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ISSUE 172  
DECEMBER  
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WHAT HI-FI, Jan 97

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WHAT HI-FI, May 97

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Gramophone, Jan 97

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DUE TO TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES BEYOND THEIR CONTROL, OTHER MINI SYSTEMS WILL NOT BE DELIVERING THIS LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE

Chief Musical Officers' Warning

# TEAC

## EDITORIAL

● **Editor-in-Chief** ATW "Stan" Vincent  
 ☎ 0171-917 7747 e-mail: editor.hifichoice@dennis.co.uk  
 ● **Deputy Editor** Jason Kennedy  
 ☎ 0171-917 7746 e-mail: deputy\_ed.hifichoice@dennis.co.uk  
 ● **Reviews Editor** Alan Sircom  
 ☎ 0171-917 7751 e-mail: reviews\_ed.hifichoice@dennis.co.uk  
 ● **Art Editor** Del Gentleman  
 ☎ 0171-917 7748 e-mail: art.hifichoice@dennis.co.uk  
 ● **Production Editor** Christina Bunce  
 ☎ 0171-917 7745 e-mail: edprod.hifichoice@dennis.co.uk  
**Consultant Editor** Paul Messenger • **Technical Editor** Paul Miller •  
**Contributors** Richard Black • Alvin Gold • Jimmy Hughes • David Vivian •  
**Assistant** Andrew Liasi • **Photography** Chris Foster • Chris Richardson •

## ADVERTISING

● **Group Ad Manager** Rob Debenham  
 ☎ 0171-917 3834 e-mail: ads.hifichoice@dennis.co.uk  
**Deputy Ad Manager** Sean Gibson ☎ 0171-917 3932 • **Sales Executive**  
 Clare Smith ☎ 0171-917 3935 • **Advertising Fax** 0171-917 5555 ☎  
**Production Manager** Simon Maggs ☎ 0171-917 7676 • **Advertisement**  
**Controller** Robin Ryan ☎ 0171-917 3885 • **Production Fax** 0171-580  
 6430 ☎ **Circulation Director** Sean Farmer ☎ 0171-917 7654 • **Manager**  
 James Burnay ☎ 0171-917 7810 • **Marketing Director** Alison Townsend  
 ☎ 0171-917 7675 • **Manager** Mary McGovern ☎ 0171-917 7768 • **Co-**  
**Operative Marketing Executive** Paul Smyth ☎ 0171-917 3946 e-mail:  
 coop\_marketing@dennis.co.uk • **Circulation & Marketing Fax** 0171-917  
 7677 **List Rental Department** Simon McCay ☎ 0171-917 3943 • **Nerys**  
 Church ☎ 0171-917 5663 ☎ **Men In Black Publisher** Simon Davies ☎  
 0171-917 7718 e-mail: publisher.hifichoice@dennis.co.uk ☎ 0171-917  
 7718 • **Advertising Director** Ian Westwood ☎ 0171-917 7618 •  
**Publishing Director** Eric Fuller ☎ 0171-917 7686 • **Managing Director**  
 Alistair Ramsay ☎ 0171-917 7661 • **Chairman** Felix Dennis • **Pre-Press**  
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## ● QUERIES (PAGE 40) AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR (PAGE 29)

Accepted by letter only to the fax number, e-mail or postal addresses given. We deeply regret we are unable to speak with readers or answer queries on the telephone.

## ● BACK ISSUES — SEE PAGE 145 FOR DETAILS.

A number of selected back issues are available at £4.00 each (£6.95 overseas) including p&p. Call (01789) 490215 to order — all major credit cards accepted.

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# Editor's Notebook



PHOTO BY SEAN BALDWIN

An invitation to Hi-Fi Choice's Web site, new e-mail addresses and the parallels between houses and hi-fi. **Stan Vincent** has the gen.

**H**ave you visited our Web-site? If you have access to the Internet, I'd recommend you take a look. You can read all about it on p59, but if you're in a hurry, the Web address is 'www.hifichoice.co.uk'.

On our site you'll find a unique interactive version of our renowned Buyers' Guide, including all the latest equipment prices and information about every hi-fi component we've reviewed in the past year.

The added benefit of the Web site is that this information can be presented according to your precise needs. If you're shopping for hi-fi products of a particular type and price, you can command our database to search for them exclusively.

But that's not all. Our Web site includes an exclusive 'chat' area, in which *Hi-Fi Choice* readers from around the world can swap hints, tips and stories — or just compare record-buying habits.

In due course we aim for the Web-site to expand upon topics covered in the magazine — by incorporating more technical detail from our reviews, for example. But the most important thing is for users to give us feedback about the good and bad points of our new service to readers. We'll listen to your comments and do what we can to make our site a welcome stopover on the information superhighway.

## New e-mail addresses

As you will see in the address panel, left, editorial staff have been given personal e-mail addresses, which replace the solitary CompuServe account via which you have contacted us over the past two years. Please use the new e-mail addresses immediately, as the old one will be discontinued shortly.

## Houses and hi-fi

"Are you an enthusiast, or a consumer?" I asked in my column for *HFC* 170. I found myself confronted by this dilemma while house-hunting recently. On offer was a bargain-priced, Grade II listed Georgian cottage, built in the 1790s, with most of its original plaster and wooden fittings intact, but in need of decoration. It was beautiful and captivating, but was it practical? The answer would depend on whether I was a true 'house enthusiast'. How far would I

compromise my lifestyle to align with this dwelling from a bygone era?

I saw lots of parallels with the decisions and compromises made by hi-fi enthusiasts. How far should *they* go? Like the Japanese, to build a house around huge folded horns? Perhaps not. The British usually favour hi-fi gear that does not oblige one to remodel the living room.

Okay, so only the hard-core hi-fi devotee can derive transcendental pleasure from a certain kind of vacuum tube. But you don't need to have a room full of spaghetti to be an enthusiast. The great thing about hi-fi is the way it turns consumers into enthusiasts. And this is as true for a minimalist rig as it is for a behemoth system.

TV viewers are consumers. Midi-system listeners are consumers. But hi-fi listeners are enthusiasts. Their audio equipment makes a living picture out of two-dimensional noise; it reveals to them the true power of music as the artist experienced it.

By the way, I decided not to buy the cottage. There was nowhere to put the stereo! Enjoy *your* listening this month...

## BUY AWARD-WINNING HI-FI, SAVE MONEY, HELP CHARITY!

Here's your chance to own one of this year's EISA-Award-winning products — for less than you'd pay in the shops! On offer there's a pair of Jamo Concert 8 speakers, as featured in our Awards write-up (*HFC* 170), and reviewed by Alan Sircom in *HFC* 160. They have been donated by their manufacturers, to be auctioned in aid of the children's charity UNICEF. In the shops they'd cost £1,300, but I will accept the best offer over £800. ● UP TO £500 SAVING. Supplied boxed, brand-new and with full manufacturer's warranty. Free delivery in Greater London area. This product will be secured by the best offer received before Friday November 14, 1997, by letter or fax sent to the Editor at the usual address. Please include your name, address and daytime phone number. This offer is subject to availability.



Budget bonanza! From 10 candidates, we pick the ultimate CD players under £250. p76



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## WIN!WIN!

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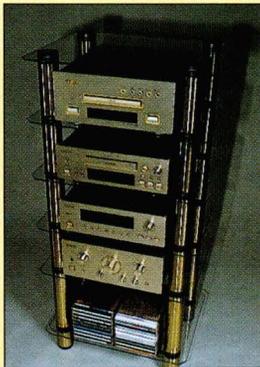
## WIN!

**37** A complete NAD system and amps worth £1,500!

# Update

THIS MONTH... TWO NEW CASTLE LOUDSPEAKERS... LATE-BREAKING NEWS ABOUT DVD-AUDIO... AND MUCH MORE...

## In brief



Optimum system support.

Optimum International 2000 has a new Designer range of equipment supports with champagne gold, stainless steel or matt black support rods. The new range is designed (no pun intended) for one piece and separate mini component systems, and all shelves are in toughened glass. Prices start at £99. ☎ (01274) 583 249

TDK has announced a price reduction on its CD-RXG domestic CD-R blanks. The 74 minute disc is due to sell for £4.99. ☎ (01737) 773 773

Walrus Systems is the UK's first internet-only hi-fi company. It specialises in accessories, especially those hard-to-get vinyl, cable and equipment isolation goodies. Coo-coo-ca-choo. The Web site is [www.walrus.co.uk](http://www.walrus.co.uk). E-mail: [mail@walrus.demon.co.uk](mailto:mail@walrus.demon.co.uk). Post: PO Box 12819, London N20 8WD.

Sharp's new £329.99 mini system will include Dolby Pro-Logic surround sound. The new CDC470E incorporates a five-speaker package along with a three-disc CD changer, twin auto-reverse cassette deck and a three-band synthesised tuner with 40 presets. ☎ (0800) 262 958

## Mintcake ahoy

Castle Acoustics has been busy installing its carbon fibre loudspeaker cones, first seen in the Avon, in two 'new' models, the £449.90 Kendal and £579.90 Severn 2. The Kendal name goes back to the first speaker that Castle made 23 years ago — but similarities with the latest compact floorstander end there.

The new 710mm-high Kendal uses a 130mm carbon fibre mid/bass cone driven by a 30mm coil on a kapton former. This is allied with a 25mm polyamide tweeter, and unusually for Castle the Kendal is a sealed enclosure.

The Severn 2 not only uses a 150mm carbon fibre cone with the same motor system as that in the Kendal, but is some 20 per cent bigger than the original Severn. The 25mm tweeter is Castle's laminated soft dome. The floor-standing cabinet is internally divided so that the lower half acts as a stand, with a port system venting out of the gap between speaker and plinth. This arrangement is said to improve bass extension and power.

Both models are available in a comprehensive range of real-wood veneers with rosewood and yew commanding higher prices. Castle Acoustics ☎ (01756) 795333



Severn 2: 20 per cent bigger and carbon-fibre loaded.

## Popular Beat combo

Danish amplifier expert Densen has added a power amplifier to match its entry-level BEAT B-100 integrated model. The impedance and output of the new £800 BEAT B-300 power amplifier allows it to bi-amp existing B-100 amplifiers. It is also a stand-alone power amplifier for use with preamplifiers like the forthcoming BEAT B-200.

Densen has incorporated a unique feature into the B-300's construction. The amplifier has an internal selector to adjust the gain, allowing the B-300 to match both active and passive preamplifiers in the future. There is also an internal socket for connection to an electronic crossover for actively driven loudspeakers.

The B-300 has a claimed output of 2x100 Watts into eight Ohms and uses the company's own zero-feedback technology. It also features surface mount components allied to 60,000µF of storage capacitance, fed from a large 500VA transformer. Densen ☎ (01582) 561227



100 Watts of Densen's zero-feedback BEAT technology.

## Danish wizard worship

Bow Technologies from Denmark has a new integrated amplifier which takes its name from Frank Zappa's 1972 masterpiece *The Grand Wazoo*. The £1,795 Wazoo is Bow Technologies' attempt to bring the philosophy of its ZZ range to a wider audience by virtue of keener pricing.

The Wazoo is based on the circuit topology of the ZZ-One amp but uses only seven active components per channel in a zero negative feedback design. It has five line inputs (one of which is fully balanced) and offers the option to adjust volume by remote control. The aluminium casework has been selected for sonic and aesthetic reasons. Path Premier ☎ (01494) 441736



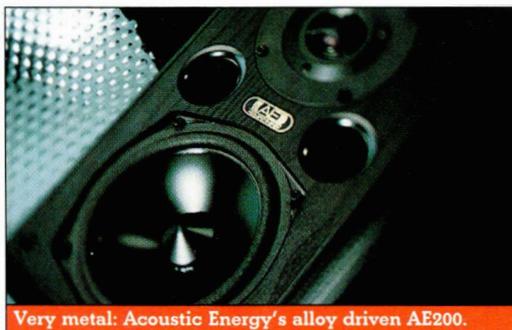
The first amp to have been inspired by a Zappa album.

# Full metal driver

Acoustic Energy has lowered the price of entry to its metal cone technology with the introduction of the new 200 Series loudspeakers. The first two models in the range, the £299.95 AE200 and £479.99 AE209, are due out this month with two more models to follow.

The power behind the range is a new 130mm mid/bass alloy unit with a 32mm voice coil, combined with a 25mm alloy dome tweeter. Both units are magnetically shielded and use AE's UPOCC cable for internal wiring.

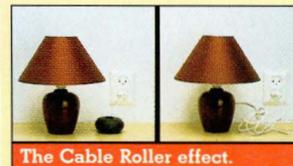
The 18mm MDF carcass is fully braced and finished in black or rosewood vinyl veneers. The three floorstanding models have cast alloy plinths and mass-loaded bases. The £379.95 AE205 and £649.95 AE220 will be available soon. Acoustic Energy ☎ (01285) 654432



Very metal: Acoustic Energy's alloy driven AE200.

## In brief

Tidy your loose cables with the Novem Cable Roller. This compact rubber device will store up to five metres of 4mm-diameter cable and is designed to be used between any appliance and its mains plug. The Cable Roller costs £2.99 and is available from selected branches of B&Q, Do It All and Office World. ☎ (01376) 330388



The Cable Roller effect.

Calling all audio archivists! Cambridge-based CEDAR has introduced three new DSP-based Series X audio restoration products. The £3,495 DCX declicker, £3,795 CRX declicker and £3,995 DHX dehisser all use high-tech DSP to eliminate nasties without introducing unwanted side-effects. While intended for studios, so all prices exclude VAT, the CEDAR trio can be used domestically. ☎ (01223) 414117

Custom Design has a new equipment support range called Aspect. Key features include fully adjustable glass shelving, spiked top shelf with contoured glass to avoid sliding, four rich colour finishes and five sizes. Prices start at £229.99 for the Aspect 650M four shelf unit for midi size components. ☎ (0191) 262 4646

Milliflex, a bona fide cable manufacturer whose clients include Naim Audio, is launching its own range of speaker cables at the budget end of the market. Prices range from approximately 40p to £3.80 per metre for PVC clad multistrand copper cable in various strand densities and thicknesses. ☎ (01962) 868424

Panasonic has a new SC-AK90 mega changer mini system that will store 51 CDs and can play any track of any disc within six seconds. All this for £399.95 — with 300 Watts to boot! Lower powered, lesser disc carrying options are also available in the SC-AK range. ☎ (0990) 357357

Wharfedale has announced to the professional audio world that it will be producing NXT flat panel loudspeakers from January 1998. Wharfedale has a licence ➡

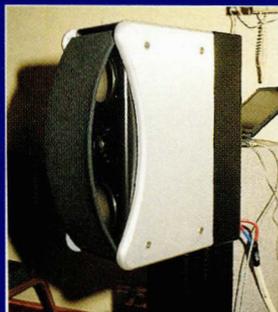
## Revel revel

Harman International has spawned Revel, a new independent loudspeaker brand with some high falutin' aspirations. The company is headed up by Madrigal founder Sandy Berlin and has Kevin Voecks (previously of Snell Acoustics) as its chief engineer. The product range consists of the £5,295 Ultima Gem stand mount two-way, and the £2,195 Ultima Sub-15 and partnering £5,500 LE-1 amplifier/crossover.

The Gem is a stylish, high-power design featuring a pair of five-inch-titanium-dome mid/bass units with two inch voice coils and neodymium magnets. It has a pair of long-excursion, high-power tweeters. One tweeter is fitted to the back of the speaker and can be adjusted for optimal room matching.

The Sub-15/LE-1 combination has panels to match the Gem and features interchangeable modules allowing tailoring to numerous applications, including operation with satellite speakers from other brands. Sub-15 uses a 15-inch Kevlar/kapok impregnated pulp cone on a four-inch coil.

Both systems offer a variety of panel finishes and even unfinished panels for custom installations. Path Premier ☎ (01494) 441736



Gem with aluminium cheeks.

## Newcastle – home of digital surround

Britain's first and cheapest home-brew Dolby Digital integrated amplifier rolls out from Sherwood's Newcastle factory this month. The £399.95 R925RDS receiver is the keystone for Sherwood's 1998 push into the explosion-infested world of digital surround sound.

The new budget AV receiver claims to deliver 70 Watts into all five channels (or 110 Watts in stereo mode). It has six audio and four video inputs as well as a front panel socket for games consoles and camcorders. There are five main amplifier inputs for adding a decoder. It also sports a 30 preset tuner with full RDS/EON display.

Recent developments place the Motion Picture Experts Group and not Dolby Labs in pole position as the surround sound format for European DVD. There are also rumours of dual Dolby/MPEG2 5.1 discs becoming available. Regardless, at present the Sherwood R925RDS with its adjustable digital delay and universal remote control is ideal for enthusiasts importing NTSC LaserDiscs, who want Dolby Digital on a shoestring.

Richer Sounds ☎ (0171) 940 2240



Dolby Digital with a Geordie accent from Sherwood.

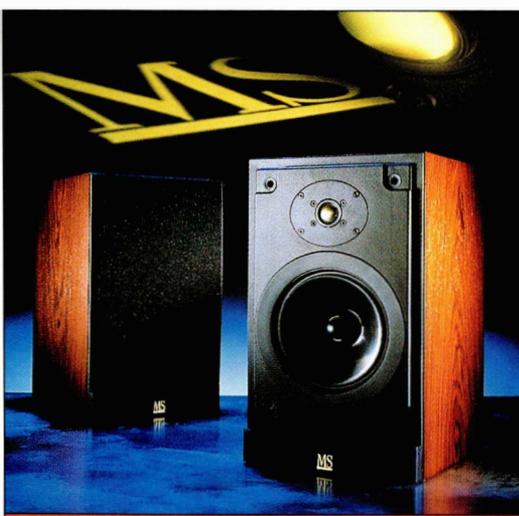
## Modern Classic

Mordaunt-Short's Classic range of loudspeakers is growing ever larger. The latest model in the range is the £599.99 MS30i Classic stand-mounted enclosure.

The new Classic model expands upon the existing MS30i in a number of key areas. The new speaker is physically larger than its predecessor. It also features a real-wood-veneered cabinet with extensive internal bracing and strategically applied Bitumastic damping panels. These are claimed to help control cabinet resonance.

It features a hard-wired first-order crossover network with a parallel capacitor high-frequency filter. This is connected to the outside world with a set of bi-wireable, gold-plated, five way, binding-post terminals.

The claimed 90dB sensitive, eight Ohm impedance loudspeaker utilises a 25mm anodised gold dome tweeter and a 200mm mid/bass driver. The latter uses the latest version of Mordaunt-Short's own Moulded Cone and Surround technology. This polypropylene moulding is said to keep the cone structure rigid while maintaining its piston properties. Mordaunt-Short ☎ (01705) 407 722



Classic stuff from Mordaunt-Short's latest MS30i.

The most important development  
in sound reproduction for years.

And the box it  
comes in.



The Faraday ring may look insignificant. But it's this tiny component that gives the A Series its huge dynamic range.

By counteracting rising impedance in the voice coil, it allows more power into the tweeter. And with more power going in, you get more power out.

Even the highest frequencies sing out loud and clear, making the A Series the ideal speakers for the faithful reproduction of today's digital music and film recordings.

The Faraday ring is just one of many small, but vitally important components that make the new A Series so special. And there's only one place good enough for it. The beautiful box we put it in.



# News from the front

Hot from the Audio Engineering Society's conference in New York comes the latest split to torment the development of DVD. This time DVD-Audio is coming under the cudgel of factional arguments between the opposing Philips/Sony and Matsushita/Pioneer/Toshiba groups.

Two radically different options have emerged as formal proposals for the next generation of CD albums. The Matsushita/etc group (nicknamed Mat-cetera) is aiming for a disc that is effectively DVD-Video without the video. Their idea is to guarantee that every disc has at least a 24-bit/96kHz stereo PCM version of the music on it. Since this is one of DVD-Video's audio options, the next generation of players could easily be made to play these discs. The high dynamic/high resolution PCM version would use around a quarter of the DVD disc's capacity with the remaining space used to carry surround-sound versions of the album in MPEG-2, Dolby Digital, DTS, SDDS or any other new format that comes to the fore in the future.

These additional versions do not necessarily have to be surround-sound. The 'open format' principle allows for specialist audiophile technologies or 'mix-it-yourself' multi-track versions to be added to the disc.

The strength of the Mat-cetera DVD-Audio option is that it requires little additional standardisation work — the discs will play on any next-generation DVD-Video

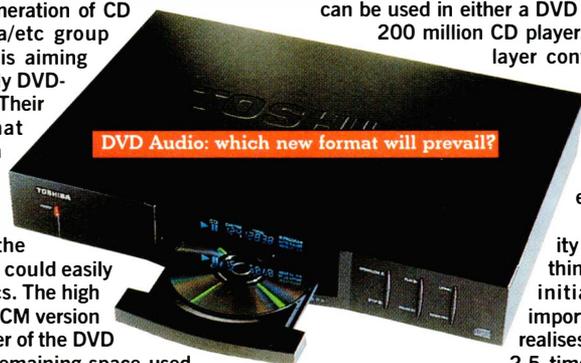
player and the open-format avoids the worst of the factional arguments between the supporters of different forms of audio coding.

Sony/Philips, on the other hand, is proposing a fully-defined, backward-compatible CD/DVD disc. This 'Super Audio' disc has a CD layer and a DVD layer so that the disc can be used in either a DVD player or any of the existing 200 million CD players around the world. The CD layer contains a standard CD audio version of the album while the DVD layer holds super-fi stereo and surround versions using the Sony/Philips Direct Stream encoding techniques.

The backward compatibility with CD players was something that the record industry initially said was of critical importance. However, now that it realises DVD/CDs will cost at least 2.5 times more to press than CDs, backward compatibility doesn't seem quite so crucial.

Hoping to set a universally agreed format is the International Steering Committee — this represents the recording industry — whose intention to have a decision by Christmas seems wildly optimistic. At the moment, the only thing that either side can agree is that the final DVD-Audio spec will definitely include a multitude of copy protection schemes, including an 'improved' version of SCMS, together with digital and physical watermarking; the one thing we didn't want to hear.

by Tim Frost



## In brief

◀ to produce speakers using this revolutionary technology, and looks set to beat fellow licensees Mission to market. ☎ (01480) 431737

Sanyo has launched a personal CD player with the world's first 40 second antishock memory. The £199.99 CDP900 has a 40 second buffer so any jolts will not affect playback. ☎ (01923) 246363

CPC, the specialist spares distributor has a new 1998 catalogue featuring more than 10,000 new products, addressing the need for electronic, electrical and mechanical components and spares. ☎ (01772) 654455



The multi-purpose Lozenge.

Spaced Out has a CD storage solution for the young sophisticate. The Lozenge shelving system comes in a broad variety of finishes including brushed aluminium, chrome, nickel and various plastics. You can store anything — CDs, video tapes, socks — in one of the three sizes of Lozenge. Prices start at £60 plus P&P. ☎ (0171) 833 9236

Panasonic has a new portable to joust with your mongoose. The Cobra or RX-ED77 weighs in at £199.95 and features MASH D/A conversion on its motorised-top-panel CD player. ☎ 0990 357 357

## Epos big boy

Epos has launched its largest model yet, namely the ES30, a 900mm-high 27kg three-way design costing £2,385. Building on the strengths of the ES22, the ES30 utilises a 25mm aluminium dome tweeter with dissimilar-value parallel capacitors in its filter network. These are said to reduce 'insertion losses' and spread component resonances. The midrange driver is a 150mm injected-polymer cone with a high temperature 32mm voice coil and a phase plug where a dust cap would usually be found. The bass unit is a 200mm PVC cone, on a 38mm coil, in a die-cast chassis.

The end result is an 88dB sensitive, 300-Watt power handling, six Ohm loudspeaker that's available in rosewood and walnut wood veneers. Or a sophisticated power house if you prefer! Epos Acoustics ☎ (01705) 407722



The power-house Epos ES30 is ready for front line duty.

## Precision-made in Scotland

Tannoy has a new range of loudspeakers to complement its popular Mercury models. The Precision range consists of four models, all featuring sloping baffles and cherry or black finished cabinets; the range has been designed for both music and home cinema applications. 'PC' and 'PS' models are specifically designed for dialogue and surround duties respectively.

The £299.90 P10 features the 25mm aluminium-anodic film sandwich tweeter and 165mm Verton composite-polymer woofer common to the range. The P10 is a reflex-loaded stand-mount of 12litre volume. The £399.90 P20 is a floor-stander that's 870mm high with 90dB sensitivity, whereas the £549.90 P30 stands 90mm higher and claims another dB of sensitivity; it's also a true three-way with a second woofer onboard. The big boy in the range is the £749.90 P40 — a metre tall and utilising a pair of side-mounted 200mm bass drivers. Tannoy ☎ (01236) 420199



Precision P40: the shape of Tannoys to come.

### ALBUMS PLAYED IN THE HI-FI CHOICE OFFICE THIS MONTH

Coldcut  
Let Us Play  
The Verve  
Urban Hymns  
Portishead  
Portishead  
John Barry  
Themeology  
David Bowie  
Scary Monsters  
Billy Cobham  
Magic  
Little Feat  
Time Loves A Hero  
Joseph Spence  
Morning Mr Walker  
Various Artists  
Pulp Fusion

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naim

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# THE SUITE HEAR AFTER...

In early September, hi-fi fans from across the nation converged on Heathrow's Ramada Hotel for their yearly fix of bridal-suite-situated hi-fi demonstrations. **Jason Kennedy** and **Alan Sircom** report.

## Interesting widgetry

We saw plenty of new accessories and, as ever, a multitude of new cables. **Russ Andrews**, no stranger to these shores, introduced YELLO, a range of budget cables for midi systems, portable stereos and the like. Prices start at £20 for YELLO mains cable. Also, Russ had the new Hero interconnect from **KimberKable**, priced at £110. **SonicLink** continues its adventures with unusual metals: new at £995 is the Rhodium cable.

**van den Hul** was counting up to The Third, a new carbon speaker cable with 3.5 million fibres (£450/m); plus two new phono cartridges: the Frog (£1,500) and the range-topping Black Beauty (£3,000).

Max T of **Townshend International** had a lot of fun with his pumpo, pumpo demonstration, inflating the fully-fledged Seismic Sink Stand and deflating it to dramatic sonic effect. The new stands start at £899 for three tiers and reach £1,550 for six tiers. **Chantry Audio** has a series of modifications for Rega and similar turntables, including a granite baseboard, new power supply and an alternative counterweight. Chantry Audio can be reached on ☎ (01777) 870372.

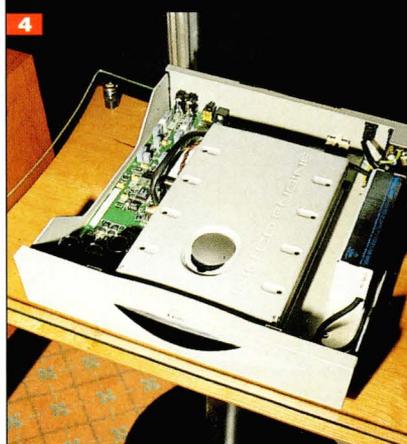
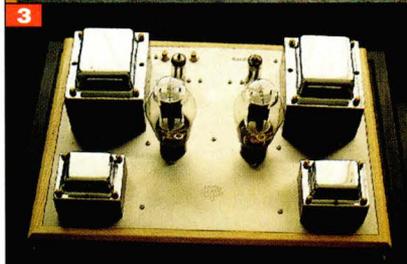
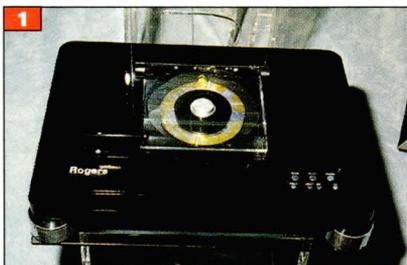
**Linn Products** showed a prototype CD transport called the CD Engine; proposed names for a future player include the cheeky Sondek CD12 (pic. 4). **Wilson benesch's** Craig Milnes showed us a sample of a compacted woven-polypropylene midrange cone which he hopes to use with an ultra-compact neodymium magnet, and possibly rear suspension. Making its debut was the Circle turntable with phono stage, in matching circular plinth (10).

**Nottingham Analogue** introduced its Foot (6), a 12-inch carbon-fibre tonearm, with fibres oriented along the tube rather than around it. Price is £1,100.

## The High End

As usual, there was an abundance of High End kit at the Hi-Fi Show. With such a dazzling array of wares on display, we've concentrated on products that are likely to enjoy UK distribution.

Amplifiers took the lion's share of exposure, and there were nice new submissions from the tube fraternity. It was good to hear the £3,495 **BorderPatrol** 300B SE



(3), in fully-fledged livery, doing impressive stuff in the **Living Voice** room, while its maker was along the corridor demonstrating standard versions of both his standard external PSU and the £995 MB ("maximum b\*ll\*cks") version. Tube demi-god **Graham Tricker** launched his **Tron** range with the Nucleus phono stage and preamp, both compact, highly-specified designs at £2,000 apiece.

**EAR/Yoshino** had the rather stylish V-20 (£2,000), whose curved casework conceals 10 ECC83 valves per channel. **Tube Technology** made its entry into the CD field with the Fulcrum transport and tube DAC at £2,400 the pair, alongside its least expensive power amp yet, the £1,150, 45 Watt Syrinx. The Italians, in the guise of **Unison Research**, made a bid for the style award with the £1,750 Mystery One preamp, and lowered the entry level for tube phono stages with the £500 Simply Phono.

It wasn't all tubes, though. **Chord Electronics** had a room full of beautiful solid-state hardware including the 96kHz/24-bit ready DSC 1100 DAC (£2,575), plus SPM 1200C (315 Watt stereo) and SPM 1400 (350 Watt monoblok) power amps, both priced at £3,915. The CEL 202 four-way loudspeaker, at £2,375, is the latest addition to a six-strong range.

**Alchemist** showed Signature versions of its Forsetti pre/power amps at £1,500 apiece, alongside a Kraken transport and DAC combo at £995. **DNM** has finally finished the 3C version of its classic, Perspex-clad preamp (£2,550 in basic guise), which complements the PA3 power amp at £2,500 and upwards. **Proceed** has 'simplified' its PAV and DSD home theatre components into the AVP digital multichannel preamp — £4,995 with all the trimmings. The matching AMP5 (≈ £4,500) provides five 250-Watt channels of continuous power.

**DPA** supplemented its burgeoning line-up with the Enlightenment preamp (£795) and four new DACs: Enlightenment (£825), Renaissance (£570), SX128 (£2,000) and DX8 Little Bit 3 (£325). **conrad-johnson** arrives on the serious integrated-amp scene with the CAV-50 at £2,500. Whoever next?

The cassette tape has finally reeled to its end. Now a new digital

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era begins with Sharp MiniDisc.

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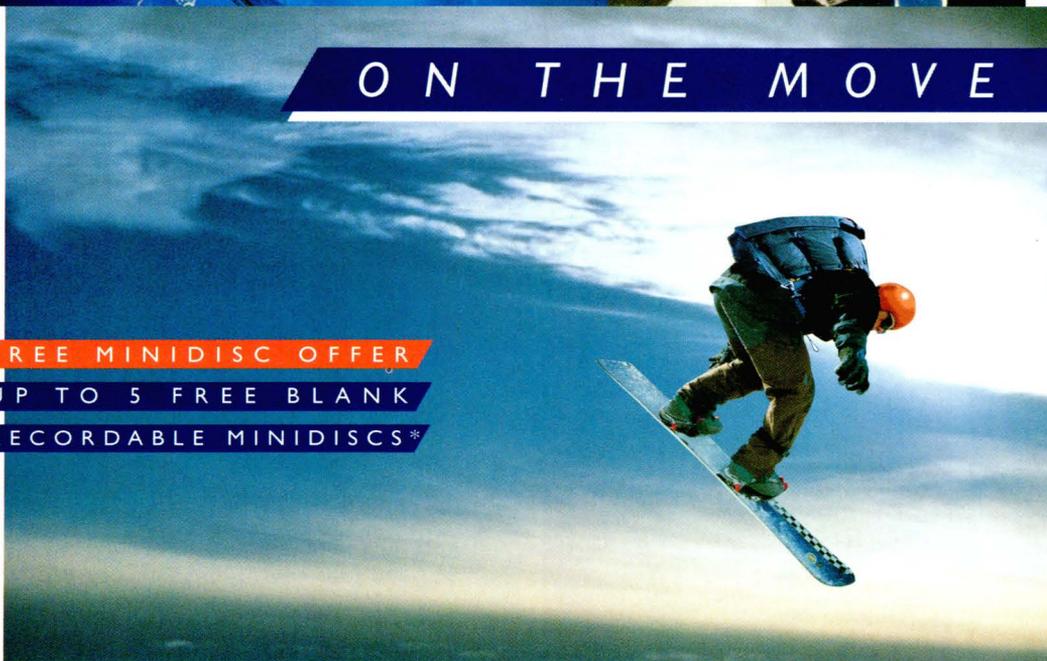
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There were plenty of interesting sources and speakers. New distributor **Absolute Analogue** showed off the slick, black Helios CD player range (7), Audioplan's latest Konzert speaker, and the mother of all turntables, the Rockport Sirius III (8). This air-powered overkill of a deck has a sirius price, too: £50,000.

**Rogers** also had shiny black CD players: the £2,800 CD2 transport (1), £1,889 DAC and £1,119 CD1 integrated. **Loricraft** (with the blessing of Garrard) has created the 501 turntable: an ambitious project with a £4,000 price tag. Contact Loricraft on ☎ (01488) 72267.

**Ikon Audio** played the '3D-keyhole'-shaped S9 and S15 speakers priced at £1,950 and £2,450; while Anglo/German brand **ALR/Jordan** showed what design is about with the Factor 2 (9).

### Snazzy electronics ahoy!

Many Japanese brands returned to the show this year, with a stack of new products. **Denon's** new range of AV and hi-fi products yielded the first UK sighting of its DVD-2000 DVD player, a gold-series CD and amp, and a pair of new MiniDisc recorders including the £750 DMD-F10.

**Sony** was waving the MD flag with its £650 MDS-JA30ES player, as well as showing the £449 XA-20ES CD player, which is a lower-priced alternative to the EISA-Award-winning CDP-XA50ES.

**Marantz** had two models to match the popular CD-17 player — the £599 ST-17 and £899 PM-17 'Reference' integrated amplifier. Marantz is promising to deliver a trio of DVD players and the DR700 CD-RW player by Spring 1998.

**Pioneer** had a dummy display of its next two hot-rodded products, the CT-S505S Precision cassette deck and F-504RDS Precision tuner. Prices look set to be in the £350-£400 region for each. Flushed with the success of the 500-series system, **TEAC** has introduced a lower-cost, four-box H-300 variant (£600).

Playing for England we had **Arcam**, unveiling four new products: the £700 AV50 Pro-Logic integrated; a £400 pre-amp-only version of the Alpha 9 amp; a wholly new modular integrated amp range; and the £800 Alpha 10/£600 10P power amp. **Myryad** announced a £500 MT-500 tuner to match the existing range, and showed the T-Series range (5) that offers a low entry-level point to the Myryad sound.

**Audio Note** showed the new £1,000 AN-CD2 CD player in its all-tube system, while the cutest new slab of electronics was **Naim's** new headphone amplifier, details to be confirmed. It's like a regular Naim amp, but designed for Action Man!



### Speaking of speakers

Ramada is a speaker-fest at the best of times, and this year was no different.

**Heybrook** had three new models: the £259 Optima, the £649 Ultima, and the £1,800 Octet. The Octet sports sophisticated features including a gas-filled piezo tweeter and ceramic enclosed midrange drive-unit. **Rogers** introduced no fewer than six new models in its Gold Series, starting from £179 for the GS1. **Tannoy** expanded its popular Mercury range with the new, entry-level bookshelf unit, M1 (£119). It's intended for use with mini systems and as the rear-channel speaker in home cinema.

**Acoustic Energy** has been busy with its pair of new models in the 200 series; three more 200-series models; and an entirely new trio of 500-series models all waiting for launch in 1998.

**Keswick Audio Research (KAR)** has transmogrified its successful Figaro loudspeaker into the Figaro Evolution; now it's priced at £1,099. KAR's new floorstander is the £1,199 Legato. A spin-off from KAR is **Blueprint**, a new company with two elegant floorstanders: the £1,000 Point 1 and £1,650 Point 2 (2).

**Musical Technology** has rejigged its popular Harrier SE, now weighing in at £595. Expect more MT bird-calls as the Condor swoops into view at £1,000. US manufacturer **KLH** has returned to the UK with a healthy 23 models, ranging from the entry level 325 (£115) to the 82T (£690). Eight more designs are due to arrive soon.

With the KT3 just into the shops, **Kelly Transducers** has introduced a baby brother, the £700 KT2, which is so fresh from the production line that it appeared after the show's price-lists were printed!

Ruark now offers a choice of full or half veneer on the new A/V-oriented Prologue One floorstander. Full veneer adds £100 to the part-veneered price of £799.

All telephone numbers can be found in our Manufacturers' List (p137) unless they are printed in the text.

# No anorak required



# Alan Sircom casts off his hi-fi snorkel jacket. . .

here's a system that just plays great music!

**A**VI has made its reputation on the manufacture of small, neatly-proportioned electronics that sound just right. Recently, it has added to its range small, floorstanding speakers designed to complement its CD players and amps. A big round of applause, then, for AVI's first complete system.

AVI made the plunge into speakers because of its commitment to accurate sound quality. In AVI's opinion, few third-party enclosures could match the quality of its own electronics. Some might think that bold, even arrogant — but it is one hundred per cent justified by the sonic evidence from the outfit we have auditioned this month.

Priced at £3,300, this rig is set to be a big seller. It incorporates the new, £1,399 S2000MC Reference CD player (originally tested in issue 169); the £999, 100 Watt, solid-state, S2000MI integrated remote-control amplifier; and a pair of the new floor-standing, reflex-loaded, two-way Positron speakers, priced at £899.

### Relax. It's an AVI...

This is the classic fit-and-forget system. The likes of Linn, Meridian and Quad offer greater degrees of inter-component communication capability, but even though such features are absent from the AVI rig, it shares with those other British brands a home-grown and sometimes counter-intuitive control logic in both amp and CD player. Apart from that, the system simply

slots together with an elegance normally the preserve of high-tech mini and micro systems. Thing is, even the most sophisticated packaged audio rig — indeed, quite a few umpty-thousand-pound systems we could mention — cannot match the AVI for sound quality.

Many hi-fi manufacturers, dealers and enthusiasts often take a dim view of true accuracy and neutrality. It's certainly true that this kind of sound doesn't leap off the shelves and into the arms of prospective hi-fi buyers. But let's not forget that 'hi-fi' in its purest sense implies faithfulness to the original recording. And though it might not be fashionable, this is AVI's creed.

Even though the Positron is a small, light speaker, it generates the kind of wide-open sound you'd expect to hear in a recording studio. It projects a surprisingly large, three-dimensional soundstage, with bass to catch you unawares. There is no sense of overhang in lower registers, and very little corruption of the sound. You can buy cleaner-sounding speakers, but only at the penalty of physical volume or greater cash outlay.

The 2000 series CD player and amplifier are the perfect match for these speakers. Again it comes down to a complete lack of artificiality about the sound; this system is perfect for audiophiles with the most catholic musical tastes. Every album from my collection slipped effortlessly through this rig's components and wires.

Hi-fi reviewers often ply their trade by

singling out particular aspects of a component or system's performance, to accentuate its positive points. AVI disagrees with this approach. Listeners who crave edge-of-seat rhythmic performance, so-called 'timing', are often attracted to Naim equipment, for example. For magisterial and mellifluous aural sculptures, get valves. For naturalness, AVI is your marque.

As a consequence, I found it very difficult to identify a weak link in this chain, but I do feel these components work best as a package. Their no-nonsense, accurate sound becomes diluted in the context of systems that are less than complementary.

Another observation: the AVI system's egalitarian approach to musical styles only holds good within a certain envelope of output volume. You'll be disappointed if your idea of fun is Black Sabbath or The Prodigy reproduced at concert levels. Because the Positron's mid/bass cones are small, and undergo long excursions to provide a decent quantity of bass, the speaker feels the strain when you crank up the amp. Music with heavy beats and big dynamics push the speakers up against their end-stops long before you hit the fifth green volume LED on the amp's front panel.

These caveats, and my note earlier about the slightly arcane control ergonomics, constitute the only criticisms I can level. Hi-fi enthusiasts may dismiss the AVI system for being too well balanced, too convenient or insufficiently upgradeable... what a shame. Music enthusiasts will be too busy playing CDs on the AVI system to waste time mourning for an audio anorak's loss. ▲

AV International Ltd ☎ (01453) 752656/765682

### WHAT'S IN THE SYSTEM?

AVI S2000MC CD	£1,399
AVI S2000MI amplifier	£999
AVI Positron loudspeakers	£899
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£3,297</b>



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THE CONCERT 8 - A GREAT ORATOR FROM **Jamo**

# Ear Waxings

Jason Kennedy goes deep, deep down with a REL Studio II subwoofer.

But will its bass welly be a match for the new Acoustic Precision Eikos FR1 speakers?

**M**any components give decent midband; a fair few do high frequencies with a modicum of grace. But extended, controlled, powerful bass is still a rarity. There are two ways to get it: by combining big amps with large loudspeakers, or by enlisting the services of a separate, dedicated subwoofer with a built-in power amplifier. And because powerful amps don't always sound as good as smaller ones, and large speaker cabinets do little for a speaker's invisibility, the second option is increasingly favoured as a route to low frequency nirvana.

I've been sceptical of subwoofers until recently. It's been rare to encounter one outside the door of a full-on surround-sound dem, and with the exception of products from the REL brand, subs have never enjoyed a spectacular reputation in hi-fi circles. The only sub that's done it for me is Living Voice's RW24 horn-loader (*HFC* 163).

So why am I investigating this, ahem, *sub*-species of loudspeaker? Turn to page 50 to find out. My catalyst was the Acoustic Precision Eikos FR1, a diminutive loudspeaker with extraordinary properties but limited bass extension. With a -3dB point at 65Hz, it cannot supply effective bass, and although it sounds great unaugmented, I could not resist the temptation to add some power down below. To the REL range I turned, plunging in at the deep end with the new Studio II — a range-topping, back-breaking, £4,000 biggie. I paid the price for greed when lugging this 200lb monster up my staircase.

This beast measures 615x684x520mm (HxWxD), just a bit bigger than a half-metre cube, and while it's not quite in the monolith category, its presence in the average-size living room will not go unnoticed. But people still walk around it, look puzzled, and sit down before they say "what is that?". If appropriately camouflaged, the Studio II might blend in better. But still it needs mains power and signal cables, and while there are innocuous black PVC-clad affairs supplied with the Studio II, you may, like me, be inclined to replace them with flex of a more garish nature. I was alarmed at the length of the supplied signal lead — around six metres

— but I found some suitably-dimensioned speaker cable terminated with the requisite Neutrik Speakon plug. This substantial four-way connector is one of the features that differentiates the II from its predecessor: it's a simple twist-and-lock affair with screw terminals for the cable. Its advantages include self-cleaning on removal/insertion, and CE-friendly shrouded contacts. The other mkII changes are a balanced input for mono operation, and more significantly, an improved power supply for the power amp.

The drive system inside this behemoth is a 300-Watt MOSFET, direct-coupled amplifier with absolutely no capacitors in its signal path. This lump exerts its awesome grip

ment; the other offers fine-tuning.

The initial temptation is to set both output level and roll-off frequency too high, but after a period of experimentation I ended up with quite subtle levels of level and cut-off, meaning that the sub is just ticking over most of the time. I couldn't help cranking up at times, but this led to rather alarming and indeed window-bowing levels of air pressure on replay of particularly deep and powerful material. It depends on which speakers the sub has been partnered with — if they're as quick and resolute as the Eikos FR1s, then virtually any sub will muddy the picture if it overlaps with their output too obviously.

I devised a simple system for setting correct parameters: playing acoustic material with very little bass content, and turning down the level and roll-off frequency of the sub until its presence was no longer apparent.

I was very impressed by the Studio II/FR1 combination. It was subtle, but solid and deep. On numerous occasions I was shocked at the depth and power emanating from what should have been familiar records, but also there was less distortion.

I tried really hard to upset the apple-cart with some of my more ludicrously bass-heavy monster cuts, but I failed: the Studio II coped with Sly and Robbie, Leftfield, The Chemical Brothers, Chaka Demus and Pliers, and a whole lot more. Never did I sense that the sub was being left behind the AP speakers. I've only heard 'quicker' bass than this once in my room, with the Electrofluidics Sonolith (*HFC* 139); and as I recall, those speakers couldn't equal this rig's bass extension. The Studio II is a cookin' piece of hardware — I'd love to hear it on a concrete floor in a big room with the wick turned up all the way.

Paul Messenger wonders whether eight REL Q100E subs would sound better than one Studio II. They could be sited to avoid exciting room modes, and the output of each would be vanishingly low. But imagine all the cable and the loss of space. I think REL's one-box solution has more appeal — so long as I don't have to move it for a while! ▲

REL ☎ (01656) 768 777



over a pair of 10-inch Volt drivers that fire downwards into the gap between the cabinet and the floor. They are augmented by a six-inch-diameter port and REL's ARM (Acoustic Resistive Matrix) loading. The latter resembles B&W's Matrix approach, by dividing up the enclosure into tuned cells that create a stiffer air-spring than you would encounter in an 'open' cabinet. Also, it increases cabinet rigidity.

### Bassic instinct

Setting up the Studio II is a fine art. Once you've decided where to put it, you can adjust its output level with one knob, then set the upper roll-off frequency with another pair of controls. One of these is a coarse adjust-

In the  
sky  
with...



7.1

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7.3



7.2

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# The Jimmy Hughes Experience

It's time for more adventures at the outer limits of hi-fi. Jimmy Hughes unveils the Statmat!

**C**ontroversy ahoy, acolytes of objectivity! In 1996, John Rogers of Ringmat Developments visited me with a prototype he'd been working on — a mat designed to improve the sound of CD. Called the Statmat, and priced at £20, it's made from a thin conductive plastic material with special ink patterns on both sides, and 'cuts' at strategic points. It didn't look like much, but it definitely worked.

What I heard was impressive, though Statmat is a tricky product to compare on an A/B basis, as it seems to have a temporary conditioning effect on both disc and player. When it's removed, neither CD nor player sounds like it did originally — the effect takes a day or two to wear off. Fascinating! Weird! It was almost a year before John had a sample for me to try over an extended period.

The kind of improvement made by Statmat is hard to describe in a few words. The sound isn't just smoother, sweeter or sharper. Rather, the music itself seems to change, becoming rhythmically more cohesive, and altogether more purposeful and coherent. Statmat increases the sense of depth and space around voices and instruments, expanding dynamic range to give more light and shade, so tonal colours are subtler and more varied.

John claims his Statmat works by controlling 'static electricity charges' created when the CD spins at high speed within the player. These charges, he believes, exert unpredictable adverse influences on the CD machine's electronics, affecting 'phase-coherence' which, he alleges, confuses musical timing. This makes the music's rhythms less homogeneous, apparently. It's difficult to describe, but easy to hear. On the right music, the audible difference can be quite profound; though one might debate whether these results arise from the causes John enunciates.

## By jingo Mpingo

Recently, a friend obtained a lump of Mpingo wood. Mpingo is a dense African swamp-ebony

hardwood, used by Shun Mook, for example. From his piece of Mpingo my friend fashioned a heavy LP record weight. He just puts it on the turntable spindle with a record playing, waits a few seconds, and suddenly the sound changes, growing richer and more holographic, with a very precise sense of rhythmic timing.

In subjective listening terms, it wreaks a very similar improvement to the Statmat. So what's happening, and why? Shun Mook says Mpingo wood absorbs resonance, but I find this an inadequate explanation. An ordinary record clamp or weight does

not produce comparable sonic benefit; often there's little difference; sometimes the sound actually gets worse. There is scant evidence that Mpingo absorbs resonance better than other hardwoods. But it has a noticeable effect on sound quality.

And here's another reason to doubt the resonance absorption theory. Would you believe that I can audibly improve the sound of CD by just placing the Mpingo LP weight on a spinning turntable platter? It's true. Using the Mpingo weight on a revolving turntable doesn't just benefit vinyl reproduction. It produces exactly the same sort of change with CD. Music sounds more cohesive, and both spatial cues and depth information are enhanced. It's just more vivid and solid.

## The truth is out there

Once I'd heard how the Mpingo weight improved my LP sound, I wanted the same for CD. Not easy! You'd need special tools to cut a thin slice of Mpingo suitable for use as a CD mat. However, I reckoned the improvement could be associated with properties other than resonance absorption or static control. I suspected Mpingo

might not need to physically touch the CD to create the enhanced sound I perceived.

I don't pretend to know what's going on here, but perhaps we're dealing with a Peter-Belt-type effect. (Peter Belt proposed bizarre hi-fi tweaks involving 'polarised water', and made reference to left-field tenets like the morphic resonance theory propounded by Rupert Sheldrake — Ed.)

Certainly, Peter used to talk a great deal about problems with the spinning disc and its adverse reaction to electrical and gravitational fields. Could Statmat work by treating these? If so, an effect would occur just by making the device spin, almost regardless of what it touched.

Actually, I do think the effectiveness of Statmat increases when it touches the spinning CD. But it also works without contact. For example, when placed on a turntable platter under the mat, it improves the sound of

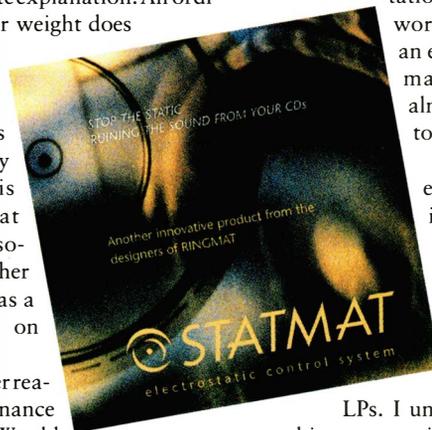
LPs. I understand John Rogers is working on a special version for vinyl replay.

Recently I've tried two Statmats, one either side of the thin rubber mat supplied with Pioneer's PD-75. This player, of course, has Pioneer's unique 'Stable Platter' CD mechanism, which spins the CD upside down on a large aluminium disc. Using two Statmats gives more benefit than using one. However, I'm not sure it would be necessary or desirable to use two Statmats with a conventional CD player.

John Rogers describes Statmat as the biggest advance in CD reproduction since compact disc was launched. I'm not sure I'd put it that strongly (ahem! — Ed), but it does produce a specific benefit that's musical and difficult to duplicate with more conventional methods. It's a different kind of change, for example, to that engendered by adding an outboard DAC.

Statmat is thin and rather flimsy, but tougher than it looks. It needs fairly careful handling, and the deliberately over-sized centre hole entails precise positioning on a disc before loading. But I'd say it's well worth investigating.

Ringmat Developments ☎ (01277) 200210





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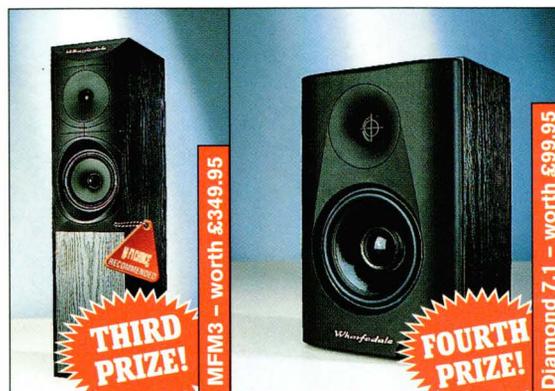
**COMPETITION**

# SUPER SPEAKERS!

## Wonderful Wharfedale woofers (and tweeters) worth £1,550!

**W**harfedale has long been respected for its loudspeakers. In this prize-packed competition, four lucky *Hi-Fi Choice* readers will soon find out why! Three of the four prizes derive from from the company's Mid-Field Monitor (MFM) range, featuring Wharfedale's unique 'Audio Stealth' front-baffle mouldings. First Prize is a pair of the MFM-7 worth £649.95, a floor-standing, three-way, four-driver design. This rear-ported, dual-chamber enclosure handles up to 150 Watts of music power, yet offers a high 91dB sensitivity and six Ohm nominal impedance. Second Prize is a pair of the MFM-5 floorstander at £449.95. A three-way, three-driver speaker, this model can handle music up to 125 Watts, and returns a 90dB sensitivity with eight Ohm nominal impedance. The Third Prize is a pair of MFM-3 worth £349.95. These floorstanders are also rear-ported, but have a more conventional complement of two drive units in a two-way configuration. The MFM-3 (Best Buy, *HFC* 164) is specified to accommodate 100 Watts of music, has a nominal impedance of eight Ohms and an 89dB sensitivity.

Last but not least, the fourth card from the hat bags a pair of £99.95 Wharfedale Diamond 7.1 two-way, two-driver bookshelf monitors. Send in your entry today!



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Bradley Stoke North,  
Bristol BS12 0BQ

All entries must arrive by first post, Thursday December 4th, 1997.

### THE QUESTION

**What does MFM stand for?**

- a) Modern Fruit Management
- b) My Football Memories
- c) Mid-Field Monitor
- d) Mrs. Fielding's Memoirs

#### YOUR DETAILS

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
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- The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- The Wharfedale competition is not open to employees of Dennis Publishing Ltd, IAG (Wharfedale), nor their suppliers, agents or associates.
- We regret this competition is open to UK residents only.
- No cash alternatives will be offered.
- We reserve the right to substitute alternative prizes with equal value to these shown, in the unlikely event of stock being temporarily unavailable.
- By entering the competition you agree to be bound by the rules.
- All entries must be on this official entry coupon. If you do not wish to cut your magazine, you may send a photocopy of the page instead. Please note: only one entry form per household.

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# Paul Miller's Oasis of Sanity

To transform your listening room into a concert hall, your hi-fi system needs to generate realistic signal levels. But Watts alone are not enough, reveals Paul Miller . . .

**T**his *Oasis* prefaces a forthcoming feature in which we will investigate the improvements in sound quality claimed for very sensitive loudspeakers — recent reviews on Rehdeko and Kelly Transducer speakers having set the ball rolling. So what is the relationship between amplifier power, speaker sensitivity and the loudest musical peaks that can be accommodated in the average listening environment?

To explore this question, I used the pair of Audio Note AN-EII loudspeakers that have served in countless blind listening tests for *Hi-Fi Choice* over the years. They are not quite as sensitive as I'd been led to believe, measuring 88dB for 2.83V at 1m distance, using the same third-octave technique that is employed in our loudspeaker group tests. 88dB is an average result for today's loudspeakers. The 2.83V part, however, is very important, because this convention is used in all such measurements to represent a power of one Watt into a notional eight Ohm load. All other things being equal, a 6dB increase in this voltage across the speaker terminals (5.66V) will yield a 6dB increase in perceived loudness from 88dB to 94dB at 1m distance.

**Fig. 1** To ensure a vast supply of volts, I needed a very powerful amplifier. Talk Electronics' Hurricane 5 fitted the bill, being capable of delivering 45.9V under dynamic conditions (1) into our notional eight Ohm load. This is equivalent to 263 Watts — a comfortable margin for our experiment.

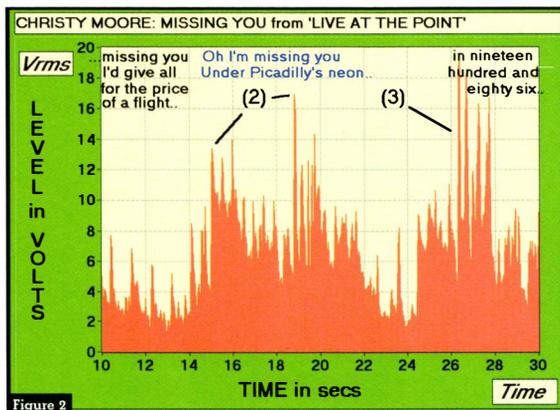
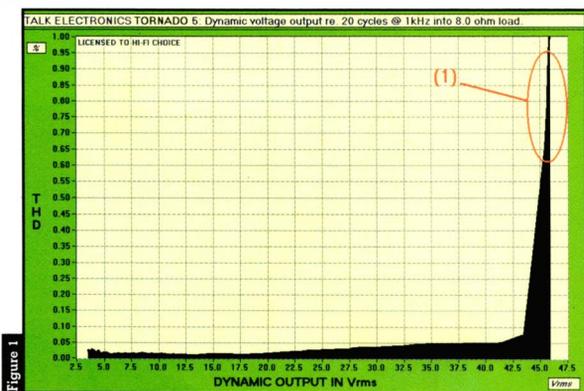


Figure 2

After several days of programming, I had created a Virtual Instrument permitting real-time analysis of the music signal as it hits the loudspeaker terminals, plotting the instantaneous variations in voltage with time.

**Fig. 2** Ever wondered what real music 'looks' like? Well, a 20-second excerpt of Christy Moore's Live performance of *Missing You* provides a great example. This portion is culled from Track 6 of *Live at the Point* (GRACD 203), beginning at 0:10 seconds and ending at 0:30 seconds. I've added the lyrics, so you can follow the tune yourself if you have the disc.

**Fig. 3** For classical buffs, I've included another spectrum revealing the first 60 seconds of Mahler's *5th Symphony* (Denon, COCO-9737). The

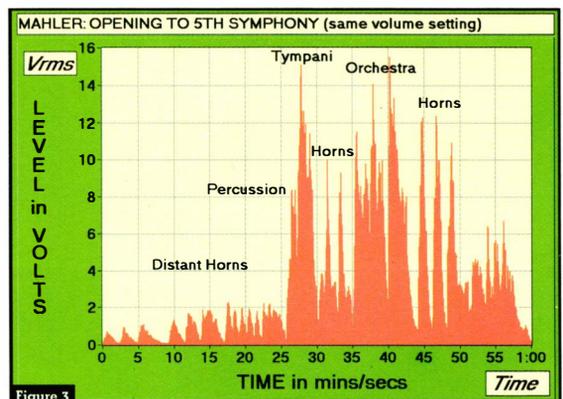


Figure 3

instruments most readily audible during this tumultuous introduction are illustrated by each series of musical peaks. Note that despite being monitored at precisely the same volume setting, and from the same CD player, this lower-level recording does not reach quite the same peak output level as Christy's live performance.

This is very much more than hi-tech karaoke. Each of the prominent peaks (2) represents an individual strum of

Christy's 12-string guitar which, at 26-28 seconds into the performance, is drawing momentary peaks of over 19V from the amplifier. Mahler's thundering timpani and percussion reach 15.5V on this same scale.

Now, if we treat the Audio Note AN-EII as a nominal six Ohm load (in practice it'll be tougher), this equates to a power demand of 60 Watts — well within the compass of the Talk Hurricane 5 amp.

But how loud is this? Theoretically, 19V should raise the AN-EII to 104.5dB at 1m, an increase of 16.5dB.

With a pair of speakers in a typical room, auditioned at a typical 2.5m distance, this would represent a musical peak of some 100-101dB SPL — loud, but well short of a live concert's 110dB peaks.

To squeeze an extra 10dB of peak level from these speakers would require 59.8V, or 450W into eight Ohms. This is well

beyond the reach of all but the most exalted amplifiers, and would fry the voice-coils of all but the staunchest speakers.

However, a speaker manufactured to have an inherent 2.83V/1m sensitivity of 98dB would already have this 10dB 'in hand'. It is not unreasonable to assume that such a speaker would entertain a headroom of 12dB without overheating (or 16-17dB for 2.5m distance), and it would require just 50-60 Watts to pummel the listening position with realistic 110dB peaks. More about this in next month's feature!

Do you have a subject matter for the *Oasis*? Please contact P. Miller via E-mail on 100576.3021@compuserve.com

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**Personal** Paul Messenger adds a second opinion to last month's review of Linn's new cartridge and phono preamp.

# Messages

**A**lan Sircom got first bite at the *Choice* cherry this time (*HFC* 171), but I wasn't going to pass up the opportunity to try out Linn's new, upgraded, vinyl-disc-playing cartridge: Arkiv. Unlike Alan, I was a firm fan of the original Arkiv, and reviewed it back in *HFC* 119. Some critics of the era found Arkiv a little too clinical, preferring its more laid-back and romantic predecessor, Troika; but I loved Arkiv from the start, for its openness, neutrality and exceptional bandwidth extension at both ends of the spectrum.

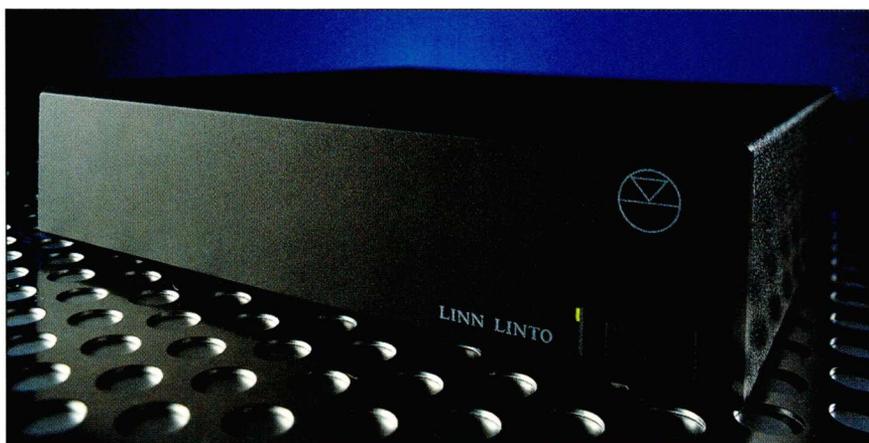
Okay, I'm prejudiced; but sadly deluded are those who believe they're unbiased! I've been using Linn cartridges for longer than I care to remember. Asak, Karma, Troika and Arkiv: each has done loyal service at the end of my tonearm; each has laid strong claim to being the state of the cartridge art for its era. I've tried a fair few rivals along the way, and although there are sweeter and more spacious alternatives, none has convinced me.

Nor was any likely to, after I heard a prototype of Linn's updated and boron-cantilevered variation a few months ago. A Linn person was delivering a Linto (phono preamp) for review, and just happened to have Arkiv in the car. We sat up very late, rediscovering new delights in many old records; the subsequent deprivation left me in a foul mood for days!

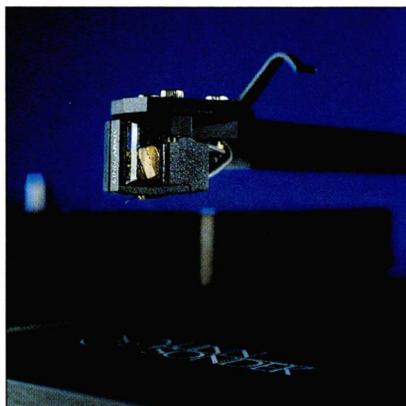
Finally I readjusted to the original Arkiv, and against all odds, I have done my best to enjoy my record collection over the past three months. But when a review sample of the new Arkiv turned up, I wasn't slow to mount it in the tonearm.

To be honest, as I cued *Poison* (from The Prodigy's *Jilted Generation*), I wasn't expecting too much. The last time I'd fitted an Arkiv, a year or so ago, it had sounded dire straight out of the box. I wondered what Linn had done to a component that I respected and admired. After pondering the option of a bit of high-end cartridge networking, I had persevered with gritted teeth, and by the third day it was just beginning to play tunes. It took a whole week to come properly on song.

Not so the new version. I don't know yet what it will sound like after a week of running in, but I do know that it left its predecessor for dead from the first bars. *Poison* starts off with a solo synth, followed, a few bars later, by a quick breakdown riff on electronic snares, a cymbal crash, and then the



Linn Linto (above) and Arkiv (below) New needle confirms Messenger prejudices shocker!



main theme is introduced on a hi-hat (or sample thereof) placed just left of centre. I've played the track dozens of times, but have never consciously isolated and picked up on this important little detail before.

Within 30 seconds of installation, the new Arkiv had justified its existence by doing what every hi-fi component is supposed to do — deliver the information that lets you peel back more musical layers. The £1,200 price tag might be iniquitous, but there's no denying that this cartridge does the business, making even the least accessible recordings listenable. I managed to get through three sides of the new Oasis album before the mid-band compression finally curled my toes and I'd worked out that the music owed rather more to Status Quo than The Beatles.

### The grunge effect

I'm sure it all comes down to improving the mechanical control of stylus, cantilever and the rest. There's some loss of heavy bass trackability, but the payoff is greatly

improved treble detail, much tighter stereo image focus, and, best of all, a quite dramatic reduction in spurious background hash and garbage. By engineering out much of the mechanical grunge, I reckon that Linn has increased the real-world system dynamic range by at least 10dB, resulting in sound that has all the musical virtues of the vinyl disc (transparency, delicacy, naturalness etc), but presented with a quite un-vinyl-like freedom from spurious noise.

By coincidence I'd heard a rather similar effect at one of the Ramada Show dems a few days previously. Only there it wasn't a cartridge that was doing the 'de-grunging' — it was A J van den Hul's non-metallic carbon-based interconnect and speaker cabling, and the medium under application was 78rpm shellac rather than vinyl.

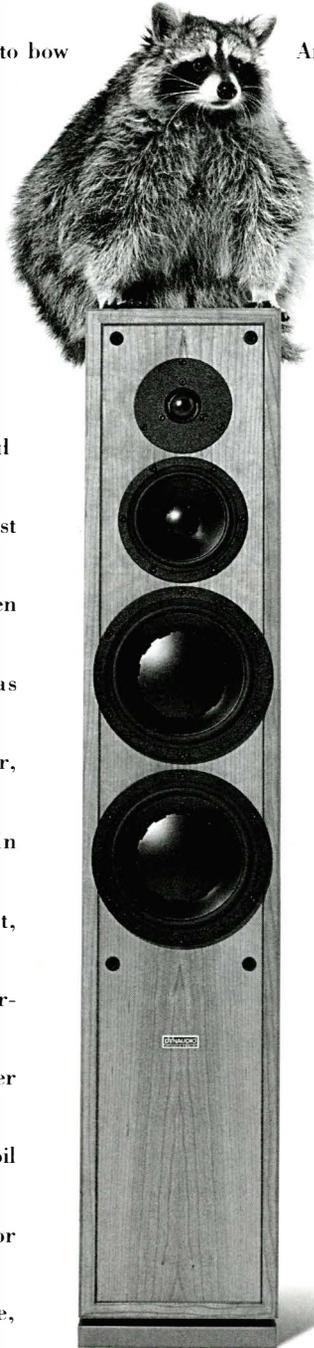
One shouldn't dismiss the capabilities of this long-obsolete format. Bandwidth was always strictly limited, but midband dynamics can show the same righteous expressiveness many have been eagerly rediscovering through retro valve amps and horn speakers. Trouble is, if you play 78s through today's wide-bandwidth systems, even with the right stylus, cartridge and equalisation, it's difficult to enjoy the music because of the roaring, crashing high-frequency noise. You could hear the noise on the vdH system, but it seemed less intrusive than it should have been — that's another grunge-reduction technique that could be well worth exploring.

Grunge-reduction lies at the heart of hi-fi; in digital terms, the grunge is jitter. The trick is to lose the hash without sacrificing music along the way. ▲

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**COMPETITION**

# TOP TURNTABLES

## £1,000 worth of Dual record players up for grabs!

**W**ith a little help from our friends at Dual, we've secured five samples of top-notch turntabular treats exclusively for *Hi-Fi Choice* readers.

First Prize is the top-flight CS 750-1, which has just become available once again on UK shores. This £329.95 deck offers semi-automatic operation, and the ability to play at 78rpm as well as 33 and 45 speeds. Features include Cardan bearings on the arm (which uses a massless tracking system), the DMS 750 cartridge, a floating subchassis and a drive system with a '100-fold, light-barrier-scanning, electronic-commutator-disc armature motor'. You don't get many of those to the pound!

Second Prize is Dual's budget classic, the CS 505-4, which has been the first step on the ladder for many an audiophile. It's another semi-automatic design, priced at £219.95, which features Dual's massless tracking-force system and removable carbon-fibre headshell supporting the ULM 68 E cartridge. The damped aluminium platter is driven by a 16-pole synchronous motor via a flat belt.

Our Third Prize winner will spin vinyl on the £169.99 CS 455 Gold, a fully-automatic record player. Its floating subchassis is housed in a solid-wood console, and it comes complete with Dual's DMS 251 E cartridge. Finally, each of two Fourth Prize recipients will install the £139.95 CS 435-1 fully automatic turntable, with aluminium platter and balanced arm supporting the Dual DMS 251 S cartridge. Our mail-bag awaits your card!



