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ISSUE 189  
APRIL 1999  
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## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Jason Kennedy highlights the current DVD-Audio developments. Will it be the next hi-fi revolution?



**D**VD Audio is finally official – on February 8th the DVD Audio Forum released the version 1.0 specification in Tokyo. The final spec as produced by Bike Suzuki's Working Group 4 (WG-4) offers a maximum two-channel replay quality of 24-bit, 192kHz which allows a bandwidth of 90kHz – four and a half times that of CD! Alternatively the system will support six channels of 24-bit/96kHz standard by utilising the Meridian Lossless Processing (MLP) compression system.

In theory this means that the world's bigger hardware manufacturers can start turning their prototypes into real products and we should see early samples at the end of the year. But the release still depends on a secure copyright protection system being defined for the medium – until that is established the record industry will not be inclined to start the all-important process of producing software.

However, it is good to see that DVD-A has finished its long gestation and can start to mature as a premium hi-fi medium. It's also great to see that a small English company has managed to incorporate its technology into the format. MLP is claimed to be an entirely lossless system and has an in-built 'feedback' system to establish that nothing is lost on playback. PCM and MLP decoding are mandatory for all DVD-A players but discs may use either encoding system on a track-by-track basis. This is presumably one reason why existing DVD-V players would not be able to play some DVD-A software, hence the need for universal discs discussed last month. Meridian has signed up with Dolby Labs to act as its licensing agent, so the MLP logo could one day be as ubiquitous as Dolby's noise reduction badge.

DVD-A could be a saviour for genuine hi-fi, it may even be the last great 'hard' medium in as much as it's an artefact rather than a datastream coming into your computer. And high quality multi-channel, if it's taken up by the record business, could revolutionise the way that even the audiophile listens. In fact, given that it's not likely to really happen until next year, DVD-A will be the medium of the millennium. Most excellent!

## MATERIALS SCIENCE

Last month we ran a letter criticising Paul Messenger's lack of critical faculty when talking about Kevlar cones (*Mellow Yellow*, *Letters*, HFC 188). This month we have given B&W the chance to put the case for the material it uses so extensively. Having managed to hold onto the Nautilus 802s since the HFC 183 review, I feel the need to add a subjective element to the argument: whatever the technicalities, Kevlar makes an incredibly good midrange driver. The N802s

are the most revealing and neutral speakers I've used, every disc or LP that they reproduce reveals the character of its provenance in such incredible depth that you are left in awe of their transparency. Recordings from different sources should theoretically have a lot of variation in character but so many systems gloss over them that you don't realise the effect that different studios, mics, desks, recorders and so-on can have. I think that the NAD Silverline CD player got lucky this month by being the first machine that I had used to play *Supper's Ready* by Genesis through the N802s with, and it's possible that half the praise I lavished on its transparency could be put down to the speakers!

So whatever the technical reasons for using Kevlar as opposed to carbon fibre I think it's safe to say that when the application is as well considered as that on the N802, it is a more than worthy material.

## SO LONG, FAREWELL

Much to my chagrin *Hi-Fi Choice* will be losing its glamour next month when Production Ed Tina Bunce and Editorial Assistant Charlotte Ricca abandon the mag for sunnier shores. Tina is doing literally that, by going to live in Florida, while Charlotte is doing her level best to spend more time with the equine species (if that were possible) by looking for work on horse magazines. We wish them all the best and will miss them terribly – or at least until we get some replacements!

*JKennedy*

## THIS MONTH'S EDITOR'S CHOICE

**T**his month's headline grabber is undoubtedly Wilson benesch's loudspeaker statement, the Bishop. So-called because of its mitre-like cap, this substantial design incorporates a new variant on the isobarik theme in the form of 'clamshell'-style bass units, and takes advantage of Wb's expertise in the field of composite materials technology. The result is as stunning sonically as it is visually. Despite his best attempts, Paul Messenger couldn't break them – even with his Prodigy records – and had to admit he'd rarely come across such even and comprehensively capable speakers.

The other awardee is NAD's Silverline S500 CD player, a 24-bit DAC equipped device with a nice line in casework and a fine set of socketry. Considered marginally superior to the Silverline S300 integrated amp this player retrieved a high level of resolve from everything I played on it and managed to give my reference a reason to worry when it came to low frequency grunt.





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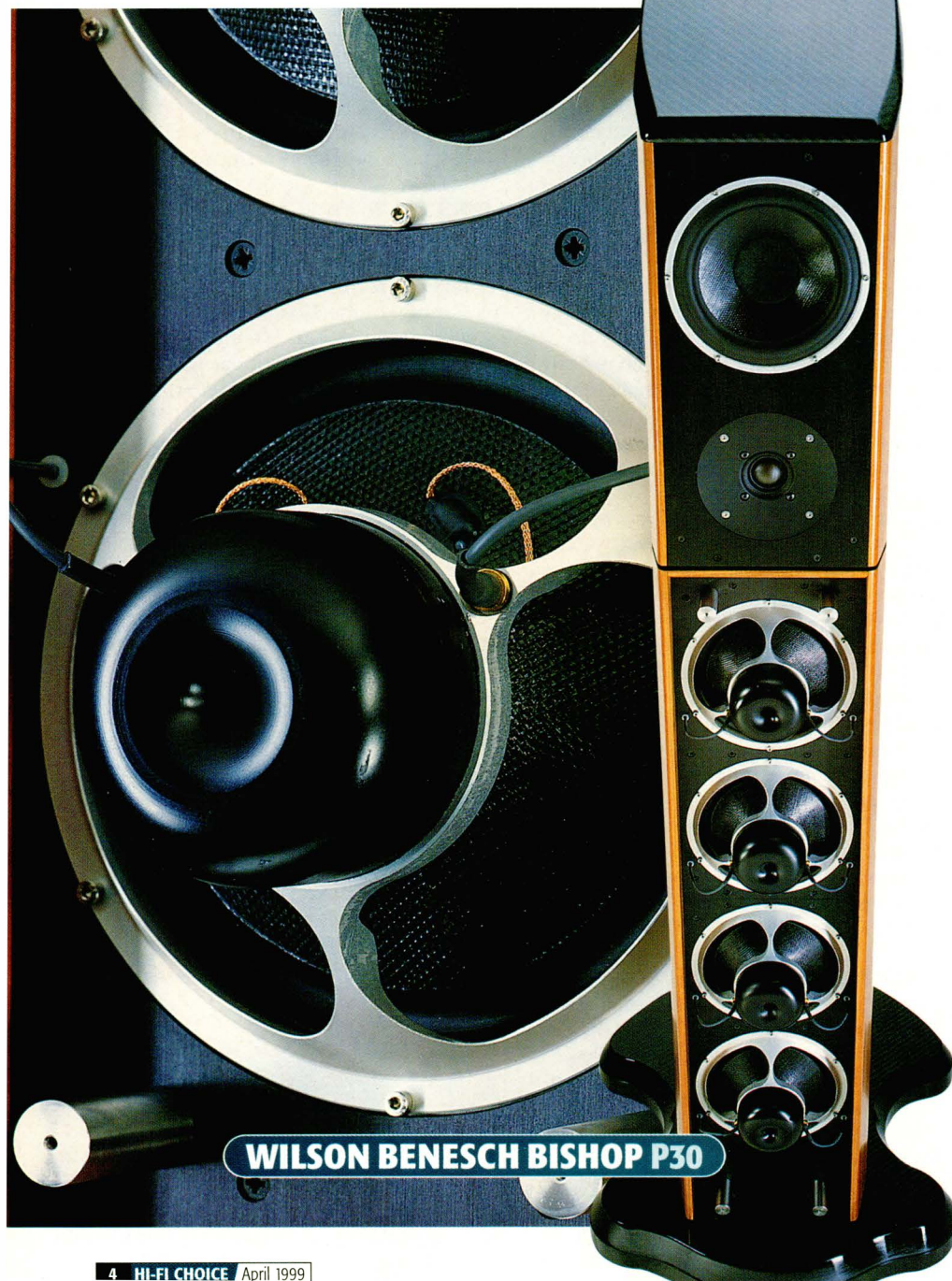
Richard Black takes a look at some small boxes that are the lifeline to your treasured vinyl. This may be the digital age, but analogue still rules.

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We all need a little support, and loudspeakers are no exception. Tim Bown checks out 10 of the best and reveals how you can transform your hi-fi and spike up your life.

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Miller and Gold may sound like an expensive beer, but when it comes to high-end amps you won't catch them on the hop.



WILSON BENESCH BISHOP P30



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**YOU CAN WIN A MIGHTY CYRUS PRE/POWER COMBO WORTH NEARLY £3,000!**



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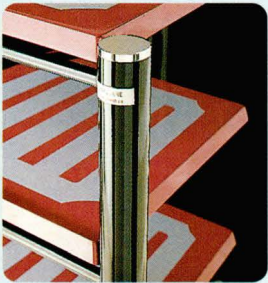
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# NEWS & VIEWS

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

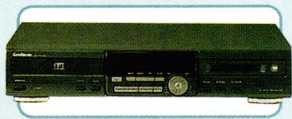


**COPULARE** equipment supports (above) are now being distributed in the UK by Zentek Music Ltd. The range is suitable for high-end kit of all types, including home cinema. Shelves can be filled with sand or lead shot. ☎ (01892) 616383

**THE EPOS** loudspeaker brand has been bought by Creek Audio, following the purchase of the brand's former parent company, Mordaunt-Short, by Audio Partnership. Epos will run as a separate trading company, and Creek will seek to maintain its philosophy and image. ☎ (0181) 361 6734

**MARANTZ** is waging war on grey imports and poor dealer service in a bid to protect consumers. Initiatives include the prevention of unauthorised supply to/from outside the European Union, and sanctions against so-called 'parasite' dealers stocking such products within the territory. Authorised dealers are to be split into two levels, with only those offering suitable listening facilities allowed to carry 'audiophile' products. ☎ (01753) 680868


**CYRUS** has decided to change the name of its upgraded dAD1 CD player, as reviewed last month, to dAD1.5. The company has also announced its independence from Mission, becoming a separate operation within the NXT Group of companies from February 1st 1999. ☎ (01480) 451777



**GOODMANS'** new CD/MiniDisc combination unit (above) is the cheapest on the market at £199. It incorporates CD for playback and MiniDisc for both playback and recording, with 19-track programming and full remote control. ☎ (0181) 594 5533

**QED** has a new range of digital and video interconnects, specially packaged to make DVD players simpler to connect. The Analogue DVD pack at £100 includes three pairs of Qnect Two interconnects and a video cable, while the Composite Video digital pack at £90 is comprised of a digital audio interconnect and a higher grade video cable. The £100 digital S-video DVD pack is the same as above, but caters for S-video TV outputs. ☎ (01276) 452211

## Castle speakers lay siege

 Castle Acoustics' new Inversion range of speakers is poised for an April launch. Following brief details published last month, we can now reveal the full low-down on this three-strong line-up, featuring unusual tapered cabinets and new drive units with carbon-fibre cones.

The base model £425 Inversion 15 is a 42cm high, two-way standmounter with a 15cm mid/bass driver and an optional matching stand. Then there's the £875 Inversion 50, a 95cm high, two-way floorstander, set to replace the Avon in Castle's range and featuring a 17cm main drive unit. Last, but by no means least, the Inversion 100 is a substantial two-way, three-drive unit model, standing at 108.5cm and sporting a pair of 17cm mid/bass drivers, one of which fires up from the cabinet top. Priced at £1,975, it incorporates twin-pipe quarter-wave loading and is touted as the effective replacement for the company's Howard.

In true Castle tradition, buyers will be given a choice of nine sumptuous real-wood veneers: cherry, mahogany, birch, maple, natural, walnut and antique oak are available as standard, with yew and rosewood offered for an additional outlay. Watch this space for an Inversion 100 review, coming your way soon.

Castle Acoustics ☎ (01756) 795333



Castle's new Inversion range features stylish tapered cabinets.



Stax's phones – don't leave home without them.


## Giant head Stax

 "The ultimate headphone" is the claim from Stax for its new SR-007 (Omega~Mk2) Earspeaker.

Priced at £1,896, it incorporates a specially developed electrode, gold-plated on the outer edge and featuring an increased diaphragm vibration area to heighten sonic power. Build quality is designed to ensure nothing but the diaphragm vibrates, encasing the sound element in an insulated resin case within a rigid metal outer-housing, and a high-quality cable is included for optimum signal transfer.

A matching headphone amp – the SRM-007t Vacuum Tube Driver Unit – is also available at £1,396. It's a transistor and valve hybrid design, sporting a pure balanced circuit, a special wire-wound resistor and four high-voltage triode valves in its output stage. Together, these two components should be something special. Path Premier ☎ (01494) 441736

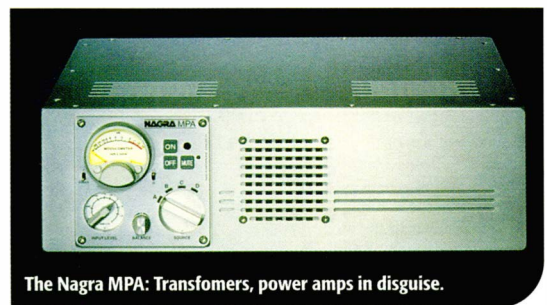
## Nagra reels off two powers

 Two new 'audiophile' power amps are on the way from Nagra, a company renowned for its excellent, professional reel-to-reel recorders.

The first is transistor based – the MPA (MOSFET Power Amplifier). It's a 250 Watt stereo power amp that is bridgeable to deliver up to 500 Watts in a monoblock configuration, and comes complete with a special power supply designed to eliminate sonically damaging 'power spikes'. There's also a retrofitable option to turn the amplifier into a fully remote controllable integrated model. Price is £7,995.

The second amp is a valve-based design called the VPA (Vacuum-tube Power Amplifier), a pure class A monoblock delivering 50 Watts of power. Its maker claims superb transparency owing to extremely low levels of intermodulation distortion, and zero negative feedback in the output stage helps to drive difficult speaker loads. It's available on a limited, built-to-order basis, and costs £8,495 for a pair.

Nagra Kudelski (GB) ☎ (01727) 810002



The Nagra MPA: Transformers, power amps in disguise.



## NEWS IN BRIEF

**TDL** has been acquired by Audacity Audio Ltd, with Gordon Provan (previously of Celestion fame) taking the Chief Executive role. John Wright, TDL's founder, is being kept on to provide technical support to the company. ☎ (01628) 850111

**THE NORTHERN IRELAND HI-FI SHOW** is taking place at the Stormont Hotel, Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast on 24th-25th April 1999. Over 60 brands are to appear, including Krell, Helios, Audio Analogue, Roksan, Yamaha, Marantz, Philips and many more, making it one of the biggest shows in the UK. ☎ (01868) 753606

**JAMO'S** new floorstanding X3M speakers are aimed squarely at the bedroom DJ. There are two models in the range: the £599 X3M 8, sporting a 20cm woofer and 200 Watt power handling; and the 750 X3M10 (below), featuring a 25cm woofer and 280 Watt power handling. ☎ (01327) 301300



**ANTIFERRE** claims to have launched "the aerial of the future". The Rx has two dipoles instead of one, which allegedly improves performance. They are impedance matched, the second dipole improving balance so that frequency response is more even. ☎ (01543) 267160

**ICOM** has a new radio scanner which PC owners should check out. With AM, FM, Wide FM and FM Stereo modes, the IC-PCR100 lets you scan and listen to broadcast radio stations, as well as frequencies like the HAM bands, emergency services, air traffic control and marine band. You can even listen to terrestrial TV stations, and all for £199.99. ☎ (01227) 741741

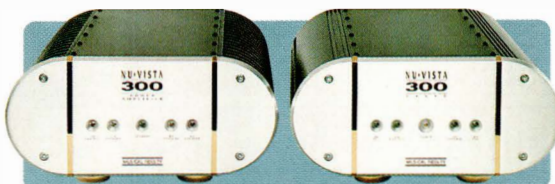
**THE SERIES 9** turntable from Simon Yorke Designs has at last seen the light of day. It's made principally from aluminium, graphite and stainless steel alloys, comprising a turntable chassis, bearing and platter, armboard, unipivot tonearm and free-standing motor control unit. It's priced at £3,495 – expect a review soon. ☎ (01207) 580394

**B&W** has a new nine-model Custom Installation Series comprising three in-wall speakers, three new in-ceiling speakers, a new home cinema centre channel and surround-sound speaker, and an upgraded SE version of the 'audiophile standard' Signature Seven in-wall monitor. Prices start at £200 for the ceiling mounted models, rising to £700 for the Signature 7SE.

# Hybrid nuvistor monster

Musical Fidelity's bulging product portfolio continues to expand with the introduction of a new high-end power amp, together with a tuner to complement the company's popular 'X-A' range.

The Nu-Vista 300 power amp follows Musical Fidelity's current design cues and comes in two separate cases, one containing a pair of mono amps and the other the necessary power supplies, thus minimising magnetic interference. Power is rated at a massive 300 Watts into eight Ohms, in accordance with the company's assertion that high power output is essential for proper dynamic range. With the promise of rock-like build quality and "the largest die-cast heat sinks ever to be used in an audio amplifier", it could be the perfect match for the company's Nu-Vista preamp. If you're interested, the pair will set you back £3,300.



**The never ending production line that is MF; this time it's big amps.**

The new tuner is the X-Plora, housed in the same aluminium-fronted metal extrusion used for the X-A1 amp and X-Ray CD player. Its aim is a "completely neutral sound" and excellent signal to noise ratios are claimed with even average signal strengths. Remote control and RDS facilities are included, all for £599.

Musical Fidelity ☎ (0181) 900 2866

## TAG gets surrounded



TAG McLaren's first surround sound product: the AV32R.

TAG McLaren Audio is continuing its drive towards the complete system by slipping the AV32R, audio-visual processor, into its F3 range.

At its heart is the same 16-bit Siemens microprocessor controller found in McLaren's Formula One car, it's also the first product to use a new 32-bit digital signal processor from Analog Devices. Dolby Pro-Logic, Dolby Digital, DTS and MPEG2 surround-sound formats are all supported, together with TAG McLaren Surround.

The processor is fully optimised for 24-bit/96kHz DVD-Audio discs, when they eventually arrive, and TMA claims to have racked up many hours of listening time in selecting crucial audio components. Comprehensive on-screen menus and a 'learning' remote round off an impressive-looking package, priced at £2,000.

TAG McLaren Audio ☎ (0800) 7838007

## Sony's DVD explosion

Sony is unleashing another barrage of DVD-Video players to join the format's swelling ranks, including a new range-topping model.

The DVP-S7700 is described as "state of the art", and is claimed to incorporate several audiophile features to make the most of music. Much attention has been paid to build quality to reduce the effect of resonance and

## Germans master miniaturisation



German brand ELAC is celebrating its initiation into the UK market with the CL 310i JET, a miniature speaker promising high-quality sound from a tiny enclosure.

Measuring just 12.3x20.8x28.2cm (WxHxD), the new speaker sports an ultra-rigid cabinet made from extruded aluminium and available in silver, black, white or blue. A ribbon tweeter is used, instead of the more conventional dome variety, and its long-throw mid/bass driver incorporates a cone made from an alloy layer bonded to doped pulp fibre. The result? Speakers that can "fill a large room with music while remaining virtually invisible", with a price tag of £800.

ELAC is a huge loudspeaker brand on its own territory, but with this product's debut on British soil, distribution is to be via the UK branch of a rather better known German outfit – Sennheiser.

ELAC Helpline ☎ (01494) 551571

**ELAC hits the UK with its CL 310i JET.**



cut electromagnetic noise, including the use of a copper-plated chassis and a specially designed centre-loading transport mechanism.

Audio circuitry is isolated, with extra thick copper traces and high-quality film capacitors, and a variable coefficient digital filter is fitted to tailor audio settings. On the video side, Sony asserts that improved processing and filtering allows maximum detail and contrast.

Three lower cost models are set to join the DVP-S7700 – the DVP-S325, DVP-S525 and DVP-S725, the last of the three incorporating Sony's proprietary Digital Cinema Sound mode in addition to Dolby Digital, MPEG5.1 and a 96kHz/24-bit DAC. Sony is unable to confirm prices but the 7700 is expected to retail at around £800 and the 325 and 525 at just under £500. Sony ☎ (01932) 816000

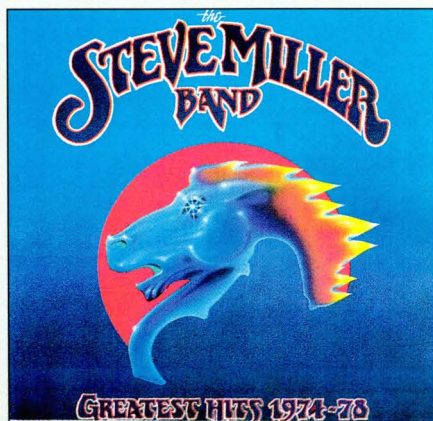


Sony's new DVP-S7700; flying the flag for its DVD range.



## PREVIOUSLY UNHEARD

**Phil Strongman** digs out rare and classic tracks appearing on CD or virgin vinyl for the first time. Go strut your funky stuff...



### STEVE MILLER BAND Greatest Hits 1974-78

The rocky twin peaks here are *The Joker* and *Take The Money & Run* but some others have aged well too, the best example being *Fly Like An Eagle* ("time keeps on slippin', slippin', slippin'"). Breezy near-perfect tracks, stunningly re-mastered for vinyl by the America's sonic supremo, Steve Hoffman. DCC Limited Edition – Vivante ☎ (0181) 977 6600 ★★★★★

### LOU REED Berlin

Not all Simply Vinyl discs hit the audiophile spot but this, and *Blonde On Blonde* below, do indeed cut the mustard. Reed's stark songs, superbly recorded by Bob Ezrin in London, have denied emotion oozing out all over. From the drunken start right through to the dazzling *Over The Rainbow* orchestration of *Sad Song*, this is a bona fide classic. RCA – Simply Vinyl Ltd Edition LP ★★★★★

### BOB DYLAN Blonde On Blonde

*Rainy Day Women, I Want You* and *Just Like A Woman* are just some of the high-

lights and Mr. Zimmerman's harmonica rings out as if it was live in your front room. The set that gave the Big D total lift-off.

CBS – Simply Vinyl Ltd Edition LP ★★★★★

### CLAIRE MARTIN Take My Heart

The Britjazz lass of now proves her worth on this sultry outing with vocals that'll keep you warm 'til Summer. Oasis' Noel Gallagher does some strumming – on a Beatles number, surprise, surprise – but producer Paul Stacey adds more with a tight, clear sound and with

some class guitar on Costello's *Baby Plays Around*.

Linn HDCD ★★★★★

### PARLIAMENT Osmium

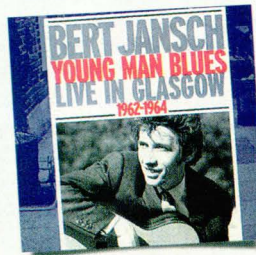
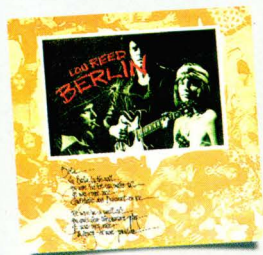
Sequel boosts the vinyl revival with this 180g pressing, the 1970 debut of George Clinton's funksters. There's yodelling lunacy and rehearsals but most of it is musically tight too. *Funky Woman* shows Clinton's main obsession – like that of his president – remains changed. Invictus-Sequel ★★★★★

### VAN HALEN Van Halen

The *You Really Got Me* cover explodes out on the 1978 LP that started the VH legend. Serious heads-down stuff from the days when heavy metal was fun – the 'air-guitar' fraternity never recovered! Also on MoFi CD. DCC Ltd Edition vinyl – Vivante LP ★★★★★

### BERT JANSCH Young Man Blues

30 numbers live from the bars and brothels of Glasgow circa 1962. Audiowise it varies but the folk hero's songs still shine out – in mono. Big Beat ★★★★★



## Denon tunes in

Nine years on, the TU-260L MkII arrives in style.



Denon's seminal budget tuner, the TU-260L, is finally set for replacement after nine years. The new TU-260L MkII picks up where "Britain's best-selling tuner" left off, adding RDS facilities, updated styling and improved performance, all for £129.99.

A rotary tuning knob is now incorporated for manual tuning and access to 40 station presets across FM, MW and LW. Inside, a newly-developed MPX filter seeks to improve the signal-to-noise ratio, with a circuit board designed for a "tight, flat frequency response". Featuring remote control for anyone with a suitable Denon handset, the TU-260L MkII is in the shops now.

Denon ☎ (01234) 741 200

## Neat (not so) Petite

Neat Acoustics' standmounting Petite speaker has been joined by a new floorstander based on the same design – the Elite. According to Neat, it combines the smaller model's agility and musicality with seriously deep bass, all for £1,195.

The Elite uses the same mid/bass driver and ribbon tweeter employed by the Petite, with an extensively braced cabinet mounted on spacers above a solid slate plinth. There's also a choice of three finishes: black ash, rose maple and blonde maple (pictured). Neat Acoustics ☎ (01833) 631021



Neat Petite sees a growth with the Elite.

## Prince of Denmark

Lots of major speaker brands are launching mega-expensive flagship models at the moment, and the Danes at Dynaudio are no exception. We unveiled the Evidence in our Las Vegas show report last month, and a price has now been set for the UK – £50,909.

Dynaudio compares the level of engineering involved to that of a Formula One car, which might help to explain the cost. Each speaker consists of three sections – two containing twin 20cm bass drivers, the other incorporating two 15cm midrange units and a pair of tweeters – the entire structure stands at over two metres high. If you're after an audition you're out of luck, as UK dealers won't be stocking them for now, but if your pockets are of the very deep variety they're available to order.

Dynaudio Sales UK ☎ (01732) 451938







Three of a kind: the new ALR/Jordan range.

## ALR/Jordan plays three notes



ALR/Jordan has unveiled three speakers for imminent launch, brought to the UK by new distributor AudioPlus.

The Note range combines aluminium bass and mid/bass cones with a pre-coated polyester fabric-dome tweeter, and features narrow, real wood-finished cabinets throughout. A 'unique', tuneable passive radiator is also incorporated to aid bass performance and allow adjustment to suit different rooms.

The line-up starts with the Note 3 standmounter at £1,000, and continues with two floorstanders — the £1,800 Note 5 and £2,500 Note 7. Sonics are claimed to be unusually similar throughout, with choice mostly dependent on sound pressure level requirements.

AudioPlus ☎ (0181) 642 4436

## DAB – the race is on



Will Cymbol's tuner be the first of its kind?



Another British company is vying with Arcam to claim itself maker of the world's first Digital Audio Broadcasting tuner for domestic hi-fi use.

Cymbol's C-DAB 1 tuner looks set to roll off the production line mid-March, hitting the shops at around the same time as Arcam's Alpha 10 DAB. And Cymbol is hoping to end up first out of the blocks.

Digital radio has come under fire of late, with some radio fans claiming inferior sound quality to that of FM broadcasts, but David Kingham, Cymbol's Managing Director, takes a pragmatic approach.

"Eventually, everyone will need a digital radio because analogue transmission will ultimately cease," said Kingham. "We can't alter the number of bytes sent down the line — our job is to take the signal and make it as attractive to the listener as possible. The technology will evolve and this is the best we can achieve as yet."

To that end, the C-DAB 1 employs Cymbol's top-end DAC, a high-quality toroidal transformer and Grundig's DAB module, which the company reckons is the best yet. It comes complete with a chromium-plated front panel and gold-plated buttons, and costs £899.

Cymbol ☎ (01256) 381569



## PAUL MESSENGER

Will digital TV provide us with another hi-fi source?

After years of not-a-lot-happening, we've suddenly got a glut of new consumer electronics technologies vying for our cash. I'd be interested in DVD, if I ever managed to find the time to watch films. And I'd be more interested if the DVD Audio spec wasn't still stuck in the pending tray (see Ed's Column). I put a DAB (digital radio) aerial on the roof in early January, but still haven't managed to borrow a DAB tuner to try it out.

Both those products are on a fairly slow-burn launch strategy, with high-ish hardware prices and no great profusion of software or programming just yet. Not so the new digital television services.

Whether we like it or not, DTV is seen by both broadcasters and government as the future of television. The former want the extra channels; the latter would love to close down relatively spectrum-inefficient terrestrial analogue TV broadcasts, and auction its frequencies to the mobile phone companies. TV has always been a high-stakes, mass-market game, and with two players in head-on competition (three, if you live in a cabled area), and heavy subsidies on the hardware, DTV is launching on a very short fuse.

What's it got to do with hi-fi? Well, I reckon that television is now as important a hi-fi source as radio. Agreed, there's no televisual equivalent to Radio 3, but I don't think many would argue against the claim that *Later with Jools Holland* deserves hi-fi sound rather more than Mark and Lard.

The trouble is that from a hi-fi point of view the sound quality of this new digital TV isn't that exciting. The MPEG-2 digital TV signal typically uses a data-compressed digital stereo soundtrack running at 256 kbits/s, whereas the Nicam signal that accompanies our analogue terrestrial TV broadcasts runs at 728 kbits/s. The result to these ears, after admittedly limited exposure, is that the MPEG-2 sound is somewhat dull.

Much the same is true of the picture quality, if you replace 'dull' with 'fuzzy'. In fact the colours themselves are beautifully natural, it's just that movement tends to smear a little, and surface textures which are sharply enough resolved when the camera is still, seem to go smudgy as the camera moves. However, it's neither a constant nor a predictable phenomenon. A Channel 4 Italian football match was clearly prefer-



Digital TV: essential technology for the millennium or a passing fad?

able via analogue transmissions, while the BBC's Five Nations looked similarly soft through both delivery systems.

So far I've only tried the ONdigital terrestrial DTV system, because it's so straightforward to install. And I've only tried the free-to-air services for a couple of weeks, which isn't long enough to properly see the effect of different weather conditions on transmissions.

The big worry is that I did run into a few 'early adopter' teething problems. The black box had a tendency to 'freeze' like a computer (which, to some extent, it is), necessitating a 'reset' operation, and some channels tended to go through 'bad patches' when the picture would lock, stutter, mosaic and jump, which might have something to do with atmospheric. Hopefully these problems will be temporary — if not, I fear for the future of digital terrestrial services, and reckon we might all end up with Sky.

But in spite of the glitches, by the end of the fortnight I found myself actually feeling quite positive about the little black box, and rather reluctant to take it back. There are certainly occasions when it will give better picture quality than the regular analogue off-air signals, I like the extra free-to-air channels, and also the widescreen option, even though the latter's implementation is rather farcical at present.

And I reckon an outlay of £199 plus a mandatory £7.99/month for the first year is not a bad proposition, though I find ONdigital's selection of subscription channels a bit strange. That said, the Sky option is even more competitively priced, and seems to be trouble free in service too, showing the maturity of a couple of years extra development time.

But I have to put the hi-fi hat back on and say it's all a slight disappointment. We're being offered loads of extra channels, most of which I have no interest in watching, of broadly comparable quality to what we have already, at exactly the same time that America is launching a full High Definition TV service. Hmm...



# NEWS & VIEWS

It's February 19th, 1999, and **Tim Bown** is paying a visit to Sound and Vision Bristol, the first British hi-fi show of the year. Here's what he finds.

**T**he train creeks to a halt and I peer through the window to the murky morning beyond. Bristol Temple Meads – my stop. I step to the platform and ponder the day in store: hotel hi-fi shows are never the ideal place to experience the serene sound of high quality audio. Narrow, densely packed corridors lead to room after crowded room, building stress levels in all but the most show-hardy individuals. Spine tingling sounds? Chronic back ache, more like.

But though the picture I paint is grim, it rather misses the point. Hi-fi shows are not about sensible component auditions. They're about gathering a multitude of kit, in one place at one time, allowing punters to peruse the past and glimpse the future. Hotels are simply the most practical way of creating this scenario, and allowing manufacturers to take over bedrooms gives them a reasonable environment to demonstrate their wares. And besides, the annual Bristol show is one of the more penetrable of the breed; still hot, still crowded, but not as oppressive as some. There's always a sense of enthusiasm about the place that rubs off on those who pass through its doors, so yes, for hi-fi folk this is a fine day out.

So here I am at the Marriott Hotel, scene of the first UK show of 1999. I'm only here for a day, so my exploration will have to be sharp and to the point. I suck in a lung-full of air and make for the first floor, steeling myself for immersion amid the throng.

Bristol is a strong indicator of what the year holds in store, and it's good to find much-vaunted new technology finally trickling

through. For most, it's the first chance to hear the two new disc-based music formats – Sony is demonstrating a first-generation SACD player, while another hotel nearby is playing host to Technics' rival high-end DVD-Audio player, due this Summer. There's also a prototype SACD player from Marantz. As to which sounds better, it's impossible to make real judgements under these conditions, but the Technics six-channel dems create particular food for thought. Promising.

**“Bristol is a strong indicator of what the year holds in store, and it's good to find much-vaunted new technology finally trickling through.”**

Digital Audio Broadcasting is also on view, with Arcam proudly showing off its Arcam Alpha 10 DAB tuner (£800), while MD John Dawson conducts interviews with excited local radio reporters. Digital pioneer Meridian is in on the act too, its new 564 DAB/FM tuner present for perusal.

Here at least, home cinema is taking a back seat. There's an impressive processor from TAG McLaren (see news story), a new surround sound pre/power amp from Sony (TA-9000ES), and an amp, a receiver and a decoder from Denon. There's also a smattering of DVD-Video players from Pioneer, Nakamichi, Sony and Meridian (the gasp-inducing 800 Reference DVD). But most of the show's new gear is dedicated to established technologies and good ol' two-channel stereo – fine for music lovers like me.

There's plenty of life left in CD, and a healthy complement of new players are on show here, mostly in the mid to high

price bands. At the lower end of things there's Rotel's £300 RCD-951 and the £398 DAD1.5 from Cyrus, while a promising crop of new high-end players include Densen's Beat B-400 (£1,000), Marantz's CD7 (£3,500), NAD's S500 (£1,100, demonstrated with the rest of the svelte SilverLine range) and Talk's Thunder 4/Whirlwind 3 player/power supply combo (£1,899). There are even a couple of new multiplayers – the £450 MB-10 from recently-restored Nakamichi and a high-end machine from Denon – the DCM-5000.

Digging deeper into the show's heart, it becomes apparent that other types of source component are thin on the ground. There's little activity on the tape deck or tuner front, Nakamichi prototypes and DAB aside, and there's even scant service in the MiniDisc and CD-R departments. Come the early autumn product rush, however, that's likely to change. It's satisfying to see a few new turntables, though, including John Michell's 'Spider Edition' decks and two newbies from Pro-ject – the Classic, from £360, and the 6.9 at £550.

Things are quiet on the stereo amp front. There's a neat-looking three-box pre/power from Audio Note (M Zero/P Zero, £898), shown with matching two-box CD player, and smart designs from Alchemist (Forsetti R/C, £1,250), Densen (Beat B-200 remote control preamp, £1,000) and NAD (S300, £1,900), but precious few surprises.

Thank heavens for speakers, then – there's plenty to talk about amid the horde of new models. Newcomers like ELAC, Veritas and Vienna show



Left: The Cyrus NXT hybrid in prototype form. Michell's Orbe 'SE' (below) was one of several new turntables standing firm against the digital invasion.



Above: Talk's Thunder 4 CD player and power supply. Below: Meridian's 564 makes a DAB tuner sandwich!





their wares, while established brands demonstrate their latest offerings. Some are under £500 — Mission 702e and 773e, Acoustic Energy Aegis Two, Tannoy Revolution R2, all floorstanders. Others are more costly — ProAc's £649 Tablette 2000 and £999 Studio 125, Ruark's £1,200 Solus, the imposing £5,000 NBL from Naim and Castle's three-strong Inversion range (see news story). More unorthodox are Wharfedale's flat, wall-hanging LoudPanels, derived from NXT technology, and a stunning pre-production Cyrus speaker mixing NXT and conventional drivers, with a prospective price of £2,500.

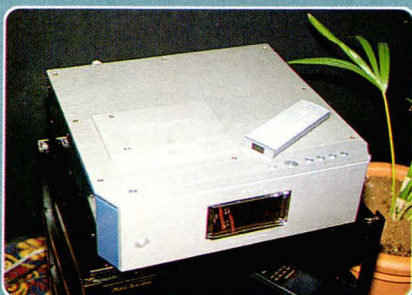
Add a deluge of cables and supports from the likes of Atacama, Audioquest, Chord and Nordost, and several headphones from Sennheiser, and that about wraps it up on the new product front. Just time to pop to the hotel bar, gulp down a double vodka and head for the 18.30 train.

Once ensconced in my seat, it's time to exhale and reflect on the day gone by — a fascinating mix of old and new technologies, with new launches tending to reflect current market trends towards mid-price and high-end. The show itself was buzzing with energy, exhausting but ultimately rewarding, with a pleasing proportion of 'real world' music instead of the tinkly 'dem' stuff that isolates so many people.

As a Bristol claim to fame, it may not match Brunel's suspension bridge or Massive Attack's *Blue Lines*, but it ranks a resounding third. Roll on February 2000.



Above: Prototype cassette decks from Nakamichi. Below: Another prototype — Sony's SACD player.



Below: Alchemist's Forseti CD player, now with 24 bit/96 kHz DAC, and matching remote control amp.



## JIMMY HUGHES

All you need for hi-fi comparison is a time machine!

**A**fter much deliberation I treated myself to a new camera a few weeks ago. To gauge the difference between new and old, I took a series of pictures under identical conditions on both cameras. The prints came back, and what a shock. The photographs taken on the new camera were stunning — better sharpness, colour saturation, and fine detail than anything I'd ever had before. Alas, the pictures taken on my old camera were inexplicably bad — some of my worst ever...

This brought a mixed reaction. Pleasure and relief that I'd chosen wisely; you can't A/B compare camera picture quality in a shop, only handle and inspect the units physically. So there's always an element of 'buying blind' with photo gear. At the same time there was sadness; I realised I'd never want to use my old camera ever again.

But then I thought — "Hang on; why the sudden loss of confidence in something that's given sterling service for 20-odd years?" In the past I'd had many excellent pictures from my old gear. Had it become terrible overnight? I dug out some recent photo albums and checked the pictures — they were fine. Indeed, some were very good. Okay, perhaps not quite as crisp as the prints from the new camera, but not vastly inferior either. And much better than the comparison prints.

Now, if only you could do that with hi-fi! How many people have brought a new piece of equipment home, connected it up, and (apparently) heard it trounce what was there before. The improvement seems enormous — so much so, there's no going back. Yet often, just a few days later, reality kicks in. The novelty wears off, and what appeared to be a vast improvement at the time no longer seems quite so vast. It's called the joys and perils of subjective assessment!

It's frighteningly easy to be fooled. After a quick A/B comparison, you can suddenly lose confidence in something you've used and enjoyed for years. I'm not saying you should deny the evidence of your ears when you hear what seems to be a big improvement; it could be that the new component replacing the old really is a hundred times better. But, it's also possible that something else is happening that exaggerates the difference.

Example: you borrow a big new power amp and plug it in beside your old one to warm it up. It draws a lot of power from the mains and radiates quite a large electromagnetic field. You listen to the new power amp, but feel unsure about whether or not it represents an improvement. The sound is perhaps a bit better than you're used to, but not much better.

So you reconnect your old power amp, half anticipating the difference to be small. Then comes the shock. Your old power amp sounds terrible — thin, edgy, congested — completely lacking the smoothness and control of the new one. Not at all what you were expecting! At this point it's easy to think the new product eats your old one for breakfast. But does it?

Just bringing a big power amp into the listening room, and plugging it in to a spare mains socket to let it warm up, can adversely affect the sound of the system. The same holds true when you're comparing CD players, and loudspeakers; you can't just bring things into your room and assume nothing changes.

Yet it's an elusive unpredictable thing. In some situations, or so it seems, you could wheel in half a dozen power amps, and hear next to no change in the sound. At other times, just bringing a spare preamp into the room noticeably alters things for the worse.

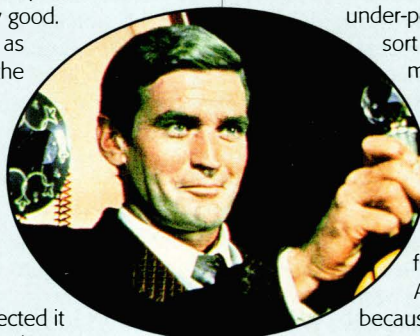
Hopefully, you have a good aural memory, and sufficient confidence in your hi-fi system to realise when things aren't sounding as they should. But it's easy to lose your bearings, and not realise when your regular set-up is

under-performing. To make any sort of meaningful assessment, you need a swift return to normal listening conditions. Ideally, that means removing the power amp (or whatever) from the room — or at least, unplugging it from the mains.

All this is necessary because you can't go back and re-visit sound. Unlike a photographer with old photo albums, you can't compare the past with the present. Sound can't be frozen, put away, and brought out at a later stage for comparison. Of course you can A/B compare components at any time. But you can't be sure that item A sounds exactly the same as it did yesterday or last week.

As a result, comparisons are sometimes misleading. What seems at the time to be a cut and dried case of one item being clearly better than another may actually be anything but. The only way to be sure is to repeat the comparison again at a later stage. Be methodical and careful when making comparisons. Don't overlook your long-term reaction; in many ways it's the most important thing of all.

I'm a great believer in the 'morning-after' test. Rather than worry about how a component (or system) sounds or compares when I first hear it, my acid test is to listen 'cold' the next day. If I'm equally impressed, then chances are the original evaluative impression is an accurate one. If, however, things sound much the same as usual, or worse, then suspicions are immediately aroused.





# Sweetness AND BITE

Set in a countryside location between Bath and Bristol, The Right Note is a dealership with a difference. Proprietor Jeremy Baldwin recommends a high-end, small-room system for us to hear and **Tim Bown** finds himself in sonic Utopia.

## THE SYSTEM

Wadia 830 CD player	£3,000
Advantage A300 power amp	£2,250
Audio Physic Step loudspeakers (inc. stands)	£1,299
Argento Silver i/connect (XLR)	£295/m pair
BKS loudspeaker cable	£250/2m pair
<b>TOTAL COST</b>	<b>£7,094</b>

It's a beautiful day in early spring. Fresh, white sunlight slips down from on high, casting elegant shadows across a stretch of cool, green grass. In the centre of this idyll lies a Georgian country house. Beside the house is a traditional English pub, beyond the pub run the tranquil waters of the River Avon. The clutter of the city seems a distant memory, expelled and refreshed with every lung-full of untainted air. No hustle, no bustle, no traffic roar to pollute your ears — just the twitter of birds, the rustle of leaves and the sweet, sweet sound of hi-fi's true high end. Bliss...

The house is owned by a Mr. Jeremy Baldwin, an audiophile of exacting taste. Following the natural course of his obsession, he has extended the building to incorporate his business, a retail service he provides for the hi-fi connoisseur which trades under the name 'The Right Note'. Anyone with an interest in the field can visit his premises by appointment and experience top-notch high fidelity in the most relaxed location imaginable. A typical session with a 'customer' may include a trip to the

pub or a walk by the river, without the slightest hint of sales pressure to ruin the occasion. It's a treat for the senses, and the perfect environment in which to fully appreciate such rich sonic finery.

So, should you decide to visit Jeremy in his heavenly domain, what kind of system are you likely to become acquainted with? We asked him to recommend a set-up for us to listen to, supplying him with a scenario on which to base his ideas:

"Imagine a customer with a provisional budget of around £7,000, give or take a few bob. He or she has varied music tastes and requires a CD-based system for use in a smallish room. What would be your first thoughts?" The result is described forthwith, and simply represents a starting point for the high-end gear with which Jeremy deals.

## SMALL ROOM UTOPIA

Let's start at the top. To spin those silver discs Jeremy decided upon the Wadia 830, a CD player of real distinction and an excellent place

to begin. US-based Wadia is a company much respected by those in the know, with fans that include many analogue stalwarts who have found its digital products to be the first they could live with. The 830 is its entry-level player, and while obvious savings have been made in the aesthetics department — the front panel looks

**"The energy and location of each instrumental performance is adroitly imaged, a wonderful 'listen through' clarity in the mid to treble region giving the listener full view of every individual note."**

more like an early '80s video game than a piece of precision hi-fi — it's a true high roller under the skin. A disc-clamping transport, multiple Burr-Brown DACs, temperature-stabilised clocking and a resonance-controlled cabinet combine to produce a thoroughly convincing musical performance.

Moving on through the system, our journey arrives upon its most obvious hook — the omission of a preamp. By removing this link from the chain, the signal's path is made more direct and, in theory, better sound can be achieved for less money. But you can't do this with any old CD player; it requires one incorporating a highly accurate digital volume control, and Jeremy reckons the 830, with the help of Wadia's proprietary Digimaster filtering, is the most affordable such device on the market. He also says that to maintain the level of performance with a preamp on board would probably add at least 3K or 4K to the cost — a pretty persuasive argument.

That leaves us with just a power amp, the Advantage A300. The Swedes are less



This system, as recommended by Jeremy Baldwin of The Right Note, makes a perfect small-room high-end combo.



**“The shocking thing, considering the diminutive size of the speakers, is the utterly convincing scope of its soundstage — just close your eyes and listen. Music spreads far and wide.”**

known for their hi-fi prowess than their Danish cousins, yet this 175 Watt power house proves itself a most communicative beast, with its class-A operation, over-sized transformers and MOSFET transistors. Advantage is unwilling to divulge much more about its internals, claiming “micro-processor technology unique in power amp design”, but keeping secretive as to what that actually entails. But it sounds great, and that’s what counts.

The system’s final component touch is German — a pair of Step speakers from Audio Physic. Their specific design tenet is to deliver no-compromise performance in a small-room scenario, featuring 33cm high cabinets with a slim, rounded defraction-reducing baffle and a built-in diffuser board with 38 different-sized holes to “lower-standing waves and optimise cabinet resonances”. They’re rather fussy about placement, preferring free space and relatively close proximity to the listener, but their performance when placed on Audio Physic’s open-frame stands is exceptionally pleasing.

Naturally, the cables are another vital part of this set-up’s sound, but I dare not describe them in detail lest I entirely run out of space to outline the system’s sound. Suffice it to say that the Argento Silver interconnect is used in balanced form, making use of the extra degree of quality supplied by the CD player’s XLR-type output and the power amp’s input, while the BKS woven copper speaker cable was supplied to us in two metre lengths.

**SOUND QUALITY**

So what does it all sound like? Imagine listening to a honey-voiced chorister wrapped in a

sumptuous cathedral acoustic, without any extraneous noise to cloud your perception. That, metaphorically-speaking, is the essence of its performance.

The shocking thing, considering the diminutive size of the speakers, is the utterly convincing scope of its soundstage — just close your eyes and listen. Music spreads far and wide, seeming to stretch beyond the cabinets and even room boundaries, creating such an illusion of three-dimensional space that, upon opening your eyes, it takes a couple of blinks just to re-orientate your mind. The energy and location of each instrumental performance is adroitly imaged, a wonderful ‘listen-through’ clarity in the mid to treble region giving the listener full view of every individual note, its harmonics and its ambient surroundings. Magical stuff.

Analytical qualities are undoubtedly strong, but of even greater merit is that they are seamlessly tied to fundamental musicality. It neatly sidesteps the sterile trappings of an over-clinical approach with a supremely pure and effortless tone, engaging ears as deftly with The Beastie Boy’s jazzed-up/mellowed-out instrumentals on *The In Sound From The Way Out* as with each delicate stroke of key in Chopin’s *Impromptu No.1 in A Flat Major* (Howard Shelley). Nothing too soft, nor too hard; sweetness and bite in equal measure.

Anything to criticise? Ultimate bass depth is naturally constrained by the speakers’ size, though the impression you get is anything but lightweight. Neither is it a system that seeks to wow the listener with massive dynamic peaks and thunderous ability at high volume, but in its own context it comes perilously close to perfection.

VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★★
SYNERGY	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£7,094.00

A triumph of simple design and high-quality components, carefully chosen for a complete sonic performance. A majestic high-end/small room system.

The Right Note (01225) 874728

The lack of a preamp may concern users of multiple sources, but the solution is simple — with the Wadia hooked up to the power amp’s balanced inputs, a preamp for additional sources can be attached to the single-ended phono-type inputs at any time. Jeremy even provides hints for future upgrades, recommending that I try some Yamamura Churchill M4000 mains cables (£249 each) to

hear the difference for myself. I did, and though the change in quality isn’t revolutionary, greater resolution undoubtedly warrants the outlay.

It just shows, you can improve on ‘perfection’. It’s another step up the ladder towards sonic Utopia, and in that respect, as a CD-based system for small room use, this outfit gets closer than almost anything else I’ve heard. Like I said, bliss.

**THE SYSTEM COMPONENTS**

**CD PLAYER**

**WADIA 830 £3,000**

Wadia’s entry-level spinner is not the prettiest of players, but it’s an exceptional performer. Gutsy, dynamic and copiously detailed, it’s a fine component indeed, and particularly impressive when used without a preamp. Alternatives: Acoustic Precision Eikos £1,850; Audio Research CD1 £3,290; Naim CDSII/XPS £3,700/£1,925; Helios Stargate £2,550



**SPEAKERS**

**AUDIO PHYSIC Step £1,299**

Small, slim speakers that supply maximum sound in minimum space. Featuring a neat 8cm mid/bass cone and metal dome tweeter, they project a soundstage that utterly belies their modest dimensions. Price includes stands. Alternatives: Jamo Concert 8 £1,365; Dynaudio Contour 1.3 MkII £1,198; Harbeth HL Compact 7 £1,300; Acoustic Precision Eikos £800



**CABLES & SUPPORTS**

We used Argento Silver balanced XLR interconnects and BKS woven copper loudspeaker cable, both recommended by The Right Note. Audio Physic’s own speaker stands were used, with a Mana rack supporting the equipment for the purposes of review.

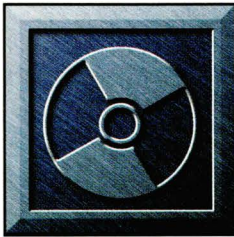
**POWER AMPLIFIER**

**ADVANTAGE A300 £2,250**

A black monolith of a power amp, delivering 175 Watts per channel and offering both balanced and single-ended inputs. Advantage claims its design is “unique”, but won’t quite say why. Still, its sound is effortlessly good. Alternatives: Sirius D200 £2,995; Border Patrol 300B SE £3,995; Krell KAV-250a £3,195; XTC POW-1 £2,250







# PAUL MILLER'S OASIS OF SANITY

Technical Editor **Paul Miller** explores different manufacturers' use of digital filter technology to manipulate CD player performance.

Those stalwart readers who successfully digested last month's *Oasis* will now have a nodding acquaintance with the theory behind oversampling filters and why no modern CD player would survive without one.

In that issue we discovered that, during D/A conversion, the original music signal is reconstructed along with mirror-images that are 'reflected' either side of the 44.1kHz sample rate (known as  $F_s$ ) and its harmonics (2 $F_s$ , 3 $F_s$ , 4 $F_s$  etc) — see plot 1, HFC 188. Digital filters are the cheapest and most effective method of removing these unwanted reflections and recovering the music signal intact.

Digital filters use oversampling to add new 16-bit samples in-between existing pairs before the data reaches the D/A converter. For example, a two-times oversampling filter will add one new sample for each original sample while a four-times oversampling filter adds three new samples in-between each original pair. These new samples are calculated by interpolation, which takes into account the magnitude and rate of change of existing samples.

By this method, our two-times oversampling filter increases the effective sampling rate (when data is clocked through the D/A converter) from 44.1kHz to 88.2kHz, just as the four-times filter also elevates this to 176.4kHz or 4 $F_s$ . The unwanted digital images are, therefore, pushed out to higher frequencies (2 $F_s$  and 4 $F_s$ , respectively) where they may be scrubbed out by a relatively gentle and cost-effective analogue filter circuit after the D/A conversion.

## FIGURE ONE

This is our reference plot, obtained from measurements

of a 'real' CD player, and may be compared to the computer simulations (plots 3 and 5) in our last issue. Observant readers may have noticed that I pasted a 'kHz' label instead of a 'Hz' label onto the frequency axis of these latter plots. Please excuse this misdemeanour.

Our reference plot is obtained from a Sony CD player, but its 'brickwall' response (1) and effective removal of all digital reflections is also typical of modern players from Arcam, Naim, TAG McLaren and JVC, to name but four. Assuming that our music data was limited to 20kHz, then any digital reflections or images would persist to the right of the vertical blue line at 24.1kHz. This region is known as the stopband and, in this example, is completely free of any digital 'rubbish'.

The upper inset graph (2) is a magnified (+4dB) portion of the player's response, highlighted by the grey box (3), and is plotted on a logarithmic frequency axis from 1kHz to 25kHz (1,000Hz to 25,000Hz). I have marked 10kHz (10,000Hz) with an asterisk. In this instance, the magnified inset proves the player and its oversampling filter has an utterly flat response, free of rippling or a peak caused by Gibb's Phenomenon (see last *Oasis*) before falling rapidly away beyond 20kHz.

As we discussed last month, the digital oversampling filter computes an impulse (4) for every sample and that the ringing and windowing of this impulse is directly linked to the severity of the filter's cut-off. This is a very high-order filter whose ringing is revealed in protracted pre- (5) and post-echoes (6) that just die away before they reach the edges of the (red) inset plot. Hence the

term FIR or Finite Impulse Response, used to describe this particular type of digital oversampling filter.

## FIGURE TWO

To some manufacturers, this ringing is undesirable even though, without it, the digital filter would prove ineffective. The pre-echo (5) is thought to be particularly disagreeable because it represents a form of ringing that occurs before the

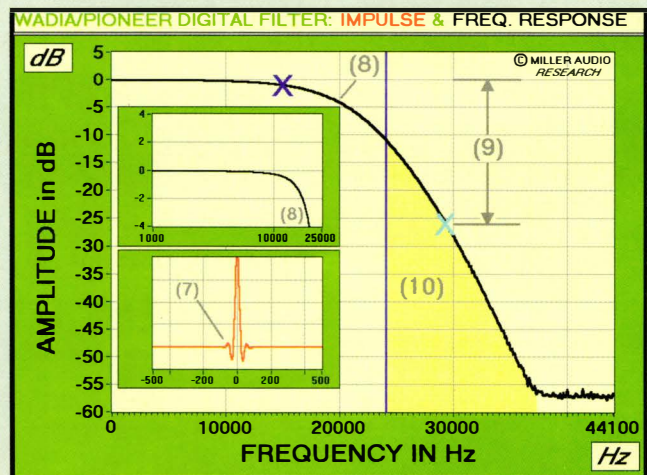
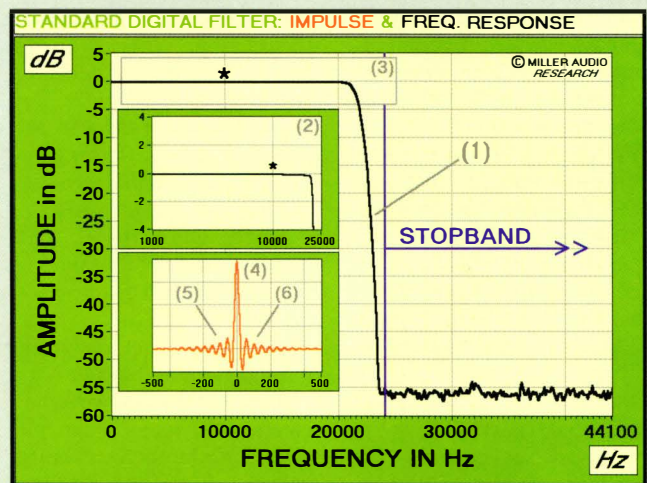
musical event. And this, in the real world, is an unnatural state of affairs even if it's an inherent consequence of engineering a brickwall filter. And remember, we need the brickwall filter to remove those digital images that reflect back from the 44.1kHz ( $F_s$ ) sample frequency. Digital filters really are a choice between the devil and the deep blue sea.

Either way, this controversial 'ringing' occurs at about 22kHz (or the -6dB point of the filter) and so it should not be directly audible. Nevertheless it could — I stress *could* — result in an intermodulation distortion, a smearing if you like, fractionally before the event, possibly affecting imagery and what some listeners refer to as 'timing'.

Our second plot demonstrates the action of some earlier Wadia and Pioneer

**“The pre-echo is thought to be particularly disagreeable because it represents a form of ringing that occurs before the event.”**

FIGURES ONE (TOP) AND TWO (BOTTOM)





(Digimaster and Legato Link, respectively) digital filters that err away from the devil in favour of the deep blue sea. These are still FIR filters, but the impulse is windowed using a Spline polynomial to yield just two pre/post echoes (7). Far less ringing, to be sure, but the 'filter' itself is proportionally gentler, falling by 4dB at 20kHz (8), and is less effective in its suppression of any digital images reflecting back off the

44.1kHz sample frequency. Let's take a musical signal at 15kHz, marked by the dark blue 'X'. Its digital image is reflected off the 44.1kHz sample frequency at  $44.1\text{kHz} - 15\text{kHz} = 29.1\text{kHz}$ , marked in the stop-band region by a bright blue 'X'. The effectiveness of the filter is measured by its rejection or suppression of these anharmonic images (9) which amounts to some 26dB in this instance. In our previous plot,

the brickwall FIR filter would have afforded over 100dB suppression at this same point. Thus, with the Wadia/Pioneer filter, any digital reflection that falls within the yellow shaded region (10) will escape the CD player and possibly cause additional distortion in the amplifier/loudspeaker combination.

**FIGURE THREE**  
An extreme example of this FIR digital filter is found in T+A's

**"T+A has achieved an impulse response that's very close to the 'perfect' single spike but its efficacy as a digital filter is sorely restricted."**

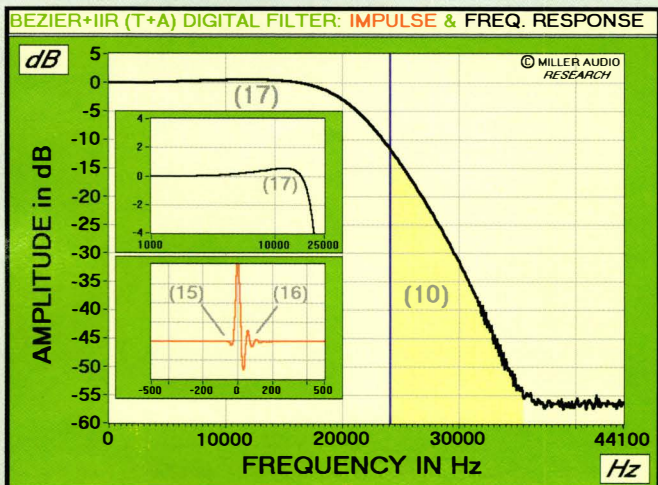
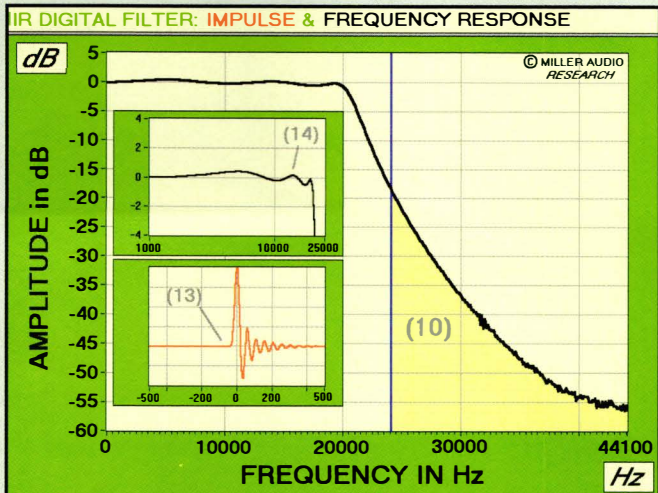
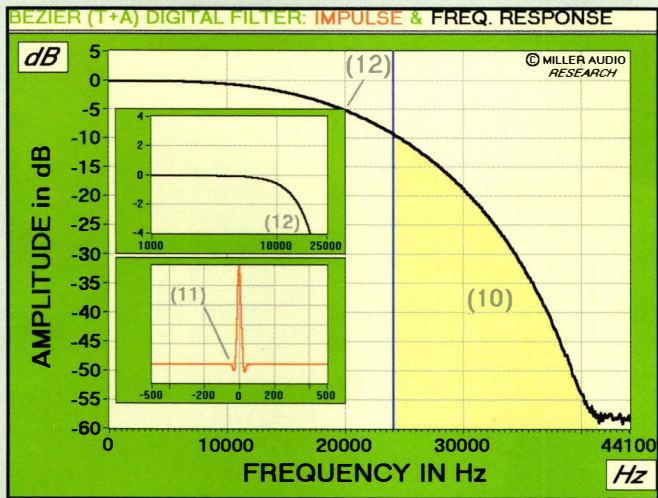
fascinating CD1210R CD player, reviewed last month. Here the impulse is modified using Bezier polynomials to leave just one faint pre- and post-echo (11). Sure enough, T+A has achieved an impulse response that's very close to the 'perfect' single spike but its efficacy as a digital filter is sorely restricted. Here, the frequency response droops by an audible 5dB at 20kHz (12) and 'lets through' a substantial region of digital images (10) that may prompt an unpredictable sound with different amp/speaker systems. All else being equal, this type of filter will undoubtedly cause the CD player to sound *different* than if it had a conventional brickwall FIR filter. But the emphasis here is on 'different' rather than 'better' or 'more realistic'.

