SOUND VALUE
ROGERS’ LS33/AB33 LOUDSPEAKER SYSTEM

DOLBY S CASSETTE FOR UNDER £150!
AIWA’S AD-S750

NEW AUDIOLAB 8000S INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

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'Excellent size and sound ace!'

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'Great little things.'

'Excellent value for the quality received.'

'Nice smell! not to mention an excellent sound.'

'Excellent size and sound ace!'

'Outstanding!!'

'Outstanding!!'

'Mind blowing miniatures that blew my breath away.'

'The above are genuine comments taken from Warranty Registration Cards. If you want to feel this good about your speakers contact:

KEF AUDIO (UK) Limited. FREEPOST MA 1332, Eccleston Road, Tovil, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6BR
Telephone: (01622) 672261 Fax: (01622) 750653. KEF and CODA are registered trademarks.
Rogers’ replacement for the popular LS2a2, the LS33, is an affordable standmounter that’s upgradable with the addition of the AB33 dedicated subwoofer. We bring you an exclusive test of both - see page 12.

Audiolab’s 8000S looks set to make a mark for itself. Here’s an integrated with the poise and detail of a good pre/power. Read all about it on page 16.

Looking to clean up in the cassette deck field, Aiwa’s new AD-5750 is a Dolby S equipped 2-head machine with a price tag of just £149 - See page 23.

Ever wondered where the long hair wool used in loudspeakers comes from? We did, so we found out. Read about the special long hair sheep bred for hi-fi on page 18.

Our quest for high fidelity sound is always constrained by budget. Aiwa have reached an intelligent balance with their AD-5750 cassette deck. The mechanics of a cassette deck are expensive to manufacture; prices have risen considerably over the years with little gain in quality. Aiwa’s solution combines a modest 2-head transport with the excellent Dolby S system. Here the electronics disguise its weaknesses to give high performance results at a bargain price.

All too often sound quality takes a back seat though. Gadgets and features are regarded as more valuable on mass produced CE equipment, most of it from the Far East. This unbalances the equation, providing mediocre sound. In contrast, British audiophile equipment tends to offer super sound with minimal facilities, arguably another poor balance. But in a tough market we’re getting wiser. Both Rogers’ LS33 loudspeakers and Audiolab’s new 8000S amplifier show a new awareness of people’s needs, being flexible and easily upgradable, as well as delivering remarkable sound quality.

Dominic Baker, Editor
THIS MONTH'S REVIEWS

AMPLIFIERS

AUDIOLAB 8000S 16
This new remote control line level amplifier from Audiolab offers a range of flexible operating modes. It can be used as an integrated, in a bi-amp system, as a preamplifier or even as the basis for a high quality AV system.

MYRYAD MI 120 / MA 120 25
Put an integrated amplifier and a power-amplifier together and that's the simple way to bi-amp your loudspeakers. Haider Bahrani tries Myryad's method.

COPLAND CSA 14 49
As fluid as the water around the little mermaid... that's this hybrid valve/transistor amplifier from Denmark, according to Eric Braithwaite.

LOUDSPEAKERS

ROGERS LS33/AB33 SUBWOOFER 1 2
Last year, Rogers put a bit of bass under the bottom of the LS3/5a miniature with the AB1 subwoofer. Now there's a new, much more affordable small loudspeaker, the LS33 and an optional pair of subwoofers-cum-stands to go with it. Bottoms up! says Haider Bahrani.

LINN SEKRIT/SEQUENCE 400 20
Just picture the sound! Slim-line Eric Braithwaite tries out two pairs of loudspeakers thin enough to hang on the wall.

SPENDOR SP9/1 33
Big loudspeaker, big price. Big sound. Not that small himself, Dominic Baker, listened to them.

B&W DM302 57
This loudspeaker is more spiky inside than a porcupine is outside. Dominic Baker listens to find out if B&W's new 'Prism' cabinet construction will spike the competition's guns.

CARTRIDGE

ORTOFON ROHMANN 36
A commemoration £1000 cartridge from Ortofon. Eric Braithwaite indulges in a private orgy of LP listening.

CASSETTE DECK

AIWA AD-5750 23
No longer for the specialists, like Eric Braithwaite, with a fat wallet (not so like Eric), Aiwa's AD-5750 brings the cost of a cassette deck with Dolby S down to only £150.

COMPACT DISC

ORELLE XTC TRANSPORT AND CONVERTOR 29
Pronounce the words care-fully and slow-ly. Could this be the CD system Eric Braithwaite will rave about? Did it turn him into an all-niter?

TUNERS

TEAC VRDS-10SE 41
Everybody's doin' it. Now Teac has produced a 'Special Edition' CD player. Haider Bahrani tracks down what's special about this new version of the VRDS-10.

PIONEER F-204RDS 65
Who composed Spoon River? It was Percy Grainger, Pioneer's RDS tuner told Haider Bahrani via Radiotext. Now they can both go on Mastermind.

WORLD VERDICT

OUTSTANDING - Superb sound, something we'd use ourselves.
GOOD - Has strong merit. Worth an audition.
ADEQUATE - Mediocre in vital areas. May be worth auditioning.
NEXT ISSUE
What’s going to be in May’s Hi-Fi World. And Eleanor’s, and Edna’s and Joe’s, and ... let’s just say there’s something for everybody.

NEWS
Have a look at Tradewinds - find out which way the hi-fi wind is blowing.

READERS’ LETTERS AND Q&A
Disgusted of Deptford, Puzzled of Prestonpans, Mystified of Macclesfield, our letters and queries pages are open to all. Everyone wins a prize, too!

COLUMNS
Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, Opinion ... you can have any kind of column you like, as long as it’s the last sort.

SUBSCRIPTIONS
From the Orkneys to Oman, if you subscribe you won’t be deprived of your copy if the local newsagent runs out.

WORLD FAVOURITES GUIDE
Our verdicts on over a hundred of the best hi-fi products to buy.

DIAL A DEALER
Make a British Telecom shareholder happy. Phone your dealer about the hi-fi dream of your life.

SPECIALIST HI-FI DEALERS
These people are serious. Mostly about hi-fi, but sometimes about chess, music, real ale ...

MEET YOUR MAKER
If you’ve had the call to serious hi-fi, trawl through these names for future enlightenment.

WORLD AUDIO DESIGN
WADy(a mean, you don’t know one end of a soldering iron from another? Our kit instructions even tell you which end is too hot to hold. Well, almost.

HI-FI WORLD LIBRARY
It may not be as extensive as the British Library, but you can browse these tides any time.

MEASURED PERFORMANCE
Spot the spike! Wend your way around a wobbly frequency response! Fall over laughing at the antics of a third harmonic!

READERS’ CLASSIFIEDS
Spring into action - buy a hi-fi bargain from the biggest hi-fi classified section in the country!

DIY SUPPLEMENT NO 21
Free with this month’s issue! News about the latest kits; a unique dipole subwoofer; a guide to the triode valve; book reviews; DIY questions answered.

WOOLY TALES
There’s probably more wool used in loudspeakers than there is on the backs of all the sheep in New Zealand. Noel Keywood knits together some strands of information about its role in the hi-fi business.

CARTRIDGE CRIME WATCH
Noel Keywood consorts with the criminals of the cartridge world. How come so many are bent?

ROCK RECORD OF THE MONTH:
Tori Amos: Boys For Pelé “A sin to miss it!”

CLASSICAL RECORD OF THE MONTH:
Janacek’s Sinfonietta, Hindemith’s Metamorphoses and Prokofiev’s Symphony No3, on vinyl-look-alike CD!

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The best of this month’s albums
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Tori Amos: Boys For Pelé “A sin to miss it!”

CLASSICAL
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CLASSICAL RECORD OF THE MONTH:
Janacek’s Sinfonietta, Hindemith’s Metamorphoses and Prokofiev’s Symphony No3, on vinyl-look-alike CD!

JAZZ
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COMPETITION
COMPETITION
66
A perfect pair! Win B&W DM601 loudspeakers and the latest Aura VA 80SE-x amplifier.
At Rogers we believe the vital organ of a loudspeaker is the crossover.

The life blood of any loudspeaker, no matter how good, is dependent on the crossover. Rogers crossovers are designed to provide maximum signal transmission, minimal loss and distortion-free operation.

At Rogers we use only the best materials for our hand-crafted crossover units - from the hard-wired oxygen free cables to the finest grade hand-wound copper coils.

That is why the BBC and top recording studios all over the world use Rogers speakers as their sound reference, because they know that after 50 years of pure music - every Rogers loudspeaker has a heart of gold.
ALL THE SEVENS

The latest additions to Quad’s 77 range should be available in March. These are the 77 pre-amplifier and 77SA stereo power amplifier, which has the same power rating as the integrated. The pre-amp will have an additional ‘D’ type socket called the ‘77 Amp Bus’, which will have provision for six balanced audio channels for bi-amping or surround-sound with the stereo power amplifier or the forthcoming monoblocs. Quad’s new 77FM RDS tuner is expected to go on sale in May.

Quad Electroacoustics, St Peters Road, Huntingdon, Cambs. PE18 7DB.
Tel 01480 52561

DENON TWEAKED

Denon’s new DRM-550 budget cassette deck replaces the DRM 540. Denon claim it has better metering than its predecessor and, in response to requests from customers, have given it a headphone socket with volume control and a timer play/record switch.

Under its skin the DRM-550 features a two-motor transport with ‘Non-Slip Reel Drive’ and a ‘Silent Logic’ mechanism which engages the transport modes through motor-actuated cams. Other features include Dolby HX Pro and Dolby B and C noise reduction. Retail price is £159.99.

Hayden Laboratories, Hayden House, Chiltern Hill, Chalfont St. Peter, Bucks SL9 9UG.
Tel 01753 888447

NATURALLY FORCED ORCHID

New audio company Orchid has announced two products. First to appear is the PLLI, the “Phase Linked Loudspeaker”, to be followed by the Natural Force, a 200 watt per channel valve amplifier. This massive affair weighs 100kg and is to retail at around £9,000.

The PLLI is a six-way design, with a Volt B2500 250mm woofer supplying the bass and a Tonigen ribbon tweeter the treble. To employ the drivers only over their best range, explains Orchid, “crossover points occur at 350Hz, 4kHz and 10kHz with the 36-element crossover forcing linear phase behaviour at these points. This is achieved by using trinary crossover points - three loudspeakers are involved at each transition point instead of two.”

Available in mahogany or black Ash, the PLLI is priced at £4,750.

Orchid Precision Audio, Compton Court, Long Compton, Warwickshire CV36 5JW.
Tel 01608 684694
INTRODUCING THE NEW 600 SERIES

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

just this bit:

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

⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐

What Hi-Fi, November 1995

LISTEN AND YOU'LL SEE

For details and stockists of the 600 range of loudspeakers, phone B&W UK on 01903-750750
NEW ALIENS IN THE BLUE ROOM

Remember the weird-looking Technopod? No, not that thing that chased Sigourney Weaver around in Alien 3, but B&W's odd bulbous loudspeaker. Their Blue Room Division has bred a cute kid brother for it, the Minipod, not unlike a little snowman in its acrylic white livery. (It is also available in black, blue and red.) This wee addition to their Alien collection is handcrafted, using highly advanced fibreglass moulding techniques. The curves are not just wacky design: lack of parallel surfaces inside the cabinet minimises standing waves so, claims B&W, improving sound quality. The Minipod can be either wall-mounted or out in space or specially-designed Sputnik stands. It retails at £399.00.

Blue Room Loudspeakers, Elm Grove Lane, Stving, West Sussex BN44 3SA.
Tel 01903 524801

ANTHEMS ON THE FRONTIERS

Sonic Frontiers are moving into the entry-level hi-fi market. The new all-valve Anthem range includes a pre-amplifier, integrated amplifier, power amplifier and (presumably non-valve) CD player, all retailing at prices below $1500. Despite the very affordable price, Sonic Frontiers insist they have not skimped on build quality.

Also new from Sonic Frontiers is the Power 3 monoblock power amplifier. Rated at 220W, using 6550 valves in "partial triode mode" the Power 3 is claimed to have an original circuit design and a "creative approach to implementing feedback" which Sonic Frontiers says avoids the downfalls associated with traditional feedback designs. No price was available for the Power 3 when we went to press.

Sonic Frontiers, 2790 Brighton Road, Oakville, Ontario, Canada L6H 5T4.
Tel (+1) 905 829 3033

CROSSED TUBES

A novel valve external crossover for loudspeakers, the XM26, has turned up from Marchand Electronics Inc. of Webster, New York. Four replaceable frequency modules and four front-panel calibrated controls set the crossover frequencies for left and right low and high pass filters. A 'sum' switch allows the low-pass channels to be summed for matching up a subwoofer. Crossover frequencies can be set from 20Hz to 5kHz, while the normal slope is 24dB/octave fourth-order Linkwitz-Riley. Modules are also available for first, second and third-order slopes. Four 12AX7 valves are used in each of the two channels, with a solid-state regulated power supply for both the plate voltage and the filament voltage. Housed in a black heavy-duty steel cabinet, with gold-plated RCA connectors, the XM26 Electronic Crossover Network is priced at $599 in the USA; there is no UK price as yet.

Marchand Electronics
PO Box 473, Webster, NY 14580
Tel (+1) 716 872 0980

APOLLO LANDING

Apollo claims that while other manufacturers concentrate on removing minute impurities in the conductors they have set their minds to the "larger problem" of isolating the signal from external noise caused both by the signal interfering with magnetic fields and small changes in the electrical properties of the cable when it is flexed or vibrated. Therefore, Apollo has placed a layer of "modern semiconducting material" between the conductor and the shield. The cables are available to order in any length from 15cm to 25m from £25 per metre terminated in RCA connectors. Cables with SCART, 5-pin DIN and Neutrik Profi phono plugs are also available.

Apollo Cables, 23 Perowne Way, Puckeridge, Ware, Herts SG11 1SZ.
Tel 01920 822095

VALDUS VALUE

Sales of Wharfedale's Valdus 100 loudspeaker are up, so the price is down by a tenner, from £89.95 to £79.95. Thrown in along with the reduction is a redesigned dome tweeter which, Wharfedale says, gives a cleaner and more detailed sound.

Wharfedale, Sandleas Way, Crossgates, Leeds LS15 8AL.
Tel 0113 260 1222

WIRELESS MUSIC

Sennheiser has produced an infra-red cordless headphone for less than a hundred pounds. The IS 360 headphones, at £69.95, incorporate batteries, infra-red sensors electronics and volume control, while the transmitter plugs into the headphone socket on an amplifier or source.

Sennheiser, 3 Century Point, Halifax Road, High Wycombe, Bucks HP12 3SL.
Tel 01494 551551
PARASOUND
affordable audio for the critical listener

C/DP-1000 CD Player/Transport

P/LD-1100 Line Drive Preamplifier (with RC)

D/AC-1100 HD Digital to Analog Converter

P/LD-1500 Line Drive Preamplifier (with XLR outputs)

D/AC-1600 HD Digital to Analog Converter

STOP PRESS!
BELT DRIVE TOP LOADING CD TRANSPORT £1695

The superb CBP-2000 transport is difficult to equal at almost any price. It's an ideal partner for the D/AC-1600 HD £1449, or for the top of the range DAC-2000, £2495, using Ultra Analogue converter chips and input receiver – arguably the best available in the world today.

The products are designed by John Curl, whose legendary designs virtually defined HI-END and set the standards for others to follow. The results speak for themselves. Not even considering the products' low price, they outperform almost any product available.

So, if you're passionate about your music, give us a call for more information on (01752) 731313.

Heybrook Hi Fi Ltd
Estover Industrial Estate, Plymouth PL6 7PL
Tel: (01752) 731313 Fax: (01752) 733954
SLIGHTLY TWISTED
Insert Audio's new interconnect, the IC100, comprises two "slightly twisted" signal conductors formed from Linear Crystal Oxygen-Free copper. A "loosely-wrapped" screen, Insert Audio says, reduces overall capacitance while providing maximum protection against hum and outside interference. Available in standard lengths from 0.5-10m, or custom-made up to 20m, with RCA, BNC or XLR connectors cost is from £39.95 per metre. Unterminated lengths are £6.50/m.

Glaive, 25 Totterdown Street, London SW17 8TB.
Tel 0181 336 0110

NEW ON THE AANVIL
Aanvil Audio has announced they have been appointed UK distributors for ART accessories, Meracus electronics and Yamamura Churchill cables and accessories.
Aanvil Audio, Woodvale, Heath Road, Woolpit, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP30 9RU.
Tel 01359 240687

SOUND & VISION AGAIN
No, not Bristol, that's over, but the Vienna Marriott hotel hosts a show with the same title from 21-24 March. Among the exhibitors are Mana, Linn and Naim from the UK, Boston Acoustics and Mark Levinson from the USA, with big names Sony, Panasonic and Philips also attending.

For more information, contact Barbara Rosenberg on (+43) 1 547 1961

HIGH END '96 FRANKFURT
From May 2nd to May 5th, the High End Society will be holding its 15th 'High End' equipment exhibition at the Gravenbruch Kempinski Hotel, near Frankfurt. The first two days are trade-only, the final two are for the general public. The catalogue of exhibitors will be available at the end of March. For more information, contact:

High End Society Marketing GmbH, Hatzfelder Straffe 16 I -163, D 42 281 Wuppertal, Germany.
Tel (+49) 202 702022

VINTAGE COMMUNICATIONS
Now established and in its fifth year, the National Vintage Communications Fair will be taking place at the NEC, Birmingham, on Sunday 5th May. The NVCF will be celebrating 100 years of radio, the 60th anniversary of BBC TV, the 30th anniversary of stereo radio and the 20th anniversary of the British Vintage Wireless Society. Around 300 dealers will be selling rare and interesting items related to vintage technology. Admission is £5, but includes a copy of the latest Sound & Vision Yearbook, worth £3.50, while stocks last.

NVCF '96, 2-4 Brook Street, Bampton, Devon EX16 9LY.
Tel 01398 331532

FIRST FUNKAUSSTELLUNG FOR BRITAIN?
With disappointment rife in the hi-fi industry over both the cost of exhibiting at Live '95 and its failure to boost hi-fi sales, DMG Exhibition Group is touting its Connect Show next autumn as the "British Funkausstellung". This biennial German show has been Europe's premier showcase for hi-fi manufacturers, with no equivalent in this country in the last decade.

The group is hoping for a strong hi-fi presence at Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre, timed to coincide with the Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition and the Motor Show. Dates are October 18-27. Companies intending to exhibit so far include Linn, JVC, Harman Audio, Denon, Marantz and Aiwa.

DMG Exhibition Group, Times House, Station Approach, Ruislip, Middx. HA4 8NB.
Tel 01895 625739

HUNGRY FOR A HUNGARIAN TAKE AWAY!
If so, Triform UK Ltd is importing Hungarian László Sallay's Etalon brand of loudspeakers and electronics from Budapest. There are several loudspeakers, including one 'bookshelf' model, two minimalist integrated amplifiers and pre/power models in the range. Much use is made of polished and sculptured wood. Prices remained to be fixed at time of going to press.

Triform, 1 Riverside, Totnes, Devon TQ9 5JB
Tel 01803 862517

NEW RETAIL OUTLET IN N. IRELAND
Kronos Distribution has opened a new hi-fi retail shop in Newmills, Dungannon. With two demonstration rooms, it will stock Arion valve amplifiers, Audiomeca, Impulse loudspeakers, Michell turntables and amplifiers, Micromega, Ortofon cartridges, Pro-ject turntables and Triangle loudspeakers. Opening hours are Mon-Fri 9am-5pm; evenings and Saturdays by appointment.

Kronos, 35 Farlough Road, Newmills, Dungannon, N. Ireland BT71 4DU
Tel 01868 748632

shows
Start with a new small loudspeaker from Rogers, the LS33; then turn it into a floorstander with the AB33 subwoofer. Haider Bahrani does just that.

Tori Amos' 'Horses' made me wish I could ride. The thuds of the Bosendorfer's pedals were as clear through the Rogers AB33 subwoofers as the sound of the hammers hitting the strings were through the little LS33 loudspeakers on top of them.

Back in July last year we reviewed the classic BBC LS3/5a monitors atop Rogers' dedicated sub-woofer-cum-speaker stand, the AB1. Now, we have a new small loudspeaker, the LS33, not a great deal bigger, which is intended as a replacement for the LS2a/2 at about the same price. Like the AB1s, the AB33 subwoofers are optional and not too dissimilar externally. A stereo pair, they act as plinths to support their satellites; Rogers is obviously intent on doing stand-manufacturers out of business.