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All entries must arrive by first post, Thursday December 4th, 1997.

### THE QUESTION

What type of arm bearings are used in the Dual CS 750-1?

- a) Cardigan
- b) Uni-pivot
- c) Gimbal
- d) Cardan

### YOUR DETAILS

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
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- We regret this competition is open to UK residents only.
- No cash alternatives will be offered.
- We reserve the right to substitute alternative prizes with equal value to those shown, in the unlikely event of stock being temporarily unavailable.
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# Write on!

TELL US YOUR VIEWS ON HI-FI AND MUSIC. THE BEST LETTER EVERY MONTH WINS AN M-S POLO-SHIRT!

## LETTER OF THE MONTH

### Low frequency support

I was delighted to read in Jimmy Hughes's Hints & Tips (HFC 171, p55) his suggestions for siting subwoofers. He stated that a three-sided enclosure built around a subwoofer would not only improve its bass output, but also act as a support for a television.

However, as a REL Q100E is not magnetically shielded, surely the television picture would be affected by the subwoofer's drive unit? Would it help to make the three-sided enclosure from a material of a certain thickness?

D Pepper, Brighton, E. Sussex

### Jimmy Hughes replies...

REL says that, while it would be unsafe to put a TV directly on top of a sub, raising it by a distance of (say) 15 cm or more should prevent any effect on the TV picture. However, bear in mind that the Q100E's magnet is much less powerful than those of the drivers used in REL's larger subs.

### DVD does digital?

DVD players are being advertised with 20-bit technology. So, if I purchased one of models currently on sale in the US, could I add a budget off-board DAC and a jitter reducer to challenge CD players up to the £500 mark?

D Hancock, NSW, Australia

### Paul Miller replies...

Conventional CDs contain a 16-bit code which should receive equal treatment from DVD players, or CD players utilising 20-bit converters. Both kinds of players' digital outputs will adhere to the IEC958 specification, so both will be compatible with outboard DACs. Importantly, however, the SPDIF data transferred between DVD/CD player and DAC will still be at a 16-bit accuracy if derived from a conventional CD disc. DVD digital outputs must also be IEC1937-ready to accept the compressed audio format

adopted by film soundtracks. For the time being, my advice would be to stick with a decent integrated CD player.



Sony CDP-X3000ES

### Singapore Sony sanity

I was disappointed with your review of the Sony CDP-X3000ES CD player in HFC 169. The player's filters were described in Paul Miller's 'Oasis of Sanity' column on p15, yet the review on p67 discussed the filters too. I would have liked to know whether the transport section is the same, or to a lower specification, to that employed in the CDP-X5000ES. Also, it would have been interesting to learn of the player's tracking ability and susceptibility to external vibrations and knocks; I gather that fixed-laser transports are (or were?) below par in this respect.

Can the two digital outputs be switched off for better sound quality from the internal DAC (as on the CDP-X5000ES)? The CDP-XA50ES and CDP-XA30ES also have nine filters each, so when you come to review these units, please remember to report on the other aspects and characteristics of the players to give a more balanced overall appraisal.

K Parker, Singapore via the Internet

### Paul Miller replies...

To the best of my knowledge, neither the CDP-X5000ES, CDP-XA30ES nor the CDP-XA50ES are currently available in the UK; although since winning this year's EISA CD player award, the latter is available to special order. From memory, I do not believe it is possible to mute the CDP-X3000ES's digital output.

The proprietary 'Fixed Pickup Mechanism' was first seen in Sony's CDP-XE900E (HFC 159) and has evolved into several strains, one of which is fitted to the CDP-X3000ES. An early sample of this mechanism proved noisy when tested at length in my lab, although this had no impact on its ability to track less-than-perfect discs. I have not experienced any further technical issues with this transport and would continue to recommend the CDP-X3000ES very highly indeed.

### Abuse of position

I must take issue with Alan Sircom's advice to Mr Banda in issue 170 (Help, p31). Surely it would be best to experiment with the POSITION of the speakers — say about 40 cm from the rear walls and at least 80 cm from the side walls.

### OUR ADDRESS

The Editor-in-Chief, Hi-Fi Choice, 19 Bolsover Street, LONDON W1P 7HJ.

☎ 0171-917 5512.

✉ editor.hifichoice@dennis.co.uk.

We reserve the right to edit all letters. Concise correspondence preferred! All letters must include address and daytime phone numbers.

The distance between the speakers should not be more than 2.5 metres, and they should not be toed-in. Then remove the spikes and put them on some kind of absorption feet to improve the bass. I can guarantee that this low-cost remedy will improve the sound a lot more than by replacing the CD player.

Stefan Fridefors, Goteborg, Sweden via the Internet

### Alan Sircom replies...

It's a good point. But, while re-positioning Mr Banda's speakers would improve the sound slightly, there are what I strongly consider to be fundamental mis-matches between CD, amplifier and speakers — especially between his CD player and amp. These cannot be corrected by adjusting the position of the speakers.

## Win threads!

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## ◀ Global Village shopping

*Hi-Fi Choice* is sold all over the world, but prices of equipment often vary greatly in different parts of the globe. A very good (but infuriating) example is in Singapore. In the UK, Mission 735i speakers cost £650 while Acoustic Energy AE109 are £350. That makes the Missions about twice the price of the AEs. But here in Singapore they are both about the same price — around S\$1,500.

Exchange rates explain the price for the Missions, but not the AEs. This makes it very difficult for me to interpret your group tests that are delineated by price. The Missions and AEs, for example, would most likely be in two different price groups, say below £500 (AE) and above £500 (Mission). So if the AEs get a Best Buy in their own category while the Missions get a Recommended, where do I go?

I would suggest that in future group tests, you give an absolute score for sound quality regardless of price, for every product tested.

I am a happy convert from *What Hi-Fi?* so please keep up the good work!  
J Tan, Singapore  
via the Internet

## National Lampoon

A few observations on the national characteristics of European hi-fi magazines. In the Netherlands, where I live, you can get Dutch, German and English magazines. The Dutch don't really have an opinion: "if you spend enough money, you can't buy bad equipment". The Germans are very critical but the result is much the same: "everything that claims to be good is good". (Funny how German products are always a bit better than others.) The English are enthusiastic about every new English product, and sometimes about others, but lose interest as time passes. (The same product loses appeal as new products enter the market).  
J. van den Broek, Netherlands  
via the Internet

## Stan Vincent replies...

*In years to come, sociologists will define nations by their approach to hi-fi. National dress won't get a look-in...*

## Whither Naim Audio?

I am a great fan of Naim equipment, and note that your Consultant Editor, Paul Messenger, regularly uses Naim gear while reviewing speakers. Given this fact I do not understand why the magazine has reviewed so few Naim products. For instance, the CDS CD player and NAC52 preamp are not mentioned in your Directory.

As a proud owner of a CDS (I couldn't find anything that came close for ability) I would like to know why!

R Kirkbride, via the Internet

## Alan Sircom replies...

*We have reviewed both the CDS and NAC52. The latter in The Collection, Winter 1990-91; the former in The Collection, Winter 1992-1993. Both products have undergone dramatic improvements since their inception; however, Naim does not make a big fuss about this, and as a consequence we have not had the opportunity to review these very fine products on a regular basis.*

## Is size not important?

*In your review of the B&W DM603 in HFC 170, you seem uncertain whether they are worth £200 more than the DM602. You state that the DM602 could have the edge, but award the DM603 a Best Buy tag. Can you explain why?*  
N Taylor  
South Ockenden, Essex

## Paul Messenger replies...

*The DM603 did exceptionally well in the blind tests; the DM602 didn't stand out so clearly. The models in a group test define the standards for that test, which won't always stay consistent from one group test to the next.*

*Ultimately, it remains well nigh impossible to com-*



*pare a floorstander and stand-mount, even when (as here) they contain very similar ingredients, because the stand itself is a major price/performance variable. With the right stand and under some room conditions I believe the DM602 could more than match the DM603, though I haven't put the two head-to-head.*

## Good things come...

For two years I've tried everything to get my Cambridge Audio DACmagic 1 to sound good. My transport is a Teac T1. I won't tell you how many tweaks I have tried. Then, at last, a miracle happened. I found a new cable with a transformer in it, to connect between my transport and DAC. Now the soundstage is great and the tone is sweet. The cable is called Digitrans, and is made in Paris by HIFI-cables. But when I tried it on a Krell MD-2 transport there was no improvement. Why?

B Stephaus, Geneva  
via the Internet

## Paul Miller replies...

*Why buy a product and then wait two years before you like the sound of it? Ideally, I would recommend buying equipment auditioned in your own system, if only to avoid these issues of incompatibility. Your problem is due to circulating RF interference from the DACMagic's direct-coupled digital input and the correctly-engineered 75-Ohm output of the Teac T1.*

*The Krell transport, with which I am not familiar, may not have a 75 Ohm output impedance and, therefore, may be mistermated when driving the 'Digitrans'.*

## RFI murders CD

A gold star to Mr Secret for coming to my defence after your non-committal response to my letter concerning the sound quality of FM radio compared with CD. ('Kenwood comeback', p35, HFC 171.)

I have solved the problem after reading about the evils of RFI (Radio Frequency Interference) in another magazine. I bought a pair of 'pure Henry',

inserted them into the speaker leads and now all the harshness from CD replay has gone. CD replay is now finer than the sound from my tuner and LP records.

I am not going to buy a £1,000 CD player as suggested. Instead, I will spend money on a Musical Fidelity X-DAC and Theta jitter reducer.

What we need from hi-fi magazines are more articles on the cause of poor sound quality in CD, and less nonsense about buying more equipment that merely transfers a problem from one place to another.

R J Smith, Goring-by-Sea, W. Sussex

## Paul Miller replies...

*Regular readers of Hi-Fi Choice will be familiar with my 'Oasis of Sanity' column which addresses these very issues. In HFC 159 we discussed the effect of a CD player's ultrasonic output on amplifier performance, and in HFC 167 we looked specifically at the susceptibility of amplifiers to RFI. For the last eight years or so, all of my amplifier reviews have included a test for RF susceptibility. Mr Smith may also care to read HFC 165 where the efficacy (or otherwise) of various so-called jitter busters was demonstrated. Or perhaps Mr Smith was confusing Hi-Fi Choice with another magazine?*

## Pod-ness abounds

In the 'Accessories' feature of your July/August edition (HFC 168, p38), I wonder why there was no mention of the Reference International Air Pods. I bought 16 of these devices two years ago. They are expensive but, collectively, have made the biggest perceived improvement to my system since I started on the hi-fi trail over 20 years ago.

R K Fox, Radcliffe-on-Trent, Notts

## Alan Sircom replies...

*I evaluated these components privately. I did not find them to be significantly better than cheaper products fulfilling a similar rôle. At the time of compiling the feature in HFC 168, it was not possible to obtain fresh samples of this product. However, we are glad you have found them useful.*

# DESIGNS



**The "showroom"**

Vladimir's impressive hi-fi system sits among his own furniture and interior décor designs. Right: detail of source and control components.

# OPIHI-FI

So you think hi-fi can't sound good and look good? **Richard Black** visits an aesthetic hi-fi heaven in the home of a Czech furniture designer.

**W**hen a man owns a room full of impressive hi-fi, and calls that room his 'showroom', usually it means he's a hi-fi salesman. But in the case of Vladimir, our host this month, the hi-fi is actually the only thing he *hasn't* designed. Through his company, Bohemian Designs, he creates eclectic furniture and interiors, including carpets. In honour of the latter, as laid in his room, he politely offered me a pair of soft slippers when I arrived.

So did he select his hi-fi for its looks? "I'm not technical," he replies. "I can just about set up a cartridge, but that's it. All I'm after is the best sound I can afford. I certainly care more about what the boxes look like than what's in them, but how it performs is even more important."

Not that the looks are anything to be ashamed of. The Michell Gyro Dec is renowned as one of the most elegant pieces of hi-fi ever produced, and the EAR G88 preamp is a rather tasteful item, too. The loudspeakers have the makings of beauty, but incongruously combine Bohemian Design panels (housing Apogee ribbon drive units, originally from Duetta Signature speakers), finished in Vladimir's favourite burr walnut, with a pair of bass cabinets from original B&W 801s, in mahogany veneer. Replacement bass enclosures are apparently on the way, promising improvements in sound and aesthetics.

Vladimir's background is not notable for its hi-fi connections. He was brought up in communist Czechoslovakia, and was "initiated into hi-fi by a friend in Prague, who is now a resident in Germany. He owned a superb hi-fi system, sited in a dedicated



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## A Little Gem

*"Standmounters that sound simply huge - the most complete speakers you can get at the price."*

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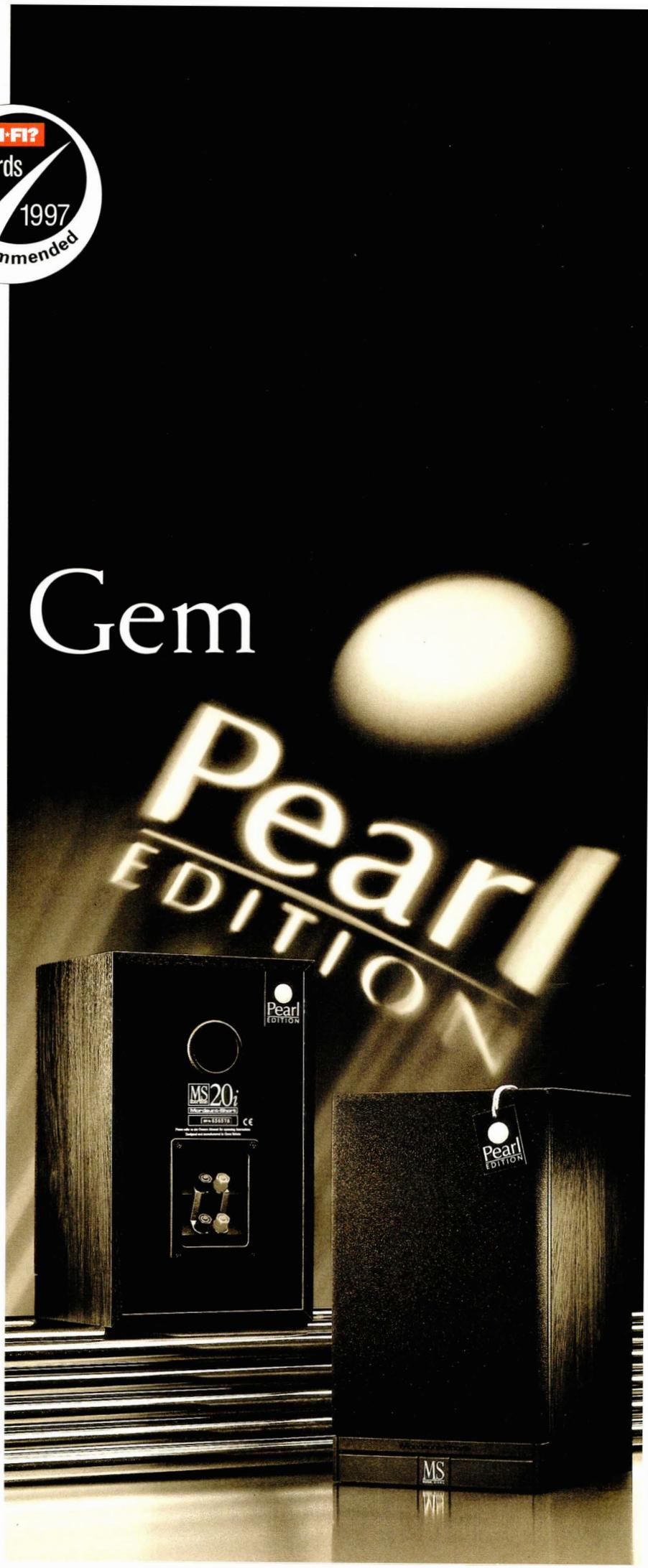
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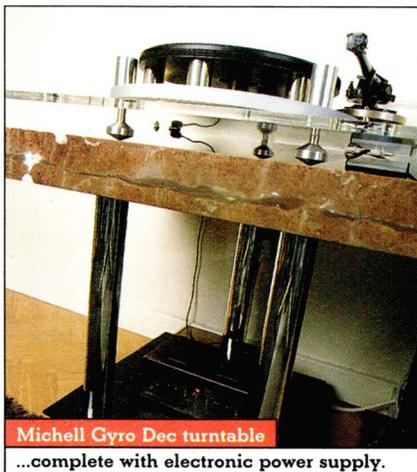
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**Michell Gyro Dec turntable**  
...complete with electronic power supply.

listening room in his basement. His father had a job that involved foreign travel, and he would come home with exotic hi-fi equipment and records not readily available locally. My friend listened to symphonies and Wagner operas on a Michell Hydraulic turntable, and later a Linn Sondek, through Luxman valve amplifiers and large Allison speakers.

"I was fascinated by this, but of course couldn't buy any equipment myself. But when my friend got his Sondek in about 1978, I bought his Michell, and brought it with me when I moved to England in 1982. When I arrived I didn't have much money, but eventually I managed to buy the B&W 801s, and in the mid-'80s was listening to these driven by a Hitachi amplifier. Well, that's hardly an ideal partnering and it didn't sound great. After a while I replaced the Hitachi with a Hafler preamp and XL280 power amp, which at last gave my recordings the 'third dimension'."

The Gyro Dec was the next upgrade, running at first with the classic pairing of SME 3009 arm and Shure V15 cartridge. Next came an SME V to replace the 3009, initially with a Dynavector XX-1 cartridge ("not at all bad; I still have it as a spare") and later a Lyra Parnassus. The Gyro Dec, SME V and Parnassus are still running perfectly, though the motor unit has benefited from the recent addition of an electronic power supply.

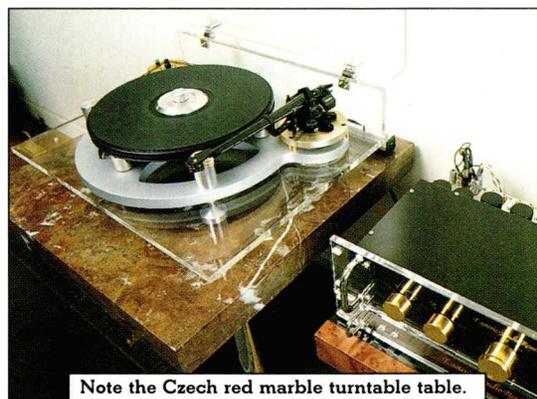
**Unusual ears**

Further up the chain is a rare EAR G88 pre-amplifier, added in 1990. "I'd say that the cartridge and the preamp are the true stars of this system. In fact I bought the preamp a year or so after getting a pair of EAR 519 power amps." The 519s gave way in time to the more powerful 549s which skulk threateningly beneath the very smart equipment tables — but no Mana effect here! I was particularly taken with the turntable table. Perhaps granite might sound better, but Czech red marble is rather splendid.

The new conrad-johnson CD player (DR-1 transport and D/A-2b DAC) might give the impression that Vladimir is pretty seri-

ous about CD. In fact, he bought this CD player, his first, only because so many recordings are no longer available on LP. "As CD players go, it's a very good one," says Vladimir, "but still I prefer LP. I feel that the analogy between LP and CD is a bit like that between a photograph and a reproduction in a newspaper of a photograph; as you get closer to the former you see more detail, but as you get closer to the latter you just see dots, although from a distance it can look quite convincing.

"As for this business about LPs suffering from noise and scratches, I find that these effects decrease considerably with really good replay equipment. One thing I've noticed with scratches and ticks particularly is that on a good recording the music appears to come from all around the area of the speakers, but ticks are generally localised in one or both speakers. This gives us a spatial tool to help filter them out. Anyway, the odd tick is no more offensive than a cough or a creaking chair at a con-



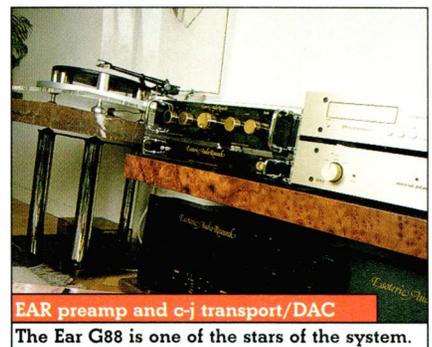
**Note the Czech red marble turntable table.**

cert. And really, many of my LPs dating from the '60s and '70s are of fantastic quality with hardly a blemish. If they've been carefully made and looked after, there's no reason why they should be scratchy."

To complete the system there's a pair of Jecklin Float headphones, and cables from Supra, Bespoke Audio and Cardas. "The Jecklins get quite a lot of use these days. Before my son was born I would listen for hours a day on speakers; now, sometimes I go for a week without using them." Not that young Tomas, when he came into the room at the end of our listening session, seemed perturbed by a spot of Charlie Mingus.

**Classical gold**

Vladimir's tastes are focused almost entirely on classical music, with a bit of jazz by way of contrast. I confess to having coveted several of his LPs containing 20th Century orchestral and chamber music, which make up a good percentage of his 1,000-plus LP collection. We kicked off with Prokofiev's first violin concerto played by Kyung-Wha Chung, with the LSO under Previn. "The violin's a bit too close, really, but it's a superb orchestral recording by Decca. I think they had the best orchestral sound, on balance." And indeed there's a wonderful sense of space and presence cre-

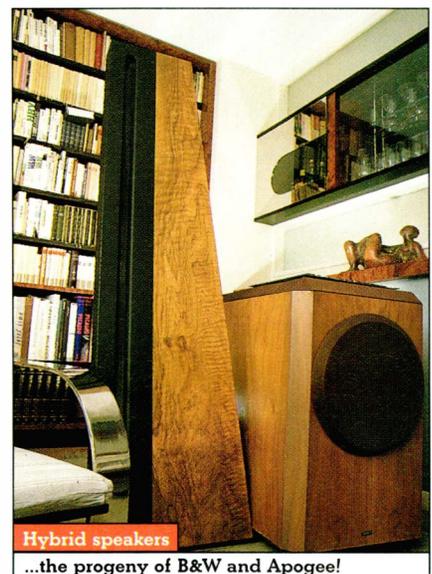


**EAR preamp and c-j transport/DAC**  
The Ear G88 is one of the stars of the system.

ated by this system. Although Vladimir cautioned me that the imaging is a bit 'one-seat', in fact I felt (by comparison with most hi-fi systems) that it's highly forgiving of listening position. Yes, if one sits well off the centre axis the image is distorted, but then the same situation arises when one sits in the cheap seats around the sides of the Royal Festival Hall, and in much the same way. Still, in the 'hot seat' the stereo image is really about as good as it gets. I can't help feeling that the line-source ribbon speakers (with their very low crossover frequency to the bass cabinets) contribute to this significantly. Apart from a hint of bass boom just now and then, the system is highly neutral and never seems strained dynamically.

However, this outfit is equally adept with less bombastic musical performances, for example the last movement of Janáček's first string quartet, recorded live in Prague in 1979 ("a perfectly behaved Prague audience — you don't know they're there until they applaud!"). In this system's portrayal, each instrument seems believably positioned and faithfully captured. I have no idea how it would perform with heavy metal or rap, but let's just say that, having arrived with the intention of conducting a fairly swift interview and departing, I was very late for my next appointment! ▲

*Editor's Note: Bohemian Designs can be contacted care of Richard Black at the Hi-Fi Choice office.*



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- a) NAD's classic 3020 amp of yore
- b) Dad's jurassic 20/20 vision through the door
- c) A lad's boracic life on the floor
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CHFC 712A



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Alan Sircom is here to answer your hi-fi queries this month.

Every letter published wins a TDK SA 90 tape worth approx. £2.39! Ten tapes for our Query of the Month!



## Query of the month

Brought to you in association with TDK

### That's progress for you

Comparing the comments in your first and last pages of the October issue, I'm confused about which price point to start shopping at when upgrading. On the one hand, you say inflation doubles the price of components every seven years, but on the other hand you say that technological progress gives ever better performance at a given price point.

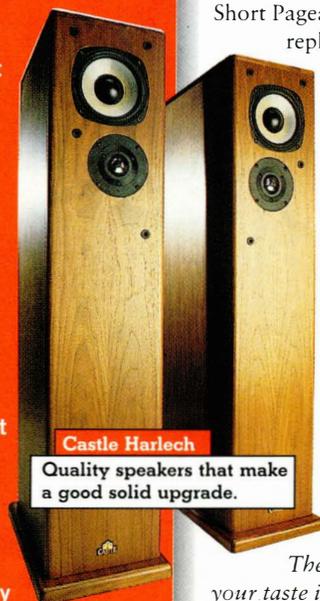
I want to replace some five-year-old components, which at the time of purchase cost £300-£400 each (Rotel RCD965BX, Arcam Delta 60, Monitor Audio MA14, Audioquest Quartz and Crystal). Listening to classical and rock, I find the sound lacks separation on complex music and is muddled at higher volumes. Where do I start looking in order to get a major leap in performance? Looking at amps, inflation theory suggests I'd need to look at the £800-£1,000 mark, for example Audiolab 8000S or the Arcam 9/9P. With CD players, the technology progress theory suggests a £500-£700 player (I'm tempted to wait to hear the Arcam 9). What do you suggest? Incidentally, for the same price, would a bi-amped integrated/power outfit or a single integrated amp give better results?

Roger Flory, Ipswich

Both points are valid. Computing theory has even given a name to it: Moore's Law. This states that technology will halve in price and double in capacity every three years. Computers tend to follow this law closely, but hi-fi takes a more relaxed view. While technology — especially CD — improves annually while decreasing in price, the effects of inflation cannot be stopped.

We would suggest that, under normal circumstances, a £400 machine from five years ago should be upgraded by a device costing at least £600. However, you need to begin with the loudspeakers, as this is the most obvious place to start. Check out a pair of Castle Harlechs or Monitor Audio MA703PMCs. Then think about bolstering the performance of the system with a decent amplifier like the Roksan Caspian or the Copland CSA8. Finally, change the CD player to an Acurus ACD11 or Meridian 506.

Every issue, we're giving ten of TDK's award-winning SA 90 tapes to the writer of the month's best query. When reviewed in Hi-Fi Choice, TDK's SA tape revealed the heart and soul of music with a graceful and transparent sound. We awarded Five Stars for Sound Quality and our coveted Recommended flag!



Castle Harlech  
Quality speakers that make a good solid upgrade.

### Rotel's Return

I am in the process of upgrading. I now have the basis of my new system: two new Rotel RB-981 (bridged) power amps controlled by an RC-971 preamp. They are feeding rather ancient Mordaunt-Short Pageant IIs from a Yamaha CDX-460 CD player. Before I replace the speakers, I would like to replace the CD player.

My taste in music is classical — mainly chamber music and choral works. I have been advised by my dealer to buy the Rotel RCD-975BX CD player, but the reviews have not been good. Should I go for something different? My budget is up to around £800. I will probably end up with Castle or Ruark speakers at about the same price.

Lloyd Daniels, via the Internet

I would disagree about the quality of the Rotel RCD-975BX player. It's a fine machine and a perfect match for your amplification. You could spend an extra £400 on a better CD player — the Acurus ACD11, Marantz CD-17 and Cyrus dAD3Q spring to mind — but I feel that you would be better off spending the balance on a four-tier Mana table and good-quality cables such as Cable Talk Studio 2 interconnects and Talk 3.1 speaker cable.

Then you can turn your attention to loudspeakers. Given your taste in music, the Castle Harlechs, Rogers Studio 7, ProAc Studio 100 and Ruark Talisman II are all worth a look. One of these is bound to suit you.

### More grace, please

My system consists of Mission 752s, Cyrus I amplifier and Sony CDP-X339ES CD player, with Monster interconnects and Audioquest speaker cables. Since I find the sound too harsh and lacking in finesse, it's upgrading time. I'd like something more 3-D and was thinking of the Meridian 506 CD player and Audiolab's 8000S amp.

Any other ideas or suggestions?

Sjoerd from Arnhem, Netherlands, via the Hi-Fi Choice Website

The Meridian and Audiolab system will smooth things out a bit, although ultimately the Mission 752s may need to be changed. Other — more expensive — CD and amp combinations to consider are the Quad 77 CD, pre and power, and a mega-mix of Acurus ACD11 CD with the Copland CSA8 integrated amplifier. Speakers like the Castle Harlech will outperform the 752s in the manner you desire, but at a cost. Also, if you want to smooth things out still further, try Audioquest's Turquoise interconnect, and a quality stand for the system.



Acurus ACD11  
A good match with the Copland CSA8 amp.



### Two CDs aren't better than one

My current system comprises Sony CDP-X3000ES and Harman/Kardon FL8400 CD players, JVC AX-A662 integrated amplifier and MB Quart QL01 bookshelf speakers on unfilled Atacama SE24 stands. Interconnects are Monitor and Nordost Flatline Black Knight, while the speaker cables are Cable Talk Talk 4.

I am planning an upgrade at the end of the year and my options are to change either the amp or speakers (I recently got the Sony CD player) although eventually both will be changed. I want a remote-control amp and would like to stick to bookshelf speakers for the time being as I only recently bought the Atacamas. Music is mostly English and Mandarin mainstream pop/rock and instrumental (including orchestral soundtracks and jazz). My main gripe with my current set-up (other than the amp not having a remote) is a lack of air and depth, and it sounds slightly cluttered in the middle. However, my main problem is that I am not sure which component to change first.

James Tan, via the Internet, Singapore

First, you should get rid of one of the CD players. As the Sony is so flexible, the H/K should be made to walk the plank. From here, upgrade the speakers before the amplifier, as we felt that the AX-A662 was a hard act to follow. In many respects, it outperformed some very well-respected amps and only a pre/power would better it — with a product like the ECA Vista/Lectern or the Quad 77 duo.

Fill those Atacama stands, especially if you are considering an upgrade. Try filling them with Sound-Bytes, lead shot or silver sand. Begin by filling them half-way and then experiment until the sound in your room is just right. These will then work well with expensive speakers, although Acoustic Energy, ProAc, and Sonus-Faber models generally sound better on their own stands. As it stands, the B&W CDM1 would be a perfect speaker for you.



Sony CDP-X3000ES

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### Voltage vexation

Does anyone know if a Marantz CD-17 for 220V supply in Europe can be used on 240v supply in the UK?

Frank Chennell, via the Hi-Fi Choice Website

Formally, Europe has harmonised its mains power to 230V. The rest of Europe raised its voltage by 10V, while we dropped ours by 10V. In reality, nothing has changed.

The Marantz you mention will be fine in the UK. While it may be slightly sonically advantageous to have an original 240V version (if such a thing exists) of a hi-fi component, using 220V versions will not cause any physical problems. Using 110V devices in the UK without some form of voltage adjustment is definitely not recommended, though!

### Bargain basement boxes

My system consists of a Marantz CD-46 CD player, Kenwood KA-3020SE amplifier, Marantz SD-40 cassette deck and Pioneer SP-S20 speakers. I want to upgrade the speakers to something that would be a better match for the rest of my system.

My short-list includes the Tannoy M2, B&W DM601 and Mordaunt-Short MS10i Pearl. Which would you suggest? Also, would speaker cables such as Cable Talk be suitable for my system? I listen to reggae, soul and jazz-funk.

Nigel Dexter, Birmingham

The trouble is, all three speakers are exceptionally good for the money. At £200, the DM601 is going to be considerably better than the other two £140 speakers. Yet, we feel that a pair of cheaper models — like the Tannoy and M-S speakers you mention and also the B&W DM302, the Mission 731 Pro and Tangent Monitor 9 — will work better in your system.

Which one is best?

Only you can say. Get thee to a dealer immediately and listen to at least two of these models side by side in a system similar to your own. If you can, spend some extra money on good-quality sand-filled speaker stands and Cable Talk cables.



B&W DM302

Cheap and cheerful speakers!

### Ripening upgrade fever

My present system consists of a Marantz CD-52 mkII, Kenwood KA-3020 amp and a pair of new Mission 733i. The 733is were brought in to cure the lack of deep bass on my old 761is, but the new speakers are showing that the other components are ripe for upgrading. A new job means I'm looking to spend in the region of £1,300 on upgrading, but my problem is to know what proportion to spend on each item.

Common sense tells me the source should be the most expensive item. So if I went to audition CD players at around £700-£800 and amps at £400-£500, would I be on the right track, or should I try and keep an equal weighting? And will the 733i do justice to a source of that price? I bought them as good all-rounders as my music tastes are across the board, and would preferably like to keep them for at least a few years.

Chris Lane, Keele University

In the old days of turntables, you had to spend as much as possible on a source to get past the fundamental limitations of low-cost engineering. However, CD is less of an exercise in mechanical engineering, so the source-first hierarchy is less important than before. While it would be right to adopt a family approach, adding the Cyrus dAD3Q CD, Illi amp to your 733i speakers, it would be equally correct to use a Pioneer PD-S505 Precision CD player with a more expensive Copland CSA8 amplifier, or even the almost-identically-priced Orelle CD-100E with the Densen Beat B-100. Any of these systems would work with your pair of 733i, which you should not need to replace until well into the 21st Century.



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**Sansui system sort-out**

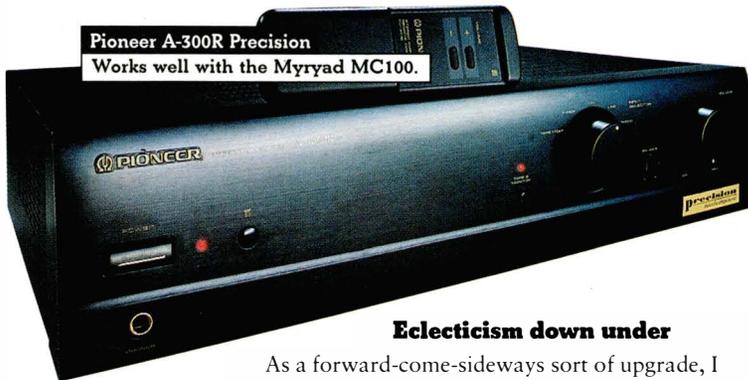
Having been away from the hi-fi scene for some years, I have just acquired a Sansui system. This comprises a SR-222 MkII turntable with original arm and cartridge, an A-40 amplifier, T-60 tuner and D-90 tape deck. I have added a pair of Mordaunt-Short MS-10i speakers and good quality speaker cable. I intend to change the cartridge soon, possibly to either a Rega Bias or an Ortofon 510P.

I wish to buy a CD player and my short-list includes the Denon DCD-825 and DCD-1015. Is it possible to connect the CD to the tape/aux circuit or does it have to be connected to a phono output? I am also considering a change of interconnect cables and at a later stage I might go for a Cambridge Audio A3i. Am I going in the right direction?

C King, Carshalton, Surrey

*The Denon models you suggest — especially the DCD-1015 — are superb players, although we would also advise you to check out the Arcam Alpha 7, Pioneer PD-S505 Precision and the Marantz CD-67SE. Whichever CD you finally choose, use the aux input, NOT the phono input. The latter has a special equalisation circuit that converts the output of a turntable's cartridge to match other line-level sources.*

*On the subject of cartridges, I would choose the Ortofon 510P over the Rega Bias on your deck and arm. Your future amplifier upgrade suggestion is also a good bet, although you should make sure that any other amps have a built-in phono stage, for replaying those records. Finally, Ixos 104 interconnect will suit your kit perfectly.*

**Eclecticism down under**

As a forward-come-sideways sort of upgrade, I intend to change my Cyrus III amp to the new Pioneer A-300R Precision. My reason for the change is down to pure frustration with one of the Cyrus's 3mm speaker sockets, which I had to have repaired recently. Overall I am happy with the Cyrus sound, and I seek more of the same but without continuing hassle.

My other components are: Myryad MC100 CD player and bi-wired Mission 780SE speakers on Atacama SE24 stands, all wired with SonicLink cable.

Is the Precision a good match for the Myryad? Also, which loudspeakers would you recommend for a future upgrade? My eclectic taste in music ranges from The Eagles and 10cc to Enya, Dire Straits and Lisa Stansfield.

David Hancock, Sydney, Australia

*The Precision is a fine amplifier for your system though not as ballsy-sounding as the Cyrus. While the matching Pioneer Precision CD player is a better option here, the combination with the mature-sounding Myryad player should prove highly listenable.*

*An upgrade from the Mission 780SE depends on a number of factors, such as the size, shape and construction of the listening room and your ultimate budget. That said, speakers like the Musical Technology Harrier and the new Acoustic Precision Eikos FR1 should offer a much greater degree of musical insight.*

**Low-flying Kytes**

I have recently upgraded my CD player and amplifier with a Marantz CD-63 Mk II KI Signature and an Orelle SA-100. My speakers are Rega Kytes which are excellent miniatures. However, I am looking for speakers with a bigger all-round performance. I've auditioned the Epos ES14 and was impressed by the bass extension but found the treble a bit restrained.

Could you comment on matching the Epos ES14 to my system, and recommend any alternatives, either large stand-mounts or floorstanders? Could you also suggest any suitable cables and interconnects? My budget is about £800.

B McKoy, Bedford

*The ES14s were designed to work with a Naim NAP 250 power amplifier, which has a much brighter sound amplifier than the SA-100. As a result, the ES14 might sound a little too dark. Likewise most speakers will sound restrained in the treble after Rega Kytes, but ultimately small variations in tonal presentation are less important than overall resolution of dynamics, timing and low level information.*

*Compare the ES14s with some of the following; Linn Keilidh, Mission 753 Freedom and Monitor Audio MA703PMC. Of course, you could always improve the bass extension of your Rega Kytes with the addition of one or even two REL Q-100e subwoofers. This would keep the feel of your existing system but add the extra depth you crave.*

**Low level loquacity**

My system comprises a Rega Planet CD and Brio amplifier with Acoustic Energy AE109 speakers, using Naim cables and Cable Talk Studio 2 interconnects. This system sounds far from its best at lower volume levels, when it loses its clarity. I'm hoping that a better amplifier will improve things. I don't really want to spend more than £400, but I could stretch to £500 if something like an Audiolab 8000A is really worth the effort, especially as I won't be using tone controls or the phono stage. I like a warm sound and a minimalist design. My tastes in music include Orbital, the Prodigy and the Chemical Brothers.

Simon Elmer, London W14

*There seems to be a fundamental mis-match between your amp and speaker. But, up to a point, the problems you face are mostly speaker-based. It would be possible to gain significant improvements with an amplifier like a Musical Fidelity A2 or similar, but otherwise you should change the speakers.*

*Best way to get good results at low volume levels is to use high sensitivity loudspeakers, models with ratings of 90dB or more. Such designs are not necessarily so good at high levels however, so there's an element of compromise. We would suggest you do your utmost to hear one of the following: Royd Doublet, B&W DM602, Dali 104B or TDL RTL3.*



**Small is beautiful**

I have a very small room (3m x 2.5m) which I can use as a listening room. It has a wooden floor on joists, fitted carpet and a unit which can be used as a hi-fi support, with book shelves.

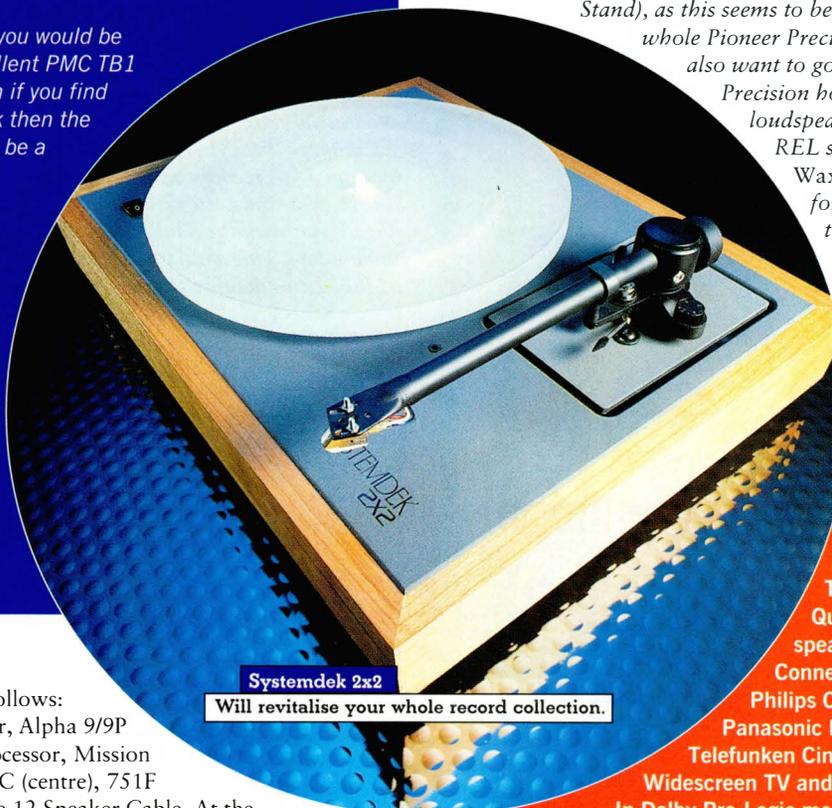
The equipment I have is a Dual turntable, Audiolab 8000C/8000P amplifiers and a Nakamichi CR4E cassette deck. I may add a CD player, perhaps one of the models reviewed by you earlier this year.

My problem is deciding on suitable speakers and cables for classical music in such a room. Living where I do, the difficulty is in physically hearing them before purchase, but speakers can be ordered through dealers. Otherwise, I could wait until the next time I am in mainland Britain.

Edward Inman, Isle of Man

*The perfect speaker for you would be something like the excellent PMC TB1 studio monitor, although if you find this a little too laid-back then the Heybrook Quartet would be a decent alternative.*

*However, before you change any other components in the system, switch turntables. The Dual is just not up to the job: a Rega Planar 3 or a Systemdek 2X2 turntable would be far better bet, and you would transform your record collection, making that CD purchase seem less necessary.*



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**Link on weak link?**

My current system is as follows:

Arcam Alpha 8 CD player, Alpha 9/9P amps, Yamaha E-390 processor, Mission 753F (front speakers), 75C (centre), 751F (rears), QED Silver Profile 12 Speaker Cable. At the moment I have van den Hul The First interconnect between CD and amp — what a great cable...

However, between the two amps I have Cable Talk Monitor 2. I feel this is the weak link so would like to upgrade it. Could you suggest a good cable?

Also, I like surround sound and I am thinking about buying an Alpha 8P power amp to run the centre and rear channels. Has anyone tried this and does it make a worthwhile difference? Any comments are more than welcome!

Mark Watkins, via the Hi-Fi Choice Website

*First, the cables. While we wouldn't call Monitor 2 a weak link, we believe that you should stick to cables with a similar design and outlook, which usually means staying with the same brand name. We would suggest using a brace of vdH carbon cables, eventually replacing all interconnects with The First, if your wallet can stand it. That said, using a £210 interconnect between a £500 integrated amplifier and £400 power amplifier seems to be bizarre budgeting. But if you already have a set of The First and you love them, who are we to argue?*

*For similar compatibility reasons to the cabling, you should buy an Alpha 9P for the centre and front, to match the tonal balance of the rest of the system. The 8P has a softer, warmer sound than the 9P and would sound a bit mis-matched.*



Townshend SSS

**Where do I go from here?**

I have just purchased Pioneer's Precision amplifier and CD player, with Goertz M2 cable and an Atacama Elegance 3 equipment rack. I've kept hold of my Musical Fidelity X-10D, with Sonic Link Silver Pink to connect CD to X-10D and Cable Talk Advanced from X-10D to amplifier. Finally, my speakers are Castle Severns. I think it sounds beautiful, but what do you think?

P Hambry, Isle of Wight

*If you like the sound of your system, why change? You may want to upgrade the equipment stand to a Townshend SSS (Seismic Sink Stand), as this seems to be a perfect foil for the whole Pioneer Precision sound. You may also want to go the whole Pioneer*

*Precision hog, with a pair of Eikos loudspeakers allied to a good REL subwoofer (see Ear Waxings this month); also, for maximum resolution, try replacing the X-10D with Acoustic Precision Eikos interconnect.*

**Hi-fi and home cinema don't mix**

My system comprises a harman/kardon AVI200II amp, a pair of Quadral Rubin speakers, Quadral Base Two speaker, a pair of Quadral Phase Zero rear speakers, Translator Black Connection speaker cable, a Philips CD620 CD player, a Panasonic NV-F55 VCR, a Telefunken Cinevision 24M Widescreen TV and VLS Interlinks.

*In Dolby Pro-Logic mode my system gives a very good sound, the low-ends are powerful, dialogue is very clear and the effects are stunning. But when I switch to stereo and play a CD, my system lacks some power in the low-end. The rest is very good: I like the overall sound, except the depth of the bass.*

*Recently I read about the Musical Fidelity X-Tone. Would this be a solution to my problem or should I add a subwoofer? My room is 3.5m x 5 m and very high (about 2.5 m). Peter Haaima, Groningen, The Netherlands.*

*We don't know of either Quadral speakers or Translator cables, but we still feel that you have discovered one of the most common problems of home cinema, especially with lower priced kit — it just doesn't mix with hi-fi too well.*

*This could be due to the presence of a TV between the two front speakers, or the sheer profusion of speakers in the listening room, but we have found that if you start with hi-fi, the system tends to pay lip service to home cinema (and vice versa) unless you are very careful.*

*Adding tone controls, cables or external DACs may ameliorate the problems, but the only fundamental cure will be to rebuild the audio part of your system. We would advise you to audition home cinema components from companies with a hi-fi reputation, for example Arcam and Tannoy.*

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**WHAT HI-FI?**

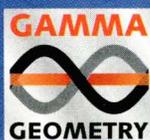


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## HELP!

### ◀ Whither JM Labs?

I have recently upgraded my CD player to a Rotel RCD975 but the rest of my system is still a remnant of mismatched purchases from back in the '80s. It consists of a JVC JA-S22 amplifier and Wharfedale Glendale speakers. An upgrade to QED Qudos speaker cable improved things but the rest of the rig does no justice to the RCD975.

Recently I auditioned a pair of JM Labs speakers in Holland through the Rotel RC970BX MKII and RA970BX pre-power amplifier and liked it a lot, but have not been able to find a dealer in England or Ireland.

Can you recommend any other suitable speakers? I listen mainly to jazz and classical. I like my music detailed and often listen at low volume in the evenings.

*Philip Tran, via the Internet*

*Fortunately, your worries are over. JM Labs now has a British distributor, in the guise of Sound Image UK ☎ (0181) 255 6868. Sound Image will be able to point you in the direction of a good dealer. Add these speakers to the Rotel amplifiers you like and you will have the makings of a great system.*



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## HINTS & TIPS

### TIDY IS AS TIDY DOES...

**Jimmy Hughes gets domestic — does a messy listening room really affect hi-fi sound?**

**D**uring the long hot spell last August I went to see an old hi-fi friend for a chat and a listen to his system. He complained things weren't sounding quite right, and I said it probably had something to do with the very hot weather we'd had recently. Equipment may perform better when it is nice and warm, but if the room is hot and stuffy the result is often thick boomy bass and a lack of sparkle at high frequencies. Certainly, you'll get crisper, keener sound at lower room temperatures.

As we sat and talked, I noticed a few other things. For starters he had half-a-dozen CD cases piled up on top of the CD player, and a bunch of LPs leaning casually against the turntable stand. Nothing wrong with that you might say, but to me it's a potential sonic hazard. I'm hardly the tidiest person in the world, but I am careful with CDs and LPs, and never leave them on top of CD players, amplifiers, or speakers.

Surely something as innocuous as this can't affect sound quality; it seems unlikely, I know. But when I did remove the CD

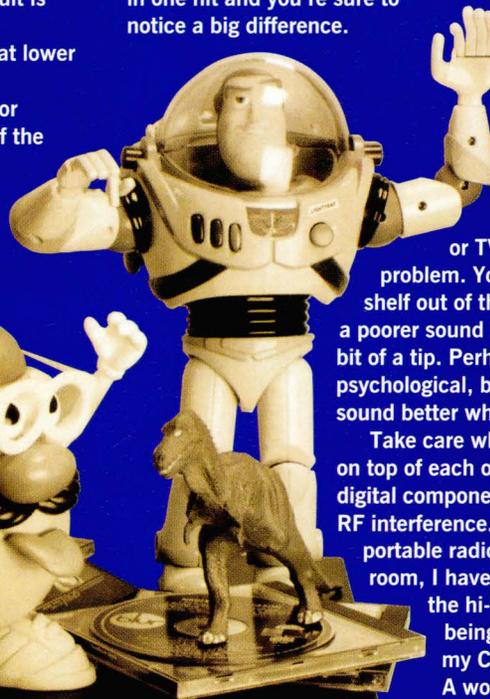
cases from the top of his player the sound changed, increasing in sharpness and focus. We both noticed a worthwhile improvement; the music seemed slightly louder and more dimensional, projecting into the room more positively, rather than merely sounding 'flat'.

Everyone knows hi-fi components are affected by what they stand on, yet no-one seems to appreciate they're sensitive to things placed on them. Perhaps if we're dealing with just a single item placed on (say) a preamp or CD player, the difference might be small. But if you've got several CDs (or books, magazines, newspapers, or even worse, a battery-operated electronic item) sitting on one or more components, the cumulative effect can be quite large. Clear everything away in one hit and you're sure to notice a big difference.

Other electronic items in the room may also affect the perceived sound of the hi-fi. Removing a pile of CDs from the top of a preamp, and placing them on a video recorder or TV set, only shifts the problem. You need to put them on a shelf out of the way. I notice I often get a poorer sound if my listening room is a bit of a tip. Perhaps it's partly psychological, but things just seem to sound better when the room is fairly tidy!

Take care when you stack components on top of each other, especially 'noisy' digital components that throw out lots of RF interference. If I bring my little FM portable radio into the main listening room, I have to keep it well away from the hi-fi to prevent the signal being swamped by noise from my CD player.

A worst case might involve a CD player immediately on top of a preamp, especially if the preamp has a sensitive moving-coil phono stage. So keep separate bits of hi-fi apart wherever this is practical.



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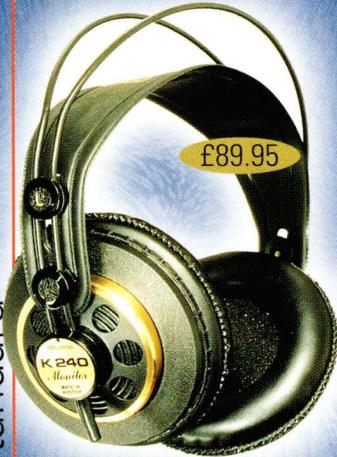


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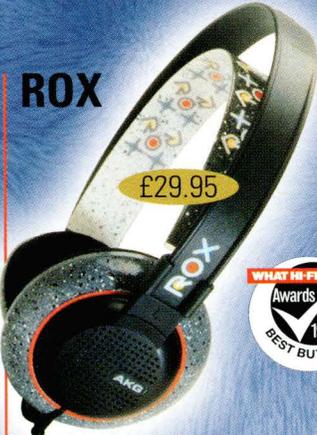
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# So high, Solo

Micromega has a new, improved high-end CD contender. **Alan Sircom** test-drives the Solo.

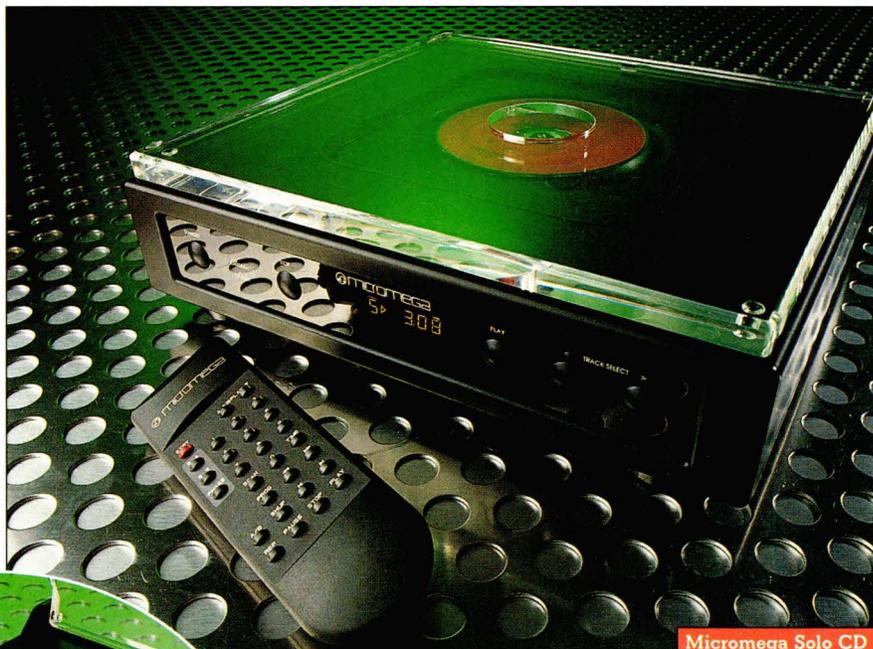
**A** few years ago, Micromega enjoyed a very high profile as purveyor of high-end CD electronics to the great and good. Micromega's Classic Line CD players were musical and exciting, light years ahead of the competition for sheer lyricism. But then the Classic Line's Solo, Duo and Trio fell foul of European Union CE marking regulations, and all required considerable modifications to get past some of the more Draconian parts of the certification process.

So a major redesign was on the cards. The original plan was to retire the products for a season, before they re-emerged, CE-marked and better than ever. Unfortunately it turned out that there was more to this task than first expected, so the products took a long sabbatical and will now enjoy a radical relaunch. The Duo is gone, having been replaced by the Data transport and Dialogue DAC. The Trio is gone too, and unfortunately it will not be replaced. But the Solo continues — albeit in name only.

The new Solo (£2,750) is very different from its predecessor. It doesn't look too different, however, and aficionados will recognise the distinctive top-loading mechanism with clear acrylic cover. But the new model features a centrally-mounted CD mechanism and more rounded styling.

The die-cast CDM 12 industrial-quality CD mechanism is fitted with a unique floating suspension that has the longest transport screws known to man. All of these factors conspire to make the Solo much less fussy about partnering equipment supports than any of its predecessors, although it tends to prefer the more up-market tables of the Mana, RATA, DNM Reson or Townshend ilk.

As you'll find with most top-loading designs, the player's disc-clamping puck is not fixed to the top cover. However, it is connected to a mat of carbon-fibre, from which it has an alarming propensity for detaching itself. Not the kind of problem one expects to encounter at this price-point.



Micromega Solo CD

With Bitstream DAC and high-current output stage, Solo sings sweetly.

The presence of Philips components is not restricted to the CD mechanism. Under the hood you'll find Philips'

T D A 1 5 4 7 (DAC7) chipset

beats at the heart of the machine, deployed in conjunction with an eight-times-oversampling digital filter and fourth-order noise shaper. It uses Micromega's own 'low-phase-noise master clock' oscillator.

And, just downstream from the unit's output sockets, lurks a Class A output stage which is rumoured to be capable of more than one amp's current supply. There are both XLR balanced and single-ended phono outputs, and the coaxial digital output is switchable.

In keeping with many high-end products, the elegant-looking Solo needs a few days to run in before it will perform at its best — maybe to negate the effect of being skewed with those long transit screws! But just a day or two after being moved and plugged in again, it's right back on form. And when it is on form, it seems like a force to be reckoned with in the digital world.

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## Micromega's mellifluous midband

More than almost every CD player I've heard to date, the Micromega produces a mid-band bereft of digital unpleasantness. It offers the greatest degree of transparency I've heard from hi-fi. Even if that was all the Micromega Solo had to offer, it would be more than commendable.

Fortunately, the rest of the frequency range is pretty hot, too. There is a touch of fine granularity to the treble that Paul Miller dubs 'dirty digits', which does propose the Solo more for the rock canon than the classical. Otherwise the sound is wonderfully musical. Bass lines are well proportioned; grunt and depth are balanced nicely. A sense of charming naturalness pervades the Solo and everything it touches. Add to this a bouncy, infectious sense of rhythm, and that expansive, lyrical mid-band, and you have sound quality that is hard to beat.

To draw a parallel with the world of music, this is the kind of CD player that Phil Spector would have produced. Everything is larger than life and casts a wide soundstage. Unlike Spector's Wall of Sound, though, the Micromega Solo has height and even depth in its sound. As such, this is one of the most characterful CD players available on the market. And therein lies the rub. If you like this player, you will love it; if not, forget it. As for me — I love it!

Musical Design Company ☎ (01992) 573 030

# Red Hot & Blue

From the guys who brought you the Eikos CD player, a speaker. **Jason Kennedy** says: whatever you do, don't step on my blue suede enclosure. . .



**W**hen the Trichord Genesis CD player was launched three years ago, inherent in its arrival was the promise of a complete 'phase-linear' system. The Acoustic Precision Eikos FR1 speaker is, effectively, the final third of that system. It does not arrive under the Genesis banner, however; its progenitor, Tom Evans, is now the doyen of a different company. The system's heart is the Pioneer A-300R Precision amp (*HFC* 162), which of course was modified by... yes, you guessed, Evans the Tweak. There's a matching Pioneer Precision CD player (PD-S505, *HFC* 166). And don't forget AP's own CD player, reviewed in *HFC* 165.

Ted Jordan, founding father of metal-cone drive-unit technology, designed the 92mm broad-band driver; Paddy Hanscombe, of Electrofluidics, designed the cabinet; and Tom Evans planted the seed of the project and brought it to fruition. By any measure, this small-company product benefits from major-league expertise.

I suspect that, as in most things, the FR1's success derives from the simplicity of its design. It has only two components: a controlled-flexure aluminium cone that requires no crossover; and a high-density, low-mass cabinet. The finished speaker weighs only three-and-a-half pounds, yet its walls are 30mm thick. By the pound it costs £114.14; for a pair you'll pay £799.

#### The measure of the box

Overall dimensions of 249x174x280mm (HxWxD) place it firmly in the bookshelf category, and give rise to the inevitable first question: how will it produce any bass from a small, sealed box with one four-inch driver? It shares its four-litre internal volume with that definitive bookshelf monitor, the BBC LS3/5A, and claims a response with -3dB points at 65Hz and 17kHz. So with no port resonating at 50Hz and no wooden cabinet singing along, inevitably it sounds bass-light compared to many bookshelf speakers. You'd be forgiven also for suspecting that the

FR1 presents a tough load to amplifiers, but because there are no energy-sapping crossover components, no amp will be strained if it has the power to accommodate this design's low 86dB sensitivity. The lack of crossover allows low-frequency roll-off to be a mild 6dB/octave, which suggests output will be 12dB down at 20Hz.

Though this is a radical design, it is underpinned by a rationale of fundamental nature. When you have one 'full-range' drive unit without a crossover, immediately you solve a problem that afflicts all speakers with two or more drive units: the need to integrate the wavefronts of various origins into a cohesive whole that the ear can comprehend. Furthermore, it is a point source, which has benefits for the quality of stereo imagery. The low-mass cabinet has the enormous advantage of very low amplitude resonance and the inability to store energy; think about how much noise a cardboard box makes when you hit it, compared to a wooden one, and you should get the picture.

This is not the first time hi-fi has witnessed low-mass speaker enclosures. In the early '80s there was a classic model from Celestion, the SL600, which used aluminium aerolam. Though both light and stiff it did not have the self-damping properties of the honeycomb-structure co-polymer used in the FR1. On another tack, I suspect that amps and signal sources of the era, designed for inherently coloured loudspeakers, were not equal to the task of driving a low-colouration speaker.

#### Colour by numbers

Coloration is the key word here — or rather, the lack of it. Combine the Eikos FR1 with an amp or source of character, and that character will be revealed in all of its glory... or notoriety. To describe this speaker is essentially to describe the music and equipment playing through it; it can be defined only by comparison with other, more coloured speakers. How do I know other speakers are more coloured? Because they have much lower resolution. Never have I heard hi-fi resolution of the kind perceived while I auditioned the FR1. And the amazing thing is that all of this was conjured up by Pioneer's £400 Precision amplifier. Only when you've

heard Pioneer with Eikos FR1 can you appreciate the former's strengths. Having said that, I deeply regret that I could not keep the Jeff Rowland Concentra (HFC 171) long enough to try it with these speakers. No doubt they would have made the most of the £5,500 amp's resolving powers. In the absence of such an audiophile aristocrat, however, the Pioneer Precision amp triumphed over all rivals. Sure, it benefited from exalted sources: Acoustic Precision's Eikos CD player; SME 20A/SME V/ Dynavector XX-1 record player; and Michell Iso HR phono preamp. I used Kudos and Mana stands and supports, Electrofluidics and Acoustic Precision signal interconnects and speaker cabling, and mains cables by Russ Andrews and Living Voice.

### The flat response

Before I hymn this speaker's virtues, I must reveal its limitations. Most noticeable is the lack of serious bass: the -3dB frequency (at which output is half the average output level through the midband) is 65Hz, which is an octave-and-a-half off the bottom. The lack of overhang or boom only enhances this perception. A subwoofer-cum-stand is in the pipeline to address the issue, but in the meantime, either listeners will have to learn to live with less bass welly (surprisingly easy once you realise what you're getting in exchange), or invest in the best subwoofer around. I did both, using the solo FR1s for two weeks, then installing a REL Studio II (more on this in *Ear Waxings*, p17). In both instances the results were addictive.

The second disclaimer is related to loudness: this is not a headbanging loudspeaker, but because it has such low distortion (and for that matter limited bass extension) you don't get loudness in the traditional, appealing, distorted style. FR1 stays clean right up to the wire, then it complains.

Those caveats aside, the essence of this speaker is in its ability to communicate all the nuances, shapes and colours of the music it is served. Even with music you've heard a hundred times through great hi-fi systems, the Audio Precision enclosures will show you what's really going on within those pits or microgrooves. I think it's to do with their reproduction of the depth in sound as well as its height and width. The subtle but critical stuff that turns sounds into instruments and makes lyrics distinguishable. That's the only way I can explain the degree of extra information I have heard. I thought I had three-dimensional stereo when the first Trichord Clock mod hit my Cambridge CD3, but it wasn't really getting through my speakers. Now it is, music is so engrossing and varied that I wonder how much more could be achieved with better amplification.

### Record reincarnation

The best thing about these speakers is the way they rejuvenate your record collection. Hitherto uninspiring wares reveal their



The FR1's solitary active ingredient: a 92mm-diameter aluminium cone designed by Jordan.

magic; cuts that sound great on radio suddenly develop 'serious' system cred. Heavily layered or sampled music (such as DJ Shadow and Coldcut) comes alive with spatial dynamics and slabs of sound shifting around the room, way beyond the speakers. Material that was once mere cacophony (albeit with cult status) turns into meaningful composition. These speakers remove the shackles on musical appreciation. Just as fighter-aircraft turning circles are only limited by the amount of centrifugal force a pilot can endure, with the FR1 the pleasures of 12-tone dissonant music are only limited by human faculties of comprehension.

Within its frequency range and at normal

listening levels, the Eikos FR1 knows no peer. It has speed, coherence, timing, imaging, dynamics and transparency. Knock off a point for lack of bass extension, but otherwise this is as clean a loudspeaker as I have experienced in my listening room. Just don't sling it into any old system and expect it to give of its best. Be prepared to sacrifice amps and CD players whose less delightful aspects have been clouded hitherto by average speakers — it may be a painful process, but I guarantee the result will be worth it. Remember, you got into hi-fi because you wanted to hear more of the music. With the Eikos FR1, now you can. ▲

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# Take the tube

Alan Sircom continues his Audio Research with a valve-based power amplifier of the VT100 variety.

**L**ast month's digital *Statements* from Audio Research (CD2 CD player) made us hungry for more. Fortunately, more came in the guise of the £4,390 VT100 vacuum-tube stereo power amplifier.

Although the company has branched out into digital audio, surround sound and even the odd cable or two, the mighty reputation of Audio Research Corp (ARC) has been built around top-class valve amplifiers. Founder, William Z Johnson, was originally a legendary hi-fi hot-rodder of the '50s and '60s, and gained a reputation for making magnificent sounds with Dynaco valve power amps of the day. ARC was founded in Minneapolis, USA, in 1970. Since then, many Audio Research products have become hi-fi classics, and now command very high second-hand resale values. The VT100 looks all set to join that honoured list.

The all-valve VT100 is based around the circuitry developed for the Audio Research Reference Series of flagship power amplifiers. These amplifiers run in fully-balanced mode, and the VT100 is no exception, but ARC has recognised commercial reality by including a single-ended input option, which can only be used by fitting a jumper plug into the XLR socket.

As you would guess from the numbers in its name, the VT100 is claimed to be a 100 Watt design that delivers its power output in Class AB. To achieve this there is a valve complement of four 6922 twin triodes for input and driver stages, and two matched pairs of 6550 output pentodes per channel. No fashion conscious single-ended triode design, this one!

The power supply is a fully-regulated 270 joule affair. This is distributed between two isolated output circuit boards for short signal paths. There is true dual-mono operation back to the main power transformer.

Output transformers, meanwhile, are ultralinear and benefit also from partial cathode coupling to lower the output impedance. This has the effect of making the amplifier more tolerant of different loudspeaker loads.



Audio Research VT100

A valve amplifier from America that's subtle enough for English tastes.

## Hot air

As usual with ARC products, the big amplifier comes complete with a thick, milled-alloy front panel. Quite a lot of open space has been left within the amp's chassis, deliberately, to keep air circulating efficiently enough for fan cooling to be unnecessary. The footprint is 500mm x 500mm, and the unit stands 220mm high. Despite all this creative use of air, however, the amp is no lightweight, and weighs in at a substantial 29.5kg. All input and output terminals are custom made and heavily gold-plated.

If you're of the opinion that valve amplifiers are warm-sounding and not exactly neutral, the VT100 will come as a bit of a shock. A shock because it sounds like it should be in a studio — one of the best-sounding studios on the planet. By contrast, the majority of other power amplifiers appear to modify the sound in some way, shape or form. Some try to wrap the sound in rhythm by accenting leading edges of notes, others do the opposite by blunting the same in favour of a smooth sound, while still more seem to go off on a tangent and end up

with a sound that is very shiny and 'hi-fi' but not true to the original. None of these options is bad, they are just alternatives.

However, the VT100 is simply neutral. It seems content not to over-emphasise or exaggerate, yet neither does it underplay the life in the music. Play an album, and if it is well-recorded it will sound fantastic; on the other hand, it will do nothing to glamorise a poor recording.

As a consequence, this is not the easiest amplifier to categorise. It keeps moving the goalposts, depending on the music and ancillary equipment. Use the wrong components and the sound falls flat on its face; play the wrong disc and everything will be on display, good or bad. If there is a sound-stage, it will portray it accurately; if not, the sound could just as well be monophonic.

For all this, however, it is a most agreeable amplifier to live with. Best used in the context of other ARC components with revealing cables and loudspeakers (Wilson Audio, B&W or Wilson benesch for example), the amplifier does its job quietly and efficiently. This is not faint praise: there is only a handful of products that can perform this task so honestly and without false élan.

In short, there are few amplifiers that can match the VT100 for tonal honesty. If you seek fidelity in your high-fidelity system, this is one of the power amps to beat. ▲

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# A clean slate

Jason Kennedy chalks up quality time with a pair of speakers housed in metamorphic rock.

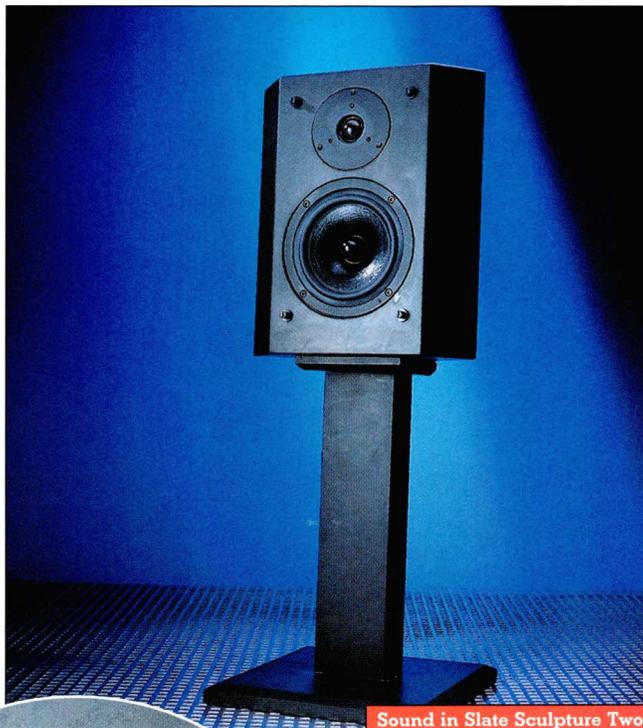
**M**ost hi-fi designers agree that wood is not the best material from which to fabricate loudspeaker enclosures. It does lend itself very well to modern mass-manufacturing techniques, but more and more companies are trying out alternative cabinet materials in the hope of making lower-coloration, higher-resolution loudspeakers. The Sculpture series from Sound In Slate is a perfect example of such radical thinking.