**FIGURE FOUR**  
One way to avoid a pre-echo altogether is to employ an IIR digital filter. IIR (Infinite Impulse Response) filters only respond to present and past samples but loop the impulse so its response to one sample is akin to a decaying series of samples – hence the 'echo' analogy. As we can see, an IIR digital filter suffers no pre-echo (13) but, unlike its FIR cousins, is not inherently stable just as its pass-band suffers a non-linear ripple (14) and phase shift. The latter is arguably more audible than the ringing it serves to avoid and as such, IIR are very rarely employed in commercial CD players.

**FIGURE FIVE**  
We end with a unique mix of FIR and IIR filter technologies from T+A's CD1210R CD player. Here the worst excesses of a four-times oversampling IIR filter are mollified by sequencing it with a two-times oversampling FIR filter equipped with Bezier polynomials. A total eight-times oversampling is achieved with the minimum pre-echo (15), a reduced IIR post-echo (16) and a response that shows a slight treble boost (17) instead of an invasive ripple. It's an interesting halfway house, but the sonic advantages gained by minimising any pre-echo (15) must be weighed against the digital reflections (10) allowed to escape into the audio system as a whole.

So, whatever side of the digital coin a manufacturer chooses to emphasise in its promotional literature; just remember there is no panacea, simply a juggling of compromises within the technology. **Do you have a subject matter for the Oasis? Please contact P.Miller via E-mail on MILLER\_AUDIO\_RESEARCH@compuserve.com**

**FIGURES THREE, FOUR AND FIVE**

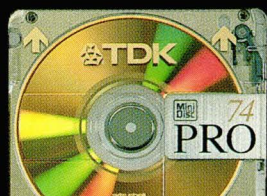


**GLOSSARY**

- DIGITAL/OVERSAMPLING FILTER:** A chip that interpolates extra samples in-between existing samples, effectively increasing the sample rate. Digital images (distortions) are pushed out to higher frequencies, allowing the use of gentler analogue filters.
- FIR:** A type of digital filter that responds to one impulse per sample of data.
- IIR:** A type of digital filter that, theoretically, responds indefinitely to each impulse (like a decaying echo).
- IMPULSE:** Description of a frequency response in the time domain.
- INTERPOLATION:** Creating a new sample based on the pattern of existing samples.
- PASS-BAND:** Desired frequency range inside the filter.
- PHASE SHIFT:** A time delay. In a Phase-Linear filter, any time delay is proportional to frequency.
- POLYNOMIAL:** In this instance an equation or set of mathematical coefficients used to modify the 'shape' of the filter's impulse response.
- SAMPLING OR SAMPLE RATE:** Slicing-up a musical waveform in discrete chunks of time.
- STOPBAND:** Undesired frequencies outside the range of the filter.
- STOPBAND SUPPRESSION:** How effectively any digital images or 'reflections' are erased within the stopband.



# The new wave in sound.



All digital recording media sound the same, right? Not with TDK's new MD-RXG PRO MiniDisc they don't. Better definition, more precise control, an even more 'real' sound. All thanks to TDK's leading edge digital technology. But don't take our word for it. Believe the audio experts from across Europe who raved that the MD-RXG PRO was the most realistic MiniDisc they'd ever heard. So, if you really care what you listen to, there is only one MiniDisc. TDK's amazing MD-RXG PRO.

TDK



**T**he future may be orange, but will it be bigger or smaller? Both. Bigger performance, smaller package. It's technology's preferred *modus operandi*. Examples are everywhere: palm-held computers packing the power of yesterday's laptops, city cars that squeeze in family saloon-sized interiors and safety features, miniature mobile phones with massive memory capacity and battery life. And, of course, hi-fi.

The march of the mini and the micro is relentless, even if the shrinkage in size isn't always accompanied by an equivalent leap in sound quality. It isn't usually the fault of the electronics. The 'guts' of hi-fi components will inevitably continue to get smaller and more powerful. Loudspeakers, on the other hand, seem fundamentally constricted by the basic laws of physics. To wit, you can't get mighty bass out of a midget box. That doesn't stop people trying, though. Or appearing to succeed.

I've spoken to very few men — and absolutely no women — who like the look of large speakers. OK, fridge-sized floor-standers with 15-inch woofers or horns you could lose domestic pets in might just get away with making a 'statement' if your lounge is as big as a skating rink. But mine is as small as the cupboard they keep the skates in. Even so, I want a realistic, life-size sound from a couple of boxes that don't dominate their surroundings. Not an unreasonable ambition in 1999.

### THE TARDIS EFFECT

The best I've come across so far, and the speakers I use when I'm not reviewing others, are AVI's £500 NuNeutrons. What I like about these isn't just that they sound much bigger than they look but that they don't appear to resort to artifice or exaggeration to achieve it. What bass there is is remarkably solid, tuneful and articulate considering that the NuNeutrons stand just 27cm high and 21cm deep. Connected up to suitably muscular amplification (say, 70 Watts a side — though 150 is better) they're loud and dynamic, too. The bass has weight and shape; it just doesn't go very low. But as far as I'm concerned the compromised bottom end extension is more than repaid by the AVI's petite appearance. Even smaller would be better from a purely aesthetic standpoint, but when does tiny become tinny? How much smaller can you go before the sound falls apart?

Heaps according to Technics whose new £500 SB-MO1 is just 23cm high, anything but square and, as you can see, even cuter than Zöe Ball thinks she is. Each enclosure comes with a self-assembly aluminium tripod foot into which are screwed three sharp brass cones. These are intended to improve the SM-MO1's performance if you sit them on a sideboard or shelf but, at £500, they're certainly expensive enough to justify a decent helping of audiophile accoutrements. So I sidelined the coned feet, cracked open a new pack of Blu-Tack and

## DAVID VIVIAN

Can the adage 'small is beautiful' apply to bass drivers, or is good quality sound on a small scale just a dream?



Small, beautiful and downright bassy, the new Technics SB-MO1 is less than 10 inches high.

**“The SB-MO1s, it has to be said, sounded — how to put this — not tinny, not timid, not tippy-toey, not... well... very small. But big. As in BIG.”**

plonked them on top of the 24-inch Slate Audio stands normally reserved for the NuNeutrons. I wasn't prepared for the shock that greeted me when I eased off the exquisitely fashioned metal-capped fabric grilles: the smallest 'bass drivers' I've ever seen.

At 8cm, we're talking seriously titchy. The AVI's are 13cm. Come to that, most three-way systems' midrange drivers are more than 8cm. And these are said to be the result of Technics' "meticulous analysis" into why compact speakers produce poor bass... drivers the size of mini donuts. Right.

Slightly more encouraging is the big bore, rear firing reflex port, the nuggety enclosures (3kg each) and the very low 79dB sensitivity which should make budget amps with weedy outputs think twice before chancing their arm with this mighty midget.

### THE NEXT BIG THING

The only way to get decent bass from a drive unit with such a diminutive cone area is, of course, to give it a huge throw. And for such a diddy driver, 12mm is huge. To maintain voice-coil linearity at extreme excursions,

Technics has developed a special dual-phase damper. For large excursions the less stiff part of the damper exerts more control; for smaller cone movements, the stiffer, damper periphery takes over. This works in conjunction with a surround made from foam rubber that's thinner at its junction with the paper cone's edge than it is where it joins the chassis and a hefty, low-distortion magnet. The crossover uses a high-grade, non-etching, aluminium electrolytic capacitor and oxygen-free copper cable links the drivers, crossover and input sockets.

Hooked up to my main system, which uses two 150 Watt AVI monoblock power amps, the SB-MO1s, it has to be said, sounded — how to put this — not tinny, not timid, not tippy-toey, not... well... very small. But big. As in BIG. As in absolutely-bloomin'-enormous. The dislocation of scale between the size of the cabinets and the music coming out of them was, to be frank, ridiculous. And, like the NuNeutrons, they sounded amazingly accurate as well. Down to a point, anyway. Generous and well controlled as the SB-MO1's upper bass is, lower notes (the spec has it -16dB at 58Hz) sound thicker and more forced, lacking the textural subtlety the NuNeutrons are capable of.

In the end, an 8cm woofer is an 8cm woofer, however long its throw. My £500 would still go on the slightly less expensive but harder-hitting AVIs. But full marks to Technics for making something so small, beautiful and downright bassy.



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owning a recording he has the  
**music.**"

John Cage, 1961



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# LETTERS

**Hi-Fi Choice's very own 'points of view' page, where you, the reader, can express your opinions!**

## LETTER OF THE MONTH

### ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS!

I am glad to discover that Paul Miller's bar graphs are getting more transparent!

Now a query. In order to compare the bar-graphs between different speaker tests in different editions, one has to have the absolute value of the group average

If Monitor Audio is the most easy to drive, how could I possibly work this out with the current information? I can see which is best in the group, but I can't figure out if the B&W Matrix 800 series, or the new B&W Nautilus series are better.

So how do I know if I'm getting value for money and how do I compare between two group tests? There just isn't any way to compare that information.

*Paul Larmuseau, via email*

*The Editor replies.... We are currently trying to work out a way of publishing all the test results (including those*

*not printed) on the HFC website, we are also trying to work out a system for giving averages that refer to all previous results, ie working with a huge database. But as you might imagine there are a few logistical problems to overcome.*



extent we employ scientists and engineers qualified in all the sciences including materials science.

Put simply, zero mass is not a particularly desirable attribute for a cone material and infinite stiffness only in a limited context.

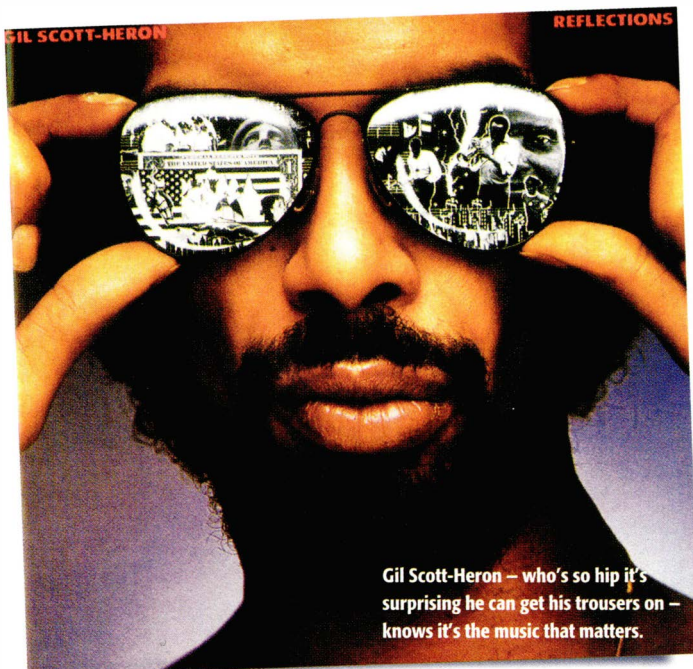
Infinite stiffness is only desirable if you can have many drivers of different sizes. The diaphragms get progressively more directional with increasing frequency, so to maintain a reasonably constant directivity over the audio band requires at least four drive units.

When you need to use a single drive unit to cover a wide frequency band, you have to take a different approach. The properties of a woven Kevlar cone are such that all the break-up patterns exhibit four-fold symmetry. When the cone breaks up, it does so as a combination of an octopole bell mode and a number of axisymmetric modes, commencing with the outer regions of the cone and gradually moving towards the middle.

Thus for every four areas of the cone going upwards there are four equal areas going downwards. Such multipole sources are inefficient at radiating sound when the wavelength is greater than or comparable to the distances between the poles. The outer regions of the cone cancel each other out, leaving the piston-like reducing central area to give an uncancelled volume velocity that produces the controlled frequency response and directivity.

We are well aware that this is not an extremely stiff cone, as the combination of the fibre plus resin and the material's internal damping should maintain both the required non-axisymmetric behaviour and Q values of the resulting bell modes for the optimum cancellation to occur. Up to now we have not been able to use carbon fibre for this type of design, precisely because of its high stiffness.

*Dr Peter Fryer, Director, B&W Loudspeakers Research*



**Gil Scott-Heron – who's so hip it's surprising he can get his trousers on – knows it's the music that matters.**

### THE FOOD OF LIFE

I have been a subscriber to *Hi-Fi Choice* for several years and find the mix of articles, from budget equipment through to high end, provides a very interesting and stimulating read. In recent

months there have also been articles on particular recordings that have been thought-provoking and commendable additions.

However, what I do miss, as an owner of some extremely satisfying analogue and digital equip-

ment, is a regular monthly review of albums across the whole spectrum of musical tastes. As far as I am aware there is no hi-fi magazine that offers this in conjunction with the accessible and enjoyable style of *Choice*. I would welcome the opportunity to hear other people's opinions about new, and old releases. I believe you could very easily justify space to discuss the very reason we all spend so much time (and money) on the hardware!

*Mark Eley, Northumberland*

*The Editor replies.... Of course music rules, but software reviewing is something we feel that is best left to dedicated music magazines.*

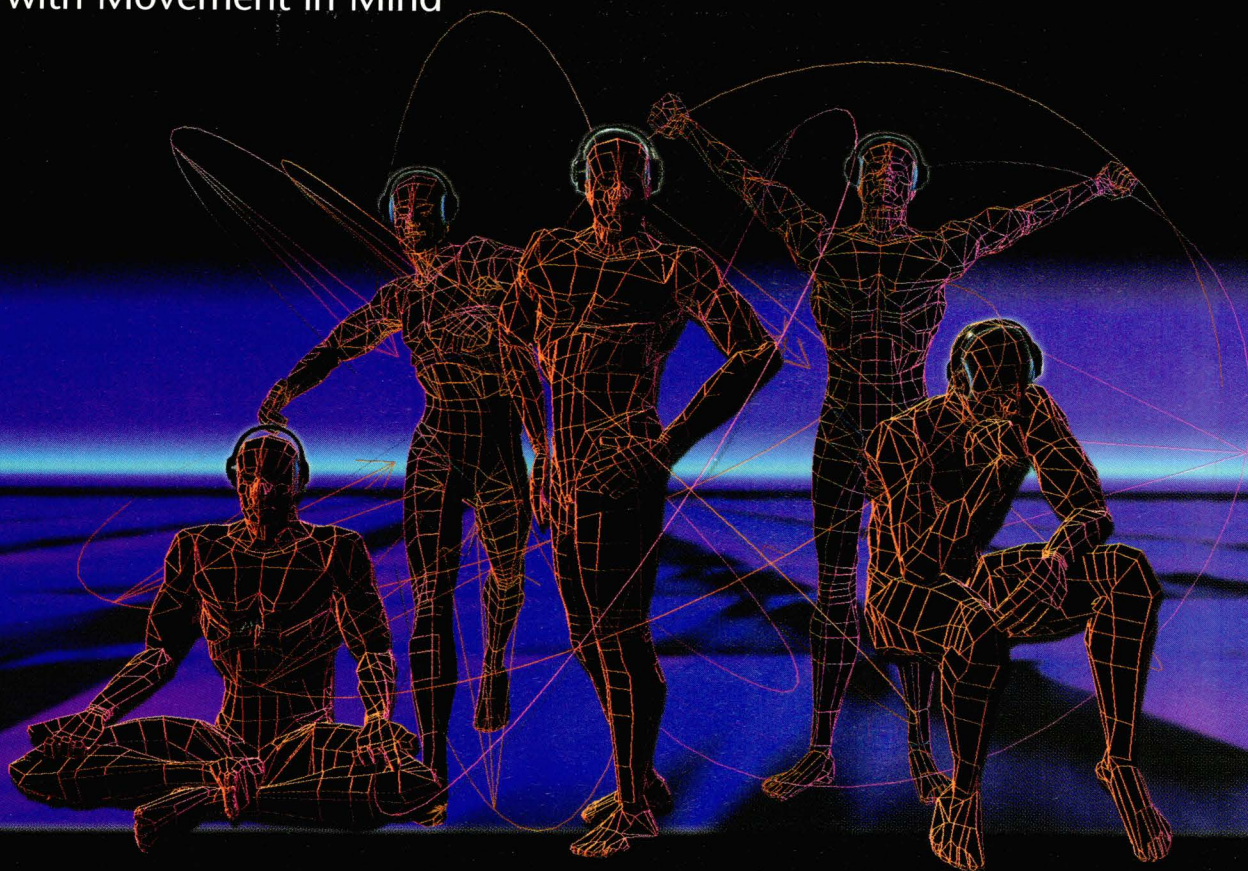
### NOT SO MELLOW

I am not sure who should be most upset about Dr Straker's ill-informed letter in the March issue (*Mellow Yellow*), we at B&W or Paul Messenger who, contrary to Dr Straker's assertions, appears to have lost none of his cynicism.

At B&W we like to think we are serious about product development, not simply purveyors of "dubious assertions". To that



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# HELP!

Jason Kennedy  
is here to rid you  
of your hi-fi woes!

## LETTER OF THE MONTH

### TOTALLY HAPPY

 The hi-fi side of my system comprises the following: Pioneer PD-S904 CD player, Pioneer VS-A701 AV amp used as a pre-amp, Rotel RB991 power amp into TDL Studio 1M speakers. Cabling is Talk Broadcast interconnects and Audioquest Indigo II speaker cable.

While I am totally happy with the sound, I have been thinking (also advised by a dealer) about adding an audiophile preamp into the system priced up to about £550.

My question is simple: what should I expect to gain by doing this? Secondly I am about to replace my CD player with a Pioneer 717 DVD player. Are such players compatible with DACs such as Musical Fidelity X-DAC for replay of my HDCD-encoded CDs?

*Mr C Banda, Dartford, Kent*

You've heard the saying 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' we hope! However, it doesn't say '...don't upgrade it', and a 'proper' preamp would seem like a good idea. What it should do is give you better all-round performance, from broader bandwidth to more solid imaging with all that goes in-between, and clarity in particular.

All the DVD players that have a digital output are capable of outputting CD's 44.1kHz sample rate and thus can be used with an external DAC, where HDCD decoding can be carried out. However, as it stands, only Pioneer DVD players will output a full 96kHz signal should you want to use one of the new DACs designed for this sampling rate.



◊ ECA Vista preamp and Lectern power amp: a good amplification partnership is vital!



### GET A JAMO LEATHER CD WALLET!

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.

## NO POP PLEASE



I'm an avid reader of *Hi-Fi Choice* and am also quite a fan of hi-fi. My system is comprised of a Sugden A21 a integrated amp, Pioneer PD-F705 multi-disc CD player, a pair of Acoustic Energy AE100i bookshelf speakers, Ixos 103 interconnects and Ixos Gamma series speaker cables. I'm thinking of upgrading by getting an outboard DAC, possibly Musical Fidelity's X-ACT or X-24K and also getting the line level upgrade X-10D. Do you think this will do the trick or do you have any other suggestions or other brands in mind?

My budget is around £400 and my musical taste encompasses anything apart from pop and noisy, heavy rock. I was also thinking of getting a second hand Adcom 5500 power amp and pairing this with Musical Fidelity's X-PRE. Do you think this is a good idea? Will it produce the liquid, tube-like sound I prefer?

*Erwin via e-mail*

Although adding a DAC would change and hopefully improve the results you're getting, it's unlikely to give you the kind of improvement you are after. We would suggest cable and support upgrades, try some Supra EFF-ISL interconnect and Kimber 4VS or TC speaker cable. Unless you have serious equipment accommodation already, have a look at a few racks, of the more affordable options we like the Quadraspire Q4.

Once you've got the above sorted try out the X-10D, it's won many converts and might help.

As for your amp, we are not familiar with Adcom kit, thus cannot say how tubey it sounds, but the X-PRE certainly fits the bill.

### ◊ Supra EFF-ISL interconnects.



## ALL TYPES



My system comprises Roksan Xerxes turntable (first edition), Tabriz tone arm, Quad 44 preamp, 606 power amp, QED Qnect 4 interconnects, Linn K400 bi-wire speaker cable and Keilidh speakers. I am looking for a cartridge with a high output to get the most of detailed bass and attack for £200 or less.

It really has to be a moving coil or a moving magnet which is going to sound as good. Three cartridges I've already thought of are the Denon DL304, Linn K9 or the Ortofon MC15mkII Super. Can you suggest anything better?

My tastes are Black Sabbath, George Michael, Simply Red, Prodigy, The Eagles and others, so you can see I listen to all types.

*S Robinson, Folkestone, Kent*

You've picked a good selection. The Ortofon is most likely to satisfy your requirements, the Denon may be too relaxed and the Linn a little brash. There are a couple of alternatives, namely Goldring's Eroica LX and Grado's Prestige Gold. If you're prepared to stretch the budget by £50 there's the Sumiko Blue Point Special, an open bodied MC with pretensions to the high end.

### Sumiko's Blue Point Special.



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**EASILY PLEASED**

 My current system consists of Micromega Drive 3 and DAC, Arcam Alpha 9/9P amps and Dynaudio Contour 1.8 MkII speakers. The Arcam 9 integrated is used as a preamp because the Dynaudios are not bi-wirable.

I feel the problem lies with the amps, I wish they were more dynamic, punchy and detailed. I don't want much do I?

I have a budget of £2,500 to spend if necessary. My shortlist so far includes the Naim NAC102/NAP180 pre/power or possibly a Krell KAV300i.

The system is hooked up with XLO and Trichord interconnects, Nordost FlatLine Gold speaker

cable and Campaign Audio silver plated mains cables.


*C Smith, Dagenham, Essex*

Given the nature of your speakers we are inclined to agree with your prognosis. While not a particularly heavy load, the Contour 1.8 is not the most sensitive of speakers and will require a more meaty power amp to give its best. To that end the Krell is a better choice than the Naims, but we would suggest you audition some or all of the following: Meridian 502/557, Roksan ROK-L2.5/ROK-S1.5, Musical Fidelity Nu-Vista/XA-200 and Sumo IIB/Polaris. All of these will give you higher resolution and greater flexibility than the integrated option.



**Meridian's 502/557 pre/power combo will give high resolution.**

**HINTS & TIPS**


 Although the purist view is to switch them out of circuit, bass and treble tone controls can sometimes help to control room problems that cause boomy bass or screeching treble. A little lift or cut at bass and treble extremes can subjectively improve clarity and definition, while making the sound nicer to listen to. If your system sounds dull, try a gentle treble lift and a slight bass cut. If the tonal balance is too bright and forward, increase the bass a notch while reducing the treble slightly. If you want a stronger midrange, a slight cut to both bass and treble will have the effect of strengthening the middle frequencies. A little cut or boost at the right point can sometimes produce improvements that are subjectively far greater than one might at first think, given a quick A/B comparison.



**TRADING PLACES**



**Marantz's PM66 KI Sig: will emphasise timing and dynamics.**

 I would like to exchange my old amplifier for a better (possibly much better) one, for up to £400, as the budget is limited. My system comprises: Pioneer PD-8700 CD (a new external DAC is planned), van den Hul D102 MkIII interconnect, Pioneer A-225 amp (this is to be exchanged), van den Hul The Skyline Hybrid speaker cable, Tannoy Mercury M2 speakers (recently bought and very satisfactory), Marantz ST-40 tuner and Pioneer PL-200 turntable.

I am thinking about the Pioneer A-300R Precision, Denon PMA-250SE, Marantz PM57, PM66SE, PM66 KI Signature or Cambridge Audio A3i, but if you have any better suggestions, please share them with me.

*Tamas Tornoczky, Pecs, Hungary*

There are two ways you could proceed here. You could emphasise your CD player's imaging capabili-

ties by using Pioneer's A-300R Precision, which would bring its fine coherence to the party and

**"You could emphasise your CD player's imaging capabilities by using Pioneer's A-300R Precision."**

make for a clean, relaxed balance. Or alternatively you could play to your speaker's strengths with Marantz's PM66 KI Sig amp, its emphasis on timing and dynamics allowing a more energetic presentation. The latter option would take you a step further toward a well rounded system, requiring only a CD player upgrade to complete the package. The Pioneer route would really warrant new speakers as well. But try and listen to the alternatives and make up your own mind.

**DISAPPEARING ACT**

 I have a Micromega Stage 1/DAC 2 combo, Sony TCK-311S tape deck and Sony ST-211 tuner with Marantz PM-44SE amplification using AQ Digital Pro between the player and transport and AQ Diamond between DAC and amp. Speakers are ProAc Studio 100s on Target R2 stands using AQ Midnight+ cable (not bi-wired).

The listings in the back of the latest *Choice* show the Stage models replaced by Premium 18 and 20 – what's happened there? I'd intended upgrading the Stage 1 into Drive 3 form but if there is no future in this range maybe I should replace with something different (and better!). If I saved up and bought a Solo they'd probably discontinue that.

Anyway, I intend to upgrade the Marantz, so which amplification system would best suit the ProAc's? I am considering the MF X-PRE/XA-50's, the new Electro ECI-3 and the Roksan

Caspian. I've read in *American Internet* reviews that the ProAc's are best matched with valve amps. But are there any amps with an Audio Research sound without the major league price tag?

My listening room is quite small so anything that emphasised the ProAc's bright treble wouldn't help. Also I haven't decoupled the speakers with anything – would Michell Tenderfeet be suitable? Music played is generally rock so rhythmic grip is quite important though not at the expense of transparency and realism.

*E Riordan, Norwich.*

**Copland CSA14 – high-end sound without the price tag.**

Micromega has indeed replaced its Stage models with the Premium range, but the Drive 3 is still available and you could get your player upgraded to transport status.

As for amplification for your ProAc's, apparently designer Stuart Tyler uses Audio Research himself which explains the affinity the two brands share. So what you need is something of similar balance and, of the options you list, the Electrocompaniet is the most likely to fit the bill, but another Scandinavian contender – Copland's CSA14 – might be a better bet. An alternative that won't stretch the budget so far is Musical Fidelity's A2, a very tube-like device.





## LONG LIVE VINYL



My current set-up is an Arcam Alpha 8 amp and CD player, and TEAC V-6030S cassette deck all connected by van den Hul D102 MkIII cable, and Acoustic Energy AE100i speakers on Atacama SE24 stands, connected by Cable Talk 4.1 speaker cable.

I am interested in resurrecting my record collection by adding a suitable turntable. The Rega 2/3 turntables are an obvious starting point, but the more I look in to it, the more options become available. In terms of money I could be stretched to £1,000 for the complete package including turntable, arm and cartridge, plus anything else that might be required ie power supply or phono stage (as the amp is MM only), plus suitable cables.

As there is such a boom in second-hand LP sales, investing in a good quality turntable may well be worth it so I would be

grateful if you could suggest a few alternative decks to try out and also which cartridges and arms go well with the decks. I am happy to buy second hand if this is a viable alternative

*Neil Hepworth, Reading*

Record players – can't live with 'em, can't shoot 'em! Can't beat better engineering/design, so spend as much as you can afford, even if your system isn't in quite the same league you'll never regret buying a decent turntable. A better turntable will not emphasise the scratches on your records, nor sound poor if you don't use a state-of-the-art support.

We would encourage you to audition the Michell Gyro SE and Nottingham Analogue's Spacedeck, both will work well with the Rega RB300 arm and either a Grado Prestige Gold or Sumiko BPS cartridge. The latter will require an MC step-up or phono stage, see our reviews this month (p40).



**Nottingham Analogue Spacedeck.**

## LOADSA WORRIES

Acoustic Precision's Eikos should inject some civility into a system.



I own the following system: Naim CD player (top loading), NAC 32 preamp with HI-CAP PSU, NAP250 power amp and Naim SBL speakers. I would like to change the CD player as it is inconvenient to use and malfunctioning. I would also like to change the amps as the sound is very harsh and lacks any real punch behind it.

The room is not ideal as it contains only hard and reflective surfaces, it is 20 by 18 feet.

*Nicholas Lawson via e-mail*

An all-Naim system is probably not the best thing for an ostensibly 'bright'-sounding room. Indeed, we would argue that a change of speakers would probably do more to alleviate your problems than a change of amps. We've not tried them yet but B&W's new Nautilus 805s are said to work well with Naim and should have a more relaxed balance than SBLs without

sacrificing punch. Alternatively Celestion's A1 and the Totem Model One are both smooth and capable of kicking it.

**"An all-Naim system is probably not the best thing for an ostensibly 'bright'-sounding room."**

As for a new CD player, a bit of civility injected at that end should complete the picture. Listen to an Acoustic Precision Eikos, Meridian 508, Resolution Audio CD50 or Wadia W830.

On the other hand you might be better off with a complete system change. Trade the Naim in for something like Definitive Audio's Helios/Musical Fidelity/Living Voice system from HFC 177. That had grunt without grain.

## ONE BOX OR TWO



In my city there are hardly any possibilities for auditioning CD players, but I am about to try and change mine.

So my first question is, which is better sounding: an Audio Alchemy DAC In The Box and a Marantz CD67 player as a transport, or a good £300-£500 player, like the Rotel RCD-971?

Please recommend a good sounding player or combination in the £400-£600 range.

Also, if a CD player is mechanically well built,

and it's jitter is low, is it a good sounding transport?

And finally, which is the best FM tuner in the £300-£500 range?

*Ferenc Bokros, Hungary*

The consensus these days seems to be that one-box solutions are more effective than the alternative – at least in the affordable end of the market. And it's unlikely that you could better an RCD-971 with the combination you are suggesting. As well as the Rotel we would

recommend the Pioneer PD-S505 Precision and Sony's CDP-X3000ES, but without knowing the rest of the system it's hard to be more specific.

Unfortunately good mechanics and low jitter do not a great CD transport make, but they certainly help.

The best tuner in your price range is probably Pioneer's F-504RDS Precision, but it'll only reveal as much when used with a decent aerial.

✓ **Sony CDP-X3000ES, one of the top one-box players.**



## HINTS &amp; TIPS

Although a high-quality source is essential, nowadays the old idea of devoting the lion's share of any given budget to this component (even to the point of creating an unbalanced system), isn't always the best approach. This is largely down to the existence of reasonably-priced CD players offering excellent sound, making it wiser to spend more on amplification and loudspeakers. As always, much depends on the system in question; how it sounds and what its weaknesses are. So try and investigate both options if you're about to hit the upgrade trail. See how your existing CD player fares when partnered with better amplification and loudspeakers. But also check out the kind of improvement a better CD player might make to your existing amp and speakers. Only then can you be sure to make the choice that's right for you.



**MONEY'S TOO TIGHT**



I recently bought an issue of your magazine from November 97 and I am really happy to own it, because by our standards it is fresh off the production line! I've accumulated a small sum of money (about £100) and as you can imagine I don't have a big choice of loudspeakers. In fact the only possibility for me is a pair of Sony SS-F630Es. As nothing is said about these in your magazine, I wondered if they are worth the money?

I do not have any other equipment but I've decided to find money for a Pioneer A-405 amp, a Technics Z7 deck and probably a Pioneer CD player (even if it

takes a whole life to get it).

*Nikola Krivorov, Bulgaria*

It sounds like you'd be better off building your own speakers if funds are that tight. Have you considered some of the kits and designs available from the likes of Wilmslow Audio?

As for the Sony speakers, we are not familiar with that model but the company's current hundred pounder, the SS-86E, has been well received in some quarters. The best sub £100 model we know is JPW's Gold Monitor, but you might find Tannoy M1s or KEF Coda 7s closer to the mark, which would be worth stretching for.



**JPW's Gold Monitors could be just the budget-busting thing for those with tight purse strings.**

**CASTLES IN THE AIR**



I have a pair of 20 year old Castle Richmond 2's on Target stands with QED Qudos cable, a Pioneer A400 amp, Pioneer PD-S904 CD player and Sony MD-SJE510 MiniDisc recorder.

Last year I replaced the bass drivers (foam surrounds had deteriorated) and I recently upgraded the speaker cable from QED 79 strand to QED Qudos and was frankly amazed at the improvement. The speakers still sound very good to me although the midrange is a little coarse – voices have a slight 'rasp'. The sound staging could also be better.

Unless you think a further cable upgrade would improve things, I'd like to replace the Castles and need some suggestions. As the amp has no tone controls I need a careful match! My budget is £250 to £500, my room is approx 4x9m, and music taste varies from Mozart to Van Morrison. I want believable voices, and crisp dynamics but with neighbour-friendly bass! Am I seeking 'Castles in the air'?

*D Drewett, High Wycombe, Bucks*

Not so much Castles in the air as Castles on stands would seem appropriate, though there's no reason to stick to Castles or stand-mounts for that matter. What you want is something with a great midband but not necessarily



**Castle Isis, for a clean performance at a bargain price.**

extreme bass performance, which doesn't narrow the field too much and does suggest a few attractive options. The Heybrook Heylios and Neat Critique 2 are standmounts while the B&W DM603, Rega ELA MkII and System Audio 1130 stretch all the way to the floor without producing too much low stuff. There's one Castle that fits the bill, the £250 Isis, but it's not in the same league as the dearer options listed above.

**HINTS & TIPS**



Are your loudspeakers correctly phased? It's easy

to accidentally transpose positive and negative wires when connecting up, resulting in vague central images and weak boomy bass. It can also create an unpleasant 'pressure' effect on the ears. Check for correct phase with a system set-up test CD. Alternatively, move your loudspeakers together so the fronts face each other, and play a recording with a strong bass line. Switch the amplifier off, reverse positive and negative connections to one speaker, and listen again. If the bass disappears, the speakers were correctly phased before you reversed the connections. If the bass is now much stronger, the new connection is correct. Check the polarity of the cables to see where the reversal took place. Remember that a system is out of phase when one speaker is wired in reverse to the other; if both speakers are wired in reverse, the sound will be in-phase – albeit with absolute polarity reversed.

**A TOUCH OF CLASS**



Recently I have upgraded my CD Player to Copland CDA266 and amplifier to Copland CSA28 with Nordost Blue Heaven interconnect and speaker cable to match. With £1,000 budget left to spend, I'm looking for a pair of quality speakers. I have listened to the Cabasse Farella 400, but I thought the sound was a bit too forward.

I am considering Monitor Audio MA703s and Mission 753 Freedom as well. I listen mainly to jazz and classical music. Are these speakers suitable? Or what other recommendations do you have?

*Andrew Hoi, Singapore*

Sounds like a classy system so far, and as your opinion of the Cabasse matches ours you should find some of our recommendations well suited. Your amp



is not the most powerful around so a bit of sensitivity wouldn't go amiss, and your CD player is very clean and smooth, so a speaker that's on the open side of neutral would probably be a good balance. The speakers you should be trying include: Celestion A1, JBL 4312MkII, JPW Ruby 4 and Tannoy D300. All four have different strengths and weaknesses and you shouldn't have much trouble picking a favourite.

**Celestion A-1: on the open side of neutral, and sensitive to boot.**



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### Aberdeen

Holburn Hi Fi 01224 585713

### Alderley Edge

Aston Audio 01625 582704

### Belfast

Lyric Hi Fi 01232 381296

### Blackburn

Romers 01254 887799

### Cambridge

The Audiofile 01223 68305

University Audio 01223 354237

### Carlisle

Practical Hi Fi 01228 44792

### Coventry

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### Darlington

Hi Fi Experience 01325 481418

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Halifax Hi Fi 01422 366832

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Martins Hi Fi 01553 761683

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Laser Audio 01563 540292

### Leeds

Image Hi Fi 0113 2789374

### Leicester

Leicester Hi Fi 0116 2539753

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The Hi Fi Room 0161 8351366

### Norwich

Martins Hi Fi 01603 627010

### Nottingham

Nottingham Hi Fi 0115 9786919

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### Rotherham

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### Sheffield

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Creative Audio 01743 241924

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Music Matters 0121 7420254

### Stourbridge

Music Matters 01384 444184

### Stratford

Stratford Hi Fi 01789 414533

### Wakefield

Image Hi Fi 01924 200272

### Warrington

Practical Hi Fi 01925 632179

### Worcester

Sevenoaks Hi Fi 01905 612929

### York

Vickers Hi Fi 01904 629659

The logo for Cyrus, featuring the word "CYRUS" in a stylized, bold, sans-serif font. The letters are white and set against a dark background. The "Y" and "R" have a unique, elongated design.

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THE WEAK LINK



I have recently purchased a Linn Karik 3 CD player, Wakonda/LK240 pre/power and B&W CDM7 speakers on Target stands. The speakers are bi-wired with Nordost Flat Line Gold speaker cable, Audioquest interconnects have been used between amplifiers and Audioquest Diamond between source and preamp.

I have a budget of around £2,000 and would be most grateful if you could advise me on the most cost effective path to take to improve my system. I would guess, however, that the speaker cables are the weakest link at the moment but any help or advice you may be able to offer would be very much appreciated.

Paul Maine, Cwmbran, Gwent

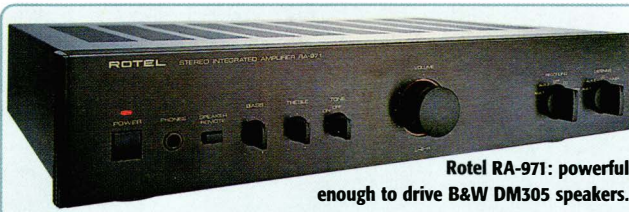
Assuming you are happy with the basic sound of the system and don't feel as though any part is letting the whole down, we would suggest you concentrate on ancillaries such as cables and supports. On the wire front we recently discovered Supra EFF-ISL which would help in both CD/pre and pre/power interfaces. You could substantiate matters further with a decent speaker cable like Kimber 4TC or 4VS.

As for supports, have you considered the Mana route? There are stands for both the electronics and the speakers which will inject energy into the sound and tighten up the bottom end a treat. Alternatively, if you are after a smoother sound try a Townshend Seismic Stand or the Wilson benesch Asside.



Kimber 4VS speaker cable.

LONG TIME COMING



Rotel RA-971: powerful enough to drive B&W DM305 speakers.



I am a casual buyer of Hi-Fi Choice and though I have been interested in hi-fi for 25 years (I am 45), it is only now that I can afford to invest in a system.

In Mauritius there is no specialist shop with listening room facilities simply because hi-fi is a luxury for the majority of the population, so auditioning is impossible.

I still have a copy of HFC 163 in which you recommended the following system: Philips CD721

**"In Mauritius there is no specialist shop with listening room facilities."**

CD player, Harman Kardon HK620 amp and B&W DM305 speakers. Since I have already bought the B&W speakers, I'd like to know whether, if I add the newer CD723 and more powerful HK640, I'll get good results.

Regarding the CD player, I may consider the Cambridge Audio

CD4SE or the AMC CD8A.

My musical tastes are quite ordinary: pop music – old groups such as Creedence Clearwater, Elvis Presley, Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd etc and songs of the '70s, '80s and '90s that are not over-worked by sound engineers. In fact I prefer the sound of older songs even if they are a bit 'crude'.  
Roland NG via e-mail

We haven't tested either of the alternatives you are suggesting for this system, so it's not possible to give an opinion on how the system will gel as you propose it. We would rather recommend some alternatives that should work well as a system and are currently available, the H/K amp is due for replacement itself quite shortly. A couple of adequately powerful amps to consider are Rotel's RA-971 and Technics' SU-A800D Mk2. Suitable CD sources would include the CD4SE you mention but not the AMC, alternatives include: the AMC CD9/DAC8 combo, Denon's DCD-635, Kenwood's DP-4090 and Teac's CDP-3450SE.

CHESHIRE CAT



Your reviews have made me question the choice of amp and CD player that I have just made. I was going to go for a Cyrus IIIi and an X-Ray to link to some Reference 3a Master Control speakers and add a PSX-R at a later stage when my wallet could cope.

I have a max of £1,400 to spend on an amp and CD player. My music taste includes jazz, vocals, some rock and dub. I don't want thumping bass but control. I want nice detail but it's not the most important. An open, well focused soundstage is very

desirable. However, what I want, more than anything else, is for the music to pick me up and take me for a ride. To grab my attention and make me tap my feet, pat the arm of the chair and grin. Widely.

I hate a cold, sterile, just-doing-the-job kind of sound.

What would you advise?

Andrew Morten via e-mail

Unfortunately we are not familiar with your loudspeakers, which makes amp selection a little tricky, but if we assume the 50 Watt output of the Cyrus IIIi is sufficient, this gives us some idea of what's

required. You say you want something up beat and entertaining, a strength best derived from the music itself but some kit is better at letting it through than average, and the following examples should all tickle your fancy. Try some of these combos for size: Musical Fidelity E624 and Densen Beat B-100 MkII, Pioneer PD-S505 Precision and A-300R Precision, Cyrus dAD3Q and Roksan Caspian or, if your speakers will work with less Watts, take the Helios Model 3/Musical Fidelity A2 combo for a spin, it's a lot of fun.

Densen Beat B-100 MkII.



HINTS & TIPS

When you're making changes to your system, trying to improve its sound – never make two or three changes at once. Always introduce changes one at a time, and listen to each change individually before moving on to the next. This applies with a vengeance if you're auditioning a new component; don't put a new amplifier in the system, and at the same time replace the speaker cables or interconnects – if the sound isn't quite right, you won't know where you are.

By proceeding one step at a time, you're better able to gauge the nature of each change made, and whether or not it's an improvement. If you jump straight in by making three changes at once, you'll quickly lose your bearings within the system. Although it's the overall sound that counts, it's instructive and useful to know which component made which difference – especially if things don't quite sound right and you find you need to retrace your steps.





# COMPETITION

## WIN THE ULTIMATE CYRUS AMPLIFIER

Answer our two simple questions and you could win a three-box amp from Cyrus, worth £2,694! Time to get scribblin'...

# CYRUS

**T**he amplifier is the heart of any hi-fi system. It controls the source inputs, turns signal into current and gets your loudspeakers making waves, keeping that musical life-blood flowing towards your ears. Neglect the need for a high-quality amp and you'll kill your system – stone dead.

If your amp fails to make the grade, all is not lost. Those bods at Cyrus have been beavering away on a new high-end, three-box pre/power design claimed to deliver "unrivalled performance at virtually any price". Such quality doesn't come cheap: the aCA7 pre-amp costs £798, while the aPA7 mono power amps will set you back a further £948 each (and you're going to need two). Serious

money indeed, but for the winner of our competition a complete set will cost the same as a single, solitary stamp! Fan-blinkin'—tastic!

So, let's get those details in full. The aCA7 offers the user five line-level inputs for CD, tuner and so-on, and two tape loops for recording and playback purposes. Circuitry is heavily revised from the company's previous preamps, and maintains a simplicity first philosophy while still incorporating convenience features like remote control, user-definable input sensitivity and Cyrus' MC-Bus system control circuitry, giving synchronised control of other Cyrus components. There's a headphone socket to the rear, driven by a dedicated amp, and much time has been spent to

ensure the volume control is supremely accurate. What's more, future upgrade paths are covered – just add a PSX-R power supply.

The aPA7 power amp, meanwhile, is a single-channel design supplying a meaty 150 Watts. It's the first Cyrus amp to use the company's 'zero feedback' technology, implementing circuitry which, Cyrus claims, negates the need for negative feedback to reduce distortion. The result is said to be a more natural and musical sound.

Tempting enough for you? OK, so reach for a pen and fill out that form pronto! Today you're just reading about this impressive new high-end amp, but who knows – tomorrow it could be making music in your very own home!







**HOW TO ENTER**

Answer the questions below by circling the correct answers, then fill in your name, address and daytime telephone number in the spaces given.

**The Questions**

1) What is Cyrus' integrated system control circuitry called?

- a) MC-Hammer
- b) MC-Taxi
- c) MC-Bus
- d) MC-Control

2) Which special technology is incorporated into the aPA7 power amp?

- a) Negative feedback
- b) Zero feedback
- c) Constructive feedback
- d) D-cup slingback

Post this entry form to:

Hi-Fi Choice Competition (CHFC904A)  
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 All entries must arrive by First Post, Thursday April 29th, 1999.  
 Please remember to tell us whether you are over 18 years of age.

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- Please tick here if you are under 18.
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Please tick one only of the following:

- Are you a current subscriber? OR
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- 1) The Closing Date for the Cyrus competition is First Post, Thursday April 29th 1999.
- 2) Winners of the Cyrus Competition will be judged from all correct entries submitted, and drawn at random after the Closing Date given in 1) above.
- 3) All winners will be notified by post.
- 4) The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- 5) The Cyrus Competition is not open to employees of Dennis Publishing Ltd, Cyrus nor their suppliers, agents or associates.
- 6) We regret this competition is open to UK residents only.
- 7) No cash alternatives will be offered.
- 8) We reserve the right to substitute alternative prizes with equal value to these shown, in the unlikely event of stock being temporarily unavailable.
- 9) By entering the competition, you agree to be bound by the rules.
- 10) All entries must be on this official entry coupon. If you do not wish to cut your magazine, you may send a photocopy of the page instead. Please note: only one entry form per household.

**CHFC 904A**

**CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING WINNER OF OUR JANUARY COMPETITION!**

■ In January's Audiovector competition the correct answers were:

- c) M3 or M3 Signature models
- b) July/August 1998

One pair of Audiovector M2 loudspeakers goes to:  
 G Morgan of Dyfed

If you don't wish to cut up your copy of Hi-Fi Choice, please photocopy this coupon.

TP1

TP2

aCA 7



# AMAZING grace

Wilson benesch's new high-end offering, the Bishop, is a positive beast of a speaker.

Paul Messenger finds out if its sound quality matches the £20,000 asking price.

**W**ilson benesch's £20,000 Bishop is the most expensive as well as one of the largest speakers to come my way in more than a decade of reviewing. It also comes soon after my review of three other large and pretentious designs from B&W, JM Lab and Ruark (*HFC* 186), in the full and uncomfortable knowledge that the Bishop costs almost as much as those three put together.

But I guess the asking price isn't really the issue. This isn't what you'd call the price-sensitive end of the marketplace. It's unlikely you're reading this review because of any serious purchase intentions — you're just curious to know whether the Bishop really cuts it, and to find out where and how it sits in the high-end hierarchy.

Let's start off by putting the Bishop into context. Wilson benesch is a relatively young (10-year-old) and very successful hi-fi company based in Sheffield, specialising in upmarket products and advanced materials, notably carbon fibre composites (CFCs). Following the international success of the ACT One, loudspeakers have become an increasingly important part of the WB operation (which has no connection whatsoever with US high-end speaker builder Wilson Audio).

The Bishop represents a logical development of the ACT One. Both use CFC enclosure panels and taper towards the rear, while the Bishop uses WB's new 'Tactic' driver technology. However, this top gun in the range is considerably larger and heavier, as well as more expensive, with a complex twin cabinet construction, and no fewer than 10 drive units in each of the loudspeakers. Which does at least go some way towards explaining the price tag. Whether the

sound quality can justify this extravagant engineering content is the key question for this review to address.

Before getting onto judgements, there's a bit more ground to cover. It's unusually tall (1.6m), and quite deep too (600mm), but the front view is an exceedingly slim 220mm, and the detailing quite delightful, so the

end result is imposing but exceptionally elegant. Or it would be with the grille in place, I assume, as the curved profile needed to cover the magnets and frames of the visible bass drivers would complete an almost aerofoil profile.

The tilted, mitre-shaped CFC top gave the Bishop its name, while the sculpted MDF base has a CFC-style surface finish, and cunningly conceals a row of eight terminals. The 'spare pair' provide attenuation options of around 1dB in the mid-band and 3dB in the treble. The front baffles are

small sealed back, faces forward, and operates right up to the crossover point (c2.8kHz) to the 25mm soft dome tweeter.

The Tactic driver is unique in several respects. The frames are machined from solid aluminium, to give a very open, unobstructive profile to the diaphragm, the more so because the tiny magnet structures use ultra-powerful, super compact rare earth alloy magnets (NeFeB). The cone material is a three-layer, self-bonding woven Isotactic polymer, with claimed characteristics which compare very favourably to the alternatives, while offering much better sample consistency than WB's previous favourite, felted paper.

## SOUND QUALITY

The Bishop's debut was inauspicious. You could say it marched onto the stage, fluffed its lines and fell flat on its bum. (To be fair, it had spent the previous couple of months at a hi-fi dealer, and arrived *sans* spikes.) The room balance was actually very promising, but the sound as a whole didn't seem to gel properly, despite occasional glimpses of true potential. Over the next four days I persuaded it to get a whole lot better, first by using WB's mega-spikes (which literally nail the speaker to the floor), and then by discovering slack in, and tightening up, the 70-odd bolts which hold the drivers in place.

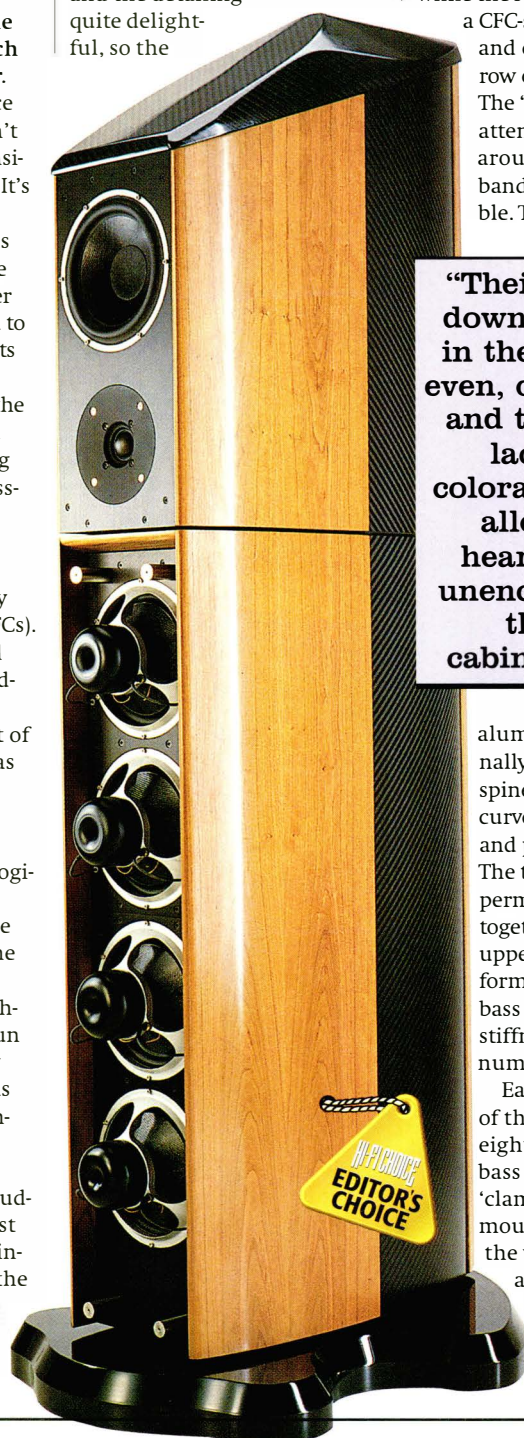
It was really starting to motor, when WB called to say the speakers were needed elsewhere for a week. When returned, WB had done a quick rebuild job, which included a number of crossover network changes, and reduced bass-chamber damping. The sound was a whole lot better too — even though the topmost main drivers still had slack bolts.

With the second coming, the Bishop strutted its stuff to very great effect. The whole thing timed much better than before, providing a rare — and probably unique — combination of neu-

**"Their success is down to subtlety, in the beautifully even, open balance, and the uncanny lack of box colorations, which allow you to hear the music unencumbered by the usual cabinet grunge."**

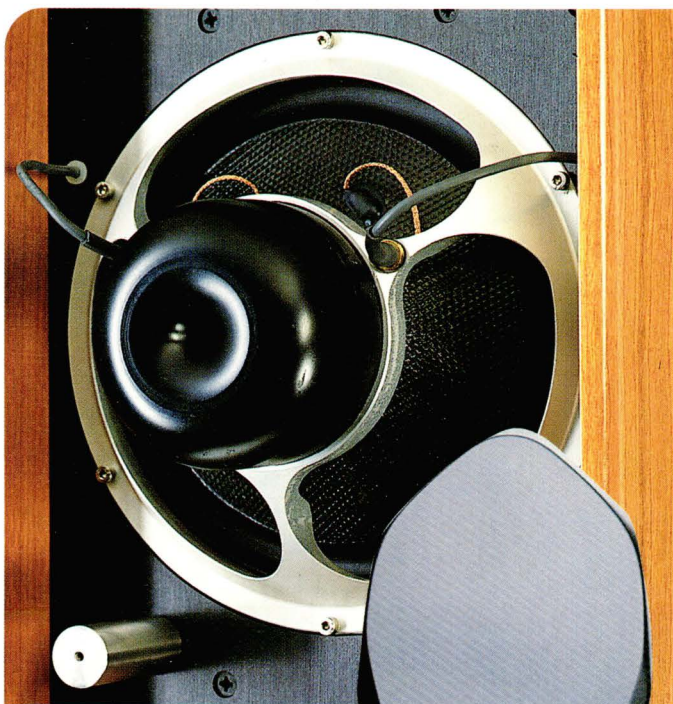
aluminium (backed internally by MDF), the rear spine MDF, while the curved sides are part CFC and part wood veneered. The two enclosures are permanently fixed together, most of the upper chamber actually forming part of the total bass enclosure, while total stiffness is enhanced by numerous braces.

Each speaker uses nine of the new Tactic drivers, eight of which operate as bass drivers in four 'clamshell isobarik' pairs, mounted face-to-face all the way up the front, and loaded by the sealed enclosure of roughly 70 litre capacity. The ninth Tactic has its own



○ The huge 1.6m Bishop uses CFC enclosure panels and boasts no less than 10 drivers.





◉ The Tactic's basket is machined from solid aluminium and provides maximum ventilation for the isobarik drivers.

tral, full-bandwidth transparency with exceptional temporal musical coherence.

What wrought the transformation? A key change from the original version was the removal of a capacitor feeding the midrange driver, effectively converting the speaker from a three-way to a 'two-and-a-half-way' configuration. There's now no phase lag from the bass to the midrange, which I suspect is why the timing is significantly improved, but there's a downside too, as the midrange driver now has to deal with all the bass energy, and the consequent cone excursion, which will limit the system's power handling, and increase midband distortion when playing bass-heavy material at high levels.

I hardly ever found this a problem, but this speaker sounds so clean, there's a strong incentive to drive it hard with the right material. The opening section of Prodigy's *Smack My Bitch Up* is relatively restrained with mostly mid and treble content, positively encouraging irresponsible use of the volume control. About 50 seconds into the track all hell breaks loose in the bass. The topmost driver developed massive excursion – far greater than that experienced by the 'clamshell' bass drivers – and the midband inevitably lost its com-

posure. I should stress that you do have to work them very hard, and with the wrong sort of material, to achieve this effect. But I do wonder whether WB might better use its mid-band 'attenuator' terminal to provide a high-pass filter option for those occasions when you feel like playing the music extra loudly.

I loved the bass range clarity and freedom from 'thickening' of the ACT One's curved, part-CFC enclosure, and the same was immediately evident in the Bishop. This time, however, there's a lot more power, weight and smoothness than in the smaller earlier model. One gets so used to the 'singalongbass' character of most commercial speakers (especially from vinyl's sometimes all too obvious recorded rumble), the lack of

**“One gets so used to the ‘singalongbass’ character of most commercial speakers the lack of such character here sounds initially strange and rather lightweight.”**

such character here sounds initially strange and rather lightweight. When the bass does come in, however, it does so with considerable weight and consummate clarity.

The balance is flat and smooth, giving an in-room, far-field trace of exceptional wide-band neutrality, holding within +/-5dB limits from the 20Hz bass right up to 18kHz. There's no 'dip' through the crossover region, rather the suggestion of a couple of slight peaks at 2kHz and 3.5kHz, which correspond closely to the crossover minima. The 'line-source' bass array seems unusually effective in minimising room-mode peaks and troughs.

The exceptional clarity through the bass leaves the midband unusually exposed to scrutiny. This is beautifully clear, open and transparent for the most part, especially when using vinyl, but a slight forwardness does tend to draw attention to itself with harsher sources or mixes, and I feel there may still be

some scope for improved smoothness through the mid-to-treble crossover zone.

The mid/treble axis is a few degrees above seated ear level, which gives an unusually high effective sound source and an unfamiliar but very seductive spaciousness to the whole sound. While it doesn't have quite the pin-point image focus of smaller speakers, the narrow front and exceptional freedom from boxiness gives excellent lateral precision with fine depth perspectives too.

I did miss the sort of dynamic drive and grip I associate with very high sensitivity speakers – the Bishop is a respectable 89dB/W or thereabouts, alongside a reasonably easy (4.5 Ohm minimum) load. But the excellent box control ensures that the dynamic range is very wide, retrieving coherent information from way down deep into the mix. The Beastie Boys' *Hello Nasty* never sounded as nice – nor as clear!

#### CONCLUSION

This review might have turned into a bit of a saga, but once we got them working properly, the Bishops set a very impressive benchmark for all-round performance. Their success is down to subtlety, in the beautifully even, open balance, and the lack of box colorations, which allow you to hear the music unencumbered by the usual cabinet grunge. The limited loudness potential is the unavoidable price that goes with the excellent time coherence.

If I do have reservations, they're to do with those fiddly little driver fixing screws, and whether they'll stay tight. And a price tag which is determinedly elitist. Those apart, I really enjoyed my all too brief time with the Bishops, and am seriously depressed at the thought of them disappearing back up to Sheffield.

#### VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£20,000.00

📄 Astonishingly clean, clear, deep and smooth bass delivery, and a beautiful overall balance too. Subtle and refined.

■ FIVE YEAR GUARANTEE

📞 Wilson benesch (0114) 285 2656



# TEAC

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Chief Musical Officers' Warning



# THE DIGITAL domain

Wadia's range-topping one-box CD player also doubles as a digital preamplifier.

Paul Messenger tries it for size.

This highly-regarded US brand, taking its curious name from the co-founder's father, is very much a creature of the digital engineering age. It was founded some 10 years ago by computer scientists with a passion for hi-fi, who could see ways of applying their specialist digital know-how to the delicate art of CD music reproduction, and is unusual – possibly unique – among high-end manufacturers in restricting its activities solely to the digital arena.

This 860 is the top model of three integrated players, and at £7,450 is a very expensive proposition indeed (though Wadia has some separate CD components that cost considerably more!). However, the 860 is actually rather more than just a CD player – it also acts as a high-quality digital preamplifier. This might not seem a pressing need at present, but does offer at least one interesting and useful feature, and the potential for increasing usefulness in the future, as more digital sources become available.

The heart of this CD player is Wadia's special digital-to-analogue decoding technology, based on 24-bit architecture and incorporating a 100-step digital-domain volume control with a 50dB range. The idea is that you connect the player directly to a stereo power amplifier, avoiding the need for a preamp with its analogue volume control. There are four external digital inputs (each with a different type of connector) but no A-to-D encoders, so

○ Not only higher, the Wadia is deeper and heavier than most other CD players.

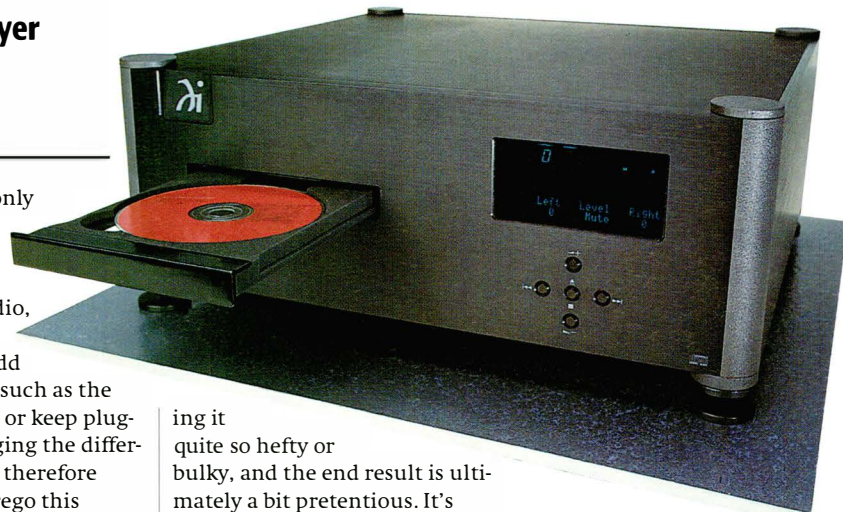
this approach is only practical if you don't want to use regular analogue sources (vinyl, radio, TV sound etc), or are prepared to add an external ADC (such as the £3,250 Wadia 17), or keep plugging and unplugging the different bits. I suspect therefore that most will forego this direct-to-power-amp route, and treat the 860 as a straight CD player, with its internal volume control set at maximum.

