PM AUDIO LAB
SINGLE-ENDED 211 VALVE AMPLIFIERS

NEW
LINN TUKAN LOUDSPEAKERS

SIX PAGES OF BARGAIN USED HI-FI
(SUPPLEMENT NO. 19 (overseas - inside) free with this issue.

COMPETITION - WIN MISSION 731 AND 731LE LOUDSPEAKERS - WORTH £1350
Trust your instincts.
Grasshopper! A £3450 pickup cartridge. At last we've risked reviewing this legend. But we looked at it in awe, decided we all had jelly hands and sent it to LP expert, Chris Beeching - see p 70.

We've found many other superb and less delicate products to review alongside it. For example -

- McIntosh are a venerable U.S. name whose past includes innovative valve amps. Their new CDM 7009 CD player, big as a Mack truck, had Eric Braithwaite flailing his arms about - sign language for “it's seriously good”. See what afflicted Eric on p13.

- Back home, Linn's little Tukan loudspeaker will get people excited, as much as the outgoing Kan, thinks Linn fan David Price. Here's a great little Rock miniature, on p26.

- It sounds good and comes at a bargain price - but is that enough? Check out Philips' latest DCC digital tape recorder, the new DCC730 on p23.

- We've had hi-fi from Russia - now it's China's turn. Fitted with Chinese Golden Dragon 211 valves, directly-heated glowing wonders, here's a fascinating single-ended amplifier from the East, on page 57.

I personally hoped that today's Live shows would take over where London's great Olympia hi-fi show of yore left off, but I was wrong. Times have changed. Today we've got Consumer Electronics, dominated by the Japanese. Theirs is a morass of domestic video, camcorders and what have you, all of which attracts kids with lollipops, carrier bags full of free give-aways and sticky fingers. Thankfully, this year we also had a Central London show for real hi-fi: Sound & Vision. We attended eagerly, full of hope as always - and it was great! Our demo room was packed much of the time and we loved it. Thanks for coming to see us. Here's looking forward to an even grander event at the Cumberland, Marble Arch next September - we'll be there. Hope to see you too.

Noel Keywood, Editor
**AMPLIFIERS**

**SHEARNE PHASE 2/PHASE 3**
Eric Braithwaite listens to John Shearne’s updated Phase 2 integrated amplifier. It has a distinctive sound, and with the new Phase 3 for bi-amping, the combo’s even better.

**P.M. AUDIO LAB 211SE**
Our first Chinese amplifier! Valve specialists P.M. Components now produce monoblocks using the mighty 211 power triode. There’s an accompanying valve line-level preamplifier too. Dominic Baker sees the light.

**MOTH STEREO 60/MONO 100**
Peter Downs listens to Moth’s new Stereo 60 power amplifier, and investigates their upgrade system when he takes on the Monoblock 100s.

**COMPACT DISC**

**McINTOSH CDM 7009**
Eric Braithwaite reminisces over his lost love, the McIntosh CDM 7009. Using TEAC’s VRDS mechanism, one-bit chipset and classic McIntosh design who can blame him?

**LOUDSPEAKERS**

**CHARIO ACADEMY ONE**
Eric Braithwaite receives a lesson in Italian style from Chario’s Academy I loudspeaker, a compact, solid Walnut miniature with a sound to match.

**KEF CODA 8**
The war of the boxes continues. The latest be launched is KEF’s Coda 8. Dominic Baker asks whether they have cracked it.

**LINN TUKAN**
Will Linn’s new Tukans, successor of the Kans, continue their reign. David Price has the answer.

**MORDAUNT-SHORT PERFORMANCE 860**
Known for competitive lower end models, Mordaunt-Short have launched the Performance range. Can they show the high-end how it should be done? Read Noel Keywood’s verdict.

**CASSETTE DECK**

**PHILIPS DCC730**
A Digital Compact Cassette recorder for just £250. Our studio engineer, Douglas Floyd-Douglass, listens.

**VINYL**

**VAN DEN HUL GRASSHOPPER IV**
A legend amongst Moving Coil cartridges, here’s the ultimate in vinyl replay. Chris Beeching tells us of its secrets.

**REGULARS**

**NEWS**
Finger on the pulse, ear to the ground, remember you read about it here first.

**LETTERS**
Your turn to sound off about any aspect of hi-fi.

**QUERIES**
In a confused and troubled world, World makes sense of it all.

**COLUMNS**
Noel and the Dominics draw your attention to this month’s relevant issues.

**WORLD VERDICT**

- **OUTSTANDING** - Superb sound, something we’d use ourselves.
- **GOOD** - Has strong merit. Well worth an audition.
- **ADEQUATE** - Mediocre in vital areas. May be worth auditioning.
REGULARS

NEXT ISSUE
Make sure you face the chaos of the sales armed with the January edition of Hi-Fi World.

COMPETITION
Don't rely on Father Christmas - win our competition.

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Make an early new year resolution not to go without Hi-Fi World in 1996.

FEATURES

SUGDEN/Castle System
A truly British system: the simply styled but silkly finished Sugden CD player and amplifier, with Castle loudspeakers, and remote control.

ROKsan System
Eric Braithwaite takes delivery of an all Roksan system. With new Attessa CD player, Radius III turntable, L2.5/S1.5 pre/power amplifiers and floorstanding Ojan 3X loudspeakers, was it all worth it?

SOUND & VISION LONDON SHOW REPORT
We bring you all of the news, equipment and gossip from the Hi-Fi Show of the year! If you missed it, our report is the only way you'll catch up.

DIY SUPPLEMENT

In this month's Supplement we give details of a special active crossover network which allies Quad's ESL63 electrostatic loudspeakers to Celestion's SL6000 open dipole subwoofer. Combined, they give you a cabinet-free loudspeaker with extremely low colouration and a remarkably wide and flat frequency response. There's also a review of the recently updated Loudspeaker Design Cookbook and the new Electrostatic Loudspeaker Cookbook as well as features, news and a whole lot more for the DIY hi-fi enthusiast.

MUSIC

Some excellent new releases for your perusal.

ROCK RECORD OF THE MONTH:
The Charlatans: The Charlatans

CLASSICAL RECORD OF THE MONTH:
George Lloyd: Iernin

ROCK AND POP
JAZZ
CLASSICAL

COMPETITION
TEN top pairs of Mission loudspeakers. There are three pairs of Mission 731LE speakers and seven pairs of Mission 731 speakers up for grabs this month.
One of life's more rewarding decisions.

If only all decisions in life were as straightforward as this.

The fact is that if you want the purest sound and the most uncompromising specification, it simply has to be New KEF Reference.

Every speaker must match our engineers' 'reference' prototype to an almost unbelievable tolerance of 0.5 decibels. This means you can be sure that the sound KEF created will be recreated in your home. Exactly.

Our breakthrough Uni-Q° technology delivers an astonishing stereo image, its unique point source design, with the tweeter at the exact acoustic centre of the mid-range cone, lets you visualise the precise location of every performer on the stage. What's more, because of Uni-Q's smooth, even dispersion you'll hear that incredible realism throughout the room. From speakers this good you'd expect outstanding bass performance. With KEF's famous 'coupled cavity' bass system, now further improved with interports, you get it. We go to similar extremes in perfecting every detail.

Some you can't see, like Oxygen-Free Copper internal wiring or magnetic shielding (vital in Home Theatre). Some you can - sumptuously veneered cabinets with heavily gold-plated feet and terminals, for example. In other words, each pair of Reference speakers is as close to perfection as KEF can make it.

When you know you can choose the best, would you willingly settle for anything less?

The experience of sound

SPEAKERS SHOWN ARE MODEL THREE IN SANTOS ROSEWOOD FINISH. KEF AND UNI-Q ARE REGISTERED TRADEMARKS. UNI-Q IS PROTECTED UNDER GB PATENT 2 236929. WORLDWIDE PATENTS PENDING. KEF AUDIO (UK) LIMITED, ECCLESTON ROAD, TON/IL, MAIDSTONE, KENT ME15 6QP. TELEPHONE (01622) 672261.
A MYRYAD DELIGHTS
First in a range of new products from Myryad is the MI 120 remote control stereo integrated amplifier. With 60 watts on tap it suits a wide range of loudspeakers. The MI 120's custom machined aluminium fascia (6.3mm thick) houses illuminated touch sensitive switches for input selection, an illuminated standby switch, a headphone jack and infra-red remote receiver. The recommended retail price is £529.95.

Myryad Systems Ltd
2 Pipers Wood,
Waterbury Drive,
Waterlooville,
Hants. PO7 7XU
T 01705 265508

VERITY GROUP BUY QUAD
It came as a surprise to learn that Verity Group, owners of Mission, have bought Quad for £3.7m.
Quad had embarked on an ambitious programme to develop and market a stylish system built around the 77 amplifier and their unique Quadlink remote control system. An impressive new production line had been installed in the factory to cope with expected volume, whilst maintaining Quad's legendary quality.

It appears the plan ran into problems. The 77 amplifier and associated Quadlink remote control was designed to run primarily with other 77 sources, notably the 77 CD player and 77 tuner. They were not ready alongside the amplifier, however, limiting its appeal. Doubtless, the long hot summer, which depressed sales generally, had its effect too.
Mission are but a stone's throw away from Quad, in Huntingdon. Their superbly equipped R&D department will doubtless add the sort of resources Quad needs to complete the 77 range and upgrade existing products. The Verity Group includes overseas interests and, doubtless, they'll be delighted at acquiring the Quad brand name. Quad's future seems assured.

BIG PLAYERS TEAC LAUNCH NEW CD PLAYER
Now we bring to your attention TEAC's new one-bit CD player, the CD-P3450. Its features include a 1-bit DAC, an 8-times oversampling digital filter, music calendar, shuffle play, program edit, tape record edit and an auto space function as well as a Toslink optical digital output. It will be available from September, finished in black and priced at £179.

TEAC UK Limited
5 Marlin House,
The Croxley Centre,
Watford, Hertfordshire. WD1 8YA
T 01923 819630
With over 63 years experience in producing loudspeakers for recording, for rock concerts, for discos, for instruments ranging from the wickedest rock guitar to thunderous church organs; only Wharfedale has the ability to give your music the power, the realism, the drama that you really deserve. VALDUS speakers are efficient so you get more sound out into the room for each watt of power delivered by the amplifier. VALDUS takes loudspeaker design into a new era; a new age; a new dimension. Connect-up; Power-up; Volume-up; and say goodbye to your neighbours.

Wharfedale
BRITAIN'S MOST FAMOUS LOUDSPEAKERS
Telephone: 0113 260 1222 Fax: 0113 260 0267

£89.95  £109.95  £149.95  £199.95  £299.95
EASY ENTRY FOR RUARK
Ruark's Icon has been designed to replace the much loved Swordsman, Ruark's entry level loudspeaker. A compact 2-way loudspeaker intended for use close to a rear wall, the Icon uses a reflex loaded 5.5inch bass driver and a 25mm doped fabric/silk diaphragm.

The Icons come as a handed pair which helps improve imaging, and the drivers overlap so that their acoustic centres are as close to each other as possible. The cabinet is constructed from 15mm particle board for the wrap and 18mm MDF for the baffle boards; they are finished in real wood veneer. Recommended UK price is £359.00.

Ruark Acoustics Ltd
59 Tailors Court,
Temple Farm Industrial Estate,
Southend-on-Sea, Essex. SS2 5TH
Tel 01702 601410

THE AGE OF DIGITAL
Harman recently revealed their new digital amplifier. Using a PCM to PWM convertor, output power is 200W with total harmonic distortion less than 0.1% below 20kHz. It boasts an efficiency rate of more than 70% and weighs in at 6kg. This product is expected to reach the shops in January 1997 and is still in the developmental stage. Estimated retail price is expected to be between £2500 and £3000.

Harman Audio
Harman International Industries Ltd
Unit 2 Borehamwood Industrial Park,
Rowley Lane, Borehamwood,
Herts. WD6 5PZ
Tel 0181 207 5050

ALCHEMY'S GOLDEN TOUCH
The new Digital Decoding Engine v3.0 is the latest weapon in Audio Alchemy's armoury. At the heart of this design lies the new Pacific Microsonics HDCD filter. The v3.0 has an optional remote control facility for input selection and volume control.

With the optional Intel 87C51 microprocessor and remote control, the v3.0 forms the control centre of a digitally based system. Even in its pure form, Audio Alchemy claim this DAC is a revolutionary addition to the sub £1000 market. Inputs are three coaxial, optical and Toslink. There is also a digital coaxial output. Recommended retail price is £699.95 with Power Station Four and £899.95 with Power Station Three power supplies.

Alchemy Sound
Bank House, St Agnes,
Cornwall. TR5 0QW
Tel 01872 533117

PRICE REVOLUTION
Revolver announce that the success of their production and export sales has enabled them to reduce the prices of two of their loudspeakers. The Purdey 2-way floorstander, formerly priced at £249.99, now retails at £199.90. The Colt 2-way stand-mounting speaker has dropped from £149.99 to £139.99.

Not content to stand still, Revolver will shortly be introducing two large floorstanders and a new stand-mounting design. They promise to be bi-wirable and finished in Rosewood.

Ram UK Ltd
16 William Trading Estate,
55 Waverly Road,
Sale, Cheshire. M33 7AY
Tel 0161 973 0505

QUAD'S BACK PROBLEM SOLVED
Academy Sound have designed a new back panel for the Quad 33 which uses high quality gold plated phono sockets instead of DIN plugs. Academy Sound will fit this panel along with new tape and pick-up selector boards and provide a free set of high quality IXOS interconnects for £185 including carriage.

Academy Sound
Bank House, St Agnes,
Cornwall. TR5 0QW
Tel 01872 533117

CHORD SOUND THEIR SIREN
New from The Chord Co. is the Siren, an interconnect constructed from silver plated oxygen free copper. The conductors are held within an air foamed dielectric which has very low capacitance. A lapped silver screen gives good interference rejection. Terminated with Chord's own gold plated phono plugs, price is £65.

The Chord Co.
30a Sarum Business Park,
Portway, Salisbury, Wiltshire. SP4 6EA
Tel 01722 331674

HI-FI WORLD
Only a truly neutral loudspeaker is truly timeless

The DALI 850 presents conclusive proof that a truly neutral loudspeaker will perform well, regardless of individual musical preferences. Nothing at or near the price can rival it in the crucial areas of accuracy and neutrality of music reproduction. That's why, as trends may come and go, the DALI 850 will stand the test of time. We even guarantee it. For life.
**THE UNISON RESEARCH RANGE**

Unison have recently introduced a phono stage to complement their Simply 2 and 4 valve amplifiers. Using three ECC83s, the Simply Phono takes its power from the main amplifier; a separate power supply is available to order. Price is £495.

Also new is the £1750 Mystery One; a pure Class A valve pre-amplifier with five line inputs, the £4,500 Performance One S.E. dual mono integrated using EL34s to produce 25 watts and the £11,995 845 Absolute parallel single-ended integrated using 845 triodes for 37 watts output.

**ORIGIN OF THE SPEAKER**

Origin Live have updated their OL2 floorstanding loudspeaker. The new model uses a new bass driver, and boasts a 3dB increase in sensitivity to 90dB. The tweeter is a soft dome. The cross over has been re-engineered and the cabinet made wider to improve air-flow around the back of the cone.

**MURDER INQUIRY**

And now a request for your help regarding a very serious matter. On the 3rd August 1995, the body of the Ayodele Odamtten was found in his flat at 14c Cologne Road, Battersea, London, SW11. Mr Odamtten died through repeated blows to the head and the following list of equipment was missing from his home and has yet to be recovered:

2. Technics SU-VX600 (EBK) amplifier. Serial number OF2CA6143.
4. Two Arcam loudspeakers. Serial number ALS000205.

The suggested retail price of the MS40i is £450 and the MS50i £550.

**ACOUSTICA IN CHESTER**

Chester has a new hi-fi dealer specialising in equipment from Linn, Naim, Arcam, Audiolab and Ruark. You can find them at:

Acoustica
17 Hoole Rd,
Chester, CH2 3NH
Tel: 01244 344227

**MORDAUNT-SHORT CONTINUE IN UPGRADE DIRECTION**

Continuing to upgrade their range, Mordaunt-Short have recently added the 'i' suffix to their MS30s and 40s. Visually this means they get gold colour livery, including a gold anodised aluminium dome tweeter. Sonically, the new tweeter is said to improve detail and resolution, a new MCS cone termination offers improved midband performance and a better braced cabinet improves bass. An all round upgrade, it would seem.

**UK Distribution**

23 Richings Way,
Iver, Bucks. SLO 9DA
Tel: 01753 652669

**ORIGIN OF THE SPEAKER**

Origin Live 87 Chessel Crescent,
Bitterne,
Southampton, SO19 4BT
Tel: 01703 442183

**MURDER INQUIRY**

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4. Two Arcam loudspeakers. Serial number ALS000205.

The suggested retail price of the MS40i is £450 and the MS50i £550.
Eric Braithwaite relishes the MCD 7009 CD player from McIntosh.

They like things big in the States. Especially when they're Macs. No, you haven't opened Burger Monthly by mistake. I mean McIntosh USA as in big amplifiers. And now as in big-money CD players. The McIntosh MCD 7009 costs £2,650. But don't turn the page feeling faint. It's worth all of it. In actual fact, the McIntosh CD player stands no higher than the average transport and D/A converter together. With its name and legend backlit-green on an engraved black glass fascia, it still looks big, like a fifties Cadillac. It's heavy, it's solid, it feels luxurious, and bearing the Teac VRDS mechanism under the hood, it's the CD equivalent of an upmarket Lexus.

Every now and then a product turns up which leaves a hole in the heart when it has to leave home. Not many CD players fill that category, but the McIntosh is one: my Sugden transport and DAC I wouldn't be parted from; a Meridian 500/563 I was a bit sad about; the Counterpoint transport from California I would love to lighten my
With a glimmer of a smile, the Commodore's mind slid beneath Debussy's waves.
doorstep again. I shall want to send the Mac a postcard asking it back for its holidays.

Why this enthusiasm? Nay, euphoria? The Mac negates the whole reason for buying separate DACs and transports - that you can always improve the sound as DACs develop. This one is so good, it should last for years. Even though at one stage I threw an £1800 D/A converter and Jitter Box at its digital output, it would be hard to say it was that much of an improvement on what the Mac had under its perforated sleeve already. Different, yes; more subtle, yes. But substantially, £1800 better, no. Apart from one flaw - it absolutely refused to read one CD pressed by a company called Damont which has slid in and out of other drawers without a whimper - everything was fine and dandy.

Very dandy indeed. What distinguishes the really good digital source (DAC or transport, or in this case both) is its ability to portray real music dynamics. Music swelled out of the Mac on a Ravel recording, giving one of the best impressions of true orchestral dynamics to be had from digital. There were the brass instruments, clear and crisp, even the occasional omphaling of the tuba quite distinguishable from a bass trombone.

Yet while strong tuttis had the equivalent of a Doc Marten boot behind them, delicate string textures and melodies were both clear and, rhythmically, baleetic enough to be wearing pumps. On a Haydn (early instrument) symphony, the brass section powered forcefully out of the speakers while every single demi-semi quaver quivered from the violins. This is not just a matter of dynamics - the brass and lead guitars were pushed just a bit more forward than was entirely real - but detail, too. The Mac was accurate and truthful enough in every department to allow one listener to wince at a single fluffed note on the part of one cellist.

Imaging had a 'cut-glass' aspect which I favour anyway, laying out the components of a group or orchestra like the individual facets of a diamond. Fischer Dieskau singing Schubert Lieder was simply entrancing. Piano and voice utterly stable, with absolute control of the dynamics of the instrument and vocal nuances to boot. Dieskau's every intonation - essential to appreciate 'Erlkonig' - could have been used for a masterclass.

Along with all this came that digital rarity, real walk-in depth, not just an impression of distance. Tonal, absolutely no complaints either, except for a very slight tinge of sourness in flute tone and a trace of just-too-much warmth on an oboe, which gave the instrument a little too much of a reedy tone. Some would call it a beneficial enhancement, but so much of the rest of the range was so accurate that the Mac encourages you to expect absolute perfection in tonal purity and pitch-perfect perfection.

Subtle and delicate when it needed to be, the Mac could put on the bower boots as well. You want power rock? A bit of House? Well, lead and rhythm guitars ripped out of the speakers, kick drums kicked, and Housebeats thundered across the floorboards. Yet still subtle enough that if you want to know exactly what Rickie Lee Jones' Cabasse guitar sounded like, all you had to do was slide the CD into the McIntosh's drawer in preference to almost anything else.

In fact, the McIntosh came to be the preferred digital source out of several around over the reviewing period. Two people, visiting the upstairs neighbour demanded to know what was making that glorious sound: apparently my McIntosh-inspired evening concert was heard through the floorboards and hushed the conversation. It almost destroyed the dinner party they came for: they had to come down to listen. Never mind the price, even if you can get DAC/transport combinations for a few hundred dollars less. It sounds worth even more than you have to pay. It's not just inspiring; it's inspired.

McIntosh MCD 7009 £2,635

MPI Electronics, 13 Weston Road, Guildford, Surrey GU2 6AU T 01483 454993

Two people, visiting the upstairs neighbour demanded to know what was making that glorious sound.>
The much acclaimed Alpha 1 is Arcam’s most affordable CD player to date. A multi-level Delta Sigma digital to analogue converter means the Alpha 1 provides musical reproduction of unparalleled quality. As with the renowned Alpha 5+ CD player, the Alpha 1 offers slimline styling and a minimalist layout, ensuring ease of operation and the traditionally uncluttered look of top quality British equipment.

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

The breathing new Studio 12 loudspeaker’s from Monitor Audio, offer a no compromise approach to design and construction. This is obvious the moment you see them. Whether they are finished in a standard satin veneer or a luscious grand piano lacquer, the Studio 12’s are stunning. All of the models within the new Studio series offer a combination of a gold anodized tweeter and an aluminium alloy bass/mid range driver. When partnered with suitable amplification the Studio 12’s offer remarkable transparency and the necessary focus to reproduce complex passage’s of music with glorious accuracy.

To experience the Monitor Audio Studio series of loudspeaker’s, including the Studio 20SE, visit our branches in Sevenoaks, Aberdeen, Chelsea, Croydon, Guildford, Watford and Witham (Essex).

With the introduction of their long awaited PRE and PWR amplifiers, Cyrus are able to offer a sophisticated ancillary combination. From the exterior the Cyrus PRE looks like the Cyrus III integrated amplifier, complete with the familiar shoe-box casing, microprocessor source selection and volume control. The Cyrus PWR offers outstanding performance, driving most loudspeaker’s with ease. It can also be connected to the PSX-R power supply, improving performance as it becomes isolated from the mains, reducing the chances of extraneous noise and low level signals. This ensures that all music is delivered with a close attention to detail.

For more information on the Cyrus PRE & PWR, PSX-R, DAD7, FM7 and Cyrus III then contact your local Sevenoaks Hi Fi-Cyrus stockist.
EXPRESSION

hi fi connoisseurs and music lovers

The new 77 CD player is available in two guises. The first is a conventional, mains powered CD player, which offers all of the hallmarks of performance and style you expect from Quad products. The second is a bus powered CD player, which must be connected to the revolutionary 77 integrated amplifier and operated by the new intelligent 77 CD player. With this pedigree, the superb CD63SE represents exceptional value for money.

At the heart of the VRDST1 CD Transport, is Teac’s world famous Vibration Free Rigid Disc Clamping system. The V.R.D.S mechanism provides precise transportation of the CD, ensuring accurate tracking and retrieval of the digital information stored.

When connected to the DT1 DAC, via digital or optical outputs the two combine to deliver stunning mid range transparency and bass depth. The DT1’s Bitstream conversion in Dual operation and the VRDST1 represent state of the art performance and unparalleled build quality. For more details on the outstanding Teac VRDS series, contact your local Sevenoaks Hi Fi branch.

CD63SE

Marantz are one of the few dedicated manufacturers that enjoy making recorded sound as realistic as is possible. This development of pure hi-fidelity has led the Hi Fi press to bestow numerous Best Buys and Recommendations upon models within their range. This includes the 1995 What Hi Fi Award of CD player Best Buy.