It should not be too contentious to suggest that if a material is rigid at audio frequencies, it offers an excellent basis for a speaker. Slate is just such a material, and very elegant, too. It's extremely dense and inert, but I guess reasons of cost and inherent constructional complications have prohibited its wider application in hi-fi.

Until now the only other slate hi-fi product has been Slate Audio's speaker stand, which has gained an enviable reputation in a market dominated by welded steel. Over the years there have been a number of high-mass speaker cabinets made out of plaster, concrete and concrete/polymer mixes, yet none has received universal

acclaim. Wood, with all its problems, still seems to dominate the scene, most probably because the majority of drive units have been developed using wooden cabinets.

The Sculpture series is made up of two models: the Sculpture One at £2,350 plus stands; and our candidate here, the Sculpture Two, at £2,937.50 per pair including slate stands. If fashioned from more conventional materials, this product would cost only about a third of the price. According to Sound in Slate, this is because its own raw material is expensive to source and shape into the eight-sided cabinets that are utilised in both models. The Sculpture Two measures a medium-compact



Sound in Slate Sculpture Two  
With 28mm Morel tweeter and 180mm  
IPL mid/bass. Inset: Michell sockets.



380x320x130mm (HxWxD), and is one of the highest-density loudspeakers I've lugged around.

The drive unit complement in the Two comprises a 28mm Morel tweeter paired with a 180mm IPL mid/bass unit, both being rebated into a sealed cabinet with a solitary pair of

Michell binding posts occupying a circular recess at rear. Not a badge in sight. The quoted specs describe a decent 40Hz to 25kHz bandwidth, a low-ish 85dB sensitivity and a reasonably tame impedance response. Not a tough load — but hardly a push-over, either.

### Between a rock and a hard place

I listened to the Sculptures both in the *Hi-Fi Choice* review studio and at home, in concert with amplifiers including the Musical Fidelity A1001 and AVI S2000MI reviewed in this issue, and the trusty Pioneer A-300R Precision. The results I obtained reflected the input applied in a quite dramatic fash-

ion, and of the amps used in the studio the AVI just clinched it. Either way, the speaker was sensitive to the quality of ancillaries, which is a good sign.

The first impression I recorded was of really tight timing — it is on the ball at all times, making light work of even complex musical rhythms. At times I would have liked a better idea of tones in the bass registers, but on experimenting with different room positions I discovered the Sculpture Two is much more fussy than most speakers about its favourite spot. Put them too close to the wall and the bass booms; pull them out a couple of feet and things seem to gel — the image gets away from the boxes and into centre stage.

The speaker grilles turned out to play a more significant rôle than usual. They are felt-lined and fit tightly on the speaker, suggesting more than average thought has gone into their design. Removed, they made the sound more coherent but inclined to very slight midrange glare; replaced, they relaxed the balance but also dispelled some of the magic. By 'toeing-in' the speakers (turning them to face one another) to a large degree, but perhaps there is scope for fine-tuning of the design in this regard.

There is good bass extension for such a compact design. I was impressed with the way it added substance to music, adding weight to the left-hand of pianists like Mal Waldron. This is where the slate really makes its mark: good bass weight seems to be a feature of dense speaker cabinets.

Clearly the Sculpture Two is a very interesting loudspeaker. It fulfils many of the criteria considered essential for hi-fi reproduction, and even plays loud without effort, but it faces serious competition at this price. The cabinet material is definitely a winner, and I believe it will yield stunning results in future. I would be very interested to hear the fruits of a liaison between Sound in Slate and another Welsh practitioner out on the South-West peninsula — Ted Jordan. His drivers work particularly well in non-wooden boxes, and would surely be showcased to great effect in such inert enclosures. ▲

Sound In Slate ☎ (01286) 830 242

# 1001

## An Amp Odyssey

A1000 is dead. Long live A1001! In this world exclusive review, **Alan Sircom** grapples with the new flagship integrated amp from Musical Fidelity.

**M**usical Fidelity's A1000 has been widely considered one of the nicest-sounding amps around. This 'pre/main' amplifier — essentially an integrated amp with an off-board power supply — has also been considered one of the hottest amplifiers ever made, thanks to most of its 50 Watts output being delivered in Class A.

Some three months ago the A1000 retired to make way for the all-new A1001, which is priced at £2,499. This looks like an A1000, but trades the former's phono stage for a convenience-boosting remote control handset. It offers five line-level inputs and a tape loop — vinyl users will have to deploy a phono preamp such as MF's X-LP.

Like its predecessor the A1001 is contained within a single box, but still commands an imposing physical presence by virtue of sheer bulk. The new beast weighs in at a back-breaking 30kg, has a footprint of 475mm wide by 540mm deep, and stands 164mm high. Exercise extreme caution before siting it on a wall-shelf! Suitably-sized hi-fi furniture is available from Target and Quadraspire, for example.

### Circuit training

In-circuit topology the A1001 has changed substantially from the A1000. Its predecessor's 50 Watts, pure Class A output has been abandoned in favour of a hefty claimed 200 Watts of high-bias Class AB. This, says Musical Fidelity, allows the amplifier to run cooler and draw less mains power, while retaining much of the Class A sound. There are separate, distinct preamplifier and dual monoblok power amp sections, which are said to eliminate interactions between amplifier components and ameliorate interconnect cable effects.



Musical Fidelity A1001

Coffee tables beware: the monster A1001 is too big for a standard-sized hi-fi equipment rack.

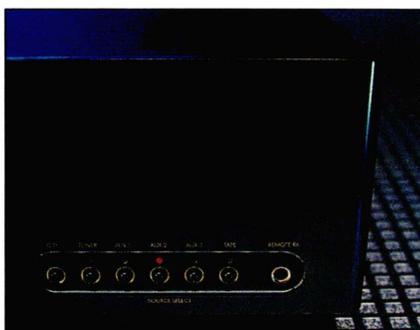
Each stage in the amplifier circuit has its own transformer, and each transformer is shielded to prevent interference with the preamp circuitry. The preamplifier is said to be fully discrete, and to use high-current pre-driver transistors working entirely in Class A. The power amplifiers, allegedly, are very similar to the output stages used in the

MF X-A50 monobloks reviewed in *HFC* 169, but with greater power.

### Your flexible friend

The A1001 can become either part of a two-box amplifier system. Its rear-panel has pre-amp output and power-amp input sockets, which are factory linked with gold-plated removable connectors. This means you can use the amp with an AV processor or some form of tone-control device (naturally, MF would probably recommend the X-TONE module). Intriguingly there is a second set of preamplifier outputs, to facilitate bi-amping and multi-room applications.

The A1001 certainly generates a significantly greater amount of heat than most hi-fi amps, but it runs a great deal cooler than the A1000. But perhaps the convection is



Five line inputs are offered, and a tape loop.

fundamental to its sound, which is very appropriate to the heavyweight nature of its casework. Not since Muhamad Ali at his peak have power and grace been combined so successfully, and certainly not in a one-box amplifier.

It tracks the pace of music in the manner of a lithe little 20 Watt amp, conveying a natural and infectious sense of rhythm. Yet there is also a sense of effortlessness proceeding from the prodigious power at its disposal (see Lab Report). This is a boon for the hills and dales of Rachmaninov.

In hi-fi musical reproduction there is a fine but crucial line between a sense of relaxation and an impression of being too laid back. The A1001 treads this line with aplomb. There is a subtle but distinct grain perceived in treble registers, leading to fine, natural but ever-so-slightly 'woody' tones, which are a classic signature of Musical Fidelity's amps. This character lends itself to all kinds of music, from the simplicity of early choral compositions to driving rock tracks from today and yesterday. Often critics refer to this as an acquired taste, but in my opinion the flavour is very easy to acquire, is hard to forget, and leaves alternatives seeming distinctly bland.

### Possible partners

I listened to the A1001 with the Micromega Solo (see p49) and AVI S2000MC (see p14) CD players, hooked up with MF's own X-LINX interconnects. On the other end of the system, with Audio Note AN-B speaker cable, I hooked up the Kelly Acoustics KT3 speakers developed by MF themselves (*Personal Messages*, HFC 171; p146 this issue), Audio Note AN-E, and AVI Positron (p14). With all of these components a slightly 'squeaky' treble was the only factor

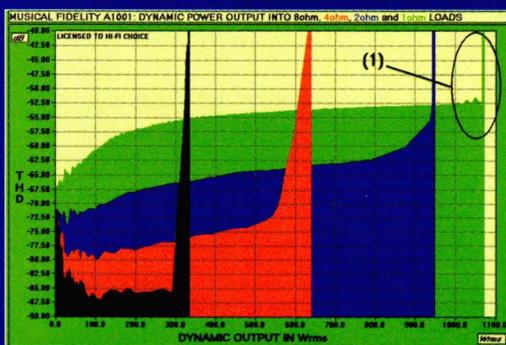


See that volume knob? It's no ordinary volume knob. Twist it and watch the street lamps dim.

to remind one that this behemoth was not a multi-thousand-pound high-end monster. The effect caused a slight degree of nasality, for example making massed violins begin to resemble clarinets. But only inappropriate speakers, such as horn-loaded designs or Rehdekos, would exacerbate this effect. The A1001 just tells the truth about music where the A1000 or the X-A50s might have offered a more euphonious opinion.

The A1001 adds a purposeful undercurrent to the warmth and charming sophistication of its forebear. It's like James Bond films over the years: the A1000 is suave in the *Live And Let Die*/Roger Moore manner; while the A1001 is much more of a Sean Connery. Elegance is omnipresent, different characters are underlying. And, after all, we know which actor played Bond best... ▲  
Musical Fidelity ☎ (0181) 900 2866

## MUSICAL FIDELITY A1001 - LAB REPORT BY PAUL MILLER



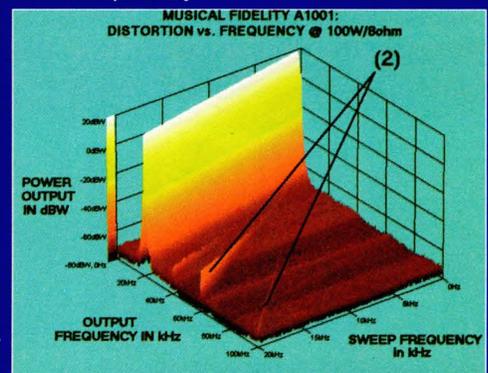
**W**hile promoting the benefits of its new, very-high-sensitivity Kelly loudspeakers, Musical Fidelity is simultaneously launching one of the UK's most powerful integrated amplifiers. The A1001 is a massive amp designed to clobber any speaker in its path. (Or, according to MF, to permit realistic musical dynamics at concert-class listening levels - *Ed*). It delivers 275Watts through the midband into eight Ohms, but only 250Watts at 20Hz. 450Watts are avail-

able into four Ohms (420Watts both channels driven). Under dynamic, music-like conditions, the A1001 stretches its reach to 340Watts, 640Watts, 940Watts and 1070Watts into eight, four, two and one Ohm loads (black, red, blue and green graph traces, respectively). This represents a maximum current delivery of 37.3A over 5msec or 32.7A over 10msec, beyond which we can see the amplifier collapses very abruptly indeed

(1). Then again, 1kWatt capacity should be enough for most applications!

With such power at its disposal, it's good to see that MF has engineered a low 0.02 Ohm output impedance. The 4V input overload limit is clearly short of the 12V-16V commonly encountered, however, even though it does leave +6dB of headroom above the 2V output of most CD players. Noise is very low at 88dB (re. 1Watt/eight Ohms)

while the enriched biasing of its output stage holds THD to <0.006 per cent across the audioband up to 10 Watts or so. At higher power, however, odd-order distortions can be seen increasing rather abruptly to 0.045 per cent at HF. So, despite the prodigious output of the A1001, it will still sound very different at low and high powers and, therefore, with high and low sensitivity speakers respectively.





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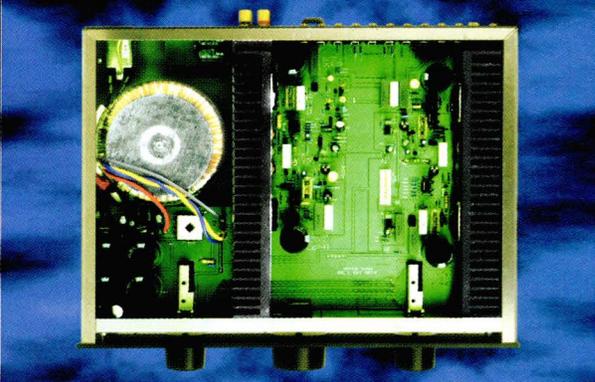
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\*Answers at the bottom of the page for those without web access.

### Have you ever wondered...

- 1 Which is the most expensive amplifier in the World?
- 2 How many drive units in the Mission 753 Freedom?
- 3 What is the name of Benz-Micro's most expensive cartridge?
- 4 What is the best CD player for £350 or under?

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1 The Audio Note Gaku On, at a basic price of £159,500, is probably the most expensive commercially manufactured amplifier package in the world. And it's only a power amp. 2 Five drive units in total, four 130mm pistillexed-paper, long throw mid bass units, and a 27mm silk dome tweeter. 3 Benz Micro's most expensive cartridge is the fully Open Air moving coil, priced at £1,600 and available from AudioReaks in the UK. 4 One of the best value CD players priced below £350 is the Cambridge Audio CD45FC, which received an HFC Best Buy in issue 163. We'll assess the latest crop budget CDs in our December 1997 issue.

# In-Head Entertainment

David Vivian dons his cans in search of the best headphone equipment around.



**I**gnore the humble headphone and you're missing out on one of hi-fi's greatest bargains. Consider. For a modest outlay you can buy your very own acoustically optimised listening environment. No awkwardly placed sofas, no wobbly, boom-inducing floorboards, no irate neighbours thumping on the partition wall. Just you and a pair of tiny, comfortably mounted, perfectly positioned transducers — miniature marvels of technology — delivering pure, unadulterated music directly into your lug holes.

If you own a good pair of headphones then you're half way to owning a high-quality hi-fi system. If you want, you can thumb your nose at expensive amplifiers and loudspeakers. And you don't have to find a big room to put them in. A good £200 CD player with a headphone socket and volume control is all you need. Or a similarly

equipped cassette deck or MiniDisc player. True liberation comes when you plug your cans into a pocket-friendly personal. A spokesman for Sennheiser said more and more people are discarding the ear-plug-style items that come with palm-sized players, for full-sized 'audiophile' models (nearly all have dual-size jack plugs these days), and to hell with the sideways glances.

There are even cordless models that effectively cut the physical umbilical between you and the source component. You can even push the performance of your 'phones still higher, by purchasing a natty little headphone amp. This will faithfully preserve the quality of the source at the same time as serving up more power and control to drive headsets with low sensitivity or tricky impedance ratings.

The truth is, a decent pair of cans will get you closer to the music. You'll hear detail you never knew existed, experience tonal and transient accuracy beyond the grasp of all but a handful of high-end speakers, and witness production effects just as they left the mixing desk. Great.

Sounds too good to be true, doesn't it? Well, you didn't expect me to kick off with the drawbacks. There are a few. First, if you don't like the way headphones create a soundstage inside your bonce rather than outside and in front of it, it's unlikely you'll ever be seduced by even the best performers in this giant test.

A few more points. Using even the most comfortable headphones is more tiring than listening to speakers. Whether it's a numb skull, itchy ears or the rather odd between-the-ears stereo, it's always something of a relief to take them off after a long session. Especially if you've been playing your music loud. Because distortion levels are so low,

## THE CAST LIST

MODEL	PRICE	PAGE
Amity HPA2	approx £200	p65
Beyerdynamic DT-511	£116.33	p61
Creek OBH	£129.00	p67
Denon AH-D750	£129.99	p61
Grado SR40	£45.00	p62
JVC HA-W60	£49.99	p68
Musical Fidelity X-Cans	£129.95	p67
Philips SBC 3396	£74.99	p62
Philips SBC HP9000	£89.99	p63
Sennheiser HD 475	£79.95	p63
Sennheiser HD 545 Ref	£124.95	p64
Sennheiser IS 380s	£54.95	p70
Sony MDR-F1	£199.99	p64
Technics RP-DJ1200	£129.95	p65
Vivanco FMH 3000s	£79.99	p70
Vivanco IR 5800s	£49.99	p70

volume can be higher than it seems. But beware. Too much ear-drum bashing will damage your hearing permanently.

Which, of course, is counter-productive. Over the next 10 pages, you'll discover that for what, in hi-fi terms, amounts to a pocket of beans, you can climb more rungs of the ladder to sonic nirvana than you imagined possible.

We've divided our coverage into three sections for this review. The main focus is dynamic headphones in the burgeoning £50-£200 bracket, including nine models from the likes of Sennheiser, Beyerdynamic, Grado, Denon, Philips, Sony and Technics. The cordless corner is fought by infra-red units from Sennheiser, Vivanco and JVC and the innovative Vivanco "Cyberwave" which uses FM radio as a signal carrier. Finally, we've given three tasty headphone amps a spin round the block to see which does the most to turbocharge the headphone listening experience.

### HOW THE TESTS WERE DONE

The reference equipment used to carry out these tests consisted of the following:  
Pioneer PD-S904/Musical Fidelity X-DAC,  
Meridian 602 transport and 603 DAC,  
Denon DCD-825.

Interconnects by Audioquest.

Digital interconnects by van den Hul.

Sennheiser HD600 headphones

(upper reference and headphone amps).

### WHAT MUSIC DID WE USE?

**Sheryl Crow:** *Sheryl Crow* on A&M Records Inc

**Marcus Miller:** *Marcus Miller Live & More* on Dreyfus Jazz

**Walter Becker:** *11 Tracks of Whack* on Giant Records

**Joni Mitchell:** *The Hissing of Summer Lawns* on Elektra/Asylum Records

**John Williams:** *Schindler's List* on MCA

**Steve Vai:** *Fire Garden* on Sony Music

**Bobby Lyle:** *The Power of Touch* on Atlantic Jazz

**Supertramp:** *Some Things Never Change* on EMI

**BEYERDYNAMIC DT 511**

These semi-open-style German headphones purport to deliver audiophile sound quality at an affordable price. Up front claims include powerful bass coupled with dynamic mid-range and top frequencies, to bridge that tiresome gap between performance and cost. An obvious nonsense, though, is the telephone-style coiled signal cord. Unless you grab the cord to play in some slack it will try to rip the 'phones off your head if you sit more than a metre away.

Perhaps the coiled cord is meant to contribute to the "pro" appearance. Beyer's house style is every bit as distinctive as Sennheiser's: big circular ear pieces, voluptuous velour-roll ear pads (a fetching silver in this case), two-piece headband. Cool. Snug and comfy, too.

The response, power-handling and distortion specs read well but sensitivity is an unexceptional 95dB. None of this, however, can prepare you for the way the '511s sound.

**Sound quality**

Exciting but odd is the easiest way to sum up the Beyers. It's the tonal anomalies that strike you first. The full, warm bass and fast, clinical treble give them a unique character that isn't entirely believable but curiously seductive. It's helped by a clear, informative mid-range with bags of ambience and terrific attack on strings and brass. The '511s cut through complex productions like a laser. They're unerringly analytical yet superbly musical with almost electrostatically-crisp transients.

Timing is in the atomic clock bracket from the mid-range up but the bass really needs more speed and bite. Still, there's never a dull moment with these cans. If an ounce of vitality exists in the music, the Beyers will bring it out. But, unlike the Denons, they show considerable discrimina-



tion and finesse and can image spectacularly. This may not be the most neutral sound around but it's seldom less than hugely enjoyable.

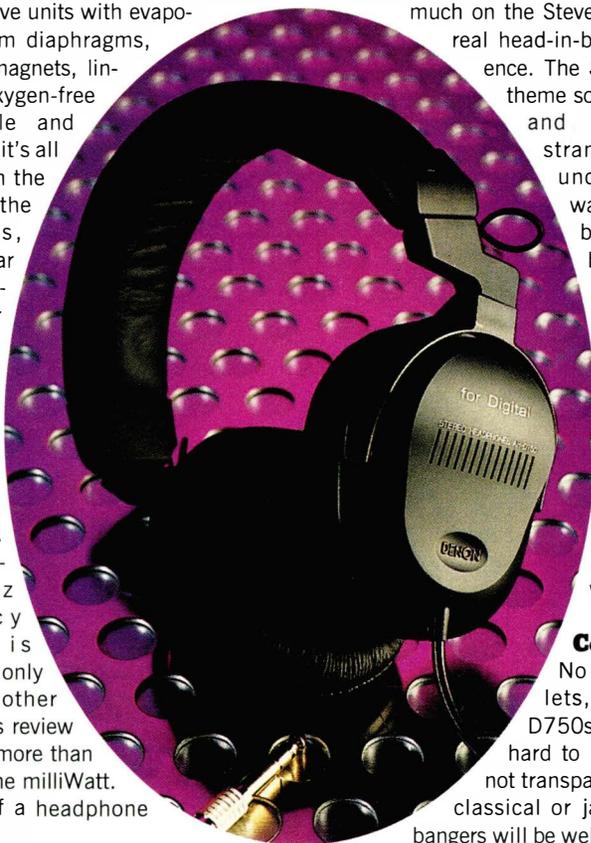
Williams' *Schindler's List* was treated to a scintillatingly clear and detailed rendition through the 511s, but lead violin was all leading edge and no body. Almost unbearable tension and emotion, though. You quickly get used to the tonal character and start enjoying the music.

**Conclusion**

The Beyers aren't the most balanced of designs but they sure do motor. Sometimes spell-binding, sometimes a bit strange, they're never less than wholly entertaining. Surely that's what headphones are all about. Recommended.

**DENON AH-D750**

The rather bulky, old-fashioned, quasi-studio styling disguises a bang-up-to-date spec: big 50mm drive units with evaporation-titanium diaphragms, neodymium magnets, linear-crystal oxygen-free copper cable and voice coils — it's all there. As with the larger of the Sennheisers, plump oval ear pads completely cover the ears, but the Denon's ear pads have closed backs isolating ambient noises from the listener. A wide-open 2-30,000Hz frequency response is claimed and only one of the other models in this review will give you more than 106 dB for one milliWatt. Something of a headphone hot rod, then.



**DENON AH-D750 - VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★☆☆☆  
**VALUE** ★★☆☆☆  
**PRICE** £129.99

- ☐ Goes loud, with meaty bass, rocks, but remains clumsy to a fault.
- ✉ Hayden Laboratories Ltd, Hayden House, Chiltern Hill, Chalfont St Peter, Bucks. SL9 9UG
- ☎ (01753) 888447

The Denons feel quite dated, with a single-piece headband, coarse ratchet adjustment and lots of wrinkly leatherette. But that headband is very comfortably padded and cleverly canted forward to reduce pressure on the skull.

**Sound quality**

As for sound quality, welcome the first crowd pleasers. If wallop and volume are what you crave, these cans deliver it by the bucketload. They may not be the last word in articulation, and the slightly boomy upper bass on the Marcus Miller cut soon became wearing, but they certainly know how to belt it out. In-yer-face and then some.

Treble doesn't have much finesse but is quite bright and breezy; you get the broad picture. Lots of leading edge information gives the impression of crisp timing but the bass sometimes drags behind. At least you could never accuse the sound of being reticent or bland. True, everything seems a bit larger than life but it's hard not to like that typically forthright and bold Denon-style presentation. Definitely a front-row seat.

In the end, though, it's all just a bit relentless. Everything is tackled at 100mph. Big, bold and colourful is fine, but it was too much on the Steve Vai track — a real head-in-bass-bin experience. The *Schindler's List* theme sounded intimate and detailed but strangely cold and unconvincing. It wasn't allowed to breathe and became a bit jumbled, as if all the separate strands were fighting for attention. The delicate Joni Mitchell track completely floored the Denons: it sounded as if it was in mono.

**Conclusion**

No shrinking violets, but the AH-D750s almost try too hard to please. They're not transparent enough for classical or jazz, but head-bangers will be well served.

**BEYERDYNAMIC DT511 - VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★☆☆☆  
**VALUE** ★★☆☆☆  
**PRICE** £116.33

- ☐ Clarity, speed, tingle factor, but slightly slow, soft bass.
- ✉ Beyerdynamic (GB) Ltd, Unit 1, Albert Drive, Burgess Hill, Sussex. RH15 9TN
- ☎ (01444) 258258

**GRADO SR40**

The SR40s' inclusion in this test is interesting. At £40, they're the cheapest 'phones Grado makes and comfortably the cheapest here. But Grado has acquired something of a giant-killing reputation of late. Will the Sennheisers be slayed, the Beyers biffed?

Remarkably, but in time-honoured Grado tradition, they give the appearance of being even less expensive than they are. In fact, they look like something a fourth-division Far Eastern manufacturer would bundle with a dodgy personal stereo. Hard plastic, basic foam — that's your lot. In a word: depressing.

Nothing wrong with the basic spec, though: 20-20,000 Hz frequency response, respectable 32 Ohm impedance, decent 100 dB sensitivity.

And the SR40s vie with the Sennheiser 475s for outright comfort honours. They're extremely light so even the simple unpadded plastic headband is no problem. The foam ear-pads sit on rather than around ears but, again, their grip is so gentle you hardly notice their presence.

**Sound quality**

The real shock, though, is the way they sound. Big bass is the last thing you'd expect from such flimsy-looking items but there's no shortfall here. On the contrary, it's amazingly full-bodied and explicit; quite tuneful and extended, too, with good timbre and pace to complete the package.

Treble is slightly ragged but in keeping with the lively nature of the product. The Grados can sound raw and there is some mid-range coloration (cuppy plus some glare) but the presentation is pacey and involving. The excellent Poochie Bell drum solo at the end of the Marcus Miller track had a compellingly live quality.

There's an honesty about the sound



that's attractive but it can be a bumpy ride. Some skull-drilling notes emanated from Bobby Lyle's piano, and Sheryl Crow's voice on Sweet Rosalyn sounded horribly shouty and ragged with obvious distortion. Steve Vai's workout almost hurt. Despite quite decent bass, this track brought out the worst in the Grados. They just sounded too "noisy". The stereo was pretty rough and ready as well.

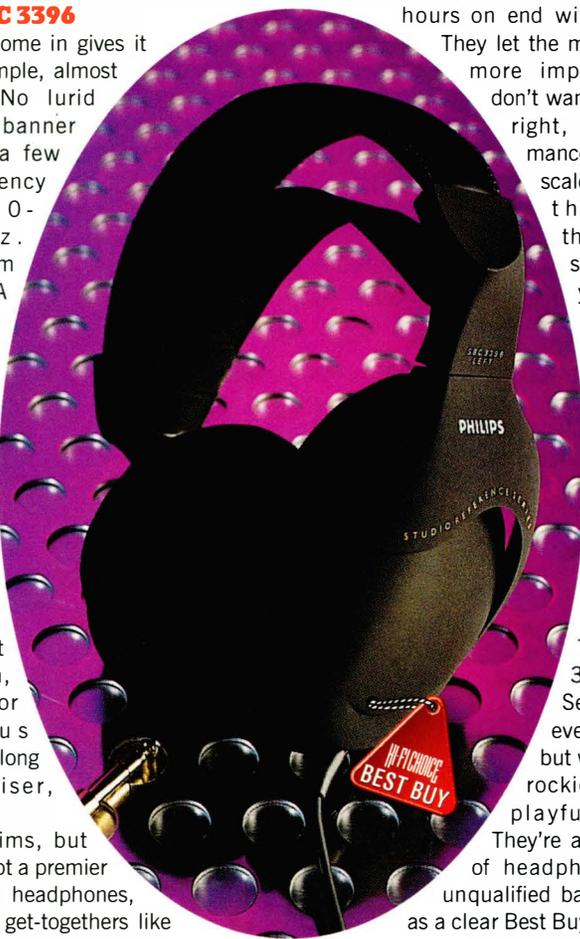
**Conclusion**

For the most part, though, the SR40s are jaunty, infectious and bring plenty of fun and vitality to the music. The raw midrange can be wincingly bad but, although rather thin and screechy, *Schindler's List* retained its heart. Cheap and (mostly) cheerful.

**PHILIPS SBC 3396**

The box they come in gives it away. It's a simple, almost drab affair. No lurid colours, no banner claims. Just a few facts. Frequency response 10-26,000 Hz. Generous 50mm voice coils. A three metre linear-crystal oxygen-free copper cord. Plenty of bangs for your milliWatt: 104 dB. These cans have a determined demeanour. They're not just a bit of fun, but pitching for the serious punter's cash along with Sennheiser, Beyer et al.

Laudable aims, but from Philips? Not a premier league name in headphones, true, but grand get-togethers like



**PHILIPS SBC 3396 - VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★★★★  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £74.99

☑ Seriously good sound for the money, as well as good looks.  
 ✉ Philips Consumer Electronics Ltd, Philips Centre, City House, 420-430 London Road, Croydon, Surrey. CR9 3QR  
 ☎ (0181) 689 4444

this have a habit of throwing up surprises and the SBC 3396 is a biggie.

First, these headphones look fab. Their long, ovoid, swept-forward earpieces are as unusual as the dark-grey matt finish. Second, they're probably the most comfortable of the heavier models. The forward position of the headband and generous surface area of the large oval ear pads no doubt help here.

**Sound quality**

Sound quality is perhaps the best surprise of all, though. Their overall tonal balance is arguably the best of the group and superbly integrated top to bottom. The deep, smooth and notably agile bass doesn't have a hint of boom or bloom. And Poochie Bell's flashing drum solo on the Marcus Miller set was appropriately taut, fast and weighty. The open, detailed treble doesn't draw attention to itself but neither is it veiled or reticent.

Overall, the 3396s sound slightly warm but that's no bad thing. If there's a criticism it's that they tend to sweeten bitter pills, but this means you can listen to them for hours on end without fatigue.

They let the music flow and, more importantly, you don't want it to stop. All right, their performance doesn't quite scale the heights of the Beyers; they're not the sort of cans you'd use to deconstruct production techniques. But they are the ones to go for if you want to relax and enjoy a broad spectrum of music.

**Conclusion**

To sum up, the 3396s have Sennheiser-style even-handedness but with a warmer, rockier and more playful character. They're a very fine pair of headphones and an unqualified bargain, as well as a clear Best Buy.

**GRADO SR40 - VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★★★★  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £45.00

☑ Bold, honest sound. Comfortable, but a touch uncouth. Look cheap.  
 ✉ Goldring Products Ltd, 8 Greyfriars Road, Bury St Edmonds, Suffolk IP32 7DX  
 ☎ (01284) 701101

**PHILIPS SBC HP9000**

The more expensive of the Philips headphones share little of their stablemate's restraint. Neither understated in their intent nor in the least stylish, it's hard to know quite what to make of them. Like the 3396s, they're a closed-back design and part of Philips' "Studio Reference" series, but the styling seems to take its cues from a studio circa 1958. In fact they look more like something Doc Brown — the nutty scientist from *Back To The Future* — might have knocked up in his shed: big, bulbous and barmy.

Comfortable, though: almost in the "forget you're wearing them" class. Except don't, because you'll get arrested. A cracking set of stats, too, including a 6-28,000 Hz frequency range, 50mm Mylar drivers, 2m of LC-OFC cord and a phenomenal 108 dB of sound pressure for one milliWatt. Easy with that volume knob.

**Sound quality**

Bass quality is similar to that of the 3396s — smooth, extended and nicely tuneful, but perhaps with a shade more leading edge definition. Good stuff. But the topmost octaves are altogether brighter and fizzier. This spikes up the presentation but makes it busier and somehow less fluent.

The midrange also sounds crisper, more prominent and detailed. But on some material it's overdone and verges on the shouty. In particular Bobby Lyle's piano acquired a chromium glare that militated against comfortable listening.

You're unlikely to miss anything, though. These cans are nothing if not on the pace and bubbling with detail. There was a huge amount going on in the Vai track. And the *Schindler's List* theme was revealed in all its melancholy glory. But the HP9000s' powers



**PHILIPS SBC HP9000 - VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★★★★  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £89.99

☐ Clear sounds, bubbling with detail. Too much analysis, not enough soul.

✉ Philips Consumer Electronics Ltd, Philips Centre, City House, 420-430 London Road, Croydon, Surrey. CR9 3QR

☎ (0181) 689 4444

of insight are almost too intense and tend to pull the music apart.

In short, they aren't very forgiving. If the material is bright and aggressive, that's how it will sound. Probably with knobs on because the HP9000 veers towards this sort of balance itself. And here's the flaw: it tends to make things sound a little bit mechanical.

**Conclusion**

If you want to scrutinise your music in minute detail, these could be just the job. But, for us, the HP9000s have moved too far away from the ideal represented by the 3396.

**SENNHEISER HD 475 EXPRESSION LINE**

This is the flagship of Sennheiser's cute-looking Expression Line range. Like most of the company's products, it's made in Ireland and uses ultra-light aluminium/copper voice coils and a neodymium-ferrous rare earth element magnet in search of better transient performance and efficiency. It's an open-back — "hear through" — design with a claimed frequency response of 16-23,000 Hz and a modest sensitivity rating of 94 dB for one milliWatt. The single, three-metre Oxygen Free Copper (OFC) signal cable is detachable for separate stowage.

A word about this model's neat, understated, ergonomic styling. The whole look and feel is minimalist, designerish and desirable. Very Sennheiser. And weighing just 120 grams, this is also arguably the most comfortable headset in the group. It has a gentle caliper pressure and the fabric ear



**SENNHEISER HD 475 - VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★★★★  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £79.95

☐ Elegant, uncluttered sound quality, and comfortable to wear. The bass can be rather lean.

✉ Sennheiser UK Ltd, 3 Century Point, Halifax Road, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP12 3SL

☎ (01494) 551551

pads aren't too squidgy. The inner headband adjustment is slightly fiddly, but the whole thing is so light, you can almost forget you're wearing it. Despite that, it looks and feels tough and durable. There's nothing much to go wrong or break off.

**Sound quality**

The 475s sound clear and well balanced, but rather lean. What bass there is sounds smooth, fast and nicely integrated but on Marcus Miller *Live and More*, the American bass ace sounded anything but. His powerful, expressive playing was stripped of its attack, weight and note shaping.

Treble was somewhat shy and wishy-washy, too, with simplified tonal colours and harmonics. Both warmth and sparkle were lacking but — good news — the sound was clear, explicit and open, especially through the mid range. Stereo perspectives were well handled; not too scrunched up or spaced out.

These Sennheisers are faithful to the tempo of music but, again, lack drive and impetus. This is partly due to the weak bass and is never more obvious than on Steve Vai's brand of super-virtuosic heavy-metal guitar. You could hear the production tricks all right — and Vai's own technical prowess. But where was the kick and slam? Too polite by half.

This omission wasn't so significant when relaxing to John Williams' heart-tugging theme from *Schindler's List*. Here the 475s displayed fine mid-range clarity and string tone. The emotional core of the music stayed intact, as it did with Joni Mitchell's *Shades of Scarlett* *Conquering from The Hissing of Summer Lawns*.

**Conclusion**

The 475s produce quite a classy sound: even-handed, not grossly coloured or musically manipulative, and easy to listen to. But, ultimately, rather unfulfilling.

**SENNHEISER HD 545 REFERENCE**

For HD 545 Reference read 475s with bulk, bass and more substantial build quality. Shared features are the open-back principle, neodymium magnets, featherlight aluminium/copper voice coils and OFC copper cable. But the larger, more expensive model gets gold-plated jack plugs and velour-covered ear pads that sit around the ears rather than on them. No inner band means there's slightly more pressure topside, and the higher caliper force squeezes your cheeks; you're left in no doubt you're wearing cans.

Frequency response is a little wider (16-28,000 Hz), sensitivity a few notches higher (but still not notably) at 96 dB. Most importantly, though, the 545s sound more colourful and convincing. Bass guitar on the Miller cut, while still far from forceful, had more weight, power and extension. The effect was somehow luxurious and reassuring.

**Sound quality**

With the 545s it was possible to understand what Marcus Miller was doing and why. Leading edges were subtly sharper, too — a nice double whammy.

At the same time, cymbal work assumed a natural smoothness and sheen and, for the first time, sounded interesting. In fact, the deeper bass and fuller treble made all the difference. If the 545s aren't quite as open-sounding as their cheaper siblings, they are capable of generating a more generous, cohesive and believable sound that, nevertheless, doesn't want for ambient detail or atmosphere. They're effortlessly musical yet possess fine stereo and focus.

Don't get the wrong idea: these cans can rock, boogie and swing with the best of them. What makes them special is the way they seem to handle all styles of music with



equal assurance. You just want to keep listening — a good sign. Vai motored along at a cracking lick and was a real education to hear through the 545s. Yet the exquisite string tone on *Schindler's List* also had the desired plaintive effect.

Joni's voice sounded slightly more closed in than it had on the 475s but, generally, the 545s seem to have all bases covered.

**Conclusions**

Natural, spacious and relaxed, they're responsive to the subtlest nuance and represent a masterful mix of qualities at the price. Sennheiser at its best. Recommended.

**SONY MDR-F1**

There are open-back designs, very open-back designs — and the Sony F1, which actually suspends the drive units in free air. The aim is to "create a wide sound stage outside the listener's head".

To generate the bass lost by removing any sort of acoustic coupling between the headphone and the ear, Sony has developed the "acoustic bass lens" — a box-shaped chamber covered by an acoustically discriminative material that allows high frequencies to pass through but filters low frequencies so they're concentrated in the centre part of the drive unit and, ultimately, are delivered more efficiently into the ear. High-power neodymium magnets assist sensitivity: 100dB/mW is good



**SONY MDR-F1 - VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★★★★☆  
**VALUE** ★★★★★☆  
**PRICE** £199.99

📄 Fab looks, easy-going sound, very comfortable. Not enough bass, tonally dark.  
 📧 Sony UK Ltd, The Heights, Brooklands, Weybridge, Surrey. KT13 0XW  
 ☎ (0990) 111999

going for any open design, never mind one as extreme as this example.

Some effort has gone into the F1's appearance. It's gloriously hi-tech in the Sony idiom and built like a pair of quality sunglasses with lots of conspicuous detail. The magnesium alloy frame and self-adjusting 'super duralumin' headband make it look far more expensive than it is. Ownability is sky high. No one would feel foolish wearing these. Or uncomfortable. Very light, no hot ears.

**Sound quality**

They sound fine, too — very natural and coherent with strong mid-range presence. But they need more low-frequency brawn for an ideal balance. Bass is quite articulate and tuneful but, acoustically focused or not, there simply isn't enough of it. You hear the note but not the body. Admittedly, the lower registers sound very free and uncongested, but there isn't the almost tactile quality you get with the best closed designs.

High frequencies, on the other hand, are beautifully rendered with excellent tonal colour and shading. The F1s certainly had the right touch with the John Williams, which was warm, expressive and touching. These aren't the most foot-tapping of designs, though. They didn't really hit the groove with Bobby Lyle's keyboard-based jazz-funk — you need more bass than the F1's are capable of mustering.

**Conclusion**

So, an interesting design with an essentially natural and musical character, if a bit bass-light and lacklustre. They're terrifically comfortable, though, and look the absolute business.

**SENNHEISER HD 545 REF - VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★★★★☆  
**VALUE** ★★★★★☆  
**PRICE** £124.95

📄 Elegant, uncluttered sound quality, and comfortable to wear. The bass can be rather lean.  
 📧 Sennheiser UK Ltd, 3 Century Point, Halifax Road, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP12 3SL  
 ☎ (01494) 551551

**TECHNICS RP-DJ1200**

Apparently designed and developed with heavily-perspiring club DJs in mind, the RP-DJ1200s are sweat-proof, splash-proof and have earpiece arms that swivel back up into the headband. This is good for stowage (draw-string pouch supplied) and that cool thing DJs do when they monitor with just one earpiece.

The Technics is a closed-back model with the emphasis on sensitivity and power handling. It pumps out 106 dB for 1 milliWatt (matching the Denon) and will soak up a meaty 1.5 Watts. Claimed frequency response is 8-30,000 Hz and the two-metre cord is terminated with gold-plated plugs.

The single-piece headband is well-padded and exerts a vice-like caliper grip so that the supersquidgy ear pads form an air-tight coupling. They'd be just as effective as a pair of ear defenders.

**Sound quality**

But not when you fire them up. We've heard big floorstanders with less bass than this. The bottom end from the 'DJs has quite astonishing weight, slam and real, honest-to-God extension. They growl. These were the only headphones to do real justice to Marcus Miller. Okay, the upper bass is a

bit boomy but when Marcus dug deep, the Technics stayed with him all the way.

What's amazing is the quality of the bass which, apart from that hint of upper boom, isn't at all amorphous or thumpy; it actually plays tunes. Thankfully, the treble isn't exaggerated or over aggressive to try to balance out the bass. In fact, it's quite natural and laid back. Maybe the top end could do with a little more energy and brilliance.

All in, these aren't the most transparent or open-sounding of headphones. Stereo is squashed in breadth and very two-dimensional. And the balance rather muggy — a bit like the air at a rave.

But they have unstoppable drive and were a blast with Steve Vai. In the end, you have to ask yourself how much you can take.

**Conclusion**

The DJs aren't pretending to be the best all-rounders — more the Cerwin-Vegas of headphones. They're the only ones here that will satisfy true bass freaks, and can be a whole lotta fun!

**TECHNICS RP-DJ 1200 - VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★☆☆☆  
**VALUE** ★★☆☆☆  
**PRICE** £129.95

☐ Head-pulping bass, sweat-proof. Muggy balance, sweaty.

✉ Panasonic (UK) Ltd, Panasonic House, Willoughby Road, Bracknell, Berks RG12 8FP

☎ (0990) 357357

# HEADPHONE AMPS

These specialist amps help to get the most from your headphones.

**HEADPHONE AMPS**

Let's start with the most specialised, from a company you probably won't have heard of. The **Amity HPA2**, and its dedicated **DSC3** interconnect, are produced by a small German concern (Amity Hi-Fi) currently looking for a distribution outlet in the UK. For the time being, though, Amity is happy to supply the product by mail order. The price has yet to be decided but, in Germany, the HPA2 costs DM 589, about £200. This is its first review outing in the UK.

It's unusual since it has two volume controls connected to separate, DC-coupled, Class-A super-linear amps for the left and right channels. There are individual two-Watt power supplies as well. The reasoning behind the two volume knobs is that stereo



Amity HPA2

# Musical Instruments

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

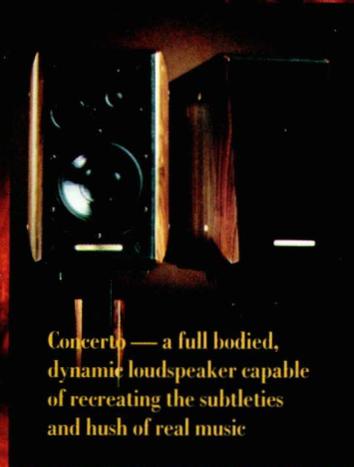
Ultimate expression of this craft is the fabled **Guarneri**

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

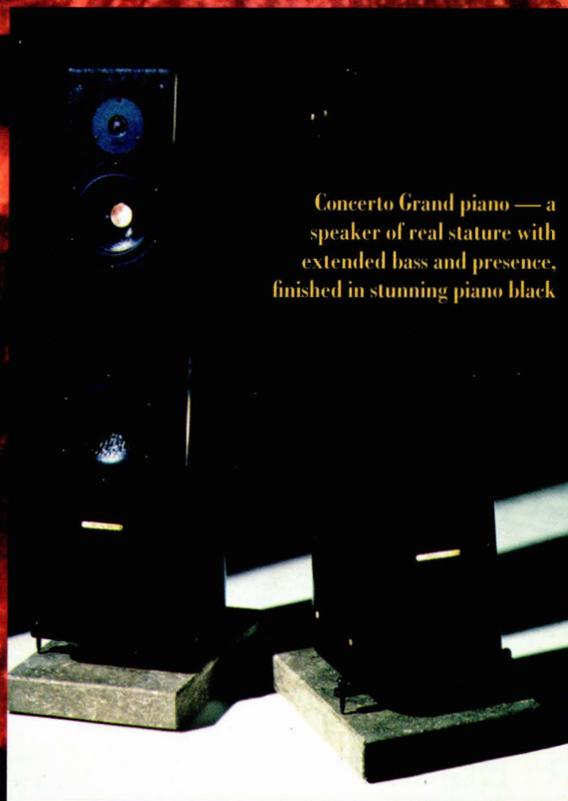
**Guarneri** was a 17th century Cremonese master violin maker whose instruments were intensely sculpted acoustic masterpieces characterised by a unique ability to combine tonal strength and full bodied sound with sweetness.

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Sonus faber**®

**Absolute Sounds**  
58 Durham Road · London SW20 0DE  
Telephone 0181-947 5047  
Facsimile 0181-879 7962  
Email 73064,1710@compuserve.com





Creek OBH-11



Musical Fidelity X-Cans

depth is influenced by small changes in gain to each ear. In practice this proved to be true enough. Amity claims "enormous transparency" and a spectacular 5-100,000 Hz frequency response for the HPA2 and insists that it should be hooked up to a good CD player and a tasty pair of cans; there were plenty of those to choose from.

This unit has no styling to speak of. It's just a ribbed black box with a rather flimsy aluminium front panel, a couple of nicely milled knobs and a very substantial headphone socket. But don't let that worry you. It sounds absolutely lovely.

Even lovelier than the established and highly regarded, all-Brit Musical Fidelity X-Cans and Creek OBH-11s it's ranged against here. We're not going to fake a titanic struggle: the German product has greater resolving power and grace. It really doesn't matter where you start. Its bass is deep and powerful with a sumptuous quality missing from the MF, yet it's just as agile and tuneful as the taut 'n' twangy Creek. Treble is clean, extended and rich with shimmering detail, yet completely free from grain. The real thing. The timing's good; it's capable of capturing deft shifts of tempo, and is brilliant with fancy cymbal work. A sure Best Buy.

**Musical Fidelity's X-Cans** looks like Thomas the Tank Engine, is built like Thomas The Tank Engine, and is a bargain at £129.95. Sonically, however, it's not in the same league as the Amity. The MF's bass is warm and weighty but goes soft on the deepest notes. High frequencies are its shining glory — smooth, clean and extended with good inner detail. Yet the tonal balance isn't what you'd expect of a tube headphone amp. The midrange presentation is crisp, lively, articulate and hard-hitting — mildly at odds with warm bass — but it doesn't sound as homogeneous as Creek or Amity. Nevertheless, a quality product and accordingly Recommended.

Small and light, with a tightly-constructed ribbed black case and green graphics, the £129 **OBH-11** couldn't be anything but a **Creek** product. Creek recommends a burn-in period of 24 hours but, straight out of the box it sounds fresh, incisive, musically adept and convincing — if not as grain-free as the Amity or imbued with the inner detail of the MF. Rhythmically lucid and surefooted, you never feel it is dragging its feet. It keys into up-tempo material with zest. Bass is solid, well-shaped, nimble and quite dry in character.

Plenty of grip and control, then, but occasionally you become aware of slightly thickened tonal textures. It's not as transparent as its rivals. Yet it's hard not to like the way the Creek does things. It puts the music first and hi-fi second. There's no mush or unnatural warmth; it just gets on with the job in an honest, revealing and enjoyable fashion. No frills, plenty of thrills. Recommended.

Amity Hi-Fi/Anderson Electronic, Germany

☎ +49-7138-32-25

Creek ☎ (0181) 361 4133

Musical Fidelity ☎ (0181) 900 2866

# Got No Strings... ...To Hold Me Up

If you don't like the restrictive nature of regular headphones, why not try some cordless ones?

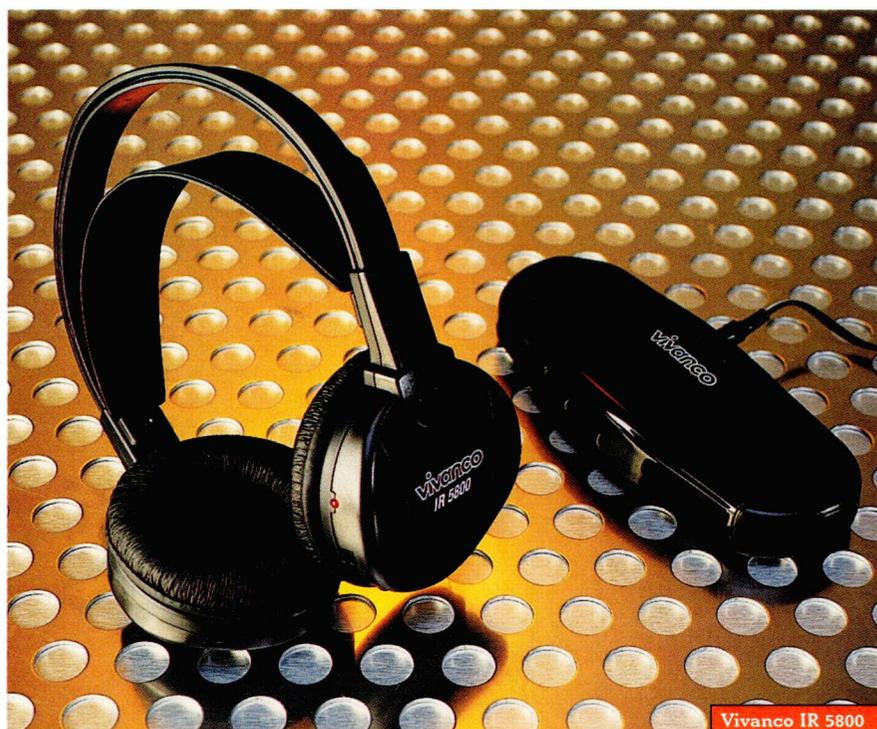
As a signal transmission medium, infrared — the chosen medium of three cordless headphones in this section — has some unique characteristics.

There are infrared rays in daylight so all these systems, to a greater or lesser extent, suffer from the Dracula effect: they perform worse in strong or direct sunlight. You can forget using them outdoors, near a window or in a sun-lounge. What then, you might ask, is the point?

The longest conventional headphone cord is three metres; many units come with just two metres. True, you don't have to sit



JVC HA-W60



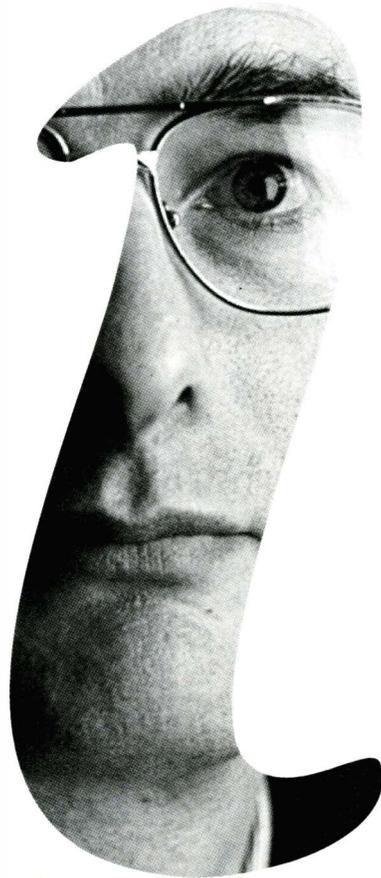
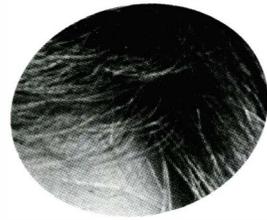
Vivanco IR 5800

next to the hi-fi, but freedom of movement is somewhat restricted. All the infrared models here can breeze seven metres and degradation of sound quality doesn't start until about nine metres. The one radio frequency transmitter and headset, made under the "Cyberwave" badge by Vivanco, has a range of over 30 metres and is indifferent to the sunlight IR sets hate — and, indeed, brick walls. It's a kind of freedom, but is it hi-fi?

Least costly of the IR units is the £49.99 JVC HA-W60 which, despite the weight of two AA alkaline batteries, has a light, comfy headset totting 30mm drivers, a single volume control for both sides and a three-hour auto power-off facility. The FM carrier channels are set at the "clean air" 2.3 MHz (left) and 2.8 MHz frequencies used by all the IR system in the group.

The JVCs look quite sleek, attractive and comfortable. They're snug, certainly, though the foam ear pads become itchy after a while. Sound quality? Not bad at all — a bit brighter than the Vivanco IR5800s and less dynamic than the Sennheiser IS380s but remarkably clean, rhythmic and detailed. Borderline hi-fi but musical nonetheless.

This man can't  
believe what he's  
hearing...





Vivanco Cyberwave FMH 3000

both sides to plug in and recharge the headset's nickel metal hydride battery.

For different reasons, these are the sonic cream of the cordless crop. With the Vivancos, some fine detail is lost in its marginally higher background noise but, on the whole, they have a confident, well-balanced sound that's easy to listen to for long stretches. The Sennheisers clearly try harder for genuine hi-fi reproduction and, most of the time, get tantalisingly close; you can actually identify that clear, clean, well-ordered Sennheiser sound. Trouble is, when the inevitable hiss creeps in as you move around, the sense of realism is abruptly shattered, which can make long-term listening more frustrating than satisfying.

The other option, of course, is to lower your sonic expectations, extend your boundary of operations and go for the £80 **Vivanco Cyberwave FMH 3000s**. They're quite bulky, look a bit silly with an aerial poking out of the right earpiece and aren't exactly cheap. But they do have honest walkabout potential and sound good enough — similar to a modest in-car FM radio — not to irritate, save for some weird chuffing effects with our test set. What interference there is seems mostly benign and forgivable given the range and room-to-room-to-garden freedom. Not for serious listening, but we liked 'em.

Sennheiser UK Ltd ☎ (01494) 551551

JVC UK Ltd ☎ (0181) 450 3282

Vivanco UK Ltd ☎ (01442) 403020

◀ Where the JVCs really score is with their amazing low background noise. The Sennheisers and Vivancos are also good in this respect, but they aren't as remarkable as the HA-W60s which are essentially hiss-free at close range save for the gaps between tracks. A convincing argument for IR.

Maybe an even better one is made by the £49.99 **Vivanco IR 5800s** and brand-new £54.95 **Sennheiser IS 380s**. These attractively simple models were the most comfortable of all the cordless models tested; both boast inner headbands but the Vivanco has the slightly more comfortable ear pads.

The Sennheiser gets the award for the cutest transmitter, though. It looks like a shallow road speed bump and has slots on

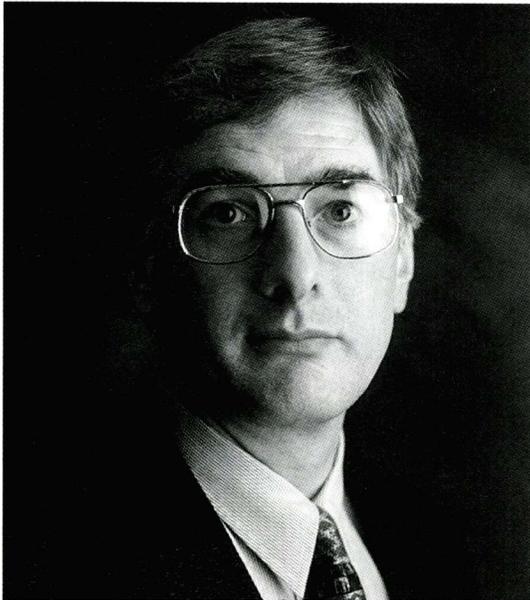


Sennheiser IS 380

### YOU WHAT? PARDON? SORRY? SAY THAT AGAIN?

Being responsible folk here at *Choice Towers*, we will reinforce the real danger of incurring hearing loss by listening at excessive replay levels. Headphones are often used in noisy environments where there's a strong temptation to crank up the volume.

Also, because headphones can sound so clinically clean, even at absurdly high volume levels (most cans will motor along happily at 110 or 120dBA) they do not offer the natural loudness cues of loudspeakers. For this reason, well-sealed headphones, which allow a lower replay level without noise interference from the outside world, offer a significant advantage in loud surroundings.



# ...But it's true.

*Peter J Comeau is no ordinary reviewer. As designer of the only product to win the coveted What Hi-fi Best Loudspeaker Award three times in succession, he's generally regarded as the guru of small speakers. With 30 years' experience as a specialist hi-fi retailer, co-founder of a highly respected UK hi-fi manufacturer and one of the 'terrible three' who pioneered subjective reviewing in the staid hi-fi press of the 1970s, his opinion carries formidable weight.*

*“Percussion is firm and practically floor shaking in its intensity - just a few bars and you are already reaching for your wallet.”*

Hi-Fi News & Record Review

*“...The 12i marks the baseline performance above which all other speakers should rise. But do they? Do they hell!”*

Seasoned hi-fi critics are notoriously hard to impress.

So how come we weren't surprised when Peter J Comeau enthused so fulsomely about our new 12i?

“They sound like a grand's worth of exotic compact,” he wrote in October's Hi-Fi News. “If Celestion can achieve this sort of performance for a miserly figure, why are most of the speakers that arrive on the market so poor in comparison?”

Well, we can't speak for anyone else - but we know what makes the 12i such a remarkable performer.

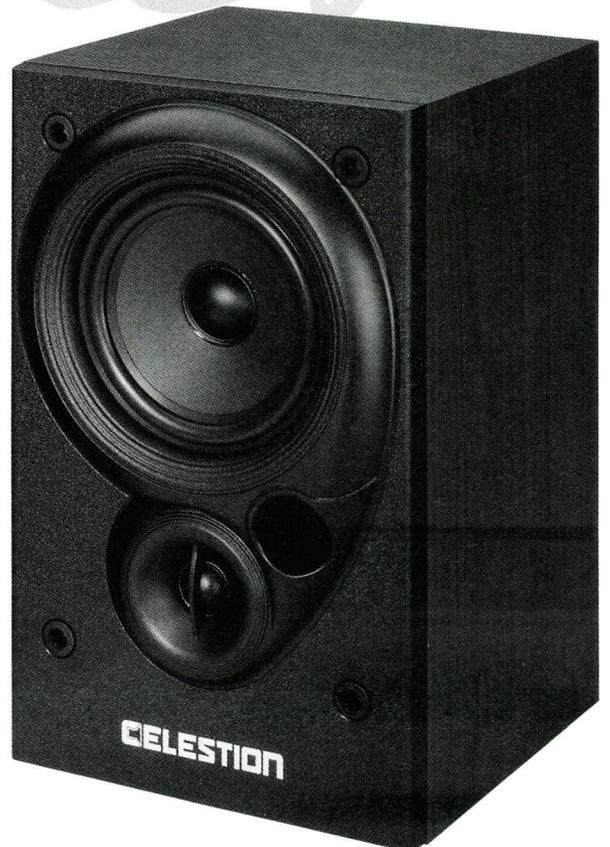
The smooth, natural-sounding vocals? Celestion's 19mm tweeter, whose neodymium magnet is ferrofluid-cooled for improved power handling.

The phenomenal bass response? 130mm long throw bass drivers, which allow the cone extended movement without removing the HF coil from the magnetic gap where energy is most concentrated.

The acoustic purity and lack of distortion? The use of laser interferometry to tune out the response peaks of conventional speakers. Celestion crossovers to ensure seamlessly smooth transitions. Mounting the drivers and reflex port in a dense one-piece composite baffle to minimise resonance. Cabinets computer-designed to eliminate box coloration.

In the words of the Hi-Fi News lab report, “the horizontal off-axis trace is brilliantly managed.” To the listener, that means the same seductive audio experience wherever you sit in the room.

No wonder the 12i reproduces the most demanding material with such accuracy ▷



*i*series

**OVERALL CONCLUSIONS**

The big picture should be pretty clear by now. Your common £100 dynamic headphone is one of hi-fi's great unsung heroes. Connected to a decent source component, it's capable of generating sonic delights that are scarcely believable. Headphone amps work. There wasn't a pair of cans in this test that didn't derive considerable benefit from an amp's extra drive, control and transparency. If you're considering cans for serious listening rather than just convenience, we'd strongly recommend them.

The crop of cordless cans are harder to condone. Even the most expensive of the infrared models in this test sounded worse than the cheapest of the conventional, corded units. The extra freedom of movement is a bonus but is really limited to one room. A far better signal carrier in this respect is FM radio, as it isn't bothered by brick walls or strong sunlight and has a much longer range: expect to see a glut of

models over the coming months. But, even then, we're tempted to ask if they'll be such a smart buy. A Discman and a pair of Sennheiser 475s will sound much better and, of course, have an unlimited range.

**Winners and losers**

There are three standout models from the main group. Perhaps inevitably, one of them is a **Sennheiser**, the **HD 545**. It doesn't do anything badly and most things extremely well. They're headphones for all reasons. An altogether more dangerous customer is **Beyerdynamic's DT511**. These good-looking cans have lightning midrange speed, so sound fresh and crisp. They don't produce the most neutral sound around but it's seldom less than enjoyable.

Perhaps the best blend of excitement and listenability, though, comes from an unlikely quarter: **Philips' SBC 3396**. These are essentially rockers but are sufficiently refined to make a fine job of the other stuff, too; a bit like the Sennheisers but with a well-installed turbocharger. And they cost £55 less, which makes them superb value.

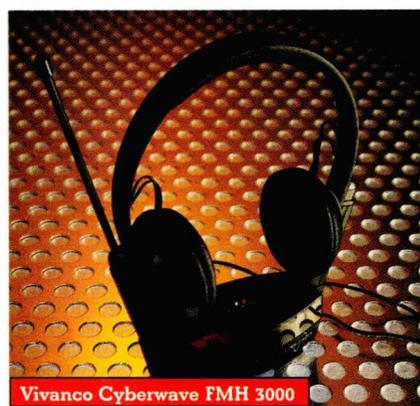
Of the cordless systems, we liked the **Sennheiser IS 380s** for their ambitious sonic aspirations, design values and comfort; the **JVC HA-W60s** for their outstandingly hiss-free reception and the **Vivanco IR 5800s** for their easy-going musicality. But if what you want is music all round the house or in the garden, there's really only one choice — the FM radio-based **Vivanco Cyberwaves**. They aren't hi-fi but at least they do what it says on the box.

The battle of the headphone amps left the big-value **Musical Fidelity X-Cans** and **Creek OBH-11** bloodied by a German upstart no one's heard of. The **Amity HPA2** was, in many ways, the star of the show, turning in a scintillating sonic performance that showed MF's high-end-for-peanuts claim to be a little wide off the mark.

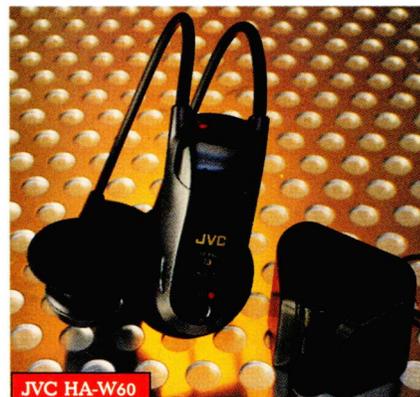
Which isn't to take anything away from the X-Cans or OBH-11. Both are exceptional products for the price which should inspire at least as much confidence for being made by well-established specialist companies on our doorsteps, as for their



Sennheiser IS 380

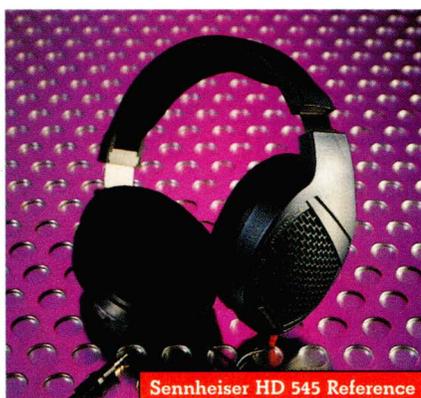


Vivanco Cyberwave FMH 3000

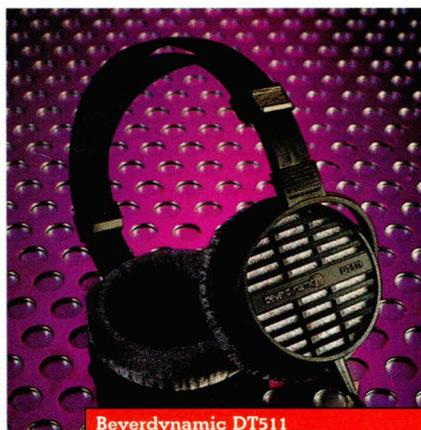


JVC HA-W60

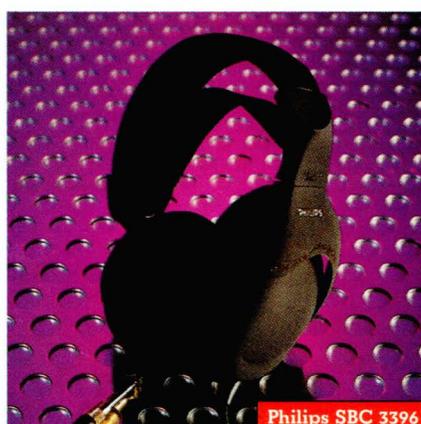
fine sonic abilities. The Creek is everything you would expect: snappy, tuneful and vivacious. The MF is more unusual: wonderful valve treble, hard-hitting midrange, rather soft lower bass. We recommend all of them but, if you want the full monty, check out the Amity, a sure Best Buy. ▲



Sennheiser HD 545 Reference



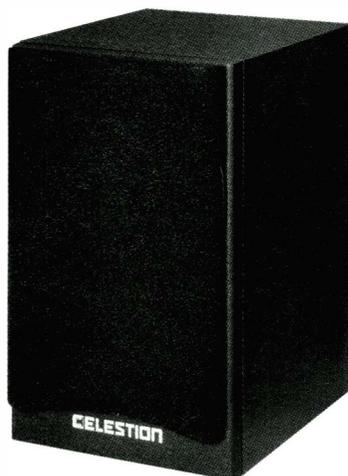
Beyerdynamic DT511



Philips SBC 3396



Amity HPA2



and emotional depth.  
 “The coherence is extraordinary,”  
 Peter J Comeau remarks. “That each  
 note is so well defined is remarkable  
 for a speaker of this class.”

Peter concludes “When you  
 close your eyes, they (the artists)  
 might just as well be in the room  
 with you.”

That’s the ultimate accolade for  
 any speaker, irrespective of price.

At only £119, no wonder he  
 couldn’t believe his ears.

“Nothing prepares you for the  
 sound of this new model. Ask  
 listeners to guess the price,  
 I guarantee an answer closer to  
 £500 than the spare change you  
 have to sprinkle on the counter  
 to own a pair.”

...At only **£119**, no wonder he  
 couldn’t believe his ears.