Why a stereo pair of subwoofers? Strictly speaking, since the AB33s don't deliver sub-bass and use the same 6.5in driver as the LS33s, their official 'Auxiliary Bass' description is more apt. Down towards 50Hz or so, although many claim low frequencies are non-directional, Rogers believe that there are stereo effects especially with acoustic instruments, and I'd agree.

Designer Andy Whittle has picked a lower than usual crossover point, at 120Hz, aiming not to obscure stereo information around 140-180Hz, the crossover point for many subwoofers. The AB33s have a horizontally-mounted driver inside their slim enclosure, with a
reflex port firing out to the side. This allows two options for placing them, depending on the room, with the port firing either inwards or outwards.

Despite my distinct unwillingness to part the LS33s from their subwoofers, I perched them on stands six feet apart and about six inches from the rear wall. Portishead’s ‘Sour Times’ almost convinced me these weren’t little boxes, but might have been floorstanders themselves. The LS33s aspire to greatness and certainly create the illusion.

Ricky Lee Jones’ ‘Easy Money’ was easy and confident, with a perky piano, although the cymbals were a little too forceful in attracting attention. What gave the game away was a little lack of coherence at the centre of the sound stage. The tweeter clearly revealed sibilance in a recording and ride cymbals tended to crash, but the bass was surprisingly effective for a small speaker.

At £250 the two-way reflex design LS33 is a bargain. Despite this there are one or two minor niggles. The most obvious is a slightly over-eager tweeter. Toeing them out to fire straight down the room helped here, bringing a smoother sound. The brightness was still there, but revealed itself more as insight and detail than sharpness.

Replacing them on their AB33 pedestals, using the cables Rogers supplied to connect them up, effectively makes the combination a £600 floorstander. Playing Tori Amos’ Boys For Pele CD (Rock Record of the Month in the April issue) her vocal on the track ‘Blood Roses’ was vividly projected into the room. Harpsichord was as spine-tingling as iced coffee dripping down my spine.

When it came to Nirvana’s ‘Polly’, it would be easy to believe the sound was coming through the Rogers combination just the way the late Mr Cobain heard it in the studio. The rawness of acoustic guitar turned our listening room into their live recording venue. Bass was effortless, plentiful and even three-dimensional. The midrange was precise and the Rogers produced a stage depth that was, well, deep!

Bass isn’t something that just rumbles underneath everything else. Listening to Paul Weller’s ‘You Do Something To Me’, the Rogers made it into something as appetising as Belgian chocolate ice-cream and fudge sauce. ‘Changing Man’ from the album Stanley Road was punchy and dynamic with good depth. Accurate timing in the lower registers more than made up for the slight sharpness at the top.

The LS33/AB33 combination, kept a little wider apart than the usual six feet, managed to reproduce the whole width and depth of the recorded sound stage while accurately keeping every instrument on it in its place. It seems ideal. For those who can’t immediately stretch to the £600 for the combination, the LS33 makes a good starting point. For many it would make a pretty good end, too. Adding on the AB33 is a dream come true.

Rogers LS33/AB33 £249/£349
Rogers
310 Commonsde East,
Mitcham,
Surrey CR4 1HX
T: 0181 640 2172

WORLD VERDICT
LS33
AB33

The LS33s are superb value, having a clear and open sound that few better at the price.
With the AB33s some useful extra extension is gained.

Measured Performance see p105-111

APRIL 1996
You can find our products at all of these suppliers

Hi-Fi Experience
17 Conscliffe Road
Darlington
Co. Durham
DL3 7EE
Tel. 01325 481418

Radford Hi-Fi
10-12 Gloucester Road
Bristol
Avon
BS7 8AE
Tel. 0117 9441010

English Audio
37 Whitecross Road
Hereford
Hereford & Worcester
BR4 0DE
Tel. 01432 355081
Movement Audio
588 Ashley Road
Parkstone
Poole
BH14 0AQ
Tel. 01202 730 865

Hi-Fi Corner Ltd.
52 Gordon Street
Glasgow
Scotland
G1 3PU
Tel. 0141 2482840

Hi-Fi Corner Ltd.
44 Cow Wynde
Falkirk
Central Scotland
FK1 1PU
Tel. 01324 629011

The Audio File
41 Victoria Road
Cambridge
Cambridgeshire
CB1 3WW
Tel. 01223 68305

Lynn Hi-Fi
163 Cornwood Road
Belfast
N. Ireland
BT9 5AJ
Tel. 01232 381296

Thomas Heinitz
35 Moscow Road
Bayswater
London
W2
Tel. 0171 229 2077

Unilet Audio Ltd
35 High Street
New Maiden
Surrey
KT3 4BY
Tel. 0181 942 9567

Project One UK Ltd
T/a Auditorium
19 Middlesex Street
Bishopsgate
London
E1 7JF
Tel. 0171 247 5000

Practical Hi-Fi
106 English Street
Carlisle
Cumbria
CA3 8ND
Tel. 01228 44792

Bill Hutchinson Hi-Fi
T/a the Hi-Fi Room
50 Bridge Street
Manchester
Greater Manchester
M3 3BN
Tel. 0161 835 1366

Musical Images
173 Station Road
Edgware
Middlesex
HA8 7JX
Tel. 0181 952 5535

Rayleigh Hi-Fi
216 Moulsham Street
Southend-on-Sea
Essex
SS0 1PQ
Tel. 01702 435 255

Leicester Hi-Fi Co.
6 Silver Walk
St Martins Square
Leicester
Leicestershire
LE1 7EW
Tel. 0116 2539753

Musical Images
45 High Street
Hounslow
Middlesex
TW3 1RH
Tel. 0181 569 5802

Norman Audio Ltd.
131 Priorygate
Preston
Lancashire
PR1 2EE
Tel. 01772 253057

Radford Hi-Fi
449-551 Cowbridge Road East
Cardiff
Wales
CF5 1JH
Tel. 01222 398121

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6 Market Place
St Albans
Herts
AL3 5DG
Tel. 01727 851596

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132-134 London Road
Southend-on-Sea
Essex
SS1 1PQ
Tel. 01702 435 255

Rayleigh Hi-Fi
44a High Street
Rayleigh
Essex
SS6 7EA
Tel. 01268 779762

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Covent Garden
London
WC2H 9HB
Tel. 0171 497 1356

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Hounslow
Middlesex
TW3 1RH
Tel. 0181 569 5802

Richard's Audio Visual
4 Greyfriars
Bedford
Bedfordshire
MK40 1HP
Tel. 01234 365165

Rayleigh Hi-Fi
216 Moulsham Street
On the Parkway
Chelmsford
Essex
CM2 0LQ
Tel. 01245 265145

Hi-Fi Experience
Lion House
227 Tottenham Court Road
London
W1P OZH
Tel. 0171 580 3535

The Audio File
40 Hockerhill Street
Bishops Stortford
Herts
CM23 2DW
Tel. 01279 506576

The Power Plant Ltd
66 Upper North Street
Brighton
East Sussex
BN1 1FL
Tel. 01273 775 478

Hi-Fi Corner Ltd.
121 Rose Street
Edinburgh
Scotland
EH2 3DT
Tel. 0131 220 1535

The Audio File
40 Hockerhill Street
Bishops Stortford
Herts
CM23 2DW
Tel. 01279 506576

Doug Brady Hi-Fi
Kingsway Studios
Kingsway North
Warrington
Cheshire
WA1 3NU
Tel. 01925 828009

Hi-Fi Corner Ltd.
121 Rose Street
Edinburgh
Scotland
EH2 3DT
Tel. 0131 220 1535

Hi-Fi Experience
Lion House
227 Tottenham Court Road
London
W1P OZH
Tel. 0171 580 3535

The Power Plant Ltd
66 Upper North Street
Brighton
East Sussex
BN1 1FL
Tel. 01273 775 478

APRIL 1996
From the outside Audiolab's new 8000S amplifier appears to be a minimalist product, yet it has the convenience of remote control. In fact, it's a stripped down brother to the 8000A, lacking phono stage, tone controls, balance control and speaker switching, but with a full function remote control that will also operate an Audiolab CD player and tuner.

This doesn't limit the 8000S' potential. Audiolab have aimed to package a high quality, line level integrated amplifier into a convenient-to-use and eminently upgradeable package. With three tape monitors and a mode switch which allows it to be used as an integrated amplifier, part of a bi-amp system, as a preamplifier and in an AV system with a processor inserted, the new 8000S is certainly flexible. There's even an extra pre-output, useful for owners of subwoofers.

But all's lost if the basic amplifier can't deliver, and it is here that Audiolab claim their dedication to sound quality will win them the throne.

Capitalising on the fine imaging properties of the Mission 752s I used, the 8000S made light work of producing a pin-sharp image - even more so than the 8000A which is already first class in this area. Around a centrally placed, near holographic image of Dubstar's Sarah Blackwood, was a perfectly contoured landscape of sound. Bass was fast, tight and rhythmic, with more depth and colour than the 8000A, which can err on the dry and clinical at times. Not the 8000S, and it is here that one of the most welcome differences lies.

The 'S has an expressiveness and level of detail, backed by solid and weighty drive, that makes it sound twice the amp. you'd expect at the price. The articulation of every plucked bass note...
on The Charlatans' album was exquisite, even on such a grungy recording. In its favour, this album does have a natural, acoustic feel which imbues it with great atmosphere, something the S exploited readily.

The 8000S integrated brings a whole new level of detail right across the range compared with the popular 8000A. With greater insight, a clearer, tighter focus through the midrange and truly rhythmic bass, the S takes a step up the high fidelity ladder. The 8000A does a fine job, unbeatable in my opinion for the money, but with the S it's a whole different ball game.

With Pulp's wonderfully satirical 'Common People' the freshness of the atmosphere was spine tingling. Allowed to grow and strengthen, Jarvis' vocal captured my attention. In fact, vocals are very sharply captured by the S, crisp leading edges aiding the overall feeling of fine projection and clarity.

It even stamped its authority on Eat Static's 'Bony Incus'. The hard-core bass line, swirling keyboard, electronic effects and dynamic bolts of energy send many amplifiers into turmoil. A P.A. is normally more appropriate for this style of music, but the 8000S did remarkably well at holding the cones of the 752s in check while avoiding confusion further up the frequency scale.

Although the effect is heavily processed, Garbage's sound-stage-stretching 'A Stroke of Luck' showed just how wide the 8000S could spread itself. Totally in command of the 752s, the sound wrapped around the whole room to enclose me in a wash of sound, whilst vocals steered a straight course towards my seat.

This ability to order the sound stage in such a coherent manner will doubtless appeal to many classical listeners. Given the wide spread of an orchestral piece the 8000S demonstrates it ability to accurately describe the scale and shape with great realism. Being super crisp both in terms of definition and tonal character, the S could be a little too eager with strings. Mission's 752s could be accused of being a touch soft in the upper midrange, but the super projection of the 8000S pushed them forwards to speak out with captivating clarity. With more forthright 'speakers, the S may push things too far for some tastes, especially with CD. Fed by a good phono stage though, the 8000S was devastating. Its fast, crisp transient edges and driving bass lines made every record sound larger than life. LP revealed more of this amplifier's ability to portray stage depth, which although not quite as deep in its reach as the best, went far enough to create a very believable feeling.

With such a crisp, detailed and spacious sound the 8000S is impossible not to recommend. It has a strong delivery, placing performers firmly within a wide stage. It married especially well with the Mission 752 loudspeakers I used, but beware of less euphonic designs, like Technic's impressive yet unremitting SB-M300 loudspeakers. So match carefully and have fun, this one's impressive.

Audiolab 8000S £649.95
Cambridge Systems Technology
Spitfire Close,
Ermine Business Park,
Huntingdon,
Cambs. PE18 6XY
T 01480 52521

WORLD VERDICT

Powerful and expressive bass with great insight from a clear and detailed midrange and treble.

Measured Performance see p105-111
Nothing matches the extraordinary ability of long-haired wool to absorb sound. It is a unique material with a fascinating history that stretches back to the time of Canute, Britain's Danish king, best known for trying to hold back the rising tide of the Wash. He failed and the Wash lived up to its name.

Canute had greater influence than this snippet of ancient folklore gives him credit for. He ruled over Britain while it was briefly part of the Danish empire from 1006-1035 and it was he who introduced the long-haired sheep to Britain's shores, where they thrive to this day.

Nowadays, we associate long-haired wool with one Professor Bailey, who re-discovered its properties while researching the transmission-line loudspeaker at Bradford University's Department of Acoustics, during the 1960s. Bailey was trying desperately hard to make the transmission line loudspeaker into a practicable proposition. He needed a material that could absorb all the energy transmitted rearward from a loudspeaker cone.

Wandering through a local museum Bailey was intrigued by artefacts and manuscripts dating back to Canute's time which showed Norsemen had come to understand the bi-directional properties of the tapered horn. Large horns were used in the front of their longboats to produce fearful battle cries, like "Tivoli Gardens", as they approached British shores. Ancient Britons fled in terror.

Turned around and in smaller form, horns were pressed into service as a hearing-aid that could magically amplify faint sounds. "The Danes invented the horn loudspeaker," insists Peter Qvortrup, the Danish founder of Audio Note (UK). "They imported it into Britain but it took the British 930 years to catch up!"

Professor Bailey saw that to control volume the Danes cleverly used differing amounts of wool stuffing in their horns, taken from their long-haired sheep. Being a Yorkshireman, Bailey recognised the breed, tried it himself and found that long-haired wool had remarkable sound-absorbing properties. Providence led Bailey to re-discover this once valuable part of the region's wool trade.

Peter Qvortrup insists that Canute founded Britain's loudspeaker business. "The Vikings came to settle in the lands they invaded, bringing early craft... the story of hi-fi sheep.
industries like wool spinning. When Canute sailed up the Humber to establish the seat of his kingdom at York, he brought with him the loom and a variety of hardy, long-haired sheep that could survive Britain's cold uplands, especially in the Yorkshire Dales and Northumbria. It's no coincidence that even today Yorkshire is thought of as home of Britain's loudspeaker industry, with names like Wharfedale and Castle, for example, based there. The Danes were responsible for this.

Today, long-haired wool comes exclusively from Yorkshire. Denmark experienced terrible famine from 1742-48, during which time, in desperation, the Danes converted their own long-haired sheep into lamb chops. Nowadays, when Danes want to build a loudspeaker they must look to the land Canute ruled for supplies. But they face some peculiar problems.

Anglicised long ago, this special breed, known now as the Swaledale, has two cousins, the Dalesbred, which thrives only in the Yorkshire Dales and another, the Rough Fell, in Northumbria, where they have adapted to nutritious local grasses. So Danes like Peter Qvortrup still have to paddle their long boats across the bleak, inhospitable waters of the North Sea if they want to manufacture decent loudspeakers.

The old long-haired is an ancient, wild variety basically nervous of man, especially Danes. That's why there are no Danish hill farmers in Yorkshire: it's a waste of time. Gathering long-haired wool for use in loudspeakers has become something of an art, practised only by indigenous Yorkshire hill shepherds.

The breeds rely on their wonderful wool coats to keep warm in the bitter upland winters, but come the spring, this wool is shed as warmer weather approaches. The skill of the shepherd lies in knowing when the sheep are about to shed their wool, for only then can they be sheared.

Any earlier and the sheep will disappear in fright into the nearest snowdrift where, with their white coats, they are impossible to find. Any later and the wool will have been shed naturally. So there's a very narrow window of a few weeks when Swaledales, Rough Fells or Dalesbreds can be sheared. If it's missed, the supply for the year will be limited and loudspeaker prices rise.

Because of their nervousness these breeds are notoriously difficult to herd for shearing. Long-haired sheepdogs like Border Collies have to be used or the sheep get suspicious. In the 1960s, hill farmers discovered that long-haired hippies made good shepherds for the same reason, so students from local universities were recruited for the shearing season. This tradition continues today. Horn loudspeaker enthusiasts and Danes are discouraged from entering the area at shearing time.

The wool is gathered into huge bales and stored in warehouses. It is sold mainly as industrial fibre for heavy-duty fabrics, but also as acoustic wadding. However, whilst Professor Bailey popularised this material for use in loudspeakers, it is still rare. Chasing sheep up and down the fells is a time-consuming and expensive business, so long-haired wool is costly. It is sold only in huge, smelly bales; we buy a bale at a time; it takes up a lot of floor space.

Current legislation on the Maintenance and Protection of Rare Breeds states that animals like this and their by-products must be treated with care at all stages of their management and, partly because of ambiguous wording in the Long Haired Hi-Fi Sheep Act, 1992 (sub-clause 92a, Loudspeaker Applications) we have to employ a long-haired person to handle this wool. It's another reason for the scarcity and cost of the product.

So it has taken invasion, King Canute, 930 years of rural agriculture and Yorkshire's wool trade for long-haired wool to reach its current, precarious state of existence. When so much goes into such an obscurely valuable material, one that ends up hidden within a high-quality loudspeaker, it's no wonder the outside world thinks hi-fi enthusiasts are Baaa...rmy.

Our thanks for background information (although they bear no responsibility for what we have done with it) to the National Farmers Union, the National Sheep Association, The Sheep Centre, Malvern, Worcs. and the Rare Breeds Survival Trust, National Agricultural Centre, Kenilworth, Warwicks. A book, British Sheep, is available from the National Sheep Association, price £6.00. (Tel: 01684 892661)
Eric Braithwaite hangs out with two space-saving loudspeakers, Linn’s Sekrit and the Sequence 400.

There seems to be a notion about that hi-fi ought to be more like small children: heard, but preferably not seen. Or is that the wrong way round for children, the right way round for loudspeakers? Peer through the windows of all too many living rooms and the speakers will be perched on brackets on the walls or hung in thoroughly non hi-fi positions from all manner of contrivances.

Sequence were perhaps the first to produce a loudspeaker that could, literally since it was only two inches or so thick, be unobtrusive, and hung from a wall. The latest version is the 400.

Now Linn has joined the 'decorate your wall with a speaker' school of interior design with the Sekrit.

Both can be either on the wall or off, to coin a phrase. The 'bookshelf' size Sekrits have an optional tripod-like tubular frame stand; the Sequence 400, still only a couple of inches thick, is as tall as the average floorstander and comes with what really amounts to a square-section steel U-shaped base.

Both were used in 'off the wall' mode, but close to the wall.

LINN SEKRIT

If it hangs on a wall, well, it would be bound to sound like audible wallpaper, wouldn’t it? Not a bit of it. More than just interior decor, on its stands the Sekrit behaved with real decorum. Since Linn makes its own jazz recordings, it might have been expected that this speaker would suit the genre. What was more surprising was it proved very amenable to others too.

Brubeck’s ‘Blue Rondo a la Turk’ came over with a very pleasant balance. Particularly striking was the clarity of the double bass through such a relatively small speaker, the sound of real playing rather than an anonymous thumping. The alto sax was definitely an alto, albeit a bit short on dynamics in its lower register, but the piano was grand in both senses. Just a touch of thinness towards the top was perfectly forgivable.

We won’t go into the ‘playing tunes’ business, but the Sekrit was pretty...
quick-footed. No-one listening to it would have any trouble recognising whether a piece was in 4/4 or 6/8 time, which is more difficult for some speakers than you might expect.

Clapton might not be a fave at a rave, but the Sekrits reminded me why he filled the Albert Hall. Blues-player subdue when it was on the disc, ripping distortion real enough to half-believe there was a guitar amp feeding the speakers instead of a pair of Audiolabs.

The RPO/Tring disc of Tchaikovsky’s Sixth wouldn’t be top of my list of interpretations, but it is a good SBM recording. The Sekrit proved adept at pulling off the double that allows a listener to appreciate the technical quality while musing over the musical interpretation at the same time. This argues that tonal truthfulness is pretty well right. Certainly, this was unmistakable RPO.

Equally pleasing for the classical buff was the Sekrits’ ability to allow the violins to spread just beyond the boundary of the left-hand speaker. Some Linn owners may not have put imagery at the head of their wants list in the past, but the Sekrits were as capable as any small speaker in this department.

As might be expected from a Linn design, bass quality was fast, tight and dry; though not thunderingly deep, it had enough energy for no-one to miss true low-end extension.

Apart from them both being as slim as Princess Di, otherwise these two have as much in common as she and her husband.

SEQUENCE 400

Bigger does not necessarily mean better, though the sax on the Brubeck CD had a larger presence through the Sequences than the Sekrits. ‘Presence’ is the operative word. After the Linns, the Sequences seemed almost beyond themselves with excitement. There were a couple of decided pluses in a somewhat uneven equation. The scale of the RPO was greater and the Sequences offered a better degree of depth perspective. There was a real sense of the acoustic space of St Augustine’s, Kilburn, where I heard the Bach B Minor Mass being recorded.

