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Hi-Fi WORLD

OCTOBER 1995 £2.00

For the love of music

P. Jones

**SIX PAGES OF
BARGAIN USED HI-FI**

**FEATURE: THE
CAMBRIDGE CD1
LEGEND**

SCOOP!

SINGLE-ENDED DELIGHT UNISON SIMPLY 4 VALVE AMPLIFIER

**SUPPLEMENT NO. 17
(overseas - inside)
free with this issue.**



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World Radio History

This Month's World

● Unison offer one of the few competently designed single-ended valve amplifiers available today. Dominic Baker, a man who's heard a few amps in his time, relates its wonders on p13.

● NAD are the masters of entry-level hi-fi separates, with a string of fine sounding, well engineered products under their belt. Can they do it again with the new 'take-no-prisoners' 510 budget CD player? Find out on p20.

● Wharfedale are back making big, budget loudspeakers with more drivers than a Chinese bus company. They're eyeing the A/V market, where big is beautiful and fidelity is judged by the size of explosions and earthquakes. Seismic hi-fi is with us, its epicentre on p26.

● Back in the mid-eighties, Stan Curtis of Cambridge Audio designed the mother of all Compact Disc players, the awesome CD1. Read its fascinating story on p36.

● Marantz and Kenwood represent the conventional side of the industry. Their best efforts offer fine performance at a great price, necessary to succeed in today's cut-throat market. See if their latest creations live up to past form, on p29 and p57.

Hi-Fi is polarising into different camps. The big Consumer Electronics boys follow a conservative path, producing black boxes aimed at price points. Today it's A/V, tomorrow "multimedia". Innovation has slipped from their vocabulary; they simply go where there's a sale

This world is different from the hobbyist's. Leisure time is increasing and people are looking to fill it. There's a great sense of satisfaction gained from building complex items like loudspeakers and amplifiers which go on to give years of pleasure. We're seeing a healthy revival of interest here, but it still needs succour. Today's hobbyist is tomorrow's audio engineer, the future of an industry that provides thousands of jobs and exports up to 70% of production.

Noel Keywood, Editor

S H O W ! S H O W ! S H O W !

Hear our DIY kit designs at the Sound & Vision Show, Cumberland Hotel, Marble Arch, London. It's a great venue for real hi-fi, held from 21st-24th September 1995 (the same time as Live 95, so you can go to both). We'll be there, with a stand and a room.

TEST EQUIPMENT



● Hi-Fi World has its own advanced test laboratory and acoustically treated listening room. No other hi-fi magazine has the benefit of such facilities.

● Hi-Fi World has a dedicated in-house team of experienced listeners, and uses selected freelance professionals. We review thoroughly by extensive auditioning, rather than by quick-fire group listening tests.

● Hi-Fi World's engineering team designs a wide range of products in-house. We export kits, parts and built-up products around the world, delighting buyers in far flung corners of the globe. No other hi-fi magazine is so expert and dedicated.

LISTENING ROOM (TREATED BY RPG ACOUSTIC TOOLS)



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see page 68 for details

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AMPLIFIERS

- UNISON SIMPLY 4** 13
Dominic Baker listens to Unison's single-ended valve amplifier from Italy.



- EXPOSURE SUPER XV** 48
How does Exposure's premium integrated amplifier measure up to the best of the rest? David Price finds out.

- HARMAN KARDON HK620** 49
More than just a piece of wire with gain? Dominic Todd plugs in Harman's latest budget offering and pumps up the jam.

COMPACT DISC

- NAD 510** 20
When NAD introduce a new entry-level CD player shock waves resound. We surf the tsunamis in the wake of the 510.

- MARANTZ CD-72II** 29
How does Marantz's enduringly popular middleweight player compare to their young CD-63SE pretender? Dominic Todd finds out.

- TEAC CD-P3200** 65
It looks amazingly good value at a mere £150, but things are not always as they seem, thinks Eric Braithwaite.

LOUDSPEAKERS

- HEYBROOK HEYLO** 18
Dominic Baker listens to Heybrook's handsome little Heylo floorstander.

- WHARFEDALE VALDUS 500** 26
Although a lowly £299, these multi-driver floorstanders rival the Telecom Tower. Douglas Floyd-Douglass tunes in.

- MIRAGE 890i** 34
Just an illusion? Not quite. The tall, stylish floorstanders from Mirage get their first review from Dominic Baker.

- ORTOFON CONCORDE 6** 59
Made in Denmark, Ortofon's Concorde 6 is a three-way floorstanding loudspeaker priced at a competitive £329.

CASSETTE

- ROTEL RD-960BX** 41
Noel Keywood, scourge of cassette decks world-wide, reviews Rotel's latest budget combatant. Can it maintain Rotel's good name?

VINYL

- OPUS 3** 23
Vinyl junkie David Price auditions an intriguing parallel-tracking concrete-loaded turntable from Sweden.



TUNER





- KENWOOD KT6050L** 57
Eric Braithwaite asks whether Kenwood's new £300 RDS tuner is the best thing since rolling tobacco and Rizlas.



HEADPHONES

- SENNHEISER HD 455 vs. VIVANCO SR 850** 51
Professional wearer of headphones Douglas Floyd-Douglass listens to interesting designs from Sennheiser and Vivanco.

WORLD VERDICT

- 
OUTSTANDING - Superb sound, something we'd use ourselves.
- 
GOOD - Has strong merit. Well worth an audition.
- 
ADEQUATE - Mediocre in vital areas. May be worth auditioning.
- 
POOR - Seriously flawed. Not worth considering.

REGULARS

NEWS

All the latest that's happening in hi-fi.

LETTERS

World readers expound on issues that concern us all.

QUERIES

We get to grips with your hi-fi problems.

NEXT ISSUE

Don't miss next month's Hi-Fi World with yet another FREE DIY Supplement.

COLUMNS

63, 69, 71, 72

Comment, criticism and overviews on the ever-changing hi-fi scene.

COMPETITION

World offers you an instant upgrade!

SUBSCRIPTIONS

No more tedious trips to the newsagent - and you'll have the pick of the classifieds.

SPECIALIST HI-FI DEALERS

There are no box shifting purveyors of midi systems here! These are real hi-fi dealers offering expert advice and service.

MEET YOUR MAKER

Who makes what and how to get in touch.

WORLD AUDIO DESIGN

A growing range of high performance kits for the enthusiast.

7 **DIAL-A-DEALER** 89
Who sells what, and how to get in touch.

44 **HI-FI WORLD LIBRARY** 99
Highly readable titles, many of which are definitive publications in their sphere.

52 **MEASURED PERFORMANCE** 113
The HP3561A ushers forth from the lab.

60 **READERS' CLASSIFIEDS** 134
Looking for a bargain - Hi-Fi World classifieds are the place.

ADVERTISERS' INDEX 146

FEATURES

66 **CAMBRIDGE CDI** 36
David Price talks to Stan Curtis about his seminal digital creation, and puts the ten year old player against the latest Pink Triangle player.

DIY SUPPLEMENT

81 In this month's FREE DIY Supplement we build and test Maplin's new Newton valve preamplifier, partner to the Millennium 4-20 power amp, there's part two of Liberty's Audiosuite audio measurement system, book reviews, DIY news, readers' letters and more.

MUSIC

Some excellent new releases for your perusal.

ROCK RECORD OF THE MONTH:

The Verve: A Northern Soul

CLASSICAL RECORD OF THE MONTH:

Henry Prucell: The Indian Queen - incidental music

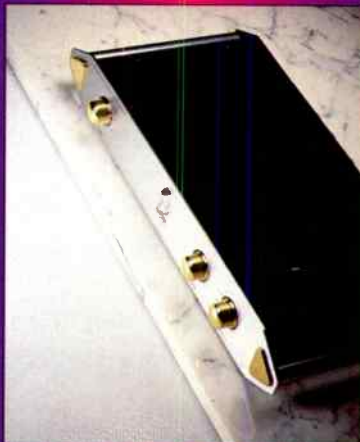
ROCK AND POP 73

JAZZ 86

CLASSICAL 93

COMPETITION

We offer you the chance to win one of five superb Alchemist Axiom integrated amplifiers worth £300 each, for the price of a stamp. See page 66 for details.



STUNNING COMMENTS

Four audio legends.



KEF® Raymond Cooke Series

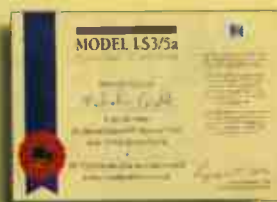
In the early 1970's, KEF founder, Raymond Cooke, and his team devised an entirely new way of designing evaluating and manufacturing loudspeakers. He couldn't have known it at the time, but he'd begun to build

legends and in the process became one, himself.

Using digital computer techniques to evaluate performance, together with radical improvements

in design and technology, Raymond Cooke started a process that set the Reference standard for KEF and along the way became the standard for an industry - the Reference by which all others would be judged.

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Model 107/2 proclaims 'classic Hi-Fi' experience, from their impressive technical heritage to their luxuriously finished cabinets - and the ultimate finishing touch, a gold plated limited edition plaque engraved with the signature of KEF's founder, Raymond Cooke.

The name of these very special loudspeakers? There was only one possible choice.

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Raymond P. Cooke

MODELS SHOWN FROM LEFT TO RIGHT ARE THE LS3/5A, 104/2 AND 107/2. KEF IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK FOR DETAILS ON THE KEF RAYMOND COOKE SERIES PLEASE CLIP THE COUPON AND SEND IT TO KEF AUDIO (UK) LIMITED, FREEPOST MA 1332, ECCLESTON ROAD, TOVIL, MAIDSTONE, KENT ME15 6BR. TELEPHONE (01622) 672261

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QUAD'S LOUDSPEAKER SP(L)ENDOR!

Quad Electroacoustics Ltd. have contracted Spendor Audio Systems to manufacture an exclusive range of loudspeakers to be sold under the world-famous Quad name. The first of the new range is soon to be released to the industry, and will subsequently appear in the shops. It is said to be "built and tested to the same exacting standards as the Spendor Classic and Master range in expanded production facilities at Hailsham in Sussex".

Quad Electroacoustics Ltd.
St. Peter's Road,
Huntingdon,
Cambs. PE18 7DB
☎ 01276 451166



OPTIMA-STIC SUGDEN

J. E. Sugden and Co. announce their new Optima series of amplifiers, comprising the £325 Optima 80 and the £475 Optima 140. Both models feature a passive input stage with 5 line level inputs including a tape monitor. The power amplifier sections - 40watts on the 80 and 70watts on the 140 - are DC coupled with a high gain, low sensitivity front end. An extra £75 buys you the remote controlled R version of either amp.

J. E. Sugden and Co., Ltd.
Valley Works Station Lane,
Heckmondwike,
West Yorkshire. WF16 0NF
☎ 01924 404088



PRO-ACTIVE CARBON-FIBRE

ProAc's new Response Two Point Five is a two-way floorstander featuring a unique 8" carbon fibre-filled paper cone bass/midrange driver allied to a 3/4" soft dome tweeter. The 107x22x25cm 'speakers are claimed to have "exceptional detail, pinpoint imagery and almost three dimensional soundstaging".

Celef Audio International
Highpoint House, Riding Road,
Buckingham Road Industrial Estate,
Brackley,
Northants. NN13 7BE
☎ 01280 700147





SYSTM-ATIC

Three hundred pounds buys you a pair of Systemdek's new Systym 165 floorstanding loudspeakers. Standing a discrete 78cm high, the 165s boast a healthy sensitivity of 89dB and can take 100W before they depart their mortal coils. Weighing in at 23kg per pair, they're no lightweights, and fully specified with gold plated bi-wirable speaker terminals look good value too. Finish is black Ash or Mahogany.



Systemdek Ltd.
34 Kyle Road,
Irvine,
Scotland. KA12 8LD
☎ 01294 271251

MERIDIAN GO HI-VI



Meridian announce the 541 Surround Controller, a high-end A/V compatible hi-fi preamplifier with extensive audio and video switching facilities. It features on screen display, Dolby Pro Logic and a custom Meridian Cinema mode. Meridian dryly state that "unlike other surround decoders, the 541 has been optimised for both music and film". Price is £950 including Meridian's MSR remote, with an optional phono module also available.

Meridian Audio Ltd.
Stonehill,
Stukley Meadows,
Huntingdon,
Cambridgeshire. PE18 6ED
☎ 01480 52144

PHILIPS: MORE FOR LESS

Philips announce the DCC730, a digital compact cassette deck in the vein of the DCC951 which impressed us back in March. The DCC730 has more conservative black box styling, and costs £30 less at £249.95. It boasts 18-bit digital recording, faster track access and sophisticated editing facilities. Philips claim "higher resolution, better dynamics and even less background hiss than standard CD".

Philips Consumer Electronics Ltd.
City House, 420-430 London Road,
Croydon, Surrey. CR9 3QR
☎ 0181 689 2166

MOBILE CONVERSION

Audio Alchemy announce the £149.95 DAC-MAN, a portable CD convertor for the digitalite with everything. Said to be the world's cheapest external DAC, it's designed to improve low priced compact disc and laser disc players. It features the new Crystal CS4330 DAC chip, a high current Class A line driver, custom designed TARA LABS captive analogue interconnects, and auto-switching coaxial and TosLink digital inputs. As with all AA DACs, it can be used with Power Stations One, Two and Three.



Path Premier
Unit 2 Desborough Industrial Park,
Desborough Park Road,
High Wycombe,
Bucks. HP12 3BG.
☎ 01494 441736

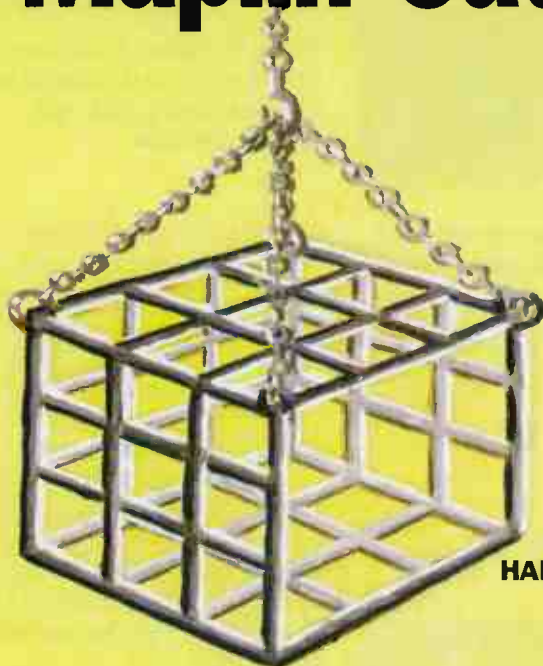
BOOM! BOOM!

Following Wharfedale's foray into midi-system-friendly 'speakers, Celestion announce the IMPACT range of budget boxes. The capitalised name makes Celestion's intentions clear - they're making high perceived value, high power handling budget boxes majoring on showroom appeal. As a possible first rung on the ladder of real hi-fi, the IMPACT 10 is keenly priced at £129, while the 15, 20, 25, 30, 35 and 40 models ranging from £199 to £629, continue the theme. All models from the IMPACT 20 upwards are magnetically shielded for home cinema use.



Celestion International Ltd.
Foxhall Road,
Ipswich. IP3 8JP
☎ 01473 723131

Here's one hi-fi product you won't find in the new 1996 Maplin Catalogue



**SEPARATES
HANGING BASKET**

If you prefer listening to your hi-fi rather than hanging it in the window for everyone else to admire, then the new 1996 Maplin Electronics Catalogue is for you. Almost 1200 pages of electronic products, including over 50 pages of serious audio products for the discerning

listener. Choose from some of the best names in the business, like Marantz, Pioneer, Teac, Sony, Polk, Philips, Harman, Nikkai, Wharfdale and many more.

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Catalogue Mail order Price £3.45 (inc p&p). Prices depicted are from the 1996 Maplin Catalogue and are inclusive of VAT. All items are subject to availability. E & OE. Maplin Electronics, P. O. Box 3, Rayleigh, Essex, England SS6 8LR.

MOTH GO WILD IN THE COUNTRY...

The weird and wonderful Moth company have launched two new power amplifiers designed by Huntingdon's solid-state heavyweight, the ubiquitous Stan Curtis (see



Cambridge feature on page 36). Using discrete circuitry with close tolerance components, the £549 Thirty Series 60 watt stereo power amplifier is a two enclosure design with PSU and amplifier each given their own box. The £879 100watt mono power amplifier is a three enclosure package with a PSU and two monoblocks. All Thirty Series amplifiers are available in Ash, black Ash, Elm, Mahogany, Oak and Rosewood.

Moth Group
Dane Lane,
Wilstead,
Bedford. MK45 3HT
☎ 01234741152

COPLAND TOO!



Copland's CTA301/II £1,349 preamplifier now features higher specification Sovtek 6922 valves, with a claimed sweeter performance as a result. The new unit also sports gold plated palladium switch relays, polypropylene capacitors and metal film resistors for better sound. The new £2099 CTA 505/II power amplifier features improved driving capability with a greater 65watt output, in either tetrode or triode operation. Copland describe the system as, "above all, musically enticing".

Richard Allen Associates
Myrtle Cottage,
117 Station Road,
Burgess Hill,
Sussex. RH15 9ED
☎ 01444 248873

JULIAN VEREKER EXPORTER EXTRAORDINAIRE

Naim Audio founder Julian Vereker has been awarded an MBE for his services to British exports. He says, "I am honoured to receive this award, which says a lot about the drive and enthusiasm of all those who have contributed to Naim's success." Naim exports to 26 countries around the world, including North America, Europe and Japan. Fifty percent of the company's business goes abroad.

GET ORGANISED!

The Sound Organisation has announced a new single pillar speaker stand retailing for £79.95, available in 18 or 24 inch heights. Supplied in piano black finish, the Z118 and Z124 are designed to be sand or shot-filled, and include carpet-piercing spikes as standard.

Goldring Products Ltd.
8 Greyfriars Rd,
Bury St Edmonds,
Suffolk. IP32 7DX
☎ 01284 701101

SENNHEISER'S DYNAMIC DUO

Featuring Duofoil transducers, copper clad alloy wire drivers and neodymium iron magnets, Sennheiser's £229.95 HD 580 Jubilee 50th Anniversary headphones seem a veritable breeding ground for technological sounding acronyms. If that wasn't enough, this limited edition model uses a carbon fibre frame and forks to reduce resonance, making for a claimed "neutral balance with deep bass and smooth extended highs".



Sennheiser UK
12 Davies Way,
Knaves Beach Business Centre,
Loudwater,
High Wycombe,
Bucks. HP10 9QY
☎ 01628 850 811

CURRYS' NEW SEPARATES SUPERSTORE!

Currys are opening a new superstore on junction 9 of the M6 motorway near Birmingham. It houses no less than "eleven metres of hi-fi separates", we were told, including brands like Mission AV loudspeakers, Marantz, Wharfedale, Celestion, Philips, Mordaunt Short and Pioneer. There'll even be a dedicated demo room. Surprised? Yep, Currys are moving back into separates.



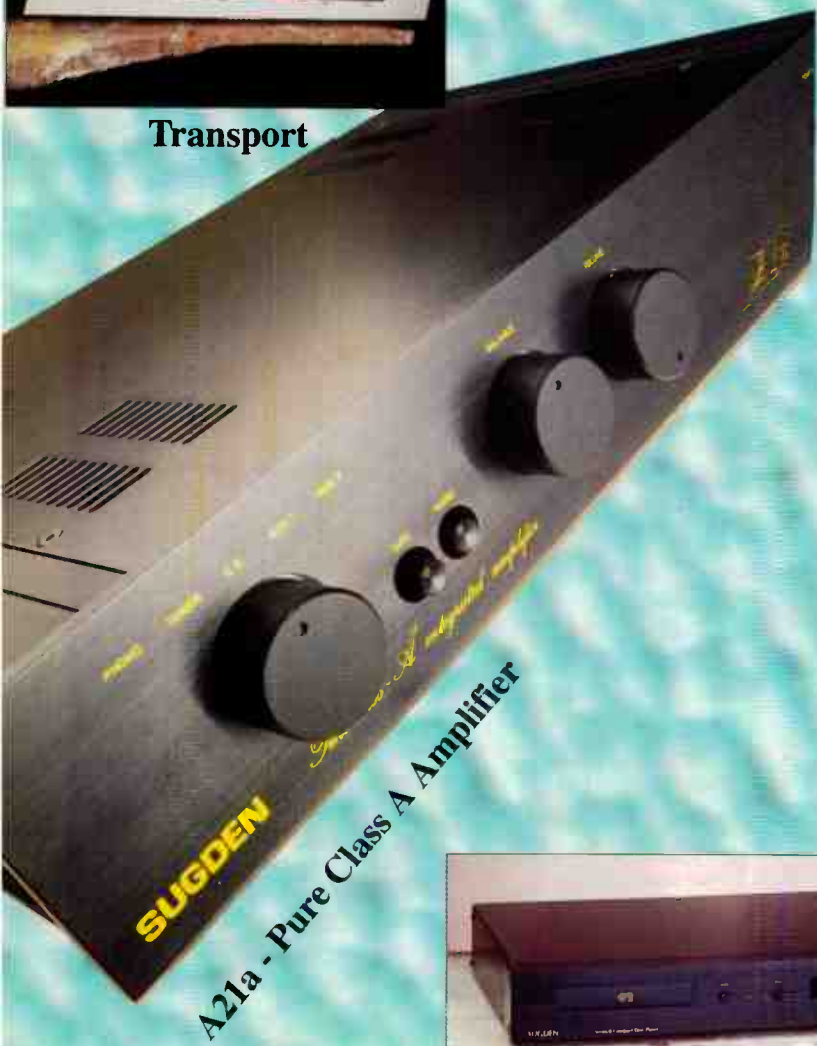
**LPA - 10 Line Amplifier
PA - 10 Phono Amplifier**



**SDD-1 CD Transport
SDA-1 CD Converter**



Transport



A21a - Pure Class A Amplifier



**SF 60 Line Level Integrated
SF 100 Line Level Integrated**



Optima - CD Player



**AU 41 Pre & Power
Amplifier**



SDT-1 CD Player

J.E. SUGDEN & CO. LTD
Valley Works, Station Lane, Heckmondwike, West Yorkshire WF16 0NF
Tel. Heckmondwike 01924 404088/9 Fax. 01924 410069



With two more output valves than the £995 Unison Simply 2, the Simply 4 offers greater power, 16watts, with the ability to drive a wider range of loudspeakers. In sound quality, all the hallmarks of a good single-ended design are present with

the Simply 4. Compared to a push-pull design, the sound stage grows and widens to give a greater sense of the acoustic space around a recording. Whispers at the back of the studio, the rustling of scores, a muffled cough and other imperfections all appear as if by

magic from beneath the music.

Listeners often talk of the 'magic' of single-ended as if this extra detail is being conjured up from nowhere, and I can well see what they are thinking. But although good S.E.s appear to have magical qualities, in truth they're just



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With over 63 years experience in producing loudspeakers for recording, for rock concerts, for discos, for instruments ranging from the wickedest rock guitar to thunderous church organs; only Wharfedale has the ability to give your music the power, the realism, the drama that you really deserve. VALDUS speakers are efficient so you get more sound out into the room for each watt of power delivered by the amplifier. VALDUS takes loudspeaker design into a new era; a new age; a new dimension. Connect-up; Power-up; Volume-up; and say goodbye to your neighbours.

Wharfedale

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200

£109.95



300

£149.95



400

£199.95



500

£299.95

SIMPLY THE BEST?

Dominic Baker listens to the Unison Simply 4, an esoteric single-ended valve amplifier.

showing what a push-pull design conceals or destroys. These qualities are more easily recognisable with well recorded classical works, where the recording environment tends to be significantly larger and more natural than that within the studios used for most rock.

With this in mind, the first piece into the CD player (Marantz CD16) was a foné recording of I Violini di Cremona. This was quite apt really, being recorded in Italy where the Unison is manufactured, using Neumann valve microphones. Mendelssohn's Op62 was captivating, the tone and character of the Stradivari violin finding space to breathe and flourish in the gentle hands of the Simply 4.

The firmly struck keys of a Steinway piano were rich with overtones, forming a solid foundation for the violin. This is an especially well recorded piece, and played through equipment of this calibre, gets as close to the clarity and atmosphere of being at a live event as is possible with present technology. A thoroughly convincing performance by any standards.

Unison's Simply 4 uses EL34 pentode output tubes in parallel single-ended mode. They have exactly the character that everyone expects from a valve amplifier, displaying a big, warm sound with good bass drive, smooth, clear midrange and sweet treble. The ECC82 twin-triodes used in the

preamplifier stages help inject the spark of detail and attack too, bringing the sound to life. All this was brought through aided by Unison's in-house designed and manufactured transformers, the key to a good valve amplifier.

But does the Simply 4 have blood and guts beneath its genteel front? P.J. Harvey's 'Meet Ze Monsta' provided the answer with its raw electric guitars, heavy bass line and viciously struck cymbals. The Simply 4 sailed through this test, even on less sensitive 'speakers such as Heybrook's 86.5dB Heylos, with more than enough power and dynamics to make a clean stab at each transient. Most impressive though was the depth and power of its bass. This is largely due to output transformer core size, and judging by its weight, Unison have made sure there's plenty of grain orientated silicon steel here.

Moving back to gentler melodies, the Unison continued to impress, showing how even-handedly it can cope with a wide range of music and styles. It has an inherent rightness to its sound, the way it pulls a performance together, each instrument perfectly in time and clearly positioned across a panoramic stage. Imaging was first rate too, individual performers seemingly grid referenced to a position, with a strong central image placed squarely between the 'speakers. Stage depth didn't extend

quite as deep, or freely project quite as far forward as some of the better zero-feedback triode designs, but then these do tend to cost more than its modest - when you consider the performance - £1495 price tag.

Unison have done well to provide a range of useful features on the Simply 4. There are 4ohm and 8ohm output taps, essential if you want to get the best match between a valve amplifier and 'speaker. Also relevant to 'speaker matching is the two position feedback selector. In position 1 feedback is higher, reducing output impedance so the amplifier will be affected less by a reactive loudspeaker (one with widely varying impedance across the audio band). In position 2 feedback is reduced, giving better sound stage depth and greater atmosphere, but demanding use of a near-flat impedance 'speaker for a balanced sound.

There are four line inputs, a tape monitor, and Unison also make an external phono stage which we hope to review in the near future. All sockets are gold plated, and the controls, with the exception of the rather squidgy selector, have a firm and positive action. The amplifier's proportions seem a little odd, since it's too deep for a normal equipment rack. But then, the Unison deserves a special place of its own, on view for all to see.

All in all, Unison have put together a highly attractive package in the Simply 4, one that should prove extremely popular with all music lovers. This is something of a classic. ●

Unison Simply Four

£1495

**U.K. Distribution,
23 Riching Way,**

Iver,

Bucks. SL0 9DA

☎ 01753 652669

WORLD VERDICT



With a sweet, detailed and open sound the Simply 4 is unusually musical. Sensible facilities too.

**Measured Performance
see p113-121**

TRUE MUSICAL

quality hi fi products with style and value for

audiolab



8000A

When the original **8000A** was launched in October 1983, it took the Hi Fi world by storm. It quickly earned a reputation for exceptional sound quality, elegant design and the ability to complement all types of modern loudspeaker's.

Over the years Audiolab have continued to develop the **8000A**, introducing new component materials and improving engineering techniques. Today it is still one of the finest and most flexible integrated amplifiers available. The present **8000A** incorporates many of these developments. A new power supply and transformer configuration provides higher current delivery, enabling it to drive more loudspeaker's, with greater control. Audiolab also offer a logical upgrade path to increase the **8000A**'s performance. Simply use the pre-amp output to add an **8000P** power amplifier. This ability ensures the **8000A** will continue to perform for many years. For more details on the Audiolab range, including the **8000Q**, **8000C**, **8000T**, **8000CDM**, **8000DAC**, and **8000PPA**, contact your local Sevenoaks Hi Fi branch.

arcam



ALPHA 1 CD

The much acclaimed **ALPHA 1** is Arcam's most affordable CD player to date. A multi-level Delta Sigma digital to analogue converter means the **ALPHA 1** provides musical reproduction of unparalleled quality. As with the renowned **ALPHA 5+** CD player, the **ALPHA 1** offers slimline styling and minimalist layout, ensuring ease of operation and the traditionally uncluttered look of top quality British equipment.

The **ALPHA 1** is also an ideal aesthetic and sonic match for Arcam's new **ALPHA 6+** amplifier. The two models combine to provide the convenience of a full remote control system, as well as outstanding sound quality. At Sevenoaks Hi Fi you will discover the Arcam **ALPHA** and **DELTA** series of products.

monitor audio



STUDIO 20SE

The breathtaking **STUDIO** series of loudspeaker's from Monitor Audio, offer a no compromise approach to design and construction. This is obvious the first moment you see them. Whether they are finished in a standard satin veneer or a luscious grand piano lacquer, they cater for a discerning palette. The superb **STUDIO 20SE**'s incorporate a gold anodised

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cyrus



III

Following the phenomenal success of the original Cyrus range of amplification, the new **CYRUS III** offers even greater musical presentation. Inside the familiar shoe-box casing, this remarkable amplifier was designed to incorporate the very latest technology, including remote control operation. By adding the **PSX-R** power supply you isolate the **CYRUS III** from the mains, reducing the chance of extraneous noise and glitches. The end result is an audiophile product, adept at reproducing all types of music, from rock to classical, jazz to blues, with great reality. The recent award for best amplifier from the British Federation of Audio Dealers, enhances the **CYRUS III**'s reputation further. For more details on the Cyrus range, which includes the **DISCMASTER**, **DACMASTER**, **DAD 7**, **FM 7**, and new **PRE-POWER** amplifiers, contact your local Sevenoaks Hi Fi - Cyrus branch.

meridian



506

All Meridian components, from the simplest to the most complex, are designed to be operated by the touch of a single button on the MSR remote control.

The **506** CD player is no exception. It provides the very high levels of performance you expect from every model within the superb Meridian range. Utilising a high mass drawer mechanism and steel chassis, means that CD transportation is exceptional. An 18-bit Delta Sigma conversion stage ensures that bass notes are delivered with real slam, while detail is incredibly natural.

These are characteristics common to all Meridian CD Players, including their finest integrated model the **508** and the remarkable **500** and **563** CD Transport and DAC. However, the real benefits of the **506** materialise when it is used with other Meridian components, like the **551** integrated amplifier and **504** digital tuner. Creating an advanced and flexible, full remote control, digital system.

quad



77 CD

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on Monday 2nd October 1995

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hi fi connoisseurs and music lovers

The new **77** CD player is available in two guises. The first is a conventional, mains powered CD player, which offers all the hallmarks of performance and style you associate with Quad products. The second is a bus powered CD player, which can only be operated when connected to the revolutionary **77** integrated amplifier, via the new intelligent remote control. The introduction of this second model enables Quads **77** system to offer almost limitless expansion capabilities, and with a digital tuner soon to be released, the system of **77** components will be complete. With such innovative products, it is easy to see how Quad have become such a successful and well respected manufacturer.

rotel



RC/RB970BX II

Designed and developed in the UK, the amazing **RC** and **RB970BXMKII** pre and power amplifiers deliver real audiophile sound quality. By adding a second **RB970BXMKII** power amplifier, you can bridge the two in mono, providing incredible control with a wide range of quality loudspeaker's. The **RC** and **RB970BXMKII** offer the same slimline styling and characteristically solid build as all Rotel products. A separate record and listening facility with tone defeat and a split volume control means you have almost finite adjustment. While the addition of the **RQ970BX** phono equaliser ensures vinyl replay of the highest standard. For further details of the Rotel range, including the **RCD970BX** CD player, and **RA970BX** integrated amplifier visit your local Sevenoaks Hi Fi branch.

ruark

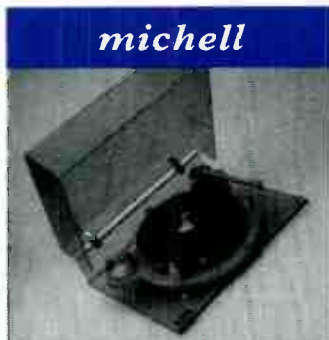


TALISMAN II

If a talisman is something that possesses mystical powers, then the superb **TALISMAN II** loudspeaker's from Ruark are aptly named. Refined musical presentation and style are the hallmarks of all Ruark loudspeaker's. With knowledge gained from years of experience as a member of the Guild of Mastercraftsman, Ruark have the ability to design loudspeaker's that blend seamlessly into any living room.

The **TALISMAN II**'s incorporate a two way bass reflex design. A Seas tweeter and bass/mid driver combine to offer controlled, yet smooth bass lines and crisp, clear mid range. To audition the complete Ruark range, including the new **ICON**, contact your local Sevenoaks Hi Fi branch.

michell



GYRODEC

The **GYRODEC** has always been a class act. Beautifully styled in either a gorgeous bronze or a standard silver finish, it looks like no other turntable. Like all of the products designed and built by John Michell, it offers outstanding performance, extracting every last nuance from a variety of music. The **GYRODEC** incorporates a three point suspension system, so it is very easy to set up. It can also be used with a multitude of tonearms and cartridges, making it one of the most flexible turntables available. Over the years the **GYRODEC** has evolved. With the addition of the new QC power supply it provides finite vinyl replay normally associated with more expensive turntables.

marantz



CD63SE

Marantz are one of the audio manufacturers that enjoys making recorded sound as realistic as is possible. This development of pure fidelity has led the Hi Fi press to bestow numerous Best Buys and Recommendations upon models within their range. The **CD63SE** offers the kind of sparkling performance you associate with more expensive CD players. With a high mass drawer mechanism, and copper screening, ensuring unrestricted CD transportation and air flow, music is always reproduced faithfully. The **CD63SE** also offers an easy upgrade path, via coaxial and digital outputs. With this pedigree, the **CD63SE** represents exceptional value for money.

For more details on the Marantz range contact your local Sevenoaks Hi Fi branch.



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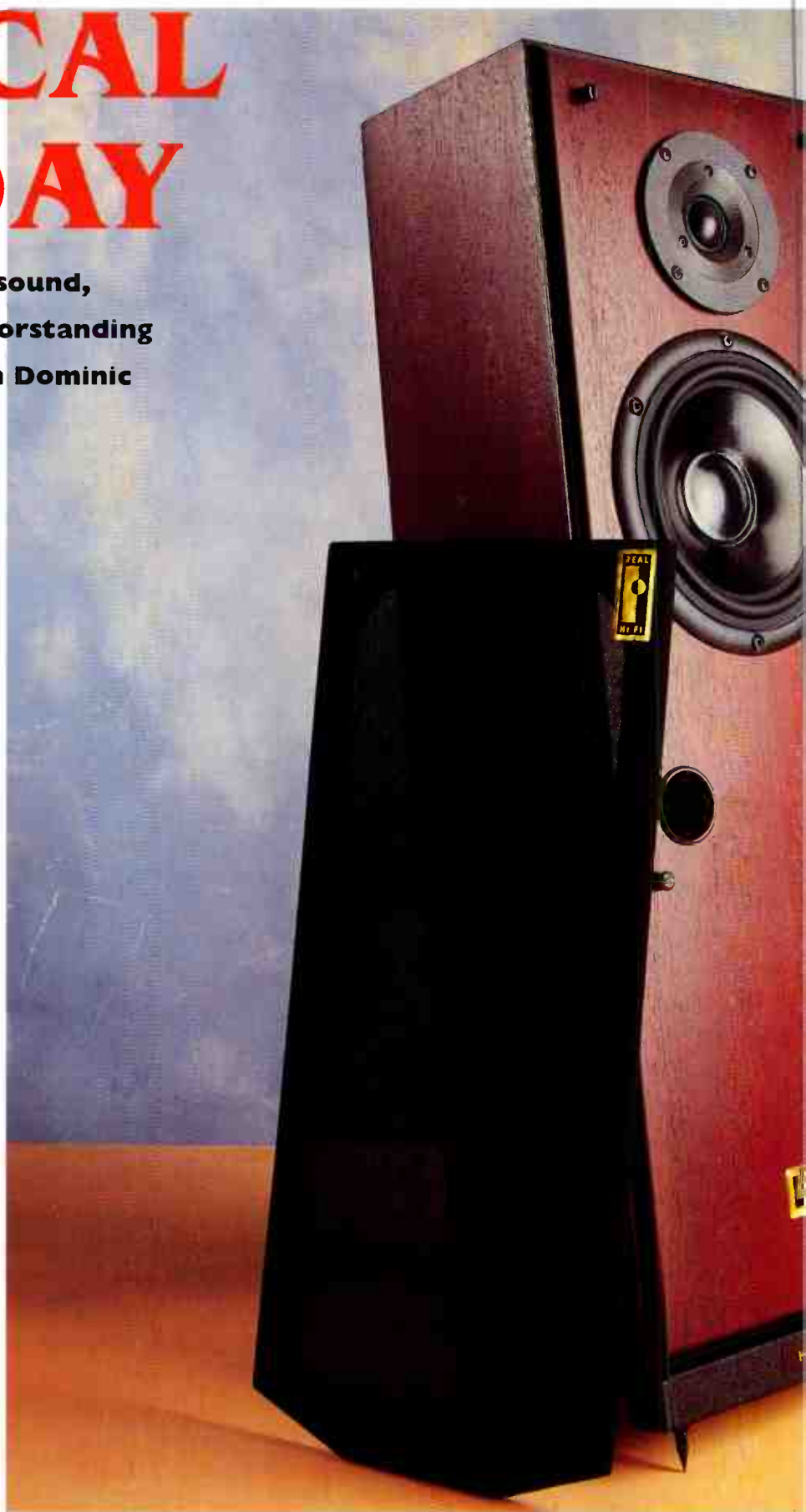
MUSICAL HEYDAY

With a quality finish and sound, Heybrook's new £389 floorstanding Heylo loudspeakers catch Dominic Baker's attention.

If you don't have a sub-£500 floorstander in your loudspeaker range, you're not in the running these days. But why the sudden interest? Well, with today's trend towards sensitive loudspeakers that need little power to drive and match a wide range of amplifiers as a result, insensitive miniatures are out on a limb. They trade sensitivity against bass power, needing muscle amps. to get them going. The larger cabinet volume possible with a floorstander removes this compromise. It allows lighter, more efficient drivers to be used to greater effect.