The CD63SE offers the kind of sparkling performance you associate with more expensive CD players. With its high mass drawer mechanism and copper screening ensuring unrestricted CD Transportation and air flow, music is always reproduced faithfully. The CD63SE also offers a logical upgrade path, via its coaxial and digital outputs.

With this pedigree, the superb CD63SE represents exceptional value for money.

SEVERN

The Severn are Castle Acoustic’s all new two-way reflex loaded floor-standing loudspeaker. As with all of their models the Severn’s are engineered to look good and sound great. The hand crafted enclosure incorporates newly developed drive units. A long-throw bass/mid range driver and a soft dome ferro fluid tweeter, with off-set configuration, ensures outstanding stereo imagery making it adept at handling all types of music, like the bigger Howard II.

Although the Severn has a slim profile and a small ‘footprint’, it generates a surprising level of controlled bass. Finally a spiked plinth in a matching veneer from Castle’s selection of finishes provides stability.

RA970BX

Designed and developed in the UK, like all of their models. The RA970BX integrated amplifier is instantly recognizable as a Rotel product. With the same characteristically solid build, as every model within their range, it delivers the type of performance you expect from this discerning manufacturer.

Four line inputs, a tone defeat switch and a split volume knob provides finite adjustment. When partnered with a suitable pair of loudspeaker’s the RA970BX is able to get most feet tapping. Its 60 Watts RMS per channel means that bass lines are punchy and treble is crisp.

For further details on the Rotel range, including the superb RCD970BX CD player and RC&R97078XII pre and power amplifiers, visit your local Sevenoaks Hi Fi.

ring any one of our branches for a competitive quote

Simply ask your local branch for details.

If you thought this level of service might be expensive - then you would be wrong. We always try to ensure that our prices are competitive. However, in the unlikely event a competitor within 30 miles advertises an identical product as available from stock at a lower price, even in a sale, we will match that price!

Added value offers not available on price match sales.
In the war for the budget speaker buyer, KEF have launched their new Coda 8. Will it help them break Mission's grip on the market, Dominic Baker wonders!
The world of miniature loudspeakers seems to have gone crazy again just recently. In the past Goodmans' Maxim, Wharfedale's Diamond, Celestion's 1 and Mission's 760 have battled it out. Now they've been joined by another well known name - KEF.

This has shaken things up. KEF are no new kid on the block. They have as much knowledge and experience at their disposal as anyone. The new Coda Series has already made waves.

Mission's 731 was one of the first of the new wave of miniatures, a high tech. design for the mass market. It was a little bright and had good bass punch, both things that made its sound impressive - and its sales figures equally so. Just as the 731 was becoming firmly seated as the one to beat, KEF's Coda 7 launched itself onto the market to steal the limelight; in our back-to-back test we reckoned that it just pipped the Missions. Mission, drawing a second pistol at lightning speed, were hot on KEF's heels though with the 731LE, a substantially re-worked 731 that took performance a large step further, for a mere £20 extra. Here, we reveal the second weapon in KEF's armoury, the £199 Coda 8.

KEF's Coda 8s are essentially a bigger Coda 7, and that's just about how they sound. With a bigger, deeper bass and improved power handling they present music with a greater sense of scale and body. Blur's 'Country House' from their latest album The Great Escape, had a full and rounded punch in the bass which drove this track onwards. Bass still wasn't the deepest, but within its limits it was taut and firm, giving good pace and attack. And the 8s can do this at higher levels too, less prone to compression than their smaller brethren.

Through the midrange and treble I found them less coherent and focused than the 7s. Although they definitely have a larger sound stage, Damon Albarn's vocal on 'Best Days' was dispersed across a wider plane, rather than tightly defined between the speakers. Where the 8s certainly add an extra degree of scale, they are less adept than the 7s at conveying the structure of a piece of music.

With less focused material, such as the Stones-influenced Supergrass, where a lot of the studio ambience has been (over)captured to give a wide acoustic, the Coda 8s were better suited. Their almost phasey quality suited 'Time' especially well, with fine texture to the fuzzy electric guitar and harmonica, and an echoy spaciousness to vocal harmonies.

But with more closely miked and rawly depicted pieces such as P. J. Harvey's 'C'mon Billy', some of the emotion and urgency was lost by the smearing of her image across the stage. Also, more noticeable on this piece was the slight cuppiness the Coda 8s have through the midrange, which coloured vocals. Although spread wide, P. J.'s voice was restricted in projection and weight. Instead of the full display of power, urgency and emotion in her voice on 'Send His Love to Me', her vocals were more distant and submerged amongst the rapid strumming of acoustic guitar and intricate percussion than I recall they should have been.

One area where the Coda 7s were especially talented, and where the 8s continue to be strong, is in their sweet, open and detailed treble. KEF have chosen a quality fabric dome tweeter for this job and it has certainly paid off, giving a level of quality that few boxes in this price range manage. It is tonally very neutral, free from the sharpness or ringing of cheaper metal domes and with a better range of texture than the sometimes monotonic plastic and polymer tweeters.

This gives a crisp edge to cymbals and fine upper harmonics and decay to strings, demonstrated admirably by The Verve's 'On Your Own', with its simple acoustic structure. With twelve string acoustic guitar, maracas and cymbals there is a lot of treble detail to resolve, which the Coda 8s did in an informative and musical fashion.

The Coda 8s are an interesting loudspeaker. In many ways they do exactly what they should, building on the strengths of the 7s by adding an extra dimension of scale and depth. But in other ways they fall a little short, not having quite the same focus and precision that made the 7s so captivating. Superficially, they appear to be just a bigger Coda 7, but the 8s have quite a different character.

KEF Coda 8 £199

KEF Audio Ltd., Tovil, Maidstone, Kent. ME15 6QP 
Tel 01622 672261

WORLD VERDICT

The new KEF Coda 8s have a big, atmospheric sound, but are less focused and a little more coloured than the 7s.

Measured Performance see p113-121
Dominic Baker combines Sugden's Optima CD player and remote controlled Optima 140 amplifier with Castle's Severn loudspeakers. Here's a system with pedigree.
Severn. It was driven by the Sugden 140 amplifier, fed by the Optima CD player, forming a neat, elegant system. The silky brushed black finish of the Sugden amplifiers complemented the rich real-wood veneer of the Castles to give the whole a luxury feel.

First of all let me describe the character of the individual components and why they work so well as a system. The CD player has quite a bright balance, not sharp but with plenty of treble detail and insight. The Optima 140 amplifier, like many of Sugden’s designs, has a smoothness about it which many other solid state designs fail to provide. It is quite dry and cold through the midrange, neutral in the treble and powerful and full in the bass. The bass gives strong, deep lows, but as a combination these components were a touch ruthless through the midrange and treble.

Enter the gentle and mellifluous Castle Severns. The bass of the Severns isn’t the deepest, but it’s tight and tuneful, so it complements the system well. Its midrange and treble are sweet and full, but a touch soft for my liking. Combined with the Sugden though things fell into place: the various merits of each component balancing out to form a compromise that was the sum total of the better parts. This is what system matching is all about, achieving a balance that allows the best qualities to shine.

To finish off, I installed a set of Campaign Audio Design silver plated copper interconnects, to ensure that the treble from the CD player stayed sweet, and Chord Co. Flatline speaker cable, which has a detailed and neutral balance, whilst at the same time allowing the amplifier to keep a firm grip on the drive units. Once set up the only other necessary adjustment was to raise the front spikes on the Castle Severns, angling them back slightly so that the tweeter was aimed at ear level. I found the sound cleaner and more open with them set like this.

What impressed most about this combination, and where it stands head and shoulders above any comparatively priced all-in-one system, was in its taut, deep and punchy bass. U2’s ‘Stay (Faraway, So Close! ’ with its deep resonant bass guitar and kick drum conveyed impressive scale, filling the room with rolling bass lines. The Optima amplifier had a firm grip on the Severns, notes stopping and starting with a crisp edge, leaving little impression of overhang.

The Cure’s ‘Lullaby’ from their Disintegration album, a track I haven’t listened to in an age, still managed to draw me deep into the eerie, spooky atmosphere of the music. The marimba/maracas were softly placed in the sound stage, with no sharpness or tweeter colouration, but highlighted enough to clearly set the tempo for the track. The slightly muffled, closed-in vocal of Robert Smith became a little more with the warm, plastic character of the Severns’ bass driver, but remained intelligible, no doubt helped along by the colder, dryer midrange of the Optima amplifier.

Breathing a little freer with The Crash Test Dummies’ ‘In The Days Of The Caveman’, the Sugden/Castle combination showed just how open it could be. With a good sense of acoustic space and detail through the upper midrange, this track took on a far more spacious sound, stretching out beyond the speakers.

Following on from this, Swimming in Your Ocean displayed the projection vocal and lead guitar pulling forwards and out across the carpet. The system was especially talented in sound stage depth. Often with CD, the sound stage can be very two-dimensional, with little depth behind the speakers. The Sugden/Castle combination certainly doesn’t fall into this category, which is surprising because to get walk-in depth you normally have to spend more.

Capable of delivering very high sound pressure levels cleanly and in a balanced and musical manner, the system continued to compel. As volume level rose, everything stayed in place. Elastica’s raucous ‘Waking Up’ held focus and balance, with just a midrange hardening of vocals creeping in as the system was really pushed hard. Bass dynamics compressed a little, but not in an unpleasant fashion, and treble had a crisp bite that never strayed too close to harshness.

Assembling this system was an interesting exercise, showing the convenience of remote control is available in the same package as classic British sound and build quality. The system performed every bit as well as I’d hoped. A true sophisticate, it was stylish, beautifully constructed, slick in use with remote control and offered a top quality sound.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Sugden Optima CD</td>
<td>£699</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sugden Optima 140</td>
<td>£549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castle Acoustics Severn</td>
<td>£499</td>
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Sugden J.E. & Co. Ltd.,
Valley Works,
Station Lane,
Heckmondwike,
W. Yorks. WF16 8NF
01924 404088

Castle Acoustics Ltd.,
Shortbank Road,
Skipton, N. Yorks. BD23 2TT
01756 795333

**WORLD VERDICT**

A well balanced system offering fine sound and build quality.

**Measured Performance**

see p113-121
WHO SAYS THE
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IN EUROPE?

EUROPEAN LOUDSPEAKER OF THE YEAR

At B&W we’ve just scored another major success. Our CDM1 has now won European Speaker of the Year, which was judged by the Editors-in-Chief of leading photo, video and audio magazines from thirteen countries. High praise indeed. But with a winning team of engineers coming up with a hat trick of technological innovations: outside tweeter mounting, kevlar drive unit and contoured edges for reduced sound diffraction, it’s not an entirely unexpected result. For more information call B&W UK on 01903 750750. And see that the best European players don’t have to start at £8.5m.
Philips' DCC is still trying to get its foot in the door against stiff competition from the conventional cassette, Sony's MiniDisc, DAT and, most of all it seems, consumer indifference. DAT has become an accepted professional industry standard format, but it's expensive for consumer use and pre-recorded software is scarce. Sony's MiniDisc has met some success in Japan and the U.S.A., areas where DCC has so far failed to make any serious inroads and has been declared dead by the majority of the Press.

On European home territory (Philips are Dutch) DCC has struggled. Philips decided recently to renew their marketing efforts, mainly by slashing recorder prices. They've belatedly realised that Sony were knocking DCC badly by offering cost-cut Dolby S recorders like the £300 TC-K61S.

This competitive war has caused hardware prices to tumble - good news for potential buyers. However, tape prices remain high, although little higher than cassette, now that the music biz has raised prices, possibly to kill off cassette.

We've assiduously reviewed DCC recorders since they were first introduced and found that, in sound quality, they deliver. The new £250 DCC730 was no disappointment in this respect either. It can make 18-bit recordings off CD, and playback pre-recorded DCC cassettes and conventional analogue cassette too (Dolby B & C). This is a value packed product.

The styling of the 730 is derived from the design objective of easy operation and practical functionality. All major functions have been put onto the remote control unit, with basic override control.
The sense of occasion - it all starts when your touch reaches the Open button and the interior of the superb VRDS mechanism presents itself. You will know to anticipate music in glorious detail - detail your last player could never find for you. You will also know why: Nothing is able to touch the VRDS mechanism for stability and musicality, and nothing else can touch the DAC which, in the VRDS-10 Special Edition, comes straight from the acclaimed TEAC D-T1. It is your TEAC. Only you can touch it.
functions on the machine itself. However, its behaviour at times appeared to be bafflingly illogical and painfully slow. The reason for apparently peculiar behaviour lay in the dual-function controls. For example, stabbing at the Track Skip button gives just that - track skip. But hold it for more than 0.5 seconds and the machine goes into full rewind. This logic sequence changes again when the machine is playing to give fast search if the track skip button is depressed for more than 0.5 seconds. Without prior knowledge, gained from reading the handbook, it appears that the 730 is missing functions like fast wind/rewind and that it behaves strangely in response to commands. Philips could usefully make the operating logic of this player more transparent and user friendly; it needs domesticating.

Loading cassettes takes longer than usual, as the machine reads the tape's table-of-contents and the user friendly (but dated) LED display scrolls what you are about to hear, along with a string of not very important information. Some of the delays, such as winding through the blank leader of a pre-recorded tape until the time code started, seemed excruciating, as did the clanking and whirring as it shuffled about in track search. However, fast reeling is now relatively fast and there’s no doubt that for those who thrive on such things, the logic and track search facilities are comprehensive.

For the librarians among you, the DCC 730 has good titling and editing facilities - great for ID and tape security when sending your precious demo to the record company (as long as they have a DCC) or just impressing your friends with your hi-fi's Star Trek communication skills.

Recording digitally the DCC 730 is more than capable of delivering arguably the best recording quality around for under £250 pounds. In terms of noise (i.e. tape hiss, hum, etc.) the DCC attains levels of near studio acceptability. The dynamic range is good. I did feel that recordings sounded a little ‘dry’ and compressed, especially when compared to the more musical Nakamichis and top-end Dolby ‘S’ machines.

The 18-bit converter is noticeably superior to the 16-bit machines I have heard. This upgrade in specification is heard mainly in the overall smoothness and linearity of programme, and does induce a smoother, more analogue presentation. The whole recording process itself is remarkably simple, although ‘customising’ recordings, with fade ins and outs, wasn’t entirely successful because of the large incremental steps of manual adjustment; it steps in and out rather than fading gracefully.

There was also a danger of over-recording, despite the ‘over’ warning indicator, which was slow to react and not entirely responsive to transients or subsonics. For fans of noiseless recordings however, the DCC 730 is a must, as it is for archivists. The only foreseeable problem is commercial software - but Philips have assured us that pre-recorded DCCs will enjoy wider distribution in the future.

Those with a collection of analogue pre-recordeds won’t be disappointed by the DCC730 either. It had a tight grip on tempo and reproduced music cleanly; I’ve heard many people express surprise at DCC’s analogue performance. I heard some leanness in the sound, nicely balanced out by fulsome recordings like Tina Turner’s ‘Private Dancer’. Dull recordings, like Diana Ross’ ‘Eaten Alive’, can sound hopelessly muffled on ordinary cassette decks, but came over well on the DCC730. ‘Free Nelson Mandela’ fairly span along, as it should - a great sound from The Special AKA. The DCC730 acquitted itself well in this area.

DCC does not offer the sonic integrity of DAT in my experience, but then again it is not designed to. The greatest strengths of this recorder are what it actually demonstrates with regard to the DCC format. Here we have a digital recording system, with available pre-recorded material and the ability to compile personal selections digitally direct from CD. DCC also belongs in-car, where CD tracking can be a problem, especially when negotiating the congested M25 or right handers at Brands. I’d say DCC has a future and the new DCC730 is a good ambassador for the format. It’s a bargain - even if you do have to negotiate a daunting handbook first. That’s the highest price to pay though.

Philips DCC 730 £250
Philips Consumer Electronics Ltd.,
City House,
420-430 London Road,
Croydon, Surrey CR9 3QR
Tel 0181 689 2166

**WORLD VERDICT**

Great quality all-around, but not user friendly. A bargain all the same.

**Measured Performance**

see p113-121
David Price finds Linn’s Tukan loudspeakers build on the strengths of their idiosyncratic forebears, the Kans.

"The Earth can be any shape you want it"
Thomas Dolby, ‘The Flat Earth’

A decade ago, many audiophiles believed the only boxes to have on the end of a system had the word “Linn” written on the back. Aided by enthusiastic dealers and a certain now-defunct periodical called The Flat Response, Linn argued that the first priority of a ‘speaker should be the way it played rhythms. The most extreme embodiment of this approach was the Kan, a tiny box sandwiching the treble and mid drivers from Linn’s flagship Isobarik behemoths.

An unlikely idea, admittedly, but when properly sited against a rear wall on a decent pair of open frame stands, the Kans were capable of a captivating performance. They sounded extremely
fast and tight, with a capacity to
disappear into their own soundstage, an
ability Linn's bigger speakers never
convincingly displayed.

But their downsides were many.
There was no deep bass to speak of, or
rather there was, but (as the saying
goes) not as we know it. Although
super-tight and tuneful, Kan bass was a
cerebral rather than a physical thing,
sounding underwhelming if you weren't
used to it.

Kans also shared with Naim's
original NAIT amplifier a profoundly
fussy approach to matching ancillary
components - ironic as both items were
often used together with some success.
But in true eighties style, if you wanted
more than a squeak from them, Kans
demanded a large, muscular transistor
amplifier. And they also didn't like
inferior source components. Early CD
was exquisitely painful through Kans,
meaning in those days it was an LP 12, a
Xerxes, or nothing.

Nowadays, in a somewhat different
audio climate, the Linn Tukans boast
many of the strengths of the Kans of
yore, with few of their idiosyncrasies.

Almost identical in size, but with a more
modern appearance, gone is the
uncanny (excuse the pun) resemblance
to the antique BBC LS3/Sas. Nowadays,
Linn's baby standmounters come in a
multiplicity of finishes (of a very high
standard) with a removable 'stocking'
grille rather in the vein of Mordaunt
Short's now deceased MS3.10s. Looking
'round the back of this two-way design,
in addition to the standard gold-plated
bi-wire terminals, horror of horrors, a
bass reflex port can be found (the Kans
had a sealed enclosure).

The Tukans then, are a more
modern, user-friendly Kan, less "flat
earth" in conception, designed to work
in a wider range of systems. Do they
live up to their promise? I decided to
put them against my own pair of 1984
Kans. Starting with Thomas Dolby's
'Dissidents', the Tukans delivered an
extremely expansive, full-bodied sound
with excellent speed and dynamics,
making your typical sub-£500
floorstander sound ponderous by
comparison. Compared to the distinctly
atypical Kans, bass was more weighty
and seemed to breathe better, with
synthesiser bass sequences sounding
more supple and tuneful. But not to be
outdone, the Kans replied with a lighter,
tighter sound, with better attack
transients to bass drums and a lithe
lower midrange. Where the Tukans
started and stopped with real speed and
precision, the original Kans were even
closer.

As if to compensate for this
marginal loss of grip, the Tukans
seemed less shut in, with an easier,
more open sound. Underworld's 'me.'
brought their respective differences into
sharp relief. Where the Kans had a
smaller soundstage inside which
instruments were tightly located, the
Tukans sounded bigger and more airy.
Where the Kans had low-level detail -
the arpeggiated keyboard at the back of
the mix being easily discernible - the
Tukans had a more fluid, musical
attitude. Vocals were tangible, and bass
lines more bouncy. The Kans on the
other hand fought back with
outrageously tight rim shots which
thwacked the listener betwixt the eyes.
Their successors, like nearly all other
speakers I've heard, sounded soft in
comparison.

It was with jazz that the plot hit
home. Although the Kans delivered a
superb, finely etched cymbal on Lee
Morgan's 'These are Soulful Days', the
young newcomers proved ultimately
more satisfying. Double bass assumed a
physicality and presence that the
original Kans couldn't muster, while the
soundstage as a whole was larger and
more believable. Even compared to
other similarly priced high quality
designs such as Chario's Hiper One, the
Tukans gave superior dynamics,
steadfastly refusing to sound

constrained or prone to break-up, even
when volume levels went right up.

The downside of the Tukans?
Although in no sense coarse, both
drivers lack the last degree of finesse of
the original design, needing some
running in to get them to smooth out.
In the upper regions, Tukan treble
seems more extended, but gone is the
last degree of the Kans' space and
clarity, making for a slight softening and
lack of detail on hi-hats and
tambourines. In the lower registers,
although the port is well executed, it's
possible to identify a 'sweet spot' in the
upper bass that makes the Tukans
sound bigger than they really are.

Finally, like the 'speakers they
replace, they're fairly critical of source
components, so you won't be able to
get away with any old front end - I'd say
a Marantz CD-63SE would be the
minimum. Fortunately, they seem both
more sensitive and an easier load, so
quality amplifiers of modest power
should work well.

The key to the Tukans is
consistency. They work seriously well
on all types of music, in a far greater
range of systems than their
predecessors. Bringing strong rhythm,
dynamics and imaging together
successfully, the Tukans are an
ultimately more enjoyable and
eminently more usable loudspeaker
than their "flat earth" antecedents.
Thomas Dolby was right all along.

Linn Tukan
£389

Linn Products Ltd.,
Floors Road,
Waterfoot,
Eaglesham.
Glasgow G76 0EP
T 0141 307 7777

WORLD VERDICT

Highly musical standmounters that
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a great deal to worry about.

Measured Performance
see p113-121
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E&OE
The rich tones of a John Shearne Phase 2 amplifier get a boost when joined by the new Phase 3 bi-amping power amplifier, finds Eric Braithwaite.

It is always a bit risky to use the word 'shock' when writing about an amplifier, because readers might conjure up a picture of a singed reviewer and blue sparks. Although blue is about the Shearne Phase 2 integrated...
siren n. 1. (Gk Myth.) creatures half woman, half bird, living on rocky isle to which they lured seafarers with enchanting singing. 2. sweet singer.

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World Radio History
and Phase 3 power amplifier is their LED and the marble-effect fascia. Possibly, also the faces of one or two other manufacturers, because not knowing the cost of these units until the listening sessions were over, I had happily imagined something getting on towards double the actual price. That was the shock.

**PHASE 2 INTEGRATED**

The sound of the Phase 2 integrated has changed a bit since it was last reviewed in Hi-Fi World. All to the good it must be said though the original was very good to start with. Their slightly rosy, valvey warmth is still there, even though this is a transistor amplifier, but subjectively the latest version sounds usefully tighter-focused in imaging, detail and speed.

Curiously, a slightly recessed presence region was evident from the Phase 2 on its own, which was not the case when I later tried the Phase 3 power amplifier with it in bi-amp mode. Curious, because the power amplifier sections of the two are the same. This tended to take some vocals back a pace or two in the mix to meld them with backing vocals. This was almost altogether smoothed out when the Phase 3 was used for bi-amping. It didn’t affect Gary Moore’s After Hours, leaving him satisfactorily forward on the stage, with the group more clearly around and behind him.

**PHASE 3 POWER AMPLIFIER**

The word ‘neutral’ these days is too often used as a synonym for ‘boring’. The Shearne Phase 3 power amp is decidedly not so, but ‘neutral’ it is. Pressed into service via a passive pot for some hurried listening to a number of CD players, it became clear within minutes that the character of anything put through the cables into it was going to come out absolutely unaffected except by a tinge of richness at the bottom end.

Wired up to my usual Argo HR preamp - but to Harbeth HL Compact 7 dynamic speakers instead of ESL-63s, for reasons which will be apparent later - it was difficult to believe the Decca Ashkenazy recording of Tchaikovsky’s Sixth wasn’t issuing out of big B&W monitors in one of Decca’s Kilburn mastering suites. It was dynamic, big, brassy and thoroughly exciting. This is a fine power amp.

To further investigate its qualities I decided to use the Phase 2 integrated as a pre-amp instead of the Argo. A spot of Ravel, also on Decca, suggested the depth was almost as good as it had been with the Argo, but slightly less airy and spacious, while the serious razzmatazz of horns and trumpets was a touch richer and fuller. There was a mild question mark over the purity of the treble: in the Allegro of the Pathetique, cymbal clashes soared over the full band, but the Argo HR had the better extension. Anyway, this showed how little the preamp stage of the Phase 2 added to things.