By and large, imagery was precise enough to do justice to the price, although the Sequences did appear to be more susceptible to the effects of variations in placement and different rooms. These are not, let me remind you, totally accurate transducers. Clapton’s voice, for example had a nasality to it which was not a fair representation, as did the bass in the Bach B minor Mass. On the same performance by The Sixteen, James Bowman’s counter-tenor was sharp and clear, though it also sounded harder and more inflexible than it should.

Horns in both Tchaikovsky’s Sixth and the Mass also caught the Sequences out. Splendidly rich and vibrant in the lower notes, the timbre thinned in the higher notes. Brubeck’s piano was not entirely a success; while it had some of the large scale to be expected of a floorstander, it had a decidedly too clangy tone in the treble stave.

On its stands, the bass too was surprisingly lightweight and vaguely defined with the Sequences away from a hard plaster wall. It improved markedly in extension, and to some degree in tightness and definition in a different location where the speakers could be placed further apart to about seven feet, with the ports firing inwards unrestricted and closer to a solid wall.

A caveat needs to be entered here. In a show room, those anomalies which appeared fairly marked during the review period hadn’t impinged as much.

Conclusion

Apart from them both being as slim as Princess Di, otherwise these two have as much in common as she and her husband. Price doesn’t figure in it, since they are much of a muchness here. If paint matching is essential, the Sekrits can be given a brush over with a pot of best emulsion to taste. The Sequences, having cloth covers, are a little more limiting if one’s interior decorator has gone in for an unusual shade of puce. The dual role does inflict a price premium, of course; there are some purist loudspeakers at this price which have superior sonics.

Sonic differences between them, there are. Of the two, the Sekrits are the most even, but to some tastes, they might be described as almost unassumming. That doesn’t mean bland: a bit of push from the amplifier and they produce plenty of excitement.

Superficially the Sequences are pushier, brighter and come closer to reproducing some of the true scale of the instruments. While ambient detail and imagery could be on a par with almost any equivalently-priced loudspeaker given favourable room conditions, it was let down in the last analysis by an uneven transition between upper mid and treble.

Linns Linn Products
Floors Road, Waterfoot,
Eaglesham, Glasgow. G76 0EP
Tel 0141 644 5111

Sequence 400: £329.90
STANDS: £49.90

May Audio Marketing
Aireside Mills, Cononley,
Keighley, W. Yorks. BD20 8LW
Tel 01535 632700

WORLD VERDICT

Linn Sekrit
Sequence 400

Linn Sekrit: Well-behaved and with a decent tonal quality. Sequence 400: Good at orchestral scale, but coloured in the mid-band.

Measured Performance see p105-111
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LOW NOISE, LOW PRICE

The most affordable Dolby S cassette deck ever? Eric Braithwaite finds out if Aiwa's AD-S750 is worth making a noise about.

Despite the average price going up last year, the British bought 40 million blank audio tapes. And digital, DCC tape? Well, the British didn't buy many of those at all. When you can now buy a cassette deck like Aiwa's AD-S750 for £150, it's not surprising that old-fashioned analogue tape still has the hearts and minds of the buyers.

Just a couple of years ago, a deck like this with all three Dolby noise reduction systems (B, C and S) and automatic tape biasing would have cost at least double. Buying a cassette deck has never been such an attractive proposition.

The Aiwa, though nothing spectacular in terms of recording quality, took advantage of metal tape and Dolby S to produce superbly hiss-free recordings. The combination showed off the AD-S750 at its best, especially with pop, rock and jazz. It brought out the subtler vocal inflections and some of the tactile fingerwork of instrumentalists that adds atmosphere and feel to a recording. Melodic lines survived the process, though rhythmically any underpinning tight bass was on the edge of being soft.

A quick bash with Fine Young Cannibals produced a clean recording, but a bit short of the crisp bite it ought to have. Ferric tape - maybe due to the automatic 'hands off' biasing - sounded as though there was a tiny boost to the bass, which is no bad thing. I've heard better bass timing, and stronger bass, though admittedly not at this price.

Using metal tape particularly, a little less so with chrome, recordings had an airy spaciousness. Fore and aft perspective, even on orchestral recordings which have plenty, however, was given somewhat short shrift. The AD-S750 turns out a pleasantly smooth facade rather than real architectural depth.

The Aiwa coped well with pre-recorded tapes, with very acceptable clarity on vocals and a general air of sweetness all round. Frederica Von Stade's voice on 'My Funny Valentine' was almost perfect. Beethoven's Violin Sonatas, however, did cause the deck a momentary flutter. The piano had a slightly 'wet' sound and a degree of uncertainty.

All-in-all, however, this is a cassette deck with a very competent, even, overall performance. For once, too, an avowedly budget design dealt capably with all three tape types and all three Dolby noise reduction systems. I would be tempted never to switch Dolby S out when recording; even tempted to use the best-quality tape, though I fear many buyers will mistakenly think Dolby S will improve a 90p market-stall ferric. They would be wrong. This is a machine that deserves much better.

Sonically, a very decent, competent machine. For the price, there's nothing better. I don't think Mr Richer is going to have any bother selling this one. Only one thing: in the USA it has a remote control. Why them and not us?

Aiwa AD-S750 £149.95

Available at all Richer Sounds stores.

WORLD VERDICT

Not perfect but for the money it's hard to beat. Dolby S gives low-hiss recordings with all tape types.

Measured Performance see p105-111
In digital audio signal processing, jitter is distortion.

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World Radio History
If looks were everything, Myryad's MI 120 integrated and MA 120 power amplifier would be first in the beauty parade. Haider Bahrani plays judge.
We are too busy building the World’s best hi-fi to design adverts.

But not too busy to talk to you if you want information.

dpa digital ltd., Units 7 & 8, Willowbrook Lab Units, Crickhowell Rd., St Mellons, Cardiff CF3 0EF
Tel: 01222 795621 fax: 01222 794267.
A pair of beefy gold-plated ‘speaker terminals on both the integrated amplifier (above) and power amplifier (below) allow for bi-wiring. When an internal board is in place, the Aux input is used for LP.

If the general swim of hi-fi were to be judged on looks alone, then Myryad’s MI 120 remote-controlled stereo integrated amplifier would be a length or two ahead of most of its competition. An illuminated volume control, elegantly inset into a thick fascia, sets the tone. Sent along also was an MA 120 power amplifier, so the two could be used for bi-amping. In this mode, the integrated fed the treble and the power amplifier the bass of a pair of Mission 752s.

Bi-amping the Myryad

This way, it was by far the best. Listening to CD, Annie Lennox’s ‘Love Song For A Vampire’ had a bass that thumped and rumbled like a pipe organ in a Transylvanian castle. She was perfectly positioned in the sound stage, her diaphragm pumping under her ribs like Count Dracula waking up ready for a tough night on the mountains.

When it came to heart-wrenching Blues like Tab Benoit’s ‘Nice and Warm’ from Strike a Deep Chord, the bi-amped Myryads turned out a Blues man’s Blues. His voice sounded as though there was an authentic shot of burning Bourbon in it. The Artist problem with his voice on U2’s ‘The Fly’. The guitars on this recording were also were a tad brighter than I’m accustomed to hearing, with very little sustain. There was, at the top end, a faint but annoying sharp edge cutting through the rest of the music. On the other hand, the attack on most instruments had near-precision timing.

And also on vinyl...

Labelled the MYM 33 MC, the optional moving-coil stage for the Myryad integrated costs an additional £79.95. This, it turned out, sounded very different to the CD input. With an Arkiv MC cartridge installed in an LP12’s Ekos arm, I took Texas for a spin at 33⅓rpm.

The first track to encounter the needle was ‘I Don’t Want a Lover’ from the LP Southside. Sharleen Spiteri, taking centre stage, was too far back in the mix to have any real presence. The guitars however, were tonally better balanced than on CD, without the harshness that had been apparent. Timing was less accurate than before, with the bass a little too laid-back and uninspiring. REM’s ‘Losing My Religion’ from Out of Time sounded tame, with most of the instruments confined to the central three feet or so between the loudspeakers.

Conclusion

Although the bi-amp set up performed well, however beautiful the MI 120 and MA 120 look together, they do not really make up a £1000 amplifier. The integrated is probably the best-looking and one of the better-built integrated amplifiers in its price range, but its sound is very much an acquired taste.

Myryad MI 120 Integrated

The integrated on its own was less appealing. The sound stage was strictly confined between the speaker cones, for example. On the positive side, it had a very fast and punchy response with a bass that only the really fussy would fault. The Transylvanian rumbles of ‘Love Song For A Vampire’ were still well in evidence. The very low notes, much as before, blasted around the room like a bow round an Easter egg. Annie herself, however, was gasping for breath as if the flanging on her voice was slowly sucking her into a dark cave behind the sound stage. Bono too had a similar problem with his voice on U2’s ‘The Fly’. The guitars on this recording were also were a tad brighter than I’m accustomed to hearing, with very little sustain. There was, at the top end, a faint but annoying sharp edge cutting through the rest of the music. On the other hand, the attack on most instruments had near-precision timing.

WORLD VERDICT

A little rough in parts; bi-amping is a must, though it puts the set-up on the pricey side given the sound quality.

Measured Performance

see pl05-111
In March 1996 WHAT Hi-Fi? reviewed the new Mordaunt-Short MS 10i loudspeaker against five of its closest rivals.

***

WHAT HI-FI?

"For small boxes they generate striking bass."

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For your FREE copy of this review and a FREE Mordaunt-Short literature pack, including details of the new Music Series i, the new Performance loudspeakers and our new range of Home Entertainment loudspeakers, CALL FREE NOW on 0321 506550 (24 hours).
Orelle's first foray into the 'high-end' is the XTC CD transport and convertor. Will Eric Braithwaite find it a hard pill to swallow?

Orelle have made a name for themselves with very affordable and, in its way, very 'English' sounding equipment. Last September they announced (brave souls) a 'high-end' range. These 'statement' products include a remote-control pre-amplifier, a power amplifier and the CDT-I 'LE' transport and DAC-I convertor we seized for this month's review.

Now 'high-end' has become a bit of a misleading term, since it's become associated with high-price products. That's not to say that 'high-end' has to cost Barbuda holiday prices instead of Mallorca ones, and Orelle's XTC digital products are about average for this corner of the market.
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AND THE MODULAR AUDIO
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The Reviewer Choice
As a piece of functional furniture the BASE Racks and Platforms together
are a work of art - Dave Wiley,
Audiophile Magazine

The Customer Choice
It's refreshing to
find a complete
isolation system
that values aesthetics
as highly as it does sonic benefits
- Mr P M Rodwell, Cornwall.

Thanks!! The improvement is
astonishing and after hearing and
trying other audio stands, the
performance of BASE is second to
none - Mr M Slattery, Sussex.

"The Audiophile support brings the
sound I hear at home one step closer
to the sounds we create in the concert
hall. Bravo"... Dr. K Murphy
(Classical Musician)

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The Square, Forest Row,
East Sussex RH18 5SE.
What is much more a real mark of 'high-end' is the sound quality. Among the signs that it's in its place is subtlety. That's not just fine shadings of tonal colour or a little bit more expressiveness, although OreIle's transport, particularly, justifies its £1200 tag therewith. The CDT-I 'LE' should make its own appeal to the tweaky New Age market too. As the drawer slides open it reveals a peculiarly bilious green-coloured tray, like a billiard table after a heavy night on a booze cruise. Green is said to absorb any stray red light from the player's laser, reducing interference.

I have been accused before of supporting tweaky notions like this when I didn't, so if it is the colour that puts the sound on a level with Audiolab's 8000CDM that's something other people can argue about. OreIle's transport, however, has only a coax digital connection; at this level AES/EBU balanced and optional AT&T optical are becoming almost commonplace.

Fed from this transport the Orelle DAC-I convertor offers a taste of that elegantly smooth, slightly laid-back sound which is the epitome of some American 'high-end' tastes. That has been a bit of an OreIle hallmark anyway, but this has added refinement.

It's a moot point as to how far this degree of smoothness should go and there are American high-end designs which arguably take this kind of delicacy to the point of near-collapse. The Orelle's strong point is decency and equilibrium over brute force and coarseness. With LL Cool J's 'Mr Smith' it didn't stop Mr J sounding pretty forceful, 'energised' as he calls it. The bass was equally energetic, but was a touch too round to be true.

Nor did it stop some of the current run of Britpop achieving a good sense of verve and a vividness that kept it on its toes. When it comes down to the subtleties of guitar fingering, rimshots and clean vocals, the Orelle came up with some pretty good trump cards. Teenage Fanclub, Oasis, well, they all sound like Lennon and McCartney anyway these days, without the benefit of Lennon, but apart from wishing for a tighter beat in the bass lines there wasn't much to complain about.

I tend to prefer a stronger dynamic contrast than the OreIle offered, but this is where personal taste comes into play. The Previn recording of 'Carmina Burana' can have a chorus which sounds either raucously exciting or a trifle muddy through many converters. The OreIle steered a neat path between the two equally undesirable alternatives. The chorus - apart from a little shortage of absolute contrast in that grey area 'twixt the tenors and baritones or sopranos and mezzos - was happily intelligible. Equally clean, and sweet, were the strings, with a reasonably spacious spread between and behind the Harbeth HL Compact 7s that were used as monitors.

"As the drawer slides open it reveals a peculiarly bilious green-coloured tray, like a billiard table after a heavy night on a booze cruise"

Ever since Keats put the two words together, truth and beauty have become synonyms. They aren't. The OreIle combination is beautiful: a smooth but detailed sound with plenty of variety in tonal colour and shading. Truthful? It's not as totally, almost painfully, analytical as the Audiolab. It strikes a good balance, with a degree of bass warmth. Since my fave McIntosh - which is the burger king of this sort of detail, sharp imaging and dynamics - is several hundred quid more, then the OreIle has to be good value.

XTC DAC-I £1000
XTC CDT-I 'LE' £1200
Orelle XTC
Unit 12, Imex House, 6 Wadsworth Road, Perivale, Middx. UB3 7JS T 0181 810 9388

WORLD VERDICT
A warm and musical sound with a taste of high-end refinement and detail.

Measured Performance see p105-111
"It's tantamount to a miracle"
-Ken Kessler, Hi-Fi News

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by Unison Research

If that sounds like an extravagant claim, consider the following: You know how magical the single-ended triode sound can be, but you have probably always thought of SETs as quirky, unreliable and expensive, Perhaps ugly too. Not any more. With the Smart 845, Unison Research has redefined the pure triode single-ended valve amplifier. Not only do the Smart 845's sound superb, they are beautifully made, they can drive almost any loudspeaker you care to name, they are dependable, user-friendly and, yes, they are a bargain too*. Now isn't that tantamount to a miracle?

*Indeed they are. All this hand-crafted glory costs only £2995 for the pair. For full information on the Smart 845 monoblocks and the full range of superb Unison Research products, plus the name of your nearest stockist call:

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When Spendor's SP9/1 loudspeakers arrived, it took two pairs of helping hands to lift each one. Since Dominic Baker has only one pair himself, it looks as though they'll be staying put.

When these Spendors were offered to him several months ago, Eric held back - he knew better. I was less hesitant: "Yes, of course I'd love to audition the SP9/1s." Standing some 3.5ft tall, 1.5ft deep and over a foot wide, these flagships are intended for large rooms. Don't expect to collect and install a pair of these monoliths on your own; each loudspeaker weighs in at a back-breaking 52kg. They need at least two pairs of safe hands at each end to shift them. Even then, don't expect to get where you're heading too quickly.
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“...the famous engaging bloom and warmth so characteristic of LP, which is either caused by analogue’s inherent superiority over digital or a mixture of distortion, crosstalk and microphony according to your viewpoint. Anyway, I liked it...”
— John Borwick, Gramophone

Project 1 Turntable
Project 1 record playing systems are available for between £150 and £2,000 For more details and stockists, phone ORTOFON UK on 01753-889949

You can follow the digital revolution or you can follow the Groove

The sounds from the Pro-Ject 1 had the famous engaging bloom and warmth so characteristic of LP, which is either caused by analogue’s inherent superiority over digital or a mixture of distortion, crosstalk and microphony according to your viewpoint. Anyway, I liked it...
— John Borwick, Gramophone

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Project 1 Turntable
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You can follow the digital revolution or you can follow the Groove
Firmly bolted to the massive 54mm-thick baffle are three high-quality drivers. At the top, unusually, is a 6in midrange unit. With a carefully-doped homopolymer polypropylene cone, this driver smoothly spans the range 600Hz to 4kHz. Below on the baffle, but above in frequency range, sits a 19mm ScanSpeak tweeter; a popular choice in higher-end designs for its sweet and detailed nature. This inverted layout places the more directional dome driver smoothly spans the range 600Hz to 4kHz. This one is a 12in heavy-duty affair, properly tooled up for the job. A driver like this brings a cleanliness and quality to bass that smaller ones can never match. Because of its large cone area it doesn’t have to move so far to shift the same volume of air, which reduces distortion considerably.

Then there are the trimmings. To get the best from these drivers, and it would be a shame not to, the SP9/1s have high-quality crossover components and internal wiring, linked to tri-wire gold-plated terminals. The baffle is joined to light and rigid bitumen-damped cabinet panels, which store less energy, lowering colouration. The angled baffle edges reduce cabinet diffraction - important with such a large baffle area - to improve imaging. And the grilles have a felt lining around the tweeter and midrange positions so that imaging isn’t compromised when they are in place either.

Being easy to drive (we measured 89dB sensitivity along with a smooth, high impedance) they will suit a wide range of amplifiers. I tried a 9W, 300B valve single-ended and a 60W transistor amplifier. The SP9/1s were very responsive, clearly showing up the differences. Although the transistor amplifier gave greater headroom, I found the smooth 9W of the 300B triodes gave adequate levels in my medium-size room.

Strategic avoiding action, like not answering the door when Spendor called, saw the smaller SP7/1s comfortably installed in my system for several months before they were cruelly snatched back. Having come to know them well, I felt well-prepared for their bigger brothers. But it was a delight to find such a crisp and expressive bass. With more of Prince Naseem’s speed and punch than Frank Bruno’s heavyweight thump, they showed a surprising deftness and agility. Their dynamic and energetic pace made everything engaging and informative.

Dubstar’s ‘The Day I See You Again’ was replayed with a full and rounded quality as intended, the bass line clearly defined. Compared to KEF’s Reference 3s, the SP9/1s are certainly dry, but their tight control and impeccable rhythmic timing opens a window on bass quality that most loudspeakers hide from view.

Smoothly integrated above the bass, Sarah Blackwood’s vocal was impressively open, and imaged tightly between the ‘speakers. Here the SP9/1s are notably clearer and purer than I remember the 7/1s being. The dedicated midrange driver in the three-way 9/1s has an easier task than a bass/midrange driver of a 2-way design, bringing with it sharper, clearer focus and detail resolution.

Richly detailed, with complex harmonics, the simple violin and piano of Salvatore Accardo’s I violini di Cremona is a deceptively tough challenge. Capturing the emotion and atmosphere present in this recording, the SP9/1s created a believable acoustic both in terms of space and scale. Their range of tonal colours and the precision with which they respond to changes in pitch and inflexion more than make up for the slight colouration of the polypropylene cone material. This adds a fine brush-stroke of warmth and body which bodes well for thinner recordings, especially those on CD.

Gently lowering the tonearm on to Lou Reed’s ‘Walk on the Wild Side’, a fantastic recording on CD, but even better on vinyl, the sound was both realistic and captivating. With a wide stereo spread and walk-in depth to the sound stage it was one of the most natural performances I’ve heard.

Spender’s SP9/1s retain many of the strengths of the 7/1s, while scaling-up the sound appreciably. Perhaps their imaging wasn’t quite as tight, but then this is often the case with larger loudspeakers, and the SP9/1s do considerably better than most. Too big for your home? Maybe. But then, they’re worth buying a larger house for.

Spender SP9/1 £3,400 light Cherry
£3,450 Walnut
£3,600 Rosewood

Spendor Audio Systems
Station Road Ind. Estate,
Hailsham,
East Sussex. BN27 2ER
Tel 01323 843474

WORLD VERDICT

One of the clearest and most expressive loudspeakers you’ll find for a large room. Easy to drive too.

Measured Performance see p105-111

HI-FI WORLD
The Rohmann is Ortofon’s latest moving-coil cartridge. Eric Braithwaite indulges in a little vinyl orgy all by himself.

Ortofon’s latest moving-coil cartridge, called the Rohmann after the company’s late chairman, was approached with some trepidation. I’ve been paying blackmail to NK for months to stop his exposé about my (and other’s) knack of destroying cartridges. One of them, an Ortofon, was mine; the other, alias also an Ortofon, theirs. Both were expensive... and the Rohmann costs a grand.