Personally, I find them a more acceptable domestic alternative to a miniature on an ugly, spiked metal stand. An elegantly proportioned floorstander looks attractive in the home and takes up no more space than a box on a stand. Heybrook's first such floorstander that falls well below the £500 threshold is the exquisitely finished £389 Heylo. Our pair came in a real mahogany wood veneer, richly polished to give a deep shine.

Sitting at just under two and a half feet tall, the Heylos fire their sound well below normal ear height (seated). To counter this, Heybrook have engineered the Heylos to integrate best just above the axis of the drivers, providing a welded steel foot plate that tilts the whole cabinet back by 10degrees or so. The Heylos are wider than they are deep, and the drivers are mounted in the top half of the cabinet which, combined with the backwards tilt, does



make them a little unstable. Lifting the front of the cabinet by just an inch causes them keel over. I had to ensure the spikes were firmly pushed into the floor to avoid any likelihood of this.

The bass/midrange driver is the same as those used in Heybrook's bigger floorstanding Heystaks, a doped paper 6inch unit. The tweeter is a quality fabric dome type, partially horn loaded by the face plate to improve efficiency. These give the Heylos a neutral tonal colour. I found it made them good for acoustic and classical music; they have the ability to reveal subtle changes in pitch and inflexion.

The Heylos are characterised by a light, open and breezy balance which exploits the ambience and space around a performance. Insane Jane's 'Why Am I Living This Way' on vinyl was performed within a pleasingly open sound stage, the echo of the steel strung guitar's harmonics bouncing around the room to create a great feeling of acoustic space. Vocals were projected well forwards, characterised by a cold but sharply etched clarity that gave real insight into the track.

A dry, slightly hard bass quality - not soft and warm - accentuated speed and punch - something these 'speakers have in abundance. Bass couldn't be described as deep and powerful, but it's tight and tuneful. This is certainly a better compromise than being slow and undynamic, allowing the Heylos to resolve a remarkable amount of the detail of bass lines, capturing the resonant and woody quality of cellos for example. There wasn't quite the richness and texture of more costly designs, resulting in a thinner portrayal with less body and depth, but the Heylos did well tonally, giving them a natural ease.

With up-tempo pop tracks, led by dominant bass lines, accompanied by crashing cymbals and wailing guitars, the Heybrooks could sound a little compressed. Inspiral Carpets' 'Saturn 5' pushed them to their limit at higher

volume levels, the powerful bass punch, massed layers of guitars and vocals through the midrange and strong treble all becoming too much. The effect wasn't unpleasant, but dynamic compression blurred leading edge detail, softening the blows, rather than cracking under the strain.

REM's 'Bang and Blame' really opened out on the Heylos, their delicate and detailed treble bringing a crystalline clarity to cymbals. Their

tonally pure midrange helped push vocals and lead guitars to the front of the mix.

Bass was tactile and controlled,

firmly underpinning events, without becoming overblown. I found the Heylos a tidy performer, bringing order and control to a performance.

To summarise, these 'speakers are a civilised and polite performer. Even when provoked, they don't bark or bite, staying on a tight lead. Tonally, they are neutral, helped along in this area by their quality doped-paper bass unit and fabric dome tweeter.

I suspect Heybrook will do rather well with the Heylos, being a cut above the more forceful Mission 734s and Wharfedale Valdes 500s we have auditioned recently. They have a level of clarity in their sound and a quality of finish that few match at this price level, making them sonically confident and domestically acceptable. It may just be a winning combination ●

Heybrook Heylo

£389

**Heybrook Hi-Fi, Estover Close,
Estover Ind. Est.,
Plymouth. PL6 7PL**

☎ 01752 731313

WORLD VERDICT

The Heylos have a neutral, fast and dry sound. Good match for soft sounding systems.

**Measured Performance
see p113-121**

NAD are famous for delivering quality hi-fi to the audiophile at extremely competitive prices. The new 510 CD player continues the tradition, in a modest, unassuming sort of way. Expect a few surprises and raised hackles from the opposition.

The 510's loading tray is stable, and clicks in and out smoothly, an assurance shared with more expensive players. There is no remote control, so all the standard gizmos are catered for on the front panel, giving it a busy appearance. For audio adventurers, the 510 has a Random button, which plays the tracks in no particular order - missing your favourite track every time! This is an invaluable commodity at boring dinner parties where you can reassure your guests that you will change the music just as soon as the CD has finished. . .

The front panel is smart and functional - serious, yet unpretentious. The only quibble is that the track indicator LED is exactly the same as the minutes and seconds display, which can be confusing from a distance. In the absence of visible add-ons you have to wonder where the money's been spent. The good news for audiophiles, is that, as with their 402 tuner, NAD have concentrated on the sound, and it is here that most attention has been lavished.

Gorecki's moving and sometimes quite maudlin 3rd Symphony is haunting, with a treat of string arrangements. The 510 certainly had grace and composure here; the soundstage was wide, deep and well suited to such an orchestral work. Some of Gorecki's string sections



PENURY -

**NAD has always been the choice of the
Floyd-Douglass finds out if the new**



contain long, sustained chords, which are demanding on the ear and the performer. There was no sign of strain in the 510, and all passages were delivered with a pleasing and warming characterisation of this enlightening piece.

Dave Matthews' recent platinum album in the USA, produced by the

Musical Maestro Steve Lillywhite, is a charming testament to the acoustic reproduction capabilities of the 510. In 'Ants Marching', bass guitar was tight and fast in complement to the deep, cracking snare. The strummed guitar in unison was clearly placed in the soundstage and played marvellously off the responding violin. The vocal was well projected, if on occasion just a bit thin. Imaging was excellent for the price, the 510 creating a strong central image between the 'speakers'.



FRIEND

**financially-challenged audiophile. Douglas
510 CD player can keep the side up?**

Matthews' gifted song writing ability in 'Lover Lay Down' was made mystically magical by the breathy, open vocal (extremely close-miked) and soft, brushed snare. The melodious and crooning sax set a warm, composed atmosphere, punctuated only by occasional articulately plucked guitar.

Harry Connick Junior's 'It had to be you' had excellent vocal composure, and the 510 delivered effortlessly. The soundstage, dominated by the projected centre vocal, was wide with muted

trumpets on the right and a cheerful, trilling bassoon taking the occasional guest riff on the left. Strings were warm and piano was natural and not at all 'glassy', as is often the case with budget players. Brass crescendos with the floor toms were powerful and exciting, with a wonderful live feel.

For piano fans, especially jazzists, it is well worth a listen to Harry's 'Our love is here to stay'. The solo piano has a fantastic lower midrange with demanding attack, which once again the

510 cruised through with utmost pleasure. Triplets in the higher register of the keyboard, as well as the resounding bass notes, revealed the tonal quality and action of the instrument. The 510 delivered musical expression really well. This emphasises the performers' 'feel', which at all times was emotive and impressively authentic.

Serious analogue recordings like Cat Stephens' 'Tea for the Tillerman' worked really well with the NAD; most impressive was the lack of hiss in what is a fairly noisy recording. At one point, the guitar reproduction was so good that I could hear a mistimed bass drum clearly. Ah, the bygone days of timecodelessness - delightful stuff.

Female vocals sounded smooth, crisp and deep. So were backing vocals, in a commendable lifelike soundstage. High frequency dynamics, especially in Rickie Lee Jones' 'Livin' it up', were especially impressive. The bell-trees, chimes and triangles really do have acoustic timbre, revealing all the essential harmonics, an ability beyond the reach of many machines.

I tried a number of rock, dance and fusion tracks, which all sounded equally well performed. The NAD 510 is a more-than-competent all-rounder which will find many a home. Real piano lovers will drool, and might well be encouraged to trade down in price and up in musicality. Take a listen - you have been warned!

NAD 510

£199.95

**NAD Marketing,
Adastra House,
401-405 Nether Street,
London. N3 1QG.
☎ 0181 343 3240**

WORLD VERDICT 

The 510 is hard to criticize at the price, having a sweet and musical sound. Super value.

**Measured Performance
see p113-121**



*To Doctor Livingstone's surprise,
someone had swapped his Brubeck CD for Beethoven.*

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Stoned Immaculate

**Opus 3's solid concrete Continuo turntable and parallel tracking Cantus tonearm look the business, but how do they sound?
David Price listens in.**

The Opus 3 Continuo turntable is a seriously specialist design, using mass to suppress vibration and resonance. A massive 24kg concrete marble composite plinth forms the base, whilst the rotating platter weighs 7kg and is made from the same material. Our review turntable, price £550, also came with the optional £350 Cantus parallel tracking tonearm, which can be fitted, claim Pentacone, to almost any deck in a matter of minutes.

The platter is driven from a high quality Papst motor by a belt that looks strong enough to be used for bungee jumping. Although the standard power supply was tried, I opted for

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Bitstream Conversion
is a trademark of the
Philips Corporation.

Pentacore's own beefed-up external supply, costing an additional £125 which, I found, smoothed things out no end. The Continuo's finish is not what you'd call elegant, but in the best Scandinavian tradition it's still perfectly functional. Those wanting a slice of the good life don't need to look elsewhere however, because special finishes can be built to order, including a delicious looking piano black version.

Massive plinths and platters have been tried before by the Japanese in the Seventies, the idea being that heavy plinths absorb colouration-inducing resonances better than light, boxy designs, but this approach, as designers of suspended subchassis decks point out, doesn't work so well with airborne vibrations, which don't disturb the deck's heavy plinth but still affect the delicate, lightweight stylus. Likewise parallel tracking was once regarded as the way to track a phono cartridge, eliminating as it does geometric tracking error and the resultant (mainly innocuous sounding) second harmonic distortion. But it's worth bearing in mind that while this design solves some obvious problems, they're usually a flimsy platform for a cartridge to work from - as their sins are worse than those they seek to cure, this is why so many parallel trackers have died by the wayside.

The Continuo/Cantus combination was actually far more straightforward to set up and use than I expected - fitting the cartridge to the arm simply involved sliding the cartridge holder from the glass arm assembly, bolting the cartridge in, connecting up the wires, sliding it back in place, and balancing the tracking weight with the two screw adjusters at the other end of the cartridge holder. With a Goldring 1042 firmly in place, driving an EAR834P valve phono preamp, Audiolab 8000Q/Ms and Mirage 890i speakers, we were ready to go.

The Continuo has an instantly recognisable sound that reminds you of

its concrete origins - 'hewn from stone' is the best way of putting it. Kicking off (appropriately enough) with The Stone Roses' 'Ten Storey Love Song', it delivered thunderous deep bass that underpinned the track in no uncertain terms. Midband was fairly neutral, but perhaps a tad sterile compared to a similarly priced Michell Gyrodec/RB300 combination. Still, there was a lot going on, with a large, expansive soundstage that oozed solidity and poise. The Opus imaged behind the plane of the speakers, with all but the guitar work at the forefront of the mix hanging well back. This imbued the Continuo with a feeling of lazy confidence, with all the

strands of the mix handled with decorum.

Unfortunately, the higher frequencies lacked the stability of the lower regions. Although there was plenty of space and depth to the sound effects at the start of 'Ten Storey Love Song',

the Opus displayed a slight softening of the leading edges of treble detailing. This was more marked with the subtleties of Spiritual Vibes' 'One Blue Moment', with triangle work that comes across super-fast and clean on the Gyrodec gently rounded off. Not an unpleasant effect, it suited the smooth, gutsy lower frequencies nicely.

Image stability was good too, not quite up to the standards of the best £1000 combinations, but satisfying nonetheless. Vocals were smooth and precise, Kikuko Nonaka's vocal having a solid, almost mastertape-like ease and naturalness. Piano, always a tell-tale test of a turntable, assumed a satisfyingly full tone, with no signs of the vagaries that bedevil cheaper entry-level vinyl players.

Moving to a vintage piece of new wave from the Teardrop Explodes, the Continuo/Cantus returned a seriously impressive performance, with bass guitar thundering confidently from a well conveyed acoustic. Like the Gyrodec, there was a good deal of space around Julian Cope's voice on

“It's the hi-fi equivalent of a Harley Davidson motorbike.”



'Treason', plus a deep, penetrating kick drum and rock-solid imaging. But the Opus 3 again fell down on treble detail, with a tendency to coarsen maracas and blur the subtlest of tambourine work. Despite the great weighty sound, dynamics weren't quite up to par either. Although the deck was far from leaden, it wasn't quite as quick off the mark as it could be.

If you like a big, sumptuous, lazy sound from your records - the hi-fi equivalent of a Harley Davidson motorbike - you'll like the Opus 3 Continuo/Cantus combination. It doesn't quite have the fire-blade agility of some similarly priced packages, but not everyone wants to be Kevin Schwantz. Although it's ultimately not up to the red hot Michell/Rega combination, the Opus 3 will still find admirers who appreciate solidity and dependability ●

Opus 3 Continuo £550
Opus 3 Cantus £350

Pentacore
4 Cross Bank Road, Batley,
West Yorkshire. WF17 8PJ
☎ 01924 445039

WORLD VERDICT

Solid as a rock and almost as heavy. It's a satisfying performer, but not quite the best.

Measured Performance
see p113-121

POWER TO THE MUSIC

With powerful drivers, and plenty of them, Wharfedale's new Valrus 500 loudspeakers are certainly capable of adding zing to a performance. Just ask Douglas Floyd-Douglass.



The younger denizens of this planet collectively spend more on music software - especially singles - than other age groups. There is literally a new mix or single out every week, leaving the musically up-to-date little cash for the hardware to play it on. This favours the budget black box from the East.

This cloned merchandise, devoid of individuality - and often decent sound as well - is stamped with every conceivable grabline and freebie in order to achieve sales. The 'speakers in these systems are strongly compromised, robbing music of life and detail.

Recognising this, Wharfedale have designed a loudspeaker to deliver better sound quality from a midi or small separates systems. Big, powerful and efficient enough to be driven by even modest systems, the Valdus 500s deliver more music for your watts.

At 92dB - an exceptional sensitivity figure - the 500s could lift the roof off most living rooms driven solely by the bathroom tranny. It might not seem logical, but big loudspeakers are potentially more sensitive than little ones and Wharfedale have capitalised on this, producing monsters that stand more than a metre high. The reason is to make the most of low power midi/mini/micro systems. Who'd imagine such systems could drive imposing monoliths like these. Three 8inch drivers, two for bass and one for midrange, and a fuse-protected fluid cooled tweeter make for a large, late seventies style appearance.

Reggae seemed a good area to start, and Sly & Robbie did the honours. Bass, as expected was almost overpowering. Jimmy Cliff's 'Power and Glory' sounded lively and drum sound was powerful and tight. What was noticeable after a while, was that the bass did seem to centre around 80-100Hz. I found that the Audiolab monoblocks drove the Valdus 500s too

well here, resulting in unnatural, thick bass. I switched to the Aura VA-80, which sounded better, having slightly dryer and more controlled bass.

Definition was not one of the characteristics that came to mind, but projection certainly was. Midrange had detail and presence; treble was clear without being overtly harsh. There was adequate, although narrow stereo separation, and the image was forward and lacked real depth. The Valdus is a product that clearly sets out to achieve an objective, in this case filling a niche in the midi-market and in this it is

“The Valdus 500s would not be out of place at a throbbing party, where they certainly have the dynamics and power handling ability to deal with a prolonged dance onslaught”

successful, even if in terms of fidelity alone it is compromised.

Brian Adams' 'Cuts like a knife' had the vocals sounding thin and sadly, quite unlike Brian Adams. A lack of breathiness made his voice restrained and lacking in openness. However, intelligibility was crisp and would certainly lend a hi-fi sounding hand to a struggling midi-system. Lead and rhythm guitar sounded excellent, which I'd attribute to the paper cones - a favourite choice used in hundreds of famous electric guitar amplifiers. Their partiality to rock was further emphasised by Richie Blackmore's scorching lead and powerful backing on 'Rainbows Power' and 'Miss Mistreated'.

The Valdus 500s would not be out of place at a throbbing party, where they certainly have the dynamics and power handling ability to deal with a prolonged dance onslaught - with an added degree of finesse. Gerry Rafferty's 'Baker Street' revealed great power handling, particularly in the midrange (one 8 inch driver is dedicated to this cause, and it certainly works!). The sax could easily soar to live sound

pressure levels, with no evidence of break up or even a wince of complaint - in fact they seemed to beg for more.

I tried a recording of Tchaikovskys serenade for strings, keeping an open mind. This was not unlike taking a Harley Davidson to a Ball where everyone else arrives in a horse drawn carriage; there is a time and a place for everything, or rather a loudspeaker for every style of music. The Valdus make no bones about their preference.

Isaac Hayes in his dulcet and liquid baritone sounded like God taking roll call from a distance. I mean, how much

bass do you really want? Fans of uncle Isaac can now have him at home, tonsils and all. The 500s certainly have the ability to make the most of a limited source. They are perfect for the budget minded as a serious upgrade to standard midi 'speakers, acting as a first entry into the hi-fi separates market. The

Valdus 500s will no doubt find a delighted audience in the midi/mini/micro market where they seem almost magically able to elevate a mini to, well, a Ford Capri 3 litre. They've got grunt and go, but don't cost a lot ●

Wharfedale Valdus 500 £299.95

**Wharfedale Loudspeakers Ltd.,
Sandless Way,
Crossgate,
Leeds LS15 8AL.
☎ 01532 601222**

WORLD VERDICT

Good for adding scale and power to a weak system or budget separates.

**Measured Performance
see p113-121**



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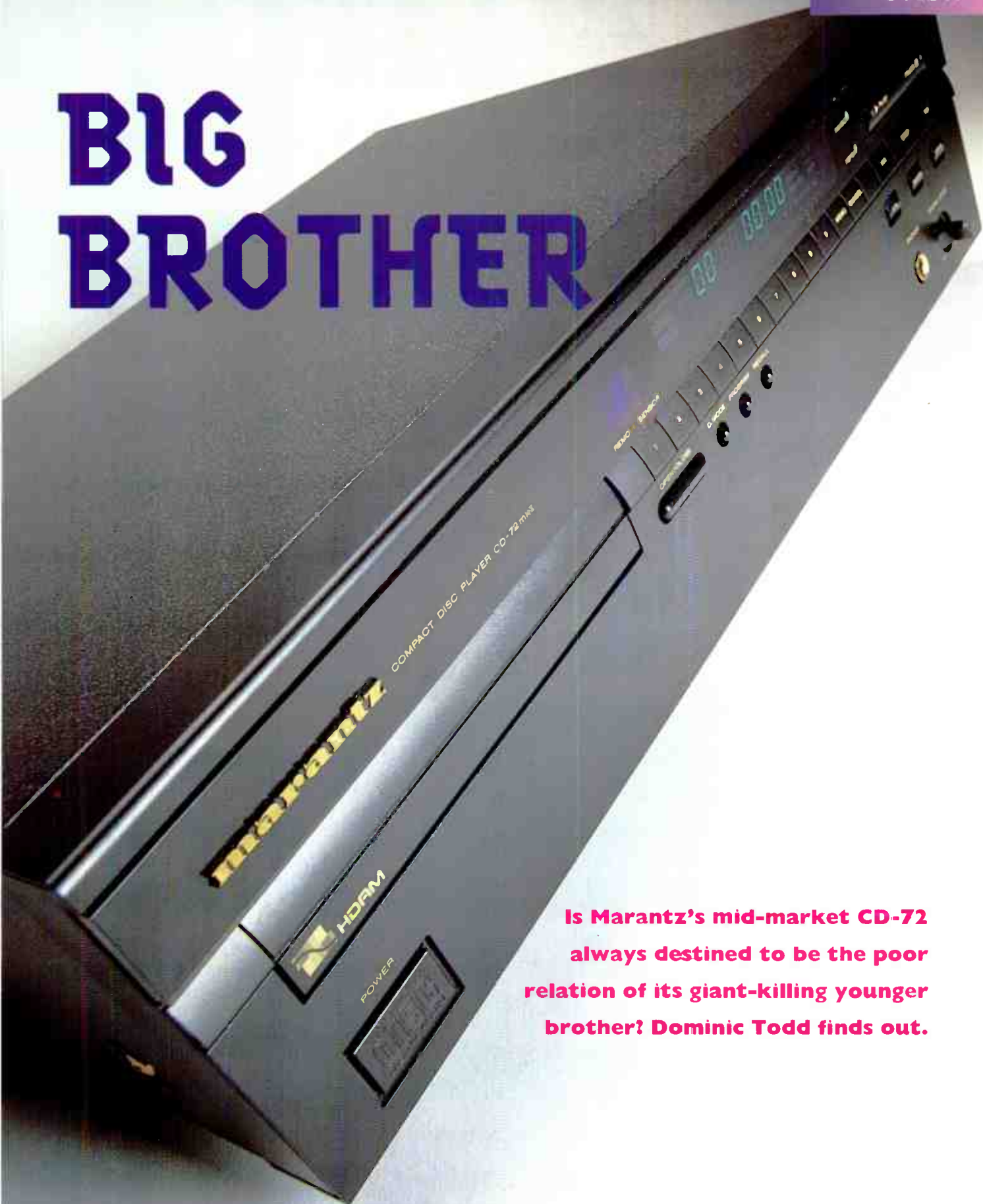
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BIG BROTHER



Is Marantz's mid-market CD-72 always destined to be the poor relation of its giant-killing younger brother? Dominic Todd finds out.

With all the recent publicity surrounding the CD-63 and 63SE,

Marantz's middle order CD players have been rather ignored of late. One such player is the £600 CD-72 which

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has now, in MkII format, undergone improvement.

The basis of the original CD-72, first launched in 1992, is unchanged. This means a Philips CDM-4 transport and a bitstream digital-to-analogue convertor. Marantz have now added their pukka HDAM op-amps. First seen in the CD-63, the HDAM op-amps used in the CD-72MkII are copper clad and proper audio grade devices, rather than the general purpose ones used in many machines of this price.



Features and build quality are exactly as before, which means above average in both cases. The CD-72 is built at Marantz's Japanese factory, although seems to be far more solidly constructed than the CD-53/63s also constructed there. This may be down to the fact that the CD-72 uses an older (less cost-effective) chassis first seen in the late eighties on the CD-50/60. Although this design has been criticised for its ergonomics (since improved), many will prefer its slab-like styling to that of the glossy organic look of newer players typified by the CD-63. The comprehensive features are similar to the CD-63 with the addition of Philips' ubiquitous Favourite Track Selection.

The CD-72 faces tough competition not just from other mid-price players like Micromega's Stage 1, but also from within in the form of the £350 CD-63SE. To discover if the extra £250 is justified, I plugged the Marantz into my system, and listened in. With Jackie Leven's 'Shadow In My Eye', the breaths taken at the beginning of the track were

clearly depicted. Vocals were presented in a clean and articulate manner, yet not quite as expansive as some. During more complex sections, the CD-72 maintained a tight control on the music, resisting confusion and mush. At times though, the resulting sound could be a little sterile.

The Oysterband's 'Blood Wedding' is a lively folk rock number that can sound brash with some CD players. Despite its aforementioned control of complex passages, the Marantz suffered from a slightly splashy treble here. Other machines manage to produce greater definition and a better decay with cymbals. I wasn't altogether surprised to hear this characteristic, as it's long been a Marantz trait, only recently stamped out with the CD-63SE. That said, it's less noticeable than with the previous CD-72. It could also sound slightly edgy and sibilant with certain vocals, often exposing crude recording techniques. The upside of this

is the ability the Marantz has in being able to capture subtle nuances of vocals and instrumentation. It doesn't gloss over the detail, but merely tells it how it is, warts and all. It's certainly more analytical and less coloured than its baby brother. Despite this analytical side though, the CD-72 managed not to fall into the trap of sounding thin and aggressive; violins were full-bodied and convincingly natural.

'Fathers Day' by Weddings, Parties, Anything, showed other advantages of the CD-72's lean, clean balance. It sounded punchy when the music demanded it, without smearing. This was helped by bass that was both tight and always commendably in tune with the rest of the mix. With sympathetic partnering, the sound didn't become too forward and tiring to listen to, but in a bright system it could all become rather overbearing. Bass, although tuneful and solid, wasn't especially deep, in this respect offering little over the CD-63SE.

The piano in June Tabor's 'False, False' sounded anything but, its timbre a

great improvement over the earlier CD-72 which could make a Stein sound like a Honky-tonk! Background noise during quieter passages was extremely low, allowing contrast and space between the instruments and vocals to be fully appreciated. Tabor's vocals were accurately portrayed, with no undue sibilance or congestion. Backing instruments were faithfully placed within the sound stage, which itself had respectable width and depth, although nothing outstanding.

It's hard to believe the CD-72 comes from the same family as the CD-63SE, because the sound of the two machines contrasts in so many respects. Whether the CD-72 is better or not is down to personal preference. It's certainly better built, but the sound quality misses the euphonic yet involving temper of the CD-63SE. What it offers instead is crystal clear transparency and openness, with freedom from serious colouration. Show it a rough recording though, and it'll show you no mercy. It's difficult to recommend the CD-72 over the CD-63SE. Yet for those looking for an integrated, well built machine to brighten up a dull system, the CD-72 is still worth a listen ●

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£600

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WORLD VERDICT



Highly transparent, well built player, that's rather in the shadow of its famous younger brother.

Measured Performance
see p113-121

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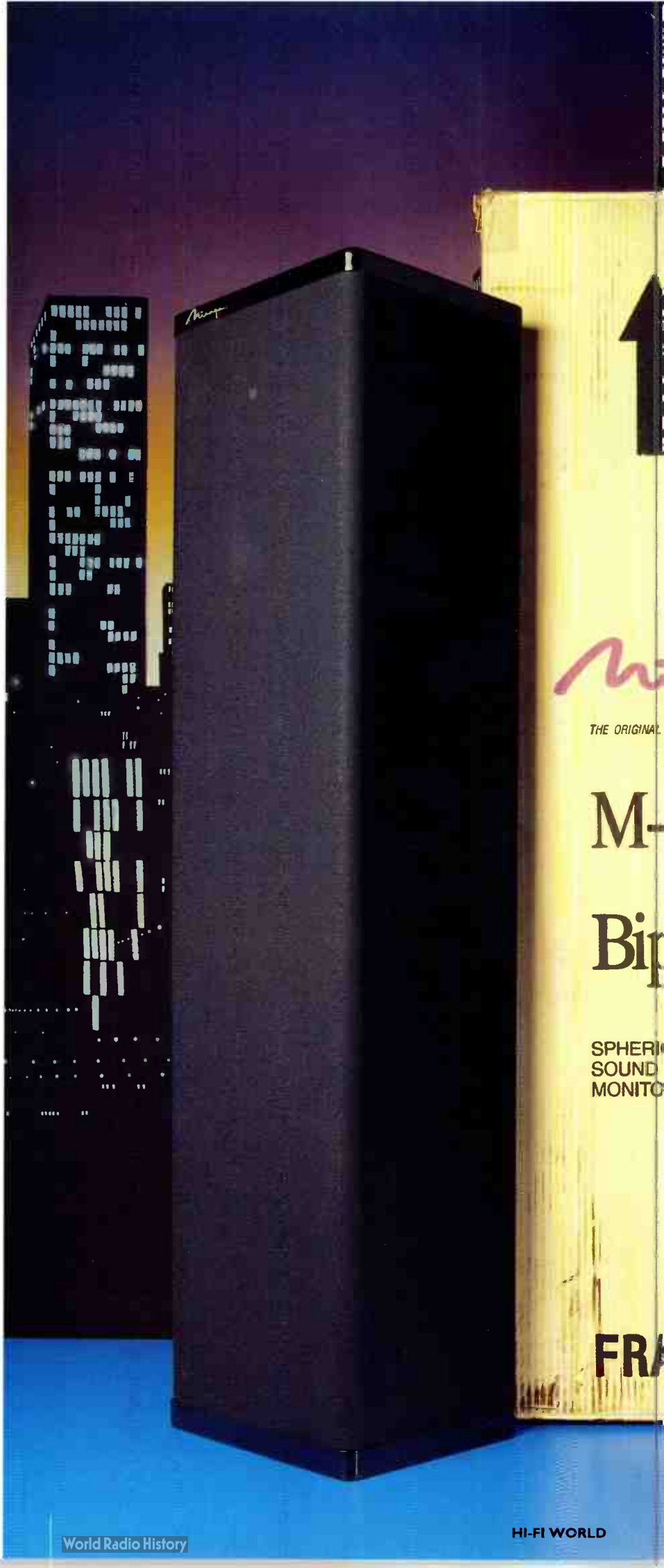


Just an Illusion?

Dominic Baker listens for the magic in Mirage's bipolar 890i floorstanding loudspeaker.

Mirage aren't just another loudspeaker manufacturer, their approach is a little different; the 890is are bipolar. A conventional loudspeaker only fires sound forwards, the rear energy from the drivers being contained by the box. A dipole loudspeaker, like Quad's electrostatic, fires sound forwards and backwards, but the rear energy is out of phase with the front, causing cancellation lobes either side where there is effectively no sound. But Mirage's bipolar system uses identical sets of drivers on the front and rear baffles in phase with each other, radiating sound in a spherical pattern. This all-round sound distribution pattern means that a high proportion of what you hear at your listening position will have been reflected off walls and ceilings, giving a sense of spaciousness. Mirage suggest this is a more accurate way of producing music, mimicking the reflections you get from a concert hall.

A tall floorstander, the £1075 890is are a two-way reflex design. The bass unit is a 5.5inch injection moulded



polypropylene cone and the tweeter a 1 inch vapour deposited titanium dome. Partly because of the doubled-up drivers, they are inefficient and need a powerful amplifier for decent sound levels and good control. In the bass the 890is can become a little thick and over-prominent if they are positioned too close to room boundaries. I quickly found they needed to be placed well out into the room, settling on 3ft from the side walls and 4ft off the back to give a dryer, cleaner bass quality.

Using a pair of Audiolab 8000M monoblocks, the Mirages were tightly controlled, with deep, solid bass extension. They have superb upper bass punch too, giving bass lines real attack. Pink Floyd's 'What Do You Want From Me' had fantastic drive, lending real scale to the track, although dynamics were limited a little, the leading edge thwack slightly blurred. As with many 'speakers using polypropylene drivers, the 890is had a rich and mellifluous character through the upper bass and midrange, which gave them a rather laid back character. Luckily, they are rescued from becoming too soft by the titanium tweeter, which adds a bright and clear edge to cymbals, but some edginess to string harmonics.

Primal Scream's '(I'm Gonna) Cry Myself Blind' suited the 890is well, with deep resonant bass, well projected vocal harmonies and crisp, detailed strings. These 'speakers imparted a naturalness to the sound, which made it easy to sit back and listen, without worrying about being in exactly the right spot for best fidelity. This makes the 890is an extremely attractive proposition, but there is a price to pay. When track 6 arrived on the Primal Scream album, 'Free', Denise Johnson's smooth vocals were exactly that, free to spread across the stage. Normally tightly located, straight between the 'speakers and a couple of feet forwards, with the 890is she was drifting in space, dispersed across the stage and out beyond each 'speaker. In imaging terms this makes them a bit of a non-event, but then they do balance this with a fabulous openness and natural ease.

Lacking the directly aimed punch and focus of more conventional loudspeakers, the 890is take a little getting used to. The stage isn't really in front of you anymore, it's all around, which can be a little disconcerting. Listening to The Stone Roses' 'Tears' I

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was waiting for the powerful, soaring electric guitars to explode forwards, but it never happened.

Although the 890is create the impression of detail and atmosphere, they don't resolve as much of the low level detail in a recording as, say Heybrook's Sextets. The fundamentals are all there, but some of the insight is glossed over. I'm not sure if I'd actually live with the 890is. I'd miss the strong central image presence and more directly focused sound of good conventional loudspeakers. But I can see why listeners could be drawn to them; for some I'm sure they'll be irresistible ●

Mirage 890i

£1075

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WORLD VERDICT



An easy going, open and natural sound makes the Mirages an attractive proposition.

**Measured Performance
see p113-121**

If there's one CD player that deserves legendary status in Compact Disc's short twelve year lifetime, it has to be the Cambridge CDI. In the mid-eighties, CD had already been sold to the general public as the bee's knees, but was yet to garner any serious critical acclaim.

Compared to high end turntables, players from major combatants at the time, like Philips, just didn't get a look in, while many hi-fi journalists found it hard to hide their doubts about the Digital Audio Disc. But then the Cambridge CDI arrived and blew the debate wide open.

EVOLUTION OF THE CDI

The story starts in mid 1984 when Cambridge Audio designer Stan Curtis came to the inescapable conclusion that, in his own words, existing Compact Disc players were "truly awful". Because he found different samples of identical players never sounded the

QUALITY ASSURED



Cambridge's CDI was regarded as the first real high end CD player when launched in 1984, many believing it to be the best. David Price looks back at this classic piece of digital audio.



same. he built a simple error counter to find out what was going on.

Using this circuit, which later became known as the "Quality Assurance Module", Stan started experimenting with a Philips CD104 player to find out how to reduce the amount of errors that occurred when CD players tried to read discs. This resulted in the development of a lead beam suspension system designed to provide better isolation from external disturbance than sprung designs. He also produced several different analogue filters, each replicating the performance of designs used in professional products employed in the recording process. These gave complementary "mirror image" behaviour in the domestic replay chain. The filters were user selected to give the best results with a disc.

So successful was this cannibalised CD104 that listeners remarked how different it sounded to ordinary players. Duly, the decision to go into production with the Cambridge CD1 was taken on the day before Christmas Eve 1984. As Cambridge Audio was exhibiting at the Las Vegas Consumer Electronics show in January, it was the logical place for a new player to make its debut. This meant time was of the essence.

Stan decided to use the CD104's CDM1 metal diecast transport mechanism (Philips' very first transport, for which he still has a lot of respect), along with his custom suspension and switchable analogue filters. But there was still a lot of work to do. The

dimensions of the parts had yet to be laser measured for the machinist, but this proved difficult over the Christmas break, so one of Stan's friends who worked for a major Austin Rover subcontractor illicitly sneaked in to AR to do it. After the break, Stan discovered there'd been a mistake - the CD1's casing was too small to accommodate everything. With little time left he took the most pragmatic option and put the analogue circuitry and D/A convertors into one box and the transport in another.

"So was born the world's first two box CD player," says Stan, "not for some brilliant engineering reason, but because we couldn't fit everything into one box." Instead of using the now standard SP/DIF connection, Stan took the clock signal and the data signal directly from the transport to the other, at a stroke eliminating synchronisation and jitter problems. How did he join the two boxes? With DIN connectors, because that was all Cambridge had on the shelf - Radio Spares were, like everyone else, closed over Christmas!

The CD1 made it to the Las Vegas show and proved a great success. Six months later, as a direct result, other manufacturers started marketing two-box players for sonic reasons, following Stan's example without realising his discovery had been a fortunate accident! Because the CD1 hadn't been carefully production-engineered, it proved expensive and inconvenient to manufacture, meaning - in the best Cambridge traditions of yore - reliability was patchy. In Stan's words: "It was another classic Cambridge product that sounded great and, if everything went well, would last forever, but some of them failed the day you took them out of the box."

So awkward was the CD1 to produce that Stan had to personally cast every one of the lead beams used in the suspension mechanism over a gas ring

using an old cast iron pan - because of health and safety regulations, he couldn't find any subcontractors to do it.

The analogue circuitry also benefitted from the Curtis touch, having a more powerful bass response than existing players. Again, this was almost by accident. To make it harder for anyone to copy his design, Stan decided to encapsulate the D/A convertors, analogue filters and the output coupling capacitor in a solid block of epoxy resin, which was then glued down on the board. "I've never attempted to justify this," confessed Stan, but when he did it, "solid bass appeared from nowhere"!

How does he view the CD1 with hindsight? These days he's no fan of the "quite crude" Sygnetics 5534 op amps used and would have preferred a discrete stage if he'd had the time to design one. Despite this, he's still pleased with his baby even today, "the big characteristic of the CD1 is a bit like listening to a horn loudspeaker - tremendous dynamics, music just surges

"The big characteristic of the CD1 is a bit like listening to a horn loudspeaker - tremendous dynamics, music just surges at you."

at you". But he's still got reservations, not thinking the CD1 the most transparent of players by today's standards.

Despite Cambridge's attempts to kill it off several times to concentrate production on the more profitable CD2, it sold and sold. Stan also has fond memories of the terror the QA module, with its intimidating line of digital counters, instilled in the hearts of player manufacturers and disc producers alike. How could CD be "pure, perfect sound forever" if the QA module counted three and a half thousand dropouts across the surface of a disc? Conversely,

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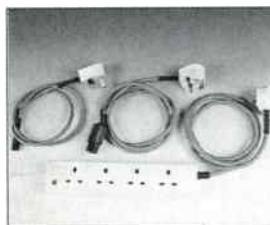


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THE CDI IN USE

There's something undeniably impressive about a CDI in the flesh. It's not so much its build quality, which apart from its metal disc tray is nothing to write home about, but its bulk. The main transport box is a real blast from the past, with the early Philips bright green six digit display. Loading a disc means watching the disc tray amble back into the unit, whereupon nothing seems to happen for a few seconds, until the display starts flashing "P" to indicate it's found something. Sure enough, after several seconds the track gets going.

Underneath the transport is a smaller black box housing the DACs and analogue circuitry, with a variable output control on the front and two sets of fixed and variable phono sockets at the back. Beneath this is the CDI's masterstroke, the "Quality Assurance Module" error counter. Its row of large four-digit displays notch up minor uncorrected errors, medium corrected ones, and major signal dropouts. Watching this can be a fairly depressing experience for silver disc aficionados, as even with brand new, untouched discs, the errors build up with disconcerting speed. Twenty seconds into one new disc straight out the foil, the QA module had counted 94 minor errors and 61 mediums, trashing any claims of "perfection".

SOUND QUALITY

Plugged in and warmed up, our Cambridge CDI was put against our resident Audiolab 8000CDM/Pink Triangle Da Capo, through Audiolab 8000Q/M amplification and Technics' revealing SB-M300 loudspeakers. First the Beatmasters' 'Rok Da House' disc went into the Audiolab/PT reference, giving a big, powerful sound with masses of treble detail and a wide, expansive soundstage. Moving to the CDI and the



high frequencies became duller, softer and more velvety. Upper bass lost some body, but lower bass gained a substantial wallop that happily coincided with the lower regions of the Beatmasters' beloved TB303 bass synthesiser. This gave the Cambridge the edge, sounding faster and more punchy.

