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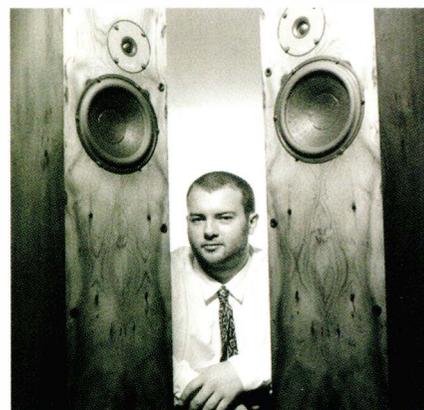
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Editor's Notebook

Stan Vincent ushers in a special edition of *Hi-Fi Choice*, encourages votes for your favourite hi-fi, and welcomes a user-friendly graph.



Welcometothisspecial edition of *Hi-Fi Choice*, which is all about getting more from your hi-fi system by adding the extra dimension of surround sound. Now, before died-in-the-wool traditionalists cry foul, we're not foisting upon you a truck-load of tellies with plastic boxes hanging off the back. As you'll read within, surround sound has come of age, and now offers as much for music fans as it does for movie freaks. And there could be no clearer evidence of this than Naim's *AVI* surround processor, reviewed on page 22, which takes a stubbornly minimalist approach to the provision of 'sound behind the head'.

Another common fallacy is that all surround sound gear resides at the low end of the market. That couldn't be further from the truth, as you'll see on page 18, where we encounter the £150,000 home cinema system offered by high-end importers Absolute Sounds. Comprising audiophile stalwarts like Krell, Martin Logan, Theta and Wilson Audio, this system defines the state of the art in music/movie crossover.

However, if you yearn for cinematic authenticity, you couldn't do better than to check out AV equipment approved by Lucasfilm's THX division — three examples, from affordable to mortgageable, are proffered on page 26.

For those operating on real world budgets, there are round-ups of the finest surround-sound speakers (page 32), the best big-screen TVs (page 36), and a test of affordable surround processors (page 57). Plus Linn boss Ivor Tiefenbrun talks about his company's entry into AV (page 31); we explain Dolby AC-3, the hot new acronym that every audiophile should under-

stand (page 35); and there's a Hints & Tips special on positioning AV speakers (page 45).

Finally, for any readers who are not up to speed on AV principles, I can highly recommend a copy of our sister publication, *Home Entertainment*. Alternatively, why not acquire a back copy of our February issue, which came free with an *Absolute Beginners' Guide to Home Cinema*? If your thirst for knowledge remains unquenched, write in with your questions. If there is a sufficient response, we'll stage a massive 'AV surgery' in a few months' time!

Cast your vote in the British Hi-Fi Awards — NOW!

This month is your last chance to vote for your favourite hi-fi in the British Hi-Fi Awards, sponsored by *Hi-Fi Choice* and the British Federation of Audio. You'll find the voting form on page 69 of this issue, and I urge you to put pen to paper right now! That's because by sending in your voting form, you are automatically entered in a fabulous competition with 75 superb prizes on offer. First prize is a fantastic holiday and the chance for you and a partner to join us at the Gala Awards Evening in April. This is the ONLY hi-fi awards in the UK where winning products are decided by readers' votes, meaning that the greatest possible spectrum of brands and models are represented. You'll find that we've drawn up a shortlist based on our experience of products launched in the last year — now it's up to you to choose your favourites. Another key point is that in selected product categories, we will make two or even three awards, to recognise that hi-fi does not have to be expensive to be good. Take five minutes to cast your vote now. You won't even need a stamp!

User-friendly technical tests

Regular readers will notice something different about our group tests this month (AV processors, page 57). The 'Virtual Instrument' plots (as introduced by Paul Miller in issue 143) are now so sophisticated that even Einstein himself might have to stop for a minute to ingest the information they contain. So we've decided to present lab results in a much more accessible form, as seen below: a bargraph.

There are two very important points to note. Firstly, even though this bargraph looks very simple, the information that it presents derives from a full battery of Paul Miller's legendary lab tests. If anything, Paul tells me that it takes longer to create this simple bargraph than it does to produce the charts of yore.

The second point is that each parameter tested — power output, distortion etc — is measured on its own individually calibrated scale. The percentage figure quoted is thus not an absolute, but a representation of how one product performs relative to the others in a particular test group. (If any readers wish to know more, write in to the usual address and we'll do our best to illuminate you further.)

Bear in mind, though, that we are not attempting to measure sound quality on a graph like this. While our formal tests have always been, and will always be, based upon objective technical appraisals, our assessment of sound quality remains something that is very much "in the ear of the beholder".

Enjoy your listening this month!

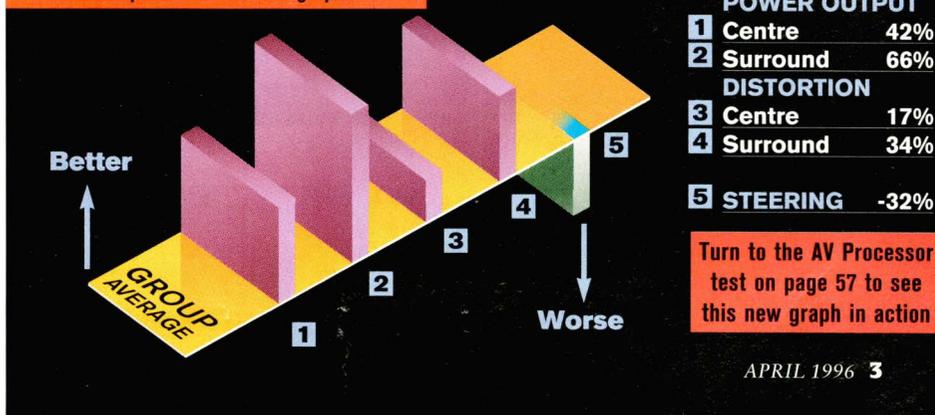
Stan Vincent

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"HOW IT COMPARES" a sample of our new bar graphs



HI-FI CHOICE

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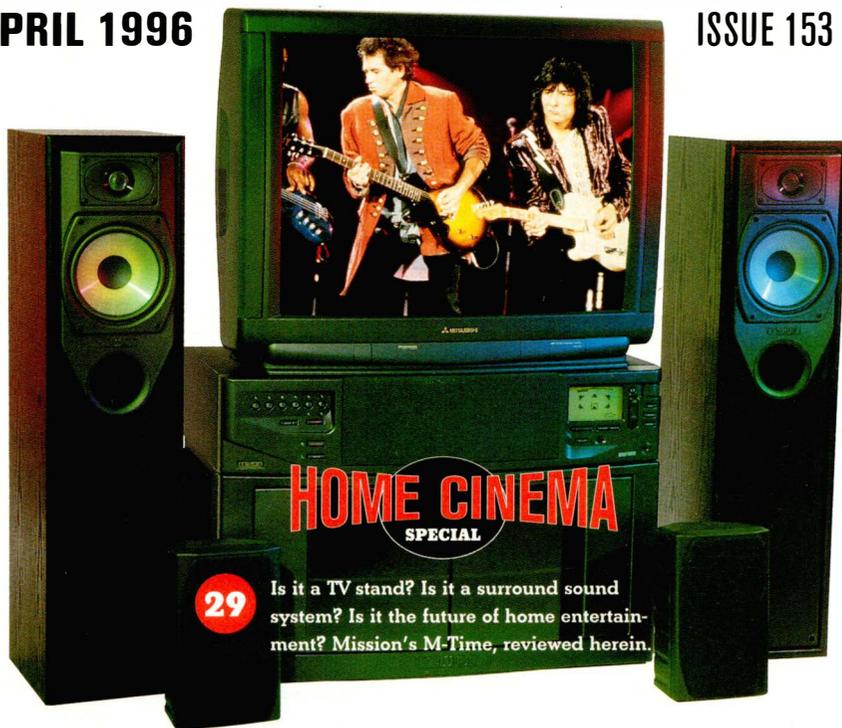
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£4,000 worth of brilliant ProAc speakers must be won

THE INDUSTRY CHOICE

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SR 909



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SR 850 "An all-round giant-killer" - *Hi-Fi Choice*, Mar '95

"An excellent buy" - *What Hi-Fi?*, Dec '93

SR 606 "It sounds open and clean, with warmth and graciousness denied most of its competitors" - *Hi-Fi Choice*, Aug '94

SR 250 "A real bargain and an obvious Best Buy..." - *Hi-Fi Choice*, Mar '95

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Update

MALCOLM STEWARD SHOWS WHAT NEW HI-FI YOU'LL BE PLAYING YOUR 'TAKE THAT COMEBACK LIVE' TRIPLE ALBUM ON



NAD goes mad in Vegas

NAD used the Las Vegas CES to announce a veritable slew of new models, all of whose prices look very competitive. None more so than the £149.95 310 integrated amplifier, pictured above. However, bargain hunters who search around could well find it selling for about £100. Described as a paragon of hi-fi value, sonic performance and simplicity, it follows NAD's original budget audiophile classic, the 3020, in providing a conservative 20W per channel; but it can deliver 20 Amps peak current, for driving low impedance loudspeakers. The 310 is line-level only, uses a dual-concentric volume control and has defeatable tone controls.

The new 114 pre-amplifier does come with a phono stage — MM and MC — and provides six line-level inputs and two line outputs. The latter will drive multiple power amplifiers or long runs of interconnect cable. Also included are tone controls (which can be bypassed) and a discrete

headphone amplifier. The price is £269.95.

The last new amplifier is the 312, a 25W integrated selling for £199.95, and offering six line-level inputs, tone controls, Pre-Out and Main-In connections, and discrete circuitry throughout.

Two new CD players were unveiled at the show. The £249.95 512 uses a new MASH D/A converter and has remote control, full programming facilities, and a buffered digital output. The £349.95 515 is a five-disc carousel-type player whose shuffle-play mode operates on all the loaded discs rather than just the one playing.

The 712 receiver offers remote control and 25W per channel, along with a tuner section with 12 FM and 12 AM presets. Discrete audio circuits and the ability to deliver current into low impedance loudspeaker loads are also features of this £329.95 device. ☎ (0181) 343 3240.

In brief

The Verity Group plc empire expands once more. Its corporate umbrella, which already shelters the Mission, Cyrus, Wharfedale and Quad brand names, now covers another specialist hi-fi manufacturer: Roksan, makers of high-end turntables, CD players, amplifiers and loudspeakers. ☎ (01480) 451777.



Ash Design's Monostem.

Ash Design's Monostem wall-mounted equipment supports are now available in a new range of colour finishes, including Shocking Pink. Selling for £295, the support offers cable management and brackets with a maximum load of over 500Kg. ☎ (0116) 2433233.

Increased production has enabled Wharfedale to reduce the price of its *Valdus Home Theatre* loudspeaker package from £189.95 to £179.95. ☎ (0113) 2601222.

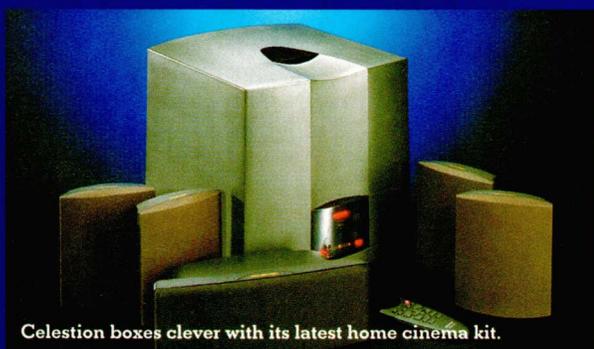


TDK's colourful MD.

TDK now has coloured MiniDiscs to help simplify organising your music collection. Seventy-four-minute long MD-XG74 discs cost £8.99 and come in red, blue, yellow and green. ☎ (01737) 773773.

The National Vintage Communications fair takes place at the NEC, Birmingham ▶▶

Celestion is out of its box



Celestion boxes clever with its latest home cinema kit.

Celestion is aiming to make that initial foray into surround sound a painless exercise, with its new *Home Theatre in a Box* system. The HTiB centres on a subwoofer module that contains all the system's electronics, including six power amplifiers and a Dolby Pro-Logic processor. The package also includes four magnetically-shielded effects speakers and a centre channel speaker. Also provided are all the cables required and a back-lit remote control. The buyer simply has to connect their stereo TV, VCR or LaserDisc to the HTiB module, connect the speakers, and they're in business — set-up is carried out using the remote control handset. The price of all this convenience is £749. ☎ (01473) 322222.

Beam me up, Scotty!

Sennheiser's new IS360 headphone system uses infra-red transmission to free listeners from the hassle of headphone cords.

Included in the £69.95 retail price are the S360 IR transmitter, which connects to any audio source, and an HDI360 headset fitted with a volume control. The transmitter operates at 2.3 and 2.8MHz for improved bandwidth and reduced interference. It can, says its makers, flood a 250 square foot room with IR signal. The HDI360 uses wide angle sensors to increase system coverage and an active squelch circuit prevents noise if the music signal is removed. The headset weighs only 230g including batteries, and is a closed-back design. It will operate for about twenty hours on a set of two AA cells and can be used with rechargeables.

• Sennheiser's HDC 45 Noise Gard noise cancelling headphones, the domestic version of which was reviewed in the supplement of issue 134, has been specified by Air France as a standard fitment in the airline's 'Espace' business class. ☎ (01494) 551551.



Reach for the stars

The only thing better than a five star review - is *two* five star reviews!

In March 1996 WHAT HI-FI? reviewed the new Mordaunt-Short MS10i loudspeaker against five of its closest rivals.



"For small boxes they generate striking bass."

"We know there are those who find the KEFs' delivery a little relentless - those listeners will love the MS10is."

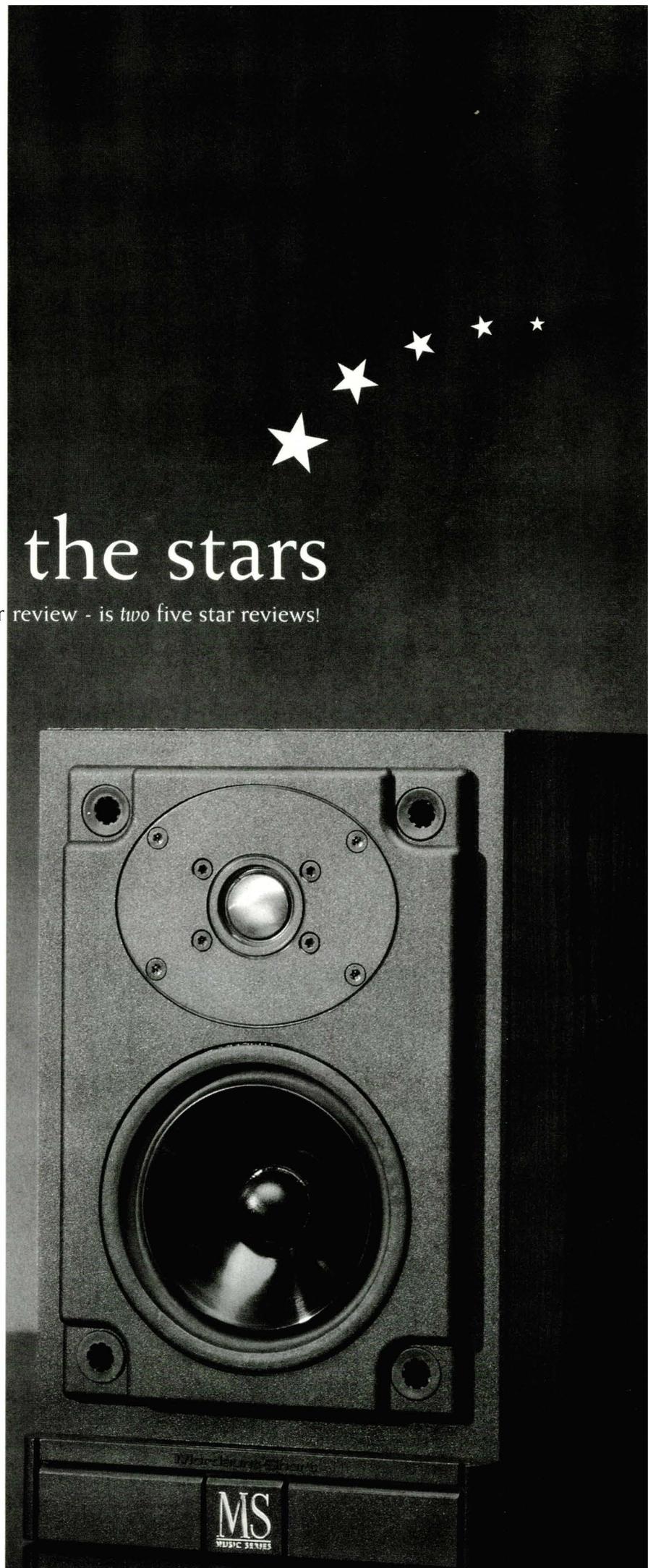
"But the stars here are the £140 Mordaunt-Short MS10is. They rock out with clarity, and deliver high standards of detail and focus at a price which makes them quite superb value for money."

We think they liked them!

Maybe it was our new, anodised aluminium gold dome tweeter which raises the first break-up mode of the tweeter dome beyond audibility, resulting in a sweeter, more detailed, more open treble. Or it could have been the new MCS Technology cone and surround, precision profiled to improve transient attack and termination characteristics, resulting in better midband performance. Possibly they liked the new, braced cabinet construction which improves the bass.

Whatever it was you'll find similar attention to detail in all loudspeakers from Mordaunt-Short, where engineering with a purpose and a love of music still mean something.

For your FREE copy of this review and a FREE Mordaunt-Short literature pack, including details of the new Music Series *i*, the new Performance loudspeakers and our new range of Home Entertainment loudspeakers, CALL FREE NOW on 0321 506550 (24 hours)



Doin' the Neutron dance

"Tiny and exquisitely specified" is how AVI describes its new cherry-veneered, hand-finished reference loudspeaker, the *Neutron*. Three years' research went into the compact design, although AVI says it has not adopted any radical solutions to traditional loudspeaker problems. Instead it has studied the effect of internal cabinet reflections and devised a method for damping these without sacrificing the bass extension provided by the reflex port.

The *Neutron* uses selected drive units, including a 4.5-inch doped-paper-cone bass/mid driver with a 25mm voice coil in a large motor assembly, and a 19mm fabric dome tweeter. The crossover network uses massive, air-cored inductors and metallised polypropylene capacitors mounted on a 2.5mm glass fibre PCB with 2oz pure copper tracks. The crossover point is set at a very high 10kHz.

Intended for stand, bookshelf or wall mounting, the speaker measures only 254mm high, 235mm wide, and 195mm deep. With an eight-Ohm impedance and 83dB sensitivity, the *Neutron* should be used with amplifiers rated between 30 and 200Watts. It sells for £499. ☎ (01453) 765682.



Precision sub-atomic particles from AVI.

In brief

on Sunday 5 May between 10.30am and 5pm. Admission is £5, or free for under-14s. Around 300 dealers will be waiting to serve sound and vision technology collectors. Arrive early for a free copy of the *Sound and Vision Yearbook* (normally £3.50). ☎ (01398) 331532.



tech+link on the cheap.

tech+link has two new inexpensive OFC loudspeaker cables. *OFC42* is a 42-strand design selling for 49 pence per metre, while *OFC79* — with 79-strands — sells for 99 pence per metre. Both cables are pink sheathed and are marked for direction. ☎ (0181) 771 8388.



Strand Europe Ltd has been appointed the exclusive UK distributor of One For All remote controls and will be launching the new *OFA 5* and *OFA 6* phone-upgradeable handsets. It will also be operating the new UK-based customer service help-line, which you can reach on ☎ (0990) 143 038. ☎ (01252) 861000.



JBL has two home cinema packages using its TLX range of speakers. The *TLX AV Mix*, using *TLX70* floorstanders, the *TLX103* centre and *TLX101* surrounds, costs £499.99. The *TLX/REL Option*, with *TLX121* fronts, *TLX103*, *TLX101*s, and a *REL Q-Bass* subwoofer, comes in at a mere £699.99. ☎ (0181) 207 5050.

Aiwa, Pioneer, Canon, JVC, Panasonic, Sony, Toshiba and Philips were among 19 firms invited to Scotland Yard at the end of January, to discuss ways of building anti-theft safe- ➤

Cables, cables everywhere!

Silvertone is a range of interconnect and loudspeaker cables sold direct by Turner Electrical. The company's aim is to provide pure silver and silver-plated OFC cables at affordable prices. *Silver-Sonic* speaker cable comes in two grades — *MC* (medium capacity) and *HC* (high capacity) — and sells for £10 and £15 per metre respectively; while the two-core *Silver-Voice* uses pure silver conductors for £85 per metre.



Sci-Fi — In space no one can hear your cables.

Ex-static is a screened interconnect with a single central conductor, silver-plated to a depth of 100 microns. Selling for £35 (one metre) it comes with gold-plated phono plugs. The *Sci-Fi* interconnect, at £95 per metre, uses five pure silver conductors in its centre core. It is fitted with Swiss Neutrik phono plugs. ☎ (0973) 743054.

Apollo Cables' first products are the *Black Velvet* interconnects, available by mail order while the company establishes its dealer network. The company's believes that isolating the audio signal from external noise is more important than removing minute impurities in the conductor. To do this it interposes a layer of semiconducting material between the signal conductor and the high density braided copper sheath.

A one-metre set of cables costs £25, although all leads are built to order and can be had in lengths as short as 15cm or as long as 25 metres. There are also *Black Velvet Pro* cables (which use Neutrik Profi phono plugs), and an ultra-low-noise speaker cable that's nearing completion. ☎ (01920) 822095.



Black Velvet — isn't that a Guinness and Champagne cocktail?

Lexicon and on

Harman Audio has five new THX-certified Lexicon power amplifiers for high-end home theatre fans. The smallest of these is the £1,850 *Model 212*, a bridgable two-channel design producing 120W per channel into eight Ohms and 200W into four. The £2,750, three-channel *Model 312* provides the same output power as the *212* but can be bridged to provide one 400W channel and one 120W channel. The £3,250 *Model 412* provides four 120W channels (into eight Ohms) and offers a variety of configurations. The £2,500 *Model 225* is a bridgable stereo design providing 250W into eight Ohms and 400W into four Ohms. At the same price, the *Model 501* is a monoblock capable of 500W into eight Ohms and 800W into four Ohms. It can be switched from high current to high voltage to suit different loads. All the amplifiers have RCA unbalanced and XLR balanced inputs, and use high current output stages.

Lexicon also has a new digital surround sound processor, the *DC-1*, whose modular design claims to banish obsolescence. This copiously equipped unit — eight audio inputs, five analogue video inputs (three with S-Video), four digital inputs, zone switching and trigger circuits to operate other electrical devices — is available in basic format, which caters for Dolby Pro-Logic processing, at £2,000. There's also a THX version for £3,000 and an AC-3 version for £4,000. You can, naturally, upgrade the basic controller to either THX or AC-3 specification. ☎ (0181) 207 5050.

Tosh technology torture

There's some uncertainty about the exact launch date of Toshiba's first Digital Video Disc (DVD) players. At the Winter CES, the word was "Toshiba's first two players are scheduled to reach the marketplace this Fall." The press pack then encouraged readers to visit Toshiba America's World Wide Web site. We dutifully trundled the virtual Lambretta along to <http://www.toshiba.com> and parked at the DVD pages. Here we discovered that "it's coming to your store next summer!". A thoroughly low-tech phone call to Toshiba's UK public relations company office elicited the line: "We're hoping a player will be in British shops in time for Christmas. But..." Toshiba, they explained, won't introduce players if at the time of the intended launch, there's what it deems an insufficient amount of prerecorded software available. The ball now transfers to the content providers' court. So, having mixed enough metaphors, it's time for a cliché: watch this space! ☎ (01276) 62222.



Today's Toshiba technology — tomorrow!

MOST SALES LITERATURE ON SPEAKERS GETS RECYCLED. OURS JUST GETS REREAD.

As you may have noticed, the "high-end" audio world tends to congregate in small sects around many "gurus" who preach unbelievable creeds about wholly unbelievable technological breakthroughs. True to our tenet, following the teachings of our first official Danish Holyman, chief tester St.Erik "The Ear" Nielsen, we feel compelled to prevent further adoration of Golden Calves, comparable idols, and other profane fallacies.

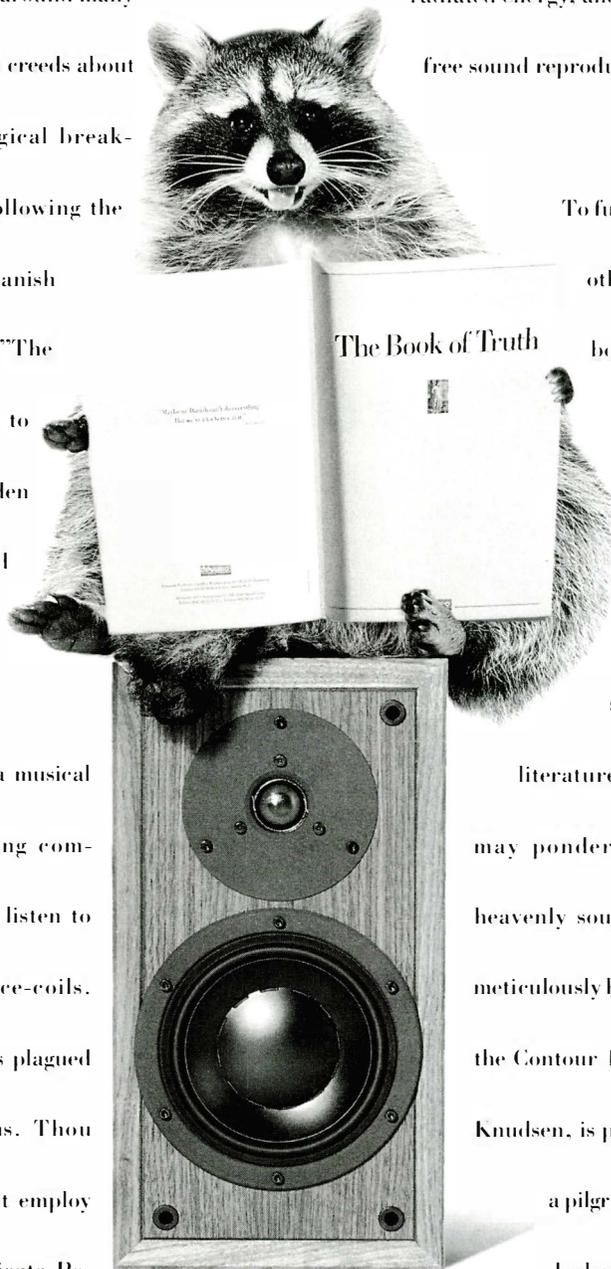
Hence, "The Book of Truth", a musical bible containing such towering commandments as: Thou shalt not listen to speakers with undersized voice-coils. Thou shalt not listen to speakers plagued with phase response problems. Thou shalt only listen to speakers that employ one-piece MSP (Magnesium Silicate Polymer) woofer cones. Thou shalt only listen to speakers

that utilize complete absorption of evil, backwards-radiated energy, and allow for virtuous, echo-free sound reproduction.

To further indulge in these and other truths from Skanderborg, Denmark, please call +49-40-858-066 or fax us at +49-40-859-035, to receive a missionary copy of our small masterpiece of true audiophile

literature. In the meantime, you may ponder seeking refuge in the heavenly sounds emanating from our meticulously handcrafted speakers (like the Contour 1.3 our company raccoon, Knudsen, is preaching from), whilst on a pilgrimage to one of our few true dealers. Consequently, you may

even consider recycling your former speakers as well.



DYNAUDIO
AUTHENTIC FIDELITY

DANES DON'T LIE.™

Marantz's retro rockets

Marantz America has gone to extraordinary lengths to ensure the authenticity of its new *Classics* valve amplifiers. Working closely with the Valve Amplification Company in America, it has produced near-exact replicas of its vintage *Model 7*, *8B* and *9* amplifiers, using components from the manufacturers who supplied parts for the original designs. That extends right to the actual potting compound used in the transformers!

There has been no attempt to "improve" the original Saul Marantz designs, and even out-moded features, such as multiple phono equalisation curves, remain in the reissues. The legends on the new facias even duplicate the irregular hand lettering of the first models. Only very small changes to the original designs have been dictated by current safety regulations.

The *Classics* will be coming to the UK in Summer. The *Model 7* Stereo Pre-amplifier features eight inputs — Microphone, Phono 1, Phono 2, Tape Head, FM-AM, FM Multiplex, TV and auxiliary — with several phono equalisation settings including



RIAA, Old Columbia LP, and early 78. The *Model 8B* Stereo Power Amplifier is a dual-mono 35 Wpc design with 4, 8 and 16 Ohm outputs. The *Model 9* Monophonic Power Amplifier delivers 70W continuous and 140W peak, and is internally switchable for 40W triode operation. UK prices have yet to be announced. Tuner nuts will be saddened that the first crop of *Classics* does not include the legendary *Model 10B*, but we live in hope!

Rest assured that the *Classics* won't cost anywhere near the estimated £20,000 that will be asked for the new 50W *Project T-1*, pure Class A valve monoblock power amplifier. Marantz UK is only importing one unit for demonstration but says it will be pleased to satisfy demand from any high-end valve enthusiasts. The *Project T-1* uses selected premium components throughout, including custom valves and transformers built by American specialists OPT.

At a more affordable level, Marantz now offers its £1,500 *Arch* system in a choice of original walnut veneer or a new faux black marble. ☎ (01753) 680868.

New for old... the Project T-1 backs up the Model 8B.

Onkyo's Integra Circus

Onkyo celebrates 50 years of "technological leadership" by releasing a new range of products called *Integra*. The first three Anniversary Edition models, which will come in a special gold finish, are the *A-9911G* integrated amplifier, the *T-4711G* tuner, and the *DX-7911G* CD player. UK prices hadn't been fixed at the time of writing. Also in the range are three black-finish models: the *A-9711* integrated amplifier, the *TA-6711* cassette deck and the *DX-7711* CD player.

The *A-9911G* amplifier is rated at 90W per channel, claims to use no negative feedback and is said to provide lower distortion than even "exotic Class A designs". The 80W *A-9711* incorporates much of the *A-9911G*'s design and adds remote control.

The *DX-7911G* CD player employs Onkyo's own conversion system and Accupulse Quartz circuitry, the new Sample Rate Conversion system and a co-axial digital output. The black *DX-7711* offers a lower cost alternative with similar technology. Finally, the Anniversary Edition *T-4711G*, brings RDS technology to a high-end tuner. ☎ (0181) 343 3240.

Tannoy tweak time

Tannoy's new limited-edition *631 SE* is based on the *631* we reviewed in issue 141. The new modified model sports a redesigned crossover for smoother transition between drive units in midband, a flux optimisation magnet added to LF drive unit to increase efficiency of magnetic circuit, and black-ash vinyl on a slim MDF board replaces the plastic laminate used in the enclosure's top panel.

With peak power handling of 120 Watts per channel, nominal impedance of 6 Ohms and efficiency of 87 dB/Wm, the *631 SE* is priced at £169.90. Industry pundits are already claiming that this pricepoint may become as hotly contested as £130 is now.

☎ 01236 420199.



Tannoy goes all special.

In brief

guards into electrical goods. The meeting was hosted jointly by Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Paul Condon and Mark Souhami of the Dixons Group. Manufacturers were urged to make use of PIN numbers, immobilising circuitry and deterrent sirens.

Woodside Sound Engineering, manufacturers of Radford amplifiers, have moved to Ivy House Farm, Wolverhill, Banwell, Avon BS24 6LB. ☎ (01934) 820634.



Russ Andrews Turntable Accessories' 1996 catalogue is now available. Order your free copy on ☎ (0800) 373467.

Kronos Distribution has opened a new retail outlet at 35 Furlough Road, Newmills, Dungannon BT71 4DU. Product ranges stocked include Micromega, Arion, Triangle, Michell, Impulse, Pro-Ject, Ortofon and more. Opening hours are 9 to 5 Monday to Friday, with evenings and Saturdays by appointment. ☎ (01868) 748632.

Hi-Fi manufacturers that have not yet achieved the stringent European EMC standards have been granted a one year stay of execution. It was originally believed that all products sold from 1st January 1996 had to carry the CE mark. However, the deadline has been extended to 1st January 1997, allowing non-CE marked equipment to be still legally saleable.

True Dynaudio Dealers.

HiFi Experience, 17 Coniscliffe Rd, Darlington, 01325-481418
 Music Matters, 351 Hagley Rd, Edgbaston, Birmingham, 0121-4292811
 Music Matters, 93-95 Hobs Moat Rd, Solihull, Birmingham, 0121-7420254
 Harrogate Hifi Centre, 15 Commercial St, Harrogate, 01432-504274
 Cornflake Shop, 37 Windmill St, London, 0171-6310472
 Nichols Hifi, 430-432 Lee High Rd, Lewisham, London, 0181-8525780
 Performance Hifi Systems, 5 London Rd, Sevenoaks, Kent, 01732-740425
 Worthing Audio, 20 Teville Gate Precinct, West Sussex, 01903-212133
 Music Matters, 156-157 Lower High St, Stourbridge, 01384-444184

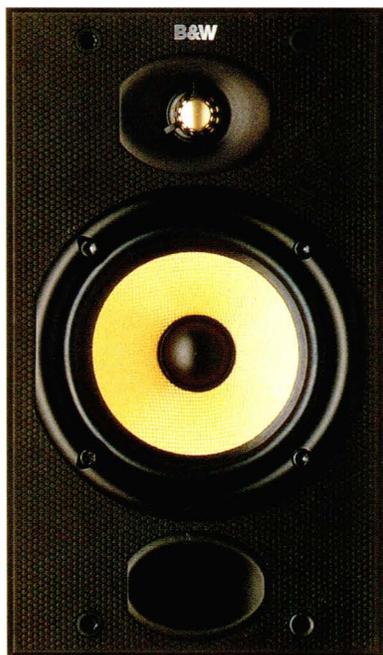
Holburn Hifi, 441 Holburn St, Aberdeen, 01224-585713
 W.M. Coupar, 8-12 Wellmeadow, Blairgowrie, 01250-872436
 W.M. Coupar, 33 Reform St, Dundee, 01382-229588
 W.M. Coupar, 9 Scott St, Perth, 01738-634809
 The Music Room, 98 Bath St, Glasgow, 0141-3325012
 Richer Sounds, 34 Wellington Quay, Dublin, 0103531-6719666
 Richer Sounds, 40-41 Smithfield, Belfast

DYNAUDIO
 AUTHENTIC FIDELITY

Danes don't lie.

INTRODUCING THE NEW 600 SERIES

Don't believe all that
you read in the press...



just this bit:

B&W has pulled the stops well and truly out for these speakers, and boy does the result sound good... the 601's sound like the voice coils of God. Up-to-the-minute design, gold-plated biwireable sockets: they're a bargain - magnificent for £200.



What Hi-Fi, November 1995



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

For details and stockists of the 600 range of loudspeakers, 'phone B&W UK on 01903-750750

Ear Waxings

Jason Kennedy ventures up the M1 with plugged ears and a new almanac of tube data.

I went up to see Kevin Scott in Nottingham recently: He's the man who built up the mighty Living Voice *Air Partner* horn system. Not long ago, he completed the smaller (though still substantial) *Air Scout*, which has resolution beyond your wildest dreams and dynamics to satisfy the most demanding material. Every time I visit Kevin, his speakers seem to sound better, but of late they have achieved extreme resolution and offered something far above the standards I have come to expect from hi-fi. I refer to resolution in its complete form: timbre, dynamics, scale and solidity. The result is staggering and just as sensitive to partnering equipment as you'd expect.

So what did we get these results with? Silver transformer, zero negative feedback 300B SE tube amps and a rare and exotic turntable perhaps? We did use one of the latter (Voyd/Wilson Benesch/Empire), but some of the most convincing sounds were achieved using a Trichord *PD-S503* transport, Monarchy DAC and its partnering DIP jitter buster via push-pull pentode amplification, courtesy of Audio Innovations (*Series 800 Anniversary*). Unusual perhaps, but far from excessive.

And it was all there; delicacy, coherence, power and precision. We tried a 211SE tube amp that I'd brought (*Gamma Rhythm*) — it sounded very pleasant and refined until we put the *Anniversary* back in and realised that it lacked a great deal of solidity and coherence. On our hands was clear evidence that not all single-ended amps are equal. And by the way: fine line preamplification was from Border Patrol.

The *Air Scout* is now a fully finished, badged product, in a way that very few low volume high end products are — still at £14,750 I would hope it was.

I also tried the Trichord *Black Box One* mains conditioner on this macro lens of a system. We put it on a Wadia 23 CD player to extraordinary effect. The thing practically took off, resolution improved, bass power increased, timing tightened up and the sound was invigorated with a new sense of life and energy. In one word: impressive!

Planes, trains and fontopians

On the journey up the M1 I managed to persuade my good lady to drive while I had a go with some new Sony noise-cancelling headphones. Unlike previous models from Sennheiser and others, the *MDR-NC10* are an in-ear design created for the Walkman user who'd rather not have to listen at dangerous levels. They are also highly appropriate for the traveller who wants to relax without the low frequency drone of a plane, train or automobile.

When I say in-ear I mean right in. These things are what Sony calls a fontopian design, which means that, like those pink things that used to be supplied with trannies, they fit tightly in your ear hole. This factor alone cuts out quite a lot of noise, leaving the anti-phasing system to eliminate low frequencies, which they do very effectively. What's strange about them is that by cutting out bass they make the presence (midrange) range stand out. In practice, this should mean that you can listen to the car radio in circumstances which would normally require a (considerably) quieter car or a louder in-car system. The only drawbacks are that they stick out quite a lot more than most in-ear phones, and they aren't very comfortable in the long run. Perhaps my ears are too small, though I doubt they are smaller than average...

Complements and substitutions

Those of you whose imaginations were fired by last month's referral to two tube amp books might be interested in a new publication that comfortably supports the grandiose title *Gold Aero Tube Library Volume One - Complement*

and *Substitution Guide 1950-1995*. However, this is not a coffee table decorator. It's an engineer's reference that comes in ring-bindable, loose leaf form — all 429 pages of it!

The majority of these pages are taken up by descriptions of the tube complements for 775 amplifiers, including basic layout, original tube complement, recommended tube substitutions, original price and review references. There are also tube replacement listings and equivalent guides, and it even has a comprehensive selection of tube base diagrams. You get the picture: this manual is primarily of use to people who regularly service tube amps.

The *Library* was put together by Frank Morris and is published in the US by Cool Sounds Press (fax 00 1 408 377 1282), costing \$50 plus P&P. What's more, it's not half as Americana-centric as one might expect, containing as it does brands like Trilogy, Audio Innovations, Leak and EAR alongside the gamut of US and a few European brands — largely the array that is or has been imported into the US. There are a few notable exceptions, such as Audio Note. However, the loose leaf nature of the edition means that it can be easily supplemented. Apparently the first batch of new pages turned up at the Winter CES in Las Vegas, and the publisher now threatens two new supplements per annum. Brace yourself, Mr Postman! ▲



Wave goodbye to noise reduction with Living Voice's *Air Scout* speakers.



Choice sessions

IN JIMMY HUGHES'S WEIRD, WONDERFUL WORLD, NOTHING IS AS IT SEEMS, UNTIL IT'S TESTED AT LEAST 5,632 TIMES

Cambridge Audio CD-4, Axiom amp, Gale Four floor-standing speakers

This little lot just goes to show that a smooth-sounding, snazzy-looking system needn't cost you mega bucks.

£800

The Richer Sounds system: separates that were made for one another.

Those lovely people at Richer Sounds have put together a very nice system for us this month, consisting of a Cambridge Audio CD-4/DACMagic 2i CD player, the tasty-looking Alchemist Axiom amplifier, and a pair

of Gale Four floor-standing speakers. Before auditioning the complete system, I spent time with each item on its own to assess individual characteristics.

I've reviewed the CD-4 in these pages previously. It's a very smooth, warm-sounding player. For some systems (and tastes), it is slightly short on drive and attack — partly the result of having a lowish-level analogue output voltage. However, add the DACMagic 2i and the sound immediately perks up in terms of presence and bite, as well as loudness. The new DAC2i replaces the original DAC1 and costs an extra £50.

The DACMagic 2i looks similar to its predecessor, but internally it displays a range of improvements, including a gold-plated circuit board and socketry, plus optical and coaxial inputs. These inputs allow it to be teamed with budget CD players that only have an optical output — although where a CD player has both, plump for coaxial. It's an excellent digital converter and superb value, but it quickly makes the jump from good

to downright outstanding if used via its balanced outputs.

Compared to the DAC1, the DAC2i is tonally more open and transparent. It's also a shade more detailed and articulate. I have just one grumble: using three mains transformers, the old DAC1 was mechanically noisy, and, alas, the DAC2i is much the same.

If nothing else, Alchemist's Axiom integrated amp really looks the part, with its combination of cool silver brushed aluminum and gold knobs and end pieces. It sounds good too; warm rather than analytical, with smooth, clean treble and a full bass. It's line level only, so you'd have to add a separate phono stage for vinyl replay.

For just under £200, the Gale Fours give you your money's worth. They're quite sensitive, and sound lively rather than warm or rich, with a pleasantly forward balance that ensures plenty of detail and attack. Beguiling they aren't, but if you want your music sharp and bold you'll love 'em.

I began by using the system driven by the CD-4 on its own, and felt the sound was sharp, lively and clear. The Gales don't sound as open as the little B&W DM302s, and have a slight degree of tonal hardness. However, it's something you soon get used to, and on the credit side I'd say the Gales were more forgiving than the DM302s. The slightly sweeter and softer sound of the CD-4 suits the system quite well, ensuring that hardness is not emphasised.

Adding the DAC2i brought the expected improvement in detail and attack, albeit at the expense of making the Gale's tonal hardness slightly more noticeable. In my own system, adding the DAC2i to the CD-4 is a definite improvement, but in the context of this system I think I preferred the CD-4 on its own, simply because the overall sound was friendlier.

An impressive system all the same; one that demonstrates the extra detail and definition of good separates. And for just £800 it sounds quite special.

Richer Sounds ☎ (0171) 403 4710



Marantz CD-63 Ken Ishiwata Signature

Marantz is not a company content to just sit back and smile at its successful CD-63. Oh no, it has to go and make it even better — show offs!

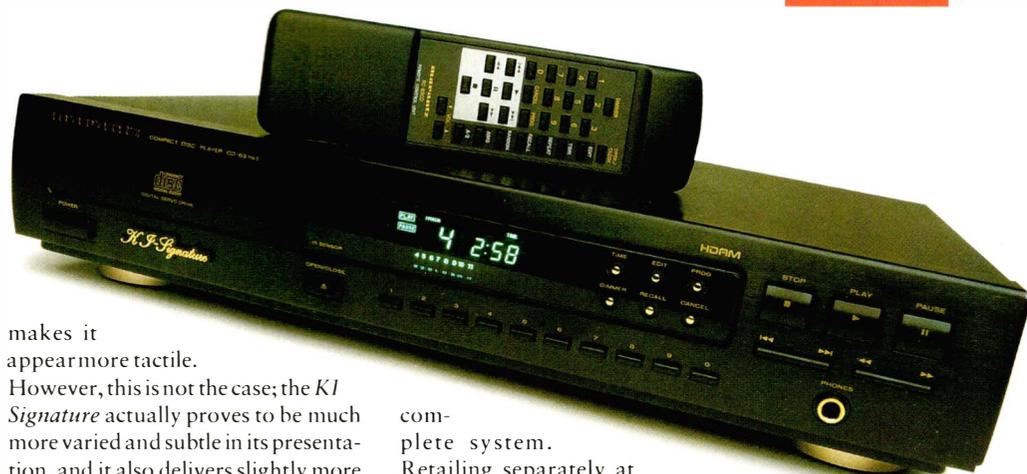
£499.90

It hardly needs pointing out that the CD-63 has been a runaway success for Marantz, both with the press and thereaders. There's an *Mk II* model and an *SE* version, but for those of you wanting the ultimate CD-63, Marantz has now launched the Ken Ishiwata Signature. This is the first in a projected range of Signature models from Marantz, intended as 'Statement' products of a standard above *SE*, but with a realistic pricetag.

The *KI Signature* is actually made in the UK, and the principal changes between this model and the *Mk II* include the use of a toroidal mains transformer, improved power supply, a copper-plated chassis, plus faster rise-time analogue output circuits. The *KI Signature* is slightly heavier than the *Mk II*, although functions and facilities remain identical. All in all, there are some 33 component changes between the original CD-63 and the new *KI Signature*.

I began by using the *KI Signature* as a transport, feeding via a Meridian 518 into a Cambridge Audio DAC-MAGIC 2i with balanced outputs. Something noticeable right from the start was the *KI Signature's* beautifully sweet, clean treble. It sounded controlled and articulate, yet lively, with excellent detail and dynamics.

Comparisons with a CD-63/II proved interesting: driving an external DAC, the two players sounded pretty close, with just a slight preference for the *KI Signature*, which seemed a shade fuller and more solidly focused. Discarding the external DAC, so the two players could be used via their own analogue outputs, brought more difference. Again I was struck by the beautifully sweet effortlessness of the *KI Signature's* treble, which came across as very open and transparent. By contrast, the CD-63/II sounded a shade grainier and tonally harder, without the same ease and delicacy. The difference was most noticeable with choral music; the voices had more edge on the cheaper model. On a superficial comparison, the CD-63/II could be judged more detailed on some music — it gives a sharper, more 'etched' treble quality, which



makes it appear more tactile. However, this is not the case; the *KI Signature* actually proves to be much more varied and subtle in its presentation, and it also delivers slightly more impact and transient attack, despite its extra sweetness.

I found the *KI Signature* easy on the ear without being bland; it has a way of focusing your attention on the music rather than its reproduction. This sets it apart from the CD-63/II, good as it is, and makes it a worthwhile upgrade for those who want a musical CD player that sounds immediate and tactile, yet sweet and beguiling.

Marantz Hi-Fi UK ☎ (01753) 680868

AVI S2000M1

This amp is a rebel — it's British, but small, tasty-looking and dynamic. However, maybe it's a bit too gutsy...

£799

Who says specialist British hi-fi has to be large, ugly and unstylish? AVI's diminutive S2000M1 integrated amp is small but powerful (100W), and it offers a fast, clean and punchy sound with detail and impact. Offering five line level inputs, including tape with monitor facility, the *M1* forms part of a complete remote control AVI system, which also sports a matching tuner and CD player. For just under £2,200, you can become an owner of the

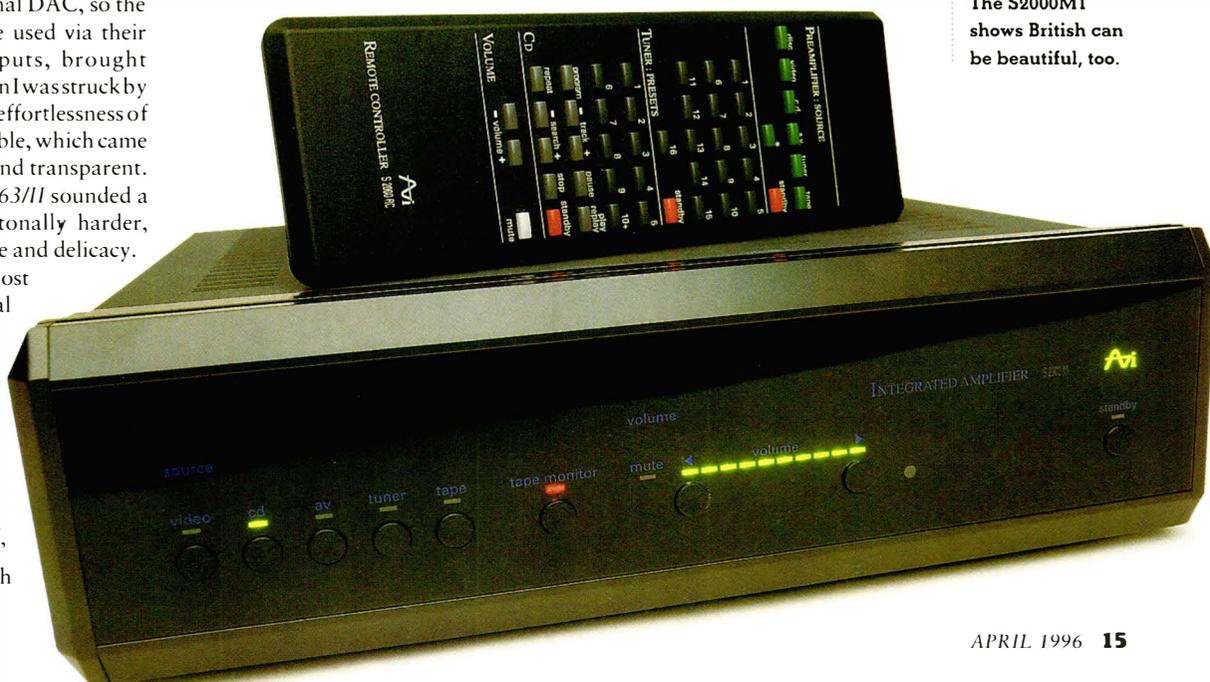
complete system. Retailing separately at £799, the *M1* is a very simple, straightforward product to use, with only volume and input selection to worry about. Two buttons activate a motorised volume pot, with levels indicated by an illuminated scale. A supplied remote handset gives input selection and volume, in addition to functions of the matching CD player and tuner.

As already indicated, the *M1* is a lively and powerful-sounding amp, which has lots of energy and attack. I found it positive and exciting in presentation, while also reasonably refined, with a clean, open and detailed sound. When I put the AVI in place of my usual Orelle SA-100, I was immediately impressed by the bite and attack of the former, which made the Orelle sound almost a shade pedestrian.

With extended listening, there were times when I felt that the *M1* perhaps proved a little too dynamic and up-front, but such feelings are likely to depend on personal taste and the system in use. Certainly, AVI's *M1* is a gutsy amp that should suit those after real specialist UK hi-fi that kicks ass, but with the styling, petite size and operational convenience of a midi-system. AVI ☎ (01453) 752656

KI Signature: the first in Marantz's new range.

▶▶
The S2000M1 shows British can be beautiful, too.





◀◀
B&W's DM302 speaker — so much more than just a pretty face.

B&W DM302

This speaker was produced with the lower end of the market in mind. So B&W must have 'cut corners', but I'm blown if I can find exactly where.

£129.95

It's always difficult for a company primarily associated with highly-priced, high-quality hi-fi gear to successfully apply their expertise to a product aimed further down the market. For B&W, it was more than just a simple 'me too' exercise. The company wanted a speaker that could offer superb sound and innovative design without flaws or compromises. As a result, the DM302's styling and finish are excellent, but the cabinet is more than just a pretty face, being both light and rigid, with a 'spiky' rear wall — like an anechoic chamber to break up standing waves.

It seems to work; the DM302 has an exceptionally 'boxless' sound for a small speaker. It's open and uncolored without that constrained, tonally hard midrange often found in small designs. Sensitivity is a high 91dB/W, making the 302 easily driven (even by small amps), and, as a natural result, it sounds fast and dynamic. Bass could be deeper — an inevitable trade-off with small high-efficiency enclosures — yet the

sound is far from lightweight or thin. Massed violins sound very sweet and natural, as do voices. Choral music is stiffest, but the DM302 passed with ease, sounding natural and realistic. It's revealing, though, and perhaps less forgiving than some tonally hard and less transparent models. So, when fed with good sources, the DM302 will most certainly deliver. In many respects, it seems to be the kind of speaker that will just keep getting better and better as the equipment around it improves. B&W Loudspeakers (UK sales) ☎ (01903) 750750

van den Hul Source HB and CS122

Multi-strand cables have a bit of a dodgy reputation, but the CS122s are no ordinary cables. In fact, they're fab!

£18.99 per metre and interconnect

With my prejudice against multi-strand cables, I could easily have written off van den Hul's CS122 speaker cable. However, there were some good reasons why I didn't. The CS122 has two 3.35mm dia conductors that comprise 147 strands of 0.15mm dia OFC copper with a pure silver coating. The insulation, made from halogen-free Hülliflex, covers a thin carbon layer intended to partially convert the external magnetic field into an electrical field, and act as an electrical bridge between conductors.

Stranded it may be, but CS122 does not have the weaknesses that often afflict cables of this type. It sounds very smooth and articulate, with superb focus and control. Detail is impressive, yet above all it was the sheer coherence of this cable that won me over. There was no tendency to exaggerate the music; instead, the sound was clean and clear, with impressive analysis. In short, a cable of real integrity.

The same can be said for the matching Source Hybrid interconnect. It has a stranded construction, featuring silver-coated OFC copper conductors with a carbon layer. The cable is shielded, and vdH claims use of special manufacturing techniques to prevent loss of performance due to ageing. Terminated

lengths of 0.8m (£49.99) and 1.2m (£59.99) are available.

Like CS122, Source Hybrid is a very clean and neutral-sounding lead that offers clarity and detail with none of the smearing or false hazy 'warmth' known to afflict stranded cables. Used between CD and preamp, it sounded correct tonally, with an excellent and subtle inner detail which allows you to hear all the music. Nice one!
van den Hul ☎ (0181) 8109388



This subwoofer may be cheap, but it's no dog.

REL Q Bass subwoofer

Even those not particularly interested in subterranean low frequencies have been won over by the Q Bass.

£349

In a few short years REL has secured sub-bass speakers a respected place in the serious hi-fi market. The presence of good, clean and deep bass adds a unique depth and spaciousness to the whole sound, improving sound-staging, clarity, and fine detail.

Alas, the full REL effect has never been cheap; hitherto you had to pay £1,000 or more to get all the benefits outlined above. Until now, that is. With the new Q Bass, REL has succeeded in producing a small and relatively cheap sub that offers quality bass without compromise. The Q Bass doesn't go quite as deep as the Stadium II, true, but it's good down to 20Hz and offers all the speed and clarity you could want.

Being a sealed enclosure, it sounds tighter and less voluminous than the expensive Stadium II: on deep organ pedals the low frequencies don't quite wash around the room, rattling anything not bolted down. Yet the bass is satisfyingly deep and powerful — a clean 20Hz is not to be sneezed at!

Even my big Impulse H-1s benefited from the Q Bass, adding weight



CS122 cables won over our most prejudiced of testers.

THE FRONT END

and solidity to what is already a rich, full bottom end. Interestingly, the *Q Bass* reproduces less upper bass than the bigger REL subs. Playing solo on Erasure's *Blue Savannah*, the *Q Bass* reproduced only the bass line; with *Stadium III* I could hear the vocals, too.

No matter how the controls were set, *Stadium II* always reproduced some of the upper frequencies. *Q Bass* (with its variable upper frequency pot set about halfway) sounded well down at 200Hz, whereas *Stadium II* (frequency controls set to minimum) still had output at 500Hz.

I'm not saying *Q Bass* fully equals the bigger REL subs, but it is surprisingly comparable. Its more sharply curtailed upper frequency register and sealed enclosure make it slightly less open than reflex REL subs like *Stadium II*. The *Q Bass* gives tighter, drier low frequencies, and sometimes this is a distinct advantage.

It's still early days, but I'll take my chances and rate *Q Bass* a tad above *Stadium II* for tightness and control. The latter wins on dynamics and breadth, and gives a cleared idea of the pitch of each bass note. It also has a more voluminous sound on low organ pedals, but when you consider the price difference, there is no doubt that REL have an absolute winner in its *Q Bass*.

REL ☎ (0181) 207 5050

Meridian 518

The 518 seems to offer everything you ever wish for. Or is it just a case of a lot of stuff that does very little...?

£895

It's usually a good sign when a new product arrives for test and, after a few days' use, you wonder how you ever managed to live without it. And this is exactly how I feel about

Meridian's *518* digital audio processor. It's simple to connect and fairly straightforward to use, yet the range of user options is wide and I could easily spend two or three pages going into everything that's on offer. However, since space doesn't allow this, I'll concentrate on its resolution enhancement abilities. Just keep in mind that it can be used both professionally for CD mastering or as a digital control preamp.

The *518* connects between a digital source (such as a CD player) and DAC. Even set to Bypass, it gives an immediate improvement, de-jittering the signal for a cleaner treble, with more detail and greater dynamics. By itself, this is impressive, but it's also just the start...

With the *518* set in enhancement mode, you're able to match the word length of CD transport to DAC, increase the volume level of under-recorded CDs in the digital domain, and introduce noise shaping: a technique which moves audible distortion to a part of the spectrum where the ear can't detect it. There are five noise-shapers to choose from, plus additive dither and 'flat' options for comparison.

CDs vary widely in terms of loudness, and those transferred at a low level will lack resolution and focus, even when the amp volume is turned up to compensate. The *518* allows the level to be increased by up to +12dB in the digital domain, and a 'Clip' warning illuminates to tell you when peaks are reaching the danger point. On most music, most of the time, it won't matter if 'Clip' flashes up during peaks — you'll not hear any distortion. Indeed, it's surprising how much you can exceed 'maximum' without audible clipping, although much of it depends on the music.

Many classical CDs may need anything from +2dB to +6dB, sometimes more, to reach peak level. Under-

recorded CDs sound tonally pale and lack dynamics and separation, but lifting level in the digital domain with the *518* helps restore missing colour and vibrancy, and improves focus and attack. The difference can be striking.

The different noise-shaping options can prove comparatively subtle, but out of the five on offer I found myself preferring Shapes B and C. With each successive Shape, the sound gets more and more incisive, perhaps to the point of aggression with shape D and E. Noise-shaping subjectively increases low-level resolution and improves detail and separation. It also seems to make the background silences more inky black, allowing quiet sounds to project with greater articulation and vibrancy.

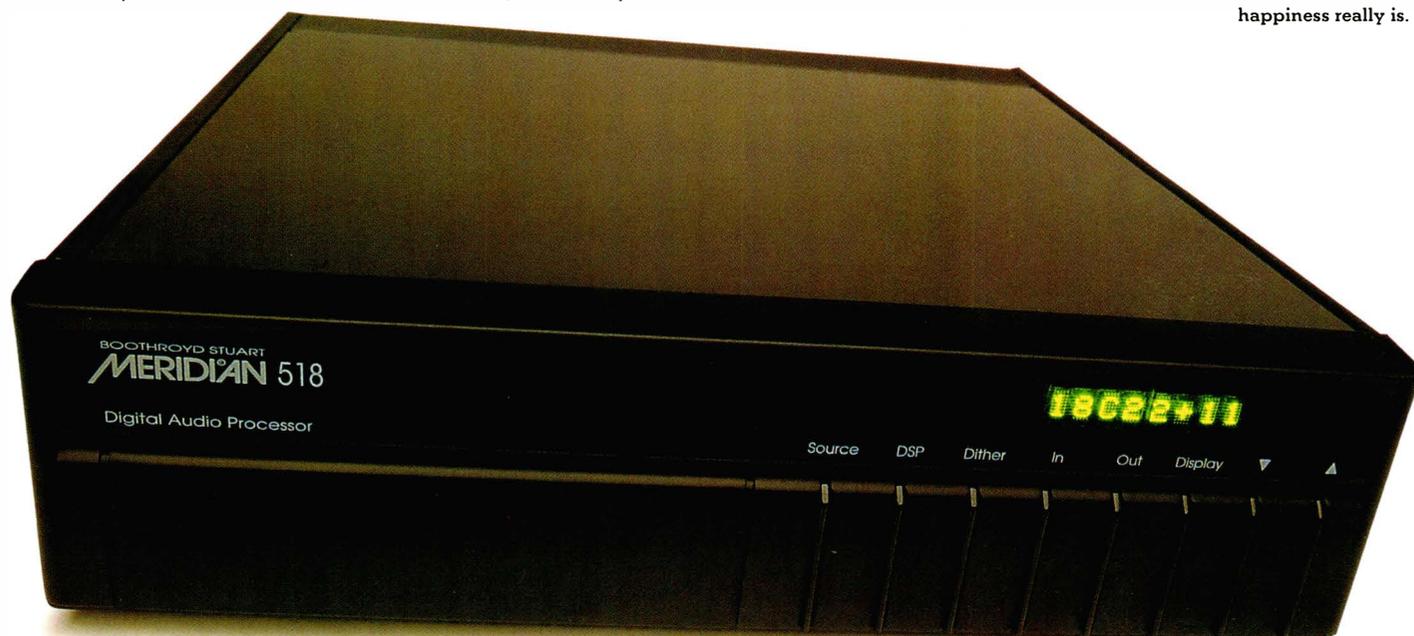
I found the *518* rather music/disc dependent, but it really suits low-level material with plenty of harmonics. Noise shaping gave a quiet oboe solo, backed by plucked strings, a reedier, more plangent tone quality.

Meridian's Bob Stuart prefers the *518* in Emphasis mode, because it reduces digital noise and gives a 1-bit increase in resolution. Some CDs are mastered with Emphasis (a treble lift that rises to +10dB above 10kHz), but they're not that common. The *518* adds digital emphasis, which the DAC then removes with analogue filtering, thus reducing noise like Dolby B.

While accepting the theoretical advantage that Emphasis brings, I preferred the *518* in Gain mode when it appeared slightly sharper and more transparent. The mode preferences, however, will normally depend on personal taste and the DAC used.

All in all, I found myself deeply impressed by the *518*. It may sound like hype, but I almost can't imagine how I've played CDs since 1983 without it! Meridian Audio ☎ (01480) 434334 ▲

Meridian's 518 — let it into your life and realize what true hi-fi happiness really is.



Absolutely divine

If you thought home cinema gear could never sound as good as hi-fi, think again. **Alan Sircom** meets a system that delivers!

Absolute Sounds is not the sort of company that hides its light under a bushel. Then again, you'd need a pretty large bushel to camouflage a pair of Wilson *Grand SLAMMs*...

The two camps of hi-fi and AV rarely see eye to eye about quality concepts, and the best of hi-fi and the best of AV are usually very different beasts. Yet Absolute Sounds, run by Ricardo Franassovici, has created the seemingly impossible: the sort of hi-fi system that audiophiles would donate spare vital organs to own, and the sort of AV system that restores faith in high tech.

Ricardo began his quest for the best in AV some time ago, by searching for an existing reference point and trying to better it. Eventually, he found the Cello Music & Film System in Hollywood. Having set the reference point, Ricardo looked at every processor, projector and ancillary until he was happy. Then he became the English distributor for the companies involved...

The audio side of Absolute Sounds' system is well-known, but has progressed over the years. The cassette deck is still a Nakamichi *1000XL*. The turntable remains a Goldmund with AirTangent arm and Koetsu cartridge, but this is now fed into a two-box Krell *KPE* phono

stage. Alongside there's a £5,345 Theta *Data Mk III* which doubles up as CD and LaserDisc transport. The DAC and preamplifier have been replaced by the £3,495 Angstrom *200 Home Cinema Director*, which in turn feeds a pair of Krell *Audio Standard 2* monobloc power amps. Finally, a pair of Wilson *Audio X-1/Grand SLAMM* speakers complete the audio system. Normally, these £19,500 power amps and night-on £70k six-foot tall speakers would dominate any room, but in Ricardo's elegant listening lounge anything smaller would look minute.

Seeing is believing

The video side of the system is far more discreet. In the centre of the ceiling there's a £13,497 California Audio Labs/CineVision *IDP6.50C* three-gun data-grade CRT projector. This takes video signal from the Theta *Data III*, as well as a more pedestrian VCR and satellite decoder, to display on a Stewart screen, which descends from the ceiling. This screen also has two black-out patches at each side for normal TV viewing. In the tradition of big screen presentations, these panels can retract when the main feature is played in Widescreen. For NTSC LaserDiscs, the video signal is enhanced through a £4,444 Dwin *LD2-2* line doubler.

Back to sound, and once again the Angstrom *200* unit is the centrepiece. This acts as conventional stereo line-level preamplifier, digital converter for the Theta transport and a full Dolby Pro-Logic processor (with a £1,098 AC-3 upgrade if required in future).

For centre and rear channels, signal passes to the £3,985 Krell *KAV500/3* three-channel power amplifier. This amp (which also can be configured as, or upgraded to, a four or five channel device) feeds the centre and rear channel speakers. These are Martin-Logan *Logos* and *Stylos* respectively. The centre *Logos* speaker is attached to the picture rail just above the projector screen, while the two *Stylos* speakers sit at eye-level in the corners of the rear wall. There



Wilson X-1/Grand SLAMMs in effect!

are no subwoofers, but with a speaker like the *X-1/Grand SLAMM* reproducing almost any frequency from DC to light, who needs one?

The secret's in the set up

The components, illustrious as they are, form only half of this story — careful setting-up is paramount for ultimate sound quality. The Absolute Sounds system cannot be assembled in a couple of hours: it requires dedication and time to bed in, and a few minor (but vital) readjustments to wring out that last five percent of performance.

Installation began with the stereo set-up, for it is Ricardo's opinion that it's impossible to get good cinema sound without good audio. From here, the picture was carefully adjusted over a period of months. Finally, when he was happy with the sound and vision, the rest of the cinema package was incorporated into the system.

I found the system's picture quality little short of sensational. Although this is the most expensive audio-visual system I've seen outside a real cinema, the amazing picture quality more than justifies the expense. There is a sense of depth and solidity to the images that challenges the best conventional screens,

Goldmund, Krell and Nakamichi unite in over-the-top audiophilia.





Above: is this the finest AV system known to man? Right: Angstrom's 200 Home Cinema Director (beneath VCR).

with a colour balance that is both subtle and vibrant. Even demanding NTSC passages, where strong blues and greens are blended together, are portrayed impeccably. Even watching bland afternoon TV quiz shows is a delight with a big picture as well balanced as this.

The sound turned out to be every bit as stunning, whether in stereo or five channel mode. The rear settings showed how many subtleties the Angstrom processor is capable of revealing. Unless the soundtrack went way over the top, you were hardly aware of the centre and rear channels—until you switched these channels out. The film then fell away into very good stereo.

Ultimately, the sound quality of each part of the system was typically Krell, giving a sense of rock-solid bass and detail so strong that it is almost forward, almost bright. This complemented the detail retrieval capabilities of the Wilson speakers perfectly, making for a presentation that would delight in formation hounds. It may prove too exacting for some, but remains nevertheless the sort of system that cannot be criticised in absolute terms.

The £150,000 total price tag is little short of scary. However, when you look more carefully at what you get, and

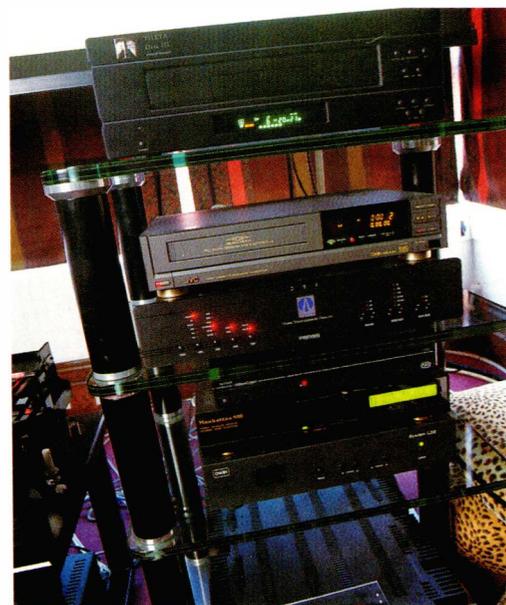
what the competition has to offer, that sum starts to look more sensible. To get a better picture quality, you would need some sort of line quadrupler—some £20,000 more than the Dwin LD2-2 doubler—and a top-class data projector, that could easily cost up to £100,000 on its own.

You could up the ante of the audio side, by using a dedicated CD player (like the Krell KRC-20i which will be on test in our next issue), a more audiophile-esque preamp than the Angstrom and possibly substituting the KAS2 power amps for a pair of the four-chassis, 350w KAS. But this would add an extra volume control and a further umpty-thousand pounds to the final price.

So is it worth the money?

The real secret of this system is its diversity. Most high-end AV systems still rely upon one or two principal brands. This system sources LD, processor, power amps, front speakers, side and rear speakers, projector, line doubler and even screen and cables from different manufacturers.

Ricardo's home cinema outfit is the



finest example of true hi-fi and AV integration that I have ever encountered. If any company believes it has a better system, let them come forward. Ricardo's outfit sets a new standard that would be hard to beat at any price. ▲

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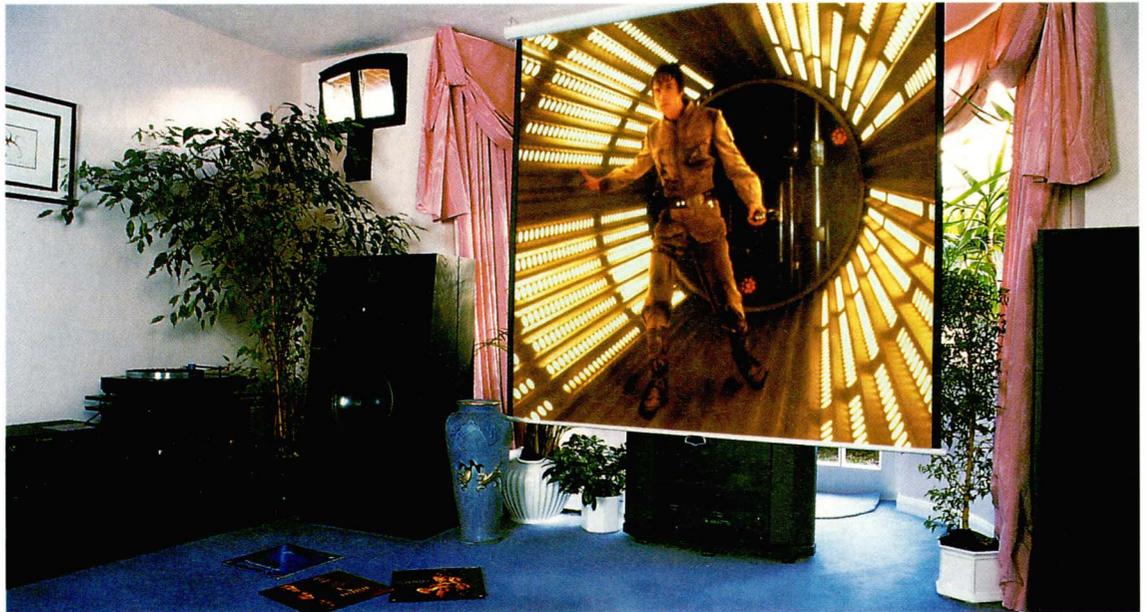
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Naim AV1

Naim Audio is noted for a no-nonsense approach to hi-fi. Paul Messenger investigates their first surround sound processor.



