

# HI-FI CHOICE

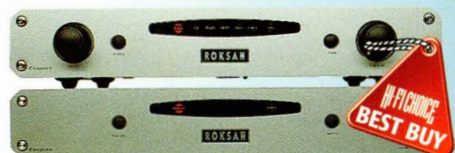
THE FINEST HI-FI MAGAZINE IN THE WORLD

# BEST BUYS 1998

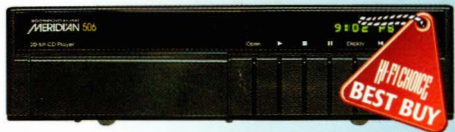


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ISSUE 185  
BEST BUYS  
1998 £2.99  
BEF 160









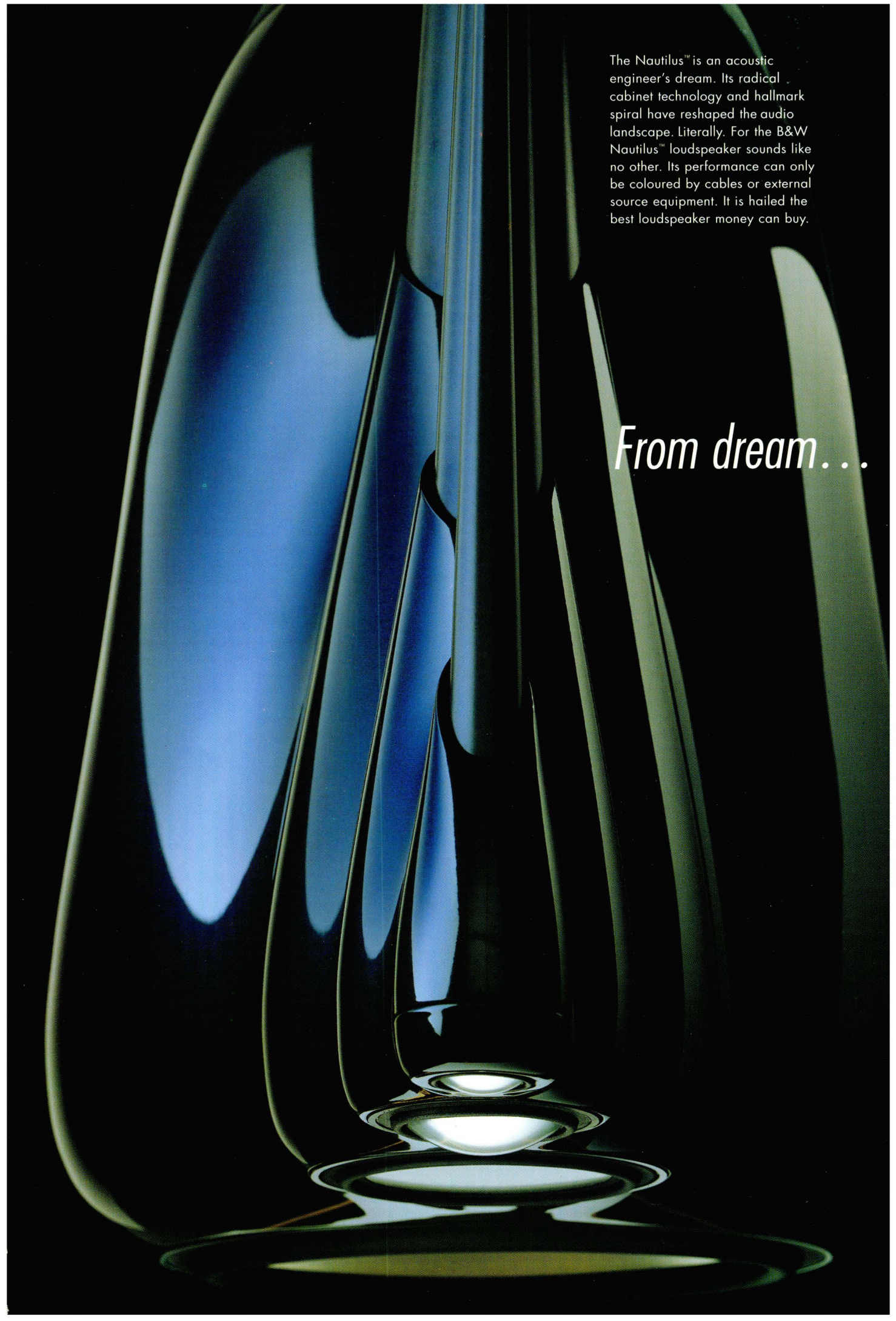
DECCA

James Lock is as much a legend of classical recording as the B&W Matrix™801 he has professionally always favoured. The original Matrix™801 is so highly regarded that some eighty percent of all classical recordings are monitored using this stunning loudspeaker. For his home, James chose the new Nautilus™802 for its manageable size and peerless performance. "The Nautilus™800 Series represents a quantum leap in musical reproduction."

**B&W**

LISTEN AND YOU'LL SEE



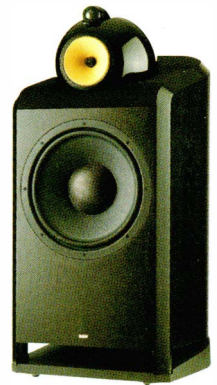


The Nautilus™ is an acoustic engineer's dream. Its radical cabinet technology and hallmark spiral have reshaped the audio landscape. Literally. For the B&W Nautilus™ loudspeaker sounds like no other. Its performance can only be coloured by cables or external source equipment. It is hailed the best loudspeaker money can buy.

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If the Nautilus™ is a dream, here is the reality. B&W's Nautilus™801, flagship of a stunning new range, fuses the innovative Nautilus™ tube technology with a series of industry firsts: Fixed Suspension Transducer™, Kevlar® drive units, Matrix® cabinet bracing and Flowport™ technology. The result is an unprecedented purity of sound. The reason EMI's Abbey Road studios, along with the biggest and best in the recording industry, are now upgrading to the Nautilus™801. Listen and you'll see – at your nearest authorised Nautilus™ 800 Series dealer. For more information please contact B&W: 01903 750 750 or visit our website <http://www.bwspeakers.com>



L I S T E N   A N D   Y O U ' L L   S E E



# Musical Instruments

**Sonus Faber** loudspeakers are worked with the old world craftsmanship of the musical instrument maker.

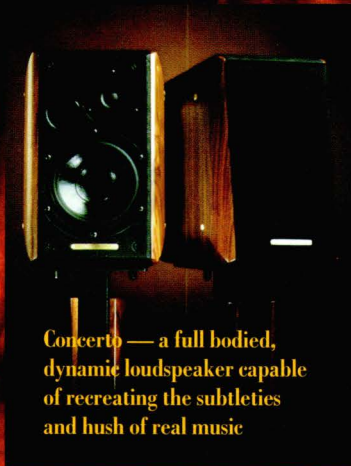
Ultimate expression of this craft is the fabled **Guarneri**

**Homage**, a unique lute-shaped speaker with the strong tonal personality of a Guarneri violin.

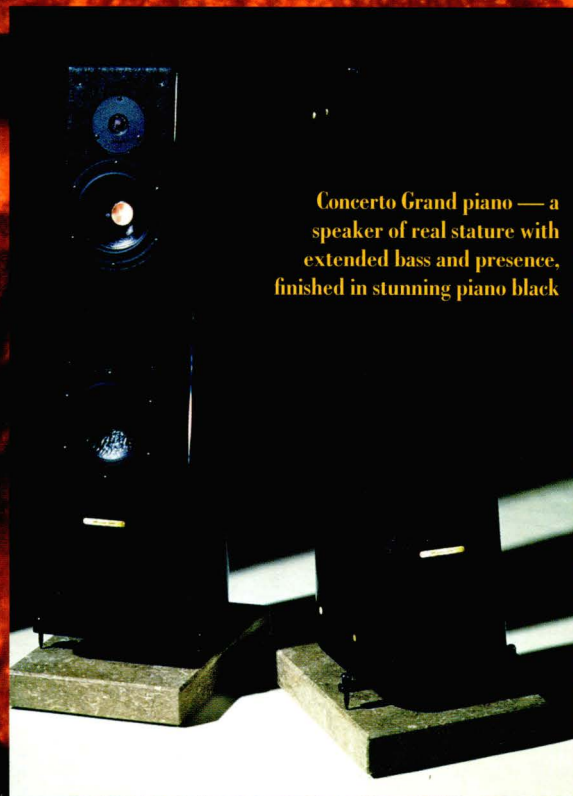
**Guarneri** was a 17th century Cremonese master violin maker whose instruments were intensely sculpted acoustic masterpieces characterised by a unique ability to combine tonal strength and full bodied sound with sweetness.

This overriding passion for tonal character and dynamic range is a feature of all **Sonus Faber** speakers. To this musical passion is brought modern materials technology and a listening room 'laboratory' to create a family of products true to a musical heritage yet based in today's science.

Baby of this family is the **Concertino**. Its cabinet with solid walnut sides, insulated with non-resonant material brings new meaning to the expression 'substantial'. Ken Kessler reviewing the Concertino (HFN&RR 3/96) referred to it as 'a small speaker for grown-ups' and concluded that 'it's one of the least expensive introductions yet to the joys of "real hi-fi"'.  
What Hi-Fi (8/96) wrote of the Concertino: 'considering their size they deliver bass of stupendous power, speed and accuracy'.  
The bigger **Concerto** two-way was described by Alvin Gold (HFN&RR 4/97) as 'a truly



**Concerto** — a full bodied, dynamic loudspeaker capable of recreating the subtleties and hush of real music



**Concerto Grand piano** — a speaker of real stature with extended bass and presence, finished in stunning piano black

remarkable loudspeaker'. He praised the 'exquisitely refined and articulate midband' before concluding 'listening through the Concerto was like listening through an open window. Music sounds completely unmanipulated and utterly clear with a sweetness, purity and a sense of presence...all sense of artifice simply vanished'.

Jason Kennedy (Hi-Fi Choice 4/97) simply said 'an admirable design that achieves its sonic goals and looks beautiful'.

After many successful years the popular **Electa Amator** is revised and appears in MkII form with a revolutionary new cabinet.

As exciting comes the news of a Sonus Faber integrated amplifier — the **Musica** — so you can now hear how the Sonus Faber designers listen to their own products.

Sonus Faber has also introduced a floor-standing speaker the **Concerto Grand piano** — indeed it has all the physical and musical presence of a concert grand. Ken Kessler (HFN&RR 5/97) found it 'an odd but delightful blend, a small speaker's energy and vim with a large speaker's authority'. He even christened it 'a perfect rock speaker for the headbanger who want the energy and levels the music demands, minus any rough edges'.

Which just goes to show that what can recreate the sound of a Guarneri can recreate the sound of a Gibson!

Please contact **Absolute Sounds** for full details of the **Sonus Faber** range and a dealer referral where you can discover the truth and beauty of a real musical instruments.

**Sonus faber®**

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# EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

**Stan Vincent** reflects on five years in hi-fi.  
**The wind of change still blows undaunted!**



Life goes too quickly, I have realised, while recently looking back over five years as an Editor at Dennis Towers. First I helmed *Hi-Fi Choice's* sister magazine, *Home Entertainment*; and then I became custodian of the more venerable hi-fi title you hold now.

Those five years have passed with remarkable alacrity; and in their passing have witnessed unparalleled developments, changes and upheavals in many aspects of consumer electronics and technology. The new Digital Versatile Disk (DVD), for example, was but science fiction when I joined *Home Entertainment* in 1993. The best we could manage back then was Philips' Video CD format; and the big product hype on my first issue was the Philips CD-i player.

Likewise when I took over on *Hi-Fi Choice* in mid-1994; High-Definition Compatible Digital (HDCD) was the bright new hope on the horizon which promised improved digital sound-quality. HDCD has gone on to establish itself, but who then would have dreamed of the 24-bit, 96kHz paradigm we see emerging today?

While if we refocus our telephoto time lens on the latest technological nuggets, a growing speck in the viewfinder is the practice of obtaining music from the Internet and auditioning it on portable solid-state players. This emerging scene is becoming known as 'MP3', due to its reliance on audio compression technology from the Motion Pictures Experts Group, MPEG.

MP3 is not necessarily an audiophile pursuit, but fascinating for its gadget appeal and the way it has terrified the multinational music companies. Interested? Well, look no further than page 24 of *DJ Choice*, the free 32-page supplement you'll find bagged with *Hi-Fi Choice* this month. That'll get you up to speed on the concept of Web music. (Incidentally, after *DJ Choice* had gone to press, the November 7 edition of *Billboard* magazine revealed that Diamond Multimedia had escaped an injunction imposed on the Rio MP3 player. Read *DJC* to find out more!)

## LAST NIGHT A CLICHÉ SAVED MY LIFE

*DJ Choice*, produced in association with Jamo and Pioneer, will also show you the fascinating, evolving world of digital DJ equipment. There's a whole new breed of products which straddle the gap between home audio gear and the traditional DJ outfit. With reviews, round-ups, features and interviews, *DJ Choice* offers a unique slant on the hardware - and software - available for aspirant home music stylists. In my book, it's only a logical extension of music loving to begin recycling tunes or making up your

own sonic collages in the comfort of home.

Here in this month's issue of *Hi-Fi Choice*, it's our fourth annual summary of the top products reviewed over the year. Best Buys, Recommendations and Award Winners to a component, they are gathered together under one roof for ease of access and reference. Look no further for top hi-fi!

## I DID IT MY WAY

*Hi-Fi Choice* will be back with its usual blend of reviews and features next month, but alas without me in the driving seat. 50 issues later I'm moving into pastures new. Jason Kennedy, hitherto my stalwart Deputy Editor, has taken the reins. In fact, he's been looking after this issue, while I've had my baseball cap on backwards with *DJ Choice*. Jason boasts 11 years experience on *Hi-Fi Choice* so you'll be in safe hands.

It's been a great honour and pleasure to edit a venerable, '70s-born magazine like *HFC*, but more than that a privilege to write for an audience of readers who really care about the magazine and give heart-felt feedback month after month. Deserving special mention here is Mr John Slevin of London, who has written reams of diatribe over the years to which I've never had the time to reply in person. John wins the honorary 'Ultimate Reader' award for his dogged pursuit of the hi-fi truth!

I must also extend special thanks to all my colleagues on *Hi-Fi Choice*. We've weathered the rough and the smooth, with many a guffaw along the way. Special thanks to Jason, Del, Tina and Charlotte; to former staffers Sam, Lisa, and Kristin; and to Rob Debenham, the funniest guy in advertising.

Music is the universal language of human emotion, and hi-fi transmits the power of that emotional communication. But in the final analysis, music is all that matters. So *au revoir*, and remember - enjoy your listening this month!

*Stan Vincent*

*"We shall not cease from exploration  
 And the end of all our exploring  
 Will be to arrive where we started  
 And know the place for the first time"*

TS Eliot, *Little Giddings*

## ERRATUM

On page 12 of last month's edition of *Hi-Fi Choice*, we inadvertently printed an incorrect caption to Figure Two in Paul Miller's *Oasis of Sanity*. The caption should have read, "Audiolab 8000CD: distortion and requantisation noise ascribed to Crystal DAC." We apologise for any confusion caused.





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The year's best from p80.



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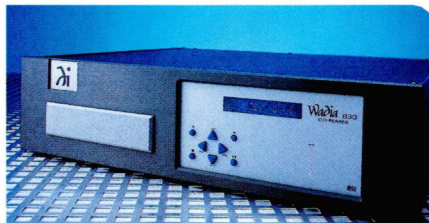
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# HIGH-END REVIEWS

Over the past year, we reviewed a plethora of high-end kit, from the bizarre to the downright outrageous, with a stack of gems in between. Here's the annual summary.



**WILSON BENESCH**  
**FULL CIRCLE**  
**£1,995**

This £2,000 assembly of precision-engineered parts represents the Sheffield-based company's point of entry into the world of 12-inch black vinyl. The deck (£795) is presented here with a £795 version of the ACT tonearm called ACT 0.5, and an open-bodied MC cartridge dubbed Ply.

Sonically there is no shortage of resolution, since information retrieval is its forté, and instruments sound convincing as they take their place in the soundstage with little hesitation or uncertainty. The overall balance is a little further forward than, however, and good quality isolation is necessary to get it to give its best.

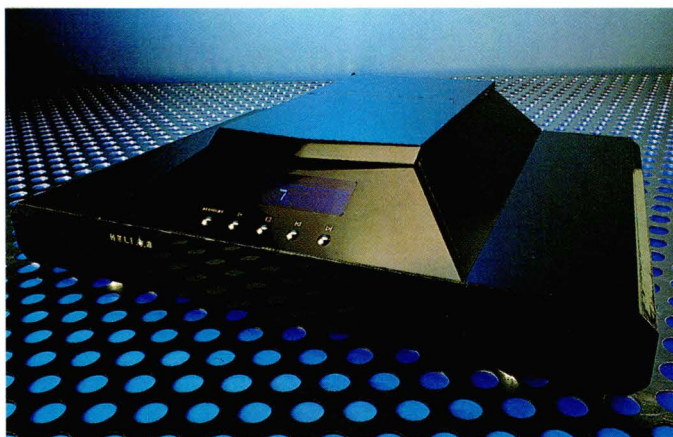
**Wilson benesch** ☎ (0114) 285 2656  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 174**

**HELIOS**  
**STARGATE**  
**£2,550**

Helios is the hi-fi division of a French defence contractor; it therefore has considerable technical expertise which it has lavished on the range-topping Stargate. Employing custom-built DACs from Crystal and a graphite and carbon-fibre chassis, we found much to enjoy in this integrated player's performance. Its enthusi-

asm is contagious, creating dynamic soundstages, and guaranteeing enjoyment. It reminds us how much of CD's potential goes unrealised, and how modern players have addressed all but the most hard-core criticisms of the format's shortcomings. If your system sounds uninspired, try a Helios and inject some light into your listening!

**Absolute Analogue** ☎ (01425) 654488  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 174**

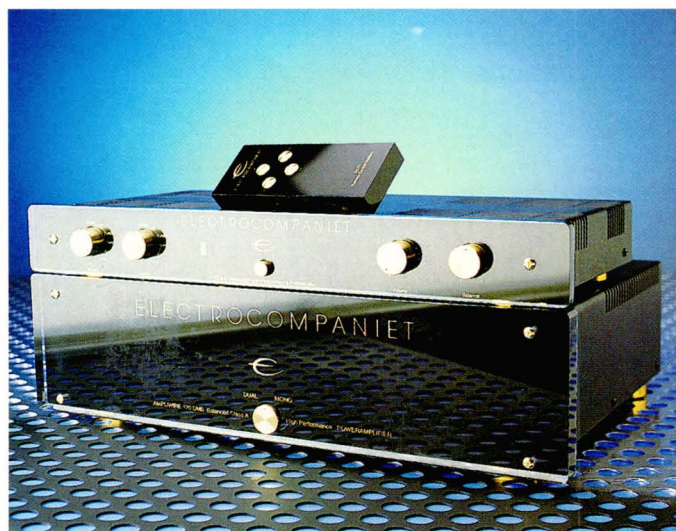


**GOLDEN TUBE AUDIO**  
**SI-50 (MK2)**  
**SI150 MK2 LINE**  
**£1,095**  
**SI150 MK 2 LINE/PHONO**  
**£1,295**

The SI-50 represents an unusual confluence of old and new technologies: on the one hand it uses microprocessor controls to allow active or passive operation, and on the other it is a valve-driven integrated amplifier. Made in the US, Golden Tube has used computer-derived cooling fans and silicon to

keep a constant check on the valves for correct biasing. While not as bullet proof as more conventional tube designs, it has a similar balance with a beautiful midband that will bring out the best in great acoustic recordings, such as *Blue Note* jazz. With the preamp in passive mode it can transport you not merely emotionally but temporally as well, taking you back to the day the recording was made.

**Audiofreaks** ☎ (0181) 948 4153  
**Reviewd in Hi-Fi Choice 175**

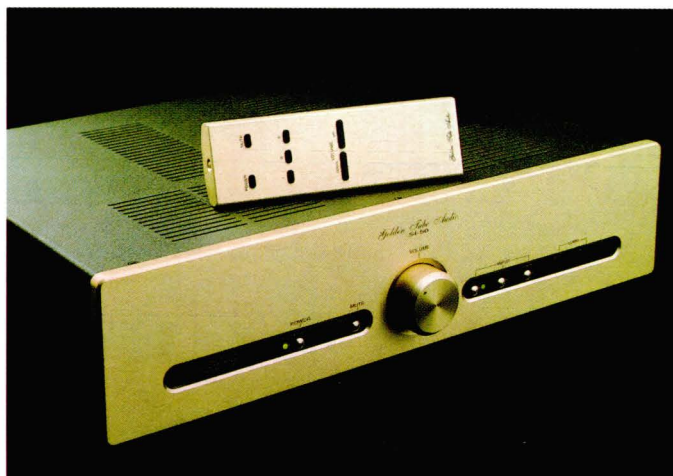


**ELECTROCOMPANIET**  
**EC 4.6/AW 120 DMB**  
**£1,750/£2,695**

Norwegian audio electronics specialist Electrocompaniet has always strived to attain that great high-end amplifier goal: the 'straight wire with gain'. Both pre and power amplifier in this combo follow similar lines. They are class A designs and each is divided into separate input and output gain blocks. With the right speakers and a good recording,

there is a truly three-dimensional feel to the soundstage produced by this combo, but this is nothing compared to the almost visceral presence of musicians in the room. You won't get much closer to live performance without living, breathing musicians, or illegal psychotropic drugs. To find Non-American hi-fi that plays the Yanks' own game so successfully is rare indeed.

**Sound Image** ☎ (0181) 255 6868  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 174**



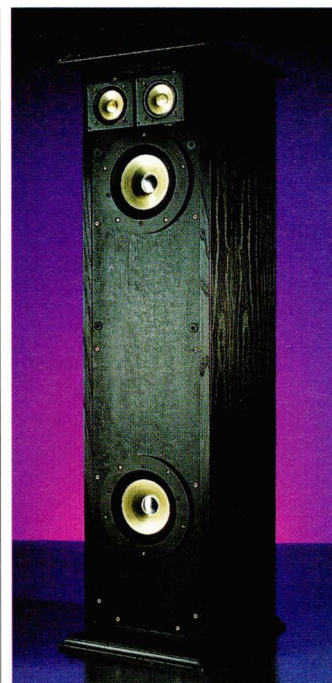




**TITAN**  
**T/4**  
**£1,175**

The T/4 represents very good material value for money and weighs an alarming amount. Employing aluminium Bando drive units in a metre-high enclosure the T/4 eschews, such modern conventions as floor spiking and bi-wiring in favour of a chamfered plinth and capital, with a full-length grille. Since our review, Titan has attempted to address some of the shortcomings we found in the design with double-wound voice coils and reflex loading. These have increased the power handling to 70 Watts. Presumably they still have a fine sense of presence but a wider dynamic window.

**Titan Loudspeakers Z (01702) 206870**  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 176**



**PROAC**  
**TABLETTE 50 SIGNATURE**  
**£899**

Taking the 'small is beautiful' ethos to new extremes, the gorgeously-veneered Tablette 50 Signature is a diminutive 28x16.5x23cm, but at 14lbs it's no lightweight. This is down to the die-cast mid/bass driver chassis with its five-inch polycarbonate cone and "copper magnet assembly", plus matching copper phase plug. The tweeter is a three-quarter-

ter-inch soft dome with a honeycomb-wound voice coil. The 50 Sigs brought out the differences between recordings by getting right inside them: by revealing the harmonics of struck cymbal, and that spine-tingling internal harmony-yet-discord of church organ in full flow. We'd advise everyone to hear these speakers. From small acorns, massive oak-veneered sounds grow.

**DNA Marketing ☎ (01798) 343414**  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 175**



**THETA**  
**MILES**  
**£2,895 (BALANCED)**

Based around Pioneer's Stable Platter transport the Miles is Theta's first integrated CD player. It is available in both single-ended and balanced output varieties; the latter costing an extra £400 and incorporating two 18-bit converters instead of one. This is a genuine attempt to dig up the full-bodied sound of CD so often

overlooked by designers wrapped up in the sound of digital. If the sound is euphonically enhanced, the trick has been performed with a deft hand. Miles develops an excellent soundstage for times when you feel like a hi-fi buff, but it also throws a mean party when you feel like getting in touch with your funky side and want to crank up the volume.

**Absolute Sounds ☎ (0181) 971 3909**  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 176**



**BOW TECHNOLOGIES**  
**WAZOO**  
**£1,849**

Bow Christensen is clearly a man of good taste, anyone that names an amplifier after a great piece of music — Frank Zappa's *The Grand Wazoo* — and makes it look this sexy deserves a bit of exposure. The Wazoo is a 20kg, 50 Watts per channel line integrated with optional remote control. Circuitry

is based on the brand's dearer ZZ-One and avoids negative feedback. An amp with a lot of finesse, the Wazoo captivates with its rich, organic, textures and effortless resolution. While not the quickest or most dynamic of amps it can bring performances right into the room with you, yielding an intimacy that is rare.

**Path Premier ☎ (01494) 441736**  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 175**

**DNM**  
**3C/PA3**  
**£3,700/£2,500**

DNM amps don't do themselves many favours — they are small, lightweight and ergonomically challenging with twin-volume pots and DIN socketry. But the fact that they have survived since the early '80s in much the same form suggests there's appeal behind their eccentricity. This is due to the combo's resolving powers which are better developed than those of any component that we've enjoyed for a long time. In essence the musical presentation is understated and devoid of distortion or muddle. It is totally unflappable; no strand of

music becomes tangled. The DNM 3C/PA3 pairing is among the most capable amplifiers just don't expect remote control!

**Virtual Reality ☎ (01277) 227355**  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 176**





# HIGH-END REVIEWS

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**BOULDER**  
LSM/L102M  
£3,800/£3,100

Born in the studio scene of Colorado, the Boulder range takes a straightforward, albeit distinctly Stateside approach, with its distinctive M range of amplification. Built around a DC-coupled discrete gain stage, balanced operation and solid power are cornerstones of these no-nonsense designs.

Here, we are faced with a product which comes very close to the hi-fi ideal of a straight wire with gain. These amps add next to nothing to the music they reproduce. Their touch is not quite as light as that of DNM 3C/PA3, but the extra power here allows the user to choose from a broader range of speakers and offers serious dynamics to boot.

Sound Image UK ☎ (0181) 255 6868  
Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 177

**KRELL**  
KAV-250P/KAV-250A  
£1,999/£3,145

While not as over-engineered and fin-festooned as Krell's top-flight gear, this neat combo features many of the elements that established the brand. They operate in class A and feature balanced connections as well as, in the case of the 250-Watt power amp, the

ability to be daisy-chained or bridged. The true strength of the Krell KAV-250 combination is solid performance. If you want your music to be close to the sound from the original disc, yet not so ruthlessly analytical that every other CD is virtually unplayable, the Krells kick keister.

Absolute Sounds ☎ (0181) 971 3909  
Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 176



**ALTIS**  
CDT III/REFERENCE TUBE  
PROCESSOR  
£4,995 EACH

The substantial two-box Altis transport and DAC CD player comes from an American brand dedicated to CD, its only other product being an even more OTT transport. The CDT III transport here is an SACD-ready, glass optical interfacing behemoth with a Papst motor driving its Philips CD-

ROM mechanism. The Ref DAC is tube powered for a silky midrange and equipped with a proprietary digital interface that's claimed to reduce jitter to less than 10 pico seconds. Its relaxed yet detailed presentation suits acoustic material beautifully but the slightly softened leading edges and limited bass extension make the pairing seem less competitive.

HEAR ☎ (01232) 319148  
Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 176

**RESOLUTION AUDIO**  
CD50  
£2,995

From an American brand that's in the vanguard of the 24-bit/96kHz movement comes a diminutive CD player with some serious intentions. Internals include Pacific Microsonics PMD-100 filtering and four Burr-Brown 20-bit converters, offering fully-balanced operation, plus onboard volume control. It doesn't try to create a

rich, warm, analogue sound, but instead makes the signal as detailed and precise as possible. All the normal attributes of good CD are there, yet this player is without hardness or the steely brightness normally associated with the breed. Best of all, your heart will thrill as much to music as your head responds to the detail portrayed.

Audiofreaks ☎ (0181) 948 4250  
Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 177







**CONRAD-JOHNSON**  
**CAV50**  
**£2,495**

Following a trend that has swept high-end audio of late, Conrad-Johnson has created an integrated line amplifier, the first in its 30-year history. Operating in 45 Watt ultralinear or 22 Watt triode-coupled mode the CAV50 uses classic EL34 output tubes. The CAV50 might be the perfect tonic for

those who find modern recordings a little too shiny. It is not rolled off in the treble, but does have the ability to transcend the harshness which is inherent in many digital recordings. That said, the sound is not veiled or smoothed over one iota. It can be virtually every bit as detailed and as crisp as a good tranny amp.

**Audiofreaks** ☎ (0181) 948 4153  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 178**



**NAGRA**  
**PL-P**  
**£6,995**

Nagra has a reputation for making the best portable tape recorders ever built, but recently this Swiss company branched out into domestic hi-fi, specifically amplification. The PL-P is the most desirable preamplifier we have ever encountered: battery powered, tube driven and equipped with step-up transformers for its phono stage, it is one sexy gadget. We've never encountered this

degree of sonic revelation in the past, it comes down to the pre-amp's ability to reproduce dynamic and timbral variation, to a degree that eludes other products. Both of the aforementioned characteristics are typical valve-amp signatures, but because mains noise has been eliminated from the circuit, these valves operate in conditions of electrical hygiene about which most tubes can only dream.

**RT Services** ☎ (01235) 810455  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 178**

**WILSON BENESCH**  
**ORATOR**  
**£2,900**

A scaled-down version of the company's Actor, the Orator is the first Wb speaker to feature a woven polypropylene cone developed by Leeds University. The new cone seems to have some appealing qualities, the most obvious being speed. The Orator is very revealing, portraying all the energy of guitars and cymbals, but underpinning them with bass guitar and kick drum. We found this attractive floorstander to be more thrill-packed than its stable-mate the A.C.T. One, the Orator appears to be a remarkably open door on your music: it's revealing and responsive. Spoil it with fantastic CD players, amps and cables, and it will spoil you with fantastic sound!

**Wilson benesch** ☎ (0114) 285 2656  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 179**



**AVANTGARDE**  
**DUO**  
**£6,700 CHECKED**

A radical re-working of horn technology, the Avantgarde Duo combines midrange and treble horns with a boxed subwoofer per side. The midband is outstanding, but the treble needs to be compensated with slightly overblown bass, which makes the bottom-end deficiencies of the subwoofer tend to be all the more obvious.

However, even a die-hard bass nut could sacrifice some LF for the awesome intensity of the Avantgarde experience. Like other big-horn systems, Duo breaks down barriers between performance and reproduction like no conventional box speaker can. Such a combination should be unbeatable with acoustic music.

**GT Audio** ☎ (01895) 833099  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 178**



**TACT**  
**MILLENNIUM**  
**£5,999.99**

Back in the May issue, we carried out a comprehensive laboratory test of this, the world's first digital amplifier. Eight months later, Paul Miller has just received the first review sample to come off the production line. Unlike conventional amplifiers the Millennium operates entirely in the digital domain, there's no volume control in the conventional sense, but rather a means of raising or lowering the DC voltage supplied to the output stage. It is mercilessly adept at revealing otherwise hid-



den colorations in partnering speakers but its utter silence makes musical dynamics all the more powerful. It is free from obvious artifice, highly emotive, yet entirely complementary to the music being played. We look forward to assessing whether the finished thing lives up to expectations with baited breath.

**Audio Club** ☎ (01296) 482017  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 178**

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# HIGH-END REVIEWS

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**SIEMEL**

**TU-10/TA-20**

**£1,599/£2,350**

Siemel Industries is a French precision electronics company that has branched out into hi-fi. The TU-10 valve preamplifier is a line-level design and TA-20 a 60-Watt stereo power amp of the solid-state variety. Both feature high-grade components and are superbly built and finished. Over an extended appraisal, I found the

Gallic duo to be most capable and keen, without becoming at all overbearing or brash. The Siemel preamp's tubes give it an edge with dynamics and timbre, and I suspect the preamp could reach even greater heights of performance in the company of a better power amp. The latter has a subtle but enthusiastic sound but some might find it too laid-back.

**Kronos Distribution ☎ (01868) 753606**

**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 179**

**MUSICAL FIDELITY**

**X-A200**

**£1,000 PER PAIR**

The most substantial member of Musical Fidelity's X-Family, the X-A200 is a power-house monoblock amplifier kicking out 200 Watts and 30A of peak current. Remarkably, these monoblocks bare comparisons with some of the finest valve-based amps I've heard, in terms of sweetness and variety of tonal colour. The lower midband

sounded remarkably articulate and refined, as did the bass, whose combination of reach, power and presence was quite extraordinary. It's a big, bold, potent amplifier, but also much subtler and more organic than its smaller brother (XA-50). There is more to the X-A200 than meets the eye and ear; and it shows a much more upmarket side to Musical Fidelity's X series.

**Musical Fidelity ☎ (0181) 900 2866**

**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 180**



**MAGNUM DYNALAB**

**FT-101A**

**£795**

Canadian brand Magnum Dynalab specialises in tuners, and the FT-101A was reviewed alongside the brand's F-205 Super Sleuth antenna amplifier and FT-R infra-red control system. It's a basic FM tuner with no presets or RDS functions but display systems for multipath, signal strength and fine tuning to name three. The word 'analogue', liberally

used throughout the FT-101A's technical literature, also befits the sound quality. Although a good tuner is effectively transparent, an open window into the broadcast studio, Magnum Dynalab's model also accentuates the smooth sound of radio. It's a very friendly sound: not rosy or over-warm, but rich and inviting. It can even make Zoë Ball sound acceptable, which is praise indeed.

**Audiofreaks ☎ (0181) 948 4153**

**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 180**

**LINN**

**CLASSIK**

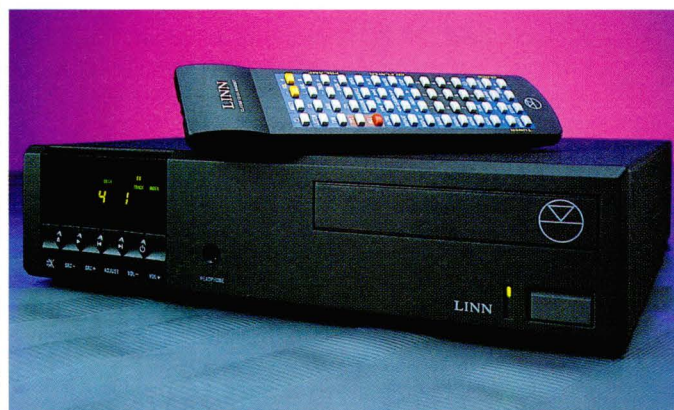
**£995**

Linn's alarm clock/CD player Classik is not a Linn in the traditional sense, don't treat it like serious hi-fi, your prejudices will get in the way of its charm. But next to similarly-priced packaged audio systems the Classik shows its worth. The characteristic dry, controlled sound of Linn electron-

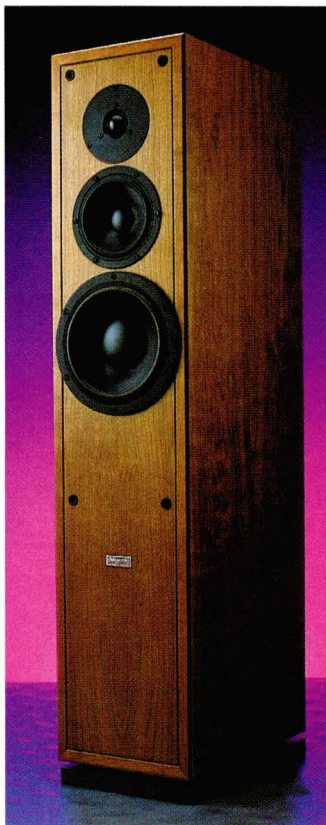
ics is still evident, but the sound is slightly smaller-scale. However, it lacks the floppy-bass mediocrity most integrated systems display. The point is not to liberate audiophiles from the clutter of separates, but to offer a decent system where space is at a premium, without running to the expense of a true multi-room system.

**Linn Products ☎ (0500) 888909**

**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 180**







**DYNAUDIO  
CONTOUR 3.0**

**£2,930**

The Contour 3.0 is a proper three-way design from a Danish drive-unit manufacturer with a substantial reputation. It features a 47-litre enclosure, polyprop mid and bass drivers and a fabric-dome tweeter with 86dB/W sensitivity. The combination of top-class drivers, gentle-slope crossover networks and a well-controlled enclosure adds up to an outstanding speaker in almost every respect, though in practice the ultimate loudness capability may be somewhat constrained by the modest sensitivity, the amplifier power available, and the type of material you play. It isn't a party animal, and doesn't have the dynamic realism I associate with high sensitivity designs, but this Dynaudio's consistency, neutrality, unflappability and transparency will be more than sufficient compensation for most listeners.

**Dynaudio UK ☎ (01732) 451938**  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 180**



**MUSICAL FIDELITY  
NU VISTA**

**£1,200**

Employing a rare and tiny canned valve called the Nuvistor, this two-box preamp is a remote-controlled design with high aspirations. The Nuvistor was the

last electron tube to be developed and had low noise and military applications as its goal, but the transistor came along and stole its thunder. Musical Fidelity has been collecting what stocks remain, however, and has a spare set of these valves for every Nu Vista sold.

It is hard to criticise the pre-amp's timing and image depth, even if it lacks a little scale. In timbral terms it sits squarely between transistor and more traditional tube designs, it's a delightful device with looks, sound and convenience to woo the modern user, yet enough historical intrigue to draw in anachrophiles.

**Musical Fidelity ☎ (0181) 900 2866**  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 182**



**DCS  
ELGAR**

**£8,500**

Although the Elgar is ostensibly a very serious digital-to-analogue converter it is fundamentally a state-of-the-art hi-fi mainframe, ready for any digital audio technology that should happen to surface, and ready a long time before anything else. Using the company's Ring DAC it can accommodate up to 192kHz sampling or alternatively the Sony/Philips DSD system. We used the Elgar's professional audio siblings to make live CD standard and DVD-Audio standard (24-bit/96kHz) recordings in a City church and thus were able to sample the potential of the new medium in an unusually real sense. We found that while there was something of the church's acoustic signature in the 'CD' version, the full 96/24 version was considerably more detailed, open and generally three-dimensional.

**RT Services ☎ (01235) 810455**  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 181**

**NAIM  
CDX**

**£2,200**

A replacement for the CD2, the CDX uses the brand's characteristic swing-door-mounted transport mech and the ability to be upgraded with the XPS power supply. The Naim sound, consistent throughout the company's electronics, will not be to everyone's taste. The adjectives 'sweet', 'delicate' and 'transparent' don't spring readily to mind, and stereo soundstage doesn't have the tangibility or depth of, say, the Acoustic Precision Eikos. Rather the CDX's strengths are found in its communication rather than presentation skills. The sound might not always be inherently 'pleasant', but it will delineate differences in musicianship, recording techniques and sound quality.



**Naim Audio ☎ (01722) 332266**  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 181**

**WILSON  
CUB**

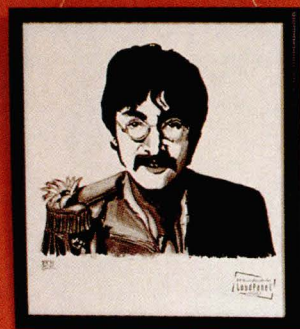
**£5,495 (IN BLACK)**

Wilson Audio's 'entry-level' model, the Cub, is a medium-sized stand mount with a centrally-mounted inverted tweeter from Focal, flanked by two 17cm SEAS drivers in a D'Appolito array. Sensitivity is 94dB, but this is said to be a low-impedance, four-Ohm load — not entirely amp-friendly. It was a revelation with some recent recordings, which opened out in space and air with a firmness that was remarkable. But other less-rounded albums won't survive long on the digital roundabout when played in a Cub-based system. So while it took time to acquire the Cub habit, saying good-bye to it will be an equally protracted affair.

**Absolute Sounds ☎ (0181) 971 3909**  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 181**







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# HIGH-END REVIEWS



**KUZMA**  
**STABI S**  
**£695 WITHOUT TONE ARM**  
**£1,000 WITH STOGI S**

Imagine a turntable stripped of all decoration, then remove any suspension or speed control. Chances are that the new £700 Kuzma Stabi S from Slovenia will

match your mental image. The basic turntable comprises just four main parts: chassis, motor, alloy sub-platter (with the spindle bearing) and main platter. The chassis is a solid-brass, tubular T-bar, with an arm cut-out at one end and the bearing structure at the T-bar. The Kuzma offers a typi-

cal high-end sound: rich and warm, with loads of information, and a precise, walk-in soundstage. It has the ability to sound musical and honest, and to integrate with ultra-high-end systems without clamouring for attention.

**Audiofreaks** ☎ (0181) 948 4153  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 182**

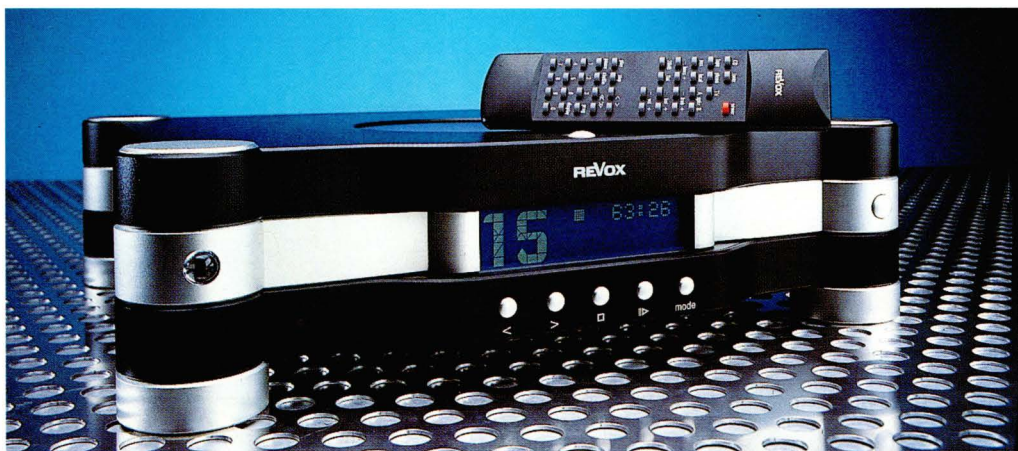
**PANASONIC**  
**DVD-L10**  
**£999.95**

The world's first personal DVD player features a five-inch 'widescreen' aspect ratio LCD screen and a DVD-Video player in a case that's little bigger than the first CD personals but considerably more bulky than today's miniature designs. However, it is no less of a mega-gadget for that, and the ability to watch movies



with this degree of AV fidelity while on the move is pretty impressive. As a CD personal, it's no better than a dedicated £200 model and eats batteries at twice the rate. But the strength of the DVD-L10 resides in its excellent picture quality and fine headphone output. An essential replacement for the lap top for all you frequent flyers.

**Panasonic** ☎ (0990) 357357  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 182**



**REVOX**  
**EXCEPTION E426**  
**£1,599.99**

One third of the Exception series of matching components (the other two are an amp and a tuner), the E426 CD player combines Revox's enviable reputation for engineering with some highly-

distinctive styling. Employing an unusual space-age sliding-door mechanism above a puck-clamped transport, the Exception features electronics design from Micromega and an unusually large 'footprint'. Its sonic style is distinctly European, being light and agile with excellent treble

extension and clarity, but no glare. Seasoned listeners would no doubt point to classic sonic characteristics of a bitstream DAC: real 'snap' and energy, allied to a strong, rhythmic gait in every piece played.

**The Musical Design Co** ☎ (01992) 573030  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 182**

**PROAC**  
**RESPONSE 3.8**  
**£3,990**

Elegant 1.28m high floorstanders don't come much more attractive than this yew-veneered Response 3.8 from ProAc. Equipped with top quality custom Scanspeak drive units in the form of 130mm carbon fibre loaded mid and bass units with a 32mm soft dome tweeter, this is an AV-oriented British heavyweight. Switching on the radio revealed that the 3.8's biggest strength is unquestionably its voice reproduction. It brings to mind two of the most venerable 'classics' in my collection of references: the Spondor BC1 and Quad ESL57. Sharing something of their midband magic, thanks to its beautiful voice-band coherence — and similarly low sensitivity. The benefit is all the bass you get thrown into the bargain for free. Great for home cinema.

**DNA Marketing** ☎ (01798) 343414  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 182**





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# HIGH-END REVIEWS

**WADIA**  
**830**  
**£2,999.99**

Digital specialist Wadia's entry-level CD player is not the prettiest machine available, but it does contain some serious technology and casework that's designed to sound better than it looks. The 830 has all the key Wadia ingredients and contains virtually the same electronics as the 850 for £2,000 less. It uses two pairs of Burr-Brown converters and boasts 21 bits of 'real' resolution. What the dynamic and imaging strengths give you is an extraordinary sense of realism. Acoustic instruments are more



tactile than you would give CD credit for, with beautiful timbre and full, firm body. So if you can cope with the 'Gameboy' buttons,

why not discover what your CDs really sound like?  
**The Musical Design Co ☎ (01992) 573030**  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 183**

**T&A**  
**CD1220R**  
**£1,540**

In Germany, T&A is one of the leading brands, making hi-fi in the Meridian mould. In the CD1220R, transport and DAC sections are treated as if they were two separate devices, specifying a so-called 'reverse-clock' arrangement, whereby the DAC clock acts as a master. It also uses both bitstream and multibit DACs to get the best of both and offers switchable filtering, a technology that T&A pioneered. The CD1220R is extremely presentable, with a clear, extended character which is detailed and open. In use, with the standard filter engaged, I found the T&A traded blow for blow with my resident (but pre 24-bit) Meridian 508. T&A has proved itself a brand with which to conjure.

**Richard Hirschmann UK ☎ (01234) 345999**  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 182**



**SIRIUS**  
**D200**  
**£2,995 CHECKED**

Sirius's claim to fame with the D200 is its dedication to using single pairs of MOSFET output devices per channel — the argument being that multiple devices will create distortions by virtue of the inevitable variations in their characteristics. Its other (not so) USP is dual-mono design, although amps that offer this level

of duality and sound quality usually cost a lot more than £3,000. It comes down to the combination of power to drive the lower registers and detail in the higher ones, with a fluid midband that's apparently transparent to whatever's coming down the line. It combines Naim-style timing with Levinson-style power and resolution, and sounds like a bargain.  
**RT Services ☎ (01235) 810455**  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 183**

**B&W**  
**NAUTILUS 802**  
**£6,000**

A bit of a technological *tour de force*, this descendent of the original Nautilus 'snail' brings together all that B&W learnt from that project and combines it with the more cost-effective Matrix technology. Retaining the rearward energy dispensing Nautilus HF tube and midrange 'head' and coupling them to a horseshoe section Matrix bass enclosure, B&W has created a world-beating speaker at the price. This loudspeaker shows how to combine electrostatic transparency with horn dynamics and cut out the coloration in the process. Clearly it demands the best ancillaries you can put with it — high amp power is essential despite the decent 91dB sensitivity. The Nautilus 802 is a fit-and-forget loudspeaker. It'll let you forget about hi-fi and revel in music. One of the very best.  
**B&W ☎ (01903) 750750**  
**Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 183**





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Models Shown: BDI-2000, AA-88, CDX-12M

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# HIGH-END REVIEWS

Visit Our Website: [www.hifichoice.co.uk](http://www.hifichoice.co.uk) • Because of the MMC directive relating to retail price recommendation on systems, certain companies no longer supply prices. Asterisked prices, although correct in the original review, may now have changed.



**LAVARDIN  
MODEL IT**  
£3,200.00

This stripped-down 2 x 40-Watts amplifier has a delicate midband and a transparency normally associated with valve-driven amps. The bottom end has the sort of power and authority attributed to

solid-state electronics. It comes without remote control, but this is no great sacrifice for the glorious sound quality.

The technical basis of the IT arose from identification of a new form of distortion, called 'memory distortion'. This concept is difficult to prove objectively, but it does

carry a ring of truth and would also go some way towards explaining why the IT sounds so astonishingly 'clean' and free from hash and artifice. Its music making is not only uncommonly 'tidy' and delicate, but also informative.

**Absolute Analogue** ☎ (01425) 654488  
Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 184

**MICROMEGA  
PREMIUM DVD**  
£1,500

The Micromega Premium was tested both in audio and video systems. As a CD player, the Micromega sounds warm and soft and very, very analogue. But this is only skin-deep, however, as the true sound is actually rolled-off in the treble. On AAD discs, the player fares slightly better, although it does truncate some of the sound quality of the full 24-bit/96kHz datastream. Apart from its independence from the regional coding system, I can see little to justify the price of this DVD player for video. Surprisingly, our measurements showed that 96kHz digital audio is down-sampled to 48kHz, thus not offering the bandwidth promised by the medium. An odd result.

**Surrey Sounds** ☎ (01932) 254297  
Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 183



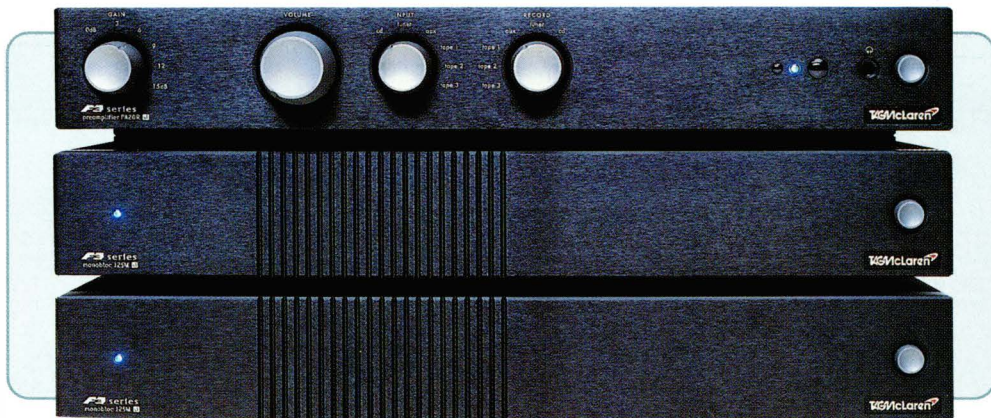
**TAG MCLAREN  
PA20R/125M**  
£1,499.95/£1,199.95

Once you get past the packaging and marketing of these good-looking products, finish and operation are both gratifying, with microprocessor-operated relays making little clicks just after you move the input knob.

The PA20R has three standard-line inputs and three tape loops, a pair of phono outputs and alternative balanced XLR sockets, logical enough until you find out that there are no matching XLR inputs on the power amps. Both components feature 'sl' (straight line) technology: direct signal coupling without the use of capacitors at the output. The power amps claim 145 Watts into eight Ohms.

The boxes had a clean, mud-free nature, with strong resolution, and weren't phased by even the most chaotic music.

**TAG McLaren Audio** ☎ (0800) 783 8007  
Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 184



**TAG MCLAREN  
CD20R/60IRV**  
£1,249.95/£999.95

After the take-over of Audiolab by TAG McLaren, the 60iRv integrated amp and CD20R CD player bear slight resemblance to their forbears. Ultra-clean surfaces, aluminium knobs, improved build quality and neon blue LEDs are all features of TAG products.

The basic 8000 layout remains inside, but all the PCBs have been redesigned and old components auditioned against higher-grade items. The ensemble is characterised by its transparency, lightness of touch and delicate treble.

A wealth of information is present in the music, but is well integrated and weighted. The CD player has the snappier focus and timing, but is not particularly muscular.

**TAG McLaren Audio** ☎ (0800) 783 8007  
Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 184





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hi-performance hi-fidelity



# SYSTEMS



## MARANTZ/TANNOY, PIONEER/ACOUSTIC PRECISION ISSUE 174

Two 'name' designers of the moment are Tom Evans and Ken Ishiwata: the former is the brains behind the Precision range from Pioneer, while the latter turns ordinary Marantz CD players and amps into KI Signature versions. But how do their approaches compare, side by side?

The Pioneer £399.95 A-300R Precision amplifier and the £449.95 PD-S505 Precision CD player are both veteran Best Buy components. They're paired up with Acoustic Precision Eikos FR1 speakers, the same brand's £85/m Eikos interconnects, and thin, flat, low impedance £40/m

Monolith 20/20 speaker cable.

This rig just seems to make sense of music. Play jazz next to classical, sprinkle in some rock, and the system reproduces only what's spinning off the CD. So, if your collection is a little more eclectic than the norm, the Pioneer/Acoustic Precision/Electrofluidics outfit will show you why musical diversity makes the rockin' world go round.

A mainstay of Ken Ishiwata's souped-up range is the CD-63 mkII KI Signature (£399.90), this was recently joined by the £399.90 Marantz PM-66 KI Signature amplifier and combined with a pair of £139.90 Tannoy Mercury M2 loudspeakers for this test. Marantz also recommended

£249 Audioquest Emerald interconnects, Kimber Kable's £19.60/m 4TC speaker cable, and £119 Heybrook HBS1 speaker stands.

The system is no prima donna. It will not make a fuss about eclectic musical tastes or poor recording quality. It simply plays music with a relaxed, cool hand. This isn't to indicate a lack of character, though it will sound best at the rock end of the spectrum.

There is a £640 price differ-

ence between the two, but you would need to spend a lot more to improve overall performance.

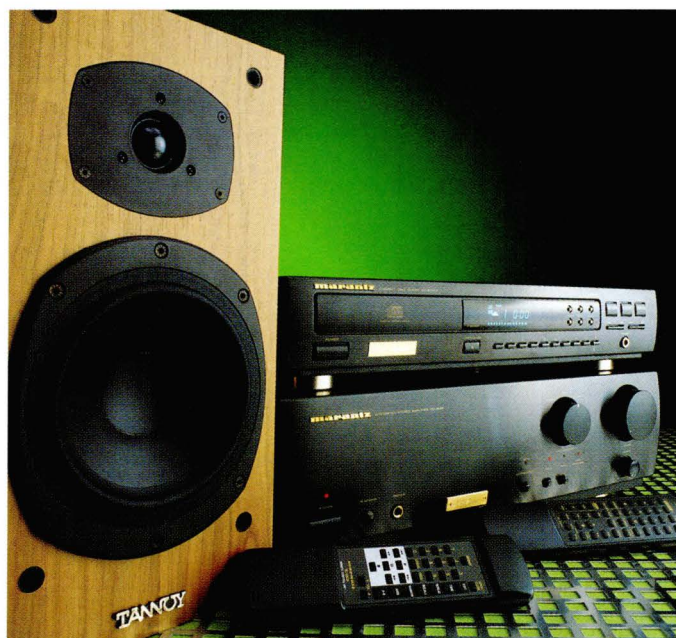
The Marantz/Tannoy system represents the best of what current hi-fi does well, the Pioneer/Acoustic Precision system on the other hand represents what could well be the future of high fidelity. Take your pick.

**Acoustic Precision** ☎ (01483) 267516

**Marantz** ☎ (01753) 680868

**Pioneer** ☎ (01753) 789500

**Tannoy** ☎ (01236) 420199



## COPLAND/SONUS FABER ISSUE 175

Although Absolute Sounds stocks some of the highest of high-end American kit other strings to its bow are products of European companies like Copland and Sonus Faber. These appear to offer a true high-end approach, while falling into the 'almost affordable' segment of many a listeners' wish-list.

To test this proposition we

assembled the following system: from Swedish brand Copland, the CDA266 CD player and CSA28 integrated amplifier; while from Italian speaker craftsmen Sonus Faber, the Minima Amator loudspeakers supported on Ironwood loudspeaker stands.

Copland's CD player features the PMD100 HDCD digital filter, allied to the Burr-Brown PCM 63P 20-bit D/A converter. Unlike Copland's '277 and '288 CD play-

ers, the 266 uses a new, sprung-suspension Sony mechanism.

The CSA28 is the real star of the show. The first Copland amp to feature a remote control, it is a 60-Watt valve/solid-state hybrid. Hard-driving, cool-running semi-conductors populate most of the circuit-boards, but a pair of double-triode valves straddle the pre- and power stages exactly where Copland believes sonic benefits are most important.

The Minima Amator is a two-way, 11.5-litre ported box. With a claimed efficiency of 88dB/W/m and impedance of four Ohms, this speaker must be matched with care to prospective amplification suits, but it doesn't demand a powerhouse.

For cables we experimented with reasonably-high-end Audioquest, DNM, LAT and the new Nordost SBM Reference.

So can this system fulfil the promise of 'affordable high-end?

Well if you're seeking the most accurate rig in the world, look elsewhere. However, if you would rather spend time with equipment that makes the most of almost any music played on it, this will be much more to your taste. There is a sense of a self-imposed soundstage, especially from the Copland components.

Toe in the speakers and the imagery takes on precise proportions, yet the soundstage doesn't bloat or bloom. It is unquestionably on a slightly small scale, but only because the bass is in correct proportion.

I found these components complemented all manner of musical selections. It does tend to paint all music in the same hue, and will not dig deep into the mix, but it lulls and relaxes the listener with a silken sheen.

High end but 'almost affordable'? Yes, I think so.

**Absolute Sounds** ☎ (0181) 947 5047







**ARCAM/DENSEN/B&W  
ISSUE 176**

The art of system building is rather like blending a fine whisky: knowing how to take a number of elements and play to each individual's strengths. But there are so many fine CD players, amps and speakers on the market, we figured it was time to assemble some of the latest likely contenders, to find out whether their whole would be greater than the sum of their parts.

Enter the new Arcam Alpha 8SE CD player (Best Buy, issue 176), the Densen Beat B-100mkII (Recommended issue 175), and the B&W CDM1SE, an update of

the award-winning CDM1.

As befits a system hand-picked from the pages of *Hi-Fi Choice*, this system deserves good cables, stands and tables. Naturally, given B&W's association with Kudos speaker stands, the Best Buy S50 and Recommended S100 models make a perfect foil for the CDM1SEs. For interconnections I found Cable Talk Studio 2 and Linn Analogue to be the products of choice; for speaker hook-up it was down to Kimber 4TC or Cable Talk 3.1 — all solid *Hi-Fi Choice* Recommended kit — to complement the electronics' characteristics. Equipment supports have to be Mana Acoustics all the

way with this rig. With three components in the signal chain: each has a clear sonic signature, but as a team they work together like ants. The Arcam is smooth, yet detailed and transparent. The Densen Beat is equally detailed yet dynamic. The B&W, meanwhile, is as well-mannered and orderly as a compact monitor speaker should be — it's detailed, too.

This outfit represented a perfect example of how complementary sonic characteristics make the best of good hi-fi components. The CDM1SE speakers tame the Densen's more lively caprices, yet not to the extent of undermining

the Beat's dynamics, or clouding the clarity of the Arcam.

This rig turns its hand to any style of music with ease, giving a 'studio' feel to everything it reproduces. There is a palpable sense of musicians playing, especially with the B&W's bung removed. Some might argue that the B&W's excellent sense of control could come across as restraint. But I strongly recommend this system, especially for those who crave the easy-going sound of American high-end without the prissy manners and stratospheric price tags.

**Arcam** ☎ (01223) 203203  
**Densen** ☎ (01582) 561227  
**B&W** ☎ (01903) 750750

**HELIOS/MUSICAL FIDELITY/  
LIVING VOICE  
ISSUE 177**

Definitive Audio's 'starter' system departs from the beaten path of hi-fi. At a cost of £3,492 the set-up breaks almost all the rules, but justifies its iconoclasm with superb sound quality. Its greatest sin against the hi-fi commandments is the emphasis it places upon loudspeakers.

The source is a £700 Helios Model 3 CD player, the amp is a £500 Musical Fidelity A2, while the £1,500 Living Voice Auditorium speakers cost more than both products combined.

The A2, spiritual heir to Musical Fidelity's legendary A1, was reviewed and Recommended in *HFC* 162 while the Helios is junior to the £950 Model 2 CD player Recommended in *HFC* 176. The Auditorium has subsequently earned itself a Best Buy, *HFC* 180.

If there was nothing more to this system, it would still be something special, but Definitive Audio has gone the extra mile to extract really impressive results from

already very promising components. The Sound Organisation table is enhanced by the addition of Living Voice Mystic Mat isolation platforms. These are sheets of carbon fibre and other materials, supported by four cones which themselves rest on the Sound Org's MDF shelf.

All manner of cables have been used to bring out the best in the system. Most interesting are the relatively humble Hitachi LC-OFC speaker wires and the Living Voice LVC1 interconnect. The latter has flying earth leads at both ends.

It is when demonstrated that this system really begins to come alive. The whole package creates a sound that moves air and emotions in equal measure. There is a perfectly natural sense of scale, real-world dynamics and 'musicians-in-the-room' presence.

Like the best concert venues, this system favours no musical genre over another. Due to the high sensitivity of the speakers, they may be less 'neutral' than low-efficiency designs, but most speakers sound dull and lifeless



by comparison.

I would never suggest you should buy a system without listening to it first, but I have

encountered few systems that sound as good as this one — at any price.

**Definitive Audio** ☎ (0115) 981 3562



# SYSTEMS

## ALCHEMIST/MAGNAT ISSUE 178

Some systems can be divided into component parts and sprinkled into other mix-and-match combos. Others should never be split asunder. This month's outfit, from Henley Designs, falls in the latter camp.

The Alchemist Forseti CD drive and DAC, each priced at £1,100, have a striking appearance. Only the £999.95 Forseti integrated amplifier has styling strong enough to match. Speakers have more freedom to dress how they want. But with such a bold visual statement up front, any less-than-refined enclosure wouldn't be up to the mark. Fortunately, the £1,199 Magnat Vintage 720 fits the bill – this tall, ported floor-stander drips quality in a decidedly understated manner.

These electronics do not only complement each other in cosmetic appearance; equal harmony is present under the hood. The Philips-based Forseti Drive uses a centre-mounted tray, while multiple regulated power supplies draw juice from an overkill high-current main power supply. The



player sports a remote control. There are both balanced and single-ended digital outputs, plus a 'low-jitter' clock.

The DAC claims to use a pair of 20-bit Delta-Sigma processors per channel, allied to a system of multiple resynchronisation to keep the processing clean.

The APD15A mkII integrated amp, rated at 100 Watts, is a heavyweight box with alloy side-bars and front panel, plus gold-coloured cheeks and knobs.

The German-built Magnat

speaker is excellent value for money. Using the classic D'Appolito layout, the 720 sports a 20mm ceramic tweeter flanked by two 165mm aluminium-coned mid-bass units. At the rear is a huge port and a quartet of the largest binding posts known to man. Partner this with a 28mm thick MDF front baffle, a suggested four Ohm impedance and a claimed 90dB efficiency, and you have a speaker that makes its presence felt. Henley recommends you use this set-up with Ortofon SPK 200 or SPK 300

speaker cable.

Magnat refers to the range as 'speakers with bite', and I can confirm this is an accurate representation. It does not sound fierce but the sound is bold. There is loads of bass, yet it is still tuneful and easy to follow.

Here you have a set-up that produces energetic, powerful sound with precise imagery, rock-hard solidity, but still some grace and verve. If you like the looks, chances are you'll love the sound!

Henley Designs ☎ (01491) 834700

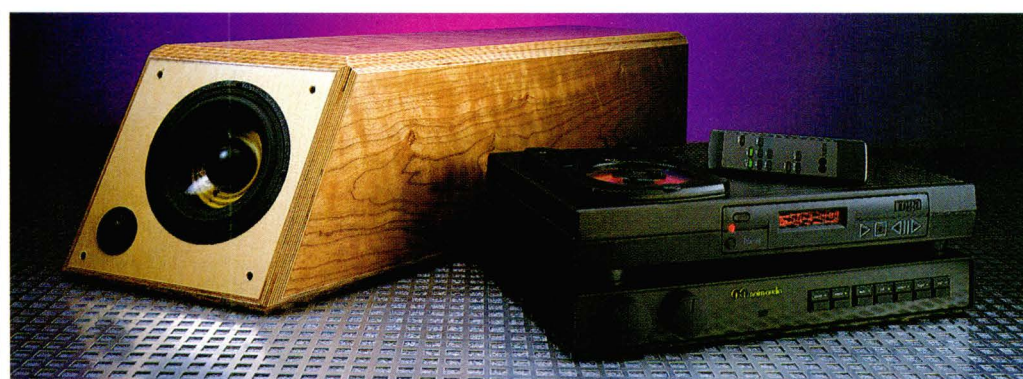
## REGA/NAIM/SHAHINIAN ISSUE 179

Although we've arranged some glorious hi-fi weddings in the past, sometimes our combinations may prove hard to find within one dealer's showroom. So, this month, we've gone straight to that Mecca of hi-fi shops, Grahams Hi-Fi in North London. "Find us a system that sounds great, but for a maximum of £2,000," we said.

It began with an Arcam Alpha 8 CD player (£520) and amp (£360), hooked up to a pair of Acoustic Energy AE109 speakers (£350). Cables were Linn Analogue interconnects (£40 per metre) and single-wired runs of Cable Talk 4.1 (£4.25 per metre).

My initial reaction was mixed – the sound was powerful, bold and dynamic, but too heavy and broody. So out went the Alpha 8 CD player in favour of the Rega Planet (£450).

This was a step in the right direction, thanks to a less cluttered midband and more pristine high-frequency tones. But I still wasn't satisfied, so we went back to the Arcam CD and experimented with



**"...Once I'd heard the sound of the Rega/ Naim/Harbeth combination, there was no way I'd spend less than this amount..."**

different amps, climbing the Arcam upgrade ladder to the Alpha 9 amp (£500). Another improvement, but still there was too much inky-black darkness, so there was nothing left but to change the speakers.

My host returned the system to its original all-Alpha-8 state, and substituted the Musical Technology Harrier SE (£425) at the end of the chain. This was cleaner in the bass, but the Naim Intro that followed sounded thin and brash. Then we tried the Harbeth HL-K6 (£1,049), a large, stand-mounted classical monitor, which I thought to be very honest and sophisticated.

By now, the CD and amplifier were clearly the limiting factors, so back came the Planet, this time to stay. Hitherto its charms had been hidden beneath a veil of darkness, but with the Harbeth speakers, the

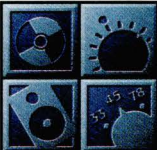
Rega's naturalness shone through.

On the amp front, the first to return was the Alpha 9, and again the Harbeth speakers revealed its talent. We also tried the Naim Nait 3R (£760), which took me up to the £2,000 mark. With this combination, images were wide and deep; the sound was packed with detail. It was a superb-sounding rig that I would be happy to own.

We then decided to bust the budget by substituting a pair of Shahinian Compass (£1,395). They seemed to cut to the musical quick, leaving behind all artificiality so often experienced in hi-fi.

Grahams Hi-Fi ☎ (0171) 226 5500





# SYSTEMS

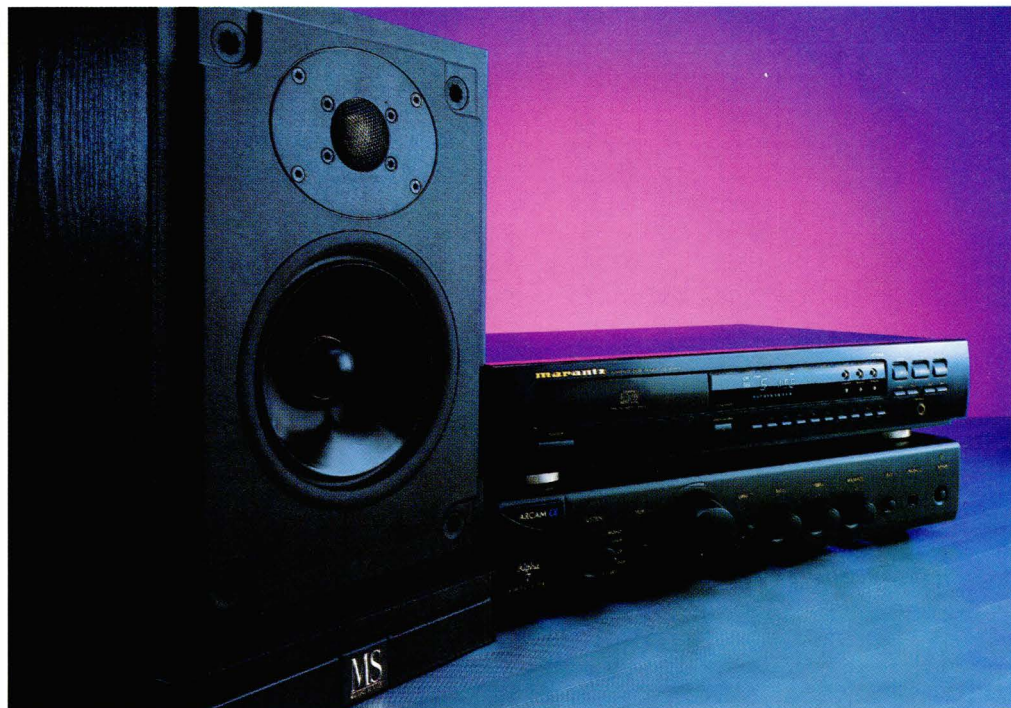
## MARANTZ/ARCAM/ MORDAUNT-SHORT ISSUE 180

**R**ather than relying on a single stockist's hi-fi suggestion, here's a rig you should be able to find in the majority of specialist shops. With a budget of £750 for the core components of CD, amp and speaker it's the kind of system you could buy if you walked into a shop tomorrow.

This trio is made up of old friends. At the helm is the ubiquitous Marantz CD-67mkII CD player, Rec in HFC 179 and priced at £250. Our amplifier is another favourite, the £260 Arcam Alpha 7 integrated amplifier (HFC 167).

In this most instant of systems, our speakers had to be the £200 Mordaunt-Short MS20i Pearl.