It has been developed, so an Ortofon source said, to be more affordable than the flagship MC7500 and to appeal to those who love the MC2000. As luck would have it, I had been listening to both beforehand; hence, perhaps, a somewhat odd selection of LPs, picked to duplicate those I’d recently heard with the other two cartridges.

From Copland’s ‘Rodeo’ it was obvious that the Rohmann had as beat-happy an attitude as the MC7500. It was up on its points, quivering to every minute quaver and gripping the groove like a four-wheel drive. Brass had superb dynamics and rich but accurate timbre, while the strings were both deep and sweet. There’s a richer, fuller-sounding bass than the other two, too, more reminiscent of the Supremes, but with that tell-tale clarity that gives that ‘stick on parchment’ sound before the drum resonates. Very convincing.

A quick spin through Beethoven’s Violin concerto produced an orchestral image of total stability and exogenous spread, with the whole of the first and second violins located in three-dimensional space with pin-point precision. The enveloping ambience perhaps wasn’t up to the extraordinary MC7500 standard and the solo violin was slightly richer than either that cartridge or the MC2000, both of which squeeze extra fine bowing detail out of the recording that makes them the equivalent of a jeweller’s loupe. Both managed to open up the harpsichord continuo in Vivaldi’s Mandolin concerto, expressing the space between it and the strings just that touch more.

Bob Dylan Live at Budokan polished the session off. Now with this recording, the MC7500 is so tenacious of every last grain of sound quality the recording is liable to leave a lingering sense of disappointment. Not so with the Rohmann, which did one of the neatest balancing acts between truth and music I’ve ever heard. Whether it was a slightly over-nasal Dylan, a somewhat weedy sax, or a crammed and recessed backing threesome, the Rohmann touched up the colour just enough to put the music firmly at the front of the mind. To do this with absolute integrity and not a single sign of tonal fiddling marks real expertise. Ortofon really is on a roll, with the field almost all to themselves now Audio-Technica has abandoned the MC cartridge. The Rohmann proves, yet once more, that laurel leaves belong only on the brows of Roman emperors. For Mr Rohmann’s former colleagues they are definitely not for sitting on. His namesake cartridge defines the parameters of what a thousand-pounder ought to be. I had a glass of my best cognac when it was back in its polished wooden box. To ease the guilt or to celebrate its safe return? Shan’t tell you.

Ortofon Rohmann
£1000
Ortofon UK
Chiltern Hill,
Chalfont St Peter,
Bucks. SL9 9UG
01753 889949

WORLD VERDICT

Another top-quality MC from Ortofon, with superb tonal quality and excellent imagery.

Measured Performance see p105-111
HOW BENT CAN YOU GET?

Noel Keywood interrogates contributor Eric Braithwaite about a serious audio crime

Recently, sitting in an infamous venue on London's Portobello Road, I learnt to my fascination that it wasn't only cheques that were known to bounce in the hi-fi business. Cartridges had been doing likewise in considerable numbers, I was told. This was good to hear, because recently I joined this band of malefactors for what I claim, is the first time in my audio life. That's 25 years with a clean LP driving record, now permanently blemished.

My informant, however, knew things I didn't. I knew Eric Braithwaite's record(!), but I didn't know others had been causing havoc too. Perhaps I shouldn't have worried so much about what could, with the planets in conspiracy against us, as I suspected they were, happen to our Grasshopper if we had reviewed it in-house. Plenty had been happening elsewhere, it seemed, and the culprits were still alive and walking.

Eric was distraught. Cruelly, we had steered Grasshopper away from him, 'cos his hands get shaky at times. That's OK when a re-tip can be absorbed in the factory budget, but less so when it may threaten the manufacturer's solvency. This isn't an aspersion on Eric's great love of music and vinyl, both of which are fed from the local fabric, as it were. Portobello has plenty of funky vinyl outlets and Rough Trade was within earshot of our furtive pub discussion. It was just that an accident with Grasshopper would put him on skid row.

I sympathised and bought him another pint. My confidence had been shaken too, by another hopper - one that hopped across my record. Time seemed to stand still as it danced its dance of death in front of me. I could see it was going to commit a suicide, and I knew it was going pull me into this macabre event.
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APRIL 1996 HI-FI WORLD
I’ve never needed to use a cue platform, which I consider dangerous. Slow ones let the stylus into the groove too slowly. Horrible bursts of mistracked music sound like cries of agony every time the stylus hits the crest of a warp, flies silently across the trough, only to crash into the next crest. Fast cue platforms leave the arm behind on their descent. Bias force swings it out, the stylus lands the wrong side of the lip and there are more sounds of torture, even death.

Hand cueing avoids all of this - and I’ve never missed yet. But as I swung my magnificent 12in SME 3012 inward this time, my grip was slovenly and weak. When my hand stopped - the arm didn’t. The Ortofon MC25FL which I’d been so carefully running in went with it, a carefree passenger on a one-way trip to cartridge heaven. Wah!

There’s just no point in making excuses to the importers. You know they’ve heard it all before. “I broke it,” I told them bluntly, hoping they’d find my candour refreshing.

But I was learning more in the depths of this stuffy bar. The music was blaring. A couple of girls, one black, one white, played backgammon insouciantly, flicking us an occasional glance. They seemed to sense that something was going down. Eric drew nervously on his fifth fag. “What happened?” I asked him again. “It wouldn’t co-operate,” he said, which I thought a bit absurd. Co-operate? What was he doing to the thing? Arm wrestling it to get a flatter response? “No, no,” Eric blurted out, irritated by my facetious suggestion. “The damn stylus guard wouldn’t go onto the cartridge. The guard has a groove on either side that’s meant to mate up with the cartridge body. Trouble is, Ortofon have put on three ridges, but only one is the right one. Choose the wrong one and - poof! - end of stylus. It’s like playing Russian Roulette. This time round the cartridge snuffed it.”

Our corner was getting gloomier by the minute, but it was just as well. Our furtive conversation was pulling out truths from the woodwork. All the revelations in that Sunday’s News of the World couldn’t match what I was hearing. For the first time I realised that these events weren’t so rare, it’s just that nobody was saying much for fear of reprisal. Eric was already suffering this - he’d missed his chance with Grasshopper.

“What one did you destroy?”

“An MC30 Supreme, the one I was testing for your July 1994 review.”

So, that was why we never got our original sample back. It had been tested, packed and despatched to Eric’s Notting Hill garret, and that was the last we saw of it. Ortofon had to send us another. I was suspicious at the time and rumour had alerted me to the fact that not all cartridges made it out in one piece.

July 1994 issue? We put that one to testing for your July 1994 review.”

“Fixing a £2,000 cartridge into a £50 player just wouldn’t do. “Grasshopper.”

“Mc25fl that’s because they’ve got powerful magnets in the body. Use a steel screwdriver and, unless you keep a tight grip, it’ll fly out of your hands and do a wrecking job.” Both hands flew around this time, in an agitated gesture.

Suddenly I saw it. I realised that not one of us was to blame. Most MC fatalities were self-inflicted! The MC25FL had thrown itself at my Garrard’s metallic centre spindle, a clear act of self-immolation. Ortofon’s cartridge had committed suicide and Eric’s - well - it had brought its fate upon itself.

Not guilty M’lad! With this verdict I felt a great weight lift from my shoulders. It was time to buy Eric yet another drink. Perhaps it would steady his nerves next time he played a record with his MC7500.

Eric describing the invisible force that causes the death of so many cartridges
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Late in the race to put a ‘special edition’ CD player on the streets, Teac have come up with one at last. Haider Bahrani decides whether the VRDS-10SE will hit the headlines.

Reincarnation is all the rage. It’s second time around for Teac’s VRDS-10SE CD player, which supersedes the VRDS-10. Visible, external, differences are limited to the words ‘Special Edition’ inscribed in gold on the front and two gold-plated buttons on the right-hand side of the fascia for track selection, forward and reverse. The gold-coloured drawer remains as do the ‘broadcast’ white buttons for play, stop and pause. Other functions, including display off, are accessed via the remote hand-set.

Inside, however, is a VRDS transport from the higher-end VRDS-20 CD player and P-700 transport, accompanied with twin DAC-7 digital conversion à la Teac’s DT-1 converter and “new improved” output circuitry and clock.

It does need a lot of time to warm up, and I don’t mean ten minutes. After a couple of hours the ‘10SE created a very convincing impression. At its best, it is a very musical one. This ‘SE version takes a broad brush and paints a stage which hides the speakers, leaving little trace of their physical existence. Those two divine tracks ‘God’ by Tori Amos and ‘And God Created Woman’ by The Artist Formally Known etc. etc. spanned the room with the breadth and depth of a Roman amphitheatre. On both tracks, the Teac’s timing in the mid to upper-midrange was nearly exemplary.

I say ‘nearly’ because side-by-side with the Audiolab 8000CDM and Da Capo converter, the ‘10SE lacked some guts, particularly at the lower end where they set a tidy pace yet were both soothingly natural and clinically precise. All the same, the TEAC doesn’t veer that much from this ideal and it is much cheaper at £849.95 - which is approximately a third of the price of the two-piece kit.

Whether the Teac is entirely truthful as well as musically engaging is another matter. Take ‘You Do Something To Me’ from Paul Weller’s Stanley Road CD. Bass was natural via the VRDS-10SE, but slightly too relaxed. It reminded me of myself around seven o’clock in the morning, needing a little caffeine to perk it up a tad.

The midband was clear, with the instruments accurately taking their place within the sound stage. Weller’s voice, however, at times found itself drifting around in the background looking for a way clear of the jamboree. Whether this was more the recording rather than the CD player might be uncertain.

It was not the case with Alanis Morissette’s ‘You Oughta Know’ which was both seductive and venomous, as it should be, with an astonishingly real illusion of depth and presence. Now, while some would say they heard something they could never hear before, you have to be sure whether you were meant to. The VRDS-10SE provided a timely lesson. High-hats and ride cymbals ‘crashed’ a little, and often the instrumental bleeps, ticks and twangs at the higher end of the sonic spectrum sounded brighter and over-emphasised when the unwary might say they were an example of greater clarity.

Having lived with the original VRDS-7 and appreciated the VRDS-20, I feel that TEAC haven’t surpassed their own high standards with this one, but it is definitely worthy of a recommendation.

Teac VRDS-10SE £849.95

TEAC UK
5 Marlin House,
Marlin’s Meadow,
The Croxley Centre,
Watford,
Herts. WD1 8YA
01923 819699

WORLD VERDICT
Musically engaging and forthright sound with good stage depth. A touch bright though.

Measured Performance see p105-111
ENTHUSIASM IS BACK

I was fortunate enough to visit a hi-fi show recently staged at the Royal Scots Hotel in Edinburgh. Whilst I was there it was also my good fortune to meet people that I consider to be genuine enthusiasts.

Strangely enough, they were all looking through the records and CDs. This indicated to me that the correct amount of emphasis was being placed on both the hi-fi and the reason for it. It was an absolute tonic to hear the views of the backroom boys interfacing with enthusiasts and other members of the public.

I noted that with the exception of Mission Electronics/Cyrus, many of the bigwigs were fairly low key or did not show at all. One of them being an eminent Scottish company - strange. Having listened to the views of some of the afore-mentioned people I was gladdened to hear that the industry is steering back towards the enthusiasts instead of one-off buyers.

After all there is room in the world for both.

I must conclude by asking

SEPARATES ARE BEST

Having only recently lost my virginity to the superior sound of separates, I find it totally absurd that a market for £500-plus midi-systems and ghetto blasters still happily exists, when one can connect up a system of separates with a far more refined sound.

Manufacturers of separates truly have to polish up their act in relation to hi-fi separates design. Current models are simply physically overwhelming and have a hard time fitting in with typically small British lounges, excepting, of course, Meridian and Cyrus designs.

The problem is more evident when one goes the transport/DAC/pre-amp/power amp route, and becomes bloody ridiculous when a home theatre system is thrown in too. Your lounge quickly begins to attract would-be customers who think you’re in the process of converting your house to a typical gadget-strewn den.

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Letter of

Richer Sounds store. Which brings me to the second point. I have a gripe with so-called hi-fi buffs—sorry, buffs. I frequent hear them insisting that audio-visual sound (Dolby Pro-Logic, AC-3) is a totally meaningless investment and incompatible with straight stereo.

I totally disagree. I am no hi-fi expert, but I sure as hell believe that a person who wants the best out of hi-fi will want their ears to be subjected to a superior sound, regardless of the source, be it video, vinyl, Laser Disc or a personal stereo.

Bearing that point in mind, I have built up my system around a Meridian 565 processor and the result is stonking for all my software from vinyl to CD to Laser Disc. Even my bedroom system now is no pre-packaged off-the-shelf joke but a Denon ‘mini-separates’ system. Hell, if I could fit a DAC to my 14-month old’s vocal cords, I would, if only to make the sound less bright!

I find it totally
why your list of recommended products came to an abrupt end without reasonable explanation as I considered it to be the most valid guide. Clinton J Westridge, Hartlepool, Cleveland

Space is always at a premium, so World Favourites took a holiday.

It returned revitalised and brand new last month. EB

LAST BEST LOUDSPEAKER

Last May I updated my hi-fi system to Quad 66/606 together with the 67CD and 66FM tuner. Money ran out then and so I kept the Linn Index speakers and Linn LP12. I am now able to update the speakers and the hi-fi dealers I bought the Quad system from recommend KEF Reference Is. Although I have no reason to doubt their word, they are agents for KEF and I wonder whether they are being

bemusing when I hear people with expensive systems proclaim that they are happy with the mono sound from their TV sets and 33-year-old VTRs. Mrs C Barker, Dartford, Kent

We also find it totally absurd that a market for £500-plus midsystems and ghetto blasters still happily exists, but you don’t have to look far to see why this is so. The £500 components system is an extremely attractive proposition to the average buyer, packed with all of the latest gadgets and features. They ‘appear’ to offer more than your traditional minimalist British gear and at the same time cost the same or less.

It seems we have become very quality-unconscious in the UK, always looking for the cheapest thing that will ‘do the job’. In addition the advertising campaigns waged by these manufacturers are incredibly powerful.

Witness the JVC Adagio commercials on TV which easily convinced most of my friends—it took months for me to repair the damage.

The UK’s manufacturers are in a difficult predicament regarding the physical size of their products, one that isn’t immediately obvious from a UK buyer’s point of view. The majority of British manufacturers rely on high export sales, typically in the region of 70-90%, mostly in the East. Here there is a much greater appreciation of quality, both sonically and in terms of build. They sell us budget mini systems, and buy quality separates hi-fi for themselves. Several manufacturers have commented on the need to make their equipment full rack mount (19in wide) size for them to get good sales in these markets.

Your final point regarding AV also raises some interesting points. We steer well away from AV products for several reasons, mainly because to do a thorough and professional job with hi-fi equipment is a full-time job on its own. But I do agree that listeners who appreciate the quality of sound they get from their hi-fi are also looking for a similar standard from TV.

What we don’t agree with, which you touch on earlier in your letter, is the extra subwoofers, centre channel ‘speaker, surround ‘speakers and all of the associated electronics that goes with it. This is overkill. It doesn’t improve the quality of sound, just the quantity. DB

I sympathise. I had terrible difficulty persuading friends in Belgium recently to set up their Nicam stereo/surround system, even though they now have a separate telly room. They didn’t want it mixed up with their music. This I can understand, since if you are used to the wide soundstage of a recorded opera or a broadcast play, the way most TV stereo compresses dialogue to a couple of feet in the centre and leaves the outer edges for sound effects or music, is positively underwhelming. I also tend to find the bangs and crashes of surround-sound film tracks a bit wearing as a rule once the initial shock factor wears off.

The most ‘musical’ and ‘hi-fi’ surround system I’ve heard so far was based around Meridian’s: far superior in quality to the more general run of basic processors and A/V amplifiers. Going back to a mono TV after that did seem to be a bit of a waste of a TV licence fee. EB

You’ve hit World right in the heart. Go on, have a free subscription and keep spreading the word.
completely honest with me. At my age I will never update again and I want to get it right. Should I purchase the KEF Reference (model one, two or three) or should I be considering something else? The Quad ESL-63s may be beyond my means. Room dimensions 18x13x8ft high.

Len Mitchell, Moorhampton, Hereford

We have thoroughly auditioned and reviewed all three of KEF's new Reference series loudspeakers. They all share similar properties of super imaging, detail and powerful bass. The Uni-Q driver in this incarnation really does seem to work, giving a very clear and well-focused sound. I'd recommend you try the Model 1s and 2s in a home demonstration to see which suits your room best. The Model 3 is huge, and will probably be overpowering in the room you use.

All of KEF's Reference series loudspeakers are difficult to drive, drawing high current in the bass. However the Quad 606 is a sturdy sort. DB

KLS3 was designed to be a very easy load on amplifiers, having high sensitivity and a smooth impedance. Bi-wiring splits the current each cable has to carry, lightening the load on each. This doesn't seem to make a very much difference with KLS3, which only draws light current anyway. The benefits with less efficient loudspeakers where higher power is needed are more obvious. By all means try bi-wiring, but expect to only hear a moderate improvement.

For similar reasons upgrading to a more powerful amplifier will also bring only moderate improvements; your Intek has plenty of power for KLS3. What you are looking for is quality rather than quantity in this instance.

I suggest you investigate the following. Find a good local dealer and arrange a home demonstration of Linn's Wakonda preamp with an LK100 power amp. Then investigate the difference between using the superb Wakonda preamp to drive the power amp, section of your Intek, and then use the Intek as a pre-amp to drive the LK100. I suspect that the former combination will give you the greatest improvement, where the extra detail and transparency afforded by the Wakonda will allow more of your super front end to shine through. DB

CONVERTER CLINIC

My current set-up consists of: NAD 306 amp, Marantz CD-52SE II, Castle Howards, NAD 402 tuner, Marantz DCC-82, Thorens TD 160 II/Denon DL160

Although I am pretty pleased with the set-up, I still find that CD sounds a bit clinical. The music does not draw you as far in as I had hoped. What would be the best upgrade path concerning the CD player? I heard some good stories about the two-box solution. I was thinking, for the moment, of holding on to my Marantz CD 52SE II and buying a Cambridge DACMagic as a convertor. Or would this conflict with the Marantz transport-wise? Another option is to save more and invest in the new TEAC T1 or DPA players. What's best sound/money-wise?

I noticed, playing the CD through the digital output of the Marantz DCC-82, there is not that much difference in sound. Inside the DCC-82 is a DAC-7 convertor. Isn't that superior to the built-in convertor of the 52SE II?

Funnily enough, if you copy a CD to the Marantz DCC82 and play the DCC tape, the sound is a lot better than the actual CD. Just a tiny bit of more echo/power than before.

Last question: it seems that DCC hasn't taken off as expected. Would this mean that in two or three years' time it will be impossible to buy the actual blank tapes? Suppose CD-R succeeds? (Pioneer is coming on the market next year with a recordable CD player for less than £750.) How can you copy your DCC tapes digitally to the new medium? Only analogue! Or would Philips/Marantz break the copy lock?

Hopefully you can answer some of my questions. By the way, the Thorens TD 160 only sounds great on some records. Too many records I buy second-hand are too badly scratched. Avoiding the usual debate - CD and vinyl are both terrific media.

W. H. Stroomberg, Holland

There seems to be a little confusion over the Serial Copy Management System which is built in to digital recorders including Pioneer's current CD-R machine. This prevents a copy being made digitally of a digital copy; it doesn't prevent a first direct digital copy being made. Providing a CD player has a digital output and the recorder a digital input, there is no need to go back to analogue. Please note, however, that the copying of commercial CDs is an infringement of copyright.

The apparent 'improvement' you have noticed on a DCC copy is likely to be the subjective effects of the compression system. This was noticed when DCC (and MiniDisc) first appeared. Unfortunately it will still be some time before an erasable CD-R machine...
My system comprises: a CAL model ICON CD player, Michelli's Argo HR preamplifier, Meridian 60S monoblock power amplifiers, IMF Reference Mk IV transmission line speakers. I have a large listening room with good acoustics, and I listen mostly to classical music. I have the following in mind, and your advice would be most welcome:

1. Retain the CD player as a transport and add Pink Triangle's Da Capo DAC unit, with HDCD module (upgradeable later on with a Cardinal transport).
2. Replacing the CD Player with: either Linn’s Mk III Karik player (upgradeable later on with a Numerik DAC) or with Meridian’s 500/563 combination or DPA’s Enlightenment transport and converter.