Going some way towards justifying its extravagant price tag,

**“One could highlight various specific strengths, but the firm, dry, and exceptionally deep bass particularly stood out, as did the sweet and uncommonly well controlled treble.”**

this is a monumental piece of engineering, turning the scales to an improbable 48 lbs. You'll not only need some pretty substantial support furniture, you'll also need to accommodate its unusual depth, of 16 inches, against the 'standard' 17 inch width. That said, build quality is absolutely magnificent, using thick aluminium panels and pillars, and the presentation is most attractive too, with just five basic facia buttons and a rather small though informative display.

The handset matches the machine, but as it's a handset, there's no good reason for mak-



ing it quite so hefty or bulky, and the end result is ultimately a bit pretentious. It's not alone in this – this is a common failing with upmarket hi-fi, so anxious to justify price tags it can lose sight of the objective. A handset ought to be slim enough to hold and operate easily in one hand, not threatening to put you in plaster if you drop it on your toe, and have the simplest possible button layout. This Wadia example fares poorly on all three parameters.

## SOUND QUALITY

The CD mechanism is a high-spec example of the Teac VRDS drives, and handled my most difficult damaged discs with little audible complaint and no mistracking at all. As for the sound quality, beguiling was the first word that came to mind, with a studied neutrality and excellent broad-band dynamic range consistency, proving a superb match for the Spendor BC1 speakers I was using at the time. One could highlight various specific strengths, but the firm, dry, and exceptionally deep bass particularly stood out, as did the sweet and uncommonly well controlled treble.

If the 860 did have a character of its own, there seemed to be a slightly 'shiny' quality, and some lack of extreme top-end transparency. Both of the characteristics seemed more obvious when I changed over to the Rehdeko RK175 speakers, but were substantially ameliorated by changing from Nordost Red Dawn to Lavardin interconnect cables. With a CD player that sounds this precise and transparent, it's essential to spend the time, effort and money

○ The 860 combines custom electronics with a Teac VRDS drive.

needed to get the most out of it.

More intriguing was the effect of bypassing the preamp and connecting the 860 directly to the power amps. This brought an extra level of clarity and cleanliness, though the tonal match was rather less satisfactory, and there was no option to try alternative cables. I also found the total 50dB dynamic range of the digital volume control a little restricting, especially as only the top 25dB maintained full CD resolution, and that bypassing it (by selecting the 100dB setting) gave a further slight improvement.

The Rehdekos also made the timing limitations of the Wadia more obvious. Again it's impressively evenhanded, controlled and consistent, but doesn't have the fastest sound around, or the punchiest dynamics. As with most high-end gear, it's a matter of priorities, and there's no question the 860's superior neutrality and transparency bears the stamp of the genuine high end.



WADIA VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£7,450
<p>Wonderful build quality, it sounds beautifully neutral, transparent and evenhanded; usefully upgradeable DAC.</p> <p>■ FIVE YEAR GUARANTEE ON ELECTRONICS, ONE YEAR ON TRANSPORT</p> <p>MDC (01992) 573030</p>	



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# PART OF the furniture

If you're after a non-intrusive yet communicative loudspeaker, then look no further. **Richard Black** investigates KEF Audio's new RDM 3.

**M**y first exposure to 'real' hi-fi was via KEF speakers, but the old 104/2s looked nothing like this. Even though one suspects the cabinet is surely made of MDF (as closer inspection reveals to be the case) it's hard not to be impressed by that ultra-high-gloss veneer on the sides. The gold screws round the drivers are a nice touch, too, and the proportions are nicely chosen to make the speaker blend reasonably well into smallish rooms.

In fact, the total capacity of the main cabinet enclosure is given as only 27 litres (plus a separate 6.5 litres for the midrange/treble driver), which is in line with the current fash-

◉ Classic KEF ingredients: Uni-Q mid/top and 'racetrack' bass driver.

ion for quite small floor-standers that offer only slightly more capacity than a stand-mount speaker while giving a smaller footprint and saving the extra cost of a stand. But the extra frontal area afforded by going floorstanding does allow for a bit more freedom in proportioning drivers and ports, and the elliptical bass driver has a radiating area of

**"If you turn up the wick it can get quite lively, even boisterous, and if the music you're playing is emotionally strong stuff you won't be missing out."**

some 50 square inches, equivalent to a typical 10-inch round driver. Above it sits a KEF 'Uni-Q', a combined midrange and treble unit, with the promise of good off-axis integration.

Construction is good, if not stunning. Remove the bass driver (which is fitted without any kind of gasket) and its pressed steel chassis becomes evident. Behind it sits the crossover, a moderately complex affair realised with well-rated components but no audiophile tweaker. However, it certainly looks robust. Internal wiring is with KEF's own cable (a basic figure-8) and connects to the outside world through two sets of terminals at the rear, allowing for single- or bi-wiring. The reflex port, nicely tapered at the front, is cut off sharply at the rear end.

## SOUND QUALITY

From that description of the build, and also from the appearance, one might be tempted to think that this speaker isn't aimed at the full-on audiophile: rather, the fit-and-forget part of the market, which is fair enough. The sound ties in with this. If you want the audiophile business – stonking bass, vast dynamics, oodles of detail – you may find better elsewhere, including other models from KEF.

No, where the RDM 3 scores is in not forcing itself on your attention. Don't get me wrong, I don't want to imply that all it can do is play background music. In fact, if you turn up the wick it can get quite lively, even boisterous, and if the music you're playing is emotionally strong stuff you won't be missing out. But the speaker itself is rather good at sinking modestly into the background, and that's a useful attribute.

Listening analytically, bass is slightly lumpy and ultimately limited in extension – on The Mavericks' superbly produced album *Trampoline*, for instance, which has some excellent bass, the RDM 3 made a valiant effort but clearly lost some weight and never quite suc-

ceeded in integrating the drums with the rest of the band. On good piano recordings, which benefit greatly from really deep bass even though there's little energy there, some of the instrument's scale was lost too.

Symphony orchestra and jazz band seemed less affected by this, the largely neutral mid-band (with possibly just a shade of lift where mid merges into bass) going a long way to convince the listener that everything's neatly in place. And in the extreme high treble the odd sibilant sound – cymbals,

voice, violins – could spark off some excess brightness from time to time. Imaging is excellent if you're in the 'hot seat' but ironically (given this is where the Uni-Q should score) falls away noticeably even a couple of feet away. Sensitivity is moderate and maximum output is healthy: I clipped a 100 Watt amp into the speakers without serious upset, though the sound inevitably coarsens just a little.

## CONCLUSION

But put on any decent recording at sensible listening levels and just let it play, and it becomes obvious that those flaws just mentioned are indeed minor in the scheme of things. This is a speaker that positively encourages long-term listening. As with most things in life, you have a choice: thrills and spills, or dependable performance on a slightly less edge-of-the-seat level? This is the latter. Pipe and slippers, in the very best sense of the term.



## KEF VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£1,499.99

Definitely a speaker aimed at long-term satisfaction rather than immediate impressiveness, and it succeeds well.

■ FIVE YEAR GUARANTEE

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# SILVER sound machines

Jason Kennedy experiences NAD's new SilverLine series S300 amplifier and S500 CD player. And wonders if this budget specialist can give the high-end a run for its money?



**W**hy has it taken NAD so long to break free of its budget shackles and produce serious kit? Is it that the budget market has become so competitive that it is having to look elsewhere for customers? Or has it seen an opening in the mid to high end that others have overlooked? According to Product Manager Cas Oostvogel it is more difficult to make a good budget product, with all the cost constraints involved, than it is to make a decent high-end one. And, in his opinion, there are plenty of high-end products that don't offer very good value. With Silverline NAD wants to show the world that it can make sonically uncompromised products for less.

Silverline was designed in the UK but is built in Denmark, which marks as big a change for the brand as the upmarket prices. The S300 integrated amplifier and S500 CD player cost £1,900 and £1,100 respectively, reflecting their luxury build, beautiful lustre finish and in the case of the amp, excessive weight. The latter is a real brute of an integrated, its 27.5kg mass outdoing many a serious power amp, its dual

mono construction (separate toroidal power transformers) and double walled fascia having plenty to do with this. Externally there are a few hints as to its aspirations. WBT speaker terminals, which are pretty scarce even at this price, and floating earth phono sockets, a good sign of intent. And there's no avoiding the serious heat sinking down either flank, which turns the S300 into something of a secondary room heater when it's running.

The S500 is likewise quite plushly fitted out with balanced and RCA analogue outputs next to XLR and BNC digital outputs should you wish to circumvent the Crystal CS4390 24-bit converter, something that's unlikely to appeal for a while to come I suspect. The controls on both player and remote are pretty basic — there appears to be no programming options or display dim, just alternative time displays. The clock system is of a new variety to me with M and S included to indicate minutes and seconds. Happily it's very clear and easily read at a distance. The machine won't go straight into play when you select a track, and

**“In hi-fi terms the S500 seems to be a more serious proposition than the S300, but then it's designed to be at least as good as the S100/S200 pre/power combo, thus inevitably keeps something in reserve.”**

the button that serves to shut down the S300 has no function on the S500 remote. But a solution is on the way in the form of the S70 remote, a dedicated unit for the whole Silverline range that will be upgradeable to include future products, although price and availability are yet to be confirmed.

## SOUND QUALITY

Initially I used the S300 amp instead of the DNM 3C/Roksan ROK-S1 pre/power combo that usually does the amplification in my system, and have to say that the remote control combined with the rela-

**○ High-end aspirations are reflected in the luxury casework, minimalist features and the amp's excessive mass.**

tively broad usable volume range made the changeover pretty painless. But given the relatively crude functionality of the remote, the fact that it's not necessary to make fine adjustments is essential. The remote doesn't really live up to the build and sound of the amp, its wider selection of inputs suggests it was meant for another component and its a good thing there's a decent system remote on the way.

Another niggle is the limited selection of socketry — this amounts to four pairs of line-level phonos and a balanced input for CD with one tape out, which is hardly sufficient for many modern systems. You'll probably need to get an interconnect made up with XLR sockets on one end if your CDP doesn't have balanced out.

Having got the above off my chest I have to say that once the slightly bass-forward balance had been accommodated the amp began to shine. Its 100 Watts proved more than sturdy enough to control the tricky load presented by B&W's







Nautilus 802s. In some respects the amp seemed a little 'heavy' in balance for these restrained speakers and there was a slight loss of clarity at high frequencies after the reference amps, but there was no disguising the ease, power and breadth of dynamics on tap. Factors which encouraged me to listen

at the sort of levels that even B&W engineers would enjoy.

The amp's slight heaviness refers to a prodigious bass performance that sounds tactile and muscular with most material, but occasionally a little too full. For instance where a double bass plays across its whole range the lower notes become a little bloated. It's the one area where a drier speaker would be a better match, but given the price of the amp this is probably a good thing, as very few of the speakers it's likely to partner have the bottom-end capabilities of the N802s. I was tempted to suspect that the amp was having trouble controlling the speaker in this respect, but it's not a characteristic that I have encountered with previous amps, even those that have been struggling with the task.



While it's not the most transparent of amplifiers the S300 has a very agile and expressive midband, voices are more captivating than usual and instruments take on colour and depth that are often denied them. This is accompanied by a keen but not unduly emphasised

sense of timing. It doesn't resort to projecting the treble to define its leading edges but reproduces them with as much snap as the source can produce. Imaging is likewise very strong, the amp responding to the atmosphere of recordings in a natural and, where appropriate, expansive manner. Which is one area where the S500 CD player seemed a little lacking next to my admittedly dearer reference (Acoustic Precision Eikos), the NAD producing a relatively flat version of events.

Ironically it was only when I used the S500 in the context of

my usual electronics that its capabilities became more apparent. I have a sneaking suspicion that the comments about depth above related to the Pioneer's Legato Link HF enhancement technology rather than any lack on the NAD's behalf. Because there was no shortage of image depth and width with many discs, it's possibly a little more restrained and dry, but it's by no means flat. Its 24-bit DAC and extensive power supply regulation no doubt had something to do with the extremely convincing way in which the player reproduced the timbre, dynamic and recording style of various discs with such distinction. *Supper's Ready* (from *Foxtrot* by Genesis) has rarely revealed so much character and Tori Amos' *Pretty Good Year* has never been as emotionally powerful.

In hi-fi terms the S500 seems to be a more serious proposition than the S300, but then it's designed to be at least as good as the S100/S200 pre/power combo, thus inevitably keeps something in reserve for more demanding duties. It's a pity we didn't get this player in last month's medium/high-end CDP test, I suspect its bass performance alone would have put it among the winners — especially when used via the balanced outputs which double the output of



the SE alternatives to 4.4 Volts (peak). When used with the S300 this results in a more relaxed balance with apparently better timing, although the player didn't seem particularly forward or chronologically restrained before the switch.

**CONCLUSION**

It looks as though NAD has succeeded in showing some of the high-end brands that it's possible to make uncompromised products in nice boxes without having to charge a fortune. The build of both units is exemplary and the results suggest that there has been considerable attention paid to the details that matter. The S300 amplifier is a worthy challenger to the likes of Krell's KAV300i, with considerable muscle on tap and a character that is clean, relaxed and captivating — before I went back to my reference gear I was seriously considering hanging on to it, even with the irritating remote.

I thought even more highly of the CD player — what initially seemed like dynamic and spatial restraint came around to sounding like excellent low level detail resolution. The S500 is, in the context of my system at least, the more competitive of the two units. But it would only take a slightly different speaker for the amp to make the running as well and I have to applaud NAD for doing such a nice job with Silverline.

VERDICT-S300	
SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★
PRICE	£1,900
<p>■ A true dual mono integrated with remote control that can reproduce timing and timbre with considerable aplomb. Only five inputs however.</p> <p>■ TWO YEAR GUARANTEE</p> <p>📞 Audio Club (01296) 482017</p>	
VERDICT-S500	
SOUND	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★
PRICE	£1,100
<p>■ A 24-bit DAC-equipped giant killer with very high resolution, killer bass and a good selection of socketry.</p> <p>■ TWO YEAR GUARANTEE</p> <p>📞 Audio Club (01296) 482017</p>	



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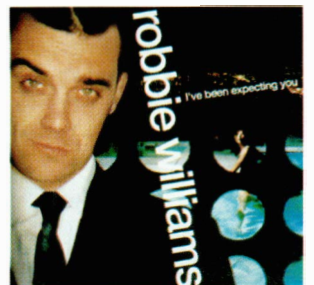




**PMC**

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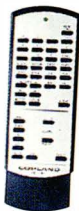
'I've been expecting you' the album: Mastered and listened to in Robbie's front room on PMC



# COPLAND CSA-28

About a year ago, this model replaced the CSA-14, which had been around for five years and had become Copland's best-selling amplifier. The design has changed incrementally rather than radically to meet evolving market requirements, the most visible change being the inclusion of a remote handset. This can select inputs and adjust the volume, and also provides the wherewithal to control a Copland CD player.

As the maker points out, remote control receiver circuits always involve an element of compromise. The designers feel they will inevitably inject some noise into the audio circuits. For this reason Copland has opted for a unique split arrangement. On one position of the source selector, the IR receiver responds to commands, and in this mode the source selected is indicated by one of a ring of LEDs, one per input. If the source selector is turned away from this position, a 'manual' LED acts as a pointer, and the remote control circuits are switched off. This is the purist position, and it does indeed give slightly improved transparency and 'air', though it is difficult to believe that it is impossible to design a truly transparent-sounding remote, especially as most remote processors revert to non-scanning or 'sleep' mode when not



**"The Copland was one of the better all-rounders in the hands-on testing. It demonstrated a firm grip and an often quite sophisticated way of handling difficult material."**

required.

The design is otherwise closely related to the CSA-14, albeit in a slightly slimmed and still more elegant case, with the same hybrid configuration based around E88CC double triodes in the pre-differential driver stage, downstream of the volume control, and an improved diode rectifier on the well-endowed power supply (400VA with 60,000pF capacitance for a 60 Watts per channel power rating, or 120 Watts into 4 Ohms). Five inputs are provided, including an MM phono and a rather ungenerous four line inputs, one of which is the tape circuit. Tape monitoring is available.



## SOUND QUALITY

At least one report that the author has seen describes the CSA28 in valve amplifier terms as 'creamy', but the reality is that there are few obvious valve-like cues in this design, for which the all-solid state Primare 30.1 (coincidentally made in the same factory) is a better candidate. As far as the panel was concerned, the CSA28 was a little dry and bright, with sometimes slightly garish "Technicolor" tonal hues in material rich in the lower registers, though paradoxically the amplifier often sounded dry, even bleached of tonal colours when the lower frequencies were not prominent in the mix. The performer's "enthusiasm and sense of drama" came through on the Dohnányi, and the "combination of analysis and passion" it brought to the Volodos, in particular, attracted much praise.

The panel's view that this amp is a little sharp and almost excessively detailed, and that it has a rather constrained sense of soundstaging and a loss of the solidity and image presence, is hard to refute. Still, the Copland was one of the better all-rounders in the hands-on testing. It demonstrated a firm grip and an often

● The CSA-28 is closely related to the CSA14, although slightly slimmer.

quite sophisticated way of handling difficult material, and its apparent edginess turns out to be speaker dependent: the Copland simply provides enough rope for partnering hardware to hang itself.

## CONCLUSION

Copland amplifiers are never less than classy, and this one is no exception, but there is a suspicion that the slight opacity associated with some recent designs has been over-compensated here. Good, then, but check with your system, and avoid bright or edgy speakers and sources. Recommended subject to this constraint. **AG**

## VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★

**BUILD** ★★★★★

**VALUE** ★★★★★

**PRICE** £1,249.00

■ A lean, clean dream amplifier, but perhaps a little too dry and desiccated for some tastes.

■ ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Absolute Sounds, 58 Durham Road, London SW20

☎ (07000) ABSOLUTE (0181 971 3909)

## THE LAB REPORT

As an updated, remote-controlled version of the earlier CSA14, the CSA28, too, employs a mix of valve driver stages with a bipolar output stage. This leads to an unusual, though by no means worrisome specification. For example, although it's not uncommon to find distortion increasing with increasing output power, it is unusual to witness such a linear progression of distortion with output voltage. In this case, THD starts around 0.01 per cent at 1Vrms (0.1W/8 Ohms or 0.25W/4 Ohms) and climbs linearly to 0.1

● Good all-round compatibility.



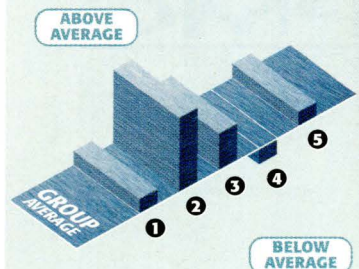
per cent at 27Vrms (90W/8 Ohms) as higher-order harmonics join the otherwise 'sweet' 2nd harmonic residual.

In practice, such a smooth transition is likely to have nothing but a very positive influence over sound quality, especially as the amplifier's 16.9A current reservoir (5msec, <1 per cent THD), also suggests good all-round compatibility. The final dynamic output of the CSA28 is a respectable 102W, 179W, 239W and 219W (14.8A) into 8, 4, 2 and 1 Ohm loads with continuous ratings of 77W/125W into 8/4 Ohms respectively. Add to this a low -87.4dB noise (re. 1W/8 Ohms), a sensible 260mV input sensitivity, high >16V overload margins and a remarkably extended bass response (-3dB @ 2Hz), and the CSA28 is looking very good indeed. **PMI**

## HOW IT COMPARES

In this instance, the use of valve technology has harmed neither the amplifier's tolerance of difficult speakers or its pattern of distortion. Different speakers will be driven consistently but, though brighter sounding models are unlikely sweetened.

- 1 DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT 10%
- 2 SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE 50%
- 3 AUDIBLE DISTORTION 25%
- 4 NOISE -10%
- 5 OVERALL COMPATABILITY 10%



## SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	RATED	ACTUAL
■ Continuous Power Output, 8 Ohms	60W	77W
■ Distortion 20Hz-20kHz, 1W/8 Ohms	<0.1%	0.02%
■ Input Sensitivity (CD/Aux)	120mV	261mV



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# THULE Spirit IA 100

The Thule Spirit IA 100 front panel is home to a single multifunction control and a read-out which shows the input and volume level. A remote control (not the one illustrated in the instruction leaflet) adds some minor additional features, notably display dim/off for the volume read-out section of the display, tone controls which don't actually work with this model, a balance control and a set of tuner and CD player controls which enable it to act as a system remote. The IA 100 is not exactly swimming in inputs, of which there are five, with just one tape circuit offering full in and output connections. However, it is possible to operate the amp as a power amp, or to extract a preamplifier feed for bi-amping purposes.

The solitary operating control is spun to adjust a digital potentiometer in 79 discrete 1dB steps. When pressed it changes inputs and selects tape monitor, and when held for two seconds it invokes standby — or it is supposed to — neither of these functions worked on test. The distributor is adamant that this is the first sample to suffer this problem, and noted wryly that if everything was always perfect, you wouldn't need guarantees. Quite.

The amplifier is just as purist and well screwed together inside. The power supply is driven by a 500VA transformer and 40,000pF of reservoir capacity, and claims no overall global feedback, though



**“There was little wrong with the midband, which seemed decently spacious and refined with simple recordings, but the amplifier's poise faded when the music became more difficult and multilayered.”**

this is partly semantic since local 'error correction' is applied as necessary. Switching (aka crossover) distortion has been addressed in a 'novel' way, which is Thule says reduces the level of artefacts and converts what remains into a musically benign form, while the good claimed damping factor should maintain control at all frequencies.

#### SOUND QUALITY

A bit of a curate's egg, this one. There was little wrong with the midband, which seemed

decently spacious and refined with simple recordings, but the amplifier's poise faded when the music became more difficult and multilayered. The treble had a distinct sting in the tail, with a glassy piano sound in the upper registers.

One panellist confirmed the Thule's inability to cope adequately with complex material: "It had trouble with lots of things going on at once. There was a halo around the notes (Volodos), and the whole effect was a bit amorphous. With individual percussion sounds (Dohnányi) it seemed quite nicely etched, with delicate tones, and I could hear all the instruments, even the quiet background one. However, the music became sandpaper and rough around the edges when things became complicated". The bass was variously described as "very good" and "a bit boomy", depending more on the music

than the listener, but there was wide agreement about the flat stereo imagery and the rasping string tone.

This is a curious amplifier — capable of sounding clean and refined one minute, with a winning languidness which worked well with

◉ The Thule's single control is designed to perform three functions.

Claire Martin, for example, but which sounded out of its depth when pushed hard, not necessarily at high volumes, but simply with complex material.

#### CONCLUSION

There's a potentially good amplifier in here, but it trips up as the octane level increases and treble takes on an edgy tone. Build quality, however, is good, and in purely material terms value for money seems strong. But people don't buy amplifiers simply because they offer good material value. **AG**

#### VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£600.00

■ The *ne plus ultra* example of Danish cool fails to live up to the promise with a fundamentally decent sound that grew stressed when the going became complicated.

#### ■ TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Glave Ltd, Unit 7 Wren Industrial Estate, Coltred Road, Maidstone ME15 9XN.  
☎ (01622) 664070

## THE LAB REPORT

Thule can always be relied upon for innovative ideas and the IA100 is no exception. The digital volume control, for example, has a calibration error of 1.5dB over the top 60dB of its range and a channel balance error of just 0.2dB, which is within Thule's specification. However, possibly because of Thule's proprietary local compensation (cf feedback), the IA100's distortion seems unusually dependent on level, frequency and load.

For example, THD at 1kHz varies from 0.009 to 0.16 per cent over 2/3 of its avail-

◉ Innovative but technically flawed.



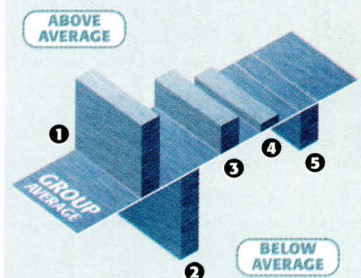
able power range and increases from 0.009 to 0.06 per cent from 1kHz to 20kHz at a fixed 0dBW output. The output profile is very unusual, showing distortion minima occurring at 12W, 25W, 20W and 10W into 8, 4, 2 and 1 Ohm loads respectively, but building either side (i.e. at lower and higher outputs). So, the 126W/8 Ohm output may be within Thule's 100W specification, but its +/-30A/1 msec current rating looks seriously compromised in the light of the mere 6.8A and 5A obtained in our tests over slightly longer 5msec and 10msec bursts. Dynamic outputs as high as 260W may be maintained into 4 Ohms, but this collapses

to 75W and just 25W into 2 and 1 Ohm loads, implying the IA100 doesn't have quite the 'spirit' its name might suggest. **PMi**

## HOW IT COMPARES

This amplifier is dominated by a unique pattern of distortion that not only varies as the volume is raised and lowered, but also changes in line with both music content and severity of the speaker load.

1 DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	50%
2 SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	-55%
3 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	20%
4 NOISE	5%
5 OVERALL COMPATIBILITY	-25%



## SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Continuous Power Output, 8 Ohms	100W	125W
■ Distortion 20Hz-20kHz, 1W/8 Ohms	0.05%	0.06%
■ Input Sensitivity (CD/Aux)	500mV	565mV



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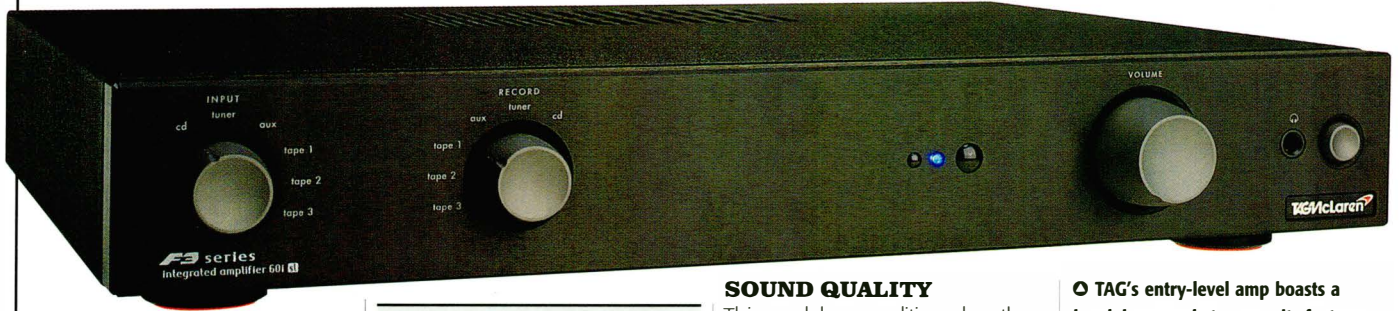
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# TAG McLaren 60i



**H**ere is the entry-level model in the TAG McLaren (née Audiolab) lineup: a sleek, slimline amplifier modelled on the 8000LX which offers an absolute minimum of controls, and 60 Watts of grunt per channel. A J-FET input ensures a high input impedance, helping to avoid unwanted interactions with source components with high output impedance values, and DC offsets are minimised with a servo instead of blocking capacitors, which also helps ensure a wide DC bandwidth and minimises group delay. The output stage is complementary and bipolar, and comprehensive output protection is claimed to be aurally non-intrusive. Until it is needed, that is.

There are just three controls, one for volume, a source selector and a record selector, and there is no remote control. The flexibility of the design is quite impressive however. There is no phono input, but there are three line inputs and three tape circuits, all of which allow off-tape monitoring by jiggling the two input controls appropriately. The 60i is also one of the few specialist amplifiers with a headphone socket, and a preamp

**“Following one rather mediocre showing from another amplifier, the panel found this model a refreshingly analytical improvement, with good imagery and depth.”**

out/power amp in facility is also available as an option.

Build quality is exemplary for an amplifier in this price area, with abundant signs of attention to detail, and good materials used throughout. The amp also looks clean cut and modern, but curiously lacking in character – more Lexus than Mercedes one might say – despite the unique grey alloy turned controls. The low contrast panel graphics can be difficult to read in some lighting, and the mechanical input selectors feel stiff. In these areas the Audiolab was both more practical and more visually distinctive, though clearly it was not constructed to the same standards of excellence.

## SOUND QUALITY

This model was auditioned on three separate occasions on two days, and was also used as a reference on one of those days. On the whole it received about average marks. It was palpably quite distinctive, but although it started out strongly, in sustained listening it didn't wear particularly well.

The hands-on listening showed this to be a consistent amplifier with different CD players and speakers. In every case it sounded bold and outgoing, with a strong, propulsive bass and a prominent treble which was nevertheless lacking in air. Ultimately it left the amplifier sounding rather dry and inexpressive.

Following one rather mediocre showing from another amplifier, the panel found this model a refreshingly analytical improvement. It was said to have good imagery and depth and well integrated voices on the two vocal test tracks, but even here there were comments about a “shouty” quality in the Bill Morrissey track. On the other presentations the panel was slightly less tolerant of what was perceived as the 60i's “muddled presentation” in the Dohnányi, and the “recessed” piano in the Volodos. There were

○ TAG's entry-level amp boasts a headphone socket among its features.

many other comments along similar lines, which distilled to their fundamentals suggested significant losses of clarity and some roughness under pressure.

## CONCLUSION

The Audiolab 8000LX from which the 60i was derived was the weakest model in that now defunct range, and the TAG McLaren has no difficulty in showing it a clean set of heels. Taking due account of price and build quality, this is a strong performer, but in the final analysis not quite strong enough for a formal commendation. **AG**

## VERDICT

<b>SOUND</b>	★★★★☆
<b>BUILD</b>	★★★★★
<b>VALUE</b>	★★★★☆
<b>PRICE</b>	<b>£799.95</b>

■ Clean, open yet ultimately curiously uninvolved sound quality is still a significant improvement on its predecessor, the Audiolab 8000LX.

### ■ TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ TAG McLaren Audio Ltd, Ermine Business Estate, Huntingdon, Cambridge PE18 6XY  
☎ (01480) 415600

## THE LAB REPORT

**A**s an enhanced version of Audiolab's 8000LX, the real advantages offered by the 60i are in the *detail* of its specification rather than the broad nuts and bolts. For example, like the 8000LX, the 60i exceeds its 60W specification to deliver a continuous 80W into 8 Ohms with distortion typically less than 0.02 per cent right across the audio range. However, when we look at the behaviour of the amplifier under dynamic, music-like, conditions, both the 8000LX and the 60i provide some 110W, 200W and 325W into 8, 4 and 2 Ohm loads, although the pattern of dis-

tortion remains very much more consistent with the newcomer. This in itself suggests a smoother performance should be possible from the 60i when directly substituted for the 8000LX.

Other similarities include the maximum 12.7A current delivery, obtained into low, 2 Ohm loads (325W for 10msec) but this falls to 7.7A (59W) into lower 1 Ohm impedances as the amplifier's protection circuitry cuts in. In practice, this output muting is hardly likely to occur unless there's a genuine fault condition, like the speaker cables being accidentally shorted together. The small 0.6dB dip at 20kHz, meanwhile, will not exert any significant impact on performance, though its excellent immunity to RF bodes well for compatibility with RF 'noisy' CD players! **PMI**

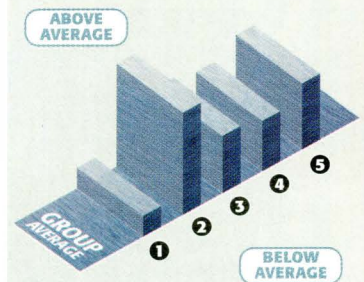
○ The 60i easily exceeds its 60W spec.



## HOW IT COMPARES

**T**his tickled-up version of Audiolab's 8000LX is the most tolerant of difficult speakers in our mini 3-way group, besting its modest 60W specification and offering over 300W into the lowest impedances.

1 DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	15%
2 SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	70%
3 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	40%
4 NOISE	35%
5 OVERALL COMPATIBILITY	45%



## SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Continuous Power Output, 8 Ohms	60W	80W
■ Distortion 20Hz-20kHz, 1W/8 Ohms	<0.07%	0.02%
■ Input Sensitivity (CD/Aux)	175mV	340mV





# 100% value

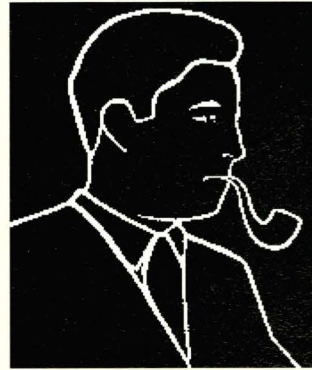
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# NAIM Nait 3R



This is the remote-control version of the Naim entry-level amp, the remote (not shown) being a compact handset with source selection, tape monitor switching, a mute switch and a balance control. The amplifier is every inch a thoroughbred, with a standard Naim fascia, and a back panel which uses recessed 4mm speaker sockets (spaced plugs are supplied). DIN socketry is supplied for all bar one line input, which discourages though it doesn't preclude use with third party components. The one non-DIN input is fitted with standard phono sockets which made life easier for this test, but it is worth noting that Naim has long make a point of stressing the synergistic benefits of using its own cables with its own electronics.

Although the Nait has a large footprint, it is slimmer and lighter than average, reflecting the small power supply needed to support the low 30 Watts per channel power rating. The power switch is adjacent to the captive cable entry, stage rear, which encourages leaving the amplifier switched on. The case temperature barely rises when the amp is not in use.

**“In a sympathetically constructed system, there are few amplifiers near the price that can rival the sense of being there that the Nait conjures out of the air.”**

Upgradability is built in at ground level. MM and MC cards are available, and the Nait can be converted into a preamplifier. Outdoor power supplies such as the Flat Cap can also be added to the preamp stage, but they add considerably to the cost.

### SOUND QUALITY

The Nait 3R is clearly less powerful than the other amplifiers here, and bolting on outboard supplies won't help a lot as they're configured to enhance resolution and sound quality rather than simply supply more Watts. Within reasonable limits, however, it was surprising how ballsy the Nait sounded. Unless you really want to wallow in Watts up to the plumbline, the Nait will do just fine with medium efficiency

speakers as long as your listening room isn't too big or absorptive.

Naim amplifiers are widely described as having a particular kind of sound, and one of the benefits of blind testing is that these ideas can be tested properly. From prior experience some of the usual comments about Naim amplifiers had been expected, nevertheless it came as a shock not only to have the stereotypes repeated, but for the language used in these comments to be close to that which Naim aficionados use. So "a sense of rhythmic patterns, of parts behind main parts" and "a great sense that this is a quiet amp, which provides real space for the notes to move in — dynamic and controlled" were typical sum-ups, along with others such as "dynamic", "good timing" and "believable".

The Nait didn't receive a completely clean bill of health. One listener felt that it "lacked subtle analysis" and "refinement" — the latter flatly contradicted by another. In hands-on testing, the Nait seemed very close to the general view of the panel, with a strong sense of image presence, a dryish bass and a foreshortened

Although the Naim has only 30 Watts a-side, it sounds surprisingly ballsy.

image depth. This too was explicitly noted by a couple of the panellists, and is a neat echo of the Naim party line that stereo depth doesn't exist, or at least doesn't count for much.

### CONCLUSION

The Nait is no panacea. It does ultimately lack refinement and the perception of image depth is undernourished. Nevertheless, in a sympathetically constructed system, there are few amplifiers near the price that can rival the sense of being there that the Nait conjures out of the air.

Recommended.

AG

### VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £780.00

The first step on the Naim ladder is intended to get you hooked — and this one probably will.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

Naim Audio Ltd, Southampton Road, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP1 2LN  
(01722) 332266

## THE LAB REPORT

Previously tested way back in HFC 154, this remote-version of the classic Nait 3 was, nevertheless, re-examined for the sake of thoroughness. In the event, there are no fundamental changes to its performance to report. The Nait 3 remains only modestly powerful at 30W/8 Ohms with dynamic outputs of 43W and 72W into 8 and 4 Ohm loads, respectively. However, the 3.7A current limit and increasing distortion restrict its momentary handling of low 2 and 1 Ohm loads with just 40W and 14W available. And it's this, rather than the 30W/8 Ohm rating, that suggests the Nait

Sensitive loudspeakers preferred!



3 is better partnered with sensitive, 8 Ohm-rated loudspeakers.

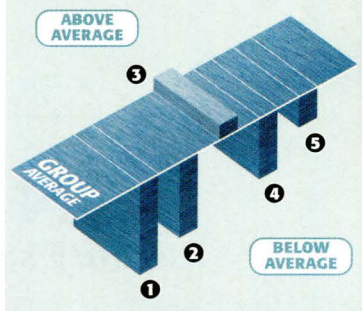
The response is also tailored with a -1.3dB drop at 20kHz, a treble loss that's likely to be further modified in line with the speaker's HF impedance trend, judging by the Nait's high 0.27 Ohm output impedance. Input sensitivity remains very high; its excess gain better suited to the low-output line sources of yesteryear than the high output CD players of today. High sensitivity also restricts the usable range of its volume control and increases the 1W/8 Ohm noise figure to -74.5dB. Figures 10dB or so in excess of this are the norm these days. With these foibles in mind, it's

unlikely the idiosyncratic Nait 3 will ever be all things to all systems. **PMI**

## HOW IT COMPARES

The Nait's relatively low power output, intolerance of difficult speakers and moderate output impedance will cause its performance to vary. Similarly, its high line-level sensitivity and relatively high noise also work against its all-round compatibility.

- 1 DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT -60%
- 2 SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE -50%
- 3 AUDIBLE DISTORTION 10%
- 4 NOISE -40%
- 5 OVERALL COMPATIBILITY -20%



## SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	RATED	ACTUAL
Continuous Power Output, 8 Ohms	30W	34W
Distortion 20Hz-20kHz, 1W/8 Ohms	<0.1%	<0.1%
Input Sensitivity (CD/Aux)	75mV	56mV



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We at QED recognise that the only way to ensure the best results, is to **insist on an unparalleled level of signal accuracy.** To prove this, we undertook one of the most comprehensive studies ever undertaken, on how and why cables effect system performance\*. Not that you need to worry about the technicalities, all you have to do is enjoy the results!

\* A summary of this research "The Genesis Report" is available on request.

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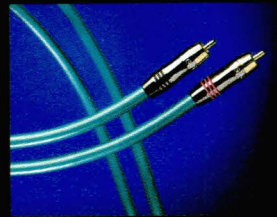
### Qnect 4S

"...solid performance with particularly good bass."

Price from £60.00/pair



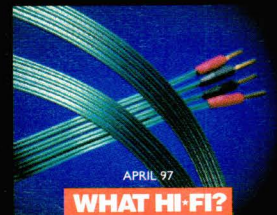
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### Profile 4 x 4

"This is incredibly good value cable, revealing clarity and depth of image that is downright stunning. We recommend the QED unreservedly."

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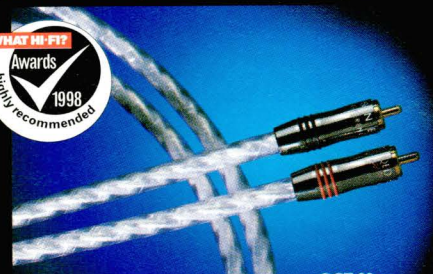
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WHAT HI-FI?



### Qnect Silver Spiral

Price from £78.00/pair



OCT 98

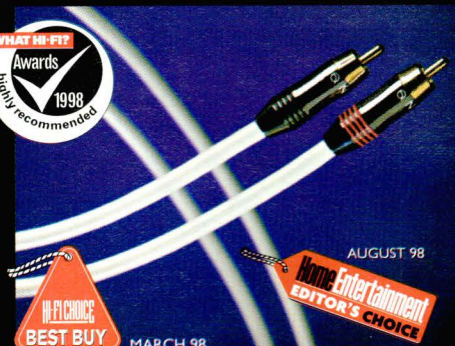
WHAT HI-FI?



"Music is presented in a natural and unforced manner... Silver Spiral excels in detail and dynamics...If your looking for an interconnect...Silver Spiral deserves to be at the top of your shopping list."

### Qnect 2

Price from £27.00/pair



AUGUST 98

Hi-Fi Choice  
EDITOR'S CHOICE

"Qnect 2 was one of the best-liked cables in the test. Qnect 2 fully deserves a Best Buy."

"Great price, great cable, well made. Nifty name, neat plugs. Five stars. Next..."  
WHAT HI-FI 5 star review MARCH 98

### Qudos Silver

Price around £4.95/m



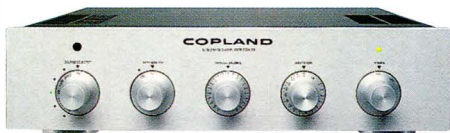
MAY 98

WHAT HI-FI?



"...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."





Copland CSA-28 p67



Musical Fidelity X-A100R p73



Restek Fantasy 2 p80



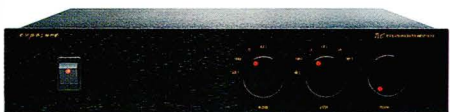
Densen DM-10 p75



Naim Nait 3R p61



T+A PA1220R p81



Exposure RCXXV p69



Præcisa Acustica Sonoro p77



TAG McLaren 60i p63



Marantz PM-17KI Sig p71



Primare A30.1 p79



Thule Spirit IA 100 p65

- GROUP A** £600-£800
- GROUP B** £800-£1,300
- GROUP C** £1,300-£1,800

**THE PRICE BANDS**

We divide our candidates into groups based on price (see right). Each band is colour-coded as above.

**HINTS & TIPS**

Like elastic bands, amplifiers need to be stretched before they fulfil themselves. They need running in (which may take a week), and warmed up prior to each listening session (typically for an hour). Amplifiers also sound best when used on proper equipment supports, ideally with no other component on the same surface, or perched on top. If an amplifier must be stacked with other equipment, put it on top to ensure proper heat dissipation. If tone controls are fitted, set them to zero (12 o'clock), and bypass them if possible. If there is a direct input switch, so much the better.

**AMPLIFIERS GROUP A**  
£600-£800

Although there are only three models in this group, which extends up to £800, they fairly represent the group in microcosm, and come from quite different design schools. The Thule comes from the same strictly minimalist tradition that informs the Copland and Primare, while TAG McLaren take the Audiolab brand forward into the millennium, with much better build quality, and much bolder, more central European voicing. The Naim is the latest iteration of the venerable Nait, and offers an unusual degree of upgradability through bolt-on or add-in modules for phono operation, and to augment the internal power supplies, though the essential Naim attributes of pace, rhythm and timing remain undiluted.

Naim Nait 3R	£780.00
TAG McLaren 60i	£799.95
Thule Spirit IA100	£600.00

**AMPLIFIERS GROUP B**  
£800-£1,300

Exposure used to be thought of as a parallel to Naim, with qualities intended to appeal to the same kind of buyer. In reality it has a quite distinctive feel, and is in little danger of being mistaken for a Naim, even with the lights out. The Copland and Marantz models enhance and update existing models, and both offer aesthetics to die for, and the Marantz additionally offers a fairly full feature set (even a temperature gauge!), making it one of only two models of the 12 so equipped. Meanwhile, Musical Fidelity continues to plough its own furrow, with a well-rounded model which uses an outboard power supply, allowing compact packaging in the now familiar X-series mould.

Copland CSA-28	£1,249.00
Exposure RCXXV	£1,000.00
Marantz PM-17KI Sig	£1,299.90
Musical Fidelity X-A100R	£999.00

**AMPLIFIERS GROUP C**  
£1,300-£1,800

Our biggest group covers amplifiers costing £1,375-£1,800, and includes at least three models – from T&A, Restek and Præcisa – which will be unfamiliar to most readers, though each has much greater visibility in its home market. T&A in particular is a full-range producer of TV as well as high fidelity with a profile similar to Loewe (except that the latter's hi-fi is made by Linn Products). All five models are well endowed internally, but with the single, and singular exception of the T&A, very simply equipped externally. The Copland (see Group B) and Primare are made in the same Swedish factory, though they have quite different design teams and distinctive performance.

Densen DM-10	£1,375.00
Præcisa Acustica Sonoro	£1,800.00
Primare A30.1	£1,499.99
Restek Fantasy 2	£1,499.00
T+A PA1200R	£1,445.00

**HOW THE TESTS WERE DONE**

The amplifiers were subject to the standard battery of tests, including a close physical examination, unsighted panel-based listening tests in a high-grade system chosen to extend the amps fully without being unrealistic electrically or sonically, hands-on listening using a range of speakers and CD players, and PMI's computerised measurement test programme. Each player was thoroughly run in and warmed up prior to being auditioned, and kept running during the panel test runs to keep the AC mains condition consistent. Two days of panel testing included a number of repeats, with no panel member knowing the identity of the amplifier on test, and with levels matched between test runs.

The system used for these tests included JM Labs Electra 915 loudspeakers for the unsighted tests and others including Monitor Audio Silver 7s and – because they was available – a pair of Eggleston Works Rosa speakers, an outrageously expensive American high-end design. The main CD player was a Copland CDA288. Speaker cables and interconnects were from Nordost, including the new Quattrofil screened cable. An addition for this test was to pick out one amplifier from each day's tests to use as a standard. It was introduced unannounced on several occasions each day to provide a yardstick against which the consistency of the other tests and repeats could be judged.

**LISTENING PANEL**

Thanks as always go to the men and, well, more men of our listening panel, industry luminaries one and all, who contributed their listening skills and time for the greater good, and the promise of a cheap meal. This month's batch of celebs included: DAVID INMAN (Castle Acoustics) MARK HOCKEY (Kenwood) MIKE MARTINDALE (Arcam) RUSSELL KAUFMANN (Densen/Morel) DIETER SCHUTZ (TAG McLaren) STAN VINCENT (also TAG McLaren). Dieter was an HFC panel virgin, and Stan was, of course, the previous editor of this very organ, proving that there is

life beyond Hi-Fi Choice Towers. Just for a change, we decided to lunch at Pizza Express.

**WHAT MUSIC DID WE USE?**

CLAIRE MARTIN: *Riverman* from *Take My Heart* – Linn Records AKD 093

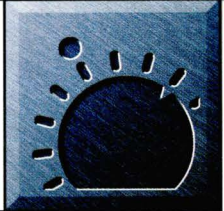
RACHMANINOV: *Volodos Melodiya* from *Volodos (pno) Piano Transcriptions* on Sony Classical SK62691

DOHNÁNYI: *Symphonic Minutes Op. 36 – Rondo* on Chandos CHAN 9455

BILL MORRISSEY: *You'll Never Get To Heaven* from TAG McLaren *Test Tracks* CD – TAG McLaren 4101 (supplied with TAG McLaren hi-fi components)

Plus others which were used for hands-on testing.





# ON TEST!

# AMPLIFIERS

**Alvin Gold** (listening tests) and **Paul Miller** (lab tests) put 12 amplifiers with attitude through the rigorous *Hi-Fi Choice* testing machine.

## THE CAST LIST

Copland CSA-28	£1,249.00	p67
Densen DM-10	£1,375.00	p75
Exposure RCXXV	£1,000.00	p69
Marantz PM-17KI Sig	£1,299.90	p71
Musical Fidelity X-A100R	£999.00	p73
Naim Nait 3R	£780.00	p61
Præcisica Acustica Sonoro	£1,800.00	p77
Primare A30.1	£1,499.99	p79
Restek Fantasy 2	£1,499.00	p80
T+A PA1200R	£1,445.00	p81
TAG McLaren 60i	£799.95	p63
Thule Spirit IA100	£600.00	p65

Not too long ago, received wisdom had it that amplifiers were amplifiers, that you injected a low-level signal at one end, and extracted from the other an inflated, but otherwise identical copy of the same signal capable of driving your loudspeakers as hard as necessary. Politics, the nature of the source component, country of origin, the laws of the land — none of these things were strictly rele-

vant to the task at hand, and could be safely ignored as reasons for differences found between one amplifier to the next. Indeed, apparently oblivious to the irony, Quad used to promote the superiority of its amplifier with the slogan that all good amplifiers used within their in and output limitations sound identical, just as, some years later, Philips was to preach that CD offered perfect sound, forever — another of the great howlers of all time.

If you're looking for a single pithy phrase to encapsulate the 12 relatively costly models that are this month's amplifier group, it is amplifiers with attitude, though strictly speaking each of the 12 amplifiers has its own very different attitude. Our task is to try and pin down these attitudes, or personality traits, as well as sorting out those that make sweet music from the also rans. The two are not exactly synonymous, some of the more satisfying and musical ampli-

fiers being models which it would be difficult to defend on grounds of literal, textbook accuracy. Quad got it wrong all those years ago.

Anyone choosing an amplifier in this price range, which extends to £1,800, will inevitably be faced with an additional choice. Is it best to opt for an integrated amplifier, or a pre/power amplifier? Again, there is a textbook answer to this, and then there is a real-world one. The textbook answer is that pre/power amps are the way to go. Separating the current drawing final driver stage from the low-level signal stages has all kinds of electrical benefits. With pre/power amps it may be possible to position monoblock power amps close to the speakers, as long speaker cables are known to have a much more deleterious effect than long signal leads, all other things being equal. In practice, you're paying substantially for the extra signal interfaces and the additional packaging, which complicates matters somewhat, and it is doubtful

## GLOSSARY

**INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER:** A complete amplifier, consisting of pre and power amplifiers in a single housing.

**PREAMPLIFIER:** The early stages of an amplifier, consisting of a volume control, source selector and tape monitor switching, sometimes including tone controls and/or the early gain stages.

**POWER AMPLIFIER:** The high-level circuit that boosts the output of the preamplifier to a level suitable for connecting to the loudspeakers.

**BI-WIRING:** The use of separate power amplifiers to feed the bass units and tweeters of a loudspeaker.

**TONE BYPASS SWITCH:** A link that bypasses the tone control circuits (see Direct switch).

**DIRECT SWITCH:** Feeds the designated direct input past any tone and balance controls, and sometimes tape monitor stages direct to the volume control and power amplifier.

**TAPE MONITOR:** A feature that allows the user to hear the output of a tape recorder (off tape if it is a three-head cassette deck) without interrupting the recording in progress.

whether most pre and power amp combinations below £2,000 would worry most integrated amplifier designers.





# Sensational Selection at



PLEASE NOTE NOT ALL PRODUCTS ARE STOCKED AT ALL OUTLETS. PLEASE TELEPHONE TO VERIFY PRICE AND AVAILABILITY BEFORE TRAVELLING.

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 Denon DCD835 £ CALL  
 Denon DCD1550 AR £ CALL  
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 Marantz CD48 £ CALL  
 Marantz CD67II £ CALL  
 Marantz CD67IIIOSE £ CALL  
 Marantz CD63IIKI Signature £ CALL  
 Marantz CD17KI Signature £ CALL  
 Meridian 506 20 Bit £ CALL  
 Meridian 508 24 Bit £ CALL  
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 Myrrad T10 £ CALL  
 Myrrad T20 £ CALL  
 Myrrad MC100 £ CALL  
 Myrrad MCD500 £ CALL  
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 Pioneer PDS505 Precision £ CALL  
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 Rotel RCD951 £ CALL  
 Rotel RCD971 £ CALL  
 Sony CDPXE310 £ CALL  
 Sony CDPXE520 £ CALL  
 Sony CDPXB920 £ CALL  
 TAG McLaren CD20R £ CALL  
 Yamaha CDX493 £ CALL

## CD MULTIPLAYERS

Arcam Alpha MCD £ CALL

## CD TRANSPORTS

Meridian 500 £ CALL  
 TAG McLaren CDT20R £ CALL

## DACS

Meridian 566 24 Bit £ CALL  
 Musical Fidelity X24K £ CALL  
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## MINI DISC/CD RECORDERS

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 Kenwood DM3090 £ CALL  
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## Musical Fidelity X-A1

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## SPEAKER PACKAGES

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# SPEAKER STANDS CONCLUSIONS

## THE BEST IN THE TEST

### BEST BUY CUSTOM DESIGN

R/S 300 £75.00

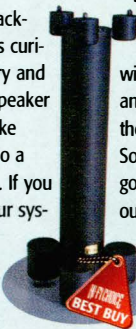
A strong 'budget' performer, with an expressive and detailed character, and particular bass prowess. It has the ability to make music come alive without audible strain, and with the added bonus of good looks it's got to be a leading contender at the price.



### BEST BUY PARTINGTON

A-4 £119.00

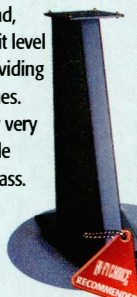
This really is a cracking stand, despite its curious looks. Open, airy and focused, putting a speaker on one of these is like opening a window to a fresh, spring breeze. If you want to improve your system's definition and soundstaging, look no further.



### RECOMMENDED ATACAMA

R724 £149.99

An immaculately turned out stand, with a built-in spirit level and cable tidy providing the finishing touches. Sound is generally very good, though treble outperforms the bass. Impressive value-for-money all in all.



### RECOMMENDED ELEMENTAL

Isotube SZse £599.00

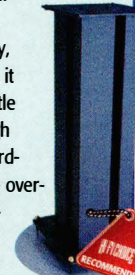
Expensive, but the transformation it can bring – almost as beneficial as changing a major component – means its price becomes less contentious. No other stand here imbues the same sense of resolution.



### RECOMMENDED JPW HS1 £119.99

A stand that sounds purposeful, this is a good choice for rock and dance.

Bass is taut and weighty, and though it sounds a little dry with high quality recordings, the overall standard is high.



**S**ceptics be damned! If proof were needed to show how much of a difference speaker stands can make, let the doubters behold this little lot. Just the briefest of listens confirms a selection of individual sonic characters, each one different from the last, and all valid in their own way. There are some dreadful stands on the market today, cobbled together without any genuine reference to acoustic engineering, but none are included here – we've stuck with the experts, manufacturers who know the right principles and how to apply them. Not one of these stands is less than worthy, and some are so good they can

breath new life into a system's sound just as effectively as upgrading the speakers.

For the very best on test, check out the panel above. But what of those that failed to earn a Best Buy or Recommended swing tag? Of the four stands that weighed in at under £100 per pair, two rate as no more than average. The Alphason HDS is smooth but fails to excite, while the Apollo Olympus does well but is let down in the bass. They're both decent enough at the price, but neither is outstanding. Meanwhile, Sound Organisation's Z524 is a mite more impressive, particularly in the midrange, but quality drops at the frequency

extremes and it just misses out on a Recommendation.

Between £100 and £150, the situation is healthy. All three pick up swing tags and therefore earn description elsewhere on this page, so I won't dwell on them here. Suffice it to say that their performance is worth the extra over their less costly cousins, and if you've got the money you should seriously consider spending it.

The leap from £150 to £600 is a substantial one, yet all three stands clustered around that exalted price acquit themselves well, easily outperforming the cheaper designs. Whether the improvement is worth that much extra is largely a personal thing,

but if your system warrants it you may well find it money well spent. For me, neither the Russ Andrews Torlyte nor the Black Box Speaker Stand is quite deserving of an official Recommendation for the money – the Torlyte is a little too reserved (though some may place it top for that very same reason) and the Black Box is a touch thick in the bass, not to mention rather physically awkward for home use. That said, they're both impressive pieces of acoustic engineering, able to transform the sound of a speaker in their own way, and for that reason alone they deserve all the attention they can get. Speaker stands: don't ever imagine they're boring again.

## SPEAKER STANDS COMPARISON TABLE

MAKE	ALPHASON	APOLLO	ATACAMA	BLACK BOX	CUSTOM DESIGN
MODEL	HDS	OLYMPUS	R724	SPEAKER STAND	R/S 300
PRICE	£85.00	£75.00	£149.99	£796.65	£75.00
SOUND	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
GUARANTEE	1 year	Lifetime	1 year	1 year	Lifetime
HEIGHT/S	45/60cm	40/50/60cm	60cm	65.5-79cm	40.6-60.9cm
TOP PLATE	15.5x15.5cm	15-18x12.5-20cm	15x17cm	40 cm diameter	15-21x15-19cm
BASE PLATE (F-B)	23cm	25.5cm	35cm	94cm	26cm

## SPEAKER STANDS COMPARISON TABLE

MAKE	ELEMENTAL	JPW	PARTINGTON	RUSS ANDREWS	SOUND ORGANISATION
MODEL	ISOTUBE SZSE	HS1	A-4	TORLYTE	Z524
PRICE	£599.00	£119.99	£119.00	£599.00	£69.00
SOUND	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
GUARANTEE	1 year	2 years	Info on request	Info on request	Info on request
HEIGHT/S	61cm	61cm	50/60/100cm	61cm	61cm
TOP PLATE	N/A	19x21cm	N/A	33.5x24cm	16x17cm
BASE PLATE (F-B)	42.5cm	23/25cm	20cm	24cm	31cm



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## ELEMENTAL Isotube SZse

Audio engineering firm Elemental began building stand prototypes four years prior to officially starting business in 1997. Now the company's palette stretches from equipment supports to tone arms, and includes a range of speaker stands from £499 (for the Isotube SZ) to a mighty £1,500. What we have here is the 'se' version of the SZ, featuring the same welded steel tube construction, but mass loaded with both sand and lead shot (the standard version only uses sand) and weighing in at 30 kilos. The theory is thus: as vibrations travel through the stand, the two substances rub together and turn kinetic energy into thermal energy, which has no audible effect.

Its structure is open and devoid of top and bass plates because, says Elemental, they store energy and can artificially add to top-end frequencies or slow the bottom-end. The result is a

high mass, low volume stand, and a pretty one too – it comes in four standard finishes, with several others available at a premium.



**“Treble sings with crisp incision and vocals hang suspended in mid-air, with the kind of resolution that seems to inform you of everything.”**

### SOUND QUALITY

As a structure the SZse is not entirely resonance-free, but its engineering principles are sound and the result is excellent performance – even at this lofty price tag. They free the sound of a good speaker from its box in a way budget stands simply can't, helping to give voices and instruments free reign within a truly convincing soundstage. Bass-heads may find its low-end character a touch light, but the compensation is a wonderfully deft touch that imbues a sense of 'air' right through the frequency range.

The results obtained with both PMC and Jamo speakers were equally impressive. Treble sings with crisp incision and

vocals hang suspended in mid-air, with the kind of resolution that seems to inform you of everything but force nothing. It's not a fussy stand musically, but its nature is perhaps best suited to lighter, more natural styles – acoustic, jazz, classical and so on – than heavier, synthetic material (that's where the Black Box stand comes into its own). It's expensive, but it may just be worth it.

### VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★

**BUILD** ★★★★★

**VALUE** ★★★★★

**PRICE** £599.00

■ A well-engineered product that justifies its price tag when it comes to the all-important listening. Definitely a stand of distinction.

#### ■ ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Elemental Audio, Unit 4c, Highfield Ind Est, Camelford, Cornwall PL32 9RA

☎ (01840) 211045

### SPECIFICATIONS

Height: 61 cm (or any other specified)

Top plate: None (dimensions 23x27cm)

Base plate front to back: 42.5cm

## RUSS ANDREWS Torlyte

These stands were bound to be something different, seeing as they come from the celebrated Mr. Andrews – a fifth Dan entrepreneurial hi-fi tweak-master, with a portfolio full of interesting accessories and upgrades. But at first glance you'd be forgiven for feeling disappointed. Without wishing to sound facetious, the Torlyte stand looks more like something you might buy in Ikea than the product of extensive audio engineering.

So where does the money go? It's all in Russ Andrews' proprietary material, Torlyte – an extremely light honeycomb wood structure – the production of which is exceptionally labour-intensive, hence the cost. The theory behind it is at the opposite end of the scale to mass loading – the lower the mass the less able it is to store energy. Three oak cones are supplied on which to site your speakers, together with three substantial spikes for the floor.

### SOUND QUALITY

This is not the kind of stand on which you can place a

**“Its character is inherently musical, featuring an effortless midrange that stretches all before you but never forces the issue.”**



speaker and expect to be impressed within the first few bars of music. It can't match the sense of space and air conveyed by the Elemental, nor can it deliver the same degree of drive and weight supplied by the Black Box; it's undoubtedly pleasant, but on initial listening it doesn't seem special enough to warrant such a price.

Perseverance pays off, however, and this stand's charms become increasingly evident over an extended period of time. Its character is inherently musical, featuring an effortless midrange that stretches all before you but never forces the issue, while its firm yet gentle nature at the frequency extremes is ideal for banishing listening fatigue.

The trade-offs for such amiable manners are some loss of ambience and the feeling that expression is always a little restrained – the sense of space and atmosphere within both Sara K's *Play on Words* and Sparklehorse's *Good*

*Morning Spider* seems muted. It largely comes down to a matter of taste, and to my ears the stands from both Elemental and Black Box offer a more engaging experience in their own different ways. But if a sweet and controlled persuasion is your thing, the seductive sounding Torlyte may well be the one to float your boat.

### VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★

**BUILD** ★★★★★

**VALUE** ★★★★★

**PRICE** £599.00

■ Wooden stands delivering a classy, cohesive and controlled sound, but a little more sonic 'pizzazz' is needed for full Recommendation at this price.