What is that core sound? It combines the Marantz CD player's briskness with the warm yet effusive sound of the Arcam amp. The Mordaunt-Short factor in this equation adds a healthy dose of bass oomph, yet settles down sensibly on more restrained musical styles. There's no doubt this system leans towards modern material like the Propellerheads, but at the same time it plays lyrically with John Coltrane's sax



and Glenn Gould's old joanna.

I cannot conceal the fact that the sound gets a bit lost and muddy when sailing through big orchestral swells, and the imagery, though competent, would not give cause for alarm to the average Quad ESL-63. But performance is credible when you consider the

price; and that's easy to forget when a system sounds this good!

For the same amount of money, you could buy an integrated system crammed with features such as an MD recorder, Dolby Pro-Logic processor, funky graphical displays and the like. But none will sound as good as this rig. Best of

all, it can play loud with style. Not non-stop-wake-the-street-slammin'-techno loud, I grant you; but for those after-the-pub-impress-your-mates-with-The-Prodigy blasts, it's a killer.

**Arcam** ☎ (01223) 203203

**Marantz** ☎ (01753) 680868

**Mordaunt-Short** ☎ (01705) 498866

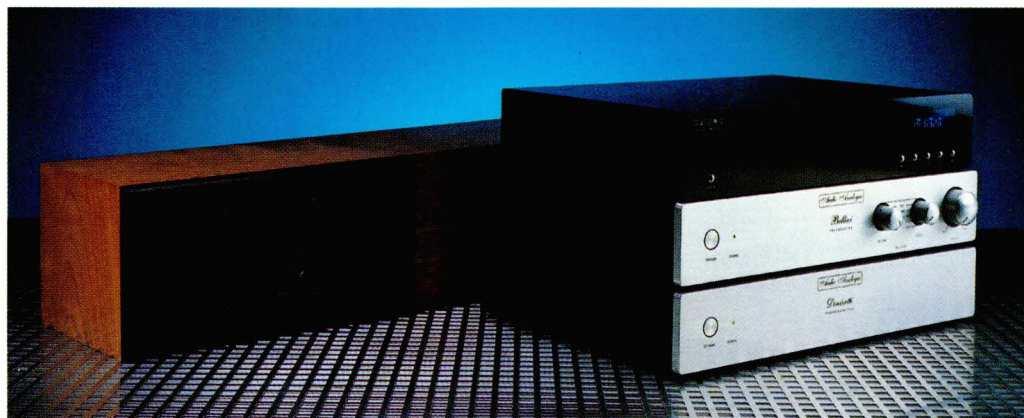
## HELIOS/AUDIO ANALOGUE/ ATC ISSUE 182

**W**alrus Systems is situated deep in the heart of London's chi-chi belt. And its product roster has been designed to reflect the upmarket locale. You'll find no regular bastions of British dealers. Instead, shelves are stacked with upmarket wares, assembled into systems with care and obvious attention.

On HFC's visit to Walrus, the plan was to assemble a £3,500 single-source system.

The heart of the system was the French-made, £1,250 Helios Model 1 CD player. Joining the Model 1 was a pair of Italian Audio Analogue amplifiers – the £475, phono-equipped Bellini and the £575, 60-Watts-output Donizetti power amplifier.

Rounding off the system was a pair of slim, floorstanding ATC speakers, the £1,200 SCM A7T. With comparatively inexpensive Sonic Link cables for hook-up, the total system cost strays just onto



the wrong side of the £3.5k limit.

My initial concern was that, on paper, the ATC speakers would require about 200 Watts more power than the Donizetti power amp could muster; but in practice these fears proved unfounded. Unlike ATC's domesticated studio monitors, like the SCM 10 and SCM 20, the SCM A7T does not require behemoth amps to produce the uncolored, crisp, honest performance for which studio monitors are revered.

When combined the Walrus way, all three components in this system seemed to give off their best. The Helios CD player contributed brightness and excitement, to which the Audio Analogue pre/power gave body and warmth, and all was displayed on a wide-open soundstage with pin-sharp clarity by the ATC speakers.

This package displayed the unique ability to offer high-end refinement one minute and grass-roots earthiness the next, just as

the music required. Best of all, this system sounds innately 'right'. I could have sat in front of it for hours. The Walrus combination gives you both the big picture and the brush-strokes.

So despite the fact that Walrus Systems is a new kid on the block, its system-building abilities prove it has audiophile experience way beyond its tender years. We recommend you pay a visit if you're at a loose end in the West End!

**Walrus Systems** ☎ (0171) 724 7224





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# SYSTEMS



## MARANTZ/UNISON/ GRAAF/AUDIOSTATIC ISSUE 183

Usually, we approach a hi-fi dealer with specific price guidelines and tastes. For this month's excursion, however, we felt our system-building approach should reflect the diversity of wares available in the Audio Consultant's showroom, and the 'funky' nature of its location – it's based in the 'arty' bit of Camden Town. So, we asked its proprietor, Steven Harper, to assemble a system based on smart design and neat lines. The sound quality was important, of course, but not as vital as the aesthetics.

To this end, there was one part of the system that would be impossible to change – the Audiostatic £2,500 DCI electrostatic loudspeakers. These elegant Dutch panels are tall, thin full-range designs, very sensitive to their surroundings and the amplifier which drives them.

We had two power amp options that worked well with the DCI. The best match of all was with the £3,500 Conrad-Johnson Premier 11A tube power amplifier. These made rich, smooth and bold sounds that gave the speakers some dynamic range. The other option, the Italian Graaf GM20 OTL (output transformerless) power amplifier (£2,750), was less successful, but made some extremely magical sounds and looked distinctive enough to count by our criteria.

In the real world, the Graaf would not be the first choice for the DCIs, a pair of them – or the more expensive GM200 OTL – would have the sort of grunt to cope with the panels. As the latter

“...as this system was designed to be a 'looker' as much as a 'sounder', the Marantz, Unison and Graaf, was an obvious choice...”

was not available I could only dream about the synergy twist serious OTL and electrostatic.

The two main options for pre-amplifiers were the £1,990 Conrad-Johnson PV12AL and the £1,750 Unison Research Mystery One. Both products are line only, both do without remote control and both use valves. The differences between the two are

simple: the Mystery One looks fabulous in its curvy wood finish and sounds warm and soft, while the more conventional gold-fronted Conrad-Johnson is a more natural-sounding superstar. The Conrad-Johnson is the more dynamic of the two, but there is not a great deal between the two in out-right performance terms.

Central to the system's performance is the CD player, and once again we had two options available, with one hailing from Virginia. The £1,695 Conrad-Johnson DF-2 and £1,100 Marantz CD-17 KI Signature players share Philips internals and a few other features aside. Once again, the Conrad-Johnson follows the family sound of smoothness and refinement, while the Marantz is, not

surprisingly, a more crisp, bright and up-front player that matches well with the rest of the system.

Cables were all Cardas Quadlink, from the £200/m interconnects to the £59/m speaker cables. This stuff sounds excellent, managing to enrich and satisfy.

Both versions of the Audiostatic system clearly excelled. However, as this system was designed to be a 'looker' as much as a 'sounder', the Marantz, Unison and Graaf, system was an obvious choice, but only with the extra power amp – it was clean, open and dynamic, yet had enough grunt to sound coherent with dense material. But the Conrad-Johnson option had the upper-hand for audiophiles.

**The Audio Consultant**  
☎ (0171) 380 0866

## THE SYSTEM COMPONENTS

### CD PLAYER

**MARANTZ CD-17 KI Signature** £1,100  
Popular CD player, 'breathed upon' by Ken Ishiwata. Sounds cool and controlled and will work reasonably well in a wide variety of systems.  
ALTERNATIVES: Conrad-Johnson DF-2 £1,695, Copland CDA-266 £1,199, Meridian 506 £1,100



### PREAMPLIFIER

**UNISON RESEARCH** Mystery One £1,750

Distinctive looking wooden tube preamplifier with a warm (if slightly woolly) sound quality and a relaxed overall tone.

ALTERNATIVES:  
Conrad-Johnson PV-12AL £1,990  
Copland CTA-301 MkII £1,399  
DNM 3C Primus £2,550



### SPEAKERS

**AUDIOSTATIC DCI** £2,500

Tall, thin and elegant floorstanders with full-range electrostatic speaker panels. Very open, thanks to the electrostatic panels and the lack of protection circuits.

ALTERNATIVES:  
Martin-Logan CLS Iiz £4,555  
Quad ESL 63 £3,450  
Sound-Lab Aura £6,490

### POWER AMPLIFIER

**GRAAF GM20** £2,750

20W Output transformerless design sounds remarkably perfect for electrostatics, but two bridged amps are needed to drive speakers properly.

ALTERNATIVES  
Conrad-Johnson Premier 11A £3,500  
Copland CTA505 £2,099

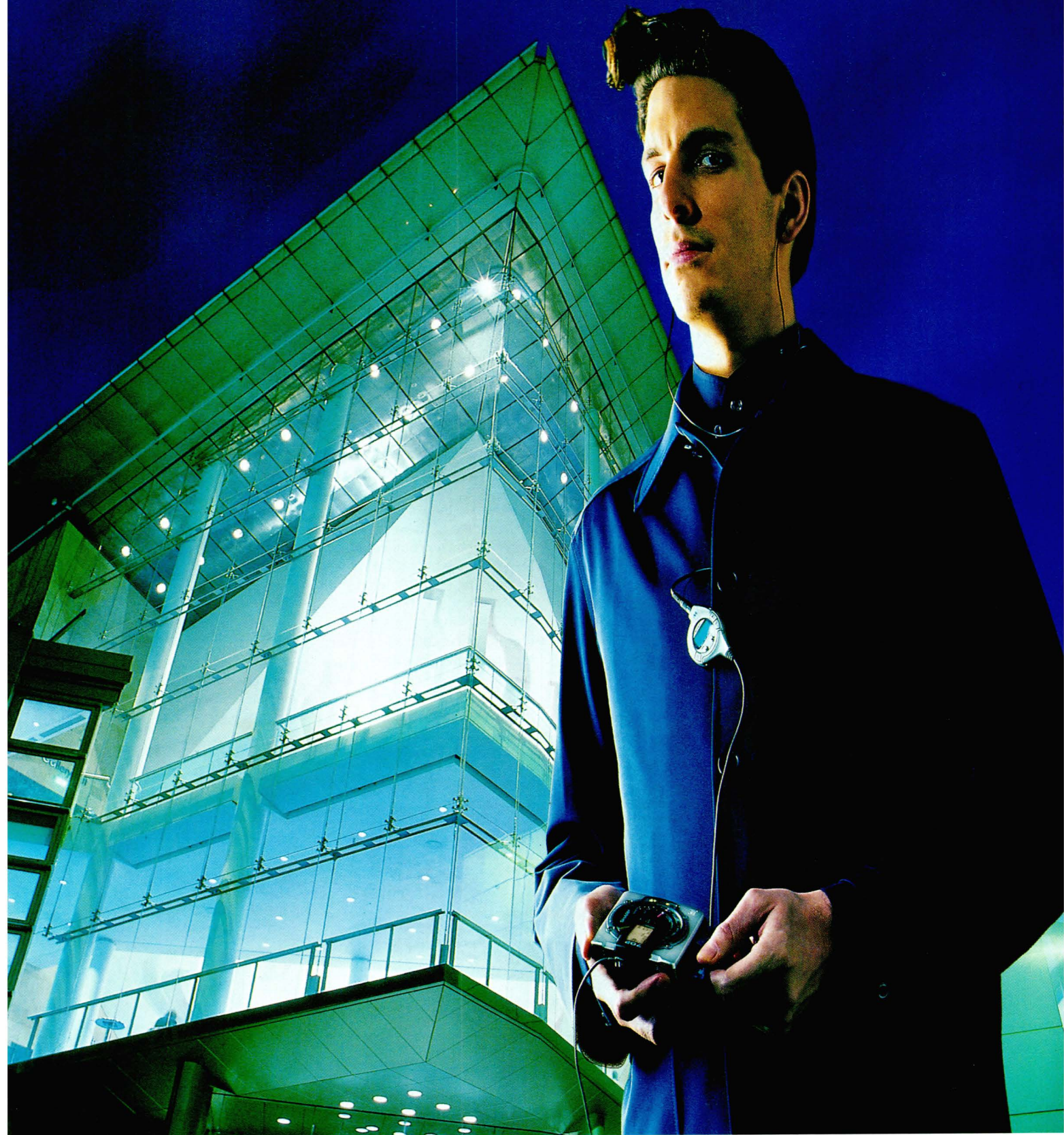


### CABLES & SUPPORTS

Regardless of the electronics, this system rested on the sleek, if slightly Scandinavian-looking Pagode range of supports by the German high-end table makers finite elemento. Cables were from the USA, all made by Cardas Audio and all called Quadlink.



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MD-R1H MKII  
MD-DECK



April 1998



MD-R2H  
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Sept 1998



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June 1998

**T3** ★★★★★

March 1998



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**INNOVATION T3**

Feb 1998

MD-X8H MD/CD  
Mini System  
'Network Audio'

**SHARP**  
digital

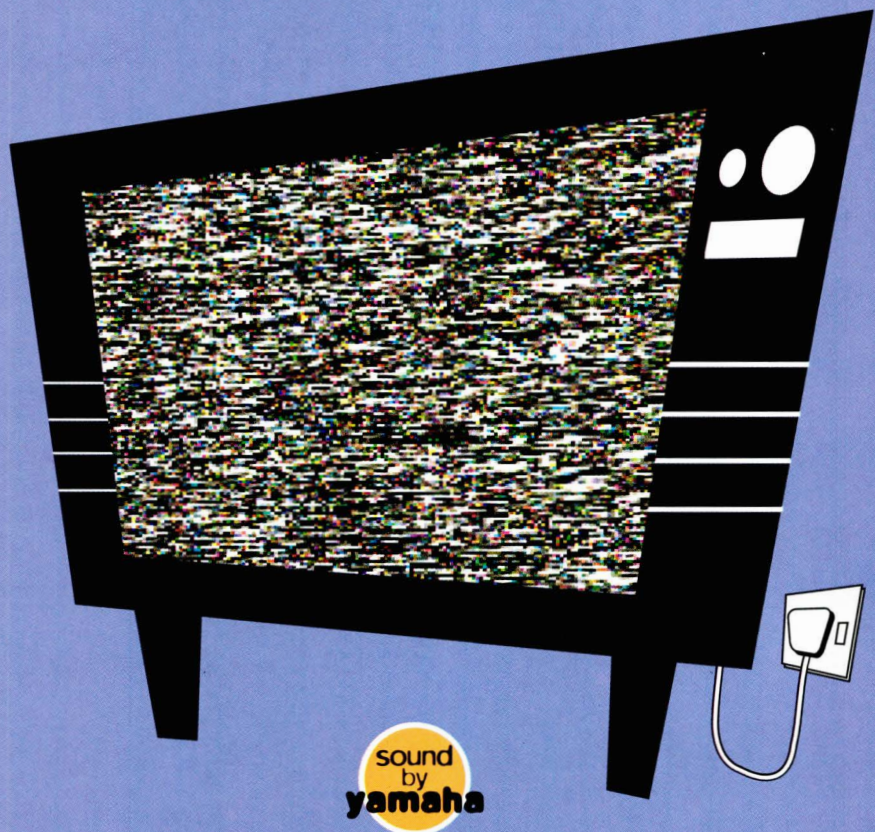
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## QUERY OF THE MONTH

### WORLD OF BASS

 I have been reading *Hi-Fi Choice* for some years now (on and off) and I have to give you credit for the new 'style'. Finally, it seems that even the British have discovered that expensive hi-fi can be very interesting — and that a loudspeaker costing £6,000 (for example) can be called 'well worth the money'. Great! I'm just so tired of reading about all these 'remarkable' speakers for £200 or less...

Talking about loudspeakers — I must ask you about the specification-line: "Bass from (Hz)", in your loudspeaker Directory. What are you really trying to show with that? Please don't tell me that you want to prove that the Tannoy Mercury M2 (£140) gives eight Hz lower bass-extension in 'the real world' than the B&W Nautilus 802 (£6,000)?

If you say that the M2's bass goes down to 25 Hz, then I want to know: Is it by -6 or -12dB? Is it in-room? Or have you just copied the manufacturer's specifications and have no idea at all about what the company did when it got the result? I really hope not.

*JK Replies...* The 'bass-from' figure is a -6dB in-room measurement made by Paul Messenger in his listening room. While the size and shape of Paul's room will influence this figure, the fact that all the speakers were measured in the same environment means that the figures are comparable. However, like Watts per channel with amplifiers, a 'bass-from' figure is no indication of quality, just quantity. The degree of control with which a speaker can reproduce music at very low frequencies is far more important.



● B&W Nautilus 802.

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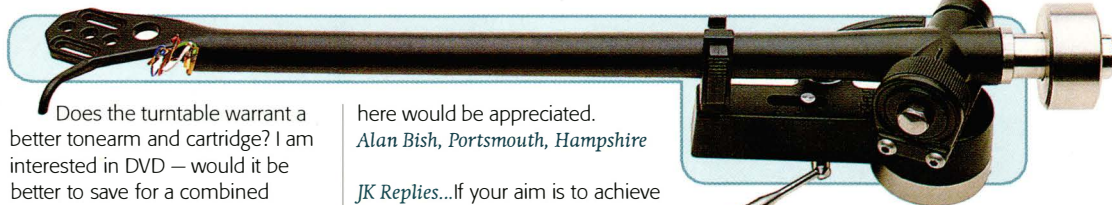
Every issue, the reader whose letter is our Query of the Month, will receive one of these stylish, leather CD wallets, courtesy of those lovely people at Jamo Loudspeakers.



## BARRAGE TACTICS

 I am currently planning to update or replace my old hi-fi system which comprises: Onkyo A8057 amplifier, Onkyo TARW66 cassette deck, Philips CD460 CD player, Jamo D5E speakers, Acoustic Research EB101 turntable and Audio Technica cartridge.

I listen predominantly to CDs then albums and occasionally cassettes. My musical taste is mainly heavy rock/metal along with a lot of indie and some classical. I have a planned budget of around £1,500 and wondered if you could advise on the following points?



● Rega RB300 tonearm.

Does the turntable warrant a better tonearm and cartridge? I am interested in DVD — would it be better to save for a combined CD/DVD player? I am also considering purchasing an MD player instead of a cassette player, would this be a good move now?

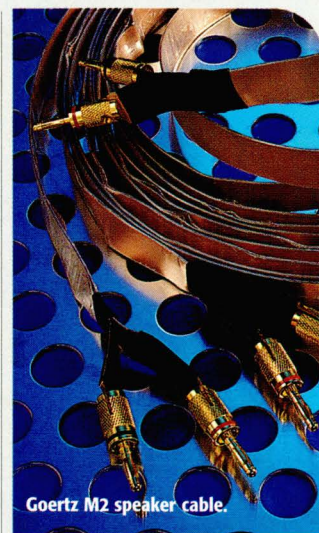
Do I need to replace everything or can I just get some of the items serviced? If all-out replacement is the best option, what would you recommend? I will also need new interconnects, speaker cables, system stand and speaker stands, so any pointers

here would be appreciated.


*Alan Bish, Portsmouth, Hampshire*

*JK Replies...* If your aim is to achieve an all-round improvement in sound quality, the all-out replacement approach seems most appropriate for the key components, ie amp, CD player and speakers. We would suggest you concentrate funds in this area before going on to others.

However, yes, the EB101 would improve with a better arm such as the Rega RB300, and as far as DVD is concerned, it would be better to



Goertz M2 speaker cable.

 Perhaps you can answer a few questions I have regarding my 'music boxes', which consist of a Sugden A48III amp, a Marantz CD63III KI Sig and Epos ES11 loudspeakers. My cables are: MIT 2 Terminator interconnect and Monster speaker cable, bi-wired. (Epos on Target and the rest on Quadraspire Q4.)

My question is: how I can get more out of this set-up? I tried various speaker cables like Siltech (which costs the earth), and also a pair of MIT Terminators. The MIT gives extreme detail, and an enormous soundstage, but has too much bass for my tastes. The Siltech also has good detail and sounds slightly warmer than MIT.

How can I improve the system? Perhaps it's the amp which needs replacing; it's quite an old banger but still performs well. Would an MF X-A1 or Roksan Caspian do a better job? I'm very fond of my speakers, though, and would prefer not to replace them.

*Jan Zandvoort, Noorwijk, The Netherlands*

*JK Replies...* Not being all that familiar with the Sugden A48III it's hard

to say what sort of upgrade you would achieve with either of the fine amps you mention, but it would be surprising if it didn't prove worthwhile.

In many respects, however, all this system needs is some refinement outside of the core components. We'd suggest Goertz M2 speaker cable, Acoustic Precision Black Box mains refining for the CD player, and a Seismic Sink for each piece of electronics.

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**POWER SHORTAGE**



I have original Linn Kan speakers on Atacama SE24 stands with QED Qudos cable, an Arcam Alpha 7 CD player with a QED Qnect 2 interconnect and a Mission Cyrus One amplifier.

I would like to replace the Cyrus with either an Audiolab 8000S, Cyrus IIIi, Audio Analogue Puccini SE, Linn Majik, or Naim Nait 3R. Alternatively I could go for the Creek OBH12 preamp with power amp. If this is the best route then what power amp would be suitable? My budget is up to about £1,000.

I listen to a mixture of music but no heavy rock, and I like a very clear sound, hence my choice of Linn Kans. Can you please advise me on which amplifier would be most suitable in your opinion?

**Julian Naylor, Teddington, Middlesex**

**JK Replies..** You are probably right, the Cyrus might well be struggling to control the Kans, and something

with extra grunt should prove more entertaining. There is a slight danger that the extra resolution might reveal shortcomings in the source, but that's the price you pay for progress.

The integrated amps you list are generally not capable enough and we'd recommend you consider the AVI S2000 MI and Roksan Caspian integrateds, or Moth's 30 Series active preamp and monoblocks, if you fancy the separates avenue.

◀ **AVI S2000 MI.**



**BETTER DAYS**



I am intending to renew my system in the very near future and was

wondering if you could possibly assist me.

I presently have a pair of Castle Richmond II speakers (circa 1979!) which I am still very happy with, and a Technics SL-PG580A CD player. Amplification is supplied by an aged Hacker GAR600 combination which, sadly, has seen better days.

I'm looking initially to purchase an amplifier and, having only a small budget for this purpose, was looking at the NAD C320 or Cambridge Audio A3i as likely contenders.

Could you advise if these components would be a compatible set-up and, if not, possibly suggest something more suitable?

**J Douglas McMann, Lumsden, Aberdeenshire**

◀ **Cambridge Audio A500 amplifier.**

**JK Replies..A Hi-Fi Choice**

Recommendation from issue 15, the Castle Richmond II is a reasonably sensitive speaker with an average amplifier load, suggesting that a reasonably powerful amp would be appropriate. The Cambridge you mention would appear to fit the bill but it might pay to hang on for our budget amp review (January 1999 issue) out next month. In this we will be pitting the NAD C320 against Cambridge's new A500, a £200 amp that presumably supersedes the A3i, and eight other budget options.

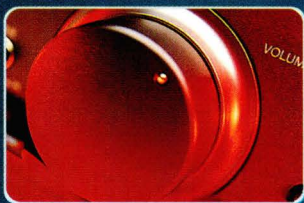
It would seem that you've been able to survive with your Hacker for quite a while, so it should suffice for one more month.

**HINTS & TIPS**



Quite a few modern amplifiers offer two identical

sets of loudspeaker outputs, principally for those who want to run a second set of speakers in another room in addition to the main pair. Since no distinction is made between these two outputs, most people probably use the terminals marked A for their main speakers, and terminals B for the second set. But it's worth listening carefully to both sets of



outputs, especially if the B terminals sit beneath set A and are closer to the amplifier's mother board. Very often the B terminals sound slightly better than the A terminals because the former have a slightly shorter signal path, soldering directly to the circuit board. You might be surprised at how much difference this makes once your system is set up. So, listen to both sets of output terminals before deciding which to use for your main speakers.

**A GOOD BALANCING ACT**



I am preparing to upgrade my NAD 7225PE receiver to a better integrated amp. I have a Marantz CD63SE and B&W P4 speakers (Audioquest type 4 speaker cable and Tara Labs Prism 22 interconnect), and in the near future I want to add a turntable. I am thinking about an integrated amp in the £300-£500 price range, including a phono stage.

I listen mostly to classical and some jazz music. Good balance, space, and resolution of detail is more important to me than bass extension. Looking at your recommended products I was thinking of: Marantz PM66 KI Signature, Musical Fidelity A2 and Audio Analogue Puccini. Which amp would you recommend to go with my speakers?

I am also worried that the system will be a bit unbalanced and it would expose some obvious weakness in the CD player. What do you think?

I live in the Netherlands and I

have access to almost any brand but it is hard to find and compare them in the same shop. Also, my CD player has been discontinued, and although B&W seems to be a popular brand here, I haven't come across the P4.

**Tamas Kovacs, Leiden, The Netherlands**

**JK Replies..** It's always difficult making a piecemeal upgrade from a good starter system to the next significant step up the ladder. But you've started so you've got to finish.

The B&Ws require a reasonable

amount of muscle to get them going, but not just raw power. You need the musically-coherent grunt offered by the following: Arcam Alpha 9, Marantz PM-66 KI Signature, Mission Cyrus SL or Musical Fidelity XA-1. All but the Marantz, however, are devoid of a phono stage, but consider adding a good standalone unit such as the Musical Fidelity X-LP or Rotel RQ970BX.


As for the CD player, we suggest you get the amp and see whether the results warrant further upgrades, in all likelihood you should enjoy what you've got until the budget has recovered.



▶ **Marantz PM-66 KI Signature amplifier.**



TURN, TURN, TURN

 I would be grateful to hear your opinion on the following selection of turntables: PT TOO, PT Export GTI, Michell Gyrodec with QC. My tonearm is an SME IV and the cartridge an Ortofon Rohmann.

The rest of my system consists of: Audio Research LS-5 preamp, Linn Linto phono stage, Audio Research VTM-120 monoblock power amps and Audio Physic Virgo speakers. I would appreciate any other ideas that you may have. Nikos Papaioannou via e-mail

JK Replies. All three of the decks you mention are very decent options and would suit the arm and cartridge you have. Which you go for really does come down to

taste. Although all three are ostensibly very neutral the Michell is stronger in the bass while the Pinks have fabulous midrange. Alternatives that deserve attention include: Roksan's Xerxes 10 which does a fine job of timing; and Nottingham Analogue's Spacedeck, a good steady performer at a reasonable price.

Looking at the rest of your system, however, we would be inclined to urge you upwards to something in the extremely tasty league. SME's Model 20.2 comes to mind and would of course provide the definitive platform for your SME IV arm.

◆ SME's Model 20.2 turntable lies in the extremely tasty league when paired with either SME IV or V tonearms.

ROCK, POP AND DISCO

 So far, my system is as follows: Talk Electronics Storm 2P amp, JM Lab Megane Carat speakers and QED Qnect 2 interconnect cable. I need a recommendation for a CD player and some speaker cable that would go well with this system as a whole.

Basically, I would prefer the system to have clean treble and punchy bass with exceptional midrange. My music tastes include rock, pop and disco. Eddy via e-mail

JK Replies..We're not familiar with your speakers but you appear to be on


◆ Cyrus dAD3Q: a good all-round CD player.

the right track with the amplifier you have selected. Mind you, who in their right mind wouldn't want clean treble, punchy bass and exceptional midrange?

Luckily, there are a few CD players that should be able to provide this, notably the Acurus ACD11, Arcam Alpha 8SE, Cyrus dAD3Q or the Sony CDP-X3000ES. As for speaker cable, if you can stretch to it, some Goertz M1 would be very nice, but otherwise we would suggest Straight Wire Quartet or Hitachi LC-OFC.



COMING IN FROM THE COLD

 My current system is as follows: Sony CDP-XE510 (with Cambridge Pacific interconnect), Kenwood 3020SE amp and Sony SS-176E speakers. I find some music sounds very 'hard' and 'cold' with no transparency.

I was considering a few changes for around £500 — the thought of a Marantz CD-63mkII Kl Sig or a Pioneer PD-S505 Precision appeals. Will these two complement my system?


I would also like to change the cables to vdH D102III with some DNM LSCB500 speaker cable. I am hoping that these changes will breathe a bit more life into the system and substantiate the bass. Paul Heading, Beaconsfield, Bucks

JK Replies... Unless it's the speakers, which we have never tested, it's hard to see where the hard, cold element is coming from. We found

the CD player to be bland, and the amp is enthusiastic but not brash, so it could be an unfortunate combination of components and cables. Either way, a better CD player would perk things up a bit and both of your choices will provide this, but the Pioneer is the more spatially capable of the two.

The vdH interconnect should work but the DNM speaker cable might encourage the symptoms you are trying to avoid. Try Straightwire Quartet instead.

HINTS & TIPS

 Whichever your main source of music — be it compact disc, tape or tuner — it makes sense to give it the best sounding input on your amplifier. Although ostensibly all line inputs on an amplifier should offer identical performance, often this isn't so. Because of board layout, some inputs may have a shorter more direct route, and this can greatly influence sound quality. Many modern amplifiers have a dedicated CD input carefully designed to take the signal via the cleanest shortest path — thereby giving the best sound quality. So don't just assume that all line inputs are equal! Perhaps surprisingly, the best sounding input is often tape monitor, because it by-passes the main input selector. So listen to your principle source through the various line inputs offered by your amplifier or pre-amp, and choose the one that sounds best.



Pioneer PD-S505 Precision,

a good spatially capable CD player.



**ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY**



I have an Arcam Alpha 8SE CD player, an Arcam Alpha 9 amp and some ageing KEFs which are in need of replacement. With a view to bi-amping the system with an Arcam 9P when funds allow, could you suggest some speakers to suit?

My room measures 5.6m by 4m and is fairly heavily furnished. The speakers are placed well out of the room corners but

toed in towards my favourite chair. I listen mainly to rock and am looking for something that will give me deep bass but at fairly modest volume levels.

At the end of your July/August edition you mention Arcam Alpha 10/10P and 8SE CD driving the new Kelly KT2. Would the KT2 or KT3 be suitable? I had been thinking about Castle Harlech or Monitor Audio MA703 PMC as a possible replacement until I read David Vivian's article.

*Paul Mulry, Beckenham, Kent*

**JK Replies...** If deep bass is your bag then the Kelly KT3 and Castle Harlech are the two speakers on your list that are most likely to fit the bill, but they are very different beasts. The Castle is the more refined of the two and works very nicely with acoustic material; the Kelly on the other hand is more dynamic with a relaxed balance but a propensity for playing loud. Both designs would suit your room, but the Castle is the more easily driven of the two and would be happy with the Alpha 9 on its own.

◉ Castle Harlech: works well with the Alpha 9.



**SOMETHING BORROWED...**



My present system comprises some very old, some very new and some in-between components, namely: Cambridge R50 speakers (c1970), Sony JE510 MD, Dual 505-2 turntable, Musical Fidelity A1 and Arcam Alpha + CD player. Speaker cables are Monster 16-2 and interconnects are Audioquest Turquoise.

Having only recently started reading your magazine, I have already tweaked my speakers by putting them on spikes, renewed the cartridge and improved the interconnects, all of which have made an appreciable difference. I now want to see where else I can make improvements.

My partner, for instance, would dearly love to see the departure of the speakers as they are so big! However, the room is 18 foot square with a high ceiling and I think floorstanders are appropriate — perhaps you can suggest some options. The other area where I feel a change may be a good idea is the turntable. I listen to

quite a lot of vinyl and continue to buy old and new LPs. What would work well with my system?

*Piers Warner, Sevenoaks, Kent*

**JK Replies...** In a room that big you clearly need something with some air moving capacity — presumably the area where your Cambridge units have scored until now.

Combine this factor with the low power of the A1 amp and there's a clear need for a decent-sized, though more elegant and efficient speaker.

These parameters are met with ease by the JPW Ruby 4 at £999 and the Roksan OJ3X at £1,195, although, having recently encountered a pair of slightly modified R50s you may find that a figure closer to their notional cost today, about £3-4,000, will be necessary to make a complete upgrade.

As for a turntable, you're right, an upgrade would bring rewards. Try and hear a Michell Gyrodek, Nottingham Analogue Spacedeck or Rega Planar 9. All three are capable of revolutionising your record collection.

◉ JPW Ruby 4.



**HINTS & TIPS**

The placement of loudspeakers in a room, and where you sit in relation to them, can profoundly influence the perceived quality of sound. For example, positioning the speakers so they're close to rear walls and/or room corners will tend to reinforce low frequency output. Some speakers are designed to work best when used in close proximity to a rear wall, and will sound thin and bass light when used out into the room.

Conversely, other speakers sound heavy and boomy if placed close to walls, and need plenty of space around them to produce a natural tonal balance.

Obviously, you should follow the manufacturer's recommendations. But don't be afraid to experiment; it may be that your room is unusual acoustically, and calls for something very different to the norm.



**PHWOARR! WHAT A PAIR...**



I've long heard how well the Jamo Concert 8 speakers sing. I would like to obtain a pair to use with a duo of Musical Fidelity X-A200 monoblocks which drive 200 Watts into eight Ohms.

Would these speakers be able to handle my two powerful power amps as the maximum power rating of the Jamos is 150 Watts with a four-Ohm load?  
*SC Lim, Liverpool*

**JK Replies...** Matching speakers and amplifiers is a more subtle matter than finding units with the same Wattage — given the price of Watts these days that's no bad thing. You have to look at the real output of the amp, often better described as the amount of amperes it can put out, and the real load presented by a speaker, described in our lab tests as ease of drive.

What this boils down to in nearly all instances is that there's

no such thing as too much power. The opposite — insufficient power — can, however, be a problem. Driving a speaker with an inadequate amplifier can result in distortion, and taken to extremes can be harmful to both amp and speaker. Having

a surfeit of power means that the amp never has to struggle and retains control of a speaker. The golden rule is if a speaker sounds like it's in trouble, ie distorting, turn it down. If you want to listen that loud, buy PA!

**Jamo Concert 8.**



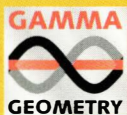




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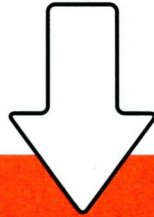
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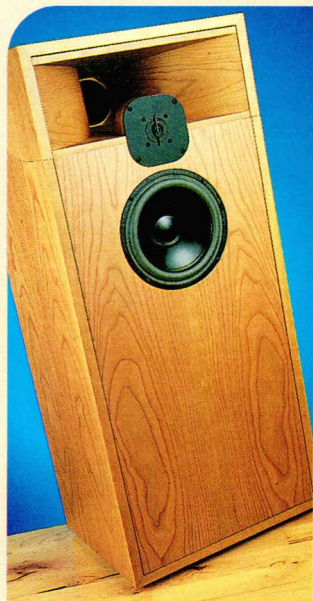
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## BACK IN THE GAME



As a returnee to the world of hi-fi I was dismayed to find out that my late '80s/early '90s kit is apparently obsolete and its makers no longer in business. I have a Voyd/Cyalene/Milltek Olympia record player with an Audio Innovations Series 500 amp (triode coupled with Border Patrol PSU), Marantz CD94 (Trichord Clock 2), Ixos 104 and vdH CS 122 cables with Impulse H6 speakers.



◊ The Eclipse Statement impressed IMH in *Hi-Fi Choice* 183.

It's all pretty good but I have been playing with speaker upgrades on and off, and would like to improve the imaging of my system while achieving a natural airy, easy-going sound with plenty of bass and sparkle. I would like floorstanders that are happy next to a wall/corner and have a budget of £2,500 plus trade-in.

The names Klipsch, Hørning and Living Voice have been suggested but I am open to other options. *Greg Guilding, Lancaster*

*JK Replies...* A bit of a classic system and one which we have many happy memories of, but not one that couldn't be improved in the area you have identified. However, before trading the Impulses in you might be amused at what can be achieved with some Electrofluidics Monolith 20/20 speaker cable. Many tube users have been enthused by the improvements that this wonderful stuff brings to all aspects of sound quality but especially imaging.

As for new speakers, the brands you mention, and the last one in particular, are a good place to start. LV had its new Avatar at the recent Hi-Fi Show and it sounded very promising. Alternatively, consider the Eclipse Statement that Jimmy Hughes was listening to in *HFC* 183 — this is an Impulse-style horn with some very attractive qualities and stylish appearance at £2,225.

## STARTING POINTS



My 18-year-old Technics set-up needs replacement on a budget of £1,000-£1,500. Hence I bought a couple of your recent issues to catch up a little on current modern technology.

What do you think, as a starting point, of the combination of a Denon TU-425 tuner, DCD-635 CD player and a PMA-350SE amp combined with B&W 602 speakers for use in a room 24ft x 19ft with a diet of classical music? I've also considered the DCD-835 — what else do you suggest?

Which cables and stand would suit the Denon system or the one you think might be preferable? And, are there any new products about to appear on the market that could be worth waiting for?

*EM Godbold, Southwold, Suffolk*

*JK Replies...* You appear to have picked a system based on our recommendations, which is as good a place to start as you can get. On paper at least it looks like a decent match, although the speakers may need a bit more power to give of their best. Alternative electronics to audition would be Cambridge's A31 amp and CD4SE CD player or Sony's TA-F448BE amp and the Teac CDP-3450SE CD player. There are a few other loudspeaker choices that warrant attention, in particular the Castle Isis, Mission 750LE and Heybrook Heylios.

You can find our cable and stand recommendations in the Directory, but in the case of the former let the dealer demonstrate their preference as cables can be used for fine tuning, and suit some systems better than others.

## ◊ TEAC CDP-3450SE CD player.



## FRUSTRATED OF KUALA LUMPUR



My big question is: am I being a total plonker? Or am I missing some fundamental point?

My system includes: Linn LP12/Ittok LV II/Dynavector 10X, Meridian 500 Transport/566 DAC (Illuminati — transport to DAC, Sonic Link Violet — DAC to pre-amp) Naim NAC 82/Naim NAP 250/2 HI-CAPS (Naim cables) Martin Logan SL3 on Sonus Faber plinths, with Quadraspire support.

My living room is about nine meters long, six wide and about eight high at the speaker end and three meters high at the 'seating' end. The speakers are about three meters apart and four meters away from the listening position. They are sited about a meter from the rear wall and toed in slightly.

I recently changed the speakers from Sonus Faber Minima Amators, primarily because they sounded good but strained, as if they could not cope with the signal produced by the NAP 250. In

the shop the Logans sounded very good on a similar set-up, although with a Naim CD2 as the source (I had a CD2 pre-Logan but could not handle its up-front nature, hence the change to Meridian).

Now the problem is that the sound is not very involving. There appears to be a lack of focus and the base is muddy and lumpy-sounding. It is distinctly better on simple acoustic recordings, particularly on LP.

It can sound good, but it never makes my hair stand up. Frankly, I'm a bit tired of this quest, I just want to get there, wherever 'there' is! *Tony Horrell — Frustrated of Kuala Lumpur*

*JK Replies...* At first we thought that you had gone astray while trying to balance source and loudspeaker, the sweet Martin-Logans needing a more gritty front end

than the Meridian, but then again your LP12 is lively enough so it rather looks as though the panels are not really your bag.

The answer probably lies in a more gripping loudspeaker system, but not one that gives up too many of the qualities you like in the Martin-Logans. One speaker that lives up to this high demand is B&W's Nautilus 802, but at £6,000 that may not be appropriate. It would, however, be interesting to investigate one of the smaller models in the range, for instance the 803. This incorporates many of the bigger model's components but at a lower aesthetic and economical cost.

◊ B&W Nautilus 803.



## HINTS &amp; TIPS



Is it good practise to choose interconnects and speaker cables from the same manufacturer? Hopefully, doing so should ensure a certain consistency, maintaining family resemblances. But much depends on the original sound of your system; using several cables with similar characteristics may reinforce specific tonal characteristics and unbalance the sound. For example, take a solid-core cable that sounds lean, tight, and detailed. Putting such a cable between CD player and preamp might provide a worthwhile improvement in terms of extra clarity and articulation. However, having this cable between preamp and power amp, and adding a speaker cable with similar characteristics may over-egg the pudding. Equally it may not; the result might be fabulous — only you can say. The point is, a mix of characteristics is sometimes preferable to a string of similarities; a few pluses and minuses lead to a more balanced end result.



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**1996**  
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**1997**  
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# One of Life's affordable luxuries . . .



## Hi-Fi Choice

(December '96)

Cable Talk Studio 2  
Sound \*\*\*\*\*

## THE VERDICT

▲ Tonally, dynamically and rhythmically a truly first-class cable

▼ Very little to criticise.

Price: £65 (1m pair)

## Home Entertainment

(August '98)

Cable Talk Studio 2  
Verdict \*\*\*\*\*

▲ . . . handles music & video sound with equal aplomb . . .

▼ . . . the cable is excellent & can be used almost anywhere.



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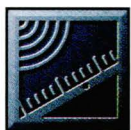
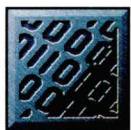
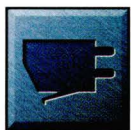
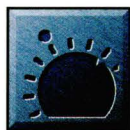
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# BEST BUYYS 1998



The 1998 roll call for *Hi-Fi Choice* Best Buys is upon us! **Paul Messenger** takes you through the plethora of products that helped make 1998 a memorable year for hi-fi.

**H**i-Fi Choice has reviewed literally thousands of hi-fi components since 1975, many receiving our coveted Best Buy and Recommended swing tags. Naturally you can keep up with the hi-fi scene month by month in our normal editions, but if your *Hi-Fi Choice* collection has a few gaps, this bumper Best Buy compilation will fill in the cracks and get you up to speed on the hottest hi-fi of the year.

Our detailed comparative group tests, with full laboratory and unsighted listening test back-up, are respected around the world. Since last January we have found 36 new Best Buys and 81 Recommended products. A load of other features provide the definitive and complete guide to 1998-style hi-fi, but cramming everything into a single edition



of *Hi-Fi Choice* has required some very heavy-handed editing. If you want the full and unexpurgated versions of any particular reviews, take advantage of our Back Issues warehouse and Factsback service (details of both can be found on p 151). Meanwhile, cyberphiles of the world are clicking on our Web site at [www.hifichoice.co.uk](http://www.hifichoice.co.uk) for interactive review searches and chat areas.





## AMPLIFIERS



It's easy to underestimate the importance of the amplifier. In a real sense it's the core of the system, bringing all the sources together and telling the loudspeakers what to do. Although the sonic differences between loudspeakers are more immediately obvious, the differences between amplifiers are usually much more insidious.

The right amplifier will contribute more to your long-term listening pleasure than any other component, so taking the time and trouble to choose wisely is especially important. Our reviews will help you get a feel for the market, appreciate the surprisingly wide range of models available at different prices, and build a shortlist of likely contenders. Then it's down to you, your ears, and your dealer's patience.

## CD PLAYERS



CD technology is still evolving at an impressive rate, and even though some of the emphasis is now turning towards new optical disc formats like DVD, the huge variety of CD software available ensures that the silver disc will remain the cornerstone of home music reproduction for much longer than the foreseeable future.

Prices at the budget end continue to creep downwards (Tangent has a two-box combo for less than £200!), bolstered by the strength of the pound, so our Best Buys tend to be dominated by low-cost players. But a rich variety of Recommended models provide plenty of interesting alternatives, and steadily improving levels of refinement too.



## LOUDSPEAKERS



As usual there are more Best Buy speakers than any other hi-fi components, proving that loudspeakers come in a wider range of sizes, styles (and prices) than the other product categories. Our reviews merely reflect the diversity of the marketplace.

Our lounges are all different shapes and sizes, and that's one obvious reason why our speakers are too. Big speakers work best in big rooms, no question. They can work well in small rooms too, but if your circumstances are more modest, you can get away with something smaller and less expensive. Loudspeakers are very visible parts of the furnishings too, so you can choose from a wealth of attractive wood veneers, albeit at a price.

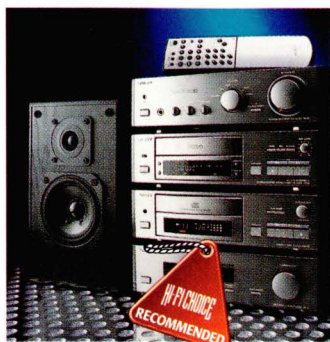
Voicing and balancing a loudspeaker is a very subjective process, and personal taste plays a significant part in any evaluation. Use our citations as a guide, to compile a shortlist of candidates which will suit your requirements. Then take your ears (and a disc or two) down to your local hi-fi shop to make the final choice.



## AND THE REST

Speakers, CD players and amplifiers might represent the core of the modern hi-fi system, but other components are needed to get maximum pleasure from your music. In today's high-resolution systems, the connecting cables which link everything together make an important contribution, as does the support furniture on which the equipment sits.

Such accessories are crucial, but alternative sources like radio tuners, vinyl discs and recorders are another important part of the mix. The arrival of DVD players, MiniDisc and CD recorders are early signs that we're moving into a 'second digital age', with immense new possibilities for the world of hi-fi.



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# AMPLIFIERS

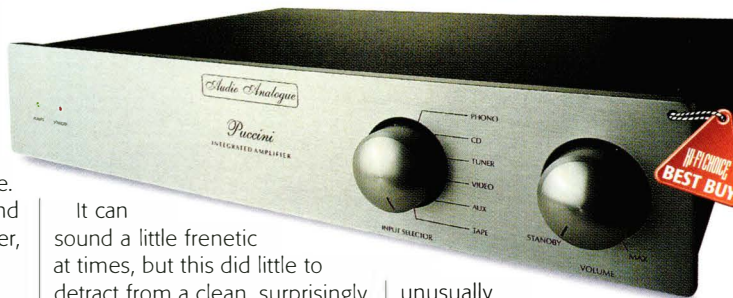
## AUDIO ANALOGUE PUCCINI £450.00

Hand-crafted in Italy, the Puccini SE has been designed along purist lines – no tone controls, speaker switching and so-on. It has the neatest 'standby' switching I have yet encountered, operating when the volume control is set to minimum – just like those old amplifiers with the on/off switches incorporated into their volume controls. Here, however, there is no click, and it's 'standby', not overall power off.

Finish is well above average,

while power output is 40 Watts into eight Ohms (and about 72 Watts into four Ohms). There's an MM/MC phono input option, and the line inputs have 50 Ohms input impedance.

Real sonic electricity at last, and at such a low cost! "Sounds faster, more dramatic and has better dynamics (than previous models)." "Very detailed... it takes a firm grip on the music, and has great flourishes of authority." What few criticisms there were centred on a loss of subtle detail and demeanour.



It can sound a little frenetic at times, but this did little to detract from a clean, surprisingly punchy and articulate presentation. An excellent and quite unexpected star from an improbable quarter, the Puccini is everything a low-cost amplifier should be, including being

unusually well presented. The real secret of its success, however, is its bold, engaging and crystal-clear sound quality.

■ UKD Distribution ☎ (01753) 652669  
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 175

## MUSICAL FIDELITY X-A1 £480.00

This is a low-gadget amplifier, with six line inputs, including a single-tape circuit with tape-monitor switching and 50 Watts per channel into eight Ohms. There's a single set of speaker terminals on the rear, and a simple three-control interface on the front. The power supply is outboard, connected by a long umbilical, and 'pre-out' can drive outboard power amplifiers such as the X-A50 or X-A200. Notable absentees are remote control and a headphone feed.

Build quality is first-rate, thanks to a case extrusion strong enough to stop a tank. The oval case is a close match to the X-Ponents range, which includes a number of

compatible add-on products, among them X-Cans and X-LP for headphones and vinyl replay respectively.

The listening panel findings showed some variation and included criticism of

"lifelessness" and "softness". However, the principal reactions were positive, and over an extended period of listening, I found the X-A1 consistent, open and articulate, with wide dynamics, strong detail and real expressive ability. This is an amplifier that doesn't sit on the music.

Helping to reinforce the mounting evidence that simple circuits often really do result in more musically transparent and expressive results, the X-A1 is was one of the nicest as well as one of the most informative amps on test. It is also powerful beyond its price.

■ Musical Fidelity Ltd ☎ (0181) 900 2999  
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 181



## ORELLE SA-100RX £649.00\* (REMOTE £29\* EXTRA)

The SA-100RX was originally reviewed in *HFC* 178, but the company has since identified and resolved a transformer problem. Orelle has also taken the opportunity to specify Morecroft (as in DNM) slit-foil power supply capacitors. Power output is rated at 75 Watts per channel, and is based around a passive preamplifier with a motorised potentiometer and a single power amplifier gain stage.

The amp is compact but feels heavy and solid. Controls are limited to volume, seven input selections and a tape monitor switch. 'Pre-out' encourages bi-amplifica-

The panel was clearly a lot less equivocal about this amplifier than before, awarding it the highest score for any in its group. Scoring was consistent, with com-

wide open and very clear, as well as being very ambitious... and very transparent."

The Orelle performed with ease and fluidity on virtually all music, and is also even-tempered across a range of loudspeakers, apart from a slight loss of low-frequency control with wide bandwidth speakers. The SA-100RX has become a star, with a limpid, elegant transparency that lifts it clear of the field.

■ Orelle Hi-Fi ☎ (0181) 810 9388  
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 181

“...The panel was clearly a lot less equivocal about this amplifier than before, awarding it the highest average score for any in its group...”

tion or upgrading with a larger power amp. Our RX version of this amplifier is remote control-ready.

ments like: "This is an exciting, fast and dynamic amp... with lots of space and detail. It sounds







**ROKSAN**  
CASPIAN INTEGRATED/  
CASPIAN POWER £795/£595

The Caspian/Caspian Power combo was tested as part of a group, investigating the benefits of upgrading an existing integrated amplifier by adding a matching power amp, and using the pair to 'bi-amp' drive any speaker equipped with twin input terminal pairs. The style and technical philosophy of the good-looking

Caspian duo very much belongs to the Roksan tradition of purist, straight-line designs using quality materials and components, with a simple, elegant interface that includes powered volume and input selection. Power outputs are 70 Watts per channel.

The Caspian integrated hit the ground running – sensationally natural and musical, yet not in a romantic, rose-tinted way. First off, the bi-amped rig sounded a bit more literal, and we preferred the Caspian integrated on its own. On a Brian Wilson track, the Caspian

Power's influence did reap significant rewards, notably a cleaner, more brilliant treble, crisper transients and better separation.

The effect of bi-amping wasn't entirely consistent. It made an

vocals. Prince's *Hate U* came over with oodles of power and authority. Nothing sounded better than this, except the two Caspians working together. Impact, coherence, separation, detail, solidity and cruising ability all took a notch up. Lee Ritenour

“...The style and technical philosophy of the good-looking Caspian duo very much belongs to the Roksan tradition of purist, straight-line designs...”

Aimee Mann track sound more tactile, focused and sharply etched, while with Madonna the improvement was smaller, embracing a more muscular bass and smoother, cleaner backing

sounded relaxed but vaguely synthetic with one; less electronic and more human with two. Bi-amping wins again.

■ Roksan Audio Ltd ☎ (0181) 830 7733  
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 183

**SONY**  
TA-F3000ES £499.99\*

Take a look at this shoebox-format, champagne-gold integrated amp from Sony and weep! Products with these standards of finish simply can't be made at £499.99 in the UK. This is a MOSFET amplifier, rated at a modest 35 Watts into eight Ohms, rising to 50 Watts into four Ohms.

A rotary control selects input, a matching volume control maintains symmetry, and three smaller rotaries take care of bass, treble and balance. That's about the lot, apart from an MM/MC phono-stage switch option on the back, a stick-type remote-control handset, and a headphone socket.

Sonically, the TA-F3000ES is simply exceptional. It's quick, focused and assured, with a tight,

tuneful bass – no hint of overhang or excess – and a taut, crisp treble, sometimes to a fault. Dynamics are simply devastating within the power ceiling, which is a little less than average, but this is the only area in which the Sony might be lacking.

What impressed most was the absence of the usual solid-state

amplifier signatures. There was no noticeable granularity, no aggression (apart from an increased hardness, if the rated output was exceeded), and no congestion. The Sony simply sang, and its quality was obvious with all the music used. This is

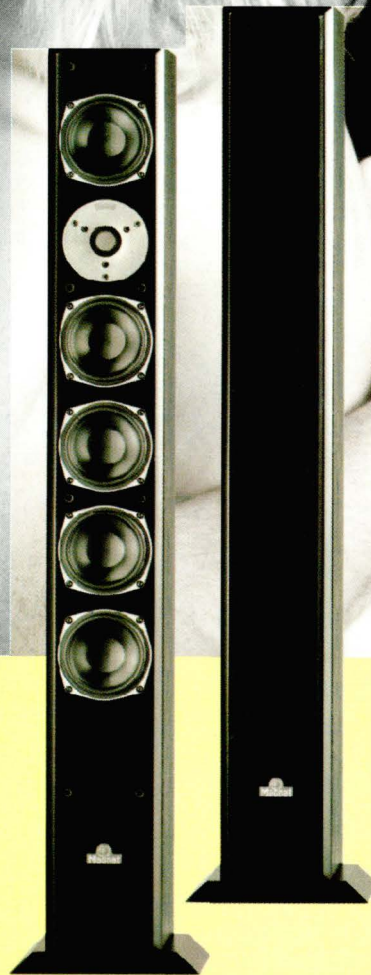
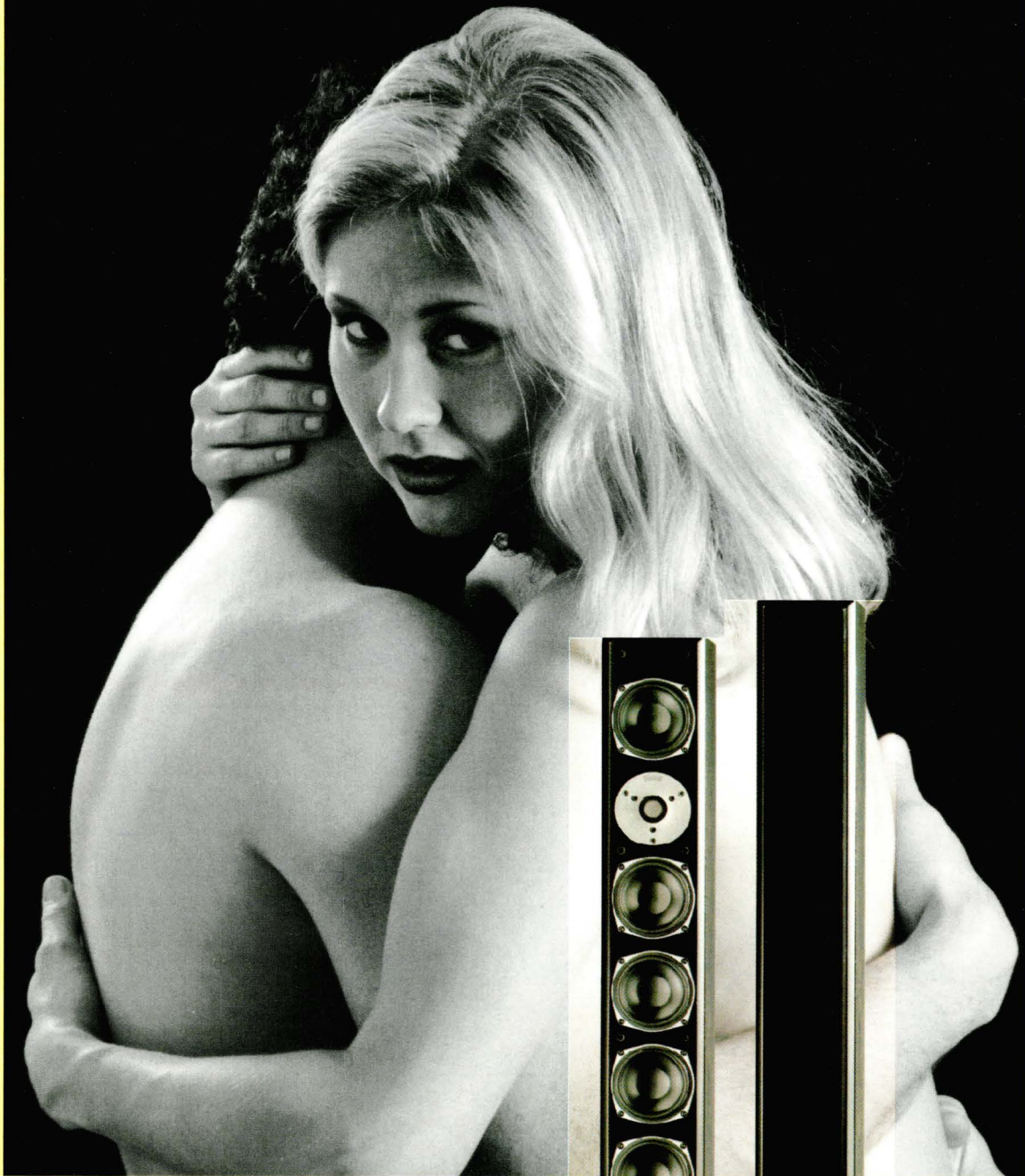
one of the stars of the show, except when used in big rooms or with insensitive speakers.

■ Sony UK ☎ (0990) 111999  
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 178





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# AMPLIFIERS

**ARCAM  
ALPHA 10 £799.90**

The much-talked-about high-tech, modular and upgradeable Alpha 10 has finally arrived. Under the skin, this is a very different animal from previous Alphas, being controlled by a microprocessor, and with a tremendous amount of hidden intelligence and flexibility. There's an informative display, and the standard set of inputs includes five line, with two

pointing. This is an amplifier with a strong power yield and plenty of detail, but it can sound bright, and complex orchestral music showed a loss of resolution and some coloration, including a 'cupped hands' effect with vocals. There was a generalised loss of subtlety, instrumental separation and image depth when judged against the highest level. But it's also easily the most

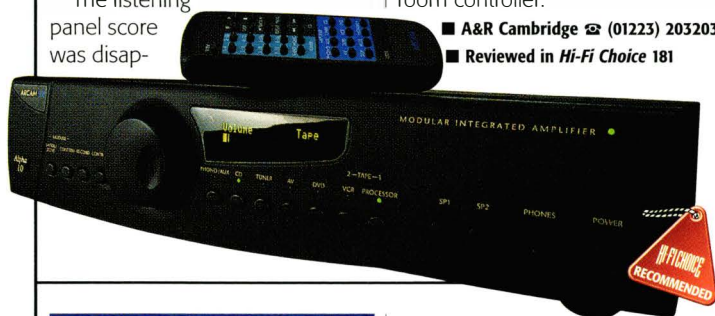
**“...It's also easily the most flexible product of its kind, offering plenty of power, and a quality upgrade path, when coupled with the Alpha 10P..”**

tape circuits. Other options include an MM/MC vinyl stage, and either a four-zone, four-source multi-room controller, or an all-singing, all-dancing AV module.

The listening panel score was disap-

flexible product of its kind, offering plenty of power, a quality upgrade path when coupled with the Alpha 10P, and the ability to transform itself into an AV amp or a multi-room controller.

■ A&R Cambridge ☎ (01223) 203203  
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 181



**CAMBRIDGE AUDIO  
A1 MK3SE £119.95**

A revised and improved version of Richer Sounds' house entry-level integrated amp, the Special Edition version of the A1 Mk3 has a better power supply, the preamplifier is now fully regulated and screened, and higher quality components have been substituted at various points. The main circuit board has also been relaid, with particular attention having been paid to reducing noise and distortion. This very simple product has just five inputs, including a tape circuit with a monitoring facility, and a vinyl option for an extra £20. It is neatly presented in a slimline case, with a simple alloy front panel with slightly rough edges.

The sound was generally felt to be credible, perhaps a little distant and even vague at times, but also airy, spacious and relaxed – in short, an amplifier that made listening an enjoyable experience, though there were adverse comments about 'slow' timing. This amplifier seemed well defined and believable, with quiet backgrounds which helped acoustic material stand out, though it did become a bit congested when stressed, and the bass sometimes appeared lacking in strength.

Modestly specified it may be, but its even more modestly priced, and provides a more than favourable compromise between clarity and euphony.

■ The Audio Partnership ☎ (0171) 827 9001  
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 178



**AVI  
S2000 MI £999**

My personal view is that the S2000 MI's styling job is heavy-handed, but there is no denying its good build quality and finish. Four inputs and a single tape circuit are provided, with volume and mute switching available, but no balance control or headphone feed, and just the basic connections on the back panel. The remote control handset can control a complete system. It's fairly simple internally, with a passive preamplifier section and cool-running 100 Watt bi-polar output powered by two toroidal transformers.

The S2000MI is an amplifier that works well with a wide range

of speakers. It has a well-focused midband, a strong sense of detail and good timing, though some might find it a bit clinical and dry, and there's some upper bass excess.

The styling job is ultimately a matter of taste, but the compact packaging is a boon, and musically the S2000MI runs away with the honours.

This is a clean, detailed and attractive amplifier, and one that worked well with a variety of speakers. It has been around for some years, and dealers praise its reliability. Strongly recommended.

■ AV International  
☎ (01453) 752656 or 0374 695621  
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 175



**DENON  
PMA-1500R £499.99**

The heart of Denon's new 1500 series separates, the PMA-1500R is a massive and well-equipped battleship amp, designed to manage a large and complex system. The rated 70 Watts/eight Ohm power output doubles into four Ohms, a measure of its independence from the load. Technical features include the use of twin transformers in a flux leakage-cancelling configuration, so-called Ultra High Current MOS output devices, and a dual mono-circuit topology. Suppression of vibration and feedback were major design priorities.

The overall score told a story of high-tech circuits which offer

plenty of power and load independence, and tremendous consistency throughout the frequency band, but which, when the chips are down, simply doesn't cut to the chase.

What the Denon did was to present a rather literal, even mechanical account, which short-changed such subtleties as musical articulation and purity of tone. The lack of simplicity and transparency was all too obvious in hands-on listening. Where the Denon did score was in its ability to go outrageously loud – with the utmost consistency and no suggestion of dynamic or detail loss – into every loudspeaker I was able to lay my hands on.

■ Hayden Laboratories ☎ (01753) 888447  
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 181

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# AMPLIFIERS

## DENSEN BEAT B-100 MK II £649.99

The B-100 Mk II is a straightforward development of the original Beat 100, the differences including a completely redesigned main circuit board, with a higher surface-mount component count, and improvements to the power supply. The basic topology involves a passive preamplifier section, no overall feedback and only minimal local feedback, and the 60 Watts per channel power spec. Minimalist facilities mean there is no tape monitor loop or remote control.

It sounds like a pun, but it isn't – the Beat understands how to rock and roll. Dynamics and timing are its strong suit, and it worked without flagging into all the test loudspeakers, and those used in the hands-on listen-

ing. The dynamic qualities were marked inconsistently, but there was some consensus that the amplifier sounded dry, even cold, and didn't always 'breathe' naturally. There was also considerable agreement that this amp was detailed, tight and well projected.

Not the most sophisticated sound, but this is an unusually punchy, detailed performer, able to take control of some quite difficult loudspeakers. Some care with system matching is called for, but with this caveat in mind, a Recommendation is mandatory.

- Densen Audio Technologies
- ☎ (01582) 561227
- Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 175



## DENSEN BEAT B-100 MKII/B-300 £649.99/£800.00

Tested as part of a group investigating the benefits of upgrading an existing integrated amplifier by adding a matching power amp, and using the pair to 'bi-amp' drive any speaker equipped with twin input terminal pairs, Densen's 100 Watts B-300 power amp has identical casework to the distinctively minimalist Beat B-100 MkII integrated, rated at a more modest 65 Watts.

The Beat B-100's rendition of Joni Mitchell's *Edith and the Kingpin* was the smoothest and most mellifluous of all the amplifiers in this test – and absolutely gorgeous. Bass, in particular, had

a strong and rich flavour, with beautifully rendered note shaping. Adding the B-300 diluted the sweetness a little but improved clarity and focus, the track remaining effortlessly tuneful, lush and natural, with fabulous string tone. The Beat is simply superior to your everyday £650 integrated amp. As a solo act it manages to combine transparency with a warm, organic feel. With the B-300 in place, it became even easier to latch onto different strands of Lee Ritenour's Bob Marley tribute, *This Is Love*.

Smooth but not smothering, the B-100 is undoubtedly an amp with 'character' and, like an oaky Australian red, it's big, generous and extremely more-ish.

- Densen Audio Technologies
- ☎ (07000) 443426 or (01582) 561227
- Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 183



## ELECTROCOMPANET EC1-2 £995.00

The EC1-2 is rated at 50 Watts per eight Ohms, 90 Watts per four Ohms and 150 Watts per two Ohms. It has four line inputs, a single set of speaker outputs, an external processor loop (with readily-detachable wire V links) and a preamplifier output. The input is described as a transconductance amplifier, and claims to have no overall feedback. The output – described as a transresistive amplifier with feedback – has bandwidth limitations designed to prevent TIM (Transient Intermodulation Distortion) and related distortions. The power supply uses a large (575VA) transformer.

Sonically, a fine amplifier overall, if, according to two panel members, a little slow. The bass is tuneful, deep and well controlled, which lends the music more sense of solidity and substance than some of its contemporaries. This design has been around for a while, and although it sounds a little less fresh and consistent than I recall from an earlier sample, the basic qualities of the original are still present. It has some significant sonic limitations, but they are not fundamental to the musical integrity of the design, which retains the feel and character of real performers performing on real instruments in real acoustics.

- Sound Image UK ☎ (0181) 255 6868
- Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 175



## MICROMEGA TEMPO 2 £900

Micromega's Tempo is a logic-controlled interface design, centred on an LED display flanked by two columns of four controls. The controls handle everything from standby switching to source selection and volume control, in

power output is 70 Watts per channel.

This French design registered impressive scores, attracting very few adverse comments. It was a little less even-handed than some of the competition, but this is more an indication of character than a criticism per se, and there was no

“... It has a direct and expressive feel, and treble and bass sound well integrated and attractive in character. A wonderfully idiosyncratic amplifier...”


very fine steps over the main part of the volume range. In addition, various set-up functions are accessed with a couple of the command keys. Existing Tempo 1 owners can upgrade to the Tempo 2, which in turn can be upgraded to the Tempo Pre preamplifier. Vinyl input cards are available, and

noticeable glare or opacity. It has a direct and expressive feel, and treble and bass sound well integrated and attractive in character. A wonderfully idiosyncratic amplifier, which gives a lean but expressive and clear-headed account.

- Surrey Sounds ☎ (01932) 254297
- Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 181







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In South Africa: Hi-Fi Specialists, 115 Durban Road, Bellville. 7535. Tel:(021) 946 1441

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

Described as "Arcam's finest hour", the new Alpha 9 CD player boasts not only Arcam's renowned engineering principles, but something else rather unique. Patented technology in the guise of a ring DAC chip that delivers unheard-of definition and accuracy. Exactly the same technology, in fact, that's used in the radar system in the Eurofighter.

You see, the technology that tells the Eurofighter's pilot whether that's a friend or a foe lurking over the horizon, is precisely the same

technology that enables the Alpha 9 listener to tell whether that's a Steinway or a Bechstein lurking behind the conductor.

There's one big difference, however. The Eurofighter will set you back thirty two million pounds. The Alpha 9, on the other hand, has been described as "the best sound available for less than a thousand pounds".

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# AMPLIFIERS

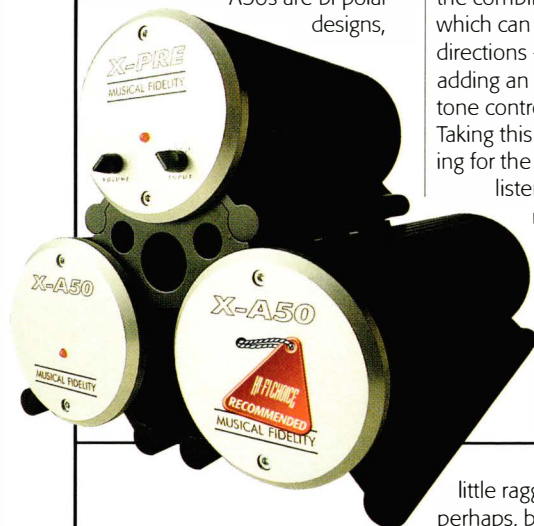
## MUSICAL FIDELITY

X-PRE £199.99

X-A50 (PAIR) £499.99

X-LINX CABLE £39.99

The X-Ponents range from Musical Fidelity, from which the X-PRE and X-A50 monoblocks are drawn, includes a number of audio accessories, some of which are genuinely innovative. Powered by a small, plug-mounted transformer, the X-PRE is a single-ended, triode, Class A preamplifier based around KT-88 valves, with four line inputs and a volume control, but no tape circuit. The X-A50s are bi-polar designs,



with a loop output which enables additional power amplifiers to be daisy-chained, typically for bi-amplified systems.

Registering an indifferent average across two presentations to our panel, separate hands-on listening suggested that the pre-amp's power supply was a significant drag on system performance, preventing dynamics from 'breathing' freely. However, the X-PRE/X-A50 really comes into its own with big, clean, dynamic loudspeakers.

Build quality is excellent, and the combination is a flexible one, which can be grown in several directions – for example, by adding an improved power supply, tone controls or a phono stage. Taking this into account, and allowing for the fact that the hands-on listening yielded better

results than the panel test, this model earns a Recommended tag.

- Musical Fidelity
- ☎ (0181) 900 2999
- Reviewed in
- Hi-Fi Choice 175

## PIONEER

A-405R £249.95\*

This A-405R is rated at 45 Watts per channel, rising to 65 Watts per channel into eight Ohms, and like most commercial Japanese amplifiers in this price area, it is quite fully equipped, including a simple remote control. Power efficiency is the name of the game here, and Pioneer's new proprietary HEX power MOSFETs and Wide Range Linear (drive) Circuit are used, to reduce power consumption, enhance damping and improve linearity.

A super-critical panel gave this amplifier a strong score, and I too found this a satisfying amplifier – a

little ragged in extremes perhaps, but bold, outgoing and colourful, with an adequately taut and tuneful bass. Dynamics and stereo imagery were notably good, too, with clear separation of individual instruments, though depth imagery was slightly foreshortened compared to the very best.