Alain G. Lefebure
British-American Tobacco (Miûs) plc, Mauritius

The CAL player I don’t know, alas, so it is difficult to say whether it is sufficiently good as a transport to make it worth adding a Da Capo to it. I have doubts about HDCD. Despite there having been a good deal of hype about it, especially in the American press, there are very few recordings around using the process. I doubt very much whether any of the major recording companies will take it up, so at the moment it hardly seems worth the extra expense.

Meridian’s 500/563 is one of my favourite converter/transport packages, though the converter is not as good as the Da Capo. It costs half as much, though. There is, alas, a dearth of transports; apart from the Meridian, consider my own other favourite, Sugden’s SDT-I, the Audiolab 8000CDM and Teac’s T1.

Bad Out of the Box

After coming to lovely Britain last year, I read a lot about possible upgrades for CD-players. So I tried it myself. I bought a highly recommended Dac-In-The-Box, but I was deeply disappointed. It sounded wrong. Too many highs, imaging was OK but dynamics weren’t too good. I then switched cables. DPA Digilink made the whole thing a little better, the addition of a Theta TLC turned out to be another slight improvement. But still my Sony CDP 303ES sounded much better though far from perfect. At least the balance of sound is right, though it sounds quite clinical.

All in all, I spent about £500 without any result and I am understandably a little bit disappointed. Something must be wrong here. I use as an amplifier the Yamaha CX-1 and MX-1 (not available in the UK, great reviews in Germany); loudspeaker Tannoy D700; interconnect Monster M-1000; Naim loudspeaker-cable. Sounds wonderful with Heybrook TTI. Any suggestions?

Michael Heine,
Radio Bremen, Germany

It sounds like you’ve made a bit of a sideways step here. The Dac-In-The-Box (DITB) is a very good converter for the money, having a sweet and detailed midrange and treble, but it can sound a touch lightweight. It is good value for money, hence the good reviews, but it is more ‘different to’ than altogether ‘better than’ your Sony. Your Sony has the better balance with good bass, but the DITB has the refinement through the midrange and treble. You need to make a whole step forwards to acquire a better sound.

Several things spring to mind when I think about your set-up. Firstly, you have some very revealing loudspeakers in the D700s; they can quickly become hard and cold through the midrange and sharp in the treble if combined with the wrong equipment. I suspect the lighter balance of the DITB bought out this brightness in the D700s which you didn’t like. You need to aim for a CD with a softer, warmer sound. Also, to achieve similar results from CD to those from your TTI, you will need to spend at least as much if not more.

Quad’s 67 CD player is a very good starting point. It has a smooth, musical balance that will bring out the best in the D700s.

If you are still keen to try an outboard converter, look to Pink Triangle’s Ordinal or Mission’s DacMaster. Both are fine converters and have traits that your D700s will welcome: smoothly rolled-off treble and a gentle bass lift. Both these converters should bring an all-round improvement to your system. DB

continued on page 47...
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...continued from page 45

AND ANOTHER MISTAKE

For many years I enjoyed the sound produced from my LPs using my trusty old Sony PS S520 turntable on which I had replaced the original cartridge with a Shure M75B Type 2.

However, when it finally reached the end of its life, I replaced it with another Sony turntable, their latest offering, the PS-LX431, wrongly assuming (and foolishly not first enquiring at the Sony dealer) that all turntables manufactured today had replaceable cartridges, like they did years ago.

I have, of course, now discovered that the cartridge is not detachable and the sound quality produced by the unit is far from satisfactory. I wasn’t able to return the deck because it is not faulty and Sony don’t make any better turntables.

Can you please suggest a solution to this problem, e.g. are there any hi-fi dealers who can replace the tone arm with one that will allow a choice of cartridges, or one with a cartridge equivalent to the Shure M75B Type 2 (or equivalent), or is there some other way of improving the frequency response? I don’t really want to scrap the unit as it cost nearly £150.00.

B J Lawrence, Milton Keynes, Bucks.

When you get your new turntable, here’s some top quality vinyl to play.

By Gutsell, Herne Bay, Kent

We did run a short news story back in August ’94 regarding replacement ribbons for the DK30 and London tweeters. This service is provided by H. Dawson, an electronics engineer, who can be contacted at 16 Copeman Road, Aylsham, Norwich, NR11 6FL. If you write to Mr Dawson I’m sure he will be able to offer some help.

Decca ribbon tweeters are rare though, nowadays, so I’d recommend a modern alternative such as the Tonigen ribbon used by Heybrook in their Sextet loudspeaker. You can contact Heybrook on Tel: 01752 731313. This tweeter gives a super flat response from 6kHz upwards with just a simple 1.5µF capacitor in series forming the crossover. DB

MORE DETAILED APPROACH

I seem to have two problems with my system. Firstly my turntable, a Thorens TD 166 Mk VI, sounds lacklustre when compared to my Alpha 5. Played through an 8000A, would a turntable such as a Planar 3/RB300 and Rega arm and cartridge give me a more stimulating combo? Or even a Michell Mycro with the same arm and the cartridge I use now (Goldring 1012 GX)?

Secondly my Mission 731s seem to lack the type of detail I want. I like their charging enthusiasm but miss the detail I can hear on headphones through my Nakamichi DR3. Would a pair of Rega Kytes do the job better? Unfortunately any speaker has to be wall-mounted and around the same size as the Missions. My room is incredibly small but I cannot alter this.

M. Kirby, West Yorkshire

As you seem keen to continue playing your vinyl, I think an upgrade is well in order. You have a very good amplifier in the 8000A, one with a super phono stage that is quiet on MC, which you should certainly take advantage of. Pro-ject’s 6 comes complete with the excellent Ortofon MC15 Super II for £449.95.

If you prefer a good MM cartridge, Reson’s rs1 turntable package is also super value. This comprises a tweaked Systemdek turntable, Rega arm, and Goldring 1000 series cartridge (based on our favourite 1042), all for £600. Try and audition both in your system before you buy, but whichever you choose I’m sure you’ll be very pleased with the improvement.

Once this is in place, you are right in identifying your loudspeakers as the next weak link in need of attention. With a super vinyl front end and very good CD player feeding the 8000A, your loudspeakers will be struggling to resolve all of the detail being thrown at them. Good though the 731s are, they are only a £130 ‘speaker, and aren’t really in the same league as the rest of your system.

I suggest Systemdek’s Systym 931s as an absolute minimum, or even a second-hand pair of HL-P3s (the new E5 version, superb though it is, has risen in price to £800). The HL-P3s are a sealed box design, so bass will remain tight and detailed even when they are against a rear wall. DB

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SECOND HELPING

A year on and newly revised, Copland’s CSA 14 hybrid valve and transistor amplifier natural to a warm welcome from Eric Braithwaite.

Sometimes amplifier manufacturers are like restaurants. The chef comes up with a tasty little dish; you try it; second time around it's better. For me, this is second time around for Copland's CSA 14 hybrid valve/transistor integrated amplifier.

Unlike many other hybrids, the Copland isn't a simple split between valve pre and transistor power or vice versa. The two 6922 double triodes are used in the pre-driver stage of the transistor output power amplifier, fed by a solid state preamplifier including MM phono stage.
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Here, Copland have aimed to gently blend the qualities of each technology to achieve a naturally balanced sound. I’m no fan of country music, but trying Willie Nelson on the new Columbia Classics remastered CDs, a halo around his now 20-year-old recorded voice was more noticeable than it had been before through a much pricier pre/power combination. Obviously attributable to microphone quality, it gave a first inkling as to the CSA 14’s uncanny knack of displaying sheer transparency, at least in the vocal range of the spectrum.

The same proved true for the chorus in the old Decca/RCA Carmen, with the unique quality of the Vienna Boys’ Choir coming through to absolute perfection. Even though Polly Harvey is not one of nature’s clearest enunciators, the Copland rendered her every syllable intently.

It also put an slight but irritating hum through the right-hand loudspeaker which had the whole system hurriedly disconnected until it dawned that the CSA 14 was behaving as immaculately as its build quality would suggest it should. The fault lay in the recording engineer’s hand, or one of the guitarists’ leads.

Aberrant the choice may be, but the Swedish Omnibus Wind Ensemble do a very amusing arrangement of Ravel’s Bolero to polish off their CD of the music of Frank Zappa. Ravel’s piece has practically become a pastiche of itself by now, but the Omnibus Ensemble skates over its tinitness by slyly giving it a tinge of Latino, a wash of north African and even a smidgen of Chinese sound to it.

Most of this is via subtle inflection in the saxophone, clarinet and percussion departments, the timing and timbre of which the Copland put its finger on unerringly. Again, memory is a little unreliable, but going back to my notes, the new version of the CSA 14 has acquired a little more ‘bite’ in the upper regions, although it is not quite as forceful as some all-transistor designs. It is barely evident in orchestral recordings, where it gives the upper strings a slight but welcome sheen, although on recordings where they have a distinct sharpness and edginess, those listeners who find eighties CDs setting their teeth on edge will find the restraint very acceptable.

The Omnibus Wind Ensemble recording, it meant that neither cymbals, triangles, Chinese gongs nor any of the plethora of upper-frequency percussion shocked the ears. For the Copland, the devil is in the detail of the treble and the timbre, not in any attention-grabbing forwardness or brightness.

If memory serves, then it has also been invested with a slightly tighter and drier bass end, too. This still doesn’t make the Copland a rough, tough driving machine. It’s still an amplifier equivalent of a Range Rover rather than a Subaru”

The judder of low bass guitar notes, for example, exists but wouldn’t have a devotee of live PA systems at the Hammersmith Apollo diving for cover. Heavy electronic drumbeats didn’t find their way into the floorboards to loosen the nails. The new dryness showed up mostly in the way the Copland treated percussion like toms. When a percussionist tickles the skin with his fingers, or slaps it with his palm, the Copland ensures you do not think he’s using a duster. In the more excitable moments of Carmen, some of this tightness didn’t extend downwards into the lower regions of timpani and bass drums, which had an air of rumbling thunder rather than that crack and wallop of a storm immediately overhead.

Oddly, this time around I was slightly less enthused by the MM phono stage. By comparison with the line-level inputs, it retained perhaps too much of the silky softness of the original. Menuhin’s solo violin in the Beethoven Triple Concerto was fluid but with the subtleties of the bowing pressure a little smoothed over.

This was, however, with Ortofon’s T20 transformer boosting the output of an Ortofon Rohmann MC, and on reflection, if you are going to use an MC rather than an MM cartridge with the Copland, perhaps the boat should be pushed out a bit further as regards the transformer.

The CSA 14 is, simply, elegant, in sound and looks. A eulogy on control, a sweet and subtle sound. Fine midrange; transparent and open with vocals.
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make it a date

23–25 February 1996 at the Marriott Hotel, Lower Castle Street, Bristol.
I've been doing some donkey work subbing our Classified adverts - and they're fascinating. There's a whole world of interest out there, one I'm very sympathetic to, that ignores market pressures and trends. People carve their own way through high fidelity, unfazed by the "commercial world" as it's so often termed. And why not? By the time I'd sorted through what seemed like a few thousand queries I nearly had my chequebook out.

The best equipment is often old and may need care and attention. That's half the fun for some people, but it may be an unwelcome surprise to others.

Take one of the most common power amplifiers, the Quad II. Released in 1958, it comprises two monoblock valve power amplifiers which are quite compact. They can't be operated independently of the partnering Quad 22 valve preamplifier, however, without modification. They are very insensitive too (1.2V in for full output), so a modern preamp must have plenty of gain (x5) if it is to match - and not all will.

Alternatively, the Quad 22 preamplifier can be used. But most will need to be refurbished, otherwise they are likely to sound dull and messy after years of use and, probably, subsequent years of neglect. Don't forget that they can be rejuvenated by being returned to the place from where they came: Quad still service all their products, no matter how old.

Anyway, the Quad 22/11 combination, popular in our Classifieds, is idiosyncratic: you may love it, but you may not. My advice is: keep real. I bought a pair many moons ago: no modern amplifier sounds like a Quad II; it was the sweetest thing I'd ever heard. If this is what you value most, there's not a lot of contest with modern solid-state and that's half the reason for this amplifier's popularity.

But the power amps turn out a paltry 8watts and you can hear them straining to drive many loudspeakers. Paired with sensitive loudspeakers, a Quad II can really sing, developing surprising amounts of punch and power, but they'll never match a Naim in this department, so don't expect it. That's not what a Quad II is all about.

Talking of speaker matching and low power brings me to the next make to catch my eye: Lowther. Not a name to turn up often in the hi-fi press, because they shun publicity, Lowther's loudspeakers continue to have a strong following, both in Britain and abroad. I'm surprised at the level of sales going on in the second hand market for these speakers, but it's gratifying too. Not everyone is swayed by current media-driven opinion - and thank heaven! That might seem a funny thing to say, coming from someone who started an "overground" magazine, but Hi-Fi World has always had a broad remit and covers all hi-fi, not just current production. What else would you expect from someone who insists the Leak Troughline, in good condition, is the world's best tuner?

It was the Troughlines in our Classifieds, especially Graham Tricker restored (GT Audio) samples, that had me reaching for my chequebook - until I remembered that I already own one! If you are tempted, just remember that yet again there are drawbacks. You must either get a good one or expect to pay for repair and, preferably, restoration. Troughlines are relatively insensitive and demand a very strong aerial signal of 2mV or more, so you'll need a god aerial too, or a transmitter nearby. And finally, Troughlines give around 70mV of output - minuscule by modern standards. Most amplifiers need 200mV or more so you'll have to crank your volume control right up. Naim and Audiolab both make preamps sensitive enough though.

Then, of course, there are all those gorgeous high-torque idler drive turntables that everybody discarded so quickly aeons ago because of rumble. I know, because I bought a new Garrard 401 in the early seventies and it rumbled like an express train. Thankfully, it was so beautifully engineered I just could not part with it, so it was consigned to the loft. Then, more than twenty years later (!) I met a man, Martin Bastin, who said he could fix it - and he did. That 401 now works properly for its living in our listening room.

But so much for the old favourites. I spotted other goodies too, not all so highly appreciated. The cassette is in decline and sales at the top end of the cassette deck market have shrunk to insignificance. Sadly, this has prompted Nakamichi to cease manufacture of some of the most extraordinary boxes of cogs and wheels ever devised by man. Whilst the Dragon is awesome in its complexity, my money is on the CR-7E as the best in terms of sound quality and, occasionally, this rarest of esoteric beasts turns up in our Classifieds. Drawbacks? B&W tell me that the Japanese factory will continue to manufacture spares for 5 years after it has been discontinued. So a CR-7E can be serviced fully for another 10 years, but after that some items may become difficult to obtain, depending on B&W stocks.

But who knows, all Garrard parts were dispensed when the Swindon factory closed down, but re-manufacture has started because of demand. Perhaps the same will happen to Nakamichi. Don't forget that Western Electric have also started re-manufacturing valves too.

Talking of which, perhaps there's a lesson in all this. Who doesn't want to own an E type? The motor industry faced serious buyer resistance to increasing mediocrity and reacted accordingly (no rude letters please!). I believe the hi-fi industry is about to do likewise. All this activity in the second hand market is a sign that people want something other than another faceless black box. Quite right too! ©
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Back when audio was young, gramophones, as my old dad assures me they were called, had large, curiously shaped ‘tone arms’. So-called because their design had a discernible effect on the tone of the reproduction, these giant groove-crushers lent every 78 that bore their considerable weight their own particular colorations. Later, with the advent of the microgroove LP, they became known as ‘pickup arms’, doubtless thanks to their skill at drawing every conceivable bit of dust, fluff, cat fur and what-have-you straight up to the needle. Then, when vinyl playback finally came of age, the unprepossessing pick-up arm became nothing less than the ‘transcription tonearm’ - a sufficiently pretentious tag for all but the most extravagantly-priced designs.

Nowadays, in the twilight years of the LP record (so they say), the tonearm has become something of a hi-fi backwater, with no new design of note for almost a decade since the ‘big three’, Linn Ekos, Naim ARO and SME Series V, appeared on the scene. By contrast, turntable design has come on by leaps and bounds, with quartz-locked power supplies, better bearings, motor isolation and improved platter damping making today’s Roksans, Linns, Pink Triangles and Michells far superior to anything that was around ten years ago. Cartridges, too, have improved beyond belief, with advanced stylus profiles and clever coil design now the province of even the most low-rent vinyl junkies.

Remember the days when manufacturers were falling over themselves to contrive ever more complex tonearm designs - parallel tracking, ultra low mass, fluid damping, variable mass unipivots, ‘battleship construction’? Why has all the action and effort come to a halt? Is it that most of the work has now been done, with conventional straight-pipe, ultra-stiff tubes, high toleranced bearings and good internal wiring proving a successful working compromise?

I’d venture that, in the overall scheme of things, today’s top arms are too good for the turntables that carry them. Despite their best efforts, turntable makers haven’t yet made a on the Gyro with its balanced suspension and mass-optimised armboards.

Let loose with demo samples of both arms, I immediately began my customary installation procedure, involving the ritual stripping of armboard threads, snapping of allen keys and bending of cantilevers. Which would prevail, I asked myself, as I hunted on the floor for my extra-long cartridge mounting bolts?

First on was the Ekos, which sounded great, with a smoother, cleaner, tighter sound than my old ‘Tri-tok’ and no less of the Linn ‘swinging factor’. By comparison, the SME wasn’t as much fun, sounding more cerebral and composed, but with a level of detail that the Linn simply couldn’t muster. So focused was it that every aspect of the disc’s recording, production and mastering process came under the strictest of scrutiny.

On the right discs this meant gut-thumping low bass, cast-iron stereo imaging and super-smooth yet crisp treble. Still, where the Linn followed a tune and ran with it, the SME came over a little aloof - where the former emoted, the latter analysed. The Ekos worked best when I stopped listening and just enjoyed the ride, sauntering through the first side of an old copy of the Beatles’ Abbey Road with alacrity, while its Sassenach rival had me sitting there thinking ‘God, listen to McCartney’s Hohner bass!’, or ‘Jeez - voices at the back of the mix all through ‘Come Together’ - where were they before?’

When decision time came, I can’t pretend it was easy. After months of pacing rain-lashed winter streets agonising over what to do, I plumped for the SME, simply because where the Ekos was the usual fuss and bother to set up, the ‘V’ was a joy. Now, installed on the Gyro, it sounds better than ever. I can see myself moving from my mechanical-sounding Audio Technica OC9 to a more lilting, easy-going Ortofon equivalent, but it’s a small price to pay to own such a beautifully formed slice of magnesium. Funny then, that despite the Series V’s ultra-modern design, ‘high-tech’ construction and digital-bashing sound, SME continue to use their quaint, sepia-tinged Fifties catchphrase ‘the best pick-up arm in the world’... Pass the tea, vicar.

auditophilia

David
Price

in the overall scheme of things, today’s top arms are too good for the turntables that carry them
OOPS!
Sorry but the Harbeth phone number in last month's review of the new HL-P3ES was wrong.

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22 Nelson St., Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, KA1 1BA
B&W’s new Prism system reduces colouration in a loudspeaker. Dominic Baker wonders if it will make the DM 302 a strong player.
One thing the Lalis did that few other speakers do was make listening to music fun.

Chris Beeching. Hi-Fi News '95

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This game is played in front of some of the biggest crowds of all, drawing in supporters from all around the world. B&W's newest team member is the £130 DM 302. There are already many hopefuls in the field; some lazy but talented Le Tizziers, numerous Andy Coles's in the right place, but shooting wide of the mark. If the 302s are to beat the best, they need a Ferdinand-type blast of energy that nothing can argue with.

From the outside, the 302s look similar to any other lean and smartly-turned out player. But, in this case, beauty is certainly more than skin-deep. B&W's 302s are the first to use their Prism system. Inspired by the tapered wedges of foam used to prevent standing waves and reduce reflections in an anechoic chamber, the 302s sport a similar surface on the inside of their rear baffle.

In the 302s, the internal sound waves from the rear of the cone are broken up by this Prism system on the back wall. Instead of a strong reflection off the rear of the cabinet being able to set up standing waves which cause colouration throughout the frequency range, but I feel the basic loudspeaker needs to be better balanced before it will become a success.

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Measured Performance see p105-111
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Used car warranties have always been viewed with scepticism, but now the heat has been turned on the electrical industry and its extended warranty 'rip-offs'. Some of these may cost as much as half the price of the product itself, and ultimately prove more expensive than getting the unit repaired several times over.

In fine consumer-protector style, I set out to find out which warranties were worth having, what goes wrong with hi-fi separates in any case, and how much it costs to fix them.