**BI-AMPING**

In bi-amping mode, a second pair of speaker cables allows the Phase 2 integrated to feed the tweeters while the Phase 3 powers the main driver. Hence the use of bi-wirable Harbeth Compact 7 speakers.

Benefits there were a-plenty for a first step onto the bi-amping ladder. The Tchaikovsky broadened its stage width across the speakers perceptibly. Along with this improved breadth came an equally improved depth perspective and a much tighter clash of cymbals in the brass - and - percussion laden third movement than the pair had when used simply as a pre/power amp. The overall perspective was a little more laid-back, but while the brass was a touch less dynamically forward, there was much more distinction between the instruments.

No slouch at rock music, either, the Shearne pairing turned out strict-tempo timing. Bryan Adams’ live ‘C’mon Everybody’ was the very living picture of a live performance, so much so if a teenage girl had been listening she would probably have rushed up to the speakers and found herself kissing air instead of the singer.

What comes across when the pair are together is a combination of sheer detail and precision, combined very happily with a very subtle warmth.

What comes across when the pair are together is a combination of sheer detail and precision, combined very happily with a very subtle warmth.

CONCLUSION

The Phase 2 on its own rates among the best half-dozen of the £500-ish integrated amps around. It has a distinctive, unusual and engaging character.

With the Phase 3 power amplifier and bi-wired, the two are an astonishing sonic bargain in my experience. But with the Phase 2 alone Shearne owners start off a good few rungs higher up the quality ladder than most.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Price</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2 integrated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase 3 power amplifier</td>
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Shearne Audio, P. O. Box 22, Stevenage, Herts. SG2 8HF
Tel 01438 740955

**WORLD VERDICT**

Building on the strengths of the original, the Phase 2 integrated has a smooth valvey sound with good focus.

The Phase 3 power amplifier is highly neutral and has a smooth balance, a sonic bargain.

**Measured Performance**

see p113-121
SPECTRA Dynamics

DELEX acoustic PRODUCTS
Designed by Engineers - Used by Professionals

A. DELEX ACOUSTIC PANEL
You need at least 2 Deflex panels for a pair of small bookshelf speakers, 4 panels for a pair of Tannoy 5's, and at least 6 panels for larger cabinets. Deflex panels are reusable and transferable.

Standard Panel 28cm x 21cm £7.95 each
Small Panel (LS8RM4) 14 x 17cm £4.95 each
Sub-woofer Panel 34cm dia. £14.95 each

B. FOCUSPODS
Focuspods are high performance vibration absorbing supports designed to be placed under Compact Disc Players, Turntables, Amplifiers, Loudspeakers and All other Audio, Video & Computer equipment. The spherical surface provides even contact and uniform energy distribution.

Focuspods £14.95 pack of 4

C. TURNABLE PLATTER ISOLATION MAT
This turntable mat has been carefully designed to incorporate 3 layers of Deflex materials, all of differing hardness. The sandwich layer 0-1A hardness (shock absorbing); Base layer 15A hardness (support).

Turntable Mat 12" diameter £55.50 each

D. MAGNAPAD GOLD
Magnapads have been specifically designed to absorb unwanted vibrations directed at the speaker chassis, coils & magnets and to prevent further sound reflections of the flat surfaces.

Magnapad Gold 7 (75mm dia.) £7.95 pair
Magnapad Gold 5 (125mm dia.) £12.95 pair
Magnapad Gold 7 (175mm dia.) £15.95 pair
Magnapad Gold 9 (225mm dia.) £19.95 pair

E. DELEX WRAP
Unwanted vibrations transmitted from the reflex ports will distort the music. To prevent this, the only remedy is to suppress the distorted sound. Wrap’s dense composition and unequalled shock absorbing properties significantly remove this unwanted colouration.

Wrap 28cm x 21cm x 15mm thick £14.95 sheet

F. DELEX SHEET
Sheet is for the enthusiast who wants to damp out resonances wherever they are perceived to be influencing the natural sound of the system. Ribbed sheet can be used for lining ports, etc.

Plain Sheet - 2mm thick (28cm x 21cm) £7.95 sheet
Plain Sheet - 3mm thick (28cm x 21cm) £8.95 sheet
Plain Sheet - 4mm thick (28cm x 21cm) £9.95 sheet
Plain Sheet - 6mm thick (28cm x 21cm) £11.95 sheet
Plain Sheet - 8mm thick (28cm x 21cm) £13.95 sheet
Plain Sheet - 10mm thick (28cm x 21cm) £15.95 sheet
Ribbed Sheet - 3mm thick (28cm x 21cm) £8.95 sheet
Ribbed Sheet - 6mm thick (28cm x 21cm) £11.95 sheet

G. ISOLATION BLOCKS
Isolation blocks are offered in a range of shapes and sizes, designed to accommodate all types of equipment of varying weights and sizes.

Isolation Block - 43mm dia x 25mm thick £4.50 each
Isolation Block - 80mm dia x 20mm thick £8.50 each
Isolation Block - 120mm dia x 30mm thick (40mm hole) £7.50 each
Isolation Block - 75 (75mm square x 20mm) £5.50 each
Isolation Block - 115 (115mm square x 20mm) £8.50 each
Isolation Block - 150 (150mm square x 20mm) £16.50 each

H. DE-COUPING GASKETS
De-coupling gaskets not only help isolate unwanted vibrations between cabinets and drive units but because of the material composition provide a perfect air-tight seal without the need to use a mastick sealant. The range is continually expanding. Phone for details.

Gasket - KEF B110B £3.00 each
Gasket - SEAS 17cm £3.00 each
Gasket - MOREL MW 142 £3.00 each
Gasket - MOREL MW 140P £3.00 each
Gasket - SCAN-SPEAK 2008 £2.50 each
Washer 20mm & 25mm dia x 6mm thick £0.30 each
Torsional washer 35mm dia x 6mm thick £0.30 each

I. CORNER BLOCKS
Corner blocks are designed to be fitted in rectangular areas of enclosures to prevent recircum sound reflections - "bat's eye phenomenon."

Corner Block - Theoretical edge 50mm £1.25 each
Corner Block - Theoretical edge 75mm £2.50 each

J. TUNABLE PORT SYSTEM
The port system ranges from 30mm to 100mm dia, and can be built up from 30mm lengths onwards, in 10mm increments. Phone for full data sheet.

Port System £9.75 each

* SPECIALIST SERVICES *
Deflex material can be used to encapsulate crossovers and other components, etc. Telephone for further information or fax your details.

Specialist Services Filling charge £12.00 per kilo
All prices inclusive of V.A.T

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Indonesia Tel/Fax 31 311 598
Italy Tel/Fax 02 578 88 101 Fax 02 578 88 101
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Korea Tel 031 311 598 Fax 031 311 598
Mexico Tel 52 555 111 Fax 52 555 111
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Switzerland Tel/Fax 51 311 598 Fax 51 311 598
Switzerland Tel/Fax 51 311 598 Fax 51 311 598
US (CA) Tel 415 669 7181 Fax 415 669 7558
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"...a marked improvement was obvious from the first few bars of REM's Automatic for the people album...
HI-Fi News & Record Review - March 1994

...the result was sharper imaging, wider dynamics and a more natural sound...
Audio Video - November 1994

CHOICE VERDICT
best sound quality ...
Hi-Fi Choice - January 1994

For the enthusiast & - D.I.Y. -
The simplest and most cost effective way to upgrade your existing system
ROCK-ER

Built from ResinRock, Mordaunt Short's new 860 loudspeaker is heavy, says Noel Keywood.

Here's a big speaker backed by a lot of engineering and flaunting some interesting ideas. Its ResinRock cabinet is impressively inert to a rap of the knuckles and it uses a set of polypropylene coned drive units custom designed to provide "improved integration with partnering drivers". The midrange unit sits on its own isolated front baffle to avoid vibrational interference from the cabinet. Twin bass drivers offer good power handling and harness floor reinforcement, Mordaunt Short claim, to improve depth. A metal dome tweeter handles treble.

I wasn't surprised to be confronted by a loudspeaker crisp, fast and precise, as it pounded out Primal Scream's 'Rocks'. The opening drum strikes had power enough, if not floorboard shaking depth, and percussion was clean and vigorous. This isn't a great recording, but Bobby Gillespie's vocals came across as well as can be expected. He was in correct perspective to the rest of the band, neither muffled nor too forward.

A little upper midrange brightness gave percussion a firm edge; the 860 has some brightness in its sound and it's forthright: there's clear image resolution and forceful detailing. It comes at you with Rock like this, I found, after trawling through a range of material.

For the size of the cabinet, bass didn't go as low as expected, but it was dry and tight. The rumbling bass line and roar at the end of Angélique Kidjo's Tatchédogbé sounded quite normal, when it is in fact inflated by studio E.Q.

The corollary to this is that the 860s deliver dry and controlled bass, which gave good drive to the rhythm section. I also detected a little megaphonic 'shout' from the midrange cone. It sounded like return energy from within the cabinet, which prevented performances enjoying complete freedom from the speakers. The sound stage stretched earth-bound from left to right, in the plane of the speakers.

The metal dome tweeter used in the Performance 860s sounded forward in the lower treble, adding brightness, but curtailed in upward extension. Cymbals were muted, lacking the sonorous ring of brass.

In one of Steve Earle's classic Southern Blues numbers, 'Mercenary Song', suffused with Mexican imagery made real by his guttural drawl, the Mordaunt Short tweeter lost the rich metallic twang of strings, the air around them and the copious delicacy and complexity of their vibrant harmonics. The tweeter wielded a disproportionately large influence upon the whole 'speaker, adding a pervasive metallic tonal colour.

Well engineered in most areas, the Mordaunt Short 860 is fast, tight and seemingly accurate. It's for Rock aficionados who want punchy percussion and clear bass lines, cleanly etched vocals and cymbals that crash. The tweeter was unimpressive though. Partnered with tight, powerful solid-state amplifiers, the 860s will likely appeal to those who favour the speed and timing element of Rock.

MS Performance 860 £1450

Mordaunt Short Ltd.,
3 Ridgeway, Havant,
Hants. PO9 1JS
Tel 01705 407722

WORLD VERDICT

Fast, tight and informative. But poor tweeter that casts a grey shadow. Lacks sweetness, but arguably suits Rock.

Measured Performance see p113-121

DECEMBER 1995

HI-FI WORLD
IN A SPIN

I am writing in response to Morten Svendsen's letter in the October edition. I too was interested in acquiring a record cleaning machine, but was rather worried about the cost. I actually enquired about the possibility of buying one from a local hi-fi dealer. After discussion it was suggested that I use a Black and Decker drill to clean my records - yes, I laughed too. However, when I got home I began to think that this was not as stupid as it sounded. I devised a system to attach a record firmly to the drill bit - rather in the same way a sanding disk is held firm. Actually, I inverted the rubber grip in the sanding device and placed a plastic spacer between the record and the metal spindle.

Having got as far as this I then concentrated upon cleaning the record, selecting as a test piece something I never listened to. I used a mixture of half distilled water and half isopropyl alcohol. Using a felt brush I soaked the record and wiped the record quite firmly on both sides. When it had soaked enough I rinsed with a small mixture of half distilled water and half isopropyl alcohol. Using a hair dryer on low speed I dried the label on both sides. When it had soaked out the moisture and dirt allowed to drip dry. I then attached the record to the drill and span it at high speed. Centrifugal force flings out the moisture and dirt. Using a hair dryer on low heat I dried the label on both sides.

This technique is especially good for cleaning records with mildew or grease marks. There is very little surface noise even with records that are quite marked. True, it can take between 5-10 minutes per record, but this is a small sacrifice surely and certainly cheaper than buying a record cleaning machine.

David Riggs
Norwich.

MORE THAN MUSIC

I've become accustomed to the cover slogan "For the love of music" which you adopted earlier this year, but I can't help thinking it typifies the worried audiophile's stock response to accusations of, well, audiophilia.

Self-taught specialist expertise (which is usual in the case of the hi-fi user) and genuine enthusiasm for any subject are likely to be met with condescending indifference by the world at large. One can hardly blame the weary audiophile for acting upon the realisation that the enjoyment of music is near-universal and is therefore the safest aspect of a hi-fi habit to wear in public - "For all our apparent interest in playback equipment, we really only care about the music, honest!" Yet many (if not most) hi-fi products seem to be marketed without reference to music at all. The fact that there's more to audio than music is inescapable!

In many respects, it's the wide accessibility of audio which lies at the root of the problem. The image of the hi-fi anorak is a popular caricature, but you'll never hear anyone refer to a contemporary art anorak, or a wine anorak, or a nouvelle cuisine anorak. One may choose to have high end aspirations or not, but the audiophile attitude costs nothing; all one needs is a can opener (plus, of course, a copy of Hi-Fi World).

Hopefully most hi-fi enthusiasts actually are, like myself, interested mainly in the music. However, an interest in audio must entail an interest in aspects of engineering, technology, industrial design and manufacture, and even social and cultural history, all of which will contribute to the making of informed choices in the selection and use of audio components.

Why is it so unfashionable to admit to this kind of awareness? Are these subjects somehow less worthy than music? Why not celebrate the fact that such an interest allows the simultaneous exploration of both musical and technical subjects? This has to be a more sophisticated and interesting stance than just occupying your chosen space in the record market and feigning nonchalance vis-a-vis the technical and aesthetic aspects of audio hardware.

Hi-fi enthusiasts ought to stop apologising for themselves. The subjects attendant on audio are legitimate areas of both intellectual and practical interest in playback equipment, we really only care about the music, honest!" Yet many (if not most) hi-fi products seem to be marketed without reference to music at all. The fact that there's more to audio than music is inescapable!

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Hi-fi enthusiasts ought to stop apologising for themselves. The subjects attendant on audio are legitimate areas of both intellectual and practical
tweaks and tricks. Dealers and manufacturers need to ask themselves why this is so, and start doing something about it. Tweaks, like mats, cleaners, green pens, spikes and exotic cables, are not the answer. I, like many other enthusiasts, have a box full of such 'nine day wonders' to prove it.

My mini-system owning friends aren't stupid, they just can't believe many of the ridiculous claims masquerading as responsible journalism in magazines. The best one yet has been 'room tuning' devices - 16 small, furry discs - which cost a staggering £545. And Mr. Todd wants hi-fi to be taken more seriously? A few good dealers I know are fed up with the emphasis given by the press to tweaking. It's just more clutter for the dealer to remove from the mind of a budding hi-fi nut who's had his head buried for too long in the latest hi-fi mags. So many people waltz into dealers demanding hyped items like the Marantz CD63SE, and no amount of cajoling can persuade them to even listen to something else. I found the Marantz had many ultimately misleading strengths because it failed to portray rhythm and timing effectively for long-term satisfaction.

The fact is, the dealers, the press and the industry as a whole are their own worst enemy. If they want us to appreciate good hi-fi, they should curb their collusiveness, their 'short-termism' and stop publicising useless tweaks and clap-trap which rely so heavily on false promises of sonic nirvana. But then, not a damn thing will change because a 'cleaned up' industry would be a slimmer one - and who wants that?

Richard Ward
Courthill Road,
London.

There's no doubt that people are confused by the variety of choice available in hi-fi, and perhaps too much emphasis has been placed on tweaks. But as you say, it is possible to buy a fine system whose components work in apparent symbiosis. You are moving onto different territory when talking about dealers blaming the press for recommending products like the Marantz CD63SE. Dealers commonly complain about press recommendations when they happen not to stock the product concerned.

Readers, for their part, continued on page 37...

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OR PERFECT PITCH'S FRANCIINSTIEN CD ENHANCER

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- Hi-Fi World. October 1995

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expect us to review products with diligence and care and to offer independent advice. I believe we do this well.

There's no collusion or conspiracy to mislead, as you suggest. People might see things differently to you, but that doesn't make their views claptrap. NK

MUSIC IS THE ANSWER
CD players or LPs? Valve or solid-state? Bass reflex or Horn? Too many questions, so few answers.

Each choice is subjective, but from my point of view sophistication kills the emotion music is supposed to bring. I use an Audion 300B SE driving a pair of Lowther 'Fidelio' (bought directly from the factory with a first class service) and care and to offer independent advice. I believe we do this well.

There has been a lot of concern expressed in Hi-Fi World and the hi-fi press recently that people are buying so called 'Midi' systems instead of 'Real hi-fi'. A number of correspondents suggest that the reason for the dominance of the Midi system over the market at the moment lies in consumer ignorance of the benefits of Real hi-fi. That indeed may be so, but another (more likely) reason is the clutter a separate system creates in comparison to a Midi system.

I am a hi-fi enthusiast having used quality separates since the mid 'seventies. I bought my wife a JVC Midi system for our kitchen/living room last year. I installed the Midi system, used good quality 'speaker cables (not the supplied bell wire), an external aerial for the tuner and wall mounted the 'speakers. I feel in a position to give a comparative analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of each, also maybe to give manufacturers some feedback that they may find useful.

The JVC Midi system is a 'one box' unit with remote control. It is hard to find fault with the package. The sound quality is adequate, the machine plays CDs, cassette tapes, including 'books on tape', copies from

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continued on page 39 ....
"...PASSION took over the reference position... substantially ahead of the best active line pre-amps. PASSION’s switched, discrete attenuator is clearly more accurate, more dynamic and transparent than the pot alternative. When audio products are as good as this, there is little more to say, save to endorse them with a firm recommendation... Now better still in all Vishay mode with a record score of 37”.

Review of PASSION - Martin Colloms
HiFi News April ’93 and November ’94

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Call for catalogue!
can be described as boomy
tape to tape etc. The tuner is
the bass boominess and lack
would account for some of
Wall mounting the ' speakers
extension, spitty treble, a
not bad either, which proves
.... continued from page 37
VCR. The system is set-up
and hard to beat at around
of depth, but for the money
reasonable left/right stereo
on a Target 5 tier stand.
cassette deck, Mitsubishi
components: Meridian 208
it is extremely good value
IR{340.
constant over a wide area.
Linn SARA ' speakers on
NAP250-NAC AS
the look of their equipment?
problem I hear you ask?
with the same case for more
seventies, to the muted black
aluminium facias of the
changed a lot in that time.
lot over the past 20+ years.

those used ten years ago. I
have one new style and two
old style cases! So much for
the concept of an
upgradeable system. Am I
expected to replace a
NAP250 and a Hi Cap to the
new case model just because
Naim Audio decide to change
the look of their equipment?
The system is, from the
back, a nightmare. The cables
are tucked behind as neatly
as possible, but with the
speaker leads a few metres
are coiled up (wasted) to
ensure that each channel has
the same length of cable and
the same loading.

Each piece of equipment
also has it's own power
supply cable. On my system
that requires two four way
distribution boards. If I
upgraded further to a second
NAP250 and a NAXO, there
would be more interconnects
and mains cables and an
extra mains distribution
board. Yeecchh! All this
equipment just to play music.
At least the SARAs are
meant to work close to the
wall and they don't intrude
too much into the room.

Recently I looked at a
pair of Castle Howards -
they don't so much invade
the room as take it over. The
situation was even worse
earlier this year when I had a
Linn Sondek LP12. The LP12
stood on its own table and
had an 'angle poise' lamp
with a low wattage bulb to
keep the m/c cartridge at an
even temperature. Then
there was the anti-static gun,
etc.

I am reluctant to call the
system anything but
'technical looking', maybe
even 'macho'. but certainly
not 'discreet'. I suggest part
of the problem is in the
number of boxes and all the
interconnects, an obstacle
that the Midi system
overcomes.

Thomas Fox
Kinnged, Co. Westmeath.

MUSICAL NOTEBOOK
I bought a CD-ROM drive
(Multiport CD-jet) as an
upgrade for my notebook
computer and was surprised
to see audio line out jacks at
the back. So I connected it
directly to the volume
control to see what would
happen. Ah, it works! I'm a
hard-core turntable guy, but
now my interest is growing
(and I bought my first CDs!).
Early impressions of the
sound are: weaknesses at top
and lower ends, loss of edge,
rhythmically not so involving,
but stable. Handling is very
comfortable when done from
CD player software by the
computer.

Now the question: could
this be Real hi-fi? Multimedia
PC or personal computer
with power amplifier as hi-fi?
I have never read anything
about such combinations in
the well established hi-fi
press. Maybe it's time for
great competition between
drives and a comparison with
CD players, and how about
 tweaking and upgrading my
 driver? Even if the result
(reproduced music) is not of
the highest order, the topic
seems interesting.

Hartwing Christian
Dorner
Leitahgebirge.

We haven't assessed CD-
ROM as a serious hi-fi
product and you must
accept that high quality
audio reproduction is not its
main role. There are
lots of inexpensive all-in-
one Digital-to-Analogue
convertor chips around
that manufacturers can
bundle into such drives to
give an audio output.

Most, like the relatively
new Crystal CS4330 all-in-
one DAC on a chip, give a
good standard of quality,
but they are not top-of-
the-range devices. I'd
expect a ROM like yours
to probably rival a budget
CD player costing £150 or
so.

The Consumer
Electronics industry,
however, sees CD ROM
and your set up as their
future. In this scenario, the
computer, television, hi-fi
and heaven knows what
else are all integrated into
one glorious Multimedia
package which will
control and provide for all
aspects of your life.

Exciting isn't it? NK

SURROUNDED
Could you help me? Some
two or three years ago
'Tomorrow's World'
demonstrated 3D sound. I
have looked around for some
material recorded in this way
and not found anything.

Speaking to my hi-fi
dealer, Paul Green of Bath,
he suggested Roger Waters
'Q' Sound "Amused to
death", but again I have been
unable to locate this.
Can you advise?

S.M. Beckford.

We assume that you are
thinking of the Sensaura
releases from Thorn EMI.
There aren't very many of
them at the moment but
here is an up to date list:

1994 Releases
Charllie Floyd, Charlie's
Nite Life
Liberty C2-80475.
Milla Jovovich, The Divine
Comedy'
SBK 7243-8-27984-2-2
Frank Sinatra, Duets
Capitol 7243-8-28067-2-1
Vasari / Jeremy
Backhouse, Requiem
(Howells) Mass (Martin)
United 88033 CD

1995 Releases
Stephen Kovacevich,
Schubert Son.D960
EMI Classics 7243 5 55359
2 4
Cikada Quartet, Black
Angels
(Crumb, Webern &
Lutoslawski)
Cala CADC 77001
Stephen Kovacevich,
Beethoven Son. Op.31
EMI Xlassics 7243 5 55226
2 7
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LONDON'S 1995 HI-FI SHOW

Here are the new products we discovered.

London's newly established Sound & Vision Show was a great success. Held at the Cumberland Hotel, right beside Marble Arch, it was situated in the heart of London, next to Oxford Street. The venue was extremely popular, the show being busy every day. With Live '95 now dominated, by mobile phones, computers camcorders and what have you, real hi-fi enthusiasts made a beeline for the spacious and palatial rooms of the Cumberland Hotel, to enjoy the sounds made by top audio manufacturers and distributors from around the world.

We were there with two rooms to offer help and advice on all aspects of audio, demonstrate a selection of our latest kit designs and investigate the wealth of new equipment launched at this prestigious event. Here's some of what we spotted on our travels around the hotel.

AURA
A wealth of new products were on show from Aura, including the long awaited replacement for the TU-50 tuner, the TU-80. Also on show for the first time was the new VA150 integrated amplifier, boasting 100 watts output, and the remote controlled CA200/PA200 pre/power amplifiers.

PM AUDIO LAB
Also on show for the first time was PM Audio Labs' MP 211A valve monoblocks and matching MP L15 valve preamplifier. Using the 211 power triode the monoblocks will set you back £2750, and the line level preamplifier £650. The amplifiers are designed exclusively for valve supplier PM Components.

ENSEMBLE
PM Components have also taken on the distribution of the Swiss made Ensemble products, known for their highly transparent monitor loudspeakers. The latest in this line is the Elysia, which was on demonstration with their Profundo Silver stereo subwoofer system. Also on show was their latest range of electronics, including the Dichrono CD transport and convertor and Evocco amplifier.

ORELLE
On display in the Orelle room was their new line up of XTC Series electronics. Finished with gloss black front panels this high end range marks a new era for Orelle.

QLN
Distributors Projekt were demonstrating the QLN range of loudspeakers along with the wooden faced Hofi range of electronics. QLN have recently made a welcome return to the UK, we'll be bringing you a review of their compact Signature loudspeaker in a forthcoming issue.