## The 12i is available at:

<b>Avon</b>	Bristol	Paul Roberts Hi-Fi	31-33 Gloucester Road, BS7 8AA	01179 429370
<b>Bedfordshire</b>	Bedford	Richard’s Audio Visual	4 Greyfriars, MK40 1HP	01234 365185
<b>Berkshire</b>	Windsor	Sonics Hi-Fi Ltd	58-60 Grove Road, SL4 1HS	01753 859721
<b>Cheshire</b>	Cheadle	Audio Council	14 Stockport Road, SK8 2AA	0161 428 7887
	Cheadle	Chester Audio Visual	47 St Werburgh Row, CH1 2DY	01244 320414
	Crewe	Roy Townsend	2-4 Victoria Street, CW1 2HE	01270 213276
	Northwich	Roy Townsend	39 Chester Way, CW9 5JT	01606 43691
	Winsford	Nordis	Queens Parade, CW7 1AE	01606 593205
	Warrington	Warrington Audio Visual	106 Bridge Street, WA1 2BY	01925 636215
<b>Cumbria</b>	Kendal	K. Gardener Ltd	Unit 5, The Westmouland, LA9 4LR	01539 721953
<b>Derbyshire</b>	Chesterfield	F.L. Smith	12 Cavendish Street, S40 1VY	01246 234953
<b>Dorset</b>	Bournemouth	Movement Audio	926 Wimbourne Road, Moordown, BH9 2HH	01202 529988
	Bournemouth	Strouden Park TV	472-476 Castle Lane, BH8 9UD	01202 518323
<b>East Sussex</b>	Hove	Churchers	8 Western Road, BN3 1AE	01273 324616
<b>Essex</b>	Epping	Chew & Osbourne	148 High Street, CM16 4AG	01992 574242
	Saffron Walden	Chew & Osbourne	26 King Street, CB10 1ES	01799 23728
	Southend-on-Sea	Gateshead Ltd	19 The Royals, SS1 1DQ	01702 461634
<b>London</b>	Palmers Green	Audio Vision	349 Green Lane, N13 4JG	0181 447 8288
	West Hampstead	Audio T	190 West End Lane, NW6 1SQ	0171 794 7848
<b>Hampshire</b>	Andover	KLW Cook	1 The Broadway, ST10 2JF	01264 323573
<b>Hertfordshire</b>	Hitchin	David Orton Audio Visual	6 Bancroft, SG5 1JQ	01462 452248
	St Albans	W. Darby & Co	6 Market Place, AL3 5DG	01727 851596
<b>Humberside</b>	Kingston-Upon-Hull	Nuway Televisions Ltd	149-151 Kingston Road, HU10 6AL	01482 651774
<b>Kent</b>	Canterbury	Canterbury Hi-Fi & Video	50 Burgate, CT1 2HW	01227 765315
<b>Lancashire</b>	Lancaster	Kenneth Gardener	TV House, Parliament Street, LA1 1DQ	01524 39344
	Wigan	Ron Leigh Ltd	49 Mesnes Street, WN1 1QX	01942 244696
<b>Leicestershire</b>	Market Harborough	The Auditorium	27 Adam & Eve Street, LE16 7LT	01858 461460
<b>Middlesex</b>	Edgware	Musical Images	173-175 Station Road, HA8 7JX	0181 951 5864
	Ruislip	TV Allied Service	70-72 Victoria Road, Ruslip Manor, HA4 0AH	01895 632217
<b>Norfolk</b>	Kings Lynn	Martins Hi-Fi	5 High Street, PE30 5AF	01533 761683
	Norwich	Martins Hi-Fi	85-87 Ber Street, NR1 3EY	01603 627010
<b>Northamptonshire</b>	Kettering	Classic Hi-Fi & Video	School Lane, NN16 0DH	01526 310855
	Northampton	Audiocraft	23-25 Deansgate, NN1 1TY	01604 36291
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	Belfast	LRG Sound & Vision	171-175 Albert Bridge Road, BT5 4PS	01232 451381
	Co. Antrim	LRG Sound & Vision	120 Main Street, BT40 1RG	01574 272757
<b>Nottinghamshire</b>	Nottingham	Forum Hi Fi	600-602 Mansfield Road, NG5 2FS	0115 962 2657
<b>Scotland</b>	Aberdeen	Bruce Miller’s	363 Union Street, AB9 1EN	01224 592211
	Lanark	Braedale Electronics Ltd	33 St Leonard Street, ML11 7AB	01555 663023
<b>South Yorkshire</b>	Doncaster	Barker & Wigfall Ltd	25 Hallgate, DN1 3NH	01302 323923
<b>Staffordshire</b>	Stafford	Roy Townsend	Sheridan Centre, Gaolgate Street, ST16 2AD	01785 243669
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	Sudbury	System Sound	91 North Street, CO10 6RE	01787 881816
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## SPEAKER PACKAGES

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# Budget Beaters

**Alvin Gold** (listening tests) and **Paul Miller** (lab tests)  
put 10 budget CD players through the Hi-Fi Choice testing mill.

**L**ife here at *Hi-Fi Choice* Towers has its ups and downs. This was supposed to be a test of 12 CD players, but only 11 had arrived by the appointed date. Another dropped out later when the distributor owned up that the product concerned was by then on sale for half the original price, and there were only a handful left — enough, with luck, to last out the week. A week last month as you read this. So here we are, with 10 CD players instead of 12, but never mind, we have some peaches. And we also have some lemons.

None of the models tested costs more than £250; in fact the average price is nearer £150, with the first models tipping the scales at just £120, which is almost affordable if you think about it. There is more than one starter model here using technology that is deployed in higher echelons of the same manufacturer's product range, having been given a further boost of facilities and perhaps the addition of a remote control handset, neither of which is likely to do good things to sound quality. There is, then, an implied promise of excellent sound quality at modest prices — as for whether it was met; well this is a matter to which we shall return.

It doesn't bear repeating too often that there are different ways to buy compact disc players. The easy way is to trundle down to the high street or out-of-town superstore, and buy one off the shelf from your local electronics emporium or catalogue showroom. The other way is to go to a specialist dealer. The difference? Well in

practice it's unlikely to make a lot of difference to the price you pay. But the specialist should be able to demonstrate the difference between models on your shortlist, rather than just waffle on about them, and usually he will be able to exchange equipment that turns out to be unsuitable for reasons other than failure to operate. If in doubt about how to locate a true specialist dealer, try the *Hi-Fi Choice* Dealer Directory (p 139), or the BADA information hotline, ☎ (0171) 226 4044.

## THE CAST LIST

MODEL.....	PRICE .....	PAGE
AMC CD8a .....	£149.95 .....	p79
Denon DCD-635 .....	£179.99 .....	p87
JVC XL-V184BK .....	£119.99 .....	p81
Kenwood DP-4090 .....	£229.95 .....	p89
Marantz CD-48 .....	£199.90 .....	p91
NAD 510 .....	£199.95 .....	p93
Philips CD751 .....	£149.99 .....	p83
Sony CDP-XE510 .....	£179.99 .....	p95
Technics SL-PS770D .....	£250.00 .....	p97
Yamaha CDX-390 .....	£129.95 .....	p85

## HOW THE TESTS WERE DONE

**T**he test included sighted hands-on listening, physical examination and functional testing, with a wide variety of programme material and partnering equipment. There were two days of unsighted panel testing in which each player was presented to an experienced listening panel, and a standard music programme played, levels having been equalised first using appropriate test signals and measuring equipment. The equipment was chosen to be of a caliber that would not unnecessarily limit any of the hardware. All equipment was run in, and players remained switched on and plugged in until all tests had been completed. The system included: Roksan Caspian amplifier, Definitive Technology BP8 floorstanding loudspeakers, Nordost Red Dawn speaker cables and interconnects, and a Meridian 508 CD player to establish a level of competence at the start of each morning and afternoon session. Finally, there was a computerised test programme in Paul Miller's laboratory, as detailed on p77.

This is by far the most searching series of tests used by any magazine. Readers may not be aware that the measurement and listening tests are conducted entirely independently, and are not cross referenced before the reports are written.

## WHAT MUSIC DID WE USE?

Joni Mitchell: *Cool Water* from *Chalk Mark in a Rain Storm* on Geffen 924 172-2

Keith Jarrett: *Blues from Paris Concert* on ECM 1401 839 173-2

James Taylor: *Handy Man* from *James Taylor Live* on Columbia 474216 2

Henri Dumont: *Veni sponsa mea* from *Henri Dumont Les Litanies de la Vierge* on Linn Records CKD067

Plus others too numerous (and sometimes with too many syllables) to enumerate for the hands-on testing.

## THE LISTENING PANEL

Special thanks as always for expert listening services of our panel. They were: Steve Cross (Ruark Loudspeakers), Jonathon Jordan (Complete Marketing Communications), David Inman (The Audio Marketing Department), Robin Marshall (Mission), Russell Kaufmann (Morel Loudspeakers), Julian Maddock (Mission), Jason Kennedy (*Hi-Fi Choice*) and Alan Sircom (*Hi-Fi Choice*). And once again, let's hear it for that nice Mr/Mrs/Ms Pizza Express.



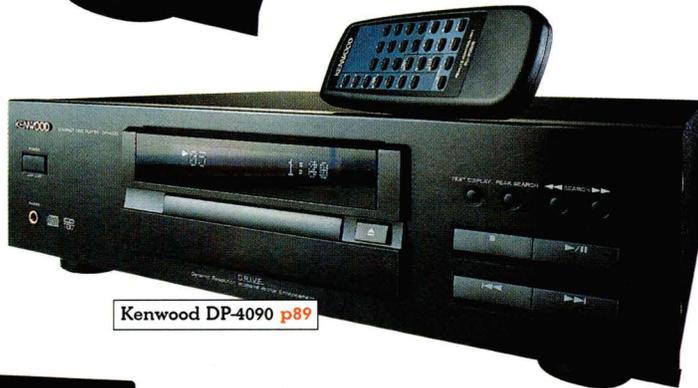
AMC CD8A p79



Marantz CD-48 p91



Sony CDP-XE510 p95



Kenwood DP-4090 p89



Denon DCD-635 p87



JVC XL-V184 p81



NAD 510 p93



Philips CD751 p83



Technics SL-PS770D p97



Yamaha CDX-390 p85

UNDERSTANDING OUR BAR-GRAPHS AND GROUP AVERAGES

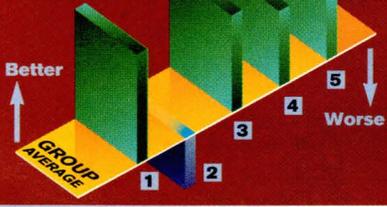
There will be significant differences between the cheapest product in our test and the most expensive. For this reason we always segregate our test candidates into two or more categories based on price. Our aim is to assess every product's performance in the context of its closest rivals.

Each lab-report panel is colour-coded according to the key given below:

GROUP A EXAMPLE BELOW £150



GROUP B EXAMPLE £150-£250



UNDERSTANDING OUR BAR-GRAPH MEASUREMENTS

The measurements behind *Hi-Fi Choice's* unique bar-graphs are provided by our Technical Editor, Paul Miller, using both GPIB-controlled measurement hardware and his own, award-winning, PC-based Virtual Instrument software. Each bar-graph value is derived from a weighted statistic of several key measurements and is displayed relative to a notional zero per cent which represents the group average for that particular category.

**1 Suppression of Digital Images:** This indicates the effectiveness of the player's digital filter in removing 'aliasing' or 'stopband' distortions immediately outside of the audio band.

**2 Jitter:** Any uncertainty in the timing of the digital code produces digital jitter which manifests as an insidious form of distortion during digital-to-analogue conversion. The lower the figure the better.

**3 Practical Dynamic Range:** This is determined by the player's Signal-to-Noise ratio and to what degree it is compromised by any Noise Modulation occurring under real signal conditions.

**4 Harmonic Distortion vs. Level:** This bar chart value is derived from the variation in distortion both with frequency and signal level. The consistency and nature of the distortion also forms part of the equation.

**5 Linearity:** Linearity is a measure of the player's low-level resolution. For example, if a signal coded at -80dB emerges from the player at -80.5dB then this represents a deviation in its linearity of 0.5dB.

TEST INNOVATOR OF THE YEAR

Our Technical Editor, Paul Miller, has been awarded Test Innovator of the Year by *Test* magazine, the leading European journal of the test and measurement industry. This gong came in recognition of Paul's Jitter Measurement Suite, as used to test CD players for *Hi-Fi Choice*.

**test**  
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HI-FI CHOICE BEST BUY, April 1997



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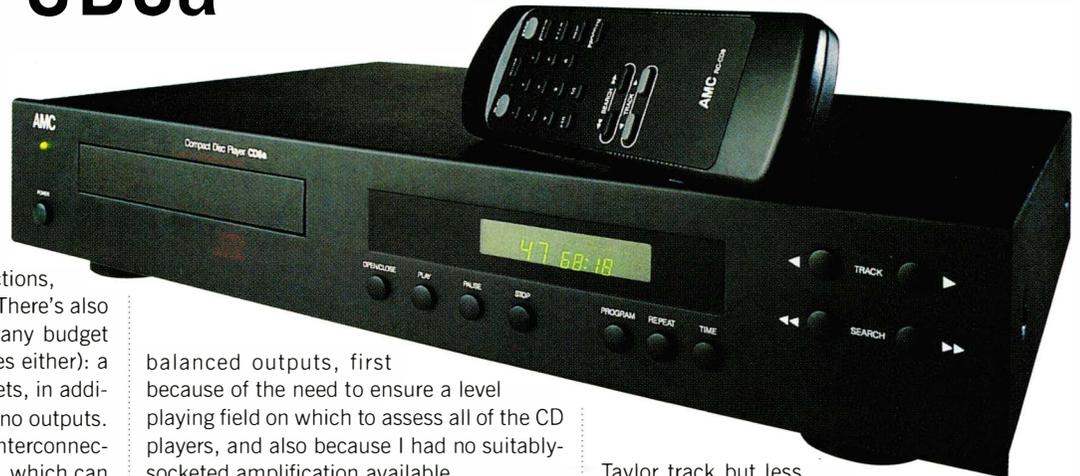
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# AMC CD8a

Welcome to the umpteenth episode in the amazing story of AMC's prices, subtitled: how low can you go? The answer in this case is £150, which buys you a CD player with remote control and a fairly standard set of play functions, plus an electrical digital output. There's also a feature previously unseen on any budget player (or on most expensive ones either): a balanced output using XLR sockets, in addition to standard unbalanced phono outputs.

In an ideal world, all signal interconnections would be in balanced form, which can increase the signal-to-noise ratio when noise components picked up en route are summed out of phase at the receiving end. However, balanced operation is difficult to implement properly, which is why, in practice, this method of working is restricted to exotic high-end components, mostly from the USA.

If you were going to build a complete AMC system, I would wager that the benefits of balanced signal connections might be outweighed by more significant performance shortcomings inevitable in budget hardware such as this. And for the purposes of this test, it was not possible to use the AMC's



balanced outputs, first because of the need to ensure a level playing field on which to assess all of the CD players, and also because I had no suitably-socketed amplification available.

On the front panel there is a simple green fluorescent display, complemented by basic play controls, plus programme, repeat and display mode keys, and an bright 'power-on' indicator LED. The remote-control handset benefits also from a track-access numeric keypad and an A-B repeat key. There is no headphone socket.

### Sound quality

The panel could not agree on the sound of this model, and expressed a range of views. Regrettably, the balance of opinion tipped towards the unenthusiastic, leading to a nondescript score overall.

"A thuddy bass, and a rather wispy vocal quality; I'm not sure that I'd recognise this as Joni Mitchell if I didn't already know," wrote one listener. On the Keith Jarrett piano track, he described the player as being "cloudy and lacking in precision." He noted also some clanginess in the upper registers, and a vocal quality delivered "as though through clenched teeth" (James Taylor). Another panelist wrote of the AMC's 'fruity' bass, which he felt worked well in the James

Taylor track but less so elsewhere, and a softening of leading edges, which caused the Keith Jarrett piano sound to seem "slurred".

Other comments were more favourable. "This is the best player so far (out of three)," wrote another listener. "It is dynamic, has quite good timing, and there is more than a hint of spaciousness." Another member of the jury thought the AMC displayed a "strong sense of drive and a reasonable tonal balance that makes the music seem interesting most of the time".

Hands-on listening with different amplifiers and speakers pointed to a player with limited capabilities. Its strong bass performance was offset by a rather synthetic treble, and it never seemed to portray more than marginal detail. At a purely mechanical level, this player had problems tracking some of my older 'difficult' CDs.

### Conclusion

Thumbs-down for a worthy but unbalanced player that simply fails to transcend its limitations. Those with balanced AMC amplifiers may care to give it a whirl, though. **AG**

### VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★☆☆☆  
**VALUE** ★★☆☆☆  
**PRICE** £149.95

⊞ Intriguing budget CD player with balanced output to suit AMC-branded balanced-input amplifiers; in other respects it's a rather ordinary design with a strong line in bass, but a rather grubby sound in the midband.

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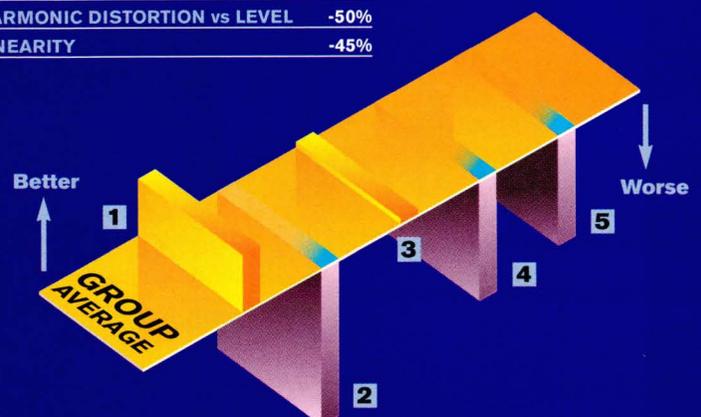
## THE LAB REPORT

The NAD-like appearance of this AMC CD8a is more than skin deep. Like various earlier NAD designs, this player employs an MN6474 MASH/PWM converter. Coincidence? Perhaps, and though the PCBs are copyrighted to the 'Weltronics Corp', the highly characteristic five-pole analogue filtering of this player's ultrasonic noise was only ever previously seen in models like the NAD 502 (HFC 119). Either way, the filtering and low 102 Ohm output impedance both help maximise the compatibility of the CD8a with different amplifiers. The balanced output option provided by this player, however, is an entirely new feature accommodated by a secondary PCB.

Quite unlike the NAD players, this AMC derivative betrays evidence of poor tracking, and is particularly unhappy with CD-R copies should you ever attempt to play them. The jitter spectrum is dominated by fundamental data-induced sidebands that account for the bulk of its 784psec total, often encouraging a flat and uninteresting sound. Distortion is low enough at 0.0018-0.015 per cent at peak output, but picks up quickly at low signal levels and high frequencies, as do errors in low-level linearity. Overall, the CD8a exhibits mixed performance. *PMi*

## HOW IT COMPARES

1	SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES	25%
2	JITTER	-65%
3	PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE	2%
4	HARMONIC DISTORTION vs LEVEL	-50%
5	LINEARITY	-45%



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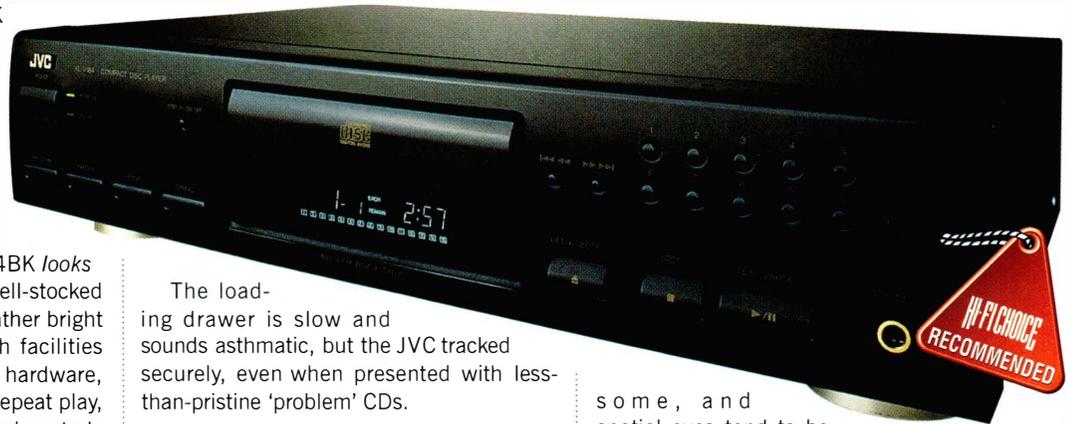
# JVC XL-V184BK

JVC's entry-level XL-V184BK is a close relative of the XL-V284 reviewed in *HFC* 147. In fact the two units are so similar as to be identical, apart from the former's omission of remote control and its new, remarkably low selling price of £120.

On the plus side, the XL-V184BK looks like good value. It has a very well-stocked front panel, and an excellent if rather bright display. It comes complete with facilities you'd expect only on more costly hardware, including program, random and repeat play, activated by large, well-signposted controls on the left of the centrally-mounted display.

On the right are the usual control keys for play, cue and track-skip, and a numeric keypad for direct track access. There is a headphone socket, but its output level is fixed. The 'display-off' facility works intelligently, coming to life briefly when a command is issued before falling asleep until the end of the disc.

As you might expect, there is provision for this CD player to be linked with other JVC components and operated with a single remote control. The same rear-panel 'Comp-Link' sockets also enable synchronised recordings from CD to tape.



The loading drawer is slow and sounds asthmatic, but the JVC tracked securely, even when presented with less-than-pristine 'problem' CDs.

## Sound quality

On paper, the XL-V184 should sound very similar to the XL-V284, though the absence of a remote-control receiver might improve sound quality slightly through reduced loading on the power supply.

The senior model received a Recommendation (*HFC* 147), but on its first presentation to the panel, the XL-V184 garnered unanimous disapproval. "Thin", "scrawny", "inept", and "small-sounding" were typical epithets. However, I suspect the assembled listeners were still adjusting to the first test candidate after hearing Meridian's £1,700 508 during the set-up process. When the JVC was presented a second time, it fared much better.

My own listening after the panel testing confirmed the second score was a more realistic judgement. Also, I discovered that switching off the display makes a positive contribution to sound quality.

There was a warmth and grace to the JVC which is often lacking in more costly machinery, though it is not as transparent as

some, and spatial cues tend to be muddled. "Big and bold, quite together-sounding, but there's a bit of a metallic sheen," was one comment, while another panelist wrote that it was "big and full-bodied, but lacked upper treble so that it sounded steely and hard," echoing many similar comments.

Taking these observations into account, and allowing for a rather lossy sound with rather caricatured stereo behaviour, I still maintain that this unit's sound-to-price ratio is hard to fault.

## Conclusion

At £120, the JVC XL-V184 seems to have what it takes in terms of build-quality, features (except for remote control) and euphonious sound. Okay, so it is not the most exciting or analytical CD reproduction device ever to have emerged from the Victor Corporation of Japan, but at the offered price I believe it represents exceptional value for money, and accordingly I have reached into the humidior and awarded it a fragrant Recommended swing-tag. *AG*

## VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £119.99

Doesn't tell the whole story, but remains a skilled raconteur nonetheless; a winning technical performance and at the price it's a peach. Buy!

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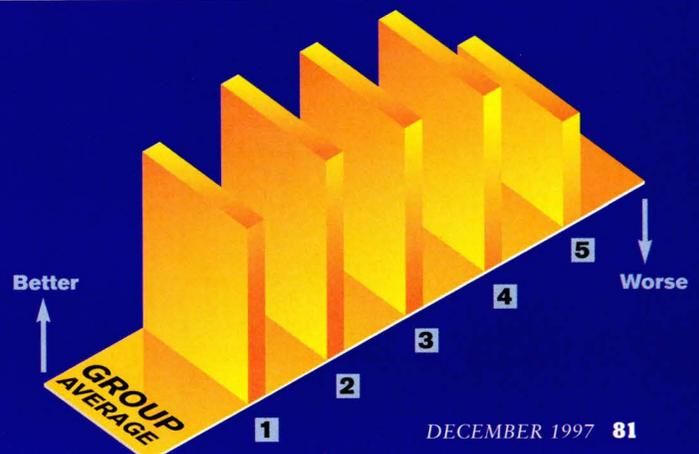
## THE LAB REPORT

To all intents and purposes, JVC's XL-V184 is a remote-less version of the XL-V284 reviewed favourably back in *HFC* 147. Both players are equipped with one of JVC's proprietary PEM (Pulse Edge Modulation) bitstream converters, though this most recent derivative enjoys a +2dB improvement in S/N with a corresponding reduction of 2dB in noise modulation. This adds up to a very worthwhile increase in the player's practical dynamic range which, at >100dB, clearly exceeds its competitors in this group.

Furthermore, the XL-V184 exhibits the lowest ultrasonic output of any player in this survey, remaining utterly free of sampling distortions, digital images and other spurious. The moderate 490 Ohm output impedance is a bit disappointing, but the sheer 'cleanliness' of the JVC's output should ensure excellent compatibility — or at least consistency — with a wide variety of different amplifiers. Low-rate PSU/hum-induced jitter amounts to just 285psec while distortion remains as low as 0.007 per cent through the mid-band at -30dB (where much of the musical action takes place). With errors of just +0.2/-0.4dB in low-level resolution, a ripple-free response and textbook handling of dithered signals, the XL-V184 looks astonishing for the price. *PMI*

## HOW IT COMPARES

1	SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES	75%
2	JITTER	85%
3	PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE	80%
4	HARMONIC DISTORTION vs LEVEL	75%
5	LINEARITY	45%



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# Philips CD751

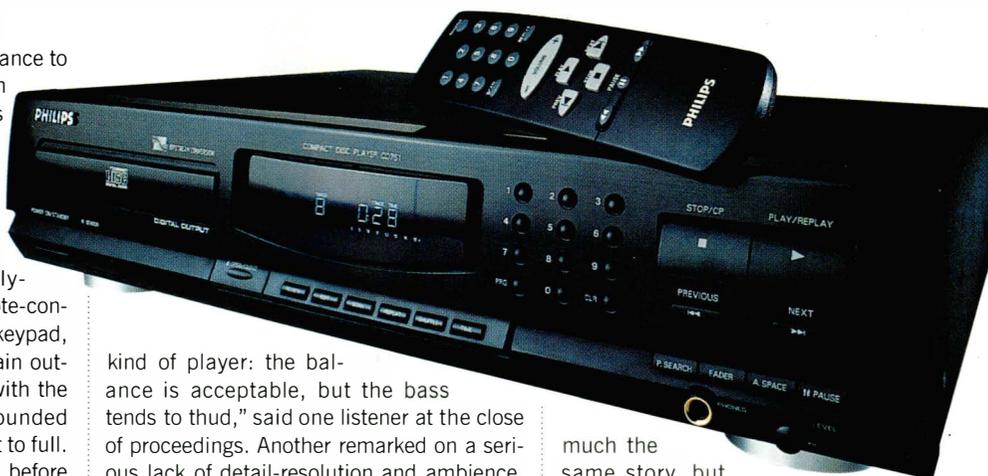
This player bears a close resemblance to the Marantz CD-48 reviewed on page 91. On its front panel, this player boasts the presence of Philips' proprietary Bitstream digital-to-analogue conversion system, though the Lab Report reveals there is more to this than meets the eye.

Features include an attractively-designed, unusually ergonomic remote-control handset with a 10-key numeric keypad, and a volume control feeding the main output. Intriguingly, the player arrived with the volume set about half way, but sounded much more lively with the volume set to full. It always remembers its last setting before being switched off.

Features on offer include direct track access from the front panel, and a range of advanced play and tape-editing features, including a fader, peak search and various time edit modes. However there is no sync socket to accommodate friendly cassette decks. Headphones may be connected via a dedicated volume control, and there is an electrical digital output.

## Sound quality

The Philips did not receive a resounding vote of confidence from the panel. "It's an okay



kind of player: the balance is acceptable, but the bass tends to thud," said one listener at the close of proceedings. Another remarked on a serious lack of detail-resolution and ambience. "It's very dry," he said, "rather like a quiet PA system." A third member of the jury chose to describe the Philips as a bit clinical and 'in-ner-face' — "a genealogist's CD player" was his parting shot.

Different listeners frequently remarked on an odd, phasey, edgy feel. "There's a buzzy quality to the upper registers," commented one after hearing the Keith Jarrett track; another, writing about the same piece, remarked that the sound had a "gritty top end and an artificial-sounding midrange" and that it "sounded processed". This appears to be associated with an under-characterised stereo image.

"Seems a bit mono-ish — or is that just a reaction to the spaciousness of the last player?" asked one panelist. The lively, spacious James Taylor recording was also damned with the mono epithet by another listener; the following referred to the choral piece: "sounds hurried — you can't fit this many singers into such a small, shallow aural picture".

My own hands-on listening sessions told

much the same story, but highlighted a degree of inconsistency from system to system, and even from compact disc to compact disc, which made it difficult to form a balanced judgement. The Philips is a fair performer with simple, middle-of-the-road music, but loses its footing with difficult, dense material. Its coarse, textured treble was highlighted by a Roksan Caspian amplifier, but it sounded more subdued and focused via an easy-going Primare A20.

## Conclusion

I can't help but feel that the Philips CD751 is sometimes a little unbalanced, tending towards a thin and scrawny sound in the top registers, and opacity at the bottom end. Its inconsistent performance made it difficult to pin down, but in terms of features alone it is a well-endowed player at an exceptionally reasonable price. This is not enough to warrant a formal Recommendation, but I would definitely say it is worth considering. After all, you don't see many Wadias or Krells for £150 these days. *AC*

## VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★☆☆☆  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £149.99

Well-endowed budget-price model, with somewhat irregular overall balance; it worked at some times but not at others.

Philips Consumer Electronics, 420-430 London Road, Croydon, Surrey CR9 3QR  
 (0181) 689 4444

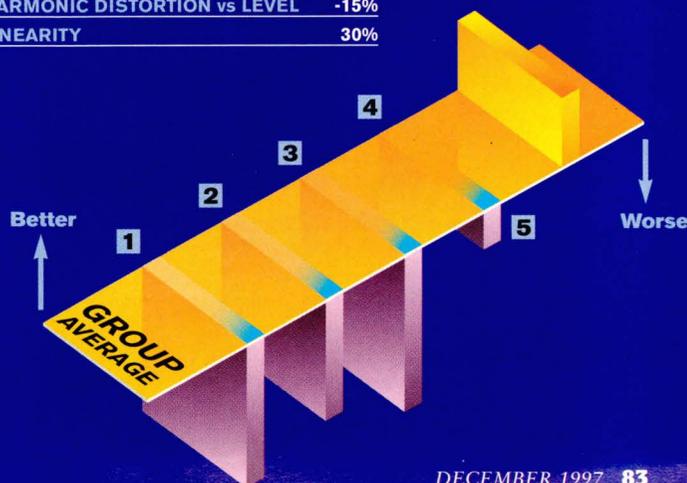
## THE LAB REPORT

The CD751 may boast a 'Bitstream' logo, but at its heart beats a mixed-technology BCC DAC called the TDA1549. This is a low-dissipation version of the TDA1305 popularised last season by Cambridge and Rotel, combining a multi-bit 'front-end' with two four-bit bitstream outputs (amounting to five bits in total). The pattern of distortion produced by the TDA1549 is not unlike that of the TDA1305, though there's a general increase at HF, reaching 0.06 per cent at -30dB. Like its relatives, however, the CD751 enjoys excellent low-level resolution with errors of just +0.3/-0.8dB over a full 100dB dynamic range.

Whether this resolution will be realised subjectively depends very much on the tolerance of the listener and accompanying amplifier to its release of bold stopband images (<30dB) immediately outside of the audioband. The high +10dB noise modulation and 1kOhm output impedance will also add a degree of uncertainty to its performance, just as its busy-looking jitter spectrum (amounting to 740psec) may well contribute to a certain phasiness or woolliness in some systems. Otherwise, the general performance of the CD751 looks distinctly more purposeful than earlier models like the CD740. *PMI*

## HOW IT COMPARES

- 1 SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES -60%
- 2 JITTER -50%
- 3 PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE -65%
- 4 HARMONIC DISTORTION vs LEVEL -15%
- 5 LINEARITY 30%





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# Yamaha CDX-390

Yamaha's new entry-level CD player is no bare-bones product: it's sleek and sophisticated, and looks almost too well equipped to be the first rung on the company's CD ladder. It comes with a comprehensive remote control (whose numeric keypad duplicates the one on the front panel), index search and a three-stage display dimmer.

The handset also includes keys to drive a comprehensive range of CD-to-tape editing features. These include automatic track spacing and editing, auto programming of discs to make best use of the available tape space, and even a peak-level search capability. A synchronised CD recording feature makes CD player and cassette deck respond to a single start command, but at first sight it is not obvious how this works since there is no dedicated socket on the back panel.

In fact, provided one has a compatible Yamaha cassette deck, this synchronisation feature derives its start command from the remote control at the same time as the CD player, if the two are positioned close to one another. Simple, and presumably effective.

Unfortunately there is no digital output socket, so this unit cannot be upgraded with



an external DAC. Neither is there a headphone socket nor indeed any output apart from the standard line-level phono sockets.

## Sound quality

The panel gave this model a high score, which is impressive given the low selling price. However the nature of the comments tended to belie the strong numerical showing from all but one member of the panel, who awarded the Yamaha his highest score of the day. He described the player as offering "good resolution of fine detail and a tight bass", though he also felt that stereo imagery was "two dimensional" (Joni Mitchell).

The James Taylor track was more enthusiastically received. "It captures the live spirit," he enthused, and "puts the performance against a very dark background".

The consensus opinion depicted a rather dense, opaque sound, not lacking in power, and with a certain treble presence, but which ultimately obscures more than it elucidates. The James Taylor track did indeed have an energetic, lively feel, but I felt that the performance sounded rather one-dimensional and lacking in subtlety, and stereo performance was sometimes phasey.

"Tonally okay, but the piano seems a bit stretched in the left-right plane," was one comment on the Keith Jarrett; while James Taylor's ultra-smooth delivery was characterised as "strained" by the same listener.

Perhaps the most perceptive comment came from another panel member who wrote in his sum-up comments that the Yamaha "times well and has a good tonal balance, and sounds really nice with simple music, but that it tends to come to grief and sound harsh and muddled with more complex material". Quite so.

## Conclusion

There are two points to be made in favour of this player: it is well built, with excellent controls, plenty of tape-dubbing aids and smooth-acting mechanicals; and it is cheap. Its rather inconsistent sound quality will never endear it to those who seek a high-performance player at a low price, but it manages to sound presentable, and certainly would not disgrace any self-respecting middle-rank system. *AG*

## VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★☆☆☆  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £129.95

Well-presented entry-level player of particular interest to those with serial-CD dubbing requirements and a compatible Yamaha cassette deck. Musically too inconsistent to recommend.

Yamaha Electronics UK Ltd, 200 Rickmansworth Rd, Watford, Herts WD1 7JS  
 (01923) 233166

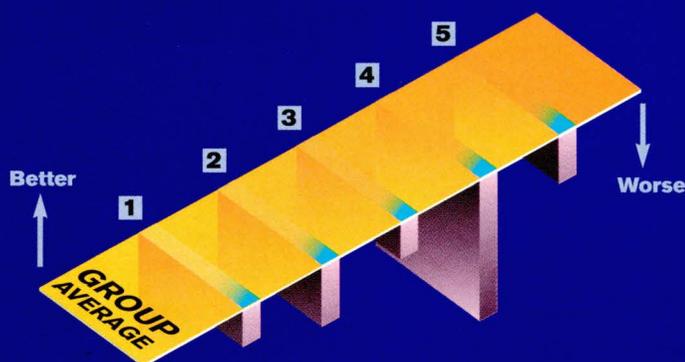
## THE LAB REPORT

The origins of the CDX-390 can be clearly traced back to Yamaha's CDX-480 (HFC 147) and, latterly, the CDX-490 (HFC 159). All three players are based around a common topology, with Technics' busy little MN66271R processor at its heart, so all three suffer the same, digitally-derived drawbacks. Most noticeable is the sweep of ultrasonic requantisation noise, the odd-order high frequency harmonics, which reach 0.07 per cent at -30dB, and characteristic stopband image (at -64dB). All three phenomena will contribute to a degree of inconsistency with different systems, as will the high 1.1kOhm output impedance. I would avoid MF and Arcam amplifiers, which have very low CD input impedances.

Jitter, meanwhile, amounts to 680psec and is largely accounted for by fundamental, data-induced sidebands which will tend to muddle its sound when the going gets tough. Otherwise, the player's low-level resolution looks very good and its overall dynamic range is still just in excess of 16 bits. There will be a maximum +5.9Hz pitch shift thanks to poor crystal clock selection, but I would not expect this to exert any audible significance. As good as the CDX-490 then, only cheaper! *PMi*

## HOW IT COMPARES

- 1 SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES -15%
- 2 JITTER -25%
- 3 PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE -15%
- 4 HARMONIC DISTORTION vs LEVEL -60%
- 5 LINEARITY -20%





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# Denon DCD-635

Here is a replacement for the DCD-625, which is pitched into the fray at £20 less than its predecessor.

It keeps faith with multi-bit conversion technology by deploying what is claimed to be an 18-bit Burr Brown DAC plus eight-times-oversampling 'LAMBDA filters' and 'Digital Noise Shaping'.

This player is nothing special to look at. The centre-mounted mechanism is positioned above the display, which is not the most helpful arrangement, but otherwise it is cleanly styled, simple, and easy to understand. Its mechanism is quiet but positive in action, and the rather fussy display can be dimmed or switched off entirely, with some benefit to sound quality.

The headphone feed has a rotary volume control, while via the remote handset users may attenuate the main line-level output by 12dB, though not without a penalty to sound quality.

The display dimmer is a new feature, and the laser-servo control has been upgraded, leading to claims of faster track-to-track response and more accurate tracking. User-convenience features include various disc-to-tape editing programme functions, and these are enhanced by the provision of a 'sync'

socket to which one may connect Denon cassette decks. The digital output is a TOSLINK optical socket, and the display includes a calendar-style track number readout.

## Sound quality

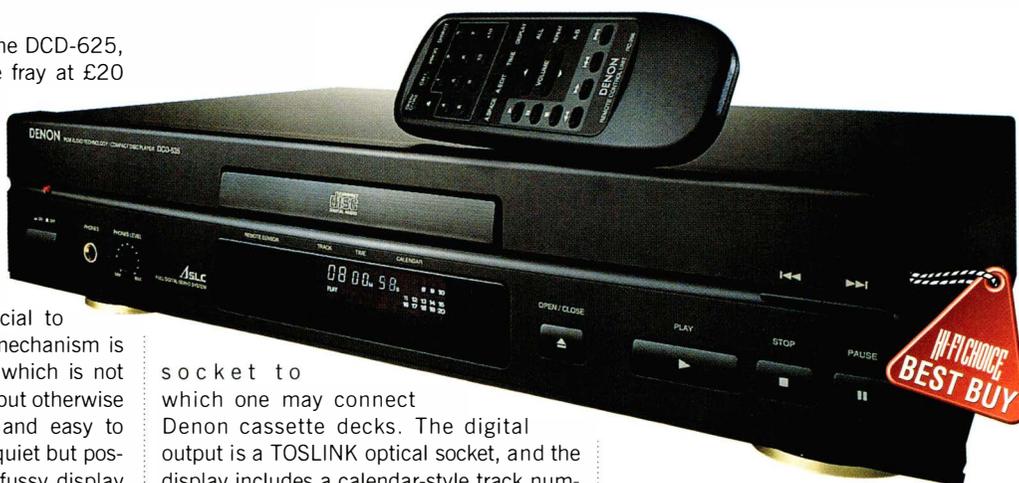
Here is a player that shows what can be done at a low price when resources are concentrated where they can do the greatest good. "Bouncy and pretty lively," wrote one listener about the Joni Mitchell track. "The player is tonally very even-handed, and very easy to listen to," and the Keith Jarrett was felt to have "a good sense of rhythm". The choral piece from Henri Dumont offered "good clarity, with a nice listen-through character and good (vocal) articulation, and an even-handed tonal balance". Another described the Denon as the "best so far". Following the James Taylor presentation another listener wrote that the player "captured the interplay of instruments well", though he felt the player was a little too laid-back to fully exploit the live feel of the song.

This, however, was a minority view, and a high average score tells its own eloquent story. I have no quarrel with the consensus

panel view. This is a clean, evidently accurate and expressive player, which was as good an advocate for the complex and the unfamiliar — for example, the extraordinarily complex sound pictures in Percy Grainger's *The Warriors* (Rattle/CBSO on EMI) — as it was with more homely material such as the James Taylor test track *Handy Man*. In the end, it was the authentically lifelike quality of the latter which marked this player out from the crowd; that combined with a general mixture of euphony and transparency.

## Conclusion

Though it is no advert for a large cosmetics budget, and indeed feels a little plasticky, Denon's DCD-635 is a thoroughbred when it comes to musical performance, and it holds its own with players that cost quite a bit more. The only criticisms raised during the test were mild in nature and infrequent in occasion. This CD player, I believe, is an obvious Best Buy. **AG**



## VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £179.99

First-rate budget price player; sharp, articulate and vividly presented; but unprepossessing packaging and suggestion of midband emphasis.

Hayden Laboratories Ltd, Hayden House, Chiltern Hill, Chalfont St Peter, Bucks SL9 9UG  
(01753) 888447

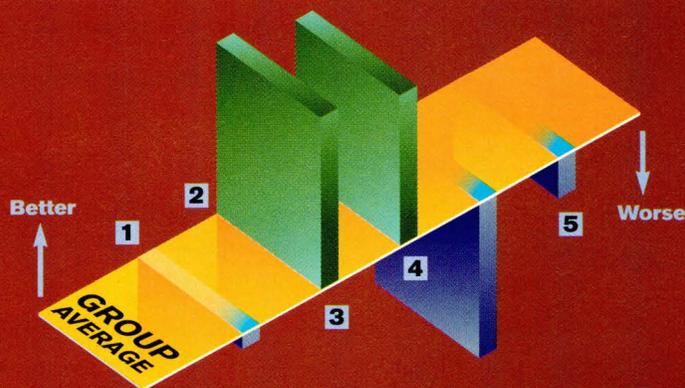
## THE LAB REPORT

The very familiar technical performance of the DCD-635 suggests that Denon has recognised the strengths of previous models and, wisely in my view, decided against any radical revisions. Hence the choice of NPC's SM5841 oversampling filter and Burr-Brown's 18-bit PCM61P DACs, a combination already used to good effect in the DCD-615 (*HFC* 139) and DCD-625 (*HFC* 147). Once again we see a very familiar pattern of stopband images (<54dB) and pronounced spread of harmonic distortions at the crucial -30dB level (0.05-0.08 per cent).

These distortions are numerically greater than those suffered by its competition in this group (hence the bargraph) but their *nature* is one that contributes to the perceived dynamic 'edge' and power of the Denon's music-making. Meanwhile, a mere smattering of data-induced low-rate transport-derived jitter and two high frequency patterns add up to a very respectable 280psec overall — an excellent result and one that's subjectively more important than worrying over conventional distortions. A combination of +10dB noise modulation and a 109dB S/N ratio yields a respectable dynamic range, though the 1.9V peak output might still put the DCD-635 at a slight disadvantage in non-critical listening conditions. *PMi*

## HOW IT COMPARES

1	SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES	-5%
2	JITTER	75%
3	PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE	65%
4	HARMONIC DISTORTION vs LEVEL	-65%
5	LINEARITY	-15%





# Kenwood DP-4090

You will find in Kenwood's price list a brief description of this model, which is the third most expensive in a five-strong range. The description reads: 'CD player, 1 bit DAC, D.R.I.V.E, remote control, tuned for the UK, CD Text'. CD Text? It's going to be everywhere soon. Fifteen years ago the capability was first demonstrated by Technics, though the concept was written into the original Red Book specifications for CD. Now Kenwood, among other brands, has introduced players that can extract album and track titles, artist and composer names and other similar data from suitably-encoded discs, using a large dot-matrix panel above the loading drawer, with long messages scrolled across the display.

Despite possessing a minimalist front panel, the DP-4090 is not short of features, and many of these are potentially most useful: electrical and optical digital outputs, remote system-link terminals and remote-control-operated headphone volume adjustment. (However the same digital ladder network is also in line with the main outputs, and this is less welcome.)

Though bulky, the player is well made, and has an extruded aluminium front panel, with a thin Teac-like loading drawer, which is quieter and quicker to respond than most.



A 'peak search' feature is available to help set recording levels on a partnering Kenwood cassette deck, and various tape dubbing features are available, though typically for this marque, some of the operating procedures are a little obscure until you've read the instructions in depth.

## Sound quality

Clearly it was one of the more successful models in this group, because the Kenwood received a highly consistent endorsement from the panel. "This sounded pretty good," wrote one panellist; another said: "I liked it. The player sounds full-bodied, rhythmic and detailed. Sometimes its treble seems a little harsh, but on the whole it works really well".

One point attracting particular praise was stereo imagery. "The piano has excellent depth and a strong sense of scale, with a soundstage that seems to extend to the edges of the speakers, then stops abruptly," was the comment on the Keith Jarrett and James Taylor tracks. Another member of the jury, who was sitting more centrally between the speakers, wrote of the Kenwood's "impressive, wide, open imaging, which went way outside the speakers". Timing and

dynamics were widely and explicitly praised, while the only criticisms were confined to sporadic comments about a degree of muddle and coloration when the music became very complex. "This player drew me into the music — I really enjoyed listening," was one pretty typical sum-up comment.

The Kenwood is a colourful and articulate player which is notably more dynamic and less mechanical than most, and which performed consistently with each system used on test. It had the happy knack of drawing attention away from the mechanics of music reproduction, and into the music itself.

## Conclusion

A first-rate budget CD player, the DP-4090 has an open, expressive sound quality, with plenty of tonal colour, dynamic incident, and dark spaces between the notes to enhance contrast. Take into account an improved loading mechanism and the CD Text feature, and you're left with an unquestionable star performer. The DP-4090 is a Best Buy. **AG**

## VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★  
**VALUE** ★★★★★☆  
**PRICE** £229.95

Sharp, clean and well-differentiated sound quality, with strong tonal quality, dynamics and three-dimensional imagery — plus CD Text. No real failings that we can find.

Kenwood Electronics UK Ltd, Kenwood House, Dwight Road, Watford, Herts WD1 8EB  
(01923) 816444

## THE LAB REPORT

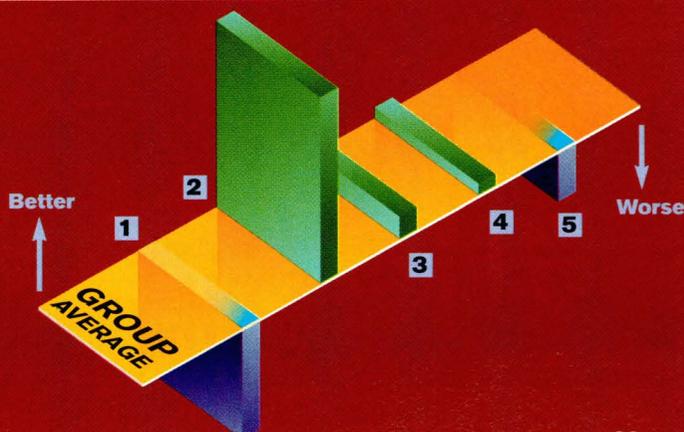
Kenwood's DRIVE technology has reached a new budget price-point in the DP-4090, which includes the combined KAN03 Drive/DAC IC. The well-controlled ultrasonic output, surmounted by rippled stopband images (<-38dB), is entirely synonymous with this eight-times-oversampling filter and bitstream DAC.

Nevertheless, there remain significant stopband distortions just outside of the audioband, which are sufficient, in my view, to account for a slight muddling or harshness with some amplifiers.

On the other hand, its very low 270psec of jitter, accounted for by unusual +/-334Hz sidebands, is an excellent result. Previous generations of Kenwood's budget CD players were riddled with jitter up to 10 times this level, so the DP-4090 marks a great improvement in this vital area of performance — realised in its markedly sharper stereo imaging. Elsewhere, the DP-4090 fares well enough, with a 100dB S/N ratio only slightly diminished by a +3.5dB noise modulation and distortion that holds to within 0.0032-0.032 per cent across the audioband at -30dB. Unusually, its low-level linearity is better at 20kHz than at 1kHz, where deviations of +1.8/-2.4dB are evident. Otherwise, the DP-4090 is strong where it counts. *PMI*

## HOW IT COMPARES

1	SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES	-45%
2	JITTER	80%
3	PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE	10%
4	HARMONIC DISTORTION vs LEVEL	5%
5	LINEARITY	-20%



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# Marantz CD-48

This player bears a striking resemblance to the Philips CD751 (tested in this issue, p83). The front panel is different and looks the better for it, but many key parts are in precisely the same positions, and the rear panels, which are rarely disguised for obvious reasons, are virtually identical. This is true also of the remote controls, which is no bad thing: this is an artfully-designed handset that is very easy to use. Remote control over the player's main line level output is here, above a diamond cluster of the main transport function buttons, and below a 10-key numeric keypad. The latter is duplicated on the player's front panel.

The Marantz is equipped with the usual plethora of tape edit, trick play and track programming modes. On the tape-editing front there is a peak-search function to help set appropriate record levels, and a fader control to smooth over the joins between tracks. The player is also equipped with an electrical digital output socket, and a headphone socket with a volume control to match. The display is of excellent quality, and the control system is well organised, if a little 'busy'. My advice is to stick with the remote control.

## VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★☆☆☆  
**VALUE** ★★☆☆☆  
**PRICE** £199.90

At times a genuinely distinguished sound, but undermined by coarse, excessive performances at the frequency extremes.

Marantz Hi Fi UK Ltd., Kingsbridge House, Padbury Oaks, 581 Bath Road, Longford, Middlesex UB7 0EH (01753) 680868



## Sound quality

It is not hard to draw parallels with the Philips CD751 in the listening panel's reactions to the Marantz. However, when it came to criticisms that were directed at the Philips model, these were much less vehement, and overall there was a greater sense of enthusiasm for the Marantz. There were occasional calls of "dire" and "bad", and more than one remark to the effect that the Marantz sounded artificial, but these were outnumbered by the positive comments. "Refined without losing its edge... good underpinning of bass," was one comment following the Joni Mitchell track, while another drew attention to the "clear differentiation between voices" and the generally "solid presentation". These comments are broadly representative of the consensus in this case, but one listener demurred, describing the sound of Marantz, CD48-style, as "artificial" and the treble as "glassy", though his principal complaint was of an uncontrolled, overblown bass.

I took the opportunity to compare the Marantz directly to the Philips, and was a little surprised to find they sounded quite different. The Marantz sounded more distant than the Philips, which was already less

forward in balance than most. But the Marantz was also more sharply focused, with a more obviously dynamic sound, both in the way low-level details were distinguished from each other, and in their gross dynamic structures. On balance, the Marantz was clearly the more distinguished-sounding player of the two, though it was also the more aggressive-sounding, and upper strings and other complex, high-frequency-rich sounds sometimes acquired a distinct phasiness and granularity, which perhaps accounts for some of the comments about the treble. Either sample variation plays a more prominent part than expected, or these really are two different players internally. But I know which one I'd buy.

## Conclusion

The CD-48 lacks the softly-spoken refinement of other Marantz players. It hints at sterner stuff, but often its strengths are veiled, with some excess at both frequency extremes bracketing a mostly clear, open and well-differentiated midband. A flawed design, but interesting nonetheless. **AG**

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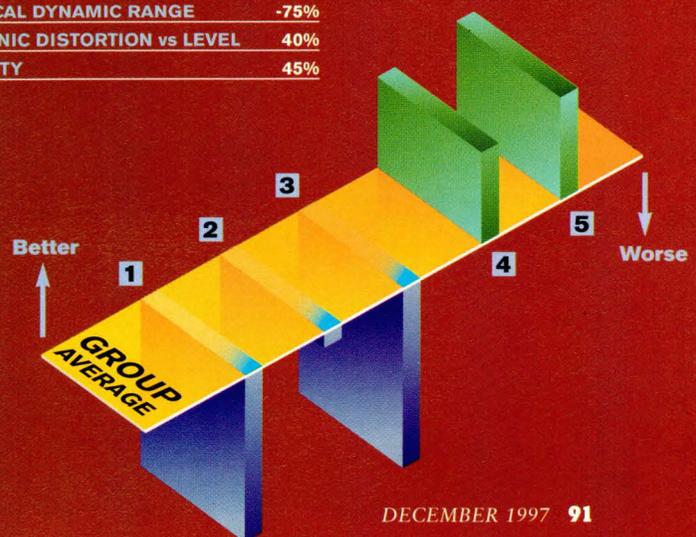
## THE LAB REPORT

The highly complex jitter spectrum emerging from the CD-48 is quite distinct from the 'fingerprint' pattern which defines Marantz's entire CD-63 and CD-67 series. Nevertheless, this series of sidebands is equally distinctive and more than likely to contribute some colour to the overall performance. Indeed, the pattern is identical, though higher in amplitude (980psec), to that generated by Philips' CD751.

Instead of using NPC's combined filter/DAC, the reliable SM5872, this new player marks a return to Philips with its hybrid (Bitstream/Continuous Calibration) DAC, the TDA1549 — the very same chip, I must add, found in Philips' CD751 (see page 83). On paper at least, there are further interesting comparisons between the CD-48 and CD751. Both have a high and not entirely useful 1kOhm output impedance, both exhibit the same pattern in distortion (0.0006-0.011 per cent at 0dB) and both, naturally, output very substantial stopband images as defined by their digital filters. Both have almost precisely the same 2.0V output, though the Marantz suffers an extra 6-7dB noise modulation for no practical improvement in S/N — hence the poor dynamic range bargraph. *PMI*

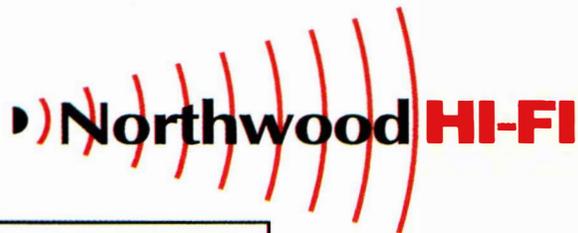
## HOW IT COMPARES

1	SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES	-70%
2	JITTER	-5%
3	PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE	-75%
4	HARMONIC DISTORTION vs LEVEL	40%
5	LINEARITY	45%



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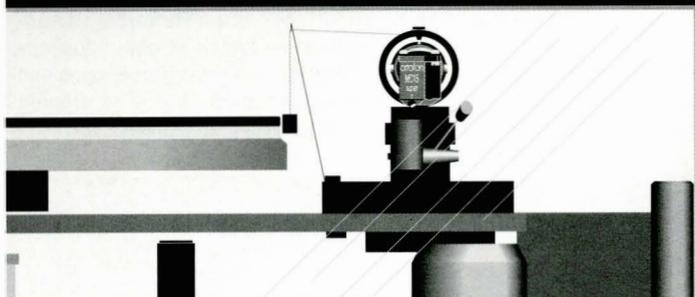
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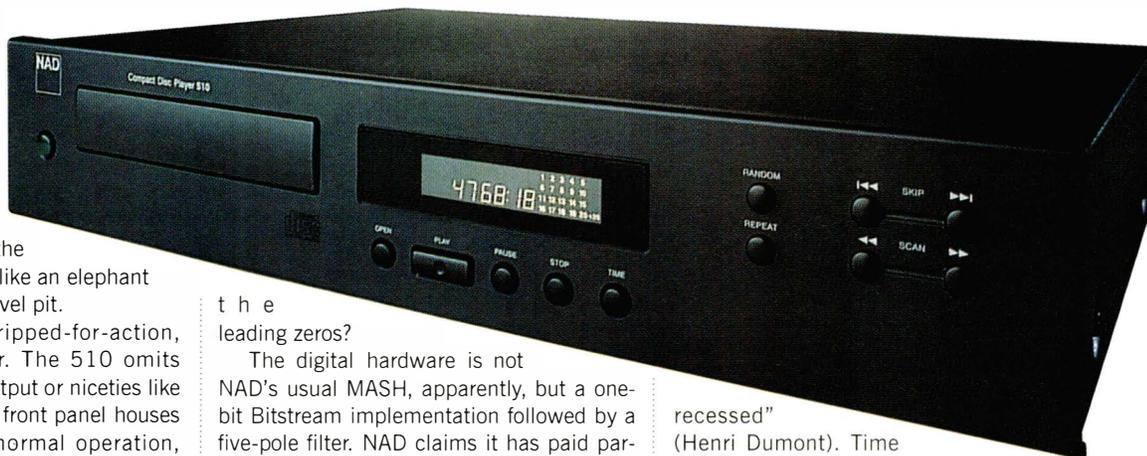
01753-889949

# NAD 510

NAD's generic look is now so familiar as to have acquired institutional status. All the usual visual cues are present: the grey fascia, the back-lit display, the simple control layout, the loading tray that sounds like an elephant being pulled across a gravel pit.

This is the new, stripped-for-action, entry-level NAD player. The 510 omits remote control, digital output or niceties like headphone sockets. The front panel houses skeleton facilities for normal operation, including cueing and track skip, random and repeat play, but there is no track programming option and no remote control. I would not be surprised if many users miss both of the latter. Apart from the obligatory play, pause, stop and open controls, the only other button is the one that switches the display between time elapsed and time remaining, both for the current track as well as the whole disc.

Simplicity is no bad thing, but the admittedly attractive display has insufficient space between track numbers and time readouts, frequently making it hard to interpret the display unambiguously. Oh, and why do NAD's designers insist on retaining



the leading zeros?

The digital hardware is not NAD's usual MASH, apparently, but a one-bit Bitstream implementation followed by a five-pole filter. NAD claims it has paid particular attention to short signal paths, and has attempted to minimise contamination of audio signals by stray RF noise.

### Sound quality

The panel was distinctly underwhelmed by this player, even though it was auditioned alongside other comparably-priced models, as is standard practice in our panel tests. One listener chose to construct a scenario for a low-cost player in which the aim is to reduce the usual perceived problems of the medium, and the result is a unit so smooth that it has "no leading edges, no nothing". Another wrote that there seemed to be "two Farads between myself and the music", which just might make this the first joke in history to feature the unit of electrical capacitance. Other comments: "wispiness and slightly vague — vocals blurred and indistinct" (Joni Mitchell); "very legato, like all the leading edges have been filed off" and "soundstage is far too centralised" (the piano recording featuring Keith Jarrett); "lacking presence" (James Taylor); and "flat, no expression,

recessed" (Henri Dumont). Time and again the panel offered comments of a similar nature.

These opinions may sound like caricatures, but my hands-on tests confirmed that the NAD is very cool and dry, with a peculiarly wispy, distant quality. Music has little 'grip', and recorded dynamics never really take wing. "Quite polished in a sanded-down way" was one typically double-edged compliment. Music tends to sound flat and expressionless, though in its favour, the 510 is far from being harsh, aggressive or unpleasant. It simply lacked the wherewithal to make music that was as compelling as it should be.

### Conclusion

I applaud the idea of stripping the bells and whistles from a basically sound player to hit a low price point. I fear that in this instance the process has cut into muscle as well as fat, resulting in a rather flat, monotonous sound that lacks the spark of similarly-priced competition. The comment about edges filed off the music is all too apt. *AG*

### VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★☆☆☆  
**VALUE** ★★☆☆☆  
**PRICE** £199.95

Stripped-down player with no digital-out or remote control. Music sounds stripped-down, too.

The Audio Club, Unit 15, Faraday Rd, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP19 3RY  
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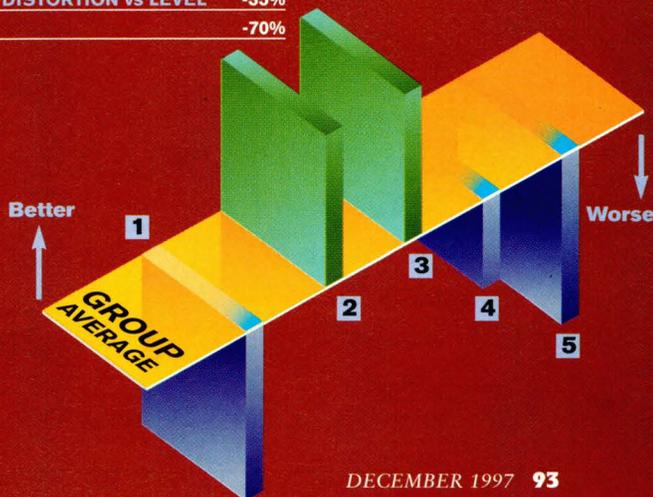
## THE LAB REPORT

Bit of a mixed bag, the 510. On the one hand, NAD has retained its five-pole active filter used in earlier models like the 502 (HFC 119), but has abandoned the usual MNG474 MASH/PWM DAC in favour of Philips' longstanding SAA7350 Bitstream converter. On the one hand, the SAA7350 is performing up to scratch in terms of noise (-102dB) and distortion which lies at 0.0006-0.0014 per cent (at 0dB), and an excellent 0.004-0.009 per cent (at -30dB). Jitter is a mixture of data-induced sidebands and various other endemic patterns amounting to a very respectable 301psec, while the peak output is spot-on at 2V via a usefully low 100 Ohm source impedance.

The bad news comes courtesy of the player's digital filter, which provides scant attenuation of digital images immediately outside the audioband (-30dB). Though NAD's proprietary analogue filter does eliminate the boldest of potential interference above 40kHz or so, there remains evidence of very high-order digital IM patterns creeping into the treble octaves of the audioband. This, combined with a marked increase in distortion at -60dB of 0.4 per cent, and a very obvious glitch in low level linearity (-6.5dB at -90dB), seems to have contributed to the 510's downfall. *PMI*

## HOW IT COMPARES

1	SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES	-70%
2	JITTER	65%
3	PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE	65%
4	HARMONIC DISTORTION vs LEVEL	-35%
5	LINEARITY	-70%



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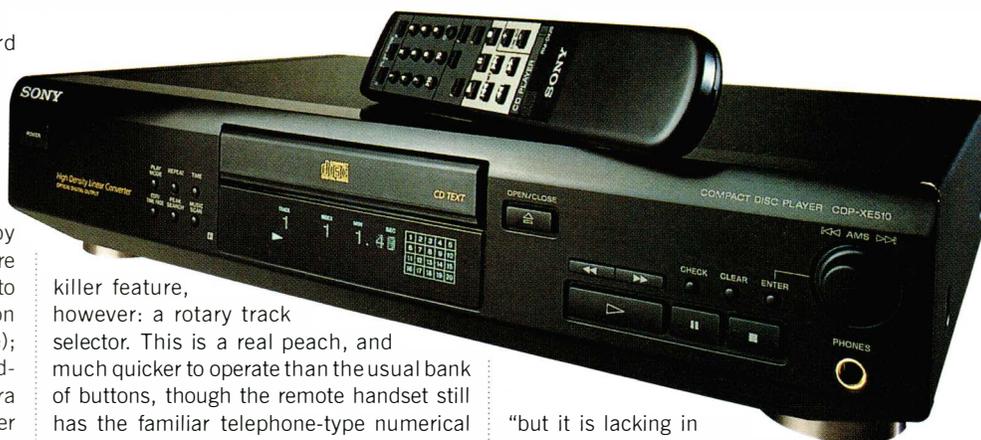
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# Sony CDP-XE510

The 'XE510 is based on a standard player, produced by Sony in Japan, which has never been sold in the UK. This, in turn, was very loosely derived from the CDP-XE500 (Best Buy, HFC 159). The CDP-XE510 has been extensively rejigged with a number of internal enhancements put in place by Sony's UK design team. Enhancements are said to include an updated output op-amp to provide wider bandwidth, lower distortion and a quicker transient response (slew rate); various changes to the power supply including a larger mains transformer; and extra screening for the one-bit Pulse DAC. Other changes are alleged to include upgrades to a number of coupling and power supply capacitors, detailed changes to the sharpness of the low-pass-output-filter's resonance peak, the use of copper fixed screws, and a new main PCB layout. All informed, apparently, by in-depth listening tests.

External presentation accords with Sony's high-class, slimline style, here enhanced by angled-back top and bottom edges. There's nothing special about the front panel, on which many features are accommodated quite painlessly; but as before the display is a little too fussy to convince on ergonomic grounds. There is one



killer feature, however: a rotary track selector. This is a real peach, and much quicker to operate than the usual bank of buttons, though the remote handset still has the familiar telephone-type numerical keypad. A volume control with stepped 20dB range is available on the remote control, and this varies the main output and headphone sockets together. System control sockets and optical digital output are fitted.

## Sound quality

I regret to say that the panel was overwhelmed by this player. "Probably pretty competent," remarked one listener. "This one does what it is meant to do, but doesn't excel at anything in particular". Another panellist wrote somewhat damningly that the Sony was "blandly competent".

By the same token there were no disasters in this unit's performance on test, and the bottom-line listening score was not at all poor. Most of the negative comments were framed in the absence of particular qualities. The female vocals in the Henri Dumont sounded "very small" according to one listener, and "lacking focus" by another, who went on to describe the player as "curiously uninvolved". Another felt that the James Taylor track "lacked projection". "This is a well-balanced player" went another remark,

"but it is lacking in bottom end, and male vocals sounds indeterminate"; Joni Mitchell sounded "vaguely right" although the sound "lacked bounce". This listener was quick to acknowledge the Sony's basic competence.

There were significant inconsistencies in the performance of this player with different systems, but the general tone of the panel comments was clearly along these lines: nice player, shame about the music. The Sony was more at ease with simple music, such as solo vocals (Suzanne Vega unaccompanied, some classical guitar); but it became congested with high octane orchestral material (Rautavarra, Bartók et al).

## Conclusion

I would love to report otherwise, but this is a disappointing player that ultimately fails to engage the emotions, and is too inclined to sound edgy and congested when the going gets tough. But this is not to detract from its competent performance with simply-recorded musical material, and the rotary track search feature is a real plus for compulsive track-skippers. **AG**

## VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★☆☆☆  
**VALUE** ★★☆☆☆  
**PRICE** £179.99

Even-tempered, tonally accurate, polished sound, and excellent rotary track-search control, but ultimately this rather bland player seems to go through the motions rather than the emotions.

Sony UK Ltd, The Heights, Brooklands, Weybridge, Surrey KT13 0XW  
(0990) 111999

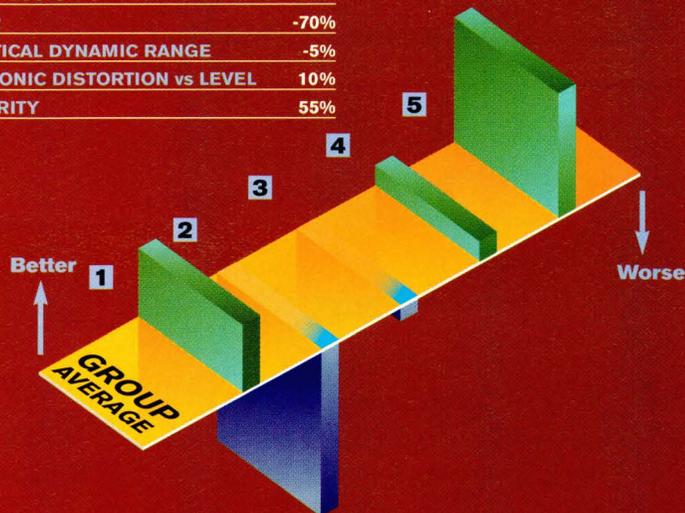
## THE LAB REPORT

Take one CDP-XE500 (HFC 159), add a CD Text facility and, broadly speaking, you've got the makings of the new CDP-XE510. Like its forerunner, the 'XE510 features a beautifully clean ultrasonic spectrum that is free of sampling images and other digital distortions, and with just the merest hint of a 'leaky' 88.2kHz sample tone to spoil what is otherwise a near-perfect result. Distortion follows a consistent pattern that's low in the midband and bass (typically 0.001 per cent at 0dB and 0.0045 per cent at -30dB), but somewhat higher through the treble octaves (up to 0.016 and 0.03 per cent at 0dB and -30dB respectively).

Sadly, Sony has reverted to a digital mute ruse to deliver what appears to be a 122dB S/N ratio, though in practice, the equally unrealistic +26dB noise modulation suggests that a 'real' figure between 100-102dB is occurring under music conditions. The real oversight in this 'XE510 lies in the substantial PSU and hum-induced jitter, a full 2360psec's worth. Clearly this exceeds the jitter suffered by the old 'XE500 and, by its nature, is more than sufficient to throw a cloud of uncertainty over an otherwise neutral performance. *PMI*

## HOW IT COMPARES

1	SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES	30%
2	JITTER	-70%
3	PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE	-5%
4	HARMONIC DISTORTION vs LEVEL	10%
5	LINEARITY	55%



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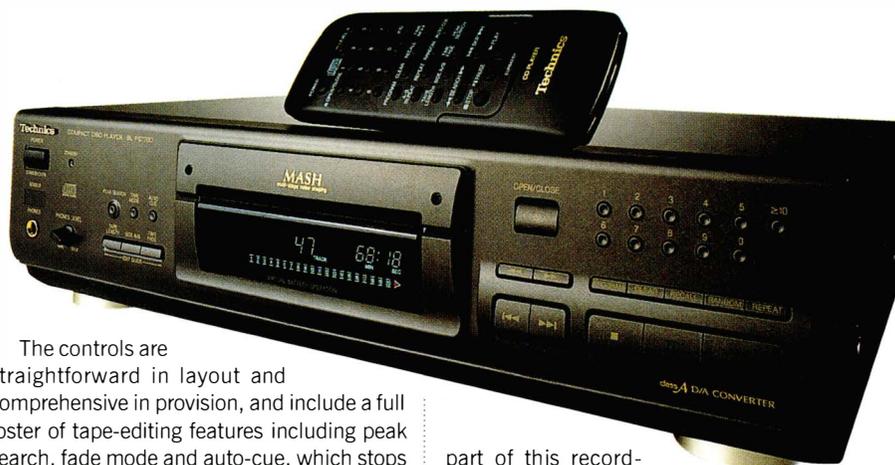
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# Technics SL-PS770D

Developed from last season's SL-PS770A, the SL-PS770D claims to be a veritable showcase of Technics technology. Check these out: composite low-resonance THCB base, Také power supply capacitors with bamboo-pulp separators, Organic Semiconductive low impedance electrolytic capacitors in the audio stages, and a newly-designed, high-speed output opamp. And don't forget Technics' proprietary Virtual Battery low-noise power supply and top-of-the-line S-Advanced MASH Class A DAC.