The high street stores are among the most criticised of all retailers. After investigating, I had to agree with the watchdogs, from Ransom to Which? that many of their two- or three-year warranties are expensive and pointless. In most cases an extended warranty on, let’s say, a tape deck, costs between £40-£50. On a Compact Disc player it could cost up to £75. This may still seem reasonable for three years’ complete peace of mind, but you’d be extremely unlucky to spend that in maintenance over the second and third year. (Don’t forget a one-year warranty is near universal anyway now.) This wouldn’t be so bad if the warranties weren’t forced down the consumers’ throats, but often they are.

Many sales executives make a proportion of their salary from commission on extended guarantees. This makes it hard for them not to be, shall we say, ‘persuasive’ at times. I have known cases of discounts only being offered on goods if the warranty is taken up. Surely this can’t be legal?

Hi-fi separates chain stores seem to offer an altogether better deal. Many offer two-year cover free of charge, and sometimes three. Other stores offer three-year cover for only a tenner or so, which seems reasonable. This is often backed up by free servicing and some type of minimum part-exchange guarantee for the future, often quite handy if you plan to upgrade after three years or thereabouts. Sales staff are often still on commission, but it is generally a far lower percentage than that of the high street electrical stores.

Independent hi-fi shops can also offer excellent after-sales service, too. British Audio Dealers Association (BADA) approval is by no means a guarantee of a first-rate dealer, but it does guarantee a minimum two years’ warranty, which is transferable to any BADA-approved outlet, especially useful for students who spend time away from home, and an exchange scheme.

Bear in mind, however, that extending this guarantee further is often still quite expensive. Smaller dealers who don’t belong to BADA may offer schemes through the large financial institutions which also turn out to be just as much a waste of money as those offered by the electrical retailers. Yet, by the same token, you could find a friendly local dealer who doesn’t offer an extended warranty but is prepared to fix out-of-warranty equipment for next-to-nothing in the interests of the store’s good reputation.

But what actually goes wrong with hi-fi separates in any case? Buying an extended warranty for a tuner, amplifier or loudspeaker really makes no sense. All three contain very few moving parts, and laser lenses can also fog up in smoky rooms (it’s a simple enough job to clean them, but one which can cost over £20) and drawer tracks can wear, but again this usually happens after the extended warranty period

Some of the electrical industry’s extended guarantees may cost half the price of the product itself and ultimately prove more expensive than getting the unit repaired several times over.

Even then, with moderate use, these parts won’t be failing around the two-three year mark, but more likely after five or eight. The amount of use the machine gets clearly dictates whether an extended warranty is worth the extra outlay or not.

With CD players, repairs can be an altogether more expensive business. I’ve known CD lasers last anything from eight months to twelve years. (So far, CD’s entire life-span.) The cost of a laser is usually around £70-£100. Clearly, an extended warranty may be a good option with a CD player, but then again, remember most lasers fitted to reputable machines last for about seven years of average use - long after the warranty’s run out.

My advice is to remember, when buying hi-fi separates, to look not only at the best price on offer but also the after-sales backup. Many stores have proved it needn’t cost half as much as the system itself.
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AMPLIFIERS

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<td>Chord SPM-800 160wp</td>
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<td>Chord SPA-1016 280wpc (professional)</td>
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<td>Quad 66 pre-amp &amp; remote panel</td>
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<tr>
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Considerable time spent searching has proven to us that there are still manufacturers who's primary aim is to develop and market benchmark products with performance and reliability that justifies their cost, whilst remaining firmly in the specialist Hi-Fi arena, and not entering the mass market Audio / Video camp.

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We hope to be providing a number of musical evenings over the next six months to introduce some ground breaking new products, so watch this space, and if you can't wait then we will be pleased to chat over your enquiries, so give us a call.

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<th>£1999</th>
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<td>Delphi 2</td>
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<td>Celestion 7000 Ribbon loudspeakers</td>
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<td>Original Mogi Glass A amp</td>
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Audio By Development, Ruton Row, Wheelcombe, Somerset TA4 2NB.
After rustling through the pages of the Radio Times, Haider Bahrani discovers unexpected delights listening to Pioneer’s F-104RDS tuner.

It is not common to find me, at home or in my car, listening to Radio 3. From today though, after a little encouragement from Pioneer’s F-204RDS tuner, terrestrially transmitted high-fidelity has found itself a little space in my heart.

Radio Times rustling in my palms, I had planned the beginning of my listening session to coincide with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra playing Kodaly’s ‘Harry Janos’ suite. Ten minutes early, I caught the tail end of Bartok’s ‘Contrasts’ with Joseph Szigeti playing some wonderful violin alongside Bartok himself on the piano.

This recording was old, hissy and in mono. The truth is, it was thoroughly enjoyable nonetheless: clear, despite the hiss, and truly involving. Now to the more up-to-date Kodaly recording. Once the presenter (Stephanie Hughes) had stopped speaking, the hiss had all but disappeared. The stereo image of the orchestra then revealed itself like the curtains opening on a Cinemascope movie.

At times, there were hints of brightness that might give more of an illusion of fine detailing than the real thing. But my real complaint would be related to the lower-end response. Bass was well-tailored, but light. The bass drums thumped, but too gently, like the heart-beat of a herbal tea junkie meditating. The violins, though, were glorious, dominating the stage at one point with all the charisma of a Gielgud or Olivier on the solos.

Staying with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for de Falla’s ‘El Amor Brujo’, Reiner’s recording had an almost Arabian feel through the Pioneer, with the mood of a coastal Andalucian village under a warm twilight sun. Not knowing much about the piece, the picture the F-204RDS conjured up for me probably has nothing to do with it, but if that was not accurate the tuner’s interpretation was enjoyable.

The brightness experienced earlier seemed to lose itself in a temperate, easy atmosphere. The lower registers, although still under-pronounced, had an air of confidence. Brass sections were dry - like a Kit-Kat rather than as rich as chocolate truffle - but attractive just the same. Strings, much as before, were very engaging.

Popular music was more revealing of the Pioneer’s drawbacks. Cameo’s ‘She’s Strange’ on GLR really wasn’t hi-fi, unless you’re an avid fan of compression and limiters. Generally, bass response, particularly with pacey tracks, was less than exemplary. However, wandering up the dial to Jazz FM I found myself in the middle of ‘Seventh Avenue Stroll’ by Mark Whitfield. Ah - true piano, easy drums, perhaps a little bright and uneasy at the top, but underneath all was smooth, even mildly spine-tinging. Admittedly it wasn’t all perfect. The guitar apparently sat alongside the brushed snares giving that close-up seedy club buzz rather than any deeper perspective.

Handing over £139.95 to Pioneer buys a Radio Data System (RDS) tuner with FM and AM, Long Wave as well as Medium Wave, with 30 presets. Primarily, AM on this tuner is, I’d say, for anyone who wants to get Virgin Radio outside London. Hi-fi it is not. For news and information seekers it’s fine as a facility, but that is all.

At this kind of budget price it might be assumed that Pioneer would try to appeal to the taste of the less affluent younger generation which goes for the heavy thud-thud-thud that comes out of a TR-909 drum machine. Instead, it is more amenable to less ear-throbbing, or ear-damaging, music.

For this money, a pleasure, if not absolutely perfect

Pioneer F-204RDS £139.95
Pioneer Hi-Fi Fidelity
Pioneer House,
Hollybush Hill,
Stoke Poges,
Slough,
Berks. SL2 4PQ
T 01753 789789

WORLD VERDICT
Fundamentally a good basic tuner with plenty of facilities, but not for bass freaks.

Measured Performance see p105-111
WIN AN AURA OF YOUR ALONG WITH A PAIR OF LOUDSPEAKERS

This month we have prizes for three lucky readers again. Each winner gains the latest £250 Aura VA 80SE-x amplifier and a pair of £200 B&W DM601 loudspeakers to go with it.

This B&W/Aura system is just the thing to get you started. All you need to add is a source, which can be either a CD player or a turntable, since the Aura VA 80SE-x amplifier has a phono stage.

The DM601 loudspeakers came top of our group test of six in the January '96 issue. "Everything about them is melodic," wrote Laura Martin in her review. They make perfect partners for the Aura VA 80SE-x. This, too, is one of our winners, figuring in its line-level guise in our last annual round-up of the best products of the year. "A smooth unflustered sound makes it confident with a wide range of styles ... a great achievement at the price," according to Dominic Baker in last month's issue.

B&W takes one initial of its title from its founder, the late John Bowers, who started the company in 1967. Over the last quarter of a century, the name has become widely respected around the world, with recording studios galore using the 801 model as a monitor loudspeaker. Hi-Fi World's "local" studio, Decca West London, uses them; they figure regularly on CD sleeves among the list of equipment used.

The company has also come up with the occasionally slightly wacky design. Show-goers could hardly have failed to spot the bright blue Nautilus loudspeaker, with its mollusc-like shape and spines apparently sticking out of its back.

Among the less obviously radical notions has been B&W's use of Kevlar for the cones of the company's top-range Silver Signature loudspeakers which were produced to celebrate the company's 25th anniversary in 1992. Now, the material is used for the driver of the DM601. This recent design also includes zinc clamping rings, which have a rounded profile to minimise the effects of diffraction, to fix the driver to the cabinet, a flared reflex port to increase the loudspeaker's efficiency and gold anodised fluid-cooled aluminium dome tweeters.
Although B&W had produced amplifiers to partner their studio monitor loudspeakers for some time, it was not until 1990 that the company launched the Aura brand of domestic electronics. With their slim-line looks and optional shining chrome finish, the range quickly made a mark for itself. Aura's latest amplifier, our competition prize, is the VA 80SE-x. This combines the VA 80's line stage quality with the added benefit of a phono stage for playing vinyl.

With three sets of speakers and amplifiers to be won, post your entry form today. The winner could be three of you!

Send your completed entry form, fixed to the back of an envelope, to:

B&W/Aura Competition
Hi-Fi World Magazine,
64 Castellain Road,
Maida Vale,
London W9 1EX

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

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COMPETITION RULES AND CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

[1] Only one entry per household. 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 second issue following the closing date. Purchase of the magazine is not a precondition of entry.
[3] No correspondence will be entered into; the Editor's decision is final.
[4] No employees of Audio Publishing Ltd. or of any companies associated with the production or distribution of the prizes may enter.

If you would prefer not to receive details of new products or special offers please tick the box.

Hi-Fi World magazine is published by Audio Publishing Ltd.
Better off DEAD
no vibrations dead sounds perfect

THIS MONTH'S PRODUCT FEATURE
DEFLEX Turntable Upgrades

The triple laminate Deflex Platter Mat has been developed to release all the potential from your turntable - provides improved listening pleasure from poorer recordings - allows you to see through the music and pin point detail.

£29.50 each

Upgrade your Rega turntable by fitting a Spectra Dynamics Deflex Platter - simply remove the existing platter and replace with the Deflex precision moulding - parallel fitting model also available. Telephone for details.

The triple laminate Deflex Platter Mat has been developed to release all the potential from your turntable - gives improved listening pleasure from poorer recordings - allows you to see through the music and pin point detail.

£60.50 each

Deflex material is a specially formulated low resilience polymer with exceptional shock absorbing properties. In its soft form the material has a texture similar to plasticine but with high memory characteristic. In hard form it is a semi-rigid and ultra low resonant. The mechanical properties of the material guarantee to reduce unwanted noise.

Please add £2.00 POP on all orders less than £20.00 - £5.00 on all orders over £20.00

For a FREE comprehensive information pack and details of other products from Spectra Dynamics
Tel. (01745) 571600
Fax. (01745) 570194

DISTRIBUTORS WORLDWIDE
U.K. Tel. (01908) 508900 - Fax. (01908) 509080
Australasia Tel: 03 9429 2199 - Fax 03 9429 9309
Belgium Tel/Fax 09 357 4937
Belgium Tel/Fax 076 715010 - Fax 076 714773
Bermuda Tel 809 292 3125 Fax 809 295 8379
Canada Tel 905 829 5858 - Fax 905 829 5388
Cyprus Tel 02 442148 - Fax 02 464001
France Tel 78 05 04 82 - Fax 78 05 76 35

The triple laminate Deflex Platter Mat has been developed to release all the potential from your turntable - gives improved listening pleasure from poorer recordings - allows you to see through the music and pin point detail.

DEFLEX

£49.50 each

The triple laminate Deflex Platter Mat has been developed to release all the potential from your turntable - gives improved listening pleasure from poorer recordings - allows you to see through the music and pin point detail.

£65.00 each

Centre layer oleo-ear Mertens Deem,

High performance vibration absorbing Deflex Bushes designed for REGA 250/300 tone arm. When fitted to a turntable base it will isolate unwanted vibrations that can be transmitted through the tone arm and cartridge.

Please add £2.00 POP on all orders less than £20.00 - £5.00 on all orders over £20.00

For a FREE comprehensive information pack and details of other products from Spectra Dynamics
Tel. (01745) 571600
Fax. (01745) 570194

Sound Investment

If you have invested expertise and money in building up a sound system to your own unique specifications, then why compromise with indifferent housing units?

Fi-Rax offers a new dimension in audio visual racking - from a range of standard designs to the flexibility to custom create a unit to suit your particular sound system and lifestyle.

*High quality aluminium construction.
*Finishes available to your choice.
*Fully adjustable 6mm glass shelving.
*Sound isolation on shelving/feet.
*Custom created to suit your system.
*Free delivery throughout the UK.

Fi-Rax - a sound investment for those who want the best from their equipment.

Audio Visual Furniture

For further information or a free brochure contact: JEM Distribution, Springfield Mills, Spa Street, Ossett Wakefield WF5 0HW
Tel: 01924 277626 Fax: 01924 270739

Michell Engineering, 2 Theobold Street, Borehamwood, Herts WD6 4SE
Tel:- 081 953 0771

MICHELL GYRODEC AND QC POWER SUPPLY

A SYMBOL OF PRECISION

"THE MOST DESIRABLE DECK BELOW £1500"
Ken Kessler - Hi-Fi News & Record Review August '94

Michell Engineering, 2 Theobold Street, Borehamwood, Herts WD6 4SE
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Ken Kessler - Hi-Fi News & Record Review August '94

Michell Engineering, 2 Theobold Street, Borehamwood, Herts WD6 4SE
Tel:- 081 953 0771
COMPACT DISC PLAYERS

DENON DCD-315 £150
Real hi-fi and real music for a mere £150. Achieves a good semblance of orchestral dynamics and acoustic space.

NAD S10 £200
A competent all rounder with lifelike soundstaging and impressive treble clarity.

GRUNDIG CD1 £240
Good detail and broad, clearly defined sound stage. Can sound incredibly refined and delicate for the price.

ARCAM ALPHA ONE £300
An excellent entry-level player from Arcam that's far better than equivalently priced Japanese machinery.

MARANTZ CD-63 Special Edition £350
A superb budget buy. Addressing the problems of the CD-501 SE, it's detailed and musical sound embarrases many expensive players.

NAD S14 £350
The $14 convays deep bass notes with conviction and weight. A supremely relaxing player to listen to with fine build quality.

ARCAM ALPHA FIVE PLUS £480
A well built mid-price player that's a great all-rounder. Although highly musical and engaging, it has lost some of the warmth that made its antecedents so pleasant to listen to.

LINN MIKIK £639
The Mikik does what it's designed to do very well, with super-tight rhythmic presentation and plenty of detail. It can sound rather grey and clinical though.

QUAD 67 second-hand £1399
One of Quad's best products for a long time, the 67 is warmer and smoother than most, yet is highly musical and revealing. Good enough to frighten many rivals.

DPA RENAISSANCE £695
Words cannot describe its infinite variety, but suffice to say you'll love it or hate it. Highly emotional, involving presentation with not a hint of self-doubt.

MARANTZ CD-16 £1399
An extremely neutral CD player, smooth and reserved in its performance. Beautifully built too.

LINN KARIK 3 £1600
Superb one-box player. Its supremely rhythmic, musical sound with delicacy and finesse puts it up with the best of the rest.

NAIM CD1 £1600
This single box 16-bit player sounds very engaging compared to your average bitstreamer. Has that vital tingle factor of the larger, two-box CDS.

MCINTOSH CDM7009 £2635
A thoroughly inspiring machine. One of the most musical CD players around; sweet, open and detailed.

COMPACT DISC TRANSPORTS

TEAC VDRS-T1 £550
Not as substantially built as its chunky looks suggest, the T1 is nevertheless a good entry-level transport with a warm, expansive sound.

ARCAM DELTA 250 £800
A well-built transport with serious sound quality. It partners the BB50 well, especially when sync-locked.

AUDIOLAB 8000CDM £1300
Beautifully built and finished, the CDM is packed with sensible features and performs superbly, day-in-day-out.

CD CONVERTORS

DPA LITTLE BIT 111 £1300
A lot more weight at frequency extremes than the II and far better control. For £300 there's nothing to beat it.

PINK TRIANGLE ORDINAL £837
Pure, smooth sound free from harshness. One of the best at any price, losing little to the big guns.

AUDIOLAB ENLIGHTENMENT £795
Some believe this to be the best convertor around. A truly charismatic performer, it dives into rock music with rare passion.

DPA 1024 £6000
Proof positive that today's CDs needn't sound detailed, albeit clinical sound.

PINK TRIANGLE DA CAPO £1450+
Offers a choice of filter modules, all up there with the best. The Da Capo is superb in many respects, but can sound a touch polite on rock.

DPA 1024 £6000
Proof positive that today's CDs needn't sound detailed, albeit clinical sound.

PINK TRIANGLE ANNIVERSARY £1200
One of the finest-sounding turntables around, the Anniversary takes the listener nearer to the recording studio than almost any other deck. Works with Rega, Linn and SME arms alike.

SME MODEL 20 £2495
Including the excellent SME V tonearm, the Model 20 is possibly the last great turntable, unless you've got £11,000 for the Model 30, that is.

TONEARMS

REGA RB300 £130
Supremely capable at the price, but not quite humankind's salvation as has been suggested. Detailed, tight, rhythmic sound but tonally rather grey and cold-sounding.

LINN AKITO £1300
A well made entry-level tonearm which works especially well with the LP12, but struggles to match the RB300 on other decks.

SME 1009SI £375
This Paleolithic device doesn't bother with frequency extremes or detail, but its legendary serviceability makes it a cult in Japan. Oh death, where is thy sting?

SME309 £570
A down-market version of the IV and V with aluminium armtube and detachable headshell. Tight, neutral sound with good tonality, but lacks the IV's pace and precision.

SME IV £850
A Series V with lower tolerated bearings, cheaper cables and no damper. Still vastly over-engineered and almost capable of its bigger brother's sonic fireworks. SME's best value product.

SME V £1235
A masterpiece of precision engineering with a cohesive, ultra-transparent sound. A dream to set up and use.

LINN EKOS £1400
A thunderous battleaxe of an arm, with a very impressive sound, masses of detail and dynamics, but lacks the SME's cohesion and musicality.
cartridges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ORTOFON</td>
<td>VMS-2E</td>
<td>£10</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Warm, full-bodied, punchy and fast. Not to be sniffed at for a tenner. Can be upgraded with a better stylus at a later date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOLDRING</td>
<td>1012GX</td>
<td>£60</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>An accomplished MM with a solid bass, slightly forward midband and clean treble. £20 buys the faster, more dynamic 1022GX.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORTOFON</td>
<td>MC110</td>
<td>£100</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The best moving magnet available. Has an extremely cohesive sound that's warm but highly involving. Deliciously delicate treble and strong, powerful bass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUDIOLAB</td>
<td>8000A</td>
<td>£500</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A jack-of-all-trades whose facilities, build, power and top-rate phono input make it a steal. Sound is good, but less involving than the Naim Nait 3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAIM NAIT</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>£500</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A taste of high-end audio. The most involving, musical design at the price, but low power means it won't work in all systems. Superb phono stage is £100 extra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORTOFON</td>
<td>MC2000</td>
<td>£650</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>We came across this one in an SME IV on a Garrard 401; it duly gave one of the best results we've ever heard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORTOFON ROHMANN</td>
<td>MC6000</td>
<td>£1000</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>In a way it's MC2000 meets MC7500 with all the tonal strengths and dynamo sound Ortofon has been putting into its best moving-coil cartridges of late.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LYRA LYDIAN</td>
<td></td>
<td>£649</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>A truly musical, sophisticated device that makes most other MCs sound frigid.</td>
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<tr>
<td>VAN DEN HUL</td>
<td>MC-10</td>
<td>£840</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Fluid bass, finely etched treble and highly tuneful in between. The MC10 is honey, pure and simple.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ORTOFON</td>
<td>MC7500</td>
<td>£2000</td>
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<td>Conclusive proof that there's hope for humankind. Makes music of enormous scale and vibrancy. CD lovers would die if they heard it.</td>
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integrated amplifiers

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<td>NAD 3070</td>
<td>second-hand</td>
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<td>Classic sweet sounding, punchy budget super-amplifier with strong phono stage. Able to embarrass many modern budget amps.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAD 310</td>
<td>£130</td>
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<td>A real Hifi amplifier at a bargain price. Forms the heart of a separates system that will murder any midfi system at twenty paces. No phono stage, but you can't have everything at this price.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DENON PMA-35011</td>
<td>£220</td>
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<td>A good, clean sound with plenty of drive behind it creating a wide expanse of sound. Powerful too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARCAM ALPHA 5</td>
<td>£230</td>
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<td>A well-engineered budget amplifier with a bold, exciting presentation. Plenty of power and facilities, but lacks subtlety.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DENON PMA 4501 SE</td>
<td>£270</td>
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<td>A solid, refined sound with plenty of power make this a good all rounder, but hard and steely with the wrong ancillaries. Medioocre phono stage.</td>
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<td>ORTOFON</td>
<td>310</td>
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<td>Superb value entry-level phono stage with audiophile quality components and clear sound.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ORTOFON MC15 SUPER II</td>
<td>£109.95</td>
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<td>An excellent budget moving coil with a smooth, polished, detailed sound. Tracks superbly but verges on the analytical at times. A bargain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORTOFON</td>
<td>MJ30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>A very musical, sophisticated device that makes music of enormous scale and vibrancy. CD between. The MC 10 is honey, pure and simple. Fluid bass, finely etched treble and highly tuneful in tonal strengths and dynamo sound Ortofon has ever heard.</td>
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<td>NAD 3020</td>
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<td>A truly musical, sophisticated device that makes music of enormous scale and vibrancy. CD between. The MC 10 is honey, pure and simple. Fluid bass, finely etched treble and highly tuneful in tonal strengths and dynamo sound Ortofon has ever heard.</td>
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QUAD 606II £675
Quad's latest 140W powerhouse is smooth and civilised, but engagingly musical. Legendary back-up service.