HI-FI WORLD DECEMBER 1995 151
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World Radio History
Holfi, also new to the UK, were demonstrating a wide range of electronics from a CD transport to feedbackless integrated amplifiers, all sharing the same wooden fascia styled cases. Expect to see more of these soon.

**ACOUSTIC ENERGY**

Acoustic Energy were making surprisingly powerful sounds with their new miniature AE100. Priced at £200 they look pretty impressive, with a 4" bass midrange driver and 25mm fabric dome tweeter.

**TDL**

TDL also announced a new subwoofer, the Nucleus SBR. This passive subwoofer has been designed to complement TDL's own Near Field Monitor speakers, or other bookshelf speakers of similar sensitivity (87-90dB). Price will be £200.

**REL**

Known for the best bass around, REL launched a new subwoofer at the Sound & Vision show. It is set to bring entry to their active subwoofer range down to an even more affordable level. The £350 Q-bass uses a powerful 10" bass driver and an electronic safety circuit that limits excessive peaks to prevent damage.

**MERIDIAN**

Unveiling their new monster 557 power amplifier at the Sound & Vision Show, Meridian had a fine sound going. This 200watts power amplifier features a new circuit design which Meridian hope to patent. Price is expected to be around £1200.

**ART AUDIO**

Present at the show with new valve amplifiers and an intriguing three part loudspeaker system, Art Audio's room was certainly worth a visit. The new, compact, Duet power amplifier uses the popular 5881 tetrode output valves to give 20watts, and its matching Minuet line preamplifier uses two ECC83s. Prices are £880 and £500 respectively.

**ACOUSTIC INNOVATIONS**

Another valve amplifier manufacturer getting into loudspeakers, Audio Innovations were displaying their Alto loudspeakers with Alto CD player and amplifier. The £329 Alto loudspeakers are a 2-way reflex design with a sensitivity of 88dB, complementing the Alto range of electronics.

**SONNETEER**

Another new name to appear at the Sound & Vision Show was Sonneteer, revealing their Campion integrated and power amplifiers. The £329 Campion will be available in the shops first, with a power output of 30watts and an expected sub-£500 price tag. We'll be bringing you a review in the near future.

**ROKSAN**

Roksan unveiled an all-new loudspeaker in their custom built demonstration room. The Roksan 1s are expected to cost around £495 when they are officially launched, and the pre-production prototypes certainly looked very smart. Also new and due for launch sometime next Spring was the DP10/DA10 transport and DAC. Price is undecided at present, but don't expect them to be cheap as they will be top of the range.

**SEQUENCE**

Announcing a new loudspeaker line up, Sequence were out in force. Their three new models are the 200, 300 and 400, priced at £200, £250 and £330 respectively. The Sequence range of loudspeakers are all just 7cm deep, and can all be wall mounted or, in the case of the larger 300s and 400s, used with Sequence's Tri-Mount 'speaker stand.
Roksan, starting off with a turntable of curious, but effectively implemented principle, now has a whole hi-fi chain. The boxes that made my kitchen un-navigable for a while contained the new Ojan 3X loudspeakers, Attessa ATT-DP2MKII CD player, Radius Ill turntable, L1 pre-amplifier, S1 power
“The whole has that kind of ambient warmth allied with subtleties of detail that makes so many jazz collectors opt for valve amps and the ‘warmer’ kind of speaker balance.”

amplifier and a choice of two power supplies for the pre-amp.

Single-manufacturer systems have their drawbacks, but Roksan has pulled it off. The whole is quite surprisingly better than the component parts, given that there’s not a lot wrong with any of the parts. The only grief was caused by the selector knob on the pre-amp spinning on its shaft, but it had been elsewhere before reaching me. Perhaps it had been well-used, for I was surprised to see some gun-metal grey paint flake off the top edge of the fascia after a few days when my fingers caught it. Otherwise there was no aberrant behaviour.

There are, however, what some designers would view as decided aberrations, or at least departures from conventional wisdom, in elements of the design. Roksan’s designer likes springs. The Attessa CD player’s mechanism is very softly sprung compared to most; where you don’t expect to see springs is in a loudspeaker.

Some years ago, Roksan came up with the Darius loudspeaker which suspended the tweeter clear of the cabinet on springs. Interesting, but not elegant. The notion has been developed for the Ojan floorstanding speakers supplied for this system. They were the up-rated model, distinguishable from the similar but cheaper version by the copper phase plug on the (different) main driver. Their novelty lies in the way the tweeter - placed below the main driver - is mounted on a sprung MDF ‘paddle’. The last place you would want resonating springs, I would have thought, was near a tweeter, but however odd the practice, it does seem to work.

B&W, of course, have taken the tweeter out of the main cabinet in a number of models and parked it on the top in a pod for perfectly sound reasons, so the fundamental principle I won’t argue with.

The cabinet is based on equally valid principles. It is deeper than usual and has angled sides to reduce unwanted internal reflections. At a time when we are being flooded with ‘affordable’ floorstanding speakers which have practically no pretensions to real bass performance, it was a relief to have speakers which stood on the floor and did the business their size entailed you to expect. Not that they in fact do go very deep; little lower than a pair of large-ish Harbeth Compact 7s, for example. A matching subwoofer is available however. The Ojans were responsible for a good part of the very satisfying sound that came from this Roksan system. In themselves, the pre- and power-amplifiers are very representative of current British solid-state designs, but they are not exceptional in any particular aspect. The power amplifier is pretty neutral and barely interferes with the signal. On its own with the cheaper power supply the pre-amp is a little soft and veiled, but the higher-grade power supply does a very good ‘Mr Sheen’ job, adding a little more polish to the whole performance.

The surprise in the system was not in fact the loudspeakers, but the Attessa CD player. Previous experience of the earlier Attessa outboard DAC and transport had led me to expect a good, but unexceptional sound. This Attessa integrated struck me as much more well - integrated, with a more equable response, a firmer bottom end and more detailed treble than the combo I had some time ago. However, there was a little too much polish in the spit-and-polish to really make Hendrix sear into the ears as much as he should. Perhaps this polish was also largely responsible for a splashiness on cymbals, which lost that tight sparkle and clear ring they should have - although the speaker tweeters are on the soft side at the top end too.

Apart from this and a slight haziness in the mid-range, the Attessa CD player was quite a worthy performer and a considerable improvement on the early two-box pairing. Admittedly, the

![The bass driver of the Ojan 3X loudspeakers has a copper plate on the pole piece which helps smooth impedance.](image)
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World Radio History
magnetic puck which has to be dropped over the CD spindle can be tricky to put on sometimes; and I dislike the 'American laundromat' look, but my aesthetic sense is mine and it doesn't have anything to do with the sound. Unlike one earlier example of the transport, which sometimes stubbornly shut like a clam in a temper and somehow always trapped a favourite CD inside, the servo-assisted lid always opened and closed when asked.

There are some systems which are 'right' for music, some which are 'wrong', but still eminently listenable. The Roksan system, unusually, has a foot cleverly planted in both camps. As a friend remarked, the Ojan speakers have a coloured mid-range, but it is tempered by the electronics: a very good example of some small wrongs making a good right. The mid is warm but not bloomed: it gives instruments a very attractive richness. The give-away is in vocals. It doesn't matter what range, tenor, soprano, contralto or baritone, it is mildly unnerving, simply because they sound either too light or too dark - or both momentarily, depending on the note that's being sung. This is especially noticeable against ESLs or Harbeth Compact 7s which are superbly 'voiced' for voice.

The system's sense of space, depth and general imaging is particularly good. Those Decca recordings from Montreal have a very strong acoustic signature which swamps some electronics and speakers so it either disappears, leaving the orchestra sounding laid back and lazy, or mucks up the whole business until violins and violas, or trumpets and trombones might as well be one. Not with the Roksan. This was one of the rare occasions when the whole horse-shoe shape of an orchestra was properly laid out.

The violi section seemed a bit squeezed laterally, due to a lack of space in the listener room. The bass was good, although in reality little more extended than the Harbeths. It sounds a lot deeper, because it isn't as dry. This made for a superbly resonant and lifelike representation of Rob Wasserman's electric double bass. Warm, but very tuneful. This is not floppy bass at all, and when it comes to jazz quartets amazing in its time-keeping.

In fact, it is really on jazz and classical chamber music that the Roksan system excels, especially with the turntable in tow, though this has a slightly different feeling of scale to the digital source, and is in parts a little over-emphatic in its punchiness. The whole has that kind of ambient warmth allied with subtleties of detail that makes so many jazz collectors opt for valve amps and the 'warmer' kind of speaker balance.

And let's not forget the detail: from piccolo way back in the orchestra to a spectrumb slipping from guitar string to body. All just a bit larger than life, it helps to distract from the recording in the drawer or on the platter and just focus on music. So often an excuse for trying to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, in this case, synergy works.

Ojan 3X Loudspeakers (Black) £1,195
Atessa ATT-DP2MK II CD £1,295
L1 Pre-Amplifier £2,250
S1 Power-Amplifier £1,495
Radius III Turntable with
Tabriz arm and Corus cartridge £865

Roksan Digital Ltd.
Stockley Close, Stockley Road,
West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 9BB.
Tel 01895 436384

WORLD VERDICT

System with good sense of space, depth and imaging: more than the sum total of its parts.

Measured Performance
see p113-121
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- Major General Dorian Mode just prior to his epic battle against the Assault on the Senses. The long-awaited signal was delivered by a pair of ORTOFON SPK300 speaker cables.
and the Academy I speaker. Except here the clichés become unreliable: only the bit about beautiful, sensuous design is true of this sweet-sounding speaker. The price for the loudspeaker equivalent of Sophia Loren: a few million lire or £1200, and worth every penny just for the feel of the oiled walnut, let alone the sound.

What is most noticeable is a holistic apparent 'rightness' which has the listener sitting back relaxed and engrossed. A good deal of the pleasure is in a warm, rich mid and bass, which brings out the texture in woodwind and lower strings. The bass sounds rather deeper than in reality it can be: drum rolls and timps are very realistic, although not as strong as from the Harbeth Compact 7s. But let's not object too much: the 7s are much larger enclosures.

What the Academy I does well is produce a superbly listenable illusion. An orchestra sits between the speakers in a true arc, either beginning in front and stretching well back, or in a plane between them, depending on the recording, which is how it should be. Close your eyes and the illusion is complete: try to imagine where the boxes are and you fail.

For a small box, the Academy I is an excellent fist at orchestral dynamics. Brass comes forward, to give the impression of rising over the body of an orchestra; strings, although a little lacking in complete fullness of tone, are sweet and in perfect proportion. Most importantly, the Charios have the timekeeping of an Olympic stopwatch. If you can happily sing along with the melody and switch to a counterpoint without thinking, then we have a good speaker. Rebel's wonderful Les Elemens has a number of sudden changes in tempo; the Charios almost anticipated them so a listener never fell behind the beat.

In rock music, this knack came well to the fore, sometimes literally, with a tight, fast, exciting rhythm and very tuneful bass. Again, the amount of projection depended entirely on the recording. Iggy Pop's 'China Girl', a mucky, mid-distance mix was determinedly stacked between the speakers where Tony Visconti put it, while Blur and Bryan Adams had their guitars out in front of the boxes.

There are rivals around at this price, but they are of a different style. Members of Chario's peer group are the German Audio Physic Step, the BBC LS5/12a and Harbeth's HL Compact 7, though the latter is not a miniature like the Chario. Both the Harbeth and the BBC designs are true 'studio monitor' speakers, ruthlessly revealing, while the Step is notable for its equally fine detail and depth. The Academy I is more domestically amenable, painting the sound in broader brushstrokes with less of the monitor's essential pernickety highlighting of sometimes distracting detail. It is as though it pictures the action on stage without spotlighting the fact that the costumes are tie-dyed cotton instead of real velvet and damask.

Compared to a true monitor, there are minor failings. The bass/mid-range unit has a slight thickness which rounds off the sound of woodwind and cellos superbly, but smooths over the inflections in a bass voice. There is also a degree of unevenness around the crossover region, which catches out a soprano on her way up to a high C. The tweeter strains a little on the way up the scale, and can sound somewhat constricted in scale and reach. Tinkling triangles in Madonna's 'I'm a material girl' were tucked away in the back of the mix on the Charios, more clearly defined on the Compact 7s, while her voice could have sounded a bit stronger. A harpsichord recording of high technical quality caught them out, with a somewhat bright, hard, edge to the treble clef and a bass clef which had a slight sense of disconnection between the two manuals.

All the same, it's the music that matters, and the Charios make a good recording sound like a real concert performance, not an artificial reproduction. If it was an opera in their home town, the three gents whose names appear on the brass plate on the back of the Academy I would be hearing yells of 'bravo!' ringing around La Scala.

Chario Academy I

£1,199

Picture The Sound,
13 Weston Road,
Guildford,
Surrey GU2 6AU
Tel 01483 454991

WORLD VERDICT

Musical realism and a great real-wood finish make these speakers enjoyable, if not perfect.

Measured Performance

see p113-121
A MELLOWER SOUND FOR CD
I currently own an Arcam Alpha Plus CD player, Audioquest interconnect to a Meridian 563 DAC with a Chord Co. interconnect to Naim NAC 92/NAP 90 amplifiers, Naim cable and Roksan Ojan 3 speakers. No record deck.

I have had my present system for over a year and was at first happy with the sound, but now find the treble too hard and slightly over bright when listening to CDs.

What I am after is a mellow, softer sound which will make my CDs more listenable. My dealer recommends that I buy a Hi-Cap power supply for the Naims to fill out the frequency extremes, which he tells me will make the sound more balanced. I somehow feel that this will not do anything to soften the sound which I assume is due to the forward presentation of the Naims and the slightly bright balance of the Ojans. I would like to retain the Ojans since I am fond of their bass control. Although I appreciate the speed and resolution of the Naims, I am toying with the idea of part exchanging them for a more mellow sounding amplifier, with a gentler delivery.

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

My price limit is £900 and I am considering an Alchemist Forseti APD 15A integrated, which I have heard is a soft sounding amplifier although I have yet to hear or audition one. Could you please let me know if this amplifier would satisfy my requirements and do you have any other suggestions? I listen mainly to classical music.

Julian Thomas Aberystwyth, Dyfed.

You are right that a Hi-Cap power supply will not change the basic balance of your system; it may even make it worse, allowing the Naims to reveal more of the problem. As you seem basically pleased with the sound of your system and have some very good equipment, I'd suggest you experiment with some fine tuning first. Firstly, it is worth taking a careful look at your listening room. Hard reflective surfaces, especially those on a path between you and your 'speakers, will add glare and hardness to the sound. Soft curtains or wall tapestries will help absorb some of these hard reflections and soften the sound. Also, if you have a nice polished wooden floor this could be covered with a thick, soft rug, again this will help soften the sound.

Try auditioning van den Hul's First carbon interconnects in place of your Audioquest. These, although expensive, have a
I have a query regarding the performance of my turntable. I use a Roksan Xerxes, presently with a Moth arm and AT95E cartridge. I am experiencing a problem with end-of-side distortion—mainly a sort of 'sibilance' particularly noticeable on 'S'-type sounds and a hardening 'edginess', particularly at higher frequencies. The records affected are not especially old and have not been played very often. I have had the cartridge re-aligned and the stylus has been replaced as it should have been. Tracking weight and anti-skate settings are also fine.

It has been suggested that the cartridge is being overwhelmed by the turntable, and that I should upgrade to one which has better tracking capabilities and a more polished sound—models suggested include the Roksan Corus Black, Linn K9, Sumiko Blue Point Special and AT moving coils. Would you concur? (In theory, I have a budget of £100-150.)

Could the arm be influencing this problem? I have considered postponing the cartridge upgrade until I can afford a new arm as well—models initially considered include the Rega RB300 and Roksan Artemiz. In addition, however, I have also considered a linear-tracker such as an Eminent Technology Airbearing or even an Air tangent (probably second-hand!).

Would there be any real advantages to using such an arm, in terms of sound, reduced record wear and the aforementioned sibilance/distortion? It has also been suggested that I consider a unipivot arm design—would this be beneficial? Can you suggest any I may like to audition?

Thank you in anticipation of your advice.

Nicholas Schofield
Bolton, Lancs.

The Moth arm, based on the Rega RB250, generally isn't considered ideal for an MC cartridge. An RB300 is normally regarded as the minimum requirement for a good MC. The RB250 can sound superb with a good MM, like the Goldring 1042. This has a lovely smooth and open sound, with fine detail thanks to its top quality stylus. It also has excellent bass extension, something that will build on the inherent strengths of your Roksan Xerxes.

You don't mention what amplifier you are using, which makes me a bit reluctant to recommend any MC. Ones with a neutral, detailed and transparent sound are the Ortofons, the MC15 Super II representing fantastic value at £110. This has quite a forward balance compared to many other MCs due to its extremely flat frequency response. This may bring a more open and cleaner balance to your Roksan, but it could also become a little clinical if you are using a revealing solid state phono amp. It is definitely worth an audition though, being the best value MC I can think of. DB

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The end-of-side distortion you hear is almost certainly tracing distortion—once a well known phenomenon. Because an LP spins at constant rotational velocity (i.e. 33rpm), linear groove speed decreases with radius, so inner grooves effectively move more slowly past the stylus. Because of this the mechanical wavelength of the signal cut into the groove decreases. At high frequencies, which have short wavelengths in any case, a poor stylus becomes unable to read the groove accurately. The result is distortion from geometric tracing error (see diagram), as well as high frequency loss.

The solution is to choose a cartridge with a high quality, profiled stylus possessing a small minimum radius capable of reading right into the shortest wavelengths, with little loss or distortion. In my experience, you can rely upon Van den Hul, Ortofon and Goldring in particular to have addressed this problem satisfactorily. Their more expensive models (£100+) have fabulous tips, but even their budget models don't disgrace. Don't panic and blow all your cash on a funny arm. A Rega is good enough, above which—dream SME! NK
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When we listen to music, both the high and low frequency sounds help our brains to paint a 3 dimensional stereo picture. But when we listen to CD, the high and low pictures do not perfectly realign. With their clinically clean electronics, CD players lack the beneficial, subtle signal handling of analogue equipment which can actually “re-converge” the two stereo images. So creating the convincing illusion that is the hallmark of good analogue systems.

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“CDs sounded better defined, the soundstage having a more definite shape. It was as if there was more air around each strand in the mix, allowing you to hear it more distinctly, more separately...I didn’t immediately want to switch the CD player off and relax with some LPs, instead I went on to make further explorations of my CD collection”
— Andrew Cartmel - Hi-Fi Choice

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very smooth, richly textured sound, completely free of brightness or sibilance. This should increase the smoothness of the treble and give a slightly warmer balance. If these tweaks fail to alleviate the problem, I'd recommend you take a close look at your CD player. This is where I would suggest your weakest link is; the Naim amplifier and Ojan loudspeakers are more than capable of revealing the shortcomings of CD. With your budget, and by part exchanging your Meridian 563, you should just about be able to stretch to Pink Triangle's discrete Da Capo CD convertor. This has a rich and smooth sound, with a much warmer balance than the Meridian. It also is capable of creating great stage depth and width, along with fine detail. I think it is here that you will hear most improvement. DB

And don’t forget the less expensive but beautifully smooth and refined Ordinal DAC, by Pink Triangle. NK

WARMING UP VINYL
I have been in search of a replacement cartridge for my LP12, Ittok LVII. Exposure 17 and 4 amp and Royd Prior speaker system.

At the moment I’m using an ATOC9 but am not pleased with the sound. I find the cartridge sounds too much like CDs, exciting at the beginning, but soon after too analytical and uninvolving. While I appreciate the quality of MCs, the ones I have tried have always left me feeling the same way; too lean and too cool sounding.

I'm curious about some of the Ortofon line as well as the Blue Point special and possibly the Linn K18 II. The difficulty is finding cartridges which are compatible with the Sondek as most Linn dealers will not recommend non-Linn cartridges.

Believe it or not, I have had relatively positive results with a Grado 8M2 and while it was not the fastest sounding it did convey the emotion of the music quite well. My budget is £200-£300. Your suggestions would be greatly appreciated. Conrad LeDrew Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

I suspect the root of your problems lie deeper than just the cartridge. Both your amplifier and loudspeakers have the analytical sound you describe, which in combination with the OC9 will give a rather cold and forward balance. If you can stretch to it, taking into account part exchange on your Royd loudspeakers, audition Mission’s 752s. These have a sweet, smooth and warm balance which will be better suited to your system, and should allow you to enjoy the extra detail and neutrality of your MC cartridge.

If this is out of the question, the Goldring 1042 is a rich and warm sounding MM with good detail. DB

MORE SLAM FROM CD!
My system comprises Meridian 200 transport with clock mod. and Deltec PDM 1 mkII convertor, Naim 62/140 and Epos ES 14 speakers.

I am seriously considering changing my CD player as I find it lacking some attack and solidity with rock music. Having recently heard some upmarket multi-bit convertors by the likes of Orelle, Wadia etc., they seem to give the sound the necessary lift in rhythm. Could this be the bitstream convertor influencing this type of sound and why so many specialists are staying with multi-bit?

Adam Tusueem Billericay, Essex.

Multibit players do seem to offer more powerful sound with greater slam and punch for rock, with bitstream convertors generally sounding smoother and sweeter. Your DPA PDM 1 mkII, although a very fine convertor, is a little long in the tooth now, having been replaced by the mkIII first, and more recently the new Enlightenment discrete DAC.

Although on a short audition multibit players do seem to be better suited to rock, I prefer the sweeter balance of bitstream which is less fatiguing over extended listening periods. For this reason I’d stick with bitstream, but upgrade your PDM 1 to the latest Enlightenment convertor. This discrete design will give you a smoother sound with better detail and sound staging and the extra added punch you want. DB

ROOM FOR FLOORSTANDERS
My question is regarding floor standing speakers and which would suit my system. It consists of a Linn Sondek/Grace 707/II/Supex 900 super, Rotel 856BX LE (fitted with their discrete board), Pioneer A400. The room is 21 x 12 ft and is sonically slightly bright. I am considering TDL RTL2, Mission 733, or Mission 752.

The cartridge is something I would like to consider as well. I was wondering if a Supex 900 super was up to the modern standards of a Goldring 1042 or an Ortofon MC15 Super II? To attain listening comparisons between two identical turntable set ups is impossible these days, so your guidance in this area would be appreciated. I was pleased to see that Hi-Fi World will be running articles on the Linn Sondek, its history and tweaks and this has prompted me to subscribe to the magazine.

Finally, an easy tweak for your readers’ systems would lie in considering computer cable for interconnects and speaker cable. After spending a lot of time and money on all types of cable, these have proved to be the best. What’s more it is inexpensive and takes little soldering knowledge. I have used 50 strand on the speaker cable and 12 on the interconnects. Please consider, even very expensive cable didn’t match it.

Paul Roberts Gold Coast, Australia.

I would tend to avoid the TDL RTL2s or any bass prominent loudspeaker.

Mission’s 752s use a high tech, High Definition Aerogel driver which gives them a smooth and detailed sound.

Continued on page 61...
Introducing the Riverside 4040 Valve Amplifier...

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| CKH 022 | NIGEL NORTH | Bach on the Lute Vol 1 |
| CKH 025 | NIGEL NORTH | Bach on the Lute Vol 2 |
| CKH 036 | NIGEL NORTH | The Baroque Lute |
| CKH 061 | POLISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA | Live Concert |
| CKH 062 | WILLIAM CONWAY / PETER EVANS | Poulenc Cello Sonata |
| CKH 063 | ENGLISH CLASSICAL PLAYERS | Mozart Symphony 40 |
| CKH 064 | Leningrad Symph Orchestra | Shostakovich Symphony No 5 |
| CKH 065 | JILL PELOMAN | 17th Century Italian Love Songs |

Jazz:

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| AKH 020 | MARTIN TAYLOR | Artistry |
| AKH 022 | MARTIN TAYLOR | Reunion |
| AKH 036 | MARTIN TAYLOR | Change of Heart |
| AKH 044 | MARTIN TAYLOR | Don't Fear |
| AKH 066 | CAROL KIDD | Nice Work |
| AKH 067 | CAROL KIDD | The Night We Called It a Day |
| AKH 077 | CAROL KIDD | I'm Glad We Met |
| AKH 096 | CAROL KIDD | Crazy for Shadow |
| AKH 135 | CLAIRE MARTIN | Devil May Care |
| AKH 136 | CLAIRE MARTIN | Old Boyfriends |
| AKH 137 | CLAIRE MARTIN | Reminiscence |
| AKH 140 | TOMMY SMITH | Misty Morning & No Time |
| AKH 143 | DAVID NEWTON | Victim of Circumstance |
| AKH 155 | DAVID NEWTON | Eye Witness |
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The 211 power triode gives a big, bright and vivid sound, quite unlike any of its smaller counterparts. It differs from the 300B, which is warmer, richer and smoother. The 211 is very forthright; it adds real force and weight to music, but to date few amplifiers use the valve, which runs at high voltage. Here's a new addition to

MEETING
THE
CHINESE PM

Dominic Baker thinks the new PM Audio Lab 211 valve amplifiers will be great ambassadors for Chinese hi-fi. Will they take up a premiere position?
sound investment

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the rarefied world of single-ended 211 amplifiers, the P.M. Audio Lab MP 211 A monoblocks with their matching MP LIS preamplifier.