#### ■ GUARANTEE: INFO ON REQUEST

✉ Russ Andrews Accessories Ltd, Edge Bank House, Skelsmergh, Kendal, Cumbria LA8 9AS

☎ (01539) 823247

### SPECIFICATIONS

Height: 61 cm (or any other specified)

Top plate: 33.5x24cm (ditto)

Base plate front to back: 24cm (ditto)



## PARTINGTON A-4



**V**iew this stand sans speaker and you'd be forgiven for expressing a glimmer of doubt. Its style is a smidgen eccentric, replacing the reassuringly solid bass and top plate of other designs with a collection of odd-looking 'barrels'. Seven of these protrude from a large, cylindrical steel torso – three at the top and four at the bottom – each equipped with a single spike. The column itself should be mass loaded (Partington recommends it's filled three-quarters full with sand), as should each of the barrels at the base. As for the barrels at the top, you can experiment – some prefer them filled, others empty.

Why no base and top plate? According to Partington, the use of such plates causes unwanted energy to bounce backwards and forwards between them, whereas the open-ended nature of the A-4 allows it to escape more easily.

### SOUND QUALITY

It may look odd, but there's no arguing with the quality of sound this stand can convey. Its character

**"Bass is agile but not lightweight, midrange is spacious and well defined, and treble offers that clean extension essential for a tactile sound."**

is tighter and more precise than any other here, bar the clutch of designs commanding £600+ price tags, yet it succeeded in sounding musical and engaging with every speaker we placed upon its crown. Bass is agile but not lightweight, midrange is spacious and well defined, and treble offers that clean extension essential for a tactile, 'listen-through' sound.

Whatever you play, this stand is able to heighten the musical atmosphere. Leading edges are crisply resolved and elusive ambience brought vividly to the fore, helping to free the speaker's sound from the constraints of its cabinet. It opens up the complex textures of an orchestral piece like Sibelius' *Symphony No.5*, giving

instruments individual presence yet letting them work as a convincing whole. And it's just as effective with a surging slice of trance like BT's *Flaming June*, contributing to the track's pace and punch while revealing semi-hidden samples with greater clarity than its price peers. Without a doubt, this is one of the most talented stands you can buy below £150. It's sure to seduce your ears, if not your eyes.

### VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★

**BUILD** ★★★★★

**VALUE** ★★★★★

**PRICE** **£119.00**

■ An odd-ball stand with a sound of sheer class. More open and focused than almost anything below £150.

■ **GUARANTEE: INFO ON REQUEST**

✉ Partington & Co, Orchard Farm, Fawkham Road, Longfield, Kent DA3 7QP

☎ (01474) 709299

### SPECIFICATIONS

Heights: 50cm; 60cm; 100cm

Top plate: N/A (dims: 16x19cm; 19x22cm)

Base plate front to back: 20cm

## BLACK BOX Speaker Stand

**B**'eck, this thing is peculiar! Looking more like a spare part from a film set, it's hardly Homes and Gardens territory when it comes to eye-pleasing domesticity. Still, what's good for the ear is good for the soul, and this stand is designed to do a job – nothing more, nothing less. Its design is aimed chiefly at the professional studio, where its maker claims the need for stable, rigid speaker support has been overlooked. Such a stand needs to be tall enough to clear a mixing desk – in excess of 1m – yet maintain rigidity and stability... a 'tall' order indeed.

What we have here is the domestic version of Black Box's

**"Its sonic signature is fulsome and well-defined, transmitting the scale of powerful works with a full measure of clout."**

solution, a little lower in height but essentially the same. Two upright sections made from rectangular steel tubes are welded at crucial points, allowing frictional contact to aid resonance damping. A lengthy, 'Y'-shaped base is bolted on, giving an exceptionally large footprint to keep its tall structure stable. The circular top plate is made from an MDF/damping layer 'sandwich' and incorporates three pads of belt-type rubber to maximise friction between stand and speaker. Top plate height is adjustable from 65.5cm to 79cm and three heavy-duty spikes are supplied for the floor.

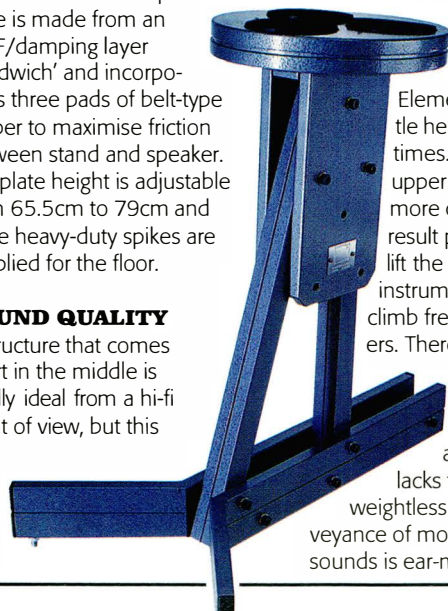
### SOUND QUALITY

A structure that comes apart in the middle is hardly ideal from a hi-fi point of view, but this

stand's combination of resonance-damping materials and a highly stable footprint seems to compensate well. Its sonic signature is fulsome and well-defined, transmitting the scale of powerful works with a full measure of clout, yet there's sufficient delicacy in its sound to ensure more subtle

strains maintain their grace and flow.

True, compared to the likes of the Elemental SZse it's a little heavy-handed at times. Bass is thicker and upper frequencies are more closed-in, the net result proving less able to lift the lid and allow instruments and vocals to climb free from the speakers. There is, however, impressive image depth and drive, and while acoustic and classical music lacks the Elemental's weightless presence, its conveyance of more synthetic sounds is ear-meltingly good.



From the indie-rock of Sparklehorse and The Afghan Whigs to the epic trance of BT, the Black Box's combination of weight and solidity delivers. They're ugly things, and that height adjustment is of dubious worth in the home, but for the studio they're a veritable boon.

### VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★

**BUILD** ★★★★★

**VALUE** ★★★★★

**PRICE** **£796.65**

■ **Stands don't come stranger than this!**

**Bass is a touch thick and that large footprint is awkward, but performance with synthetic music types is worth the asking price.**

■ **ONE YEAR GUARANTEE**

✉ Black Box, 18-23 Greenwich Market, London SE10 9HZ

☎ (0181) 858 6883

### SPECIFICATIONS

Height: 65.5-79cm

Top plate: 40cm diameter

Base plate front to back: 94cm



# ATACAMA R724



**A**tacama knows a thing or two about putting a pair of stands together. Following a flurry of ecstatic reviews, its famous SE24 became easily the most sought-after stand in the UK, and it's still the sub-£100 model everyone wants to beat. The R724 we're reviewing here is the company's flagship model, building on the SE24's now almost ubiquitous truncated 'triangular' pillar design and weighing in at nearly double the price.

Attention to detail is immaculate, and from a perceived value point of view this is way ahead of anything else here. They're arguably the best-looking stands in the entire test, and come ready-built with a pre-filled mass-loaded base attached to a fillable high-mass steel column. Metal loops are supplied at the back to help manage cables, and a firmly-welded top plate

**"Its character is smooth and coherent, coping calmly with all types of music and showing a level of control many fail to match."**

even incorporates a spirit level to aid accurate set-up. Naturally, a full set of spikes are supplied for top and bottom.

### SOUND QUALITY

Not surprisingly, considering its maker's pedigree, the R724 proves to be a well-balanced performer. Its character is smooth and coherent, coping calmly with all kinds of music and showing a level of control many fail to match. It's not the most gripping stand here, it must be said – bass isn't as well defined as that supplied by the Partington A-4, and though midrange is well ordered it would benefit from a touch more presence and openness. But high frequency performance is

exceptional, promoting the kind of crisp ambience and clean, fresh treble notes that are guaranteed to keep you listening.

Though it never knocks you for six, the Atacama put in a highly listenable performance with all our test material, from Sibelius to Sparklehorse. It suits a wide range of speakers too, our listening session showing no foibles that might upset the average standmounting boxes. Good, solid stuff all-round.

### VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★

**BUILD** ★★★★★

**VALUE** ★★★★★

**PRICE** **£149.99**

Atacama has used its market strength to deliver a superbly-appointed product at a very reasonable price.

#### ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

Atacama Audio, Winston Avenue, Croft, Leicester LE9 6GQ  
(01455) 283251

### SPECIFICATIONS

Height: 60cm  
Top plate: 15x17cm  
Base plate front to back: 35cm

# JPW HS1

**W**hen the time was right to deliver a high-quality speaker stand, JPW's excellent loudspeaker tradition stood it in good stead. The HS1 is a solid and practical design, neither particularly attractive nor especially ugly, but indisputably well put together. Its upright section consists of four rectangular pillars placed perpendicular to each other – JPW says this

**"Anyone who loves strong, driving bass rhythms will find this stand appealing. It conveys low frequencies with weight and solidity."**

configuration was found to sound better than a parallel formation.

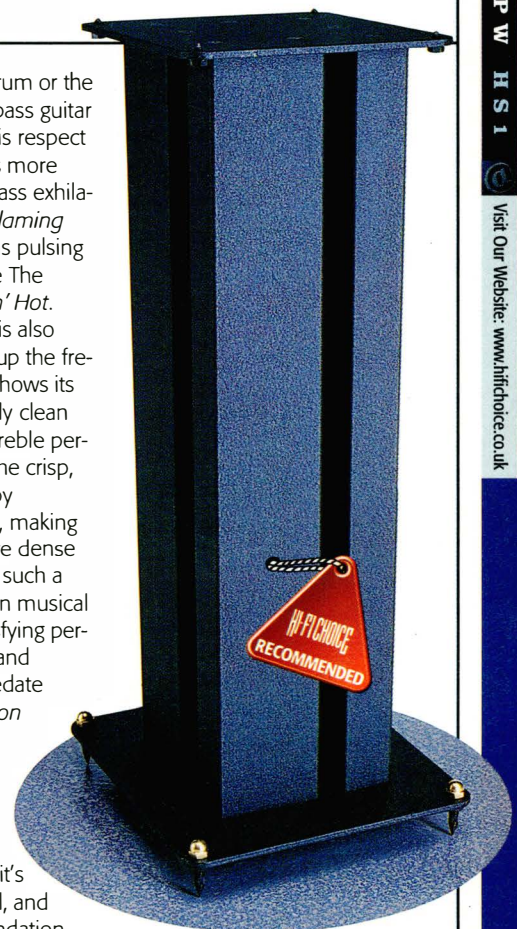
The entire construction is made from mild steel and is quite heavy even without its columns filled, but the addition of extra mass is recommended by way of the usual sand and/or lead shot-type filler. It's supplied flat-packed, with bass and top plate requiring no fewer than eight bolts each to fit together, a full complement of spikes are supplied for top and bottom.

### SOUND QUALITY

Anyone who loves strong, driving bass rhythms will find this stand appealing. It conveys low frequencies with weight and solidity, helping a speaker to deliver the hard,

beefy thump of a kick drum or the full, guttural twang of a bass guitar in ample measure. In this respect it beats the Atacama: it's more adept at capturing the bass exhilaration throughout BT's *Flaming June*, or keeping rhythms pulsing through a rockin' cut like The Afghan Whigs' *Somethin' Hot*.

Midrange expression is also good, but a little higher up the frequency range the JPW shows its limits. Though reasonably clean and free from grain, its treble performance falls short of the crisp, airy character supplied by Atacama and Partington, making music sound a little more dense and less open. Whether such a tone will suit depends on musical taste – it's a hugely satisfying performer with pacey rock and dance, but with more sedate music like Sara K's *Play on Words* disc or Chopin's *Impromptu No. 1 in A flat major* it just misses that high-level sparkle that can really make a phrase come alive. Still, it's a solid performer overall, and deserving of Recommendation.



### VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★

**BUILD** ★★★★★

**VALUE** ★★★★★

**PRICE** **£119.99**

A purposeful stand, a touch dry-sounding but particularly strong in the bass department. A sound choice for rock and dance music.

#### TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

JPW Loudspeakers Ltd, Ocean Quay, Richmond Walk, Plymouth, Devon PL1 4LL  
(01752) 333800

### SPECIFICATIONS

Height: 61cm (also available: HS2 46cm)  
Top plate: 19x21cm (HS2 22x25cm)  
Footprint: 23cm/25cm



# CUSTOM DESIGN R/S 300

CUSTOM DESIGN R/S 300



They say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and I have to admit I rather like the look of this effort from Newcastle-based Custom Design. Its aesthetics are clean and simple, offset by eye-catching, gold-coloured top plate spikes, and over-sized covers for the spike tops at the base. Domesticity is further helped by a wide choice of finishes: ours was supplied in gun grey (pictured), but you can also plump for gloss black, champagne, burgundy, chrome, dark sapphire blue or even British racing green!

The R/S 300 is constructed entirely from mild steel, the stand is supplied in flat-pack form, with a single bolt at either end used to attach the base and top plate to the main tubular column.

This section can be mass-loaded, and Custom Design makes its own specialised filler called Inert, available at £5 per bag, with one or two bags recommended per stand for best results.

**“Treble has a fine degree of ‘air’ and detail, while midrange expression ensures powerful music is projected with gusto.”**

### SOUND QUALITY

In this predictable world, we reviewers get our kicks by unearthing hidden gems – powerful products from unexpected sources. In this particular test, CD’s stand achieved that accolade. It’s an excellent all-rounder, putting in a robust and decisive performance across the board. Treble has a fine degree of ‘air’ and detail, while midrange expression ensures powerful music is projected with gusto, giving a real kick to the sulky riffs that populate The Afghan Whigs’ *Somethin’ Hot*, while showing enough subtle resolution to give instruments their own individual sense of space.

But what really sets it apart in this under-£100 group is bass per-

formance. Weight and definition are excellent at the price, giving bass rhythms satiating impact and conveying a strong impression of texture and micro-dynamics with low frequency instruments. You don’t get the sheer clarity and control proffered by the more expensive stands here, but the net result satisfies like no other in this test’s lower echelons. A strong buy, and worth considering alongside the likes of the Atacama SE24.

### VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	<b>£75.00</b>

Combining strong aesthetic and sonic appeal at a popular price point, this is a good stand all round.

#### LIFETIME GUARANTEE

Custom Design, Unit 11, Bath Street Ind Est, Walker, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne NE6 4PH  
(0191) 262 4646

### SPECIFICATIONS

Heights:	40.6cm; 45.7; 50.8; 55.9; 60.9
Top plate:	15x15cm; 16.5x18cm; 21x19cm
Base plate front to back:	26cm

# SOUND ORGANISATION Z524

SOUND ORGANISATION Z524

This nifty little stand might appear a touch puny compared to the more chunky, column-based designs that are prevalent these days, but they actually do a pretty fine job. They’re supplied flat-packed, and these pack flatter than most, with a main body section formed from a narrow rectangular tube with an L-shaped profile. Another rectan-

**“Most laudable of all is its quality in the midrange, promoting a smooth yet open character that’s eminently listenable.”**

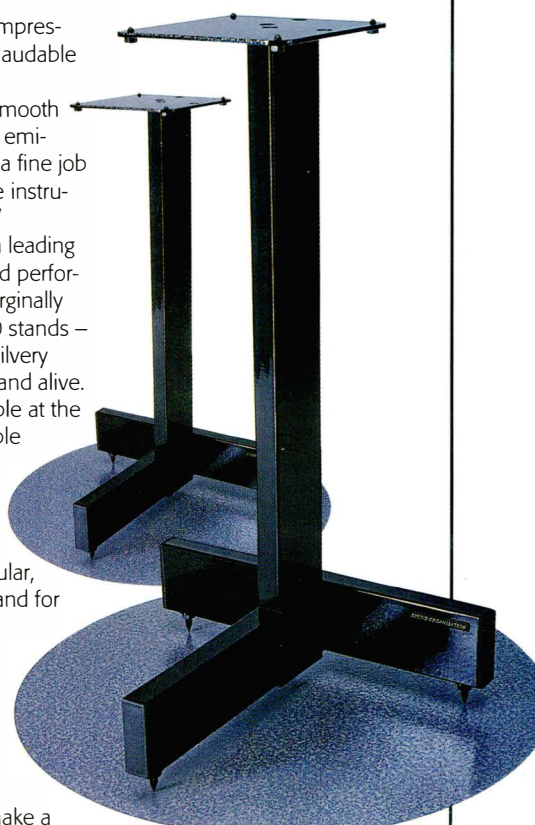
gular tube is screwed to the rear for stability, and a reversible plate featuring four threaded spike holes (spikes supplied) is bolted to the top. Three substantial spikes make contact with the floor.

The aesthetically-minded among you will have to make your own decisions on this and cons of such a slim and angular design, not to mention the shiny ‘piano-black’ finish – currently the only colour Sound Organisation has supplied for its entire range of furniture, as far as we’re aware. However, you may be pleased to note that another finish is about to be made available as an option: by the time you read this, the Z524 should also be available in silver.

### SOUND QUALITY

In many ways this is an impressive budget stand. Most laudable of all is its quality in the midrange, promoting a smooth yet open character that’s eminently listenable. It does a fine job of conveying the sublime instrumental scope of Sibelius’ Symphony No.5 (though leading edges are a little soft) and performance with voices is marginally the best of the sub-£100 stands – it helps ensure Sara K’s silvery tones sound substantial and alive.

But the Z524 is less able at the frequency extremes. Treble could be cleaner, and bass is notably soft compared to the model from Custom Design. With rhythmic music, in particular, it misses drive and bite, and for that reason a Recommended tag narrowly eludes it. That said, with more sedate musical forms it’s both ear-friendly and articulate, and at this price its combination of virtues make a pretty persuasive case.



### VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	<b>£69.00</b>

A coherent-sounding stand with particular strengths in the midband, though quality drops at the frequency extremes.

#### GUARANTEE: INFO ON REQUEST

Sound Organisation, 8 Greyfriars Road, Bury St Edmonds, Suffolk IP32 7DX  
(01284) 701101

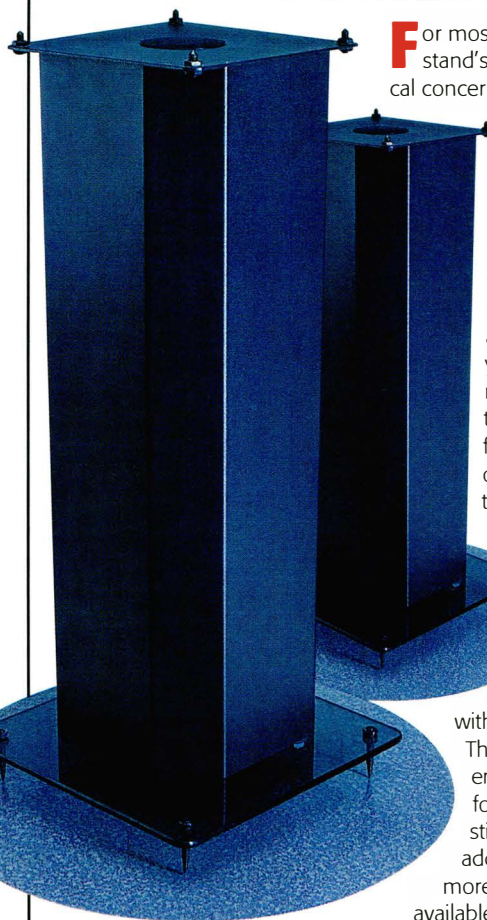
### SPECIFICATIONS

Heights:	61 cm (also available: Z518 46cm)
Top plate:	16x17cm (Z518 19x20.5cm)
Base plate front to back:	31cm

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## ALPHASON HDS



**F**or most manufacturers, a stand's base is purely a practical concern; for Alphason's HDS, it's also an aesthetic opportunity. The customer gets a choice of materials for this section, the stand's price varying in accordance: there's metal at £79, glass (pictured) at £85 and for a fiver more you can even get it in rosewood. Size variations are a little less flexible, with two height options and a fixed-size top-plate.

Base and top plate are fixed to the column via a pair of screw-in tension rods, with four spikes a-piece to interface with floor and speaker.

There's a portion of mineral aggregate supplied for mass-loading and stick-on cable clips give added value, but there are more substantial platforms available at the price.

**"They're rigid enough, and their performance is more even than some sub-£100 stands from less distinguished manufacturers."**

## SOUND QUALITY

Having listened to the Alphason with a suitably broad collection of music, the descriptive phrases that spring to mind are all rather grey – adequate but undistinguished, listenable but hardly inspiring. Its sound is inoffensive, and while such descriptions may appear to damn with the faintest of praise, an inoffensive nature is undoubtedly something of worth in a speaker stand. They're rigid enough, and their performance is more even than some sub-£100 stands from less distinguished manufacturers.

The trouble is, it all sounds a bit bland. While some stands here are able to wring the best from a speaker's performance in quite

spectacular fashion, the HDS merely carries out the bare essentials, and does so with little aplomb. Bass is soft, losing the texture of, say, the bass guitar in Sara K's sublime *Turn My Upside Down*, and mid/treble detail misses a degree of definition, though filling its torso with more mineral aggregate than is supplied does improve dimensionality. The effect is middle-of-the-road – not overtly slow or blurred, but lacking guts and presence.

## VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆

BUILD ★★☆☆

VALUE ★★☆☆

PRICE **£85.00**

■ A reasonable stand delivering a smooth but rather bland performance.

## ■ ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Alphason Designs Ltd, Unit D2, 2 Moss Ind Est, St Helens Rd, Leigh, Lancs WN7 3PT  
☎ (01942) 678000

## SPECIFICATIONS

Heights:	45cm; 60cm
Top plate:	15.5x15.5cm
Base plate front to back:	23cm

## APOLLO Olympus

**A**longside the more ostentatious constructions in this group, this Apollo looks distinctly dull. It's now something of a veteran in the world of stands, and you can tell – its design lacks the aesthetic distinction increasingly used by manufacturers to differentiate from the competition. It's functional enough, however, with a decent-sized, 'inverted-tray' base and simple, three-piece assembly. The cylindrical steel pillar is easily

**"The top plate is reversible, which is nifty – each of the three available top-plate sizes can be turned to suit the speaker's dimensions."**

filled for mass-loading (Apollo sells a sand-fill kit for £7.95), and base and top plate are attached using a pair of bolts for each.

The top plate is reversible, which is nifty – each of the three available top-plate sizes can be turned to suit the speaker's proportions. Four floor spikes per stand are provided, but top spikes will cost you an extra £9.95.

Unless you fork out, you'll have to make do with neoprene isolation pads (supplied) or Blu-Tack.

## SOUND QUALITY

In action, the Apollo's 'functional' construction transfers into 'functional' sound. It delivers a greater sense of musical purpose than the

Alphasons, and is capable of extracting decent presence in the upper registers from a good pair of 'bookshelf' speakers. But its overall tone is a little on the bright side, with a fairly enthusiastic treble given greater exposure by a somewhat lacklustre performance in the bass and lower-midrange.

There's also a lack of drive with fast, rhythmic material, thanks mainly to that rather plodding bass – play some punchy rock or dance stuff and a comparison with the stand from Custom Design leaves the Olympus for dead. But there's nothing nasty about the sound, particularly once you've taken the time to experiment with mass-loading, and the general effect is quite communicative. Fair to middling, all-in-all.



## VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆

BUILD ★★☆☆

VALUE ★★☆☆

PRICE **£75.00**

■ A popular stand and a decent performer, but unremarkable by today's standards.

## ■ LIFETIME GUARANTEE

✉ Apollo Hi-Fi Furniture, Tipton Road, Dudley DY1 4SQ  
☎ (0121) 520 5070

## SPECIFICATIONS

Heights:	40cm; 50cm; 60cm
Top plate:	15x12.5cm; 13x17.8cm; 18x20cm
Base plate front to back:	25.5cm





# SUPER TEST

## SPEAKER STANDS

No 'small' speaker can give of its best without the proper support. **Tim Bown** takes a pile of stands to prove the point.

### THE CAST LIST

Alphason HDS	£85.00	p49
Apollo Olympus	£75.00	p49
Atacama R724	£149.99	p51
Black Box Speaker Stand	£796.65	p52
Custom Design R/S 300	£69.99	p50
Elemental Isotube SZse	£599.00	p53
JPW HS1	£120.00	p51
Partington A-4	£119.00	p52
Russ Andrews Torlyte	£599.00	p53
Sound Organisation Z524	£69.00	p50

When you think about it, it's not surprising the uninitiated think we hi-fi folk are mad. Not only do we spend a small fortune on our 'stereos', we then fork out more for a pair of strange metal pillars, just so we've got somewhere to put the speakers! They probably think we've lost the plot completely. If only they knew.

You don't have to be bonkers to appreciate speaker stands – all you need is a love of music and a desire to reveal its full sonic glory. Anyone who owns a pair of small, non-floorstanding speakers, the kind termed as 'bookshelf' (a misnomer) or standmounting, should look at stands as an absolute necessity. Without them, such speakers can never come close to fulfilling their potential; perching them on an ordinary piece of furniture simply won't do. Stands tighten up the bass, open up the midrange, bring more clarity to the treble. It's like taking a screwdriver to a loose screw and tightening it until you achieve the perfect fit.

Even if you accept that using speakers stands can improve the sound of your system, it might be easy to assume that one kind will sound much the same as another. Wrong. The sonic

contrast between stands can be just as defined as that between, say, different amps or CD players, and the one you choose will profoundly effect your entire system's sound. There are good performers and bad performers, just as there are with any other piece of hi-fi gear, and the subjective differences between the 'good' ones are just as much a matter of taste – some sound smooth and controlled, others fast and punchy and so-on. But the fundamental goal, in a word, is neutrality.

So, what is it that speaker stands do that turns out to be so important? Their most obvious job is to bring the speaker, or more precisely the tweeter, to ear level when you're relaxing on the sofa. But because of the subtleties of loudspeakers themselves their influence goes far deeper.

A good stand is strong, rigid and as inert as possible, isolating the

speaker by combining certain physical attributes. Materials are important – steel is most commonly used, but alternatives like glass and MDF are also to be found. Mass loading is another oft-used technique for absorbing vibration (see Hints & Tips) and the inclusion of spikes to couple with the floor helps to hold the stand in place and act as a mechanical diode, draining energy away from the speaker. Many stands also provide less lethal spikes on which to site the speaker itself, providing a connection between it and the stand, which also helps to drain energy.

It's tempting to choose a stand for its aesthetic qualities, and in the real world looks are bound to play a part. But sonic quality is the primary reason for their existence, and any specialist dealer worth its salt will be happy to let you audition a few to see which one suits

your speakers, and your ears. Most designs are available in a variety of heights and top plate sizes, and it's important to get the right one for your speakers' cabinet size. In terms of height, 60cm is the most common.

Prices can vary from as little as £20-£30 right up into the thousands, but as a rule of thumb you should look to spend at least £60-£70 to support a good pair of 'entry-level' speakers – by that I mean speakers somewhere around the £100-£300 category. With speakers of a higher calibre, it's worth spending considerably more. Remember, if your speakers are resting easy, you will be too.

### HINTS & TIPS



Many stands are designed to be mass-loaded – which

means filling them with a substance to make their structure heavier and therefore more inert. If the option is there it's well worth taking it up – you'll get greater authority and improved soundstaging. The most common filler is dry sand, available from DIY stores, which provides a cheap and effective way to absorb vibrations. Lead shot is sometimes also recommended, or even a combination of the two, while some stand manufacturers market their own mineral-based filler. Take the maker's recommendations for the most effective type.

The amount of filler used also has a bearing on sound. The more you put in the more the sound is damped, which usually has the effect of increasing the speaker's sense of control. It is possible to damp the sound too much, however, robbing music of its life. It's best to experiment to find your preferred balance, you'll find that it's possible to tune a stand to taste. And if your stands aren't fillable, don't panic – some designs use different methods of isolation.

If your stands come with top spikes, use them. If not, or if you're worried about damaging your speakers' cabinets, three or four small blobs of Blu-Tack make an excellent substitute. Finally, when it comes to positioning, try to give both speakers a similar environment to work in, with the same distances from rear and side walls.

### HOW THE TESTS WERE DONE

The 10 stands featured in this test fall naturally into three price groups, so listening was based on these, with final ratings related to cost. **Musical Fidelity's X-Ray** CD player was used throughout, together with two different amps: **Musical Fidelity X-A1** and **ECA Vista/Lectern**. Speakers used included the **PMC TB1**, **Jamo Concert 8** and **Mission 772**, with cables by **Audio Note** and **Chord Company**. The testing process involved a mix of brief A/B comparisons and longer sessions where speakers were swapped to get a broad impression of a stand's character. All the listening was carried out in a small, slightly 'hard' sounding room with a concrete floor. A broad selection of musical and recording styles was used to identify strengths and weaknesses, including the following:

#### THE MUSIC WE USED

**SPARKLEHORSE:** *Good Morning Spider*, Parlophone

**SARA K:** *Play On Words*, Chesky Records

**SIBELIUS:** *Symphonies Nos. 5 & 7* (Simon Rattle) EMI CDM 7 64122 2

**BT:** *Flaming June* from *Paul van Dyk remixes 92-98*, Deviant



# PHONO STAGES CONCLUSIONS

## THE BEST IN THE TEST

### BEST BUY

#### MOTH 30 Series Phono

Only just bettered by the more expensive amps reviewed, this little wonder turns in a fine showing in every department.



### RECOMMENDED

#### CREEK OBH-9

A diminutive but capable unit which majors on long-term listening satisfaction. It has an essentially neutral balance, apart from a slight richness, and only a touch of dryness to give it away.



#### ELECTROCOMPANIET ECP-1

This is a particularly fine unit, using an unusual design concept to good effect and extracting a great deal of information from the tiny signal it's fed.



#### MICHELL Iso/Lithos

The Iso has long had a reputation as an above-average phono amp, and the Lithos in no way diminishes that. Fine detail recovery and good tonal balance.



#### MUSICAL FIDELITY X-LP

Excellent material value for money and good performance too, although a touch more bass might not go amiss. Imaging and detail are strong points.



#### QED Discsaver DS-1

This only just qualifies as hi-fi in the first place, but it does have a legitimate purpose which it fulfils without drama or distress. A true friend to phono-less integrated amps everywhere!



People have been designing phono stages (alone or as part of a bigger amp) for many years and lessons have been learned, so it's not surprising that the overall standard of the units tested here is high. OK, two of them have very limited pretensions and (frankly) attainments, but that leaves eight that all do a pretty creditable job, depending on your budget.

Mention of budget brings up an important point: how much should one really expect to pay for a phono stage in the context of a given deck, arm and cartridge? There is, of course, no hard and fast rule, but as a very rough guide I might suggest spending somewhere between the value of your cartridge and half its value, maybe a bit more if you're particularly fond of one particular cartridge. But do remember that a weak phono stage won't damage your records, while a worn, damaged, badly set up or simply not very good cartridge may.

The evidence of these tests suggests that you can get more than passable performance with the Musical Fidelity, Creek or Moth units, all costing under

£250. If you are in any doubt as to your cartridge's quality or condition, do seriously consider replacing that with one of the many fine models still available (I can't recommend the Denon DL304 highly enough, it being quite closely related to my all-time favourite Highphonic MC-A3 and particularly kind to vinyl), and save the purchase of that £500-plus phono stage for your Christmas present to yourself, some year soon.

On the other hand, if your cartridge is recent and you're sure of its abilities you are unlikely to regret treating it to some more esoteric amplification, of which Electrocompaniet and Michell seem to be the most honourable examples. Mention should also be made of the Roksan Artaxerxes X, which missed Recommendation not least on account of its rather high cost as reviewed here with the DS1.5 power supply; but if you have other Roksan equipment and can spread the justification of the DS1.5 over two items of kit (as it has two outputs), or indeed find one of the cheaper supplies adequate, it looks a much more attractive proposition.

PHONO STAGES COMPARISON TABLE

MAKE	CREEK	CYRUS	DENSEN	ELECTROCOMPANIET	MICHELL
MODEL	OBH-9	AEQ7/PSX-R	DP-DRIVE/DP-02	ECP-1	ISO/LITHOS
PRICE	£160	£498/£328	£350	£495	£400/£199
SOUND	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
GUARANTEE	2 yrs	1 yr	3 yrs	1 yr	Life
SIZE WxHxD	100x60x110mm	213x70x355mm	110x73x310mm	240x65x160mm	190x67x110mm
MM/MC	MC	MM/MC	MC	MM/MC	MC
ADJUSTABLE GAIN?	To order	No	No	No	No
MC I/P IMPEDANCE	470 Ohms	Adjustable	10 Ohms	10 Ohms	100 Ohms

PHONO STAGES COMPARISON TABLE

MAKE	MOTH	MUSICAL FIDELITY	NAD	QED	ROKSAN
MODEL	30 SERIES PHONO	X-LP	PP-1	DISCSAVER DS-1	ARTAXERXES X/DS1.5
PRICE	£249	£130	£39.95	£35	£445/£745
SOUND	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
GUARANTEE	1 yr	2 yrs	2 yrs	2 yrs	2 yrs
SIZE WxHxD	103x55x340mm	110x110x210mm	140x40x75mm	40x40x190mm	120x54x165mm
MM/MC	MM/MC	MM/MC	MM	MM	MM/MC
ADJUSTABLE GAIN?	No	No	No	No	Yes
MC I/P IMPEDANCE	47 kOhms	100 Ohms	-	-	Adjustable



# Tributes to the Grand Masters of violin making

## Guarneri Homage

Sonus Faber's unique acoustic monitor dedicated to the memory of Master Violin Maker Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù (1698–1744) in the Violin Hall, Cremona



Rosario Morra

In July 1993 **Sonus Faber** created a masterpiece – the **Guarneri Homage** – a unique lute-shaped speaker with the strong tonal personality of a Guarneri violin. The second commemorative speaker in the programme of three tributes to the Grand Masters of the art of violin making is now ready – the **Amati Homage**. Cremonese violins and violas made by the masters, Guarneri, Amati and Antonio Stradivari were intensely sculpted acoustic masterpieces characterised by a unique ability to combine tonal strength and body with sweetness. **Sonus Faber** has trodden the same path of overriding passion for tonal character in researching these speakers. The first and patented lute-shaped cabinet comprise many handsawn pieces of solid wood bonded using organic glues and heat in the manner of the great violin masters. Seven coats of natural lacquer give an unsurpassed finish. Mature walnut, maple

## Amati Homage



and lime woods are chosen for their differing strengths and densities permitting fine tuning of the cabinet structure which is damped internally with copper and lead.

For tuning, cabinets are produced in 'quiet' workshops away from factory noise.

For the Guarneri a silk dome tweeter has its own solid maple wood acoustic chamber.

Transducers are manufactured according to the *free compression driver* concept to produce

the ultimate musical detail at high speed with both control and power. Tweeters are not damped. The Amati midrange

is a highly linear paper carbonium/titanium device. Bass is handled by two extra-rigid

paper carbonium cones.

The Amati and Guarneri are true musical instruments with exceptional extension and dynamics but which retains a

uniquely passionate timbre – sweet and accurate.

Please contact **Absolute Sounds** in the first instance for personal dealer referral; musical monitors so rare are destined for the discerning. Details of the complete **Sonus Faber** range of products from £599 to £11,400 are available on request.

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# QED Discsaver DS-1

They don't come much more basic than this. A dual op-amp, a power supply regulator chip and 34 other components make up the sum total of the circuitry. Power is by battery (PP3) or optional 'wall-wart' supply, the case is plastic and there's no earthing point. Um, that's it. Leads are not included: a pair of those (cheap'n'cheerful) and just one PP3 battery will make this about the same price as the NAD, and battery life is unlikely to be over about 50 hours. Component quality is actually perfectly decent, but I suspect this would also be an ideal test-bed for up-and-coming audio tweekers — perfectly safe and cheap enough that you won't cry if it blows up!

### SOUND QUALITY

Granted, this won't blow any of the pricier units on test into the weeds, but it does what it's meant to. The most obvious limitations are in the area of refinement, which is conspicuous by its absence. The sound frequently verges on the coarse and suffers from some muddle and confusion. All the same, it's all there if

you listen for it and the dynamic ebb and flow of a piece of music is reproduced quite happily. Bass is rather odd, seeming, if anything, on the heavy side in quiet passages but receding a good deal as the music gets louder, but treble seems honest enough if occasionally just a shade bright.

**“This would also be an ideal test-bed for up-and-coming audio tweekers — perfectly safe and cheap enough that you won't cry if it blows up!”**



QED's Discsaver DS-1 operates from a 9V battery supply.

Imaging is modest but by no means extinguished.

### CONCLUSION

Operating from a 9V supply inevitably limits headroom but QED has judged gain very carefully and overload is very unlikely, though output will be rather lower than CD players or current tuners. Noise performance is adequate and frequency response fine. Overall, then, a quite suitable addition to any phono-less integrated amp. Recommended.

### VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£35

It's cheap, it's cheerful, it's OK — perfectly adequate for use with a phono-less integrated, though not very refined.

#### TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

QED Audio Products Ltd, Ridgeway House, Ridgeway Close, Lightwater, Surrey GU18 5XU  
(01276) 451166

# ROKSAN Artaxerxes X/DS1.5

The Artaxerxes X comes with a choice of power supplies, of which this is the most expensive (others cost £150 and £600). Roksan clearly takes power supplies seriously: exactly half of the well-filled board inside the Artaxerxes is occupied by regulators and smoothing capacitors while the DS1.5 contains a mammoth toroidal transformer and more regulators, plus twin output sockets. For the rest, the Artaxerxes includes a combination of low-noise transistors and a high-quality op-amp per channel, with mostly sur-

face-mount passive components. Gain and loading are adjustable over a wide range (including both MM and MC compatibility) via internal switches.

### SOUND QUALITY

Aided by a subjectively unintrusive noise signature (low in absolute terms, too), this little amplifier extracted a good deal of detail from the rather feeble output of the Highphonic cartridge used for most of the listening. It was no surprise, then, to find it very much at home with quiet music, with which it

**“Roksan takes power supplies seriously: exactly half of the well-filled board inside the Artaxerxes is occupied by regulators and smoothing capacitors.”**

achieved a good balance of authority and delicacy. It may at times lose the last degree of ambience information from naturally decaying sounds like piano or small percussion, but in the Ravel record, for instance, it made the most of the light and skilful orchestration. However, it was less assured at climaxes which, depending on the music, could become somewhat congested or synthetic, particularly with difficult sounds like orchestral violins. Imaging is very slightly compressed in depth

and the sound can occasionally be on the smooth side.

### CONCLUSION

Lab performance is good, with absolutely flat frequency response, though there's some DC on the outputs which can upset a few following pre- or power amps. This is a good unit, but the high cost of the power supply makes it an expensive option. In a Roksan system, where the DS1.5 can serve twice over, it would be more cost effective.

### VERDICT

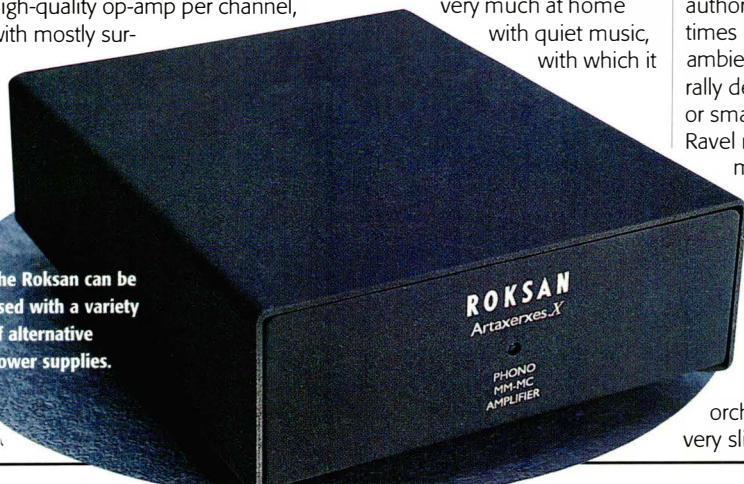
SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£445/£745

Admirable delicacy and good balance, though slightly congested at climaxes. Power supply expensive, but there are cheaper alternatives.

#### TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

Roksan Audio Ltd, 15B Atlas Business Centre, Oxgate Lane, London NW2 7HJ  
(0181) 830 7722

The Roksan can be used with a variety of alternative power supplies.





# MUSICAL FIDELITY X-LP

Another unit housed in a case of striking design, this is part of a range from MF sharing the distinctive tubular casework. Inside is a single circuit board bearing what really is an astonishing amount of circuitry for such a low-priced product. However, closer inspection reveals that some careful cost saving has gone on and

**“Some sibilance crept in, but there was a pleasingly rounded tonal balance on most music which served voices particularly well.”**

although the important components (such as the low-noise input transistors) have not been skimped, some of the passive components and the circuit board material, for instance, are decidedly unesoteric. That’s no criticism, though: good design need not rely on tweaky components at all points in the chain! There are separate inputs for MM and MC car-

tridges, with relatively low gain for the latter but probably still adequate for all but the very meanest of cartridges.

**SOUND QUALITY**

If there’s a weak point in the X-LP’s armour it’s the bass which, though it drives quite powerfully in rock and jazz, does ultimately lack some weight. It’s what some call ‘fast’ bass but in bypass testing it was clearly slightly shy, this being most obvious in music that contains fairly subtle low-frequency information such as full orchestra playing at moderate levels. Once or twice some sibilance crept in, too, but otherwise there was a pleasingly rounded tonal balance on most music which served voices particularly well. Perhaps because of the lightness, climaxes are not always as dramatic as they might be — ‘loud’, one might almost say, in the wrong sense. Imaging is good,



○ The MF X-LP boasts a plethora of circuitry within its confines.

there’s plenty of detail and ambience is well reproduced.

**CONCLUSION**

Bass response is indeed more sharply curtailed than in any other unit here, but noise is low and everything else in order. Given its impressively low price the X-LP certainly walks off with a Recommendation, narrowly missing the full BB Monty.

**VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★★★★

**BUILD** ★★★★★

**VALUE** ★★★★★

**PRICE** **£130**

■ A little bass lightness does not seriously mar the performance of this fine value unit.

**TWO YEAR GUARANTEE**

✉ Musical Fidelity Ltd, 15/16 Olympic Trading Estate, Fulton Road, Wembley, Middx HA9 0TF  
☎ (0181) 900 2866

# NAD PP-1

Neck and neck on price with QED’s Discsaver, NAD (which manufactures in low-labour-cost China) manages to include a metal case, ‘wall-wart’ power supply and captive (very short) output lead with the PP-1. Internally it’s the more complicated of the two, though it is based on the same device, the ubiquitous 5532 dual op-amp. Component quality is pretty much commercial grade but it’s all very neatly put together and there’s even the luxury of gold-plated connectors. It’s highly reminiscent of the sort of phono stage fitted inside many integrated amplifiers and its natural home would surely be with one such that lacks a phono input.

**“It manages to produce some fairly solid bass, but then it tends to be solid in the way that cold rice pudding is — lumpy and turgid.”**

**SOUND QUALITY**

Of the QED and NAD, this one lost out all round. It’s actually slightly quieter but that’s not sufficient to redeem its generally coarser sound and

rather thin tonal balance. Just occasionally it manages to produce some fairly solid bass, but then it tends to be solid in the way that cold rice pudding is — lumpy and turgid. With most material, however, it could simply do with more low frequencies. Voice is often quite edgy and strained while anything with a drum kit in loses some impact and foot-tappingness. Side-to-side imaging is OK but front-to-back is limited and dynamics are restricted — at any rate, the way the sound coarsens and roughens as a climax approaches makes the impact

of the climax that much less when it arrives. All in all the sound is not terribly involving.

**CONCLUSION**

For all that, this unit measures pretty well with a very flat frequency response and astonishingly low noise given the price. Gain is higher than the QED’s but overload occurs at about the same input level. Even in the context of its very low price the PP-1 fails to make a great impression and though it works well enough it’s not quite up to formal Recommendation.

**VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★★★★

**BUILD** ★★★★★

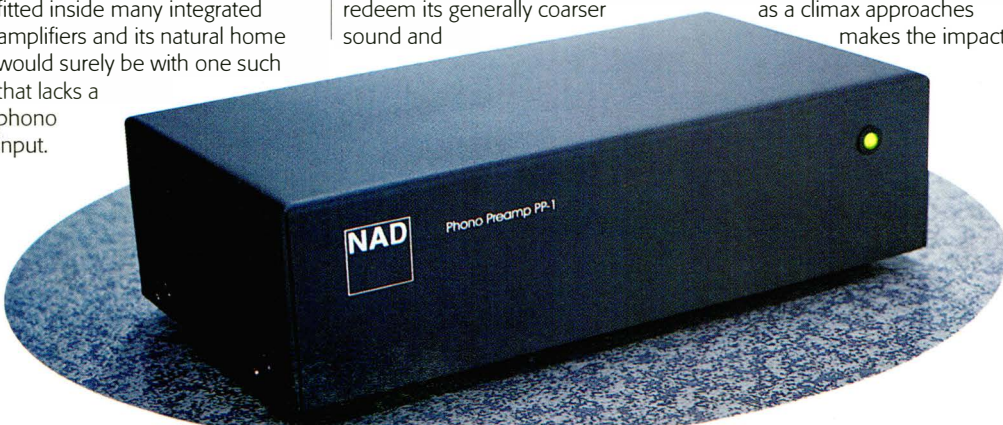
**VALUE** ★★★★★

**PRICE** **£39.95**

■ A basic phono stage that does its job rather coarsely: a bit bass-shy too.

**TWO YEAR GUARANTEE**

✉ Audio Club, Unit 15, Faraday Road, Aylesbury, Bucks HP19 3RY  
☎ (01296) 482017





## MICHELL Iso/Lithos

The basic Iso is already a well respected product. It was designed for Michell by Tom Evans, who has now added the Lithos power supply to his portfolio. This is a small sub-board which fits inside the Iso and replaces the IC regulators (as used by almost all the other manufacturers in this test) with a higher-performance regulator of his own devising. Existing Isos can be upgraded, or a complete Iso/Lithos ordered from Tom. Apart from the Lithos, the Iso consists of a single circuit board

populated with a combination of high-quality op-amps and selected passive components, joined to the mains supply via a lump-in-the-lead transformer. The only rather dumb feature is the earthing post, which is under the unit and stands proud of the feet when anything more than a very thin wire is trapped under it.

### SOUND QUALITY

Undoubtedly one of the better contenders here, the Iso

**“Voices sound very natural, as do orchestral strings and piano – all difficult tests – and long-term listenability is good.”**

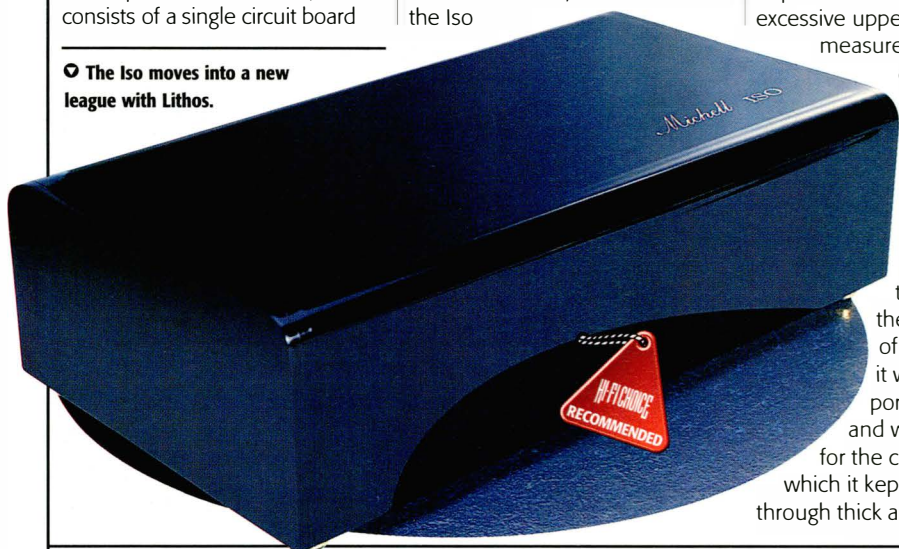
somehow managed to give the impression of a very slightly excessive upper bass, though measurements subsequently disproved this. However, there was a persistent, very mild, tonal thickening – which is by no means unpleasant. On the bypass test it just missed the ultimate degree of image depth, but it was very good at portraying ambience and was also notable for the conviction with which it kept the bass going through thick and thin. Voices

sound very natural, as do orchestral strings and piano – all difficult tests – and long-term listenability is good.

### CONCLUSION

In the lab the Iso showed evidence of careful and intelligent design, with flat response, high sensitivity (but adequate headroom for cartridges up to about 0.5mV nominal) and low noise. The case is plastic, so it's a little sensitive to hum if placed near mains wiring. It certainly seems to achieve a Recommendable standard without difficulty.

✔ The Iso moves into a new league with Lithos.



### VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★

**BUILD** ★★★★★

**VALUE** ★★★★★

**PRICE** £400/£199

With the Lithos power supply upgrade, the Iso is a very capable phono stage with just a hint of bass fullness.

#### ■ FIVE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ T Evans Audio Design, 50 Bedwlwyn Road, Ystrad Mynach, Hengoed, Mid Glam. CF8 7AE

☎ (01443) 816856

## MOTH 30 Series Phono

This unit has stood the test of time, if nothing else: I reviewed it in 1990 and liked it so much I bought one. Comparing old and new, the only obvious change is the front panel, which has gone from solid hardwood to veneered MDF. That's for the worse, for my taste at least, but the all-important innards seem absolutely identical. The circuitry is based on a motherboard the full size of the unit, with four small (identical) daughterboards mounted on it, well stuffed with discrete transistors. At the rear, a single pair of input sockets and a gain switch cater for MM or MC cartridges. One feature I hate about this unit is the horribly inaccessible earthing post, though I suppose only a reviewer will need to get to that regularly! Power is from a 'lump in the lead'.

### SOUND QUALITY

Has the sound stood the test of time? On the whole, yes. Perhaps by comparison with a couple of others here (much more expensive) there is a slight hardness to the sound with clearly recorded

orchestra or voices, although that very hardness seems beneficial with hard-driven rock in adding a subtle drive to the music. Noise is low (as low as any active MC stage I've tested, to this day) and the tonal balance is extremely neutral, something confirmed by bypass testing which put this unit in the top two or three of the group. Imaging is particularly good and the recorded acoustic is always clear to hear.

**“Noise is low and the tonal balance is extremely neutral, something confirmed by bypass testing which put this unit in the top two or three.”**

The Moth hasn't changed much, apart from the veneered front panel.



### CONCLUSION

The Moth's manners on the test bench were exemplary, with well-judged gain, massive headroom, oodles of output drive, and very flat frequency response. There's some DC present on inputs (which I've never found to be a problem, though some disagree) and outputs, which may cause scratching as a volume control is turned, and input loading is the same for MM and MC cartridges at 47kOhms. Overall, however, it's still a great little performer and a natural Best Buy.

### VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★

**BUILD** ★★★★★

**VALUE** ★★★★★

**PRICE** £249

Fine sound all round, with any kind of music, from this bargain phono stage.

#### ■ ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Moth Group, 10 Dane Lane, Wilstead, Beds MK45 3HT

☎ (01234) 741152



# DENSEN DP-Drive/DP-02

From Denmark, this test's 'space oddity'. The price is really quite modest so we can perhaps overlook the unusually brick-like case (made from flat slabs of aluminium), but inside it gets a lot stranger. Take the lid off, and you'll see a pair of light bulbs surrounded by solar-cell-like devices that function as power supply isolators for the input stages of the circuit. Novel, certainly, though possibly

**"In absolute terms noise is low but it has a treble-rich nature that makes it just audible over vinyl noise on occasion."**

a bit of a sledgehammer approach. The DP-Drive is actually the docking station, which accepts either an MM or an MC stage, the DP-02 (MC) being a tiny

board that's densely populated with surface-mounted discrete transistor circuitry. Assembly is a little odd but it looks as if it should all hold together, and light bulb life is quoted as 10,000 hours, similar to valve life. Like the Electrocompaniet amp, the DP-02 appears to use a current input so noise and gain performance with different cartridges may vary to a surprising degree.

**SOUND QUALITY**

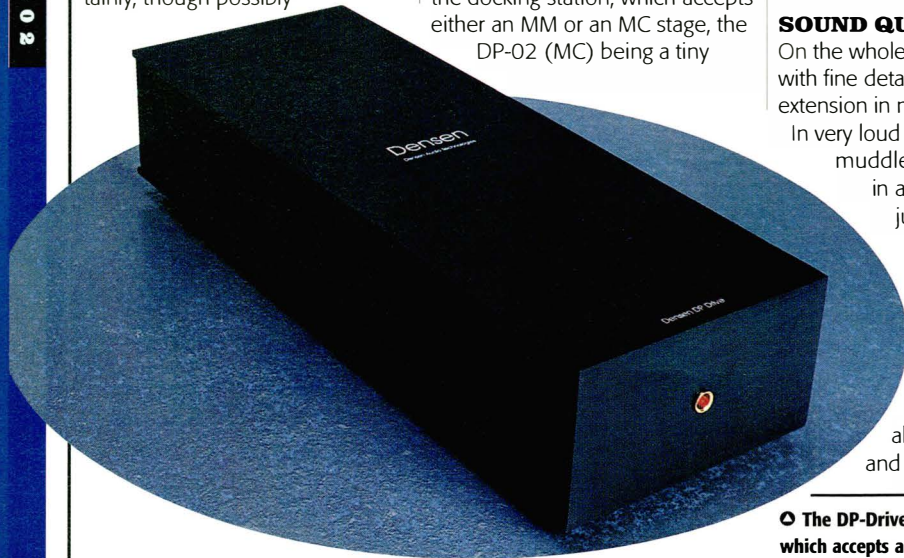
On the whole the sound is good, with fine detail and frequency extension in most circumstances.

In very loud music a degree of muddle sometimes creeps in and bass becomes just a little recessed. In absolute terms noise is low but it has a treble-rich nature that makes it just audible over vinyl noise on occasion. Imaging is always good, though, and on the bypass test

this amp did as well as any on image depth. However, what seems lacking is that essential feeling of reality — somehow the sound all too often feels distinctly reproduced rather than natural.

**CONCLUSION**

Sensitivity is very high and with its limited headroom this amp is decidedly suited to lower-output cartridges (below 0.2mV nominal). Bass response is not quite flat and though it sounded plausible in my system it would be worth checking. A curate's egg: try it by all means.



● The DP-Drive is a docking station which accepts an MM or MC stage.

**VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★★★★

**BUILD** ★★★★★

**VALUE** ★★★★★

**PRICE** £350

📖 Quite unusual design in many ways: sound is mostly good but never quite shakes off a 'synthetic' quality.

■ THREE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Densen Audio Technologies, Randersvej 28, 6700 Esbjerg, Denmark

☎ (01582) 561227

# ELECTROCOMPANIET ECP-1

It's amazing what a nicely polished piece of acrylic can do to smarten up a drab metal box. That apart, there's little externally remarkable about the unit. Gain is switchable for MM or MC cartridges and power is from a dedicated 'wall wart'. Internally the works are based on discrete transistors, quite a lot of them, with the MC input stage apparently using the principle of a current input. This is a difficult discipline to design but has some theoretical advantages. It can lead to surprises in the perceived output level of cartridges, but that's no cause for concern. Assembly and component quality are good.

ful whatever else is happening around it, while treble has that combination of sweetness and extension that characterises the best LP replay equipment. On the difficult bypass test this unit came closest of all eight to matching the sound of the reference, with only a very subtle bass lift giving the game away. Detail, imaging and ambience were all first-rate. With any music there's that essential

**"On the difficult bypass test this unit came closest of all eight to matching the sound of the reference, with only a very subtle bass lift giving the game away."**

**SOUND QUALITY**

This turned out to be one of the stars of the test, in a pretty good field too. From the start, when its low noise sank below the level of run-in grooves on even the quietest pressings, it came across as having an exceptionally detailed sound which nevertheless did not sacrifice smoothness when that was required, nor long-term listenability. Bass digs deep and remains tune-



'rightness' to the sound that encourages listening far into the night.

**CONCLUSION**

The only test result for this unit that might be significant is the very high (in context) current it passes through a cartridge's windings, up to 0.2mA. It certainly won't do any damage but might affect the sound with some cartridges. Check with your own cartridge if unsure. That apart, this is an extremely fine piece of kit and is strongly Recommended.

**VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★★★★

**BUILD** ★★★★★

**VALUE** ★★★★★

**PRICE** £495

📖 An excellent phono amp that combines well-rounded balance with detail and low noise.

■ ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Sound Image UK Ltd, 52 Milton Road, London, SW14 8JR

☎ (0181) 255 6868



## CREEK OBH-9

This diminutive box is a model of restrained design — every detail has been honed to keep costs down. Although it's really quite plain I must admit I find it an appealingly sweet li'l thang visually. It's an MC-only amplifier with no adjustments for gain or loading, and like most of the units in this test it's powered by a simple external power supply. Internal circuitry is based on discrete transistors

◉ Creek's sweet li'l OBH-9 phono stage is powered by an external power supply.



and decent quality passive components, neatly enough done though the electronic assembly isn't exactly the tidiest I've seen. Sensitivity is possibly a little high given the rather limited headroom: cartridges with a nominal output of 0.2mV to 0.4mV will suit best. (Creek also offers a version with lower gain.)

### SOUND QUALITY

This clearly wasn't going to be the quietest amplifier in the test and

**“There's a basic appeal to the sound of this amplifier that does a lot to redeem specific minor shortcomings.”**

in fact its noise was just audible over the surface noise of really quiet pressings, but that's with a very-low-output cartridge. Possibly partly due to that noise, the sound was at times a little muddled and lacking in fine detail. However, there's a basic appeal to the sound of this amplifier that does a lot to redeem specific minor shortcomings, bearing in mind here that we're not dealing with any pretensions to full high-end status. Bass is extended and very natural and although the tonal balance may in fact be

just the tiniest bit over-warm, it is in essence neutral and without undue emphasis of one instrument over another. In 'bypass' testing (with the inverse RIAA filters) this unit showed a slight tendency to dryness with some material, but had no alarming symptoms.

### CONCLUSION

Lab tests showed nothing alarming. Frequency response is nearly flat apart from a minute lift in the high treble, with extension to over 100kHz. Given its price and likely application, this unit seems worthy of Recommendation.

### VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★

**BUILD** ★★★★★

**VALUE** ★★★★★

**PRICE** £160

■ A neat little unit with an essentially neutral and listenable character.

■ TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Creek Audio Ltd, 2 Bellevue Road, London N11 3ES

☎ (0181) 361 4133

## CYRUS aEQ7/PSX-R

This is easily the most hi-tech of the phono stages reviewed here. Inside Cyrus's clever die-cast case lies not only the phono circuitry itself (almost entirely surface-mount) but also a microprocessor control system which provides electronic switching between MM and MC inputs

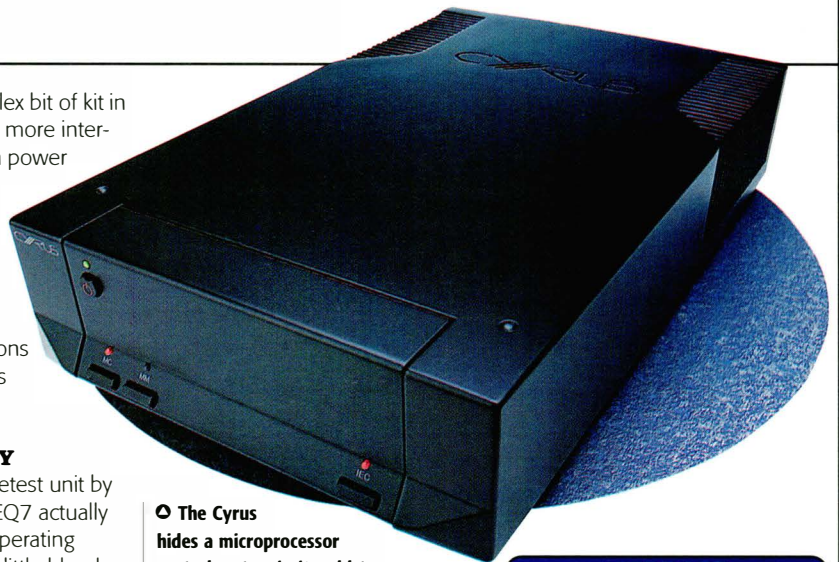
**“The sound is always smooth and unfatiguing, but this is too much of a good thing if the smoothness is at the expense of detail and dynamics.”**

(each on a separate set of sockets). There's also the option of switching from RIAA to IEC equalisation, the latter essentially RIAA plus what used to be called a 'rumble filter'. The aEQ7 actually includes a mains transformer and can be operated on its own: it automatically senses when the higher-capacity PSX-R supply is connected and hands over to that.