Above: The Naim MD's listening room, with two Naim DBLs but no dialogue speaker! Right: the minimalist AV1



The first AV processors to come my way were Dolby Surround devices from Marantz and Akai, way back in the mid-'80s. Both were notably simple to set up and use—the Akai implementation was actually built into the back of a VCR.

The first Dolby Pro-Logic processor couldn't have provided greater contrast. I spent a day at a Lexicon seminar undergoing training, then the same time again trying to figure out how many different channels of power amplification I needed!

I must have tried a few dozen different implementations since then, either as separate processors or built into TV sets, and I have come to realise that Dolby Pro-Logic Surround does not have to be complicated. It's caught on commercially, too, to the point of becoming the universal way to reproduce movie soundtracks at home.

However, Pro-Logic is much more complicated than simple Dolby Surround, which leaves questions begging to be asked and—from a purist audiophile perspective—certain contradictions to be confronted. By its very existence, this is precisely what Naim's new £1600 AV1 processor does. Add another £700 for an extra NAP140 power

amp to drive the rears, and it's an indisputably pricey way of adding surround sound capability. There's no sign of any Dolby logo anywhere in sight, and in configuration it's much more like Dolby Surround than Pro-Logic.

The most obvious omission is of a centre-front dialogue channel. The front soundstage is strictly two-channel stereophonic, while the processor, for all its elaborate and complex circuitry, is merely used to extract and delay the surround channels.

What, no dialogue?

Why no dialogue channel? There are several contributing reasons, but a good starting point is to turn the question round and ask: why have a dialogue channel? Its prime purpose is to satisfy Pro-Logic's original brief, which was to create a surround sound experience in a large cinema auditorium, where, by definition, most of the audience will be well off the central stereo axis. The centre-front channel was, therefore, created to keep the dialogue locked to the centre of the screen from all the seats in the house. (It wasn't a new idea —

there was a strong lobby for three-channel stereo with centre-fill way back in the '50s, supported by a number of US manufacturers; Paul Klipsch continues that tradition today.)

However, what's necessary for an auditorium full of people is not necessarily relevant in the home environment. And anyone who's already invested Naim-system-size money will be making pretty certain he or she gets the best seats in the house: somewhere along the main stereo axis, where dialogue will automatically be located firmly. It's true that large households might find the separate dialogue speaker an advantage, but it's far less relevant than in the cinema.

There is an advantage in reproducing dialogue from a single point source, simply because voices do sound that bit more natural and better focused—perhaps due to the phase errors that twin-source mono is bound to introduce. However, there are several other qual-

NAIM'S AV DEBUT

lycogen reasons for eliminating the dialogue channel. First, this avoids any processing in the signal chain, never mind steering logic.

Then there's the toughest question of all: where do you put the dialogue speaker? The answer will depend on what sort of picture display you're using, and is bound to involve some sort of compromise. The best dialogue reproduction is usually achieved with a speaker well off the ground and away from walls, which almost certainly puts it right in the way of the picture. In the cinema, they put the dialogue speaker behind the screen and makes small holes for the sound to get out. This is not by any means ideal, and nor is it really viable for domestic projectors, as the holes have to be much smaller because the screen is much nearer. With bulky direct-view TV sets, you don't even get that option: below the TV is too close to the floor; while above the TV it sits on top of a large rattly plastic box, whereas a rigid speaker stand is necessary to do justice to a decent sound system.

Whichever way you look at it, the dialogue speaker runs into some sort of trouble in the domestic environment, and arguably it is unnecessary. Naim goes one step further, pointing out that the space between the speakers should be left as clear as possible in the interests of the very best stereo reproduction; the company strongly encourages the use of in-room projection for TV/video display. It's certainly true that a large glass 'n' plastic box between the speakers represents a degree of sonic compromise, but room projection is hardly the most convenient solution for day-to-day viewing.

Back to basics

'Minimal intrusion' is the whole essence of Naim Audio's approach to AV, and the company that pioneered the removal of singular controls from amplifiers has now come up with the two-knob surround processor. Both knobs set 'gain': one for each of two synthesised surround channels (as distinct from Dolby Surround's one). In addition there are two little bar-graph meters that act as checks on balance and overload. There's a mute button on the front and an on/off switch on the back, but nothing else, and no remote handset either.

AVI takes its feed from the spare stereo pre-out sockets of any preamplifier, and takes an essentially passive role in the proceedings once its levels have been set to match front/rear speaker sensitivities at the listening position. I'd have liked remote control over level and mute, to make fine adjustments from the listening seat, as the 'passive' configuration renders test-tone line-up impractical. Adjustment is done subjectively.



Inside the deceptively simple case-work lies considerable electronic complexity, and anything but minimalism. A-to-D converters turn the incoming analogue signal into digits, whereupon Philips DSP chips are used to extract and synthesise the phase-encoded surround information. Still in digital form, the signal undergoes a 15ms fixed delay that simple passive systems cannot accomplish, although it's an important part of the surround sound illusion.

The passive watershed

If the advantage of passive surround decoding is that it maintains full two-channel stereo compatibility, the disadvantage is that it doesn't have the capability to bounce sounds around the back of the room. By the very nature of the passive process, the surround channels are created from main left and right channels, but the sounds that created them remain in the front channels, too.

Only by applying Pro-Logic, or some other form of active steering logic, can one actually remove sound from the front soundstage and divert it to the rear channels. Even with steering logic, front-to-rear separation is relatively modest, which is why the movie industry is moving rapidly towards discrete multi-channel systems like Dolby AC-3 (see feature, p. 35). Such soundtracks are already available on recent US NTSC LaserDisc titles, but seem unlikely to appear on European releases.

The passive approach must, therefore, be regarded as something of a halfway house to surround sound, rather than the full mounty, and those seeking more spectacular effects should look elsewhere. With speakers mounted right behind the listeners, as Naim recommends, it's certainly possible to 'drag' sounds outside of the front speakers and about halfway back down the room, but no further. Which is not necessarily such a bad thing. When auditioning Pro-Logic processors I tend to mount the surround speakers at the side rather than behind, set maybe half a metre behind the listening position and point-

ing down towards the back of the room. If find the more modest effects rather more natural than with rear-mounted surrounds, and to some extent the AVI gives a comparable result.

Where the AVI really stands out, though, is in sheer transparency, and its general applicability to virtually any sound source. The most obvious role of surround channels is to generate surround sound effects, and the AVI is certainly a little reticent on that front. The other important surround task is to make the listening room 'disappear' acoustically, and replace it with a much larger simulated acoustic. And it is here that the considerable poise and precision of the Naim kit is exceptionally effective.

Set the levels so that you're not really aware of anything going on behind, then go back to your seat armed with a long stick (labelled 'remote control handset'), and use this to switch the mute on and off. Introducing the subtle and delayed surround has no deleterious effect on the front information, but somehow opens up the scale of the listening room to more like that of a small concert hall. This adds a little extra warmth and weight as a bonus, yet avoids the sort of heaviness and smearing that lesser processors and amps are apt to introduce.

And the conclusion...

If the AVI falls a little short of the mark in generating spectacular surround effects, its wonderful lack of intrusiveness will be a major plus point for the serious stereo listener who is unwilling to compromise, yet is anxious not to miss what video sources have to offer. Most surround processors inserted in my system have been used for movies and sport, staying switched off for the rest of the time. The AVI, however, has been doing its seductively subtle thing for a couple of months now — and it stays on almost all of the time. ▲

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



Top: Naim's factory listening room. Above: the Sanyo PLC-320M data grade LCD projector (£8,107.50), modified and sold by Naim.



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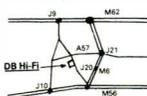
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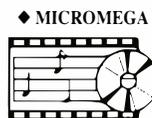
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21st Century

CDs shaped as Madonna's breasts and Westrex 300B valves back in production.

Barry Fox reveals all!

Fox

The record companies got very excited recently by the news that two German students used a fret saw on a CD. Although they cut it into a fancy shape, it still played.

Big deal. Of course the CD played. The laser in a CD player plays discs by tracking out from the centre hole, not tracking in like the stylus of a gramophone. The Table of Contents, which electronically indexes a CD, sits at the very beginning of the recording, closest to the centre. So cut-up CDs will play until the laser gets to the outer edge. Then the player will make nasty noises through the speakers, perhaps damaging the tracking arm before giving up.

Playing time will be reduced from the usual 75 minutes, depending on how much circular space is left near the centre. If the TOC takes all this into account, the disc will neatly stop playing before the laser gets confused.

The record companies now see this as a great marketing gimmick. But let them be warned on several counts: modifying the presses in a CD factory, to mass produce oddly-shaped discs, will be expensive. So the discs will cost more to make, while holding less music.

Any attempt at cutting down circular discs risks breaking the lacquer seal at the edge, which is there to stop air getting to the aluminium reflective layer. Once the air gets to the metal, it will start to corrode and the disc will 'rot'. The corroded parts cannot be played.

Philips warns that the disc must be pressed circular, then cut, which will inevitably damage the lacquer seal. This implies that 'rotting' is inevitable with time. An odd-shape disc is also likely to jam in the CD player's loading tray, upset the balance and then damage the spindle (if it spins). And when the player lid is closed, the disc will no longer be visible, or it will look like a silver circle as it spins.

People call Philips a spoilsport for tightly controlling the CD standard. However, it is due to the company's strictness that any CD bought anywhere in the world will play on any player. The computer industry could do with a similar spoilsport...

For all these reasons Philips may well block any attempt at changing the disc shape. Under current rules, the CD licence specifies a disc must be circular to a tolerance of 0.3mm. Manufacturers cannot manufacture without a licence. Philips' own pressing plant has often been asked to make non-round discs. One request was for a Santa Claus

shape. "No way, *José*," is always the answer.

Oh, and by the way, if the German students try to patent the idea of a non-circular disc, I shall play spoilsport. It's now nearly ten years since I sat in on discussions at Philips' Head Office, when the company was planning to launch the daft CD Video. This stored five minutes of analogue video, and they wanted to distinguish CDVs from music CDs. I suggested an oval or similarly odd-shaped disc... Philips pooh-pooed the idea for all the sound reasons I am now passing on. But I wrote about the idea, which (inadvertently) killed the chances of anyone else trying to patent it.

Tube Snake Boogie

And this month's tube tip: if you've been saving up for a pair of original 300B power triode valves, made by Westrex, the Western Electric company in America, wait a bit longer. Westrex stopped making valves in 1988. Other factories were already closed. The military and telephone companies had long since gone over to transistors. The audio industry needed only a very few pairs, certainly not enough to justify a full production line, so the line went over to making transistors. After all, it was Bell Labs, parent company to Westrex, that invented the transistor.

Ever since then, the audio industry has bought in valves from China and Russia, where factories still make them. There are two good reasons for this. Their telecoms industry has not kept up with technological developments: they still use old valve equipment, which needs replacement tubes. Their military equipment uses valves because they can withstand EMP, the electromagnetic pulse that comes from a nuclear explosion and knocks out transistors. Western forces use transistors, but 'hardened' them with shielded casing.

The Russian and Chinese factories do not know about 'golden ears'. They make their valves to satisfy telephone engineers and soldiers. And these valves can go 'soft'. Traces of gas contaminate the vacuum, either by getting through poor seals or escaping from the glass itself. The

valve then loses power and distorts sound signals. So Western importers check these valves before sale for hi-fi use. This puts up the price by £50-plus a time for mimic 300Bs. However, this is still peanuts compared to the £1,000 or so you can pay for an original Westrex 300B.

"Just about every manufacturer of high-end hi-fi now sells a tube amplifier," Charles Whitener of the Westrex Tube Division told me. "So one year ago we decided to start production again. The original staff are using the original tools... the first tubes are ready for sale."

The new 300Bs will sell for \$350 each. The factory will make 25,000 this year for the hi-fi market



They don't make them like they used to. Well, they do actually.

alone. Whitener assures me the new valves will be indistinguishable from the originals. Hence my suggestion that you pause before paying a grand for the latter.

Particularly intriguing is Whitener's mention of talks between Westrex and a UK company about starting up production here to supply the European market. Long ago, Western Electric owned STC (Standard Telephones and Cables) in the UK. Northern Telecom bought chunks of STC. Mullard, now owned by Philips, had valve factories in the UK. GEC Marconi was in the valve business, too.

Who will start making 300Bs is any one's guess. But one thing's for sure: the hi-fi press will try to decide which new 300Bs are best and whether any are as good as the originals. ▲

Three of the best

Is THX the ultimate solution for music and movies? **Jason Kennedy** checks out three systems at London's Kamla Electronics.



Kamla Electronics, on London's Tottenham Court Road, houses the UK's only multiple THX demonstration room. When you're ushered into Kapes Patel's moodily lit room, it's not immediately apparent that it contains 21 loudspeaker cabinets, some of them sizeable subwoofers, but you soon get an inkling when you notice that one side of the room is made up of grille-cloth-covered panels. These conceal the electronic goodies until the lights are dimmed, whereupon red and green LEDs shine through, hinting at the high-powered electronics behind. Opening each panel exposes a stack of serious AV gear and the odd subwoofer or two; closer to the screen one observes left/right speakers jostling for pole position. The six subwoofers are arranged along the bottom of this metre-deep AV 'wall', with a REL *Studio* standing by at the rear of the room.

The V side of the AV equation is unsurprisingly top of the range, and takes the form of a Runco *Cinema Pro 750* three-gun projector (£7,000) and a Da Lite *Da Snap* THX screen (£3,000). The latter is perforated so as not to muffle a centre channel speaker placed behind it; you lose a little bit of picture

Above: getting close to the PAV. Top: JBL's dual-purpose music/movies speakers are pictured on the right.

resolution but gain sonic coherence. In this set-up there are three (vertical, THX style) centre channel enclosures behind the screen — an array that would have been impossible to arrange around a conventional screen.

Probably the best toy in this room is the Lexicon *500T* system controller. This is remote control taken to the max: back-lit, and programmable on board or from a PC, it looks like a midget TV. Very nice. But very expensive (£2,000).

THX for beginners

The 'starter' system in this array costs £6,200 plus cables. Its source is Pioneer's stalwart *CLD-2950* Laser Disc player, the machine that plays both sides of a disc, and whose chassis is the basis of the two high-end LD players that front more exalted systems in this room.

THX decoding is carried out by

Harman Kardon's *AVP-1A*, an analogue processor that has found many an admirer in the AV reviewing fraternity. All six channels of power amplification are derived from a Carver *806*, which drives a JBL *HT-1* speaker system. The latter is made up of the usual THX array: main left and right, centre, mono surrounds and two subwoofers. The subwoofers are necessary to achieve the low frequency power that THX systems require.

We watched *Casper* and listened to the Eagles on this system, and it soon became clear why serious home cinema is taking off. I've been to a few hotel-room home cinema dems in my time, but none has approached this standard. Now I know why AV fans get so excited!

All three of these systems are pretty spectacular, but even the most affordable helps one to understand why THX, despite its inherent expense, is so popular in the States (where the software can be had at a reasonable cost). Sound makes a movie, and guys like Kapes always play you the dramatic bits, but all too often these sound uncomfortably loud and distorted. However, THX means that certain standards of power and power handling are met, which equals cinema levels but without the pain.

That said, when we played the definitive music-and-pictures dem disc, (the Eagles' *Hell Freeze Over*), it was a reminder that the sort of music reproduction one might expect at this price is hard to combine with a basic THX package. Nevertheless, you do get a big sound with controlled bass, not to mention a picture to focus the mind away from the details of hi-fi.

Movies and music

The second system in this literal Wall of Sound is over three times the price of the first, weighing in at a committed £19,500, plus cables and stands. Its constituents are pretty classy, as one might expect. Laser Discs come courtesy of a McIntosh *MLD-7020*; at the system's heart is Proceed's very flexible and rather stylish *PAV* processor.

The amazing £2,000 Lexicon 500T does its thing with a bowl of fruit.



THX ON TRIAL

Power amplification comes in two parts: the key left, centre, and right channels are driven by a Proceed AMP3, while the remaining subwoofer and surround channels are pushed and pulled by another McIntosh component, the 7106, in four-channel mode. The latter was initially used for the whole caboodle, but didn't have enough reserves for this system in this room (which has rather soft partition walls that soak up a lot of sound). On the end of all this, B&W's EISA-award-winning THX system (see issue 147) ably demonstrates the power of THX loudspeakers.

This is Kapes's favourite system for both audio and home cinema use, and with the aforementioned Eagles disc, it was not hard to hear why. In surround mode it sounded very slick without losing the edge that comes with a decent sense of timing: the bass had texture and space as well as weight; and the balance seemed more appropriate to the image than it had with the first system. Switch off the surrounds and centre channel for stereo, and the system starts to focus, atmosphere creeps back in and you've got the serious sound quality of a LaserDisc.

Needless to say, these qualities do plenty for cinematic capabilities as well. We checked out the start of *Batman Forever* and I got a little too engrossed in the footage to take in the limitations of the sound system—which would suggest that they must be minor.

The big one

System number three is the 'big one' in the Kamla dem room, as it features 5.1 channel AC-3 processing, courtesy of the Enlightened Audio Design (EAD) *TheaterMaster*. AC-3's advantage over the Pro-Logic base of the other two sys-



Gargantuan graphic equalisers are de rigueur for THX — in this case JBL's mighty Synthesis 2 system.

tems is that the soundtrack is digital and it has separate left and right surround channels—the 5.1 refers to five separate channels, plus a dedicated sub feed (see also page 35). It's taking off in the US, but because of political shenanigans, is unlikely to be formally available here, at least as far as software is concerned. However, for the committed home cinema enthusiast, and anyone who can afford the £33,000 asking price, an annual flit across the pond 'to pick up some new titles' is probably a trip worth making.

The rest of this top-notch system doesn't sound as serious as it is: Laser Disc replay is courtesy of EAD's *T-8000* and the JBL *Synthesis 2* system provides both amplification and loudspeakers. The latter is a fairly uncompromising affair, which consists of a processor, a massive techno-fear-inspiring graphic equaliser, a 400W stereo amp for the subs, and a five-channel amp for the rest. Some unusual music and movie speakers, with different drivers for each application, provide left and right channels, while more conventional designs do centre and surround. The subs are, of course, monsters.

Watching *Batman* again it was not

difficult to hear why the AV fraternity likes this system so much—and, for that matter, this technology. Here we had power and precision of placement with tremendous dramatic effect—on music this balance sounds odd, but with movies, you're there, dude. We started off playing this a bit louder than the other two—the fine art of demonstration at work—but even then it wasn't uncomfortable, and it was loud. Dialogue was clear as day and the image steering was pin-point accurate. I could have sat there all afternoon.

We also tried the aforementioned Eagles 'unplugged' disc, but forgot to switch from movie to music mode, so the kick drum took over and you couldn't hear the bass guitar or drums. A flick of a switch brought in the dome tweeters on the main front channels and a natural, very convincing balance ensued.

I want it now!

Having spent a couple of hours in Kapes's dem room I can see what home theatre is all about, and yes, I want one (but where am I going to put it?). All of these systems brought home the cinematic effect without having to listen to people eat popcorn or endure 'loud', nasty sound systems. I now want to watch all those action movies that our sister mag *Home Entertainment* is always enthusing about.

Top-end AV requires cash and square metres, but if you find the right system, your music will sound super as well. ▲

Kamla Electronics, 251
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Proceed PAV (bottom) and AMP3 are the brain and brawns of Kamla's £19,500 system, which also includes B&W's acclaimed THX speakers.



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MISSION M-TIME

After years spent struggling with home cinema, Paul Messenger welcomes the first easy-to-set-up AV system with open arms.

Mission has labelled its £2,499 *M-Time* an AV-gram — don't bother looking in your hi-fi glossary; it's not in there, yet. Britain's leading speaker builder has come up with a new concept in home entertainment packaging, and made a substantial investment bringing it to the market.

The result is one of the most imaginative solutions yet to the practicalities of audio/video integration: a genuine AV product that ingeniously addresses the tricky problem of trying to graft these separate worlds together.

The focal point of any AV system is bound to be the TV set, which traditionally sits out from walls, on a trolley or console that also houses the VCR and other sources, such as your satellite tuner or Laserdisc. The hi-fi hardware is likely to be against a wall and in a different part of the room entirely, so interconnecting the two is a potential nightmare.

M-Time acknowledges that the telly can't be moved over to the hi-fi system, and instead provides the heart of a complete hi-fi system (and then some) to support and fit neatly under the TV. It's not exactly small — anything less than a 28-inch set would look incongruous on top of *M-Time* — but it's very stylish and still leaves room for two full-width audio and/or video components to hide behind smoked glass doors underneath. Audiophiles might mutter about over-hyped TV stands, but *M-Time* could be a godsend to anyone looking to fit classy-looking, classy-sounding AV into an already techno-cluttered home.

If the price seems a tad hefty by mass-market hi-fi standards, it's much more reasonable when the elaborate spec is taken into account, and looks positively cheap against 'lifestyle'-type competition from companies such as B&O and Bose. It's a solid affair in two separate sections (both for shipping purposes and to provide some mutual vibration damping). The larger 16kg lower section



houses a twin subwoofer system that flanks the component rack.

The real business section is the much slimmer but even heavier (21kg) top; essentially a Dolby Pro-Logic AM/FM receiver, much of which is taken up with a giant, fan-cooled, multi-channel amplifier. Over 500W of RMS power is claimed, spread across nine channels. There's 3x100W for the front soundstage; 2x40W for the surrounds; and a total of 120W for the stereo subwoofer. An additional 2x40W is available to drive a pair of speakers in a separate room. There's also a TV feed and this second zone is controlled via its own wireless remote handset.

Half of the moulded front panel is taken up by a three-driver dialogue speaker. Contoured control panels either side give direct access to most of the functions, a comprehensive back-lit LCD display, and a neat volume control. My only complaint is that there's some difficulty in identifying the selected input from a distance; the rear panel is a forest of 3mm speaker and phono sockets. *M-Time* accommodates and switches five external sources (three with video), and there

are line outputs too, including one for an external

Mission's M-Time: those who've struggled with AV integration will appreciate its elegance.

subwoofer. There are no Scart or S-sockets.

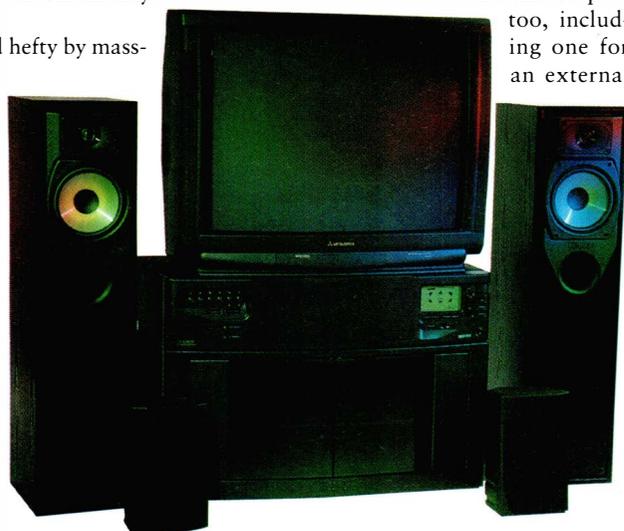
The main handset is a neat but elaborate multi-source affair that can be programmed to operate any TV, VCR or satellite receiver in addition to *M-Time*. Cleverer still — and unique to Mission — is an automatic channel balancing system, complete with microphone, that lets you reset the balance for a different seating position at the touch of a button or two.

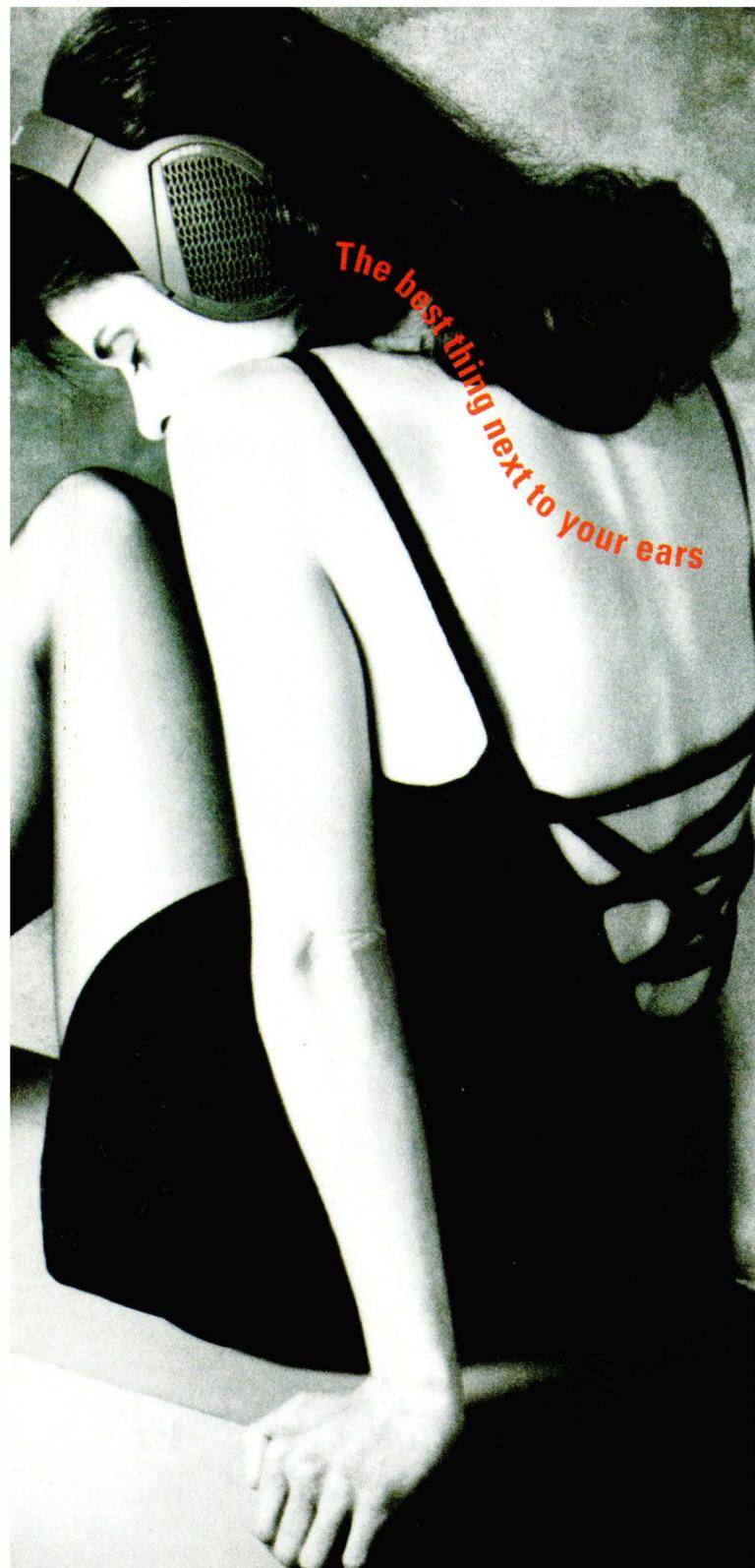
Even without automatic assistance, set-up proved unusually straightforward. Operation proved simple too, thanks mainly to the informative display; a single button cycling through five stereo and four Pro-Logic modes (note that there's no 'phantom' option).

The subwoofer is even and tight, giving decent output from around 30Hz (in-room) up to an upper roll-off variable from 60Hz to 120Hz depending upon the type/size of speakers for the main left/right channels; small 7-14 litre models work fine, and larger models can also be used. Moreover, it's easy to adjust the sub's level remotely: up for movies, down for music.

Slight fan noise is audible at very low, late-at-night levels, or if the unit is left on with nothing playing. The dialogue speaker is open and bright but could be smoother, and there's some midband thickening due to its position quite close to the floor. Hooked up to suitable satellites, the whole thing comes together with richness and fine midband focus and delicacy, enveloping the listeners with a relaxed easiness and bags of headroom.

M-Time is not a product aimed at the audiophile or videophile. It's an elegant chameleon that tackles the practical problems of AV integration in a highly creative way, while also delivering solid hi-fi standards of performance. As such it deserves due recognition well beyond the specialist hi-fi marketplace. ▲





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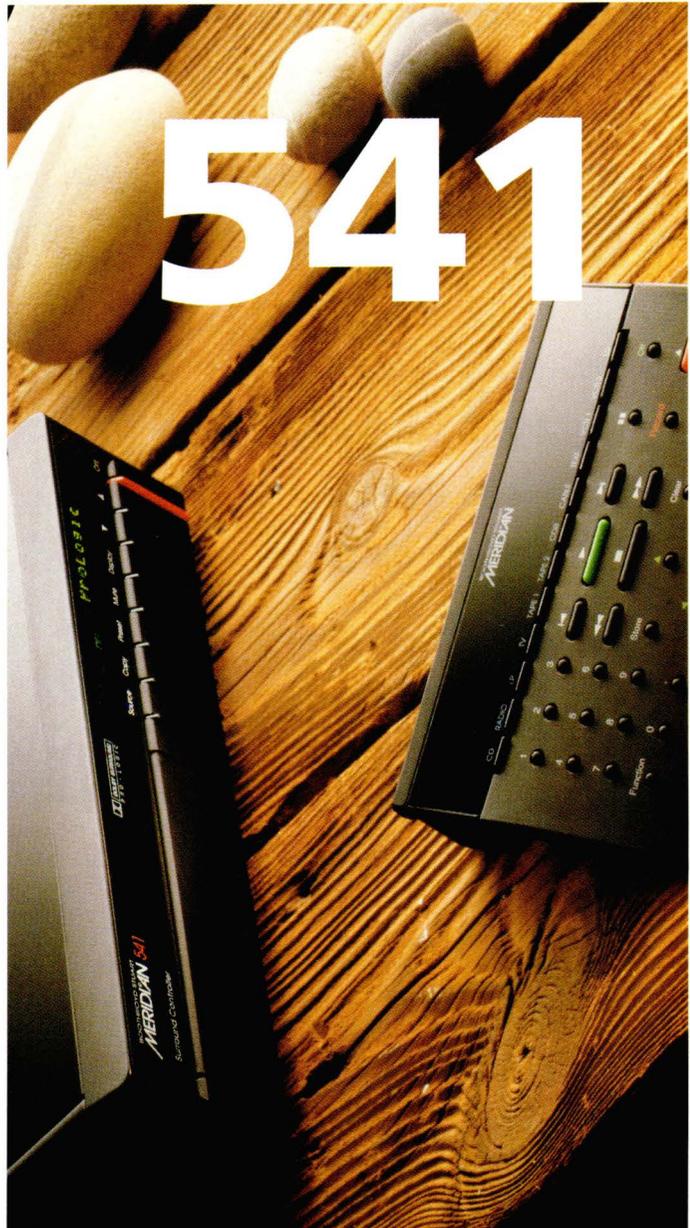
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Home Cinema **shocker**

Tim Frost talks to Ivor Tiefenbrun and uncovers Linn's plans for an audio-visual future.

Linn is moving solidly into the AV market. The company's first shot in anger was the announcement that it will be distributing Loewe TVs in the UK, with Linn's sales force being responsible for both TVs and matching Loewe hi-fi systems. (The latter are made by Linn, under an OEM deal).

Within the next few months Ivor Tiefenbrun's company will be launching four speakers, an AV amp and a set of new power amps, which will form a complete AV product range, the AV51. This is the first time Linn has produced a full system to address a specific market outside of specialist hi-fi.

These speakers will be all full-range systems, and can be single, bi-wired, tri-wired, or actively driven. The 5140 is mainly for left/right duties, while the 5120 can be used just in the centre (for dialogue) or for the whole system if multiplied by five. The smallest 5110 is intended to reproduce surround signals, while the lowest frequencies will be handled by a new dual, 18-inch driver Isobarik sub-bass system, housed in a box which has aspirations to being mistaken for a posh coffee table.

The electronics are managed by a forthcoming Dolby AC-3 preamp, which extracts

5.1 discrete channels of audio from American NTSC Laserdiscs. There will also be a set of power amps that offer the user a basic package. Like all AC-3 preamps, Linn offers full support for Dolby Pro-Logic.

The audio market is obviously moving into the AV world, and MD Ivor Tiefenbrun looks upon AV as becoming an important part of the company's business in the future.

"We see AV as being a major element in our business; possibly as much as hi-fi," he reckons — especially in the US. "The bottom line is that home cinema in America is third on people's list of priorities: it's a house, a car, and then a home cinema. It's a big opportunity for Linn. It excites us immensely and introduces lots of people to high quality sound. It supplements and augments hi-fi and doesn't compete with it."

Having made the decision to move into AV, how has Linn tackled the thorny issue of data-reduction in AC-3 (or, indeed, its European equivalent, MPEG)? For a man who had to think long and hard before releasing a CD player, Ivor takes a more relaxed approach to AC-3 in pure quality terms.

"Some people might argue that because it's compressed, the actual total amount of data per channel is not as much as a dedicated CD. But you have more channels, so in total you have more data and more information than you have with a CD. So you have something that supplements the video experience. Our experience is that it's good enough to be intensely involving, and as the sound quality is a good percentage of the movie experience, it's really very worthwhile to have a good sound system, so we're very enthusiastic about this."

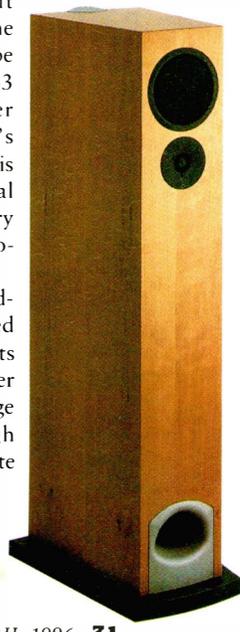
Ivor sets a lot of store by AC-3, primarily because of its discrete channel approach. Without this it would seem unlikely that Linn would have broached the AV market.

"Obviously it is a completely new field and a big step. The reason we are interested in it at this moment in time is that this new, full-range, discrete AV standard makes it very exciting. There is a real possibility of doing a good job on cinema sound and making the movie experience real."

Furthermore, it has also allowed them, he says, to produce speaker systems that will work equally well for film and music. "By having a very clean, accurate loudspeaker system, there is no tonal compromise between film sound and music. So you can listen to the AV system and you can play music on it. That wasn't possible in the past [before AC-3] and that's what excites us about it."

The system is not going to be THX approved. This doesn't seem to be because Linn has deep-felt disagreements with the THX approach, but rather because they simply don't feel it's necessary. Ivor argues that THX is just "a subset of Dolby Pro-Logic; a modification of Dolby", and that rather than THX being a philosophy about what happens after the decoding (whether it be Dolby Pro-Logic, AC-3 or any other carrier format) Lucasfilm's certification system is merely "a commercial approach. It works very well with Dolby Pro-Logic."

The finished products will be unwrapped in March, but pundits will inevitably wonder whether Linn's AV range can develop enough of an identity to compete in a market where AC-3 capability has already become a mere starting point. ▲



Right: The Keltik 'king'. Far right: The 5140 can be wired any way you like.



The full Monty

There's more to surround sound than filling the room with speakers. Quality, as ever, is a crucial factor, as **Alvin Gold** explains.



Above: the definitive centre channel for all you Jamo enthusiasts; the Centre 200. Below left: Canon's distinctive corner-mount V-100.

Were at present in the middle of a transitional phase in the development of home cinema. The first phase was introductory, and thanks to the efforts of the consumer press, dealers and manufacturers — and in particular the TV makers who have promoted Pro-Logic TVs so vigorously — there is a degree of public understanding of the basics of home cinema. The next phase will be the integration between home cinema and high fidelity to the point where they are synonymous. Music will be designed to play through two or five loudspeakers, or however many there happen to be, without any question of sacrificing sound quality for the number of channels. Well, maybe it won't happen exactly like this, but it is nice to dream...

Dolby Pro-Logic systems can be configured in several ways. Ignoring the various packaged system options aimed mainly at the low end (low

in price, and/or low in expectations), there is the option of starting with a respectable stereo hi-fi system, and add to that the electronics and speakers which will turn it into a full five-speaker Pro-Logic system without detriment to its stereo performance. Here, we look at some of the speaker options for those who want to take the quality route to home cinema.

Centre Speakers

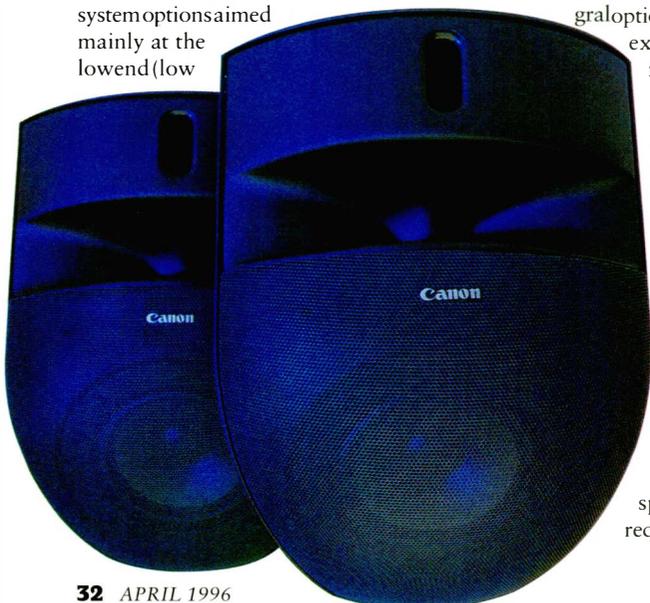
The questions concerning the central dialogue speaker are many: which ones should I short-list, using what criteria, and how much should I pay? However, the simplest, cheapest and arguably the most elegant solution is to manage without the centre speaker altogether. This is not quite the cop-out it sounds — under Dolby Surround it is actually the only way to make your system work properly. With Dolby Pro-Logic the central speaker position is an integral option, and will supply movie dialogue exclusively, thanks to an innate feature of the system.

We all know that central images will still be formed, without a centre speaker, but it is less widely appreciated that the nature of the central image will be different in the two cases, even for those occupying the central hot seat. A centre speaker provides a better focused, more solid and more stable-sounding central image for all listeners, and with a suitable decoder it is arguably superior to the use of two speakers, even for stereo material.

Given the need for a centre speaker of some kind, what are the requirements? Obviously, they need

to be magnetically shielded if they are to be used close to a TV picture tube. This alone ensures that most conventional hi-fi speakers are unsuitable as AV centre speakers. In an ideal world, the centre speaker would be identical to those on the left and right, and in a THX system, that is precisely what you get. But this is the council of perfection. The realities of life are that standard hi-fi shaped speakers would usually be ruled out on aesthetic grounds, even if the physical problems of accommodating a large, up-ended brick on top of a TV were to prove acceptable. It's worth noting that in the United States, in a development that is bound to make its way over here in due course, THX centre speaker design has also introduced its first wide and short centre speaker models.

Making the three front speakers physically identical is not, however, the most subtle way of ensuring that they are aurally consistent. One useful approach is to choose a speaker from the same maker and range (if possible) like your existing hi-fi speakers. KEF Q series owners would naturally gravitate towards the Kef Model 90 or 100 (£259 and £359 respectively); for Jamo speaker owners, the Jamo Centre 200 (£200) is a good safe bet and the Mission 75C (£250) is an obvious choice for owners of the Mission 752 or 753, while the Canon S-C10 and S-C20 (£130 and £200) are good matches for other Canon speakers. In the Canon case, the technologies involved for the main and centre speakers are rather different, but the same designers and design tools were involved, which gives them a good measure of consistency.



The optimum solution for centre channels is to use speaker systems which are as close as possible to being time aligned, so that all frequencies appear to come from a single point, or a very small region in space. Three technologies are available for achieving just this: Uni-Q from KEF, Dual Concentric from Tannoy and ICT from GLL, all three being represented by some excellent products. The KEF *Model 100* (£359) is the longest established and most celebrated of them all, and arguably the only classic loudspeaker that the home cinema industry has generated. But Tannoy has followed close suit with the 622 (Dual Concentric) and the 621 (a budget ICT unit) at £180 and £100 respectively. All three are distinguished by their ability to deliver an unusually smooth and consistent off-axis sound.

The only relaxation in the demands made of centre speakers is that they are not normally required to plumb the deep bass. In the normal setting of a Dolby Pro-Logic decoder, bass frequencies below about 85Hz are stripped from the centre feed, split and fed to the two main speakers—or a subwoofer. Even so, for a speaker to extend seamlessly down to such frequencies demands an enclosure with more internal volume than is sometimes appreciated.

The KEF *Model 200* gives a good indication of what is required. This speaker is of normal height and depth, but at 760mm wide, almost the full width of a standard TV, which allows it to work without restriction down to 85Hz. Of course it is possible to disguise the bulk, for example by making a speaker that is relatively narrow and deep. The B&W *CC6* (£200) is an excellent example: it looks conventionally proportioned from the front but turns out to be unusually deep at 275cm.

Finally, there are also examples of speakers which are simply large all round, of which another B&W, the *Matrix HTM* (£500) is one of the best around. This speaker is notable for the use of a tweeter housed in a low diffraction housing immediately above the bass driver, outside the main housing, which allows a measure of time alignment in the lateral plane.

Surround Speakers

The surround speaker channel is fed a mono time-delayed signal which is band-limited to 7kHz and below, ensuring that sounds located at the front of the soundstage will



Boston's THX system, with the distinctive vertical centre channel of the breed.

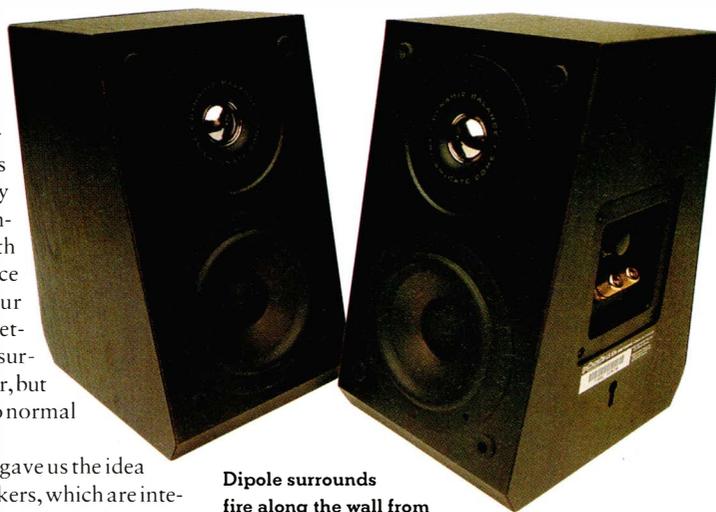
be heard from that direction, and not from the nearest speaker. It is even possible to see the Dolby surround chain as a means of reducing the quality demands on the rear channel speaker. However, with a decade or so of experience with Dolby Surround at our disposal, we now know better. The performance of surround speakers does matter, but in subtly different ways to normal hi-fi speakers.

It was Lucasfilm who gave us the idea of dipolar surround speakers, which are integral to the THX system, and which also work well in plain Dolby systems. In fact, even before THX began to make its mark, the importance of a wide and even spread of sound was becoming obvious. The low and high frequency requirements of a Dolby rear channel speaker remain much less critical than for the main front speakers, but are more critical than is commonly supposed. A rear channel signal ideally requires a speaker whose internal volume is closer to that of, say, a KEF *Coda 7* (£129) than the tiny pod speakers commonly touted as suitable. In addition, modern Dolby systems are becoming subtly less band limited than they used to be, and generally livelier and more convincing as a result.

Strictly speaking, there is no absolute requirement to use dedicated surround speakers, which is just as well given the dearth of truly satisfactory surround speakers. Instead, the only real disadvantage of compact hi-fi speakers is that they don't usually come with wall-mounting hardware, and they tend to stick out visually, although shelves or wall brackets can provide an acceptable solution.

If cost is no object, dipolar rear speakers like the Polk *LSfx* (£449) or the Boston Acoustics *VRS* (£430) represent the current state of the art, unless you count true THX-approved designs like the Boston Acoustics *575X* (£450), KEF *AV2* (£539 each) or the B&W *SCM8* (£595 each). Leaving THX to one side, KEF makes an excellent dedicated surround speaker; the *70S* (£299), which uses Uni-Q drive units and has a shallow enclosure construction which makes it less intrusive than most.

The most popular dedicated surround speakers of all is probably the Canon *V-100* (£210), which uses an acoustic mirror rather than an exotic drive unit configuration to give a wide, even spread of sound. It also has the kind of wall-hugging curves that make it acceptable where boxier speakers would look out of place. The unusually wide sound dispersion gives the surround channel a spacious, disembodied effect which is extremely effective on audition, and is a true measure of the benefit of a dedicated speaker for the surround channel. ▲



Dipole surrounds fire along the wall from both sides of the enclosure. Below: KEF's 200



OUR PICK OF THE BEST LOUDSPEAKERS

Centre Channel speakers:

B&W CC6	£200
B&W Matrix HTM	£500
Canon S-C10	£130
Canon S-C20	£200
Jamo Centre 200	£200
KEF 90	£259
KEF 100	£359
KEF 200	£699
Mission 75C	£250
Tannoy 621	£100
Tannoy 622	£180

Surround speakers:

B&W SCM8	£595 (each)
Boston Acoustics VRS	£430
Boston Acoustics 575X	£450
Canon V-100	£210
KEF Coda 7	£129
KEF 70S	£299
KEF AV2	£539 (each)
Polk LS fx	£449

Contact Phone Numbers:

B&W	(01903) 750750
Boston Acoustics	(01494) 890277
Canon	(01256) 841300
Jamo	(01327) 301300
KEF	(01622) 672261
Mission	(01480) 451777
Polk	(01727) 827311
Tannoy	(01236) 420199

This list of Best Buy components is based on reviews in Hi-Fi Choice's sister magazine, Home Entertainment — the ultimate choice for home cinema enthusiasts!

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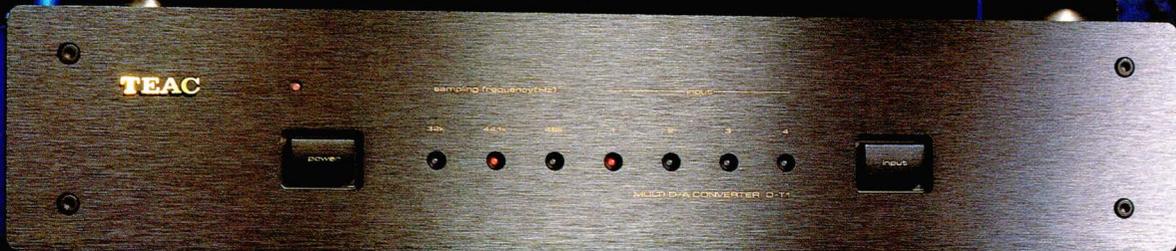
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The future sound of surround

Tim Frost explains all about AC-3, and other arcane AV matters.

There is still a lot of confusion over home cinema sound formats. Dolby, the progenitors of cinema sound systems, came up with the basic idea of Dolby Surround a couple of decades ago. The original cinema surround system used two channels and a 'quadraphonic' decoder to produce three front signals for speakers behind the screen, and a single mono surround channel for speakers spread around the auditorium. In the movies, the front three speakers are used to carry music and front effects that are spread evenly across the screen.

Dolby's original domestic Dolby Surround system simply added out-of-phase Dolby B-coded information to carry a mono effects channel for surrounding atmospheres and effects. The front soundfield remained purely two channel, with no centre speaker and noway of stopping the surround information leaking into the front speakers. However, from this came Dolby Pro-Logic, a steering system that developed from the 'Logic' systems that were designed for QS and SQ quadraphonic systems in the '70s. Pro-Logic can identify the signals that were destined for the centre, left and right and mono surround, introducing a significant amount of separation between the channels.

Pro-Logic has its limitations, however. No logic system can produce pin-point positioning accuracy, and when the wrong combination of phase and level occurs in the soundtrack — which can easily happen with electronic music — then the system can be con-

A new generation of AV receivers, such as the harman/kardon below, are 'AC-3 ready'.



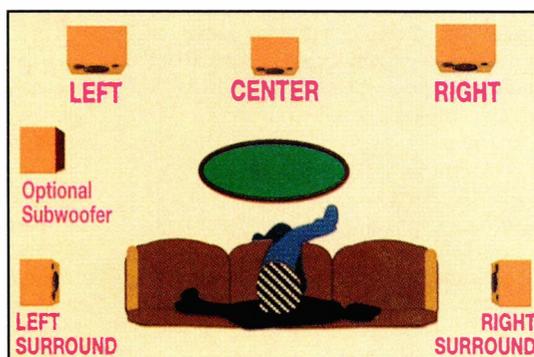
fused, throwing sounds all over the place. To reduce overspill problems, Dolby limited the bandwidth of the surround channels by removing the extreme bottom and top ends of the signal and adding a very crude delay line — none of which ranks very highly in audiophile terms.

These problems exist on the big-screen system too, so the development of data-reduced digital audio systems were a welcome opportunity to convert cinema sound into a discrete digital multi-channel affair, dispensing with the logic decoding and leaving the channels entirely separate. Dolby Digital is only one of several discrete digital cinema-sound systems: if you are a cinema-goer you will have come across DTS and Sony's SDDS, which are directly competing systems. The layout for Dolby Digital is 5.1 channels: left, centre and right at the front and two independent channels for the surrounds, to give stereo effects. The 0.1 channel is purely for the big bangs — the 20Hz to 120Hz region.

What is AC-3?

Dolby AC-3 is the domestic realisation of this digital system, and can deliver the same 5.1 discrete digital channels in the home, provided you have the right hardware, and software carrying the AC-3 signal. The system is very close to the perceptual encoding used by MiniDisc and DCC. It has the equivalent of a 20-bit dynamic range and a frequency range in excess of that offered by CD (>20kHz). It reduces the five audio channels down to a single data stream running at less than 400kbits per second, and therefore can fit easily onto a domestic digital carrier such as LaserDisc, Digital Video Disc (DVD), satellite, cable or digital videotape. In addition there are all sorts of fancy dynamic range management facilities, where the decoder can limit and adjust the dynamic range of the soundtrack, depending on the playback conditions.

AC-3 hardware is based on a modified LaserDisc player that can derive a digital bit-stream from the audio track to feed a separate



The AC-3 speaker layout: note that rear speakers deliver independent 'stereo' signals.

decoder. And this is the major stumbling block for AC-3. Despite the excitement and considerable hype surrounding the system, AC-3 is only available on NTSC LaserDiscs — around three dozen titles are out so far — as there's no space spare for the AC-3 bitstream on a PAL LaserDisc. So the amount of software you can play on your new multi-thousand pound AC-3 system is always going to be limited to a range of US blockbusters and effects movies — titles designed to attract buyers in the more mature US home cinema market.

This situation will change with the development of DVD, the new high density Video CD format, but there are problems there too. Apart from the fact that DVD discs will also be limited in number for a few years to come, there is no guarantee that the DVD discs available through the normal channels in Europe will have an AC-3 soundtrack on them.

The likelihood is that American and Japanese NTSC-based DVDs will use AC-3, while European PAL-based DVD discs (and digital TV transmissions) will use a multi-channel version of MPEG, the system deployed for digital radio and digital TV. As an enthusiast's toy, AC-3 is a reality — it works, you can buy the gear, and the impressiveness of the effect can overcome the most mean-minded distaste for the less-than-purist 'MiniDisc' approach of perceptual encoding. As a long-term investment for a mainstream European video user, however, there must be doubts. ▲

The

BIG

picture

Paul Messenger explains how to buy a TV set worthy of your hi-fi's sound!

Choosing the sound components for an AV system is the easy bit. Figuring out what to watch the pictures on is a whole lot harder. Chances are it will be some sort of TV set, but these come in a whole variety of shapes, sizes, brands and prices, and there are alternatives that the audiophile should consider. It's a bit like buying loudspeakers — there's no easy answer.

Putting any sort of TV set between a high-class pair of stereo speakers is fundamentally a Bad Thing from a sound quality perspective. The trouble is, all the alternatives are a pain in the proverbial, too. So if you want moving pictures alongside your music you'll have to make a choice. In this case it's helpful to start off with some knowledge of what's going on.

It's also worth taking stock of your viewing habits. Those who are exclusively into movies will have a different list of priorities from those who watch regular TV with movies on the side. The number of people watching, and the layout of the room, are equally important factors.

Size — does it matter?

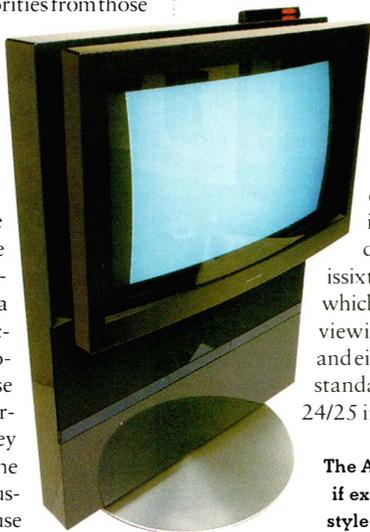
'The bigger the screen the better' has become one of the cornerstones of the home cinema movement. It's also a myth. Big screens aren't necessarily better — unless chosen wisely they can be worse than smaller screens in several respects, and invariably they cost more. 'But that's what the cinema uses,' comes back the justification. Of course cinema uses

big screens. This is primarily because they're serving an audience of hundreds, but it also helps that film stock has at least ten times the resolution of domestic video.

As far as perceived image magnification is concerned, the size of the screen is no more important than the distance from which you view it. The lap-top computer, on which this article was written, has a ten-inch screen, and sits 22 inches in front of me. The TV has a 29-inch screen, and sits about 80 inches away. Both screens occupy almost exactly the same field of view, so theoretically I could watch telly on the computer and process words on the TV.

In the real world of domestic TV, however, image magnification is best defined as the ratio between image height and viewing distance. Traditionally this is six times the screen height (6xH), which very conveniently gives viewing distances of six, seven and eight feet respectively for the standard screen sizes: 21 inches, 24/25 inches and 28/29 inches.

The Avant is one of the excellent if expensive analogue sets from style conscious Bang & Olufsen.



However, there is a persuasive argument for looking towards larger screen sizes. TV picture quality (from origination to display) has come a long way over the past thirty years. It's now perfectly feasible to watch at 4xH without becoming distracted by the limitations of the medium, and the extra magnification makes the whole experience that much more involving. (Going to blackout conditions is even more effective.)

The equivalent viewing distances for 21 inch, 24/25 inch and 28/29 inch screen sizes then become 4ft, 4ft, 8in; and 5ft, 4in respectively; while the equivalent screen sizes for 6ft, 7ft and 8ft viewing distances become large and expensive: 33in, 37in and 41in models.

Widescreen complications

The situation is made a lot more complicated (especially for movie fans) by the whole issue of Widescreen TVs, whose multifarious ramifications would take at least another page to explain properly. The abridged version is that the widescreen 16x9 shape is the right way to go forward, because it maintains image height (and hence magnification) whether the picture is 4x3 or 16x9 in shape.

The difficulties come down to the fact that most TV and video pictures, for now and the immediate foreseeable future, are 4x3 in shape, and a 4x3 picture looks rather small if displayed undistorted and un-cropped on current 16x9 sets. (There's also a problem with 'Movie Expand' — see box). In fact, a 28-inch 16x9 set will show a 4x3 image at the same size as a 21-inch 4x3, a 32-inch 16x9 corresponds to a 25-inch 4x3, and nobody is even bothering to try and sell 36-inch 16x9s in Britain right now (more's the pity).

The largest 16x9 images currently available here on conventional direct view sets (ie those that do not involve a projection system) are found on the biggest 4x3 screens (currently 37 inches). Since Ferguson's £1,800 T94N is less expensive than most 32 inch 16x9s, it's hardly surprising that widescreen sets have been relatively slow sellers.

THE WIDESCREEN RESOLUTION CONUNDRUM



On the left is a 16:9 widescreen image; the dotted bars represent a conventional 4:3 image. However, if you hit the zoom button (movie expand) on a widescreen set when watching a letterbox movie (to make the picture fill the screen — shown here), the line structure will be revealed. Although the magnified image fills the screen, the picture still only includes 432 active lines instead of 576 lines, which makes the picture more grainy.

BIG SCREEN TV

Direct view practicality

Conventional TVs are known as 'direct view' because the image is actually formed on the inside of the glass faceplate, and therefore it is viewed directly. A number of crucial advantages explain the overwhelming success of this approach: low price; complete consistency viewed from any angle; high resolution (potentially well beyond that of current TV standards); good brightness; and a wide dark-to-light range under normal domestic lighting.

The debit list includes: limited maximum size; considerable bulk, weight and increasing cost at the large end of things; and significant geometric distortion due to the curved faceplate (needed to maintain an internal vacuum) which gets progressively worse with increasing screen size. And of course there's the unwelcome sonic consequence of that large plastic-and-glass box between the speakers.

However, for those prepared to accept this compromise, there is really no escaping the convenience, cost-effective practicality of the large direct-view set. For my money, the 28/29-inch size, 4x3 shape is the best all-round package.

I haven't tried all the options, but I've encountered some excellent examples among the more upmarket sets on offer. I've also encountered a number of expensive and pretentious sets with horrid picture quality due to the mis-application of digital picture processing technology, which tends to smear dynamic detail and 'bland out' textures. This is particularly true of some new upmarket widescreen models.

The goodies include any set from Bang & Olufsen (B&O). All have delightful (analogue) picture quality, but carry significant price premiums and are a pain to interconnect with non-B&O gear.

The Philips 29828C (£999) has a superb picture quality with outstanding contrast range and 100Hz flicker-free scan. It comes complete with a Pro-Logic sound package that might be a useful starter, and has sensible socketry for connection to a separate AV system.

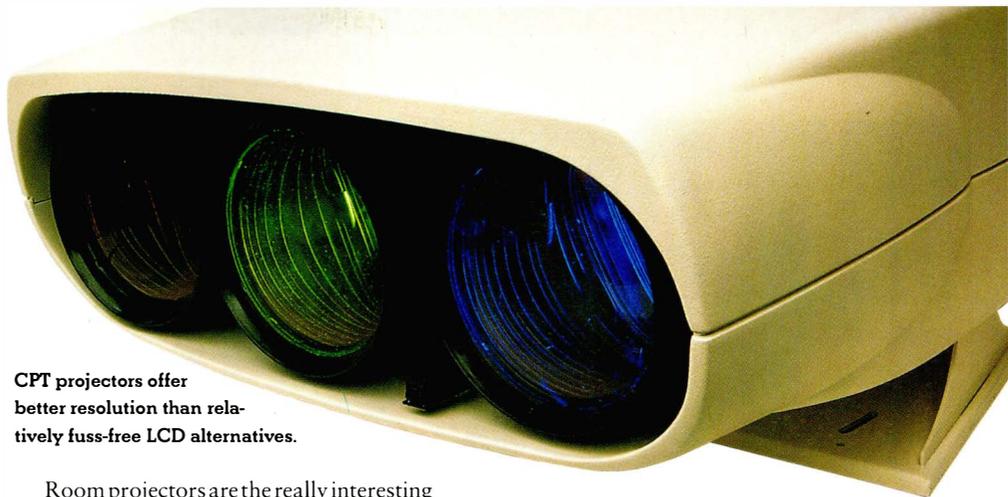
My other favourite is JVC's £899 AV-29SX1, which also has a fancy '3D-Phonic' sound package that offers a form of Dolby Surround from just two in-set speakers. More importantly, though, it has a superior picture quality with unusually good transparency.

Projectors for purists

A projection TV would seem to be the ideal answer to a number of direct-view limitations. Size is no longer an obstacle, and the big flat screens have excellent geometry. However, there are numerous practical difficulties, too.

Bulky rear-projectors are even worse than large direct-view sets for interfering with a good pair of speakers, and are not recommended for audiophiles. Although there's plenty of it, brightness varies quite unpredictably with viewing position, and the large image is somewhat negated by the need to sit well back for even screen brightness and good focus.

JVC AV-29SX1EK offers 'surround sound' from only two speakers courtesy of 3D-Phonic.



CPT projectors offer better resolution than relatively fuss-free LCD alternatives.

Room projectors are the really interesting option for the hi-fi nut, as they're totally unintrusive acoustically. The big hassle is that they have to be used under blackout conditions to give a full contrast range. What's more they don't have a built-in TV tuner and thus require signal feed from a VCR.

Current room projectors fall into two camps: CPT (colour picture tube) and LCD (liquid crystal display). The former offers better resolution, grey scale and colour balance at lower prices, but lacks brightness, has fixed magnification and suffers colour registration hassles. The latter is brighter, offers foolproof set-up and useful zoom capability, but it is more expensive and gives static resolution no better than that of a CPT. Also, LCD can suffer from dynamic smear, pixellation (being able to see individual picture elements), limited black level and a lack of colour richness.

For the permanent domestic installation, I'd go for a ceiling-mounted CPT from one of the Italian specialists (RCF, Seleo, Vidikron), checking out the least expensive. Do ensure that installation is carried out to the highest standards, that the projector in question handles your intended programming, and don't go for too big a screen — four to five feet will be ample for most British lounges. Go for greater than 4xH magnification and you'll start to notice too many inherent picture defects. ▲



OUR PICK OF THE BEST

BIG TV SETS

Standard Shape (4x3)

21 inch screen

Philips 215321BL £380

24/25 inch screen

Panasonic TX25X1 £530

Philips 25822 £800

Toshiba 2535DB £700

Sony KV-2572 £630

28/29 inch screen

Bang & Olufsen Beovision ME6000 £950

Hitachi C2976TN £999

JVC AV-29SX1EK £899

Philips 29828C £999

37-inch screen

Ferguson T94N £1,800

Widescreen

28-inch screen

B&O Avant £3,300 (includes VCR)

Philips 28W662A £999

Rear Projection Sets

40-inch screen

Pioneer SD-M1407 £3,600

41-inch screen

Sony KP-S4112U £2,800

50-inch screen

Pioneer SD-T5000 £4,000

Room projectors

RCF LS4001/WS £4,994

Seleco SVT-150Q £3,447

Vidikron VPF40E £5,264

Contact Phone Numbers

Bang & Olufsen (01734) 692288

Ferguson (0181) 344 4444

Hitachi (0181) 849 2000

JVC (0181) 450 3282

Panasonic (0990) 357357

Philips (0181) 689 4444

Pioneer (01753) 789789

RCF (0181) 348 1496

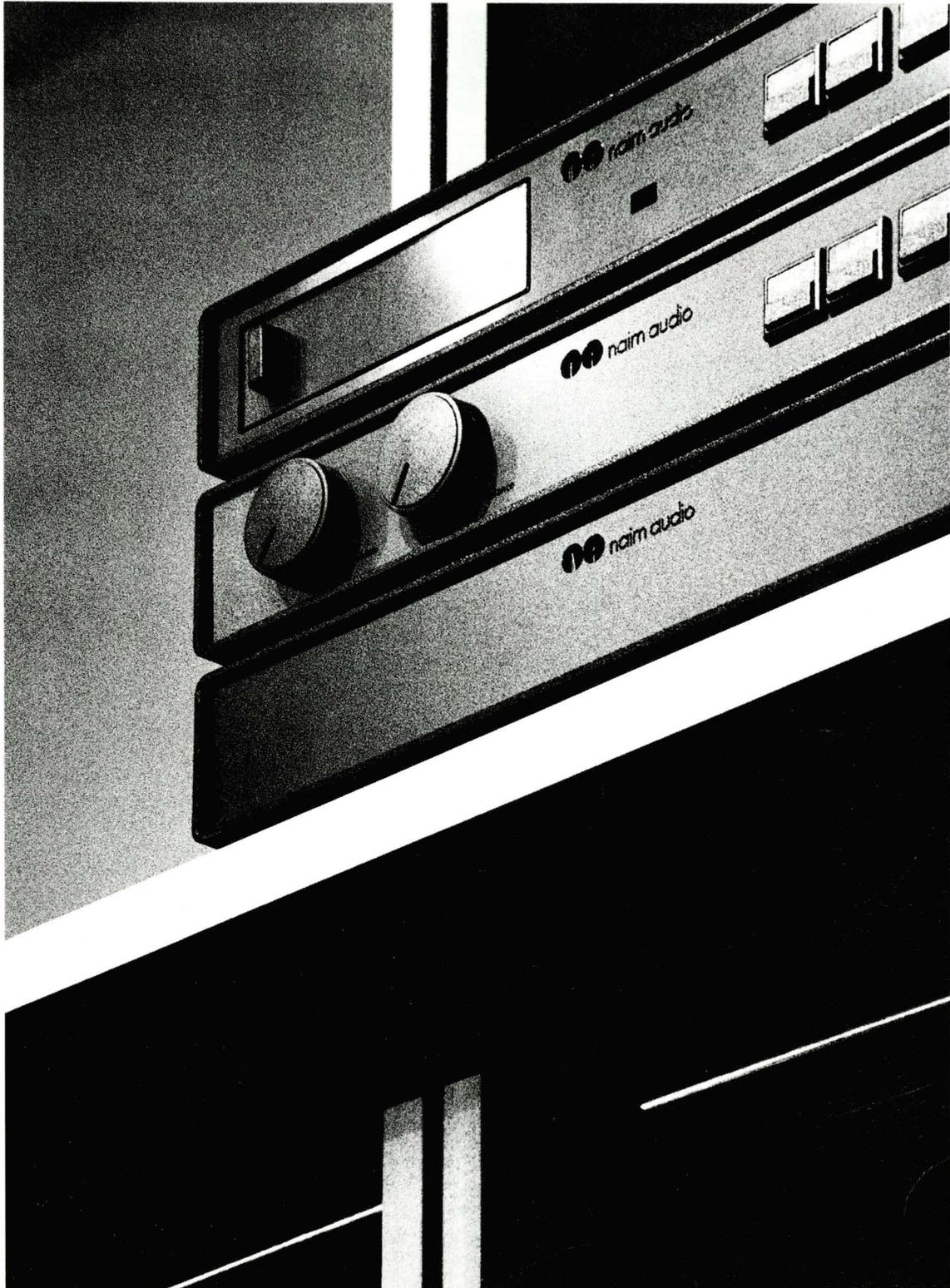
Seleco (01825) 766123

Sony (01932) 816000

Toshiba (01276) 62222

Vidikron (0161) 406 8066

This list of Best Buy components is based on reviews in Hi-Fi Choices sister magazine, Home Entertainment — the ultimate choice for home cinema enthusiasts!



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Help!

YOUR HI-FI GIVES YOU PERSPIRATION? YOU'RE IN NEED OF INSPIRATION? — MALCOLM STEWARD HAS THE MEDICATION



Valves and Class A without the heat from Copland.

A touch of Class A?

My system consists of a Micromega CD player and ProAc Response 1S loudspeakers. I am looking for a suitable Class A amplifier with a warm and transparent sound.

I've considered the Musical Fidelity A-1000 and the Electrocompaniet EC-1. Which other models would you suggest I audition?
MM, Poland

Earlier this year I was highly impressed by the British-built Chimera X-100, which has a

Class A sonic character without the paint-melting side-effects of Class A operation. Its sound is highly transparent, detailed, naturally voiced and showed a convincing ability to portray dynamics. I suspect that you would also enjoy the less powerful but equally appealing presentation of the Copland CSA14 valve/transistor hybrid. Alternatively you could go for a full complement of valves with an Audio Innovations Series 700.

Get out of the beam

To avoid certain room/speaker effects, I'm contemplating reorganising my listening room and possibly replacing my speakers into the bargain. I've found that many stand-mounted mini monitors seem to compress the soundstage along the vertical axis, making it perversely obvious that the high notes are emanating from the tweeter, which is usually in the top half of the cabinet. I want to avoid this and wonder if using a tall floor-stander with many drivers, such as Mission's 753 or Wharfedale's Valdus 500, provides a common-sense answer.

Gareth Moor,
Buckinghamshire

A simple trick might be to avoid listening perfectly on-axis as this highlights the beaming

Query of the month

Antiques Roadshow

I bought my hi-fi about twenty years ago — a Thorens TD12SII, SME arm, Shure V15 cartridge, an Armstrong 625 receiver and KEF 104 speakers — and it seems to have deteriorated. The bass is boomy and the treble weak. Would you agree that the amplifier is at fault? Would the rest of the system pass muster if I replaced the Armstrong with a new receiver or a separate tuner and amplifier? I am prepared to spend around £300, perhaps a little more if necessary.

MJ Richards, Shropshire

Before making any major purchases I'd have your system professionally overhauled. Have a specialist dealer service your turntable and fit a new cartridge. Then fire up the system in his demonstration room where you can compare it to more youthful components. It should sound at least respectable with a new cartridge, the speakers placed on suitable stands and everything connected with decent cables. Truly significant improvements will cost a bit more than £300 so unless you're keen to spend big bucks I'd concentrate on making the most of what you have.

effects of some speakers. Try adjusting your sitting position or speaker placement so that the tweeters are slightly above or below ear level.

You might be happier with speakers from the KEF and Tannoy ranges, which use concentric drive units to avoid having clearly localised sound sources. Avoid multi-driver floorstanders unless you can sit several metres away from them: if you listen in the near field you will hear the output of the individual drivers distinctly. The Wharfedale Valdus range, incidentally, is aimed at head-banging youth. If your movements normally amount to just cocking an ear or tapping a foot, look elsewhere.

