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# HI-FI CHOICE

DECEMBER 2004 ISSUE 261

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## WELCOME TO HI-FI CHOICE

To ensure you get the best information, opinion and advice, *Hi-Fi Choice* employs the most knowledgeable and experienced hi-fi writers in the business...



**"Music digs deep into our emotional core like no other art form. It touches the soul and makes grown men weep. Hi-fi is simply a means to a musical end – it provides the conduit for its energy and detail, delivers scale and space, ensures you get closer to the tone and impact of the original performance. It makes music seem more real and hence achieve its emotional goal. Quite simply, the music that moves you, moves you more."** Tim Bower, Editor



### PAUL MESSENGER

A former *HFC* editor, Paul has been writing about his beloved hi-fi hobby for nearly 30 years. In that time he has become one of the world's most respected sonic scribes and probably the UK's foremost loudspeaker reviewer.



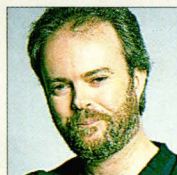
### DAN GEORGE

Dan is a huge hi-fi nut whose dream came true when he became *HFC*'s reviews editor. Armed with a bristling contacts book and a pair of razor-sharp ears, he ensures that only the most interesting products make it into *HFC*.



### ALVIN GOLD

Alvin cut his hi-fi teeth in retail, and has been writing about his obsession for more than 20 years. In that time he has contributed his encyclopaedic knowledge to almost every hi-fi periodical you can think of (and several more besides).



### DAVID VIVIAN

An award-winning journalist, David's sharp ears and equally sharp powers of description are a valuable mix for *HFC*. He also writes about cars, but who needs try the latest Lotus when you've got the finest hi-fi to test drive?



### RICHARD BLACK

Richard is a professional musician, an experienced recording engineer and a highly knowledgeable hi-fi analyst to boot. He has a particular knack for writing about complicated subjects in a comprehensible way – and he only writes for *HFC*.



### DOMINIC DAWES

Dom is a musician and all-round music nut who found his passions led him naturally to hi-fi journalism. From old-school kit the sharpest new technologies, Dom's finely-honed writing skills allow him to cut right to the heart of the matter.



### JASON KENNEDY

Jason previously edited *HFC*, but can now be found swanning about the wilds of Sussex indulging himself with the very best hi-fi money can buy. His own system is simply sensational (trust us) and his love of music knows no bounds.



### ALAN SIRCOM

After a stint selling hi-fi, Alan began his journalistic career at *HFC* some 12 years ago. Now a successful freelancer, you too can benefit from his extensive hi-fi knowledge, from purist two-channel stereo to the latest multichannel gear.

## ESTABLISHED 1975

**HI-FI CHOICE** is your essential guide to audio excellence in the home, from vinyl records to the latest digital music formats. For 29 years, our unique tests have brought you the most thorough and reliable hi-fi journal around. And our mix of cherry-picked kit, rigorous group tests and in-depth equipment reviews continues to ensure that **HFC** is the magazine you can trust. Published 13 times a year, it's the smarter hi-fi read...



## HIGHLIGHTS INSIDE >>

### HI-FI CHOICE AWARDS

From CD players to speakers to cables, all components have been rigorously tested to bring you the hi-fi awards you can trust

### ...AND AFTER THE AWARDS

Our Reviews section includes the low-down on T+A's high-tech turntable and valve amp

### CRACKING CD PLAYERS

Important new players from Cyrus and Exposure get their first *HFC* outing

### SCINTILLATING SPEAKERS

Two new standmount models from PMC, plus a frankly extraordinary design from Vivid

### AND MUCH, MUCH MORE...

The next issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* is on sale 19 November. Don't miss a thing – see p84 for our latest great subscription offer



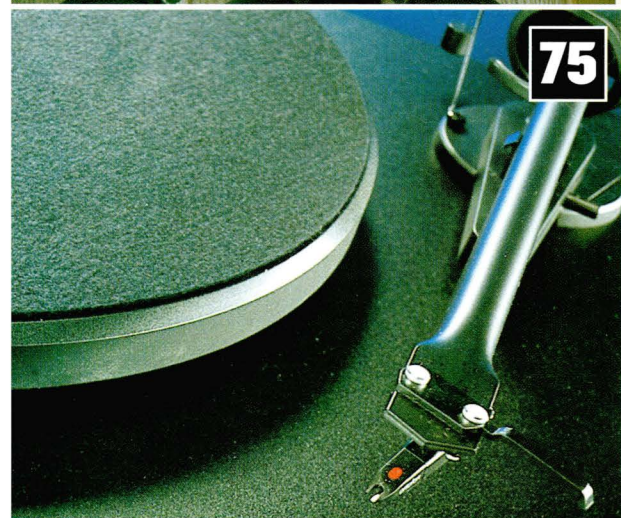
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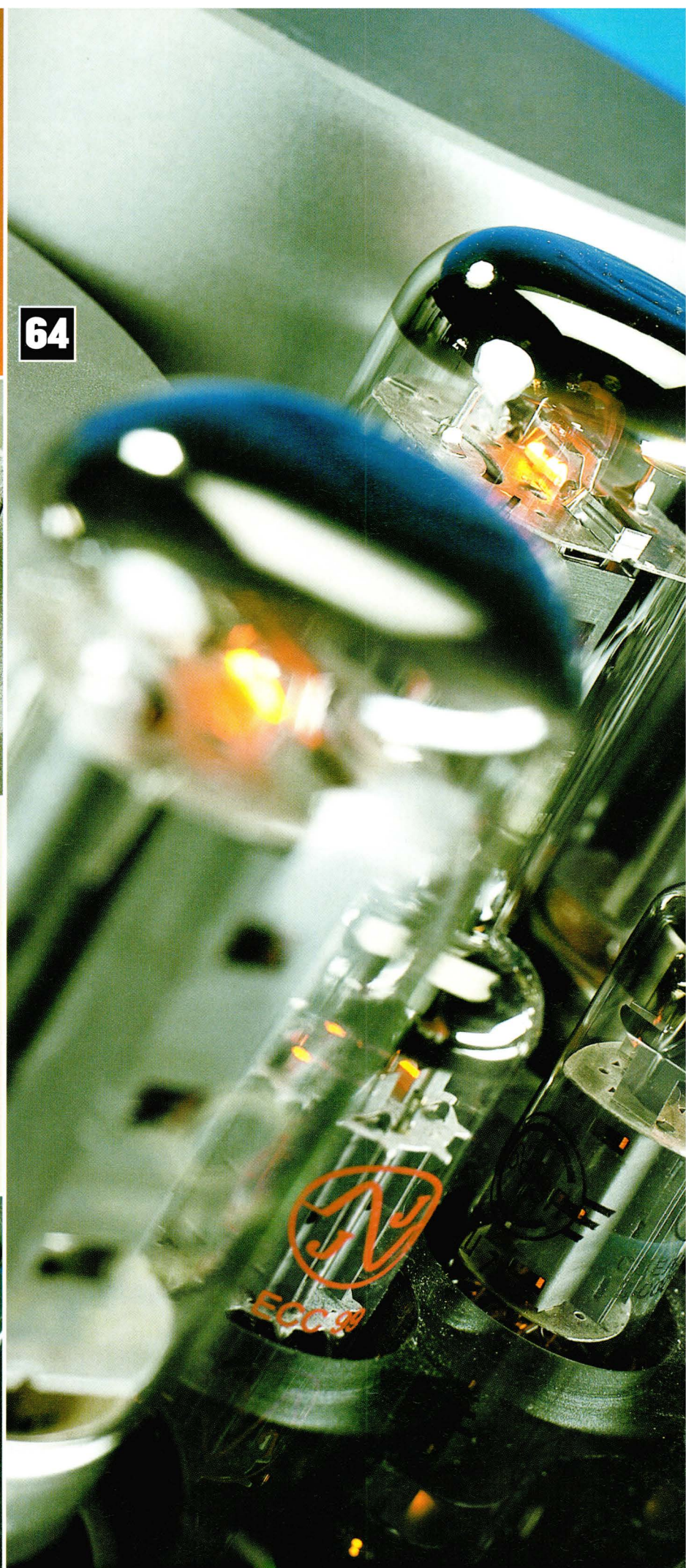
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Don't miss our new second-hand mini-mag	
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3	Trading Pages
7	Reader Classified

# Hello



November 2004

## Say hello to Genie

Genie™ is a revolution in home cinema systems, combining Mordaunt-Short's passion for music reproduction with stunning design. Featuring a host of ground-breaking technologies Genie delivers truly awesome performance in any environment.

Visit [www.mordaunt-short.co.uk](http://www.mordaunt-short.co.uk) or call 0845 128 3951 for more information.

# MORDAUNT-SHORT



## LINDEMANN 820 CD/SACD PLAYER

The rather gorgeous 820 is the latest source component from one of Germany's most respected hi-fi marques. Electronics specialist Lindemann has been around for over a decade and has developed a number of reference-quality audio products. Its latest gem has been designed as a high-end CD player with the added bonus of stereo SACD playback.

A spokesman for Lindemann goes as far as saying that the difference in sound between the two formats is not terribly great on this

player, since the 820's CD playback is so good. The design is based around a Sony SACD drive and features extensive resampling architecture, Burr-Brown chipsets and a four-layer PCB. Further features include user-definable sample rates, four digital inputs capable of processing up to 24-bit/192kHz resolution, and a large graphic display capable of offering detailed system information.

*To find out more, see our exclusive in-depth review in the next edition of Hi-Fi Choice*

<b>PRODUCT</b> Lindemann 820
<b>TYPE</b> CD/SACD player (stereo only)
<b>PRICE</b> £6,999
<b>KEY FEATURES</b> Stereo SACD playback • Four digital inputs for external sources • Low jitter architecture • Switchable sample rates
<b>CONTACT</b> ☎ 01895 833099 🌐 <a href="http://www.gtaudio.com">www.gtaudio.com</a>

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**because music matters**

[www.marantz.com](http://www.marantz.com) | Marantz 01753 680868





## VINCENT CD-S1.1 AND SV-121 CD PLAYER AND AMP

▶ Vincent may be a name that's new to the UK, yet this Far Eastern brand has an exciting range of high-quality hi-fi gear at very tempting prices. The CD-S1.1 CD player is primarily based around a Philips VAM1202/12 transport and a Burr-Brown 24-bit/96kHz DAC with HDCD decoding, which should ensure solid enough credentials. It also offers a set of balanced XLR outputs, twin single-ended analogue

outputs and a digital coaxial connection. Equally well-featured is the SV-121 stereo integrated amp, boasting an ALPS volume pot and oxygen-free copper internal cabling, plus an oversized toroidal transformer to keep the watts flowing. Priced at under £500 apiece, can these new kids on the block give the Brits a run for their money?

*To find out more, see our exclusive in-depth review in the next edition of Hi-Fi Choice*

**PRODUCT** CD-S1.1 and SV-121

**TYPE** CD player and integrated stereo amplifier

**PRICE** (CD-S1.1) £455, (SV-121) £495

**KEY FEATURES** (CD-S1.1) ◉ HDCD playback  
 ◉ Philips transport ◉ Burr-Brown 24-bit/96kHz DAC  
 ◉ Balanced XLR output ◉ (SV-121) Oversized toroidal transformer ◉ OFC internal cable  
 ◉ Balanced XLR input

**CONTACT** ☎ 01892 539245  
 🌐 www.metropolis-music.co.uk

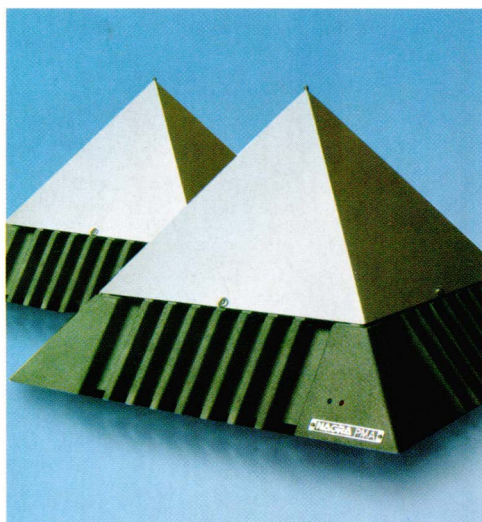
## NEW PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS



**DENON DVD-2910**

Hot on the heels of the DVD-3910 tested last month, this new universal disc player now marks Denon's entry point for high-resolution multichannel audio. The electronics giant has dropped DVD-Audio/SACD compatibility from its cheaper DVD player range and is instead championing both formats as audiophile mediums for upmarket machines. The new player is said to boast most of the performance features of the £900 DVD-3910, but at a lower price point. It retains the latest-spec HDMI link along with video scaling, four Burr-Brown audio DACs and a pure direct mode for music.

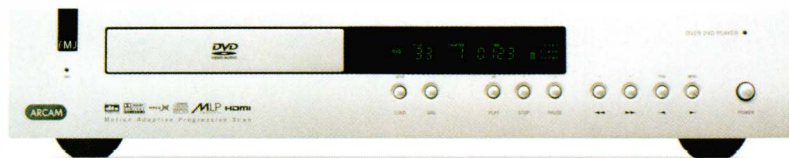
**Price** £600 **Due** Now ☎ 01234 741 200 🌐 www.denon.co.uk



## NAGRA PYRAMID

High-end electronics specialist Nagra has launched an unusual pyramid-shaped monoblock amplifier called the PMA (Pyramid Mosfet Amplifier), to complement its upmarket PL-L and PL-P preamplifiers. The unique shape allows the electronics to be seated on a solid aluminium base, which acts as a highly efficient thermal dissipater. The amp delivers 200 watts into a standard eight-ohm load and can be placed close to loudspeakers for ideal operation. Speakers and amplifier are safeguarded by DC protection and a heat-sensitive auto power-off function.

**Price** £8,000 each **Due** December  
☎ 01235 810455  
🌐 www.nagraaudio.com



## ARCAM FMJ DV29

Arcam has unveiled its new flagship DVD player, replacing the FMJ DV27A – winner of our coveted Editor's Choice badge back in *HFC* 246. The DV29 is a highly-specified DVD-Audio/Video spinner, equipped with the latest version of HDMI (v1.1). This allows the transmission of both digital video and multichannel digital audio to a compatible processor or amplifier via a single connection. It's not a universal machine – there's no SACD playback – but it supports DVD-Audio and its performance with both DVD-Video and CD is said to be first-rate, the latter matching that of a high-end CD player. We can't wait to give it a spin...

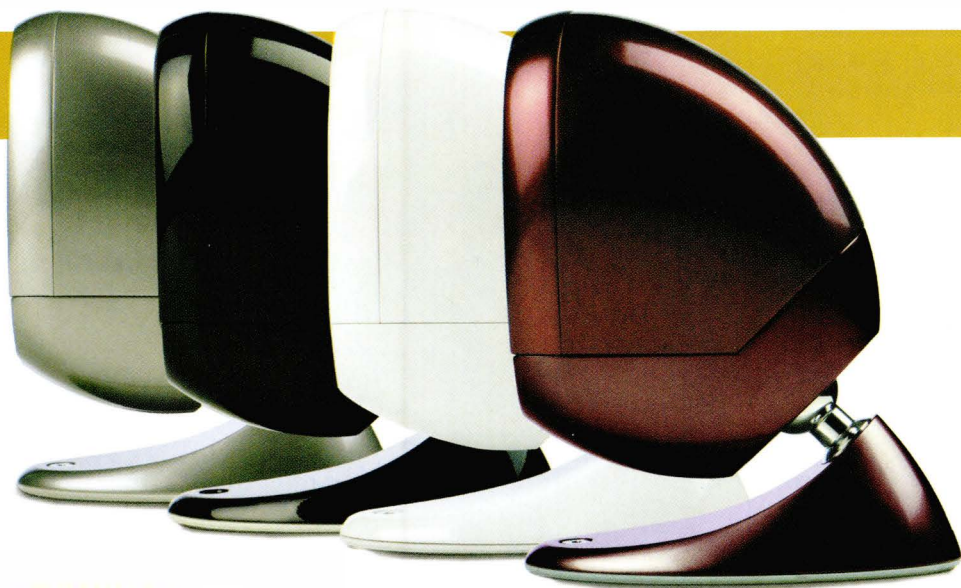
**Price** £1,600 **Due** Now ☎ 01223 203200 🌐 www.arcam.co.uk



## HARBETH NRG

British loudspeaker stalwart Harbeth has launched three new speakers that although aimed at the AV market, have been developed for music playback. The NRG range comprises a two-way standmount speaker (NRG2), a three-way floorstander (NRG4) and a dual driver centre channel speaker called (NRG5). All models use soft dome tweeters and coated paper cone drivers.

**Price** NRG2: £650 per pair, NRG4: £1,250 per pair **Due** Now  
☎ 01444 484 371  
🌐 www.harbeth.co.uk



## TANNOY ARENA

Tannoy has unveiled an incredibly stylish sub/sat package called Arena. The diminutive satellite speakers use a 100mm version of Tannoy's dual concentric driver, implementing the brand's WideBand technology into a miniature surround solution. This feature gives treble extension to 54kHz plus a respectable sensitivity rating of 88dB. The package is available as a full 5.1 system and the satellite speakers can also be bought individually to form 2.1 systems, or any other configuration you fancy. Arena's funky 20-litre, 300-watt active subwoofer extends to 16Hz, can be flipped to stand on its side and is arguably the best looking subwoofer we've seen to date!

**Price** 5.1 package: £1,199 (satellites: £199 each) **Due** December ☎ 01236 420199 🌐 www.tannoy.com

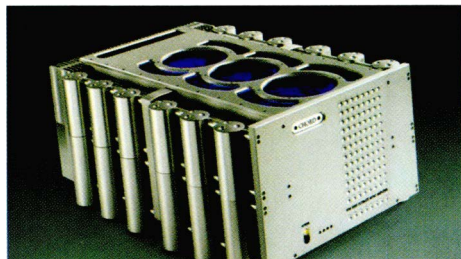


## DENSEN B-350

After five years development Densen has released its flagship amplifier, the B-350 monoblock. The product started life as a reference amp which was used in Densen's R&D department, but now its 125 watts per channel are available to the audiophile. The amp uses a massive 750VA transformer and utilises a host of proprietary technology to keep output impedance low.

**Price** £2,600 **Due** Now

☎ 0045 75 181214 🌐 www.densen.com



## CHORD SPM 14000

Chord's new flagship mono power amp has been designed to offer audiophiles uncompromised performance. It uses the latest generation, 12kW-capable power supply and 64 of Chord's proprietary power output devices. There's also a five-channel power amp called the SPM 2400 which delivers 5x200 watts.

**Price** £18,900 **Due** Now

☎ 01622 721444 🌐 www.chordelectronics.co.uk



## TRIANGLE ESPRIT

French speaker specialist Triangle has released a new range of speakers under the Esprit banner. There are seven main speakers in the line-up, plus two centre channel speakers, dedicated rears and a sub. The main models include three standmounts and four floorstanders, one of which is a replacement for the Antal 202 (a Best Buy in HFC 257). Features throughout the range include titanium tweeters, in-house bass/mid drivers and a choice of three finishes.

**Price** From £290 to £1,395 per pair **Due** Now

☎ 01753 652669 🌐 www.triangle-fr.com

## Soundbites



**SENNHEISER** has topped its 500 series with the new HD595 – a £150 set of headphones utilising technology passed down from the £300 HD650. Duofol diaphragms are said to extend bass response and longevity is assured courtesy of the Kevlar-reinforced single-sided cable. Its frequency response is a claimed 12-38,500Hz, ideal for high-resolution audio. ☎ 0800 652 5002

**ISOTEK** has produced a new range of multi-way mains extension blocks offering between four and eight sockets, with prices starting at £155 for a four-way block. The units benefit from IsoTek's Polaris X technology that's said to reduce mains noise, with further features including silver-plated, PTFE-insulated cabling and spike/surge protection. The blocks can also be upgraded to incorporate the more sophisticated Gemini and Orion circuit boards. ☎ 01635 291357

**VAN DEN HUL** has released a new high-performance, silver-coated mains cable called the Mainserver. The cable has been designed for low power consumption appliances such as CD/DVD players and preamps and is said to eliminate noise and shield against interference. The internal construction is based around seven OFC leads with a dense silver coating. The cable costs £125 for a 1.5 metre length. ☎ 01235 511166



**ERRATA:** Gremlins crept into the office last month and stole the Best Buy badge from Denon's superb DVD-3910 universal disc player (appropriately reunited in the picture above). Also, we stated that the Supra LoRad mains cable is priced at £12. That's actually the unterminated price – it's really £50 to you and me. It's still spiffing value though – turn to p57 for evidence...

### The Insider

#### THIS MONTH HFC TALKS TO...

##### ANDY WHITTLE

**Job title:** Managing Director  
**Company:** Exposure Electronics



##### What's your most exciting product in development at the moment?

We are currently signing off a new 35 integrated amplifier, to launch early next year. This replaces the old 25 integrated, one of Exposure's best-selling products. The new 35 offers a considerable uplift in performance over the 25 in terms of power output, bass control and dynamics.

##### What's the future of hi-fi?

Difficult to say, it is in a precarious position. I believe that there will always be a demand for high-quality two-channel music systems but that might not be significant enough to sustain medium-sized manufacturers. These will most likely move manufacture to the Far East, if they haven't already done so.

##### DVD-Audio or SACD - and why?

Looks like a repeat of VHS vs Betamax or QWERTY keyboard vs Dvorak keyboard. Both formats appear to offer an improvement over CD but I think DVD-Audio will win out due to its association with DVD and greater mass market appeal.

##### Is the universal disc player the future of CD playback?

Not as far as we are concerned. Our CD player sales are increasing year on year. With over three billion CDs produced over the last twenty years we see enough demand in our sector.

### Hi-Fi Diary

#### NOVEMBER

- 5-7 **What Hi-Fi Sound & Vision Show**  
Novotel London West Hotel  
020 8267 8378  
*Second year for this new home cinema and hi-fi show*
- 7 **Audiojumble**  
Leatherhead Leisure Centre,  
Leatherhead  
07730 134973  
*Second-hand treasures for southerners*

#### FEBRUARY

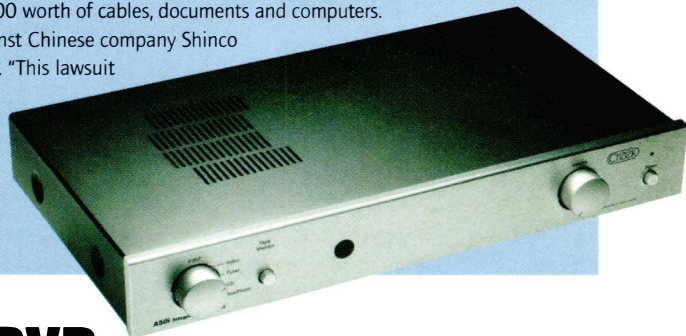
- 25-27 **Sound & Vision 2005**  
Mariott Hotel Bristol,  
www.bristolshow.co.uk  
*The UK's largest hi-fi and home cinema show - highly recommended*

## Down by law

Fraud is on the rise in hi-fi circles this month. A Chinese company has produced a copy of a Creek Audio amplifier called the 4330 Mk3. The bogus Creek is made by the company that once represented Creek in China - it has even had the audacity to put Mike Creek's signature on the front. Ironically, that's something you won't find on a genuine Creek amp! The 4330 is no longer made by Creek in any form.

Sticking with the legal theme, Tara Labs has got itself into trouble with US Customs over allegations that it has been passing off foreign-made cables as American-made items. Federal agents raided the company's Ashland, Oregon premises and seized over \$600,000 worth of cables, documents and computers.

Elsewhere, DTS has filed a lawsuit against Chinese company Shincro International for trademark infringement. "This lawsuit represents DTS's continuing efforts to enforce our intellectual property rights, and protect our company, our licensees and consumers," said Brian Towne, Vice President of the Consumer/Pro Audio Division at DTS.



## MLP for HD-DVD

Both the DVD Forum and the Blu-ray Disc Association have selected Dolby Digital Plus and MLP (Meridian Lossless Packing) for their forthcoming high-resolution video formats - HD-DVD and Blu-ray. The DVD Forum, which backs HD-DVD, also selected DTS++, an alternative lossy compression system, as a mandatory requirement. Dolby Digital Plus is actually a considerably more efficient coding system than the existing Dolby Digital but it offers the potential for more than the standard 5.1 channels with a flexibility that's designed to make it work with a variety of next-generation cable, broadcast and satellite systems.



HD-DVD and Blu-ray will be in direct competition to become the 'next-generation DVD' format when the first hardware is launched next year. Both are primarily video formats, developed to handle advancements in digital video technology, and as such will be largely driven by the movie industry. But the inclusion of MLP means hi-res DVD-Audio sound is a possibility on both formats, perhaps for both movies and music.



## Late night surround sound

Marantz's next upmarket universal disc player will have some unusual new features. The DV-9500 (due early 2005) will be the first standalone DVD player to sport Dolby Headphone, allowing the user to listen to multichannel sources through a pair of conventional headphones. This means late night listening in surround, without the inevitable complaints from the rest of the family! The DV-9500 will also be the first player from the Marantz stable to feature the HDMI (High Definition Multimedia Interface) digital audio/video connection. What's more, its onboard bass management system is claimed to be the most comprehensive yet sported by a DVD-Audio/SACD player, meaning less reliance on partnering processors and multichannel amps to make the most of these hi-res multichannel music formats. Expect a review as soon as we can get our hands on one...



## EPG for DAB

DAB digital radio may have had some critical knocks due to sound quality, but its functionality is set to increase with the introduction of EPG or electronic programme guides thanks to new software from Enigma, a subsidiary of Imagination Technologies alongside Pure Digital. David McBrien of Imagination Technologies describes the technology thus: "The EPG enables radio listeners to search the listings of digital stations they receive, then select a programme, or set a reminder up to seven days in advance. It brings the functionality we now take for granted in digital television broadcast to DAB digital radio."

The first EPG-enabled DAB receiver is expected to be Pure's Bug radio for which a downloadable upgrade will be available from the end of the year. EPG broadcasting is due to start in October.

## JIMMY'S TWEAKS #27

HANDY HINTS FROM JIMMY HUGHES - HI-FI'S SUPER TWEAKER



### Telephone ear

One of the curses of modern life is spending half your working day (or more) on the telephone. Quite apart from the health concerns regarding high levels of electromagnetic radiation from mobiles, there's the damaging effect produced by having a loud and rather 'peaky' transducer pressed close to your ear for

hours on end - a problem exacerbated if you always use the same ear.

After having been on the phone for a while, it's interesting to put the handset to your other ear. If the perceived sound is quite distinct, it indicates that your ears have differing sensitivity and frequency response. Hopefully, a day or two spent phone-free (is that really possible??!) should see you two ears back on equal par.

## TOP 10

CLASSICAL HI-FI TEST DISCS

- 1 **Stravinsky** Petroushka etc, piano/Naxos (CD)
- 2 **Wagner** Ring/Decca 455 555-2 (14CD)
- 3 **Takemitsu** Autumn/Denon CD-18032 (CD)
- 4 **Messiaen** Turangalila/Decca 470 627-2 (SACD)
- 5 **Rachmaninov** Vespers/Pentatone 5186027 (SACD)
- 6 **Shostakovich** String Quartets/DG 463 284-2 (5CD)
- 7 **Mahler** Das Lied Von Der Erde/DG 471 635-2 (SACD)
- 8 **Respighi** Pines etc/Reference Recordings RR-95CD (HDCD)
- 9 **Stravinsky** Firebird (transcribed for piano)/Naxos 8.555999 (CD)
- 10 **Haydn** Creation/Deutsche Harmonia Mundi 82876 58340 2 (2CD)



## New Music

### IN THE STUDIO

ARTISTS RECENTLY ABSENT FROM THE CUT AND THRUST OF SHOWBIZ HYPE DUE TO FINISHING THEIR LATEST ALBUMS



### SUPER FURRY ANIMALS/ GRUFF RHYS

**Title:** *Yr Atal Genhedlaeth*  
**Release date:** Jan 2005

Expect not one but two Super Furry Animals-related releases next year. The first is a solo album from the band's frontman Gruff Rhys, containing 11 songs and bearing the Welsh title 'Yr Atal Genhedlaeth'. The second is the band's seventh studio album, due in spring and which Rhys says has "an orchestral feel."

### FLAMING LIPS

**Title:** *At War With The Mystics*  
**Release date:** 2005

Last Flaming Lips album *Yoshimi Battles The Pink Robots*, won a Grammy and sold 200,000 in the UK alone. The follow-up is again produced by Dave Fridmann (Mercury Rev/Mogwai/Sparklehorse). "We've moved to sounds that are made by robots that come off organic," says the band's Wayne Coyne. "It's getting into a space-age jazz element, like a sort of progressive Dixieland." The mind boggles.

### THE LEMONHEADS

**Title:** tbc  
**Release date:** 2005

You thought they had split up after not hearing from the Lemonheads since 1996's *Car Button Cloth*. Not so, insists the band's main man Evan Dando. After a solo album and a spell touring as the singer with the reformed MCS, he is busily writing a new Lemonheads album but has not revealed who else will be in the band's line-up.

### FRANZ FERDINAND

**Title:** tbc  
**Release date:** autumn 2005

In these days of top bands taking three or four years between albums, it's refreshing to learn that Scotland's Franz Ferdinand are



already planning the follow-up to their chart-topping, Mercury Prize-winning debut. Producer Dan 'The Automator' Nakamura says the demos for the new album are "more musically diverse," and suggests the results will be "a little bit more electronic."

### OASIS

**Title:** tbc  
**Release date:** May 2005

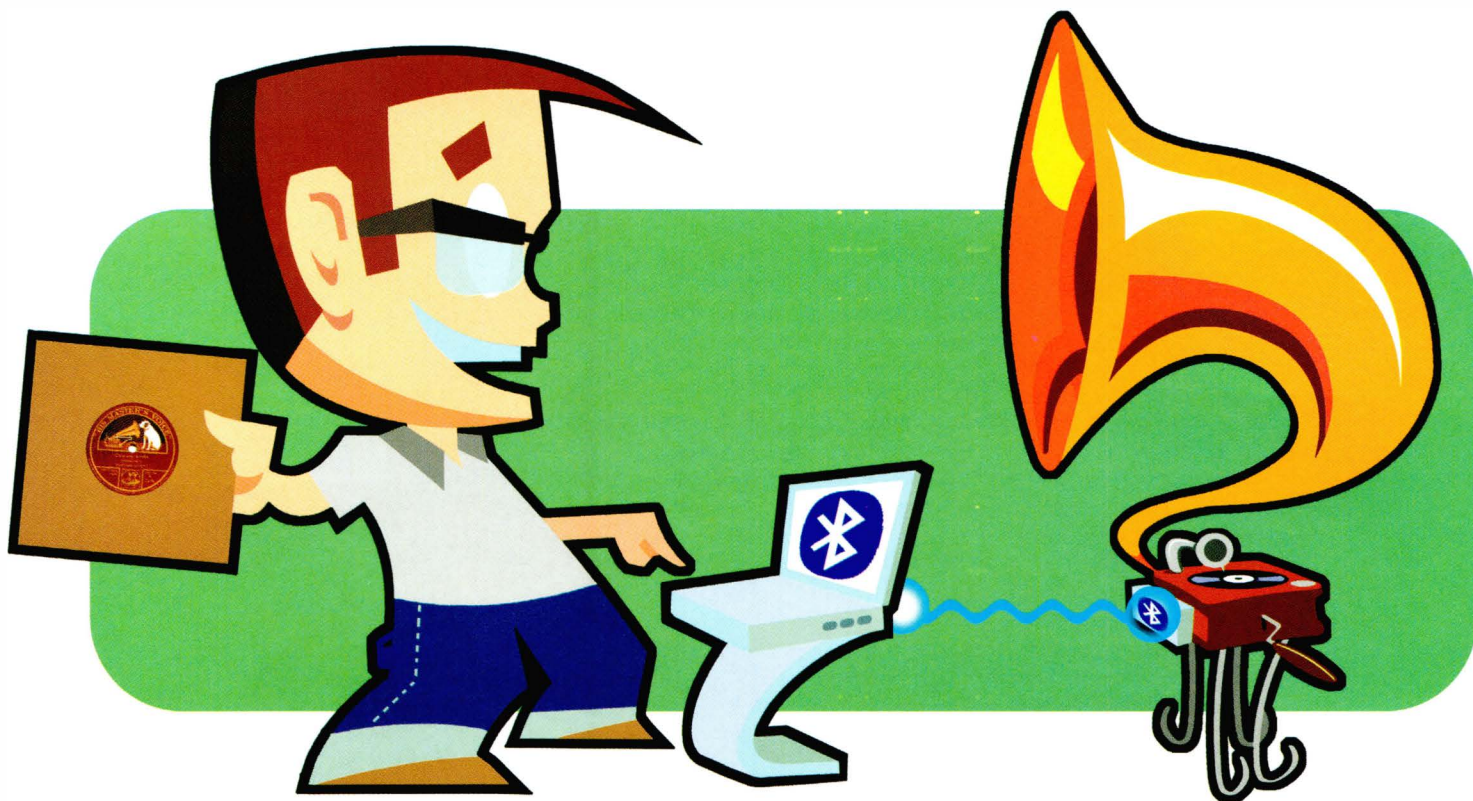
We've reported the next Oasis album before - but since then the band has gone back to the drawing board and started again with producer Dave Sardy (The Thrills). "It's been meandering because we've not had a deadline," Noel Gallagher admits. "Now we've to get it out by 26 May."

### ALSO COMING SOON JAZZ/CLASSICAL

**Christine Tobin** Romance and Revolutions (Nov) **Various** Women Of Latin America (Nov) **Bryn Terfel** Silent Noon (Nov) **Wilhelm Furtwangler** The Fascination Of Furtwangler (Nov)

### DVD-AUDIO/ SACD

**Grateful Dead** American Beauty (DVD-A DualDisc, Nov) **Nine Inch Nails** Downward Spiral (SACD, Nov) **Hilary Hahn/LSO** Elgar: Violin Concerto (SACD, Nov) **Neil Young** Greatest Hits (DVD-A DualDisc, Nov) **Keane** Hopes And Fears (SACD, Nov)



Paul Messenger

## Shock of the old

*The coming of age of 'retro-fi'*

Looking back over the last year, most of the high points have more to do with old than new technology. I've sometimes wondered whether 'retro-fi' was just a passing phase, born of romantic nostalgia rather than seriously attempting to advance musical fidelity, but the last year has certainly convinced me that we still have plenty left to learn from the past. And also that much of what passes for technological 'progress' often has more to do with making things more cheaply than making them better.

Time and again, 'obsolete' technologies continue to defy the passage of time and the predictions of technophiles. Vinyl hasn't been this popular since the 1980s – turntable sales

**“They might struggle at frequency extremes, and lack the power of solid state, but valve amps do a superior job of the midband.”**

could soon overtake regular CD players, if current trends continue. Mid-year I had great fun doing a valve amp group test, and while I continue with solid state for speaker reviewing, because they're much less likely to get upset by 'difficult' loads, I can well understand why enthusiasts choose the thermionic route.

They might struggle a bit towards the frequency extremes, and lack the power of solid state models, but valve amps invariably do a superior job through the midband, which is after all the most important part of the spectrum. They'll never match the cool-running, fit-and-forget convenience of solid state, but today's valve amps are increasingly civilised affairs: Audio Research's VS155 is a particularly fine all-rounder with full remote control.

Another interesting discovery was just how good amplifiers using little EL84 output valves could sound, not only in the Audio Note OTO SE that was part of the test, but also in a restored vintage Leak Stereo 20 that one of

the listening test panellists had brought along. And the benefits of valves were further emphasised a few months later when I got to try the wonderful Magnum Dynalab MD106T tuner, featured amongst this issue's Awardees.

Retro speakers are not yet fashionable, but I hope their time will come. One 2004 high spot for me was the very bulky Tannoy Yorkminster, which uses 300mm dual concentric main drivers with two very retro features – Alnico magnets and fabric surrounds. Both of these techniques virtually disappeared back in the 1960s, and both contribute to this speaker's delightful midrange delicacy and transparency, which in a very real sense parallels and complements that delivered by valve amps.

The Yorkminster proved a bit too big for my room, but its cheaper Kensington brother, with half the box volume and a 24cm Alnico dual concentric driver, is equally impressive, and a rather better match. It lacks a little deep bass grunt, but the midrange is even better, and

dynamics are superb. Assuming the 1950s styling and mahogany veneer doesn't put you off, this is unquestionably one of the finest speakers available, and a powerful argument for the virtues of Alnico magnets, paper cones and low-hysteresis fabric surrounds.

*Paul Messenger is a former editor of Hi-Fi Choice and has been writing about his favourite hobby for nearly 30 years*



## Firm favourites

*2004 turned out some classic kit*

One of the highlights of my year was – or should have been – the glitzy relaunch of the now B&W-owned Classé brand in the unparalleled surroundings of Gaudí's Casa Batlló in Barcelona. It should have been excellent, but somehow it all unravelled. First, it tripped over just outside the magnificent Gaudí edifice, cracking a rib and killing my camera stone cold dead. The Classé product looked great, but it has taken months for any of it to reach the shops. As I write, most of the range still remains unavailable, and none has yet arrived at my door for review – though I'm dining out on the promises. Meanwhile, Mark Levinson has relaunched, with the new 320S preamplifier – the final product signed off under the old Madrigal management – making a cameo appearance at the Heathrow *Hi-Fi Show & AV Expo* in late September, and looking a million dollars. If it's a quarter as good as it looks it should be worth twice as much as it costs. Follow...?

One of the joys of the year has been the sheer quantity of excellent high-end hi-fi that I have had the pleasure of getting to know. The obverse of this is that there has been so little to get excited about at the volume end of the market, but there are exceptions. One obvious candidate is the excellent Pioneer DV868i-S universal player. Okay, at £1,000 it's not *cheap* cheap, and its external build and finish are no better than they need to be. But with its integral HDMI and i.Link interfaces, this is one of the first players capable of delivering all kinds of digital audio and video in its native form, and it performs well out of its price class, both as an

# RETRO

HI-FI REVISITED

TAG MCLAREN AV32R  
MULTICHANNEL PROCESSOR



When the watches-to-Formula 1 group McLaren turned to hi-fi, it put a lot of noses out of joint by taking over the sleepy Audiolab

brand. It started innocuously enough with refinements to the existing stereo line, but its abrasive hands-on CEO, Udo Zucker, saw TAG McLaren as a vehicle with which to express his personal passion, namely home cinema with the qualities of high-end high fidelity.

The turning point was the development of the AV32R in 1999, a THX-compliant cinema home processor based on a SHARC DSP with Flash-upgradeable ROM, which was a clean sheet design from a powerful and well-equipped team at the glossy company HQ in Huntingdon with help from the (then) very successful Formula 1 software engineers at TAG Electronics Systems. The price was £2,000, and the AV32R was everything its competitors were not, namely sleek, slim and elegant (it had the same form factor as the company's stereo preamp), with a brilliantly simple control system and display, and sound quality approaching that of high-end stereo component separates.

Its performance as a multichannel amp was good too, but it was hampered in various ways, one example being Udo's not entirely rational dislike of pure analogue inputs, which it soon transpired were very difficult to cope without in an age of multichannel audio. This hardly mattered when the AV32R was introduced, but matters soon changed. Another problem which the company struggled with from the beginning was the AV32R's USP. Not only was there very little space inside to shoehorn in all the circuitry, there was very little rear panel real estate for the mass of sockets it required.

To address these problems, and to keep up with developments as the multichannel market began to evolve, TAG McLaren set out to support its fledgling multichannel product range, of which the AV32R was always the centrepiece, with an extraordinarily comprehensive programme of firmware updates and bolt-on upgrades. The programme was supported by easily the best website in AV history, which amounted to a TAG community



**“The AV32R was everything its competitors were not, namely sleek, slim and elegant.”**

of owners and aspiring owners.

Many of the early changes were essentially bug fixes and minor enhancements, mostly available free of charge, but in 2000 new functionality became available via the TAGtronic Communication Bus. Later a 7.1-channel upgrade and custom install features were added along with additions to the suite of surround sound modes – Dolby Pro Logic II and HDCD, THX (later Dolby) EX, DTS-ES and Neo:6. Finally in 2002 a 5.1-channel analogue input became available. It was even possible to add an internal DAB radio. Towards the end of its life, a version with dual SHARC processing supporting THX Ultra2 and room equalisation was launched at around £4,000. But the financial footing of the company was undermined by the high cost of serving a relatively limited marketplace and selling prices that in retrospect were too low. In 2003 the company ceased trading.

Remaining stocks are being sold off, and existing customers supported by IAG (Quad, Wharfedale) – it's even possible that the technology will have a second outing as a future Quad processor. In the meantime, the AV32R remains a tribute, a shining beacon to the tenacity and commercial folly of one of the most inventive electronics companies home cinema has ever seen – or ever will. **HFC**

*Alvin Gold*



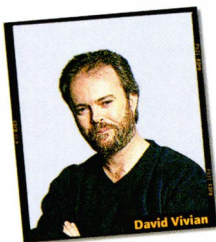
### “The last thing that anyone needs are dogmatic, doctrinal dealers.”

audio and as a video player. Turning to vinyl replay, the Roksan Radius 5 (acrylic) with its Nima unipivot arm is sensationally desirable at £850. Loudspeaker highlights include the Mission Elegante e83, which I enjoyed greatly, though some might criticise it as soft-centred.

Slightly further up the food chain, one of the real highlights of the year was the Anthony Gallo Nucleus Reference III loudspeaker. It may look like a collection of kitchen utensils on stilts, and on the wrong day it has a certain rawness, but in its own crazy way, it really works. Balls, transparency, absence of box type artefacts – whatever, it makes music.

But there was another speaker last year that made an even greater impression. Sadly it costs a lot more than the Gallo but it is an extraordinarily refined loudspeaker, with class leadingly low levels of coloration, and the kind of imagery in depth, and clarity without undue emphasis that simply brings music to life and helps you forget you're listening to an elaborately staged forgery. I refer to the Focal-JMLab Alto Utopia Be, which is arguably the most practical and rounded in the Utopia series, and a loudspeaker I still miss badly, though I sent it back home half a year or more ago. Used with the exquisite Hovland HP-200/RADIA pre/power amp combination and a BAT VK-D5SE valve CD player you would have something very special.

*Alvin Gold began writing about hi-fi more than 20 years ago and has since become one of the UK's most internationally renowned reviewers*



### Demo devils

*System selection is all about choice*

It's one of life's great truisms that there are more questions than answers but when it comes to hi-fi shops in 2004, there are too damn many. One of the most nagging, not to say perplexing, is why some stock such a narrow range of brands?

The devil in the demo room is this – A versus B is fine if you're a buff, and have already decided that C, D and E wouldn't be as good. But it's not if you don't know hi-fi and want to make a decision from a standing start.

Accept the implicit doctrine of someone else and suddenly you're part of a smaller, flatter universe, not a bigger one. There's an ideological chasm between the 'trust us' approach and the 'what-sort-of-system-do-you-really-want?' alternative, a truly unbiased and open-ended approach. Choice represents real purchasing power. Far from putting prospective customers off, it draws them into the whole process of tailoring a sound for themselves.

Earlier this year, I sat in on five hour-long demonstrations at The Listening Rooms in London's Old Brompton Road, the final one going on long after the shop's closing time. It ended in a £3,000 sale. All the

preceding demo customers made new appointments – not because they didn't cover a lot of ground in their sessions, but because there were still more options to explore. Crucially, the demos didn't run out of steam after A had beaten B. And the customers actually looked as if they were enjoying the adventure once they'd recovered from the mild shock of discovering the significant differences between similarly priced products.

The most enlightened customer who left the shop that day was the bloke who wanted Acoustic Energy AE1 speakers. He'd brought along an industrial-sized Technics integrated amp of uncertain pedigree and implausible complexity for the gig. A less suitable amp with which to drive the diminutive and impossibly demanding AEs would have been hard to imagine.

And yet when connected to the small metal boxes, to the considerable surprise of the staff, if not the customer, it turned out to be not merely good, but terrific.

Within a flexible framework, such 'apparent' anomalies are bound to occur. The important thing is that they're allowed to. The last thing the man with the Technics amp needed was a lecture in hierarchical system building and an expensive pre-power combination. The last thing anyone needs are dogmatic, doctrinal dealers. Choice and an open-minded attitude are the keys to this industry's future.

*David Vivian has been wallowing in gorgeous hi-fi and then describing its virtues and/or vices in Hi-Fi Choice since 1990*



### Two for one?

*Should hi-res discs combine?*

This has been the year when the high-resolution formats should have consolidated their positions and started to gain acceptance if not popularity in the world outside of hi-fi. This has not happened – you can still walk into very large music shops and



get a blank look when you ask for SACD or DVD-Audio. In LA this summer I found a small shelf dedicated to the formats in a Virgin Megastore, the first I've seen. I bought Beck's *Sea Change* and was surprised to find it was SACD only, not hybrid, and thus only works in SACD players – that won't win many converts.

In an attempt to broaden the appeal of DVD-A, the major labels have rubber stamped a hybrid version called DualDisc, with both CD and DVD versions of each album on a single disc. Smaller record labels such as Canada's 3Bone Audio, which released an album by electronic musician KAJE on both CD and DVD-A in a single sleeve, with an additional AAC version for iPod users, have taken a more sensible approach. This multidisc idea is easier to understand while offering a greater sense of value at little extra cost. In the UK, video mixmasters Hexstatic have done a similar thing with their album *Master View* on separate CD and DVD discs – stereo 3D glasses included.

As far as the dedicated high-res formats go, SACD is surging ahead in both units and titles, and sales have been boosted by popular back-catalogue material from the likes of Pink Floyd and the Rolling Stones. These remasters would probably have sold just as well without their hi-res layer but hopefully some of them will end up on universal players and their owners will think that the result is good enough to warrant closer examination. It's a path, of sorts, but not a very clear one.

A video option for SACD has also been created called SA-CS2CD, which could be used to give the format wider appeal to an increasingly video-oriented listening public. But it seems unlikely that this will bring SACD's sonic potential to the fore.

It would seem that the majority of sound-sensitive end users are less concerned about the multichannel potential of these formats than the resolve offered in stereo. Townshend's stunning TA 565 universal player functions in multichannel but has had considerably more attention paid to its main stereo channels than the remaining 3.1 outputs – creator Max Townshend says his customers are less in multichannel. Marantz, meanwhile, has launched a Premium series stereo-only SACD player, the SA-1151, so it looks like they are getting the same feedback.

Ironically, thanks to SACD, this autumn sees the first ever issue of the classical Mercury Living Presence series in the short-lived three-channel stereo format that they were originally recorded in back in the fifties and sixties. With goalposts moving at this rate, multichannel capability may be worth keeping after all.

*Jason Kennedy began working on Hi-Fi Choice over 15 years ago, eventually rising to the position of editor. He's currently indulging his passions as a freelance hi-fi writer* ▶

# M

## MUSO

CLASSIC ALBUMS

THE CLASH  
LONDON CALLING



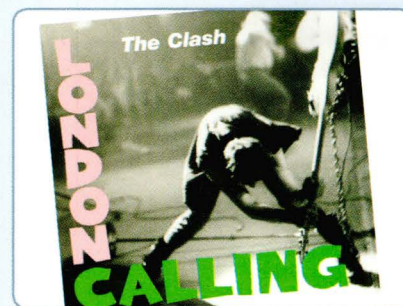
In 1979 the Clash were struggling to make a credible album. The kudos they'd received with their seminal, self-titled debut, and its text-book example of three-chord aggressive alienation, had largely been thrown away by its anthemic follow-up, *Give 'Em Enough Rope*. Despite containing some of their best songs, this had committed the heinous punk sin of using US rock producer Sandy Pearlman (best known for his work with stadium metal monsters Blue Öyster Cult), apparently culminating in an attempt to sell out. They needed to win their credibility back.

They did it, not by returning to the garage band basics of their debut, but by moving in a different direction entirely, taking in elements of ska, dub reggae, rockabilly, soul, R&B, jazz and pop and banging them out with punk attitude, redefining the possibilities of the genre, and indeed, rock itself.

Despite their punk roots, the Clash were in fact fine musicians for the most part, in particular drummer Topper Headon, whose versatility would be allowed full rein on *London Calling*. And with guitarist/singers Mick Jones and Joe Strummer there was a songwriting partnership of enviable quality (sharp-cheekboned bassist Paul Simonon meanwhile mostly just looked very cool and provided Olympic-grade sneers).

The seemingly odd decision to ask one-time Mott The Hoople producer Guy Stevens to helm the sessions proved a fruitful one. He was to die of problems related to alcoholism in 1981 but still managed to produce 'inspired chaos', flinging chairs around, pogoing frantically inches from Strummer's face while he tried to sing, which all contributed to the 'anything-goes' mood. The band would often turn up at Wessex Studios in north London to find him crashed out drunk under the mixing desk – fortunately engineer Bill Price, another Hoople alumnus, was on hand to salvage something from the potential wreckage.

There were a myriad influences begging for attention, and it took the Clash at their creative and performing peak to mould them into a cohesive whole (and squeeze them onto

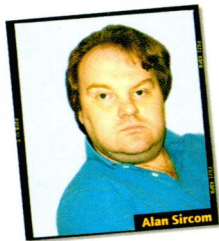


**“It took the Clash at their creative peak to mould their myriad influences into a cohesive whole.”**

a double album). So we get *The Card Cheat*, treated like a Phil Spector wall of sound, with every instrument played twice to make it sound bigger, and the rockabilly surge of Brit rocker Vince Taylor's *Brand New Cadillac*, all stripped down automotive vigour and snap. Then there's the late-addition, *Train In Vain* (Jones wrote it too late to feature on the original album cover – it's an extra track credited only in the run-off groove at the end of side four), which comes on like a tribute to early Motown. Paul Simonon's dub reggae opus *Guns Of Brixton* features a monstrous bass riff, later sampled by Fatboy Slim, and of course there's plenty of the blazing rebel rock that was the Clash's stock in trade, most famously on the title track.

It was the last time the Clash were fully united. Ahead lay grinding US tours and the sprawling if occasionally inspired triple album *Sandinista*. The Strummer/Jones songwriting axis would grind to a halt and Topper would become addicted to heroin for years. But on *London Calling*, the Clash are everything that made them great: angry, focused and eclectic, with a global attitude and universal appeal. They really don't make 'em like this anymore, though Columbia's extensive 25th anniversary CD reissue, including long-lost demo recordings and contemporary video, comes close. **HFC**

Dave Oliver



Alan Sircom

### To DSP or not to DSP

*The evolution of hi-fi is happening fast...*

**T**his year, I've been mostly playing... stereo. Now, this was unexpected. I was fully geared up for 2004 to herald the big shift to multichannel music on SACD and DVD-Audio. In the US, there are enough sales of DVD-Audio and SACD to mark them out as blips on the charts. The Americans have a large selection of discs and there is even a small amount of PR support for the formats. The same is not true here. In the UK, 2004 may be known as the year DVD-Audio and SACD all but dropped off the mass market radar. This is in part because the average DVD player purchaser appears more interested in price than performance, but largely because the formats are desperately under-supported in the high street.

DVD-Audio and SACD are not dead – people who make informed value judgements about sound quality will look at multichannel music as a valid entertainment medium in its own right. The formats are especially popular with collectors of classical music (on both SACD and DVD-A) and jazz (on SACD in particular).

However, I predict that over the next year or two, we shall see less and less DVD-Audio and SACD logos appearing on entry-level electronics.

Perhaps hi-fi manufacturers were concentrating so hard on what might be the next big thing in music (multichannel) that they overlooked what really was the next big thing... downloadable music. Companies like Sony claimed to be relatively disinterested in the internet audio market right up until the early part of this year, despite the huge success of Apple's world-dominating iPod.

But this is changing, and changing fast. Now there's a download chart and almost every portable audio company has an iPod clone. It's time for the internet to make sweet love to the hi-fi system. Cyrus, Imerge and Onkyo all feature network audio devices, to allow seamless transmission of compressed and uncompressed audio signals along computer networking systems, and as the might of the downloaded tune takes hold, this looks like a market that's set to grow and grow.

Networked audio naturally leads to custom install – the CEDIA people have been experimenting with this for years. Hi-fi die-hards



### “The next big thing turned out to be downloadable music... it's time for the net to make sweet love to the the hi-fi system.”

are traditionally wary of custom install, often with good reason – the best places to hide a pair of speakers for custom install usually make exactly the worst places to site speakers for good stereo reproduction. However, today's custom installer has a DSP (digital signal processor) ace up their sleeve. It's possible to correct a multitude of poor placement sins with clever signal processing.

This DSP adjustment is becoming cheaper and more acceptable solution outside of the custom install world, with many AV receivers and amplifiers now featuring DSP-driven automated set-up systems. It's possible that the same could come to stereo (in fact, Meridian and TACT have already begun the process). However, in this context it would be used not to correct poor positioning of speakers, but to overcome the idiosyncrasies of the listening room. Once we get over the heresy of using DSP to improve our stereo systems, we will all get the benefit of a better sound. Hopefully...

*Alan Sircom began his journalistic career at HFC 12 years ago. He has since become one of the hi-fi and AV industry's most respected scribes*



Richard Black

### Hi-fi jewellery

*Hi-fi needs to get prettier to survive*

**I** write this freshly arrived home from the Heathrow *Hi-Fi Show*. There, a realisation crystallised in my brain which however had been slowly forming – hi-fi is getting prettier. A lot prettier. And it has happened quite recently. Or at any rate, it has been over the last year that the trend towards good-looking hi-fi has really amounted to a wholesale move by a significant proportion of manufacturers.

Yes, there are still plenty of square boxes out there. Some of them are very smart square boxes, many of them perform very well and offer superb value for money. For many purchasers they represent highly desirable items. That's

fine, but there are now also lots of source, amplification and speaker components that look a million dollars. They will be the salvation of the hi-fi business, because they appeal to people beyond the traditional hi-fi enthusiast – and let's face it, we're on the decrease.

A survey of a few recent issues of *HFC* provides further evidence. B&W's PV1 subwoofer, Chord's Choral range, O'hEocha's wireless speakers, all look fantastic and more than qualified to sit in an upmarket, style-conscious 21st-century home. More candidates can be found in advertisers' photographs of, for instance, Ferguson Hill horn speakers and Shanling's CD player. But it was walking the corridors of the show that really brought home the range available. The audio standard of most of the kit available (smart and ugly alike) is these days seldom in doubt – what really sorts the sheep from the goats is appearances.