The PSX-R is a complex bit of kit in its own right, bearing more internal resemblance to a power amp than a 'mere' power supply. Further aEQ7 features include six switchable loading options for MC cartridges and connections for the Mission/Cyrus remote control bus.

### SOUND QUALITY

Although not the quietest unit by measurement the aEQ7 actually sounds very quiet. Operating alone, it is perhaps a little bland and lacking incisiveness, areas helped but not fully redeemed by the PSX-R which adds detail but still doesn't lift performance quite into the front rank. The sound is always smooth and unfatiguing, but this is too much of a good thing if the smoothness is at the expense of detail and dynamics, as seems to be the case here. Bass is fine when the music's not too loud but tends to recede somewhat at climaxes, and there is also a little roughness in loud



◉ The Cyrus hides a microprocessor control system in its midst.

passages. Generally, lightly scored music is best served.

### CONCLUSION

On the bench, the aEQ7 showed signs of distress in the presence of high-frequency signals, with some tendency to subsonic 'bounce' as HF comes and goes, which probably explains a lot about the sound. It's an attractive product but the sound doesn't quite warrant formal accolades.

### VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★

**BUILD** ★★★★★

**VALUE** ★★★★★

**PRICE** E498/E328

■ Very hi-tech product which tends too much towards smoothness except at climaxes, which can be rough.

■ ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Cyrus Audio, Stonehill, Huntingdon, Cambs PE18 6ED

☎ (01480) 451777





# SUPER TEST

# PHONO STAGES

**Richard Black** puts his silver discs away and has a play with the black stuff for this comprehensive phono stage review.

This may be the CD age, but quite apart from the fact that the LP is experiencing something of a resurgence (manufacture in Japan, for instance, is currently climbing) there's many a treasured LP collection out there which will be a source of pleasure to its owner for many years to come. Record decks and cartridges continue to be available; however, many preamps and integrated amps no longer feature a phono stage, and so the dedicated, stand-alone phono stage

has risen from being a curiosity less than a decade ago to being a common occurrence in any specialist amp manufacturer's lineup.

Reviewed here are 10 such units, from the very-nearly sublime to the not-quite ridiculous, the idea being to give you some idea of what your options are if you think you need one. At £35, the QED Discsaver is clearly aimed at the budget market, while Roksan's £1,190 combination of Artaxerxes and power supply has more to do with the high end. In between is something for almost every wallet.

What's required of a phono stage? A cheap one is unlikely to have to deal with moving coil (MC) cartridges, and indeed the NAD and QED units reviewed here only handle moving magnet (MM) signal levels, which are typically around 10-30 times higher. Even then, we're talking about pretty small voltages, and in fact there are very few design problems in any other area of electronics which combine all the requirements of a good phono



stage: low noise, wide bandwidth, low distortion and all the other tangible and intangible factors that go to make up 'good sound'.

Added to that is the problem of matching the phono stage to the cartridge, and to the rest of your system. If you're using an MM cartridge then the first part is not such a problem since these have much more standardised signal levels and impedances, but MCs vary widely, with nominal output levels in the range of 0.1mV to 0.5mV and sometimes even higher: there are also 'high output MC' cartridges which can be treated electrically as an MM type. Using 0.1mV output MC with a phono stage designed for a 0.5mV type may give rise to noise and lack of gain, while the opposite situation may lead to overload at peaks. Check spec sheets and consult your dealer for advice.

As for matching to the rest of the system, that's much less of a problem since any phono stage is

## THE CAST LIST

Creek OBH-9	£160	p41
Cyrus aEQ7/PSX-R	£498/£328	p41
Densen DP-Drive/DP-02	£350	p42
Electrocompaniet ECP-1	£495	p42
Michell Iso/Lithos	£400/£199	p43
Moth 30 Series Phono	£249	p43
Musical Fidelity X-LP	£130	p44
NAD PP-1	£39.95	p44
QED Discsaver DS-1	£35	p45
Roksan Artaxerxes X/DS1.5I	£445/£745	p45

designed to drive typical line-level inputs (CD, aux etc.) on a preamp or integrated. In fact all the phono stages reviewed here have pretty good load-driving ability and should be unfazed by most combinations of cable and following amplifier. However, there's always some element of system matching involved in any purchase, so again, consult your dealer and ask for a representative demonstration in the shop or at your home if possible.

Mention should perhaps be made of MC transformers as an alternative to electronic MC inputs (as featured in the units here). A transformer boosts voltage passively so that an MC cartridge can feed an MM stage, and performance can be very good: however, good transformers don't come cheap. It's an option to bear in mind.

## GLOSSARY

**MC/MM:** Moving coil/moving magnet cartridge. A description of the basic mode of operation. In practice, the former usually has a much lower output voltage but frequently achieves superior mechanical characteristics.

**LOADING:** In this context, the input impedance of the phono stage. The value of this can have an audible effect on the performance of many MC cartridges.

**OUTPUT LEVEL:** The output level of any phono cartridge is normally quoted in mV (millivolts) for modulation levels equivalent to 5cm/s stylus velocity. However, actual levels on records can rise as high as 50cm/s, so any phono stage needs considerable 'headroom'.

**HEADROOM:** The amount by which the output of a phono stage (or other amplifier) can exceed the nominal operating level. Insufficient headroom in a phono stage, with a given cartridge, can lead to severe distortion.

**RIAA:** The name of the equalisation (pre-emphasis) curve applied to records in the cutting, and applied in reverse, within the phono stage, in the playing.

**LP:** Black plastic disc about a foot across, containing music which you play by scratching it with a bit of rock. Requires ridiculously accurate bits of rock coupled with precision mechanical systems and state-of-the-art electronics, but can work surprisingly well – said by some to make CD eat its shorts!

## HOW THE TESTS WERE DONE

Most of the listening took place with each unit plumbed into my regular system of **Pink Triangle/SME/Highphonic** deck, **EAR** amplifiers and **ATC SCM20** speakers, with custom interconnects and **Goertz** speaker cable. All eight of the MC-capable amps were auditioned with the Highphonic (the MC-A3, which has 0.17mV output from 40 Ohms), and those with MM input also were auditioned briefly with the Highphonic plus an EAR step-up transformer. The MM-only units were tested principally with a Shure VST. Various tracks were played through all the units, plus some casual listening to other items.

In addition, all the units were auditioned on a 'bypass' basis, using as a source a CD player connected via a precision inverse RIAA filter and set up to simulate a low-impedance cartridge with varying output levels. This allows switching to the direct CD player output, or 'bypass', giving a quick and very critical check on phono stage neutrality.

All units were also checked for basic performance parameters on the lab bench.

### SOFTWARE:

**RAVEL:** *Daphnis and Chloë*, Boston Symphony Orchestra/Munch, on Chesky RC15

**HAYDN:** *Symphony 102*, New Philharmonia/Klemperer, on HMV SAX5266

**BUSONI:** *Fantasia Contrappuntistica*, Ogdon, Altarus, on AIR-2-9074

**LITTLE FEAT:** *Feats Don't Fail Me Now*, on Warner WB 56 030

## HINTS & TIPS



Given the incredibly low signal levels involved it's inevitable that all phono stages will be somewhat sensitive to hum, so positioning can be critical – keep well away from any mains transformers! Also ensure that earthing recommendations are followed. Some turntable motors radiate hum too.

Some MC phono amps feature adjustable cartridge loading, which can be well worth experimenting with. Don't be tempted into snap judgements as to what's 'better', as loading also affects level and that can be misleading.

Don't neglect basic 'LP hygiene' – keep records and stylus clean. A good phono stage will show up the effects of dirt, and of incorrect turntable set-up, all the more obviously.



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## 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 \*\*\*\*\*

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



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Quoting HFC 04/99



# EXPOSURE RCXXV



One of the most aspirational brands, Exposure recently became part of the Monitor Audio group (see last month's CD player group test), though the products don't appear to have changed much. Introduced about three years ago, the RCXXV is the top of the line integrated model, a line-level amplifier for which a phono step-up, the well-regarded Model 13, is available at £800. The RCXXV is supplied with an infra-red remote handset (not shown) with controls covering volume, balance, mute, input select and the primary CD player controls.

Manual controls also include a record-out-selector for CD, tuner, aux 1 & 2, for independent listening and recording, though this arrangement doesn't allow tape dubbing unless the source machine is connected to one of the non-tape inputs. Each of the three rotaries (not forgetting the mains switch) is fitted with a red LED tell-tale which acts as a position marker and indicates malfunctions by flashing. Sometimes two of these tell-tales remained extinguished when switched on rapidly after being switched off, but leaving the amp a

**"The Exposure does feel solid and its very simplicity and lack of artifice is a benefit: there is no pretence about this amplifier, what you see is what you get."**

few seconds before restoring power resolved the problem.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the '25 looks rather plain, if not down at heel compared to a number of the more exotic models in this group. Though functional, the mains on/off switch, looks like something out of the Radio Spares catalogue, and the two selector rotaries have a different feel, presumably because the Listen selector is remote controllable and the Record selector isn't, though this doesn't explain why the latter scrapes in its cutout. These minor issues apart, the Exposure does feel solid and its very simplicity and lack of artifice is a benefit: there is no pretence about this amplifier, what you see is what you get.

## SOUND QUALITY

Although this amplifier was felt to have reasonable "grip and authority", it was also perceived to be rather "lacking in analysis (Claire Martin) despite many other hi-fi attributes, in the end impeding a natural emotional connection to the music". This wasn't a solitary view. "The piano sounds fuzzy, and the orchestra, though spacious, has a rather bleary, detached quality", wrote a second, while a third contented himself with the view that the Exposure sounded "very slow". In another presentation later in the day, the same listener wrote that "Claire (Martin) sounded sultry and well controlled, but the voice was somewhat recessed, and so was the orchestra (in the Dohnányi), which also seemed forced. In the Bill Morrissey track, the voice failed to stand out from the backing. It wasn't bad, but it wasn't very good either, and it lacked refinement".

Again, there are no quarrels with the panel's assessment on the basis of the hands-on test programme because the Exposure amplifier behaved in much the same manner with other source components and speakers. It's

Exposure's styling department prefers the hard-core approach.

voicing really isn't bad, but there's a lack of electricity in its music making which makes it seem lacklustre when it should be sparkling, and matter-of-fact when it should be uplifting.

## CONCLUSION

There's not much wrong with this amplifier, or at least nothing that a complete makeover wouldn't cure. Its physical presentation is lacklustre, though it is decently solid. Much the same applies to its sound, which somehow avoided pulling the right strings in our tests. **AG**

## VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£1,000.00

The remote-controlled Exposure integrated is workmanlike, but it doesn't excite.

### THREE YEAR GUARANTEE

Monitor Audio, Unit 34, Clifton Road, Cambridge CB1 4ZW  
(01223) 246344

## THE LAB REPORT

Different amplifiers exhibit different patterns of distortion which contribute to their 'musical colour'. In Exposure's case, distortion produced by its RCXXV demonstrates a marked current-dependence. For example, the RCXXV is most linear when supplying around 1.5A across the attached load, whether this 'load' (read speaker) is 8, 4, 2 or 1 Ohms. Here THD will fall to a minimum of 0.02 per cent, which occurs around 15W into 8 Ohms and 10W into 4 Ohms. The amplifier's maximum continuous output reaches 58W into 8 Ohms but

Distortion shows current dependence.



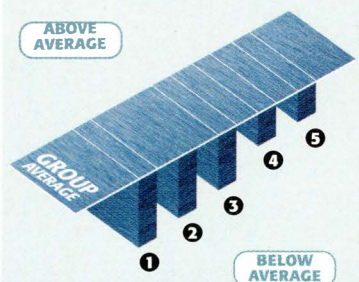
there's only just enough headroom to squeeze out 62W, 99W, 89W and 47W on a dynamic basis into 8, 4, 2 and 1 Ohm loads, respectively. This is equivalent to a maximum current reservoir of 6.8A for 10msec and 7.5A for 5msec (<1 per cent THD).

At low power, there's evidence of high-order crossover distortion (up to 0.2 per cent) while VI-limiting causes distortion to rise with increasing power into loads (speakers) lower than 8 Ohms. Between 10-90W into 4 Ohms, for example, distortion 'creeps up' almost linearly from 0.03 to 0.4 per cent. This, plus the 1.2dB droop at 20kHz, high 0.22 Ohm output impedance and 40mV DC offset, all helps modify the performance – and sound – of the RCXXV with different cable/speaker combinations. **PMI**

## HOW IT COMPARES

Exposure may be too liberal in its rating of the RCXXV's power output which cannot maintain 60W/8 Ohms on anything other than a momentary basis. The distortion pattern gives this amp an 'old-fashioned' appearance that could compromise sound quality.

1 DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	-45%
2 SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	-40%
3 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-35%
4 NOISE	-20%
5 OVERALL COMPATABILITY	-20%



## SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	RATED	ACTUAL
Continuous Power Output, 8 Ohms	60W	58W
Distortion 20Hz-20kHz, 1W/8 Ohms	Not specified	0.28%
Input Sensitivity (CD/Aux)	150mV	300mV



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# MARANTZ PM-17KI Signature

For those few who don't know who the KI Signature range, KI is Ken Ishiwata, Marantz's resident designer-cum-guru. He's also the man responsible for taking off-the-shelf hi-fi products and squeezing a little more from them with improved quality passive components, which are then sold with SE badging. The KI Signature imprimatur was introduced a couple of years ago on a strictly limited range of components — four at present — which are intended to represent the crème de la crème.

The base PM-17 (which — note the subtle irony — shares the transmuted version's pale gold finish) was reviewed in these pages in HFC 181, and the two are indistinguishable to look at, apart from the KIS badging of course. The feature set is much fuller than normal for an audiophile amplifier and includes tone and balance controls with a source direct bypass switch, independent monitoring for two tape decks, bi-directional dubbing, a record selector, and a switchable moving magnet/moving coil phono input. A preamplifier output is also available, and there is even a moving coil meter which shows whether the amplifier is up to temperature. A remote control, also capable of operating a Marantz CD player, is included, along with rear panel system link sockets.

Both amplifier and remote control are to die for, being fabulously dressed and presented, with classy components inside and out,



**“Both amplifier and remote control are to die for, being fabulously dressed and presented, with classy components inside and out.”**

including WBT speaker terminals. Enhancements for the KIS are not specified in detail, but include an improved Super Ring transformer, copper plating of the complete chassis for screening purposes and improved passive components throughout, including power supply coupling capacitors.

### SOUND QUALITY

When first auditioned, following one of the strongest performers of the day, Claire Martin's *Riverman* was "difficult to listen to: it sounded boomy, woolly and a little confused, with a grainy, scratchy quality in the upper registers". The Volodos piano was "small scale, and sounded like a rather average upright rather than a good grand". The bass "lacked body,

and sounded rather blowsy". Another described the Volodos piano as "a bit small-scale and bright", though the Marantz was praised in the Bill Morrissey track for its dynamic consistency. "When the horns went loud, the voice remained crystal clear, and didn't cloud up" he noted. A third listener concurred about the voice treatment, and also about the solidity of the sound generally and its strength with percussion, but he complained about "scratchy" sounding piano and brass.

The second time out the Marantz followed a rather weaker performer, and attracted some more positive comments. "Good sense of height (and) good timing" wrote one, and another described the sound as "involving and airy". Again, though, there were complaints of some "roughness" and of a "scratchy sound, especially with brass", and that vocals sounded "shut in".

The bottom line, fleshed out in separate hands-on listening, is of an amplifier with considerable midband resolution and a strikingly consistent sound at different levels. The bass, however, did sound rather blowsy, almost like a typical valve amp.

◉ The PM-17 KIS is an audiophile version of a well equipped base model.

Yet it had a decidedly unvalve-like treble, which was incisive yet edgy and coarse.

### CONCLUSION

The PM-17KIS was rather disjointed when assessed at the high-end level, with a rather unrefined top end, and it is notable that the original (non-KIS) PM-17 was criticised in our previous test in almost identical terms. If Marantz could address those shortcomings while retaining the amp's fine timing and midrange clarity, this amp would sound as good as it looks. **AG**

### VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£1,299.90

Superbly presented full feature amplifier for the audiophile, but the frequency extremes, and the treble in particular, are wayward.

#### TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

Marantz Hi Fi UK Ltd., Kingsbridge House, Padbury Oaks, 575-583 Bath Road, Longford, Middlesex UB7 0EH.  
(01753) 680868

## THE LAB REPORT

First tested in plain-vanilla guise in HFC 181, comparisons with this 'breathed-on' KI version are interesting. Importantly, the over-active protection circuitry looks to have been relaxed in the light of our earlier Lab Report, allowing the '17KI to sustain brief musical transients into 1 Ohm loads. Otherwise, the '17KI is no more powerful at 85W/145W into 8/4 Ohm loads and VI-limiting becomes more obvious as it is asked to drive lower impedances. The 94W, 172W, 191W (9.8A) and 112W (10.6A) available into 8, 4, 2 and 1 Ohm loads suggests

◉ PM17KIS — stupendous S/N ratio.



the optimum delivery occurs between 4-2 Ohms. This is a sensible result as the impedance minimum for most conventional loudspeakers is typically in this range.

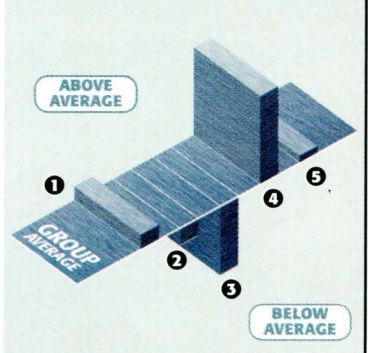
Marantz's new, copper-plated chassis, 'super-ring' power transformer, revised capacitor types and WBT speaker terminals do seem to have widened the amplifier's already vast 93.5dB A-wtd S/N ratio to a stupendous 95.5dB (re. 1W/8 Ohms). This is some 10dB ahead of the 'average' figure for a modern hi-fi amplifier. Distortion, also, has been modified with a mild increase from 0.003 to an equally inaudible 0.009 per cent at high frequencies.

Better volume pot selection, has reduced the channel balance error at -60dB by a full 1dB. Worthwhile improvements, all round. **PMI**

## HOW IT COMPARES

In line with our previous Lab Report, this 'KI' version of the PM-17 now benefits from an improved tolerance of difficult speakers. Exceptionally low noise, however, remains the cornerstone of an amplifier that's best suited to equally 'clean' CD players!

1 DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	10%
2 SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	-10%
3 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-45%
4 NOISE	60%
5 OVERALL COMPATABILITY	5%

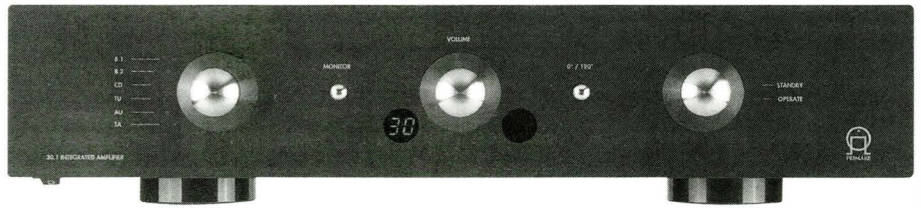


## SPECIFICATIONS

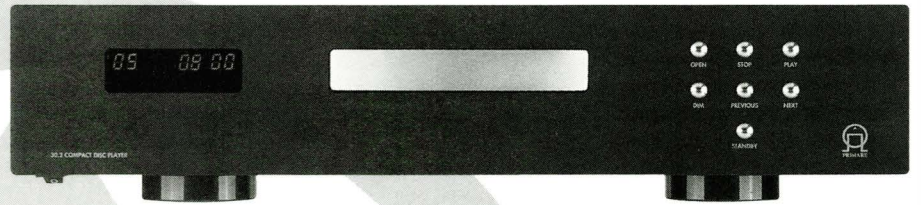
SPECIFICATION	RATED	ACTUAL
Continuous Power Output, 8ohm	60W	85W
Distortion 20Hz-20kHz, 1W/8ohm	0.01%	0.009%
Input Sensitivity (CD/Aux)	170mV	176mV



A 30.1 INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

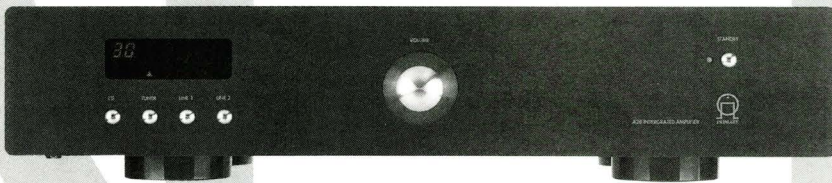


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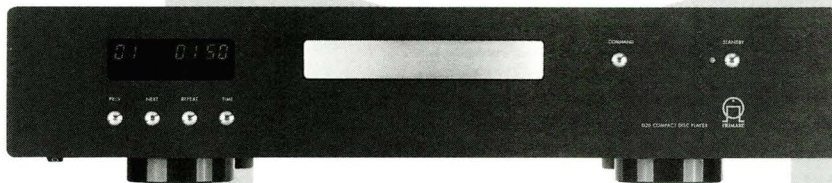
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# MUSICAL FIDELITY X-A100R

The oval additions to the X-series have been a significant success for Musical Fidelity. One proof of this is that the X-RAY CD player greatly out-sells the conventionally packaged E-624 (reviewed last month), even though the latter if anything slightly outperforms the electrically all but identical X-RAY while costing significantly less.

The X-A100R is related to the X-A1 integrated amp and the X-AS100 power amp. Electrically it is closer to the latter, but in market position it is a kind of upmarket X-A1. It has a 75 Watts per channel output and remote handset which controls the ALPs rotary input selector and volume control, and provides output muting, though

**“Build quality is excellent, thanks in large part to a quality alloy case extrusion, though the fluting at the top is a dust trap and will need brushing out from time to time.”**

tape monitoring is strictly manual. Compared to the X-A1, the power supply design is more sophisticated, and the bipolar output stage uses selected matched pairs of output devices, and is biased harder into Class A at low power levels. The maker claims inherently lower distortion within the feedback loop as a result. As usual with this marque, there are no

superfluous features, not even a balance control. There are six line inputs, including a single tape circuit with off-tape monitoring.

Like all the X series, build quality is excellent, thanks in large part to a quality alloy case extrusion, though the fluting at the top is a dust trap and will need brushing out from time to time. The power supply, which includes the mains on/off switch, is housed in an external moulded case connected to the amplifier proper via a long umbilical.

### SOUND QUALITY

There was not complete agreement about this amplifier's musical integrity, but its basic aural fingerprint was not in doubt. Two listeners independently felt that it improved as the test progressed. One remarked that the Claire Martin track started out sounding as though the voice was emerging from a PA stack, but by the time the track had ended he felt the amplifier was “subtle and revealing, as well as being tonally very acceptable”. The Dohnányi orchestral recording was described as having a “sense of composure” and one listener said: “the triangle that tinkles away in the background that sounded a bit lost (through the previous ampli-



○ The X-A100R takes over where the X-A1 leaves off.

fier) was quite clear and convincing”. There was also a much more obvious sense of the cymbal sound “stopping and starting”. The other listener didn't go into as much detail, but he too described his original feeling that the X-A100R started out sounding “pretty murky”, but that it “became better through the programme” — and he too noted the clarity of the percussion in the Bill Morrissey track. Another was a little more critical, describing it as “not entirely convincing”.

It is interesting to speculate about this apparent improvement. It could indeed be that the amp really was improving as the music progressed, though all amplifiers were thoroughly warmed up prior to the test. The Claire Martin vocal is extremely close miked, and can sound a bit unatmospheric, even boxy as a result. On the whole, the author sides with the majority view. This is an amplifier that while not excessively dynamic or punchy, is articulate, refined and spacious.



### CONCLUSION

If you want an amplifier that will knock your lights out at 20 paces, look elsewhere. If you want one that will power medium-sized systems at moderate levels, and reproduce the musicianship, tonality and sense of space captured on worthwhile recordings, especially acoustic ones, the X-A100R is a bargain. Recommended. **AG**

### VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£999.00

**Fine mid-price amplifier that works particularly well with naturally balanced acoustic material, but may not be demonstrative or kick-hard enough for high octane rock.**

#### ■ FIVE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Musical Fidelity Ltd, 15/16 Olympic Trading Estate, Fulton Rd, Wembley HA9 0TF  
☎ (0181) 900 2999

## THE LAB REPORT

MF's X-A100R is best described as slightly more powerful version of the X-A1 reviewed in HFC 181. The former offers a 105/185W dynamic output into 8/4 Ohm loads respectively, and this increases to 124W/228W in the X-A100R. Fine so far. Only the X-A100R has a fractionally lower reserve of current at 11.3A (12.6A over 5msec) and so its 1 Ohm rating falls to 129W. Current-limiting is very harsh indeed as distortion spirals almost

○ The MF boasts low distortion.



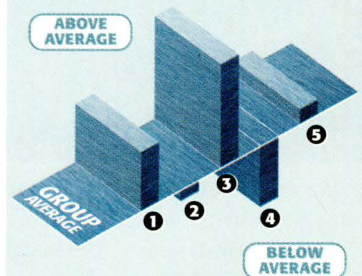
instantly in excess of 30 per cent — even under momentary conditions — if the amplifier is nudged into clipping into low loads. It could be argued that the X-A100R is actually less load tolerant than the slightly less powerful X-A1!

Otherwise, all the technical features of Sanken's 'thermally reactive' output transistors — and MF's implementation thereof — remain to grace the X-A100R. Low 0.005 per cent distortion right across the range, a flat response only -0.4dB down at 20kHz and a low-ish -84dB noise (re. 1W/8 Ohms) that continues to fall to a respectable -98dB (re. 2/3 output, A-wtd). Input loading is sensible at 47 kOhms, the 1dB channel error at -60dB about typical, and the overload margins generous at >16V. **PMI**

## HOW IT COMPARES

The XA-100R is just as cautiously rated as the XA-1 (75W instead of 50W) but will deliver 100W into 8 Ohm speakers at very low and controlled levels of distortion. Be warned, however, when the XA-100R runs out of steam it does so very abruptly indeed.

1 DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	40%
2 SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	-5%
3 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	70%
4 NOISE	-40%
5 OVERALL COMPATABILITY	10%



## SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	RATED	ACTUAL
■ Continuous Power Output, 8 Ohms	75W	100W
■ Distortion 20Hz-20kHz, 1W/8 Ohms	0.04%	0.005%
■ Input Sensitivity (CD/Aux)	300mV	268mV



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# DENSEN DM-10



The DM-10 amplifier, of which Russian diva Nathaly Troitskayis is said (according to Densen's promotional material) to have remarked "For the first time since 1991 I felt myself again in the company of Placido (Domingo) on stage...", is typical of the marque. It's very big, it's very butch, its very black and the front panel is adorned by just two very gynomous brass-coloured controls, one for volume, the other to select the input, with a red LED keeping the peace between them. The deep front panel is made from blackened acrylic, chosen to reduce circulating currents, and the rest of the chassis is non-magnetic aluminium for a similar reason, and to disperse heat. On the back are sockets for four line inputs, two tape decks and bi-wire terminals for speakers. There is no tape monitor facility.

Densen – which claims to have invented the term "air guitar" – is yet another company which claims to use zero feedback, and like most of the others it claims to be 'virtually' the only one to do so (see Thule review, p65), though

**"There was some scatter in the panel comments, with positive remarks about the Densen's subtlety and easy, open sound."**

Densen's claim is slightly more credible than some as there is no get-out clause about using local feedback.

The DM-10 is described as an uncompromised, cost-no-object design which took three years to complete/perfect (delete as applicable once you've read the review). It is a dual mono design, which uses two massive shrouded toroidal transformers, eight regulated power supplies and 80,000pF reservoir capacity, which is going some for a 75 Watt output rating. MM and MC phono step-ups, the DP-01 and DP-02, are available as extra-cost options, displacing input 1.

**SOUND QUALITY**

There was a problem with the original test sample, which had

been used for the lab testing and the panel tests with slightly displaced controls. This had been attributed to poor build quality, but was later diagnosed as having been dropped, and a replacement sample was drafted in. At no point were both amplifiers available for a side-by-side audition, but the second sample did seem a little more comfortable in its own skin.

The Densen was described as even handed but "somewhat detached and uncommunicative" by one, and as "seeming to be going through the motions" by another and as "plodding" and "a bit muffled and ploddy" by a third, these from final comments from two separate presentations. Most interesting of all were comments about "signs of strain" through the louder passages and of "subtle high-frequency distortion"; both referring in particular to the Bill Morrissey track, though similar comments were made when the panel was in post-listening banter mode. Some level changes were noted in the hands-on listening that imply that the amplifier was running out of steam when it was being driven hard. There was some scatter in the panel com-

◦ If knobs maketh the amplifier, then the Densen's a winner.

ments, with positive remarks about the Densen's subtlety and easy, open sound, and at moderate levels in the hands-on tests it did indeed sound clean, dynamic and transparent.

**CONCLUSION**

A curious amplifier with some real strengths, this one is worth an ear-ball and will certainly suit some systems well where its gutsy ability to control a loudspeaker load can be bought to bear. Ultimately, though, the DM-10 failed to satisfy with inconsistencies in its behaviour that were not completely resolved by the replacement test sample.

AG

**VERDICT**

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£1,375.00

■ A kind of Danish Naim on steroids, but without the consistency and sang-froid.

■ THREE YEAR GUARANTEE

☒ Densen Audio Technologies, Randersvej, 28 6700 Esbjerg, Denmark  
☎ (01582) 561227

**THE LAB REPORT**

Densen's 'affordable' BEAT B-100 integrated amplifier was tested on no less than three occasions (HFC 154, 162 and 175) whereupon problems noted in my lab reports were progressively resolved. Now it's time for the upmarket DM-10, which has foibles of its own. For example, the 75W/150W 8/4 Ohm rated specification is not met at 70W/120W in practice, though some 89W, 162W, 268W and 190W may be teased-out under dynamic conditions into 8, 4, 2 and 1 Ohm loads, respectively.

◦ Distortion of the Densen is current-dependent, reaching an early high.



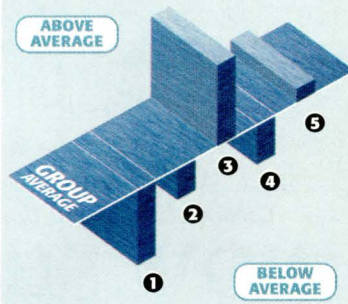
Similarly, the low <0.01 per cent rated THD seems a little optimistic if the DM-10 really is (as claimed) a 'zero-feedback' amplifier.

In reality, distortion shows a current-dependency through the DM-10, for though it's able to sustain a generous 13.8A into 1 Ohm, the distortion profile reaches an early maximum at around 0.6A into all loads. For example, distortion climbs to 0.13 per cent at 2-3W output into 8 Ohms but falls at lower and higher powers, suggesting the 'colour' of the amplifier might also change through this important point in its dynamic range where its music is 'ticking-over'. As with early B-100's, the DM-10 has a high 85mV DC offset on one channel and a low 9 kOhm input impedance – not ideal for all speakers and CD players. PMI

**HOW IT COMPARES**

The 70W/8 Ohm power output is only a little short of Densen's specification but, into 4 Ohms, the gulf widens with 120W proving below the 150W. Distortion is also higher than indicated while DC offset is very high on one channel.

1 DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	-50%
2 SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	-20%
3 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	55%
4 NOISE	-25%
5 OVERALL COMPATIBILITY	10%



**SPECIFICATIONS**

SPECIFICATION	RATED	ACTUAL
■ Continuous Power Output, 8 Ohms	75W	70W
■ Distortion 20Hz-20kHz, 1W/8 Ohms	<0.01%	0.08%
■ Input Sensitivity (CD/Aux)	280mV	309mV



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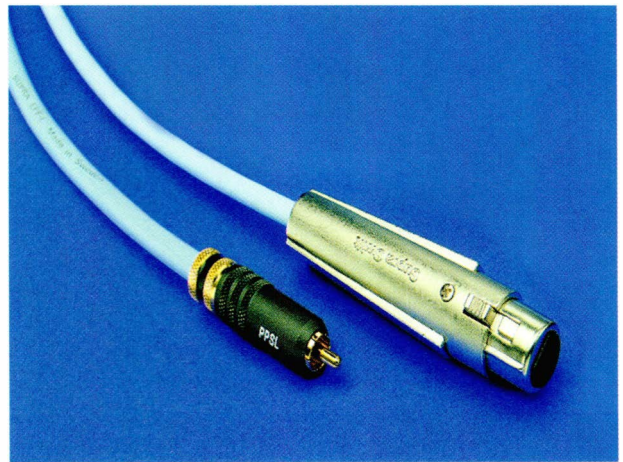
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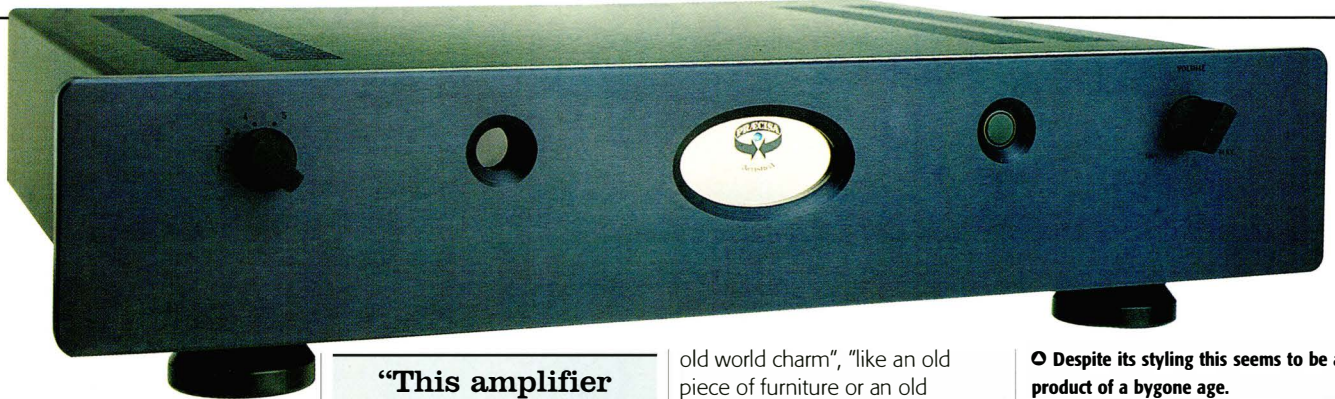
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# PRÆCISA ACUSTICA Sonoro



**P**ræcisa Acustica is an Italian brand of more than usually stylish hi-fi equipment. Few details were available at press time other than the fact that the company's existing range includes a preamplifier, a power supply, a power amplifier and a loud-speaker which from the maker's brochure is an elaborately constructed standmount, fine-wood confection roughly in the shape of an egg. The Sonoro integrated amplifier is the baby of the range, has just been introduced, and came with little documentation and only preliminary instructions.

As the photo shows, the Sonoro is quite a looker — note the oval central styling motif which acts as home for the tiny blue power indicator. The power switch is recessed on the right, and restoring symmetry is a similar recessed feature which is the remote control window. The latter accepts commands from a truly minimalist remote control (not shown), which has just two buttons, one to raise, and one to lower the volume. Front panel controls duplicate this function and access the five inputs, all at line level and one of which is

**“This amplifier sounds curiously, even quaintly slow and old-fashioned, and it tends to smother bold dynamic swings, though it is not without a certain grace that’s missing from many of its peers.”**

a tape circuit, though tape monitoring is not on the menu. Power output is rated at 100 Watts per channel. The amplifier is solid and heavy, and build quality is of a very high standard, though slightly smoother edges to the two rotary controls would have helped improve operational feel. The insides are if anything even better turned out, though there may be some sonic benefit if the rather ratty top panel was damped.

#### SOUND QUALITY

Arguably the most distinctive amplifier in the group, this model was variously described as “full of

old world charm”, “like an old piece of furniture or an old whisky”, “seductive but not real” and “old fashioned, quite musical, but like a bleached photo that has lost some of its colour”. These comments were from different listeners and listening sessions referring to the Claire Martin, Volodos, Dohnányi and the Bill Morrissey extracts respectively. The hands-on listening led to a similar range of conclusions, though the Sonoro has the leopard-like ability to change its spots according to the system it is used in, which implies an excessive degree of load sensitivity. The mid/top region seemed gently ‘shaped’, and the bass varied in level, tunefulness and pace according to the speakers chosen, and tended to sound lost with large, bass-rich designs.

The short version, then, is that this amplifier sounds curiously, even quaintly slow and old-fashioned, and it tends to smother bold dynamic swings, though it is not without a certain grace that’s missing from many of its peers. Perhaps the biggest surprise is that it is powered by little slivers of silicon rather than by glowing bottles. This, by the way, is not meant as a complement: the best valve

◯ Despite its styling this seems to be a product of a bygone age.

amplifiers are the ones that don’t sound like valves, and this one certainly does. “Ploddy”, “soft”, “refined”, “reduced piano size”, and “sounds quite expensive, but glosses over some of the detail” are descriptions that have been plucked from a long list, and each is fully justified.

#### CONCLUSION

If you have been wondering what went wrong with amplification in the decades since Leak introduced the Point One, this is probably the amplifier for you. Bottom line: tame. **AG**

#### VERDICT

<b>SOUND</b>	★★★★☆
<b>BUILD</b>	★★★★☆
<b>VALUE</b>	★★★★☆
<b>PRICE</b>	£1,800.00

Stylish, elegant — and sounds like something from the pre-transistor era, for better or for worse.

#### THREE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Sound Image, 52 Milton Road, East Sheen, London SW14 8JR  
☎ (0181) 255 6868

## THE LAB REPORT

**M**y Italian is decidedly ropy, nevertheless Præcisa's literature appears to suggest the Sonoro is capable of 100W into 8 Ohms. In practice, no more than 88W is possible at <1 per cent THD (just 54W at 20kHz) though more is undoubtedly available at higher distortion. For example, using Præcisa's rated 800mV input level, this forces an output of 133W/8 Ohms, albeit at crushing levels of distortion. Low sensitivity has the advantage of low noise and high input overload margins, as is the case here. Otherwise, some 111W and 195W is achieved

◊ Gives a fair tolerance of tricky loads.



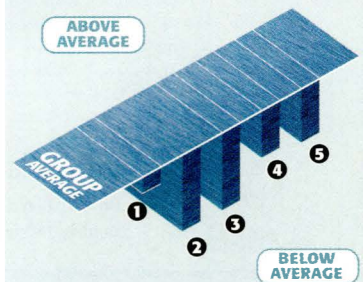
able under dynamic conditions into 8 and 4 Ohm loads up to 1 per cent THD.

Into lower impedances, the trend is more complex. At 2 Ohms, the Sonoro's dynamic output exceeds 1 per cent THD by 3-5W but then drops back to 0.7 per cent or so up to 160W, before reaching a true 'clip' at 224W (10.6A, <2 per cent THD). Much the same happens into 1 Ohm, with THD nudging three per cent at low power before falling back <1 per cent at 110W. A maximum 13.2A is available (175W), promising a fair tolerance of tricky loads, even if its delivery seems a trifle 'colourful'. Distortion, is invariably high and complex in nature but the high 0.63 Ohm output impedance will only serve to further modify what is otherwise a flat and uniform response (+0.0/-0.4dB). Expect the unexpected! **PMI**

## HOW IT COMPARES

**D**istortion is high but colourful and distinctly 'valve-like' and while the Sonoro will achieve 100W/8 Ohms, this is above our 1 per cent distortion threshold. Its high output impedance will modify the system's response in line with the impedance trend.

1 DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	-10%
2 SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	-50%
3 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-50%
4 NOISE	-30%
5 OVERALL COMPATIBILITY	-35%



## SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	RATED	ACTUAL
Continuous Power Output, 8 Ohms	100W	88W
Distortion 20Hz-20kHz, 1W/8 Ohms	0.1%	0.8%
Input Sensitivity (CD/Aux)	800mV	531mV





**JM Lab**  
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Electra SW 33A

Electra 920

Electra 905

Electra SR 30

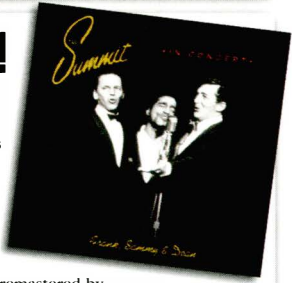
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**OL' BLUE EYES IS BACK!**

In what must be one of the musical coups of the decade, LA-based audiophile specialist DCC have just announced an historic agreement with Artisan (the company started by the Sinatra family to handle the late crooner's musical catalogue) to issue previously unreleased archive material. The world-wide deal has given DCC access to over 60 hours of tapes which will result in a series of 180g vinyl and 24 carat gold CD releases, all to be remastered by engineering maestro Steve Hoffman using DCC's renowned vintage vacuum playback system, resulting in what we all hope will be the best-sounding Sinatra releases ever. The first title is *The Summit*, a 1962 "Rat Pack" recording featuring Ol' Blue Eyes and accomplices Sammy Davis Jnr and Dean Martin, this will be followed by a solo Sinatra live recording, *'57 Concert*, and many more releases will follow.



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# PRIMARE A30.1

**A**side from its considerable audio merits, the Primare 30.1 is arguably the best looking and best turned out amplifier in this month's group, which is praise indeed as there are some strong contenders. This is a big amplifier, though not grossly so, and it is one of the densest and heaviest pieces of hardware of its type, thanks to a massively endowed power supply section which is responsible for the 100 Watts into eight Ohms (180 Watts into four Ohms) power ratings. The front panel incorporates a stand-off to house the display and control circuits, which is an effective aesthetic feature, but the most impressive features of all are the three turned controls, which are simply the best.

The amplifier is a dual mono design, with a 300VA transformer for each channel. Inputs – there are six – are relay switched and controlled by an impulse generator volume control offering high precision 1dB stepped attenuation and good channel balance, even at low volume settings, which is difficult to achieve with stepped rotary potentiometers. Controls are limited to volume and source selection, and there's no tape monitor facility. A full system remote control also offers balance adjustment.

Unusually there is also an absolute phase switch, but most



**“Diction was counted as particularly good in the vocal tracks, and tonality was generally warm and open, with two listeners guessing the brand correctly.”**

unusual of all is that two of the inputs are fully balanced, which has its up and down side. Balanced operation should deliver better sound quality, though much depends on the specific circuit topology. Few have access to balanced source components, and for the rest of us, the A30.1 is reduced in effect to a four input amplifier. However, Primare's own D30.2 CD player is a balanced mode player, and there are others, mainly from high-end producers where it's considered essential.

### SOUND QUALITY

There was no substantial disagreement about this one, and on the one occasion where there was a difference in judgement, it was about the musical merit of

the amp, and not about the actual sound. By common consent, then, this was heard as an easy, light and open amplifier, which was generally felt to be enjoyable and fresh. Diction was counted as particularly good in the vocal tracks, and tonality was generally warm and open. Two listeners guessed the brand correctly, though neither had been told which brands had been included in the test.

“Intimate, tactile, and with good timing” was one typical comment following the Claire Martin track *Riverman*, while another described the same piece as “very enjoyable, light and fresh, very good diction and a believable guitar”. The Dohnányi *Symphonic Minutes Op. 36* was felt “a little rushed” by one and “warm, easy to listen to, almost valve-like” by another. It was precisely this warmth and grace that was heard by one listener as a little too easy and relaxed to be true, but even he scored the Primare well at the end of the sessions.

This is indeed an impressive amplifier, with plenty of subtle, tactile detail and a coherent, solid balance; an amplifier moreover

● The Primare delivers 100 Watts, each channel boasting a 300VA transformer.

that worked consistently well in each of the systems tried. In some ways it is not the most immediately likeable performer because its qualities, though wide ranging, are evenly, even thinly spread, but it repays extended listening all the more for this.

### CONCLUSION

Best Buy. This is one of the most naturally balanced, least intrusive and thoroughly enjoyable amplifiers in the group, whose sound for once is sophisticated and complete enough to justify its cost. What more can you ask?

### VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£1,499.99

■ Heavyweight amplifier, dressed to kill and deceptively musical without seeming to try too hard.

■ TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ CSE, Unit 9, Centre Park Holdings, The Airfield, Tockwith, Yorks YO5 8QF  
☎ (01423) 359054

## THE LAB REPORT

**P**rimare's digital volume control offers a mere 0.1dB error over the top 60dB of its range, 0.2dB over 70dB and 0.5dB over the full 78dB span, with comparable deviations in channel balance – a superb result in anyone's book! As with other amplifiers in this month's survey, the nature of the A30.1's distortion is dependent on both level (in this case a voltage-dependence) and load impedance.

There's little evidence of crossover distortion at low signal levels where THD is a respectable 0.02 per cent, though opti-

● A speaker-tolerant design.



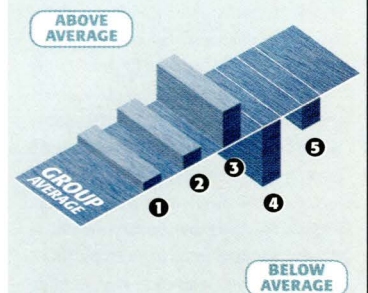
mum performance occurs up to 14Vrms (25W/8 Ohms or 49W/4 Ohms), beyond which distortion tends to increase to the point of clipping. The latter occurs at a healthy 125W/190W into 8/4 Ohm loads with some 152W, 283W, 437W (14.8A) and 449W (21.2A) available under dynamic conditions into 8, 4, 2 and 1 Ohm loads. Clearly, the A30.1 is one of the more speaker-tolerant designs in this test as a whole.

In global terms, noise is about 'average' at -85dB (re. 1W/8 Ohms) and improves to -100dB at two-thirds output. The 5V input overload margins should be sufficient to cope with the vast majority of line sources, though I'd not be tempted to partner it with the Helios Model 3 CD player (see HFC 188)! **PMi**

## HOW IT COMPARES

**M**ore rugged than the bargraph might suggest, the Primare's spec is overwhelmed by the higher power and lower noise of its German competitors in this test. In reality this is a well-engineered amp with no obvious or debilitating compromises.

1 DYNAmIC POWER OUTPUT	5%
2 SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	10%
3 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	25%
4 NOISE	-40%
5 OVERALL COMPATIBILITY	-15%



## SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	RATED	ACTUAL
■ Continuous Power Output, 8 Ohms	100W	126W
■ Distortion 20Hz-20kHz, 1W/8 Ohms	0.07%	0.04%
■ Input Sensitivity (CD/Aux)	280mV	323mV



# RESTEK Fantasy 2

German high-end maker Restek has been around for five years in this country on a fairly small scale, though on its home turf the marque has been established for in excess of quarter of a century. The products are hand made and produced in limited numbers, and the Fantasy 2 ('the most cost-effective entry into true high-end amplification') was only recently introduced. Although a plethora of German language information was available for this amplifier, there was little in English, and some of that was wrong. For example, there are six inputs, including two tape circuits, not eight as the Restek website claims. Hopefully the ability to deliver 274 Watts into two Ohms is accurate, and also the 70 Ohm current delivery (peak, presumably), but we have to guess the specified eight Ohm power output. Our money is on a generous 100 Watts per channel, but see the lab report below.

The amplifier is available in two finishes, black anodised aluminium, and — inevitably for an exotic German amplifier such as this — chrome plate. In this case the chrome is on brass, with a black facia insert covering the large red fluorescent display characters, these show which input is selected and the protection circuit status. The amplifier may not match prevailing UK aesthetic sensibilities, but it certainly makes a



**"The upside of the Restek is that sense of power, the propulsive, even explosive nature of the amp; both of which become obvious with a very high price speaker."**

dramatic statement, as does its 26kg deadweight. If you want an amplifier with the biggest possible 'wow' factor, there can be few better this side of Krell, and the chunky aluminium slab-faced CD/amp remote handset is equally impressive.

## SOUND QUALITY

An almost unstoppable powerful and consistent amplifier, the Fantasy 2 also has the stereotypical qualities associated with German brands (the real subtext of this test group is how closely most of the models submitted really do correspond to national stereotypes). The downside is a rather plodding, heavy-handed

quality, especially obvious in the bass, and rather mechanical timing which didn't mesh well with much of the test material. The Dohnányi *Symphonic Minutes* excerpt, for example, seemed curiously out of sorts, as though played by second-rate musicians — "the instruments are not together" was the way one panelist put it — which is far from the case. Vocals were variously described as "shouty" and "quacky" (Claire Martin and Bill Morrissey respectively), and another described what he perceived as a "hardened, inexpressive" vocal from Claire Martin.

The upside of the Restek is that sense of power, the propulsive, even explosive nature of the amp; both of which become obvious with a very high price speaker that became available at the end of the test period from Eggleston Works (at £8k+ a pair, not a standard combination). This requires an amplifier with the kind of focus and drive that the Fantasy 2 was able to bring to bear. The most positive panel comment along these lines was one that concluded "Much more open (than the previous amplifier), and drives

☉ Fantasy is also available in black, but we liked the chrome.

music much better, I enjoyed it to the point where music was becoming the focal point, and I was much less aware of what the amplifier was doing".

## CONCLUSION

There were different views about this amp, and the previous comment is praise indeed, but it was a minority view, and the hands-on mainly supported the proposition that this was a rather hard, insistent sounding amplifier, albeit one that has some very positive qualities. If you want an amplifier that sounds as powerful as a bright outhouse, look no further.

AG

## VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★

**BUILD** ★★★★★

**VALUE** ★★★★★

**PRICE** £1,499.00

☐ A real mailed fist in a mailed glove of an amplifier, resplendent in bright chrome to justify the Fantasy model name.

■ THREE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Restek UK, 159 Dominion Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN14 8LD.

☎ (01903) 207634

## THE LAB REPORT

When every other amplifier in this test is left whimpering in the corner for fear of the toughest loudspeaker load, send in the troops, or at least the Restek Fantasy 2. Its speaker-grappling specification is certainly no fantasy: a full 175W, 327W, 550W (16.6A) and 734W (27.1A) into 8, 4, 2 and 1 Ohms, respectively. Yes, that's 734W: not bad for a 130-Watter! And yet there's more to a good amplifier than oodles of grunt. In this case, Restek seems to be employing a 'belt and braces' approach to gain man-

☉ Belt and braces gain management.



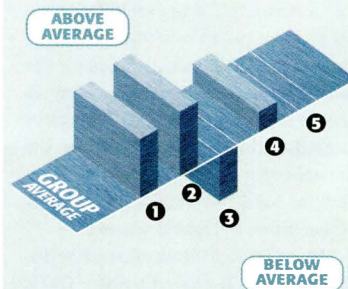
agement. It's squeezed distortion down to 0.001 per cent through the midband but lets it rise closer to 0.018 per cent as both power and frequency increase and negative feedback has less effect. It's this change in distortion that might have some audible penalty, hence the negative bargraph result.

Other features of this tightly-controlled design include very low -90dB noise (re. 1W/8 Ohms), a very low 0.014 Ohm output impedance and a mere 0.7dB error in channel balance over the top 60dB volume range. Restek's logic-governed input selection may be behind the limited (though perfectly useable) 5.4V input overload margin and there's a +0.9dB boost at 4Hz, reinforcing the sub-20Hz region just prior to its sharp DC cutoff. PMI

## HOW IT COMPARES

The most powerful and speaker-resistant amplifier here still uses plenty of compensation to achieve low distortion and an equally low output impedance. These properties are often associated with a typically 'transistorised' sound.

1 DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	40%
2 SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	45%
3 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-30%
4 NOISE	15%
5 OVERALL COMPATIBILITY	0%



## SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	RATED	ACTUAL
■ Continuous Power Output, 8 Ohms	130W	135W
■ Distortion 20Hz-20kHz, 1W/8 Ohms	<0.007%	0.004%
■ Input Sensitivity (CD/Aux)	Not Specified	230mV



# T&A PA1220R



**A**lthough T+A is an unfamiliar name in the UK (we were T+A virgins prior to last month's test, when we looked at the CD1210R CD player — a suitable partner for this amplifier), the range is a well-established upmarket brand in its native Germany. Like many brands which were honed for their home markets, this one is a highly individual design in many ways. The basics include 100 Watts per channel (eight Ohms), full remote control with a large, well-equipped system handset — and a complete absence of English language documentation, which should be put right shortly.

The PA-1220R is full of surprises, one of which is that such a slimline design can deliver 100 Watts per channel with a strong current yield, though one of the factors is the extensively perforated top cover which allows heat out and provides a good view of the impressively constructed circuit boards. The feature set includes switching for two pairs of speakers, independent listen and record selectors using the same set of control buttons, full tone controls (using pop-out car radio style controls) and loudness with a

**“The PA-1220R is full of surprises, one of which is that such a slimline design can deliver 100 Watts per channel with a strong current yield.”**

‘flat’ bypass facility, switching for two pairs of speakers and a headphone socket.

The back panel is not without its surprises, not the least of which is that room was found to accommodate two sets of chunky 4mm binding post loudspeaker terminals. Full system link sockets are provided using 3.5mm minijack socket adapters, and an infra-red link can be attached, which means the amp could be hidden in a cabinet and still operated remotely without the clumsy expedient of a stick-on repeater. But there wasn't room for everything on the back panel. The surround interface, consisting of four phono sockets (which will require right-angle plugs for clearance) which can be patched to a surround sound or other processor, is hidden in the base.

## SOUND QUALITY

The panel was clearly aware that they were dealing with an amplifier that was qualitatively and quantitatively different to the rest of the group, and had no difficulty in describing its character. “Quite different to anything heard (earlier in the day), this amplifier really grabbed those speakers and made them work” said one. Another talked of a “very powerful, solid bass, the first time we have really heard bass like it (today)”, though by the next presentation later in the day the same writer felt the bass was “thumpy”, and there was widespread criticism of vocal intelligibility and of a certain mid-band diffuseness and coloration in both outings.

The problem for this amplifier is one that was not entirely absent from some of the other amplifiers in this group, which is that the overt character of the amplifier, its outer skin if you will, was contradicted by a lack of finesse or attention to detail, and first impressions tended to be disappointing in extended listening. The hands-on listening underlined this, and although it was hard to put a finger on exactly what didn't work, there was a clear loss of

◉ The T+A's back panel houses a plethora of sockets and terminals.

synergy and ‘focus’ with most of the combinations tested.

## CONCLUSION

There is a system out there that is made for this amplifier, and it is probably one based on T+A's own CD players and loudspeakers. Used with the equipment listed in the introduction, the PA-1220R seemed bold but a bit heavy handed, but it is a true individual and there is clearly real merit in the design which is definitely one to watch. **AG**

## VERDICT

<b>SOUND</b>	★★★★☆
<b>BUILD</b>	★★★★☆
<b>VALUE</b>	★★★★☆
<b>PRICE</b>	<b>£1,445.00</b>

◉ Intriguingly bold, dynamic but somewhat coarse textured amplifier, but one of the better models to include tone controls.

### ■ ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Richard Hirschman Electronics (UK) Ltd, St Martins Way, St Martins Business Centre, Bedford MK42 0LF  
☎ (01234) 345999

## THE LAB REPORT

**O**n the face of it, there are numerous technical and performance parallels between the Restek Fantasy and this slimline model from T+A. For example, the PA1220R is also both very powerful and disarmingly load-tolerant with a capacity to sustain dynamic outputs of 164W, 282W, 444W (14.9A) and 590W (24.3A) into 8, 4, 2 and 1 Ohm loads respectively. The supply of current is typically delivered at <0.01 per cent distortion into 8, 4 and 2 Ohm loads but increases to 0.1 per cent into 1 Ohm, right up to its substantial 24.3A limit. Low

◉ Insensitive speakers aren't a burden.

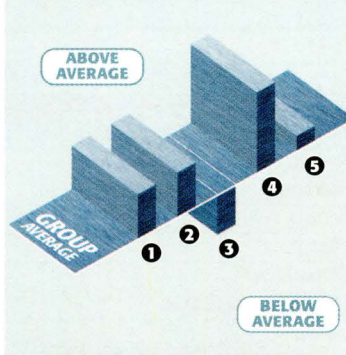
impedance and/or insensitive speakers will not prove a burden for the PA1220R just as its 0.01 Ohm output impedance will make the best of any very low resistance cables.

The amplifier's response is utterly flat from 20Hz to 20kHz, errors in channel balance amount to no more than 0.2dB over a 60dB range while distortion falls as low as 0.0004 per cent (that's three zero's) through the midrange. Once again, all this points to the judicious use of compensation (feedback) as does the exceptionally low -94dB A-wtd noise (re. 1W/8 Ohms). Relative to two-thirds output, the PA1220R's S/N ratio tops some 107dB! This is all well and good, but we do know that such a 'wide window' may expose the harsh effects of any local RF 'hash'. **PMi**

## HOW IT COMPARES

**V**ery powerful and consistent in performance from speaker to speaker, the PA1200R is yet another technical tour-de-force from T+A but, like the Restek, it looks rather better on paper than it sounds in the listening room.

1 DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	30%
2 SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	30%
3 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-25%
4 NOISE	55%
5 OVERALL COMPATIBILITY	10%



## SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	RATED	ACTUAL
■ Continuous Power Output, 8 Ohms	100W	115W
■ Distortion 20Hz-20kHz, 1W/8 Ohms	0.002%	0.0018%
■ Input Sensitivity (CD/Aux)	Not Specified	216mV





# AMPLIFIERS

# CONCLUSIONS

## THE BEST IN THE TEST



### BEST BUY PRIMARE A30.1 £1,499.99

Easily the best Primare amplifier we have looked at to date, this is a superb all-rounder, with abundant power combined with good timing, a natural warmth that stops short of being excessive and a sense of rightness and precision that makes it feel instantly at home.



### RECOMMENDED COPLAND CSA-28 £1,249.00

A hybrid amplifier developed from the popular CSA14, the new model includes remote control that can be bypassed for quality critical sessions. As elegant as any previous Copland design, the new model is cleaner, sharper and more transparent, but it can sound bright in some systems.

### RECOMMENDED MUSICAL FIDELITY X-A100R £999.00

Much of Musical Fidelity's strong showing is based on the X-series, which now includes some grown-up mainstream components. Close to the X-A1 in concept, this is a thoroughly likeable and musical, yet easy on the ear amplifier with especially strong midband voicing.



### RECOMMENDED NAIM NAIT 3R £780.00

The remote-control version of the venerable entry-level Naim amplifier remains what it always was: wilfully idiosyncratic and comparatively low in power, but brick-solid, consistent and dynamic in sound. The addition of remote control had not detracted from its sense of drive or its unusual rhythmic strengths.



The generalised conclusion that fell out of the woodwork last time we looked as relatively inexpensive integrated amplifiers (*HFC 186*) was that the market is so competitive that there is a certain base level of competence that most amplifiers seem capable of achieving. By the same token there are few that stand head and shoulders above the crowd.

Not so here. The price band for this month's group extends up to nearly £2,000, which takes us well beyond what euphemistically can be described as mass-market territory, and as it turns out the standards found in this month's test group are much more diverse. There is a lot more personality in many of the products, an almost wilful quality that has little to do with literal truth or the classic audio idea of a transparent open window on the music.

One of the main sources of variation turns out to be regional. In this month's group we have amplifiers from four European countries: Germany, Italy, Denmark and the UK, as well as the Marantz. The latter is a bit of a polyglot, with Japanese circuitry that has been breathed on by a UK team headed by Ken Ishiwata. It was little surprise that the standard of fit and finish, indeed the quality of the casework and external fittings was superior in the case of the models made outside the UK. It's notable that the best finished British model was created under European auspices. But in a

### AMPLIFIER COMPARISON TABLE

MAKE MODEL	COPLAND CSA-28	DENSEN DM10	EXPOSURE RCXXV	MARANTZ PM-17KIS	MUSICAL FIDELITY X-A100R	NAIM NAIT
PRICE	£1,249.00	£1,375.00	£1,000.00	£1,299.90	£999.00	£780.00
SOUND	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
GUARANTEE	1 year	3 years	3 years	2 years	5 years	1 year
SIZE (WXHXD) IN MM	430x125x375	440x78x375	440x90x306	458x110x444	220x110x345	430x56x300
WEIGHT	13kg	14.7kg	9kg	15kg	9kg	5.4kg
RATED CONTINUOUS POWER OUTPUT, 8 OHMS	60W	75W	60W	60W	75W	30W
ACTUAL CONTINUOUS POWER OUTPUT, 8 OHMS	77W	70W	58W	85W	100W	34W
RATED DISTORTION, 20HZ-20KHZ, 1W/8 OHMS	<0.1%	<0.01%	Not specified	0.01%	0.04%	<0.1%
ACTUAL DISTORTION, 20HZ-20KHZ, 1W/8 OHMS	0.02%	0.08%		0.009%	0.005%	<0.1%
RATED INPUT SENSITIVITY (CD/AUX)	120mV	280mV	150mV	170mV	300mV	75mV
ACTUAL INPUT SENSITIVITY (CD/AUX)	261mV	309mV	300mV	176mV	268mV	56mV



way this is a side issue. You may like chrome-plated amplifiers of the kind that tend to go down well in Germany, or you may prefer the more stripped-down styling associated with the Scandinavian design school. But such matters have few performance-related repercussions, and none of the UK designs (some of which, despite the earlier comments, were very professionally screwed together) gave any cause for concern about their probable longevity.