Knowing this, it was odd that I was compelled towards Locatelli first, and a graceful, sweeping piece in true Italian style. Perhaps it was the elegance of the amplifiers themselves, with their glowing valves and finely finished metalwork that inspired me. Or was it that being a single-ended design, I knew that a good classical piece recorded in a spacious acoustic would reveal its subtler properties more readily!

Either way, it proved a fine choice. It is pieces like this, recorded in a large hall with the performers spread out across a wide stage, that allows a feedbackless, single-ended design to display its finest strength, that of superb sound staging. The MP 211 As didn’t disappoint here, the performance spread out three dimensionally all around the ‘speakers, images completely in focus, creating a very real performance. The timing of the orchestra was impeccable, giving this simple piece for violin, basso continuo and harpsichord an elegant and captivating presence.

So what is the background of this pairing? Well, PM Audio Lab has been set up by P.M. Components, valve specialists and suppliers of Chinese Golden Dragon valves. The combination of MP LIS valve preamplifier and MP 211 A 25watt monoblock power amplifier, is built to their design and specification in China, where the Golden Dragon valves are produced.

The preamplifier is a simple, line level only design, using three ECC83 double triodes. In the power amplifier a 6SN7GT double triode is used as the input valve, and a 6SL7GT as the driver, again a double triode. These amplify the signal and provide the drive for the huge 211 power triode, one of the most impressive valves you’ll ever see with its brightly glowing filament.

Continuing my listening, The Pixies’ ‘La La Love You’ displayed a different character. What the Locatelli had failed to convey earlier was the sheer scale and power the MP 211 As devote to the lowest octaves. Bass drums had tremendous dynamics. Bass guitar on ‘Key’ continued the theme, with an explosive punch and vice-like grip. And cymbals had a silvery sheen to them, brightly lit and strong. Anyone hearing a valve amplifier like this for the first time would be quite shocked; it’s not the soft and warm sound you’d expect, but that’s the 211 for you.

What always amazes me about amplifiers using the 211 is their tuneful bass. Bass lines seem to appear from nowhere. Cymbals had a silvery sheen to them, brightly lit and strong. Anyone hearing a valve amplifier like this for the first time would be quite shocked; it’s not the soft and warm sound you’d expect, but that’s the 211 for you.

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The introduction to Pink Floyd’s ‘Coming Back to Life’ swelled and grew as the sharply plucked electric guitar, helped by the plastiky click of the plectrum, led into the vocal. At first the MP 211 As didn’t seem to have quite the same midrange projection and breadth of tonal colour as a good 300B design, and perhaps they were not quite as neutral either, having a brighter, more metallic tone. But it’s the apparent subjective extension at either end of the frequency spectrum that gives this impression. With such strong bass and shiny treble, the midrange seems more subdued in comparison.

Echobelly’s ‘Nobody Like You’ is a raw, stripped bare recording with a great sense of atmosphere and energy. The MP 211 As structured the sound well, placing each instrument clearly across a wide sound stage. Treble soared, crystal clear and super precise, giving cymbals dramatic impact. Here careful ‘speaker matching is required; a bright or hard sounding tweeter will hit you straight between the ears.

Of the pairing, it must be said that the MP LIS is the limiting factor. But don’t discount it. At £650 it is one of the smoothest and sweetest preamplifiers around, free from the transistorised grain many of its solid state rivals at this price point suffer. The MP 211A monoblock power amps are extremely revealing though, with a strong eye for detail. In every sense, this was an unusual amplifier, with a dramatic appearance and sound. The Chinese Dragon stirs.

**World Verdict**

The MP 211A power amplifiers are detailed and open with great bass. The preamplifier is great value too.

**Measured Performance**

See p113-121
Christmas is here, or so you'll think when you pick up the January issue of Hi-Fi World. Not only do you get your hands on the most expert and enthusiastic read in hi-fi, full of all the latest equipment, music, news, and more, but in our special Christmas Competition we'll be offering everything we review as prizes. Here's just some of what we hope to bring you in our bumper Christmas issue.

£200 LOUDSPEAKER TEST
We select a group of the newest and best £200 loudspeakers on the market to find out what they can offer. Models tested include KEF’s Coda 8, Celestion’s Impact 15s, B&W’s 601, Mordaunt-Short’s MS20i, Revolver’s Purdy and Acoustic Energy’s AE100.

CHAMELEON
Changing its colours to blend in more harmoniously, the domesticated Chameleon power amplifier now has no internal cooling fan, so it's quieter.

TEAC CDS
TEAC’s latest CD player is the CDS. Priced at £350 it is aimed squarely at market leaders such as Marantz’s CD-63SE and NAD’s 514. With TEAC’s solid build and DAC-7 convertor it looks as if it could be up to the challenge.

FREE WORLD WINNERS SUPPLEMENT
We look back over a year of Hi-Fi World and pick a short list of components that caught our sonic attention. A selection of the best hi-fi around in 1995.

ARCAM ALPHA 6 AMPLIFIER AND ALPHA 6+ CD PLAYER
Arcam have been busying themselves over the summer months, updating and improving their range. We test their new Alpha 6 amplifier and Alpha 6+ CD player.

CHRISTMAS COMPETITION
Gluttons for punishment, once again for the January Christmas edition of Hi-Fi World we plan to give away everything we review. Last year it was a logistical nightmare but worth it when it came to handing out the prizes. Don’t dare miss it!
with your A-400 amplifier, which in itself has generous bass. Of the three speakers you mention the 752 would probably be the best match, but even these may sound a bit too full and warm with the A-400. Try auditioning them, as well as Castle Chesters, if they are available in Oz.

**BI-WIRE MISSIONS**

I have recently carried out the conversion to the crossover of the Mission 760i you carried in your July 1993 edition, so that they are now bi-wired.

I have no technical knowledge and cannot (perhaps that should be “could not”) read a circuit diagram. I had previously wired the speakers internally and fitted Deflex panels, but this latest modification really has transformed the speakers. They sound even bigger, more refined with more depth and I am now rediscovering my CDs.

The rest of my system is as follows: Audiolab 8000A, Philips CD 61011 (used as a transport) QED Digit (dual Positroned courtesy of Hi-Fi World mod.), B&W Acoustiline subwoofer.

I have tweaked my system in many ways, but the best I find are those that cost very little (of course!), e.g. the 760i mod. I have a Sound Organisation three shelf table and I use a Cyrus Isoplat under the CD player.

I had some thick glass plate (8mm) lying around and put the cut up Deflex on the Isoplat and then placed the glass on top of this, then the CD player and finally some Deflex on top of the player and a metal plate (weight approx 10lbs). This seemed to make the CD sound more coherent and more together; more detail and refinement.

I used another sheet of glass under the amplifier with the Deflex under this and finally the same under the DAC and power supplies.

For other readers interested in bi-wiring their Mission 760i loudspeakers, it is worth bearing in mind that many specialist hi-fi dealers have an engineer who can perform this modification competently and at moderate cost. Remember though, that this kind of tweak will invalidate your guarantee.

Your best bet if you want to bi-amp your system is, as you have recognised, to add an 8000P power amplifier. If you can’t stretch your funds to accommodate a new one, it’s always worth considering buying second hand. Audiolab amplifiers are known for their build strength and reliability, so this option would be a fairly safe bet. And servicing is not a problem.

DB

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**Converting Mission’s 760i loudspeakers for bi-wiring simply involves splitting the crossover into bass and treble sections.**

These have a deep and powerful bass, but a dry balance which should complement the A-400 well.

Regarding your cartridge, for similar reasons I would go for the superb Ortofon MC15 Super II. This has a very neutral, detailed and dynamic sound, quite unbeatable at the price. At the same time you would get a great improvement by replacing your old Grace arm with an RB300, which is much more up to the job of taking control of a good MC. This should bring about a worthwhile improvement to your front-end, giving better detail, dynamics and transparency. DB

---

The Audiolab 8000P power amplifier can be used with their 8000A integrated in a bi-amp system.
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When Celestion ditched their heavy, expensive but fascinating SL-6000 subwoofer, publication of my crossover circuit for integrating it into the Quad ESL-63 was shelved. But the project raised so many questions and pointed to so many intriguing possibilities that it remained very much alive in our heads. Just what they are, and why this project is best seen as an introduction to fascinating, little understood but potentially important part of hi-fi is worth covering here.

For me, the project was more than an attempt to create a great loudspeaker. Since manufacturers these days believe a loudspeaker is a wooden box with a few drivers in it, all other forms have hit their off-limits commercially. Alternatives have now become enthusiasts’ territory. Conveniently, the open baffle subwoofer, or bass dipole as it is also known, is simple in construction, amenable to experiment and yet impressive to hear - an enthusiasts dream!

Firstly, here are the unique properties of the dipole subwoofer and what it has to offer hi-fi.

The cabinet that is put around the rear of a conventional loudspeaker drive unit to contain back radiation imposes a low frequency limit upon bass reproduction, often too high to allow low notes to be played properly. It also compromises bass quality by making it lumpy, boomy, uneven or just dry and anaemic. Placing resonance adds mid-band colouration, whilst box echoes add woohumph, chestiness and a megaphone effect. Add in the cost of the woodwork, its weight and volume and you have a severely bad idea staring you in the face.

Amazingly, it gets worse. Here’s the least understood but perhaps most significant drawback of the box loudspeaker: it is a monopole that cannot be properly matched into an enclosed space - domestic rooms in other words. All that pulling and pushing ’speakers around to get good bass performance from them is down to the property.

In return for the certainty that a monopole never works properly is the certainty that it is consistent in its imperfection: it can be plonked anywhere and will give a result. This is why ’speakers placed carelessly in a room invariably deliver poor - often boomy - bass. But their owners are likely to be oblivious to the fact, and as long as there’s plenty of boom, boom, boom going on, happy too.

An open baffle dipole is a fundamentally different animal. It cannot be plonked anywhere; it must be tuned into a room by alignment. This is the bad bit. Potentially, it makes the dipole a real tweaky beast, but I suspect this set-up process can be made simple. In return for this difficulty we get a loudspeaker that works better in an enclosed space. It can actually suppress room modes.

What sort of performance do you get? Firstly, bass with no lower limit. In truth the free air resonance of the drive unit sets the lower limit, but this can be manipulated to exist almost anywhere in the frequency spectrum; Celestion got it down to 5Hz or so, which was frightening. This bass was so deep that it possessed seismic power; the room would move, as if an earthquake was in progress. It takes an enormous box to approach this performance - and none can actually match it!

An open dipole delivers smooth, even and apparently effortless bass lines, that casually reach down to the lowest notes. This is more important than the ability to reproduce seismic events. You have to hear how relaxed and normal bass lines can sound from a dipole before realising just how much a box ’speaker struggles - and often fails - to get down even to 40Hz, the bottom limit of stringed instruments, let alone lower.

Finally, we have no cabinet. This banishes all sorts of ills, especially unwanted colourations. There are drawbacks, but I believe most of them can be overcome. The box monopole ’speaker has enjoyed decades of rigorous scrutiny and analysis, during which enormous amounts of theory and computing power have been applied to tame it. The dipole has attracted little attention and, in fact, I have never seen associated room matching theory until Celestion launched the SL-6000. This is a little understood subject at present.

What we do know is that the dipole is inefficient and consumes lots of power. It also needs electronic equalisation. Suitable high power, high sensitivity bass drivers exist though (e.g. Audax PR330MO, 13in paper cone, Fr 28Hz, 98dB sensitive, etc) and a power amp with equalisation and overload limiting could be included in the base of each unit or as a separate power amplifier. It could be pure Class B and need not have massive heat sinks.

This may look a bit daunting for amateur experimenters, but is it? Maplin offer suitable power amplifier modules, or an old/second-hand power amp. could be pressed into service. These days, equalisation circuits can be knocked up after a good night’s reading of Don Lancaster’s Active Filter Cookbook. Maplin can again offer all parts and the inexpensive test equipment needed to validate results. The dipole subwoofer itself is a drive unit on a small baffle - what could be simpler?

I hope that by publishing my circuit in this month’s DIY Supplement we’ve put meat on the theoretical bones, as it were. From this many of you will be able to cobble up a working system and start experimenting. Good luck! You are likely to get quite a surprise!
Sumo presents the Artemis, a totally new concept in preamp design featuring:

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Moth produce some interesting, no frills amplifiers, including passive and active preamplifiers, a phono stage, four power amps and an integrated. They share the same modular construction of a simple deep aluminium box with a plain wooden front panel.

Moth Stereo 60
The Stereo 60 comes in two boxes, one box for the electronics and one for the 400 VA transformer. First reactions were of a crisp sound with bags of detail, but a lean bass. As listening progressed it was clear the overriding quality was a harshness that coloured everything.

Switching to a valve preamp helped a little bit, but it did not solve the problem. A pity, because fighting to be heard was a superb midrange. Neil Young's vocals never sounded so good. If you don't like following lyrics on the sleeve notes, this is the amp for you. The clear diction was wonderful. Trying other records revealed the same thing, a good midrange drowned out by harsh and somewhat strident treble. I made the mistake of playing Diane Reeves' 'Never Too Far' which was not a happy experience. The forward mix of the record was too much.

The sound stage was quite open but

CONCLUSION
I couldn't recommend the Stereo 60 unless you have a dull, warm system in need of brightening up. The Mono 100 was much better balanced, if still biased towards the midrange. Its clinical approach was sometimes too clean for comfort, but given the right material it could shine. If you are in the market for an amplifier which brings terrific detail and a wonderfully deep soundstage, then the Moth Mono 100 is the one for you.

Moth Stereo 60  £549
Moth Mono 100  £879

Moth Group, 10 Dane Lane, Wilsed, Bedford MK43 3HT
Tel 01234 741152

WORLD VERDICT
Stereo 60: ★★★
Sharp treble and poor depth.
Mono 100: ★★★★
Great staging and plenty of detail.

Measured Performance see p113-121

LIGHT ATTRACTION
Peter Downs thinks Moth's new Mono 100 amplifier is a bright new flame. But with the Stereo 60 you might get burnt.

Reviewed here are the all-new Stereo 60 and Mono 100 power amplifiers. They share common circuitry, enabling Moth to offer an upgrade facility, so that you only pay the difference between the Stereo 60 and Mono 100.

STEREO 60
After my experience with the Stereo 60, and bearing in mind the similar circuitry, I was not looking forward to listening to this three-box combination. The difference between the Mono 100 and the Stereo 60 is that each channel has its own enclosure and the power supply houses two 400VA transformers.

Gingerly, I put on the first record. Was this suicide playing Diane Reeves again? Wow! What a difference. Was this really the same design? The harshness had gone and what greeted me was a holographic midrange going back miles. It was like being there. Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No.2 relayed the eerie experience of hearing Ashkenazy fingers tapping on the keys.

Going back to Neil Young, he sounded much more natural, if slightly spotlit compared to the rest of the sound. The bass was a little subdued and lacked slam, and treble was still a bit bright, but it was nowhere near as harsh as the Stereo 60. The more I listened, the more I had the feeling that the balance had been tinkered with. Some instruments would zing out of the mix with such force that I was almost ducking for cover. Side 2 of Young's Harvest has a harp appear out of nowhere, almost drowning out the lyrics.

MONO 100
After my experience with the Stereo 60, and bearing in mind the similar circuitry, I was not looking forward to listening to this three-box combination. The difference between the Mono 100 and the Stereo 60 is that each channel has its own enclosure and the power supply houses two 400VA transformers.
7 pairs of Mission 731 speakers
3 pairs of Mission 731LE speakers
one Hi-Fi World competition

Add 'em all up and you get ten reasons to enter our great competition!

That's right! Enter this month's fabulous competition and you could walk away with one of ten pairs of Mission loudspeakers. There are three pairs of top 731LEs for the top three entrants and seven pairs of super 731s for the first seven super runners up.

Mission's cleverly engineered and constructed £130 731 loudspeaker appeared on the market a little over a year ago now, and very quickly became the loudspeaker that competitors had to beat. These miniatures are designed for use on a bookshelf or on stands, placed against a rear wall. They have a lively and exciting sound, which helps them bring any system to life. Good punch in the bass makes them great for small rooms.

The 731s use a novel construction technique, where the front and rear baffle are moulded from plastic and snap together to lock the surrounding wooden wrap firmly in place. This makes them extremely rugged little speakers, and having the front braced to the rear
helps reduce cabinet coloration.

The 731LEs, launched recently, are the turbo-charged, super-tuned version of the 73Is, offering greater detail and neutrality to the audiophile. Our November issue headline, ‘Merci Mission’, was apt: the 731LEs are super value for any audiophile on a budget. They are bi-wireable and have been extensively re-worked and tuned to offer a top class performance.

In our World Verdict David Price summed up the 731LEs by saying “Excellent sound puts the competitors in the shade. Well built and pretty too. What more could you expect?”

And what better competition could you ask for too, with the chance to win three pairs of the 731LEs and seven pairs of 73Is. So make sure you enter this competition. All you have to do is simply complete the questions and tie breaker opposite.

Please send your entry on a POSTCARD, or the back of a SEALED ENVELOPE, and completed in block capitals, to arrive no later than 5th DECEMBER 1995 to:

MISSION 731 COMPETITION
Hi-Fi World Magazine
64 Castellain Road,
Maida Vale,
London. W9 1EX

COMPETITION ENTRY QUESTIONS
Cut out and affix to the back of a sealed envelope

1) The Mission 731 is -
   A. A famous track by ‘The Mission’
   B. A miniature loudspeaker
   C. Mission’s secret recipe for chocolate cake
   D. A secret mission to rid the world of poor sound quality

2) Mission’s 73Is use a clever plastic front and rear baffle which lock together, but what is the cabinet wrap made from?
   A. Wrapping paper
   B. Chocolate cake
   C. Wood
   D. Polystyrene

3) Pick one thing the Mission 731LEs don’t have which the 73Is do.
   A. The suffix LE
   B. Chocolate cake cabinet damping
   C. Bi-wire terminals
   D. A £130 price tag

4) How did David Price summarise the 731 LE in our World Verdict?
   A. “Well built and pretty too, just like me!”
   B. “What more could you ask for?”
   C. “I’d swap my Ferrari for them”
   D. “I’d rather have some chocolate cake”

TIE BREAKER (obligatory)
Since it has featured so heavily in the questions above but otherwise has no part to play, so far that is, compose a poem to include the words chocolate cake as well as Mission 731 (or 731LE).

Here’s an example to get you started:
Mission’s 73’s are no fake,
Like Lyon’s original chocolate cake,

Name: ...............................................................
Address: ...........................................................
..............................................................
..............................................................
Post Code: ................................. Tel No. ..............................
☐ Please do not add my name to your mailing list.

COMPETITION RULES AND CONDITIONS OF ENTRY
[1] Only one entry per household will be accepted. Multiple entries will be automatically disqualified.
[2] In the event of more than one entrant submitting all correct answers, the winner will be picked from the tie-breaker by the editor. We will endeavour to publish the results in the February 1996 issue. Purchase of the magazine is not a precondition to entry.
[3] No correspondence about this competition will be entered into and the editor’s decision is final.
[4] No employees of Audio Publishing Ltd. or any companies associated with production or distribution of the prizes may enter.

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

Your name and address may be added to our mailing list only.
If you would prefer not to receive details of new products or special offers from us alone please tick the box. Hi-Fi World magazine is published by Audio Publishing Ltd.
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E&OE 07/95

HI-FI WORLD
A small group of us, including Douglas Floyd-Douglas our acoustics expert and the Editor of Hi-Fi Choice, Stan Vincent, recently went to see Rickie Lee Jones perform live at the London Palladium.

Douglas, knowing the sound engineer, had managed to secure some of the best tickets in the house - about ten rows back and right in line with the single microphone stand which stood centre stage. I'm not a great fan of Rickie Lee Jones myself, but Douglas had assured me that this was an event at a venue not to be missed.

Taking our seats, I spotted the 'speaker system Douglas had been enthusing about earlier on, complete with open-baffle Tannoy Dual-Concentric drivers.

Apparently, whilst working on the set for Oliver, the sound engineer had found the boy's unbroken voice was strongly coloured by cabinet effects of the loudspeakers they were using. So he mounted several drivers on baffles (i.e. without cabinets) to lessen this effect. The result was a clear and totally pure vocal quality. Consequently, a similar set-up had been chosen for this Rickie Lee Jones performance.

For a live performance the sound system was very simple, with no processing or effects, just straight amplification from Rickie herself and either the piano or twelve-string guitar she plays. The sound was absolutely superb, with a great acoustic and pure, natural tonal balance which really helped to draw the emotion out of each song.

In many ways the performance wasn't a million miles away from what a top hi-fi system is capable of. Of course there were differences. Most noticeable was the massive dynamic headroom which allowed Rickie Lee Jones to go from a softly struck chord only just audible, to a vocal peak that would send shivers through your yet without the slightest hint of compression or distortion.

But, this was an all-seater venue, where the crowd were very quiet during each song, removing one of the largest differences between live and reproduced music. The PA system had been very carefully balanced so that its own inherent character didn't override the performance, something which a hi-fi system also has to deal with.

The PA system had been very carefully balanced so that its own inherent character didn't override the performance, something which a hi-fi system also has to deal with. All this, combined with the limited bandwidth material that comes from just vocal and guitar, narrowed the differences between the live performance and a top hi-fi system.

Some of our older readers must be kicking themselves as they read about the current trends towards single-ended valve amplification and now open baffle loudspeakers. This was how hi-fi started, a large 15" Tannoy dual concentric driver on a plank of wood propped up against the wall and a home built single-ended valve amplifier good for a couple of watts. They must be wondering when we'll even see an electrostatic panel housed in an open-back cabinet, allowing small size but good enough extension to reach down to a conventional bass driver.

I hope we'll see interesting open baffle loudspeakers appear in the future. They are easy to build and sound far more natural and uncoloured than any elaborate midrange cabinet arrangement. Perhaps we'll even see an electrostatic panel housed in an open-back cabinet, allowing small size but good enough extension to reach down to a conventional bass driver. We hope to give you more information about all this in the coming months.

**Hi-Fi World** is looking for an Editorial Assistant.

We need someone with a good working knowledge of hi-fi, an ability to listen critically and make balanced judgements, a clear writing style and the resilience to work under pressure in an often hectic editorial environment! You will be working in Central London.

Interested? Then send your C.V. by post or fax to Hi-Fi World, marking the envelope 'Job Application'.

**Dominic Baker**
Grasshopper is the world’s most esoteric pickup cartridge, spoken of in reverential tones. Lack of physical body accounts for its fascinating insect-like appearance. Its sound quality is the vertical propellant that makes you jump. Then there’s the price: at £3750 big enough bring you back to earth.

Grasshopper arrived in a modest but carefully made small wooden box. Inside, the cartridge was held by nothing more than a perspex plate pressing it down into a moulded plastic tray. There was no stylus guard and no other protective packaging - almost everything about this cartridge is minimalist, including its packaging it would seem. But it arrived intact all the same.

The apparent fragility of the Grasshopper belies its robust construction; the front plate is substantial by anyone’s standards and the protruding cantilever looks substantial too. The diamond stylus seems minuscule in comparison, but then it needs to be to reach into the music in the grooves.