Speakers have benefited perhaps more than any other category. Look at Anthony Gallo's spheres, for instance. Discreet, available in a wide range of colours, funky – in a word, delightful. Tannoy's new 'Arena' range is artfully sculpted to disguise its function and looks a world away from the traditional bookshelf speaker. Designs like these are facilitated not least by the ready availability of computer-aided design and manufacturing (CAD/CAM) whereby small manufacturers can design curvy 3-D shapes on the computer and transfer the design effortlessly to the mould-maker, cutting out endless iterations of model-making and tooling which would otherwise price production out of reach.

But industrial design is being brought to bear in simpler ways too – equipment racks, for instance. These were once uniformly black, foursquare, functional constructions. Compare and contrast the current variety of tastefully profiled glass, wood and brushed aluminium. Best of all are racks purpose-made for a range of equipment, where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, as with the current Tube Technology gear. Out of context, each part looks somewhere between dull and bizarre, but assembled it is a truly gorgeous system.

Due credit must of course be given to trail-blazers in the field, not all of whom survived in business to see the fruition of their vision. Lecson amps, Michell turntables, Blue Room speakers and others all presaged the trend. Now, the realisation that 'hi-fi jewellery' is neither an oxymoron nor damnation with faint praise will, I believe, help a new generation to discover the joys of high quality music reproduction in the home. Let us rejoice!

*Richard Black is a professional musician and experienced recording engineer. He knows a thing or three about hi-fi technology too*

# TECHNO

TECHNOLOGY EXPLORED

YOU CAN NEVER HAVE  
TOO MUCH POWER!



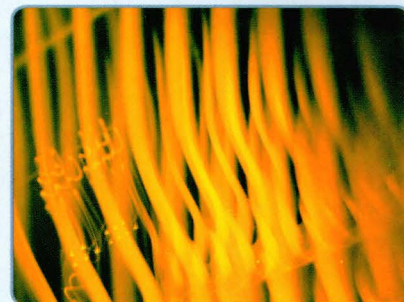
In the last *Techno* we looked at the general subject of audio power. Where does it all come from? Looking upstream from the amp's output stage, it comes from the internal power supply, the home and street mains wiring and ultimately a huge rotative machine somewhere miles away. Now the basic criterion for an amp's power supply is simple enough: it needs to be able to deliver the notional rated power without failing. That's about it. So why then does Cyrus (see reviews p72, p80), among others, offer power supply upgrades?

The power supply's job is to supply a steady voltage (or two) to the amplifier proper, irrespective of how much current is drawn from it. There are basically two kinds of supply, regulated and unregulated. The regulated version uses electronics – in fact, an amplifier of sorts – to keep the output voltage constant, while the unregulated one relies on the mains voltage, plus transformer and capacitor performance, for stability.

Most power amps have an unregulated supply, which means that the 'steady' voltage actually varies as current is drawn. This only slightly decreases notional output power but can have a quite nasty effect on the whole circuit, effectively producing distortion, hence reducing clarity. Bigger transformers and/or capacitors do a lot to fix that. They also help in regulated supplies, because the electronic stabilisation has only a finite degree of effectiveness. Obviously one can upgrade the electronics too!

There are other effects. The relatively high currents that flow within the parts of a power supply can cause interference inside the amp case due to the magnetic fields they create. Ironically, big transformers and capacitors tend to cause peak currents to be higher so the potential for interference is greater. This is why many power supply upgrades involve an external box containing these components, since physical separation is a highly effective way of dealing with interference.

Even the diodes, which convert alternating current (AC) to direct current (DC) can have an effect. They switch on and off rapidly and can



**“Instead of the power supply, one can fiddle with the amp to make it less sensitive to disturbances.”**

produce bursts of high frequency oscillation which again leads to internal interference. You can get diodes that produce lower noise levels but they cost more and naturally (since we're admittedly talking about relatively small effects in the overall scheme of things) most equipment uses cheap ones.

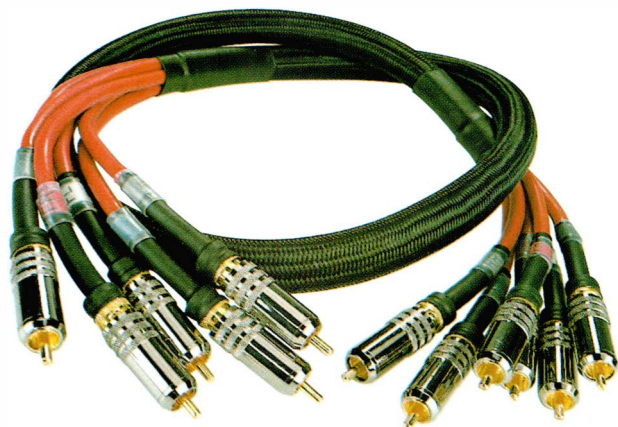
There's another way of looking at the whole power supply problem. Although interference, noise and voltage dips are produced by the supply, it is the amplifier circuit that responds. Instead of fiddling with the power supply, one can fiddle with the amp to make it less sensitive to such disturbances. Anything from a substantial circuit change to re-routing some wires can have the desired effect.

Good designers will of course already have done that to some degree, but more can always be done – of course one must be careful to ensure that other aspects of the amp's behaviour don't suffer as a side effect. And then there is always a point of diminishing returns, not to mention a budget. In the end, all design is a compromise between a whole raft of factors, and from an aftermarket point of view upgrading the power supply is often practical and viable. What's certain, however, is that the perfect power supply is no more realisable than the perfect amplifier. **HFC**

*Richard Black*



## ESSENTIALS



### TCI VIPER 6 SIX-WAY INTERCONNECT £180 (1M SET)

⊕ We reviewed the basic Viper some years ago, and liked it. The design hasn't changed – it's still a pseudo-balanced design made from good materials and fitted with high-quality locking phono plugs – but TCI now does a set of six for surround applications. One might think that surround would be more forgiving of cables than stereo since each channel has less work to do in creating an image, but this little lot, dropped into a medium-grade multichannel set-up, had an immediate and obvious effect in improving clarity and intelligibility of speech and music. Strongly recommended as a first upgrade for any surround system. ☎ 07710 196949 🌐 www.true-colours.com

### WIREWORLD TERRA 5 SPEAKER CABLE £5/ M (TERMINATION £30)

⊕ One of Wireworld's cheapest cables, the Terra 5 still employs the company's trademark 'Symmetricoax' design, which gives it unusually high capacitance and also brings the benefits of screening (though interference is seldom a problem on speaker cables). Still, the construction does seem to have its benefits. Despite fairly high DC resistance, the sound is unusually clear and extended for a budget cable. Bass is deep, powerful and tuneful while treble is quite noticeably sweeter than with most competing wires. Stereo imaging is also very fine, and image depth definitely exceeds expectations.

☎ 020 8991 9200 🌐 www.wireworldaudio.co.uk



### ZERO AUTOFORMERS IMPEDANCE-MATCHING TRANSFORMER £252 (PAIR)

⊕ Amps don't always work at their best into eight ohms, and some speakers are even lower impedance than that. The Autoformers act as impedance-matching transformers that present a higher speaker impedance to the amp, promising lowered distortion at the expense of ultimate loudness. Various impedance ratios are available, though 2:1 and 4:1 should cover it for most purposes. Despite a small tonality change in most cases and an occasional slight loss of bass clarity, midrange and treble gained in detail and vibrancy, making for improved communication and long-term listenability, a real net benefit.

🌐 www.zeroimpedance.com

### WALKER AUDIO SUPER SILVER TREATMENT CONTACT ENHANCER £52

⊕ Unlike Caig and most other contact treatments, this one is actually conductive, consisting of silver flakes suspended in jelly. But does this necessarily make it better? On phono plugs and so on it seems equally effective, though we would expect it to last longer in applications where plugs are often mated and unmated. Where this really scores is on internal applications such as valve pins, which are notoriously difficult to treat. It's fiddly to do and requires some care, but for the dedicated valve-lover the benefits are clear. Antique kit can benefit from Caig, then dry wiping, then SST. Expensive, but long-lasting and worth the trouble.

☎ 01282 867819 🌐 www.walkeraudio.com



## PARTINGTON DREADNOUGHT BROADSIDE SPEAKER STANDS £239 (60CM PAIR)

⊕ The Partington 'Dreadnought' range has a fine reputation which this new model seeks to build on. It's an uncommonly solid, weighty and acoustically dead design, with resin-loaded top and bass and fillable columns, with four spiked feet. We found it an ideal base for a variety of speakers, especially small but punchy models which can typically deliver their best bass when sturdily mounted in this fashion. Larger standmounts also appreciate it, and in all cases treble is clear and free of confusion. It's worth experimenting with spikes in or out – on carpeted floors we found the sound a little clearer with spikes removed. Highly recommendable, however used.

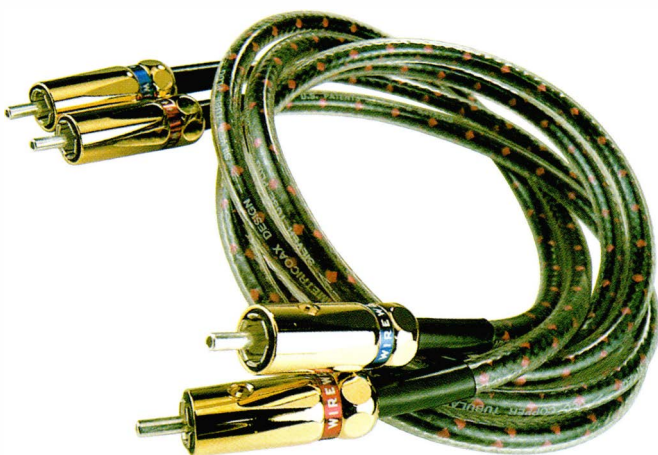
☎ 01474 709299 🌐 www.partingtonspeakerstands.com



## WIREWORLD EQUINOX 5 ANALOGUE INTERCONNECT £220 (1M PAIR)

⊕ Wireworld's interconnects also use 'Symmetricoax' construction, though this is relatively less radical since most interconnects are coaxial anyway. Sound seems a fair match for the speaker cables, though not quite as distinctive and tonally just a little dark compared with other leading competitors. There's certainly plenty of information, and the treble is particularly praiseworthy for its smooth and unfussy extension. With full-bodied and clear bass too, it's well worth a punt.

☎ 020 8991 9200 🌐 www.wireworldaudio.co.uk



## VAN DEN HUL THE NAME ANALOGUE INTERCONNECT £45 (1M PAIR)

⊕ Dutch firm van den Hul realises that a good video cable can also make a great audio cable, and so you can buy this cable in pairs for stereo or video or in sixes (at a saving) for surround sound. It will also, of course, cover digital audio perfectly happily. Unusually for vdH it uses a solid centre conductor but otherwise is a fairly standard high-quality coaxial based on silver-plated copper. As for sound, it's a very clear and detailed performer, in the manner of other recent vdH interconnects, though it doesn't seem to have quite the insight of their best. All the same, it's a bargain, offering as it does a degree of analysis not often found in budget cables, allied to smooth and beguiling tonal qualities and plentiful extension in both bass and treble when it's required.

☎ 01235 511166 🌐 www.vandenhul.com



## PARTINGTON MINIM EQUIPMENT SUPPORT £389 (FIVE SHELVES)

⊕ Nothing remarkably out of the ordinary with this smart metal-and-glass rack, but it has one nifty feature that many others lack: it is adjustable. A little fiddling with an Allen key frees the shelves from their support pillars and allows infinite adjustability. Five shelves will be on offer in production units (we reviewed a four-shelf prototype). In terms of sound, it isn't entirely neutral, and like most of its breed, it imparts a little 'zing' and (illusory) speed to the sound. But it's not at all an unpleasant effect, and overall it's very nicely balanced for the price. Versatility is enhanced with adjustable feet/spikes too.

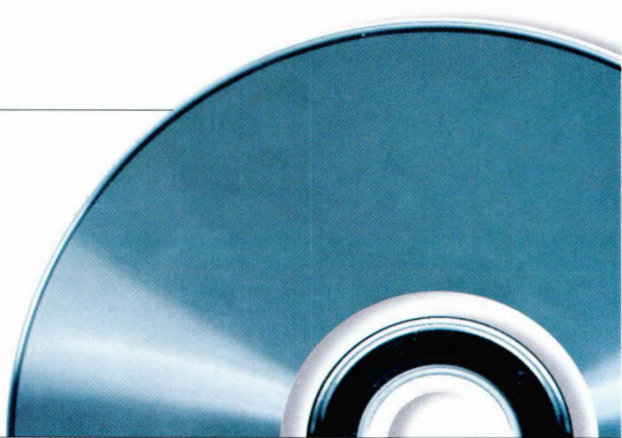
☎ 01474 709299 🌐 www.partingtonspeakerstands.com

# ChoiceCuts



This month's varied musical morsels

Reviews by Alvin Gold, Jason Kennedy, Dave Oliver,  
Mark Prendergast, Phil Strongman, Nigel Williamson



## AUDIOPHILE VINYL

### CAPTAIN BEEFHEART AND THE MAGIC BAND

Safe As Milk

Buddah/Simply Vinyl 2x125g vinyl

Music: Featuring Ry Cooder alongside the first incarnation of the Magic Band, the legendary Captain's 1967 debut is a vital collection of 12 songs including the hard and fast *Electricity*, a track whose age is only given away by the sixties sound of the recording. It's blues, but abstracted and twisted in a way that had never been heard before, so no-one mistook it for the Captain's heroes Bo Diddley or Howlin' Wolf even though his voice clearly emulated the latter. The second disc contains alternate takes and instrumental cuts from the same period, including the track *Safe As Milk* which is not on the original album. ★★★★★

Sound: While there's a strong sense of the era about the sound of this album and it could hardly be described as dynamic, the music is so strong that such factors are mere details, and it certainly sounds a lot better than the CD. ★★★ JK

### RAMON MORRIS

Sweet Sister Funk

Groove Merchant/Pure Pleasure 180g vinyl

Music: Tenor saxophonist Ramon Morris paid his dues in Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers and had a smooth but clearly jazz funk oriented style that makes this 1973 release a pleasure for anyone who appreciates the finer points of the genre. Produced by Sonny Lester,

*Sweet Sister Funk* mixes funky rhythms with great chord changes. The bass playing is as nimble as you like while the drumming is often restrained to the point where it's more like percussion. This tends to highlight the contributions of Morris and trumpet player Cecil Bridgewater, not to mention Albert Dailey's groove-laden electric piano which takes turns with the sax to great effect. ★★★

Sound: Mastered by Kevin Gray at Acoustech this is a smooth sounding album which is a little restrained in dynamic terms but reflective of the balance that was preferred at the time. ★★★ JK

These LPs are available from Vivante: ☎ 01293 822186 ● www.vivante.co.uk and Simply Vinyl: ☎ 020 8545 8580 ● www.simplyvinyl.com

## COMPACT DISC & VINYL



### THE BLUE NILE

High

Sanctuary

Music: With just four albums over 20 years, the Blue Nile rarely feel the pressure of deadlines to hurry their muse, which comes as it will and is given plenty of time to take shape. They're like a familiar and much-loved uncle who visits infrequently, but always delights with his marvellous gifts. And marvellous, in its quiet and somewhat familiar way, is what *High* is. It doesn't depart from the Blue Nile template of seeping melancholy and yearning romance; Paul Buchanan's swooning voice over a wash of synth-generated strings and precise, intimate guitar musings. Like their other albums, it's a beautiful, spare, lonely treat. ★★★

Sound: The band claim not to spend much time in the studio, but this still manages to sound lush but spare, a big sound for lonely rooms. ★★★★★ DO



### LEONARD COHEN

Dear Heather

Columbia

Music: Leonard Cohen is 70 this year and his voice seems to have dropped yet another octave so that it now rumbles somewhere around his boot straps. But the only rock 'n' roll poet who can hold a candle to Dylan has lost none of his lyricism on his first album of new material since 2001's *Ten New Songs*. Like Dylan's *Time Out Of Mind*, many of the half-spoken songs deal with intimations of mortality, from the opener *Go No More A-Roving* to the extraordinary closer *The Faith*, while *On That Day* has to be the most profound song yet written about the post-9/11 world. ★★★★★

Sound: Girlie choruses (*On That Day*), a late night jazz feel (*Morning Glory*) and strings (*The Letters*) cleverly complement Cohen's tuneless but undeniably sensual voice. ★★★ NW



### CATHIE

In The Flesh

Purelove

Music: It's time young Cathie got a big break – perhaps her forthcoming Channel 4 TV appearance will swing it – for each of her albums has proved to be better than its predecessors. This fourth shot, however, scales surprising new heights with its 16 tracks that are, by turns, breathy, personal, uplifting, dynamic, intense, vulnerable and, well, magical. Forget Norah Jones, forget Joss Stone and you could even forget Joni Mitchell (for a little while). This is that rare thing, a quality acoustic album that's simply astounding – pure music from Purelove. Brilliant. ★★★★★

Sound: Intimate and without trickery, and though some of the ephemeral touches work best through good headphones, this'll more than sing out through any half-decent system. ★★★★★ PS



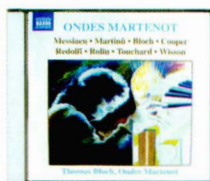
### U2

How To Dismantle An Atomic Bomb

Island

Music: It's become a tradition that every few years U2 resubmit their application for the title of the world's greatest rock band and, as you would expect, everything about *How To Dismantle An Atomic Bomb* is writ large, from the epic sound to the weighty subject matter. Bono doesn't do intimate, so a song about his dying father (*Sometimes You Can't Make It On Your Own*) has the same anthemic grandiosity as songs about Middle East conflict (*Love, Peace Or Else*) and Third World debt (*Crumbs From Your Table*). This can create a one-dimensional feel, as if everything is being broadcast through a megaphone. That said though, this is still a great U2 album and arguably their best since *Achtung Baby*. ★★★★★

Sound: The overall sound of *How To Dismantle An Atomic Bomb* is largely dominated by the Edge's unique guitar work. But underneath the polished veneer there are echoes of U2's earlier earthiness, which is likely to come courtesy of producer Steve Lillywhite, who manned the controls on their first three albums. ★★★★★ NW



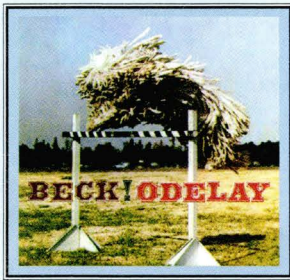
### ONDES MARTENOT

Works by Messiaen and others

Thomas Bloch, Phil Minton, Fernand Quattrocchi, Pomeranian Quartet, Paderewski Philharmonic Orchestra etc. Naxos 8.555779

Music: I first became fascinated by the Ondes Martenot through the maniacal dervish-like contribution it makes to Messiaen's *Turangalila* symphony. To this day Messiaen remains the most celebrated composer for this oddly compelling precursor to the synthesiser, which was developed in the early 20th century, and has a repertoire of around 1,000 works. This overview ranges from the gripping and Kraftwerk-like (Tomas Bloch's *Formule*) to the relatively banal (*Martin's Fantasia*). ★★★★★

Sound: The recordings were made around the world and recording quality is uneven, ranging from serviceable to excellent. ★★★★★ AG



## THIS MONTH'S CLASSIC HI-FI TEST DISC "His most imaginative and energised album."

**BECK** Odelay Geffen Records

**Music:** Beck's fourth album is also his most imaginative and energised. *Odelay* is a spirited and lively set that's hot to let rip, albeit in an oblique fashion that shakes things up in constantly engaging fashion. A lot of the songs use samples from soul and funk sources, drummer Bernard Purdie being a clear favourite. It opens with the storming *Devil's Haircut*, that twists and turns, bleeding some gorgeous electric guitar in the process. Things calm down a

bit for the other classics, *The New Pollution*, *Novacane* and *Where It's At*, but the standard remains high throughout. If you like his more recent work, this 1995 classic will be an ear-opening treat. ★★★★★

**Sound:** There is a lot of sampling and manipulating of sound on this album so it's hardly a purist's choice, but if you want to hear how your system copes with density and differences in sound sources, it's ideal. ★★★★★ JK



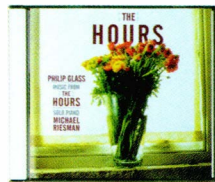
### TOM WAITS

Real Gone

Epitaph

**Music:** Tom Waits has been refining his distinctive brand of junkyard blues since 1983's *Swordfishtrombones*. Yes, he's been largely remaking that album ever since, but no, the exercise has never been boring, and his latest proves that his muse is still perched precariously on his shoulder, whispering sweet and probably barely coherent nothings in his ear. The voice gets further out there, the music more lost, but in his 55th year, the old scarecrow is still howling at the moon, producing uncompromising music fuelled by a new box of tricks, including a reliance on 'vocal percussion' and rhythms ranging from his standard twisted blues and polkas to cut-up funk, Afro-Cuban beats, mambo and jazz inflections. ★★★★★

**Sound:** His voice sounds like a barking dog, and the band sound like they've made their instruments from wasteground junk, but it takes nous in the studio to make all this coherent, and Waits, with co-writer/producer/wife Kathleen Brennan has plenty of experience. He's an original, and untouchable in his field. ★★★★★ DO



### PHILIP GLASS

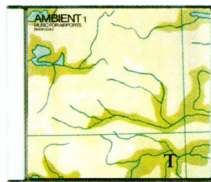
Music From The Hours

Michael Riesman (piano)

Orange Mountain Music 0012

**Music:** Probably of greatest interest to those who have seen the film, this is not the original soundtrack album, or even the piano-led orchestral suite that was spun off from it, but a piano reduction made by Riesman. Musically it is typical Glass, which means you'll love it or hate it. The music is repetitive and overtly poignant in tone, yet emotionally vapid at the deepest level. ★★

**Sound:** On a system with wide bandwidth speakers, the sound opens out a little, but through compact speakers it doesn't really work. Louder passages lack force, almost as though the volume was turned up to achieve the required dynamics, instead of being an organic response to the pianist's interaction with his instrument. ★★ AG



### BRIAN ENO

Ambient 1: Music For Airports

Virgin/EMI

**Music:** Utilising white key piano harmony, unblemished tone colours and a general ambition to produce calm in the listener, Eno made his most significant contribution to 20th Century music in 1978. Robert Wyatt plays gorgeously unresolved piano on 1/1, Christa Fast, Christine Gomez and Inge Zeininger are the girlie chorus singing seven pitches of "ah" on 2/1, the results achieved by the random splicing of tape-loops. And Kraftwerk producer Conny Plank conjured the grand synthesizer finale 2/2 which comes over like a requiem for the future. Peerless. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Since Eno utilised notes with ambiguous key centres your speakers will hum with a glorious shimmer, especially on 1/1. ★★★★★ MP

## DVD-AUDIO & SACD

### BRYN TERFEL

Wagner

Claudio Abbado (cond), Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra

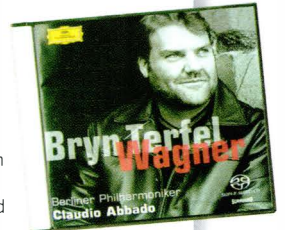
SACD (stereo/multi-channel SACD plus stereo CD layer)

DGG 471 638-2

**Music:** With his rich, liquid baritone voice, Bryn Terfel's first full disc of Wagner, recorded live, includes arias from *Der Fliegende Holländer*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *Tannhäuser*, *Parsifal* and *Die Walküre* (coupled with the overture from *Der Fliegende*). It could be

damned as just another compilation of bleeding chunks, but it works better than expected as a programme, and acts as an excellent introduction to Terfel, accompanied by an orchestra under Abbado that has the quality and passion to do justice to the powerful scores. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Recorded at the Berlin Philharmonie in 2000 and 2001, the sound is expansive and refined, with real weight, especially from the SACD layer, and Terfel's voice has the projection and power to compete with the orchestra when playing full throttle, a tribute to Bryn's artistry which has been well captured by the recording engineers. ★★★★★ AG



### LILIUM

Short Stories

DVD-Audio (24/96 surround, DTS 5.1)

Glitterhouse Records

**Music:** Liliium are Pascal Humbert and Jean-Yves Tolà, the rhythm section of alt.country outfit 16 Horsepower.

For this project they have brought in the likes of Tom Barman of dEUS and John Grant of The Czars as well as 16 Horsepower cohort David Eugene Edwards. The music they make is good, miserable stuff, introspective to the point of shoe gazing, which all makes for some remarkably poignant songs. There's a strong gothic edge which reminds of Nick Cave and the variety of singers means that there's plenty of contrast between songs yet a clear sense of cohesion. And if it's a worry that the anchor throughout is the drum and bass of Humbert and Tolà don't fret, their efforts are no more obvious than with any regular band – this is in fact a remarkably successful collaborative effort. ★★★★★

**Sound:** This is one of the best sounding non-audiophile discs around. Instruments sound incredibly real and there's a sense of dynamics to the sound that is rare on commercial albums. ★★★★★ JK



### THE POLYPHONIC SPREE

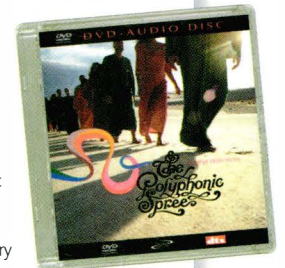
Together We're Heavy

DVD-Audio (24/96 surround, DTS 5.1 surround, PCM stereo)

Hollywood

**Music:** The second album from Tim DeLaughter's extensive toga-garbed crew builds on last year's well-received *The Beginning Stages Of...*, even to the extent of picking up where the original's track listing left off, beginning with *Section 11 (A Long Day Continues)*. Musically it's in the same vein of psychedelic pop – the sort familiar to devotees of late period Beach Boys, Rotary Connection or the Flaming Lips. Tim still has a penchant for sweeping feelgood statements married to extended uplifting choruses, which is all very much in keeping with the band's religious cult image. The aim is clearly euphoria through good vibes, though there is still something of their tendency to bombast. ★★

**Sound:** A big band deserves a big sound but thankfully the temptation to expand the sound in the transfer to multichannel has been resisted in favour of subtle effects for the most part, with a full-on surround effect only coming through on the (numerous) big choruses. ★★★★★ DO



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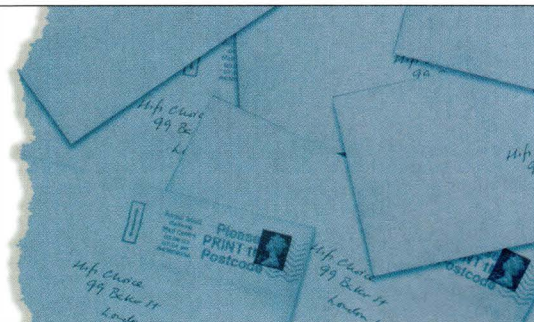


# ChoiceMail



The pick of this month's best letters

Write to: Hi-Fi Choice, Future Publishing Ltd, 99 Baker Street, London W1U 6FP. Or email your letters to [dan.george@futurenet.co.uk](mailto:dan.george@futurenet.co.uk)



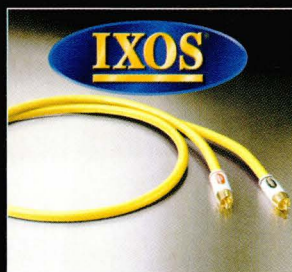
## ★ LETTER OF THE MONTH

### FAB DAB?

I bemoaned the BBC's decision to put quantity before quality when carving up the DAB landscape, and I echo your views about broadcasters often not even making the best use of DAB. But wait – is something going on behind the scenes? Has the quality of BBC DAB crept upwards lately? Certainly Radio 3 broadcasts seem to have become a little smoother, with less harshness. The Proms on 4 September were an interesting example where the better points of DAB (low noise floor and potential dynamic range) were fully exploited.

**Chip** via email

**HFC** Given the falling cost of data transmission and processing it seems likely that important Radio 3 broadcasts were sent uncompressed throughout the chain, until MPEG 2 coding at the transmitter. The Beeb is due for new coders soon.



WIN IXOS INTERCONNECTS!

The author of our letter of the month receives a free pair of Ixos XHA606 interconnects worth £60, featuring Gamma Geometry and silver plated OFC conductors for superior sound. So get writing! (250 words max please...)



Above: Sony's STR-DB795, Brit-tuned and proud!

### BRIT POP

My Sony AV receiver has a red label saying 'UK Sound Tuned'. I've seen other Sony kit with the same label. What does this mean, exactly? Is our British hearing so different from the rest of the world? (Obviously the Yanks are different because they produce things like Billy Ray Cyrus and Britney).

**Woody** via email

**HFC** Some products from big multinational brands are 'tuned' locally to suit specific markets. There is an acceptance that tastes and expectations differ from region to region – for example, Japan, the US, Germany and the UK are all perceived to have their own preferred 'sounds', and accordingly slight adjustments are made to tonal priorities and so on. There may also be different technical requirements from region to region.

For some years now, Sony UK has made a habit of tinkering with the internals of certain kit to better suit British tastes and our perception of 'musicality'. The 'UK tuned' badge also adds a certain kudos to what otherwise may be seen as another faceless product from the Far East.

### MANUALS FOR THE WEAK

I read and laughed at Chris Taylor's 'rattle out of pram' letter Handbags At Dawn (HFC 259). Perhaps he should contact his counterpart in the Brighton branch of Sevenoaks Sound and Vision? He managed to switch the Marantz PM7200 between class AB and A, while still powered up, with no problems at all! Perhaps Mr Taylor should try *using* the amp instead of reading the instruction manual to get a 'true' feel for its working.

**“Obviously the Yanks hear differently because they produced Billy Ray Cyrus and Britney.”**

To (mis) quote Mr Taylor: “As a member of the paying public, it would be appreciated if retailers knew exactly what they were talking about before they sell a product with incorrect and therefore misleading information”.

**JRKO** via email

### LETTER FROM AMERICA

In recent months the Spondor S series loudspeakers have received rave reviews in magazines such as *Hi-Fi News* and *Stereophile*. At the same time, you have reviewed the same series with a lukewarm reaction. I'm confused – are there things that your reviewers hear that others don't? Or, do other reviewers hear qualities in these speakers that you don't? Do you just not like Spondor? I mean, it doesn't make sense that all the others are wrong and you are right.

**Cyrus Elm** Washington DC, USA

**HFC** We have had mixed results from the new S series range, with certain models proving themselves, and others failing to excite. Recently, both the S6e and S9e floorstanders have been awarded commendable, if not class-leading overall scores of 83 and 85 per cent respectively. Of course, hi-fi is incredibly subjective and we don't claim to hear things that other reviewers don't. ▶



Above: Krell KAV400xi - at £2,698, be very wary of reselling by post

## “Sometimes reviews mention ‘excessive’ sibilance. But what is excessive?”

❑ However, unlike some other magazines where almost every review is glowing, we do attempt to give a useful verdict – and we stand by our reviewing processes as the most rigorous in the business. In our most recent Spendor review (*Ultimate Group Test, HFC 257*), the £1,500 S6e didn't acquit itself badly, but was simply outclassed by the competition.

### HISS OFF

I seem to have a particular aversion to sibilance. Sometimes reviews mention 'excessive' sibilance. The big question is what is excessive? Is it merely personal preference? Do some brands over-emphasise sibilance? Perhaps microphones need to be redesigned or their position changed to avoid it – I notice when doing radio (the odd guest spot) that speaking at a greater angle to the mike lowers both sibilance and chestiness.

**Detlev Vosgerau** South Australia

**HFC** We would expect microphone designers to create a product that captures every subtle nuance of the voice without adding any coloration. It is then down to the studio engineer to EQ the incoming signal but sadly, many a fine album has been sabotaged at the mixing desk. You might prefer equipment with a softer focus – try some of the Italian electronics such as Audio Analogue and Unison and avoid metal drive units in speakers – particularly if your listening room is 'live'.

### WARNING – BEWARE FRAUDSTERS

Some months ago I advertised an amp for £450 on a couple of classified websites on the net. Since then, I've had over 30 unusual emails offering to buy it.

The 'buyer' claims that he/she has a client in the UK who owes them money and this person will send a cheque of between £2,000 and £5,000 to me. I am then to send the balance to a 'shipper' through Western Union money transfer.

At first I thought it was genuine and packaged up the amp for despatch and found out about Western Union payments. In the meantime, the cheque bounced. I have had at least six other cheques since then and all of these are poor quality fakes. Be very careful if selling expensive hi-fi equipment.

**Max** via email

**HFC** This is a variant of one of the many money scams that are commonly believed to originate in Nigeria that have been landing in email inboxes everywhere. Sellers of various high-value items (not just hi-fi) are sent excessive fake cheques, and then invited to wire back the remaining balance. The problem lies in the UK banking system – banks are obliged to 'clear' funds and make monies available to you within five working days, but this doesn't make the cheque good. Fakes can take weeks to be detected, by which time you've lost your money and there's nothing you can do. You have been warned.

Below: The (commendable) Spendor S6e



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## @ ONLINE FORUM

A few choice comments plucked from our online forum. Join in the fun at [www.hifichoice.co.uk](http://www.hifichoice.co.uk)

Why are so many hi-fi buffs also into jazz? I'm not saying that there are none among us metallers, or the Pink-lovers, but there do seem to be a high number of jazz followers...

**Mikehit**

... I've no idea, but I wish there weren't as many at hi-fi shows – they would then be much more enjoyable!

**MartinC**

Have you ever acquired a piece of new kit only to have it damaged within a matter of weeks? I still shudder to think about my cat sitting proudly on top of my Monitor Audio Silver 5is when my wife decided to reposition him. He freaked and tried to hold on, first to the lovely rosemah finish, then the drivers. Result – a £110 bill.

**KingsXFan**

The quality of CD recordings seems to be a major bottleneck. Even recordings by big names such as Deutsche Grammophon, Philips and Sony are often sub standard. I enjoyed the free Naim CD with *HFC 259* though – t's a revelation...

**Blu\_max**

...I must agree. It's very well recorded...

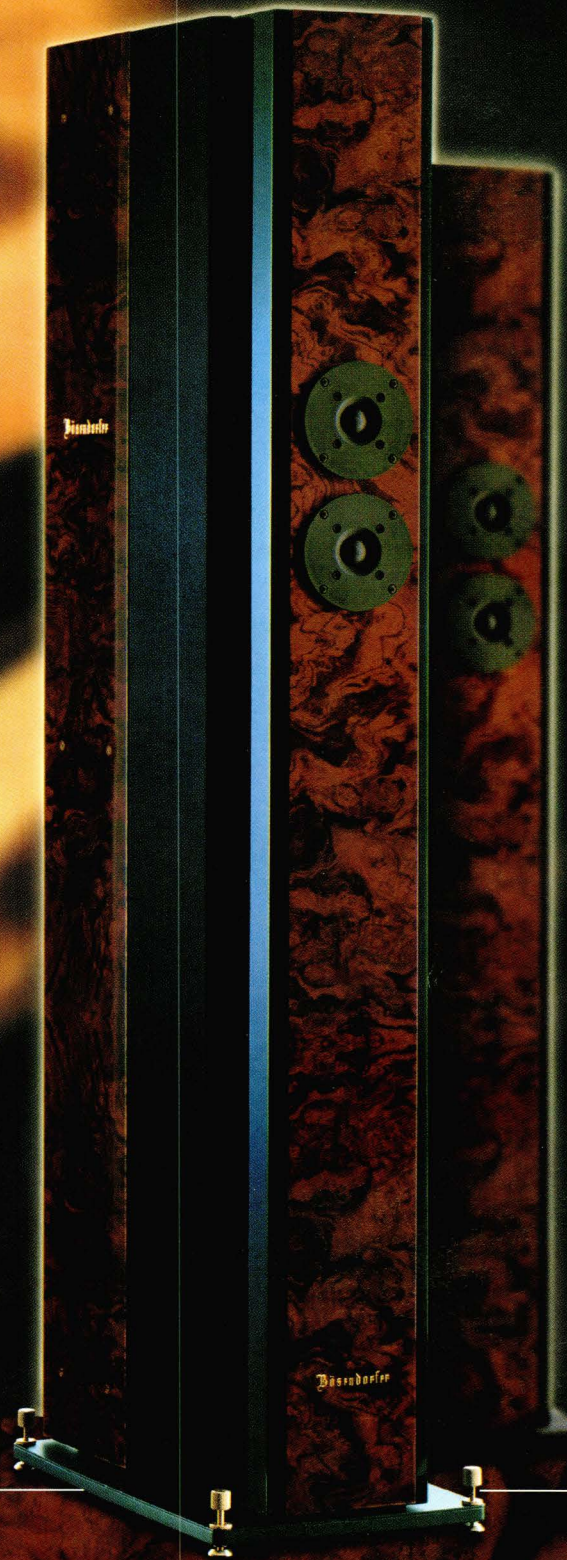
**Jezzor**

...I agree, these freebie discs from Naim and Linn always sound great, but the music itself is only fit for lifts!

**Gkold**

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-  Wide Dispersion
-  3D Audio
-  Time Coherence
-  Amplifier Friendly



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# THE HI-FI AWARDS

## Welcome to the *Hi-Fi Choice* Awards 2004-2005

Spread across the next 32 pages you'll find our pick of the best hi-fi components currently available, painstakingly plucked from each relevant product category with prices ranging from entry-level to the aspirational high end.

As you'd expect from *Hi-Fi Choice*, this is no flippant, Oscars-style ceremony. Instead, we have studiously filtered all our favourite products to come up with a list of Award-winning components to suit every pocket – after all, how could you possibly compare the best CD player costing less than £500 to the best priced at over £5,000? Both deserve to be judged against their peers, and that's just what you get with *Hi-Fi Choice*.

The process we undertake in judging our Awards is painstaking. We've listened to the kit, measured it and sought the opinions of blind listening teams before extensive consultation with a judging panel of exceptional experience – the *HFC* reviewing team! We then gradually whittled down our list of both stereo and multichannel components until we reached a final, democratically agreed selection, with three products in each price category ranked in order of Gold, Silver and Bronze. The result is an Awards edition for those who really care about quality – hi-fi awards you can really trust.

Of course, anyone's choice of hi-fi will ultimately come down to personal taste, and you'll find many other fine components worthy of your audition list nestling in our *Buyers Bible* section at the back of the magazine. Yet all our special Award winners have succeeded due to their exceptional mix of qualities at each individual price point – whether the gong is Gold, Silver or Bronze, these are products you simply *have* to hear. And since every product featured will be available well into 2005 and beyond, the shortlist for your next upgrade starts here...

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**BEST CD PLAYER UNDER £500**



**Cambridge Audio Azur 640C**

PRICE £250 CONTACT ☎ 0870 900 1000 🌐 www.cambridge-audio.co.uk

Cambridge Audio has become a lean, aggressive budget brand with the Azur range – and with this stunning CD player in particular. Sleek silver design and the far-from-budget feel of the casework create an excellent first impression, as does the elegant remote. Most importantly, it performs, producing a smooth, coherent presentation with trad jazz, and the rhythmically elastic grooves of Missy Elliott with equal aplomb.



**Marantz CD7300**

PRICE £350 CONTACT ☎ 01753 680868 🌐 www.marantz.com



**Arcam DiVA CD73T**

PRICE £400 CONTACT ☎ 01223 203200 🌐 www.arcam.co.uk

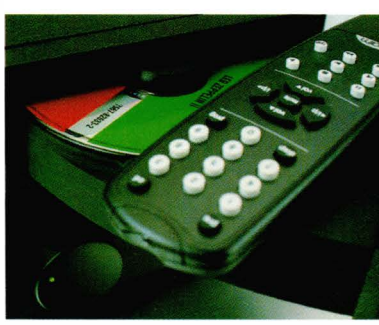
**BEST CD PLAYER £500-£1,000**



**Naim CD5i**

PRICE £825 CONTACT ☎ 01722 332266 🌐 www.naim-audio.com

Naim has employed the 'evolution not revolution' concept here. Based on the CD5, this new design loses some upgradeability and concentrates solely on sonics, improving performance while at the same time reducing the cost. With a highly resonance-controlled transport and a DAC chosen purely on performance grounds, the CD5i will provide a breath of fresh air to any sub-£3,000 system. Tight, clean and vibrantly detailed, it's a worthy winner.



**Arcam DiVA CD192**

PRICE £850 CONTACT ☎ 01223 203200 🌐 www.arcam.co.uk



**Roksan Kandy MkIIID**

PRICE £650 CONTACT ☎ 01235 511166 🌐 www.roksan.co.uk

**BEST CD PLAYER £1,000-£2,000**



**Cyrus CD8x/PSX-R**

PRICE £1,200 (E800/ E400) CONTACT ☎ 01480 435577 @ www.cyrusaudio.com

The addition of one lower-case 'x' doesn't quite do justice to the work that's gone into upgrading the CD8. The CD platform, transport and a completely redesigned PCB mean this is much more than a superficial

overhaul. And it shows. On its own, it's a confident, open and detailed-sounding player, but with the addition of the optional PSX-R outboard power supply it leaps several more notches up the performance ladder. Excellent!



**Audio Analogue Maestro 192/24**

PRICE £1,650 CONTACT ☎ 01753 652669 @ www.audioanalogue.net



**Primare D30.2**

PRICE £1,500 CONTACT ☎ 01423 359054 @ www.primare.net

**BEST CD PLAYER £2,000-£5,000**

**Resolution Audio Opus 21**

PRICE £2,850 CONTACT ☎ 01277 227355 @ www.resolutionaudio.com

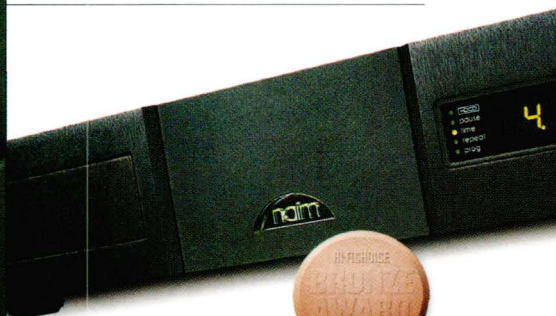
Resolution Audio is a small, resolutely two-channel San Francisco-based brand; it's also an apt name to describe the performance of the Opus 21 CD player. This two-box player splits its functions simply: one unit contains the transport, DAC and

output stage, while the other houses the display and power supplies. The result? Dynamic energy, stereo imaging, subtle detailing and a naturalness of tone not often heard from CD player. It's hardly cheap, but it's an audiophile bargain.



**Wadia 302**

PRICE £3,999 CONTACT ☎ 01992 573030 @ www.wadia.com



**Naim CDX2**

PRICE £2,700 CONTACT ☎ 01722 332266 @ www.naim-audio.com

## BEST CD PLAYER OVER £5,000



### Naim CDS3/XPS2

PRICE £7,244 (£4,875 / £2,369) CONTACT ☎ 01799 531999 # www.cdscitd.co.uk

**N**aim's flagship two-box disc spinner is a truly great CD player – one of the most naturally engaging at any price. The CDS3 is the player proper, but it's inoperable without its matching power supply, the XPS2. When combined, the resulting sound has a

transparency, delicacy and natural top-end openness that takes it remarkably close to the strengths of high-end vinyl replay – and that's praise indeed! For the love of a cherished CD collection, this is a player to which audiophiles and music lovers should aspire.



### Wadia 861se

PRICE £9,999  
CONTACT ☎ 01992 573030 @ www.wadia.com



### Chord Blu/DAC 64

PRICE £6,190 (£4,195 / £1,995)  
CONTACT ☎ 01622 721444 @ www.chordelectronics.co.uk

## INFO >> DISC PLAYERS



**S**ome believe that the dedicated CD player has had its day, and that the future of audio lies with multiformat AV disc players, hard disk-based servers and sundry PC-linked playback devices. At HFC, we'd agree – certainly in terms of a macro view of the market. But that's not the whole story...

In hi-fi circles, the age of the dedicated CD player is far from over – that's why we've devoted three pages of our Awards to a comprehensive summation of the current state of the art. True enough, unit sales of CD separates are a fraction of what they were, manufacture is now left almost solely to smaller specialist companies and dedicated audio CD mechanisms have become much harder for manufacturers to source. Yet as long as we continue to have large, expanding and treasured CD collections, a dedicated CD player by and large remains the best way to make the most of your discs.

There are various reasons for this. One is that the increased complexity brought about by the inclusion of video circuits and so on can interfere with the audio signal. Another is that through two decades of experimentation and acquired knowledge, the sheer variety of finely tuned designs allows the consumer to choose the ideal candidate for his/her own budget, musical taste and sonic preferences.

That said, the concept of the multiformat disc player is equally valid for the hi-fi/music enthusiast. Across the next few pages you will see some of the best, beginning with a selection of DVD players from £150 to over £6,000. None of these will match our Award-winning CD players in corresponding price categories with straightforward CD replay, but they're improving in this regard and the better machines sound more than respectable, and in some cases genuinely impressive.

What's more, all do a splendid job with DVD-Video discs, and all play at least one hi-res multichannel music format – DVD-Audio and/or SACD (DVD players that are compatible with both are commonly termed 'universal disc players' – a handy catch-all solution that's improving technically with each generation).

In the greater commercial world, sales of these two formats have hardly set the music world alight, yet their sonic potential remains undimmed. Opinions differ as to which format is technically superior, but whether or not a manufacturer supports either or both has as much to do with politics and production/development costs as any technical or philosophical judgements. In software terms, SACD continues to have the quantitative edge, with a good number of impressive remasters of past rock classics and plenty of excellent classically-oriented releases. But neither format is easy to find on the high street, and the internet remains the best place to browse.

A further disc-playing category is the audio-only SACD player, a multiformat machine that eschews DVD playback in favour of just music on CD and SACD (sometimes multichannel, sometimes stereo only). There are only a handful of these on the market, but a number are excellent with both formats (see p37).

Finally, a word about hard drives. Servers using hard disk storage will undoubtedly play an important part in the way we receive, store and playback entertainment media in the future. And in the present, devices like those on p37 can be a boon if you want to carry your music on the move, or build a neat multiroom solution. But right now, if you want convenient and collectable high-performance digital audio (and video) in the home, there's still no beating the 12cm optical disc.





*"Best New Analogue Component Award"* Hi-Fi News, UK  
*"Best Buy"* Hi-Fi Choice, UK  
*"Highly Recommended"* Audio & Video, Brazil  
*"Brilliant"* Hi-Fi World, UK  
*"Fantastic"* Image Hifi, Germany  
*"Best New Record Player & Arm"* Stereo Sound, Japan  
*"Excellent"* Hi-Fi review, Hong Kong

# R O K S A N

## RADIUS 5



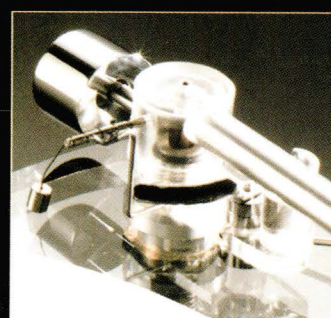
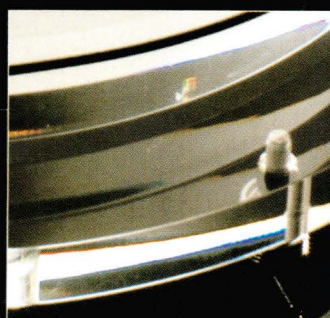
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**BEST DVD PLAYER UNDER £500**



**Pioneer DV-575A**

**PRICE** £150 **HI-RES FORMAT** DVD-A/SACD **CONTACT** ☎ 01753 789500 @ www.pioneer.co.uk

Some companies have been pushing DVD-A/SACD playback up the price range – but not Pioneer. The new DV-575A is by some way the cheapest ‘universal’ player, yet its specification is impressive, with DVD-A and SACD capability alongside well-specified DVD-Video playback. The ‘wow’ factor is that it does it all for so little money – it’s not an ‘audiophile’ product, but tonally it’s fine and it lets you experiment with multichannel music at an almost disposable price.



**Cambridge Audio Azur 540D**

**PRICE** £200 **HI-RES FORMAT** DVD-A **CONTACT** ☎ 0870 900 1000 @ www.cambridge-audio.co.uk



**Marantz DV6400**

**PRICE** £400 **HI-RES FORMAT** DVD-A/SACD **CONTACT** ☎ 01753 680868 @ www.marantz.co.uk

**BEST DVD PLAYER £500-£1,000**



**Denon DVD-3910**

**PRICE** £900 **HI-RES FORMAT** DVD-A/SACD **CONTACT** ☎ 01753 888447 @ www.denon.co.uk

Denon has dispensed with low-end universal players, but when you hear the DVD-3910 you’ll think £900 is a bargain. With four dual differential DACs and well-specified progressive scan video circuitry, it delivers the goods in every format. Its sonic skills are the main draw: SACD sounds full, clean and exciting, and even CDs offer a frank, polished presentation. The perfect all-rounder? Not quite, but for under £1,000 the DVD-3910 gets much closer than most.



**Pioneer DV-868AVi**

**PRICE** £1,000 **HI-RES FORMAT** DVD-A/SACD **CONTACT** ☎ 01753 789789 @ www.pioneer.co.uk



**Arcam DiVA DV78 and DV79**

**PRICE** £700 and £1,000 **HI-RES FORMAT** DVD-A (DV79) **CONTACT** ☎ 01223 203200 @ www.arcam.co.uk

**BEST DVD PLAYER £1,000-£3,000**



**Townshend Audio TA 565 MkII**

PRICE £2,995 HI-RES FORMAT DVD-A/SACD CONTACT ☎ 020 8979 2155 @ www.townshendaudio.com

**N**ow in MkII form, this is the second universal disc player from Townshend, and like the first it's based on a Pioneer machine. Using this basic digital building block, Townshend has modded, added and upgraded to create an astonishing audio performance for a DVD-based machine. The sound is clean yet irresistibly smooth with CDs and powerfully precise with movies. And it gets even better with SACD or DVD-Audio, delivering superb detail and dynamics.



**Linn Unidisk SC**

PRICE £2,995 HI-RES FORMAT DVD-A/SACD CONTACT ☎ 0141 307 7777 @ www.linn.co.uk



**Marantz DV-12S2**

PRICE £2,000 HI-RES FORMAT DVD-A/SACD CONTACT ☎ 01753 680868 @ www.marantz.co.uk

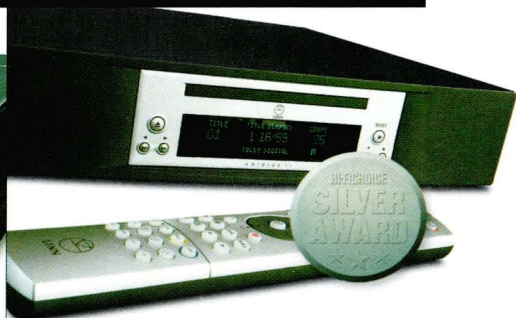
**BEST DVD PLAYER OVER £3,000**



**Meridian G91 and G98**

PRICE G91: £3,895, G98DH: £3,350, G98AH: £3,625 HI-RES FORMAT DVD-A CONTACT ☎ 01480 445678 @ www.meridian-audio.com

**D**igital specialist Meridian played a major role in the development of DVD-Audio as a hi-res multichannel music format. So it comes as no surprise to discover that its latest DVD players are state of the art, both in video performance and, crucially, sound quality from CD and DVD-A. Three different player configurations cater for every need, from the G98AH DVD-Audio/Video player and G98DH DVD transport to the G91 'player/controller/tuner' (pictured). Based on the same essential architecture, the result is three flavours of player worthy of our Gold Award.



**Linn Unidisk 1.1**

PRICE £6,500 HI-RES FORMAT DVD-A/SACD CONTACT ☎ 0141 307 7777 @ www.linn.co.uk



**Theta Compli**

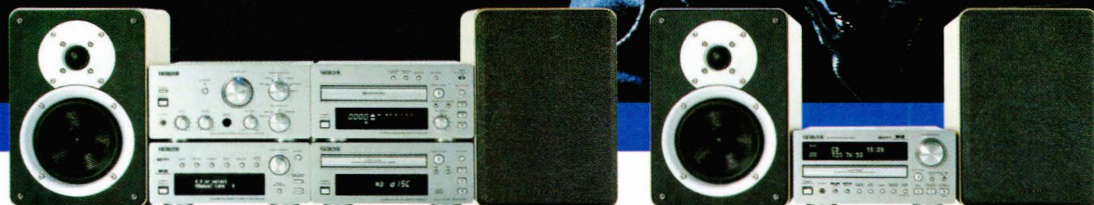
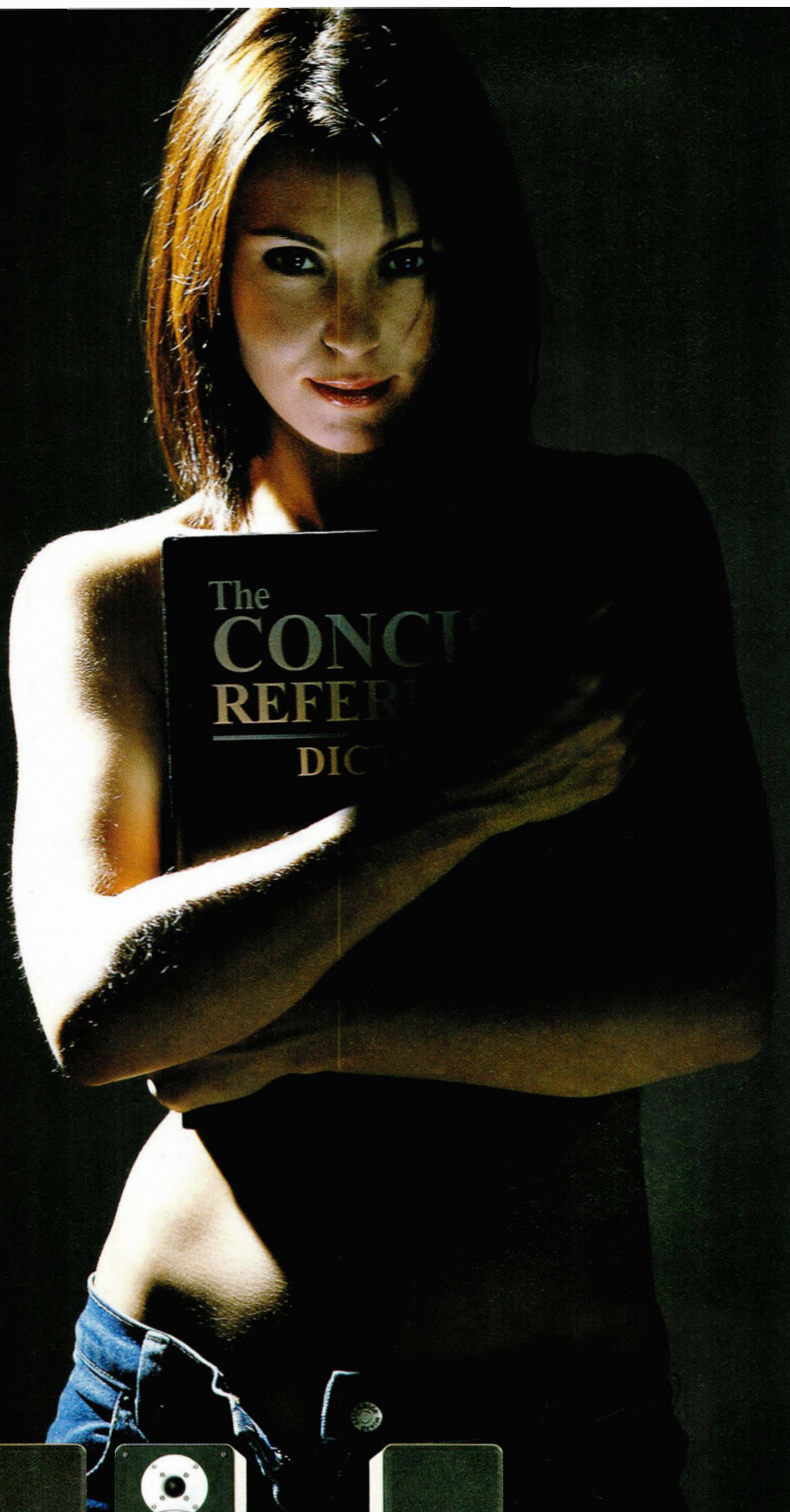
PRICE £4,482 HI-RES FORMAT DVD-A/SACD CONTACT ☎ 020 8971 3909 @ www.thetadigital.com

# Character Reference

Introducing the new Reference Series 250 System and Reference 300 Mk. II. Following the stunning success of the original award winning Reference Series, TEAC is proud to announce these brand new products. Both feature DAB tuner, beautiful silver finish and offer high quality hi-fi performance in a micro/mini sized package. Ease of use comes naturally with a full function remote control.