No, where matters became much more interesting was in uncovering the regional flavouring of the various amplifiers, confirming at least some of the more popular stereotyping. To a first approximation at least, the German amplifiers really did sound bright and shiny, with a powerful, propulsive bass, while the Italians seem to go for a more seductive, even romantic quality, with solid-state designs that sound as though they could be driven by valves. The Scandinavian models generally sounded crisp, clean and cool, while judging from this month's showing there was considerable variation among the UK ones, with less of an identifiable national characteristic. Equally interesting was the parallel discovery that these personality traits had surprisingly little to do with the final sound quality assessments. Although all the four most favoured models were British and Scandinavian, they covered quite a diverse range of qualities. It seems that their personalities should be considered when choosing a system — avoid dull, laid-back speakers with the Præcisa Acustica Sonoro, or bright, aggressive ones with the Restek Fantasy 2 for example — but have relatively little to do with

inherent music-making abilities.

The moral of the story, if you'll excuse the use of the term, is that the choice of amplifiers needs to be considered on several levels. On a practical level, it may be best to buy a line-level amplifier unless you definitely intend to play records because you may pay quite a substantial overhead for a phono stage you won't require. Power levels need to be adequate for your requirements, and the tests contain

much data on this, though most of the test group is powerful enough for most normal situations. The ability of the amplifier to deal with the difficulties associated with particular loudspeakers may also be relevant here. Beyond these and similar basics, choosing the right amplifier is rather like entering into a fruitful personal relationship. It has little to do with the numbers, and almost everything to do with personal chemistry.

**BEST BUYS & RECOMMENDATIONS**



**BEST BUYS:** Our famous Best Buy swing-tag is awarded to hi-fi equipment which offers an excellent standard of performance at an attractive price. Best Buy winners are superb all-round components.

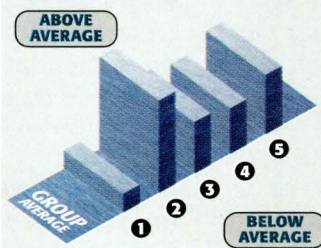


**RECOMMENDED:** Recommended products are first-class audiophile propositions, losing out to Best Buy status only because of a higher price or less competitive overall sound quality.

**UNDERSTANDING OUR BAR-GRAPH MEASUREMENTS**

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

**THE BAR-GRAPHS**



- 1 **DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT:** A measure of power up to one per cent distortion under realistic, music-like conditions, using a brief (20msec) transient signal and an eight-Ohm speaker load.
- 2 **SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE:** This indicates how ably the amplifier maintains a given level of performance into progressively lower-impedance and more difficult speaker loads.
- 3 **AUDIBLE DISTORTION:** Rather than quote a single figure for distortion at one frequency and level, this bar value represents a measure of distortion and its consistency across the whole audio band and the amplifier's dynamic range.
- 4 **NOISE:** This is a direct representation of the amplifier's A-weighted Signal-to-Noise (S/N) ratio at one Watt output into a model eight Ohm load.
- 5 **OVERALL COMPATIBILITY:** This new category measures the amplifier's ability to drive different loudspeakers, its susceptibility to radio-frequency interference (RFI) and its ability to handle today's high-output CD players.

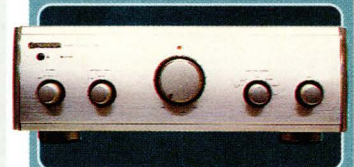
**RIVAL BUYS**

**ARCAM Alpha 10 £800**  
Arcam's technically sophisticated senior model is not quite a class leader sonically, but performs well enough, and can 'grow' into a high performance multi-channel or multi-room powerhouse.

**BRYSTON B60R £1,249**  
A real success in the US, this is Bryston's first integrated, and is a sturdy piece of work (it comes with a 20-year guarantee!), if somewhat shut in.

**TAG MCLAREN 60iRv £999**  
The remote-control version of the TAG McLaren 60i tested in this issue is better equipped in other ways too, and is slick and accomplished.

**PIONEER A-07 £999**  
Battleship build, a glamorous standard of finish and an exquisitely open and detailed sound are combined with reasonable pricing in this flag bearer for Pioneer (below).



**MYRYAD MI120 £600**  
Although it was slightly brittle sounding in our tests, this well-endowed and neatly finished amplifier is otherwise neutral and consistent in sound quality (below).



**AUDIO ANALOGUE Puccini SE £450**  
Italian sourced model takes full advantage of the favourable relationship between sterling and the Italian Lira and provides stylish music making at an easy to swallow price.

**A M P L I F I E R C O M P A R I S O N T A B L E**

MAKE MODEL	PRÆCISA ACUSTICA SONORO	PRIMARE A30.1	RESTEK FANTASY 2	T+A PA1220R	TAG MCLAREN 60I	THULE SPIRIT IA 100
PRICE	£1,800.00	£1,499.99	£1,499.00	£1,445.00	£799.95	£600.00
SOUND	★★★★☆	★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★★★	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆	★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
GUARANTEE	3 years	2 years	3 years	1 year	2 years	2 years
SIZE (W×H×D) IN MM	483x115x400	430x100x375	483x115x440	440x75x390	445x75x350	420x95x290
WEIGHT	15kg	15.5kg	26kg	8.5kg	7.6kg	12kg
RATED CONTINUOUS POWER OUTPUT, 8 OHMS	100W	100W	130W	100W	60W	100W
ACTUAL CONTINUOUS POWER OUTPUT, 8 OHMS	88W	126W	135W	115W	80W	125W
RATED DISTORTION, 20HZ-20KHZ, 1W/8 OHMS	0.1%	0.07%	<0.007%	0.002%	<0.07%	0.05%
ACTUAL DISTORTION, 20HZ-20KHZ, 1W/8 OHMS	0.8%	0.04%	0.004%	0.0018%	0.02%	0.06%
RATED INPUT SENSITIVITY (CD/AUX)	800mV	280mV	Not specified	Not specified	175mV	500mV
ACTUAL INPUT SENSITIVITY (CD/AUX)	531mV	323m	230mV	216mV	340mV	565mV



# 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

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★★★★★  
★★★★★  
★★★★★

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#### **Leicester CYMBIOSIS**

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#### **Shrewsbury CREATIVE AUDIO**

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0161 633 2602

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0114 275 6048

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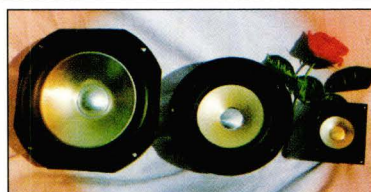
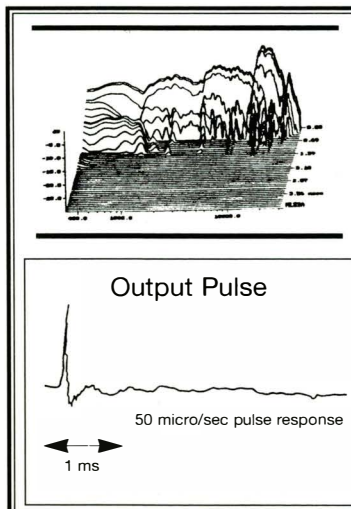
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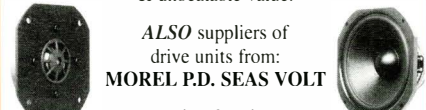
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NAD 25inch TV	Cadence ES MkII
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24bit CD	Dali Grand
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int amp	Denson Beat 300 amp
Musical Fidelity Xray	Denson Pre amp
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Musical Fidelity X-A100K	Denson DM20 pre amp
in Amp	Denson DM30 Power
Musical Fidelity X-P100	Meracur Tanto CD Player
pre Amp	Meracur Intera Int Amp
Musical Fidelity X-A5100	Meracur Power Amp
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Anthem CD player	Pass 2 Monoblocks
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Primare D20 CD player	Rega Planet CD Player
Primare A30 int amp	Rega Brio Int Amp
Primare D30-2 CDplayer	Rega Luna Int Amp
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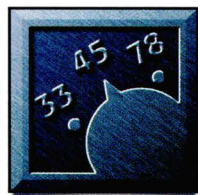
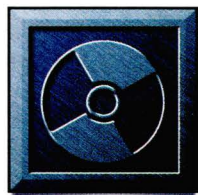
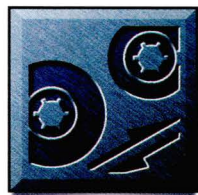
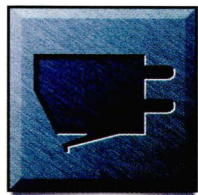
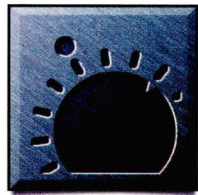
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- Bang & Olufsen hi-fi stand, attractive design £125 ono. (01252) 614055.
- Cambridge DAC Magic £50. Video X lead £15. Ixos 101 interconnects, unused £45. As new, boxed, will post. (01278) 782622.
- Castle Harlech (antique Oak) speakers £400. Musical Fidelity E20/E30 pre/power amp £450. Technics SL-P2000 CD player £300. Michell Synchro turntable £250. Pioneer CTS 430S twin cassette deck £60. Pioneer F-502RDS FM/AM tuner £60. Soundstyle 5-tier support £100. (01322) 365701, weekends only.
- Conrad-johnson MV55 power amp £1,200 ono. Copland CTA 401 £1,300 ono. One must go. Both excellent condition. Pioneer A400 £80 ono. (0171) 257 1134 days/(01932) 841361.
- Cyrus dAD7 CD player £500. Cyrus III amp £300. Denon TU260L tuner £75. Sony CDP-XE320 £75. All boxes, manuals etc. Tom (0171) 359 8020/(0976) 608543.
- Cyrus II/PSX (£200), Monitor Audio R352 speakers/Heybrook stands (£100), Target Audio rack (£50), sale as package £300. (01792) 298077.
- Cyrus PSX-R power supply, 2 yrs old, excellent condition. £175. Kent (01227) 364820.
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- Exposure VI power supplies (2), £150 each, £250 pair plus free VII preamp. (01708) 457691.
- Kenwood CDP7090 CD player, HFC Best Buy, £200. Nakamichi DR3 cassette deck, little used £250 ono. Musical Fidelity A2 amp £350. All mint and boxed. Brighton (01273) 305176.
- Leak 1 stereo preamp and stereo 20 power amp circa '59 appearance, good electrical condition, buyer collects, offers to (0181) 876 9411.
- Lexicon DC1.DTS/AC3/THX fitted. Mint condition, £2,990. Krell KAV500 5-channel power amp, mint, £2,990. (0113) 234 6111/(0113) 240 2043, or email: tompledge@msn.com.
- Linn LP12, black ash. Eikos Karma, Valhalla. Mint cond, £1,000. (01865) 744532.
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- Rega Planar 3, excellent condition, £160. Gordon, Herts (01462) 743073.
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- Rotel RC972 preamp (remote), mint, boxed £120. Arcam Black Box 2 DAC, ex cond, boxed £95. Denon DCD 820 CD (1991), boxed £35. Cables: AQ Ruby 1m £35, 0.5m £30. AQ Digital Video 2 £30. Leeds (0113) 256 0318, eves.
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- Sugden A48 amp, £75. C J Walker turntable, Linn Basik tonearm £65. Naim boards, types 322 and 323 £25 each. (0116) 271 6132.
- Sugden amp (P41 + C41 Signature – 1100W – moving coil boards fitted), ex cond. Boxed with manuals. Cost £1,470, little used, £800. (0161) 796 7463.
- Thorens TDI66VI/UK/250, HFC Best Buy, cost £400, sell for £195. Rotel RB980BX, 120 WPC £275. Mission Argonaut 780 £225. (01926) 740254.
- XLO Reference Recordings test and burn-in CD. 24K gold disc, mint condition £15. (01782) 855749.

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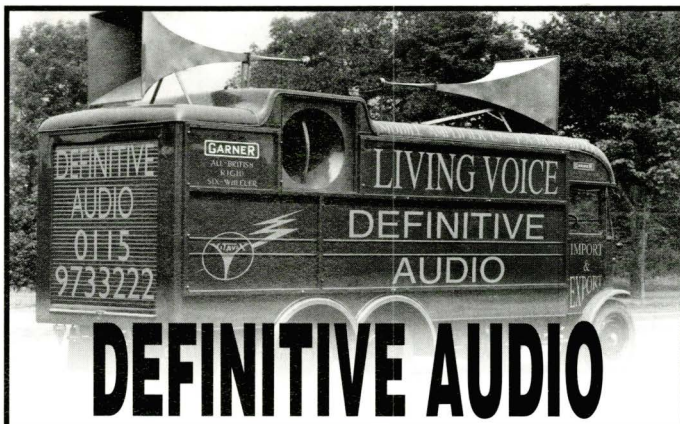
- Audio Alchemy headphone amp or Grado or Krell. (0115) 913 8607.
- Ergo AMT headphones, Sony 3000ES mini separates. (0115) 913 8607.



## 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!





# DEFINITIVE AUDIO

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Audio Innovations S100 Pre	£ 500	(£1350)
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Audio Innovations 2 <sup>nd</sup> Audio Monos 6B4G	£ 900	(£3000)
Ariston RD 80 Turntable (no arm)	£ 100	
AudioNote DAC3 Sig.	£1850	(£ 2850)
AudioNote ANV i/c 2 metres	£ 250	(£ 500)
Alchemist Forsetti power amp	£ 699	(£1350)
Border Patrol 300B SE 'Blue'	£1500	(£2500)
Denon Transport and DAC	£7000	(£15000)
Pass Labs X600 Monos	£15000	(£23000)
Border Patrol PSU	£ 495	(£ 595)
Orchid Precision PLL 1 loudspeakers	£3900	(£7900)
Kelly KT3 loudspeaker (new)	£1200	(£1850)
Dali 104 MS (94dB)	£ 450	(£ 650)
Impulse H2 loudspeakers Mahogany	£1500	(£2500)
Impulse Ta'us	£1900	(£3100)
Linn LP12, Avendale PSU, Helios Aurius	£ 450	
Naim CDS	£2250	(£3940)
Naim 72 pre-amp	£ 400	(£ 745)
Naim 250 power-amp	£ 800	(£1705)
Naim CD2	£1200	(£2000)
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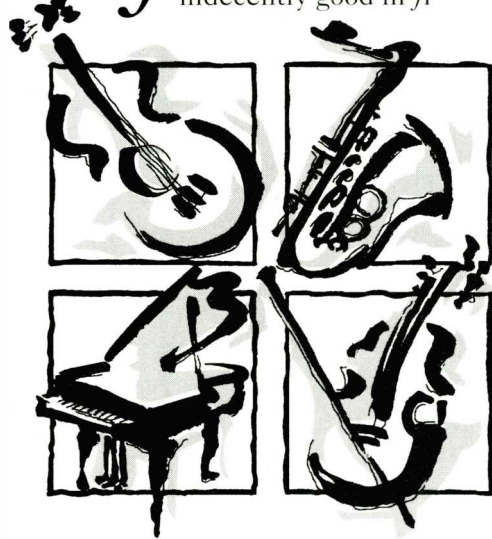
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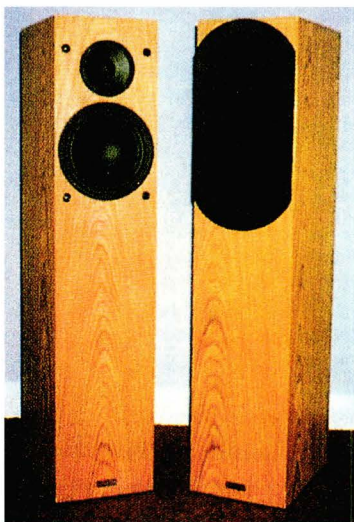
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# HOW TO USE THE BUYERS' GUIDE

## 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!

# DIRECTORY INDEX

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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 AM1 100	Ⓜ	50W	230
AMC 3020	Ⓜ	20W	100
AMC 3025A	Ⓜ	30W	140
AMC 3050A	Ⓜ	45W	170
AMC 3100a	Ⓜ	100W	200
Arcam Alpha One	Ⓜ	35W	230
Ariston AX910	Ⓜ	30W	80
Cambridge A1 Mk III	Ⓜ	30W	100
Cambridge A1 Mk 3 SE	Ⓜ	30W	120
Cambridge A3i	Ⓜ	60W	200
Cambridge A500RC	Ⓜ	50W	200
Denon PMA-250SE	Ⓜ	30W	140
Denon PMA-350SE	Ⓜ	50W	180
Denon PMA-535R	Ⓜ	50W	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 KAF-3010R	Ⓜ	70W	180
Marantz PM-48	Ⓜ	50W	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 C320	Ⓜ	40W	200
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-407R	Ⓜ	45W	230
Pioneer A-405R	Ⓜ	45W	250
Rega Brio	Ⓜ	30W	229
Rotel RA921	Ⓜ	20W	100
Rotel RA931	Ⓜ	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	230
Sony TA-FE210	Ⓜ	40W	130
Sony TA-FE320R	Ⓜ	60W	150
Sony TA-F248E	Ⓜ	50W	200
Teac AR-600	Ⓜ	90W	200
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	475
Audiogram MB1	Ⓜ	40W	493
Audiolab 8000LX	Ⓜ	60W	470
Audiolab 8000A	Ⓜ	60W	500
Aura VA-100 II	Ⓜ	70W	350
Creek 4330	Ⓜ	35W	279
Creek 4340	Ⓜ	35W	279
Creek 4330R	Ⓜ	35W	355
Creek 5250	Ⓜ	50W	450
Cymbal CA1	Ⓜ	40W	499
Denon PMA-735R	Ⓜ	65W	300

Denon PMA-1500R	Ⓜ	70W	500
EMF Audio Sequel	Ⓜ	50W	450
H/K HK640	Ⓜ	55W	400
Kenwood KA-5090R	Ⓜ	65W	300
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 Series 2	Ⓜ	40W	400
Mission Cyrus SL	Ⓜ	50W	398
Monno Asty	Ⓜ	55W	400
Musical Fidelity E11	Ⓜ	60W	300
Musical Fidelity X-A1	Ⓜ	50W	480
Musical Fidelity A2	Ⓜ	35W	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	499
Sony TA-FB920R	Ⓜ	65W	300
Sony TA-FA30ES	Ⓜ	80W	400
Sony TA-F3000ES	Ⓜ	40W	500
Talk Electronics Storm 1	Ⓜ	50W	500
Teac AH-500	Ⓜ	50W	280
Technics SU-A800D Mk2	Ⓜ	55W	300
Technics SU-A900D Mk2	Ⓜ	70W	400
Thule Audio Spirit IA60	Ⓜ	60W	449
Tokien K50	Ⓜ	55W	350
Yamaha AX-592	Ⓜ	100W	280

### £501 TO £700

Alchemist Kraken APD6A	Ⓜ	55W	600
Alchemist Nemesis	Ⓜ	80W	700
Audio Analogue Puccini SE	Ⓜ	40W	635
Audio Note Kanji Line SE	Ⓜ	9W	699
Audio Note First integrated	Ⓜ	40W	699
Audiogram MB2	Ⓜ	60W	599
Audiolab 8000S	Ⓜ	60W	700
CR Dev CR3245e	Ⓜ	150W	569
CR Dev Kalypso	Ⓜ	15W	599
CR Dev CR325	Ⓜ	175W	699
Creek 5250R	Ⓜ	50W	575
Creek 5250SER	Ⓜ	60W	665
Densen Beat B-100 MkII	Ⓜ	60W	650
Exposure XX Super	Ⓜ	55W	700
Gamma Gemini	Ⓜ	12W	699
H/K HK660	Ⓜ	65W	700
Hi Q Sound MCI	Ⓜ	30W	565
JoLida 202	Ⓜ	40W	635
LFD Integrated 0	Ⓜ	50W	549
Linn Majik (Line)	Ⓜ	33W	650
Lynwood Opal	Ⓜ	80W	685
Magnum IA200	Ⓜ	100W	599
Magnum Class A	Ⓜ	85W	690
Micromega Tempo 1	Ⓜ	50W	700
Mission Cyrus III	Ⓜ	50W	598
Musical Fidelity A220	Ⓜ	50W	700
Myryad MI 120	Ⓜ	60W	600
Naim Nait 3	Ⓜ	30W	590
Orelle SA-100RX	Ⓜ	75W	649
Primare A20 Mk II	Ⓜ	70W	600
Quad 77 Integrated	Ⓜ	85W	700
Roksan Caspian	Ⓜ	70W	695
Rose Scion	Ⓜ	65W	615
Shearpe Phase 2	Ⓜ	50W	689
Stemfoort SF60	Ⓜ	60W	549
Talk Electronics Storm 2	Ⓜ	50W	650
Teac AB-X7R	Ⓜ	50W	700
Thule Audio Spirit IA100	Ⓜ	100W	599

### £701 TO £1000

Alchemist Forseti Integrated	Ⓜ	100W	1,000
Arcam Alpha 10	Ⓜ	100W	800
Audio Note Oto Line PP	Ⓜ	12W	950
AVI S2000MI	Ⓜ	100W	999
Copland CSA8	Ⓜ	60W	899
Credo IMP702	Ⓜ	70W	850
Credo IMP703	Ⓜ	70W	1,000
Electrocompaniet ECI-2	Ⓜ	50W	995
Exposure XV Super	Ⓜ	55W	800
Golden Tube Audio SI-50	Ⓜ	50W	1,000
H/K HK680	Ⓜ	85W	1,000
Hofli Audis Signature	Ⓜ	65W	750
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 2	Ⓜ	70W	900
Naim Nait 3 R	Ⓜ	30W	780
Opera Aida	Ⓜ	60W	795
Pioneer A-07	Ⓜ	80W	999
Rega Elclic	Ⓜ	70W	730



# H I - F I P R I C E G U I D E

Shearman Phase 2 Reference	5	50W	799
Sonnesteer Alabaster	5	50W	900
Stemfoort SF100	5	100W	849
Thule Audio IA150B	5	150W	999

## £1001 TO £2000

Art Audio Integra		30W	1,499
ATC SIA2-150	4	150W	1,984
Audio Note Soro Line PP		20W	2,000
Audio Note Oto Line SE	4	12W	1,200
Audio Note Oto Phono SE		12W	1,500
Audio Note Soro Line SE	5	18W	1,699
BB Audio BB 30-60	5	30W	1,495
Beam-Echo SA-50	5	50W	1,950
Bow Technologies Wazoo	5	50W	1,795
Bryston B-60	5	60W	1,249
Copland CSA14	5	60W	1,199
Copland CSA28	5	60W	1,249
Copland CTA402	5	35W	1,698
CR Dev Romulus V3	5	35W	1,198
CR Dev Athena	4	38W	1,499
CR Dev Remus V3	5	60W	1,989
Credo LIM 702			1,191
Credo LIM 703			1,249
EAR 859	5	13W	1,999
EAR 834	5	40W	1,999
Graaf Venticinque	5	20W	1,790
Jadis Orchestra	5		1,345
LFD Integrated 1	5	65W	1,099
Meracur Intrare	5	60W	1,050
Primare A301	5	100W	1,900
Rogers E-20a	4	20W	1,229
Rogers E-40a	4	40W	1,900
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Integrated	5	25W	1,299
T+A R1200R	5	90W	1,750
Thule Audio IA250B	5	250W	1,799
Unison Simply Two	5	12W	1,095
Unison Simply Four P	5	24W	1,595
Unison Simply Four T	5	11W	1,650
Woodside ISA230 Line	5	30W	1,099
Woodside ISA230 Disc	4	30W	1,249
YBA Integre DT	5		1,650

## OVER £2000

Adyton Opera	4	50W	2,595
Audio Note Meishu Line		9W	2,750
Audio Note Ongaku	5	26W	56,000
Audio Research CA50			3,399
Cary CAD-300SEI	4	11W	3,995
Conrad-Johnson CAV-50	5	50W	2,495
EAR V20	5	24W	2,495
Electrocompaniet ECI-1	5	100W	2,195
Gamma Rhythm	5	18W	2,499
Gamma Rhythm Ref	4	20W	3,499
Gamma Moment	5	40W	19,999
Jadis DA30	5	30W	2,690
Jadis DA60	5	60W	4,483
Krell KAV300i	5	150W	2,495
Krell KAV300r			3,333
McIntosh MA6400E	5	100W	3,999
McIntosh MA6800E	5	150W	5,999
Meracur Onesta	4	75W	2,595
Musical Fidelity A1001	5	200W	2,500
Pioneer A-09	5	45W	4,000
Rowland Concentra	5	100W	5,500
Sonus Faber Musica			2,295
T+A R1500R	5	135W	2,015
Tube Tech Unisig Sig. Int.	5	30W	2,300
Tube Tech Synergy PPS	5	150W	6,900
Unison Simply 845	5	24W	3,195

## PREAMPS

### KEY

Ⓢ (etc) - Number of line-level inputs.  
**Ph** - Phono input fitted as standard  
 (may be an option on some other models).

### UP TO £500

Art Audio Minuet			499
Audio Analogue/Bellini	5	Ph	495
Audio Note The M			350
Beam-Echo PP-21		Ph	499
Bryston BP1	5	Ph	438
Carver CT-24	5	Ph	499
CR Dev Themis		Ph	349
Creek P43	5	Ph	399
Creek P52	5	Ph	499
Crimson CS610C	4	Ph	450
DPA Enlightenment phono			275
EAR 834P	5	Ph	349
EAR 834L	5	Ph	449
EAR 834P/MC		Ph	499
Electrocompaniet ECP-1		Ph	495
Henley HMC50		Ph	200
Henley HMC100		Ph	200
Hi Q Sound LCP2			450
LFD Mistral Linestage	5		449
LFD LSO Linestage	5		499
Lumley PP70	5		345
Lumley PP1	5		345

Magnum MP120	5		330
Magnum MP660	5		500
Magnum MP330	5		500
Mission Cyrus aEQ7		Ph	498
Monrio ADN-N		Ph	295
Monrio Asty L	5		500
Moth 30 Passive	4		149
Moth 30 RIAA		Ph	249
Moth 30 Active	4		349
Musical Fidelity X10-D	5		120
Musical Fidelity X-LP		Ph	130
Musical Fidelity X-PRE	5		200
Musical Fidelity E20	7	Ph	400
NAD 114	5	Ph	270
NAD 116	5	Ph	430
Naim Prefix			360
Naim NAC92	5		485
Parasound P/JHP-100		Ph	130
Parasound P/JHP-850	4	Ph	400
Rega EOS		Ph	398
Rega Cursa	5	Ph	450
Roksan Artaxerxes 10		Ph	395
Rose RV-23		Ph	450
Rotel RQ970BX		Ph	130
Rotel RC971	5		150
Rotel RC972	5		225
Talk Electronics Hurricane 1	5		500
Technics SU-C1000 Mk2	5	Ph	300
Thule Audio Spirit PR100	5		399
Trilogy 905			375
Trilogy 904		Ph	375
Trilogy 900	5	Ph	499
Unison Simply Phono	5	Ph	500

## £501 TO £2000

Adyton Chorus			1,995
Alchemist Kraken Pre			550
Alchemist Forseti Pre	5		950
Art Audio Headline	5		700
Art Audio VPL	1		741
Art Audio Conductor Phono			750
Art Audio VP1			952
Art Audio Conductor	1		1,250
Art Audio Conductor Export			2,000
Audio Note M1 Line		Ph	550
Audio Note M2 Line		Ph	999
Audio Note Discovery			999
Audio Note M2RIAA		Ph	1,099
Audio Prism Mantissa	5		1,995
Audio Research LS8			1,449
Audio Research PH3		Ph	1,490
Audio Research LS9			1,949
Audio Synthesis Pro Passion	1		595
Audio Synthesis Passion	1		695
Audio Synthesis Passion 8S	1		1,295
Audio Synthesis Passion 8M	1		1,695
Audiolab 8000C	5	Ph	580
Audiolab 8000PPA		Ph	1,000
Audiolab 8000Q	5	Ph	1,250
Aura CA-200		Ph	700
AVI S2000MP	5		949
AVI S2000MP+P		Ph	1,199
Beam-Echo SP-21	5	Ph	1,116
Bryston 4	5	Ph	642
Bryston BP5		Ph	889
Bryston BP20		Ph	1,126
Bryston BP-25		Ph	1,326
Canary Audio CA-606	4		1,295
Canary Audio CA-601	4		1,595
Cary SLP-50	5		995
Cary SLP-74	5		1,795
Cary PH-301		Ph	1,898
Chord Phono			1,905
Chord CPA 1800	5		900
Concordant Exhilarant			1,950
Concordant Exquisite			995
Conrad-Johnson PV-10AL	5		995
Conrad-Johnson PV-10A	5	Ph	1,295
Conrad-Johnson PV-12AL	5		1,990
Conrad-Johnson EF-1	5	Ph	1,990
Conrad-Johnson PF-2	5	Ph	1,990
Copland CSA303		Ph	1,099
Copland CTA301 MkII	4	Ph	1,249
CR Dev Carmenta	5		659
CR Dev Argento	5	Ph	699
Credo CMP004			1,246
Credo CMP005			1,876
Densen DM-20	5		1,200
DNM 3 Start	4	Ph	1,000
DNM 3A Start	4	Ph	1,650
DPA Enlightenment pre			795
Dynavector L200			1,195
Dynavector P100		Ph	1,495
Dynavector L100		Ph	1,995
Earmax Pre	5		1,895
ECA Vista S	5		760
ECA Vista HD	5		880
ECA Prisma		Ph	880
Electrocompaniet EC-4.5			1,195
Electrocompaniet EC-4.6	5		1,750
Exposure XIX			800
Exposure XVII	5	Ph	850

Golden Tube Audio SEP-1	5		990
Graaf WFB Two	5	Ph	1,350
Graaf WFB One	5	Ph	1,750
Henley HMC200			750
Heybrook Signature II Pre			555
Hi Q Sound MCB2		Ph	545
Hi Q Sound MCL2	4		645
Jadis DPL2			1,590
Krell KAV250P			1,999
LFD MC1 PhonoStage		Ph	949
LFD L51 Linestage	5		999
LFD MC2 PhonoStage		Ph	1,499
LFD L52 Linestage	5		1,599
LFD L5B Linestage	5		1,999
Linn Wakonda	5		750
Linn Linto	5		850
Linn Kairn	5		1,400
Lumley LV1.5	5		895
Lumley LV1	5		1,150
Lumley PV1.5	5	Ph	1,700
Lumley PV1	5	Ph	1,700
Matisse Atom	5		1,000
McIntosh C712	5	Ph	1,999
Meracur Ingredi			925
Meridian 501	5		695
Meridian 562	5		765
Meridian 562V	5		995
Meridian 502	7		1,295
Michell Orca	5	Ph	1,650
Michi RHC-10	5		795
Michi RHQ-10	5	Ph	1,150
Michi RHA-10	5		1,150
Micromega Tempo P	7		1,150
Mission Cyrus aC7	5		798
Muse Model 3	5		1,990
Musical Fidelity F25	5	Ph	1,500
Myriad MP100	5		600
NAD 118	5		1,000
Naim NAC92R	5		650
Naim NAC72	5		745
Naim NAC102	5		1,080
Quad 77 Pre	4	Ph	850
Rega Hal	5	Ph	998
Roksan ROK-L2.5	5		1,250
Rose RV-23S	4	Ph	525
Rotel RC995	5		525
Shearman Phase 6 Pre	5		999
Shearman Phase 1 Pre Ref	5		1,499
Siemmel MC20		Ph	650
Siemmel MM20		Ph	650
Siemmel TU10	5		1,599
Siemmel TR20	5		1,599
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Pre 1P		Ph	899
Sonic Frontiers Phono 1		Ph	1,999
Sonographe SC26	5		995
Sumo Athena II Line	5		767
Sumo Athena IIB/II LS	5		987
Sumo Athena III	5		987
Sumo Artemis uP	5		1,595
T+A P1200R	5		965
Talk Electronics Hurricane 2	7		650
Talk Electronics Hurricane 3	5		900
Talk Electronics Hurricane 4	5		1,550
Talk Electronics Hurricane 5	5		1,900
Technics SU-C2000		Ph	700
Thorens TTP-2000F	5	Ph	699
Thule Audio Spirit PR150B	5		699
Trilogy 901	5		750
Trilogy 906	5	Ph	995
Trilogy 902	5		1,595
Tron Retro	4		1,000
Tron Nucleus Phono	5	Ph	2,000
Tron Nucleus	5		2,000
Tube Tech Seer Line	5		935
Tube Tech Mac Phono	5	Ph	1,150
Tube Tech Prophet	5		1,970
Unison Feather One	5		795
Unison Mystery Two	5		1,750
Unison Mystery One	5		1,750
Van Den Hul Pre-amp	5		1,700
Wilson Benesch Stage One		Ph	995
Woodside SC27 Line	5		949
Woodside SC26 Line	5		1,557
YBA XTC PRE-1	5		1,250
Yamaha CX-2	5	Ph	650
YBA 3	5		1,199
YBA Integre	5		1,199
YBA 2	5		1,999

## OVER £2000

Adyton Temper			2,495
Adyton Modus	5		2,695
Alchemist The Alchemist pre			4,995
ATC SCA2			2,599
Audio Note M3Line			2,650
Audio Prism Avanti	5		7,995
Audio Research LS15			3,399
Audio Research LS25			4,999
Audio Research REF 1	5		8,495
Boulder L3AE	5		2,100
Boulder L5AE	5		3,400
Boulder L5M	5		3,800
Boulder 2010	5		22,000

Canary Audio CA-801	5		3,750
Cary SLP-98L	5		2,595
Chord CPA 2200	5		2,530
Chord CPA 3200	5		3,785
Chord CPA 4000	5		6,675
Conrad-Johnson PF-R	5		2,490
Conrad-Johnson PV-12A	5	Ph	2,590
Conrad-Johnson Premier 15	5	Ph	3,995
Conrad-Johnson Premier 14	5		4,495
Conrad-Johnson Art	5		14,995
CAT SL1 Sig. Mk3	5	Ph	6,500
CR Dev Kastor	5		2,995
Credo LPR 001	5		2,815
DNM 3C Primus	5	Ph	2,550
DNM 3C Twin	5	Ph	3,800
DNM 3C Six	5	Ph	5,050
EAR 802MC	5	Ph	2,599
EAR G88	5	Ph	9,999
EAR PS2	5	Ph	15,999
Gamma Era Ref	5	Ph	7,999
Graaf GM13.5B	5		3,750
Jadis DPL	5		2,900
Jadis DPMC	5	Ph	2,900
Jadis JPL	5		4,200
Jadis JPP200	5		4,290
Jadis JP30MC	5	Ph	5,290
Jadis JP52	5		6,690
Jadis JP80MC	5	Ph	10,166
Jadis JP200MC	5	Ph	15,900
Krell KRC3	5		2,998
Krell KRC-HR	5		6,949
LFD Disc Preamp	5	Ph	4,499
Mark Levinson 255	5	Ph	2,950
Mark Levinson 380	5		3,9





## HI-FI HELP

Let our experts help with your hi-fi problems. Send your query to 'Help' at the usual address.

Audio Note AN-S	⊗	99.00
Audio Note AN-V	⊗	179.00
Audio Note AN-Vx	⊗	450.00
Audioquest Jade	⊗	30.00
Audioquest Turquoise 2	⊗	40.00
Audioquest Topaz 2	⊗	59.95
Audioquest Ruby 2	⊗	80.00
Audioquest Quartz	⊗	125.00
Audioquest Opal	⊗	200.00
Audioquest Emerald	⊗	260.00
Audioquest Lapis	⊗	399.00
Audioquest Diamond	⊗	549.00
Cable Talk Improved 2/CD	⊗	26.00
Cable Talk Advanced 2	⊗	34.95
Cable Talk Improved 2/Tape	⊗	47.00
Cable Talk Monitor 2.1	⊗	50.00
Cable Talk Studio 2	⊗	65.00
Cable Talk Professional 2	⊗	85.00
Cable Talk Broadcast 2	⊗	100.00
Cable Talk Reference 2	⊗	150.00
Cable Talk Signature 2 Gold	⊗	300.00
Cambridge Atlantic	⊗	10.00
Cambridge Arctic	⊗	20.00
Cambridge Pacific	⊗	30.00
Cambridge Studio Reference	⊗	40.00
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 Audio Hexlink-Golden-5 C	⊗	600.00
Cardas Audio Golden Cross	⊗	700.00
ChordCo Chrysalis	⊗	40.00
ChordCo Cobra 2	⊗	55.00
ChordCo Siren	⊗	69.00
ChordCo Chorus	⊗	199.00
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	⊗	35.00
DPA Slink	⊗	41.00
DPA White Slink	⊗	75.00
DPA Black Slink	⊗	220.00
Ecosse Ref CA1	⊗	65.00
Ecosse Ref CS1	⊗	75.00
Ecosse Ref MA2	⊗	155.00
Ecosse Ref MS2	⊗	165.00
Ecosse Ref US1	⊗	550.00
Expressive Tech IC-1	⊗	700.00
Gamma Mow 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	⊗	39.00
Insert Audio Focus 1.2	⊗	21.50
Insert Audio IC100 Mk II	⊗	46.95
Insert Audio Image 5.1	⊗	84.95
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 100.X03	⊗	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 MkII	⊗	58.00
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

### POWER AMPS (CONTINUED)

Art Audio Concerto	50W	1,669
Audio Analogue Donizetti	60W	595
Audio Note The P	40W	550
Audio Note P0	9W	599
Audio Note P1	12W	750
Audio Note P1SE	12W	999
Audio Note P2	20W	1,000
Audio Note P2SE	18W	1,499
Audio Note Conqueror	8W	1,599
Audio Prism Antares	35W	1,695
Audio Research D130	130W	1,890
Audio Research VT60	35W	1,999
Audiolab 8000SX	60W	550
Audiolab 8000PX	100W	850
Audiolab 8000MX	125W	1,800
Aura PA-100	100W	700
Aura PA-200	110W	1,200
Aura PA-200 C	100W	1,250
AVI S2000MM	150W	1,399
Bryston 2B-LP	75W	750
Bryston 3B-ST PRO	150W	1,160
Bryston 3B-ST	150W	1,160
Bryston THX3B	150W	1,262
Bryston 7B-ST PRO	500W	1,545
Bryston 4B-ST PRO	300W	1,756
Bryston 7B-ST	500W	1,815
Bryston THX4B	300W	1,850
Bryston THX7B	500W	1,886
Canary Audio CA-706	40W	1,695
Canary Audio CA-708	50W	1,950
Carver A-500X	250W	949
Carver A-760X	380W	1,299
Chord SPM 400	100W	1,425
Chord SPM 600	130W	1,850
Conrad-Johnson MV-55	50W	1,995
Copland CSA515	150W	1,299
Copland CTA505	67W	1,899
CR Dev Amphion	12W	1,949
Credo PMP 804		1,876
Creek A52SE	80W	599
Crimson CS630C	100W	800
Densen B-300	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 AW60FTT	60W	1,095
Exposure XVIII Super	70W	850
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	1,425
Heybrook Signature II Pwr	120W	1,045
Hi Q Sounder MCM	70W	715
Jadis DA5	40W	1,749
Krell KAV150a	150W	1,990
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	985
Magnum MF660	125W	825
Magnum A500SE	200W	1,485
Magnum A50SE	200W	1,595
McIntosh MC7100	100W	1,999
Meracus Ciere	60W	1,095
Mendian 555	60W	750
Meridian 556	100W	895
Meridian 557	200W	1,400
Meridian 505	160W	1,590
Michell Alecto Stereo	50W	1,150
Michell Alecto Mono	100W	1,989
Michi RHB-05	100W	1,100
Michi RHB-10	200W	2,000
Micromega Amp	100W	1,150
Mission Cyrus aPA7	150W	948
Monrio Asty P	100W	950
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	770
Naim NAP180	60W	1,090
Naim NAP135	75W	1,705
Naim NAP250	70W	1,705
Papworth TVAS0	50W	1,425
Parasound HCA-1000A	125W	600
Parasound HCA-1500A	205W	1,000
Quad 77 Power	85W	600
Quad 707	140W	800
Rega EKS	70W	598
Rega Exon	125W	1,196
Roksan Caspian Power	70W	595
Roksan ROK-S1.5	100W	1,495
Rose RP-190 (Dual Mode)	75W	550

Shearpe Phase 3	50W	639
Shearpe Phase 3 Reference	50W	749
Shearpe Phase 5 Mono	100W	1,598
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 A1210	90W	875
T+A PA1200R	90W	1,445
T+A A1500	140W	1,535
T+A PA1500R	135W	1,665
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
Thule Audio Spirit PA100	100W	599
Thule Audio Spirit PA150B	150W	699
Trilogy 948	50W	1,895
Trilogy 948T	22W	1,895
Tube Tech Syrnix	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 STAS0	50W	1,880
XTC POW-2	150W	1,450
Yamaha MX-2	750	750
YBA 3 stereo	150W	1,299

### OVER £2000

Adyton Cordis 1.6	120W	3,495
Adyton 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	2,699
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	70W	8,500
Audio Note Neiro	30W	11,360
Audio Note Ankoru	60W	14,500
Audio Prism Debut Mk II	35W	2,495
Audio Prism Mana	100W	12,995
Audio Research VT50	50W	2,950
Audio Research 100.2	100W	3,395
Audio Research VT100 MkII	100W	4,950
Audio Research VT200	200W	8,790
Audio Synthesis Desire Decade	200W	2,495
Beam-Echo DL7-35	30W	3,525
Boulder 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	25,000
Boulder 2050	999W	43,500
Bryston THX8B	150W	2,385
Canary Audio CA-304	40W	2,695
Canary Audio CA-301	22W	2,995
Canary Audio CA-303	24W	5,495
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 1000B	200W	2,920
Chord SPM 1200B	250W	3,790
Chord SPM 1200C	350W	4,210
Chord SPM 1400B mono	350W	8,420
Chord SPM 5000	415W	14,570
Conrad-Johnson MF-2300A	250W	2,990
Conrad-Johnson Premier 11A	350W	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
CR Dev Artemis	4995	4,995
Credo LPO 804	20W	2,456
Credo PMP 155	12W	2,676
Credo LPO 455	12W	4,975
Credo LPO 155	12W	6,983
DNM PA3	23W	2,500
DNM PA3S	23W	3,750
Dynavector HX75	75W	2,195
Dynavector HX1.2	130W	3,995
EAR 861	32W	3,599
EAR 509 Mk II	100W	3,999
EAR 519	100W	4,699
EAR 549	200W	6,499
Electrocompaniet AW1200MB	120W	2,695
Electrocompaniet AW250R	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	2,850
Graaf GM100	100W	4,250
Graaf GM200	200W	7,500
Jadis DA8	80W	2,990
Jadis DA7	100W	4,790
Jadis JA30	30W	5,180
Jadis SE300B	10W	7,980
Jadis JA80	60W	9,580
Jadis JA100	100W	10,298
Jadis JA200	160W	13,980
Jadis JA500	400W	19,990
Krell KAV250a	250W	3,145
Krell KAV500/2	100W	3,195
Krell KAV500i	200W	4,499
Krell FPB200	200W	5,998
Krell FPB250m	250W	8,994
Krell FPB300	300W	9,500
Krell FPB600	600W	12,900
Krell FPB350m	350W	15,994
Krell FPB650m	650W	23,800
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
Shearpe Phase 1 Pwr Ref	100W	2,399
Siemal TA20	50W	2,350
Sonic Frontiers Power 1	55	



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 Solar Wind	84.95
Nordost Blue Angel	98.00
Nordost Blue Heaven V/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 Qnect 2	30.00
QED Qnect 4	60.00
Roksan ROK-Intercon	75.00
Shinpy Red Devil	80.00
Shinpy Red Star 2	120.00
Shinpy Black Star 2	240.00
Shinpy Pulsar 2	495.00
Shinpy Quasar 2	850.00
Siltech MC2-12	308.00
Siltech MC4-24S	400.00
Siltech FTM-3S	730.00
Silver Sounds SS2	99.00
Silver Sounds SS1	199.00
Silver Tone Ex-Static	35.00
Silver Tone Sci-Fi	95.00
SME S2LB-4	46.18
SME S3LB-4	52.06
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
Straightwire Chorus	40.00
Supra DAC-X	60.00
Supra EFF-1SL	80.00
Supra EFF-XLR	90.00
Tara Prism 3	1795
Tara Prism 5	2195
Tara Prism 8	2595
Tara Prism 11	3750
Tara Prism 22	6350
Tara Prism CD	7625
Tara Prism 33-i	8825
Tara Prism 55	11500
Tara RSC-CD	138.00
Tara RSC-Prime	170.00
Tara RSC-Ref Gen. 2	229.00
Tara RSC-Master Gen. 2	464.00
Tara RSC-Decade	935.00
Tara The 2	1,170.00
Tara The One	2,230.00
Transparent Cable Musichord Int	48.00
Transparent Cable The Link	92.00
Transparent Cable Music Link	119.00
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



## 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
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	38.00
ChordCo Optichord	40.00
ChordCo Prodac	50.00
DNM-Reson DIG100	26.00
DPA Opti-link	20.00
DPA Digi-link	27.50
Ecosse Ref MD2	71.50
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	70.00
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
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
Theta Digital AT&T	550.00
Transparent Cable PDL	199.00
Trichord Pulsewire 75D	75.00
Vampire Wire DI/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



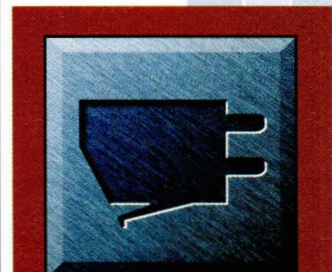
## SPEAKER CABLES

**KEY**  
 ● - Stranded construction.  
 ○ - Solid-core construction.  
**Price per mono metre, unterminated.**

Acoustic Energy AESC-C3	11.95
ALR/Jordan QMM	5.00
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
Cable Talk Theatre 2	1.50
Cable Talk The Flat One	2.00
Cable Talk Talk 3.1	2.25
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 Golden5 SC	175.00
Cardas Audio Golden Cross SC	789.00
ChordCo Myth	6.00
ChordCo Legend	15.00
ChordCo Odyssey	17.00
DNM-Reson LSC	6.95
DNM-Reson LSCB	13.95
Ecosse Ref FS2.16	1.75
Ecosse Ref CS2.2	2.50
Ecosse Ref CS2.3	3.75
Ecosse Ref CS2.15	5.75
Ecosse Ref MS2.2	15.00
Ecosse Ref MS2.3	20.00
Ecosse Ref MS2.15	30.00
Ecosse Ref US2	450.00
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	16.00
LAT International BWIRE	23.00
LAT International SS 1000	36.00
Lieder Pad	133.00
Lieder Bel Canto	188.00
Lieder Spoor	253.00
Lieder Straat	463.00
Lieder Weg	663.00
Linn K20	4.00
Linn K400	10.00
Linn K600	15.00
Lumley Silver 12/2	35.00
Lumley Silver 14/4	40.00
Mission Duet	1.90
Mission Quartet bi-wire	3.90
Naim NAC A5	5.70
Nordost Octava	3.00
Nordost 4-Flat	12.00
Nordost Solar Wind Bi-wire	27.95
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 Mkl	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 AST60	2.50
Sonic Link AST75	2.95
Sonic Link AST200	5.95
Sonic Link AST200x2	10.00
Sonic Link S300	18.00
Sonic Link S150x2	20.00
Sonic Link S300x2	40.00
Sonic Link S900	60.00
Sonic Link S600x2	80.00
Sonic Link Black Rhodium 4	1,000.00
Straightwire Quartet	8.00
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 Quartet 4x4	8.95
Supra Classic 10	9.95
Tara Prism Extra	1.95
Tara Klara	2.95
Tara Prism Omni	3.95
Tara Prism 2+2	8.20
Tech + Link SPC 79	1.20
Transparent Cable Musichord	11.00
Transparent Cable The Wave	23.00
Transparent Cable Music Wave	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 Gold Water	7.00
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	99
Audio Technica AT-91	15
Audio Technica AT-95E	20
Audio Technica AT-110E	28
Audio Technica AT450E	70
Audio Technica AT440ML	90
Benz-Micro MC20EII	70



## CARTRIDGES (CONTINUED)

Denon DL110	MM	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'ham Tracer I	MM	98
Ortofon VMS2	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 XV15-757S	MM	60
Pickering XV15-625DJ	MM	60
Pickering XV15-1800S	MM	70
Pickering TL3S	MM	80
Pickering XEV-3001E	MM	95
Pickering XLZ-3500	MM	100
Pickering TL-4-S	MM	100
Rega Bias	MM	39
Rega RB78	MM	39
Rega Super Bias	MM	59
Rega Elys	MM	85
Shure M70BX	MM	21
Shure M92E	MM	22
Shure SC35C	MM	29
Shure M447X	MM	35
Shure M44GX	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 IOLtd	MC	4,500
Audio Technica AT-OC9	MC	330
Benz-Micro The Glider	MC	650
Benz-Micro M090	MC	700
Benz-Micro L040	MC	700
Benz-Micro H200	MC	700
Benz-Micro Reference	MC	1,100
Benz-Micro Reference Ruby	MC	1,500
Benz-Micro Ruby Open Air	MC	1,600
Clearaudio Aurum-Alpha	MM	135
Clearaudio Aurum-Beta	MM	195
Clearaudio Aurum-Beta/S	MM	265
Clearaudio Gamma-S	MC	745
Clearaudio Signature	MC	1,495
Clearaudio Accurate	MC	2,500
Clearaudio Insider	MC	4,900
Denon DL304	MC	200
Dynavector 10X4II	MC	189
Dynavector 23RS	MC	375
Dynavector 17D2	MC	450
Dynavector XX-1L	MC	998
Dynavector XX-1	MC	998
Dynavector Te-Kaitora	MC	1,698
Goldring Eroica LX	MC	110
Goldring Eroica	MC	110
Goldring 1042	MM	120
Goldring Elite	MC	220
Goldring Excel VX	MC	525
Grado Prestige Silver	MM	119
Grado Prestige Gold	MM	149
Grado Signature Junior	MM	150
Grado Signature 8M2	MM	250
Grado Signature MCZ	MM	375
Grado Signature TLZ	MM	650
Grado Signature XTZ	MM	975

Grado Reference	MM	995
Koetsu Red T	MC	1,359
Koetsu Red K Sig	MC	1,899
Koetsu Urushi	MC	1,999
Koetsu Signature	MC	2,999
Koetsu Gold PR	MC	5,498
Linn K9	MM	125
Linn Klyde	MC	500
Linn Arkiv	MC	1,000
London Decca Maroon	MM	299
London Decca Gold	MM	319
London Decca Maroon Dp	MM	379
London Decca Gold Dp	MM	399
London Decca S Gold	MM	439
London Decca S Gold Dp	MM	519
London Decca Jubilee	MM	999
Lyra Lydian	MC	649
Lyra Clavis Da Capo	MC	995
Lyra Parnassus DCT	MC	1,895
N'ham Tracer II	MM	310
N'ham Tracer III	MM	410
N'ham Tracer IV	MM	660
Ortofon MC15 Super II	MC	140
Ortofon 540	MM	140
Ortofon MC3 Turbo	MC	150
Ortofon MC25E	MC	200
Ortofon MC25FL	MC	250
Ortofon MC10 Supreme	MC	300
Ortofon MC20 Supreme	MC	450
Ortofon MC30 Supreme	MC	550
Ortofon MC2000II	MC	800
Ortofon MC Rohmann	MC	1,000
Ortofon MC3000 II	MC	1,200
Ortofon MC7500	MC	2,000
Pickering TL-3003	MM	145
Pickering XLZ-4500	MM	150
Pickering TL-4004	MM	175
Pickering XSV-5000U	MM	200
Pickering XLZ-7500	MM	200
Pickering TLZ-7500-S	MM	200
Reson Mica	MM	185
Reson Recca	MM	250
Reson Aciore	MC	299
Reson Etile	MC	455
Reson Lexe	MC	1,300
Roksan Corus Black	MM	130
Roksan Shiraz	MC	970
Shure V15XMR	MM	295
Stanton 890AL/X	MM	120
Sumiko BPS	MC	250
Transfiguration Spirit	MC	1,000
Transfiguration Temper	MC	1,950
Van Den Hul MM-1	MM	250
Van Den Hul MM-2	MM	300
Van Den Hul DDT-II	MC	600
Van Den Hul MC-10	MC	750
Van Den Hul MC-One	MC	900
Van Den Hul MC-One Super	MC	1,050
Van Den Hul MC-Two	MC	1,200
Van Den Hul The Frog Low o/p	MC	1,500
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIIISLA	MC	2,000
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIIIGLN	MC	2,800
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIIIGLA	MC	2,800
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIIICMN	MC	2,800
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIIICHN	MC	2,900
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IVGLA	MC	3,000
Wilson Benesch Matrix	MC	786
Wilson Benesch Analog	MC	1,572
Wilson Benesch Carbon	MC	1,573

Kenwood KX-3080	↔	160
Kenwood KX-W6080	↔	200
Kenwood KX-5080S	↔	200
Marantz SD-455	↔	170
Marantz SD-57	↔	199
Onkyo K 185	↔	200
Pioneer CT-5250	↔	150
Pioneer CT-W205R	↔	160
Pioneer CT-W505R	↔	180
Pioneer CT-5450S	↔	200
Pioneer CT-W606DR	↔	200
Sony TC-KE200	↔	120
Sony TC-WES25	↔	160
Sony TC-KB820S	↔	180
Sony TC-WE725	↔	180
Teac W-416	↔	100
Teac V-615	↔	130
Teac RH-300	↔	160
Teac W-790R	↔	170
Teac V-1050	↔	180
Teac RH-500	↔	200
Technics RS-BX501	↔	170
Technics RS-TR373	↔	180
Technics RS-TR474	↔	200
Technics RS-AZ6	↔	200
Yamaha KX-393	↔	130
Yamaha KX-W321	↔	170
Yamaha KX-493	↔	180

## OVER £200

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-5550S	↔	250
Pioneer CT-W806DR	↔	300
Pioneer CT-5550S Precision	↔	340
Pioneer CT-5830S	↔	500
Pioneer CT-95	↔	1,000
Rotel RC960BX	↔	250
Sony TC-WE825S	↔	230
Sony TC-KA6ES	↔	550
T+A CCI200R	↔	1,180
Teac W-860R	↔	230
Teac W-6000R	↔	450
Teac V-6030S	↔	550
Teac V-8030S	↔	650
Technics RS-AZ7	↔	270
Technics RS-TR575	↔	280
Yamaha KX-580SE	↔	250
Yamaha KX-W592	↔	280

Cambridge CD6	↔	250
Denon DCD-435	↔	130
Denon DCD-635	↔	180
Denon DCD-735	↔	230
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	↔	250
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	↔	250
NAD 522	↔	170
NAD 510	↔	200
NAD 523	↔	250
NAD 512	↔	250
Philips CD711	↔	120
Philips CD721	↔	130
Philips CD751	↔	150
Philips CDC751	↔	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-930AX	↔	180
Sansui CD220	↔	120
Sherwood CD-4030R	↔	180
Sherwood CDC680	↔	180
Sherwood CDC6050R	↔	180
Sony CDP-M205	↔	110
Sony CDP-XE10	↔	120
Sony CDP-M305	↔	130
Sony CDP-XE310	↔	140
Sony CDP-CE105	↔	150
Sony CDP-XE110	↔	180
Sony CDP-XB720E	↔	200
Sony CDP-CE315	↔	200
Sony CDP-C325M	↔	200
Synergy CD11210	↔	120
Teac CDP-1120	↔	100
Teac CD-P1820	↔	130
Teac CD-P3450SE	↔	200
Teac PD-D2400	↔	200
Teac PD-H500	↔	240
Technics SL-PG390A	↔	90
Technics SL-PC490A	↔	100
Technics SL-PC590A	↔	120
Technics SL-PD688	↔	140
Technics SL-PD888	↔	160
Technics SL-P5670D	↔	200
Technics SL-MC410	↔	250
Technics SL-P5770D	↔	250
Yamaha CDX-393	↔	130
Yamaha CDC-565	↔	170
Yamaha CDX-493	↔	180
Yamaha CDX-9	↔	200
Yamaha CDC-665	↔	220
Yamaha CDX-593	↔	230

## £251 TO £500

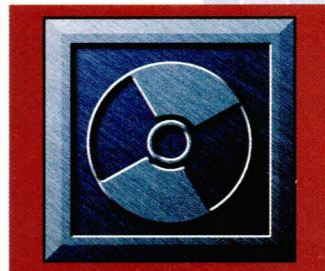
Arcam Alpha 7	↔	330
Arcam Alpha MCD	↔	450
Aura CD100	↔	400
Carver MV-5	↔	469
Denon DCD-835	↔	280
Denon DCM-260	↔	300
Denon DCD-1550AR	↔	350
H/K HD730	↔	300
H/K FL8300	↔	300
JVC XL-Z674BK	↔	300
Kenwood DP-R7080	↔	300
Kenwood DP-9090	↔	300
Kenwood DP-5090	↔	300
Kenwood DP-7090	↔	400
Marantz CD-67SE MkII	↔	300
Marantz CC-870	↔	400
Marantz CD-63IIK1	↔	400
Mission Cyrus dAD1	↔	398
Musical Fidelity A60	↔	300
Musical Fidelity A2 CD	↔	500
Mynyad T-10	↔	400
NAD 513	↔	290
NAD 515	↔	350
NAD 514	↔	370
NAD 517	↔	400
Onkyo DX 7210	↔	260
Onkyo C721	↔	290
Onkyo DXC 320	↔	380
Onkyo DX 7510	↔	400
Onkyo CM 716	↔	450



## 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**

Akai DXW1100	↔	200
Akai DX1200	↔	200
Ariston WX-510	↔	60
Denon DRM-550	↔	160
Denon DRW-585	↔	200
Goodmans Delta 801	↔	130
JVC TD-X372BK	↔	170
JVC TD-R472BK	↔	200
Kenwood KX-W4080	↔	160



## 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 CD9/DAC8	↔	200
Ariston CDX700	↔	70
Ariston CDC610	↔	90
Ariston CDX710	↔	100
Cambridge CD4	↔	150
Cambridge CD4SE	↔	200



Parasound C/DP-1000	499
Pioneer PD-S707	300
Pioneer PD-F805	300
Pioneer PD-S705	300
Pioneer PD-F906	350
Pioneer PD-S904	400
Pioneer PD-S505 Precision	460
Rotel RCD951	300
Rotel RCD-971	350
Sony CDP-CX55	280
Sony CDP-XE900E	300
Sony CDP-CX200	380
Sony CDP-XA20ES	450
Sony CDP-X3000ES	500
Synergy CDJ2010	300
Yamaha CDX-993	400

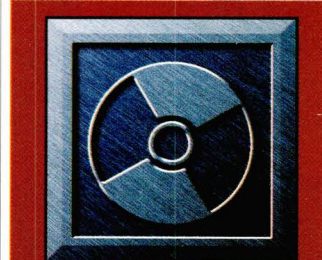
## £501 TO £1000

Acurus ACD11	899
Alchemist Nexus	600
Arcam Alpha 8	520
Arcam Alpha 8SE	600
Arcam Alpha 9	800
Audio Analogue Paganini	750
Audiolab 8000CD	1,000
Audiomeca Obsession	999
AVI S2000MC2	899
AVI S2000MC 24 Ref	999
Creek CD42	599
DPA Renaissance int CD	950
Helios Model 3	650
Helios Model 2	950
Heybrook Signature II	989
Linn Mimik	875
Magnum CD2020	595
Marantz CD-17	800
Micromega Premium 10	650
Micromega Premium 20	850
Mission Cyrus dAD3	598
Mission dAD3Q	898
Monnio Asty PL	675
Monnio Privilege	995
Musical Fidelity X-RAY	799
Myrad T-20	600
Myrad MC100	700
Orelle CD100eA	649
Orelle CD-100eSA	999
Pioneer PDS-06	550
Primare D20	700
Quad 77 Bus	700
Quad 77 Mains	900
Roksan Caspian	895
Rotel RCD991	750
Sony CDP-XA50ES	1,000
Talk Electronics Thunder 3	1,000
Teac VRDS-8	600
Teac VRDS-9	700
Teac VRDS-25X	1,000
Technics SL-P2000	1,000
Thule Audio Spirit CD100	599
Thule Audio Spirit CD150B	699
Trichord Genesis	569
Trichord Digital Jukebox 25	619
Trichord Digital Jukebox 50	669
Trichord Digital Jbox 100	719
Trichord Revelation	819
YBA Special	625