There is a similarly fulsome quotient of features — and a couple of oddities. The digital output is optical, as usual; and a rough'n'ready digital ladder-type volume control sits on the main output, allegedly attenuating up to 12dB in coarse 2dB steps. This also controls the headphone output, even though there is a separate control pot to do the same job. It is not hard to foresee circumstances where the user might be subject to sound levels 12dB higher than expected. The electronic volume control used by Technics is palpably below par in audio terms, and is best left at its maximum setting, which is as near as you will get to taking it out of circuit.



The controls are straightforward in layout and comprehensive in provision, and include a full roster of tape-editing features including peak search, fade mode and auto-cue, which stops at the beginning of each successive track. The player feels polished and smooth in action, with the drawer mechanism in particular seeming especially svelte. However, there is no index search. The best that can be said of the remote control is that it is comprehensive!

## Sound quality

The SL-P770D fared somewhat unevenly in three separate sessions in front of the panel, though one of the repeats was accurately identified as a repeat, and on balance an average score was probably about right. In many ways this is an attractive-sounding player, but consistently it lost its edge when stressed with really fine recordings, such as a recently acquired Mozart *Serenade for 13 Wind Instruments* K361 (a *BBC Music Magazine* cover mount freebie, Oct '97 issue), which is tremendously vivid with a very strong sense of colour and presence. The recording sounded smooth and natural through the Technics, but flat, and did not convey the slightly dissonant quality of the period instruments in which resides a large

part of this recording's appeal. Even cheapies like the JVC XL-V184BK, at under half the price, managed to show it a clean pair of heels, although the Technics sounded more transparent and natural. Similar findings greeted this model's predecessor, the SL-P770A (*HFC* 147), which implies the latter's faults have remained.

The consensus panel view was that the SL-P770D offers an analytic midband quality and well-behaved frequency extremes (one mark of a fine player), but that it nevertheless managed to sound "a bit too shiny and unreal", and that it was "competent, rhythmic, but the treble is a bit off".

## Conclusion

Beautifully presented and armed to the teeth with Technics technology — but on audition the '770D failed to engage emotions. I would say it's a player to admire more than like, and cannot help but feel it concealed musically important information that makes the difference between listening to a recording and experiencing a performance. **AG**

## VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £250.00

It seems that the weakness identified in the SL-P770D's predecessor, the SL-P770A, has not been addressed, and the result, although acclaimed elsewhere, doesn't cut the mustard. Clearly there is a great player here struggling to get out.

Panasonic UK Ltd, Panasonic House, Willoughby Road, Bracknell, Berks RG12 8FP  
 (0990) 357 357

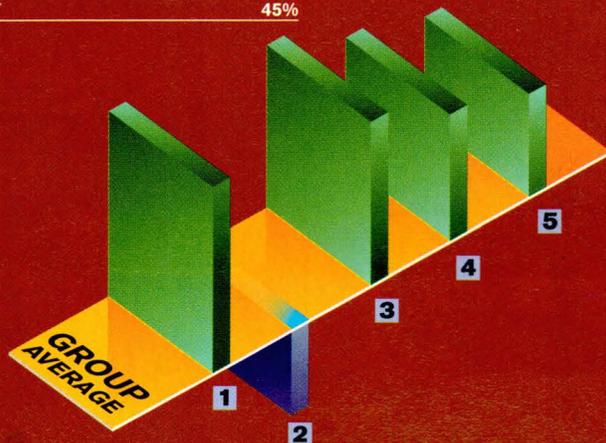
## THE LAB REPORT

*HFC* 147 saw Technics' SL-PS770A receive a less-than-favourable reaction from our panel, and regrettably there has been a similar reaction to the SL-PS770D, which evinces the same technical hallmarks and oversights. There's still plenty that's 'right' about the SL-PS770D, including its >105dB suppression of ultrasonic noise and stopband images, its excellent response to dithered signals, mere +0.4/-0.5dB errors in low-level linearity, and very low 0.0025-0.008 per cent THD at -30dB. Its 'real' 105.8dB S/N ratio is fractionally short of the A's 106.6dB but the player still has the best dynamic range of the bunch.

Now the bad news. Bearing in mind Technics' claims for its VBO (Virtual Battery operation), it is surprising to discover that no less than 1388psec of its substantial 1414psec jitter is attributable to hum and PSU-induced phenomena. This characteristic, low-rate pattern was also identified with the SL-PS770A and remains the principal cause of its undoing, bamboo-pulp capacitors notwithstanding. The high-ish 814 Ohm output impedance also suggests the topology of its output stage will be no less amplifier and cable-fussy than its forbear. I would suggest a fundamental re-think is required before 'son-of-770D' is launched. *PMI*

## HOW IT COMPARES

1	SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES	80%
2	JITTER	-35%
3	PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE	70%
4	HARMONIC DISTORTION vs LEVEL	55%
5	LINEARITY	45%



# Conclusions

As we mentioned in the introduction to this test, many of the models on appraisal have been built on the same chassis as more expensive, better equipped units in the same range. We had hoped, therefore, to be impressed by budget contenders punching above their weight. But it was hard not to end up a little disappointed, or at least underwhelmed, by the prevailing standards revealed. Whatever the influencing factors,

only three models out of ten fulfilled the strict requirements for *Hi-Fi Choice* Recommended or Best Buy awards. And few others could do more than hint at the essence of the recordings we played.

If, from the dawn of CD in 1983, we plucked an observer to comment on our conclusions, he or she would be baffled that we were suggesting there might be differences in quality between players, or that any of them should depart from the ideology of

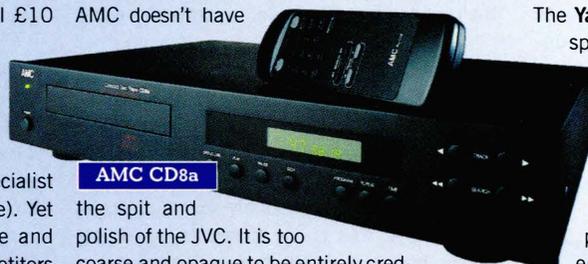
Philips' now immortal slogan, Perfect Sound, Forever. Sign of the times dept: even Philips is now reported to be working on the next generation of music-disc players (see Update, p6, for the latest news). Presumably, these will be better than perfect. But let's not forget that our observer from the dawn of digital would have been amazed at the features and sound quality available from CD kit at today's prices. Alas, though, not all players are created equal...

## GROUP A (UP TO £150)

<b>AMC CD8a</b>	<b>£149.95</b>
<b>JVC XL-V184BK</b>	<b>£119.99</b>
<b>Philips CD751</b>	<b>£149.99</b>
<b>Yamaha CDX-390</b>	<b>£129.95</b>

The **JVC XL-V184BK** turned out to be one of the more intriguing players in this group. It is the cheapest model tested by a useful £10 margin, and lacks nothing that most people would consider particularly significant — except, of course, a remote control! It makes no pretence of being anything but a competent player; there are no claims for it being stuffed with specialist components (a favourite sport elsewhere). Yet this player has an overall competence and spring in its step that most close competitors can't match. By no means the most transparent or detailed in the group, but clearly better sorted than some more expensive models.

An example of the latter is the **AMC CD8a**, which stands just £30 further up the price ladder, but is equipped with remote control. However, in performance terms it does not cut the mustard so well, and we must question the inclusion of a balanced output option, which is an unnecessary luxury on a budget player. The AMC doesn't have



AMC CD8a

the spit and polish of the JVC. It is too coarse and opaque to be entirely credible, but it does possess attractive audio qualities, for example in its above-average performance with low-frequency registers.

Priced on the same level as the AMC, the **Philips CD751** is somewhat more evenly-balanced, as well as looking like the inspiration for the Marantz CD-48 (or is it the other way around?). But this is another rather coarse, opaque-sounding player which didn't give our listening panel a lot of satisfaction.

The **Yamaha CDX-390** is ideally suited to a specialist but nonetheless very prevalent activity — dubbing CDs onto cassette for use in your car or personal stereo. Apart from its unique features in this respect, the Yamaha is an extremely well presented player, with remote control (unlike many players at this price). With complex and deeply layered musical styles, it does begin to sound cluttered and inconsistent, but with simply-recorded material it gives a much better account of itself.

## GROUP B (OVER £150)

<b>Denon DCD-635</b>	<b>£179.99</b>
<b>Kenwood DP4090</b>	<b>£229.95</b>
<b>Marantz CD-48</b>	<b>£199.90</b>
<b>NAD 510</b>	<b>£199.95</b>
<b>Sony CDP-XE510</b>	<b>£179.99</b>
<b>Technics SL-PS770D</b>	<b>£250.00</b>

**Kenwood's DP4090** is one of this month's star performers. It is a bulky player, with a large dot-matrix display that can show disc and track titles, plus other information, which is all part and parcel of a new system called CD Text. This brings to CD one of the key utility features of MiniDisc. For us, though, its principal virtue was an infectious musical character: at £230 it depressed the scores of several other models in this month's group.

The **Sony CDP-XE510** started life as a run-of-the-mill player, but then it was 'breathed upon' by a dedicated team of tweekers at Sony UK. It is well-made and attractive, and has a superb rotary track-selector control, but musically it attracted only average scores during our listening tests, displaying a greater facility with simple material than denser and more complex tracks. It remains worth hearing, though, and

like the Kenwood offers the useful facility of displaying CD Text information.

Even more exciting is the **Denon DCD-635**, £180 worth of bubbling clarity and musical transparency. It doesn't look much, offers only ordinary equipment levels, and claims to possess no magic ingredients under its skin. It is just reasonably priced and it does its job.



Technics SL-PS770D

The **Marantz CD-48** is closely related to the Philips CD751, but costs more, looks better, and seems to measure rather worse. On audition, it was something of a mixed bag: certainly it turned in a better performance than its Philips sibling. Only questionable portrayal of frequency extremes spoiled its hear-through midband.

The **NAD 510** budget Bitstreamer is a misguided attempt to make a smooth, listenable budget player by knocking off the rough edges of music, and a critical bit of the music itself. We do not believe it is justified to omit a remote control and a digital output at this price level, especially when there is little audible evidence that money saved has improved sound quality.

In many ways the most disappointing of all models tested was the **Technics SL-PS770D**, as it seemed the most promising initially. It is, of course, also the most expensive player (if £250 is expensive in a world where you could pay several thousand pounds for a player that does no more), and it is stuffed to the gills with exotic technologies of Technics' own creation. The problem is, there just seems to be no real heart to this player's music-making. The inescapable feeling was of music being painted by numbers. On the evidence of our lab test, some of the blame for this might well be ascribed to the high levels of jitter detected within the player's digital circuits. Nonetheless, in material terms and feature count, it offers good perceived value for money.

## BEST BUYS

The new **Denon DCD-635** lit up our listening sessions with a clean, attractive, bouncy sound quality. It communicates music with an eloquence that eludes many others. In overall sonic ability it was no better than several competitors, but its combination of fine resolution and an organic naturalness worked well. Coincidentally or otherwise, Denon is one of the few mainstream CD player manufacturers to persevere with multi-bit DACs, but there are several other reasons to account for its good showing.

Just to hammer home the message, our other Best Buy, the **Kenwood DP-4090**, does not rely on tried and tested digital conventions. Indeed this model is an epitome of current (and future) technology, being one of two players in this test to boast CD Text track and title read-outs. It's a clean and expressive player which always seems transparent to music.



## RECOMMENDED

It is a measure of the clear musical gulf separating many of the models on test, that this month's round-up includes only one Recommended component. The amount of clear blue water is not in proportion to the quality of components used within these players, nor to the efforts of 'golden ear' tweaking teams within big corporations. So which is the component worth citing? It's the **JVC XL-V184**, which has neither remote control nor digital output, but otherwise is well-equipped and well-finished: quite simply, it delivers the goods. At the end of the test there were a few too many question marks still extant for it to deserve a Best

Buy flag — in particular relating to a lack of transparency when judged on the most nitpicking criteria. But this does little to dim our innate enthusiasm for this excellent, and remarkably inexpensive player.

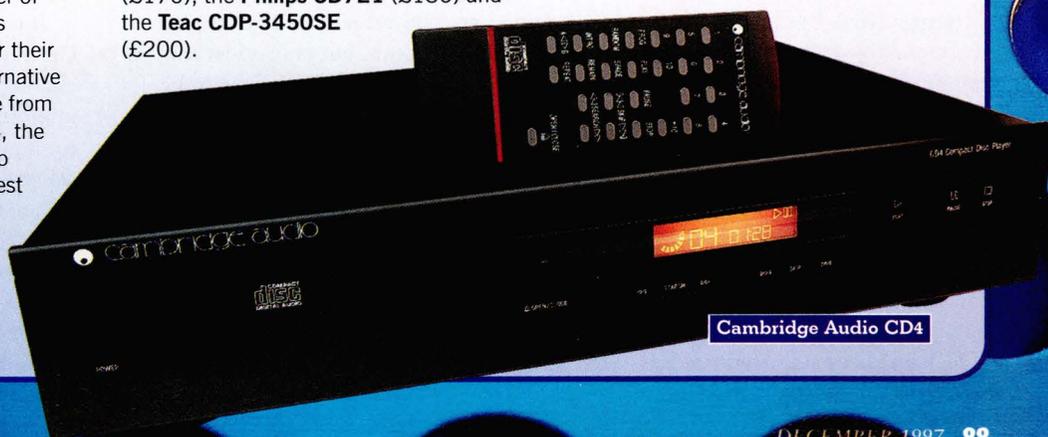


## BEST OF THE REST

Predictably, the price band below £250 includes a large number of models, and many would give this month's candidates a good run for their money. In alphabetical order, alternative choices include no less than three from **Cambridge Audio**: the £150 **CD4**, the £200 **CD4SE** and the super-sharp £250 **CD6**. (The latter pair are Best Buys). Then there's the slightly rough but dynamic **harman/kardon HD710**; and the **JVC XL-V284BK** — a remote-control version of the XL-V184BK tested on p81. Also check out the bold

but slightly edgy **Kenwood DP-3080** (£170), the **Philips CD721** (£130) and the **Teac CDP-3450SE** (£200).

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# Five Stars

**Paul Messenger explains why you should visit an independent**

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

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

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

## **Power of the Press**

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

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

We hacks get paid to write words, often about components in isolation, because



individual product reviews are still the staple diet of the press. They can sometimes provide a useful guide to the way a product performs, but only under the particular circumstances in which the review was conducted.

The hi-fi reviewer attempts, with varying degrees of success, to evaluate a particular component, and find something interesting (and hopefully positive) to say about it. That's about the end of it, and it's on to the next product.

The magazine prints the review, and that very process magically confers a measure of authority. Experienced hi-fi

enthusiasts, who read reviews over a period of years and try out various products themselves, soon start to realise the limitations of that approach. Some reviews are better than others, but none can get to grips with the real heart of the problem - whether a given product will improve your musical satisfaction, in your system and your room.

## **The Role of the Dealer**

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

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

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

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

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

# For Value

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

decision making process.

Putting together a successful hi-fi system might not be as difficult as it was twenty or thirty years ago, but it's just as easy to make a mess of things. Put the 'wrong' combination of components together and it'll still sound a lot better



than any cute little mini system package. It might even rate a five star review. But it won't match the potential of a carefully balanced and properly installed system, and it certainly won't cater for your own particular preferences and personality.

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

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

You know full well that your music collection is as individual as your wardrobe, and just as precious too, so it's worth taking the time and trouble to search out the dealer and equipment that will make that collection come alive, and give you a new buzz every time you play your favourite discs.

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

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

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

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

"The views and opinions expressed here are my own and not necessarily those of hi-fi choice."

*Paul Messenger*

The specialist Dealers listed here are professional and enthusiastic. Give your nearest a ring for a demonstration.

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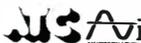
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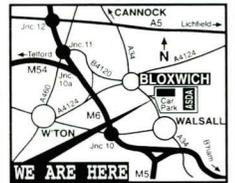


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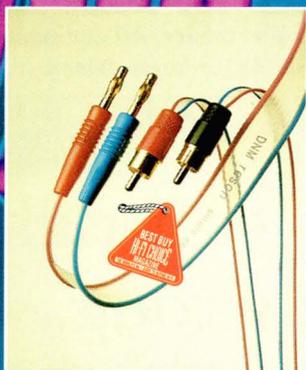
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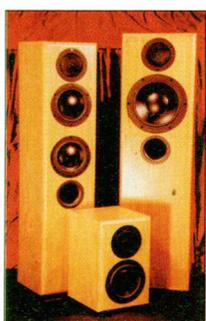
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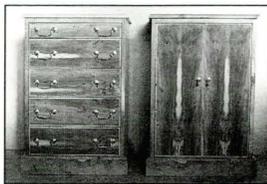
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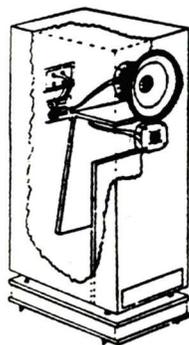
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Buxley (01322) 529954.

● Different makes of cables no longer used, want to sell. Open to offers. Scart-Scarts, interconnect cables etc. Newport (01633) 680525.

● DPA Enlightenment DAC & mains power filter, immaculate, boxed and manufacturers warranty. £640 ono (£950 new) nr Bristol (01934) 813666.

● Garrard 301 Lockwood plinth/cover. SME3009/Denon 110, original instructions, perfect £250. Target PSW1 shelf to suit above, £30. Wirral (0151) 632 3790.

● Garrard 401 turntable. SME3009 Series II, improved arm/plinth. Shure V15 type III cartridge. VN35MR stylus. £150 ono. Crewe (01477) 532972.

● Leak Stereofetic, vgc £40. Leak Troughline stereo, ex cond, £75. Garrard 301/RB300, good plinth, excellent £125+85 or £200. Naim MC boards, audiophile PSU, top rate phono stage for £150. (01243) 553531.

● Linn Kabers, black ash, mint £600. Linn LP12, black Lingo Cirkus, Ekos MkII, Karma, nearly new, boxed, new Lid unused, £1,500. Jules, Swansea (01792) 280061.

● Linn LP12, Lingo, Eikos, Arkiv. Audiotech table. All ex cond £1,350. Cheltenham, (01242) 577496/(01242) 225027.

● Linn Mimik CD player, over

3 years warranty left. Mint, boxed (£875) £600. Dual CS505 turntable £80 ono. (01904) 627437.

● Linn Sondek LP12, black ash. Lingo, Ekos Mk II, Karma, Cirkus. Karma has only 40hrs use. £1,500 ono. Jules (01792) 280061.

● Marantz Model 7 preamp & Model 9B stereo power amp. Vintage classics in excellent, original condition, 250V, fully working. £4,500, can split. London (0171) 917 7746

● Meridian 203 DAC, exc cond, (nearly £700 new) £120. lan, Cams (01354) 655284.

● Micromega Microdec for sale, upgrade your old CD player, good condition, cost over £400, any offer considered. (01932) 848092.

● Musical Fidelity A-1000 amplifier, boxed, unused £1,499 new, will accept £1,150 ono. Wirral (0151) 625 8124.

● Naim NAC 32-55 preamp, MC and CD boards. NAP90 power amp. NA24 interconnect Naim speaker cable. Traditional style, boxed. £495.

● Onkyo Integra T-9090II state-of-the-art tuner, multi-feature, remote control etc. £300 ono. 0171 231 6184

● Pioneer A-400X, vgc £150. Mordaunt-Short MS25i speakers, 6 months old, boxed, vgc £180. Norfolk (01263) 511154.

● Pioneer CTS-830S cassette deck, incredible machine, as

new. Forced sale £370. Cardiff (01222) 499561.

● Polk RT12 speakers £350. 2 x Rotel RB-970BX MkII power amps, £120 each. Rotel RC-970BX MkII preamp £100. Marantz CD52SE £80.

Soundstyle X105 5-shelf table £140. Also high quality interconnects and 7m cables. All immaculate and boxed. Moving abroad forces sale. Tom, Worcs (01905) 874300 day/(01386) 750278 eves.

● Quad 44/405 pre/power £370. Nakamichi cassette deck-2 £230. Thorens TD160-Super £160. Arcam Alpha 5/Plus CD player £225.

Audiolab 8000 DAC £450. Price includes p&p. B'ham (0121) 326 8083.

● Quad 66 pre £475. ESL63 stands £70. Deltac PDM1 Series 2 DAC £125. Hi-Fi Choice nos 98-140 £15. London (0181) 688 6397.

● REL Storm subwoofer, immaculate, 10 months old, boxed and instructions. £450 ono. Kingston (0181) 549 8845.

● Rotel RA 970 BX amplifier, £160. Marantz CD 67 CD player £180. Both brand new and boxed. London (0181) 877 3669.

● Rotel RB970 mk II x 2 power amps. (60 WPC stereo, 180 WPC bridged mono) mint, boxed, instructions. £100 ea. Essex (01255) 675115.

● Tannoy Monitor Gold 12" dual concentric speakers 12 x

21 x 33. £275 ono. Worcs (01684) 566971.

● TDL RTL3 loudspeakers, as new £200. Denon TU380-RD tuner, hardly used £140. Marantz CD63SE, excellent condition £200. Surrey (01483) 533982.

● Technics SL10 turntable, parallel tracking with solid metal case and lid, moving iron cartridge and preamp, ex cond £150. Hants (01256) 895795.

● Technics SL-P2000 Reference CD player, boxed as new. £600 ono. Brighton (01273) 305176.

● Two 10in reels of Racial-Zonal 1/4in tape, NAB centres, unused, £5 each in aid of charity. Contact Stan (0171) 917 7747.

● van den Hul The Second 1m terminated/boxed. van den Hul The Revelation 5 ft terminated. Offers, Essex (01708) 221188.

● Wilmslow Audio HSM V25 £275, cost new £550. 2 x 10in VLT Visitation active subs £275 ea. (01672) 851748.

● XLO Pro type 100 quality interconnects, 1 x 1m and 1 x 1/2m, one week old. Absolute mint, boxed (cost £213) £140 the pair. Brighton (01273) 749304.

● Yamaha A970 Pro-Logic DSP amp £300. Pioneer PL12D turntable, new stylus £30. (01708) 457691.

● Yamaha NS-10M stereo speakers for sale. Excellent condition, boxed. Ideal for Portastudios (4/8 track) or professional studio. £195. Simon, Edinburgh area (0131) 661 3130.

### WANTED

● Help! Luxman L100 amplifier circuit diagram urgently needed. Can anyone supply a photocopy? Any expenses paid fully! Staffs (01782) 746581.

● IAS 811 1/4 wave horn speakers in playing condition, demonstration essential. Will collect. John (0181) 452 00653.

● Mana wall shelf. Wirral (0151) 632 3790.

● Technics SH 8075 professional equaliser. Ipswich (01473) 827301.

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# THE DIRECTORY

## Our Three Step Guide to Buying Hi-Fi

The legendary *Hi-Fi Choice* Directory is now simpler to use than ever before, but contains all the information you need to select and buy the perfect hi-fi system.

**STEP 1** Discover which products fall within your budget by using our Price Guide (starts on the next page). This listing is updated bi-monthly and includes all hi-fi products currently available in the UK. It is organised by product type, then by price band, and is sorted alphabetically. Products whose names are printed in **red** are those that we have reviewed. Which leads us to...

**STEP 2** Read about the hi-fi equipment that we have reviewed in the Directory (starts after the Price Guide). Here you will learn which items have been singled out for our famous Best Buy and Recommended awards that denote products of exceptional quality and value. The Directory is sorted by product type and listed alphabetically, and the beginning of each section provides essential information about each kind of hi-fi component.

**STEP 3** Find your nearest hi-fi store in our Dealer Directory (starts on page 139) to book a demonstration of the products you are interested in.

## Best Buys and Recommendations

If you see a Best Buy (**red**) or Recommended (**blue**) flag at the beginning of an entry in our Directory of reviewed products, the item concerned is particularly deserving of your attention.

**B** **Red** signifies the Best Buy swing-tag, which indicates products of the best quality and superb value for money in their price category.

**R** **Blue** Recommended products offer excellent quality and value, but not the same cost-effectiveness as a Best Buy.

Please note that an expensive Recommended product will nearly always perform better than an inexpensive Best Buy.

### Using Best Buys and Recommendations to buy hi-fi.

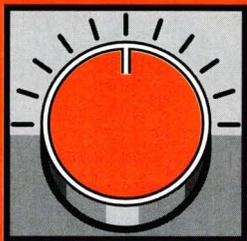
Do not commit the cardinal sin of dashing into your local dealer, magazine in hand, demanding to purchase Best Buy CD player A, Best Buy amplifier B and Best Buy speakers C. This is unlikely to result in your long-term satisfaction. Our belief at *Hi-Fi Choice* is that you must consider the hi-fi system as a complete entity, not as a collection of components. While a superb system might well contain Best Buy and Recommended components, one cannot lump together Best Buys and Recommendations in the hope that they will automatically perform superbly. These ratings make a useful guideline for short-listing components worth trying, but only by hearing them for yourself can you draw meaningful conclusions about what suits your taste. Furthermore, don't panic if the dealer offers you equipment that we have not tested.

At the end of the day, what matters most is that your hi-fi system fits your tastes like a glove, and it is the dealer's challenge to ensure your satisfaction by any means – and components – necessary!



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**AMPLIFIERS**  
Integrated Amps

**KEY**

Ⓢ - number of line-level inputs.  
"20W" - output power per channel into nominal load of 8 Ohms.

**Up to £250**

Aiwa XA-003	Ⓢ	40W	140
AMC 3020	Ⓢ	20W	100
AMC 3025A	Ⓢ	30W	130
AMC 3050A	Ⓢ	45W	170
Arcam Alpha 7	Ⓢ	40W	250
Cambridge A1	Ⓢ	35W	80
Cambridge A1 Mk III	Ⓢ	40W	120
Cambridge A31	Ⓢ	60W	200
Denon PMA-250SE	Ⓢ	30W	160
Denon PMA-350SE	Ⓢ	50W	200
Denon PMA-425R	Ⓢ	45W	230
Denon PMA-100M	Ⓢ	80W	240
Goodmans Delta 801	Ⓢ		140
H/K HK610	Ⓢ	30W	180
H/K HK620	Ⓢ	40W	250
JVC AX-V4BK	Ⓢ	30W	200
JVC AX-R5BK	Ⓢ	45W	200
Kenwood KA-1080	Ⓢ	60W	140
Kenwood KA-3080R	Ⓢ	70W	170
Kenwood KA-3020SE	Ⓢ	50W	200
Marantz PM-47	Ⓢ	40W	150
Marantz PM-57	Ⓢ	50W	200
Marantz PM-66SE	Ⓢ	50W	230
Marantz SR-47	Ⓢ	40W	250
Musical Fidelity E1	Ⓢ	30W	199
NAD 310	Ⓢ		100
NAD 312	Ⓢ	25W	200
Pioneer A-105	Ⓢ	30W	130
Pioneer A-204R	Ⓢ	25W	160
Pioneer A-300R	Ⓢ	45W	200
Pioneer A-405R	Ⓢ	60W	250
Rega Brio	Ⓢ	30W	229
Rotel RA-931	Ⓢ	35W	150
Rotel RA970BX	Ⓢ	60W	250
Sherwood AX-7030R	Ⓢ	95W	250
Sony TA-FE210	Ⓢ	45W	130
Sony TA-FE310R	Ⓢ	45W	150
Sony TA-F248E	Ⓢ	40W	200
Sony TA-F448EB	Ⓢ	55W	250
TEAC A-R300	Ⓢ	45W	200
TEAC A-R500	Ⓢ	90W	250
Technics SU-V300	Ⓢ	25W	150
Technics SU-V500	Ⓢ	30W	180
Technics SU-A600 Mk3	Ⓢ	60W	200
Technics SU-V620	Ⓢ	70W	230
Technics SU-A700 Mk3	Ⓢ	45W	250
Unison Simply 845	Ⓢ	24W	24
Yamaha AX-390	Ⓢ	60W	170
Yamaha AX-492	Ⓢ	85W	220

**£251 to £500**

Alchemist Axiom	Ⓢ	30W	289
Alchemist Maxim	Ⓢ	30W	319
AMC CVT 3030A	Ⓢ	30W	400
Arcam Alpha 8	Ⓢ	50W	350
Arcam Alpha 9	Ⓢ	70W	500
Audio Analogue Puccini	Ⓢ	40W	450
Audiolnno Alto	Ⓢ	35W	300
Audiogram MB1	Ⓢ	35W	493
Audiolab 8000LX	Ⓢ	60W	470
Audiolab 8000A	Ⓢ	60W	500
Aura VA-100 H	Ⓢ	70W	350
CR Dev CR324	Ⓢ	100W	499
Creek 4330	Ⓢ	35W	279
Creek 4340	Ⓢ	35W	279
Creek 4330R	Ⓢ	35W	355
Creek 5250	Ⓢ	50W	450
Denon PMA-725R	Ⓢ	65W	350
EMF Audio Sequel	Ⓢ	50W	450
H/K HK640	Ⓢ	55W	400
Kenwood KA-5090R	Ⓢ	65W	300
Kenwood KA-7090R	Ⓢ	85W	400
Magnum IA120	Ⓢ	65W	265
Magnum IA170	Ⓢ	90W	330
Magnum IA170SE	Ⓢ	90W	430
Marantz PM-68	Ⓢ	90W	300
Marantz PM-66 KI Sig.	Ⓢ	50W	400
Micromega Minium	Ⓢ	40W	350
Mission Cyrus SL	Ⓢ	50W	398

Monrio Asty	Ⓢ	60W	440
Musical Fidelity E11	Ⓢ	60W	300
Musical Fidelity A2	Ⓢ	25W	500
NAD 314	Ⓢ	35W	260
NAD 317	Ⓢ	80W	470
Onkyo A9210	Ⓢ	40W	260
Onkyo A921	Ⓢ	50W	350
Onkyo A922	Ⓢ	70W	400
Orelle SA-100	Ⓢ	50W	499
Pioneer A-400X	Ⓢ	50W	300
Pioneer A-605R	Ⓢ	80W	400
Pioneer A-300R Precision	Ⓢ	35W	400
Pro-Ject Model 7	Ⓢ	40W	300
Rega Elex	Ⓢ	50W	398
Shearne 2.5	Ⓢ	35W	489
Sony TA-FA3ES	Ⓢ	70W	400
Sony TA-F3000ES	Ⓢ	60W	500
Talk Electronics Storm 1	Ⓢ	50W	500
TEAC A-H500	Ⓢ	50W	280
Technics SU-A800D	Ⓢ	55W	400
Technics SU-A900 Mk2	Ⓢ	90W	450
Technics SU-A900D	Ⓢ	70W	500
Yamaha AX-592	Ⓢ	100W	280

**£501 to £700**

Alchemist Kraken Integrated	Ⓢ	55W	579
Alchemist Nemesis	Ⓢ	80W	700
Audio Analogue Puccini SE	Ⓢ	50W	595
Audio Note Kanji Line SE	Ⓢ	9W	699
Audio Note First integrated	Ⓢ	40W	699
Audiogram MB2	Ⓢ	60W	599
Audiolab 8000S	Ⓢ	60W	700
CR Dev Kalyppo	Ⓢ	15W	599
CR Dev CR325	Ⓢ	175W	699
Creek 5250R	Ⓢ	50W	575
Creek 5250SER	Ⓢ	60W	665
Densen Beat B-100	Ⓢ	60W	600
DPA Renaissance int.	Ⓢ	40W	595
Exposure XX Super	Ⓢ	55W	700
Fase Evoluzione Performance 2.0	Ⓢ	40W	570
Gamma Gemini	Ⓢ	12W	699
H/K HK660	Ⓢ	65W	700
JoLida 202	Ⓢ	40W	695
LFD Integrated 0	Ⓢ	50W	549
Linn Majik (Line)	Ⓢ	33W	650
Lynwood Opal	Ⓢ	80W	685
Magnum IA200	Ⓢ	100W	599
Magnum Class A	Ⓢ	85W	690
Mission Cyrus IIII	Ⓢ	50W	598
Musical Fidelity A220	Ⓢ	50W	700
Myryad M1 120	Ⓢ	60W	530
Naim Nait 3	Ⓢ	30W	575
Orelle SA-100RX	Ⓢ	75W	649
Prime Design A-100	Ⓢ	100W	650
Quad 77 Integrated	Ⓢ	85W	700
Roksan Caspian	Ⓢ	70W	695
Rose Scion	Ⓢ	65W	615
Shearne Phase 2	Ⓢ	50W	649
Stemfoort SF60	Ⓢ	60W	549
Talk Electronics Storm 2	Ⓢ	65W	650
TEAC A-BX7R	Ⓢ	50W	700

**£701 to £1000**

Alchemist Forseti Integrated	Ⓢ	100W	949
Audio Note Oto Line PP	Ⓢ	12W	950
AVI S2000M1	Ⓢ	100W	999
Copland CSA8	Ⓢ	60W	945
Credo IMP702	Ⓢ	70W	938
Credo IMP703	Ⓢ	70W	1,000
Electrocompaniet ECI-2	Ⓢ	50W	995
Exposure XV Super	Ⓢ	55W	800
Fase Evoluzione Performance 1.1	Ⓢ	70W	790
Fase Evoluzione Performance 1.0	Ⓢ	60W	790
Golden Tube Audio SI-50	Ⓢ	50W	995
H/K HK680	Ⓢ	85W	1,000
LFD 0 LE Integrated	Ⓢ	60W	799
Linn Majik (Phono)	Ⓢ	33W	800
Magnum Class A SE	Ⓢ	85W	815
Marantz PM-17	Ⓢ	60W	900
Meridian 551	Ⓢ	55W	795
Micromega Tempo 1	Ⓢ	50W	750
Micromega Tempo 2	Ⓢ	75W	950
Minstrel Ultra Linear	Ⓢ	26W	900
Naim Nait 3 R	Ⓢ	30W	760
Pioneer A-07	Ⓢ	80W	1,000
Rega Elicit	Ⓢ	70W	730
Shearne Phase 2 Reference	Ⓢ	50W	799
Sonneteer Alabaster	Ⓢ	50W	900
Stemfoort SF100	Ⓢ	100W	849
TEAC AB-X10	Ⓢ	100W	1,000
Thute IA100	Ⓢ	100W	949
Unison Simply Two	Ⓢ	12W	995

**£1001 to £2000**

Art Audio Integra	Ⓢ	30W	1,499
Audiolnno Classic 25	Ⓢ	25W	1,099
Audiolnno S500	Ⓢ	25W	1,199
Audio Note Soro Line PP	Ⓢ	20W	1,200
Audio Note Oto Line SE	Ⓢ	12W	1,200
Audio Note Oto Phono SE	Ⓢ	12W	1,500
Audio Note Soro Line SE	Ⓢ	18W	1,699
Beam-Echo SA-50	Ⓢ	50W	1,950
Bryston B-60	Ⓢ	75W	1,280
Bryston B-60R	Ⓢ	75W	1,468
Copland CSA14	Ⓢ	70W	1,199

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Credo LIM 702	Ⓢ		1,191
Credo LIM 703	Ⓢ		1,249
EAR 834	Ⓢ	40W	1,999
Graaf Venticinque	Ⓢ	20W	1,995
Heybrook Signature II	Ⓢ	120W	1,600
LFD Integrated 1	Ⓢ	65W	1,099
Marantz PM-16	Ⓢ	90W	1,700
Meracur Intrare	Ⓢ	60W	1,095
Minstrel Partridge	Ⓢ	26W	1,499
Monrio MC-205	Ⓢ	80W	1,545
Musical Fidelity A1000	Ⓢ	50W	1,500
Primare 301	Ⓢ	80W	1,800
Rogers E-20a	Ⓢ	20W	1,229
Rogers E-40a	Ⓢ	40W	1,900
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Integrated	Ⓢ	25W	1,295
Unison Simply Four P	Ⓢ	24W	1,555
Unison Simply Four T	Ⓢ	11W	1,595
Woodside ISA230 Line	Ⓢ	30W	1,099
Woodside ISA230 Disc	Ⓢ	30W	1,249
<b>Over £2000</b>			
Adyton Opera	Ⓢ	50W	2,595
Audio Note Meishu Line	Ⓢ	9W	2,750
Audio Note Ongaku	Ⓢ	26W	59,000
Audio Research CAS50	Ⓢ		3,990
Cary CAD-300SEI	Ⓢ	11W	3,495
EAR 859	Ⓢ	13W	2,499
Electrocompaniet ECI-1	Ⓢ	100W	2,195
Gamma Rhythm	Ⓢ	18W	2,499
Jadis DA30	Ⓢ	30W	3,490
Jadis DA60	Ⓢ	60W	5,750
Krell KAV300i	Ⓢ	160W	2,550
Meracur Onesta	Ⓢ	75W	2,595
Pioneer A-09	Ⓢ	45W	4,000
Tube Tech Unisig Sig. Int.	Ⓢ	30W	2,300
Tube Tech Synergy PPS	Ⓢ	150W	6,900
Unison Performance One	Ⓢ	25W	4,500
Unison Absolute 845	Ⓢ	40W	11,995
Bryston BP1	Ⓢ		438
Carver CT-24	Ⓢ		499
CR Dev Themis	Ⓢ		349
Creek P43	Ⓢ		399
Creek P52	Ⓢ		499
Crimson CS610C	Ⓢ		450
EAR 834P	Ⓢ		349
EAR 834L	Ⓢ		449
Electrocompaniet ECP-1	Ⓢ		495
Fase Evoluzione PhonoDrive 1.0	Ⓢ		445
Henley HMC50	Ⓢ		200
Henley HMC100	Ⓢ		450
LFD Mistral Linestage	Ⓢ		449
LFD LSO Linestage	Ⓢ		499
Lumley PP70	Ⓢ		345
Lumley PP1	Ⓢ		345
Magnum MP120	Ⓢ		330
Magnum MP660	Ⓢ		500
Magnum MP330	Ⓢ		500
Moth 30 Passive	Ⓢ		149
Moth 30 RIAA	Ⓢ		249
Moth 30 Active	Ⓢ		349
Musical Fidelity X10-D	Ⓢ		120
Musical Fidelity X-LP	Ⓢ		130
Musical Fidelity X-PRE	Ⓢ		200
Musical Fidelity E20	Ⓢ		400
Musical Fidelity F2	Ⓢ		500
NAD 114	Ⓢ		270
NAD 116	Ⓢ		430
Naim Prefix	Ⓢ		350
Naim NAC92	Ⓢ		470
Rega EOS	Ⓢ		398
Roksan Artaxerxes 10	Ⓢ		395
Rose RV-23	Ⓢ		450
Rotel RC970BX MkII	Ⓢ		175
Talk Electronics Hurricane 1	Ⓢ		500
Technics SU-C1000	Ⓢ		350
Trilogy 905	Ⓢ		375
Trilogy 904	Ⓢ		375
Trilogy 900	Ⓢ		499
Unison Simply Phono	Ⓢ		500

**£501 to £2000**

Adyton Chorus	Ⓢ		1,995
Alchemist Kraken Pre	Ⓢ		519
Alchemist Forseti Pre	Ⓢ		919
Art Audio Headline	Ⓢ		700
Art Audio VPL	Ⓢ		741
Art Audio Conductor Phono	Ⓢ		750
Art Audio VP1	Ⓢ		952
Art Audio Conductor	Ⓢ		1,250
Art Audio Conductor Export	Ⓢ		2,000
Audio Note M1 Line	Ⓢ		550
Audio Note M1 RIAA	Ⓢ		550
Audio Note M2 Line	Ⓢ		999
Audio Note Discovery	Ⓢ		999
Audio Note M2RIAA	Ⓢ		1,099
Audio Research LS7	Ⓢ		1,750
Audio Research LS3	Ⓢ		1,997
Audio Synthesis Pro Passion	Ⓢ		595
Audio Synthesis Passion	Ⓢ		695
Audio Synthesis Passion 6	Ⓢ		1,195
Audio Synthesis Passion 8S	Ⓢ		1,295
Audio Synthesis Passion 8M	Ⓢ		1,695
Audiolab 8000C	Ⓢ		580
Audiolab 8000PPA	Ⓢ		1,000
Audiolab 8000Q	Ⓢ		1,250
Aura CA-200	Ⓢ		7

Bryston 4B-ST PRO	£	1,756
Cary SLP-74	£	1,495
Cary PH-301	Ph	1,795
Conrad CPA 1800	£	1,774
Concordant Exhilarant		900
Concordant Exquisite		1,950
Conrad-Johnson PV-10AL	£	995
Conrad-Johnson PV-10A	Ph	1,295
Conrad-Johnson PV-12AL	£	1,990
Conrad-Johnson EF-1	Ph	1,990
Conrad-Johnson PF-2	Ph	1,990
Copland CSA303	Ph	1,199
Copland CTA301 MkII	Ph	1,399
CR Dev Carmenta		659
CR Dev Argento	Ph	699
Crede CMP004		1,246
Crede CMP005		1,876
Densen DM-20	£	1,200
DNM 3 Start	£	1,000
DNM 3A Start	£	1,650
DPA Enlightenment pre		795
DPA DSP500S		2,000
Dynavector L200	£	1,195
Dynavector P100	Ph	1,495
Dynavector L100	£	1,995
Earmax Earmax Pre	£	1,895
ECA Vista S	£	760
ECA Vista HD	£	880
ECA Prisma	Ph	880
Electrocompaniet EC-4.5		1,195
Electrocompaniet EC-4R	£	1,495
Exposure XIX		800
Exposure XVII	Ph	850
Fase Evoluzione Controlsources 2.0	Ph	625
Fase Evoluzione Controlsources 1.0	£	1,395
Golden Tube Audio SEP-1	£	890
Graaf WFB Two	Ph	1,195
Graaf WFB One	Ph	1,895
Henley HMC200	£	750
Hi Q Sound MCB2	Ph	545
Hi Q Sound MCL2	£	645
Jadis DPL2	£	1,790
LFD MC1 Phonostage	Ph	949
LFD LS1 Linestage	£	999
LFD MC2 Phonostage	Ph	1,499
LFD LS2 Linestage	£	1,599
LFD LSB Linestage	£	1,999
Linn Wakonda	£	750
Linn Linto	£	850
Linn Kairn	£	1,400
Lumley LV1.5	£	895
Lumley LV1	£	1,150
Lumley PV1.5	Ph	1,700
Lumley PV1	Ph	1,700
Marantz AC-500	£	700
Marantz EC-500	£	900
Matisse Atom	£	1,000
Meracur Ingredi	£	925
Meridian 501	Ph	695
Meridian 562	£	765
Meridian 562V	£	995
Meridian 502	£	1,295
Michell Argo	£	730
Michi RHC-10	£	795
Michi RHQ-10	Ph	1,150
Michi RHA-10	Ph	1,150
Micromega Tempo P	£	1,250
Mission Cyrus Pre	Ph	648
Monrio ADN	Ph	625
Monrio Pluri-L	£	960
Muse Model 3	£	1,990
Musical Fidelity F25	Ph	1,500
NAD 118	£	1,000
Naim NAC92R	£	630
Naim NAC72	£	725
Naim NAC102	£	1,050
Quad 77 Pre	Ph	850
Rega Hal	Ph	998
Roksan ROK-L2.5	£	1,250
Rose RV-23S	£	525
Shearman Phase 6 Pre	£	899
Shearman Phase 1 Pre Ref	£	1,399
Sonic Frontiers SFP-1	Ph	1,095
Sonic Frontiers SFP-1 Sig	Ph	1,495
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Pre 1	Ph	1,495
Sonic Frontiers Line 1	Ph	1,995
Sonographe SC26	£	995
Sumo Athena II Line	£	767
Sumo Athena IIB/II LS	£	987
Sumo Athena III	£	987
Sumo Artemis uP	£	1,595
Talk Electronics Hurricane 2	£	650
Talk Electronics Hurricane 3	£	900
Talk Electronics Hurricane 4	£	1,100
Technics SU-C2000	Ph	700
Tesserac TAADA	£	1,500
Tesserac TALA	£	1,500
Tesserac TAHA	£	1,800
Thorens TTP-2000F	Ph	699
Thule PR200	£	699
Trilogy 901	£	750
Trilogy 906	Ph	995

Trilogy 902	£	1,595
Tron Retro	£	1,000
Tron Nucleus Phono	Ph	2,000
Tron Nucleus	£	2,000
Tube Tech Seer Line	£	935
Tube Tech Mac Phono	Ph	1,150
Tube Tech Prophet	£	1,970
Unison Mystery One	£	1,750
Unison Phono One	Ph	1,995
Van Den Hul Pre-amp	£	2,000
Wilson Benesch Stage One	Ph	995
Woodside SC27 Line	£	949
Woodside SC26 Line	£	1,557
XTC PRE-1	£	1,250
Yamaha CX-2	Ph	650
<b>Over £2000</b>		
Adyton Temper	£	2,495
Adyton Modus	£	2,695
Alchemist The Alchemist pre	£	4,995
ARC SCA2	£	2,499
Audio Note M3Line	£	2,650
Audio Research LS15	£	3,399
Audio Research LS22	£	4,391
Audio Research LS5 MkIII	£	6,435
Audio Research REF 1	£	9,900
Boulder L3AE	£	2,100
Boulder L5AE	£	3,400
Boulder L5M	£	3,800
Boulder 2010	£	26,000
Cary SLP-94L	£	2,095
Cary SLP-98L	£	2,295
Chord CPA 2200	£	2,355
Chord CPA 2800	Ph	3,246
Chord CPA 3200	£	3,320
Chord CPA 4000	£	6,210
Conrad-Johnson PF-R	£	2,490
Conrad-Johnson PV-12A	Ph	2,590
Conrad-Johnson Premier 15	Ph	3,995
Conrad-Johnson Premier 14	£	3,995
Conrad-Johnson Art	£	14,995
CAT SL1 Sig. MK2	£	6,500
CR Dev Kastor	£	2,995
Crede LPR 001	£	2,815
DNM 3C Primus	£	2,550
DNM 3C Twin	£	3,800
DNM 3C Six	£	5,050
EAR 802MC	Ph	2,599
EAR 688	Ph	9,999
EAR P52	£	15,999
Gamma Era Phono	Ph	2,499
Gamma Era Ref	£	2,499
Gamma Era Sig	Ph	19,999
Graaf GM13.5B	£	3,950
Jadis DP60L	£	2,800
Jadis DPL	£	3,190
Jadis DPMC	Ph	3,190
Jadis JPL	£	4,720
Jadis JPP200	£	4,998
Jadis JP30MC	Ph	5,978
Jadis JPS2	£	7,900
Jadis JP80MC	Ph	11,989
Krell KRC3	£	3,250
Krell KRC-HR	£	6,949
LFD Disc Preamp	Ph	4,499
Marantz Model 7	Ph	3,500
Mark Levinson 25S	Ph	2,950
Mark Levinson 38	£	3,995
Matisse Fantasy	£	2,500
Matisse Reference	Ph	3,500
Meracur Pretare	£	2,195
Naim NAC82	£	2,160
Naim NAC52	£	3,350
Roksan ROK-L1.5	£	2,250
Sonic Frontiers Line 2	£	2,995
Sonic Frontiers Line 3	£	4,995
Tesserac TAP-A	£	5,300
Trilogy 918	£	2,775
Unison Dream	Ph	11,995
Woodside SC26 Line & Phono	Ph	2,233

Arcam Alpha 8P	50W	250
Arcam Alpha 9P	70W	400
Arcam Delta 290P	75W	400
Carver TFM-6CB	65W	399
Creek A43	50W	399
Creek A52	70W	499
Crimson CS620C	50W	450
Earmax Earmax Headphone	0.1W	375
LFD Mistral Power	60W	449
LFD PA0 Powerstage	50W	499
Magnum MF120	85W	365
Marantz MA-500	125W	250
Marantz MA-700	200W	400
Mission Cyrus XPA	200W	298
Mission Cyrus Power	50W	498
Moth 30 Series Power	30W	249
Moth 30 Mono/40	40W	469
Musical Fidelity X-CANS	0.1W	130
Musical Fidelity E30	100W	500
Musical Fidelity X-A50	50W	500
Myryad MA 120	60W	450
NAD 912	30W	200
NAD 214	80 W	370
NAD 216THX	125W	470
Naim NAP90/3	30W	450
Rotel RB970BX MkII	60W	225
Rotel RB980BX	120W	450
Shearman 3.5	35W	469
Talk Electronics Tornado 1	50W	450
Technics SE-A1000	70W	400
<b>£501 to £2000</b>		
Alchemist Franken pwr	55W	529
Alchemist Forseti Pwr	150W	1,309
AMC CVT 2100A	80W	600
Art Audio Quintet	15W	1,393
Art Audio Quintet SE MB	-W	1,500
Art Audio Concerto	50W	1,669
Art Audio Analogue Donizetti	60W	575
AudiInnov Series 800	25W	999
AudiInnov First Audio	7.5W	1,749
AudiInnov Series 1000	50W	1,799
Audio Note The P	40W	550
Audio Note P0	9W	599
Audio Note P1	12W	750
Audio Note P1SE	12W	999
Audio Note P2	20W	1,000
Audio Note P2SE	18W	1,499
Audio Note Conqueror	8W	1,599
Audio Synthesis Desire	100W	1,695
Audiolab 8000SX	60W	550
Audiolab 8000P	100W	750
Audiolab 8000PX	100W	850
Audiolab 8000M	125W	1,600
Audiolab 8000MX	125W	1,800
Aura PA-100	100W	700
Aura PA-200	110W	1,200
Aura PA-200 C	100W	1,250
AVI S2000MM	150W	1,399
Bryston 2B-LP	75W	750
Bryston 3B-ST PRO	150W	1,160
Bryston 3B-ST	150W	1,160
Bryston THX3B	150W	1,262
Bryston 7B-ST PRO	500W	1,545
Bryston 4B-ST	300W	1,756
Bryston 7B-ST	500W	1,815
Bryston THX4B	300W	1,850
Bryston THX7B	500W	1,886
Carver TFM-15CB	100W	599
Carver A-500X	250W	949
Carver A-760X	380W	1,299
Cary SLA-70 II	30W	1,495
Chord SPM 400	100W	1,325
Chord SPM 600	130W	1,720
Conrad-Johnson MV-55	50W	1,995
Copland CTA501	30W	1,750
CR Dev Amphion	12W	1,949
Crede PMP 804	1,876	
Creek A52SE	80W	599
Crimson CS630C	100W	800
Densen DM-30	100W	1,200
DNM PA Start	45W	1,000
DNM PA1 Start	45W	1,650
DPA Enlightenment pwr	100W	995
Earmax Earmax Power	25W	1,895
ECA Lectern S	50W	880
ECA Lectern HD	50W	1,480
Electrocompaniet AW60FTT	60W	1,095
Exposure XVIII Super	70W	850
Fase Evoluzione Powersource 2.0	65W	860
Fase Evoluzione Powersource 1.0	100W	1,670
Golden Tube Audio SE-40	40W	1,000
Golden Tube Audio SE-300B MkII	8W	1,490
Golden Tube Audio SE-100	100W	1,995
Graaf Venticinque P	25W	1,250
Jadis DA5	25W	1,997
Lexicon 212	120W	1,850
LFD PA1 Powerstage	60W	999
LFD PA2 Powerstage	75W	1,599
LFD PA2M Powerstage	90W	1,999
Linn LK100	50W	650
Linn LK240	120W	750
Linn AV5105	100W	1,200

Lynwood Ruby	120W	985
Magnum MF330	150W	685
Magnum MF660	125W	825
Magnum A500SE	200W	1,485
Magnum A50SE	200W	1,595
Meracur Ciere	60W	1,095
Meridian 555	60W	750
Meridian 557	200W	1,400
Michell Alecto Stereo	50W	1,150
Michell Alecto Mono	100W	1,989
Michi RHB-05	100W	1,100
Michi RHB-10	200W	2,000
Micromega Amp	100W	1,250
Monrio Cento	135W	1,495
Monrio HP1	135W	1,750
Moth 60 Stereo	60W	599
Moth 30 Mono/100	100W	879
Muse Model 100	100W	1,490
Musical Fidelity FX2	100W	800
NAD 218THX	200W	850
NAD 208THX	250W	1,100
Naim NAP140	45W	750
Naim NAP180	60W	1,060
Naim NAP135	75W	1,655
Naim NAP250	70W	1,655
Papworth TVA50	50W	1,425
Prime Design P-150	150W	650
Quad 77 Power	85W	600
Quad 707	140W	800
Rega EXS	70W	598
Rega Exon	125W	1,196
Roksan ROK-S1.5	70W	1,495
Rose RP-190 (Dual Mode)	75W	550
Rotel RB990BX	200W	625
Shearman Phase 3	50W	619
Shearman Phase 3 Reference	50W	729
Shearman Phase 5 Mono	100W	1,500
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Amp 1	40W	1,195
Sonographe SA250	125W	995
Sonographe SA400	220W	1,395
Sumo Ulysses III	60W	629
Sumo Polaris III	120W	950
Sumo Model Five	60W	1,975
Sumo Andromeda III	240W	1,975
Talk Electronics Tornado 2	65W	600
Talk Electronics Tornado 3	100W	750
Talk Electronics Tornado 4	110W	1,100
Technics SE-A2000	100W	1,100
Thorens TTA-2000	30W	599
Thule PA200	200W	1,798
Trilogy 948	50W	1,895
Tube Tech Syrix	45W	1,150
Tube Tech Unisis Sig. Pwr	30W	1,900
Woodside SA240	40W	1,199
Woodside MA100	100W	1,733
Woodside STA50	50W	1,880
XTC POW-1	200W	2,000
Yamaha MX-2	150W	750
<b>Over £2000</b>		
Adyton Cordis 1.6	120W	3,495
Adyton Cordis 3B	280W	12,995
Alchemist The Alchemist pwr	220W	3,995
Alchemist The Alchemist mono	55W	8,995
Art Audio Tempo	30W	2,499
Art Audio Quintet SE	-W	2,500
Art Audio Maestro	100W	3,524
ATC SPA2-150	200W	2,500
AudiInnov Ser 1000SE	50W	2,499
AudiInnov Second Audio	15W	3,299
Audio Note P3	9W	2,150
Audio Note Quest	9W	2,750
Audio Note Yubi	18W	3,850
Audio Note Conquest	18W	4,450
Audio Note Tomei	30W	8,500
Audio Note Neiro	7W	11,360
Audio Note Ankoru	60W	14,500
Audio Research D130	130W	2,299
Audio Research VT60	60W	2,395
Audio Research D300	300W	4,678
Audio Research VT100	100W	4,995
Audio Research D400 MkII	400W	6,850
Audio Research VT130 SE	130W	8,500
Audio Research VT150 SE	150W	17,000
Beam-Echo DL7-35	30W	3,525
Border Patrol 300B SE	10W	3,495
Boulder 102AE	100W	2,800
Boulder 500AE	150W	5,000
Bryston THX8B	150W	2,385
Cary CAD-300SE	12W	3,795
Cary CAD-805	50W	8,495
Chord SPM 800	160W	2,265
Chord SPM 1000B	200W	2,785
Chord SPM 1200B	250W	3,525

Conrad-Johnson Premier 8A	275W	17,000
CAT JL1	200W	15,500
<b>Copland CTA505</b>	<b>67W</b>	<b>2,099</b>
CR Dev Artemis	180W	4,995
Crede LPO 804		2,456
Crede PMP 155		2,676
Crede LPO 455		4,975
Crede LPO 155		6,983
DNN PA3	50W	2,500
DNN PA3S	23W	3,750
DPA DAP500S	250W	3,000
Dynavector HK75	75W	2,195
Dynavector HX1.2	130W	3,995
EAR 861	32W	3,299
<b>EAR 509 Mk II</b>	<b>100W</b>	<b>3,699</b>
EAR 519	100W	4,699
EAR 549	200W	6,499
Electrocompaniet AW100DMB	100W	2,095
Electrocompaniet AW250DMB	250W	3,995
Electrocompaniet AW180MB	180W	4,595
Exposure IV	80W	2,199
Exposure XVI	125W	4,000
Gamma Rhythm Ref	35W	3,999
Gamma Aeon	20W	4,999
Gamma Space Ref	18W	7,999
Gamma Aeon Sig	90W	78,600
Graaf 5050	50W	2,150
Graaf GM20	60W	2,750
Graaf GM100	100W	4,490
Graaf GM200	200W	8,000
Jadis DA8	80W	3,333
Jadis DA7	100W	5,290
<b>Jadis JA30</b>	<b>30W</b>	<b>5,980</b>
Jadis JA300B	10W	9,000
Jadis JA80	60W	9,912
Jadis JA200	160W	15,518
Jadis JA500	400W	21,500
Krell KAV500/2	100W	3,485
Krell FPB200	200W	6,490
Krell FPB300	300W	9,500
Krell FPB600	600W	12,900
Krell KAS2	200W	20,000
Lexicon 225	250W	2,500
Lexicon 501	500W	5,000
Linn Klout	80W	2,400
<b>Lumley ST70</b>	<b>70W</b>	<b>2,225</b>
Lumley M125	120W	3,750
Lumley M250	250W	7,500
Magnum Class A mono	180W	2,450
Magnum A200SE	275W	3,750
Marantz Model 8	35W	3,500
Marantz Model 9	70W	4,000
Mark Levinson 331	100W	4,495
Mark Levinson 332	200W	6,495
Mark Levinson 333	300W	8,495
Mark Levinson 33H	150W	19,395
Matisse Ref Monoblocks	180W	8,000
Meracrus Tentare	75W	2,245
Meracrus Cantare	-W	8,995
Muse Model 160 Ser. II	160W	2,290
Muse Model 150	125W	2,690
Muse Model 175 Ser. II	175W	3,490
Muse Model 300 Ser. II	300W	3,990
Musical Fidelity F16	200W	2,500
Musical Fidelity F19	300W	4,000
Papworth M100	100W	2,645
Papworth M200	200W	3,825
Roksan ROK-M1.5	160W	2,250
Shearpe Phase 1 Pwr Ref	100W	2,199
Sonic Frontiers Power 1	55W	2,495
Sonic Frontiers Power 2	110W	4,995
Sonic Frontiers Power 3	220W	9,995
Sumo Model Ten/M	240W	4,200
Sunfire Sunfire	300W	2,500
Tesseract TAMP-60	60W	7,350
Trilogy 958	100W	3,395
Tube Tech Genesis Sig.	100W	4,700
Tube Tech Synergy DMA	150W	6,400
Unison Smart 845	24W	3,250
Unison Palladio	32W	11,995
Van Den Hul Power amp	60W	3,000

**Prices for interconnects are for a one-metre terminated pair.**

Apertura Model B	260.00
Apertura Model A	469.00
Art Yam Church 5000	515.00
<b>Audio Note AN-A</b>	<b>18.00</b>
<b>Audio Note AN-C</b>	<b>35.00</b>
<b>Audio Note AN-S</b>	<b>99.00</b>
<b>Audio Note AN-V</b>	<b>179.00</b>
Audio Note AN-Vx	450.00
Audioquest Jade	30.00
<b>Audioquest Turquoise 2</b>	<b>40.00</b>
Audioquest Topaz 2	60.00
Audioquest Ruby 2	80.00
Audioquest Quartz	120.00
Audioquest Opal	189.00
Audioquest Emerald	249.00
Audioquest Lapis	399.00
Audioquest Diamond	549.00
Cable Talk Improved 2/CD	26.00
Cable Talk Advanced 2	35.00
Cable Talk Monitor 2	50.00
Cable Talk Improved 2/T	50.00
<b>Cable Talk Studio 2</b>	<b>65.00</b>
Cable Talk Professional 2	85.00
Cable Talk Broadcast 2	100.00
Cable Talk Reference 2	150.00
Cable Talk Signature 2 Gold	300.00
Cambridge Atlantic	10.00
Cambridge Arctic	20.00
Cambridge Pacific	30.00
<b>Cambridge Studio Reference</b>	<b>40.00</b>
Cardas Audio 300B-Microtwin	115.00
Cardas Audio Quadlink-Five	200.00
Cardas Audio Cardas Cross	360.00
Cardas Audio Hexlink-Five C	530.00
Cardas Audio Hexlink Golden-5 C	600.00
Cardas Audio Golden Cross	700.00
Connections UK Ultra	28.00
<b>Connections UK Midas</b>	<b>39.00</b>
Connections UK HD	46.00
<b>DNM-Reson TCC75</b>	<b>34.00</b>
<b>DPA Slink</b>	<b>41.00</b>
<b>DPA White Slink</b>	<b>75.00</b>
<b>DPA Black Slink</b>	<b>245.00</b>
Expressive Tech IC-1	700.00
Gamma Wow Balance	799.00
Goertz Interconnect	148.00
GT Audio Intercon	130.00
Henley HSP10	20.00
Henley HSP50	35.00
Henley HSP100	65.00
Henley HSP200	95.00
Heybrook Black Flash	49.95
<b>Ixos 104</b>	<b>20.00</b>
<b>Ixos 103</b>	<b>45.00</b>
<b>Ixos 102</b>	<b>60.00</b>
<b>Ixos 101</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Ixos 100X03	150.00
Kimber PBJ	68.00
Kimber KC1	96.00
Kimber Hero	110.00
Kimber Silver Streak	180.00
Kimber KCAG	390.00
Kimber KCTG	720.00
Kronos Konnekt 3	49.00
Kronos Konnekt 2	99.00
Kronos Konnekt 1	199.00
LAT International IC-50	37.00
LAT International IC-80	60.00
LAT International IC-100-D	89.00
LAT International IC-200 Mk II	151.00
Lieder Chanson	340.00
Lieder Lek	420.00
Lieder Het Lied	420.00
Lieder Song	580.00
Lieder Maas	620.00
Lieder Rijn	1,000.00
Lieder Waal	1,400.00
Lumley Silver 12/2	115.00
Lumley Silver 14/4	175.00
<b>Moth Layline Black</b>	<b>100.00</b>
<b>Moth Layline Grey</b>	<b>200.00</b>
Nordost iMagic	30.00
<b>Nordost Black Knight</b>	<b>55.00</b>
Nordost Blue Angel	90.00
Nordost Blue Heaven	135.00
Nordost Red Dawn	260.00
Nordost SPM	825.00
Ortofon 7N interconnect	250.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 35	40.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 50	50.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 52	70.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 53	90.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 100	100.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 102	130.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 103	160.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 104	190.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 200	220.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 202	290.00

Precious Metals Silver Signal 203	360.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 204	430.00
QED P2 Gold	20.00
QED Incon P2 Screened	23.00
QED Incon P1 Screened	26.00
Roksan ROK-Intercon	75.00
Siltech MC2-12	308.00
Siltech MC4-24S	400.00
Siltech FTM-3S	730.00
Silver Sounds SS2	99.00
Silver Sounds SS1	199.00
<b>Silver Tone Ex-Static</b>	<b>35.00</b>
Silver Tone Sci-Fi	95.00
SME S2LB-4	46.18
SME S3LB-4	52.06
SME 4900A	76.83
SME 5900A	102.57
Sonic Link Bonus	15.00
Sonic Link Red	25.00
<b>Sonic Link Silver pink</b>	<b>35.00</b>
<b>Sonic Link Black</b>	<b>49.00</b>
Sonic Link White	65.00
Sonic Link Brown	70.00
Sonic Link Violet	85.00
Sonic Link Blue Nickel	140.00
Sonic Link Vermillion	195.00
Sonic Link Red earth	300.00
Sonic Link Black earth	450.00
Sonic Link Blue earth	695.00
ChordCo Chrysalis	30.00
ChordCo Cobra	49.00
ChordCo Siren	65.00
<b>ChordCo Chameleon</b>	<b>68.00</b>
<b>ChordCo Solid</b>	<b>99.00</b>
Transparent Cable Musichord Int	48.00
Transparent Cable The Link	92.00
<b>Transparent Cable Music Link</b>	<b>119.00</b>
Trichord Pulsewire 75	169.00
Vampire Wire CC	24.00
Vampire Wire CCC/II	58.00
Vampire Wire SC/II	98.00
Vampire Wire SC/IV	144.00
Vampire Wire AI/2	259.00
Vampire Wire SL	412.00
<b>Van Den Hul Storm</b>	<b>25.00</b>
<b>Van Den Hul Source HB</b>	<b>50.00</b>
<b>Van Den Hul DI02 IIHB</b>	<b>70.00</b>
<b>Van Den Hul Thunderline HB</b>	<b>130.00</b>
<b>Van Den Hul First</b>	<b>210.00</b>
<b>Van Den Hul Second</b>	<b>240.00</b>
<b>Van Den Hul MC Gold</b>	<b>400.00</b>
<b>Van Den Hul MC Silver IT</b>	<b>1,475.00</b>
<b>XLO Type 150</b>	<b>50.00</b>
<b>XLO Type 0.1</b>	<b>180.00</b>

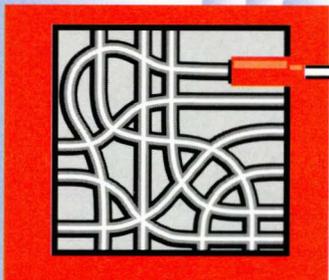
Precious Metals Silver Dig 35	20.00
Precious Metals Silver Dig 100	50.00
Precious Metals Silver Dig 200	110.00
Precious Metals Silver Dig 202	145.00
<b>QED Digiflex</b>	<b>20.00</b>
QED Optiflex	25.00
Roksan ROK-Intercon	45.00
<b>Siltech HF-6</b>	<b>145.00</b>
Sonic Link Blue/black	10.00
<b>Sonic Link Green</b>	<b>60.00</b>
Sonic Link Green Earth	150.00
<b>ChordCo Codac</b>	<b>33.00</b>
<b>ChordCo Prodac</b>	<b>50.00</b>
Transparent Cable PDL	199.00
Trichord Pulsewire 75D	75.00
Trichord Pulsewire 110D	145.00
Vampire Wire DV/1	150.00
Van Den Hul Source HB	30.00
<b>Van Den Hul Videolink</b>	<b>60.00</b>
Van Den Hul AES-EBU 110	65.00
<b>Van Den Hul First</b>	<b>125.00</b>
Van Den Hul Second	130.00



**SPEAKER CABLES**

**KEY**  
 ● - stranded construction.  
 ○ - solid-core construction.  
 Price per mono metre unterminated.

Apertura Silver	82.50
Art Yam Church M2000	470.00
Art Yam Church 5000	795.00
<b>Audio Note AN-D</b>	<b>4.50</b>
<b>Audio Note AN-B</b>	<b>16.50</b>
<b>Audio Note AN-L</b>	<b>29.50</b>
<b>Audio Note AN-SP</b>	<b>150.00</b>
Audio Note AN-SPx	450.00
Audioquest Type 2	3.50
Audioquest F-16	3.60
Audioquest Type 6	7.50
Audioquest Indigo 2	12.00
<b>Audioquest Crystal</b>	<b>18.00</b>
Audioquest Forest	65.00
Audioquest Argent	95.00
Audioquest Clear 3	150.00
<b>Bandridge LC7409</b>	<b>4.00</b>
Bandridge LC4110	28.00
Bandridge LC3410	40.00
Bandridge LC3210	75.00
Bandridge LC3219	75.00
Bandridge LC3220	90.00
Bandridge LC3310	95.00
Bandridge LC3240	125.00
Cable Talk The Flat One	2.00
Cable Talk Theatre 2	2.00
<b>Cable Talk Talk 3.1</b>	<b>2.25</b>
Cable Talk Overture 2.1	4.00
Cable Talk Talk 3.1 Biwire	5.00
<b>Cable Talk Talk 4.1</b>	<b>5.00</b>
Cable Talk Concert 2.1	7.00
Cable Talk Talk 4.1 Biwire	9.00
Cable Talk Symphony 3	13.00
Cable Talk Concert 2.1 Biwire	14.00
Cardas Audio 300B-Microtwin SC	35.00
Cardas Audio Quadlink-Five SC	59.00
Cardas Audio Cross SC	99.00
Cardas Audio Hexlink-Five SC	109.00
Cardas Audio Hexlink GoldenS SC	175.00
Cardas Audio Golden Cross SC	239.00
<b>DNM-Reson LSC</b>	<b>6.95</b>
<b>DNM-Reson LSCB</b>	<b>11.95</b>
<b>DPA Black Sixteen</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Electrocompaniet EC-K2	30.00
<b>Gale XL189</b>	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Gale XL315</b>	<b>2.00</b>
<b>Gale XL160-2</b>	<b>2.50</b>
Gamma Wonder Line	60.00
Goertz M1	16.00
<b>Goertz M2</b>	<b>32.00</b>
Goertz Big Boy	64.00
GT Audio Speaker	50.00
Ixos 607	2.00
Ixos 605	3.00
Ixos 606	8.00
Kimber 4PR	8.00



**DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS**

**KEY**  
 ● - stranded construction.  
 ○ - solid-core construction.  
 Prices for interconnects are for a one-metre terminated pair.