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Reference 300 Series Mk. II

Reference CR-H250 System

Reference 250  
The New Reference 300 Mk. II

Reference 300 System  
The Award Winner



**TEAC**  
[www.teac.co.uk](http://www.teac.co.uk)

**BEST SACD PLAYER (AUDIO ONLY)**



**Sony SCD-XA3000ES**

PRICE £800 CONTACT 08705 111999 www.sony.co.uk

Play-it-all, video-capable universal players may be all the rage, but if you really want to make the most of the SACD format, while also achieving high-quality CD playback, a dedicated audio player is the best way to go. There aren't that many around, but the Krell and two-channel Marantz pictured on the right are both exceptional machines, as is Sony's top-end SCD-XA9000ES (£2,400). But it's the 9000's baby brother that wins our Gold Award for its superb design, riveting performance and excellent value for money.



**Marantz SA8400**

PRICE £700 CONTACT 01753 680868 www.marantz.co.uk



**Krell SACD Standard**

PRICE £4,244 CONTACT 020 8971 3909 www.krellonline.com

**BEST HARD DISK AUDIO COMPONENT**

**Apple iPod**

PRICE From £220 (20GB) CONTACT 0800 039 1010 www.apple.com/uk

The iPod has become a style icon for the MP3 generation, but even for those with audiophile tastes it offers a smart, convenient way of making your music collection portable. The new 20GB version is slimmer and lighter (158g)

than its predecessor, and holds up to 5,000 songs. Better still, you can burn your CDs to it using the Apple Lossless format – as opposed to the standard AAC – which means less compression and better sound than any of its MP3-playing rivals.



**CyrusLink system**

PRICE From £3,000 (160GB four-zone server) CONTACT 01480 435577 www.cyrusaudio.com



**Creative Zen Touch**

PRICE £220 (20GB only) CONTACT 003531 4333200 www.europe.creative.com

## BEST TURNTABLE UNDER £500



### Pro-Ject 1 Xpression

PRICE £210 (inc. carbon fibre tonearm/Ortofon OM10 cartridge) CONTACT ☎ 01235 511166 @ www.henleydesigns.co.uk

**P**ro-Ject has shaken up the budget turntable scene in the UK and its most potent high-value weapon is the 1 Xpression, a slick-looking deck with a soft-edged plinth, a carbon fibre tonearm and an Ortofon OM10 cartridge – staggering considering carbon fibre tonearms were the preserve of the high end a few years ago. Lowering the needle reveals a smooth, weighty sound and genuine musicality. The bass is full and fruity, and it lets the music flow in a natural, relaxed way.



### Goldring GR1

PRICE £140 (inc. Rega-based arm/Goldring Elektra cartridge) CONTACT ☎ 01279 501111 @ www.goldring.co.uk



### Rega P3

PRICE £298 (inc. Rega RB300 tonearm) CONTACT ☎ 01702 333071 @ www.rega.co.uk

## BEST TURNTABLE £500-£1,000



### Rega P5

PRICE £698 (inc. Rega RB700 tonearm) CONTACT ☎ 01702 333071 @ www.rega.co.uk

**R**ega resolutely ignores the AV market, in favour of creating high-quality stereo hi-fi products. A case in point, the P5 has a lightweight aluminium frame, micro-fibre plinth and Rega's new RB700 tonearm. In action it produces a very coherent and tight sound, with a keen sense of timing that defines the leading edge of each note with subtlety, precision and realism. The bass has plenty of grunt too, delivering a generous dollop of energy to complex basslines.



### Roksan Radius 5

PRICE £750 wood, £850 acrylic (inc. Nima tonearm) CONTACT ☎ 01235 511166 @ www.roksan.co.uk



### Audio Note TT1

PRICE £728 (inc. ARM1 tonearm) CONTACT ☎ 01273 220 511 @ www.audionote.co.uk

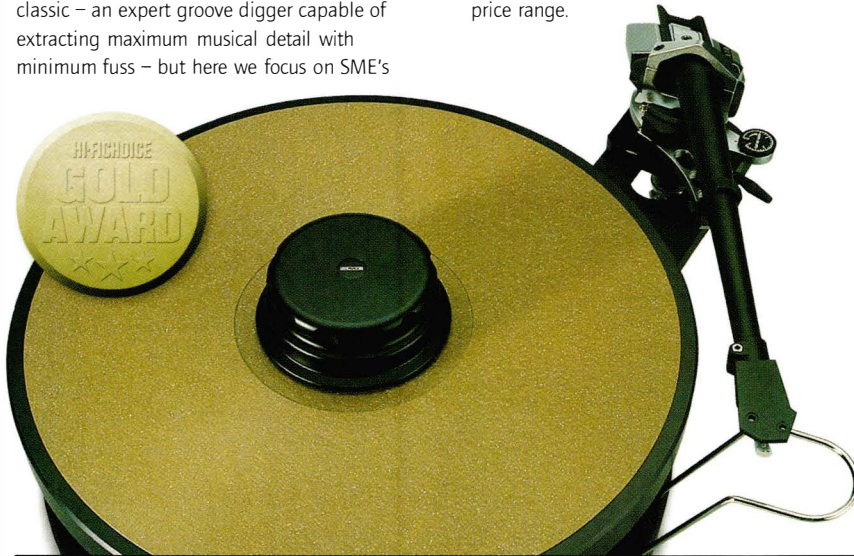
**BEST TURNTABLE £1,000-£3,000**

**SME Model 10**

PRICE £2,775 (tonearm extra) CONTACT ☎ 01903 814321 @ www.sme.ltd.uk

**S**ME's tonearms and turntables have been delighting music fans for decades and its products are still going strong, so it's thoroughly appropriate that it should feature in our Awards once again. Each of the company's turntables is, quite frankly, a classic – an expert groove digger capable of extracting maximum musical detail with minimum fuss – but here we focus on SME's

(still very substantial) entry-level model. Its price without a tonearm only just allows it to be shoehorned into this price category – but add one of SME's own very fine arms and its delivery of the musical truth will eclipse just about every other turntable in its price range.



**Rega P9**

PRICE £2,498 (inc. Rega RB1000 tonearm)  
CONTACT ☎ 01702 333071 @ www.rega.co.uk



**Michell Orbe SE**

PRICE £2,015 (tonearm extra) CONTACT ☎ 020 8953 0771  
@ www.michell-engineering.co.uk

**BEST TURNTABLE OVER £3,000**



**Avid Acutus**

PRICE £6,000 (tonearm extra) CONTACT ☎ 01480 457300 @ www.avidhifi.co.uk

**T**his category's winner boasts an extremely sturdy design, with suspension that combines strong vertical springs with 'O' rings positioned to discourage side-to-side movement. The subchassis casting supports a large tapered bearing housing, which in turn

supports the platter. And this well designed turntable delivers the goods when it matters: it takes you right to the musical event with considerable presence and precision. Bass performance is very special – punchy but never overpowering.



**Roksan TMS2**

PRICE £7,500 (inc. Artemiz tonearm)  
CONTACT ☎ 01235 511166 @ www.roksan.co.uk



**Townshend Audio Rock Anniversary**

PRICE £8,000 (inc. Excalibur tonearm)  
CONTACT ☎ 020 8979 2155 @ www.townshendaudio.com



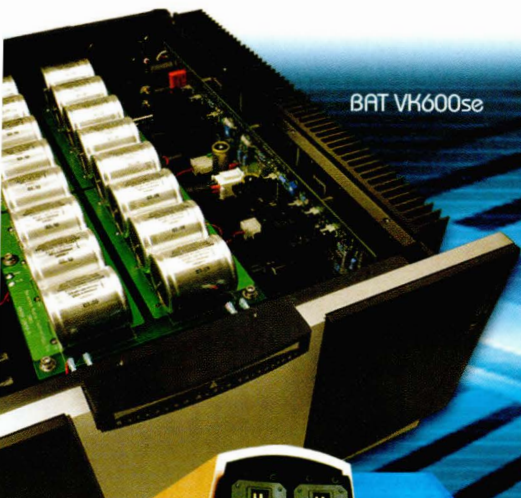
Boulder 2010 Preamplifier



metropolis music



Acoustic Zen



BAT VK600se

Hovland HP200 Preamplifier / Radia Solidstate Power.



Copulare

Music Tools



Lumley Lampros Concert Grand



Boulder 1050 Mono amplifier

Kharma Ceramique 3.2



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[www.metropolis-music.co.uk](http://www.metropolis-music.co.uk)



Advantage Monoblocs

Tel. 01892 539245 Fax. 01892 616383  
6 London Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. TN11 1DQ



**BEST RADIO TUNER UNDER £500**



**Creek T50**

PRICE £499 TYPE AM/FM CONTACT ☎ 01442 260146 🌐 www.creekaudio.com

**D**AB won't be killing off FM for a good few years yet, and under good reception conditions the sound of a strong FM tuner like this Creek will blow any digital equivalent into the weeds. Construction is excellent and functionality straightforward, and it achieves a standard of performance that more than justifies its price over lower cost models. The T50 offers a generous amount of precision, polish and insight, while its neutral tonal balance gets to the heart of the music.



**Rega Radio 3**

PRICE £398 TYPE AM/FM CONTACT ☎ 01702 333071 🌐 www.rega.co.uk



**Cambridge Audio Azur 640T**

PRICE £200 TYPE DAB/FM CONTACT ☎ 0870 900 1000 🌐 www.cambridge-audio.co.uk

**BEST RADIO TUNER OVER £500**



**Magnum Dynalab MD-106T**

PRICE £3,600 TYPE FM CONTACT ☎ 020 8948 4153 🌐 www.magnumdynalab.com

**I**f you want to make the most of all that free music on the radio, why not splash out on this beauty from Magnum Dynalab – perhaps the world's finest purveyor of high-quality FM tuners. The only digital thing in this otherwise all-analogue design is its tuned frequency readout. Its cost lies in its use of top-notch components, hand-aligned front-end filters and the zero-feedback triode amp stage. Sound is clean and vivid, and it delivers music with enormous delicacy and realism.



**Magnum Dynalab MD-90T**

PRICE £1,195 TYPE FM CONTACT ☎ 020 8948 4153 🌐 www.magnumdynalab.com



**NAD Silver Series S400**

PRICE £600 TYPE FM CONTACT ☎ 01908 319360 🌐 www.nadelectronics.com

## BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER UNDER £500



### Marantz PM7200

PRICE £330 TYPE Integrated CONTACT 01753 680868 www.marantz.co.uk

This Gold Award winner is certainly unusual at its price point. The PM7200 is a dual-mode amplifier – you can use it as an efficient 105-watt Class A/B amp (the standard for most hi-fi amps), or you can switch it into Class A, dropping power to 25 watts but delivering potentially even purer, sweeter sound. In practice both modes sound superb, producing effortless bass, crisp treble and the kind of low-distortion clarity that at the price, frankly, is little short of cheeky.



### NAD C352

PRICE £350 TYPE Integrated CONTACT 01908 319360 www.nadelectronics.com



### Cambridge Audio Azur 540A

PRICE £200 TYPE Integrated CONTACT 0870 900 1000 www.cambridge-audio.co.uk

## BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER £500-£1,000



### Rotel RA-1062

PRICE £595 TYPE Integrated CONTACT 01903 221500 www.rotel.com

Arriving on the scene in 2003, this amp already feels like an old friend. On its first outing in HFC, its mix of fine build, sensible facilities, ample power and well-judged sound gave it class-leading status, and its keen pricing continues to keep it at the front of the pack. Features include a built-in MM phono stage and Rotel's 'contour' tone control, alongside a sound that's punchy and exciting, yet very musical. Vocals have presence and character, while percussion sounds crisp, clear and detailed – a real class act.



### Naim Nait 5i

PRICE £699 TYPE Integrated CONTACT 01722 332266 www.naim-audio.com



### Roksan Caspian M Series

PRICE £1,000 TYPE Integrated CONTACT 01235 511166 www.roksan.co.uk

**BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER £1,000-£2,000**



**Cyrus 8vs/PSX-R**

**PRICE** £1,200 (£800/£400) **TYPE** Integrated/power supply **CONTACT** 01480 435577 www.cyrus.co.uk

**P**riced at £800, the new Cyrus 8vs is a good little amp. But as we discover in our first full review (see p72), it's when you add the optional £400 PSX-R power supply upgrade that it really bursts into life. In this configuration, you get a maximum helping

of what makes the best Cyrus components so good – precision, poise and detail, coupled to serious musical expression. It's a heady audio cocktail for a combo small and neat, ensuring the traditional Cyrus tag of 'singing shoeboxes' is fully warranted here.



**Exposure 3010 Integrated/Power**

**PRICE** £1,800 (£1,000/£800) **TYPE** Integrated/power amp **CONTACT** 01273 423877 www.exposurehifi.com



**Myryad MXI2080**

**PRICE** £1,100 **TYPE** Integrated **CONTACT** 020 8863 9117 www.myryad.co.uk

**BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER £2,000-£5,000**



**Krell KAV-400xi**

**PRICE** £2,698 **TYPE** Integrated **CONTACT** 020 8971 3909 www.krellonline.com

**T**his integrated from Krell is a fabulous design. Apart from offering 200 watts per channel into eight ohms (or 400 watts into four ohms) and the inclusion of a massive 800VA toroidal transformer, it also happens to look drop-dead gorgeous. It takes some running in, but in true Krell style it delivers a fast, fluid and powerful performance. A fine tonal colour palette and a punchy, precise bass response combine to make an amp that really knows how to sing.



**Primare PRE30/A30.2**

**PRICE** £2,400 (£1,200/£1,200) **TYPE** Pre/power **CONTACT** 01423 359054 www.primare.net



**Audio Research Vsi55**

**PRICE** £2,895 **TYPE** Integrated **CONTACT** 020 8971 3909 www.audioresearch.com

## BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER OVER £5,000



### Naim NAC 552/NAP 500

PRICE £23,975 (E12,100/£11,875) TYPE Pre/power CONTACT 01722 332266 www.naim-audio.com

Naim's amps are justly famous throughout the global hi-fi scene, so when the firm decided to produce a 'statement' preamp and power amp – the very best its considerable resources could muster – the ears of the world's hi-fi enthusiasts trembled with

anticipation. The excitement was warranted – these two products combine to make music of startling sonic clarity, with exceptional dynamics and rhythmic drive. The last word in amplification? Perhaps not, but very little else comes close to being so musically engaging.



### Halcro dm10/dm38

PRICE £25,550 (E11,600/£13,950) TYPE Pre/power CONTACT 01252 702705 www.audioreference.co.uk



### Audio Research LS25/VM220 (x2)

PRICE £14,499 (E5,499/£4,500 each) TYPE Pre/power CONTACT 020 8971 3909 www.audioresearch.com

## INFO >> AMPLIFIERS

There are several decisions to make when choosing an amp. For example, it's crucial you pick one with enough inputs to take all your sources, both present and future. And how about features like remote control and tone adjustment? Once vilified in specialist hi-fi circles, it's now generally accepted that if implemented well, such niceties needn't have a broadly adverse effect on sound (though they might add to the price tag). For those with wide-ranging music tastes, tone controls many prove useful to tame aggressive recordings, for example, while remote control is a convenience many now take for granted – which is why amps without it are now few and far between.

Another key decision is whether you want to build a straightforward two-channel system or whether you want to go multichannel for surround sound music and movie replay. This is simply a matter of priority – if you're building a system to primarily play music from sources like CD, vinyl records and radio, then we'd recommend you concentrate your resources on optimising a pure stereo system. Remember also that there's nothing stopping you playing DVD and SACD discs in plain stereo – even surround sound discs will sound much better through a good two-channel set-up than through a bad multichannel one.

That said, multichannel AV amps are getting better all the time, notably in their ability to play two-channel material off CD etc. When choosing, don't be swayed by unnecessary frills – work out exactly how many channels you require (in many houses, and with multichannel music in particular, more than 5.1 is an unnecessary extravagance). And while the number of surround processing formats (Dolby, DTS *et al*) is continually growing, it's likely that many will remain unused in most systems – a plethora of processing options isn't everything!



Much more important are the amplifying fundamentals – a healthy power supply, high-quality circuit components, appropriate shielding, signal paths that are as simple as possible and so on. There are now some remarkably good sub-£500 integrated multichannel amps on the market (like Sony's STR-DB795, p46), but you shouldn't expect miracles from something so complex and yet so affordable – a good, similarly priced two-channel amp will beat its AV equivalent hands down with a straight stereo source like CD. However, top-end multichannel integrations can now perform all functions (stereo included) with aplomb, often with future-proof 'upgradeability' built in to boot. Just don't expect this level of quality to come cheap!

It's certainly true to say that multichannel music has taken the 'AV amp' concept away from its previous role as purely a slave to home cinema, with undoubted qualitative benefits. Perhaps the best way to experience 'hi-fi multichannel' is to buy a separate preamp/processor and multiple channels of power amplification from a specialist manufacturer. This is the most costly route of all, but also the most flexible and easy to optimise for genuine hi-fi sound. For the uninitiated, the results with a good multichannel DVD-Audio/SACD music disc or a DVD film soundtrack can be startling, with high-level two-channel sound a real possibility too.

Lastly, and briefly, the subject of power. The spec sheet isn't everything, and in the case of AV amps in particular it's often misleading. But don't worry – with the exception of very low-powered valve designs, most modern amps will have no trouble driving most modern speakers. It's the sonic character that really counts (to which many factors contribute) – not nominal figures on the spec sheet!

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**BEST MULTICHANNEL AMPLIFIER UNDER £500**



**Sony STR-DB795**

PRICE £300 TYPE Receiver CONTACT ☎ 08705 111999 @ www.sony.co.uk

This receiver's predecessor was regarded as having no right to sound so good at the price, and Sony has made a number of critical improvements to chassis construction and circuit topography. It also has two more channels than before, and can handle Dolby Digital EX and DTS-ES, as well as Pro-Logic II. The sonic presentation is spacious, well detailed and has an alluring warmth – an exceptionally capable sub-£500 design in both stereo and multichannel modes.



**Yamaha DSP-AX750SE**

PRICE £499 TYPE Integrated amp CONTACT ☎ 01923 233166 @ www.yamaha-audio.co.uk



**Denon AVR-1905**

PRICE £300 TYPE Receiver CONTACT ☎ 01753 888447 @ www.denon.co.uk

**BEST MULTICHANNEL AMPLIFIER £500-£2,000**



**Denon AVR-3805**

PRICE £1,000 TYPE Receiver CONTACT ☎ 01753 888447 @ www.denon.co.uk

There were whispers about this receiver well before we heard one – and we weren't disappointed. The AVR-3805 offers auto room set-up and speaker calibration, every relevant surround mode including Pro-Logic II and DTS Neo:6, and a healthy 120 watts per channel. Flexibility is also a strong point, but it's the sound that really shines at the price. In Denon's 'Pure Direct' mode especially, its performance is clear, expansive and dynamic – a real show-stopper.



**Arcam DiVA AVR300**

PRICE £1,300 TYPE Receiver CONTACT ☎ 01223 203200 @ www.arcam.co.uk



**Marantz SR9300**

PRICE £2,000 TYPE Receiver CONTACT ☎ 01753 680868 @ www.marantz.com

**BEST MULTICHANNEL AMPLIFIER £2,000-£5,000**



**Pioneer VSX-AX10Ai**

PRICE £3,200 TYPE Integrated amp CONTACT ☎ 01753 789500 @ www.pioneer.co.uk

Pioneer's new flagship amp has so much going on under the bonnet we asked it to make a round of tea just to see what would happen. It wouldn't stir our Darjeeling, but it's still quite a box of tricks: video conversion (it upgrades a composite or S-video signal to component video), auto set-up, 7.1 analogue inputs and a whopping 170 watts into seven channels. Performance is outstanding – good image depth and powerful dynamics with both surround and two-channel material.



**Denon AVC-A1SRA**

PRICE £3,000 TYPE Integrated amp CONTACT ☎ 01753 888447 @ www.denon.co.uk



**Sony TA-DA9000ES**

PRICE £2,600 TYPE Integrated amp CONTACT ☎ 08705 111999 @ www.sony.co.uk

**BEST MULTICHANNEL AMPLIFIER OVER £5,000**



**Arcam FMJ AV8/P7**

PRICE £5,750 (£3,150/£2,600) TYPE Processor/power CONTACT ☎ 01223 203200 @ www.arcam.co.uk

Arcam's AV8 preamp/processor is the stuff of aspiration, but when you consider it has stumped up for every Dolby, DTS and THX licence under the sun, the price isn't unrealistic. And the P7 power amp – tipping

the scales at 30kg and the bank balance at £2,600 – is Arcam's most ambitious piece of power engineering to date. Together they create a sound of terrific intensity with all formats – hi-fi multichannel done right.



**EAD Theater/Power Master 8800/8300**

PRICE £10,650 (£4,900/£5,750) TYPE Processor/power CONTACT ☎ 020 7435 1222 @ www.ultimate-sonics.com



**Krell HTS 7.1/TAS**

PRICE £17,496 (£8,998/£8,498) TYPE Processor/power CONTACT ☎ 020 8971 3909 @ www.krellonline.com

## BEST LOUDSPEAKER UNDER £500 PER PAIR

### Tannoy Sensys DC1

PRICE £449 TYPE Standmount CONTACT ☎ 01236 420199 @ www.tannoy.com

The DC1 contains some impressive features for a speaker at this price point. Tannoy's oft-praised dual-concentric drive unit has a history that goes back to the 1940s, while a top-mounted super-tweeter kicks into action at 16kHz, giving the DC1 an airy, free and sweet treble performance. But its not just high frequencies that shine

with this speaker – it's beautifully balanced and voiced overall, with impressive stereo focus, lively and agile bass and a natural way with acoustic instruments. At under £500 per pair, it's a fine all-rounder.



### Castle Richmond 3i

PRICE £320 TYPE Standmount CONTACT ☎ 01756 795333 @ www.castle.uk.com



### AVI Neutron IV

PRICE £499 TYPE Standmount CONTACT ☎ 01453 752656 @ www.avihifi.co.uk

## BEST LOUDSPEAKER £500-£1,000 PER PAIR

### B&W 705

PRICE £900 TYPE Standmount CONTACT ☎ 01903 221500 @ www.bwspeakers.com

The 705 has a sleeker, more streamlined look than its predecessor, the CDM-1NT. It sports a classy real-wood veneer, and neat front-to-back tapering to help avoid the parallel surfaces that focus internal standing waves. In action, the most noticeable thing about this speaker is its freedom from 'boxy' colorations – a pair of 705s delivers exquisite midband clarity, fine stereo imaging and a sweet top end of the sort normally associated with more costly models. It's not a speaker for lovers of seismic bass, but its sublimely subtle and detailed musicality more than makes up for it.



### PMC GB1

PRICE £995 TYPE Floorstander CONTACT ☎ 08704 441044 @ www.pmc-speakers.com



### Focal-JMLab Chorus 716 S

PRICE £550 TYPE Floorstander CONTACT ☎ 0845 660 2680 @ www.focal-jmlab.fr



**BEST LOUDSPEAKER £1,000-£2,000 PER PAIR**

**PMC FB1+**

PRICE £1,625 TYPE Floorstander CONTACT 08704 441044 www.pmc-speakers.com

PMC has become equally successful in both domestic hi-fi and professional monitoring circles. The latest '+' versions of some of its models are significantly improved, as the new FB1+ ably illustrates: it features a new damping foam for its transmission line, a better quality tweeter and some corresponding tweaks to the crossover network. The end result is even better than the original, with a midrange that's supremely transparent and free from coloration, bass that's solid and controlled, and a top end that sings with open, vibrant energy.



**B&W 703**

PRICE £2,000 TYPE Floorstander CONTACT 01903 221500 www.bwspeakers.com



**Acoustic Energy AE1 MkIII**

PRICE £1,600 TYPE Standmount CONTACT 01285 654432 www.acoustic-energy.co.uk

**BEST LOUDSPEAKER £2,000-£5,000 PER PAIR**

**Focal-JMLab Micro Utopia Be**

PRICE £3,500 TYPE Standmount CONTACT 0845 660 2680 www.focal-jmlab.fr

This speaker has a very particular ace up its sleeve – a tweeter made of beryllium, a material superior to both aluminium and titanium. This high-performance driver is paired with a 'W cone' main drive unit, made from a sandwich of woven glass tissues on a foam core, the net result being a speaker of phenomenal transparency. Exceptional neutrality and fine imaging make for a stunningly realistic portrayal, while the open and extended treble ensures a lively, vibrant sound overall.



**Neat Ultimatum MFS**

PRICE £2,995 TYPE Standmount CONTACT 01833 631021 www.neat.co.uk



**Sonus Faber Cremona Auditor**

PRICE £2,149 TYPE Standmount CONTACT 020 8971 3909 www.sonusfaber.com

## BEST LOUDSPEAKER OVER £5,000 PER PAIR

### JBL K2 S9800

PRICE £20,000 TYPE Floorstander CONTACT ☎ 020 8731 4670 🌐 www.jbl.com

This meaty marvel is a very special speaker. All three drive units are unusual, nay, unique in the modern domestic scheme of things – a 38cm (15in) paper cone features an advanced motor design, while a rather special horn driver, plus a super-tweeter that kicks in at 10kHz, supply the upper frequencies. The sound is, quite simply, exceptional. Bass is stunning, yet overall it sounds impressively neutral, with an amazing ability to portray micro-dynamic subtleties. It all adds up to one of the best – and most entertaining – loudspeakers we've ever heard.



### Focal-Jmlab Alto Utopia Be

PRICE £11,000 TYPE Floorstander CONTACT ☎ 0845 660 2680 🌐 www.focal-jmlab.fr



### Wilson Benesch ACT

PRICE £8,400 TYPE Floorstander CONTACT ☎ 0114 285 2656 🌐 www.wilson-benesch.com

## INFO >> LOUDSPEAKERS

There are more manufacturers of speakers on the market today than of any other hi-fi product category. Two reasons – one, they're relatively easy to develop and bring to market (though much harder to perfect). Two, whatever type of audio system you're building, speakers are the one component that everybody needs.

The result is a huge selection of designs of myriad shapes and sizes, and equally wide-ranging quality of sound. Tonally at least, no other component exerts such influence on the sonic character of a system, and as with any component, some careful auditioning is called for to ensure you choose the right model to suit your tastes.

First, you need to decide how many you need – two for a stereo set-up or more for multichannel (surround sound). In this year's HFC Awards, we've simply featured speakers in pairs rather than repeating the process with multichannel packages. This is because, even with multichannel, the most important thing is to choose the best 'main front' pair for you – this is what you'll hear with stereo material, and with multichannel sources they'll deliver a large portion of the overall soundfield. What's more, a speaker that performs well with music will also do a fine job with film soundtracks, but the reverse is not always true. Choose your main pair of speakers with care then, and build the rest around them.

There are various ways to consider the centre and rear speakers within a multichannel set-up. For music, it's recommended that you choose five identical full-range speakers and place them equidistant from the listener, firing directly towards his/her position in the centre (this is known as the ITU configuration). But this is often impractical – most multichannel systems also incorporate a video screen and a horizontal 'centre speaker' may be the only realistic solution; likewise,

it may be difficult to incorporate anything but a smaller pair at the rear. The important thing is to ensure that all speakers are as similar as possible – from the same range with the same essential voicing and the same critical drive units. So once you've chosen your main front speakers, pick your centre and rears accordingly – the result should be a sound that suits your ears across all available sources.

There's no obvious answer to the 'does size matter' question. Larger floorstanding speakers will usually plumb greater depths of bass and may offer superior dynamics, with a larger main drive unit (or units). But for the speaker engineer, there can be inherent advantages in working with a smaller box, and the best of the breed sound gloriously coherent (when used with an appropriate stand). Try before you buy, and try not to let aesthetic considerations be the major ruling factor – the only real rule is to avoid using very large floorstanders in very small spaces, and to experiment with positioning once you've got them home.

Small sub/sat systems may appeal to some people aesthetically, but rarely will they challenge the coherence of a good, full-range integrated loudspeaker system, which is why you'll find none in this year's HFC Awards. That said, there are an increasing number of stylish and compact solutions with obvious multichannel appeal emerging from some highly reputed brands, and with sound quality certainly improving this is an area to watch. Subwoofers themselves continue to be viewed in many circles as largely the preserve of home cinema enthusiasts, but the effect of a 'musical' sub in augmenting the bass and 'driving the room' in conjunction with a good hi-fi system shouldn't be ignored, multichannel or not. Our subwoofer Awards on p53 hold such ability paramount.

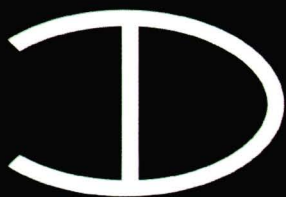
# Not for conservatives



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Densen Audio Technologies



## The Densen B-800 FM Tuner - The Most Musical Tuner of All Time

Everybody told us, "just make a tuner and let's have a complete system". However, compromise has never been a word in the Densen vocabulary. We only want to make the ultimate products. That made the whole project a challenge, and already early on in the project, we knew we were on to something special, as we compared the tuner to a well-respected reference tuner, and before hearing the first sound, our head honcho's girlfriend said, "there is no difference in tuners" but after 5 minutes she said, "I didn't know there could be such a big difference".... The B-800 is hyper sensitive, and will tune in to even relatively weak stations. The audio stages of the B-800 are made with no compromise, and advanced class-A non-feedback audio stage, combined with laser trimmed resistors, custommade capacitors and transformers, makes the B-800 sound extremely open, dynamic and detailed, while retaining a sweet and engaging sound. When it comes to sound, the B-800 is among the very best on the market, and that without taking the relatively low price into account. Lifetime warranty.

"What it does so well is do away with any feelings that what you are hearing is "just a radio", or is to be considered in any way second fiddle to your CD-player... This tuner is musical - it's as simple as that - and lives up to the manufacture's aims of involvement and passion. Provided you have a good aerial, and a system fully able to do it justice, this is a radio you have to hear."

Gramophone Feb 2004

"Listen to a good Radio 3 live concert or BBC recording, and there's presence and impact you only get from the very best 'live' CDs. The way you're drawn into a play is magical"

What Hi-Fi? Apr 2004

Acoustic Arts  
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Cheadle  
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Audio Counsel  
Oldham  
Tel. 01616 332602

Hi-Fi Studios  
Doncaster  
Tel. 01302 725550

Kevin Galloway  
Audio  
Kilmarnock  
Tel. 01563 574185

Midland Audio  
Exchange  
Bellbroughton  
Tel. 01562 731100

Mike Manning  
Taunton  
Tel. 01823 326688

Mike Manning  
Yeovil  
Tel. 01935 479361

New Audio Frontiers  
Loughborough  
Tel. 01509 264002

Phonography  
Ringwood  
Tel. 01425 461230

Progressive Audio  
Gillingham  
Tel. 01634 389004

Zen Audio  
Hull  
Tel. 01482 587397

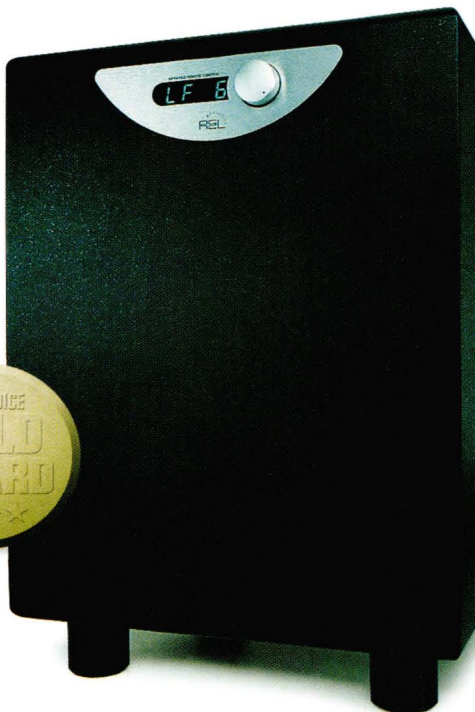
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**BEST SUBWOOFER UNDER £1,000**

**REL Stampede**

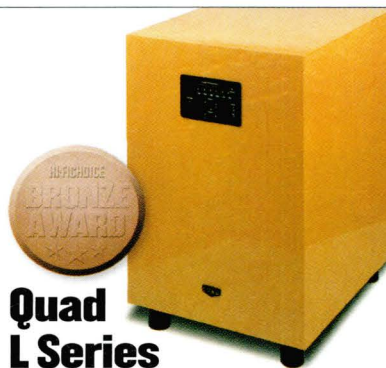
PRICE £550 (wood veneer £625) CONTACT ☎ 01656 768777 🌐 www.rel.net

New from REL this year are the Stampede and Strata 5, a pair of affordable subs that come complete with electronic controls, remote handsets and blue LED displays. Most importantly they deliver sonically, coupling considerable bass muscle with a musicality all too rare in the subwoofer world. Of the two, it's the lower priced Stampede that marginally earns itself our Gold Award on value for money grounds – its built-in 100-watt amp and 20cm driver make tuneful bass with satisfying aplomb.



**B&W PV1**

PRICE £950 CONTACT ☎ 01903 221500 🌐 www.bwspeakers.com



**Quad L Series**

PRICE £700 CONTACT ☎ 0845 458 0011 🌐 www.quad-hifi.co.uk

**BEST SUBWOOFER OVER £1,000**

**MartinLogan Descent**

PRICE £2,998 CONTACT ☎ 020 8971 3909 🌐 www.martinlogan.com

The Descent subwoofer is that rarity – a genuinely innovative, clean-sheet design that addresses the physics of bass reproduction and comes up with an original solution. The core idea is to use three relatively small, fast servo-controlled drivers spaced 120 degrees apart to eliminate net rocking effects on the enclosure. Add superb build and good controls, along with some subtle design elements that suit it for a role as a truly musical subwoofer, and the Descent is an instant classic.



**B&W ASW850**

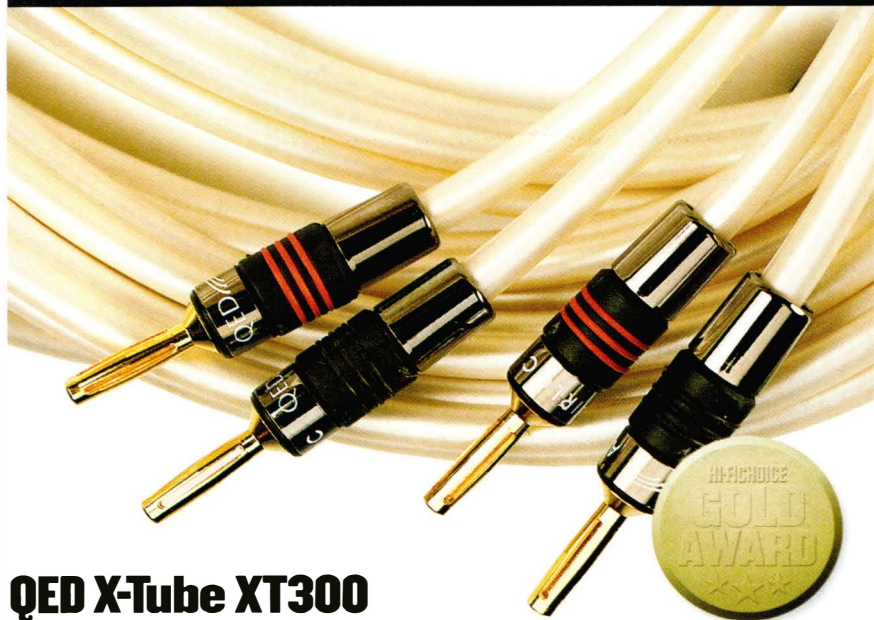
PRICE £2,000 CONTACT ☎ 01903 221500 🌐 www.bwspeakers.com



**REL Stadium III**

PRICE £1,500 CONTACT ☎ 01656 768777 🌐 www.rel.net

**BEST SPEAKER CABLE UNDER £10/m**

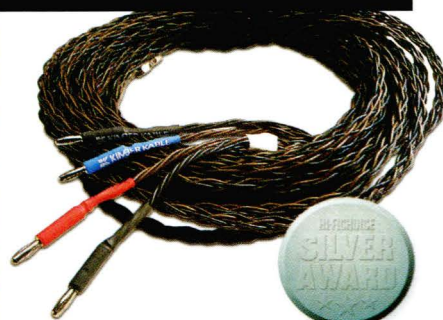


**QED X-Tube XT300**

PRICE £10/m CONTACT ☎ 01483 747474 🌐 www.qed.co.uk

This might look like just another speaker cable of classic 'figure-8' construction, but the conductors aren't the usual mass of twisted copper strands. Instead, each is a hollow tube over a central core of polythene, hence the name for this range: 'X-Tube'. Most

importantly, it performs very well for the price, with excellent bass response and strong stereo imaging. Overall its sound is natural and well-controlled, with a balance of virtues that make it a fine recommendation for a wide range of systems.



**Kimber 4PR**

PRICE £5/m CONTACT ☎ 0845 345 1550 🌐 www.kimber.com



**QED Silver Anniversary**

PRICE £5.50/m CONTACT ☎ 01483 747474 🌐 www.qed.co.uk

**BEST SPEAKER CABLE OVER £10/m**



**Townshend Isolda DCT**

PRICE £50/m (plus termination – £100/pair) CONTACT ☎ 020 8979 2155 🌐 www.townshendaudio.com

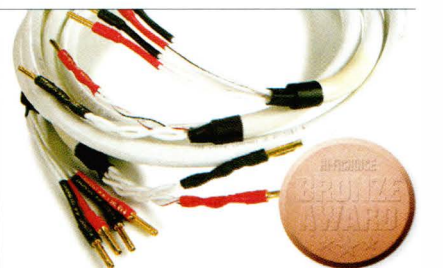
It may seem expensive, but the level of sonic problem solving that's gone into the Isolda DCT is highly impressive – there's a combination of passive components at each end of the cable that will stabilise any problem amplifiers without affecting the

sound at all. Then there's Townshend's 'Deep Cryogenic Treatment' of the conductors. In any case, it all adds up to an absolutely first-rate cable. Treble is effortless, bass is deep and powerful and the midrange is rich in textural, timbral and spatial information.



**Wireworld Solstice 5**

PRICE £20/m CONTACT ☎ 020 8991 9200 🌐 www.wireworldaudio.com



**Chord Company Odyssey 4**

PRICE £34/m CONTACT ☎ 01980 625700 🌐 www.chord.co.uk

**BEST INTERCONNECT UNDER £100 PER PAIR**



**Van den Hul The Well**

PRICE £85 (1m pair) CONTACT 01235 511166 www.vanden Hul.com

Not for the first time, van den Hul has made a low-cost cable perform way out of its class. This modestly-priced interconnect features the company's trademark mixture of silver-plated copper and 'linear structured carbon', double screen and all. In practice,

The Well communicates the music with graceful ease – imaging is solid, believable and deep, while detail is plentiful and gracefully presented. Solo voices retain their full individual character, and subtle dynamics are handled with great confidence.



**Kimber Timbre**

PRICE £83 (1m pair)  
CONTACT 0845 345 1550 www.kimber.com



**Wireworld Solstice 5**

PRICE £70 (1m pair)  
CONTACT 020 8991 9200 www.wireworldaudio.com

**BEST INTERCONNECT OVER £100 PER PAIR**



**Van den Hul Integration**

PRICE £155 (1m pair) CONTACT 01235 511166 www.vanden Hul.com

This category's winner includes van den Hul's 'fusion technology' – it uses zinc as well as copper and silver, and each conductor is surrounded by Linear Structured Carbon. The proposed idea is to preserve low-level detail by reducing the alleged detrimental

effects of crystal boundaries – the proof is in the listening, and whatever the reason, there's no denying this interconnect's outstanding sound quality. There's a rare, natural ease to the sound, with a splendid tonal balance from top to bottom. Imaging, also, is truly first rate.



**Chord Company Chorus**

PRICE £200 (1m pair)  
CONTACT 01980 625700 www.chord.co.uk



**Black Rhodium Opera 25211**

PRICE £297 (1m pair)  
CONTACT 01332 361390 www.blackrhodium.co.uk

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**BEST DIGITAL INTERCONNECT**

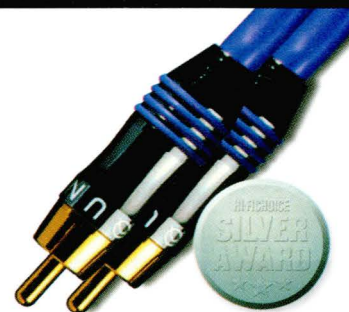


**Kimber Select KS200**

PRICE £629 (1m coaxial) CONTACT ☎ 0845 345 1550 🌐 www.kimber.com

**Y**es, it's still possible to build a complete hi-fi system that costs less than this cable. But the fact is, the KS200 produced a distinct improvement in every system we tried it with, from cheap to high end. There's more than just solder inside those wood-bodied

phono plugs: both hot and cold return conductors are connected through capacitors, reducing the chance of stray circulating earth currents. Hard to justify in a digital cable? Audition the KS200 as a part of any DAC purchase over a grand and hear for yourself.



**QED Qunex P75**

PRICE £25 (1m coaxial)  
CONTACT ☎ 01483 747474 🌐 www.qed.co.uk



**Supra ZAC**

PRICE £32 (1m optical)  
CONTACT ☎ 01622 664070 🌐 www.supracables.co.uk

**BEST MAINS CONDITIONER/CABLE**

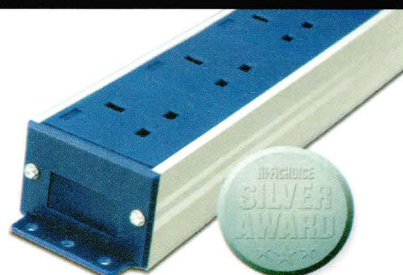


**IsoTek GII Mini Sub**

PRICE £495 CONTACT ☎ 0870 241 2469 🌐 www.isoteksystems.com

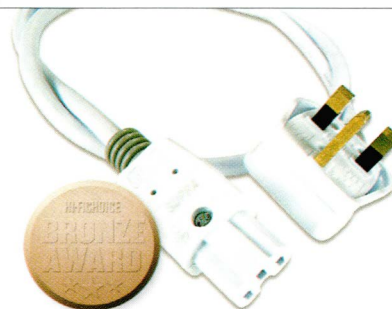
**T**his little beastie performs two useful functions. First, it's a mains distribution block, providing six sockets into which you may plug your beloved hi-fi components. Second, it's a mains filter which will protect your system's power supply from all sorts of mains-borne nasties. The end result is a

cleaner, purer supply of electricity which results in a marked improvement in performance – finer detail and a crisper, clearer sound are the common results. Effective and good value for money, it's a thoroughly recommended upgrade for any cherished hi-fi system.



**Russ Andrews Silencer Block**

PRICE £150, £195, £235 (4-way, 6-way, 8-way)  
CONTACT ☎ 0845 345 1550 🌐 www.russandrews.com



**Supra LoRad cable**

PRICE £50  
CONTACT ☎ 01622 664070 🌐 www.supracables.co.uk

**BELOW**  
FRESCO CENTER / REAR CHANNEL  
MOSAIC LOUDSPEAKERS  
GROTTO SUB WOOFER

**LEFT**  
PRODIGY LOUDSPEAKER

**BOTTOM**  
CLARITY LOUDSPEAKER



# MARTIN LOGAN

EYE TO EAR CO-ORDINATION

**ABSOLUTE SOUNDS'** commitment to Martin Logan has been rewarded with a line of hybrid electrostatic speakers so comprehensive that it now encompasses every permutation of home theatre and audiophile performance, and a price band from entry-level to cutting edge. Because of their sheer beauty - both aural and visual - the Statement Evolution 2, Prodigy, Odyssey, Ascent i, Aeon i and Clarity have established hybrid electrostatic technology as the obvious choice for those who want state-of-the-art sound without suffering a profusion of ugly boxes.

All of the speakers are immediately recognisable as Martin Logan products because of the peerless, oft-imitated, room-friendly appearance, with the captivating see-through panels and furniture grade finish. Best of all, the sound is as clear as the panels themselves. This year, in recognition of its astonishing performance and sensible price, the Clarity - the 'baby' of the line - won the coveted EISA award, proving that the Martin Logan look and the sound are acknowledged across Europe.

For the new season, Martin Logan has applied its years of experience to even smaller, room-friendlier systems suitable for a wider range of applications, by launching a second hybrid technology called ATF. Martin Logan had already demonstrated its skills with home theatre applications with the Theater i and Cinema i centre-channel models, the Script i main and surround speakers, the awesome Descent self-powered subwoofer and its baby sister, the Depth.

Thanks to ATF, an even wider audience can savor the Martin Logan experience. The ultra-compact Fresco hybrids can be used horizontally or vertically, wall- or shelf-mounted above or to the sides of plasma or other flat-screen display, while the Mosaic and Montage floor-standing models have the look of a 'baby Clarity'. Even the subwoofer's size has been addressed: the new ATF designs work wonderfully with the Grotto, literally a miniature Depth!



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**BEST HEADPHONES UNDER £200**

**Beyerdynamic DT990**

PRICE £160 CONTACT ☎ 01235 511166 @ www.beyerdynamic.co.uk

**F**eatured in last year's HFC Awards, Beyer's DT900 once again proves its star quality by holding off the competition at its price point. Comfortable and practical, it succeeds in combining extended bass and treble with midband neutrality and class-leading clarity across the range. Buy this set of headphones and immerse yourself in a private musical universe where new insights into familiar recordings become the order of the day – it's a genuine high-end bargain.



**Grado SR80**

PRICE £110 CONTACT ☎ 01279 501111 @ www.gradolabs.com



**Philips HP890**

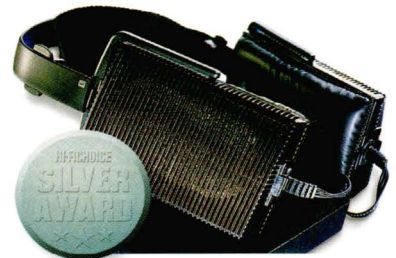
PRICE £70 CONTACT ☎ 0870 900 9070 @ www.philips.co.uk

**BEST HEADPHONES OVER £200**

**Sennheiser HD650**

PRICE £300 CONTACT ☎ 01494 551551 @ www.sennheiser.co.uk

**A** new 'reference' pair of cans from Sennheiser is always going to raise a few heads, given the company's pedigree. The HD650 features hand-selected drivers, ultra-low-mass coils and diaphragms for extended frequency response, as well as oxygen-free copper leads and a newly optimised magnet design for lower distortion. Sound quality is a revelation – the combination of a neutral balance and extraordinary resolution means that listening fatigue is all but banished, while the bass extends to quite splendid depths.



**Stax SRS-2020 Basic System 2**

PRICE £349 CONTACT ☎ 01727 865488 @ www.stax.co.jp



**AKG K1000**

PRICE £600 CONTACT ☎ 020 8970 1910 @ www.akg.com

## BEST SPEAKER STAND UNDER £100 PER PAIR

### Partington Ansa 60

PRICE £99 (60cm) CONTACT ☎ 01474 709 299 🌐 www.partingtonspeakerstands.com

**P**artington has earned itself a very fine reputation for its speaker stands, with a range that consistently outperforms most of the competition at a wide range of price points. At the lower end of the scale, the Ansa 60 is an elegant stand with a steel centre column welded to four outer tubes. Best of all is its ability to 'disappear' sonically, avoiding the colorations that other inexpensive stands often bring to the party. It simply gets out of the way and lets the music do its thing – thoroughly impressive speaker support for the money.



### Atacama Nexus 6

PRICE £60-£70 (60cm, price according to finish)  
CONTACT ☎ 01455 283251 🌐 www.atacama-audio.co.uk



### Custom Design RS 300 MkII

PRICE £100 (61cm)  
CONTACT ☎ 0191 262 4646 🌐 www.customdesign.co.uk

## BEST SPEAKER STAND OVER £100 PER PAIR

### Kudos S50

PRICE £159 (45cm/60cm) CONTACT ☎ 01833 631021 🌐 kudosaudio.co.uk

**T**he S50 uses a large diameter central steel tube pillar with a wide, stable tripod base. It's easily assembled and in action it's quite superb – the overall presentation is warm and rich, without the over-projected voice band so often found with other speaker stands. It's a full and relaxed balance, with qualities in the bass that deliver real power and authority, as well as a notably wide dynamic range across a broad bandwidth. At the price, no other stand will do a good pair of 'bookshelf' speakers greater justice.



### Partington Dreadnought Broadside

PRICE £239 (60cm) CONTACT ☎ 01474 709 299  
🌐 www.partingtonspeakerstands.com



### hne Cableway

PRICE £395 (61cm)  
CONTACT ☎ 01777 708673 🌐 www.hne.co.uk

**BEST EQUIPMENT SUPPORT UNDER £500**



**Custom Design Concept 400**

PRICE £300 (four shelves, standard version) CONTACT ☎ 0191 2624646 🌐 www.customdesign.co.uk

**T**his specialist hi-fi rack from Newcastle's Custom Design is a simple yet effective design that lets the kit speak for itself like few others at its price point. Its side uprights are made of a laminate of two steel sheets glued together, forming an uncommonly 'dead' structural material that its maker calls

Acoustic Steel. In its standard form this basic structure is simply adorned with glass shelves, but other options are available, including wood veneered versions and the superb Concept Acoustic 400 (£700), which uses Acoustic Aluminium shelves to even better sonic effect.



**Partington Minim**

PRICE £389 (five shelves) CONTACT ☎ 01474 709 299 🌐 www.partingtonspeakerstands.com



**Atacama Equinox**

PRICE £280-£300 (four shelves, price according to finish) CONTACT ☎ 01455 283251 🌐 www.atacama-audio.co.uk

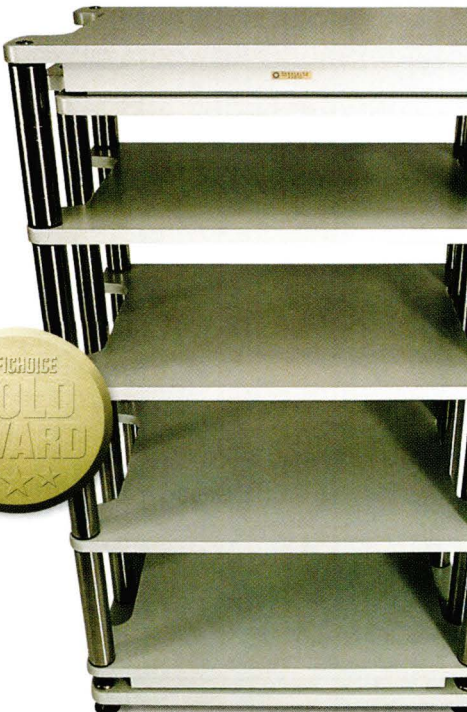


**BEST EQUIPMENT SUPPORT OVER £500**

**Townshend Audio Seismic Sink Stand 2**

PRICE £1,100 (five shelves) CONTACT ☎ 020 8979 2155 🌐 www.townshendaudio.com

**B**uilding on the success of Townshend's Seismic Sink isolation platform, this complete rack supports several components on a single airborne structure (it can be bought in various sizes, and Townshend will make stands to order for particularly odd-sized loads). It has two 'bladders', one at the top and one at the bottom, which isolate the components from any external vibrations. The results are excellent: the sonic effect produces greater clarity and stability, enhancing subtle details, micro-dynamics and stereo imaging.



**Audiophilebase StarBase**

PRICE £1,496 (four shelves with Base 01 platforms) CONTACT ☎ 01892 619319 🌐 www.audiophilebase.com



**Clearlight Audio Aspekt**

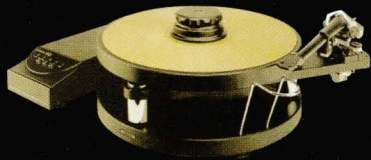
PRICE £600 (four shelves, real wood finish) CONTACT ☎ 01635 291357 🌐 www.clearlight-audio.de



# SME

The way to play vinyl...

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Model 20/2



Model 30/2



Series M2



Series 300



Series IV



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# PINEWOOD MUSIC

of Winchester and Taunton

## STRADIVARI HOMAGE WINS TOP UK AWARD

A richly deserved accolade of High End Product Of The Year from 'Hi-Fi News' for the sublime Sonus faber Stradivari Homage, claimed by many reviewers as the finest loudspeaker in the world. Some visitors were disappointed that it was not being demonstrated at September's London Show, but it was felt that this was not the most sympathetic environment for such a creation. Instead, serious inquirers are invited to make an appointment with Pinewood Music, where it can be heard in all its glory.