For me, though, the most amazing part was the lead-out wires from the coils, which are exposed to the elements. They are so thin that they are difficult to see with the naked eye. A jeweller’s loupe didn’t offer much improvement either. How vdh manage to solder these tiny wires I don’t know; it amazes me.

The Grasshopper was auditioned in

Chris Beeching listens to van den Hul’s legendary Grasshopper IV pickup cartridge. The music made him chirp (but the price made him croak!)
both a Naim Aro atop an LPI2/Armageddon combination with a step-up from Paul Stuart Designs, and also a Nottingham Analogue Spacedeck/Paragon I combination into a cheap pair of the Ortofon transformers. Neither combination disappointed. Fortunately, the cartridge’s robust construction allows easy fitting, and the perspex top-plate has tapped holes which makes installation even more straightforward. Gold-plated pin connections link the output to the rest of a hi-fi system.

Installation took about half an hour. Setting up was easy and having set vertical tracking angle (VTA), tracking force was optimised at 1.6 grams in both arms. At this downforce I found tracking ability was superb. Even from cold the Grasshopper managed to make music from anything I happened to play. As with any good cartridge, the critical aspects of spatial imagery, soundstage depth and ‘presence’ were all ‘true to the original’, but where the Grasshopper scored was its uncanny ability to recreate the music which was taking place. This quality transcended any downfall in the recording process itself. For example, some historical performances can be notoriously difficult to really get into, but the Grasshopper made the music easy and accessible. Somehow the emotion and life of the performance came through where others had failed to present it fully.

Other notably poor recordings which contained good performances also came to musical life. It wasn’t that the Grasshopper was kind to all recordings (far from it, in fact), but neither was it ruthless. It seemed to have a discernment about its presentation which let the important musical aspects through while not highlighting the things which weren’t as important.

I started with a favourite recording: Ansermet conducting Stravinsky’s Petrushka on Ace of Clubs in mono. Now an aged record, and well over-played, the Grasshopper managed to re-present all the magic of the performance that so captured me when I first bought it. All the subtleties, the depth of the silences, just how good a performance it was; all was revealed through the Grasshopper.

Many modern stereo cartridges simply don’t have the lateral compliance to replay mono records well. The Grasshopper excelled here, with a stable central image, a surprising sense of depth and a treatment of percussion which was extraordinarily close to real life. One aspect of mono recordings which I feel is less successful in stereo is sudden transients; in mono, the only stylus movement is sideways, while in stereo the stylus is being pushed up the opposite groove wall which can often result in mistracking. Here the Grasshopper showed just how competent a performer it is in lateral compliance and raw dynamics.

Seeking out some stereo recordings, my hand came to rest (among others) on the Sphere album Flight Path. The opening track ‘If I Should Lose You’ opens with a heavy plucked bass on the right channel followed by a loud, rasping, yet lyrical sax on the left. The surprise is in the non-played information which comes through. Recorded at the Rudy Van Gelder Studios in the USA, the air and space surrounding these two performers was huge. A long, deep and high echo made it seem they were playing in an empty Wembley stadium. This decayed slowly but gracefully over the next few notes played, without being masked by them; the Grasshopper manages to reveal all this without losing the main thread of the music - quite an achievement.

Transparency was the Grasshopper’s hallmark, allowing music to flow with superb fluidity. Its bottom-to-top presentation was seamless, with good bass weight and a clear, open and extended sparkling treble. This lack of tonal colouration is no doubt aided by the absence of a cartridge body, and all its associated resonances. I’m sure the cartridge structure must have a resonance somewhere, but simply by listening, I couldn’t find it.

Ultimately it mattered not what sort of music I played, what age of pressing, whether stereo, mono or SQ compatible, the Grasshopper managed to reveal things which I had previously been unable to hear. Its one disadvantage is that a really revealing system in needed to hear the benefits. Plonk it in front of a Pioneer A-400, or a similar budget super-amp, and you’re likely to be disappointed, not because the amps are no good, but because their resolving power is at a lower order of magnitude than the front end. So, highly articulate speakers and very transparent amplification are needed to reveal the Grasshopper’s musical abilities.

The biggest downside to reviewing this spectacular cartridge lies in the aftermath: I’d have to go back to missing all the things I’d now heard. When I play again any of the records used for this review I shall be reminded of the joy that the Grasshopper gave as a musical performer, and of the hidden gems which it revealed. Moving back to lesser cartridges will be something of a major culture shock.

vdH Grasshopper IV £3750

van den Hul UK,
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With the home market remaining staunchly stereo, this has placed British manufacturers in something of a dilemma.  

With the home market now well under way, after a barrage of Shows, just where does the industry see its future? Although there were a greater number of London based shows for the hi-fi enthusiast this September, there hasn't been the expected split between hi-fi and A/V based products. The rest of the world (well, America, Japan and mainland Europe, at least), seem to be heading towards an A/V dominated market where the music part of the hi-fi is incorporated with the visual side. This has led most of the large Japanese amplifier manufacturers to reappraise their future output and move over to A/V amplifiers, with stereo amps no longer a mainstay. Although they'll produce the ancillary equipment, such as CD players, cassette decks, tuners, and the like, the market for quality budget to mid-range priced equipment will become poorer. We may never see the likes of the A-400 again.

So where does Britain fit into all this? Well, unlike our Western partners, A/V equipment has been rather slow to catch on over here. Surround sound televisions are still something of a gimmick and it's not a feature likely to dominate the market as Nicam has done over the past six years. Hi-fi originated A/V separates are a similar case. Whilst there has been an interest, stereo amplifiers still outsell multi-channel home cinema ones by at least 10 to 1 (the exact amount varies according to whose figures you believe).

With the home market remaining staunchly stereo, this has placed British manufacturers in something of a dilemma. The fact that the Japanese are now tending to concentrate on Audio Visual equipment has meant that British amplifier manufacturers have been able to capitalise on reduced competition. I forecast that over the next few years we'll see fewer Japanese amplifier awards, as they slowly move out of stereo and toward A/V.

At the moment the British hi-fi industry appears to be in something of a dilemma. On the one hand, companies such as Audiolab are (so far) rightly doing is not putting all their eggs into one basket.

Another part of the industry affected by the intrusion of A/V, is the loudspeaker market. The approach here has been similarly diverse, as with the electronic side of things, yet with varying results. Celestion, for example have been quick to latch on to A/V, but have had their fingers burnt in the process. For some time they've had A/V speakers, a policy continuing with the Impact range, designed to be driven using “lifestyle” and mid-systems (all credit to Celestion for their superb new up-market, stone cabinet Kingston loudspeaker range too).

However, whilst appeasing the A/V and high-end market, Celestion have made the mistake of letting their mid-range ‘speakers fade away. Once, ‘speakers such as the Celestion D1 and SL ranges were the mainstay of the company. And, it should be noted that, as well as sounding good and having a clearly defined market position, they actually sold well too. This is certainly something that couldn't be said of Celestion’s previous CS range. I look forward to reviews of the new Impact range with interest to see if Celestion have regained some of their credibility in the budget to mid-range hi-fi market.

Mission, on the other hand, have managed to get the balancing act right. Whilst pursuing A/V with a full range of ‘speakers, with electronics to come from partnering Cyrus too, they've still managed to retain a broad hi-fi ‘speaker range that offers a degree of consistency in terms of ability, right through from the 731 at £130 to the £700 753. Excellent sales speak for themselves.

Although A/V is certainly more than a gimmick, I hope that when manufacturers are considering the future they don’t use it as an excuse to ignore the hi-fi customer and let music reproduction go to pot. With the Japanese turning towards A/V the coming years could be the most fruitful ever for British manufacturers, provided they clearly identify the market's needs - not its whims. Whatever the results, the next few years will probably prove a turbulent time for the hi-fi industry, but they may be a little more bountiful for real hi-fi manufacturers than expected.
• Let’s face facts: sometimes you get out of the right side of the bed and sometimes you get your feet all tangled up. Oasis’ sequel to last year’s debut Definitely Maybe, exemplifies both kinds of morning. Oasis were the first group to sing about selling the Big Issue on the most inspiring entree for five years, and sadly there’s not always such fired up originality on this second instalment.

One could easily argue that the mere four weeks spent cutting the current disc is well in keeping with their long-standing admiration of the mid-sixties Liverpool sound. Furthermore, it’s a strikingly novel notion for a group to pursue simplicity. This goes against the sixties obsession with progressiveness which was, let’s be honest, in most cases something to talk about in interviews.

This is not to say that the distinctive wit of the first album isn’t present. Try to work out a line like “She’s got a sister with a palm that’s got a blister”. Clue: it’s on page 346 of Les Dawson’s ‘Anthology of Bawdy Jokes, Vol.23’. These lyrics are sung in a surprisingly high pitched vocal refrain from Gallagher junior.

Ultimately, Oasis’ continuing success is down to their flair with a cool, catchy tune, a nose for publicity and their sheer talent. Have the days of Definitely Maybe passed? Let time tell.

THE LEVELLERS
Zeitgeist China
MF4/GDIHFW

• A fifth time out from Brighton’s best loved quintet. Apparently, the lads have recently moved into a communal dream home, just like The Beatles in the Help
than likely to make the crossover to desirable world markets. After all, it took The Kinks the best part of fifteen years to cross the Atlantic. Perhaps they are a bit laid back in terms of image, but then this is classy pop with strong hooks and not a hint of the pretentiousness that seems to plague so many of our up-and-comers.

Willowy and sweet voiced Tim Burgess up front, Martin Blunt (another ironic name, considering his strong underpinning) and his brother Rob on guitar and keyboards respectively, and drummer Joe Brooks, stretch the gamut from the thundering to the exquisite. Cop an earful of "Toothache" which is anything but likely to have you begging for anaesthesia. But to cut a long review short, there's not a dud track to be found here. A fine band. No lie, honest guv'nor.

movie. They are obviously very close, and as their name suggests, they continue to be PC without sacrificing a palpable sense of joy.

The disc was recorded over nine months - an apt gestation period for a record that alternately provokes, entrances and unless you are careful, is likely have you doing amiably silly dances. Flow with the lads on a mixed melee whose prime moments include the sublime "Maid of the River", the suitably ironic "PC Keen", or the magically wrought "Fantasy". The band recently told Vox mag that you can't be a real musician unless you take some type of drug or other. The record is a definable buzzer, so The Levellers are evidently level-headed on the herbal-chemical front. Just don't try it at home kids - these men are trained professionals and as mad as they come.

LOUDON WAINWRIGHT III
Grown Man
VIRGIN CDV 2789

Loudon Wainwright is eminently articulate, scabrous and just so funny it almost hurts. In short, he possesses a wit few American songwriters can hold a candle to. This man, with his gawky stage movements and truly eccentric vocal style, has a breadth of material that can make you laugh one minute and cry the next. Even after something like two decades in the business and a persona as quirky as Emo Phillips crossed with Tiny Tim, all spiced up with the wit of David Byrne minus the more pretentious bits, he can still come up with some hot tunes. True perhaps that he has had the obligatory ups and downs, but "Just a Joke", "A Year" and "Father Daughter Duologue", are fine additions to a catalogue that already includes oodles of wit, wisdom and some really neat tunes. Tune in, turn Loudon on and don't drop your false teeth laughing.

ECHOBELLY
On
FAUV 6 CD

Dunno about you, but I'd buy this band's discs just for the photos of the glorious Sonya Aurora Madan. However, happily there's more to Echobelly than meets the eye. They have overcome the Smiths copycat tag, to turn up a sturdy and varied act packed with wry social observations and digs, as well as heaps of memorable tunes.

Despite a somewhat odd obsession with motor cars, they're a pleasure to ride with. Look out Blur - the 'Bellies are catching up real fast.
Jon Clarke

THE REBIRTH OF COOL PHIVE
Subterranean Abstract Blues
BRCD 617 1 525 778-2

- Number Phive and the Rebirth possé bring out the compilation of the year yet again. Still elusive, vague and moody in conception, the flavour is once more progressive and stylish. Ultimately Cool.

The trick it seems is to avoid the labelling and stereotyping that most music has fallen prey to over the years. As the sleeve notes proclaim: "We don't know what to call this music". And this is quite apparent - labelling Rebirth is nigh on impossible. To say it is a celebration of English originality in music - which in part it certainly is - would be unfair to Japan's United Future Organisation or America's Beastie Boys, both who have tracks on Phive.

Rebirth is about the rebirth of originality in music, particularly in the UK, and this is summed up by the inclusion of tracks by Bristoleans Tricky and Portishead. Their music can be likened to Trip-Hop, Acid Jazz and Danruy, but the only place it can really be likened to is "Whipping Boy". There are also excellent tracks by Leena Conquest and Kruder and Dorfmeister.

Brown Sugar is where the Gospel meets the nightclub - a rendezvous which culminates in sheer sensuality. Hopefully, D'Angelo, can handle the artistic and social pressure that go hand-in-hand with his talent, and progress without too much pain and heartbreak.

Brown Sugar is the sexiest, most soulful album to hit the streets for years and it could - just maybe - be the start of a musical career to rival that of Curtis, Marvin and Prince. The 21-year-old from Richmond, Virginia, used to hold court at local Sunday Church services. He teamed up with Ali from A Tribe Called Quest for a studio jam, when he suddenly hit the piano and the single Brown Sugar was born.

It started the vibe which continues right through the rest of the album - a delightful journey through Motown and smooth, smooth Soul.

Almost entirely written, performed and produced by D'Angelo himself, the album has immediate similarities with Stevie Wonder and Prince's masterpieces. This must be due to his humble musical roots. Learning to play music by ear from the age of four, Michael "D'Angelo" Archer, was soon being handed playlists of songs on a Saturday to rehearse for the following day's Church service. His talent was eventually recognized at the notoriously difficult Showtime At The Apollo competition, in New York, which he won three times.

D'Angelo seems to have a rare talent, not often seen today, to take any groove and make it sound sexy. And without exception all of Brown Sugar's 10 tracks are enough to get anyone in the mood for love-making.

BROWN SUGAR
D'Angelo
7Z43 8 406 7 25 VTC 59

- It's been out a little while now, but this summer's underground dance success by a long shot came from the little known US dude D'Angelo. Brown Sugar is the sexiest, most soulful album to hit the streets for years and it could - just maybe - be the start of a musical career to rival that of Curtis, Marvin and Prince. The 21-year-old from Richmond, Virginia, used to hold court at local Sunday Church services. He teamed up with Ali from A Tribe Called Quest for a studio jam, when he suddenly hit the piano and the single Brown Sugar was born.

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This is an inspired pairing and no mistake. And, with all due respect to Japanese noise sculptors The Ruins, it gives this column the chance to sound off at some length about one of the most remarkable figures in modern music.

What can be said about Derek Bailey that hasn’t already been said a thousand times already? The English guitarist emerged in the mid-sixties as a key figure in a group of radical young jazz musicians who very deliberately cut all links with the 50 year history of the genre and attempted to forge a new, totally spontaneously created music which would avoid the clichés of stylized jazz improvising, and the fetters of idiom generally.

The groups and individuals on the scene - Bailey, Evan Parker, the Spontaneous Music Ensemble, Trevor Watts, the late, great John Stevens, the Music Improvisation Company (the list runs on and on) achieved their aims with varying degrees of success, but always with a depth of intelligence and grace. Their music was distinguishable from other contemporary sounds through its violent and often deliberately cacophonous feel which originated in urban America (the ‘New Thing’) and Europe.

As time moved on, a lot of the members have moved onto more regular pastures. Dave Holland and Kenny Wheeler, both cohorts of Bailey’s in the Spontaneous Music Ensemble, are now rightly renowned for their adept, highly lyrical post bop improvising which has made them natural label mates at ECM. Stevens himself, the SME’s leader (in as much as one individual could be) spent much of the seventies writing and playing an enthusiastically ethnic blend of jazz rock.

Of all these musicians, Bailey, along with soprano and tenor saxist Parker, are the two who stand out as having pursued the most dogged, singular course, albeit along very different lines. Parker’s greatest contribution has been the mammoth body of live and pre-recorded solo saxophone work which has built up over the years. Despite the highly modern and esoteric nature of his solo performances, Parker still crops up on more predictable occasions, such as with the gleeful, hard swinging Kenny Wheeler Big Band or that master of manic depressive pop, Scott Walker.

And what of Bailey? It is Bailey’s background which makes Saisoro what it is, that is an intriguing and dazzling record. It seems to me that Bailey’s great contribution to contemporary music is two fold. Firstly, and crucially, for this gets overlooked so often it’s painful, Bailey is one of the most significant innovators on the world’s most horrendously over played instrument to have emerged in the last three decades, or more. If you were to sit down and make up an objective list of the most significant guitar players since Django Rheinhardt, then sure you’d have Charlie Christian and Jimi Hendrix and Robert Johnson and probably John McLaughlin and possibly Ry Cooder - and unquestionably Derek Bailey.

Call me a late starter, but I first saw Derek Bailey perform live in the mid eighties and experienced a true
guitarist, this can seem like having your guitar turned on their head (and for the first time is to have one's world turned upside down). He is expectations and assumptions about the guitarists who grew up sufficiently in the community - and definitely not that you can certainly hear it in his playing.

And now to discuss Bailey's most recent collaborators. The Ruins are drummer vocalist Yoshida Tatsuya and bassist Masuda Ryuchi (Yoshida being the mainstay). They are a typically Japanese hybrid of Western hi and lo brow rock influences, a kind of punk rock thrash metal outfit with a serious King Crismon - or Magma? - hang up. Their records on assorted Japanese labels and New York's Arthouse, punk home of the hit 'Shimmy Disc', paved the way for a host of Japanese noise freaks and Western Japophile genre misfits.

Recorded last year in New York, and unfortunately available only as a US import on John Zorn's latest venture TZadik, Saisoro is either a ridiculous, coyly postmodernist debacle in which two mutually exclusive, if not actually hostile, musical philosophies come head to head just to make a point; or (and I'm with this camp) a meeting as inspired as that of Tony Conrad and Faust. In other words a meeting of idiomatically different but spiritually aligned artists.

Frankly, it's a blast. On 'Yagimbo', Bailey spins a spider's web of a guitar solo around strident, punkish rhythms. On 'Shivareyango', Yoshida's opera singer in a torture chamber shrieks rip out of beautiful, ethereal guitar drones. On 'Quinka Matta', heart stopping guitar harmonics overlay splatter punk hardcore drumming. Other influences are evident in 'Odangdoh' and 'Zomvobischum' which recall Arto Lindsay's late 70s art punk outfit DNA with their lurching, stop start drumming and scratchy guitar.

You get the picture. Saisoro's series of seven vignettes make up one the most enjoyable albums this reviewer has come across in a good while.

The best Magma freak Jap punk band meets brilliant eccentric English experimenter - record of the month, at least. Make the effort to hunt this one down. Essential.

---

**VARIOUS ARTISTS**

*Universal Sounds Of America*

**HFSOUL JAZZ RECORDS SJRCD27**

- I can't think of many compilations that we've reviewed in this column over the years. Yet in every area of commercial music, multi artist compilations have come to dominate the market place. Now the general critical tendency would be to see this as a worrying trend, but in truth, for all the throw away TV advertised pap (today's major label major earner, tomorrow's car boot sale fodder) there occasionally emerges a various artists collection which instantly captures the zeitgeist. It is, after all possible to crystallize a whole bunch of diverse music critical perspectives, or simply present an audience willing to listen with a fresh take on music they already know.

With Universal Sounds of America, Soho's cottage industry, Soul Jazz Records, have gathered together a whole bunch of American jazz from around the mid 70s, which straddles Free Jazz and Jazz Rock. The man on the moon artwork of the cover perhaps sums up this album better than any standard term - this is pure psychedelic jazz. The collection brings together certainly some names one would expect: Sun Ra's 'Solar Arkestra' with a stunning epic take on the bandleader's
classic call to cosmic enlightenment, 'Space is the Place'. This features the blasting tenor and soprano sax of Pharoah Sanders; the Art Ensemble of Chicago are at their very best with a very Arethaesque Fontella bass topping off the weirdly funky proceedings. Joining them are rarer finds from David Durrah, Marcus Belgrave, Steve Reid, and Butch Morris.

This collection stands out against many of pop music's satellites, such as trip-hop, which are keen to invoke the spirit of 70s psychedelic jazz. This set opens a window on an underground of extraordinary music which has idled too long in obscurity. Let's hope they're hard at work on Volume 2.

Simon Cooke

ROBERT TROWERS QUARTET
Point Of View
CCD 4636

There are great trombonists, as well as great 'bone-led bands. As an instrument, it lends power and weight to the brass section, providing a good, stable platform for the rest of the players. However it will never - and I mean never - be a lead instrument for that same reason. Authority is earned through speed and flexibility, both essential for a lead player, whose job is to interest and involve the listener.

On the other hand, thin, compressed recordings of the 'bone are more of a rarity than those of tenor (and especially alto) sax. If you can afford the time to state notes fully - as with trombone - you give the recording technicians something to get their teeth into, so to speak. Still, even the best recording can't replace the sparkle of a performance originally blown on the 'bone, the same way that your 'speakers won't resolve what's been lost by a lacklustre component earlier in the system. You know that and luckily so does everyone associated with this recording.

Okay, so it takes eight tracks to really come alive and from a total of eleven, I'll admit that's a lot. Nevertheless, slowness is not disappointing per se because the ability of the musicians on these tracks comes through right down the line. Robert Trowers fronts with Al Grey; Slide Hampton and Fred Wesley gust on two tracks, each on trombones; Richard Wyands is on piano, Marcus McLaurine on bass and Gene Jackson on drums. Even during those first eight tracks there are moments of beauty when one or other of the musicians suddenly shines. However, it never really takes off until Trowers' own 'R&B', which is merely a precursor to Fats Waller's 'The joint is jumpin' (track 10). Here it all comes together in a storming take on an old standard which shows Trowers at his best. Overall, it's an album of well-played jazz which will appeal to trombone lovers, but few others. A pity.

TRIBUTE TO LEE MORGAN
Lee Morgan Tribute Band
NYC 61016

From trombone to trumpet, and into a racier, more driven, modern mode. In fact, the trumpet here is provided by Eddie Henderson, who brings the required virtuosity and deep lyricism to Morgan's compositions. Morgan's tunes are classics of their time and deceptively easy to play. It's good to hear a band of this pedigree tossing these tunes around. The band behind (around and sometimes in front of) Henderson, are Grover Washington Jr. and Joe Lovano, on soprano and tenor sax respectively, Cedar Walton on piano, Peter Washington on bass and Billy Higgins on drums. The nine tunes kick off with 'The Lion and the Wolff' and roam through 'Sidewinder' and 'Speedball', 'You don't know what love is' - taken beautifully slow - and 'Ca-Lee-So', to conclude with 'Search for the New Land'.

Everything is here. The recording is beautifully clean and images detail limpidly. There's really very little more you could possibly expect from a CD, unless you want an autographed copy.

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Peter Herring

Have you heard the one about the Irishman, the Pole and the Russian? Let us enlighten you as to the unexpected influence of an intemperate Dubliner on no lesser person than Frederic Chopin. Also how Rachmaninov produced some of his finest piano pieces while seeking to emulate Chopin. Then, finally revealed in all its colourful splendour, is the opera created by the Cornishman, which combines Italian style and Celtic myth trips, and it was on one of these that he decided to part company with his tutor and settle in St Petersburg. During his stay Field gave lessons to the likes of Glinka, but later resumed the nomadic life as a travelling virtuoso.

Field also garnered considerable praise as a composer for the piano, his concertos being widely played (he wrote seven in all, one of which has retained its place in the repertoire). Towards the end of his life Field settled in Moscow, and it was there that he died in 1837. According to the Oxford Companion to Music, "intemperance and carelessness had some part in his comparatively early death"; the nature of this "carelessness" remains a mystery.

John Field is now chiefly remembered for 'inventing' that most freely impressionistic of piano forms, the nocturne, which reached its apotheosis with Chopin. The Polish genius was the first to acknowledge his debt to the Irishman; Chopin urged his pupils to study and play Field's compositions. Listening to them it is easy to appreciate where Chopin's distinctive 'vocal' tone - the ability to make the piano 'sing' - had its roots. Field's achievement was arguably one of the one great innovations in English music during the first decades of the nineteenth century.