Apertura Model B	139.00
Apertura Model A	255.00
Art Yam Church 5000	275.00
Audioquest Digital/video 1	30.00
Audioquest Digital/video 2	60.00
Audioquest Optilink X	90.00
<b>Audioquest Digital PRO</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Audioquest Optilink Pro	149.00
<b>Audioquest Optilink Z</b>	<b>179.00</b>
Cable Talk Digital 2	75.00
Cardas Audio Lightning	190.00
DNM-Reson DIG100	26.00
<b>DPA Opti-link</b>	<b>20.00</b>
<b>DPA Digi-link</b>	<b>28.00</b>
<b>Ixos 105</b>	<b>25.00</b>
<b>Kimber Opti-link</b>	<b>50.00</b>
Kimber Illuminati DV-30	55.00
Kimber Illuminati D-60	215.00
Kimber Illuminati DX-50	350.00
Kimber Illuminati Orchid	750.00
LAT International DI-20-D	79.00
<b>Moth Layline Datalink</b>	<b>140.00</b>
Nordost Moonglo	145.00



**CABLES**  
**ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS**  
**KEY**  
 ● - stranded construction.  
 ○ - solid-core construction.

Kimber 4VS	12.00
Kimber 4TC	19.68
Kimber 8TC	40.00
Kimber 4AG	394.00
Kimber 8AG	656.00
LAT International SS 800	21.00
LAT International BIWIRE	27.00
LAT International SS 1000	42.50
Lieder Pad	460.00
Lieder Bel Canto	500.00
Lieder Spoor	660.00
Lieder Straat	1,080.00
Lieder Weg	1,400.00
Linn K20	4.00
Linn K400	10.00
Linn K600	15.00
Lumley Silver 12/2	35.00
Lumley Silver 14/4	40.00
Mission Duet	1.90
Mission Quartet bi-wire	3.90
Halm MACA 5	5.50
Nordost Octava	3.00
Nordost 4-Flat	10.00
Nordost Blue Heaven	50.00
Nordost Red Dawn	100.00
Nordost SPM	325.00
Ortofon SPK100	3.00
Ortofon SPK200	5.00
Ortofon SPK300	8.00
Precious Metals Silver L'r 32	7.50
Precious Metals Silver L'r 102	10.00
Precious Metals Silver L'r 34	15.00
Precious Metals Silver L'r 104	20.00
Precious Metals Silver L'r 106	30.00
Precious Metals Silver L'r 108	40.00
Puresonic OFC 7892	1.20
Puresonic OFC 7844	1.65
Puresonic 7845	1.95
Puresonic 7891	2.85
Puresonic OFC 7816	3.75
Puresonic OFC 7832	3.75
Puresonic OFC 7812	3.75
Puresonic OFC 7834	5.50
Puresonic OFC 7825	6.95
Puresonic PSOCC 7801	9.50
Puresonic PSOCC 7802	18.00
Puresonic PSOCC 7803	27.00
QED Qudos Micro	1.25
QED Qudos Bi-Wire	4.50
QED Profile 8	6.50
QED Profile 4x4	9.00
QED Profile Silver 12	15.00
Rega REGA	2.00
Roksan ROK-Speaker	6.00
Siltech LS2-45	109.00
Siltech FT-12 MkI	240.00
Siltech LS4-120	549.00
Silver Sounds 12 Gauge	15.00
Silver Sounds 10 Gauge	35.00
Silver Sounds 8 Gauge	75.00
Silver Tone Silver-Sonic	10.00
Silver Tone Silver-Sonic HC	15.00
Silver Tone Silver-Voice	55.00
Silver Tone Silver-Voice Ultra	85.00
Sonic Link AST50	1.95
Sonic Link AST75	3.00
Sonic Link AST200	5.95
Sonic Link AST200x2	10.00
Sonic Link S300	18.00
Sonic Link S300x2	35.00
Sonic Link S900	50.00
Sonic Link S600x2	70.00
Sonic Link RE3.1	90.00
Sonic Link RE3.4	330.00
Tech + Link SPC 79	1.20
ChordCo Myth	5.95
ChordCo Legend	15.00
Transparent Cable Musichord Spkr	11.00
Transparent Cable The Wave	23.00
Transparent Cable Music Wave Spkr	25.00
Vampire Wire SC-384	11.00
Vampire Wire SC-554	15.00
Vampire Wire ST-I	30.00
Vampire Wire SC-1108	30.00
Vampire Wire ST-II	48.00
Vampire Wire ST-III	73.00
Van Den Hul Snowline	5.00
Van Den Hul Skytrack HB	5.50
Van Den Hul Clearwater	7.00
Van Den Hul Snowtrack	10.00
Van Den Hul CS122 HB	12.00
Van Den Hul Cleartrack	13.00
Van Den Hul D352 HB	20.00
Van Den Hul Teatrack HB	22.00
Van Den Hul SCS12	34.00
Van Den Hul Magnum HB	38.00
Van Den Hul The Wind HB	40.00
Van Den Hul Revelation HB	76.00
Van Den Hul Revelation HB	120.00
Van Den Hul Skyline HB	350.00
Van Den Hul The Third	1,000.00
XLO Pro 600	4.00

**XLO Pro 600** 16.60

**KEY**  
**MM** - moving-magnet type.  
**MC** - moving-coil type.

Up to £100

Audio Note IO1	MM	99
Audio Technica AT-91	MM	13
Audio Technica AT-95E	MM	19
Audio Technica AT-110E	MM	24
Benz-Micro MC20EII	MC	70
Denon DL110	MC	70
Denon DL160	MC	90
Denon DL103	MC	100
Goldring Elan	MM	19
Goldring Elektra	MM	29
Goldring 1006	MM	59
Goldring 1012GX	MM	79
Goldring 1022GX	MM	99
Grado ZTE+1	MM	27
Grado ZCE+1	MM	37
Grado ZFE+1	MM	48
Grado Prestige Black	MM	49
Grado Prestige Green	MM	59
Grado Prestige Blue	MM	69
Grado ZF1+	MM	83
Grado Prestige Red	MM	99
N'ham Tracer I	MM	98
Ortofon VMS2	MM	14
Ortofon OM 5E	MM	20
Ortofon OM 10	MM	30
Ortofon 510	MM	38
Ortofon OM DJ	MM	50
Ortofon 520	MM	65
Ortofon OM 20	MM	70
Ortofon MC1 Turbo	MC	70
Ortofon Concorde DJ	MM	80
Ortofon OM 30	MM	90
Ortofon MC10 Super	MC	100
Ortofon 530	MM	100
Pickering TE-15	MM	20
Pickering VE-15	MM	25
Pickering T-E	MM	25
Pickering V15-DJ	MM	28
Pickering TL-E	MM	35
Pickering TL-2E	MM	45
Pickering XV15-625E	MM	50
Pickering XV15-150-DJ	MM	50
Pickering TL-2-S	MM	55
Pickering XV15-757S	MM	60
Pickering XV15-625DJ	MM	60
Pickering XV15-1800S	MM	70
Pickering TL3S	MM	80
Pickering XEV-3001E	MM	95
Pickering XLZ-3500	MM	100
Pickering TL-4-S	MM	100
Rega Bias	MM	39
Rega RB78	MM	39
Rega Super Bias	MM	59
Rega Elys	MM	85
Shure SC35C	MM	29
Shure ME95ED	MM	38
Shure M70BX	MM	38
Stanton 500AL II	MM	34
Stanton 500EL	MM	37
Stanton 680AL/X	MM	56
Stanton 680EL/X	MM	70
Sumiko Oyster	MM	30
Sumiko Black Pearl	MM	50
Sumiko Pearl	MM	70
Sumiko Blue Point	MC	100

**Over £100**

Audio Note IO2	MM	139
Audio Note Soara	MC	795
Audio Note IO1V	MC	1,095
Audio Note IO2V	MC	1,695
Audio Note IOLtd	MC	4,500
Audio Technica AT-OC9	MM	245
Audio Technica ART-1	MC	944
Benz-Micro The Glider	MC	650
Benz-Micro M090	MC	700
Benz-Micro L040	MC	700
Benz-Micro H200	MC	700

Benz-Micro Reference	MC	1,100
Benz-Micro Reference Ruby	MC	1,500
Benz-Micro Ruby Open Air	MC	1,600
Clearaudio Aurum-Alpha	MM	135
Clearaudio Aurum-Beta	MM	195
Clearaudio Aurum-Beta/S	MM	265
Clearaudio Gamma-S	MC	745
Clearaudio Signature	MC	1,595
Clearaudio Accurate	MC	2,950
Clearaudio Insider	MC	5,500
Denon DL304	MC	200
Dynavector 10X4II	MC	189
Dynavector 23RS	MC	375
Dynavector 17D2	MC	450
Dynavector XX-1L	MC	998
Dynavector XX-1	MC	998
Dynavector Te-Kaitora	MC	1,698
Goldring Eroica LX	MC	110
Goldring Eroica	MC	110
Goldring 1042	MM	120
Goldring Elite	MC	220
Goldring Excel VX	MC	495
Grado Prestige Silver	MM	119
Grado Prestige Gold	MM	149
Grado Signature Junior	MM	150
Grado Signature 8MZ	MM	250
Grado Signature MCZ	MM	375
Grado Signature TLZ	MM	650
Grado Signature XTZ	MM	975
Koetsu Red T	MC	1,550
Koetsu Red K Sig	MC	1,998
Koetsu Urushi	MC	2,297
Koetsu Signature	MC	3,218
Koetsu Gold PR	MC	5,498
Linn K9	MM	125
Linn Klyde	MC	500
Linn Arkiv	MC	1,000
London Decca Maroon	MM	259
London Decca Gold	MM	299
London Decca Maroon Dp	MM	339
London Decca Gold Dp	MM	379
London Decca S Gold	MM	399
London Decca S Gold Dp	MM	479
London Decca Jubilee	MM	999
Lyra Lydian	MC	649
Lyra Clavis Da Capo	MC	995
N'ham Tracer II	MM	310
N'ham Tracer III	MM	410
N'ham Tracer IV	MM	660
Ortofon MC3 Turbo	MC	130
Ortofon MC15 Super II	MC	130
Ortofon 540	MM	130
Ortofon MC25E	MC	180
Ortofon MC25FL	MC	250
Ortofon MC10 Supreme	MC	300
Ortofon SPU mono	MC	350
Ortofon MC20 Supreme	MC	425
Ortofon SPU Classic	MC	450
Ortofon MC30 Supreme	MC	525
Ortofon MC200II	MC	750
Ortofon MC Rohmann	MC	1,000
Ortofon MC3000 II	MC	1,100
Ortofon MC5000	MC	1,500
Ortofon MC7500	MC	2,000
Pickering TL-3003	MM	145
Pickering XLZ-4500	MM	150
Pickering TL-4004	MM	175
Pickering XSV-5000U	MM	200
Pickering XLZ-7500	MM	200
Pickering TLZ-7500-S	MM	200
Reson Mica	MM	185
Reson Recca	MM	250
Reson Aciore	MC	299
Reson Etile	MC	455
Reson Lexe	MC	1,300
Roksan Corus Black	MM	130
Roksan Shiraz	MC	970
Stanton 890AL/X	MM	118
Sumiko BPS	MC	250
Transfiguration Spirit	MC	1,000
Transfiguration Temper	MC	1,950
Van Den Hul MM-1	MM	250
Van Den Hul MM-2	MM	300
Van Den Hul DDT-II	MC	700
Van Den Hul MC-10	MC	800
Van Den Hul MC-One	MC	1,000
Van Den Hul MC-One Super	MC	1,150
Van Den Hul MC-Two	MC	1,350
Van Den Hul The Frog	MC	1,700
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IISLA	MC	2,200
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IISLGN	MC	3,000
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IISLGA	MC	3,000
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IISCMN	MC	3,000
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IISCHN	MC	3,400
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IVGLA	MC	3,450
Wilson Benesch Matrix	MC	786
Wilson Benesch Hybrid	MC	1,068
Wilson Benesch Carbon	MC	1,586
Wilson Benesch Analog	MC	1,850

**CASSETTE DECKS**

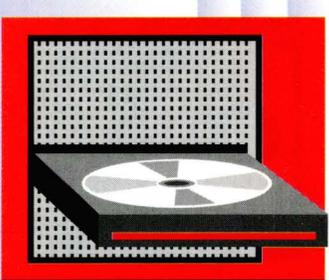
**KEY**  
 ← Autoreverse — no need to remove and turn round the tape.  
**3-H** - 3 heads, i.e. separate record and replay heads.

Up to £200

Aiwa AD-F450	→	120
Aiwa AD-WX727	→	170
Denon DRM-550	→	160
Denon DRW-580	→	200
Denon DRS-640	→	200
Goodmans Delta 801	→	130
JVC TD-W218BK	→	170
JVC TD-X372BK	→	170
JVC TD-R472BK	→	200
JVC TD-W318BK	→	200
Kenwood KX-W4080	→	160
Kenwood KX-3080	→	160
Kenwood KX-W6080	→	200
Kenwood KX-5080S	→	200
Marantz SD-555	→	200
Onkyo K 185	→	200
Pioneer CT-S250	→	150
Pioneer CT-W205R	→	160
Pioneer CT-W505R	→	180
Pioneer CT-S450S	→	200
Sony TC-KE200	→	120
Sony TC-WE405	→	150
Sony TC-KE400S	→	180
Sony TC-WE505	→	180
TEAC W-416	→	100
TEAC V-610	→	100
TEAC W-780R	→	170
TEAC R-560	→	180
TEAC R-H500	→	200
Technics RS-BX501	→	170
Technics RS-TR373	→	200
Yamaha KX-390	→	150
Yamaha KX-W392	→	180
Yamaha KX-490	→	200

**Over £200**

Aiwa AD-F850	→	3-H	230
Aiwa AD-S950	→	3-H	300
Carver TDR-1550	→		629
Denon DRM-650S	→		230
Denon DRM-740	→	3-H	270
Denon DRS-810	→	3-H	310
H/K TD420	→		350
H/K TD450	→	3-H	350
JVC TD-V562BK	→	3-H	220
JVC TD-V662BK	→	3-H	270
JVC TD-W718BK	→		300
Marantz SD-57	→		249
NAD 613	→		230
NAD 614	→		270
NAD 616	→		300
Onkyo TA 6210	→		230
Onkyo TARW 211	→		270
Onkyo TARW 311	→		320
Onkyo TA 6310	→		330
Onkyo KR 609	→		350
Onkyo KW 606	→		370
Onkyo TARW 411	→		370
Onkyo K 611	→	3-H	460
Pioneer CT-S550S	→	3-H	250
Pioneer CT-W806DR	→		300
Pioneer CT-S830S	→	3-H	500
Pioneer CT-95	→	3-H	1,000
Sony TC-KE500S	→	3-H	230
Sony TC-WE800S	→		250
Sony TC-KE600S	→	3-H	300
Sony TC-KAGES	→	3-H	550
TEAC W-850R	→		250
TEAC V-1030	→	3-H	250
TEAC W-6000R	→		450
TEAC V-6030S	→	3-H	550
TEAC V-8030S	→	3-H	650
Technics RS-TR474	→		220
Technics RS-A26	→	3-H	230
Technics RS-TR575	→		280
Technics RS-AZ7	→	3-H	300
Yamaha KX-580SE	→		250
Yamaha KX-W592	→		280
Yamaha KX-690	→	3-H	400



CD PLAYERS

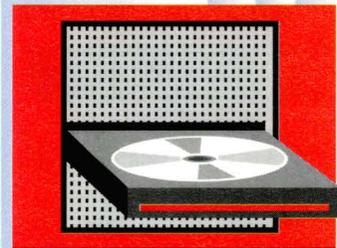
**KEY**  
 ➡ - multiplayer, can be loaded with more than one disc.  
 [10] - electrical (coaxial) digital output.  
 Many players also include an optical (Toslink) output.

Up to £250

Aiwa XC-300	150
AMC CD9	120
AMC CD8	150
AMC CD6	250
AMC CDM7	250
Cambridge CD4	150
Cambridge CD4SE	200
Cambridge CD6	250
Denon DCD-625	200
Denon DCD-715	235
Denon DCD-825	240
Eclipse CD30	50
Eclipse CD50	60
Eclipse CD101	80
H/K HD710	200
JVC XL-V120BK	110
JVC XL-V184BK	120
JVC XL-V284BK	140
JVC XL-F116BK	180
JVC XL-F216BK	200
JVC XL-V274BK	250
Kenwood DP-1080	110
Kenwood DP-2080	130
Kenwood DP-R3090	140
Kenwood DP-R4090	160
Kenwood DP-3080	170
Kenwood DP-R6090	200
Kenwood DP-4090	230
Marantz CD-46	150
Marantz CC-38	200
Marantz CD-57	200
Marantz CD-67II	250
Marantz CC-47	250
NAD 510	200
NAD 512	250
Philips CD711	120
Philips CD721	130
Philips CD751	150
Philips CDC751	180
Pioneer PD-104	130
Pioneer PD-204	150
Pioneer PD-M603	200
Pioneer PD-S505	200
Pioneer PD-F605	230
Pioneer PD-F25	230
Rotel RCD-930AX	180
Sherwood CD-4030R	180
Sony CDP-M205	110
Sony CDP-XE210	120
Sony CDP-M305	130
Sony CDP-XE310	140
Sony CDP-CE105	150
Sony CDP-XE510	180
Sony CDP-CE315	200
Sony CDP-C325M	200
TEAC CD-P1800	130
TEAC CD-P3450SE	200
TEAC PD-H500	240
TEAC PD-D2200	250
Technics SL-PG380A	150
Technics SL-PG480A	130
Technics SL-PG580A	150
Technics SL-PD687	160
Technics SL-PD887	180
Technics SL-PS670D	200
Technics SL-PS770D	250
Yamaha CDX-390	130
Yamaha CDC-565	170
Yamaha CDX-490	170
Yamaha CDC-665	220
Yamaha CDX-590	230
<b>£251 to £500</b>	
Aiwa DX-C100M	500
Arcam Alpha 7	320
Arcam Alpha MCD	450
Audio Alchemy ACD II	490

AudioInnov Alto	399
Aura CD100	400
Carver SDA-400	299
Carver MV-5	469
Denon DCM-260	300
Denon DCD-1015	350
H/K HD730	300
H/K FL8300	300
JVC XL-Z674BK	300
Kenwood DP-R7080	300
Kenwood DP-9090	300
Kenwood DP-7090	400
Marantz CD-67	270
Marantz CD-67SE	350
Marantz CC-870	400
Marantz CD-63H1K1	500
Micromega Minium	400
Musical Fidelity E60	300
Musical Fidelity A2	500
NAD 513	290
NAD 515	350
NAD 514	370
NAD 517	400
Onkyo DX 7210	260
Onkyo C721	290
Onkyo DXC 320	380
Onkyo DX 7510	400
Onkyo CM 716	450
Pioneer PD-S705	300
Pioneer PD-F805	330
Pioneer PD-F905	400
Pioneer PD-S904	400
Pioneer PD-S505 Precision	460
Rotel RCD-965BX	300
Rotel RCD-970BX	375
Sony CDP-XE900E	300
Sony CDP-CX200	380
Sony XA20 ES	449
Sony CD-XA20ES	450
Sony CDP-X3000ES	500
TEAC CD-5	350
Technics SL-MC400	350
Yamaha CDX-890	350
<b>£501 to £1000</b>	
Acurus ACD 11	899
Alchemist Nexus	597
Arcam Alpha 8	520
Audiolab 8000CD	1,000
AVI S2000MC2	895
Creek CD42	599
Denon DCD-3000	1,000
DPA Renaissance int CD	950
Fase Evoluzione Laserdrive 1.0	995
Helios Model 3	650
Helios Model 2	950
Heybrook Signature II	989
Linn Mimik	875
Marantz CD-17	800
Micromega Stage 4	600
Micromega Stage 5	750
Micromega Stage 6	950
Mission dAD3	598
Mission dAD3Q	898
Monrio Privilege	995
Myrrad MC100	700
Naim CD3	1,000
Orelle CD100eA	649
Orelle CD-100eSA	999
Pink Triangle Numeral	999
Quad 77 Bus	700
Quad 77 Mains	900
Roksan Caspian	895
TEAC VRDS-7	599
TEAC VRDS-9	700
TEAC VRDS-10SE	850
Technics SL-P2000	1,000
Thule CD100	849
Trichord Genesis	549
Trichord Digital Jukebox 25	599
Trichord Digital Jukebox 50	649
Trichord Digital J'box 100	699
Trichord Revelation	799
<b>Over £1000</b>	
Alchemist Forseti	1,950
Audio Alchemy ACD Pro	1,395
Audio Research CD1	3,290
Audio Research CD2	4,100
Audiomeca Talisman	2,150
Audiomeca Talisman SE	2,300
AVI S2000MC	1,399
Cary CD-301	2,495
Copland CD277	1,800
Copland CDA288	2,199
Helios Model 1	1,250
Helios Stargate	2,250
Krell KPS30i	5,490
Krell KPS-20i	9,990
Marantz CD-17K1	1,300
Marantz CD-23	4,000
Mark Levinson 39	5,995
Meracrus Tanto	1,395
Meracrus Imago Player	4,495

Meridian 506	1,100
Meridian 508	1,685
Meridian 800	4,995
Micromega Solo	2,750
Musical Fidelity FCD	1,500
Myrrad MCD500	1,300
Naim CD2	2,000
Naim CDS	3,940
Orelle CD100eV	1,149
Pink Triangle Litaural	2,099
Primare 302	1,800
Roksan Attessa-DP3P	1,495
Sherwood CD1	1,100
Sonic Frontiers SFCD-1	3,495
TEAC VRDS-25	1,300
XTC CDP-1	1,250



CD TRANSPORTS

**KEY**  
 [10] - electrical (coaxial) digital output.  
 Many players also include an optical (Toslink) output.

Arcam Delta 250	800
Audio Alchemy DDS III	700
Audio Alchemy DDS Pro	1,550
Audio Research CDTI	3,290
Audio Synthesis Transcend	1,395
Audiolab 8000CDM	1,400
Audiomeca Damnation	999
Audiomeca Damnation SE	1,100
Audiomeca Kreatura SE	1,400
Audiomeca Mephisto	2,350
Cambridge Discmagic One	300
Conrad-Johnson DR-1	1,795
DPA Enlightenment Drv	725
Jadis JD3	4,850
Jadis JD2	4,990
Jadis JD1	12,500
Krell KPS-20t	8,490
Linn Karik	1,850
Mark Levinson 37	3,995
Mark Levinson 31.5	9,295
Meracrus Imago	3,995
Meridian 500	1,245
Micromega Drive 3	750
Micromega Data	2,250
Monrio Bitmatch	950
Muse Model 5	1,800
Orelle CD100eT1	699
Orelle CD100eT2	799
Pink Triangle Cardinal II	875
PS Audio Lambda TR	2,250
PS Audio Lambda AT&T	2,778
Roksan Attessa-DP3	1,295
Sonic Frontiers SFT-1	2,295
TEAC VRDS-T1	550
TEAC P-30	2,500
Theta Digital Data Basic II	2,397
Theta Digital Data III NTSC/PAL	5,455
Thorens TCD-2000	999
Trichord Digital Turntable	699
Tube Tech Fulcrum	1,000
Wadia 8	3,195
Wadia 20	4,370
<b>DIGITAL TO ANALOGUE CONVERTERS (DACs)</b>	
AMC CDM7DAC	100
AMC DAC8	130

AMC CDM7VAC	200
Arcam Black Box 50	480
Arcam Black Box 500	750
Audio Alchemy DAC Man	150
Audio Alchemy DDE v1.2	596
Audio Alchemy DDEv3.0	699
Audio Note DAC1	675
Audio Note DAC2	1,099
Audio Note DAC3	1,750
Audio Research DAC5	2,148
Audio Research DAC5	2,335
Audio Research DAC3	4,195
Audio Research DAC3	4,555
Audio Synthesis DAX-2	2,195
Audiolab 8000DAC	900
Audiomeca Elixir	799
Audiomeca Ambrosia	1,850
Boulder 2020	25,000
Cambridge Dacmagic 2 Mk II	150
Chord DSC1100	2,575
Chord DSC1500	3,850
Conrad-Johnson D/A-3	1,195
Conrad-Johnson D/A-2b	1,990
Denon DCD-425	150
DPA Little Bit 3	325
DPA Renaissance DAC	570
DPA Enlightenment DAC	825
DPA SX128	2,000
DPA SX256	4,000
DPA SX512	8,000
Jadis JS3	2,129
Jadis JS1	8,068
LFD DAC2	1,950
LFD DAC3	3,000
Linn Numerik	1,500
Mark Levinson 36	3,995
Mark Levinson 35	7,995
Mark Levinson 30.5	15,950
Meracrus Auriga	1,295
Meracrus Flagrare	2,495
Meridian 566	1,095
Micromega DAC 2	750
Micromega Dialog	2,000
Monrio 18B2	795
Muse Model 2	2,190
Muse Model 2 Plus	2,500
Musical Fidelity X-ACT	200
Musical Fidelity X-DAC	300
Onkyo DX 7310	330
PS Audio DL3	777
PS Audio SL3	1,449
PS Audio UltraLink 2 HDCD	2,590
PS Audio Ref Link	4,550
Roksan Attessa-DA2	595
Sonic Frontiers SFD-1 Mk 2	2,495
Sonic Frontiers SFD-2 Mk 2	5,295
Sumo Theorem II	945
Sumo Theorem IIB	1,155
TEAC D-11	500
TEAC D-700	600
Theta Digital Chroma Std	849
Theta Digital Pro Geny	1,145
Theta Digital Pro Prime II	1,800
Theta Digital Pro Basic III	2,990
Theta Digital Gen V SE	4,300
Theta Digital Casablanca LS	5,910
Thorens TDA-2000	700
Trichord Pulsar Ser One	1,395
Tube Tech Fulcrum	1,400
Wadia 12	1,530
Wadia 15	3,790
Wadia 64.4	4,750
Wadia 16	7,395
Wadia 7	9,995
Wadia 9	12,790
Woodside DVAC-18	1,499
<b>DIGITAL RECORDERS</b>	
<b>KEY</b> MD - minidisc DAT - digital audio tape [P] - Portable	
Denon DMD-1300	500
Kenwood DM-7090	500



**THE ESSENTIAL ACCESSORY – SENNHEISER'S HD565**

"Sound quality is exceptionally good... easily the best all-round model tested".

Alvin Gold, Hi-Fi Choice, September 1996.

Call (01494) 551551 for more information or your nearest stockist.

Meridian CDR		4,500
Onkyo MD 122	<b>MD</b>	700
Pioneer D-05	<b>DAT</b>	900
Pioneer PDR-05		1,300
Pioneer D-C88	<b>DAT</b>	2,000
Sharp MD-R1E	<b>MD</b>	300
Sharp MD-MS200H	<b>MD</b>	350
Sharp MDXV300H	<b>MD</b>	1,000
Sony MZ-E20	<b>MD</b>	180
Sony MDS-JE510	<b>MD</b>	250
Sony MZ-E30	<b>MD</b>	280
Sony MDS-S38	<b>MD</b>	300
Sony MZ-R30	<b>MD</b>	300
Sony MDS-JA30ES	<b>MD</b>	699
TEAC MD-H500	<b>MD</b>	650
TEAC MD-10	<b>MD</b>	950

Kenwood KPM-410		25
KLH KHP201TW		21
KLH KHP-300V		25
KLH KHP-420V		33
Maxell HP-1000		20
Maxell HP-2000		25
Maxell HP-3000		30
Pioneer SE-A40		20
Pioneer SE-A20V		23
Pioneer SE-M250		25
Pioneer SE-M350		30
Sennheiser HD56		18
Sennheiser HD433		20
Sennheiser HD435 Vegas		30
Sennheiser HD435 Manhattan		30
Sennheiser HD60TV		40
Sony MDR-W20G		18
Sony MDR-E837		18
Sony MDR-P70		18
Sony MDR-ED238		20
Sony MDR-009TV		20
Sony MDR-A34L		20
Sony MDR-E848		20
Sony MDR-P1TV		25
Sony MDR-CD270		30
Sony MDR-E868		35
Sony MDR-CD370		40
Sony MDR-D11		40
Technics RP-HT280		30
Technics RP-HT300		40
Vivanco SR250		19
Vivanco SR150		20
Vivanco SR200		25
Vivanco SR300		30

<b>Over £41</b>		
AKG K301		80
AKG K222R		100
AKG K401		120
AKG K501		150
AKG K3331R		150
AKG K4441R		180
AKG K290S		250
AKG K1000		700
Audio Technica ATH910PRO		90
Beyer DT311		57
Beyer DT411		69
Beyer DT331		82
Beyer DT431		98
Beyer IRH890		117
Beyer DT511		117
Beyer DT531		135
Beyer DT770 Pro		152
Beyer DT100		152
Beyer DT801		172
Beyer DT990 Pro		187
Beyer DT811		200
Beyer IRS890		222
Beyer DT901		222
Beyer DT911		235
Denon AH-D210		45
Denon AH-D350		65



**HEADPHONES**

**KEY**

'D' - dynamic type, compatible with virtually all normal headphone sockets.

'E' - electrostatic type; generally includes a separate power supply.

☞ - open-back construction.

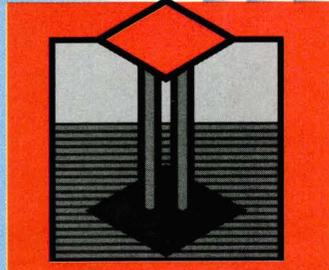
☞ - closed-back construction.

Up to £40

Aiwa HP-X301		20
Aiwa HP-VX303		25
Aiwa HP-X705		40
AKG Rox		30
Audio Technica ATH-P1		10
Audio Technica ATH-P3		15
Audio Technica ATH-P5		20
Beyer DT111 Beta		20
Beyer DT111 Gamma		25
Beyer DT211		34
JVC HA-CD88		18
JVC HA-D525		20
JVC HA-F65		20
JVC HA-D626		25
Kenwood KPM-310		18

Denon AH-D550		80
Denon AH-D650		95
Denon AH-D750		130
Denon AH-D950		150
Grado SR40		45
Grado SR60		79
Grado SR80		100
Grado SR125		150
Grado SR225		200
Grado SR325		300
Grado RS1		695
Jacklin Float Model 1		79
Jacklin Float Model 2		99
Jacklin Float ELS		399
JVC HA-D727		43
JVC HA-D910		65
JVC HA-D1000		250
JVC HA-F25		699
Precide Ergo Model 1		120
Precida Ergo Model 2		140
Sennheiser HD445		45
Sennheiser IS 380		55
Sennheiser HD455		55
Sennheiser HD465		65
Sennheiser HD475		80
Sennheiser HD25 SP		90
Sennheiser HD535		105
Sennheiser IS450		120
Sennheiser HD545 Ref		125
Sennheiser HD250II		150
Sennheiser HDC 451-1		150
Sennheiser HD565 Ovatin		150
Sennheiser HD265 Linear		150
Sennheiser HD25-13		160
Sennheiser HD25		160
Sennheiser HD 580 P'cision		200
Sennheiser HD600		250
Sennheiser Lucas		280
Sennheiser IS850		859
Sennheiser HE60/HEV70		998
Sennheiser Orpheus		9,652
Sony MDR-IF50K		50
Sony MDR-IF120K		50
Sony MDR-CD470		50
Sony MDR-E888		55
Sony MDR-IF125RK		60
Sony MDR-CD570		70
Sony MDR-IF420RK		100
Sony MDR-CD770		100
Sony MDR-D77		130
Sony MDR-NC20		150
Sony MDR-NC10		150
Sony MDR-IF520RK		150
Sony MDR-CD1700		200
Stax SR-001		280
Stax SR-Lambda Nova C		370
Stax Lambda Nova Basic		449
Stax SR-Lambda Nova S		450
Stax Omega		1,695
Stax SR-Omega Ref		1,700
Technics RP-HT400		50
Technics RP-HT600		60
Technics RP-HT700		70
Vivanco IR5700		50
Vivanco IR5000		50
Vivanco SR850		50
Vivanco SR850		50
Vivanco SR750		60
Vivanco IR6000		70
Vivanco SR909		70
Vivanco IR6500		90
Vivanco SR10001FL		110
Vivanco IR7100		120
Vivanco IR7600		140
Vivanco SR2001FL		140

**Equipment Supports**



**EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS Speaker Stands**

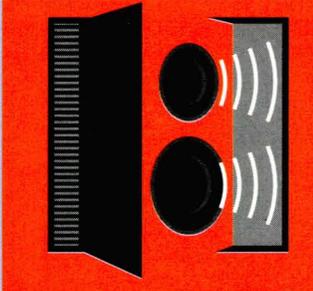
Alphason NCI		47
Alphason RS1		49
Alphason NCI		84
Alphason Titan S		125
Apollo AZ6		80
Arcici Q-1		299
Arcici Q-2		299
Atacama BD21		55
Atacama BD17		55

Alphason SM17		49
Alphason GSM17		75
Alphason VSM17		85
Alphason R17/17		120
Alphason GR17/17		150
Alphason VR17/17		190
Audiophile Base 01		79
Audiophile S4T120		280
Audiophile Furniture Base		480
Audiophile S4T120P		560
BCD Model 1006/8		795
BCD Model 1000		1,250
Custom Design CD-1		70
Custom Design WMB		100
Custom Design G5		160
Custom Design CD-3		200
Custom Design Aspect 650		230
Custom Design Aspect 850		250
Custom Design Aspect 500AW		270
Deadrock 701		60
Deadrock 802		90
Deadrock 703		130
Deadrock 704		190



Deadrock 705	230
FI-Rax R4	399
Frameworks H175	130
Frameworks FS1	150
Frameworks FT2	285
Frameworks FT3	350
Frameworks H700	355
Frameworks H900	389
Frameworks H500/H175	404
Heybrook Stand-Signtaure	249
Impulse Iso-plate	190
JPW 3 Tier	80
JPW 5 Tier	100
Kudos Audio Corinthian	600
Linn K3000	85
Mana Sound Frame	125
Mana Mini Table	150
Mana Power supply table	150
Mana Reference flat top	150
Mana Sound Shelf	175
Mana Sound Base	175
Mana Sound Stage	200
Mana Sound Table	235
Mana Ref Shelf	325
Mana Reference Table	350
Mana 2 Tier Amp stand	375
Mana 3 Tier Amp Stand	450
Mana 4 Tier Amp Stand	500
Mana 5 Tier Amp Stand	600
Mana 6 Tier Amp Stand	700
Mission Hark	298
Optimum G2	55
Optimum G2/Pedestal	85
Optimum G4/Pedestal	130
Optimum OPT 3406	149
Optimum G5/Pedestal	150
Optimum OPT 4906	199
Optimum OPT 6606	199
Optimum OPT 340	249
Optimum OPT 490	299
Optimum OPT 440	299
Optimum OPT 10206	299
Optimum AV 300	299
Optimum OPT 660	349
Optimum OPT 610	399
Optimum OPT 1020	399
Optimum OPT 700	450
Optimum OPT 1190	450
Projekt A3	145
Projekt A4	190
Projekt B3	255
Projekt A6	280
Projekt B3i	300
Projekt A5	320
Projekt B4	340
Projekt B Multi	345
Projekt B3ii	345
Projekt C3	375
Projekt D3	420
Projekt C3i	420
Projekt B5	425
Projekt C3iii	465
Projekt C3ii	465
Projekt D3i	500
Projekt C4	500
Projekt C3iv	510
Projekt D3ii	545
Projekt C Multi	555
Projekt D4	560
Quadraspire Q4 mini shelf	60
Quadraspire Q4 shelf	60
Quadraspire Cabinet shelf	80
Quadraspire AV shelf	120
Quadraspire Q4 mini table	200
Quadraspire Q4 table	200
Quadraspire AV table	300
Quadraspire Cabinet	400
Reson DOMOPS	195
Reson DOMOWS	195
Sound Org 2022	65
Sound Org 2021	78
Sound Org 2030	100
Sound Org 2060	120
Sound Org 2038	135
Sound Org 2540	140
Sound Org 2545	140
Sound Org 2560	160
Sound Org 2530	170
Soundstyle X300	180
Soundstyle X305	210
Soundstyle X053	210
Soundstyle X050	210
Soundstyle X6300	215
Soundstyle X100	220
Soundstyle X058	240
Soundstyle X310	250
Soundstyle X105	250
Soundstyle X6053	255
Soundstyle X6100	265
Soundstyle X6310	275
Soundstyle X6058	290
Soundstyle X6105	300

Soundstyle Finewoods W105	320
Stands Unique Isolation Platform	52
Stands Unique Sound Support	249
Stands Unique Sound Tower	289
Stands Unique Compact Sound Supp	315
Stands Unique Sound Support 10	315
Stands Unique Sound Twr Cabinet	369
Stands Unique Ref Wall Support	550
Stands Unique Ultimate Tower	689
Stands Unique Ultimate Tower	689
Stands Unique Ref Floor Support	799
System Tripod Z053	135
System Tripod Z050	135
System Tripod Z058	155
Target 85	175
Townshend Seismic Sink 1-CD	110
Townshend Seismic Sink 1-3D	400
Townshend S/Sink Stand 1-4	999
Townshend Seismic Sink 3-4	1,250
Wilson Benesch Asside	720
Wilson Benesch Triptych	990



**LOUDSPEAKERS**

**KEY**

- ↓ - floorstander; larger models requiring no separate stand.
- ⊞ - stand mount; smaller models designed to be raised above the floor.
- - wall mount; designed to be hung on the wall or mounted in-wall.
- ⊞ - box type, including infinite baffle, reflex and transmission line types.
- ▷ - horn type; mostly large and very efficient.
- - panel type, including electrostatic and planar magnetic types.

Up to £130

Allison Micro Monitors	60
Allison Mini References	60
Celestion 12i	119
Denon SC-M2	80
Gale Mini Monitors	70
Genezza GX300	80
Genezza GX330	80
GLL Arena HF	99
Goodmans Active 75	65
Interaudio XL1000	130
Jamo Studio-80	70
Jamo SAT-90	90
Jamo Cornet 25	100
Jamo D-110	100
Jamo SAT-170	110
Jamo Studio-110	110
Jamo Cornet 35	120
Jamo Artina	120
Jamo D-115	120
Jamo 28	125
JBL TLX111	120
JPW Mini Monitor	60
JPW Gold Monitor	80
JPW IW51	80
JPW ML210	80
JPW ML310	90
JPW ML410	100
JPW IW61	100
JPW IW81	130
JVC SX-SC1VBK	60
JVC SP-V50	80
JVC SP-X220TBK	100
JVC SP-X550BK	130
KEF Coda 7	129
Kenwood LS-90UK	130
Mission 731i	130
Mordaunt-Short VS-100	100
Mordaunt-Short MS05i	100
NAD 801	100
Pioneer CS-3030	120
Polk AB410	100
Realistic Minimus 26	56
Realistic Minimus Pro-77	100
Revolver Beretta	100
R Allen Minette 2	129
Solid HCM2	130
Sony SS-86E	100
Tangent Monitor 3	60
Tangent Monitor 5	80
Tangent Monitor 7	100
Tannoy Mercury M1	120
TDL Nucleus 1	60
TDL NFM 1	120
TEAC LS-X8 Mk II	80
Technics SB-CS55	80
Technics SB-CS75	100
Visonik 5202	129
W'dale Valdis 100	80

W'dale Diamond 7.1	100
W'dale Valdis 200	110
W'dale Modus Micro	110
<b>£131 to £200</b>	
Acoustic Energy AE100	200
Allison Model 4A	170
B&W DM302	150
B&W CWMS	170
B&W DM601	199
Bose 101	190
Bose 141	200
Boston CR6	149
Boston 325	149
Boston Micro 80 Sat	169
Boston Runabout	169
Boston 335	179
Boston 351	189
Boston CR7	199
Boston Runabout II	200
Celestion 15i	199
Carwin-Vega CT-165	200
Denon SC-E313	160
Gale 21B	140
Gale 4i	140
Gale 3s	150
Genezza GX650	140
GLL Arena SW	139
GLL Imagio IC100	170
Heybrook Prima	139
Infinity SM65	150
Infinity Reference 1i	150
Infinity Reference 11i	200
Interaudio XL2000	200
Jamo 38	150
Jamo 525	150
Jamo 560	170
Jamo 660	170
Jamo Cornet 65	170
Jamo Studio 180	180
Jamo D165	200
Jamo 68	200
JBL TLX121	150
JPW ML510	140
JPW ML610	170
JPW SSS51	200
KEF Coda 8	189
KEF Q15	199
KEF Model 60S	199
Kenwood LS-200G	200
KLH Model 21	155
KLH Model 11	155
KLH Model 31	185
Mission 731i Pro	140
Mission 732i	200
Mordaunt-Short MS10i	140
Mordaunt-Short VS-200	150
Mordaunt-Short MS20i Pearl	200
Mordaunt-Short VS-300	200



**You must listen to...Mission's 731i.**

**"A combatant truly worthy of the budget speaker challenge".**

Alan Sircom, Hi-Fi Choice, July/August 1996.  
Call (01480 451777) for more information or your nearest stockist.





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60S Effects  
80C Dialogue



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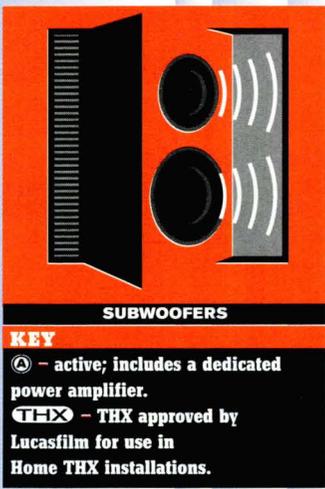
		£601 to £1500			
Mission 752f	578	Acoustic Energy AE2-II	1,095	JBL L80	1,250
Mission 735i	650	Acoustic Solutions Eight	1,200	JBL L90	1,500
Mission 753f	798	Ambience Mod. 4.0	1,185	Jordan Watts JH1 + 1	995
M-A Studio 2SE	600	Apertura Prima	920	JPW Ruby 4	1,000
M-A 700 PMC	600	Apertura Agora	1,095	KEF Q75	999
M-A 702PMC	700	Apertura Nova	1,295	KEF Ref. Model One	1,199
M-A 703PMC	800	ATC SCM10	999	Kelly KT3	1,200
Mordaunt-Short MS50i	550	Audio Note AN-J/D	930	Keswick Torino	999
Mus Tec Falcon	575	Audio Note AN-K/SPx	1,060	Keswick Figaro Evolution	1,099
Naim Intro	660	Audio Note AN-E/B	1,299	Keswick Milano	1,199
Neat Mystique	575	Audio Note AN-J/SPx	1,415	Keswick Legato	1,199
Neat Petite II	745	Audio Physic Step	1,299	Keswick Amber	1,499
Opera Seconda	595	Audiovector 2X	850	Linn Tukan Aktiv	1,050
Opera Operetta II	770	Audiovector 3X	1,500	Linn Keilidh Aktiv	1,250
Opera Platea	795	AVI Positron	899	L Voice Auditorium	1,300
Origin Live Resolution	732	B&O Beolab 4000	1,100	Lowther Accolade 2	1,199
Origin Live Victory	750	B&W P5	875	Lumley L/M3.5	1,050
Pentachord B	519	B&W DM604	1,000	Magneplanar SMG-C SE	990
Pentachord Pentode	729	B&W P6	1,095	Magneplanar MG-0.6 SE	1,370
Polk RT12	600	B&W Matrix 805 V	1,095	Meridian Argent 1	995
Polk RT16	799	Bandor Trident	846	M&K S-125	1,150
Polk LS50	800	Bandor Mora	1,260	Mission 754f	1,298
Proac Tablette 50	599	Bandor Bandora	1,340	M-A Studio 12	1,000
Proac Studio 100	699	Bose A'mass AM7	900	M-A 705PMC	1,400
Promenade SP4	650	Bose 701	1,000	Mordaunt-Short Perf 820	1,495
QLN Classic One	800	Boston VR40	1,000	Mus Tec Condor	845
Quad 10L	600	Castle Harlech	849	Mus Tec Hawk	1,250
Rogers G59	579	Castle Howard S2	1,199	Mus Tec Eagle	1,500
Rogers LS3/5A	699	Celestion A1	899	Naim Credo	1,060
Rogers C6/25	799	Celestion A2	899	NHT VT-1.2	999
Roksan ROkone 1	595	Cerwin-Vega AL-1000	1,499	Opera Callas II	950
Roksan Ojan 3	795	Cerwin-Vega 1515	1,300	Opera Terza	999
Royd The Sorcerer	595	Chario Academy 1	1,300	Opera Callas Gold	1,050
Royd Abbot	665	Clements Reference 1	995	Opera Divina II	1,500
Ruark Templar II	599	Dali 850	1,100	Origin Live Sovereign	975
Ruark Sceptre	599	Def Tech BP8B	1,000	Pink Triangle Ventral	999
Ruark Talisman II	749	Def Tech BP10B	1,500	Polk LS70	1,200
Ruark Prologue One	799	Diapason Prelude II	875	Polk RT20p	1,500
SD Acoustics SD3R	649	Dynaudio Contour 1.1	879	Proac Tablette 50 SIG	899
Silverado Raider	695	Dynaudio Contour 1.3	1,198	Proac Response 1 SC	1,199
Sonus Faber Concertino	599	Electrocompaniet EC-Qube	1,195	Proac Studio 150	1,399
Spendor 2030	599	Electrocompaniet EC-Qube SE	1,495	Prof Monitor Co LB1	935
Spendor LS3/5A	630	Epos ES22	1,185	Prof Monitor Co AB1	1,496
Spendor SP3/1P	795	Gamma Epoch	1,499	QLN Signature	1,000
Tannoy Profile Plus 637	649	Harbeth HL-K6	1,049	QLN Signature HDII	1,200
Tannoy Profile Plus 638	649	Harbeth HL-Compact 7	1,499	QLN Prestige	1,500
Tannoy Definition D100	689	Harbeth BBC LS5/12A	1,499	QLN Sig. Splitfield	1,500
TDL T-Line 2	550	Heybrook Sextet	1,299	Rega XEL	1,040
TDL T-Line 3	750	Impulse Kora	1,250	RMS Revelation S 1	1,299
Totem Rokk	695	Jamo 707i	900	Rogers C6/28	1,399
Triangle Comete TZe	525	Jamo Concert 8	1,300	Roksan Ojan 3X	995
Triangle Lunn	550	JBL L40	1,000	Royd The Albion	1,270
Triangle Zephyr	799	JBL PS15	1,000	Ruark Broadsword II	899
W'date MFM7	650			Ruark Paladin	1,099

Shahinian Super Elf	875
Shahinian Compass	1,395
Sonus Faber Minuetto	898
Sonus Faber Concerto	1,098
Spendor 2040	899
Spendor SP2/3E	1,050
Spendor SP1/2E	1,390
Tannoy Definition D300	999
TDL Studio 1M	899
Technics SB-M1000	1,500
Totem Model One	1,195
Triangle Antal	1,099
Vandersteen 2Ce	1,395
Visonik LB1	935

£1501 to £3000

Acoustic Energy AE1 Sig	1,695
Acoustic Energy AE2 Sig	2,695
Ambience Mod 3.2	1,780
Apertura Tanagra	1,895
Apertura Tanagra Sig.	2,295
ATC SCM20	1,599
ATC SCM20 Tower	2,099
Audio Note AN-E/D	1,520
Audio Note AN-E/SPx	2,250
Audio Physic Spark 2	1,749
Audio Physic Tempo	1,999
Audiovector 5	2,500
Avalon Monitor	2,995
B&O Beolab 6000	1,550
B&O Beolab 8000	2,100
B&O Beolab Penta 3	2,650
B&W Matrix 804	1,695
B&W Matrix 803s2	2,495
B&W Matrix 802s3	2,995
Bose 901 VI	1,650
Boston Lynfield 300L	2,000
Bravura Virtuoso	2,995
Carver AL-111P	1,999
Cary SP-301	2,295
Celestion A3	2,399
Celestion Kingston	2,500
Chord LS5/12A	1,595
Chord CEL 201	2,130
Chord CEL 202	2,375
Chord CEL 301	2,840
Clements Reference 7	1,995
Credo SPB 003	1,820
Credo SPB 009	2,453
Dali Grand Coupe	2,500
Def Tech BP2002	2,400
Diapason Adamantes II	1,895
Dynaudio Contour 1.8	1,842
Dynaudio Craft	2,598
ECA Servo A.2	2,450
ELS Res'ch Vision	2,800
Epos ES25	1,655
Gamma Epoch Ref Five	2,999
Hales Revelation Three	2,200
Hales Concept Two	2,250
Harbeth HL-S8	1,999
Helius Syrius II	2,395
Helius Syrius I	2,850
Hi Q Sound SM108	2,000
Horning Aristophane	2,600
Impulse Lali	1,850
Jamo Concert 11	2,000
JBL L100	1,750
Jordan Watts JH2K	2,820
KEF Ref. Model Two	1,599
KEF Ref. Model Three	1,999
Linn Kaber Passive	2,000
Linn Kaber Aktiv	2,640
Lowther Fidelio	1,999
Lowther Academy	2,399
Lowther Bel Canto	2,699
Lumley L/M2 Mk3	2,995
Magneplanar MG-10 SE	1,650
Magneplanar MG-1.5 SE	1,780
Magneplanar MG-2.7 SE	2,650
Manticore Matisse	1,890
Martin-Logan Aeries i	2,299
Meridian M60	2,150
M-A Studio 20SE	2,200
Mordaunt-Short Perf 860	1,895
Mordaunt-Short Perf 880	2,795
Naim SBL Active	1,830
Naim SBL Passive	1,970
Neolith NEO 1	2,999
NHT VT-2	1,600
Opera Caruso II	2,350
Origin Live Conqueror	1,650
Pentagon Jubilee	1,995
Pentachord P'column	1,649
Polk LS90	1,700
Posselt Albatross	2,500
Proac Response 2S	2,000
Proac Studio 250	2,240
Proac Response 2.5	2,700
Prof Monitor Co LB1S	2,099
QLN Reference	2,000
QLN Reference HDII	2,500
Rehdeko RK115	1,700

Rogers LS5/9	⊕	⊕	1,549	ELS Res'ch Illusion MkII	⊕	⊕	9,000	Sound-Lab Ultimate III	⊕	⊕	18,950	Muse Model 22	⊕	⊕	1,890
Ruark Crusader II	⊕	⊕	1,599	Fase Evoluzione Aria	⊕	⊕	3,100	Sound-Lab Ultimate I	⊕	⊕	23,950	Muse Model 18	⊕	⊕	3,790
Ruark Equinox	⊕	⊕	1,849	Genesis 400	⊕	⊕	4,000	Spendor SP9/1	⊕	⊕	3,450	NHT Gravitas	⊕	⊕	1,095
Ruark Accolade	⊕	⊕	2,699	Genesis V	⊕	⊕	15,000	Tannoy Edinburgh TW	⊕	⊕	3,250	NEAT SW2Pi	⊕	⊕	609
SD Acoustics SD5	⊕	⊕	1,549	Genesis 300	⊕	⊕	27,500	Tannoy Definition D900	⊕	⊕	3,999	Polk PSW50	⊕	⊕	350
SD Acoustics SD1E	⊕	⊕	2,995	Hales Concept Three	⊕	⊕	4,350	Tannoy GRF Memory TW	⊕	⊕	4,000	Polk PSW150	⊕	⊕	500
Shahinian Arc	⊕	⊕	1,875	Hales Concept Five	⊕	⊕	6,350	Tannoy Westminster TW	⊕	⊕	6,600	Polk PSW300	⊕	⊕	750
Shahinian Obelisk	⊕	⊕	2,695	Horning Agathon	⊕	⊕	3,555	Tannoy Canterbury 15 TW	⊕	⊕	7,720	REL Q50	⊕	⊕	375
Silverado Silverado 1	⊕	⊕	1,995	Impulse Ta'us	⊕	⊕	3,100	Tannoy Westminster Royal	⊕	⊕	14,920	REL Q-100E	⊕	⊕	495
Sonus Faber Minima Amator	⊕	⊕	1,566	Infinity Sigma	⊕	⊕	5,995	TDL Ref Standard-m	⊕	⊕	4,999	REL Strata II	⊕	⊕	575
Sound-Lab Quantum	⊕	⊕	2,150	Infinity Epsilon	⊕	⊕	9,995	Triangle Nemo Altair	⊕	⊕	4,250	REL Storm	⊕	⊕	695
Spendor SP7/1	⊕	⊕	1,990	Jamo Oriel	⊕	⊕	7,000	Wilson Audio Cub	⊕	⊕	5,495	REL Stadium II	⊕	⊕	995
Spendor SP100	⊕	⊕	2,099	JBL S2600	⊕	⊕	3,500	Wilson Audio WATT 5	⊕	⊕	8,750	REL Stentor II	⊕	⊕	1,795
Tannoy Definition D500	⊕	⊕	1,999	JBL S3100	⊕	⊕	4,000	Wilson Audio WITT	⊕	⊕	8,888	REL Studio II	⊕	⊕	3,995
Tannoy Stirling TW	⊕	⊕	2,200	Jordan Watts JH5K	⊕	⊕	3,950	Wilson Benesch Actor	⊕	⊕	3,800	Revel Sub-15	⊕	⊕	2,195
Tannoy Definition D700	⊕	⊕	2,500	Jordan Watts JH10K	⊕	⊕	7,570	Wilson Benesch ACT1 sprkr	⊕	⊕	6,400	Revolver The Recoil	⊕	⊕	100
TDL Studio Monitor-m	⊕	⊕	2,449	KEF Ref. Model Four	⊕	⊕	3,299					R Allen Gold Sub	⊕	⊕	149
Totem Mann-2	⊕	⊕	2,795	Keswick Zero 2	⊕	⊕	7,000					R Allen Dim'n Active	⊕	⊕	499
Triangle Zays	⊕	⊕	1,750	Linn Keltik Aktiv	⊕	⊕	6,000					R Allen Magnum Action	⊕	⊕	699
Triangle Altinis	⊕	⊕	2,250	L Voice Air Scout	⊕	⊕	19,500					Rogers AB1	⊕	⊕	549
Triangle Extan	⊕	⊕	2,950	L Voice Air Partner S	⊕	⊕	37,200					Rogers Sub-bass	⊕	⊕	679
			<b>Over £3000</b>	Lowther Delphic	⊕	⊕	3,099					Roksan Ojan 3S	⊕	⊕	795
Acoustic Energy AE5	⊕	⊕	7,995	Lowther Opus One	⊕	⊕	4,999					Roksan Ojan 3S	⊕	⊕	795
Ambience Mod 5.0	⊕	⊕	9,550	Lumley L/M 2 Sig. Mk3	⊕	⊕	4,500					Sequence FW120	⊕	⊕	249
Apertura Athena	⊕	⊕	4,395	Magneplanar MG-3.5SE	⊕	⊕	3,800					Solid PB100	⊕	⊕	350
Apertura Atlante	⊕	⊕	6,995	Magneplanar MG-20 SE P	⊕	⊕	10,300					Sony SA-W101	⊕	⊕	230
ATC SCM20A	⊕	⊕	3,049	Magneplanar MG-20 SE A	⊕	⊕	11,000					Sunfire True Sub	⊕	⊕	1,600
ATC SCM50	⊕	⊕	3,750	Martin-Logan SL3	⊕	⊕	3,499					Tannoy 625ALFie	⊕	⊕	600
ATC SCM100	⊕	⊕	4,499	Martin-Logan CLS Ilz	⊕	⊕	4,555					TDL Nucleus SBR	⊕	⊕	200
ATC SCM50A	⊕	⊕	5,250	Martin-Logan CLS IIz	⊕	⊕	5,875					Triangle SATHI	⊕	⊕	650
ATC SCM100A	⊕	⊕	5,999	Martin-Logan Re-Quest	⊕	⊕	7,440					Velodyne VA-68XII	⊕	⊕	399
ATC SCM200A	⊕	⊕	12,999	Martin-Logan Monolith S	⊕	⊕	8,550					Velodyne VA-79XII	⊕	⊕	499
ATC SCM300A	⊕	⊕	14,999	Martin-Logan Monolith IHP	⊕	⊕	11,900					Velodyne VA-810XII	⊕	⊕	599
Audio Note AN-JSE Silver	⊕	⊕	7,900	Martin-Logan Monolith IIXPB	⊕	⊕	11,900					Velodyne VA-1012XII	⊕	⊕	700
Audio Note AN-ESE Silver	⊕	⊕	9,600	Meridian DSP5000	⊕	⊕	8,295					Velodyne VA-1215XII	⊕	⊕	999
Audio Physic Virgo 2	⊕	⊕	3,399	Meridian DSP5500	⊕	⊕	5,950					Velodyne FSR-12	⊕	⊕	1,099
Audio Physic Avanti 2	⊕	⊕	6,699	Meridian DSP6000	⊕	⊕	9,400					Velodyne FSR-15	⊕	⊕	1,299
Audio Physic Caldera	⊕	⊕	10,599	M-A Studio 50	⊕	⊕	4,000					Velodyne F-1800II	⊕	⊕	1,999
Audio Physic Medea	⊕	⊕	24,999	M-A Studio 60	⊕	⊕	6,000					W Dale Modus Sub Bass	⊕	⊕	180
Audiovector 6	⊕	⊕	4,600	Naim DBL Active	⊕	⊕	7,414					W Dale Modus Powered Sub	⊕	⊕	350
Avalon Avatar	⊕	⊕	4,495	Neolith NEO 2	⊕	⊕	3,499					Wilson Audio Puppy 5.1	⊕	⊕	8,450
Avalon Arcus	⊕	⊕	6,000	Neolith NEO 3	⊕	⊕	4,999					Wilson Audio Whow III	⊕	⊕	12,500
Avalon Eclipse	⊕	⊕	6,495	NHT Model 3.3	⊕	⊕	3,500					Yamaha YST-SW40	⊕	⊕	140
Avalon Radian	⊕	⊕	10,995	Paragon Regent	⊕	⊕	3,490					Yamaha YST-SW80	⊕	⊕	180
Avalon Osiris	⊕	⊕	72,000	Proac Response 3.5	⊕	⊕	4,250					Yamaha YST-SW150	⊕	⊕	280
B&W Matrix 801s3	⊕	⊕	3,995	Proac Response 4	⊕	⊕	12,000					Yamaha YST-SW300	⊕	⊕	350
B&W Silver Signature	⊕	⊕	5,500	Prof Monitor Co MB1P	⊕	⊕	4,370								
B&W Nautius	⊕	⊕	35,000	Prof Monitor Co BB5/P	⊕	⊕	6,270								
Bandor Bandoline	⊕	⊕	3,290	QLN Artec 1600	⊕	⊕	4,500								
Bandor Bandora/Mora	⊕	⊕	3,290	Quad ESL63	⊕	⊕	3,450								
Boston Lynfield 500L	⊕	⊕	4,449	Rehdeko RK125	⊕	⊕	3,200								
Bravura Virtuoso Silver	⊕	⊕	3,195	Rehdeko RK145	⊕	⊕	4,800								
Bravura Virtuoso Gold	⊕	⊕	3,395	Rehdeko RK175	⊕	⊕	8,800								
Bravura Accelerando	⊕	⊕	6,600	Revel Gem	⊕	⊕	5,295								
Chario Academy 3 Junior	⊕	⊕	6,000	Rockport Syzygy	⊕	⊕	15,000								
Chario Academy 3	⊕	⊕	9,000	Rockport Procyon	⊕	⊕	32,500								
Crede SPB 012	⊕	⊕	3,147	Shahinian Hawk	⊕	⊕	4,995								
Crede SDL 001	⊕	⊕	5,677	Shahinian Diapason	⊕	⊕	8,895								
Dali Grand	⊕	⊕	4,000	Shun Mook Bella Voce	⊕	⊕	5,500								
Def Tech BP2000	⊕	⊕	3,600	Sonus Faber Electa Amator	⊕	⊕	3,293								
Dynaudio Contour 2.8	⊕	⊕	3,198	Sonus Faber Extrema	⊕	⊕	6,500								
Dynaudio Contour 3.3	⊕	⊕	4,815	Sound-Lab Dynastat	⊕	⊕	3,790								
Dynaudio Confidence 3	⊕	⊕	4,846	Sound-Lab Aura	⊕	⊕	6,490								
Dynaudio Confidence 5	⊕	⊕	5,924	Sound-Lab Pristine III+	⊕	⊕	7,990								
Dynaudio Consequence	⊕	⊕	14,566	Sound-Lab Ultimate II	⊕	⊕	13,950								
ELS Res'ch Vista	⊕	⊕	3,900	Sound-Lab A-1	⊕	⊕	13,990								



**SUBWOOFERS**

**KEY**  
 ⊕ - active; includes a dedicated power amplifier.  
 THX - THX approved by Lucasfilm for use in Home THX installations.

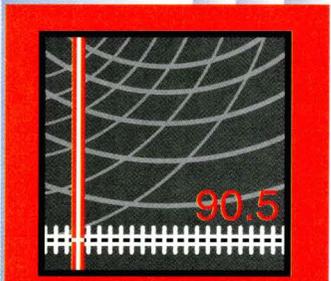
Aiwa TS-W9	⊕	⊕	170	Air Tangent IC	#	3,333
Allison Mini Ref Sub	⊕	⊕	210	Air Tangent 10B	#	7,777
AMC B1-20	⊕	⊕	350	Air Tangent Ref. Sig.	#	11,000
ATC SCM 0.1/15	⊕	⊕	2,750	Audio Note AN-ARM 1	⊕	169
Audio Physic Terra	⊕	⊕	3,499	Audio Note AN-0s	⊕	795
B&W AS6	⊕	⊕	500	Audio Note AN-1s	⊕	995
B&W Matrix 800ASW	⊕	⊕	1,500	Audiomeca SL5	#	2,500
B&W Matrix 800ASW	⊕	⊕	1,500	Clearaudio TQ-1 Improved	⊕	1,950
Boston CR400	⊕	⊕	300	Dynavector 507	⊕	1,995
Boston VR500	⊕	⊕	450	Graham 1.5 Basic	⊕	1,695
Boston VR2000	⊕	⊕	800	Graham Mk 2.0	⊕	2,650
Celestion CS135	⊕	⊕	139	Helius Orion 4 Copper	⊕	549
Celestion CSW MkII	⊕	⊕	329	Helius Cyalene 2	⊕	1,495
Celestion S11	⊕	⊕	349	Kuzma Stogi	⊕	750
Cerwin-Vega HT-10D	⊕	⊕	200	Kuzma Stogi Reference	⊕	1,250
Cerwin-Vega HT-12D	⊕	⊕	250	Linn Akito	⊕	500
Crede SDC 001	⊕	⊕	3,054	Linn Ekos	⊕	1,500
GLL LE Bass	⊕	⊕	350	Manticore Musician II	⊕	595
Hales Concept Zero	⊕	⊕	2,950	Manticore Magician II	⊕	895
H/K Citation 7.4	⊕	⊕	875	Manticore Magician 12	⊕	995
Infinity SSW-10	⊕	⊕	500	Moth Mk I	⊕	109
Jamo 860SW	⊕	⊕	110	Moth MKIII Stainless	⊕	146
Jamo SW303E	⊕	⊕	220	Moth Mk III Tungsten	⊕	174
Jamo SW400E	⊕	⊕	330	Moth Moth 900	⊕	598
Jamo SW505E	⊕	⊕	400	Naim ARO	⊕	1,040
Jamo Sub One	⊕	⊕	400	N'h'am Space	⊕	450
Jamo SW600e	⊕	⊕	530	N'h'am Paragon 3	#	550
JBL CM6	⊕	⊕	200	N'h'am Paragon 2	#	800
JBL PSW800	⊕	⊕	275	N'h'am Mentor	⊕	800
JBL Sub 10	⊕	⊕	300	N'h'am Foot	⊕	1,100
JBL PSW1000	⊕	⊕	325	N'h'am Paragon 1	#	1,600
JBL PSW1200	⊕	⊕	375	Rega RB250	⊕	109
JPW Subwoofer	⊕					



Acoustic Precision Eikos CD player — £1,800 worth of digital dreadnought.

SME 3009 Ser II Imp	309
SME 3009 S2 Ser II Imp	338
SME Series II 3009-R	514
SME Series II 3010-R	526
SME Series II 3012-R	565
<b>SME 309</b>	<b>668</b>
SME 310	705
SME 312	802
<b>SME Series IV</b>	<b>983</b>
<b>SME Series V</b>	<b>1,461</b>
Wheaton Music Tri-Planar 4i	3,000
Wheaton Music Tri-Planar 5i	3,250
Wilson Benesch ACT1 Std	950
Wilson Benesch ACT2	1,350
Zeta AS	469
Zeta VDH	549

<b>Denon TU-425RD</b>	<b>P40</b>	<b>RDS</b>	<b>200</b>
H/K TU930	P30		150
<b>H/K TU950</b>	<b>P30</b>	<b>RDS</b>	<b>200</b>
Kenwood KT-2080	P20		130
Kenwood KT-3080	P30		180
Linn Kudos	P50		775
<b>Linn Kremlin</b>	<b>P80</b>		<b>2,600</b>
Magnum Dynalab FT11			550
<b>Magnum Dynalab FT-101A</b>			<b>825</b>
Magnum Dynalab Etude			1,250
Magnum Dynalab 108			4,500
Marantz ST-57	P59	<b>RDS</b>	150
Marantz ST-65	P59	<b>RDS</b>	200
Marantz ST-17	P60	<b>RDS</b>	600
Meridian 504	P30		695
<b>Meridian 604</b>	<b>P30</b>		<b>1,350</b>
Michi RHT-10	P16		895
Micromega Minium FM MK2	P39		329
<b>Micromega Tuner</b>	<b>P39</b>		<b>750</b>
Mission Cyrus FM7	P29		400
Musical Fidelity E50	P20		300
NAD 412	P24		190
NAD 414RDS	P24	<b>RDS</b>	250
NAD 710	P20		270
NAD 712	P24		330
Naim NATO3			595
Naim NATO2			1,080
<b>Naim NATO1</b>			<b>1,730</b>
Onkyo T 4210RDS	P30	<b>RDS</b>	180
Onkyo T 409	P30		230
Onkyo T 411RDS	P30	<b>RDS</b>	260
Pioneer F-204RDS	P30	<b>RDS</b>	140
Pioneer F-304RDS	P40	<b>RDS</b>	190
<b>Pioneer F-504RDS</b>	<b>P40</b>	<b>RDS</b>	<b>250</b>
Quad 77FM	P25		700
Rega Radio	P24		229
Roksan Caspian	P50		495
<b>Rotel RT-935AX</b>	<b>P20</b>		<b>160</b>
Rotel RT-990BX	P16		500
Sony ST-SE200	P30		100
Sony ST-SE300	P30	<b>RDS</b>	120
Sony ST-SE500	P30	<b>RDS</b>	140
Sony ST-SE700	P30	<b>RDS</b>	180
<b>Sony ST-SA3ES</b>	<b>P30</b>	<b>RDS</b>	<b>250</b>
TEAC T-R400	P20		120
TEAC T-H500	P30	<b>RDS</b>	170
TEAC TB-X10	P20	<b>RDS</b>	400
<b>Technics ST-GT350L</b>	<b>P30</b>	<b>RDS</b>	<b>150</b>
Technics ST-GT550L	P39	<b>RDS</b>	200
Technics ST-GT650L	P39	<b>RDS</b>	250
<b>Thorens TR1-2000</b>	<b>P59</b>	<b>RDS</b>	<b>499</b>
Yamaha TX-480L	P40		100
Yamaha TX-492RDS	P40	<b>RDS</b>	130
Yamaha TX-590RDS	P40	<b>RDS</b>	180



**TUNERS**

**KEY**

'P20' - (etc.) number of presets.