Moving to Intastella's 'People', the Audiolab/PT produced a delicious silvery treble that caught the intricate hi-hat work beautifully, bass was powerful and midband super-clear. I was impressed - the Da Capo on top form mixes great refinement with real musicality, a rare combination. The CDI had its work cut out, but fought back valiantly. Where the PT's soundstage had been extremely wide, imaging behind the plane of the 'speakers with reasonable stage depth, the CDI's was narrower, imaged further forward but also showed greater space behind the 'speakers. Stella's voice projected better, the Cambridge separating the main strands of the mix with greater ease. Conversely, the CDI struggled with low level atmospheric detail that the PT effortlessly churned out - main instruments and vocals were bigger, while low level detail was more veiled.

Moving to Miles Davis' 'So What', the pattern continued, with a super-wide soundstage, deep fulsome bass and super-detailed treble from the Pink. The Cambridge on the other hand sounded duller, with less emphasis on the recording's analogue tape hiss. Bass was less powerful until the double bass got right down to the bottom string, whereupon it kicked like few other players I've heard. Meanwhile, solo instruments separated out from the bass, drum and piano backing more convincingly. Indeed this was its forté - an uncanny blend of dynamics with a very convincing soundstage, making for an eminently musical performance.

CONCLUSION

So how does it rate overall? Very well I'd say. The basics - rhythms, dynamics and sheer cohesion - are hard to match by even today's best players. But it does show its age in other respects such as low level detail and atmosphere. In this respect it was an eerie trip back to Compact Disc of the mid-eighties. Yet I'm still more than a little surprised at how well it stands up to today's super-players in sheer listenability. If all Stan Curtis' Christmases were as productive, heaven knows where British audio would be



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* Recommended UK manufacturer's retail price £299.90.

BLACK ECONOMY



Rotel's RD-960BX cassette deck is a careful exercise in costing. Noel Keywood listens out for cut corners.

As I explain in my column this month, cassette decks at any quality level are rapidly becoming more expensive. They've become something of a moving target in this sense - what cost £180 yesterday costs £230 today. And with the Yen growing in strength daily, who knows what they will cost tomorrow.

WHO SAYS THE

BRITISH DON'T

PLAY BRILLIANTLY

IN EUROPE?

EUROPEAN LOUDSPEAKER OF THE YEAR



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B&W

World Radio History

LISTEN AND YOU'LL SEE



This injects reviewer confusion! At first I thought the Rotel's new RD-960BX was bad value then, on ruminating and considering the opposition, I changed my mind. Here's a solid, sensible but budget cassette deck, with remote control, all for £230.

Yen? The Rotel comes from Taiwan, not Japan, but Rotel are a Japanese company and likely the value of the Yen comes into the equation indirectly, if not directly. But although key components like the head and transport didn't measure so well, this doesn't necessarily condemn it to the ranks of also-rans. Cassette decks are such complicated bundles of tricks that there's leeway to make the package work effectively by avoiding weaknesses in design and final alignment.

Although the front looks sombre - you get brighter boxes at funerals - the Rotel looks sturdy enough and has a good set of controls with a light but positive action. Neither is the bare minimum of facilities an inconvenience, as it still boasts a good digital counter with zero-stop, music search, Dolby B & C and HX Pro, auto-tape selection and user-adjustable bias for tape matching. The indicators have 0VU set low at Dolby level, just as well because the head isn't good enough to cope with more. The RD-960BX deck didn't clank or feel flimsy in use, but its design has obviously been "subject to budget restraints", shall we say! Contrary to this impression was the provision of remote control, which is always useful.

Tests showed the deck had been well aligned, but the head couldn't handle the strong signals needed to magnetise metal tape. While a deck of

this price could be relied upon to hit +3 or thereabouts with metal a year or two ago, the RD-960BX managed a miserable -1. This means recording levels have to be kept down when using metals, making hiss 4dB more obvious. However, TDK MA is sufficiently quiet these days not to hiss badly with Dolby B in action, allowing good recordings with only a gentle background hiss. All the same, I decided this was yet another cassette deck best run with TDK

AR ferric tape. We listened to TDK SA (chrome bias) and thought that on balance, although a little quieter than AR, its sound was more congested.

As is so often the case, TDK AR sounded warm, smooth and a touch dull until bias was cranked right back to minimum. At this point some upper treble emphasis appeared, but it helped counteract the innate warmth (saturation) of AR's sound. Using Dolby B the combination worked fine with Eddie Reader's bass-rich recordings, the record indicators dancing around +3. She seemed clear enough on the sound stage - bass didn't wallow and strummed guitar chords sounded crisp. I guessed the more prominent transients of Latin American percussion on Songhai 2 would suffer - which they did, sounding dulled with an easy, unchallenging warmth. Purists would object, but casual users generally wouldn't take offence.

I was surprised the transport could handle Chopin's Opus 48, No 1, with its sustains and testing crescendos. Expecting to hear piano waver, it proved stable enough. However, there was some 'pollution of tone', where the purity of a note seems greyed and coarsened, caused by random wow. All the same, the RD-960BX performed well enough in reproducing piano, a revealing test of transport stability. Single capstan transports can sound shaky at the start of a tape, but not the RD-960BX. The laconic intro to Miles Davis 'So What' exhibited just a little random note wobble, as it were, on TDK AR.

Recording onto TDK MA metal tape was successful just so long as the

indicators went no further than 0VU on peaks, to avoid muddle. Then, hiss was minimal with Dolby B in action and transients came over with conviction. The deck made clear and forceful recordings, displaying the sort of clean-limbed dynamics that come from good record and replay circuits.

On pre-recorded playback, Swing Out Sister sounded bass light and lacking in conviction. There was a distinct lack of high frequency detail and vocals were blurred by the Dolby B noise reduction - what you'd expect from cassette, even though it can sound better. Madonna's True Blue album had its moments though. The bass line was tight and the mix clean, giving the playback circuits the chance to show their stuff. Frankie's 'Two Tribes', with that wonderfully throbbing bass line, sounded solid and powerful. Dynamics were good, and with matching kit, this deck might just be a reasonable choice amongst dance fans. Spoken word also played back particularly well, and piano sounded convincingly steady in pitch.

The Rotel RD-960BX put up a reasonable performance all round, but it's no marvel. Remote control makes it easy enough to use, but balancing this is limited ability with metal tape. However, for those who stick to budget ferrics in any case, and don't much care about pre-recorded replay quality, it offers a competent enough package. The way the Yen is going these days, it offers as much as can be expected, it would seem, especially with remote control ●

Rotel RD-960BX £229.95

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

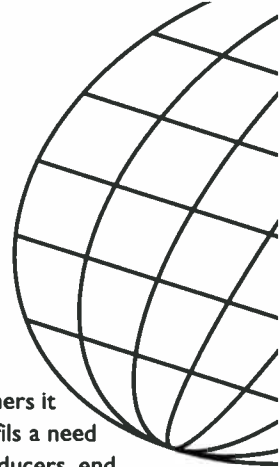
WORLD VERDICT

A solid, competent machine that's reasonable value for money.

Measured Performance
see p113-121



World



UNBIASED BASF

We refer to your feature in the July 1995 issue of Hi-Fi World on "Winning Formulations" and are somewhat surprised and disappointed to note your comment that "brands like Fuji, Scotch, JVC and BASF are as rare as Tory voters".

The marketplace for audio and video cassettes has changed considerably within the last five years with enormous growth in the supermarket sector. All business, especially new business, is good for the blank tape market, and the players in it. Being valued at an estimated £62 million for 1995, it is still a large value market. In share terms to date, Audio shares are as follows (source: Nielson):

BASF	7.0%
Maxell	4.0%
Memorex	7.3%
Sony	7.6%
TDK	60.0%

It is quite clear that the market is dominated by TDK, but music and hi-fi stores are not representative of the whole market. In order to achieve a totally representative test, a wider brand range is more often featured, and this type of test is fairer and unbiased, which ensures customers draw their own conclusions as to which product to buy.

**Sian Roone,
Marketing Department,
BASF plc
Middlesex.**

I walked the streets of Central London to check actual availability of blank tapes, heading south from our offices down the Edgware Road, East along Oxford Street, then North up Tottenham Road,

bolting like a rabbit into numerous and various specialist hi-fi stores, as well as Virgin and HMV megastores. BASF tapes were all but invisible. TDK tapes were everywhere. Knowing TDK have a tight grip on the market, in technology and market analysis, I 'phoned them for info. Here are the Gfk figures they supplied on sales by volume -

BASF	3.0%
Maxell	5.6%
Memorex	13.7%
Sony	13.2%
TDK	48.7%

They differ from your own, but not to any degree that would have affected what I said.

I've carried out numerous comparative tape tests over the years and consistently, front runners have been TDK, Sony and Maxell. Were BASF, or anyone else for that matter, ever to have shown greater ability in this field, and were your tapes more widely available, then I would be amenable to running a long comparative test. As it is, we have to devote precious space to more popular items. NK

JUST SAY NO TO SUPER-CD!

I can't quite see the point of your campaign against CD sound. Unlike your campaign against early CD players, it doesn't seem to have a productive purpose. CD is here to stay whether you like it or not, and harking back to the days of vinyl and its supposedly superior sound is

simply a waste of time.

You're wrong when you say CD's raison d'être is superior sound, as it has no raison d'être - it was developed almost by chance, started life as a laser video disc and wasn't a great success when it was first launched on the market, mainly due to overpricing. A market place doesn't need justifications for new products, as the market itself is value-free. (Only governments impose values on markets through regulations.) It is simply supply and demand. Therefore CD has no raison d'être, it simply fulfils a need that LP didn't satisfy - it's more durable, portable, doesn't suffer from surface noise and is more convenient. In fulfilling a need

for consumers it also fulfils a need for producers, end of story!

If you prefer LPs, fair enough, so do I as far as sound quality goes, but nostalgia is a waste of time. You can't turn the clock back on progress, you can only look forward. Many hi-fi critics are impatient, and constantly bemoaning CD's limitations compared to LP, and can't wait for super CD. This attitude is negative and pointless. CD has already greatly improved, with better players and superior mastering processes like SBM.

My prediction is that DCC has failed, Minidisc has shown only moderate success in countries like

Letter of

LACK OF CHOICE

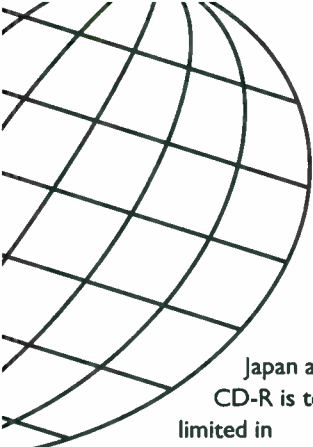
I find there is an abysmal lack of choice in appearance of audio products. Audio equipment is bulky and makes a considerable impact in the appearance of your living space and I find the endless rows of black boxes dull and uninspiring. Of course many U.K. and U.S. manufacturers provide an alternative, but at a price which many of us cannot afford. This is where the provision of home built products can allow us the

choice of finish in order to fit within the home environment. I am still the proud owner of a Michell Hydraulic Reference turntable which is now almost 20 years old - where is the imagination in design shown by products such as this in today's product, other than at Michell?

Please, you manufacturers out there, give us some choice but please not at the expense of usability - it is possible to manufacture simple, attractive, ergonomic

Send your letters to Hi-Fi World Letter Page,

writes



Japan and CD-R is too limited in

applications. In my view, the future music medium will be solid-state with data reduction. As for CD, I don't know. Solid state technology lacks the consumer appeal of CD, and it would be nice to think that record companies would be interested in sound quality, but they're working within the limitations imposed by a mass market. Without the demand for super CD, record companies aren't in the position to launch it, even if they want to. They can't force consumers to buy new CDs, especially when consumer penetration has reached a certain level.

I enjoy reading about new technology like super CD,

but I think you're on a hiding to nothing in trying to promote it.

Julian Osborn, Bristol.

Commercial products don't just diffuse into the market - they are aimed to fulfil the perceived need you talk about. So CD did have a raison d'être, that of bringing superior sound together with convenience and durability. Large Consumer Electronics Companies are very directed in their strategies, even if they are defeated by the exigencies of the marketplace.

Is writing about what CD is capable of in a different guise really "negative and pointless"? As we revealed in last

month's issue, the ARA - a group comprising some of the world's leading audio academics and industrialists - also believe there's much scope for improving on today's geriatric seventies digital audio specification.

This is the crux of the problem. Some have read World's criticism of CD as a dislike of the medium itself. This is missing the point - we've nothing against CD as a storage medium, it's the current 16bit digital audio specification that we find deficient. This is most definitely not "here to stay" - changes are afoot and it's no longer a question of if but when.

You suggest that we're nostalgic for vinyl, wheeling out notion of "progress" as justification for CD, but progress or not, it doesn't stop a fifties analogue music carrier sounding better

than a seventies digital one.

I think World readers would agree that campaigning for something that's real progress - 24bit digital audio with 96kHz oversampling on a 5 inch silver disc, bringing analogue-like sound with digital convenience - has to be the right thing to do, for vinyl lovers and CD buffs alike. DP

I'd like to reinforce the point that we've campaigned, in effect, for better CD. In absolute terms (ignoring price, etc) sound quality has never been convincingly better than LP, many - including ourselves - finding it worse. We want a better digital code for CD.

At a personal level, I've been able to measure CD and LP

continued on page 46...

the Month

equipment without resorting to dreary racks of black boxes, and preferably at prices that the average enthusiast can afford. We all have to live with our equipment and we would prefer to live with something attractive!

Leslie A. Hopkins Billesley, Birmingham.

Couldn't agree more. Since I've used a Michell turntable, I've become convinced that there's no excuse for just sticking equipment,

however well engineered, in a black box. The Gyrodec combines form and function in an unsurpassed way. It is totally reliable, easy to use and maintain, extremely robust, sounds superb and looks stunning. If that's not an accomplished design, I don't know what is. John Michell has shown the way forward - perhaps manufacturers should try and follow him instead of each other? DP

64, Castellain Road, Maida Vale, London W9 1EX.

WIN HI-FI WORLD INTERCONNECT CABLES

OR PERFECT PITCH'S FRANCINSTIEN CD

ENHANCER

The writer of the most interesting or funniest letter will receive a choice of either: a free set of Hi-Fi World's silver plated copper interconnect cables, worth £69.95, or a Francinstien CD convertor enhancer worth £150.



.... continued from page 45

comprehensively, which is difficult, demanding use of a sophisticated spectrum analyser, and well know that CD is not a convincing improvement technically, once psycho-acoustic effects are taken into account. So I don't swallow the argument that CD is objectively better either.

Finally, continued complaints about CD sound quality did, in the end, strike home, I can assure you. Philips engineers and executives are a little rueful about the whole thing in private. So the great buying public - especially our ever vociferous readers - really have had an influence. If you shout long and hard enough, you get heard, it seems. Improved CD is now firmly on the agenda, but LP has been the quality yardstick that has helped it along. NK

FOR THE RECORD

Whilst I believe LP sounds better than CD, there has been precious little mention about the sound quality of current LP releases, which sound digital simply because most are new recordings. In fact a high quality turntable playing digitally mastered records sounds similar to CD. Just as many in the eighties noticed the degradation in sound quality the analogue to digital transfer made. We're now seeing the reverse, and I must confess I actually prefer some CDs to LPs. But ultimately the main determination of sound quality depends on the recording.

**Dr M.C. Tan,
Leicester.**

We've certainly had a lot of talk about the relative merits of the two formats, without touching on

recording quality. In this respect it's difficult to generalise. I don't think digital recording is necessarily bad, but different. But you rightly identify those god-awful digital remasters of the eighties. I've yet to hear any remaster that approaches the sound quality of the analogue master, or even a decent digital master. Why record companies boast about it is beyond me - it's tantamount to saying "the sound quality of this classic analogue recording has been obliterated".

I think D/A and A/D converters are pretty bad news for music, so engineers should keep things in the analogue or digital domain, but not change between them needlessly often.

Interestingly this practice has recently started catching on, especially in the jazz field where Blue Note have digitally remastered (and Super Bit Mapped) only for the CD versions, leaving vinyl versions with the original analogue masters. This company, for one, knows on which side its bread is buttered. DP

IT'S FAB - 'TIL NEXT MONTH!

It's good to find a hi-fi magazine which is not anti-Quad. Other mags advise Quad owners to ditch them, and buy the latest Japanese wonder kit. I'm very pleased that you don't fall into the game category. You've probably guessed I'm a Quad owner! I have had a 34/306/FM4 system for about 6 months. The 34 and FM4 were bought second-hand, both absolute bargains at less than half new price. The 306 was bought new only because a second-hand 405 was too loud for our small living room.

I have a great deal of

respect for Quad and other companies like them, who pride themselves on looking after the customer. I have always had excellent service and advice from Steve Halliwell and others at their factory. It is a great pity that other manufacturers couldn't take a leaf from their book.

My reason for writing is the interesting letter Julian

provide rock-solid aftersales support for their products, a policy which engenders great customer loyalty. It also does a lot for Britain's image abroad. Japanese buyers really go for this type of service; as consumers and producers they show enormous attention to detail, and duly respect it



The classic Quad line up of 34 preamplifier, FM4 tuner and 306 power amplifier. Good reliable engineering and a smooth sound to match.

Osborn wrote back in February. Like many others, I have bought a Marantz CD63 due to magazines raving about it. It is sad that so many of us get taken in with these reviews. When it first came out, it was hailed as the best sub £500 CD player money could buy. Within two months, the new Pioneer was better, then the Sony. Next, out comes the CD63SE. Another gift from the Gods by Marantz. Where does it stop? When will we learn?

**Mike Newell,
Kenilworth,
Warwickshire.**

I've also respect companies like Quad who

greatly when they see it in other countries' products.

It's a shame that magazines trumpet new products with such voracity, only to suggest that next month's new product is even better - it's unhelpful, and promotes the built-in obsolescence ethos that companies like Quad are so against.

When reviewing good new designs it's easy to make dramatic pronouncements, but you often find in the cold light of day, things weren't as they first appeared. That's why we're so careful and sometimes over-equivocal, such as our controversial three-way DPA

*Renaissance review!
Anyway, it seems that
Julian has put pen to
paper again... DP*

MYSTIC MEGABYTES

Bearing in mind the ongoing development of multimedia and high density formats, I thought I would add some views of my own.

The computer industry is now taking a firm lead in promoting the home entertainment system of the future, namely the computer. They have successfully demonstrated that not only can you word process and do the accounts, but you can watch TV, listen to music and communicate with the outside world. Yet it's ironic that to achieve some of the above, you have to use severe data reduction - even though we are told we're in the 'information age'. While the film industry has actively supported multimedia discs, it will be the computer industry that has the major influence on the final format design, relegating film and music to add-on extras to attract consumers into purchasing a particular computer brand.

So where does this leave specialised hi-fi? Somewhat isolated? In some ways, yes. While Philips and Toshiba have said their respective systems could offer 24-bit, plus higher sampling frequencies, it would mean record companies having to produce both high density and normal CDs. I doubt if there is a large enough market to support this, and with their bad experiences with other formats, the music industry might lose interest very quickly.

Nevertheless, I still don't believe the future is all doom and gloom. With new multimedia CD formats, hi-fi companies that have gained experience with designing

CD players could easily create equivalent high grade multimedia equipment, and in doing so the tables could be turned. Instead of the computer taking centre stage, the hi-fi system becomes the main element in a home entertainment system.

After all, only hi-fi manufacturers can produce good sounding speakers, amplifiers, DACs and transports. With some extra circuitry, video cards could be installed in players or stand alone units providing video playback and connection to a computer while the audio side remains unaffected. Now the computer has become the peripheral item. There are certainly a number of British hi-fi specialists quite capable of producing such equipment and even moving into actual computer system manufacture.

I would like to see hi-fi companies cheekily attending computer exhibitions promoting these ideas. And who knows, when the visitors are growing weary of the latest spreadsheet upgrade, one could introduce them to that universal data storage format, the vinyl disc! Who knows, you could end up with a system incorporating a Pentium processor and a 211 valve. There's a thought.
**Robert Fraser
London.**

*I'd like to see the 7" single
return to the High Street.
As kids have decided it's
not for them anymore,
let's use it as a computer
data storage medium.
After all, any multi-media
computer sound files are
bound to sound better on
vinyl aren't they! No -
just kidding. That said,
last week Andy Grove
confessed that he wanted
to build a valve computer,
and the frightening thing
is I really believe he was
serious! DP*

*In all this excited babble
about our multimedia
future, where we whizz
around the Internet and
exist in cyberspace, we've
all forgotten that half the
population (more?) still
has a problem changing
the mains plug. In 20 years
time I believe techno fear
or loathing will have
driven those not ecstatic
about silicon (not
implants, you fool) into
gibbering techno-phobes
who'll deeply love and
empathise with homely,
glowing 211s and pieces of
black vinyl with a wiggly
groove. NK*

**AN IMPOVERISHED
SPOTTER'S GUIDE...**

I often recommend systems to my friends, many of whom are students or on low incomes, so money is very tight. Unlike most hi-fi magazines you don't subscribe to the "newest is best" approach so I thought I could pass on my experiences as they might be useful for those without too much dosh!

Goldring Lenco GL75
This is my favourite cheap deck, which can usually be bought for between £5 and £25. They often need new arm pivot bearings (indicated by the arm's inability to lower properly) readily available from Technical and General for about £8. The cartridge is best replaced by Ortofon's VMS-2E, an absolute bargain at £12. It's best to clean the platter's underside with meths to get the best results. On some plinths, the suspension is too springy. This can be damped by removing the base and stuffing the springs with foam rubber. If they are properly lubricated, GL75s don't rumble.

Pioneer PL12D
Another good deck is the Pioneer PL12D which usually only needs a belt, costing approximately £2.

Leak Stereo 30/70

I've found these amps to be good and reliable, with prices ranging from £10 to £40, while a friend recently picked up a mint Stereo 70 for a couple of pints of beer. The 30s give 15watts per channel and the 70s a more modern 35watts per channel. Some of the inputs have high/low gain switches which help if using a CD. Five of my friends use these and are happy with them.

Trio KA2000a, 2002, 4002

These classic early seventies models are also good to use and can be picked up for approximately £10-£30.

Sugden A48, A21

These are excellent amplifiers but a lot more costly at £60-£120.

Celestion 3, Wharfedale Diamond IV, Mission 76I

Good budget speakers are more difficult as a lot of older designs now sound somewhat woolly, but it's possible to buy the above models cheaply for between £25-£50.

Leak Delta FM

This tuner is good and cheap, approximately £10 to £20, and it sounds better than more modern designs.

CD Players

Sorry I've no comment to make on CD players as none of my friends feel they are worth the expense.

**Davies McGuire,
Leicester.**

*While we're in
trainspotting mode, here's
some more silvery
seventies super-budget
separates : Turntables:
Micro Seiki MB10, Trio
KD1033. Amps: Trio
KA3700, JVC JAS11G.
Receivers: NAD 7020. Tape
decks: Pioneer CTF-500,
TEAC A103. CD players:
Sony CDP-101...and there
goes the Great Western
Railwa...oops, sorry. I
could continue, but I'm
sure someone somewhere
can do it better... DP*

OVER - EXPOSED

Nice sound, shame about the black boxes, thinks David Price of Exposure's Super XV integrated amplifier.



The Exposure Super XV integrated gave me an eerie sense of *deja vu* as I prized it from its box - the feeling of coming across something once familiar, but long since forgotten. For a short while at the end of the eighties I used Exposure's smaller X, and enjoyed it a lot. Back in the days of *Moonlighting* and *Maggie*, competition between high-end integrations wasn't so fierce. Although the X's aesthetics and build were 'basic' (to put it kindly), it was no different in this respect to its home-grown competition, while foreign amplifiers were regarded with such disdain that the high quality of their finishes wasn't enough to redeem them.

Nowadays, things have changed. For the £800 that a Super XV will set you back, most buyers expect a smooth operating, svelte looking product. But despite italicising the silk-screened logos on the front panel, Exposure haven't really progressed much in the style and finish stakes. Were I a hi-fi newcomer who saw the Exposure XV sitting next to a Meridian 551 or Quad 77, it pains me to say that I don't think I'd even bother to listen to it. This is a shame, because when powered up and driving Technics' SB-M300s it turned in a creditable performance which took me back to the days when everything in life

depended on whether you had an LP12 or a Xerxes.

Still, today Exposure amps have an intrinsically musical sound, combining Naim-like get up and go with a smoother, more beguiling presentation. But don't confuse smoothness with lack of grip, the bass sequencing in the Beatmasters' 'Rok Da House' was testament to the XV's grip in the lower regions, pile-driving the sub-bass and TR808 bass drum with the confidence that only a well designed transistor amplifier can muster. There was plenty of detail too, with countless percussive subtleties clearly distinguishable at the back of the mix.

Tonally it was a bit grey and uninviting, and sound staging wasn't quite up to Naim NAIT 3 standards, particularly clear on Chandos' recording of the LSO playing Bruch's Violin Concerto No 1. Soloist Hideko Udagawa was crisply portrayed, with every last rhythmic nuance caught by the grippy Super XV. Although the leading edges of Udagawa's violin were super-crisp, the instrument lacked body, sounding slightly wiry. Furthermore, the Exposure ultimately failed to impart the sense of a living, breathing orchestra, sounding a touch veiled and hazy with very low level ambient information.

Sadly however, if you looked beyond

the basics - which were, to Exposure's credit, absolutely spot on - you came away wanting a richer, more varied tonal palette, a deeper, more breathy acoustic and a smoother midband.

For Exposure buyers - like myself when I was knee-high to a Linn Sara - this really isn't the point. What the Exposure Super XV does, it does very well, and this involves sinking inexorably large amounts of power into difficult (eighties-style) loads with gratifyingly rhythmic results. But sound quality aside, do Exposure amps still have to be black boxes, even when the decade to which they belong - the eighties - is but a fading memory?

Exposure Super XV £800

**Exposure Electronics,
The Works, 59 North Street,
Portslade, East Sussex BN41 1DH
☎ 01273 423877**

WORLD VERDICT

A strong sounding transistor amp for rock. Build and finish could be better and price lower.

**Measured Performance
see p113-121**



SHADOW BOXING

Harman's new HK620 integrated amplifier doesn't look set to steal the limelight, says Dominic Todd.

For as long as I can remember, Harman Kardon have had a fine reputation for their budget amplifiers. Here we take a look at the remote-controlled £280 HK620, which continues in this tradition. The only disappointments on the feature side are the lack of a tone bypass switch and the fact that a phono stage will set you back another £30.

This new amplifier continues to use discrete components, but with measures taken to simplify the design. The Zobel network coil on the 'speaker terminals has been removed (as with Naim amps), output transistors have been up-rated, signal and current paths are minimised and star-earthing is now used. During the test, I ran the Harman using my usual sources and a pair of Celestion 5 'speakers. Yet despite a modest output of 40 watts, a (claimed) hefty current swing of +/- 40amps should ensure all but the most difficult of 'speaker loads can be driven.

The instant impression, gained with Rory Melody's 'Huge Sky', was one of a gutsy, powerful sound. Bass was firm and deep, but could occasionally conspire to over-ripen the mix. Vocals were smooth and, in contrast to older Harman amplifiers, refined too. Yet it could sound slightly veiled - in comparison with a Pioneer A-400 it lacked transparency. Having said that, this wasn't to the detriment of detail. Although not brimming with every subtle nuance, background detail could still be heard, if not quite as finely etched as some.

Simpler ballads from June Tabor and Tom Waits showed the HK620 in its best light. Vocals weren't projected quite as freely as they might have been, but remained smooth, articulate and lacking sibilance. Just the tonic, in fact, for an over-exuberant CD player. The deep, rich low frequency presentation suited the double bass playing on the Tabor tracks, although it lacked some

texture.

With the live sections of Pink Floyd's 'Pulse', the Harman sounded a touch mechanical and lacking in atmosphere, sometimes becoming confused on more complex tracks, with vocals not given sufficient differentiation from the rest of the performance. It occasionally lacked excitement, with some softening of dynamic contrasts, but its freedom from compression smear, and sturdy, well integrated bass saved the performance from anonymity. Whilst nothing particularly special, the spatial width of the sound stage was good enough to create a credible performance.

Despite its best efforts, the Harman Kardon HK620 can't really cut it as a top audiophile amplifier. Were it £100 cheaper like its non-remote sister it would be a different story. But in this highly competitive class, sound quality is simply unexceptional, and not quite as transparent or informative as the best at the price. Don't write it off altogether though, as it will suit systems that need taming or drive relatively difficult 'speakers. It's also an extremely appealing package in terms of features, style and build quality. So although probably not one for the dedicated audiophile, the HK620 should find its niche ●

Harman Kardon HK620 £280

**Harman Audio UK Ltd.,
Unit 2,
Borehamwood Ind. Park,
Borehamwood,
Herts. WD6 5PZ
☎ 0181 207 5050**

WORLD VERDICT

Not quite a giant killer, the Harman is nevertheless a good solid budget buy.

**Measured Performance
see p113-121**

Mirage®

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You Can Start Hyperventilating Now

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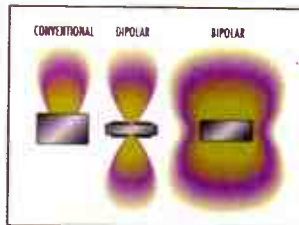
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This binaural showdown involves the brand new Sennheiser HD 455, part of the new 'expression line' and the Vivanco SR 850. In terms of specification and design, the two models are quite different. The HD 455 is a lightweight, open 'phone intended for multipurpose use, including the much neglected personal stereo department (in terms of decent quality headphones). The SR 850 is a half open design, combining the transparency of an open 'phone with the efficiency and bass control of the studio preference, a closed, ear enveloping cup. The only similarity between the two models really, is the price-tag; around £50 each.



SENNHEISER HD 455

The Sennheisers are commendably lightweight and comfortable to wear. An added bonus is that all the leads and pads are replaceable, which is great value long term if you intend to clock up musical mileage.

Midrange had a clear presence and real attack, particularly on the snare drum in Dave Weckl's 'Heads up' and the bass was tight, fast and clean. Female vocals, courtesy of Rickie Lee Jones, sounded refined and distinctive. The HD 455s were easy to listen to, if somewhat restrained, or should I say 'polite'.

On Jean-Michel Jarre's 'Magnetic Fields' synthesisers were well balanced and dynamic. The 455s were capable of delivering distortion free music at more than reasonable levels, without disturbing fellow commuters. The

external padding does well to absorb most of the potentially offensive high frequencies, like those annoying hi-hat cymbal repetitions - a not uncommon experience on the underground among youngsters brandishing 'jungle'. Classically speaking, the 455s really shone when exposed to serious orchestral music. Rimsky-Korsakov's 'Scheherazade' was inviting, and sounded mature - the new Sennheiser drive coils handle the dynamics with such conviction and control in much the same way that their far more expensive designs do. Impressive. Excellent ambience and the real feel of a concert

made the 455s a pleasure to listen to. The woodwind and strings were soothingly smooth, and the lows of the cellos bowed through with warmth and elegance.

VIVANCO SR 850

The Vivanco SR 850s in contrast were equally plausible, but in a more robust, alive and kicking sort of way. The immediate sensation, other than the difference in weight, was that the Vivancos gave an extremely wide perception of dynamic range.

There was evidence of bass and treble lift, which made them exciting to

listen to, with the real power of bass guitar and floor toms in Dave Weckl's 'Taboo' crashing well beyond the boundaries of standard closed ear designs. The pads are comfortable, and the self adjusting headband is innovative and easy to wear.

There was a hint of colouration in the sound (lift at frequency extremes), as I discovered when listening to the Stones' 'Under Cover'. But this does not detract from the pleasure of listening to music. In fact the SR 850s were particularly good at

delivering live recordings with the impact you'd expect from a throbbing PA system. Even Rickie Lee's vocal and jazz band sounded unusually 'live' and involving. Consonants were clear and crisp, allowing the Vivanco's to translate the emotion behind the lyrics really well.

Despite transparency and near electrostatic quality of the treble, the SR 850s tended to sound slightly sibilant on occasions. J-M. Jarre's synthetic pop sounded really superb on the Vivancos, taking me back to Docklands, with the lights and the mega-sound system filling the atmosphere with music.

CONCLUSION

Headphones as exiting as the Vivanco SR 850s are rare. But while they are capable of reproducing single instruments well, their ability to handle a full orchestra is not as good as the similarly priced Sennheiser HD 455. But, who's complaining? For the price of a pair of really good show tickets, you can bring the excitement and real feel of live music to all your favourite bands. For those with a more conservative musical taste, the Sennheisers offer a civilised and refined performance. At the end of the day though, both are easy on the head, the ears and for the price, the pocket ●

Sennheiser HD 455	£49.95
Vivanco SR 850	£49.99

Up to the ears

Douglas Floyd-Douglass gets heavily into new headphones from Sennheiser and Vivanco.



readers' queries

BIN THE DINS

My system comprises a NAD 5425, Quantum 102/207DA pre/power amp and Rega Kyte 'speakers. The amp has DIN inputs, but because the volume control is of such poor quality to be useless at very low levels, the interconnects have had to be mildly attenuated. Attenuated DIN-to-two (or four) phono cables aren't widely available at a reasonable price, so mine are cheapos, as are the 'speaker cables.

I think my system sounds wonderful - anything substantially better would be very expensive. It would have to be British made, and I cannot imagine spending more than £500 on any one item.

I listen almost exclusively to classical music. Although solo piano and chamber music sound great, I'm concerned that:

[1] sopranos singing high and loud tend to break up, as if they were peaking.

[2] big vocal and orchestral climaxes (even in excellent modern recording such as Handel: Israel in Egypt, Parrott, EMI) seem congested.

I feel the only answer is for someone to bring round a selection of possible upgrades to my house and to

Write in with your problems to Hi-Fi World, 64 Castellain Road, Maida Vale, London W9 1EX. Our panel of experts will endeavour to solve them, or at least offer some practical advice.

try them out in situ. Do you have any suggestions?
**Keith McCullock
Malvern,
Worcestershire.**

It sounds like your Quantum pre-power is past its prime, and your attenuated DIN interconnects don't seem to be helping matters either, and are probably responsible for much of the harshness.

As the NAD is a pretty smooth player anyway, consider changing the amplifiers for Sugden's beautifully sweet A21a. When funds permit, buy some Chord Flatline 'speaker cables and some decent CD-amp interconnect such as Chord

Cobra. If the problem persists, a change of speaker to the smoother, more civilised Mission 752 might be just the job. DP

I'd suggest you also consider the super-smooth Aura AU-80 amplifier, which is great for classical music. It is warmer sounding than the Sugden, if not as crystal clear and rock solid. High level breakup is, I suspect, attributable to your loudspeakers. As David suggests, check out Missions. NK

WHICH WAY NOW?

I have a Linn Axis/K9, Pioneer A-400X, Creek CD 60 (excellent despite the odd poor review) and Linn Index speakers (vintage 1987), plus Rotel RT830 tuner and Technics tape deck.

I've abandoned the idea of upgrading to an LP12, and have had the amp 12 months and consider it superb for the money. I feel I would get more out of the system with new speakers, although I've been very happy with the Linns over the years. With a budget of around £500, which direction should I go in?

**G.W. Knowles
Bromley Cross,**

Bolton.

Without saying anything about your tastes and room, you make it difficult for us to point you in the right direction. I'd guess, however, that you listen to rock music (Linn) in a medium sized room (Index 'speakers). Try auditioning Mission 733 floorstanding loudspeakers or TDL RTL2s or the bigger 3s, both of which have real bass slam. All these 'speakers are basically well engineered, pretty truthful as a result, but punchy and fast. I'd also suggest you trade in that K9 for something a bit more proficient, like a Goldring 1022GX for example. NK

ON THE RECORD

Whatever happened to record cleaners? Back in the eighties when I started hi-fi and bought a lot of records there were many record cleaning products about - but where have they all gone?

I was particularly pleased with a spray called Permostat, which seemed to remove dirt and reduce static. There was also the Pixall roller and Zerostat gun. I prefer to buy new vinyl but because am now reluctantly having to buy

second-hand records, thus the greater need for record cleaners.

I am also looking for an upgrade of amp. I'm currently using a humble NAD 3220 with Audiovector Trapez X speakers. I use two turntables, a Rega 3/VMS2E and a Pioneer PL51/AT110. I am looking at the Audiolab 8000A or Sugden A21a. I intend to upgrade both cartridges to something like the Ortofon MC15 Super II. I also need to purchase an extra phono preamp to allow both turntables to be permanently connected. Can you help me out?
Morten Svendsen
Chesterfield.

In my experience, the likes of Permostat and the Pixall roller were somewhat flawed. I too buy second-hand vinyl, and attack the problem of dirt in two ways. If the disc is dusty, static laden and full of fluff, use a carbon-fibre cleaning brush such as a Goldring Exstatic. This type of cleaner is still commonly available at dealers, and does the job superbly. If the disc is covered in fingerprints and ingrained dirt, then a spin on a Keith Monks cleaning machine works wonders, and is far superior to Permostat. Many hi-fi dealers can

clean a disc for you for around £1 a go, and you'd be surprised how it can revitalise even the dirtiest of discs. Alternatively, Loricraft Audio offer a postal record cleaning service using a similar machine - contact Terry on 01488 72267. Also, Techical and General on 01892 654534 can advise you on spares for record cleaners.