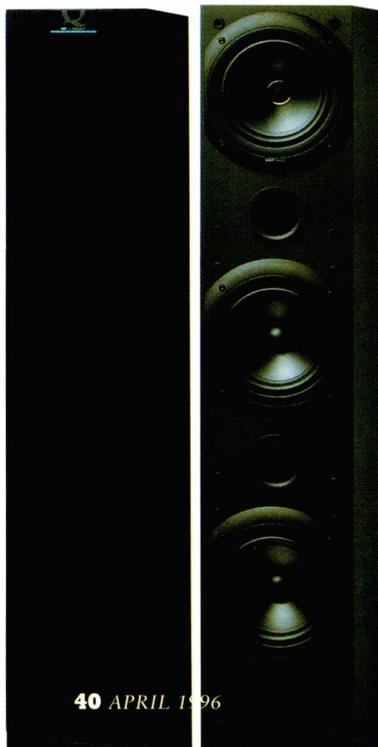
Where's the bass

My recently finished system is based around a Michell Syncro turntable with Rega RB300 tonearm and Goldring 1022 cartridge. The CD player is a Technics SL-P670; the ampli-

fier is an Arcam Alpha 6; and the speakers are TDL RTL2s. I'm using Chord Company Cobra interconnects and QED Qudos bi-wired speaker cables.

The system sounds brassy and harsh and I'm not getting much bass from the TDLs. Without SP2 pressed in on the amplifier I only hear treble. Should it be bass? Have I wired the speakers wrongly?
Rufus Wedderburn, Glasgow

You could well have your speakers incorrectly wired. I'd suggest, for starters, that you make sure that both speaker cables are connected to the unswitched set of amplifier terminals — in other words, don't use the Speaker 2 terminals at all. While you're doing this ensure that both cables from each speaker are going to the relevant amplifier terminal — you don't, for instance, want the left tweeter and the right bass unit connected together. Check also that each cable's



Beat the beam with KEF dual concentrics.



Is Pioneer's CD-R the answer to an archivist's dream?

polarity is correct — both 'positive' leads should be going to the 'positive' red terminals on the speaker and amplifier.

Archiving the irreplaceable

I'd like to transfer my irreplaceable analogue tape recordings onto CD and the only thing that has stopped me buying a Pioneer PDR-05 is that your review suggested it didn't have a very good ADC. Would it be wiser to wait and hope that another manufacturer will produce a domestic CD-R with a better ADC? I'm concerned that my analogue tapes will degrade eventually — is this likely to happen soon? Is the Marantz CD-R610 a professional machine? I understand that it has an excellent ADC but do not know how much it costs. I'm prepared to spend up to £2,000.

Name and address supplied

The Marantz CD-R610 is a professional machine distributed by SCV Electronics (0171 923 1892) through HHB Communications (0181 962 5000). It costs £3,989.13 including VAT, which puts it just a tad over your budget.

I don't think our review of the Pioneer PDR-05 CD-R really criticises its ADC. It simply says that the Pioneer — described as "potentially the highest quality home recorder now available" and "for the very highest calibre recordings ... the only serious choice" — falls short of the professional Marantz unit.

If you're still concerned, you could always use the Meridian



562 Analogue Digital Preamp, which incorporates the same ADC that Meridian has fitted in its professional units. It costs £695, which, along with the £1,299.99 for the Pioneer, puts this combination at just under two grand.

Hold on for SBLs

My system lives in a small (13ft by 12ft) room and consists of a Meridian 200 transport with Trichord Clock 2 modifications and an Audiolab 8000 DAC with DAC7 upgrade.

Amplification comes from a Naim NAC72, HiCap, NAP180 combination and feeds Epos ES11 speakers and stands. I also have a rarely used Systemdek IIXE turntable fitted with a Moth arm and Rega Elys cartridge.

I would particularly like to improve bass performance and extension while retaining a fast, detailed sound. I'd also like improved treble quality and imagery. Naim SBLs are out of my price range at the moment so I'm considering either adding a subwoofer or changing to other floorstanders at



around £1,000 — Monitor Audio Studio 12, Mission 753, Castle Howard, etc. What's my best choice and will I have problems with too much bass in my small room?

Stephen Craig, Northern Ireland

My initial, admittedly biased, reaction is to suggest that you keep saving and go for the SBLs — I've used them very successfully in a room smaller than yours. That they're designed for close-to-wall placement also makes them a particularly appropriate choice.

If you still want to go for an intermediate upgrade, then I would recommend that you forget about adding a subwoofer — I doubt that you'll find one in your price range that's sufficiently musical to integrate seamlessly with your system. Of the speakers you've listed, I reckon the Castle Howard might be worth trying. So would the Roksan Ojan 3 and 3X, whose bass can be outstandingly muscular. Whatever you decide to try, though, be sure to listen to them at home before committing yourself.

Choking on the amp

Convinced that my amplifier is choking the sound from my CD player, I have decided to upgrade. I have a Marantz CD-63, Arcam Black Box 3, Cambridge Audio P70 and Mission 753s bi-wired with Mission Cyrus solid core cable. Other interconnects are Deltec Slink and QED Digiflex. I'd like a more open, detailed sound.

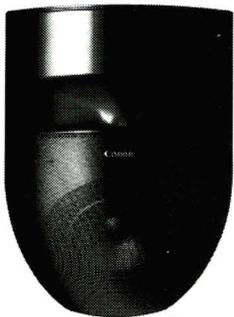
My budget is around £1,000 and I've been thinking about a Moth preamp with a pair of Arcam Delta 290P power amps or a Copland CSA14.

Jim Hawthorne, Northern Ireland.

Before you spend a grand on an amplifier, Jim lad, consider upgrading your CD player. I don't subscribe to the idea of using budget CD players with outboard DACs and think that you will ultimately do better by replacing the Marantz — Mission 753s certainly need a better front end than any budget player will provide. I'd recommend a moderately priced CD transport such as the Teac

**“The V-100 has become
something of a
Home Cinema Classic.”**

(Alvin Gold, Home Entertainment magazine)



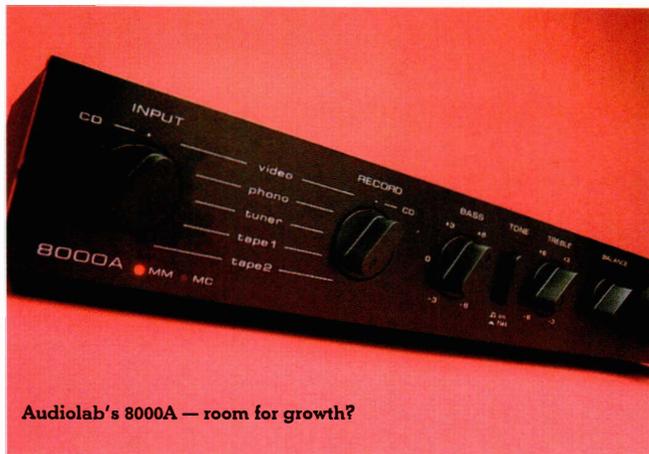
The Canon corner-mounting V-100 is one of a range of unique loudspeakers. Giving you a larger spread of sound than conventional box loudspeakers. And making your Home Cinema system truly home-friendly. There are options like wall-mount, shelf and stand-mount, and paintable grilles. So you can even match the speaker into your decor.

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Canon

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DISPERSION
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Audiolab's 8000A — room for growth?

◀ VRDS-T1, which will leave you with around £500 to replace your amplifier.

If you are keen on multi-amp systems then you should start with a product that allows expansion. Both Arcam's Delta 290 and Audiolab's 8000A can be supplemented by matching power amps — notably the Delta 290P and 8000P.

Indefeatable DAC

If I use a separate DAC with my Rotel RCD-965BX, is the player's internal DAC still powered? Would there be a performance advantage if the internal DAC was disconnected and is this a task a layman could tackle?

Charles T Lout,
Lancashire

The Rotel's on-board DAC remains powered and functioning when you're using an external converter. Implementing a defeatable DAC (as found on some Micromega and Roksan machines) isn't viable on what is essentially a budget player. But that's not to say that someone who knew about electronics couldn't disconnect the RCD-965BX's on-board DAC. But from both a sound quality and safety point of view it's not really worth your while.

Make big changes

My AVI 2000 CD player, Theta Cobalt 307 DAC, LFD Linestage 2 pre and Powerstage 2 power amp are used to drive Shahinian Arc speakers through Musical Fidelity Lifeline cable. I also have a Linn Lingo LP12/Ittok/K18. Interconnects are mostly LFD.

Should I change my phono interconnect or upgrade my cartridge first? I've heard wonderful reports about the Theta TLC jitterbuster: would this give real benefits in my system. The AVI is very revealing but a little polite. Would that politeness go if I upgraded my speaker cable?

Fred Arnold, Hertfordshire

If you want significant improvements start by making significant changes. Don't play around with phono leads, upgrade your cartridge to a good moving coil. Start by listening to the Lyra Lydian and Dynavector 17D2. Then find a dealer who can demonstrate the Jitterbuster — with your transport and DAC, naturally — and see what it does. Then try swapping your speaker cable for Naim NAC A5 or Kimber, both of which will liven up your Shahinians.



HI-FI CHOICE

Don't get in a flap about idle DACs.

DEALER DECISIONS

A trio of terpsichorean traders tussle with a teaser

The Query

My system comprises a Marantz CD-63 CD player with Cambridge Audio Artic interconnect, NAD 302 amplifier with Cable Talk 3 bi-wire speaker cable, Sony STS 311 tuner and a pair of Mission 780SE speakers on Atacama SE24 stands.

I would like to upgrade the amp to something more powerful because I feel that the NAD is not doing the 780SEs justice. I would like something with thumping tight bass and a clear upper end. I listen to mostly rock and indie such as Oasis and Bon Jovi. Would adding a power amp be an alternative? Or would changing something else in my set-up be better? I have a budget of £300.

Norman Liu, Birmingham

Sounds Expensive

Your equipment is the basis for a very good system. You seem to think the NAD 302 is letting the side down and substituting it for one which gives greater control and clarity is certainly possible. But no matter what the amplifier, there is no earthly way that the 780SEs are capable of great thumping bass.

It would be wiser to upgrade your loudspeakers for a pair with better bass performance. I would recommend a floor-standing speaker like the KEF Coda 9 or the TDL RTL 2 and a more controlled amplifier like the Rotel RA970BX. Although you have only £300 to spend, you could help finance your new equipment by trading-in. Finally, it is most important that you audition all equipment to make sure you are happy with your choice.

Keith Abbas, Sounds Expensive, Rugby.

The Powerplant

The Mission 780SE's do need an amplifier with a bit more power and control than your amplifier. Adding a power amplifier would be one solution, although by keeping your NAD 302 as the preamplifier you may not be improving the sound too much. The alternative would be an integrated amplifier that is a much better match for your Mission loudspeakers.

We recommend that you listen to the Rotel RB970BX MkII power amplifier with your NAD 302 and then gauge the NAD's pre-amp performance against the matching Rotel RC970BX MkII pre-amplifier. An integrated amplifier that would suit your system very well would be the Arcam Alpha 6 plus. However, our best advice would be for you to visit a quality hi-fi shop, which can recreate your system and play you the alternatives available within your budget. Remember, if it doesn't sound better in the shop, it's not going to be an improvement for you at home. Happy Listening.

Xavier Wilcox, The Powerplant, Brighton.

Basically Sound

We have no in-depth working knowledge of the system you use, or the components you plan to keep. The only advice we would therefore give you would be to take your system to a local dealer who will allow you to listen to recommendations in the context of your system.

However, if you could push your budget a little, I can recommend the Arcam Alpha 6 plus and the new Micromega Minium amplifiers. Both possess excellent performance and system flexibility, allowing you to make beneficial future upgrades. I would also urge you to listen to something better, like the Naim Nait 3, as this may do more of what you want, and may be worth saving up for. I couldn't honestly recommend a power amp for £300.

If amplifiers don't do the trick, then maybe alternative floor-standing speakers could be considered, such as the TDL 2 or 3, or even a fuller bodied CD player, like the Arcam Alpha 5 plus or the excellent new Alpha 6. Whatever happens, sorting your system out should be fun.

Graham Halliwell, Basically Sound, Norwich

The Jimmy Hughes Experience

He can't be serious — or can he?

Jimmy Hughes introduces the enigma that is Mpingo.

To the casual eye, it looks like a vegetable chopping board. But place it under an amplifier or CD player and the result is improved sound quality, increased richness and depth, as well as greater coherence. What else could it be but Shun Mook's remarkable equipment support platform (issue 146)? I still regard the platform as Shun Mook's simplest and most accessible component, but good as it is, it only scratches the surface of wood-aided sound improvement...

A far more imaginative and effective use of Shun Mook technology is to be found in their *Spatial Control Kit*. This extraordinary collection of items allows you to influence the way your speakers image the sound; it alters room acoustics, and it affects tonal balance. Sceptical? I don't blame you — I certainly was. But hearing is believing, and despite being unable to understand how these devices work, I know that they do have an effect.

The *Spatial Control Kit* is available in two versions. I tried the simpler one, which contains two L-shaped wood blocks, each fitted with three Mpingo (ebony) discs, as well as three separate Mpingo discs. The wood blocks should be placed on the floor, on the outside of each loudspeaker, while one Mpingo disc sits on the top surface of each speaker. The third Mpingo disc has to be positioned between the speakers in the centre of the room.

Each Mpingo disc has a small hole in its circumference, called the Head of Shun Mook, and both alignment and positioning of it are fairly critical. For example, placing the disc toward the front of the speaker cabinet creates the subjective impression of the soundstage moving closer. If the disc is placed at the rear of the enclosure the opposite happens; the soundstage appears 'deeper' and more spacious, as though further away.

Now, I'm aware that this piece is running in our April issue, and appreciate that what I've just described is, on the face of it, highly implausible. Yet — bizarre as it may seem — Shun Mook's *Spatial Control Kit* seems able to change the apparent depth of the stereo soundstage. Not only that: moving the discs to the outer or inner edge of the enclosure will

enable you to broaden or narrow the width of the stereo image!

It gets worse. The discs should be set up with the little hole pointing forwards. Turn each disc clockwise or anti-clockwise and subjectively you can shift the speaker's tonal balance towards treble or bass. It's remarkable! You can alter the tonal balance and soundstage presentation of your system subjectively, just by changing the position of two discs that sit on top of the speaker cabinets. Weird!



Any tweak with a puck has got to be strange.

Actually, Shun Mook's *Spatial Control Kit* seems to increase the feeling of space and depth around voices and instruments almost irrespective of where the Mpingo discs are placed, although certain positions definitely enhance the effect. Just using the kit is enough in itself. It makes the speakers become less obvious as sources of sound — the music simply emanates from the space they occupy.

After using it for several weeks, I removed the *Spatial Control Kit* and things immediately seemed to sound less special, while there was a clear reduction in sonic depth. Dynamically, the music sounded 'flatter' and less vivid; it was hard to say precisely what was missing, but presentation was markedly less three-dimensional. Even two or three days later (the kit was away being photographed) I could still sense its absence. The music had definitely lost some of its magic...

The question is: how does it work and why? Shun Mook claims that the Mpingo wood discs

absorb vibration, but personally I find this a rather limited and unhelpful explanation. For example, it doesn't really say why the tonal balance changes when the discs are rotated, or why the stereo width and depth alter as the discs are moved back and forth.

Mpingo wood clearly has some very unusual properties. This was brought into sharp relief when I visited the home of Shun Mook distributor Branko Bozic of Audiofreaks, who demonstrated a record clamp made of the same stuff. This item costs a cool £1,200 — an absurd sum for a record clamp, I'm sure you agree.

Yet the effect it had on the sound was quite staggering. On EMI's recording of Beethoven's Archduke piano trios with Ashkenazy, Perlman, and Harrel, I found the instruments projected much more positively as soon as the clamp was in place.

This particular recording is fairly left/centre/right in its positioning of the three instruments, and Shun Mook's clamp enhanced this so that the violin and cello (placed left and right) really projected out into the room as though the volume had been increased. Branko kept putting it on and taking it off as the LP played (using it as a record weight rather than a clamp), which created an instant A/B comparison. The effect on sound staging as he did so was very noticeable, especially when the clamp was removed. It was almost like a switch being thrown.

When I arrived back home that same evening, I put the CD version on and it sounded 'flat' by comparison. The basic sound was fine, and heard in isolation there was nothing to complain about. But the sense of three instruments separately projecting out — each with a dynamic life of its own — was missing. It made the playing seem more ordinary.

Shun Mook's *Spatial Control Kit* can help clean up boomy bass, and give the soundstage real depth and space. Yet how it works is a mystery since the items seem too small and light to have much (if any) physical influence on the room or speakers. I find it truly remarkable but suggest you hear it for yourself — only then will you appreciate what I'm talking about.

Audiofreaks ☎ (0181) 948 4153

HINTS & TIPS: AV SPEAKER POSITIONING BY TIM FROST

Most of what you've learnt about speaker placement from your hi-fi experience needs to be unlearnt for home cinema. Front speaker positioning is of enormous importance to the way the whole AV soundfield works in the room, but the issues are quite different from two-channel stereo.

Provided you have three correctly-matched speakers at the front, you can ease up on the triangle rule for stereo. Three front sound channels create a more stable image than just two speakers — for a start you don't have to worry about a phantom image to give the impression of sound emanating from between the speakers. So in left-to-right terms, there is more flexibility on speaker placement.

What you have to look at now is the vertical speaker placement, and you should make sure that the three speakers produce a coherent wave-front. This means looking much more carefully at placing the speakers in a linear pattern. In stereo, it's taken for granted that the left and right are always at the same height. But in home cinema the centre speaker needs to be in the place occupied by the TV. Since this is impossible, unless you have a projection TV with the speakers set behind the screen, the centre speaker has to sit immediately below or on top of the TV set. In order to adjust the speakers to the same height, you may have to change the vertical position of the left/right speakers, or move the TV up or down. One effective trick is to turn the left/right speakers upside down.

Just as important as the position of the speakers, is the actual direction of the sound axis. It should be pointed at the listener, and you achieve this by angling the speakers up (or down) until they point directly towards the head position (see also this column in issue 150). If the centre speaker is too far back relative to the left and right, the front soundfield becomes less coherent. Setting the three speakers in a gentle arc will help focus the front image.

Surround speaker placement has been plagued by the practices of quadraphonic, where rear speakers were aimed at the listening position to get the full effect of trombones blaring behind you and instruments circling the room.

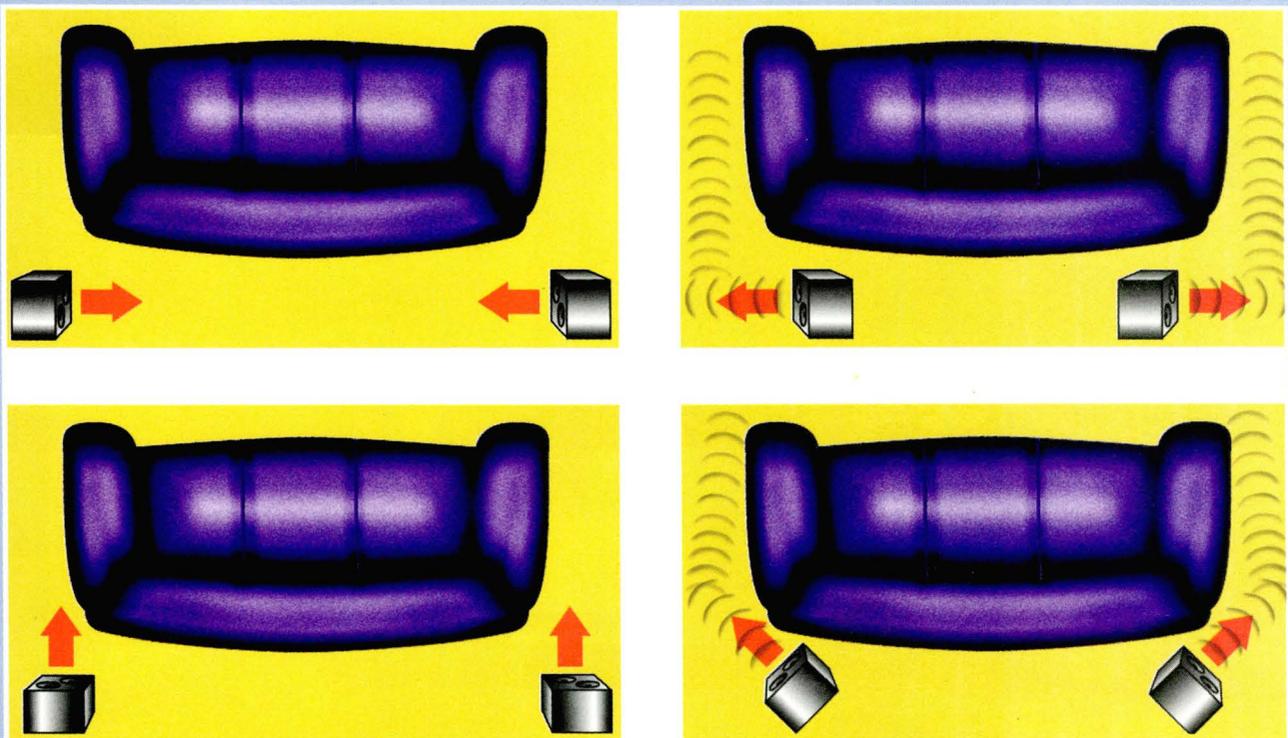
For home cinema, you want the entire opposite. The surrounds are there to produce an all-engulfing atmosphere that is essentially

room-filling and directionless. Surround speakers need to be placed high up, either on the rear wall, or on the side walls if you have a long room. 'Real' surrounds for the home use some sort of bipolar design with two sets of drivers facing in opposite directions, which helps to drive the room correctly. But there are many great compact hi-fi speakers that can be used for surround, if their position and orientation is carefully tested. Positioned either facing across the room, backwards, towards the wall, or even on their back on a shelf pointing upwards, is going to produce a more room-filling atmosphere than having them pointing towards you.

Phasing isn't an absolute science with AV. Of course, all three front speakers should be phased the same, and the surrounds should have a common phase with each other, too. However, it's worth experimenting with the relative phase between the front and the surrounds, as this can produce subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle differences in the overall spaciousness of the system.

Cabling to the surrounds can be problematical. Substantial speaker cables running between the electronics and the front speakers are normally acceptable, but it may prove difficult to place, or even afford, similar cables for the long runs down the side of the room and up the wall to the surrounds. As a result, there is an increasing number of quality flat or flattish speaker cables designed specifically to be tucked under carpet.

All Dolby decoders have a built-in test-tone generator, which puts noise onto each of the channels in turn and thereby enables you to precisely balance the levels to each speaker. Although this is normally easy to do by ear, there is nothing like getting the levels perfectly matched for a crisply focused soundfield. Even a fairly crude sound level meter will do the job well, and every dealer selling decent AV systems ought to have one to hire or loan. However, since few ever do, your local Tandy store should be able to offer you one for around £30. Keep a record (or mark up) the speaker settings, as you may well want to change them for certain movies or when you start messing about with the system again. If you have a record of them you'll always have the 'correct' settings without having to go through the whole set-up procedure again.



The idea with surround speakers is to create an ambient soundfield, an effect that can be created in most rooms with one of the positions above.

COMPETITION

SUPER SPEAKERS FROM PROAC

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2ND
PRIZE

3RD
PRIZE

Three pairs of ProAc speakers, worth over £4,000, could soon decorate your lounges!

We have three superb prizes to give away. First prize is the simply

superb ProAc Response Two Point Five, worth £2,700. This elegant floorstander won the heart of *Hi-Fi Choice's* own Alan Sircom in the December 1995 issue. A two-way design with a rear-firing port, the *Two Point Five* features the traditional 19mm fabric dome tweeter allied to a unique Scanspeak 178mm carbon-fibre bass driver to give the speaker its amazing speed. Second prize is a pair of ProAc Studio 100s, worth £699. This two-way speaker is favoured by many a studio engineer as a superb near-field monitor. Originally launched back in 1990 as the *Studio 1*, it now sports significant refinements in cabinet construction and internal damping. Finally, the third name out of the *Hi-Fi Choice* hat will receive a pair of the excellent *Tablette 50* loudspeakers, worth £599. These are the fifth generation of ProAc *Tablette* speakers, the first dating back to 1979. Since then, the tiny *Tab* has stunned many with its vast sound for such a small box. The latest incarnation features a new woofer and tweeter, reworked crossover and new damping, kept in the tiny dimensions of the *Tablette III*. Like all ProAc speakers, these boxes will work well with average equipment, but really start to shine with seriously high-end gear.

THE QUESTION

In which issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* did Alan Sircom get all excited about the ProAc Response Two Point Five loudspeakers?

- a) December 1995
- b) January 1996
- c) December 1994
- d) March 1978

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■ You will be asked to state the answer to the question above. Please speak clearly, and don't forget to leave your name, address and daytime phone number. Winners will be picked at random from all correct entries. You will be asked to inform us if you do not wish to receive details of further offers or promotions.

■ Calls cost 39p per minute cheap rate, 49p per minute at all other times. Calls should take no longer than two minutes.

■ Lines open at midnight on Friday March 1st, 1996, and remain open until midnight on Friday April 12th, 1996.

■ Alternatively, write the answer on the back of a postcard or sealed-down envelope, together with your name, address and daytime telephone number. Please state whether you are over 18 years of age.

Address this entry to:

Hi-Fi Choice Competition (CHFC604A)
Bradley Pavilions,
Bradley Stoke North,
Bristol BS12 0BQ.

All postal entries must arrive by first post, Friday April 12th, 1996.

COMPETITION RULES

- The Closing Date for this competition is April 12th, 1996.
- Winners of the ProAc competition will be judged from all correct entries submitted by telephone and post, and drawn at random on the Closing Date.
- All winners will be notified by post.
- The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- The ProAc competition is not open to employees of Dennis Publishing Ltd., ProAc Ltd., nor their suppliers, agents or associates.
- We regret that this competition is open to UK residents only.
- No cash alternative will be offered.
- The act of entering the competitions will be taken as acceptance of the rules.
- You must notify us if you do not wish to be informed of any special offers or promotions. On postal entries, please indicate clearly on your entry if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers.
- We will assume you are over 18 years of age unless you state otherwise.
- For a list of winners of the ProAc competition, write enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope, to: *Hi-Fi Choice* Winners, Dept 151/1, 19 Bolsover Street, LONDON W1P 7HJ.

The secrets

Want to know more about what goes on inside your amplifier and how the technology developed? Read on — **Dave Berriman** can tell you everything you need to know.

In principle at least, the hi-fi amplifier is very simple. All it should do is increase the level of an audio signal to a degree suitable for either headphones or speakers. There's more to it than that, of course — there are volume controls, input selectors and power supplies to consider — but the single most important part of the amplifier is right at its heart.

The origins of the amplifier can be traced back to 1906, when Lee de Forest patented an unusual new electrical device. De Forest had noticed variations in the flow of current through a rectifying diode that he was working on. (The diode is a basic electronic component that converts an alternating current — ie one that flows first one way along a wire, then the other — into a direct current.) The glass-cased hollow diode normally had two internal metal electrodes, one of which was a hot filament, but in de Forest's experiment it had a third non-heated electrode. When this was connected up to a voltage source, the current flowing through the main device changed markedly (see figure 1).

the industrial revolution before it. This development led, via the transistor, to our modern consumer electronics world of CD players, computers and television.

After the triode came other multi-electrode valves that offered greater amplification. The advent of the thermionic valve meant that telephone signals could be amplified and therefore travel further; likewise radio waves could be transmitted across continents and oceans. Later on, amplifiers were used to drive loudspeakers instead of the often inconvenient headphones that came with early radios. Though the first amplifiers produced very little power — less than a Watt — loudspeakers of the day were highly sensitive and made the most of what they were given. Since those early times amplifiers have become progressively more powerful and loudspeakers less sensitive.

Though the amplifier dates back to the early part of the century, hi-fi's origins really start with the early days of radio and cinema, when greater fidelity became a priority. In the '50s, with the Second World War over, the introduction of the long-playing record brought unprecedented quality into the home, leading to a rapid growth in the sales of hi-fi equipment. And some of the valve amplifiers that were built then are well-regarded by audio enthusiasts even today.

Amplifiers are essential in hi-fi systems because the basic signals produced by turntables, CD players, tuners and cassette decks are very small. The output of a record player's moving magnet cartridge, for instance, may typically be just 3mV (three thousandths of a Volt, or 20 millionths of a millionth of a Watt at the input of a typical amplifier). For quiet musical passages the signal will be much smaller, whereas for louder moments, the voltage may peak higher. In the good old pre-electric days the record (or cylinder) groove provided all of the (rather limited) power, and this was extracted by a stylus, a mica diaphragm and a tapered horn — rather like a human ear in reverse — but the output from a moving magnet cartridge is pathetically low and a moving coil cartridge produces even less. With loudspeakers requiring many Volts rather than a few milliVolts to generate an appreciable sound, some method of making the same signal larger and

The input signal had very little power of its own but was able to control a much larger source of electric current flowing in the vacuum between the heated and unheated electrode. In short it was amplifying the signal, making it larger. Because it used a hot filament, had three electrodes, and worked rather like a tap (ie a water valve) de Forest called his invention a thermionic triode valve.

The invention of what we now call the valve (known as the vacuum tube in the US) was the start of a revolution as important as



of amplifiers

Figure 2

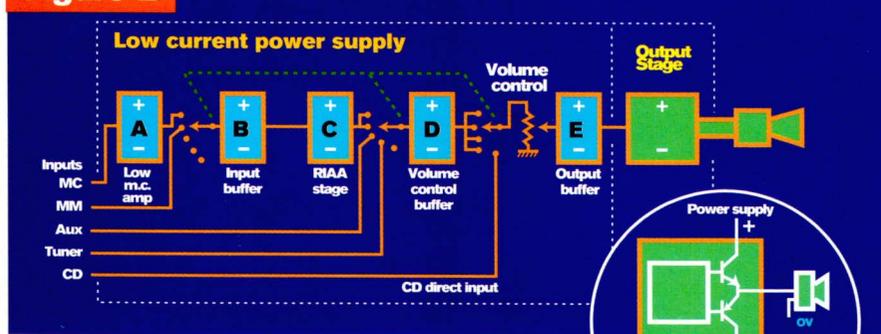


Figure 1

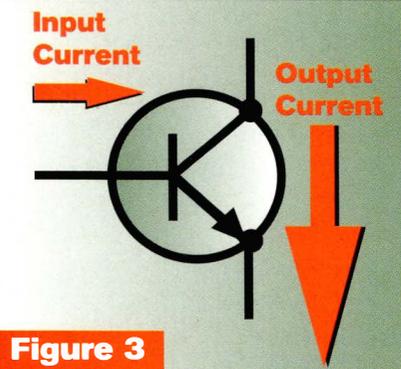
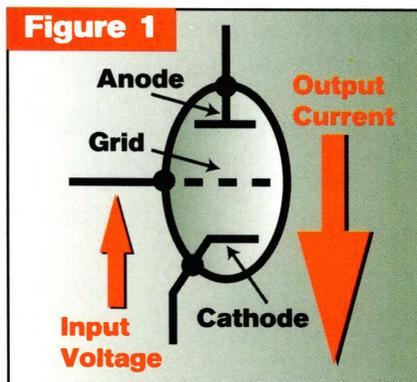


Figure 3

more powerful is clearly required. And this is where the amplifier comes in.

A modern integrated amplifier will have selectable inputs, a volume control and outputs for two stereo speakers. Inside the case, many amplifying devices working together in complex circuits amplify the inputs to supply power to the loudspeakers — this can be sim-

plified into a block diagram (see figure 2).

Moving up in price and sophistication, the pre and power amplifier sections are housed in separate boxes connected via signal and possibly power leads.

Valves versus transistors

Though both valves and transistors amplify signals they behave very differently (see figures 1, 2 and 3). Valves draw virtually no input current and provide an output which is generally at a high signal voltage (hundreds of Volts). This is fine within the amplifier but is of little use for driving loudspeakers, which, by their nature, are low impedance devices that require comparatively low voltages and high currents. That's why virtually all valve power amplifiers have an output transformer — two sets of copper coil windings on an iron core — that reduces the voltage and increases the current. Very little power is lost in the transformer, which effectively couples the low impedance (low voltage/high current) speaker to the high impedance (high voltage/low current) valve or valves. Usually, two valves are connected to the output transformer to achieve higher powers than are possible from just one valve.

Bipolar transistors draw much more input signal current than valves and provide greater voltage amplification. By comparison, mosfet transistors require very little input current. Both forms of transistor work at inherently low voltages and higher currents than valves. Power transistors, in particular, are designed to provide high currents — several Amps —

Three amplifier myths exploded

1/ The more Watts the better

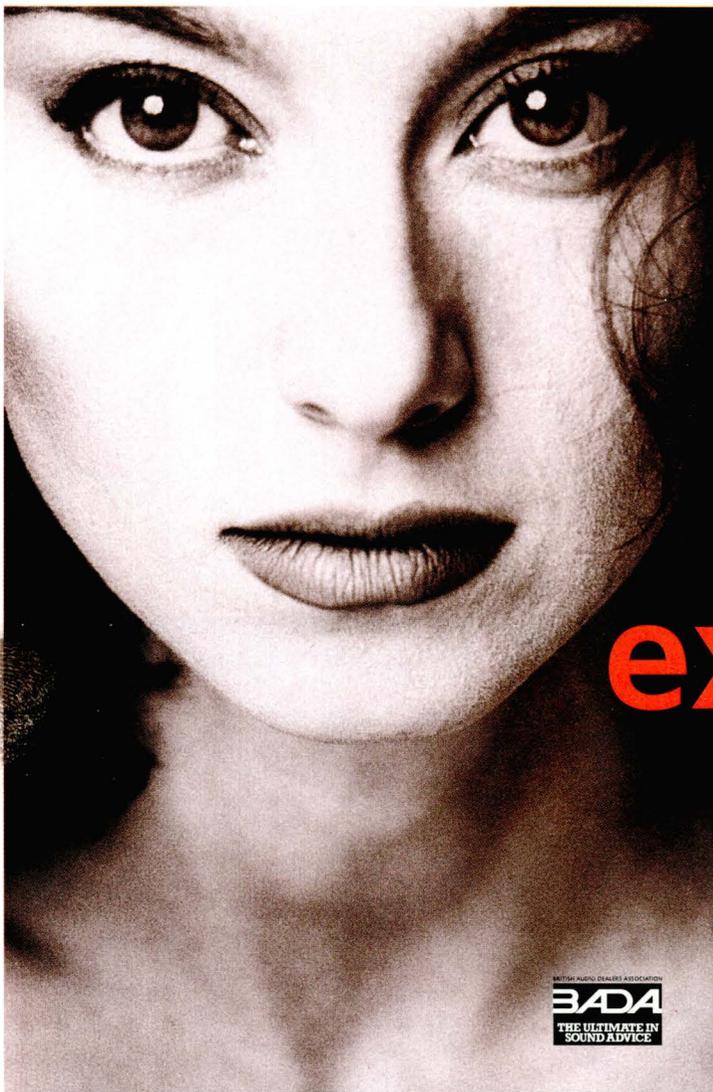
It's a common belief that as with money and sex, so with amplifier power. The truth is more complex. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of amplifier power is converted to sound. The rest disappears as heat — usually inside the speaker. So it's not just power that counts, it's also the ability of speakers to turn that power into sound efficiently. This factor, somewhat unsurprisingly called sensitivity, is quoted in dB/Watt/metre and is one of the keys to successful amplifier-to-speaker matching. In practical terms, an 80dB per Watt speaker will need ten times more power than a 90dB per Watt model if it is to reproduce the same sound levels.

2/ Speakers rated at 100W need a 100Wpc amp

A speaker power rating of 100 Watts means that its maximum rating is 100 Watts. However, you can use a 200 Watt amp with the same speakers and not damage them provided you don't push them too hard for too long. But provided you can reach the sound levels you want, there's no harm in using significantly less power and there will often be an advantage.

3/ The more controls the better

Surely there's nothing more satisfying than a neat row of controls and perhaps a graphic equaliser or two. After all, the car stereo is bursting with buttons. Here's another myth that has long since been exposed as marketing hokum. If the quality of the signal, the amp or the speakers is not up to it, then no amount of fiddling with tone controls is going to improve it. Tone controls and graphic EQs do not make a good system. Sometimes they can be handy to correct for a tonal balance which is a bit wonky, or speakers which are not neutral, but really these are best tackled at source by moving the speakers to a new position, or buying some that sound right in the first place.



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and so can drive speakers without the need for an output transformer. Bipolar or mosfet output devices are usually connected directly to the loudspeaker, with only speaker cable and sockets between them, and this provides a very intimate relationship between amplifier and speaker.

The output stage, however, is only one section of any amplifier, be it valve or transistor. Because transistors are small and relatively inexpensive, more can be used within an amplifier and this allows designers to push distortion (unwanted additions to the original signal) to very low levels by using specialised techniques such as negative feedback. This takes part of the output voltage and subtracts it from the input, thereby stabilising the signal (I'm afraid that you'll just have to take my word

for this—an explanation is some way beyond the level of this article). Valve amps use negative feedback too, but the complex behaviour of the output transformer and other factors rule out the high levels that are typically applied to transistors.

Valve amplifiers were generally believed obsolete by the late 1960s, when tranny amps — with their transformerless outputs, lower distortion and higher power outputs — seemed to have pushed their counterparts to the verge of extinction. Yet just a few years later, nagging dissatisfaction with the sound of transistor amplifiers led to a reappraisal of valve designs. This eventually led to something of a renaissance, particularly over the past ten years or so.

Because valve and transistor amplifiers are so far apart in operation, it should come as no surprise that they tend to sound different too. Transistor amplifiers, by virtue of their direct-to-speaker coupling, usually have cleaner and better controlled bass. Valves, on the other hand, with their different distortion spectrum, gentler operating curves and overlapping AB output operation (see figure 8 and the panel on amplifier classes) tend to have the cleaner, smoother, more natural treble.

Transistor sound, at its most extreme, is characterised by a harsh, gritty treble and a flat, dimensionless soundstage. The early transistor amps sounded like this and, paradoxically, things got worse as distortion was pushed ever lower while designers chased better specifications. Modern designers are aware of these pitfalls and have largely overcome the problems associated with transistor sound: the best amplifiers do not sound this way at all.

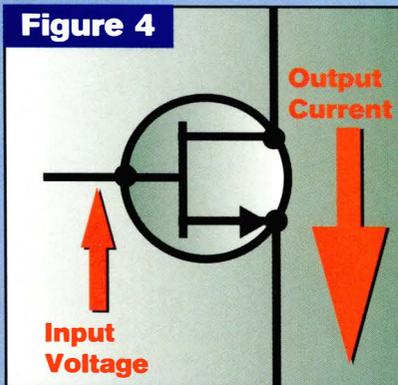
Valve amplifiers often excel in the mid-band, even when compared to good modern transistor designs. No one really knows why this is, but valves exhibit no switching delay and produce a different distortion spectrum with fewer high-frequency harmonics. Valve circuits are much simpler than transistor ones and, as mentioned above, use less negative feedback. Distortion levels are invariably higher in valve amps, especially in the bass (where the output transformer can be pushed into a form of overload called saturation).

Valve amps often exhibit a refreshingly open and natural sound. Unfortunately, they can sound fuzzy and lacking in dynamics or, in some cases, dull and lacking in sparkle. Linked with stodgy bass, these problems can result in the warm and woolly 'valve sound' typical of some old designs — not very accurate but easy on the ear.

Though valve amps are expensive and tend to be low-powered, those which avoid the pitfalls can achieve neutral balance, clean bass and open sound quality. They can deliver levels of performance that go way beyond those of the average transistor amplifier, but just having valves is no guarantee of excellence. There are some excellent transistor amplifiers about, which, offer advantages in neutrality, phase linearity, bass quality and power delivery. Deciding which type of amp to plump for is essentially a matter of personal taste, but as transistor designs that sound more like valve amplifiers have emerged, so valve amplifiers have shifted to sound more like transistor designs — a kind of convergence has occurred, with the ultimate, unobtainable 'perfection' probably somewhere in-between.

What's in a transistor?

Figure 4



Transistors are made from a small chip of semiconductor material (usually silicon) that has been modified by the introduction of specific carefully controlled impurities. Inside the transistor, a small electric current injected via one lead controls a much larger flow of electricity between the other two. If the control current is in the form of an electrical signal, the output current is a larger electrical signal: in other words the transistor amplifies the current (figure 3).

This, of course, is just what's needed in a hi-fi amplifier. Like the valve, the transistor has three terminals, but unlike the valve it is very compact and does not need a hot filament to function. Because in transistors the current flow is through solid material, they have been dubbed solid-state devices.

The mosfet (figure 4) is another type of transistor, again usually made from a small chip of modified silicon but constructed differently to the bipolar device. Instead of an input current, it uses an input voltage to control the output current. Mosfets offer generally weaker amplification (lower voltage gain) and create a different spectrum of distortion. They turn on and off more quickly and are more stable when they heat up. Mosfets thus combine some qualities of valves and transistors and, like bipolar transistors, are often used in pairs in the output stage of the amplifier.

Five ways to get the best from your amplifier

When you unpack your much-treasured new amplifier, don't forget to read the instruction manual: it will be packed with all sorts of useful tips along the lines of remembering not to immerse it in water and so on. But what it may not tell you is that there are some simple things you can do to help your amplifier give of its best.

- 1/ Use good speaker cable — not that cheap bell-wire stuff, but something half-way decent. You don't need to start talking telephone numbers. Go for good purpose-made cable, preferably after listening to it in your system. Ask your dealer for advice and get the assistant to solder on some good quality connectors — otherwise the exposed copper goes a horrid green-brown colour (oxidises) and won't make clean contact with the amp or speaker sockets. Good interconnects are equally important, again replace the freebies with decent stuff.
- 2/ Every now and again, unplug all of your signal leads (with the system powered down, of course) and then reconnect them. This scrapes the oxides off and cleans the contact points. You could even splash out on some proprietary contact cleaner/preservative

and periodically treat your sockets and plugs to a quick polish. The benefits (cleaner treble, more open sound) should be similar but longer lasting.

- 3/ Don't position sensitive items like cassette decks too close: the amplifier's mains transformer can cause hum in the cassette deck. Likewise, items like CD players can induce interference in amplifiers and this will affect the sound with any source, so keep these on a separate shelf. Don't place items on top of an integrated or power amplifier as this can restrict air flow and lead to over-heating.

- 4/ For that last bit of sound quality, turn off any unused equipment. If you're listening to vinyl, switch off the CD player. If you're listening to CDs, turn off the tuner and cassette deck. Everything creates some interaction, no matter how small. If you can't hear the difference don't get neurotic over this one, but it's worth a try.

- 5/ If you can, place your amp on a purpose-built equipment rack. Good racks are solidly built to avoid resonances, which can vibrate components inside amplifiers, causing a loss of sound quality. A very good rack is a significant contribution to sound quality.

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What's the difference between class A and class B?

Class A

Class A is the most commonly used method of operating a transistor (bipolar or mosfet) or thermionic valve in low-power applications. In class A current flows all the time through the device. With no signal it is neither on or off, but somewhere in-between (usually about half way). Any signal makes the output swing up and down between two extremes, limited only by the power supply. When the extremes are reached the amplifier clips: that is the maximum output. Up until that point, current flows at all times — at some instants there is more current and at others less, but current flows all the time and is in proportion to the input signal. This is the basis of class A operation (see figure 6, which shows the in/output curves and signals of a single-ended power amplifier).

There is no problem with class A — except at the amplifier's output stage. Why? because here the maximum current flow is much greater. To ensure uninterrupted current through the two output devices requires a high current to flow even when there is no signal (figure 5). This is called the standing, or quiescent, current and creates a lot of heat. Manufacturers have tried to avoid the heat loss from class A while retaining its advantages by several means, for instance using multiple power supplies so that a low power class A amp hands over to a more powerful class B one for the peaks. Comparing figure 5 and figure 8, the only significant difference between class A and AB is the standing current, which places greater demands on heat flow and power supply.

Single-ended class A

This is an antiquated form of class A power amplifier which has seen a revival in its fortunes. It uses just one output device operated in class A (figure 6). Generally producing low power outputs (under 10 Watts), single-ended amps must be used with sensitive speakers and tend to be rather expensive. Despite its drawbacks the genre has attracted a firm following from enthusiasts.

Class B

Class B sidesteps the class A heat problem by almost turning the transistors off while idling. This avoids the huge heat loss of class A, but introduces a problem of its own — crossover distortion. This occurs where the operation of the two output devices (bipolars, mosfets or valves) crosses over at zero Volts (figure 7). Mosfets, which have a gentler on/off overlap region and have no turn-off delay, are less prone to this effect. Bipolars have a sharper off/on transition and take time to turn off. Several tricks are used by designers to get around these problems, so no good modern design should suffer from serious crossover distortion.

Figure 5

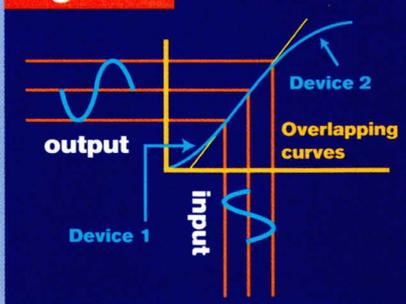


Figure 6

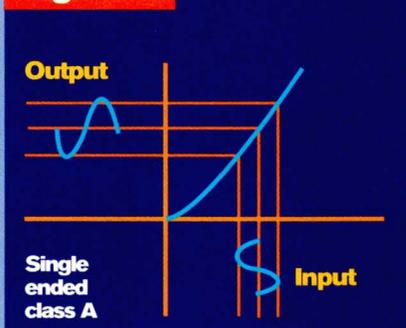
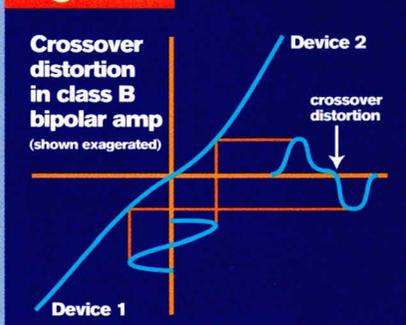
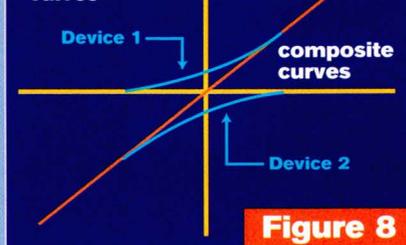


Figure 7



Class AB mosfets or valves



Class AB

In pure class B, there is no standing current when there is no signal, but virtually all real-world class B hi-fi amplifiers use a small standing current to avoid crossover distortion. Sometimes the designer sets the current higher (often done with mosfets) so that for small signals the amplifier runs in class A, changing to class B at higher levels. This is known as class AB (figure 8.) a kind of half-way house between pure class A and Class B.

The future

With digital electronics so firmly established their use in audio can only become more widespread. Already there are digital preamplifiers and tone controls that can place you in the concert hall of your choice.

With a CD transport feeding a digital pre-amp, the only analogue part of the system is the power amplifier and speakers. However, even that may soon change with the advent of amplifiers working entirely in the digital domain, their transistors turned either fully on or fully off at any instant. With digital amplifiers, the audio signal would be converted to analogue only at the speaker. The advantages of this would include much lower distortion levels than are currently possible.

A design for an all-digital amplifier already exists, previewed by Harman Audio last year (*Hi-Fi Choice*, December 1995): it seems that it is only a matter of time before digital amplifiers become more widespread. The arguments about valves versus transistors, distortion and the effects of negative feedback will then be all in the past — or will they? ▲

The secret of amplifier matching

There is no single secret to matching your amplifier to the rest of your system. When deciding on an amplifier, you'll need to do some basic homework to narrow down the range of choice. How much power do you really need for a start? Are you after CD-only replay or do you want to play records? If so, are you going for a moving magnet or moving coil cartridge? If you are into vinyl you'll need to check on this: moving coils have very low output (microVolts) compared to moving magnets (milliVolts). The nature of the input circuitry (its impedance) will not be an issue for CD players, tuners or tape decks, but for pick-up cartridges it can have a noticeable influence on sound quality. A detailed discussion is not possible here, but a good hi-fi dealer will be able to help you.

The output end of the amplifier, where the speakers hook up, is a vitally important interface. The speaker is power hungry and has its own agenda. It doesn't always want to do what the amplifier tells it when it tells it, and is inclined to fight back. The result can be that the speaker tries to draw lots of current when the amplifier isn't properly able to deliver it. Depending on how well the amp and speakers are matched, this can result in anything from a mild sonic effect such as audible distortion to complete amplifier shut down. Paul Miller has developed a test that gives you an idea of how good the amplifier is at achieving this under difficult load conditions. Amplifiers which measure better will have superior control over the speakers. However, there may be other factors — such as whether or not you like the sound — that carry more weight.

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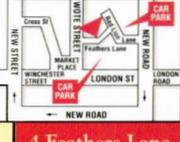
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LETTER OF THE MONTH

A 10 to 15 year sentence

Having read recent items in *Hi-Fi Choice* on the subject of multi-media, especially Barry Fox's highly interesting and, for me, somewhat jaw-dropping article about tomorrow's CD (issue 149), I am moved to put forward the prognostication that in 10 to 15 years' time the vinyl junkies who currently scorn the digital reproduction of music will be superseded by high-end CD freaks clinging to the sound of their CD-based systems with the same nostalgia.

L G Neville, Tewkesbury



Gimme controls

I am fascinated by the school of thought that derides the use of tone controls on an amp. These same people denounce the use of a graphic equaliser on the grounds that the 'original signal' should remain unaltered. Do these folk not realise that their Holy Grail, the 'original signal', is almost always the result of a complex mixing operation performed in the recording studio? Usually, the mixing is done by some bloke using a 'graphic equaliser', and the result is thus his personal opinion of what sounds best. Is the listener not entitled to hold a different view without being labelled a pleb?

Those music lovers who do have minds of their own, and who do wish to change the sound of things sometimes, would no doubt be very interested to hear your views on the graphic equalisers currently available, ideally in the sort of group test that you normally do so well. Go on — I dare you!

Bob McClelland
Middleton, Manchester

The graphic equalisers used in the studio may look very similar to those used at home, but

the similarities soon end. The subtle and precise tone shaping possible with professional equalisers has nothing in common with the gross tonal shifts that are a feature of most domestic units. The difference is likened to that between a Renault Clio and Damon Hill's Formula One Williams. If you have heard what good hi-fi, free of tone controls, can do, you really wouldn't want to go back to playing with your music.

Mainly mains

Equipment supports, speaker cables and interconnects: all affect the performance of hi-fi equipment. However, many audiophiles may not realise that the mains supply is also very important.

Radio Frequency interference (RFI) and mains spikes both pollute our mains heavily and seriously impair the performance of hi-fi equipment.

During the evenings, hi-fi sounds more relaxed, more cohesive, less grainy and less distorted, for at this time of day there is less drain on the National Grid. This results in a cleaner mains supply reaching

our equipment. But RFI and mains borne spikes, although reduced, are still present.

These contaminants can only be removed successfully by mains screened cables and conditioner. Surprisingly, hi-fi mags rarely review these items.

A system can be greatly improved with good mains conditioning. The benefits include wider soundstaging, increased bass definition, less high frequency distortion and better imaging. The hi-fi will no longer have that sat-upon sound that has been strangling the music for so long, and the synergy that we all seek in our systems will no longer be so elusive. With mains conditioning it is as if the musicians are all in the listening room, their individual instruments playing separately yet coming together to make a glorious whole.

I hope *Hi-Fi Choice* will address this important issue.

J M Willis
London SW

Marantz 2, Sony 0

Last December I purchased a Sony CDP-715E CD player. In use at home I had noticed occasional 'clicks' coming mainly from the right speaker, but sometimes the left. Initially I blamed the clicks upon the recordings until a 'click' of alarming volume was produced. An extensive attempt was made to eliminate other equipment as being the source. This included using a friend's equipment and proved the Sony was at fault.

The player was returned and exchanged, not once but twice, making a total of three players with the same problem!

The third and final exchange was for a Marantz CD-63 out of desperation.

The CD-63 is a significant improvement over my old CD-65II. However, I know that the CD-63 is harsh in comparison to the 715. Consequently, I recently auditioned the new Sony CDP-761E. However, within ten seconds of listening to the Sony, a 'click' was heard from the right speaker which was not on the recording. Dem over: Marantz 2; Sony 0!

My mate has also heard this fault (on the 715) and I have heard it many times.

I'd be interested to know if anyone else has experienced a similar problem, although I suspect that those who fill their systems with equipment on the strength of magazine recommendations, rather than their own ears, will not.

Stuart Griggs, via the Internet

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POUND FOR POUND SURROUND

It's easier – and cheaper – than you think to enjoy quality surround sound without compromising your treasured hi-fi system. Here's **Paul Miller** with a test of six budget-conscious add-on processors

It's clear that audio enthusiasts have been bitten by the Pro-Logic bug. And why not? The sound that dribbles from the average TV set is but a pale reflection of the dynamics, bandwidth, clarity and sheer musical involvement that bursts from a decent, though not necessarily expensive, hi-fi system. Need convincing? Well, next time you are engrossed in some on-screen action, just shut your eyes and consider, for a moment, just how unrealistic that TV-only sound really is.

It's well-known that the visual stimulus provided by a TV compensates for the inadequacies of the accompanying audio. But once you're immersed in a good film and Pro-Logic is busily strutting its stuff, then AV can suddenly sound simply marvellous.

The easiest way of scratching the Pro-Logic itch is to integrate both hi-fi and surround sound systems via an outboard processor and extra loudspeakers (one for centre and two for the rear or surrounds). AV processors are the perfect conduit for combining your video sources with the existing integrated amp and loudspeakers of your hi-fi system. Just hook the stereo audio output of your VCR, satellite package, LaserDisc player and/or TV into the processor and, provided the films core is Pro-Logic encoded, the processor will separate the centre-front

dialogue and rear surround effects from the main front left/right (L/R) signal.

The front L/R information should then be passed to a spare input on your integrated amp: preferably the Line or Aux inputs, but never Phono. In the meantime, the processor's on-board power amps directly feed the additional centre and rear loudspeakers. It's a neat first rung on the Pro-Logic ladder, though you shouldn't expect powerhouse performance from the processor's on-board amps. That's why a few processors, all above £400 or so, include additional line-level outputs for connection to external amplifiers. You should eventually aim to use the same type of external power amp for all four front L/R, centre and rear channels.

But what of widgets? Well, all budget processors will include separate centre, rear and master volume controls, along with an automatic test-tone sequencer that allows you to balance the sound level from front to centre to rear. When it comes to centre-channel modes you may choose between Wide (a full frequency range signal), Phantom (no centre channel — used with L/R speakers when there is no centre speaker) or Normal. The latter feeds all deep bass to the front speakers rather than risk overwhelming a small centre speaker.

Additional surround modes may be provided to enhance mono sources or to create a more ambient effect with non-Dolby stereo sources, including music CDs. Be warned, however, for these are often of dubious merit. Some processors even include full AV switching facilities. These enable you to route both audio and video signals in and out of the same box, with the additional benefit of providing on-screen menus that can be viewed on your TV.

More expensive processors should offer a more detailed and transparent sound, more powerful amplification and a wider range of on-board widgets. But there is no need to keep home cinema and hi-fi in separate rooms. After all, both are intended for high quality sound reproduction, whether to enhance your enjoyment of music or films.

What is Dolby Surround?

Dolby Surround is all about recreating a cinematic wrap-around sound in the comfort of your own home. And with 5,000-6,000 Dolby-encoded films and music performances now released on video alone, this fantasy can become a reality on a surprisingly modest budget.

The concept itself is very simple. During filming, four audio channels are encoded onto a standard two-channel stereo soundtrack. In an AV processor, the extra two channels are decoded by comparing the relative phase and level of both (Left and Right) channels. Sound that appears mainly on the R is steered towards the front R speaker (ditto for front L) while any sound that appears in-phase on both L+R channels is steered towards the centre speaker. This technique is used to localise dialogue on the screen.

Meanwhile, the surround or special ambient effects that are recorded in anti-phase (L-R) are steered towards the two rear mono speakers. Unfortunately there's always some spillover of front information to this rear channel. Consequently the rear is delayed by 20msec (15-30msec is allowable) to ensure front-orientated sounds always arrive at the listening position first. This, in a nutshell, is Dolby Pro-Logic.

THE CAST LIST

Arcam Xeta 2	£650
JBL Director	£150
Marantz AV-1030	£330
Pioneer VSP-200	£250
Technics SH-AV500	£250
Yamaha DSP-E580	£449

Arcam Xeta 2

Arcam's new Xeta 2 processor may be the most expensive in our test, but it's not entirely representative of other models in the £500-£1,000 price band — the Xeta 2 is unique in many ways.

Among the Xeta 2's unusual features is Arcam's proprietary set-up procedure. This can only be accessed via an on-screen menu, which means that you have no choice but to route your video source (VCR or LD player) via the Xeta 2 on its way to the TV. A range of CVBS (phono) video inputs and outputs are provided for this purpose, overlaying important information about the chosen surround mode, the rear channel delay, centre speaker mode, input trim and test tone on top of the screen image.

All other processors and AV amps in this price band also include an on-board fluorescent display of some description, so the blank look of the Xeta 2 may take some getting used to. Of course, if the Xeta 2 is your first AV purchase then you are unlikely to notice the difference!

Anyway, Arcam's on-screen menu is accessed via a handy remote control which also adds Cinema and Hall modes,



centre/rear volume adjustment and muting to the digital main volume, logic-controlled input selection and stereo bypass facilities that are already provided on its fascia. Add these to the separate line-outs for front, centre, rear and subwoofer channels, and the Xeta 2 amounts to an unexpectedly sophisticated package.

Sound Quality

Striving hard to justify its place as the costliest AV processor in our six-way test, Arcam's Xeta 2 proceeded to deliver a vivid and robust performance, creating a truly three-dimensional soundfield with an excellent sense of integration from centre to main speakers and from front to rear. Described as 'forward, dynamic, expressive' and 'decidedly Leicester Square', this processor left us exhilarated if a little exhausted once our blockbuster movie selection was complete.

The whoosh of movement throughout the frantic party scene in *The Mask* sounded especially animated while the gunshot and roadkill scenes had a real gut-wobbling impact. This was powerful stuff, and make no mistake: it built added drama into every

film. It heightened the tension in *Outbreak* as the devastating fuel-air bomb drifted ominously towards the military encampment, and the explosion was equally dramatic (though perhaps a little too fierce unless Arcam's Cinema mode was engaged).

This aggressive delivery is the Xeta 2's greatest strength, but it also contributes to the processor's occasional downfall as the emphasis of 'top and bottom' renders its performance a little wearing, sapping the body from simple one-to-one dialogue. Gérard Depardieu, for example, was likened to Jean-Paul Gaultier as he made his speech after the beach-landing midway through *1492...*

Conclusion

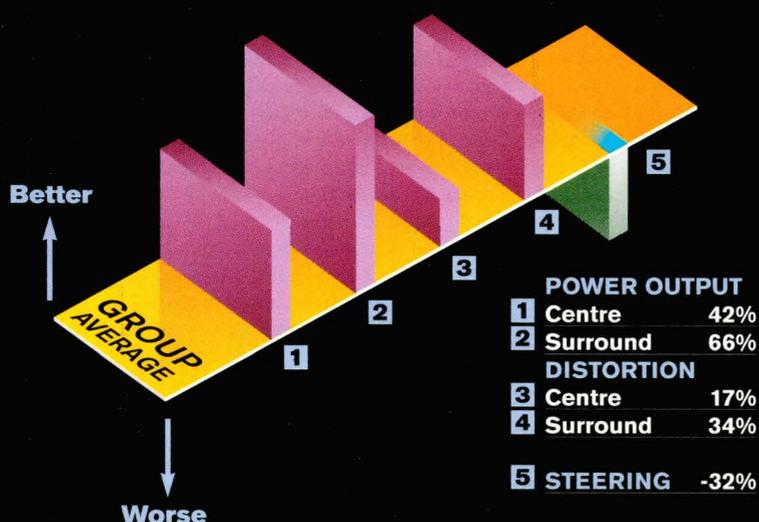
One for fans of blockbusting, high-adventure movies rather than everyday viewing, Arcam's Xeta 2 relishes tackling the likes of *Apocalypse Now* even if its swashbuckling treatment is less successful with *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. The Xeta 2 isn't equipped with the DSP-based surround modes that are often included to 'tart up' stereo sources — this is straightforward Pro-Logic, held up with belts, braces and a trio of lusty on-board amplifiers.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★☆
VALUE ★★★★★☆
PRICE £649.90

- ▲ Grand and majestic-sounding processor with no shortage of power.
- ▼ Over-cooked sound might well turn *Babe* into *Die Hard With A Vengeance*.
- ✉ Arcam, Pembroke Avenue, Denny Ind. Centre, Waterbeach, Cambridge CB5 9PB
- ☎ (01223) 440964

HOW IT COMPARES



LAB REPORT

The key to the performance of this processor is the very flat and massively extended responses of all four (front L/R, centre and rear) channels, the latter delving down to an outrageous 18Hz. In reality, there is no surround-encoded information this low in the bass, yet sufficient low bass signals will 'leak' from the centre and front to yield a warmer rear-channel sound.

The powerful 65W centre and 2x53W surround amplifiers also provide plenty of headroom (+0.8dB and +1.4dB respectively) to handle film track dynamics while the combination of low distortion and low noise (typ. -74dB and -72dB re. 1W/eight Ohm, A-wtd, centre/rear respectively) further encourages a clean and articulate performance.

Arcam's centre/rear digital volume operates in 1dB steps while the master volume offers finer 0.5dB divisions over the top 30dB of its range, dropping to coarser 1dB steps until -60dB is reached and the output is muted. Input overload margins are very generous but still, like the Xeta One AV amplifier, dependent upon the manual setting of its input trim facility. Meanwhile, its principal 'add-on' facility — the Cinema mode — introduces a mild treble cut to successfully reduce the brightness of big-screen movie soundtracks.

JBL Director

Pro-Logic processors come neither cheaper nor more cheerful than JBL's *Director*. This is the home cinema heart of JBL's 'SoundEffects' range, which also includes satellite loudspeakers and passive subwoofer combinations. Operating the *Director* is easier than falling off a proverbial log. There's no mains switch because the *Director* lurks in standby mode until it senses an audio signal arriving at the input. Then it's all systems go, with a master volume to adjust the output of all channels and a test tone to help you balance the sound from front, centre and rear.

Ordinarily, this would be achieved using separate volume controls for the centre and rear channel amplifiers. However, JBL has included a two-channel stereo amplifier in its *Director* (one channel feeds the centre speaker, the other feeds both rear speakers in series), and it uses a conventional rotary balance control to shift the level from centre to rear and vice-versa. Neat, huh?

Furthermore, I must admit to being surprised at the quality of the *Director*'s innards. This is no 'bag of bits', but a thoughtfully engineered piece of kit that



uses the fine-sounding PMI decoder chip, popularised by far costlier AV amplifiers a few years ago. JBL is certainly not going to make a fortune from selling the *Director* at this price.

Sound Quality

Anyone who is labouring under the misapprehension that all budget processors sound thin, weedy, bright and tiring should cock an ear towards the *Director*. To describe it as warm, heavy and ponderous would certainly not be an overstatement. One listener suggested that it sounded ideal for 'a small AV system that wants to be a home cinema monster', suggesting that its big and overbearing bass would only give a credible impression of weight and scale with the smallest of AV speakers.

The large loudspeakers used in our system only served to expose the *Director*'s coloration. It sounded rather thick and clumsy at times, and the combination of guns, helicopters and background effects throughout the first chapter of *Outbreak* merged into a glutinous and oppressive performance. Turning to *1492* and Columbus's exploration

of the island's rain forest, the *Director* provides less a feeling of wide open spaces and more the atmosphere associated, it was suggested, with London Zoo's Reptile House.

This pervading warmth almost always masks any sense of fine detail, so treble-dominated effects sound smeared and central dialogue seems mushy and indistinct. And it's this loss of fine detail, of quickness and alertness, that depresses the *Director*'s ability to recreate a light and breezy acoustic when required. This machine is AV's answer to a six-tog duvet.

Conclusion

The morbidly dark perspective offered up by JBL's *Director* seems ideally suited to moody films such as *Batman*, *The Crow* and *Beetlejuice* but, quite frankly, is likely to prove too damn depressing for what might generally be called 'light entertainment'.

Nevertheless, it is well worth remembering that the *Director* was designed with JBL's small and relatively forward-sounding 'SoundEffects' loudspeakers in mind. And with the 'SoundEffects' *Movies One* system (*Director* and three satellite speakers) starting at just £300, perhaps this is one casting couch worth entertaining...

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆
VALUE ★★☆☆☆
PRICE £149.99

▲ Large-scale and beefy sound. Budget price.
 ▼ Lacks finesse, subtlety and sparkle. Zero features.
 ✉ Harman Audio UK Ltd, Unit 2, Borehamwood Ind Est, Rowley Lane, Borehamwood, Herts WD6 5PZ
 ☎ (0181) 207 5050

LAB REPORT

Although JBL rates its 'stereo' amplifier at 25W per channel, in reality this amounts to 22W for the centre and just 8W for each series-connected rear channel speaker. So the *Director* certainly has the lowest output in this test, making easy-load, high-sensitivity speakers a must.

The big and blowsy sound of the processor comes from its high 0.28 Ohm output impedance(s), high 0.5 per cent rear-channel distortion and, most importantly, from the spilling of centre-channel dialogue into the front L/R channels to the tune of -19dB and -17dB respectively. This is outside the official Dolby specification and will tend to 'stretch' the audible image of central characters. Otherwise, the *Director* enjoys excellent separation between all other channels, bolstering its position in the 'steering' category.

The overload margins aren't terribly generous. Just 1.16V is sufficient to swamp the rear channel, so you need to beware high-output VCR's and LD players. And just like Mordaunt-Short's old *Decoder One*, the *Director*'s centre channel is permanently fixed in 'normal' rather than 'wideband' mode, limiting its -3dB bass output to just 115Hz. This proves, once again, that the *Director* is targeted squarely at small AV loudspeakers.

HOW IT COMPARES

POWER OUTPUT

- 1 Centre -52%
- 2 Surround -98%

DISTORTION

- 3 Centre -13%
- 4 Surround -19%

- 5 STEERING -5%

Better



1

2

3

4

5

GROUP AVERAGE

Worse



1

2

3

4

5

Marantz AV-1030

While the vast majority of Marantz's AV product range — amounting to at least 11 pre, power, integrated amplifiers and AV receivers — are all listed together in its mainstream brochure, the slimline AV-1030 slips through as part of the associated 'Marantz Design Hi-Fi' range. Designed to complement a variety of other stylish components, this processor manages to squeeze a fully-fledged Pro-Logic decoder, a chunky two-channel amplifier and both video and audio inputs into a package no more than 77mm high!

Matrix, Hall and Simulated surround modes inject a modest degree of life into tired, non-surround recordings, while your choice of input, centre mode and rear-channel delay are flashed up on a neat fluorescent display. The rear and centre volume settings are also revealed once they are activated by the remote control — a dual-sided affair complete with soft-touch buttons, which is quite capable of governing an entire Marantz-based audio system. And, yes, the AV-1030's master volume control is motorised for your convenience.

In common with past AV amplifiers from

the Marantz stable, the AV-1030 is fitted with a rotary input level control (see lab report), which is used to limit the peak signal level reaching the Pro-Logic IC itself. Just play the loudest portion of the film (not that easy the first time around) and trim the input control until the 'Peak' light is extinguished. Ideally, this should optimise the performance of the decoding circuits.

Sound Quality

Evidently biased towards the top end of the spectrum, the sound of this processor was described as 'a catalogue of quick, bright and intrusively edgy detail without the oomph to back it up'. The shotgun wielded by Jim Carrey's landlady in *The Mask* sounded implausibly weak, while the ram-paging T-Rex from *Jurassic Park* was simply too fierce to be plausible.

Our listeners thought this was a much louder presentation, although the AV-1030 was auditioned at precisely the same level as every other processor in this test.



VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £329.90

▲ Good sense of space and attack.

▼ Sounded fierce-sounding and unforgiving. Was this AV-1030 sick?

✉ Marantz Hi-Fi UK Ltd, Kingsbridge House, Padbury Oaks, 575-583 Bath Road, Longford, Middx UB7 0EH

☎ (01753) 680868

Initially, our panel was impressed by the apparent wealth of information pouring from the front, but this was no more than 'Fool's Gold, a surfeit of rough-edged treble' according to one panellist. In spatial terms, the Marantz was certainly better co-ordinated, but the effects and dialogue were handled unsympathetically, blurring subtleties of articulation. Jim Carrey's quick-fire repartee was particularly difficult to follow in this instance — hardly ideal for long term, stress-free listening.

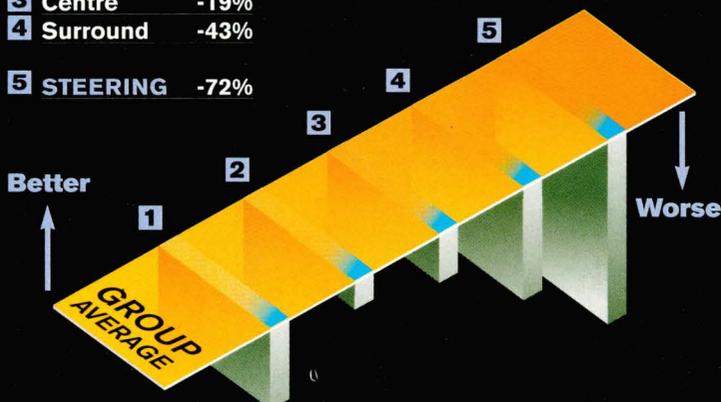
Conclusion

Marantz's 'designer' product may look the part but, assuming this sample is any guide, its sound is simply too fierce and unforgiving to warm the cockles of any film buff's heart. 'This might brighten up an old Ealing comedy,' remarked one listener, 'but it will surely prove too intimidating with today's bright-sounding film tracks'.

On the evidence of the lab test below, it is possible that this unit was defective and not representative of production samples. As always, we will be happy to test another sample if the manufacturer so desires. — Ed

HOW IT COMPARES

- POWER OUTPUT**
- 1 Centre -31%
- 2 Surround -10%
- DISTORTION**
- 3 Centre -19%
- 4 Surround -43%
- 5 STEERING -72%



LAB REPORT

Alas, it seems possible that this AV-1030 processor was suffering the electronic equivalent of flu. For starters, the AV-1030 uses a robust 'stereo' power amp with one channel driving the centre and the other driving two rear outputs in series. Fair enough, yet with 2x22W available to the latter, I would have anticipated close to 60W or so for the centre channel rather than the 28W actually measured. And a negative dynamic headroom of -1.3dB... A dodgy regulator, perhaps?