## CREMONA AUDITOR

But these little beauties *were* playing at the Show. Did you hear them with the little Jadis DA-5 amplifier? You didn't? Shame on you! Those who did were captivated: this is a system that really talks out loud to you. Wonderful speakers, wonderful amplifier.

## JADIS

The stuff of legends - and stocked by very few dealers. What does it sound like? It sounds like a feisty angel plucking at your heartstrings. Come and experience the magic with Pinewood.

## AUDIO RESEARCH

The CD3 Mk 2 is said by many, including ourselves, to be the finest CD player at any price - and at little over £5000, that says a lot. No upsampling or over sampling, just the basics taken to the highest level. It shows what can be done.

## KRELL

Krell's new Resolution Serres of loudspeakers won a lot of admirers at the Show, and every model represents superb value. Remember: Dan D'Agostino was doing loudspeakers before amplifiers, so he knows more than a thing or two! Hear them at Pinewood.

*Agents for:* Krell, Audio Research, Jadis, Sonus faber, Martin Logan, Koetsu, Copland, Prima Luna, Pathos, Oracle, Lyra, Unison Research, Transparent, Chord Cable, finite-elemente, BCD Engineering, Futureglass

Brian Rivas and Alison Holmes can be contacted at  
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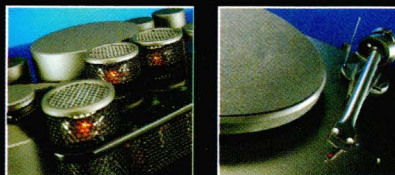
# REVIEWS



Welcome to the HFC hardware reviews section – the only place for definitive tests of the latest hi-fi components. Our unique combination of extensive listening, unsighted comparisons and scientific lab reports, conducted by the UK's most experienced set of reviewers, ensures you're holding the most comprehensive and reliable guide to high performance hi-fi in the world.

## EQUIPMENT REVIEWS

- 64 T+A G10R turntable and V10 integrated amplifier
- 68 Vivid Audio B1 loudspeaker
- 72 Cyrus 6vs and 8vs integrated amplifiers
- 75 Pro-Ject Debut III turntable
- 76 Exposure 2010 S CD player
- 78 PMC DB1+ and TB2+ loudspeakers
- 80 Cyrus CD8x CD player and PSX-R power supply
- 83 Pioneer DV-575A universal disc player



## OUR RATINGS EXPLAINED

Percentage ratings for various different criteria, like sound quality and value for money

...nor an... we liked point here is... to the job of... recommend you... dare this with Marantz's £800 player, the 17 MkII M, which has excellent build and is a very good impression in HFC 243. At same price there's also the Cyrus 7, a ring all-rounder in a compact case. After trying the Heart with the standard s we switched over to the Siemens grade, a comparison somewhat muddled by the fact that it was a cold for hot swap – the player had been on for several days with the

Our overall conclusion... after a livelier... w tubes shone... through. The Siemens-equipped player has an snappier sound with better timing that as with dense material with remarkable fidelity and ease. It even seems to be

You can find... civilised players for the money. But few combine dynamics with fine timing skills as effectively as this HFC... Jason Kennedy

The things we like most about the product

The things we think could be better

The product's final score. All criteria are taken into account but the emphasis is on performance. Components scoring more than 85% may qualify for an HFC Award Badge

**VERDICT**

**SOUND >> 83%**

**FEATURES >> 85%**

**BUILD >> 85%**

**VALUE >> 85%**

**CONCLUSION**

Having a highly entertaining and colourful player at a competitive price, the build quality is good and the feature list strong – it's not the most subtle £750 player but if you're looking for a spinner to inspire you it could prove a bargain.

**HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 84%**

## OUR AWARD BADGES EXPLAINED



**Best Buy**

A component receiving the coveted Hi-Fi Choice Best Buy Badge has been judged to deliver excellent performance at its price point, thereby offering outstanding value for money.



**Editor's Choice**

This Badge is awarded only to those components that are judged to deliver reference-standard performance, regardless of cost. These products may be considered among the very best of their kind.

Turn the page for the most rigorous tests of serious hi-fi in the business...

# Power of 10

*Trauma-free high end with the Mercedes quality touch*

**PRODUCT** T+A G10R and V10

**TYPE** Turntable and integrated valve amplifier

**PRICE** (G10R) £2,300, (V10) £4,000

**KEY FEATURES** (G10R) Size (WxHxD): 44x15x38cm  
◉ Weight: 15kg ◉ Belt-driven synchronous motor drive  
◉ 33/45rpm ◉ Microprocessor control ◉ (V10) Size  
(WxHxD): 44x19x38cm ◉ Weight: 25.8kg ◉ 80W/ch  
(4/8 ohms) ◉ 4 line inputs plus tape ◉ High/standard  
valve bias voltage settings for low and high level replay

**CONTACT** ☎ 020 8863 9117

🌐 www.taelektroakustik.de

A recent visit to T+A elektroakustik (which stands for Theory and Applications in electroacoustics) in Herford, Westphalia, Germany, demonstrated first-hand that the company is not just another anonymous small-scale producer. T+A designs and manufactures a full range of hi-fi equipment from sources through to loudspeakers, plus complete, upmarket stereo and surround systems. Its products traditionally have very long product lifetimes and remain serviceable until the cows come home. Quality is an obsession at T+A, right down to factory processes like rigorous vibration testing while monitoring distortion levels – but not in the case of the two items reviewed here, for which this kind of treatment would be inappropriate.

Our test subjects are the first two products in T+A's flagship V-series, which consists of an integrated valve amplifier and a turntable (with no 'V' in the title – don't ask), the latter available in different versions (see box, p66).

These are clearly 'proper' high-end products, and there's something very focused and purposeful about both. On a variety of levels, the designers have sought to synthesise the benefits of modern technology with traditional core technologies, with results that in less talented hands often fall between two stools when attempted. The other side of the V-series is the radical and quite original industrial

design, which again seeks to combine contemporary and traditional technology and style in an innovative and enticing way.

The V10 integrated valve amp was the first product in the series. It's a highly specified, yet compact unit, designed to deliver 80 watts per channel into four or eight-ohm loads using a novel circuit topology called SPPP (Single Primary Push Pull – see Q&A panel, p66) over a 100kHz bandwidth. Consistency is addressed with a rigorous valve selection process, and all operational parameters – signal levels, currents and overload margins – are monitored by microprocessor, which also calculates running times and other parameters (cold/hot starts, load types and so on) and warns when new valves are required. It also ensures voltages to the valves are turned on slowly to reduce wear as they heat. The ballpark lifetime of a valve set is estimated at 3,000-5,000 hours.

Mechanical construction has also been a high priority. The basic structure is steel, with four shock absorbing feet and external aluminium sandwich panels, the top acrylic panel helping to reduce vibration and microphony. The main transformer and output stage caps are housed in aluminium for resonance control and to disperse heat.

The G10 is the turntable – more correctly it's a 'record player', since it's only normally available with an arm and cartridge (for options, see box, p66). An integral phono step-up is also an option – called the PH-G10RMC, it arrives preconfigured for your chosen cartridge but can be easily changed for different cartridges using miniature in-line switches accessible from underneath. Our review sample came fitted with a Rega arm that's closely related to the familiar RB300, and a System C05 high-output, fixed-stylus moving coil cartridge manufactured by Benz – all but ready to run straight from the box. The player sits on four heavily damped suspension pillars, but no adjustment is required and set-up takes a matter of minutes.

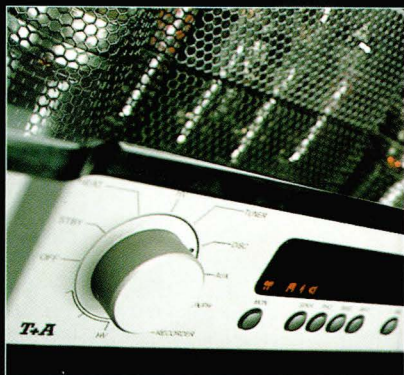
Although the basics are comparable to other turntables with heavy platters driven by belt from a synchronous motor, the execution is quite different. Start-up torque is mediated by DSP, which also regulates the motor drive to eliminate (it claims) the pulse-like drive pattern of the motor, and also the motor speed to change between 33 and 45rpm. Running speeds are selectable from the front panel. The mechanical construction takes its cue from the V10. ▶





EDITOR'S CHOICE

HI-FI CHOICE  
magazine



# Q & A

We spoke to Lothar Wieman, director of development for T+A elektroakustik, about the design of the V10 amplifier



**HFC:** Can you explain

what the SPPP amplifier circuit is meant to do?

**LW:** SPPP stands for Single Primary Push Pull, which offers significant advantages over conventional push pull valve amplifiers, in particular excellent linearity and a much improved broadband frequency response, which are otherwise difficult to achieve with valves.

**What were the problems you set out to resolve?**

In conventional push pull amplifiers, there is always some asymmetry in the output valves and transformer which make it impossible to achieve completely smooth waveforms when the positive and negative output half-waveforms are added together. There is also stray inductance between the individual primary output transformer windings complicating the issue, and a single-ended solution would not allow us to provide the power output we believe to be essential.

**How are these ends achieved?**

Our new circuit eliminates the symmetry problems completely as there is only a single DC feedback loop to define the 0V DC point of the amp, with no division into pulsed half-wave currents which can only be imperfectly summed, and which inevitably result in harmonic distortion. With only one primary transformer winding, symmetry problems are eliminated and there is less stray interference, and hence a cleaner signal. There is no current flow through the output transformer, which makes it possible to employ toroidal transformers, with their inherently wider bandwidth and lower phase shifts, without problems. No overall negative feedback is needed, yet the upper frequency limit is 100kHz.

**What are the trade-offs?**

The only disadvantage of the circuit is that it is much more complex than a conventional circuit, and a more sophisticated power supply is required. In all, 22 separate voltages have to be supplied, 16 valves are required – ten triodes and six pentodes – and the transformers we use are more expensive.

**Are there any plans to extend the V-series?**

We are currently working on a matching stereo SACD player which will have a valve output stage.



**“If you hanker for the solidity, architecture and presence of a musical *event*, then no digital source is likely to compete.”**

▣ The platter is a heavy machined alloy and acrylic, which is also used in combination with steel for the upper surface of the player. Internally, a resonance absorber filled with lead and sand dampens the structure down further.

## SOUND QUALITY

The internal firmware provides impressive ‘hand-holding’, making the combination of G10 and V10 very easy to use. The turntable can be set to power up automatically when the amp is turned on and the output of the phono step-up is muted when the player turns off. But the G10 is mechanically well behaved anyway, and is much less microphonic than most, with sound quality relatively unresponsive to the quality of the support by turntable standards. Similarly, the amplifier can be operated by the well designed full system remote control (supplied), and the front panel display can be

made to show bias levels on the two channels. An estimate of remaining valve life, which takes into account the way the amplifier is used, is also indicated on the amplifier display, along with various error and status messages. Speaker impedance settings can be selected on the back panel. The amplifier is mainly passively cooled, but the microprocessor-based control system operates a variable speed fan which is normally (but not always completely) inaudible. Great stuff, but somehow the T+A package seems suspiciously slick for a system using thermionic valves and rubber bands.

Several thoughts of this kind were swirling around when this system was first fired up in anger, but they turned out to be completely misguided. The T+A pair was run with a pair of Lumley Lampros 300AB speakers, which is a medium to large (and unusually complex) floorstander, but perhaps more by luck than judgement, the Lumley turned out to be an inspired choice that complemented the character of the amplifier and player like a hand fits a glove.

Some basics. The player is absolutely speed-stable. ‘Wow’ and ‘flutter’ are said to be immeasurable, which must count as pretty low, and certainly there was no identifiable wow, which often manifests as a subtle edginess, or wow which consists of low rate cyclic speed variations. Even better, the amplifier’s thermal noise level is virtually inaudible even at close

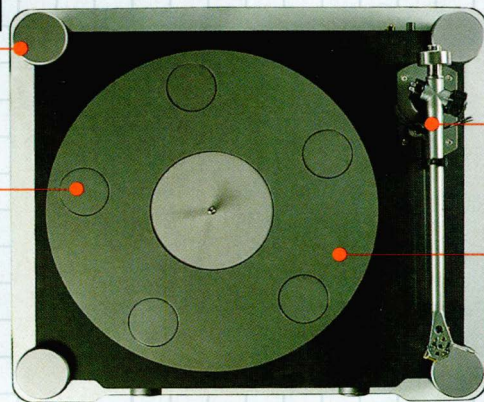
## OPTIONS

The V10 amp is only available in dark grey and black. The turntable is finished in the same way, but with some choices. The G10 has two arm-inclusive variants, one with a mildly modded Rega RB300 (as tested here) and the other a more upmarket design, the SME M2-9. These are fitted with Benz-made System C05 and System C10 moving coil cartridges respectively. The two variants are identified with an R (for Rega) or S (for SME) suffix, and the prices are £2,300 and £3,000. Another option is a phono step-up, the PH-G10RMC, which despite the name is a universal device, though it arrives set up for the cartridge supplied, and is fitted inside the base of the player. Cost is £250. A brass centre weight and Perspex dust cover are also available as accessories.

**Detail - G10R**

Top of suspension pillars

Upper platter engages with aluminium section below through these five aluminium extensions



Modified Rega RB300 arm, fitted with Benz high-output MC cartridge

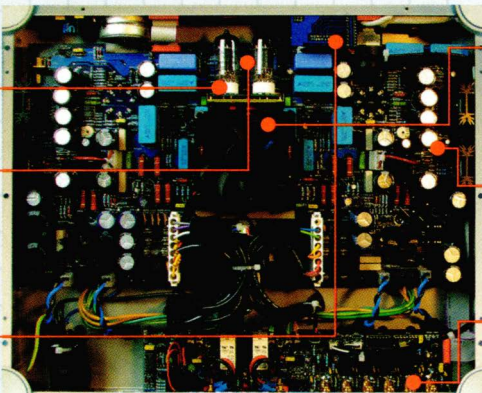
Acrylic upper platter section

**Detail - V10**

Ceramic sockets for valves

All amplification by valves. Semiconductors used only for voltage stabilization and control circuits

Two-stage volume control



Thermostatically controlled cooling fan

High grade audiophile class capacitors

Hermetically sealed gold contact relays

listening ranges and at high volumes. And that's another thing: given that this is a valve amp, and even allowing for the relatively gentle way that valve circuits normally behave when they enter clipping, the T+A amplifier goes remarkably loud with no hint of misbehaviour. But at very low levels some frequency hum harmonics (mainly LF stuff, 50 and 100Hz) can be heard with an ear close to the speakers. Slightly more worryingly, there is some mid frequency noise around a few hundred Hertz with the G10's platter held stationary but under power, which could be unscreened pick-up from the motor or (more likely) its control circuits – but apparently at too low a level to have any directly identifiable effect on the music.

Musically, the two components are extremely impressive individually, and even more so in combination. From the record player, there is a

perceptible thickening of textures and coloration at the extreme top of the audible frequency band, yet the bass is tight, powerful and tuneful, and the midband is simply glorious, framed by the magic of the V10 amplifier, which is at least as impressive as the player in its own way. There is nothing clinical about this combination, and the reality is that if you like the precision and transparency of good CD or SACD (or DVD-A, of course), the T+A sound may seem rather opaque and probably isn't for you. But if you hanker for the smell of the greasepaint, the solidity, architecture and presence of a musical event, then no digital source is likely to compete, painful as it is to admit it. The digital source component used during this test was a Sony SCD-XA9000ES SACD player, which worked well, but which really requires slightly different properties from the rest of the system before it is completely convincing.

But it is the combination of the two, the G10 and the V10, that really weaves spells. A recently acquired vinyl record of Antonio Forcione and Sabina Scibba called *Meet Me In London* (The Naim Label) was scarcely less than spectacular. It reproduced with a boldness and presence that was remarkably lifelike, and which placed the performers in the listening room with

an almost physical certainty that was only reluctantly dispelled by the evidence of the eyes. The performance hung together with a rare articulation, and at times it almost seemed possible to peer around the performers and see – hear – what was going on behind. Not every recording was this good of course, but the corresponding CD was not in the same class, and a surprising number of other titles were capable of just this kind of aural conjuring trick with the help of a little T+A magic. **HFC**

*Alvin Gold*



**VERDICT - G10R turntable**

SOUND >> 88%



FEATURES >> 90%



BUILD >> 90%



VALUE >> 85%



**CONCLUSION**

The G10R makes a great partner for the V10 amplifier, with the bonus of being an excellent (and simple to set up) turntable in its own right.

**HI-FI CHOICE**  
**>> 88%**

**VERDICT - V10 amplifier**

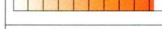
SOUND >> 91%



FEATURES >> 88%



BUILD >> 93%



VALUE >> 84%



**CONCLUSION**

Complex design but superb performance, with many of the practical benefits of solid state, coupled with the sound of single-ended valve standards.

**HI-FI CHOICE**  
**>> 89%**



EDITOR'S CHOICE  
**HI-FI CHOICE**  
magazine  
★

# Out of Africa

The Nautilus begat more than the B&W 800 Series as this new South African design reveals

**PRODUCT** Vivid Audio B1

**TYPE** Loudspeaker and integral stand

**PRICE** £6,590 per pair

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 27x110x38cm (base depth: 42cm) • Weight: 38kg • Three-and-a-half-way design • Sensitivity/impedance: 89dB/4 ohms (nom) • Crossover: Fourth order, Linkwitz Riley • Finishes: white, oyster grey, sahara beige, copper, graphite black

**CONTACT** ☎ 01273 749149

www.vividspeakers.com

The first South African loudspeaker to come our way is also one of the most distinctive we've seen for a long time. The Vivid B1 has some unusual pedigree, in that it was designed by the man who produced the original snail-like Nautilus speaker for B&W, one Laurence 'Dic' Dickie. Dic has been working as a consultant for PA specialist Turbosound of late, but he has retained his enthusiasm for metal drivers and enclosures that challenge the norm, a passion which has come to fruition with a small range from SA start-up Vivid Audio. This unlikely collaboration came about because B&W's former owner Robert Trunz went to South Africa to get closer to the artists on his B&W Music label and in the process got to know Philip Guttentag and Bruce Gessner, acoustic engineers based in KwaZulu-Natal. When the latter told Robert of their intention to start Vivid he put them in touch with Dic.

Unlike the majority of speaker manufacturers, Vivid has not only designed and produced its enclosures but has also created a brand new range of drive units to go into it. As a result, the B1 features some highly original thinking. For a start, the metal mid and high frequency domes are not hemispherical in shape but catenary, the shape formed by a chain supported at either end. This profile, when combined with a stiffening ring, gives the highest break-up frequency for a given diameter, and as a result the 26mm high frequency dome can be taken

up to a super-tweeter-beating 41 kHz before it hits its first resonance. The 50mm upper-mid dome will itself go higher than most tweeters – both units are backed by tapered tubes to absorb rearward radiation, à la Nautilus.

The B1 uses a three-and-a-half-way driver arrangement where each driver is able to operate in fully pistonic fashion across its band and is sharply rolled off (24dB/octave) at the crossover point. There are two 158mm drivers, one firing rearwards and one forwards, the latter covering both bass and midrange while the rear driver does bass only. These two units are decoupled from the cabinet by lossy mountings and rely on a bar joining their magnets for mechanical integrity.

The two dome drivers have radially polarised neodymium magnets, which in the case of the tweeter produce an incredible field strength of 2.4 Tesla. The metal cone bass/mid drivers feature a highly aerodynamic small area chassis with deep, thin ribs to allow maximum freedom of air movement. This is combined with a coil former that is "perforated to the max" as Dic puts it, defined as '41 per cent open'. This calms the Helmholtz resonance that is peculiar to coil formers and smooths the overall response. Vivid uses a short coil in a long gap to ensure consistent power handling.

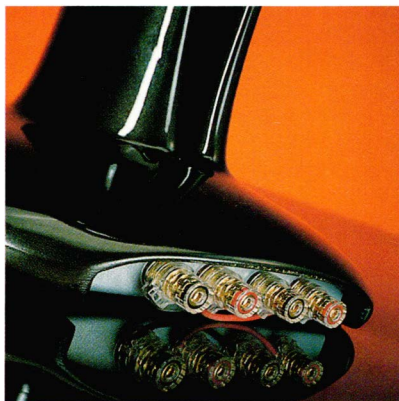
The 40-litre cabinet is made of carbon fibre filled polymer and is ovoid in shape in order to achieve high rigidity and minimal internal reflections. The only parallel surfaces are the front and rear baffles. The curved edges of the front baffle also serve to minimise diffraction and combine with the narrow profile of the integral stand to offer a very low resistance path for energy travelling across the baffle. The integral stand hides van den Hul internal cabling with the bi-wire terminals located at the back of the five-spike base, which means that one of the least attractive things about

speakers – speaker cables – keep as low a profile as possible. Unusually there are two reflex ports, and it's possible to see right through the speaker. These have a reaction-cancelling effect and are tuned to 40Hz.

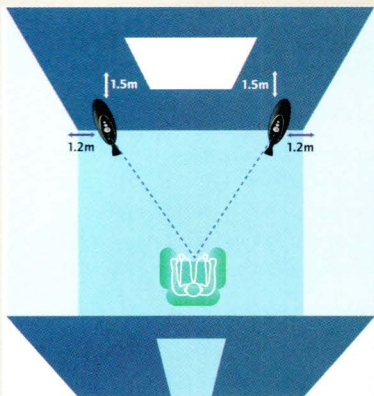
## SOUND QUALITY

Most loudspeakers are either a refinement of what has gone before or benefit from a trickle down of technology, but the B1 has been designed from the ground up to be a low-distortion, low-coloration loudspeaker. Its only obvious antecedent is the stunning, in both performance and price, B&W Nautilus, yet unlike the range that trickled down from that model it maintains precisely the same approach. The result is an impressively revealing, neutral and thrilling transducer that revitalises your best records and opens up those you thought less spectacular. For instance, Frank Zappa's *Halloween* DVD-A had previously seemed to be a less than clean live recording, but the B1 suggested that some of the problems were not coming from the disc but the speakers we'd used in the past. What's more, despite the B1's compact nature it can produce deep, grunty bass that's both solid and tuneful.

What first strikes you when playing a familiar track is the quality of timing – this is an extremely nimble and thus engaging speaker that can turn on something much smaller than a sixpence. McCoy Tyner's *Land Of Giants* SACD becomes a more energetic, sprightly album in the Vivid's delicate hands. This album can often seem rather too relaxed and smooth but that is what most speakers make of it; in the Vivid's even grasp the quality of playing becomes clear and the tunes much more subtle. That might suggest that this is a bright or forward speaker but it ain't so – it's just not adding its own foibles to the mix to the extent that many speakers do. There is no ▶



## SET-UP



### POSITIONING

The B1 was designed as a wide dispersion loudspeaker and thus will make you a little more aware of the reflectivity or otherwise of the side walls in your listening room. To minimize this effect, Vivid recommends you angle the speakers in so that their axis crosses in front of the listening position. This is a classic set-up for achieving good imaging and a wide sweet spot so is a fine place to start. We achieved good results with the speakers toed in to a lesser degree, almost pointing straight at the listening seat, the side walls not offering much reflectivity in our room. This gives a bit more depth of image at the expense of sweet spot width – in other words, fewer listeners will get good imaging from the system.

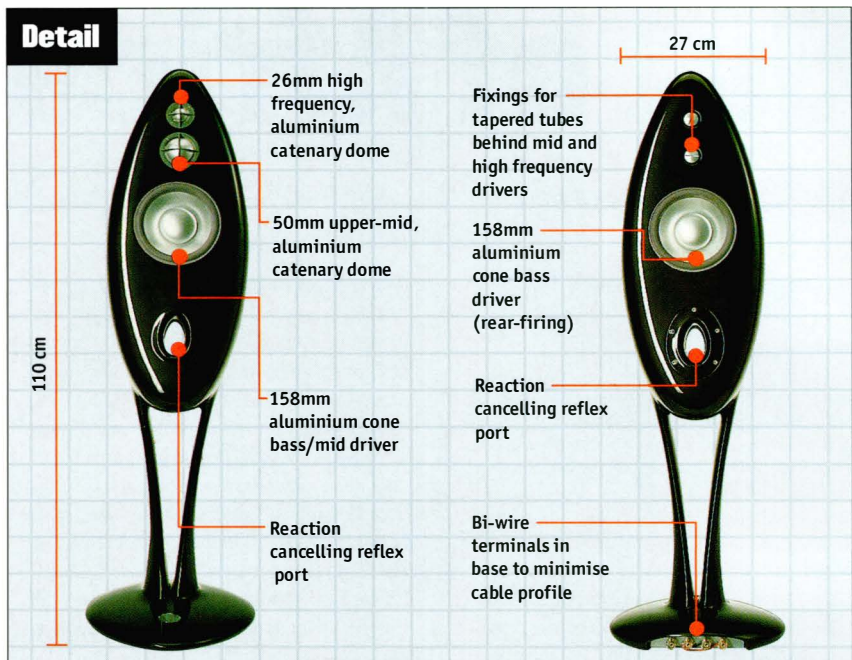
### SYSTEM MATCHING

The B1 did show a little excess bass in our 4x5m room and if your listening room has a strong resonance at 40Hz like one of ours then the B1 may not be the best choice. Larger rooms will give better results, especially those with higher than average ceiling height. Vivid neither supplies nor encourages the use of foam bungs to block ports to alter the bass response, but this is an easy way of tuning the bass if resonances are an issue.

We tried using Townshend Seismic bases under the B1s but got only a slight improvement because of the way Vivid decouples its drive units from the cabinet, combined with the extremely high stiffness of the cabinet itself. The B1 has five spike mountings on its large base so it will effectively nail itself into soft floorings, which is fine so long as your electronics are well isolated. As far as ancillary equipment goes this is a revealing and highly neutral speaker that will show up any foibles in the source and amplification. The latter needs to be powerful for serious volume – at least 100 watts – but if you don't need to play loud then a stiff valve amp (like the Border Patrol mentioned in the review) can produce stunning results.



## Detail



## “If you want to hear right into the recording, few speakers sound as ‘clean’ as the Vivid.”

discernible cabinet character – instead they ‘disappear’ and let the sound out into the room. This means that the resonances of the acoustic bass on Adem’s *Homesongs* have a greater presence and the recording overall has a greater intimacy than usual.

There’s really only one respect in which the B1 could obviously be better and that’s dynamics. Our pair had the disadvantage of following the massive ATC SCM150s into our listening room and the reduction in driver and box size had an inevitable impact. That said, we’ve not heard another speaker close to this size that offers greater dynamics with anything like the vanishing levels of coloration on offer. There’s always a trade-off with speakers and if you want to hear right into the recording, to understand every syllable that Andre 3000 utters on Outkast’s *The Love Below* while appreciating the rhythmical dexterity of the production, there are few as ‘clean’ as the Vivid.

Dynamic range is stunning, however, and this speaker will reveal the full breadth of level, whatever you play through it.

Lambchop’s *Is A Woman* is a quiet, finely layered album with a lot of small sounds that are often hard to identify. With the B1 we could even hear the soundbooth used by the vocalist, along with greater distinction between louder and vanishingly quiet instruments. Yes, they’re all instruments – Lambchop has to be the quietest orchestra in ‘pop’!

Most of the listening was done with a Gamut D200 power amp but the opportunity to use the Border Patrol S20 SE valve amp came up and produced gripping results. The greater

differentiation between recordings, especially with regard to soundstage scale, and the quality or style of recording generally became more apparent. If it could be compared to a visual image it’s as if there is a lot more detail in the ‘black’, with details emerging from the shadows. Put on a great album and then see if you can turn it off – it’s difficult with this sort of hardware in the room!

This is one of the most revealing and neutral speakers we’ve heard and a remarkable achievement for a new company. In many respects the price seems low for what’s on offer – go to Revel or Focal-JMLab and you might pay an extra 30 per cent for a competing product. The fact that it’s so elegant is the icing on the cake, and we look forward to bigger cakes from the Vivid kitchen with relish. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy

## VERDICT

SOUND >> 95%



EASE OF DRIVE >> 69%



BUILD >> 95%



VALUE >> 88%



### PRO

An extremely revealing and genuinely neutral speaker with dynamic range, timing and imaging to die for.

### CON

Bass proved a little full in our room and dynamics are limited by size.

### CONCLUSION

The Vivid Audio B1 proved itself to be a truly world-class speaker from a new brand that clearly knows how to get results. If you want to hear more of the music and less of the speaker, there’s not a lot of serious competition.

**HI-FI CHOICE** >> **92%**  
OVERALL SCORE

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# Sixes and eights

*The 'singing shoebox' returns – and how! Meet the new integrated amps from Cyrus...*

**PRODUCT** Cyrus 6vs and 8vs

**TYPE** Integrated stereo amplifiers

**PRICE** (6vs) £600, (8vs) £800

**KEY FEATURES** (6vs) Size (WxHxD): 22x8x36cm

• Weight 3.7kg • Rated power output: 40W/channel (8 ohms) • 7 inputs • (8vs) Size (WxHxD): 22x8x36cm

• Weight: 5.5kg • Rated power output: 70W/channel (8 ohms) • 7 inputs • Upgrade path with PSX-R

**CONTACT** ☎ 01480 435577 • www.cyrus.co.uk

**C**yrus has been going through changes. Just recently, the company achieved independence in a management-led buyout from erstwhile parent NXT, and it has now redesigned and relaunched its signature products, the half-width Cyrus 6 and the Cyrus 8 integrated amps, which are signalled by a 'vs' suffix on the model designations. The changes

are subtle but they are significant, and they have had an important effect on sound quality.

The two amplifiers are almost identical externally. In fact from the front there is nothing to distinguish them, apart from a badge showing the model number that's all but hidden on the base of the front panel. The outer cover is made from pressure die-cast magnesium alloy with a silver or dark grey textured spray paint finish. The chassis is made from a polymer composite. In this way Cyrus continues to avoid using ferrous metals in the construction of its amplifiers. Ferrous panels allow eddy current to flow, with an audibly deleterious effect on sound quality.

The input labels have changed, but not their nature: new additions like one called MP3 (in fact an analogue input) don't alter the essential

fact that you can connect seven line inputs, including one labelled tape, which in reality is just another line input, though there is a full-blown tape in/out circuit (Tape 2) with a monitor facility for analogue decks with a third monitor head. Two pairs of speaker terminals have been shoehorned onto the tiny back panel for bi-wiring using the compact but now almost extinct BFA connector, though hollow-pin 4mm plugs can be used without adaptors. A headphone socket is also available on the back, which can be selected by a front panel switch.

The most obvious difference between the two amplifiers is power output – 40 watts per channel for the 6vs and 70 watts per channel for the 8vs. They both have seven inputs, balance adjust, fade/mute and a means of normalising levels between different inputs,



## UPGRADING WITH THE PSX-R

The Cyrus PSX-R is an externally featureless outboard power supply, which may be used to upgrade the 8vs (the 6vs is not compatible). Priced at £400, it assumes responsibility for the analogue signal-related sections of the 8vs, the advantages of which include a reduction in injected mains noise and ripple.

Good as the bare-bones 8vs is, the augmented model is simply in a different league. With the PSX-R the amp goes no louder (well, not much louder), but it restores the balance, purity and sweetness of the smaller 6vs. Instrumental and vocal separation is palpably superior, and the expressiveness with which music is reproduced is clearly enhanced, as is stereo imagery. There is more explicit depth information, and the soundstage is more vibrant and crisply defined. For reasons that are far from obvious, the combination of the 8vs and the PSX-R sounds in some ways like a smaller, better disciplined amp than the 8vs on its own, more like the 6vs in some ways, but with the potential for higher undistorted volume levels. This lifts the 8vs firmly into Best Buy territory (and also our Awards – see p43).



with a ring of LEDs around the multi-turn encoded control that indicates volume level and other status information. Oh, and an improved system remote control.

There are other differences too, such as upgraded passive components in the senior amplifier, but the main advantage of the Cyrus 8vs is that it can be optionally used with a PSX-R (see box). There are good reasons to go for the PSX-R as will be discussed shortly, but an obvious disadvantage is that it adds £400 to the bottom line. The amps themselves are being sold at exactly the same price as the models they replace, while the PSX-R is up by £50, the first time there has been a price increase in several years.

There's only a limited amount that can be said about the changes that have been made for the 'vs' models, which arose from a 'skunk'

sweet and detailed, earning the tag 'singing shoe boxes' in their earliest incarnations. Later models improved in their build quality and internal sophistication, but not always quite so obviously in terms of pure sound quality. They never completely lost their naturally agile and concise feel, but in a world where other competing designs were becoming progressively more accomplished, the Cyrus amplifiers have tended to remain relatively small-scale in sound, lacking muscle, and sounding as one colleague so succinctly put it in a recent conversation – 'thin'.

Until now that is. The Cyrus 6vs still has the classic turn-on-a-sixpence quality, but the top end has been cleaned up a great deal, and it is reminiscent more than any recent iterations of the original baby Cyrus amplifier – the classic Cyrus One. In fact it seems almost certain that

## “The ‘vs’ models arose from a ‘skunk’ project within Cyrus, in which designers are allowed to develop their own pet ideas.”

project within Cyrus, in which designers are allowed to develop their own pet ideas. Cyrus is being reticent about the detail of what has been done, but the outline version is that internal coupling capacitors have been eliminated or replaced by much smaller value components, and the servo amplifier necessary for output stability has been replaced by a less intrusive 'virtual servo' which has reduced the need for exotic components, instead using close tolerance components in a specific layout. As Cyrus explains it, the circuit is not rocket science, but the result of some clever lateral thinking.

### SOUND QUALITY

There has been something of a sea change in the performance of the 'vs' series amplifiers. Cyrus's half-width models have always been

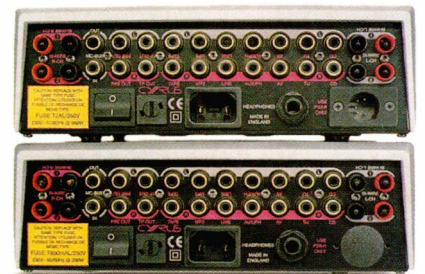
the new amplifiers are considerably purer, more organic and sweeter toned than the original singing shoeboxes from all those years ago, but the rate of change has surely accelerated with the latest incarnation. The Cyrus 6vs is neither thin nor raw (another possible criticism of the original). It is pure and organic, light of touch and better balanced than before. In its own still relatively small-scale way, it is an exquisitely refined and capable amplifier.

At first sight (or sound), the Cyrus 8vs is more of the same. It has a similar delicacy and purity, with significantly bolder musculature than the smaller version. It remains a subtle and expressive performer, but there are also signs of strain around the edges. One telltale signal is a lack of complete separation between the different elements in the soundstage. The 6vs's unusually organic and fluid way of

responding to changing musical landscapes is an object lesson, rare at any price, and the 8vs is not quite the equal of the junior model in this singular, but important respect.

Over recent years, although we have not entirely lost our original enthusiasm for the little Cyrus amplifiers, they have not always managed to track improvements in other amps, almost as though the required advances in performance have been held back by the physically compact packaging. With the 'vs' modifications, Cyrus has made a quantum leap, one that parachutes its amplifiers back towards the top of their class. One added attraction is that you can start with a 6vs and upgrade to an 8vs for little more than the difference in retail cost, and the PSX-R can be added to the 8vs at any time. But taken on their own, it's the cheaper model, the exquisite 6vs, that is the real star of the show. Without the benefit of the PSX-R, the 8vs is not quite its equal, even though it goes significantly louder. **HFC**

*Alvin Gold*



### VERDICT – Cyrus 6vs

SOUND >> 87%

FEATURES >> 80%

BUILD >> 88%

VALUE >> 89%

#### CONCLUSION

This is an exquisite little amplifier that sounds altogether cleaner, more agile and more finely detailed than its non-vs predecessor.

**HI-FI CHOICE**  
>> **88%**

### VERDICT – Cyrus 8vs

SOUND >> 83%

FEATURES >> 85%

BUILD >> 88%

VALUE >> 81%

#### CONCLUSION

The more costly Cyrus amp is much like its little brother, but with more power – yet it doesn't have quite the same degree of elegance and panache.

**HI-FI CHOICE**  
>> **83%**

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Deferred 12 months	£1945.00

**Interest Free Option on Request**

SYSTEM 3 ★★★★★	
UNICO CD player	£1175.00
UNICO Amplifier	£825.00
SONUS Concerto Spkrs	£999.00
<b>Normal System Price</b>	<b>£2999.00</b>
DEPOSIT	£600.00
Deferred 12 months	£2399.00

**Interest Free Option on Request**

SYSTEM 4 ★★★★★	
SHANLING CDT-100	£1649.00
PATHOS Classic 1 Amp	£1325.00
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<b>Normal System Price</b>	<b>£4473.00</b>
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**Interest Free Option on Request**

SYSTEM 5 ★★★★★	
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**Interest Free Option on Request**

SYSTEM 6 ★★★★★	
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SONUS FABER Auditor	£2548.00
<b>Normal System Price</b>	<b>£7546.00</b>
DEPOSIT	£1510.00
Deferred 12 months	£6036.00

**Interest Free Option on Request**

SYSTEM 8 ★★★★★	
THETA Compli Uni Plyr	£4482.00
PATHOS Inpl 2 Amp	£5500.00
WILSON BENESCH ACT	£9000.00
<b>Normal System Price</b>	<b>£18,982.00</b>
DEPOSIT	£3800.00
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**Interest Free Option on Request**

SYSTEM 9 ★★★★★	
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McINTOSH C2200/MC2101	£10,000.00
MARTIN LOGAN Odyssey	£6798.00
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# Star debut

Now in its third incarnation, Pro-Ject's entry-level record player edges ever closer to budget perfection



**PRODUCT** Pro-Ject Debut III  
**TYPE** Turntable, arm and cartridge  
**PRICE** £130  
**CONTACT** ☎ 01235 511 166  
 🌐 www.henleydesigns.co.uk

In recent years, much has been made of the sonic sacrifices that were made by the mass switch from vinyl to CD in the late 1980s. Many were convinced by marketing execs boasting of CD's 'perfect sound', but the more recent appearance of high-resolution digital formats SACD and DVD-Audio has shown the hollowness of that claim.

Nowadays of course, many who made the switch completely are left with a still-impressive collection of LPs sitting in a corner somewhere and nothing to play them on. What we need is a choice of turntables that can rekindle our love for vinyl without breaking the bank.

Cue the Pro-Ject Debut series. The Debut has been in the excellent-yet-affordable category for some time and its third incarnation, the Debut III, aims to up the ante still further.

On first impression it's a similar beast to its predecessor. Build quality is excellent for the price, and it's very easy to set up. The supplied Ortofon OM5E cartridge (very decent for a deck costing just £120) came ready-fitted to our review model, and the process of balancing the arm with counterweight and anti-skating weight is very straightforward.

The Debut III boasts a sturdy high-mass MPF plinth, as well as flexible suspension on its feet to help isolate the deck – and your spinning

vinyl – from unwanted vibrations. But the main improvement over the Debut II is a completely different tonearm: higher in mass and therefore much sturdier, it also has sapphire bearings and is very well designed and machined. The deck's suspended 16-volt motor is also improved: it's now the same as that featured on every Pro-Ject deck up to £700.

There's no speed box supplied, so to change from 33 to 45 you must take the platter off and re-hook the belt to a different part of the motor pulley. This is, however, done very quickly. Alternatively, Pro-Ject sells an add-on speed box (£45) that can be used on any of its turntables.

## SOUND QUALITY

Given the performance of this deck's predecessors, we were expecting big things. And the Debut III didn't disappoint. As soon as the needle came to rest on Joni Mitchell's *Hissing Of Summer Lawns* LP, the Debut III opened up with a performance of solidity, space and a superb grasp of rhythmic subtlety.

Frankly, flicking through a large selection of classic LPs made reviewing this deck a delight. The taut sound of David Bowie's *Hunky Dory* was complemented hugely by the Pro-Ject's performance, while the smoky ambience of Miles Davis' era-defining *Kind Of Blue* album was reproduced with a gripping sense of poise, realism and enough precision to deliver, even when saxophonist John Coltrane hits his signature hundred-notes-a-minute stride.


If there is a criticism to be made of this turntable – and at £130 such a criticism is a

tad churlish – it's that the Debut III's bass is a little on the lean side. A nostalgic roam through some late eighties/early nineties hip-hop records revealed a slight lack of weight and power in the lowest frequencies.

However, what it lacks in sheer grunt the Debut III makes up for in punch and precision. Wise system matching – a bass-responsive amplifier and a decent pair of floorstanders, for example – will turn this into a budget deck that casts any doubts aside.

The Debut III offers excellent value for just £130. If you're a first-time buyer or someone who wants a new turntable to revisit the joys of an old record collection, the Debut III is highly recommended. **HFC**

Dominic Dawes

VERDICT	
<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 74%</b> 	 <b>PRO</b> Detailed, musical and genuinely engaging, this is a superbly capable vinyl spinner for the money. <b>CON</b> Of course, it's no match for turntable/arm/cartridge combos costing hundreds of pounds more – but at the price, who's complaining?
<b>FEATURES &gt;&gt; 60%</b> 	
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 73%</b> 	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 97%</b> 	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> Don't expect miracles for 130 quid – yet this little budget marvel gets remarkably close! As a low-cost way of getting that vinyl spinning, it's superb value and a tough act to beat.	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE &gt;&gt; 86%</b>	

# Bespoke Exposure

*A custom-built transport looks set to improve Exposure's already fine 2010 CD player*

**PRODUCT** Exposure 2010 S

**TYPE** CD player

**PRICE** £600

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 44x9x33cm

• Weight: 5kg • Custom-built transport • Thicker gauge casing • Optical/coaxial digital outputs

**CONTACT** ☎ 01273 423877

Ⓜ www.exposurehifi.com

**C**hange is good. There's nothing quite like a new technology to focus the minds of those involved with an existing one. Just look at how turntables evolved at the very time CD was supposed to be making them obsolete. These days, against the combined might of multichannel and codec compression, it's the traditional exponents of two-channel that are upping the ante. One such two-channel devotee is Exposure and, if their new 2010 S is anything to go by, such dedication should bring rich rewards to the listener.

The Exposure 2010 was already a fine midrange CD player. Some criticised it for its lack of refinement, but this so-called 'poor man's Naim' had a sense of rhythm and control that made it compelling. Fortunately, Exposure hasn't tinkered with the winning formula too much. It still uses the same subtle, contoured all-aluminium casework. Underneath the hood, it looks familiar too. There's the same high capacity toroidal transformer, with separate supplies for analogue and digital stages. The single, surface-mount PCM 1716, 24-bit/96kHz DAC remains, as does the jitter reducing, high-purity master clock. Recording fans will be happy to find that both optical and coaxial digital outputs are standard.

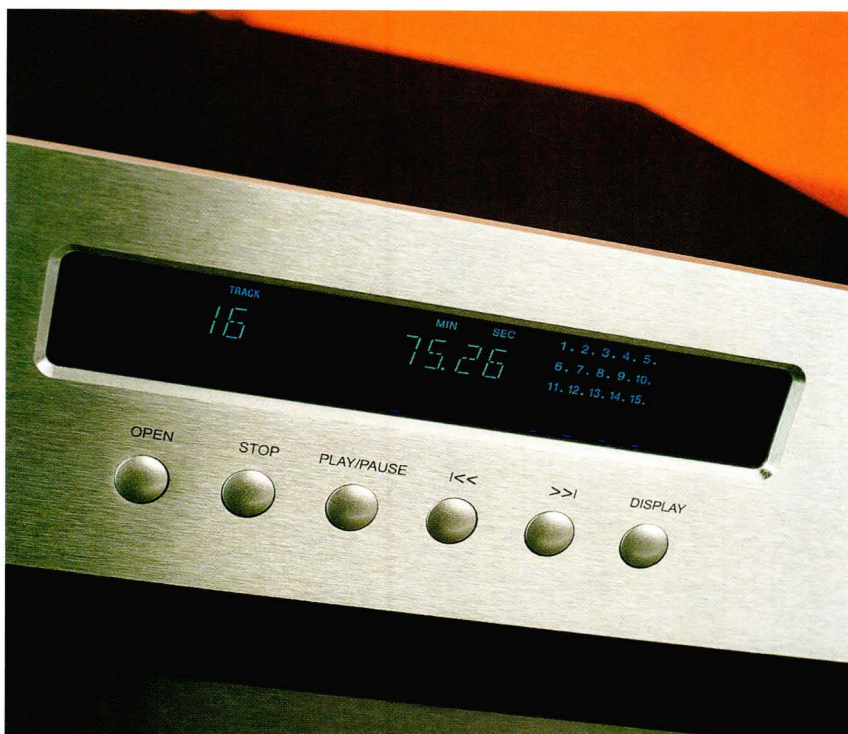
New to the S model is a totally bespoke transport (of which more later), a thicker casing, new feet, improved finish and a new remote control. The latter is a great improvement, and there are no quibbles with the build quality either. It always was fine, but

it now has to rate as one of the most solid, well-made £600 CD players about. We're less sure about those new feet, though – they're so smooth that unless the unit is on a course surface, it does tend to slip and slide about. Not on the spec sheet, but another change with the 2010 S is a switch from twin output reservoir capacitors to eight smaller Elna designs. This is really a question of designer preference and should have little effect upon the sound quality either way.

One aspect of the design that should dramatically affect the sound quality, however, is the new transport. These days there are fewer and fewer transports around that aren't based on a CD-ROM. It leaves manufacturers such as Exposure with little choice except to try to work around an inferior design, or start afresh with a completely new one. Bravely, they took the later route and have heavily invested in their own design. Based around a Sony laser and servo, the 2010 S features a mechanism, micro controller and display that are completely unique. It's an expensive business, but having control over the transport stage gives Exposure far greater scope in controlling the very delicate digital signals. Exposure isn't alone in this thinking, and companies such as Naim have for years expounded upon the

**“The brass and percussion timbre was, given the price, absolutely first rate, and a match for many more expensive machines.”**





importance of a decent transport and power supply over and above a fashionable DAC. Whether other companies will follow Exposure, however, remains to be seen. Budget brand Cambridge Audio already tweaks its Sony-based transports, although not to anything like the extent that Exposure has here. Others may adopt this route, but it's likely that those involved with multichannel in particular, will stick to lightly tweaked, off-the-shelf designs.

Not a great deal has changed in the midrange CD market since we last tested the 2010, so the rivals remain pretty much as before. The likes of Roksan's Kandy MkIIID (£650) and Rotel's RCD-1072 (£600) represent the direct opposition, with players like Cyrus's new CD8x occupying the next rung up (see review, p80).

**SOUND QUALITY**

New transport or not, the 2010 S still sounds very much like the last one. To these ears that's no bad thing, although others may disagree. Playing some processed pop, in this case Kylie Minogue's *Chocolate*, brought out a taut, punchy sound with pace that's right at the top of its class. Bass wasn't quite the deepest, but its sheer enthusiasm and 'bop' more than made up for this.

Now for the downside. Using a generally neutral system we were aware of the treble response being slightly brighter than usual. It wasn't intrusive, but it's likely that those with brighter systems might find it so. If you own a pair of speakers with a particularly sharp-sounding metal tweeter, for example, then you may well find the 2010 S not to be well matched. Otherwise, it was a composed and involving listen. The soundstage was expansive, if lacking the exact vocal positioning of some of the (admittedly more expensive) competition. A Naim CD5i, for example, would have focused Kylie's vocals just that bit more accurately. Nevertheless, for £600 the staging and definition is certainly class-competitive.

With Joss Stone's *Super Duper Love*, it was the rhythm and pace that once more stood out. The sound could perhaps become a bit relentless in a harsher system, but with well matched components it's probably one of the most communicative players this side of the benchmark CD5i. Indeed, in many ways it's voiced much like Salisbury's finest which, given the price differential, is no mean feat. Other aspects of the sound quality couldn't quite live up to the excellent timing but were at least class-competitive. There was a pleasant vocal timbre, and fair height of sound. If one aspect


let the player down, then it was probably the percussion. Heard against an Arcam CD82, used as reference, it wasn't as focused or refined. But the more rounded character of the Arcam isn't to everyone's taste, and it's likely the Exposure's looser treble balance and all-round 'pep' will find favour with many.

Classical music always tends to be a good test for a CD player's ability to remain composed and measured. In terms of complex and dynamic pieces they don't tend to come much more testing than Chabrier's *España*. It's an immensely powerful piece, rich in musical contrast, but it can sound extremely ragged on the wrong system. Fortunately, the 2010 S didn't turn out to be the roughneck that it might have been. It had a light touch during the gentler passages, yet strong presence when required. The brass and percussion timbre was, given the price, absolutely first rate, and a match for many more expensive machines. Even at the composition's most complex, the Exposure always remained composed, and had little trouble in layering and separating the various instruments. What the Exposure most definitely is not, however, is an 'analogue sounding' CD player. Take what issues you may with the phrase, but there's no doubt that something like the Arcam CD82 would possess more of what might be thought of as 'analogue qualities'. In our experience, the CD82 was certainly the more fluid and seamless of the two.

The ever so slightly mechanical sound to strings was carried through to The Divine Comedy's *Charmed Life*. Not the glassy screech that would make cats run for cover, characteristic of some late-1980s CD players, but merely not quite as 'rounded' as some. What the 2010 S most definitely is, though, is transparent. In addition to class-best timing, it gives the impression that you can really 'feel' the recording – making it one of the most involving players for the money. **HFC**

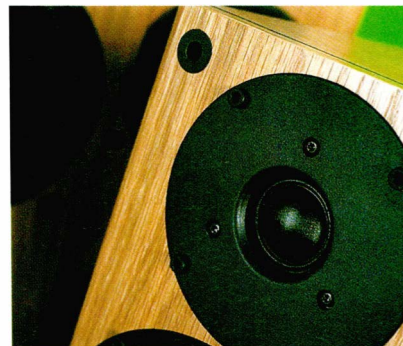
Dominic Todd



<b>VERDICT</b>	
<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 81%</b>	 <p><b>PRO</b> Strong build and features mix. Class-leading timing, and one of the most involving machines at the price.</p> <p><b>CON</b> Not the most rounded of players. Some lack of focus in the treble, and will sound 'forward' on bright systems.</p>
<b>FEATURES &gt;&gt; 82%</b>	
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 86%</b>	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 87%</b>	
<p><b>CONCLUSION</b> Misses a Best Buy tag by the skin of its teeth, but still a must-audition £600 player for anyone who likes a lively sound. It's one of the most engaging CD players this side of the Naim CD5i, though one or two rivals offer more refinement.</p>	
<p><b>HI-FI CHOICE</b> <b>&gt;&gt;&gt; 84%</b> <b>OVERALL SCORE</b></p>	

# The T-line twins

PMC's '+' means revised damping, tweeters and crossovers, plus an upgrade option for existing owners



**PRODUCT** PMC DB1+ and TB2+

**TYPE** Standmount loudspeakers

**PRICE** (DB1+) £625 per pair, (TB2+) £795 per pair

**KEY FEATURES** (DB1+) Size (WxHxD): 16x29x23cm  
 ◉ Weight: 4.5kg ◉ (TB2+) Size (WxHxD): 20x40x30cm  
 ◉ Weight: 8.5kg ◉ (Both) 27mm fabric dome tweeter with twin chambers and ferrofluid damping ◉ Bass/mid driver has cast frame and doped pulp paper cone  
 ◉ 1.5m folded transmission line

**CONTACT** ☎ 08704 441044  
 🌐 www.pmc-speakers.com

**P**MC has long been a favourite of this *Hi-Fi Choice* reviewer, going right back to the company's early days in 1992, and loudspeaker buyers would seem to agree, since it has been one of the fastest growing operations in British hi-fi. As a result its trademark technique of transmission line bass loading – pioneered by Bailey and IMF back in the 1960s, but only regularly used since then by Rega – is now firmly back on the hi-fi map.

The DB1 and TB2 were the least costly and smallest PMCs. Both were standmounts, and both have received *HFC* Best Buy ratings – as did the latter's TB1 ancestor in 1996.

These new DB1+ and TB2+ models look identical to their

predecessors, and follow precisely the same overall configurations, though they feature a number of important modifications, basically the same as those applied to the FB1+ reviewed last month, and also cost a little more, at £625 and £795 per pair respectively.

Both are two-ways, and despite their modest dimensions, both use folded transmission lines some 1.5m long to load the rears of their bass drivers. It's a technique which has some similarities to reflex loading, inasmuch as there's a port at the end of the line that provides some reinforcement in the bass region. But there are significant advantages too – the internal panels used to create the line provide worthwhile enclosure stiffening; and the combination of the line with carefully placed damping materials offers considerable scope for absorbing and controlling the rear radiation from the main driver cone, reducing the box reflections that are found with simpler enclosures.

The prime '+' modification is the use of a more costly and superior 27mm dual-chamber soft dome tweeter, of the same type as that which has long been used in PMC's larger and more upmarket models. This also involves modifications to the crossover, including the use of carefully selected Solen capacitors for best sound quality. A new type of foam, especially good at absorbing midrange frequencies, is also now used in the TB2+.

Both models have classy real wood veneer all round, with demure styling and nicely rounded vertical edges to the front panel. The standard finishes are black ash, oak and cherry, though a textured neo-black Pro version is also available. The TB2+ is a medium-sized standmount based on the same 170mm cast frame main driver as that used in the FB1+. It has an internal box volume of around 15 litres, and a large slot-shaped port on the rear. The much smaller DB1+ (DB translates as 'dinky box') has a 140mm cast frame main driver with a 90mm doped paper cone, and its rear panel has an attachment plate for a substantial wall bracket.



**Above:** PMC DB1+: translates as 'Dinky Box' 1+

There are also magnetically shielded versions of both speakers, with identical acoustic performance, intended for horizontal mounting. Twin terminals facilitate bi-wiring or bi-amping. Owners of existing 'non +' DB1s and TB2s may purchase upgrade kits for £198 and £249 respectively, to convert their speakers to the latest specification and performance.

**SOUND QUALITY**

The spec sheet quotes 87dB and 90dB sensitivities for the DB1+ and TB2+ respectively, plus slightly greater bass extension for the larger model. This seems a little optimistic: under our far-field, in-room measurement regime, 86dB and 88dB seem more appropriate figures. However, these relatively modest values are fully consistent with the 'genuine' eight ohms impedance that are both claimed and met.