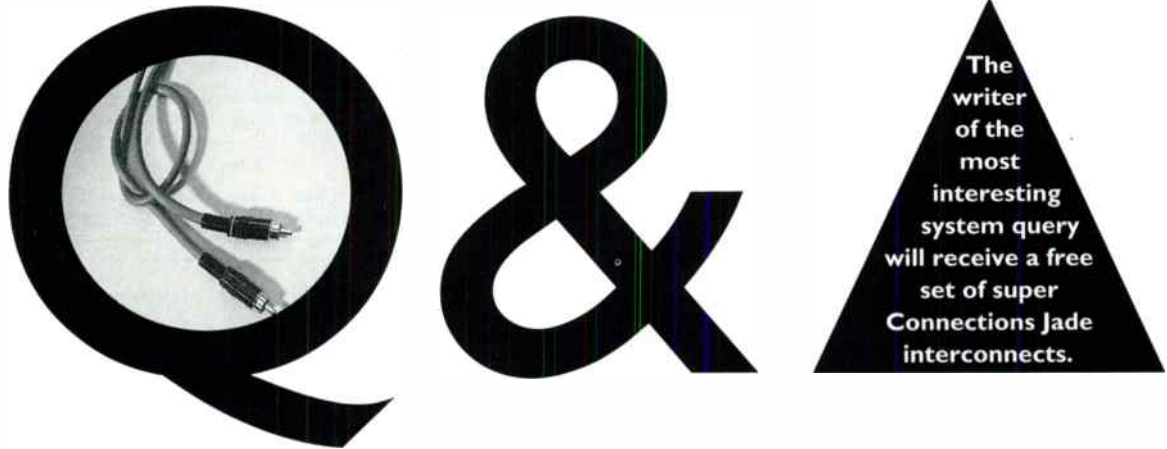
As for your phono stage, I've got a money saving suggestion for you. The Audiolab 8000A effectively has two phono inputs, one for MM and the other for MC, switchable by a fairly accessible switch at the

back. Why not kill several birds with one stone and buy an 8000A, an MC15 for the Rega and a Goldring 1042 for the Pioneer, and switch between your two turntables from the rear of the Audiolab? The phono stage(s) sounds excellent, by the way, sweeter sounding than the Rotel, albeit a touch less detailed. DP

HARSH WORDS

My system consists of a Quad 67 CD player, Naim 32.5, Hi-Cap, Nap 250 amp and Epos ES11 loudspeakers. Interconnects are

Continued on page 55...



o f t h e M o n t h

ANALOGUE SOUND FROM CD, PLEASE

My system consists of NAD 533 turntable with Goldring 1012GX, Rotel RCD 965 BX CD player, Pioneer A400 amplifier, Sony ST370RDS tuner and Mission 780 speakers. All equipment is kept on a Stand Firm tripod stand, except the NAD which is on a separate wall-mounted shelf.

I am fortunate to still have vinyl and use it regularly. Even in this price range I still find its sound more enjoyable than CD. The turntable's midband and treble are sweet and clear,

but bass is a little indistinct at times. Could it be the NAD's MDF platter? I have started enquiries with Rega towards purchasing a glass platter used on the Planar 3. Do you think it will give punchier, more dynamic bass?

My second query regards CD replay. The sound is refined and reasonably musical, but I'm listening to vinyl a lot more since the purchase of the NAD - some 99% of the time! The problem is CD vocals are less full-bodied with poor projection from the 'speakers. I would like a

more analogue feel with more get up and go on rock and pop without losing refinement on classical works. Possible solutions include the use of a new DAC, though I am at a loss as to which I should choose within a budget of £200-£300.

T.M. Peary
Bolton,
Lancashire.

The Rega's glass platter may just improve matters on your NAD, but I doubt if it would be profound. More likely, the cartridge isn't tight enough in the

headshell. Also check the wall shelf is rigidly mounted and level, and that the tonearm is also tightly bolted to the deck. If the problem still persists, then it's probably the cartridge, which could be upgraded to the excellent Ortofon MC15 Super II with a tighter sound all round. As for your CD player, there's not an awful lot to choose from at that price - personally I'd upgrade the Rotel for the (yes, you've guessed it) Marantz CD63SE. DP



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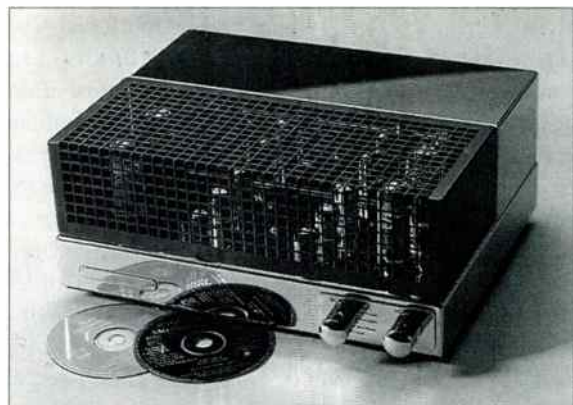
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.... Continued from page 53

Audioquest Quartz and Naim 'speaker cable. It doesn't have so much a weakness as an over-emphasis on an aspect of the performance that makes prolonged listening tiring. I enjoy the drive and punch of my system, but am finding the reproduction of vocals rather harsh.

I have been given some suggestions that I would value your opinions on. One dealer suggested upgrading to a Meridian 508 CD player, which did not bring the hoped for improvement. The salesman told me it was more detailed with improved focus and soundstage. To be honest I rarely listen with such intensity, and the basic problem of harshness was still apparent.

Next idea was SD Acoustics SD5 loudspeakers with a ribbon tweeter. These were impressive in the large dem room, but in my listening room, bass was boomy. Another dealer suggested I change the amplifier for a Quad 66/606, but it did not do so well with synthesised bass lines.

Another option I have not yet tried is to replace my Naim preamp with an Audio Innovations LI passive line preamp. Needless to say a local Naim dealer was not at all impressed with this idea and suggested I buy a Linn Karik/Numerik CD player, which if anything made vocals more harsh. Do you have any other suggestions?

**P. Sanders,
Tamworth.**

Good grief - you are long suffering. I can't say the advice you have received makes much sense to me, although at the same time I'm a little baffled by your problem.

Firstly, not one of the items in your system has ever struck me as harsh sounding, and certainly

not the Quad 67 CD player. Naim amplifiers are fast and have some upper midrange glare, but I wouldn't call them harsh. I wonder whether your system, for all its speed and slam (it's a Rockers system) is just not to your taste in this respect. Alternatively, you could just be suffering a fault, or perhaps just pushing the 'speakers too hard with your NAP250. Then, harshness would arise from cone breakup.

Firstly, you should audition an easier, sweeter amplifier. You would suffer least culture shock (a Naim is difficult to follow) with a DPA200S Pre/power. DPAs are fast and tight too, but sweet and somewhat less "in-your-face". The only other amp. that may appeal is a Sugden, either the A21a, which has limited power, or a Stemfoort.

Then you have to consider the Epos ES11 loudspeakers. These are generally accepted as an easy listen, but perhaps they are being pushed too hard. The NAP250 will drive Harbeth HL-P3s, or perhaps Mission 752s would suit. You will have to listen to decide. NK

SPEAKER DESIGNS (SLIGHT RETURN)

I am a student in my final year at London Guildhall University studying Music Technology (BSc). I am currently writing a dissertation on the design of loudspeaker enclosures. As the reasons for employing the different types of enclosure design are so subjective, I am trying to obtain an expert opinion on the advantages/disadvantages of various enclosure types.

There are a number of text books that explain the principles involved, but do not cover the audible effects or drawbacks that the

listener will experience from different types of enclosure. It would be helpful if you could supply any information you consider helpful on the subjective comparisons between the various types of enclosure; sealed, bass reflex or horn loaded, etc.

I would also like your views on which system is generally the most popular and which produces the most pleasing results irrespective of cost, plus any information on the latest developments in designs or trends.

**John Bidder,
Bristol.**

Here's a brief outline of the most common enclosure types. The majority of loudspeakers use either a sealed or ported cabinet, for practical reasons; they are small and easy to manufacture. Generally it is easier to get a tight, tuneful bass from a sealed cabinet. Reflex types, although more efficient, take a lot more tuning to get right, and even then they sound very different from room to room. I personally prefer reflex loaded bass, but only when it is properly tuned in the room that the system is going to be used in. It tends to give a cleaner more dynamic bass with less compression of transients.

Horn loudspeakers are an acoustic transformer, coupling the drive unit to the room which gives them terrific drive and power. The scale of sound you get is in a different league to sealed or reflex designs, but horn loudspeakers have to be large to produce low bass (the mouth area would have to be 5.9m² for 40Hz), and are difficult to make because of the flare of the horn. They are clear and open through the midrange, but I find the bass quality dry and a little hollow, lacking the

richness and fullness of reflex or sealed designs.

Transmission line speakers are completely the opposite. They have very strong bass, which is full and rounded. Bass tends to be a little sluggish though, in comparison to a good horn which has lightning dynamics and attack. TLs tend to have very deep bass for their size.

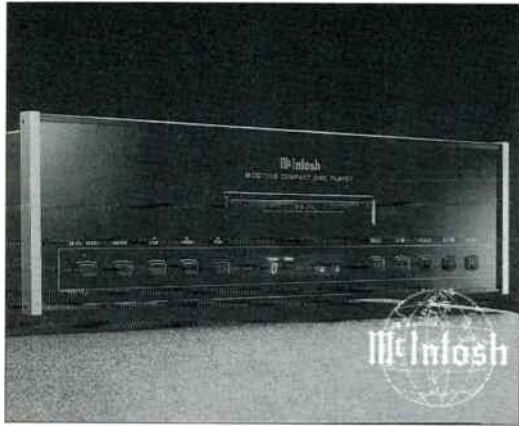
Of course there is also the open baffle, where there is no cabinet at all. There are very few of these around, the only recent commercial design I can think of is Celestion's SL6000 sub bass system, which isn't available any more. Open baffle 'speakers are my current favourite. By eliminating the cabinet you get rid of a lot of the problems of box colourations, and are listening to the character of the driver alone. With a good drive unit this gives a super clean sound, but there are numerous design difficulties.

There are also a number of variant designs around, truncated transmission lines (TDL RTL series), resistively loaded horns (Castle Howards), passive bass radiators (KEF Q90s) etc. There isn't room to go into these here, I can only suggest you try and track them down in a hi-fi dealer and audition them yourself.

On top of all of this, the actual size and shape of the cabinet affects the sound. Small, narrow cabinets tend to image better than large wide ones. Offsetting the drivers to the inside of the baffle tends to give better imaging due to less reflection off the front surface. I could go on and on!

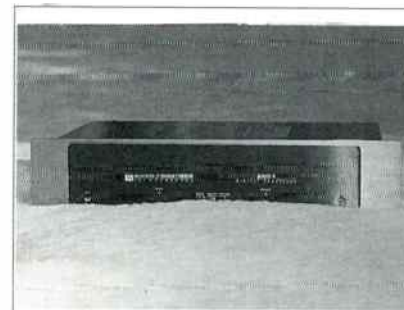
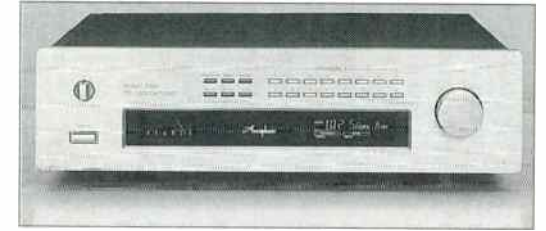
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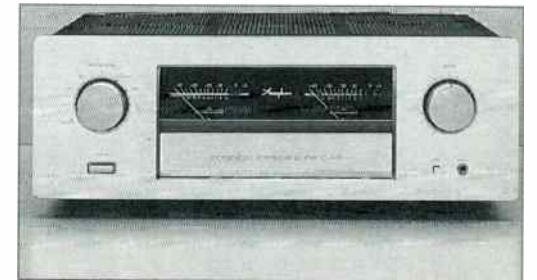



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 **SONIC FRONTIERS**
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First of all, the bad news. This review of Kenwood's KT-6050 mentions opera. Rock fans will just have to wait in patience. The reason is the good news: at £299, this is an extremely good tuner. Years ago, tuners were always marked down as a second-rate source, but that frankly was a whole load of the substance that scatters the streets of Pamplona.

Tuners like this have you sitting in your seat wondering at the sheer wealth of music out there, pulling you deeper into music you thought you didn't like. I even found myself listening to Keith Jarrett's Cologne '75 concert with rapt attention. I normally find him a bore, but there was the full gorgeous embracing ECM sound. On Jazz FM were Miles Davis and Herbie Hancock with an unmistakable electric piano. The former

clinging a bit of Berlioz' Les Franciscans on RT tempted me to listen later, and longer, to an unfamiliar opera, Verdi's Aroldo. The reason was that the range of orchestral colours in the Berlioz was stunning. Sweet strings, clarity and near-perfection in woodwind tone, and above all a rich, warm sound that differentiated trumpets, horns and even a bass trombone from a tuba. It even produced a thoroughly credible sound stage, with depth as well as the kind of breadth that does not appear to stop short at the edges of the speakers.

The opera was, as anticipated, splendid. The same good stage perspective and range of tonal colour, and apart from a touch of softness on high notes the harmonics, absolutely no complaint. A

despite Virgin's compression. Even then, Bob Marley's 'One Love' was strong enough in this department for all but Carwin-Vega fans - very, very tuneful and as clear and distilled as the CD.

On the facilities side, while the tuner display is full of games (IF selection, three-bar tuning indicator, a choice of aerial attenuation and all the usual memory and programming aids) Kenwood has missed a trick by having RDS but not Radio Text. Tut, tut, especially as Dixon put it in their £150 tuner. With other Kenwood products in line it is remote-controllable. AM/FM is a little richer and warmer and more listenable than some, but as usual, competent rather than special.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I have this list of recordings I've heard on the wireless. I've passed them by in the record shops

HEAVENLY

Eric Braithwaite enjoys scanning the ether with Kenwood's impressive KT-6050 tuner.



was as ear-opening as ever you'd hear it off CD, the latter coming over with the phasiness that bent some of the notes around the speakers, which you would also hear off CD, but would not expect off any tuner but one with serious pretensions.

Classical piano was almost beyond reproach. Chopin's Fantasy in D minor was absolutely real, with a solid image and a completely integrated sound.

totally engrossing, close-to-the-original broadcast sound. As with the Berlioz, the Kenwood allowed you to join in with a melody without even noticing the mark of a seriously good source.

Reservations? There's a touch of haze combined with a mild recession in the middle of the vocal register, which gives perhaps a more laid-back feel than I would like. Bass was at the same time tuneful enough to bring off a series of drum rolls from the Berlioz with great precision. It's almost too rich, but its control saves it from being overpowering. The KT-6050 almost put CD power behind that awesome bass in Frankie Goes to Hollywood's 'Relax'.

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**Measured Performance
see p113-121**



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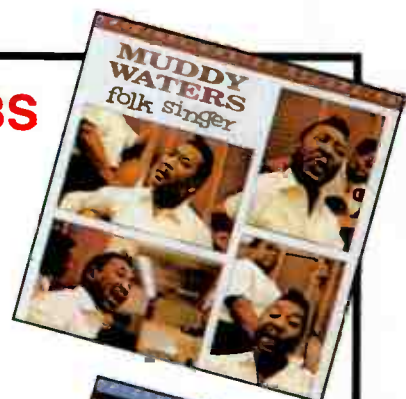
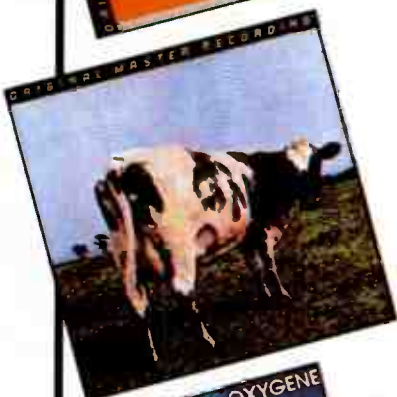
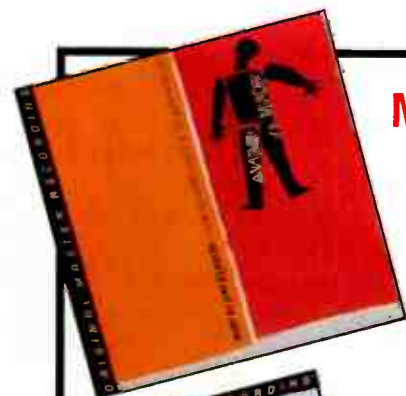
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Thanks to its accessory bag, Ortofon's beautiful MC7500 arrives in a fairly sizeable box, considering how small a cartridge is. But a pair of boxes labelled 'Ortofon' each a metre long? What sort of cartridge is this? It's a pair of loudspeakers, that's what. A pair of three-way ported floorstanding loudspeakers, even, the top model of a range of three.

Diversification is the name of the game these days, especially among companies that have been associated with vinyl records all their life. Vinyl revival there may be, but in all honesty compared to CD it is such a wispy shadow of its former self it would slip through the eye of a needle and vanish in the flutter of a camel's eyelid.

Hence Ortofon's liaison with Kinshaw, for electronics, and its venture into loudspeakers. However wise from a trading point of view, the Danish company is going to be up against it though. What with the number of speaker manufacturers in the UK, Ortofon has entered an already overcrowded soukh.

Be that as it may, a three-way floorstanding speaker for £329, which is what the Concorde 6 costs, is a bargain in any bazaar, especially considering the stickers say 'Made in Denmark'. Mind you, they've joined the EU and the Single Market, come to think of it, so this is perhaps one of the Euro-challenges the Brits are so good at ignoring until it's too late.

The bass issuing out of these relatively slim boxes, given the right propulsion, is very effective. If you want good thumping bass (even thumping good bass), there is an engine inside the Concorde 6 not far removed from the Olympus engines of Concorde. Evidence of clean and relatively deep lower frequencies was provided by a satisfying twang and burr from the bass guitar notes that begin Morrissey's 'Spring Heeled Jim'. Timpani thwacks from the last movement of Shostakovich's Fifth were not earth-shattering in real dynamics the way big horn loudspeakers do it, but were very plausible and clean.

All in all, the Concordes produced some very acceptable sounds. Male

vocals had a noticeable, but not unpleasant sharpness, and Sinead O'Connor's voice was on the bright side of shiny. There was zip enough to deliver a good leading edge to rhythm guitars too. Trouble is, though, that the upper midrange sounded rather recessed, so the electric guitarists tended to stand back.

Where the Concorde is at its best, ironically, is where many stand-mount speakers in the price bracket below are good. With small acoustic groups, when a real guitar or double bass allows the cones to move unstressed, the 6s flow freely. Blur sounded good. Heavy metal sometimes caught the bass driver out, where it kicked in and out a fraction late, not quite keeping up with the axework.

Watch it, though, because trying the Concordes with a few different amplifiers, I found that they do sound more smoothly integrated, if then rather laid-back, with those that deliver well into 4ohms and have a neutral balance. Any with a bit of a tilt into the treble or a warmed-up lower midrange give the three drivers a bit of an identity problem. Imagery was competent, reasonably focused, but depth could vary, according to the behaviour of the amplifier.

If you don't want the extra expense of stands buying an equivalent bookshelf speaker involves, the Concorde 6 represents very good value without adding to the negative equity burden too much. But they aren't the final answer.

Ortofon 6

£329

**Ortofon UK Ltd.,
Chiltern Hill, Chalfont St. Peter,
Bucks. SL9 9UG
☎ 01753 889949**

WORLD VERDICT

Good value floorstanders with clean enjoyable sound - not quite supersonic, though.

**Measured Performance
see p113-121**

IN THE NOVEMBER ISSUE

Want to know what's new in hi-fi? Are you looking to upgrade? Do you need some advice and helpful hints on how to get the best from your system? Hi-Fi World carries in-depth reviews on all the latest equipment and has a team of experts dedicated to audio. For news, reviews, features, music reviews, a fabulous competition, six pages of bargain used hi-fi, a free DIY hi-fi Supplement and more, don't miss the November issue of Hi-Fi World. Here's just some of what we hope to bring you next month:

DPA LITTLE BIT III

At last - finally we will be bringing you the first ever test on this latest discrete design CD convertor from DPA. At £300 it is the most affordable discrete design in the World. Was it worth the wait? Find out next month.



TECHNICS SB-M300 LOUDSPEAKERS

Technics have managed to cram four drive units into a compact enclosure to give deep, powerful bass from a standmounter. But can they match the best of British? We investigate.

VIRTUAL REALITY TURNTABLE

(SYSTEMDEK/RB300/1042GX)
Working with Systemdek, Rega and Goldring, Virtual Reality have come up with this highly tuned turntable system. Just some of the tune-ups include a precision Swiss motor for the Systemdek, new wiring for the Rega, and a carefully selected Goldring 1042GX. We take a close listen to this high performance LP system.

LINN TUKAN LOUDSPEAKERS

The long awaited replacement for the Kans is finally available. The Tukans are a miniature loudspeaker designed for a fast and clearly projected sound. David Price, a long term user of the original Kans, weighs up the new design.



WHARFEDALE VALDUS COMPETITION

In the November issue of Hi-Fi World, there's a chance to win one of 15 pairs of Wharfedale Valdus loudspeakers worth £2039.25 in total. With so many prizes on offer, make sure you don't miss out!

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.... Continued from page 55

above, all are compromises, each with their own set of strengths and weaknesses. It's also all subjective as you yourself recognise, and depends greatly on what loudspeakers you've heard, and whether they were well engineered or not.

Sadly, as you've noticed, none of the books available on loudspeakers discuss the subjective qualities of different arrangements, at least not in any I've come across. It may be worthwhile contacting either KEF, Tannoy or Celestion, all of whom have a great deal of experience in loudspeaker design, and may be able to point you towards a source for your dissertation. DB

HI HO (QUICK)SILVER

I am writing to you with a cry for help. Noting that *Hi-Fi World* fully appreciates the superior sound quality offered from valves, you are probably the only source of help I can find to save my bacon.

Some years ago I purchased a second-hand pair of Quicksilver mono block power amps. They were in a sorry state at the time. A friend who is an engineer repaired them, doing a few mods including putting an earth on. (They were quite dangerous at that time, the HT circuit nearly touching the outer casing!) I believe they are an American design. I used an old pair of Magnaplanar MG IIIs with them and was gobsmacked - they sound very much like Audio Research Classic 60s which must cost a few thousand more.

Now to my problem. The Quicksilvers use a valve (output) of type 8417 which I cannot get hold of from any source I can find advertising valves. There is no

information available on the 8417 to find an alternative valve or maybe a way to modify the amps to take another valve. It will be a sad day if they are destined to become bookends.

**Andrew Footman
Wolverhampton.**

The 8417 is a beam tetrode, and very rare. It is strange that Quicksilver chose to use this valve, especially as it has no modern equivalent. Billington Export had three left listed in their catalogue last year, but they have since been sold. The only place I could find an 8417 in the UK was Colomor Electronics (Tel: 0181 743 0899). They had one left, and didn't think they'd be able to get another one, ever! Considering how rare the 8417 is, it is surprisingly cheap too, at £18 + £3.35p&p. DB

BURN MONEY, WHY DON'T YOU?

I wanted to upgrade my Denon PMA797 amp, DCD1520 CD, DRM44 cassette deck, ADC graphic equaliser and JBL TLDC9s. I sold the lot and now I think I have gone the wrong way. I have two kids that were playing with them all the time, so thinking I needed more space I bought an Onkyo L909 mini system with 3 head cassette deck and processor for £1700, plus a pair of Aura SP50s and stands.

A couple of weeks later I listened to a friend's system comprising a Roksan/ART I, Bryston pre/power with AEI speakers, and he said I'd made a big mistake. Trying to put it right, I brought a Linn LPI2 Valhalla/Akito/K9 with Majik-I, but after reading the report on the Audiolab 8000A and Naim Nait 3, I think I have made another mess, and run out of money.

Can you help me? How can I rectify my problem? I

listen to jazz, soul, classical and pop. I see *Hi-Fi World* has second-hand ads, but I'm a bit frightened to buy this way. Is it a wise idea to leave them alone and buy new?

**G. Scot
Oxtrey.**

With your track record for impulse buying, I'd tear out the Classified section from the back of the mag and burn it, if I were you! Step one is to slow down, and step two is to find a good dealer. Why do you think you've made another mess? Is it the amplifier you're unhappy with? You've certainly got a good front end, so that's a start. If funds are limited, I'd look to replacing the 'speakers with Mission's excellent 752s, and also get rid of the K9 which isn't quite up to the likes of Goldring's 1042. If you're still unhappy, look around for a second-hand Naim Nait 3 which will bring more punch and detail, or Sjudgen's A21a which will give a bigger, richer and smoother sound. DP

SOFT ROCK

I have put together a basic CD system comprising an old Philips CD104, Quad 77 integrated and Meridian A500 speakers. The sound is OK but I'm looking at the possibility of a Meridian 508 or a new Quad 67 CD player. The present system has a poor soundstage, not very deep front to back.

Also, treble doesn't seem very bright. Is this my ears, the CD, or the room, with soft furnishings absorbing the energy? The tone of the system is very natural, with good dynamics and bass drive. I like a broad spectrum of music including jazz, soul and acoustic rock. Your views please.

**A. Cooke
Swindon.**

The Philips CD104 is well

past its sell-by date, and is definitely first in the queue for an upgrade. Of the players you mention I'd go for the Quad 67, which has a lovely full and musical sound. It will help to give a better sound stage (although CD players have never quite managed to conjure up the same kind of stage depth as a good turntable), but unfortunately the 77 amplifier and A500 'speakers both tend to sound a little two dimensional in this respect.

It may be worth trying the mirror test described by Douglas Floyd-Douglass in our November '94 issue. Basically this involves getting someone to hold a mirror on the side wall of your listening room whilst you sit in your normal listening position until you see the 'speaker. Placing an obstacle here, such as a plant or bookshelf, will break up this first reflection path. It may also be worth toeing in your 'speakers a little to place more of the image in the centre, something that CD players with their super wide channel separation fail to do, and again where vinyl scores.

The A500s are quite smooth through the treble because of the silk dome tweeter they use, and if you have been used to a sharp metal dome tweeter, I can understand why you say they don't seem very bright. You are right that soft furnishings will also soften the sound, reducing the amount of treble energy that is being reflected around the room. Losing some of this furnishing will certainly help. The A500s' upper treble does roll off a little too, aiming the tweeters directly at your listening position will also help here. DB

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— **Eric Braithwaite** - Hi-Fi World

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— **Andrew Cartmel** - Hi-Fi Choice

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Reflections
from Noel
Keyword



Life is deserting the old cassette. This antiquated technology - brewed up in the sixties and steadily getting left behind by lasers and digital storage - is being undermined by economic pressures from another direction. Cassette hardware is rapidly becoming more expensive, meaning manufacturers have to pedal ever-harder to make competitive products. Cosmetic cost cutting is the last thing they want to do, so performance at all price points has got worse. Rotel's £230 RD960BX (full review in next issue) is a testament to this as well as NAD's 614 tested last month.

Why the increased costs? These days electronics come cheap, but mechanical parts don't. Cassette decks are a complex amalgam of mechanics and electronics, the Japanese being undisputed masters of the former, manufacturing the best transport mechanisms and heads going. Throughout

“Mechanical sophistication can be replaced by electronics, bringing enormous cost savings.”

the eighties, Japanese electronics giants moved manufacturing abroad to save on spiralling labour costs, while keeping innovative technologies at home to discourage competition. This included the manufacture of high quality cassette parts from companies like TDK and Canon (heads); Denon, Sankyo Seiki, Aiwa/Sony (mechanisms).

The go-go late eighties seem an eon ago in terms of global economic history. Whereas moving production out of Japan capped labour costs, I doubt if anyone could have foreseen a time when an overvalued Yen would price their high

technology components off the market. To make further economies now they would have to move production of these parts out, but because mechanical parts have been downgraded by other developments, that's not going to happen either.

Philips reached key conclusions about the future of global consumer electronics manufacturing well before the Japanese, who have proven slow to

understand important global trends. But unfortunately Philips have never been able to exploit their ideas as well as the Japanese. Yet while the commercial arm of Philips couldn't sell an ECU to a Frenchman, the marketing and research side are impressive, long ago realising that mechanical sophistication can be replaced by electronics, bringing enormous cost savings.

And that's what Dolby S, DCC and MD are all about. Each in its own way improves performance by electronic processing, obviating mechanical complexity. Nakamichi make great

recording heads, but you can bet they're a far more costly way of obtaining dynamic range than Dolby S. DCC is an astonishingly cheap-to-make, yet effective digital tape system. It uses a standard cassette transport, relying on a digital buffer memory to iron out speed variations, digital error correction schemes (Reed-Solomon code) to counteract tape dropouts, and low rate digital code to use cheap chrome video tape, rather than metal tape. The low data rate again comes about through use of electronics: PASC digital data removal (compression is too misleading a description) makes it possible. So DCC is an ingenious way of swapping mechanical complexity for electronic complexity, which comes a lot cheaper.

The marketing men tell me that cassette has had it simply because people fall out of love with such things and, irrespective of their practical value, stop buying. It's the truth and terror within the Bell Curve, which depicts the way sales of a medium perform of a period of time, starting slowly, increasing rapidly, slowing to a peak, then following a similar pattern in decline. Blank and prerecorded cassette sales peaked during 1989 and have been heading South ever since. They'll continue to do so, I'm told, absolutely

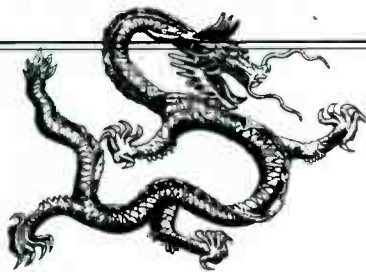
irrespective of the fact that there's little sign of alternatives - DAT, DCC and MD - being taken up as a replacement. Weird!

So what will replace the cassette? Well, not a lot. The Consumer Electronics industry has fallen into a sullen silence over the whole business of replacement. Once the second most popular electrical item in your average global home, beaten only by the lightbulb, buyers have resisted all potential replacements.

Tape, we are told, just isn't acceptable anymore, simply because it has an old fashioned image. If this is true, then we can kiss DAT and DCC goodbye without another thought. Perhaps MD will succeed in the end, or do people want recordable CD (CDE)? The ideal would be recording into solid-state memory, but we are a long way from that.

At the moment we are faced with a curiously blank future. Complex mechanical systems are kaput. Manufacturers aren't interested and, in the cassette, neither are buyers it would seem.

So another piece of yesteryear is fading away. Never again will we see such extraordinary concoctions of mechanics, magnetics and electronics as the tape deck. It will be consigned to the dustbin of industrial history, to rest alongside the LP ●



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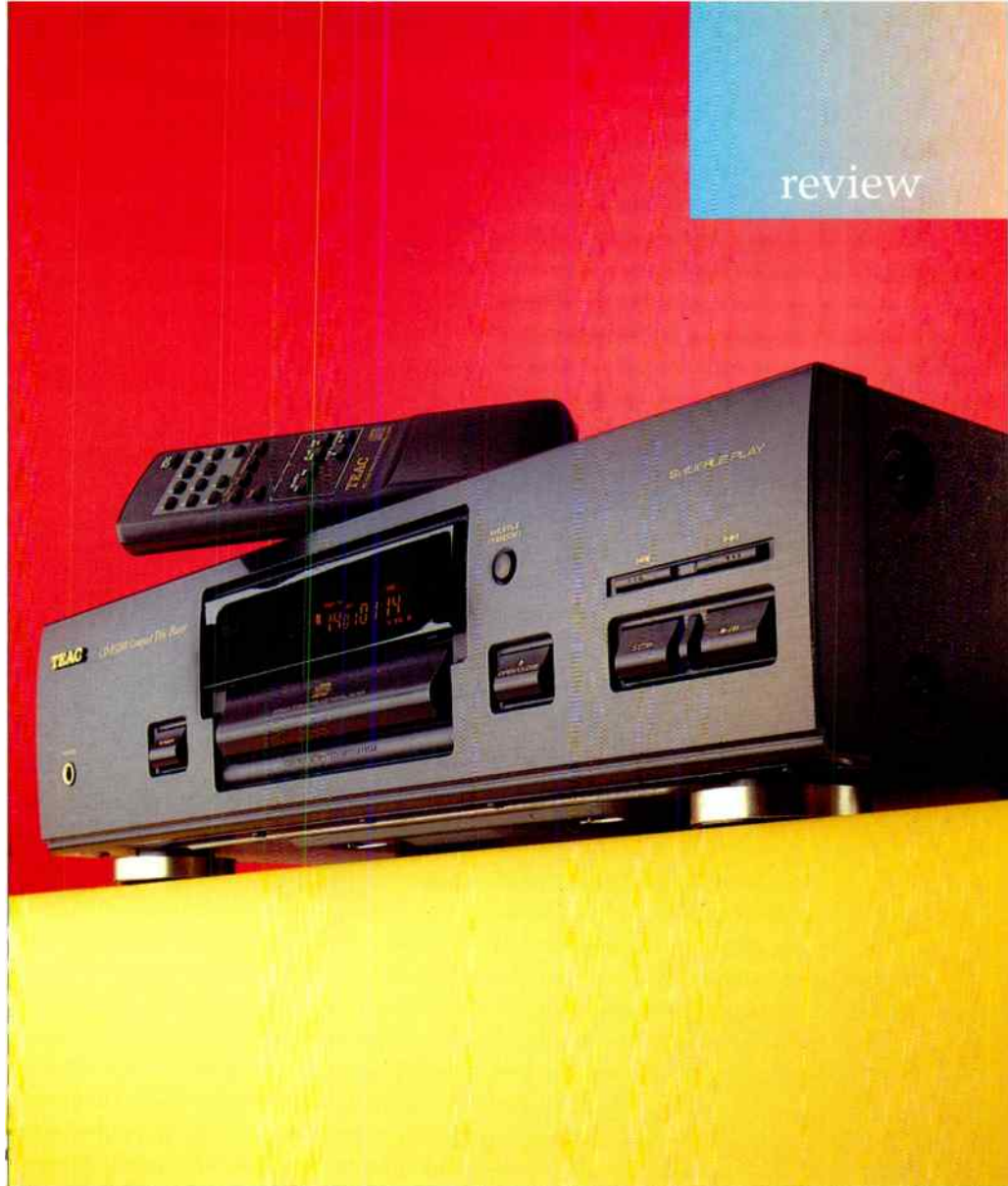
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When you try to be all things to all men, you often end up being nothing to nobody. This may be the case with the £150 TEAC CD-P3200, which has all the usual features including remote control and even a full display which shows the now-elusive index numbers. No hair-shirt minimalism here, but look under the hood and you soon see where the savings are made - you won't find a VRDS transport in this TEAC.

At first listen there isn't much wrong with this player - music progresses in a superficially reasonable fashion, acoustic guitar with a happily tuneful sound, firm percussion with kick drums coming through strongly. But it's not a player for subtleties, more on the rough and ready side. Play some jazz, and although double bass is tuneful and strong, when the music gets more complicated, things start to go astray. Sax, trumpet, Hammond organ and percussion were all present and correct, but squeezed into the middle with as little space between and around them as though they'd been recorded on the tube in the rush-hour, the Tokyo Metro at that.

This kind of perspective, allied with a compressed dynamic range in parts of a score where the 'tadpoles' are most populous, was curiously reminiscent of budget turntables of yore. Arturo Sandoval's 'A Mis Abuelos' started well, the guitar work warm and pleasant, but fell into disarray as soon as the brass came in on the action. Mutes in the bells had the effect of making the brass sound uncouth and uncultured - almost painfully raucous in fact.

Discrimination isn't the TEAC's strongest point as you may've gathered. Blur's 'This is a Low' was, a rather subdued and uninspiring performance that sounded plodgy (this year's attempt to get a word into the Oxford English Dictionary coming up: 'plodgy' - plodding and stodgy). Initially pleasant as laid-back background music was the Decca/Dutoit recording of de Falla's Three-Cornered Hat. Here we had good tonal discrimination between



unclamped

Eric Braithwaite finds that TEAC's new CD-P3200 CD player can't match their VRDS players' value.

violins, cellos and the generally darker-toned instruments, and tight timps, but above the middle register things went awry again, the distant soprano sounding as though she had soap in her mouth.

Still, what do you expect for £150? Instead of spending money on better internals, TEAC have lavished it on the neat front panel. They're obviously after price-conscious buyers looking for real hi-fi separates. This is a laudable aim, but given the excellent sound of TEAC's higher-end VRDS range it's a pity more of that serious quality hasn't percolated down into the murkier depths of this budget player ●

TEAC CD-P3200 £149.95

TEAC UK Ltd.,
5 Marlin House,
The Croxley Centre,
Watford, Herts. WD1 8YA
☎ 01923 819630

WORLD VERDICT

A valiant attempt at rock-bottom hi-fi separates, but none the better sounding for it

Measured Performance
see p113-121

competition

WIN ONE OF FIVE
ALCHEMIST
AXIOM
INTEGRATED
AMPLIFIERS
WORTH £300
EACH!

Alchemist have recently introduced a new affordable integrated amplifier, the Axiom. We reviewed one last month and, finding it very musical, we've decided to give away FIVE in our October competition.

The Alchemist Axiom is a 30watt integrated amplifier with six line level inputs including tape. In true Alchemist fashion the styling is a little out of the ordinary, with a lavish brushed aluminium front panel adorned by polished gold control knobs. Inside, component quality is high, and the

layout neat and professional.

We auditioned the £300 Alchemist Axiom for our September '95 issue, and found many favourable qualities.

Douglas Floyd-Douglass praised it highly - here are some of his findings. "John Lee Hooker's 'Chill Out' had good depth of soundstage and a warmth so befitting the blues. Cymbals were open and gave a good indication of the ability of this amplifier to handle transients with musical dexterity. The percussion was tight and fast and skin drums sounded natural and were given good space amidst the full band accompaniment."

If you want one of these stylish, musical Axiom amplifiers, make sure you enter this competition. Simply complete the questions and tie-breaker opposite. Please send your entry (completed in block capitals) on a POSTCARD or the back of a SEALED ENVELOPE to arrive no later than 5th OCTOBER 1995 to:

ALCHEMIST AXIOM COMPETITION
Hi-Fi World Magazine,
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**AUGUST ISSUE
 COMPETITION - WIN
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Congratulations.

COMPETITION ENTRY QUESTIONS

Cut out and affix to the back of a sealed envelope

- 1) How powerful is Alchemist's Axiom amplifier?

A. 20watts	B. 30watts
C. 50watts	D. 100watts

- 2) What inputs are provided on the Alchemist Axiom?

A. 5 line level, 1 tape, 1 phono	B. 6 line level, 1 tape
C. 6 line level	D. 4 line level, 1 phono

- 3) Playing John Lee Hooker's 'Chill out' Douglas Floyd-Douglass found that the Alchemist Axiom had?

A. great driving bass lines	B. good detail and attack
C. great depth of soundstage	D. good depth of soundstage

- 4) If you don't win this competition, how much would an Alchemist Axiom cost you?

A. £250	B. £300
C. £350	D. £400

TIE BREAKER (obligatory)

Alchemist are considering designing a matching CD player and tuner to go with the Axiom. What do you think they should be called, and what name would you give to the system?

.....

Name:

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.....

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Please do not add my name to your mailing list.

COMPETITION RULES AND CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

- [1] Only one entry per household will be accepted. Multiple entries will be automatically disqualified.
- [2] In the event of more than one entrant submitting all correct answers, the winner will be picked from the tie-breaker by the editor. We will endeavour to publish the results in the December 1995 issue. Purchase of the magazine is not a precondition to entry.
- [3] No correspondence about this competition will be entered into and the editor's decision is final.
- [4] No employees of Audio Publishing Ltd. or any companies associated with production or distribution of the prizes may enter.