Steering is asymmetric too, with centre and rear-channel effects spilling over into the front right channel, leaving the left untainted. Then there's Marantz's manual input attenuator (see main review) whose concept is compromised by the limited gain — and therefore output — of the processor as a whole.

For example, with no input attenuation, a 500mV input can produce a massive 6.4V from the centre line-channel but just 500mV from the front line outputs — hardly sufficient to drive an external power amp. Naturally, increasing the input level soon compromises the processor's overload limit (665mV with the input level set to ten), so this is no solution. Ideally, Marantz should have provided extra gain for the front L/R channels, allowing them to adequately match the range available to its centre/rear outputs.

Pioneer VSP 200

Back in the mists of time, Pioneer had a rather nifty little AV amplifier called the VSA-303. If I remember rightly, it did quite well in both *Hi-Fi Choice* and our sister publication, *Home Entertainment*. Now, this VSP-200 processor is based on that popular amplifier. Sure enough, it's not quite as powerful and has obviously deferred the responsibility for driving the front L/R speakers to your existing stereo amplifier. The VSA-303's phono input has also been abandoned, and there are no tone, balance or loudness controls.

Yet the core of the VSP-200 is identical to that of the old VSA-303 — it even shares the same PCBs (printed circuit boards) with 'blank' patches where the earlier model was populated with components. Widgets are thin on the ground but include Simulated and Studio surround modes for CD sources, as well as Pro-Logic (with phantom, normal and wide centre options) for Dolby-encoded filmware. The motorised main volume is accessed via remote control, as is the centre/rear volume adjustment, rear channel delay and test tone facility. The VSP-200 is basic but thoroughly earnest stuff.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★☆
VALUE ★★★★★☆
PRICE £249.95

- ▲ Very together-sounding processor at a realistic price.
- ▼ Not quite as smooth or clear as the very best. No line-level output for the rear channel.
- ✉ Pioneer Hi-Fidelity (GB) Ltd, Pioneer House, Hollybush Hill, Stoke Poges, Slough, Berks SL2 4QP
- ☎ (01753) 789789



Sound Quality

Likened to a slightly thinner and shriller-sounding version of Technics's fabulous SH-AV500, Pioneer's VSP-200 was still very well liked by the panel. The Party sequence from *The Mask* was a little lighter in tone and atmosphere, but Jim Carrey's whirlwind effect still proved very entertaining and his roadkill impact still possessed a relatively decent 'thwack'.

The VSP-200 is a light and lively performer with a flair for the dramatic but it's not totally clean or articulate as possible and, as one panellist remarked, 'tends to pull to the centre very slightly'. The Pioneer is certainly a little 'leaky' — some L/R detail finds its way onto the dialogue channel — but the overall cohesiveness of the sound is more likely to be affected by differences in the quality of Pioneer's on-board amps than the stereo amp used for front L/R. If you already own an A-400 or, better still, the light and bubbly sounding A-303R, then the VSP-200 will shine all the brighter.

It's important to note that the fiercest of

tracks, including the opening chapter of *Outbreak*, never seem to sound oppressively hard or insistent. Here, the drama of the fire-fight had us on the edges of our seats while the thudding blades of the helicopter found us all glancing anxiously about the room. Then came that awesome fuel/air bomb, a devastating scene that was conveyed with great intensity and power. However, it sounded neither overbearing nor obviously 'processed'. At the end of the day, it's all good, wholesome family entertainment.

Conclusion

Were it not for the more recent and thoroughly fantastic Technics AV-SH500, this enthusiastic-sounding player would have won top honours, just as it did over a year ago in *Home Entertainment* magazine. Instead, the Pioneer VSP-200 will now have to make do with a firm recommendation, demonstrating that the pace of AV technology waits for neither man nor Far Eastern giant. The ball is placed squarely in Pioneer's court where, from past experience, it will be returned with vigour.

LAB REPORT

This may be the granddaddy of our AV processor test, but Pioneer's VSP-200 is still using the very same Sanyo-based Pro-Logic decoder featured in Technics's new SH-AV500. This alone, however, does not explain the subjective success of both units, because the LA2785 processor has also found its way into some less-than-wonderful AV products.

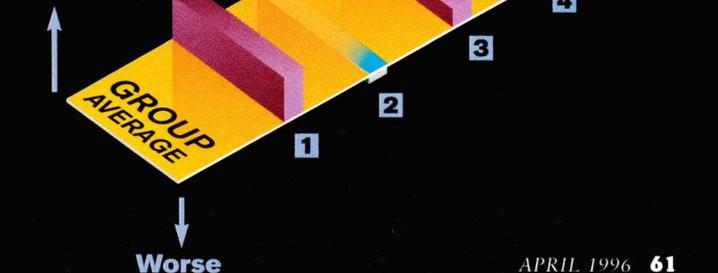
Like the SH-AV500, the VSP-200 does enjoy very low levels of distortion (0.03 and 0.09 per cent on centre and rear respectively), though with a beefier rear-channel amplifier, its 2x24W surround power more closely matches the 49W available to the centre. Nevertheless, the VSP-200 is still no powerhouse, so stick with sensitive, easy-load speakers for best results (particularly as regards the surrounds).

Pioneer's implementation of the Sanyo decoder has not realised the steering achieved by the very best, with separation between front, centre and rear channels typically hovering between 30-40dB. Good enough, but not to the standards of either the Technics or the Yamaha. On the other hand, its overload margins are more generous, so there's less chance of the VSP-200 getting into trouble with high output VCRs and LD players.

HOW IT COMPARES

POWER OUTPUT		
1	Centre	17%
2	Surround	-2%
DISTORTION		
3	Centre	7%
4	Surround	17%
5	STEERING	-12%

Better



Worse

Technics SH-AV500

If we disregard JBL's *Director* for a moment, then £250 is about as cheap as a decent, fully-fledged AV processor gets. And with the emphasis firmly on decent, Technics new *SH-AV500* not only looks set to frazzle all sub-£300 competition: it will also wipe the smug grin from various units costing £400 or more. And the reason for this success? Well, let's take a closer look.

Your choice of audio and video input, surround mode and main volume level is available at-a-glance from the central display, which also provides helpful little messages should you get lost among the widgets. Not that the *SH-AV500* is a daunting prospect: surround modes include standard Pro-Logic and the more reverberant 'Theatre' option with so-called Game, Hall and Simulated modes.

As usual, all features are accessible via remote control, including the three main, centre and rear channel volume controls. The former is unusual in employing a rotary encoder rather than the traditional mechanical volume knob, allowing you to spin the control continuously in either direction until



the amp reaches its limits. To prevent any nasty surprises after switching on, the default setting is minimum volume.

Sound Quality

This is a very subtle, well-balanced and smooth-sounding processor that remains clear and lucid without sounding too bright or losing its grip of important detail. The creaking rigging, the shouts of the sailors and the background chorus that fill *Land In Sight* from *1492* spilled into the room, extending from the front clear across to the surrounds with a marvellous and — by the standards of the day — quite surprising sense of integration.

Loud effects appearing on one of the channels — such as the ship's anchor plunging into the sea in *1492* — do not tug the soundstage to one side. Instead, the *SH-AV500* retains both bold and subtle detail in a peaceable harmony, imposing a hint of mildness in an effort to retain an air of authority and composure. Our panel also

remarked on its ability to reproduce a film's mood music with genuine commitment and emotion. "This sounds more like real music and not just an incidental backing track," remarked one appreciative panelist.

Moreover, the processor's sense of balance, its sophistication and subtlety, are retained at far lower volume levels, keeping attention on the screen where other processors would sound lacklustre or just plain ineffectual. Without doubt, the *SH-AV500* proved to be the star of the day's show.

Conclusion

This Technics entry-level processor takes a more even-handed approach to the creation of a plausible surround sound than any other of the models in this survey. Furthermore, it was the only model that our panel would describe as 'hi-fi' in the most positive sense. It's a stunning box of tricks, not for its auditory fireworks but for its unruffled access to the tension and atmosphere of the film itself. And at just £250, nothing short of a Best Buy would do the *SH-AV500* justice.

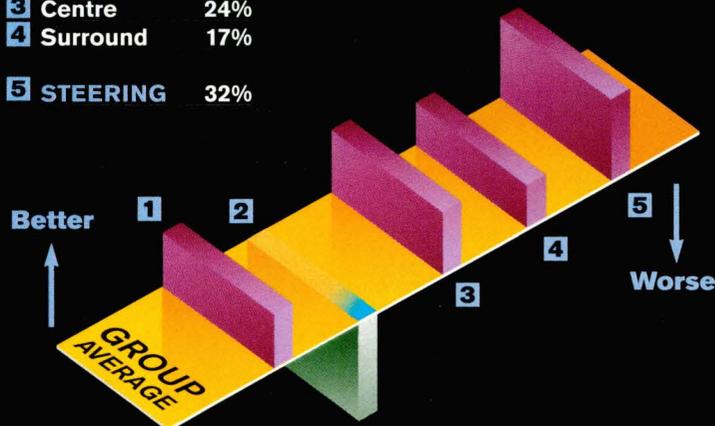
VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £279.95

- ▲ Breathes life into every soundtrack without over-cooking the effects.
 - ▼ Lacks extreme bass and extreme top-end 'air'.
- ✉ Panasonic (UK) Ltd, Panasonic House, Willoughby Road, Bracknell, Berks RG12 4PF
 ☎ (0990) 357357

HOW IT COMPARES

- POWER OUTPUT**
- 1 Centre 21%
- 2 Surround -38%
- DISTORTION**
- 3 Centre 24%
- 4 Surround 17%
- 5 **STEERING** 32%



LAB REPORT

In accord with its well-balanced sound, the technical performance of the *SH-AV500* also hangs together with a certain poise. Distortion, for example, hovers at a very low 0.014-0.09 per cent across all front, centre and rear channels while the channel separation, and hence its steering, remain both wide and symmetrical. Moreover, the processor features a decently wide dynamic range on the rear channel, avoiding the 'bumpy' noise floor suffered by other processors (and the Marantz in particular). Add to this a set of decent overload margins and a series of very even and extended responses, particularly on surrounds, and you've a recipe for good sounds.

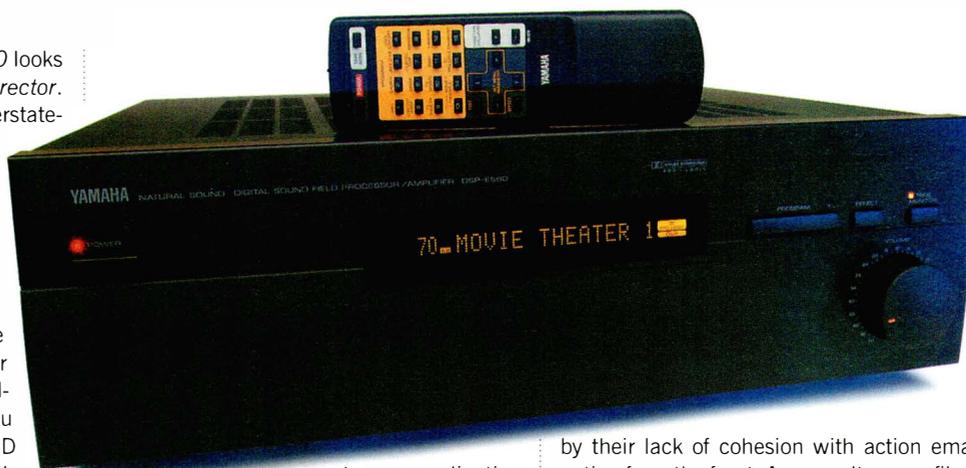
The only gnat in this glowing ointment is the relatively low 2x16W output of the single rear-channel amplifier, even if this does edge up to 2x27W into lower impedance (four Ohm) loudspeakers. If you are only using one rear-channel effects speaker then connect it across the L+/R- surround outputs for single rear channel capability of 50W/eight Ohm. This more closely matches the 51W available to the centre channel. Otherwise, err on the side of caution and use high sensitivity, eight Ohm speakers at the back of the room.

Yamaha DSP-E580

At first sight, Yamaha's *DSP-E580* looks as frugally-equipped as JBL's *Director*. But Yamaha are masters of understatement, and behind the blank alloy fascia beats a heart of comprehensive DSP widgetry. Fire up the *DSP-E580* and you are confronted with an attractive orange display, a panel that reveals your choice of some 12 cinema-based and four hi-fi based programs. These can all be selected via the remote, and their operational parameters are also available via Yamaha's on-screen menu system. Just wire your VCR or LD player via the *DSP-E580*'s video inputs for an instant display of all features.

The principal home cinema modes include both plain vanilla and 'enhanced' Pro-Logic, plus 70mm Theatre 1 and 2 varieties. Concert video and Opera modes are provided to 'tart up' any music video recorded in Dolby Surround; Animation, Classic, TV Sports/Theatre, Game and (argh) Karaoke modes complete the picture. Alternative DSP-based programs for conventional two-channel audio (ie CD) include Concert, Church, Jazz and Rock.

It's also possible to alter the surround environment created by these modes by, in



most cases, adjusting the rear channel delay, the initial delay and length of reflections (room size), the reverberation time and overall effect trim. Yamaha has future-proofed the *DSP-E580* by providing line-level outputs for all channels, enabling external power amps to be added at a later date. There's even a genuine low-pass line-level output to feed an active subwoofer, like REL's fabulous little *Strata*.

Sound Quality

Whatever else our listeners might have had to say about the sound of the *DSP-E580*, all agreed that its Enhanced Pro-Logic mode represented a great improvement in the spread of effects, the ambience and feeling of 'being there', compared to plain vanilla Pro-Logic. In general terms, however, the processor is just a little too measured and comfortable, suppressing what might be described as AV fireworks while still revealing plenty of clean, undistorted detail.

The helicopter that opens *Outbreak* certainly seemed to soar overhead but, otherwise, rear channel effects were conspicuous

by their lack of cohesion with action emanating from the front. As a result, many films were dominated by front effects, the overall effect being neither as vivid nor immediate as we had come to expect.

Similarly, the bangs and thuds we know to exist throughout the Party scene in *The Mask* were lacking oomph. "The subwoofer never once jumped," remarked one listener. Not that the *DSP-E580* is incapable of creating a very clean, tidy and ordered sense of acoustic, as the jumbled Land In Sight clip from *1492* aptly demonstrated. The detail is there, but it lacks a little weight and conviction.

Conclusion

If the listening notes seem rather downbeat then this is simply a reflection of this processor's understated competence. It confidently offers a calm performance that rallies against the crash, bang and wallop traditionally associated with in-store AV demonstrations. As a result, the *DSP-E580* ranks as a good long-term bet, a processor that will slip unobtrusively into your system while satiating the desires of the most widget-crazed home cinema fans.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆
VALUE ★★☆☆☆
PRICE £449.95

▲ A very civilised-sounding processor brimming with soundfield gadgets.

▼ Lacks a little drive, sparkle and AV-style charisma.

✉ Yamaha Electronics UK Ltd, Yamaha House, 200 Rickmansworth Road, Watford, Hertfordshire WD1 7JS (01923) 233166

LAB REPORT

In Yamaha's case, DSP might stand for 'Digital Soundfield Processor', yet this is still achieved via genuine DSP (Digital Signal Processing) which adds the special ambient effects to its surround sound. The Pro-Logic decoding itself, however, uses digital controls to guide what remains an *analogue* signal within the YSS223 IC. This is in contrast with the full-scale DSP decoding used in Yamaha's top AV amplifiers.

Yet the efficacy of this proprietary decoding technique is revealed in the excellent isolation (steering) afforded its respective front L/R, centre and rear channels. The result is crisp and stable images throughout the soundfield.

The lack of homogeneity between centre and rear sound effects is a little puzzling, however, because here Yamaha is using three entirely separate but identical amplifier stages. As a result, you're guaranteed a genuine 25W/eight Ohm across all three channels with only a slight increase in distortion (0.06 to 0.14 per cent) from front-to-back.

Incidentally, if you are using external power amps and wish to match the line outputs correctly, the centre should be set to -12dB and the rear -8dB, according to Yamaha's display. When the -10dB 'main level' facility is used, the centre/rear outputs more closely match the front L/R.

HOW IT COMPARES

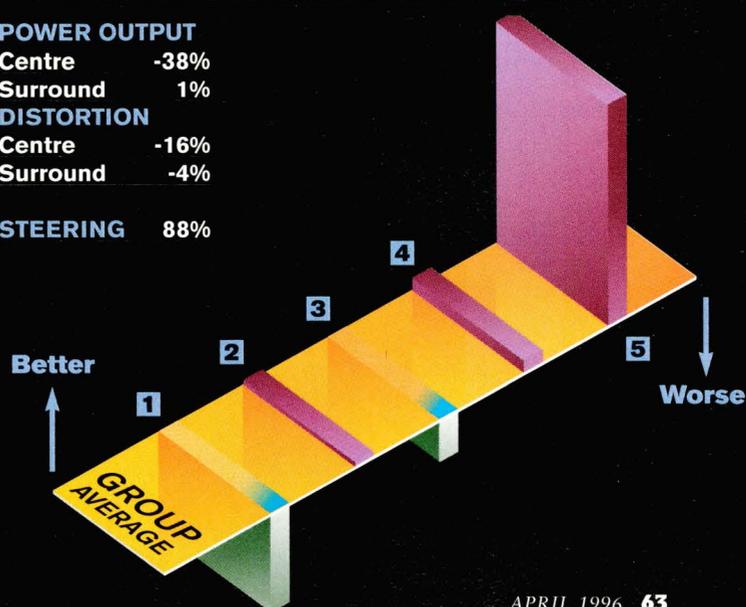
POWER OUTPUT

- 1 Centre -38%
- 2 Surround 1%

DISTORTION

- 3 Centre -16%
- 4 Surround -4%

- 5 STEERING 88%



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Conclusions, Best buys and Recommendations

If there is one machine that challenges the concept that higher prices and robust, convincing AV surround go hand-in-hand, it's JBL's entry-level



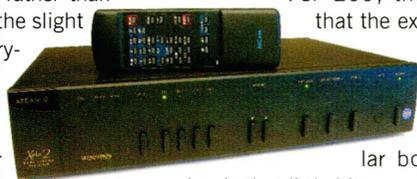
'more air than fuel'. An extra £100 or so more brings Yamaha's DSP-E580 into range. This is the one

processor boasting user-programmable DSP-derived soundfields alongside souped-up versions of Dolby Pro-Logic surround. Importantly, this is a rare example of a processor with matched centre and rear channel amplifiers, so that the surrounds keep going while the dialogue channel is thundering contentedly away. Nevertheless, for all its flexibility and technical prowess, the DSP-E580 can sound a little too civilised and orderly for a truly riveting AV ride.

Director. This surprisingly well-engineered AV processor has no frills and sounds rather overwhelming, but when partnered with a quintet of small, forward-sounding speakers, the *Director* is likely to give a very good account of itself.

At the other end of our AV spectrum, Arcam's new *Xeta 2* processor includes the important innards of its costlier *Xeta One* amplifier in a somewhat slimmer case. Full on-screen display and remote control bring sophistication, while beefy internal amplifiers give power and confidence to its sound, yet the *Xeta 2* is still aimed squarely at the 'AV minimalist' who wants to pay for quality Pro-Logic surround and not a catalogue of auxiliary DSP-based special effect modes.

Marantz's AV-1030 also steers clear of fancy effects, but relies on its modern styling and 'designer' two-sided remote facility to attract its customers. This — rather than the sound quality — justifies the slight premium over competing entry-level processors. Having just witnessed the devastating fuel-air burst from *Outbreak*, one panellist observed, rather dryly, that this effect was



processor boasting user-programmable DSP-derived soundfields alongside souped-up versions of Dolby Pro-Logic surround. Importantly, this is a rare example of a processor with matched centre and rear channel amplifiers, so that the surrounds keep going while the dialogue channel is thundering contentedly away. Nevertheless, for all its flexibility and technical prowess, the DSP-E580 can sound a little too civilised and orderly for a truly riveting AV ride.

In the end, it was the two popular mass-market processors that really stole the show. **Pioneer's VSP-200** produced a fine performance, packed with vivid, edge-of-the-seat detail that found us reluctant to cut short our various movie clips. Don't be put off by its dour appearance: this is a very straightforward processor with all the vital engineering done very right indeed.

However, despite our appreciation of the *VSP-200*, there was no doubt that the extra £30 warranted by Technics' new *SH-AV500* was more than justified. This particular box of AV tricks is simply that little bit more sophisticated, that

What is DSP?

Strictly speaking, DSP means Digital Signal Processing, although the same three letters are often used to denote the 'Digital Soundfield Processing' offered by various AV amplifiers. Sadly, DSP is an over-used acronym that crops up time and again.

The vast majority of Pro-Logic decoders are entirely analogue in design. A few use digitised information to steer those analogue signals between the left, right, centre and surround channels. Fewer still actually digitise the incoming stereo signal before steering, delaying the rear channel and performing one or more extra digital sleights of hand. So far, only Yamaha, Kenwood and Meridian can boast 'pure digital' Pro-Logic AV amplifiers.

Furthermore, just because an AV processor offers other modes like Matrix, Hall, Studio or simulated surround, this does not imply the use of DSP. In practice these modes are achieved by feeding sum or difference signals to the rear channel, whose delay is achieved using either 14-bit digital or analogue ICs.

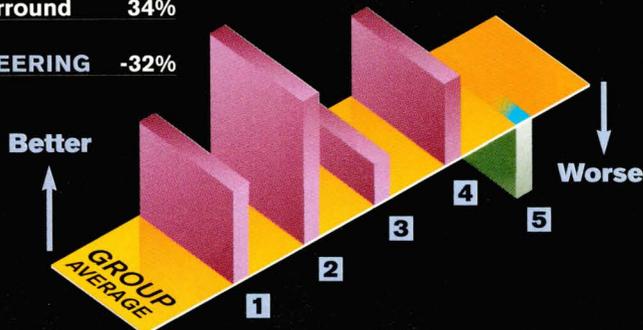
UNDERSTANDING OUR NEW BARGRAPHS

This month sees the introduction of a more 'instant' guide to the performance of products in our group tests. Simple though the graphs look — and that's the intention — you can be assured that *Hi-Fi Choice's* renowned attention to technical detail is preserved.

In every case, the middle position on the graph represents the average value for that parameter across the group as a whole. For example, the height of the first bar on our sample chart (taken from the Arcam *Xeta 2*) means its centre channel is 42% more powerful than the average figure for the group. The next bar shows that its rear-channel output is some +66% above the average surround power for the group.

Importantly, the value described by each bar indicator is arrived at by applying an algorithm, or weighting index, to a combination of carefully measured parameters. The steering indicator, for example, is a measure of the unwanted leakage that occurs between centre-and-rear, front L (and R)-to-centre, rear-to-front L (and R) and so on. The more disruptive types of leakage, say from centre-to-front, are given a higher weighting and therefore have more impact on the final height (or depth) of the bar.

POWER OUTPUT	
1 Centre	42%
2 Surround	66%
DISTORTION	
3 Centre	17%
4 Surround	34%
5 STEERING	-32%



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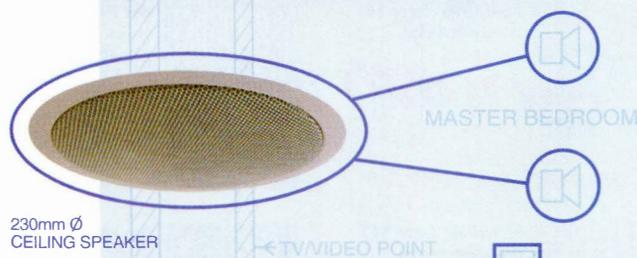


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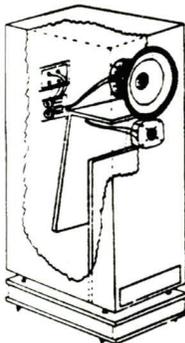
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ARCAM Alpha CD, £175. Linn Intek amp, £175. Linn Helix spkrs £175. £500 the lot. London (0181) 684 9815

ARCAM Alpha 5+ CD, £350. Cambridge Dacmagic 1, £110. Both two mnths old. Rochdale (01706) 345418

AUDIO INNOVATIONS, brand new Alto amp, chrome, £200. Aura VA80 amp, £160. Target M series 3 tier rack, £65. Glasgow (01236) 873100

AUDIO INNOVATIONS 500S amp, recent dealer service & valves, exc cond, £400 ono. Naim 32 preamp w/CD & MC boards, Avondale PSU, mint, £150 ovno. Northumberland (01670) 853780

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spkrs w/AE stands, mint, £650. Gloucester (01452) 611917

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WANTED: Service manual or copy of circuit diagram for Harman Kardon PM660 amp. Graham, Essex (01702) 520063



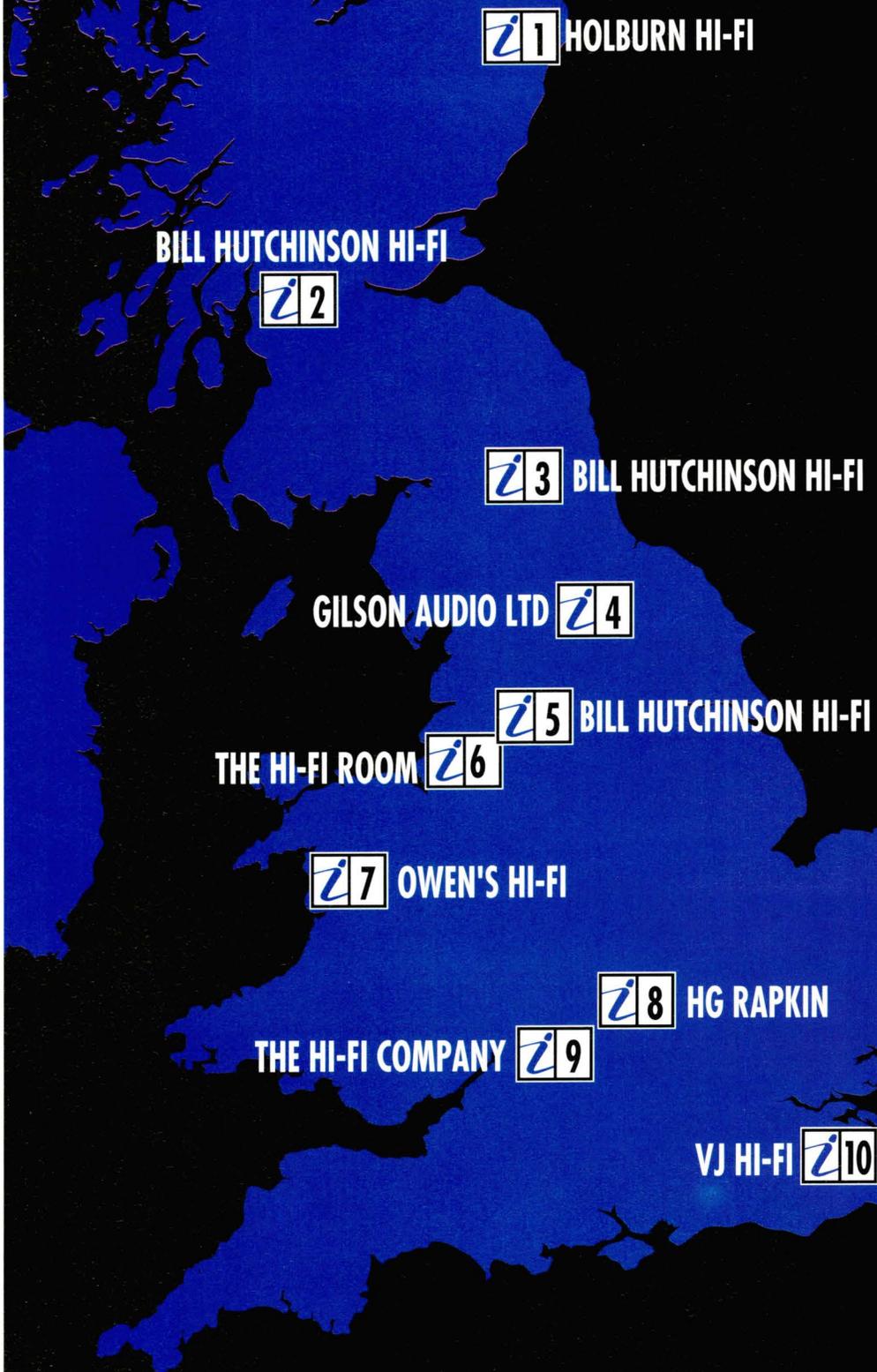
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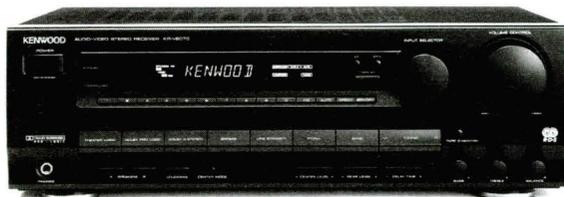
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■ **B'BUY** A product carrying the Best Buy swingtag is of excellent quality and good value for money in its price category.

■ **REC** Recommended products are runners up, but they are still definitely worth considering within their price bands.

Please note, however, that an expensive Recommended product will nearly always sound

better than an inexpensive Best Buy.

An ideal situation would be to choose suitably priced **B'BUY** or **REC** products from relevant categories and create a Best Buy system. However, due to the varieties in tonal balance that exist in many audio products, and differences in taste, system building is unfortunately not that simple. These ratings make a useful guideline for short-listing components, but only by experiencing the actual combination in a dealer's listening room will you be able to decide whether it works for you.

BUYING HI-FI EQUIPMENT

The key to putting together a great hi-fi system is finding a dealer with whom you can communicate, and who is sympathetic to your requirements. So the first stage in your quest is to look up your local dealers in our Dealer Directory, at the end of the product Directory, and go to see the people behind the counters. Listen to the sound they make, check out their record collections, sip their coffee and find the store with the right attitude. Then take your records in and listen to them through a variety of components within your budget. Use our Recommendations and Best Buys to narrow options down, but bear in mind that dealers have a lot of experience in putting systems together, so don't worry if parts of the system are not Best Buys. It's the end result that counts. Listen for the system that shows you the greatest differences in your software, (regardless of musical content, records should sound distinctly dissimilar). This is a good way of assessing which system is the most revealing.

If you can borrow equipment to try at home, do this before you buy. Loudspeakers in particular can sound very different according to the room they are in. Don't forget that cables and supports play an important part in the sound of a system: if you take your bits home and plonk them on the sideboard with a bit of mains flex to connect them up, don't expect sonic ecstasy!

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Amplifiers

The amplifier sits at the heart of the system, processing the outputs from the various music sources as necessary and then driving the loudspeakers. These two (quite separate) functions are integrated into a single box at the low-to-middle price points; but separated pre and power amplifiers, even separate power supplies, become increasingly common as one moves upmarket.

■ Bear in mind that output power and sound quality are not necessarily related. Some of the finest amplifiers around have outputs as low as 12 Watts, but team them with high efficiency loudspeakers and you can achieve loudness aplenty. Only when using loudspeakers of low sensitivity (below 87dB/W) or difficult load do you need lots of power.

■ As general rule, the more widgets an amplifier has (ie

tone controls, remote control, DSP) the more money will have to be spent on it to match the sound quality that can be achieved with a minimalist design. The sort of facilities that are useful include tape monitor switching and a source direct button on models with tone controls.

■ An increasing number of amplifiers are supplied without vinyl disc stages, or with the phono stage as an optional extra. If you use a turntable, make sure that the amp has an MM or MC stage to suit your cartridge.

A/V amps

In practice an A/V amplifier provides all the standard CD, tuner, tape, aux and phono inputs offered by a standard stereo amplifier. In addition many also incorporate an AM/FM tuner section, making them A/V receivers.

■ More importantly an A/V amplifier includes a Dolby Pro Logic decoding chip along with extra circuitry to effect the rear channel delay. Naturally there are at least four channels' worth of amplification under the bonnet to feed the five loudspeaker outputs.

Key

integrated, preamp, power amp amplifier type
 A/V includes surround sound capability
 50W power output per channel in Watts RMS
 MM, 5L, 2T number of inputs of each type (L - line, T - tape, MM - moving magnet cartridge, MC - moving coil cartridge
 hdph headphone output available

PRODUCT ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

AMPLIFIERS	
Analogue Saturn	75 preamp • MM
Analogue Saturn MC	75 preamp • MC
Creek OBM-8	99 preamp • MM • 10.6,11cm • Phono stepup
Sherwood AI 1110	100 integrated • 55W • MM,4L,1T • hdph
Creek OBM-9	110 preamp • MC • 10.6,11cm • Phono stepup
Creek OBM-11	129 0.3W • 1L • hdph • 10.6,11cm • Headphone amplifier
Pioneer A-103	130 integrated • 30W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • 42,11,31cm
Aiwa KA-003	140 integrated • 40W • MM,2L,1T • hdph • 2 speaker circuits
Kenwood KA-1060	140 integrated • 140W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • 44,13,25cm • 'Logical Flow' construction
Moth 30 Passive	149 109 preamp • 4L,1T • 5,10,35cm • Modular system gives cracking results. Passive pre/power amp warrant Best Buy (tested with 30/Stereo 60).
Marantz PM-34	150 integrated • 40W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • 42,14,28cm • Source direct
Pioneer A-203	150 integrated • 45W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • 42,11,31cm
Sony TAF211B	150 integrated • 30W • MM/2L • hdph • 43,14,31cm • Source direct
Denon PMA-250 III	160 121 integrated • 30W • MM,3L,1T • hdph • 44,10,28cm • High resolution amp, can loses its grip but is engaging and enjoyable.
Grundig V11	160 integrated • 50W • MM,5L,1T • dph • rem • 44,9,30cm • Tone defeat
Kenwood KA-2060R	170 integrated • 65W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 44,13,30cm • System control
Sherwood AI 5010	170 integrated • 70W • MM,3L,2T • hdph
Technics SU-V300	170 integrated • 25W • MM,2L,1T • hdph • 43,13,32cm • A/B speaker select
Rotel RC970BX MkII	175 144 preamp • 3L,2T • hdph • 44,8,29cm • Confident, consistent sound. reviewed (in Sessions) with RB970BXMkII power amps
NAD 302	189 116 integrated • 25W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • A sprightly and uplifting performance. Sounds loud, but never intrusive or fatiguing.
Moth 30 RIAA	199 preamp • MM/MC, • 5,10,35cm • Stand alone phono stage
QED Vector One	199 preamp • 4L,1T
Harman-Kardon HK610	200 integrated • 30W • 4L,2T • hdph • 45,11,37cm • 2 speaker pairs
JVC AX-R5BK	200 149 integrated • 45W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 44,15,31cm • Versatile, and ots of even-handed, articulate detail; but let down by superficiality
Kenwood KA-3020SE	200 134 integrated • 50W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • 44,14,35cm • UK Special Edition
Luxman A-312	200 integrated • 40W • MM,4L,2T • hdph • 13,44,36cm • CD direct, A/B speakers
Marantz PM-44 MkIIse	200 134 integrated • 40W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • 42,14,28cm • Two generations on from the PM-40SE, this new model gives a disappointingly grey view of music
Marantz PM-43	200 integrated • 55W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • 42,14,30cm • Twin speaker sockets
NAD 312	200 integrated • 25W • 6L,2T • hdph • 44,10,29cm • Soft clipping
Nakamichi IA4s	200 integrated • 30W • 3L,1T • 43,7,32 cm • 'Harmonic Time Alignment'
Onkyo A-801	200 integrated • 40W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • 46,12,33cm
Pioneer A-303R	200 134 integrated • 45W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 42,13,36cm • Fresh and uncomplicated sound bests much of the audiophile competition.
Sony TAF244B	200 integrated • 40W • MM/2L • hdph • 43,14,31cm • MOSFET power stage
Teac AR300	200 integrated • 45W • MM/MC,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 44,13,36cm • Mic input
Technics SU-V500	200 integrated • 30W • MC/MM,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 43,13,31cm • New Class A
Rotel RB970BX MkII	225 144 power amp • 60W • 44,8,29cm • Tested with RC970BX MkII in Sessions (see above)
NAD Monitor 1000	229 preamp • MM/MC,3L,2T • hdph
Rega Brio	229 integrated • 30W • MM,3L,1T • 43,7,15cm
Denon PMA-350 II	230 134 integrated • 50W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • 44,12,28cm • Mods give this amp a powerful up-front and compelling performance.
Denon PMA-480R	230 integrated • 50W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 44,12,29cm
JVC AX-V6BK	230 integrated • A/V • 50W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 44,13,46cm • Dolby Pro Logic
Kenwood KA-3060R	230 142 integrated • 45W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 44,13,30cm • Classy engineering, but sound is over-dry, often frustratingly restrained and rather unsophisticated.
Pioneer A-300X	230 116 integrated • 40W • MM,3L,2T • 42,13,36cm • This revamped version of the A300 sounds more confident via CD than MM, yet our panel was unmoved.
Technics SU-V620	230 integrated • 70W • MM,MC,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 43,13,32cm • R-Core transformer, THCB
Technics SU-A600 Mk2	230 149 integrated • 37W • MC/MM,3L,2T • hdph • 43,13,32cm • An amplifier that's great fun to be with, but a little untidy from time to time
Moth 30 Series Power	239 power amp • 30W • 5.10.35cm
Yamaha AX-490	239 149 integrated • 85W • MM,MC,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 44,15,39cm • Widgets aplenty, but unemotional sound evoked an uncertain response from panel
Alchem Alpha 5 Plus	240 149 integrated • 40W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • 43,8,30cm • Detailed improvement on predecessor, but lacks 'air'
Alchemist Axiom	249 integrated • 30W • 6L,1T • 47,8,25cm • Alloy/gold finish
Magnum IA120	249 integrated • 50W • MM,5L,2T • hdph
Moth 30 Active	249 preamp • 4L,1T • 5,10,35cm
NAD 304	249 121 integrated • 35W • MM,4L,2T • hdph • Good with CD and vinyl, this is a successful and entertaining amplifier for your shortlist.
JVC AX-A472BK	250 142 integrated • 65W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • 44,15,36cm • Unpredictable performer that is initially impressive but often ends up sounding starchy and tiring.
Luxman A-331	250 integrated • 60W • MM,4L,2T • hdph • 13,44,36cm • Inc CD direct
Marantz MA-500	250 power amp • 125W • 9,15,45cm • D-bus, monoblocks, bridgable
Marantz PM-53	250 integrated • 65W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 42,14,30cm • Remote control
Rotel RA935BX MkII	250 integrated • 50W • 3L,2T • hdph • 44,10,35cm • Separate listen/rec selectors
Sony TAF44E	250 142 integrated • 50W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • 43,15,38cm • Sheds all frillery for an audiophile approach, but till sounds grubby and stilted.
Teac AR500	250 integrated • 90W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 44,13,36cm • Mic input
Lecson 380X	255 integrated • 35W • MM/MC,6L • 44,6,27cm
Pro-ject Model 7	259 142 integrated • 40W • MM,3L,2T • A minimalist amplifier brimming with good intent, but too quirky for its own good. Either MM or MC.
Onkyo A803	260 142 integrated • 60W • MM/MC,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 46,12,33cm • This amp sounds lifeless, vague and disinterested in the music at hand.
Creek P42	279 preamp • 4L,2T • hdph • 42,6,20cm • Plug-in modules available
Creek A42	279 power amp • 50W • 42,6,20cm • 150 watts in mono
Creek 4240	279 134 integrated • 40W • 3L,1T • hdph • 42,6,20cm • Bearing no relation to earlier Creek designs, this radical rethink is more successful via MM than CD.
Denon PMA-450SE	280 142 integrated • 60W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • 44,14,36cm • Based on the original '450 and offers a fast, furious and entertaining sound.
Harman-Kardon HK620	280 integrated • 40W • 4L,2T • hdph • 45,11,37cm • High current design
Kenwood KA-4060R	280 integrated • 70W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 44,14,35cm • System control

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
Technics SU-A700 MkII	280		integrated • 45W • MC/MM,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 43,13,32cm • THCB low resonance base	
AMC AV81 Control	289		preamp • A/V • 8L,2T • rem	
Leccion Stereo 383X	295		integrated • 60W • MM/MC,6L • hdph • 44,6,27cm	
Alchemist Maxim	299		integrated • 30W • MM,5L,1T • 47,8,25cm • Alloy/gold finish	
AMC 2445	299		power amp • 45W • 4 channels	
Moth 30 RIAA 100VA	299		preamp • MM/MC • 5,10,35cm • Standalone phono stage	
QED Vector Reference	299		preamp • 4L,1T	
Yamaha AX-590	299		integrated • 100W • MM,MC,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 44,15,39cm • UK specified, system remote	
Denon PMA-715	300		integrated • 60W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 44,16,40cm	
Harman-Kardon HK1200	300		integrated • 25W • 5L,2T • 45,11,35cm • Discrete, low feedback circuit	
Kenwood KA-V3700	300		integrated • A/V • MM,4L,2T • hdph • rem • 44,14,30cm • Dolby Pro Logic	
Marantz PM-63	300		integrated • 70W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 42,14,30cm • Remote control	
Mission PSX-R	300		power supply • 22,8,36cm • Outboard PSU	
Musical Fidelity E10	300	144	integrated • 40W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • 44,10,34cm • Minimalist features	REC'D
Onix OA30	300		integrated • 40W • 5L,1T • hdph • 43,77,33cm	
Pioneer A-400X	300	138	integrated • 50W • MM/MC4,2 • hdph • 42,13,36cm • <i>On second audition, this amp was tonally unchanged but less compelling</i>	REC'D
Pioneer A-503R	300	138	integrated • 70W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 42,13,36cm • <i>Best via MM disc, the dull and claustrophobic sound is otherwise deeply uninspiring.</i>	REC'D
Rotel RA970BX	300	138	integrated • 60W • 4L,2T • hdph • 44,7,35cm • <i>Lively, fresh and perky with plenty of power, but not so clever with complex recordings.</i>	REC'D
Sony TAF542E	300		integrated • 90W • MM/MC,3L,2T • hdph • 43,15,38cm • UK optimised sound	
Naim Flat-Cap	317		power supply • 43,56,30cm • Power supply	
Moth 30 Integrated	320		integrated • 30W • 8L,T • 8,18,35cm	
Lumley Reference PP70	325		preamp • 6L,1T • 36,46,6cm • Passive, bolts to ST70	
Lumley Reference PP40	325		preamp • 6L,1T • 29,40,6cm • Bolts to ST40	
Lumley Reference PP1	325		preamp • 6L,1T • 29,44,6cm • Passive, stand alone	
Audio Innovations Alto	329	138	integrated • 35W • 4L,2T • 43,8,30cm • <i>Despite a lack of bass, it still sounds open, natural and relaxed.</i>	B'BUY
Magnum Quartet	329	121	integrated • 36W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • <i>An integrated model that incorporates four monoblocks optimised for bi-wiring, but sound is sandy in the treble.</i>	
Analogue Jupiter	330		integrated • 30W • MM,4L,1T	
Aura VA100 II	330	138	integrated • 70W • MM,4L,1T • hdph • 43,6,31cm • <i>Big, smooth yet slightly disjointed sound was equally familiar.</i>	
JVC AX-A662BK	330		integrated • 90W • MM/MC,3L,2T • hdph • 44,13,31cm • Compu-link system	
EMF Audio Sequel	349	109	integrated • 50W • MM,4L,1T • hdph • 43,65,28cm • <i>Relaxed and restrained design from Mike Creek.</i>	
Moth 30 Active 100VA	349		preamp • 4L,1T • 5,10,35cm	
NAD Monitor 1000S	349	124	preamp • MM/MC,3L,2T • hdph • <i>Sounds a little restrained.</i>	
NAD 306	349		integrated • 50W • MM,4L,2T • hdph	
Arcam Alpha 6 Plus	350	129	integrated • 50W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 43,8,30cm • <i>A new MOSFET design with a subtle and melodic sound.</i>	REC'D
Audiolink Sterling II	350		integrated • 60W • MM/MC • 43,7,270cm • Available in chrome	
Creek 4240SE	350		integrated • 50W • 3L,1T • hdph • 42,6,20cm • Optional MM/MC	
Inca Tech Oberon Pre	350		preamp • MM/MC,6L,2T • 43,8,22cm • CD direct & two outputs	
Kenwood KA-5050R	350	129	integrated • 95W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 44,15,40cm • <i>A listenable but neither particularly communicative nor captivating amplifier.</i>	
Luxman A-353R	350		integrated • 60W • MM/MC,4L,2T • hdph • rem • 13,44,37cm • Motorised volume control	
Onkyo A-911	350		integrated • 70W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 28,12,33cm • Mini component, 4ohm rating	
Pioneer A-602	350		integrated • 80W • MM/MC,3L,3T • hdph • 42,17,44cm	
Rotel RC980BX	350	109	preamp • MM/MC,3L,2T • hdph • 44,7,33cm • <i>Powerful, expansive but lacks poise, control and detail - disappointing (tested with RB980BX).</i>	
Technics SU-C1000	350		preamp • MM/MC,3L,2T • rem • 43,70,31cm • <i>Partner with SE-A1000</i>	
Technics SU-A800 Mk2	350	134	integrated • 55W • MC/MM,3L,2T • rem • 43,14,37cm • <i>Long term listening shows this model is a little bit bluff.</i>	
Quad 306	364		power amp • 50W • 33,7,21cm • Stereo power amp	
Audio Innovations P1	369		preamp • MM • 25,10,30cm • Phono stepup	
Audio Innovations L1	369	145	preamp • 3L,1T • 25,10,30cm	
Onkyo A850	370		integrated • 60W • MM/MC,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 46,15,35cm	
AMC 1030	379		preamp • MM	
Alchemist Kraken/Pre	380	124	power amp • 60W • 32,9,25cm • <i>Quirky Class A design with an equally warm and colourful sound.</i>	REC'D
Alchemist Kraken/mono	380		power amp • 60W • 32,9,25cm • <i>Mono version of Kraken power amp</i>	
Creedo PMP003	385		preamp • 22,6,24cm • Phono amp MM/MC, & PSU	
Creedo HMP003	388		preamp • hdph • Class A headphone amp	
Rega Elex	398	116	integrated • 50W • MM,3L,1T • 43,7,25cm • <i>Minimalist amplifier t sounds forward, hard and unforgiving.</i>	
Alchemist Kraken/Pwr	399	124	integrated • 60W • 3L,2T • 32,9,25cm • <i>Hardly accurate, but entertaining nevertheless.</i>	REC'D
EAR 834P	399		preamp • MM/MC • 40,40,15cm • Valve phono stepup	
Arcam Delta 290P	400	141	power amp • 75W • hdph • 43,9,30cm • <i>Crisp dynamics and detail - tested in Sessions</i>	B'BUY
Harman-Kardon HK1400	400	129	integrated • 40W • MM/MC,3L,2T • 45,11,37cm • <i>Relaxed, confident sound is only troubled by the most dense of recordings.</i>	REC'D
Harman-Kardon PA2100	400		power amp • 45W • 45,11,37cm	
Inca Tech Oberon Pwr	400		power amp • 70W • hdph • 43,8,22cm • Two inputs	
Luxman A-373	400		integrated • A/V • 80W • MM/MC,4L,2T • hdph • rem • 13,44,37cm • Also has AV inputs	
Onix OA24	400		preamp • MM/MC,2L,2T • 75,23,37cm • Internally switchable MM/MC	
Onix OA401	400		power amp • 50W • 75,23,37cm • With internal supply for OA24	
Sony TAF-A3ES	400		integrated • 70W • MM/MC, 3L,2T • hdph • 43,14,38cm • Toroidal transformer, MOSFET	
Sony TA-AV570B	400		integrated • A/V • 70W • MM,4L,5T • hdph • 43,15,36cm • Dolby Pro Logic	
Technics SU-A800D	400		integrated • 55W • MM/MC,3L,2T • hdph • 43,84,35cm • Two box pre/power combination	
Technics SE-A1000	400		power amp • 70W • hdph • 43,14,35cm • <i>Moving coil meters. Partner with SU-G1000</i>	
Michell Iso	412		preamp • MM or MC • smallcm • Phono stage	
Quad 34	414	44	preamp • MM,2L,T • 33,7,21cm • <i>Good filtering and above average tone controls, but lacks detail and dynamics</i>	
Naim NAP90/3	416		power amp • 30W • 43,56,30cm • Latest style. Suits 92	
Leccion Quattra	420		integrated • 30W • MM/MC + N/A • 44,6,27cm • Pre out/main in	
Audio Innovations T2	425		preamp • MC • 12,16,8cm • MC stepup transformer	
Onix OA21S	430	97	integrated • 50W • MM/MC,3L,1T • 75,23,37cm • <i>CD input sounds dead, but via MM disc, this amplifier has a fresh, vibrant sound</i>	
Naim NAC92	435		preamp • 5 (L or T) • 43,56,30cm • Latest style. Suits 90/3	
Creedo MMP002	439		preamp • Mic amp, phantom power	
AMC 2030	449		power amp • 30W	
EAR 834L	449		preamp • 5L,1T • Valve, line-only	
Orelle SA-100	449	140	integrated • 50W • 6L,1T • 44,7,23cm • <i>Tested in Sessions - clean, natural and articulate sound</i>	
Crimson CS610C	450		preamp • MM/MC,3L,1T • 9,10,35cm	
Crimson CS620C	450		power amp • 40W • 9,10,35cm	
Harman-Kardon HK640	450		integrated • 55W • 4L,2T • hdph • 45,14,37cm • ELNA reservoir caps	
Inca Tech Oberon	450		integrated • MM/MC,6L,2T • hdph • 43,8,22cm • Preout, biwire	
Marantz PM-700AV	450	125	integrated • A/V • 45W • MM,5L,2T • hdph • rem • 42,16,34cm • <i>Sounds just great through front and centre channels but surround sound is very weak.</i>	
Rose RV-23	450	77	preamp • MM,2L,1T • 33,9,26cm • <i>You can pay more to get a more transparent sound, but it's hard to criticise at the price.</i>	REC'D
Rotel RB980BX	450	109	power amp • 120W • 44,12,33cm • <i>Sound is expansive but lacks poise, control and fine detail - disappointing (tested with RC980BX).</i>	
Technics SU-A900 Mk2	450	138	integrated • 90W • MC/MM,3L,2T • rem • 43,14,37cm • <i>Jeckyl and Hyde amplifier with a dismal-sounding phono stage but transparent CD input.</i>	REC'D
Moth 30 Mono/40	459		power amp • 40W • 5,10,35cm • 2x monoblocks	
Audiolink P400	467		preamp • 4L • 43,7,270cm • Available in chrome	
AMC S84	479		preamp • A/V • 8L • rem • Multiroom, bal/unbal inputs	
Denon AVC-1530	480		integrated • A/V • 70W • MM,2L,2T • hdph • rem • 44,14,34cm	
Onix OA31	480	140	integrated • 60W • MM/MC,4L,1T • hdph • 43,77,33cm	
Grant CD10	482		preamp • 4L	
Arion Adonis (kit)	495		integrated • 20W • 4L,1T • Pre Class A integrated kit	
DPA DSP200S	495	124	preamp • 5L,1T • 22,30,8cm • <i>Dramatic but detailed and transparent sound belies modest power rating (tested with DPA-200S).</i>	REC'D
Unison Res Simply Phono	495		preamp • MM/MC • For Simply series	

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
Alchemist Kraken/Pwr A	499		power amp • 60W • 32,9,25cm • Stainless steel/gold finish	
AMC AV81 H.T. Control	499		preamp • A/V • 8L,2T • As AV81 plus Dolby Pro Logic	
Art Audio Minuet	499		preamp • 5L,1T	
CR Developments Kalypso	499		integrated • 15W • 5L	
Credo IMP702	499		integrated • 70W • 6L • 44,6,31cm	
Harman-Kardon AP2500	499		preamp • MM/MC,6L,2T • 45,11,35cm	
LFD Integrated Zero	499	140	integrated • 50W • 5L,1T • 30,6,37cm • <i>Lively and brisk, but at the same time cold and unsympathetic</i>	
LFD Linestage LSO	499		preamp • 5L,1T • 30,6,37cm • Zero feedback	
LFD Powerstage PAO	499		preamp • 50W • 30,6,37cm • Stereo MOSFET	
Arcam Delta 290	500	116	integrated • 75W • 4L,2T • hdph • rem • 43,9,32cm • <i>Combines dry restraint with detail, dynamics and musical colour.</i>	REC'D
Audiolab 8000A	500	140	integrated • 60W • MM/MC,2L,3T • hdph • 45,8,36cm • <i>The 8000A remains a highly disciplined and mature sounding amp.</i>	REC'D
Mission Cyrus III	500	140	integrated • 50W • MM,5L,1T • rem • 22,8,36cm • <i>The classic Cyrus II sounds convincing, masterful and musical.</i>	B'BUY
Pioneer VSA-701S	500		integrated • A/V • 55W • MM,2L,2T,5V • hdph • rem • 42,17,42cm • Dolby Pro Logic	
Rotel RC990BX	500		preamp • MM/MC,2L,2T • hdph • rem • 44,7,33cm	
Sentec PP9 RIAA MM	500		preamp • MM • 5,12,23cm • Phono step-up - MM	
Technics SU-A900D	500		integrated • 70W • MM/MC,3L,2T • hdph • 43,84,35cm • Pre/power, Master Series caps	
Thorens TTP2000	500	139	preamp • MM/MC,4L • <i>Minimalist shoebox preamp, rhythmical, warm balance. Tested in Sessions with TTA2000</i>	
Magnum MF125	515		power amp • 140W • Monoblocks	
Audiolab 8000C	520	97	preamp • MM/MC,2L,3T • hdph • 45,8,36cm • <i>Distinctive, stark neutrality that will not appeal to all. Good value engineering.</i>	
Linn Majik-1 (Line)	524		integrated • 33W • 4L,2T • hdph • 32,8,33cm • <i>Works as preamp or integrated; multiroom capability</i>	
Rose RV-23S	525		preamp • MM/MC,2L,2T • 33,9,26cm • Tube, separate PSU	
AMC CVT3030	529	116	integrated • 30W • 6L,1T • hdph • <i>Attempt to mix transistors with valves only shines with simple musical styles.</i>	
Myriad MI120	530		integrated • 60W • 4L,2T • hdph • rem • 44,10,31cm • Optional MM or MC modules	
Credo IMP703	538		integrated • 70W • MM/MC, 6L • rem • 44,6,31cm • As above, with remote	
Rose Scion	545		integrated • 50W • MM/MC,3L,2T • 42,7,30cm • 2-box, purist design	
Alchemist Kraken A	549		integrated • 60W • 5L,1T • 32,9,25cm • £50 MM option, alloy/gold	
Alchemist Kraken Anniv	549		integrated • 60W • MM,3L,2T • 25,9,25cm • Stainless steel/gold finish	
Linn LK100	549		power amp • 50W • 32,8,33cm • Stereo	
Moth 30 Stereo/60	549	109	power amp • 60W • 5,15,35cm • <i>Tested with 30 Passive - see comments earlier on page 113</i>	
Naim NAIT	549		integrated • 30W • 3L,1T • 43,56,30cm	
Stemfoort Audio SF60	549		integrated • 60W • 4L,1T • 43,8,35cm • Passive line amplifier	
KAL Magician	550		preamp • 3L,1T • hdph • Tube	
Rose RP-190 (Dual Mode)	550		power amp • 75W • 33,9,30cm • Low feedback monoblock mode	
Thorens TTA2000	550	139	power amp • 35W • <i>Tested with TTP2000 (see above) in Sessions</i>	REC'D
Heybrook Integra	555		integrated • 75W • MM/MC • hdph • 77,44,30cm	
Aldyon PSU	569		power supply • PSU for Chorus, Temper, Modus	
Tube Tech Seer Line	575		preamp • 5L,1T • 35,8,25cm • Entry level, 10 yr guarantee	
Naim NAC92R	579		preamp • 5(L or T) • rem • 43,56,30cm	
Electrocompaniet ECP-1	580		preamp • MM/MC • 24,7,16cm • Self-adjusts to cartridge	
Audiolink PR401	583		power amp • 100W • 43,10,37cm • Available in chrome	
Linn Majik-1 (Phono)	593	129	integrated • 33W • MM,MC,3L,2T • hdph • 32,8,33cm • <i>The cornerstone of Linn's modular hi-fi system is innovative, but sounds vague and confused.</i>	
DPA Renaissance	595	140	integrated • 40W • MM,4L,1T • hdph • 40,28,8cm • <i>DPA's first integrated amp is typically innovative, but a little too 'crisp 'n dry' for our tastes.</i>	
Magnum MF300	595		power amp • 180W • Monoblocks	
Monrio ADN	595		preamp • MM/MC • 14,8,36cm • Phono preamp, ext PSU	
Fullers Pre 1	599		preamp • MM,5L,2T • 48,9,30cm • Optional MC stage	
Magnum Class A	599	116	integrated • 60W • MM/MC,3L,1T • <i>Lasings of rich and compelling music, but the Class A trades lushness for accuracy.</i>	REC'D
Musical Fidelity E200	599	145	preamp • 5L,2T • hdph • rem • 44,12,35cm • <i>Weighty, luxuriant but hardly scintillating. Tested with MF E300</i>	
Musical Fidelity E100	599	140	integrated • 70W • MM,4L,1T • hdph • rem • 44,12,35cm • <i>Beautifully crafted with a vibrantly colourful, almost dramatic sound.</i>	REC'D
Art Audio Headline	600		preamp • hdph • Single ended triode Class A	
Kenwood KA-V7700	600		integrated • A/V • MM,11L,1T • hdph • rem • 44,13,30cm • Pro Logic, learning remote	
Nakamichi IA2	600		integrated • 50W • MM/MC,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 43,12,36cm • 'Harmonic Time Alignment'	
Pioneer VSA-D802S	600	125	integrated • A/V • 55W • MM,2L,2T,5V • hdph • rem • 42,17,42cm • <i>The grey sound lacks attack and confidence, undermining tension</i>	
Sentec PP9 RIAA MC	600		preamp • MC • 5,12,23cm • Phono step-up - MC	
Shearne Phase 3	619		power amp • 50W • Can biamp with Phase 2	
Meridian 501	625	145	preamp • MM,4L,2T • hdph • 33,9,34cm • <i>Tight, positive sound, but dispassionate; intense at high levels. Tested with 555</i>	
Meridian 555	625	145	power amp • 60W • 33,9,32cm • <i>Tested with the 01 - see comments above</i>	
Bryston 4	641		preamp • A/V • 4L,1T • 48,5,25cm	
Fullers Pre 1+	649		preamp • 6L,2T • 48,9,30cm • No phono option - hard wired	
Heybrook SIG CA	649		preamp • MM/MC,5L,2T	
Naim Hi-Cap	649		power supply • 21,76,30cm • Power supply	
Shearne Phase 2	649		integrated • 50W • 5L • MM/MC phono i/p £87 extra	
Tube Tech Seer Phono	649		preamp • MM,4L,1T • 35,8,25cm • Tube phono stage	
Alchemist Nemesis	650		integrated • 80W • 6L,1T • 44,8,34cm • Alloy/gold finish	
Audiolab 8000S	650		integrated • 60W • 3L,3T • hdph • rem • 45,8,36cm • Mode switch, biwire terminals	
Harman-Kardon HK660	650		integrated • 65W • 4L,2T • hdph • 45,14,37cm • 50 amp peak current	
Quad 77	650	139	integrated • 50W • 2L,T • 33,6,30cm • <i>Stylish remote driven amp, bright and lively. Tested in Sessions</i>	
Triangle TE60SE	650		integrated • 70W • MM/MC,3L,1T • hdph	
Lecson Quattra Plus	655		integrated • 50W • MM/MC + N/A • 44,6,27cm • Separate PSU	
Naim NAC72	670		preamp • 2MM/MC, L,2T • 21,76,30cm • Upgradable with PSU, MC I/P	
Bryston BP1	673		preamp • A/V • MM or MC • 48,5,25cm • <i>Phono stepup, balanced and unbalanced operation</i>	
LFD Int. Zero (Ph)	679		integrated • 50W • MM/MC,5L,1T • 30,6,37cm • Phono version of Int. Zero	
Lynwood Opal	685		integrated • 80W • 7L,1T	
Meridian 562	685		preamp • MM,8L,T,6D • 33,9,34cm • Digital main out. MC option	
Meridian 551	695		integrated • 55W • MM,4L,T • hdph • rem • 33,9,34cm • MC option	
Monrio MJ	695		integrated • 50W • 5L,1T	
Heybrook SIG MNEX	698		power amp • 140W • Mono, uses ext SIG/DCPS PSU	
Exposure XX Super	699		integrated • 55W • 4L,2T • 43,85,35cm • Upgraded model	
Gamma Acoustics Gemini	699	148	integrated • 12W • 3L • 33,23,8cm • <i>Genuine single-ended triode design, but low power, mundane sound and poor build</i>	
Marantz AV-500	699		preamp • A/V • MM,7L,2T • rem • 42,10,34cm • Dolby Pro Logic	
Musical Fidelity E300	699	145	power amp • 100W • 44,12,35cm • <i>Tested with E200 - see comments above</i>	
Naim NAP140	699		power amp • 45W • 21,76,30cm	
Onix OA601	699		power amp • 70W • 75,46,36cm • Regulated PSU	
Thule PR200	699		preamp • 5L,2T • hdph • rem • Balanced in and outputs	
Audiolab 8000P	700		power amp • 100W • 45,8,36cm • Bi-wire speaker terminals	
Aura CA200	700		preamp • MM,7L,2T • hdph • rem • 43,6,34cm • Chrome finish, add £50	
Harman-Kardon PA2200	700		power amp • 70W • 45,14,38cm	
Micromega Tempo 1	700		integrated • 50W • 6L,1T • hdph • 43,9,28cm • Optional MM/MC	
Teac A-BX7R	700		integrated • 60W • MM,3L,2T • rem • 44,10,38cm	
Technics SU-C2000	700		preamp • rem • 45,13,35cm • Rotary resistor attenuator	
Woodside SC27 Line	705		preamp • 2L,1T	
Michell Argo	715		preamp • 3L,1T • 33,7,19cm • 2 pairs of outputs	
Quad 606	718	124	power amp • 140W • 33,14,24cm • <i>Amplifier with classic lineage but compromised by an equally dated, soft and undynamic sound (tested with 66).</i>	
Naim NAIT R	724		integrated • 30W • 3L,1T • 43,56,30cm	
Sonic Link DM30	725		integrated • 25W • MM/MC,3L,1T • 23,8,43cm	
Rega Elicit	730		integrated • 70W • MM,MC,3L,1T • 43,7,25cm • Full dual mono	

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Denon DCD 1015 CD *	£349.00	£259.00	NAD 705 Receiver	£329.00	£229.00
Denon DRW 760 Double Deck*	£259.00	£189.00	Pioneer CLD 950 Laser Player *	£499.00	£329.00
Denon TU 215RD Tuner*	£149.00	£109.00	Pioneer PDS 703 CD Player	£249.00	£179.00
Denon AVC 1530 AV Amp*	£479.00	£349.00	Pioneer CT S430S Cassette	£199.00	£129.00
Heybrook HB1 (Black)*	£269.00	£149.00	Pioneer CT630S Cassette	£299.00	£209.00
Heybrook Heylo (Black)	£389.00	£289.00	Pioneer VSA 802 AV Amplifier *	£599.00	£429.00
KEF Coda 7 Speakers	£129.00	£99.00	ProAc Response 1 Speakers (Blk)	£999.00	£699.00
KEF Coda 8 Speakers	£189.00	£149.00	Quad 66 Preamplifier *	£897.00	£679.00
Linn Karik 3 CD Player	1750.00	1195.00	Quad 67 CD Player	£875.00	£659.00
Linn LP12(B)/Cirkus/Basik	1050.00	£599.00	Quad 66FM Tuner *	£554.00	£399.00
Linn Lingo Power Supply	£750.00	£495.00	Quad 606 Power Amplifier *	£718.00	£499.00
Linn Ekos ToneArm	1500.00	£950.00	Quad FM4 Tuner *	£434.00	£329.00
Linn Kairn (Phono) Pre	1750.00	1100.00	Quad 306 Power Amp	£364.00	£269.00
Linn Kaber Passive Speakers	1800.00	£898.00	Rega Brio Amplifier	£229.00	£169.00
Linn LK100 Power Amp	£650.00	£449.00	Rega Elex Amplifier	£398.00	£298.00
Marantz PM34 Amplifier *	£149.00	£119.00	Ruark Swordsman Plus 2 Spkrs	£299.00	£149.00
Marantz ST55 Tuner *	£149.00	£ 95.00	Ruark Templar Yew Speakers	£499.00	£299.00
Marantz ST65 RDS Tuner *	£199.00	£129.00	Ruark Talisman Speakers	£699.00	£349.00
Marantz PMV711 AV Amplifier *	£449.00	£309.00	Rotel RA935 Phono Amp*	£275.00	£179.00
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Mission 731 Speakers	£129.00	£ 95.00	Tannoy 633 Speakers	£299.00	£229.00
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Mission 752 Speakers	£499.00	£399.00	Yamaha KX580 Cassette Deck*	£249.00	£189.00