Although the sensitivities are a shade below average (based on the 'standard' 2.83V input), the current they will both draw from the amp is rather less than average too, so the load imposed is relatively benign. Bass extension is decent considering the small size of both speakers. In both cases the bass alignments are quite dry, and the little DB1+ will definitely benefit from close-to-wall bass reinforcement (a bracket is available for optional wall mounting). The TB2+ might also need some wall assistance, but this is less clear cut, so it's best to experiment *in situ*. The overall in-room responses for both models show a well ordered midrange plus a broadly restrained presence zone (1-4kHz), followed by some recovery in the smooth treble proper.

To provide a proper context, we requested single samples of the 'pre +' versions of both these speakers in order to carry out direct (mono) comparisons between old and new. The improved treble sweetness and clarity was immediately evident and obvious, providing improved detail with a clear reduction in 'splashy' and 'splattery' distortion effects. Indeed, the superior smoothness of the new models gave the impression that they actually had a little less treble energy than their predecessors, even though detail was enhanced and delicacy improved. The TB2+ also showed the effectiveness of the new damping material in reducing boxiness in the midband. This was very obvious with voices, especially on speech.

The results of the changes are two models with significantly better manners than before. The sound as a whole might be a shade too laid back for some tastes perhaps, and the bass could have had a little more authority and drive, but these are both quite small loudspeakers, so some lack of power and weight is only to be expected. The laid-back midband does tend to reduce low-level voice intelligibility a little, but at the same time it ensures the speakers may be played quite loud without becoming aggressive.

Where these speakers really score is in their clarity and freedom from coloration through the broad midband. Whereas some of the obvious competition tend to push the sound at you,



Above: PMC TB2+: superior dynamics

**“Both really score in their clarity and freedom from coloration in the midband.”**

forcing the pace and adding a slightly 'shouty' quality, these two PMCs do the business through subtlety, low coloration and a wide dynamic range. The result is invariably both expressive and natural, yet also attractively unexaggerated with good stereo image perspectives and fine freedom from boxiness. Indeed, one is rarely if ever conscious of the specific locations of the speakers themselves – all you hear is the soundstage spread out across the area in front of you, which is as it should be.

If anything the tiny DB1+ has an edge over its bigger brother in overall smoothness, despite the extra coloration that wall proximity inevitably introduces. That said, the larger main driver and box of the TB2+ is undoubtedly responsible for some advantage in the expression of dynamics, and this brings an extra measure of vividness and drama to the party.

Their modest size means that neither speaker is a deep bass excavator, so home cinema fans will want to add a subwoofer or two, though on regular music programming the bottom end works very well, sounding smooth and even with commendable freedom from any 'thumpy' tendencies, and good analytical clarity. What really stands out with these two revised models

is the sheer subtlety and sophistication they offer at very realistic prices, especially through the midband and treble. The bottom line is that there are plenty of similar size alternatives around that cost considerably more, yet offer no significant performance advantage. **HFC**

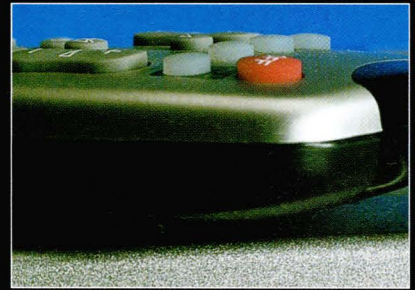
Paul Messenger

**VERDICT – DB1+**

<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 83%</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b> This impressive small speaker might lack some weight and dynamic drama, but its laid-back balance has little boxiness and a sweeter top end than its predecessor.
<b>EASE OF DRIVE &gt;&gt; 84%</b>	
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 87%</b>	<b>HI-FI CHOICE</b> <b>&gt;&gt; 84%</b>
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 83%</b>	

**VERDICT – TB2+**

<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 86%</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b> Improved treble sweetness and reduced midband coloration take this fine standmount up a notch or two in the sound quality stakes. Recommended.
<b>EASE OF DRIVE &gt;&gt; 90%</b>	
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 87%</b>	<b>HI-FI CHOICE</b> <b>&gt;&gt; 87%</b>
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 87%</b>	



# Cyrus gets X-appeal

*Hot on the heels of the new 6vs and 8vs amps, Cyrus has also updated its range-topping CD player*

**PRODUCT** Cyrus CD8x and PSX-R

**TYPE** CD player and optional power supply

**PRICE** (CD8x) £800, (PSX-R) £400

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 22x8x3.6cm (each)

• (CD8x) Weight: 3.5kg • Digital outputs: coaxial electrical and Toslink optical • System remote control • Cyruslink bus integration • Upgrade path with PSX-R

**CONTACT** ☎ 01480 435577 🌐 www.cyrusaudio.com

**A**s you may have read on p72, Cyrus has been through some changes of late. Allow us to elaborate further...

Earlier in the year, Cyrus MD Peter Bartlett and two partners managed to lever a management buy-out of the brand that he has been heading up for over ten years. He managed to persuade Mission, Cyrus and NXT founder Farad Azima that despite the brand's good reputation the name alone was not worth millions and arrived at a sensible price. The assets were purchased from parent company NXT, the technology licensing outfit

that grew out of Mission/Cyrus and eventually usurped them both. Fortunately for the newly formed Cyrus Audio, NXT had been investing in the company quite heavily so it has a head start for the new owners.

The continued results of this investment will become apparent over the coming months but the changes in nomenclature at least will be subtle. The CD8x reveals the pattern we should expect – the basic names of the ranges will remain 6, 8 and 10 but with the addition of suffixes to indicate new models (like the 6vs and 8vs amps on p72). So despite the mere addition of an 'x', a lower case 'x' at that, the CD8x is a genuine upgrade on its predecessor.

It looks identical until you peer at the bottom right-hand corner where the name is hidden, but even the trademark Cyrus casework has seen some revision. It's still a non-magnetic die-cast box but the base is now coated in silver alloy. Internally, the CD platform, transport and associated components have

been redeveloped to improve its performance as a standalone transport. Cyrus is bringing out a high-end digital to analogue converter, the DAC X, which presumably revealed some shortcomings in this respect with the previous CD8. Chances are there will be an 'X' transport to match but in the meantime it's likely that Cyrus has used what it learned in developing the DAC X component to improve the CD8.

The CD8x has a redesigned PCB (printed circuit board) which doubles the density of its predecessor from two to four layers in order to achieve the transport improvements desired. It also uses nine revised cascade power supplies to keep things running smoothly. Like many Cyrus products there's the option of adding a PSX-R outboard power supply, and in this instance the CD platform changes are said to make the effect of adding one even greater (more on this later).

The building blocks of the player are otherwise as per the previous CD8 – 24-bit dual balanced differential DACs, twin toroidal





power supplies, low-noise output stage and anti-jitter circuitry with re-clocking. It stormed its group test when we tried it with the PSX-R back in the April issue (HFC 252) so expectations were high for its successor.

Controls on the front panel use Cyrus's slimline graphics and these are pretty legible so long as the disc drawer is closed, but otherwise they're hidden! Luckily, a full system remote control does almost everything except open the drawer, which for the lazy is a minor gripe. Otherwise the key buttons are highlighted in green, which is a good thing as this handset looks like it would run any Cyrus component, including a multichannel processor.

The back panel reveals two pairs of analogue outputs, coaxial and optical digital outputs and phono sockets for the buslink system, which allows interoperability with other Cyrus kit – power up one component and the rest power up too; press play on the CD player and the amp selects the correct input automatically.

The PSX-R power supply is built around a 300VA transformer with enormous current delivery capability. It uses slot foil capacitors to ensure a low impedance, wide bandwidth DC supply and when used with a low power component such as a CD player, its massive inertia produces a supply that is virtually like a battery from the player's point of view (batteries being the ultimate but least practical of low power DC supplies).

**SOUND QUALITY**

As a lone player without the PSX-R supply, the CD8x produces a higher than average output level (2.1V) which can make it seem rather more forthright than the alternatives. This is largely because it is a confident and outgoing player that's better than many at producing strong, three-dimensional images. On test, for example, Norah Jones's voice sounded as pure, open and effortless as you could hope for, sitting high above the speakers in full and expansive fashion. The instruments on the recording produced decent bass weight and sparkling highs, the whole sound being rich and warm. By contrast, Eminem's *Kill You* sounded quite aggressive (though it's never the friendliest of tracks), with clear lyrics and full upper bass. Dido sounded a lot sweeter on *Stan*, even if the thunder cracks didn't have quite the weight that some players pull from this disc.

Adem's *Homesongs* revealed a surprising amount of noise on the opening track – a soft mush seemed to accompany one hammered guitar string in particular, made evident by the CD8x's confidence and clarity. This seemed to make the notes more stark, but it could also be a result of the very simple arrangement – either way it was striking stuff (excuse the pun). The less acoustic beats of electronic duo Kruder and Dorfmeister's *K&D Sessions* revealed the player's strength with spatial cues – it can really take advantage of the manipulation of reverb and phase used by these Viennese mix-meisters.



**“Adding the optional PSX-R power supply enhances the player further, bringing it up several notches in confidence and integrity.”**

There was a slight forwardness to the sound on this and several of the other tracks we tried, suggesting that it may be a factor of the recordings the Cyrus is particularly partial too.

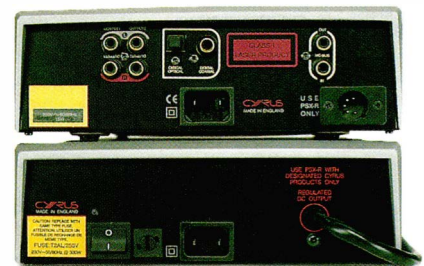
Next to a Sony SCD-XA333ES, which cost the same amount in its time, the Cyrus sounds lively but a little lightweight at low frequencies, the Sony displaying a gravitas in the bass that is a little less with the newer machine. That said, the more nimble, natural highs of the CD8x make for more fluent music and better timbral resolution – or to put it another way, instruments and voices sound more realistic.

Timing, though not unduly emphasised, is also a strong point, contributing to superb coherence and rhythmic stability with Abdullah Ibrahim's piano playing during our test programme. Adding the optional PSX-R power supply enhances this further, bringing the player up several notches in all-round confidence and integrity. The most obvious change is in the bass, which gains the ground it gave to the Sony player with some serious weight and power on tap for the many occasions it's required. In fact, it's this underpinning that lies at the root of the all-round improvement that the PSX-R upgrade produces. As Bugge Wesseltoft's *New Conception Of Jazz* album revealed, this two-box combination delivers a groove that flows effortlessly and produces images that are solid and cohesive. Alternatively, Beck's second outing, *Odelay*, sounded as spirited and energetic as the music demands.

The CD8x is a fine player that's distinctly enhanced by adding the outboard PSX-R. It may not embody the ultimate expression of CD

replay, and with the further addition of the DAC X it might sound even better. But at the price, in its basic form, the CD8x is an entertaining and highly capable contender.

And with the PSX-R added, it's a real star. **HFC**  
Jason Kennedy



**VERDICT – CD8x**

<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 84%</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b> In its basic £800 form, the CD8x is an enjoyably bold design. It's strong in terms of timing, imaging and tonal resolution and isn't afraid to get to grips with the music.
<b>FEATURES &gt;&gt; 85%</b>	
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 88%</b>	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 89%</b>	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE &gt;&gt; 87%</b>	

**VERDICT – CD8x + PSX-R**

<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 91%</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b> Adding the £400 PSX-R improves imaging, power and all-round confidence. The combined price pits it against some serious rivals, but it copes with aplomb.
<b>FEATURES &gt;&gt; 85%</b>	
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 88%</b>	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 89%</b>	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE &gt;&gt; 90%</b>	

# definitive audio

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# Universal bargain

Pioneer breaks the DVD-Audio/SACD price barrier with its new £150 'universal' DVD player

**PRODUCT** Pioneer DV-575A  
**TYPE** Universal disc player  
**PRICE** £150  
**CONTACT** ☎ 01753 789500 🌐 www.pioneer.co.uk

**D**VD-Audio and SACD have both had a tough time of late. There's next to no software support in the UK stores and, far from being the next big thing in music replay, the two formats have been largely sidelined in the mass market arena with hardware companies pushing the formats up the price range. Pioneer, however, is an exception, as the company continues to push mass appeal of DVD-Audio and SACD in the shape of its £150 DV-575A universal player.

There's a significant gulf between the price of this and the next cheapest universal player, yet in specification terms, the DV-575A seems to almost have it all, with multichannel decoding for DVD-Audio, SACD and any Dolby or DTS DVD-Video format, as well as a full spread of bass management options. It also features both progressive and interlaced video outputs through phono terminals (a feature that would have been only fitted to £1,000+ players 18 months ago). It has most of the easy on-screen menu system on all Pioneer players – the only omission is the instant set-up option, so you have to work a little harder to install this player in order to keep the price this ridiculously low.

Everything may essentially be on a single chip, but it's a brilliantly specified chip. The on-board DAC delivers 24-bit/192kHz sound and the video DAC is a 108MHz, 12-bit affair, both of which wouldn't look out of place on a much more expensive player. There's also the provision

for DivX replay – not big in the UK yet, but in parts of Europe, people are demanding that they should be able to play downloaded DivX movies on their CD-R discs, despite the not-quite-DVD picture quality of DivX.

## SOUND AND PICTURE QUALITY

The DV-575A delivers good DVD-Audio and fair SACD and CD replay. That said, don't expect miracles, especially sonic ones. The 'wow' factor of this player is that it can do all this for the money, rather than outright performance with individual formats. CD quality in particular is flat and lacking the sort of insight that a decent dedicated player will provide. DVD-A fares much better, with more extended frequency response and a solidity that snaps the sound into sharper focus. Between these poles, SACD comes out closer to DVD-A than CD, with good clarity and extension, but less excitement than DVD-Audio.

The overall tonal balance is decent regardless of disc format, although it does fall short when it comes to soundstaging on CD. It presents a two-dimensional image that extends beyond the far edges of the speakers, but has little in the way of image depth and no great stereo separation, blurring the instruments into a bolus of sound between the speakers. Multichannel fares better, but even so, the sounds seldom break free of the speaker enclosures – then again, you'll have to pay a fair bit more to get a big improvement, and hundreds more to get it from a player that plays both DVD-A and SACD.

Video quality is on a par with the sound. It delivers good, colourful pictures, but without the filmic image depth and layering of more costly players. However, unless you're using a projector, chances are you'll never notice the difference.

This seems like a limitation too far, but the fact remains that the sheer low price of the DV-575A holds all the aces. It allows the user to experiment with multichannel music at an almost disposable price; if the experiment fails, it hasn't cost a fortune. Just don't chuck out your CD player yet. **HFC**

Alan Sircom

## FORMAT COMPATIBILITY

DVD-AUDIO	✓	DVD+R	✗
DVD-VIDEO	✓	DVD-RAM	✗
SACD	✓	MP3 AUDIO	✓
CD	✓	WMA AUDIO	✓
HDCD	✗	AAC AUDIO	✗
CD-R/RW	✓	VIDEO CD	✓
DVD-R/RW	✓	JPEG PICTURES	✓

## VERDICT

### SOUND >> 70%

▶▶ SUB RATINGS  
 CD 57% SACD 73% DVD-A 79%

### VISION >> 76%

### FEATURES >> 90%

### VALUE >> 96%

### PRO

It plays almost every type of polycarbonate disc to a decent standard, at a very low price. As a catch-all music/movie solution it offers an amazing amount for the money.

### CON

Keeping those costs low but the format count high means the performance (especially on CD) is compromised in ultimate terms.

### CONCLUSION

You get what you pay for, but for £150 who's complaining! An ideal universal toe in the water for those who want to try multichannel music without spending a fortune; if you like it, there's better... but for more money.

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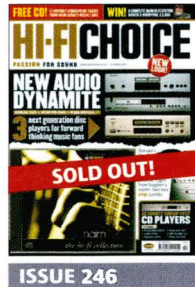
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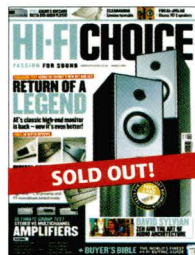
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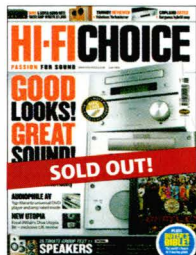
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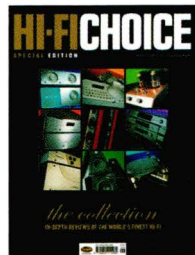
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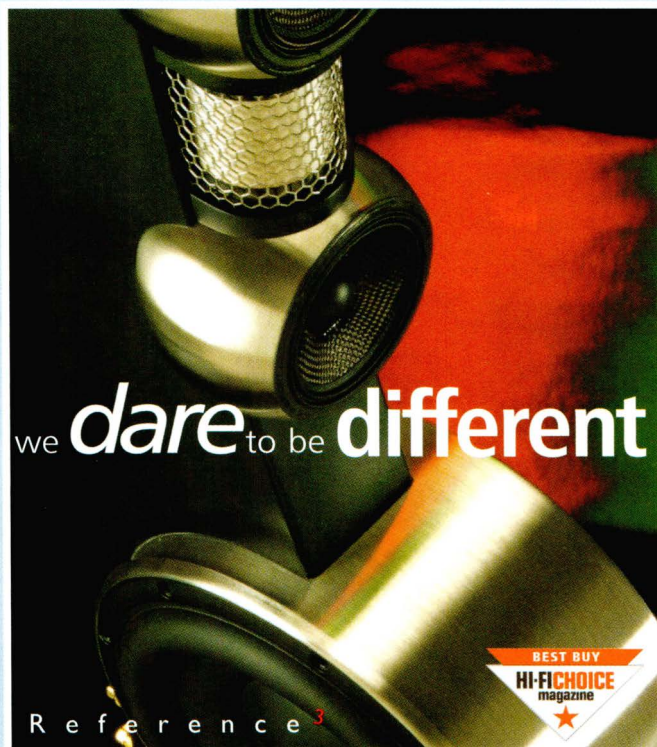
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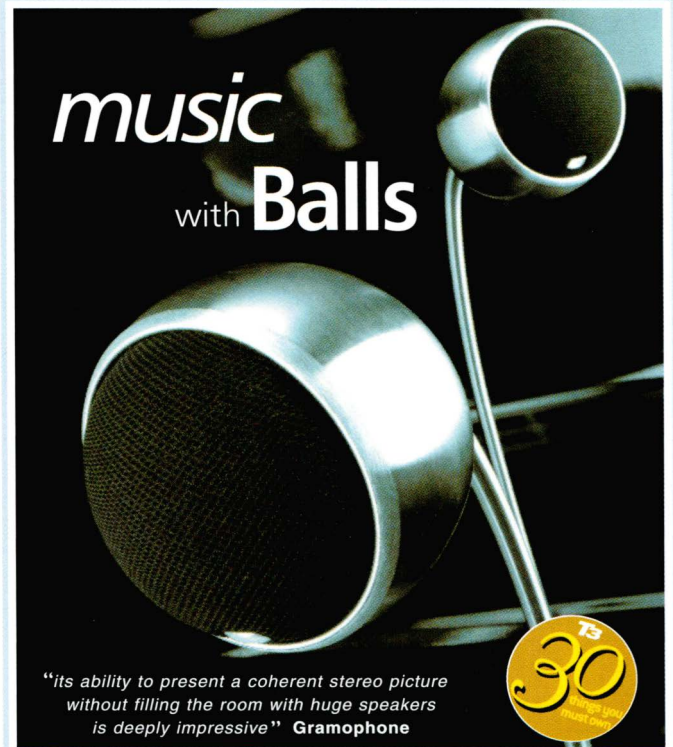
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# HI-FI CHOICE BUYER'S BIBLE



Welcome to the *Hi-Fi Choice Buyer's Bible* – the ultimate guide to the very best high performance hi-fi and AV gear you can buy. Here you'll find all our favourite current products listed under easy to use categories, together with useful information on what to look for and how to get the most from your components.

#### Reviews you can trust

Our test results are the most reliable in the business. We employ the most experienced reviewers and use the most thorough techniques to ensure our ratings are the ones you can trust. All the equipment we rate most highly is contained within these pages, from CD and vinyl to the latest multichannel disc players. Whether hi-fi stereo or high performance surround and vision, these components will take you a step closer to reality.

#### How to use this guide

The *Hi-Fi Choice Buyer's Bible* is the best way to make a shortlist of components for your system. Pick the ones that best suit your taste and budget, then use our *Dealer Classified* section to find specialist outlets where you can audition these components with your favourite discs.

Products that score more than 80 per cent overall are automatically featured in the *Hi-Fi Choice Buyer's Bible*. Any Best Buy or Editor's Choice Badges awarded are also displayed.

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# CD PLAYERS

*Audio disc players for music only*



Despite the emergence of new formats and the resurgence of an old one (vinyl), CD is still the king of formats if you require breadth of choice. And despite the fact that other sources will play CDs, if you want to hear your discs at their best there's little substitute for a dedicated CD player.

It's also the most enduring format on the market. Despite high-resolution contenders like SACD and DVD-Audio, nothing has been able to undermine this universally popular format.

CD players work by reading a stream of 1s and 0s off a disc that spins at a constantly changing speed (to counteract the increasing length of 'groove'). This bitstream is then digitally filtered before undergoing digital-to-analogue conversion in the DAC (D-to-A convertor). Thereafter, the signal is filtered



again before being amplified and sent to the output sockets.

The processes of reading the disc and converting the data are sometimes split between a CD transport and separate DAC in so-called two-box players. A popular approach with very high-end kit, this separates the electronically noisy elements from the sensitive analogue stages, but can introduce timing errors known as jitter, therefore one-box players usually offer best results where budget is a consideration.

## SUPER AUDIO CD



SACD or Super Audio CD is a relatively new audio-only format introduced by Sony and Philips. It offers higher resolution than CD in the form of considerably greater bandwidth and improved dynamic range. It also has the potential for uncompressed surround sound using up to six channels, and most new discs take advantage of this. SACD discs are usually hybrids and will play on normal CD players, but you won't be able to appreciate their highest quality or their multichannel capability without an SACD-compatible player. Some SACD players also play DVD and even DVD-Audio – these are listed in our DVD section.

## Q&A

### WHAT'S A DAC?

A DAC or digital-to-analogue convertor is a fundamental part of any CD player and converts the digits read from the disc into an analogue music waveform which is amplified to line level.

### WHY HAVE SEPARATE TRANSPORTS & DACS?

Discs are read by a transport or disc drive, which creates radio frequency 'noise'. Separating the DAC means the conversion can be done with less interference.

### CAN I USE AN OUTBOARD DAC WITH MY INTEGRATED CD PLAYER?

Yes, if it has a digital output – and most do.

### DO I NEED DIGITAL CABLES FOR A CD PLAYER?

No. All analogue cables are suitable for connecting a CD player to an amp. Digital specific cables with 75ohms impedance are useful when connecting the player to a digital recorder or DAC.

### WHAT IS OVERSAMPLING/UPSAMPLING?

Oversampling involves multiplying the sampling frequency by a whole number, usually between four and 32, but sometimes higher, and is designed let the DAC to work in a more linear fashion.

Upsampling is where the data stream is stretched out by interpolation and is typically used to refer to large changes in sampling rate such as from 44.1 kHz to 192kHz.

### CAN I PLAY SACDS ON A NORMAL CD PLAYER?

Yes. The vast majority of SACD discs are hybrids, with a CD layer that all CD players can read.

### CAN I PLAY DVDS ON A CD PLAYER?

No, the same applies to DVD-As. But you can play CDs and DVD-As on normal DVD players.

## TOP BUYS



### Marantz CD7300 £350

The latest in a long line of highly successful sub-£500 CD players from Marantz is an absolute beauty. Engaging and sonically refined, there's little to touch it at the price.



### Naim CD5i £825

If you're looking for sub-£1,000 CD player, park your ears here. Naim's entry level beauty combines the brand's traditional rhythm and timing with considerable poise and panache.

## Our favourite CD PLAYERS

BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Audio-only CD and SACD players

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS							ISSUE NUMBER
				SACD COMPATIBLE	ELEC DIG OUTPUT	OPT DIG OUTPUT	CD-RW COMPATIBLE	CD TEXT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>											
BB	Arcam DIVA CD73T	400	Refined and articulate, smooth and dynamic – a finely judged balance for budget to mid-price systems	●	●	●	●				247
BB	Arcam DIVA CD192	850	Contemporary below the lid upsampling player with articulate, if slightly understated sound quality	●	●	●	●				260
BB	Cambridge Audio Azur 640C	250	This elegant little player can hold its own in very elevated company – a budget system will barely do it justice	●	●	●	●				249
	Heart CD6000 OSE LE	750	Valved-up Marantz makes an entertaining and colourful player that will inspire you to listen longer	●	●	●	●		●	●	245
	Marantz CD5400 OSE	200	Nicely thought out player with useful features and good sound, though some mechanical noise	●	●	●	●		●		256
BB	Marantz CD7300	350	Astonishingly capable sub-£500 player with effortless bass, detailed mid and treble and vast soundstages	●	●	●	●		●		250
BB	Musical Fidelity X-RayV3	900	Think of this as an A3.2 CD player in a smaller, cheaper box. Great, earthy CD sound for the money	●	●	●	●				255
BB	Naim CD5i	825	As idiosyncratic as ever, but sonically the CD5i is the definitive player at the price				●				259
BB	Roksan Kandy MkIIID	650	Clean, tidy and expressive player – a more than worthwhile improvement on previous versions	●	●	●	●		●		259
	Rotel RCD-02	375	Against some strong competition in the same price area, this Rotel generally holds up well	●	●	●	●				231
	Sony SCD-XE597	150	Excellent as a budget SACD player, but rivals beat it with CD	●	●	●	●				260
BB	Sony SCD-XA3000ES	800	A revised and refined version of the SCD-XA333ES that provides an almost holographic sound	●	●	●	●		●		248
<b>ABOVE £1,000</b>											
BB	Audio Analogue Maestro	1,650	The new Maestro 192/24 delivers a sound that's slightly rosy yet always musical and thoroughly enjoyable	●	●	●	●		●		257
EC	Audionet ART V2	2,300	Built to last forever, this CD has a dark natural sound with excellent bass and would be cheap at twice the price!	●	●	●	●				231
EC	Ayre CX-7 CD Player	2,950	Superbly built and natural sounding player that will win you over with its range of capabilities and transparency	●	●	●	●		●		251
EC	BAT VK-D5SE CD Player	5,495	Superb valve CD player that is smooth and refined but with real guts that doesn't conform to valve stereotypes	●	●	●	●		●		251
	Exposure 3010	1,195	What this player lacks in immediacy and punch is offset by its sparkling sense of occasion and musical tension	●	●	●	●				246
	Exposure XXII	1,395	Natural sounding player, great with voices and acoustic instruments and makes for engaging listening	●	●	●	●				238
	Hegel CDP2A	1,500	A technically proficient and masterly-sounding player built by people who clearly know what they are doing	●	●	●	●		●		252
EC	Krell SACD Standard	4,244	A landmark SCD player and an excellent CD player at what by Krell standards is a relatively affordable price	●	●	●	●		●		251
	Meridian G07	1,595	Immaculately conceived and executed player with a softly-spoken voice. Needs careful system matching	●	●	●	●		●		259
EC	Musical Fidelity Tri-Vista	4,000	Limited edition stereo-only SACD/CD player that is simply the best player MF has ever made	●	●	●	●		●		237
EC	Naim CDX2	2,700	Fine quality one-box CD player, but its best feature is upgradeability via outboard XPS supply	●	●	●	●				238
	Orelle CD100evo2	1,299	Relaxed, but strong on refinement and detail. An intelligent choice, particularly strong with acoustic music	●	●	●	●				259
BB	Primare D30.2	1,500	Superb high-resolution player gives a strong taste of musical structure and physicality	●	●	●	●		●		226
	Quad 99 CD-P	1,000	Good but not outstanding player that also doubles as a preamp, with digital inputs and volume controls	●	●	●	●				259
BB	Resolution Audio Opus 21	2,850	Dynamic, well timed and 3D performance with an analogue volume control and digital input for a second source	●	●	●	●		●	●	244
	Roksan Caspian M Series	1,100	An enjoyably dynamic-sounding player featuring a positively unique choice of digital components	●	●	●	●				252
EC	Sony SCD-XA9000ES	2,400	State-of-the-art CD and SACD player with full SACD bass management and i.Link-encrypted digital output	●	●	●	●		●	●	253
EC	Wadla 302	3,999	A dynamic and gripping player, with bass to die for and resolution to change your listening habits	●	●	●	●		●	●	253
EC	Wadia 861se	9,999	Stunning player with a full digital preamp and an all-revealing sound that'll keep you up all night	●	●	●	●		●	●	256

**SPECS KEY** SACD COMPATIBLE Plays high-resolution SACD discs in multichannel and/or two-channel mode. **ELEC DIGITAL OUTPUT** Electrical coaxial output for digital connection to a DAC or digital recorder. **OPT DIGITAL OUTPUT** Optical Toslink output for digital connection to a DAC or digital recorder. **CD-RW COMPATIBLE** Will play CD-RW (rewritable) discs, most CD players can cope with CD-Rs. **CD TEXT** Will display album and track titles from inserted disc. **BAL ANALOGUE OUT** Balanced XLR output connections for similarly equipped amplifiers. **HEADPHONE SOCKET** Quarter inch (6.3mm) headphone jack fitted to the CD player. **VARIABLE OUTPUT** Player features both fixed level and variable, volume adjustable outputs.



### Audio Analogue Maestro 192/24 £1,650

A beautifully crafted CD player that brings many traditional 'analogue' qualities to digital replay. If you want your CDs to sound natural, detailed and dynamic, this is a fine buy.



### Resolution Audio Opus 21 £2,850

This player is king of subtlety. Outwardly, the music sounds dynamic and well-scaled, but it's the level of inner detail resolved here that is truly outstanding.

# DVD PLAYERS

*Disc players for audio and video*

➤ DVD has proved a phenomenal success in commercial terms and has virtually extinguished the market for budget CD players – you can't really beat a multiformat player when it comes to features. Early DVD players were not particularly good CD spinners because of the enormous amount of RF interference produced by video circuits, but as this problem has been identified manufacturers have begun to tackle it. Nowadays, most DVD players are competent CD players and a few are very good – often as not they are the ones that play DVD-Audio discs as well.

The great advantage of DVD is that it offers sufficient capacity to hold a feature length movie or music concert *and* discrete multichannel sound on a disc the size of a CD. In the case of plain DVD-Video discs, the audio is encoded in either the Dolby Digital or DTS format, both of which use 'lossy' compression to fit the audio onto the disc alongside the video data. You can use



a DVD player with your stereo system by connecting the stereo outputs, though this won't give the surround sound benefits that the format specialises in.

## Q&A

### WHICH AUDIO OUTPUTS GIVE THE BEST QUALITY?

Use the analogue outputs for CD, DVD-A and SACD, and the coaxial digital output for DTS and Dolby Digital movie soundtracks.

### WHICH VIDEO OUTPUTS GIVE THE BEST QUALITY?

The best connection is component video closely followed by RGB Scart, which is clearly superior to S-video and the basic composite video option.

### DO I NEED A MULTICHANNEL AMP TO USE A DVD PLAYER?

Only if you want to hear music and movie soundtracks in multichannel surround. DVD players can be used with stereo amps and just two speakers to great effect, but you'll only get stereo, not surround sound.

### DO I NEED PROGRESSIVE SCAN VIDEO?

It's worthwhile for the very best picture quality, but make sure your DVD player and display device support PAL progressive.

## DVD-AUDIO

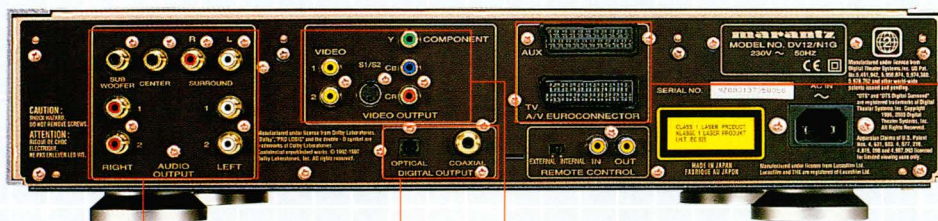
DVD-Audio is a high-resolution format that offers multichannel, stereo and Dolby Digital tracks on dedicated DVD-A discs. The discs can be played on any DVD player, but the CD-beating high-fidelity sound can only be appreciated with a DVD-A player.



While offering similar benefits to SACD, it has the advantage of on-screen display for information – lyrics, images and so on. To save

you having to decide which format to go for, a few brands are bringing out universal players to cover SACD and DVD-A, alongside CD and DVD-Video – a neat and relatively future proof route into high-resolution multichannel music. Higher-end models featuring high-bandwidth compatible digital audio links are now also appearing, enhancing DVD-A/SACD sound when used with similarly equipped amps.

## CONNECTIONS



**ANALOGUE AUDIO OUTPUTS:** For stereo and multichannel connections, use these for best results with DVD-Audio, SACD and CD.

**DIGITAL OUTPUTS:** For Dolby Digital, DTS and PCM audio bitstreams.

**VIDEO CONNECTIONS:** Yellow sockets are composite; red, green and blue sockets are for component which gives best results, while the black multipin socket is S-video, which sits qualitatively between the two.

**SCART CONNECTIONS:** These are a good-quality option for video, especially ones that output RGB.

## Our favourite DVD PLAYERS

**BB** BEST BUY **EC** EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Audio/Video disc players

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				DVD-A COMPATIBLE	SACD COMPATIBLE	ELEC DIG OUTPUT	OPT DIG OUTPUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>									
<b>BB</b>	Arcam DiVA DV78	700	Imagine almost all of the DV88 Plus at a knock-down price. Top picture and sound performance for the money		●	●			254
	Cambridge Audio Azur 540D	200	Very respectable and well presented DVD-Audio player at a knockdown price	●		●	●		257
<b>BB</b>	Denon DVD-3910	900	Exceptionally well-specified universal player with a performance to match. A true class-leader	●	●	●	●		260
	Marantz DV6400	400	Good starter universal player with decent CD replay quality, but slightly disappointing SACD performance	●	●	●	●		254
<b>BB</b>	Pioneer DV-668AV	600	HDMI-equipped universal player without i.Link audio output, but still absurdly well equipped and highly capable for the price	●	●	●	●		252
<b>BB</b>	Pioneer DV-868AVi	1,000	State of the art universal player with next-gen digital outputs – HDMI for video and i.Link for high-resolution audio	●	●	●	●		252
	Primare V25	1,000	Bold pictures on screen are matched to easy, likeable sound quality and a huge range of outputs			●	●		237
<b>ABOVE £1,000</b>									
	Arcam DiVA DV89	1,300	No SACD playback, but CD sounds strong, DVD-Audio is highly engaging and video performance is excellent too	●		●	●		248
	Cyrus DVD8	1,200	An impressive step up from the DVD7+, which includes component video outputs			●	●		238
<b>EC</b>	Denon DVD-A11	1,700	Refinement and clarity are hallmarks of this player, which is also as close to being future-proof as they come	●	●	●	●		250
<b>EC</b>	Denon DVD-A1	2,500	A convincing case for the DVD-A format, battleship construction combined with sonic and visual finesse	●		●	●		230
<b>EC</b>	Linn Unidisk SC	2,995	Groundbreaking universal player with built-in preamplifier, with excellent picture for home cinema and sound for hi-fi	●	●	●	●		259
<b>EC</b>	Marantz DV-12S2	2,000	A universal player for audiophiles, with top-notch video playback too. Sonically refined and enjoyably understated	●	●	●	●		255
<b>EC</b>	Meridian G91	3,000	A DVD-A/V player, preamp/processor and tuner combined – great as a two-channel player, or in a complete Meridian rig	●		●	●		260
<b>EC</b>	Meridian 800	10,805	The ultimate in DVD replay, modular construction, buffered ROM drive, upsampling and high-res digital outputs	●		●	●	●	230
<b>EC</b>	Primare DVD30	2,000	A universal player for audiophiles – no wideband digital outputs but masterful with music and a good picture too	●	●	●	●		253
<b>EC</b>	Townshend TA 565 MkII	2,995	If you care more for results than aesthetics it's unbeatable. This is probably the best universal player on the planet	●	●	●	●		259

**SPECS KEY** **DVD-A COMPATIBLE** Plays high-resolution DVD-A discs in two and multichannel modes. **SACD COMPATIBLE** Plays high-resolution SACD discs in two and multichannel modes.

**ELEC DIGITAL OUTPUT** Electrical coaxial output for digital connection to a multichannel amplifier or receiver. **OPT DIGITAL OUTPUT** Optical Toslink output for digital connection to a multichannel amplifier or receiver.

**HEADPHONE SOCKET** Quarter inch (6.3mm) headphone jack fitted to the DVD player.

### TOP BUYS



**Arcam DiVA DV78 £700**

Arcam's entry-level machine combines great video quality with impressive CD sound.



**Denon DVD-3910 £900**

New-generation Denon is currently the most complete universal player below £1,000.



**Pioneer DV-868AVi £1,000**

Pioneer's HDMI/i.Link-equipped universal flagship packs an amazing hi-tech punch.



**Townshend Audio TA 565 MkII £2,995**

This player builds on Pioneer essentials to deliver breathtaking sound across all formats.



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# VINYL

*Turntables, cartridges and phono stages*



Record players or turntables offer the digital revolution serious competition when it comes to sound quality. Even a modest model can turn musical tricks that most CD players struggle with. Some call it vinyl warmth, but in reality it's a lack of digital hardness that makes the format so engaging. True, the software requires a bit more care, but even a knackered LP is more playable than a scratched CD.

Record players are made of three, perhaps four, fundamental parts. The turntable is the plinth and platter, usually also containing the motor and any suspension system. A tonearm sits on the plinth and allows the cartridge to trace the vinyl groove by pivoting or parallel tracking over the record. The cartridge contains the means of turning the mechanical movement of the groove wall into an electrical signal.

A fourth element is an amp dedicated to the delicate job of amplifying and equalising the cartridge's insubstantial output. This is called a phono stage and can be found in some integrated amplifiers and preamps, but is increasingly purchased separately for use with line-only amps.



## TURNTABLE SET-UP

Setting up a turntable varies from model to model, but the general principle is to level the platter by adjusting the suspension or, as with solid platters, the surface it sits on. Sprung suspensions sometimes require a bit of fine-tuning to sound their best, but the principle is to achieve a smooth, pistonic bounce. Cartridge set-up is even more critical, as the angles at which the stylus traces the groove affects its tonal balance and levels of distortion. A good alignment protractor is essential if you are intending to set up your own cartridge, as is a degree of patience. In essence, there are two angles you need to get right: the tracing angle as the cartridge crosses the record if you are looking from above, and the vertical tracking angle (VTA), which is adjusted by raising or lowering the arm base to bring the arm parallel with the record surface.

There are two types of phono cartridge: moving magnet (MM) and moving coil (MC), and with a few exceptions the latter outperforms the former. But MCs produce a lower output and require better-quality amplification to be heard at their best. As a general rule, MCs offer a broader bandwidth, greater dynamics and more detail, but the better moving magnets do most things well enough to distract you from your CD collection.

## TOP BUYS



### Pro-Ject 1 Xpression £210

The latest model from Czech turntable specialist Pro-Ject is remarkable value for money – an Ortofon OM10 cartridge and carbon fibre arm are included in the price.



### Rega P5 £698

Rega's latest is a non-suspended design with a highly entertaining sound and a great sense of musical 'timing'. The new RB700 arm is included in the price.



### Roksan Radius 5 £850

A beautiful mid-price turntable with an impressively well-sorted sound from low bass to high treble. Price includes matching Nima tonearm.



### Michell Orbe SE £2,015

A fine example of the turntable art, the stripped down SE version of Michell's flagship now features a DC motor. Does justice to the best arms and cartridges.

## Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

# TURNTABLES

### Record players

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS				ISSUE NUMBER
				SPEEDS	SUSP SUBCHASSIS	SWITCHABLE SPEED CHANGE	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	
<span>BB</span>	Audio Note TT1/ARM1	728	Simple and unpretentious, it delivers a real taste of true high-end performance at an affordable price	33/45	●	●	●	203
<span>BB</span>	Avid Diva	1,100	A solid and powerful sounding deck with fine build, requires a smooth, relaxed cartridge for best results	33/45	●			247
<span>EC</span>	Avid Volvere Sequel	3,500	Heavyweight turntable that will deliver more of what's in a vinyl groove than most of the competition	33/45	●	●		229
<span>EC</span>	Avid Acutus	6,000	Extremely capable design with no apparent shortcomings. Don't sell your vinyl 'til you've heard it on this!	33/45	●	●		194
	Clearaudio Emotion	655	An engaging turntable offering plenty of audiophile credibility for the money (price includes arm and cartridge)	33/45			● ●	251
	Clearaudio Champion Level 2	1,955	Neutral balance, great looks, but only so-so detail. Benefits greatly from isolation	33/45			● ●	223
<span>EC</span>	Clearaudio Master Reference	12,610	Revealing and exciting turntable that revels in the fine details (reviewed with Master TQ-I arm/Accurate cartridge)	33/45		●	● ●	256
<span>BB</span>	Goldring GR1/RB250	140	The best value 'Rega' yet and a new benchmark for budget turntables. Vinyl nirvana on a shoestring	33/45			● ●	252
<span>BB</span>	Michell Gyro SE	1,058	New DC motor-equipped Gyro offers great looks and even better sound. Price includes RB300 arm	33/45	●		●	239
<span>EC</span>	Michell Orbe SE	2,015	A superb turntable, able to mix it with the best at virtually any price. Now features new DC motor	33/45	●			235
<span>BB</span>	Nottingham Analogue Horizon	529	A fluid midrange and nimble but rich bass are two of the many attributes of this bargain deck (price inc RB250 arm)	33/45			●	253
<span>BB</span>	Pro-Ject 1 Xpression	210	Well designed and executed budget deck with an entertaining and revealing sound	33/45			● ●	248
<span>BB</span>	Rega P2	198	Updated Planar 2: just as much fun as ever and now even better value as the competition falls away	33/45			●	214
	Rega P3/RB300	298	Updated Planar 3, building on the strengths of the P2 with added subtlety and detail	33/45			●	214
<span>BB</span>	Rega P5/RB700	698	Combines a great sense of timing with market-leading resolution and a phenomenal tonearm – a hard act to beat	33/45			● opt	257
<span>BB</span>	Rega P7	1,298	A highly capable player that could hold its own in the most exalted company – a vivid and natural performer	33/45			● opt	257
<span>EC</span>	Rega P9/RB1000	2,498	Exceptionally elegant hi-tech player with complex outboard supply, ceramic platter and wonderful RB1000 tonearm	33/45		●	●	228
<span>BB</span>	Roksan Radius 5/Nima	850	Sophisticated design with accomplished sound quality, excellent imagery and good isolation (acrylic version tested)	33/45	●		●	248
<span>EC</span>	Roksan TMS2/Artemiz	7,500	Typical Roksan sound, but better: pitch-accurate, lean, detailed and controlled, without the 'bloat' of lesser designs	33/45	●	●		246
<span>EC</span>	SME Model 10A	3,411	Elegant and extremely capable design, tested here with Series V/309 hybrid arm	33/45	●	●	●	195
<span>EC</span>	SME Model 20.2A	5,274	Beautifully built, extremely neutral damped and suspended deck with superb sound. Inc V arm	33/45/78	●	●	●	186
<span>EC</span>	Townshend Rock Anniversary	8,000	If you want to get to the meat and bones of the music this is a great tool for the job (price inc. Excalibur arm)	33/45	●		●	259

## Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

# PHONO CARTRIDGES

### MM and MC cartridges

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS			ISSUE NUMBER
				MM	MC	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	
	Goldring Elite	250	A remarkably subtle and persuasive design that should tempt anyone		●		235
	Grado Prestige Black	40	Offers admirable detail and treble extension, with good bass and ambience too	●		●	214
<span>BB</span>	Grado Prestige Gold	110	Produces rich, open and expansive music with the minimum of fuss	●		●	235
<span>EC</span>	Linn Akiva	1,800	With fine dynamic expression and a wide bandwidth, what you hear sounds very close to master tape		●	●	242
<span>EC</span>	Lyra Helikon	1,095	Highly capable and highly neutral, this is a cartridge for all seasons, albeit fussy about vinyl quality	●			215
<span>BB</span>	Sumiko Blue Point Special	250	A no-nonsense performer with engaging musical properties – one of the best around for less than £300			●	192
<span>BB</span>	Van den Hul MC One Special	699	A gorgeous cartridge that's worth the price every time you hear a familiar track in a whole new light			●	235
<span>EC</span>	van den Hul Colibri XGP	2,699	Phenomenal resolution, custom building to suit hard and soft, but needs 500 ohm loading and is vulnerable to damage			●	244
<span>EC</span>	Wilson Benesch Naked Analog	1,450	With its smooth clean highs, transparent midband and nimble bass, this is a lot of performance for the money			●	253

## Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

# PHONO STAGES

### Phono stages

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS				
				MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	AOL GAIN	AOL IMPEDANCE	ISSUE NUMBER
	Musical Fidelity X-LPSv3	249	Simple, well turned out valve-driven phono stage lacks adjustability, but sounds sweet, open and well-behaved	●	●			248
<span>BB</span>	NAD PP2 phono stage	50	A fine buy for turntable users on a tight budget – open tonality and clarity is distinctly impressive for the money	●	●			245
<span>BB</span>	Tom Evans Microgroove	400	For dynamics and real bass extension with good tonal colour this is the one to beat. The Plus version (£700) is even better!		●			234
<span>EC</span>	Tom Evans The Groove	1,800	Plenty of detail, excellent imaging and almost flawlessly neutral: a good choice for maximum information retrieval off any LP		●			201
<span>BB</span>	Trichord Dino/Dino+	498	Relaxed yet resolute with very good image depth and natural balance, not to mention great flexibility	●	●	●	●	234

**TURNTABLE SPECS KEY** **SPEEDS** Speeds offered in rpm. **SUSP SUBCHASSIS** Turntables with a sprung or suspended support for the platter and arm. **SWITCHABLE SPEED CHANGE** Some decks require manual lifting of the belt from one pulley to another to change speed, but not these ones. **SUPPLIED WITH ARM** Deck is supplied complete with tonearm – some require a separate purchase in this department, but the dealer will fit it for you.

**SUPPLIED WITH CARTRIDGE** Some decks are supplied with a starter cartridge and this is included in the price shown.

**CARTRIDGE SPECS KEY** **MM** Moving magnet cartridge – see amp and phono stage features to match this type. **MC** Moving coil cartridge – see amp and phono stage features to match this type.

**REPLACEABLE STYLUS** Some cartridges have separate styli for ease of replacement, but it compromises sound quality.

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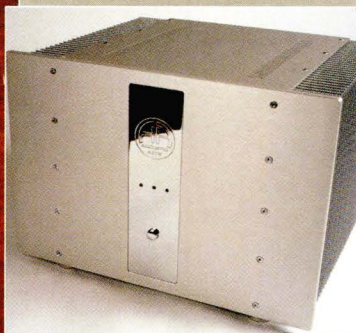
### McIntosh 275 valve amplifier

This modern reissue of their classic 1969 amplifier has robust, full bodied sound with smooth high frequencies. A healthy 75wpc will drive most speakers easily and can be bridged to give a conservative 150wpc. £2750



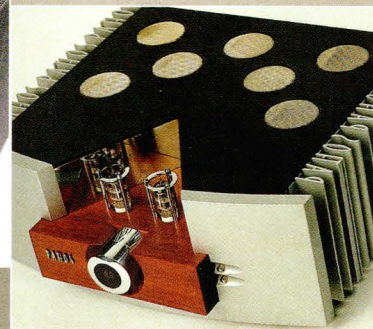
### Dali Helicon 400 loudspeaker

A 2 1/2 system with unique ribbon/soft dome tweeter arrangement. Easy to drive, capable of producing a big soundstage and a very open top end. Excellent appearance and cabinet quality. £3310



### Acoustic Arts AMP 2

Dual mono power amplifier 200wpc. An elegant sound from this quality manufacturer from Germany. £5375 RCA output, £5820 genuine balanced output.



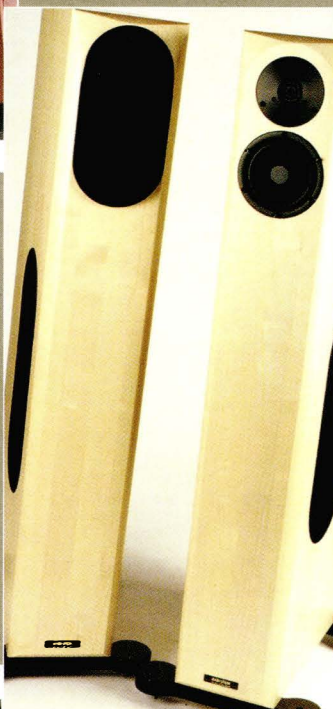
### Pathos Logos integrated hybrid amplifier

A popular amplifier with great looks and sound. £2750



### Sugden Masterclass CD player

A sophisticated sound as you would expect from this UK manufacturer. A very layered soundstage and non aggressive presentation. £2750



### Audio Physic Loudspeakers

We are please to be demonstrating the new range from this highly respected manufacturer. Very accurate imaging and tonal balance with great styling. Virgo 3 (shown above) £3999, Tempo £2199, Yara £999.



### Nottingham Analogue Space Deck

With the new, thicker platter and upgrade kit it produces an even more neutral and stable image. £1417



### Bel Canto Pre 2 & eVo2 amplifier

A very transparent sound with good tonal balance and precise imaging. Although a digital amplifier, the sound is reminiscent of their valve heritage. Pre 2 £3999. eVo2 £2899. Also on demonstration, we have their integrated amplifier eVo2i at a remarkable £2799

### McIntosh MA6900 solidstate integrated amplifier

This solid state amplifier with transformer coupled output has sound that is close to their classic valve amplifier designs. The very reasonable 200 wpc output will drive into any speaker load. An all-in-one solution with a high-end sound. £4240



### Resolution Audio Opus 21 CD player

The improved sound with the new drive is astonishing. £2950

ACCUSTIC ARTS ▶ AMPHION ▶ ART ▶ AUDIO PHYSIC ▶ AVALON ▶ BEL CANTO ▶ BENZ-MICRO ▶ CARDAS ▶ CLEARAUDIO ▶ CONRAD-JOHNSON ▶ DALI ▶ EAR/YOSHINO  
EXPOSURE ▶ ISOL - 8 ▶ LEEMA ACOUSTICS ▶ LYRA ▶ MCINTOSH ▶ MONO PULSE ▶ NORDOST ▶ NOTTINGHAM ANALOGUE ▶ OPERA ▶ PAGODE ▶ PATHOS  
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# RADIO TUNERS

*FM and DAB hi-fi separates*



Radio is a fantastic musical resource that's in danger of being taken for granted, but whatever your tastes there's someone out there catering for it. If you haven't got a decent tuner hooked up to your hi-fi already, you're missing out!

### DAB or FM?

Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) is said to be available to 80 per cent of the population and the long-term plan is to switch public broadcasting over to digital, but hardware prices have yet to come down to a point where this would be acceptable. Its advantages over FM include hiss-free reception, the potential for a wider range of stations and the ability to display comprehensive programming information. FM's RDS system means that station name and occasionally track titles are displayed, but the range of information is fairly limited.

Where FM scores over DAB is in the lower cost of hardware and the greater reception

area. It can also provide higher sound quality if reception conditions are favourable. Absolute sound quality judgements are muddled by the fact that you are listening to different forms of compression and processing at the studio for each station.

What is clear, however, is that there are more and more radio stations broadcasting on DAB that aren't available on FM. So if it's variety of programming you're after, they have a lot to offer.

### RECEPTION

The quality of signal you feed a tuner will dictate its sound quality. So serious FM listeners should get a decent external aerial and connect it with as few junctions and splits as possible. Every time you split the cable (ie take a feed for another tuner) you halve signal strength! With DAB the same applies but get a DAB-specific aerial. See [www.bbc.co.uk/digitalradio](http://www.bbc.co.uk/digitalradio) for details.

### TOP BUYS



#### Denon TU260L II £130

The benchmark for all other budget AM/FM tuners, with great sound and features.



#### Cambridge DAB500 £150

A low-cost DAB radio that gets very close to much more expensive digital models.



#### Creek T50 £499

A thoroughly accomplished AM/FM tuner with a substantial and detailed sound.



#### Magnum Dynalab MD 90T £1,195

FM tuner with valves – 'affordable' for an MD, but still streets ahead of most radios.

## Our favourite TUNERS

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

### FM & DAB HI-FI SEPARATES

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	SIG. STRENGTH METER	ROT. TUNING KNOB	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>FM TUNERS</b>									
	Creek T50	499	Very fine results indeed with precision, polish and insight added to excellent basics	FM,M,L	128	● ● ● ●	● ● ● ●	●	251
	Denon TU-260L II	130	The return of the all-time favourite, now enhanced with RDS and sounding as fine as ever	FM,M,L	40	●	● ● ● ●	●	193
	Magnum Dynalab MD 90T	1,195	No remote or presets as standard, manual everything and valves... but its sound is simply sublime	FM	opt	opt	● ● ● ●	● ●	257
	Magnum Dynalab MD 102	2,200	Superb remote control analogue FM tuner delivers a superbly transparent sound that makes radio fun	FM	5		● ● ● ●	● ●	241
	NAD C422	180	Admirably free of roughness or other obvious nasties, with just a slight lack of clarity	FM,M	30	●	● ● ● ●		250
	NAD S400	600	One of the best around – bass and treble are both well extended and detail is excellent	FM	30	● ● ● ●	● ● ● ●		230
	Primare T21	600	Identical to NAD S400 and likewise a very fine tuner	FM	30	● ● ● ●	● ● ● ●		230
	Rega Radio 3	398	Unpretentious unit which does what it claims, very well. Unusually fine FM sound in all areas	FM,M	20	● ● ● ●	● ● ● ●		242
	Rotel RT-02	279	A highly competent tuner which always sounds appealing and fuss-free	FM,M	30	● ● ● ●	● ● ● ●		242
<b>DAB TUNERS</b>									
	Arcam DIVA DT81	650	A very smart and polished DAB performer	DAB	16		● ● ● ●	● ●	221
	Cambridge Audio DAB500	150	Very good sound, plus optional response tweaks, and slickest operation yet	DAB	10		● ● ● ●	● ●	248
	Cambridge Azur 640T	200	Slightly ahead of the pack in DAB performance, though FM is never better than decent	DAB,FM	60	● ● ● ●	● ● ● ●		260
	Pure Digital DRX-701ES	250	An excellent introduction to DAB, fine value, simple to use and feature loaded	DAB	99		● ● ● ●	● ●	234
	Pure Digital DRX-702ES	330	Very flexible DAB (inc L-band) and FM tuner. DAB is good, FM a touch disappointing	DAB,FM,M	99	● ● ● ●	● ● ● ●	● ●	242
	Sony ST-SDB900	200	Nicely designed UK-tuned model is a touch bright with both DAB and FM but generally insightful and clear	DAB,FM,M	60	● ● ● ●	● ● ● ●	● ●	259

**SPECS KEY** WAVEBANDS Which bands are supported: FM, M – medium wave, L – long wave, DAB – digital audio broadcasting. PRESETS How many stations can be stored in memory. RDS Radio Data System – station names and program titles can be displayed among other facilities (FM only, DAB has more comprehensive display potential). REMOTE CONTROL For the couch potato. SIGNAL STRENGTH METER Useful for setting up an aerial. ROTARY TUNING KNOB An ergonomic alternative to buttons.