Don't forget to include your name, address and a telephone number so that we can contact the winners promptly.

Your name and address may be added to our mailing list only. If you would prefer not to receive details of new products or special offers from us alone please tick the box. *Hi-Fi World* magazine is published by Audio Publishing Ltd.

Over the last year at Hi-Fi World we've become increasingly aware of the way a room affects the sound of loudspeakers. Our own listening room has been treated with RPG acoustic tools, to give a more neutral and balanced sound which better reveals differences between loudspeakers. But this RPG treatment is aimed at the professional market and won't be domestically acceptable in many circumstances.

Recently I came across Aedon Audio, an Italian manufacturer of acoustic carpets and wall panels. Their fabric coverings are designed by Missoni, which does make them a little pricey, but finish is superb. They are available in the UK from Picture the Sound (tel: 01483 31410) who kindly delivered a medium sized Audiocarpets, which was quickly nicknamed the 'magic carpet' and two wall panels.

My home listening room is an ideal place to experiment with these acoustic tools. Being four stories up in a solidly built building, it has a reinforced concrete floor, making for a hard and reflective surface. My (landlord's) carpet is quite cheap and is reflective itself, and underneath there is just the thinnest layer of rubber. This has compressed, making it more like a plastic sheet than soft, absorbent underlay. I have a thick pile rug that sits between me and the 'speakers to absorb the floor reflections, and it works well, cleaning up the treble and upper midrange to give better focus.

The magic carpet took my rug's favourite spot between the 'speakers and sofa. Aedon Audio suggest in their instructions (well, I think this is what they

dB on the level

mean - the translation from Italian to English hasn't been entirely successful) that you massage the carpet once it is in position. This is to help settle the layers of acoustic material and smooth out any wrinkles, or as they put it

“The magic carpet had more of a broad band effect, cleaning treble to give greater definition.”

“settlement of its stratification and elimination of the covering cloth wrinkles”.

Also supplied with the magic carpet were Aedon's wall panels, designed to be hung from a picture rail or supplied mounting bracket. I used the mirror test described in Hi-Fi World's November '94 issue, which basically involves getting a friend to hold a mirror against the side wall, moving it until you can see the tweeter of your loudspeaker from your normal listening chair. This places the wall panels at the point of strongest side wall reflections, where they will work best.

At this first reflection point on one wall of my room there is a window. Glass is very reflective, so I have a thick curtain with heavy lining which I draw

Dominic Baker



opinion

to help control this side. The other wall has a waist high CD rack placed to help break up the reflection, but the wall behind is hard stone. Because the heavy curtain seems to do such a good job on one side, I decided to use both wall panels on the bare wall opposite. One was used at the first point of reflection above the CD rack. Again, with the help of a friend and a mirror, I found the reflection point on the same wall for the other loudspeaker and positioned the other wall panel.

Where the rug I use most affects treble, reducing glare and sibilance, the magic carpet had more of a broad band effect, cleaning treble to give greater definition, but also smoothing the midrange to give better focus and detail. If you already have a system that images well, but can become confused on more complex passages, or clattery through the midrange, the magic carpet does an admirable job of cleaning up these foibles, giving a cleaner and more controlled sound field.

The wall panels also worked well. I had noticed a slight asymmetry in the sound stage before, where one wall was reflecting midrange and treble energy quite strongly, whilst the other was more absorbent. Having both wall panels on one side to balance the room out

worked well. Listening over a couple of days I was less aware of the acoustical differences between the two sides of the room. The sound stage opened out on the side with the panels to give a wider, more open stage overall, with better balance. It also helped to clean up the midrange and treble splashiness which, combined with better image focus of the magic carpet, improved the overall standard of sound quite considerably.

It's interesting that the capabilities of a system in these areas are so strongly affected by the room and its furnishings. You could spend a lot of money on equipment chasing after more precise imaging or a wider, more natural sound stage, only to find that the key all along was getting the room set up properly. I would urge anyone who takes their music seriously enough to have spent a couple of thousand pounds on a system to consider such acoustic tools. They help to bring out the very best in a system and once installed, will have the same benefit with any system or upgrade you move on to in the future.

Audiocarpets (medium 140x250cm) £659-£1875, depending on fabric

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It happens in the fashion industry regularly. It has infected the car industry and now it seems to be reaching the hi-fi industry. What is it? It's an appreciation (some would say infatuation) of all that has gone before. Or, to use a nineties buzzword: retro. The fashion industry slavishly looks back as far as the 20s for annual revivals of twin sets, perhaps without the pearls, back to the 1970s for platform shoes and luminous socks. Witness, also, the motor industry. The likes of the Nissan Micra and Mazda MX-5, good cars though they may be, have provoked much debate as to whether or not it's right to draw so heavily on the past when styling a car.

Now retro is creeping into the hi-fi industry. Despite originating from stern Teutonic stock, Sennheiser have been making some risky moves in differing from the straight and narrow and offering something with more than a hint of the past. First off were the Charleston headphones. Offering up to the minute engineering, but with the usual nineties swoopy plastic look being shelved for a decadent twenties style.

Now they've gone one stage further with the reintroduction of the HD 414s. And it's not just a reincarnation of the name either. For those unfamiliar with headphones, the HD 414s were the first ever open-back headphone, introduced in 1968. Like the slab sided architecture of the time, the rather kitch black and yellow 414s have been modernised. Modern drive units and OFC cable do the business, but the point is the 414s look almost identical to their famed predecessors. Capitalising on the product's heritage and a pool of watery eyed nostalgia, Sennheiser's move is shrewder than it first appears. And who knows, if the limited run

Fair Views

*- from Dominic
Todd, our man in
Scarborough*



opinion

of 414s prove a success, we may see similar come-backs from other stalwarts.

Yet you don't have to have 27 years of history behind a product when retro styling a new product. Take Alchemist's Kraken, with its gothic fins and green crackle paint work that brings back memories of 1950s laboratory equipment.

amplifiers and source components, with kit 'speakers being less in demand too. Now, as this magazine's letters and numerous component company advertisements show, building your own 'speakers and amplifiers has made something of a comeback.

It's not just those that originally made kits who have returned to the

reducing development costs too. Also it could be seen as yet another U.S.P. (Unique Selling Point) with which to relieve punters of their loot. That having been said, it should be argued that retro inspired hi-fi offers the consumer wider choice, and a break from the endless stream of black boxes we otherwise face.

Expanding this point further, it seems to me as though there is a feeling, in some parts, that the hi-fi industry has lost its momentum. Technological advances are fairly piecemeal compared with previous decades, and now people turn their attention to the computer industry to get a technological fix. The increasing perceived stagnation of the audio industry has led to renewed interest in DIY by consumers, as well as a feeling of trying to recapture former glory by the manufacturers.

Of course, there are some products that have been immune to advances in technology and have merely evolved as time has gone by. The evergreen Linn LP12 and various incarnations of the BBC L53/5a loudspeaker, for example. Proof that with proper development and planning, provided manufacturers produce good hi-fi there'll always be a demand for it, whatever the fashion of the day. Now, where did I put that pogo stick?

Now, as this magazine's letters and numerous component company advertisements show, building your own 'speakers and amplifiers has made something of a comeback.

Audio Innovations' Alto also offers something different with its 50s sky-fi inspired curves and shiny chrome. Even conservative radio manufacturers Roberts (some of whose products have never even stylistically progressed anyway in the past several decades) have gone all retro on us. Apparently, their bright red portable radios with sixties styling have become strong sellers.

Another ghost from the past that has returned is DIY hi-fi. The move from valves to transistors in the 60s and 70s, and the later dominance of CD over vinyl saw a decline in kit

hobby either. The lure of a soldering iron and the satisfaction of having produced something yourself has won favour with those from a generation brought up in today's world where the transistor and digital reign. The kits being built revolve very much around valve and analogue hi-fi, rather than a load of small, black silicon chips.

So why is there such a fascination with the past? Well, there are several points to be looked at here. The cynic would argue that retro hi-fi is merely a marketing ploy, cashing in on nostalgia and even, in some cases,

Working in the rarefied climes of *Hi-Fi World* towers, it's sometimes nice to press the elevator Down button and take a trip to ground level. So imagine my surprise when I recently found myself in a High Street "electrical retail chain", only to discover that the AMEX-clutching punters weren't talking about \$350 Western Electric 300B triodes. And as for time-aligning Audax gold dome tweeters in glass-lined open baffles, forget it.

Shocking as it was, valiantly listening in on everyday conversations was an education. The world of "graphics", "bass boosts" and "3D surround" was new to me. A midi boasting "40W per channel at 10% THD" Ten percent? Not even sixties hi-fi measured that badly! Midi speakers with plastic boxes and fake tweeters - is this a toy shop I asked myself? And as soon as an obliging salesperson

"The mini system is a thoroughly rational - if uninspired - response to the UK state of play"

switched one on, my interest disappeared faster than a racoon in a room full of rocking chairs. Nasty paper cones breaking up, a silly bass peak at 100Hz and treble, Jim, but not as we know it. Asked to give an accurate summation of the sound, "abysmal" would be my chosen adjective.

But don't get me wrong, I'm not going to bemoan the very existence of the mini system, because it's a thoroughly rational - if somewhat uninspired - response to everything that marketing intelligence reports currently tell us about the UK state of play.

As managing director of a new consumer electronics company, I'd be only too aware of the divide between average High Street rubbish and the expensive exotica

audiophilia

David
Price



found in specialist retailers. And I'd be looking at the company's profitability on both sides of the river. Unfortunately, my choice would be to go for manufacturing cheap and nasty high volume stuff, because all the marketing information available suggests Britain is currently an intensely price-sensitive market;

'computer' for the price of the separates - thinking in those terms, which would you have?

Manufacturers of separates have to provide a convincing answer to this, and so far they haven't.

In Japan many manufacturers have given up on budget separates because they can't make them cheap enough anymore - the odd two million yen gold-plated CD player and valve amp sell easier instead. Many affordable separates have been usurped by "mini-compo" (mini component systems). Unlike the UK variety, these are quite expensive (typically £600 plus), and comprise reasonable quality miniature separates styled keenly enough to have Bang and Olufsen worried. With acres of brushed aluminium, tray loading tape decks and intelligent remotes, they feel far better evolved than the average Japanese kit that reaches Britain's shores, and are keenly differentiated from their hi-fi separates brethren.

But things aren't the same in Britain. Mini systems don't look so different to budget black boxes, and more importantly (for Britain at least) are far cheaper. Why then go for separates?

Now, British separates manufacturers with "the vision thing" are stepping in and making waves. Interestingly, these budget separates aren't black

boxes - a chrome Aura or Alchemist integrated doesn't look like your average box - they're clearly differentiated from the audio plankton swimming around the primordial consumer electronics sludge, and affordable too.

NAD hit precisely this winning formula in the early eighties with their 3020 amplifier, which was visually different (everything back then was covered in brushed metal), sounded great and was cheap enough to grab sales from music centre buyers. Further upmarket, the fact that Quad now consistently produce attractive, innovatively styled products has to be the mother of all surprises. Twenty years ago, I'd never have thought the young bloods of the day would be aesthetically outmanoeuvred by everyone's grandfather's favourite wireless maker.

Michell is another case in point, a very long established company that's finally got the balance right between class-leading performance and jaw-dropping styling. One look at a Gyrodec and all thoughts of updating your computer or renewing the TV go walkies.

It's this critical mix of sonic performance, keen pricing and that magic third factor - a kind of visual appeal to the heartstrings - that makes a product succeed ●

The Music of Days

rock & pop record reviews

Giovanni Dadomo

INDEX

RECORD REVIEWS

ROCK & POP 73

Giovanni Dadomo
Jon Clarke
David Price

JAZZ 86

Simon Hopkins
Simon Cooke

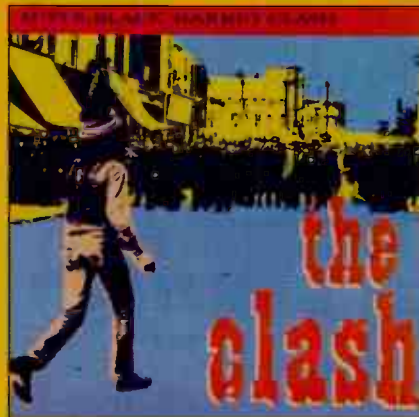
CLASSICAL 93

Peter Herring



NEIL YOUNG
Mirrorball
REPRISE 9362-45934-2

● Mr. Young's not put a foot wrong for a good five years, from 'Freedom' to the sublime 'Sleeps With Angels'. Sad to say that this collaboration with Pearl Jam in their Seattle hometown just doesn't do it for this boy. The sound's messy, the songs are often uninspired thrashes, and try as I may I cannot find what I'd call a classic Young song. But Pearl Jam sell discs by the zillions so this'll probably be one of the man's biggest sellers ever. Good luck to him and who's to say I won't love it in another week or three. Reviewers are nothing if not fickle creatures after all. And one last thing, this is one of those sets you just know will sound terrific live - stadium rock pure and simple but still disappointing from a man of Neil's talent.



THE CLASH
Super Black Market Clash
COLUMBIA 474546-10

● If ever there was a classic British punk band, these geezers were it. Name dropper that I am, I recall meeting Joe Strummer (only lately one from the highly underrated 101'ers) in the toilet of Dingwalls' Dancehall in Camden Town. Strummer promptly introduced me to a mop-topped Mick Jones, his partner in a band he proudly announced would travel under the name of The Heartdrops. I thought that was pretty naff and promptly told them so. Imagine my surprise therefore when, a mere few weeks later, I - along with a score odd of other pop press gunslingers - was invited to a sleazy Camden warehouse to witness the debut performance by a combo now re-christened The Clash.

And were they brilliant? Yes indeedly. They were all sound and fury, much of which is included on this extended version of the original 'Black Market Clash' EP. Here then, in all their princely glory are the likes of 'Jail Guitar Doors', 'Capital Radio 2', a re-fried version of the much bootlegged original single of the same name minus the Tony Parsons interview (what a shame eh, Tone?) and various items produced by the pseudonymous Pepe Unidos - alias Strummer - bassman Simonon and manager Bernie Rhodes, as the concise but ultra-bright sleeve notes clarify with equal doses of accuracy and good taste.

With rumours of a Clash reunion rapidly heading towards becoming concrete, this is a timely reminder of

probably the greatest British band of the late Seventies. Mind you, I still can't help feeling they owed more to NYC's David Peel & The Lower East Side than anyone ever seems to have acknowledged, but that was then and so is this, for that matter.



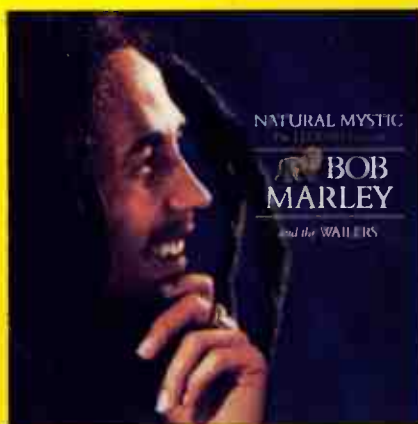
FUGAZI
Red Medicine
DISCHORD CD DIS90CD

● They're eight years old, hail from Washington D.C. and are the definitive indie band, US stylee. Like, say, the Dead Kennedys before them or our own (pre-hit singles) Levellers. Fugazi play bare-knuckle rock with a political conscience that's backed up by their untainted policy of keeping the price of their records/concert tickets as low as humanly possible. They probably even live on a diet of Corn Flakes and water - they're, in short, so damned P.C. it almost makes you want to vomit.

What saves their bacon (oops! I wager they're all strict vegetarians or vegans too) is the fact that they make great balls of fiery rock'n'roll that has oodles of bite, distinctive character and all the bluster the most dedicated stage-diver could wish for. I don't know if it's Ian McKay or Guy Piccotto - both of whom share lead vocal and guitar duties but one of the geezers sounds remarkably like Alex Harvey. This is a high compliment in my book and only serves to remind me how quickly one of Scotland's finest sons seems to all but have vanished from public memory. But that's another story - Fugazi are here and now and, on this fourth LP, in fine and furious form as ever.

BOB MARLEY
Natural Mystic
ISLAND BMWCD 2/524 103-2

● As the success of 'Iron Lion Zion' more than proved, Bob Marley's music remains as topical and attractive as



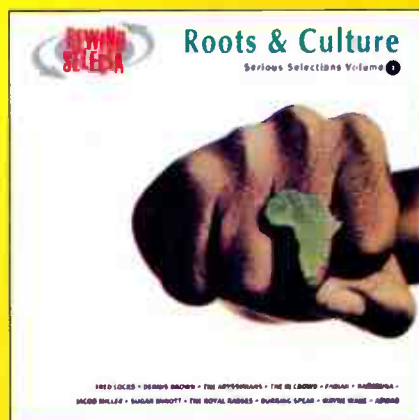
ever. Most long-term fans will have a good many of the sixteen cuts on this latest compilation - 'War', a rousing live take of 'Trenchtown Rock', 'Who The Cap Fit' and so on. For me there were still sufficient surprises above the nostalgia to make this a refreshing experience - the canny 'Pimper's Paradise', an aptly cheery 'Sun Is Shining' and the bottle-shaking 'Keep On Moving', to name but a few. Crisp production, wondrous playing, and the sort of sublime arrangements that made Marley the master song-writer he was, transforming even the merest wisp of a tune into bliss itself. This is the stuff of which legends are made, and Bob Marley, like Hendrix, will always be around to inspire and enchant.



**BOOTSY COLLINS AND
BOOTSY'S NEW RUBBER
BAND**
Keepin' Dah Funk Alive
RYKODISC RCD 98323/24

● Following the recent double retrospective comes this live set recorded in Tokyo earlier this year. And, yes, it's pretty much a Greatest Hits package in itself, including such firm faves as 'One Nation Under A Groove', 'Aah...The Name Is Bootsy Baby', 'Flashlight', etcetera. But it's all done so splendidly - great playing, especially from new-found boy wonder guitar man Gary "Dirty Mugg" James, as well as old stalwarts like Bernie Worrell and

Mudbone Cooper - fine mixes and production that feel as if you're hearing it for the first time. Fans'll love it. Newcomers should do their best to get a couple of lugs full of one of the most innovative and entertaining musicians of our times. To say he's the black Frank Zappa is no insult either. Sure his puns stink, but Bootsy Collins is still a major mover, and on the strength of this collection back with the proverbial bang. Tune in and find out where Prince stole a good many of his chops.



VARIOUS ARTISTS
Serious Selection Vol 1.
REWIND SELECTA LPREG 3

● David Rodigan's surely one of our best reggae deejays. So this double set of Seventies' classics simply can't be faulted. If you've never encountered the likes of Fred Locks, The Abyssinians, and Sugar Minott, you simply haven't lived. Classic reggae cuts one and all. Don't pass this one by if you want to hear some of the best dance blasts ever to come out of Jamaica. Groovy times indeed.

Jon Clarke

**Soul II Soul - Volume V
Belief**
CDV 2739 7243840628 28 BELIEVE



THE VERVE A Northern Soul CD HUT 27

● The Verve is a name more redolent of the Beatles and their assorted following sounds than anything to come along in 20-odd years. A Northern Soul takes a lot to live up to but take this cloth-ears word for it - the quartet in question live up to their high aspirations more often than most past pretenders. They are not mere Moptop impersonators; the ballsome title cut for a start nods more subtly in the direction of early Who in a surprising enough wedding



to say vintage Happy Mondays which - believe it or not - is by no means a bad thing. In short The Verve combine all

the wild electric blazes of early Who or Yardbirds with the ultra-subtle sound-layering of the best of contemporary pop. The wildly wacky 'Brainstorm Interlude' for example could only be a product of a Sixties sensibility filtered through Nineties technology. Not that subtlety is forsaken for the sake of high-tech - one merely has to investigate the delicate melody and arrangements of 'No Knock On My Door' the sort of delicate and moving ballad McCartney's so often striven for and so rarely scored. For the record The Verve are most definitely a group to keep one's ears open for. Ace combo.

● In a turbulent, changing world it's comforting to know that certain good things still exist out there, ready to be revisited at a minute's notice. With the weather hot and sticky again we should have guessed Jazzie B and gang would bounce back with yet another summery dancefloor classic.

As with each of the last three albums a lot of people are going to pick up this latest offering in the hope of another Volume One, a landmark album, sweetly lodged in a generation of sweet memories. They will not be disappointed.

OK, it's not quite the 80s classic Volume One - but it's the nearest thing since. While the London collective's heyday has now surely passed, they still emerge every other year with a new album and single.

This year it's the excellent single 'Love Euff' - already well lodged in the top 40 - and Volume V Belief, the fifth in a decade of mainly essential releases from Soul II Soul.

It's a delicious holiday album of smooth soul and grooves to fuel up the floors on the costas and at the carnivals. The return of Caron Wheeler and Simon Law has brought with it the Soul II Soul feel of old. The freeform, mellow beats and melodies married to the stoned ramblings of Jazzie B are back and feel right again. 'Universal Love' and particularly 'B Groove' fit in perfectly with the 'Keep On Moving' spirit of old.

But where there are similarities there is also change. With seemingly hundreds of musicians featured on the 13 tracks, Volume Five has a range of influences pulling from the late 80s feel right through to 1995. The fusion of rap,

touches of swing-beat and weak strains of jungle make for an album very much relevant to today. Where 'Zion' is a top Jamaican style dance track, 'I Care' is pure and unadulterated soul.

Various - Summer Compilations

● It's holiday time again and the shops are crammed with summery compilations all peddling the feel good factor. You know the message - this is your number one best beach accessory; the soundtrack to enhance your two weeks in the Med: buy, buy, buy.

And it works of course. There you are two hours before your flight, hanging around at Heathrow at the Global Village shopping centre just looking around for that little thing that you might have forgotten, when bang! It's staring you in the face - 20 hot summer anthems - the sound of Ibiza, or something like that.



Pick of the bunch is **Jive West 25th Volume 2** (6/10) - a cool mix of street rap and soul. These 13 cuts from the underground Jive label, while being completely varied and obtuse, somehow sit together nicely giving an all-in jolly good après beach chill out.

The reworking of Snoop's gangster rap goodie 'Who Be The Dopest?' by

Level 6 is superb, as is 'Sum Dum Monkey' by the Fu Schnickens. But best of all is Keith Murrey's and Eric Sermon's (of EPMD) contribution with 'Get Lifted'.

The way the album speeds up and slows down into R.Kelly and Silk and then picks up with basketball fruitcake Shaquille O'Neal and 2Pac is pure style. Summer stylee. **Summer Swing** (2/10)



slaps 20 tracks onto the platter, built around Bobby Brown's 'Humpin Around' and Ini Kamoze's 'Hotstepper', and runs like a daytime radio playlist. But between the overheard and hackneyed tunes are a couple of older summer gems; Omar's well worn but still sweet 'There's Nothing Like This' and Mary J Blige's 'Real Love' to name two. But the dreadful housed up remix of the Young Disciples' 'Apparently Nothin' really put the nail in the coffin.

The 16 tracks on **Jungle Heat 95** (4/10) are, well, Jungle tracks, and of understandably limited appeal. It sounds good for 10 minutes and no doubt longer on the dancefloor, but apart from that only a 16 year old mini regga or film producer looking for an inner city soundtrack is going to seriously listen to the whole thing. The real plus point is the track 'Bastard' by Blackman - a great stomping track with some excellent lyrics.



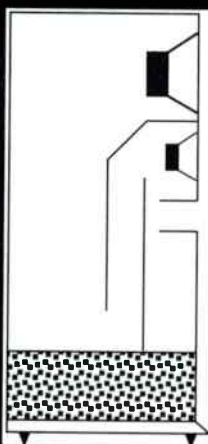
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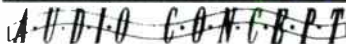
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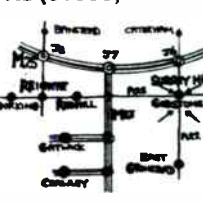
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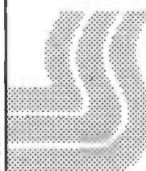
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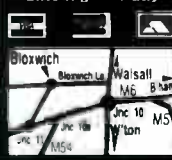


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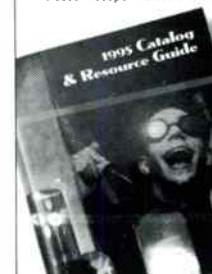


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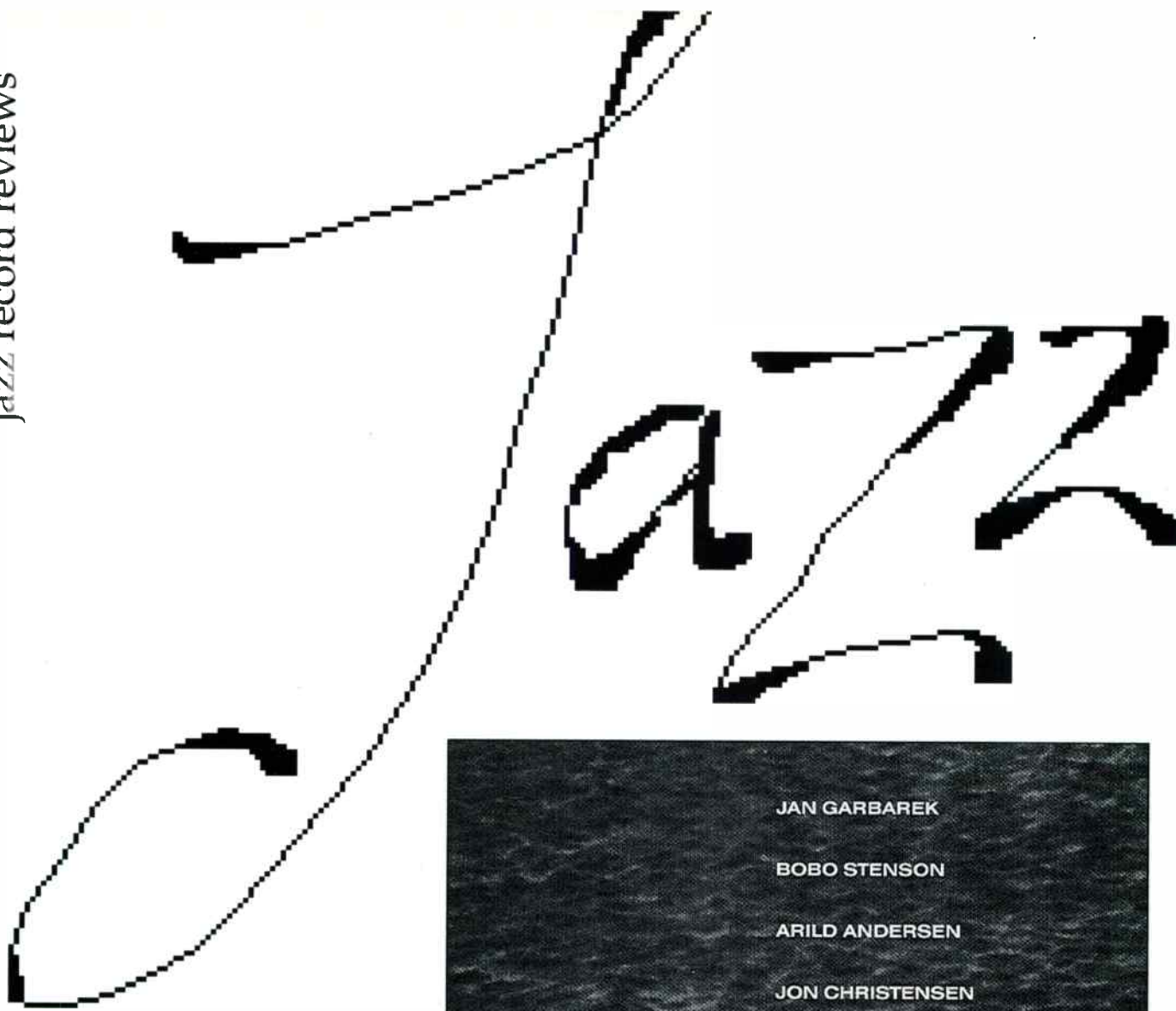
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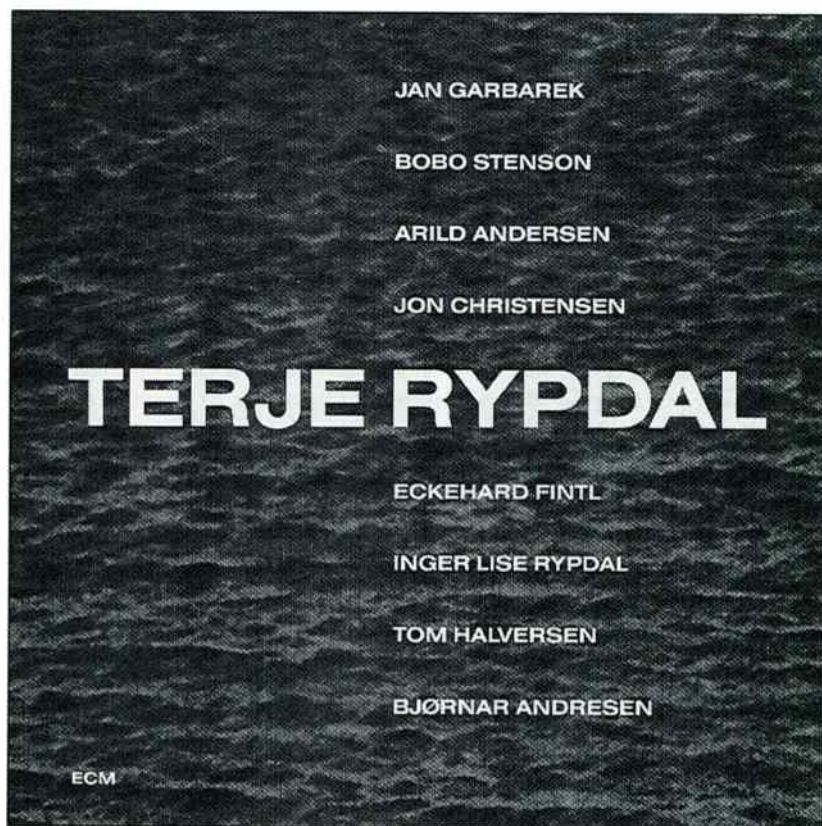
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● ECM seem to be getting round to reissuing their very earliest releases from the early Seventies. For its first hundred releases or so the label was still finding its feet and hadn't really established the aesthetic agenda which would come to define its two-and-a-half decade history. The joy of this is that there are some real unexpected gems in there, from the schizo egghead

searchings of the Music Improvisation Company to the sublime psychedelic jazz of Julian Priester's *Love Love*. Trouble is, ECM have such a strong sense of what their label should be that a goldmine of obscure, wonderful sessions remains steadfastly unreleased.

So it's something of a surprise to come across guitarist Terje Rypdal's staggering debut album, a challenge in every way to received truths about Rypdal specifically and the label generally.

A set of four long, relatively

freeform, darkly explorative tracks, the album presages many of the obsessions which would dominate Rypdal's work over his following albums: soaring, melodic guitar solos which draw as heavily on Coltrane as they do on Hendrix, Miles-inspired freeform funk, a great debt to Northern European folk melodies (and their attendant sense of ascetic pastoralism), and a certain late-Romantic scoring which owes much to Mahler and perhaps Nielsen.

But where later albums would see these areas of interest more and more

pinned down to through-composed forms - from his group The Chasers' tight songs to his recent chamber works like QED - where these strands are braided together with a much greater sense of freedom and with a wholly psychedelic impulse.

There's certainly a fine band at work here. Pianist Bobo Stenson is a fine, emotionally charged improviser. Drummer Jon Christensen would become one of the most underrated percussionists in modern jazz, alternately hard-swinging and deftly colouring. Likewise, bass player Arild Andersen remains a major musician, whose visibility has been lower than it should have been for twenty years or so; on the other hand, saxophonist Jan Garbarek has, of course, become just about the most highly visible jazz musician working today, whose own brand of Holy Minimalism and trademark plangent soloing has become one of the most copied styles in all current jazz. This basic quintet is augmented with singer Inger Lise Rypdal, second bassist Bjornar Andresen, oboe and english horn player Eckerhard Fintl and pianist Tom Halverson.

The textures these nine musicians conjure up are intensely rich, at times a swirling tone poem from which broken solos emerge, at times a thick impasto splattered across urgent, loping rhythms. Rypdal, of course, shines at the helm. While his soloing lacks the grace it would acquire over the years, its inchoate agonies rip out from the music around it. And Garbarek, too, is a million miles from the lyricism which typifies his playing now; here his playing owes as much to Archie Shepp and late Coltrane as it does to the Nordic folk which would dominate his playing later. Witness his wailing as it erupts over the album's massive Free Funk opener Keep it Like That - Tight.

There's not a bad moment here; the album flows from strength to strength, from hard jazz rock to the magical, densely erotic tone poem 'Rainbow'. But it's the album's closing track, 'Tough Enough', which truly points up this album's strengths and origins. Its sassy, swaggering rock shuffle is pure classic Seventies electric Miles Davis, at times a complete doppelganger for passages from Jack Johnson. Which is intriguing; the ECM artist roster filled up with expats from Miles' great electric groups: Jack De Johnette, Chick Corea, Keith Jarrett, Dave Holland, and so on. Yet these musicians took up entirely different musical paths, largely turning their back on Miles' dangerous,

malevolent jazz rock. And here's Rypdal, and a bunch more young Scandinavian musicians, unknown at that point to the world at large, making music that owes its very existence to the voodoo of Miles' electric bands.

As we'll see, Rypdal too would follow other paths - though not before making the gothic-psychedelic jazz masterpieces *Odyssey* and *Whenever I Seem To Be Far Away*. It seems to be a truism that the appeal of involvement in music this intense seemed to wear off on even the most adventurous musicians; many of Miles' acolytes soon woke up to the financial lure of a much slicker, easier-going, lighter fusion of jazz and rock, while others - and young European players involved in sessions like this - would take up a more pastoral, generally acoustic music altogether. We can mourn, but also rediscover; this album adds to an increasing body of work - a body of work that includes Miles' Seventies records, Herbie Hancock's Mwandishi-period recordings, early Weather Report, early Mahavishnu and so on - being rediscovered by a musical audience grown hungry after the visceral excitements of techno and hip-hop.

The whole business of record company reissues is still viewed with some suspicion by many music fans - that it's money for old rope, that it diverts money and attention from the serious business of developing new talent, that it simply turns up long-forgotten crap that deserved to remain that way - but when the serious business of rediscovering and reissuing records of this magical quality turns up trumps, then it's an essential enterprise, clearing a path to foolishly abandoned possible futures and parallel universes. In short - at last! - utterly essential.

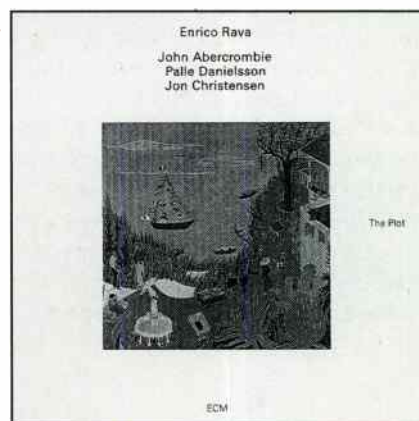


Jazz

TERJE RYPDAL After The Rain ECM 523 159-2

● And here's Rypdal five years later - an entirely different musical proposition together. *After The Rain* is a suite of ten highly lyrical, pastoral songs developed from a beautiful opening theme. Joined only by singer Inger Lise Rypdal, Terje has multi-tracked instrument after instrument - various guitars, synthesiser, pianos, reeds and percussion - building up by turns incredibly deep and gorgeously sparse musical textures.

If this all sounds a tad proto-New Age, rest assured, Rypdal's sense of melody elevates all this music from the endlessly anodyne naval-gazing meanderings by lesser musicians (and generally, notably, musicians with no background in jazz) that followed in its wake. Throughout the record, Rypdal's electric guitar - thoroughly more refined than the agonised screeches of his debut, but still soaked in distortion and echo - soars with a violinistic grace and beauty.



ENRICO RAVA The Plot ECM 523 282-2

● ECM have also recently reissued three very desirable Seventies albums by Italian jazz trumpeter, Gato Barbieri alumnus and sometime film soundtrack composer Enrico Rava.

1978's Enrico Rava Quartet record (ECM 523 283-2) featured a fine band of musicians with whom Rava had worked in various contexts over the years: the great Free Jazz trombonist Roswell Rudd, fiercely swinging bassist JF Jenny-Clark and drummer Aldo Romano. The record easily straddles the line between Free Jazz and hard post-bop.

Previously, in 1975, Rava had formed another fine group with whom he played on and off for several and who debuted on the essential *The Pilgrim*

and the Stars (ECM 847 322-2): guitarist John Abercrombie, bassist Palle Danielsson and drummer Jon Christensen.

Now this is a classic mid-Seventies, essentially European, mid-period ECM group whose finest moment was 1977's *The Plot*. Elsewhere this month I've binged on about how some of the more extreme, fecund and psychedelic possibilities of the very earliest jazz rock were widely abandoned in favour of lighter fusion. But some of the musicians working in Europe at this time, many recording for the ECM label, eschewed both jazz rock paths in favour of a style which encompassed bebop improvising, hard bop rhythms, a kind of considered rock attack and a tendency towards European impressionist melodies. Elsewhere, the like of Pat Metheny watered down even this approach and made themselves very successful in the process.

But here, with the classic ECM line-up, and with a set of largely his own compositions, Rava creates a music of labyrinthine, searching solos, heart-stopping melodies, mesmerising rhythms and breath-taking, crystalline arrangements. Rava's trumpet playing is, at times, awesome, with sparkling runs torn off at random across Christensen and Danielsson's darting rhythms (they remain, for the record, one of the great rhythm sections of European music). And check out Abercrombie; now a bit of a fusion star, I reckon some of his records of late have fallen short of some of his initial promise (although

he's become, of course, a much finer player), but here he's on rip-roaring form, an improviser who flits easily from lyrical grace to manic urgency. Highly recommended.