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PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
Art Audio VPL	741		preamp • 6L,2T	
Audio Innovations L2	749		preamp • 4L,1T • 50,12,30cm	
Audio Innovations P2MM	749		preamp • MM • 50,12,30cm • Phono stage	
Electrocomp't ECP-1 SF	749		preamp • MM/MC • 24,7,16cm • auto-adjusts, black stone fascia	
Arcam Delta 110	750		preamp • MM/MC,2L,2T • hdph • rem • 43,7,30cm • On-board DAC, 2 inputs	
Art Audio Conductor Phono	750		preamp • MM/MC • Separate PSU, upgradable	
Audiolab 8000M	750	145	power amp • 125W • 45,8,36cm • <i>Strong, controlled sound; confident bass, but colourless. Tested with 8000Q</i>	
Bryston 2B-LP	750		power amp • A/V • 75W • 48,5,25cm • Bridgable	
DPA 200S	750	124	power amp • 60W • 22,30,8cm • Dramatic but crisp, open sound belies power rating (tested with DSP-200S).	REC'D
KAL Harlequin	750		preamp • MM/MC,2L,1T • hdph • Tube	
Rotel RB990BX	750		power amp • 200W • 44,12,38cm	
ECA Vista S	760	145	preamp • 4L,1T • 39,10,39cm • Wind up the volume and blow a breath of fresh music into your system (tested with Lectern).	B'BUY
Grant G100P	764		preamp • MM,2L,1T	
Meridian 501V	785		preamp • A/V • MM,4L,1T • hdph • 33,9,34cm • As 501, plus video switching	
Michi RHC-10	795		preamp • 5L • 47,8,34cm • Passive	
AVI S2000M	799		integrated • 100W • 4L, 1T • rem • 31,25,9cm • Includes S200RC handset	
Credo CMP004	799		preamp • 6L • 44,6,31cm • 3 outputs	
Exposure XiX	799		preamp • 5L • 43,85,35cm • Line only version of XVII	
Exposure XV Super	799		integrated • 55W • MM,MC,3L,2T • 43,85,35cm	
LFD Int. Zero LE	799		integrated • 60W • 5L,1T • 43,7,33cm	
PS Audio 6.1	799		preamp • 4L,1T • 43,6,19cm • Outboard PSU	
Chimera X-150C	800		preamp • 4L,1T • Balanced CD in, balanced out	
Chimera X-80	800	138	integrated • 80W • 4L,1T • <i>Stinking looks, powerful, but ultimately lacking in dynamics. Tested in Sessions</i>	
Crimson CS630C	800		power amp • 90W • 9,10,35cm	
Sentec SC9	800		preamp • 4L,2T • hdph • 34,7,15cm	
Sherwood AM/AVP8500	800		A/V • 230W • hdph • rem • A/V Pre/power amp	
XTC PRE-1	800		preamp • 5L,1T • hdph • rem • Single ended MOSFET preamp	
Bryston BP4	802		preamp • A/V • 4L,1T • 48,5,25cm • Balanced out	
Heybrook SIG CAP	829		preamp • 6L,2T • Line only	
AVI S2000MA	849		power amp • 105W • 31,25,9cm • New reference model	
AVI S2000MP	849		preamp • 5L,1T • 31,25,9cm • includes S2000RC handset	
Exposure XVII	849	142	preamp • MM,MC,3L,2T • 43,85,35cm • Superbly rhythmic; maybe a tad overpowering in the midband. Tested in Sessions with XVII Super	REC'D
Exposure XVIII Super	849	142	power amp • 70W • 43,85,35cm • Upgraded model	REC'D
Onix OA801	849		power amp • 190W • 75,46,36cm • 2x monoblocks, massive PSU	
Stemfort Audio SF100	849		integrated • 100W • 4L,1T • 43,8,40cm • Passive line amplifier	
Audiolab 8000PPA	850		preamp • MM/MC • 45,8,36cm • Phono preamplifier	
Alchemist Forsetti Pre	870		preamp • 6L,1T • 47,8,39cm • Balanced output	
Michelli Iso HR	879		preamp • MM or MC • smallcm • Phono stage	
Moth 30 Mono/100	879		power amp • 100W • 5,15,35cm • 2x mono, separate PSU	
Shearpe Phase 5 Mono	879		power amp • 100W • 44,6,31cm • Monoblocks - bal/unbalanced	
ECA Vista HD	880		preamp • 4L,1T • 39,10,39cm • High definition version	
ECA Lectern S	880	145	power amp • 50W • 39,10,30cm • Tested with £60 Vista S - see above for comments.	B'BUY
ECA Prisma	880		preamp • MM,MC • 39,10,23cm • Phono stepup	
Woodside SC27 MM	881		preamp • MM,2L,1T	
Bryston BP5	889		preamp • A/V • MM/MC,3L,1T • 48,5,25cm • MM or MC, balanced out	
Dawn Audio Cmd 2 by 200	890		power amp • 200W • 38,11,26cm • Single monoblock	
Meridian 562V	895	140	preamp • A/V • MM,8L,1,6D • 33,9,34cm • As 562, plus video switching	REC'D
Monrio MC-200S	895		integrated • 60W • 6L,1T • 43,10,37cm • Simplified version of MC-205	
Monrio MC-25	895		power amp • 80W • 43,10,36cm • Dual mono construction	
Shearpe Phase 6 Pre	895		preamp • MM,6L • Bal/unbal, can use battery	
Quad 66	897	124	preamp • MM,4L,2T • rem • 33,8,26cm • <i>Amplifier with classic lineage but compromised by an equally dated, soft and undynamic sound (tested with 606).</i>	
Alchemist Forsetti	899		integrated • 100W • 4L,2T • 47,10,39cm	
PS Audio 6.2	899		preamp • MM/MC,3L,2T • 43,6,19cm • Outboard PSU	
PS Audio Phono Link	899		preamp • MM/MC • 43,6,19cm • Outboard PSU	
Woodside ISA230 Disc	899	116	integrated • 30W • MM,2L,1T • <i>Smooth and inoffensive valve amplifier, though it lacks the sparkle and euphony required for a truly entertaining sound.</i>	
Woodside ISA230 Line	899		integrated • 30W • 4L,2T	
Concordant Exhilarant	900		preamp • 5L • 6 tube pre, wood case option	
Marantz SC-22	900		preamp • 4L,1T • 25,9,22cm • Audiophile micro component	
Micromega Tempo 2	900		integrated • 75W • 6L,1T • hdph • 43,9,28cm • Optional MM/MC	
Minstrel Ultra Linear	900		integrated • 26W • 3L,1T • 38,31,16cm • Low feedback hybrid	
Heybrook SIG/SPX	922		power amp • 140W • Stereo power amp	
Meracus INGREDI	925		preamp • MM/MC,6L • h dph • 46,9,31cm • Optional phono & case colours	
Audio Innovations P2MC	949		preamp • MM/MC • 50,12,30cm • Phono stage	
LFD MC1 Phonostage	949		preamp • MC • 30,7,36cm • Discrete circuit	
Thule IA100	949		integrated • 100W • 5L,2T • rem • Fully balanced operation	
Woodside ISA 240	949		power amp • 40W	
DNM 3 Start	950		preamp • MM/MC,2L,1T • 27,13,16cm • Solid core, slit foil caps	
Monrio PWR1L	950		preamp • 6L,1T • 43,7,27cm • Twin outputs	
Dawn Audio Prelude +50	951		preamp • MM/MC,2L,2T • 38,9,26cm • Pre out line driver	
Art Audio VP1	952		preamp • MM,5L,2T	
Lynwood Ruby	985		power amp • 120W	
Naim NAP180	987		power amp • 60W • 43,76,30cm	
Electrocompaniet EC1-2	990		integrated • 50W • 3L,1T • 46,11,38cm • New entry level integrated	
Conrad-Johnson PV10AL	995		preamp • 5L • Line version of PV-10A	
Counterpoint Solid IEM	995		power amp • 100W • 25,6,27cm • Mono	
Michi RHB-05	995		power amp • 100W • 47,8,36cm	
Michi RHQ-10	995		preamp • MM,MC • 47,8,34cm • Phono equaliser	
Michi RHA-10	995		preamp • 5L • rem • 47,8,34cm • Active	
Roksan ROK-L2.5	995		preamp • 4L,1T • 43,8,33cm • Revised	
CR Developments Romulus998	998		integrated • 35W • 5L	
Linn Kairn Pro	998		preamp • 4L, 2T • 32,8,33cm • Multi-room compatible	
Arcam Xeta One	999		integrated • A/V • 50W • MM,5L,2T • hdph • 43,13,32cm • Video switching, 5ch Dolby	
Audio Innovations Ser 800	999	148	power amp • 25W • 41,15,34cm	
Gamma Acoustics Era Std	999		preamp • MM,3L,1T • 44,17,30cm • Triode, fully regulated	
LFD LS1 Linestage	999		preamp • 4L,1T • 48,7,33cm • Zero feedback	
LFD PA1 Powerstage	999		power amp • 60W • 48,7,33cm • MOSFETs, custom parts	
LFD PPS	999		preamp • 2L,1T • 13,6,27cm • Switched attenuator, passive	
Musical Fidelity F22	999		preamp • 5L,1T • rem • 49,12,33cm • Optional phono/digital boards	
NAD Monitor 208	999	124	power amp • 250W • <i>Truly a beefy amplifier</i>	
Teac A-BX10	999		integrated • 100W • MM/MC,3L,2T • 44,10,38cm • Balanced input	
Woodside SC27 MC	999		preamp • MC,2L,1T	
YBA Integre Line	999		integrated • 45W • 4L,1T • 43,9,33cm	
Audiolab 8000Q	1,000	145	preamp • 3L,3T • hdph • rem • 45,8,36cm • <i>Tested with £750 8000M monoblocks - see comments</i>	
Graaf WFB Two	1,000		preamp • MM,6L,1T • 41,10,30cm	
Harman-Kardon HK680	1,000		integrated • 85W • 5L,2T • hdph • 45,14,40cm • Optional phono stage - £30	

PRODUCT

£ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

Harman-Kardon PA2400	1,000	power amp • 120W • 45,16,41cm	
Lumley Reference LV1	1,000	preamp • 6L,1T • 29,44,6cm • Active valve circuit	
Marantz PH-22	1,000	preamp • MC,MM • 25,9,22cm • Phono stepup	
Sentec PA9	1,000	power amp • 60W • 20,8,30cm • Monoblocks	
AVI S2000MP + P	1,049	preamp • MM,4L,1T • rem • 31,25,9cm • includes S2000RC handset	
Meracus CIERE	1,095	power amp • 60W • 46,9,31cm • Discrete design	
Meracus INTRARE	1,095	integrated • 60W • MM/MC,5L,1T • hdph • 45,9,31cm • Optional phono & case colours	
Sonic Frontiers SFP-1	1,095	preamp • MM/MC • 45,12,28cm • Tube/J-FET phono stage	
Audio InnovClassic 25	1,099	integrated • 25W • 4L,1T • 46,15,34cm • Enclosed valves	
Copland CSA-14	1,099	148 integrated • 60W • MM,3L,1T • 43,13,38cm • <i>Great sound and looks, but watch out for high capacitance cables</i>	REC'D
LFD Integrated 1	1,099	integrated • 65W • MM/MC,4L,1T • 48,7,37cm • <i>A more powerful Integrated 1</i>	
Musical Fidelity FX	1,099	power amp • 90W • 49,12,38cm • Bal/unbalanced in	
Tube Tech Unisis Pwr Amp	1,099	power amp • 30W • 35,17,27cm • Stereo power amp	
Art Audio Conductor	1,100	preamp • 6L,2T • hdph • Upgradable	
Technics SE-A2000	1,100	power amp • 100W • rem • 45,19,44cm • Meters, R-Core, MOS AA	
Creedo CMP005	1,119	preamp • 6L • rem • Remote controlled preamp	
Bryston BP20	1,126	preamp • A/V • 8L,1T • 48,5,25cm • Balanced in/out	
Grant G50A	1,128	power amp • 60W • Monoblocks	
Unison Res Simply Two	1,148	integrated • 12W • 4L,1T • 25,16,40cm • <i>Looks fantastic, but sound is confused</i>	
Arion Eros Line Mk II	1,150	preamp • 4L,1T • Dual mono construction	
Michell Alecto Stereo	1,150	power amp • 50W • 32,20,36cm	
Copland CSA-303	1,155	preamp • MM,3L,1T • 43,13,38cm • Hybrid, Sovtek 6922 tubes	
Bryston 3B-NRB	1,159	power amp • A/V • 150W • 48,13,23cm • <i>Balanced and unbalanced operation</i>	
Counterpoint SA-1000E	1,195	preamp • MM/MC,3L,1T • 49,12,32cm	
Counterpoint Solid 8E	1,195	preamp • 3L,1T • 49,6,27cm	
Dynavector L200	1,195	preamp • 3L,1T • 44,6,24cm • Line preamp	
Audio Innovations S500	1,199	integrated • 25W • MM,3L,2T • 41,15,34cm	
Audio Innovations SV00	1,199	116 integrated • 25W • 4L,1T • 41,15,34cm • <i>Turns the roughest of digital sounds into understated and graceful music.</i>	REC'D
Tube Tech Prophet	1,199	preamp • 4L,1T • 35,8,25cm • Two box pre, separate PSU	
YBA 3 Power	1,199	72 power amp • 45W • 43,9,33cm • <i>Tested with £1250 3 Pre - see below for comments.</i>	
YBA Integre	1,199	121 integrated • 45W • MM,4L,1T • 43,9,33cm • <i>Audiophile spec French integrated with good resolution and nice phono stage.</i>	
Aura PA200	1,200	power amp • 110W • 43,10,34cm • Balanced & unbalanced in	
Chimera X-150P	1,200	power amp • 150W • MOSFET, balance, bridgable	
Chimera X-100	1,200	integrated • 100W • 4L,1T • Outboard PSU, s/steel & chrome	
Fullers A10	1,200	power amp • 10W • 48,13,30cm • Single ended Class A	
Woodside MA50 Class A	1,224	power amp • 50W • 1 channel monoblock	
AVI S2000MM	1,249	power amp • 150W • 31,25,9cm • 2x monoblocks	
Alchemist Forsetti Pwr	1,250	power amp • 150W • 47,14,39cm • Alloy/gold finish	
Conrad-Johnson PV-10A	1,250	139 preamp • MC,4L • <i>Beautiful imaging, superb detail, plenty of gain on the phono input; classy build too. Tested in Sessions</i>	REC'D
Lumley Reference ST40	1,250	power amp • 40W • 30,40,17 • Pentode	
Micromega Amp	1,250	power amp • 100W • 43,9,28cm	
Micromega Tempo P	1,250	preamp • 7L,1T • hdph • 43,9,28cm • Optional MM/MC	
YBA 3 Pre	1,250	72 preamp • MM,3L,1T • 43,9,33cm • <i>See-through, ethereal stereo images, but more convincing towards centre of soundstage (tested with £1199 3 Pwr).</i>	
McIntosh MC7100	1,259	power amp • 100W • 45,9,54cm • System controller	
Bryston THX3B	1,262	power amp • A/V • 150W • 48,13,23cm • 2 channels, THX approved	
Magnum MA500	1,295	power amp • 280W • Monoblocks	
Arion EOS Export Mk II	1,299	power amp • 18W • With volume control	
Classe Audio Audio 3D	1,320	preamp • MM/MC,4L,1T • 48,7,28cm	
Woodside STA35	1,323	100 power amp • 35W • <i>Synergistic with SC26, with a cool, controlled sound, good focus and transparency. More poise than grunt (tested with SC26).</i>	
Michell Argo HR	1,339	preamp • 3L,1T • 36,8,22cm • 2 pairs outputs	
Copland CTA-301MKII	1,349	preamp • MM,3L,1T • 43,13,38cm • Upgraded, tube, soft start	
Arion Eros Phono Mk II	1,350	preamp • 3L,1T • Dual mono construction	
Art Audio Quintet	1,393	109 power amp • 15W • <i>Switchable triode, ultralinear output stage. In triode mode, these are 15 of the sweetest Watts around. Surprisingly gutsy.</i>	REC'D
Sonic Frontiers SFL-1	1,395	preamp • 4L,2T • 45,12,28cm • Tube/FET hybrid line stage	
Linn Kairn Preamp	1,398	preamp • MM, MC 3L,2T • 32,8,32cm • Multi-room compatible	
Arion Triton Mk II	1,399	power amp • 10W • Triode, volume control	
Arion Elektra Export Mk	1,399	integrated • 18W • 4L,1T • Class A valve amp	
Classe Audio Audio 70	1,399	power amp • 75W • 48,12,30cm • Single ended, balanced	
Musical Fidelity A1000	1,399	integrated • 50W • MM/MC,3L,1T • 49,13,36cm • Separate PSU	
Shearpe Phase 1 Pre Ref	1,399	preamp • MM/MC,5L,2T • 43,6,31cm • <i>Owners of old non-ref model can have their amps upgraded</i>	
Tube Tech Unisis S'Line	1,399	integrated • 30W • 4L,1T • 35,17,27cm • Line level version of Unisis	
Tube Tech Unisis	1,399	integrated • 30W • MM,3L,1T • 35,17,27cm • One tube phono stage	
Exposure XIV	1,400	preamp • MM,MC,3L,2T • 48,8,30cm • Needs 9 power supply	
Electrocomp't EC-4 Line	1,420	preamp • 5L,2T • 48,9,23cm • inc XLR balanced in/out	
Woodside SC25 Line	1,420	preamp • 2L,2T	
Papworth TVA50	1,425	power amp • 50W • 43,19,33cm • Tube stereo	
Electrocompaniet EC1-2SF1	1,440	integrated • 50W • 3L,1T • 46,38,11cm • As EC1-2 + Black Stone facia	
Arion Talos Line Mk II	1,450	integrated • 10W • 4L,1T • Triode Class A valve amp	
McIntosh C712	1,479	preamp • 6L, 2T • hdph • rem • 45,9,45cm • System controller	
ECA Lectern HD	1,480	power amp • 50W • 39,10,23cm • High definition version	
Counterpoint SA100E	1,495	power amp • 100W • Hybrid	
Counterpoint Solid 1E	1,495	power amp • 100W • Mono	
Dynavector P100	1,495	preamp • MM,MC • 44,6,22cm • Phono stepup	
Roksan ROK-S1.5	1,495	power amp • 70W	
Sonic Frontiers SFP-1 Sig	1,495	preamp • MM/MC • 45,12,28cm • Tube/J-FET phono stepup	
Unison Res Simply Four P	1,495	integrated • 24W • 4L,1T • 35,16,40cm • Single ended Pentode	
Art Audio Integra	1,499	integrated • 30W • 5L,2T • Class A Pentode	
LFD Phonostage MC2	1,499	preamp • MC • 30,7,36cm • Hand tuned MC1	
Minstrel Partridge	1,499	integrated • 26W • 3L,1T • 38,31,16cm • Zero feedback hybrid	
PS Audio 100 Delta	1,499	power amp • 120W • 42,15,35cm	
Audio Note Oto SE	1,500	126 integrated • 24W • MM/MC,4L,1T • <i>Transparent, dynamic, clear and subtle, but limited power.</i>	REC'D
DNM 3A Start	1,500	preamp • MM/MC,2L,1T • 27,13,16cm	
Lumley Reference PV1	1,500	preamp • MM,5L,1T • Phono version of LV1	
Monrio MC-205	1,500	integrated • 80W • 6L,1T • 43,10,36cm • Inc pre-out sockets	
Tesserac TAADA	1,500	preamp • MM/MC	
Tesserac TALA	1,500	preamp • 5L,1T	
Thorens TRP3000	1,500	preamp • MM,3L,1T • hdph • Inc Class A headphone amp	
Thorens TRP3000	1,500	preamp • MM/MC • Phono stepup, valve	
Grant G100AMS	1,528	power amp • 100W	
Naim NAP135	1,529	power amp • 70W • 43,76,30cm	
Naim NAP250	1,529	power amp • 70W • 43,76,30cm	
Unison Res Simply Four T	1,545	integrated • 11W • 4L,1T • 35,16,40cm • Single ended triode Class A	
Audio Research PH-3	1,550	preamp • MM/MC • 48,14,26cm • Hybrid phono preamp	
Triangle Nemo Allion 02	1,550	integrated • 80W • 5L,2T	
EAR 859	1,595	integrated • 13W • 6L • 40,40,15cm • Single ended valve	

PRODUCT £ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

Copland CTA-501	1,599	power amp • 30W • 2L • 43,18,38cm • Tube, has vol control	
EAR 834	1,599	integrated • 50W • 6L • 40,40,15cm • Valve	
Exposure XVIII (pr)	1,599	power amp • 65W • 43,85,35cm • Upgraded 2x monoblocks	
LFD Linestage LS2	1,599	preamp • 4L,1T • 48,7,37cm • Hand tuned LS1	
LFD Powerstage PA2	1,599	power amp • 75W • 48,7,33cm • Hand tuned PA1	
Marantz MA-22	1,600	power amp • 50W • 23,9,22cm • Audiophile monoblock x2	
Arion Talos Phono Mk II	1,650	integrated • 10W • MM,3L,1T • Triode Class A phono amp	
Michi RHB-10	1,650	power amp • 200W • 47,19,37cm	
Art Audio Concerto	1,669	power amp • 50W • 2x mono triode/pentode	
Counterpoint SA-2000E	1,695	preamp • 4L,2T • 49,12,33cm	
Sonic Frontiers SFS-40	1,695	power amp • 40W • 40,18,32cm • Stereo tube power amp	
Classe Audio Audio 4L	1,697	preamp • 5L,1T • 48,9,34cm • Remote option	
Copland CTA-401	1,699	integrated • 30W • MM,3L,1T • 43,18,38cm • Tube push/pull ultra-linear	
Credo PMP154	1,699	power amp • 150W • 44,16,31cm	
Credo PMP303	1,699	power amp • 30W • Class A power amp	
YBA 2 Pre	1,699	56 preamp • MM,3L,1T • 43,9,33cm • <i>Superbly finished, good space and transparency. Needs transformer for MC cartridges (tested with £2150 2 Pwr).</i> REC'D	
Classe Audio Audio 4	1,735	preamp • MM/MC,4L,1T • 48,9,34cm • Remote option	
Audio InnovFirst Audio	1,749	power amp • 7.5W • 41,15,34cm	
DNM PA1	1,750	power amp • 45W • 27,13,18cm • Triwire output	
LFD Linestage LS2P	1,750	preamp • MM/MC,4L,1T • 48,7,37cm • As LS2 with phono stage	
Unison Res Mystery One	1,750	preamp • 4L,1T • For Smart 845	
Bryston 4B-NRB	1,756	power amp • A/V • 300W • 48,13,39cm • Bridgable, bal & unbalanced	
Electrocomp't EC-4 SF L	1,790	preamp • 5L,2T • 48,9,23cm • XLR in/out, black stone facia	
Sonic Frontiers SFC-1	1,795	126 integrated • 50W • 4L,2T • 45,19,43cm • <i>Smooth, sophisticated Canadian valve amp with a decent direct input and more features than average.</i>	
Sonic Frontiers SFL-1 Sig	1,795	preamp • 4L,2T • 45,12,28cm • Tube/FET hybrid line stage	
Thule PA200	1,798	power amp • 200W • High power balanced design	
Audio InnovSer 1000	1,799	power amp • 50W • 41,15,34cm • Monoblocks	
Tesseract TAHA	1,800	preamp • MC, • hdph	
Bryston 7B-NRB	1,815	power amp • A/V • 500W • 48,13,39cm • Single monoblock	
Audio Research LS-3	1,845	preamp • 5L,1T • 48,14,26cm • 1 direct input	
Arion Tycho Pwr Mk II	1,850	power amp • 50W • Pure Class A	
Bryston THX4B	1,858	power amp • A/V • 300W • 48,13,39cm • 2 channels, THX approved	
Linn Klout	1,895	power amp • 80W • 32,8,33cm • Stereo, tri-wire connectors	
Musical Fidelity F15	1,899	power amp • 100W • 49,19,38cm • Bal/unbalanced in/hybrid	
Naim Super-Cap	1,909	43,76,30cm • Power supply	
Bryston THX7B	1,917	power amp • A/V • 500W • 48,13,39cm • 1 channel, THX approved	
Woodside SC26 Phono	1,931	100 preamp • MM/MC,3L,2T • <i>Synergistic with STA35, with a cool, controlled sound, good focus and transparency (tested with STA35).</i>	
Concordant Exquisite	1,950	preamp • 5L • 10 tubes, 2 line out, ext PSU	
Lumley Reference ST70	1,950	power amp • 70W • 36,46,18cm • Switchable triode/pentode	
Electrocompaniet EC-3MC	1,953	preamp • MC,4L,2T • 48,9,23cm • XLR in/out, adj MC input	
Michell Alecto Mono	1,989	power amp • 100W • 32,20,36cm	
Adyton CHORUS	1,995	preamp • MC • 44,3,25cm • RIAA phono stage	
Counterpoint NPS-100E	1,995	power amp • 100W	
Dynavector L100	1,995	preamp • 3L,2T • 44,6,24cm • Line preamp	
Monrio HP1	1,995	power amp • 135W • 43,11,43cm • Dual mono, high current	
Unison Res Phono One	1,995	preamp • MM,MC • For Mystery/Perf/Absolute	
Naim NAC82	1,997	preamp • 6 (L or T) • rem • 43,76,30cm	
Arion Tycho Int Mk II	1,999	integrated • 50W • 4L,1T • Pure Class A integrated	
Copland CTA-504	1,999	power amp • 50W • 43,18,38cm • Switchable tetrode/triode	
LFD Linestage LSB	1,999	preamp • 4L,1T • 48,7,37cm • Balanced LS2	
LFD Powerstage PA2M	1,999	power amp • 90W • 30,7,37cm • Mono PA2	
Art Audio Conductor Export	2,000	preamp • 6L,2T • hdph • rem • Separate PSU, mono	
Thorens TRA3000	2,000	power amp • 90W • 8x EL34 tubes	
Thorens TRA3000	2,000	power amp • 90W • Valve	
XTC POW-1	2,000	power amp • A/V • 175W • 4 channel multi-purpose amp	
Electrocomp't AW100DMB	2,080	power amp • 100W • 48,13,36cm • High current (80A)	
McIntosh C38	2,095	preamp • MM, 5L,3T • hdph • rem • Multi-room, balanced out	
Copland CTA-505	2,099	power amp • 67W • 43,18,38cm • Switchable tetrode/triode	
McIntosh C22	2,099	preamp • 8L • hdph • rem • Retro style valve pre	
YBA 2 Power	2,150	56 power amp • 70W • 43,9,33cm • <i>Superbly finished, but with slightly softened bass (tested with £1699 2 Pre).</i>	REC'D
Credo PMP102	2,181	power amp • 100W • 44,21,31cm • Class A power amp	
Electrocompaniet EC1-1	2,188	integrated • 100W • 5L,2T • 45,13,36cm • High current (80A)	
Bryston 8B-NRB	2,195	power amp • A/V • 150W • 48,13,39cm • 4 channels, bridgeable	
Counterpoint SA-3000E	2,195	preamp • MM/MC,4L,2T • 49,12,33cm • Separate PSU	
Dynavector HX75	2,195	power amp • 75W • 22,13,37cm • High current design	
Meracus PRETARE	2,195	preamp • MM/MC,3L,1T • rem • 42,12,44cm • Dual mono, case colour opt	
Exposure IV	2,199	power amp • 80W • 48,13,35cm • Fully regulated	
Shearne Phase 1 Pwr Ref	2,199	power amp • 100W • 43,14,36cm • <i>Owners of old non-ref model can have their amps upgraded</i>	
Graaf 5050	2,200	power amp • 50W • 41,20,33cm	
Meracus TENTARE	2,245	power amp • 75W • 42,12,44cm • Dual mono	
McIntosh MC7108	2,249	power amp • A/V • 40W • 45,16,51cm • 8 channel (5-way) 8x45 watts	
Audio Research LS-3b	2,250	preamp • 5L,1T • 48,14,26cm • 1 direct input	
Conrad-Johnson PV-12L	2,250	preamp • 5L • Line version of PV-12	
Roksan ROK-L1.5	2,250	preamp • 4L,1T • 43,8,33cm	
Electrocomp't EC-3MC SF	2,270	preamp • MC,4L,2T • 48,9,23cm • XLR in/out, black stone facia	
PS Audio 200 Delta	2,279	power amp • 200W • 42,15,45cm	
Electrocomp't AW100DMB	2,280	power amp • 100W • 48,13,36cm • High current, blk stone facia	
McIntosh MC7150	2,295	power amp • 150W	
Classe Audio Audio 10	2,299	power amp • 125W • 48,17,42cm • Single ended, bal bridgable	
Matisse Fantasy	2,300	preamp • A/V • 6L,2T • Line stage	
Classe Audio Audio 5L II	2,395	preamp • 5L,1T • 48,15,43cm • Remote option	
Bryston THX8B	2,400	power amp • A/V • 150W • 48,13,39cm • 4 channels, THX approved	
Marantz MA-24	2,400	power amp • 30W • 21,17,36cm • Class-A monoblock x2	
Electrocomp't EC1-1 SF	2,460	integrated • 100W • 5L,2T • 45,13,36cm • High current, blk stone facia	
PS Audio 200b Delta	2,490	power amp • 200W • 42,15,45cm	
Adyton TEMPER	2,495	preamp • MC,2L • 44,3,25cm • Phono & line source preamp	
Counterpoint Solid 2E	2,495	power amp • 200W • 49,17,49cm • Hybrid	
Art Audio Tempo	2,499	power amp • 30W • 2x mono Class A triode	
ATC SCA2	2,499	preamp • 6L,2T • rem • 44,36,10cm • Balanced & unbalanced in/out	
Audio InnovSer 1000SE	2,499	power amp • 50W • 41,15,34cm • Silver circuit board	
Gamma Acoustics Rhythm 2	2,499	integrated • 22W • MM,3L • 38,30,21cm • Single ended phono integrated	
Credo PMP252	2,509	power amp • 250W • 44,21,31cm	
Adyton OPERA	2,595	integrated • 50W • MM/MC,3L,2T • 21,33,13cm • Optional phono	
Meracus ONESTA	2,595	integrated • 75W • MM/MC,3L,1T • rem • 42,12,44cm • Dual mono, case colour opt	
EAR 802MC	2,599	63 preamp • MM/MC,2L,2T • <i>Tested with £3499 509 Mk II - see comments</i>	REC'D

PRODUCT

£ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

Tube Tech Genesis	2,599	power amp • 100W • 35,15,27cm • 2x monoblocks	
Audio Research VT60	2,645	power amp • 35W • Single end tube mono	
Papworth M100	2,645	power amp • 100W • 25,17,38cm • Tube monoblock	
Classe Audio Audio 5 II	2,657	preamp • MM/MC,4L,1T • 48,15,43cm • Remote option	
McIntosh MC7104	2,729	power amp • A/V • 100W • 45,16,51cm • 4 channels	
Conrad-Johnson PV-12	2,750	preamp • MC,4L • Tube	
Meridian 601	2,750	preamp • MM,4L,T • hdph • rem • DSP tone control, MC option	
McIntosh MC150	2,855	power amp • 150W • 45,14,45cm • Blue meters	
Jadis JA-30	2,880 60	power amp • 30W • 21,21,46cm • French tubes, JP-30MC has beautiful build, nostalgic styling and delightful midrange (tested with £5978 JP30).	REC'D
Adyton MODUS	2,895	preamp • 4L,2T • 44,5,25cm • Line control amp	
Audio Research PH-2	2,895	preamp • MM/MC • 48,14,26cm • Balanced	
Sonic Frontiers SFS-80	2,895	power amp • 80W • 45,22,35cm • Stereo tube power amp	
PS Audio 250 Delta	2,980	power amp • 250W • 42,15,45cm • Monoblocks	
Counterpoint NPS-200E	2,995	power amp • 200W • Rated at 4 Ohms, hybrid	
Unison Res Smart 845	2,995	power amp • 24W • Single ended triode monoblocks	
Audio Research LS-2 II	2,997	preamp • 5L,1T • 48,14,26cm • 1 direct input/hybrid	
DNM 3B Twin E	3,050	preamp • MM/MC,4L,1T • 27,13,16cm	
McIntosh C39	3,129	preamp • A/V • MM, 10L (6 Vid) • hdph • rem • 45,17,45cm • Two zone, THX compatible	
McIntosh MC7300	3,195	power amp • 300W	
Lumley Reference M120	3,200	power amp • 120W • 29,44,18cm • 2xmono, triode/pentode	
McIntosh C40	3,239	preamp • MM, 6L, 3T • hdph • 45,14,45cm • Balanced in/out	
Audio Research D-200	3,248	power amp • 110W • 48,14,31cm • Single ended, balanced	
Audio Research SP9 III	3,290	preamp • MM/MC,4L,2T • 48,14,26cm • Hybrid pre	
Audio InnovSecond Audio	3,299	power amp • 15W • 41,15,34cm • Monoblocks	
Krell KSL-2	3,331	preamp • 4L,1T • 48,7,36cm • Opt. MM/MC stage	
Audio Research V35	3,355	power amp • 30W • 48,18,37cm • Balanced in, hybrid	
Audio Research LS-2b II	3,398	preamp • 5L,1T • 48,14,26cm • 1 balanced direct input/hybrid	
Classe Audio Audio 15	3,399	power amp • 175W • 48,19,42cm • Single ended, bal bridgible	
McIntosh MC7106	3,425	power amp • A/V • 100W • 45,16,51cm • Six x 100W THX amp	
Mark Levinson 29	3,450	power amp • 50W	
Grant G350A	3,455	power amp • 350W	
Classe Audio Audio 6L II	3,469	preamp • 5L,1T • 48,15,43cm • Remote option, sep PSU	
Adyton CORDIS 1.6	3,495	power amp • 120W • 45,9,35cm • Stereo power amp	
EAR 509 Mk II	3,499 63	power amp • 100W • 36,20,25cm • Combining sonic strengths of transistors and valves, this amp warrants attention (tested with £2599 802).	REC'D
Conrad-Johnson Prem 11A	3,500	power amp • 70W • Baby Premier 8	
Matisse Reference	3,500	preamp • A/V • MM/MC,5L,2T	
Art Audio Maestro	3,524	power amp • 100W • 2x mono triode/pentode	
Counterpoint SA4	3,575	power amp • 140W • Hybrid	
McIntosh MC275	3,595	power amp • 75W • Classic valve amp	
DNM 3B Primus E	3,630	preamp • MM/MC,4L,1T • 27,13,16cm	
KAL Empress	3,660	preamp • MM/MC,2L,1T • hdph • Tube	
Krell KSA-50s	3,690 141	power amp • 50W • 48,22,40cm • Sustained Plateau Bias integrated • 150W • hdph • rem • 45,18,51cm • Blue meters	B'BUY
McIntosh MA6800	3,735	power amp • 100W • 48,22,40cm • Sustained Plateau Bias	
YBA 1 Pre	3,750 62	preamp • MC,4L,1T • 43,9,33cm • Tested with £4250 1 Pwr - see below for comments.	REC'D
Grant G200AMS	3,760	power amp • 200W • Monoblocks	
McIntosh MC300	3,765	power amp • 300W • 45,16,46cm • Bridgable to 600W, blue meters	
Jadis DEFY-P60	3,774	preamp • MM/MC,4L,1T • 43,17,30cm • Tube	
Sonic Frontiers SFL-2	3,795	preamp • 4L,2T • 45,12,33cm • Tube, dual mono, balanced	
Classe Audio Audio 6 II	3,817	preamp • MM/MC,4L,1T • 48,15,43cm • Remote option, separate PSU	
Papworth M200	3,825	power amp • 200W • 46,20,31cm • Tube monoblock	
Conrad-Johnson Prem 10	3,900	preamp • 5L • Line version of Premier 7B	
Electrocomp't AW2500MB	3,983	power amp • 250W • 48,22,45cm • High current (100A)	
Alchemist Alchemist Stereo3	3,995	power amp • 200W • 47,18,52cm • Alloy/gold finish	
Counterpoint SA-5000E	3,995	preamp • MM/MC,4L,2T • 49,12,27cm • Separate PSU	
Counterpoint SA-9	3,995	preamp • MM/MC • 49,12,37cm • Phono stepup	
Dynavector HX1.2	3,995	power amp • 130W • 44,13,37cm • High current capability	
Mark Levinson 38	3,995	preamp • 6L,2T • rem • Fully remote, balanced	
Gamma Acs Space Ref	3,999	power amp • 18W • 3L • 43,22,31cm • Line integrated	
Gamma Acoustics Era Ref	3,999	preamp • MM,3L • 44,17,30cm • Single ended Triode	
Musical Fidelity F18	3,999	power amp • 220W • 49,19,67cm • Bal/unbalanced in/hybrid	
Tube Tech Synergy 1	3,999	integrated • 150W • 5L,1T • rem • 47,18,47cm • Bias monitor, soft-start	
Exposure XVI	4,000	power amp • 125W • 48,13,35cm • Pair of regulated monoblocks	
Counterpoint Nat Progress	4,125	power amp • 150W • Mono, hybrid	
Krell KRC-2	4,190 141	preamp • 6L,1T • rem • 48,7,36cm • Opt MM/MC stage	
Electrocomp't AW2500MB	4,195	power amp • 250W • 48,45,22cm • High current stereo, blk stone	
DNM PA2BE	4,250	power amp • 90W • 27,13,18cm • Triwire output	
YBA 1 Power	4,250 62	power amp • 85W • 43,14,33cm • Well finished pre/power amp with front rank imaging and transparency (tested with £3750 1 Pre).	
KAL Emperor	4,375	power amp • 9W • Single ended tube Class A	
Counterpoint NPS-400E	4,395	power amp • 400W • Rated at 4 Ohms, hybrid	
Audio Research V70	4,480	power amp • 60W • 48,18,40cm • Balanced in, hybrid	
Mark Levinson 331	4,495	power amp • 100W • High current	
LFD Disc Preamp	4,499	preamp • MC • 30,5,36cm • Battery powered	
Roksan ROK-M1.5	4,500	power amp • 160W • 48,11,34 • Pair of monoblocks	
Unison Res Performance 1	4,500	integrated • 25W • 4L,1T • Single-ended triode	
Classe Audio Audio 25	4,639	power amp • 250W • 48,20,53cm • Single ended, balance bridga	
Electrocomp't AW180MB	4,673	power amp • 180W • 28,29,48cm • High current, price per pair	
EAR 519	4,699	power amp • 100W • 43,14,20cm • Valve monoblock x1	
Jadis JPL	4,720	preamp • 5L,1T • 43,17,30cm • Tube	
DNM 3B Six E	4,780	preamp • MM/MC,4L,1T • 27,13,16cm	
Audio Research D-300	4,800	power amp • 160W • 48,18,33cm • Single ended, balanced	
Electrocomp't AW180MB	4,900	power amp • 180W • 28,29,48cm • Black stone, price per pair	
Jadis JA-80	4,956	power amp • 60W • 23,26,58cm • Tube, 1x monoblock	
Alchemist Control	4,995	preamp • 10L,2T • rem • 47,18,41cm • Dual mono, alloy/gold finish	
Jadis JPP-200	4,998	preamp • 4L,1T	
Naim NAC52	5,006	preamp • 6 (see note) • rem • 43,76,30cm • Optional phono board	
DNM PA2BS	5,250	power amp • 90W • 27,13,18cm • Triwire output	
Jadis DEFY-7	5,290	power amp • 100W • 49,23,63cm • Tube	
Tesseract TAP-A	5,300	preamp • MM,3L,2T	
McIntosh MC2600	5,395	power amp • 600W	
Mark Levinson 27.5	5,399	power amp • 100W	
Sonic Frontiers SFS-160	5,495	power amp • 160W • 45,22,35cm • Twin tube monoblocks	
CAT SL1 Sig line	5,500	preamp • 3L,1T • 31,48,14cm • 2 outputs, valve	
DNM PA2BS-1	5,650	power amp • 90W • 27,13,18cm • Triwire output	
Audio Research LS-5 II	5,690	preamp • 5L,1T • 48,14,30cm • Full balanced in/out	
Krell KSA-100s	5,843	power amp • 100W • 48,22,50cm • Sustained Plateau Bias	

PRODUCT £ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

Jadis JP-30MC	5,978 60	preamp • MM/MC,4L,1T • French tubes, JP-30MC has beautiful build, nostalgic styling and delightful midrange. (tested with JA30).	REC'D
Audio Research VT130	5,994	power amp • 65W • Stereo tube, balanced	
CAT SL1 Sig phono	6,000	preamp • MM,2L • 31,48,14cm • 2 outputs, valve	
McIntosh MC500	6,265	power amp • 500W • 45,27,51cm • Blue meters	
Mark Levinson 332	6,495	power amp • 200W • High current	
Mark Levinson 38S	6,495	preamp • 6L,2T • rem • Special Edition, balanced	
Audio Research D-400II	6,600	power amp • 200W • 48,23,33cm • Single ended, balanced	
Conrad-Johnson Ev20 SP	6,700	preamp • MC,4L • Poor man's Premier 7B	
Krell KRCs	6,949	preamp • 6L,1T • rem • 48,7,36cm • Opt MM/MC stage	
EAR 549	6,999	power amp • 200W • 43,27,22cm • Valve monoblock x1	
EAR G88	6,999	preamp • MM/MC,3L,2T • Valve	
Conrad-Johnson Prem 12	7,000	power amp • 140W • Monoblock pair	
Audio Research VT150	7,200	power amp • 130W • 37,31,56cm • Monoblock, tube, priced each	
Conrad-Johnson Prem 7B	11,000Col	preamp • MC,4L • The 7 is designed without compromise, and is clearly one of the finest (valve) preamplifiers money can buy.	REC'D



Cables

Cables are not accessories, but an integral part of a system. Inevitably some cables are greater than others. The best cable for your system will only be found through trial and error, but by combining our Recommendations with those of a dealer, you will end up with something suitable. Generally speaking, budget to spend about ten per cent of the total system cost on cables. ■ Analogue interconnects are the leads that connect source components to amplifiers and pre to power amps. The cables in this section are priced for a one metre terminated pair. ■ Symmetrical indicates where a twisted pair of conductors

are used. Coaxial means that there is a central 'hot' conductor and a shield that carries the negative signal. Stranded cables have multiple strands and solid core uses individually insulated strand(s). ■ Digital interconnects connect CD transports to DACs, and are traditionally coaxial with a 75 Ohm impedance. They come in optical and electrical varieties, the former being made of plastic or glass. The prices shown are for a terminated linear metre. ■ Speaker cables are used between the amplifier and speaker. Our prices are per unterminated metre. Termination (plugs etc) costs vary with manufacturers.

Key
loudspeaker; interconnect;
digital, electrical; digital, opticalthese are the different types of cable this information is followed by...
for loudspeaker cablesconstruction type, materials used, capacitance (high, med. or low)
for analogue interconnectsconstruction type and topology, materials used
for digital interconnectstype of cable (elec. or optical), materials used, impedance in Ohms

PRODUCT £ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

CABLE			
QED 42 Strand	1	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • med • low • copper • PVC outer, figure-of-8	
Tech + Link OFC79	1	loudspeaker cable • stranded • low • copper	
Tech + Link OFC42	1	loudspeaker cable • stranded • low • copper • ie 49p/mtr	
Cable Talk Flat One	2	speaker cable • stranded • 6N copper • low intrusion budget cable	
Cable Talk Theatre 2	2	speaker cable • stranded • copper • entry level for AV purposes	
Ixos 603	2	133 Loudspeaker cable • stranded • copper	B'BUY
QED FI-4	2	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • med • low • copper • Flat construction, poly outer	
QED 79 Strand	2	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • low • copper • PVC outer, fig-of-8	
Cable Talk Talk 3	3	133 speaker cable • stranded • 6N copper • budget hi-fi cable	B'BUY
Ixos 601	3	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • OFC • 6 core	
QED RI-4	3	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • med • low • copper • 4-core, round construction	
QED Qudos	3	145 Loudspeaker cable • stranded • low • low • OFHC copper • Polyethylene cover	B'BUY
Cable Talk Overture 2	4	6N speaker cable • stranded • copper • Scaled down Concert series	
Heybrook Heywire	4	109 Loudspeaker cable • solid core • copper • This well-meaning facsimile of earlier ribbon cables ends up sounding lumpy and uneven.	
Cable Talk Talk 3 Biwire	5	speaker cable • 6N copper • 4 conductors, 6N	
Cable Talk Talk 4	5	speaker cable • stranded • 6N copper • Uprated version of Talk 3	
Ixos 604	5	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • copper • Bi-wire	
Ixos 602	5	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • OFC • 12 core	
Nordost 2-Flat	5	Loudspeaker cable • solid core • copper • Flat construction	
QED Qudos Profile 8	5	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • OFHC • Flat 8-core OFHC poly	
Cable Talk Concert 2.1	7	speaker cable • stranded • copper • Signal Return Flow System	
Chord Rumour	8	loudspeaker cable • stranded • low silver/copper • PTFE dielectric	
Cable Talk Talk 4 Biwire	9	speaker cable • stranded • 6N copper • Uprated Talk 3, 4 conductor	
Chord Flatline Gold	9	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • solid core • low • copper	REC'D
Mission Quartet	9	133 Loudspeaker cable • solid core • copper • 4-conductor OFC solid core	
Nordost Flatline Gold	9	Loudspeaker cable • solid core • copper • flat construction	
Sonic Link First Mains	10	Mains cable • stranded • 12A • silver plated copper • PTFE insulated	
Arion LS0.5	12	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • silver • Priced per meter	
Cable Talk Conce t 2.1 BW	14	speaker cable • stranded • copper • 4 conductor version of Concert	
Chord Flatline Twin	16	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • solid core • low • copper	
Nordost Super Flat Biwire	17	Loudspeaker cable • solid core • copper • flat twin construction	
DPA Opti-link	20	108 Digital, optical • plastic • Very similar to Bantbridge AL560; sound is lacklustre	
Ixos 104	20	131 Interconnect • coaxial • stranded • OFC • 24 karat plugs	B'BUY
Ixos 603/10	20	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • copper • Unterminated	
Mission Stranded	20	109 Loudspeaker cable • stranded • copper • This Swedish made cable proved a real fit with our listeners - a slick performer and Best Buy upgrade.	B'BUY
QED Digiflex	20	108 Digital, electrical • coaxial • stranded • copper • A top performance, low-loss 75ohm coax with a very open, almost liquid quality.	B'BUY
QED P2 Gold	20	Interconnect • Symmetrical • stranded • OFHC copper	
Sonic Link Pure Mains	20	Mains cable • stranded • 3A • HPMC • PTFE insulated	
QED Incon P2 Screened	23	Interconnect • coaxial • stranded • OFHC copper	
Cable Talk Improved 2/CD	25	Interconnect • Symmetrical • coaxial • solid core • copper • Entry level CD etc phono-phono	
DNM ML125UK	25	Mains cable • solid core • 13A • High purity copper	
Ixos 105	25	131 Digital, electrical • 75 Ohms • copper • OFC screen	REC'D
QED Optiflex	25	Digital, optical • plastic fibre	
QED Incon P1 Screened	26	Interconnect • Symmetrical • coaxial • stranded • OFHC copper • Various lengths available	
DPA Digi-link	28	108 Digital, electrical • coaxial • stranded • 75ohms • copper • Can seem slightly impassive but there's no avoiding its exceptionally detailed sound.	B'BUY
Arion LS1	30	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • silver • Priced per meter	
Chord Chrysalis	30	Interconnect • stranded • copper	
Nordost Magic 1	30	Interconnect • Symmetrical • stranded • low • copper	
Sonic Link Super Mains	30	Mains cable • stranded • 30A • silver plated copper • PTFE insulated	
Sonic Link Light Brown	30	108 Digital, electrical • coaxial • 75ohms • PTFE • Deviates from the 75 ohm standard and provides an unbalanced sound.	
vdH MV Videolink 75	30	108 Digital, electrical • coaxial • 75ohms • copper • An AV-cum-digital cable that nearly beats QED's Digiflex, but emphasises sibilants.	REC'D
Chord Codac	32	108 Digital, electrical • coaxial • stranded • 75ohms • copper • A connection with a stranded inner core and a sound that lacks integration.	
Chord Cobra	32	Interconnect • stranded • copper	
QED Qudos Terminated	33	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • low • low • OFHC copper • Various lengths, terminated	
DNM TCC75	34	131 Analogue • solid core • medium • low • high purity copper • Non-coaxial	B'BUY
Cable Talk Advanced 2	35	Interconnect • Symmetrical • coaxial • solid core • 6N copper • phono-phono, for CD etc	
Sonic Link Pink	35	Interconnect • coaxial • stranded • silver plated copper	
Kimber Cable PSB D'link	37	108 Digital, electrical • copper • An analogue interconnect inappropriately pressed into digital service. A visible deterioration in the digital signal results.	

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
Ixos 103	40	131	Interconnect • coaxial • stranded • OFC • Double shielded, locking plugs	REC'D
Sonic Link AST150	40		Loudspeaker cable • stranded • low • copper	
Naim NAC05	44	109	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • copper • <i>Described as a 'dinosaur of a cable', this stiff wire rod doesn't belong outside Naim systems.</i>	
Audioquest F-14	45	109	Loudspeaker cable • solid core • copper • <i>Ideal for laying under c.arpets, F-14 encourages a slightly warm and vibrant sound</i>	REC'D
Monster Interlink LS100	45	108	Digital, optical • plastic • <i>Well constructed stepped-index fibre with polished ends and connectors. Lean, fuzzy, engaging performance.</i>	REC'D
Monster Datalink 100	45	108	Digital, electrical • coaxial • 75ohms • copper • <i>A colourful coaxial interconnect with an equally colourful and up-beat sound. Very compatible.</i>	REC'D
Sonic Link Red	45		Interconnect • coaxial • stranded • HPMC	
DPA Slink	47		Interconnect • coaxial • stranded • low • silver • phono terminated	
Kronos Konnekt 3	49		Interconnect • coaxial • stranded • copper	
Arion LS-2	50		Loudspeaker cable • stranded • silver • Biwire, priced per meter	
Audioquest Video Z	50	108	Digital, electrical • coaxial • stranded • 75ohms • copper • <i>The very best available, with an expressive sound, but generously priced.</i>	B'BUY
Cable Talk Monitor 2	50		Interconnect • 6N copper • Signal Return Flow System	
Cable Talk Improved 2/T1	50		Interconnect • Symmetrical • coaxial • solid core • copper • Phono-phono for tape	REC'D
Chord Prodac	50	131	Digital, electrical • 75ohms	REC'D
Nordost Black Knight	50		Interconnect • Symmetrical • stranded • copper	
Sonic Link AST75X2	50		Loudspeaker cable • stranded • copper • Biwire	
Sonic Link Green	50	131	Digital, electrical • coaxial • 75ohms • PTFE	
Sonic Link Derwent	50		Interconnect • stranded • silver plated copper	
vdH The Clearwater	50	109	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • silver/copper • <i>Despite its evocative title, the Clearwater turns out to be a disappointingly murky sounding cable.</i>	
Kimber Cable KC-1 D/link	52	108	Digital, electrical • copper • <i>This cable adopts a woven construction with the addition of a conductive screen. Music lacks detail and spirit.</i>	
Nordost Blue Heaven	58		Loudspeaker cable • stranded • low • low • silver/copper	
Kimber Cable Opti-link	59	108	Digital, optical • plastic • <i>Hardly cheap for what appears to be a bog-standard PMMA fibre, yet it sounds a little brighter and livelier than most.</i>	REC'D
Ixos 102	60		Interconnect • coaxial • stranded • OFC • Double shielded, locking plugs	
Trichord Pulsewire 75/D	64		digital interconnect • Symmetrical • coaxial • solid core • 75 ohms • silver plated copper • mono	
Cable Talk Studio 2	65		Interconnect • Symmetrical • coaxial • solid core • 6N copper • Enhanced version of Monitor 2	
Chord Siren	65		Interconnect • coaxial • stranded • Silver plated copper	
Chord Chameleon	68		Interconnect • stranded • copper	
Arion SA0.5	75		Interconnect • Symmetrical • stranded • silver	
Audioquest Type 4	75	109	Loudspeaker cable • copper • <i>Four 18-gauge OFHC copper conductors wound in a Litz-type fashion increases capacitance but restrains the cable's 'bite'.</i>	
Cable Talk Digital 2	75		digital interconnect • Symmetrical • coaxial • solid core • 75/110 ohm • 6N copper • CD drive - DAC cable	
DPA White Slink	75		interconnect • coaxial • stranded • silver plated OFC • polyethylene/PTFE dielectric	
Nordost Blue Angel	80		Interconnect • Symmetrical • stranded • low • copper	
Sonic Link AST150X2	80		Loudspeaker cable • stranded • low • copper • Biwire	
Cable Talk Professional 2	85		interconnect • Symmetrical • coaxial • solid core • 6N copper • MGT Multi Ground construction	
Sonic Link Violet	85		Interconnect • Symmetrical • stranded • HPMC	
Audioquest Digital PRO	90	108	Digital, electrical • coaxial • stranded • 75ohms • silver • <i>A silver cable with all the drive of Video Z but lacking its clear cut transparency.</i>	
Sonic Link Grey	90	109	Loudspeaker cable • solid core • silver plated copper • <i>A spaghetti-thin silver plated cable lacks bass impact and treble 'air'</i>	
Kimber Cable KC-AG D/link	95	108	Digital, electrical • silver • <i>An asymmetric cable using silver conductors that deviates from the 75ohm standard. Not ideal for digital applications.</i>	
Arion DAC1	99		Digital, electrical • coaxial • stranded • 75ohms • silver	
Chord Solid	99	131	Interconnect • coaxial • solid core • silver/copper	REC'D
Kronos Konnekt 2	99		Interconnect • coaxial • solid core • copper	
Nordost Red Dawn	99		Loudspeaker cable • stranded • low • low • silver	
Audio Note AN-D	100	109	Loudspeaker cable • solid core • copper • <i>Supplied in linear, non-polarised lengths that should be twisted into stereo pairs. Sounds rather grippy and forward.</i>	
Audioquest Optilink Z	100	108	Digital, optical • glass • <i>Good level of midband detail but frequency extremes lack depth and extension.</i>	
Electrocomp't EC-K3 Mk 2	100		Mains cable • stranded • 13A • copper • Terminated, woven conductors	
Ixos 101	100		Interconnect • coaxial • stranded • silver plated OFC • Double shielded, locking plugs	
Sonic Link Blue	115		Interconnect • solid core • HPMC	
Nordost Blue Heaven	120		Interconnect • Symmetrical • low • copper/silver	
Moth Leyline Datalink	140	108	Digital, electrical • coaxial • 750 Ohms • copper • <i>A thin, coaxial version of Leyline Black with a rather hard and unforgiving character. Too expensive.</i>	
Sonic Link Care Music	150	133	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • low • silver plated copper	
Trichord Pulsewire 75	150		interconnect • Symmetrical • coaxial • solid core • 75 ohms • silver plated copper • stereo	
Audio Note AN-B	165	109	Loudspeaker cable • solid core • copper • <i>High capacitance Litz-type cable may act as a taming influence in many systems.</i>	REC'D
DNM LBC8500	170	109	Loudspeaker cable • solid core • copper • <i>High impedance can influence the treble response, but this was a winner on sound per pound.</i>	B'BUY
Audioquest Midnight H'litz	260	109	Loudspeaker cable • solid core • copper • <i>Similar to Type 4, but with a delicate smoothness.</i>	
van den Hul The Magnum	265	109	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • copper/silver • <i>Touted as vdH's most prestigious twinlead cable, Magnum sounds soft and old fashioned.</i>	
DPA IS19	275	109	Loudspeaker cable • solid core • silver/copper • <i>Clear, neutral and transparent sound of the older 8S without the clarity of Gortex Black 16.</i>	
van den Hul The Wind	330	109	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • silver/copper • <i>'The Wind' kicks up a storm with its lush midrange and bone-crunching bass!</i>	REC'D
Audio Note AN-SP	1,270	133	Loudspeaker cable • silver • <i>Some 15 individually insulated silver strands make up this a civilised and exceptionally detailed sounding cable.</i>	REC'D



Cassette Decks

The compact cassette is still the world's most versatile and ubiquitous music storage medium. Buffs may wrinkle their noses, but they're happy to use cassette decks to make up tapes for the car. ■ There should be no problems in connecting a cassette deck to any normal amplifier, but some care needs to be taken in choosing the best tapes for a specific machine.

(Trial and error is one effective technique, but many decks have manual bias adjustment and some match up to the tape automatically.) Lab performance and sound quality often go hand in hand, and are frequently somewhat dependent upon factory alignment. The mechanical integrity of the mechanism is another crucial factor. ■ Twin decks offer the option to dub tapes and play two cassettes sequentially. Autoreverse is a useful feature, but

usually with some mechanical compromise.

Key

single, twintype of cassette deck

Dolby B, C, HX-Pronoise reduction and other circuitry

2 headnumber of heads

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
CASSETTE DECKS				
Sherwood DS1150	80		single • Dolby B, C • 2 head	
Goodmans Delta 700W	100	123	twin • Dolby B • 2 head • 36,13,28cm • <i>Compact and ultra-basic twin deck which is rough and bass shy, with a less than stable tape path.</i>	
Sherwood DS1010C	100		single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • Mic input	
Sherwood DD1030C	100		twin • Dolby B • 2 head	
Sony TC-FX211B	100		single • Dolby B, C • 2 head • 43,12,29cm	
Teac V3955CHX	100		single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,21cm • Dual capstan, remote control	
Aiwa AD-F450	120	136	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • <i>Basic but well designed budget deck, astonishing value; only the poor metering gives the game away.</i>	B'BUY
JVC TD-W106BK	120		twin • Dolby B • 2 head • 44,13,24cm • Twin, one recording deck	
Sherwood DS3010C	120	117	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • <i>Good range of facilities, let down by poor transport and iffy electronics.</i>	
Teac V-610	129		single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,14,28cm • Logic control, FL display	
Goodmans GSW650	130		twin • Dolby B • 2 head • 43,12,27cm • Both auto-reverse	
Sony TC-K215B	130		single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,12,31cm • Tape calibration	
Sony TC-K311B	130		single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,12,31cm • Auto calibration	
Sony TC-W445B	150		twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,12,31cm • Full logic control	
Denon DRM-540	160	146	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,28cm • <i>Exceptionally stable and well focussed sound quality and a bargain price.</i>	B'BUY
Yamaha KX-380	169		single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,29cm • Play Trim, manual bias	
Aiwa AD-WX727	170	146	twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • <i>High class twin for those who want bells, whistles - and music.</i>	B'BUY
JVC TD-W218BK	170		twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,33cm • 'Compu' auto tape calibration	

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
JVC TD-X372BK	170		single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,33cm • Entry level single deck	
Kenwood KX-W4070	170		twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,14,27cm • Auto bias function	
Kenwood KX-3060	170	139	single • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,12,37cm • Based on CD-53 DAC/filter, but with a more transparent, sober and insightful sound.	B'BUY
Pioneer CT-S330	170		single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 42,13,28cm • Audio tape setup, FLEX	
Sony TC-K461S	180	146	single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,13,31cm • Transport is good, and sound quality is fine, though undynamic. Marginal with metals.	REC'D
Sony TC-K415B	180	136	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 43,12,31cm • Mainly UK designed with audiophile intent, but spoiled by erratic output, at worst with metal tape.	
Teac R-560	180		Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,14,28cm • Logic control, FL display	
Teac W-760R	180		twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,14,29cm • R/C logic & FL display	
NAD 602	199	127	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • Minimalist deck for the audiophile market. Unfortunately engineering is minimalist too.	
Yamaha KX-W282	199		twin • Dolby B, C • 2 head • 44,13,28cm • Twin auto-reverse, one records	
Yamaha KX-480	199		single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,28cm • Auto-tape tuning, Play Trim	
Denon DRW-580	200		twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • Music search, hi speed dub	
Dual CC8000 RS	200		twin • Dolby B, C • 2 head • 44,13,25cm • Remote via 9000RS	
Grundig CCF3	200	146	twin • auto reverse • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,30cm • Unstable sounding twin thanks to a primitive transport mechanism.	
Grundig CCF3	200		twin • auto reverse • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,30cm • Elapsed time, display switch	
JVC TD-R472BK	200		single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,33cm	
JVC TD-W318BK	200		twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,14,34cm • 'Silent' mechanism	
Kenwood KX-W6070	200		twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,14,27cm • Auto-bias function	
Luxman K-322	200	146	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 13,44,18cm • Gives best value results with lower bias tapes, helped by a successful Dolby C installation.	
Marantz SD-53	200	146	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,14,30cm • Modestly equipped player is short-changed by a rough transport, and dull prerecorded quality.	
Pioneer CT-W503R	200		twin • auto reverse • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 42,13,25cm • Auto NR, FLEX	
Pioneer CT-S430S	200	136	single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 2 head • 42,13,28cm • Against the odds - a 2-head Dolby S deck that works. Well set up and fully equipped.	B'BUY
Sony TC-WR545B	200		twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,12,29cm • Auto calibration	
Technics RS-TR373	200		twin • auto reverse • Dolby B, C • 2 head • 43,14,29cm • Play transport unidirectional	
Technics RS-BX501	200		Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,13,30cm • Centre tray, ATC	
Denon DRS-640	210	140	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,31cm • Drawer loading deck, with simple facilities and smooth, well adjusted sound.	B'BUY
JVC TD-V562BK	220	123	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 44,13,33cm • Ultra-sophisticated transport at a silly price; sound quality is stable but slightly opaque.	REC'D
Technics RS-TR474	220		twin • auto reverse • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,14,29cm • High speed FF/REW	
Aiwa AD-F850	230		single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • Super DX head, twin capstan	
NAD 613	230		single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,29cm • Block repeat, R/C links	
Pioneer CT-W603RS	230		twin • auto reverse • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 2 head • 42,13,25cm • Auto tape setup, FLEX, Dolby S	
Kenwood KX-5060S	235	140	single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,12,30cm • Well engineered transport and Dolby S star in this refined and detailed design.	REC'D
Yamaha KX-W482	249		twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,28cm • Twin recording auto-reverse	
Yamaha KX-580	249	146	single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,28cm • Stable and clean, if bright. Play Trim helps wake up recalcitrant recordings.	B'BUY
JVC TD-W718BK	250		twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,14,34cm • Tape calibration, stabiliser	
Marantz SD-535	250		twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,14,32cm • Synchro record	
Onkyo TA-RW313	250		twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 46,12,31cm	
Sony TC-WR645S	250		twin • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,12,31cm • UK optimised sound	
Sony TC-K511S	250		single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 3 head • 43,12,31cm • UK optimised sound	
Teac V-1030	250	105	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 44,15,29cm • Optional remote control	REC'D
Technics RS-BX601	250	146	Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 43,13,29cm • Remarkably fast cassette wind means it will suit those with large collections. Good all-round sound.	REC'D
Denon DRW-760	260		twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,28cm	
Denon DRM-740	270	136	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 44,13,28cm • Breathed-on DRM-710, with good external treatment offers good, if somewhat detached sonics.	
JVC TD-V662BK	270	146	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 44,13,33cm • Assured, clean and agile sounding recorder, if not quite the most refined in its class.	B'BUY
Marantz SD-63	270		single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 43,14,30cm • D-bus	
NAD 614	270		single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,32cm • Play Trim, CAR compression	
Harman-Kardon TD420	280		single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 45,13,34cm • 3 motors	
Kenwood KX-W8070S	280		twin • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,14,27cm • Auto bias function, power load	
Technics RS-TR575	280		twin • auto reverse • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,14,29cm • Optical quick reverse	
Aiwa AD-S950	300	140	single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 3 head • High-value, high-spec package is both well set up and musically well sorted.	B'BUY
Pioneer CT-W803RS	300		twin • auto reverse • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 2 head • 42,13,25cm • Twin record, mic i/p	
Pioneer CT-S630S	300	140	single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 3 head • 42,13,38cm • 3 heads and Dolby S feature in an excellent deck that is underbiased with Type IV tapes.	REC'D
Sony TC-K611S	300	127	single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 3 head • 43,12,30cm • Good Dolby S deck - slightly let down by lack of attention to detail.	REC'D
Technics RS-BX701	300	136	Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 43,13,30cm • Costly, but well built, this decks is a pleasure to operate and listen to.	REC'D
Denon DRS-810	310	127	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 44,13,32cm • Drawer loading deck, carefully designed yet lacking in subtlety on audition.	
NAD 616	320		twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,29cm • Twin auto-reverse, R/C link	
Kenwood KX-7060S	329	146	single • HX Pro • 3 head • 44,13,30cm • Although slightly dull sounding with prerecorded tapes, this is a well equipped and fine sounding deck.	REC'D
Harman-Kardon TD450	350		single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 45,11,35cm • 3 head version of TD420	
Onkyo KR-609	350		Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 28,12,31cm • Mini component	
Onkyo TA250	350		single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 46,12,31cm	
Technics RS-BX747	350		single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 43,13,30cm • Fine bias adj, THC lo-red base	
Onkyo K-W606	370		twin • auto reverse • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 28,12,32cm • Mini component	
Pioneer CT-M601R	380		Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 42,14,38cm • Six tape record/play, r/cntrl	
Luxman K-373	400		single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 13,44,35cm • System bus, mic inputs	
Marantz CP-230	400		single • Dolby B • 2 head • DC portable, semi-pro	
Marantz SD-635	400		twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,9,32cm • Drawer loading	



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PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
Technics RS-TR979	400		twin • auto reverse • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,13,28cm • Both decks record, quick rev	
Onkyo K-611	430	146	Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 28,12,32cm • Cute drawer loading mini-size component with 3-heads and dual capstan transport.	REC'D
Harman-Kardon TD470	450		single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 3 head • 45,11,35cm • Dolby S version of TD450	
Marantz DC-1010	450		single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 42,8,31cm • Inc CD player module	
Nakamichi DR3	450	123	single • Dolby B, C • 2 head • 43,10,32cm • Refined, exquisitely detailed and solid sounding 'budget' Nakamichi 2-head.	REC'D
Teac W-6000R	450		twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,15,33cm • Pitch control, remote	
Marantz CP-430	500		single • Dolby B • 3 head • Portable, dbx NR, anti-roll	
Pioneer CT-5830S	500	146	single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 3 head • 42,14,38cm • High class mechanism, if lacking in battleship externals, and superb sound.	REC'D
Yamaha KX-W952	599		twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,16,37cm • Twin record, opt remote	
Teac V-8030S	650		single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 3 head • 43,15,35cm • Quartz locked, dual capstan	
Nakamichi DR2	700	127	single • Dolby B, C • 3 head • 43,10,32cm • Accomplished design with simple features (manual tape select!) but superb sound and serviceability.	B'BUY
Arcam Delta 100	899	111	single • Dolby B, C, S • 3 head • 43,12,34cm • Superb transport and a ripe, spacious sound. Dolby S is more successful than some.	REC'D
Pioneer CT-95	1,000		single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 3 head • 44,15,38cm • Copper plated chassis	
Nakamichi Dragon	2,350		single • Dolby B, C • 3 head • 45,14,30cm • Auto azimuth correct	



CD Players, Transports & DACs

Now established as the prime audio source, the CD player continues to evolve. Manufacturers have accepted that "Perfect Sound Forever" (an early Philips slogan) was a trifle optimistic. Now the medium is being slowly transformed into something worthy of the audiophile's enthusiasm.

■ All CD players offer a basic selection of facilities, and some can keep you entertained for hours as you programme in disc names and track orders. All but the excessively inexpensive feature remote control. Most CD

players can be upgraded by adding an outboard DAC (see below). To do this the player needs a digital output of either electrical or optical persuasion; sonically the former is preferable.

Transports & DACs

A CD player can be split into two basic components: the disc drive or transport, and a device which turns the digital bitstream coming off the disc into an analogue audio signal. This is called a digital to analogue converter, or DAC. Although most players are contained in a single

box, expensive players are usually two-box affairs.

■ The first thing listed for a DAC is the type of converter chip employed. However, in much the same way that an amp's output is not indicative of its sound quality, the DAC chip is only one factor in a CD player's sound.