# DIGITAL AUDIO RECORDERS

CD, MiniDisc and hard drive recorders



## MiniDisc

MD's strength is versatility. You can record and then re-record many times over. Editing facilities are second to none – you can erase mistakes, name tracks and re-order a disc's contents with a few simple button pushes, making it ideal for building compilations. They're pretty robust too.

Sound quality is below that of CD-R/CD-RW. The format uses a Sony-developed compression technology called ATRAC, which discards part of the data in order to squeeze it on the disc. If you're copying from CD to MD, the result tends to sound a little cold in comparison, lacking a degree of detail and ambience. But to most people it still sounds light years ahead of cassette – clean and hiss-free.

## Recordable CD

With recordable CD you have a choice of two disc types: CD-R discs are the cheapest, but you can only record once; and CD-RW discs are a little more costly, but you can re-record on them *ad infinitum*.

Though the latest machines incorporate some useful editing facilities, CD-R/RW is not as flexible as MD. However, sound

quality is higher – if you're recording from a CD, the best models will give you a copy that is very close to the original. In terms of compatibility, most CD players will play back a CD-R disc, but older models might have trouble with CD-RW (though you can, of course, play the disc back on your own recorder). If you want to play a CD-R/RW on a DVD player, check for compatibility.

## Hard drive

The latest contender on the digital recording scene is also the most flexible. Some HDD (hard disk drive) recorders can store whole music collections if you use a compression format such as MP3. HDD recorders are taking over from multidisc CD changers as sound servers in multiroom installations, where their ability to play more than one piece of music at a time is a great boon. HDD also offers impressive editing facilities on a par with MD, and they can also record from CD (or to CD-R/RW) at high speed.

At present, sound quality isn't the driving force behind the format – flexibility and storage capacity being bigger issues – and a plain CD-R/RW machine will outperform an HDD recorder in fidelity terms.

TOP BUYS



BEST BUY  
HI-FI CHOICE  
magazine

Philips CDR802 £300

Multidisc recorder that's slick and capable, albeit with a slightly flaky build.

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BEST BUY  
HI-FI CHOICE  
magazine

Marantz DR6000 £400

Quality in a box – it eschews gimmickry, but it does a simple job very well.

---



BEST BUY  
HI-FI CHOICE  
magazine

Yamaha CDR-HD1300 £600

Combining hard disk with CD-R makes CD recording a whole lot more flexible.

---



BEST BUY  
HI-FI CHOICE  
magazine

Imerge S2000 £1,599

Impressively flexible hard disk music server for multiroom applications.

## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

# DIGITAL RECORDERS

### CD-R/RW, MD and HDD recorders

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS			
				DECKS	HD CAPACITY (GB)	OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS	ELEC IN/OUTPUTS
CD-R/RW RECORDERS							
	Denon CDR-1000	400	A respectable player and recorder, though some midband congestion was noted when recording	1		● ●	218
<span style="font-size: 0.8em;">BEST BUY</span>	Marantz DR6000	400	No frills, but in its fundamentals this is one of the finest CD recorders on the market	1		● ●	233
	NAD C660	500	Audiophile twin deck offering high-speed copying, HDCD replay and notably fine recording from analogue	2		● ●	243
<span style="font-size: 0.8em;">BEST BUY</span>	Philips CDR802	300	Tacky looks and build notwithstanding, this is a well-equipped and technically sound 3-to-1 autochanger/recorder at a good price	2		● ●	233
<span style="font-size: 0.8em;">BEST BUY</span>	Philips CDR951	380	An improvement on previous models, it delivers the musical goods in some style	1		● ●	205
<span style="font-size: 0.8em;">BEST BUY</span>	Pioneer PDR-609	270	Classic CD recorder with outstandingly good sound for the money on both record and replay	1		● ●	243
	Pioneer PDR-W839	350	Good-quality twin CD burner makes recordings that can be hard to distinguish from the original. Good value too	1		● ●	218
MD RECORDERS							
	Pioneer MJ-D508	200	Well equipped, but musically sleep-inducing player that receives its Recommendation owing to the price	1		● ●	205
	Sony MDS-JE480	130	Straightforward and effective, but the three real killer features are price, price and price	1		● ●	233
HDD RECORDERS							
	Imerge S2000	1,599	Intended as the centrepiece of a multi-room installation, this three-output server combines flexibility with good sound	2	80	● ●	243
<span style="font-size: 0.8em;">BEST BUY</span>	Yamaha CDR-HD1300	600	Superb combination of high-speed CD-RW drive and hard disk, adding editing flexibility to CD recording	2	80	● ●	243

**SPECS KEY** **DECKS** Amount of drive mechanisms on board – twin-deck recorders use one to play while the other records. **HD CAPACITY** Amount of gigabytes of storage capacity, for HD only. **OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS** Optical Toslink in and outputs for digital connection to a CD player or DAC. **ELEC IN/OUTPUTS** Electrical coaxial in and outputs for digital connection to a CD player or DAC.

# Sevenoaks SOUND & VISION



**Sevenoaks Sound & Vision** stocks a wide range of Hi-Fi separates, DVD players, amplifiers, speakers, plasma screens, LCD televisions and projection systems from all the leading manufacturers.

From starter systems to custom designed multi-room and home cinema installations, our friendly staff are available in all stores to advise, demonstrate and guide you through the home entertainment jungle. If you're interested in home entertainment and want to avoid the confusion, contact your local Sevenoaks Sound & Vision store and **experience more.**

0% interest free option<sup>^</sup> is available on most products.

<sup>^</sup>Written details on request. Licensed credit brokers. Minimum balance £400. Subject to status.



## CUSTOM INSTALLATION

Modern home entertainment doesn't have to be intrusive.

A carefully considered installation of home cinema with distributed audio and video and easy lighting control can give you all the sound and vision performance you could ever dream of - enhancing your lifestyle and your home.

Our custom install services range from the most simple, affordable solutions to the most grandiose. We can help transform every room and every home, whatever your needs and budget.

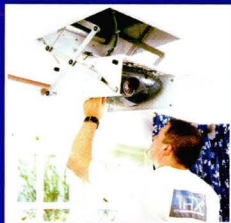
Want to know more? Why not pay us a visit and pick up a copy of our **FREE Custom**

**Installation Guide,** available now, from your local store.



Sevenoaks Sound & Vision

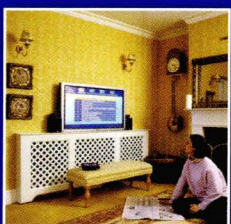
Enjoy the freedom to listen to the music of your choice or watch TV independently from other rooms in the home



Our installation experts are fully trained to the highest standards and will continue to support you and your equipment long after your first visit to one of our nationwide stores



Flush-mounted in-wall speakers can give you all the sound you can handle, but won't eat into your floor space or clash with your decor



## NEWSNEWSNEWS



### DENON DVD-3910 UNIVERSAL DVD PLAYER

Replacing 2003's all conquering DVD-2900, the new Denon DVD-3910 moves Denon further ahead with a massive performance and feature upgrade.

Using leading edge audio and video technology and heavyweight construction, this Universal player promises to deliver the highest quality picture and sound quality from your entire disc collection.

Handling both DVD-Audio and SACD, the '3910 will also play MP3, WMA, JPEG and Photo CD plus all varieties of DVD/CD -R and +R. It includes every digital and analogue audio/video output: HDMI, DVI, FireWire, Component, Composite and S-Video.

## NEW EALING STORE

The long-awaited store in Ealing is now open.

Part of a newly developed parade in the heart of town close to Ealing Broadway tube and on the fringe of the Ealing Broadway Shopping Centre, the store offers an unrivalled experience to shoppers searching for the best in audio and video equipment.



24 THE GREEN  
EALING  
0208 579 8777

OPEN  
MONDAY-SATURDAY 10:00-6:00  
SUNDAY 12:00-4:00



ABERDEEN (NEW)

BEDFORD

BIRMINGHAM

BRIGHTON

BRISTOL

BROMLEY

CAMBRIDGE

CARDIFF

CHELSEA

CHELTENHAM

CRAWLEY

CROYDON

EALING (NEW)

EDINBURGH

EPSOM

EXETER

GLASGOW

GUILDFORD

HOLBORN

HULL

IPSWICH

KINGSTON

LEICESTER

LEEDS

LINCOLN

MAIDSTONE

MANCHESTER

NEWCASTLE

NORWICH

NOTTINGHAM

OXFORD

PETERBOROUGH

PLYMOUTH

POOLE

PRESTON

READING

SEVENOAKS

SHEFFIELD

SOLIHULL

SOUTHAMPTON

SOUTHGATE

STAINES

SWINDON (OPENING SOON)

SWISS COTTAGE

TUNBRIDGE WELLS

WATFORD

WEYBRIDGE

WITHAM (ESSEX)

WOLVERHAMPTON

PLEASE SEE PAGE 7  
FOR ADDRESS AND TELEPHONE  
NUMBER DETAILS

[www.sevenoakssoundandvision.co.uk](http://www.sevenoakssoundandvision.co.uk)

# Sevenoaks SOUND & VISION

"A perfect combination of early Arcam refinement and subtlety, combined with new-found vitality and freshness." DIVA CD192

**Arcam DiVA  
CD192 CD Player £849.95  
A90 Amplifier £849.95**



WHAT IN-FIT? Nov 04  
★★★★★

## Roksan Caspian M Series-1 CD Player £1099.95 Amplifier £999.95

"A real class-contender, the new M Series-1 is a canny piece of kit and well worth the money." M SERIES-1 CD PLAYER

"A fine piece of equipment." M SERIES-1 AMPLIFIER

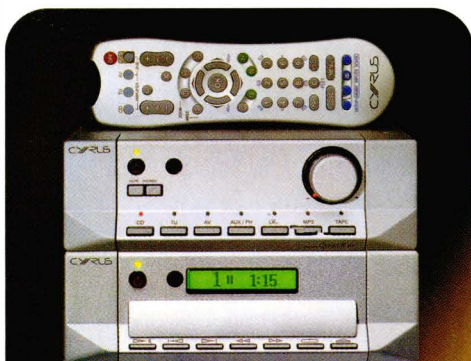


**FREE**

**FREE GRADO SR60 HEADPHONES WORTH £90**

WHEN YOU PURCHASE AN AMP AND CD TOGETHER FROM ONE OF THE FOLLOWING MANUFACTURERS - ARCAM, CYRUS & ROKSAN\*

NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR PROMOTION



## Cyrus 8vs Amplifier £799.95 CD8 X CD Player £999.95

Cyrus has been developing high performance hi-fi systems for over 20 years. Today their upgradeable, modular product range includes multi-room systems, home cinema and some of the world's finest hi-fi systems. The new 'VS' preamp circuitry, incorporated in the 6vs and 8vs amplifiers, has dramatically improved their performance while the CD8 X is a heavily revised version of the CD8.

"Here's a machine that advances the ability of its excellent predecessor by an almost absurd degree. The Cyrus 8vs is an absolute superstar"

WHAT IN-FIT? Oct 04  
★★★★★

"The added 'x' factor brings a level of CD playback previously unheard at this price" CD8 X

WHAT IN-FIT? Nov 04  
★★★★★



## Cyrus 6vs Amplifier £599.95

"A significant upgrade to what was already an impressive amp - Cyrus' new entry-level integrated is a peach"

WHAT IN-FIT? Oct 04  
★★★★★



## Marantz CD5400 CD Player £119.95

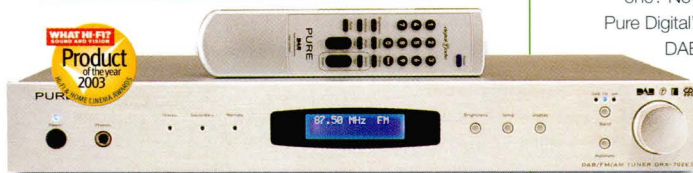
"This is a remarkable player for the money, with superb sound, looks and feel, which give you no clue as to the budget price... A very solid buy - and a lot of fun."



## Sony ST-SDB900 Digital/Analogue Tuner £ CALL

"The Sony ST-SDB900 is a great tuner for the money, and is definitely capable of giving our current Award-winner, the excellent DRX-702ES, a run for its money."

WHAT IN-FIT? Nov 04  
★★★★★

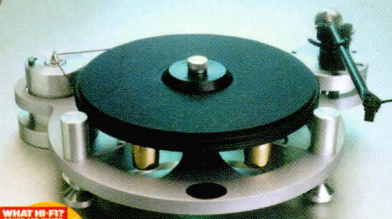


## Pro-ject Debut III Turntable

(Black) £129.95

(Colours) £144.95

"Building on the Award-winning design of its predecessors, the new Pro-ject Debut III delivers a thrillingly good sound for the money... Products like this should really reinvigorate your interest in hi-fi."



## Michell Gyro SE Turntable / RB300 Tonearm £1049.95

"The Gyrodec SE sounds great, combining the best sonic characteristics of rivals... Quite simply, the Michell Gyrodec SE is terrific. Nothing compares at this price point - it's well deserving another Best Buy."

**CLAIM £50**

**TOWARDS THE GOLDRING  
CARTRIDGE OF YOUR CHOICE\***

## Pure Digital DRX702ES Digital/Analogue Tuner £279.95

"So do you buy a digital tuner? Or an analogue one? Now you don't have to pick: just buy Pure Digital's DRX-702ES! Whether on FM or DAB, this tuner sounds superb... The overall balance is powerful, clean and crisp, making this a fine tuner by any standards, and a superb buy given its excellent flexibility."

experience more

# experience more

## experience more



**FREE QED CABLE WORTH £60\***

### KEF Q4 Speakers £399.95

The Q4 is one of the latest additions to KEF's acclaimed Q Series. At the heart of this floorstander lies the Uni-Q driver array - a 130mm die-cast chassis housing a long throw cone and coincident mounted 19mm aluminium dome HF unit. This driver arrangement makes

the speaker much easier to place in the room and alleviates the 'sweet spot' found on 'ordinary' speakers. This has been combined with a dedicated 130mm LF unit for extended bass output which belies the size of its diminutive cabinet.

### FREE QED SPEAKER CABLE WORTH

WITH ALL HI-FI SPEAKER PAIRS OVER £299\*

£60 WITH SPEAKERS OVER £299  
£80 WITH SPEAKERS OVER £499  
£120 WITH SPEAKERS OVER £999

**FREE QED CABLE WORTH £60\***



### B&W DM602 S3 Speakers £299.95

"These solidly made standmounters perform well across the whole range of musical styles... Add these speakers to your hi-fi system and you're guaranteed magnificent integration between the drivers and an even tonal balance."



### Roksan Kandy KD1/III CD Player £649.95 KA1/III Amplifier £649.95

"Timing and rhythm are excellent. DJ Shadow is delivered with clarity and a tight bass, while at the other extreme the treble is sweet and detailed, getting the most from Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries*. The result is a breathtaking Best Buy amplifier that betters its competition with ease." KANDY KA1/III AMPLIFIER - AWARDS 2003

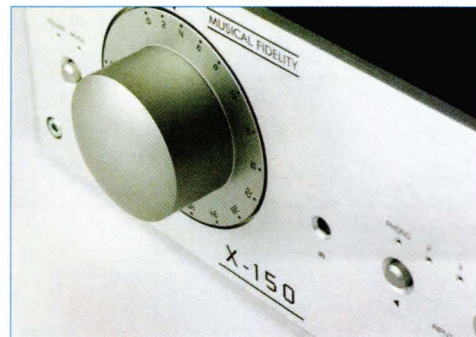


"The Kandy KD1/III CD player offers a great array of talents - team it with its amp stablemate and you have something close to the ideal visual and sonic combination."



**FREE**

**GRADO SR60 HEADPHONES WORTH £90** WHEN YOU PURCHASE AN AMP AND CD TOGETHER FROM ONE OF THE FOLLOWING MANUFACTURERS - ARCAM, CYRUS & ROKSAN\* NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR PROMOTION



### Musical Fidelity X-80 Amplifier £599.95 X-150 Amplifier £799.95 X-Ray<sup>VS</sup> CD Player £899.95

The 40 wpc, **X-80** and the 80wpc **X-150** amplifiers are part of Musical Fidelity's revamped X-Series. Both models feature a dual-gang analogue volume control and high-output transistors for each channel. The X-150 also includes a high quality phono stage.

The **X-Ray<sup>VS</sup>** CD player, replacement for the legendary X-Ray, uses the same DAC and upsampling principles as the acclaimed Tri-Vista SACD player.



### Wharfedale Diamond 9.1 Speakers £179.95

"The overall balance of the speakers is their finest characteristic. Thanks to near-perfect driver integration, music sounds wonderfully natural and transparent... This is a bar-raising effort from Wharfedale: these are ridiculously good speakers at the budget price level."



### PRICING POLICY

**£** We always try to ensure our prices are highly competitive. In the event you can find the same products and excellent service at a lower price, please bring it to our store managers' attention.

### 0% FINANCE OPTION\*

Spread the cost of buying. 0% finance option is available on the vast majority of products we stock. \*Written details on request. Licensed credit brokers. Minimum balance £400. Subject to status.

**PLEASE NOTE: SOME PRODUCTS MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE AT ALL STORES. PLEASE CALL BEFORE TRAVELLING.**

\*ADDED VALUE OFFERS - FROM RANGE AVAILABLE IN-STORE. NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER. ADVERTISEMENT VALID UNTIL AT LEAST 17/11/04, E&OE.

# Sevenoaks SOUND & VISION



## Rotel 10 Series RA-1062 Amplifier £594.95 RCD-1072 CD Player £594.95

"At the heart of the 60-watt **RA-1062** is a toroidal transformer and a power supply, which Rotel claims, helps the amp maintain performance even at high volumes... Crank up the volume and, as promised, the Rotel keeps its composure and balance... If you want a £600 integrated, be sure to audition the RA-1062.

First impressions of the **RCD-1072** are excellent. This is the slickest machine in this group: the casework feels solid and the finish exceptional at the price... On its own terms it remains an enjoyable and informative CD player."

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION • SEPTEMBER 2003

## Acoustic Energy Aelite Three Speakers £749.95

"Acoustic Energy's new Aelite Threes weigh in at a hefty 18kg a piece, and their curved, real wood finished cabinets both look handsome and make good acoustic sense... So how do they perform... Give them a big room and position them in free space and they'll deliver great things... If you want a big sound for sensible money, don't hesitate to audition the Aelite Threes."

WHAT HI-FI?  
SOUND AND VISION  
Sept 04  
★★★★★



FREE  
QED CABLE  
WORTH £80

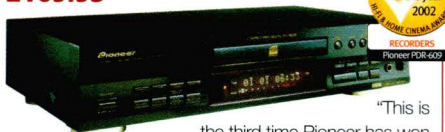
## CD RECORDERS



## Yamaha CDR-HD1300/II £ CALL

New replacement for the Award-winning CDR-HD1300. Now includes a larger hard-disk for extra storage.

## Pioneer PDR-609 £169.95



WHAT HI-FI?  
SOUND AND VISION  
RECORDERS  
Product of the year 2002  
BEST BUY  
Pioneer PDR-609

"This is the third time Pioneer has won Product of the Year in the recorders section.

Features include 24-bit/96kHz digital-analogue-conversion plus manual recording level controls, ideal when making compilations to standardise levels. All this means you get great copies from the Pioneer... and remarkable value."



## Monitor Audio Bronze B2 Speakers £199.95

"Monitor Audio's Bronze B2s sound much more expensive than their £200 price tag would suggest. In fact, they sound superb... In the competitive world of budget hi-fi, speakers don't get much better than the B2s."

WHAT HI-FI?  
SOUND AND VISION  
Best Buy  
2003  
MONITOR AUDIO

## Mission m34i Speakers £329.95

"The original m34s impressed us with their easy-going bass, but had an undynamic and uninvolved balance. Not the m34is: they're refined and enjoyable... You'll be hard pressed to find a better balance of talents anywhere else for this amount of money."



FREE  
QED CABLE  
WORTH £60

WHAT HI-FI?  
SOUND AND VISION  
Oct 04  
★★★★★

## Mission m31i Speakers £139.95

"Overall, the little m31i speakers are great, and the team at Mission should consider this upgrade job well done. The 'i' in the model name stands for 'improved' and these speakers fully deserve the suffix."



WHAT HI-FI?  
SOUND AND VISION  
Nov 04  
★★★★★

## COMPACT SYSTEMS



## Linn Klassik Music System £799.95

When purchased with speakers over £299\*  
When purchased on its own £849.95

"The Klassik sounds simply marvellous... It offers the performance you'd expect from high quality separates in one lovely package - this is a very superior product."



## Denon DM31 UD-M31 CD Receiver £189.95

When purchased with speakers over £99\*  
When purchased on its own £199.95

"The D-M30 was exemplary, as its three What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision Awards clearly show. The D-M31 is even better, making it phenomenal value for money."

NB - DENON DM31 & LINN CLASSIK PRICES EXCLUDE SPEAKERS

## B&W 704 Speakers £1399.95

The 704 speakers are part of B&W's new 700 series. These floorstanding, two-and-a-half-way, vented box speakers are available in a variety of attractive finishes. In a recent What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision group test the 704 offered "Remarkable openness and clarity that is unrivalled at this price."

WHAT HI-FI?  
SOUND AND VISION  
Mar 04  
★★★★★



FREE  
QED CABLE  
WORTH £120

PLEASE NOTE: SOME PRODUCTS MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE AT ALL STORES. PLEASE CALL BEFORE TRAVELLING.

\*ADDED VALUE OFFERS - FROM RANGE AVAILABLE IN-STORE. NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER. ADVERTISEMENT VALID UNTIL AT LEAST 17/11/04, E&OE.

experience more

experience more  
experience more



WIRELESS NETWORKING

## MUSIC ALL AROUND THE HOME



You've heard of hi-fi – now welcome to the world of wi-fi! Wi-fi devices allow you to network a range of devices together – from your music system to your PC – without the wires. For example, a multiroom server like Yamaha's MusicCAST can wirelessly send music to up to five 'client' playback systems dotted around your home. That music could be stored on the MusicCAST server device or other sources – existing hi-fi kit, maybe, or an internet radio station or MP3 files from your PC: plug-in adapters make it easy to wi-fi-enable products.



YAMAHA'S MusicCAST  
MCX-1000 DIGITAL SERVER  
& MCX-A10 CLIENT

MusicCAST  
MCX-A10 CLIENT  
& MCX-SP10 SPEAKERS



- YAMAHA MusicCAST**
- MCX A10 ..... £599.95 (MusicCAST Client)
  - MCX 1000 ..... £1799.95 (MusicCAST Server)
  - MCX-SP10 ..... £99.95 (MusicCAST Speakers)
- CYRUSLINK**
- Linkserver 160 ..... £2999.95 (Four Zone HD Server 160Gb Drive)
  - Linkserver 250 ..... £3499.95 (Four Zone HD Server 250Gb Drive)
  - Linkport ..... £649.95
  - Linkwand ..... £199.95

Cyruslink  
AVAILABLE AT SELECTED SEVENOAKS SOUND & VISION STORES

## SUGGESTED HI-FI SEPARATE SYSTEMS

Sevenoaks has carefully chosen three hi-fi separate systems. All components have been selected for their performance, reliability and compatibility.

These systems represent superb value for money with massive savings on the individual component prices.

Simply add speaker and interconnect cables and other accessories from our extensive range available in-store.



- Rotel**
- RCD-02 CD Player
  - RA-02 Amplifier
- Monitor Audio**
- Bronze B2 Speakers

£799.95 SAVE £129

PRICE EXCLUDES CABLES & STANDS

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1  
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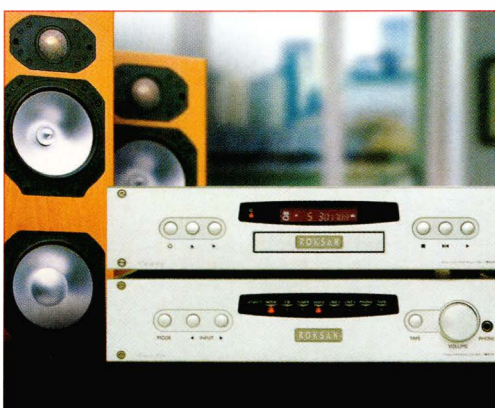
- Arcam**
- CD73T CD Player
  - A65 Plus Amplifier
- KEF**
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2  
HI-FI SYSTEM



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  - Kandy KA1/III Amplifier
- Monitor Audio**
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3  
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# Sevenoaks

## SOUND & VISION



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Michell Gyro SE/RB300 £50 GOLDRING CARTRIDGE*	£1049.95
Michell TechnoDec (Ex Arm)	£574.95
Project Debut Phono SB	£169.95
Project Debut III (Black)	£129.95
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Cyrus FM X	£499.95
Denon TU260L MKII	£99.95
Harman Kardon TU970 DAB/AM/FM	£299.95
Marantz ST4000	£99.95
Pure DRX-701ES DAB	£199.95
Pure DRX-702ES Analogue/DAB	£279.95
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Sony ST-SDB900	£ CALL

### CD PLAYERS

Arcam DVA CD73T	£399.95
Arcam DVA CD192	£849.95
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Linn Ikemi	£2199.95
Marantz CD5400	£119.95
Musical Fidelity X-Ray V9	£899.95
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Musical Fidelity A308**	£1999.95
Quad 99 CD-P	£999.95
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Roksan Caspian M	£1099.95
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Rotel RCD1072	£594.95

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Sony RCD-W100	£ CALL
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Arcam DVA A80	£599.95
Arcam DVA A90	£849.95
Arcam FMJ A32	£1199.95
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Cyrus 8vs	£799.95
Cyrus Pre X vs Pre	£1099.95
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Linn LK85 Power	£544.95
Marantz PM4400	£149.95
Marantz PM7200	£249.95
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Musical Fidelity X-150	£799.95

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Musical Fidelity A3.2 Pre	£999.95
Musical Fidelity A3.2 Power	£999.95
Musical Fidelity A308	£1999.95
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Roksan Caspian M	£999.95
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Rotel RA-02	£349.95
Rotel RA-1062	£594.95

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Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo Three	£259.95
Acoustic Energy Aelite Two	£449.95
Acoustic Energy Aelite Three	£749.95
Acoustic Energy AE1 MKIII (From)	£1699.95
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B&W DM602 S3	£299.95
B&W 704	£1399.95
B&W 705	£899.95
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KEF Q4	£399.95
KEF XQ1	£749.95
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Mission m34i	£329.95
Mission 780SE	£349.95
Mission 782SE	£899.95
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Monitor Audio Silver S1	£299.95
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Arcam DVA DV79	£999.95	£999.95
Arcam FMJ DV29	£1599.95	£1599.95
Cyrus DVD8	£1199.95	£1199.95
Denon DVD-1710	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-2200 Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-2900 Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-2910 Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-3910 Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-A11	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-A1	£1599.95	£1599.95
Harman Kardon DVD22	£299.95	£299.95
Harman Kardon DVD31	£399.95	£399.95
Pioneer DV370	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DV575A Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DV668AV Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DV868AV Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Toshiba SD240E	£ CALL	£ CALL
Toshiba SD340E	£ CALL	£ CALL
Yamaha DVD-S540	£ CALL	£ CALL

Yamaha DVD-S550	£ CALL	£ CALL
Yamaha DVD-S1500	£ CALL	£ CALL

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MAKE & MODEL	REGION 2	MULTI REGION
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Panasonic DMR-E65 DVD-RAM	£ CALL	£ CALL
Panasonic DMR-E75 DVD-RAM	£ CALL	£ CALL
Panasonic DMR-E85 DVD-RAM	£ CALL	£ CALL
Panasonic DMR-E95 DVD-RAM	£ CALL	£ CALL
Panasonic DMR-E100 DVD-RAM	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DVR3100S DVD-R/RW	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DVR5100HS DVD-R/RW	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DVR-520H HDD/DVD-RW	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DVR-720H HDD/DVD-RW	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DVR-920H HDD/DVD-RW	£ CALL	£ CALL
Sony RDR-HX900 DVD-RW/+RW	£ CALL	£ CALL

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Arcam AVR250 A/V Receiver	£999.95
Arcam AVR300 A/V Receiver	£1299.95
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Cyrus AV8 A/V Processor	£1099.95
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Denon AVC-A1SR A/V Amplifier	£ CALL
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Denon AVR1905 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
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Denon AVR3805 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
Harman Kardon AVR330 A/V Receiver	£599.95
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Pioneer VSX-C501 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
Pioneer VSX-C502 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
Pioneer VSX-D812 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
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Rotel RSP1066/RMB1075 A/V Pre/Power	£1799.95
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Yamaha DSP-AX750SE A/V Amplifier	£ CALL
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Yamaha RX-V650 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
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Yamaha RX-V1500RDS A/V Receiver	£ CALL
Yamaha RX-V2400RDS A/V Receiver	£ CALL

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Acoustic Energy Ago P5/II	£499.95
Acoustic Energy Aelite 5.1	£1894.95
Artcooustic Diabio	£994.95
B&W VMI/AS1	£849.95
B&W DM300 AV	£899.95
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KEF KHT5005 £200 FREE QED CABLE*	£1199.95
KEF Q7 AV £300 FREE QED CABLE*	£2199.95
M&K K5 £250 FREE QED CABLE*	£1699.95
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M&K 850/CS35A/850	£3899.95
Mission M30 AV Pack	£449.95
Mission Elegante e82 5.1 Package	£3489.95
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Monitor Audio Bronze B4 AV	£949.95
Monitor Audio Radius 270	£499.95
Monitor Audio Radius 5.1	£999.95
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ThemeScene H56 Cinema DLP	£1999.95
ThemeScene H77 Cinema DLP	£3499.95
Yamaha DXP1100 DLP	£ CALL

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### WHO ARE SEVENOAKS?

Founded in 1972, Sevenoaks Sound & Vision is one of the largest and most successful hi-fi and home cinema retailers in the country.

Each Sevenoaks Sound & Vision store stocks a wide range of quality products, covering all categories of specialist home entertainment, from Hi-Fi separates and systems to DVD players, widescreen plasma televisions and projection systems, all at highly competitive prices.

Friendly staff are available in all stores to advise, demonstrate and guide you through the home entertainment jungle.

### DEMONSTRATION FACILITIES

Our comfortable demonstration rooms are among the finest in the country, many complying with full THX specifications.

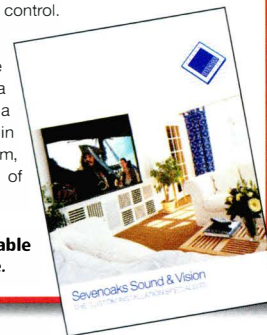


### CUSTOM INSTALLATION

Sevenoaks Sound & Vision's Custom Installation Service enables the integration of a home cinema or hi-fi system into your home as neatly and seamlessly as possible. All electronics can be hidden away, speakers discreetly mounted either in the wall or ceiling and the complete system operated via remote control.

Our installation experts are fully trained to the highest standards in all areas and provide a prompt, reliable and professional service. Whether you're looking for a multi-room system, a dedicated home cinema installation with a retractable screen and built-in speakers or an integrated control or lighting system, Sevenoaks Sound & Vision has a diverse range of products available to cater for all your requirements.

**FREE 8 Page Custom Installation Brochure available now from your nearest store or via our website.**



### SEVENOAKS WEBSITE

The Sevenoaks Sound & Vision website has news and information on the Sevenoaks group and detailed pages to help you locate your nearest store.

### SPECIAL OFFERS

There are hundreds of special offers and stock clearance items available from our stores nationwide - many with savings of up to 50%. To view our regularly updated product lists, visit [www.sevenoakssoundandvision.co.uk](http://www.sevenoakssoundandvision.co.uk) and click on **special offers**

### PRICING POLICY

Whilst we do not claim always to be the cheapest, we try to ensure our prices are highly competitive. Take into account the expert advice, unrivalled product selection, demonstration facilities and excellent pre, during and after sales service and the lower price might not look such good value.

In the event you can find the same products and excellent service at a lower price, please bring it to our store managers' attention. We will always endeavour to offer you the best deal.



### Sevenoaks Sound & Vision GUIDE TO HI-FI AND HOME CINEMA

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**E-MAIL:** [insert store location]@sevenoakssoundandvision.co.uk

[www.sevenoakssoundandvision.co.uk](http://www.sevenoakssoundandvision.co.uk)

# STEREO AMPLIFIERS

*Integrated and pre/power amps*



Amplifiers come in two basic forms: integrated and preamplifier (pre) plus power amp combinations. Integrated simply means that both pre and power sections are in one box. There are definite advantages to separating the low level, delicate signals in the preamp from the radiations of a power amp, so the more ambitious designs come in two or more cases. In some cases, each channel has its own power amp called a monoblock.

Amplifiers use two basic technologies: transistors or valves. Transistors are popular because of their practical and technical advantages, but valves – aka tubes – live on owing to aspects of sound quality that trannies can't replicate. If you want to play your music loud, use trannies; if you appreciate acoustic music, try valves.

The fundamental of amp/speaker interfacing is power rating and speaker sensitivity. You can drive a high-sensitivity speaker with a ten watt valve amp, but it takes a 200W behemoth to get the best out of speakers which present a difficult load. As a rule, you can't have too much power.

### How to choose an amp

The main areas in which amps vary are: timing, dynamics, stereo imaging and transparency. Timing is the ability to present the attack and decay of each note precisely; amps with strong timing have a snap and coherence that is very appealing.



Dynamics is a general term for the ability to portray variations in level between individual notes and is different to dynamic range (the difference between the loudest and softest notes). Dynamically strong amps tend to have more life and energy.

Stereo imaging is how solid or three-dimensional an instrument or voice sounds. The point of having two rather than one speaker is to make it possible to recreate the soundstage of the original recording, thus amps that have strong imaging skills can create a sonic space that seems to extend the room.

Transparency of detail is the most obvious difference between amps. One amp will present more subtlety than another, but the drawback with using this as your main criterion is that a forward or 'bright' sounding amplifier will emphasise detail at the expense of overall musical coherence.

### Q&A

#### SHOULD I LEAVE MY AMP ON ALL THE TIME FOR BEST RESULTS?

All audio electronics perform better when they are warmed up, and this is particularly the case when it comes to amplifiers. If there's no way that you can leave it on all the time, make an effort to switch it on at least 20 minutes before listening.

#### WHAT IS BI-WIRING AND BI-AMPING?

Bi-wiring is when you run separate cables to the treble and bass/mid terminals on the speaker. In most instances, this improves sound quality so long as identical cables are used. Bi-amping is using two stereo amps to drive one pair of speakers, using one amp to drive the treble and the other for the bass/mid sections of the speakers.

#### WHY DO VALVE AMPS HAVE SO LITTLE POWER?

Valve amps are inherently low powered in absolute terms – at least when you compare them to their transistor-based cousins. But when partnered with high-sensitivity loudspeakers, they are quite capable of producing perfectly adequate head-banging levels.

### HOME CINEMA STEREO

Stereo amps can be used in home cinema set-ups as well. You don't get the surround and centre channels, but well set-up stereo speakers do a remarkably good job of creating atmosphere for movies. Stereo amps

tend to be better at reproducing music as they don't have the (electrical) noise-inducing digital processing of AV amps. AV amps cost three to four times as much as stereo models of a similar quality.

### TOP BUYS



**Marantz**  
PM7200 £330

A true budget belter from Marantz – power and finesse in equal measure, plus the ability to switch between Class A and Class AB operation. Giant killing amps are back!



**Roksan**  
Caspian M Series £1,000

The latest version of Roksan's long-running mid-market amp is a truly expressive performer, good enough to pick up a gong in our 2003 Awards.



**Quad**  
99 Pre/909 £1,650

This neat pre/power combo is much more engaging than stereotypical Quads of old, yet retains their purposeful, no-nonsense appeal. A great value two-box option.



**Primare**  
PRE30/A30.2 £2,400

Beautifully made and with a sound to match, this Scandinavian pre/power combines warmth and body with energy and detail – a truly musical performer.

## Our favourite STEREO AMPLIFIERS

BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Integrated amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>									
BB	Arcam DIVA A65 Plus	370	Highly articulate and fluent, offers unusual insight for its price	5	●	●	●	40	232
	Arcam DIVA A80	600	Arcam's most successful mid-range amp to date – sophisticated control system and crisp, detailed sound	6	●	●	●	90	251
EC	Arcam DIVA A90	850	Enhanced replacement for A85, convertible to 7.1 sound with the addition of an add-on module and extra P90 power amps	6	opt	●	●	90	250
EC	Audio Analogue Primo	475	Small, stylish amp with a smooth and beguiling sound. Makes a fine partner for AA's equally compact Primo CD player	5	opt	●		70	255
BB	Cambridge Audio Azur 540A	200	A well built and fully featured amplifier that costs this little should not sound this revealing	6	opt	●	●	50	255
	Cambridge Audio Azur 640A	250	Cambridge has a powerful weapon in the battle for budget amp supremacy, it's a lot of musical entertainment for the money	5	opt	●		65	250
BB	Exposure 3010 Integrated	1,000	A mix of old and new, combining greater power with Exposure's traditionally sweet and enthralling sound	6	●	●	●	120	244
	Icon Audio Stereo 40i	900	Stylish and very sharply priced valve amp is a good all-rounder	4				37	254
BB	Marantz PM4400 OSE	250	Highly competent and well specified – a lively performer that makes great music	5	●		●	50	256
BB	Marantz PM7200	330	High power, plenty of features, and remarkably clear and informative sound with lots of impact	6	●	●	●	105	248
EC	Marantz PM7200KI	500	Even more refined version of basic amp, with notably improved bass purity	6	●	●	●	95	254
BB	Musical Fidelity X-80	600	The entry-level to Musical Fidelity's amplifier range sounds both powerful and refined	4		●		55	255
BB	Myryad MXI2080	1,100	A sound of great assurance and clarity – perhaps a touch bass-light at times, but otherwise superb for the money	7		●		80	260
BB	NAD C352	350	Dynamic and musical sounding update on what was already a star product	7		●	●	80	253
EC	Naim Nait 5i	699	A trade-off of more power and better connectivity against less inputs works surprisingly well in a grunty, musical manner	4		●		50	252
BB	Primare I20	750	An amplifier with attitude: punchy fast and secure sounding, with excellent build quality for the money	4		●		70	239
BB	Roksan Caspian M Series	1,000	Improved mid-range model from Roksan is a fine, expressive amplifier – right at the top of its class	6		●		85	248
EC	Rotel RA-02	349	Agile and capable slimline design with an engaging sound that draws you into the music	4	●	●	●	40	232
BB	Rotel RA-1062	595	A great value amp with a detailed and engaging sound, and the ability to drive almost any speaker in its path	5	●	●		95	251
BB	Sugden A21a	899	This single-ended, Class A transistor amp has exquisite resolving ability and presence – an authentic classic	5				25	224
BB	Thule IA60B SE	895	An amp that's so faithful to the spirit and detail of the source material and costs less than £1,000 is hard to fault	5		●		75	253
<b>ABOVE £1,000</b>									
BB	Arcam FMJ A32	1,150	Remarkably flexible and well-featured, with excellent sound quality for the price	7	●	●	●	100	228
BB	Audio Note Oto Line SE	1,599	Single-ended valve amp lacks power but sounds remarkably delicate and coherent	5	opt			10	254
BB	Audio Analogue Maestro S.	1,750	The beautifully made Maestro Settanta sounds fast, deep and very smooth, though perhaps not the most dynamic	5	●	●		70	257
BB	Audio Research Vsi55	2,895	Superb all-rounder provides the delights of valve amplification without sacrificing convenience	5		●		50	254
BB	AVI Laboratory Series	1,399	Terrific power, control and resolution – effortlessly musical and fine value	6	opt	●		200	241
BB	Copland CSA29	1,900	A hybrid valve/solid state amplifier that gets close to offering the best of both worlds	6	opt	●		85	255
	Hegel H1	1,500	A rich and responsive amp that revels in great music with a warmth that encourages non-stop listening	6		●		120	254
EC	Karan KA-i180	3,900	Lean, sharp and articulate, this impressively constructed heavyweight is almost up there with the audiophile pre/power elite	4		●		180	236
EC	Krell KAV-400xi	2,698	The best integrated Krell yet is quick, agile, solid and finely detailed	5		●		200	247
BB	Primare A30.1	1,500	Smooth, detailed singing quality, elegant appearance and a healthy power yield	6		●		100	214

## Our favourite STEREO AMPLIFIERS

BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Pre/power amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				PRE-AMPLIFIER	POWER AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>UP TO £2,000</b>										
BB	Arcam FMJ A32/P35	1,980	One of the few correctly matched integrated/power combinations, the sound has real gravitas and sophistication	●	●	7	●	●	100	227
BB	Croft Vitali/Series 5C	2,000	Oddball retro style and ergonomics, but truly magical voice coherence and projection, great transparency	●	●	3	●		30	216
	Densen Beat 200/300	1,985	Classy jet black cast boxes pack plenty of punch with good total musical coherence (remote £300 extra)	●	●	6	opt	opt	100	216
BB	Exposure 3010 Integrated/Power	1,800	Simple units with various connection options which give very satisfying sound in all areas	●	●	6	opt	●	116	256
BB	Quad 99/909	1,650	Well thought out and well executed, with good strong sound and just a little veiling	●	●	5	●	●	136	256
<b>ABOVE £2,000</b>										
EC	Border Patrol P20	6,750	Muscular 300B P-P design with fluidity and dynamics to match the best	●	●				20	231
	Bryston BP25/4BSST	4,000	Extremely transparent, high-power combo, you'll listen louder and longer because you can	●	●	8	opt	●	300	241
EC	Chapter Preface/II+	9,800	Among the finest amps available, the resolution of this preamp and power amp challenges the best at any price	●	●	6		●	300	249
	EAR 864/534	4,156	Valve combo delivers fine measured and subjective performance and inspires great confidence	●	●	6	●		50	254

**SPECS KEY** **LINE INPUTS** Input sockets for source components with a line level output: CD players, DVD players, tape decks, tuners, phono stages etc. **PHONO INPUT** Input sockets and onboard phono stage for a cartridge. Either MM (moving magnet) or MC (moving coil), occasionally both. **REMOTE CONTROL** A remote control is supplied with the amplifier. **HEADPHONE SOCKET** To drive your cans with. **POWER OUTPUT** Manufacturer's rated output in watts per channel.

Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

# STEREO AMPLIFIERS continued

## Pre/power amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				PREAMPLIFIER	POWER AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	ECS EA-1	6,000	Understated monoblocks with real transparency to the fine detail, passion and energy in your record collection	●	●			180	253
	Exposure XXIII/XXVIII	2,790	Highly natural and dynamic amplifier that offers the fluidity and energy of valves via transistors	●	●	6	opt	70	241
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Gamut D200 Mk3	3,950	A great power amp that's now even better – one of the best regardless of price		●			200	247
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Halcro dm10/dm68	25,550	Extravagant, extreme and massive amp combo will probably polarise opinions, but delivers stunning midrange clarity	●	●	5	●	225	243
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Hovland HP-100/RADIA	12,745	Uncommonly musical valve/transistor hybrid transcends stereotypes, one of the genuine high achievers	●	●	9	opt	125	250
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Krell FPB 700cx	14,998	Reference class amplifier may represent overkill in many systems, but when no compromise is called for, this is it		●			700	234
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Linn Klimax Kontrol	6,000	Beautifully executed example of Scots audio art, sounds as clean as it looks and is a lot more transparent than most	●	●	4	●		238
	Naim NAC202/NAP200	2,720	More sophisticated than its forebears with a fleet-footed sound that draws you into the music	●	●	8	●	70	241
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Naim NAP500	11,875	Wonderful neutrality, bandwidth and dynamic range, plus Naim's traditional leading-edge definition		●			140	208
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Naim NAP552	12,100	Extremely expensive preamp, but still solid value. Magnificent sound with fine flexibility and convenience	●	●	6	●		233
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BB</span>	Primare PRE30/A30.2	2,400	Smart kit that lives up to the visual promise with gorgeous sound – a really musical performer	●	●	7	●	128	256
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Quad QC-24/II-40	4,007	Big, muscular valve sound that's smooth and easy on the ears, plus solid engineering with good power delivery	●	●	7		40	254
	Roksan Caspian M Series pre/pwr	2,050	Confident and highly enjoyable sound with lively music, perhaps a little less sure with subtler, complex scores	●	●	6	●	78	256
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BB</span>	Stello DP200/S200	2,990	Flexible preamp with purist leanings, plus classic stereo power amp offer great value by high-end standards	●	●	3	●	200	259
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Sugden Masterclass AA	5,600	Yorkshire's finest class A kit. Dynamic and tonally rich, this gives even valve amps a run for their money	●	●	7	●	35	246
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Unison Research Unico Pre/DM	2,590	Hybrid designs with a rich powerful performance that makes a fine balance between valve and solid state sound	●	●	3	●	150	242

# AV AMPLIFIERS

Surround sound amps for music and movies



The multichannel, surround sound or AV amplifier is a popular option, thanks to the success of the DVD player and home cinema. Now you can buy five channels or more of amplification for the price of two. Now that multichannel music is also on the agenda, there's a lot to be said for a good AV amp or receiver (an amp with a radio tuner built in).

So if you fancy hearing what DVD-Audio, SACD or even music DVD-Video can do, then check out a multichannel amp and speaker set-up – they're stunning with movies and none too shabby with music.

AV amps are usually designed primarily for movies and come with digital processing for the various soundtrack formats – Dolby Pro-Logic (analogue), Dolby Digital and DTS, which offer discrete surround sound in 5.1 and 7.1 channel formats. More ambitious designs also offer THX post processing, designed to emulate the sound of the mixing theatre at home.

Processing in AV amps is needed because the surround formats on DVD-Vs are compressed, limiting their high-fidelity



potential. This is why new formats SACD and DVD-A, which don't use 'lossy' compression, were created for music.

All this processing power can take its toll on analogue formats. The best multichannel amps for music are often the simplest, but any that offer a complete bypass option with six-channel input are suitable. It's also worth looking at real power – five or seven channels of amplification are not easy to produce with a feeble power supply, and the cheaper amps in particular often fail to live up to the claims.

## Q&A

### HOW MANY CHANNELS?

Depends on how many speakers you want. Multichannel music discs come with six or 5.1 channels, but for new movies, 7.1 systems are where it's at. 7.1 set-ups also mean you have speakers directly behind you – preferable for music discs.

### WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A PROCESSOR AND AN AV AMP?

Processors don't have amplification on board and you need separate power amps. AV amps and receivers have processing and amps in the same box.

### WHAT DOES THE .1 IN 5.1 STAND FOR?

This is the LFE (low frequency effects) or bass channel that is reproduced by a subwoofer.

## HI-FI MEETS SURROUND SOUND

With DVD-Audio and SACD offering high-quality multichannel music, surround sound is no longer just a home cinema thing. An increasing number of people want to build a multichannel system that will do their music as well as their movie

DVDs justice, and the number of AV products delivering sufficient quality is on the increase. But most aren't cheap – building a top-quality system with five or more channels is inevitably more expensive than sticking with stereo. There

are some very decent integrated options below £1,000, though the best (and most costly) route is to buy a separate processor and power amp(s). Or you can add AV amplification to a stereo model you can't bear to part with.

## TOP BUYS



**Sony**  
STR-DB795 £300  
Sony's latest little box of AV tricks is astonishingly good for the money – great with cinema and unusually fine with music.



**Denon**  
AVR-3805 £1,000  
Combines admirable sound across all music and movie formats with features like full auto set-up, i.Link and the latest surround formats – a class act at £1,000.



**Pioneer**  
VSA-AX10Ai £3,200  
An astoundingly thorough multichannel *tour de force*, stuffed with features and impressive in both stereo and full surround – state of the integrated AV amp art.



**Arcam**  
AV8/P7 £5,750  
A fantastic achievement from this respected UK brand – a top-ranking AV processor and seven-channel power amp.

## Our favourite AV AMPLIFIERS

BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

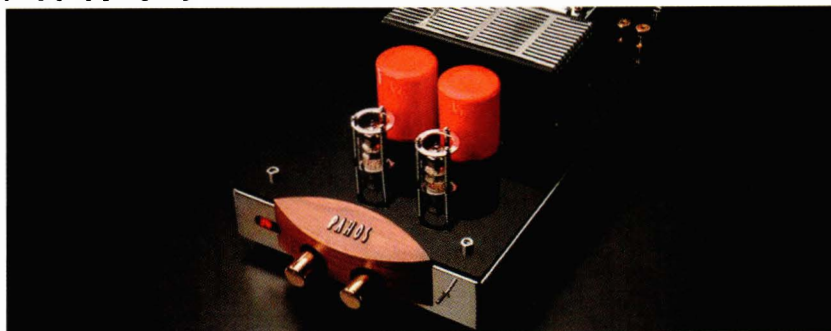
### Multichannel amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	RECEIVER	LINE INPUTS	7.1 COMPATIBLE	5-CHANNEL POWER (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>MULTICHANNEL INTEGRATED AMPS</b>								
	Arcam AVR200	800	Upgraded AVR100 with Dolby Pro-Logic II and some bass management. Great for stereo, a bit bass-light for multichannel	●	6	70	229	
BB	Arcam AVR300	1,300	Cracking all-round music and movie ability sets the Arcam apart from the AV crowd	●	8	100	257	
	Denon AVR-2803	650	Merely 'average' sound but it's impossible to argue against the flexibility and value of its engineering	●	9	130	251	
BB	Denon AVR-3805	1,000	Upgraded sound, new processing algorithms and a great remote control make this a superb mid-market multichannel buy	●		120	256	
EC	Denon AVC-A1SRA	3,000	An AV amp with genuine high-res hi-fi credentials. Feature set now upgraded to the AVC-A1SR'A'		8	170	232	
	Marantz SR9300	2,000	Not a high flyer, just a thoroughly enjoyable, warm and attractive sounding receiver with music and film soundtracks alike	●	8	105	252	
	Marantz SR-12S1	3,000	A multichannel amp that can be taken seriously in stereo too. Resources are in the engineering rather than the gimmickry	●	3	160	255	
BB	Pioneer VSA-AX5i	1,200	Standard setter in its price category, with i.Link digital interface and MCACC auto set-up	●	11	100	248	
EC	Pioneer VSA-AX10Ai	3,200	State of the art one-box amplifier with enhanced sound quality, auto set-up and other enhancements		10	150	260	
BB	Sony STR-DB795	300	A superb value little amplifier, well appointed technically and successfully tuned for UK ears	●	7	100	260	
EC	Sony TA-DA9000ES	2,600	Arguably the first convincing fully digital amplifier, an excellent match for players with i.Link encrypted outputs	●	10	200	253	
<b>MULTICHANNEL PREAMPS/PROCESSORS AND POWER AMPS</b>								
BB	Arcam A90+7.1 mod, P90/3	1,920	Add Arcam's multichannel module and a P90/3 power amp to the A90 stereo integrated and you've got got superb purist 5.1		8	90	250	
EC	Arcam AV8/P7	5,750	State-of-the-art processor (£3,150) and seven-channel power amp (£2,600). An excellent fusion of stereo and surround sound		7	180	235	
EC	Copland CVA306/CVA535	3,748	Tube analogue six-channel pre transforms multichannel audio from a novelty into a genuine advance for the high fidelity art		5	125	236	
	Cyrus AV8/3x Smartpower	2,900	Classic Cyrus sound translated to a multichannel arena, limited features and power, but civilised sound		3	105	238	
EC	EAD TheaterMaster 8800	4,500	One of the most 'musical' sounding AV processors to date – great with the matching PowerMaster 8300 multichannel power amp		9		242	
	Linn Exotik	1,750	Is hi-fi ready to make the jump to multichannel music? Linn think so with this musical preamplifier		4		260	
BB	Marantz PS-17/2x SM-17	3,400	Classy and capable system, great steering, warm solid sound and high detail resolution, and some great gadgets		10	60	238	
EC	Meridian 861	9,833	Powerful surround processor with flexible modular construction, marvellous versatility to drive any speaker configuration		6		230	
	Naim AV2/NAPV175/NAP150	4,175	First truly credible multichannel system from Naim is idiosyncratic but offers excellent basic sound with modest spatial steering		5	50	238	
EC	Parasound Halo C1/A51	8,500	Powerful and flexible processor/power amp combo with impressive sound. Excellent value – processor includes onboard screen		11	250	243	
BB	Primare SP31.7/A30.5	4,200	Great all-round system which brings the qualities of good stereo high fidelity to a multichannel world		5	120	238	

**SPECS KEY** **RECEIVER** Integrated multichannel amp with built-in radio tuner. **LINE INPUTS** Input sockets for source components with a line level output: CD players, DVD players, tape decks, tuners, phono stages etc. **7.1 CHANNEL COMPATIBLE** The amp either has seven-channel in and outputs or in some instances is equipped with seven channels of amplification. **5-CHANNEL POWER (W)** Power output in watts per channel of all channels driven by the amp

# PATHOS

*'The Classic One is one of the finest amps I have ever heard, of any era, from anywhere. . .'* Sam Tellig, *Stereophile*



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# STEREO SPEAKERS

*Speaker pairs for stereo sound*



While loudspeakers are relatively straightforward in construction, they have one of the most difficult jobs in hi-fi – turning an electrical signal into an acoustic one. Most consist of two or more drive units in a box that usually has a port in it to make life easier for the cone in your mid and/or bass driver. Alternatives to this arrangement include panel speakers, which use electrostatic or ribbon technology, and horns, which use drive units in complex cabinets that greatly improve efficiency.