Simon Cooke



MICHAEL HASHIM *Transatlantic Airs*

33 JAZZ 023

● American saxophonist Hashim is well-known on these shores and here fronts an impressive band with David Newton on piano, Dave Green on bass, and Clark Tracey on drums, with Tina May providing vocals on two Kurt Weill tracks ('Speak Low' written with Nash and 'My Ship' with Gershwin). Hashim wrote four of the tracks, and the other five come from names such as Lester Young, Mel Torme, Henry Mancini. We're in serious mainstream territory here.

That's not to say it's boring; far from it! While none of the players exude that 'lean and hungry look' they are young and vibrant enough to really crack along when necessary, although fans will know that these players can also bring subtlety and texture to the slower pieces. I have to say, however, that I am glad Tina May only gets two tracks here. By her standards it's something of a lacklustre performance, almost as if she was not really concentrating on her work, and it's a pity that this otherwise excellent CD fails to do justice to her abilities, as well as her professionalism.

The recording is, technically speaking, on a par with your average - hence impressive - '33Records' release. Hashim's sax perhaps sounds a shade compressed, but the rest of the band is accurately portrayed across a clean, open sweep of space.

Like the next CD, this recording has

apparently been made without editing or dubbing. What they heard is what you get; in theory. 'Transatlantic Airs' lacks the articulation and clarity of 'Spirit and the Blues', but they're both excellent recordings. If your preference runs more to jazz than country blues, this is a release with a cracking start, mellow middle, and a bit of a sting in the tail.



ERIC BIBB AND NEEDED TIME

Spirit And The Blues
OPUS 3 CD 19401

● I write five hundred words per month here, and at that rate I could comfortably be writing about 'Spirit' well into the next millennium. Nevertheless, I shall try to emulate the CD notes by keeping it sweet and simple. It's a pleasure that the recording technicians have followed this principle too, using minimal interference with the signal - and valve equipment to give a rich, lustrous, and immediate sound. This CD, in effect, cuts the cackle and really brings you the live performance.

The arrangements are breathtakingly simple as Bibb eschews Gospel-chorus ebullience and the common R&B 'stomp' approach for clean, lucid arrangements which enhance those tiny, atmospheric sounds of a gig; breath, echoes, comments. All are here in abundance. That's the problem. For me, a dyed-in-the-wool soundstage freak, all of these small sounds - especially echoes - only serve to disrupt a carefully-cultured acoustic image. Still, it didn't take me long to forget my expectations and accept that the ersatz sound of accomplished musicians enjoying a trip through the history of gospel, blues and soul is worth any amount of technical wizardry trying to keep the sound clean. Either way, it's an excellent, mellow recording, with emotion enough to put the great names of blues to shame. More!



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PAGE 89

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PAGE 90

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PAGE 91

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PAGE 92

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PAGE 97

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Continued on page 97....

Peter Herring

Going solo, with a grand piano, an even grander harpsichord, and a golden-toned cello, not to mention perfect one-to-a-part Purcell, with recordings made in Suffolk and Sofia, Stockholm and south-west London.



FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN
Piano Sonata No3 in B minor Op58
FRANZ LISZT
Mephisto Waltz No1
SERGEI RACHMANINOFF
Prelude in C sharp minor Op3 No2
ROBERT SCHUMANN
Arabesque in C Major Op18
ALEXANDR SKRJABIN
Fantasia in B minor Op28
 Stefan Lindgren, piano
 OPUS 3 CD9202 (AAD/64.08)

● This is an attractive showcase for the considerable talents of the Swedish-born pianist Stefan Lindgren. Clearly drawn to the romantic repertoire, from Chopin to Rachmaninoff, the only disappointment here is that he did not show more imagination in selecting a piece to represent the latter. Pianists, I feel, should still take their cue from Rachmaninoff himself, who eventually grew so tired of playing the C sharp minor Prelude that he admitted, "Nowadays I play it without feeling, like a machine." Lindgren's performance does not want for feeling, and he is far from mechanical; it is the piece itself which has grown stale.

However, there is much else that makes this recital desirable, including a compelling and idiomatic performance of the third and finest of Chopin's piano sonatas. Lindgren illuminates the poetic heart of this work with playing of great lyricism and formidable technique. It is a technique that also serves him well in the dazzling figurations and searching harmonies of Liszt's Mephisto Waltz, a work by turns grand and grotesque and inspired by the-literally-diabolical

outpourings of Nikolaus Lenau's poem, Faust.

I have to say that, while Lindgren's Liszt is a formidable pianistic tour-de-force, musically I found his Schumann more appealing. What a delightful piece the C Major Arabesque is, full of skittish good humour, and portraying the composer at his happiest. It's also technically a superb piece, a self-contained rondo full of colour and contrast.

As you may recall from the review of the Brahms and Mozart Clarinet Quintets in last month's issue, these Opus 3 recordings from Sweden are modern analogue tapings, taking a minimalist approach in terms of electronics and microphones and utilising the special sound qualities of valves wherever possible. And again, you would be hard pressed to show where digits could have made a better job of capturing the fullness of tone and register, as well as the glittering upper ranges of Stefan Lindgren's Steinway.

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH
Cello Concerto No1 in E flat major Op107
PYOTR TCHAIKOVSKY
Variations on a Rococo Theme Op33/Pezzo Capriccioso Op67/Nocturne Op19 No4
 Nathaniel Rosen, cello; Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra; conductor, Emil Tabakov
JOHN MARKS RECORDS JMR3
 (DDD/62.30)

● There are recordings where it is impossible not to feel that the involvement of the performer(s) reaches far beyond the scrupulous interpretation of the notes; that they have detected something within the music that affects them deeply and moves them to an expressive high.

RECORD OF THE MONTH

The years of Cromwell's Commonwealth had brought a complete cessation of theatrical activity in England. It was hardly surprising therefore that the Restoration of the Monarchy - and something resembling normal life - should see the demand for public entertainment outstripping what could be supplied. There were many revivals of the likes of Beaumont, Fletcher and of course Shakespeare, and new plays were hastily written. But the taste of the new monarch, Charles II - who authorised the building of two new theatres in London - and his court had changed during their exile at Versailles. They had come to enjoy the more sophisticated aspects of French theatre: its use of elaborate scenery and special effects; its greater emphasis on female roles; and above all, its more ambitious and imaginative use of music and dance.

In England, these new ideas, originating from Italy as well as France, were rapidly grafted on to the pre-Civil War masque tradition to create what Henry Purcell's contemporary Roger North described as "semi-operas". As the leading composer of the day, Purcell made a predictably distinguished contribution to this new genre, beginning with *Dioclesian* of 1690 and continuing with *The Fairy*

Queen, King Arthur and in 1694, *The Indian Queen*. The problem for Purcell was that the chaotic state of English theatre during this period gave him no solid foundation upon which to build and develop his ideas. This is reflected in the fact that his one true opera, *Dido and Aeneas*, was originally written for performance at Josias Priest's Girls' Boarding School in Chelsea.

HENRY PURCELL *The Indian Queen* - incidental music

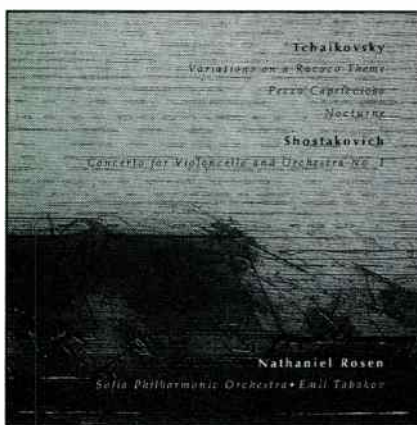
Tessa Bonner, Catherine Bott, Rogers Covey-Crump, Peter Harvey, soloists;
The Purcell Simfony
The Purcell Simfony Voices; director,
Catherine Mackintosh
LINN RECORDS CKD035 (DDD/60.20)

● *The Indian Queen* began life as a tragedy by Sir Robert Howard (to whose wife, Lady Annabella, Purcell was Master of Music), with a contribution from the rather better-known poet and playwright, John Dryden. It was first produced in January 1664 with some incidental music supplied by John Banister, and was well-received. In the ensuing seasons however it was rarely staged, but in 1694 came proposals to revive

the production in the fashion of a 'semi-opera' with better effects, more dances and new music. The music - an hour-or-so's worth of arias and instrumental pieces - was supplied by Henry Purcell. His widow, Frances, later described it as his "last and best performance in music". However, whatever the qualities of Purcell's score, the production itself, planned for London's Theatre Royal, seemed doomed when the leading producer of the day, Thomas Betterton, became embroiled in a dispute with the theatre's management and quit his post, taking the cream of the actors and singers with him.

A new, but inevitably inexperienced company was quickly formed and the production went ahead, but it seems probable that Purcell was forced to simplify some of the musical content to take into account the limitations of the new performers. This would explain why the music for *The Indian Queen* became increasingly elaborate and more overtly operatic in later productions, the accretions including an upbeat finale composed by Purcell's younger brother, Daniel, which is utterly inappropriate to the grim tragedy which has preceded it. It's rightly omitted from this recording.

The plot of *The Indian Queen*



That's the feeling I have from listening to the American cellist Nathaniel Rosen, in Shostakovich's First Cello Concerto, one of two he wrote for Mstislav Rostropovich. Rosen's association with Russia goes back to 1966, when he undertook his first tour. Then in 1978 he astonished many observers by winning the Gold Medal in the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow; the astonishment was not that he didn't

thoroughly deserve the accolade, but that in a Soviet Union rife with anti-semitism, it should be awarded to an American Jew.

Certainly, Rosen's affinity with Russian music is not in doubt, as his alluring and eloquent playing of Tchaikovsky's Rococo Variations amply proves. I cannot recall hearing this lyrical tribute from Tchaikovsky to his idol, Mozart, more persuasively played, and the same can be said of the two Tchaikovsky miniatures, the Pizzicato Capriccioso and the Nocturne. However, for me, it is the Shostakovich which holds the main fascination. This an emotionally complex, multi-layered work with, at its heart, a lengthy and often painfully-expressive cadenza. I also enjoyed the spiky, razor-like pungency of his playing in the first movement, with its shrill warnings from the woodwind and the relentlessly grinding rhythms on the strings. The whole concerto is pervaded by a sense of latent menace;

even the burlesque-like music of the finale wears an evil sneer, knowing that the laughter is a hollow deception.

Unlike the early symphonies, Shostakovich requires no grandiloquent titles or heroic gestures to drive home the point here; whichever way you look at it, the music says it all - there are no riddles, no enigmas as in, say, the Fifteenth Symphony. All it needs is a comprehending interpreter, and Rosen fully fulfils that role.

He receives enthusiastic backing throughout from the Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra under Emil Tabakov, though I fear the somewhat cavernous acoustic does not help their sound in the louder passages. On the plus side, however, the recording is naturally balanced with no spotlighting of the soloist, which may be why he feels able to give full rein to the vibrant sound of his 1948 Venetian Montagnana cello. It may not be the smoothest, most polished of orchestral recordings, but then Shostakovich's

concerns a series of wars supposedly to have taken place between the Aztecs and the Incas (dramatic licence places Peru alongside Mexico on the map of South America!). In truth, this merely acts as an exotic backdrop for a reworking of the age-old plot of doomed love (between the Peruvian general, Montez and, and Zempoalla, the queen of the Mexicans) and the inevitable redemption through sacrifice. Purcell's music is both beautiful and refined, and enhances the drama wonderfully well.

This new recording of *The Indian Queen* from Linn Records, a co-production with Westdeutscher Rundfunk of Cologne, joins a notable list of Purcell recordings to have appeared in recent years. The colourful timbres of the instruments used, the lightness of the forces employed in these more enlightened times, the interest in preserving clarity and detail have all challenged engineers and producers, and the results have brought an often striking purity and transparency of sound. This recording, both produced and engineered by Philip Hobbs, is no exception. It was recorded last September in the fine acoustic of St

Bartholomew's Church in the Suffolk village of Orford and uses the new Purcell Society's edition as the basis for the performance.

A glance at the list of performers involved here reveals many names long associated with the current revival of



interest in Purcell's music: three of the instrumentalists, for example - violinist and director, Catherine Mackintosh, bass viol player Richard Booth by, and the harpsichordist Robert Woolley -

are members of the Purcell quartet which, among other achievements, has recorded the *Sonatas for Chandos*. There is an equally distinguished line-up of singers, with the soprano Tessa Bonner contributing not only as a soloist, but as a member of the four voice choir.

The recording seeks to recapture the kind of private performance of the work which Purcell almost certainly gave to small audiences of friends, colleagues, pupils and patrons and so employs a one-to-a-part orchestra of strings, oboes, recorders, harpsichord, trumpet and drums. And wholly successful this approach proves, helped immeasurably by the characterful singing of both soloists and choir. The impression is that all involved are completely at ease with this music, and wholly sympathetic towards it too, and the result is utterly enticing and ultimately rewarding. Unquestionably, this is one of the most distinguished contributions to the Purcell tercentenary year.

music is no smooth ride.

John Marks Records, I should add, is an American based company founded by the eponymous John Marks, and has the distinction of being the smallest US record label in the smallest state (Rhode Island). The label has also recorded Nathaniel Rosen in chamber works by Brahms, Schumann and Mendelssohn, and in the six Bach suites, all of which on the evidence here should be well worth investigating. An intriguing technical point about the CD, mastered by that eminent engineer Bob Ludwig, is that the label side was first coated with a layer of flat black ink. This, they tell me, is intended to absorb the laser beam and minimise stray reflections and refractions, and to eliminate possible 'strobing' effects from the label graphics. A second ink layer, an overprint of deep green with the label text reversed out, makes double use of the black 'underlayment'. You learn something every day.

TOMÁS LUIS DE VICTORIA
Missa Trahe me, post te/Motet: Trahe me, post te/
Four Marian antiphons: Alma redemptoris mater;
Ave regina coelorum; Regina coeli; Salve regina
 Choir of Westminster Cathedral; James O'Donnell, Master of Music
 HYPERION CDA66738 (DDD/67.32)

● That splendidly byzantine edifice, Westminster Cathedral, celebrated its centenary in June. Throughout those one hundred years, as well as being the focus for Catholic worship in Britain, the Cathedral has also maintained a notable tradition of music-making, most memorably perhaps under the pioneering George Malcolm. Yet over the decades, has the standard of choral singing ever been better than that to be enjoyed today? It was David Hill who, as Master of Music, first brought the choir its present glittering reputation, and it



has been sustained under Hill's successor, James O'Donnell; and arguably their greatest single achievement has been the series of award-winning recordings made for Hyperion of the music of the Spanish composer, Tomás Luis de Victoria.

Whenever someone suggests to me that there is little emotional contrast in Renaissance polyphony, or minimal stylistic difference between the

acknowledged masters of the period, Byrd, Palestrina, Lassus, Tallis, Victoria, et al, it is to the music of the last that I turn to demonstrate just what can be achieved within the limitations which, for historical and practical reasons, dictated these composers' musical palettes.

Victoria's setting of the Requiem Mass - the finest of the period - combines a lofty serenity with an aching poignancy that is intensely personal; hope transcending grief. Then there are the Tenebrae Responsories, the harrowing Eastertide lamentations which embrace the full range of feeling aroused by the Passion story, from horror to anger. With its dark hues, sombre sonorities and sometimes graphic word-painting, Victoria's music is a precise reflection of the text. And when compared to the drama of the Responsories for Tenebrae, the works on this newest Westminster/Hyperion recording vividly demonstrate the breadth of Victoria's expression. These are all celebratory works, rich in texture and exultant in range.

The motet "Trahe me, post he" is to a text from the first chapter of the Song of Songs and Victoria effectively illustrates the opening words with the striking use of double-canon. The second tenor imitates the first at an interval of three bars, while the first alto starts a similar canon half-a-bar after the first tenor but with a different theme, this too being answered at three bars distance by the second alto. The clarity of line and sound achieved here easily lets the listener identify this progression.

Following the tradition of the time for 'parody Masses', Victoria freely bases his *Missa Trahe me* of 1592 on the earlier motet, reviving the canonic procedure of the model in the six-voice *Agnus Dei*. The construction is complex but the flow is uninterrupted, the voices cresting shining waves of sound. The four antiphons in praise of the Virgin are gems: sample the arresting opening of *Alma redemptoris mater* for double choir, where the three upper voices of the first choir fan out from the same note in successive entries, or the *Succurre cadenti surgere* section, where Victoria deploys all his rhythmic mastery. The brilliant *Ave Regina coelorum* for five voices was published in Venice in 1572, as was its companion, *Regina coeli*, the radiant *Magnificat* antiphon for the Octave of Easter. The last of the four motets is Victoria's grandest and most imposing setting of the *Salve regina*, which was sung from first vespers on Trinity Sunday to the

Saturday before the first Sunday in Advent. With its seven sections fully exploiting the potential for contrast between the high and low voices, and the sheer splendour of its sonorities, this is unquestionably one of the great masterpieces of Renaissance polyphony.

The Westminster choir concludes this sixth of its programmes of Victoria's music with one of another, and perhaps the most widely known of the Marian texts, the *Magnificat* (*My soul magnifies the Lord*). This setting, in the first tone (*prima toni*) again explores the contrast between high and low voices to great effect. Antony Howell and Mark Brown's recording maintains the usual Hyperion production values, while the spacious acoustic of Westminster Cathedral is wonderfully well captured. The choir - apart from the odd 'nasally' treble - is in fine voice, and James O'Donnell directs these performances with all the commitment and insight that his predecessor David Hill brought to Victoria's music. There can be few better ways to celebrate a centenary.



THE ROYAL HARPSICHORD OF GEORGE III
Music by Thomas Arne, Johann Christian Bach, Thomas Chilcot, George Frideric Handel and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
 Martin Souter, harpsichord
 ISIS RECORDS CD010 (DDD/63.48)

● Our last encounter with Martin Souter was at the keyboard of the 1696 Schnitger organ in the Lutheran austerity of the *Hervormde Kerk* at Noordbroek in The Netherlands. The contrast with this latest recording could hardly be more marked: recorded in the elegant surroundings of Kew Palace, Souter performs on the Tschudi harpsichord once owned and played by King George III and his wife, Queen Charlotte. A product of one of

England's finest instrument makers, Burckhardt Tschudi, it was acquired by George III's father, Frederick, Prince of Wales. It is now owned by Her Majesty the Queen. Isis Records' Edward Horn came across it by chance during a visit to Kew Palace and obtained permission to have it restored by Anthony Goble and used for recording. This splendid recital is the first fruit of their efforts, after an extensive restoration.

This is a simply outstanding recording in technical terms. I cannot recall a better rendition of the sound of a harpsichord, possessing as it does all the fullness of body and richness of colour and tone that you could want, together with a vivid presence, but with a completely natural balance. Even at modest volume levels, the result is completely convincing.

The qualities of Martin Souter's playing have been praised in these pages before, and here he is at his most fluent and exuberant in a programme of music that reflects the styles popular during George III's reign. There is Handel, of course, the magnificent *Suite in D minor*, with its beautiful saraband, and a fine sonata by Thomas Arne whose reputation always suffered from having to work within the giant shadow of Handel. Also represented is Johann Christian Bach, the elder son of Johann Sebastian who spent most of his working life in England, and Mozart, who visited the English court during a visit in 1764 and, through his links with J.C. Bach, may well have played this very instrument. Finally, Martin Souter offers a delightful suite by the now largely forgotten Thomas Chilcot who was organist of Bath Abbey during the period in which the city was becoming the fashionable place to be. Chilcot, like his contemporary Thomas Arne, certainly knew how to write a good tune, and this charming E minor work does not disguise its French influence.

Glorious music-making throughout, and with not a trace of the fatiguing brightness which mars so many recordings of the instrument. The second recording using this 'royal harpsichord' promises an all-Handel programme including the final three suites from the 1720 collection which aid not appear on Martin Souter's earlier recording (Isis CD003). It is, needless to say, eagerly anticipated.

Classical

....Continued from page 92

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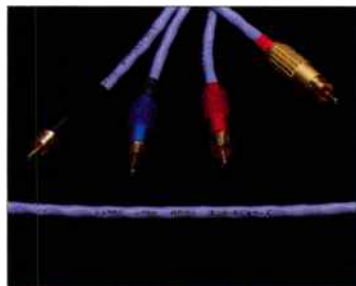
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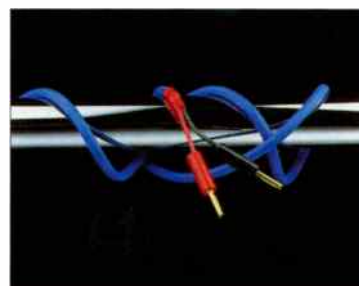
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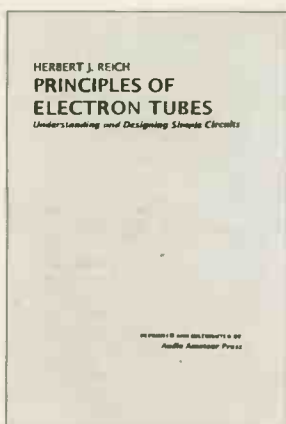
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WORLD LIBRARY

NEW VALVE BOOKS

PRINCIPLES OF ELECTRON TUBES, by **Herbert J. Reich** £29.95

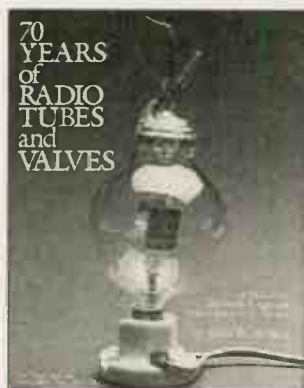


Principles of Electron Tubes first appeared in 1941 as a textbook for beginners studying valves for the first time. The book starts with the basics of how a vacuum tube actually works, including how construction and materials effect performance. Once this basic understanding is in place, Herbert Reich goes on to explain the principles of the simple diode valve, the triode and multi-grid valves. Familiar with the various valve types and their operating principles, the book continues to show how a simple circuit is designed and on to amplifiers, transformers and power supplies. A must for budding valve enthusiasts and an invaluable reference for hobbyists.

70 YEARS OF RADIO TUBES AND VALVES, by **John W. Stokes** £19.95

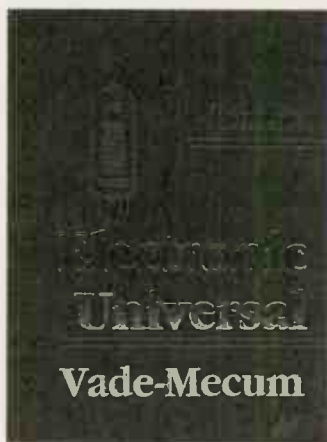
New Zealand author John Stokes, with over fifty years experience, outlines the evolution of radio receiving tubes and the part they played in the domestic radio

receiver in this beautifully illustrated (B&W) book. An ideal reference for those interested in the history and development of valves and for collectors alike.



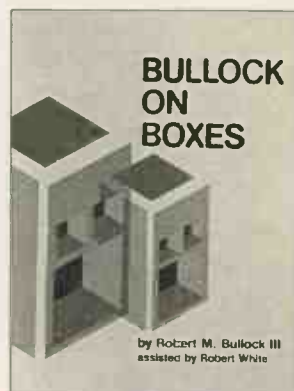
ELECTRONIC UNIVERSAL VADE-MECUM, by **Piotr Mikolajczyk & Bohdan Paszkowski** £49.95

This sizeable data book contains no fewer than 5693 valves divided into 442 groups. It contains connection details, operating parameters, load lines, example circuits and more making it one of the most comprehensive reference books we've seen, although there are some omissions, such as 300B and 211 valves.



LOUDSPEAKER BOOKS

BULLOCK ON BOXES, by **Robert M. Bullock** £12.95



This book relies on manipulation of Thiele-Small parameters (supplied with all drive units) to optimise reflex box design, but with a calculator and at high school level. With lots of helpful tables and graphs, this straightforward book is every beginners best bet for getting to grips with sizing the box and port of a reflex loudspeaker.

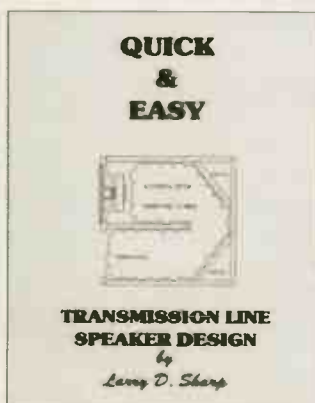
ACOUSTICS, by **Leo L. Beranek** £39.95

From analogous electrical circuits important for modelling, the author moves through to microphones then loudspeakers. He covers design factors, showing how theory influences practice in drive units. Loudspeaker enclosure types covered include sealed, ported and horn. The behaviour of sound in rooms, very important for hi-fi, is also covered extremely well here.



QUICK & EASY TRANSMISSION LINE SPEAKER DESIGN by **Larry D. Sharp** £10.95

A practical approach to designing and building your own transmission line loudspeaker. Covers the background theory, but is very practical in approach. Design examples and equations, even a computer package to run under Lotus 123 which takes care of the maths.



THEORY AND DESIGN OF LOUDSPEAKER ENCLOSURES by **J. E. Benson** £23.95

This book covers loudspeaker enclosure design; infinite baffle, reflex, passive radiator etc in great detail, with a highly mathematical approach, making it unsuitable for beginners, but highly authoritative to experienced designers with a good foundation in acoustics.



SOLID STATE ELECTRONICS

THE ART OF ELECTRONICS, by P. Horowitz and W. Hill. £35

The definitive electronics book. The Art of Electronics is an ideal book for the beginner through to the engineer. Written in easy to understand English, each chapter takes you from basic first principles through to full design exercises and practical circuits.



THE ART OF LINEAR ELECTRONICS, by J. Linsley-Hood. £16.95

Concentrates specifically on analogue electronics for audio and goes into detail on obscure topics like the drawbacks of feedback, as well as its advantages. Covers mainly solid state but



also includes valves. A must for serious enthusiasts and budding designers.

AUDIO ANTHOLOGIES

Audio Anthologies - When Audio Was Young

There are five volumes of the Audio Anthologies, listed below with a brief description and guide to their contents. They cover one of the most exciting and important eras of hi-fi, from the end of the second world war, through the introduction of stereo, magnetic recording, binaural recording and the FM Multiplex decoder. They contain many ground breaking circuits and theory covering all aspects of hi-fi design. A must for valve enthusiasts.

Volume One - May 1947 to December 1949

The first new audio amplifiers, tuners and speakers designed after the long delays of the Great Depression and World War II.

Summary of Contents: 9.5watt, 5watt and 6.5 watt 6AS7G amplifiers, 30watt 300B amplifier, valve FM tuning indicator, 30watt 211 power amplifier, cathode follower amplifier using 6V6, an adaptation of the Williamson amplifier, valve phono preamplifier, several horn and reflex loudspeaker designs and much more.

Volume Two - January 1950 to July 1952

More great amplifiers, preamps, loudspeaker designs, and the first glimmer of the stereo revolution plus magnetic recording aids.

Summary of Contents: Ultra linear 6L6 design and operation of the Williamson, a direct coupled amplifier, Williamson type amplifier using 6A5s, 40watt 845 push-pull amplifier, valve phono and line preamps, valves and loudspeaker damping, design and construction of reflex and horn loudspeakers.

Volume Three - August 1952 to June 1955

Seven power amplifiers, eighteen preamps, twelve loudspeaker designs, including four horn types and binaural recording techniques.

Summary of Contents: Simple valve phono stage, transformerless amplifier using 6082, 20watt 5881 amplifier, 10watt 6V6 amplifier, stereo valve preamp, high quality valve phono stage, a preamp for the Williamson, low distortion tone control preamp, binaural or stereophonic?, transistor phono amp, corner horn loudspeaker, concrete horn loudspeaker.

Volume Four - July 1955 to December 1957

How to plan an audio system, twelve amplifiers and preamps, solid state techniques and circuits introduced and six loudspeaker designs.

Summary of Contents: 18watt 5881 amplifier, 4watt single-ended tweeter amplifier, budget 11 watt amplifier, versatile bass/treble control, transistor theory, transistor preamp, transistor techniques, battery powered transistor phono preamp, loudspeakers explained.

Volume Five - January 1958 to December 1959

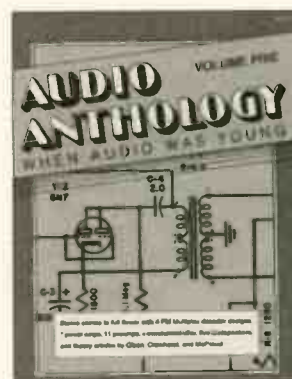
Stereo comes to full flower with four FM Multiplex decoder designs, seven power amps, eleven preamps, a commercial killer, five loudspeakers, and theory articles by Olson, Crowhurst and McProud.

Summary of Contents: Stereo valve multiplex decoder, 7watt EL84 amplifier, valve active crossover and 20watt treble amp/50watt bass amp., monaural, binaural, monophonic and stereophonic explained,

heterodyne FM multiplex adapter, transistor preamp, 60watt EL34 amplifier, high power audio amplifiers, hi-fi loudspeaker enclosure.

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Audio Amateur Press

MULLARD TUBE CIRCUITS FOR AUDIO AMPLIFIERS. £13.95

First published in 1959 by Mullard, this book includes full designs for eleven power and control amplifiers, including the 5-20, using valves. This book begins with a four-chapter tutorial on getting the best sound from valve amplifiers.



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Troughline Mk II, III & Stereo are all very capable tuners - with two problems, firstly most are mono, secondly the Stereo models have lousy output. We have an easy cure for a low output stereo model, an extra valve buffer stage connected to the decoder. This raises the output from a ftee-powered 0.04 of volt, to a much more usable 1.2 volts, as well as offering better cable control, and thus improving the sound (better bass, dynamics etc.). We charge £70 for this, including a full alignment, gold sockets & service. Anyone just wishing to have their tuner aligned and serviced will be charged £40. The ultimate mod for any Troughline (or any tuner for that matter) is the Tim de Paravicini F.M. Tube Decoder. This gives the best sound you can get out of any tuner system anywhere. Total charge is £235 for alignment, modification & supply of the TdP decoder.

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"the technology may be rooted in the early years of this century,
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"The Gamma RHYTHM REF (aeon) is a welcome new comer to the single ended fold the design
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this is one of those minimalist amp which must leave many high end solid state buffs
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the Gemini will charm the very best out of your music collection.

for £699 you'd be hard pressed to match this design for sheer sound quality
and enjoyment (Hi-Fi Choice March '95)

the immediate effect of this new amp was warmth and funkiness.

"Suddenly it had soul" "I had a clearer idea of what they were feeling"

"the Gemini offers a small footprint with a difficult to beat price" (Hi-Fi News & RR Feb. '95)

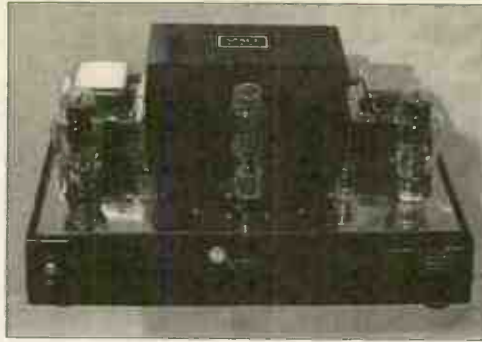
There's a hugely endearing quality about the Gemini sound, " It has the most attractive
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(What Hi-Fi Feb. '95) **BUT DON'T TAKE THEIR WORD COME AND BE HAPPILY SURPRISED!**

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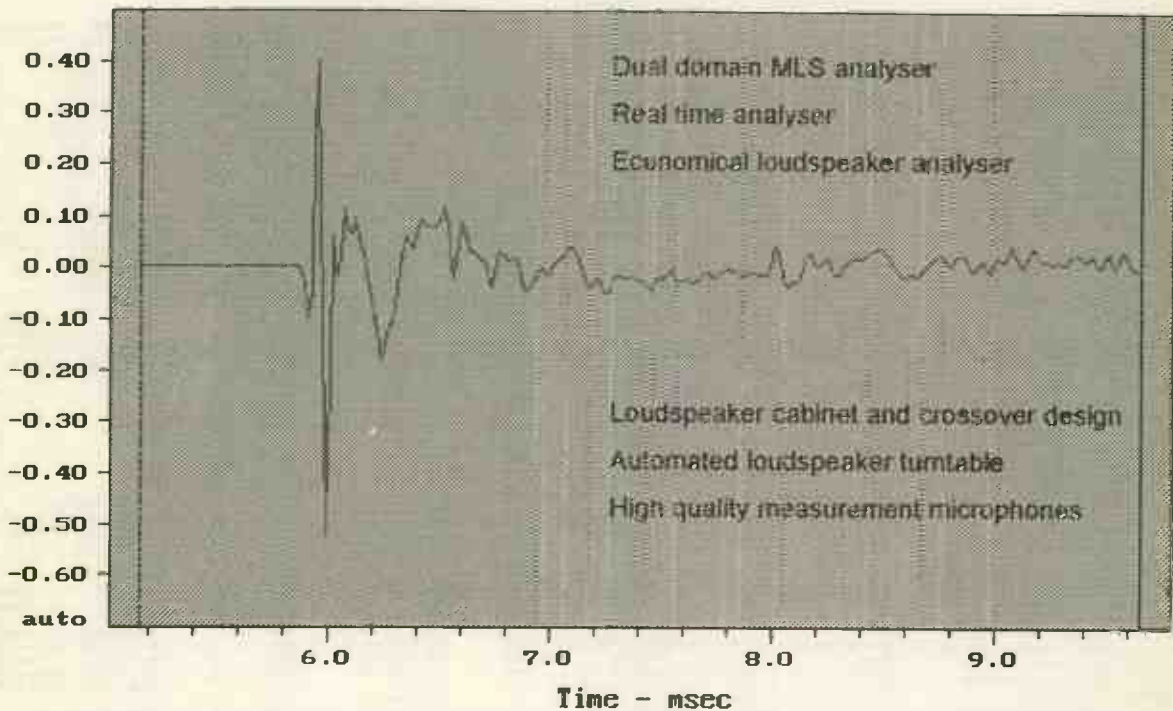


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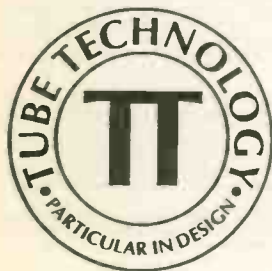
Even the remote-controlled volume has a separate gearbox and motor together with a high quality attenuator, custom built ensuring "high-end" purity.

Tube Technology's build quality is of the highest standard and is backed by a no-nonsense ten-year guarantee.

Described here are only a few features of the Synergy, for a complete discussion and audition of this and our other remarkable products please contact us for your nearest dealer and colour brochure.

From the moment you hear The Synergy...

you realize that its unique styling is a major contribution to its musical performance.



Tube Technology, Foxhills Farm, Longcross Road, Ottershaw, Surrey, KT16 0DN, England. ~ Est. 1988.

Tel: 01932 873444 ~ Fax: 01932 873012

All Tube Technology amplifiers are designed and manufactured in England.

Gold Aero

The Synergy is shown here fitted with Gold Aero tubes from the USA. These are high grade, audiophile vacuum tubes which have attained world class respect for their sonic qualities. Now available in the UK via Tube Technology & their selected dealers.

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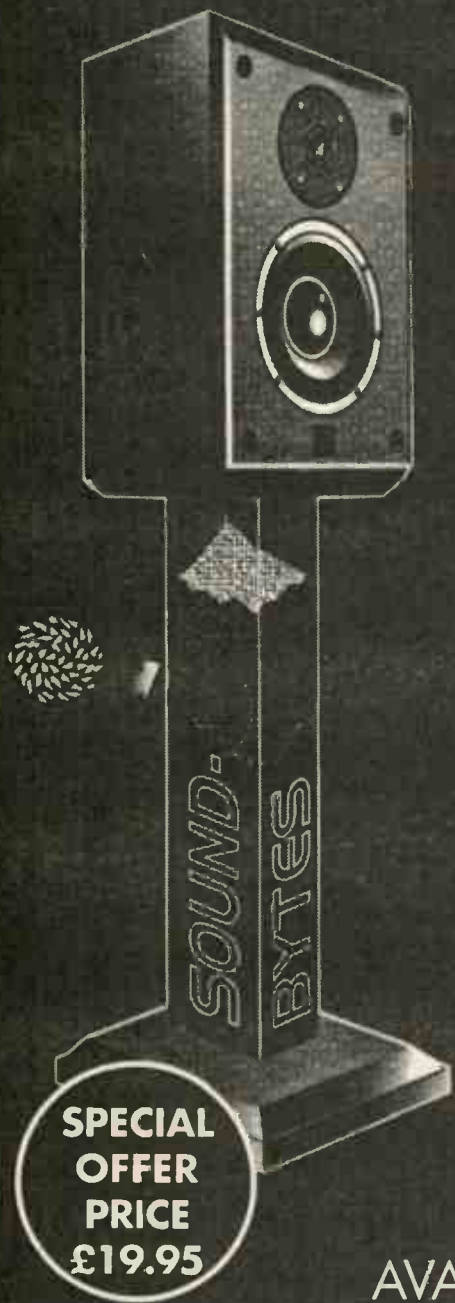
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LOUDSPEAKERS

Smooth, flat frequency response is important to ensure a balanced sound. Look carefully at overall trends; rising treble will give a bright sound, falling treble a dull sound. A rise through the midrange normally corresponds with good projection.

High sensitivity (better than 86dB) means less power is needed for a certain volume, meaning a low power amp. can be used.

The impedance curve tells us how easy loudspeakers are to drive. Low or wildly varying impedance is bad; a flat impedance around 8Ω is good.

CD PLAYERS

Even small trends in frequency response of CD players can affect their subjective balance. Generally, those with a gently rolled off treble and, more rarely, a rising bass will sound best. Rising treble can produce a

sharp sound.

The distortion plot we show is taken at -30dB, to represent a typical music signal. High distortion at this level, combined with rising treble, can result in a harsh sound. Yet other effects have to be considered, especially low level linearity, which we also test for, including -90dB signals with dither applied.

AMPLIFIERS

Distortion from solid state amplifiers should be no more than around 0.2%. Even order (2nd, 4th, 6th etc) distortion is aurally innocuous, but odd order (3rd, 5th, 7th etc) distortion makes for a glassy, hard sound, or grittiness.

Frequency response can be band limited, with bass and treble rolled off just out of the ear's range, or wideband. Each has its own characteristics. Small wideband response variations colour tonal balance.

Power output is easy to understand: the higher the figure, the louder it will go. Just make sure there's enough power output to drive any loudspeakers you intend to use.