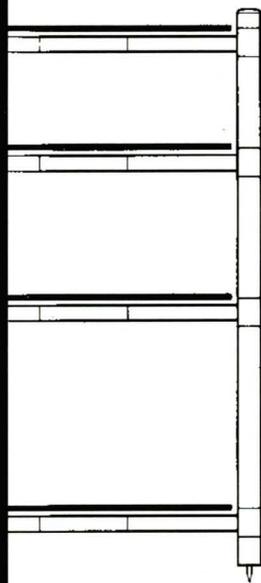
Key

multibit, 1-bit	.....DAC type
electrical/optical out	.....digital out put(s)
rem.....	.....remote control

PRODUCT £ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

CD PLAYERS				
Eclipse CD101a	80	144	multibit • rem • 36,8,29cm	
Eclipse CD420	100		multibit • rem • 42,8,29cm	
Philips CD163	100		multibit • 36,29,8cm • Midi size	
Pioneer PD-77	100		1 bit • electrical out • optical out • rem • 44,13,33cm • Satin gold finish	
Goodmans Delta 700	110	128	multibit • rem • A 16-bit alternative to the CD650II that furnishes a colourful and animated sound.	REC'D
Goodmans GCD360R	120		multibit • rem	
JVC XL-V184BK	120		1 bit • 44,11,28cm	
Philips CD711	120		multibit • 44,26,9cm • With Bitcheck	
Philips CD721	130		multibit • rem • 44,30,11cm • With Bitstream D/A conversion	
Sherwood CD3020R	130	119	bitstream • Although this budget wonder has little respect for musical convention, what emerges is still remarkably entertaining.	B'BUY
Sony CDP-M302	130		1 bit • rem • 36,10,33cm • Midi-size, full remote control	
Technics SL-PG370	130		mash • 43,92,24cm • Remote control ready	
Dual CD1135RC	140		multibit • electrical out • rem • 42,8,28cm • Variable headphone output	
JVC XL-V284BK	140	147	1 bit • rem • 44,11,28cm • A player that bears absolutely no relation to the DP-3060, despite appearances. Sounds vague and thoroughly uninteresting.	REC'D
Pioneer PD-103	140		1 bit • 42,11,28cm • Display off	
Teac CD-P1100	140		multibit • rem • 44,9,28cm • Headphone jack	
Aiwa XC-300	150		1 bit • optical out • rem	
Cambridge Audio CD4	150	147	electrical out • rem • 43,9,29cm • Basic appearance and sluggish track access/track search belies its up and at 'em sound quality.	REC'D
Denon DCD-315	150		bitstream • rem • 44,11,28cm	
Dual CD1150RC	150		multibit • electrical out • rem • Variable headphone output	
Sony CDP-312	150	139	1 bit • rem • 43,10,29cm • Something of a rough diamond, offering a raft of features and good build but a decidedly Technicolor sound	
Teac CD-P3200	150	147	multibit • rem • 44,12,28cm • A primitive looking CD player, housing primitive 16-bit electronics which deliver an equally primitive and uninspiring sound.	
Technics SL-PG470AK	150		mash • optical out • rem • 43,96,24cm • CD edit	
Kenwood DP-2060	160	147	1 bit • rem • 44,10,26cm • A player that bears absolutely no relation to the DP-3060, despite appearances. Sounds vague and thoroughly uninteresting.	
Pioneer PD-203	160		1 bit • rem • 42,11,28cm • As 103, variable H/P output	
Yamaha CDX-480	169	147	bitstream • rem • 44,10,28cm • A dispassionately calm sounding player that delivers the musical goods with little or no apparent enthusiasm.	
Dual CD1000RS	170		bitstream • electrical out • rem • Remote control via CR9000RS	
Grundig CDII	170		bitstream • electrical out • rem • 44,9,30cm	
Philips CD740	170	139	multibit • electrical out • rem • One of several Philips players using hybrid DAC technologies. Still sounds insufferably boring, however.	
Technics SL-PG570AK	170		mash • rem • 43,103,29cm • Digital servo, THCB base	
Teac CD-P3450	179		1 bit • optical out • rem • 44,10,25cm • 8x o/sampling tape record edit	
Dual CD1180RC	180		bitstream • electrical out • rem • 44,9,29cm • Variable headphone output	
JVC XL-F116BK	180		1 bit • 44,13,40cm • 5-disc carousel	
NAD 501	189	139	bitstream • A thoroughly typical frills-free player with a slightly too cautious, even restrained musical outlook.	
Yamaha CDC-555	199		multibit • rem • 44,11,39cm • Entry level	
Denon DCD-825	200	137	multibit • electrical out • rem • Despite extensive revisions, this latest player still sounds like a typical 18-bit Denon, which is no bad thing!	REC'D
Denon DCD-625	200	147	multibit • electrical out • rem • 44,11,29cm • DCD-615 replacement is generously equipped but lacks sophisticated sound of its forebear.	
JVC XL-F216BK	200		1 bit • rem • 44,13,40cm • 5-disc carousel	
Kenwood DP-R4070	200		1 bit • rem • 44,12,34cm • 5-disc tray loading	
Kenwood DP-3060	200	139	1 bit • rem • 44,10,26cm • Based on the same filter/DAC as Marantz's CD-53, but with a more transparent, sober and highly insightful sound.	B'BUY
Luxman D-322	200	147	bitstream • rem • 44,10,28cm • Well bred player sounds smooth and cultured without appearing grey or boring.	
Marantz CD-53	200	139	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 43,9,30cm • Looks identical to CD-63, but internal costs are cut, exposing a slightly ragged performer.	REC'D
Onkyo DX-710	200		1 bit • optical out • rem • 46,11,31cm	
Pioneer PD-S504	200	147	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 42,11,29cm • More consistent than the old PD-S503 and capable strong atmosphere and 'occasion'.	B'BUY
Rotel RCD-930AX	200		1 bit • rem • 44,9,29cm	
Sony CPM2403	200		bitstream • rem • 24 disc 'intelligent' changer	
Sherwood CDC5030R	200	132	1 bit • rem • 44,10,38cm • This replacement for the 5-disc CDC5010R sounds messy, disjointed and generally unpleasant. A disappointment.	
Sony CDP-561E	200	147	bitstream • optical out • rem • 43,11,30cm • Combines plenty of features with an open, transparent and sparkling sound.	B'BUY
Technics SL-PS670AK	200		mash • optical out • rem • 45,12,29cm • Virtual Battery operation	
Yamaha CDX-580	229		bitstream • electrical out • rem • 44,10,28cm • UK specified o/p stage	
Sony CDP-C325M	230		1 bit • rem • 36,10,39cm • Midi size, 5-disc player	
Sony CDP-C345	230	132	1 bit • rem • 43,13,39cm • Sony's Hybrid Pulse DAC sounds great in the CDP-311 but in this 5 disc carousel it provides a mere skeleton of a performance.	
NAD 502	239	119	mash • electrical out • rem • 44,108,40cm • Updated 5425 trades spontaneity for precise, but mechanical style.	REC'D
Denon DCD-825	240		multibit • electrical out • rem • 44,11,28cm • UK design	
Onkyo DX-703	240		1 bit • optical out • rem • 46,11,31cm	

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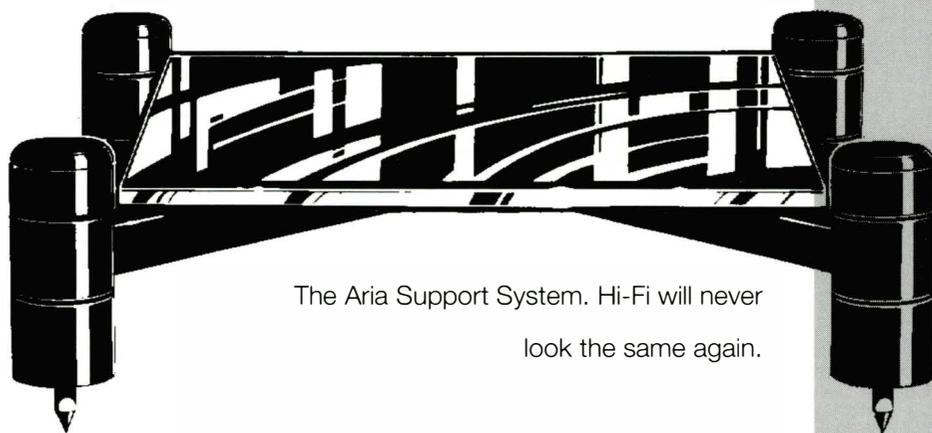


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PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
Yamaha CDC-655	249		bitstream • optical out • rem • 44,11,39cm • Tray load multi-player	
Harman-Kardon HD710	250		electrical out • rem • 45,11,33cm	
JVC XL-V574BK	250	139	1 bit • optical out • rem • 44,11,28cm	
Kenwood DP-M5570	250		1 bit • rem • 44,13,37cm • 6+1 disc changer	
Kenwood DP-5060	250		1 bit • optical out • rem • 44,12,31cm • D.R.I.V.E.	
Marantz CC-45	250		bitstream • optical out • rem • 44,12,40cm • 5 disc carousel	
NAD 512	250		electrical out • rem • 44,9,26cm • Low output impedance	
Pioneer PD-M603	250		1 bit • rem • 42,11,30cm • Six disc	
Rotel RCD-940BX	250	137	multibit • rem • 44,10,32cm • <i>A sea change in transport and DAC technology lies behind this untidy-sounding and irritating player.</i>	
Sony CDP-761E	250	147	bitstream • optical out • rem • 43,11,40cm • Tarted up CDP-561E with less widgets and a slightly overcooked performance.	REC'D
Teac CD-3	250		bitstream • electrical out • rem • 45,13,28cm • Central mechanism	
Teac PD-D2200	250		multibit • rem • 44,11,38cm • 5-disc carousel	
Technics SL-PS770A	250	147	mash • optical out • rem • 43,13,29cm • <i>AA mellow sounding player that never quite rouses from its slumber to really tackle the music at hand.</i>	
Onkyo DX-7210	260	147	bitstream • rem • Well-bred CD player features an unusual digital filter is smooth and cultured without appearing grey or boring.	REC'D
Marantz CD-63MKII	270	151	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 42,9,30cm • Smooth sounding and highly satisfying player	B'BUY
Onkyo C-711	290		1 bit • optical out • rem • 28,8,30cm • Mini component	
Harman-Kardon HD7325	299		bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 45,10,33cm	
Arcam Alpha One	300	137	delta sigma • electrical out • rem • 43,8,29cm • <i>The first UK-built player under £300 is hampered by a tidy but rather grey and uninspiring sound.</i>	
Denon DCD-1015	300	141	multibit • electrical out • optical out • rem • 44,11,28cm • Excellent, middle range player - fast, fluid and lean	REC'D
Grundig CDC14	300		bitstream • electrical out • rem • 44,9,30cm	
Harman-Kardon FL8450	300		bitstream • optical out • rem • 45,10,38cm • 5-disc carousel player	
Harman-Kardon HD730	300		optical out • rem • 45,9,33cm	
JVC XL-Z674BK	300	151	1 bit • rem • 44,11,28cm • Even handed, but glosses over the most intimate moments	REC'D
JVC XL-M408BK	300		1 bit • rem • 44,13,32cm • Six disc	
Marantz CD-1010	300		1 bit • optical out • rem • 42,8,31cm • Slim Series component	
Musical Fidelity E60	300		bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 44,10,34cm	
Nakamichi MB4s	300	132	multibit • rem • 43,9,27cm • Entry level Music-Bank player has plenty of dynamics and detail but little stereo depth.	REC'D
Pioneer PD-S703	300	137	1 bit • optical out • rem • 42,13,27cm • Legato Link and bitstream player sounds as manipulative and intriguing as ever.	REC'D
Pioneer PD-M703	300		1 bit • rem • 42,13,30cm • Six disc, DSP soundfield cntrl	
Rotel RCD-965BX	300	100	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 44,10,32cm • Exceptionally refined: transparent, exquisitely detailed and powerfully emotive. A landmark.	B'BUY
Marantz CD-1020	334		1 bit • optical out • rem • 42,8,31cm • Slim Series, motorised cover	
Yamaha CDX-880	339	141	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 44,10,29cm • UK specified components	
AMC CD6	349	124	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • Based on Rotel's RCD-965BX, but has a raunchier, beefier but less transparent sound.	REC'D
Harman-Kardon HD7425	349	141	multibit • electrical out • rem • 45,10,33cm	
Micromega Minium CD	350		bitstream • electrical out • rem • 43,27,7cm	
Onkyo DX-7510	350	151	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 46,11,31cm • Strongly flavoured, assertive sound	
Onkyo DX-750	350	141	bitstream • optical out • rem • 46,11,31cm	B'BUY
Teac CD-5	350	151	bitstream • rem • 48,12,29cm • Bright, breezy and up-beat - but short in the trowser department	
NAD 514	370	151	bitstream • optical out • rem • 44,108,40cm • Boistrous sound, but undeniably attractive	REC'D
Rotel RCD-970BX	375		bitstream • electrical out • rem • 44,8,30cm	
Rotel RCD-965BX D	375	141	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 44,10,32cm • Discrete output	
Kenwood DP-7060	380	141	1 bit • optical out • rem • 44,12,31cm • D.R.I.V.E	REC'D
Audio Innovations Alto	399		bitstream • electrical out • rem • 43,8,30cm • Dual diff DAC	
Aura CD100	400		bitstream • electrical out • rem • 43,6,28cm • Chrome finish, £50 extra	
Harman-Kardon HD7525	400	151	multibit • electrical out • rem • 45,10,33cm • Glorious sounding player, if slightly inconsistent	REC'D
NAD 517	400		bitstream • electrical out • rem • 44,108,40cm • 5-disc carousel player	
Pioneer PD-S904	400	151	1 bit • electrical out • optical out • rem • 42,14,29cm • Too much legatso - literally - in sound	
Sony CDP-XA2ES	400	151	optical out • rem • 43,13,35cm • Strong-willed, heavyweight sound; not for the faint-hearted	REC'D
Rotel RCD-965BX LED	425		bitstream • electrical out • rem • 44,10,32cm • Discrete & slit foil caps	
Audio Innovations Alto Chr	449	151	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 43,8,30cm • Lacks dynamic subtlety and discrimination of Alto amps	
Pioneer PD-DM802	450		1 bit • rem • 42,14,31cm • Dual magazine 12-disc	
Arcam Alpha 5 Plus	470	151	multibit • electrical out • rem • 43,8,27cm • Upbeat, dynamic sound disguises lack of transparency	
Pioneer PD-S901	499		1 bit • electrical out • optical out • rem • 42,13,33cm • SPM, Legato Link, Twin DAC	
Aiwa DX-C100M	500		1 bit • optical out • rem • 100+1 disc autochanger	
Creek CD42	500		electrical out • rem • 42,8,30cm	
Nakamichi MB3s	500		multibit • rem • 43,9,38cm • 6+1 Music Bank, 18 x 8 o/s	
Orelle CD-100	500		multibit • electrical out • rem • 44,10,28cm • DC coupled	
Pioneer PD-TM3	500		1 bit • rem • 42,18,35cm • Triple magazine, 18-disc	
Harman-Kardon HD7625	550		multibit • electrical out • rem • 45,10,33cm	
Luxman D-373	550		multibit • optical out • rem • 44,11,35cm • System bus remote	
Micromega Stage 1	550		bitstream • electrical out • rem • 43,28,88cm • Upgradable	
Musical Fidelity E600	599		bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 44,12,35cm • Balanced XLR output	
Teac VRDS-7	599		bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 45,15,34cm • Twin BS, VRDS mech	
Arcam Alpha 6	600		electrical out • rem • 43,8,27cm • Upgradable from 5/5 Plus	
Kenwood DP-J2070	600		1 bit • rem • 44,19,38cm • 100 disc autochanger	
Marantz CD-72 Mk II	600		bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 42,13,30cm • DAC7	
Pioneer PD-F100	600		1 bit • rem • 42,19,40cm • 100 disc, Legato Link	
Micromega Stage 2	700		bitstream • electrical out • rem • 43,28,88cm • Upgradable	
Nakamichi MB2s	700		multibit • electrical out • rem • 43,9,38cm • 6+1 Music Bank, 18 x 8 o/s	
Teac VRDS-10	770	119	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 45,15,34cm • A basic analogue stage compromises performance. Lacks bass energy.	
Linn Mimik	798		delta sigma • electrical out • rem • 32,8,33cm • BNC digital	
Arcam Delta 270	800	124	hybrid • 2 electrical out • rem • 43,9,28cm • Dry, tightly-focussed sound will either beguile or aggravate, depending on taste!	
Harman-Kardon HD7725	800	124	multibit • electrical out • optical out • rem • 45,10,33cm • This flagship implimentation of RLS sounds impressively bold and dynamic.	REC'D
JVC XL-MC100	800		1 bit • rem • 36,37,38cm • 100 disc player	
Sony CDP-CX100	800		1 bit • optical out • 43,13,38cm • 100 disc autochanger	
Thule CD100	849		bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • Balanced out, Crystal chipset	
Teac VRDS-10SE	850		bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 45,15,34cm • Imp. mechanism & chassis	
Meridian 506	875		delta sigma • electrical out • optical out • 33,9,34cm • Recently improved sound	
Quad 67	875	124	delta sigma • electrical out • rem • 33,8,26cm • Powerful, fluid and captivating sound reminiscent of Meridian's 206.	B'BUY
DPA Renaissance	895		bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 40,28,8cm • DPA DP16 DAC	
Micromega Stage 3	900		bitstream • electrical out • rem • 43,28,88cm • Upgradable	
Mission DAD7	900	145	multibit • electrical out • rem • 22,8,36cm • PSX-R o/b PSU option	
Nakamichi MB1s	900		multibit • electrical out • rem • 43,9,27cm • 6+1 Music Bank, 20 x 8 o/s	
Thorens TCD2000	900		bitstream • electrical out • rem • 21,9,34cm • Top loader	
Naim CD3	949		multibit • rem • 43,56,30cm • 1 box	
AVI S2000MCII	999	119	1 bit • rem • 31,25,9cm • A stylish, midi-width player with an exceptionally refined and comfortable sound. Lacks passion.	
Onix CD33	999		bitstream • 43,8,33cm • DAC7	
Technics SL-P2000	1,000		mash • optical out • rem • 45,13,33cm • THCB base, R-Core transformer	
Krell KSP20iV1	1,100		electrical out • rem • As KPS20i + remote volume	
Sentec Diana	1,100		multibit • electrical out • optical out • 12,5,23cm • 20 bit	
Marantz CD-10	1,200		bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 46,14,36cm • Twin DAC-7h eavy build	
AVI S2000MC Ref	1,249		multibit • electrical out • rem • 31,25,9cm • 20bit 8x oversampling	
Audiomeca Kreatura	1,299		multibit • electrical out • optical out • rem • 25,14,39cm	
Teac VRDS-20	1,299		bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 50,15,34cm • Twin DAC7, balanced output	
AVI S2000MC	1,300		multibit • electrical out • rem • 31,25,9cm • 'Reference' 20 bit player	

PRODUCT £ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

Meridian 606	1,350	1 bit	
Marantz CD-16	1,400	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 25,29,13cm • Twin DAC-7	
Audiomeca Kreatura SE	1,450	141 multibit • electrical out • rem • 25,14,39cm • Trichord clocked	
Meridian 508	1,475	140 delta sigma • electrical out • optical out • 33,9,34cm	REC'D
Roksan ATT-DP3P	1,495	delta sigma • electrical out • rem • 46,12,35cm • Player, four level isolation	
Linn Karik	1,497	144 delta sigma • electrical out • optical out • rem • 32,8,33cm • Based on early Linn transport, the Karik is dry but very positive, detailed and engrossing.	
Musical Fidelity FCD	1,499	bitstream • 2 electrical out • optical out • rem • 49,12,33cm • XLR balanced out, tube o/p	
Copland CDA-288	1,799	multibit • electrical out • optical out • rem • 43,13,38cm • HDCD compatible	
Mission Disc/Dacmaster	1,900	multibit • electrical out • rem • 22,8,36cm • Two box, inc Dacmaster DAC	
Naim CD2	1,997	multibit • rem • 43,56,30cm • One box	
McIntosh MCD7008	2,195	multibit • electrical out • rem • 45,14,45cm • Seven disc multiplayer	
Pioneer PD-95	2,500	1 bit • electrical out • optical out • rem • 44,16,34cm • Balanced output, Legato, SPM	
McIntosh MCD7009	2,635	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 45,14,38cm • VRDS CD player	
YBA 2	2,999	multibit • electrical out • optical out • rem • 43,10,33cm • Outboard power supply	
Marantz CD-15	3,000	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 46,14,36cm • Twin Star Mark DAC-7	
Naim CD5	3,642	multibit • rem • 43,56,30cm • Two box	
Micro-Seiki CD-M2DC	3,695	multibit • electrical out • rem	
Marantz CD-23	4,000	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 25,29,13cm • CDM-9/DAC-7 DAC	
Meracus IMAGI™	4,495	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 42,12,44cm • Top load, isolated mechanism	
Luxman D500XS	4,500	multibit • optical out • rem • 44,12,39cm • Top loading	
Micro-Seiki CDM2000X	4,689	multibit • electrical out • rem	
Krell CD-DSP Mk II	5,000	rem • 42,13,28cm • Digital inputs facility	
Krell CD DSPH 5000	5,000	multibit • 2 electrical out • rem • 42,13,28cm • Has digital in, balanced out	
Wadia 16	7,395	multibit • Glass, plastic, BNC & AES/EBU	
Jadis JS-1	8,068	multibit	
Krell KPS20i	9,990	bitstream • electrical out • rem • Balanced output	

CD TRANSPORTS

Teac VRDS-T1	550	144 transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 44,15,33cm • Superb quality engineering is mated to tidy and composed sound (tested with D-T1).	
DPA Enlightenment	635	transport • rem • 40,28,8cm • Clock locks to DPA DACs	
Audio Alchemy DDS III	700	transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • Designed primarily as transport, has analogue output	
Micromega Drive 1	700	transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 43,28,88cm • Upgradable, AES/EBU out	
Arcam Delta 250	750	130 transport • rem • 43,9,28cm • Arcam's best effort yet is a new design based on Philips CDM9 transport. Specification includes Sync Lock facility.	REC'D
Pink Triangle Cardinal	795	144 transport • 46,8,36cm • Soud quality is warm and communicative, but over-polished compared to PT Ordinal (tested with DaCapo and DC PSU).	
Meridian 200	895	96 transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 32,32,10cm • Light, fresh and very bubbly sound that is natural, engaging and unfatiguing.	REC'D
Teac P-700	900	120 transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 23,14,40cm • Tested with D-700, low resolution sound is warm, bubbly and entertaining.	B'BUY
Audiomeca Damnation	950	transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 29,10,32cm	
Micromega Drive 2	1,000	transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 43,28,88cm • Upgradable, AES/EBU out	
Meridian 500	1,095	133 transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 32,33,9cm • Used with the 563 DAC, the combination is thin, brash and uncomfortable.	
Audiomeca Damnation SE	1,100	transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 29,10,32cm • Trichord clocked	
Audiomeca Kreatura	1,199	transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 25,14,39cm • Heavily modified CDM	
Audiomeca Kreatura SE	1,250	transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 25,14,39cm • Trichord clocked	
XTC CDT-1LE	1,250	transport • electrical out • rem • Philips laser, FRFB clock	
Roksan ATT-DP3	1,295	transport • electrical out • rem • 46,12,35cm • AT&T optical, AES/EBU optional	
Audiolab 8000CDM	1,300	transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 45,8,36cm • Precision master clock	
Meridian 602	1,750	120 transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 32,33,10cm • With matching 606 DAC, Meridian's top player sounds distinctive and elegant.	REC'D
Counterpoint DA-11.5E	1,895	130 transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • This model elivers a remarkably vivid and natural sound.	REC'D
Audiomeca Mephisto	2,100	144 transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 43,15,33cm • Tested with Trichord Pulsar, the duo provides a highly composed and tactile sound.	REC'D
PS Audio Lambda tr	2,250	133 transport • electrical out • rem • 38,8,34cm • With Ultralink Two, sound positively sparkles with colour and resonant detail.	REC'D
Theta Data Basic II	2,298	130 transport • electrical out • rem • 42,8,34cm • Includes a budget version of Teac's VRDS mechanism in a fancy case: overpriced.	
Wadia 8	3,195	130 transport • rem • 35,16,41cm • Includes a budget version of teac's VRDS mechanism in a fancy case; just too expensive for the performance on offer.	
ADT Drive 1	3,499	transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 44,9,34cm • Top load, BNC in	
ATD Drive 1	3,499	transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 44,9,34cm • Top load, 2-box acrylic	
Meracus AMAGO	3,995	transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 42,12,44cm • Top load, BNC in	
Teac P-2S	4,000	130 transport • rem • 23,14,49cm • The latest version of Teac's luxury P-2 transport sounds as over-engineered as it looks.	
Wadia 20	4,370	transport • Glass, plastic, BNC, AES/EBU	
Krell MD-20	4,999	transport • rem • 42,13,28cm • Top load, AT&T optical out	
Theta Data III NTSC	5,345	transport • electrical out • rem • 42,12,40cm • AT&T, AES/EBU option	
Theta Data III NTSC/PAL	5,879	transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 42,12,40cm • AT&T, AES/EBU balanced in	
Krell MD-10	7,990	transport • 2 electrical out • optical out • rem • 42,13,28cm	
Jadis JCDT	8,000	transport • rem • Top load	
Krell KPS 20T	8,490	transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • AT&T, AES/EBU balanced in	
Krell DT-10	9,090	transport • 2 electrical out • optical out • rem • 42,13,28cm • Front loader	
Wadia 7	9,995	transport • rem • 35,16,46cm	

DACS

QED Positron	85	Upgrade PSU for Digit	
QED Digit Plus	139	113 bitstream • electrical out • rem • Bearing in mind its expensive but very forgiving performance, the Digit is almost embarrassingly cheap.	B'BUY
Cambridge A DACMagic 1	150	136 hybrid • Ridiculously under-priced, this DAC is best suited to high end transports.	REC'D
Audio Alc DAC-in-the-Box	230	127 multibit • electrical out • This giveaway DAC may still rescue the oldest of players from obsolescence.	REC'D
Counterpoint AD20	255	multibit • DACCard for DA-10E	
QED Digit Reference	299	136 bitstream • No great advance on the basic QED Digit yet its enthusiastic sound is more than competitive at the price.	REC'D
Counterpoint CS18	395	multibit • DACCard for DA-10E	
Audio Alchemy DDEv1.1	399	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • Upgradable external PSU	
Orelle DA-188	449	multibit • 22,7,23cm • DC coupled, optical & coax in	
Arcam Black Box 50	480	127 hybrid • electrical out • optical out • 43,7,28cm • Measured and sophisticated sound from a DAC that leaves plenty in reserve for future upgrades.	B'BUY
Teac D-T1	500	144 bitstream • electrical out • optical out • 44,10,33cm • Teamed with VRDS-T1 for test, this superb quality unit is tidy and composed.	
Woodside DAC2	509	101 multibit • electrical out • optical out • Sharp, dynamic sound is captivating for its lack of grain and 'tizz'.	REC'D
Roksan ATT-DA2	549	delta sigma • 22,10,33cm • DAC 4 inputs, optional AT&T	
DPA Renaissance	550	bitstream • 20,28,8cm • Unique DPA DX16 DAC	
Audio Note DAC1	600	127 multibit • electrical out • optical out • rem • Oddball DAC with manual deemphasis switch. Needs a high preamp input impedance or bass will suffer.	
Teac D-700	600	120 multibit • electrical out • optical out • rem • 23,14,40cm • With P-700, the D-700 may lack the resolution, but is bubbly and entertaining.	B'BUY
Counterpoint BB69	655	multibit • DACCard for DA-10E	
PS Audio DigiLink II	688	multibit • 38,8,16cm	
Perception DAC	695	multibit	
Audio Alchemy DDEv3.0	699	multibit • Upgradable external PSU	
Sonic Frontiers Transdac	699	multibit • 24,5,17cm	
Sonic Frontiers U Jit Bug	699	multibit • 24,5,17cm • Jitter reduction interface	
Micromega DAC	700	bitstream • 43,28,88cm • AES/EBU input	
Thorens TDA2000	700	bitstream • electrical out • 21,9,34cm • 3 digital in puts	
Audiomeca Elixir	745	141 bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 25,39,9cm	
Arcam Black Box 500	750	136 bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 43,9,28cm • Sophisticated unit with Sync Lock and discrete DAC. Early samples sounded grubby and restrained.	
Meridian 563	750	127 delta sigma • 3 electrical out • optical out • 33,9,34cm • Warmer but no less detailed than 200-series, the 563 can fly with a top rate transport.	REC'D
DPA Enlightenment	795	multibit • 20,28,8cm • Unique DPA DX32 DAC	
Audiolab 8000DAC	800	127 bitstream • 45,8,36cm • Just as smooth and refined as its predecessor yet, sadly, still manages to obscure the passion or fire of music.	
Pink Triangle Ordinal	837	136 bitstream • electrical out • optical out • 23,8,35cm • The cheapest dual-differential DAC converter available offers top-flight sound quality.	B'BUY

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS
Monrio 18B2	850	multibit • electrical out • optical out • 43,8,36cm • 18x4 bit, inc outboard PSU
Woodside DAC1	909 87	multibit • electrical out • optical out • <i>Fine but slightly dated and costly package in performance terms - but flexible, musical and well built.</i>
Sentec Diana	993	multibit • electrical out • optical out
XTC DAC-1	1,000	multibit • electrical out • optical out • 32 - 48kHz, Vishay resistors
Linn Numerik	1,075 144	multibit • 32,8,33cm • <i>A new 20 bit DAC and revised Karik transport have cleaned up; but sounds a tad dry and humourless.</i>
PS Audio SuperLink 2	1,230	multibit • 38,8,16cm
Counterpoint UA20	1,295	multibit • DACCard for DA-10E
Meracus AURIGA	1,295	bitstream • electrical out • 46,9,31cm • Optional case colours
Trichord Pulsar Ser One	1,395 144	hybrid • electrical out • optical out • Richly detailed and honest sound
Counterpoint DA-11E	1,495 144	electrical out • optical out • rem • 49,6,27cm • <i>(Tested with DA-11E). Harsh and fatiguing sound.</i>
Wadia 12	1,530	multibit • electrical out • optical out • Balanced and AT&T input
Pink Triangle DaCapo	1,536 144	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • 46,8,35cm • <i>With Cardinal and DC PSU, the DaCapo is best with its 22bit option. It is warm but over-polished.</i>
Pink Triangle DC Supply	1,590 144	46,8,35cm • Massive battery PSU for DaCapo
Audio Note DAC3	1,650	multibit • rem
Theta Pro Prime II	1,800	bitstream • electrical out • 42,5,23cm
Counterpoint DA-10E	1,895 144	electrical out • optical out • rem • Interchangeable DACs, optional
Meracus FLAGRARE	2,495	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • 42,12,44cm • CD link sync, Class A out
Sonic Frontiers SFD-1/2	2,495	multibit • 48,10,33cm • HDCD compatible, tune output
PS Audio UltraLink2 HDCD2	2,650 133	multibit • 38,6,20cm • With Lambda transport, the sound positively sparkles with colour and resonant detail.
LFD DAC3	2,699	multibit • 48,7,37cm • Optional balanced output
Theta Pro Basic III	2,990	multibit • 42,5,29cm
DPA PDM256	2,995 133	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • 20,28,8cm • <i>Highly advanced, with adjustable dither. but the different settings only leads to compromise.</i>
Krell Studio 2	3,198	multibit • 42,13,27cm • AT&T in
Wadia 15	3,790	multibit • electrical out • optical out • rem • 35,9,41cm • Software upgradable
Mark Levinson 36	3,995	multibit • electrical out • 20 bit, FIFO input buffer
Audio Research DAC3	4,195	multibit • 48,14,26cm • 20bit, 8x o/s
Theta Pro Gen V SE	4,200	multibit • 42,8,34cm • AT&T input option
Krell Studio	4,450	multibit • 42,6,32cm • AT&T in
PS Audio Ref Link	4,550	multibit • 38,8,36cm • AT&T input
Wadia 64.4	4,750	multibit • electrical out • optical out • 35,8,28cm • Balanced output
Sonic Frontiers SFD-2/2	5,295	multibit • 48,10,33cm • HDCD compatible, tune output
DPA PDM10924	5,995	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • 40,30,8cm • Unique DPA DX128 DAC
Theta Pro Gen V	6,500	multibit • electrical out • 42,8,34cm
Wadia 9	12,790	multibit • electrical out • optical out • rem • 44,9,36cm • Digital volume, separate PSU
Krell Reference 64	14,900	multibit • 42,13,39cm • AT&T in

REC'D

REC'D



Digital Recorders

Digital recorders come in a variety of different guises, but have yet to make much of an impact on the domestic market. At present there are four types to choose from: DAT (digital audio tape), MD (Mini Disc), and DCC (digital compact cassette) and CD-R (CD Recordable). DCC is backwards compatible inasmuch as the machines can play regular audio tapes. MD's claim to fame is its optical disc

format, which offers instant track access and can't be worn out like a tape. DAT has been on the market for quite some time now, but has never really 'made it' as a consumer medium. In the last year or so it has begun to carve itself a niche at the top end of the market, replacing reel to reel tape recorders as the audiophile's tape-based medium. CD-R is just coming into its own with the release of Pioneer's PD-Ros.

Key

MiniDisc, Digital Audio Tape,	.....type of recording medium
Digital Compact Cassette	.....digital input(s)
electrical, optical in	.....digital output(s)
electrical, optical out	.....DAC type
bitstream, multibit etc.	.....DAC type

PRODUCT £ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

DIGITAL RECORDERS

Philips DCC134	150	Digital Compact Cassette • bitstream • 11,10,4cm • Portable: Dolby B, charger
Philips DCC730	250	Digital Compact Cassette • electrical in • bitstream • 44,30,9cm • 18 bit resolution
Philips DCC170	250	Digital Compact Cassette • electrical in • bitstream • 11,10,9cm • Portable, wired remote
Philips DCC951	280	Digital Compact Cassette • electrical in • optical in • electrical out • multibit • Turbodriven mech, 18 bit
Sharp MD-M11E	450	MiniDisc • 8,3,11cm • Recorder, title generator
Sony MDA-JA3ES	799	MiniDisc • electrical in • optical in • electrical out • optical out • bitstream • 43,9,35cm • Track title recording
Pioneer D-05	800	Digital Audio Cassette • electrical in • optical in • electrical out • optical out • bitstream • 46,14,29cm • 96kHz sampling
Sony MBS501	800	MiniDisc • electrical in • optical in • electrical out • bitstream • 43,9,35cm • Sample rate converter
Sony DTC80ES	800	Digital Audio Cassette • electrical in • optical in • electrical out • optical out • bitstream • 43,11,55cm • SBM
JVC XM-D1BK	900	MiniDisc • electrical in • optical in • electrical out • optical out • bitstream • 18,5,13cm • Minidisc record and player
Pioneer D-07	1,150	Digital Audio Cassette • electrical in • optical in • electrical out • optical out • bitstream • 44,14,38cm • 96kHz record, Legato Link
Teac R-9	1,200	Digital Audio Cassette • electrical in • optical in • electrical out • optical out • bitstream • 45,16,36cm • Based on TASCAM technology
Pioneer PDR-05	1,300	CD-R • electrical in • optical in • electrical out • optical out • bitstream • 46,14,29cm • Legato Link digital filter
Meridian CDR	4,500	CD-R • electrical in • optical in • electrical out



Stands & Supports

Hi-fi furniture is more important than you might imagine; the effect it can have on the sound of your system is far from subtle. Hi-fi furniture can be split up into two categories — equipment supports and loudspeaker stands.

It is not entirely clear what makes a great equipment support, but some are definitely more equal than others.

There's a variety of approaches and materials used include particle board, hardwood, glass and all manner of steel tube and section. The majority are built for sound quality first, aesthetics second, but there are attractive examples.

Speakers stands come in a variety of sizes and styles to suit different models. Use dealer or manufacturer recommendations to narrow down the choice of types, but as a general rule the you want the tweeter at ear height.

Key to stands & supports

shelf pitch	.....gap between shelves
60, 39, 48cm	.....size width, depth, height in cm
MDF	.....medium density fibreboard
pillar/frame	.....multi leg stand
column	.....single leg stand

PRODUCT £ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS

Ixos 800	35	equipment support • single shelf • Mini/midi pedestal
Deadrock 701	40	equipment support • Single module
Ixos 701	40	equipment support • single module
JPW Add-on	50	equipment support • Add-on shelves (x2)
Quadraspire Q4/S	50	Add on shelf for Q4 • wood finish • Adjustable shelf pitch

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AWARD WINNERS

Denon AVC2800 Amp	Available
Kenwood KMX1000THX	Available
Kenwood KRV5570	Available
Kenwood KRX1000THX	Available
Marantz AV600THX	Available
Pioneer CLD2950	Available
Pioneer CLDD515	Available
Sony TAAV790	Available
Yamaha DSPA590 Amp	Available
Yamaha DSPE390	Available
Yamaha RXV590 Receiver	Available

LaserDisc Players

Pioneer CLD310	Available
Pioneer CLD315	Available
Sony MDP850	Available

Prologic Processors

Canon D300 NEW	Available
Kenwood SS3300	£179
Marantz AV1030	Available
Marantz SP50	£99
Pioneer VSP200	£199
Technics AV500	Available
Yamaha DSPE1000	Available
Yamaha DSPE580	Available

Prologic Amplifiers

Canon D500 New	Available
Denon AVC1530	£399
Denon AVC1800 New	Available
Kenwood KAV3700	Special
Kenwood KAV7700	Special
Marantz PMA711av	Available
Marantz MA500THX	Available
NAD 216 THX	Available
Pioneer VSA303	£249
Pioneer VSAD802	Available
Sony TAAV790	Available
Yamaha DSPA2070	Available
Yamaha DSPA590	Available
Yamaha DSPA780	Available
Yamaha DSPA970	Available

Prologic Receivers

Denon AVR1000	£399
Denon AVR900 NEW	Available
Kenwood KRV5570	Available
Kenwood KRV6070	Available
Kenwood KRV7070	Available
NAD 713	Available
Pioneer VSX804RDS	Available
Technics SAGX370	£219
Technics SAGX390	£259
Technics SAGX470	£299
Technics SAGX670	£349
Yamaha RXV390	Available
Yamaha RXV590	Available

HOME CINEMA SPEAKERS

AWARD WINNERS

Speaker Packages	
Jamo 4000	Available
KEF Home Cinema	Available
Arena Package	Available
Tannoy Screen One	Available
Canon Home Cinema	Available
JBL Music Movie Package	Available
JBL Flix 1.3 Speakers	£99
Technics 200 Package	Special

Centre Speakers

B&W 2000IFS	Available
B & W CC6	Available
Canon SC10	Available
JBL MR Centre	Available
KEF Centre 90	Available
KEF Centre 100	Available
Jamo Centre 100 & 200	Available
Celestion CC1	£49
B&W Centrale	£99
Boston 404	£79
Boston 525	£89
Boston VR12	£179
Pioneer SP7C	£49
Tannoy 623	£149

Subwoofers

Canon SC5 & SC20	Available
Celestion Centre 2 & CSW	Available
Jamo 40/50 & 160	Available
KEF 80C	Available
Tannoy 621 & 622	Available
Yamaha C80 & C110	Special

Rear Surround Speakers

Canon VSB100	£99
Jamo SW400/600/505	Available
KEF 30B NEW	Available
Kenwood SW500	Available
REL STORM	Available
REL STRATA II NEW	Available
Tannoy 625	Available
Yamaha SW60/120/200	Available
Canon SV15	£89
Celestion MP1	£99
Jamo Rear	£39
Kenwood CM5E	£49
Kenwood RS05	£79
Pioneer SP55	£39
Pioneer SP77	£69
Canon V100	Available
Canon S25 & 35 NEW	Available
Jamo Surround 100 & 200	Available
KEF 60S & 70S	Available
Kenwood Omni 5 & 7	Available
Tannoy Profile 628	Available
Yamaha NSE80	Available

TELEVISIONS & VIDEOS

AWARD WINNERS

Nicam Videos	
Aiwa FX1500	Available
Philips VR757	Available
Panasonic NVHD600	Available
Panasonic NVHD650	Available
Mitsubishi M561	Available
Sony SLVE700	Available
Toshiba V855	Available
JVC HRJ625	Available
Panasonic SVHS 1000	Available
JVC HRS7000	Available

Mono Videos

Aiwa GX250	Available
JVC HRJ220	Available
Toshiba V254	Available
Panasonic SD200	Available
Sony SLVE500	Available

Selected Top Quality Videos

Sony SLVE80	Available
Sony SLVE1000	Available
JVC HRJ725	Available
JVC HRJ825	Available
Philips VR948 SVHS	Available
Mitsubishi M1000 SVHS	Available

Televisions

Philips 29PT828 Prologic	Available
Philips 32W9631 W/screen	Available
Philips 29PT9021	Available
Philips 28W9631	Available
JVC 29SX1 3D Phonic	Available
Sony 28WS3 PAL Plus	Available
Panasonic 29AD1DP	Available
Sony 32WS3 PAL Plus	Available
Grundig E72 911 Porsche	Available
Sony KVS2952 Prologic	Available
Toshiba 3357 Prologic	Available
Sony 29" Nicam	£595
Sony 25" Nicam	£495
Sony 21" Nicam	£399
Mitsubishi 28" Prologic	Special
Philips 28802 100Hz	£599
Philips 21" Nicam	£299
Toshiba 25" Nicam	£429
Panasonic 25" Nicam	£439
Panasonic 28" Nicam	Special
Panasonic 29" Nicam	Special
Mitsubishi 28" Nicam	Special
Grundig 32" Nicam	£999
Mitsubishi 37" Nicam	Special
Projection Televisions	
Pioneer 40" 1407	Available
Sony 41" KPS4112	Available
Philips 46" 100Hz 912	Available
Pioneer 50" D5000	Available

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PRODUCT	£	ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
Ixos 711	60	equipment support • 1 shelf • Toughened glass shelf	
Sound Organisation Z022	60	equipment support • Wall mountable • 50w,47dcm • Removable shelf	
Ixos 802	70	equipment support • 2 shelf • Mini component, 125mm spacing	
Sound Organisation Z230	70	equipment support • 3 shelf • 50,40,43cm • Satin finish, self assembly	
QLN Signature	75	Speaker stand • Pedestal • 13 inchcm • Available up to 24 inch	
Sound Organisation Z021	75	equipment support • 2 shelf • 50,40,36cm	
JPW 3 tier	80	equipment support • 3 shelf rack	
Ixos 803	90	equipment support • 3 shelf • Mini component, 125mm spacing	
Sound Organisation Z030	95	equipment support • 3 shelf • 50,40,43cm	
Alphason R24/24	100	equipment support • 3 shelf, MDF • 60,39,48cm	
Alphason R17/17	100	equipment support • 3 shelf, MDF • 60,39,34cm	
Alphason R12/12	100	equipment support • 3 shelf, MDF • 60,39,24cm	
Ixos 802P	100	equipment support • 2 shelf • mini - with pedestal/CD store	
Ixos 703	100	equipment support • 3-shelf	
JPW 5 tier	100	equipment support • 5 shelf rack	
Ixos 803P	110	equipment support • 3 shelf • mini - with pedestal/CD store	
Ixos 804	110	equipment support • 4 shelf • Mini component, 125mm spacing	
Sound Organisation Z060	115	equipment support • 4 shelf • 50,40,62cm	
Alphason TV24/17	120	TV base module • 3 shelves, MDF • 67,39,41cm	
DNM DOMOWS	125	Turntable wall stand • Lightweight • 37 deepcm	
DNM DOMOPS	125	Turntable support • Lightweight • 37,50,46cm	
Mana Acoustics Sd Frame	125	equipment supports • 1 shelf • <i>Used singly (glass) for equipment, or in pairs for speakers</i>	REC'D
Projekt A3	125	equipment support • MDF modular • 2 shelves, 2 dividers	
QLN Modulul	125	equipment support • MDF shelves • Extends up aad along	
Sound Organisation Z550	125	equipment support • 5 shelf • 50,40,77cm • Satin finish, self assembly	
Alphason GR24/24	130	equipment support • 3 glass shelves • 60,39,48cm	
Alphason GR17/17	130	equipment support • 3 glass shelves • 60,39,34cm	
Alphason GR12/12	130	equipment support • 3 glass shelves • 60,39,24cm	
Ixos 713	130	equipment support • 3 shelf • Toughened glass shelf	
Sound Organisation Z038	130	151 equipment support • 5 shelf • 50,40,84cm • <i>Too lively and lacking order - but cheap</i>	REC'D
Ixos 804P	140	equipment support • 4 shelf • mini - with pedestal/CD store	
Ixos 704	140	equipment support	
Alphason TV24/175	150	TV base module • 3 shelves, MDF • 67,39,34cm • Swivel top	
Mana Acoustics Mini Table	150	equipment support • Glass shelf	
Alphason VR24/24	160	equipment support • 3 shelves, rosewood • 60,39,48cm	
Alphason VR17/17	160	equipment support • 3 shelves, rosewood • 60,39,34cm	
Alphason VR12/12	160	equipment support • 3 shelves, rosewood • 60,39,34cm	
Projekt A4	165	equipment support • MDF, modular • 4 shelves	
Ixos 705	170	equipment support • 5 shelf	
SoundStyle X300	170	equipment support • 4 legs • 59,38,51cm • Glass shelves	
Mana Acoustics Snd Shelf	175	Equipment support • 1 shelf, wall mount • The original, upgradable	
Target B5	175	151 equipment support • 5 wood shelves • <i>Free of colourations, fine grip and good value</i>	REC'D
Ixos 714	190	equipment support • 4 shelf • Toughened glass shelves	
Alphason AV24/17	200	AV base module • 5 shelves, MDF • 127,39,94cm • 'L' shaped	
Mana Acoustics Snd Stage	200	Upgrade unit • <i>Upgrades amp stand or Reference table</i>	
Quadraspire Q4	200	151 equipment support • 4 MDF shelves • <i>Easy to live with, and tonally neutral</i>	B'BUY
SoundStyle X305	200	equipment support • 3 shelf • 77,44,51cm • Glass shelves	
SoundStyle X053	200	equipment support • 4 shelf • 64cmcm • 3 pillar, 16.9cm shelf pitch	
SoundStyle X050	200	equipment support • 4 shelf • 64cm highcm • 3 pillar, 12.8cm shelf ptch	
Projekt A5	205	equipment support • MDF, modular • 5 shelves	
SoundStyle X100	210	equipment support • 4 glass shelves • 58,49,64cm • 16.9cm shelf pitch	
Stands Unique Snd Supp	222	Hi-fi/TV table • 3 shelves • 42,115,42cm • Adjustable shelves	
Alphason AV24/17S	230	AV base module • 6 shelf, MDF • 127,39,94cm • Swivel base for TV	
Ixos 715	230	equipment support • 5 shelf • Toughened glass shelves	
SoundStyle X058	230	equipment support • 5 shelf • 78cmcm • 3 pillar, 15.3cm shelf pitch.	
Mana Acoustics Snd Table	235	equipment support	
SoundStyle X310	240	equipment support • 3 shelves • 103,44,51cm • Glass shelves	
SoundStyle X120	240	equipment support • 6 glass shelves • 59,49,109cm • 16.9cm shelf pitch	
SoundStyle X105	240	equipment support • 5 glass shelves • 59,49,84cm • 16.9cm shelf pitch	
Projekt A6	245	equipment support • MDF, modular • 6 shelves	
Stands Unique Snd Tower	249	151 equipment support • 5 glass shelves • 81,72,42cm • <i>Adds colouration, and lacks weight. Optional Isolation Platform</i>	
Fi-Rax R4	250	151 equipment support • adjust glass shelves • To speccm • <i>Lively, exuberant sound, slightly weak bass</i>	
SoundStyle Select 6105	280	151 equipment support • glass shelves • <i>Respectable sonics, structurally solid and smart</i>	REC'D
Mana Acoustics 2 tier stnd	325	equipment supports • 2 shelves • <i>Infinately upgradable</i>	
Mana Acoustics Ref table	350	147 equipment support • 1 shell • <i>King of its type</i>	B'BUY
Mana Acoustics 3 tier stnd	450	equipment supports • 3 shelves • <i>Infinately upgradable</i>	
Audiophile Furniture Base	480	151 equipment support • 4 shelves • <i>Easy to set up, well ordered sound</i>	REC'D
Mana Acoustics 4 tier stnd	500	equipment supports • 4 shelves • <i>Infinately upgradable</i>	
Mana Acoustics 5 tr stnd	600	151 equipment supports • 5 shelves • <i>Infinately upgradable. Persuasive and thrilling</i>	B'BUY
Mana Acoustics 6 tier stnd	700	equipment supports • 6 shelves • <i>Infinately upgradable. King among equipment stands</i>	

SPEAKER STANDS

JPW WB	30	speaker supports • Wall brackets	
Alphason NC1-60	40	speaker stand • pillar type • 23w,60hcm • Double column, steel	
Alphason NC1-50	40	speaker stand • pillar type • 23w,50hcm • steel	
Alphason NC1-40	40	speaker stand • pillar type • 23w,40hcm • steel	
Sound Organisation Z023	42	speaker wall bracket	
JPW MS2	45	speaker stand • 3 leg • 39,29,45cm • for Sonata	
Ixos 903	50	Loudspeaker stand • single column • 60cm highcm	
Ixos 902	50	Loudspeaker stand • single column • 47cm highcm	
Ixos 901	50	Loudspeaker stand • single column • 39cm highcm	
Sound Organisation Z026	50	speaker stands • High - tripod base • 60cmcm	
Sound Organisation Z027	50	speaker stands • Mid - tripod base • 45cm tallcm	
Sound Organisation Z037	50	speaker stands • Low - tripod base • 30cm tallcm	
JPW MS3	55	speaker stand • 3 leg • 37,30,61cm • For Minim	
Alphason NC11-60	70	speaker stand • pillar type • 23w,60hcm • Double column, steel	
Alphason NC11-50	70	speaker stand • pillar type • 23w,50hcm • Double column, steel	
Alphason NC11-40	70	speaker stand • pillar type • 23w,40hcm • Double column, steel	
Sound Organisation Z040	70	speaker stands • Frame type • 45cm tallcm • Fixed top spikes	
Sound Organisation Z055	72	speaker stands • Frame type • 60cm tallcm • Fixed top spikes	
Sound Organisation Z010	76	speaker stands • Pillar type • 25cm tallcm	
Sound Organisation Z018	78	speaker stands • Pillar type • 46cm tallcm	
JPW MS1	80	speaker stand • 4-leg • 39,32,46cm • For AP2, AP3, P1	
Sound Organisation Z024	80	speaker stands • Pillar type • 61cm tallcm	
Alphason Titan S-50	100	speaker stand • Pillar type • 29w,50hcm • cast iron	

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS
Alphason Titan S-40	100	speaker stand • Pillar type • 29w,40hcm • cast iron
SoundStyle X024	100	speaker stands • 61cmcm
SoundStyle X020	100	speaker stands • 48cm tallcm
SoundStyle X016	100	speaker stands • 41cm tallcm
SoundStyle X012	100	speaker stands • 31cm tallcm
Sound Organisation Z128	108	speaker stands • Column type • 45cm tallcm • Adjustable top/bottom spikes
Sound Organisation Z129	110	speaker stands • Pillar type • 61cm tallcm • Adjustable top/bottom stands
Alphason Titan L-60	130	speaker stand • pillar type • 29w,60hcm • cast iron
Alphason Titan L-50	130	speaker stand • pillar type • 29w,50hcm • cast iron
Alphason Titan L-40	130	speaker stand • pillar type • 27w,40hcm • cast iron
Alphason Titan S-60	130	speaker stand • Pillar type • 29w,60hcm • cast iron
JPW HS2	130	speaker stand • For Ruby 2 • 26,29,45cm
JPW HS1	130	speaker stand • For Ruby 1 • 23,25,58cm



Headphones

There are a variety of different approaches to headphone design. Among the more expensive models, electrostatic drivers are used in open-backed phones. The more down-to-earth models feature dynamic (moving coil) drivers in circular, open or closed-back designs. The advantage of open backs seems to be a

correspondingly open sound, but one can also hear external noise, of course. Closed-back designs are useful in situations where it is necessary to block out noise.

■ There are three styles of headphone: circumaural models enclose the ear; supra-aural designs feature a flat pad which presses on the outer ear; and intra-aurals (in-ear) rest inside the ear itself, à la personal stereos.

Key

open back, sealed, in-ear	.....	headphone type
275g	.....	weight in grams
16 Ohm	.....	impedance

PRODUCT £ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

HEADPHONES		
Sony MDR-E525	15	in-ear model • 5g • 1m lead, mini plug
Sony MDR-24	15	open back • 7m, 3.5/6.3mm plug
Vivanco SR120	15	sealed • 32g • 32 Ohm • Large earcups
Audio Technica ATH-S44	16	open back • 5g • 16 Ohm • Inner ear
Pioneer SE-5	16	open back • 60g • 30 Ohm • 2m OFC cable
Sony MDR-25	16	open back
Sony MDR-W12L	16	in-ear model • 1.2m mini plug
Ross RDH-300CD	17	133 sealed • 155g • 8 Ohm • <i>In-lead controls are the highlights of this shoddy, sometimes aggressive sounding design.</i>
Sony MDR-008TV	17	open back • 5m, 3.5/6.3mm plug
JVC HA-CD88	18	open back • 38g • 32 Ohm
Sony MDR-E535	18	in-ear model • 5g • 1.2m lead, mini plug
Sony MDR-44	18	open back • 7m, 3.5/6.3mm plug
Sony MDR-009TV	19	open back • 5m, 3.5/6.3mm plug
Vivanco SR250	19	sealed • Xtra bass feature
Aiwa HP-X301	20	sealed • 230g • 3m lead, dual plug
Audio Technica ATH-P1/TV	20	open back • 55g • 25 Ohm • 'Omniphones', vol control
Audio Technica ATH-P5	20	open back • 70g • 40 Ohm • 'Omniphones'
Beyer DT111 Beta	20	open back • 30g • 16 Ohm • Neodymium magnet
JVC HA-D525	20	sealed
JVC HA-F65	20	in-ear model • 32 Ohm • In-ear
Kenwood KH-757	20	in-ear model • 32 Ohm • 3.5mm plug, in-ear model
Kenwood KH-1000	20	121 open back • 30g • 32 Ohm • <i>First step up from a true mini: a near miniature which is cheap, comfortable and inoffensive</i>
Maxell HP-2000	20	open back • 140g • 32 Ohm • Volume control digital ready
Pioneer SE-15	20	open back • 65g • 30 Ohm • 2m OFC cable
Sony MDR-35	20	open back
Sony MDR-CD30	20	sealed • 2m, 3.5/6.3mm plug
Sony MDR-E747MP	20	in-ear model • 6g • 1.2m lead, mini plug
Sony MDR-CD50	20	sealed • 180g • 24 Ohm • 2m, 3.5/6.3mm plug
Sony MDR-5747	20	in-ear model • 6g • 1.2m lead, mini plug
Vivanco SR150	20	sealed • 32g • 32 Ohm • In-line volume control
Ross RDH-400CD	22	sealed • 186g • 8 Ohm • Digital headphone
Sony MDR-P1TV	22	sealed • 5m, 3.5/6.3mm plug
Sony MDR-A22L	22	in-ear model • 1.2m mini plug
AKG K2	23	open back • 70g • 200 Ohm • Mini
Pioneer SE-32	23	open back • 94g • 40 Ohm • 2.5metre OFC cable
Aiwa HP-VX303	25	sealed • 230g • In-line controls, dual plugs
AKG K33	25	open back • 90g • 50 Ohm
Beyer DT111 Gamma	25	open back • 32g • 16 Ohm • With volume control
JVC HA-D626	25	sealed
JVC HA-D610	25	sealed • 120g • 32 Ohm • 3m, 6.3/3.5m jacks
Kenwood KH-959	25	in-ear model • 32 Ohm • 3.5mm plug, in-ear model
Pioneer SE-52	25	open back • 104g • 40 Ohm • 2.5metre OFC cable
Vivanco SR200	25	sealed • 32g • 32 Ohm • Titanium finish
Audio Technica ATH-M2A	28	sealed • 115g • 22 Ohm • Mid size
Sennheiser Vegas	28	open back • 118g • 32 Ohm • 3m lead, 3.5/6.3mm
Sennheiser Manhattan	28	open back • 118g • 32 Ohm • 3m lead, 3.5/6.3mm
Sony MDR-CD250EX	28	sealed • 3m, 3.5/6.3mm lead
Maxell HP-3000	30	133 120g • 32 Ohm • <i>Solid, smooth sounding supra-aural headphone, but congested and undynamic. Includes in-lead controls.</i>
Pioneer SE-15V	30	open back • 65g • 30 Ohm • 5m OFC cable
Technics RP-HT77	30	sealed • 160g • 32 Ohm • 3m lead, OFC wire
Vivanco SR300	30	sealed • 32g • 32 Ohm • Single cable design
Beyer DT211	33	open back • 120g • 40 Ohm • Supra-aural
Pioneer SE-330D	35	sealed • 165g • 35 Ohm • 3m cable, bass boost duct
Pioneer SE-400D	37	133 sealed • 185g • 35 Ohm • <i>Acceptable, if unexciting all-rounder, this supra-aural phone has good long-term comfort levels.</i>
Sennheiser HD60TV	38	open back • 118g • 32 Ohm • 6.8m lead (inc vol control)
Aiwa HP-X705	40	sealed • 130g • Dual plug, 2m ext cable
Kenwood KH-2020	40	sealed • 210g • 32 Ohm • 2.5m OFC lead, closed model
Sennheiser HD445 II	40	121 open back • 125g • 52 Ohm • <i>Still the one by which others at the price are measured, though now slightly leaden sounding, with a cold treble</i>
Technics RP-HT300	40	sealed • Single sided cord
Vivanco SR606	40	133 open back • 225g • 32 Ohm • <i>Although slightly overblown at times, this model is easy on the ears and essentially enjoyable</i>
AKG K44	42	99 open back • 90g • 50 Ohm • <i>Good quality personal oriented phone, could have a better sense of space but is musically quite communicative.</i>
Audio Technica ATH-M4A	42	sealed • 139g • 28 Ohm • Mid size
JVC HA-D727	43	sealed

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
Sony MDR-CD450	45	133	sealed • 260g • 24 Ohm • <i>Fair acoustic isolation and comfortable construction, moderate sound.</i>	REC'D
AKG K135	46	63	open back • 160g • 150 Ohm • <i>The K135s doesn't live up to the usual AKG standards, though it does have the ability to convey rhythm well.</i>	
Pioneer SE-500D	48		sealed • 175g • 35 Ohm • 3m cable, dual bass horn	
Beyer DT311	49	133	open back • 124g • 40 Ohm • <i>Uncharacteristically tight, unrefined sound quality from this otherwise well engineered 'phone.</i>	
Sennheiser HD414 Class	50		open back • 80g • 52 Ohm • The original lives on!	
Sennheiser HD455	50		open back • 3m lead, 3.5/6.3mm	
Sony MDR-IF210	50		infra-red cordless • 170g • Extra h/phone w/o transmitter	
Technics RP-HT400	50		sealed • Single sided cord	
Vivanco IR5700	50		Infra-red cordless	
Vivanco IR5000	50		Mono, infra red cordless	
Vivanco SR850	50		open back • Double bow design for comfort	
JVC HA-D710	55		sealed • 210g • 32 Ohm • 3m, 6.3/3.5m jacks	
Beyer DT331	59		open back • 210g • 40 Ohm • Circum-aural	
Pioneer SE-700D	60		sealed • 180g • 35 Ohm • 3m cable, dual bass horn	
Sony MDR-CD550	60	99	sealed • 270g • 45 Ohm • <i>Competent headphone creates remarkable space from a closed back design and sounds natural to boot.</i>	B'BUY
Technics RP-HT600	60		sealed • 3m lead, double headband	
JVC HA-D910	65	121	sealed • 220g • 32 Ohm • <i>Broadly acceptable if unexciting design with low level losses and some colourations.</i>	
Sennheiser HD465	65		open back • 3m lead, 3.5/6.3mm	
Beyer DT411	69	111	open back • 120g • 250 Ohm • <i>A reasonable but not very thrilling headphone that doesn't really offer enough at the price.</i>	
Kenwood KH-5000	70		sealed • 280g • 32 Ohm • 2.5m OFC lead	
Nakamichi SP7	70		open back • 150g • 45 Ohm	
Sennheiser IS360/UK	70		sealed • 240g • Budget infra-red model	
Sony MDR-D33	70		sealed • 120g • 45 Ohm • 1.5m, 3.5/6.3mm plug	
Technics RP-HT700	70		sealed • 5m lead, double headband	
Vivanco IR6000	70		Stereo infra-red cordless	
Vivanco SR909	70		open back • 285g • 600 Ohm • Remote control lead, all plugs	
AKG K141	74		open back • 225g • 600 Ohm	
Jacklin Float Model 1	75	55	open back • 400g • 200 Ohm • <i>Whilst very unusual in appearance, the Floats give remarkable sound quality and openness at a reasonable price.</i>	B'BUY
Sennheiser HD475	75		open back • Selected drivers/diaphragm	
Audio Technica ATH-M7A	78		sealed • 210g • 40 Ohm • Mid size	
Sony MDR-IF210K	80		infra-red cordless • 170g • Seven metre range infra red	
AKG K240 Monitor	82	63	open back • 240g • 600 Ohm • <i>Something of a classic, these AKGs are very user-friendly in all respects; sonically on the warm side of normal.</i>	REC'D
Sennheiser HD25 SP	85		sealed • 115g • 85 Ohm • Monitoring headphone	
Beyer DT431	89		open back • 210g • 40 Ohm • Circum-aural	
Audio Technica ATH911	90		open back • 280g • 600 Ohm • Dynamic, full size	
Audio Tech ATH910PRO	90	55	sealed • 280g • 40 Ohm • <i>The closed back 910s are an improvement on the 909s, with a nice rhythmic quality rarely found with headphones.</i>	REC'D
Sony MDR-D55	90		sealed • 120g • 45 Ohm • 1.5m, 3.5/6.3mm plug	
Sony MDR-CD750	90	111	sealed • 290g • 45 Ohm • <i>Reasonably comfortable and eminently listenable, these Sonys have characteristically good bass power and relaxed HF.</i>	REC'D
Vivanco IR6500	90		Stereo infra-red with charger	
Beyer DT511	99		open back • 200g • 250 Ohm • Circum-aural	
Jacklin Float Model 2	99	63	open back • 400g • 200 Ohm • <i>Helmet shaped, but open sounding and comfortable in long term, despite lack of adjustment.</i>	REC'D
AKG K222IR	100		infra-red cordless • Infra-red, rechargeable	
Sennheiser HD535	100		open back • 255g • 150 Ohm • 3m lead, 3.5/6.3mm	
Technics RP-F10	100	121	sealed • 300g • 32 Ohm • <i>Another very comfortable sealed circum-aural model, has modest sound isolation and uneven, sound favouring bass.</i>	
Vivanco SR1000IFL	110		open back • 265g • 100 Ohm • In-front localisation	
AKG K270	112		sealed • 250g • 75 Ohm	
AKG K280 Parabolic	117	63	open back • 250g • 75 Ohm • <i>Revealing twin-driver design uses the same design principles as a satellite dish to beam sound into ear.</i>	REC'D
AKG K400	118	121	open back • 250g • 120 Ohm • <i>Comfortable over long sessions. Sound is exquisitely detailed, dynamic and uncoloured.</i>	REC'D
Sennheiser HD545 Ref	120		open back • 255g • 150 Ohm • 3m lead, 3.5/6.3mm	
Sony MDR-D77	120		sealed • 140g • 45 Ohm • 1.5m, 3.5/6.3mm plug	
Vivanco IR7100	120		Stereo infra-red cordless	
AKG K270 Studio	121		sealed • 250g • 75 Ohm	
Beyer DT531	129	144	open back • 245g • 250 Ohm • Circum-aural	REC'D
Beyer IRS790	129		open back • 270g • Cordless infra-red	
AKG K500	138	111	open back • 250g • 120 Ohm • <i>K500 offers impressive definition. Balance is on the light side but transparency is high.</i>	REC'D
Beyer DT770 Pro	139		sealed • 250g • 600 Ohm • Circum-aural	
Beyer DT100	139		sealed • 350g • 600 Ohm • Choice of impedances	
Sennheiser HD565 Ovat'n	140		open back • 255g • 150 Ohm • 3m lead, 3.5/6.3mm	
Sennheiser HD265 Linear	140		sealed • 260g • 150 Ohm • Closed back	
Vivanco IR7600	140		Stereo infra-red cordless	
Vivanco SR200IFL	140		open back • In-front localisation	
AKG K333IR	150		infra-red cordless • Circum-aural, cordless	
Sennheiser IS450	150		160g • Infra-red cordless - hi-fi	
Beyer DT801	159		sealed • 250g • 250 Ohm • Circum-aural	
Sennheiser HD25	160		sealed • 140g • 70 Ohm • Professional, closed back	
Beyer DT990 Pro	163		open back • 230g • 600 Ohm • Circum-aural	
Stax SR34	169		open back • 170g • Electrostatic	
Beyer DT811	179		open back • 245g • 250 Ohm • Circum-aural	
AKG K444IR	180		infra-red cordless • Circum-aural, cordless	
Sennheiser IS550	180		170g • Infra-red cordless	
Technics RP-F30	180		sealed • 340g • 32 Ohm • 3m lead, XBS double drive	
Sony MDR-610k	190		infra-red cordless • 470g • Seven meter range infra-red	
AKG K340	191	75	open back • 380g • 400 Ohm • <i>Heavyweight cans in most respects, the K340 with its electrostatic tweeter is a very revealing headphone.</i>	REC'D
Beyer IRS890	199		open back • 270g • Cordless infra-red	
Beyer DT901	199		sealed • 280g • 250 Ohm • Circum-aural	
Sennheiser HD 580 P	200		open back • 260g • 300 Ohm • Flagship model	
Sony MDR-CD1000	200	111	sealed • 330g • 45 Ohm • <i>A fine sounding and comfortable headphone that's likely to work well with most sources.</i>	REC'D
Beyer DT911	219	111	open back • 275g • 250 Ohm • <i>Probably too revealing for many headphone amps, these are very subtle and fine, if expensive cans.</i>	REC'D
Stax SR Gamma	239	55	open back • 300g • <i>One down from the Lambda, the Gamma is an excellent headphone with little to criticise bar the price.</i>	REC'D
JVC HA-D1000	250		sealed • 340g • 32 Ohm • 5m, 6.3/3.5m jacks	
Stax SR84	259		open back • 160g • Electrostatic	
Audio Technica ATH9000	273	111	open back • 240g • 32 Ohm • <i>Electrets which connect to the amp's speaker outputs, They sound a little too smooth, but would suit aggressive amps.</i>	
Stax SR Lambda	349		open back • 325g • Electrostatic	
Jacklin Float ELS	399	55	open back • 600g • 8 Ohm • <i>These electrostatics have an openness of sound that is rarely found in the breed, with good dynamic range to boot.</i>	REC'D
Stax Gamma Pro	399	63	open back • 300g • <i>With SRD-X Pro, the Gamma Pro is like a stethoscope for your hi-fi, revealing subtleties that many loudspeakers fail to resolve.</i>	REC'D
Stax Lambda Pro	449	55	open back • 325g • <i>Tested with SRD-7B PSU, this is an industry reference, and is frighteningly revealing.</i>	REC'D
Stax Lambda Sig	549	72	open back • 325g • <i>With SRM-T1, the Signature must be the most transparent headphone available.</i>	REC'D
AKG K1000	646	99	open back • 270g • 120 Ohm • <i>One of the best dynamics on the market, hooks directly into speaker outputs.</i>	REC'D
JVC HA-F25	699		in-ear model • 32 Ohm • In ear	
Sennheiser IS850	860		330g • Digital audiophile infra-red	
Sennheiser HE60/HEV70	998		open back • 260g • Electrostatic with energiser	
Stax Omega	1,695		open back • 400g • Electrostatic	
Sennheiser Orpheus	9,652		open back • 365g • Electrostatic, valve energiser	



Loudspeakers

As the last item in the hi-fi chain, the loudspeaker is merely the slave of what has gone before; it is capable only of reproducing a signal as good as it is fed. Nevertheless, the distortions (colorations and stereo effects) introduced by loudspeakers (and rooms) tend to be greater than those anywhere else in the hi-fi chain, so careful selection of models is very important.

■ The average loudspeaker consists of an enclosure (much of which may have begun life as part of a tree) plus a couple of drive units hidden behind a removable grille. Inside the box lurks a simple electrical circuit known as a crossover, which divides the incoming (full range) signal into the right bits for the drivers to handle. The designer's primary task is to balance the 'sensitivity' of the loudspeaker (how loud it goes for a given electrical input) against the bass extension

(how low it goes), for the given box size. After that, such subtleties as coloration (or lack of it) and dispersion come into the equation.

■ Careful placement of the loudspeakers within the room is as important as the initial choice of model. For good stereo the enclosures need to be more or less the same distance from nearby walls. Speakers with a rear port need to be a foot or two from the rear wall to avoid bass boom.

■ There are two subsections within the overall heading of loudspeakers: these are satellites and subwoofers, and active subwoofers. The former is a combination of small mid/treble units and a single subwoofer which provides the bass. They are primarily designed for situations where the sight of loudspeakers would harm domestic harmony. Active subwoofers have built in power amplifiers and offer 'real' bass extension.