It is difficult to see how you can go wrong with this likeable and capable design. The only surprise was that a straightforward (if high-tech), off-the-shelf amplifier manages to at least equal some of the 'tweaked' amplifiers from a number of sources, an embarrassing number of which cost rather more than this one.

- Pioneer High Fidelity (GB) ☎ (01753) 789789
- Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 178



## MYRYAD

MI120 £599.95

Myryad's MI120 has been reviewed in these pages previously, but a number of design changes have been introduced, including an improved mains transformer, enhanced power supply filtering, and upgraded power rectifiers. The passive preamp can handle up to four line inputs and two tape circuits. Full remote control is available, and the amplifier's power supply looks well endowed for its 60 Watts per channel power rating. A vinyl input is optional, aesthetics are particularly attractive, and fit and finish are exemplary.

The new MI120 really is a better amplifier; the rather coarse, grainy quality noticed previously

having been replaced by a much smoother, more detailed quality, and a better fleshed-out bass. But the amp did not receive a completely clean bill of health, with one or two complaints of midband compression. I've tried it out in various systems, and found it consistent, disciplined and fairly detailed with accurate tonality, but slight greyness and compression when stretched.

If it just stops short of generating the electricity of one or two competitors, Recommendation is merited on the grounds of its musical manners, strong features, excellent build and even-handed consistency.

- Myryad Systems ☎ (01705) 265508
- Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 175



## PRIMARE

A-20 MK II £799

Primare's A-20 Mk II is compact and heavy, with a unique 'stand-off' fascia. The volume control is an impulse generator with close operating steps and excellent channel balance, and there

whereas this new Mk II is more communicative and outgoing. String tone now seems more vivid and better separated, while space, rhythm and timing seem more on the ball. The effect is altogether tauter and more muscular,

“...String tone now seems more vivid and better separated, while space, rhythm and timing seem more on the ball...”

are four line-level inputs plus tape. A system remote includes 'display off' and balance. The A-20 Mk II has improved op-amps and power supplies with higher voltage rails. The main circuit board is also new and the signal path is shorter. Rated power output is now 70 Watts per channel.

The original A-20 was open, transparent but cool and distant,

and, for the most part, the panel agreed with this assessment.

This Primare has emerged from its extensive make-over smelling of roses, and is now a very competitive amplifier, with refinement and authority that few can match at or near the price. Earlier versions may be upgraded.

- MDC ☎ (01992) 573030
- Reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice 181



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## So What!





# AMPLIFIERS

## QUAD 77 INTEGRATED/77 POWER £699.95/£599.95

Quad's 77 integrated-plus-power combo was tested as part of a group, investigating upgrading an existing integrated amplifier by adding a matching power amp, and then using the pair to 'bi-amp' drive any speaker equipped with twin input terminal pairs. The integrated's 84 Watts per channel are more than ample, and something of a surprise from a box so slim and stylish, which also packs plenty of goodies into its compact casing.

Warm, natural and undemonstrative, bringing the 77 Power amp into play didn't change the character of the Quad's delivery; it just made more of it. Although

retrieval of fine detail wasn't tops, listenability moved onto a higher plane, with luscious bass and sublime musicality. Working together, the Quads became even better 'big picture' amplification – more physical and palpable, with tonal textures you could really sink your teeth into.

The 77 integrated got just about everything right with Motorhead's *Dead or Alive*, except with the 77 Power taking care of business downstairs, you got more – more body, less hash. The Lee Ritenour track didn't really come alive at first, but perked up with the 77 power amp in place, becoming bigger, bouncier and more vivid.

■ Quad ☎ (01480) 431737

■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 183



## TALK ELECTRONICS STORM 2 FROM £649.95

The Storm 2 delivers 65 Watts per channel, via a MOSFET output stage. The control scheme is minimalist, with simple source selection – CD, tuner, auxiliary, AV and two tape circuits – augmented by tape monitor and mute, and all accessible from the remote control. Finish is excellent, and the control layout is utterly individual. 'Pre-out' sockets are fitted, and a vinyl input is available for an extra £80.

This amplifier achieved a strong and highly consistent panel score. It worked at least moderately well in all key areas, with no obvious identifiable weaknesses. The Storm 2's particular strengths are an open, crystal-clear yet airy mid-band, and

good timing. However, there were also clear indications that it is less amenable to difficult power loads, and evidence of power limiting at only modestly high volume levels. Less suited to heavy-duty, wide-bandwidth speakers, it's more than routinely communicative and musically engaging when punching inside its weight range.

It is not easy to understand why this amplifier should be so similar in character and, apparently, in power yield to the Storm 1, but there are no complaints about a performance which is well balanced and accurately tuned to similar priced, mainstream source components and speakers.

■ Talk Electronics ☎ (01252) 378383

■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 175

## TECHNICS SU-A800D MK 2 £299.95

Clever styling makes this two-box amplifier look like a pukka pre/power combo, though in fact the 'preamp' takes low-voltage power via a special umbilical from the power amp section. Rated at 55 Watts per channel, it looks good enough to eat. All switching is logic controlled, and a good range of inputs plus a system remote control are included in the package. Proprietary technologies include Master series TAKE capacitors and a novel output stage configuration. This uses a Technics MOSFET voltage drive circuit linked to a bi-polar current drive stage, with

what is described as a Special Class AA Bridge Connection.

The middle-of-the-road listening test score perhaps conceals more than it shows, but in the end the Technics sounded rather 'shouty' and thin when extended, with little of the solidity and stability that distinguishes the best from the rest, and a rather flat, dimensionless stereo image. Its liveliness and midband clarity helped, though, and it's hard to argue against an amplifier that looks like an easy grand's worth, or that sounds so exuberant and open, even if it does suffer somewhat at the frequency extremes.

■ Panasonic UK ☎ (0990) 357357

■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 178



## YAMAHA AX-492 £219.95

Yamaha's AX-492 offers a roughly similar package of goodies to several price competitors, but this model also boasts much greater power output (85 Watts per channel). It's also unusually well equipped, and takes greater than usual care to make this amplifier both sleek and user-friendly by fitting a swing-down cover to conceal all but the most basic controls. The icing on the cake is not one but two bypass facilities. Remote control is also included.

"I like this one – everything sounds 'right,'" said one panellist. "What more is there to say?" voiced another. Well, quite a bit, but this was certainly the consensus view of an amplifier that

scored an impressive score on test. It has a bold, outgoing quality, but also a relaxed character when called on to deliver at high volumes. The bass sometimes sounded a bit insubstantial (not uncommon with mainstream amplifiers of the type), but its tunefulness, depth and propulsive timing more than compensated.

The clean, open and finely detailed sound impresses most here, supported by the strong feature count. There is a potential overload problem via CD Direct with CD players whose output voltage peaks much above 2V – an oversight which restricts to Recommended status.

■ Yamaha Electronics UK ☎ (01923) 233166

■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* issue 178



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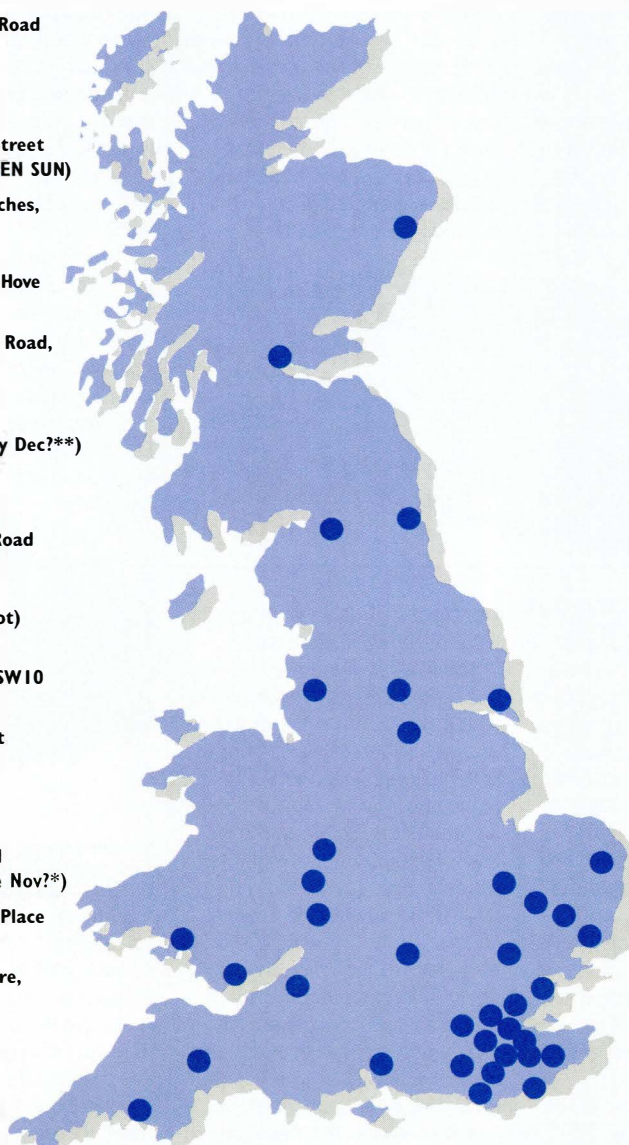
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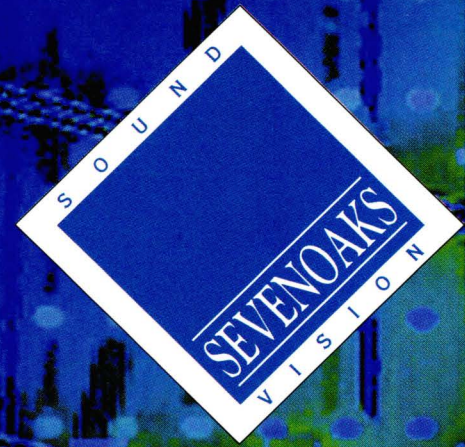
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# CABLES



## QED QNECT 2 £30.00/1M

**Q**ED is one of the best-known and longest-established manufacturers of cables and accessories in the UK. Traditionally, the company has excelled in the lower-price arena, and this modest cable is no exception to this custom. The Qnect 2 is a pseudo-balanced type, moderately flexible, and fitted with some very smart, practical phono plugs. Inside, the plugs are not outstandingly robust but the cable is quite well secured and its grip on sockets is tight. The cable itself uses a low-loss dielectric, and is very non-microphonic.

Despite its low price, Qnect 2 was one of the best-liked cables in the test. Its bass is extended and clean – perhaps not as extended as the very best, but it's a close second. Treble is detailed and clear

– it balances bite and refinement admirably, running rings around several cables costing more than twice as much. In one opera recording there was an isolated comment about some coloration in the midband, but apart from that the balance seemed good.

To be hyper-critical, at times there seemed apparent a tiny loss in delicacy with sounds such as a lightly-struck cymbal, but in no way was this an intrusive problem. And when handling traditional cable challengers like massed choral voices, the Qnect 2 portrayed them beautifully at any volume setting.

All things considered, then, this cable should suit many applications and tastes, and fully deserves a Best Buy.

■ QED Audio Products ☎ (01276) 451166  
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 176

## STRAIGHTWIRE QUARTET £7.99/M

**T**he Quartet has four separately insulated conductors twisted together inside a common sheath. The conductors are of plain stranded copper and are insulated in 'hybrid foam' – it actually feels like natural rubber. Crimp-fit bananas were fitted to the review sample – perfectly decent connectors but with a soft plastic sleeve which can come adrift when you try to pull the plug out of a socket.

If Quartet had a consistent flaw, it was its lack of bass weight in the presence of complex textures, which is something shared by many cables. When there's not so much happening the bass can be gratifyingly extended and full,

which leads to excellent results with jazz trio or passages of organ music using only the pedals – but it can also slightly reduce the impact of an orchestra or a full rock band. With operatic excerpts this cable was as successful as any in the group. Ambience was well preserved and detail easy to hear through any amount of complication. This cable seemed to show more of its 'character' in the cheaper amp/speaker system.

Electrically, it's not unusual with moderate capacitance (slightly lossy, though) and inductance, and below-average resistance. A good all-round choice, given the modest price, good sound and practicality.

■ CSE ☎ (01423) 359054

■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 183



## VAN DEN HUL D102 MKIII £69.99/0.8M STEREO PAIR

**V**an den Hul is one of several cable companies to investigate conductors other than copper and silver. In this case, the experimental work suggested there was a common and undesirable signature to all cables using metal conductors. So, the company set about investigating non-metallic conductors instead, notably with cables using carbon fibre filaments.

D102 Mk III is one such, although it is in fact a hybrid, mixing carbon fibres with more conventional silver-plated copper. It's constructed in a pseudo-balanced configuration, with Teflon insulation and collet-clamp phono plugs. Capacitance, dielectric loss and

microphony are all low.

Sonically, this was the best cable in the test, by a small and decisive margin, which is all the more creditable in view of the relatively modest cost. The sound was solid, clear, always effortless, and basically free from criticism. Bass was extended as far as any and fully resonant, but at the same time under control. The midrange was uncolored and natural, helping voices sound natural and unprocessed, while the treble was sweet and detailed, conveying the delicate tinkle of small percussion instruments and the rasp of muted trumpet. In fact, this is pretty much as good as cable gets, and is therefore a Best Buy.

■ van den Hul UK ☎ (0181) 997 4280

■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 176

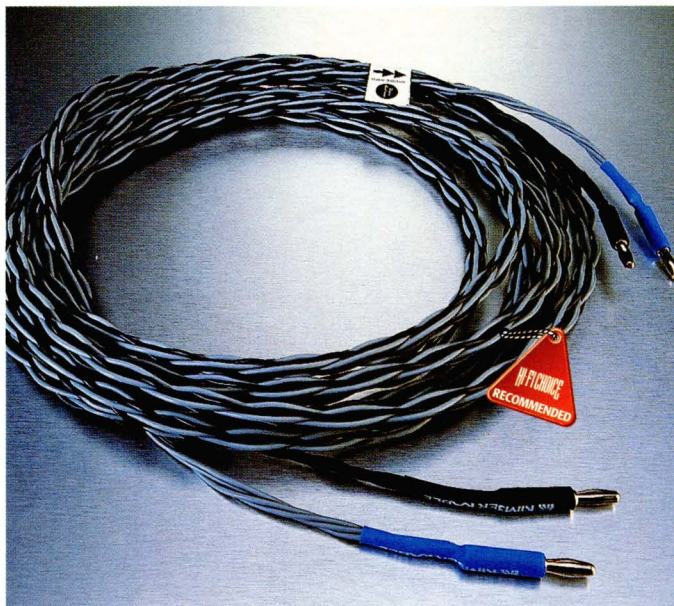


**KIMBER  
4VS £94/3M PAIR  
WITH PLUGS**

Kimber cables are the ones with several conductors plaited together in an open weave, a formula which has served Kimber well, in both sales and critical acclaim. It's not at first obvious what the differences are between the £94 (three-metre terminated) 4VS and the more expensive 4TC (issue 168) – they measure almost identically and are sonically quite alike, too.

The bass is a strong point, but 4VS also gave the cleanest and sweetest trumpet sound. Imaging seemed rather behind the 4TC standard. 4VS has highish capacitance and low inductance, together with quite low resistance – a mix likely to give good results in a variety of systems without upsetting amplifiers. A good all-round performer and definitely Recommended.

- Russ Andrews Accessories
- ☎ (01539) 823247
- Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 183



**CABLE TALK  
ADVANCED 2 £34.95/1M**

This cable is conveniently flexible, and is fitted with some of the most gorilla-tight phono plugs we've ever seen. It's a pseudo-balanced type with two thin conductors and screen inside an awful lot of sheath. The plugs are actually of only modest quality but are well fitted. The insulating sheath is rather lossy and moderately microphonic.

If all that sounds rather lukewarm, the cable itself proved itself rather less tepid on test. There's a degree of roughness in loud passages, but most comments were positive. Bass was quite solid and extended, the treble combined bite and smoothness. For its modest price, this is a good all-rounder, and a good cable for the first-time upgrader.

- Cable Talk ☎ (01252) 373434
- Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 176

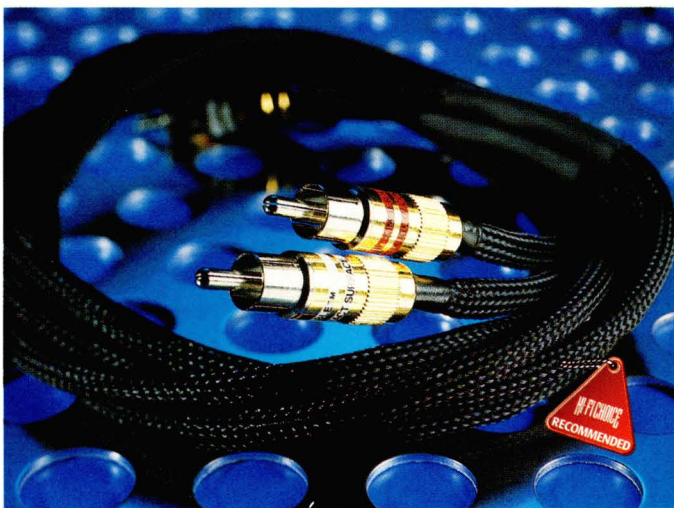
**NORDOST  
BLUE HEAVEN  
£149.95/1M PAIR**

Nordost uses the same cable geometry for both speaker and interconnect duties, and its low capacitance construction is intrinsically far better suited to interconnects. Four solid conductors, for each of live and return, are laid side-by-side in a dielectric of Teflon or similar, and are terminated in nifty, sprung, Neutrik phono plugs. Assembly seems

very robust, but there's no screening to avoid hum.

One of the more successful cables in the test, it particularly excels in the bass, and if the treble was less persuasive, it was only due to a hint of grain. Integration was well maintained with any musical style or signal source I listened to, so despite the rather high price it seems worthy of Recommendation.

- Nordost UK ☎ (01352) 730251
- Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 176



**KIMBER  
CABLE HERO £110.00/1M**

Kimber's braided speaker cables are familiar to hi-fi cognoscenti the world over, and GyroQuadratic braiding is a feature of this Hero interconnect. There are two conductors each for live and return, individually stranded and insulated with Teflon in a proprietary weave. There's no screen, but Kimber claims its braiding technique is effective against noise pick-up.

A qualified success on audition, the bass seemed slightly coloured, and things could get a little rough when the music was loud, but the treble was always clear, and detail not far short of the best. Lateral imagery was good, but front-back was slightly less so, and non-classical music was generally preferred to classical music. A bit of a mixed bag, but Recommended.

- Russ Andrews Accessories
- ☎ (01539) 823247
- Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 176





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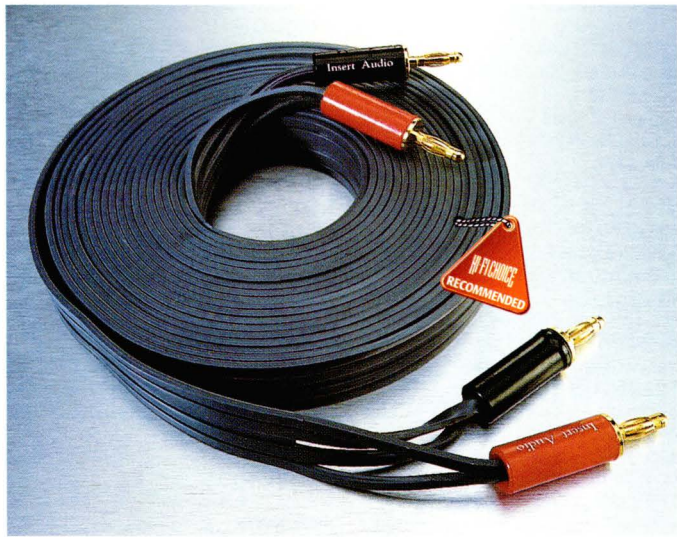
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# CABLES

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**ORTOFON  
SPK200 £4.99/M**

With four flat conductors this cable offers options of bi-wiring or parallel configuration, and may be run under carpeting, as it's only 2mm thick. The review samples came terminated with banana plugs, which unfortunately showed evidence of some slightly slapdash soldering.

It did the bass thing particularly gleefully, but might be a little too resonant for some. Higher up the

spectrum there's still much to praise, though with a few qualifications. Solo voice suffered a little dryness and also seemed to move forward in the mix. Full chorus came across well, with a little front-back image compression, but it had excellent tone and communication.

Ultimately, this is a practical and flexible cable that deserves Recommendation.

- Henley Designs ☎ (01491) 834700
- Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 183

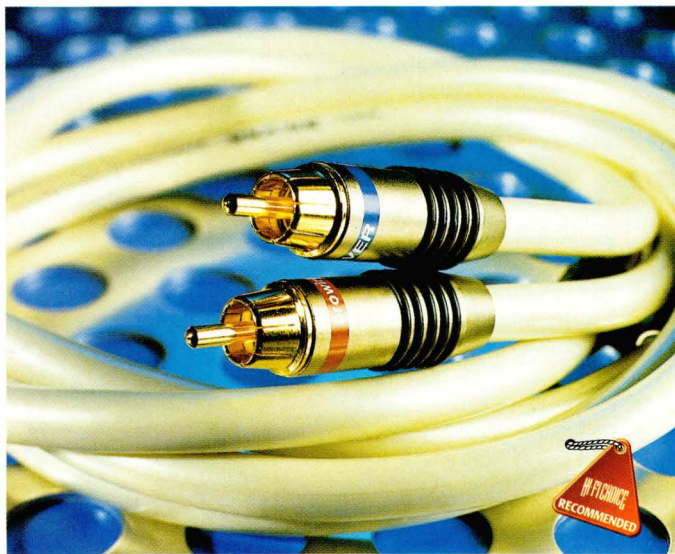
**PROWIRE  
SILVER £59.99/1M\***

Prowire is part of Vivanco, known for its fine headphones, and the Silver is the flagship of a new range, with unusual silver-plated conductors at £59.99. It's a pseudo-balanced cable with quite substantial conductors in a Teflon dielectric, screened with a foil-and-braid screen and covered in a thick sheath. The cable is slightly inflexible but certainly good material

value for money.

Although not quite the most accomplished, the Prowire still made a very good impression, imparting just a hint of coloration to the bass, and lacking the last fine degree of detail at higher volume levels. Vocals, both spoken and sung, were natural, unforced and uncoloured, while violins had bite, sparkle and refinement.

- Vivanco UK ☎ (01442) 403020
- Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 176



**SONICLINK  
BLACK £50**

Sonic Link is one of those wonderfully iconoclastic companies that makes hi-fi fun. The Black consists of a pair of stranded conductors, hefty by interconnect standards, with a rubber dielectric and a similar sheath, covered with nylon braid. There's no screen, and the cable may pick up hum if installed anywhere near mains wiring. Microphony is very low.

Black tends towards dryness, particularly in the bass. Midrange and treble are clean, and seem generally uncoloured, though there's a mild lack of bite in the extreme treble, which slightly smooths off violins, saxophones and the like. Imaging is good, and there's a pleasing sense of integration between the different strands of an ensemble.

- Sonic Link ☎ (01332) 361390
- Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 176

**QED  
QUDOS SILVER £5/M**

Launched to mark the firm's 25th anniversary, the £5 per metre price is very reasonable for silver-plated copper conductors. Construction is of the basic figure-eight, with many rope-laid strands insulated in translucent, hard polythene and terminated in crimp-fit banana plugs.

Imaging was moderate to good, and detail was reasonably easy to follow. There was a degree of

roughness in loud and complex music, but simpler and quieter moments were detailed and smooth. Bass seemed to lack some extension but was easy to follow and generally well integrated. Vocals communicated well but could have been more exciting at times. Although not outstanding, it's a perfectly competent cable, so it would be mean to deny it Recommendation.

- QED Audio Products ☎ (01276) 451166
- Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 183





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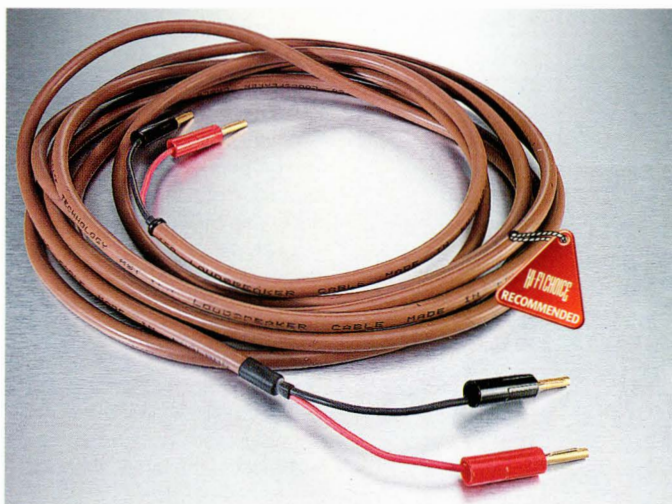
[www.straightwire.com](http://www.straightwire.com)

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		<b>WORTHING</b> Phase 3 Hifi	01903 245577





# CABLES



## STRAIGHTWIRE CHORUS £39.99/1M

**S**traightwire's Chorus is an attractive practical, flexible design, with basic but securely-fitted phono plugs. It's a simple coaxial type with a thin Teflon dielectric, which gives low loss but unusually high capacitance. This suggests caution with any cable run longer than about one metre, with passive preamps and similar. Microphony is low.

Chorus seems just a little soft in the treble, lacking some bite and extension, particularly with brass instruments. At the other end of the spectrum, though, bass is solid, well rounded and nicely extended, with good detail. There is perhaps a small loss of imaging detail in really dense textures, but there was still a good sense of being 'invited in' to the music.

■ CSE ☎ (01423) 359054

■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 176

## SONICLINK AST150 £3.95/M

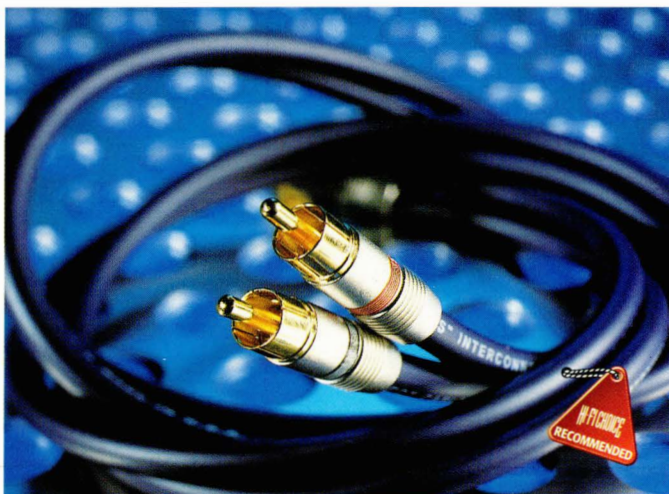
**R**elatively modest technologically, using tinned copper conductors insulated in silicone rubber, the AST150 is basically a figure-eight design with an outer sheath, giving an overall circular cross section.

The first impression was of a bass which lacked low extension but was surprisingly plummy in the mid-bass area. Male voices

sounded slightly higher in timbre – which although not unpleasant, probably isn't very accurate – but its strength was its ability to hold everything together through thick and thin, regardless of loudness or complexity. Imaging was fair, though not precise. Like other Sonic Link cables, it's a Curate's egg, deserving Recommendation if only to encourage you to try it out.

■ Sonic Link ☎ (01332) 361390

■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 183



## TARA LABS KLARA £2.95/M

**T**ara is an American firm with some frighteningly expensive cables in its portfolio, but the Klara is a budget buy by any standards. A simple figure-eight design, the insulator is apparently a double-layer affair, and the copper conductors are 'Pressure-Stranded' to increase mutual contact.

Considering this was the cheapest cable in the survey, it put up a

credible fight, with no obvious flaws. The weakest area was probably imaging, but even here, performance was no worse than average. Bass extends a fair way down and is always tuneful. The treble is generally clean and tidy, and voices are well served.

It should suit budget amps and speakers especially well. Good value, and Recommended.

■ Sound Image UK ☎ (0181) 255 6888

■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 183



## SUPRA PLY 3.4 £6.95/M

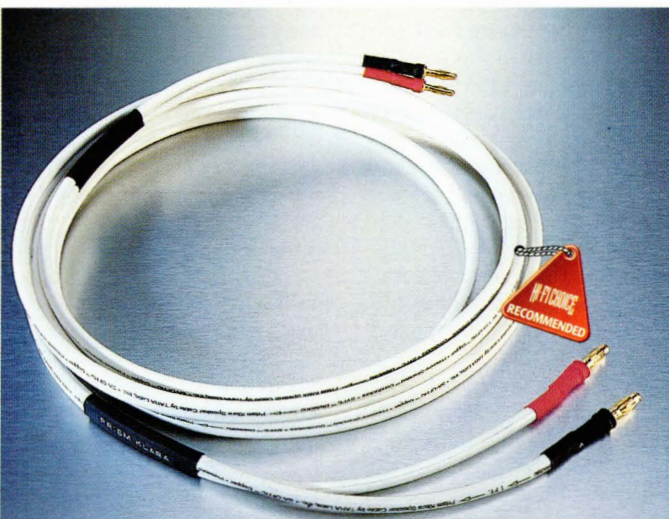
**S**upra's Ply 3.4 is a modified figure-eight cable in which two conductors of rectangular cross-section are placed face-to-face in an overall sheath, to minimise inductance (and maximise bandwidth). The conductors are multi-strand tin-plated copper.

Ply 3.4 put up a good case for Supra's construction, with a pleasing tonal balance and good detail.

It has deep, resonant, slightly 'fat' bass; a clean and effortless mid-band; and just a hint of restriction on the treble. Imaging was convincing, and the sound stayed clean up to high levels. Inductance is slightly lower than most figure-eight cables, though capacitance is a little higher. Resistance is low, and it should be a good match with most amps and speakers.

■ Glaive ☎ (01622) 664070

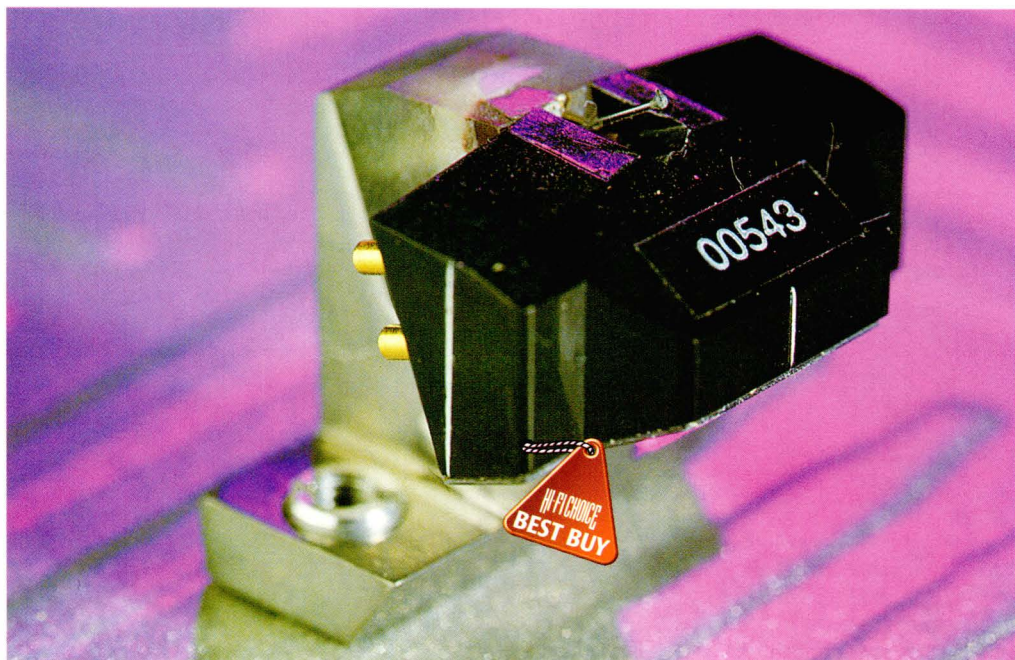
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 183







# CARTRIDGES



## CLEARAUDIO SIGNATURE £1,450

**C**learaudio is a small German cartridge manufacturer which concentrates on the high (and very high) end. I recall reviewing a Gamma for a *Choice Collection* about a decade ago, and being impressed then by both its qualities and its 'differentness'.

The Gamma is still available as the least expensive member of a range which includes this £1,450

Signature. Key features include 24ct gold wiring, a hollow boron cantilever, and a Trygon II stylus. The shape is best described as a 'hammerhead', with a slim rearward section containing magnet and mounting lugs. The Signature's wide front not only houses the stylus, cantilever and coils, but also the terminal pins. Some tonearms might require longer-than-usual headshell wires to accommodate this.

It's also a relatively heavy cartridge, the heaviest in our group, in fact by a small margin at 11-12g. Installation of the Signature is a bit fiddly because separate nuts and bolts are used, but the stylus guard gives good security. Alignment is straightforward, however, thanks to a neat little line inscribed on the hammerhead side. The stylus-to-mounting-plate height is several millimetres greater than average here, which

might pose clearance problems with some dust covers.

Output level is among the highest of the 'low output' types, registering only 10dB below the high-output Grado model. The subsonic resonance has slightly higher damping than average, and hit a very sensible 10Hz in our medium-mass tonearm. The response traces are pretty well ordered, though there's a minor glitch at 800Hz, and a well-damped treble resonance across the 7.5-15kHz octave. Vertical/lateral separation is around 30dB over most of the range, dropping gently above 2kHz.

Barring a touch of 'edge' and brightness (presumably associated with that treble peak), the Signature sounds absolutely gorgeous. Voices have great presence and coherence, and a real dose of dynamic vitality. The dry, deep, clean bass helps dig a serious groove, and if surface noise is slightly obvious, there's an overall sense of intimacy and credibility in the midband which is very special indeed. A definite winner.

The most convincing all-rounder in the group, yet by no means the most expensive, Clearaudio's Signature is the obvious recipient of a Best Buy flag.

■ Absolute Analogue ☎ (01425) 654488  
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 175

## ORTOFON ROHMANN £1,000

**D**anish manufacturer Ortofon claims to have made the world's first moving-coil cartridges (in 1948), and has stuck firmly to that line of trade ever since. Even when it was virtually the sole representative of MC during the moving magnet-dominated '60s and '70s, it didn't conform to the trend.

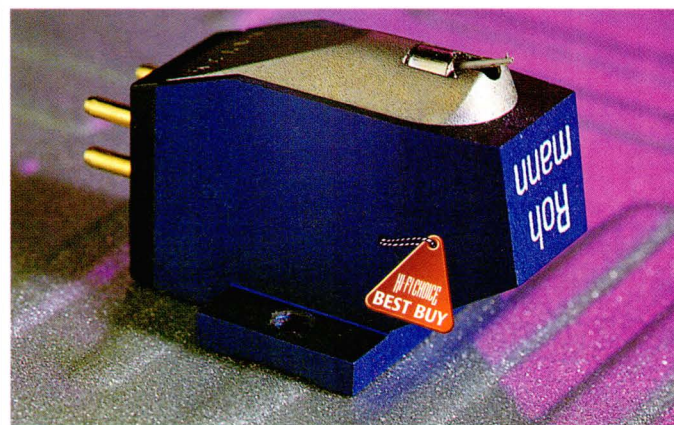
When improvements in turntables and tonearms started bringing the moving-coil principle back into favour near the end of the '70s, Ortofon was well placed to take advantage, and now produces complete ranges of both types of needle: from cheap magnetics up to (and beyond) this £1,000 Rohmann.

Named after Ortofon's late proprietor, it features a pretty and purposeful-looking blue-anodised body, milled from solid aluminium. The 'Orto-line' nude stylus has a 100µm major radius to

give an unusually extended line contact. This reduces groove pressure and therefore allows the security of a highish 2.5-gram tracking weight. A tapered aluminium cantilever connects to a carbon-fibre armature, wound with high (99.9999 per cent) purity silver wire.

Weight is about average, while the compliance is quite stiff, resulting in a lightly-damped subsonic resonance at a highish 15Hz in our medium-mass test arm. Higher-mass arms should not be a problem, and light damping might be worth trying.

Specific output level is high by historic Ortofon standards, but fairly low in our group context, registering -16dB ref. the high output Grado. The responses are as close to neutral as any, with just a minor glitch at 900Hz and a suggestion of a very well-damped resonance at around 10kHz. I suspect the security of that



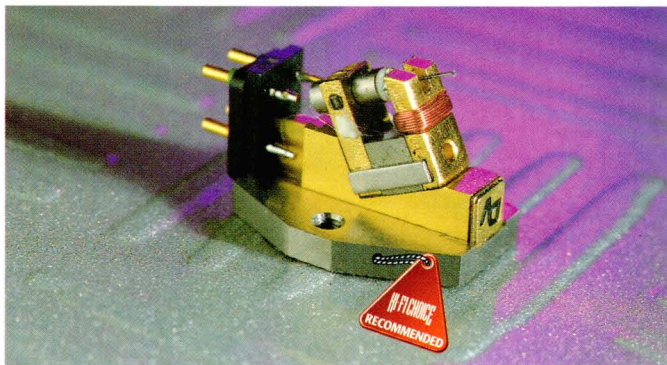
generous 2.5g downforce has much to do with the fine stability and solid coherence of this cartridge. Transparency and neutrality are its greatest strengths, with just the faintest top-end sheen in evidence. Dynamic range is excellent, giving clear information retrieval way down into the mix, though dynamics themselves do lack a little spark and vitality. The

Rohmann is always laid-back in the way it goes about things. Ultimately, what it lacks in tension and drama, it makes up for in smoothness and delicacy.

A fine all-round performer at a more realistic price than most, the Rohmann deserves a confident Best Buy.

■ Henley Designs ☎ (01491) 834700  
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 175





#### DYNAVECTOR TE-KAITORA £1,698

**D**ynavector's new flagship, the 1,698 Te-Kaitora has adopted a Maori name which means The Discoverer. In fact, Dynavector New Zealand helped with the design. The most striking feature is its nudity: there's no bodywork at all, just the magnet structure left open to the elements, backed by a substantial flat titanium plate. Actually, there's good sense in doing this, because bodywork, however exotically fashioned, is bound to add some degree of resonance coloration to the sound. There's no stylus/cantilever guard either, so several millimetres of very fragile, exposed, expensive and almost invisible boron rod cantilever pokes out, so installation involves some nervous tension, although it was perfectly straightforward.

The stylus is an Ogura Pathfinder, the wiring is silver, and the cartridge features Dynavector's proprietary magnetic tweaks – a 'flux dumper' coil on the front, and 'magnetic

softening' via ferrous metal strips. Weighing 8.8g, compliance is relatively low, giving a lightly-damped 14Hz resonance in a medium mass arm. It will be happy in higher-mass arms too, though. Output level is on the low side. The response traces show no sign of a treble peak, although upper-mid output is a bit suppressed, and despite the low compliance, trackability seemed fine, and needle-talk is exceptionally low.

I developed a very healthy respect for this delightfully smooth and transparent cartridge, but it took a day or three to fall in love with it. There's very little to criticise about the sound *per se*, save some lack of vividness and power. It's very delicate, with a wide dynamic range, but it is also rather laid back in presentation.

This is a real smoothie. The price is high, but it's well worth checking out if you're looking for laid-back transparency and value the low level of needle-talk.

■ Pear Audio ☎ (01665) 830862

■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 175

#### VAN DEN HUL FROG £1,500

**V**an den Hul's £1,500 Frog has a conventional body in a vivid green colour. The squared-off shape makes alignment easy, although the screw-together metal body could well add some resonances. Key features include a solid boron rod cantilever, and mono-crystal silver wire coils, but most importantly the specially shaped Type 1S diamond stylus.

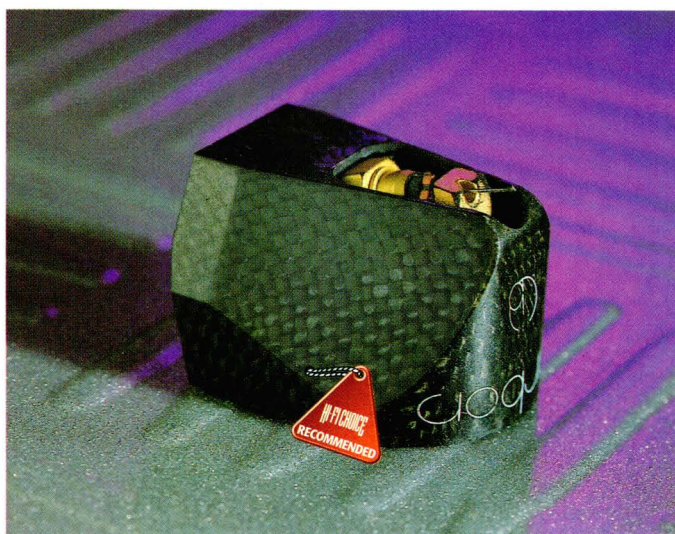
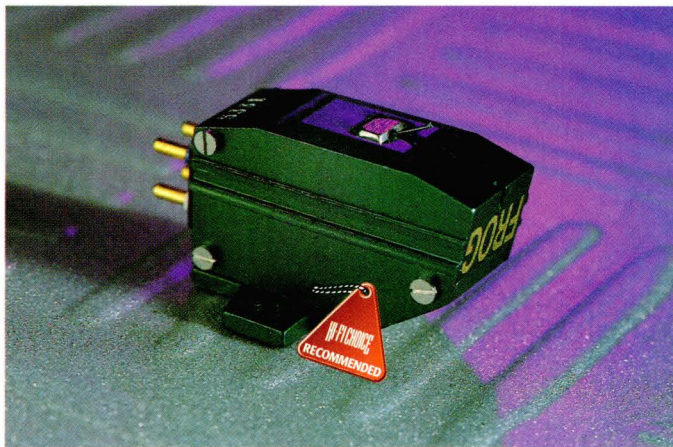
The 7g Frog is among the lightest of the moving-coil cartridges, yet also has a relatively high output and high cantilever compliance, and the lowest recommended tracking weight (the two usually go together). The subsonic trace shows that the fundamental resonance is exceptionally well damped, but at a lower frequency than most (9Hz). Higher mass arms should be avoided. The basic response trace is well balanced, but there's a

cluster of small resonances through the midband (500-550Hz, 850-900Hz and 1.4kHz), while the mid treble is just a shade prominent.

The remarkable thing about the Frog is the way it seems to ignore (or suppress better than most) surface noise and groove damage, or at least offer superior suppression of it. That alone should commend it to those interested in classical vinyl and/or secondhand sources. Elsewhere the sound is very impressive, especially the delicate vocal clarity. The top is a little shiny, the midband slightly coloured, and the bass could have more drive and authority, but the midbass is solid and tuneful, and the whole has a graceful and caressing quality which is very seductive. In all, the Frog is a delicate and subtle performer with great charm.

■ van den Hul UK ☎ (0181) 810 9388

■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 175



#### WILSON BENESCH CARBON £1,573 (LESS 15% TRADE-IN)

**W**ilson Benesch is best known for the creative application of carbon fibre composites (CFCs) in various parts of

the hi-fi chain – from tonearms, cartridges and turntables through to loudspeakers. Accordingly, this £1,586 Carbon low output moving-coil cartridge features a very elegant CFC body cladding a low-output, moving-coil Benz-sourced

“...the Carbon sounds beautifully open and remarkably free from voice colorations, to a degree probably only matched by the nude designs...”

generator. The shape is all curvy, so alignment isn't easy, and there's no obvious way of attaching any form of stylus guard, so installation is a bit hand-in-mouth.

Other highlights include a solid boron rod cantilever, nude elliptical diamond, and sapphire armature. The 7g Carbon is lighter than most of its peers, and also has a highish specific output level. Compliance is well judged to give a reasonably damped fundamental resonance at 10Hz in a medium mass arm. High-mass arms are probably best avoided.

The response is exceptionally flat up to 1kHz, avoiding the slight loss of midband output often found elsewhere, but not a slight

mechanical glitch at 850Hz.

There's a trace of treble forwardness centred on 7-8kHz, but in that respect results are exemplary, achieving around 30dB vertical/lateral separation right up to 6kHz.

When used in anger the Carbon sounds beautifully open and remarkably free from voice colorations, to a degree probably only matched by the nude designs. The bass is clean, quick and dry, and offers fine timing, while the treble is just slightly shiny/sheeny in character. In all it's an impressive all round performer, and further vindication of the potential value of carbon fibre as a hi-fi material.

■ Wilson Benesch ☎ (0114) 285 2656

■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 175





# CD PLAYERS

**AMC  
CD9/DAC8 £199.99/£329.90**

**A**bsolutely outrageous! That's the only way to describe a two-box CD player that sells for a mere £199.99 (£50 less than the two components purchased separately). This is not a transport paired with a DAC; rather a CD9 CD player plus DAC8 outboard digital-to-analogue decoder.

The latter has four digital inputs selectable from the front panel – each automatically locking onto sampling rates of 32kHz, 44.1kHz or 48kHz – while an electrical digital output permits use with a digital recorder. The remote-control CD9 player is almost identical to the more expensive CD8a,

tested in issue 172, except for the omission of the balanced audio outputs – no great sacrifice.

The listening panel heard it only in two-box guise, and gave it one of the highest scores in the test. Hands-on work revealed a clear sonic improvement when the DAC8 is

engaged. It adds light and shade to the music, and you'll hear more expressive and complex dynamics, and sweeter high frequencies. The CD9 alone generates a less expansive image.

While AMC's two-box player may occasionally lack electricity, it has an open, organic sound that certainly steers well clear of the desiccated, mechanical presentation offered by all too many CD players. Although no sophisticate, this is an honestly-specified, well-presented CD-playing solution. If its music-making

sometimes lacks fire, it sounds organic and attractive, with decent timing and respectable imagery. You'll be very hard pressed to find better at the price.

■ **Tangent Acoustics UK**  
☎ (0500) 828620  
■ **Reviewed in**  
*Hi-Fi Choice* 179



**ARCAM  
ALPHA 7 (IMPROVED) £329.90**

**R**eviewed originally in issue 163, Arcam's 330 Alpha 7 has been sufficiently 'tweaked' to warrant re-appraisal (the 'improved' suffix is ours). Arcam has revised the main printed circuit board and power supply, made component changes in the digital-to-analogue converter and audio outputs stages, and improved the mechanical isolation of a number of key components.

The player looks busy, even fussy, and not quite finished to the high standards of the best Japanese kit, but its soft styling is a relief from the conventional. The

display is also too bright, but can be dimmed or turned off.

It uses a Sony mechanism and a Burr-Brown bitstream DAC. The most interesting feature, however, is that it may be dealer-upgraded to Alpha 8, 8SE or Alpha 9 specs.

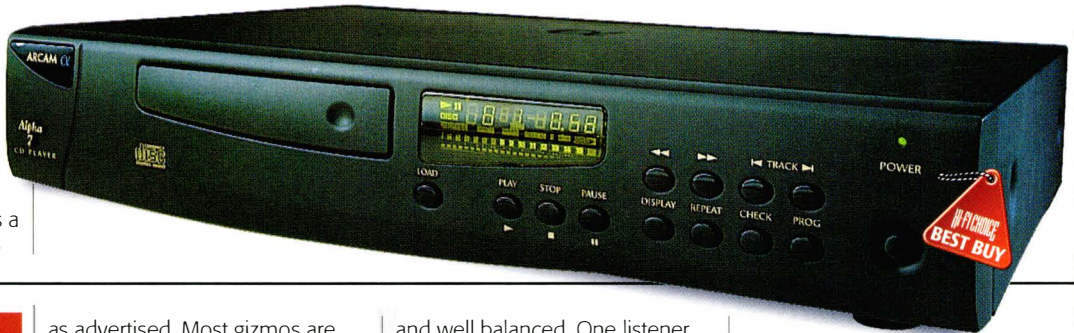
The listening panel was enthusiastic: One remarked on the "bass

weight, definition and expressiveness". Another found it rather "thin and jangly", but also acknowledged its strong resolution of detail, and its sense of pace and timing.

The Alpha 7 in its current, much-improved guise, gets as close to the music as one could

hope to achieve at the price. Its key strength is to perform in an even-handed way, imparting no obvious emphasis to music other than an occasional treble edge. Quite possibly it's the ultimate 'mid-price' CD player.

■ **A&R Cambridge** ☎ (01223) 203203  
■ **Reviewed** *Hi-Fi Choice* 179



**ARCAM  
ALPHA 8SE £599.90**

**T**he first Arcam CD player equipped to decode HDCD CDs, the Alpha 8SE is fitted with the Pacific Microsonics PMD-100 digital filter and HDCD decoder, alongside the same transport mechanism (Sony), motherboard and casework as the Alpha 7 and 8. It appears to use the same NPC one-bit PWM bitstream D-to-A converter, too.

The player looks like the standard Alpha 7 and 8, with a curvy moulded front panel and somewhat wheezy drawer mechanism. The fluorescent display has a rather narrow viewing window, and there's a plasticky feel overall, but the unit is well finished, and all features work

as advertised. Most gizmos are accessible on the front panel, making for a 'busy' appearance, but the controls are well organised. There is a compact and user-friendly remote control, but no headphone socket. Owners of Alpha 7 and 8 players can upgrade to 8SE spec with a £299 dealer-fitted upgrade kit.

Sound quality is clean, open

and well balanced. One listener found it to be the "best by a mile – each track sounded better than it has done all day". And yes, this was at the end of the day, and not the beginning. Criticism was pretty restrained, with the main concern being a "thumpy" and "over-warm" bass.

Hands on, I liked this player a lot. It offers consistently fine

**“...Hands on, I liked this player a lot. It offers consistently fine portrayals of recordings I know well...”**

portrayals of recordings I know well, and its clear, open presentation always made unfamiliar recordings more interesting and engaging. An excellent all-rounder.

■ **A&R Cambridge** ☎ (01223) 203203  
■ **Reviewed in**  
*Hi-Fi Choice* 176



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**MERIDIAN**  
506 £1,195

One of hi-fi's longer-running designs, the 506 has evolved with the times. It now incorporates a 20-bit 'Delta-Sigma' Crystal DAC, derived from the last incarnation of the now 24-bit 508. Unlike that model it has phono outputs (no XLRs). However, the transport mechanism is said to be the same data-grade, linear-tracking, three-beam laser pick-up, and elsewhere there's a sprinkling of audiophile components and a discrete Class A output stage.

The 506 is supplied with Meridian's full-system remote handset, while the mechanism is still installed within the conven-

nient loading drawer, which has the added mechanical advantages of a top loader.

The current 506 sounds strikingly different from its predecessor. There's a new-found sense of warmth and grace, and a more crystalline purity in the higher registers. It's altogether superior musically, with more light and shade, and a wider effective dynamic range than before, but most of all it's smoother, more organic and progressive – less synthetic, if you will.

The panel recognised these

qualities immediately, one commenting that the 506 wasn't particularly dynamic, but "perhaps it doesn't need to be, because it was more enjoyable to listen to". Criticisms were mild, the sound perhaps softer edged than previous Meridians, while the ergonomics will not please every

user. However, the bottom line is that this player possesses considerable charm and resolving ability.

■ Meridian Audio ☎ (01480) 434334  
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 176



**ROTEL**  
RCD-971 £349.95

Another year, another identikit Rotel CD player – slim, mean and workman-like, rather than attractive. But someone has been waving the magic wand below decks, and the RCD-971 turns out to have hidden talents.

The engine room contains dual-differential Burr Brown PCM63P DACs and a Pacific Microsonics

PMD100 HDCD digital filter. Other highlights include separate analogue and digital supplies, slit-foil capacitors along with other 'audiophile' components, and some mechanical damping. The mechanism is from Sony, but the ergonomics were less than exciting. Equipment levels are fairly standard for this class of machine.

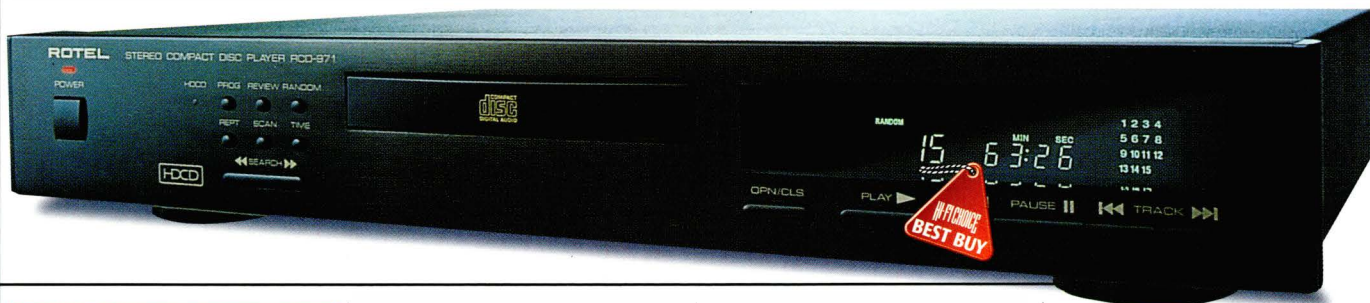
With too many recent Rotels, performance has lacked a certain

spark. Not so in this case. Here is a player that has a fullness and an unusual smoothness that should remain listenable long after others have started to grate on the nerves. But in no sense has this been achieved at the cost of resolving ability, clarity or dynamics. This is a refined but exquisitely detailed-sounding player.

Almost to a man, the panel agreed with this prognosis. The

slightly mid-forward balance seemed to suit all music types without favour, and the Rotel's ability to handle even the most challenging program material without sounding aggressive, or alternatively recessed, marks it out from the crowd. This exceptional player deserves the highest praise at its relatively modest price.

■ Gamepath ☎ (01908) 317707  
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 184



**YAMAHA**  
CDC-665 £219.95

Relatively inexpensive, the CDC-665 is essentially a five-disc carousel changer. Perhaps the only thing lacking is a means of scanning the carousel, to see which discs are loaded. That apart, it's very well provided with convenience features, plenty of display feedback, variable output level, and all manner of assistance with copying onto tape. There are, of course, the usual random, repeat and programme functions, plus a dimmable display and a 'PlayXchange' button, which allows disc swapping while playing. All this comes courtesy of a fairly typical set of CD-player innards, which although of an unremarkable construction, are of decent quality and assembly.

Given that Yamaha has squeezed a lot of functionality

from a tight budget, has the expenditure on sound suffered accordingly? On the whole it seems not. More comments were positive than negative, pointing out the solid and tuneful double bass pizzicato, good integration between a soloist and accompanying choir, good balance

between bringing out detail and the context of the whole, along with a natural acoustic space around spoken voice.

Criticisms were mostly minor. Musical climaxes can become rather coarse and harsh, and in some circumstances the bass has an oddly hollow ring, while trum-

pets can sound rather bright.

Imaging is a particular forte, and there's an impressive and useful set of features, so all things considered it's a surprisingly capable player for the price.

■ Yamaha Electronics (UK)  
☎ (01923) 233166  
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 178



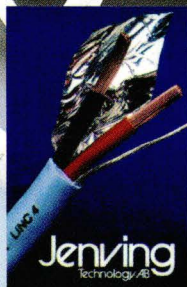


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# CD PLAYERS

**ARCAM****ALPHA MCD £449.90**

Arcam's Alpha MCD multiplayer uses a six-disc stacker mechanism, with its attendant drawback of having to load the discs one at a time, and only in Stop mode. There are clear signs of care being taken in little details of sound quality, component quality is generally

good while assembly is beyond reproach. The only real criticism is of some mechanical noise.

Bass is probably its greatest strength, as the treble can at times be a little dry. The midband is tonally very natural, but it feels as if there's more detail than integration; one can follow all the threads but not so easily hear how they

relate to one another. This also tends to make dynamics seem a little compressed.

Overall, and in a price context, however, the performance is good, going on very good, and the Arcam is very listenable in the long term, with very low listening fatigue.

- A&R Cambridge ☎ (01223) 203203
- Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 178

**DENON****DCD-835 £279.99**

Denon's DCD-835 was conceived and optimised in the UK to suit local market conditions. It has a number of technical features, which are uncommon at this price level, including a relatively massive transformer feeding ten independent regulated supplies. External presentation is simple, with a centre-mounted loader above a neat new display, and a basic range of features, which excludes a headphone socket but



provides an output level control.

By common consent, the Denon was considered a detailed player, and an open window onto the music, along with a trace of sibilance. Historically, Denon players have tended not to be the tidiest around, instead sounding sharp and dynamic with good, propulsive timing. This model is no exception, though it does add a level of refinement, which was not always the case in the past. Although improvements are presumably possible, the DCD-835 already achieves a high standard and comes highly Recommended.

- Hayden Laboratories ☎ (01753) 888447
- Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 184

**CYMBOL****CDP-12 £1,299**

With its roots in specialist British hi-fi company Onix, Cymbol continues to showcase the designs of Tony Brady, with upgraded circuits and construction. The CDP-12 may be a relative lightweight, but it has complex power supply arrangements. The case is a conventional steel wrap, the fascia simple and good looking. Finish is slightly rough by some standards, but everything works well, and the player confers compatibility with the few hundred HDCD recordings now available.

On the whole the Cymbol performed extremely well throughout the listening tests, with the only significant complaints concerning the bass.

I was equally enthusiastic about this player – although it couldn't match the Krell for pace and timing, it still proved itself more than capable of jumping through hoops

**COPLAND****CDA-266 £1,199**

Copland's CDA 266 is the third and least expensive CD player from this Danish company. It has clearly inherited the family virtues of sheer elegance, as well as the marvellous twist-and-push transport control.

It's quite similar to its more upmarket siblings in the digital domain too, the Pacific Microsonics digital filter providing HDCD decoding.



The panel found the Copland interesting and successful, and I too enjoyed my hands-on exposure to this new Danish pastry. It seems livelier and even better balanced than its colleagues, but shares their great staying power. At all times the CDA-266 remains both listenable and detailed. It is an excellent all-rounder that is simultaneously detailed and refined. Most impor-

in the midband. Its treble was equally agile and airy, with just the occasional sting in the tail to greet unsubtle recordings. This very well-conceived and thoroughly developed player is a pricey but consummate performer.

- Cymbol Electronics ☎ (01273) 517358
- Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 176

**HELIOS****MODEL 2 £995**

Helios products are manufactured in the South of France, by a company called ETNA, whose principal concerns are apparently high-tech and military in nature. If I was to say more, I'm afraid I'd have to shoot you. Middle rung in a three-strong range, the Model 2 is based on a Philips CDM12.4 mechanism, with a low-resonance carbon-fibre disc tray, and a laser carriage re-specified to reduce resonances and servo workload. The player is ultra-simple and classy, with

excellent ergonomics.

The sound quality is as individual and highly characterful as the technology, with distortions that are sometimes beneficial and sometimes harmful. Rarely is this unit less than interesting, and occasionally it is enthralling, with an almost visceral sense of air and space surrounding the performers on many discs. But there was little consistency, probably because the Helios cast its light and shadows in unexpected (musical) places.

- Absolute Sounds ☎ (0181) 947 5047
- Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 176





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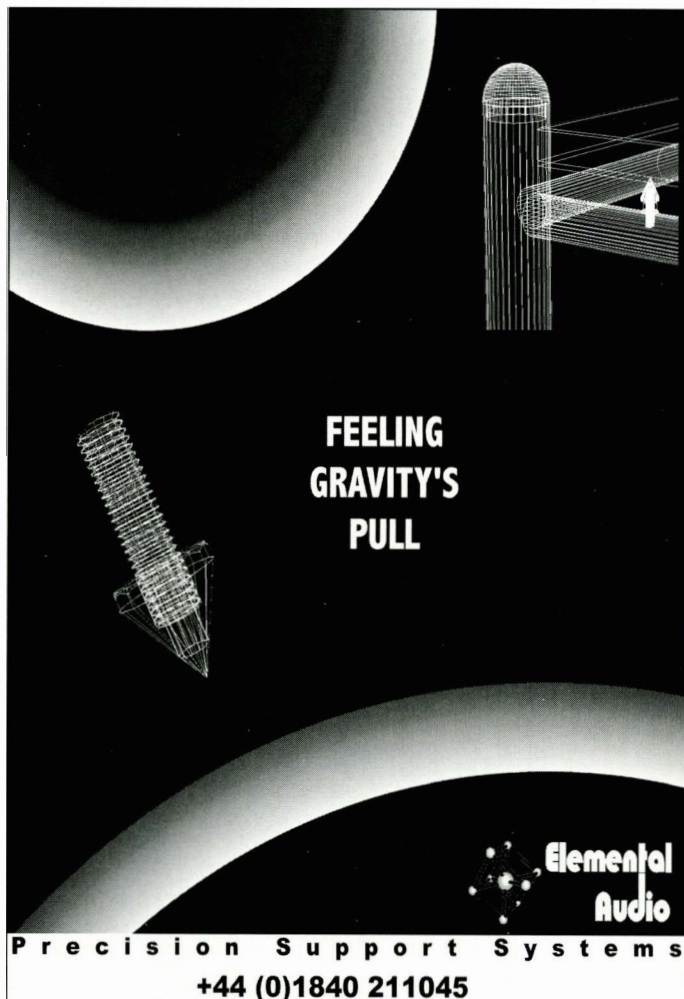
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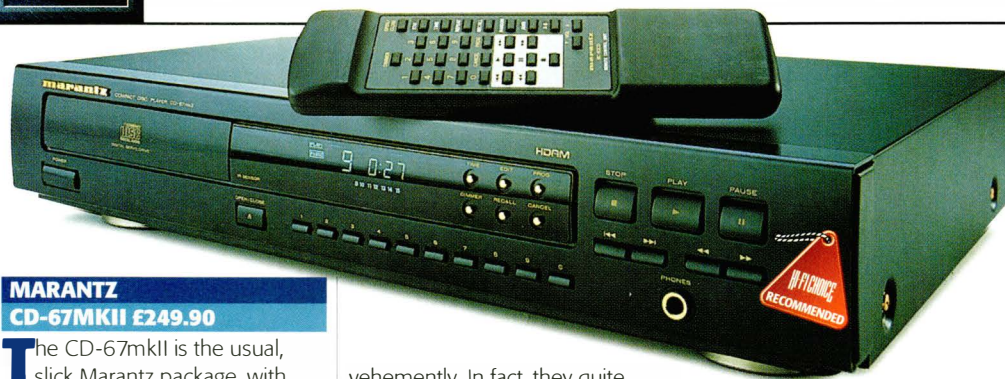
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# CD PLAYERS



## MARANTZ CD-67MKII £249.90

The CD-67mkII is the usual, slick Marantz package, with well-finished front panels discreetly enlivened by gold-coloured highlights and a classy track-read-out display. The quiet, smooth-acting CD loader is partnered by a nimble mechanism. Marantz claims only to have updated the power supply capacitors over the original CD-67 spec.

The original CD-67 failed to curry much favour on audition, attracting persistent criticism for harshness and aggression. The panellists made similar comments this time round, but not quite so

vehemently. In fact, they quite enjoyed it, returning an above-average score. In hands-on tests, this player sounded quintessentially Marantz-like – warm, a little distant and understated, but with a fairly smooth, articulate quality overall, although the warm, distant balance will not suit every listener's tastes or system. Nonetheless, this unit is clearly good value at £250, as a characterful player which usually manages to pull the right musical strings.

■ Marantz Hi Fi UK ☎ (01753) 680868  
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 179

## PIONEER PDS-06 £550

The PDS-06 incorporates a number of proprietary Pioneer technologies, including a new twist on Pioneer's Legato Link Conversion digital filter system, which enhances low-level signal resolution by 'requantisation of recorded 16-bit data into 24-bit data'. Other claimed enhancements include reduced jitter and an improved CD mechanism. With 20-bit Burr Brown converters, this

is the first multi-bit Pioneer for years. It's built like a tank, and sports an impressive gold-anodised front panel.

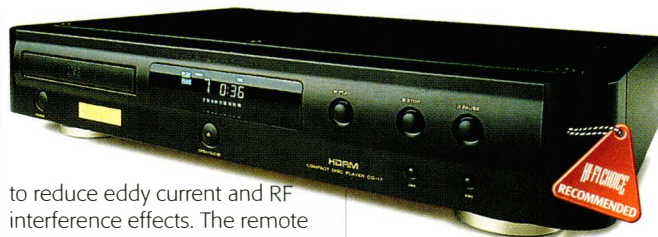
It scored well above average in the listening tests, but failed to generate massive excitement. Obviously no effort has been spared to knock off any rough edges, but have some essential musical sparks been extinguished as well? I would argue that the PDS-06 is too complex, and while very polite, never bites, even though all musical instruments need to show their teeth from time to time. Nevertheless, it offers excellent value for the modest asking price.

■ Pioneer High Fidelity (GB)  
☎ (01753) 789789  
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 176



## MARANTZ CD-17 KI SIGNATURE £1,99.90

One of an expanding series of Marantz products bearing the 'KI' signature, the CD-17 KI Signature is based on a CD-17, rebuilt by hand with various high-spec components. Apart from one regrettable sample assembly problem, it gives every indication of being superbly constructed, with widespread copper screening



to reduce eddy current and RF interference effects. The remote control is a fabulous metal encased confection.

This is a very good, but not outstanding player. It was always

smooth and elegant, but lacked any sense of edge, and that vital frisson of excitement. However,

the CD-17 KI Signature is about as refined as CD players come, and listeners should not suffer the fatigue that compact discs can cause. If you're looking for more dynamic qualities from your digits, however, you may find this player lacking. In any case, it's well worth short listing.

■ Marantz Hi-Fi UK ☎ (01753) 680868  
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 176

## PIONEER PD-S707 £300\*

The key technology feature of this player is the new DAC24. The 24-bit resolution claim should be taken with the usual yard of salt, but the main pitch is its reduced sensitivity to clock jitter. Otherwise, what you see is

broadly what you get: Pioneer's inverted player mechanism, a defeatable electrical digital output, a display that can be turned off, and there are plenty of play and tape-editing features.

A few listeners realised that the musical attributes of this player are more than ordinarily

music dependent. However, in separate hands-on testing the Pioneer gave a strong account of itself in different systems, with a range of predominantly orchestral and instrumental recordings, and a clear sense of image space and depth, though localisation was sometimes lacking,

and some of the better rock recordings sounded a little under-charged.

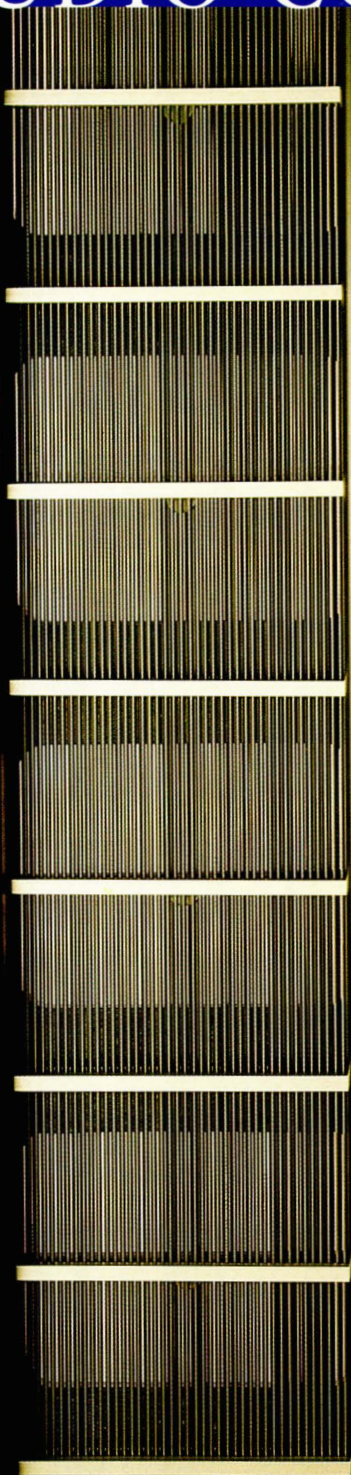
Not everyone's cup of tea, then, but well worth auditioning, and Recommended.

■ Pioneer High Fidelity (GB)  
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■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 184





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Audio Analogue Paganini CD player	£ 750
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# Five Stars

Paul Messenger explains why you should visit an independent

*Why use a specialist hi-fi dealer? The short answer is because he knows one hell of a lot more about hi-fi than you do. And if you've gone to the trouble of picking up a specialist magazine on the subject, you're obviously interested in something rather more than a mini system from the nearest electrical superstore.*

You've probably bought this magazine for one of two reasons. You're looking for advice (presumably unbiased and good) on choosing and using your hi-fi system, and/or you're checking out the ads to decide where to go and buy it.

The independent specialist dealer doesn't know everything, and he doesn't know much about you, but if music's an important part of your life, he's the only guy around who's able (and hopefully willing) to help you choose the equipment which will give you the best long term satisfaction.

#### **Power of the Press**

Dealers sometimes moan to me about the power of the press, and the disproportionate influence of its 'Best Buy' and multi-star ratings. Well, I've been in the press for twentysomething years, and still feel more ignorant than powerful.

The more I mess around with hi-fi gear, the more I become aware of our lack of real understanding of the subtleties involved, and the more I appreciate the importance of the dealer's skills and experience, in bringing together components so that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

We hacks get paid to write words, often about components in isolation, because individual product reviews are still the staple diet of the press. They can sometimes provide a useful guide to the way a product performs, but only under the particular circumstances in which the review was conducted.

The hi-fi reviewer attempts, with varying

degrees of success, to evaluate a particular component, and find something interesting (and hopefully positive) to say about it. That's about the end of it, and it's on to the next product.

The magazine prints the review, and that very process magically confers a measure of authority. Experienced hi-fi enthusiasts, who read reviews over a period of years and try out various products themselves, soon start to realise the limitations of that approach. Some reviews are better than others, but none can get to grips with the real heart of the problem - whether a given product will improve your musical satisfaction, in your system and your room.

#### **The Role of the Dealer**

The dealer's role is very different, and potentially much more valuable. He has the chance to talk one-on-one. If he's good at his job, he'll use that opportunity to find out what you as an individual are looking (or listening) for.