**RDS** - Radio Data System; receives text information on station, programme type etc.

<b>AMC T7</b>	<b>P30</b>	<b>130</b>	
Arcam Alpha 7	P24	230	
Arcam Alpha 8	P24	280	
Arcam Delta 200	<b>P20</b>	<b>399</b>	
<b>Audiolab 8000T</b>	<b>P39</b>	<b>800</b>	
Aura TU80	P30	350	
AVI S2000MT	P16	599	
AVI S2000MT2	P60	799	
Carver TX-8R	P20	469	
Creek T43	P68	399	
Day Sequerra FM Ref		5,937	
Day Sequerra S B'dcast Mon		14,640	
<b>Denon TU-260L</b>	<b>P20</b>	<b>120</b>	
Denon TU-215RD	P40	<b>RDS</b>	150



**TURNTABLES**

**KEY**

⊙ arm included.

⊙ cartridge included.

**Up to £500**

Audio Note AN-TT 1	349
Dual CS435-1	150
Dual CS455	190
<b>Dual 505-4 UK</b>	<b>250</b>
Eclipse TT430	70
Genexxa Lab-710	60
Genexxa Lab-810	70
Kenwood KD-492F	100
Michell Mycro	435
Moth Alamo	199
Moth Kanoot Mk1 Arm	279
<b>Moth Kanoot Mk3 Arm</b>	<b>329</b>
NAD 533	220
N'h'am Interspace	500
Pioneer PL-J2500-C	80
Pioneer PL-990	130
Pro-Ject 0.5/OM10	160
Pro-Ject 1/510	200
<b>Pro-Ject 2/520</b>	<b>300</b>
Pro-Ject 6/MC15	450
Rega Planar 78	214
<b>Rega Planar 2</b>	<b>214</b>
Rega Planar 3	274
<b>Roksan Radius</b>	<b>470</b>
Sherwood PM8550	130
Sony PS-LX150H	90
Sony PS-LX300H	150
Systemdek I/920	136
<b>Systemdek IIX/900</b>	<b>230</b>
Systemdek I/920/Moth	235
Systemdek IIXE/900Ap	388
Systemdek 960	500
<b>Systemdek 2X2</b>	<b>500</b>
Technics SL-J1100	120
Technics SL-BD20	160
Technics SL-BD22	180

Technics SL-1210MKII	⊙	400
Technics SL-1200MKII	⊙	400
Thorens TD-180 AT91	⊙	190
Thorens TD-280 IV/UK	⊙	210
<b>Thorens TD-166 VI/UK/RB</b>	<b>⊙</b>	<b>400</b>
Thorens TD-318 III TP50	⊙	500
<b>Over £500</b>		
Audio Note AN-TT 2		995
Audio Note AN-TT 3		1,995
Audiomeca Romance	⊙	1,895
Audiomeca J1		3,500
Basis 2001		2,750
Basis Ovation II		4,800
Basis Debut Gold Std III		7,200
Basis Debut Gold Vacuum		9,250
Chantry QT Level 2	⊙	705
Clearaudio Evolution	⊙	1,790
<b>Clearaudio Reference</b>	<b>⊙</b>	<b>4,500</b>
DNM-Reson Rota 1	⊙	3,900
<b>DNM-Reson Rota 2</b>	<b>⊙</b>	<b>5,600</b>
Impulse Moskito	⊙	695
<b>Kuzma Stabi</b>	<b>⊙</b>	<b>1,950</b>
Kuzma Stabi Reference		3,750
Linn LP12 Basik		1,100
Linn LP12 Lingo		1,750
Manticore Mantra 97		595
Manticore Mantra		895
Manticore Magister		4,400
Marantz TT-1000		6,000
<b>Michell Gyrodek</b>	<b>⊙</b>	<b>825</b>
Michell Orbe		1,950
<b>N'h'am Spacedeck</b>	<b>⊙</b>	<b>750</b>
N'h'am Graphic		1,200
N'h'am HyperSpacedeck		1,500
N'h'am Mentor		2,600
N'h'am Anna Log		5,500
Oracle Paris		1,100
Oracle Delphi		3,370
Oracle Delphi 15th Anniv		3,800
Pink Triangle Tarantella		579
<b>Pink Triangle Anniversary</b>	<b>⊙</b>	<b>2,500</b>
Pro-Ject 6/Sumiko	⊙	850
Rega Planar 9	⊙	1,598
<b>Reson RS1M</b>	<b>⊙</b>	<b>600</b>
Reson Rota 1	⊙	3,900
Rockport Capella II		7,000
Rockport Sirius III	⊙	50,000
<b>Roksan Xerxes 10</b>	<b>⊙</b>	<b>1,295</b>
Roksan TMS		2,750
SME Model 20/2		3,403
<b>SME Model 20/2A</b>	<b>⊙</b>	<b>4,836</b>
SME Model 30/2		10,675
SME Model 30/2A	⊙	12,135
Stratosphere ST1		6,500
Technics SL-1200LTD	⊙	700
Thorens TD-146 VI TP50	⊙	550
<b>Thorens TD-2001 TP90</b>	<b>⊙</b>	<b>700</b>
Thorens TD-520 SME		1,050
<b>Well Tempered Record Player</b>	<b>⊙</b>	<b>1,850</b>
Well Tempered Classic	⊙	2,980
Well Tempered Super	⊙	3,900
Well Tempered Reference	⊙	5,300
Wilson Benesch WB Turntable	⊙	1,775

**Remember that all entries printed in RED refer to hi-fi products that we have reviewed. Turn to page 122 for a full summary of test results!**



# for the midlands AWARD winning PRODUCTS...



**BEST BUY...CD.** Arcam Alpha...**AMPLIFIER.** Marantz PM-66 K1 Signature...**RECORDER.** Sony MDS -JE510 Minidisc...**TUNER** Sony ST-500...**HOME CINEMA SOURCE.** Panasonic NV -H0625B...**AV STARTER PACKAGE.** JBL Simply Cinema ESC200...**AMPLIFIER.** Yamaha DSP -i92...**PROCESSOR** Yamaha DSP - E492...**LOUDSPEAKERS.** REL Q100E Subwoofer...**SPEAKER PACKAGES.** Mission AV21...**SPEAKER CABLING.** Cable Talk 3.1...

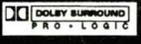
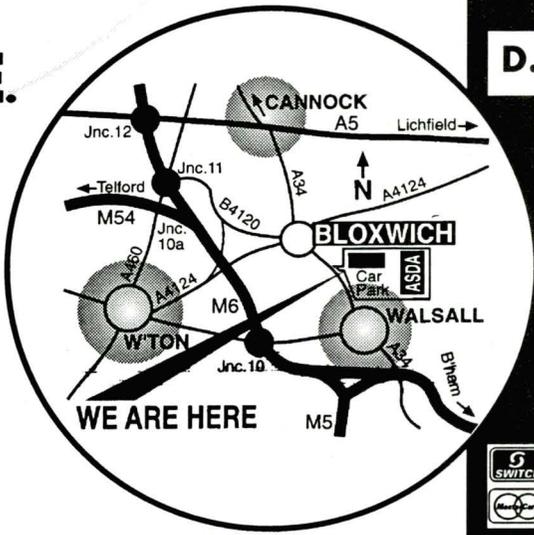
# AWARD winning SERVICE...



**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED...CD** Sony CDP - XE310 • Marantz CD - 48 • Marantz CD - 63 MkII K1-s • Audiolab MOCDD...**AMPLIFIER.** Rotel RA - 931 Sony TA - F248E • Talk Electrics Hurricane 4L/Wirlwind/Tornado 4s...**LOUDSPEAKERS** Tannoy Mercury 2 • Tannoy Mercury M3 • KEF Q35 • EPOS ES30...**RECORDER.** Yamaha KX - 5805E cassette • Pioneer CT-W806DA twin cassette...**TUNER.** Yamaha TX-10L • Arcam Alpha 7 • Audiolab 8000T...**ONE MAKE SYSTEM.** Marantz CD - 48/PM-57/Tannoy Mercury M2 Linn Mimik/Majik/Tukan...**AV SOURCE.** Pioneer CLD - D925.AV STARTER PACKAGES. JBL Simply Cinema ESC -300...**AV AMPLIFIER.** Arcam AV50...**AV PROCESSOR.** Meridian 565 7.1...**AV LOUDSPEAKERS.** KEF 80C • Yamaha NS - E105 • B&W D56 • M&K V- 125THX...**AV SPEAKER PACKAGES.** JBL Q-Series Package • Definitive Technology Package...**AV SPEAKER CABLE.** IXOS Gamma 6003 • Nordost Flatline Gold • Audioquest Indigo +...**AV INTERCONNECTS.** Chord Company Chrysalis • Cable Talk Monitor 2.1 • Audioquest Tapaz II... **AV ACCESSORIES & ESSENTIALS.** Creek DBH - headphone amp • Atacama SE24 speaker stands • Sound Organisation Z580 • Equipment rack.

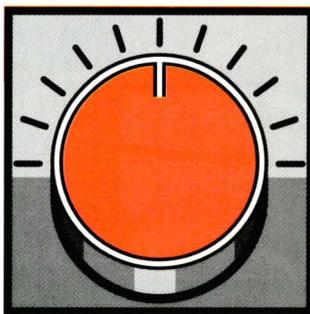
# AWARD winning VALUE.

**12 MONTHS INTEREST FREE CREDIT**  
from September 1st - end November  
Available on all products above and other selected items.  
Written Quotations available on request. Subject to status



# 01922 493499/473499

sound academy...152a high street...Bloxwich...West Midlands...01922 493499...473499...van den hul...yamaha...



# Amplifiers

Brought to you in association with **audio research**  
HIGH DEFINITION™

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 become separated into preamps 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 available have outputs as low as 12 Watts, but team them with high-efficiency loudspeakers and you can achieve loudness aplenty. Power output is equally no indication of sound quality.

**Best buy**

**Recommended**

KEY	MC PHONO INPUT:	POWER OUTPUT (W):	information page.
LINE INPUTS: Amount of input sockets for non-vinyl sources such as CD players, tuners and cassette decks.	If an amp has a vinyl phono input for moving coil (low output) cartridges.	Lab tested power output in Watts per channel.	
MM PHONO INPUT: If an amp has a vinyl phono input for moving magnet (normal output) cartridges.	RECEIVER: If an amp has a built in radio tuner.	RECEIVER: If an amp has a built in radio tuner.	ISSUE NUMBER: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.
	HEADPHONE SOCKET: If an amp is can friendly.	FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback	

## INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS

Product	Price (£)	Comments	LINE INPUTS	MM PHONO INPUT	MC PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER	RECEIVER
Alchemist Maxim	319	Vivid and colourful sounding amp that's just too bold and brassy	5	●				30	1737	154	
Alchemist Nemesis	700	Good if ultimately undistinguished amplifier whose strengths include warmth, authority and distinctive aesthetics	6					80		168	
AMC 3025a	130	Surprisingly potent and easy on the ear, if not especially analytical. Classic bargain basement material in fact.	4	●	●	●	●	30		171	
AMC 3050a	170	Tremendous value for money, and a full, big, if rather uninformative sound	4	●	●	●	●	45		167	
AMC CVT3030a	400	Beer-budget valve amp, with quintessentially valve-like virtues (euphony with dynamics) and vices (system dependency, noise)	6	●			●	30		168	
Arcam Alpha 7	250	Decent, if slightly system-fussy amplifier that generally pulls all the right strings	5	●			●	40		167	
Arcam Alpha 8	350	Enjoyably soft-centred amp, won't frighten the animals. Upgradeable via preamp output, and R/C (not supplied)	5	●			●	50	1853	162	
Arcam Alpha 9	500	Not quite as much a star as the Alpha 9/9P combo, the solo integrated is nevertheless colourful and explicitly detailed	7			●	●	70		168	
Audio Innovations Alto	300	Probably because of a lack of deep bass, this stylish amp sounds open, natural and relaxed	6					35	1540	138	
Audio Note Ongaku	56,000	A single-ended, zero negative feedback triode, line-level amplifier and a half. Probably the best amplifier in the world	3					26		C91	
Audio Note Oto SE	1,200	Transparent, dynamic, clear and subtle, but limited power	4					24		126	
Audiolab 8000A	550	The 8000A remains a highly disciplined and mature-sounding amp	5	●	●		●	60	1581	140	
Audiolab 8000S	750	Informative in every sense, only a slight lack of bite detracts. Perhaps Audiolab's best yet!	6			●	●	60	1740	154	
Aura VA100 II	350	Big and smooth, yet slightly disjointed sound was equally familiar	5	●			●	70	1541	138	
Cambridge Audio A3i	200	Maximum information design, with plenty of usable and reasonably refined power. A snip	4	●				60		167	
Copland CSA8	945	Sophisticated yet transparent, this is one of those amplifiers that sounds good even when the gloss has worn off	5					60		168	
Copland CSA14	1,199	Great sound and looks, but watch out for high capacitance cables	4	●				60	1416	148	
Creek 4330	279	Compact, even pretty, but sounds dark and uninviting, with coarse treble and woomy bass	5					40		171	
Denon PMA-250SE	160	This amp can sound rough when extended, but within its limits it is open, detailed and likeable	5				●	30		171	
Denon PMA-350SE	200	Reinvented in the minimalist tradition, the new SE model is a control freak, but can sound wonderful	5				●	50	1856	162	
Denon PMA-425R	230	Well-equipped and generally enjoyable but slightly ragged performer. You can do better	3	●			●	45		167	
Denon PMA-725R	350	Warm, bold, up-front presentation, but musically unexciting	5	●	●	●	●	97	1802	157	
Densen Beat B-100	600	Low feedback amp with passive internal preamp gives a bold, pacey and thoroughly involving sound. Phono option listed	5					60	1855	162	
DPA Renaissance	595	DPA's first integrated amp is typically innovative, but a little too 'crisp 'n dry' for our tastes	5	●			●	40	1582	140	
EMF Audio Sequel	450	Relaxed and restrained design from Mike Creek	5	●			●	50		109	
Exposure XX Super	700	Rather transistorised, unexciting sound. Good coherence and rhythm. Best played loud	6					55	1743	154	
Gamma Acoustics Gemini	699	Genuine single-ended triode design, but low power, mundane sound and poor build	3					12	1416	148	
Harman/Kardon HK610	180	Lively and friendly sound, but could prove too exciting for the faint hearted	6	●			●	30	1465	149	
Harman/Kardon HK620	250	Capable and musical amplifier which is among the nicest available at the price. Optional add-in MM/MC board available	6				●	40	1858	162	
Harman/Kardon HK640	400	Breezy, nimble sounding amp, lacks grip and fortitude – it can sound artificial and insubstantial	6				●	55	1542	138	
Jolida 202	695	Well-built and technically accomplished, affordable valve integrated with subtle and refined, if not quite gripping sonic performance	4					40		168	
JVC AX-V4	200	Respectable performance for a Pro-Logic AV amplifier. Lacks resolution and sparkle, though	5	●			●	63	1805	157	
JVC AX-R5	200	Versatile, and lots of even-handed, articulate detail; but let down by superficiality	5	●			●	45	1466	149	
Kenwood KA-3020SE	200	Not a brilliant phono stage, but this is a lively, exuberant sounding amp via CD	5	●			●	50	1130	134	
Kenwood KA-5090R	300	Large, well equipped and high tech integrated, but TRAITR output still gives a harsh, unsubtle performance	5	●	●	●	●	65		171	
Krell Digital KAV-300i	2,550	EISA Award winner with balanced inputs and AV friendly outlook, sound is confident and three-dimensional (Statements)	5					150	1825	160	
LFD Integrated Zero	549	Lively and brisk, but at the same time cold and unsympathetic	6					50	1584	140	
Linn Majik (Phono)	800	The cornerstone of Linn's modular hi-fi system is innovative, but sounds vague and confused	5	●	●		●	33	1013	129	
Magnum IA120	265	Mirror finish amplifier with a bold, colourful delivery, but needs careful system matching to avoid loss of focus and clarity	6				●	65		171	
Magnum IA170	330	Gives a realistic sense of instruments playing within a very believable acoustic, preserves colour and dynamics well	6				●	96	1260	142	
Magnum IA-200	495	Sweet, valve-flavoured solid state amplifier flatters where it doesn't cast light. Note: power output listed is peak	7					100	1860	162	
Magnum Class A	690	Lashings of rich and compelling music, but the Class A trades lushness for accuracy	4	●	●			60		116	
Marantz PM-57	200	Well equipped but ultimately anodyne amplifier which lacks for nothing but star quality	5	●			●	50		171	
Marantz PM-66SE	230	A bit lush, and power output is limited, but it communicates well and gives airy, large-scale music. An excellent budget buy	5	●			●	50		167	
Marantz PM66 Ki-Signature	400	An amplifier that knows how to rock and roll with holographic detail and stereo, but prefers small/medium scale acoustic material	5	●			●	50		168	
Micromega Minium Amp	350	Excellent musical performance but doesn't like high levels or low impedance speakers	6	●			●	40	1806	157	
Mission Cyrus IIIi	500	Beautifully presented, but mid-dominated balance and other anomalies were not liked. Upgradeable using PSX unit PSU	6	●			●	50	1854	162	
Mission Cyrus SL	398	Sharp, articulate amplifier, and superb, outgoing midband with lean though well-extended bass – and build quality to die for	6					50		168	
Musical Fidelity A2	499	Lucid, transparent midband and a full upper bass are provided by this highly proficient A1 replacement	5	●				25	1862	162	
Musical Fidelity A220	700	Powerful, authoritative and well turned-out amplifier that is easy to match with comparably priced speakers and source components.	5	●				50		168	
Musical Fidelity E1	199	Vivid, richly flavoured tonality and realistically scaled imagery distinguish this new entry level Richer Sounds special	6					30		171	
Myryad MI 120	530	Despite an ultra-modern appearance, the old-fashioned cold, dry transistor sound	5				●	60	1747	154	
NAD 310	100	Fleet and sure of foot, it seems likely to set all appendages tapping with its blend of enthusiasm and artfulness	5					20	1468	149	
NAD 312	200	Another great budget price NAD, and a worthy all-round successor to the 302	6	●			●	25		171	
NAD 314	260	Lively if coloured presentation that is musically engaging and easy on the ear	6	●			●	53	1807	157	

# INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS

MM PHONO INPUT  
MC PHONO INPUT  
HEADPHONE CONTROL  
POWER OUTPUT (W)  
FACTSBACK NUMBER  
ISSUE NUMBER

Product	Price(£)	Comments	MM PHONO INPUT	MC PHONO INPUT	HEADPHONE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>Naim Nait 3</b>	575	Distinctive and highly musical sounding integrated amp. Perhaps too distinctive for some tastes	5				30	1748 154
<b>Orelle SA-100</b>	449	A musically rewarding amplifier that grows on you. Trace of coarseness in treble	5				50	1749 154
<b>Pioneer A-204R</b>	160	The A-204R makes no special claims beyond being well equipped and cheap, but it displayed unexpected talent on test	5	●	●	●	25	171
<b>Pioneer A-300R</b>	200	Its bright and breezy sound is a natural tonic to those of us worn down by the ongoing stress of life	5	●	●	●	50	1469 149
<b>Pioneer A-400X</b>	300	On second audition, this amp was tonally unchanged but less compelling	6	●	●	●	50	1545 138
<b>Pioneer A-300R Precision</b>	400	Sophisticated, breathed-on variant of the A-300R. Not an obvious winner, but will slowly win you over with its subtle charms	5	●	●	●	35	1863 162
<b>Pioneer A-605R</b>	400	Intriguing technology, but execution is certainly impeded by excessive gadget count	5	●	●	●	80	168
<b>Prime Design A-100</b>	650	Dynamic but somewhat aggressive powerhouse with limited stereo interest (either MM or MC phono)	4	●	●		100	168
<b>Pro-ject Model 7</b>	300	A minimalist amplifier brimming with good intent, but too quirky for its own good. Either MM or MC	5	●			40	1264 142
<b>Quad 77 Integrated</b>	700	Compact and sophisticated Quad system amp, limited range of inputs when used with 'foreign' components (optional system remote)	3				84	168
<b>Rega Elex</b>	398	Minimalist amplifier derived from Elicit, is a little uninspiring, though at least it is not badly behaved	4	●			50	1865 162
<b>Roksan Caspian</b>	695	Well-built, open and articulate amplifier, which is also consistent from system to system, and well built	6	●	●	●	70	168
<b>Rose Scion</b>	615	Unique two-box integrated gives real subtlety and low level resolution, but the sound lacks scale and weight	5	●	●		65	168
<b>Rotel RA-931</b>	150	Rather dry and unforgiving sound from this internally well specified and attractively priced amplifier	4	●		●	35	171
<b>Rotel RA970BX</b>	250	Lively, fresh and perky with plenty of power, but not so clever with complex recordings	6			●	60	1546 138
<b>Sony TA-F246E</b>	200	Relaxed quality that seduces with its guile and subtlety, MM input is a bit laconic but CD is very tidy and composed	3	●		●	40	1471 149
<b>Sony TA-F448BE</b>	250	Classic minimalist interface is matched to carefully considered circuit to broadly satisfactory effect - but keep the volume in check	5	●		●	55	171
<b>Talk Electronics Storm 1</b>	500	Good soundstaging and strong detail are provided by this unassuming and not especially powerful model	6				50	1868 162
<b>TEAC A-BX7R</b>	700	Characterful balance mars an otherwise meticulously designed amplifier. Includes a balanced input, optional MM/MC stage	5			●	50	1869 162
<b>Technics SU-A700 Mk 3</b>	250	Fully equipped, high-tech amplifier ultimately fails the 'is it Stork...?' test, and can sound messy and inarticulate	5	●		●	45	1870 162
<b>Woodside ISA230 Disc</b>	1,249	Smooth and inoffensive valve amplifier, though it lacks the sparkle and euphony required for a truly entertaining sound	3	●			30	116
<b>Yamaha AX-592</b>	280	Fine, middle ranking amplifier, with a detailed, dynamic midband, and some performance falloff at the frequency extremes	5	●	●	●	100	171
<b>Preamplifiers</b>								
<b>Acurus RL11</b>	899	Well-featured US preamp with plenty of grunt and depth when used with the A150 power amp (Sessions)	6			●		1624 151
<b>AMC CVT1030A</b>	400	Budget valve preamp, modest build and a bit noisy, with fair sound	6	●		●		165
<b>Audio Innovations L1</b>	369	Reviewed with S800 Anniversary - explicitly detailed, conveys the message of the music as a whole	4					1300 145
<b>Audiolab 8000C</b>	550	Distinctive, stark neutrality that will not appeal to all. Good value engineering	5	●	●	●		97
<b>Audiolab 8000Q</b>	1,100	Tested with 8000M monoblocks	6			●		1301 145
<b>Aura CA200</b>	700	Flexible, well designed - can sound slightly aggressive, but it's fast, clean and dynamic, and makes compelling listening	10	●	●	●	●	165
<b>Conrad-Johnson PV-10A</b>	1,295	Beautiful imaging, superb detail, plenty of gain on the phono input; classy build too. Tested in Sessions	4		●			1560 139
<b>Copland CTA-301MkII</b>	1,399	Sweet sounding - but never gets bogged down in audio treacle	4	●				1630 151
<b>Cyrus Pre</b>	650	Tested with Cyrus Power. High-tech design, punchy, light-footed character with a sense of substance and natural warmth	5	●		●		155
<b>Densen DM-20</b>	1,200	Stylish Danish preamp with a pair of huge knobs and effortless resolution and a slightly dark balance (Statements)	6					164
<b>EAR 802MC</b>	2,599	Tested with 509 Mk II - see comments in power amp section	4	●	●			63
<b>ECA Vista</b>	760	Wind up the volume and blow a breath of fresh music into your system (tested with Lectern)	5					1302 145
<b>Exposure XVII</b>	849	Superbly rhythmic; maybe a bit overpowering in the midband. Tested in Sessions with XVIII Super	5	●	●			142
<b>Jadis JP-30MC</b>	5,978	French tubes, JP-30MC has beautiful build, nostalgic styling and delightful midrange. (tested with JA30)	5	●				60
<b>LFD Mistral Linestage</b>	499	Strong ergonomics, generally decent sound, but a little lacking in detail	6					165
<b>Meridian 501</b>	695	Tight, positive sound, but dispassionate, intense at high levels. Tested with 555	5	●		●		1303 145
<b>Meridian 562V</b>	995	Transparent and capable preamp, also features six digital inputs	9	●		●		140
<b>Meridian 502</b>	1,295	Extremely sophisticated analogue controller with tremendous flexibility and a fast and tidy presentation (Statements)	7			●		162
<b>Moth 30 Passive</b>	149	Modular system gives cracking results. Passive preamp and power amp warrant Best Buy (tested with 30/Stereo 60)	4					109
<b>Moth 30 Active Line Stage</b>	349	Excellent sounding ultra-simple miniature preamp	4					165
<b>Muse Model Three</b>	1,990	Natural sounding tranny preamp with useful audiophile features. Works beautifully with 160 power amp (tested in Statements)	5			●		166
<b>Musical Fidelity F2</b>	500	Subtle, sweet-sounding preamp with strong presence	5	●	●			165
<b>NAD 114</b>	270	Beer-budget preamp, sounds focused, detailed and consistent	6	●	●		●	165
<b>Naim NAC92R</b>	599	Upgradeable preamp uses proprietary socketry, etc. See NAP90 power amp for comments	5			●		165
<b>Quad 77 Pre</b>	850	Sophisticated design with 2-way remote control console; open colourful sound and very flexible	4	●	●	●		165
<b>Rega Hal</b>	998	Dedicated to Exon power amps - passive line stages	6	●	●	●		165
<b>Rose RV-23</b>	450	You can pay more to get a more transparent sound, but it's hard to criticise at the price	3	●				77
<b>Rotel RC970BX MkII</b>	175	Confident, consistent sound. reviewed (in Sessions) with RB970BXMKII power amps	5			●		144
<b>Sumo Athena IIB</b>	767	Tested with Polaris III. Big, natural and tidy-sounding with very natural reproduction of acoustic and electric instruments	6					1305 145
<b>Talk Hurricane 2L</b>	649	Design of integrity which gets to the heart, if not the soul, of the music	6					165
<b>Thorens TTP2000F</b>	699	Glamorous, shoebox-format, minimalist pre with fine detail and some granularity	3	●	●	●		165
<b>Woodside SC26 Phono</b>	2,233	Synergistic with STA35, with a cool, controlled sound, good focus and transparency (tested with STA35)	5	●	●			100
<b>Power amplifiers</b>								
<b>Acurus A150</b>	899	Tested with RL11 preamp. Powerful remote-control US combo with a slightly forward inclination	1				150	1624 151
<b>Alchemist Kraken/Pwr</b>	529	Hardly accurate, but entertaining nevertheless	1				60	124
<b>AMC CVT2100A</b>	600	Astonishing value valve/MOSFET hybrid with KT88 output, but lacks the magic of the best valves	1				80	165
<b>Arcam Alpha 9P</b>	400	Clear, colourful and well-disciplined, the Arcam is a strong all-rounder that can compete with conviction	1					165
<b>Art Audio Quintet</b>	1,393	Switchable triode, ultralinear output stage. In triode mode, these are 15 of the sweetest Watts around. Surprisingly gutsy	1				15	109
<b>Aura PA100</b>	700	Can sound slightly aggressive, but it's fast, clean and dynamic, and makes compelling listening	1				100	165
<b>Audiolab 8000M</b>	800	Strong, controlled sound; confident bass, but colourless. Tested with 8000Q	1				125	1301 145
<b>Audio Research VT60</b>	2,395	Ranks as 'must try' American cultural item (tested in Statements). Tube design	1				35	1179 136
<b>Copland CTA-505</b>	2,099	Grown-up amplifier with a refined, yet never over-civilised air	1				67	1630 151
<b>Cyrus Power</b>	498	Tested with Cyrus Pre. Punchy, light footed character with a sense of substance and natural warmth (bridgeable)	1				50	155
<b>Densen DM-30</b>	1,200	Fluid, valve-like power amp with effortless resolution and a slightly dark balance (Statements)	2				100	164
<b>EAR 509 Mk II</b>	3,699	Combining sonic strengths of transistors and valves, this amp warrants attention (tested with 802)	1				100	63
<b>ECA Lectern</b>	880	Tested with Vista. Wind up the volume and blow a breath of fresh music into your system	1				50	1302 145
<b>Exposure XVIII Super</b>	849	Slight dullness and hardness, but great 'boogie factor'	1				70	142
<b>Jadis JA-30</b>	5,980	French tubes, JP-30MC has beautiful build, nostalgic styling and delightful midrange (tested with £5,978 JP30)	1				30	60
<b>LFD Mistral Power</b>	449	Infectious upper band vitality, but LF dynamics lacking, and lacks 'grip' and transparency	1				60	165



CABLES (CONTINUED)

SYMMETRICAL COAXIAL STRANDED SOLID CORE COPPER SILVER  
FACTSBACK NUMBER  
DIG CABLE TYPE  
ISSUE NUMBER

Product	Price(£)	Comments	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	FACTSBACK NUMBER	DIG CABLE TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
LFD Spirolink II	70	Price for 0.7m length. Strong and confident sound enhancing bass depth and subtlety, concentrates on the meat of the music	●				●	●			1694 131
LFD Trilink	150	Price for 0.7m length. Warm and luxurious sound but a little too fruity in balance, treble is a little subdued, bass detached	●				●	●			1695 131
Linn Phono to Phono	47	Encourages a delicate performance underpinned by a strong and authoritative bass			●						1695 131
Monster Interlink 200	20	Colourful in an appealing rather than contrived sense, bass is slightly over-blown, large and ingratiating sound stage	●				●	●			1696 131
Monster Interlink 300	30	Richer, smoother more civilised sound than 200 with improved articulation and reduced sibilance	●				●	●			1696 131
Monster Interlink 400	40	Compromised by a grainy top end, treble and vocal range sound particularly sharp and untidy	●				●	●			1697 131
Monster Interlink 500	50	Sounds rather good, providing a livelier and more interesting account of music than most sub £100 cables	●				●	●			108
Monster Interlink 800	80	Not as bright or aggressive as the 400 but treble is strangely lumpy, muted and manipulated - odd cable	●				●	●			1697 131
Monster Interlink Reference 2	100	Easy on the ear but rather contrived, slightly clanky treble fails to integrate with the smoother but sploidy midband					●	●			1697 131
Moth Ley Line Black	100	Offers a full and big sound, neutral yet very solid and confident in delivery. Expansive imaging retains music's energy	●				●	●			108
Moth Ley Line Grey	200	Detailed enough but there's a sense of distance between the music and the listener, vox are coarse rather than liquid	●				●	●			108
Nordost Black Knight	55	Flat black cable that is distinctive but slightly coloured - but not in a wholly negative manner	●				●	●			160
Panasonic RP-CA910	50	Uncongested and even handed balance if slightly flat imagewise, retains impact but has a vaguely untransparent quality					●	●			108
Silvertone Ex-Static	35	Pleasantly unfatiguing and competitively priced cable that lacks detail and insight					●	●			160
SonicLink Silver Pink	35	Dynamically sensitive and muddle-free. Unsure about the flesh-coloured finish though...	●				●	●			160
SonicLink Black	49	Encourages an upbeat and snappy sound that's driven by leading edges, full and rumbustious bass maintains an even tempo					●	●			1699 131
Tara Labs Prism 11	45	Very compatible cable that wins through with a naturally balanced and realistically dynamic sound. 6N purity copper	●				●	●			1699 131
Tara Labs Prism 22	56	Delivers a fresh and detailed sound with clear and bright treble giving it a free, quick and dynamic character					●	●			1700 131
Tara Labs Quantum CD	75	Lacking in obvious vices, neutral and transparent, there's also a good solid bass. Vox are not always as intimate as possible	●				●	●			108
Tara Labs Prism 33	90	A pedestrian cable that sounds lively but muddled. Quite dynamic, quite rich, quite smooth but also quite indistinct					●	●			1700 131
Transparent Audio Music Link	119	No aggressive nasties to tax the ears, neither does it sparkle with inspirational detail. Only suited to low output impedances					●	●			1701 131
van den Hul The Storm	25	Price for 0.8m length. Rich and warm but bass is rolled off, however there's plenty of drive and high frequencies are clean					●	●			1701 131
van den Hul Source HB	50	Price for 0.8m length. Hybrid carbon-fibre/copper cable that is a paragon of naturalness. Airy and well controlled	●				●	●			160
van den Hul The First	210	Using 12,000 carbon fibres, a gentle and subtle sounding cable that conveys oodles of information but lacks dynamic punch					●	●			1702 131
van den Hul The Second	225	Wonderfully open and relaxing but also intimately detailed, slightly softens percussive dynamics	●				●	●			1702 131
XLO Type 150	50	A restrained but useful cable for taming lively CD players, dynamics lack freedom, treble lacks clarity					●	●			1703 131
XLO Type 0.1	180	Unusual but highly expressive and detailed with a hint of graininess on powerful vocals					●	●			1703 131
<b>Digital Interconnects</b>											
Audio Note AN-V	110	Ostensibly an analogue cable but gives a meaty and natural performance when used for digital duty	●				●	●		E	1704 131
Audioquest Optilink Z	120	Good level of midband detail but frequency extremes lack depth and extension								O	108
Audioquest Digital Pro	100	A silver cable with all the drive of Video Z but lacking its clear cut transparency					●	●			E 108
Bandridge AL4900G	40	Lacks deep rounded bass and treble is coloured with a spittiness, a little rough and ready					●	●			E 1705 131
Chord Codac	32	A connection with a stranded inner core and a sound that lacks integration					●	●			E 108
Chord Prodac	50	Price for 0.6m length. Lively detailed treble, drives music along confidently with no hint of fizz					●	●			E 1706 131
DPA Opti-link	20	Very similar to Bandridge AL560; sound is lacklustre									O 108
DPA Digi-link	28	Can seem slightly impassive but there's no avoiding its exceptionally detailed sound					●	●			E 108
Ixos 105	25	Extended but soft-edged treble that's mercifully free of fatiguing colourations, plenty of weight, smooth vox	●				●	●			E 1707 131
Kimber Kable Opti-link	50	Appears to be a bog-standard PMNA fibre, yet sounds a little brighter and livelier than most									O 108
LFD DigiLink Copper	30	Slightly grainy highly compatible cable with coherent and forward dynamic quality	●				●	●			E 1708 131
Moth Leyline Datalink	140	A thin, coaxial version of Leyline Black with a rather hard and unforgiving character. Too expensive					●	●			E 108
QED DigiFlex	20	A top performance, low-loss 750hm coax with a very open, almost liquid quality	●				●	●			E 108
Siltech HF-6	150	Sounds detailed, very clean and very extended, but bass is less well resolved - a treat for high-end systems					●	●			E 1709 131
SonicLink Green	60	Spacious, positive and engaging if a bit over crisp at times, very compelling however	●				●	●			E 1709 131
van den Hul MC Videolink 75	48	An AV-cum-digital cable that nearly beats QED's DigiFlex, but emphasises sibilants					●	●			E 108
van den Hul The First	120	Exceptionally natural albeit slightly dark or cautious compared to some, plenty of subtle information and beautiful integration	●				●	●			E 1710 131
<b>Loudspeaker Cables</b>											
Audio Note AN-D	4.50	Supplied in linear, non-polarised lengths that should be twisted into stereo pairs. Sounds rather grippy and forward					●	●			109
Audio Note AN-B	16.50	Well suited to valve systems, elastic bass, methodical but unintrusive and musical					●	●			1711 133
Audio Note AN-L	29.50	Fruity bass and expressive vocal rendition was appreciated by the panel which was happy to accept its foibles	●				●	●			1712 133
Audio Note AN-SP	125	A calm and civilised presentation, very quiet in the way it reveals subtle low level detail. Great poise and clarity	●				●	●			109
Audioquest F-14	1.95	Ideal for laying under carpets, F-14 encourages a slightly warm and vibrant sound					●	●			109
Audioquest Type 4	4.95	Four 18-gauge OFHC copper conductors wound in a Litz-type fashion increases capacitance but restrains the cable's 'bite'	●				●	●			109
Audioquest Cobalt 2	45	A rather polite and anaemic sound that bubbles gently with detail and is largely uncoloured and cautiously spacious	●				●	●			133



Tel: 0181 348 5676 (2.00-7.00 pm)  
Fax: 0181 341 9368

Esoteric High Fidelity CABLES

Dealers in: Absolute, Audio Note, Audioquest, Deltec, Electrocompaniet, Harmonix, Kimber, Mandrake, MIT, Siltech, Symo, Transparent, Van den Hul, WBT and others.

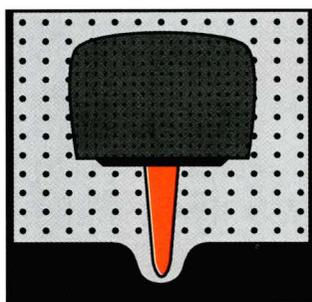
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... in YOUR home

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## CABLES (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	SYMMETRICAL				ISSUE NUMBER			
			COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIG CABLE TYPE	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Audioquest Crystal	18	Neutral balance is spoiled by some graininess and smearing	●	●	●					168
Bandridge SF LC1070	42p	Basic figure 8 bellwire, lightweight balance and a softness that dilutes even the strongest bass	●	●	●					1713 133
<b>B</b> Bandridge SF LC1259	1	Fresh and open, bubbly and naturally colourful soundstage that's neither forced or unduly edgy. Treble is slightly messy	●	●	●					1713 133
Bandridge Highflex LC2604	3.50	Substantial 6mm2 conductor produces weighty but ploddy music that lacks transparency	●	●	●					1714 133
<b>A</b> Bandridge LC7409	3.85	Detailed and up-beat cable. A bit too steely for classical strings	●	●	●					1800 157
<b>A</b> Cable Talk Talk 3.1	2.25	Quite well-balanced but tends to lose bass lines in complex music	●	●	●					168
Cable Talk 4.1	4.25	Smooth and cultured sound that lacks fine detail and is a bit too restrained	●	●	●					1800 157
Chord Myth	5.95	Light and airy tonality may please, but bass is recessed and detail not outstanding	●	●	●					168
DNM LSC350	6.95	Majors on midband and lower treble lucidity at the expense of bass and extreme treble extension	●	●	●					168
<b>A</b> DNM LSC8500	5.95	High impedance can influence the treble response, but this was a winner on sound per pound. Bi-wire	●	●	●					1716 133
<b>A</b> DPA Black Sixteen	90	Unflappable resolution of fine musical details, there's no dampening of dynamics, simply oodles of taut information	●	●	●					1717 133
<b>A</b> Gale XL189	0.99	Slightly bright and not that subtle, but a perfectly acceptable cable for any starter system	●	●	●					168
<b>A</b> Gale XL315	2	A little lacking in detail but plenty of life and excellent value	●	●	●					1800 157
<b>A</b> Gale XL160-2	2.50	Rhythmic and bouncy-sounding bi-wire cable. Can be slightly manipulative	●	●	●					1800 157
<b>A</b> Goertz M2	20	Remarkably detailed, smooth, neutral and with excellent bass; check amplifier compatibility	●	●	●					168
Heybrook Heywire	4	This well-meaning facsimile of earlier ribbon cables ends up sounding lumpy and uneven	●	●	●					109
<b>A</b> Ixos 603	2	Big and expansive-sounding cable, full and engaging while retaining a high degree of neutrality	●	●	●					1718 133
Ixos 604	5	Midrange is detailed and surprisingly smooth but treble is hard and synthetic and the bass no better	●	●	●					1719 133
<b>A</b> Kimber 4TC	19.68	A well-balanced cable with good performance in all areas	●	●	●					168
Kimber 4TC Double-wire	40	A variation on a Kimber classic which produces a rich and weighty sound, but isn't quite as transparent as single runs	●	●	●					133
Mission Quartet	7.90	Mixed, inoffensive sound, adds guttural resonance to vocals and could be generally more coherent. Bi-wire	●	●	●					1722 133
Monster Cable XP	1.50	XP offers plenty of slightly soft bass and a slightly rounded treble, a relaxed cable whose indiscretions are not bothersome	●	●	●					1723 133
Naim NACA 5	5.11	Described as a 'dinosaur of a cable', this stiff wire rod doesn't belong outside Naim systems. But it works a treat in them	●	●	●					109
Nordost Octava	2.95	Fair bass but confused treble and some coloration	●	●	●					168
Ortofon SPK100	3	Grey-sounding and strips instruments of their natural richness and resonance, a bit bass shy too	●	●	●					133
<b>A</b> Ortofon SPK300	8	Tremendously open and atmospheric with robust full blooded bass, and dynamic too if slightly bright at times	●	●	●					133
Puresonic 7845	1.95	Big, weighty sound — but too messy and bloated for its own good	●	●	●					1800 157
Puresonic 7891	2.85	Chunky cable design, shame about the sound quality	●	●	●					1800 157
QED Qudos	2.50	Despite high-tech design and excellent Air-Loc plugs, the music failed to gel	●	●	●					1800 157
QED Profile	9	Good midrange and treble balance, but bass is rather slack and detail not outstanding	●	●	●					168
QED Profile 8	5	Sophisticated flat cable that lacks decent bass and get up and go	●	●	●					1800 157
Silver Sounds 12 gauge	12	Basic 'homemade' construction gives fairly neutral sound, though not outstandingly competitive	●	●	●					168
Sonic Link S300	18	Happiest with simple music; tends to smudge detail in complex pieces	●	●	●					168
<b>A</b> SonicLink AST50	1.95	It may look like bell-wire, but AST50 sounds detailed, ordered and balanced	●	●	●					1800 157
<b>A</b> Transparent Audio Musichord	11.42	Sweet, open and refined treble, a bit of breathy exuberance and can sound slightly lackadaisical	●	●	●					1728 133
<b>A</b> Transparent Audio Wave	22.84	Very close to the sound of 'no cable', one of the very best. Slightly softens treble detail	●	●	●					1728 133
Tech + Link OFC79	1	Bargain basement cable that sounds cosy, but suffers from a wobbly bass	●	●	●					1800 157
van den Hul The Clearwater	6	Despite its evocative title, the Clearwater turns out to be a disappointingly murky-sounding cable	●	●	●					109
van den Hul CS122	19	Smooth and articulate with superb focus and control, its sheer coherence makes it a winner (tested in Sessions)	●	●	●					153
van den Hul The Magnum	31	Touted as vdH's most prestigious twinlead cable, Magnum sounds soft and old fashioned	●	●	●					109
<b>A</b> van den Hul The Wind	35	'The Wind' kicks up a storm with its lush midrange and bone-crunching bass!	●	●	●					109
van den Hul Revolution	64	Silver-plated OFC combined with carbon fibre prompts a sombre character with an easy and relaxed treble	●	●	●					1726 133
XLO Pro Type 625	4	Lively but natural and relaxed-sounding but a hint of congestion at frequency extremes	●	●	●					1726 133
XLO Pro 600	16.60	Basically neutral tonality but can become aggressive and two-dimensional	●	●	●					168



## Cartridges

**C**artridges 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.

**Best buy**

**Recommended**

### KEY

MM: Moving magnet cartridge with a normal output suitable for all vinyl disc amplifier inputs.  
MC: Moving coil cartridge with a low output only suitable for high-

sensitivity vinyl disc amplifier inputs.  
REPLACEABLE STYLUS: Most MM cartridges have a stylus that can be removed and replaced.

OUTPUT (MV): Cartridge output in millivolts.  
MASS (g): Cartridge mass can affect arm choice.  
FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax

copy of the review.  
ISSUE NUMBER: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

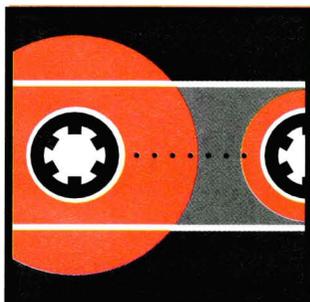
## CARTRIDGES

Product	Price(£)	Comment	REPLACEABLE STYLUS		OUTPUT (MV)	MASS (g)	ISSUE NUMBER	
			MM	MC			FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>A</b> Audio Note Io IIV	1,695	One of the best, giving an extraordinarily relaxing midrange clarity. Needs a transformer	●	●	0.1			100
<b>A</b> Audio Technica AT-95E	19	Clear and dynamic, though richly balanced	●	●	2.8			48
<b>A</b> Audio Technica ART-1	944	This is a delicate and very fluid-sounding MC that tracks well	●	●	0.4	9		72
<b>A</b> Denon DL110	70	A fine all-rounder, this high output MC model is likely to perform well	●	●	1.0	6		48
Denon DL160	90	Although listeners just preferred the 110, its brother here survived lab tests and is still 'thoroughly competent'	●	●	0.1	6		43
Denon DL103	100	Good performance in bass and good 'life'. Is seriously let down by its spherical stylus which kills subtle detail	●	●	0.1	6		103
<b>A</b> Denon DL304	200	Uncoloured, detailed, tracks superbly. Top notch altogether and a bargain too	●	●				103

CARTRIDGES (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comment	REPLACEABLE MM	STYLUS MC	OUTPUT (MV)	FACTSBACK MASS (g)	ISSUE NUMBER
Dynavector Karat 17D2 mk2	449	Clean and controlled sound with taut, tuneful bass. Detailed and musically cogent		●	0.15	5.3	158
Dynavector XX-1L	998	Very clear, very detailed; a response lift around 20kHz seems to do no harm		●	0.25	12	84
Dynavector XX-1	998	Good, but not immensely competitive at the price, and not helped by comparison with the low output version		●	2.0	12	84
Goldring Elan	19	A lightweight and frisky-sounding MM apparently based on Nagaoka MM4 body	●		5.0	7	67
Goldring 1012GX	79	Slightly harsh but plenty of life and detail. Some high frequency colouration apparent	●		6.5	7	85
Goldring 1022GX	99	As with 1012, a touch harsh; detail and transient purity improved	●		6.5	7	85
Goldring Eroica LX	110	Not the most subtle cartridge in the world: can sound edgy at times, but lively and informative		●	0.5	8	84
Goldring 1042	120	Not terribly subtle, and not such good value alongside 1012 and 1022. Quite lively though	●	●	6.5	6	91
Goldring Elite	220	The basics are right, and it will cheerfully tackle any source material, but its sound has a certain dirtiness		●	0.5	8	103
Grado Prestige Gold	150	Rich sounding with an unusually refined top-end for a moving magnet-type cartridge	●	●	4	6	158
Linn K9	125	Linn improved this model by beefing up the Basik's bodywork and adding a super stylus	●	●	4.5	5	Col
London Decca Maroon	259	Now manufactured under the London brand name, this Decca cartridge is as iconoclastic as ever	●		5.0	6	67
London Decca S Gold	339	Immediate and detailed, but coloured, nonlinear with a questionable effect on records	●		5.0	6	84
Lyra Lydian	649	Superbly capable all-round musical performer that improves markedly when its body cover is removed		●	0.3	7	158
Lyra Clavis Da Capo	995	A stable tracker, and one of the finest cartridges we've heard		●	0.1	7	143
Ortofon 510/P	38	For the price, a good blend of virtues – weight, clarity and neutrality	●		3.0	5	85
Ortofon 520/P	65	Sensitive to load capacitance, the 520/P has a lively, effervescent sound	●		3.0	5	67
Ortofon MC10 Super	100	"What a delightfully sweet-sounding cartridge this is..." we said		●	0.3	7	48
Ortofon MC3 Turbo	130	The 3 Turbo is bright, cheerful and bouncy, but subtle – take it as it comes		●	3.3	4	103
Ortofon MC15 Super II	130	A good all-rounder, with outstanding resolution, if slightly bright and close up		●	0.35	7	103
Ortofon MC25E	180	An excellent upgrade for a mid-price turntable		●	0.5	11	139
Ortofon MC25FL	249	A bit too stark and honest, but faithful to what's on the LP		●	0.5	11	139
Ortofon MC30 Supreme	525	Highly detailed and even-sounding cartridge that has a special affinity with female vocal recordings		●	0.5	10.7	158
Ortofon MC3000II	1,100	A real eye-opener. Nothing to criticise anywhere, one of the very best		●	0.12	10	84
Ortofon MC5000	1,500	Limited tracking ability, bright and forward sound, but good stereo		●	0.12	10	91
Rega Bias	39	Difficult to mount in some arms due to its shallow build, the Bias offers a gentle, refined sound	●	●	5	4	67
Rega Elys	85	Clearly superior to the Bias, the Elys is more detailed, accurate and convincing	●		5.0	5	67
Roksan Corus Black	130	Recognisably related to the Corus Blue, but smoother and more civilised	●		6.5	5	91
van den Hul MM-1	250	If woody midrange could be tamed, imaging and security would pull it through	●		5.5	6	103
van den Hul DDT-II	699	Outstanding stereo imaging and neutral balance are appealing, but rhythmically the DDT-II is a bit lazy		●	0.35	7.6	158
van den Hul MC-10	799	A neutral, balanced performer, gives fine depth and focus and a firm, extended bass		●	0.4	6	60
van den Hul MC-One	999	This extended all the positive qualities of the 10, but added greater authority and scale – worth all the extra money		●	0.4	6	60
van den Hul MC-Two	1,349	MC-Two rewards with a highly detailed yet fluid and musically convincing portrayal		●	0.4	6	72
van den Hul G' hopper IIIGLA	2,999	Undoubtedly one of the finest cartridges available, it has tremendous bandwidth, energy and finesse		●	0.4	6	122
Wilson benesch Matrix	786	Extraordinarily well balanced cartridge: neutral and detailed yet lively and rhythmically assertive		●	0.58	6	158

Cassette Decks



The compact cassette is still the world's most versatile and ubiquitous music storage medium. Buffs may wrinkle their noses, but they all use it.

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.)

Twin decks offer the option to dub tapes and play two cassettes sequentially. Autoreverse is a useful feature, but usually implies some mechanical compromise. Useful facilities include tape monitor switching and Dolby S.

**B Best buy** **R Recommended**

KEY

<b>DOLBY C:</b> A rather extreme noise-reduction system not usually associated with high sound quality.	for cassette recording.	<b>AUTOREVERSE:</b> Automatically plays both sides of the cassette.	<b>FACTSBACK NUMBER:</b> The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.
<b>DOLBY S:</b> A desirable derivative of the Dolby SR professional noise-reduction system.	<b>3-HEAD:</b> If you want to monitor a recording while you are making it, a third head is essential.	<b>AUTO CALIBRATION:</b> The deck will automatically set up bias and EQ for any tape.	<b>ISSUE NUMBER:</b> The issue of <i>Hi-Fi Choice</i> in which the original review appeared.
<b>DOLBY HX-PRO:</b> System designed by B&O to extend headroom	<b>TWIN DECK:</b> Contains two decks for dubbing and continuous play. In most instances only one deck will record.	<b>ADJUSTABLE BIAS:</b> Bias can be manually set to suit the tape being used.	

CASSETTE DECKS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	DOLBY C	DOLBY S	DOLBY HX PRO	3-HEAD	TWIN HEAD	AUTOREVERSE	ADJUSTABLE BIAS	FACTSBACK NUM.	ISSUE NUMBER
Aiwa AD-F450	120	Basic but well-designed budget deck, astonishing value; only the poor metering gives the game away	●	●						1513	136
Aiwa AD-WX727	170	High-class twin for those who want bells, whistles - and music	●	●						1377	146
Denon DRM-550	160	There are some technical limitations, but this remains a fine sounding deck, and excellent value	●	●						1591	140
Denon DRW-580	200	Twin deck: OK for casual use, but will quickly pall with more quality critical applications	●	●						1591	140
Denon DRS-640	200	Draw-loading deck, with simple facilities and smooth, well-adjusted sound	●	●						1591	140
Denon DRM-650S	230	An all-round improvement on predecessors, offers a wide-ranging, disciplined sound. Dolby S is not the best feature	●	●						1591	140
Denon DRM-740	270	Breathed-on DRM-710, with good external treatment, offers good, if somewhat detached sonics	●	●						1514	136
Denon DRS-810	310	Draw-loading deck, carefully designed yet lacking in subtlety on audition	●	●						1591	140
Harman/Kardon TD420	250	Minor inconsistencies detract from a well-conceived, minimum features design	●	●						1592	140
Harman/Kardon TD450	350	Draw loader with poor tape navigation features; good midband but shallow bass	●	●						1592	140
JVC TD-R472	200	Excellent auto-reverse deck which doesn't suffer the usual disadvantages and is very sharply priced	●	●						158	
JVC TD-V562BK	220	Ultra-sophisticated transport at a silly price; sound quality is stable but slightly opaque	●	●						158	123
JVC TD-V662BK	270	Assured, clean and agile sounding recorder, if not quite the most refined in its class	●	●						1380	146
JVC TD-W718	300	Twin deck. Good for creative live recording, but no timer standby. Respectable though not earth-shattering performance	●	●						171	

# CASSETTE DECKS (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	DOLBY C	DOLBY S	HX PRO	TWIN HEAD	3-HEAD	AUTO CALIBRATION	AUTOREVERSE	ADJUSTABLE BIAS	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Kenwood KX-W6080	200	Modestly decent sounding twin deck, with some transport instability and ragged bass. The features list is also strong	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	171	171
NAD 613	230	Rough and ready, but enjoyable sound, though marred by mechanical motor noise	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	158	158
NAD 614	270	Solid, workmanlike and ungimmicky player with a sound to match, a little pricey by the standards of its class	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	164	164
NAD 616	300	Primitive twin deck with basic features. No Dolby setting memory, transports are too unstable for serious quality first use.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	171	171
Onkyo K-611	460	Cute drawer loading mini-size component with 3-heads and dual capstan transport	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1384	146
Pioneer CT-W806DR	300	Had it not been for the iffy transport quality, this ultra-sophisticated twin would have been recommended.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	171	171
Pioneer CT-SB30S	500	High-class mechanism, if lacking in battleship externals, and superb sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1385	146
Sony TC-KE600S	300	Mild setting-up problems notwithstanding, this UK-tweaked design has a smooth, open and un-cassette-like sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	158	158
Technics RS-AZ6	230	For those who can't afford the RS-AZ7, exquisite clarity over the widest bandwidth thanks to AZ thin-film head	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	164	164
Technics RS-AZ7	300	Thin-film head gives a solid, almost CD-like bass and midrange. A clear advance in the state-of-the-art	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	158	158
Yamaha KX-490	199	Electrifyingly transparent and capable deck whose only flaw is a trace of audible wow and flutter	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	158	158
Yamaha KX-580SE	250	Subtle, engaging and transparent sounding deck, with a lightweight tonality, but good stability and strong detail	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	171	171



# CD Players brought to you in association with MISSION

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. 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 convertor, or DAC. Although most players are contained in a single box, expensive players are usually two-box affairs.

**Best buy**

**Recommended**

**KEY**

**ELECTRICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT:** For electrical connection to an outboard DAC.  
**AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUTPUT:** Balanced digital output to be used with similarly equipped DACs.  
**OPTICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT:** For optical connection to an outboard DAC.

**AT&T OPT DIG OUTPUT:** High-speed optical output to be used with similarly equipped DACs.  
**BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT:** Balanced analogue output for amplifiers equipped with balanced inputs.  
**HEADPHONE SOCKET:** For can users.  
**VARIABLE OUTPUT:** Remotely adjustable, volume-

controlled output.  
**MULTI-DISC:** Equipped with a carousel or multi-tray system for continuous play of multiple discs.  
**DAC TYPE:** Digital to analogue convertor: BS - Philips Bitstream, MB - multibit, Hyb - hybrid of multibit and bit-stream technologies, 1bit - single bit types such as MASH,

bitstream, PWM, etc  
**FACTSBACK NUMBER:** The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.  
**ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which the original review appeared.

## CD PLAYERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUTPUT	OPTICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT	AT&T OPT DIG OUTPUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER	
Alchemist Nexus APD32A	597	Refined treble, constrained yet capable bass and attractive all-round presentation distinguish this player from the crowd	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	169	
Acurus ACD11	899	First-rate if costly player from the US, which combines a delightful transparency with an uncontrived naturalness	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	166	
Arcam Alpha 7	320	Very detailed for a budget player with a slick and free sense of dynamics, needs careful ancillary matching	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	1872	163
AMC CD8A	150	Has balanced output, but is otherwise rather grey and unremarkable	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	172	172
Arcam Alpha 8	520	Refined, intricately detailed but a little cautious, this should be broadly compatible with a variety of amps	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1873	163
Audio Innovations Alto	399	Refreshing piece of audio sculpture belies inconsistent audio behaviour	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1635	151
Audiolab 8000CD	1,000	Developed according to the Green Cross Code of digital audio with an elegant but safe musical presentation	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1874	163
Audio Research CD1	3,290	Suspends disbelief with a frighteningly real yet obviously coloured sound. A rare proposition among CD players	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1875	163
AVI S2000MC Reference	1,399	Lean, dry, high resolution player, built to outlast most of us, and a fine performer in a sympathetic system	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	169	169
Cambridge Audio CD4	150	Basic appearance and sluggish track access/track search belies its up and at 'em sound quality	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	1268	147
Cambridge Audio CD4SE	200	Among the best players we have encountered at the price, considerably more refined and convincing than CD4	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1877	163
Cambridge Audio CD6	250	A sharp, lively and articulate player, a real thoroughbred in fact, perhaps too sharp and lively for some systems	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	159	159
Copland CDA-288	2,199	A gentle giant of a player that errs in favour of pastel shades rather than bold daubs of colour, one for refined tastes	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1880	163
Denon DCD-625	200	DCD-615 replacement is generously equipped but lacks sophisticated sound of its forebear	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1269	147
Denon DCD-825	240	Despite extensive revisions, this latest player still sounds like a typical 18-bit Denon, which is no bad thing!	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1531	137
Denon DCD-1015	350	Excellent, mid-range player - fast, fluid and lean	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1599	141
Denon DCD-3000	1,000	Sings with the temperament of a huge orchestra under the baton of a timid conductor, but very agreeable at that	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1881	163
Denon DCD-635	180	Modest presentation gives little clue to the thoroughbred electronics ticking away inside	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	172	172
Eclipse CD101a	80	If you want to know the sound of high order distortion, this is probably as good a place to start as any	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	144	144
Harman/Kardon HD710	200	A player of integrity, but can sound a bit hard and rough when extended, and is somewhat amplifier fussy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	159	159
Harman/Kardon HD730	300	Competitive at the price, with a coloured but dynamic and outgoing sound supported by a raft of user features	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	166	166
JVC XL-V184BK	120	Excellent budget player, well presented, a tad opaque but its heart is in the right place.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	172	172
JVC XL-V284BK	140	Featuring a new set of bitstream innards, this flexible player has a refined, if occasionally unpredictable sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	1270	147
JVC XL-Z574	250	Strong resolving power and good midband and dynamics, but slightly raw and thin	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	159	159
JVC XL-Z674BK	300	Even-handed, but glosses over the most intimate moments	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	1637	151
Kenwood DP-3080	170	Bold, dynamic and outgoing sound, though somewhat aggressive. Poor build quality and finish	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	159	159
Kenwood DP-4090	250	Focuses a clear, wide aperture lens on the music - and has CD Test too	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	172	172
Kenwood DP-7090	400	A lively and compelling performer with an even-handed and coherent disposition	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1885	163
Krell KPS 20i	9,990	Forthright, edge-of-the-seat sound with outstanding bass performance (tested in Statements)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1734	155
Linn Mimik	875	Useful multi-room features matched to strong bass, but poor imagery and transparency	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	1762	155
Marantz CD63MkII KI Sig	500	It's the quintessential sound of Marantz - warm, open, and smooth almost to a fault	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	169	169
Marantz CD-67	270	Dynamic, authoritative, and wide tonal response, but also shut-in and mid-forward balance	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	159	159
Marantz CD-67SE	350	Refined, enjoyable player, though ultimately a little soft-centred	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	166	166
Marantz CD-48	200	Somewhat inconsistent, middle ranking player which hints at better things	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	172	172
Marantz CD-17	800	Fabulous packaging and an excellent all round performer: smooth, detailed and consistent	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1763	155
Meracus Tanto	1,395	Believable tonal colours and textures, refinement takes preference over dynamics - but it's not cheap	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	DS	169	169
Meridian 508 (20-bit)	1,685	Combines a delicate mid and treble with rich, opulent bass and has impressive low-level resolution	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1886	163
Micromega Minium	400	Dynamically weak and some roughness offsets the pleasing tonal balance, articulate mid and strong bass	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	159	159
Micromega Stage 6	960	Lucid, open sound quality with some dynamic limitations with certain discs. Upgradeable from lesser Stage models	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	169	169

ISSUE NUMBER  
DIAZ NUMBER  
FACTSBACK NUMBER  
MULTI-DISC  
VARIABLE OUTPUT  
HEADPHONE SOCKET  
HEADPHONE OUTPUT  
BAL ANALOGUE OUT  
AT&T OPT DIG OUT  
OPTICAL DIG OUT  
AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT  
ELEC DIGITAL OUTPUT

CD PLAYERS (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT	OPTICAL DIG OUT	AT&T OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE OUTPUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	FACTSBACK NUMBER	DIAZ NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER	
▲ Mission Cyrus dAD3	598	This front loader has a relaxed style of delivery that convinces with guile and subtlety rather than orchestral ordnance										BS	1887	163
▲ Mission Cyrus dAD3Q	898	Lucid, transparent and uncontrived sound quality, superb build, and readily upgradeable							●			MB		169
▲ Monrio Privilege	995	Costly and well-engineered, but ultimately rather heavy-handed and dull, if refined player	●									MB		166
▲ Musical Fidelity E60	299	This entry-level player lacks proper stereo localisation and clarity	●									BS		166
▲ Musical Fidelity A2	499	Warm (too warm), attractive and open player, a great improvement on (related) E60	●						●			BS		169
▲ Musical Fidelity FCD	1,500	A forward disposition makes this perfect for Fenders but less appropriate to Guarneris	●						●			BS		163
▲ Myrrad MC100	700	A little extra get-up-and-go wouldn't go amiss, but its sheer maturity and composure ensure listenability	●									BS	1889	163
▲ NAD 510	200	Pale version of NAD's senior CD players with a stripped down feature count										1bit		172
▲ NAD 512	250	Simple, well-focused presentation, and articulate with it, though hard-nosed quality is not everyone's cup of tea	●									1bit		159
▲ NAD 514	370	Boisterous sound, but undeniably attractive	●									BS	1639	151
▲ Naim Audio CD3	1,000	The idiosyncratically packaged CD3 is solid and highly articulate. Always has its feet on the ground though										MB	1765	155
▲ Naim Audio CD2	2,000	Provides bags of detail with a solid stereo focus but not all the romanticism we know to be possible										MB	1890	163
▲ Onkyo DX-7210	260	Well-bred CD player features an unusual digital filter, is smooth and cultured without appearing grey or boring	●						●			BS	1273	147
▲ Onkyo DX-7510	400	Strongly flavoured, assertive sound	●						●			BS	1640	151
▲ Oreille CD-100EA	649	Excellent imagery, timing and transparency, and readily upgraded or reconfigured	●	●					●			MB		166
▲ Philips CD-721	130	Surprisingly well-sorted, articulate if slightly glossy and attractively presented sound. Captive signal lead										1bit		159
▲ Philips CD751	150	Inconsistent and occasionally opaque and scrawny sounding cheapie	●									1bit		172
▲ Pioneer PD-204	150	Generally easy on the ear, but can bite back, especially with complex high-frequency music content. Well endowed										1bit		159
▲ Pioneer PD-S705	300	A dichotomy, this machine was loved by some for its articulacy and disliked by others for sounding too impressive!	●						●			BS	1891	163
▲ Pioneer PD-S904	400	Too much legato – literally – in sound, but a very smooth performer	●						●			1bit	1641	151
▲ Pioneer PD-S505 Precision	460	Assured, fluid-sounding player, with great spatial coherence	●						●			1bit		166
▲ Quad 77	900	A true thoroughbred combining a penetrating insight into detail with poise rarely found at the price										Hyb	1893	163
▲ Roksan DP3P	1,495	Dramatic and compelling, classical listeners should be ready to 'air conduct' when auditioning this player	●									BS	1896	163
▲ Roksan Caspian	895	Solid, articulate, and fundamentally well-engineered player, but with some subtle low-level limitations	●									Hyb		169
▲ Rotel RCD-970BX	375	A combination of solid build, useful facilities and an attention grabbing sound make this a winner	●									BS	1897	163
▲ Sherwood CD-4030R	180	Easy on the ear, smooth-sounding player, with limits set by the slightly soft, compressed quality – and messy fascia							●			BS		159
▲ Sherwood CD1	1,100	A very neutral, even handed sounding player with a rather flat, lifeless sound. Beautiful construction	●						●			BS	1899	163
▲ Sony CDP-XE510	180	Souped up CDP-XE500 which tells a rather bland and unengaging story										1bit		172
▲ Sony CDP-XE900E	300	Refined and analytical disc scavenging tool, but there are some distinctive colourations making auditioning vital							●			BS		159
▲ Sony CDP-X3000S	500	Shoobox format player, with looks to die for, and switchable digital filters to tweak the already excellent sound	●						●			BS		169
▲ Teac 3450SE	200	For once a budget player where the gadgets take second place to respectable, budget amplifier-friendly sonics	●						●			1bit		166
▲ Teac CD-5	350	Bright, breezy and up-beat – but short in the trouser department	●						●			BS	1643	151
▲ Teac VRDS-7	599	Although bold and outgoing, this player can sound both intrusive yet lacking in fine detail	●						●			BS	1769	155
▲ Teac VRDS-10SE	850	Superbly built and presented, but rather leaden bass, with an over-prominent and not ideally refined mid/top	●						●			BS		169
▲ Teac VRDS-25	1,300	A solid player in all respects combining powerful sound with state-of-the-art technology	●						●			MB	1903	163
▲ Technics SL-PG480A	140	Full driving sound, but somewhat uneven in balance with a subtle, slightly harsh top end										1bit		159
▲ Technics SL-PS770D	250	High tech and well built technology battleship which smoothes the rough edges off the music							●			BS		172
▲ Trichord Genesis	549	Breathed-on Pioneer is warm and mellifluous, but ultimately lacks drive and authority.	●									Hyb		169
▲ Trichord Revelation	799	Well-ordered and clean sound that may be a little too refined for some, images well	●									1bit		166
▲ Yamaha CDX-390	130	Well endowed entry level unit, with inconsistent sound that can be harsh in extremis										1bit		172
▲ Yamaha CDX-490	170	Big, blowsy sound, is undermined by lack of precision and focus							●			1bit		159
▲ Yamaha CD-X890	350	Clearly a quality product in every sense, the Yamaha provides a spacious, refined and tuneful account of the music	●						●			BS		166
<b>TRANSPORTS</b>														
▲ Arcam Delta 250	800	Arcam's best effort yet is a new design based on Philips CDM9 transport. Specification includes Sync Lock facility	●						●			-	1491	130
▲ Audiolab 8000CDM	1,400	Super-slick transport and basically very honest sound, but lacking the last degree of fine detail	●	●								-		162
▲ Audiomeca Kreatura SE	1,400	Superb combo for those who like the sound of valves (tested with Elixir DAC in Sessions)										MB		141
▲ Audiomeca Mephisto	2,350	Tested with Trichord Pulsar, the duo provides a highly composed and tactile sound	●						●			-	1320	144
▲ Linn Karik	1,850	Based on early Linn transport, the Karik is dry but very positive, detailed and engrossing	●						●			-	1323	144
▲ Meridian 500	1,245	Used with the 563 DAC, the combination is thin, brash and uncomfortable	●						●			-	1103	133
▲ PS Audio Lambda	2,250	With Ultralink Two, sound positively sparkles with colour and resonant detail	●	●					●			-	1106	133
▲ Roksan Attesa ATT-DP3	1,295	Not the most detailed or refined but capable of good excitement with the right material	●						●			1bit		162
▲ Teac VRDS-T1	550	Superb quality engineering is mated to tidy and composed sound (tested with D-T1)	●						●			-	1325	144
▲ Theta Data Basic II	2,397	Uses a Philips CDM-9 Pro mechanism and works a treat with more lively DACs	●						●			-	1494	130
▲ Thorens TCD2000	999	Lively and up-front presentation not helped by rather loose bass and splashy treble	●						●			-		162
▲ Trichord Digital Turntable	699	Very detailed, precise, controlled yet involving; a first-rank performer	●						●			-		162
▲ Wadia 8	3,195	Budget version of Teac's VRDS mechanism in a fancy case; just too expensive for the performance on offer	●	●					●			-	1495	130
<b>DACS</b>														
▲ Arcam Black Box 50	480	Measured and sophisticated sound from a DAC that leaves plenty in reserve for future upgrades										Hyb	1506	133
▲ Arcam Black Box 500	750	Sophisticated unit with sync lock and discrete DAC										BS	1519	136
▲ Audio Note DAC1	675	Oddball DAC with manual de-emphasis switch. Needs a high preamp input impedance or bass will suffer										MB		127
▲ Audiolab 8000DAC	900	Basically very honest sound, but lacking the last degree of fine detail										BS		162
▲ Audiomeca Elixir	799	DAC was tested with Kreatura SE – see above										BS		141
▲ Linn Numerik	1,500	A new 20-bit DAC and revised Karik transport have cleaned up; but sounds a bit dry and humourless										MB	1323	144
▲ PS Audio UltraLink 2 H2CD	2,590	With Lambda transport, the sound positively sparkles with colour and resonant detail										MB	1106	133
▲ PS Audio Ref Link	4,550	Consolidates reputation of PS Audio for high performance digital electronics							●			MB	1069	132
▲ Roksan Attesa ATT-DA2/DS5	1,145	Not the most detailed or refined but capable of good excitement with the right material										1bit		162
▲ Teac D-T1	500	Teamed with VRDS-T1 for test, this superb quality unit is tidy and composed										BS	1325	144
▲ Teac D-700	600	With P-700, the D-700 may lack the resolution, but is bubbly and entertaining										MB		120
▲ Thorens TDA 2000	700	Lively and up-front presentation not helped by rather loose bass and splashy treble										BS		162
▲ Trichord Pulsar Series One	1,395	Very detailed, precise, controlled yet involving; a first-rank performer. Switchable phase, dither etc										Hyb		162

You must listen to **MISSION** For details of your nearest stockist, ☎ 01480 451777. Or visit the company's WorldWideWeb site – <http://www.mission-cyrus.com>

# Digital Recorders



**D**igital 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 three types to choose from: DAT (digital audio tape), MD (MiniDisc), and CD-R (CD Recordable). 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 due to the dearth of pre-recorded material. However it has begun to carve itself a

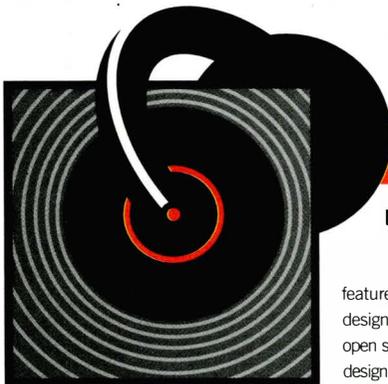
niche in the top end of the market, replacing reel-to-reel as the audiophile's tape based medium. Home CD-R is coming into its own with Pioneer's PD-R05 machine attempting to set a trend.