DPA DPA2005 £750
Better than anything else at the price. Not as dry as the 505.

NAIM NAP180 £900
Partnered with a NAC82, this has classic Naim control, making for a superbly rhythmic presentation. A touch lean for some tastes.

MICHELL ALECTO STEREO £1300
A refined transistor amplifier with valve-like Warm and open sound. This is one of the best solid-state power amps valve rivals.

AUDIOLAB 8000M £1500
Beautifully built, powerful amps that will drive anything you care to throw at them. Detailed, analytical sound, but a touch grey compared to anything you care to throw at them.

CHORD SPM 1200 £2995
This is one of the best solid-state power amps around, with a massively powerful, dynamic and detailed sound.

TUNERS
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THE FLAMING LIPS
Clouds Taste Metallic
WARNER BROS 9362-45911-2

With their third, and unarguably best, major label release, Oklahoma quintet The Flaming Lips seem at last to have made the big crossover from ex-indie cultists to major record-makers.

Their's is a highly-nasal vocal sound which comes loaded with oodles of guitar, bass, drums - the whole rock caboodle. My few reservations are that the lead vocals do tend to sound a bit samey/whiney, but then I felt like that about Neil Young for yonks and now rate him one of the toppest of top men. And who could resist persistently loopy lyrics the like of "You can afford to buy expensive cars/and live on Mars"? Do what? This is whacked-out dudes to the nth degree, but Clouds Taste Metallic remains packed with strong, if deliberately quirky, tunelets.

A bundle of originality - if, that is, you're ignorant/young/deaf enough to overlook the blatant borrowings from Thunderclap Newman's 'Something in The Air' towards the end of the disc. I'll refrain from mentioning the cut in question by name, but I wouldn't be surprised if Thunderclap remnants will be issuing writs any day now. Still, rocking good fun and, as they say, in the vanguard of contemporary guitar rock'n'pop.

FRANK BLACK
The Cult of Ray
EPIC DRASAMP 3043-2

Third solo outing, this, from Mr Black, who rose to fame, if not fortune, with the still fondly-remembered Pixies. Reactions to Frank's solo work have been mixed to say the least, a lot of it no doubt due to what our Antipodean cousins call the "call poppy syndrome": i.e. the build 'em up and knock 'em down tendencies of the UK pop press.

For my part, I still play FB's first solo LP often and with continual pleasure, although I can see why the blatantly overweight 'Teenager Of The Year' from '95 was just too much for one listening. Now Senior Black is with Epic and this major label debut is at least constrained volume-wise. But then, as others of like eccentric tendencies have proved in the past - Capt. Beefheart, Butthole Surfers, Big Black (who at least had the sense to call it a day early on enough not to make the sad descent into self-parody) - you can have too much of a weird thing.

This considered, The Cult Of Ray is a pleasant-enough addition to the Black canon. Some old tricks, true, but enough fresh ones to make it an entertaining diversion for the
Cred-wise, Tori Amos has it all sewn up. Not only does she have a name that might conjure up all kinds of wild anagrams: Roti Soma (a mental-health-inducing kind of curry), Mia Toros (lesbian bulls!!) and no doubt others too rude to commit to print, but she also, in a relatively brief career, has managed to clock up multi-million sales with records that are far from overtly commercial.

Put briefly, she’s as off-the-wall as they come. Forget your David Byrne, or female equivalent Laurie Anderson; this woman, and on this third LP in particular, is taking every commercial risk in the ‘Don’t Take Any Commercial Risks’ book and then some.

Trained, or so the suspiciously glamorous tale goes, in the classical mode, she was too much of a muchness not to be expelled by the time she’d barely reached double figures age-wise. Reduced to playing kitsch jazz standards in gay bars (it says here, so every word must be God’s Honest Truth) she eventually committed or newcomers. You may have heard it all before, true, but few contemporary artists would have the imagination, let alone the sheer unadulterated gall, to open up with a mutation of early Who cut with the riff from Roy Orbison’s ‘Pretty Woman’. And then continue in similarly unorthodox vein, from the self-explanatory ‘Punk Rock City’, the wry ‘Kicked In The Taco’ or the atypically soft-centred ‘I Didn’t Want To Hurt You (Every Single Time)’.

One for the committed more than likely, but still no hunk of dreck. I kinda like it a lot.

As you can see by this last sentence, Ms Amos and her work are not things which can be spoken of with tabloid curtness or conciseness. For all that, she does make discs that are both radical and hauntingly charming. Comparisons have been made with such daring wayfarers as Joni Mitchell and Kate Bush. She certainly has more than the occasional vocal affinity with the latter, while the occasional phrase can echo the famous Canadienne’s more inspired moments. But so what? There’s even spots on Boys For Pele where I hear hints of Polly Harvey, but this could all be coincidental.

The fact remains that Tori Amos is a true original, a stylist of the first order. And the fact that she has so far been able to combine these things with global commercial success and acceptance are themselves worthy of immense admiration and applause. More power to her elbow, sez I. This is a unique, constantly remarkable and ear-opening experience to share. A sin to miss it.

From last year’s excellent single ‘Nothing in Particular’.

A host of Brits queue up for recognition; Bob Hoskins, Sid James, The Undertones, Roger Mellie, Sherlock Holmes, Jerry Dammers and even X-Ray Spex get a look in. But it’s more than just names. The BNP and Yid-bashing both get a slap. And moods change from hard-knock upbringings (on the notorious Chalk Hill Estate, Wembley) to nightmares: ‘Dark Stalkers’ with its eerie accordion music and cool entraîe, "Welcome to your funeral".

Musically the talents of the duo, with classy production work from the mysteriously named Underdog, rank with great US acts Pete Rock and CL Smooth, A Tribe Called Quest, and Third Base. But at their best (‘Nominate/You Gotta Live’) Shyloc and Spyce are in a league of their own.

With intelligent breakbeats and samples, even including Jethro Tull, King Crimson and Soft Machine, the sound is always leftfield and original. A final postscript: Elementalz is pleasantly free of the gangsta-rap sentiments and vocabulary used by low-IQ rappers like Snoop Doggy Dog in the States.
Although chastised recently for too many mentions of maverick composer-improviser John Zorn, I find myself with a stack of new releases of his that refuse to be ignored. So here goes.

**JOHN ZORN**  
**Masada-Vav**  
**DIW RECORDS DIW-900**

Vav is part six of the saxophonist’s massive memorial project Masada, which sees just about the finest acoustic post-bop quartet to have graced recent jazz roar through a set of heavily Ornette-inspired pieces. From the giddy tempo and blistering solos of ‘Debir’ to the deep mourning of ‘Sheubah’, from the heart-stopping odd metre rhythms of ‘Nevalah’ to the ominously calm beauty of ‘Miktav’ (reminiscent of Ornette’s ‘Lonely Woman’) ... for a musician known for his outrageous genre-bending and staunch alliance to all things maverick in the arts, Masada has an anger and sadness at its heart which so much contemporary jazz lacks, making this a rarely compulsive listen.

**JOHN ZORN**  
**Redbird**  
**TZADIK TZ7008**

This album earns its place in this column through the history of its participants and the dexterous freedom they bring to two through-composed pieces. These are ‘Dark River’, an eighteen-minute solo for tuned bass drums and the 40-minute ‘Redbird’ for harp, viola, cello and percussion. With their austere beauty, they owe - perhaps unconsciously - more to the rise of the European ‘holy minimalists’ (Arvo Part et al.) than to American minimalist composition or ambient improvisation. Highly recommended.

**ART HODES**  
**Keepin’ Out Of Mischief Now**  
**CANDID CACD 79717**

This is the first airing for a superb show-piece for a talented but undervalued player of the old school, recorded in 1988 when Hodes was 84. His lyrical and melodical style makes this simple album of solo piano a recording for just lazing around and listening to. Hodes had a much lighter touch than, for instance, Jake Hanna, a legacy of the Blues with which he first made his name and far from the whorehouse drive of early jazz. There’s still fire in his playing, though, and he exhibits a sturdy, reliable left hand when required.

By taking his time he gets the best out of 70 minutes of gems such as Stewart/King’s ‘Tennessee Waltz’ or Porter’s ‘Love for Sale’ which are dusted off and lovingly polished, as are Ellington/Bigard’s ‘Saturday Night Function’ and - the link between my reviews this month - ‘Just a Closer Walk with Thee’.

**TERELL STAFFORD**  
**Time To Let Go**  
**CANDID CACD 79702**

Much more up-front and abrasive than Hodes’ album; I mean, these guys last for just nine tracks and 53 minutes. They just don’t have the stamina any more, do they? Stafford leads on trumpet with Tim Warfield playing tenor sax and Steve Wilson on alto and soprano. Steve Nelson plays vibes, Victor See-Yuen rounding off the line-up on percussion. Stafford penned three of the tracks here and the remaining six wade through well-fished waters: Van Heusen/Burke’s ‘Polka Dots and Moonbeams’, Rodgers/Hart’s ‘Soon’, Sondheim’s ‘Send in the Clowns’ and - once again - the traditional ‘Just a Closer Walk with Thee’.

In Stafford’s hands this is a very accomplished piece, if a little po-faced and studious, but it shows his potential as a leader. Perhaps it’s because I heard this back-to-back with Hodes’ album I felt this was not a great recording, but nonetheless it’s a worthwhile buy.

Stafford, however, is probably going to go far, once his skills as a front man have grown to equal his skills on the trumpet. Bear his name in mind for a while; it should pay dividends.
Public and private faces:
from the I I-trumpet extravaganza of Janacek's Sinfonietta to the intimacy of Schubert's songs and consort music by Purcell for his friends.

Though I have enthused before about the Athene label and its instrumental recordings of early fortepianos, as far as

I am aware, this is its first venture into vocal music. It is not a tentative debut: nothing less than one of the great Schubert song-cycles.

In 1823, diagnosed as having syphilis, Schubert seems to have accepted it as a death sentence. His hopes of operatic success were diminishing and he sought another outlet for his undoubted genius as a composer for the voice.

He found it in the romantic poetry of a 29-year-old German, Wilhelm Müller, whose lovelorn and sentimental verses he translated into an altogether weightier and profound utterance, with the piano making as expressive a contribution as the voice. The result was Die Schöne Müllerin, one of the first masterpieces of an astonishingly creative final five years.

One of the benefits of using a piano of the period, as here, is that it allows the perfect balance of voice and instrument to be achieved without any technical interference.

The result is immensely satisfying. The recording was made in a Georgian drawing-room, with the singer set some 12 feet away from the listener. Set the volume control for a realistic level and you will quickly appreciate the natural balance.

Both Richard Edgar-Wilson, who was the featured artist at the 1995 Schubertiad series at the Wigmore Hall, and Joanna Leach, prove imaginative and responsive interpreters. I can think of few other versions which convey these songs more persuasively or with more involvement.

FRANZ SCHUBERT
Die Schöne Müllerin D795 (Op25)
Richard Edgar-Wilson, tenor; Joanna Leach, piano
Athene: ATH CD6 (DDD/83.55)

So strongly has Abbado been associated with DG in recent years, it is often forgotten that he made his recording debut with Decca. The combination of Janacek's glittering Sinfonietta (it could hardly be anything else, with an array of 11 trumpets!) and Hindemith's exuberant Symphonic Metamorphoses, thrillingly played and recorded in the ideal acoustic of London's Kingsway Hall, has always been regarded as one of the triumphs of Abbado's Decca days. Prokofiev's Third Symphony from the following year has not enjoyed comparable acclaim, perhaps because the work itself has its uneven moments. Despite this, I find it one of his most compelling scores, full of intense drama, passion and not a little barbaric menace. Abbado's conducting, coupled with virtuoso playing from the LSO, brings out these elements vividly. Seldom can this under-rated symphony have been performed with such conviction.
PETER WARLOCK
Capriol Suite/Serenade (to Frederick Delius on his 60th birthday)/The Curlew/Songs and Carols
Various artists
EMI Classics CDM S 65101 2 (ADD/69.46)

• There can be no disputing the highlight of this collection of the work of Peter Warlock (or Philip Heseltine, to give him his real name). Ian Partridge’s 1974 performance of the four W B Yeats settings grouped under the title of ‘The Curlew’ remains one of the finest achievements of his career.

Nothing to surpass them was to come from the pen of their composer. Written between 1920 and 1922, these treatments of Yeats’ melancholy verses display a remarkable empathy. In 1923 ‘The Curlew’ received a Carnegie award, when the composer was 26 and it should have been the springboard to an outstanding career. Instead, seven years later he was dead of gas-poisoning, widely assumed to be suicide, although the inquest returned an open verdict.

Some of his earlier writings on British musical life had made him less than popular with the musical establishment, which was why he adopted the pseudonym of Warlock. It doubtless mirrored his interest in the occult.

With the two names came two different personalities: Heseltine was introspective and even melancholic; ‘Peter Warlock’ was assertive, ebullient, bitingly cynical - and a heavy drinker.

Even in his short career, Warlock developed into one of the finest composers of song in the English tradition, able to blend modern harmonies with an archaic lyricism belonging to the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras.

The Shakespeare setting ‘Pretty Ring Time’ of 1925, beautifully sung here by Janet Baker, displays a sureness and delicacy of touch. His love of the forms of the 16th and 17th centuries is reflected in the engaging orchestral Capriol Suite, although under Neville Dykes it becomes uncomfortably fierce in loud passages.

Warlock also composed some of the very best of 20th century Christmas carols, rightly recalled in this EMI compilation alongside his contribution to English song. All are generally fine recordings and altogether this is an incomparable introduction to the work of one of English music’s most enigmatic figures.

HENRY PURCELL
The Fantazias and In nomines
Fretwork
Virgin Classics Veritas VC S 45062 (DDD/54.54)

• This is a fascinating and absorbing glimpse into the ‘private’ world of Henry Purcell. Although not certain, it can be assumed that these wonderful miniatures were written for the private pleasure of Purcell and his colleagues from among the royal musicians.

They all date from the summer of 1680 when the court decamped to Windsor to escape the heat and stench of London. It is easy to imagine the composer and a handful of friends occupying themselves on a sultry evening mastering the complexities and sonorities of this intimate, profound and searching music.

Yet the Fantazias - the ‘z’ is Purcell’s own idiosyncrasy - were an anachronism. The form’s heyday lasted from 1530-1630, but by 1680 had been overtaken by the advent of ‘virtuosi’ and of music from Italy whose technical demands eclipsed the abilities of the gifted amateurs for whom Consort Music had been ideal.

Purcell’s contribution was to be the last composed in England - but what an apotheosis. Here he could display his mastery of counterpoint to the full as well as exploring all manner of other musical devices.

Although none exceed five minutes in length, each is full of contrast and colour, with deeply expressive slow passages juxtaposed with lively dance-like sections. This is captivating playing from Fretwork, with a clear, well-balanced and richly detailed recording. Never published in Purcell’s lifetime, of all the recordings of the tercentenary year, this music brings perhaps the most unexpected rewards.

HENRY PURCELL

Peter Warlock

Henry Purcell

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 inch mid</th>
<th>4 inch mid</th>
<th>6.5 inch bass/mid</th>
<th>8 inch bass</th>
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<tr>
<td>HDA</td>
<td>HM100Z0</td>
<td>HM130Z0</td>
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<td>CARBON FIBRE</td>
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FABRIC DOME TWEETERS

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<th>Tweeter</th>
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<tr>
<td>TW025M0</td>
<td>2-way systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>TW025M1</td>
<td>3-way systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TW034X0</td>
<td>34mm 92dB</td>
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<tr>
<td>OVAL GOLD DOME TWEETER HD-3P</td>
<td>complete with crossover. Works extremely well with HM100Z0 - ultra flat response from 400Hz to 20kHz.</td>
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<th>UK (inc VAT&amp; carriage)</th>
<th>OVERSEAS, (net)</th>
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<td>K6L6-K240/120</td>
<td></td>
<td>£295</td>
<td>£255</td>
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<tr>
<td>4W single-ended integrated amplifier</td>
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<td>K5881PSE-B240/120</td>
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<td>KLP1 line level preamplifier</td>
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<td>KLP1P-B240/120</td>
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<td>£695</td>
<td>£595</td>
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<td>KLS3 3-way carbon fibre driver floorstanding loudspeaker</td>
<td>Drive Units + Crossover kit etc</td>
<td>KLS3-C</td>
<td>£350</td>
<td>£300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drive Units</td>
<td>KLS3-D</td>
<td></td>
<td>£230</td>
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<tr>
<td>KLS4 2-way carbon fibre driver standmounting loudspeaker</td>
<td>Drive Units + Crossover kit etc</td>
<td>KLS4-C</td>
<td>£230</td>
<td>£200</td>
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<tr>
<td>KLS6 3-way HDA driver floorstanding loudspeaker</td>
<td>Drive Units + Crossover kit etc</td>
<td>KLS6-C</td>
<td>£825</td>
<td>£700</td>
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<td>KLS6-D</td>
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<td>KLS7 2-way carbon fibre driver floorstanding loudspeaker</td>
<td>Drive Units + Crossover kit etc</td>
<td>KLS7-C</td>
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<td>Drive Units</td>
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<td>£110</td>
<td>£95</td>
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<tr>
<td>AUDAX DRIVE UNITS (P&amp;P Extra, please add £5.75 for individual units or tweeters, otherwise add £10)</td>
<td>High Definition Aerogel</td>
<td>3inch midrange</td>
<td>HM100Z0</td>
<td>£35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4inch midrange</td>
<td>HM110Z0</td>
<td>£45</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.5inch bass/mid</td>
<td>HM117Z0</td>
<td>£50</td>
<td>£45</td>
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<td>8inch bass</td>
<td>HM1210Z0</td>
<td>£60</td>
<td>£55</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carbon Fibre</td>
<td>4inch midrange</td>
<td>HM1130C0</td>
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<td>6.5inch bass/mid</td>
<td>HM1170C0</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8inch bass</td>
<td>HM1210C0</td>
<td>£55</td>
<td>£50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabric Dome Tweeters</td>
<td>25mm 92dB for 2-way systems</td>
<td>TW025M0</td>
<td>£15</td>
<td>£13</td>
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<td>TW025M1</td>
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<td>£14</td>
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<td>TW034X0</td>
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<td>£22</td>
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THE LOUDSPEAKER DESIGN COOKBOOK, 5th Edition, by Vance Dickason. £23.75
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BULLOCK ON BOXES, by Robert M. Bullock £12.95
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QUICK & EASY TRANSMISSION LINE SPEAKER DESIGN, by Larry D. Sharp. £10.95
A practical approach to designing and building your own transmission line loudspeaker. Covers the background theory, but is very practical in approach. Design examples and equations, even a computer package to run under Lotus 123 which takes care of the maths.