TUNERS

Frequency response, as always, says much about tonal balance and character traits, like peaky treble (due to a mis-matched MPX filter). Distortion and channel separation need to be less than 0.3% (according to

harmonic structure) and better than 25dB.

Hiss level must be lower than -70dB for Radio 3 silences to be just that - silent. And full quieting, the strength of aerial signal needed for optimum results, should be around 1mV or less

Selectivity, the ability to separate stations under the most difficult conditions should be better than 60dB and sensitivity better than 30μV on stereo.

CASSETTE DECKS

Replay performance is measured to IEC 94 Standards using IEC test tapes. This ensures that recordings made on a machine transfer to a car player, personal stereo or another domestic recorder properly, as well as ensuring optimum results with commercially prerecorded tapes. Look for a quoted replay response of 40Hz-10kHz, no more than 1% speed error and hiss in the replay amps lower than -58dB.

Recording quality considers frequency response, bias variation, head performance and alignment. Frequency response should stretch from 40Hz-15kHz or so. Head overload (MOL/SAT) must be above 0dB, reaching around +4dB for good results.

From the transport mechanism look for less than 0.15% wow or flutter. Overall (DIN weighted) wow and flutter should be no more than 0.1% or so.

CASSETTE

ROTEL CASSETTE DECK

The transport mechanism displayed fairly mediocre speed stability, running fast by 1.2% and varying its speed randomly (drift), which in turn produced irregular speed variations (jerking, as it were). This is a simple transport, whose antics are likely to be audible with sustained piano notes, at least.

The head is poor, much like so many I'm coming across nowadays due, I suspect, to the Yen's rise. Consequently, it would sustain reasonable recording level onto ferric tape, low level onto chrome and was awful with metal, not even making it up to 0VU. Distortion hit 12% at low frequencies.

Frequency response displayed a little bass lift with all tape types, just enough to add body to the sound. Bias varied little with metals and was badly set, but it worked satisfactorily with ferrics and chromes, offering flat response with all tape brands and types, to give tonally balanced recordings. Input sensitivity was very high at 60mV and output also high at 700mV, so matching will be no problem. Hiss and hum levels were low.

Frequency response of the replay amplifiers

(replay e.q.) was flat, which will give good basic tonal balance with pre-recorded tapes.

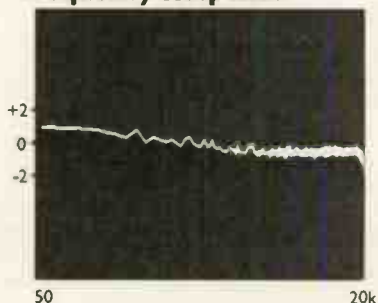
The RD-960BX is a cost cut deck with some significant weaknesses. I had to make running repairs, securing a circuit board so the auto tape selectors would work properly, then jiggling a connector to get one channel back into life. All this suggested hurried assembly and testing. Not good. **NK**

TEST RESULTS

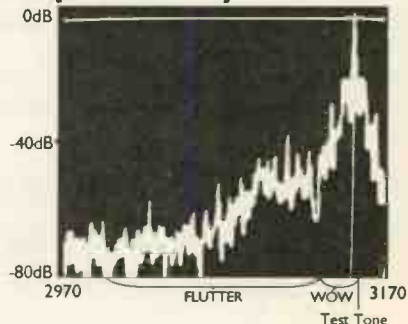
REPLAY (pre-recorded tapes)
Frequency response (-2dB) 30Hz-20kHz
Speed accuracy +1.2%

Hiss (70uS, Dolby out) -60dB
RECORDING (blank tapes)
Frequency response (IEC Primary Refs.)
ferric (IECI) 24Hz-17kHz
chrome (IECII) 24Hz-17kHz
metal (IECIV) 24Hz-17kHz
Separation (1kHz) -42dB
Distortion (315H) 2.3%
Hiss (70uS, Dolby out) -56dB
Speed variations (DIN total) 0.1%
Flutter energy (3-3.13kHz) -30dB
MOL/SAT (IEC Refs) 315/10k
IEC I (ferric) +2dB/-5dB
IECII (chrome) 0dB/-4dB
IECIV (metal) -1dB/0dB

Frequency Response



Speed Stability



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82

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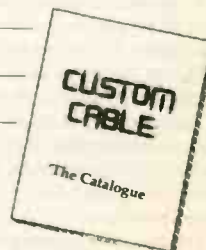
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NEW10/85

AMPLIFIERS

HARMAN KARDON HK620

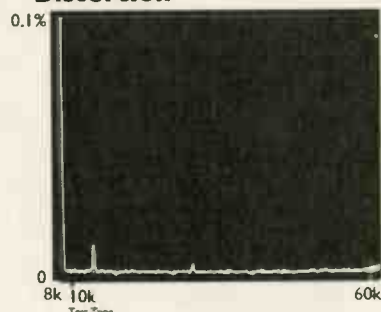
The 620 produces plenty enough power for most loudspeakers, in small to medium sized rooms, for normal volumes. We measured 66watts into a normal load and no less than 100watts when feeding a low 4Ω.

Harman have traditionally produced very wide bandwidth amplifiers and although current outlook would have it that restricting bandwidth is the best thing to do, Harman amplifiers suggest there's more to it. They usually offer a good, open sound, in spite of response exceeding 100kHz, as it did with the new 620. Bass extension was exceptionally low too, reaching 2Hz. With high sensitivity, low noise and distortion (mainly innocuous sounding second harmonic) the 620 measured well, as Harman amps usually do. **NK**

TEST RESULTS

Power	66watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	2Hz-130kHz
Separation	-85dB
Noise	-92dB
Distortion	0.014%
Sensitivity	140mV
dc offset	3/-5mV

Distortion



UNISON SIMPLY FOUR

The Simply Four is the bigger brother of the Simply Two reviewed in the August '95 issue of HFW. The Two used one EL34 per channel to produce 8watts of single ended power, the Four uses a parallel-single-ended configuration with two EL34s in parallel for each channel to give just over 16watts, making it suitable for a wider range of 'speakers.

Distortion remained predominantly 2nd harmonic at all levels, which tends to be innocuous, or at least more pleasing than odd order components. The Unison has switchable feedback, offering two levels. The higher feedback position gives lowest distortion and output impedance, which will allow more reactive loudspeakers to be driven. But the lower feedback position normally gives better subjective results, as long as distortion isn't too high.

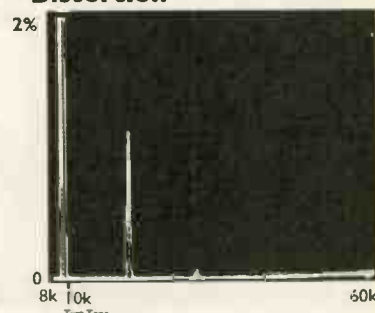
With the Simply 4, Unison have engineered a very well thought out amplifier. In addition to the well mannered distortion characteristics, noise is low enough to be inaudible on all but the most sensitive loudspeakers and the line inputs are all sensitive enough to be used with even the lowest output tuners and cassette decks. **DB**

TEST RESULTS

Power	16.5watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	10Hz-60kHz
Separation	60dB
Noise	-88dB
Distortion	
Position 1 (highest feedback)	1%
Position 2 (lowest feedback)	1.4%

Sensitivity 160mV
dc offset 0mV

Distortion



EXPOSURE SUPER XV

Exposure's Super XV is a powerful integrated, raising 58 watts into 8Ω and 93watts into a 4Ω load. This is enough power to drive most loudspeakers loud with ease, and the Super XV will cope with low impedance loudspeakers, such as KEF's Reference series, well.

Frequency response is band limited to 24kHz, which normally gives a smoother treble than wide band amplifiers, free from sharpness. Distortion on the Exposure was high, measuring 0.3% at 10kHz for a 1watt output. But although the plot below shows strong harmonics, their structure is dominated by even order harmonics, 2nd and 4th being the strongest, which are normally innocuous.

Sensitivity on line level inputs was 165mV, so even low output tuners and cassette

decks will have enough output to drive the Exposure to full power.

Channel separation was surprisingly low though at 41dB, and noise quite high at -85dB, so some slight hiss may be audible. Also, D.C. offset on one channel was high at 20mV, which may displace 'speaker drive units, especially on more sensitive loudspeakers.

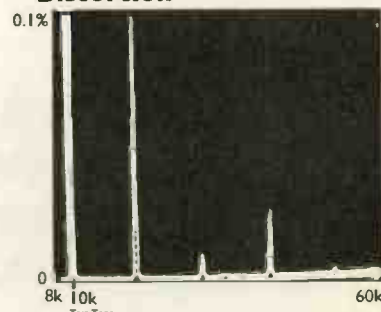
The Exposure Super XV measures reasonably well, but some areas of its performance could be more refined considering its price. **DB**

TEST RESULTS

Power	58watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	10Hz-24kHz
Separation	41dB

Noise -85dB
Distortion 0.3%
Sensitivity 165mV
dc offset 20/3.4mV

Distortion



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CD PLAYERS

MARANTZ CD-72 MKII

The CD-72 II has a very flat frequency response, with just the slightest lift in the high treble. This will give a neutral balance, but it may sound a touch 'clinical' because of the extra perceived detail associated with the treble lift.

As is common with many of the well engineered Japanese players, distortion was very low at all levels. There was strong noise and inharmonic distortion though starting within the upper reaches of the audio band. If you look at our -30dB distortion plot below, you can see this starting at the far right, and it may well colour treble quality, especially combined with the slight treble lift in the frequency response.

Otherwise the Marantz measured well enough, with output just a smidgen above the Philips standard at 2.1V, a healthy dynamic range of 106dB and extremely wide channel separation; nearly 130dB at 20kHz. **DB**

TEST RESULTS

Frequency response	4Hz-21kHz	
Distortion (%)		
-6dB	0.005	0.006
-30dB	0.01	0.01
-60dB	0.57	0.54
-90dB	30.2	30.5
-90dB dithered	3.4	3.3
Separation (dB)	left	right
1kHz	132	132
20kHz	128	128
Noise with emphasis	-121dB	
Dynamic range	106dB	
Output	2.1V	

TEAC CD-P3200

The TEAC CD-P3200 is probably the worst CD player I have ever measured, but then again, it is also the cheapest. Frequency response is smooth and flat up to 2kHz, but from here upwards things go a little wonky. The response becomes very uneven and the overall trend is a rising one which will lighten tone and add a brightness to the sound.

This combined with the high distortion at all levels is unlikely to sound pleasant. At -30dB, a level selected to represent typical music level, distortion harmonics were high and wide ranging. This will almost definitely colour the sound, and combined with the frequency response lift in the treble could result in harshness. At -60dB distortion was high again at 2.4%, giving a low dynamic range of 95dB (EIAJ test).

Channel separation was lower than most too, but as you only need around 25dB of separation for good stereo, and the TEAC managed 66dB at 20kHz, this is no cause for serious concern. Output was fine at 2.2V. **DB**

TEST RESULTS

Frequency response	4Hz-20.9kHz	
Distortion (%)		
-6dB	0.061	0.065
-30dB	0.091	0.114
-60dB	2.44	2.45
-90dB	32.7	32.1
-90dB dithered	22.7	18.3
Separation (dB)	left	right
1kHz	90	90
20kHz	66	66
Noise with emphasis	-103dB	
Dynamic range	95dB	
Output	2.2V	

NAD 510

With rising manufacturing costs in the East, the performance of budget CD players is suffering. Determined not to compromise performance on their new 510 player, NAD have provided no remote control and sparse features. The good news is that it's worked, the NAD measuring well and displaying quality engineering.

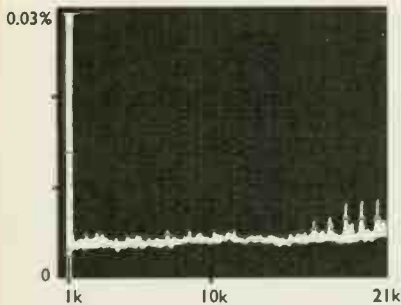
Frequency response is smooth with a slight lift in the bass and rolled off treble, normally the best combination for a good subjective balance from CD. Treble does roll off a little early though, so I'd expect a soft and warm sound, which may well be a benefit with some systems.

Distortion was low at all levels, which is something few players at this price manage nowadays. At -30dB, a level selected to represent a typical music signal, you can see just a small amount of 2nd and 3rd harmonic distortion poking out above the noise floor. I suspect it is low enough not to colour the sound.

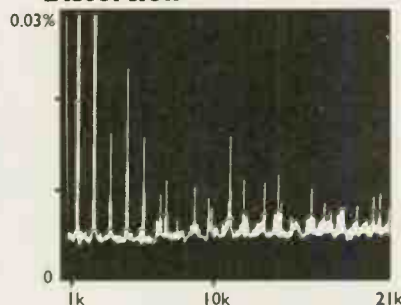
Elsewhere there is nothing to grumble about, the 510 having wide channel separation, good dynamic range, healthy output at 2.3V and low noise. All in all, a well thought out and engineered player. **DB**

Frequency response	4Hz-21.25kHz	
Distortion (%)		
-6dB	0.004	0.005
-30dB	0.013	0.011
-60dB	0.61	0.61
-90dB	55.3	57.7
-90dB dithered	16.7	15.3
Separation (dB)	left	right
1kHz	116	117
20kHz	99	100
Noise with emphasis	-103dB	
Dynamic range	106dB	
Output	2.3V	

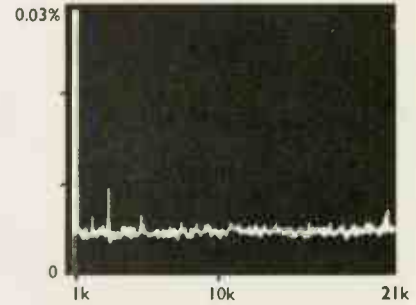
Distortion



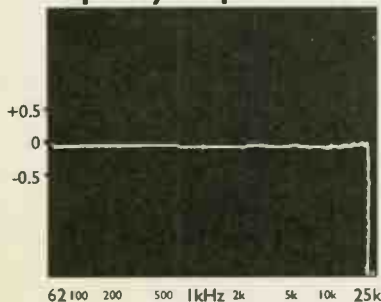
Distortion



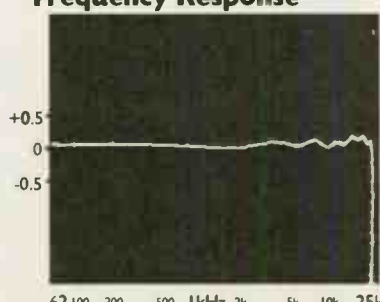
Distortion



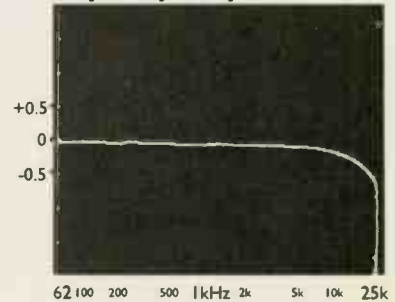
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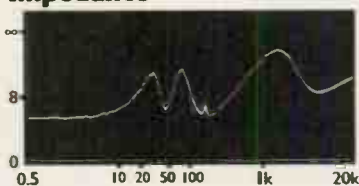
ORTOFON CONCORDE 6

You get a lot of loudspeaker from Ortofon in the form of their Concorde 6. They are a large three way floorstander with healthy bass extension as seen in the plot below. Above this the response starts to gently fall in level which will remove a little midrange projection, but the tweeter comes in strong to give the response a plateau lift above 5kHz. I'd expect the Ortofon's to have powerful bass, a smooth midrange and strong treble.

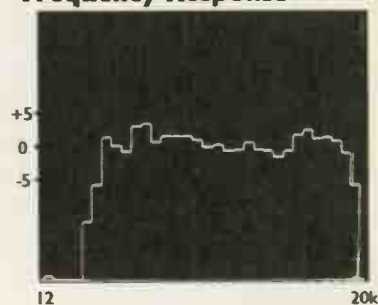
Impedance falls low through the bass, suggesting that the twin bass drivers have been wired in parallel, reducing impedance and increasing power draw. This said, impedance never drops below 4Ω, which keeps them a nice load for most amplifiers. Sensitivity is good too, measuring 88.5dB at 1m with a nominal watt (2.83V) pink noise signal.

The Concorde 6s are nicely engineered, but beware of strong treble. **DB**

Impedance



Frequency Response



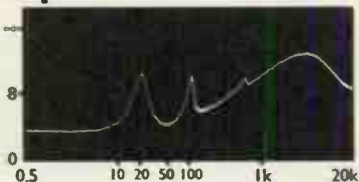
WHARFEDALE VALDUS 500

The Valdus 500s have a reasonably smooth and integrated response from around 800Hz upwards. There is a slight peak at 3kHz which will push detail forwards and should give them good projection. Below this there is a deep and wide dip followed by a strong peak centred around 100Hz. This may remove some upper bass/lower midrange detail, but below this the lift should give good bass punch.

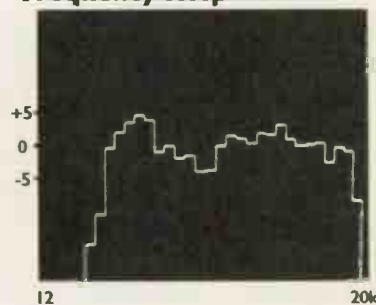
Wharfedale's Valdus 500s are very sensitive, producing a healthy 92dB at 1m for a nominal watt (2.83V) pink noise signal. This means that they will go loud with few watts. Overall impedance is low at 6.2Ω though, and the impedance curve shows falling impedance towards the bass. This means that an amplifier capable of delivering current into low impedance loads will be necessary if you

want to exploit the Valdus' prolific bass extension to its full. **DB**

Impedance



Frequency Response



HEYBROOK HEYLO

Heybrook's Heylos are a short floorstander with the drivers mounted below the axis where your ear would normally be. Cleverly though, Heybrook have aligned the phase of the Heylos so that the response is smoothest and integrates best with the microphone above them, so the response is lobed upwards towards the listener.

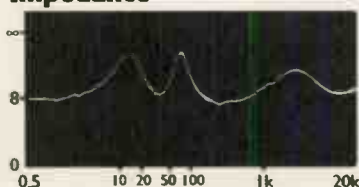
Frequency response was very smooth, with a gentle lift through the midrange which will tend to push detail forwards, and a slight lift in the treble. This, combined with a falling bass, response may give the Heylos quite a light and open quality, but they are unlikely to have very powerful bass, even with some wall reinforcement.

With a high overall impedance of 9.8Ω and a smooth impedance curve that never drops below 5Ω right across the audio band, the

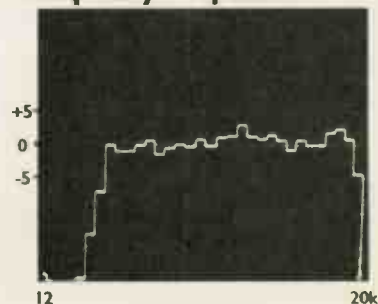
Heylos could be a good match for zero feedback amplifiers. However, they are only of average sensitivity, measuring 86.5dB at

1m for a nominal watt pink noise input, so I'd recommend at least 30watts or so for best results. **DB**

Impedance



Frequency Response



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Helius Sirius II Loudspeakers - excellent cond.		950
Linn LP12 Turntable with ITTOK tonearm - mint N/A		550
Voyd Valdi Turntable with HELIUS tonearm	N/A	595
Audio Innovations T2 Stepup transformer	(350)	200
Rega Planar 3 Turntable - mint	N/A	175
JPW AP2 Loudspeaker -ex dem light oak	(199)	149

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LOUDSPEAKERS

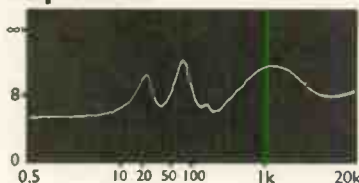
MIRAGE M-890I

The Mirage M-890is are a bipolar design, with identical drivers firing both forwards and behind, in-phase to create a hemispherical sound pattern. As you will see from the plot below, the '890is have a smooth response and are especially flat through the midrange. Treble lifts gently above 6kHz, which is likely to give them extra perceived detail and insight. This is balanced in the bass by a lift around 160Hz, which will add some punch.

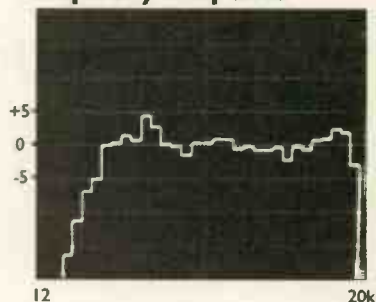
As far as driving the '890is goes, they aren't the easiest of loads. Low sensitivity of 84dB at 1m for a nominal watt (2.83V) pink noise signal, plus low impedance

through the bass, will combine to draw current. This makes a powerful solid state amplifier the best bet. I'd recommend at least 50watts for good levels in a typical listening room. **DB**

Impedance



Frequency Response



TUNER

KENWOOD KT-6050

This is an advanced tuner design, beating most. It has incredibly low hiss, at -80dB the lowest I've ever measured. As a result, it hits -70dB hiss - most tuner's lower limit - at just 0.63mV from the aerial, another record. It has just about no spurious output, and very low distortion too. With a carefully tailored frequency response that mildly de-emphasises treble to avoid glare and with bass emphasis to add weight, I'd predict an interesting sound.

Alternate channel (+/-0.4MHz) selectivity was excellent in Wide or Narrow IF mode, but Narrow usefully improved adjacent channel selectivity by 16dB.

The signal meter usefully runs up to 0.8mV, enough to tell whether the aerial really is giving enough signal, although 3mV or more is needed to hit absolute minimum noise of -80dB.

The KT-6050 measured incredibly well. It's a class leader. **NK**

TEST RESULTS

Frequency response

3Hz-14.5kHz

Stereo separation

45dB

Distortion (50% mod.)

0.1%

Hiss (CCIR)

-80dB

Signal for minimum hiss

3mV

Selectivity (at 0.4MHz)

80dB

Sensitivity

mono

2µV

stereo

18µV

signal strength meter

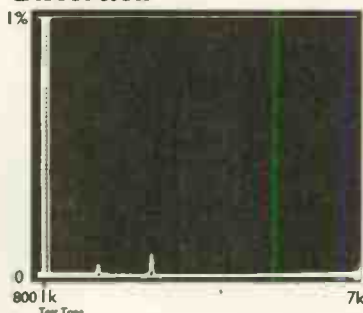
LED No.

1 2 3 4 5

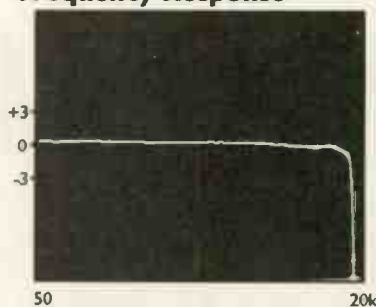
level (µV)

5 16 60 250 800

Distortion



Frequency Response



TEST EQUIPMENT



- Hi-Fi World has its own advanced test laboratory and acoustically treated listening room. No other hi-fi magazine has the benefit of such facilities.

- Hi-Fi World has a dedicated in-house team of experienced listeners, and uses selected freelance professionals. We review thoroughly by extensive auditioning, rather than by quick-fire group listening tests.

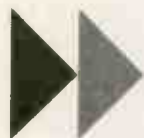
- Hi-Fi World's engineering team designs a wide range of products in-house. We export kits, parts and built-up products around the world, delighting buyers in far flung corners of the globe. No other hi-fi magazine is so expert and dedicated.

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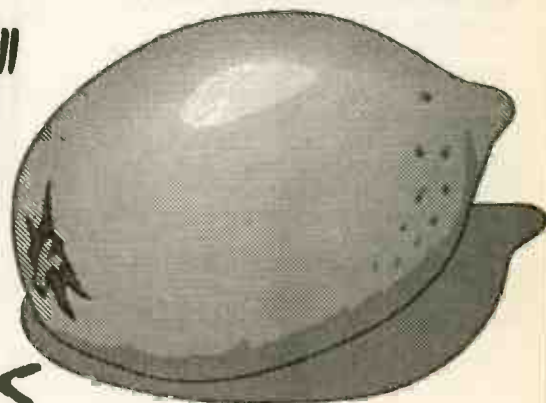
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Around The World

Last month we referred to the "Best of British" Hi-Fi and frankly we do prefer to sell British products as apart from anything else it's so much easier to sort out problems should any occur, which luckily is very seldom. So for us to get involved with a foreign product, means it has to have something special which we can't otherwise find in equivalent British products, though the usual higher price makes the equation difficult sometimes.

A) Speakers

If there is one criticism that can generally be made against British speakers, especially in the era of CD, is a tendency towards a shrill sound and one of the main characteristics of all the foreign units we sell is of a more mellow sound. This has always been a characteristic of American speakers, but often they go too far the other way and lack real excitement and dynamics. My association with Alon results from a 15 year era when I used the now obsolete Dahlquist DQ10's, a superbly dynamic speaker with 5 drivers. The Alon's are produced by Carl Marchisotto, who worked for 15 years

as Chief Engineer at Dahlquist, and has carried on the tradition, but in more user friendly vertical boxes. Previously all Alon units were open baffle, apart from the bass unit, but they have just produced two new box units,, the 0.5 floorstander and the bookshelf sized Petite, for which a sub-woofer is planned. The Petite has just had a rave review in the 'Absolute Sound' and we should have heard it by the time this ad appears. Ring us for details. This speaker costs £1000 approx, but the Alon 1 at £1600 and the II At £2700 are full range beasts with a huge open stage and powerful bass which would appeal to rock fans and large orchestral enthusiasts

The Triangle speakers from France are much cheaper starting at £325 for the Titus bookshelf to the first of their floorstanders at £650. These are as sweet as a nut and incredibly accurate transducers. All of these however only come as black boxes, but if you want a beautiful cabinet look no further than the Callas from Opera (Italy), with a sweet sound to boot. The Jamo speakers from Denmark have some bargains particularly the Cornet 30 at a mere £90, while Analysis from Greece produce big and small panel speakers from £2500 to £4500. More next time!

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Manticore has the policy of helping our customers to progress along the upgrade path, and we will always take an MB5, or MB5i in part exchange at full cost price against an MB6. Consequently, we often have pre-owned MB5 or Mb5i in stock at very good prices.

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NEWSLETTER NO 6

I am often asked the questions of what is the 'best' amplifier, or system available. My reply is usually something like the proverbial "how long is a piece of string". Generally speaking it's one of those awkward questions with no real solutions. There are too many variables, such as how big the room will be, what loudspeakers are to be used etc. There is always more than one way of breaking an egg!

Something else that I am constantly asked is how do some manufacturers (of the high-end) justify such high prices on certain products. Companies like Krell, Audio Note, Wilson Audio, and others all make very expensive equipment. Much of the time, the technology used is often "way over the top" and very expensive to develop. It must be perceived to be a "lasts a lifetime" product, and therefore casework becomes expensive.

We, the listeners, must never rest in the false security that our systems are 'right'. Manufacturers must always strive to get closer to the original performance. Constant development of all products in the audio chain is the only way to realise the truth of the moment!

What I am of course saying, is that there are systems which are much better at creating the illusion of music from boxes of electronics, than others.

At the present moment the most consistent amplifier I have ever heard/used is the mighty Audio Note Kegen. Weighing in at about the maximum my back will take, this is not a particularly big amplifier, but it's solidity is apparent when attempting to lift it. Here is an amplifier which uses Valve rectifiers, a pair of 300B output tubes per channel and some real sexy mains & output transformers. All capacitors are the usual high grade components we have come to expect from Audio Note.

This is an example of a product that is not justifiable, until it is heard. The asking price is over £70,000. Everyone who I have demonstrated this advice to, has said the same thing. "When I win the lottery Dave..." The amplifier has tremendous drive in the bass and mid frequencies. A transparency others only hint at. This is a device that lives and breathes music.

Now at last, the incredible ONGAKU is bettered (but not replaced). This once was the benchmark to which all others were to be judged. King Kegen

now reigns supreme to all music lovers, lucky enough to have heard it. It certainly made me reassess and un-learn what I had learnt. 18w per channel, that sounds as loud or louder than most amps of 150 w.p.c. But that isn't all. Not only does it go loud or get louder, when you dial up the volume control, the sound gets bigger! Much bigger.

This phenomenon is common to all the Audio Note products. Most systems just get louder to the point of pain. An Audio Note amplifier in a system makes the sound pressure level go up, but the image and dynamics are the eye-opener here. I can demonstrate surround sound with 2 loudspeakers!!! Again everyone who has experienced this demonstration is awe-struck. The purchase of their A.N. amplifier is therefore imminent, if not immediate.

Remember if you are contemplating going down the valve route, do not hesitate to contact Serious Kit. I am only too happy to discuss all of your system requirements, from the affordable integrated OTO S.E. right up to the stratospheric levels of the ONGAKU and Kegen. We have more experience of these products across the range than any other U.K. retailer. Whether it be advice, installation, or demonstration, I'll be delighted to hear from you. By auditioning Audio Note equipment, you will hear and experience for yourself, why I spend so much of my rapidly diminishing spare time, writing about their superior products.

The bottom line, Serious Kit stocks extra-ordinary HiFi equipment for the reproduction of music. So, without wishing to repeat myself too often, for a system which is out of the ordinary, give us a call! Remember mistakes cost more than getting it right.

As ever, a musical month to you all.

Kind regards

David W. Speirs

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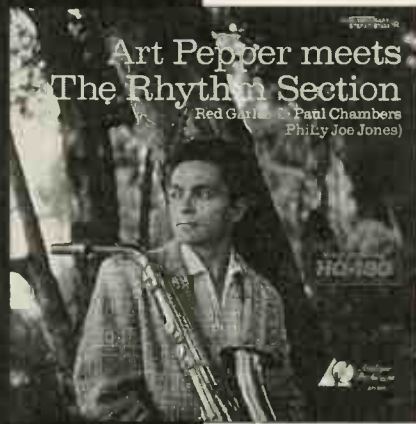
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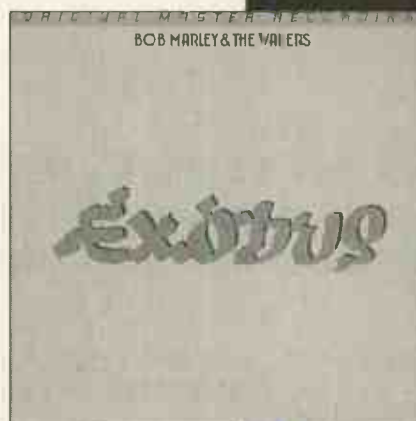
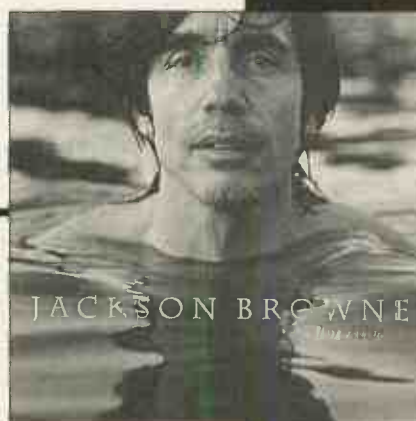
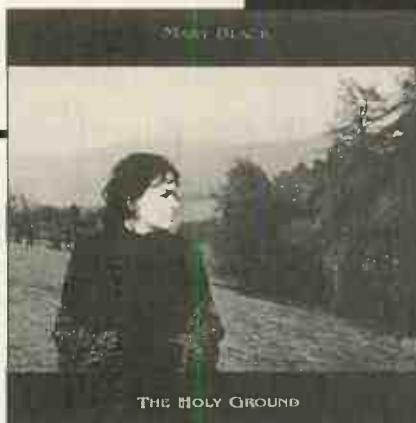
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AURA VA100 amplifier	£300	£199
AURA TU50 tuner	£300	£195
EXPOSURE 18 power amp	£795	£525
EXPOSURE 15 amplifier	£750	£550
KEF Reference 2 speakers	£1500	£1199
ROKSAN Xerxes/Tabriz	£1125	£625

The above is a selection of the ex-demonstration equipment offers we have in our Summer Sale a full list is available on request.

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LINN ISOBARIKS. Black Ash. Immaculate condition. Reluctant sale. (Were £2,500) £1,050 o.n.o. Phone 01708 704092.

LEAK CLEAROUT. Leak Troughline III (Mono) tuner £90 (o.n.o.); Leak Stereofetic tuner £25 (o.n.o.); Leak Stereo 30 £30 (o.n.o.); Leak Stereo 70 £50 (o.n.o.). Any offer considered. Highest bid secures, everything must go. Adam 01737 843601.

DYNAUDIO MICRON high quality miniature loudspeakers. Exquisite real Cherry wood veneer, boxed and in immaculate condition. Cost £1100, bargain at £400. Contact Paul (10-6pm) Tel: 0171 482 3768.

DNM PA2 MONOBLOKS, rare hi-end bargain (70 watts, stearthred, separate PSUs) £1,250 ono. (Tri-wire Cables, plus matching 3B twin pre-amp, may be available). Magnepinar SMGa panel speakers (boxed) £350 ono. Tel: 0150 6825546.

LINN KAIRN (Phono "Brilliant") £875. Linn LK100 £325. Naim NAP 180 £600. EPOS ES11 + Stands £325. All VGC boxed. Spendor BC1s Teak, gc, no stands. Tel: Barry 01256 882607 (Basingstoke).

QUAD ELS-63s with new unused Arcici stands £1,400. Tel: (Oxford) 01865 63160.

QUAD 44/405 £299. Marantz CD-75 £49. Nakamichi BX150E £59. KEF 101 speakers £99. Teac CX400 £39. Tel: 01283 73 2622 (Evenings), 01332 340178 (Daytime).

AT OC9 CARTRIDGES, brand new £180.00; Heybrook HBI MK111 brand new £180.00; Naim NAC62 preamp, mint £340.00; Roksan Darius I/s, black, £1,100. Tel: Jules on 01792 280061.

ENTHUSIASTS HI-FI Clearance - moved house! Includes speakers, tape recorders; reel and cassette, tuners and other components, everything in good order, some as new. Tel: 01323 769793.

GOLDRING-LENCO 88 deck. Original instructions, plinth template, lid, Thorens arm £30. Armstrong FM56 tuner (mono) with valve power supply £25. Solid state phono £10. Tel: 01480 460502 (Cambridge area).

REGA PLANAR 3 with RB300 arm £175 o.n.o. Tel: 01352-754274 (Chester, North Wales).

BARGAIN! MERIDIAN 207 PRO CD/PRE-AMP. Meridian 209 MSR remote control. Both mint condition and boxed! £1,100 new a bargain at only £399. QUAD 606 power amp boxed only £349. Yamaha DSP E300 Pro Logic sound processor mint, boxed with remote £560 new only £299. Peterborough Tel: 01733 322334.

ACOUSTIC ENERGY AEGIS I loudspeakers. Walnut finish, in mint condition. £325.00. Slate Audio stands also available at £180.00. Tel: 01525 384174.

NAIM SBL LOUDSPEAKERS, black Ash, in original unmarked condition £900; Naim IBLs black Ash £350; Naim Naxo 2x4 active crossover with Avondale power supply suitable for SBL or IBL loudspeakers £275. Tel: 01524 381389

BOSE 901 IV vgc (new £1,600+) £495 ono. Quad 33/303 vgc £175. Croft valve pre £125. Wanted AVI tuner/CD or good DAC. Evening 01452 812618 (Gloucestershire).

ARAGON 4004 power amp, 200 WPC, recently serviced, £750. Matching Aragon 24K pre-amp with external PSU, £550. Both boxed, approx. 3 years old, good condition. Both £1,895 new. Tel: 01483 825234.

CAMBRIDGE CD3 (grey) MC remote £350. Spendor Prelude speakers (real walnut veneer) £150. Cliff Stone Foundation speaker stands £50. All boxed. Excellent condition including instructions. Tel: 01244-681805 (Chester).

ARCAM ALPHA 5 Plus CD player £315. Micromega Microdac £125. Theta TLC Jitter Buster £175. Audioquest Crystal speaker cable 4m single bi-wire £60. All items vgc and postage included. Tel: 01534 66238.

AUDIO INNOVATIONS S.500 int valve amp. Woodside STA 35 Renaissance Series valve power amp. Ruark Talisman I speakers in Ash ETC. Wanted: Best Naim equipment W.H.Y. 01626 774246 Devon.

MOTH SERIES 30: phono stage MM/MC; passive pre-amp; power amp. One year old - £350 (£590). May split. Linn Nexus LS250 speakers. Black Ash veneer, Kustone stands - £285 (£600). Soundstyle Tripod 2 shelf stand. Spiked top shelf. £50 (£100+). Goldring Elite MC cartridge. Low hours - £85 (£200). All perfect, can demonstrate. Near offers invited. Tel: 01455 636695.

LINN LP12 (BLACK), Ittok, Stilton AT-F5, boxed £550, Meridian 200/203, boxed £695, SD Acoustics SD1 floorstanding loudspeakers, superb, boxed £695 (£1,700 new), Mission Cyrus I amplifier £125 Tel: (01449) 676335.

AUDIO INNOVATIONS S500 New Sovteks £475. Arcam Delta 170 transport £225. Deltec PDM1/11 £275. Yamaha OSR70 Prologic £75. Mission 73C £125. 2 x 9m Soniclink Brown £150. All boxed, upgrade clearout. Wanted: Leak TL12, REL Stentor/similar. Tel: 01 773 609104.

CROFT Micro Valve pre-amp. Recent Mil.Spec. valves. Gold/PTFE phonos. £125. Sony ELCASET EL5 Recorder + 29 Tapes £55, Target Stand, 5 shelves 20 x 16" £35. JVC KD-V44 cassette, auto reverse £25. Tel: 01628 82 2040.

REL STRATA Subwoofer, active, 7 months old, excellent condition, £340 ono. NAD 304 amplifier, 1 year old, vgc, £130 ono. Tel: 0171-387 7189 (London).

WANTED: MUSICAL FIDELITY MC4 loudspeakers (transparent cones), also Audiomaster monoblock valve amplifier (one) with Partridge transformers and cherry red base. For sale: Rotel 965BX CD Player £150 (300). 01566781275 Cornwall.

LINN LP12 VALHALLA/Ittok/Asaka; Linn LK280; various Hi-Fi magazines, 1970s onwards - offers? Northampton (01604) 403947 weekends or after 7pm.

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PROAC RESPONSE IS speakers, latest specification, including Target R1 stands, all items boxed and in mint condition. Tel: 01582 592211. Evenings.