Though now performed on the modern concert grand, John Field's music was not written for such an instrument. Originally, it would have been played on the much smaller, essentially domestic square pianos of his time, and this is the approach successfully adopted by Joanna Leach. On this generously filled CD containing all of the nocturnes, she employs three square pianos of Field's era: a five-and-a-half octave William Stodart of around 1823; a six-octave John Broadwood of
By now I ought to know it will be a waste of time. Whenever a new recording of music by the venerable George Lloyd comes my way, I turn to the appropriate reference books for background information - composition dates, first performances, that kind of thing - and, almost without exception, uncover not a solitary mention of the work in question. Some of these tomes, Peter Pirie’s excellent English Musical Renaissance, for example, ignore Lloyd altogether. Why so? After all, regardless of its quality, the very quantity of his music - operas, concertos, symphonies, piano pieces - merits some comment.

But, then, for some three decades, George Lloyd was outside the mainstream of English musical life. This was partly the consequence of his personal isolation. Lloyd’s experiences during the Second World War as a merchant seaman on the Arctic convoys to Russia, left him physically and mentally shattered. For a time, he gave up his career in music altogether and retreated with his wife to Dorset to grow carnations and mushrooms. However, even before the war, Lloyd was also becoming isolated musically. He was someone whose gifts belonged more to the nineteenth century than the twentieth, who felt no empathy with, for example, the neo-classicism of Stravinsky, and whose heart was with the Italian opera composers. For this, he was shunned by many in the musical establishment, especially those too concerned with asserting their own ‘modern’ credentials to recognise that quality of expression is more important than the musical language used.

In recent times though, chiefly thanks to enlightened record labels such as Albany and Conifer, George Lloyd’s music has at last attained the audience it deserves. And it is heartening to know that the composer, now eighty-three but still trim and fit and well able to conduct a full-length concert - as he demonstrated at the Barbican last year - is able to enjoy that success.

In conclusion, it almost goes without saying that when I sought out references to George Lloyd’s opera, lernin, a work inspired by the Celtic myth and magic of his native Cornwall, I turned up little more than a one-line mention. Do the compilers of the guides, dictionaries and encyclopaedias know what they’ve overlooked, I wonder?

GEORGE LLOYD IERNIN

Marilyn Hill-Smith, soprano; Claire Powell, contralto; Geoffrey Pogson, tenor; Henry Herford, baritone; Malcolm Rivers, bass-baritone; BBC Singers; BBC Concert Orchestra; conductor, George Lloyd

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- My gazetteer of prehistoric myth and history lists four groups of standing stones in Cornwall with the name Nine Maidens. No doubt each has its own associated legend, but it was the stone circle lying west of St Ives, within the Penwith peninsula near Zennor which supplied the inspiration for George Lloyd’s three-act opera. The story goes that an early Christian saint, coming across creatures from the Celtic faery world - lernin and her eight sisters - indulging in wild pagan dances and luring mortal men into their embraces, promptly transformed the temptresses into stones.

The opera opens with one of the stones reawakening as lernin. She is pursued by nearby huntsmen, captured and brought before a nobleman, Gerent, who immediately feels an inexplicable bond with this strange creature; it is as though he knew her in some past existence. But whatever emotions Gerent feels must be suppressed as he is shortly to wed Cunaide, the daughter of a Cornish prince, Bedwyr. lernin is released and flees her captors.

However, there is another complication to the marriage between Gerent and Cunaide. The king of the invading Saxons (the plot is set around 950 AD) has sent an emissary to Bedwyr demanding Cunaide’s hand for his earl, Aethelwulf. Bedwyr is determined to defy the Saxons, even if it means outright rebellion.

Come the day of the wedding, lernin appears among the crowd of onlookers but, upon seeing the Christian Celtic cross being held aloft in the procession, shrieks with terror (hardly surprising given the outcome of her previous encounter with this particular symbol). The crowd’s
reaction to this outburst is to condemn her as a witch, which prompts Gerent to desert his bride and spring to lernin’s aid. The pair make for the hills.

Cunaide, however, is not so easily thwarted and pursues Gerent. Upon finding him, she berates him for deserting his responsibilities and he comes to realise, if reluctantly, that the gulf between his world and that of lernin is unbridgeable. lernin also becomes reconciled to her fate and resumes her place in the stone circle, this time for ever. Gerent departs to undertake his commitments to Cunaide and Bedwyr, and to face the challenges that his marriage and their defiance of the Saxons will undoubtedly bring.

The libretto for lernin was produced by the composer’s father, William Lloyd, an enthusiast for Italian opera. It was an enthusiasm that was passed on to his son and at the remarkably early age of twenty-one, George Lloyd was able to write for the voice with a confidence and fluency borne out of a good grounding in Bellini, Rossini, Donizetti and the like. Yet the strongest influence here, in terms of the vitality and dramatic energy of the work, must be Verdi and in an interview with the producer, Chris de Souza, which occupies the last twenty minutes or so of the third disc, George Lloyd reveals the impact that Otello had on him. One thing he vigorously eschews is any link between lernin and the misty-eyed nostalgia of the Celtic Twilight espoused by Rutland Boughton. His opera, declares Lloyd, is about the colours of Cornwall in all their vibrancy and all their shifting moods. Following the Italian tradition, characters are defined by the melodic line, and the power of the work comes from the voices. Yet the orchestration is also wonderfully vivid and atmospheric.

George Lloyd completed lernin in June 1934 and it was first performed in Penzance in November of that year. The following summer, it transferred to London and ran for three weeks at the Lyceum Theatre (it would have probably enjoyed a longer run were it not for the heat wave which caused audiences to dwindle). Frank Howes, music critic of The Times, saw the Penzance production and gave it an enthusiastic review. In London, most of the leading musical personalities of the day - John Ireland, Thomas Beecham, Ralph Vaughan Williams - saw the opera and were equally encouraging. Yet after its 1935 success, the work slipped into obscurity. Why so?

True, stylistically, Lloyd belongs to the era of his beloved Verdi and writes in a Verdian idiom that was out-of-step with the time and reflected little of what was to follow. Yet the work is unusually well-crafted, if lacking some of the polish that maturity might bring, and sincere in its intentions. It is also full of fine music, and it takes little imagination for the opera to come vividly alive in the listener’s mind. And, if the plot is rooted in fanciful, albeit attractive, myth, its themes embrace a timeless relevance: the conflict of duty and desire. The mistrust of the outsider, the undermining of a culture by a new orthodoxy - in this case Celtic freedoms by Christian intolerance - even quiescent Cornish nationalism, are concerns very much alive today.

This Albany recording of lernin has been digitally remastered from tapes made by the BBC in 1985, in a performance directed by the composer. The soloists are uniformly fine, although it is difficult not to single out Marilyn Hill Smith in the title role. The orchestral and choral contributions are first-rate, suggesting a genuine enthusiasm for the score. Given a clean, well-balanced sound, too, it can only be hoped that this first CD appearance of George Lloyd’s opera will enjoy the same impact and recognition that its youthful composer encountered exactly six decades ago.
Preludes (except, doubtless, the hackneyed Op3 No23) then I am tempted to say that this is the 'private' Rachmaninov. It is especially for those who are not enamoured of the 'public' version, embodied in the symphonies and piano concertos. Here the ideas are necessarily more concentrated, and although several of the pieces embody the nostalgic yearning and wistful melancholy associated with Rachmaninov, there is little of the 'heart-on-the-sleeve' sentimentality which characterises the Second Piano Concerto.

But even the doubters would surely be seduced by Ashkenazy's magnetic playing, his obvious empathy for the idiom, and a technique which seems perfectly honed to this music. No other pianist better illuminates the texture of Op23 No4 and understands the mood of Op23 No1, or senses the flow of Op23 No6. Most of all, Ashkenazy communicates the indefinable 'Russian-ness' of these pieces, a collection which Rachmaninov modelled on Chopin's 24 Preludes of a century earlier. Like his Polish predecessor, by including the youthful C sharp minor with the Op23 set of 1904 and the thirteen preludes of Op32 (1910), Rachmaninov was able to encompass all the major and minor keys. However, there the similarity between the Op23 and Op32 sets tends to end, because style, mood and content are surprisingly different.

Rachmaninov's Second Piano Sonata was begun in Rome in 1910, three years after he completed his second set of Preludes. It is a superb work, wrought on a large scale (it lasts twenty-five minutes) and welded together by one of the composer's typical themes. The work is also distinguished by its bell-like sonorities, a conscious or unconscious result of Rachmaninov being haunted throughout his life by the sound of Russian church bells. The piano sound of the sonata, recorded in Kingsway Hall, is very fine, but that of the Preludes is better still. Taped between January 1974 and April 1975 by Kenneth Wilkinson in All Saints', Petersham, Surrey, it displays no inconsistencies and has emerged clear and full-bodied in this latest CD transfer. The perfect medium to convey Ashkenazy's fabulous playing.

Ralph Vaughan Williams
Symphony No6 in E minor
Symphony No9 in E minor
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra; conductor, Vernon Handley
EMI EMINENCE CD-EMX2230 (DDD/66.14)

It is one of the mysteries, not to say injustices, of British musical life that a musician of the stature and experience of Vernon Handley has never, to my knowledge, been offered the principal conductorship of a leading orchestra which he so richly deserves. Whichever ensemble he is called to direct, Handley generates performances of insight and character, as well as technical excellence, both in concert and on recordings. This latest issue in his Vaughan Williams cycle simply reinforces that observation.

Here, Vernon Handley offers cogent, illuminating and utterly idiomatic interpretations of two of the three 'difficult' Vaughan Williams symphonies, the Sixth and the Ninth (I would nominate the Fourth as the other work in that triumvirate). The Sixth has partly acquired the 'difficult' tag through associations which have nothing whatsoever to do with the composer. The aggression and turbulence of the opening movement (if tempered by one of the noblest tunes that VW ever wrote) is followed by the latent menace of the second and the bitter sarcasm of the scherzo. It is rounded off, after all the fury and frenzy by an epilogue which, throughout its ten-minute duration, never rises above pianissimo and is permeated by 'whiffs of theme' as the composer described them.

Introduce such music into a post-war world - the premiere was given by Adrian Boult in 1948 - that is a world still discovering its capacity for creating horror, and it was perhaps inevitable that an apocalyptic message would be detected in the last movement's desolation. When asked what he was trying to imply in this eerie, haunted musical landscape, Vaughan Williams merely compounded the mystery by quoting from Prospero's final speech in Shakespeare's Tempest: "We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep."

The Ninth Symphony poses its own set of questions, although clues may be found in a programme symphony which VW had planned but then abandoned. It was to have depicted the legendary places of Wessex and its associated literature. The macabre march which suddenly intrudes into the second movement has its origins in music intended to portray the spectral drummer of Salisbury Plain. As in the Sixth Symphony, this work abounds with contrasts, which are however more evanescent and elusive. The first movement opens with towering, granite-like resolution but ends with disquieting uncertainty. The finale of the Ninth is one of VW's most extraordinary symphonic movements, bringing the work to an end in an equally extraordinary fashion: saxophones intrude over long E Major chords, with chords of F and G, swelling to a climax and then just as abruptly receding into a musical void.

The Ninth usually eludes conductors not well versed in Vaughan Williams's symphonic idiom. Vernon Handley, however, is steeped in this music as the coherence and confidence underlying his interpretation makes apparent. The performance of the Sixth, which exhibits outstanding playing from every department of the RLPO, must also rank among the very finest versions currently available. Exemplary recording too (divided violins doing much to clarify the textures) from the ever-reliable production and engineering team of Andrew Keener and Mike Hatch.
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- CHARLIE BYRD - The Guitar Artistry Of...
## hi Best prices for new, xdem & s/h equipment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Manufacturer</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Price</th>
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<td>ARCAM ZETA ONE AV.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Typically as new but may vary</td>
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<td>SOND FRONTIERS SPL-1</td>
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<td>TESSEERAT Tala Line</td>
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<td>BURMESTER 880 Linigharo</td>
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<td>AUDIO RESEARCH S151</td>
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<tr>
<td>EXPOSURE XV</td>
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<td>CREEK 42 40</td>
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<tr>
<td>MISSION CYRUS 3 + PSX</td>
<td></td>
<td>as new</td>
<td>£300</td>
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<td>AUDIO INNOVATIONS 5500</td>
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<td>ARCAN ZETA ONE, A.V.</td>
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<td>SCANDIN AV A3</td>
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<tr>
<td>STAX FX83</td>
<td></td>
<td>as new</td>
<td>£2095</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**X-OVER**

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- Orelle SP-200 Power amp
  - **£799** **£499**
- Orelle CD-480 CD player
  - **£399** **£299**
- Orelle SP-150 Power amp
  - **£499** **£299**
- Orelle Orators Speaker system
  - **£849** **£499**

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- **Mail order direct 1-15 days**
- **Competitive price (inc. P&P)**

---

## Make and Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Make and Model</th>
<th>Cartridge</th>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Price</th>
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<td>Goldklang</td>
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12. AUDIO T CHELTENHAM 01242 583960
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19. FRANK HARVEY HI-FI COVENTRY 01203 525200
20. HAMPSHIRE AUDIO SOUTHAMPTON 01703 252827
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22. HI-FI EXPERIENCE DARLINGTON 01325 481418
23. LINTONE AUDIO GATESHEAD 0191 477 4167
24. LINTONE AUDIO GATESHEAD 0191 460 8999
25. LINTONE AUDIO NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE 0191 232 3994
26. MARTINS HI-FI NORWICH 01603 627010
27. MARTINS HI-FI KINGS LYN 01553 761683
28. MUSIC MATTERS HI-FI SOLIHULL 0121 742 0254
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Smooth, flat frequency response is important to ensure a balanced sound. Look carefully at overall trends; rising treble will give a bright sound, falling treble a dull sound. A rise through the midrange normally corresponds with good projection.

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

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

CD PLAYERS

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

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

AMPLIFIERS

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

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

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

TUNERS

Frequency response, as always, says much about tonal balance and character traits, like peaky treble (due to a mismatched MPX filter). Distortion and channel separation need to be less than 0.3% (according to harmonic structure) and better than 25dB.

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

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

CASSETTE DECKS

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

Recording quality considers frequency response, bias variation, head performance and alignment. Frequency response should stretch from 40Hz-15kHz or so. Head overload (MOL315) must be above 0dB, reaching around +4dB for good results.

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

AMPLIFIERS

P.M. AUDIO LAB MP211 PRE/POWER AMPLIFIER.

The power amplifier only met its claimed output ‘power’ with no load, producing 12V. Load matching was poor, producing severe clipping asymmetry, which limited power delivery to around 3 watts (3% THD). The design is bandwidth limited, as might be expected with the 211 valve, since it has plenty enough of spectrum extremes in its sound.

We ran this amplifier combo well within its limits by using our own KLS3 loudspeaker, which goes loud with our own 4watt SE design. It appears that the output transformer is poorly load matched to the 211 valve. NK

TEST RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Power</th>
<th>3watts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CD/tuner/aux.</td>
<td>30Hz-15kHz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency response</td>
<td>90dB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separation</td>
<td>-78dB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distortion</td>
<td>30mV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0k 10k 60k

Hi-Fi World
**Golden Dragon**

**RETAIL PRICE LIST**

**Golden Dragon Pre-Amplifier Tubes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tube Type</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6SN7GT/ECC83</td>
<td>£6.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6DJ8/E88CC/ECC88</td>
<td>£6.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12AX7/E88CC/ECC83</td>
<td>£6.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6DJ8B/88CC/ECC88</td>
<td>£10.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6SN7GT/ECC83</td>
<td>£9.95</td>
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**Special Quality Golden Dragon Pre-Amplifier Tubes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tube Type</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12AT7A/E81CC/ECC81</td>
<td>£6.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E81CC-01 Gold Pins Low Microphone Low Noise £10.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E9CC-01 Gold Pins Low Microphone Low Noise £10.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>E9CC-03 Gold Pins Low Microphone Low Noise £9.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E9CC-01 Gold Pins Low Microphone Low Noise £14.50</td>
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**Ceramic Sockets and Hardware**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Type</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Locking 4 Pin</td>
<td>£6.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>Locking 4 Pin (300B etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jumbo (211 etc.)</td>
<td>£12.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Octal Chassis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Octal PCB (EL34 etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>B9A Chassis (pre amp)</td>
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<tr>
<td>B9A PCB (pre amp)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screening Can &amp; Skirt (pre amp)</td>
<td>£2.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Damping Can (pre amp)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Power Valve Retainer (EL34 etc.)</td>
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**Golden Dragon Triodes**

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<tr>
<th>Type</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2A3 4PIN</td>
<td>£22.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>2A3 OCTAL</td>
<td>£32.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>81A</td>
<td>£11.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>845</td>
<td>£36.50</td>
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<td>805</td>
<td>£23.65</td>
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**Golden Dragon 300B Range**

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<th>Type</th>
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<tr>
<td>300B Super</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.300B</td>
<td>£34.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.300BLX Super</td>
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**Golden Dragon Power Tubes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Price</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EL34/6CA7</td>
<td>£25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL4L</td>
<td>£24.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL84</td>
<td>£23.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6L6WGB/5881</td>
<td>£25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KT66</td>
<td>£25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KT68 (low drift)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>KT88 (low drift)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>KT88 Super BRIMAR</td>
<td>£32.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6L6GC</td>
<td>£19.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**AMPLIFIERS**

**MOTH 60/100**

The Moth 60 is an unusual and rather daring design. Distortion rose at low levels, reaching 1% in the midband, with extended harmonics, below 1 watt. This is high and will produce coarseness. Feedback was low for solid-state, obvious by the difference between channels and with level. Transistors are not as consistent as valves - they must have some feedback. Output measured a healthy 80 watts, however, and frequency response was wide, although sensitivity is low at 900 mV.

The Moth 100 was unusual. It produced little distortion, but also less power - 60 watts into 8 ohms. However, regulation was unusually good, power doubling to 120 watts into 4 ohms. Distortion behaviour was completely different to the 60. Levels were much lower and decreased with power, staying below 0.06%, a far more benign result. Bandwidth was wide at 4 Hz-20 kHz.

**JOHN SHEARNE PHASE 2 & 3**

John Shearne amplifiers have been designed to mimic the valve sound. In truth, solid-state can do no such thing perfectly, but certain features of valve amp performance are hinted at; these amps have a different and engaging "flavour", I've found. However, measured performance is, shall we say, unconventional. I measured both the Phase 2 integrated amplifier and the Phase 3 power amplifier for this report and they were much alike, as expected.

Producing a healthy 45 watts into 8 ohms, power declines steeply to 25 watts into 4 ohms. According to (simplistic) current wisdom, this should result in soft bass, but it seems not to in any significant manner. The distortion spectrum was extended, especially at 10 kHz, but levels did not rise above 0.2%. Some muddle is likely. The Phase 2 is very sensitive, has low noise and low D.C. offset.

**SUGDEN OPTIMA**

Like all Sugden amplifiers, the Optima measured well and produced a very clean all-round performance. It has a benign distortion characteristic, even at high frequencies, where second harmonic predominates at all levels, as our analysis clearly shows. Measured distortion levels were low at all output powers and frequencies, in fact. I know from experience that Sugden amplifiers produce relatively sweet treble as solid-state designs go and this is one reason why, if not the only one.

Frequency response was wide, stretching from a low 6 Hz right up to 105 kHz, within 1 dB. It isn't difficult to engineer a wide response, and it usually results in a bright, open presentation.

Power output measured a healthy 70 watts and there was plenty of grunt for low loads. The Optima 140 will drive loudspeakers to high levels.

My only gripe was a little more d.c. offset than usual at -40 mV on one channel (17 mV on the other). The usual figure is less than 10 mV. Otherwise, this amplifier has been well designed and will deliver good results.

**TEST RESULTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Power</th>
<th>Frequency response</th>
<th>Noise</th>
<th>Distortion</th>
<th>Sensitivity</th>
<th>D.C. Offset</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45 watts</td>
<td>4 Hz-2 kHz</td>
<td>75 dB</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>125 mV</td>
<td>1.8/3.3 mV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 watts</td>
<td>6 Hz-105 kHz</td>
<td>-95 dB</td>
<td>0.015%</td>
<td>140 mV</td>
<td>-17/-40 mV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THE MOTH 60 HAS UNACCEPTABLE LEVELS OF DISTORTION.**
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CD PLAYERS

SUGDEN OPTIMA CD
Sugden's Optima CD player has a rather wonky frequency response. At low frequencies there is quite a strong rise, which will doubtless add weight and scale to bass lines. But in the treble there is a sharp peak, the lift starting just above 10kHz. This could reveal itself in one of two ways: extra incision and perceived detail or a sharp bite to the sound - only listening tests will tell.

Pushing my suspicion slightly towards the sharp bite side of things, is the high distortion at all levels. At -30dB, a level picked to represent a typical music signal, there was a wide range of harmonics, as can be seen from the plot below. At -60dB distortion is around three times higher than the best, leading to a mediocre dynamic range of 99dB (EIAJ test).

Output was a little under the Philips standard at 1.9V, and noise quite high at -92dB, the best all manage lower than -100dB.

TEST RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency Response</th>
<th>4Hz-21.1kHz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distortion (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-6dB</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-30dB</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-60dB</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-90dB</td>
<td>45.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-90dB dithered</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separation (dB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1kHz</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20kHz</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with emphasis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamic range</td>
<td>99dB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Output</td>
<td>1.9V</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DISTORTION

0.03%

Frequency Response

ROKSAN ATTESSA
The Atessa CD player has a smooth frequency response with some subtle trends which will affect its sound. A gentle lift in the bass will add power and solidity, and smoothly rolled-off treble should ensure a sweet and smooth top end. My only worry would be that this tilted response may make the Atessa a little too soft.

Distortion was quite high, but as you can see from the plot below taken at -30dB to represent a typical music signal, this is caused by a strange looking lift in the noise floor between 8-9kHz. At -60dB distortion was about average, yielding a dynamic range figure of 104dB (EIAJ test). Noise was low enough to be inaudible and separation wide.

The only area of real concern in the measured performance was the very low output of the Atessa. At 1.37V this is significantly under the Philips standard of 2V, something to bear in mind during comparative demonstrations.

TEST RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency Response</th>
<th>4Hz-21.1kHz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distortion (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-6dB</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-30dB</td>
<td>0.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-60dB</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-90dB</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-90dB dithered</td>
<td>9.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Separation (dB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1kHz</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20kHz</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with emphasis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamic range</td>
<td>104dB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Output</td>
<td>1.37V</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

McINTOSH CDM 7009
The McIntosh CDM 7009 has a flat frequency response up to 2kHz or so, after which it starts to lift strongly to form a sharp peak at 20kHz. This will certainly add some brightness, though what form it takes will depend on the distortion characteristics. If distortion is high and odd order, I'd expect it to sound sharp. If it's low, this lift may well give the impression of greater insight and detail.

Looking at the distortion plot taken at -30dB, a level picked to represent a typical music signal, things don't look too good. Although non-harmonic, distortion is high and wide ranging. This will almost certainly colour the sound; for better or for worse can only be judged by listening tests however.

Elsewhere the McIntosh measured well, as you'd expect from a company with a strong engineering background. Separation was wide, noise low enough to be inaudible, dynamic range wide at 106dB and output healthy at 2.25V.

TEST RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency Response</th>
<th>4Hz-21.1kHz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distortion (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-6dB</td>
<td>0.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-30dB</td>
<td>0.007</td>
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<tr>
<td>-60dB</td>
<td>0.56</td>
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<tr>
<td>-90dB</td>
<td>29.7</td>
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<td>1kHz</td>
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<td>20kHz</td>
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<td>Noise</td>
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<tr>
<td>with emphasis</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dynamic range</td>
<td>106dB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Output</td>
<td>2.25V</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Michell's latest record player the Orb continues to impress in both construction and sound quality. It may be time for you to check this one out!

Impulse I am happy to say are back with us in a definite big way. It is true to say that this company have been concentrating on the overseas markets but are now back with a vengeance to concentrate on the U.K. We have a new range to look at (and listen to). The latest horn speaker is called the Kora and at £1095 represents the entry level, moving up the lali range is the TA",US at £2695 and possibly is the most elegant horn system available. These things definitely have a sound and a "vivid" sound.

Anyone who has fallen in love with the single end triode, but requires to move on, may be interested in the latest range from Armstrong Audio.