## OVER £1000

Acoustic Precision Eikos	1,850
Alchemist Forseti	1,995
Audio Research CD2	3,399
Audiomeca Keops	1,500
Audiomeca Talisman	2,150
Audiomeca Talisman SE	2,300
Cary CD-501	2,495
Classe CDP-3	1,395
Conrad-Johnson DF-2	1,695
Conrad-Johnson DV-2b	2,495
Copland CDA-266	1,199
Copland CDA277	1,649
Copland CDA288	1,999
Cymbal CDP12	1,299
Helios Model 1	1,250
Helios Stargate	2,250
Jadis Orchestra	1,345
Krell KAV250cd	2,490
Krell KAV300cd	3,599
Krell KPS25s	19,995
Marantz CD-17KIS	1,100
Mark Levinson 39	4,995
McIntosh MCD7009	3,699
Meracur Tanto	1,395
Meracur Imago Player	4,495
Meridian 506	1,100
Meridian 508	1,995
Micromega Solo	2,500
Myrad MCD500	1,300
Naim CD3-5	1,050
Naim CDX	2,200
Oracle CD Player	9,525
Pink Triangle Numeral	1,049

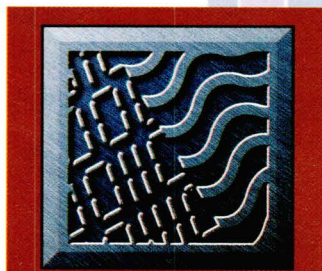
Pink Triangle Litaural	2,200
Primare D302	1,500
Proceed CDP	1,350
Resolution CD50	2,995
Roksan Atessa-DP3P	1,495
Shearpe Phase 7	1,499
Sherwood CD1	1,100
Sonic Frontiers Anthem CD1	1,699
Sonic Frontiers SFCD-1	3,799
T+A CD1210R	1,185
T+A CD1220R	1,540
Theta Digital Miles SE	2,390
XTC CDP-1	1,250
YBA 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 Synthesis Transcend Decade	3,295
Audiolab 8000CDM	1,400
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
Conrad-Johnson DR-1	1,795
DPA Enlightenment Drv	775
Jadis JD3	1,999
Jadis JDI	9,190
Linn Kanik	1,850
Mark Levinson 37	3,995
Mark Levinson 31.5	9,295
Meracur Imago	3,995
Micromega Drive 3	1,000
Micromega Data	2,000
Monnio Bitmatch	950
Muse Model 5	1,800
Oracle CD Drive	7,415
Pink Triangle Cardinal II	909
PS Audio Lambda TR	2,250
PS Audio Lambda AT&T	2,778
Rogers SC-8t	2,699
Roksan Atessa-DP3	1,295
Sonic Frontiers Transport 3	5,999
T+A CM1200R	875
Teac VRDS-T1	550
Teac P-30	2,500
Theta Digital Pearl	1,349
Theta Digital Jade	2,650
Thorens TCD-2000	999
Trichord Digital Turntable	719
Tube Tech Fulcrum	1,000
Wadia 8	3,195
Wadia 20	4,370

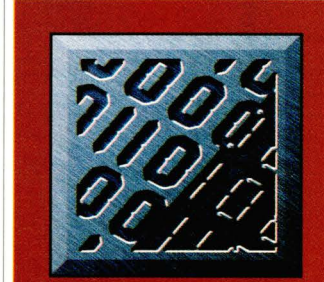


## DIGITAL TO ANALOGUE CONVERTERS (DACs)

**KEY**  
 - Number of digital inputs

Alchemist Forseti DAC	1,100
Altis Reference	4,995

AMC DAC8	130
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	2,335
Audio Research DAC5 MkII	3,999
Audio Synthesis DAX Decade	2,795
Audiolab 8000DAX	1,000
Audiomeca Elbir	799
Audiomeca Ambrosia	1,850
Boulder 2020	21,000
Chord DSC900	1,850
Chord DSC1100	2,575
Chord DSC1500	3,850
Conrad-Johnson D/A-3	1,195
Conrad-Johnson D/A-2b	1,990
dCS Elgar	8,500
DPA Little Bit 3	325
DPA Renaissance DAC	595
DPA Enlightenment DAC	850
DPA SX128	2,000
DPA SX256	4,000
DPA SX512	8,000
Jadis JS2	2,499
Jadis JS1	6,990
LFD DAC2	1,950
LFD DAC3	3,000
Linn Numerik	1,500
Mark Levinson 36	3,995
Mark Levinson 30.5	15,950
Meracur Auriga	1,295
Meracur Flagrare	2,495
Meridian 566	1,095
Micromega DAC 2	750
Micromega Dialog	1,750
Monnio 18B2	795
Muse Model 2	2,190
Muse Model 2 Plus	2,500
Musical Fidelity X-ACT	200
Musical Fidelity X-DAC	300
Onkyo DX 7310	330
PS Audio DL3	777
PS Audio SL3	1,449
PS Audio UltraLink 2 HDCCD	2,590
PS Audio Ref Link	4,550
Rogers SC-8m	1,899
Roksan Atessa-DA2	595
Sonic Frontiers Processor 3	5,999
Sumo Theorem II	945
Sumo Theorem IIB	1,155
Teac D-T1	500
Theta Digital Chroma 396 Std	799
Theta Digital Pro Genia	1,099
Theta Digital Pro Prime IIa	1,699
Theta Digital Pro Basic IIIa	2,990
Theta Digital Casablanca LS	6,158
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	300
Kenwood DM-7090	500
Kenwood DM-9090	550
Marantz DR700	600
Ornkyo MD-121	450
Ornkyo MD 122	700
Philips CDR880	499
Pioneer PDR-555RW	480
Pioneer PDR-04	700
Pioneer D-05	900
Pioneer PDR-05	1,000

Pioneer D-C88	2,000
Sharp MD-R3H	300
Sharp MD-R2	300
Sharp MD-R1E	300
Sharp MD-MS200H	350
Sharp MDXV300H	1,000
Sony MZ-E20	180
Sony MDS-JE510	250
Sony MZ-E30	280
Sony MDS-JB920S	300
Sony MDS-S38	300
Sony MZ-R30	300
Sony MDS-JA30ES	699
Sony MDS-JA50ES	1,300
Teac MDH300	300
Teac MD-H500i	350
Teac MD-5	600
Teac MD-10	900
Yamaha MDX-9	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

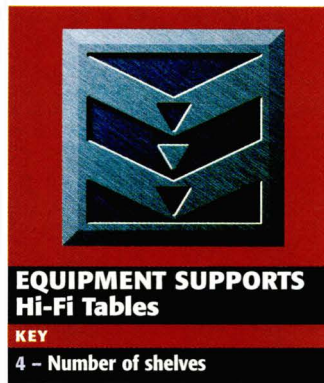
AKG Rox	D		30
Aural Envelope DX200	D		20
Aural Envelope DX220	D		30
Beyer DT111	D		15
Beyer DT121	D		31
Beyer DT121 TV	D		35
JVC HA-CD88	D		18
JVC HA-DS25	D		20
JVC HA-F65	D		20
JVC HA-D626	D		25
Kenwood KPM-310	D		18
Kenwood KPM-410	D		25
KLH KHP201TW	D		21
KLH KHP-300V	D		25
KLH KHP-420V	D		33
Maxell HP-2000	D		20
Pioneer SE-A40	D		20
Pioneer SE-A20V	D		23
Pioneer SE-M250	D		25
Pioneer SE-M350	D		30
Sennheiser HD56	D		18
Sennheiser HD433	D		20
Sennheiser HD400	D		25
Sennheiser HD470	D		35
Sennheiser HD60TV	D		40
Sony MDR-W20G	D		18
Sony MDR-E837	D		18
Sony MDR-P70	D		18
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		30
Sony MDR-E868	D		35
Sony MDR-V400	D		40
Sony MDR-D11	D		40
Stanton ST Pro	D		25
Technics RP-F200	D		30
Technics RP-HT300	D		40
Vivanco SR150	D		20
Vivanco SR200	D		25
Vivanco SR250	D		25
Vivanco SR300	D		30
Vivanco IR5700	D		40

### OVER £41

AKG K301	D		80
AKG K240DF	D		100
AKG K222R	D		100
AKG K401	D		120
AKG K501	D		150
AKG K333R	D		150
AKG K444R	D		180



AKG K290S	D	250
AKG K1000	D	700
Audio Technica ATH910PRO	D	80
Audio Technica ATHD40FS	D	120
Audio Technica ATH-M40	D	120
Audio Technica ATH911	D	120
Beyer DT311	D	50
Beyer DT411	D	63
Beyer DT431	D	81
Beyer DT511	D	106
Beyer DT801	D	125
Beyer DT831	D	140
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-W200RF	D	75
JVC HA-D1000	D	250
JVC HA-F25	D	699
Koss R/100	D	100
Philips SBC 3396	D	70
Philips SBC HP9000	D	90
Pioneer SE-M550	D	50
Pioneer SE-M750	D	60
Precide Ergo Model 1	D	120
Precide Ergo Model 2	D	140
Sennheiser HD490	D	50
Sennheiser IS 380	D	55
Sennheiser HD495	D	60
Sennheiser HD500	D	70
Sennheiser RS400	D	80
Sennheiser HD570	D	80
Sennheiser HD25 SP	D	90
Sennheiser HD545 Ref	D	100
Sennheiser IS450	D	110
Sennheiser HD265 Linear	D	125
Sennheiser HDC 451-1	D	130
Sennheiser HD250II	D	150
Sennheiser HD565 Ovat'n	D	150
Sennheiser HD25-13	D	160
Sennheiser Lucas	D	160
Sennheiser HD25	D	160
Sennheiser HD 580 P'cision	D	200
Sennheiser HD600	D	250
Sennheiser Lucas/HD580	D	260
Sennheiser IS850	D	859
Sennheiser HE60/HEV70	E	998
Sennheiser Orpheus	E	9,652
Sony MDR-605LP	D	50
Sony MDR-IF120K	D	50
Sony MDR-E888	D	55
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 SR-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 FM7980	D	80
Vivanco FMB180	D	99
Vivanco IR7600	D	100
Vivanco SR1000IFL	D	100
Vivanco SR2000IFL	D	120



## EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS Hi-Fi Tables

**KEY**  
4 - Number of shelves

Alphason SM17	1	49
Alphason VSM17	1	85
Alphason GSM17	1	85
Alphason GMV1P	1	110
Alphason R17/17	3	120
Alphason GMH1P	1	150
Alphason GR17/17	3	190
Alphason GR17/17-AS	4	275
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 Aspect 650	4	240
Custom Design e'lite E4	4	250
Custom Design Aspect 500AV	3	270
Custom Design Aspect 850	5	270
Custom Design e'lite AV	6	350
Deadrock 701	1	60
Deadrock 802	2	90
Deadrock 703	3	130
Deadrock 705	5	230
Deadrock 704	4	250
Elemental Isotube X1	1	169
Elemental Isotube BS	1	199
Elemental Isotube TS	1	209
Elemental Isotube IS	1	209
Elemental Reference B1	1	329
Elemental Isotube X2	2	379
Elemental Isotube X3	3	489
Elemental Reference BS	1	499
Elemental Reference X1	1	499
Elemental Reference TS	1	549
Elemental Reference IS	1	549
Elemental Isotube X4	4	599
Elemental Reference X2	2	799
Elemental Isotube X4/Ref	4	1,199
Elemental Reference X3	3	1,199
Elemental Reference X4	4	1,599
Fi-Rax R4	6	399
Frameworks H175	1	139
Frameworks FS1	1	159
Frameworks H500	3	265
Frameworks FT2	2	285
Frameworks FT3	3	350
Frameworks H700	3	355
Frameworks H900	3	389
Heybrook Stand-Signature	4	249
Impulse Iso-plate	190	
JPW 3 Tier	3	80
JPW 5 Tier	5	100
Kudos Audio Connthian	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 Stage	200	
Mana Sound Table	235	
Mana Ref Shelf	325	
Mana Reference Table	350	
Mana 2 Tier Stand	375	
Mana 3 Tier Stand	450	
Mana 4 Tier Stand	500	
Mana 5 Tier Stand	600	
Mana 6 Tier Stand	700	
Mana 7 Tier Stand	800	
Mana 8 Tier Stand	900	
Mission Hark	5	298
Optimum G2	2	69
Optimum G2/Pedestal	2	99
Optimum G4/Pedestal	5	130
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	4	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	150
Sound Org Z560	5	160
Sound Org Z530	3	170
Soundstyle X300	3	180
Soundstyle X305	3	210
Soundstyle X053	4	210
Soundstyle X050	4	210
Soundstyle X6300	3	215
Soundstyle X100	4	230
Soundstyle X6110	4	230
Soundstyle X058	5	240
Soundstyle X310	3	250
Soundstyle X105	5	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 Supp	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
Townshend Seismic Sink Stand	4	1,245
Vibraplane Passive	1	1,895
Vibraplane Active	1	3,600
Wilson Benesch Standard Shelf	1	130
Wilson Benesch Mono Block	1	265
Wilson Benesch Kewlar Shelf	1	270
Wilson Benesch Asside Basic	4	590
Wilson Benesch Asside	4	720
Wilson Benesch Triptych	1	990



## EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS Speaker Stands

**KEY**  
60 - Height of stand in cm

Alphason NCI	60	47
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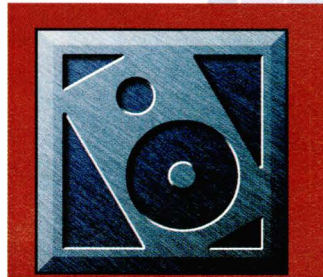
Alphason Akros I	60	49
Alphason RS1	120	49
Alphason NCI	60	84
Alphason HDS-40/M	60	85
Alphason Titan S	60	125
Apollo A26	66	80
Arcici Q-1	30	299
Arcici Q-2	30	299
Atacama BD21	56	55
Atacama BD17		55
Atacama BD25		60
Atacama SE16		65
Atacama SE12		65
Atacama SX500		67
Atacama F2		70
Atacama F1		70
Atacama 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 SE615		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 Tri 100	50	50
Custom Design R/S300	60	70
Custom Design M3	55	75
Custom Design M2	55	75
Custom Design M1	55	75
Custom Design Tri 300	55	85
Custom Design SC5 24	60	85
Custom Design X24	61	109
Deadrock 903	60	60
Deadrock 902	47	60
Deadrock 901	39	60
Dynaudio Trophy	60	120
Dynaudio Master	60	200
Dynaudio Ultima	60	290
Elemental Isotube SZ	49	499
Elemental Isotube SCZ	49	699
Elemental Reference SZ	52	999
Elemental Reference SCZ	52	1,499
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
Mana Sound Base		175
Opera WS I/E	60	235
Opera S1	60	295
Opera S2	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
Sound Org Z027		55
Sound Org Z026		55
Sound Org Z518	45	65
Soundstyle X6118	42	100
Stands Unique Speaker support	59	159
Stands Unique Tuned Spkr Support	59	220



Townshend Seismic Sink stand.



Stands Unique Tuned Carbon Fibre	59	299
Stands Unique Vivas CF Spkr Supp	60	349
Target TR60	60	68
Target R1	53	280



## 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 03	30
Ariston MSX 05	50
Celestion 12i	119
Denon SC-M2	80
Denon SC-E313SE	130
Gale Mini Monitors	70
Gale Gold Monitors	90
Gale 2i	130
Genexa GX300	80
Genexa GX330	80
GLL Arena	90
GLL Imagio IC208	100
Goodmans Active 75	65
Heybrook Prima 2	129
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
Mordaunt-Short VS-100	100
Mordaunt-Short MS05i	100
NAD 801	100
Paradigm Micro v2	120
Paradigm Atom v2	120
Pioneer CS-3030	100
Polk AB410	100
Realistic Minimus 26	56
Realistic Minimus Pro-77	100
Revolver Baretta	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
Wdale Valdis 100	80
Wdale Diamond 7.1	100
Wdale Valdis 200	110
Wdale Modus Micro	110

### £131 TO £200

Acoustic Energy Aegis One	150
Acoustic Energy AE100i	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
Genexa CX650	140
Genexa Pro	160
GLL Imagio IC218	140
GLL Imagio IC318	200
Heybrook Heylette	199
Heybrook HB1	199
Infinity SM65	150
Infinity Reference 1i	150
Infinity Reference 11i	200
Interaudio XL2000	200
Jamo Cornet 165	150
Jamo 38	150
Jamo 52	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 S5551	200
KEF Coda 8	189
KEF Q15	199
KEF Model 605	199
Kenwood LS-200G	200
KLH Model 21	155
KLH Model 11	155
KLH Model 31	185
Magnat Vector 22	179
Mission 701	160
Mission 771	170
Mission 702	200
M-A Monitor 1	200
Mordaunt-Short MS10i Pearl	150
Mordaunt-Short VS-200	150
Mordaunt-Short MS812	200
Mordaunt-Short MS20i Pearl	200
Mordaunt-Short VS-300	200
Paradigm Mini Monitor	200
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 GS1	179
Royd A7X	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
Wdale Diamond 7.2	140
Wdale Valdis 300	150
Wdale Modus Music Two	200
Wdale Valdis 400	200
Wdale Diamond 7.3	200

### £201 TO £300

Acoustic Energy AE200	250
Arcaydis Baby 1	299
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 C1	299
Celestion 23i	299
Cerwin-Vega VS-8	250
Cerwin-Vega CT-330	300
Chario Syntar 100	249
Chario Ref 100	299
Chario Hiper 1000	299
Dali 102B	260
Dali 150	300
Eltax Linear Response	249
GLL Imagio IC238TL	250
Heybrook Optima	259
Heybrook Heylios	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
JM Lab Tantal 507	295
JPW ML710	230
JPW ML810	260
JVC SX-SW10	300
KEF Coda 9	299
KEF Model 705	299
KLH 83A	205
KLH 183A	265
KLH SoundBites System	276
KLH Model 81	280
KLH Model 41	290
Linn Kan	295
Mission 772	230
Mission 750	248
Mission 703	300
M-A Monitor 2	250
M-A Silver 3	300
Mordaunt-Short MS30i	275
Mordaunt-Short MS10i Classic	280
Mordaunt-Short MS814	300
Mus Tec Kestrel SE	300
NAD 802	280
NHT SuperZero	218
Paradigm Monitor 5	250
Paradigm Monitor 7	300
Pioneer CS-7030	230
Pioneer CS-9030	280
Pioneer S-LC1	300
Polk AB505	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 CS3	279
Royd The Envoy	249
Royd Mnstrel	275
Ruark Epilogue	239
Sequence 300	249
Solid HCM1	250
Sony SS-176EB	250
Tannoy Mercury M3	230
Tannoy Precision P10	300
Wdale Modus Music Four	230
Wdale MFM1	250
Wdale Valdis 500	300
Yamaha NS10M	300
ZYP A1	219
ZYP A2S	295

### £301 TO £500

Acoustic Energy AE105SE	320
Acoustic Energy AE109	350
Acoustic Energy AE209	450
Acoustic Energy AE120	500
Allison Model 2A	420
Arcaydis Baby 2	399
Audiovector C1	399
AVI Neutron	499
B&O Beovox CX50	325
B&O Beovox CX100	425
B&W CWM8i	350
B&W DM305	350
B&W CDM2SE	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 Kendal	400
Castle Eden	470
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 E512	499
GLL Imagio IC248TL	350
GLL Imagio IC258TL	450
GLL Imagio IC348TL	500
Heybrook Heylo	359
Heybrook Ultima	399
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 TLX161	400
JBL PS8	500
JBL TLX171	500
JM Lab Micron	395
JM Lab Tantal 515	495
JM Lab Megane	495
Jordan Watts JHFLC	380
Jordan Watts JH200	420
JPW ML910	330
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 Ana 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 751f	348
Mission 773	350
Mission 704	450
Mission 774	500
M-A Monitor 3	350
M-A Silver 5	400
M-A Studio 2SE	500
M-A Monitor 4	500
M-A 700 PMC	500
Mordaunt-Short MS25i Pearl	330
Mordaunt-Short MS815	450
Mordaunt-Short MS40i	450
Mus Tec Harner	400
Mus Tec PM15	475
NAD 804	400
Neat Critique	445
NHT SuperOne	338
NHT Model 1.5	450
Opera Duoetto	395
Opera Prima	495
Origin Live OL-1AS	399
Origin Live Monarch	399
Paradigm Studio/20	350
Paradigm Monitor 9	400
Pentachord A	469
Pioneer S-LC2	450
Polk AB705	330
Polk RT8	400
Polk RT10	500
Polk AB805	500
Prof Monitor Co TB15M	403
Prof Monitor Co TB1	410
Prof Monitor Co TB1S	430



Prof Monitor Co TB1M	447	Audiovector M1	759
Prof Monitor Co XB1	499	Audiovector C2	799
Promenade SP2	399	AVI Biggatron	599
Promenade SP3	499	B&O Beolab 2500	750
Rega Jura	450	B&W CDM1 SE	600
Rega ELA MkII	498	B&W P4	675
Revolver The 260	350	Bose 501	600
R Allen Dimension Five.3	349	Bose A'mass AM3	650
R Allen Dimension Five.4	429	Boston VR30	600
Rogers GS5	379	Castle Severn 2	580
Rogers GS6	429	Castle Avon	730
Rogers GS8	479	Celestion 45i	599
Rogers C6/20	499	Celestion C2	699
Royd The Squire	350	Cerwin-Vega VS-12	550
Royd Minstrel SE	399	Cerwin-Vega VS-15	700
Royd Doublet	485	Chario Ref 100T	599
Ruark Icon	399	Chario Hiper 1000T	699
Sequence 400	329	Clements 600si	595
Solid Verticale	400	Cura CA-10	699
S Coast Odette	325	Dali 107	600
Spendor S2	399	Dali 350	600
Spendor 2020	399	Dali 450	700
Spendor S1	499	Dali 109	800
System 1130	500	Def Tech BP6B	750
Tannoy Precision P20	400	Diapason Micra II	750
TDL RTL2 SE	330	Dynaudio Audience 50	577
TDL RTL 35E	450	Epos ES14	675
TDL Chiltern CF100	450	Harbeth BBC LS3/5A	699
Technics SB-M300	350	Harbeth HL-P3ES	799
Technics SB-M500	450	Heybrook Duet	799
Totem Mite	495	Infinity SM155	550
Triangle Titus TZe	379	Infinity Kappa 60	595
Triangle Lunn	500	Infinity Delta 60	700
Wdale Modus Music Six	330	Infinity Kappa 70	795
Wdale MFM3	350	Jamo BX-200A	530
Wdale Modus Music Eight	430	Jamo Classic 10	600
Wdale MFM5	450	Jamo 507A	700
Wdale Modus Music 1/6	500	Jamo 707i	800
		JBL LX70	550
		JBL LX7	550
		JBL TLX181	600
		JBL SVA1500	700
		JBL L20	700
		JBL PS12	750
		JM Lab Cobalt 807	595
		JM Lab Cobalt 810	775
		Jordan Watts JH400	515
		JPW Ruby 3	800
		KEF LS3/5a	649
		KEF RDM Two	699

## £501 TO £800

Acoustic Energy AE505	700
Acoustic Precision Eikos FR1	800
Allison Model 3A	525
Arcaydis AK1	599
Arcaydis AS2	699
Arcaydis AK3	799
Audio Gem Emerald	540
Audio Note AN-K/D	620
Audio Note AN-J/B	799

KEF Q65	799	Celestion A1	899
Kelly KT2	700	Celestion C3	999
Keswick Volante	729	Celestion A2	1,499
KLH Model 82Ta	690	Cerwin-Vega AL-1000	1,100
Linn Tukan Passive	550	Cerwin-Vega 1515	1,300
Linn Keilidh Passve	750	Chario Ref 1000T	999
Magnat Vintage 710	799	Chario Academy 1	1,299
Manticores Minaret	690	Clements Reference 1	995
Meridian A500	750	Cura CA-21	999
M&K S-85	700	Dali 850	1,100
Mission 752f	578	Def Tech BP8B	1,000
Mission 705	600	Def Tech BP10B	1,500
Mission 753f	798	Diapason Prelude II	875
M-A Silver 7	600	Diapason Karis	1,275
M-A 702PMC	600	Dynaudio Contour 1.1	879
M-A 703PMC	800	Dynaudio Contour 1.3	1,198
Mordaunt-Short MS50i	550	Electrocompaniet EC-M1	995
Mordaunt-Short MS816	600	Electrocompaniet EC-Qube	1,195
Mordaunt-Short MS30i Classic	600	Electrocompaniet EC-Qube SE	1,495
Mus Tec Falcon	575	Epos ES15	890
Naim Intro	680	Epos ES22	1,185
Neat Mystique 2	575	Harbeth HL-K6	1,049
Neat Petite II	745	Harbeth HL-Compact 7	1,499
Opera Seconda	595	Harbeth BBC L5S/12A	1,499
Opera Platea	795	Heybrook Quintet	1,199
Origin Live Resolution	732	Impulse Kora	1,250
Paradigm Studio/60	650	Infinity Kappa 80	995
Paradigm Studio/80	750	Infinity Kappa 90	1,295
Pentachord B	519	Jadis Orchestra	999
Pentachord Pentode	729	Neo Concert 8	1,300
Polk RT12	600	JBL L40	1,000
Polk RT16	799	JBL PS15	1,000
Polk LS50	800	JBL SVA 2100	1,250
ProAc Tablette 50	599	JBL L80	1,250
ProAc Studio 100	699	JBL L90	1,500
Promenade SP4	650	JM Lab Cobalt 815	900
Quad 10L	600	JM Lab Electra 905	1,095
Rogers GS9	579	JM Lab Cobalt 820	1,175
Rogers LS3/5A	699	Jordan Watts JH1+1	1,150
Rogers C6/25	799	JPW Ruby 4	1,000
Roksan ROKone 1	595	KEF Q75	999
Roksan Ojan 3	795	KEF Ref. Model One	1,199
Royd The Sorcerer	595	Kelly KT3	1,200
Royd Abbot	695	Keswick Tonno	999
Ruark Templar II	559	Keswick Figaro Evolution	1,099
Ruark Sceptre	599	Keswick Milano	1,199
Ruark Talisman II	799	Keswick Legato	1,199
Ruark Prologue One	799	Keswick Amber	1,499
SD Acoustics SD3R	649	Linn Tukan Aktiv	1,050
Shinpy Polarys	595	Linn Keilidh Aktiv	1,250
Silverado Raider	695	L Voice Auditorium	1,500
Sonus Faber Concertino	599	Lowther Accolade 2	1,199
S Coast Hades	695	Lumley L/M3.5	1,050
Spendor 2030	599	Magnat Vintage 720	1,199
Spendor LS3/5A	630	Magneplanar SMG-C SE	990
Spendor SP3/1P	795	Magneplanar MG-0.6 SE	1,370
T+A TB 100	700	Meridian Argent 1	995
Tannoy Precision P30	600	M&K S-125	1,150
Tannoy Definition D100	689	Mission 705a	900
Tannoy Precision P40	800	Mission 754f	1,298
TDL Cotswold CF200	650	M-A Studio 6	900
TDL RTL 4	650	M-A Silver 9	1,000
TDL T-Line 3	700	M-A 705PMC	1,150
Titan Mini T/2	599	Mordaunt-Short MS817	900
Totem Rokk	695	Mordaunt-Short Perf 820	1,495
Triangle Comete TZe	525	Mus Tec Condor	1,000
Triangle Zephyr	799	Mus Tec Hawk	1,250
Wdale MFM7	650	Mus Tec Eagle	1,500

## £801 TO £1500

Acoustic Energy AE509	850	NHT VT-1.2	999
Acoustic Energy AE520	1,000	NHT Model 2.5	1,299
Acoustic Energy AE2-II	1,095	Opera Terza	995
Acoustic Solutions Eight	1,200	Opera Callas Gold	1,095
Apertura Prima	1,095	Opera Divina II	1,495
Apertura Nova	1,395	Origin Live Sovereign	1,130
Arcaydis AC1	1,099	Paradigm Studio/100	950
ATC SCM10	1,000	Polk LS70	1,200
Audio Note AN-J/D	930	Polk RT20p	1,500
Audio Note AN-K/SPx	1,060	ProAc Tablette 50 SIG	899
Audio Note AN-E/B	1,299	ProAc Response 1 SC	1,199
Audio Note AN-J/SPx	1,415	Prof Monitor Co LB1	935
Audio Physic Step	1,299	Prof Monitor Co AB1	1,496
Audiovector M1 Super	999	Rega XEL	1,040
Audiovector M2	1,399	RMS Revelation S 1	1,299
Audiovector M1 Sig	1,449	Rogers C6/28	1,399
AVI Positron	899	Roksan Ojan 3X	995
B&O Beolab 4000	1,100	Royd The Albion	985
B&W P5	875	Ruark Broadsword II	899
B&W CDM7	1,000	Ruark Paladin	1,099
B&W DM604	1,000	Shahinian Super Elf	875
B&W P6	1,095	Shahinian Compass	1,395
B&W Matrix 805 V	1,095	Shinpy Micraphonica	1,099
Bandor Trident	846	Silverado Ryder	1,395
Bandor Mora	1,260	Sonus Faber Concerto	945
Bandor Bandora	1,340	Sonus Faber Concerto GP	999
BKS Audio Hybrid 107	1,500	S Coast Merlin Monitor	849
Bose A'mass AM5	900	S Coast Classic	1,195
Bose 701	1,000	Spendor 2040	899
Boston VR40	1,000	Spendor SP2/3E	1,050
Cabasse Farella 400	950	Spendor SP1/2E	1,390
Castle Harlech	880	T+A TAS 1200E	1,050
Castle Howard S2	1,200	T+A TB 120	1,060
		Tannoy Definition D300	999
		TDL Chevot CF300	850



Mission 711



Technics SB-M1000	THX	1,500
Titan Tower T/4	THX	1,175
• Totem Model One	THX	1,195
Triangle Antal	THX	1,099
Vandersteen 2Ce	THX	1,395

## £1501 TO £3000

Acoustic Energy AE1 Sig	THX	1,995
Acoustic Energy AE2 Sig	THX	2,995
Alon I Mk II	THX	1,795
Alon II Mk II	THX	2,495
Apertura Agora Signature	THX	2,295
Apertura Tanagra	THX	2,395
Apertura Tanagra Sig.	THX	2,795
ATC SCM20SL	THX	1,750
ATC SCM20 Tower SL	THX	2,400
Audio Note AN-E/D	THX	1,520
Audio Note AN-E/SPx	THX	2,250
Audio Physic Spark 2	THX	1,749
• Audio Physic Tempo	THX	1,999
Audio Wk'p Cyclone 34	THX	2,000
Audiovector M3	THX	1,899
Audiovector M3 Sig	THX	2,499
Avalon Monitor	THX	2,995
B&O Beolab 6000	THX	1,550
B&O Beolab 8000	THX	2,100
B&O Beolab Penta 3	THX	2,650
• B&W Matrix 804	THX	1,695
B&W Matrix 803s2	THX	2,495
B&W Matrix 802s3	THX	2,995
BKS Audio Hybrid 128	THX	2,549
Bose 901 VI	THX	1,650
Boston Lynfield 300L	THX	2,000
Bravura Virtuoso Bronze	THX	2,995
Carver AL-111P	THX	1,999
Cary SP-301	THX	2,295
Celestion A3	THX	2,399
Celestion Kingston	THX	2,500
• Chario Academy 2	THX	1,649
Clestants Reference 7	THX	1,995
Creedo SPB 003	THX	1,820
Creedo SPB 009	THX	2,459
Cura CA-30	THX	1,699
Dali Grand Coupe	THX	2,500
Def Tech BP2002	THX	2,400
Diapason Adamantes III	THX	1,995
• Dynaudio Contour 1.8	THX	1,842
Dynaudio Craft	THX	2,598
Dynaudio Contour 3.0	THX	2,930
ECA Servo A2	THX	2,450
ELS Res'ch Vision	THX	2,800
Epos E530	THX	2,385
Gamma Epoch Ref Five	THX	2,999
Harbeth HL-58	THX	1,999
Helius Syrius II	THX	2,395
Helius Syrius I	THX	2,850
• Heybrook Octet	THX	1,799
Hi Q Sound SM108	THX	2,000
Impulse Lali	THX	1,850
Infinity Kappa 100	THX	1,895
Jamo Concert 11	THX	2,000
JBL L100	THX	1,750
JM Lab Electra 915	THX	1,795
JM Lab Electra 920	THX	2,350
Jordan Watts JH2K	THX	2,400
Jordan Watts JH5K	THX	3,000
• KEF Ref. Model Two	THX	1,599
KEF Ref. Model Three	THX	1,999
Linn Kasper Passive	THX	2,000
Linn Kasper Aktiv	THX	2,640
L Voice Aud'm Avatar	THX	2,100
Lowther Fidelio	THX	1,999
Lowther Academy	THX	2,399
Lowther Bel Canto	THX	2,699
Lumley L/M2 Mk3	THX	2,995
Magnat Vintage 760	THX	1,999
Magneplanar MG-10 SE	THX	1,650
Magneplanar MG-1.5 SE	THX	1,780
Magneplanar MG-2.7 SE	THX	2,650
Manticore Matisse	THX	1,890
Martin-Logan Aeries i	THX	2,199
Meridian M60	THX	2,150
M-A Studio 20SE	THX	2,500
• Mordaunt-Short Perf 860	THX	1,895
Mordaunt-Short Perf 880	THX	2,795
Naim SBL Active	THX	1,885
• Naim SBL Passive	THX	2,030
Neolith NEO 1	THX	2,999
NHT VT-2	THX	1,600
NHT Model 2.9	THX	2,199
Opera Caruso II	THX	2,495
• Origin Live Conqueror	THX	1,750
Paragon Jubilee	THX	1,995
Pentachord P'column	THX	1,649
Polk LS90	THX	1,700
Posselt Albatross	THX	2,500
ProAc Response 2S	THX	2,000
• ProAc Response 2.5	THX	2,700
Prof Monitor Co IB15	THX	2,099
Rehdeko RK115	THX	1,700
Rogers L55/9	THX	1,549
• Ruark Crusader II	THX	1,649
Ruark Equinox	THX	2,000

Ruark Accolade	THX	2,699
• SD Acoustics SD5	THX	1,549
Shahinian Arc	THX	1,875
Shahinian Obelisk	THX	2,695
Shinpy Eurtimica	THX	1,995
Shinpy Altair	THX	2,895
Silverado Silverado 1	THX	1,995
Sonus Faber Electa Amator 2	THX	2,849
Sound-Lab Quantum	THX	2,150
S Coast Excalibur	THX	2,750
Spendor SP7/1	THX	1,990
Spendor SP100	THX	2,099
T+A TB 140	THX	1,760
• Tannoy Definition D500	THX	1,999
Tannoy Stirling TW	THX	2,200
Tannoy Definition D700	THX	2,500
TDL Studio Monitor-m	THX	2,750
Totem Mann-2	THX	2,795
Triangle Zays	THX	1,750
Triangle Altinis	THX	2,250
Triangle Extan	THX	2,950
Wilson Benesch Orator	THX	2,900

## OVER £3000


Acoustic Energy AE5	THX	7,995
Alon Lotus SE	THX	3,500
Alon V Mk III	THX	5,495
Alon Adriana	THX	8,500
Alon Circe	THX	12,000
Alon Phalanx	THX	19,000
Apertura Athena	THX	6,995
Apertura Atlante	THX	8,995
ATC SCM20A PRO	THX	3,049
ATC SCMS0PSL	THX	4,250
ATC SCM100PSL	THX	4,950
ATC SCM50ASL	THX	5,775
ATC SCM100ASL	THX	6,475
ATC SCM200ASL	THX	15,595
ATC SCM300ASL	THX	17,731
Audio Note AN-JSE Silver	THX	7,900
Audio Note AN-ESE Silver	THX	9,600
Audio Physic Virgo 2	THX	3,399
Audio Physic Avanti 2	THX	6,699
Audio Physic Caldera	THX	10,599
Audio Physic Medea	THX	24,999
Audiovector 5X	THX	3,999
Audiovector 6X	THX	5,699
Avalon Avatar	THX	4,495
Avalon Arcus	THX	6,000
Avalon Eclipse	THX	6,495
Avalon Radian	THX	10,995
Avalon Osiris	THX	72,000
AVI Gavitron	THX	3,995
• B&W Matrix 801s3	THX	3,995
B&W Silver Signature	THX	5,500
• B&W Nautilus 801	THX	8,500
• B&W Nautilus	THX	35,000
Bandor Bandoline	THX	3,290
Bandor Bandora/Mora	THX	3,290
BKS Audio Hybrid 175	THX	3,995
Boston Lynfield 500L	THX	4,449
Bravura Virtuoso Gold	THX	3,395
Bravura Virtuoso Reference	THX	3,995
Bravura Accelerando	THX	6,600
Chario Academy 3j	THX	5,999
Creedo SPB 012	THX	3,147
Creedo SDL 001	THX	5,677
Dali Grand	THX	4,000
Def Tech BP2000	THX	3,600
Diapason Adamantes Ltd	THX	3,995
Dynaudio Contour 2.8	THX	3,198
Dynaudio Contour 3.3	THX	4,815
Dynaudio Confidence 3	THX	4,846
Dynaudio Confidence 5	THX	5,924
Dynaudio Consequence	THX	14,566
• Electrofluidics Sonolith 2.xii	THX	5,999
ELS Res'ch Vista	THX	3,900
ELS Res'ch Illusion MkII	THX	9,000
Impulse Ta'us	THX	3,100
Infinity Sigma	THX	5,995
Infinity Epsilon	THX	9,995
Inner Sound Eros	THX	3,995
Jadis 2	THX	5,900
Jadis 1	THX	18,900
Jamo Oriel	THX	7,000
JBL S2600	THX	3,500
JBL S3100	THX	4,000
JM Lab Mini Utopia	THX	4,500
• JM Lab Mezzo Utopia	THX	7,250
JM Lab Utopia	THX	18,300
JM Lab Grande Utopia	THX	35,000
Jordan Watts JH10K	THX	7,570
KEF Ref. Model Four	THX	3,299
Keswick Zero 2	THX	7,000
Linn Keltik Aktiv	THX	6,000
• L Voice Air Scout	THX	19,500
• L Voice Air Partner 5	THX	37,200
Lowther Delphic	THX	3,099
Lowther Opus One	THX	4,999
Lumley L/M 2 Sig. Mk3	THX	4,500
Magnat Vintage 770	THX	3,500
Magneplanar MG-3.5SE	THX	3,800
Magneplanar MG-20 SE P	THX	10,300

Magneplanar MG-20 SE A	THX	11,000
Martin-Logan SL3	THX	3,399
Martin-Logan CLS Ilz	THX	4,555
Martin-Logan Re-Quest Z	THX	5,875
• Meridian DSP5000	THX	3,295
Meridian DSP5500	THX	5,950
• Meridian DSP6000	THX	9,400
M-A Studio 50	THX	3,300
M-A Studio 60	THX	5,000
Naim DBL Active	THX	8,050
Neolith NEO 2	THX	3,499
Neolith NEO 3	THX	4,999
NHT Model 3.3	THX	3,500
Paragon Regent	THX	3,490
ProAc Response 3.8	THX	3,990
ProAc Response 5	THX	9,000
ProAc Response 4	THX	12,000
Prof Monitor Co MB1P	THX	4,370
Prof Monitor Co BB5 A	THX	16,688
• Quad ESL63	THX	3,450
Rehdeko RK125	THX	3,200
Rehdeko RK145	THX	4,800
Rehdeko RK175	THX	8,800
Revel Gem	THX	5,295
Rockport Szyzygy	THX	15,000
Rockport Procyon	THX	32,500
Ruark Solstice	THX	4,000
• Ruark Excalibur	THX	7,000
• SD Acoustics SD1E	THX	3,495
Shahinian Hawk	THX	4,995
Shahinian Diapason	THX	8,895
Shinpy Enigma	THX	3,995
Shinpy Euphonia	THX	5,995
Shinpy Magnifica Suprema	THX	14,500
Shun Mook Bella Voce	THX	6,800
Sonus Faber Guarneri Homage	THX	5,795
Sonus Faber Amati Homage	THX	11,450
Sound-Lab Dynastat	THX	3,790
Sound-Lab Aura	THX	6,490
Sound-Lab Pristine III+	THX	7,990
Sound-Lab A-3	THX	11,990
Sound-Lab Ultimate II	THX	13,950
Sound-Lab A-1	THX	13,990
Sound-Lab Ultimate III	THX	18,950
Sound-Lab Ultimate I	THX	23,950
Spendor SP9/1	THX	3,450
T+A A4D	THX	3,850
T+A A3D	THX	4,550
T+A A2D	THX	8,400
Tannoy Edinburgh TW	THX	3,250
Tannoy Definition D900	THX	3,999
Tannoy GRF Memory TW	THX	4,000
• Tannoy Westminster TW	THX	6,600
Tannoy Canterbury 15 TW	THX	7,720
Tannoy Westminster Royal	THX	14,920
TDL Ref Standard-m	THX	6,000
Triangle Nemo Altair	THX	4,250
Wilson Audio Cub	THX	5,495
Wilson Audio WATT 5	THX	8,390
Wilson Audio WITT II	THX	10,995
Wilson Audio Maxx	THX	34,995
Wilson Benesch Actor	THX	3,900
• Wilson Benesch ACT1 spkr	THX	6,900
Wilson Benesch Act 2	THX	8,900
Wilson Benesch The Bishop	THX	20,000

Celestion CS135	THX	139
Celestion CSW MkII	THX	329
Celestion S11	THX	349
Celestion A6s	THX	800
Cerwin-Vega HT-10D	THX	200
Cerwin-Vega HT-12D	THX	250
Chario Syntar Bass	THX	299
Chario Hyper Bass	THX	499
Credo SDC 001	THX	3,054
GLL Le Bass	THX	350
H/K Citation 7.4	THX	875
Infinity SSW-10	THX	500
Jamo SW303E	THX	220
Jamo SW400E	THX	330
Jamo SW505E	THX	400
Jamo Sub One	THX	400
Jamo SW600E	THX	530
JBL Contol Sub 6	THX	200
JBL PSW800	THX	275
JBL Sub 10	THX	300
JBL PSW1000	THX	325
JBL PSW1200	THX	375
JM Lab Tantal SW20	THX	349
JM Lab Cobalt SW27A	THX	595
JM Lab Electra SW35A	THX	895
JM Lab Sub Utopia	THX	2,200
JPW Subwoofer	THX	130
JPW SW40	THX	199
JPW SW60	THX	350
JPW SW-120	THX	500
KEF Model 20B	THX	349
KEF Model 30B	THX	499
KEF Model AV1	THX	2,499
Kenwood SW500	THX	250
Kenwood SW501	THX	349
Keswick Alto	THX	1,299
KLH ASW10-100	THX	350
KLH ASW12-120	THX	380
Linn AV5150	THX	2,850
L Voice RW24	THX	11,500
Magnat Vector Sub 30P	THX	149
Magnat Vector Sub 30A	THX	299
Meridian M2500	THX	1,595
M&K VX-7MkII	THX	450
M&K V-75 MkII	THX	650
M&K V-125	THX	800
• M&K V-125 (THX)	THX	800
M&K MX-70	THX	900
• M&K MX-150 (THX)	THX	1,500
M&K MX-700	THX	1,595
M&K MX-200	THX	1,800
M&K MX-350THX	THX	1,995
• M&K MX-5000 (THX)	THX	2,900
Mission 70as	THX	300
Mission 75as	THX	548
M-A ASW110	THX	500
M-A ASW210	THX	700
Mordaunt-Short MS826S	THX	500
Mordaunt-Short T2000	THX	500
Mus Tec Sub	THX	650
Muse Model 22	THX	1,890
Muse Model 18	THX	3,790
Neat Gravitas	THX	1,095
NHT SW2Pi	THX	699
Paradigm PDR10	THX	250
Paradigm Servo 15A	THX	800
Polk PSW50	THX	350
Polk PSW150	THX	500
Polk PSW300	THX	750
REL Q50	THX	375
REL Q-100E	THX	495
REL Strata II	THX	575
REL Storm	THX	695
REL Stadium II	THX	995
REL Stentor II	THX	1,800
REL Studio II	THX	4,000
Revel Sub-15	THX	2,195
Revolver The Recoil	THX	100
R Allen Gold Sub	THX	149
R Allen Dim'n Active	THX	499
R Allen Magnum Active	THX	699
Rogers AB1	THX	549
Rogers Sub-bass	THX	679
Roksan Ojan 3S	THX	795
Sequence FW120	THX	249
Sonic PB100	THX	350
Sony SA-W305	THX	130
Sunfire True Sub	THX	1,450
TDL Nucleus SBR	THX	200
Triangle Sat III	THX	650
Tsunami TS200	THX	300
Tsunami TS210	THX	399
Velodyne VA-68XII	THX	399
Velodyne VA-810XII	THX	599
Velodyne VA-1012XII	THX	699
Velodyne VA-1215XII	THX	999
Velodyne FSR-12	THX	1,099
Velodyne FSR-15	THX	1,299
Velodyne F-1800II	THX	



Yamaha YST-SW40	Ⓐ	140
Yamaha YST-SW80	Ⓐ	180
Yamaha YST-SW150	Ⓐ	280
Yamaha YST-SW300	Ⓐ	350



## Ⓐ TONEARMS

**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
Helius Orion 4 Copper	Ⓐ	549
Helius 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	Ⓐ	1,070
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 Artemiz	Ⓐ	895
SME 3009 Ser II Imp	Ⓐ	309
SME 3009 S2 Ser II Imp	Ⓐ	338
SME Series II 3009-R	Ⓐ	514
SME Series II 3010-R	Ⓐ	526
SME Series II 3012-R	Ⓐ	565
SME 309	Ⓐ	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 Della 280	P20	300
Ariston TX-510	P20	60
Audiolab 8000T	P39	800
Aura TU80	P30	350
AVI S2000MT2	P99	RDS 899
Carver TX-8R	P20	469
Creek T43	P68	399
Davidson-Roth FM Ref Classic		5,590
Denon TU-260L	P20	120
Denon TU-215RD	P40	RDS 150
Denon TU-425RD	P40	RDS 200
Denon TU-1500RD	P40	RDS 250
Fanfare FT1	P08	1,395
H/K TU930	P30	150
H/K TU950	P30	RDS 200
Kenwood KT-2080	P20	RDS 130
Kenwood KT-3080	P30	RDS 180
Linn Kudos	P50	775
Linn Kremlin	P80	2,600
Magnum Dynalab FT11		499
Magnum Dynalab FT-101A		825
Magnum Dynalab Etude		1,250
Magnum Dynalab 108		4,500
Marantz ST-48	P60	RDS 120
Marantz ST-17	P60	RDS 600
McIntosh MR7084	P50	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	330
Micromega Tuner	P39	700
Mission Cyrus FM7	P29	398
Musical Fidelity E50	P20	300
Myryad T-30	P39	400
Myryad MT100	P39	530
NAD 412	P24	190
NAD 414RDS	P30	RDS 250
NAD 710	P24	RDS 270

NAD 712	P24	330
Naim NAT03		615
Naim NAT02		1,130
Naim NAT01		1,780
Onkyo T 4210RDS	P30	RDS 180
Onkyo T 409	P30	RDS 230
Onkyo T 411RDS	P30	RDS 260
Pioneer F-204RDS	P30	RDS 140
Pioneer F-504RDS	P40	RDS 250
Pioneer F-504RDS Precision	P40	RDS 300
Quad 77FM	P25	RDS 700
Rega Radio	P24	298
Roksan Caspian	P50	595
Rotel RT-935AX	P20	160
Rotel RT940AX	P20	200
Sony ST-SE200	P30	100
Sony ST-SE300	P30	RDS 120
Sony ST-SE500	P30	RDS 140
Sony ST-SB920	P30	RDS 180
Sony ST-SA3ES	P30	RDS 250
T+A T1200R	P60	RDS 790
Teac T-R400	P40	RDS 100
Teac TR-460	P40	RDS 120
Teac T-H500	P30	RDS 170
Technics ST-GT350L	P30	RDS 130
Technics ST-GT550L	P39	RDS 180
Technics ST-GT650L	P39	RDS 230
Thorens TRT-2000	P59	RDS 499
Thule Audio Spirit TU100	P40	RDS 499
Yamaha TX-480L	P40	RDS 100
Yamaha TX-10 II	P40	RDS 130
Yamaha TX-492RDS	P40	RDS 130
Yamaha TX-59 2RDS	P40	RDS 180
Yamaha RX-396RDS	P40	RDS 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 Mk1 Arm	Ⓐ	279
Moth Kanoot Mk3 Arm	Ⓐ	329
NAD 533	Ⓐ	220
N'ham Interspace	Ⓐ	500
Pioneer PL-J2500-C	Ⓐ	80
Pioneer PL-990	Ⓐ	130
Pro-Ject 0.5/OM10	Ⓐ	170
Pro-Ject 1/510	Ⓐ	210
Pro-Ject 2/520	Ⓐ	325

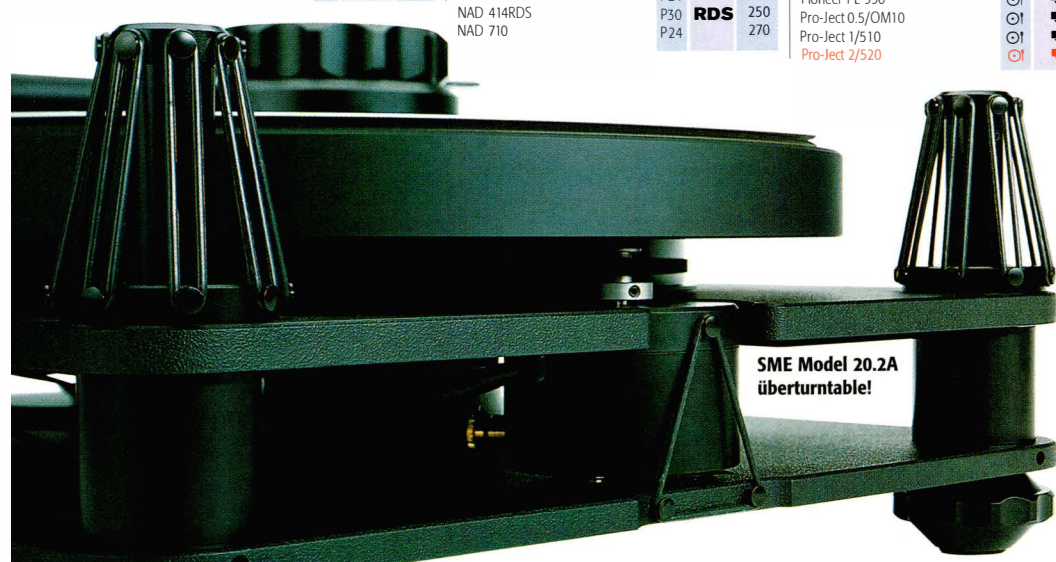
## Factsback

For access to past reviews see page 129.



Pro-Ject 6/MC15	Ⓐ	500
Rega Planar 78	Ⓐ	214
Rega Planar 2	Ⓐ	214
Rega Planar 3	Ⓐ	274
Roksan Radius	Ⓐ	470
Sherwood PM8550	Ⓐ	160
Sony PS-LX150H	Ⓐ	90
Sony PS-LX300H	Ⓐ	150
Technics SL-J110D	Ⓐ	160
Technics SL-BD20	Ⓐ	120
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

<b>OVER £500</b>		
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 97	Ⓐ	595
Manticore Mantra	Ⓐ	895
Manticore Magster	Ⓐ	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
Orade Paris	Ⓐ	1,100
Orade Delphi	Ⓐ	3,370
Orade Delphi 15th Anniv	Ⓐ	3,800
Pink Triangle Tarantella	Ⓐ	680
Rega Planar 9	Ⓐ	1,599
Reson RS1M	Ⓐ	695
Reson Rota 1	Ⓐ	3,900
Rockport Capella II	Ⓐ	7,000
Rockport Sirius III	Ⓐ	50,000
Roksan Xerxes 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 ID-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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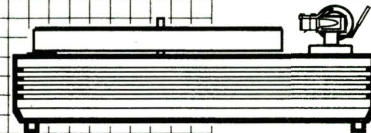
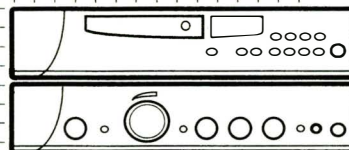
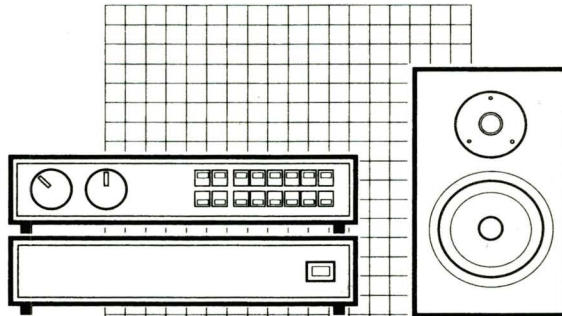
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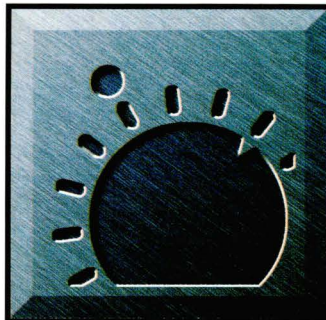
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# Amplifiers

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.  
**High End Review**

**B BEST BUY** **R RECOMMENDED** **E EDITOR'S CHOICE**

# Amplifiers

## SPECIFICATIONS

MM PHONO INPUTS  
 MC PHONO INPUTS  
 REMOTE CONTROL  
 HEADPHONE SOCKET  
 POWER OUTPUT (W)  
 RECEIVER  
 FACTSBACK NO.  
 ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	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
AMC 3100a	200	A head banger's delight, but sound quality can be muggy and brash on occasions	6			●	●	100			186
AMC CVT3030a	400	Beer-budget valve amp, with valve-like virtues (euphony with dynamics) and vices (system dependency, noise)	6	●			●	30		2001	168
Arcam Alpha One	230	Rather like an Alpha 7 but without the remote control and an what appears to be better sound quality still	6			●		35			186
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
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 A500RC	200	Load tolerance may be a problem for some, but this is an otherwise impressive, if tonally muted amp	6				●	50			186
Copland CSAB	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
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 'woomy' bass	5					40		2052	171
Cyrus IIIi	598	Beautifully presented, but mid-dominated balance was not liked. Upgradeable using PSX PSU unit	6	●			●	50		1854	162
Cyrus SL	398	Articulate amplifier with build quality to die for, superb, outgoing midband and lean, though well-extended bass	6					50			168
Denon PMA-250SE	140	This amp can sound rough when extended, but within its limits it is open, detailed and likeable	5				●	30		2046	171
Denon PMA-350SE	180	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 ECI-2	995	A 50 watt amplifier which sounds more powerful, and makes 'real sounding' music.	4					50		2158	175
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-5090R	300	Large, well equipped and high tech integrated, but TRAITR output still gives a harsh, unobtrusive performance	5	●	●	●	●	65		2053	171
Kenwood KAF-3010R	180	Plenty of twiddly bits yet weak on inputs, and basically good, but somewhat uneven sound quality	4	●			●	70			186
Lavardin Model II	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 IA200	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-48	150	Fine entry level amplifier has excellent midband resolution and top, with a slightly coarse textured bass	5	●			●	50			186
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 KI-Signature	400	It knows how to roc 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

SPECIFICATIONS	ISSUE NUMBER	FACTSBACK NO.	RECEIVER	POWER OUTPUT (W)	HEADPHONE SOCKET	REMOTE CONTROL	MC PHONO INPUTS	MM PHONO INPUTS	LINE INPUTS

STATUS	PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
	Micromega Tempo 2	900	Idiosyncratic but flexible amplifier with an attractively forward and expressive sound quality	●						181
	Monrio ASTY	400	Engaging, but ill-disciplined, even OTT amplifier with unpredictable system compatibility							178
	Musical Fidelity E1	199	Richly flavoured tone and realistically-scaled imagery distinguish this entry-level Richer Sounds special							171
	Musical Fidelity E11	299	Well built minimalist amp with a 5 year guarantee, but can sound congested when extended							178
	Musical Fidelity X-A1	479	Idiosyncratic visuals just another plus for an amp that is powerful, well built, and serves the music superbly							181
	Musical Fidelity A2	500	Lucid, transparent midband and a full upper bass are provided by this highly proficient A1 replacement							162
	Musical Fidelity A220	700	Powerful, authoritative and well turned-out amplifier that is easy to match with comparably priced speakers							168
	Myryad M1120	600	Well styled, well built: a good, even tempered amplifier, though it can sound rather brittle							175
	NAD 310	100	Fleet and sure of foot, it seems likely to set all appendages tapping with its blend of enthusiasm and artfulness							149
	NAD C320	200	Excellent budget amp from the makers of the seminal 3020 offers better clarity and neutrality and good build							186
	NAD 314	260	Lively if coloured presentation that is musically engaging and easy on the ear							157
	Naim Nait 3	575	Distinctive and highly musical sounding integrated amp. Perhaps too distinctive for some tastes							154
	Orelle SA-100	499	A musically rewarding amplifier that grows on you. Trace of coarseness in treble							154
	Orelle SA-100RX	649	In its latest guise, this is a fluid, articulate and transparent design – and excellent value							181
	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							149
	Pioneer A-407R	230	Clean, consistent, finely detailed sound, good finish and (mainly) good build							186
	Pioneer A-400X	300	On second audition, this amp was tonally unchanged but less compelling than on its first outing							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							162
	Pioneer A-07	999	Curious blend of high-end attributes and inconsistent, though undeniably detailed sound							175
	Primare A-20 Mk II	799	Everything except packaging has changed in mkII version: but ballsier model has lost none of its refinement							181
	Pro-ject Model 7	300	A minimalist amplifier brimming with good intent, but too quirky for its own good. Either MM or MC phono							142
	Quad 77 Integrated	700	Compact and sophisticated amp. Has limited inputs when used with 'foreign' components. (Optional system remote)							168
	Rega Elex	398	Minimalist amplifier, derived from Elicit, is a little uninspiring, though at least it is well behaved							162
	Roksan Caspian	695	Well-built, open and articulate amplifier, which is also consistent from system to system, and well built							168
	Rose Scion	615	Unique two-box integrated gives real subtlety and low level resolution, but the sound lacks scale and weight							168
	Rotel RA-931	150	Rather dry and unforgiving sound from this internally well specified and attractively priced amplifier							171
	Rotel RA-971	200	Budget buy par excellence, especially for large rooms and insensitive speakers							186
	Sony TA-F448BE	250	Minimalist interface is matched to carefully considered circuit with satisfactory effect – but keep the volume in check							171
	Sony TA-F3000ES	500	Champagne 'shoobox amp' may lack power reserves, but is quick and articulate. In every sense a knockout							178
	TAG McLaren 60iRv	999	Looks, feels and sounds better than the Audiolab it supersedes. Smooth, open, refined but lacks body and drive							184
	Talk Electronics Storm 1	500	Good soundstaging and strong detail are provided by this unassuming and not especially powerful model							162
	Talk Electronics Storm 2	650	Crisp, clean, well defined sound, arguably lacking warmth, but a good midrange purchase overall							175
	TEAC A-BX7R	700	Characterful balance mars a meticulously designed amplifier. Includes a balanced input, optional MM/MC stage							162
	Technics SU-A660MK3	200	Plenty of wellie for the price, but the sound can be a tad coarse and lacking in fine detail							186
	Technics SU-A700 Mk 3	250	Fully equipped, high-tech amplifier ultimately fails the authenticity test, and can sound messy and inarticulate							162
	Technics SU-A800D Mk 2	300	Two-box amplifier looks great, has plenty of gadgets, and makes good, if slightly over-exuberant music							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							175
	Token Audio K50	350	Stainless steel finish, others available. Sound is warm and attractive, though a little undynamic							186
	Woodside ISA230 Disc	1,249	Smooth and inoffensive valve amplifier, though it lacks the sparkle and euphony required for ultimate success							116
	Yamaha AX-492	220	Powerful, well equipped amplifier at an attractive price, offers powerful and engaging music-making							178
	Yamaha AX-592	280	Fine, middle ranking amplifier, with a detailed midband but performance declines at frequency extremes							171
<b>PREAMPLIFIERS</b>										
	Amp Flux System 2	3,000	Three-box affair with a clean, spacious sound and plenty of slam. A touch steely, but undeniably potent							187