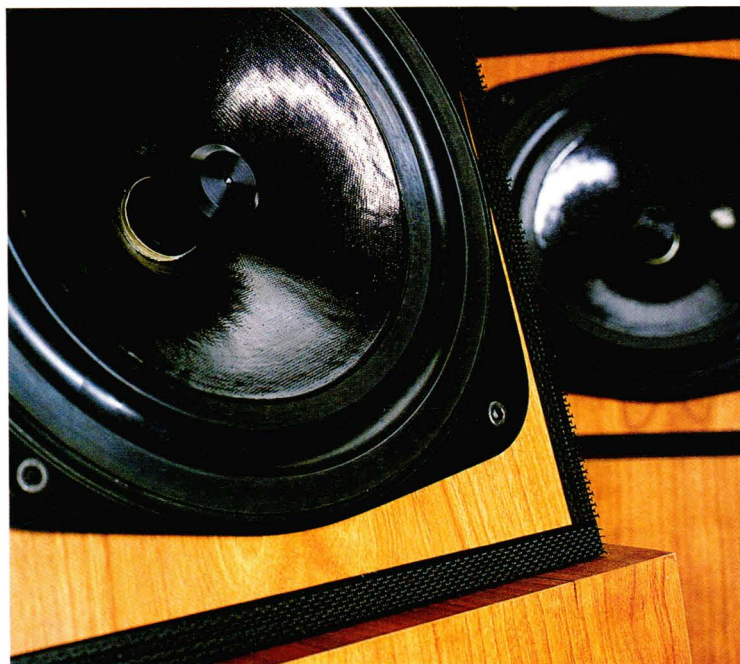
Box speakers are either designed to stand on the floor (floorstanders) or on a stand (stand or shelfmounts). Floorstanders have greater internal volume which can translate into greater efficiency and/or bass extension, but less substantial designs also introduce cabinet resonance and thus distortion. But they don't need stands and therefore have the aesthetic edge. Standmounts have less cabinet to vibrate and often score in terms of imaging and timing, but need good stands to work well.

## Positioning

The closer the speaker is to a wall, the greater the reinforcement of bass. As all rooms differ, there's no simple formula for placement and experimentation will yield the best results. Altering the angle at which the speakers face the listener can also make a difference to balance and stereo image.

## Going multichannel

Many stereo speakers can be augmented with centre and surround channels from the same brand to create a multichannel system. The most important element is a centre channel, which needs to match the stereo pair as closely as possible. For the best musical results, surrounds should be as per the front left and right channels, but if space or funds don't permit, smaller designs can be used quite effectively.



## Choosing speakers

Because speakers and the rooms they are used in vary so much, choosing a pair tends to be quite subjective. To find some that will suit you, try to listen to a good variety to hear how they differ, and if possible, audition some at home. Tonal balance tends to vary the most, but is less important than more subtle factors such as timing and dynamics. Finally, listen with your ears not your eyes – great-looking speakers aren't necessarily great sounding.

## Spikes

Floorstanding speakers and stands have threaded inserts for spikes that allow rigid coupling with the floor. These have the advantage of draining resonance from the speaker and giving tighter bass, but can result in more vibration getting back to the electronics and often cause the floor to resonate as well.

## POWER

Though some speakers have a power rating, this isn't as informative as a rating for how difficult they are to drive, nor does it indicate wattage extremes for the partnering amp. In practice, an amplifier cannot be too powerful. Our listings quote ease of drive to indicate how much power

your amp needs to avoid a mismatch. An above-average (A+) speaker will work with amps rated at 25W plus, while an average (A) speaker will need 50W or more, and a below average (A-) speaker could require 100W plus to sound its best. These are guidelines rather than rules.

## Q&A

### IF SPEAKERS ARE RATED AT 75 WATTS, DOES THAT MEAN I NEED A 75 WATT AMP?

No, see the box on power for the full story.

### WHICH SPEAKERS ARE BEST FOR SMALL ROOMS?

Those designed to work close to the wall will be smoother in confined spaces. Speakers that have relatively dry, tight bass will also sound better.

### WHICH SPEAKERS ARE BEST FOR BIG ROOMS?

Big, efficient, easy-to-drive designs are more likely to be able to fill a room better than compact models.

### DO I NEED TO BUY CENTRE AND SURROUND CHANNELS FROM THE SAME BRAND AS MY STEREO SPEAKERS?

Yes, assuming that you're wanting to create a homogenous surround sound experience, where voices don't change when they move from one channel to another.



## TOP BUYS



**Tannoy**  
Sensys DC1 £449

A new dual-concentric main driver plus super-tweeter in a solid standmount box results in a neutral yet expressive speaker at a very tempting price.



**PMC**  
GB1 £995

An attractively compact floorstander with a beautifully articulate sound and remarkable freedom from boxiness. A great buy if you've just under a grand to spend.



**B&W**  
703 £2,000

A hi-tech, three-way floorstander sporting a 'surroundless' midrange driver. Delivers a thoroughly engaging sound with great bass and an expressive midrange.



**Focal-JMLab**  
Micro Utopia Be £3,500

The smallest model in the top-end Utopia Be range is a remarkable piece of speaker engineering, complete with beryllium tweeter and a highly revealing sound.

## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE STEREO SPEAKERS

### Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				SIZE (WHD) (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EASE OF DRIVE	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>									
	Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo 1	180	An unusually classy and sophisticated performer for the price; laid-back sound and good looks too	19,36,24		A	30	●	226
	ATC SCM12	999	Magnificent main driver confers great authority, grip and smoothness, though upper bass a little lean	22,39,26		A-	55	●	253
	AVI Neutron IV	499	A great example of what can be done with a genuinely small speaker, but the warts-and-all balance won't suit all	15,27,21		A-	65	●	260
	B&W DM303	180	Chunky looking and lively sounding, with deep bass, a fine midband and a restrained top end	20,33,23		A	23	●	226
	B&W DM602 S3	300	Old-fashioned size/shape, but this timeless design has a rare combination of grip, authority and headroom	24,49,29		A	25	●	234
	B&W DM603 S3	600	Excellent all-rounder, smooth for its price with fine bass and mid, though top might be more refined	20,91,29	●	A-	25	●	231
	B&W 705	900	Deft, delicate and delightful, if a little bass light, with clever enclosure and driver engineering	22,42,29		A	35	●	253
	Castle Richmond 3i	320	Does most things well and the most important thing - musical communication - remarkably well for the price	17,33,23		A	60	●	260
	Castle Conway 3	930	Lovely real wood finish and a beautifully balanced sound, fine dynamics and transients, but might have more 'air'	22,91,27	●	A+	30	●	237
	Castle Harlech S2	1,000	Improved Harlech is slightly aggressive, but lots of fun, and very good-looking too	20,96,33	●	A	50	●	219
	Dynaudio Audience 42	400	An aristocrat of the vinyl-covered miniature breed. A terrific small speaker for the price	17,29,24		A	40	●	215
	Dynaudio Audience 52	557	Brilliant neutrality, though a little understated dynamically (wood veneered version, as tested - £647)	20,33,26		A-	30	●	250
	Dynaudio Audience 62	729	Pricy but cute vinyl floorstander that is a class act sonically - lightweight, but clean and dextrous	20,86,26	●	A	30	●	231
	Epos ELS3	200	Few affordable speakers sound as clean and convincing while taking up so little real estate	18,27,19		A-	60	●	241
	Focal-JMLab Chorus 707 S	350	The size and shape might be unfashionable, but this is an outstanding all-round performer at a very sharp price	24,49,30		A	25	●	251
	Focal-JMLab Chorus 716 S	550	Not the smoothest around, but combines coherent voicing with fine dynamic expression and real authority	22,95,30	●	A	20	●	250
	Focal-JMLab Chorus 726 S	780	Big generous sound with good dynamic freedom, hampered by some voice-band congestion	22,100,32	●	A+	55	●	253
	Focal-JMLab Cobalt 816 S	999	Great all-rounder - lively and dynamic, smooth and neutral, marred only by a slight treble 'sting'	22,98,31	●	A-	25	●	242
	Jamo E 700	150	Superb staging and detail for the price, but needs a sub to deliver real bass	14,24,20		A-	60	●	260
	KEF Q1	250	Stylish if slightly small-sounding stand-mount with fine midband coherence; works well close to a wall	22,35,30		A	30	●	234
	KEF Q4	400	Beautiful, bijou three-way floorstander lacks some bass weight but has a lovely midband with low coloration	18,82,25	●	A	38	●	255
	Leema Xen	1,000	A true micro-mini-monitor with remarkable powers of analysis and great musical insight, if a touch forward	14,22,23		A-	50	●	245
	Mission m35	400	Very good material value - a big speaker with ample bass and a notably open yet also rather bright top end	26,103,37	●	A	23	●	255
	Monitor Audio Bronze B2	200	A lively and entertaining speaker with tight, controlled bass and a pronounced midband	19,35,25		A	42	●	238
	Monitor Audio Bronze B4	350	A beautifully balanced loudspeaker with fine overall dynamic range and good imaging	19,85,26	●	A	23	●	255
	Monitor Audio Silver S8	800	A thoroughly impressive all-rounder, notable for its wide dynamic range, excellent imaging and fine neutrality	19,90,27	●	A	20	●	237
	Monitor Audio Silver S10	1,000	Timing might be less than the best, but the full balance and fine dynamic range deliver plenty of detail	20,100,27	●	A+	20	●	242
	Mordaunt-Short Avant 906	350	Capable and engaging, this neat design will complement the majority of sub-£500-per-component systems	18,85,27	●	A	45	●	254
	Neat Petite III	845	The treble is peaky, but this is still one of the most coherent and communicative miniatures around	20,31,20		A	30	●	211
	PMC GB1	995	Ultra-compact floorstander is beautifully clean, articulate and free from boxiness, with a notably delicate top end	16,92,24	●	A+	30	●	257
	Quad 22L	895	Lovely lacquer finish over birds-eye maple veneer, with a sound that's more open and forward than usual	21,87,28	●	A	25	●	257
	Rega Ela	749	Might have more grunt, but few can match its impressive agility, delicacy, and superior musical communication	23,89,30	●	A	28	●	250

**SPECS KEY** **SIZE WXHXD (CM)** Width, height and depth of one cabinet in centimetres. **FLOORSTANDER** Speakers that don't require stands. **EASE OF DRIVE** How much power the amplifier needs (approximately) to drive the loudspeaker effectively. **A+** 25 watts plus **A** 50 watts plus **A-** 100 watts plus **ACT** Active - the speaker has its own in-built amplifier. **BASS FROM** How low the speaker goes - the smaller the number the deeper the bass. **FREE SPACE** The speakers work best away from wall(s). **CLOSE TO WALL** The speakers will work best when up against a wall (but avoid corners).

# AUDUSA

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**AUDUSA - OOM Silverlink OCC balanced speaker cable**  
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### GNLM 05/04

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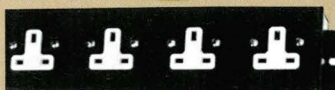
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## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE STEREO SPEAKERS continued

### Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				SIZE (WxD) (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EDGE OF DRIVE	BASS FROM (Hz)	FINE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
	Spendor SR5	1,000	This wall-mount very cleverly avoids the usual colorations, delivering a very dynamic if rather dry sound	31,31,18		A+	50		●	240
<small>BB</small>	Tannoy Fusion 4	350	This big d'Appolito twin two-way has fine coherence and dynamics. A neutral and even all-rounder	21,97,29	●	A	20	●		255
<small>BB</small>	Tannoy Sensys DC1	449	Modest sensitivity but beautifully balanced with fine authority at a very realistic price	21,41,29		A	40		●	245
	Tannoy Eyris 1	600	Pricy but very cute standmount miniature; oddball, but has marvellous midband subtlety and delicacy	17,35,26		A+			●	227
	Tannoy Sensys DC2	649	Has impressive scale and weight with fine stereo imaging, but is also rather laid back, lacking easy agility	21,97,29	●	A	20	●		250
	Tannoy Eyris 2	999	This super-slim and cutely different-looking floorstander is very communicative, despite weak treble	17,91,26	●	A	20	●		231
<b>ABOVE £1,000</b>										
<small>EC</small>	Acoustic Energy AE1 MkIII	1,690	Luxury miniature has a laid-back but bouncy sound, a marvellous dynamic range and very superior imaging	19,31,25		A-	30	●		251
	Acoustic Energy AE3 MkII	4,490	A beautifully neutral speaker with very wide dynamic range and superior imaging, plus lovely Art Deco styling	19,99,29	●	A	20	●		251
<small>BB</small>	Anthony Gallo Nucleus Ref	2,400	Occasionally raw, but engaging and capable beyond its physical stature	20,89,41	●	A	34	●		257
	ATC Active 10	1,269	Stylish, active powerhouses with plenty of subtlety when required (balanced connection only)	23,39,31		act	45	●		221
<small>BB</small>	ATC SCM35	1,999	If you want to hear the uncoloured truth about your record collection in all its glory, this is a speaker to treasure	23,88,30	●	A-	48	●		250
<small>EC</small>	ATC Active 20	2,538	30k + 300W equals resolution and bass that most amp/speaker combinations dream about – a bargain	56,28,36		act	45	●		240
<small>EC</small>	ATC SCM50 ASL	7,255	350W of power combine with superb drive units and a 48kg cabinet to provide alarming resolution	35,72,48		act	38	●		218
<small>BB</small>	Audio Note AN-E/LX	2,650	Though not very pretty, this is a thoroughly entertaining speaker with great dynamic subtlety and integrity	36,79,27	●	A+	22		●	256
<small>BB</small>	Audiovector Mi 3 Signature	2,320	Smooth and beautifully balanced with superb neutrality, wide dynamic range and a warm, sweet character	20,100,29	●	A-	24	●		260
	B&W Nautilus 805	1,400	A small-sounding loudspeaker dynamically, but very stylish, clean and 'unboxy', delivering loads of detail	24,42,31		A	28	●		199
<small>BB</small>	B&W 704	1,400	Cleverly tapered enclosure and external tweeter delivers superior bass and treble, with a laid-back midband	22,96,32	●	A	20	●		257
<small>BB</small>	B&W 703	2,000	Bass is immensely powerful and even, and the overall sound is lively and dynamic, though not overly smooth	23,101,36	●	A-	20	●		260
<small>EC</small>	B&W Signature 805	2,500	Gorgeous standmount sounds delicately transparent and laid back with very superior resolution and imaging	24,42,34		A	30		●	247
<small>EC</small>	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	●	A-	34	●		183
<small>EC</small>	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	●	A-	34	●		186
<small>EC</small>	B&W Nautilus 800	11,000	Unequivocal challenge for world domination. One of the most revealing speakers around	45,120,65	●	A-	<20	●		231
<small>BB</small>	BC Acoustique ACT-A1	1,195	Exceptional focus, dynamic coherence and expression through the voice band, but bass could be more even	21,90,33	●	A+	25	●		257
	Beauhorn B2.2 Revelation	3,984	Magnificent midband and fine overall balance but limited bass is best with small-scale material	34,130,75	●	A+	80		●	244
	Dali Helicon 300	1,980	Lively and essentially sweet sound is beautifully free from boxiness, if a little lean and forward overall	21,44,36		A	24	●		260
<small>BB</small>	Dynaudio Audience 82	1,460	Bulky, with vinyl finish, but offers exceptional neutrality, bass extension, power handling and loudness potential	22,106,36	●	A	30	●		229
	Dynaudio Contour S 1.4	1,850	Sound has fine mid-to-treble coherence and neutrality, though port tuning was ill-suited to our room	19,40,36		A-	28	●		260
	Eclipse TD Lulët 307/316	1,250	Extraordinary satellite plus sub solution sounds a cut above other sub/sats. Can be expanded to multichannel	12,16,16		act	40	●		247
<small>EC</small>	Ferguson Hill FH001	6,853	Looks and sounds wonderful, with realistic dynamic expression, but needs careful amp matching and sub(s)	90,166,80	●	A+	180		●	242
<small>EC</small>	Focal-JMlab Alto Utopia Be	11,000	Attractive and beautifully balanced, with fine bass alignment and focus, low coloration and very clean top end	37,121,53	●	A-	20	●		248
<small>EC</small>	Focal-JMlab Diva Utopia Be	7,599	Lovely slimline speaker combines remarkable transparency with fine dynamics and gorgeous bass	25,110,53	●	A+	30	●		255
<small>EC</small>	Focal-JMlab Micro Utopia Be	3,500	New 'Be' version is clearly an exceptional standmount, capable of revealing the innate quality of the music	25,42,5,38		A	50	●		245
	Harbeth Super HL5	1,699	Looks old-fashioned, but classic monitor combines authority and transparency with good neutrality	33,64,31		A	30	●		233
	Living Voice Auditorium	1,700	Gloriously coherent and dynamic midband, though the top end is restrained and bass was uneven in our room	22,86,28	●	A-	30	●		247
<small>EC</small>	Living Voice Avatar	2,700	Dynamic and highly resolved, yet physically discreet design with a relaxed balance	22,104,27	●	A+	40	●		218
<small>EC</small>	Living Voice Avatar OBX-R2	4,000	Has Dynamics, tonal colour, detail, space and time resolution in spades. External crossovers require extra cabling	22,100,27	●	A+	35	●		244
	MartinLogan Mosaic	1,799	Curious hybrid construction marries many panel speaker-like attributes with moving coil simplicity	24,102,30	●	A-	46	●		257
<small>BB</small>	MartinLogan Clarity	2,498	Relatively affordable and easy to live with electrostatic hybrid with class-leading resolving power	26,135,31	●	A-	46	●		245

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Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

# STEREO SPEAKERS continued

## Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				SIZE (WHD) (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EASE-OF-DRIVE	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BB</span>	Mission Elegante e83	1,990	Uncommonly clean, agile and refined floorstander, and as elegant as the name	33,111,36	●	A-	44	●	257
	Naim Ariva	1,275	Cute and discreet floorstander has superb bass and a wide dynamic range, but it could be smoother and sweeter	23,88,31	●	A	25	●	259
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Naim SL-2	4,995	Delivers magnificent musical analysis and communication skills in a notably discrete physical package	28,103,33	●	A-	20	●	232
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Naim NBL	6,925	Elegant, large floorstander is exceptionally informative, with an awesome dynamic range and dry, forward balance	29,116,47	●	A-	20	●	200
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Neat Ultimatum MFS	2,995	Wonderful five-driver standmount sounds bigger than it looks. Very spacious and informative	22,38,37		A+	25	●	241
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Neat Ultimatum MF9	8,500	Superb musical communicator with splendidly deep and agile bass and fine open neutrality	22,150,40	●	A-	20	●	226
	PMC LB1	1,150	Still fully competitive eight years after our original review, this genuine compact monitor is now a modern classic	18,53,26		A-	40	●	199
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BB</span>	PMC FB1+	1,625	Nicely proportioned floorstander has a sweet top and a beautifully natural, open and restrained midband	20,100,30	●	A	20	●	260
	PMC OB1	2,450	Genuinely deep bass and lovely overall neutrality, though mid could have more tension and bass more punch	20,103,33	●	A	20	●	243
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	PMC IB2	6,150	Stunning in an understated way, this speaker creeps up on you and hooks you with its transparency and power	33,74,47		A-	25	●	237
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	ProAc Response D25	2,995	The traditional ProAc high-end detail mixed with greater efficiency and more pace - a splendid speaker	22,107,25	●	A+	20	●	254
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BB</span>	Rega R9	2,498	This subtle, laid back but very informative performer has a very superior dynamic range, especially in the bass	17,103,39	●	A	20	●	256
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BB</span>	Ruark Talisman III	1,499	No bass demon, but a sophisticated and agile speaker epitomising Ruark's design ideals	22,84,31	●	A	22	●	259
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Sonus Faber Cremona A.	2,149	Standmount 'Auditor' version of the Cremona makes a soundstage bigger and better than its size suggests	19,35,32		A	48	●	246
	Spendor S6e	1,495	Combines deep, powerful bass with an attractively open midband, but perhaps too much restraint up top	30,88,19	●	A+	23	●	257
	Spendor S9e	2,895	An improvement on the original S9 - very entertaining at high levels with a fabulously open and weighty bass	24,101,38	●	A+	40	●	256
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Tannoy Dimension TD8	4,000	This stylish speaker is a splendid all-rounder, with fine dynamics, precise imaging and minimal coloration	31,86,30	●	A-	25	●	240
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Tannoy Dimension TD10	5,000	Extremely competent and rhythmic speaker, a futureproof supertweeter and detail to die for	35,101,37	●	A-	38	●	215
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Tannoy Dimension TD12	6,500	Art Deco-inspired style, plus magnificent headroom and genuine monitoring neutrality - a tour de force	42,126,41	●	A-	23	●	225
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Tannoy Yorkminster	9,000	Deliciously delicate and expressive at low listening levels, it still has massive headroom when your in the mood	62,102,45	●	A+	20	●	255
	Totem Hawk	1,900	Beautifully refined compact floorstander. Smooth and transparent, but dynamics might have more grip	17,91,25	●	A-	20	●	260
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BB</span>	Totem Forest	2,390	Low sensitivity but wonderfully open neutrality, at heart a beautifully communicative and musical loudspeaker	20,90,27	●	A	25	●	247
	Triangle Naia	1,900	Exciting, vivid and communicative, but also a bit untidy and uneven, the Naia is a whole lot of fun	23,119,32	●	A-	25	●	247
	Vandersteen 2Ce Signature	1,990	Very superior midband neutrality, impressive freedom from boxiness and splendid stereophony. A classic	41,109,26	●	A-	30	●	229
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Wilson Benesch Curve	5,000	Much (but not all) of the ACT's performance in a much more compact and affordable package	23,91,37	●	A	28	●	254
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Wilson Benesch Discovery	5,500	Innovative three-way with built-in stand, combines great subtlety with weight and headroom	23,47,38	●	A-	45	●	212
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Wilson Benesch ACT	8,400	Superb enclosure gives uncanny freedom from 'boxiness'. Well balanced, but top end might be sweeter	23,108,37	●	A	20	●	252
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Wilson Benesch Chimera	15,000	Elegant with lovely sonic delicacy and plenty of weight too. Works best at low levels, but a difficult load to drive	24,145,55	●	A-	20	●	234

# AV SPEAKERS

Speaker solutions for multichannel surround sound



Multichannel speaker systems have a front left/right (L/R) stereo pair, a centre or dialogue channel, two (5.1) or four (7.1) surround speakers and often a subwoofer. For best results, each of these speakers bar the sub should be identical. The problem is that few surround systems are dedicated to music and perform a home cinematic role as well, meaning the centre speaker has to sit above or below a video

monitor. Centre channels are usually wide and short for this reason.

This should not be a barrier to great surround for music and movies however, as many brands make centre channels with a very close sound to their L/R designs.

### Music vs movies

High-resolution SACD and DVD-A music recordings tend to be mastered with

surround speakers in the ITU standard position which is as far behind the listener as the front channels are in front. 5.1 movie soundtracks tend to place surround channels not so far behind and to the side of listeners. Usually, practical limitations will dictate a limited range of placement options, but if you are a dedicated music fan, check out the ITU set-up regulations in the booklet supplied with SACD discs.

## SET-UP

Ideally you should set up surround speakers with as much care as you would stereo systems, but practical issues tend to have a significant bearing on surround and centre speaker placement. Surround channels can be floorstanding or wallmounted, and centres usually have to perch on the TV or underneath it. Given these limitations, adjust your L/R front

speakers to give the best tonal match with the centre. If there's more than just you listening, 'toe in' the speakers so that their axis crosses in front of the listening position - this gives a wider stereo image. And if there's a subwoofer it should be placed near the front speakers. Use a sound pressure metre (available from Tandy among others) to accurately set levels.

## SUBWOOFERS

Subs start working where stereo speakers run out of steam at low frequencies. The idea is to create deeper, better-controlled bass rather than more of it. They usually have onboard amplification (active) and connect to either the LFE (Low Frequency Effects) channel in a home cinema set-up or the speaker terminals in a stereo set-up.

## TOP BUYS



**B&W**  
600 S3 package £900  
Incorporates 602s, 601s and an LCR 600 centre speaker. Great in both stereo and multichannel surround modes.



**KEF**  
Q AV7 £1,300  
With the latest Uni-Q refinements, this system is astonishingly accomplished and amazing value.



**ATC**  
Concept 3 £4,877  
It might not look as flashy as some, but the quality of engineering in this ATC package ensures superb all-round performance.



**Linn**  
Akurate package £13,750  
Linn has worked wonders with its new multichannel speaker system – it's not cheap, but its performance is breathtaking.

## Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE AV SPEAKER PACKAGES

### Multichannel speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				EASE OF DRIVE	NUMBER OF SPEAKERS	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
<span>BB</span>	ATC Concept 3	4,877	Extremely engaging, revealing and musical multichannel system providing 360 degrees of full-on entertainment	A-	6	12	●	opt	255
	B&W 300 package	900	An excellent compromise between the requirements of music and those of home cinema (inc. subwoofer)	A	6	27	●		241
<span>BB</span>	B&W 600 S3 (602/601/LCR 600)	900	Unquestionably delivers the sonic goods. High-quality drivers in standmount enclosures	A	5	22	●		224
	Castle CAV Sterling	1,250	Lovely real wood veneers. Sound has fine dynamic drive and expression, but can sound a little hard	A	5	28		●	224
	Dynaudio Audience 42 package	1,142	Multichannel package for hi-fi purists with real authority and imaging, but needs subwoofer for full-bore movie sound	A-	5	53	●		241
	Final Sound Electrostatic system	4,875	Slim, attractive, electrostatic panels have clever connections, limited loudness but a breathtaking transparency	A-	6	20	●		251
	Focal-JMLab Electra package	3,017	Bold, solid system, tremendous consistency and easy to expand with an added subwoofer	A	5	50	●		232
<span>BB</span>	KEF Q AV7	1,300	With latest Uni-Q refinements, this system is astonishingly accomplished and amazing value	A+	5	35	●		232
<span>EC</span>	Linn Akurate (242/212/225/221)	13,750	An extremely capable system that offers new insights into the potential for multichannel audio	A-	6	18	●		253
	Mirage Omni 2	2,650	Dark tonality, but superb imagery makes this an excellent all-round choice	A	5	30	●		232
<span>BB</span>	Mission m5 package	1,450	Main m52 is a clean, attractive full-range stereo speaker, while the m5as sub does big bass for movie fans	A	6	28	●		241
	Mordaunt-Short Declaration 500	1,600	Good value vinyl THX Select package with Power Towers. Good authority, but must be 5.1-connected	A	5	25		●	210
	PMC FB1/TB2	2,485	Classy, if bulky and pricey, package has good transparency, coherence and weight	A	5	20		●	210
	Rega Jura/Ara/Senta	938	Classy real wood package does a good all-round job, but sounds bright and might have more surround weight	A	5	25		●	210

**SPECS KEY** **EASE OF DRIVE** How much power the amplifier needs (approximately) to drive the loudspeaker effectively: **A+** 25 watts plus **A** 50 watts plus **A-** 100 watts plus.  
**NUMBER OF SPEAKERS** The amount of individual loudspeakers in the package. **BASS FROM** How low the speaker goes, the smaller the number the deeper the bass.  
**FREE SPACE** The speakers work best away from wall(s). **CLOSE TO WALL** The speakers will work best when up against a wall (but avoid corners).

## Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE SUBWOOFERS

### Bass speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS			
				SIZE WxHxD (CM)	POWER (W)	ISSUE NUMBER	
	B&W PV1	950	Gorgeously styled sub shakes the air but not the floor, delivering a very clean sound with negligible coloration	29,34,35	500	20	259
<span>EC</span>	B&W ASW850	2,000	Does all the things subwoofers should do with music and movies alike, but transparently and seamlessly	53,56,52	1000	18	246
	Monitor Audio ASW100	300	For the price, this compact subwoofer performs particularly well	32,32,34	120	27	225
<span>BB</span>	REL Q150E	500	Great value compact 'cube' sub adds genuine weight and drive thanks to superior filtering	29,32,33	150	20	239
<span>BB</span>	REL Stampede	550	Few subs at this price match the Stampede's subtlety and ease of integration. Much more hi-fi than AV	28,40,29	100	18	257
<span>BB</span>	REL Strata 5	700	Highly musical sub that integrates well but the REL Stampede offers near-identical performance for less money	32,46,33	150	18	257
	REL Storm III	900	Excellent sub with powerful, detailed and deep bass. Comprehensive facilities, including flexible filter adjustment	42,62,33	150	18	225
<span>EC</span>	REL Stadium III	1,500	It's a bulky piece of furniture, but offers superior filtering as well as an ability to delve deep into the bass nether regions	59,56,39	200	16	217
	Titan Saturn	800	Very bulky sub has curious styling, but decent filtering gives good weight and headroom	72,48,72	200	20	239

**SPECS KEY** **SIZE WxHxD (CM)** Width, height and depth of one cabinet in centimetres. **POWER (W)** How many watts the onboard amplifier of active models delivers  
**BASS FROM** How low the sub goes, the smaller the number the deeper the bass.

*Do you want to choose your hifi or home cinema system, in a comfortable and relaxing environment...?*

*Do you want friendly and impartial advice ( and a cup of tea) ...?*

*Do you want to buy your system based on what you hear, and see, and not what somebody tells you...?*

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**Nobody else** in these areas carries all the following major hifi brands:

Apollo, Arcam(Diva/FMJ), Ash Design, Atacama, **Atlas** (spkr cables & interconnects) B&W, **Chord Company**, **Creek**, **Cyrus**, Denon, Epos, **Exposure**, **Genelec**, **Anthony Gallo Acoustics**, Harman Kardon, Infinity, Iso Tek, KEF (including **Reference**), Linn Products(including Knekt), **MJ Acoustics**, Meridian, Michell, **Mirage**, Mission, Musical Fidelity, NAD, **Naim**, Ortofon, Pioneer, **PMC**, **Primare**, **Proac**, Project, Pure, QED(including Systemline), Quad, Quadraspire, REL, Rotel, Sennheiser, Soundstyle, **Spendor**, Stands Unique, **Tag McLaren**, Wharfedale, Yamaha.

**Nobody else** in these areas carries all the following major Home Cinema products:

DVD players: Arcam & **FMJ**, **Cyrus**, Denon, Harman Kardon, Meridian, Rotel, **Tag McLaren**, Yamaha,

Processors: **Arcam FMJ AV8**, **Cyrus**, **Lexicon**, Linn, Meridian, Rotel, **Tag McLaren**.

Amplifiers: Arcam/**FMJ**, **Bryston**, **Cyrus**, Denon, Harman Kardon, **Lexicon**, **Naim**, Rotel, **Tag McLaren**, Yamaha.

Display devices: Plasma screens from Loewe, Panasonic, Pioneer and **Yamaha**. Televisions/LCD: Loewe.

Projectors: **Barco(CRT/DLP)**, **Sim (DLP)**, **Yamaha(DLP/LCD)** Screens: **Stewart/Draper/Vutec** ,

Video Processing: **Faroudja**, **I-Scan**, **Key Digital**, **Lumagen**, **Tag**. Control systems: **Crestron**, Lutron lighting.

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# HEADPHONES

For your ears only



Headphones come in several varieties and some are designed for particular usage. The majority of 'cans' use dynamic cone and coil-type drive units and can be used with anything from a personal stereo to a dedicated amplifier. Other types also exist, most significantly electrostatics that use a charged panel membrane to produce a distinctly refined sound. These are supplied with their own dedicated amplifiers, which tends to increase the price.

Cans are split into several types. There are open and closed-back designs, the latter being best for noisy (or noise sensitive) environments as they minimise leakage and intrusion. Open-back types tend to have a more open, less 'in-head' sound. There are also three variants of earpad design: circumaurals enclose the ear and press on your head, supra-aurals press on

the ear and intra-aurals sit in the ear and are particularly popular with personal stereo users.

### Getting the best from your cans

Getting a good result with headphones is not quite as straightforward as it should be. Merely plugging them into the output on your CD player or amp will not give particularly engaging results unless you are very lucky. If you are planning on serious listening, invest in a dedicated amp – the increase in dynamics is not in the least bit subtle. A variety of models are made and prices start at around £80 for a QED, a little more for designs from, say, Creek or Musical Fidelity. And if you're really into cans, look up the valve-powered Earmax.

## Our favourite HEADPHONES

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Stereo headphones

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	ELECTROSTATIC	SUPRA-AURAL	CIRCUMAURAL	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	WEIGHT (g)	3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR	ISSUE NUMBER
	AKG K44	20	Lively, enjoyable and remarkably detailed: a bargain			●		●	190	●	219
	AKG K270 Studio	129	Pro oriented design which is very transparent and great with acoustic material			●		●	270		230
	AKG K1000	600	Neutral, analytical and completely out of the head sound, suitable for connection to speaker outputs only				●		270		244
	Audio Technica ATH-D40fs	105	Detailed and involving sound with a professional 'studio' quality appeal			●		●	250		194
	Beyerdynamic DT990	160	Impeccable balance, very extended bass and treble, and bags of detail place this model ahead of the pack			●	●		250		245
	Grado SR-60	90	For sheer musical enjoyment these are hard to beat. Retro styling may not be to everyone's taste		●				200		194
	Grado SR-80	110	Not perhaps as neutral as some but they communicate well and that's the point of the exercise		●				200		230
	Philips HP890	70	A remarkably sophisticated and very comfortable headphone			●	●		330		219
	Sennheiser HD590	160	Assured and confident headphone with very low coloration and great comfort			●	●		270		205
	Sennheiser HD650	300	Astonishing resolution and hardly less impressive tonal balance make this a true hi-fi experience			●	●		260		252
	Sony MDR-CD480	40	Generally neutral and nicely detailed – comfortable too			●	●		250		219
	Stax SRS-2020 Basic Sys. II	349	Luxury option at its price, but the sound delivery is five-star quality all the way	●		●	●		295		205

**SPECS KEY** **ELECTROSTATIC** Uses electrostatic film instead of more common cone or dome dynamics. **SUPRA-AURAL** Earpads sit on ear rather than around it. **CIRCUMAURAL** Earpads rest on the head around the ears. **OPEN BACK** Vented capsules let sound in and out. **CLOSED BACK** Sealed capsules. **WEIGHT** In grams. **3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR** Allows connection to personal stereos, computers etc

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Olsons new *Sound Fantastic* range of units are specifically designed for both the home and professional hi-fi audio markets.

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The Hidden Hi-Fi Store



# CABLES



## Wires to hook your system together



Hi-fi cables come in two varieties: interconnects and speaker cables.

Analogue interconnects come in preset lengths, generally with RCA (phono) plugs attached, though some equipment uses XLR connectors for balanced connection – this can be sonically advantageous, especially over longer runs. Speaker cable is commonly sold by the metre and can be used without plugs or can

be fitted with screw or solder-on types.

Choosing cables is not quite as straightforward as it might seem. One problem is that components interact with the cables you use and this often results in audible effects, but there are few cables that are fundamentally incompatible with any components, and we recommend the advice of a good dealer. In any case, you should look to spend as much as you can afford.

Digital cables come in two flavours: electrical and optical. In most instances electrical varieties sound better than optical, given the choice, but optical cables may be a better bet over long runs (10m+). Optical inputs/outputs usually use Toslink connectors, while most electrical types use RCA plugs, but some opt for BNC connection instead – check your components before you buy.

## Our favourite CABLES

**BB** BEST BUY **ES** EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Interconnects and speaker cables

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS				ISSUE NUMBER	
				STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER		DIGITAL CABLE TYPE
<b>ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS</b>									
<b>ES</b>	Avid Black Reference SCT	700	Rich, slightly dark sound that is beguiling and highly informative		●				256
	Black Rhodium Illusion	77	An upfront, lively, exciting cable which still manages subtly when needed. Slight coloration though		●	●			248
<b>ES</b>	Black Rhodium Opera	297	Very open, clear and detailed sound, with excellent extension at frequency extremes		●		●		260
	Chord Company Signature	499	Silver plated, triple screened. Some granularity but great resolving ability, a good match for Chord Signature loudspeaker cable		●	●			255
<b>BB</b>	Chord Company Chorus	200	Very even-handed balance with notably extended bass	●		●			259
<b>BB</b>	Ecosse The Composer	30	A high degree of realism and delicacy, and a fantastic price (0.8m)	●		●			211
	Ecosse The Diva	100	Very good performance in all areas, with particularly fine, tuneful, bass (0.8m)	●		●			224
	Kimber Silver Streak	242	Not the cheapest around, but more than justifies itself with terrific poise and balance of virtues	●		●			241
<b>BB</b>	Kimber Timbre	83	Typical Kimber construction with ditto sound – clean, extended and detailed	●		●			248
<b>BB</b>	Monster Interlink 400 Mk2	70	Really lively and enjoyable sound	●		●			224
<b>BB</b>	Townshend DCT100	100	Unusual construction with copper strip conductors, giving very detailed sound, but just an occasional hint of hardness		●	●			241
<b>ES</b>	Townshend Isolda DCT	300	Unusual construction and cryogenically treated too: whatever the reason, a remarkably capable wire		●	●			234
<b>BB</b>	van den Hul The Bay C5	45	Terrific detail, nice balance – a great cable	●		●			224
<b>BB</b>	van den Hul The Well	85	Hybrid cable with carbon-fibre conductors added. Very slight bass coloration does little to detract from fine performance	●		●			241
<b>BB</b>	van den Hul D102 Mk III	79	Hybrid conductors (carbon and copper) and intelligent construction give strong bass and excellent detail	●		●			234
<b>BB</b>	Wireworld Solstice 5	70	A cable with all-round appeal – treble is slightly 'dark' but bass is excellent and the overall balance very good indeed	●		●			259
<b>DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS</b>									
<b>ES</b>	Kimber Select KS2020	629	Provides a subtle but rewarding lift in musicality with any DAC, justifying the price		●	●		E	260
<b>BB</b>	QED Qunex P75	25	A superbly capable interconnect that's highly detailed and well balanced			●		E	207
<b>BB</b>	QED Qunex SR75	50	Lots of bass and good clear midrange and treble at a sensible price	●		●		E	234
<b>BB</b>	Supra Trico	40	Very well made digital/video cable which noticeably improves the sound of a cheap DAC	●		●		E	241
<b>BB</b>	Supra ZAC	32	High grade fibre and quality plugs add up to a noticeable improvement over giveaway optical leads					O	259
<b>BB</b>	van den Hul Optocoupler II	49	Noticeably has the edge over other optical leads, but still second best to electrical types					O	234
<b>SPEAKER CABLES PRICE PER METRE</b>									
	Black Rhodium S300	18	Tight, precise and extended bass makes this a great cable for rock 'n' roll	●		●			241
	Chord Company Signature	117	Dynamic, solid sounding cable, but it's bulky and not very tractable	●		●			255
	Ecosse Reference MS2.3	23	Favours excitement over refinement: can be slightly bass-shy, but plenty of life	●		●			227
<b>ES</b>	Electrofluidics 20/20	45	Excellent bass extension and very fine performance elsewhere – one of the best all-round cables available		●	●			241
<b>BB</b>	Kimber 4PR	5	Considering the price, this cable's very slight dryness is forgivable when everything else is so right	●		●			192
<b>BB</b>	Kimber 8VS	18	Beautifully full, open and transparent sound right across the board. Price for 1m terminated pair	●		●			227
	Kimber 8PR	21	Bass very full, just occasionally a touch flabby, but detailed and sweet upper frequencies make this a good value cable	●		●			241
<b>BB</b>	Kimber 8TC	39	Very capable in all areas, particularly good at imaging and with firm bass. Price for 5m terminated pair	●		●			203
<b>BB</b>	QED Silver Anniversary	5	A few minor flaws, but overall performance is very assured for this price	●		●			192
<b>BB</b>	QED X-Tube XT300	10	A natural and well controlled sounding cable that's cost effective for mid-priced systems		●	●			234
	QED X-Tube XT400	20	A practical cable with a liking for lively music, but slightly less assured with subtle classical grooves	●		●			248
<b>ES</b>	Townshend Isolda DCT	50	Cryogenically treated 'impedance matched' cable with stabilising components added: great sound all-round		●	●			241
<b>BB</b>	Wireworld Solstice 5	20	Unfriendly to handle, but makes up for it with very assured sound – heaps of bass and great insight	●		●			248

**SPECS KEY** **STRANDED** Cable has a number of (usually) twisted strands to conduct the signal. **SOLID CORE** Cable has one or more individually insulated strands to conduct the signal. **COPPER** Material used to form the conducting element of the cable. **SILVER** Alternative material used to form the conducting element of the cable. **DIGITAL CABLE TYPE** E – electrical, O – optical. Cables are one metre length unless otherwise stated.

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# STANDS AND SUPPORTS

## Equipment racks and speaker stands



If you want to get the most from your source and amp components, it's important to consider good quality support. Dedicated equipment supports are racks and tables made specifically to hold hi-fi gear, and the best can have a profoundly positive effect on sound

because, for example, they can help to isolate kit from ground-borne vibrations and mechanical or electrical interference. Equally, if you own a pair of small 'bookshelf' or 'standmount' speakers, it's important to place them on good quality, purpose-built speaker stands.

## Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS

### Equipment supports

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				HEIGHT	TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF SHELVES	SHELF TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
	Avik Furniture A4	350	Good sound and stylish Scandinavian looks at an affordable price	80.5	47			4	MDF	193
	Alphason A5-G	399	Nice looking, very solid and practical with a pretty well balanced sound, but lacks a little detail	80	66,46			5	Glass	247
	Atacama Equinox	280	Stable, modular design with style. Excellent bass transients and a fresh design concept	81	50,50	●		4	Glass	217
<span>BB</span>	Audiophile Base	615	Price is justified by its earth-shattering sonic abilities – a worthy upgrade	82	43			4	MDF	193
	Avid Iososshelf	1,100	An enthusiast's equipment support stand free from coloration, if a little fiddly to set up	87.5	48			5	MDF	193
<span>BB</span>	Clearlight Audio Aspekt	600	Stunning neutrality and detail from a well-damped design. Its performance makes the price tag good value	75	53,5,45			4	MDF	217
	Custom Design Aspect 650	270	Smart looks and practical thanks to adjustable shelves. Sound is fair with some loss of detail	66	46	●		4	Glass	206
<span>BB</span>	Custom Design Concept 400	700	Slightly drab looks, but great sound and efficient use of space ('Acoustic' version tested – standard version £300)	74	48,40			4	Metal	247
	Isobluie 'The Stand'	460	Attractive modular design that's as easy on the ear as on the eye	47	48,40			4	MDF	247
<span>EC</span>	Naim Fraim	1,825	Pricey but very classy looking and sounding, with modular flexibility	96	45,34			5	Glass	232
	Quadraspire Q4 Reference	480	Excellent performance from the school of wobbly racks. Natural sounding and plenty of detail	51.5	49,39.5			4	MDF	217
	Russ Andrews Torlyte Rack	988	Attractive modular system made of very light Torlyte: a touch of added warmth is its only vice	68	54,49			4	Torlyte	240
<span>BB</span>	Sound Organisation Z560	195	Excellent value rack, five shelves too! Well balanced and under 200 quid!	92	50,40			5	Glass	217
<span>BB</span>	Standesign Design 4	190	An all-in-one support at a budget price, with good sonic performance	88.5	50.8	●		4	Glass	193
<span>EC</span>	Townshend Seismic Stand 2/5	1,100	Multi-shelf air-suspension support which isolates like few others. Recommended	92	58,45			5	MDF	24

## Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE SPEAKER STANDS

### Speaker stands

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				HEIGHT	TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF LEGS	ISSUE NUMBER
<span>BB</span>	Atacama Nexus 6	60	An excellent all-round performer and a genuine hi-fi bargain	60,50	14,5,18	●		3	202
	Custom Design RS 300 MkII	100	A solid stand improving on the original, with better focus and detail	61,56,51	16,5,18	●		2	202
	hne Cableway	395	Looks great, sounds great, so start saving! Clean and sweet, and neutrality is exceptional with orchestral material	63	17,20	●		1	220
<span>BB</span>	Kudos S50	159	Formidable bass with real authority, and a wide dynamic range across a broad bandwidth	61	15,20	●		1	220
	Partington Ansa 60	90	Elegant flat-packer 'disappears' sonically; restrained but neutral and coherent	62	18,15	●		4	232
<span>BB</span>	Partington Dreadnought	100	Fully welded high-class engineering gives a very clean, open sound at a sharp price	61	17,15	●	●	5	220
	Sound Organisation Z522	95	Very hefty build for the price helps to deliver a solid sound with good authority and drive	60	16	●		4	220
	Townshend Seismic Sink	499	Unique inflatable plinth that works wonders with decent floorstanders, as well as standmounted speakers	4	38,48			0	202

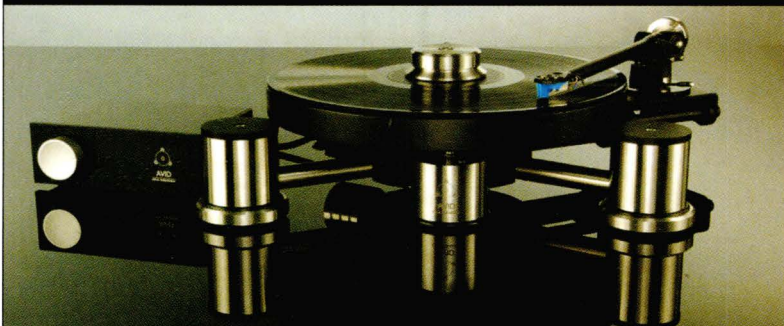
**EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS SPECS KEY** HEIGHT Of complete stand. **TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)** Width by depth of the supporting platform(s). Single figures indicate a square platform.

**WELDED** As opposed to bolt-together construction. **NUMBER OF SHELVES** To put your kit on (different configurations are often available). **SHELF TYPE** Material that shelves are made of.

**SPEAKER STANDS SPECS KEY** HEIGHT Of each stand, not including spikes. **TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)** Width by depth of platform. Single figures indicate a square platform. Speakers generally overhang top plates.

**FILLABLE** The stand can be mass-loaded with sand and/or lead to stop ringing. **WELDED** As opposed to bolt-together construction. **NUMBER OF LEGS** That support the stand.

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# GLOSSARY

## TECHNICAL TERMS

**5.1-CHANNEL AUDIO** Six discrete channels, typically front left and right, centre, surround left and right, and LFE (Low Frequency Effects) for a subwoofer.

**BALANCE** Most loudspeakers have a characteristic frequency balance resulting from emphasising parts of the audio range and/or de-emphasising others.

**BASS** The lowest three octaves of the audio band – hence 'low bass' refers to the bottom octave (20-40Hz); 'mid-bass' the middle octave (40-80Hz); and 'upper bass' the 80-160Hz octave.

**BI-AMP** (sometimes tri-amp) Loudspeakers equipped with separate access terminals to each drive unit can be driven by separate (matching) power amplifiers for each driver.

**BI-WIRE** (sometimes tri-wire) Loudspeakers with separate access terminals to each driver can be driven by separate cable runs between the amp and each driver.

**CD-R** Recordable CD that cannot be erased, though discs that have not been completely filled can have tracks added until the disc is finalised.

**CD-RW** Re-writable or re-recordable CD, incompatible with older CD players.

**CLASS A** The operation of an amplifying stage or device in which current always flows, as opposed to Class B, where some of the devices are effectively turned off some of the time. Class A tends to have the advantage of offering lower distortion while Class B tends to generate less heat.

**CLASS AB** Most practical amps operate in Class A for the first fraction of a watt and Class B thereafter.

**CLIPPING** An amplifier's output waveform is 'clipped' if the volume is advanced too far and no more 'volts' are available to sustain ever-increasing power levels. Distortion increases dramatically at this point.

**CLOCK** Any electronic oscillator that is used to generate a timing reference signal. Used to synchronise the data being taken from a disc.

**CROSSOVER** A simple electrical network which divides the full bandwidth signal received from the power amplifier, apportioning appropriate parts of the spectrum to the various drive units.

**DAB** (digital audio broadcasting). Digital radio using frequencies in the band 217.5 - 230MHz. Broadcasters use varying degrees of compression and offer a broad range of programming.

**DAC** or Digital-to-Analogue Converter. The stage in any digital component at which incoming digital data is used to reconstruct a recognisable analogue (music) waveform.

**DOLBY DIGITAL** A compressed digital audio format that typically contains five or more entirely discrete channels, eg 7.1 EX where side and rear channels are used.

**DOLBY PRO-LOGIC, DPL** Forerunner to DD that 'steers' information to the front L/R, centre and mono surround channels via an analogue matrix.

**DRIVE UNIT/DRIVER** A transducer which converts electrical energy into acoustic energy, eg bass driver, tweeter.

**DSD** (direct stream digital) The coding format used for SACD offers a frequency response of over 100kHz and a dynamic range over 120dB, it has over four times the data capacity of CD.

**DSP** or Digital Signal Processor. Integrated circuit that handles the decoding of digital audio streams. In 5.1 processors it separates the left from right and front from rear while managing the various bass options.

**DTS** or Digital Theatre Sound Competitor to Dolby Digital with a reduced 41 compression ratio that, ostensibly, promises higher quality.

**DVD-AUDIO** High-resolution variant on DVD offering up to 192kHz bandwidth and 24-bit dynamic range. Discs are compatible with standard DVD players.

**ELECTRICAL DIGITAL** Any digital connection that uses an electrical cable rather than optical. Includes the balanced ('AES/EBU') interface.

**FILTERS** Filters are intrinsic to digital audio, both analogue and digital. These are often very sophisticated in design, and in total they probably have rather more to do with the 'personality' of CD player sound than most other factors.

**FREQUENCY RESPONSE** The range of frequencies, from low to high, which a loudspeaker will reproduce.

**IMPEDANCE** With speakers, the complex electrical load that a loudspeaker presents to the amplifier which is driving it.

**JITTER** An insidious distortion specific to digital audio caused by the clock, used to regulate the conversion of data into analogue audio, being imprecise.

**KBPS** (Kilobits per second) Digital data rate measurement system used primarily with highly compressed formats such as MP3, DAB etc. The higher the amount, the better the quality.

**LINE LEVEL** Practically every modern source component (except phono cartridges) gives an output in the region of 1-2V, referred to as 'line level'. It follows that all inputs labelled 'CD', 'tuner', 'aux' or 'tape' are designed for this input level and are thus interchangeable.

**LOSSLESS COMPRESSION** A method of reducing the number of data bits (density) without corrupting the original description of the musical signal.

**LOSSY COMPRESSION** Reduction in data density by recourse to a psycho-acoustical model that predicts what is, and what is not, 'audible' within a sequence of data.

**MIDRANGE** The middle three or so octaves of the audio band, where the ear

is most sensitive, covering the approximate frequency span from 160Hz up to 3kHz.

**MP3** (MPEG layer 3) Lossy compression format for digital audio that drastically reduces data content in order to squeeze music through internet connections or allow hundreds of CDs to be stored on a hard disc.

**OUTPUT IMPEDANCE** A measure of resistance to alternating current, a source with low output impedance (below 100 ohms) helps ensure compatibility with most amplifiers, even with long interconnect cables.

**PCM** (pulse code modulation) The digital coding system for analogue waveforms used for CD and DVD. Quality is limited by the oversample and bit rates used – CD is 44.1kHz/16-bit while DVD-A is capable of 192kHz/24-bit.

**PRESENCE BAND** Critical section of the audio band at the point where midrange and treble meet.

**QUANTISATION NOISE** A form of distortion or noise resulting from errors in the description of the musical signal by the digital code.

**SACD** (Super Audio CD) was launched in 1999 and is a Sony/Philips format based on DSD coding that offers high resolution stereo and multichannel sound from hybrid discs that can also be played on ordinary CD drives.

**SAMPLE RATE** The rate at which the musical waveform is sliced up into discrete chunks. For CD this is 44.1kHz or once every 0.023msec. DVD will also support 48kHz and 96kHz.

**SENSITIVITY** The relative loudness that a speaker generates for a specific voltage input. Expressed in decibels per watt (dB/W).

**THX** Standards system for home cinema set-ups which includes amplifier power and speaker dispersion characteristics. THX Ultra is more stringent than THX Select.

**TOSLINK** The proprietary name given by Toshiba to the optical fibre signal transmission system it invented for consumer applications.

**TRANSISTOR/MOSFET** The two main types of power semiconductor used in solid state amplifier output stages.

**TREBLE** High frequencies, the top end of the audio band, ie above 3kHz.

**TWEETER** Treble driver.

**TWO/THREE-WAY** Loudspeaker crossovers split the signal into two or three frequency bands, a two-way speaker can have more than two drive units.

**WATTS** (per channel) The watt is the unit of electrical power and the WPC rating is the maximum average undistorted power that an amp can deliver to a typical speaker. However, speaker sensitivity variations can make more difference than amplifier output.

## DESCRIPTIVE TERMS

**AGGRESSIVE** Forward and bright sonic character.

**AMBIENCE** The impression of an acoustical space, such as the performing hall in which a recording was made.

**ANALYTICAL** Highly detailed.

**ARTICULATE** Intelligibility of voice(s) and instruments and the interactions between them.

**ATTACK** The leading edge of a note and the ability of a system to reproduce the attack transients in music.

**BALANCE** Essentially tonal balance, the degree to which one aspect of the sonic spectrum is emphasised above the rest. Also channel balance, the relative level of the left and right stereo channels.

**BODY** Fullness of sound, with particular emphasis on upper bass. Opposite of thin.

**BOXY** The sound of a loudspeaker with audible cabinet resonances.

**BRIGHT** A sound that emphasises the upper midrange/lower treble.

**DARK** A tonal balance that tilts downwards with increasing frequency. Opposite of bright.

**DECAY** The fadeout of a note, it follows the attack.

**DEFINITION** (or resolution) The ability of a component to reveal the subtle information that is fundamental to high fidelity sound.

**DEPTH** (of image) The perception of music being reproduced behind the loudspeakers and inhabiting a reproduction of the acoustic space of the original recording.

**DETAIL** The most delicate elements of the original sound and those which are the first to disappear with lesser equipment.

**DRY** A sound that is devoid of 'juice', which usually comes across as fine-grained and lean. Also a loss of reverberation as produced by a damped environment.

**DYNAMIC** The suggestion of energy and wide dynamic range. Related to perceived speed as well as contrasts in volume both large and small.

**EUPHONIC** An appealing form of distortion that generally enhances perceived fidelity, often ascribed to the harmonic elaborations of some valve amps.