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LINN TUKAN
The Tukans are a miniature loudspeaker designed for use against a rear wall or on a bookshelf. Bass rolls sharply off below 125Hz in free space, so even with wall reinforcement bass will not be the deepest. Through the lower midrange the response is very even, but where this passes over to the small ceramic dome tweeter the Tukans run into problems. Treble level is low, around 3dB below midrange level. This will almost certainly give the Tukans a warm, perhaps dull, balance.

Measuring 85dB at 1m for a nominal watt (2.83V) pink noise signal, the Tukans are one of the most sensitive of their breed (Harbeth HL-P3s, LS3/5as and Rogers Studio 3s are all less sensitive). Impedance measured a high 11.8Ω overall, so the Tukans will not demand high current either. All the same, I'd recommend amplifiers capable of delivering at least 40 watts for good levels.

KEF CODA 8
KEF's Coda 8s have a reasonably flat and smooth frequency response. Through the critical midband they are very smooth, response staying well within 2dB limits. The response does show a rise though towards high frequencies which will give extra perceived detail. In the bass there is a lift of around 2dB which should ensure a solid bottom end kick.

The Coda 8s are a fraction more sensitive than the smaller 7s, producing 88dB at 1m for a nominal watt (2.83V) pink noise signal. Like the 7s though, impedance isn't the kindest, dropping to 4Ω in places. This drags overall impedance down to 7.3Ω. They will need an amplifier with good current delivery to give their best.

CHARIO ACADEMY ONE
Chario's Academy Ones have a well balanced frequency response, one that I suspect will give good subjective results. The response is smooth and reasonably flat, with just a slight lift at each frequency extreme. Good miniatures are often balanced this way; the bass lift gives extra weight and scale in the bass which makes for an impressive sound, but they need a balancing lift in the treble to avoid coming across as dull. These are only gentle trends so shouldn't affect midrange projection either.

Overall impedance is high at 12.6Ω and the impedance curve impressively smooth, so the Charios aren't reactive and won't demand high current. But they are very insensitive, measuring just 82dB at 1m for a nominal watt (2.83V) pink noise signal. This means they will need a lot of volts for good levels in anything bigger than a cupboard. I'd recommend amplifiers capable of delivering at least 50 watts, including valve amplifiers thanks to their smooth impedance characteristic.
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Mordaunt-Short's 860s are a large floorstander using a pair of dedicated bass drivers, so it was surprising to see weak output at 60Hz. This will give them light or dry bass with little real depth, 40Hz being a more usual lower limit.

Above this though, the response is smooth and shows good integration between bass, midrange and treble. There is a little lift in the lower treble that will tend to push detail forwards, but above this extension isn't great, high treble rolling off above 12kHz.

Sensitivity of the Performance 860s was reasonable at 87.5dB, so they will go reasonably loud and should fill large spaces easily enough. Overall impedance was a little low at 7.1 2, the impedance curve showing where this low figure comes from, with dips below 5Ω between 100-200Hz and again above 9kHz.

The Performance 860s are well engineered, with a smooth response and reasonably easy drive characteristics making them suitable for amplifiers capable of producing 30-40watts or more.

---

CARTRIDGE

van den Hul Grasshopper IV
van den Hul stylus tips measure well, so I expected the Grasshopper to look pretty good under test, like an Ortofon, and it did. The stylus reached right into short wavelengths on inner grooves with uncanny ability, giving consistent response with little inner groove high frequency loss, an unusually good result. The response characteristic was very flat on both channels, as our analysis shows - a first class result.

The cartridge tracked very low, giving it an unusually low vertical tracking angle (VTA) of just 18degrees. Around 22degrees is the usual minimum and many cartridges hit 30degrees, so the Grasshopper was unusual in this respect. However, it couldn't accept too much tracking force in consequence, and this limited tracking ability. My tracking figures are for 1.4gms downforce and they are mediocre. A good Ortofon like the MC30 Supreme can out-track any cartridge, so it is possible to be better. I would call the Grasshopper satisfactory in this area, but it may well be heard to mistrack on crescendos or vocal pushes.

Distortion was low because of the low VTA. Tracing distortion was reasonably low too.

The Grasshopper is no mystery; it is fundamentally well engineered and measures well in consequence, except for mediocre tracking ability. I suspect this is a deliberate trade off to achieve low VTA however, because there's no doubt that van den Hul is well in control of all design parameters. NK

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TEST RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tracking force</th>
<th>1.4gms</th>
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<tr>
<td>Vertical tracking angle</td>
<td>18degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency response</td>
<td>20Hz-20kHz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Channel separation</td>
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<td>Tracking ability (300Hz)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Channel imbalance</td>
<td>0.6dB</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distortion (45μm)</td>
<td>14μm/sec.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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the immediate effect of this new amp was warmth and funkiness. “Suddenly it had soul” “I had a clearer idea of what they were feeling” "the Gemini offers a small footprint with a difficult to beat price" (Hi-Fi News & RR Feb. '95)

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<td>EL84 SPECIAL</td>
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This is a popular technique in audio engineering, often used to introduce a controlled positive feedback into an amplifier or other audio circuit. Positive feedback can be used to improve the gain and linearity of an amplifier, but it is also used for other purposes such as producing distortion or creating special effects. In audio engineering, positive feedback is often used to achieve a more natural sound quality or to enhance the dynamics of a signal.

**COMPLETE KITS**

A kit is a collection of pre-assembled parts or components that can be assembled together to create a complete product. In the context of audio engineering, a complete kit might include all the necessary parts and components required to build a specific audio component, such as a loudspeaker or a microphone. Kitting is a popular practice in the audio industry, as it allows for easy assembly and customization.

**AUDIO NOTE OUTPUT TRANSFORMERS**

These are transformers that are specifically designed for use in audio systems, typically to provide isolation and coupling between different stages of an audio system. Output transformers are essential components in many types of audio systems, and are used to match the impedance of one stage to the next, ensuring optimal signal transmission.

**AUDIO NOTE HIGH QUALITY OUTPUT TRANSFORMERS**

These transformers are designed to provide high-quality signal transmission in audio systems. They are specifically engineered to reduce distortion and noise, ensuring that the audio signal remains pure and undistorted. High-quality output transformers are often used in professional and hi-fi audio systems, where sound quality is of utmost importance.

**AUDIO NOTE COPPER FOIL PAPER IN OIL CAPACITORS**

These capacitors are made from copper foil paper, which is impregnated with oil to provide electrical insulation and support. Copper foil paper capacitors are commonly used in audio systems due to their ability to provide high stability and low inductance, ensuring optimal signal transmission.

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These capacitors are made from silver foil paper, which is impregnated with oil to provide electrical insulation and support. Silver foil paper capacitors are commonly used in audio systems due to their ability to provide high stability and low inductance, ensuring optimal signal transmission.

**AUDIO NOTE CERAMIC STAND-OFFS**

These are ceramic insulators used to provide electrical isolation in audio systems, typically to hold components in place or to separate them. Ceramic stand-offs are commonly used in professional and hi-fi audio systems, where high-quality sound transmission is essential.

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<tr>
<td>Audio Innovations 1.2 preamp (boxed unused)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audio Innovations 2nd Audio triode monoblock Amps (ex dem, as new)</td>
<td>£1,395</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audio Note DAC2 Signature (unmarked)</td>
<td>£3000</td>
<td>£1495</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leak Troublesh 3 tuner with Studio 12 decoder</td>
<td>£2,069</td>
<td>£1,295</td>
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<tr>
<td>(totally original, unmarked)</td>
<td>£195</td>
<td>£195</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impulse HS loudspeakers (absolute bargain)</td>
<td>£450</td>
<td>£450</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dolfi 103 Loudspeakers Stand Mounted 2 way. Black</td>
<td>£275</td>
<td>£275</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oracle Delphi Turntable (Excellent condition)</td>
<td>£575</td>
<td>£575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castle Durham Loudspeakers (Mint condition) (Black)</td>
<td>£195</td>
<td>£195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alphason HS 100 Turnarm VDHU (Mint condition)</td>
<td>£395</td>
<td>£275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leak Stere 20 Valve Amplifier (Excellent condition)</td>
<td>£249</td>
<td>£249</td>
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What do the critics say:

QUINTET
The Art Audio gives you music with a sense of rightness that you don’t really question but just get on and enjoy. Sweet open and lucid, the music is produced with an easy sense of naturalness which makes long term listening fatigue free and especially rewarding.
Roy Gregory Hi-Fi Choice

TEMPO
I feel that the Art Tempo amplifiers are among the finest valve power amplifiers currently available. The imagery that the Tempos create is vivid, lifelike and full of space and air.
Alan Sircom, Hi-Fi World

MAESTRO
....they are just so stunningly gorgeous and open to listen to, I can barely imagine anything more alluring.
Noel Keywood, Hi-Fi World
....the Maestro is part of that rare breed of Hi-fi that makes you forget about the equipment and think about the music. In all, unlike the car, the Maesto lives up to its name
Alan Sircom, Hi-Fi World

ART AUDIO 130 MAIN STREET, CALVERTON, NOTTINGHAM NG14 6LU tel: 01159 653604

DECEMBER 1995 HI-FI WORLD
QUICKSILVER valve pre-amp. QUICKSILVER monoblocks. QUICKSILVER M/C step-up power supply (£400 new) Musical Fidelity CRPS (£500 new), excellent sound £400 pair. M. Technics SL-12 turntable, £200. PIONEER SX-1060 receiver, £100. PIONEER PD-100 reference CD player, £800. PHILIPS CD-960 with Geoff Bull module. Now 18 months old, perfect condition and working order.

Hi-Fi World December 1995

WANTED: NAIM DBL speakers complete with x-over, preferably in teak sleeve. Must be in good condition and working order. Tel: 01865 62554 (Oxford)

NEAT PETITE speakers £30. Foundation stand £40. Arophon 4 shelf equipment rack £90. All items in g.c.: Tel: 01595 64205

PAIR OF QUAD ESL loudspeakers (bronze) £150. In perfect working order Tel: 0208 682241

AKG K1000 headphones £190. Custom made Ribbon Hybrid loudspeaker, 110cm true ribbon driver. £500 o.n.o. £1,000 new. Tel: 01795 641207

Your local classifieds are classified ads

QUAD 63; £450. Acceptable trade ins. Tel: 01902 341930

ARC 170.3 transport (Tri-chord clock) £95. 35Q DAC (upgraded to 30 spec) Video 2 interconnects, all £99. four, boxed, immaculate, £410, accept £350.

Linn KARIN pre amp £730, AVI pre amp £550, AVI CD player £675, Tape VD10-5 CD player £450, Creek T400 turner £110. Keswick Audio Aria speakers £85. Professional Monitor CO CB10 speakers with Target R3 stands £452, Luxman 507X amplifier £120. Tel: 01977 643626

JOHN SHARNICE phase 2 Mk 2 integrated amp, 50 watt per channel, beautifully finished. Hi-Fi World recommended component in '94. This amp has a warm inviting sound and is very open and airy stage. 10 months old mint condition £550 new. Burnage £75.

GARRARD 301 (white) £100. Boyks £25. TDC RTL3 SPEAKERS £280. Audio Technica 1504 Mk6 60cm tone arm, only 1 ever made. Mounted on Adagio Eclipse turntable, inc complete turntable, £450. Sonic Link Velos leads ATOMIC MIC. Dynamic, uncoloured presentation. £895 Tel: 01299 274638

THEORENS TD-216 Mk IV. Alphonso Xenon arm V.D.H. wired, A.D.C. cartridge £325. Great American Sound Company high output humphrey dyna £1,250. Tel: 01444 488342 (after 7pm)

REVOX A77-7N immaculate virtually unused condition. Aluminium hubs, remote, manual, best in UK £1,000. REVOX A77-7H super useful turntable £400. REVOX A77-3 1/2" £3 3/4" £30, remote, immaculate £375. All twin track. Tel: 014 275 1377

WANTED: Leek stereoform tuner, preferably in teak sleeve. Must be in good condition and working order. Tel: 01865 62554 (Oxford)

CRAIG MUSICAL FIDELITY £100 Intergrated amplifier, boxed, working perfectly, only £40. No offers, genuine reason for sale. Tel: 01773 604055

AUDIOLAB 8000A Mk II, 1994 model as new (£500, Calvin Labs Class A integrated original model) boxed as new £150; Rotel RSP-1055 CD player £450; Thorens TD 160 Super; Linn LP12 £90. Alone £400. Must be in perfect working order.

Cambridge Audio DACMagic, Thesata. Timebase Linque conditioner (TLC) 2. AudioQuest Video 2 digital cables. All as new, genuine, may split, best offer accepted.

Cambridge Audio DacMagic, Thesata. Timebase Linque conditioner (TLC). 2 AudioQuest Video 2 digital cables. All as new, genuine, may split, best offer accepted.

Cambridge Audio DacMagic, Thesata. Timebase Linque conditioner (TLC). 2. AudioQuest Video 2 digital cables. All as new, genuine, may split, best offer accepted.

Cambridge Audio DacMagic, Thesata. Timebase Linque conditioner (TLC). 2 AudioQuest Video 2 digital cables. All as new, genuine, may split, best offer accepted.

Cambridge Audio DacMagic, Thesata. Timebase Linque conditioner (TLC). 2 AudioQuest Video 2 digital cables. All as new, genuine, may split, best offer accepted.
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DECEMBER 1995

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With us to be both informative and stimulating. Our aim is to give you an audiophile with the same high degree of care and interest. Our aim is to ensure that you get the best value for your money, and that you are satisfied with your purchase.

The ‘AIR PARTNER’ is a 3-way pure horn system with a very easy impedance match. £14,753.00. The Air Partner remains as the flagship model but benefits from the same comprehensive advancements outlined above. The ‘AIR SCOUT’ is a 3-way pure horn system with a very easy impedance match. £2,921.00 and £3,570.00.

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LIVING VOICE For 1996 living voice introduce revised Agathon and Aristophane models. These designs have received worldwide acclaim, reproducing music in a tonally characteristic and a sensitivity of 104dB/w@1m. At their price point they offer outstandingly the highest quality of sound reproduction and cabinet work in the world. £14,753.00. The Air Partner remains as the flagship model but benefits from the same comprehensive advancements outlined above. The ‘AIR PARTNER’ is a 3-way pure horn system with a very easy impedance match. £2,921.00 and £3,570.00.

For 1996, Definitive Audio introduces revised loudspeaker models. From £350 to £75,000.

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HORNING AGATHON GOLD Lowther PM 4 driver Oak # £ 3100 # £ 4500

HORNING AGATHON BRONZE Lowther PM 6 A. Oak # £ 2500 # £ 3500

HORNING AGATHON BRONZE Lowther PM 6 A Mahogany # £ 1800 # £ 3500

IMPULSE H6 # £ 399 # £ 1595

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alarms. Zumtech acoustic tools which helped to alleviate room problems, and the resulting sound was truly superb! Do phone for an audition. (Note: it could be that Malcolm Steward heard an earlier Umbilical and not the Cable Talk, and might well agree with our conclusions if he now heard the C.T. but even then the results, as we keep pointing out, could be system dependant, which is why we have used 2 different amplification sets.)

RAMADA SHOW

One of the highlights of the show for us, was the excellent sound achieved in the Electrocompaniet room with their new ‘Qube’ speaker at £1,265. This small speaker produced a big sound from some big Electrocompaniet amplifiers and a lot of very favourable comments were received. As we supplied the RPG acoustic tools which helped to alleviate room problems, we are slightly biased! The Parasound equipment looked very good value - particularly the DACs, which will be investigating shortly and the Proac range. Apart from these, fine sounds were coming from the Wilson Witt and the Cord speakers but as both in the £9k region, they should.

or the Electrocompaniet EC/AVW100, in both cases using the ECK3 mains cable (excellent). Conclusions were the same with both amplification systems, and the resulting sound was truly superb! Do phone for an audition. (Note: it could be that Malcolm Steward heard an earlier Umbilical and not the Cable Talk, and might well agree with our conclusions if he now heard the C.T. but even then the results, as we keep pointing out, could be system dependant, which is why we have used 2 different amplification sets.)

Ian C. Vaudin
36 Druid Hill, Stoke Bishop, Bristol BS9 1EJ
Tel/Fax: Bristol (0117) 9686005
Hi-Fi World

PRIVATE

ARCAM TWO PLUS speakers, black Ash, boxed £300. Caris £100. Tel: 081 443 2381 (after 6.30pm)

QUAD FM tuner, grey £65. Quad 406 power amp £40. Both as new. Tel: 01767 631268 evenings only

ALPHA/SONIC HR: 100-VCBS Vhd wired. Boxed with instructions, £230. GP 150, £180. Tel: 0117 646 0052

UNN HIFI FOR SALE. Final advert. Everything goes to highest bid by 31/07/95. Kain (694 HMARC, birmingham) £880. LDRS (594, Chester, Wirral) £650 o.n.o. Eke (5745) £280. Kyle (5180) £200. Kebbers (£59) £20. polyphonic speaker £50. ...Make me an offer - you might be lucky.

BEAD BILL BEARLI B100 mk1 integrated amplifier, 50wpc, chrome. 18 valves on display, gorgeous looks and £560. Audiosk 4 multistand cable 2 x £60, 2 x £15. Tel: 0180 460502 (Cambridge area) 550 x 550

AUDIO RESEARCH SP-1 pre-amplifier, excellent condition £1050. (Australia) £650. box. £250. can demonstrate £120 o.n.o.

DOUGIE VALLANCE 150 watt monoblock, huge chrome, 18 valves £180; Kabers (10/93. black polymer stand) £750. Tel: 01981 250605 (Hereford) 550 x 550

GEC KT66 and original manuals, in good condition £50. Tel: 01865 63160 (Oxford)

BILL BEARD BB100 Mk2 integrated amp 3 x pack 2 power supplies. 2 SAM40 year old £825. Ion active system SPI pre-amp, £250, condition £650 o.n.o.

G36 2 track £145. ATC SCM 20 speakers £75. £2.000. pair Decca London Ribbon tweeters £150. Both in mint condition.


PORTSMOUTH. NOTTINGHAM ANALOGUE Hytarspace turntable (all arm and cabling £250 inc. £120 for new Tonearm £85. Hopfens £10. £100) £28. Tel: 01384 444517

LEAK SANDWICH speakers £75. Celestion Ditson 15SR speakers £70. JVC JR-500 receiver, garnet £90. JVC [J-4££] £100. Albarry AR4 pre-amp, condition £175. Linn Majik monoblock amplifier, six months old, mint £150. Celestion Ditson 44 loudspeakers £100, Reovx A77 Mk III high speed 2 track mint £350

QUAD 405 2 power amplifier, mint condition £150. Quad 34 pre-amplifier, mint condition £175. Linn Majik monoblock amplifier, six months old, mint £150. Celestion Ditson 44 loudspeakers £100, Reovx A77 Mk III high speed 2 track mint £350


RARE OPPORTUNITY, Audiophile 20 monoblocks, pair. Partridge transformer version, sympathetically rebuilt, original paint lightly distressed. Hayden raves about them!

SETPSHORT, Vacuum tube, excellent condition £185. The Monitor £125. AC340. sensitivit, rosewood, cost £2500 v.g.c.

QUAD 405 2 power amplifier, mint condition £150. Quad 34 pre-amplifier, mint condition £175. Linn Majik monoblock amplifier, six months old, mint £150. Celestion Ditson 44 loudspeakers £100, Reovx A77 Mk III high speed 2 track mint £350

1 PAIR of McIntosh MC30 valve mono power amplifier, lust £25. Telefunken MTR 500, 2 power transformers. 2 SAM40 year old £825. Ion active system SPI pre-amp, £250, condition £650 o.n.o.

G36 2 track £145.

LINN KEILIDH black Ash loudspeakers and stands, Isoda interconnect, excellent sound & condition £125: £65; mint condition £200. £25. £20. £100. Absolutely as new. 10 power amp £300 the pair. RB 970 BX power amplifier £285. Mission 751 speakers, £400. Arcam 290 int amp £310. Arcam 290 power amp £290. power amp £65.25. Mission 751 speakers, rosewood and deflex panels £165. All v.g.c. includes postage. Tel: 01534 66328

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CLASSIFIED ADS

SUDDEN AU1 amplifier power supply (original) £225. All SL0000 speakers plus foundation stands £250

Tel: 01702 588216 (Southend on Sea, Essex)

EVERYTHING MUST GO! Aura CD 50 £100; JPM Sonata speakers £30; Celeste D3LJ speakers £30

Tel: 01024 47581

DELTEC (DPA) POMI Series 1 DAC £95. Tel: Mike 01684 997972 (daytime) 01684 561526 (evenings before 9pm)

MUSICAL FIDELITY FID £2 pre-amp, £650; F15 power amp £1200; AVI S200 MM monoblocks £700. ATC SC20 speakers & stands, black £110. All new & boxed. Tel: 0181 870 3630

TDL STUDIO I loudspeakers finished in black Ash completely with dedicated spiked stands. little used £300. Tel: Chris 01992 887987 (daytime) Or 01438 721909 evening (Hertfordshire area)

APOGEE CENTUR, Mini hybrid ribon panels speakers with dedicated stands £65 inc packaging. V44 The Wind speaker £5 per pair. £220. £380. Sonic Link Volt Interconnects £120 £20. £1 £105 £396205

AUDIO INNOVATIONS Second Audio triode mono-blocks £900; Audio Innovations L1 pre-amplifier only had one hours use worth £2000. Abbey AP4 pre-amplifier latest grey finish £175; absolutely no offers Tel: 01904 761175 (York)

SONY ST7000ES A99 FM tuner, excellent sound & condition £125; Corton pure copper-Interconnect phosphorphone £1 pair £5; Kenwood pro-logic centre speaker, never used £50, Kimber mains lead 1 £44 £28.

Tel: 01422 206495 (Halifax)

REGA ELA speakers v.g.c. £200; Naism NUAD speakers as new £350, earned Koetsu Rosewood cartridge needs regaining £250. Tel: 01670 346195 after 1pm (Blyth, Northumberland)

NAIM ACTIVE ISOBARIK system, NAC 82, 3 x Hi Cap, Cast £30. £155. Linn Isorbitaks walnut mint condition £600. £40.5. My spells.

Tel: 0181 546 2881 (evenings)

WANTED: Line L120 Wavetek Voltakko or Ekos arm with Cirrus if possible. FOR SALE: Dunlop Systemik £6; Rega R300 arm, Nagaka N-IMP Roton cartridge £50 condition £100. Tel: 01933 626170

AUDION 3000 Silver Knights, triode, pure class A, 'zero feedback, monoblocks, variable gain, cost £3500, nearly new, £1550 o.n.o. Impulse Horn M2 94 dB sensitivity, rosewood, cost £2500 v.g.c. £1450 o.n.o.

Tel: 01634 361535 (N. Kent)

SUMO ATHENA PRE £350, LFD LSi Inadget (not with £480. Castle York in Yew £180; Audio Technica AT-110 tonearm £70. All boxed and as new: £106. £32608 (evenings)

MUSICAL FIDELITY F15/F22 review models £1950; P2070 £655. Nakamichi CRT8L; warrants 1990; Leak Trouthallins Acrylic/Paracord decoder £300, Meridian 605 monos latest spec. 2hrs use £995. VPI TWINHARVEST Technology L/H wide pimp £225. All boxed. Tel: 01734 313002
The grand - dad of every class A transistor amplifier in existence

S

oberring thought: every oversized, overweight class A exotic (and the old puny pretender) is a blood relative of the compact, black, unassuming Sugden A21a. Since Mr. J. E. Sugden manufactured the worlds first commercial solid state pure class A audio amplifier, even the famous Krell shares a common bond with this black box through some unspeakably ugly (but rather musical) creations from the early 1960's.

This isn't to say that the current A21a is simply a repackaged 60's throw back. Considerable development in (so they tell me) cascode gain stages, phase linear wide band circuitry and component specification, have taken place. Thankfully Sugden's sense of style has also moved on. A little. These are still not products likely to appeal to those seeking mere shelf adornments. Music lovers, however, queue here.

I have plenty of customers who will testify to the A21a's mastery of all kinds of music. It offers a level of clarity, tonal colour, sound staging, dynamics and sheer musicality that allows ancillaries way beyond its price to be used to great effect. The on-board phono input is certainly well worth the £70 asking price but the abilities of much more expensive

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