**B** Best buy **R** Recommended

KEY	ADC TYPE: Analogue to digital converter types as per DACs.	ELECTRICAL IN/OUTPUTS: Digital sockets for electrical cable.	ISSUE NUMBER: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.
FORMAT: type of recorder, see above for descriptions.	PORTABLE: Can be run off batteries but not necessarily personal stereo size.	FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.	
DAC TYPE: Digital to analogue converter. BS - Philips Bitstream, MB - multibit, Hyb - hybrid of multibit and bitstream technologies, 1bit - single bit types such as MASH, bitstream, PWM etc	OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS: Digital sockets for optical cable.		

## DIGITAL RECORDERS

Product	Price (£)	Comments	FORMAT	DAC TYPE	ADC TYPE	PORTABLE	ELECTRICAL IN/OUTPUTS	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Pioneer D-05	900	Second generation 96kHz DAT recorder can offer startling realism with the right software - ie first generation	DAT	BS	BS		● ●	1652	152
Pioneer PDR-05	1,000	CD recorder that uses domestic blanks only (limited to 62 minutes), write once but excellent sound quality	CD-R	BS	BS		● ●	1652	152
Pioneer D-C88	2,000	State-of-the-art portable 96kHz DAT recorder, the size of a lap-top computer this Nagra country on the cheap	DAT	BS	BS	● ●	● ●	1431	150
Sony MDA-1A3ES	700	Full-width MD recorder that makes a decent job of recordings but is less impressive with pre-recorded material	MD	BS	BS		● ●	1216	152



# Headphones

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**T**here are a variety of different approaches to headphone design. Among the more expensive models, electrostatic drivers are used in open-backed phones. Most 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. For best results a separate headphone amplifier is recommended.

**B** Best Buy **R** Recommended

KEY	CLOSED BACK: Keeps out external noise.	amplifier output.	ISSUE NUMBER: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.
TYPE: Operating principle: D - dynamic, E - electrostatic.	WEIGHT (G): Mass in grams	3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR: Can be used with mini-jack-equipped components such as personal stereos.	
SUPRA-AURAL: Style where a flat pad presses on the outer ear.	IMPEDANCE (Ω): Load offered to the headphone amplifier. All else being equal, the lower the impedance the louder the sound for a given	FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.	
CIRCUMAURAL: Style which encloses the ear.			
OPEN BACK: Offers an open sound but lets in noise.			

## HEADPHONES

Product	Price (£)	Comments	TYPE	CIRCUMAURAL	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	3.5mm JACK ADAPTOR	WEIGHT (G)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
AKG K1000	700	One of the best dynamics on the market, hooks directly into speaker outputs	D	●	●			270	120		99
Audio Technica ATH910PRO	90	The closed back 910s are an improvement on the 909s, with a nice rhythmic quality rarely found with headphones	D	●		●		280	40		55
Beyer DT100	152	Rugged, modular professional design, but bass is woolly and treble lacks detail	D		●		●	350	600		157
Beyer DT311	57	Uncharacteristically tight, unrefined sound quality from this otherwise well engineered 'phone	D	●		●		124	40	●	1098 133
Beyer DT331	82	Tonally bright and deficient in bass, but exceptionally comfortable, articulate, detailed and refined	D	●	●		●	210	40	●	1801 157
Beyer DT411	69	A reasonable but not very thrilling headphone that doesn't really offer enough at the price	D	●		●		120	250		111
Beyer DT511	117	Superb midband clarity and speed slightly at odds with soft bass. High tingle factor even so	D	●	●			200	250		172
Beyer DT531	135	A good buy for serious, heavy-duty music making	D	●	●			245	250		144
Beyer DT811	235	Probably too revealing for many headphone amps, these are very subtle and fine, if expensive cans	D	●	●			275	250		111
Denon AH-D550	80	A competent 'phone with integrity, but little panache or charisma. Hard headband causes brain strain	D		●		●	200	35	●	1801 157
Denon AH-D750	130	Loud and gutsy, meaty bass, good with rock and dance. Can sound thick and clumsy	D		●		●	250	30	●	172
Grado SR-40	45	Cheap and nasty appearance largely redeemed by cheerful, up-beat sound. Very comfortable	D	●		●		120	32		172
Grado SR-80	100	Clear, open and dynamic with pedantically open mid-band. Crude physical design, rough frequency extremes	D	●		●		60	8	●	1801 157
Grado SR-225	200	Warm, darkly-coloured tonally and ultimately lacking in clarity, but true to the spirit of the music if not the letter	D	●		●		200	32		1883 163
Jecklin Float Model 1	79	While very unusual in appearance, the Floats give remarkable sound quality and openness at a reasonable price	D	●	●		●	400	200		55
Jecklin Float Model 2	99	Helmet shaped, but open sounding and comfortable in the long term, despite lack of adjustment	D	●	●			400	200		63
JVC HA-D910	65	Broadly acceptable if unexciting design with low level losses and some colourations	D	●		●		220	32	●	121
JVC HA-W60	49	Remarkably lack of interference and hiss makes adequate sound seem even better than it is	D	●		●		165	1/R	●	172
Kenwood KH-1000	20	First step-up from a true mini: a near miniature which is cheap, comfortable and inoffensive	D	●		●		30	32	●	121
Maxell HP-3000	30	Solid, smooth-sounding supra-aural headphone, but congested and undynamic. Includes in-lead controls	D	●		●		120	32	●	1099 133
Precide Ergo Model 2	140	Still has much of the spaciousness and detachment of the Float from which it is derived, but has a coarse mid/top	D		●			380	100		1892 163
Philips SBC 3396	70	Remarkably airy for closed-back designs. Fine tonal balance, punchy delivery. Amazing for money	D	●		●	●	255	32	●	172
Philips SBC HP900	90	Sharper, snappier midrange than 3396 initially impressive but blows the balance and listenability	D	●		●		200	32	●	172
Ross RDH-300CD	17	In-lead controls are the highlights of this shoddy, sometimes aggressive-sounding design	D	●		●		155	8	●	133
Sennheiser IS 380	55	As close as you'll get to real hi-fi with IR phones at this price. Inevitable hiss spoils the illusion	D	●		●		192	1/R	●	172
Sennheiser HD 455	55	Inoffensive, if nondescript sound, modular, but can become dislodged from head	D	●	●			185	60	●	1801 157
Sennheiser HD 475	80	Elegant, uncluttered sound and very comfortable but lean bass saps satisfaction	D	●		●		120	60	●	172
Sennheiser HD 545	125	Fine all rounder that takes all styles of music in its stride. Ear-clamping headband	D	●	●			255	150	●	172

# HEADPHONES (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	CIRCUM-AURAL TYPE	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	3.5mm JACK ADAPTOR	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	WEIGHT(g)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>A</b> Sennheiser HD 565 Ovation	150	Wide bandwidth design which is refined, expressive and extremely comfortable	D	●	●		255	150	●	1801 157
Sennheiser HE 60/HEV70/UK	998	Very nearly a superb electrostatic, with an achingly pure midband, but top end is sibilant and edgy	E	●	●		260	n/a		1898 163
Sony MDR-CD770	100	Neutrality and comfort make the Sony easy to live with. Technically correct-sounding too, yet musically unrewarding	D	●	●		-	-	●	1801 157
<b>A</b> Sony MDR-CD1700	199	Astonishingly detailed, uncoloured and free of the usual artefacts from a sealed back headphone. Tremendous value	D	●	●		325	32	●	1901 163
Sony MDR-F1	100	Natural, easy-going sound teamed with great looks and comfort. Shame about the lightweight bass	D	●	●		300	12	●	172
Technics RP-DJ1200	??	Functional design with head-pulping bass and muggy tonal balance. Good job they're sweat-proof	D	●	●		230	32	●	172
<b>A</b> Stax Lambda Nova Basic	449	Refined, articulate, yet with real presence — and a notable bargain by electrostatic standards	E	●	●		347	n/a		1902 163
Technics RP-HT700	70	Well-finished but physically crass and grubby sounding	D	●	●		255	-	●	1801 157
Vivanco IR5800	50	Consistently musical and easy going. Doesn't reach for sonic heights so hiss is less bothersome	D	●	1/2		226	I/R	●	172
<b>A</b> Vivanco SR650	50	Unusually comfortable 'phone with excellent detail resolution but aggressive, thanks to tweeter resonance	D	●	●		175	-	●	1801 157
<b>A</b> Vivanco SR750	60	Cossetting physical design, attractive sound an pricing, though suffers overhang and lacks ultimate dynamics	D	●	●		188	-	●	1801 157
Vivanco IR7100	120	Infra-red phones that work well but suffer from the limitations of the medium ie compression and hiss (Sessions)	D	●	●		265	-		149
Vivanco Cyberwave FMH3000	80	The only cordless headphone that offer genuine walkabout freedom. But it sounds like a cheap FM tuner	D	●	●		210	FM	●	172

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## Hi-Fi Loudspeakers

Brought to you in association with **KEF**

**A**s the last item in the hi-fi chain, the loudspeaker is merely the slave of what has gone before; it is only as good as the signal it is fed. Nevertheless, the distortions introduced by loudspeakers (and rooms) tend to be the most obvious. The average loudspeaker consists of an enclosure plus a couple of drive units 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. Subwoofers augment the bass and come in passive and amplified active form. They are less sensitive to placement than regular speakers.

**B** Best Buy **R** Recommended

**KEY**  
 SIZE WxHxD (cm): Width by height by depth in centimetres.  
 FLOORSTANDER: As opposed to requiring a dedicated stand.  
 SENSITIVITY (dB/W): Efficiency: how much volume you get for a given input; the higher the louder.  
 IMPEDANCE (Ω): Measured in Ohms: impedance it is a measure of how hard a loudspeaker is to drive: the lower the number the more powerful the amplifier needs to be.  
 BASS FROM (Hz): The lowest frequency that a speaker can reproduce, based on in-room measurements.  
 FREE SPACE: Speakers should be placed away from walls.  
 CLOSE TO WALL: It is recommended that these speakers be placed close (between 3 and 12cm) to the rear wall.  
 FACTSBACK NUMBER: The reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback page.  
 ISSUE NUMBER: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

## HI-FI LOUDSPEAKERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	SIZE WxHxD(CM)	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY(dB/W)	BASS FROM (Hz)	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>A</b> Acoustic Ener y AE109	350	Lots of mass-loaded twin-driver speaker for the money, especially for loud, driving bass	18,90,25	●	88	4	25	●		1904	164
Acoustic Ener y AE120	500	Attractive presentation and good sonic headroom, but a heavy, uneven overall balance, and a difficult amp load too	18,98,28	●	89	4	25	●			170
ATC SCM20	1,599	Massively built, invariably informative but the rather forward presentation can be uncomfortable	24,44,31		83	8	28		●		86
<b>A</b> Audio Gem Emerald	540	Pretty compact floorstander with lively if lightweight sound	18,94,21	●	87	6	40	●		1905	164
<b>A</b> Audio Note AN-J/D	930	Light damping and local unevenness add some colouration, but don't spoil the speaker	38,58,25		93	8	25		●		110
<b>A</b> Audio Note AN-E/D	1,520	Coherent, dynamic and transparent, with extended bass and high sensitivity - but ugly!	36,84,28	●	94	8	20	●			106
<b>A</b> Audio Physic Tempo	1,999	Tall and unusually-styled floorstander has stunning stereo but suspect bass tuning	22,107,47	●	88	8	28	●		1344	143
<b>A</b> Audiovector 3X	1,500	Superior time coherence, a wide dynamic range and exception bass/mid balance	19,32,98	●	89	8	20	●		1345	143
<b>A</b> B&W DM302	150	Highly competent and neutral all rounder; clever Prism enclosure	19,32,22		88	4	45	●		1778	156
<b>A</b> B&W DM601	200	Great main driver for the price, entertaining dynamics	20,5,35,5,23		88	6	30	●		1779	156
<b>A</b> B&W DM602	300	Prefers tall stands and space, but offers impressive midband dynamics and musical tension	24,49,31		90	8	30	●		1654	152
<b>A</b> B&W 305	350	Ridged paper cone gives lively sound, clever box, but a little uneven	22,87,31	●	89	4	40	●		1908	164
<b>A</b> B&W 603	500	Squat floorstander with decent dynamics and well-judged, restrained balance; bass could go deeper	23,5,88,29	●	89	7	45	●			170
B&W P4	675	Strikes a nice balance between all-out studio monitor sound and bass-filled crowd pleaser (tested in Sessions)	20,81,25,6	●	88	8	50	●			156
<b>A</b> B&W CDM1	600	Gorgeous stand-mount delivers unusually good bass for its size	22,38,28		88	6	30	●		1818	160
<b>A</b> B&W Matrix 805 V	1095	Stylish, remarkable imaging, good balance and low colouration	33,33,21		87	8	30	●			98
<b>A</b> B&W Matrix 804	1695	A great all-rounder which combines exceptional bass extension with fine sensitivity	26,96,26	●	88	4	20	●			167
<b>A</b> B&W Matrix 801S3	3,995	Lacks transparency and the drama of the best dynamics, but acoustically a tour de force	44,100,56	●	87	8	20	●			81
<b>A</b> B&W Nautilus	35,000	Radical design results in one of the finest loudspeakers available. Active x-over needs 4 power amps (Statements)	42,105,90	●	87	4	10	●			166
<b>A</b> Bose 305	430	Fine dynamic liveliness and a good room match counter strange imaging and treble	23,45,28		-	8	40	●			78
<b>A</b> Bose 401	500	Cheaply built but distinctively styled, the 401 suffers from heavy midband	30,30,76	●	-	4	28				110
<b>A</b> Cadence ES	3,500	Hybrid electrostatic/dynamic design from India that excels with classical material (Statements)	33,108,37	●	91	8	35	●		1798	157
<b>A</b> Castle Isis	230	A great miniature at a very competitive price. Sound is lightweight but very coherent, with a fine overall balance	17,35,5,21		87	8	45	●			170
<b>A</b> Castle Severn	539	Light and bright, but sound is open and communicative. Looks good too	23,77,20		88	8	47	●		1655	152
<b>A</b> Castle Avon	700	Lovely box and lovely voices from carbon-fibre composite cone	22,91,28	●	85	8	22	●		1909	164
<b>A</b> Castle Harlech	849	Handsome big-sounding floorstander, great value and dynamic midrange	20,96,33	●	88	8	28	●		1820	160
<b>A</b> Castle Howard S2	1,200	Absolutely fills the gap between Chester and Winchester; has a rich, laid-back balance	26,104,41	●	90	8	40	●		1078	132
<b>A</b> Celestion A1	899	Rich, warm and laid-back, but a true quality sound; lovely build	24,41,35		88	6	25	●		1910	164
<b>A</b> Cerwin-Vega VS10	350	Not all that refined but ballsy as heck, these rock boxes have no shortage of gung-ho	33,70,29	●	95	6	37	●		1758	155

# HI-FI LOUDSPEAKERS (CONTINUED)

SIZE WxHxD(CM) SENSITIVITY(dB/W) IMPEDANCE(Ω) BASS FROM (Hz) FACTS CLOSE TO WALL FREE SPACE ISSUE NUMBER

Product	Price(£)	Comments	18,32,27	87	6	45	●	170	
Chario Syntar 100	250	Pretty with a pleasantly easygoing balance, but not the most communicative or exciting sound around	18,32,27	87	6	45	●	170	
Dali 104B	370	Lively, rich sounding and communicative. Shame about bland styling and dull balance	22,86,27	●	93	4	28	●	1657 152
Dynaudio Contour 1.8	1,842	Wonderful voice-band delicacy and loads of deep bass from a very elegant and compact box	21,95,29	●	85	4	20	●	167
Electrofluidics Sonolith 2.2xi	5,999	Polymer concrete cabinet with aluminium cones produces world class imaging and very serious bass (Statements)	38,95,42.5	●	86	4	n/a	●	139
Epos ES12	500	High quality luxury stand-mount has great midband and stereo imaging	20,38,25	85	8	45	●	1823 160	
Epos ES14	675	Substantial stand-mount delivers delightful midrange focus and delicacy with good bass control	23,49,29	87	8	25	●	98	
Epos ES22	1,185	Elegant floorstander with 'safe' balance that can be enlivened with the right cable and energetic material (Sessions)	21,88,25	●	87	6	58	●	1629 151
Epos ES25	1,655	Handsome floorstander with a rather uneven and bass heavy balance	24,90,35	●	88	6	22	●	1346 143
Faraday Siren	445	High mass concrete cabinet is let down by imbalance of ageing driver combination	25,27,46	90	4	48	●	94	
Gale 2i	140	Unspectacular sound and appearance fail to help this solid little miniature stand out from the crowd	22,40,27	88	7	40	●	170	
GLL Imagio IC130	530	Lots of speaker for the money, but sound is decidedly dull and shut in	22,112,29	●	88	4	20	●	1824 160
Harbeth BBC LS3/5A	699	Still a classic miniature, though not to every taste, and none the better for the recent update	19,30,18	82	10	80	●	66	
Heybrook Prima	139	Fine pace and timing, but balance is forward and bass is tight	20,29,18	87	6	50	●	110	
Heybrook Heylette	269	Attractive traditional-style near-miniature has fine bass-to-mid integrity, but dull and shut-in top end	19,5,30,20	89	6	45	●	170	
Heybrook Heylios	389	Great all-round performance in a pretty package at a sharp price	24,36,27	87	6	25	●	164	
Heybrook Heylo	439	Good vocal reproduction, but sounds thin and bass seems an afterthought	23,73,19	●	88	8	30	●	1658 152
Heybrook Quartet	649	Solidly large bookshelf model with good sensitivity and a lively, forward sound	24,41,22	90	8	48	●	122	
Heybrook Sextet	1,299	Coherent and highly analytical, partly due to distinct upper-mid forwardness	27,90,20	●	88	8	25	●	102
Infinity Reference 1i	150	Although not to our tastes, this is a competent speaker, and decent material value	20,34,20	89	6	50	●	1403 148	
Jamo BX100A	350	A cracking output for their size, these rock boxes can be a bit bright but have decent bass	31,5,54,28	91	8	40	●	1758 155	
Jamo Classic 8	400	A lot of speaker for the money; good when playing quietly, but boom 'n tizz character sounded crude	22,90,29	●	90	4	28	●	1659 152
Jamo 477A	500	Very prettily styled, but build and sound quality are disappointing at the price	19,77,28	●	88	4	40	●	1549 138
Jamo Concert 8	1,300	Employing a die cast magnesium cone with a charming open and detailed midband (Statements)	24,5,38,31	90	4	38	●	1822 160	
JBL LX2	250	Lively and invigorating, if a touch crude, this good-hearted speaker reproduces music with considerable enthusiasm	22,40,27	87	8	40	●	170	
JBL L20	700	Pricey, heavy and a bit laid back, but this is a fine rock 'n' roller which is dynamic and communicative	26,42,28	86	8	30	●	1550 138	
JBL L40	1,000	Classic, large, stand-mount 3-way is full of vim and vigour, with a superb sense of balance	30,65,31	88	4	23	●	167	
JBL L90	1,500	A classic monitor which communicates with gusto and enthusiasm, though it can sound a bit crude	24,94,35	●	91	6	23	●	1348 143
Jordan Watts JH400	565	Piano-finish hexagon has controversial sound, with uneven balance but delightful mid	28,38,21	86	8	50	●	106	
JPW Mini Monitor	60	Ultra-cheap miniature works well in a limited way	18,27,17.5	86	8	50	●	1781 156	
JPW Gold Monitor	80	More informative than Mini Monitor - but fiercer too	18,27,17.5	86	8	50	●	1782 156	
JPW ML510	140	Lots of good-quality speaker for the price, but not an ideal match for cheap budget components	20,34,22	88	5	50	●	169	
JPW MS1010	400	A seriously substantial speaker for the price, and an obvious choice for those who like their music loud	22,5,115,40	●	91	6	25	●	170
JPW Ruby 1	400	Very pretty but pricey luxury metal-cone miniature has good, if slightly edgy balance	19,32,21	87	6	55	●	1572 139	
KEF Coda 7	130	Lovely open voice reproduction, but bass could be tauter; build tougher	18,30,23	88	6	50	●	1783 156	
KEF Coda 8	190	Outstandingly well-balanced, bass is deep but a little vague	20,32,5,29	86	6	28	●	1784 156	
KEF Coda 9	300	Uneven budget 3-way floorstander with poor bass definition	20,86,28	●	89	6	30	●	1785 156
KEF RDM One	500	Cute and tiny, nice midband but lack of bass warmth and weight	23,30,24	88	6	70	●	164	
KEF Reference Model 2	1,599	Classy, large floorstander that has massive headroom and clean mid-to-treble, but limited deep bass for size	23,103,34	●	89	4	30	●	167
Keswick Audio Aria II	329	Confident and dynamic sound, if a little crude and shut in	21,42,24	89	8	20	●	1405 148	
Keswick Audio Torino	900	Good value, lively contender with distinctive shape and styling. Goes loud and deep but could be smoother	18-26, 93,28	●	90	4	20	●	167
Linn Keilidh Passive	750	Stunning timing and coherence, and awesome bass drive	20,83,28	●	87	4	22	●	1552 138
Linn Kaber Passive	2,000	Dry, bright balance emphasises dynamics and transients, but can sound unforgiving	20,90,28	●	87	4	25	●	118
Living Voice Airscout	19,500	You want dynamics? Get a horn, get a very, very good horn. This is a very, very good horn. Tested with RW24 horn sub	62,5,115,57	●	104	8	60	●	163
Living Voice Air Partner S	37,200	Outstanding transparency and dynamics from remarkably solid and fast mega horn	64,160,90	●	108	8	40	●	138
Meridian DSP6000	9,400	Sophisticated digital design, with a wide-ranging, refined and detailed sound. Has on-board amplification	28,133,43	●	-	-	35	●	1226 140
Mission 731 PRO	140	Cautious balance makes a fine match with budget equipment. A classy baby for smaller rooms	17,5,31,5,20	89	8	55	●	169	
Mission 733i	330	New tweeter gives this floorstander a more open sound; a good all-rounder that doesn't sound as big as it looks	20,5,88,30	●	88	8	45	●	170
Mission 753 Freedom	798	Great styling. New, more restrained tweeter reveals fine midband dynamics	21,90,31	●	89	4	40	●	164
Mission 754 Freedom 5	1,298	Tall but exceptionally elegant floorstander gives fine midband projection; goes loud but limited deep bass for size	22,111,31	●	88	4	40	●	167
Monitor Audio Monitor 3	400	An exceptionally discreet floorstander; sonically uneven, it's capable of fine results if used in a sympathetic system	16,91,21	●	88	5	30	●	170
Monitor Audio MA700 PMC	600	Good-looking luxury compact with all-metal diaphragms, lovely midrange, but occasionally edgy	22,35,26	89	8	45	●	1661 152	
Monitor Audio MA703 PMC	800	Lovely but pricey floorstander has up-front, coherent 'shiny' sound	20,89,27	●	88	8	50	●	1826 160
Monitor Audio Studio 12	1,000	A real looker, but sound and content are a bit on the small side for the price	17,92,20	●	90	8	28	●	1349 143
Mordaunt-Short MS10i	140	Up front, bouncy and a whole lot of fun	18,5,30,5,20	86	8	50	●	1789 156	
Mordaunt-Short MS30i	275	Slightly shut-in and coloured quality is compensated by fine bass and impressive communication	25,43,28	90	8	28	●	1662 152	
Mordaunt-Short Perf 860	1,895	Although a very neutral loudspeaker it can, with the right ancillaries, pack a serious punch (Statements)	26,86,35	●	90	6	35	●	1367 146
Musical Technology Kestrel SE	300	Brighter and drier-sounding than the standard Kestrel (and not the better for it)	20,84,19	●	84	5	50	●	164
Musical Technology Harrier	400	Very pretty package, good measured performance and even sound. Sensitivity is low, and dynamics limp	25,80,23	●	86	8	25	●	1663 152
Naim Intro	660	Great dynamic range and info retrieval, but thin, lacks warmth	24,89,27	●	89	6	30	●	164
Naim SBL Passive	1,970	Lively and punchy - smoother but more upfront than before	27,89,27	●	88	6	25	●	1352 143
Neat Mystique	575	Elegant compact floorstander has good all-round sound and value	20,85,18	●	84	8	25	●	1827 160
Neat Petite II	745	Compact design now utilising ribbon tweeter with a fine sense of timing and surprising musicality (tested in Sessions)	20,30,18	86	8	33	●	160	
Neat Petite II/Gravitas	2,000	Beautifully presented miniature/subwoofer combo with ribbon tweeter gives smooth, laid-back sound	23,105,40	●	85	6	25	●	167
NHT SuperOne	358	A fine compromise between size and performance, though sensitivity and loudness capability is modest	18,5,29,5,23	85	8	30	●	170	
Origin Live Conqueror	1,650	Chunky floorstanding 3-way has lovely cabinetwork and lively sound, but limited deep bass	24,94,27	●	88	8	30	●	167
Pink Triangle Ventral	999	If you are after Quad Electrostatic-type transparency but can't afford the price... (Sessions)	15,80,32	86	11	●	142		
PMC TB1	410	Superb transparency, subtle laid-back sound, well worth seeking out	20,40,31	87	8	45	●	1830 160	
PMC LB1	935	Delightful smoothness and transparency, though bass and treble are both limited	18,53,25	89	4	33	●	110	
PMC AB1	1,496	Lovely panel-like transparency, slightly shut-in balance, needs a big room	26,79,43	89	6	22	●	114	
Polk LS50	800	No enthusiast tweaks here, but powerful and beautiful balance	27,83,29	●	89	8	25	●	1155 138
Polk RT16	800	Bass rich, lively and powerful, but suspect top end; big and not very pretty	22,105,39	●	91	4	22	●	1831 160
Polk LS70	1,200	High sensitivity, but balance has too much midbass boom; mid-top is laid back	31,94,37	●	90	8	22	●	1084 132

# HI-FI LOUDSPEAKERS (CONTINUED)

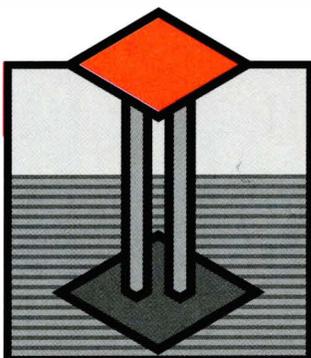
Product	Price(£)	Comments	SIZE WxHxD(CM)	SENSITIVITY(dB/W)	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FACTSBACK CLOSE TO WALL FREE SPACE	ISSUE NUMBER
Proac Response 2.5	2,700	For aspirant high-enders looking for seriously good conventional boxes, this speaker should be first port of call	22,107,25	● 86	8	30	●	1457 149
QLN Qubic 222	400	Ugly but good value floorstander with loads of bass and a smooth balance	21,87,29	● 88	6	25	●	1832 160
QLN Signature	1,000	Attractive pyramidal stand-mount with heavy, laid-back balance but remarkably unboxy sound; superb stereo	27,37,36	● 83	4	25	●	167
Quad ESL-63	3,450	Classic electrostatic lacks punch, but has strengths some can't live without	66,93,27	● 86	8	34	●	60
Rega Kyte	198	Has splendid timing and coherence, sounds very explicit and informative	19,31,19	● 87	8	50	●	114
Rega EL8	298	Kyle drivers in compact floorstander gives more bass but less coherence	17,72,20	● 86	8	55	●	122
Rega ELA Mk II	498	Pretty and smooth, the latest incarnation has a superb midband and excellent communicative skills	30,80,20	● 87	8	40	●	1578 139
Rega XEL	1,040	Looks and sounds great: balance bright but even, with delightful coherence and timing	20,82,30	● 89	6	40	●	1083 132
Rehdeko RK 115a	1,700	Single-driver system has limited bandwidth and obvious coloration, but wondrous dynamic and temporal coherence	34,42,27	● 95	8	55	●	167
Revolver Beretta	100	Great bass for the price, a bit crude further up	19,35,22	● 87	8	45	●	1790 156
Revolver Colt	139	A good all-rounder, if a little bland, and excellent value for money	30,19,22	● 88	6	48	●	1407 148
Revolver 250	250	A nice price for a floorstander, but over-bright sound balance has potentially fatiguing consequences	21,85,5,25	● 87	8	22	●	170
Revolver 260	350	A no-nonsense presenter of rock with plenty of dynamics, not too refined (tested in Sessions)	21,5,91,6,30	● 89	6	40	●	1731 154
RMS Revelation Series 1	1,300	Innovative metal-box compact with integral port/stand – clean with good timing but very laid-back balance	20,99,24	● 81	8	22	●	167
Rogers LS1	149	High grade miniature	20,20,30	● 87	6	●	●	1408 143
Rogers dB101	250	Style par excellence, this shapely sub-miniature is fast and agile but lightweight and forward: great voices; lacks bass	20,26,20	● 88	6	45	●	170
Rogers Studio 3	499	Pricey LS3/5A derived miniature, excitingly coherent if lightweight, can't go loud	19,30,16	● 85	8	30	●	118
Rogers LS3/5A	699	Clever ABI stand/subwoofer helps the classic 3/5A monitor give its best shot	19,31,17	● 82	12	45	●	1354 143
Rogers Studio 5	699	Luxury finish bookshelf-size model has genuine monitoring capabilities	25,25,48	● 89	8	40	●	1556 138
Rogers Studio 7	899	Latest variation on classic BBC-monitor theme has beautifully voiced, laid-back sound	30,63,30	● 90	8	30	●	122
Rogers C6/28	1,303	Large floorstander with carbon-fibre tweeter. Sounds much better than it looks, especially through the midband	25,103,29	● 88	6	20	●	167
Roksan ROKone	595	Large stand-mount is musically very communicative if a little coloured	21,45,33	● 89	6	30	●	1834 160
Roksan Ojan 3 Black	795	Squat, stylish and black, great bass extension and somewhat uneven balance	28,76,46	● 88	8	20	●	1082 132
Roksan OJ3X Black	995	Innovative low-line, 2-way floorstander with decoupled tweeter; great bass and fine dynamic range	28,79,46	● 84	8	20	●	167
Royd Minstrel	269	Not much wellie or loudness but fine coherence and timing, a bit bright	18,69,12	● 86	8	30	●	1167 135
Royd Doublet	450	Great value compact floorstander; lively and very informative, if a little uneven	18,93,19	● 90	4	28	●	1835 160
Royd The Sorcerer	595	Extremely musical and communicative speaker that's fun to listen to. Aesthetics could use improving though	20,31,18	● 86	8	35	●	139
Royd Abbot	665	Dynamic and fine transient qualities are hampered by a rather coloured mid-forward balance	20,81,30	● 90	8	43	●	118
Ruark Talisman II	749	Less ideologically committed than some, strength lies in fine all-round coherence	23,84,32	● 88	8	30	●	118
Ruark Crusader	1,600	Elegant luxury 3-way with wonderfully even-handed, if rather laid-back balance	24,94,31	● 85	6	22	●	167
Ruark Equinox	1,849	The primary strength of this speaker is its ability to remove itself from the picture	25,88,34	● 88	6	45	●	1227 140
SD Acoustics SD3R	649	New SD3 has the agility and charm of a quality miniature, good bass and low sensitivity	20,38,30	● 87	8	25	●	106
SD Acoustics SD5	1,549	Bass suspect but forward midband is delightfully smooth. Has ribbon tweeter	20,110,30	● 88	8	30	●	1081 132
SD Acoustics SD1E	2,995	Two-part design with four rear firing bass drivers that has vibrancy, transparency and energy (Statements)	25,120,40	● 90	6	25	●	159
Sequence 400	330	Clever hang-on-wall panel is well voiced, though bass isn't too great	25,100,7	● 86	8	45	●	164
Shahinian Arc	1,875	Occasionally wonderful small floorstanding omni; bright but coherent and revealing	35,69,25	● 88	6	24	●	110
Silverado Raider	695	Beautifully built audiophile compact, neutral if bright, tough work for amps	20,40,25	● 83	3	30	●	164
Sonus Faber Concerto	1,098	Beautiful Italian bookshelf design with superb midrange but limited loudness capabilities (Statements)	22,5,36,34	● 87	8	45	●	165
Spendor 2020	399	Utilising an oval drive unit in a stylish cabinet, this is a neutral design with AV inclinations (tested in Sessions)	18,34,26	● 87	8	●	●	1756 155
Spendor 2030	599	Discreet slimline floorstander with delicately coherent, laid-back sound	18,89,27	● 87	8	30	●	1836 160
Tangent Monitor 5	80	An uneven performer best suited to small rooms and generous volume levels	17,5,27,18	● 83	8	55	●	169
Tangent Monitor 9	150	Budget floorstander that can motor when the music demands with a solid bass but occasionally raw treble	19,5,75,5,22,5	● 90	6	45	●	165
Tannoy Mercury M2	140	A fine all-rounder with big box and deep bass for the price, could be sweeter and tighter	20,5,38,28	● 87	8	25	●	169
Tannoy Profile 631	150	Balanced, open, unboxy and quite lively, but lacks muscle	19,34,15	● 87	6	60	●	1616 141
Tannoy Profile 631SE	170	Very refined midband; maybe too laid-back for some	13-19,34,16	● 86	7	45	●	1791 156
Tannoy Mercury M3	230	Good-looking fine value floorstander is very neutral and evenhanded, with fine midband but weak dynamics and drive	20,5,87,28	● 87	7	20	●	170
Tannoy Profile 633	300	Impressive bass and balance from very compact floorstander. Upper midband could be cleaner	29,75,28	● 89	85	20	●	1665 152
Tannoy Profile 635	450	Beefy low-line floorstander packs real bass punch and an up-front balance	17-29,85,27	● 90	6	22	●	1665 160
Tannoy Profile 637	550	Good value package but a rather heavy, thick, big-bass sound	17-29,84,27	● 90	3	20	●	164
Tannoy D300	1,000	Gorgeous-looking compact floorstander. And a fine all-round performer too	16-24,85,23	● 87	6	26	●	167
Tannoy D500	1,999	Plenty of muscle and stereo, but short of poise and delicacy. Hard work for amps	31,93,34	● 91	6	20	●	1355 143
Tannoy Westminster TW	6,600	These awesome horn-loaded speakers are remarkably controlled and impressive	large	● 99	8	38	●	C93
TDL Near Field Monitor	120	Despite low price, this is an unimpressive performer, poor low frequency resolution and analysis being main flaws	18,30,17	● 87	8	50	●	1043 130
TDL RTL2	280	Spacious, weighty and enveloping sound if you can accept the laid-back balance	20,73,22	● 87	8	25	●	1412 148
TDL RTL3	400	Bargain-price floorstander has rich, heavy and bright sound with a good scale	20,90,37	● 90	8	25	●	126
TDL T-Line 3	750	Plenty of bass and treble, but broad midband is rather repressed	20,97,38	● 86	8	20	●	164
TDL Studio 1m	899	Transmission line helps bring the best from metal cone driver	23,77,34	● 86	8	20	●	118
Technics SB-M20	200	Well-balanced with natural perspectives and fine midband coherence, but bass is a bit boxy and uneven	20,32,23	● 70	8	50	●	1413 148
Technics SB-M500	450	This model offers a clean, open sound, offset by midbass, heavy balance and low sensitivity	25,78,37	● 100	8	25	●	1666 152
Totem Model One	1,195	Utterly delightful but exasperatingly expensive luxury miniature sets the benchmark for its size	17,31,23	● 87	4	28	●	122
Vandersteen 2Ce	1,395	Elegant staggered baffle contributes to a refreshing freedom from boxiness	41,101,27	● 88	7	23	●	86
Wharfedale Diamond 7.2	140	A good-hearted, lively and up-front performer that's a little lacking in subtlety and smoothness	19,29,5,23	● 88	4	45	●	169
Wharfedale Valdsus 400	199	Goes very loud with a minimum of amplification, but the sound is very thick and uneven, with a heavy upper bass	25,80,26	● 91	8	30	●	1414 148
Wharfedale Valdsus 500	299	Offering a large version of events these rock boxes can move plenty of air, albeit not as subtly as alternatives	25,108,26,5	● 91	4	40	●	1758 155
Wharfedale MFM-3	350	Smooth broad midband gives fine voice rendition; bass could be better	22,89,28	● 87	8	40	●	164
Wilson besench ACT1	6,400	Stylish, technically advanced and sonically as clean as a whistle, this is truly a high-end loudspeaker (Statements)	23,108,37	● 89	6	40	●	1852 162
ZYP AI	199	Cute metal cased micro-miniature is quite coloured but great fun	14,22,12	● 88	8	30	●	110

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# HI-FI LOUDSPEAKERS (CONTINUED)

SIZE WxHxD(CM) SENSITIVITY(dB/W) IMPEDANCE(Ω) BASS FROM (Hz) FACTSBACK NUMBER CLOSE TO WALL FREE SPACE ISSUE NUMBER

Product	Price(£)	Comments	SIZE WxHxD(CM)	SENSITIVITY(dB/W)	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	CLOSE TO WALL	FREE SPACE	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>SUBWOOFERS</b>										
B&W AS6	500	Good material value with a fair amount of low bass from 100W active design	45,51,45.5	●		30				1736 154
Celestion CS135	139	Compact hideaway passive sub lacks deep bass for high sensitivity speakers	52,19,34	●	86	8 45	●			128
Jamo SW600	530	Has some neat styling touches and remote control but deep bass is limited (active)	38,41,53	●		30				1736 154
KEF Model 30B	500	Commendably discreet with good sense of timing but limited extension (active)	38,5,37,43	●		45				1736 154
KEF AV1	2,500	Works well, looks great, shakes the windows but costs a lot and is bulky	56,43,50	●		45				128
Living Voice RW24	11,500	The only horn subwoofer on the UK market brings new meaning to low frequency energy, speed and resolution	146,84,59	●	104	8 40	●			163
M&K VX-7B	450	Baby of a big range this active design delivers deep, plenteous bass albeit lacking in transparency	35,25,37	●		40				1736 154
Rogers AB1	549	Subwoofer-cum-stand designed as partner for LS3/5a or similar miniatures	19,57,16	●	82	8	●			1354 143



## Stands & Supports

**H**i-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, including particle board, glass and

all manner of steel tube and section. Speaker stands come in a variety of sizes and styles to suit different models. Use dealer or manufacturer recommendations to narrow down the choice, but as a rule you want the tweeter at ear height.

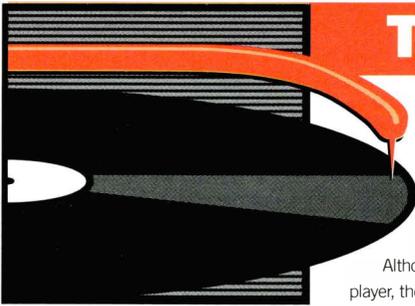
**B Best buy** **R Recommended**

KEY	lead to increase mass, which affects sound.	rack or support.	copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.
HEIGHT (CM): Height of stand or equipment shelf.	<b>WELDED:</b> The better stands and supports are welded rather than bolted together.	<b>SHELF TYPE:</b> Material that shelves are made of on an equipment rack. Wood generally means MDF.	<b>ISSUE NUMBER:</b> The issue of <i>Hi-Fi Choice</i> in which the original review appeared.
TOP PLATE SIZE (CM): Dimensions of top plate on speaker stand or equipment support.	<b>NUMBER OF SHELVES:</b> The amount of tiers on an equipment	<b>FACTSBACK NUMBER:</b> The Factsback reference for ordering a fax	
FILLABLE: Some speaker stands can be filled with sand and/or			

## STANDS & SUPPORTS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	TOP PLATE SIZE(CM)	HEIGHT(CM)	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF SHELVES	SHELF TYPE	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>Equipment Supports</b>										
Audiophile Furniture Base	480	Easy to set up, well-ordered sound	40				4	Wood	1633	151
Custom Design Classic Four	270	Glass-shelved stand with octagonal wooden uprights with upward facing spikes isolating the top shelf, adjustable shelf height	81	46,37			4	Glass		166
Fi-Rax R4	250	Lively, exuberant sound, slightly weak bass					5	Glass	1633	151
Frameworks H500/H175	404	Two-shelf stand and isolation platform combo in tubular steel that made a spectacular impression on audition	70	52,34	●		3	Glass		166
Mana Acoustics Ref. Table	350	King of its type, angle iron, chipboard and glass combined to make a significant difference to sound quality					1	Glass		147
Mana 5 Tier Sound Table	600	Infinitely upgradeable. Persuasive and thrilling glass and angle iron design that adds speed and bandwidth to components upon it					5	Glass	1633	151
Optimum Int 2000 OPT490	350	25kg stand with shelves sandwiched between variable height tubular uprights. Sounds smooth and relaxed with sturdy bass	50	60,40			4	Glass		166
Quadraspire Q4	200	Easy to live with, and tonally neutral					4	MDF	1633	151
Sound Organisation Z038	130	Too lively and lacking order — but cheap	50	84,40	●		5	Wood	1633	151
Sound Organisation Z560	150	A mix of welded and bolted members gives good structural integrity. While performance is not up with the best, it's great value	90	46,36	●		5	Wood		166
Soundstyle Select 6105	280	Respectable sonics, structurally solid and smart					5	Glass	1633	151
Soundstyle Finewoods W105	320	Veneered shelves clamped between tubular uprights that delivers with classical material	82	48,27			4	Wood		166
Stands Unique Sound Tower	249	Wooden uprights combine with glass shelves to provide a fresh, forward sound, but bass could be quicker	81	72,42			5	Glass	1633	151
Target B5	175	Free of colorations, fine grip and good value					5	Wood	1633	151
<b>Speaker Stands</b>										
Alphason NC I	45	Filled single-column design without threaded spike holes that's appropriate for non-critical applications	40-60	16,16	●					1373 146
Alphason NCII	80	Tall, slim and elegant, though sound and value are unexceptional	40-60	17,17	●					159
Alphason Titan	120	Excels in the midband and allows voices to come across in a detailed and expressive fashion	40-60	16,16	●	●				1373 146
Apollo AZ6	80	Fine engineering value, but sound unexceptional and top-plate small	66	15,13	●	●				159
Atacama BD21	55	Good-looking and good value but doesn't match the SE24's sound quality	56	15,17	●					159
Atacama SE24	70	Stands out from the budget crowd because of the consistency and overall quality of the performance	61	19,51,17	●	●				1373 146
AVF Tower 400	35	Ridiculously cheap and much better than no stand at all	54	17,20	●					159
ikos Deadrock 903	50	Smooth and tonally even but short on definition. Deep bass is soft which doesn't help timing	60							1373 146
Gale Reference 600	60	Smooth sounding with impressive bass well suited to less civilised speakers								1373 146
Kudos S50	100	Better sound than the budget stands, particularly at the bottom end	60	15,21	●					159
Kudos S100	270	The best all-round stand around... Probably...	63	15,21	●					159
Mana Soundframes	125	For use under floorstanders and equipment racks, these make music effortless and natural, can be stacked for greater effect	5							1373 146
Partington New Merlin	60	Although light in weight, the stand's performance seemed remarkably muscular but musical rendering lacked a little precision				●	●			1373 146
Partington Discovery	80	The depth and substance of the presentation truly added to the convincing nature of the system's portrayal				●	●			1373 146
Partington Trophy	100	Four-column design with damped top and base plates, sound is tight and cogent with smoothly integrated detail				●	●			1373 146
Revolver RS1	70	A good blend of performance and appearance for the price	53	18,18	●					159
RMS/Stands Unique Vivus	550	Pricey carbon fibres give ultra-clean sound with exceptional voices	50	N/A						159
Soundstyle 124	100	Big, shiny and solid, with fine midband projection	65	17,16	●					159
Stands Unique HP	220	Real wood disguises high performance tuned technology	59	22,23						159
Target R1	280	Truly high-mass four-pillar design with superb weight and speed, giving music delicious attack and outstanding imagery	53	15,21	●	●				1373 146
Target TR60	68	Lively, dynamic midrange and detailed treble from a less-than audiophile oriented twin column design	60	15,15	●					1373 14

# Tonearms



**T**urntables 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.

Although the turntable is the most important part of a record player, the tonearm is the second most important, and the quality of

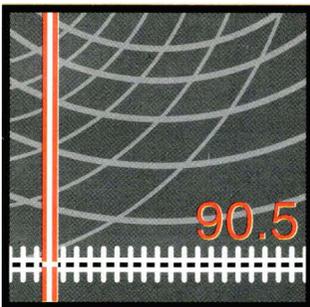
its construction and design have a significant bearing on sound quality. There are three basic types of arms listed in the key and each has its strengths, but pivoted designs are the most popular, for reasons both practical and economical.

**B Best buy** **R Recommended**

KEY	
<b>EFFECTIVE MASS:</b> This relates to cartridge compliance. Generally high mass arms are suitable for low compliance cartridges and vice versa.	<b>PARALLEL TRACKING:</b> An arm which allows the cartridge to track the disc in a linear fashion.
<b>PIVOTED:</b> Arms which allow the cartridge to describe an arc as they traverse the record.	<b>UNI-PIVOT:</b> Pivoted arms with a bearing that allows movement in two planes.
<b>EFFECTIVE LENGTH (cm):</b> Length of arm from bearing to cartridge mounting.	<b>ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT:</b> Important for accurate cartridge set-up.
<b>FACTSBACK NUMBER:</b> The reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback.	<b>ISSUE NUMBER:</b> The issue of <i>Hi-Fi Choice</i> in which the original review appeared.

## TONEARMS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	PARALLEL TRACKING	EFFECTIVE MASS	PIVOTED	UNI-PIVOT	ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT	EFFECTIVE LENGTH (cm)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Alphason HR100S	490	S-shaped arm sounds smooth, but nevertheless reproduces transients with fine attack	Medium	●	●	●	●	229	●	86
Kuzma Stogi Ref	1,000	Large, solid and well-made arm, gives exceptionally clear sound with just a hint of brightness	High	●	●	●	●	229	●	79
Linn Ekos	1,297	Superb, state-of-the-art design which builds significantly on predecessor's strengths	Medium	●	●	●	●	229	●	6
Moth Arm	95	The ultimate budget arm? Refined, sweet, detailed and natural	Low	●	●	●	●	237	●	60
Rega RB300	139	Despite its modest price it sets exceptional standards and could be used on many high-end turntables	Low	●	●	●	●	237	●	60
Roksan Tabriz Basic	275	Targeted at the Xerxes, this is a good alternative to the Rega arm in many cases – a touch bright though	Low	●	●	●	●	240	●	91
SME Series 300-309	657	Beautifully made and finished: fully adjustable and a highly neutral performer	Low	●	●	●	●	238	●	79
SME Series IV	936	Superb engineering and finish with a finely balanced sound, impressive stereo focus and low coloration	Low	●	●	●	●	233	●	60
SME Series V	1,391	Excellent in all respects, this arm arguably sets the standards for pivoted arms, regardless of price	Low	●	●	●	●	233	●	60



# Tuners

**T**he 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 concerts rival all other sources from a hi-fi perspective. Though tuners might seem something of a hi-fi afterthought, 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 reception conditions, but a high-quality aerial system is

well worth having. Tuners come in two basic types. Analogue models tune gradually and can have analogue or digital displays; they are often preferred for sound quality. Digital tuners offer convenient automatic tune facilities and pre-set memories.

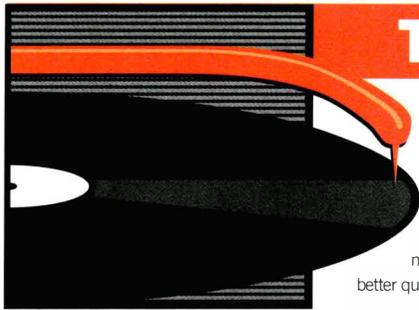
**B Best buy** **R Recommended**

KEY	
<b>WAVEBANDS:</b> Only the FM (VHF) bands give stereo hi-fi sound, though AM (MW & LW) are useful for receiving certain transmissions in the UK.	<b>PRESETS:</b> Number of station frequencies that can be stored.
<b>RDS:</b> (radio data system) was 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.	<b>REMOTE CONTROL:</b> Couch-potato friendly.
<b>SIGNAL STRENGTH METER:</b> Indicates strength of signal from aerial, useful for aligning your 'twig' during installation	<b>ROTARY TUNING KNOB:</b> The ergonomically attractive approach to dial-surfing
<b>FACTSBACK NUMBER:</b> The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.	<b>ISSUE NUMBER:</b> The issue of <i>Hi-Fi Choice</i> in which the original review appeared

## Tuners

Product	Price(£)	Comments	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	SIGNAL STRENGTH METER	ROTARY TUNING KNOB	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
AMC T7	130	Performance adequate but price is sharp, especially with remote control. Some hum	FM, M	30	●	●	●	166	166
Arcam Alpha 7	230	Indifferent RF performance but a touch of audiophile sound quality with clean, strong signals	FM, M, L	24	●	●	●	120	120
Arcam Delta 280	399	Fine sound quality marred by mild synthesiser whine; RF performance only average. Remote £60 extra	FM	20	●	●	●	1254	142
Audiolab 8000T	750	Unusual combination of fine sound quality and RF performance (inc AM), and superb ergonomics	FM, M, L	39	●	●	●	93	93
Denon TU-260L	120	Careful minimalist design promises a surprisingly open and vivacious sound	FM, M, L	20	●	●	●	166	166
Denon TU-425RD	200	A fine all-rounder with advanced RDS, good RF performance and decent sound. Remote extra	FM, M	40	●	●	●	166	166
Harman/Kardon TU950	200	Bulky but effective, delivering fine RF performance and good sound for the price	FM, M, L	30	●	●	●	1254	142
Linn Kremlin	2,600	Controversially good sound at a very high price. The reviewer's saving up but you should check it out for yourself	FM	80	●	●	●	1810	157
Magnum Dynalab FT101	825	Although fairly expensive given its minimum set of facilities, its excellent sound provided ample compensation	FM	20	●	●	●	1810	157
Micromega Tuner	700	Has digital output but even without the Micromega DAC, this provides exceptional sound quality. Looks good too	FM	39	●	●	●	1254	142
Mission Cyrus FM7	400	Open, generous soundstaging gives the music plenty of foundation, if a touch shut-in at the top	FM	29	●	●	●	1810	157
Musical Fidelity E50	300	Sounds involving if coloured and with a subjectively larger-than-life presentation	FM	20	●	●	●	1254	142
Naim NATO1	1,645	There may be better sounding tuners in the world, but we have yet to hear one	FM	20	●	●	●	166	166
Pioneer F-504RDS	250	Cable-friendly with advanced RDS and excellent RF performance, slightly disappointing sound	FM, M	40	●	●	●	1810	157
Rotel RT-935AX	160	Good ergonomics and sound quality at a realistic price, but limited features and RF selectivity	FM, M, L	20	●	●	●	1254	142
Sony ST-SA3ES	250	Clean, lean presentation but needs a quality aerial to perform at its best	FM, M, L	30	●	●	●	1810	157
Technics ST-GT350L	150	Decent RF performance is offset by sound quality more typical of a mini/midi system	FM, M, L	30	●	●	●	1254	142
Thorens TRT2000	450	Not exactly neutral sounding, it nonetheless makes listening fun	FM, M	59	●	●	●	1810	157

# Turntables



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.

Because turntables are mechanical devices that are designed to retrieve modulations as small as a micron, engineering quality is of paramount importance. It is also the reason why turntables cost as much as they do, and require high quality support systems.



**KEY**

**MANUAL:** You do it all: put the needle on the record and take it off.  
**AUTO:** The record player does it all.  
**SEMI-AUTO:** You share the work: you put it on, it takes it off.  
**SPEEDS:** In RPM to correspond with your platters.  
**SUSPENDED SUBCHASSIS:** Sprung suspension to minimise

structural interference.  
**EXTERNAL PSU:** Outboard power supply; generally it indicates high quality.  
**SUPPLIED WITH ARM:** Many turntables require a separate arm to be fitted; if not, this tells you so.

**SUPPLIED WITH CARTRIDGE:** Most turntables do not come supplied with a needle.  
**FACTSBACK NUMBER:** The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.

**ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which the original review appeared.

## TURNTABLES

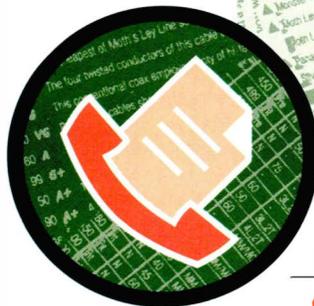
Product	Price(£)	Comments	MANUAL	EXTERNAL SUSPENDED SUBCHASSIS	SEMI-AUTO	AUTO	SPEEDS	SUPPLIED WITH CARTRIDGE	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER	
Alphason Sonata	835	Good sound in all areas - bass, clarity and neutrality all in top class (tested with HR100S MCS)	●					33	●	●	79
Clearaudio Reference	2,500	Opulent beast tested with Souther TQ-1 arm. Tends to gloss over detail with a fizzy character but is quite bold	●					33/45	●	●	1328 144
DNM Rota 2	4,800	Tonally slightly bleached, but extracts detail like few others. Works well on own table	●					33/45	●	●	1328 144
Dual 505-4 UK	200	Consistent sounding and well isolated turntable. It is slightly lacking in oomph			●			33/45	●	●	103
Kuzma Stabi/PS	1,200	(Tested with Stogi Reference) Solid oak plinth; sound is very clear, detailed and extended	●					33/45	●	●	91
Linn LP12 Basik	1,050	Trails the full LP12 significantly, but pace, rhythm, timing etc still top rank	●					33	●	●	103
Linn LP12 Lingo	1,750	The classic reference is improved by the Lingo, but charming character remains	●					33/45	●	●	91
Michell Gyrodec	765	Sweet and natural-sounding player, well matched to Rega RB300 arm	●					33/45	●	●	55
Moth Kanoot	329	Rather coarse-sounding deck that requires decent isolation and comes with a Rega RB300 arm	●					33/45		●	164
Notts Analogue Spacedeck/Arm 1.125	1,125	No frills, just a first-rate, outstandingly natural-sounding deck that will last forever	●					33/45	●	●	159
Pink Triangle Anniversary	1,980	Possibly the most detailed, clear and neutral-sounding deck around. Likeness to master tape is uncanny	●					33/45	●	●	91
Pro-ject 2	299	Remarkably effective at the price with decent timing and a generally well defined sound	●					33/45	●	●	164
Pro-ject 6/Sumiko	699	Don't think of this as a mid-price deck with a good arm, but as a scaled-down Oracle Delphi - it's that good	●					33/45	●	●	138
Rega Planar 2	214	A remarkable product at the price, surprisingly articulate and confident	●					33/45	●	●	48
Rega Planar 3	274	The '3 sounds musical in a balanced and coherent manner, needs decent isolation and suffers a little pitch instability	●					33/45	●	●	164
Rega Planar 9	1,598	Featuring the RB900 arm and a ceramic plinth, this deck puts Rega into contention with the best decks available	●					33/45	●	●	151
Reson RS1	675	Supplied set-up and ready-tuned, this unconventional deck is packed with mid-band detail	●					33/45	●	●	159
Rivelin Eclipse	1,100	Tested with SME 309. Tends to simplify things and add a slightly ragged edge to the proceedings	●					33/45		●	1328 144
Roksan Radius 3/Tabriz zi	890	Elegant-looking turntable with a tidy, ordered sound. Bright and breezy if a shade lightweight	●					33/45	●	●	159
SME Model 20A	4,631	Supplied with Series V arm. Engineered to last a lifetime, giving excellent stereo and detail retrieval	●					33/45/78	●	●	118
Systemdek I/920/Moth	235	The motor is derivative of the Rega Planar 2 with a Moth arm. Up-tempo, even bright at times but never lacks enthusiasm	●					33/45	●	●	115
Systemdek 2X2	499	Neutral, flexible and dynamic deck that begs to be used with a good arm and cartridge	●					33/45	●	●	159
Thorens TD166 VI/UK/RB	300	Refined and solid sound with well-focused imagery; suitable for use with good MM and budget MC cartridges	●					33/45	●	●	103
Thorens TD2001	700	Balances convenience and sound well, but deck lacks detail and bass could be better controlled	●					33/45	●	●	159
Well Tempered Record Player	1,800	Intriguing and challenging. Musically it is not ideal, but has a limpid quality and a lack of artificiality that sets standards	●					33/45	●	●	1180 136
Wilson-benesch TT/Act 2 arm	3,249	Carbon fibre is extensively used in this neutral and well-resolved turntable with its fabulous unipivot tonearm (Statements)	●					33/45	●	●	1775 156

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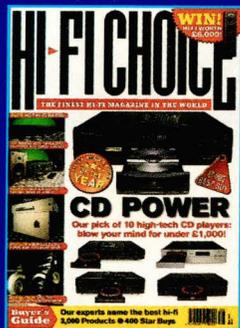


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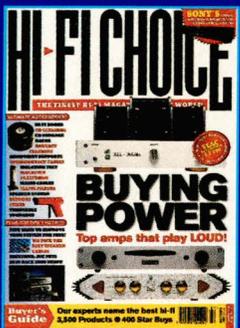
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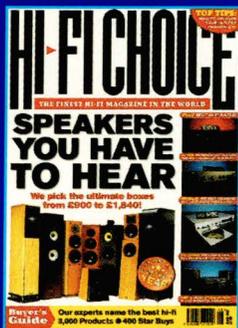
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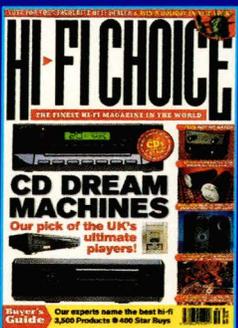
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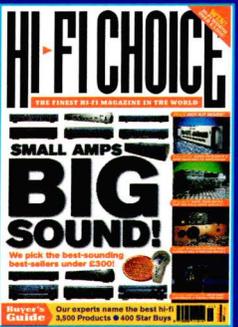
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Audiolab 8000 CDM/DAC (HFC 162)

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**THE BEST BUYS 1997 EDITION OF HI-FI CHOICE WILL BE ON SALE THURSDAY NOVEMBER 20, 1997. DON'T MISS IT!**

**Ultra** David Vivian hustles with high-sensitivity speakers, and finds intriguing contrasts between two approaches to the provision of PA in the parlour.

# Vivian Scene

**O**ne reason to own real hi-fi gear is for its ability to play loud without generating discernible distortion. But how loud is loud? If the windows rattle and the cat runs away, you're getting there. But it's never quite loud enough to be truly convincing, is it?

Live music, from Metallica to the Berlin Philharmonic, is louder. It's louder than the vast majority of hi-fi systems can play — even if you listen in a fairly small room. A solo saxophone, blown with suitable gusto, can hit peaks beyond the reach even of those multi-amped powerhouses that occasionally appear in the pages of *HFC*. That's why real sounds real: it's largely a matter of decibels and dynamic freedom.

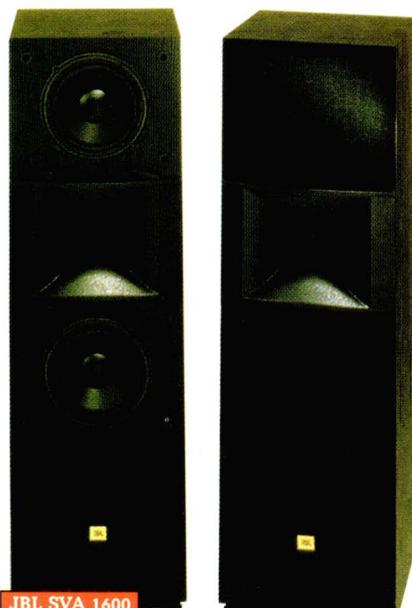
Part of the problem, contends Musical Fidelity boss Antony Michaelson (who's been giving the subject a lot of thought lately), is so fundamental, it's amazing how long the hi-fi industry has been sweeping it under the carpet. His argument is this: the majority of true hi-fi loudspeakers (especially those that aspire towards low coloration and wide bandwidth) are too inefficient for the majority of domestic hi-fi amps to drive them properly. A mismatch between energy in and volume out is the norm rather than the exception.

True, he concedes, there are high-sensitivity speakers that don't require much power to produce a lot of sound and a more believable dynamic range, but usually their drive units are prone to severe colorations and present a highly reactive load to the amplifier, which is not easy to drive. So even if your amp doesn't need to have many Watts on tap, it will need a very stiff power supply, and those don't come cheap.

Conscientiously low coloration designs — exemplars of the breed are made by Spondor, Harbeth and Rogers among others — have a penchant for plastic drivers that produce a natural tone and timbre but are sluggish to start and stop. They can sound beguilingly sweet but devour power like a black hole. This is bad news on two fronts, says Antony. First, you need a juggernaut of an amp to generate a decent degree of sound pressure and control. Second, even then there'll be a loss of "microdynamics" and "microtransients" — low-level but nevertheless vital information that gives life, vitality and dimensionality to the music.

Never missing an opportunity to put money where his mouth is, Antony has just

the product to sort out this thorny dilemma — the monolithic £1,200 Kelly Transducers KT3 speaker, about which Paul Messenger wrote so favourably last month. The Kelly company is owned by MF now that hi-fi luminary Stanley Kelly (of ribbon- and horn-tweeter fame) has retired; and the KT3s — with their light, fast-reacting aerogel drivers — meet Michaelson's blueprint for a great hi-fi loudspeaker. That is, they set out to marry low coloration and distortion with a wide fre-



JBL SVA 1600

Horn-loaded tweeter; home loudness sweeter?

quency range, a reasonably flat frequency response and, most important of all, genuinely high sensitivity. The claim is 95dB at one metre; Paul measured 93dB in room — apparently a good result, even at four Ohms.

Michaelson's datum is a peak of 112dB at one metre, to achieve a satisfactory "average" listening level at a more normal 2-3m distance with clean, unclipped transients. The performance yardstick for the amp's contribution isn't its output in Watts but dB/Watts. This adjusts for the fact that the loudness of speakers is measured in decibels, which increase on a logarithmic scale, unlike the amp's own output in Watts, which ascends linearly. In short, you need a big step-up in Watts to achieve a modest hike in dBs. To drive a low efficiency speaker (say 87dB/W) to a sound-pressure level of 112 dB, a 25 dB/Watt amp is required (112dB minus 87dB equals 25 dB/Watts, or about 320 Watts per channel). Gulp!

Do the same sum with the KT3s and you get a different result: the amp demand drops to just 17 dB/Watts, which is 50 Watts per channel. The exact rating of MF's X-A50 monoblok power amps, natch...

## Head to head

As I have enjoyed a run of muscular floor-standers in my smallish listening room (Mission 735i, B&W CDM7), I was intrigued. So I took the KT3s to be auditioned alongside a pair of JBL's new £850 SVA 1600s and I knew the comparison would be enlightening.

The new JBLs don't claim to be super efficient (they're rated at a middling 89dB) but they incorporate a bi-radial horn sandwiched between two heavy-duty bass drivers. Interestingly, these use paper cones coated in Aquaplas, a concrete-like material developed for the aerospace industry that gives a high stiffness-to-mass ratio.

The horn is the crucial bit. It claims to have much better energy management than conventional drivers because it directs sound towards the listening area and doesn't bounce it off walls, thus claiming to reduce room interference at the listening position.

Auditioning commenced in the roomy basement of my drinking buddy Steve, using fairly modest amplification (40Watts-per-side Rotel RA-931) to see if we could kick up a storm. The JBLs seemed to whip up a hurricane with very little persuasion from the Rotel's volume knob. Bass was a bit lumpy and loose but had kick and extension, with bags of presence and energy in the midband. The Kellys could be made to go as loud (probably louder), but the balance was altogether more laid-back and controlled, and there were signs of strain from the baby Rotel. (Possibly it was struggling with a low impedance load.) Everyone invited into the basement for a listen said the JBLs were louder and, in most cases, better.

Back home, with high-quality sources and amplification to hand (including a pair of MF X-A50s) the KT3s started to show their true colours. Yes, they could go excruciatingly loud, but their strength was in the effortless presence, dynamic subtlety and detail they conjured at modest listening levels.

What to make of all this talk about realistic SPLs and dynamics? The JBLs might not be able to hit 112 dB at one metre with 50 Watts, but nine out of 10 cats we asked said they were louder. Work that one out. ▲



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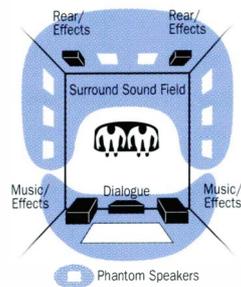
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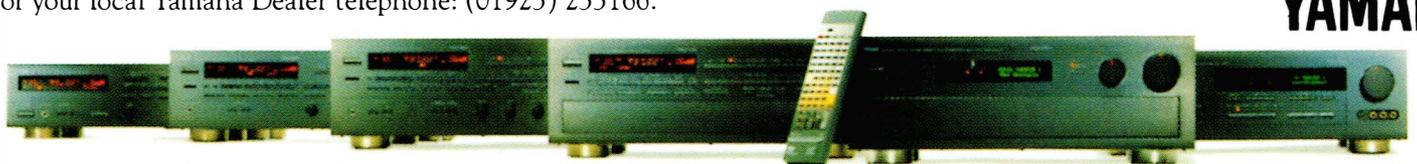
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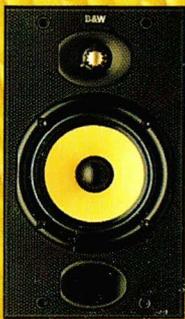
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