His motivation is very different too. Sure he wants to make a sale. That's the lifeblood of any shop. But he also knows that if something he sells really does deliver long term satisfaction, there's a very good chance you'll come back again to see if he can repeat the trick some time in the future.

If you go into a shop and demand a particular CD player, on the basis that it got seven stars (out of five) in last month's magazines, the shop will probably simply take the line of least resistance and sell it to you. (Or switch-sell you to a similar price alternative, if he's fresh out of stock



# For Value

**specialist dealer if you are searching for real hi-fi satisfaction**

of that particular flavour-of-the-month.)

If you go in and say you're looking for a CD player, and want his advice on what to choose, things are liable to become more interesting. The onus is now on the dealer to show what he can do. His first task is to ask the right questions to try and get some idea of what you might be after.

Asking the questions is the easy bit. The real skill comes in using the information to come up with a shortlist of likely contenders, and then conducting a demonstration so that you have a real chance to play a central role in the decision making process.

Putting together a successful hi-fi system might not be as difficult as it was twenty or thirty

*"If music is an essential ingredient in your daily diet, you owe it to yourself to become a member of the discriminating minority."*

years ago, but it's just as easy to make a mess of things. Put the 'wrong' combination of components together and it'll still sound a lot better than any cute little mini system package. It might even rate a five star review. But it won't match the potential of a carefully balanced and properly installed system, and it certainly won't cater for your own particular preferences and personality.

We British are notoriously indiscriminating consumers, at a mass market level at least. The majority of the population don't even bother to drive a car they're thinking of buying, never mind take the trouble to listen to hi-fi equipment.

The majority will therefore end up with hyperstore mediocrity, and hi-fi that's about as tasty as supermarket bread. But if music is an essential ingredient in your daily diet, you owe it to yourself to become a member of the discriminating minority.

You know full well that your music collection is as individual as your wardrobe, and just as

precious too, so it's worth taking the time and trouble to search out the dealer and equipment that will make that collection come alive, and give you a new buzz every time you play your favourite discs.

The independent specialist may not beat the chain store on price, but he continues to thrive in a hostile environment because real hi-fi is so much more than a matter of price. The people who work in these shops are themselves enthusiasts, often with many years of experience in meeting customer's needs, and the very necessary expertise to ensure that the whole thing is properly set up to deliver the best results.

The better the hi-fi, the more important it is to get the fine details right at the installation end of things, but even the least expensive equipment can be made to sound a whole lot better if good care is taken over the fine details - the support furniture, the cabling, the positioning of speakers and so on.

Without expert assistance even high class hi-fi can give mediocre results. With it you'll stand a very good chance of ending up with something rather more than a consumer durable - something which will be a source of considerable pleasure and genuine emotional satisfaction for decades to come.

***I agreed to write this signed piece, irrespective of the specific sponsors, because I believe the independent specialist dealer plays a vital role in giving customers long term hi-fi satisfaction.***

**Paul Messenger**

*The specialist Dealers listed here are professional and enthusiastic.*

*Give your nearest a ring for a demonstration.*

## STAR QUALITIES

value for money	★★★★★
service	★★★★★
facilities	★★★★★
verdict	★★★★★

### LONDON

**N1 GRAHAMS HI-FI**  
190a New North Road  
0171 226 5500

**SW11 ORANGES & LEMONS**  
61/63 Webbs Road, Battersea  
0171 924 2040

**W4 MARTIN-KLEISER Ltd**  
109 Chiswick High Road  
0181 400 5555

### SOUTH

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01233 624441

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01245 265245

**East Grinstead  
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INFIDELITY**  
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01895 465444

### MIDLANDS

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3 Church Lane  
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**Birmingham SOUND ACADEMY**  
152a High Street, Bloxwich  
01922 493499

**Leicester CYMBIOSIS**  
6 Hotel Street  
0116 262 3754

**Northampton LISTEN INN**  
32 Gold Street, 01604 637871

**Shrewsbury CREATIVE AUDIO**  
9 Dogpole 01743 241924

### NORTH

**Cheadle (Stockport)  
AUDIO COUNSEL**  
14 Stockport Road  
0161 428 7887

**Oldham AUDIO COUNSEL**  
12/14 Shaw Road  
0161 633 2602

**Sheffield MOORGATE  
ACOUSTICS**  
184 Fitzwilliam St  
0114 275 6048

### SCOTLAND

**Edinburgh  
RUSS ANDREWS HI-FI**  
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**Glasgow STEREO STEREO**  
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# DVD PLAYERS

## DENON

DVD-3000 £699.99

Denon's DVD-3000 has a plain, rather severe front panel adorned by a simple display and a bare minimum of controls. Under the skin, it shares a common engineering heritage with Panasonic's DVD-A350, albeit with minor differences. Unusually, the DVD-3000 features built-in Dolby Digital and MPEG-2 audio converters. The video DAC is a 10-bit device, which puts its on-screen performance alongside the best. The other headline feature is a full 24-bit 96kHz D/A converter.

The back panel is equipped with twin SCARTs, the usual mix of composite and S-Video sockets, and the six additional analogue outputs for Dolby Digital and MPEG-2 Audio. On the front is a headphone socket and associated level control.

The Denon received an impressive test score, placing it top of the DVD group overall as far as the panel was concerned. The DVD-3000 makes a more than acceptable CD player, which is not far adrift from the standards of many (though not the best) dedicated CD players in the same price



range. It has a smooth midband and strong, propulsive timing, offset by a slight loss of focus at the frequency extremes and a hint of the HF muddle that seems to be endemic with the current genera-

tion of DVD hardware. Its AV credentials are also well above average, which makes this model a particularly attractive all-rounder.

■ Hayden Laboratories ☎ (01753) 888447  
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 180

## DVD PLAYERS RECOMMENDED



## PANASONIC

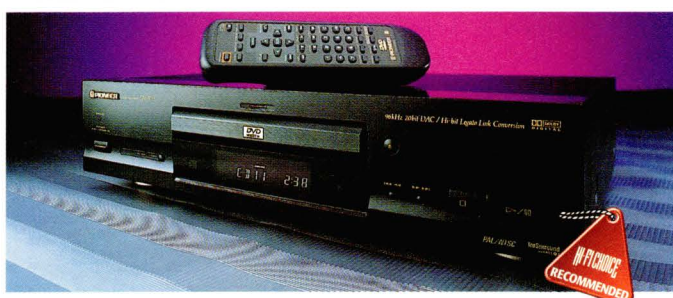
DVD-A350 £699.95

Billed as a 'second generation' DVD, Panasonic's DVD-A350 is unusually well equipped for audio and video purposes. The audio side is taken care of by a 24-bit 96kHz converter – though the S/PDIF output down-samples 96kHz audio to 48kHz, and it won't look at CD-Rs. It has on-board Dolby Digital and MPEG-2 Audio converters, while video is delivered in component RGB form. As usual, DTS DVDs appear to be incompatible, though Red Book-compatible CD DTS music

discs work just fine. Build quality is lightweight but operation is slick.

Sonically, this is an excellent performer, and it's the midband that's most impressive. What criticisms there are concern the frequency extremes, the treble in particular sounding slightly ill at ease and muddled, and low-level detail is suppressed compared to upmarket CD players. It has the usual foibles of current generation DVD hardware, too, but remains a well-balanced and enjoyable player for the most part

■ Panasonic UK ☎ (0990) 357357  
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 180



## PIONEER

DV-505 £449.99

The least costly DVD player currently available by a substantial margin, the DV-505 is a full 24-bit 96kHz machine. The video processor is a 10-bit component, with the usual Dolby Digital and MPEG-2 Audio compatibility. This, like other Pioneer DVD players, is unusual being able to output a full 96kHz bitstream via its S/PDIF socket. Only the most basic controls are fitted to the front panel, the rest relegated to a simple, compact handset, while the back panel is less generously populated

than some.

Although fairly even and neutral through the midband, this model was criticised for a lack of detail and openness at the top end. On the plus side, timing was ranked "very good", and stereo soundstaging was explicitly praised.

The crucial fact here is that the Pioneer is not just an adequate player; it has the wherewithal to hold its own into the 24-bit 96kHz era – and it undercuts the rest of the group on price, too.

■ Pioneer High Fidelity (GB)  
☎ (01753) 789789  
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 180

## SONY

DVP-S715 £599.99

With a smart, champagne-gold, extruded alloy fascia and attractive controls, the DVP-S715 is a classy-looking player. It can deliver a digital data stream with Dolby Digital or MPEG-2 audio coding, and has good picture quality. It benefits from a 24-bit 96kHz D/A converter, though the S/PDIF digital outputs will only output a 48kHz data stream.

The Sony lacks the organic quality and awesome power in well-recorded orchestral music



and piano recordings, but it sounds clean and sharp, with a powerful, driving bass and a typi-

cally open, articulate midband. The bass was tuneful and controlled, and the midband layered

and open, if rather flat spatially.

The fresh, open vitality of the Sony marks it apart from its peers, but it failed to completely transcend the standards set by good mainstream CD players. Listening fatigue was a factor in long-term use, thanks to a treble that refused to sound wholly natural and transparent. With careful system matching, some improvement can be expected, and its performance overall is good enough to earn a Recommended tag.

■ Sony UK ☎ (0990) 111999  
Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 180





# HI-FI SUPPORTS

## WILSON BENESCH ASSIDE STAND £590.00; PLATFORMS £130 EACH

Even if the Asside wasn't a top-flight sonic performer, we'd be mighty tempted by its drop-dead gorgeous appearance. A perfect expression of the Wilson benesch house style, it combines exquisite woodwork with elegant design (both in the engineering and aesthetic sense) and, of course, a conspicuous helping of carbon fibre to boot.

The carbon forms the three upright tubular legs that support four 10mm laser-cut steel platforms on which the real-wood shelving rests. The structure is formed entirely from complex curves, with no single sympathetic resonance frequency. The basic tenets of the design are low mass and a high stiffness-to-weight ratio.

In practice, the Asside is a knockout product. It gets our vote as the best-looking table in the test, and only narrowly misses the best sound award. In a nutshell, it sounds right. That's all. It doesn't seem to add or subtract anything from the music. If you want a thumbnail assessment, you could say that it combines the warmth and body of the Deadrock with the precision and dynamics of the Elemental. But, in truth, it's better than that. It brings naturalness to the party and its rhythmic abilities are second to none. If it doesn't quite have the grip or control of the Elemental, or the openness of the Townshend, it's as deftly musical as either – you just want to keep on listening.

■ Wilson benesch ☎ (0114) 285 2656

■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 181

“...In practice, the Asside is a knockout product... In a nutshell, it sounds right. That's all. It doesn't seem to add or subtract anything from the music...”

## SOUND ORGANISATION Z545 £150

The Z545 is a compact, simple and straightforward stand, with conventional bent-metal construction and glass shelves. Its bare essentials, no-nonsense approach squares well with its beer-budget price. It comes flat-packed for self-assembly, which is more fiddly than some designs, but it's satisfying when you know you've tightened up everything just so.

Its sound quality may not be the last word in resolution or timbral

finesse, but it is crisp, authoritative and honest. In many ways, the Z545 has the same tonal and dynamic character as the best tables, but is a little reigned in. While satisfyingly punchy and enthusiastic with The Artist (Prince), for instance, it isn't as ruthlessly revealing as, say, the Elemental, or, for that matter, as rhythmically capable as the Wilson benesch. It's snappy enough when required but lacks the last degree or two of agility and precision when the pace really hots up.

In the end, though, it's a good all-rounder, with solid, tuneful bass and a likeable musical presentation. It doesn't excel in any particular area, but doesn't trip up, either.

The Z545's five-shelf '560 stablemate was such a comfortable Best Buy when we tested it, that something extraordinary would have had to happen for anything to change this time round. True, standards at the top have risen, but the simple SO is still in touch with the best. So, at £150, it's a bigger bargain than ever.

■ Sound Organisation ☎ (01284) 701101

■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 181



## TOWNSHEND SEISMIC SINK STAND FROM £995

Looking not unlike a model oil rig, this stand is a high-mass amalgam of steel pillars and heavily damped shelving, with a fixed base unit on which the shelves 'float'. In fact, they rest on two air cells (developed from the 3D Seismic Sink isolation platform), which are inflated with a bicycle pump. It's important not to over inflate, as the slower the table wobbles and bounces, the lower the frequency its isolating properties reach.

Townshend's preferred demo technique is to play something on CD or vinyl with the SSS pumped up, then deflate it and repeat. The degradation in sound quality is dramatic, almost shocking. But the

SSS was never designed to run flat – it doesn't mean all solid stands sound that way.

However, the SSS is, by a small margin, the support that will get the most out of your gear, even if the difference isn't night and day as Max's 'one-note dem' seeks to suggest. At its best, it has a truly liberating effect on music, with a wide open, three-dimensional sound, which is entirely free from the confines of the speakers.

Treble is pure and grainless, instruments and voices often startlingly natural, and the bass deep, resolved in texture as well as pitch and effortlessly powerful. Just

occasionally, though, it can seem a shade too relaxed for its own good. But nothing will make your gear sound more expensive, expressive or sexy.

■ Townshend Audio

☎ (0181) 979 2155

■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 181





**SOUNDSTYLE  
X100 £230**

The striking Legato Silver-finished X100 won't be everyone's idea of decor-friendly, but Soundstyle offers a range of lacquered paint finishes, too. In essence, the X100 is a simple metal frame with four large tubular legs. It's wider than it is deep and has a reassuringly stable stance.

Four meaty glass shelves, each resting on rubber nipples, are back-painted to match or contrast the frame colour. Hefty cone-style spikes offer rudimentary levelling adjustment, while the frame itself is light but decently rigid. Cross-member spacing gives a generous 165mm gap between shelves. Set-up is simplicity itself and everything about the Soundstyle, from the packaging to the bright finish of the top caps and cones inspires confidence.

After the IXOS and Townshend,

the Soundstyle could sound a bit bass-light, but this didn't make much difference to its presentation of the Bob James track, which was very fluid and sexy. More generally, its tonal balance is a little brighter and brasher than most of the stands in the test but, with the right material, it never fails to sound lively and entertaining. It isn't the most subtle or revealing performer here, lacking the resolving power of the very best, but it has good timing and fine overall balance.

■ Soundstyle ☎ (01284) 701101  
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 181



“...The Optimum was effective in pure hi-fi terms: transparent, well balanced and smoothly integrated...”

**OPTIMUM INTERNATIONAL  
OPT 660 £349.95**

This is a self-assembly tripod with modular shelf stacking. You can have up to eight levels, and vary the space between shelves, as the leg sections are available in 120, 150, 170 and 230mm lengths.

Aesthetics are decidedly ambitious, with curved shelves, which even incorporate 60mm diameter cable-management apertures. All smoked glass and shiny metal, the Optimum is the sort of thing Donald Trump might have bought

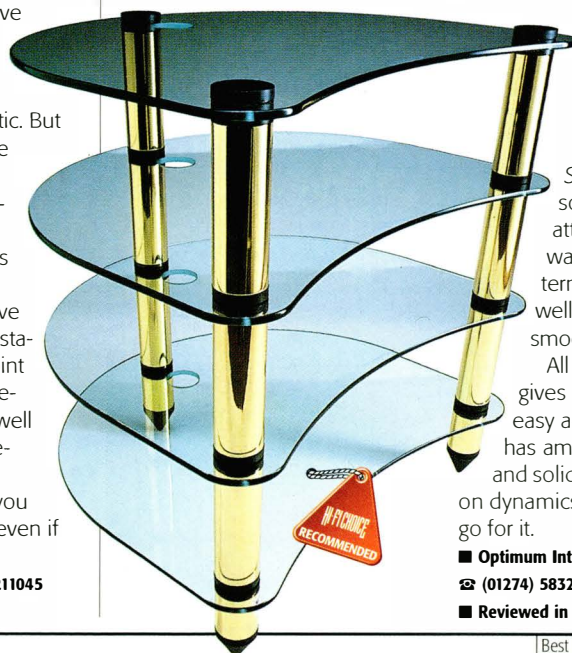
for Ivana. Optimum says the brass-gold finish legs will enhance the look of gear with gold lettering. Fair point, but you could argue that two wrongs don't make a right.

It sounds good, though, doing the business with all types of music. Detail isn't as sharply etched as with the best stands here, and it doesn't sound especially fast, but it is a consistently classy and engaging performer.

The Oscar Peterson trio came across with fine clarity, good timbral colour, and realistic scale and imaging. Oscar's *Steinway* had body, soul and plenty of attack. The Optimum was effective in pure hi-fi terms, too: transparent, well balanced and smoothly integrated.

All in, the Optimum gives a natural view and easy access to the music. It has ample measures of grip and solidity, and doesn't stint on dynamics. If you like the looks, go for it.

■ Optimum International 2000  
☎ (01274) 583249  
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 181



shelves are fabricated from 20mm-thick, polyester-bonded, marble agglomerate, available in different colours and grain structures. Each shelf is damped with rubber matting and decoupled from the spikes by bonded, inset lead/zinc discs.

On audition, the Elemental falls into our 'revelation' category. It's as if all distortion and coloration have

been scrubbed from the slate. It sounds remarkably clean, fresh and unsullied, even unromantic. But that's sometimes the case when you get control, focus, separation and resolution of this order.

Where it really shines is with complex passages played loud – images have tremendous solidity and stability, and there's a pinpoint sense of instrument placement and ambience, as well as bags of dynamics, freedom and shading. Once you've set this table up, you won't want to move it – even if you could!

■ Elemental Audio ☎ (01840) 211045  
■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 181

**ELEMENTAL AUDIO  
ISOTUBE X4 + REFERENCE  
UPGRADE £1,199**

Elemental Audio, of Camelford, Cornwall, is a relative newcomer to the equipment and speaker-stand business. Its stands are big, heavy, expensive and proud of it. Standing some 92cm high and weighing-in at 60kg, the Isotube X4 four-tier system makes most of the competition look fragile.

The four-legged Isotube frame is a monster, made totally from thick-walled tubular steel which is welded for maximum rigidity. Elemental says that this confers excellent standing-wave dispersion characteristics. The Reference



# RECORDERS

## SHARP

MD-R2 £299.99\*

As one of the two (to date) manufacturers of MiniDisc mechanisms, Sharp (the other is Sony) clearly has an advantage when it comes to making budget recorders. Even so, for half the price of its nearest rivals here it's hard to see any corners cut, though there's a high level of integration inside. Nevertheless, the feature count remains generous, with both coaxial and optical digital inputs, one optical output, a headphone socket and the usual sample rate converter and editing functions. True, the display looks a bit cheap, and the metering is crude, with relatively large steps, but there's also an extremely useful real-time clock.

There's little to complain about in the sound stakes, too, though there is a degree of hardness and a slight lack of bass – the two things possibly related as they often go together – which seems largely a function of the DAC and audio output circuitry. The mid-



band has good presence and detail, and treble seems generally sweet and extended, though MiniDisc has so far not demonstrated completely pure treble.

This model is no worse than any others, but does produce just a hint of grain and loss of sweetness on delicate sounds. Likewise, there's a small loss in acoustic

surrounding instruments, which also has the effect of closing down the stereo image, though the MD-R2 reproduced image depth well. Solo piano was a weak point, with some loss in body and scale to the sound; the same effect being felt to a certain degree with rock music.

Evidently, this recorder is not at

all shown up by much pricier competition, and is indeed a good example of the standard that we can generally expect from current-generation MiniDisc. A few minor irritations on the ergonomics front are not going to stand between it and a Best Buy rating.

■ Sharp Electronics (UK) ☎ (0800) 262958

■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 177

## RECOMMENDED RECORDERS

## KENWOOD

DM-9090 £549.95\*

The DM-9090 MiniDisc recorder is a rather large and imposing machine, and obviously well equipped with features. It has quite a collection of digital inputs and outputs, with two optical and one coaxial input, plus one optical and one coaxial output. Control layout is friendly, basic operation is fine; things get more interesting when one investigates the more advanced editing options.

This Kenwood had quite a rich sound, with good midrange detail and generally quite extended treble. If there is a weak area it is imaging, which is not quite as stable as it should be. Solo piano did very well, as did small jazz ensem-

bles, highlighting the even-handed balance and strongly defined bass. String orchestra developed a slight extra glaze, and solo voice a small degree of roughness on sibilants, but preserved character well and lost little intelligibility.

Despite small quibbles, this is a capable machine, and no less impressive via the quiet and transparent analogue inputs. It has useful facilities and is straightforward to use. Most importantly, it has none of the 'uninvolved' quality which seemed to characterise early MiniDisc recorders. It's not the cheapest around, but the price seems very fair for what's on offer.

■ Kenwood Electronics UK

☎ (01923) 816444

■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 177



## SONY

MDS-JA30ES £699.99

MiniDisc is already the true gadget freak's format, and this MDS-JA30ES is the most gadgety thing ever. Think of a feature and it's here. The only thing that seems to be missing is long-play mono mode, but you'll have to refer to the full review (*HFC* 177) for the complete list.

Apart from the usual editing functions, Sony has made things simpler by providing for erasure of part of a track, and true random combining of tracks, while the remote control is one of the best-designed I've seen.

All that lot would, of course, be rather wasted if the deck didn't sound at least reasonable. Fortunately, it's better than rea-

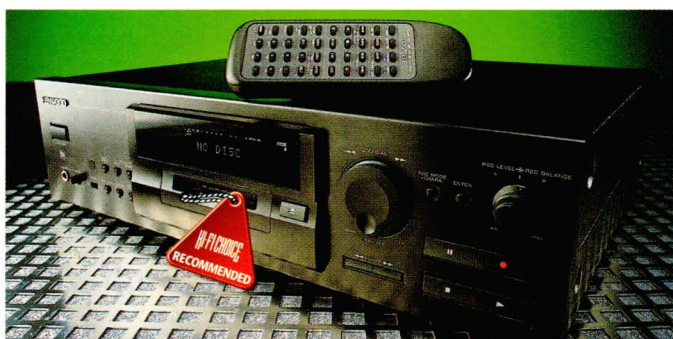
sonable. The area that seems most lacking is the analogue inputs, which, compared to the rest of the performance, are rather muffled and veiled.

One of the real acid tests is string orchestra, and the Sony made a relatively good showing, though there was still some glare. Solo piano was solid and well defined, while voices were natural, apart from just a hint of coarseness on sibilants. Bass is always strong and clear; midband natural and uncoloured.

Altogether, this is a very capable deck which shows good potential for the medium. With just a tiny bit more refinement, it could be stunning.

■ Sony UK ☎ (0990) 111999

■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* issue 177





**PHILIPS**  
**CDR880 £499.99\***

Philips created quite a stir, and ruffled more than a few feathers in the copyright business, by introducing the CDR870. It was the first audio CD recorder below £500 and the first to handle rewriteable CD-RWs. Paul Miller, writing in *HFC* 174, uncovered a jitter problem, and Philips responded by updating the model to this CDR880.

The plastic front panel, though smart enough, does look a bit raff in the company of most contemporary hi-fi separates. Still, all the basic functions are catered for.

Connections include the usual analogue in and out, plus both Toslink and coaxial in and out, allowing use with a good-quality external DAC for replay. The mechanism is based on a cast-alloy chassis, but the display has only eight coarse steps on the level display.



**“ ...If there is a difference in sound quality between original and copy, played on the same machine, it's very small indeed ... ”**

As a straight CD player the CDR880 is listenable but lacks the last word in detail, subtlety and polish. As a recorder from digital inputs it should be completely transparent, since what goes in comes out – I copied a minute of material on and off disc and found not a single different sample (in around five million). If there is a

difference in sound quality between original and copy played on the same machine, it's very small indeed. The analogue inputs do have their own character, and it's not at all bad, just marred by some loss of detail and imaging.

- Philips Consumer Electronics
- ☎ 0181 689 4444
- Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 184

**PIONEER**  
**PDR-555RW £480**

The PDR-555RW is very much a riposte to the Philips CDR880, matching it pretty much spec-for-spec and adding a few unique twists, too. Nevertheless, it's clear from the insides that Pioneer moved swiftly to bring this model onto the market – it doesn't share the Philips' highly-integrated innards, for example. The layout, however, looks smart and clear, and the plastic front panel manages to look a bit like brushed alloy. Among the features is a fader, which lets you fade in at the start and out at the end of a recording.

The PDR-555RW uses Pioneer's 'Legato Link' DAC filter system, which largely determines the replay sound quality. It has an open, spacious sound with good extension, but imaging is sometimes less than perfect and it's not always possible to hear 'through' the sound. Long-term listenability is good and the tonal balance is neutral.

Recording via the digital inputs does not give a perfect clone, due to the built-in sampling-rate converter, but you'd be pretty hard pushed to know it. The sound fares rather less well via the analogue inputs, with some upper midrange coloration and grain creeping in. However, only a few DAT and more expensive open-reel recorders have previously offered this level of performance to the domestic hi-fi enthusiast.

- Pioneer High Fidelity (GB)
- ☎ (01753) 789789
- Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 184

**“ ...Recording via the digital inputs does not give a totally perfect clone, but you'd be pretty hard pushed to know it... ”**



**SONY**  
**MDS-JB920 £300\***

If writers had unlimited space to describe features, we would all get very rich from Sony's MD recorders. These edited highlights must necessarily refer readers to the more comprehensive full review of this EISA Award-winning deck. To date, no-one has matched Sony for editing ease and power, and the JB920 can select edit times to within 12ms. Bedroom DJs may appreciate the variable speed/pitch function.

In the final analysis, this is still a MiniDisc recorder, and has that familiar sound which seems to be a characteristic of data-reduced formats. Initial impressions are very favourable, and the sound seems immediate, clear and full-bodied. However, there remains that peculiar lack of communication which seems to encourage the brain to switch off and lose interest in the music.

Still, as MiniDisc recorders go,

**“ ...No-one has matched Sony for editing ease and power, and the JB920 can select edit times to within 12ms... ”**

this is a good 'un. Recording via digital inputs makes no immediately obvious mark on the sound, while via the analogue input there's nothing amiss besides a very small amount of chestiness; the detail and imaging are still very good. The sample-rate conversion and digital level control are as near transparent as to make no odds, in this particular context.

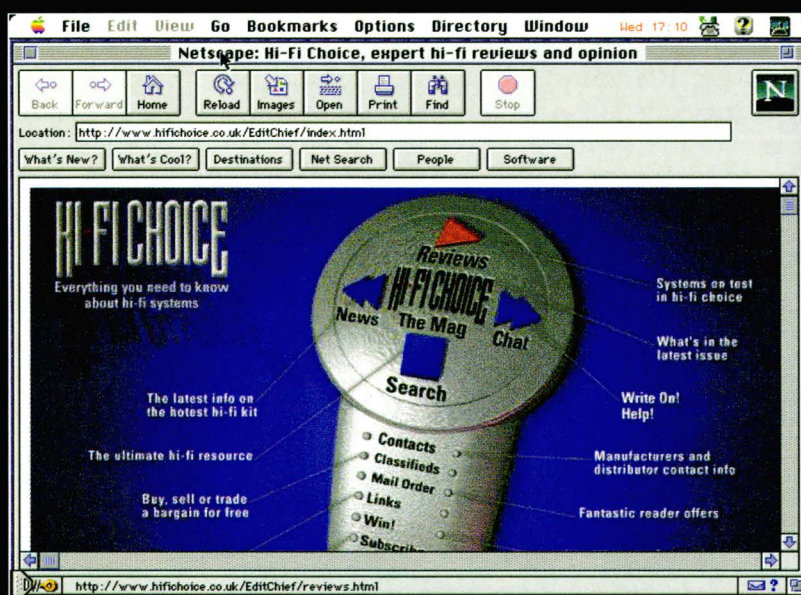
Despite reservations about the ultimate quality of the format, one can appreciate that this is a fine machine which, in many situations, will perform very well.

- Sony UK ☎ (0990) 111999
- Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 184





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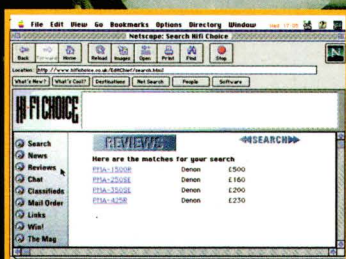
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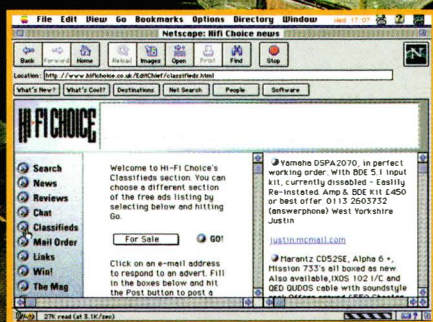
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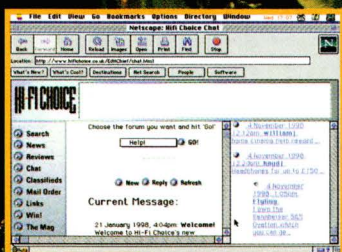
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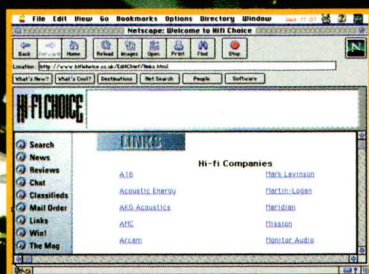
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# SPEAKERS

## DALI 606 £400

Dali loudspeakers, along with NAD electronics, is part of a Danish operation, with extensive retail as well as manufacturing interests. The speakers tend to be low-cost, high-sensitivity floor-standers – a format Dali's rather good at – this new 606 representing a lot of loud-speaker for £400.

The substantial acreage of black vinyl might not look that pretty, and there's a complete absence of floor-coupling arrangements, but there's no disputing the good, basic, material value for money, even if the aesthetics have been largely ignored. A single 25mm fabric-dome tweeter sits above an imposing line of three main drivers. Room measurement indicates that free-space siting is preferred, though some wall reinforcement is feasible.



Listening test results were impressive, and although the slightly rich and dark balance wasn't to every taste, the decent bass extension, fine stereo sound-staging and competent dynamic layering all contributed to a fine

performance, especially at the modest price. Hands-on work only confirmed its good all-round behaviour, fine headroom, and commendable freedom from unwanted nasties.

Big, cheap speakers are the most difficult design task of all, which makes the achievements of Dali all the more impressive, in creating such an essentially well-mannered speaker alongside high sensitivity, good power handling and fine bass extension, which all adds up to an obvious Best Buy.

■ The Audio Club  
☎ (01926) 482107

■ Reviewed

Hi-Fi Choice 174

## DYNAUDIO APPLAUSE 50 £577

A long-established Danish company, Dynaudio is better known for its unusual main drivers than complete speaker systems. The Applause 50 is one of the cheapest models in the range, but cheap is not an adjective readily applied here. £577 is a lot to pay for a simple, demure and decidedly understated, vinyl-finished, two-way stand-mount.

Dynaudio argues that it puts the money into the engineering, with results that are reflected in the sound quality, and that its unique main driver is a cut above the rest too – the proof of which puddings hopefully comes in the listening.

The bass alignment wasn't quite ideal for our room, but the speaker works fine in free space, and supplied bungs may be inserted for close-to-wall siting.

Placed behind the black curtain, the Applause 50 passed with flying colours. "Excellent vitality – jig-tastic, mate!" was one reac-

tion. A more careful and considered appraisal sums it up rather well: "Tight and rhythmic with a hard edge. Pretty exciting but just on the edge of aggression for me. Great if it stays this side of the razor's edge."

That slight tendency towards hardness was the only real criticism, and might be a matter of system selection. When it comes to sound and music reproduction, this is an obvious Best Buy.

■ Dynaudio UK ☎ (01732) 451938

■ Reviewed Hi-Fi Choice 174



## FOCAL JMLAB TANTAL 515 £495

Although JMLab is approaching its 20th anniversary, and has been exporting for more than a decade, this French company's complete loudspeaker systems are relatively new to British shores.

This floorstander is part of a new 'entry-level' Tantal range. The company's main claim to fame is its Focal drive unit technology, and even the humble Tantals have versions of the famous 'inverted-dome' tweeters, with titanium diaphragms. The bass-only and bass/mid drivers use specially-damped paper cones in cast chassis with generous magnets.

Compared to the drivers, the enclosure looks a bit prosaic, but everything looks tidy, and the 'rosewood' vinyl is easy enough on



the eyes. The in-room far-field response definitely favours free-space siting.

The 515 has a bright and upfront sound – but what some panellists found open and involving, others considered too clinical and edgy. Sibilants and vinyl surface noise can sometimes be intrusive, but clear diction is maintained even at low listening levels. What made Joni Mitchell's *Mingus* sound wonderful, revealed the dire recording quality of Oasis' *Be Here Now* all too clearly. The fact that the 515 makes these differences obvious is a point in its favour. Above all, this speaker's effortless communication skills set it apart.

■ Sound Image UK  
☎ (0181) 255 6868

■ Reviewed

Hi-Fi Choice 183

## KELLY TRANSDUCERS KT2 £700

Kelly Transducers, the loud-speaker wing of electronics manufacturer, Musical Fidelity, is a range engineered to give unusually high sensitivity – all the better to reproduce 'microdynamics', according to the propaganda.

This KT2 has a great deal in common with the more expensive KT3. The only real difference is the somewhat smaller and less substantial box, finished in vinyl wood-print rather than a real-wood veneer.

The key to the high sensitivity is the two decent-size aerogel diaphragm main drivers, separately port-loaded and mounted d'Appolito-style above and below a horn-loaded tweeter. The far-field, in-room response shows a slightly dry

character when mounted clear of walls, but is a pretty well-judged alignment overall.

The tweeter sits several degrees below ear level, which is maybe why the KT2 seems rather lacking in spaciousness and air.

However, in other respects, the KT2 is almost all good news, registering good scores on the listening tests with unusual unanimity.

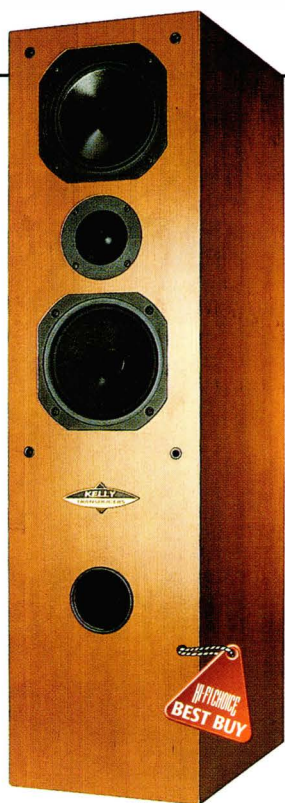
The midband dynamics are involving, though they can sound a little harsh, despite the midband and top end sounding rather shut in. The bottom end lacks some drive and authority, while the top end lacks smoothness, air and delicacy. But it's the 'big picture' that the Kelly handles so well, and that total coherence and believability is what really matters.

■ Musical Fidelity  
☎ (0181) 900 2866

■ Reviewed Hi-Fi Choice 183







### KELLY TRANSDUCERS

KT3 £1,200

A famous name from the early days of British hi-fi, Kelly Transducers has been bought by Musical Fidelity, to launch a range of speakers whose whole *raison d'être* is to offer exceptionally high sensitivity.

The key to the KT3's high sensitivity lies in the combination of twin main drivers with ultra-light aerogel-cones, each assisted by a generous box and large port, crossing over to a single horn-loaded tweeter. There's ample bass output for free-space siting, and good low bass extension, too. Build is solid while the presentation has an artful retro feel.

Top gun in the listening tests, subtle and articulate intelligibility is a major strength – singers sounding very believable and remaining unusually consistent in relation to background ambience. Several testers commented on the impressive lack of strain and the extra ease with which the musical messages came through the mix, despite the slightly dull presence and top end.

The KT3 is not cheap or perfect, but there's nothing comparable that matches its sensitivity nor the resulting dynamic precision. That fact alone would seem ample justification for a Best Buy flag, despite the occasional quirks elsewhere, while the substantial boost in amplifier headroom is an additional bonus. Although the load is a demanding four Ohms, the sensitivity advantage is much more than ample compensation.

■ Kelly Transducers ☎ (0181) 900 2866

■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 174

### LIVING VOICE

AUDITORIUM £1,500

Best known for its enormous and super-efficient horn loudspeakers, the Living Voice speaker brand hails from Nottingham, and has developed this £1,500 Auditorium to try and achieve similar aims on a rather less ambitious scale.

An essentially lounge-friendly design, the speakers have two main drivers mounted above and below the tweeter (d'Appolito-style), with additional bass reinforcement provided by a generous rear port, tuned to 38Hz. The speakers come supplied with separate plinths, fabricated from crackle-finish steel, which provide secure fixing for chunky 8mm spikes. In-room, far-field responses show an unusually smooth and even overall balance through the bass and midband, best suited to free-space siting.



■ Living Voice

☎ (0115) 981 3562

■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 180

Immediately after connecting the Auditorium, one becomes aware of the restrained and somewhat 'hooded' balance, but after five or 10 minute's acclimatisation this design's very real strengths start to show themselves. This is an exceptionally subtle loudspeaker, maintaining fundamentally correct acoustic

perspectives and tonality, alongside a lively expressiveness and considerable delicacy and transparency. It could perhaps have a little more bass drive, and slam, and a bit more presence 'bite', too. However, the fine overall coherence and agile sense of timing are of a kind rarely encountered in larger speakers.

The Auditorium is a particularly welcome addition, not just because of the attractive packaging, but because it combines high sensitivity with an unusually smooth, neutral and well-behaved balance.

### MUSICAL TECHNOLOGY

PM15 £475

A relatively new company on the scene, Musical Technology has hitherto specialised in its own species of compact floorstanders – pentagonal in plan section, and based on M-Tech's own particular implementation of metal diaphragm-driver technology. However, the company is fully aware that stand-mounts have their own advantages, and has developed two such models primarily for professional users.

The PM15 is the less expensive, following a classic rectangular, 15-litre, bookshelf-type, two-way format with drivers based closely on the Harrier SE. Styling is conservative but very nicely finished in a real-wood veneer. The inherently dry bass alignment is well suited to close-to-wall positioning.

The panel listening tests gave inconsistent results, but the

PM15 repeatedly came up trumps throughout the subsequent and more extended hands-on sessions. It does have a touch of 'character', with a slightly forward midband and 'hooded' presence, but the dynamic range and subtlety through the bass and midband sets it comfortably clear of the pack – an easy-listener but a thoroughly involving one.

The more time spent listening to the PM15, the more one appreciates this subtle and beautifully-voiced design. The sound might be a little too cautious and restrained for

some tastes, but this can prove a blessing with much modern programming, and few competitors can match its fine focus, transparency and dynamic range.

■ Musical

Technology

☎ (01656) 842000

■ Reviewed

*Hi-Fi Choice* 183



### MISSION

752 FREEDOM £578

Mission's £578 752 Freedom is a smaller, simpler and more understated brother to the 753 Freedom (a Best Buy in *HFC* 164). Where the 753F is notable for an entire baffle full of main drivers, the 752F is a simple two-way, with a single bass/mid driver covering the lower two-thirds of the audio range. However, the 752F's singleton is impressive, with a cast frame and a 120mm cone made from an ultra-light aerogel.

Real wood and matched veneers cover sides, top and the lower third of the front, while a wide chamfer is sliced off the sharp enclosure edges all round. A moulded plastic plinth increases the overall stability footprint. The speaker is well suited to free-space siting, though some wall reinforcement is feasible.

The 752F gave a good account of itself. It didn't actually top anybody's lists, but seemed to do most things well, one or two better, and nothing poorly. The balance is perhaps a little safe and conservative, the slight lack of top end robbing the sound of some 'air', but tempo and tonality are good, and there's a decent measure of dynamic grip. This is a good all-rounder, in a lounge-friendly package at a realistic price.

■ Mission Electronics ☎ (01480) 451777

■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 174







# SPEAKERS



## NEAT ACOUSTICS MYSTIQUE 2 from £575

Neat's floorstanding Mystique was originally reviewed (and Recommended) in *HFC* 160, and is now in Mk2 guise, even though the two look very similar externally.

This is certainly an elegant-looking compact floorstander, thanks to ultra-clean lines in which no attempt is made to hide the drive units. Veneer covers all five visible faces, and each edge has been precisely rounded to soften the look and feel. The whole thing is mounted on a chunky little plinth. A fine in-room balance has good bass extension, though some wall reinforcement may be beneficial.

The Mystique 2 has a lovely combination of wide dynamic range, fine crossover coherence, good freedom from time-smear and decent bass extension, with a firm and authoritative bottom end.

It works well at low levels, but there's no denying that the brighter-than-average balance might not always suit.

The original Mystique was good, but the new Mk2 is significantly better, sufficient so as to deserve a Best Buy rating, but with the minor caveat that the top end might be a little too 'hot' for some tastes. Sensitivity is modest, so a powerful amplifier is preferable.

■ Neat Acoustics ☎ (01833) 631021  
■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 177

## PMC TB1S £399

Based closely on the TB1 (a Best Buy in *HFC* 160), the TB1S comes in a rugged, charcoal, rough-textured finish which emphasises the company's professional credentials. Founded by a couple of ex-BBC engineers, PMC's trademark is its own particular flavour of transmission-line loading.

This chunky two-way stand-mount has a large transmission-line type port set into the back. The main driver has a cast frame and 125mm doped-paper cone, while the tweeter uses a 25mm metal dome. Free-space siting is likely to give the best results, though some close-to-wall reinforcement is feasible.

The balance is a bit wayward, and the TB1S can sound rather dull and shut in (depending somewhat on the character of the drive system and how close you choose to sit). It is certainly significantly more laid back than average, and this is an encouragement to listen at higher levels than brighter-sounding designs.



Listening 'through' the balance reveals uncommon transparency through the midband, with fine dynamic range and discrimination. The treble is quite sweet, and although the bass can be a bit uneven, it has an unusual ability to deliver bass guitar lines with some semblance of proper dynamic and

tonal shading. On balance, this is a good all-rounder, with a generous sound and dynamic capabilities superior to most of its immediate competition.

■ PMC ☎ (01707) 393002  
■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 177



## TANNOY MERCURY M1 £119.90

Tannoy's Mercury M2 was a mega-hit which blew away much of the competition at around £139.99, partly through being larger than its immediate rivals. Now, M2 has a baby brother, the £119.99 M1 – small enough to fit anywhere, as good

looking as any of the competition, and cheaper, to boot.

It also sounds great. First, it's a match for anything in its class in resolution, focus, presence, and in its ability to portray music as a living, breathing 'event'. Second, it doesn't get much wrong. And third, if you want something that sounds sexy, expressive and

deeply musical on the cheap, it's almost stupidly good value for money.

The sparkle and animation is engaging, yet it can also be self-effacing and even-handed. Here's a speaker that doesn't favour one style of music over another – it has enough balls and rhythmic drive to pump out dance and rock tracks with infectious energy, yet reserves a delicate touch and felicitous tonal sweetness for classical, jazz and AOR. Never do you get the impression that it isn't allowing tonal and dynamic contrasts free rein.

For £120, the M1's essential musicality is nothing less than a revelation. Truth is, these babies have poise in spades – a lucid, undemonstrative, and wonderfully easy-breathing delivery. This speaker sings and projects brilliantly. It's enough to bring you joy.

■ Tannoy ☎ (01236) 420199  
■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 179





### ACOUSTIC ENERGY AE200 £249.95

The AE200 is a small stand-mount speaker, just slightly larger than true miniatures, with a £249 price-tag which represents a comfortable premium over the budget sector. One justification comes from the metal-cone main driver, and although the box is only finished in black vinyl wood-print, it's solidly built from braced 18mm MDF.

The far-field average room mea-

surement confirmed the expected desirability of close-to-wall siting, in order to give the bass a helping hand. It also showed an obvious and broad mid-band emphasis, which the listening panel found rather attractive. Said emphasis makes an excellent first impression, by hyping up the detail a little, but after

extended hands-on listening across a much wider range of programming, it's revealed as a rather 'shouty' quality which can become tiresome.

If it doesn't have the subtlest midband around, the AE200 scores well in most other respects. The sound is always quick and agile, with a good dynamic range and fine stereo imaging, too. In all, this cheeky chappie has charm by the bucketful.

■ Acoustic Energy ☎ (01285) 654432  
■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 177

### B&W CDM1 SE £599.95

B&W's original CDM1 was a great commercial success, but it has now been replaced by this new CDM1 SE, which looks almost identical but features a number of technical improvements. It's a rather cunning re-invention of the classic standmount two-way, thanks to an interesting shape, an external tweeter, and clever cabinetwork. Room measurement indicates that some wall reinforcement may be helpful.

The general consensus was that this is a fine all-round performer, clean and particularly strong through the midband. The latter is beautifully coherent and delicate, with considerable dynamic range, and a realistic warmth, generosity and richness usually lacking in small speakers.

The presence region is a bit laid back and shut in, with a slight touch of nasality, but there's also a cunning avoidance of aggres-

sion, which makes this one speaker that relishes being driven hard. However, the bass didn't sound very firm and seemed to lack serious drive and authority. Nevertheless, this latest CDM1 SE turned in a pretty impressive sonic performance, and is still one of the most stylish speakers around.

■ B&W Loudspeakers ☎ (01903) 750750  
■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 177



### CASTLE KENDAL £399.90

Revising the name of a favourite *Hi-Fi Choice* Best Buy from way back in the '70s, this new Kendal is a very different animal, eschewing unfashionably dumpy dimensions in favour of an altogether sleeker floorstanding configuration. It's also one of the smallest around.

The main driver uses a tiny 95mm cone made from CFC (carbon fibre composites), which is, rather surprisingly, under sealed-box loading. Even close against a wall, the in-room response leaves the sub-400Hz bass and lower mid somewhat suppressed.



The bass might be a little disappointing in quantitative terms, but qualitatively it's rather good – certainly smoother than average, with fine timing, good ultimate extension, and a real capability to drive the music along with direction and impetus.

The sound as a whole might be a bit lightweight and in-your-face forward, and can react badly with some mixes, but by and large the Kendal gets away with it, and for the most part, it proved a thoroughly entertaining experience. That it's also one of the prettiest and most compact floorstanders around are further grounds for confident Recommendation.

■ Castle Acoustics  
☎ (01756) 795333  
■ Reviewed  
*Hi-Fi Choice* 177

### AUDIOVECTOR M2 £1,399.95

Representing the more specialist and upmarket face of Denmark's very successful loud-speaker industry, Audiovector's M2 is the least expensive floorstander in a six-strong M-series range, which is particularly unusual in featuring a measure of future upgradeability.

It stands around a metre tall and presents a rather sober, severe and monolithic appearance. Build feels exceptionally solid and substantial. The in-room response indicates that the speakers should be sited clear of walls.

The M2 won approval for its even-handed neutrality, clarity, drive and overall smoothness. Reservations were mostly of a slightly 'boom 'n' tizz' character. The bass has fine momentum and decent timing, but it's also a little too full and rich. The top end is inclined to draw attention to itself – though this open-back tweeter design certainly sounds uncommonly clean. In consequence, the midband seems a little restrained and slightly 'shut in'.

Taken as a whole, this is a fine all-round package, which does very little wrong and most things rather well.

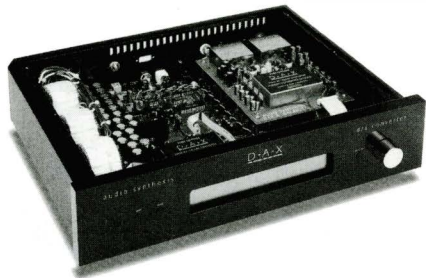
■ Glave ☎ (01622) 664070  
■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 180



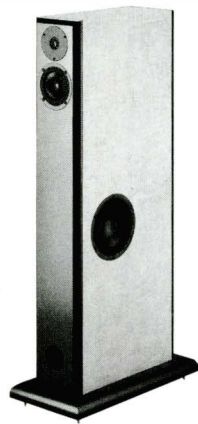


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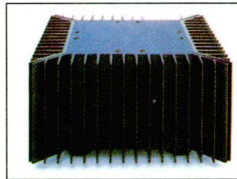
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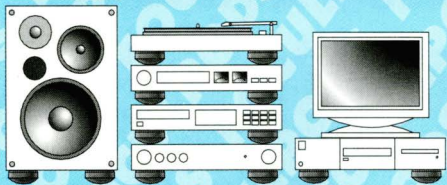


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## CELESTION

A2 £1,499

A very heftily built, yet quite compact floorstander, deep yet not standing as high off the ground as many of its rivals, Celestion's A2 is a beautifully-finished example of the cabinet maker's art, going some way towards justifying its high price-tag.

A two-way with twin main drivers above and below the tweeter, advanced technologies are part of the design. Finite element analysis helped create the 25mm titanium-dome tweeter, while laser interferometry was used to place the internal box bracing for best

effect. Room measurements indicated, and listening confirmed, that wall reinforcement is beneficial.

The listening panel was quite taken with the A2, enjoying its "well balanced, civilised presentation", even though the bass errs on the rich and heavy side of neutrality. The midband is even-handed, if a little too laid back for some.

A lot of good-looking speaker helps justify the hefty price-tag, for a stylish and attractively compact package, equally well suited to home cinema or hi-fi duties.

■ Celestion ☎ (01622) 672261

■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 180



## JBL

SVA 2100 £1,250

JBL's 2100 is a real monster, dimensionally speaking – too big by far for the majority of British customers and homes, I dare say. Still, there's no denying you get a lot of speaker for your £1,250, while the two 10-inch-frame main drivers and two large rear ports provide plenty of bass-radiating area.

Pretty it's not, the acreage of black vinyl woodprint inevitably dominating all but the largest rooms. However, the large Pro-style 'elephant's bum' horn tweeter confirms the emphasis is primarily on putting the Loud into loudspeaker. Free-space siting is mandatory.

Without the visual cues, the SVA 2100 didn't sound all that different from the norm – much to the panel's surprise. It's not a great loudspeaker, but it is a very competent one, delivering exceptionally powerful, deep, clean bass with an attractive even-handedness elsewhere, too.

There's some lack of smoothness and transparency, and on some material the bass out-

put can become a little too excessive. However, the prodigious headroom and power handling are just the ticket for the latest dance grooves.

■ Gamepath Ltd ☎ (01908) 342866

■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 180



## HEYBROOK

PRIMA 2 £129

The Prima 2 is a modestly proportioned, two-way miniature with a plain-cloth grille. The best-looking bit is the Heybrook badge, which is synonymous with serious Brit-fi. And it's in the name of better sound quality that a number of changes have been made to the original Prima, with new drive units and crossover network.

Do these changes make a difference? In a word, yes. The Prima 2 sounds open, articulate and accurate, with a sweet, natural treble and an unswervingly musical presentation. It starts and stops precisely, and despite a lean bal-

ance it's thoroughly communicative. There's an outstanding impression of cohesion, and the Prima has abundant transparency. What it doesn't sound, though, is all that muscular.

Heybrook's improvements to the Prima seem to be all-embracing. This is now a speaker with structure and rhythm in the bass, intelligibility in the midrange, and even both smoothness and detail in the treble.

You can find a weightier, more rounded sound elsewhere, but you won't find anything with more delicacy and finesse, or one with sharper focus.

■ Heybrook Hi-Fi ☎ (01752) 333800

■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 179







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# SPEAKERS



## MISSION 700 £129.90

The cheapest model in a manufacturer's line-up is often the most important, and the 700 reaffirms Mission's intention to be the budget King. Up to now Mission's best shot at this crown has been with the £140 731 Pro, but the 700 aims to be much more mainstream and still offer better value.

A key feature is an all-new bass/mid driver with a striking white-glass composite cone. The mock leather-grain baffle finish looks good, too, as do the two front-firing ports flanking the area between the drive units.

The 700's sound has show-off tendencies. It's even-handed in the sense that it draws attention to all areas of the frequency range – it's a bit toppy, a little boomy, and

has a forcefully presented midrange – and yet it's musical because it successfully captures the structure and timing of a performance.

The 700 isn't perfect, but it's certainly a cut above your average budget box and offers a lot of box, volume and musicality for your money.

■ Mission Electronics ☎ (01480) 451777  
■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 179



## MAGNAT VINTAGE 720 £1,199

This 30-year-old German brand's products have only made fleeting appearances on the UK market. The Vintage 720 is relatively inexpensive considering its height and weight. It's not the prettiest floorstander, but it does have an interesting hexagonal shape.

An essentially simple two-way design, the 720 uses two main drivers with chunky cast chassis and 120mm metal cones mounted above and below a small 14mm ceramic-dome tweeter (d'Appolito-style). The in-room response implies that free-space siting is mandatory.

Very well received in the unsighted listening tests, the 720 somehow combines the weight and scale of a relatively large loudspeaker with the coherence of a relatively simple two-way configuration. The end result might not be the smoothest or most delicate sound around, but it does pack a serious punch, with good weight, plenty of impetus and a real sense of purpose. The presentation is a little crude, but the whole is certainly more than the sum of the parts here, and the end result is very entertaining and communicative, rough edges notwithstanding.

■ Henley Designs ☎ (01491) 834700  
■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 180

## JPW RUBY 4 £999.95

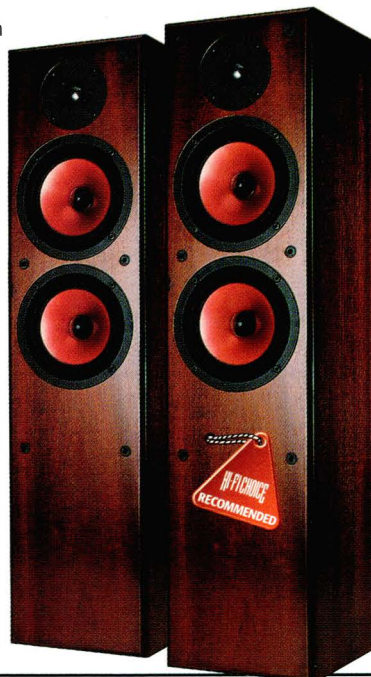
One of JPW's upmarket Ruby range, the Ruby 4 originally carried a hefty £1,300 price-tag. It's now £1,000, which is clearly a better value-for-money prospect – still decidedly upmarket, but more affordable than before.

Dimensionally, it's a classic compact floorstander, beautifully finished in a real-wood veneer, and comes complete with a shaped

tray base with chunky eight mm floor spikes, into which the speaker sits snugly. The two main drivers are sealed-box loaded, and some wall reinforcement might be helpful to achieve the best balance.

The listening panel enjoyed the Ruby 4: "A fast, dynamic speaker with excellent tight, tuneful bass, somewhat spoiled by a hard and forward midrange"; "Good fun factor... tonally and dynamically just fine for me, but lacks the last ounce of midband focus". The Ruby 4 became a favourite in the hands-on tests, too. It does sound a little shiny and forward, but maintains fine clarity and articulation, even at very low levels.

■ JPW ☎ (01752) 333800  
■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 174



“...A fast, dynamic speaker with excellent tight, tuneful bass, somewhat spoiled by a hard and forward midrange...”



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# SPEAKERS

## MISSION

750LE £248

An exquisitely beautiful speaker, to both visual and tactile senses. The combination of a lustrous rosewood veneer with clever post-formed edges and a cunningly-shaped grille covered in something resembling Lycra makes this tiny 750LE irresistibly strokable.

However, the bottom line is that this is a very small loud-speaker, with a small main driver and port, so the 750LE might be better suited to smallish rooms. Even with wall reinforcement, it struggles a bit below 100Hz.

Mixed results on the listening tests seemed largely a function of the small size. Over a longer period, I found it acceptable on

the majority of day-to-day programming, but playing full-band-width music does expose its limitations. However, the midrange is beautifully judged – restrained, but exceptionally subtle and delicate. Colorations are modest, imaging is convincing, and boxiness is impressively well controlled.

Yes, in absolute terms, this is a small speaker, but its superior midband will be more than enough to carry the day for many potential purchasers, especially if the room is small, and loud rock/dance music is not a priority.

■ Mission Electronics ☎ (01480) 451777

■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 177



## MISSION

774 £499.90

Mission's new super-slimline 774s are designed to appeal to the company's 'traditional customer base'. They're better looking, better finished and altogether neater than the larger 700s. Indeed, this 774 is one the most attractive speakers on the market – an object lesson in what can be achieved combining professional industrial design with modern manufacturing techniques.

Two small aerogel-cone main drivers are mounted above and below a mechanically decoupled tweeter, and backed up by a port – the in-room response favouring free-space siting.

This isn't the most neutral speaker around in balance terms – the 'sucked out' presence and brighter-than-average treble are quite evident – but despite either of those criticisms, this is a thoroughly entertaining and engaging loudspeaker.

Razor-sharp timing with good dynamic expression are the keys to fine communication skills. For some, the sound of the 774 will be a little too 'thin' and it isn't at its best when playing very quietly, but those are forgivable quirks in the overall picture.

■ Mission Electronics ☎ (01480) 451777

■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 183

## MONITOR AUDIO

702 PMC £599.95

A pricey but exceptionally pretty standmount when tested, Monitor Audio has recently reduced the prices of a number of models, with the 702 PMC now costing a significantly more competitive £599.95. The second model up a four-strong range, this is a simple two-way, rear-

ported design, which likes to be mounted in free space and clear of walls.

Well liked on the listening tests, the 702 PMC wasn't to every taste but attracted plenty of favourable comments, including, "Integrated, fast, controlled"; "Doesn't clog up"; "Got guts and doesn't overhang";

"Very articulate"; "Nice texture to the choir"; "Rounded, balanced and nice to listen to".

And the only slightly less favourable comments: "Makes

“...“Toe-tapping stuff with energy and verve”... “A well balanced product that’s hard to trip up, and easy to enjoy”...”

musical and lyrical sense better than usual"; "Toe-tapping stuff with energy and verve, though still not dynamic enough"; "A well-balanced product that's hard to trip up, and easy to enjoy."

The cautious voicing probably makes a lot of sense from a component matching point of view, and the recent price reduction ensures continuing Recommendation.

■ Monitor Audio ☎ (01223) 242898

■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 174





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# SPEAKERS

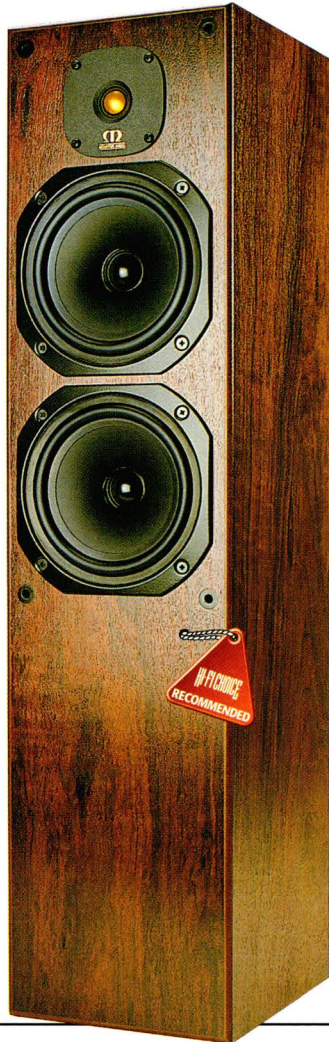
## MONITOR AUDIO MONITOR 4 £499.95

The Monitor series is the least expensive and elaborate in Monitor Audio's roster, while this Monitor 4 is the top model therein. It's a floorstander using a twin-main-driver arrangement in sealed-box mode – a configuration that makes a lot of sense.

It has a pretty enough surface finish, but elsewhere in the detail there are minor economies compared to MA's more upmarket models. Although not supplied, matching plinths are a £30 option. Best results were achieved with the speakers placed close to a wall.

Inconsistent panel test results were probably down to balance anomalies, with strong bass and rather thin midband. At the end of the day, the whole is more than the sum of the parts here. The Monitor 4 might be flawed, but it's also fun, communicates well, and enjoys being driven hard. The low midband sensitivity and oddball balance are a couple of disincentives, but otherwise the news is all good, especially with regards to the attractive cabinetwork and the confident headroom.

■ Monitor Audio ☎ (01223) 242898  
■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 177



## MUSICAL TECHNOLOGY CONDOR FROM £1,000

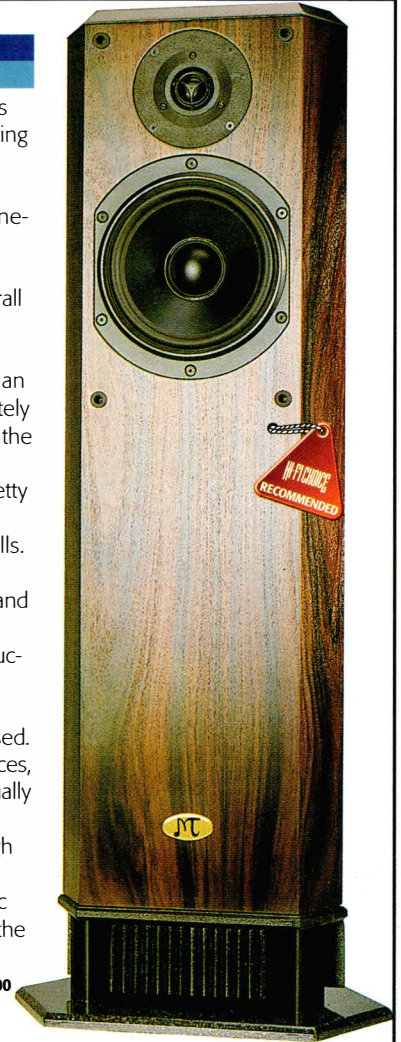
Musical Technology focuses on pentagonal floorstanding enclosures, and its own thin metal-diaphragm main drivers. This Condor is very much a refinement of the same formula, employing a variety of unusual techniques to improve the overall dynamic range.

Strikingly attractive in a yew-wood veneer, the Condor uses an external crossover in a deliberately loose-fitting box that sits below the enclosure but above the plinth. Room measurements show pretty good bass behaviour when the speaker is mounted clear of walls.

Strong in the unsighted tests, the Condor delivers consistent and even-handed results, and was praised for its orchestral reproduction. Colorations are well controlled, and the midband is especially clean, clear and focused. There's a little untidiness on voices, but the top end proper is unusually sweet, and timing is good.

The Condor succeeds through subtlety, neutrality and consistency, even though the dynamic range is more impressive than the dynamic tension.

■ Musical Technology ☎ (01656) 842000  
■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 174



## NAIM CREDO FROM £1,090

An unusual 'two-box' design, the Credo decouples a small, upper enclosure housing the main driver mechanically from a larger, lower enclosure, which provides acoustic loading and accommodates the tweeter. The result looks rather chunky and sharp-edged, but is nicely veneered. Room measurement showed strong 50Hz output wherever the speakers were placed, so experiment *in situ* for best results.

Sonically, the dynamic range is very good indeed, and the midband very expressive, providing subtle textures. But the sound is a little cold and



clinical, and the bass rather lumpy and thumpy – not slow or thick, but rather somewhat uneven and lacking in warmth. Speech, too, has a slightly 'pinched' character, and the forwardness does

tend to highlight deficiencies in microphone technique.

An interesting, entertaining and very involving loudspeaker, the Credo is also a rather uneven mixture, which proves highly effective at getting to the heart of musical rhythmic subtleties. However, it does this at some cost in terms of tonal accuracy, and with a presentation that some listeners found a little too edge-of-seat for comfort.

■ Naim Audio  
☎ (01722) 332266  
■ Reviewed  
*Hi-Fi Choice* 180

## NEAT ACOUSTICS CRITIQUE 2 £385

Neat Acoustics is one of Britain's smaller speaker specialists, and the Critique, now in Mk2 form, is a medium-size, two-way standmount finished in the company's attractive and distinctive house style – with real-wood veneer, radiused box edges and no attempt to cover up the flush-mounted drivers. The in-room trace shows a dry bass alignment, well suited to close-to-wall siting.

The listening panel really warmed to the Critique, the midband attracting most praise for its fine voicing and overall naturalness. Good control is another plus, the music coming through with a refreshing lack of 'overhang', and with a firm bass delivery that remains creditably unruffled. The top end has an open, 'airy' character, though there was the odd complaint of a slight 'edginess', and some

felt that it erred a little too much on the side of restraint, especially at the bottom end.

Sensitivity is modest, but in other respects the technical performance is largely impressive, and the price is realistic for the fine finish and attention to detail.

■ Neat Acoustics ☎ (01833) 631021  
■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 183





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# SPEAKERS



## RUARK EPILOGUE from £239

Well known for classy cabinet work, Ruark eschews the beer-budget end of the market, preferring to concentrate on the quality end. This tiny two-way Epilogue – priced from £239 with appropriate premiums for the more luxurious veneers – is, in fact, the least expensive model.

The small size inevitably compromises bass performance, but the miniature speaker has quite a lot going for it qualitatively, even if it might not match bigger units for weight, headroom or loudness capability. It's no surprise that close-to-wall siting usefully helps out in the bass region.

The sound is inevitably rather thin and lightweight, the more so because the upper midband is quite strongly projected.

Although overload was never far away, the bass end actually works rather well, with good pace and timing, provided the material isn't too heavy or played too loud.

Dynamic contrasts could be stronger, and some felt the forwardness might be fatiguing over the long term, but others welcomed the openness, liveliness and freedom from boxiness.

■ Ruark Acoustics. ☎ (01702) 601410  
■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 183

## TDL CHILTERN CF100 £449.95

TDL's reputation was built largely on the basis of big, floorstanding, transmission-line loaded loudspeakers with prodigious bass capabilities, a description which hardly fits this little CF100 Chiltern standmount. A key feature is the use of carbon fibre composites for the main driver cone.

The presentation is demure and tidy, with a touch of genuine class in the way the drivers are flush-mounted into a front baffle with neat, post-formed edges. Despite its modest dimensions, the Chiltern is definitely a free-space design.

It attracted plenty of praise from the panellists: "Very communicative of mood... engaging" and

"Big, bold sound without being in your face... doesn't draw unnecessary attention to itself". However, there was criticism too, with one panellist complaining that "these small speakers aren't breathing in the way the larger ones did... the lack of cabinet colorations seems to be outweighed by the lack of dynamic contrast". Not a speaker for bass freaks, but the delicate and transparent midband is its own reward.

■ TDL Electronics. ☎ (01628) 850111  
■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 183



## SYSTEM AUDIO 1130 £499.95

A small Danish specialist, System Audio's 1130 is one of the most elegantly slim floorstanders this reviewer has ever seen. The box is 13cm wide, which may count far more with buyers than the observation that £499 is a pretty substantial price-tag for a vinyl-clad box.

The slim front view does restrict the size of the main drivers. There are two here, operating above and below the tweeter. Despite compact dimensions, in-room measurement shows the 1130 should give optimum results when well



clear of room boundaries.

Although obviously no bass excavator, the 1130 has very real strengths elsewhere – sufficiently so as to pick up a 'best-of-the-day' ranking from the listening panel. The bass may lack the weight and loudness capability of larger rivals, but it has decent drive and timing, and excellent bass-through-mid coherence. Stereo images are well focused, and the sound is free from 'boxiness' and very even-handed.

Not ideal for those who like their Prodigy loud, but for most normal purposes it deserves warm Recommendation.

■ Atacama Audio ☎ (01455) 283251  
■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 183

## TDL RTL3 SE £449.95

Based closely on the original (and Recommended) RTL3, one of the pioneers of the budget floorstander scene, this SE variation now includes a separate plinth, spikes, and gilt fixing screws for the drivers. The crossover network has also been extensively revised.

The TDL RTL3 SE is a decent size and hefty box for the price, looking slim and sophisticated from the front and with plenty of depth to provide a firm mechanical footprint. Two identical main drivers are placed above and below a soft fabric-dome tweeter. Internal bracing stiffens up

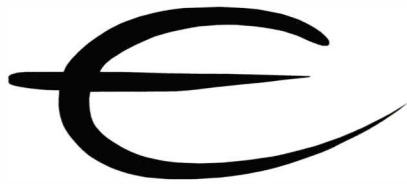
those large-area side panels, while the bass alignment favours free-space siting.

This speaker split the panel into two. Some hated "the rumbling, thuddy bass with crashy treble", while others basked in "the powerful bass, which is tight and in control, giving a solid foundation to the sound". The rather bass-heavy, mid-recessed balance must be a matter of personal taste. That said, it's a good-value big box, with a characteristic flavour and sufficient fun factor, so it would be unfair not to recommend it.

■ TDL Electronics ☎ (01494) 461803  
■ Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* 174







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# MINI SYSTEMS



## TEAC 500 REFERENCE SYSTEM £799.95\* (BASIC SYSTEM EXCLUDING SPEAKERS)

Teac is a major player, and it isn't hard to understand why the 500 Reference System has ruffled a few feathers among the competition. Its high-precision, pseudo-lab appearance is a bit like Copland's high-end stuff, and looks a lot more expensive than the £799.95 price-tag. The CD unit has a 1-bit DAC, while the cassette deck has Dolby B, C and HX Pro. The two-band tuner (no LW) comes with all the RDS trimmings and 30 presets, while the amp has a muscular 50 Watts. The system price doesn't include speakers but

there's a terrific remote control, which is stylish and easy to use. Various upgrade paths are possible through adding extra matching components.

Sonically, the Teac successfully combines a big, open and confident delivery with plenty of transparency and finesse. Absolute neutrality isn't a goal – and neither should it be in a system like this. Instead, the Teac goes for a colourful, expansive, slightly larger-than-life presentation, which does the music no harm at all and suits the Mission 731i Pro speakers we used very well.

So, it doesn't quite hit the audiophile heights, but it is hi-fi central. On Fourplay's formidably

funky *Bali Run*, the system's effortless weight and presentation of fine detail – both specific and ambient – weren't just involving; they were thoroughly alluring. Here's a system that sounds open and airy yet potently full-blooded, with tonal colours and timbres convincingly resolved. Even better is a bass which not only integrates extremely well but combines genuine, controlled extension with fine energy and rhythmic drive. That's the Teac's great strength: it unifies a rare lightness of touch with a real sense of power and, as such, creates a remarkably complete and engaging sound.