**FAST** Good reproduction of rapid transients which increase the sense of realism and 'snap'.

**FOCUS** A strong, precise sense of image projection.

**FORWARD(NESS)** Similar to an aggressive sound, a sense of the image being projected in front of the speakers and of music being forced upon the listener.

**GRAINY** A slightly raw, exposed sound which lacks finesse.

**GRIP** A sense of control and sturdiness in the bass.

**GRUNT** See grip.

**HARD** Uncomfortable, forward, aggressive sound with a metallic tinge.

**HARSH** Grating, abrasive.

**IMAGING** (stereo) The sense that a voice or instrument is in a particular place in the room.

**JUICY** Sound that has joie de vivre, energy and life.

**LOW-LEVEL DETAIL** The quietest sounds in a recording.

**MUSICAL** or musicality. A sense of cohesion and subjective 'rightness' in the sound.

**NATURALNESS** Realism.

**OPAQUE** Unclear, lacking transparency.

**OPEN** Sound which has height and 'air', relates to clean upper midrange and treble.

**PACE** Often associated with rhythm, a strong sense of timing and beat.

**PRESENT** A sense of an instrument or voice occupying a place in the listening room.

**PRESENCE RANGE** The upper midrange.

**SEISMIC** Very low bass that you feel rather than hear.

**SIBILANCE** An emphasis of the 'S' sound, often heard on radio.

**SNAP** A system with good speed and transient response can deliver the immediacy or 'snap' of live instruments.

**SPEED** A fast system with good pace gives the impression of being right on the money in its timing.

**STURDY** Solid, powerful, robust sound.

**THICK** A lack of articulation and clarity in the bass.

**THIN** Bass light.

**TIMBRE** The tonal character of an instrument.

**TIMING** A sense of precision in tempo. See speed and pace.

**TRANSIENT** The leading edge of a percussive sound. Good transient response makes the sound as a whole more live and realistic.

**TRANSPARENCY, TRANSPARENT** A hear-through quality that is akin to clarity and reveals all aspects of detail.

**TWEAK** To tune a system or component in an attempt to get the best performance from it.

**TWEAKER** Someone who enjoys this process.

**VEILED** Loss of detail due to limited transparency.

**WARM** A fullness in the lower midrange/upper bass.

**WEIGHT** A sense of substance and underpinning produced by deep, controlled bass.

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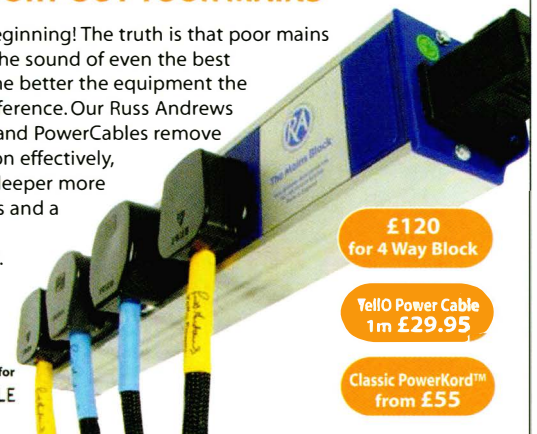


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Clearlight Audio's award-winning RDC (resonance deadening compound) has been put to good use once again in a new 'Combi Base' which can be used with their already highly regarded RDC 2, RDC 5 and Cone Cups.

For our full selection of quality audio accessories please visit our dedicated website at [www.choicebits.co.uk](http://www.choicebits.co.uk)

### SHOWCASE

#### RDC Combi Base

High quality isolation system

#### Key Features

- Suitable for all audio and AV systems
- Highly versatile configurations
- Ideal upgrade for RDC 2, RDC 5 or RDC Cone Cups
- Simple to use and install



#### RDC Combi Base

Leading players in the field of isolation products, Clearlight Audio have just launched their new Combi Base. The Combi Base is an awesome addition to Clearlight's isolation arsenal. Although simplicity itself, the strength of the Combi is its synergistic

characteristics with the other cones and cups in the RDC range. The Combi Base can be used as either a support for the RDC Cone Cups or as a cap for RDC 2 or RDC 5 cones.

Tests prove this combination gives astonishing improvements in all equipment, especially digital front-end hardware including CD and DVD players.

**Combi Base £49.95 (Qty 4)**

**RDC 5 £19.95 (Qty 4)**

**RDC 2 £29.95 (Qty 4)**

**RDC Cone Cup £19.95 (Qty 4)**

**0870 240 7228**  **www.choicebits.co.uk**

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Clearaudio Stroboscopic Light	£69.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clearaudio Deluxe Bubble Level	£21.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clearaudio Clever Record Clamp	£12.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clearaudio Quadra Record Clamp	£69.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clearlight Audio (RDC) Record Puck	£54.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
Loricraft Stroboscopic Light	£49.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
Micell Engineering Record Clamp	£22.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Compact Dynamics CD UpGrade	£14.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Ringmat The Statmat MkII	£19.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sound Improvement Disc (Model 14/15)	£17.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ultra Burn-In CD3000	£24.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Knosti Record Cleaning Fluid (1 Litre)	£14.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
L'Art du Son Record Cleaner (5Litre)	£27.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Last Stylus Cleaner	£19.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
Last Stylat Stylus Treatment	£29.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lyra SPT Stylus Cleaner	£24.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nagaoka Antistatic Record Inner Sleeves (Qty 50)	£14.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
Optrix CD Cleaner & Clarifier	£16.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
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<b>Clearlight Audio RDC Cone Cups (Qty 4)</b>	<b>£19.95</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clearlight Audio RDC 3 Cones (Qty 4)	£44.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Clearlight Audio RDC 5 Cones (Qty 4)</b>	<b>£19.95</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Clearlight Audio RDC Combi Base (Qty 4)</b>	<b>£49.95</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clearlight Audio RDC SPP Platform	£109.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
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# What, How & Where

## TO BUY YOUR HI-FI SYSTEM

Get the best system for your money by asking our Top Twenty UK specialist hi-fi dealers.

Isn't it easy to buy a new system? You read the magazine product reviews, you find out who sells the recommendations, five-star favourites or best buys at the cheapest price, you order the system, get a friend who knows his onions to install it - and live happily ever after.

This is a fairly well-trodden path but it leads to dissatisfaction, endless upgrades and a lot of wasted money. It's likely that the system will help you lose interest in music pretty rapidly. The problem is that there are more myths about hi-fi than Aesop's Fables. CD gives you perfect sound. All CD players sound the same. A £50 CD player plays high fidelity music. All magazine reviewers are experts. Big speakers are always better than small ones. More watts per channel is everything. MP3 format gives you high quality. A collection of 'Best Buy' components will be a great system. And so on and so on. All myths.

“...too many people today know the price of everything and the value of nothing.”

Oscar Wilde

### Music - the real aim

Our aim must be to buy a hi-fi system that will prove musically satisfying, reliable and deliver true value for money. If the system doesn't excite you musically you've wasted your money. What is even worse is that you may not even realise you've bought a bad egg - you'll just switch the TV on instead and your desire to listen to music will gradually diminish. Have you ever been in a pub or club where you realise it's very difficult to conduct a conversation, even to the extent of being really tiring? A poor quality system continuously distorts but I don't mean it necessarily reaches the point of audibly breaking up. With a top quality system you can play music very loudly and still hold a conversation because it's free of distortion.

A poor system is tiring to listen to even when it's played at low volume. If you want proof, go into a shoe or clothes shop where they play background 'music' and try to enjoy listening. It's odds on you'll fail.

### What and Where to buy

So where do you start. Perhaps it's better to say what you don't start with and that is *WHAT*. It's better to start with *WHERE*. There is only one way to give yourself the best chance of getting it right first time, and that's through a specialist hi-fi dealer. Now it's likely you have preconceived ideas that may put you off visiting one. Although you would welcome the advice and guidance, you don't know the technical jargon. You don't want to be talked down to. Your friend has said they only sell expensive gear and they're not interested if you don't have a big budget. They're expensive. Again, just myths. Most specialist hi-fi dealers are running their business because, above all, they love music. They spend a large portion of their time listening to music and







comparing systems to get the best possible results. They know the component combinations which don't gel together and, conversely, they know the combinations which give the best performance within a given price range. But they all also know the system must suit you.

### Buying or being sold to?

Now there's a group of long-established specialist dealers who are totally committed to putting the customer first. Their idea of 'selling' is to discuss your requirements, offer their advice, give you the best options, then play the systems for you and allow you to be the judge.


Listening to your choice of music in a peaceful, well organised demonstration room, you may be surprised and, almost certainly, relieved to discover how easy it is to hear the differences between components and between systems. You'll be able to make a clear and informed decision about what to buy. It comes down to trusting your own judgement rather than the opinion of a reviewer you've never met ...and who won't refund your money if you're not satisfied or be at the end of a phone to sort out any problem you might encounter.

The story doesn't end there. These shops won't abandon you once you've put your hand in your pocket. They won't leave you to set up the system you've selected as best you can. They'll install it in your home, make sure it sounds great, and make sure you're entirely happy with the way it works. Why? Because a high proportion of these dealers' custom comes through people who have bought from them before, either directly or by recommendation. It's vital to them to get it right for you.

### Getting the best deal

Oscar Wilde wrote "...too many people today know the price of everything and the value of nothing." Specialist retailers know that not all potential purchasers will seek them out. They tend to attract the more discerning, thoughtful customers. Let's face it, a good deal is about a great deal more than just price. After all, unless you've got money to burn, you'll be living with your new system for years. Most of these dealers offer much longer equipment guarantees than provided by the manufacturer, a very worthwhile benefit, but it also makes it in the dealer's interest to ensure high build quality and reliability. Maybe you could save a few pounds by buying piecemeal but you'll

lose out on the overall package. As far as the dealers are concerned, maybe they believe that taking care of their customers properly is a nicer way of doing business than just handing over boxes.

 Listed below are 20 of the best hi-fi shops in the country. They have been selected because they are known to do an excellent job in guiding customers towards hi-fi that will give them years of musical enjoyment and total satisfaction.

### STAR QUALITIES

#### VALUE FOR MONEY

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

#### SERVICE

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

#### FACILITIES

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

#### VERDICT

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

## OUR TOP 20 UK SPECIALIST HI-FI DEALERS

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190a New North Road  
020 7226 5500

#### **SW11 ORANGES & LEMONS**

61/63 Webbs Road, Battersea  
020 7924 2043

### SOUTH

#### **Ashford Kent**

#### **SOUNDCRAFT HI-FI**

40 High St. 01233 624441

#### **Chelmsford RAYLEIGH HI-FI**

216 Moulsham Street  
01245 265245

#### **East Grinstead**

#### **AUDIO DESIGNS**

26 High St. 01342 314569

#### **Horsham AUDIO DESIGNS**

7-9 Park Place  
01403 252255

### Brighton THE POWERPLANT

40 Church Road, Hove  
01273 775542

#### **Kingston-upon-Thames**

#### **INFIDELITY**

9 High Street Hampton Wick  
020 8943 3530

#### **Rayleigh, Essex**

#### **RAYLEIGH HI-FI**

44a High St. 01268 779762

#### **Ringwood, Hampshire**

#### **PHONOGRAPHY**

Star Lane 01425 461230

#### **Southend-on-Sea**

#### **RAYLEIGH HI-FI**

132/4 London Road  
01702 435255

#### **Southampton PHASE 3 HI-FI**

37 Bedford Place  
023 8022 8434

#### **Worthing PHASE 3 HI-FI**

213-217 Tarring Road  
01903 245577

### MIDLANDS

#### **Banbury OVERTURE**

3 Church Lane  
01295 272158

#### **Birmingham**

#### **SOUND ACADEMY**

152a High Street, Bloxwich  
01922 493499

#### **Coventry FRANK HARVEY**

163 Spon Street  
024 7652 5200

#### **Leicester CYMBIOSIS**

6 Hotel St. 0116 262 3754

### NORTH

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0161 428 7887

#### **Oldham AUDIO COUNSEL**

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0161 633 2602

#### **Nottingham**

#### **CASTLE SOUND & VISION**

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0115 9584404

### Sheffield

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0114 275 6048

#### **Warrington**

#### **CHRIS BROOKS AUDIO**

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01925 261212

#### **York SOUND ORGANISATION**

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(Read July 2004 issue of Hifi News magazine)



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LINN SONDEK LP12/ITOK	£550	£n/a
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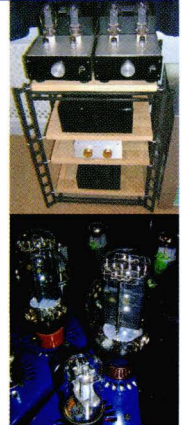
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Hi-fi by enthusiasts



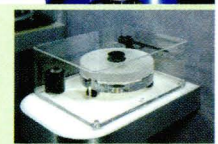
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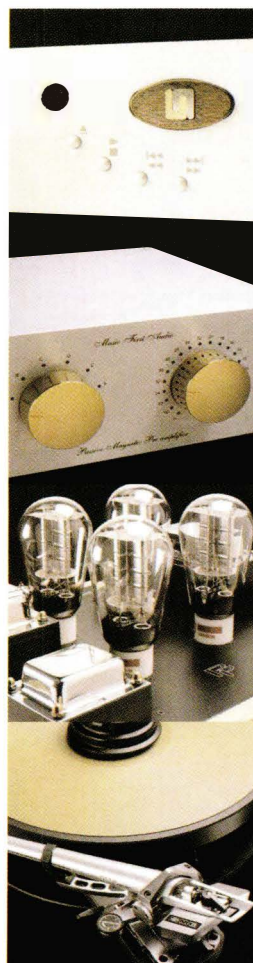
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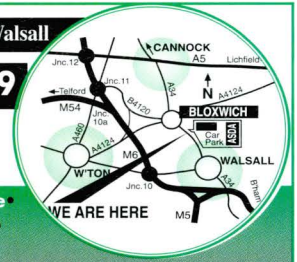
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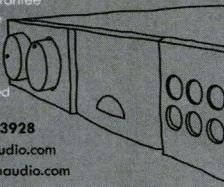
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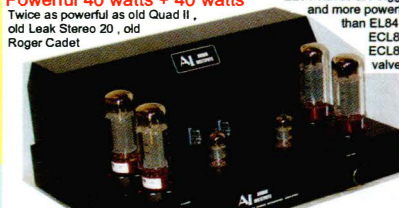
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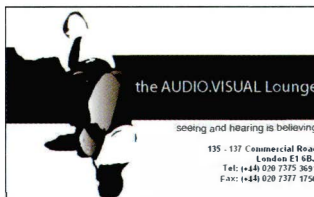
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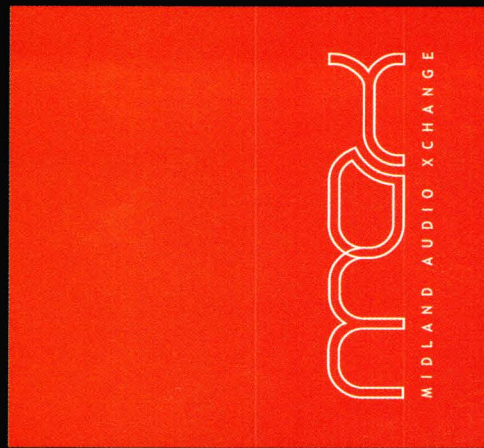
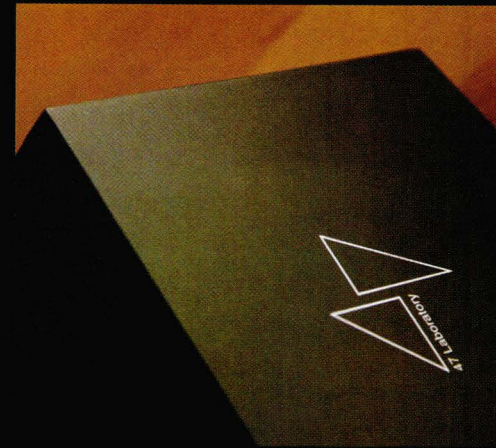
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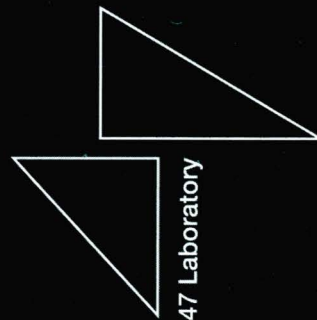
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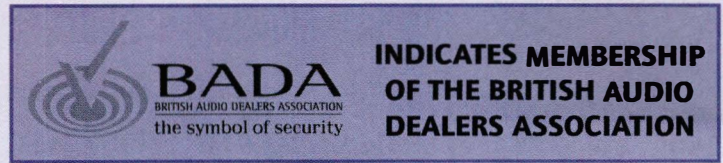
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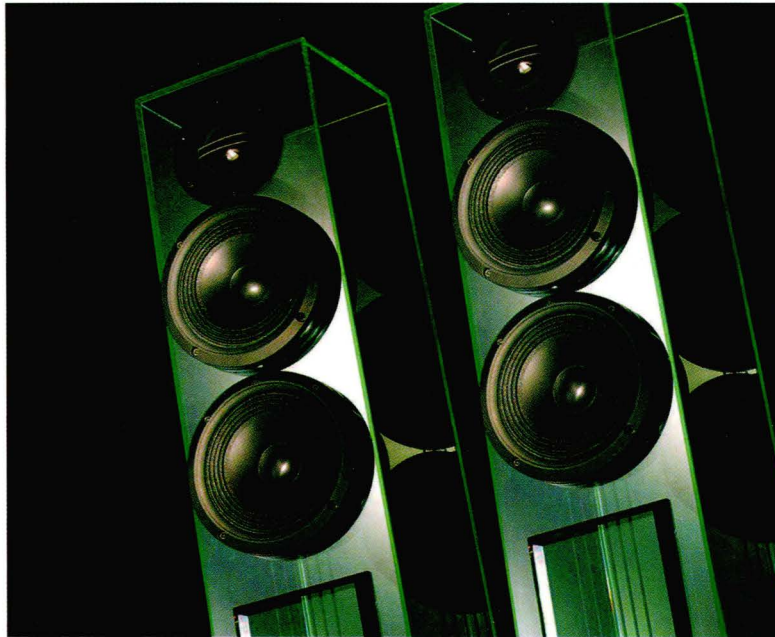
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# A-Z GUIDE TO SECOND-HAND KIT

## #03 CAMBRIDGE AUDIO

**H**istorically, Cambridge Audio isn't so much one company as two. It began in 1968 and quickly gained a reputation for high quality amps and tuners. During the digital age, it established itself as one of the format's ambassadors with CD players like the highly engineered, and expensive, CD1.

In the early 1990s, however, after financial difficulties, the name was bought by Richer Sound's sister company, Audio Partnership. The focus moved from high-end to budget, Chinese-made, kit. With an unsettled history, the brand doesn't have quite the kudos of the likes of Arcam, Linn and Naim. On the second-hand market, though, this isn't necessarily a bad thing, as prices are generally lower.

The standout products of the early years are the 16x16 CD players. Yes, that's 16-bit, and 16-times oversampling. This was achieved by piggybacking four Philips DACs together. It gave a rich, earthy sound that only the best one-bit players of the time could even begin to match. Both the CD2 and CD3 are fine machines and worth a punt if under £100. But

Below: Cambridge Audio CD4SE CD player



the cream of the crop, CD1 aside, is the rare CD3M/DAC3 two-box machine. This combined the rugged Philips CDM1 transport, complete with power supply tweaks, with a highly tweaked 16x16 DAC to great effect. Even today it still has the most beguiling

**“The only fault with the rare CD3M/DAC3 two-box player is a slowly ‘disappearing’ display.”**

mid-range, although it can sound a tad harsh in the treble against more modern machines. The Philips components last well and parts can still be found. More specific components, however, are now near-impossible to locate. That said, the only fault tends to be a slowly ‘disappearing’ display. Provided you can take this risk, a well looked after version, perhaps with a recent laser, offers a true taste of audio esoterica for around £200 or less.

One of the key products from the modern crop is the oft-overlooked A1Mk3SE. Over the years there have been countless versions of this classic little amp, but this is undoubtedly

the best. Think of it as a modern-day NAD 3020 and you won't be far wrong. The 30-watter is a sweet-sounding little thing, and avoids the harshness of its bigger brothers – the award-winning A5 included. At around £30-£50, and widely available, it's almost the

default choice for those looking for a cheap as chips starter or second system. Generally they will either work or they won't. Avoid any that don't, no matter how cheap, as the lack of output protection will probably mean blown transistors. Getting this fixed will cost as much as the amp is worth in the first place.

The perfect match for the A1Mk3SE is the CD4SE CD player. Don't confuse this with the standard CD4, which is totally different inside, and vastly inferior. It was the first of the super-budget Cambridge CD players and, in many ways, better than the later D300SE and D500SE. They used a Sony, instead of Philips, transport, and weren't as well tweaked. Today they have something of a cult following and, as such, can still command prices of up to £125. However, with excellent reliability, one at the right price (£60-£80) remains just as much a bargain as ever. **HFC**

Dominic Todd  
Next month – Celestion

## DIY CORNER SPEAKERS

Part 3 Making your shopping list...

**T**he 'shopping list' for the actual ingredients for a DIY speaker is quite short, though some extra investment in tools might be necessary to do a classy job of the presentation. The essential elements include drive units, a crossover network and an enclosure. Then there are the finer details, such as internal wiring, enclosure damping materials and terminal blocks. Grilles of some description might be on the agenda, and floorstanders ought to include four spikes.

One key element that distinguishes the DIY speaker from the commercial alternatives is the ability to choose the individual constituents from the very best. Using long-haired wool as

the main internal damping material, for example, won't be cheap, but it does hold out the possibility of genuinely superior performance. Long haired wool is not unknown among commercial speakers of course, but you won't find it in low-cost examples.

Something of the same is true of other components too. There's widespread belief that European drive units are superior to those made in the Far East. They're certainly more costly, and therefore unlikely to be found in budget speakers, but are very much the stock in trade of the DIY suppliers. And the same applies to crossover components, which have a critical effect upon speaker sound quality.



One possible difficulty lies in the fact that certain reputable European driver manufacturers are no longer supplying the DIY market. More on that next month. **HFC**

Paul Messenger

### DIY CONTACTS

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QUAD 405 Power Amplifier	£2200	£1195
CHORD SPM600	£275	£125
CHORD SPM600	£200	£114
CYRUS II	£275	£125
CYRUS Pre	£700	£345
CYRUS Power	£700	£358
COPLAND CS48 Int	£995	£596
CYRUS One Int	£195	£128
DENON PMA 250	£200	£95
DENON DR455	200	78
DENON AVR-1804 Av Rec Ex Demo	£400	£314
DNM Pre + 3 PSU	£2000	£498
DNM Pre2/PA1	£2800	£898
ELECTOR MFL Pre	£500	£148

HARMON KARDON Citation Pwr	£1200	£249
KENWOOD L07C Pre	£500	£155
KRELL K51100 Power Amp	£2995	£1596
KRELL KSA 505	3500	1695
KRELL KCT PRE (EX DEMO)	£998	7996
KRELL KS80 POWER AMP	3000	1796
KRELL KAV 150 POWER	2498	1696
KRELL SHOWCASE 5 POWER	4999	3996
LEAK STEREO 30+	-	148
LECSON AC1/API	£475	
LF1 L51 Pre	£1000	£375
LINSLEY HOOD 75	-	125
LINN LK1	£450	£194
LINN LK2	£550	£299
LINN LK280	£600	£398
LINN LK280/Sparks Pwr	£1100	£698
LINN MAJIK Int	975	378
LINN LK100	600	378
LINN LK140 (X 3)	875EA	496A
LINN CAIRN	1400	896
LINN S103 AV PRE AMP EX DEMO	3285	2124
LINNS125 EX DEMO	1800	1164
LINN KOLECTOR PRE AMP EX DEMO	575	374
LINN LK140 POWER AMP EX DEMO	875	564
LINN LR85 POWER AMP EX DEMO	545	354
LINN WAKONDA PRE AMP EX DEMO	995	644
MARANTZ (orig) SH10 Power 120vbt	£700	£295
MARANTZ CD67	£295	149
MARK LEVINSON Na33	£15500	£2995
McINTOSH MC7108 - 8 Channel Power Ex Demo	£2549	1496
McINTOSH C200 (2box pre amp)	£5400	£4498
McINTOSH 1201 monoblocks	£15600	£10698
McINTOSH MA6900 Int (Ex Demo)	£5400	£4296
McINTOSH MC122 Power (Ex Demo)	1250	896
McINTOSH MXT100 A/V Rec (Ex Demo)	5500	4126
MERIDIAN 101B Black Pre	300	£146
MERIDIAN 501.2 Pre	£780	£476
MERIDIAN 551 Int.	£900	£698
MERIDIAN 551 Processor	£2000	£998
MERIDIAN 601 DSP Pre	£2700	£995
MERIDIAN 541 Pre/processor	£1250	£498
MERIDIAN 555 Power Amp	998	696
MERIDIAN 568 Dig. Processor	3700	1496
MERIDIAN 562V2 Pre Amp	1295	696
MICHELL Argo	£575	£395
MICHELL Electro Mono's	£2495	£1496
MICHEL Alecto	£1989	£898
MICROMEGA TEMPO 1	£795	£395
MICROMEGA TEMPO 2	£1295	£595
MUSE (300W) MONOBLOCKS	4500	£2196
MUSICAL FIDELITY ASCR Pre	£1500	£498
MUSICAL FIDELITY ASCR	£1500	£678
MUSICAL FIDELITY F22 Pre	£1500	£595
MUSICAL FIDELITY E10	£300	£ 195
NAD 302 BEE INT AMP EX DEMO	220	174
NAD 320 BEE INT AMP EX DEMO	220	174
NAIM NAC 42 Pre	£400	£125
NVA AP30 Int.	£350	£175
NYTECH CA302	-	£198
ONKYO TX-DS 656	£1500	£395
PARASOUND HCA1506 6 Chn Pwr	£2995	£1296
PS AUDIO VV Pre Incl. MC/MM	£600	£295
PLINIUS 2900 Int. Amp	2500	1696
QUAD 33 Pre	£200	£95
QUAD 405 Power Amplifier	£350	£198
QUAD 606 Power	£695	£398
RED ROSE Spirit Int (as new)	£1200	£ 896
RED ROSE 2 POWER	3500	1798
RED ROSE 3 PRE	3500	1798
REGA CURSA PRE EX DEMO	548	344
ROKSAN Caspian DSPAV Pre	£900	£548
ROTEL RB985 Power Amp	£900	£498
ROTEL RMB-1075	£850	598
SPECTRAL DM12 Pre	£4200	2948
SPECTRAL DMA 100S Power	£4200	2948
SPHINX Project 2 Pre	£1600	£798
SPHINX Project 12 mono's	£3000	£1498

### Amplifiers valve

SONY SDPE9ES (Digital)	£600	£298
SONY VA333ES (AV System)	£799	£495
SONY TAE-1000SD Exp	£495	£248
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THEA Casanova Pre/Processor Ex Demo	4478	2496
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REVOX A77 2 track (Reel to reel)	£750	£378
REVOX B77 2 track	£1000	£498
REVOX PR99II 2 track (7.5/15ips)	£1500	£595
REVOX 8910 Pro cassette deck	£1500	£548
RUNCO CL500 DLP PROJECTOR EX DEMO	5499	3995
TEAC A1500 (Reel to reel - 7" spools)	£400	£198
TEAC 33405	£795	£395
TDS Audio Transformer Ex Demo	349	266

LINN KATAN EX DEMO	650	424
LINN NINKA EX DEMO	1100	714
LOCKWOOD Majors' Studio Monitors		
15" Tannoy Dual Concentrics	£1500	£898
MAGNA PLANAR 1c Imp	£1400	£595
MAGNA PLANAR MG.2.5 (Oatmeal)	£2950	£1498
MAGNAPLANAR MG.3	3500	1796
MARTIN LOGAN Aeon (As new)	£3200	£2296
MARTIN LOGAN CL11 (walnut)	£6700	£2995
Martin Logan Prodigy (Mint)	11998	8996
MARTIN LOGAN Cinema (centre) Ex Demo	1898	1296
MARTIN LOGAN Odyssey Ex Demo	6798	796
McINTOSH ML-1C Rare (circa '65)	£500	£298
McINTOSH LS340 (EX DEMO)	4500	3376
McINTOSH CSB6 Centre Ex Demo	2495	1326
McINTOSH LS320 EX Demo	1998	996
M & K V125 Subwoofer Ex Demo	849	645
MERLIN TSM-5E (Mint)	£1600	£998
MERIDIAN DSP233C DIG CENTRE SPEAKER EX DEMO	1425	1164
MERIDIAN DSP5000 ACTIVE CENTRE EX DEMO	1995	1664
MISSION 774	500	345
MISSION 771E	£195	£125
MISSION 772 (L Oak)	£295	£195
MONITOR AUDIO R252 (Teak)	£195	£98
MONITOR AUDIO Studio12	£1200	£596
MONITOR AUDIO Studio 14 (Marked)	£900	£299
MONITOR AUDIO SILVER S EX DEMO	450	294
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MORDAUNT SHORT 40i	£650	£295
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NAIM SBL	£1500	£898
OPERA SP1 Speakers Ex Demo	525	426
OPERA Super Pavarotti Ex Demo	1295	896
PINK TRIANGLE Vertical	£1500	£750



DEMONSTRATOR AND USED ITEMS

FRONT END/PLAYBACK

Audio Analogue Paganini CD X-dem	895	599
dCS Purcell Upsampler Non Firewire S/H	2999	1695
dCS Delius 24/192 DAC Non Firewire S/H	5999	2995
dCS Verdi SACD/CD Transport x-dem	9000	6499
Mark Levinson No 360s x-dem	7495	3999
Rega Jupiter CD Silver X-dem	989	699
Rega Planet CD Black X-dem	498	349
Theta Pro Basic II DAC with Oscom/Balanced S/H	2990	1195
Theta Generation V Balanced S/H	6290	2499
Unison Research Unico Valve CD x-dem	1195	895
Wadia 301 Silver CD player 8 months old S/H	3499	2395

Clearaudio Solution/RB300 x-dem	1595	999
Clearaudio Unify Unipivot Tonearm New & Boxed	795	599
Clearaudio Accurate MC x-dem	2800	1699
Clearaudio Victory MC New & Boxed	1030	699
Kuzma Stabi/Stogi S Turntable New & Boxed	N/A	1399
Lehmann Audio Black Cube SE New & Boxed	650	449
McCormack Phono Stage New & Boxed	650	399
Rega Planar 3/Heed PSU/Bias S/H	630	269

AMPLIFICATION

Audio Analogue Bellini Remote Preamplifier X-dem	625	499
Audio Research LS22 Valve Preamplifier S/H	4499	2300
Audio Analogue Corelli Stereo Power Amplifier X-dem	695	479
Audio Analogue Donizetti Mono Power Amplifiers X-dem	1050	729
Arcam Diva A85 Integrated Amplifier Black S/H	800	499
Arcam Diva P85 Power Amplifier Silver S/H	800	449
EAR 509Mk1 Valve Mono block Re Tubed S/H	N/A	1799
Krell KAV300i Integrated S/H	2590	1399
Mark Levinson 431 Dual mono Amplifier S/H	6500	3795
Nagra VPA Mono 845 Valve Amplifiers S/H	10k	7499
Red Rose Sprit Integrated X-dem	1000	649

SPEAKERS

Martin Logan CL5II Anniversary Electrostatics 7 mths old	6700	4295
Martin Logan Aerius I Hybrid Electrostatics Oak S/H	2389	1299
JM Lab Mini Utopia Black S/H	3799	1995
Naim Audio Intro Black Ash S/H	875	499
PMC FB1 Floorstander in Cherry S/H	1275	895
Rega Jura Floorstanding Black Ash S/H	450	199
Rega ELA Cherry X-demo	749	579
Tannoy Definition 700 Rosewood S/H	2000	950

CABLES & ACCESSORIES

Cardas Neutral Reference 1m RCA-BNC S/H	550	375
Madrigal CZ Gel 1.5m Balanced New & Boxed	599	299
Madrigal MDC 2 1m Fatboy Digital cable New & Boxed	319	159
Madrigal MDC 2 0.5m Fatboy Digital cable New & Boxed	279	139
QED QNEXII 1m RCA-RCA Interconnect S/H	N/A	22
Siltech SQ58G3 2x4m Balanced Interconnect X-dem	2370	1499
Siltech Signature G5 1m AES/EBU 110ohm Digital S/H	625	449
Siltech SPX10 0.5m mains cable New & Boxed	105	55
Siltech LS 25 2x 2.5m speaker cable X-dem	499	249
Spectral MH-330 15ft Interconnect RCA-RCA X-dem	800	499
Spectral MH-750 15ft Interconnect RCA-RCA X-dem	1400	799
Spectral MI-350 20 ft Speaker cable X-dem	2100	1199

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Linn	LP12/Lingo/IttokLVIII/Asaka - nr mint, rosenut, boxed	699
Linn	LP12/Valhalla/IttokLVII - nr mint, black, boxed	1199
Linn	LP12/Armageddon/Nima - ex, black	599
Linn	LP12/Valhalla/Akito - vgc, black	479
Linn	LP12/Valhalla/LVX - vgc, black	199
Linn	Basik, LVX - vgc, black	249
Linn	Axis, Basik plus - vgc, black	999
Michell	Gyrodec/RB300 - vgc, gyropower ps, Orbe platter, smoked case	699
Michell	Gyrodec SE/RB300 - ex, brand new arm	1399
Michell	Orbe/RB300 - ex/vgc, boxed	1199
Michell	Orbe - ex, smoked	1699
Michell	Orbe/SME309 - ex/vgc, boxed	1949
Michell	Orbe/Wilson Benesch Act 2 - nr mint, boxed ... Stunning!	ON DEM
MTM	All Models - Best trade ins	599
Origin Live	The Source - ex, mahogany	ON DEM
Odyssey	Rega Arm mods - Best Trade ins	499
Pink Triangle	RP1-XG - ex, the prettiest arm ever?	379
Project	LP7/RB250/Reson - ex/vgc	89
Project	Debut - ex display, black, boxed	299
Rega	Classic - ex display, birchwood plinth, boxed	149
Rega	Planar 2/RB250 - ex/vgc	179
Roksan	Planar 3/RB300 - vgc/vgc	279
SME	Nima - nearly new, boxed	449
SME	309 - nr mint	999
SME	V - nr mint boxed	ON DEM
Trichord	Dino/Plus - Best Trade ins	2499
Wilson Benesch	Act/Act 2 - the best ever? Rare as ...	

Arcam	Digital - CD, DVD etc	199	
Arcam	Many more inexpensive CD players in stock	349	
Arcam	Alpha 8 - nr mint, remote	249	
Arcam	Alpha 8SE - nr mint, remote	279	
Arcam	Alpha 9 - nr mint, remote	799	
Arcam	CD72 - nr mint, silver, remote	199	
Audiolab	8000 Transport and DAX - ex	249	
Cambridge Audio	Discmagic/Dacmagic - ex, nice combo for peanuts	249	
Cyrus	PSX-R - nr mint, black	1499	
Krell	CD-DSP - ex, clear and smoked lids, remote, stunning	99	
Marantz	DW4100 - nr mint, remote, boxed	449	
Meridian	200 transport and matching dac - ex, superb combination	349	
Meridian	200 transport - ex, Trichord mod, excellent	1449	
Micromega	Trio - ex, the ultimate Micromega	179	
Micromega	Stage 1 - ex, great intro to the Micromega sound	249	
Micromega	Stage 5 - ex, sweet sounding player from renowned French manufacturer	799	
Micromega	T-drive and T-dac - vgc, boxed, superb sound, £1000s new	119	
Musical Fidelity	X10D - nr mint	249	
Myryad	T20 - black, nr mint, boxed, remote, bargain!	699	
Naim	Cd1 - ex, remote	1749	
NVA	The Transparent Statement - vgc, crated, remote ... ultimate NVA	67 - ex, sweet sounding player, much better than 66	249
Quad	Planet - ex, black, well reviewed	449	
Rega	Caspian - nr mint, silver, boxed, remote	449	
Roksan	RCD991AE - ex, great piece of kit	99	
Rotel	CDP450FM - ex, remote	149	
Teac	Amplifiers	249	
Arcam	Alpha 7R - ex, as above with remote	299	
Arcam	Alpha 9 - ex, boxed with remote	349	
Arcam	Alpha 10 integrated - ex, boxed	179	
Arcam	Alpha 10 power - nr mint, boxed	199	
Arcam	A65 - nr mint, boxed, remote, silver	425	
Arcam	A65+ - ex display, boxed, remote, silver	199	
Arcam	A85 - ex, remote, silver	299	
Arcam	P75 - ex display, remote, silver	249	
Audio Analogue	Puccini - ex, silver	329	
Audiolab	8000A - ex, black, boxed	279	
Audiolab	8000S - nr mint	299	
Crimson	510/520 - ex, boxed, battery pre, lovely combo	299	
Linx	Vega - ex, pre/power, gloss black	795	
Meridian	605S - ex pair boxed monoblocks	949	
Meridian	505S - ex, pair monoblocks	599	
Meridian	205S - ex, pair monoblocks	899	
Michell	Alecto - ex, pair monoblocks	229	
Mission	Cyrus Two and PSX-gc, nextel finish	249	
NAD	352 - ex display, boxed, titanium	99	
NAD	304 - nr mint, great value	799	
Primare	A30.1 - nr mint, boxed	379	
Primare	A20 - nr mint integrated	225	
Quad	405/2 - good, brown	199	
Quad	405 - nr mint, early brass heatsink version	399	
Quad	66pre and system remote - ex	295	
Quad	606 power - vgc	399	
Roksan	Caspian - nr mint, silver, boxed, remote	199	
Rotel	RB03 power - ex display, boxed, silver	225	
Rotel	RB981 - ex, black powerhouse, 2 available for monoblock setup	199	
Rotel	RC955 - ex, pre with remote	199	
Shearpe	Phase 2 - nr mint, boxed, blue marble styling	279	
Sony	STR-DB940 av amp - vgc, DTS 5.1 etc	499	
Sugden	AU41 pre/power - ex, black	499	
Trio	L07C and 2 x L07M monos - superb	749	

Acoustic Energy	AE505 - ex display, superb floorstander	249
Acoustic Energy	AE505 - new sealed box, superb floorstander, were £800!!	299
Acoustic Energy	AE1 - new tweeters, scruffy grilles	279
Acoustic Energy	AE100 - ex, rosewood	129
ATC	SCM20 - ex, premium wood finish	799
Castle	Kendal - nr mint, new model in light ash	195
Epos	M15 - nr mint, light cherry, boxed	449
Epos	ES14 - nr mint, boxed 80s classic c/w dedicated stands	325
Gallo	5.1 - ex display, boxed, gorgeous!	599
Mission	763i - ex, black floorstander, boxed	119
Mission	70 centre - ex display, boxed	69
Mission	77ci - ex display, boxed	99
Mission Cyrus	781 - ex, black larger bookshelf	99
Monitor Audio	S5 - nr mint, boxed	299
Monitor Audio	Studio Centre - ex display, boxed	299
Monitor Audio	R700MD - nr mint, black	149
Monitor Audio	Bronze B2 - nr mint, cherry, boxed	129
Monitor Audio	Silver S2 - nr mint, mahogany, boxed	199
Mordaunt Short	912 - ex display, boxed	149
Mordaunt Short	914 - ex display, boxed	199
Mordaunt Short	Petite - Best trade ins	ON DEM
NEAT	Aria - ex display, boxed mini surrounds	39
QED	ESL63 - nr mint, unused since Quad service with new boxes	1499
QUAD	ELB - fair, wood floorstander	119
Rega	Q50 - ex, black	199
REL	Q50 - ex, black	299
REL	Strata - ex, black	199
Tannoy	R2 - good, boxed, slim cherry floorstander	199
Wharfedale	Pacific P130 - nr mint, boxed, light cherry, excellent	299

Arcam	Alpha 7 - ex display, boxed, rare black	149
Audiolab	8000T - vgc, rare item	329
Cyrus	FM7.5 - nr mint, silver, digital, presets, boxed	279
Denon	TU260L tuner - ex, black, digital, presets	495
Quad	86FM - ex	379
Quad	FM4 - vgc	225
Rotel	RT02 - ex display, boxed, silver	199
TAG McLaren	T20 - ex display, boxed	699
Teac	TX3000 tuner - ex, digital, presets	69
Teac	V1010 cassette - ex, 3 head	75

Atacama	Equipment supports - Your kit deserves them!	ON DEM
Beyer	D1231 galactic - new	30
Ikos	1014 - new 1m interconnect	15
Ikos	1014 - new 5m interconnect	25
Mission	Stance - ex display, silver	49
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Accuphase E307 Integrated Amp Unused.....	£2995
Advantage Integrated Amp.....	£1495

**CD PLAYERS & TRANSPORTS**

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Accuphase DP67 CD Player (new) (retails £4400).....	£2995
CECDX51 mk2 DAC with CEC TL51 Transport (new) (retails £2835).....	£1995
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Stax SR007 Omega ref (SR117 head phone & SRM007t dual triode).....	Normal Retail £2995
Project Phono Box S/E (new) (retails £125).....	£1950
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Shunyata Aries 1m RCA (ex demo) (retails £850).....	£495
Shunyata Lyra Speaker Cables 3.5m (ex demo) (retails £1550).....	£995
Kondo digital 1m RCA (new) (retails £1200).....	£495
Audio Note (Kondo) 3mtr pair SPZ speaker cable.....	£1995
Audio Note (Kondo) Digital Silver Litz cable 1mtr, boxed, mint condition, price new £700, our price.....	£475

**TURNTABLES, CARTRIDGES & TONEARMS**

Dynavektor DV-DRT XV1S (new) (retails £2900).....	£1995
Dynavektor DV20X L & H (new) (retails £395).....	£285
ZYX R100Yatra mkII (new) (retails £780).....	£550
ZYX RS20-02H (new) (retails £450).....	£325
Dynavektor DV-507 mkII bi-axial arm (new) (retails £2995).....	£1795
RS Laboratory RS _A1 with Rotary headshell (new) (retails £850).....	£595
Project 12c carbon fibre arm (new) (retails £500).....	£350
Project Perspective Turntable, no cartridge fitted (new) (retails £750).....	£525
Project 6.9 Turntable, no cartridge fitted (new) (retails £600).....	£425
Selection of brand new discounted cartridges	

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# READER CLASSIFIED

**Welcome** to *Hi-Fi Choice Reader Classified*, the UK's first and best free private ads service for second hand hi-fi. These pages are a must-read if you're thinking about buying used kit, and if you want to sell something it's definitely the place to be. It's free to place an advertisement – simply submit your ad of up to 30 words,

remembering to include your name, phone number and home town or county. The simplest way to send your ad is via email – send to: [dan.george@futurenet.co.uk](mailto:dan.george@futurenet.co.uk). Or mail to: **Reader Classified, Hi-Fi Choice, 99 Baker Street, London W1U 6FP**. Please note that this service is open to private advertisers only.

## FOR SALE

### ACOUSTIC ENERGY AE2A

speaker stands, lead filled, the best available (£530) £280 ovno. Mint and boxed. Andy 0115 9126424 (Midlands)

**ALMOST 600** classical CDs, mostly piano works. Two to three pounds each or £1,000 for the lot. Wayne 02920 369052 (Cardiff)

**ARCAM A85** amp £350. Arcam CD92T £400. Both silver, excellent cond. Stuart 07791 141267 (Ipswich)

**ARCAM ALPHA 7SE** £150. KEF Q1 speakers £175. Both mint cond. Phil 020 8668 3621 (Surrey).

**AUDIOLAB 8000T** AM/FM tuner. Non-working and needs attention. Very good cosmetic cond. New cost £800, make me a sensible offer. Steve 07973 334623 (Solihull, West Mids).

**B&O** system with S30 speakers free to collector (space needed). 020 7485 1611 (N London)

**B&W CDM 1NT** in cherry. New, boxed, with quality cables, £495. Apollo Mezzo rack, as new £95. 07932 577226 (Essex).

**CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AZUR** 640C CD player silver, Best Buy in *Hi-Fi Choice*, as new £200. No offers. Mr Coffey 01269 415017 (Essex).

**CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AZUR** 640 amps (x2), Azur 640 CD £150 each. Maple KEF Q5s £375, all as new. 07734 532945 (N London).

**CANON S50** speakers on dedicated stands £180 ono. Audiolab 8000A amplifier £175. 01708 457691 (Essex).

**CASTLE HARLECH** floorstanders in yew. Great cond, boxed, bargain £350. 01903 717826 (W Sussex).

**CLASSIC MARANTZ** receiver model 19, made in USA. 1970s, aluminium front and FM receiver. Best offer secures. Tony 01752 350770 (Devon)

**CYRUS CD7Q** plus PSX-R power supply, black, as new (£1,500) £850. Gladly demo. 0117 9498117 (Bristol).

**DENON AVC-A1SR** (gold), Onkyo DV-S757, Heybrook 2000 5.1 speakers, Epson EMP-TW100 projector, Alphason AD5/47-SB rack, Sound Fantastic mains protector, £6,000. 01929 472196 (Dorchester).

**DENON AVC-A1SR** amp £1,490. Excellent condition. Free upgrade to AVC-A1SRA, as good as Bryston 4B SST. 01923 267434 (Watford).

**EPOS ES22** floorstanding speakers, walnut, superb sound, cond and all original packaging. (£1,200) £475 ono. Stephen 01707 652985 (Hatfield).

**EXPOSURE XV** integrated amp £175. Trichord Genesis CD player clock 3 upgrade. PL5 mains lead. £195. 01634 72164 (Kent).

**INTEGRA RESEARCH RDV-1** DVD player, RDC-7 AV controller and RDA-7 amp. Recently upgraded to the latest formats, as new £5,000. George 07771 806234 (Gloucestershire).

**KEF 1.2 REFERENCE** speakers, black ash, a few months old and in perfect cond. (£1,200) £575 ono. Stephen 01707 652985 (Hatfield).

**KIMBER PBJ** interconnect 3x1/2 metre pairs (WBT phonos). £40 each. All three for £100. Terry 020 8482 0363 (Enfield).

**M&K MX5000 MKII THX** subwoofer with granite stand, as new £1,250. George 07771 806234 (Gloucs).

**MARANTZ CD63MKII KI** little used £75. Marantz PM66SE KI £75. Optimum 4 hi-fi support, glass shelves and three gold legs, as new (£250) £75. Dave 01332 660506 (Derby).

**MARANTZ DD-82** DCC digital cassette deck. Perfect in every way, never used. £100 Steve 07973 334623 (Solihull, West Mids).

**MARANTZ PM-66SE KI** signature with remote, manual and box £110. Floorstanding musical technology harriers, black ash finish, bi-wireable, boxed £95. All in mint cond. 01708 705241 or email [mawneys@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mawneys@yahoo.co.uk) (Romford).

**MARANTZ SR4400 AV** surround receiver, silver, eight months old £150. Denon CD receiver UD31 as new £135. 01482 508389 (Hull).

**MARK LEVINSON 390S CDP**, excellent cond. Boxed with remote, manual and transport screw (£6,500) £3,750. Contact Pete (01235) 763433 eves. (Oxford)

**MARTIN LOGAN SERT 1**, latest spec, only three months old, mint cond £3,000. Vincent SA93 pre/sp991 mono blocks, 900 watts, three months old, mint cond,

## WANTED

**AKAI CR80 DSS** eight-track cartridge player. 020 8281 0029 (Essex).

**AUDIOLAB 8000P**. Karl 07743 483571 (Manchester).

**KEF MODEL 4/ 2** cash or part exchange with KEF 104/2. 01494 445005 (Bucks).

superb build and sound £1,750. 02380 224 003 (Southampton).

**MISSION 753** floorstanding speakers in black £250. TEAC VDS7 C1D £200. Naim NAP50 Nait 3 £200. 07971 296699 (Cardiff).

**MISSION 782** floorstanding speakers. Black, excellent cond, £300. Magnum preamp, upgraded by manufacturer to high end spec. £350. 01704 550247 or 07794 6593157 (Lancs).

**MISSION 782** speakers with stands, mint, boxed £170ono. Also pair of Tannoy Etons, offers. 01462 817379 (Beds).

**MISSION 78C/ 78DS** centre and rear speakers (£700) £325. Yamaha DSP-E800 (£370) £95. All boxed. Amit 07957 657141 (London). ▶

## BUYING TIPS

Buying second-hand 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 if the price is right.

Do some research on which brands have a good service back-up, so if something does go wrong, you can get it fixed. Unless you purchase from a dealer, you're unlikely to get any warranty, so it's up to you to ensure the fitness of any gear that you buy.

Usually, speakers should be less prone to breakdown than amps, and amps should be more reliable than CD players. But any abused component could be trouble – have a proper dem, and judge the seller as well as the goods!

FOR SALE

**MONITOR AUDIO 703S** rosemah veneer, mass loaded, with plinths, excellent cond (£880) £415. Marantz PM17 amp (£800), champagne finish, good match with 703s £379. Buy both for £750. Alec 023 92 295032 (Hants)

**MONITOR AUDIO** gold reference 10s, plus custom made stands designed for speakers. Very good cond, £375. Mr Law 01491 612883 (Oxford)

**MONITOR AUDIO** silver S6, oak finish. Excellent cond, two years old, boxed £250. Simon 01242 703721 (Cheltenham).

**MORDAUNT SHORT** classic 40 floorstanding speakers, vgc (£500). Offers around £220 01269 851633 (W Wales).

**MORDAUNT SHORT MS815** floorstander (£350) £100. Mordaunt Short 821C centre speaker (£110) £80. Yamaha DSP-E390 AV processor (£250) £140. Yamaha NS-C80 centre speaker (£90) £30. Technics ST-GT350 tuner (£120) £40, slightly scratched top plate. Nick 01223 413614 (Camps).

**MORDAUNT SHORT** premier plus sub/sat system. Brand new in sealed cartons, includes MS309 digital sub, centre and four satellite speakers £350. 020 7724 9945 (London).

**MUSICAL FIDELITY A1** final edition. Separate power supply, 40 wpc, very tidy, original owner. Offers, David. 01535 274382 (Yorks).

**MUSICAL FIDELITY** Nuvista CD £1,650. Nuvista M3 integrated amplifier £1,650.

B&W 805 loudspeakers £900. B&W 801 Matrix £1,000. Yamaha DSP E800 £150. Jeff Rowland Model 5 £2,000. Steve 07968 186 552 (London).

**MUSICAL FIDELITY P270** power amp £375. TEAC T1 transport (services August 2004) £225. Meridian 568 digital surround processor (£3,500) £1,500. John 020 8554 6199 (London/Essex).

**MUSICAL FIDELITY XLP-S** MM/MC phono amp, mint, boxed £70. 01903 247779 (Sussex).

**NAIM NAIT 3** (line) £325. Rega Planet 2000 £275. Rega Alya floorstanders (cherry) £250. Simon 01925 572936 (Cheshire).

**ONIX AMP OA21** classic £85. Rotel RA-01 amp, 12 months old £125. Ditton 15 speakers £25. 01992 865414 (Walsall).

**PINK TRIANGLE** turntable, 33/45 with Rega 250 arm and Ortofon 520 cartridge, lid and new belt. All in excellent cond, £365. Call John King 01600 713755 (Monmouth).

**QUAD 33 PREAMP**, power amp, FM3 tuner, rarely used. Sensible offers please. Derek 0118 934 1482 (Berks).

**QUAD 99 PRE, 909 POWER**, 30 months old, excellent cond. Boxed, manuals, remote, links, (£1,650) accept £1,250. 0131 664 5433 or email Phillip@Evans1952.freeserve.co.uk (Edinburgh).

**QUAD BRONZE**, DIN, GC: 405-2 £150. 34 preamp £150. FM4 tuner £150. Arthur 01626 853348 (Devon).

**QUAD ELECTROSTATICS**, ESL 57S. Bought from and recorded by Classique Sounds. Original bronze grilles, excellent cond, £800. 020 8783 1250 or email anthonymurphy@blueyonder.co.uk (W London).

**QUAD** preamp type 44 plus Quad power amp type 303. Grey, mint cond. The pair for £325. 01590 643701 (Hampshire).

**ROKSAN DP1** CD player transport, DA1 DAC, DS4 power supply, immaculate, boxed,

serviced by Roksan last month £500. Linn Kan speakers and stands £100. 07767 441478 or 0121 456 1454 after 6pm, (Birmingham)

**ROKSAN KANDY MKIII** amp, the multi-award winner in mint as new cond, boxed with instructions and remote. Silver fascia and a bargain at £400 ono. Charles 01792 536143 (Swansea).

**RUARK TALISMAN II** speakers, finished in rosewood. Excellent sonically and visually. Original manufacturer's packaging and manual. Can demo if required £350. 01708 705885 (Essex).

**SENNHEISER HD650** reference headphones, boxed, £150. Keith 07891 533084 (Swansea).

**SHANLING SCD-T200C** valve/solid state CD/SACD player, brand new, £1,699. Shanling CD-T100 CD valve/SS CD player, £1,049 – both UK spec. Sony SCD1 SACD/CD player, £1,849. Bel Canto DAC2, (new) £749. 07979 903989 (Bristol).

**SONY DTC 1000** ES digital DAT deck. Pedigree machine and a classic performer. Mint cond, never used. £250 Steve 07973 334623 (Solihull, West Mids).

**SONY PS1350** belt drive turntable, aluminium platter. Good cond £50 ono. Also turntable wall shelf £20. Colin 0161 303 8859 or 07985 781177 (Manchester).

**SPENDOR BC3** floorstanders, mint cond, superb sound. Cable and stands included, £575. 01782 318677 (Stoke On Trent).

**SUGDEN A21 AL** amplifier. Bought new a few weeks ago (£949) £795. Arcam A85 MM/MC phono £495. 01493 665761 (Gt Yarmouth).

**SUGDEN A21**, as new, only a few weeks old (£949) £795 ono. 01493 665761 (Norfolk).

**SUGDEN CD21** compact disc player. 18 months old, immaculate cond, boxed as new (£1,050) £450 ono. Neil 01780 480624 (Stamford).

**TECHNICS REFERENCE** power amp SE-A2000. Also matching stereo control amp, SU-C2000. Mint cond, boxed with instructions/manuals etc (£1,700) £750. 01782 256087 (Stoke On Trent).

Below: Quad 99 and 909 pre/power combo



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