Key to loudspeakers

horn, ported, sealed etc cabinet type
 2 driver number of drive units
 108dB sensitivity @ 1 metre for 2.83 volts
 8 Ohms nominal impedance
 100W manufacturer's power rating

Key to satellites & subwoofers

89dB sensitivity @ 1 metre for 2.83 volts
 70 W power rating in Watts

Key to active subwoofers

stereo subwoofer type
 50W amplifier power
 THX THX approved (where appropriate)

PRODUCT £ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

LOUDSPEAKERS									
GLL Arena	89	87dB • 6 Ohms • 70W • 26,23,14cm							
JPW Minim Pair Solid	89	ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 70W • 19,28,20cm • Shielded							
Jamo Cornet 20.4	90	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 21,16,13cm • Black/mahogany							
Advent Mini	99	2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 16,28,14cm • Bookshelf/stand mount							
Celestion Little 1	99	sealed • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 9,20,15cm							
Celestion 1	99	114 ported • 2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 16,27,21cm • <i>It sounds a bit scrappy and untidy, but its heart is in the right place.</i>							B'BUY
Wharfedale Diamond 6R	99	ported • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 16,27,22cm • Stand/bookshelf mount							
Yamaha NS-C80	99	2 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 80W • 14,45,17cm • AV centre speaker							
Allison AL100	100	94 ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 33,24,19cm • <i>Loud and lively budget wall-mount is big and beefy, but lacks sparkle and refinement</i>							B'BUY
Gale Ref Monitors	100	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • Bookshelf, black finish							
Goodmans HT100	100	2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 25,53,20cm							
Interaudio XL1000	100	2 driver • 8 Ohms • 50W • 19,29,17cm							
Jamo Studio 110	100	ported • 3 driver • 91dB • 50W • 42,24,22cm • Black finish							
JPW Sonata Vinyl	100	ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 23,32,22cm							
JVC SP-X220TBK	100	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 24,66,24cm							
Mission 73S	100	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 15,26,15cm • wall brackets inc, shielded							
Mordaunt-Short MS05i	100	141 ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 26,17,18cm • <i>Tiny and hence bass light, but fine voicing (redesignated 'i' since review).</i>							REC'D
Realistic Minimus Pro-77	100	ported • 2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 55W • 14,22,11cm • Revised design							
Revolver Beretta	100	ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 80W • 30,19,22cm • Bookshelf/stand mount							
Sony SS-J90AV	100	2 driver • 167 Ohms • 19,12,15cm • Shielded centre speaker							
Sony SS85E	100	sealed • 2 driver • 85dB • 4 Ohms • 70W • 9,32,24cm • UK optimised sound							
TDL Near Field Monitor	100	ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 30,18,17cm							
TDL NFM	100	130 ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 18,30,17cm • <i>A disappointing underperformer in our tests, at a low price</i>							
Technics SB-CS75	100	ported • 3 driver • 8 Ohms • 60W • 27,49,25cm • Composite mica cone mid							
Wharfedale Valdue 200	109	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 180W • 38,21,22cm • Stand/bookshelf							
Wharfedale Modus Micro	109	ported • 2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 14,23,12cm • Shielded							
Canon SV-15	110	ported • 2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 24,17cm • Utility - wide dispersion							
Jamo Sat 160	110	sealed • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 14,20,88cm • With wall brackets							
Jamo D115	110	2 driver • 91dB • 75W • 42,24,22cm							
Jamo Cornet 30.4	110	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 55W • 32,20,23cm • Black ash or Mahogany							
Bose XL1000	115	ported • 2 driver • 8 Ohms • 50W • 29,19,17cm							
JBL Control One	115	90 ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 24,156,14cm • <i>Sub-miniature with forward midrange and real bass; price justified by build</i>							
Mordaunt-Short CS1 St	115	ported • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 16,23,13cm • Shielded, Positac protected							
GLL Maxim	119	122 86dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 10,26,17cm • <i>Budget miniature offers well balanced strengths and few weaknesses at a bargain price; a bit feeble.</i>							REC'D
Wharfedale Modus Centre	119	ported • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 46,14,12cm • Shielded centre speaker							
AMC WM50	120	2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 19,28,7cm • Ceiling mount							
Jamo Artina	120	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 25,29,8cm • Small, flat wall spkr, b/w/wr							
JPW Sonata	120	71 ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 23,32,22cm • <i>Fine sound if limited bass and dynamic range, wood veneered at a silly price.</i>							B'BUY
Pioneer CS-3030	120	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 27,54,24cm • Bookshelf							
Sony SS125E	120	sealed • 2 driver • 86dB • 4 Ohms • 90W • 22,38,38cm • UK optimised sound							
Yamaha NS-E80	120	2 driver • 91dB • 6 Ohms • 50W • 27,20,7cm • AV surround speaker							
B&W Solid HCM15	125	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 17,24,17cm • White & black finishes							
Celestion Impact 10	129	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 75W • 31,19,21cm • Inverted drivers							
Celestion CSC	129	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 75W • 33,13,15cm • Centre channel							
KEF Coda 7	129	145 ported • 2 driver • 91dB • 6 Ohms • 70W • 18,30,24cm • 2-way stand/shelf							B'BUY
B&W DM302	130	ported • 2 driver • 32,19,21cm							
B&W Solid HCM2	130	ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 14,20,14cm • White or black finishes							
Canon S-C10	130	ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 95W • 34,15,15cm • Dolby P-L centre speaker							
Jamo Sat 200 II	130	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 15,22,88cm • Stereo passive sub for SW200II							
JPW Subwoofer	130	ported • 1 driver • 95dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 26,51,27cm							
JVC SP-X550BK	130	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 24,66,24cm							
Mission 731L	130	141 ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 31,17,20cm • <i>Good looking and cleverly conceived high-tech miniature could have more brio.</i>							
Visonik David 5001	132	50W • 10,17,10cm							
Boston Acoustics HD5	139	110 ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 25,16,18cm • <i>Pretty miniature lacks boxiness, but is short of drama and dynamic drive.</i>							
Boston Acoustics 325	139	2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 50W • 17,17,5cm • Wall/ceiling white flush mount							
Celestion CS135	139	128 subwoofer • 2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 90W • 52,19,34cm • <i>Compact hideaway passive sub lacks deep bass; for high sensitivity speakers</i>							
Celestion 3 MKII	139	130 ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 21,31,18cm • <i>Smooth and polished by budget speaker standards, if a bit laid back for some tastes.</i>							B'BUY
Heybrook Prima	139	110 ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 60W • 20,29,18cm • <i>Fine pace and timing, but balance is forward and bass is tight.</i>							REC'D
Revolver Colt	139	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 30,19,22cm • Bookshelf/stand mount							
Wharfedale Modus Mini	139	ABR • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 14,39,12cm • Shielded two-way							
Genexa GX650	140	90dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 23,76,26cm							
Interaudio XL2000	140	2 driver • 8 Ohms • 70W • 23,36,18cm							
Jamo Studio 140	140	ported • 3 driver • 91dB • 50W • 50,22,26cm • From Studio range							
Jamo Sat 300 II	140	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 15,21,8cm • Use with SW500 & SW300							
Jamo Cornet 40.4	140	130 ported • 20 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 32,20,22cm • <i>Pretty presentation and a strong box, but poor driver fixing. Decent if bright sound.</i>							
JBL TLX11	140	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 30,17,22cm • Titanium composite tweeter							
Mordaunt-Short MS10i	140	130 ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 19,31,22cm • <i>Fine bass/mid but top is less appealing (redesignated 'i' but unchanged).</i>							REC'D
Advent Baby 2	149	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 26,39,15cm • Bookshelf/stand mount							
Boston Acoustics CR6	149	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 26,15,20cm • Magnetically shielded							
Celestion MP1	149	140 ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 22,30,15cm							REC'D

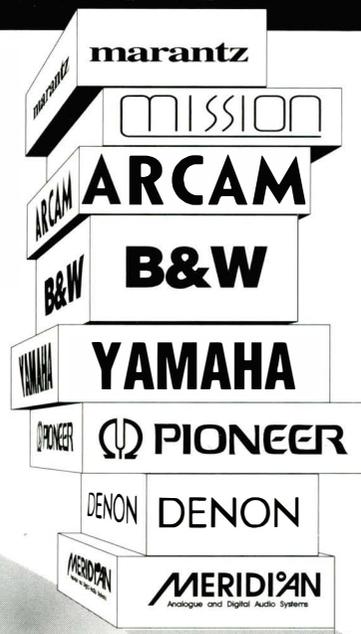
PRODUCT

£ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

Celestion CS2	149	ported • 2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 16,29,22cm	
Harman-Kardon LS0200	149	130 ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 21,35,30cm • <i>Laid back to a fault but entertaining nevertheless, and a big box for the price.</i>	REC'D
NAD 800	149	ported • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 60W • 20,32,24cm • 10 litre enclosure	
Rogers LS1	149	143 ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 20,20,30cm • <i>High grade miniature</i>	REC'D
Tannoy 631	149	141 ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 70W • 19,34,15cm • <i>Balanced, open, unboxy and quite lively, but lacks muscle.</i>	B'BUY
Wharfedale Valdus 300	149	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 180W • 47,25,23cm • Stand/bookshelf	
Yamaha NS-C110	149	2 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 120W • 15,47,18cm • AV centre speaker	
B&W CWM5	150	2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 16,22,7cm • In wall	
Canon S-25	150	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 33,21,22cm • Magnetically shielded	
Gale Model 2	150	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • Bookshelf, black finish	
Goodmans HT170	150	2 driver • 92dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 25,70,22cm	
Infinity SM65	150	ported • 94dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 34,20,19cm • Auto reset protection circuit	
Infinity Reference 1i	150	sealed • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 50W • 34,20,20cm • Pedestal	
JPW P1 Vinyl	150	102 ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 26,44,25cm • <i>Competent loudspeaker for the price, with a safe sound that won't disappoint.</i>	B'BUY
Mission 73C	150	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 16,20,43cm • TV top, shielded	
Mordaunt-Short CS-1 DM	150	sealed • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 23,16,13cm • 2 compact paintable speakers	
Mordaunt-Short HT30	150	ported • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 25,43,29cm • Shielded, Positac protected	
Mordaunt-Short SW1	150	128 subwoofer • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 24,58,26cm • <i>Prettily finished and inexpensive passive subwoofer is only really useful with sub-miniature speakers</i>	
Technics SB-CS95	150	ported • 3 driver • 8 Ohms • 100W • 29,54,25cm • Composite mica cone mid	
Visonik Sub 4	154	100W • 36,49,31cm	
Wharfedale Modus One	159	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 22,41,29cm • Stand/bookshelf mount	
AMC WM75	160	2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 22,30,9cm • Ceiling mount	
Bose XL2000	160	ported • 2 driver • 8 Ohms • 70W • 36,23,18cm	
Denon SC-E313	160	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 23,36,23cm • Shielded, red mahogany veneer	
Denon SC-E313	160	ported • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 22,75,23cm • UK designed & built	
Grundig BX1	160	ported • 2 driver • 4 Ohms • 60W • 23,40,30cm • 16 litre	
Interaudio XL3000	160	2 driver • 8 Ohms • 70W • 29,46,23cm	
Jamo D135	160	2 driver • 94dB • 90W • 52,28,25cm	
Visonik David 6001	163	74 2 driver • 87dB • 60W • 13,20,12cm • <i>Sharp styling, but the complex grillwork worsens a sound which starts off with too much top and not enough bottom.</i>	
Boston Acoustics Runab't	169	2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 22,15,16cm • White indoor/outdoor system	
Celestion CS4	169	ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 18,33,23cm	
GLL Mezzo	169	141 ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 21,36,25cm • <i>Splendid midband but a dull treble. Could suit budget systems well.</i>	REC'D
Allison AL105	170	78 ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 24,37,21cm • <i>Pretty enough in appearance; sonically the AL105 doesn't really make the grade at the price.</i>	
GLL Imagio IC100	170	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 35,23,24cm • ICT coaxial driver	
Jamo Studio 180	170	ported • 3 driver • 92dB • 80W • 22,50,26cm	
Jamo Sat 500	170	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 16,21,14cm • Satellites for SW500	
JBL TLX121	170	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 53,25,31cm • Budget compact	
JPW P1	170	141 ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 26,44,25cm • <i>Longstanding design is remarkable material value (real wood etc) and sounds pretty too.</i>	B'BUY
Pioneer CS-5030	170	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 140W • 31,53,25cm • Bookshelf	
Boston Acoustics 350	179	2 driver • 4 Ohms • 50W • 24,17,6cm • Wall/ceiling white flush mount	
Boston Acoustics 335	179	2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 18,9cm • Wall mount, white flush	
Boston Acoustics Satellites	179	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • Also A/V spkrs, black/white	
Wharfedale Modus Sub-B	179	ported • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 57,23,38cm • Two channel double tuned sub-w	
Bose XL3000	180	ported • 2 driver • 8 Ohms • 90W • 47,29,23cm	
Canon S-30	180	114 ported • 1 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 75W • 23,27,24cm • <i>Moulded design has lively coherence, with 'wide imaging stereo'.</i>	REC'D
Jamo Converta	180	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 235,235cm • Lamp-like appearance	
TDL NFM2	180	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 18,45,17cm	
Celestion Centre 2	189	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 17,16,42cm • Centre channel	
Celestion 5 MkII	189	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 90W • 25,35,21cm • Larger version of Celestion 3	
KEF Coda 8	189	ported • 2 driver • 91dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 20,32,29cm • Developed from Coda 7	
Tannoy 632	189	135 ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 90W • 51,43,27cm • <i>Clever cabinet avoids boxiness and promotes focus imaging and bass</i>	B'BUY
Bose 101 M'ble Monitor	190	1 driver • 4 Ohms • 60W • 13,23,15cm • Black finish	
Polk RT3	190	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 19,32,22cm • Shielded stand/shelf	
Rega Kyte	198	114 ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 19,31,19cm • <i>Has splendid timing and coherence, sounds very explicit and informative.</i>	B'BUY
Royd The Herald	198	ported • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 31,20,18cm • Stand mount	
B&W DM601	199	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 26,21,25cm • Kevlar bass, metal dome	
Boston Acoustics CR7	199	2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 30,22,24cm • Magnetically shielded	
Celestion Impact 15	199	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 90W • 39,24,25cm • Inverted drivers	
GLL Magnum	199	86dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 25,42,29cm	
Harman-Kardon LS0300	199	88dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 21,38,80cm	
Heybrook Solo	199	90 sealed • 2 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 75W • 23,36,23cm • <i>Untidy bass and treble, but handles complex rhythmic material well.</i>	REC'D
KEF 60S	199	ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 60W • 15,25,17cm • Uni-Q, shielded, AV & hi-fi	
Revolver Purdey Mk II	199	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 120W • 75,19,22cm • Floor stand, spiked base	
Wharfedale Modus Three	199	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 22,57,29cm • Stand/bookshelf mount	
Wharfedale Valdus 400	199	ported • 3 driver • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 80,25,26cm • Floor standing	
ZYP AI	199	110 sealed • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 14,22,12cm • <i>Cute metal cased micro-miniature is quite coloured but great fun.</i>	REC'D
Acoustic Energy AE100	200	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 75W • 30,18,25cm • Internally braced MDF box	
B&W Solid Monitor	200	ported • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 17,24,15cm • Various colours	
Canon S-B20	200	subwoofer • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 48,39,37cm • Free standing, passive	
Cerwin Vega HED165	200	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 4 Ohms • 120W • 22,84,22cm	
Gale Model 4	200	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • Bookshelf, black finish	
Infinity Reference 11i	200	sealed • 6 Ohms • 75W • 39,22,34cm • Pedestal	
Interaudio XL4000	200	2 driver • 8 Ohms • 75W • 32,56,29cm	
Jamo Converta Light	200	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 235cm • Utility speaker, inc light	
Jamo D165	200	2 driver • 94dB • 100W • 60,31,27cm	
Jamo Cornet 60.4	200	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 42,23,22cm • Black ash - Mahogany	
JPW AP2	200	106 ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 26,44,25cm • <i>Real wood finish, and performance is cleaner but similarto P1 Vinyl overall.</i>	REC'D
Kenwood LS-200G	200	ported • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 60W • 21,35,30cm • European design	
Mission 732	200	141 ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 41,20,30cm • <i>Attractive presentation but a rather dull and thick sounding speaker, and a tad pricey too.</i>	
Monitor Audio MA301	200	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 27,17,20cm • Gold dome tweeter	
Monitor Audio Monitor 1 G	200	sealed • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 16,24,16cm • Miniature stand/shelf mount	
Mordaunt-Short CS-1 T	200	ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 16,23,13cm • Shielded, Positac protected	
Mordaunt-Short MS20i	200	135 ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 22,37,22cm • <i>Alloy tweeter, MCS woofer</i>	B'BUY
Philips Legend FB720II	200	122 ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 75W • 21,37,31cm • <i>Liveliness, coherence and fine information retrieval justifies the odd looking baffle.</i>	B'BUY
QLN QuBic111	200	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 33,21,25cm	
TDL SBR	200	ported • 1 driver • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 30W • 40,20,50cm • Supplementary bass radiator	
Technics SB-M20	200	ported • 2 driver • 60W • 20,32,23cm	
Boston Acoustics 360 SII	209	2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 22,15,7cm • Wall/ceiling, flush mount	
AMC WM100	210	2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 26,36,10cm • Ceiling mount	
Canon V-100	210	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 75W • 25,33,17cm • Corner mount, wide dispersion	
Advent Graduate	219	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 210W • 28,44,17cm • Bookshelf/stand mount	
ZYP AIT	219	sealed • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 14,22,12cm • Magnetically shielded	
Allison MS200	220	2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 75W • 13,25,14cm • Boundary, stand mount	
Allison AL110	220	102 2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 24,40,23cm • <i>Compact bookshelf model is a little dry and mid-forward, but bass is extended and solid.</i>	REC'D
Bose XL4000	220	ported • 2 driver • 8 Ohms • 100W • 57,32,30cm	

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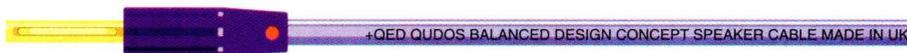


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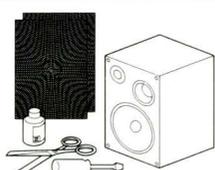
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THIS MONTHS PRODUCT FEATURE 3

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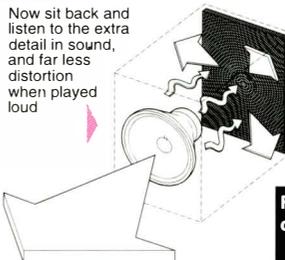


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Hi-Fi News & Record Review - March 1994

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 "...But one thing for sure - the Deflex panels are no gimmick. They work..."
Audio Video - December 1994

"...the result was sharper imaging, wider dynamics and a more natural sound..."
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Sound Quality **★★★★**
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Spectra Dynamics Limited Tatabogoch Trading Estate Meliden Road Dyserth Chwyd L18 6DD

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
Polk M3 II	220		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 17,29,21cm • Multi-app, incl wall bracket	
Visonik David 8001	228		80W • 16,25,17cm	
Castle ISIS	229		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 17,35,20cm • Available in 9 finishes	
KEF Q10	229		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 19,32,26cm • Uni Q, shielded	
JPW AP3	230	46	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 26,52,29cm • <i>Good stereo and well balanced overall, character is well suited to vinyl replay.</i>	REC'D
JVC SP-X990BK	230		ported • 3 driver • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 31,86,27cm	
Pioneer CS-7030	230		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 190W • 35,70,28cm • Bookshelf	
Boston Acoustics CR8	239		ABR • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 39,22,27cm • Magnetically shielded	
Celestion 7 MkII	239		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 31,45,24cm	
B&W CWM6i	240		2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 23,32,8cm • In wall	
Monitor Audio M7 Gold II	245		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 17,35,17cm • Stand/shelf mount	
B&W Solid HCM1	249		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 17,24,17cm • White or black finishes	
Boston Acoustics 380	249		2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 31,24,8cm • Wall/ceiling white flush mount	
NAD 802	249		ported • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 80W • 20,40,26cm • 11.5 litre enclosure	
Rogers LS33	249		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 36,24,21cm • Biwire terminals	
Bose VS100	250		2 driver • 8 Ohms • 23,15,15cm	
Canon S-35	250		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 75W • 23,27,24cm • Wide Imaging Stereo	
Cerwin Vega VS8	250		ported • 2 driver • 94dB • 4 Ohms • 100W • High sensitivity	
Cerwin Vega VS8	250		ported • 2 driver • 94dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 28,51,29cm • Bookshelf	
Infinity SM85	250		ported • 98dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 46,29,27cm • Auto reset protection circuit	
Jamo Classic 4	250		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 100W • 47,20,25cm	
Jamo Art	250		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 35,40,9cm • Slightly bowed front, 14" wh	
JBL TLX50	250		ported • 3 driver • 88dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 48,27,28cm	
Pioneer S-4UK	250	139	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 80W • 21,37,28cm • <i>Latest version now balances pretty well, with a coherent lightweight bass.</i>	REC'D
Polk RT5	250		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 22,39,25cm • Shielded stand/shelf	
QLN QuBic 121	250		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 41,21,26cm	
System Audio 905	250	142	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 15,27,21cm	
Yamaha NS10M	250		2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 21,38,20cm	
Keswick Audio Palermo	259		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 38,21,25cm • Angled profile cabinet	
Royd Minstrel	259	135	ported • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 69,18,12cm • <i>Not much wellie or loudness but fine coherence and timing a bit bright.</i>	B'BUY
Wharfedale Modus Five	259		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 22,65,29cm • Stand/bookshelf mount	
Dali 102B	260		88dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 21,32,26cm	
Celestion 9	269	102	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 21,50,25cm • <i>Nicely presented and fair material value, with impressively flat mid to bass balance.</i>	
Heybrook HB1	269		sealed • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 29,47,23cm • Boundary, shielded option	
Bose 151 Environmental	270		2 driver • 6 Ohms • 60W • 24,14,16cm • Waterproof	
Pioneer S-60	270		ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 80W • 22,47,28cm • Bookshelf	
Bose 161 Freestyle	275		2 driver • 6 Ohms • 60W • 25,14,16cm	
Mordaunt-Short MS30i	275	152	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 25,43,28cm • <i>Slightly shut in and coloured, compensated by fine bass and impressive communication.</i>	REC'D
Mordaunt-Short HT50	275		ported • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 25,87,33cm • Positec, integrated subwoofer	
ZYP A2S	275		sealed • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 22,14,12cm • Studio nearfield monitor	
Boston Acoustics CR9	279		ABR • 2 driver • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 50,25,29cm • Stand/shelf, shielded	
Celestion Impact 20	279		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 47,28,29cm • Twin vented, shielded	
Allison AL115	280		2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 28,51,26cm • Boundary, stand mount	
B&W DM602	280	152	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 49,24,31cm • <i>Prefers tall stands and space, offers impressive midband dynamics and musical tension</i>	REC'D
Monitor Audio MA100G	280		sealed • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 16,24,16cm • Shielded for AV use	
Pioneer CS-9030	280		ported • 3 driver • 92dB • 8 Ohms • 220W • 39,75,29cm • Bookshelf	
Origin Live OL-IB	289	135	2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 20,30,19cm • <i>Pretty miniature has a punchy, dynamic midband, but costs a lot for the engineering on offer.</i>	
Bose 201 Ser III	290		3 driver • 8 Ohms • 60W • 38,20,25cm • Direct/reflecting technology	
ZYP A25T	295		sealed • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 22,14,12cm • Magnetically shielded	
Linn Sekrit On Passive	298		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 60W • 26,13,48cm • Bi-wire or bi-amp ready	
Linn Sekrit In Passive	298		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 30W • 20,28,90cm • IB or bass reflex	
Rega EL8	298	122	ported • 2 driver • 8 Ohms • 17,72,20cm • <i>Kyle drivers in compact floorstander gives more bass but less coherence.</i>	REC'D
Royd Merlin	298		ported • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 31,20,18cm • Veneered	
Advent Prodigy	299		2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 300W • 24,68,20cm • Floor standing, free space	
Boston Acoustics Voyager	299		2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 26,16,17cm • White indoor/outdoor, metal	
Celestion 11	299		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 31,57,24cm	
KEF Coda 9	299		coupled cavity • 2 driver • 91dB • 4 Ohms • 120W • 20,84,30cm	
KEF 70S	299		sealed • 2 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 17,25,12cm • Uni-Q, shielded, AV surround	
Wharfedale Valdus 500	299		ported • 4 driver • 91dB • 4 Ohms • 350W • 108,25,29cm • Floor standing	
Allison CD6	300		2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 29,29,29cm • Cuboid, wall mount	
B&O Beovox CX50	300		sealed • 2 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 12,21,21cm	
B&W Solid Powerbass	300		subwoofer • 75W • 33,39,34cm • Active sub to match Solids	
B&W CWM8i	300		2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 100W • 28,38,9cm • In wall	
Bose C'puter RoomMate	300		active • 2 driver • 60W • 24,14,16cm • Self powered AC/shielded	
Bose Video RoomMate	300		active • 2 driver • 60W • 24,14,16cm • Self powered AC/shielded	REC'D
Bose Roomate II	300		active • 2 driver • 60W • 24,14,16cm • Self powered AC/12V DC	
Castle Durham 900	300	135	ported • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 85W • 22,40,23cm • <i>Lovely veneer and lots of engineering create a very upfront, coherent and exciting sound.</i>	REC'D
Celestion Impact 23	300	152	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 73,21,21cm • <i>Big, cheap and loud. Sounds coloured and old fashioned, lacks subtlety</i>	
Cerwin Vega HED265	300		ported • 3 driver • 91dB • 4 Ohms • 140W • 22,88,26cm	
Cerwin Vega SAT-6	300		subwoofer • 95dB • 4 Ohms • 125W • 22,25,32cm • 3 box satellite/subwoofer	
GLL Imagio IC110	300		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 73,23,29cm • ICT coaxial driver, shielded	
Infinity Inf IV Sat	300		sealed • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 80W • 16,24,18cm • Wall mount, shielded	
Jamo D265D	300		ported • 3 driver • 95dB • 150W • 68,44,33cm	
Jamo 307A	300		ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 70W • 31,18,26cm • Stand mount	
JBL TLX60	300		ported • 3 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 54,31,28cm	
JVC SX-SW10	300		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 29,39,45cm • Satellite subwoofer system	
Kenwood LS-300G	300		ported • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 21,35,30cm • European design	
Micromega Minium MS1	300		ported • 2 driver • 20,32,24cm • Black/rosewood finishes	
Mission 733	300	139	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 84,20,30cm • <i>Stylish and a lot of speaker for the money, and sounds pretty good too.</i>	B'BUY
Mission 751	300	125	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 75W • 17,32,27cm • <i>Great sonic potential, but our review samples have been marred by sample variations.</i>	
Monitor A Sub /W/200/92	300		8 Ohms • 100W • 48,25,36cm	
Monitor Audio MA201	300	135	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 22,41,40cm • <i>Lively and coherent with good power handling, but also a bit shut in and coloured.</i>	REC'D
Mordaunt-Short MS25i	300		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 73,21,21cm • 2xMCS bass drivers, biwireable	
Polk R17	300		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 24,48,29cm • Shielded stand/shelf	
Polk M5	300		ported • 2 driver • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 21,33,23cm • Multi-app, inc brackets	
Tannoy 633/II	300	152	sealed • 3 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 29,75,28cm • <i>Impressive bass and balance from compact floorstander. Upper mid could be cleaner.</i>	REC'D
TDL RTL2	300		ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 20,73,22cm • Reflex transmission line	
Triangle Titus TZe	325		2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 20,25,32cm • New tweeter, lifetime warranty	
Audio Innovations Alto	329	152	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 38,20,26cm • <i>Styling makes competition look old-fashioned, but sound is thin and cold</i>	
Keswick Audio Aria II	329	148	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 21,42,24cm • Bookshelf	B'BUY
Ruark Swordsman Plus II	329		sealed • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 20,38,27cm • Near wall/stand mount	
Jamo Classic 6	330		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 100W • 84,20,29cm • Inc spiked feet	
Wharfedale Modus Seven	339		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 22,81,20cm • Floor standing	
Faraday SG	345		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 4 Ohms • 75W • 27,26,25cm • Matt black or granite effect	
Advent Legacy 2	349		2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 500W • 38,67,22cm • Floor standing, free space	

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
Origin Live OL-2B	349	2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 19,80,19cm • Floor standing	
Royd The Squire	349	ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 80,18,10cm • Sand filled, shielded	
Cerwin Vega VS10	350	ported • 3 driver • 95dB • 6 Ohms • 125W • 33,70,29cm • Floor standing	
Grundig BX3 Mk II	350	ported • 3 driver • 4 Ohms • 120W • 24,107,34cm • 3 drivers, 2 way	
Infinity SM105	350	ported • 100dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 53,30,30cm • Auto reset protection circuit	
Jamo BX100A	350	ported • 3 driver • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 54,31,27cm • Floor or stand mount	
Jamo 407A	350	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 4 Ohms • 80W • 40,22,26cm • Stand mount	
JBL TLX151	350	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 160W • 58,28,32cm	
Monitor Audio M 9 Gold II	350	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 20,37,21cm • Stand/shelf mount	
Sony SA-W90	350	2 driver • 70W • 22,49,51cm • Active subwoofer	
Technics SB-M300	350	ported • 4 driver • 85dB • 70W • 22,37,34cm • 3-way, 4-driver	
Ruark Icon	359	ported • 2 driver • 6dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 35,19,26cm • Inverted drivers, handed L/R	
Castle York	370	110 ported • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 26,43,22cm • <i>Real wood compact has an engaging transparency: fine balance and timing, but could use some authority.</i>	
Dali 104B	370	152 93dB • 4 Ohms • 120W • 86,22,27cm • Lively, rich sounding and communicative. Shame about bland styling and dull balance.	REC'D
Pioneer S-80	370	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 4 Ohms • 80W • 23,56,28cm • Bookshelf	
Heybrook Trio	373	118 sealed • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 24,47,25cm • HBS1 drivers in real wood enclosure give a sweeter and more forgiving sound.	REC'D
Lumley Reference LM4	375	126 ported • 2 driver • 86dB • 6 Ohms • 120W • 18,36,22cm • <i>Metal diaphragm and wood veneer; balance uneven upper and has suspect timing.</i>	
QLN QuBic 222	375	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 85,21,30cm	
KEF Q30	379	126 ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 125W • 19,73,30cm • <i>Fine focus from Uni-Q driver, but lacks drive and time coherence.</i>	
Allison CD7	380	3 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 24,70,24cm • Floor standing, free space	
Bose 301 VM	380	3 driver • 8 Ohms • 75W • 24,43,27cm • Direct/reflecting technology	
Jamo Graphic	380	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 44,39,90cm • Decor model, switch panels	
Polk RT8	380	ported • 2 driver • 80dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 19,80,26cm • Shielded floorstander	
Celestion 15	389	114 ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 21,100,25cm • Big box and but short on subtlety and control though long on both enthusiasm	REC'D
Heybrook Heylo	389	152 ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 73,23,19cm • <i>Good vocal reproduction, but sounds thin and bass seems an afterthought.</i>	
Clements 300Si	395	89dB • 90W • 24,36,36cm • Compression line	
KAL Mini-Ref MKII	395	2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 23,27,17cm	
Celestion Impact 25	399	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 82,28,29cm • Magnetically shielded	
Fullers Sultán	399	ported • 2 driver • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 24,51,30cm • 3 finishes	
Origin Live OL-IAS	399	2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 199W • 20,30,190cm • Floor standing	
Origin Live OL-IA	399	2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 20,30,19cm	
SD Acoustics SD3R	399	106 ported • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 20,38,30cm • New SD3 has the agility and charm of a quality miniature, good bass and low sensitivity.	REC'D
Spendor 2020	399	ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 25,33,19cm • Slate grey satin, shielded	
Tannoy Subsat3	399	ported • 3 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 11,16,9cm • Subsat system with ICT tech	
B&O Beovox CX100	400	sealed • 2 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 200W • 12,32,21cm	
B&W CDM2	400	ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 32,22,25cm • Kevlar bass, metal dome treble	
B&W Solid Verticale	400	subwoofer • 88dB • 4 Ohms • 100W • Lifestyle, 3 boxes	
Infinity Inf Micro II	400	ported • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 21,x 127dcm • Two satellites and passive sub	
Jamo Classic 8	400	152 ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 90,22,29cm • <i>A lot of speaker for the money; good when quiet, but boom 'n tizz character sounded crude</i>	
Jamo D365D	400	3 driver • 96dB • 200W • 78,46,35cm	
JBL TLX70	400	ported • 3 driver • 88dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 88,27,28cm	
JBL TLX161	400	ported • 3 driver • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 160W • 58,25,31cm	
Monitor Audio MA302	400	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 200W • 50,17,20cm • 2 bass units, front port	
Musical Tech Harrier	400	152 ported • 2 driver • Very pretty package, good measured performance and even sound. Sensitivity is low, and dynamics limp	REC'D
TDL RTL3	400	126 ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 20,90,37cm • Bargain price floorstander has rich, heavy and bright sound with a good scale.	REC'D
Tannoy 636	419	sealed • 3 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 120W • 29,75,28cm	
Allison AL120	420	98 2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 28,61,29cm • <i>Pretty well balanced if slightly mid-forward, but sound quality is disappointing at the price.</i>	
GLL Imagio IC120	420	ported • 3 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 130W • 91,23,29cm • ICT coaxial, shielded	
Jordan Watts JHFLG	420	ported • Flagon pottery colour	
Celestion Impact 30	429	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 82,24,25cm • Magnetically shielded	
Celestion SL6Si	429	94 sealed • 2 driver • 84dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 20,38,27cm • <i>This stereotype luxury compact can sound a bit dull and congested; favours CD.</i>	
Rogers LS55	429	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 125W • 88,24,22cm • Black - biwire extra	
Bose 305	430	78 ported • 3 driver • 8 Ohms • 100W • 23,45,28cm • Fine dynamic liveliness and a good room match counter strange imaging and treble.	REC'D
Mission 734	430	152 ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 84,21,33cm • Fine all rounder, and good value, but dynamically a bit lazy, and tweeter quality limited.	REC'D
Fullers Sultán H.E.	439	ported • 2 driver • 98dB • 8 Ohms • 90W • 24,51,30cm • High sensitivity, 3 finishes	
Wharfedale Modus 1-3	439	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 22,109,29cm • Floor standing	
Polk RT10	440	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 22,86,26cm • Shielded floorstander	
Epos ES11	445	94 ported • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 20,38,25cm • Integral baffle/driver gives remarkable colouration, transparency and speed.	B'BUY
Faraday Siren	445	94 ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 80W • 27,25,46cm • <i>High mass concrete cabinet is let down by imbalance of ageing driver combination.</i>	
Boston Acoustics SW10	449	128 subwoofer • 2 driver • 100W • 34,17,42cm • Clever powered subwoofer system integrates well and improves system loudness and power handling.	REC'D
Boston Acoustics SubSat	6449	subwoofer • 3 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • Passive subs and two satellite	
Celestion CS6i	449	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 19,85,31cm	
Linn Tukan	449	sealed • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 30W • 19,30,18cm • Multipurpose	
Polk LS f/x Surround	449	ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 22,28,16cm • A/V surround & utility speaker	
Royd Doublet	449	ported • 89dB • 4 Ohms • 120W • 91,18,17cm • Double ported	
Ruark Sabre II	449	sealed • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 23,37,27cm • Wall/free, on stands	
B&O Beovox RL6000	450	ported • 3 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 41,54,18cm • Simplified RL7000	
Infinity SM115	450	ported • 3 driver • 100dB • 8 Ohms • 175W • 76,34,32cm • Auto reset protection circuit	
Jamo Silhouette	450	3 driver • 90dB • 5 Ohms • 80W • 122,25,17cm • Elegant design	
Jamo Atmosphere	450	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 37,26,16cm • Gives light, sound & movement	
Jamo BX150A	450	ported • 3 driver • 92dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 63,37,30cm • Floor mount	
Manticore Minaret	450	sealed • 94dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 23,15,11cm • Nearfield monitor	
Monitor Audio MA202	450	139 ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 22,89,27cm • Uneven, informative and easy-listening floorstander delivers decent scale.	REC'D
Mordaunt-Short MS40i	450	ribbon • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 23,82,28cm • Alloy tweeter, MCS woofer	
Sony SSA1L	450	sealed • 2 driver • 85dB • 4 Ohms • 120W • 19,30,32cm • Bio-cellulose tweeters	
Technics SB-M500	450	152 ported • 4 driver • 8 Ohms • 25,78,37cm • <i>This model offers a clean, open sound, offset by midbass heavy balance and low sensitivity.</i>	
UKD-Opera Prima	450	ported • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 20,33,25cm • Solid oak/mahogany	
Origin Live OL-2AS	469	122 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 19,80,19cm • Compact floorstander sounds open, transparent and evenly balanced; needs a big amp.	REC'D
Pentachord A	469	139 sealed • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 21,28,20cm • Direct coupled	REC'D
Origin Live OL-2A	470	152 2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 19,80,19cm • Fine dynamics and well engineered package, though presence bland and treble restrained.	REC'D
B&O Beovox 4500	475	ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 90W • 45,38,8cm	
Triangle Comete TZe	475	2 driver • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 22,28,40cm • High sensitivity	
Prof Monitor Co TB1	481	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 20,40,25cm • Shielded version available	
Dawn Audio Chorus BS	482	sealed • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 26,38,21cm • Bookshelf	
Roksan Roksan 1	495	ported • 2 driver • 21,44,33cm • Rosewood E50 extra	
Rega ELA Mk II	498	139 ported • 2 driver • 8 Ohms • 30,80,20cm • Floor stand	B'BUY
Advent Laureate	499	3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 500W • 21,80,29cm • Floor standing, free space	
Audio Note AN-KB	499	2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 28,46,23cm • Free space, stand mount	
AVI Neutron	499	ported • 2 driver • 83dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 26,24,20cm	
Celestion CS8i	499	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 19,100,31cm	
Heybrook Heystak	499	141 ABR • 3 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 98,22,28cm • Inc stands	
Lumley Reference LM5	499	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 25,46,21cm • Stand mount	
Origin Live OL-1	499	106 2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 20,30,19cm • <i>Luxury miniature has very good overall balance, sacrificing sensitivity for bass.</i>	
Rogers AB1	499	143 ABR • 1 driver • 82dB • 8 Ohms • 35W • 57,19,16cm • Designed as partner for LS3/5a or similar miniatures	REC'D
Rogers Studio 3	499	118 ported • 2 driver • 85dB • 8 Ohms • 505W • 19,30,16cm • <i>Pricely LS3/5A derived miniature, excitingly coherent if lightweight, can't go loud.</i>	REC'D

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
Ruark Templar	499	122	sealed • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 19,70,27cm • <i>Striking baffle gives decent bass/mid but dull treble; could tame over-bright system.</i>	
Tannoy 637	499		sealed • 3 driver • 91dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 33,86,32cm	
TDL Studio 0.5	499	94	ported • 2 driver • 85dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 20,62,30cm • <i>Tiny floorstanding transmission line lacks coherence or the balance of Studio 1.</i>	
B&W AS6	500		subwoofer • 1 driver • 100W • 51,45,46cm • Active, self powered	
B&W DM603	500		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 85,24,31cm • 2-way, ABR, port foam plugs	
B&W Signature 7	500		2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 28,37,10cm • In-wall monitor, Kevlar cone	
Bose A mass AM3 II	500		2 driver • 50W • 36,20,20cm • Acoustimass technology	
Bose 401	500	110	3 driver • 4 Ohms • 100W • 30,30,76cm • <i>Cheaply built but distinctively styled, the 401 suffers from heavy midband.</i>	
Castle Severn	500	152	ported • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 110W • 23,77,20cm • <i>Light and bright, but sound is open and communicative. Looks good too.</i>	REC'D
Infinity SSW-10 Sub	500		active sub • 34,34,33cm	
Jamo BX200A	500		ported • 3 driver • 93dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 72,43,32cm • Floor mount	
Jamo 477A	500	138	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 4 Ohms • 100W • 77,19,28cm • <i>Very pretty styled, but build and sound quality are disappointing at the price.</i>	
JBL TLX171	500		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 86,26,32cm	
JPW Ruby 1	500	139	ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 120W • 32,19,21cm • <i>Very pretty but pricey luxury metal-cone miniature has good, if slightly edgy balance.</i>	
Kenwood LS-500G	500	118	ported • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 100W • 22,44,28cm • <i>Japanese designed and built luxury compact delivers an invigorating ad exciting sound.</i>	REC'D
Mission 752	500	138	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 20,88,26cm • <i>Brilliant style, engineering and sound</i>	REC'D
Monitor Audio MA303	500		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 200W • 92,17,20cm	
Monitor Audio M 14 Gold II500	500		ported • 3 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 20,76,24cm • Floor/shelf standing	
Monitor Audio MA700PMC	500	152	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 22,35,26cm • <i>Good looking luxury compact with metal cones, lovely midrange, but occasionally edgy</i>	REC'D
Jordan Watts JH200	510		sealed • 1 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 19,33,17cm • Full range design	
Pentachord B	519	139	sealed • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 52,35,52cm • Active crossover	REC'D
Celestion Impact 35	529		ported • 3 driver • 91dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 90,28,29cm • Magnetically shielded	
KEF Q50	529	139	ported • 3 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 19,83,30cm • <i>Compact twin-driver floorstander with Uni-Q treble and a rather midbass, heavy overall balance.</i>	
GLL Imagio IC300	530		ported • 4 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 111,23,29cm • ICT coaxial, shielded	
Celestion 100	539		sealed • 2 driver • 84dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 21,42,26cm	
Boston Acoustics SubSat	7549		3 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • Passive sub & 2 satellites	
Allison CD8	550		3 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 27,73,27cm • Floor standing, free space	
Cerwin Vega VS12	550		ported • 3 driver • 97dB • 4 Ohms • 250W • 42,81,38cm • Floor standing	
Cerwin Vega DC10	550		ported • 3 driver • 96dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 29,94,35cm • Floor standing	
Infinity SM125	550		ported • 3 driver • 100dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 89,37,32cm • Auto reset protection circuit	
Mordaunt-Short MS50i	550	138	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 25,87,33cm • <i>Big value big box with fine engineering content and a big, laid back sound; lacks charisma.</i>	
UKD-Opera Seconda	550		ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 23,35,34cm • Solid oak/mahogany	
Heybrook Quartet	575	122	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 24,41,22cm • <i>Solidly large bookshelf model with good sensitivity and a lively, forward sound.</i>	REC'D
Advent Heritage	579		3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 600W • 25,89,31cm • Floor standing, free space	
Polk RT12	580		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 19,93,32cm • Shielded floorstander	
Clements 600si	595		88dB • 100W • 24,81,36cm • Compression line	
Neat Petite	595	102	ribbon • 2 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 20,30,18cm • <i>Among the most entertaining and enjoyable, despite colourations</i>	REC'D
Royd The Sorcerer	595	139	ported • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 31,20,18cm • <i>Front port, near field monitor</i>	REC'D
Tannoy 625	595		active • 90W • 58,49,45cm • Servo, current drive subwoofer	
Proac Tablette 50	599		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 28,17,23cm • special finishes £60 EXTRA	
Spendor 2030	599		ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 86,18,26cm • Slate grey satin, shielded	
Tannoy 638	599	138	ported • 3 driver • 91dB • 6 Ohms • 175W • 33,96,32cm • <i>Big value vinyl big box has good balance and lots of loudness, but needs a good amp.</i>	
B&W CDM1	600		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 37,22,28cm • Angled tweeter sub-baffle	
B&W P4	600		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 20,81,24cm • 3 real wood veneers	
JBL TLX181	600		ABR • 4 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 95,30,32cm • Ported enclosure + ABR	
Mission 735	600		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 106,20,33cm • Floor stand, boundary	
Monitor Audio Studio 2	600		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 27,17,20cm • Shielded for AV use	
Pioneer S-200	600		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 4 Ohms • 120W • 26,90,34cm • Biwire, floor standing	
QLN 313	600		ported • 3 driver • 91dB • 4 Ohms • 250W • 103,21,30cm	
KAL Mini-Tower	619		2 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 17,90,22cm	
Celestion Impact 40	629		ported • 3 driver • 91dB • 4 Ohms • 225W • 100,33,29cm • Magnetically shielded	
Keswick Audio Volante	629	150	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 85W • 21,85,27cm • <i>High sensitivity</i>	REC'D
Spendor LS3/5A	630		ported • 2 driver • 82dB • 8 Ohms • 40W • 19,30,16cm • BBC inspired location monitor	
Fullers Pharaoh 1	649		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 20,30,20cm • Curved sides, various finishes	
KEF LS3/5a	649		sealed • 2 driver • 82dB • 11 Ohms • 30W • 19,30,16cm • Raymond Cooke Special Edition	
Linnæum LFX Wood	649		hybrid • 90dB • 16,22,18cm • Modified ribbon/dynamic	
Linn Kelidh Passive	649	114	sealed • 2 driver • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 60W • 20,83,28cm • <i>Stunning timing and coherence, and awesome bass drive.</i>	REC'D
Origin Live OL-2	649		2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 19,80,19cm • Floor standing	
Tannoy D100	649		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 25,36,22cm • 6.5 inch Dual Concentric	
Allison AL125	650		2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 28,78,29cm • Open space, free standing	
Cerwin Vega DC12	650		ported • 3 driver • 98dB • 4 Ohms • 300W • 36,98,35cm • Floor standing	
Infinity SM155	650		ported • 4 driver • 102dB • 8 Ohms • 300W • 102,45,32cm • Auto reset protection circuit	
KAL Compact Ref	650		2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 140W • 23,36,27cm	
Lumley Reference LM6	650		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 25,81,21cm • Floor standing	
JVC SX-911WD	660		ported • 3 driver • 91dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 38,63,35cm • Walnut finish	
UKD-Opera Operetta	660		ported • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 22,30,26cm • Solid walnut, stand mount	
Royd Abbot	665	118	ported • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 81,20,30cm • <i>Dynamic and fine transient qualities are hampered by a rather coloured mid-forward balance.</i>	
Epos ES14	675	98	ported • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 23,49,29cm • <i>Substantial stand mount delivers delightful midrange focus and delicacy with good bass control.</i>	REC'D
Polk RT16	680		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 22,102,39cm • Shielded floorstander	
Polk RT16	680		ported • 3 driver • 8dB • 90 Ohms • 250W • 22,102,39cm • Shielded floorstander	
Meridian A500	695		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 100W • 83,20,28cm • Shelf/stand, shielded	
Dawn Audio Chorus FS	698	11	sealed • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 26,88,21cm • <i>Compact floorstander with superb coherence but rather forward midband. Would suit smaller rooms best.</i>	
Audio Note AN-K/SP	699		2 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 28,46,23cm • Free space, stand mount	
Harbeth BBC LS3/5A	699	66	sealed • 2 driver • 82dB • 10 Ohms • 30W • 30,19,18cm • <i>Still a classic miniature, though not to every taste, and none the better for the recent update.</i>	
Naim S-NAXO 3-6	699		21,76,30cm • Active crossover	
Naim S-NAXO 2-4	699		21,76,30cm • Active crossover	
Orelle Orator II	699		ported • 2 driver • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 27,40,30cm • Time aligned, biwire	
Proac Studio 100	699		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 41,20,25cm • Stand mount	
Rogers LS3/5A	699	143	sealed • 2 driver • 82dB • 12 Ohms • 35W • 19,31,17cm • <i>Clever AB1 stand/subwoofer helps the classic 3/5A monitor give its best shot.</i>	REC'D
Rogers Studio 5	699	138	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 25,25,48cm • <i>Luxury finish bookshelf size model has genuine monitoring capabilities.</i>	REC'D
TDL Studio 1	699	78	ported • 2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 23,77,33cm • <i>Genuinely extended bass from a compact enclosure, very detailed but a shade clinical.</i>	REC'D
Castle Chester	700	98	horn • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 23,91,25cm • <i>A brilliant throwback, using a horn type approach to provide startling dynamics and coherence.</i>	REC'D
Cerwin Vega VS15	700		ported • 3 driver • 102dB • 4 Ohms • 400W • 46,90,47cm • Floor standing	
Jamo 507A	700		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 22,36,91cm • spiked feet	
JPW Ruby 2	700		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 43,22,25cm • Alloy cones	
JVC SX-500	700		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 180W • 27,45,28cm • Super Digifine	
Mission 753	700	114	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 21,88,32cm • <i>Georgous presentation and potential for open transparency.</i>	
QLN 929	700		ported • 4 driver • 92dB • 4 Ohms • 250W • 113,24,32cm	
KEF Q70	729		ported • 4 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 175W • 19,105,30cm • Uni-Q, shielded, floor stand	
Pentachord Pentode	729		sealed • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 80W • 20,74,20cm • Active crossover	
Ruark Talisman II	749	118	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 23,84,32cm • <i>Less ideologically committed than some, strength lies in fine all-round coherence.</i>	REC'D
Mantecore Minaret F1	750		sealed • 94dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 23,15,11cm • Nearfield monitor	
Keswick Audio Torino	759		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 90,24,27cm • Angled profile cabinet	
Bose SE-5 Ser II System	760		2 driver • 100W • 90,100,18cm	
Bose A mass AM511	760		2 driver • 200W • 49,35,19cm • Acoustimass direct/reflecting	

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
Spendor S20	760	102	ported • 2 driver • 84dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 22,38,26cm • <i>Maintains Spendor's tradition for peerless mid-to-treble coherence and perspectives..</i>	REC'D
Acoustic Energy AE1	764	102	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 26,30,18cm • <i>Exceptional mid focus and coherence, but it is pricey and could be more agile.</i>	
Naim IBL Active	776		65W • 25,80,28cm • Boundary, floor standing	
Shahinian Super Elf	790		sealed • 2 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 21,26,37cm • Finnish birch cabinet	
Faraday FS10	795		ported • 3 driver • 91dB • 4 Ohms • 100W • 27,25,93cm • Matt black or granite effect	
KAL Tunejal	795		2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 23,100,27cm	
Roksan Ojan Sub	795		subwoofer • 1 driver • 28,54,55cm • Passive/pr. Rosewood +£200	
Roksan Ojan 3 Black	795	132	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 28,76,46cm • <i>Squat, stylish and black, great bass extension and somewhat uneven balance.</i>	REC'D
Spendor SP3/1	795		ported • 2 driver • 85dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 40,22,28cm • Stand mount, free space	
Audio Note AN-J/B	799	110	2 driver • 93dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 38,58,25cm • <i>Light damping and local unevenness adds some colouration, but doesn't spoil the very speaker.</i>	REC'D
Castle Harlech	799		horn • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 20,94,32cm • available in 9 finishes	
Harbeth HL-P3ES	799	118	sealed • 2 driver • 83dB • 6 Ohms • 45W • 31,19,18cm • Shielded, biwire/biampable	
Allison AL130	800		2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 32,95,34cm • Open space, free standing	
B&W P5	800	144	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 20,90,28cm • 3 real wood veneers	
Monitor Audio MAG901	800		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 27,17,20cm • Metal bass cone, wood veneer	
Polk LS50	800	138	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 27,83,29cm • <i>No enthusiast tweaks here, but powerful and beautiful balance</i>	REC'D
QLN Classic One	800		ported • 2 driver • 86dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 35,25,27cm • Trapezoidal enclosure	
Celestion SL600si	820	68	sealed • 2 driver • 82 dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 20,37,24cm • <i>Some will find this speaker irresistible, but it needs careful system and room matching.</i>	
Jordan Watts JH400	820	106	sealed • 1 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 28,38,21cm • <i>Piano finish hexagon has controversial sound, with uneven balance but delightful mid.</i>	REC'D
Bose A mass AM7	830		2 driver • 100W • 35,49,19cm • Acoustimass direct/reflecting	
Fullers Sphinx	839		ported • 3 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 25,91,30cm • various finishes	
Audiovector 2X	850		2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 17,90,22cm • Black ash	
Cerwin Vega DC15	850		ported • 3 driver • 100dB • 4 Ohms • 500W • 44,103,46cm • Floor standing	
Chord SysAudio Sig	850		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 27,15,25cm • Cherry, rosewood, black ash	
JBL L20	850		sealed • 2 driver • 86dB • 86 Ohms • 150W • 42,26,28cm • 3 layer MDF baffle	
Meridian DSP6000	850	140	133,28,43cm • Digital active DSP based	REC'D
UKD-Opera Super Pavarotti	875		ported • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 23,55,23cm • Solid mahogany, stand mount	
Bose 601 MKIII	880		3 driver • 8 Ohms • 200W • 32,31,76cm • Direct/reflecting technology	
Lumley Reference LM3	895	106	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 27,87,28cm • <i>Despite indifferent bass alignment, LM3 is fast, coherent, solid and informative</i>	REC'D
UKD-Opera Callas II	895		ported • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 34,22,32cm • Solid mahogany/ash, Focal	
Pink Triangle Ventrail	896	142	hybrid • 86dB • 11 Ohms • 100W • 15,80,32cm • Ribbon hybrid	
Sonus-Faber Minuetto	898		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 23,35,28cm • Compact, stand mount	
Canon S-75	899		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 25,78,25cm • Wide imaging stereo	
Keswick Audio Figaro Ev	899		ported • 1 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 19,28,27cm • Piano lacquer, shielded	
Rogers Studio 7	899	122	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 30,63,30cm • <i>Latest variation on classic BBC-monitor theme has beautifully voiced, laid back sound.</i>	REC'D
Ruark Broadsword II	899		sealed • 2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 29,43,38cm • Free space, stand mount	
Spendor 2040	899		ported • 3 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 104,18,26cm • Slate grey satin, shielded	
TDL Studio 1m	899	118	ported • 2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 23,77,34cm • <i>Transmission line helps bring the best from metal cone driver.</i>	REC'D
Jamo 707A	900	132	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 26,38,104cm • <i>Superb styling and cosmetics and decent balance apart from detached bass.</i>	
Monitor Audio Studio 6	900	118	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 22,35,25cm • <i>Metal diaphragm compact has transparent midband but lacks vigour and drive.</i>	REC'D
Naim IBL Passive	905	94	86dB • 6 Ohms • 65W • 25,80,28cm • <i>Outstanding dynamics, speed and detail marred by pronounced upper mid forwardness.</i>	REC'D
Spendor SP2/3	930		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 28,55,33cm • On stands, free space	
Acoustic Energy AE2	950		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 200W • 24,40,32cm • Twin bass, metal cone	
Pioneer S-400	950		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 4 Ohms • 160W • 27,96,38cm • Biwire, floor stand, shielded	
Jordan Watts JH400M	970		sealed • 1 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 38,28,21cm • Full range speaker	
Origin Live OL-3	975		ported • 3 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 19,83,23cm • Floor standing	
Triangle Antal	975		2 driver • 92dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 22,102,30cm	
Royd The Prior	978		ported • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 96,37,26cm • Floor standing, free space	
Magnepan SMG-C SE	990		electrostatic • 2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 43,122,-cm • 2x Quasi-ribbon	
Linaeum LSIH	991		hybrid • 90dB • 30,150,38cm • Modified ribbon/dynamic	
ATC SCM10	995		sealed • 2 driver • 80dB • 8 Ohms • 300W • 18,38,26cm • Minimum 100wpc, wall/free use	
B&W Matrix 805 V	995	98	ported • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 33,33,21cm • <i>Stylish, remarkable imaging, good balance and low colouration.</i>	REC'D
Clements Reference 1	995		86dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 20,43,29cm • Ribbon tweeter	
Infinity Kappa 6.1i	995	132	ported • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 31,95,25cm • <i>Good extension, but bass is fat and slow, and dynamics are unconvincing.</i>	
Roksan Ojan 3 Rosewood	995		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 28,74,46cm	
Totem Model One	995	122	ported • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 120W • 17,31,23cm • <i>Utterly delightful but exasperatingly expensive luxury miniature sets the benchmark for its size.</i>	REC'D
UKD-Opera Callas Gold	995		ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 34,22,32cm • Solid mahogany, ScanSpeak	
Prof Monitor Co LB1	998	110	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 300W • 18,53,25cm • <i>Delightful smoothness and transparency, though bass and treble are both limited.</i>	REC'D
Audio Note AN-J/SP	999		2 driver • 93dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 38,58,25cm • Free space, stand mount	
Keswick Audio Milano	999		ported • 3 driver • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 100,29,30cm • Angled profile cabinet	
Proac Response IS	999		ported • 2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 30,18,23cm	
B&W DM604	1,000		ported • 4 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 100,24,41cm • 3-way, twin bass drivers	
B&W P6	1,000		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 20,100,30cm • Time aligned tweeter	
JPW Ruby 3	1,000		ported • 3 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 75,19,22cm • Alloy cones	
Monitor Audio MAG902	1,000		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 50,17,20cm • Dual metal cone, wood veneer	
Monitor Audio Studio 12	1,000	143	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 92,17,20cm • <i>A real looker, but sound and content are a bit on the small side for the price.</i>	
Morel 704/2	1,000	143	sealed • 4 driver • 88dB • 150W • 80,23,21cm	
QLN Signature	1,000		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 37,27,36cm • Trapezoidal enclosure	
Rega XEL	1,040	132	ported • 2 driver • 89dBdB • 6 Ohms • 40W • 20,82,30cm • <i>Looks and sounds great: balance bright but even, with delightful coherence and timing.</i>	B'BUY
Impulse Kora	1,095		horn • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 1,86,31cm • Floor standing	
Celestion 300	1,099	118	2 driver • 84dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 21,97,33cm • <i>Splendid bass extension and fine panel-like openness, but dynamics and timing are suspect.</i>	
KEF Model One	1,099		coupled cavity • 3 driver • 89dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 23,86,30cm • Uni-Q, floor stand, shielded	
Ruark Paladin	1,099		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 88,29,38cm • Floor standing	
Castle Howard S2	1,100	132	horn • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 26,104,41cm • <i>Aby fills the gap between Chester and Winchester; has a rich, laid back balance.</i>	REC'D
JBL L40	1,100		sealed • 3 driver • 88dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 65,30,33cm • titanium dome tweeter	
Heybrook Sextet	1,129	102	ported • 3 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 27,90,20cm • <i>Coherent and highly analytical, partly due to distinct upper-mid forwardness.</i>	REC'D
Linn Keilidh Aktiv	1,144		sealed • 2 driver • 20,83,28cm • Floor standing, boundary	
Epos ES22	1,185		ported • 3 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 175W • 88,21,25cm • Light cherrywood veneer	
Infinity Kappa 7.1i	1,195		ported • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 225W • 36,108,26cm • Floor standing	
Roksan Ojan 3K Black	1,195		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 300W • 28,76,48cm • As Ojan 3, improved drivers	
B&O Beolab 4500	1,200		active • 45W • 45,38,8cm • Attaches to wall, display	
Fullers Pharaoh 2	1,200		ported • 3 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 39,100,31cm • Pharaoh 1 with added bass	
JBL L60	1,200		sealed • 2 driver • 88dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 90,26,33cm	
Kenwood LS-700G	1,200		ported • 83dB • 4 Ohms • 120W • 30,90,30cm • European design	
Polk LS70	1,200	132	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 31,94,37cm • <i>High sensitivity, but balance has too much midbass boom; mid-top is laid back.</i>	
SD Acoustics SD5	1,235	132	ported • 3 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 20,110,30cm • <i>Bass suspect but forward midband is delightfully smooth. Has ribbon tweeter.</i>	REC'D
Harbeth BBC LS5/12A	1,259		ported • 2 driver • 81dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 30,18,23cm • BBC broadcast mini, biwire	
Electrocomp't The Qube	1,265		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 16,40,28cm • D'Appolito nearfield monitor	
Audio Note AN-E/B	1,299	106	2 driver • 94dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 36,84,28cm • <i>Coherent dynamic and transparent, with extended bass and high sensitivity - but ugly!</i>	REC'D
Audio Physic STEP	1,299		ported • 2 driver • 84dB • 4 Ohms • 60W • 14,33,23cm • Time aligned, with frame stand	
Keswick Audio Alto	1,299		subwoofer • 1 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 19,70,27cm • Subwoofer to match Figaro	
Cerwin Vega 1515	1,300		ported • 6 driver • 103dB • 4 Ohms • 600W • 44,135,46cm	
JBL L80	1,300		sealed • 3 driver • 89dB • 4 Ohms • 250W • 94,30,33cm • Polypropylene midrange	
JBL L90	1,300	143	sealed • 3 driver • 91dB • 200W • 94,24,35cm	B'BUY
JPW Ruby 4	1,300		ported • 3 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 200W • 90,22,26cm • Alloy cones	

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
Manticore Matisse	1,300		sealed • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 100,28,22cm • Fibrelam honeycomb cabinets	
Monitor Audio MAG903	1,300		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 92,17,20cm • Dual metal cone, wood veneer	
Philips DSS930S	1,300		active • 2 driver • 75W • 58,33,22cm • Active digital loudspeaker	
Harbeth HL Compact 7	1,329		ported • 2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 52,27,32cm • Free-space, shielded, biwire	
Spendor SP1/2	1,330		ported • 3 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 90W • 30,63,30cm • Stand mount, free space	
Apogee Centaur Minor	1,345		hybrid • 88dB • 4 Ohms • 100W • 30,88,20cm • Ribbon/dynamic	
Keswick Audio Amber	1,349		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 21,100,30cm • Magnesium cones, shielded	
Magnepan MG-0.6 SE	1,370		electrostatic • 2 driver • 85dB • 4 Ohms • 250W • 48,127,-cm • 2x quasi ribbon	
Thiel SCS	1,379	114	active • 2 driver • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 2,23,41cm • <i>Class leading coherence and communication, but can sound shut-in and dark</i>	REC'D
Linn Kaber Passive	1,389	118	sealed • 3 driver • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 60W • 20,90,28cm • <i>Dry, bright balance emphasises dynamics and transients, but can sound unforgetting.</i>	REC'D
UKD-Opera Divina	1,390		ported • 85dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 24,39,40cm • Solid ash, stand mount	
Roksan Ojan 3X Rosewood	1,395		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 300W • 28,74,46cm • As Ojan 3, improved drivers	
Vandersteen 2Ce	1,395	86	ported • 4 driver • 88dB • 7 Ohms • 160W • 41,101,27cm • <i>Elegant staggered baffle contributes to a refreshing freedom from boxiness.</i>	
Linæum LFX Corian	1,399		hybrid • 90dB • 16,22,18cm • Modified ribbon/dynamic	
Proac Studio 150	1,399		ported • 3 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 98,19,25cm • Spacial finishes £140 extra	
Triangle Zays	1,399		3 driver • 92dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 99,22,28cm	
Celestion 700SE	1,435		sealed • 2 driver • 82dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 20,37,24cm • Aerolam lightweight enclosure	
B&O Beolab 6000	1,450		active • 80W • 20,110,21cm • Column, two amps, shielded	
Lowther Fidelio	1,465		horn • 96dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 29,100,43cm	
Tannoy D500	1,470	143	ported • 3 driver • 91dB • 6 Ohms • 175W • 31,93,34cm • <i>Plenty of muscle and stereo, but short of poise and delicacy. Hard work for amps.</i>	
Sonus-Faber M Amator	1,498		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 20,34,31cm • Compact stand mount	
ATC SCM20	1,499	86	sealed • 2 driver • 83dB • 8 Ohms • 300W • 24,44,31cm • <i>Massively built, invariably informative but the rather forward presentation can be uncomfortable.</i>	
KEF Model Two	1,499		coupled cavity • 4 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 23,101,30cm • Uni-Q, floor stand, shielded	
Thiel 2	1,499		active • 2 driver • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 22,28,63cm • 15 wood veneers + black	
Thiel CS-5	1,499		active • 2 driver • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 20,28,80cm • 15 wood veneers + black	
Audiovector 3X	1,500	143	ported • 3 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 19,32,98cm • <i>Superior time coherence, a wide dynamic range and exception bass/mid balance.</i>	REC'D
B&W Solid 800ASW	1,500		subwoofer • 200W • 43,50,58cm • Active, Matrix enclosure	
JBL L90	1,500		sealed • 3 driver • 90dB • 90 Ohms • 300W • 40,60,34cm • Horizontal array	
KAL Trans-double	1,500		2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 23,112,36cm	
QLN Prestige	1,500		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 300W • 99,23,30cm	
QLN Sig Splitfield	1,500		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 37,27,36cm • As Signature, ext crossover	
Rogers LS5/9	1,531		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 28,46,27cm • BBC monitor	
Rogers Studio 9	1,549		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 22,91,25cm • free space	
Rehdeko RK115	1,550		ported • 104dB • 8 Ohms • 34,42,28cm	
Harbeth HL-5ES	1,559		ported • 3 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 64,32,31cm • Free space, biwire/biampable	
Genelec 1019A	1,572		active • 28W • 23,31,25cm	
B&W Matrix 804	1,595		ported • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 26,92,26cm • Matrix enclosure	
Impulse Lali	1,595		horn • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 25,99,36cm • Floor standing	
Prof Monitor Co AB1	1,598	114	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 400W • 26,79,43cm • <i>Lovely panel-like transparency, slightly shut-in balance, needs a big room.</i>	
Audio Note AN-E/SP	1,599		3 driver • 94dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 26,84,28cm • Free space, stand mount	
Ruark Crusader II	1,599		ported • 3 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 24,92,32cm • Free space, floor standing	
JBL Ti 1000	1,600	118	sealed • 2 driver • 89dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 20,30,13cm • <i>Performance compromised by over enthusiastic midbass output from port.</i>	
KAL Warlock	1,600		2 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 250W • 25,113,36cm	
Origin Live Conqueror	1,600		ported • 3 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 23,87,23cm • Floor standing	
Pentachord P'column	1,649		sealed • 2 driver • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 80W • 21,108,20cm • Including active crossovers	
Bose 901 VI	1,650		9 driver • 8 Ohms • 33,53,32cm • Direct/reflecting technology	
Castle Winchester	1,650	90	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 42,108,23cm • <i>Large for its bass extension but engagingly gile, open and airy.</i>	REC'D
Magnepan MG-10 SE	1,650		electrostatic • 2 driver • 85dB • 4 Ohms • 250W • 26,173,-cm • 2x quasi-ribbon	
Epos ES25	1,655	143	ported • 3 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 200W • 90,24,35cm • <i>Handsome floorstander with a rather uneven and bass heavy balance.</i>	
Shahinian Arc	1,675	110	sealed • 3 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 35,69,25cm • <i>Occasionally wonderful small floorstanding omni; bright but coherent and revealing.</i>	
Naim SBL Active	1,692		75W • 27,89,27cm • Boundary, floor standing	
Mordaunt-Short Perf 860	1,695		90dB • 6 Ohms • 225W • 86,26,35cm • Time-aligned, ResinRock box	
Kenwood LS-1000G	1,700		ported • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 160W • 34,110,38cm • European design	
Polk LS90	1,700		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 31,94,37cm • Floorstanding, biampable	
Jordan Watts JH1 +1 Asp	1,730		sealed • 2 driver • 85dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 92,40,22cm • Metal cone speaker	
Audio Physic SPARK 2	1,749		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 4 Ohms • 70W • 17,40,25cm • Time align, space-frame stand	
Apogee Ribbon Wall	1,750		hybrid • 89dB • 27,120,7cm • Ribbon/dynamic	
Tannoy Sterling TW	1,750		ported • 2 driver • 93dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 48,70,31cm	
Magnepan MG-1.5 SE	1,780		electrostatic • 2 driver • 85dB • 4 Ohms • 250W • 48,163,-cm • 2x quasi-ribbon	
Sonus-Faber Electa	1,790		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 38,27,24cm • Compact stand mount	
KEF 104/2 REC	1,799	60	coupled cavity • 5 driver • 92dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 28,90,41cm • <i>A reference point for dynamics, best without KUBE, suited to many rooms.</i>	REC'D
JBL L100	1,800		sealed • 3 driver • 90dB • 90 Ohms • 300W • 94,40,37cm • 3 layer MDF enclosure	
Lowther Academy	1,805		horn • 98dB • 4 Ohms • 100W • 29,100,43cm • 16 Ohm option	
Naim SBL Passive	1,821	143	88dB • 6 Ohms • 75W • 27,89,27cm • <i>Lively and punchy - smoother but more upfront than before.</i>	REC'D
Ruark Equinox	1,849	140	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 25,88,34cm • <i>Free space, stands included</i>	REC'D
Proac Studio 200	1,850		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 117,23,28cm • Floor standing	
Triangle Atinis	1,950		3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 300W • 104,22,22cm	
Spendor SP7/1	1,990		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 85,30,35cm • Floor standing	
Acoustic Energy AE1 Sig	1,995		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 26,30,18cm • Special Edition version of AE1	
B&W Matrix 803s2	1,995		ported • 4 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 26,101,34cm • Matrix enclosure	
Clements Reference 7	1,995		88dB • 4.5 Ohms • 200W • 25,114,4cm • Ribbon tweeter	
Dawn Audio Symphony	1,995		sealed • 3 driver • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 34,113,32cm • Floor standing	
ATC SCM20 Tower	1,999		sealed • 2 driver • 83dB • 8 Ohms • 300W • 24,103,34cm • Floor standing SCM20	
Audio Physic TEMPO	1,999	143	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 22,107,47cm • <i>Tall and unusually styled floorstander has stunning stereo but suspect bass tuning.</i>	
B&O Beolab 8000	1,999		active • 100W • 15,132,15cm • Shielded column, int amps	
Gamma Acs Epoch 5	1,999		2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 28,26,90cm • Time aligned, piano black	
KEF Model Three	1,999		coupled cavity • 5 driver • 91dB • 4 Ohms • 300W • 27,114,34cm • Uni-Q, magnetically shielded	
Boston Acs Lynfield 300L	2,000		2 driver • 83dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 23,34,28cm • Inc stands, black	
JBL T1 2000	2,000		sealed • 3 driver • 89dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 33,82,30cm • Asymmetric, double wall	
Proac Response 2S	2,000		ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 175W • 46,23,28cm • special finishes £200 extra	
QLN Reference	2,000		ported • 3 driver • 91dB • 4 Ohms • 300W • 114,24,34cm	
Spendor SP100	2,030		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 37,70,43cm • Classic monitor, free space	
Lowther Bel Canto	2,035		horn • 97dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 28,132,44cm • Including adjustable stand	
Genelec Blamp 1031A	2,068		active • 104W • 25,39,29cm	
Tannoy D700	2,100		ported • 3 driver • 93dB • 6 Ohms • 200W • 37,99,36cm • Ten inch Dual Concentric	
Linn Kaber Aktiv	2,135		sealed • 3 driver • 20,90,28cm • Integral stands	
Monitor Audio Studio 20SE 2,200	2,200		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 20,92,26cm • Floor stand, metal cone bass	
Posselt Albatros	2,200		ported • 93dB • 6 Ohms • 200W • 31,186,32cm • Ultra sensitive	
UKD-Opera Caruso II	2,250		ported • 3 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 22,97,28cm • Solid walnut, floor standing	
Martin-Logan Aeries	2,288		hybrid • 89dB • 23,122,30cm • Two-way	
Apogee Centaur	2,300		hybrid • 88dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 33,102,25cm • Ribbon/dynamic	
Jordan Watts JH1 +1 AspK 2,310	2,310		sealed • 2 driver • 85dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 92,40,22cm • Metal cone speaker	
Helius Syrius II	2,395		ported • 95dB • 4 Ohms • 300W • 36,107,16cm	
Apogee Centarus Slant 6	2,400		hybrid • 88dB • Ribbon tweeter, dynamic bass	
TDL Studio Monitor m	2,449		ported • 3 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 27,112,43cm • TLS, metal drivers, int stands	

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PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
ECA SERVO A.2	2,450		ported • 2 driver • 80dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 22,102,30cm • True ribbon tweeter	
Shahinian Obelisk	2,490		sealed • 3 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 200W • 37,74,32cm • Omni-directional	
Fullers Pharaoh 3	2,499		ported • 4 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 46,118,45cm • Pharaoh + bass & subbass encls	
Allison I.C. 10	2,500		3 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 200W • 48,102,27cm • Floor standing, free space	
Audiovector 5	2,500		4 driver • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 24,110,34cm • Black ash + cube	
B&O Beolab Penta 3	2,500		active • 150W • 22,165,34cm • Line array column, display	
Celestion Kingston	2,500		sealed • 2 driver • 84dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 99,21,35cm • Polymer box, inc stand	
Lumley Reference LM2	2,500		ported • 4 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 33,110,29cm • Open baffle, floor standing	
QLN Ref HDII	2,500		ported • 3 driver • 92dB • 4 Ohms • 350W • 114,24,34cm	
Lowther Delphic	2,525		horn • 98dB • 4 Ohms • 100W • 28,137,44cm • With adjustable stand, 16ohm o	
Magnepan MG-2.7 SE	2,650		electrostatic • 2 driver • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 250W • 56,180,-cm • 3x quasi-ribbon	
Impulse Ta'us	2,695		horn • 94dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 31,121,49cm • Floor standing	
SD Acoustics SD1E	2,695	80	ported • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 30,125,30cm • <i>Large scale, airy and unusually detailed, with excellent dynamics.</i>	REC'D
Ruark Accolade	2,699		ported • 3 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 29,100,38cm • Free space, floor standing	
JBL Ti 3000	2,700		sealed • 3 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 200W • 46,105,35cm • Asymmetric, double wall	
Proac Response 2.5	2,700		ported • 3 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 107,22,25cm	
Tannoy Edinburgh TW	2,700		ported • 2 driver • 95dB • 8 Ohms • 180W • 66,102,42cm	
Jordan Watts Asp JH1 + 1	2,745		sealed • 2 driver • 85dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 40,93,23cm • Matt - other finishes extra	
Thiel CS2.2	2,749		active • 3 driver • 86dB • 4 Ohms • 250W • 30,33,106cm • 15 wood veneers + black	
Rehdeko RK125	2,750		ported • 102dB • 8 Ohms • 34,61,28cm	
B&W Matrix 802s3	2,795		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 500W • 30,104,37cm • Matrix enclosure	
Helius Syrus I	2,850		ported • 93dB • 4 Ohms • 500W • 36,107,16cm • Floor standing, biwire	
Triangle Altair	2,850		3 driver • 92dB • 4 Ohms • 300W • 35,120,30cm • Proprietary tweeter	
Quad ESL-63	2,860	60	electrostatic • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 66,93,27cm • <i>Classic electrostatic lacks punch, but has strengths some can't live without.</i>	REC'D
Sonus-Faber Amator	2,992		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 37,22,35cm • Compact, stand mount	
Martin-Logan Stylos	2,993		hybrid • 2xdB • 88 Ohms • 23,35,28cm • In wall	
Acoustic Energy AE2 Sig	2,995		ported • 2 driver • 91dB • 6 Ohms • 200W • 24,40,32cm • Special edition version of AE2	
Meridian DSP5000	2,995	140	225W • 90,21,30cm • Digital active DSP floor stand	REC'D
Gamma Acs Epoch Ref 5	2,999		2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 95,26,26cm • Time aligned, floor stand	
KEF Model Four	2,999		coupled cavity • 3 driver • 92dB • 4 Ohms • 350W • 30,127,48cm • Uni-Q, shielded	
Genelec Triamp S30	3,055		active • 108W • 32,50,32cm	
Jordan Watts JH2K	3,230		sealed • 47,82,40cm • Line driver array	
Audio Physic VIRGO	3,399		ported • 4 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 16,100,42cm • Decoupled tweeter	
Martin-Logan Sequel II	3,399		hybrid • 89dB • 31,160,29cm • Dynamic bass/electrostatic	
Spendor SP9/1	3,400		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 106,37,44cm • Floor standing monitor	
Apogee CDD Subwoofer	3,490		hybrid • 87dB • 63,38,55cm • Active moving coil sub	
ATC SCM50	3,499		ported • 3 driver • 85dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 31,72,43cm • Passive/to special order only	
Audio Physic TERRA	3,499		subwoofer • Active sub, adjustable	
JBL S2600	3,500		horn • 2 driver • 92dB • 6 Ohms • 400W • 99,56,41cm • Assymetric enc, horn treble	
Tannoy GRFM TW	3,500		ported • 2 driver • 95dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 80,100,48cm	
Horning Agathon	3,570		horn • 2 driver • 96dB • 8 Ohms • 38,48,115cm • Lowther drivers	
Definitive BP2000	3,600		hybrid • 6 driver • 92dB • 4 Ohms • 500W • 13,43,23cm • Active bass, passive mid/top	
MAG Audio Audio A90	3,600		ribbon • 80dB • 3.7 Ohms • 300W • 52,150,8cm • Two-way full range ribbon	
Apogee Stage Sub	3,645		moving coil • 86dB • 58,25,42cm • Active moving coil sub	
Apogee Centarus Slant 8	3,700		hybrid • 88dB • Ribbon treble, dynamic mass	
JBL Ti 5000	3,700		sealed • 3 driver • 91dB • 6 Ohms • 300W • 48,114,38cm • Asymmetric, double wall	
Electrocompanion Ellipse	3,760		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 43,120,23cm • D'Appolito monitor	
Sound-Lab Dynastat	3,790		hybrid • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 350W • 44,183,41cm • Oak or walnut finish £3990	
B&W Matrix 801s3	3,795	81	ported • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 600W • 44,100,56cm • <i>Lacks transparency and the drama of the best dynamics, but acoustically a tour de force.</i>	REC'D
Magnepan MG-3.5 SE	3,800		electrostatic • 2 driver • 85dB • 4 Ohms • 250W • 61,180,-cm • 3x planar, ribbon tweeter	
Thiel CS3.6	3,899		active • 3 driver • 86dB • 4 Ohms • 400W • 32,43,123cm • 15 wood veneers + black	
Triangle Octant Tx	3,950		3 driver • 94dB • 4 Ohms • 300W • 42,150,19cm • Ultra high sensitivity	
Apogee Caliper Sig	3,998	81	ribbon • 87dB • 58,127cm • <i>Remarkable transparency and delicacy; loudness and 'grunt' are a bit lacking.</i>	REC'D
KEF 107/2 REC	3,999		coupled cavity • 4 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 300W • 33,116,45cm • Raymond Cooke Special Edition	
Monitor Audio Studio 50	4,000		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 300W • 20,104,30cm • Floor stand, metal bass & mid	
Apogee Stage 1 GS	4,100		ribbon • 86dB • 55,82,5cm • Two way	
ATC SCM100	4,149		ported • 3 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 40,84,53cm • Passive/to special order only	
Jordan Watts Class JH2KM	4,250		ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 47,82,40cm • Line tweeter array	
Proac Response 3.5	4,250		ported • 3 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 127,28,32cm	
Rehdeko RK145	4,250		ported • 102dB • 8 Ohms • 39,66,29cm	
Linn Keltik Aktiv	4,400		sealed • 3 driver • 26,104,37cm • Integral stands, Isobarik bass	
Boston Acs Lynfield 500L	4,449		3 driver • 85dB • 5 Ohms • 350W • 122,23,47cm • Free stand, separate bass/top	
QLN Artec 1600	4,500		93dB • 4 Ohms • 500W • 165,31,32cm • Line source design	
Martin-Logan CLS IIz	4,555		electrostatic • 86dB • 62,127,32cm • Full range panel	
Audiovector 6	4,600		ported • 3 driver • 92dB • 6 Ohms • 250W • 38,115,42cm • Black piano lacquer	
Prof Monitor Co MB1P	4,681		ported • 2 driver • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 500W • 38,87,53cm • Transmission line	
Bravura Brio	4,750		horn • 1 driver • 101dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 129,39,81cm • Coaxial Lowther driver	
Jordan Watts Classic JH5K	4,875		sealed • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 47,126,40cm • Floor stand, line array	
Shahinian Hawk	4,950		sealed • 3 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 250W • 43,95,32cm • Modular, omni-directional	
Apogee Centaur Major	4,980		hybrid • 88dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 40,141,27cm • Ribbon/dynamic	
Genelec Triamp 1037A	4,982		active • 191W • 40,68,30cm	
ATC SCM50A	4,999		active • 8 Ohms • 350W • 31,72,48cm • With int x'over and amps	
TDL Ref Standard-m	4,999		ported • 7 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 800W • 56,121,50cm • Dual TLS, metal drivers	
B&W Silver Signature	5,000		ported • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 25,45,24cm • External crossover	
Martin-Logan Quest Z	5,350		hybrid • 2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 42,160,29cm • Dynamic bass/electrostatic top	
Allison I.C. 20	5,500		2 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 400W • 53,122,31cm • Floor standing, free space	
Bravura Accelerando	5,500		horn • 1 driver • 103dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 129,39,81cm • Coaxial Lowther driver	
Sonus-Faber Guarneri	5,500		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 19,38,38cm • Compact, limited edition	
Tannoy Canterbury 12 ^	5,500		ported • 2 driver • 94dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 58,90,43cm	
Audio Physic AVANTI	5,599		ported • 4 driver • 86dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 19,107,40cm • Decoupled mid/tweeter	
Wilson WAP Puppy II	5,600		subwoofer • 91dB • 25,53,35cm • Passive subwoofer for WATT	
ATC SCM100A	5,699		active • 8 Ohms • 350W • 40,84,59cm • With int x'over and amps	
Jordan Watts Class JH5KM	5,860		sealed • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 47,125,40cm • Line driver array	
Sonus-Faber Extrema	5,991		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 55,27,46cm • 'Reference Standard'	
Tannoy Westminster TW	6,000	Col	ported • 2 driver • 99dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • <i>These awesome horn loaded speakers are remarkably controlled and impressive.</i>	REC'D
Prof Monitor Co BBSP	6,754		ported • 2 driver • 91dB • 4 Ohms • 600W • 43,104,79cm • Transmission line	
Sound-Lab Pristine II	6,990		electrostatic • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 300W • 72,153,69cm • Steel frame, curved panel	
Naim DBL Active	6,991		200W • 65,120,40cm • Boundary, floor standing	
Tannoy Canterbury 15 ^	7,000		ported • 2 driver • 96dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 68,110,48cm	
Wilson Puppy 5	7,290		subwoofer • 91dB • Passive sub for WATTs	
Rehdeko RK175	7,750		ported • 106dB • 8 Ohms • 50,96,37cm	
Shahinian Diapason	8,350		sealed • 5 driver • 91dB • 6 Ohms • 300W • 58,100,38cm • Omni-directional	
Jamo Oriel	8,500		ported • 3 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 300W • 178,40,30cm • Coupled cavity, flagship model	
Lumley Reference LM1	8,500		ported • 5 driver • 89dB • 4 Ohms • 500W • 71,122,40cm • 2 box, floor standing	
Martin-Logan Monolith IIP	8,730		hybrid • 89dB • 59,163,28cm • ESL/dynamic, two-way	
Wilson WATT 5	8,800		ported • 2 driver • 91dB • 27,31,36cm	

PRODUCT £ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

Jordan Watts Class JH10K	9,340	sealed • 2 driver • 92dB • 8 Ohms • 500W • 47,156,40cm • Floor stand, line array
Infinity ARS Epsilon	9,995	sealed • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 500W • 152,47,41cm • Includes own servo control amp
Audio Physic CALDERA	9,999	5 driver • 91dB • 4 Ohms • 250W • 25,111,50cm • Pneumatic baffle, 3 cabinet
Magnepan MG-20 SE P	10,300	electrostatic • 2 driver • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 250W • 74,201,-cm • 3x planar, ribbon tweeter
Thiel CS7	10,476	active • 4 driver • 88dB • 4 Ohms • 500W • 35,48,140cm • 15 wood veneers + black
Jordan Watts JH10KM	10,495	sealed • 2 driver • 92dB • 8 Ohms • 500W • 47,156,40cm • Line driver array
Martin-Logan M'lith IIIXP	10,950	hybrid • 89dB • 59,163,26cm • ESL/dynamic, active crossover
Magnepan MG-20SE A	11,000	electrostatic • 2 driver • 88dB • 4 Ohms • 74,201,-cm • Active MG-20SE Passive
ATC SCM200A	11,207	active • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 850W • 83,73,440cm • With ext x'over and amps
Sound-Lab A3	11,990	electrostatic • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 300W • 78,187,23cm • Any finish, curved panel
Proac Response 4	12,000	ported • 3 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 500W • 160,36,43cm • Special finishes £1000 extra
Wilson WHOW III	12,500	subwoofer • 98dB • 88/65,36cm • Active subwoofer for WA T
ATC SCM300A	12,999	active • 94dB • 850W • 93,88,48cm • With ext x'over and amps
Tannoy Westminster Royal	13,500	ported • 2 driver • 99dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 98,139,56cm
Thiel CS51	13,669	active • 5 driver • 87dB • 3 Ohms • 500W • 33,43,162cm • 15 wood veneers + black
Sound-Lab A1	13,990	electrostatic • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 400W • 91,208,27cm • Curved panel, any finish
Living Voice Air Scout	14,750	horn • 3 driver • 105dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 57,63,115cm • Vitovox drivers, exp horn
Apogee Studio Grand	14,900	hybrid • 87dB • 63,160,55cm • Three way ribbon, active sub
Audio Physic MEDEA	20,999	ported • 4 driver • 91dB • 4 Ohms • 400W • 24,110,50cm • Phase linear
Living Voice Air Partner S	27,200138	horn • 108dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 64,160,90cm • Outstanding transparency, dynamics, ideosyncrasies are compensated by vitality.