■ Teac ☎ (01923) 819630

■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 174

## MINI SYSTEMS RECOMMENDED



## DENON DM-7 £649.99\* WITH SPEAKERS OR £1,099.99\* WITH SPEAKERS AND MD

Billed as a 'Super Micro System', the Denon DM-7 seeks to combine the sound quality of a good separates set-up with the user-friendliness of a modestly-dimensioned micro. In basic form (£649.99), it consists of a receiver, three-disc CD changer and cassette deck; matching speakers cost £69.99. The receiver carries a 30-Watt output with a 30-preset AM/FM RDS tuner. Our package came with the optional MiniDisc player for £1,099.99, which has optical in/out as well as analogue connections. Each component is housed in very cute silver and grey casework.

The DM-7 sounds very grown-up and polished – big, solid and detailed. Bass is powerful and punchy, and if the treble can be a bit splashy with the supplied cheapo interconnects, substituting something decent makes everything fuller, richer and more involving. It plays loud without obvious strain, and breezes through all types of music. More importantly, though, is the system's ability, when the occasion demands, to communicate a sense of fun. The bottom line is that it's got to be able to swing, lock onto a groove, and get your bits moving.

In a word it's exciting. Recording to tape or MD is also remarkably good. No one component suffers in comparison to another.

■ Hayden Labs ☎ (01753) 888447

■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 174



## SONY SCALA 2 £899.99 (EXCLUDING SPEAKERS)

Sony describes this as 'the ultimate integrated system package', and the spec doesn't dispute the claim. It's built around a 55-Watt MOSFET integrated amp, with seven inputs, including vinyl disc. The synthesizer tuner has FM/MW/LW with 30 presets and RDS/EON with PTY. The CD player has Sony's Automatic Music Sensor (AMS) system, and there's an optical digital output for MD/DAT recording. The cassette features auto reverse, Dolby B/C/S noise reduction and Dolby HX Pro.

The Scala 2 looks the business, too; it's nearer midi than mini, with restrained but very smart styling. The system doesn't come with speakers, Sony recommends its

own UK-sourced SS-86E models at £99.99.

The Sony system has the rare ability (extremely rare in the mini market) to capture music as a real, living 'event' and to sound interesting whatever the material. All right, you can point to a slightly cold character in the upper midrange, and the system's strengths aren't best served by over-fierce orchestral arrangements. But what excites me about the Sony is its transparency – the quality that allows you to hear through a recording. Amplifiers that are talented in this direction sound wonderfully fresh, open and detailed, with excellent soundstaging, focus and incisiveness. The Scala's MOSFET effort seems to be right on the money.

■ Sony ☎ (0990) 111999

■ Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 174



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# PERSONAL HI-FI

## KENWOOD

DMC-J7R £249.95\*

Kenwood's new DMC-J7R MD recorder bears a striking resemblance to Sharp's MD-MS702H, packaged in a more sophisticated casing, in contrast to the sporty look of the Sharp. The headphones seemed to slip out of my ears rather easily, though they were comfortable enough to use.

The Faithless track pumped out with strong bass and fine detail, producing fine depth and



real foot-tapping sound, benefiting from the bass-enhancement circuit. Hans Zimmer and Air were both clear and clean, and came across as very atmospheric reproductions. On playing this unit through a domestic audio system rather than headphones, it showed a clean pair of heels to many a lounge-bound component. It would be no privation to sit and listen to this Kenwood all day.

Trio-Kenwood UK ☎ (01923) 816444  
Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 182

## KENWOOD

DPC-981 £179.95\*

Full marks to Kenwood for providing noise-cancelling headphones with this personal CD player. These 'cans' reduce the amount of ambient noise within a band of mid-bass frequencies, and will be especially useful for airline passengers and similar.

The player feels heavy and chunky, with its case being metal rather than plastic. The anti-skip system claims to buffer up to 20 seconds of sound.

There is a two-stage 'Bass

Boost' function, but even with this feature defeated there is a strong sense of low-frequency reproduction – the Underworld track

sounded clear and crisp, with plenty of bottom-end oomph.

For sheer listening quality, this got my vote – the headphones were a great bonus, and very comfortable. Sound quality was good and, again, this player did not skip easily. The DPC-981 oozes class and quality.

Trio-Kenwood UK ☎ (01923) 816444  
Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 182



## PERSONAL HI-FI RECOMMENDED

### AIWA

XP-770 £89.99\*

It may be shaped like a scallop shell, but there's nothing fishy about this Aiwa CD personal. It has a 20-second anti-shock feature, and headphones are the standard

in-ear variety – comfortable enough, but with no remote control. The headphone socket doubles as a line-level output.

This player sounds good depending on the kind of music you favour. Its 'DSL' bass-boost feature is a mixed blessing – dance-music lovers will enjoy it,

but there's no denying it sounds clearer when switched off. The scallop shape provides an unusual look, and the XP-770 earns a Recommended flag because of its very reasonable £90 price-tag.

Aiwa UK ☎ (0990) 902902  
Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 182



### SHARP

MD-MS702H £249.99\*

This little MD recorder really looks the biz, and should appeal to the trendy set seeking the latest in top looks and great sound. A shiny disc is the central cosmetic feature, around which the transport controls are arranged. The main display is clear and sharp, and lights up brightly when a button is pressed. A separate battery case is available as an option, so too is a car adapter kit.

This is a good unit for low-frequency freaks – the bass boost function can be set at four levels, and on the highest, the Faithless track really pumped. But the qui-

eter Hans Zimmer track lost nothing by way of subtlety. Even through a domestic hi-fi system, the sound of the Sharp elicits respect.

Sharp Electronics (UK) ☎ (0161) 205 2333  
Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 182



### SONY

D-E405 £109\*

This attractive blue-coloured Sony CD Discman supplies extra bass in MB (MegaBass) or GRV (Groove) modes. The buttons are all solid enough, and the LCD is clear, with all the information you could need.

The Forcione & Sciubba track sounded clear on all three bass settings, with more depth on the MB setting. The GRV setting proved to be too bass-heavy for my tastes.

This is not a player for complex classical music. It did the Rachmaninov track no justice at all. The D-E405 is much happier playing riotous dance music like the Faithless, although it can cope with simpler, quieter tracks, too.

Sony UK ☎ (0990) 111999  
Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 182



### SONY

MZ-R5T £499.99\*

Dubbed a 'docking station', this unit looks like Thunderbird 2, with an MD personal player that lives in the main body of the unit when not out

and about. This clever idea combines the input options and usability of a full-sized component, with unbeatable portable convenience.

Using the docking station plugged into a separate hi-fi system, Faithless sounded very crisp and clear, with great detail and bass, though it was a bit clanky and tinny on the headphones.

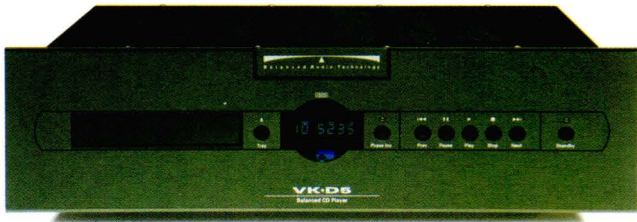
For gizmo-freaks who want music truly on the move, but the convenience of a full-size MiniDisc component, this pricey unit will be hard to beat.

Sony UK ☎ (0990) 111999  
Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 182





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# SUBWOOFERS

## JPW

**SW60 £349.99**

There's no denying you get a whole lot for your money with the JPW SW50 – close to 30kg worth. Styling is a testament to the aesthetics of textured MDF, enlivened by a couple of grooves.

Metal feet lift the base off the ground, for the good reason that this is where the driver and port are located. That in turn makes sense, because the SW60 features gentle roll-off filter characteristics.

The feature line-up includes on/off/auto and phase switches, plus a variable roll-off frequency, quoted at 40-170Hz, and a volume knob. Inputs and outputs are

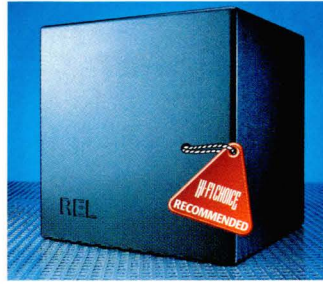
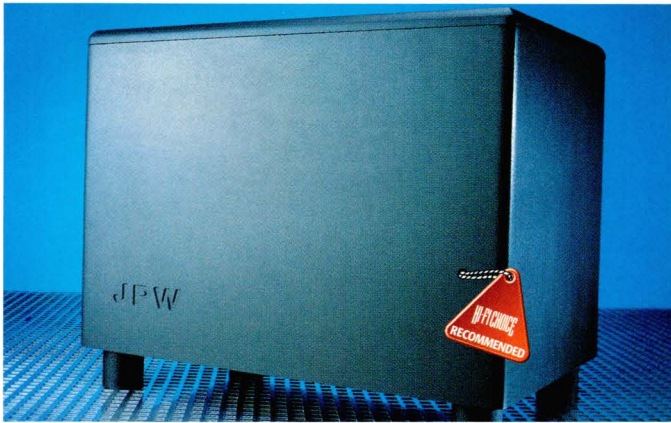
supplied at both line and speaker levels, the separate speaker (but not line-) outputs incorporating high-pass filtering.

The JPW delivers an impressively transparent sound with fine integration and well controlled coloration. It goes about its business without attracting attention to itself, but while there's little to complain about, it didn't quite get the pulse racing. The net results seem to have plenty of weight, but might have more grip and tension.

A solid, all-round performer, JPW's SW60 is a heavyweight for £350, and good value for money.

**Hi-Fi Direct ☎ (0171) 827 9827**

**Reviewed Hi-Fi Choice 179**



## REL

**Q50 £375**

A British subwoofer specialist, REL has a broad range of models, which start off with this Q-50. The company has always stressed that its subwoofers are first and foremost intended for hi-fi music reproduction. The Q50, therefore, has no high-pass filter options and no output sockets. Inputs are at both speaker and line levels, the former using a supplied, and usefully long, lead.

More compact than most rivals, Q50 is rather good looking in its cutely cuboid way. It's a sealed-box system, using a generous-size 12-inch driver, operating in the stiffness region below its fundamental resonance. The amplifier has a rather modest 50 Watts, but is helpfully equipped with 'Set-Safe' protection circuitry.

The considerable sonic weight and scale from this very compact subwoofer came as a real surprise. It's commendably free from any mid-bass excess (unless you go looking for it with the filter control). Some might prefer a warmer and fruitier sound, but the freedom from chestiness on male voices is particularly impressive. The Q50 also sounds clean, agile and light on its spikes, though it doesn't quite match the dynamic tautness and tension of its more powerful Q100 brother.

The Q50 stacks up very well against the competition, delivering genuinely deep, clean bass from an attractively compact and cost-effective package. However, the modest amplifier is something of a limiting factor, so do check out its more muscular Q100 sibling.

**REL Acoustics ☎ (01656) 768777**

**Reviewed Hi-Fi Choice 179**



## M&K

**MX-70 £900**

M&K is a US subwoofer specialist whose models have always impressed with their performance and overall credibility, even though the prices do tend to be on the high side. That certainly seems to be the case with this MX-70, which is only about a third of the size of many much cheaper competitors.

In fact, this subwoofer looks exactly like a largish bookshelf-type loudspeaker. It gets away with a slim profile by using a much smaller drive unit than its rivals, but it makes up for that by using two of them.

The feature roster includes on/off and phase switches, variable roll-off frequency, and volume. Inputs are supplied at both line and speaker levels, and separate speaker outputs incorporate high-pass filtering.

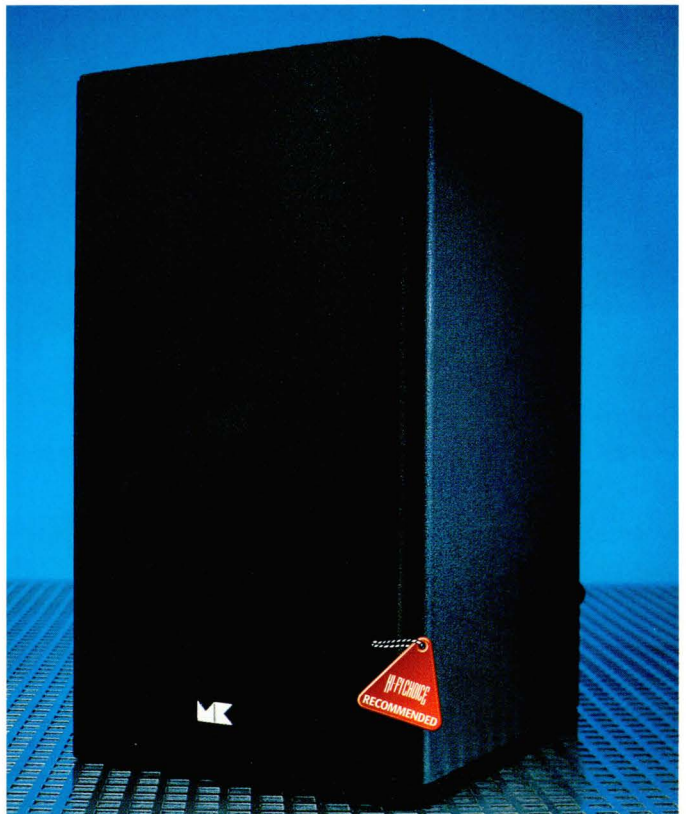
The M&K may not have quite the deepest bass nor give the greatest impression of acoustic scale, but it is unusually dynami-

cally literate, and sounds exceedingly lively and light on its feet. It is, in short, a subwoofer that doesn't sound like a subwoofer in the pejorative sense, simply and cleanly supplying the extra bass your small main speakers lack. High loudness capabilities might not be on the agenda here, but there was still ample sufficiency to partner our average sensitivity main speakers.

The MX-70 might look a pricey proposition, but it delivers a performance that justifies its cost and belies its diminutive size, with an agility and sense of purpose that easily reproduces some of the toughest material.

**Gecko Inc ☎ (0181) 681 1817**

**Reviewed Hi-Fi Choice 179**





# Pinewood Music

## SONUS FABER AMATI HOMAGE

With this majestically beautiful floorstanding speaker, the master craftsmen of Vicenza have created an instrument that expands on the unsurpassed tonal purity of the Guarneri Homage (still in production) by adding deep, fast and accurate bass as well as scale, attack and dynamics. With a high 92db sensitivity and an astonishing retrieval of low-level and far-depth detail, the Amati delivers star-spangled transparency and imaging. The Amati will go straight to your emotions, because Franco Serblin is a man who understands that reproduced music that cannot touch the heart is no music at all. Telephone Brian Rivas.

## SONUS FABER SIGNUM

At the other end of the scale is the Signum: tiny, but just as beautiful. A stand-mounted design, this is Sonus Faber's definitive mini-monitor. Mini-monitors are designed for the close scrutiny of recordings, but the difference with the Signum is that you scrutinise with your heart rather than your head.

If you want loudspeakers that hit the emotions where they bleed, you must listen to Sonus Fabers. Pinewood carries the full range, including the **ELECTA AMATOR II**, which won the 1998 EISA award for European High End Audio.

## KRELL KAV-250cd

A fabulous little player for less than £2500 – everyone loves it. Or are you waiting to see if tomorrow's technological grass really is greener? You may have a long wait, because the signs are that there's a way to go. Go on, enjoy your music NOW.

We also have the fabulous **KRELL KAV-500i** integrated amplifier, which is much more than simply a more powerful version of the excellent **KAV-300i** – and it has a nice rotary volume control for its 250Wpc. Telephone for a demonstration.

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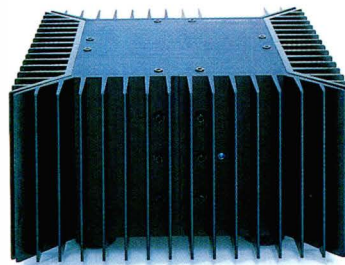
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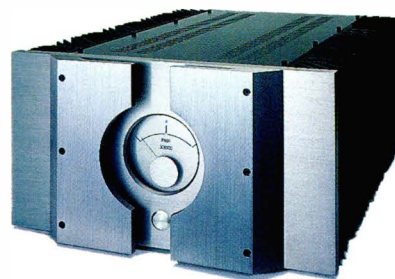
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# TUNERS

## MARANTZ ST-48 £119.90

By some margin the cheapest tuner in the group test, Marantz' ST-48 feature list is still quite impressive. RDS tops the list, although it doesn't display quite the full range of information, and there's also a built-in clock. It's not the smartest front panel around, but it's perfectly functional and reasonably easy to follow. Internally, there's little enough to look at – apart from the tuner 'head' there are five, mostly Sanyo, radio ICs.

In performance terms, it's more

than respectable. It's not amazingly quiet, and if it's a little hard to listen 'through' to hear what is happening in the inner parts of an ensemble, the information one seeks is still there.

Connected to the outdoor aerial it was a surprisingly good at receiving distant stations or those affected by multipath, and with strong stations it turned in a good, clean performance. With the indoor aerial, performance was less good, but still not far behind the competition. Listening to CDs via the FM generator system, the tuner's limits became more appar-



ent. Lab tests showed that the measurements aren't up to the standards of the dearer tuners, but not in any alarming ways. AM reception is OK – pretty good on

spoken voice, in fact. This tuner would not have looked silly at a price some 50 per cent higher.

**Marantz Hi Fi UK** ☎ (01753) 680868  
Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 184

## TUNERS RECOMMENDED



## PIONEER F-504RDS PRECISION £250

Pioneer's Precision separates are audiophile-oriented versions of the 'standard' models. There are plenty of features: two aerial inputs, 40 presets for FM and AM (MW only), and there's full RDS on the FM band. On the reception side, there's switchable IF bandwidth, an RF attenuator, fine tuning (in 25kHz steps rather than the usual 50kHz) and a choice of direct frequency entry, rotary knob or automatic search tuning. Pioneer uses its own ICs, for some jobs at least.

This was the only tuner in the

test that definitely made a better impression receiving real broadcasts rather than driven directly from an FM generator, where it seemed rather dull and shut in. Off-air, the Pioneer seems to make the most of the radio signal, and AM performance is considerably above average. Whether due to the 'Precision' mods, local reception conditions or simply better alignment, this does seem to be something of an upgrade on the standard F-504 and, as such, offers good sound for a fair price.

**Pioneer High Fidelity (GB)**

☎ (01753) 789789

Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 184



## SONY ST-SB920 £180

Sony's ST-SB920 will pick up more stations than the other tuners in the group test, simply because it's the only one with Long Wave (as well as MW) AM. The front panel looks quite bare, as much is hidden beneath a flap. There's a lovely weighted tuning knob, a full set of RDS features, two aerial inputs, an aerial attenuator, wide or narrow IF band and a really useful signal strength meter. Inside, the only noteworthy feature is Sony's own RF front end.

The sound is clear and communicative, with particularly good bass and low hiss, though the latter is biased towards high frequencies, and there's a slight loss of detail and a smaller soundstage than the best. There are no attention-grabbing nasties in the '920's sound and it's possible to listen for long periods without fatigue setting in. AM reception is pretty rough, but the combination of decent FM sound and a multitude of features looks like a good deal.

**Sony UK** ☎ (0990) 111999

Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 184

## DENON TU-1500RD £249.99

This smart, slimline TU-1500RD packs a lot in at its price – full RDS, switchable RF attenuation and IF bands, a single rotary knob which serves for manual tuning and also selects from the 40 presets. Inside is the usual mix 'n' match selection of ICs. This tuner might have done better on the main 'off-air' listening tests had it been correctly aligned, something which came to light (and was eas-

ily corrected) at a late stage while doing some lab checks.

Even slightly off-colour, the TU-1500RD proved highly listenable. Once realigned on the bench and auditioned via the stereo generator, however, this tuner really

sang. In terms of freedom from obvious nasties – noise modulation, crunching, tonal imbalance or serious congestion – the sound was remarkably fine. Performance does seem to benefit noticeably from a really strong RF signal, and

even AM performance is well above average.

Potentially, an exceptionally fine tuner for the money – that alignment problem is the only worry.

**Hayden Laboratories** ☎ (01753) 888447  
Reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice* 184





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\* A summary of this research "The Genesis Report" is available on request.

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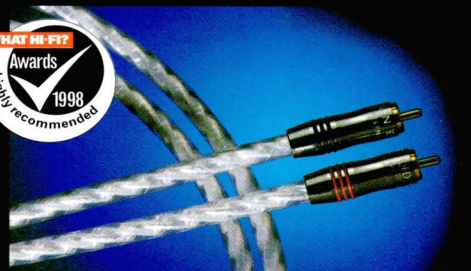
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"Great price, great cable, well made. Nifty name, neat plugs. Five stars. Next..."

WHAT HI-FI 5 star review MARCH 98

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Qnet Silver Spiral Price from £78.00/pair



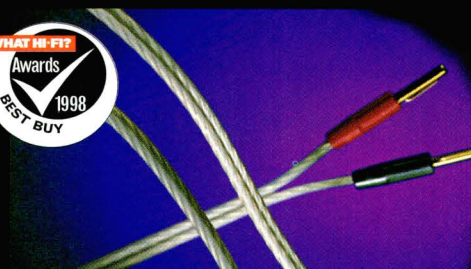
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Qudos Silver Price around £4.95/m



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"...what a fabulous little cable this is! Insightful, involving and able to dredge out even the smallest of details. ...In a sensibly-priced system (say, £1000 or so) it's a bargain."

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WHAT HI-FI?







# EISA AWARDS

European unity is still a headache for politicians, so perhaps they should take a few lessons from us hi-fi and home cinema journalists. Because in this year's EISA Awards voting, there was close agreement on which new products should be honoured as the winners. It is just left for us to remind you that, unlike certain other hi-fi awards we could mention, where the decisions are made on the basis of personal preferences, the EISA Awards are unique and thoroughly democratic. **Uncork the *entente cordiale!***



## EISA COMPACT SYSTEM

**JVC UX-MD9000R**  
£399.00

With a CD player and RDS tuner, JVC's UX-MD9000R is one of the world's smallest compact systems, and also incorporates a MiniDisc recorder. Its tiny speakers have a beautiful 'piano-lacquer' finish, and are equipped with full-range, metal-hyper-olefin-coned drive-units. These create a really musical sound, with smooth high and mid frequencies and a fantastically wide stereo image. Thanks to 'Active Hyper Bass Super-Pro', low frequencies are reproduced

## Tannoy Mercury M1



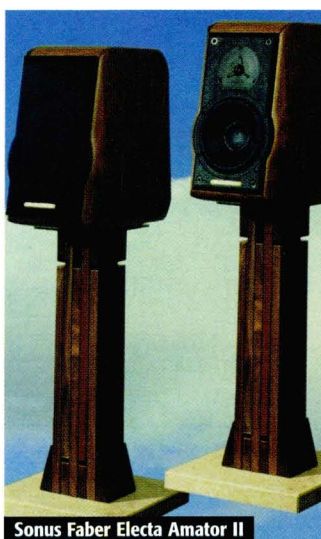
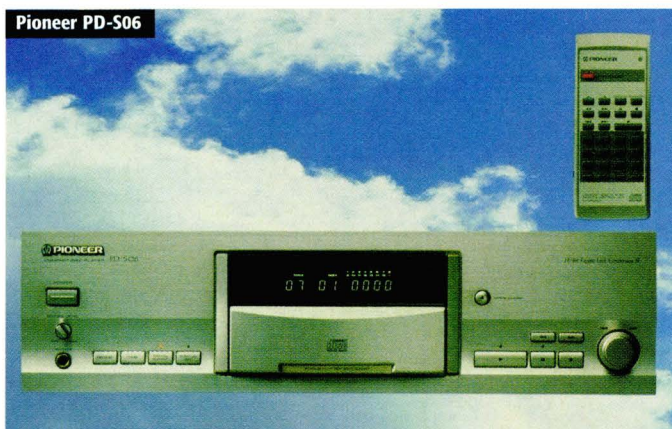
in a truly convincing and realistic way. This beautifully-designed micro system comes complete with a 'mini-tower' remote control.

**EISA LOUDSPEAKER**  
**TANNOY MERCURY M1**  
£199.90

The Mercury M1 loudspeaker stands just 30cm tall, but it plays music with the assurance of a much bigger speaker. It incorporates a 25mm soft-dome tweeter and a 130mm mid-bass drive unit, in an enclosure with a rear-facing reflex port. Despite being small, it sacrifices little bass response and generates a much more focused and life-like sound than you would expect of any speaker this size — or at such an attractive price! True hi-fi performance is rarely so affordable.

**EISA HIGH END AUDIO**  
**SONUS FABER ELECTA AMATOR II**  
£2,849.00

This exquisite Italian loudspeaker represents a complete redesign of the famous Electa Amator, but with new components and a fresh



## Sonus Faber Electa Amator II

sound concept. Scanspeak drive units of the highest quality, specially designed in conjunction with Sonus Faber, are perfectly matched and acoustically optimised within a beautifully-crafted real-wood and leather enclosure. The sound is very natural, with total transparency and outstanding resolution, even when playing the most demanding music. Its solid engineering and unique execution make this loudspeaker truly representative of the high-end ethos.

**EISA AMPLIFIER**  
**ARCAM ALPHA 10** £799.90

The Alpha 10, from one of the most well-respected British hi-fi

manufacturers, Arcam, is a truly 'future-proof' design. Being of modular construction, this 100 Watts-per-channel integrated amplifier can be upgraded to accept numerous card-based digital internal upgrades, such as Dolby Digital or DTS decoders. In this way it can be easily transformed into a very versatile AV amplifier without compromising any of its purist audiophile performance.

**EISA CD PLAYER**  
**PIONEER PD-S06** £549.99

In the PD-S06, Pioneer has successfully incorporated impressive digital technologies that clearly improve the standard of CD replay. Enhanced features include the new Legato Link Hi-Bit digital filter, top-quality multi-bit digital-to-analogue converter and, of course, Pioneer's legendary 'Stable Platter' mechanism. The consequence of all this is a stunning sound quality for such a reasonably priced product.

**EISA VIDEO PROJECTOR**  
**PHILLIPS FELLINI 100**  
£3,400.00

Of all the video projectors available today, the compact Philips Fellini 100 is probably the one model most optimised for this demanding task. Key features include high-resolution LCD panels, with Philips' patented





Music with Movement in Mind



## Headphones that Work through Walls

A new generation of wireless radio headphone systems...

Innovative design, technical excellence and a few extras into the bargain make the new RS 400 from Sennheiser an easy choice for those who want to enter the world of radio wireless headphones.

Offering everything the hi-fi enthusiast needs for unlimited music enjoyment – quality sound reproduction, style with listening comfort and complete freedom of movement at an attractive price.

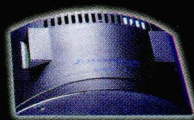
And there's far more...

- wide area transmission through walls and ceilings
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- comfortable and lightweight
- switchable frequencies for optimum reception
- integral aerial
- Sennheiser are Emmy award-winners for professional radio microphone technology

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We have listened to you. So what are you waiting for?

 **SENNHEISER**  
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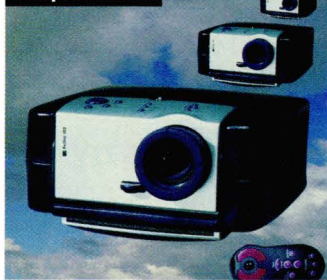
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# EISA AWARDS

**Philips Fellini 100**



'Limesco' (Line Memory Scan Converter) chips, which interpolate any input video signal to the full capacity of the projector. Specially adapted colour correction circuits aim to optimise video reproduction, while the highly efficient UHP lamp develops very high brightness without needing a noisy fan-cooling system.

## EISA CAR AUDIO

**JVC KD-MX300R £439.00**

The JVC KD-MX3000R is the first car audio receiver whose built-in multiplayer is compatible with both CDs and MDs. Using only a few push-buttons and one big rotary controller to access the menus, it is very easy to handle. A small remote control, meanwhile, permits safe operation while the

**JVC KD-MX300R**



user is driving. Comprehensive tone controls, line-in/line-out signal connections and four integrated power amps top the bill of this great-sounding but moderately-priced in-car hi-fi system.

## EISA AUDIO RECORDER

**SONY MDS-JB920 £299.99**

By incorporating the latest generation of its ATRAC data-reduction system in the MDS-JB920, Sony has made the performance of its prestigious ES series available at a

**Sony MDS-JB920**



**Mission X-Space**



much more affordable price. Being meticulously finished down to the smallest detail, the unit is extremely well built, yet is easy to use. Its high-tech design fully exploits the recording and editing capabilities of the MiniDisc medium.

## EISA AUDIO INNOVATION

**MISSION X-SPACE £499.90**

NXT confers numerous benefits over traditional loudspeaker approaches. Its microscopically vibrating panel technology permits the manufacture of extremely slim speakers, and generates sound that can be heard throughout the room. Mission's X-Space is an NXT stereo system with amplification built into a discreet subwoofer module. Its speaker panels are only a few millimetres thick, and have a unique integral wall-bracket/stand system. The X-Space points the way forward for both general audio applications and computer multimedia.

## EISA HOME THEATRE AMP

**YAMAHA DSP-A1 £1,599.95**

This new amplifier combines massive sophistication with seven channels of amplification, five of them identically rated for the most convincing surround-sound effect. It has 42 DSP (Digital Soundfield Processing) surround modes on offer, ranging from Dolby Digital and DTS programs to the simulated acoustics of theatres, jazz

**Yamaha DSP-A1**



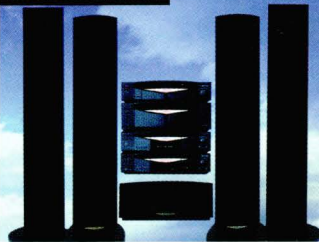
bars... and churches. The DSP-A1 creates an expansive, dynamic movie atmosphere using Yamaha's own digital processing techniques. Furthermore, it can accommodate numerous analogue and digital audio signals from any source. The DSP-A1's 'alter ego' is its programmable remote control, which can learn the commands of every other handset on your coffee table. Truly a complete solution for home theatre enthusiasts!

## EISA H T SYSTEM

**KENWOOD SERIES 21**

Kenwood's Series 21 system, designed by Giugiaro, offers a wide choice of separate components which may be combined to suit the needs of individual users. The preamplifier is ready for the home-theatre age, with its built-in Dolby

**Kenwood Series 21**



Digital decoder, and there are 5.1-channel signal inputs to allow for future surround-sound upgrades. Other components include a six-channel power amplifier, a CD player, a DVD player and a MiniDisc recorder. There is a broad range of home-theatre loudspeakers to complement the electronics, and the whole system is extremely easy to operate using an infra-red remote handset with bi-directional

communication. Given the amount of technology it embodies, Kenwood's System 21 offers remarkable value for money. \*Check with your dealer for prices.

## EISA DVD PLAYER

**PANASONIC DVD-A350**

**£600.00**

The picture quality of the Panasonic DVD-A350 redefines the standards of performance anticipated at this price. Also, it offers excellent sound with both CD and DVD sources, including 24-bit, 96kHz audio discs. It is one of the few players to include a decoder which processes both

**Panasonic DVD-A-350**

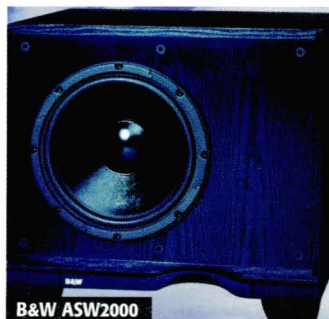


MPEG and Dolby Digital 5.1 to give a six-channel analogue output. The unit may be connected to any existing TV or video projector, through a variety of sockets. Its remote control and menu system are both easy to understand and simple to use, and the unit itself is very ruggedly built.

## EISA H T LOUDSPEAKER

**B&W ASW2000 £799.95**

With the latest improvements to its subwoofer designs, B&W demonstrates its mastery of electro-acoustical engineering. At its price, the ASW2000 can be considered the most evolved, refined and accurate subwoofer on the European market. Its impressive drive unit and carefully-profiled reflex port are partnered with a true high-end MOSFET power amplifier. With all the controls required to optimise performance in every environment, the ASW2000 assures fantastic results in audio and home theatre applications.





# Glossary

**Baffled by hi-fi jargon? Confused by technical terms? Fear not: Paul Messenger has the answers to your lexicographical questing, in the *Hi-Fi Choice* glossary.**

## A

**ACTIVE:** Loudspeaker systems that contain, or partner, dedicated electronics — power amplification plus electronic crossovers and equalisers.

**AFC:** Automatic Frequency Control. A feature found in audio and TV/video tuners to ease station tuning and stability.

**ALC:** Automatic Level Control. Used in audio recorder circuitry to avoid unwanted overload, usually by sacrificing much of the available dynamic range.

**AM:** Amplitude Modulation. This is a broadcasting technique used for medium- and long-wave radio transmissions, and for television pictures.

**AMP:** 1) Ampère. A unit that measures the amount of electrical current flowing. 2) Diminutive of amplifier.

**AMPLITUDE:** Size or magnitude, hence loudness or level.

**ANALOGUE:** Signal-modelling technique using a directly analogous and continuously varying medium.

**ATRAC:** Psychoacoustics-based perceptual coding data reduction system used in MiniDisc.

**AV or A/V:** Audio Visual.

Software/programming in which audio and visual content is of similar importance.

**AUTO REVERSE:** Audio cassette tape transport, which changes direction at end of side.

**AZIMUTH:** Alignment of (audio cassette) tape-head gap with respect to tape path; inter-deck variations compromise high-frequency performance.

## B

**BALANCE:** 1) The relative loudness of the left and right channels of a stereo system. 2) The relative loudness of different parts of the audio spectrum (for example, bass and treble) with respect to each other.

**BANDWIDTH:** The range of frequencies with defined upper and lower limits over which a system operates.

**BASS:** The lower part of the audible frequency range.

**BIAS:** 1) Lateral force applied to toner arms to assist tracking.

2) Electromagnetic preconditioning of audio tape recording; some cassette decks provide adjustable bias to 'fine tune' tape and machine co-performance.

## C

**CASSETTE:** Convenient system of



**Pioneer's DV-717, one of the latest generation of DVD-Video players.**

housing, protecting and using magnetic tape in a plastic case.

**CD:** see Compact Disc

**CD-R:** CD recording system; discs record once only; particularly useful for personalised compilations.

**CD-ROM:** High-capacity optical discs based on CDs but configured as flexible computer read-only software; many applications including some AV potential.

**CD-RW:** Re-writable CD recording format that's not 100 per cent compatible with existing CD players.

**CLIPPING:** The consequences of over-driving an electrical circuit, resulting in waveform distortion and loss of control; especially common in power amplifiers.

**COAXIAL:** Made symmetrical about a common core — for example, shielded aerial cable or loudspeaker drive units.

**COLORATION:** A general term used to describe the audible effects of a whole range of different distortions in various hi-fi components, but especially record decks and loudspeakers.

**COMPACT CASSETTE:** World standard for consumer tape recording/playback. Originated in the '60s and still going strong(ish).

**COMPACT DISC (CD):** World standard for laser-read digital-stereo music discs.

**COMPATIBILITY:** From the basic abil-

ity of different items of equipment to work together, to the subtleties of their interaction and optimisation of same.

**CONVERTER:** DAC, digital-to-analogue converter (see under D, below).

**CROSSOVER:** More precisely described as a dividing network, the electrical circuitry inside a loudspeaker that apportions the drive signal to the individual drive units.

## D

**DAB:** Digital Audio Broadcasting, ascendant radio system with the potential to carry a broad array of uncompressed radio stations as well as text and images.

**DAC:** Digital-to-analogue converter. This is used to change digital-audio code to analogue, prior to amplification.

**DAT:** Digital Audio Tape. A digital cassette tape format that uses CD-type signals and is incompatible with compact cassettes. Used by the music business, but rare in the consumer marketplace.

**DECIBEL (dB):** A logarithmic unit used to express relative loudness.

**DIGITAL:** Digital audio uses a variety of approaches to represent the essentially analogue music signal in digital code, for storage and/or transmission — for example, CD, DAT, NICAM stereo, MD, Dolby Digital.

**DIN:** German standards body,

responsible for a popular range of standard plug/socket specifications used widely in Europe.

**DISTORTION:** Literally any deviation from the original, though often specified to particular mechanisms. Hence, non-linearities.

**DITHER:** Low-level noise added when digitally encoding a signal to randomise quantisation errors.

**DOLBY B:** Original domestic noise-reduction system for audio cassettes, now ubiquitous.

**DOLBY C:** More extreme but less popular extension of Dolby B.

**DOLBY DIGITAL (aka AC-3):** Multi-channel surround sound system for movie soundtracks. To date, software is only on imported Laserdiscs.

**DOLBY S:** Complex 'smart' noise-reduction system, which might help the compact cassette survive beyond the millennium.

**DOLBY HX:** Record-only system that increases high-frequency headroom, especially with cheaper Type-1 tapes.

**DOLBY PRO-LOGIC:** Technique that extracts additional centre-front (dialogue) and surround channels from stereo movie soundtracks, for home cinema reproduction. Used almost universally on movies.

**DRIVE UNIT/DRIVER:** The sources of acoustic output in a loudspeaker; includes woofers, tweeters and so on. (qv)

**DUB:** Copy — for example, on tape.

**DVD:** Digital Versatile Disc. A high-density optical disc format intended to squeeze complete movies onto compact-size discs, and introduce 96kHz sampling and 24-bit wordlength with multi-channel to audio discs. The current DVD-Video format will be joined by DVD-Audio in late 1999.

**DYNAMIC RANGE:** The ratio (dBs) between the loudest and softest sounds a system or component can handle.

## E

**ELECTROSTATIC:** A principle employed in some exotic loudspeaker and headphone transducers.

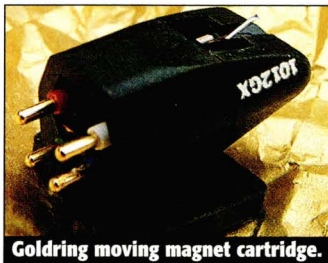
## F

**FILTER:** An electrical circuit used to limit the bandwidth of a signal.

**FM:** Frequency Modulation. A widely used method of encoding signals for transmission or recording.

**FREQUENCY RANGE/SPECTRUM:** This can refer to any spread of frequencies, but most commonly the audio





Goldring moving magnet cartridge.

band of human hearing, from 20 cycles per second (20Hz) in the extreme bass to 20,000 cycles per second (20kHz) in the highest treble.

**FREQUENCY RESPONSE:** The variation in output across a specified range of different frequencies.

## G

**GAIN:** The amplification ratio of electrical signals.

## H

**HARMONIC:** Harmonics are the whole number multiples of a base frequency called a fundamental.

**HARMONIC DISTORTION (THD):** The addition of unwanted harmonics to signal.

**HF:** High frequency, such as treble.

**HI-FI STEREO:** Name specifically given to stereo FM soundtrack system used on upmarket domestic VCRs.

**Hz (HERTZ):** Unit of frequency of vibration, 1Hz equals one cycle per second.

## I

**IMPEDANCE:** Measure of the electrical resistance (and reactance) of a component's inputs and outputs.

**INTERMODULATION (IMD):** A form of distortion whereby a high and a low frequency interact to produce sum and difference signals that are not harmonically related to either.

## J

**JACK:** Connector standard used for headphones and microphones; Walkmen begat mini-jacks.

**JITTER:** Perturbations in the timing clock used to reconstitute an analogue signal from digital data.

## K

**kHz (KILOHERTZ):** 1,000Hz (vibrations per second) 1kHz actually corresponds to a tone nearly two octaves above middle C.

## L

**LED:** Light-emitting diode, usually a red indicator bulb.

**LF:** Low frequency, such as bass.

**LINEAR:** A linear device that produces an output that exactly mirrors the input over the required operating range, and so is distortion free.

**LONG WAVE (LW):** Low-quality AM radio band, loved by housewives, old dears and cricket fans.

**'LOUDNESS':** A switchable equalisation sometimes fitted to amplifiers, which boosts low and high frequencies. Intended for low-level listening but scorned by enthusiasts.



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## M

**MD:** see Mini Disc.

**MINI DISC:** Compressed-digital audio record/replay format on encased magneto-optical discs. Designed to replace the compact cassette.

**MEDIUM WAVE (MW):** Low-quality AM radio band loved by sports fans.

**MIDBAND, MIDRANGE:** The middle range of audio frequencies, where the ear is most sensitive.

**MODULATION:** In whatever medium, the variations or coding that describe the programme signal.

**MOL:** Maximum operating level, of audio tape, usually referred to five per cent midband distortion.

**MONITOR:** High-quality loudspeaker.

**MOVING COIL:** A transducer system, which changes mechanical energy into electrical energy or vice versa; used in high-quality pick-up cartridges and in conventional loudspeaker drive units.

**MOVING MAGNET:** Inverting the moving coil technique, a transducer system whereby a magnet (or induced magnet) moves within a (relatively) static coil. Widely used in low-cost pick-up cartridges.

**MULTIPLEX FILTER:** Device fitted to some cassette decks to avoid interference from stereo pilot tones when recording from stereo FM radio.

## N

**NICAM:** Acronym for digital-stereo-sound-with-TV system, currently widely available in UK terrestrial TV

broadcasts.

**NOISE:** Random, unwanted low-level signals.

## O

**OCTAVE:** Span of frequency or pitch that represents a doubling or halving of frequency.

**OHM ( $\Omega$ ):** Unit of electrical impedance or resistance.

## P

**PHONO:** The most commonly used plug/ socket system for audio signals; also abbreviation for record deck.

**PICK-UP (CARTRIDGE):** Device with cantilever and stylus at the end of a record-playing tone arm.

**PORT:** In reflex-loaded loudspeakers, the opening that is 'tuned' to the box size and main driver characteristics, to improve output at low frequencies.

**POWER AMPLIFIER:** The final stage of an amplifier, which provides the urge to drive the loudspeakers.

**PREAMPLIFIER:** The first part of an amplifier, which accepts, switches and routes the signals from and to other components, applying any equalisation and adjusting volume prior to feeding the power amplifier(s).

## R

**RF:** Radio Frequencies. Used for the transmission of radio signals. Sometimes cited as a cause of distortion within audio kit.

## S

**SENSITIVITY:** 1) In loudspeakers, the amount of output (loudness) for a given electrical input (usually one Watt). 2) The electrical signal input required by an amplifier or tape recorder to deliver full power output or recording level.

**SCART:** 21-pin Euroconnector standard widely used for audio/visual applications, especially the connection of television to peripheral devices (aka Peritel).

**SEPARATION:** The separateness of the left and right channels of a stereo audio system.

**SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIO OR S/N:** The difference between the maximum level of a signal and the background noise left when the signal is removed.

**STEREO:** Literally 'solid' — a system that uses two loudspeakers (or a pair of headphones) to create solid, spatial sonic images.

**STYLUS:** Carefully shaped piece of diamond that rides and extracts information from a vinyl record's groove.

**SUBSONIC:** Below the audible-frequency range — for instance, below 20Hz.

**SURROUND SOUND:** Systems that go beyond stereo in attempting to envelop the listener in sound from all around (see Dolby Pro-Logic/Digital AC-3).

## T

**TOEARM:** The part of a record player that holds the cartridge and allows it to trace the grooves in a record. Available in pivoted and parallel tracking varieties.

**TRANSDUCER:** A device which turns mechanical, magnetic or acoustic energy into electrical energy. For instance pick-ups (cartridges) and loudspeakers.

**TREBLE:** The upper part of the audible frequency range.

**TWEETER:** Small loudspeaker drive unit used for higher-frequency (treble) sounds.

**TYPE I:** Basic ferric audio cassette tape.

**TYPE II:** Premium chrome or super-ferric audio cassette tape.

**TYPE IV:** Upmarket metal-particle audio cassette tape.

## U

**ULTRASONIC:** Frequencies above the limit of human audibility — for instance, 20kHz.

**UNIT:** Loudspeaker drive unit.

## V

**VALVE:** Early thermionic electronic device, still highly regarded by many enthusiasts.

**VCR:** Video cassette recorder or video recorder; sometimes VTR (video tape recorder).

**VOICE COIL:** A wire wound around a circular former that's attached to the cone of a dynamic loudspeaker.

**VOLT:** Unit of electrical potential difference; a varying voltage is used to 'model' audio signals in transducers and electronic components.

## W

**WATT:** Unit of electrical power (the product of voltage and current).

**WEIGHTING:** Equalisation applied in measurement techniques to improve relevance.

**WOOFER:** Loudspeaker drive unit that handles lower-frequency (bass) sounds.

**WOW & FLUTTER:** Low- and high-frequency pitch variations due to poor mechanical performance in tape transports and turntables.



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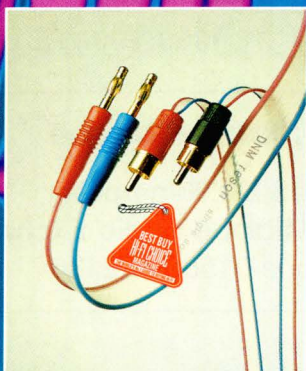
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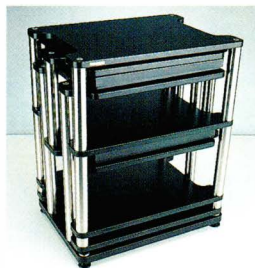
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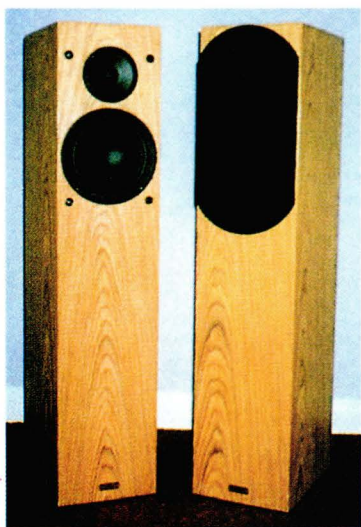
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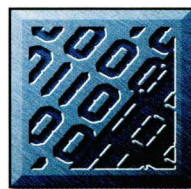
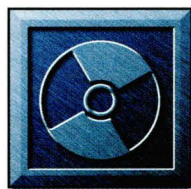
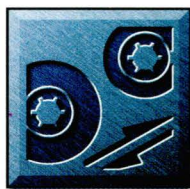
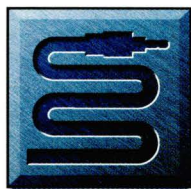
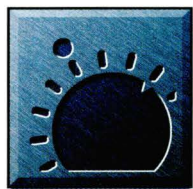
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● Quad 66 preamp & remote, 7 inputs with phono stage, 2 yrs old, £420. Quad 306 amp with upgraded power supply by VRR. £230. All VGC, with manual and box. Both together £600. Sussex (01903) 247779.

● Rogers LS4a speakers, black ash, black stands, mint, boxed. £120 ono. Lancaster (01524) 62809 eves.

● Roksan ROK-DA1 DAC, £250. Mission 753 speakers £390. MF "The Preamp" plus bridged Typhoon power amps, boxed. £450. (0116) 255 0172.

● Sony TCD-D100 DATman, new, (cost £800), £475. Sony SS86E speakers, HFC recommended (£100) £35. Rega Planar 3 (£220) £95. RB300 silver wired, modded, (£300) £150. (016974) 78537.

● Thorens TD166VI/UK/250, HFC Best Buy, (£400) £195. Rotel RB980BX, 120WPC, £275. Mission Argonaut 780 £225. Warks (01926) 740254.

## WANTED

● Naim SNAPS power supply. Surrey (01428) 656770.

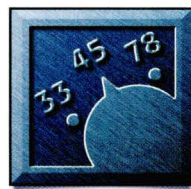
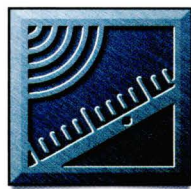
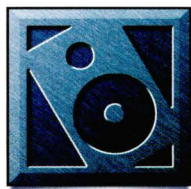
● Technics SL7 or LS10 record deck, or other similar quality automatic. Must be in mint condition. John, Blackpool (01253) 867731.

● Wilson-benesch t/table, Dynaudio speakers. Denmark +45 86 137043, fax +45 86 120002.



## BUYING TIPS

Buying secondhand can be a great way to pick up a bargain. A formerly-expensive second-hand component might well prove a better long-term bet than a brand-new product engineered down to a price. Do some research on which brands and products have a good service back-up, so if something does go wrong, you can get it fixed. Unless you purchase from a secondhand hi-fi dealer, you're unlikely to get any warranty. So it's up to you to ensure the fitness of any gear that you buy. Products such as speakers should be less prone to breakdown than amplifiers, and amps should be more reliable than CD players. But any abused component could be troublesome – have a proper dem, and judge the seller as well as the goods!





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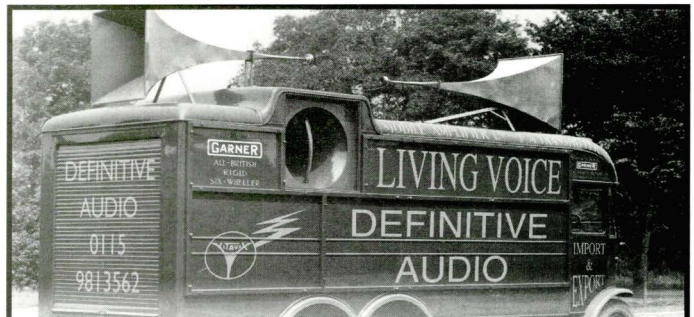
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	Sale	New
MF A2 CD	£ 250	(£ 500)
Impulse H5 loudspeakers Ash	£ 700	(£1850)
Impulse H2 loudspeakers Ash	£1100	(£2250)
Impulse Taus	£2100	(£3100)
Kelly KT3 loudspeaker (new)	£1000	(£1850)
Vitavox AK 157 Bass Driver (pair)	£ 450	(£ 900)
Carver Platinum (Hybrid Ribbon/Dipole)	£ 800	(£3000)
Audio Note DAC3 (1/2 Sig)	£ 700	(£1800)
Meridian 500/ 563 with VdH 1st di/c	£ 980	(£1800)
Micromega Drive 2 and DAC	£ 700	(£1600)
Audio innovations S.500 Integrated	£ 500	(£1200)
Audio innovations S.700 Integrated	£ 850	(£1200)
Audio innovations L2 Line Pre	£ 450	(£ 750)
Audio innovations 200 Pre	£ 200	(£ 350)
Audio innovations S.1000 SE silver monos	£1500	(£2500)
Border Patrol 300 BSE (Blue)	£1250	(£2500)
Border Patrol PSU	£ 395	(£ 595)
Naim SBL (Walnut)	£ 950	(£1970)
Naim NAC 72	£ 490	(£ 725)
Naim HI-CAP	£ 325	(£ 450)
Naim 250	£ 850	(£1665)
Naim CDS	£2800	(£3940)
Naim A5 S/Cable	£ 70	
Mana Ref Table x 1	£ 220	
Mana Mini Table	£ 120	
Mana Sound Stages x 3	£ 490	
Various high-end i/c & speaker cables	P.O.A.	

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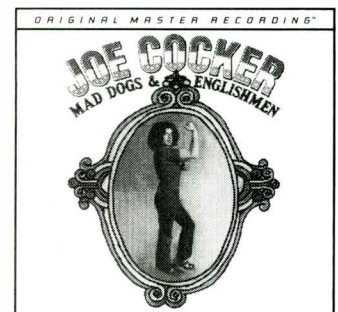
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- NAT "KING" COLE: GREATEST HITS (DOUBLE PLAY CD) - £23.95\*
- LINDA RONSTADT: GREATEST HITS VOL.2 - £19.95\*
- DON MACLEAN: AMERICAN PIE - £21.95



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# HOW TO USE THE BUYERS' GUIDE

## Best Buys, Recommendations & Editor's Choices

- B BEST BUYS:** Awarded to group-tested products which display an unbeatable blend of performance and value for money.
- R RECOMMENDED:** Top performers in group tests; perhaps not the cheapest but possibly more sophisticated than Best Buys.
- E EDITOR'S CHOICE:** More expensive components which exhibit outstanding engineering, industrial design and sound quality.

## Our Three Step Guide to Buying Hi-Fi

The *Hi-Fi Choice Price Guide and Directory* are extremely simple to use, but contain all the information you need to select and buy the perfect hi-fi system. Here's how it works.

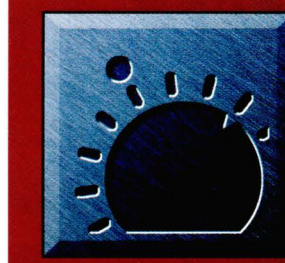
**STEP 1 DISCOVER** which products fall within your budget by using our Price Guide, which starts on this page. The product listing is updated using manufacturers' data every other month, and aims to include every hi-fi component currently available in the UK. (But please fax us on 0171-917 5512 with any omissions!) It is an alphabetical listing divided into different types of hi-fi component, and also into price bands.

**STEP 2 PRODUCTS** whose names are printed in **RED** are those we have reviewed, which you can read about in the Directory (starts after the Price Guide). Here you will learn which items have been singled out for our famous Best Buy, Recommended or Editor's Choice awards, denoting 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 (at the end of the Directory) to book a demonstration of the hi-fi equipment you want to hear. Remember to take your own LPs or CDs!

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## AMPLIFIERS INTEGRATED

### KEY

- Ⓜ - Number of line-level inputs.
- '20W' - Rated RMS output power per channel into nominal load of 8 Ohms.

### UP TO £250

Akai AM1100	Ⓜ	50W	230
AMC 3020	Ⓜ	20W	100
AMC 3025A	Ⓜ	30W	140
AMC 3050A	Ⓜ	45W	170
Ariston AX900	Ⓜ	30W	80
Ariston AX910	Ⓜ	30W	100
Cambridge A1 Mk III	Ⓜ	30W	119
Cambridge A3i	Ⓜ	60W	200
Denon PMA-250SE	Ⓜ	30W	160
Denon PMA-350SE	Ⓜ	50W	200
Denon PMA-425R	Ⓜ	45W	230
Denon PMA-100M	Ⓜ	80W	240
Goodmans Delta 900A	Ⓜ	100W	130
H/K HK610	Ⓜ	30W	180
H/K HK620	Ⓜ	40W	250
JVC AX-V4BK	Ⓜ	30W	200
JVC AX-A372BK	Ⓜ	40W	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 SR-47	Ⓜ	40W	200
Marantz PM-66SE	Ⓜ	50W	230
Musical Fidelity E1	Ⓜ	30W	199
NAD 310	Ⓜ	20W	100
NAD 312	Ⓜ	25W	200
Pioneer A-105	Ⓜ	30W	130
Pioneer A-204R	Ⓜ	25W	160
Pioneer A-300R	Ⓜ	50W	200
Pioneer A-305R	Ⓜ	50W	200
Pioneer A-405R	Ⓜ	45W	250
Rega Brio	Ⓜ	30W	229
Rotel RA921	Ⓜ	20W	100
Rotel RA-931	Ⓜ	35W	150
Rotel RA971	Ⓜ	70W	200
Sansui AUX-410R	Ⓜ	50W	150
Sansui AUX-510R	Ⓜ	70W	230
Sherwood AX 4050R	Ⓜ	50W	150
Sherwood AX-7030R	Ⓜ	95W	250
Sony TA-FE210	Ⓜ	45W	130
Sony TA-FE310R	Ⓜ	45W	150
Sony TA-F248E	Ⓜ	40W	200
Sony TA-F448EB	Ⓜ	55W	250
TEAC A-R300	Ⓜ	45W	200
TEAC A-R500	Ⓜ	90W	250
Technics SU-V300	Ⓜ	25W	150
Technics SU-V500	Ⓜ	30W	180
Technics SU-A600 Mk3	Ⓜ	37W	200
Technics SU-V620	Ⓜ	70W	230
Technics SU-A700 Mk3	Ⓜ	45W	250
Yamaha AX-392	Ⓜ	60W	170
Yamaha AX-9	Ⓜ	50W	200
Yamaha AX-492	Ⓜ	85W	220

### £251 TO £500

Alchemist Maxim	Ⓜ	30W	350
AMC CVT 3030A	Ⓜ	30W	400
Arcam Alpha 7	Ⓜ	40W	260
Arcam Alpha 8	Ⓜ	50W	360
Arcam Alpha 9	Ⓜ	70W	500
Audio Analogue Puccini	Ⓜ	40W	450
Audiogram MB1	Ⓜ	40W	493
Aura VA-100 II	Ⓜ	70W	350
CR Dev CR324	Ⓜ	100W	499
Creek 4330	Ⓜ	35W	279
Creek 4340	Ⓜ	35W	279
Creek 4330R	Ⓜ	35W	355
Creek 5250	Ⓜ	50W	450
Cymbal CA1	Ⓜ	40W	499
Denon PMA-725R	Ⓜ	65W	350
EMF Audio Sequel	Ⓜ	50W	450
H/K HK640	Ⓜ	55W	400
Kenwood KA-5090R	Ⓜ	65W	300
Kenwood KA-7090R	Ⓜ	85W	400
Magnum IA120	Ⓜ	65W	265
Magnum IA170	Ⓜ	96W	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
Monno Asty	Ⓜ	55W	400
Musical Fidelity E11	Ⓜ	60W	300
Musical Fidelity X-A1	Ⓜ	50W	480
Musical Fidelity A2	Ⓜ	25W	500
Myryad T-40	Ⓜ	50W	400
NAD 314	Ⓜ	35W	260
NAD 317	Ⓜ	80W	470
Onkyo A9210	Ⓜ	40W	260
Onkyo A921	Ⓜ	50W	350
Onkyo A922	Ⓜ	70W	400
Orelle SA-100	Ⓜ	50W	499
Pioneer A-400X	Ⓜ	50W	300
Pioneer A-605R	Ⓜ	80W	400
Pioneer A-300R Precision	Ⓜ	35W	400
Rega Luna	Ⓜ	40W	375
Rega Mira	Ⓜ	60W	450
Shearpe 2.5	Ⓜ	35W	489
Sony TA-FA3ES	Ⓜ	70W	400
Sony TA-F3000ES	Ⓜ	35W	500
Talk Electronics Storm 1	Ⓜ	50W	500
TEAC A-H500	Ⓜ	50W	280
Technics SU-A800D Mk2	Ⓜ	55W	300
Technics SU-A900D Mk2	Ⓜ	70W	400
Yamaha AX-592	Ⓜ	100W	280

### £501 TO £700

Alchemist Kraken APD6A	Ⓜ	55W	600
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
CR Dev Kalyppo	Ⓜ	15W	599
CR Dev CR325	Ⓜ	175W	699
Creek 5250R	Ⓜ	50W	575
Creek 5250SER	Ⓜ	60W	665
Densen Beat B-100 MkII	Ⓜ	60W	650
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
Hi Q Sound MCI	Ⓜ	30W	565
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 IIIi	Ⓜ	50W	598
Musical Fidelity A220	Ⓜ	50W	700
Myryad MI 120	Ⓜ	60W	600
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	Ⓜ	50W	650
TEAC A-BX7R	Ⓜ	50W	700

### £701 TO £1000

Alchemist Forseti Integrated	Ⓜ	100W	1,000
Audio Note Oto Line PP	Ⓜ	12W	950
AVI S2000MI	Ⓜ	100W	999
Copland CSA8	Ⓜ	60W	945
Credo IMP702	Ⓜ	70W	850
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	1,000
H/K HK680	Ⓜ	85W	1,000
LFD 0 LE Integrated	Ⓜ	60W	799
Linn Majik (Phono)	Ⓜ	33W	800
Magnum Class A SE	Ⓜ	80W	795
Marantz PM-17	Ⓜ	60W	900
Meridian 551	Ⓜ	55W	795
Micromega Tempo 1	Ⓜ	50W	750
Micromega Tempo 2	Ⓜ	75W	950
Naim Nait 3 R	Ⓜ	30W	760
Opera Aida	Ⓜ	60W	795
Pioneer A-07	Ⓜ	80W	999
Primare A20	Ⓜ	60W	799
Rega Elicit	Ⓜ	70W	730
Shearpe Phase 2 Reference	Ⓜ	50W	799
Sonneteer Alabaster	Ⓜ	50W	900
Stemfoort SF100	Ⓜ	100W	849
TAG McLaren 60i	Ⓜ	72W	799
TAG McLaren 60iRV	Ⓜ	72W	999
TEAC AB-X10	Ⓜ	100W	1,000

### £1001 TO £2000

Art Audio Integra	Ⓜ	30W	1,499
ATC SIA2-150	Ⓜ	150W	1,984
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
Bow Technologies Wazoo	Ⓔ	50W	1,795
<b>Bryston B-60</b>	Ⓔ	60W	1,249
<b>Copland CSA14</b>	Ⓔ	70W	1,199
Copland CSA28	Ⓔ		1,299
Copland CTA401	Ⓔ	25W	1,699
CR Dev Romulus V3	Ⓔ	35W	1,198
CR Dev Remus V3	Ⓔ	60W	1,989
Credo LIM 703			1,191
Credo LIM 703			1,249
EAR 834	Ⓔ	40W	1,999
Graaf Venticinque	Ⓔ	20W	1,695
LFD Integrated 1	Ⓔ	65W	1,099
Meracus Intrare	Ⓔ	60W	1,095
Primare A301	Ⓔ	80W	1,699
Rogers E-20a	Ⓔ	20W	1,229
Rogers E-40a	Ⓔ	40W	1,900
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Integrated	Ⓔ	25W	1,299
T+A PA1200	Ⓔ	90W	1,350
T+A R1200R	Ⓔ	90W	1,495
T+A PA1500	Ⓔ	135W	1,650
T+A R1500R	Ⓔ	135W	1,895
<b>Unison Simply Two</b>	Ⓔ	12W	1,100
Unison Simply Four P	Ⓔ	24W	1,600
Unison Pentode 35	Ⓔ	35W	1,650
Unison Simply Four T	Ⓔ	11W	1,650
Woodside ISA230 Line	Ⓔ	30W	1,099
<b>Woodside ISA230 Disc</b>	Ⓔ	30W	1,249
YBA Integre DT	Ⓔ		1,650

### OVER £2000

Adyton Opera	Ⓔ	50W	2,595
Audio Note Meishu Line		9W	2,750
<b>Audio Note Ongaku</b>	Ⓔ	26W	56,000
Audio Research CA50	Ⓔ		3,990
Cary CAD-300SEI	Ⓔ	11W	3,995
Conrad-Johnson CAV-50	Ⓔ	50W	2,495
EAR V20	Ⓔ	24W	2,495
EAR 859	Ⓔ	13W	2,499
Electrocompaniet EC1-1	Ⓔ	100W	2,195
Gamma Rhythm Ref	Ⓔ	20W	3,499
Gamma Moment	Ⓔ	40W	19,999
Jadis DA30	Ⓔ	30W	3,490
Jadis DA60	Ⓔ	60W	5,750
<b>Krell KAV300i</b>	Ⓔ	150W	2,550
<b>Lavardin IT</b>	Ⓔ	40W	3,000
McIntosh MA6400E	Ⓔ	100W	3,999
McIntosh MA6800E	Ⓔ	150W	5,999
Meracus Onesta	Ⓔ	75W	2,595
Musical Fidelity A1001	Ⓔ	200W	2,500
Pioneer A-09	Ⓔ	45W	4,000
Rowland Concentra	Ⓔ	100W	5,500
Tube Tech Unisig Sig. Int.	Ⓔ	30W	2,300
Tube Tech Synergy PPS	Ⓔ	150W	6,900
Unison Simply 845	Ⓔ	24W	3,195
Unison Performance One	Ⓔ	25W	4,500
Unison 845 Absolute	Ⓔ	40W	11,995

### PREAMPS

<b>KEY</b>			
Ⓔ (etc) - Number of line-level inputs.			
<b>Ph</b> - Phono input fitted as standard			
(may be an option on some other models).			
<b>UP TO £500</b>			

Art Audio Minuet			499
Audio Analogue Bellini	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	475
Audio Note The M			350
Beam-Echo PP-21		<b>Ph</b>	499
Bryston BP1	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	438
Carver CT-24	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	499
CR Dev Themis	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	349
Creek P43	Ⓔ		399
Creek P52	Ⓔ		499
Crimson CS610C	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	450
EAR 834P	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	349
EAR 834L	Ⓔ		449
Electrocompaniet ECP-1	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	495
Fase Evoluzione Phonodrive 1.0	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	445
Henley HMC50			200
Henley HMC100			450
Hi Q Sound LCP2			149
<b>LFD Mistral Linestage</b>	Ⓔ		449
LFD LSO Linestage	Ⓔ		499
Lumley PP70	Ⓔ		345
Lumley PP1	Ⓔ		345
Magnum MP120	Ⓔ		330
Magnum MP660	Ⓔ		500
Magnum MP330	Ⓔ		500
Monrio ADN-N	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	295
Monrio Asly L	Ⓔ		500
<b>Moth 30 Passive</b>	Ⓔ		149
<b>Moth 30 RIAA</b>	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	249
<b>Moth 30 Active</b>	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	349
Musical Fidelity X10-D	Ⓔ		120
Musical Fidelity X-PLP	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	130
<b>Musical Fidelity X-PRE</b>	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	200
Musical Fidelity E20	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	400
<b>NAD 114</b>	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	270
NAD 116	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	430
Naim Prefix	Ⓔ		350

Naim NAC92	Ⓔ		470
Parasound P/HP-100	Ⓔ		130
Parasound P/HP-850	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	400
Rega E05	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	398
Rega Cursa	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	450
Roksan Artaxerxes 10	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	395
<b>Rose RV-23</b>	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	450
Rotel RQ970BX	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	130
<b>Rotel RC971</b>	Ⓔ		150
Rotel RC972	Ⓔ		225
Talk Electronics Hurricane 1	Ⓔ		500
Technics SU-C1000 Mk2	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	300
Trilogy 905	Ⓔ		375
Trilogy 904	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	375
Trilogy 900	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	499
Unison Simply Phono	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	500

### £501 TO £2000

Adyton Chorus			1,995
<b>Alchemist Kraken Pre</b>	Ⓔ		550
Alchemist Forseti Pre	Ⓔ		950
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 RIAA		<b>Ph</b>	550
Audio Note M2 Line			999
Audio Note Discovery		<b>Ph</b>	1,099
Audio Note M2RIAA			1,099
Audio Research LS7	Ⓔ		1,750
Audio Research LS3	Ⓔ		1,997
Audio Synthesis Pro Passion	Ⓔ		595
Audio Synthesis Passion	Ⓔ		695
Audio Synthesis Passion 8S	Ⓔ		1,295
Audio Synthesis Passion 8M	Ⓔ		1,695
<b>Aura CA-200</b>	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	700
AVI S2000MP	Ⓔ		949
AVI S2000MP+P	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,199
Beam-Echo SP-21	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,116
Bryston 4	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	642
Bryston BP5	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	889
Bryston BP20	Ⓔ		1,126
Bryston BP-25	Ⓔ		1,326
Cary SLP-50	Ⓔ		995
Cary SLP-74	Ⓔ		1,795
Cary PH-301	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,795
Chord CPA 1800	Ⓔ		1,774
Concordant Exhilarant	Ⓔ		900
Concordant Exquisite	Ⓔ		1,950
Conrad-Johnson PV-10AL	Ⓔ		995
<b>Conrad-Johnson PV-10A</b>	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,295
Conrad-Johnson PV-12AL	Ⓔ		1,990
Conrad-Johnson EF-1	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,990
Conrad-Johnson PF-2	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,990
Copland CSA303	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,199
<b>Copland CTA301 MkII</b>	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,399
CR Dev Carmenta	Ⓔ		659
CR Dev Argento	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	699
Credo CMP004			1,246
Credo CMP005			1,876
<b>Densen DM-20</b>	Ⓔ		1,200
DNM 3 Start	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,000
DNM 3A Start	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,650
DPA Enlightenment pre	Ⓔ		795
DPA DSP500S	Ⓔ		2,000
Dynavector L200	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,195
Dynavector P100	Ⓔ		1,495
Dynavector L100	Ⓔ		1,995
Earmax Pre	Ⓔ		1,895
<b>ECA Vista S</b>	Ⓔ		760
ECA Vista HD	Ⓔ		880
ECA Prisma	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	880
Electrocompaniet EC-4.5	Ⓔ		1,195
Electrocompaniet EC-4R	Ⓔ		1,495
Electrocompaniet EC-4.6	Ⓔ		1,750
Exposure XIX	Ⓔ		800
<b>Exposure XVII</b>	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	825
Fase Evoluzione Controlsource 2.0	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	620
Fase Evoluzione Controlsource 1.0	Ⓔ		1,395
Golden Tube Audio SEP-1	Ⓔ		990
Graaf WFB Two	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,195
Graaf WFB One	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,725
Henley HMC200	Ⓔ		750
Heybrook Signature II Pre	Ⓔ		555
Hi Q Sound MCB2	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	545
Hi Q Sound MCL2	Ⓔ		645
Jadis DPL2	Ⓔ		1,790
LFD MC1 PhonoStage	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	949
LFD LS1 Linestage	Ⓔ		999
LFD MC2 PhonoStage	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,499
LFD LS2 Linestage	Ⓔ		1,599
LFD LSB Linestage	Ⓔ		1,999
Linn Wakonda	Ⓔ		750
Linn Linto	Ⓔ		850
Linn K1AA	Ⓔ		1,400
Lumley Livr1.5	Ⓔ		895
Lumley LV1	Ⓔ		1,150
Lumley PV1.5	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,700
Lumley PV1	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,700
Matisse Atom	Ⓔ		1,000
McIntosh C712	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,999
Meracus Ingredi	Ⓔ		925
<b>Meridian 501</b>	Ⓔ		695

Meridian 562			765
<b>Meridian 562V</b>	Ⓔ		995
<b>Meridian 502</b>	Ⓔ		1,295
<b>Michell Argo</b>	Ⓔ		730
Michi RHC-10	Ⓔ		795
Michi RHQ-10	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,150
Michi RHA-10	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,150
Micromega Tempo P	Ⓔ		1,250
Mission Cyrus Pre	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	648
Monrio Pluri-L II	Ⓔ		900
<b>Muse Model 3</b>	Ⓔ		1,990
Musical Fidelity F25	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,500
NAD 118	Ⓔ		1,000
<b>Naim NAC92R</b>	Ⓔ		630
Naim NAC72	Ⓔ		725
Naim NAC102	Ⓔ		1,050
<b>Quad 77 Pre</b>	Ⓔ		850
<b>Rega Hal</b>	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	998
Roksan ROK-L2.5	Ⓔ		1,250
Rose RV-235	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	525
Rotel RC995	Ⓔ		899
Shearman Phase 6 Pre	Ⓔ		1,399
Shearman Phase 1 Pre Ref	Ⓔ		650
Siemel MC20	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	650
Siemel MM20	Ⓔ		1,599
Siemel TU10	Ⓔ		1,599
Siemel TR20	Ⓔ		899
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Pre 1P	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,999
Sonic Frontiers Phono 1	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	995
Sonographe SC26	Ⓔ		767
<b>Sumo Athena II Line</b>	Ⓔ		987
Sumo Athena IIB/II LS	Ⓔ		987
Sumo Athena III	Ⓔ		1,595
Sumo Artemis uP	Ⓔ		890
T+A P1200R	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	849
TAG McLaren PA10	Ⓔ		1,499
<b>TAG McLaren PA20R</b>	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,499
TAG McLaren PPA20	Ⓔ		650
<b>Talk Electronics Hurricane 2</b>	Ⓔ		900
Talk Electronics Hurricane 3	Ⓔ		1,500
Talk Electronics Hurricane 4	Ⓔ		1,900
Talk Electronics Hurricane 5	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	700
Technics SU-C2000	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,500
Tesseract TAADA	Ⓔ		1,800
Tesseract TALA	Ⓔ		1,800
Tesseract TAHA	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	699
<b>Thorens TTP-2000F</b>	Ⓔ		750
Trilogy 901	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	995
Trilogy 906	Ⓔ		1,595
Trilogy 902	Ⓔ		1,000
Tron Retro	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	2,000
Tron Nucleus Phono	Ⓔ		935
Tron Nucleus	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,150
Tube Tech Seer Line	Ⓔ		1,970
Tube Tech Mac Phono	Ⓔ		795
Tube Tech Prophet	Ⓔ		1,750
Unison Feather One	Ⓔ		1,750
Unison Mystery Two	Ⓔ		1,750
Unison Mystery One	Ⓔ		1,995
Unison VPP One	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,700
Van Den Hul Pre-amp	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	995
Wilson Benesch Stage One	Ⓔ		949
Woodside SC27 Line	Ⓔ		1,557
Woodside SC26 Line	Ⓔ		1,250
XTC PRE-1	Ⓔ		650
Yamaha CX-2	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	1,199
YBA 3	Ⓔ		1,199
YBA Integre	Ⓔ		1,999
YBA 2	Ⓔ		1,999

### 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 LSS MkIII	Ⓔ		6,435
Audio Research REF 1	Ⓔ		9,900
Boulder L3AE	Ⓔ		2,100
Boulder LSAE	Ⓔ		3,400
Boulder LSM	Ⓔ		3,800
Boulder 2010	Ⓔ		19,995
Cary SLP-98L	Ⓔ		2,595
Chord CPA 2200	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	2,355
Chord CPA 2800	Ⓔ		3,240
Chord CPA 3200	Ⓔ		3,320
Chord CPA 4000	Ⓔ		6,210
Conrad-Johnson PF-R	Ⓔ		2,490
Conrad-Johnson PV-12A	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	2,590
Conrad-Johnson Premier 15	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	3,995
Conrad-Johnson Premier 14	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	4,495
Conrad-Johnson Art	Ⓔ		14,995
CAT SL1 Sig. Mk3	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	6,500
CR Dev Kastor	Ⓔ		2,995
Credo LPR 001	Ⓔ		2,815
DNM 3C Primus	Ⓔ	<b>Ph</b>	2,550
DNM 3C Twin			





## HI-FI HELP

Let our experts help with your hi-fi problems. Send your query to 'Help' at the usual address.