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CONTINUED

# Amplifiers

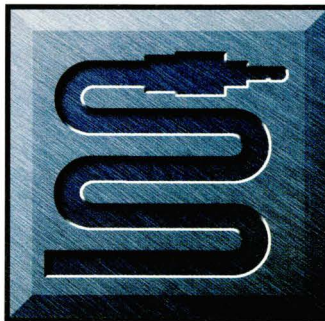
SPECIFICATIONS

MM PHONO INPUTS  
MC PHONO INPUTS  
REMOTE CONTROL  
HEADPHONE SOCKET  
POWER OUTPUT (W)  
RECEIVER  
FACTSBACK NO.  
ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	RECEIVER	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER	
Alchemist Kraken APD7A MkII	549	Unusual looks and unusual sound too, rather rough and lacking detail	6							187	
Arcam Alpha 9C	400	Well specified and flexible preamp with sound only just lacking in greatness	6			●	●			187	
Copland CTA-301MkII	1,399	Sweet sounding, but never gets bogged down in audio treacle	4	●					1630	151	
Creek P43R	350	Excellent sound, remote control operation and upgrade options from this fine value preamp	6			●	●			187	
Crimson CS610	450	Good, clear sound, including a decent phono stage, but flexibility is limited	3	●	●					187	
Crimson 610C	875	Not entirely satisfactory preamp which has dynamic strengths, but underachieves when the volume is raised	4	●						181	
EAR 802MC	2,599	Tested with 509 Mk 2 power amp. (See Power Amplifier section.)	4	●	●					63	
ECA Vista	760	Wind up the volume and blow a breath of fresh music into your system. (Tested with Lectern power amp)	5						1302	145	
Exposure XVII	850	Superbly rhythmic, maybe a bit overpowering in the midband. Tested in Sessions with XVIII Super	5	●	●					142	
Jadis JP-30MC	5,978	French tubes, beautiful build, nostalgic styling and delightful midrange. (Tested with JA 30 power amp)	5	●						60	
LFD Mistral Linestage	449	Strong ergonomics, generally decent sound, but a little lacking in detail	6						1930	165	
Meridian 501	695	Tight, positive sound, but dispassionate; intense at high levels. (Tested with 555 power amp)	5	●		●			1303	145	
Meridian 562V	995	Transparent and capable preamp, also features six digital inputs	9	●		●	●			140	
Meridian 502	1,295	Extremely sophisticated analogue controller with tremendous flexibility and a fast and tidy presentation	7			●				162	
Michell Orca	1,650	Line-level design with a gorgeous remote and focused, spacious sound. (tested with Alecto power amps)	6			●				187	
Moth 30 Passive	149	Modular system gives cracking results. Passive preamp and power amp warrant Best Buy	4							109	
Moth 30 Active Line Stage	349	Excellent-sounding ultra-simple miniature preamp	4						1931	165	
Muse Model Three	1,990	Natural sounding tranny preamp with useful audiophile features. Works beautifully with 160 power amp	5			●				166	
Musical Fidelity X-PRE	200	Cleverly configured preamp with many upgrade options, and open, lively and engaging sound	4						2152	175	
Musical Fidelity Nu-Vista	1295	Fully remote, nuvistor tube equipped, with fine coherence and musicality	5	●		●				182	
NAD 114	270	Beer-budget preamp, sounds focused, detailed and consistent	6	●	●	●			1932	165	
Naim NAC92R	630	Upgradeable preamp uses proprietary socketry. (Tested with NAP90 power amp)	5			●			1936	165	
NVA P50	350	Passive preamp that's more likely than most to cause treble loss	4							187	
Quad 77 Pre	850	Sophisticated design with 2-way remote control console; open colourful sound and very flexible	4	●	●	●			1941	165	
Rega Hal	998	Passive line stages dedicated to Exon power amps	6	●	●	●				1942	
Rose RV-23	450	You can pay more to get a more transparent sound, but it's hard to criticise at the price	3	●						77	
Rotel RC-971	150	Low price is offset by rather coarse sound quality with certain types of music. (Tested with RB-971 power amp)	5				●			178	
Sumo Athena IIB	767	Big, natural and tidy-sounding with very natural reproduction of acoustic and electric instruments	6						1305	145	
TAG McLaren PA20R	1500	Refinement of Audiolab original with clean, detailed sound but limited thrill power. (t/w 125M monoblocks.)	6			●	●			184	
TAG McLaren PPA20	1,549	One of the best-equipped phono stages available. Resolution is excellent, but timing is marginally behind the best		●	●					187	
Talk Hurricane 2L	649	Design of integrity which gets to the heart, if not the soul, of the music	6						1937	165	
Technics SU-C3000	2,997	Price includes SE-A3000. Supremely clean and even sounding combo, though it could be more musically involving	5	●						188	
Thule Spirit PR100	400	High-tech preamp slightly marred by tendency to veil the sound	5			●				187	
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>											
Alch. Kraken APD8A Mk II	549	Unusual looks and unusual sound too, rather rough and lacking detail	1						55		187
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	Well made and flexible: upgradeable to 3 channels. Good sound lacking the last degree of detail	1						100		187
Art Audio Quintet	1,393	Switchable triode, ultralinear output stage. In triode mode, these are 15 of the sweetest Watts around	1						15		109
Border Patrol 300B SE	3,995	Single ended valve power amp with passion, grace and fire, and plenty of grunt to boot	1						8.5		186
Copland CTA-505	2,099	Grown-up amplifier with a refined, yet never over-civilised air	1						67	1630	151
Creek A52SE	599	Well designed and built amplifier with plenty of power, detail and refinement	6						100		187
Crimson CS630	800	Space-saving slimline monoblocks with both grunt and finesse	1						100		187
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
Michell Alecto Monoblocks	1,950	Hefty beasts offering real power and striking imaging. Not the last word in timing (tested with Orca preamp)	1						100		187
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 X-A50	500	Cleverly configured and attractively packaged, open, lively and engaging sound. Reviewed with X-PRE	1						50		175
Myriad MA120	450	Based on MI120 integrated – see latter for comments, but sounds significantly better when bi-amped with MI120	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
NVA A60	560	Rather coarse and uninviting sound	1						60		187
Technics SE-A3000	2,997	Price includes SU-C3000. Supremely clean and even sounding combo, though it could be more musically involving	1				●		100		188
Thule Spirit PA100	600	More successful than matching preamp: sound is gutsy and lively, and generally clean	1						100		187
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						70		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 Tomado 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:** O - 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

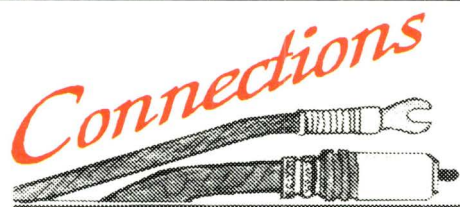
## Cables

### SPECIFICATIONS

SYMMETRICAL   COAXIAL   STRANDED   SOLID CORE   COPPER   DIG CABLE TYPE   SILVER   FACTSBACK NO.   ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	DIG CABLE TYPE	SILVER	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS</b>											
Acoustic Precision Eikos	89	Not entirely neutral: probably best suited to upbeat music. Very stiff construction				●	●		●		188
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 X2	60	Well made but let down by a pervading sense of muddle and congestion in the sound			●			●	●		188
CableTalk Advanced 2	35	Slight roughness in loud music barely detracts from a well-balanced performance with good imaging					●	●	●	2166	176
CableTalk 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
Cambridge Silver Spirit 60	100	Good bass but a lack of detail and differentiation of instruments			●		●		●		188
Chord Cobra 2	50	Good, strong sound with full-bodied music, less happy with smaller forces					●	●	●	2167	176
Chord Chameleon 2	90	Deep bass is fine but despite that the sound can be a bit hard and lacking body and resonance			●		●		●		188
Connections Midas HD	39	Canary yellow cable with excellent plugs and an open sound. Slight treble glare			●		●		●		160
DNM TCC75	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
Kimber PBJ	68	Assured sound, solid and natural bass and clear treble – excellent performance all round					●		●		188
Kimber PBJ	68	Assured sound, solid and natural bass and clear treble – excellent performance all round					●		●		188
Insert Audio IC100 MkII	47	Mostly good sound is let down by pervasive dryness					●		●	2169	176
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
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
Kimber Hero	110	Slight roughness detracts from some music; seems well suited to rock and jazz. Lively and detailed			●		●		●	2170	176
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
Nordost Solar Wind	85	Good tone and dynamics, with just occasionally a touch of bass-lightness in busy music			●			●	●		188
Nordost Blue Heaven	145	Very good bass and only slightly grainy treble add up to a well integrated, natural-sounding cable			●		●		●		176
Precious Metals SS35	50	Extended bass, but dry character suits electronic music better than acoustic					●	●	●		188
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



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# Cables

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

SYMMETRICAL COAXIAL STRANDED SOLID CORE COPPER SILVER DIG CABLE TYPE FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

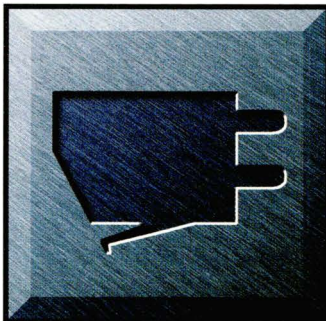
PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIG CABLE TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER	
<b>QED Qnect 2</b>	30	Very well balanced, refined and detailed, this is everything a good cable should be, and excellent value					●	●		2172	176	
<b>QED Qnect 4S</b>	70	Some coloration and roughness in the midrange and treble, but bass is gratifyingly solid	●				●	●			188	
Reference CS1	75	A moderate performer, with a little coloration and a tendency to lose bass at climaxes	●				●	●			188	
Silvertone Ex-Static	35	Pleasantly unfatiguing and competitively priced cable that lacks detail and insight				●	●	●			160	
<b>SonicLink Silver Pink</b>	35	Dynamically sensitive and muddle-free. We're unsure about the flesh-coloured finish though...	●				●	●	●		160	
<b>SonicLink Black</b>	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>SonicLink Lilac</b>	65	Some dryness can affect transient sounds, though tone is generally good, especially in the bass	●				●	●			188	
<b>Straight Wire Chorus</b>	40	A very confident cable with good bass, though perhaps a shade of treble loss			●		●	●		2173	176	
<b>Straight Wire Sonata</b>	80	Tonal balance favours lower frequencies but despite this it's a very listenable cable			●		●	●			188	
<b>Supra EFF-ISL</b>	80	Excellent sound in all areas – nothing to criticise	●				●	●			188	
<b>Tara Labs Prism 22</b>	64	Mild tendency to plumminess offsets some hardness in complex music with mixed results			●		●	●			188	
<b>van den Hul The Storm</b>	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>van den Hul Source HB</b>	50	Price for 0.8m. Hybrid carbon-fibre/copper cable that is a paragon of naturalness	●				●	●			160	
<b>van den Hul PB5</b>	50	A highly neutral cable with fine dynamic and rhythmic performance too – excellent					●	●	●		188	
<b>van den Hul D102 MKIII</b>	70	A cable with everything: good bass, treble, imaging and naturalness					●	●	●	2173	176	
<b>van den Hul The First</b>	210	Using 12,000 carbon fibres, a gentle and subtle sounding cable that conveys oodles of information			●		●	●		1702	131	
<b>van den Hul The Second</b>	240	Wonderfully open and relaxing but also intimately detailed, slightly softens percussive dynamics	●				●	●	●	1702	131	
<b>XLO Type 150</b>	50	A restrained but useful cable for taming lively CD players, dynamics lack freedom, treble lacks clarity	●				●	●		1703	131	
<b>XLO Type 0.1</b>	180	Unusual but highly expressive and detailed with a hint of graininess on powerful vocals					●	●		1703	131	
<b>DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS</b>												
<b>Audioquest Digital Pro</b>	100	A silver cable with all the drive of Video Z but lacking its clear-cut transparency			●	●				E	108	
<b>Chord Codac</b>	36	A connection with a stranded inner core and a sound that lacks integration			●	●		●		E	108	
<b>Chord Prodac</b>	50	Price for 0.6m length. Lively detailed treble, drives music along confidently with no hint of fizz	●				●	●		E	1706	131
<b>DPA Opti-link</b>	20	Sound is lacklustre								O	108	
<b>DPA Digi-link</b>	28	Can seem slightly impassive but there's no avoiding its exceptionally detailed sound					●	●	●	E	108	
<b>Ixos 105</b>	25	Extended but soft-edged treble that's mercifully free of fatiguing colorations; plenty of weight, smooth	●				●	●		E	1707	131
<b>Kimber Kable Opti-link</b>	50	Appears to be a bog-standard PMNA fibre, yet sounds a little brighter and livelier than most								O	108	
<b>Moth Leyline Datalink</b>	140	A thin, coaxial version of Leyline Black with a rather hard and unforgiving character. Too expensive	●				●	●		E	108	
<b>QED DigiFlex</b>	20	A top performance, low-loss 75 Ohm coax with a very open, almost liquid quality	●				●	●	●	E	108	
<b>Siltech HF-6</b>	145	Sounds detailed, very clean and extended, but bass is less well resolved – a treat for high-end systems	●				●	●		E	1709	131
<b>SonicLink Green</b>	60	Spacious, positive and engaging if a bit over-crisp at times – very compelling, however	●				●	●	●	E	1709	131
<b>van den Hul The First</b>	125	Exceptionally natural albeit slightly cautious compared to some. Plenty of subtle information and integration	●				●	●		E	1710	131
<b>LOUDSPEAKER CABLES</b>												
<b>ALR Jordan QMM</b>	5	Generally neutral, if sometimes bass-shy, but not very communicative	●				●		●		183	
<b>Audio Note AN-D</b>	4.50	Supplied in linear, non-polarised lengths that are twisted into stereo pairs. Sounds rather grippy and forward						●	●		109	
<b>Audio Note AN-B</b>	16.50	Well suited to valve systems, elastic bass, methodical but unintrusive and musical					●	●		1711	133	
<b>Audio Note AN-L</b>	29.50	Fruity bass and expressive vocal rendition was appreciated by the panel, which was happy to accept its foibles	●				●	●	●	1712	133	
<b>Audio Note AN-SP</b>	150	A calm and civilised presentation, very quiet in the way it reveals subtle low level detail. Great poise and clarity	●				●	●	●		109	
<b>Audioquest F-14</b>	2.2	Ideal for laying under carpets. F-14 encourages a slightly warm and vibrant sound					●	●			109	
<b>Audioquest Type 4</b>	5	Four 18-gauge OFHC copper conductors wound in a Litz-type fashion increases capacitance but restrains 'bite'	●				●	●			109	
<b>Audioquest Type 6</b>	9	A very inflexible cable in which the sonic ends don't quite justify the means	●				●	●			183	
<b>Audioquest Crystal</b>	25	Neutral balance is spoiled by some graininess and smearing	●				●	●			168	
<b>Bandridge LC7409</b>	4	Detailed and up-beat cable. A bit too steely for classical strings					●	●	●	1800	157	
<b>Cable Talk Talk 3.1</b>	2.25	Quite well-balanced but tends to lose bass lines in complex music	●				●	●			168	
<b>Cable Talk Talk 4.1</b>	4.25	Smooth and cultured sound that lacks fine detail and is a bit too restrained					●	●		1800	157	
<b>DNM LSC350</b>	6.95	Majors on midband and lower treble lucidity at the expense of bass and extreme treble extension	●				●	●			168	
<b>DNM LSCB500</b>	12	High impedance can influence the treble response, but this was a winner on sound per pound. Bi-wire					●	●		1716	133	
<b>DPA Black Sixteen</b>	100	Unflappable resolution of musical details. No dampening of dynamics, simply oodles of taut information	●				●	●	●	1717	133	
<b>Gale XL189</b>	1	Slightly bright and not too subtle, but a perfectly acceptable cable for any starter system	●				●	●	●		168	
<b>Gale XL315</b>	2	A little lacking in detail but plenty of life and excellent value					●	●	●	1800	157	
<b>Gale XL160-2</b>	2.50	Rhythmic and bouncy-sounding bi-wire cable. Can be slightly manipulative					●	●		1800	157	
<b>Goertz M2</b>	32	Remarkably detailed, smooth, neutral and with excellent bass; check amplifier compatibility	●				●	●			168	
<b>Heybrook Heywire</b>	3.5	This well-meaning facsimile of earlier ribbon cables ends up sounding lumpy and uneven					●	●			109	
<b>Hitachi LC-OFC</b>	7	Very crisp, very clear and very confident. In the right system would be very expensive to better	●				●	●			109	
<b>Kimber 4TC</b>	19.6	A well-balanced cable with good performance in all areas	●				●	●			168	
<b>Kimber 4VS</b>	9	A good mix of virtues including particularly fine bass	●				●	●			183	
<b>Linn K20</b>	4	Seems to work best with lively, unsubtle music - can be dry and edgy	●				●	●			183	
<b>Naim NACA 5</b>	5.5	A 'dinosaur of a cable', this stiff wire rod doesn't belong outside Naim systems, where it works a treat					●	●			109	
<b>Nordost Octava</b>	3	Fair bass but confused treble and some coloration	●				●	●			168	
<b>Ortofon SPK100</b>	3	Grey-sounding – strips instruments of their natural richness and resonance. A bit bass-shy, too					●	●			133	
<b>Ortofon SPK200</b>	4.99	Good strong bass and fair detail, only slightly marred by a little dryness	●				●	●			183	
<b>Ortofon SPK300</b>	8	Tremendously open and atmospheric, with robust, full-blooded bass – if slightly bright at times	●				●	●	●		133	
<b>Precious Metals SL102</b>	10	Unusual construction gives rather strained sound, only really cheering up with simple musical textures	●				●	●			183	
<b>Puresonic 7845</b>	1.95	Big, weighty sound – but too messy and bloated for its own good	●				●	●			183	
<b>Puresonic 7891</b>	2.85	Chunky cable design; shame about the sound quality	●				●	●		1800	157	
<b>QED Qudos</b>	2.25	Despite high-tech design and excellent Air-Loc plugs, its music-making failed to gel					●	●		1800	157	
<b>QED Profile 4x4</b>	9	Good midrange and treble balance, but bass is rather slack and detail not outstanding					●	●			168	
<b>QED Qudos Silver</b>	5	Basic figure-8 cable adds value with silver plating, to generally smooth and detailed effect	●				●	●			183	
<b>Silver Sounds 12 gauge</b>	15	Basic 'homemade' construction gives fairly neutral sound. Price not outstandingly competitive	●				●	●			168	
<b>SonicLink S300</b>	18	Happiest with simple music; tends to smudge detail in complex pieces	●				●	●			168	
<b>SonicLink AST50</b>	1.95	It may look like bell-wire, but AST50 sounds detailed, ordered and balanced					●	●		1800	157	



CONTINUED

# Cables

STATUS	PRODUCT	(E)	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						ISSUE NO.	FACTSBACK NO.	
				SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	DIG CABLE TYPE			
	SonicLink AST150	3.95	Slightly plummy bass and a useful way of holding musical strands together								1800	157
	Straight Wire Quartet	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.

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# Cartridges

STATUS	PRODUCT	(E)	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						ISSUE NO.	FACTSBACK NO.	
				MM	MC	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	OUTPUT (mV)	MASS (g)				
	Audio Technica AT-95E	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
	Denon DL304	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 coloration 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
	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		175
	Linn K9	125	Linn improved this model by beefing up the Basik's bodywork and adding a super stylus					4.5	5			Col
	London Decca Maroon	259	Now manufactured under the London brand name, this Decca cartridge is as iconoclastic as ever					5.0	6			67
	London Decca S Gold	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.Ct	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		175
	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 unsubtle - take it as it comes!					3.3	4			103
	Ortofon MC15 Super II	130	A good all-rounder, with outstanding resolution, if slightly bright and close up					0.35	7			103
	Ortofon MC25E	180	An excellent upgrade for a mid-price turntable					0.5	11			139
	Ortofon MC25FL	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		175
	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	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



# Cartridges

SPECIFICATIONS

REPLACEABLE STYLUS  
OUTPUT (mV)  
FACTSBACK NO.  
ISSUE NUMBER  
MM  
MC

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	OUTPUT (mV)	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
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	76	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/IIA	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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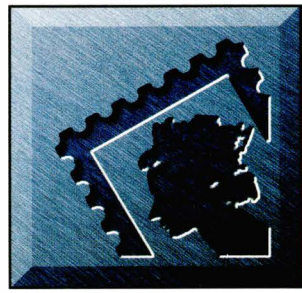
# Cassette Decks

SPECIFICATIONS

DOLBY C  
DOLBY S  
DOLBY HX PRO  
3-HEAD  
TWIN DECK  
AUTO REVERSE  
AUTO CALIBRATION  
ADJUSTABLE BIAS  
FACTSBACK NO.  
ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

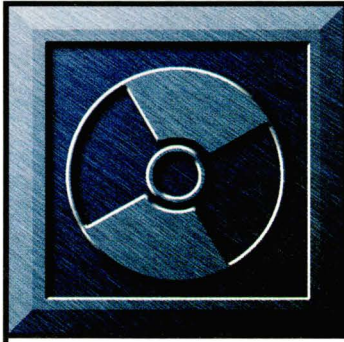
PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	DOLBY C	DOLBY S	DOLBY HX PRO	3-HEAD	TWIN DECK	AUTO REVERSE	AUTO CALIBRATION	ADJUSTABLE BIAS	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER	
Aiwa AD-F450	120	Basic but well-designed deck. Astonishing value; only the poor metering gives the game away	●								1513	136	
Aiwa AD-WX727	170	High-class twin 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	
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	
Teac V01050	180	One of the cheapest 3-head machines around, but it shows in very 'thick' sound	●									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	
Yamaha KX-490	200	Electrifyingly transparent and capable deck whose only flaw is a trace of audible wow and flutter	●									158	
Yamaha KX-580SE	250	Subtle, engaging and transparent deck, with a lightweight tonality, but stability and strong detail	●									2043	171



## HI-FI CHOICE LETTERS

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# 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 'car' 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.
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**H** High End Review

# CD/DVD Players

## SPECIFICATIONS

- AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT
- OPTICAL DIG OUT
- ST OPT DIG OUT
- BAL ANALOGUE OUT
- HEADPHONE SOCKET
- VARIABLE OUTPUT
- MULTI-DISC
- DAC TYPE
- FACTSBACK NO.
- ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT	OPTICAL DIG OUT	ST OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	DAC TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>A</b> 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
<b>A</b> Alchemist Nexus APD32A	597	Refined treble, constrained yet capable bass and attractive all-round presentation	●							Hyb		169
AMC CD8A	150	Has balanced output, but is otherwise rather grey and unremarkable				●				BS	2071	172
<b>A</b> 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
<b>A</b> Arcam Alpha 7	330	Mildly rehashed favourite comes up smelling of roses	●							BS	1872	179
<b>A</b> Arcam Alpha MCD	450	Excellent bass and natural midband, but just a touch of treble dryness, from this very listenable changer	●							MB	2220	178
<b>A</b> Arcam Alpha 8	520	Refined, intricately detailed but a little cautious. Should be broadly compatible with a variety of amps	●							BS	1873	163
<b>A</b> Arcam Alpha 8SE	600	Excellent (and very reasonably priced) HDCD-compatible player is a strong all-rounder	●			●				1bit		176
<b>A</b> Arcam Alpha 9	800	Refined, articulate player which employs new DAC technology to great effect	●							Ring DAC		188
Audio Research CD1	3,290	Suspends disbelief with a real yet obviously coloured sound. A rare proposition among CD players	●	●	●	●				BS	1875	163
Audio Note CD1	600	Easy on the ear, and for a valve player, easy on the pocket, but a bit Radio 2 flavoured	●							Hyb		188
AVI S2000MC2	899	A chip off the old block. This model's in-yr-face balance obstructs an otherwise finely detailed sound	●							MB	2179	176
<b>A</b> 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
<b>A</b> Cambridge Audio CD4	150	Basic appearance and sluggish track access/track search belies its up and at 'em sound quality	●						●	Hyb	1268	147
<b>A</b> Cambridge Audio CD4SE	200	Among the best encountered at the price, considerably more refined and convincing than the CD4	●							BS	1877	163
<b>A</b> Cambridge Audio CD6	250	A sharp, articulate player, a real thoroughbred in fact, perhaps too sharp and lively for some systems	●					●		BS		159
<b>A</b> Copland CDA-266	1,199	Simple yet elegant design is unexpectedly sophisticated under the skin, and effective in execution	●							MB	2183	176
<b>A</b> 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
<b>A</b> Cymbol CDP12	1,299	Clean, detailed and airy HDCD-equipped player with minimalist trappings	●							Hyb	2184	176
Cyrus dAD1	398	Typical excellent Cyrus packaging, but sonically more enthusiastic than polished	●							Hyb		188
<b>A</b> Cyrus dAD3	598	A relaxed style of delivery that convinces with guile and subtlety rather than orchestral ordnance	●							BS	1887	163
<b>A</b> Cyrus dAD3Q	898	Lucid, transparent and uncontrived sound quality, superb build, and readily upgradeable					●			MB	1887	169
<b>A</b> 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
<b>A</b> Denon DCD-835	280	Refined version of Denon's multibit technology is a bit of a star	●			●				MB		184
Denon DCD-1550AR	350	Disappointing bland and ploddy sound from an immaculately constructed, high tech player	●			●			●	MB	2266	179
<b>A</b> Denon DCD-1015	350	Excellent, mid-range player – fast, fluid and lean	●	●	●	●				MB	1599	141
<b>A</b> Denon DCD-3000	1,000	Sings with the temperament of a huge orchestra under the baton of a timid conductor	●	●	●	●				MB	1881	163
Exposure CD player	1,049	Slightly weak sounding, but otherwise well optimised, if costly player	●							MB		188
harman/kardon HD710	200	A player of integrity, but can sound a bit hard and rough when extended, and is amplifier fussy	●							1bit		159
<b>A</b> harman/kardon HD730	300	Competitive at the price, with a coloured but dynamic and outgoing sound, good features	●						●	BS	1957	166
<b>A</b> harman/kardon FL8300	300	Generally capable changer with relaxed sound and firm bass. Just a hint of roughness on occasion	●			●			●	MB	2220	178
<b>A</b> 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
Helios Model 3	650	Disappointing entry level model from Helios lacks verve and transparency.	●							DS		188
<b>A</b> JVC XL-V184BK	120	Excellent budget player, well presented, a little opaque, but its heart is in the right place	●						●	1bit	2072	172
<b>A</b> 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
<b>A</b> JVC XL-Z674BK	300	Even-handed, but glosses over the most intimate moments	●			●			●	1bit	1637	151
<b>A</b> Kenwood DP-3080	170	Bold, dynamic and outgoing sound, though somewhat aggressive. Poor build quality and finish	●			●			●	1bit		159
<b>A</b> Kenwood DP-4090	250	Focuses a clear, wide aperture lens on the music – and has CD Text too!	●			●			●	1bit	2076	172
Kenwood DP-5090	300	Disappointing senior brother to the excellent DP-4090, but surface interface is good	●			●			●	1bit	2267	179
<b>A</b> Kenwood DP-7090	400	A lively and compelling performer with an even-handed and coherent disposition	●			●				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>A</b> Marantz CD-67 Mk II	250	The digital equivalent of a safe pair of hands. Smoooooth	●			●			●	BS	2268	179
Marantz CD-67OSE MkII	300	Lacks dynamic consistency to justify the stunning performance with simple material	●			●			●	BS		184
<b>A</b> Marantz CD-63 MkII Ki Sig	500	It's the quintessential sound of Marantz – warm, open, and smooth almost to a fault	●			●			●	Hyb		169
<b>A</b> Marantz CD-17	800	Fabulous packaging and an excellent all round performer: smooth, detailed and consistent	●			●				BS	1763	155
<b>A</b> Marantz CD-17KIS	1,100	Minor QC problems aside, this is a superbly turned-out machine, but ultimately a little bland	●			●			●	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>A</b> Meridian 506	1,100	Revised 506 includes MSR remote and a new D/A chip, which makes it livelier and more detailed	●			●				1bit	2182	176



CONTINUED

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MULTI-DISC  
DAC TYPE  
FACTSBACK NO.  
ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT (€) COMMENTS

PRODUCT	(€)	COMMENTS	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT	OPTICAL DIG OUT	ST OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	DAC TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
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>B</b> Musical Fidelity E624	500	Similar to X-RAY, but both better sounding and cheaper	●			●					MB 188	
<b>B</b> Musical Fidelity A2	500	Warm (too warm), attractive and open player, a great improvement on (related) E60	●			●					BS 169	
Musical Fidelity X-RAY	799	Brilliantly packaged and clean but slightly antiseptic sounding player	●			●					MB 184	
Myryad T-10	400	Rather ordinary player fails to shine with good music recordings	●								DS 184	
<b>A</b> Myryad MC100	700	A little extra get-up-and-go wouldn't go amiss, but its sheer maturity and composure ensure listenability	●			●					BS 1889	163
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	●								1bit 2262	179
NAD 512	250	Simple, well-focused presentation, and articulate with it. Hard-nosed quality is not everyone's cup of tea	●								1bit 159	
<b>A</b> NAD 514	370	Boisterous sound, but undeniably attractive	●					●			BS 1639	151
<b>A</b> Naim Audio CD3.5	1,000	Forward and explicit sound needs careful system matching									Hyb	188
<b>A</b> Naim Audio CD2	2,000	Provides bags of detail with a solid stereo focus but not all the romanticism we know to be possible									MB 1890	163
<b>A</b> Naim NACDSII/XPS	5,625	Brings you the Naim sound, but for once doesn't have to rely on Naim ancillaries to get the results									MB 188	
<b>A</b> Onkyo DX-7210	260	Well-bred CD player features an unusual digital filter, is smooth and cultured without appearing boring	●			●			●		BS 1273	147
Onkyo DX-7510	400	Strongly flavoured, assertive sound	●			●			●		BS 1640	151
<b>A</b> Oreille CD-100EA	649	Excellent imagery, timing and transparency, and readily upgraded or reconfigured	●			●					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>B</b> Philips CD-721	130	Surprisingly well-sorted, articulate if slightly glossy and attractively presented sound. Captive signal lead									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 articulation and disliked by others for sounding too impressive!	●			●					BS 1891	163
<b>A</b> Pioneer PD-S707	300	Idiosyncratic Legato Link dominated sound, but always subtle and interesting	●			●			●		MB 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
<b>A</b> Pioneer PDS-06	550	Tec nologically sophisticated. Pioneer's first multi-bit player for years is polished and capable	●			●			●		MB 2176	176
<b>B</b> Pioneer PD-S505 Precision	460	Assured, fluid-sounding player, with great spatial coherence	●			●			●		1bit 1965	166
Primare D20	799	Well presented player doesn't quite cut the mustard, though it performs promisingly	●								BS 188	
<b>A</b> Quad 77	900	A true thoroughbred combining a penetrating insight into detail with poise rarely found at the price									Hyb 1893	163
Revox Exception E426	2,250	Very stylish with a light, agile sound that extends superbly and has fine timing	●					●			BS 182	
<b>A</b> Roksan DP3P	1,495	Dramatic and compelling. Classical listeners should be ready to 'air conduct' when auditioning	●								BS 1896	163
<b>A</b> Roksan Caspian	895	Solid, articulate, and fundamentally well-engineered player, but with some subtle low-level limitations	●								Hyb 169	
<b>B</b> Rotel RCD-971	350	Odd disc handling logic, but bold, detailed and refined sound make this a must	●								MB 184	
<b>A</b> Rotel RCD-970BX	375	A combination of solid build, useful facilities and an attention-grabbing sound make this a winner	●								BS 1897	163
<b>A</b> 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>A</b> Sony CDP-XE310	140	Excellent value and bright as a button, but can sound OTT in some systems									1bit 179	
Sony CDP-XE510	180	Souped up CDP-XE500 which tells a rather bland and unengaging story	●			●			●		1bit 172	
<b>A</b> Sony CDP-XB720E	200	Good basic performance and a number of filter settings make this an interesting player for tweaks	●			●			●		Low bit 184	
<b>A</b> Sony CDP-XE900E	300	Refined and analytical disc scavenging tool, some distinctive colorations make auditioning vital	●			●					BS 159	
Sony CDP-XA20ES	450	High tech, with a long list of gadgets, oddly configured player that ultimately sounds less than compelling	●			●			●		1bit 2177	176
<b>B</b> Sony CDP-X3000ES	500	Shoebbox format player, looks to die for, switchable digital filters to tweak the already excellent sound	●			●			●		BS 169	
T+A CD1210R	1,185	Intriguing player with rather pushy basic sound, but has switchable digital filters.	●			●					DS 188	
<b>A</b> TAG McLaren CD20R	1,249	Dry and unatmospheric, but plenty of presence – recommended with caution	●								BS 188	
<b>B</b> Teac CDP-3450SE	200	For once a budget player where gadgets take second place to respectable, budget amp-friendly sonics	●			●			●		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	●			●			●		1bit 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-PG480A	130	Full driving sound, but somewhat uneven in balance with a unobtrusive, slightly harsh top end	●								1bit 159	
<b>A</b> Technics SL-PS670D	200	Fine, middle ranking player which sounds solid, sometimes even a little stolid	●				●		●		1bit 2264	179
Technics SL-PS770D	250	High tech and well built technology battleship which smooths the rough edges off the music	●			●			●		BS 2080	172
<b>A</b> Technics SL-MC410	250	If you fancy a CD player that holds 111 discs, this one's cheap, pretty capable, and easy to use	●							●	Hyb 2224	178
Thule Spirit CD100	600	Definitely a try before you buy machine, but the bass and mid are excellent	●								DS 188	
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
Wadia W830	3,000	Envelope busting dynamics, power and imaging in a rather unexciting box (digital volume control)						●		●	MB 183	
<b>B</b> Yamaha CDC-665	220	T is 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	

TRANSPORTS

Linn Karik	1,850	Based on early Linn transport, the Karik is dry but very positive, detailed and engrossing	●			●					-	1323	144
<b>A</b> 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
<b>A</b> 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



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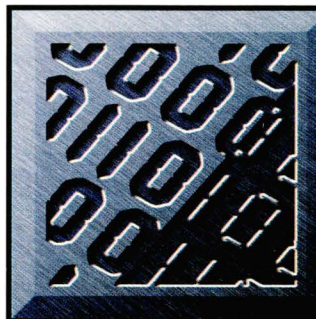
# CD/DVD Players

**SPECIFICATIONS**

ISSUE NUMBER  
FACTSBACK NO.  
DAC TYPE  
MULTI-DISC OUTPUT  
VARIABLE OUTPUT SOCKET  
HEADPHONE OUTPUT  
BAL ANALOGUE OUT  
ST OPT DIG OUT  
OPTICAL DIG OUT  
AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT  
ELEC DIGITAL OUTPUT

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS										
<b>DACS</b>													
Alchemist TS-D-1	300	24/96-equipped DAC sounds tidy but a little shut-in with both 16-bit CDs and 24-bit, 96kHz DVDs										BS	187
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
Musical Fidelity X-24K	300	24/96 ready with a warm, natural sound and good soundstaging (tested with Pioneer DV-717)										MB	187
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-5000	1,600	The first DVD-V player that ain't bad as a CD player. A fine musical device	●	●								BS	187
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 DV-717	600	DVD-V transport with 96/24 dig o/put, concedes only image depth to like priced CD players	●	●								1bit	186
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



## 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 re-recordable 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.

**B BEST BUY** **R RECOMMENDED** **E EDITOR'S CHOICE**

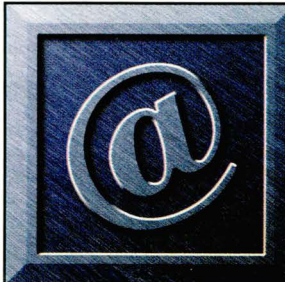
STATUS

# Digital Recorders

**SPECIFICATIONS**

ISSUE NUMBER  
FACTSBACK NO.  
ELEC IN/OUTPUTS  
PORTABLE  
OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS  
ADC TYPE  
DAC TYPE  
FORMAT

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS															
<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										MB	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
Orlkyo MD-121	450	Mini-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



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# 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 featured 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.
- **High End Review**

B BEST BUY
R RECOMMENDED
E EDITOR'S CHOICE

# Headphones

STATUS

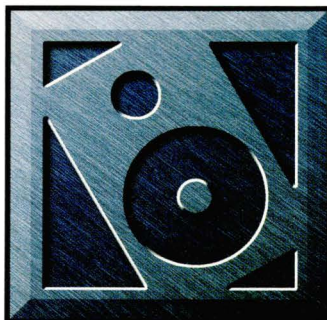
PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS										
			TYPE	SUPRA-AURAL	CIRCUMAURAL	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	MASS (g)	3.5mm JACK ADAPTOR	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER	
AKG K1000	700	One of the best dynamics on the market, hooks directly into speaker outputs	D							270	120		99
AKG K 240 DF	100	Inoffensive 'phones that are very laid back, if lacking in grunt	D							240	600		186
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
Audio Technica ATH-M40	120	Incredible detail and honesty from these classically designed studio 'phone	D							250	60		186
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 DT431	81	Nice looking 'phones that may not be the best players on the field, but will always give 100 per cent	D							210	40		186
Beyer DT100	160	Rugged, modular professional design, but bass is woolly and treble lacks detail	D							350	600		157
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 DT831	140	These provide silky, smooth textures in abundance and we're not just talking about the velvet ear pads	D							295	250		186
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 SR125	150	What these 'phones lack in style they make up for ten-fold in musical quality	D							200	32		186
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-W60	49	Remarkable lack of interference and hiss ameliorates adequate sound of this cordless design	D							165	I/R		172
JVC HA-D910	65	Broadly acceptable if unexciting design with low level losses and some colorations	D							220	32		121
JVC HA-W200RF	75	Distinct lack of hiss from these FM cordless 'phones ensures that detail and depth are easily heard	D							280	20,000		186
Koss R/100	100	Rather cheap looking 'phones that supply good detail but are severely lacking in midrange excitement	D							215	60		186
Pricide 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 500	70	A disappointing pair that offer good stereo-imaging, but little else	D							210	32		186
Sennheiser HD 475	80	Elegant, uncluttered sound and very comfortable but lean bass saps satisfaction	D							120	60	2065	172
Sennheiser RS 400	80	FM cordless 'phones that are very wearable, but slightly woolly sounding with interference problems	D							160	N/A		186
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-605LP	50	Funky looking headphones that have a very bold, but tiring sound, with coloured bass	D							145	40		186
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 Cyberwave FMH3000	40	The only cordless 'phone to offer genuine walkabout freedom, but sounds like a cheap FM tuner	D							210	FM		172
Vivanco IR5800	50	Consistently musical infra-red design. Doesn't reach for sonic heights so hiss can be forgiven	D							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 FM7980	80	A fair amount of whine and crackle detracts from 'phones which are otherwise very listenable	D							280	9,000		186
Vivanco FM8180	99	Well thought out features and a better than average sound are, at times, marred by intrusive hiss	D							240	9,000		186



## HI-FI CHOICE HELP

FOR ASSISTANCE IN BUYING THE ULTIMATE SYSTEM, CHECK OUT THE HELP SECTION ON OUR WEB SITE AT [www.hifichoice.co.uk](http://www.hifichoice.co.uk)





## 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 w×h×d (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.

**B** BEST BUY
**R** RECOMMENDED
**E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

# Hi-Fi Loudspeakers

**SPECIFICATIONS**

SIZE W×H×D (CM)    FLOORSTANDER    SENSITIVITY (dB/W)    IMPEDANCE (Ω)    BASS FROM (HZ)    FREE SPACE    CLOSE TO WALL    FACTSBACK NO.    ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS	PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SIZE W×H×D (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY (dB/W)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FROM (HZ)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
▶	Acoustic Energy Aegis One	150	At a new low price, this has a very natural and transparent midband, erring a little on the dull side	19,36,5,24		87	6	40	●		187	
▶	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	Great 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 Nautilus 802	6,000	Outstanding example of the high tech speaker builder's art, needs real power but gives real sound	39,111,55	●	91	8	34	●			183
▶	B&W Nautilus 801	8,500	The 801 is a magnificent loudspeaker in nearly every respect, but it is one that likes to play loud	52,111,69	●	91	8	34	●			186
▶	Cabasse Farella 400	950	Exciting but very up-front-and-in-yer-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	Ably 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 colorations 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 Hiper 1000	300	Classy looking stand mount has a sweet, easygoing sound with fine midband voicing	18,35,28		87	4	45	●			187
▶	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 MkII	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 Liberty 3+	150	Bright, bassy, laid back and attractively evenhanded, but dynamically challenged. Big box for your dosh	20,5,38,34		86	4	25	●			187
▶	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 2i	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 grot.	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 B	200	Attractive traditional-style near-miniature with classy main driver now has fine overall balance to match	19,5,30,22		88	4	45	●			187
▶	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 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 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



CONTINUED

# Hi-Fi Loudspeakers

SPECIFICATIONS

SIZE WxHxD (CM) FLOORSTANDER SENSITIVITY (dB/W) IMPEDANCE (Ω) BASS FROM (Hz) CLOSE TO WALL FREE SPACE FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY (dB/W)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	CLOSE TO WALL	FREE SPACE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Infinity Reference 1i	150	Although not to our tastes, this is a competent speaker, and decent material value	20,34,20		89	6	50	●		1403	148
Jamo BX100A	350	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	Invigorating, if a touch crude, this good-hearted speaker reproduces music with considerable enthusiasm	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	1,250	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	A classic monitor which communicates with gusto and enthusiasm, though it can sound a bit crude	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
JM Lab Tantal 515	495	Lively and open if bright. Sound is entertaining and informative, but presentation is nondescript	20,94,26	●	92	5	32	●			183
JM Lab Mezzo Utopia	7,250	Looks good and sounds even better. A genuinely big speaker with fantastic coherence	35,115,47	●	92	4	30	●			186
Jordan Watts JH400	565	Piano-finish hexagon has controversial sound, with uneven balance but delightful mid	28,38,21		86	8	50	●			106
JPW Mini Monitor	60	Ultra-cheap miniature works well in a limited way	18,27,17,5		86	8	50	●		1781	156
JPW Gold Monitor	80	More informative than Mini Monitor – but fiercer too	18,27,17,5		86	8	50	●		1782	156
JPW ML510	130	Lots of good-quality speaker for the price, but not an ideal match for cheap budget components	20,34,22		88	5	50	●			169
JPW 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 Q15	200	Beautifully balanced and voiced stand-mount, but a potentially tricky amplifier load at high frequencies	20,5,31,27		90	2.5	30	●			187
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	Chunky floorstander has tacky finish but whopping sensitivity and a very involving, (if characterful) sound	23,89,34	●	94	4	33	●			183
Kelly KT3	1,200	Super-high-sensitivity, hefty floorstander sacrifices smoothness for dynamic realism	25,95,36	●	95	4	28	●		2133	174
Keswick Audio Aria II	379	Confident and dynamic sound, if a little crude and shut in	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 Kan	295	Great bass discrimination from size, ensuring a very informative, if slightly shut in experience	19,31,19		86	4	45	●			187
Linn Keilidh Passive	750	Stunning timing and coherence, and awesome bass drive	20,83,28	●	87	4	22	●		1552	138
Linn Kaber Passive	2,000	Dry, bright balance emphasises dynamics and transients, but can sound unforgiving	20,90,28	●	87	4	25	●			118
Living Voice Auditorium	1,500	Pretty, compact floorstander has wonderful coherence, high sensitivity and fine dynamic integrity	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	1,200	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	Cautious balance makes a fine match with budget equipment. A classy baby for smaller rooms	17,5,31,5,20		89	8	55	●			169
Mission 771	170	Beautiful stand-mount miniature has a delightfully well balanced and voiced sound, and real wood finish	17,31,22		86	7	45	●			187
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 735i	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	A beautifully judged compromise in the art of combining presentation with a decent sound	20,90,25	●	89	8	45	●		2123	174
Mission 753 Freedom	798	Great styling. New, more restrained tweeter reveals fine midband dynamics	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 MS812	100	Quirky styling and a very laid back presence, but great musical integrity and solid value for money	20,5, 42, 25		88	5	44	●			187
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	A subtle, understated but very involving example of the 'classic' luxury-finish compact standmount.	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	Great dynamic range and info retrieval, but thin, lacks warmth	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	This elegant package delivers a fine overall sound quality; some might find the top end too insistent	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	Pro-audio version of TBI	20,41,30		87	6	40	●		2207	177
PMC TB1	482	A classy, laid-back performer that likes going loud and loves the bass guitar	20,40,31		87	8	45	●		1830	160



CONTINUED

# Hi-Fi Loudspeakers

SPECIFICATIONS

SIZE WxHxD (CM)    SENSITIVITY (db/W)    IMPEDANCE (ohm)    BASS FROM (Hz)    FREE SPACE    CLOSE TO WALL    FACTSBACK NO.    ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (CM)	SENSITIVITY (db/W)	IMPEDANCE (ohm)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
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
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
Quad ESL-63	3,450	Classic electrostatic lacks punch, but has strengths some can't live without	66,93,27	●	86	8	34	●		60
Rega KYTE	198	Has splendid timing and coherence, sounds very explicit and informative	19,31,19	●	87	8	50	●		114
Rega EL8	298	KYTE drivers in compact floorstander give more bass but less coherence	17,72,20	●	86	8	55	●		122
Rega ELA Mk II	498	Pretty and smooth, the latest incarnation has a superb midband and excellent communicative skills	30,80,20	●	87	8	40	●	1578	139
Rega XEL	1,040	Looks and sounds great: balance bright but even, with delightful coherence and timing	20,82,30	●	89	6	40	●	1083	132
Rehdeko RK 115a	1,700	Single-driver system has limited bandwidth and obvious coloration, but wondrous dynamic 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 dB101	100	This shapely sub-miniature is fast and agile but lightweight and forward: great voices; lacks bass	20,26,20	●	88	6	45	●	2024	170
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
Royd Abbot	695	Dynamic and fine transient qualities are hampered by a rather coloured mid-forward balance	20,81,30	●	90	8	43	●		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	●		183
Ruark Sceptre	599	'Traditional' cabinetwork with dassy veneer and shiny gilt fixings, hampered by rather wayward sound balance	21,38,31	●	87	8	40	●	2129	174
Ruark Talisman II	749	Less ideologically committed than some, strength lies in fine all-round coherence	23,84,32	●	88	8	30	●		118
Ruark Crusader	1,599	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
Ruark Excalibur	7,000	A big handsome speaker with a big, laid-back, but open sound, rocking bass and loads of headroom	30,125,53	●	90	4	30	●		186
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
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 omni directional design: bright but coherent and revealing	35,69,25	●	88	6	24	●		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
Tangent Monitor 5	80	An uneven performer best suited to small rooms and generous volume levels	175,27,18	●	83	8	55	●		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
Tannoy R1	200	Pretty little mini-monitor is smooth, well mannered, and polite to a fault, lacks dynamic expression	17,30,22	●	86	4	30	●		187
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
Tannoy D500	1,999	Plenty of muscle and stereo, but short of poise and delicacy. Hard work for amps	31,93,34	●	91	6	20	●	1355	143
Tannoy Westminster TW	6,600	These awesome horn-loaded speakers are remarkably controlled and impressive	large	●	99	8	38	●		C93
TDL NuDeus 2	130	A very competent miniature. Could be smoother, but no serious flaws, and hence good basic value	20,29,22	●	88	4	45	●		187
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 CF10 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
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
Vandersteen 2Ce	1,395	Elegant staggered baffle contributes to a refreshing freedom from boxiness	41,101,27	●	88	7	23	●		86
Wharfedale Diamond 7.2	140	A good-hearted, lively and up-front performer that's a little lacking in subtlety and smoothness	19,29,5,23	●	88	4	45	●		169
Wdale Diamond 7.2 Anniversary	200	Lively and exuberant, but a tad untidy with it; can sound a bit cold and hard	19,29,5,24	●	88	4	40	●		187
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

SUBWOOFERS

Acoustic Energy AE108S	299	Lots of loud subwoofer for your money, though ultimately more film than music oriented	50,42,43			20	●		2247	179
B&W ASW1000	499	(Active) Very competently engineered all round, and goes (unnecessarily) very loud	54,47,48			20	●		2248	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
Celestion CS135	139	Compact hideaway passive sub lacks deep bass for high sensitivity speakers	52,19,34	●	86	8	45	●		128
Jamo SW600	530	(Active) Has some neat styling touches and remote control, but deep bass is limited	38,41,53	●		30			1736	154
JPW SW60	349	A real heavyweight, sounds clean and transparent, if perhaps a little understated. Usefully flexible	55,47,39			20	●		2249	179
KEF Model 30B	499	(Active) Commendably discreet with good sense of timing but limited extension	38,5,37,43	●		45			1736	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



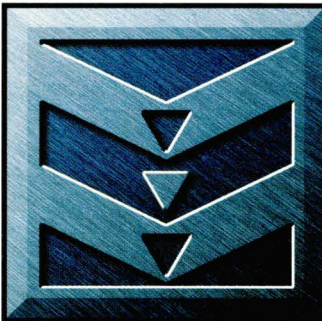
CONTINUED

# Hi-Fi Loudspeakers

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (CM)	SENSITIVITY (db/W)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FLOORSTANDER	CLOSE TO WALL	FREE SPACE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
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
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
REL Q50	375	(Active) Genuinely deep, clean bass from an attractively compact and cost effective package	40,41,42			20		●		2251	179
Rogers AB1	549	Subwoofer-cum-stand designed as partner for LS3/5a or similar miniatures	19,57,16	●	82	8		●		1354	143



## Stands & Supports

Hi-Fi supports are more important than you might imagine – they can have very unobvious 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).
- **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 magazine.
- **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

# Stands & Supports

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

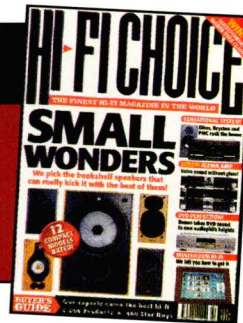
PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	TOP PLATE SIZE (cm)	HEIGHT	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF SHELVES	SHELF TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER	
<b>EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS</b>											
Alphason GR 17/17-AS	275	Great looks but sound can be bettered at this price	36	60,39			4	Glass		181	
Elemental Isotube x 4/Ref	1199	Blockbusting 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 benesch 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	Pricy 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	





# HI-FI CHOICE ARCHIVE

**NEED A BACK ISSUE OR COPY OF A PARTICULAR REVIEW? FIND OUT IN OUR ARCHIVE, PAGE 129**



## 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 tonearm – 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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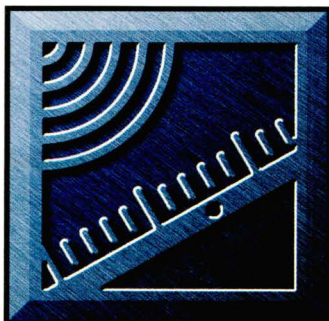
**B** BEST BUY    **R** RECOMMENDED    **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

## Tonearms

### SPECIFICATIONS

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	PARALLEL TRACKING	PIVOTED	EFFECTIVE LENGTH (cm)	ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>B</b> Kuzma Stogi Ref	1,250	Large, solid and well-made arm, gives exceptionally clear sound with just a hint of brightness	High	●				79
<b>B</b> Linn Ekos	1,500	Superb, state-of-the-art design which builds significantly on predecessor's strengths	Medium	●	229	●		67
<b>B</b> Moth Arm	95	The ultimate budget arm? Refined, sweet, detailed and natural	Low	●	237	●		60
<b>B</b> Rega RB300	174	Despite its modest price it sets exceptional standards and could be used on many high-end turntables	Low	●	237	●		60
<b>B</b> 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
<b>B</b> SME Series IV	983	Superb engineering and finish with a finely balanced sound, impressive stereo focus and low coloration	Low	●	233	●		60
<b>B</b> 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 impendable 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 prices 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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**B** BEST BUY    **R** RECOMMENDED    **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

## Tuners

### SPECIFICATIONS

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	ROT. TUNING KNOB	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>B</b> AMC T7	130	Performance adequate but price is sharp, especially with remote control. Some hum	FM, M	30		●	1945	166
<b>B</b> 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
<b>B</b> Denon TU-260L	120	Careful minimalist design promises a surprisingly open and vivacious sound	FM, M, L	20				93
<b>B</b> Denon TU-425RD	200	A fine all-rounder with advanced RDS, good RF performance and decent sound. Remote extra	FM, M	40	●		1947	166
<b>B</b> 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
<b>B</b> Harman/Kardon TU950	200	Bulky but effective, delivering fine RF performance and good sound for the price	FM, M, L	30	●		1948	166
<b>B</b> Linn Kremlin	2,600	Controversially good sound at a very high price	FM	80		●	1254	142
<b>B</b> Magnum Dynalab FT101	825	Although fairly expensive given its minimum set of facilities, its excellent sound provided ample compensation	FM					72
<b>B</b> Marantz ST-48	120	A classic budget model which manages a performance only just behind much more expensive models.	FM, M	60	●			184
<b>B</b> 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
<b>B</b> Naim NATO1	1,730	There may be better sounding tuners in the world, but we have yet to hear one	FM				1254	142



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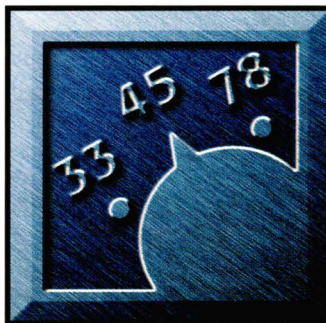
# Tuners

SPECIFICATIONS

WAVEBANDS PRESETS REMOTE CONTROL SIG. STRENGTH METER ROT. TUNING KNOB FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	REMOTE CONTROL	SIG. STRENGTH METER	ROT. TUNING KNOB	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
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	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	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	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 rhythmical 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/12-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.
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High End Review

**B** BEST BUY **R** RECOMMENDED **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

# Turntables

SPECIFICATIONS

MANUAL AUTO SEMI-AUTO SPEEDS SUSP. SUBCHASSIS EXTERNAL PSU SUPPLIED WITH ARM SUPPLIED WITH CART. FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NO.

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	MANUAL	AUTO	SEMI-AUTO	SPEEDS	SUSP. SUBCHASSIS	EXTERNAL PSU	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	SUPPLIED WITH CART.	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	●								1328	144
▶ DNМ Rota 2	5,600	Tonally slightly bleached, but extracts detail like few others. Works well on its own table	●								1328	144
▶ Dual 505-4 UK	250	Consistent sounding and well isolated turntable. It is slightly lacking in oomph		●							103	103
▶ Kuzma Stabi/PS	1,950	(Tested with Stogi Reference) Solid oak plinth; sound is very clear, detailed and extended	●								91	91
▶ Linn LP12 Basic	1,100	Trails the full LP12 significantly, but pace, rhythm, timing etc still top rank	●								103	103
▶ Linn LP12 Lingo	1,750	The classic reference is improved by the Lingo, but charming character remains	●								91	91
▶ Michell Gyrodec	875	Sweet and natural-sounding player, well matched to Rega RB300 arm	●								55	55
Moth Kanoot	329	Rather coarse-sounding deck that requires decent isolation and comes with a Rega RB300 arm	●								1907	164
▶ Notts Analogue Spacedeck/Arm	750	No frills, just a first-rate, outstandingly natural-sounding deck that will last forever	●								159	159
▶ Pro-ject 2	300	Remarkably effective at the price, with decent timing and a generally well defined sound	●								1907	164
▶ Pro-ject 6/Sumiko	850	Don't think of this as a deck with a good arm, but as a scaled-down Oracle Delphi - it's that good	●								138	138
▶ Rega Planar 2	214	A remarkable product at the price, surprisingly articulate and confident	●								48	48
▶ Rega Planar 3	274	Sounds musical in a balanced manner, needs decent isolation and suffers a little pitch instability	●								1907	164
▶ Reson RS1	600	Supplied set-up and ready-tuned, this unconventional deck is packed with mid-band detail	●								159	159
▶ Roksan Radius 3/Tabriz zi	890	Elegant-looking turntable with a tidy, ordered sound. Bright and breezy if a shade lightweight	●								159	159
▶ SME Model 20.2A	4,863	Beautifully built, extremely neutral damped and suspended deck with superb sound. Inc V arm	●								186	186
▶ Thorens TD166 VJ/UK/RB	400	Refined, solid sound with well-focused imagery; suitable for use with good MM/MC budget cartridges	●								103	103
Thorens TD2001	700	Balances convenience and sound well, but deck lacks detail and bass could be better controlled	●								159	159
▶ Well Tempered Record Player	1,850	Intriguing and challenging. Musically not ideal, but its limpid quality and lack of artificiality set standards	●								1180	136

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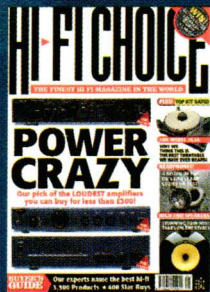
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1990	78-89	Jan, Feb, Jun, Aug, Sep, Dec	Very limited
1991	90-101	Jan, Feb, Aug-Dec	Very limited
1992	102-113	All exc. Mar 92	Very limited
1993	114-125	Jan, Mar, Jun, Sep-Nov	Very limited
1994	126-137	Jun-Aug, Nov	Very limited
1995	138-149	All exc. Feb	Very limited
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1998	174-183	None sold out	Good

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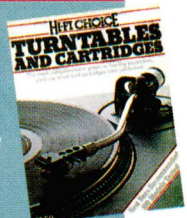
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Find the letters in the highlighted boxes within the crossword which form an anagram of a hi-fi related word, for you to decipher.

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**Post this entry form to:**

Hi-Fi Choice Competition (CHFC 904B)  
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All entries must arrive by First Post,  
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Name  
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Company Name  
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Day-time Telephone Number

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3) All winners will be notified by post.

4) The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.

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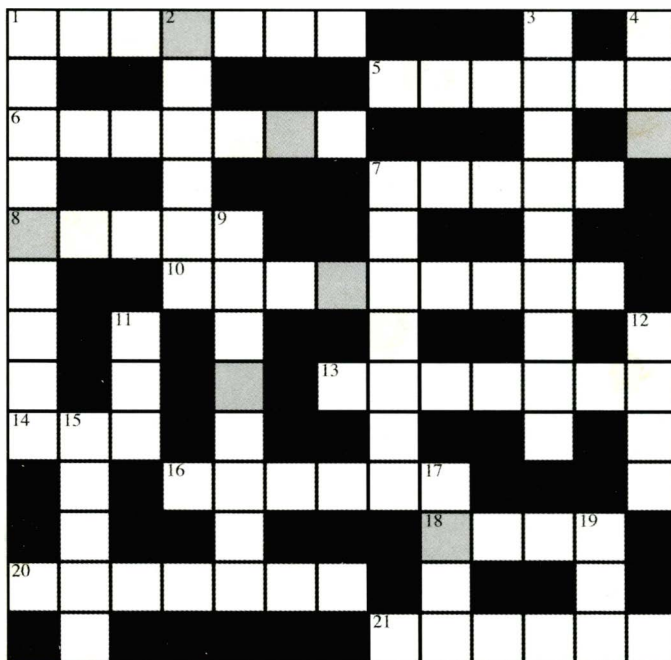
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**CHFC 904B**

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**THE CLUES**

**CLUES ACROSS:**

1. Roksan range by the Sea (7)
5. Pioneer of Cinema DSP and a name in motor bikes (6)
6. E. Marcus builds Tanto CD (7, anag)
7. Huge manufacturer of the Cotton Reel speaker (5)
8. Hi-fi firm endlessly row with Terry (5)
10. Soon cries about such an amplifier (4,5, anag)
13. They bring Freedom to speakers on a trip with a purpose (7)
14. Stemfoot take in the Audio Sequel amp maker (3, init)
16. German-branded Vintage speaker for Mr Tagman (6, anag)
18. Akai want to look in on another name in audio (4)
20. Trail-blazer bringing us a range of Precision separates (7)
21. Handset that puts one in control from afar (6)

**CLUES DOWN:**

1. Pacific cable made for a top uni (9)
2. Actor with a machine of performance (6)
3. A son is in a panic about Technics' associate (9, anag)
4. Dan returns to an amplifier specialist (3, init, anag)
7. Company taken to the Queen of Sheba, say (7)
9. Lengthy handshake picked up on this radio band (4-4)
11. Very high frequency cut down to size (3, init)
12. A bit of butter on a rotary control (4)
15. Saying about an Alchemist amp (5)
17. Record on DAT at last (4)
19. The skill of an Audio firm (3)

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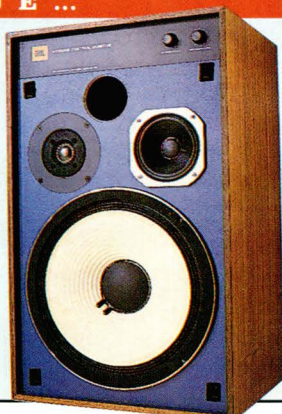
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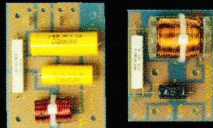
# Special Edition



CDM™ ISE  
*'Involving and revealing they are great loudspeakers made greater.'* WHAT HI-FI? Feb '98



- The special edition CDM™ ISE now delivers greater dynamics and detail due to a new dispersion modifier in the centre of the voice coil.



- Separate boards now house the bass and tweeter filters, maximising the benefits of bi-wiring.

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