REC'D

SATELLITES & SUBWOOFERS

JPW AV2	300	sub & 5 sats • 8ohms • 87dB • 51,26,27cm • Minim/Subwoofer
JPW AV1	300	sub & 5 sats • 8ohms • 85dB • 51,26,27cm • Satellites/Subwoofer
B&W Solid Verticale	400	Sub, 2 x sat • 89 • 19,34,45cm
JPW AV4	400	2 sub & 5 sats • 8ohms • 87dB • 51,26,27cm • Minim/Subwoofer
JPW AV3	400	2 sub & 5 sats • 8ohms • 85dB • 51,26,27cm • Satellite/Subwoofer
Polk M Solution	999	sub, 4 sats • 8ohms • 89dB • 28,50,36cm
Polk RM7000	999	8ohms • 89dB • 28,50,36cm • su, 2 x sat, 1 x centre

ACTIVE SUBWOOFERS

Aiwa TS-W5	150	Stereo • 50W
Aiwa TS-W7	200	stereo • 100W
Kenwood SW-500	250	stereo • 50W • 29,50,48cm • Active crossover
Kenwood SW-900	260	Stereo • 70W • 21,40,56cm • remote control
B&W Solid Powerbass	300	stereo • 75W • 33,34,39cm
Polk PSW100	499	1-box sterep • 65 W • 28,50,36cm
Triangle SAT III	650	stereo • 140W
B&W 800ASW	1,500	stereo • 200W • THX • 43,58,50cm



Tuners & Receivers

The radio medium operates at a lower profile than TV, but in areas outside pop music the BBC service is the envy of the world. Live Prom concerts rival all other sources from a hi-fi perspective. ■ Only the FM (VHF) bands give stereo hi-fi sound, though AM (MW & LW) are useful for certain transmissions in the UK. ■ Something of a hi-fi afterthought, tuners are often selected merely to match the cosmetics of a chosen amplifier. However, the task they discharge is far from simple, since it requires the skills of RF (reception) and audio (signal processing) engineering. The importance of

the former will depend on local reception conditions, but money invested in a high-quality outside aerial system is well spent. ■ Tuners come in two basic types. Analogue models tune gradually (and usually manually) across the bands, and can have analogue or digital displays; they are often preferred for sound quality, and are certainly best for AM bands. Digital tuners offer convenient automatic tune facilities and pre-set memories. ■ RDS (radio data system) is a feature t originally designed for in-car applications. Basically RDS tuners can identify and display the name of the radio station being received, but

they offer a variety of other features as well. ■ Receivers are amplifiers with tuners built in. They are often equipped with surround-sound processing.

Key

FM, Mwavebands received

A/Vsurround sound capability

75Wpower output/channel in Watts RMS

30 presetsnumber of presets offered

MM,3L,3Tnumber of inputs offered (see Amplifier category)

RDShas Radio Data System compatibility

PRODUCT £ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

TUNERS

Goodmans GST650	90	FM,M,L • 36 presets
Sherwood TD1120	90	FM,M • 24 presets
Goodmans Delta 700	100	FM,M,L • 36 presets • 36,11,30cm
Sherwood TX1010C	100	FM,M • 30 presets
Denon TU-260L	120	93 FM,M,L • 20 presets • 44,8,24cm • Careful minimalist design promises a surprisingly open and vivacious sound.
Kenwood KT-1060L	120	FM,M,L • 30 presets • 44,8,26cm • Preset scan
Sherwood TX3010C	120	120 FM,M • 30 presets • Lots of features and fine FM discrimination for price. Sound is communicative but inconsistently tacky.
Teac T-R400	120	FM,M • 20 presets • 44,9,30cm
JVC FX362BX	130	129 FM,M,L • 40 presets • 44,8,30cm • Disappointing all-round performance - watch out for aerial overload in strong signal areas. Tuning knob unspecial
Pioneer F-203RDS	130	FM,M,L • 30 presets • RDS • 42,8,29cm • RDS at very budget price
Sony STS211LB	130	FM,M,L • 30 presets • 43,9,30cm • Station naming
Yamaha TX-480L	139	FM,M,L • 40 presets • 44,9,30cm
Kenwood KT-2060L	140	FM,M,L • 30 presets • 44,8,26cm • Built-in timer, RDS
Teac T-R450	140	FM,M • 20 presets • RDS • 44,9,30cm
Denon TU-215RD	150	FM,M • 20 presets • RDS • 44,8,24cm • RDS Radiotext
Marantz ST-55	150	FM,M,L • 59 presets • 42,10,34cm • D-bus
Technics ST-GT350L	150	142 FM,M,L • 30 presets • 43,7,30cm • Remote control capable
Onkyo T-401	160	FM,MW • 40 presets • 46,8,31cm
Grundig T12	170	FM,M,L • 59 presets • RDS • 44,9,30cm • Full RDS, user station name
Kenwood KT-3050L	170	120 FM,M,L • 39 presets • RDS • 44,10,28cm • Excellent RF performance and plenty of features including RDS, but ordinary sound.
Harman-Kardon TU930	180	FM/M • 30 presets • 45,8,34cm
Pioneer F-303RDS	180	FM,M • 40 presets • RDS • 42,8,29cm • RDS with FON
NAD 412	190	FM,M • 24 presets • 44,8,30cm • Stereo blend switch
Onkyo T-430RDS	190	142 FM/MW • 30 presets • RDS • 46,9,30cm
Yamaha TX-580RDS	199	FM,M • 40 presets • RDS • 44,9,30cm
Denon TU-380RD	200	FM,M • 40 presets • RDS • 44,8,24cm • RDS Radiotext/EON
Harman-Kardon TU950	200	FM,M,L • 30 presets • RDS • 45,8,34cm
Luxman T-353	200	FM,M • 30 presets • 9,44,36cm • System bus remote control
Sony STS311LB	200	FM,M,L • 30 presets • RDS • 43,9,30cm • RDS EON, 'Autobetelical' select
Technics ST-GT550L	200	FM,M,L • 39 presets • RDS • 43,7,31cm • Remote control capable, RDS
Arcam Alpha 5 Plus	220	142 FM,M,L • 24 presets • 43,8,27cm • Signal strength meter
Rotel RT-950BX	220	142 FM,M,L • 20 presets • 44,8,24cm
Onkyo T-409	230	FM,MW • 30 presets • 28,8,30cm • Mini component
Pioneer F-502RDS	250	FM,M • 40 presets • RDS • 42,9,34cm • 2 ariel inputs

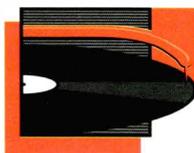
B'BUY

PRODUCT £ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

Sony STS505ES	250	FM,M,L • 30 presets • RDS • 43,9,35cm • UK optimised sound	
Technics ST-GT650L	250	FM,M,L • 39 presets • RDS • 43,10,31cm • Class AA, remote control ready	
Onkyo T-450RDS	260	FM,MW • 30 presets • RDS • 46,9,31cm	
Onkyo T-41LRDS	280	FM,MW • 30 presets • RDS • 28,8,30cm • Mini component	
Harman-Kardon TU9400	299	142 FM,M • 24 presets • 45,8,33cm • This striking tuner exceeded our expectations. On stereo FM, it's HK's best yet	REC'D
Kenwood KT-6050	300	FM,M • 39 presets • RDS • 44,10,33cm • IF switch, two antennae, RDS	
Marantz ST-72	300	FM,M,L • 59 presets • RDS • 42,10,34cm • D-bus, IF switch, local switch	
Micromega Minium FM	300	FM • 43,27,7cm	
Musical Fidelity E50	300	FM • 20 presets • 44,10,34cm	
Aura TU80	350	FM,M,L • 30 presets • 43,6,27cm • Chrome finish add £50	
Nakamichi ST3s	350	FM • 30 presets • 43,7,32cm	
Arcam Delta 280	399	120 FM • 20 presets • 43,7,28cm • <i>Fine sound quality marred by mild synthesiser whine; RF performance only average. remote £60 extra</i>	
Mission Cyrus FM7	400	142 FM • 29 presets • 22,8,36cm • Remote control bus	
Onix BWD1	420	FM • 75,23,37cm • In-house front end	
Onkyo R-81LRDS	420	FM,MW • 30 presets • RDS • 28,12,33cm • Mini component, incl timer	
Thorens TR12000	450	FM,M • 59 presets • RDS • 21,9,34cm • RDS, remote controlable	
Musical Fidelity E500	499	FM • 20 presets • 44,12,35cm • AGC/IF switch, remote control	
Rotel RT-990BX	500	FM • 16 presets • 44,8,29cm • Remote control	
Naim NATO3	549	FM • 43,56,30cm	
Magnum Dynalab FT11	550	FM • Analogue, black finish	
Quad FM66	554	142 FM • 19 presets • 33,8,26cm • <i>Very pretty and compact but technically unadventurous. Sound is smooth, but only makes sense in Quad system context.</i>	
AVI S2000MT	599	FM • 16 presets • 31,25,9cm • R/C via system handset	
Meridian 504	625	FM • 30 presets • 33,9,34cm • System handset	
Micromega Tuner	700	FM • 43,9,28cm • Digital output	
Audiolab 8000T	750	142 FM,M,L • 39 presets • 45,8,36cm • <i>Unusually combination of fine sound quality and RF performance (inc AM), and superb ergonomics</i>	B'BUY
Magnum Dynalab FT101	825	72 FM • <i>Although fairly expensive given its minimum set of facilities, its excellent sound provided ample compensation.</i>	REC'D
Michi RHT-10	895	FM • 16 presets • 47,8,34cm • Remote control	
Musical Fidelity FT	899	FM • 20 presets • 49,12,33cm • Remote control, AGC/IF switch	
Naim NATO2	998	FM • 43,56,30cm	
Magnum FT101 Etude	1,250	FM • Analogue, black finish	
Meridian 604	1,350	120 FM • 30 presets • <i>Unique digital converter makes most sense in Meridian system context: smooth, sweet sound with fine front end.</i>	REC'D
McIntosh MR7084	1,550	FM,M • 50 presets • 45,14,45cm • Links to McIntosh r/control	
Naim NATO1	1,599	142 FM • 43,56,30cm • <i>There may be better sounding tuners in the world, but we have yet to hear one.</i>	REC'D
Linn Kremlin	1,995	142 FM • 80 presets • 32,8,33cm • <i>Controversially good sound at a very high price. The reviewer's saving up but you should check it out for yourself.</i>	REC'D
Day Sequerra FM Ref	5,937	FM	
Day Sequerra B' dcast Mon	14,640	FM	

RECEIVERS

Sherwood RX1010	120	FM,M • 30W • MM,2L,1T	
Denon DRA-265R	200	FM,M • 35W • 40 presets • MM,2L,1T • rem • 44,12,31cm	
Dual CR9000RS	200	FM,M,L • 55W • 30 presets • MM,4L,2T • rem • 44,14,30cm • System component	
JVC RX-212BK	200	FM,M,L • 50W • 40 presets • MM,3L,1T • rem • 44,13,34cm • 4ch surround	
Pioneer SX-203RDS	200	FM,M • 35W • 30 presets • MM,2L,2T • rem • 42,14,29cm • RDS tuner	
Technics SA-GX190L	200	FM,M,L • 60W • 30 presets • MM,2L,2 • rem • 43,13,31cm	
Kenwood KR-A4070	230	FM,M • 60W • 20 presets • MM,3L,2T • rem • 44,13,33cm • RDS	
Sony STRD311	230	FM,M,L • A/V • 60W • 30 presets • MM,2L,2T • rem • 43,14,30cm • System remote	
Denon DRA-365RD	250	FM,M • 45W • 40 presets • MM,3L,1T • rem • 44,12,32cm • System remote	
Harman-Kardon HK3250	250	FM,M • 40W • 30 presets • 3L,2T • rem • 45,14,37cm	
Pioneer SX-303RDS	250	FM,M • 50W • 30 presets • MM,2L,2T • rem • 42,14,34cm • RDS tuner	
Teac AG-V4200	250	FM,M • A/V • 60W • 30 presets • MM,4L,3T • rem • 44,13,32cm • Dolby Pro Logic	
Yamaha RX-385RDS	269	FM,M • 40W • 40 presets • MM,3L,1T • rem • 44,13,30cm • System remote	
JVC RX-416VBK	270	FM,M,L • A/V • 50W • 40 presets • MM,1L,3T • rem • 44,13,35cm • Dolby Pro Logic	
NAD 701	279	FM,M • 25W • 24 presets • MM,2L,1T • rem	
Sony STRD511	280	FM,M,L • A/V • 50W • 30 presets • MM,3L,2T • rem • 43,14,30cm • Dolby Pro Logic	
Yamaha RX-V390RDS	299	F,M • A/V • 60W • 40 presets • MM,3L,2T,2V • rem • 44,14,30cm • AV amp, 'stereo' surround	
Kenwood KR-V5570	300	FM,M • A/V • 50W • 20 presets • MM,2L,2T • rem • 44,14,34cm • Dolby Pro Logic, RDS	
Technics SA-GX390L	300	FM,M,L • A/V • 50W • 30 presets • MM,2L,2T • rem • 43,13,36cm • Dolby Pro Logic	
Denon DRA-565RD	320	FM,M • 55W • 40 presets • MM,3L,2T • rem • 44,12,32cm • RDS	
Sherwood RV5030R	330	FM,M,L • A/V • 80W • MM,4L,4T • rem • Dolby Pro Logic	
Sony STRD611	330	FM,M,L • A/V • 60W • 30 presets • MM,3L,2T • rem • 43,14,30cm • Dolby Pro Logic	
NAD 705	349	FM,M • 40W • 39 presets • MM,2L,2T • rem	
JVC RX-616RBK	350	FM,M,L • A/V • 50W • 40 presets • MM,1L,3T • rem • 44,16,41cm • Dolby Pro Logic, RDS tuner	
JVC RX-508VBK	350	FM,M,L • A/V • 50W • 40 presets • MM,1L,3T • rem • 44,13,34cm • 5ch Dolby Pro Logic	
Kenwood KR-V6070	350	FM,M • A/V • 70W • 20 presets • MM,4L,2T • rem • 44,17,34cm • RDS, Dolby Pro Logic	
Technics SA-GX470L	350	FM,M,L • A/V • 80W • 30 presets • MM,4L,1T • rem • 43,14,36cm • Dolby Pro Logic	
Kenwood KR-V7070	400	FM,M • A/V • 100W • 20 presets • MM,3L,2T • rem • 44,15,40cm • Dolby Pro Logic, RDS	
Pioneer VSX-452	400	FM,M • A/V • 50W • 30 presets • MM,2L,2T,2V • rem • 42,14,35cm • Dolby Pro-Logic	
Sherwood RV6030R	400	FM,M,L • A/V • 100W • MM,4L,4T • rem	
Teac AG-V6200	400	FM,M • A/V • 90W • 30 presets • MM,4L,4T • rem • 44,15,40cm • Dolby Pro Logic	
Yamaha RX-V590RDS	449	F,M • A/V • 70W • 40 presets • MM,3L,3T,4V • rem • 44,15,39cm • True DSP	
Technics SA-GX690L	450	FM,M,L • A/V • 100W • 30 presets • MM,4L,1T • rem • 43,16,36cm • Dolby Pro-Logic, help function	
JVC RX-808VBK	500	FM,M,L • A/V • 70W • 40 presets • MM,1L,3T • rem • 44,16,40cm • 5ch Dolby Pro Logic	
Denon AV-1000	530	FM,M • A/V • 70W • 16 presets • MM,2L,2T • rem • 44,15,33cm • Auto input balance	
Marantz SR-73	599	FM,M • A/V • 75W • 30 presets • MM,3L,3T • rem • 43,15,38cm • Dolby Pro Logic	
Marantz SR-82	899	FM,M • A/V • 75W • 30 presets • MM,3L,2T • rem • 43,17,43cm • Dolby Pro Logic, multi-room	



Turntables & Arms

Specialist turntables are what high fidelity sound is all about. CD players may offer silent backgrounds and flat frequency responses, but they can't match the dynamics and superlative timing that serious turntable users take for granted. Turntables at the

cheaper end of the market tend to be supplied with a matching tonearm, and often include a 'starter' cartridge. Still better quality is found at higher prices among the separate motor units and tonearms. Careful partnering and set-up is essential for these components, but many so-called 'sympathetic' combinations exist.

Key to turntables

manual, automatictype of operation
33/45 rpmspeeds offered

Key to tonearms

SME fittype of cut-out into which arm mounts
233mmeffective length of arm

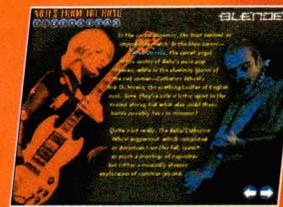
PRODUCT £ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

TURNTABLES

Goodmans Delta 700	55	semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • 36,90,37cm • Part of Delta system	
Genexa Lab-710	60	manual • 33/45rpm • Includes MM cartridge	
Genexa Lab-810	70	semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • Includes MM cartridge	

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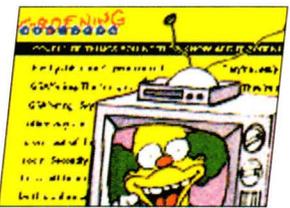
In this issue...

- The best in music - check these out!
- Melt into our EXCLUSIVE interview with Ice Maiden Björk.
- Belly, Catherine Wheel - Live on Stage.
- Radiohead - unplugged and grumpy.
- The battle of the bands - PM Dawn and KRS1 hip hop homeboys, head to head.
- PLUS animation special.
Meet the creator of The Simpsons.
Pythonesque madness with Terry Gilliam.
- For more info: check out our website www.blender.com



SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:
Windows
 MCP2 strongly recommended
 Windows 3.1 (or later) with DOS 6.2 (or later)
 486 or Pentium PC required
 4 Megabytes FREE RAM (6 recommended)
 Sound Card (Most modules)
 13" VGA or SVGA monitor
 Quicktime 2.02 for Windows (supplied)
 CD-ROM drive (double speed or better recommended)

Macintosh
 Macintosh System 7
 68030 processor required
 60040 or better strongly recommended
 4 Megabytes FREE RAM (6 recommended)
 13" colour screen (256 colour)
 Quicktime 2.0 + Apple Multimedia Tuner (supplied)
 CD-ROM drive (double speed or better recommended)



BLENDER

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Blender's "Couple of the Month"

Sherwood PS1870	70	semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • Budget turntable with arm	
Dual CS3700/3701	85	semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • 36,10,36cm • Midi-sized turntable	
Sony PSLX150H	90	semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • 43,10,36cm • Player, with MM cartridge	
Kenwood KD-492F	100	auto • 33/45rpm • 44,10,39cm • Includes cartridge	
Pioneer PL-225	120	semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • 42,10,36cm • Belt drive, fitted cartridge	
NAD 5120	129	semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • Includes arm	
Dual CS435	130	33/45rpm • 44,12,36cm • Turntable includes cartridge	
Systemdek I/920	136	manual • 33/45rpm • Semi-suspended deck	
Pro-ject 0.5	145	semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • 42, 11, 3cm • With Ortofon OM5 cartridge	
Pioneer PL-335	150	auto • 33/45rpm • 42,10,36cm • Belt drive, fitted cartridge	
Sony PSLX431B	150	auto • 33/45rpm • 43,11,36cm • Player, auto rec size select	
Ariston Pro-1200	160	manual • 33/45rpm • Semi-pro disco deck	
Technics SL-BD20	160	semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • 43,10,38cm • Belt drive, includes T4P cartr	
Dual CS503-2	170	91 semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • 44,13,37cm • Coarse and woolly sound - not inoffensive, but bettered by the CS-503-3.	REC'D
Moth Alamo	175	manual • 33/45rpm • Comes with RB250 arm	
Akai AP A950	179	manual • 33/45rpm • 44,12,35cm • Inc cartridge	
Grundig TT1	180	auto • 33/45rpm • Black finish	
Technics SL-BD22	180	semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • 43,10,38cm • Belt drive, includes T4P cartridge.	
Thorens TD180/AT91	180	semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • Belt drive	
Pro-ject 1	185	manual • 33/45rpm • 42, 11, 3cm • With Ortofon 510 cartridge	
Rega Planar 78	198	manual • 78rpm • 45,13,37cm • As Rega Planar 2, 78 only	
Rega Planar 2	198	48 manual • 33/45rpm • 45,13,37cm • A remarkable product at the price, surprisingly articulate and confident.	B'BUY
Moth Turntable	199	manual • 33/45rpm • Split-plinth design	
Dual 505-4 UK	200	103 semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • 44,15,37cm • Consistent sounding and well isolated turntable. It is slightly lacking in oomph.	REC'D
Thorens TD180/S500	200	33/45/78rpm • Belt drive, plays 78s	
Thorens TD280 IV/UK	200	semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • Electronic belt drive, AT95E	
Thorens TD166 VI/UK/BC	200	manual • 33/45rpm • Blank armboard, cut to shape,	
Pro-ject 1 (E)	209	semi arm lift • 33,45rpm • 42,11,32cm • Semi-auto version of Pro-ject	
Systemdek IIX/900	230	103 manual • 33/45rpm • A high performance budget turntable that is particularly strong at fine detail resolution and imagery.	B'BUY
Systemdek I/920/Moth	235	115 manual • 33/45rpm • The motor is derivative of the Rega Planar 2 with a Moth arm. Uptempo, even bright at times but never lacks enthusiasm.	REC'D
Moth Kanoot Mk I Arm	249	manual • 33/45rpm • Inc Rega RB250 arm	
Pro-ject 2	249	manual • 33/45rpm • 46, 12, 3cm • Metal/glass platter, clamp	
Rega Planar 3	260	48 manual • 33/45rpm • 45,13,37cm • The '3 (with RB300 arm) sounded musical in a balanced and coherent manner	B'BUY
Thorens TD166 VI/UK/AT	270	manual • 33/45rpm • Inc TP50 manual arm, AT95E	
Pro-ject 2/Ortofon	275	manual • 33/45rpm • 46, 12, 3cm • With Ortofon MC1 cartridge	
Moth Kanoot Mk III Arm	299	manual • 33/45rpm • Inc Rega RB300 arm	
Thorens TD166 VI/UK/RB	300	103 manual • 33/45rpm • Refined and solid sound with well focussed imagery; suitable for use with good MM and budget MC cartridges.	B'BUY
Linn Basik	349	103 manual • 33/45rpm • 45,14,36cm • Strong midband analysis and imagery; clean if sharp treble is matched to a good if occasionally wooden bass.	REC'D
Dual CS750-1	350	semi arm lift • 33/45/78rpm • 44,14,38cm • Turntable includes cartridge	
Pro-ject 6	379	manual • 33/45rpm • 46, 17, 3cm • Suspended turntable	
Systemdek IIXE/900Ap	388	103 manual • 33/45rpm • The acrylic platter IIXE is one of the most capable budget decks on the market: good resolution, dynamics and timing.	REC'D
Michell Mycro	397	manual • 33/45rpm • 46,14,34cm	
Pro-ject 6/Ortofon	435	manual • 33/45rpm • 46, 17, 3cm • As above, with Ortofon MC15	
Dual Golden II	500	semi arm lift • 33/45/78rpm • 44,14,38cm • Piano finish CS750-1	
Technics SL-1210MKII	500	manual • 33/45rpm • 46,17,36cm • Quartz DD, no cartridge	
Technics SL-1200MKII	500	manual • 33/45rpm • 43,10,38cm • Quartz DD, includes T4P cartri	
Michell Mycro/arm	539	manual • 33/45rpm • 46,14,34cm • Includes Rega RB300 arm	
Manticore Madrigal	570	manual • 33/45rpm • 46,36,12cm • Turntable, lifetime guarantee	
Roksan Radius	595	manual • 33/45rpm • 45,12,35cm • Motor unit	
Notts Analogue Spacedeck	600	manual • 33,45rpm	
Notts Analogue Illusion	600	manual • 33/45rpm	
Thorens TD3001BC	630	manual • 33/45rpm • No arm, but various armboards are available	
Pro-ject 6/Sumiko	699	138 manual • 33/45rpm • 46,17,3cm • With Sumiko arm	REC'D
Thorens TD2001	700	91 semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • Similar to TD320 but much dearer - why? Sound is comfortable but not very detailed.	
Linn LP12 Basik	745	103 manual • 33rpm • 45,14,36cm • Trails the full LP12 significantly, but pace, rhythm, timing etc still top rank	REC'D
Michell Gyrodek	765	55 manual • 33/45rpm • 53,19,41cm • Sweet and natural sounding player, well matched with the Rega RB300	REC'D
Thorens TD3001/UK	770	103 manual • 33/45rpm • Excellent middle ranking esoterica, with strong all-round abilities rather than excellence in particular areas.	REC'D
Roksan Radius/Tabriz	795	manual • 33/45rpm • 45,12,36cm • As above, with Roksan arm	
Townshend MkIII Rock	799	manual • 33/45rpm • Headshell end arm damping	
Alphason Sonata	835	103 manual • 33rpm • Good sound in all areas - bass, clarity and neutrality all in top class (tested with HR100S MCS).	REC'D
Manticore Mantra	890	manual • 33/45rpm • 46,36,12cm • Turntable, lifetime guarantee	
Linn LP12 Valhalla	894	manual • 33/45rpm • 45,14,36cm • Electronic PSU, upgradable	
Roksan Radius/Tabriz zi	895	103 manual • 33/45rpm • 45,12,35cm • Musically it offers exceptional performance with a minimum of fuss.	REC'D
Origin Live Oasis-S	899	manual • 33rpm • Suspended turntable	
Thorens TD520	900	semi arm lift • 33/45/78rpm • Pitch control, no arm	
Michell Gyrodek/arm	907	manual • 33/45rpm • 53,19,41cm • Includes Rega RB300 arm	
Pink Triangle Export	948	91 manual • 33/45rpm • 46,15,37cm • The PT100 with built-in PS. Transparent and neutral, but review sample had high motor noise.	REC'D
Kuzma Stabi/PS	1,200	91 manual • 33/45rpm • 51, 18, 4cm • (Tested with Stogi Reference) Solid oak plinth; sound is very clear, detailed and extended.	REC'D
Notts Analogue H.Space	1,200	manual • 33/45rpm	
Notts Analogue Graphic	1,200	manual • 33/45rpm	
Alphason Sonata/Atlas	1,235	manual • 33/45rpm • Motor unit inc PSU	
Linn LP12 Lingo	1,345	91 manual • 33/45rpm • 45,14,36cm • The classic reference is improved by the Lingo, but charming character remains.	REC'D
Roksan Xerxes 10	1,495	manual • 33/45rpm • 45,12,35cm • Black/rosewood veneers	
Wilson Benesch	1,550	manual • 33/45rpm • High-tech turntable	
Rivelin Audio Eclipse	1,595	144 manual • 33/45rpm • 45,13,38cm • Motor unit	
Audiomeca Romance	1,675	manual • 33/45rpm • With Romeo unipivot arm	
Pink Triangle Anniversary	1,797	91 manual • 33/45rpm • 45,15,37cm • Possibly the most detailed, clear and neutral sounding deck around. Likeness to master tape is uncanny.	REC'D
Well Tempered Rec Player	1,800	67 manual • 33/45rpm • 45,18,36cm • Intriguing and challenging design. Has a limpid quality and a lack of artificiality that sets standards.	REC'D
Alphason Symphony	1,860	manual • 33/45rpm • Motor unit & PSU	
Michell Orbe	1,950	manual • 33/45rpm • 55,29,71cm • Inc QC power supply	
Pink Triangle Anni/DC PSU	2,173	manual • 33/45rpm • 45,15,37cm • Battery PSU version of above	
Notts Analogue Mentor	2,200	manual • 33/45rpm • 75lb alloy or graphite platter	
Audiomeca J1	2,500	manual • 33/45rpm • 50, 40, 2cm • Top of the range model	
Roksan TMS	2,750	manual • 33/45rpm • 45,12,35cm • Black lacquer	
Well Tempered Classic	2,800	manual • 33/45rpm • 48,19,39cm • The original Well Tempered	
Kuzma Stabi Ref/PS	3,000	manual • 33/45rpm • Two motor, belt driven	
SME Model 20	3,240	manual • 33/45/78rpm • 42,16,32cm • Precision turntable	
DNM Reson Rota 1	3,500	manual • 33/45rpm • 59,14,37cm • Inc arm & cartridge	
Well Tempered Super	3,500	manual • 33/45rpm • 49,19,39cm • Classic with carbon arm	
Manticore Magister	3,800	manual • 33/45rpm • 57,46,18cm • Special order only	
Voyd 0.5	3,940	144 manual • 33/45rpm • 51,16,42cm • Cross between standard and Reference Voyds. Superb finish, colourful and dynamic.	REC'D
Audiomeca J1/SL5	4,250	manual • 33/45rpm • 50, 40, 2cm • With parallel tracking arm	
SME Model 20A	4,535	118 manual • 33/45/78rpm • 42,15,32cm • Supplied with Series V arm. Engineered to last a lifetime, giving excellent stereo and detail retrieval.	
Basis Ovation II	4,800	manual • 33/45rpm • 58,42,14cm • Lead/brass, record clamped	
DNM Rota 2	4,800	144 manual • 33/45rpm • 59,14,37cm • Includes arm and cartridge	REC'D

PRODUCT £ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

Notts Analogue Mentor Ref	4,800	manual • 33/45rpm • 150lb platter, graphite top	
Well Tempered Reference	5,000	manual • 33/45rpm • 49,19,39cm • 'Fountainhead' base/carbon arm	
Voyd Reference	6,500 91	manual • 33/45rpm • 51,16,48cm • <i>Voyd's flagship, equipped with three substantial motors, is a strong contender for world's best.</i>	REC'D
Basis Debut Gold Std III	7,200	manual • 33/45rpm • 58,42,19cm • Belt drive, high mass	
Basis Debut Gold Vacuum	9,250	manual • 33/45rpm • 58,42,19cm • Includes suction platter	
SME Model 30	10,166	manual • 78rpm • 45,22,35cm • Flagship turntable	
SME Model 30A	11,460	manual • 33/45/78rpm • 45,22,35cm • As above, with Series V arm	

TONEARMS			
Decca LI Arm	49	changeable armtube • proprietary fit • 212mm • Damped	
Moth Arm	95 60	fixed armtube • <i>The ultimate budget arm? Refined, sweet, detailed and natural.</i>	B'BUY
Rega RB250	95	fixed armtube • 237mm • Scaled down RB300	
Decca LIR Arm	99	changeable armtube • proprietary fit • 212mm • Rewired version of LI	
Rega RB300	139 60	fixed armtube • 237mm • <i>Despite its modest price it sets exceptional standards and could be used on many high end turntables.</i>	B'BUY
Moth Mk III	146	fixed armtube • Rebadged Rega RB300	
Linn Akito	209	fixed armtube • Linn/Alphason fit • 229mm • Statically balanced	
Roksan Tabriz Basic	275 91	fixed armtube • proprietary fit • 240mm • <i>Targetted at the Xerxes, this is a good alternative to the Rega arm in many cases - a touch bright though.</i>	REC'D
Alphason Xenon	286	fixed armtube • Linn/Alphason fit • 229mm • 1-piece titanium armtube	
SME 3009 Ser II Imp	294	fixed armtube • SME fit • 231mm • Fixed heaushell, low mass	
SME 3009 S2 Ser II Imp	321	removable headshell • SME fit • 231mm • Detach headshell, medium mass	
Notts Analogue Space	350	changeable armtube • proprietary fit • Opt silver wiring, unipivot	
Alphason Xenon MCS	370	fixed armtube • Linn/Alphason fit • 229mm • vdH silver wiring	
Manticore Musician	395	fixed armtube • Linn/Alphason fit • 230mm • Handmade, lifetime guarantee	
Roksan Tabriz Zi	395	fixed armtube • proprietary fit • 240mm • 'Intelligent' counterweight	
Zeta as	469	Pivoted	
Alphason HR100S	490 86	fixed armtube • Linn/Alphason fit • 229mm • <i>S-shaped arm sounds smooth, but nevertheless reproduces transients with fine attack.</i>	REC'D
SME Series II 3009-R	490	removable headshell • SME fit • 233mm • Heavier version of Ser II S2 I	
SME Series II 3010-R	501	removable headshell • SME fit • 239mm • Detachable headshell, 10 inch	
SME Series II 3012-R	538	removable headshell • SME fit • 308mm • Detachable headshell, 12 inch	
Helius Orion 4 Copper	549	fixed armtube • proprietary fit • 254mm	
Alphason HR100S MCS	550	fixed armtube • Linn/Alphason fit • 229mm • vdH silver, top bearings	
Kuzma Stogi	600	fixed armtube • proprietary fit • Effective mass 13gm	
SME Series 300-309	657 79	removable headshell • SME fit • 232mm • <i>Beautifully made and finished: fully adjustable and a highly neutral performer.</i>	REC'D
SME Series 300-310	672	removable headshell • SME fit • 238mm • 10 inch (nom) version of 300-3	
Manticore Magician1	695	fixed armtube • Linn/Alphason fit • 230mm • Polished armtube finish	
Helius Orion 4 Silver	725	fixed armtube • proprietary fit • 254mm	
Notts Analogue Mentor	750	changeable armtube • proprietary fit • Silver wiring, unipivot	
SME Series 300-312	765	removable headshell • SME fit • 308mm • 12 inch (nom) version of 300-3	
Manticore Magician2	795	fixed armtube • Linn/Alphason fit • 305mm • Polished armtube finish	
Townshend Excalibur	799	fixed armtube • proprietary fit • 220mm • Outtrigger headshell damping	
Roksan Artemiz	895	fixed armtube • proprietary fit • 240mm • Flagship arm, new style	
SME Series IV	936 60	fixed armtube • SME fit • 233mm • <i>Superb engineering and finish with a finely balanced sound, impressive stereo focus and low colouration.</i>	REC'D
Naim ARO	963	changeable armtube • proprietary fit • Unipivot	
Wilson Benesch ACT1	975	fixed armtube • proprietary fit • Carbon-fibre armtube, unipivot	
Kuzma Stogi Ref	1,000 79	fixed armtube • proprietary fit • <i>Large, solid and well made arm, gives exceptionally clear sound with just a hint of brightness.</i>	REC'D
Notts Analogue Alien	1,200	changeable armtube • proprietary fit • Graphite tube, unipivot	
Linn Ekos	1,297 67	fixed armtube • Linn/Alphason fit • 229mm • <i>Superb, state of the art design which builds significantly on predecessor's strengths.</i>	REC'D
SME Series V	1,391 60	fixed armtube • SME fit • 233mm • <i>Excellent in all respects, this arm arguably sets the standards for pivoted arms, regardless of price.</i>	REC'D
Helius Cyalene 2	1,495	fixed armtube • proprietary fit • 254mm • Silver wired, pivoted	
Audiomeca SL5	1,999	fixed armtube • proprietary fit • Parallel tracking	
Dynavector 507	2,175	fixed armtube • proprietary fit • Biaxial design	
Graham 1.5T	2,550	changeable armtube • SME fit • SME base, unipivot	
Wheaton Tri-Planar 4	2,750	fixed armtube • proprietary fit • With terminal box	
Wheaton Tri-Planar 4C	3,000	fixed armtube • proprietary fit • As 4 with Cardas cable	
Air Tangent Tangent 10B	7,777	changeable armtube • proprietary fit • Air-bearing	
Air Tangent Ref. Sig.	11,000	changeable armtube • proprietary fit • Remote control version of 10B	



Cartridges

Cartridges fall into two groups: high output MM (moving magnet) models, capable of working directly into most phono

inputs; and generally more expensive low and very low output MC (moving coil) models. MC cartridges usually have better mechanical integrity, tighter tolerances and give better performance. Many amplifiers are no longer

equipped with the necessary phono input for a cartridge, and a separate phono stage is necessary. Phono input equipped valve designs need a transformer to cope with MC cartridges.

Cartridge/amplifier interfacing can be very subtle, but even basic high output MM designs benefit in overall balance from optimised amplifier capacitance loading. Cantilever compliance (how springy it is) needs to be

considered in the light of the effective mass of the tonearm. High compliance (ie soft suspension) cartridges are best used with low mass tonearms and vice versa.

Key

fixed stylus, moving coil, moving magnetcartridge type
1.4 mVcartridge output in millivolts

PRODUCT £ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

CARTRIDGES			
Audio Technica AT-95E	19 48	moving magnet • 2.8 mV • removable stylus • 5.7g • <i>Clear and dynamic, though richly balanced.</i>	B'BUY
Pickering T-E	25	moving magnet • removable stylus • Elliptical	
Grado ZTE + 1	27	moving magnet • removable stylus • Moving flux, high output	
Pickering V15-DJ	28	moving magnet • removable stylus • Disco model	
Shure SC35C	28	moving magnet • 5mV mV • removable stylus • For broadcast use	
Arcam C77	30 48	moving magnet • 4mV mV • removable stylus • 6g • <i>A sensible moving magnet package with good bounce at a competitive price.</i>	B'BUY
Sumiko Oyster	30	moving magnet • removable stylus	
Ortofon OM Night Club S	32	moving magnet • 6 mV • removable stylus • 5.0g • Spherical stylus	
Ortofon 510/P	32 85	moving magnet • 3 mV • removable stylus • 5.0g • <i>For the price, a good blend of virtues - weight, clarity and neutrality.</i>	B'BUY
Shure M44C	33	moving magnet • 9mV mV • removable stylus • Professional, spherical stylus	
Rega Bias	34 67	moving magnet • removable stylus • 4.1g • <i>Difficult to mount in some arms due to its shallow build, the Bias offers a gentle, refined sound.</i>	
Rega RB78	34	moving magnet • 4.0g • for 78rpm records	
Stanton 500EL	34	moving magnet • removable stylus • Elliptical stylus	
Stanton 500AL II	34	moving magnet • removable stylus • Spherical stylus	
Pickering TL-E	35	moving magnet • removable stylus	
Grado ZCE + 1	37	moving magnet • removable stylus • Moving flux	
Ortofon OM Night Club E	37	moving magnet • 6 mV • removable stylus • 5.0g • Elliptical stylus	
Shure ME95ED	38	moving magnet • 5mV mV • removable stylus • Elliptical stylus	
Arcam C77MG	40 67	moving magnet • 4mV mV • removable stylus • 6g • <i>Punchy, with plenty of energy to liven things up. The solid body is well worth the extra £10.</i>	B'BUY
Ortofon Concord Pro S	40	moving magnet • 5 mV • removable stylus • 19g • Pro use, inc headshell	

PRODUCT

£ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

Pickering XV15-350C	40	moving magnet • removable stylus • Conical stylus	
Shure M55E	42	moving magnet • 6mV mV • removable stylus • Professional, spherical stylus	
Shure M104E	44	moving magnet • 5mV mV • removable stylus • DualT4P & normal fit	
Pickering TL-2E	45	moving magnet • removable stylus	
Grado Z3E+1	47	moving magnet • removable stylus • Moving flux	
Arcam E77	50	moving magnet • 4mV mV • removable stylus • 6g • Elliptical stylus	
Goldring 1006	50	moving magnet • 6.5mV mV • removable stylus • Elliptical stylus	
Pickering XV15-625E	50	moving magnet • removable stylus	
Pickering XV15-150-DJ	50	moving magnet • removable stylus • Professional cartridge	
Stanton 680AL/X	50	moving magnet • removable stylus • Spherical stylus	
Sumiko Black Pearl	50	moving magnet • removable stylus	
Rega Super Bias	52	moving magnet • 4.1g	
Linn K5	54	67 moving magnet • 4.5mm mV • removable stylus • 6g • <i>Not as crisply focussed as the other Linn magnetics, but the K5 is smoother.</i>	REC'D
Ortofon Concord NC S	55	moving magnet • 6 mV • removable stylus • 19g • Pro use, inc headshell	
Ortofon 520/P	55	67 moving magnet • 3 mV • removable stylus • 5.0g • <i>Sensitive to load capacitance, the 520/P has a lively, effervescent sound.</i>	REC'D
Pickering TL-2-S	55	moving magnet • removable stylus • Line contact stylus	
Stanton 680EL/X	56	moving magnet • removable stylus • Elliptical stylus	
Arcam E77MG	60	48 moving magnet • 4mV mV • removable stylus • <i>Our sample had a disappointing stylus, but gave a coherent, rich and laid back sound.</i>	REC'D
Ortofon OM20 Super	60	moving magnet • 4 mV • removable stylus • 5.0g	
Ortofon MC1 Turbo	60	moving coil • 3.3 mV • removable stylus • 4.1g	
Ortofon Concord NC E	60	moving magnet • 6 mV • removable stylus • 19g • Spherical version of Concord	
Pickering XV15-757S	60	moving magnet • removable stylus • Line contact stylus	
Pickering XV15-625DJ	60	moving magnet • removable stylus • Broadcast cartridge	
Shure ME97HE	60	48 moving magnet • 4mV mV • removable stylus • 7g • <i>It won't turn a sow's ear into a silk purse, but it will produce an acceptable result.</i>	REC'D
Arcam P77	63	moving magnet • 4mV mV • removable stylus • 6g • 'Profiled' stylus	
Goldring 1012GX	65	85 moving magnet • 6.5mV mV • removable stylus • <i>Slightly harsh but plenty of life and detail. Some high frequency colouration apparent.</i>	REC'D
Denon DL110	70	48 moving coil • fixed stylus • <i>A fine all-rounder, this high output MC model is likely to perform well</i>	B'BUY
Pickering XV15-1800S	70	moving magnet • removable stylus • Line contact stylus	
Sumiko Pearl	70	moving magnet • removable stylus	
Arcam P77MG	73	48 moving magnet • 4mV mV • removable stylus • 6g • <i>Preferred to its cheaper partner thanks to a better tip. Channel balance poor</i>	REC'D
Rega Elys	74	67 moving magnet • removable stylus • 4.7g • <i>Clearly superior to the Bias, the Elys is both more detailed, accurate and convincing.</i>	REC'D
Shure M110HE	74	moving magnet • 4mV mV • removable stylus • 7g • Dual T4P & normal fit	
Ortofon OM30 Super	80	moving magnet • 4 mV • removable stylus • 5.0g • Fine line stylus	
Pickering TL3S	80	moving magnet • removable stylus	
Grado ZF1+	82	moving magnet • removable stylus • Moving flux	
Stanton 890AL/X	82	moving magnet • removable stylus • Professional cartridge	
Goldring 1022GX	85	85 moving magnet • 6.5mV mV • removable stylus • <i>As with 1012, a touch harsh; detail and transient purity improved</i>	REC'D
Ortofon MC10 Super	85	48 moving coil • 0.3 mV • fixed stylus • 7.0g • <i>'What a delightfully sweet-sounding cartridge this is....' we said.</i>	B'BUY
Ortofon 530/P	85	moving magnet • 3 mV • removable stylus • 6.0g • T4P fit	
Denon DL160	90	43 moving coil • fixed stylus • 6g • <i>Although listeners just preferred the 110, its brother here survived lab tests and is still 'thoroughly competent'.</i>	
Pickering XEV-3001E	95	moving magnet • removable stylus • Elliptical stylus	
Notts Analogue Tracer I	98	moving magnet	
Denon DL103	100	103 moving coil • fixed stylus • 9g • <i>Good performance in bass and good 'life' is seriously let down by its spherical stylus which kills subtle detail.</i>	
Goldring Eroica LX	100	84 moving coil • 0.5mV mV • fixed stylus • <i>Not the most subtle cartridge in the world: can sound edgy at times, but lively and informative.</i>	REC'D
Goldring Eroica	100	moving coil • 2.5 mV • fixed stylus • Gyger II stylus	
Pickering XLZ-3500	100	moving magnet • removable stylus	
Pickering TL-4-S	100	moving magnet • removable stylus	
Sumiko Blue Point	100	moving coil • fixed stylus • High output MC	
Goldring 1042	105	91 moving magnet • 6.5mV mV • removable stylus • <i>Not terribly subtle, and not such good value alongside 1012 and 1022. Quite lively though.</i>	
Linn K9	109	Col moving magnet • 4.5mm mV • removable stylus • 7g • <i>Linn improved this model by beefing up the Basik's bodywork and adding a super stylus.</i>	B'BUY
Ortofon MC3 Turbo	110	103 moving coil • 3.3 mV • fixed stylus • 4.1g • <i>The 3 Turbo is bright, cheerful and bouncy, but unsubtle - take it as it comes.</i>	REC'D
Ortofon MC15 Super II	110	103 moving coil • 0.35 mV • fixed stylus • 7.0g • <i>A good all-rounder, with outstanding resolution, if slightly bright and clon us.</i>	B'BUY
Ortofon 540/P	110	moving magnet • 3 mV • removable stylus • 5.0g	
Roksan Corus Black	130	91 moving magnet • 6.5mV mV • removable stylus • <i>Recognisably related to the Corus Blue, but more civilised and smoother.</i>	REC'D
Pickering TL-3003	145	moving magnet • removable stylus	
Audio Technica AT-OC5	146	103 moving coil • 0.4 mV • fixed stylus • 8.0g • <i>Effortless and detailed, but rather relentless and tiring eventually.</i>	REC'D
Grado Signature Junior	149	moving magnet • removable stylus • Moving flux	
DNM Reson Mica	150	moving magnet • removable stylus	
Pickering XLZ-4500	150	moving magnet • removable stylus • Line contact	
Dynavector 50X	159	moving coil • 2 mV • fixed stylus • 4.9g • High output, exchange scheme	
Ortofon MC25E	160	139 moving coil • 0.5 mV • fixed stylus • 10.5g • High output, elliptical stylus	
Notts Analogue Tracer II	175	moving magnet	
Pickering TL-4004	175	moving magnet • removable stylus	
Dynavector 10X	189	moving coil • 2 mV • fixed stylus • 4.9g • High output, exchange scheme	
Linn K18/II	197	moving magnet • 4.5mV mV • removable stylus • 8g • Metal body	
DNM Reson Aciore	199	moving coil • fixed stylus	
London Decca Maroon	199	67 moving magnet • 5.0mV mV • fixed stylus • <i>Now manufactured under the London brand name, this Decca cartridge is as iconoclastic as ever.</i>	
Denon DL304	200	moving coil • fixed stylus • Elliptical stylus	
Goldring Elite	200	103 moving coil • 0.5mV mV • fixed stylus • <i>The basics are right, and it will cheerfully tackle any source material, but its sound has a certain dirtiness.</i>	
Pickering XSV-5000U	200	moving magnet • removable stylus • High output	
Pickering XLZ-7500	200	moving magnet • removable stylus • Hybrid, low impedance	
Pickering TLZ-7500-S	200	moving magnet • removable stylus	
Ortofon MC25FL	210	139 moving coil • 0.5 mV • fixed stylus • 10.5g • High output, Fine Line stylus	
DNM Reson Recca	225	moving magnet • removable stylus	
London Decca Gold	239	moving magnet • 5.0mV mV • fixed stylus • Elliptical stylus	
Audio Technica AT-OC9	245	moving coil • 0.38 mV • fixed stylus • 8.8g	
Audioquest MC5	250	moving coil • 1.4mV mV • fixed stylus • High output MC, line contact	
Grado Signature 8MZ	250	moving magnet • removable stylus • Moving flux	
Ortofon MC10 Supreme	250	moving coil • 0.5 mV • fixed stylus • 10.7g • High output MC	
Sumiko BPS	250	moving coil • fixed stylus • Nude stylus	
van den Hul MM-1	250	103 moving magnet • 5.5mV mV • removable stylus • <i>If woody midrange could be tamed, imaging and security would pull it through</i>	REC'D
London Decca Maroon Dp	259	moving magnet • 5.0mV mV • fixed stylus • Deccapod mounting	
Shure V15V-MR	265	38 moving magnet • 3mV mV • removable stylus • 6.6g • <i>Extended familiarity gave the feeling of a lack of energy and a 'shut in' sound.</i>	
DNM Reson Etile	299	moving coil • fixed stylus	
London Decca Gold Dpd	299	moving magnet • 5.0mV mV • fixed stylus • Elliptical stylus, Deccapod	
Miltek Aurora	299	moving coil • 2.0mV mV • fixed stylus • An overall feeling of relaxed ease characterised this clear and atmospheric Kiseki-built cartridge.	REC'D
van den Hul MM-2	299	moving magnet • 5.5mV mV • removable stylus	
London Decca S Gold	339	84 moving magnet • 5.0mV mV • fixed stylus • <i>Immediate and detailed, but coloured, nonlinear with a questionable effect on records.</i>	
Notts Analogue Tracer III	350	moving magnet	
Ortofon MC20 Supreme	350	moving coil • 0.5 mV • fixed stylus • 10.7g • High-output elliptical MC	
Dynavector 23RS	375	moving coil • 0.15 mV • fixed stylus • 5.3g • Jewel cantilever, exchange	
Grado Signature MCZ	375	moving magnet • removable stylus • Moving flux	
London Decca S Gold Dp	399	moving magnet • 5.0mV mV • fixed stylus • Deccapod mounting	
Miltek Olympia	399	moving coil • 2.0mV mV • fixed stylus • As Aurora, sapphire cantilever	
Linn Klyde	449	moving coil • 150uV mV • fixed stylus • 8g • Alloy body	



The Facts about the Rumour
The Look: Black and White, twisted pair, slim and neat.
The Content: Stranded, High purity, silver plated oxygen free copper, Teflon dielectric.
The Design: Flexible, easy to terminate, single wire, bi wire no problem.
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SWITZERLAND Gramophone, Gumligen Tel: (312) 3386262
USA Naim Audio, Chicago Tel: (312) 3386262

PRODUCT £ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

Dynavecator 17D2	450	91	moving coil • 0.15 mV • fixed stylus • 5.3g • <i>Clear, detailed, neutral and generally informative - excellent.</i>	REC'D
Ortofon MC30 Supreme	450		moving coil • 0.5 mV • fixed stylus • 10.7g • High output	
Kiseki Blue GS	499		moving coil • 0.4mV mV • fixed stylus	
Notts Analogue Tracer IV	550		moving magnet •	
Audioquest 404L	599	84	moving coil • 0.5mV mV • fixed stylus • <i>Slight harshness detracted from the performance of this otherwise clear-sounding and detailed cartridge.</i>	
Benz-Micro The Glider	600		moving coil • 1mV mV • fixed stylus • Semi-nude design	
Audio Technica AT-OC30	619		moving coil • 0.4 mV • fixed stylus • 7.8g • Nude micro linear stylus	
Grado Signature TLZ	650		moving magnet • removable stylus • Moving flux	
Ortofon MC2000II	650		moving coil • 0.12 mV • fixed stylus • 9.6g	
Lyra Lydian	699		moving coil • removable stylus	
van den Hul DDT-II	699		moving coil • 0.4mV mV • fixed stylus • Silver coils	
Benz-Micro H200	700		moving coil • 2mV mV • fixed stylus	
Benz-Micro M090	700		moving coil • 0.9mV mV • fixed stylus	
Benz-Micro L040	700		moving coil • 0.4mV mV • fixed stylus	
van den Hul MC-10	799	60	moving coil • 0.4mV mV • fixed stylus • <i>A neutral, balanced performer gives, fine depth and focus and a firm, extended bass</i>	REC'D
Audioquest 404MH	899		moving coil • 1.4 mV • fixed stylus • Boron cantilever	
DNM Reson Lexe	899	144	moving coil • fixed stylus	REC'D
Kiseki PHS	899		moving coil • 0.4mV mV • fixed stylus	
Audio Technica ART-1	944	72	moving coil • 0.4 mV • fixed stylus • 8.8g • <i>This is a delicate and very fluid-sounding MC that tracks well.</i>	REC'D
Ortofon MC3000II	950	84	moving coil • 0.12 mV • fixed stylus • 9.5g • <i>A real eye-opener. Nothing to criticise anywhere, one of the very best.</i>	REC'D
Grado Signature XTZ	975		moving magnet • removable stylus • Moving flux	
Roksan Shiraz	975		moving coil • 0.2mV mV • fixed stylus • 3-pt generator mount, no glues	
Dynavecator XX-1L	998	84	moving coil • 0.25 mV • fixed stylus • 12g • <i>Very clear, very detailed; a response lift around 20kHz seems to do no harm.</i>	REC'D
Dynavecator XX-1	998	84	moving coil • 2 mV • fixed stylus • 12g • <i>Good, but not immensely competitive at the price, and not helped by comparison with the low output version.</i>	
Linn Arkiv	998		moving coil • 150uV mV • fixed stylus • 7g • Three point mt, machined body	
London Decca Jubilee	999		moving magnet • 5.0mV mV • fixed stylus • Line contact, 0.5 inch mount	
van den Hul MC-One	999	60	moving coil • fixed stylus • <i>This extended all the positive qualities of the '10, but added greater authority and scale - worth all the extra money.</i>	REC'D
Lyra Clavis Da Capo	1,069	143	moving coil • fixed stylus	B'BUY
Benz-Micro Wood Ref	1,100		moving coil • 0.3mV mV • fixed stylus • Bruyere housing, boron	
van den Hul MC-One/Hi	1,149	84	moving coil • fixed stylus • <i>Slight softening on transients was the only real flaw, but it didn't quite seem to have that special touch one expects.</i>	
van den Hul MC-Two	1,349	72	moving coil • fixed stylus • <i>MC-Two rewards with a highly dealed yet fluid and musically convincing portrayal.</i>	REC'D
Audio Note lo IIV	1,395	100	moving coil • fixed stylus • <i>One of the best, giving an extraordinarily relaxing midrange clarity. Needs a transformer.</i>	REC'D
Benz-Micro Ruby Ref	1,400		moving coil • 0.3mV mV • fixed stylus • Bruyere housing boron	
Audioquest 7000NSX	1,495	91	moving coil • 0.4 mV • fixed stylus • <i>Stunning stereo imaging and detail spoiled by poor tracking and high sensitivity to arms.</i>	
Ortofon MC5000	1,500	91	moving coil • 0.12 mV • fixed stylus • 9.5g • <i>Limited tracking ability, bright and forward sound, but good stereo</i>	
Koetsu Red T	1,550		moving coil • fixed stylus • High-output MC	
Transfiguration AF-1 Mk II	1,595		moving coil • 230uV mV • fixed stylus • 7g • MC, transformer & preamp	
Dynavecator TE-KAITORA	1,698		moving coil • fixed stylus • 8.8g • Low output	
Transfiguration Supreme	1,995		moving coil • 200uV mV • fixed stylus • 7g • Yokeless ring magnet system	
Koetsu Red K Sig	1,998		moving coil • fixed stylus • Selected, re-tuned Red T	
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Lyra Parnassus	2,295		moving coil • removable stylus	
Koetsu Urushi	2,297		moving coil • fixed stylus • Metal alloy body	
vdHGrasshopper IIICMN	2,750		moving coil • fixed stylus • Copper coils, medium output	
Audio Note lo Ltd V	2,950		moving coil • fixed stylus • Needs PSU	
vdHGrasshopper IIISLA	2,999		moving coil • fixed stylus • Silver coils, Alnico magnet	
vdHGrasshopper IIIGLN	2,999		moving coil • fixed stylus • Gold coils, Neodymium magnet	
vdHGrasshopper IIIGLA	2,999	122	fixed stylus • <i>Undoubtedly one of the finest cartridges available, it has tremendous bandwidth, energy and finesse.</i>	
Koetsu Signature	3,218		moving coil • fixed stylus • Rosewood body	
vdHGrasshopper IIICHN	3,400		moving coil • fixed stylus • Copper coils, high output	
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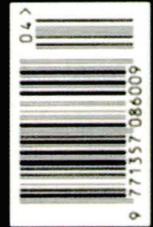
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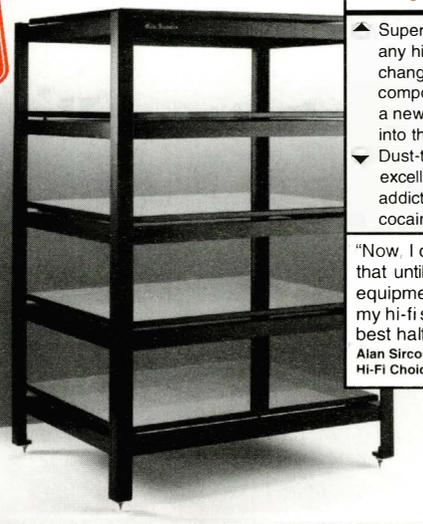
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CAPTAIN'S LOG, STARDATE 2112.90125

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Micromega's *Minium* CD player:
The price is illogical, Captain.

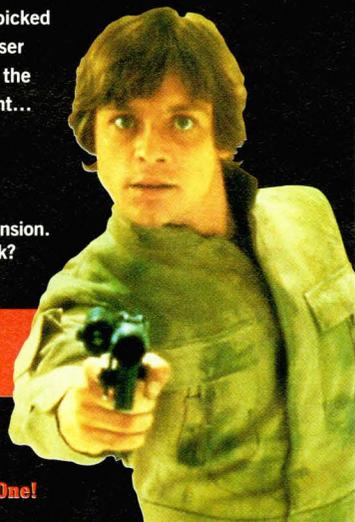
PLUS...

- Krell's £9,950 *KPS-20i* says "I don't think you wanted to do that" to Alan Sircom.
- Our Aspirations feature goes 'through the wormhole' to report on hi-fi systems of homes in a parallel dimension.
- Do androids dream of electric sheep? Does Dave Berriman long to explain for you how loudspeakers work?
- Free anti-UFO-abduction kit with every issue*

**MORE FUN THAN ATTEMPTING TO BUILD A TRANSMAT BEAM
OUT OF A LAVA LAMP AND A BOX OF MULTI-CHEERIOS**

*Anti-UFO-abduction kit subject to non-availability. We reserve the right to offer FREE DUST CAPS instead. This month's free dust caps were abducted by UFOs...

The May issue will have its on-sale electrodes attached on Friday 29th March. Make it so, Number One!



Personal Messages

Memories of sound may fade, but great amps rarely do. Paul Messenger re-discovers the age of romance.

It's been a very frustrating month, and I've been forcefully reminded that the amplifier is the heart of the hi-fi system — even if that's about the most overworked cliché in audiophile writing. My Naim NAC.52 preamplifier recently underwent a transplant operation, and the drama of finding a temporary replacement while the loved one was under the knife, in addition to the angst of nursing the rejuvenated back to full health, have left me in some trauma.

The saga started a few months back, when Naim updated the original outboard power supply of my NAC.52 preamplifier by replacing it with the new *SuperCap* device. The sonic consequences were so dramatic I devoted my January column to discussing the increasingly important rôle of the power supply in modern hi-fi systems.

SuperCap substitution had proved quite satisfactory, with the substantial improvements in neutrality appearing at the expense of some harshness and glare, which sat uneasily alongside a similar tendency in my Rehdeko 175 speakers. It was time to consider giving the .52 itself the update treatment.

Anticipating a week's deprivation from something second only to the *PowerBook* as a working tool, I took the plunge with trepidation. The substitute — entirely respectable and well-regarded — didn't cut it. I kept dozing off at the keyboard, reluctant to get up and put on records. The Chemical Brothers had lost that vital acid edge.

Racking my brains for the solution, I remembered that I still had my old NAC.12 kicking around. This had been in nearly continuous use from the mid-'70s right up until I acquired the .52 in 1991, since when it had been in continuous disuse. I dug it out, unearthed a couple of *Hi-Cap* power supplies (one for the 12, the other for the *Prefix* phono stage built into the turntable), as well as the usual bizarre collection of DIN-style interconnects, and powered up with a little apprehension.

No problem. Just a little dirt on the potentiometers, cleared by a quick twiddle of volume and balance. In fact, just how good it was

came as a real shock. The sound quality *per se* was clearly flawed with quite obvious mid-band coloration and limited top end extension. But that tended to lose its significance with acclimatisation, and soon I discovered my subliminals were enjoying the experience immensely.

Toes were tapping, and a strange noise identified as 'humming-along' became audible. This was turning out to be a lot of fun — more so than the .52 in some important respects, with a midband directness, simplicity and dynamic integrity which was truly refreshing and thoroughly involving. One of my regular listening panelists, speaker designer Robin Marshall, is another long term Naim amp user. He has always maintained the sticks with the older gear

Indeed, when the refurbished .52 returned on the Friday, I started using it after just a couple of hours warm-up, and initial results were very perturbing. Leftfield sounded about as bland and centrist as our political parties. Accents seemed muted, and voices were struggling to get out of the boxes — never before had I thought it was possible for a Rehdeko to sound laid back...

Sometwelve hours later, I was getting a glimmer of the wide dynamic range, but the dynamics themselves were still well out to lunch. By the Monday I still considered going back to the 12 despite its ergonomics — exercise is rumoured to be a good thing. "Hang on in and trust me," quoth a Naim-person. "It takes a week to get a .52 properly warmed up."

I hung on in as instructed, quite fascinated by the way the sound was evolving almost hourly. By Tuesday it had started to acquire a bit of edge and life, although the midband still sounded squashed. But it wasn't until the Wednesday that the fun factor really began to return, and the record player came in for some serious use.

Ten days down the line Kristin was starting to get heavy about copy dates, and I had made a firm decision to carry on with the .52 rather than revert to the 12. This was, however, more through reason and the need for a neutral platform than

through instinct, and not without an element of attendant frustration.

The resuscitated .52 is unquestionably superior to the 12 in every respect — it's considerably more detailed, and continues to improve daily, peeling back unsuspected layers of extra complexity from grooves worn down through regular use. But it's more of a head than a heart experience, and requires some mental effort and concentration. When I'm not paying particular attention, the old 12 is the one which worms its way up through my subconscious and gets me whistling along. The .52 is undoubtedly the more mature and balanced all-round performer, but I shall never tease Robin about his ancient Naim gear again. Maybe it's time I went searching for one of my old bolt-together style *NAP2.50* power amps... ▲



This month: Paul two-times his .52 and likes it!

out of personal preference, and I was starting to believe he had a point as I settled down to enjoy the rest of the week.

I didn't stay settled for too long. The phone rang and I had to get up and go over to turn the volume down before answering — an unexpected chore after five years of remote control idleness. Then there's the question of what to leave out. Back in the '70s, three inputs were adequate enough for vinyl, tuner and tape, but that leaves no room for the CD player and at least one AV source (probably more). If this was a sobering reminder of how far hi-fi has evolved over the last twenty years, it was also further confirmation (if such were needed) that old hi-fi can still sound very good.

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