### POWER AMPS (CONTINUED)

Chord SPM 400	100W	1,325
Chord SPM 600	130W	995
Conrad-Johnson MV-55	50W	1,995
Copland CTA501	30W	1,750
CR Dev Amphion	12W	1,949
Credo PMP 804		1,876
Creek AS2SE	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 Enlightenment pwr	100W	995
Earmax Power	25W	1,895
ECA Lectern S	50W	880
ECA Lectern HD	50W	1,480
Electrocompaniet AW60B	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	1,100
Golden Tube Audio SE-300B MkII	8W	1,490
Golden Tube Audio SE-100	100W	1,995
Graaf Venticinque P	25W	1,395
Heybrook Signature II Pwr	120W	1,045
Hi Q Sound MCM	70W	715
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 MF330	150W	685
Magnum MF660	125W	825
Magnum AS050E	200W	1,485
Magnum AS05E	200W	1,595
McIntosh MC7100	100W	1,999
Meracus Ciere	60W	1,095
Meridian 555	60W	750
Meridian 556	100W	895
Meridian 557	200W	1,400
Meridian 505	160W	1,590
Mitchell Alecto Stereo	50W	1,150
Mitchell Alecto Mono	100W	1,989
Michi RHB-05	100W	1,000
Michi RHB-10	200W	2,100
Micromega Amp	100W	1,250
Monrio Asty P	100W	950
Monrio Cento	135W	1,495
Monrio HP-1	135W	1,750
Moth 60 Stereo	60W	599
Moth 30 Mono/100	100W	879
Muse Model 100	100W	1,490
Musical Fidelity X-A200	200W	1,000
NAD 218THX	200W	850
Naim NAP140	45W	750
Naim NAP180	60W	1,060
Naim NAP135	75W	1,655
Naim NAP250	70W	1,655
Papworth TVA50	50W	1,425
Parasound HCA-1000A	125W	600
Parasound HCA-1500A	205W	1,000
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 Caspian	70W	595
Roksan ROK-S1.5	100W	1,495
Rose RP-190 (Dual Mode)	75W	550
Shearman Phase 3	50W	619
Shearman Phase 3 Reference	50W	729
Shearman Phase 5 Mono	100W	1,500
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Amp 1	40W	1,299
Sonographe SA250	125W	1,195
Sonographe SA400	220W	1,695
Sumo Polaris III	164W	950
Sumo Model Five	60W	1,975
Sumo Andromeda III	240W	1,975
T+A A1200	110W	845
T+A A1500	140W	1,495
TAG McLaren 60P	60W	849
TAG McLaren 100P	100W	1,099
TAG McLaren 125M	145W	1,199
Talk Electronics Tornado 2	65W	600
Talk Electronics Tornado 3	100W	750
Talk Electronics Tornado 4	110W	1,100

Technics SE-A2000	100W	1,100
Thorens TTA-2000	30W	599
Trilogy 948	50W	1,895
Trilogy 948T	22W	1,895
Tube Tech Syrix	45W	1,150
Tube Tech Unisis Sig. Pwr	30W	1,900
Unison Power 35	35W	1,500
Woodside SA240	40W	1,199
Woodside MA100	100W	1,733
Woodside STA50	50W	1,880
XTC POW-2	150W	1,450
Yamaha MX-2	150W	750
YBA 3 stereo		1,299

### 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 SPA2-200PRO	200W	2,056
ATC SPA2-150	200W	2,500
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	35W	2,395
Audio Research D300	300W	4,678
Audio Research VT100	100W	4,995
Audio Research D400 MkII	400W	6,850
Audio Research VT130 SE	130W	8,500
Audio Research VT150 SE	150W	17,000
Audio Synthesis Desire Decade	200W	2,495
Beam-Echo DL7-35	30W	3,525
Border Patrol 300B SE	10W	3,495
Boulder 102AE	100W	2,800
Boulder 102M	100W	3,100
Boulder 500AE	150W	4,995
Boulder 500M	150W	5,500
Boulder 2060	600W	19,000
Boulder 2050	999W	35,000
Bryston THX8B	150W	2,385
Cary CAD-572SE	20W	2,495
Cary CAD-300SE	12W	3,995
Cary 300SE Sig	12W	4,795
Cary CAD-805	50W	8,995
Chord SPM 800	160W	2,265
Chord SPM 1000B	200W	2,785
Chord SPM 1200B	250W	3,525
Chord SPM 1200C	315W	3,915
Chord SPM 1600	200W	4,718
Chord SPM 1400B mono	380W	7,830
Chord SPM 5000	415W	13,544
Conrad-Johnson MF-2300A	250W	2,990
Conrad-Johnson Premier 11A	70W	3,500
Conrad-Johnson Premier 12	140W	6,900
Conrad-Johnson Premier 8XS	150W	17,000
Conrad-Johnson Premier 8A	275W	17,000
CAT JLI	100W	18,000
Copland CTA505	67W	2,099
CR Dev Artemis		4,995
Credo LPO 804		2,456
Credo PMP 155		2,676
Credo LPO 455		4,975
Credo LPO 155		6,983
DNM PA5	50W	2,500
DNM PA3S	23W	3,750
DPA DAP500S	250W	3,000
Dynavector HX75	75W	2,195
Dynavector HX1.2	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 AW120DMB	120W	2,695
Electrocompaniet AW250DMB	250W	3,995
Electrocompaniet AW180MB	180W	4,595
Exposure IV	80W	2,199
Exposure XVI	125W	4,000
Gamma Aeon	20W	4,999
Gamma Space Ref	18W	7,999
Gamma Aeon Ref	70W	49,999
Graaf 5050	50W	2,100
Graaf GM20	60W	2,750
Graaf GM100	100W	4,250
Graaf GM200	200W	7,500
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	9,900
Krell FPB600	600W	12,500
Krell KAS2	200W	20,000
Lexicon 225	250W	2,500

Lexicon 501	500W	5,000
Linn Klout	80W	2,400
Lumley M125	120W	3,750
Lumley M250	250W	7,500
Magnum Class A mono	180W	2,450
Magnum A200SE	275W	3,750
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
McIntosh MC150	150W	3,499
McIntosh MC300	300W	3,999
McIntosh MC500	500W	8,999
McIntosh MC1000	999W	14,999
Meracus Tentare	75W	2,245
Meracus 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
Rowland Model 2	75W	4,999
Rowland Model 6	150W	10,999
Rowland Model 8T	250W	12,499
Rowland Model 9T	350W	27,999
Shearman Phase 1 Pwr Ref	100W	2,199
Siemel TA20		2,350
Sonic Frontiers Power 1	55W	2,499
Sonic Frontiers Power 2	110W	4,999
Sonic Frontiers Power 3	220W	8,599
Sumo Model Ten/M	240W	4,700
Sunfire Sunfire	300W	2,120
T+A A3000	190W	3,000
Talk Electronics Tornado 5	200W	2,100
Tesseract TAMP-60	60W	7,350
Trilogy 958T	45W	3,395
Trilogy 958	100W	3,395
Tube Tech Genesis Sig.	100W	4,700
Tube Tech Synergy DMA	150W	6,400
Unison Smart 845	24W	3,500
Unison Smart 300B	24W	4,250
Unison Palladio	32W	11,995
Van Den Hul Power amp	65W	2,500
XTC POW-1	225W	2,250
YBA 2 stereo	200W	2,200
YBA 1 HC stereo		4,999

Cambridge Arctic	⊗	20.00
Cambridge Pacific	⊗	30.00
Cambridge Studio Reference	⊗	40.00
Cambridge Silver Spirit 40	⊗	70.00
Cambridge Silver Spirit 60	⊗	100.00
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 Aud. Hexlink Golden-5 C	⊗	600.00
Cardas Audio Golden Cross	⊗	700.00
ChordCo Chrysalis	⊗	33.00
ChordCo Cobra 2	⊗	50.00
ChordCo Siren	⊗	65.00
ChordCo Chameleon	⊗	85.00
ChordCo Solid	⊗	99.00
ChordCo Chorus	⊗	185.00
Connections UK Ultra	⊗	28.00
Connections UK Midas	⊗	39.00
Connections UK HD	⊗	46.00
DBF Acoustics Black Velvet	⊗	30.00
DBF Acoustics Black Velvet SE	⊗	40.00
DBF Acoustics Azure SE	⊗	75.00
DNM-Reson TCC75	⊗	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 M1 Interconnect	⊗	145.00
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
Insert Audio Focus 1.2	⊗	21.50
Insert Audio IC100 Mk II	⊗	46.95
Insert Audio Status 3.4	⊗	160.00
Ixos 104	⊗	20.00
Ixos 1003	⊗	30.00
Ixos Gamma 1002	⊗	39.95
Ixos 103	⊗	45.00
Ixos 102	⊗	60.00
Ixos 101	⊗	100.00
Ixos 100X03	⊗	150.00
Kimber PBJ	⊗	68.00
Kimber KC1	⊗	96.00
Kimber Hero	⊗	110.00
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	⊗	35.00
Nordost Black Knight	⊗	60.00
Nordost Blue Angel	⊗	98.00
Nordost Blue Heaven I/C	⊗	144.95
Nordost Red Dawn	⊗	285.00
Nordost SPM	⊗	825.00
Ortofon 7N interconnect	⊗	250.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 35	⊗	40.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 50	⊗	50.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 52	⊗	70.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 53	⊗	90.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 100	⊗	100.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 102	⊗	130.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 103	⊗	160.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 104	⊗	190.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 200	⊗	220.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 202	⊗	290.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 203	⊗	360.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 204	⊗	430.00
Prowire Silver	⊗	60.00
PAD Elementa	⊗	145.00
QED Qnet 2	⊗	30.00
QED Qnet 4	⊗	60.00
Roksan ROK-Intercon	⊗	75.00
Shiny Red Devil	⊗	80.00
Shiny Red Star 2	⊗	120.00
Shiny Black Star 2	⊗	240.00
Shiny Pulsar 2	⊗	495.00
Shiny Quasar 2	⊗	850.00
Siltech MC2-12	⊗	308.00
Siltech MC4-24S	⊗	400.00
Siltech FTM-3S	⊗	730.00
Silver Sounds SS2	⊗	99.00



SME S3LB-4	52.06
SME 4900A	76.83
SME 5900A	102.57
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 Maroon	125.00
Sonic Link Blue Nickel	150.00
Sonic Link Vermillion	195.00
Sonic Link Red earth	300.00
Sonic Link Black earth	450.00
Sonic Link Blue earth	695.00
Sonic Link Black Rhodium	995.00
<b>Straightwire Chorus</b>	<b>40.00</b>
Supra DAC-X	60.00
Supra EFF-ISL	80.00
Supra EFF-XLR	90.00
Transparent Cable Musichord Int	48.00
Transparent Cable The Link	92.00
<b>Transparent Cable Music Link</b>	<b>119.00</b>
Trichord Pulsewire 75	169.00
Vampire Wire CC	24.00
Vampire Wire CCC/II	58.00
Vampire Wire SC/II	98.00
Vampire Wire SC/IV	144.00
Vampire Wire A/2	259.00
Vampire Wire SL	412.00
Van Den Hul Storm	25.00
Van Den Hul Source HB	50.00
Van Den Hul D102 III	69.99
Van Den Hul Thunderline HB	130.00
Van Den Hul First	210.00
Van Den Hul Second	240.00
Van Den Hul MC Gold	400.00
Van Den Hul MC Silver IT	1,240.00
Van Den Hul MC Silver IT Bal	1,560.00
Wireworld Orbit	30.00
Wireworld Solstice II	40.00
XLO Type 150	50.00
XLO Type 0.1	180.00

QED Digiflex	20.00
QED Optiflex	25.00
Roksan ROK-Intercon	45.00
Shinpy Digital	265.00
Siltech HF-6	145.00
Sonic Link Green	60.00
Supra EFF-ID	45.00
Supra DAC-XLR	45.00
Transparent Cable PDL	199.00
Trichord Pulsewire 75D	75.00
Trichord Pulsewire 110D	145.00
Vampire Wire DJ/1	150.00
Van Den Hul Source HB	30.00
Van Den Hul Videolink	60.00
Van Den Hul AES-EBU 110	65.00
Van Den Hul First	125.00
Van Den Hul Second	130.00



**Speaker Cables**

**KEY**

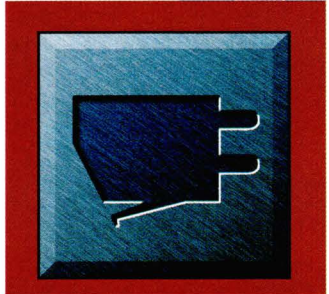
- Stranded construction.
- — Solid-core construction.

Price per mono metre, unterminated.

Acoustic Energy AESC-3S	11.95
Apertura Silver	82.50
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 F-18	3.60
Audioquest Type 6+	9.00
Audioquest Indigo +	15.00
Audioquest Crystal +	25.00
Audioquest Forest	75.00
Audioquest Argent +	125.00
Audioquest Clear 3	200.00
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 Theatre 2	1.50
Cable Talk The Flat One	2.00
Cable Talk Talk 3.1	2.25
Cable Talk Overture 2.1	3.25
Cable Talk Talk 4.1	4.25
Cable Talk Talk 3.1 Biwire	4.50
Cable Talk Concert 2.1	7.00
Cable Talk Talk 4.1 Biwire	8.50
Cable Talk Symphony 3	12.50
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 GoldenS SC	175.00
Cardas Audio Golden Cross SC	789.00
ChordCo Myth	6.00
ChordCo Legend	15.00
DNM-Reson LSC	6.95
DNM-Reson LSCB	11.95
DPA Black Sixteen	100.00
Electrocompaniet EC-K2	30.00
Gale XL105	1.00
Gale XL189	1.00
Gale XL315	2.00
Gale XL160-2	2.50
Gale XL315-2	3.99
Gamma Wonder Line	99.00
Goertz M1	16.00
Goertz M2	32.00
Goertz Big Boy	64.00
GT Audio Speaker	50.00
Ixos 607	2.00
Ixos 6004	3.00
Ixos 6003	3.00
Ixos 605	3.00
Kimber 4PR	3.90
Kimber 4VS	9.00
Kimber 4TC	19.60
Kimber 8TC	32.70

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	340.00
Lieder Bel Canto	450.00
Lieder Spoor	580.00
Lieder Straat	1,000.00
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	3.50
Naim NACA 5	5.90
Nordost Octava	3.00
Nordost 4-Flat	12.00
Nordost Blue Heaven Spkr	55.00
Nordost Red Dawn	110.00
Nordost SPM	325.00
Ortofon SPK100	3.00
Ortofon SPK200	5.00
Ortofon SPK300	8.00
Precious Metals Silver L'r 32	7.50
Precious Metals Silver L'r 102	10.00
Precious Metals Silver L'r 34	15.00
Precious Metals Silver L'r 104	20.00
Precious Metals Silver L'r 106	30.00
Precious Metals Silver L'r 108	40.00
Puresonic OFC 7892	1.20
Puresonic OFC 7844	1.65
Puresonic OFC 7845	1.95
Puresonic OFC 7891	2.85
Puresonic OFC 7816	3.75
Puresonic OFC 7832	3.75
Puresonic OFC 7812	3.75
Puresonic OFC 7825	6.95
Puresonic PSOCC 7801	9.50
Puresonic PSOCC 7802	18.00
Puresonic PSOCC 7803	27.00
QED Qudos Micro	1.25
QED Qudos micro 4 core	2.00
QED Qudos 4 core	4.00
QED Qudos Bi-Wire	4.50
QED Qudos Silver	4.95
QED Profile 4x4	9.00
QED Profile Silver 12	15.00
Rega REGA	2.00
Roksan ROK-Speaker	6.00
Shinpy Red Devil	30.00
Shinpy Red Star 2	39.00
Shinpy Black Star 2	62.00
Shinpy Pulsar 2	104.00
Shinpy Quasar 2	208.00
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	2.75
Sonic Link AST200	5.95
Sonic Link AST200x2	10.00
Sonic Link S300	18.00
Sonic Link S130x2	20.00
Sonic Link S300x2	35.00
Sonic Link S900	50.00
Sonic Link S600x2	70.00
Sonic Link RES.1	90.00
Sonic Link RES.4	330.00
Supra Classic 2.5	2.49
Supra Linc 2.5 Flex	3.49
Supra Classic 4.0	3.95
Supra Ply 2.0	4.95
Supra Linc 4.0 Flex	4.95
Supra Ply 3.4	6.95
Supra Quattro 4x4	8.95
Supra Classic 10	9.95
Tech + Link SPC 79	1.20
Transparent Cable Musichord Spkr	11.00
Transparent Cable The Wave	23.00
Transparent Cable Music Wave Spkr	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
Van Den Hul Skyline HB	3.50
Van Den Hul Snowline	5.00
Van Den Hul Skytrack HB	5.50
Van Den Hul Clearwater	7.00
Van Den Hul Snowtrack	10.00
Van Den Hul CS122 HB	12.00
Van Den Hul Cleartrack	13.00
Van Den Hul D352 HB	20.00
Van Den Hul Teatrack HB	22.00
Van Den Hul SCS12	34.00
Van Den Hul Magnum HB	38.00

Van Den Hul The Wind HB	40.00
Van Den Hul Revolution HB	76.00
Van Den Hul Revelation HB	120.00
Van Den Hul The Third	900.00
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	15
Audio Technica AT-95E	MM	20
Audio Technica AT-110E	MM	28
Audio Technica AT450E	MM	70
Audio Technica AT440ML	MM	90
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 ZFE+1	MM	48
Grado Prestige Black	MM	49
Grado Prestige Green	MM	59
Grado Prestige Blue	MM	69
Grado ZF1+	MM	83
Grado Prestige Red	MM	99
N'hram Tracer I	MM	98
Ortofon VM52	MM	15
Ortofon OM 5E	MM	20
Ortofon OM 10	MM	30
Ortofon 510	MM	40
Ortofon OM DJ	MM	50
Ortofon OM 20	MM	70
Ortofon 520	MM	70
Ortofon MC1 Turbo	MC	75
Ortofon Concorde DJ	MM	80
Ortofon OM 30	MM	90
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 XV15-7575	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
Shure M70BX	MM	21
Shure M92E	MM	22
Shure SC35C	MM	29
Shure M447X	MM	35
Shure M44CX	MM	35
Stanton 500AL II	MM	35
Stanton 500EL	MM	44
Stanton 680AL/X	MM	59
Stanton 680EL/X	MM	74
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 IO1td	MC	4,500
Audio Technica AT-OC9	MC	330



**CABLES**

**Digital Interconnects**

**KEY**

- Stranded construction.
- — Solid-core construction.

Prices of interconnects are for a one-metre terminated pair.

Apertura Model B	139.00
Apertura Model A	255.00
Apogee Digital Wyde Eye	20.00
Apogee Digital Wyde Eye Bal.	30.00
Art Yam Church 5000	275.00
Audioquest Digital/video 1	30.00
Audioquest Digital/video 2	60.00
Audioquest Optlink X	90.00
Audioquest Digital PRO	100.00
Audioquest Optlink Pro	149.00
Audioquest Optlink Z	179.00
Cable Talk Digital 2	78.00
Cardas Audio Lightning	190.00
ChordCo Codac	36.00
ChordCo Prodac	50.00
DNM-Reson DIG100	26.00
DPA Opti-link	20.00
DPA Digi-link	28.00
Insert Audio Dataline 500	24.95
Insert Audio Optic 2.1	29.95
Insert Audio Dataline 700	39.95
Insert Audio Image 5.1	44.95
Ixos 105	25.00
Ixos 106	30.00
Kimber Opti-link	50.00
Kimber Illuminati DV-30	70.00
Kimber Illuminati D-60	325.00
Kimber Illuminati DX-50	350.00
Kimber Illuminati Orchid	750.00
LAT International DI-20-D	79.00
Moth Leyline Datalink	140.00
Nordost Moonglo	155.00
Precious Metals Silver Dig 35	20.00
Precious Metals Silver Dig 100	50.00
Precious Metals Silver Dig 200	110.00
Precious Metals Silver Dig 202	145.00



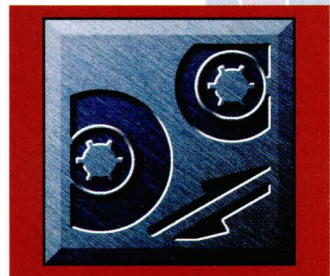
WRITE TO US!

A burning question to express in print? Write in to 'Letters' at the usual address. A prize for every letter printed!

## CARTRIDGES (CONTINUED)

Benz-Micro The Glider	<b>MC</b>	650
Benz-Micro M090	<b>MC</b>	700
Benz-Micro L040	<b>MC</b>	700
Benz-Micro H200	<b>MC</b>	700
Benz-Micro Reference	<b>MC</b>	1,100
Benz-Micro Reference Ruby	<b>MC</b>	1,500
Benz-Micro Ruby Open Air	<b>MC</b>	1,600
Clearaudio Aurum-Alpha	<b>MM</b>	135
Clearaudio Aurum-Beta	<b>MM</b>	195
Clearaudio Aurum-Beta/S	<b>MM</b>	265
Clearaudio Gamma-S	<b>MM</b>	745
Clearaudio Signature	<b>MC</b>	1,495
Clearaudio Accurate	<b>MC</b>	2,500
Clearaudio Insider	<b>MC</b>	4,900
Denon DL304	<b>MC</b>	200
Dynavector 10X4II	<b>MC</b>	189
Dynavector 23RS	<b>MC</b>	375
Dynavector 17D2	<b>MC</b>	450
Dynavector XX-1L	<b>MC</b>	998
Dynavector XX-1	<b>MC</b>	998
Dynavector Te-Kattora	<b>MC</b>	1,698
Goldring Eroica LX	<b>MC</b>	110
Goldring Eroica	<b>MC</b>	110
Goldring 1042	<b>MM</b>	120
Goldring Elite	<b>MC</b>	220
Goldring Excel VX	<b>MC</b>	525
Grado Prestige Silver	<b>MM</b>	119
Grado Prestige Gold	<b>MM</b>	149
Grado Signature Junior	<b>MM</b>	150
Grado Signature 8MZ	<b>MM</b>	250
Grado Signature MCZ	<b>MM</b>	375
Grado Signature TLZ	<b>MM</b>	650
Grado Signature XTZ	<b>MM</b>	975
Grado Reference	<b>MM</b>	995
Koetsu Red T	<b>MC</b>	1,550
Koetsu Red T Sig	<b>MC</b>	1,998
Koetsu Urushi	<b>MC</b>	2,297
Koetsu Signature	<b>MC</b>	3,218
Koetsu Gold PR	<b>MC</b>	5,498
Linn K9	<b>MM</b>	125
Linn Klyde	<b>MC</b>	500
Linn Arkiv	<b>MC</b>	1,000
London Decca Maroon	<b>MM</b>	299
London Decca Gold	<b>MM</b>	319
London Decca Maroon Dp	<b>MM</b>	379
London Decca Gold Dp	<b>MM</b>	399
London Decca S Gold	<b>MM</b>	439
London Decca S Gold Dp	<b>MM</b>	519
London Decca Jubilee	<b>MM</b>	999
Lyra Lydan	<b>MC</b>	649
Lyra Clavis Da Capo	<b>MC</b>	995
Lyra Parnassus DCT	<b>MC</b>	1,895
N'ham Tracer II	<b>MM</b>	310
N'ham Tracer III	<b>MM</b>	410
N'ham Tracer IV	<b>MM</b>	660
Ortofon MC15 Super II	<b>MC</b>	140
Ortofon 540	<b>MM</b>	140
Ortofon MC3 Turbo	<b>MC</b>	150
Ortofon MC25E	<b>MC</b>	200
Ortofon MC25FL	<b>MC</b>	250
Ortofon MC10 Supreme	<b>MC</b>	300
Ortofon MC20 Supreme	<b>MC</b>	450
Ortofon MC30 Supreme	<b>MC</b>	550
Ortofon MC2000II	<b>MC</b>	800
Ortofon MC Rohmann	<b>MC</b>	1,000
Ortofon MC3000 II	<b>MC</b>	1,200
Ortofon MC7500	<b>MC</b>	2,000
Pickering TL-3003	<b>MM</b>	145
Pickering XLZ-4500	<b>MM</b>	150
Pickering TL-4004	<b>MM</b>	175
Pickering XSV-5000U	<b>MM</b>	200
Pickering XLZ-7500	<b>MM</b>	200
Pickering TLZ-7500-S	<b>MM</b>	200
Reson Mica	<b>MM</b>	185
Reson Recca	<b>MM</b>	250
Reson Aciore	<b>MC</b>	299
Reson Etile	<b>MC</b>	455
Reson Lexe	<b>MC</b>	1,300
Roksan Corus Black	<b>MM</b>	130
Roksan Shiraz	<b>MC</b>	970
Shure V15XMR	<b>MM</b>	295
Stanton 890ALX	<b>MM</b>	120
Sumiko BPS	<b>MC</b>	250
Transfiguration Spirit	<b>MC</b>	1,000
Transfiguration Temper	<b>MC</b>	1,950
Van Den Hul MM-1	<b>MM</b>	250
Van Den Hul MM-2	<b>MM</b>	300
Van Den Hul DDT-II	<b>MC</b>	600

Van Den Hul MC-10	<b>MC</b>	750
Van Den Hul MC-One	<b>MC</b>	900
Van Den Hul MC-ONE Super	<b>MC</b>	1,050
Van Den Hul MC-Two	<b>MC</b>	1,200
Van Den Hul The Frog Low o/p	<b>MC</b>	1,500
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIISLA	<b>MC</b>	2,000
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIIGLN	<b>MC</b>	2,800
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIIGLA	<b>MC</b>	2,800
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIICMN	<b>MC</b>	2,800
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIICHN	<b>MC</b>	2,900
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IVGLA	<b>MC</b>	3,000
Wilson Benesch Matrix	<b>MC</b>	786
Wilson Benesch Carbon	<b>MC</b>	1,573
Wilson Benesch Analog	<b>MC</b>	1,850



CASSETTE DECKS

KEY

↔ - Autoreverse - no need to remove and turn around the tape.

3-H - 3 heads, i.e. separate record and replay heads.

UP TO £200

Aiwa AD-F460	↔	120
Aiwa AD-S750	↔	200
Akai DXW1100	↔	200
Akai DX1200	↔	200
Ariston WX-510	↔	80
Denon DRM-550	↔	160
Denon DRW-580	↔	200
Denon DRS-640	↔	200
Goodmans Delta 801	↔	130
JVC TD-X372BK	↔	170
JVC TD-R472BK	↔	200
Kenwood KX-W4080	↔	160
Kenwood KX-3080	↔	160
Kenwood KX-W6080	↔	200
Kenwood KX-5080S	↔	200
Marantz SD-455	↔	169
Marantz SD-57	↔	199
Pioneer CT-S250	↔	150
Pioneer CT-W205R	↔	160
Pioneer CT-W505R	↔	180
Pioneer CT-S450S	↔	200
Pioneer CT-W606DR	↔	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	↔	170
TEAC R-560	↔	180
TEAC V-1050	↔	180
TEAC R-H500	↔	200
Technics RS-BX501	↔	170
Technics RS-TR73	↔	180
Technics RS-TR474	↔	200
Technics RS-A26	↔	200
Yamaha KX-393	↔	130
Yamaha KX-W321	↔	170
Yamaha KX-493	↔	180

OVER £200

Aiwa AD-F850	↔	230
Aiwa AD-WX929	↔	230
Carver TDR-1550	↔	629
Denon DRM-650S	↔	230
Denon DRM-740	↔	270
Denon DRS-810	↔	310
H/K TD420	↔	250
H/K TD450	↔	350
JVC TD-V662BK	↔	270
JVC TD-W718BK	↔	300
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
Onkyo K 611	↔	460
Pioneer CT-S550S	↔	250
Pioneer CT-W806DR	↔	300
Pioneer CT-S550S Precision	↔	340

Pioneer CT-SB305	↔	500
Pioneer CT-95	↔	1,000
Rotel RC960BX	↔	250
Sony TC-WE805S	↔	250
Sony TC-KA6ES	↔	550
T+A CCI200R	↔	990
TEAC W-850R	↔	250
TEAC V-1030	↔	250
TEAC W-6000R	↔	450
TEAC W-6300S	↔	550
TEAC W-8030S	↔	650
Technics RS-AZ7	↔	270
Technics RS-TR575	↔	280
Yamaha KX-580SE	↔	250
Yamaha KX-W592	↔	280



CD PLAYERS

KEY

⇒ - Multiplayer: can be loaded with more than one disc.

⇄ - Electrical (coaxial) digital output.

Many players also include an optical (Toslink) output.

UP TO £250

Akai CD1100	⇄	200
Akai CDM1200	⇄	230
AMC CD9	⇄	130
AMC CD8A	⇄	150
AMC D9/DAC8	⇄	200
Ariston CDX700	⇄	60
Ariston CDX710	⇄	130
Ariston CDX910	⇄	170
Ariston CDG610	⇄	140
Cambridge CD4	⇄	150
Cambridge CD4SE	⇄	200
Cambridge CD6	⇄	250
Denon DCD-635	⇄	180
Denon DCD-625	⇄	200
Denon DCD-715	⇄	235
Denon DCD-835	⇄	280
H/K HD710	⇄	200
JVC XL-V120BK	⇄	110
JVC XL-V130BK	⇄	120
JVC XL-V230BK	⇄	140
JVC XL-F116BK	⇄	180
JVC XL-F216BK	⇄	200
JVC XL-Z574BK	⇄	200
Kenwood DP-1080	⇄	110
Kenwood DP-2080	⇄	130
Kenwood DP-R3090	⇄	140
Kenwood DP-R4090	⇄	160
Kenwood DP-3080	⇄	170
Kenwood DP-R6090	⇄	200
Kenwood DP-4090	⇄	250
Marantz CD-38	⇄	130
Marantz CC-38	⇄	200
Marantz CD-48	⇄	200
Marantz CD-57	⇄	230
Marantz CD-67II	⇄	230
NAD 522	⇄	170
NAD 510	⇄	200
NAD 523	⇄	250
NAD 512	⇄	250
Philips CD711	⇄	120
Philips CD721	⇄	130
Philips CD751	⇄	150
Philips CD751	⇄	180
Pioneer PD-106	⇄	130
Pioneer PD-206	⇄	150
Pioneer PD-F606	⇄	200
Pioneer PD-M603	⇄	200
Pioneer PD-S505	⇄	200
Pioneer PD-F706	⇄	250
Rotel RCD-950AX	⇄	180
Rotel RCD-950	⇄	200
Sherwood CD-4030R	⇄	180
Sherwood CDC680	⇄	180
Sherwood CDC6050R	⇄	200
Sony CDP-M205	⇄	110
Sony CDP-XE210	⇄	120
Sony CDP-M305	⇄	130
Sony CDP-XE310	⇄	140
Sony CDP-CE105	⇄	150
Sony CDP-XE510	⇄	180
Sony CDP-CE315	⇄	200
Sony CDP-XB720E	⇄	200
Sony CDP-C325M	⇄	200
Synergy CDJ1210	⇄	120

TEAC CD-P1800	⇄	130
TEAC CD-P3450SE	⇄	200
TEAC PD-H500	⇄	240
TEAC PD-D2200	⇄	250
Technics SL-PC390A	⇄	90
Technics SL-PC490A	⇄	100



Trichord Digital Jukebox 25	£599
Trichord Digital Jukebox 50	£649
Trichord Digital iBox 100	£699
Trichord Revelation	£799
YBA Special	£625

## OVER £1000

Acoustic Precision Eikos	£1,850
Alchemist Forseti	£1,995
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
Conrad-Johnson DF-2	£1,695
Conrad-Johnson DV-2b	£2,495
Copland CDA-266	£1,199
Copland CD277	£1,800
Copland CDA288	£2,199
Cymbal CDP12	£1,299
Helios Model 1	£1,250
Helios Stargate	£2,250
Krell KPS301	£5,490
Krell KPS-201	£9,990
Marantz CD-17K15	£1,100
Mark Levinson 39	£4,995
McIntosh MCD7009	£3,699
Meracus Tanto	£1,395
Meracus Imago Player	£4,495
Mendian 506	£1,100
Meridian 508	£1,995
Micromega Solo	£2,750
Myriad MCD500	£1,300
Naim CD2	£2,000
Naim CDX	£2,200
Naim CDS	£3,940
Oracle CD Player	£7,300
Pink Triangle Numeral	£1,049
Pink Triangle Litural	£2,200
Primare D302	£1,799
Roksan Attesa-DP3P	£1,495
Shenwood CD1	£1,100
Sonic Frontiers Anthem CD1	£1,699
Sonic Frontiers SFC0D-1	£3,799
TAG McLaren CD20R	£1,249
TEAC VRDS-25	£1,300
Theta Digital Miles	£2,495
XTC CDP-1	£1,250
YBA Integre	£1,250
YBA CD3	£2,250
YBA CD2	£3,350
YBA CD1	£4,500



### CD TRANSPORTS

**KEY**  
 Ⓜ - Electrical (coaxial) digital output.  
 Many players also include an optical (Toslink) output.

Alchemist Forseti Drive	£1,100
Altis CDT III	£4,995
Arcam Delta 250	£800
Audio Research CDT1	£3,290
Audio Synthesis Transcend Decade	£2,995
Audiomeca Damnation	£999
Audiomeca Damnation SE	£1,100
Audiomeca Talisman	£1,850
Audiomeca Talisman SE	£1,999
Audiomeca Talisman DOB	£2,250
Audiomeca Mephisto	£2,350
Audiomeca Mephisto SE	£2,500
Audiomeca Mephisto	£2,750
Cambridge Discmag One	£300
Conrad-Johnson DR-1	£1,795
DPA Enlightenment Drv	£725
Jadis J53	£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
Meracus Imago	£3,995
Mendian 500	£1,245
Micromega Drive 3	£750
Micromega Data	£2,250
Monrio Bitmatch	£950

Muse Model 5	£1,800
Oracle CD Drive	£4,680
Pink Triangle Cardinal II	£909
PS Audio Lambda TR	£2,250
PS Audio Lambda AT&T	£2,778
Rogers SC-8t	£2,699
Roksan Attesa-DP3	£1,295
Sonic Frontiers Transport 3	£5,999
T+A CM1200R	£990
TAG McLaren CDT20R	£1,499
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
Tube Tech Fulcrum	£1,000
Wadia 8	£3,195
Wadia 20	£4,370



### DIGITAL TO ANALOGUE CONVERTERS (DACs)

**KEY**  
 Ⓜ - Number of digital inputs

Alchemist Forseti DAC	£1,100
Altis Reference	£4,995
AMC DAC8	£130
Apogee Digital DA-1000	£3,395
Arcam Black Box 50	£350
Arcam Black Box 500	£500
Audio 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 Decade	£2,795
Audiomeca Elixir	£799
Audiomeca Ambrosia Boulder 2020	£1,850
Cambridge Dacmagic 2 Mk II	£17,750
Chord DSC1 100	£150
Chord DSC1500	£2,575
Conrad-Johnson D/A-3	£3,850
Conrad-Johnson D/A-2b	£1,195
dCS Elgar	£1,990
Denon DCD-425	£8,500
DPA Little Bit 3	£150
DPA Renaissance DAC	£325
DPA Enlightenment DAC	£570
DPA SX128	£825
DPA SX256	£2,000
DPA SX512	£4,000
Jadis JS3	£8,000
Jadis JS1	£2,129
LFD DAC2	£8,068
LFD DAC3	£1,950
Linn Numerik	£3,000
Manley Professional DAC-20	£1,500
Mark Levinson 36	£6,950
Mark Levinson 30.5	£3,995
Meracus Auriga	£15,950
Meracus Flagrare	£1,295
Meridian 566	£2,495
Micromega DAC 2	£1,095
Micromega Dialog	£795
Monrio 18B2	£2,000
Muse Model 2	£795
Muse Model 2 Plus	£2,190
Musical Fidelity X-ACT	£2,500
Musical Fidelity X-DAC	£200
Onkyo DX 7310	£300
Onkyo DX 7310	£330
PS Audio DL3	£300
PS Audio SL3	£777
PS Audio UltraLink 2 HDCD	£1,449
PS Audio Ref Link	£2,590
Rogers SC-8m	£4,550
Roksan Attesa-DA2	£1,899
Sonic Frontiers Processor 3	£595
Sumo Theorem II	£5,999
Sumo Theorem IIB	£945
TAG McLaren DAC20	£1,155
Talk Electronics Thunder 3	£1,249
TEAC D-T1	£1,000
TEAC D-700	£500
Theta Digital Chroma Std	£600
Theta Digital Pro Geny	£849
Theta Digital Pro Prime II	£1,145
	£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
Tube Tech Fulcrum	£1,400
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

**KEY**  
 MD - MiniDisc  
 DAT - Digital Audio Tape  
 Ⓜ - portable

Denon DMD-1000	MD	£300
Denon DMD-1300	MD	£500
Kenwood DM-7090	MD	£500
Kenwood DM-9090	MD	£550
Pioneer PDR-555R/1100	MD	£500
Pioneer PDR-04	MD	£700
Pioneer D-05	DAT	£900
Pioneer PDR-05	DAT	£1,000
Pioneer D-C88	DAT	£2,000
Sharp MD-R2	MD	£300
Sharp MD-R1E	MD	£300
Sharp MDR3H	MD	£300
Sharp MD-MS200H	MD	£350
Sharp MDW300H	MD	£1,000
Sony MZ-E20	MD	£180
Sony MDS-JE510	MD	£250
Sony MZ-E30	MD	£280
Sony MDS-IB920	MD	£300
Sony MDS-S38	MD	£300
Sony MZ-R30	MD	£300
Sony MDS-JA30ES	MD	£699
Sony MDS-JA50ES	MD	£1,300
TEAC MD-H500	MD	£650
TEAC MD-10	MD	£950
Yamaha MDX-9	MD	£300



### HEADPHONES

**KEY**  
 'D' - Dynamic type, compatible with virtually all normal headphone outputs.  
 '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
Aural Envelope DX200	D	£20
Aural Envelope DX220	D	£30
Beyer DT111	D	£15
Beyer DT211	D	£31
Beyer DT211TV	D	£35
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
KLH KHP201TW	D	£21
KLH KHP-300V	D	£25
KLH KHP-420V	D	£33
Maxell HP-2000	D	£20
Pioneer SE-A40	D	£23
Pioneer SE-A20V	D	£25
Pioneer SE-M250	D	£30
Pioneer SE-M350	D	£18
Sennheiser HD56	D	£20
Sennheiser HD433	D	£25
Sennheiser HD400	D	£35
Sennheiser HD470	D	£40
Sennheiser HD60TV	D	£18
Sony MDR-W20G	D	£18
Sony MDR-E837	D	£18
Sony MDR-P70	D	£20
Sony MDR-ED238	D	£20
Sony MDR-009TV	D	£20
Sony MDR-A34L	D	£20
Sony MDR-E848	D	£20
Sony MDR-P1TV	D	£25
Sony MDR-CD270	D	£35
Sony MDR-E868	D	£40
Sony MDR-V400	D	£40
Sony MDR-D11	D	£25
Stanton ST Pro	D	£30
Technics RP-F200	D	£40
Technics RP-HT300	D	£20
Vivanco SR150	D	£25
Vivanco SR200	D	£25
Vivanco SR250	D	£30
Vivanco SR300	D	£25
Vivanco IR5700	D	£40

## OVER £41

AKG K301	D	£80
AKG K222IR	D	£100
AKG K401	D	£120
AKG K501	D	£150
AKG K333IR	D	£150
AKG K444IR	D	£180
AKG K2905	D	£250
AKG K1000	D	£700
Audio Technica ATH910PRO	D	£80
Audio Technica ATHD40FS	D	£120
Audio Technica ATHM40FS	D	£120
Audio Technica ATH911	D	£120
Beyer DT311	D	£50
Beyer DT411	D	£63
Beyer DT511	D	£106
Beyer DT801	D	£125
Beyer DT811	D	£145
Beyer DT100	D	£160
Beyer DT901	D	£160
Beyer DT911	D	£170
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 RS2	D	£495
Grado RS1	D	£695
Jecklin Float Model 1	D	£79
Jecklin Float Model 2	D	£99
Jecklin Float ELS	E	£399
JVC HA-D727	D	£43
JVC HA-W60	D	£49
JVC HA-D910	D	£65
JVC HA-D1000	D	£250
JVC HA-F25	D	£699
JVC SBC 3396	D	£70
Philips SBC HP9000	D	£90
Pioneer SE-M550	D	£50
Pioneer SE-M750	D	£60
Precede Ergo Model 1	D	£120
Precede Ergo Model 2	D	£140
Sennheiser IS 380	D	£55
Sennheiser HD455	D	£55
Sennheiser HD455	D	£65
Sennheiser HD470	D	£80
Sennheiser HD475	D	£80
Sennheiser HD25 SP	D	£90
Sennheiser IS450	D	£110
Sennheiser HD545 Ref	D	£125
Sennheiser HD265 Linear	D	£125
Sennheiser HD250II	D	£150
Sennheiser HDC 451-1	D	£150
Sennheiser HD565 Ovat'n	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-IF120K	D	£50
Sony MDR-E888	D	£55



## HEADPHONES (CONTINUED)

Sony MDR-IF125RK	D	60
Sony MDR-V600	D	70
Sony MDR-F1	D	100
Sony MDR-NC5	D	100
Sony MDR-IF420RK	D	100
Sony MDR-CD770	D	100
Sony MDR-D77	D	130
Sony MDR-IF520RK	D	150
Sony MDR-CD1700	D	200
Stanton DJ Pro 101/HB	D	65
Stanton DJ Pro 1000	D	95
Stanton DJ Pro 1001	D	150
Stax SR-0001	E	280
Stax SR-Lambda Nova C	E	370
Stax Lambda Nova Basic	E	449
Stax SR-Lambda Nova S	E	450
Technics RP-F800	D	50
Technics RP-HT600	D	60
Technics RP-DJ1200	D	130
Vivanco IR5800	D	50
Vivanco SR850	D	50
Vivanco SR650	D	50
Vivanco FMH 3000	D	60
Vivanco SR750	D	60
Vivanco IR6000	D	70
Vivanco SR909	D	70
Vivanco IR7600	D	100
Vivanco SR1000IFL	D	100
Vivanco SR2000IFL	D	120

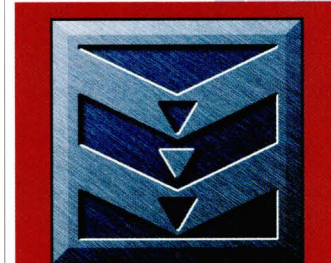


**EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS**  
**Speaker Stands**  
**KEY**  
**60 – Height of stand in cm**

Alphason NCI	60	47
Alphason Akros I	60	49

Alphason RS1	120	49
Alphason Akros II	60	59
Alphason NCI	60	84
Alphason HDS-40/M	60	85
Alphason Titan S	60	125
Apollo AZ6	66	80
Arcici Q-1	30	299
Arcici Q-2	30	299
Atacama BD21	56	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	61	70
Atacama SE20		70
Atacama SX700		73
Atacama SL300		73
Atacama TP600		75
Atacama TP500		75
Atacama SE15		75
Atacama SE515		75
Atacama SE415		75
Atacama SL400		76
Atacama SE1000S		80
AVF Tower P6144BP	60	35
BCD Model 1010	60	595
Credo STD 001		284
Custom Design CD 500	50	35
Custom Design AS 130	25	35
Custom Design AS 630AV	65	40
Custom Design Tri 100	50	50
Custom Design R/S 200	50	50
Custom Design R/S300	60	70
Custom Design Tri 300	55	85
Custom Design SCS 24	60	85
Custom Design X24	61	109
Custom Design C 20	50	109
Custom Design H1	50	275
Deadrock 903	60	60
Deadrock 902	47	60
Deadrock 901	39	60
Dynaudio Trophy	60	120
Dynaudio Master	60	200
Dynaudio Ultima	60	290
Harbeth HL-Stands	21	249
Heybrook Stand-ULT	3	55
Heybrook Stand-S6	63	69
Heybrook Stand-S4	48	69
Heybrook Stand-S1	47	119
JPW MS2	45	45
JPW MS3	61	55

JPW MS1	46	80
JPW HS1	58	120
JPW HS2	45	120
Kudos Audio Arrow	60	50
Kudos Audio S-50	60	100
Kudos Audio S-100	63	270
Mission Micrometer	58	70
Mission Entiasis	58	98
Opera S1	60	345
Pioneer CP-7		50
Pioneer CP-8		80
Projekt Signature	55	80
Revolver RS1	50	70
Royd Royd	55	99
SD Acoustics SD Alexandra	50	369
Silverado Silverado 1 Stand	60	350
Sonus Faber Ironwood		475
Sonus Faber Stonewood		497
Sound Org Z037	55	55
Sound Org Z027	55	55
Sound Org Z026	55	55
Sound Org Z518	45	65
Soundstyle X6118	42	100
Stands Unique Speaker support	59	159
Stands Unique Tuned Spkr Support	59	220
Stands Unique Tuned Carbon Fibre	59	299
Stands Unique Vivas Cf Spkr Supp	59	349
Target TR60	60	68
Target R1	53	280



**EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS**  
**Hi-Fi Tables**  
**KEY**  
**60 – Height of stand in cm**

Alphason SM17	1	49
Alphason VSM17	1	85
Alphason GSM17	1	85
Alphason GMV1P	1	110
Alphason R17/17	3	120
Alphason CMH1P	1	150
Alphason GR17/17	3	150
Alphason VR17/17	3	190
Audiophile Base 01	1	79
Audiophile S4T120	4	280
Audiophile S4T120P	4	560
BCD Model 1006/8	1	795
BCD Model 1000	3	1,250
Custom Design G3	3	130
Custom Design Aspect 650	4	240
Custom Design Aspect 500AV	3	270
Custom Design Aspect 850	5	270
Deadrock 701	1	60
Deadrock 802	2	90
Deadrock 703	3	130
Deadrock 704	4	190
Deadrock 705	5	230
Fi-Rax R4	6	399
Frameworks H175	1	130
Frameworks FS1		150
Frameworks FT2		285
Frameworks FT3		350
Frameworks H700		355
Frameworks H900		389
Frameworks H500/H175	3	404
Heybrook Stand-Signature	4	249
Impulse Iso-plate		190
JPW 3 Tier	3	80
JPW 5 Tier	5	100
Kudos Audio Corinthian	5	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	2	69
Optimum G2/Pedestal	2	99
Optimum C4/Pedestal	5	130

## HI-FI CHOICE WEBSITE

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Optimum OPT 3406	3	149
Optimum G5/Pedestal	6	150
Optimum OPT 4906	4	199
Optimum OPT 6606	5	249
Optimum OPT 340	3	249
Optimum OPT 490	4	299
Optimum OPT 440	4	299
Optimum OPT 10206	6	299
Optimum AV 300	3	329
Optimum OPT 700	5	349
Optimum OPT 610	5	349
Optimum OPT 660	5	349
Optimum OPT 1020	6	399
Optimum OPT 1190	7	450
Projekt A3	3	145
Projekt A4	4	190
Projekt A5	5	235
Projekt B3	6	255
Projekt A6	6	280
Projekt B3i	6	300
Projekt B4	8	340
Projekt B Multi	8	345
Projekt B3ii	7	345
Projekt C3	9	375
Projekt D3	12	420
Projekt C3i	8	420
Projekt B5	10	425
Projekt C3iii	11	465
Projekt C3ii	10	465
Projekt D3i	12	500
Projekt C4	12	500
Projekt C3iv	10	510
Projekt D3ii	14	545
Projekt C Multi	9	555
Projekt D4	16	560
Quadraspire Q4S mini shelf	1	65
Quadraspire Q4S shelf	1	65
Quadraspire QKS Cabinet shelf	1	80
Quadraspire QAV shelf	1	130
Quadraspire Q4M mini table	4	250
Quadraspire Q4 table	4	250
Quadraspire Q4SP Table	4	320
Quadraspire QAV table	3	350
Quadraspire QAVSP Table	3	400
Quadraspire QK Cabinet	4	450
Reson DOMOPS	1	195
Reson DOMOWS	1	195
Sound Org Z022	1	65
Sound Org Z021	2	78
Sound Org Z030	3	100
Sound Org Z060	4	120
Sound Org Z038	5	135
Sound Org Z540	4	140
Sound Org Z545	4	140
Sound Org Z560	5	160
Sound Org Z530	3	170
Soundstyle X300	3	180
Soundstyle X305	3	210
Soundstyle X053	3	210
Soundstyle X050	4	210
Soundstyle X6300	3	215
Soundstyle X100	4	220
Soundstyle X6110	4	230
Soundstyle X058	5	240
Soundstyle X310	5	250
Soundstyle X105	3	250
Soundstyle X6053	4	255
Soundstyle X6100	4	265
Soundstyle X6310	3	275
Soundstyle X6058	5	290
Soundstyle X6105	5	300
Soundstyle Finewoods W105	5	320
Stands Unique Isolation Platform	1	52
Stands Unique Sound Support	4	249
Stands Unique Sound Tower	5	289
Stands Unique Compact Sound Supp4	4	315
Stands Unique Sound Support 10	4	315
Stands Unique Sound Twr Cabinet	5	369
Stands Unique Ref Wall Support	1	550
Stands Unique Ultimate Tower	10	689
Stands Unique Ref Floor Support	6	799
Target B5	5	175
Townshend Seismic Sink 1-CD		110
Townshend Seismic Sink 1-3D		400
Townshend S/Sink Stand 1-4	4	999

Don't discount the value of a good quality support, like this Optimum International OPT 490G, if you want to get the best from your sources and amps.



Townshend Seismic Sink 3-4	4	1,250
Vibraplane Passive	1	1,895
Vibraplane Active	1	3,600
Wilson Benesch Standard Shelf	1	130
Wilson Benesch Mono Block	1	265
Wilson Benesch Kevlar Shelf	1	270
Wilson Benesch Asside Basic		590
Wilson Benesch Asside	4	720
Wilson Benesch Triptych	1	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 sited on or near the wall.
- ⊠ – 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
Ariston MSX 05	⌚	80
Celestion 12i	⌚	119
Denon SC-M2	⌚	80
Gale Mini Monitors	⌚	70
Gale Gold Monitors	⌚	90
Genexa GX300	⌚	80
Genexa GX350	⌚	80
GLL Arena	⌚	90
Goodmans Active 75	⌚	65
Interaudio XL1000	⌚	130
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 145	⌚	110
Jamo Cornet 35	⌚	120
Jamo Artina	⌚	120
Jamo D-115	⌚	120
Jamo 28	⌚	125
JBL TLX111	⌚	120
JPW Mini Monitor	⌚	60
JPW ML110	⌚	70
JPW Gold Monitor	⌚	80
JPW ML210	⌚	80
JPW ML310	⌚	90
JPW ML410	⌚	100
JPW ML510	⌚	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 700	⌚	130
Mission 731i	⌚	130
Mordaunt-Short VS-100	⌚	100
Mordaunt-Short MS05i	⌚	100
NAD 801	⌚	100
Paradigm Micro	⌚	100
Paradigm Atom	⌚	130
Pioneer CS-3030	⌚	120
Polk AB410	⌚	100
Realistic Minimus 26	⌚	56
Realistic Minimus Pro-77	⌚	100
Revolver Beretta	⌚	100
R Allen Minette 2	⌚	129
Solid HCM2	⌚	130
Sony SS-86E	⌚	100
Tangent Monitor 3	⌚	60
Tangent Monitor 5	⌚	80
Tannoy Mercury M1	⌚	120
TDL Nucleus 1	⌚	75
TDL Nucleus 2	⌚	130
TEAC LS-X8 Mk II	⌚	80
Technics SB-CS55	⌚	80

Technics SB-CS65	⌚	100
Technics SB-CS75	⌚	100
Visonik 5202	⌚	129
Wdale Valdus 100	⌚	80
Wdale Diamond 7.1	⌚	100
Wdale Valdus 200	⌚	110
Wdale Modus Micro	⌚	110

### £131 TO £200

Acoustic Energy AE100	⌚	200
Allison Model 4A	⌚	170
B&W DM302	⌚	150
B&W CWM5	⌚	170
B&W DM601	⌚	199
Bose 201 IV	⌚	200
Boston CR6	⌚	149
Boston 325	⌚	149
Boston Micro 80 Sat	⌚	169
Boston Runabout	⌚	169
Boston 335	⌚	179
Boston 351	⌚	189
Boston CR7	⌚	199
Boston Runabout II	⌚	200
Celestion 15i	⌚	199
Cerwin-Vega CT-165	⌚	200
Denon SC-E313	⌚	160
Gale 2i	⌚	140
Gale 4i	⌚	140
Gale 5i	⌚	200
Genexa GX650	⌚	140
Genexa Pro	⌚	160
GLL Imagio IC100	⌚	170
Heybrook Prima 2	⌚	159
Infinity SM65	⌚	150
Infinity Reference 1i	⌚	150
Infinity Reference 11i	⌚	200
Interaudio XL2000	⌚	200
Jamo Cornet 165	⌚	150
Jamo 38	⌚	150
Jamo 525	⌚	150
Jamo 560	⌚	150
Jamo 660	⌚	170
Jamo Cornet 65	⌚	170
Jamo Studio 180	⌚	180
Jamo D165	⌚	200
Jamo 68	⌚	200
JBL TLX121	⌚	150
JBL LX20	⌚	200
JPW ML610	⌚	170
JPW SS551	⌚	200
KEF Coda 8	⌚	189
KEF Q15	⌚	199
KEF Model 60S	⌚	199
Kenwood LS-200G	⌚	200
KLH Model 21	⌚	155
KLH Model 11	⌚	155
KLH Model 31	⌚	185
Magnat Vector 22	⌚	179
Mission 731i Pro	⌚	140
Mission 732i	⌚	200
Mordaunt-Short MS10i Pearl	⌚	150

Mordaunt-Short VS-200	⌚	150
Mordaunt-Short MS20i Pearl	⌚	200
Mordaunt-Short VS-300	⌚	200
Paradigm Titan	⌚	150
Pioneer CS-5030	⌚	170
Polk M2	⌚	180
Polk RT3	⌚	200
Polk AB610	⌚	200
Rega KYTE	⌚	198
Revolver Colt	⌚	139
Revolver The 230	⌚	169
Revolver Purdey MkII	⌚	199
R Allen Minette 3	⌚	159
R Allen Dim'n 5/1 Compact	⌚	179
R Allen RA6	⌚	199
Rogers CS1	⌚	179
Royd ATX	⌚	155
Sequence 200	⌚	199
Solid Monitor	⌚	200
Sony SS-126EB	⌚	150
Sony SS-176E	⌚	200
Tangent Monitor 9	⌚	150
Tangent Monitor 11	⌚	180
Tannoy Mercury M2	⌚	140
TDL Nucleus 3	⌚	200
Technics SB-CS95	⌚	150
Technics SB-M20	⌚	200
Visonik 6003	⌚	143
Visonik 5001	⌚	170
Wdale Diamond 7.2	⌚	140
Wdale Valdus 300	⌚	150
Wdale Modus Music Two	⌚	200
Wdale Valdus 400	⌚	200
Wdale Diamond 7.3	⌚	200

### £201 TO £300

Acoustic Energy AE200	⌚	250
Audio Gem Opal	⌚	230
B&W CWM6i	⌚	280
B&W DM602	⌚	300
Bose 151	⌚	220
Bose 301 IV	⌚	300
Boston 361	⌚	219
Boston CR8	⌚	239
Boston 381	⌚	259
Boston CR9	⌚	279
Boston Voyager	⌚	299
Castle Isis	⌚	250
Celestion 23i	⌚	299
Cerwin-Vega VS-8	⌚	250
Cerwin-Vega CT-330	⌚	300
Chano Syntar 100	⌚	249
Chano Ref 100	⌚	299
Chano Hiper 1000	⌚	299
Dali 102B	⌚	260
Dali 150	⌚	300
Eltax Linear Response	⌚	249
Faraday FS1	⌚	245
Gale 5i	⌚	220
GLL Imagio IC110	⌚	260
GLL Imagio IC115	⌚	300

Heybrook Optima	⌚	259
Heybrook Heylette	⌚	269
Heybrook HB1	⌚	269
Infinity SM85	⌚	250
Interaudio XL3000	⌚	230
Interaudio XL4000	⌚	260
Jamo 892	⌚	220
Jamo Cornet 175	⌚	230
Jamo Classic 4	⌚	250
Jamo Art	⌚	270
Jamo D265	⌚	300
Jamo 307A	⌚	300
JBL LX2	⌚	250
JBL TLX151	⌚	300
JPW ML710	⌚	230
JPW ML810	⌚	260
JPW ML910	⌚	300
JVC SX-SW10	⌚	300
KEF Coda 9	⌚	299
KEF Model 70S	⌚	299
KLH 83A	⌚	205
KLH 183A	⌚	265
KLH Soundbites System	⌚	276
KLH Model 81	⌚	280
KLH Model 41	⌚	290
Mission 750LE	⌚	250
M-A Monitor 1	⌚	250
M-A Monitor 2	⌚	300
Mordaunt-Short MS30i	⌚	275
Mordaunt-Short MS10i Classic	⌚	280
Mus Tec Kestrel SE	⌚	300
NAD 802	⌚	280
NHT SuperZero	⌚	218
Paradigm Mini Monitor	⌚	220
Paradigm Monitor 5	⌚	250
Pioneer CS-7050	⌚	230
Pioneer CS-9050	⌚	280
Pioneer S-LC1	⌚	300
Polk AB50S	⌚	220
Polk M3 II	⌚	220
Polk RT5	⌚	250
Polk RT7	⌚	300
Polk M5	⌚	300
Promenade SP1	⌚	299
Rega EL8	⌚	298
Revolver The 250	⌚	250
R Allen Dimension Five 1	⌚	239
R Allen RA8	⌚	249
R Allen RA8M	⌚	249
R Allen Dimension Five 2	⌚	269
Rogers db101	⌚	250
Rogers GS3	⌚	279
Royd The Envoy	⌚	249
Royd Minstrel	⌚	275
Ruark Epilogue	⌚	239
Sequence 300	⌚	249
Solid HCM1	⌚	250
Sony SS-176EB	⌚	250
Tannoy Mercury M3	⌚	230
Tannoy Precision P10	⌚	300
Visonik 7003	⌚	203
Visonik SUB5	⌚	259

**You must listen to...Mission's 731i.**

**MISSION**

*"A combatant truly worthy of the budget speaker challenge".*  
 Alan Sircom, Hi-Fi Choice, July/August 1996.  
 Call ☎ (01480) 451777 for more information or your nearest stockist.



## SPEAKERS (CONTINUED)

Wdale Modus Music Four	230
Wdale MFM1	250
Wdale Valdus 500	300
Yamaha NS10M	300
ZYP A1	219
ZYP A2S	295
<b>£301 TO £500</b>	
Acoustic Energy AE109	350
Acoustic Energy AE209	450
Acoustic Energy AE120	500
Allison Model 2A	420
AVI Neutron	499
B&O Beovox CX50	325
B&O Beovox CX100	425
B&W CVM8i	350
B&W DM305	350
B&W CDM2	400
B&W DM603	500
B&W Signature 7	500
Bandor Pictures	352
Blue Room Mini Pod	400
Boston Micro 90 Sat	369
Boston Micro 80 Sys	369
Boston VR20	380
Castle Tay	350
Castle Eden	470
Castle Kendal	500
Celestion 25i	399
Celestion 30i	449
Celestion 35i	499
Cerwin-Vega VS-10	350
Chario Syntar 100T	399
Chario Ref 1000	499
Clements 300si	395
Dali 104B	370
Dali 606	400
Dali Royal	500
Def Tech Celsius	395
Dynaudio Audience 5	400
Epos ES12	499
Faraday SG	345
Faraday Siren	445
GLL Imagio ICI20	400
GLL Imagio ICI30	500
Heybrook Heylios	389
Heybrook Heylo	439
Infinity SM105	350
Infinity SM115	400
Infinity SM125	500
Jamo Classic 6	330
Jamo Cornet 75	330
Jamo Cornet 195	350
Jamo BX-100A	350
Jamo 98	350
Jamo 407A	350
Jamo D365	400
Jamo Cornet 95	400
Jamo Classic 8	400

Jamo Graphic	400
Jamo 128	450
Jamo BX-150A	450
Jamo Atmosphere	480
Jamo 477A	500
JBL LX60	350
JBL LX6	350
JBL TLX1 61	400
JBL PS8	500
JBL TLX1 71	500
JM Lab Micron	395
JM Lab Megane	495
Jordan Watts JHFLG	380
JPW S5553	400
JPW ML1010	400
JPW Ruby 1	400
JPW Ruby 2	500
KEF Q35	349
KEF Q55	499
KEF RDM One	499
Keswick Aria II	379
KLH 283A	310
KLH 383A	335
KLH Model 51	375
KLH Model 71	420
KLH Model 62T	486
Linn Sekrit	395
Magnat Vector 55	349
Magnat Vector 77	449
Mission 733i	330
Mission 751f	348
Mission 734i	499
M-A Monitor 3	400
M-A Monitor 4	500
Mordaunt-Short MS25i Pearl	330
Mordaunt-Short MS40i	450
Mus Tec Harrier	400
NAD 804	400
Neat Critique	385
NHT SuperOne	338
NHT Model 1.5	450
Opera Duetto	395
Origin Live OL-1AS	399
Origin Live Monarch	399
Paradigm Monitor 7	330
Paradigm Studio/20	350
Paradigm Monitor 9	400
Pentachord A	469
Pioneer S-LC2	450
Polk AB705	330
Polk RT8	400
Polk RT10	400
Polk AB805	500
Prof Monitor Co TB1SM	403
Prof Monitor Co TB1	410
Prof Monitor Co TB1 S	430
Prof Monitor Co TB1M	447
Prof Monitor Co XB1	499
Promenade SP2	399
Promenade SP3	499
Rega Jura	450

Rega ELA MkII	498
Revolver The 260	350
R Allen Dimension Five 3	349
R Allen Dimension Five 4	429
Rogers GS5	379
Rogers GS6	429
Rogers GS8	479
Rogers C6/20	499
Royd The Squire	350
Royd Minstrel SE	399
Royd Doublet	485
Ruark Icon	359
Sequence 400	329
Solid Verticale	400
Spendor S2	399
Spendor 2020	399
Spendor S1	499
Tannoy Precision P20	400
TDL RTL2 SE	330
TDL RTL 3SE	450
TDL Chiltern CF100	450
Titan Midi Centre	399
Technics SB-M300	350
Technics SB-M500	450
Totem Mite	495
Triangle Titus TZe	379
Triangle Lunn	500
Visionik TB1S	366
Wdale Modus Music Six	330
Wdale MFM5	350
Wdale Modus Music Eight	430
Wdale MFM5	450
Wdale Modus Music 1/6	500
<b>£501 TO £800</b>	
Acoustic Energy AE1-II	795
Acoustic Precision Eikos FR1	800
Allison Model 3A	525
Audio Gem Emerald	540
Audio Note AN-K/D	620
Audio Note AN-J/B	799
Audiovector M1	759
B&O Beolab 2500	750
B&W CDM1 SE	600
B&W P4	675
Bose 501	600
Bose A/mass AM3	650
Boston VR50	600
Castle Severn 2	580
Castle Avon	730
Celestion 45i	599
Cerwin-Vega VS-12	550
Cerwin-Vega VS-15	700
Chario Ref 100T	599
Chario Hiper 1000T	699
Clements 600si	595
Dali 107	600
Dali 350	600
Dali 450	700
Dali 109	800
Def Tech BP6B	750

Diapason Micra II	750
Dynaudio Audience 50	577
Epos ES14	675
Faraday FS10	795
Harbeth BBC LS3/5A	699
Harbeth HL-P3ES	799
Heybrook Ultima	649
Heybrook Quartet	649
Infinity SM155	550
Jamo BX-200A	530
Jamo Classic 10	600
Jamo 507A	700
Jamo 707i	800
JBL LX70	550
JBL LX7	550
JBL TLX181	600
JBL SVA1500	700
JBL L20	700
JBL PS12	750
JM Lab Profil 55	625
JM Lab Opal 59 ti	750
Jordan Watts JH200	510
Jordan Watts JH400	565
JPW Ruby 3	800
KEF LS3/5a	649
KEF RDM Two	699
KEF Q65	799
Kelly KT2	700
Keswick Volante	729
KLH Model 82Ta	690
Linn Tukun Passive	550
Linn Keliigh Passive	799
Magnat Vintage 710	750
Manticore Minaret	690
Mendicant A500	750
M&K S-85	700
Mission 752f	578
Mission 735i	675
Mission 735f	798
M-A Studio 25E	690
M-A 700 PMC	600
M-A 702PMC	700
M-A 703PMC	800
Mordaunt-Short MS50i	550
Mordaunt-Short MS30i Classic	600
Mus Tec Falcon	575
Naim Intro	660
Neat Mystique 2	575
Neat Petite II	745
Opera Seconda	595
Opera Operetta II	770
Opera Platea	795
Origin Live Resolution	732
Origin Live Victory	750
Paradigm Studio/60	650
Paradigm Studio/80	750
Pentachord B	519
Pentachord Pentode	729
Polk RT12	600
Polk RT16	799
Polk LS50	800
Proac Tablette 50	599
Proac Studio 100	699
Promenade SP4	650
Quad 10L	600
Rogers GS9	579
Rogers LS3/5A	699
Rogers C6/25	799
Roksan ROKone 1	595
Roksan Ojan 3	795
Royd The Sorcerer	595
Royd Abbot	695
Ruark Templar II	599
Ruark Sceptre	599
Ruark Talisman II	749
Ruark Prologue One	799
SD Acoustics SD3R	649
Shinpy Polarys	595
Silverado Raider	695
Sonus Faber Concertino	599
Spendor 2030	599
Spendor LS3/5A	630
Spendor SP3/1P	795
T+A TB 100	690
Tannoy Precision P30	600
Tannoy Definition D100	689
Tannoy Precision P40	800
TDL Cotswold CF200	650
TDL RTL 4	650
TDL T-Line 3	700
Titan Mini T2	700
Titan Mini T3	799
Totem Rokk	695
Triangle Comete TZe	525
Triangle Zephyr	799
Wdale MFM7	650

<b>£801 TO £1500</b>	
Acoustic Energy AE505	850
Acoustic Energy AE509	1,000
Acoustic Energy AE2-II	1,095
Acoustic Energy AE520	1,200
Acoustic Solutions Eight	1,200
Alon I Mk II	1,500
Ambience Mod. 4.0	1,185
Apertura Prima	1,095
Apertura Nova	1,395



With the new Nautilus 800 series, B&W has shown the way ahead for 21st Century speaker design.