PRIVATE SALE: ProAc Mini Towers MKII, black ash, condition mint £475 o.n.o. Tel: 0181-854 6738.

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LINN KAIRN, latest spec £900 ono. Linn Klout, two months old £1,300 ono. Can dem. Ring 01480 351781.

LINN SONDEK LP12 £200. Rega RB300 £65. Meridian M3 active speakers with 101B preamp, IXOS module, cables £295. All V.G.C. Wanted: Gale GS401C. P.S. Audio 4.5. Robertson 4010. Tel: 01280-706488.

HFV 4WSE (performance checked by HFV) £450 (Upgrading). Leak Troughline 3 stereo (GT Audio) £275. Troughline 3 Mono £50. Wanted: Audio Innovations S400 or S300MkII. Tel: 01834 860681 (Dyfed)

WANTED LEAK Troughline stereo tuner. Must be mint and working. Cash for best example. Kevin Yates 0171-222 0777 (day).

AUDIO RESEARCH SP9 MKI preamp mint £895. Pioneer PD-91CD player mint £450. B & W Solids, loudspeakers mint £120. Tel: Tony 01229-833168.

MUSICAL FIDELITY MVX.2 pre-amp and PSU, mint condition, boxed with manual (£2,500 new). Bargain £750. Tel: 01263 512815.

SYSTEMDEK IIXE/Moth arm/Linn K9 (excellent, boxed) £195; Armstrong 521 amplifier, Armstrong 524 tuner - £40 each. Tel: 01970 832694 (Dyfed) after 6pm.

ARCAM ALPHA 5 CD player, still under guarantee, immaculate condition, upgrade forces sale. £300. Phone: 0114 255 3464 evenings (Sheffield).

WANTED: USED or second hand SME IV arm, also Naim Fifty Two and Eighty Two - must be in good condition, used or second hand. Tel: 0161 747 5679

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Tel: Richard 0115 9376212 (day).

AVI S2000MP pre-amp £350. Perfect Pitch Francinstien CD enhancer with 0.5m DNM interconnect £95. Alphason R5555 MDF rack £75. MAF 12 inch speaker stands £75. Bournemouth 01202-767315 (evenings).

TEAC 73002T STUDIO quality open reel tape deck, two track, two speed. Built in mixer, excellent condition, superb sound two available £275 each, £495 pair. Phone after 6pm. 01704 563178.

RADFORD RENAISSANCE Series valve amplifiers by Woodside Electronics SC25 pre-amp (M.M. input) £400. STA 35 power Amp £500. Both in excellent condition. Recently re-valved. Purchased new 1991.
Tel: 01843 592542 (Kent).

MICHELL ISO phono stage, as new, 6 months old, was £415, now £300.
Tel: Bucks 01296-86211 (evenings).

LINN TUKAN with Brakits. New £390. Kaber active crossover £490. Quad stands for ESL63 £100. Hafler DH101 pre amp £100.
Tel: 01753 851429 after 6.

AUDIOLAB 8000P 2.5 years old, mint, boxed £325. Target and S.O. wall mount table £20.00 each. Phone 01422 203057 (W. Yorks) evenings.

PINK TRIANGLE DA CAPO/1307 £1,100. Orelle CD-10T £450. SP200 power £400. SC200 pre/MM/MC £250. Orator speakers £300. Target R2 stands £200. Sonus Faber Electa £1,000. Copland CSA14 £750. All boxed, as new.
Tel: 01252 311016.

CYRUS II NUMBER 7 circuit board/PSX power supply, excellent condition, boxed, £300. Audioquest Quartz Interconnect, one metre boxed £40.
Tel: 0181-644 3678. After 6pm.

MERIDIAN ARGENT 1. Piano black. Excellent (see Hi Fi Choice buyers guide) £550. Linn LP12 (black). Valhalla. Ittok. LVII. Shure. VSTV (new stylus). Mint. £550. Quad 22 preamp/FM tuner/AM tuner. One Quad II poweramp (needs attention) offers. (Devon) 01803 770006.

LINN ISOBARIKS and stands. Teak Finish. 2 x 7.5m NAIM A4 cable. Very good condition £700.
Tel: 01299 401939.

DENON 24HX dual capstan cassette deck (light use) £125. Audio Technica ATH70 Electret Condenser headphones £85. Mod Squad (passive pre) line drive £200. Bruce Rae Audio Active Cable drive with 5 metres cable (adds guts to passive pre amps) £250. Denon 250L tuner £60. Audioquest Sorbothane turntable mat £25. BLQ1 speakers (similar to Linn Kans) £60. Robin 500T multimeter £25.
Tel: 0181-502 3017.

KOETSU ROSEWOOD cartridge, recently rebuilt by Koetsu, superb £290. Fisher 500c valve receiver (18 valves) 25 WPC with original walnut case and service manual, £250. Will consider part exchange.
Tel: 0181-8835618.

QUAD ESLs, BRONZE, good condition, never overdriven £300. Quad IIs and 22, resistors and capacitors replaced, recent new valves £300.
Tel: 01243 576073 Chichester.

FOR SALE: SPENDOR BCI new reflex £270 ono. Linn Intek pre-amp still under warranty. Boxed £280 ono.
Tel: 01753 856809.

BRYSTON 4B NRB £1,150; Audio Research SP14 £1,500; Gradient sub-woofers for Quad ESL-63s with crossover £1,000; Bryston 10B professional crossover (nearly new) £1,000; all boxed and being sold by original owner.
Tel: 01865 63160.

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Tel: 01280 706488.

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Tel: 01527-523268 evenings and weekends (Redditch area).

CROFT SERIES V (2) stereo valve power amp £275; QED MA34PG passive pre-amp £25; Sennheiser HD480 headphones £20; Deltac 'Slink' interconnects (half metre pair) £15; QED 'Digiflex' £9; Sorbothane feet (set of four) £15. All as new.
Tel: (01978) 750151.

AUDIO ALCHEMY DDE V1.0 DAC £200 ono (£400). Tannoy 611 MK2 speakers fitted with Deflex panels £290 ono (£480).
Tel: Milton Keynes 01908 678628 (evenings).

LINN SONDEK LP12, EKOS, AT OCS plus Linn Lingo power supply. Fully serviced by Audio Counsel August '94 - boxed since. £750 ono. Ring Dave 0161 799 0710 evenings only.

SUGDEN P28/C28 amplifier £300. Rotel RT850AL tuner £80. SME Series 3S new £80. Cartridges Ortofon, A&R Arcam, Nagaoka, AT, Shure, Rata, Glanz. Unused, cheap. Half price.
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MARANTZ CD 94 II with Trichord clock mod, instruction manual and remote. A classic. £475.
Tel: Guildford (01483) 267516.

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Tel: 01132 403496.

AUDIO RESEARCH SP8. All valve pre-amp £750. Wanted: Gyrodec.
Tel: Alan 01661 852874.

ATC 100A in personally selected Mahogany (new £5,000+) earlier model, therefore £2,500 o.n.o. + Meridian 602/606 boxed and mint, only £1,250 o.n.o.
Contact Tel: 0181-888 3715. No time wasters please.

SUMO ATHENA PRE £250 o.n.o. Sumo Andromeda 1 pwr £350 o.n.o. (Rare) Sumo Aurora tuner £300 o.n.o.
Contact Tel: 0181-888 3715. No time wasters please.

NAIM AUDIO NAIT 3 including M/M phono stage (£625) accept £375. Wanted: Shearpe Phase 2.
Tel: 01642 542395 day; 01429 274638 evening.

MERIDIAN 206 Delta/Sigma £550, Audio Alchemy DDE DAC plus uprated P/S £200, Linn Sara Nine including stands £395. Deltac little bit DAC £175. Rega Planar 3 £160.
Tel: 01926 831388.

LINN LP12 WITH Akito/K9/Valhalla. Excellent condition, little used with all original boxes. £350. Hampshire 01329 835039 evenings/weekends.

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NAKAMICHI 600 twin head cassette deck £250, Technics SL-1300 Mk II direct drive turntable £100, B&V model DM3 Teak veneered floor standing loudspeakers 100 watt p.c. £100, or £300 for all three. Tel: 01204 522311 (eves) (Manchester)

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ROGERS CADET pre/power valve amplifier. Excellent working condition. Mullard valves, original circuit diagrams and instructions. Bargain £95. No offers. Teledyne quadrophonic receiver £15.
Tel: 01480 406502 (Cambridge)

MISSION CYRUS ONE stereo amplifier £130, Philips remote control compact disc player £90, pair Ruark speakers £150, Aiwa stereo cassette deck £65, Pioneer turntable £70. All vgc.
Tel: 0181 681 1054

LINN LP12 VALHALLA AKITO, K9, boxed, 4 years old, little used due to absence, perfect condition, includes Sound Organisation shelf £420.
Tel: 01628 476836

ARCAM ALPHA 3 amp £100, Audio Innovations LPI pre-amp £200, Rogers Cadet 3 integrated valve amp £80, AR 18 BX loudspeakers (modified) £60, IPL S3 TL2 transmission line speakers £130, 2 pairs foundation speaker stands 16", 20", £40 each, Nakamichi 700 cassette deck £160, ADC LT1 tone arm £50.
Tel: 01935 814493

AR EB101 record deck (black Ash), Supex MM cartridge £120, Audio Technica AT-OC5 MC cartridge boxed/unused £95, Cyrus One Mk2 amplifier £95, Pioneer CT-737 (three head) cassette deck £110, Marantz CD-52IISE compact disc £130. Will sell complete for £540. All equipment immaculate, sale due O/seas move.
Tel: 01334 657160

CASTLE DURHAM 900 speakers, 7 months old, excellent condition £200 o.n.o.
Tel: 01732 740040 (daytime)
01732 866817 (evenings)

A+R A60+ AMPLIFIER (1986) includes moving coil boards, Teak finish. Classic amplifier in mint condition. Boxed £95.
Tel: 0191 261 0562

ARCAM BLACK BOX 3 DAC. Good condition £115.
Tel: 01992 467159

ION NEXUS SPI pre-amp/X Pak 2 power supply, SAM power amp £350, Sugden A21A intergrated amp £350, Sennheiser HD 250 Mk II headphones £60.
Tel 01952 406759

SYSTEMDEK III, Formula 4, Dynavector 10X Gold, mint £300 o.n.o., Sony EL7 Elcaset cassette recorder, large cassettes, battleship construction, the finest recordings 3 3/4 speed, mint, lots of tapes, boxed £200 o.n.o.
Tel: 01544 260344

RUARK SABRE II loudspeakers, walnut, and Linn Ku-Stone stands with top plate £320. Linn Valhalla power board, little use £50.
Tel 0181 777 8015

MUSICAL FIDELITY 3B pre-amp £170 o.n.o.
Tel: Adrian 0181 402 5349

TANNOY CHEVIOT loudspeakers, walnut cabinets, Sano grilles, 12" dual concentric, untouched original pair, mint condition £395.
Tel: 0378 955523

FOR SALE Audiolab 8000A (DIN but can supply full set of leads) £150, Technics tuner ST-Z55L £50, both in good condition.
Tel: Andy 01959 524258 (Eves & W/ends)

MICROMEGA STAGE I CD player, two months old with two year warranty to run. Present of Naim CD1 forces sale! £375 o.n.o. can demonstrate.
Tel: Stuart 01322 559346 (Dartford)

SONY TAN 901 150x150 Esprit power amp, mint £600, Meridian MCA1/MCPI pre-power mint £650, Sony DTC 1000ES DAT £550 (includes 10 blank tapes still sealed worth £100!), Castle Pembroke IIs mint, (boxed) £250, Meridian 203 DAC £200. Sensible offers considered.
Tel: Marc 01865 514622 (evenings)

DELTEC (DPA) PDM I Series 2 DAC £195, Philips CD473 CD player, co-ax out, remote, FTS £45.
Tel: 0727 827630 (after 6.30pm)

SE OUTPUT TRANSFORMERS, outstanding design principle, superior sound in every respect, deep drawn steel pot. £14 each.
Tel: Germany +49 241 511137

ROTEL RB960 BX power amp, boxed £100.
Tel: 01824 780 689 (North Wales)

AUDIO INNOVATIONS SR1000 pre-amp with SR1000 M.C. transformer. 1st audio power amp. Snell type K speakers with stands. Offers or PX for more wife friendly system.
Tel: 01387 263252

BILL BEARD'S BB100 Mk II intergrated tube amplifier 50 w/ channel. As new and little used. Only £600.
Tel: 01323 727199 (Eastbourne)

MUSICAL FIDELITY CDT valve CD £355, Gyrodec perspex power supply £85, AT-OC5 VGC £55, Philips CD101 £60, Goodmans SCD100 cassette deck (Nakamichi) £55, Sony FH-205W mini CD Hi Fi £180
01474 704382 (N. Kent)

MERIDIAN M30 Active black loudspeakers stands £345, 201 pre-amp £245, 204 tuner £245, boxed, Linn LK1 pre-amp £150, Tannoy DC2000 floor standing black loudspeakers two 8" drivers, one dual £195.
0181 566 1568

NAIM 250, new style, 6 months old, boxed and in mint condition £1050 o.n.o. Also wanted Chord SPM 1000 'B'.
Tel: 01902 786818 (Wolverhampton)

AMC CVT 3030 valve amp, new boxed £450, Sugden A25 amp mint £110, Leak Delta tuner £60, Target TT2 shelf £35, Target small speaker brackets £35.
0860 613024 (Watford)

TRILOGY 958 MONOBLOCK amplifiers, 100 watts per channel valve amps in mercury finish (chrome) with latest spec transformers in mint condition and boxed. Cost new £2995, will accept £1850 o.v.n.o.
Tel: 0181 291 1744

PINK TRIANGLE DA CAPO and DC battery supply. Fitted with Philips 1307 filter and battery cells recently renewed. Mint condition and boxed. Cost new £3150, will accept £2200 o.v.n.o.
Tel: 0181 291 1744

REPRODUCTION HI-FI CABINETS beautiful shape, Yew finish. Custom made. Ideal heavy/large equipment. Overall 38" long, 31" high, 26" wide. Two shelves 36" x 12" x 22". Extensive ventilation, castors, metal frame clad solid wood, glass inlay top, doors each end. Immediate SAF (Spouse Acceptance Factor) Offers for pair?
Tel: 01945 63077

WANTED BY PRIVATE BUYER, "The Head" (De Paravicini) moving coil step-up transformer with instructions. First class working condition essential with no DIY modifications. Near mint appearance. No Dealers.
Tel: 01505 703091

MONARCHY 22A DAC + Monarchy D.I.P., sell both together £500.
Tel: 01604 766124

ORACLE DELPHI II SME IV £875, Fidelity Research FR645 £285, VPI Junior, never been used £400.
Tel: 0117 9730819

LINN KEILIDH SPEAKERS with ceramic plinths. 2 x 3m of LK 400 speaker cable, as new, with receipts, instructions, boxes. £500 o.n.o.
Tel: 01765 602006 (N. Yorks)

EAR 834 VALVE AMP £795, ROK DPI + DA1 + DS4 £1200, Quad 22 + II + II FM stereo AM tuners, all mint boxed £475.
Tel: 01446 735768 or 01446 420738

ARCAM DELTA 170 £245, Meridian 203 DAC £245, Naim HICAP, 250, 32.5, recently serviced by Naim. Will split £1050. Epos ES14 Mark I + Epos stands £260. Manufacturers boxes. Excellent.
Tel: 01379 641584

LINN LINGO complete £350, Meridian 200 transport with Mission DAC-7 £650, Technics SL-PI200 CD, rare opportunity £650. Linn Kairn pre-amp, immaculate £750, KEF 103/4 Reference, rosewood, unmarked £750.
Tel: 01952 502099 (Telford)

IMPULSE H6 SPEAKERS, horn loaded bass, very efficient and very dynamic. As new, light wood veneer £600.
Tel: 0181 989 6434 leave message if out

EAR 834P superb sound, 3 months old. Arrival of Conrad Johnson forces sale £300. Radford SC2 valve pre-amp, good condition £50. Selection of valves; Mullard EL34s, Golden Lion KT 77s. Ring for details.
Tel: 01252 311266 (Farnham/Surrey)

DENON DCD 3300 flagship CD player (cost £1200 new) £250, Rega RB 250 tone arm £40. Wanted: Denon DL300, DL301 cartridges any condition.
Tel: 01634 387686 (Kent)

COLLECTORS DISPOSAL: Many interesting items. Mainly valve and transcription decks, Leak, Pye, B/E Avantic 301, 401, 124, 185 etc. Please telephone for list. (evenings)
Tel: 01392 860182

MILLENIUM 4-20 valve amplifiers, complete and tested to specification, chassis work and PCBs supplied, alternative valves, rescue work, queries, demonstrations:
Tel: 0181 427 1378 (Harrow)

LINN SONDEK LP12, Valhalla PS, Ittok arm, Linn K18 cartridge, vgc £475
Tel: Kevin Snowdon 0191 548 6050

KEF CONCERTO (Teak) speakers £110, Quad 33 and FM3 boxed, excellent condition £100, Rotel Supra 20 speaker cable 2 x 8m £60. Please leave details on answering machine for return call.
Tel: 01799 527277

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Definitive Audio provides frank and impartial advice on how to achieve significant improvements in your listening experience. Drawing on products that are radical as well as mainstream, our system-based approach has established world recognised sound quality benchmarks. As a first time buyer or a seasoned audiophile your contact with us will prove to be both refreshing and stimulating. As a customer you will find our service and support second to none.

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LOWTHER - Drive unit technology, enclosure drawings, service/exchange.

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Import/Export

New and Used Sale Items - # indicates full warranty

		Sale	RRP
SME Model 20. Boxed, unopened	#	£2400	£2950
Apogee Dueta Sig plus DAX	#	£4000	£11500
NRG M400 Monoblocks (black)		£4000	£15000
Snell All (Mahogany))	#	£1700	£4500
Audio Innovations S800 Mk1 power	#	£400	-
Audio Innovations S500 Intergrated	#	£650	£1199
Impulse H6 Oak	#	£750	£1450
Sonus Faber Minima Amator - walnut 8 months perfect	#	£1000	£1500
Yamaha DSP A2070 boxed, unopened	#	£950	£1100
Bose 901 VI speaker system - plus eq, boxed, unopened	#	£1450	£1650
Pioneer CLD 2950 boxed, unopened	#	£600	£700
Helius Aurius Tonearm	#	£190	£400
Helius Aururm Tonearm	#	£120	£300
Helius Scorpio Tonearm - needs attention		£50	£190
Sony KVA 2942 29" pro logic TV - boxed, unopened		£880	£1000
Sony MHC 7900 AV Mini System - boxed, unopened	#	£1150	£1500
Yamaha NSE80 centre speaker - boxed, unopened	#	£150	£200
Audio Innovations Alto	#	£180	£300
Ortofon MC 2000 - new	#	£500	£700

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Swervedriver	Ejector Seat	£7.50
The Fall	27 Point-Live - 2 lp	£10.90
Goldie	Timeless	£11.90
Blind Melon	Soup	£8.90
Black Grape	Its Great When	£7.90
Pet Shop Boys	Alternative - 3 lp	£19.90
Whale	We Care - 2 lp	£9.90

Expected Releases

Blur	The Great Escape	Sept.	TBC
Frank Zappa	Strictly Commercial	21 Aug.	£13.90
Jethro Tull	Roots And Branches	Sept.	TBC
Julian Cope	20 Mothers	21 Aug.	£11.90
Lenny Kravitz	Circus	11 Sept.	£9.90
Mary Black	Circus	4 Sept.	£7.90
Mike Scott	Bring Em All In	Sept.	TBC
Morrissey	Southpaw Grammer	Sept.	TBC
Nitin Sawhney	Migration	21 Aug.	£8.90
Pink Floyd	Pulse	Sept.	£37.90
Ultramarine	Bell Air - 2 lp	14 Aug.	£12.90

Impulse Reissues (All 11 Sept)

Archie Shepp	Fire Music	£14.90
Charlie Mingus	Mingus Mingus Mingus	£14.90
Oliver Nelson	Blues And Abstract Truth	£14.90
Sonny Rollins	East Broadway	£14.90

Stock Selection

Bush	Sixteen Stone	£10.50
Del Amitri	Twisted	£9.90
Iron butterfly	In A Gadda Da Vida	£8.90
Jim Morrison	An American Prayer	£9.90
Jimi Hendrix	Band Of Gypsies (remaster)	£9.90
Lightning Seeds	Jollification	£9.90
Maze	Live in New Orleans - 2 lp	£12.50
Natacha Atlas	Diaspora	£8.90
Ramones	Ramones (1976 debut)	£9.90
St. Germain	Boulevard	£9.90
Tindersticks	First Tindersticks Album	£9.90

ECM Selection

Aber/Holland/Dejohnette	Gateway	£10.50
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ARCAM ALPHA 5 CD, plus modified, £350, Arcam Delta 290 £300, Royd Minstrel speakers £180, Aiwa AD-S950 tape deck 3 months old £180, all with guarantees. Chord Flatline Gold 2 x 5m, WBT plugs £110, Chord blue heaven interconnect 0.5m £50, cables 2 months old. All boxed with instructions. Tel: 01734 662620

WANTED: 2 No. PX25 output valves for Decca Decola radio-gram new or s/h. Tel: Tony Statham 01727 840567 (day) 01707 326127 (evenings)

WANTED: QUAD/LEAK valve kit. Pair Quad IIs and 22 amp, late model original electrostatic speakers, Leak Troughline II or III tuner, Tim de Paravicini decoder for same. All must be in good nick. Prefer recently serviced tuner. Tel: 01892 667267 after 6pm

ATC SCM20 SPEAKERS and stands, black £1300. AVI S2000MM monoblocks £800, Musical Fidelity F22/F15 pre/power amps £2000, Yamaha TX580 RDS tuner, all hardly used with warranty. Tel: 0181 870 3630

MAGNAPLANAR MGIIIA SPEAKERS including external crossover (list £3000) asking £950, Concordant Exquisite superb all tube top of the line pre-amp asking £1250. Thiel CS2.2 speakers from the USA (list £2950) asking £1550. WANT: Apogee Duetta Signatures. Tel: 0171 281 0821

ROCKSAN XERXES XPS2 power supply, Rega RB300 arm vgc. Boxed. £495 o.n.o. Tel: Worthing 09103 261931

SPENDOR BCI classic quality loudspeakers boxed with stands. Vgc. Reluctant sale £135 o.n.o. Tel: 01249 654180

ENTHUSIASTS CLEAROUT Tannoy 633s new Profile speakers £200 (boxed), Mordaunt Short M5 55Ts £150, Royd Minstrels £150, Tannoy 611s £250, Revolver Purdeys with plinths £170 (boxed) all excellent, may consider part-ex on other speakers. Also, WANTED Mission 633s Tel: 01782 261237 (Stoke On Trent)

EPOS ESII SPEAKERS, dedicated stands £265, Music Fidelity P270-2 amp £750, Pioneer F91 tuner £250, Meridian 203 DAC7 £215, Technics SL120 deck, SME arm £150. All as new. Tel: 01392 57202

LOGIC DM 101 £100, Flutterbuster £50, Kyzma Stogi arm £150, OC9 (new) £140, Exposure X (MC) £175, Chris Rogers transmission line speakers £250 o.n.o., Maplin 4/20 valve monoblocks £120, Naim 32 + 90 + Snaps £325, LVV arm £20, Ferrograph 20/20 amp £30. WANTED; Goodman's Axiom 301s. Tel: 0114 273 8153

QUAD 34 PRE-AMP with MM and MC boards £175, Linn Trampolin base £45, Audio Technica ATOC5 MC cartridge boxed as new £50, WANTED; "The Head" transformer. Tel: evenings before 10pm 01603 714528

MISSION 753s 10 months old, Rosewood, mint, boxed, still 14 months guarantee left. Upgrading. Cost £700 will sell for £550 o.v.n.o. Tel: Pete after 5pm 015 9294060

RELUCTANT SALE OF KLS3s, 6 weeks old, all components supplied by Hi-Fi World. Walnut cabinets, genuine reason for sale, bargain £850 or very nearest offer. Tel: Enquiries after 5.30pm 0115 9294060

ROTEL RA935 Mk1 £120, Valecraft single column spiked sand filled stands £20, Memorex sub woofer and 2 Sat speakers £30 o.n.o. WANTED; In-Car DCC machine and blank tapes. Tel: 01638 661671

ROCK REFERENCE, Kuzma tonearm, Koetsu black needs record clamp, average use, excellent condition, will not split £2000. No offers. Kinshaw perception phono stage, mint £220. No offers. Two Target tables, two tier £70 the pair. Buyer collects all. Tel: Reading 01734 664001

LINN KEILIDH SPEAKERS excellent condition with ceramic stands £425. Tel: 01202 888832 (Dorset)

NAIM NAIT 2 little used £275. Pair Rega E.L.A. little used £275 excellent condition. Tel: 01964 671276 evenings (E. Yorkshire)

LINN LP12 Lingo, Trampolin, Cirkus, Ekos, Klyde, £1100, Linn Kairn £900, Naim CDI £1100, 2 x LK100 with active Keilidh modules £900, Keilidh speakers £350. Tel: 01642 762193

QUAD II (pair) rebuilt £395, Rogers RD40 £75, Leak Varislope III (mono) £95, STD 373 Mullard 5/20 £145, Garrard 401/SME3009 II in SME 2000 plinth £250, Acos Arm £40. Tel: 01444 459196

NAKAMICHI 700 ZXL cassette deck, a truly heavyweight deck, sonically and physically. Features auto calibration, index marking, variable pitch, mic inputs (L/R + blend) remote capability (I.R) Dolby B processor unit etc. Mint condition £800, bargain! Also Kenwood DP-X9010 CD transport with acclaimed Trichord's "Clock 2" mod, mint £350 o.n.o. P.S. Recommended by "What HiFi?/Audiophile" Tel: Leonel 01483 32791 (work eves) or 0956 519912 (one zone)

CONCORDANT EXCELSIOR valve pre-amp, wood surround, PSU £625, Concordant Exultant valve monoblocks £425, Lowther Acousta PM6 horns £225. Exquisite sound. Space forces regretful sale. Tel: 0121 459 2347 (eves)

AUDIOLAB 8000M (2 of) and 8000DAC - 6 months old, mint £1400 (£2300 new). Chord Flatline, Cabletalk Pro 2 and AudioQuest Quartz at about 2/3 RRP. Tel: 01472 253475 pre 4:20pm

MISSION 753 LOUDSPEAKERS, Rosewood £475. Audio Innovations 700 intergrated valve amplifier, new Golden Dragon valves fitted £475. All very good condition. Tel: 01923 247197 (evenings) Watford

MICHELL ISO and HERA £325, N.V.A. P50 £150, Albary S508 £275, NAD 402 £125, Deltec Little Bit £125, Yamaha KX-380 £100. All very light use. Offers accepted Tel: 0151 339 0268 after 7pm

PROAC RESPONSE 3 speakers, Mahogany cabinets fitted with Signature crossovers and Rhodium terminals, fixing bolts and spikes as new bargain at £1850. Tel: Kevin 01703 601222 (Southampton)

REGA XELS £700 (HiFi Choice Best Buy) Cost £1050. Naim NAC 92 £280, Naim CD3 £700 all 12 months old. Tel: 01952 770406 (evenings)

TANNOY ARDEN Mk1 15" HPD (mint) £1300, Tannoy Lancasters 12" Monitor Gold £495, Revox B77 Mk2-Mid mint condition £695, Leak Throughline I (mono open chassis) £175, II (mono) £95, II (stereo) £145, 3 (mono) £125. Tel: 01444 459196

TRACKLINE SHELVES by Beaver & Tapley: eleven cassette (S3AC) and one CD (S3CD) in as new condition. Cost £37 each, sell for £100 together. Tel: Andrew Emmerson 01604 844130 (Northampton)

AUDIOMECA KREATURA transport, boxed, documents, absolutely pristine, few months old £800 o.n.o. Kinshaw Perception DAC, as above £550 o.n.o. Audio Research SP9 Mk1, pristine, upgraded, boxed, documents etc £700. Buyer collects. Tel: Paul 01834 845928

NAIM 82 £1350, CDI £1350, SBLs £1300. Tel: 01703 345188 after 6pm

LINN LP12 VALHALLA excellent condition with Basik plus tonearm £250 o.n.o. Tel: Mike 01244 676512 (Chester) After 3pm weekdays, before 1pm weekends

EMT 930 TURNTABLE mono with EMT 155 pre-amp and EMT tonearm (no headshell). Good working order and fair condition. £750 plus carriage from Dublin. Tel: 00 3531 4591432

ROTEL 965BX, boxed, low use £190, Valley Acoustics valve pre-amp £220, JVC JT-Viol tuner - stereo £50. Tel: 01932 852831

FOR SALE. LUMLEY STA40 power amp, Lumley VSP1000 pre-amp £1100 o.n.o., Grant GA50 power amp £395 o.n.o., IPL S4 TL speakers £300 o.n.o. Tel: Glyn 01709 524575 (Rotherham)

PROAC MINITOWERS Walnut, v.g.c. £400. Quad FM3/33 in Afrormosia sleeve, with manuals, serviced by Quad, £110. All units to make pair of Falcon Hi-Fi Answers compact 'speakers, with drawings, £100. Tel: 0181 863 1807 (Harrow)

TANNOY CHEVIOT 12" dual concentric loudspeakers, Walnut cabinets, mint original condition, sound superb, £375 ono. Tel: 0378 955523 mobile.

SPENDOR SPI/2, 6 months old + stands, £900, or exchange for any good panel speakers, electrostatic etc. Leak Stereo 20, £180. Art Audio Quin-tet MkII new, £800. Sony CDP103 CD player, £100. Tel: 0181 531 5979

B&W 802 floor standing monitor speakers with acoustic hoods (in good condition) £300 ono. Tel: Rod 0121 705 1142 between 5pm & 7pm weekdays. Also wanted 'Stax Lambda Signature' headphone extension cable.

MERIDIAN 203 DAC £150 ono. Mission DAD5 CD player £125 ono, A&R (Arcam) A60 amplifier £75 ono. Delivery possible. Tel: 01293 595384 (work) or 01903 814846 (home) - W. Sussex.

Dynamics

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	SALE		LIST
MARK LEVINSON ML7A PREAMP. - MINT	2995	S/HAND	£6800
CAMBRIDGE CD1 CD PLAYER HEAVILY MODIFIED WITH MASSIVE POWER SUPPLY SUPERB	£1,295	S/HAND	PHONE
METAXIUS ICARUS INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER CHROME. - MINT	£595	EX/DEMO	£895
PINK TRIANGLE PIP 2 MK2 VISHAY MODIFIED PREAMP. - MINT	£1,795	S/HAND	£4,500
MARK LEVINSON ML3 POWER AMP. - MINT	£3,995	S/HAND	£8,250
CONRAD JOHNSON MV75 VALUE POWER AMP. - MINT	£1,295	S/HAND	£2,500
CELLO AMATI SPEAKERS TWIN MOUNTED PAIR IN OAK ON GRANITE STANDS SUPERB V.G.C.	£5,500	S/HAND	£20,000
MERIDIAN ARGENT 3 SPEAKERS ROSEWOOD - MINT	£995	NEW	£1,495
PROAC PROSTATIC ELECTROSTATIC SPEAKERS RARE V.G.C.	£1,995	S/HAND	PHONE
SNELL A3 SPEAKERS WALNUT V.G.C.	£4,495	S/HAND	£6,995
METAXIUS IRAKLIS MK2 POWER AMP CHROME - MINT	£895	EX/DEMO	£1,500
AUDIO RESEARCH D125 KT90 VALVES AMP. - MINT	£2,250	S/HAND £	4,650
METAXIUS CHARISMA PREAMP CHROME - MINT	£895	EX/DEMO	£1,500
EQUATION ZERO SPEAKERS PIANO BLACK - MINT	£695	S/HAND	£1,300
EQUTION ZERO SPEAKERS PIANO BLACK - MINT	£2,995	EX/DEMO	£4,800
CARY 308B VALVE MONO POWER AMPS 40 WATT TRIODE	£795	S/HAND	£1,400
HELVIS CYALENE ARM - MINT.	£1,995	EX/DEMO	£2,700
CABSSE IROISE MC SPEAKERS CHERRYWOOD - MINT.	£1,995	EX/DEMO	£2,700
NEW IN THIS MONTH			
RESTEK CHALLENGER INTERGRATED AMP. - MINT NEW	£799		
ENLIGHTENED AUDIO DSP1000 DAC - MINT.	£595	S/HAND	£1000
CJ PREMIER 4 POWER AMP			
MICROMEGA TRIO CD PLAYER - MINT	£2495	S/HAND	£4499
KLYNE SK 5A PREAMP - MINT	£1495	S/HAND	£2750
CITATION 18 TUNER ORIGINAL AMERICAN V.G.C	£295	S/HAND	£650
SUGDEN AU51C PREAMP 2 BOC MODIFIED BY AVONDALE V.G.C	£895	S/HAND	£1800
ROWLAND MODEL 3 MONOS POWER AMP BALANCED - MINT	£2495	S/HAND	£4000
SOTA COSMOS VACUUM PLATTER - MINT	£1995	S/HAND	£4400
CRYSTAL REFERENCE TURNTABLE (WALLMOUNT)	£1495	S/HAND	£2500
NAKAMICHI OMS 7E CD PLAYER VGC	£795	S/HAND	£1500
GRYPHON LTD EDITION PREAMP BALANCED - MINT.	£3995	S/HAND	£8000
SNELL TYPE C SPEAKERS WALNUT - MINT	£1295	S/HAND	£2550
CRYSTAL SIGNATURE TABLE TOP TURNTABLE BRUAR 8 ARM	£2995	S/H	£6450
SONIC FRONTIERS SFD-2 DAC BALANCED - MINT	£2995	S/H	£4700
ROWLAND MODELS POWER AMP BALANCED - MINT	£2750	S/H	£5250
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Advertisers' Index

MAIN ISSUE		KEF		6	STUDIO 12	109
		KLIPSCH		109	STUDIO 82	114
ACOUSTIC SOLUTIONS	127	LINLEY TYSON		114	STUDIO ONE	76
ALCHEMIST	38	LINN MUSIC		98	SUGDEN	12
AMADEUS	127	LINN PRODUCTS		22	SUSSEX SURPLUS	116
ARCAM	40	LORICRAFT		38	SYSTEMDEK	138
ART AUDIO	32	M A X		118	TAPE HAND	120
AUDIO ARTS	128	MANA ACOUSTICS		136	TEAC	24
AUDIO BY DEVELOPMENT	120	MANTICORE		129	THE AUDIO ENGINEER	132
AUDIO CLASSICS	104	MANTRA AUDIO		111	THE CHORD CO	30
AUDIO GALLERY	126	MAPLIN		10	THE POWERPLANT	134
AUDIO ILLUSIONS	50	MEET YOUR MAKER		81	THE SOUND	
AUDIO JUMBLE	134	MICHELL ENG.		50	FOUNDATION	138
AUDIO SYNTHESIS	38	MIKE MANNING AUDIO		122	THE SOUND GALLERY	70
AUDIONOTE	106,107	MORGAN AUDIO		32	TOP EVENTS	54
AUDIOPHILE FURNITURE	111	MUNRO ASSC.		105	TRY ME AND SEE	123
AUDIOPHILE INT.	130,131	MUSICAL IMAGES		28	TUBE TECHNOLOGY	108
AUDIOPHONICS	110	NAIM AUDIO	I.F.C.		V'AUDIO	127
B&W	42	NATION ELECTRONICS		32	WESTWOOD & MASON	102
BFA AWARD WINNERS	124,125	NORTHWOOD AUDIO		133	WHARFEDALE	14
CAD	38	OVERTURE		104	WILMSLOW AUDIO	144
CHOICE HI-FI	140	OXFORD AUDIO				
CLASSIC HI-FI	109	CONSULTANTS		133		
CLASSIQUE SOUNDS	102,120	P M COMPONENTS	64,114			
CONGLETON HI-FI	122	PERFORMANCE HI-FI	111		AUDIO LINKS	16
COTTAGE AUDIO	140	PHASE III	109		ALLISON TECHNICA	6
CUMBERLAND HI-FI SHOW	33	PICTURE THE SOUND	56		AUDIO TECHNOLOGY	18
CUSTOM CABLE	114	PINK TRIANGLE	I.B.C.		AUDIONOTE	12,13
DAN DULEY/GAMEX		QTA SYSTEMS	136		BD ELECTRONICS	6
AUDIO	132	R.J.F. AUDIO	104		BILLINGTON EXPORT	10
DEFINITIVE AUDIO	142	R.P.G.	54		CHELMER VALVE	I.B.C.
DIAL A DEALER	89-92,97	RDL	136		CRICKLEWOOD	
DIVERSE VINYL	142	RICHARD'S AV	133		ELECTRONICS	20
DYNAMICS	144	RIVERSIDE AUDIO	54		ELECTRONIC ENGINEER	22
ELVINS ACOUSTICS	76	ROKSAN	O.B.C.		FALCON	22
EMPORIUM	111	ROOM ACOUSTIC			HART ELECTRONICS	4
ENGLISH AUDIO	109	SERVICES	120		HIGHLAND ANALOGUE	22
EPOS	8	SELECT AUDIO	104		HOVLAND	20
ESOTERICA	58,102	SELECT SYSTEMS	62		IPL ACOUSTICS	20
GAMMA ACOUSTICS	105,109	SERIOUS KIT	129,144		KIT & COMPONENTS	
GLASS AUDIO	126	SEVENOAKS	16,17		SUPPLIERS	26
GLOTTA AB	70	SHEARNE AUDIO	76		LANGREX SUPPLIES	16
HEATHERDALE	111	SJS	70		MARTON MUSIC	18
HELEN KOCZUR	132	SLATE AUDIO	103		MAURITRON	22
HIFI CONFIDENTIAL	110	SME	32		NEW SENSOR CORP	24
HIFI CORNER	112	SONIC FRONTIERS	142		RUSS ANDREWS	O.B.C.
IAN EDWARDS	118	SONIC LINK	98		SONIC FRONTIERS	6
IAN HARRISON	140	SPECIALIST HI-FI DEALERS	77-80		SOWTER TRANSFORMERS	16
JEM DISTRIBUTION	58	SPECTRA DYNAMICS	84		TECHNICAL & GENERAL	18
KAL (UK)	30	STERLING AUDIO	126		WESTERN ELECTRIC	I.F.C.

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