**Factsback**  
 For access to past reviews see page 151.



## SUBWOOFERS (CONTINUED)

Celestion CS135		139
Celestion CSW MKII	Ⓐ	329
Celestion S11	Ⓐ	349
Cerwin-Vega HT-10D		200
Cerwin-Vega HT-12D		250
Chario Syntar Bass		299
Chario Hiper Bass		499
Crede SDC 001	Ⓐ	3,054
GLL LE Bass	Ⓐ	350
H/K Citation 7.4		875
Infinity SSW-10	THX	500
Jamo SW30SE	Ⓐ	220
Jamo SW40SE	Ⓐ	330
Jamo SW50SE	Ⓐ	400
Jamo Sub One	Ⓐ	400
Jamo SW60se	Ⓐ	530
JBL Contol Sub 6	Ⓐ	200
JBL PSW800	Ⓐ	275
JBL Sub 10	Ⓐ	300
JBL PSW1000	Ⓐ	325
JBL PSW1200	Ⓐ	375
JPW Subwoofer		130
JPW SW40	Ⓐ	199
JPW SW60	Ⓐ	350
JPW SW-120	Ⓐ	500
KEF Model 20B	Ⓐ	349
KEF Model 30B	Ⓐ	499
KEF Model AV1	THX	2,499
Kenwood SW500		250
Keswick Alto		1,299
KLH ASW10-100	Ⓐ	350
KLH ASW12-120	Ⓐ	380
Linn AV5150		2,850
L Voice RW24		11,500
Magnat Vector Sub 30P	Ⓐ	149
Magnat Vector Sub 30A	Ⓐ	299
Meridian M2500		1,595
M&K VX-7MKII	Ⓐ	450
M&K V-75 MKII	Ⓐ	650
M&K V-125	Ⓐ	800
M&K V-125 (THX)	THX	800
M&K MX-70	Ⓐ	900
M&K MX-150 (THX)	THX	1,500
M&K MX-200	Ⓐ	1,800
M&K MX-300	Ⓐ	2,500
M&K MX-5000 (THX)	THX	2,900
Mission 73AS	Ⓐ	450
Mission 75AS	Ⓐ	548
Mordant-Short T2000	Ⓐ	500
Mus Tec Sub	Ⓐ	650
Muse Model 22	Ⓐ	1,890
Muse Model 18	Ⓐ	3,790
Neat Gravitas	Ⓐ	1,095
NHT SW2PI	Ⓐ	699
Paradigm PDR10	Ⓐ	250
Polk PSW50	Ⓐ	350
Polk PSW150	Ⓐ	500
Polk PSW500	Ⓐ	750
REL Q50	Ⓐ	375
REL Q-100E	Ⓐ	495
REL Strata II	Ⓐ	575
REL Storm	Ⓐ	695
REL Stadium II	Ⓐ	995
REL Stentor II	Ⓐ	1,800
REL Studio II	Ⓐ	4,000
Revel Sub-15	Ⓐ	2,195
Revolver The Recoil	Ⓐ	100
R Allen Gold Sub	Ⓐ	149
R Allen Dim'n Active	Ⓐ	499
R Allen Magnum Active	Ⓐ	699
Rogers AB1	Ⓐ	549
Rogers Sub-bass	Ⓐ	679
Roksan Ojan 3S	Ⓐ	795
Sequence FW120	Ⓐ	249
Solid PB100	Ⓐ	350
Sony SA-W101	Ⓐ	230
Sunfire True Sub	Ⓐ	1,450
TDL Nucleus SBR	Ⓐ	200
Triangle Sat III	Ⓐ	650
Tsunami TS200	Ⓐ	300
Tsunami TS210	Ⓐ	400
Velodyne VA-68XII	Ⓐ	399
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
W'dale Modus Sub Bass	Ⓐ	180
W'dale 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

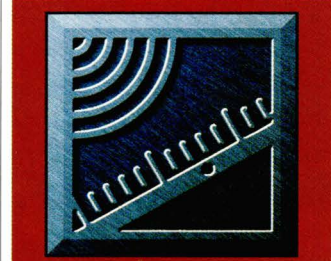
Yamaha YST-SW150	Ⓐ	280
Yamaha YST-SW300	Ⓐ	350



## TO NEARMS

**KEY**  
 ⊙ - Pivoted.  
 # - Parallel tracking.

Air Tangent IC	#	4,600
Air Tangent 10B	#	8,600
Air Tangent Reference	#	14,000
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
Hellus Orion 4 Copper	⊙	549
Hellus Cyalene 2	⊙	1,495
Kuzma Stogi	⊙	750
Kuzma Stogi Ref	⊙	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 Foot	⊙	1,100
N'ham Paragon 1	#	1,600
Rega RB250	⊙	109
Rega RB300	⊙	174
Rega RB900	⊙	598
Rockport Series 7000	#	6,000
Roksan Tabriz	⊙	320
Roksan Tabriz Zi	⊙	420
Roksan Artemis	⊙	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	⊙	689
SME 310	⊙	705
SME 312	⊙	802
SME Series IV	⊙	983
SME Series V	⊙	1,461
Wheaton Music Tri-Planar 4i	⊙	3,000
Wheaton Music Tri-Planar 5i	⊙	3,250
Wilson Benesch Act 0.5	⊙	795
Wilson Benesch ACT2	⊙	1,350
Zeta AS	⊙	469
Zeta VDH	⊙	549

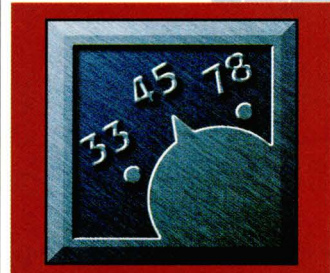


## TUNERS

**KEY**  
 'P20' (etc.) - Number of presets.  
 RDS - Radio Data System; receives text information on station, programme type etc.

Akai AT1200	P30	170
AMC T7	P30	130

Arcam Alpha 7	P24	230
Arcam Alpha 8	P24	280
Arcam Delta 280	P20	300
Ariston TX-510	P20	60
Aura TU80	P30	350
AVI S2000MT	P16	599
AVI S2000MT2	P99	899
Carver TX-8R	P20	469
Creek T45	P68	399
Day Sequerra FM Ref		5,937
Day Sequerra S B'dcast Mon		14,640
Denon TU-260L	P20	120
Denon TU-215RD	P40	150
Denon TU-425RD	P40	200
Denon TU-1500RD	P40	250
Fanfare FT1	P08	1,395
H/K TU930	P30	150
H/K TU950	P30	200
Kenwood KT-2080	P20	130
Kenwood KT-3080	P30	180
Linn Kudos	P50	775
Linn Kremlin	P80	2,600
Magnum Dynalab FT11		550
Magnum Dynalab FT-101A		825
Magnum Dynalab Etude		1,250
Magnum Dynalab 108		4,500
Marantz ST-48	P30	119
Marantz ST-17	P60	600
McIntosh MR7084	P60	2,499
McIntosh MX118	P50	4,999
McIntosh MX130	P50	6,999
Meridian 504	P30	695
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
Myryad MT-100	P20	530
NAD 412	P24	190
NAD 414RDS	P30	250
NAD 710	P24	270
NAD 712	P24	330
Naim NAT03		595
Naim NAT02		1,080
Naim NAT01		1,730
Onkyo T 421ORDS	P30	180
Onkyo T 409	P30	230
Onkyo T 411RDS	P30	260
Pioneer F-204RDS	P30	140
Pioneer F-504RDS	P40	250
Pioneer F-504RDS Precision	P40	300
Quad 77FM	P25	700
Rega Radio	P24	298
Roksan Caspian	P50	595
Rotel RT-935AX	P20	160
Rotel RT-940AX	P20	200
Sony ST-SE200	P50	100
Sony ST-SE300	P30	120
Sony ST-SE500	P30	140
Sony ST-SE700	P30	180
Sony ST-SA3ES	P30	250
T+A T1200R		745
TAG McLaren T20	P39	1,099
TEAC T-R400	P20	120
TEAC T-H500	P20	170
N'ham Anna Log	P30	400
TEAC TB-X10	P30	130
Technics ST-GT350L	P30	130
Technics ST-GT550L	P39	180
Technics ST-GT650L	P39	230
Thorens TRT-2000	P59	499
Yamaha TX-4800	P40	100
Yamaha TX-10 II	P40	130
Yamaha TX-492RDS	P40	130
Yamaha TX-59 2RDS	P40	180
Yamaha RX-396RDS	P40	250



## 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
Kenwood KD-492F	⊙	100

Michell Mycro	⊙	455
Moth Alamo	⊙	199
Moth Kanoot MKI Arm	⊙	279
Moth Kanoot Mk3 Arm	⊙	329
NAD 533	⊙	220
N'ham Interspace	⊙	500
Pioneer PL-12500-C	⊙	80
Pioneer PL-990	⊙	130
Pro-Ject 0.5/OM10	⊙	170
Pro-Ject 1/510	⊙	210
Pro-Ject 2/520	⊙	325
Pro-Ject 6/MC15	⊙	500
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 IIX/900	⊙	230
Systemdek IY920/MoTh	⊙	335
Systemdek IIXE/900Ap	⊙	388
Systemdek 960	⊙	500
Systemdek 2X2	⊙	500
Technics SL-J110D	⊙	120
Technics SL-BD20	⊙	160
Technics SL-BD22	⊙	180
Technics SL-1210MKII	⊙	400
Technics SL-1200MKII	⊙	400
Thorens TD-180 AT91	⊙	190
Thorens TD-280 IV/UK	⊙	210
Thorens TD-166 V/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 2000		1,995
Basis 2001		2,995
Basis Ovation II		5,400
Basis 2500		5,495
Basis 2800	⊙	7,495
Basis Debut Gold Std III		8,200
Basis Debut Gold Vacuum		10,300
Chantry QT Level 2	⊙	705
Clearaudio Evolution	⊙	1,790
Clearaudio Reference	⊙	3,990
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 Basic		1,100
Linn LP12 Lingo		1,750
Manticore Mantra		895
Manticore Magister		4,400
Michell Gyrodek		875
Michell Orbe		1,995
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		680
Rega Planar 9	⊙	1,598
Reson RSIM	⊙	600
Reson Rota 1	⊙	3,900
Rockport Capella II		7,000
Rockport Sirius III		50,000
Roksan Xenos 10	⊙	1,295
Roksan TMS		2,750
SME Model 20/2		3,403
SME Model 20/2A	⊙	4,863
SME Model 30/2		10,675
SME Model 30/2A		12,135
Stratosphere ST1	⊙	6,500
Technics SL-1200LTD	⊙	700
Thorens TD-146 VI TP50	⊙	550
Thorens TD-2001 TP90	⊙	700
Thorens TD-520 SME		1,050
Well Tempered Record Player	⊙	1,850
Well Tempered Classic	⊙	2,980
Well Tempered Super	⊙	3,900
Well Tempered Reference	⊙	5,300
Wilson Benesch Circle		795
Wilson Benesch WB Turntable		1,775
Wilson Benesch Full Circle	⊙	1,995

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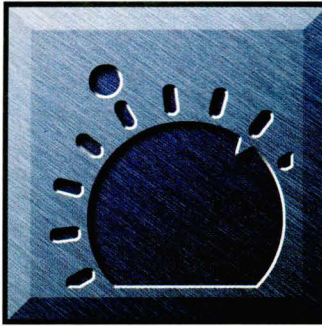
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## Amplifiers

The amplifier is at the heart of any hi-fi system, accepting the outputs from various music sources, increasing the amplitude of their signal and then driving the loudspeakers to produce sound. One-box 'integrated' amps rule the roost at low-to-middle price points, but if you pay more, the low-level and high-level signal processes are separated into preamp and power amp boxes, and even separate 'outboard' power supplies come into play. Another luxury is a separate amp for each stereo channel: such devices are known as monoblocks. Finally, output power and sound quality are not necessarily related. Some of the finest amplifiers outputs only 12 Watts, but will yield loudness aplenty when partnered with high-efficiency loudspeakers.

### KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

**LINE INPUTS:** Number of input sockets for line-level (non-vinyl) sources such as CD players, tuners and cassette decks.  
**MM PHONO INPUT:** An input specially designed for moving magnet (high output) phono pickup cartridges.  
**MC PHONO INPUT:** An input for moving coil (low output) phono pickup cartridges.  
**REMOTE CONTROL:** An infra-red handset to adjust volume etc.  
**HEADPHONE SOCKET:** An integral output for headphones.  
**POWER OUTPUT (Watts):** Our measurement of an amp's RMS power output into 8 Ohms.  
**RECEIVER:** An amplifier with built-in radio receiver (tuner).  
**FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback advert on the penultimate page of the mag.  
**ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which an original review appeared.  
**H:** High End Review

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# Amplifiers

### SPECIFICATIONS

MM PHONO INPUTS  
 MC PHONO INPUTS  
 REMOTE CONTROL  
 HEADPHONE SOCKET  
 POWER OUTPUT (W)  
 RECEIVER  
 FACTSBACK NO.  
 ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(E)	COMMENTS	LINE INPUTS	MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	RECEIVER	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Alchemist Maxim	319	Vivid and colourful-sounding amp, but just too bold and brassy						5		30	1737 154
Alchemist Kraken APD6A	579	Compact, with Darth Vader styling, yet sound quality is meek and mild, despite strong midband dynamics						5		55	2150 175
Alchemist Nemesis	700	Good if ultimately undistinguished amplifier whose strengths include warmth, authority and distinctive aesthetics						6		80	2006 168
AMC 3025a	140	Surprisingly potent and easy on the ear, if not especially analytical – classic bargain-basement material, in fact						4		30	2045 171
AMC 3050a	170	Tremendous value for money, and a full, big, if rather uninformative sound						4		45	1970 167
Audio CVT3030a	400	Beer-budget valve amp, with valve-like virtues (euphony with dynamics) and vices (system dependency, noise)						6		30	2001 168
Arcam Alpha 7	260	Decent, if slightly system-fussy amplifier that generally pulls all the right strings						5		40	1971 167
Arcam Alpha 8	360	Enjoyably soft-centred amp, won't frighten the animals. Upgradeable via preamp output, and optional remote						5		50	1853 162
Arcam Alpha 9	500	Not quite a match for the Alpha 9/9P combo, the solo integrated is nevertheless colourful and explicitly detailed						7		70	2007 168
Arcam Alpha 10	800	Although not the best sounding in its class, the Alpha 10's modular nature demands it be taken seriously						5		100	181
Audio Analogue Puccini	450	Superbly finished, the entry-level Audio Analogue performs way out of its class						5		40	2147 175
Audio Analogue Puccini SE	595	Upgraded, more powerful Puccini is disappointingly sluggish and curiously lacking in musical vitality						5		40	181
Audiogram MB1	493	The only flaws are the amateurish build, a number of technical problems and inconsistent sound quality						4		40	2235 178
Audio Note Oto SE	1,200	Transparent, dynamic, clear and subtle, but offers limited power output						4		24	126
Audiolab 8000LX	470	Well built, entry-level model lacks bottle and pizzazz. Superseded by new TAG McLaren Audio products						6		60	2148 175
Audiolab 8000S	700	Informative in every sense, only a slight lack of bite detracts. Superseded by new TAG McLaren Audio products						6		60	1740 154
AVI S2000MI	999	Fine, detailed amplifier with excellent timing and strong control of a wide range of loudspeaker loads						5		100	2155 175
Bryston B60R	1,249	Great build, but the lazy bass and opaque treble bracket an articulate midband. Comes with 20 year guarantee						5		60	2156 175
Cambridge Audio A3i	200	"Maximum information" design, with plenty of usable and reasonably refined power. A snip!						4		60	1972 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	2010 168
Copland CSA14	1,199	Great sound and looks, but avoid high capacitance speaker cables						4		60	1416 148
CR Developments CR324	569	Solid and capable on paper, this is a bit of a blunt instrument when let loose on the music						5		150	181
Credo IMP702	850	Old-fashioned looking, but bags of clarity and precision, though it can sound brash in the wrong system						5		70	2157 175
Cymbal CA1	499	Lacklustre amplifier tends to underperform with complex material. Best with straightforward compact loudspeakers						6		40	2236 178
Creek 4330	279	Compact, even pretty, but sounds dark and uninviting, with coarse treble and 'woomp' bass						5		40	2052 171
Denon PMA-250SE	160	This amp can sound rough when extended, but within its limits it is open, detailed and likeable						5		30	2046 171
Denon PMA-350SE	200	Reinvented in the minimalist tradition, this 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						3		45	1973 167
Denon PMA-725R	350	Warm, bold, up-front presentation, but musically unexciting						5		97	1802 157
Denon PMA-1500R	500	Recommended for its outrageous power, especially with problem speakers.						5		70	181
Densen Beat B-100 MkII	650	High 'air guitar' factor, and can punch above its weight, but check it will complement your system						5		60	1855 175
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
Electrocompaniet EC1-2	995	A 50 watt amplifier which sounds more powerful, and makes 'real sounding' music.						4		50	2158 175
Gamma Acoustics Gemini	699	Genuine single-ended triode design, but with low power, mundane sound and poor build						3		12	1416 148
Goodmans Delta 900A	130	Coloured and raw sound tarnish high power yield and remarkable pricing, and noisy fan cooling is a real joy-killer						5		100	2228 178
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 one of the nicest at this price. Optional add-in MM/MC board available						6		40	1858 162
Hofli Audis Signature	750	A 'no-feedback' circuit giving outstanding resolution, but significant load dependency						4		65	181
JoLida 202	695	Well-built and technically accomplished, affordable valve integrated with subtle refined, if not quite gripping sound						4		40	2011 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
Kenwood KA-5090R	300	Large, well equipped and high tech integrated, but TRAITR output still gives a harsh, unsoft performance						5		65	2053 171
Lavardin Model IT	£3,200	Banishment of 'memory distortion' delivers an amp with the best of valve and transistor sound characteristics						4		40	184
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 IA120	265	Mirror finish amplifier with bold, colourful delivery, but needs careful system matching to avoid loss of clarity						6		65	2054 171
Magnum IA170	330	Gives a realistic sense of instruments playing within a very believable acoustic; preserves colour and dynamics						6		96	1260 142
Magnum IA-200	599	Sweet, valve-flavoured solid state amplifier which flatters where it doesn't cast light						7		160	1860 162
Magnum Class A	690	Lashings of rich and compelling music, but the Class A circuits trade lushness for accuracy						4		60	116
Magnum Class A SE	795	A MOSFET amplifier drawing inspiration from the world of valves, this is an erratically refined, detailed amplifier						5		80	2159 175
Marantz PM-57	200	Well equipped but ultimately anodyne amplifier which lacks for nothing but star quality						5		50	2049 171
Marantz PM-66SE	230	A bit lush, and power output is limited, but it gives airy, large-scale music. An excellent budget buy						5		50	1969 167
Marantz PM66 Kl-Signature	400	It knows how to rock and roll with holographic detail and stereo, but prefers small/medium scale acoustic material						5		50	2003 168
Marantz PM-17	900	Probably worth it for the WBT terminals and other build features alone, but this model doesn't sing as it should						6		60	181



CONTINUED

# Amplifiers

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS					
MM PHONO LINE INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	FACTS/BACK NO.

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	MM PHONO LINE INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	FACTS/BACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
▲ Micromega Tempo 2	900	Idiosyncratic but flexible amplifier with an attractively forward and expressive sound quality				● ●	70		181
▲ Mission Cyrus III	598	Beautifully presented, but mid-dominated balance was not liked. Upgradeable using PSX PSU unit			●	●	50	1854	162
▲ Mission Cyrus SL	398	Articulate amplifier with build quality to die for, superb, outgoing midband and lean, though well-extended bass					50		168
▲ Monrio ASTY	400	Engaging, but ill-disciplined, even OTT amplifier with unpredictable system compatibility					55	2237	178
▲ Musical Fidelity E1	199	Richly flavoured tone and realistically-scaled imagery distinguish this entry-level Richer Sounds special					30	2050	171
▲ Musical Fidelity E11	299	Well built minimalist amp with a 5 year guarantee, but can sound congested when extended					60	2232	178
▲ Musical Fidelity X-A1	479	Idiosyncratic visuals just another plus for an amp that is powerful, well built, and serves the music superbly					50		181
▲ Musical Fidelity A2	500	Lucid, transparent midband and a full upper bass are provided by this highly proficient A1 replacement			●		25	1862	162
▲ Musical Fidelity A220	700	Powerful, authoritative and well turned-out amplifier that is easy to match with comparably priced speakers			●		50	2012	168
▲ Myryad MI120	600	Well styled, well built: a good, even tempered amplifier, though it can sound rather brittle				● ●	60	2153	175
▲ NAD 310	100	Fleet and sure of foot, it seems likely to set all appendages tapping with its blend of enthusiasm and artfulness					20	1468	149
▲ NAD 312	200	Another great budget price NAD, and a worthy all-round successor to the 302			●	●	25	2051	171
▲ NAD 314	260	Lively if coloured presentation that is musically engaging and easy on the ear			●		53	1807	157
▲ Naim Nait 3	575	Distinctive and highly musical sounding integrated amp. Perhaps too distinctive for some tastes					30	1748	154
▲ Orelle SA-100	499	A musically rewarding amplifier that grows on you. Trace of coarseness in treble					50	1749	154
▲ Orelle SA-100RX	649	In its latest guise, this is a fluid, articulate and transparent design – and excellent value				Opt	75		181
▲ Pioneer A-204R	160	The A-204R makes no special claims beyond being well equipped and cheap, but displayed unexpected quality			●	● ●	25	2047	171
▲ 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			●	● ●	50	1469	149
▲ Pioneer A-405R	250	Fully featured, open and dynamic sounding; makes up in enthusiasm what it occasionally lacks in refinement			●	● ●	45	2230	178
▲ Pioneer A-400X	300	On second audition, this amp was tonally unchanged but less compelling than on its first outing			● ●	●	50	1545	138
▲ Pioneer A-300R Precision	400	Sophisticated variant of the A-300R. Not an obvious winner, but will slowly ply you with its subtle charms			●	● ●	35	1863	162
▲ Pioneer A-605R	400	Intriguing technology, but execution is certainly impeded by excessive gadget count			●	● ●	80	2005	168
▲ Pioneer A-07	999	Curious blend of high-end attributes and inconsistent, though undeniably detailed sound			●	●	80	2160	175
▲ Primare A-20 Mk II	799	Everything except packaging has changed in mkII version: but balsier model has lost none of its refinement					70		181
▲ Project Model 7	300	A minimalist amplifier brimming with good intent, but too quirky for its own good. Either MM or MC phono			●		40	1264	142
▲ Quad 77 Integrated	700	Compact and sophisticated amp. Has limited inputs when used with 'foreign' components. (Optional system remote)					84	2013	168
▲ Rega Elex	398	Minimalist amplifier, derived from Elicit, is a little uninspiring, though at least it is well behaved			●		50	1865	162
▲ Roksan Caspian	695	Well-built, open and articulate amplifier, which is also consistent from system to system, and well built				●	70	2014	168
▲ Rose Scion	615	Unique two-box integrated gives real subtlety and low level resolution, but the sound lacks scale and weight			● ●		65	2009	168
▲ Rotel RA-931	150	Rather dry and unforgiving sound from this internally well specified and attractively priced amplifier			●	●	35	2048	171
▲ Sony TA-F448BE	250	Minimalist interface is matched to carefully considered circuit with satisfactory effect – but keep the volume in check			●	●	55	2055	171
▲ Sony TA-F3000ES	500	Champagne 'shoebbox amp' may lack power reserves, but is quick and articulate. In every sense a knockout			● ●	● ●	35	2239	178
▲ TAG McLaren 60iRv	999	Looks, feels and sounds better than the Audiolab it supersedes. Smooth, open, refined but lacks body and drive				● ●	60		184
▲ Talk Electronics Storm 1	500	Good soundstaging and strong detail are provided by this unassuming and not especially powerful model					50	1868	162
▲ Talk Electronics Storm 2	650	Crisp, clean, well defined sound, arguably lacking warmth, but a good midrange purchase overall				●	50	2154	175
▲ TEAC A-BX7R	700	Characterful balance mars a meticulously designed amplifier. Includes a balanced input, optional MM/MC stage				●	50	1869	162
▲ Technics SU-A700 Mk 3	250	Fully equipped, high-tech amplifier ultimately fails the authenticity test, and can sound messy and inarticulate			●	●	45	1870	162
▲ Technics SU-A800D Mk 2	300	Two-box amplifier looks great, has plenty of gadgets, and makes good, if slightly over-exuberant music			●	● ●	55	2234	178
▲ Technics SU-A900D Mk 2	400	Looks like a pre/power amplifier, but in effect it's an integrated, with a rather soft-centred sound to match			●	● ●	70	2149	175
▲ Woodside ISA230 Disc	1,249	Smooth and inoffensive valve amplifier, though it lacks the sparkle and euphony required for ultimate success			●		30		116
▲ Yamaha AX-492	220	Powerful, well equipped amplifier at an attractive price, offers powerful and engaging music-making			●	● ●	85	2231	178
▲ Yamaha AX-592	280	Fine, middle ranking amplifier, with a detailed midband but performance declines at frequency extremes			● ●	● ●	100	2056	171
<b>PREAMPLIFIERS</b>									
▲ Audiolab 8000C	580	Distinctive, stark neutrality will not appeal to all. Superseded by new TAG McLaren Audio products			● ●	●			97
▲ Audiolab 8000Q	1,250	Tested with 8000M monoblock power amps. Superseded by new TAG McLaren Audio products				● ●		1301	145
▲ Copland CTA-301MkII	1,399	Sweet sounding, but never gets bogged down in audio treadle			●			1630	151
▲ Crimson 610C	875	Not entirely satisfactory preamp which has dynamic strengths, but underachieves when the volume is raised			●				181
▲ EAR 802MC	2,599	Tested with 509 Mk 2 power amp. (See Power Amplifier section.)			● ●				63
▲ ECA Vista	760	Wind up the volume and blow a breath of fresh music into your system. (Tested with Lectern power amp)						1302	145
▲ Exposure XVII	850	Superbly rhythmical; maybe a bit overpowering in the midband. Tested in Sessions with XVIII Super			●	●			142
▲ Jadis JP-30MC	5,978	French tubes, beautiful build, nostalgic styling and delightful midrange. (Tested with JA 30 power amp)			●				60
▲ LFD Mistral Linestage	449	Strong ergonomics, generally decent sound, but a little lacking in detail						1930	165
▲ Meridian 501	695	Tight, positive sound, but dispassionate; intense at high levels. (Tested with 555 power amp)			●	●		1303	145
▲ Meridian 562V	995	Transparent and capable preamp, also features six digital inputs			●	● ●			140
▲ Meridian 502	1,295	Extremely sophisticated analogue controller with tremendous flexibility and a fast and tidy presentation				●			162
▲ Moth 30 Passive	149	Modular system gives cracking results. Passive preamp and power amp warrant Best Buy							109
▲ Moth 30 Active Line Stage	349	Excellent-sounding ultra-simple miniature preamp						1931	165
▲ Muse Model Three	1,990	Natural sounding tranny preamp with useful audiophile features. Works beautifully with 160 power amp				●			166
▲ Musical Fidelity X-PRE	200	Cleverly configured preamp with many upgrade options, and open, lively and engaging sound						2152	175
▲ Musical Fidelity Nu-Vista	1295	Fully remote, nuvistor tube equipped, with fine coherence and musicality			●	●			182
▲ NAD 114	270	Beer-budget preamp, sounds focused, detailed and consistent			● ●	● ●		1932	165
▲ Naim NAC92R	630	Upgradeable preamp uses proprietary socketry. (Tested with NAP90 power amp)				●		1936	165
▲ Quad 77 Pre	850	Sophisticated design with 2-way remote control console; open colourful sound and very flexible			● ●	● ●		1941	165
▲ Rega Hal	998	Passive line stages dedicated to Exon power amps			● ●	● ●		1942	165
▲ Rose RV-23	450	You can pay more to get a more transparent sound, but it's hard to criticise at the price			●				77
▲ Rotel RC-971	150	Low price is offset by rather coarse sound quality with certain types of music. (Tested with RB-971 power amp)				●			178
▲ Sumo Athena IIB	767	Big, natural and tidy-sounding with very natural reproduction of acoustic and electric instruments						1305	145
▲ TAG McLaren PA20R	1500	Refinement of Audiolab original with clean, detailed sound but limited thrill power. (t/w 125M monoblocks.)				● ●			184
▲ Talk Hurricane 2L	649	Design of integrity which gets to the heart, if not the soul, of the music						1937	165
▲ Thorens TTP2000F	699	Glamorous, shoebbox-format, minimalist pre with fine detail and some granularity			● ●	● ●		1938	165



CONTINUED

# Amplifiers

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	FACTSBACK NO. RECEIVER	ISSUE NUMBER	
Woodside SC26 Phono	2,233	Synergistic with STA35, with a cool, controlled sound, good focus and transparency. (Tested with STA35)	5	●	●				100	
<b>POWER AMPLIFIERS</b>										
Alchemist Kraken/Pwr	529	Hardly accurate, but entertaining nevertheless	1				60		124	
Arcam Alpha 9P	400	Clear, colourful and well-disciplined, the Arcam is a strong all-rounder that can compete with conviction	1				60	1929	165	
Arcam Alpha 10P	£600	Good all-rounder with huge headroom and a taut, controlled sound. Not the last word in transparency	1				100		183	
Art Audio Quintet	1,393	Switchable triode, ultralinear output stage. In triode mode, these are 15 of the sweetest Watts around	1				15		109	
Audiolab 8000M	1,600	Strong, controlled sound; confident bass, but colourless. Superseded by new TAG McLaren Audio products	1				125	1301	145	
Copland CTA-505	2,099	Grown-up amplifier with a refined, yet never over-civilised air	1				67	1630	151	
Crimson 620C	875	Not entirely satisfactory power amp which has dynamic strengths, but underachieves when the volume is raised	1				50		181	
Cyrus Power	£498	Detail and midband clarity and stand-out qualities. Smooth and refined with most types of music but bass-soft	1				50		183	
Densen B-300	£800	Expensive but highly musical. Colourful and warm sound with strong timing and listener involvement	1				100		183	
EAR 509 Mk II	3,699	Combining sonic strengths of transistors and valves, this amp warrants attention. (Tested with 802 Preamp)	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	
LFD Mistral Power	449	Infectious upper band vitality, but LF dynamics lacking – likewise 'grip' and transparency	1				60	1930	165	
Meridian 555	750	By providing an open window on the music, this amp is wide open to RF and low level IM distortions	1				60	1303	145	
Michell Alecto stereo	1,150	Open, well-focused imagery with natural, refined textures	1				50	1940	165	
Moth 60 Watt Stereo	599	Miniature power amp lacks control and finesse – not comfortable with difficult speaker loads	1				60	1931	165	
Moth 30 Series Monoblocks	879	Tested with Active Preamp. Demonstrated solid balance and proved adept at delivering vital musical qualities	1				100		155	
Musical Fidelity FX2	800	Quality build and imposing presentation is married to strong power yield, tonal colour and finesse	1				100	1934	165	
Musical Fidelity X-A50	500	Cleverly configured and attractively packaged, open, lively and engaging sound. Reviewed with X-PRE	1				50		175	
Mynyad MA120	450	Based in M1120 integrated – see latter for comments, but sounds significantly better when bi-amped with M1120	1				60	1935	165	
NAD 214	370	A little lightweight, but detailed, consistent sound quality, and excellent value for money	1				80	1932	165	
Naim NAP90	450	Power amp from a Nait integrated with some improvements	1				30	1936	165	
Quad 77 Power	600	Open, bold and colourful, with mild compression	1				85	1941	165	
Rega Exon	1,196	Monoblock, priced each, dedicated for Hal preamp. Bold, outgoing, in-command kind of sound	1				125	1942	165	
Roksan Caspian Power	£595	Excels musically and in conventional hi-fi terms. A power amp for people with long-term satisfaction in mind	1				70W		183	
Rotel RB-971	200	Somewhat better than the accompanying preamp – clean, mean and bridgeable. (Tested with RC-971)	1				70		178	
Rotel RB-980BX	450	Tames enthusiastically recorded material with a laid-back and occasionally smeared sound	1				120		155	
Sirius D200	2995	Single MOSFET pair per side gives tremendous resolution and timing (balanced only)	1				200		183	
Sumo Polaris III	950	Tested with Athena IIB. Big and tidy-sounding with very natural reproduction of acoustic and electric instruments	1				164	1305	145	
TAG McLaren 125M	2400	Refined Audiolab replacement monoblocks with clean sound but limited thrill power. (t/w PA20R preamp)	1				145		184	
Talk Tornado 2	600	Good, but slightly retiring sound which lacks the authority to stand out in a crowd	1				65	1937	165	
Thorens TTA2000	599	Low power shoe-box format, but gutsy and surprisingly subtle and articulate	1				30	1938	165	



## Cables

Cables are an integral part of a hi-fi system, required to connect source components to amplifiers, and the latter to speakers.

- Analogue interconnects connect source components and amplifiers, and run between pre and power amps. They are priced for one-metre terminated pairs.
- Digital interconnects connect CD transports to DACs or digital recorders. They come in optical and electrical varieties, the former being made of plastic or glass. The prices shown are for a terminated linear metre.
- Speaker cables are used between the amplifier and speaker. Our prices are per unterminated metre. Termination (plugs and soldering) costs vary.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **SYMMETRICAL:** A twisted pair of conductors.
- **COAXIAL:** A central 'hot' conductor and a shield that carries the negative signal.
- **STRANDED:** Multiple strands with no intervening insulation.
- **SOLID CORE:** Single or multiple, individually insulated strands.
- **COPPER:** Material used for conductor.
- **SILVER:** Material used for conductor.
- **DIG CABLE TYPE:** ○ - optical digital; E - electrical digital for CD Players, DACS and digital recorders.
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback ad on the penultimate page of the mag.
- **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which an original review appeared.
- **High End Review**

**B BEST BUY** **R RECOMMENDED** **E EDITOR'S CHOICE**

STATUS

# Cables

SPECIFICATIONS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	DIG CABLE TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Audio Note AN-A	18	Not especially impressive: warm but well-rounded balance that restricts 'air' but is quite clear	●				●	●		108
Audio Note AN-C	35	Neutral but lacking in subtle texture and unable to distinguish fine detail					●	●	1687	131
Audio Note AN-S	99	Up-beat and enthusiastic sound with satisfyingly deep and grumbly bass	●				●	●	1687	131
Audio Note AN-V	179	15 individually insulated silver strands make up this very clean and dynamically unchallenged cable	●				●	●	1687	131
Audioquest Turquoise	40	A 'fit and forget' cable that sounds distinctly lazy	●				●	●		160
Audioquest Topaz 2	60	Sounds flattened out, with poor imaging and grainy treble					●	●	2166	176
CableTalk Advanced 2	35	Slight roughness in loud music barely detracts from a well-balanced performance with good imaging					●	●	2166	176
Cable Talk Studio 2	65	A first-class performer from tonal, dynamic and rhythmic standpoints	●				●	●		160
Cambridge Pacific	30	Lacks subtlety and bass impact but is otherwise quite serviceable for the price					●	●	2167	176
Cambridge Audio Studio Ref	40	Dynamic cable with strong soundstaging and only a slight lack of detail					●	●		160
Chord Company Cobra 2	50	Good, strong sound with full-bodied music, less happy with smaller forces					●	●	2167	176
Connections Midas HD	39	Canary yellow cable with excellent plugs and an open sound. Slight treble glare	●				●	●		160
DNM TC75	34	Price for 0.75m. High resolution cable, but best in short runs due to higher than average series impedance					●	●	1690	131
DPA Slink	41	Slightly bright and zingy with flat soundstaging and hollow bass, though vocals and strings sound convincing	●	●					1690	131
DPA White Slink	75	Bass recedes as the music gets complex; midrange and treble better with quite good detail and imaging					●	●	2168	176
DPA Black Slink	245	Initially dark and meaty but after running in, it's lucid and transparent. Quad geometry, Gore-Tex dielectric	●				●	●	1691	131
Goertz M1 Interconnect	145	Soft sound lacking in bite, with excessive and plummy bass (NB sample used in review was only 0.5m)	●				●	●	2168	176
Insert Audio IC100 MkII	47	Mostly good sound is let down by pervasive dryness					●	●	2169	176



CONTINUED

# Cables

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

SYMMETRICAL COAXIAL STRANDED SOLID CORE COPPER SILVER DIG CABLE TYPE FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(E)	COMMENTS	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIG CABLE TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER	
<b>A</b> Ixos 104	20	Open and detailed presentation, full bass and silky if overly smooth treble					●	●		1692	131	
Ixos Gamma 1002	39	Lumpy bass, grainy treble, and poor integration. Nice colour, though	●				●	●		2169	176	
<b>A</b> Ixos 103	45	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 bring an earthiness to vocals and rhythm guitar alike	●				●	●	●	1693	131	
<b>A</b> Kimber Hero	110	Slight roughness detracts from some music; seems well suited to rock and jazz. Lively and detailed					●	●	●	2170	176	
<b>A</b> Moth Ley Line Black	100	Offers a full sound, neutral yet very solid and confident in delivery. Expansive imaging retains music's energy					●	●	●		108	
Moth Ley Line Grey	200	Detailed, but there's a sense of distance between music and listener: vocals are coarse rather than liquid	●				●	●	●		108	
Nordost Black Knight	60	Flat black cable that is distinctive but slightly coloured – but not in a wholly negative manner	●				●	●			160	
<b>A</b> Nordost Blue Heaven	145	Very good bass and only slightly grainy treble add up to a well integrated, natural-sounding cable					●	●	●		176	
<b>A</b> Prowire Silver	60	A good cable in every way, with just the occasional hint of coloration and coarseness					●	●	●	2171	176	
PAD Elementa	145	A fat, heavy and frankly rather lazy-sounding cable; best with music for small forces	●				●	●		2171	176	
<b>A</b> QED Qnect 2	30	Very well balanced, refined and detailed, this is everything a good cable should be, and excellent value					●	●		2172	176	
Silvertone Ex-Static	35	Pleasantly unfatiguing and competitively priced cable that lacks detail and insight					●	●	●		160	
<b>A</b> SonicLink Silver Pink	35	Dynamically sensitive and muddle-free. We're unsure about the flesh-coloured finish though...	●				●	●	●		160	
<b>A</b> Sonic Link Black	49	Nickel-plated copper with a slight dryness in the bass and a hint of treble roll-off don't compromise integration	●				●	●	●	2172	176	
<b>A</b> Straight Wire Chorus	40	A very confident cable with good bass, though perhaps a shade of treble loss					●	●	●	2173	176	
van den Hul The Storm	25	Price for 0.8m. Rich and warm but bass is rolled off: however there's plenty of drive and top end is clean	●				●	●		1701	131	
<b>A</b> van den Hul Source HB	50	Price for 0.8m. Hybrid carbon-fibre/copper cable that is a paragon of naturalness					●	●	●		160	
<b>A</b> van den Hul D102 MkIII	70	A cable with everything; good bass, treble, imaging and naturalness					●	●	●	2173	176	
<b>A</b> van den Hul The First	210	Using 12,000 carbon fibres, a gentle and subtle sounding cable that conveys oodles of informatio					●	●			1702	131
<b>A</b> van den Hul The Second	240	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	
<b>A</b> XLO Type 0.1	180	Unusual but highly expressive and detailed with a hint of graininess on powerful vocals					●	●		1703	131	
<b>DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS</b>												
Audioquest Digital Pro	100	A silver cable with all the drive of Video Z but lacking its clear-cut transparency					●	●		E	108	
Chord Codac	36	A connection with a stranded inner core and a sound that lacks integration					●	●	●	E	108	
<b>A</b> 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	Sound is lacklustre								O	108	
<b>A</b> DPA Digi-link	28	Can seem slightly impassive but there's no avoiding its exceptionally detailed sound					●	●	●	E	108	
<b>A</b> Ixos 105	25	Extended but soft-edged treble that's mercifully free of fatiguing colourations; plenty of weight, smooth					●	●	●	E	1707	131
<b>A</b> Kimber Kable Opti-link	50	Appears to be a bog-standard PMNA fibre, yet sounds a little brighter and livelier than most								O	108	
Moth Leyline Datalink	140	A thin, coaxial version of Leyline Black with a rather hard and unforgiving character. Too expensive					●	●	●	E	108	
<b>A</b> QED Digiflex	20	A top performance, low-loss 75 Ohm coax with a very open, almost liquid quality					●	●	●	E	108	
Siltech HF-6	145	Sounds detailed, very clean and extended, but bass is less well resolved – a treat for high-end systems	●				●	●	●	E	1709	131
<b>A</b> SonicLink Green	60	Spacious, positive and engaging if a bit over-crisp at times – very compelling, however					●	●	●	E	1709	131
<b>A</b> van den Hul The First	125	Exceptionally natural albeit slightly cautious compared to some. Plenty of subtle information and integration					●	●		E	1710	131
<b>LOUDSPEAKER CABLES</b>												
ALR Jordan QMM	5	Generally neutral, if sometimes bass-shy, but not very communicative	●				●	●	●		183	
Audio Note AN-D	4.50	Supplied in linear, non-polarised lengths that are twisted into stereo pairs. Sounds rather grippy and forward						●	●		109	
<b>A</b> Audio Note AN-B	16.50	Well suited to valve systems, elastic bass, methodical but unintrusive and musical					●	●	●		1711	133
<b>A</b> 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
<b>A</b> Audio Note AN-SP	150	A calm and civilised presentation, very quiet in the way it reveals subtle low level detail. Great poise and clarity	●				●	●	●		109	
<b>A</b> Audioquest F-14	2.2	Ideal for laying under carpets. F-14 encourages a slightly warm and vibrant sound						●	●		109	
Audioquest Type 4	5	Four 18-gauge OFHC copper conductors wound in a Litz-type fashion increases capacitance but restrains 'bite'	●				●	●			109	
Audioquest Type 6	9	A very inflexible cable in which the sonic ends don't quite justify the means	●				●	●			183	
Audioquest Crystal	25	Neutral balance is spoiled by some graininess and smearing	●				●	●			168	
<b>A</b> Bandridge LC7409	4	Detailed and up-beat cable. A bit too steely for classical strings					●	●			1800	157
<b>A</b> 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
DNM LSC350	6.95	Majors on midband and lower treble lucidity at the expense of bass and extreme treble extension	●					●	●		168	
<b>A</b> DNM LSCB500	12	High impedance can influence the treble response, but this was a winner on sound per pound. Bi-wire					●	●		1716	133	
<b>A</b> DPA Black Sixteen	100	Unflappable resolution of musical details. No dampening of dynamics, simply oodles of taut information	●				●	●	●		1717	133
<b>A</b> Gale XL189	1	Slightly bright and not too subtle, but a perfectly acceptable cable for any starter system	●				●	●	●		168	



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## Esoteric High Fidelity CABLES

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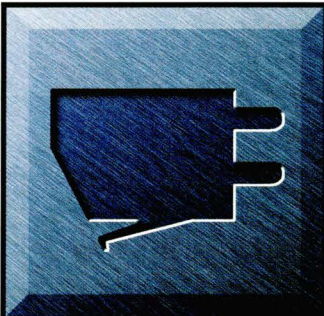
# Cables

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

SYMMETRICAL COAXIAL STRANDED SOLID CORE COPPER SILVER DIG CABLE TYPE FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(€)	COMMENTS	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIG CABLE TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>Gale XL315</b>	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	32	Remarkably detailed, smooth, neutral and with excellent bass; check amplifier compatibility									168
Heybrook Heywire	3.5	This well-meaning facsimile of earlier ribbon cables ends up sounding lumpy and uneven									109
Hitachi LC-OFC	7	Very crisp, very clear and very confident. In the right system would be very expensive to better									109
Kimber 4TC	19.6	A well-balanced cable with good performance in all areas									168
Kimber 4VS	9	A good mix of virtues including particularly fine bass									183
Linn K20	4	Seems to work best with lively, unobtrusive music - can be dry and edgy									183
Naim NACA 5	5.5	A 'dinosaur of a cable', this stiff wire rod doesn't belong outside Naim systems, where it works a treat									109
Nordost Octava	3	Fair bass but confused treble and some coloration									168
Ortofon SPK100	3	Grey-sounding - strips instruments of their natural richness and resonance. A bit bass-shy, too									133
Ortofon SPK200	4.99	Good strong bass and fair detail, only slightly marred by a little dryness									183
Ortofon SPK300	8	Tremendously open and atmospheric, with robust, full-blooded bass - if slightly bright at times									133
Precious Metals SL102	10	Unusual construction gives rather strained sound, only really cheering up with simple musical textures									183
Puresonic 7845	1.95	Big, weighty sound - but too messy and bloated for its own good									183
Puresonic 7891	2.85	Chunky cable design; shame about the sound quality								1800	157
QED Qudos	2.25	Despite high-tech design and excellent Air-Loc plugs, its music-making failed to gel								1800	157
QED Profile 4x4	9	Good midrange and treble balance, but bass is rather slack and detail not outstanding									168
QED Qudos Silver	5	Basic figure-8 cable adds value with silver plating, to generally smooth and detailed effect									183
Silver Sounds 12 gauge	15	Basic 'homemade' construction gives fairly neutral sound. Price 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
SonicLink AST150	3.95	Slightly plummy bass and a useful way of holding musical strands together								1800	157
<b>Straight Wire Quartet</b>	8	A good all-rounder with full tone, clear detail and natural ambience									183
Supra Ply 3.4	6.95	Clean sound which stays together well at high levels, with full bass - perhaps a touch of treble restriction									183
Tara Labs Klara	2.95	A good budget cable with an even spread of virtues - and very minor vices - across the board									183
van den Gold Water	7	Bass becomes shy when there's a lot happening, and detail could be clearer									183
van den Hul The Clearwater	7	Despite its evocative title, the Clearwater turns out to be a disappointingly murky-sounding cable									109
van den Hul The Magnum	38	Touted as vdH's most prestigious twin-lead cable, Magnum sounds soft and old fashioned									109
van den Hul The Wind	40	'The Wind' kicks up a storm with its lush midrange and bone-crunching bass!									109
van den Hul Revolution	76	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 - 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 amps need a transformer to cope with MC cartridges.

■ Even basic high-output MM cartridge designs will benefit from a customised amplifier input load. Consult your dealer for further details on this topic.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **MM:** Moving-magnet cartridge with a normal output, suitable for all amplifier/phono inputs.
  - **MC:** Moving-coil cartridge with a low output, only suitable for high-sensitivity MC amplifier phono inputs.
  - **REPLACEABLE STYLUS:** Most MM cartridges have a stylus (needle) that can be removed and replaced when worn out.
  - **OUTPUT (mV):** Cartridge output in millivolts.
  - **MASS (g):** The mass of your chosen cartridge.
- affects the choice of partnering tonearm. Consult dealers or manufacturers to establish which arms and pickups work well together.
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback ad on the penultimate page of the mag.
- **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which an original review appeared.
- H: High End Review**

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STATUS

# Cartridges

SPECIFICATIONS

MM MC REPLACEABLE STYLUS OUTPUT (mV) MASS (g) FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(€)	COMMENTS	MM	MC	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	OUTPUT (mV)	MASS (g)	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER	
<b>Audio Technica AT-95E</b>	20	Clear and dynamic, though richly balanced					2.8		48	
Clearaudio Signature	1,495	A great all-round performer with fine dynamic vitality and a seductive midband intimacy					0.55	11.5	2142	175
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
<b>Denon DL304</b>	200	Uncoloured, detailed, tracks superbly. Top notch altogether, and a bargain at the price								103
Dynavector Karat 17D2 mk2	450	Clean and controlled sound with taut, tuneful bass. Detailed and musically cogent					0.15	5.3		158
Dynavector Te-Kaitora	1,698	A real smoothie, but pricey. Worth checking out for its delicate laid-back transparency and low needle-talk					0.25	8.5	2142	175
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 is not the cleanest					0.5	8		103
Goldring Excel VX	525	Good bass drive but dull and imprecise higher up. An old-fashioned sound that falls short of the true high end					0.45	8	2143	175



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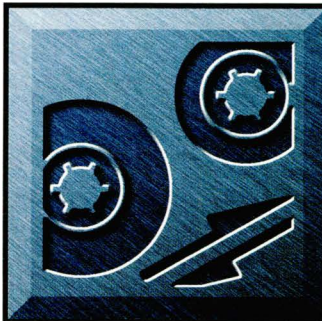
# Cartridges

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

REPLACEABLE STYLUS  
MM MC  
OUTPUT (mV)  
MASS (g)  
FACTSBACK NO.  
ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	OUTPUT (mV)	MASS (g)	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Grado Prestige Gold	149	Rich sounding with an unusually refined top-end for a moving magnet-type cartridge	●	●	4	6	158
Grado Reference	995	Loads of tracking headroom but treble is limited. A prospect for mid-oriented valve amp users	●	●	1.7	6.5	2143
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 iconic/classic as ever	●	●	5.0	6	67
London Decca S Gold	399	Immediate and detailed, but coloured and 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
Lyra Parnassus D.C.t	1,895	A real little jewel of a cartridge, with many good qualities, but handicapped by a rather too obvious treble peak	●	●	0.22	10.5	2144
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, but the 520/P has a lively, effervescent sound	●	●	3.0	5	67
Ortofon MC3 Turbo	130	The 3 Turbo is bright, cheerful and bouncy, but subtle – 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	250	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 Rohmann	1,000	A class act in nearly every respect, with fine groove security and a very smooth and even-handed sound	●	●	0.25	8.5	2144
Ortofon MC3000II	1,100	A real ear-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 body, but 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	600	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	750	A neutral, balanced performer, gives fine depth and focus and a firm, extended bass	●	●	0.4	6	60
van den Hul MC-One	900	This extends all the positive qualities of the 10, but adds greater authority and scale – worth all the extra money	●	●	0.4	6	60
van den Hul MC-Two	1,200	MC-Two rewards with a highly detailed yet fluid and musically convincing portrayal	●	●	0.4	6	72
van den Hul Frog	1,500	Seems to control/suppress surface noise better than its rivals. This delicate and subtle performer has great charm	●	●	0.65	7	2145
van den Hul G' hopper III/LA	2,800	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
Wilson benesch Carbon	1,573	Carbon fibre body contributes to a delightfully clean and open midrange, and a quick, lively and coherent sound	●	●	0.45	7	2145



## Cassette Decks

The compact cassette is still the world's most versatile and ubiquitous music storage medium. Cassette decks hook up to the 'tape loop' inputs and outputs offered by most modern amplifiers. It's worth taking care to choose the best tapes for a specific machine. For example, expensive metal tapes will be a wasted investment for a cheap deck. Many better-specified decks have manual or automatic bias adjustment to get the best from specific samples of tape. Twin decks offer the possibility of copying from tape to tape, playing two cassettes sequentially or recording onto two tapes at once. Autoreverse is a useful feature, but uni-directional mechanisms promise better sound. Dolby S is the ultimate noise reduction system, and three-head decks permit record monitoring off-tape.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **DOLBY B/C:** The first and second Dolby hiss-killers.
- **DOLBY S:** A desirable derivative of Dolby SR professional noise-reduction.
- **DOLBY HX-PRO:** Extends headroom for cassette recording.
- **3-HEAD:** Permits monitoring off-tape while you're recording.
- **TWIN DECK:** Contains two decks for dubbing and continuous play.
- **AUTOREVERSE:** Automatically plays both sides of the cassette.
- **AUTO CALIBRATION:** The deck will automatically set up bias and EQ for any tape.
- **ADJUSTABLE BIAS:** Permits manual optimisation of tape.

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# Cassette Decks

SPECIFICATIONS

DOLBY C  
DOLBY B  
DOLBY S  
DOLBY HX PRO  
3-HEAD  
TWIN DECK  
AUTO REVERSE  
AUTO CALIBRATION  
ADJUSTABLE BIAS  
FACTSBACK NO.  
ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	DOLBY C	DOLBY B	DOLBY S	DOLBY HX PRO	3-HEAD	TWIN DECK	AUTO REVERSE	AUTO CALIBRATION	ADJUSTABLE BIAS	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Aiwa AD-F450	120	Basic but well-designed 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 DRW-580	200	Twin deck: OK for casual use, but will quickly pall with more quality critical applications	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	171
Denon DRS-640	200	Draw-loading deck, with simple facilities and smooth, well-adjusted sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1591	140
Denon DRM-650S	230	An improvement on predecessors, it offers a wide-ranging sound. Dolby S is not the best feature	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1920	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
Harman/Kardon TD420	250	Minor inconsistencies detract from a well-conceived, minimum features design	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1592	140
Harman/Kardon TD450	350	Draw loader with poor tape navigation features; good midband but shallow bass	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1920	164
JVC TD-R472	200	Excellent auto-reverse deck which doesn't suffer the usual disadvantages and is very sharply priced	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	158
JVC TD-V662BK	270	Assured, clean and agile-sounding recorder, if not quite the most refined in its class	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1380	146
JVC TD-W718	300	Twin deck. Good for creative live recording, but no timer standby. Respectable performance	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2039	171
Kenwood KX-W6080	200	Modestly decent-sounding twin deck, with some transport instability and ragged bass	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2040	171
Marantz SD455	170	Works well as a single deck, especially on replay, but dubbing at high/low speed compromises sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	184
NAD 613	230	Rough and ready, but enjoyable sound, though marred by mechanical motor noise	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	158
NAD 616	300	Twin deck with basic features. No Dolby setting memory, transport is too unstable for audiophile use	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2041	171
Onkyo K-611	460	Cute drawer-loading mini-size component with 3-heads and dual capstan transport	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1384	146
Pioneer CT-S550S	250	Great features, good with cheap low bias tapes, but slightly synthetic sound quality	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1920	164
Pioneer CT-W806DR	300	Had it not been for the iffy transport quality, this sophisticated twin would have been Recommended	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2042	171



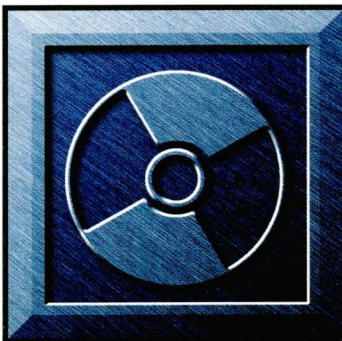
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# Cassette Decks

STATUS

DOLBY C	DOLBY S	DOLBY BX PRO	3-HEAD	TWIN DECK	AUTO REVERSE	AUTO CALIBRATION	ADJUSTABLE BIAS	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
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PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	DOLBY C	DOLBY S	DOLBY BX PRO	3-HEAD	TWIN DECK	AUTO REVERSE	AUTO CALIBRATION	ADJUSTABLE BIAS	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Pioneer CT-S830S	500	High-class mechanism, if lacking in battleship externals, and superb sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1385	146
Sony TC-KE600S	300	Mild setting-up problems notwithstanding, this UK-tweaked design has a smooth, open sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	158	158
Teac V01050	180	One of the cheapest 3-head machines around, but it shows in very 'thick' sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	184	184
Technics RS-AZ6	200	For those who can't afford the RS-AZ7, clarity over the widest bandwidth thanks to AZ thin-film head	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1920	164
Technics RS-AZ7	270	Thin-film head gives a solid, almost CD-like bass and midrange. A clear advance in state-of-the-art	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	158	158
Yamaha KX-490	200	Electrifyingly transparent and capable deck whose only flaw is a trace of audible wow and flutter	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	158	158
Yamaha KX-580SE	250	Subtle, engaging and transparent deck, with a lightweight tonality, but stability and strong detail	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2043	171



## CD/DVD Players

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 type. The former is preferable for the ultimate sound. A CD player can be split into two basic components: the disc drive or transport, and a device which converts the disc's digital bitstream into an analogue audio signal. This is called a digital to analogue converter, or DAC. Although most players are contained within a single box, expensive players are usually two-box affairs. The first new DVD players have not excelled with CD software.

### KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **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.
- **ST 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 output level (usually non-audiophile).
- **MULTI-DISC:** Equipped with a carousel or multi-tray system for continuous play of multiple discs.
- **DAC TYPE:** BS – Philips Bitstream; MB – multibit; Hyb – hybrid of multibit and bitstream technologies; 1bit – single bit types eg MASH, bitstream, PWM, etc; CC – constant calibration.
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full information, see the Factsback advert on the penultimate page of the magazine.
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# CD/DVD Players

STATUS

AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUTPUT	OPTICAL DIG OUTPUT	ST OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	DAC TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
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PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUTPUT	OPTICAL DIG OUTPUT	ST OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	DAC TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Acurus ACD11	899	First-rate if costly player, which combines a delightful transparency with an uncontrived naturalness	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	1962	166
Acoustic Precision Eikos	1,850	Seriously customised Pioneer with extraordinary resolution and world beating imaging and bass	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	165	165
Alchemist Nexus APD32A	597	Refined treble, constrained yet capable bass and attractive all-round presentation	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	169	169
AMC CD8A	150	Has balanced output, but is otherwise rather grey and unremarkable	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	2071	172
AMC CD9/DAC8	200	Beer-budget two-box system (player + DAC) is smooth, attractive and easy on the ear	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	CC	2261	179
Anthem CD1	1,595	Unusual combination of high-end player, complete with HDCD, and changer. Good, but noisy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	2219	178
Arcam Alpha 7	330	Mildly rehased favourite comes up smelling of roses	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1872	179
Arcam Alpha MCD	450	Excellent bass and natural midband, but just a touch of treble dryness, from this very listenable changer	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	2220	178
Arcam Alpha 8	520	Refined, intricately detailed but a little cautious. Should be broadly compatible with a variety of amps	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1873	163
Arcam 8SE	600	Excellent (and very reasonably priced) HDCD-compatible player is a strong all-rounder	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1-bit	176	176
Arcam Alpha 9	800	Looks like other Arcam CD players, but sounds compressed and lacking in detail	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Ring DAC	184	184
Audio Research CD1	3,290	Suspends disbelief with a real yet obviously coloured sound. A rare proposition among CD players	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1875	163
AVI S2000MC2	899	A chip off the old block. This model's in-eyr-face balance obstructs an otherwise finely detailed sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	2179	176
AVI S2000MC Reference	1,399	Lean, dry, high resolution player, built to outlast most of us. A fine performer in a sympathetic system	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	169	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 encountered at the price, considerably more refined and convincing than the CD4	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1877	163
Cambridge Audio CD6	250	A sharp, articulate player, a real thoroughbred in fact, perhaps too sharp and lively for some systems	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	159	159
Copland CDA-266	1,199	Simple yet elegant design is unexpectedly sophisticated under the skin, and effective in execution	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	2183	176
Copland CDA-288	2,199	A gentle giant of a player that errs in favour of pastel shades rather than bold daubs of colour	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1880	163
Cymbol CDP12	1,299	Clean, detailed and airy HDCD-equipped player with minimalist trappings	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hybrid	2184	176
Denon DCD-635	180	Modest presentation gives little clue to the thoroughbred electronics ticking away inside	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	2075	172
Denon DCD-625	200	DCD-615 replacement is generously equipped but lacks sophisticated sound of its forebear	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1269	147
Denon DCD-835	280	Refined version of Denon's multibit technology is a bit of a star	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	184	184
Denon DCD-1550AR	350	Disappointing bland and ploddy sound from an immaculately constructed, high tech player	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	2266	179
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	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1881	163
harman/kardon HD710	200	A player of integrity, but can sound a bit hard and rough when extended, and is amplifier fussy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	159	159
harman/kardon HD730	300	Competitive at the price, with a coloured but dynamic and outgoing sound, good features	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1957	166
harman/kardon FL8300	300	Generally capable changer with relaxed sound and firm bass. Just a hint of roughness on occasion	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	2220	178
Helios Model 2	950	This player may not be to everyone's taste, but it is an individual, with some interesting things to say	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	2180	176
JVC XL-V184BK	120	Excellent budget player, well presented, a little opaque, but its heart is in the right place	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	2072	172
JVC XL-V284BK	140	Featuring a new set of bitstream innards, this flexible player has a refined sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	1270	147
JVC XL-Z574	250	Strong resolving power, good midband and dynamics, but slightly raw and thin	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	159	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	159
Kenwood DP-4090	250	Focuses a clear, wide aperture lens on the music – and has CD Text too!	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	2076	172



CONTINUED

# CD/DVD Players

**SPECIFICATIONS**

ISSUE NUMBER  
FACTSBACK NO.  
MULTI-DISC  
DAC TYPE  
VARIABLE OUTPUT  
HEADPHONE SOCKET  
BAL ANALOGUE OUT  
ST OPT DIG OUT  
OPTICAL DIG OUT  
AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT  
ELEC DIGITAL OUTPUT

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS																		
Kenwood DP-5090	300	Disappointing senior brother to the excellent DP-4090, but surface interface is good	●	●															1-bit 2267	179
<b>Kenwood DP-7090</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>A lively and compelling performer with an even-handed and coherent disposition</b>	●	●															MB 1885	163
Linn Mimik	875	Useful multi-room features matched to strong bass, but poor imagery and transparency	●																Hyb 1762	155
Marantz CD-48	200	Somewhat inconsistent, middle ranking player which hints at better things	●																1bit 2077	172
<b>Marantz CD-67 Mk II</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>The digital equivalent of a safe pair of hands. Smoothooth</b>	●	●															BS 2268	179
Marantz CD-67SEmkII	300	Lacks dynamic consistency to justify the stunning performance with simple material	●	●															BS	184
<b>Marantz CD-67SE</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>Refined, enjoyable player, though ultimately a little soft-centred</b>	●	●															BS 1958	166
<b>Marantz CD-63MKII Kl Sig</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>It's the quintessential sound of Marantz – warm, open, and smooth almost to a fault</b>	●	●															Hyb	169
<b>Marantz CD-17</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>Fabulous packaging and an excellent all round performer: smooth, detailed and consistent</b>	●																BS 1763	155
<b>Marantz CD-17KIS</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>Minor QC problems aside, this is a superbly turned-out machine, but ultimately a little bland</b>	●	●															BS 2181	176
Meracus Tanto	1,395	Believable tonal colours and textures, refinement takes preference over dynamics – but it's not cheap	●																DS	169
<b>Meridian 506</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>Revised 506 includes MSR remote and a new D/A chip, which makes it livelier and more detailed</b>	●	●															1 bit 2182	176
Meridian 508 (20-bit)	1,995	Combines a delicate mid and treble with rich, opulent bass and has impressive low-level resolution	●	●															BS 1886	163
Mission Cyrus dAD3	598	A relaxed style of delivery that convinces with guile and subtlety rather than orchestral ordnance	●																BS 1887	163
<b>Mission Cyrus dAD3Q</b>	<b>898</b>	<b>Lucid, transparent and uncontrived sound quality, superb build, and readily upgradeable</b>	●	●															MB 1887	169
Monrio.Privilege	995	Costly and well-engineered, but ultimately rather heavy-handed and dull, if refined player	●																MB 1963	166
Musical Fidelity E60	300	This entry-level player lacks proper stereo localisation and clarity	●	●															BS 1959	166
<b>Musical Fidelity A2</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>Warm (too warm), attractive and open player, a great improvement on (related) E60</b>	●	●															BS	169
Musical Fidelity X-RAY	799	Brilliantly packaged and clean but slightly antiseptic sounding player	●	●															MB	184
Musical Fidelity FCD	1,500	A forward disposition makes this perfect for Fenders but less appropriate to Guarneris	●																BS 1888	163
Myryad T-10	400	Rather ordinary player fails to shine with good music recordings	●																DS	184
<b>Myryad MC100</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>A little extra get-up-and-go wouldn't go amiss, but its sheer maturity and composure ensure listenability</b>	●																BS 1889	163
Myryad MCD500	1,300	Well-built, attractive player, showing much promise, but can be a little heavy-going, on audition	●																1bit 2185	176
NAD 522	170	Crude, mechanical sounding player fails to tickle the music buds	●																1 bit 2262	179
NAD 510	200	Pale version of NAD's senior CD players with a stripped-down feature count	●																1bit 2078	172
NAD 512	250	Simple, well-focused presentation, and articulate with it. Hard-nosed quality is not everyone's cup of tea	●																1bit	159
NAD 523	250	Nothing seriously amiss with this classic NAD 'no-frills' changer, but it lacks that vital spark	●																Hyb 2222	178
<b>NAD 514</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>Boisterous sound, but undeniably attractive</b>	●																BS 1639	151
<b>Naim Audio CD3</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>The idiosyncratically packaged CD3 is solid and highly articulate. Always has its feet on the ground</b>	●																MB 1765	155
<b>Naim Audio CD2</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>Provides bags of detail with a solid stereo focus but not all the romanticism we know to be possible</b>	●																MB 1890	163
<b>Onkyo DX-7210</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>Well-bred CD player features an unusual digital filter, is smooth and cultured without appearing boring</b>	●	●															BS 1273	147
Onkyo DX-7510	400	Strongly flavoured, assertive sound	●	●															BS 1640	151
<b>Orelle CD-100EA</b>	<b>649</b>	<b>Excellent imagery, timing and transparency, and readily upgraded or reconfigured</b>	●	●	●														MB 1964	166
Parasound C/DP-1000	499	Comes on like a high end player, but ultimately sounds a tad weak and soft-centred	●																Hybrid	184
<b>Philips CD-721</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>Surprisingly well-sorted, articulate if slightly glossy and attractively presented sound. Captive signal lead</b>	●	●															1bit	159
Philips CD751	150	Inconsistent and occasionally opaque and scrawny sounding cheapie	●																1bit	172
Pioneer PD-S705	300	This machine was loved by some for its articulacy and disliked by others for sounding too impressive!	●	●															BS 1891	163
<b>Pioneer PD-S707</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>Idiosyncratic Legato Link dominated sound, but always subtle and interesting</b>	●	●															MB 184	184
Pioneer PD-F906	350	Interesting appearance and concept, but this changer's sound is lacklustre and ergonomics frustrating	●	●															1bit 2223	178
Pioneer PD-S904	400	Too much legato – literally – in sound, but a very smooth performer	●	●															1bit 1641	151
Pioneer PDS-06	550	Technologically sophisticated. Pioneer's first multi-bit player for years is polished and capable	●	●															MB 2176	176
<b>Pioneer PD-S505 Precision</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>Assured, fluid-sounding player, with great spatial coherence</b>	●	●															1bit 1965	166
<b>Quad 77</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>A true thoroughbred combining a penetrating insight into detail with poise rarely found at the price</b>	●																Hyb 1893	163
Revox Exception E426	2250	Very stylish with a light, agile sound that extends superbly and has fine timing	●																BS	182
<b>Roksan DP3P</b>	<b>1,495</b>	<b>Dramatic and compelling. Classical listeners should be ready to 'air conduct' when auditioning</b>	●																BS 1896	163
<b>Roksan Caspian</b>	<b>895</b>	<b>Solid, articulate, and fundamentally well-engineered player, but with some subtle low-level limitations</b>	●	●															Hyb	169
<b>Rotel RCD-971</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>Odd disc handling logic, but bold, detailed and refined sound make this a must</b>	●	●															MB	184
<b>Rotel RCD-970BX</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>A combination of solid build, useful facilities and an attention-grabbing sound make this a winner</b>	●																BS 1897	163
Sherwood CD-4030R	180	Easy on the ear, smooth-sounding player, with limits set by the slightly soft, compressed quality	●																BS	159
Sherwood CD1	1,100	A very neutral, even handed sounding player with a rather flat, lifeless sound. Beautiful construction	●	●															BS 1899	163
<b>Sony CDP-XE310</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>Excellent value and bright as a button, but can sound OTT in some systems</b>	●																1-bit	179
Sony CDP-XE510	180	Souped up CDP-XE500 which tells a rather bland and unengaging story	●																1bit	172
<b>Sony CDP-XB720E</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>Good basic performance and a number of filter settings make this an interesting player for tweaks</b>	●	●															Low bit	184
<b>Sony CDP-XE900E</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>Refined and analytical disc scavenging tool, some distinctive colourations make auditioning vital</b>	●	●															BS	159
Sony CDP-XA20ES	450	High tech, with a long list of gadgets, oddly configured player that ultimately sounds less than compelling	●	●															1-bit 2177	176
<b>Sony CDP-X3000ES</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>Shoebbox format player, looks to die for, switchable digital filters to tweak the already excellent sound</b>	●	●															BS	169
<b>TAG McLaren CD20R</b>	<b>1,249</b>	<b>Fabulous build but transparent, highly-detailed sound lacks meat and is bettered at the price</b>	●	●															1bit	184
<b>Teac CDP-3450SE</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>For once a budget player where gadgets take second place to respectable, budget amp-friendly sonics</b>	●	●															1bit 1960	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-8	600	Superb build quality is matched to good, but not exceptional sound quality	●																MB	184
Teac VRDS-9	700	Well-presented. This Teac is crisp, yet shallow, and inconsistent in sound quality and partnering skills	●	●															1-bit 2178	176
Teac VRDS-10SE	850	Superbly built and presented, but rather leaden bass, with an over-prominent 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-PC480A	130	Full driving sound, but somewhat uneven in balance with a unsubtle, slightly harsh top end	●																1bit	159
<b>Technics SL-PS670D</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>Fine, middle ranking player which sounds solid, sometimes even a little stolid</b>	●																1 bit 2264	179
<b>Technics SL-PS770D</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>High tech and well built technology battleship which smoothes the rough edges off the music</b>	●	●															BS 2080	172
<b>Technics SL-MC410</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>If you fancy a CD player that holds 111 discs, this one's cheap, pretty capable, and easy to use</b>	●																Hyb 2224	178
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	●																1bit 1966	166
XTC CDP-1	1,250	Bright and sometimes abrasive, but detailed player	●																MB 2186	176



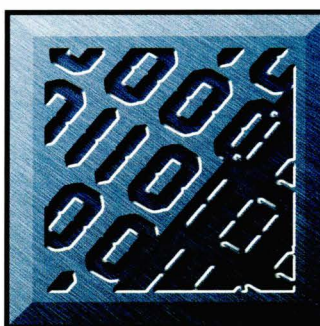
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# CD/DVD Players

STATUS

			SPECIFICATIONS									
PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT	OPTICAL DIG OUT	ST OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER	
Wadia W830	3000	Envelope busting dynamics, power and imaging in a rather unexciting box (digital volume control)									MB	183
Yamaha CDC-665	220	This player offers many features and highly listenable sound, with tidy and tuneful bass and good imaging	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	2225 178
Yamaha CD-X993	400	A bit of a lush, though the sound is singularly free of grain, and equipment levels are strong	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	184
<b>TRANSPORTS</b>												
Linn Karik	1,850	Based on early Linn transport, the Karik is dry but very positive, detailed and engrossing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	1323 144
PS Audio Lambda	2,250	With Ultralink Two, sound positively sparkles with colour and resonant detail	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	1106 133
Roksan Attessa ATT-DP3	1,295	Not the most detailed or refined but capable of sounding exciting with the right material	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	1867 162
Teac VRDS-T1	550	Superb quality engineering is mated to tidy and composed sound (tested with D-T1)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	1325 144
Theta Data Basic II	2,397	Uses a Philips CDM9 Pro mechanism and works a treat with more lively DACs	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	1494 130
Thorens TCD2000	999	Lively presentation not helped by rather loose bass and splashy treble. (Tested with TDA 2000 DAC)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	1867 162
Trichord Digital Turntable	699	Very detailed, precise, controlled yet involving; a first-rank performer	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	1867 162
Wadia 8	3,195	Budget version of Teac's VRDS mechanism in a fancy case; too expensive for the performance on offer	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	1495 130
<b>DACS</b>												
Audio Note DAC1	675	Oddball DAC with manual de-emphasis switch. Needs a high preamp input impedance or bass will suffer									MB	127
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
PS Audio UltraLink 2 HDCD	2,590	The sound positively sparkles with colour and resonant detail. (Tested with Lambda transport)									MB	1106 133
PS Audio Reference Link	4,550	Consolidates reputation of PS Audio for high performance digital electronics									MB	1069 132
Roksan Attessa ATT-DA2/DS5	1,145	Not the most detailed or refined but capable of good excitement with the right material									1bit	1867 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 TDA2000	700	Lively and up-front presentation not helped by rather loose bass and splashy treble									BS	1867 162
Trichord Pulsar Series One	1,395	Very detailed, precise, controlled yet involving; a first-rank performer. Switchable phase, dither etc									Hyb	1867 162
<b>DVD PLAYERS</b>												
Denon DVD-3000	700	Enjoyable rather than analytical, includes 24/96 and AC-3/MPEG-2 Audio	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	180
Micromega Premium DVD	1,500	Unique lack of regional coding constrictions but both DVD and CD replay are compromised	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	183
Panasonic DVD-A350	700	24/96 converter and AC-3 & MPEG-2 Audio included, well balanced, if slightly blurred and shut in	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	180
Pioneer DV-505	450	Plenty of analysis, with a slightly ragged edge. Rescued by the price & S/PDIF capabilities	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	180
Pioneer DVL-909	900	DVD and LD player: self-recommending to AV nuts; musically detailed but occasionally seems disjointed	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	180
Sony DVP-S715	600	24/96 converter for DAD compatibility, sharp, forward, but slightly unsubtle sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	180
Toshiba SD3107B	550	Dynamic sound and good stereo which lacks lowest stratum of detail	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	180

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## Digital Recorders

Domestic digital recording has been possible since the launch of digital audio tape (DAT) in the '80s. Since then DAT has remained expensive and largely esoteric, favoured only by well-heeled or professional users. Digital Compact Cassette and MiniDisc (MD) were launched in the early '90s but only MD has stayed the course. A little later came domestic CD-Recorders using CD-R discs, while the latest twist is the arrival of rerecordable CDs known as CD-RW discs. The recording quality hierarchy is as follows: DAT, CD-R/CD-RW, MD. MD is probably the most convenient to use, and offers sophisticated editing facilities, while CD-R is ideal for making digital 'clones' of prerecorded CDs. DAT is the medium of choice for high-quality location recording.

### KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **FORMAT:** Type of recorder – see left for descriptions.
- **DAC TYPE:** Digital to analogue converter: BS - Philips Bitstream; MB - multibit; Hyb - hybrid of multibit and bitstream; 1bit - single bit types such as MASH, bitstream, PWM etc
- **ADC TYPE:** The analogue to digital converter (ADC) converts sound into digits during live recording. Types of ADC are as per DACs (qv).
- **PORTABLE:** Battery operable, but not necessarily personal-stereo-sized.
- **OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS:** Digital socketry for optical cable.
- **ELEC IN/OUTPUTS:** Digital socketry for electrical cable.
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback advert on the penultimate page of the mag.
- **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which an original review appeared.
- **High End Review**

**B** BEST BUY
**R** RECOMMENDED
**E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

STATUS

# Digital Recorders

			SPECIFICATIONS									
PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	FORMAT	DAC TYPE	ADC TYPE	PORTABLE	OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS	ELEC IN/OUTPUTS	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER		
<b>MINIDISCS</b>												
Denon DMD-1000	300	A good machine, but it still doesn't manage to shake off the MiniDisc plague of losing the listener's interest	MD	BS	N	●	●	●			184	
Denon DMD-1300	500	Sound sometimes lacks integration but tonal balance is good and it handles loud music with panache	MD	BS	BS		●	●			2193 177	
Kenwood DM-9090	550	Slight sibilance and image vagueness do not detract from excellent balance and solid bass	MD	BS	BS		●	●			2194 177	
Onkyo MD-121	450	Mid-sized deck that sounds slightly coloured at times, though immediate and lively	MD	BS	BS		●	●			2195 177	
Sharp MDR3H	300	Nifty machine combining a 3-disc CD changer with a MD recorder. Sound on both is rather below par, though	BS	BS	N	●	●	●			184	
Sharp MD-R2	300	Budget recorder that loses little or nothing in comparisons with much more expensive models – highly capable	MD	BS	BS		●	●			2196 177	
Sony MDS-JB920	300	One of the better MD decks, its sound is neutral and dynamic. European Audio Recorder of the Year '98-'99	BS	BS	N	●	●	●			184	
<b>CD RECORDERS</b>												
Philips CDR-880	499	Capable of making perfect copies of CD digital, and very acceptable copies of anything analogue too		BS	BS	N	●	●			184	
Pioneer PDR-555RW	480	Competitor to Philips' CDR880; it can't make perfect copies but has the edge in replay and analogue record sound		BS	BS	N	●	●			184	
Pioneer PDR-04	700	Scaled down version of the PDR-05 with auto level setting but all the socketry and features you need to make CDs	CD-R	BS	BS		●	●			171	
Pioneer PDR-05	1,000	The first domestic CD-R deck – excellent sound quality	CD-R	BS	BS		●	●			1652 152	





## Headphones

There are several different ways of making a headphone. The most expensive models employ electrostatically-driven diaphragms within an open-backed earcup. Most mid-price designs feature dynamic, moving-coil-driven diaphragms in open, semi-open or closed-back designs. An open-backed headphone can sound remarkably transparent, but also permits the ingress of external noise. Closed-back designs keep out unwanted sound, but may be less comfortable to wear and more coloured. The latest development is the cordless headphone using either infrared light or, more recently, radio waves. Quality is improving, but has yet to match the best corded designs.

### KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **TYPE:** Operating principle: D - dynamic, E - electrostatic
- **SUPRA-AURAL:** Where a flat pad presses on the outer ear.
- **CIRCUMAURAL:** Where the earcup encloses the ear.
- **OPEN BACK:** Offers an open sound but lets in noise.
- **CLOSED BACK:** Keeps out external noise.
- **MASS (g):** Mass in grams
- **IMPEDANCE (Ω):** Load offered to the headphone amplifier. Many headphones offer a significantly higher value than loudspeakers, for example, but this does not mean they will be incompatible with the majority of amplifiers.
- **3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR:** Compatible with mini-jacked components, eg personal stereos.
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faded review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback advert on the penultimate page of the magazine.
- **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which an original review appeared.

**B** BEST BUY    **R** RECOMMENDED    **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

# Headphones

### SPECIFICATIONS

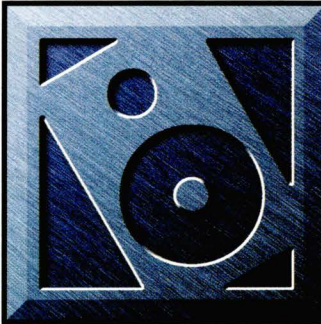
STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	TYPE	SUPRA-AURAL	CIRCUMAURAL	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	MASS (g)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	3.5mm JACK ADAPTER	FACTSBACK NO.	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	80	The closed back 910s are an improvement on the 909s, with a nice rhythmic quality rarely found	D	●				280	40			55
Beyer DT100	160	Rugged, modular professional design, but bass is woolly and treble lacks detail	D			●	●	350	600			157
Beyer DT311	50	Uncharacteristically tight, unrefined sound quality from this otherwise well engineered 'phone	D			●	●	124	40	●	1098	133
Beyer DT411	63	A reasonable but not very thrilling headphone that doesn't really offer enough at the price	D			●	●	120	250			111
Beyer DT511	106	Superb midband clarity and speed slightly at odds with soft bass. High tingle factor, even so	D			●	●	200	250		2063	172
Beyer DT531	135	A good buy for serious, heavy-duty music making	D			●	●	245	250			144
Beyer DT911	170	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
Denon AH-D750	130	Loud and gutsy, meaty bass, good with rock and dance. Can sound thick and clumsy	D			●	●	250	30	●	2063	172
Grado SR-40	45	Cheap and nasty appearance largely redeemed by cheerful, up-beat sound. Very comfortable	D	●		●	●	120	32	●	2064	172
Grado SR-80	100	Open and dynamic with pedantically open mid-band. Crude physical design, rough frequency extremes	D	●		●	●	60	8	●	1801	157
Grado SR-225	200	Warm, darkly-coloured tonally and ultimately lacking in clarity, but true to the spirit of the music	D	●		●	●	200	32		1883	163
Jecklin Float Model 1	79	While very unusual in appearance, the Floats give remarkable sound quality and openness	D			●	●	400	200			55
Jecklin 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
JVC HA-W60	49	Remarkable lack of interference and hiss ameliorates adequate sound of this cordless design	D	●		●	●	165	I/R	●		172
Precide Ergo Model 2	140	Still has much of the spaciousness of the Float from which it is derived, but coarse mid/top	D			●	●	380	100		1892	163
Philips SBC 3396	70	Remarkably airy for closed-back designs. Fine tonal balance, punchy delivery. Amazing for money	D			●	●	255	32	●	2064	172
Philips SBC HP900	90	Sharper, snappier midrange than 3396: initially impressive but blows it on balance and listenability	D			●	●	200	32	●	2065	172
Sennheiser IS 380	55	As close as you'll get to real hi-fi with infra-red phones at this price. Inevitable hiss spoils the illusion	D	●		●	●	192	I/R	●		172
Sennheiser HD 455	55	Inoffensive, if nondescript sound; modular, but can become dislodged from head	D	●		●	●	185	60	●	1801	157
Sennheiser HD 475	80	Elegant, uncluttered sound and very comfortable but lean bass saps satisfaction	D	●		●	●	120	60	●	2065	172
Sennheiser HD 545	125	Fine all-rounder that takes all styles of music in its stride. Ear-clamping headband	D			●	●	255	150	●	2066	172
Sennheiser HD 565 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 a 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. Correct-sounding too, yet musically unrewarding	D			●	●	-	-	●	1801	157
Sony MDR-CD1700	200	Astonishingly detailed, uncoloured and free of the usual artefacts from a sealed back headphone	D			●	●	325	32	●	1901	163
Sony MDR-F1	100	Natural, easy-going sound teamed with great looks and comfort. Shame about the lightweight bass	D			●	●	300	12	●	2066	172
Technics RP-DJ1200	130	Functional design with head-pulping bass and muggy tonal balance. Good job they're sweat-proof	D	●		●	●	230	32	●	2067	172
Stax Lambda Nova Basic	449	Refined, articulate, yet with real presence - and a notable bargain by electrostatic standards	E			●	●	347	n/a		1902	163
Vivanco IR5800	50	Consistently musical infra-red design. Doesn't reach for sonic heights so hiss can be forgiven	D	●			I/2	226	I/R	●		172
Vivanco SR650	50	Unusually comfortable 'phone with excellent detail resolution but aggressive	D	●		●	●	175	-	●	1801	157
Vivanco SR750	60	Cossetting physical design, attractive sound, though suffers overhang and lacks ultimate dynamics	D	●		●	●	188	-	●	1801	157
Vivanco Cyberwave FMH3000	80	The only cordless 'phone to offer genuine walkabout freedom, but, sounds like a cheap FM tuner	D	●			●	210	FM	●		172



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## Hi-Fi Loudspeakers

As the last link in the hi-fi chain, loudspeakers are at the mercy of incoming signals. Nevertheless, distortions introduced by loudspeakers (and rooms) tend to be the most obvious. The average loudspeaker comprises an enclosure containing two drive units. Inside the box, a simple electrical circuit (the crossover or dividing network) splits the incoming, full-frequency-range signal into the right portions for specific drive units to handle: highs to the 'tweeter', lows to the 'woofer'. For any given box size, designers must balance the 'sensitivity' of the loudspeaker (how loud it goes for a given electrical input) against bass extension (how low it goes). Subwoofers augment bass and are either passive (unamplified) or, preferably, active (self-amplified).

### KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **SIZE wXhXd (cm):** Width by height by depth in centimetres.
- **FLOORSTANDER:** Requires no stand support.
- **SENSITIVITY (dB/W):** How much sound results for a given electrical input – the higher the figure, the louder the speaker.
- **IMPEDANCE (Ω):** Impedance, measured in Ohms, indicates how much resistance the speaker presents to an amplifier. As impedance decreases, demands on an amplifier increase.
- **BASS FROM (Hz):** The lowest frequency that a speaker can reproduce effectively.
- **FREE SPACE:** Speakers which should not sit close to walls.
- **CLOSE TO WALL:** Speakers which should sit between 3 and 12cm from the rear wall.

● **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback advert on the penultimate page of this issue.

● **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which an original review appeared.

● **High End Review**

**B** BEST BUY
**R** RECOMMENDED
**E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

# Hi-Fi Loudspeakers

### SPECIFICATIONS

- SIZE WxHxD (CM)
- FLOORSTANDER
- SENSITIVITY (dB/W)
- IMPEDANCE (Ω)
- BASS FROM (HZ)
- FREE SPACE
- CLOSE TO WALL
- FACTSBACK NO.
- ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS	PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY (dB/W)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FROM (HZ)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
	Acoustic Energy AE200	250	Metal-cone miniature has a tendency to shout but is still lots of fun, and well built too	18,5,30,25		87	6	40			2199	177
	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
	Acoustic Energy AE120	500	Attractive presentation and good sonic headroom, but a heavy, uneven overall balance	18,98,28		89	4	25			1904	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/B	799	Light damping and local unevenness add some coloration, but don't spoil the speaker	38,58,25		93	8	25				110
	Audio Note AN-E/B	1,299	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 M2	1,399	High-class, smooth and slightly laid-back performer has driving bass. It's upgradeable, too!	20,102,30		89	4	22				180
	AVI Positron	899	This 'mini-floorstander' is capable of great precision and delicacy, but in a rather small scale way	17,5,74,24.5		85	6	40			2130	174
	B&W CDM2SE	400	Beautifully styled and finished, respectable midband. Lacks definition towards frequency extremes	22,32,25		87	6	40				183
	B&W DM302	150	Highly competent and neutral all rounder; clever Prism enclosure	19,32,22		88	4	45			1778	156
	B&W DM601	199	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 DM305	350	Ridged paper cone gives lively sound, clever box, but a little uneven	22,87,31		89	4	40			1908	164
	B&W DM603	500	Squat floorstander with decent dynamics and well-judged, restrained balance; bass could go deeper	23,5,88,29		89	7	45			2030	170
	B&W CDM1SE	600	A great looking stand-mount with one of the best midbands around, and a subtle blend of other qualities	22,37,29		88	5	40			2209	177
	B&W CDM7	1,000	A combination of serious welly and physical elegance, but a basic lack of midband smoothness	22,97,29		90	4	22			2131	174
	B&W Matrix 805 V	1,095	Stylish, remarkable imaging, good balance and low coloration	33,33,21		87	8	30				98
	B&W Matrix 804	1,695	A great all-rounder which combines exceptional bass extension with fine sensitivity	26,96,26		88	4	20			1985	167
	B&W Nautilus 802	6000	Outstanding example of the high tech speaker builder's art	39,111,55		91	8	34				183
	Cabasse Farella 400	950	Exciting but very upfront-and-in-yr-face sound. High sensitivity, fine build and good dynamic drive	26,92,32		92	5	28				180
	Castle Isis	250	A great miniature at a competitive price. Sound is lightweight but very coherent, with a fine overall balance	17,35,5,21		87	8	45			2019	170
	Castle Kendal	500	A beautifully finished compact floorstander with a decidedly forward but communicative sound.	17,76,20		86	6	45			2204	177
	Castle Severn 2	539	Carbon fibre cone gives lovely, subtle midband but treble is a bit dull and bass a bit thumpy	21,84,25		87	8	30			2120	174
	Castle Avon	730	Lovely box and lovely voices from carbon-fibre composite cone	22,91,28		85	8	22			1909	164
	Castle Harlech	880	Handsome big-sounding floorstander, great value and dynamic midrange	20,96,33		88	8	28			1820	160
	Castle Howard S2	1,200	Ablly fills the gap between Chester and Winchester; has a rich, laid-back balance	26,104,41		90	8	40			1078	132
	Celestion 12i	119	Not without virtue, but the relentless enthusiasm and mid-band colourations can become wearing	19,31,21		88	6	45			2254	179
	Celestion 23i	300	Cosmetically flawed, but the bottom end has fine get-up-and-go, and works well with dance tracks	24,86,27		89	6	30			2200	177
	Celestion A1	899	Rich, warm and laid-back, but a true quality sound; lovely build	24,41,35		88	6	25			1910	164
	Celestion A2	1500	Full scale, big sound from ultra-elegant floorstander. Smooth and slightly laid back presentation	24,93,39		89	6	22				180
	Cerwin-Vega VS10	350	Not very refined but extremely ballsy; these rock boxes have no shortage of gung-ho	33,70,29		95	6	37			1758	155
	Chario Syntar 100	249	Pretty with a pleasantly easygoing balance, but not the most communicative or exciting sound around	18,32,27		87	6	45			2020	170
	Chario Academie	1650	Pricy Italian stand-mount, has high class sound and appearance. Solid walnut enclosures	25,40,31		84	8	40				180
	Dali 606	400	A big bruiser at a tempting price. Sounds refined and polite, but also packs some punch	22,97,32		91	4	25			2121	174
	Dynaudio Audience 5	400	Follows the Dynaudio tradition for fine midband transparency, but the overall timbre is a bit thin	20,31,26		85	4	40			2205	177
	Dynaudio Audience 50	577	This stand-mount doesn't look big, but sound quality can match many models at twice the price	20,33,25		86	4	30			2122	174
	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			1986	167
	Eltax Linear Response	249	A curiously dumpy shape, but smooth, laid-back performer is easy on the ears, with fine tonal accuracy	25,35,32		85	4	40			2201	177
	Epos ES12	499	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 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
	Gale Zi	140	Unspectacular sound and appearance fail to help this solid little miniature stand out from the crowd	22,40,27		88	7	40			2021	170
	Genexa Pro	160	Terrific treble and upper-mid but coloured and cuppy lower-mid and bass. A mixture of genius and grog.	14,27,14		86	8	90			2255	179
	GLL Imagio IC130	500	Lots of speaker for the money, but sound is decidedly dull and shut in	22,112,29		88	4	20			1824	160
	Heybrook Prima 2	159	Great openness, speed and timing. Sounds fresh and vital, though sometimes lacks scale and weight	20,29,18		87	6	50			2256	179
	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			2026	170
	Heybrook Heylios	389	Great all-round performance in a pretty package at a sharp price	24,36,27		87	6	25			1912	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	Solid, large bookshelf model with good sensitivity and a lively, forward sound	24,41,22		90	8	48				122
	Heybrook Ultima	649	Has the bass wallop to justify its dual hi-fi/home cinema roles, but doesn't excite	22,97,29		89	6	45			2126	174
	Heybrook Sextet	1,299	Coherent and highly analytical, partly due to distinct upper-mid forwardness	27,90,20		88	8	25				102
	Heybrook Octet	1800	Good-looking but pricy floorstander with novel drivers and a fine ceramic-enclosure midband	24,97,31		90	6	25				180
	Infinity Delta 60	700	Striking and massive floorstander, lots of speaker for the price, but seems a victim of its own complexity	16-29,115,41		90	4	25				183
	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



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# Hi-Fi Loudspeakers

SPECIFICATIONS

SIZE WxHxD (CM) FLOORSTANDER SENSITIVITY (db/W) IMPEDANCE (Ω) BASS FROM (Hz) FREE SPACE CLOSE TO WALL FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY (db/W)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Jamo BX100A	350	Offering 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 Cornet 195	350	Loads of bass, should have plenty of yooof-appeal – it looks the business, and is priced attractively	20.5,91,31	●	90	3	26	●			183
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 507A	700	Imaginative styling keeps the front view super slim yet still it packs a punch. Glass top is a nice touch	22,94,37	●	88	3	40	●		2126	174
JBL LX2	250	<i>Invgorating, if a touch crude, this good-hearted speaker reproduces music with considerable enthusiasm</i>	22,40,27		87	8	40	●		2022	170
JBL L20	700	Pricely, 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 SVA1500	700	A distinctive Pro-style bi-radial horn tweeter, with a fun sound, enlivened by a juicy bass thump	17.5,51,31		86	8	40	●		2127	174
JBL L40	1,000	Classic, large, stand-mount three-way is full of vim and vigour, with a superb sense of balance	30,65,31		88	4	23	●		1976	167
JBL SVA 2100	1250	Monstrously large and brutish styling, goes very loud as well as deep. Fine focus but some boxiness	37,114,52	●	91	8	<20	●			180
JBL L90	1,500	<i>A classic monitor which communicates with gusto and enthusiasm, though it can sound a bit crude</i>	24,94,35	●	91	6	23	●		1348	143
JBL LX70	550	Bassmeister supreme, shame the rest doesn't match up. Fine sensitivity but an itchy scratchy treble	26.5,94,30	●	91	4	33	●			183
JM Lab Spectral 909.1	1,375	Multi-driver array in a large and very substantial enclosure. Good scale but lacks delicacy and sweetness	27,107,35	●	90	4	20	●			180
JMLab Tantal 515	495	<i>Lively and open if bright. Sound is entertaining and informative, but presentation is nondescript</i>	20,94,26	●	92	5	32	●			183
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	<i>Ultra-cheap miniature works well in a limited way</i>	18,27,17.5		86	8	50	●		1781	156
JPW Gold Monitor	80	<i>More informative than Mini Monitor – but fiercer too</i>	18,27,17.5		86	8	50	●		1782	156
JPW ML510	130	<i>Lots of good-quality speaker for the price, but not an ideal match for cheap budget components</i>	20,34,22		88	5	50	●			169
JPW ML710	230	Good material value but disappointingly uneven bass – check out the 510s instead	20,88,30	●	88	5	40	●		2202	177
JPW ML910	330	Loads of speaker for the money, plenty of headroom and loudness capability, but sounds dull	23,104,30	●	91	4	43	●			183
JPW ML1010	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	●		2031	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
JPW Ruby 4	1,000	Twin metal-cone main drivers improve the dynamic performance and bass extension, with little sacrifice	22,94,26	●	88	8	25	●		2132	174
KEF Coda 7	129	Lovely open voice reproduction, but bass could be tauter; build tougher	18,30,23		88	6	50	●		1783	156
KEF Coda 8	189	Outstandingly well-balanced, bass is deep but a little vague	20,32.5,29		86	6	28	●		1784	156
KEF Coda 9	299	Uneven budget 3-way floorstander with poor bass definition	20,86,28	●	89	6	30	●		1785	156
KEF RDM One	499	Cute and tiny, nice midband but lack of bass warmth and weight	23,30,24		88	6	70	●		1913	164
KEF Reference Model 2	1,599	Classy, large floorstander that has massive headroom and clean mid-to-treble, but limited deep bass	23,103,34	●	89	4	30	●		1987	167
Kelly KT2	700	<i>Chunky floorstander has tacky finish but whopping sensitivity and a very involving, (if characterful) sound</i>	23,89,34	●	94	4	33	●			183
Kelly KT3	1,200	<i>Super-high-sensitivity, hefty floorstander sacrifices smoothness for dynamic realism</i>	25,95,36	●	95	4	28	●		2133	174
Keswick Audio Aria II	379	<i>Confident and dynamic sound, if a little crude and shut in</i>	21,42,24		89	8	20	●		1405	148
Keswick Audio Torino	999	Good value, lively contender with distinctive styling. Goes loud and deep but could be smoother	18-26, 93,28	●	90	4	20	●		1977	167
Linn Kellidh 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 Auditorium	1,500	<i>Pretty, compact floorstander has wonderful coherence, high sensitivity and fine dynamic integrity</i>	21.5,98,29	●	91	4	25	●			180
Magnat Vector 77	450	Tall, dark and a lot of speaker for the money. Beautiful balance, but lacking in subtlety and transparency	22,115,29	●	89	5	30	●			183
Magnat Vintage 720	1200	Slightly crude in some respects but lots of heart, fine scale, decent dynamic coherence and integrity	29,113,32	●	88	4	20	●			180
Mission 700	130	A lot of speaker for the money. Good bass weight and extension and goes loud with ease	18,34,26		87	8	40	●		2257	179
Mission 731 PRO	140	<i>Cautious balance makes a fine match with budget equipment. A classy baby for smaller rooms</i>	17.5,31.5,20		89	8	55	●			169
Mission 750LE	250	Fabulous cosmetics and a great midband carry the day, though size will out and bass is inevitably limited	17,28,27		86	7	45	●		2203	177
Mission 733i	330	New tweeter gives a more open sound; a good all-rounder that doesn't sound as big as it looks	20.5,88,30	●	88	8	45	●		2027	170
Mission 774	500	Gorgeous floorstander is an entertaining communicator, despite some balance oddities (bright treble)	18,95,31	●	90	4	40	●			183
Mission 752 Freedom	578	<i>A beautifully judged compromise in the art of combining presentation with a decent sound</i>	20,90,25	●	89	8	45	●		2123	174
Mission 753 Freedom	798	<i>Great styling. New, more restrained tweeter reveals fine midband dynamics</i>	21,90,31	●	89	4	40	●		1914	164
Mission 754 Freedom 5	1,298	Tall but exceptionally elegant floorstander gives fine midband projection; goes loud but limited deep bass	22,111,31	●	88	4	40	●		1981	167
Monitor Audio Monitor 3	400	An exceptionally discreet floorstander; sonically uneven, but capable of fine results	16,91,21	●	88	5	30	●		2032	170
Monitor Audio Monitor 4	500	An oddball balance but an entertaining sound, and a good looking real-wood-box at a realistic price	20,87,24	●	84	6	23	●		2210	177
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 702PMC	700	A good all-round stand-mount with intimate midband focus	20,40,25		87	8	30	●		2128	174
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
Monitor Audio 705PMC	1400	Beautifully finished compact floorstander with fine midband coherence, but limited bass and top end	20,94,28	●	89	4	25	●			180
Mordaunt-Short MS10i	140	<i>Up front, bouncy and a whole lot of fun</i>	18.5,30.5,20		86	8	50	●		1789	156
Mordaunt-Short MS30i	275	Slightly shut-in and coloured quality is offset by fine bass and impressive communication	25,43,28		90	8	28	●		1662	152
Musical Technology Kestrel SE	300	Brighter and drier-sounding than the standard Kestrel (and not the better for it)	20,84,19	●	84	5	50	●		1915	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
Musical Technology PM15	450	<i>A subtle, understated but very involving example of the 'classic' luxury-finish compact standmount.</i>	20,41,27		88	5	38	●			183
Musical Technology Condor	1,000	Lots of clever ideas in a floorstander, which places transparency and smoothness ahead of dynamic drama	25,91,23	●	85	4	28	●		2134	174
Naim Intro	660	<i>Great dynamic range and info retrieval, but thin, lacks warmth</i>	24,89,27	●	89	6	30	●		1916	164
Naim Credo	1,060	Involving sound, but rather forward and cold. Good clarity, but some coloration and a lack of richness	24,89,30	●	88	8	28	●			180
Naim SBL Passive	1,970	Lively and punchy – smoother but more upfront than before	27,89,27	●	88	6	25	●		1352	143
Neat Critique 2	445	Contemporary standmount has a clean, crisp sound with lovely natural midband voicing	22,32,24		86	6	50	●			183
Neat Mystique Mk2	575	<i>This elegant package delivers a fine overall sound quality; some might find the top end too insistent</i>	20,86,18	●	85	6	23	●		2211	177
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	●		1988	167
Origin Live Conqueror	1,650	Chunky floorstanding three-way has lovely cabinetwork and lively sound, but limited deep bass	24,94,27	●	88	8	30	●		1989	167
PMC TB1S	430	<i>Pro-audio version of TBI</i>	20,41,30		87	6	40	●		2207	177
PMC TB1	482	<i>A classy, laid-back performer that likes going loud and loves the bass guitar</i>	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	799	Bass rich, lively and powerful, but suspect top end; big and not very pretty	22,105,39	●	91	4	22	●		1831	160



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# Hi-Fi Loudspeakers

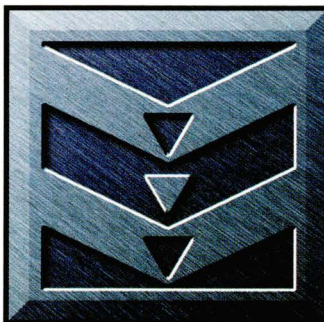
SPECIFICATIONS

SIZE WxHxD (CM) FLOORSTANDER SENSITIVITY (db/W) IMPEDANCE (Ω) BASS FROM (Hz) FREE SPACE CLOSE TO WALL FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY (db/W)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
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 boxes, this speaker should be first port of call	22,107,25	●	86	8	30	●	●	1457	149
QLN Signature	1,000	Attractive pyramidal stand-mount with heavy, laid-back balance but remarkably unboxy sound	27,37,36	●	83	4	25	●	●	167	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	60
Rega Kyte	198	Has splendid timing and coherence, sounds very explicit and informative	19,31,19	●	87	8	50	●	●	114	114
Rega EL8	298	Kyte drivers in compact floorstander give more bass but less coherence	17,72,20	●	86	8	55	●	●	122	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 coherence	34,42,27	●	95	8	55	●	●	1982	167
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	21,85,5,25	●	87	8	22	●	●	2023	170
RMS Revelation Series 1	1,299	Innovative metal-box compact with integral port/stand – clean with good timing but very laid-back balance	20,99,24	●	81	8	22	●	●	1983	167
Rogers GS1	179	Classy looking small box with equally classy, if slightly over cautious sound	19,30,17	●	85	8	45	●	●	2258	179
Rogers dB101	250	This shapely sub-miniature is fast and agile but lightweight and forward: great voices; lacks bass	20,26,20	●	88	6	45	●	●	2024	170
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 C6/28	1,399	Large floorstander with carbon-fibre tweeter. Sounds better than it looks, especially through the midband	25,103,29	●	88	6	20	●	●	167	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	●	●	1979	167
Royd Minstrel	275	Not much wellie or loudness but fine coherence and timing; a bit bright	18,69,12	●	86	8	30	●	●	1167	135
Royd Doublet	485	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 be better, though	20,31,18	●	86	8	35	●	●	139	139
Royd Abbot	695	Dynamic and fine transient qualities are hampered by a rather coloured mid-forward balance	20,81,30	●	90	8	43	●	●	118	118
Ruark Epilogue	269	Beautifully finished miniature with a lively balance and plenty of charm; best suited to smaller rooms	17,29,23	●	87	8	47	●	●	184	174
Ruark Sceptre	599	'Traditional' cabinetwork with classy veneer and shiny gilt fixings, hampered by rather wayward sound balance	21,38,31	●	87	8	40	●	●	2129	173
Ruark Talisman II	749	Less ideologically committed than some, strength lies in fine all-round coherence	23,84,32	●	88	8	30	●	●	118	118
Ruark Crusader	1,599	Elegant luxury three-way with wonderfully even-handed, if rather laid-back balance	24,94,31	●	85	6	22	●	●	1990	167
Ruark Equinox	1,849	The primary strength of this speaker is its ability to vanish behind the music	25,88,34	●	88	6	45	●	●	1227	140
SD Acoustics SD3R	649	SD3 has the agility and charm of a quality miniature, good bass and low sensitivity	20,38,30	●	87	8	25	●	●	106	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
Sequence 400	329	Clever hang-on-wall panel is well voiced, though bass isn't too great	25,100,7	●	86	8	45	●	●	1917	164
Shahinian Arc	1,875	Occasionally wonderful, small, floorstanding omnidirectional design: bright but coherent and revealing	35,69,25	●	88	6	24	●	●	110	110
Silverado Raider	695	Beautifully built audiophile compact: neutral if bright, tough work for amps	20,40,25	●	83	3	30	●	●	1918	164
Spendor 2030	599	Discreet slimline floorstander with delicately coherent, laid-back sound	18,89,27	●	87	8	30	●	●	1836	160
System Audio 1130	499	Super-slim, super smooth, involving experience, but not ideal if you like your bass deep and loud	3,100,21	●	89	4	43	●	●	183	183
Tangent Monitor 5	80	An uneven performer best suited to small rooms and generous volume levels	17,52,18	●	83	8	55	●	●	169	169
Tangent Monitor 9	150	Budget floorstander that motors when the music demands, with a solid bass but occasionally raw treble	19,5,75,5,22,5	●	90	6	45	●	●	1926	165
Tannoy Mercury M1	120	Sounds much bigger and expensive than it is. Solid, tuneful bass, wide open soundstage, excellent imaging	17,30,20	●	87	8	50	●	●	2259	179
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	169
Tannoy Mercury M3	230	Good-looking floorstander; very neutral and evenhanded, with fine midband but weak dynamics and drive	20,5,87,28	●	87	7	20	●	●	2025	170
Tannoy Precision P20	400	A creative and attractive design with time-aligned drivers, but the sound lacks sufficient excitement	21,80,30	●	88	5	25	●	●	2208	177
Tannoy D300	999	Gorgeous-looking compact floorstander. And a fine all-round performer, too!	16,24,85,23	●	87	6	26	●	●	167	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	C93
TDL RTL3SE	450	A touch of boom'n'tizz might be to taste, but this is a lot of box for the money, with floor-shaking bass	20,91,39	●	89	6	22	●	●	2124	174
TDL CF100 Chiltern	450	Tiny but classy monitor has a laid-back balance, a fine midband and a surprising bass; but needs space	20,29,23	●	85	8	50	●	●	183	183
TDL CF200 Cotswold	650	Fine midband tonality and dynamic range, but less happy towards the bandwidth extremes	22,5,78,23	●	86	6	40	●	●	2212	177
TDL T-Line 3	700	Plenty of bass and treble, but broad midband is rather repressed	20,97,38	●	86	8	20	●	●	1921	164
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	●	85	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	122
Vandersteen 2Ce	1,395	Elegant staggered baffle contributes to a refreshing freedom from boxiness	41,101,27	●	88	7	23	●	●	86	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	169
Wharfedale Valdus 400	200	Very loud with a minimum of amplification, but the sound is thick and uneven, with a heavy upper bass	25,80,26	●	91	8	30	●	●	1414	148
Wharfedale Valdus 500	300	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	●	●	1922	164
ZYP AI	199	Cute metal-cased micro-miniature is quite coloured but great fun	14,22,12	●	88	8	30	●	●	110	110
<b>SUBWOOFERS</b>											
Acoustic Energy AE108S	299	Lots of loud subwoofer for your money, though ultimately more film than music oriented	50,42,43	●	20	●	2247	179	179	179	179
B&W ASW1000	499	(Active) Very competently engineered all round, and goes (unnecessarily) very loud	54,47,48	●	20	●	2248	179	179	179	179
B&W AS6	500	(Active) Good material value with a fair amount of low bass from 100W design	45,51,45,5	●	30	●	1736	154	154	154	154
Celestion CS135	139	Compact hideaway passive sub lacks deep bass for high sensitivity speakers	52,19,34	●	86	8	45	●	●	128	128
Jamo SW600	530	(Active) Has some neat styling touches and remote control, but deep bass is limited	38,41,53	●	30	●	1736	154	154	154	154
JPW SW60	349	A real heavyweight, sounds clean and transparent, if perhaps a little understated. Usefully flexible	55,47,39	●	20	●	2249	179	179	179	179
KEF Model 30B	499	(Active) Commendably discreet with good sense of timing but limited extension	38,5,37,43	●	45	●	1736	154	154	154	154
KEF AV1	2,499	(Active) Works well, looks great, shakes the windows but costs a lot and is bulky	56,43,50	●	45	●	128	128	128	128	128
M&K VX-7B	450	(Active) Baby of a big range; this active design delivers deep, plenteous bass but lacks transparency	35,25,37	●	40	●	1736	154	154	154	154
M&K MX70	900	(Active) Justifies cost and belies its diminutive size, with an agility that makes sense of the toughest material	25,5,46,35	●	25	●	2250	179	179	179	179
REL Q50	375	(Active) Genuinely deep, clean bass from an attractively compact and cost effective package	40,41,42	●	20	●	2251	179	179	179	179
Rogers AB1	549	Subwoofer-cum-stand designed as partner for LS3/5a or similar miniatures	19,57,16	●	82	8	●	1354	143	143	143





## Stands & Supports

Hi-Fi supports are more important than you might imagine – they can have very subtle effects on the sound of your system! There are two kinds of support: those for equipment and those (stands) for loudspeakers. Equipment supports keep vibrations and resonances from affecting electronic components, while speaker stands hold enclosures stock-still and ensure they are at the correct height for your ears. Equipment supports may be rigid affairs fabricated from steel or more exotic materials; or they may have a form of suspension. Speaker stands come in a variety of sizes and styles to suit different models, and vary between open-frame and solid-pillar types. Always check with speaker and electronics manufacturers to see which supports they recommend.

### KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **HEIGHT (cm):** How tall is your support?
- **TOP PLATE SIZE (cm):** Dimensions of top surface on stand or equipment support.
- **FILLABLE:** Some speaker stands can be mass-loaded with sand or lead-shot to improve sound.
- **WELDED:** The better stands and supports are welded together rather than just bolted.
- **NUMBER OF SHELVES:** The number of tiers on an equipment rack or support.
- **SHELF TYPE:** The material from which shelves are made. Wood generally means Medium Density Fibreboard (MDF).
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- **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which an original review appeared.
- H:** High End Review

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# Stands & Supports

### SPECIFICATIONS

TOP PLATE SIZE (cm)    FILLABLE    WELDED    NUMBER OF SHELVES    SHELF TYPE    FACTSBACK NO.    ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	TOP PLATE SIZE (cm)	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF SHELVES	SHELF TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS</b>									
Alphason GR 17/17-AS	275	Great looks but sound can be bettered at this price	36	60,39		4	Glass		181
Elemental Isotube x 4/Ref	1199	Blockbusting size and build. Super sound quality	92	45,49	●	4	Marb		181
Fi-Rax R4	399	Lively, exuberant sound, slightly weak bass				5	Glass	1633	151
Frameworks H500/H175	404	Two-shelf stand and isolation platform combo in tubular steel – made a spectacular impression on audition	70	52,34	●	3	Glass	1952	166
Ixos Deadrock 704	250	Looks unassuming but sound is full and inviting		46,39		4	Resin		181
Kudos Corinthian	599	True heavyweight that doesn't quite manage knockout sound	91	46,38		4	Wood		181
Mana Acoustics Ref. Table	350	King of its type: angle iron, chipboard and glass combine to make a significant difference to sound quality	56	49,39	●	1	Glass		147
Mana 5 Tier Sound Table	600	Infinitely upgradeable. Persuasive and thrilling glass and angle-iron design that adds speed and bandwidth	91	49,39	●	5	Glass	1633	151
Optimum Int 2000 OPT490	299	25kg stand with shelves between variable-height tubular uprights. Sounds smooth and relaxed with sturdy bass	50	60,40		4	Glass	1953	166
Optimum Int 2000 OPT660	349	Glitzy style isn't reflected in sound, which is wholesome	82	60,52		5	Glass		181
Quadraspire Q4	250	Easy to live with, tonally neutral	54	40,49		4	MDF	1633	151
Sound Organisation Z038	135	Too lively and lacking order – but inexpensive	50	84,40	●	5	Wood	1633	151
Sound Organisation Z560	160	Welded and bolted members give structural integrity. While performance is not up with the best, it's great value	90	46,36	●	5	Wood	1954	166
Soundstyle X100	230	Looks lovely, sounds lively but slightly bright	64	49,28	●	4	Glass		181
Soundstyle Select 6105	290	Respectable sonics: structurally solid and smart	78	43,36		5	Glass	1633	151
Soundstyle Finewoods W105	320	Veneered shelves clamped between tubular uprights. Delivers with classical material	82	48,27		4	Wood	1955	166
Sound Organisation Z545	150	Budget gem from the stalwarts of sound supports	70	46,36	●	4	Glass		181
Stands Unique Sound Tower	289	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	81	49,36	●	5	Wood	1633	151
Townshend Seismic Stand	1245	It's big, it wobbles and it's pricey. But this is the ultimate equipment support	72	58,45		3	Wood		181
Wilson benches Asside	590	Sounds even better than it looks. And it looks wonderful	72	37,50		4	Wood		181
<b>SPEAKER STANDS</b>									
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	84	Tall, slim and elegant, though sound and value are unexceptional	40-60	17,17	●				159
Alphason Titan	125	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 is 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 its performance	61	19,57	●	●		1373	146
AVF Tower 400	35	Ridiculously cheap and much better than no stand at all	54	17,20	●				159
Kudos S50	100	Better sound than the budget stands, particularly in low-frequencies	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	5			●		1373	146
Revolver RS1	70	A good blend of performance and appearance for the price	53	18,18	●				159
RMS/Stands Unique Vivus	349	Pricely carbon fibres give ultra-clean sound with exceptional voices	50	N/A					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	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	146

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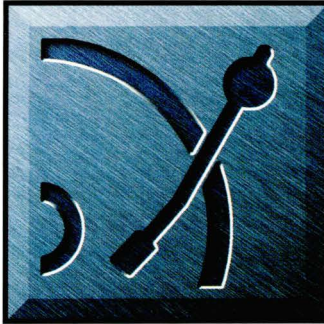
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Ref: CH0199





## Tonearms

Less expensive turntables are usually supplied with a matching tonearm (and often a 'starter' cartridge, too). However, hard-core vinyl fans should invest in a more expensive separate motor unit with specialist tone-arm — the only way to make the most of vinyl LPs. It is essential to achieve operational synergy between such components, so this is one area of hi-fi where the skills of a knowledgeable dealer are invaluable. The quality of a tonearm's construction and design affect sound quality significantly. There are three basic arm designs listed in the key, and each has strengths, but pivoted designs are the most popular, being usually the most practical and affordable.

### KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **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.
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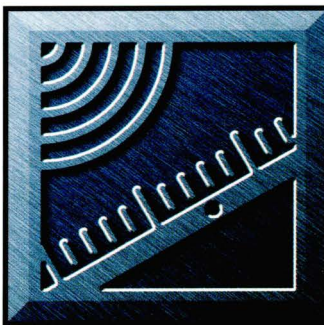
# Tonearms

STATUS

### SPECIFICATIONS

PARALLEL TRACKING  
PIVOTED  
UNI-PIVOT  
EFFECTIVE LENGTH (cm)  
FACTSBACK NO.  
ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	PARALLEL TRACKING	PIVOTED	UNI-PIVOT	EFFECTIVE LENGTH (cm)	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
▲ Kuzma Stogi Ref	1,250	Large, solid and well-made arm, gives exceptionally clear sound with just a hint of brightness	High	●	●	●	●	79
▲ Linn Ekos	1,500	Superb, state-of-the-art design which builds significantly on predecessor's strengths	Medium	●	●	229	●	67
▲ Moth Arm	95	The ultimate budget arm? Refined, sweet, detailed and natural	Low	●	●	237	●	60
▲ Rega RB300	174	Despite its modest price it sets exceptional standards and could be used on many high-end turntables	Low	●	●	237	●	60
▲ 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
▲ SME Series IV	983	Superb engineering and finish with a finely balanced sound, impressive stereo focus and low coloration	Low	●	●	233	●	60
▲ SME Series V	1,461	Excellent in all respects, this arm arguably sets the standards for pivoted arms, regardless of price	Low	●	●	233	●	60



## Tuners

TV has stolen radio's status as the foremost broadcast entertainment medium, but with its Radio Four plays and Radio Three music, the BBC still makes a potent case for audiophile reception equipment. For how much longer, under the cost-conscious Birtist régime, remains to be seen. Another new impediment is the arrival of digital radio broadcasting, though reception apparatus is currently non-existent outside of the in-car market. These days tuners play second fiddle to hi-fi sources like CD, but in many ways they are a greater engineering challenge than digital equipment, and thus higher price-tags clearly equate to superior performance. High-quality, roof-mounted antennae are essential for audiophile listening, so factor them into your budget.

### KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **WAVEBANDS:** FM — (VHF), M — MW, L — LW.
- **PRESETS:** Number of station frequencies that can be stored.
- **RDS:** (Radio Data System) was originally designed for in-car applications. RDS tuners can identify and display the name of the radio station being received, traffic news and other information about broadcasts.
- **REMOTE CONTROL:** Infra-red control handset supplied.
- **SIGNAL STRENGTH METER:** Indicates strength of signal from aerial — useful for aligning your 'twig' during installation.
- **ROTARY TUNING KNOB:** Experience has shown that this analogue throwback is ergonomically far superior to the button-based approach.
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# Tuners

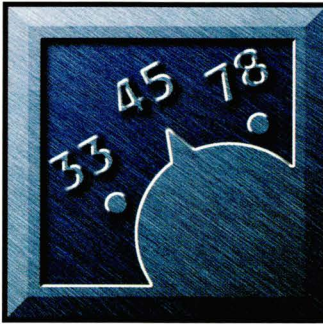
STATUS

### SPECIFICATIONS

WAVEBANDS  
PRESETS  
RDS  
SIG. STRENGTH METER  
ROT. TUNING KNOB  
FACTSBACK NO.  
ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	SIG. STRENGTH METER	ROT. TUNING KNOB	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
▲ AMC T7	130	Performance adequate but price is sharp, especially with remote control. Some hum	FM, M	30	●	●	●	1945	166
▲ Arcam Alpha 7	230	Indifferent RF performance but a touch of audiophile sound quality with clean, strong signals	FM, M, L	24	●	●	●	1946	166
Arcam Delta 280	300	Fine sound quality marred by mild synthesiser whine; RF performance only average. Remote £60 extra	FM	20	●	●	●	120	
▲ Denon TU-260L	120	Careful minimalist design promises a surprisingly open and vivacious sound	FM, M, L	20	●	●	●	93	
▲ Denon TU-425RD	200	A fine all-rounder with advanced RDS, good RF performance and decent sound. Remote extra	FM, M	40	●	●	●	1947	166
▲ Denon TU-1500RD	250	A well-balanced and clean sound with good bass and treble extension	FM, M	40	●	●	●	184	
Magnum DYNALAB FT11	499	All-analogue tuner: receives weak or tightly packed stations but loses out on noise and sonic neutrality	FM	3	●	●	●	184	
▲ Harman/Kardon TU950	200	Bulky but effective, delivering fine RF performance and good sound for the price	FM, M, L	30	●	●	●	1948	166
▲ Linn Kremlin	2,600	Controversially good sound at a very high price	FM	80	●	●	●	1254	142
▲ Magnum DYNALAB FT101	825	Although fairly expensive given its minimum set of facilities, its excellent sound provided ample compensation	FM		●	●	●	72	
▲ Marantz ST-48	120	A classic budget model which manages a performance only just behind much more expensive models.	FM, M	60	●	●	●	184	
▲ Micromega Tuner	750	Has digital output but even without the Micromega DAC, this provides exceptional sound quality. Looks good too	FM	39	●	●	●	1810	157
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
Musical Fidelity E50	300	Sounds involving if coloured and with a subjectively larger-than-life presentation	FM	20	●	●	●	1810	157
Myryad T-10	530	A very smart unit which works well and offers good rhythmic drive and vitality, albeit at a price	FM	20	●	●	●	184	
▲ Naim NATO1	1,730	There may be better sounding tuners in the world, but we have yet to hear one	FM		●	●	●	1254	142
Pioneer F-504RDS	250	Cable-friendly with advanced RDS and excellent RF performance; slightly disappointing sound	FM, M	40	●	●	●	1949	166
▲ Pioneer F-504RDS Precision	300	Lots of features, plus a sound that's low on noise and high on communication, adds up to a good value package	FM, M	40	●	●	●	184	
Roksan Caspian	595	Neat fascia with great ergonomics, but sound is not really any better than models at half the price	FM	50	●	●	●	184	
Rotel RT-935AX	160	Good ergonomics and sound quality at a realistic price, but limited features and RF selectivity	FM, M	20	●	●	●	1950	166
Sony ST-SA3ES	250	Clean, lean presentation but needs a quality aerial to perform at its best	FM, M, L	30	●	●	●	1810	157
▲ Sony STS-B920S	180	A little hiss and image compression don't detract from the clean performance of this feature-packed tuner	FM, M, L	30	●	●	●	184	
Technics ST-GT350L	130	Decent RF performance is offset by sound quality more typical of a mini/midi system	FM, M, L	30	●	●	●	1254	142
Thorens TRT2000	499	Not exactly neutral sounding, but nonetheless makes listening fun	FM, M	59	●	●	●	1810	157





## Turntables

Specialist turntables are at the heart of high-fidelity sound. CD players may offer ultra-low noise and a flat frequency response, but they can't match the dynamics and superlative rhythmic timing taken for granted by serious turntable users. Less expensive turntables are usually supplied with a matching tonearm (and often a 'starter' cartridge, too). Still better quality is found at higher prices among the separate motor units and tonearms. Because turntables are mechanical devices, designed to retrieve micron-small modulations engraved into vinyl, engineering quality is of paramount importance. This is also the reason why turntables cost as much as they do, and require the finest equipment support systems.

### KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **MANUAL:** You do all the work.
- **AUTO:** The record player does all the work.
- **SEMI-AUTO:** You put the needle on, the turntable lifts it off at the end of the record.
- **SPEEDS:** In RPM to correspond with long-playing records or seven-inch singles.
- **SUSPENDED SUBCHASSIS:** Sprung suspension to minimise structural interference.
- **EXTERNAL PSU:** Outboard power supply; generally indicative of higher-quality performance.
- **SUPPLIED WITH ARM:** Many turntables do not come with a tonearm fitted, but if this category is checked, the deck is already thus equipped.
- **SUPPLIED WITH CARTRIDGE:** If a turntable comes complete with arm and cartridge.
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback ad on the penultimate page of this issue.
- **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which an original review appeared.

**H:** High End Review

**B** BEST BUY

**R** RECOMMENDED

**E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

# Turntables

STATUS

### SPECIFICATIONS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	MANUAL	AUTO	SEMI-AUTO	SUSP. SPEEDS	EXTERNAL PSU	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NO.
Clearaudio Reference	3,990	Opulent beast tested with Souther TQ-1 arm. Tends to gloss over detail, but can sound bold	●						33/45	1328 144
▲ DNM Rota 2	5,600	Tonally slightly bleached, but extracts detail like few others. Works well on its own table	●						33/45	1328 144
▲ Dual 505-4 UK	250	Consistent sounding and well isolated turntable. It is slightly lacking in oomph				●			33/45	103
▲ Kuzma Stabi/PS	1,950	(Tested with Stogi Reference) Solid oak plinth; sound is very clear, detailed and extended	●						33/45	91
▲ Linn LP12 Basik	1,100	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	875	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	1907 164
▲ Notts Analogue Spacedeck/Arm	750	No frills, just a first-rate, outstandingly natural-sounding deck that will last forever	●						33/45	159
▲ Pink Triangle Anniversary	2,500	Possibly the most detailed, clear, neutral-sounding deck around. Likeness to master tape is uncanny	●						33/45	91
▲ Pro-ject 2	300	Remarkably effective at the price, with decent timing and a generally well defined sound	●						33/45	1907 164
▲ Pro-ject 6/Sumiko	850	Don't think of this as a deck with a good arm, but as a scaled-down Orace 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	Sounds musical in a balanced manner, needs decent isolation and suffers a little pitch instability	●						33/45	1907 164
▲ Reson RS1	600	Supplied set-up and ready-tuned, this unconventional deck is packed with mid-band detail	●						33/45	159
▲ Roksan Rabijs 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	4,863	Supplied with Series V arm. Engineered to last a lifetime, giving excellent stereo and detail retrieval	●						33/45/78	118
▲ Thorens TD166 W/UK/RB	400	Refined, solid sound with well-focused imagery; suitable for use with good MM/MC budget 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	1,850	Intriguing and challenging. Musically not ideal, but its limpid quality and lack of artificiality set standards	●						33/45	1180 136

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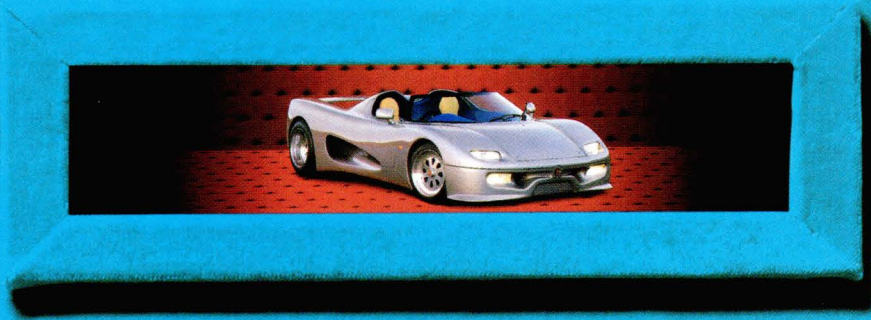
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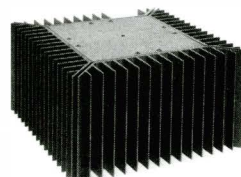
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# THE HI-FI CHOICE ARCHIVE

Missed *Hi-Fi Choice* the first time round? Don't worry! There are several different ways to acquire complete back issues or individual reviews. Our step by-step guide shows how.

## 1. BUY AN ORIGINAL BACK ISSUE ☎ (01789) 490215

<p><b>JUNE 1998/ISSUE 179</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 CD Players £140-£350</li> <li>Budget Loudspeakers £120-£180</li> <li>Subwoofers £300-£900</li> <li>Philips CDR880 CD Recorder</li> </ul>	<p><b>JULY/AUG 1998/ISSUE 180</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11 High-End Speakers £950-£1,800</li> <li>Home DJ Hi-Fi Gear</li> <li>Arcam Alpha 9</li> <li>DVD Players Vs CD</li> </ul>	<p><b>SEPTEMBER 1998/ISSUE 181</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11 Amplifiers £480-£900</li> <li>8 HDCD CD Players</li> <li>9 Equipment Supports</li> <li>dCS Elgar - 24/96 appraisal</li> </ul>	<p><b>OCTOBER 1998/ISSUE 182</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>European (EISA) Awards Report</li> <li>11 MD &amp; CD Personals</li> <li>DVD-Audio news update</li> <li>Kuzma Stabi 5 Turntable</li> </ul>	<p><b>NOVEMBER 1998/ISSUE 183</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12 Loudspeakers £300-£700</li> <li>Integrated/Power Amp upgrades</li> <li>Speaker Cables below £10/m</li> <li>B&amp;W Nautilus 802 speaker</li> </ul>	<p><b>DECEMBER 1998/ISSUE 184</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11 CD Players £200-£800</li> <li>7 Home Recorders (CD, MD, Cass)</li> <li>7 Tuners £100-£600</li> <li>TAG McLaren bonanza!</li> </ul>
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Back issues from 1988 onwards are available as shown in the table. They cost £4.00 (UK) or £6.95 (overseas). Both prices include p&p. Order by phone from Dennis Direct, on ☎ (01789) 490215 (answering service available outside office hours). Alternatively, fax your order on ☎ (01789) 490878. AmEx, MasterCard and Visa credit cards accepted, also Switch and Delta debit cards.

### BACK ISSUE AVAILABILITY

YEAR	HFC N°S	SOLD OUT ISSUES	AVAILABILITY
1988	54-65	Jun, Jul, Sep	Very limited
1989	66-77	Jan-Mar, Sept	Very limited
1990	78-89	Jan, Feb, Jun, Aug, Sep, Dec	Very limited
1991	90-101	Jan, Feb, Aug-Dec	Very limited
1992	102-113	All exc. Mar 92	Very limited
1993	114-125	Jan, Mar, Jun, Sep-Nov	Very limited
1994	126-137	Jun-Aug, Nov	Very limited
1995	138-149	All exc. Feb	Very limited
1996	150-161	Jun, Jul	Limited
1997	162-173	None sold out	Good
1998	174-183	None sold out	Good

## 2. GET REVIEW REPRINTS BY FAX



*Hi-Fi Choice* reprints are available via fax, 24 hours a day. Our database, operated by Starcomm Ltd, holds a broad selection of

reviews and features from mid-1995 onwards. UK readers can access this service on ☎ (0930) 110118. Calls cost 45p per minute off-peak and 50p per minute at all other times.

Overseas readers can order copies of reviews, non-interactively, by sending a faxed request to Starcomm on ☎ (+441937) 587941 – remember to include your credit-card details. Reviews will be faxed back to a designated number at a cost of £1.50 per page.

All pages have been designed to minimise user costs. If you experience problems with this service, or have further queries, please do not contact the editorial offices. Call Starcomm Ltd on ☎ (0870) 121214.

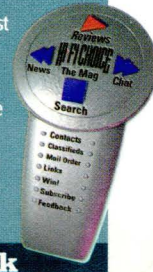
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- 2 The switchboard will offer you a number of actions to choose from. If you know the index number of the reprint you seek, enter it on your fax machine's handset, when prompted to do so. Alternatively, you may request an index of stored pages, at all times using the handset of your fax machine and following the voice prompts.
- 3 Factsback will send your chosen documents to your fax machine, complete with a cover-sheet.

## 3. VISIT OUR WEBSITE

The *Hi-Fi Choice* Web site holds copies of reviews from the past two years. It also offers a user-customisable search facility for specific products and price-points. In addition, there is a unique opportunity to swap hints, tips and gossip in our online 'chat' areas. Our site has been remarkably successful since its launch earlier this year, and is currently scoring approximately 405,000 hits per month, with a total of 90,000 page impressions. The site has no less than 6,700 unique users!

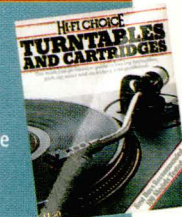
<http://www.hifichoice.co.uk>



## 4. ORDER A REVIEW REPRINT

If you are interested in an *HFC* review of an older component, and the back issue has sold out, we can send photocopies of old reviews to any UK address for a flat fee (inc. p&p) of £5.00 per review. You must know in precisely which issue the original review appeared; we are unable to search back issues for old reviews. Send a written request, enclosing a cheque made payable to Dennis Publishing Ltd, to: *Hi-Fi Choice* Reprint Service, Dennis Publishing Ltd., 19 Bolsover Street, LONDON W1P 7JH.

PLEASE NOTE: THIS SERVICE IS ONLY FOR OTHERWISE UNOBTAINABLE REPRINTS.



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## HI-FI PHILOSOPHY...

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Think of a new hi-fi component as an employee who's just started in an office, and is anxious to make an impression. Everything's done crisply and smartly. Inevitably, mistakes are made from time to time, and there's a certain roughness to the work. But despite any lack of consistency, you know that person is trying to do their best. As soon as the probation period is over, routine sets in and quality starts to slide. There's a lack of urgency and drive. Bored complacency replaces enthusiasm.

Jimmy Hughes, September 1998

### HAIR PULLING

My wife hates hi-fi. Or rather, she loathes the idea of it. Every time another delivery van pulls up outside the house and disgorges cardboard boxes, Diane jumps up and down on the spot yanking at her hair. Like most hi-fi reviewers, I've got more equipment than an Everest expedition, and the kind of cardboard stash you normally only see in Safeways' back yard. Hi-fi is all over the house like a technological rash.

Diane doesn't like any of it — it's too black and it's too big, and it makes the house look untidy. Sounds OK, though.

David Vivian, June 1998

### CUTTING CORNERS

As a devotee of American bass funkmeister Marcus Miller, I have no regrets. Hi-fi with-

out real bass, even hi-fi as good as the Eikos FR1, is like a car without suspension. It may go round corners like a ferret with its tail on fire, but you'll never truly enjoy the ride.

David Vivian, April 1998

### MATERIAL WORLD

So inextricably entwined has our culture become with consumerism and materialism, that having the money to buy things is no longer enough. You're judged every bit as much by what you buy, how much you paid for it, where you bought it, and how much market research you did beforehand.

Stan Vincent, March 1998

### MOODSWINGS

There's a scene in Quentin Tarantino's film *Pulp Fiction*, where hit-man Vincent Vega visits the home of drug dealer Lance to buy some high-quality heroin.

I'm struck by Lance's appearance. He's young, wraithishly thin and pale, has wild hair and a wispy beard. He wears a red flannel shirt over a 'Speed Racer' T-shirt. People who look like this have been selling me mood-altering substances my entire adult life, too. Lance reminds me of the bloke you'll find lurking in the shadows of any tweaky specialist hi-fi den, itching to sell you a line of exotic interconnect.

David Vivian, January 1998

### PULL YOUR SOCKS UP

Over the last two years, this column (*Oasis*) has evolved into something of a technical campaign ground, shedding light on measure-

ment issues while also badgering manufacturers to keep their socks pulled firmly up.

Paul Miller, September 1998

## THE REDESIGN....

### WHO'S BETTER WHO'S BEST

A great philosopher once said: "They must often change who would be constant in happiness or wisdom". Magazine publishers certainly subscribe to such a view. It is an easy way of blowing fresh air into a magazine to redesign it. But all too often, a cosmetic redesign is only skin-deep, when what's needed is a full-scale investment in editorial quality.

Unlike other, glossier magazines, on *Hi-Fi Choice* we have always tried to invest heavily in editorial quality. Our rigorous megatests, carried out by specialist reviewers, are not cheap to undertake. So our purpose in redesigning the magazine this month is to make a good thing better.

Stan Vincent, November 1998

## ON HI-FI REVIEWS...

### THE LITHOS UPGRADE...

The result was extraordinary. This £189 upgrade takes an already fine device into the high-end nirvana stakes. The bass power and depth alone are more than worth the price, but the overall resolution is uncanny and betters even superb phono stages. I have joined Paul Messenger in paying over the odds to get music on vinyl! Without it, you simply cannot appreciate the full sound quality of your record collection.

Jason Kennedy, September 1998

### TUBE DISTINCTIONS KT88

Anthony claims pretty impressive specs for this five-stone behemoth. In a dealer's demo room, this kind of product would cost about £4,500, so for the price of a trip to Mid-Glamorgan, you could save yourself about £1,900. Looks like a pretty good deal from where I'm sitting!

Jason Kennedy, November 1998

### ARCAM ALPHA 10/10P

It's fashionable to have a 'kick-ass' product these days, not just a flagship that showcases technical merit, but something with a sharply focused killer instinct; a predator that seeks confrontation with established quality benchmarks, then attempts to smack them silly. The Alpha 10 combo is just that. No exaggeration, there really does seem to be some kind of Armageddon vibe going down at Arcam's Waterbeach headquarters in Cambridge. You wouldn't be



Tube Distinctions' KT88; beauty and a beast.



surprised if a little synth chip secreted in the binding of the publicity brochure played *Land Of Hope And Glory* as you opened the first page.

David Vivian, July/August 1998

**TAG MCLAREN PRODUCTS**

You see, while happy to pronounce uniform improvement in the sound quality of these hi-fi separates, Dr. Zucker tells me that his engineers "can find no measurable difference" between the Audiolab and 'equivalent' F3-branded products. "Even the German reviewers", I was informed "could find no distinction". I could not understand quite what he meant by this, but felt sure that British test and measurement practice would not be found wanting.

Paul Miller, December 1998

**AVI'S NU-NEUTRONS**

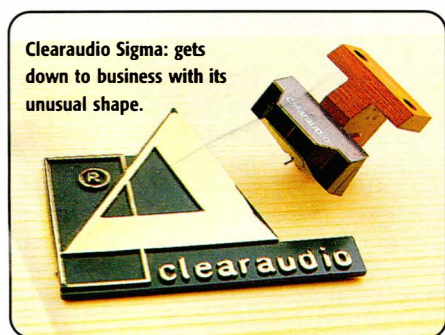
That's the other thing about baby monitors. They're insensitive, power-hungry blighters – just 86dB for one Watt in the case of the NuNeutrons. A kick up the backside was administered by the 150-Watt AVI S2000 monoblocks mentioned earlier. The difference these made was so extraordinary I still can't believe it. What had been polite became palpable; insight was replaced with a convincing version of the truth and musicians assumed life-sized, flesh-and-blood form.

David Vivian, October 1998

**CLEARAUDIO SIGMA**

The Sigma looks like every other Clearaudio I've encountered. That's a polite way of saying it's a pretty weird affair: its shape reminds me of nothing so much as the business end of a hammer-head shark. And just like those other Clearaudios, it's a pain in the proverbial to install!

Paul Messenger, July/August 1998



Clearaudio Sigma: gets down to business with its unusual shape.

**ON THE SECRECY OF RETAIL PRICES...**

**ON SPECIAL**

I am sure there were honourable intentions behind this directive, but the attack on recommended retail prices does not help the consumer. How can we evaluate a retailer's 'special offer' if we don't know what the price was initially? And in the absence of a recommended price, who has

the time to conduct a straw poll of local retailers, to establish some sort of average?

In hi-fi, remember that a good dealer should ensure you make a best buy, not just a purchase. Help like this is worth paying for!

Stan Vincent, October 1998

**ON CDS...**

**SPOT THE DIFFERENCE**

For every sad trainspotter like me who buys a second copy of a CD because it's been remastered and promises better sound, there are thousands of even sadder trainspotters who couldn't care less and wouldn't hear any difference in any case. Cynical, moi?

Jimmy Hughes, July/August 1998

**OUT OF ORDER?**

At this stage, we can only speculate on the extent to which badly recorded and mastered CDs are on the market. Nevertheless, I am bound to suggest that before the industry rallies behind a new 24-bit/96kHz or DSD standard for 'Super Audio CDs', perhaps it had better ensure its 16-bit/44kHz house is in full working order. Our readers can help too. Just write or e-mail us with lists of your most disappointing CDs, judged from the standpoint of audible distortion, not musical taste!

Paul Miller, September 1998

**ON DVD AUDIO...**

**PARTY LIKE IT'S 1999**

Forget the Greenwich dome – at the turn of the Millennium, you'll want to be indoors listening to music like you've never heard it reproduced before...

Jason Kennedy, May 1998

**ON TWEAKING...**

**A TALE OF TWO CABLES**

After literally two hours and maybe a dozen significant improvements, we were about to chew on some 'different' music when I noticed a few lengths of Electrofluidics Monolith 20/20 cable. So, what the heck, one more tweak wouldn't hurt. We plumbed it in, put the needle on the record, and split our sides laughing. All that tweaker effort, and we could probably only hear half of its effect through the regular cable!

Jason Kennedy, January 1998

**NEVER-ENDING HIGHWAY**

Upgrading in hi-fi is rather like walking towards a distant object. You can take many steps in the right direction without appearing to get any closer to the destination. You need to have the faith to carry on – eventually you'll reach your goal.

Jimmy Hughes, June 1998



**SIMPLY THE BEST?**

Some 20 years down the road, hi-fi has given me enormous pleasure and satisfaction. But two decades of accumulated experience has made it necessary to revise the ambition. Quite simply, there is no 'The Best'. It may be The Best for me – I'm not looking at changing anything right now – but it isn't perfect, and does involve compromises.

Paul Messenger, January 1998

**IT'S A PERSONAL THING...**

Last October I received a visit from Branko Bozic of Audiofreaks, and Alan Sircom of *Hi-Fi Choice*. Branko last visited me some 10 years ago, while for Alan it was his first venture into my inner sanctum. "Would they like my system?" I wondered. The short answer was... no!

Jimmy Hughes, February 1998

**ON DIGITAL RADIO...**

**DIGITAL KILLED THE RADIO STAR**

Call me a cynical Luddite, but the more I ponder the Digital Radio/DAB scenario, the more sceptical I become. Digital radio seems poorly conceived, badly timed, and could well spell the end of radio's long-standing reputation as a serious source of high-fidelity music.

Paul Messenger, December 1998

**RADIO GA-GA**

In a 1984 hit, the rock group Queen suggested radio was yet to have its finest hour. That hour is upon us, with the dawning of the digital era. But Marconi's technology, in the form it was conceived, has now entered its twilight years. Enjoy it while you can, and remember it for your grandchildren.

Stan Vincent, May 1998

**ON THE RESURGENCE OF VINYL...**

**A LEADING INFLUENCE**

A 19-year-old hi-fi-nut friend of my son stayed over for a weekend recently. It was maybe a little unfair to hit him with the full 20-grand-and-some Linn/Naim experience, way beyond teenage aspirations. But it was the vinyl bit that really knocked him out. It was so far beyond his expectations, he went straight down to the hi-fi shop the next day, to put his name on the second-hand Sondek list.

Paul Messenger, February 1998



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