THEORY AND DESIGN OF LOUDSPEAKER ENCLOSURES, by J. E. Benson. £23.95
This book covers loudspeaker enclosure design: infinite baffle, reflex, passive radiator etc in great detail, with a highly mathematical approach, making it unsuitable for beginners, but highly authoritative to experienced designers with a good foundation in acoustics.

AUDIO ANTHOLOGIES

Audio Anthologies - When Audio Was Young
There are six volumes of the Audio Anthologies. Covering one of the most exciting and important eras of hi-fi, they contain many ground breaking exercises and equations, even a computer package to run under Lotus 123 which takes care of the maths.

Volume One - May 1947 to December 1949
Summary of Contents: 9.5 watt, 5 watt and 6.5 watt 6AS7G amplifier; 30 watt 300B amplifier; valve FM tuning indicator; 30 watt 211 power amplifier; cathode follower amplifier using 6V6; an adaptation of the Williamson amplifier; valve phono preamplifier; several horn and reflex loudspeaker designs and much more.

Volume Two - January 1950 to July 1952
Summary of Contents: Ultra linear 6L6 design and operation of the Williamson, a direct coupled amplifier; Williamson type amplifier using 6AS5s, 40 watt, 845 push-pull amplifier; valve phono and line preamps; valves and loudspeaker damping; design and construction of reflex and horn loudspeakers.

Volume Three - August 1952 to June 1955
Summary of Contents: Simple valve phono stage, transformerless amplifier using 6802, 20 watt 5881 amplifier, 10 watt 6V6 amplifier, stereo valve preamp, high quality valve phono stage, a preamp for the Williamson, low distortion tone control preamp, binaural or stereophonic?, transistor phono amp, corner horn loudspeaker, concrete horn loudspeaker.

Volume Four - July 1955 to December 1957
Summary of Contents: 1 watt 5881 amplifier, 4 watt single-ended tweeter amplifier; budget 11 watt amplifier, versatile bass/treble control, transistor theory, transistor preamp, transistor techniques, battery powered transistor phono preamp, loudspeakers explained.

Volume Five - January 1958 to December 1959
Summary of Contents: Stereo valve multiplex decoder, 7 watt EL84 amplifier, valve active crossover and 20 watt treble amp/50 watt bass amp, monaural, binaural, monophonic and stereophonic explained, heterodyne FM multiplex adapter, transistor preamp, 60 watt EL34 amplifier, high power audio amplifiers. hi-fi loudspeaker enclosure.

Volume Six - January 1960 to December 1961
Summary of Contents: Transistor preamplifiers, feedback techniques, the coming of FM stereo, PM multiplex adapters. Tape recorders: distortion, frequency response and noise. 120 watt 6550 amplifier, loudspeaker efficiency.

SOLID STATE ELECTRONICS

THE ART OF ELECTRONICS, by P. Horowitz and W. Hill. £35
The definitive electronics book. The Art of Electronics is an ideal book for the beginner through to the engineer. Written in easy to understand English, each chapter takes you from basic first principles through to full design exercises and practical circuits.

Volume One - May 1947 to December 1949
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Summary of Contents: 1 watt 5881 amplifier, 4 watt single-ended tweeter amplifier; budget 11 watt amplifier, versatile bass/treble control, transistor theory, transistor preamp, transistor techniques, battery powered transistor phono preamp, loudspeakers explained.

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Volume Four - January 1960 to December 1961
Summary of Contents: Transistor preamplifiers, feedback techniques, the coming of FM stereo, PM multiplex adapters. Tape recorders: distortion, frequency response and noise. 120 watt 6550 amplifier, loudspeaker efficiency.

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

The last twelve months have proved a period of great deliberation regarding the way forward for Audio By Development. We have always held that we must be able to believe whole heartedly in a product before we recommend it to our customers, but last year we began to question the change in direction being pursued by a number of established manufacturers, and we felt that in some cases sonic attributes were being sacrificed in the interest of greater commercial success. Some fine established products were discontinued, or increased in price beyond all reason, and with their loss it became much more difficult to assemble systems with the magical synergy that is so important. Considerable time spent searching has proven to us that there are still manufacturers who's primary aim is to develop and market benchmark products with performance and reliability that justifies their cost, while remaining firmly based around these products that we believe will hold the listener in disbelief that they are being achieved.

If this has to be next year's aim, and you currently require a more economic solution, then we can offer our Suelen Class 7000 Ribbon Loudspeakers. We hope to be providing a number of musical evenings over the next six months to introduce these products to you, whilst remaining firmly in the specialist Hi-fi arena, and not entering the mass market Audio / Video camp.

Of course synergy will always be paramount and we have now assembled a range of new systems and products that we believe will hold the listener in disbelief that they are being achieved.

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MEASURED PERFORMANCE

It's important to measure products to assess performance, find explanations of sound quality and warn of peculiarities or faults. Only Hi-Fi World has an advanced in-house laboratory with digital signal analysis for this purpose. In conjunction with this facility we assess sound quality in our own acoustically treated listening room. We measure most products reviewed. Here's a simple guide on our test results.

LOUDSPEAKERS
Smooth, flat frequency response is important to ensure a balanced sound. Look carefully at overall trends; rising treble will give a bright sound, falling treble a dull sound. A rise through the midrange normally corresponds with good balance. High sensitivity (better than 86dB) means less power is needed for a certain volume, meaning a low power amp. can be used.

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

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

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

AMPLIFIERS
Distortion from solid state amplifiers should be no more than around 0.2%. Even order (2nd, 4th, 6th etc) distortion is aurally innocuous but odd order (3rd, 5th, 7th etc) distortion makes for a glassy, hard sound, or grittiness. Frequency response can be band limited, with bass and treble rolled off just out of the ear's range, or wideband. Each has its own characteristics. Small wideband response variations colour tonal balance.

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

TUNERS
Frequency response, as always, says much about tonal balance and character traits, like peaky treble (due to a 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

AUDIOLAB 8000S
The 8000S follows in the footsteps of the 8000A. In terms of measurement, at least, it certainly does nothing to discredit the name.

Into an 8Ω load the 8000S happily delivers 69 watts worth of power, climbing to 115 watts when 4Ω is presented at the output. This shows good regulation in the power supply. I would expect the 8000S to easily drive most loudspeakers unless they are extremely inefficient. Audiolab have bandwidth limited the 8000S to a frequency response which is flat between 5Hz and 38kHz, 1dB limits. This normally gives a sweeter, warmer treble quality, but only subjective tests will confirm this.

Separation and noise figures, the latter achieved using a CCIR filter, were both very good although 100Hz supply spikes were clearly evident on the noise trace. These were probably too small to have any significant effect on the sonic performance, but could give it a harder edge. Sensitivity through AUX was a standard 280mV and dc offsets very low.

The best measurement performance comes from distortion which maintains a very low figure hovering slightly about 0.008% whatever the power and whatever the frequency. Not only is this figure very low, but the fact that it varies only slightly is a sign of some close attention to design, persuasively concerning the feedback topology. HB

Power
CD/tuner/aux.
Frequency response
5Hz-38kHz
Separation
81.9dB
Noise
-98.7dB
Distortion
0.009%
Sensitivity
280mV
dc offset
-8.3f-1mV
In a world where many loudspeakers appear to be poured from a mould, we would like to show you something different, a loudspeaker which may turn out to be one of the most convincing in the world, a loudspeaker to give you and your music freedom and fidelity. Hidden beneath the classically styled cabinet is a radical 6 way design which might just change your pre-conceptions about "less being more".

To produce an experience as intense as live music takes not only a flat frequency response, it also takes high acoustic output and low distortion too, and achieving all these requires that each individual driver be operated only over a narrow, optimum frequency range. To do otherwise results in aberrant cone behaviour, high distortion, and gross coloration. Sorry.

If we had just stopped there; made a 4 way system from premium quality drivers, it would be a good 'speaker, but it would not have been a great one. Because there is the other criterion, the one nobody mentions, the PHASE RESPONSE. Without a good phase response, you will always be conscious that you are listening to electronic equipment, and you can do better, as we hope to show you.

The square wave test is one of the most revealing indicators of a 'speaker's frequency and phase response. It is rarely published since many 'speakers, like the one in the top photo, have poor phase linearity.

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AMPLIFIERS

**Myryad MI 120**

Power output into 8Ω was a good 78 watts, high enough to drive most modern loudspeakers. A frequency response of 4Hz to 8kHz within 1dB limits shows quite a wide bandwidth.

Sensitivity through the line stage was a normal 280mV. The noise figure was low too, although there were obvious periodic spikes on the trace. I would hazard a guess at them being the product of power supply rectifier switching.

The MC disc stage supplied is optional and gives a flat response from 12Hz to 4kHz within 1dB limits. Response was 3dB down at 9Hz, but this isn’t really enough to prevent cone flap with reflex® speakers.

Noise was a very average - 70dB, with

| Sensitivity through line inputs was 275mV allowing most modern sources to be used. Distortion at normal listening levels rose gradually with frequency, but was predominantly 2nd harmonic. The CSA14 comes packaged with an MM phono stage which was flat on both channels within 1dB between 7Hz and 42kHz. No warp filtering is employed. Sensitivity of the stage was measured at 5mV on both channels and noise a very low - 77dB. Overload was good too with a figure of 250mV giving us a technically well specified phono stage. HB |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Power | 78 watts | CD/tuner/aux. | 78 watts | Frequency response | 4Hz-53kHz |
| Noise | -92dB | Separation | 90dB | Noise | 0.017% |
| Sensitivity | 275mV | Distortion | 0.017% | Sensitivity | 5mV |
| dc offset | 3.8/4.2mV | Disc Frequency response | 7Hz-42kHz | Separation | 53dB |
| Noise | -77dB | Distortion | 0.017% |

**COPLAND CSA14**

The Copland is a hybrid amplifier using both valves and transistors. The transistor power output stage gave a hefty 78 watts into 8Ω load and an even heftier 132 watts into 4Ω.

Sensitivity through line inputs was 275mV allowing most modern sources to be used. Distortion at normal listening levels rose gradually with frequency, but was predominantly 2nd harmonic.

The CSA14 comes packaged with an MM phono stage which was flat on both channels within 1dB between 7Hz and 42kHz. No warp filtering is employed. Sensitivity of the stage was measured at 5mV on both channels and noise a very low - 77dB. Overload was good too with a figure of 250mV giving us a technically well specified phono stage. HB

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| Noise | -77dB | Distortion | 0.017% |

**ROGERS LS33/AB33**

On their own the Rogers LS33 have a smooth enough response. There is a slight peak in the lower treble that will inject some brightness, but this could be heard as extra insight or detail rather than sharpness if the tweeter is good. Through the midband the response is very flat and smooth, which normally ensures an even and neutral balance. Bass lifts by around 4dB, enough to bring good weight to the bottom end.

As can be seen in the second trace at the far left of the response plot, the 302s certainly aren’t going to be a kind load. The majority of the curve sits well below 8Ω giving a low overall impedance figure of 5.5Ω. And the strong rise and fall through the midrange indicates that they are strongly reactive too, although most modern amplifiers shouldn’t have too much of a problem with this. Sensitivity was high at 88.5dB, so they should go loud with few watts. DB

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**B&W DM 302**

B&V’s DM 302s have a response tailored to impress. With a bass peak in the upper bass to add punch and speed, along with a lift in the high treble for extra incision, I’d expect a lively sound. There is a slight recess through the midband, but the dip isn’t really deep enough to unbalance the sound.

Looking at the impedance curve, the 302s certainly aren’t going to be a kind load. The majority of the curve sits well below 8Ω giving a low overall impedance figure of 5.5Ω. And the strong rise and fall through the midrange indicates that they are strongly reactive too, although most modern amplifiers shouldn’t have too much of a problem with this. Sensitivity was high at 88.5dB, so they should go loud with few watts. DB

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LOUDSPEAKERS

LINN SEKRIT

Linn’s Sekrits have well extended bass for their size. There is also a downward tilt towards treble, with a wide, but shallow (3dB) dip through the crossover region. This may give them a soft sound. There is a peak around 6kHz though, which will add some needed sparkle.

With a sensitivity of 87.5dB and an overall impedance of 8Ω, they will be relatively easy to drive and compatible with a wide range of amplifiers. I’d recommend 20 watts (min.) or so for best results. DB

SEQUENCE 400

Although flat through the crossover region, frequency extremes are rolled off, severely so in the bass. The Sequences are designed to be used near or on a wall. But measurements taken around 6” from a wall show bass falling from 500Hz down. I suspect the Sequences will have little real bass and limited treble extension.

The Sequences have a high sensitivity of 89dB. However, their overall impedance figure of 4.6Ω means they will draw a lot of current; many amplifiers will struggle to drive them properly. The Sequence 400s were not very impressive.

SPENDOR SP9/1

The SP9/1s gave a very smooth response over a wide range of microphone positions. This indicates a good phase relationship between the drivers, which normally gives coherent sound. The slight rise towards high frequencies is exaggerated by microphone position, set close to the axis between midrange and tweeter as these are the most directional. Spendor have kept bass flat, rather than engineering in a lift. This should ensure a tight and tuneful bass.

Sensitivity of the SP9/1s is high at 89dB, and impedance overall measured 11.8Ω. This, along with a smooth impedance curve makes the SP9/1s compatible with a wide range of amplifiers, including low power zero feedback types. I’d recommend 20-50 watts depending on the size of room. DB

CASSETTE

AIWA AD-S750

The AD-S750 has mediocre head and transport performance. Mechanical bits cost money, but electronic bits do not, so Aiwa rely on Dolby S to help avoid head overload, for example. This is fairly successful, dropping bass distortion from 6% with TDK MA to 1%. Use of Dolby S is obligatory. Dolby S also reduces hiss. Noise reduction systems cannot affect the transport’s speed stability, however, and this was mediocre with the Aiwa. A single capstan type without speed control, it wandered a bit, results being related to the amount of tape on the hubs. Start-of-tape performance is always shakiest with this sort of transport. Wander and occasional jerking apart, the transport was respectable, displaying little capstan wow.

The Aiwa’s automatic tape tuning system is a good one, albeit a little slow. Frequency response was flat with all normal blank tapes, as our analysis with TDK MA shows.

Head azimuth was well adjusted, giving flat replay frequency response. As a result, pre-recorded tapes should play well. The AD-S750 is well balanced in its compromises. It is untouched at the price. NK
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CD PLAYERS

XTC DAC-I

With gently rolled off upper treble the XTC DAC-I should have smooth treble. In the bass there is also a slight lift, which helps to add weight to CD.

Distortion, particularly at -30dB, was slightly higher than expected. Being mainly odd order I'd expect some sharpness too, but this may balance nicely against the slight response roll off. Noise figures were low and dynamic range wide at 106dB (EIAJ test). HB.

Frequency response

-6dB 0.005 0.005
-30dB 0.033 0.027
-60dB 0.82 0.50
-90dB 33 33
-90dB dithered 9.9 4.1

TEAC VRDS10SE

The 105E has a clear 0.4dB lift at 17.5kHz on both channels as well as 1.7% inharmonic distortion i.e. not related to the fundamental, at -30dB. This may produce some harshness.

Otherwise the TEAC measured reasonably well with low harmonic distortion figures and wide separation - up to 130dB. Noise was very low too and output voltage at 2.2V is just slightly above standard. HB.

Frequency response

-6dB 0.006 0.006
-30dB 0.004 0.004
-60dB 0.50 0.56
-90dB 30.1 30.1
-90dB dithered 7 12

ORTOFON ROHMANN

The left channel was very flat as our analysis shows, but the right rose by a few dB at 16kHz. I'd expect the Rohmann to display just a shade of brightness, probably heard as clear treble, since stylus shape is important to quality and Ortofon fit amongst the best. Inner groove tracing was good, as expected, and the cartridge sailed through all torture tests for tracking ability.

The Rohmann has a low output of 0.37mV at 5cms/sec rms. Use a very quiet preamp or a transformer to avoid hiss. NK

Frequency response

25gms vertical tracking angle of 22degrees, exactly right and contributory to low distortion.

The Rohmann has a low output of 0.37mV at 5cms/sec rms. Use a very quiet preamp or a transformer to avoid hiss. NK

Tracking force

2.5gms

Weight

gms

Vertical tracking angle

22degrees

Channel separation

20Hz-20kHz

Tracking ability (300Hz)
lateral 90μm

vertical 45μm

lateral (1kHz) 25cms/sec.

Distortion (45μm)
lateral 0.8%

TUNER

PIONEER F-204RDS

The F-204 has plateau treble lift which marks it out as a budget design that will sound thin - not a good idea. There was no useful MPX filtering, so unwanted pilot tone and subcarrier were present - again not good.

Distortion was low, channel separation high and hiss well enough suppressed (-71dB stereo) with 1mV or more aerial signal to match rivals in these areas. Output was good at 600mV and alternate channel selectivity adequately high at 66/80dB discrimination either side of a wanted signal (73dB av.).

The F-204RDS will certainly sound bright and probably thin too, but otherwise it measures satisfactorily. NK
8 January 1995

Hello Peter,

Recently you supplied me with Slate Audio speaker stands for my Harbeth Compact 7 monitors and a plynth, arm & cartridge for my Garard 301 turntable. I can honestly say that this was money well spent!

I am a studio engineer and as I use my Harbeths for mixing sessions, it is absolutely critical that they reproduce what has been recorded without colouration, warts & all! Other stands, despite manufacturers' claims, are not always neutral. Not so Slate Audio. They give me definition from the loudspeaker I have not heard before. They also give me positive immaging.....I can place an instrument or effect wherever I want in the stereo with confidence. Recently I worked with a group that used a 26 inch kick drum...notoriously difficult to record. But I was able to record & mix knowing that what I was hearing was true. The proof of the pudding was when the test pressing arrived at my home and all the 30 & 40 hz were still present and not “rolled off” in the cut. Thank you Abbey Road Cutting Room.

The marble plynth for my 301 is a work of art. I am happy to say that it sounds as good as it looks. I had been listening soley to compact discs at home for the last five or six years, and when I first put up the Slate Audio 301 I must admit to having quite a shock. It took me a short while to get used to the sonics of vinyl. However, once adjusted, forever converted. Now that my cartridge is run in I am more than happy to ditch the CD player in favour of my old records. They have new life, dynamics & energy. Thank you Peter Soper.

Kind regards,

KEVIN VAN GREEN

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Hi-Fi News & Record Review July 95

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- Musical Fidelity CDA2
- Marten 292
- Audio Research D200
- Musical Fidelity DAX
- Musical Fidelity NEW Preamplifier
- Musical Fidelity Power Amp
- Audio Research LS2 MKII
- Musical Fidelity DAX
- Musical Fidelity Preamplifier
- Musical Fidelity Power Amp
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DEFINITIVE AUDIO

THE EXPERIENCE OF LISTENING TO MUSIC ON MOST HI-FI SYSTEMS IS A PALE IMITATION OF THE EXPERIENCE OF LIVE PERFORMED MUSIC. THIS SHOULD NOT BE THE CASE BUT THE LANGUAGE OF HI FI JOURNALISM SHOWS US HOW WE HAVE COME TO ACCEPT THAT IT IS. UNDUE ATTENTION IS PAID TO INCIDENTAL ISSUES WHILST THE FUNDAMENTALS ARE OVERLOOKED. UNSURPRISINGLY HI FI HAS BECOME AN ACQUIRED INTEREST, ONE THAT NON AUDIOPHILES ARE AMUSED OR PUZZLED BY. THESE NON AUDIOPHILES WOULD NOT BE PUZZLED BY A LIVE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR FAVOURED MUSIC PROGRAMME. LIVE ORCHESTRAL MUSIC HAS A RICH BALANCE OF QUALITIES THAT HI FI CAN RARELY REPRODUCE, SCALE AND EFFORTLESS DYNAMIC RANGE, POWER WITH GRACE AND FINENESS OF TONE. DEFINITIVE AUDIO HAS FOR YEARS ONLY BEEN INTERESTED IN EQUIPMENT THAT CAN REPRODUCE THE FULL BREATH OF THIS EXPERIENCE. WE ACHIEVE THIS TO A STANDARD THAT HAS BEEN MAKING WAVES AND CHANGING THE INDUSTRY. EXPERIENCED AUDIO JOURNALISTS HAVE DESCRIBED OUR SYSTEMS AS "SO REAL IT MAKES A MOCKERY OF CONVENTIONAL STEREO" (JONATHON KETTLE - AUDIOPHILE) AND "GOOD ENOUGH TO REPRESENT THE COUNTRY" (JASON KENNEDY - HI FI CHOICE) MAYBE YOU SHOULD FIND OUT WHY?

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>SALE</th>
<th>RRP</th>
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<tr>
<td>HORNING AGATHON 3 WAY HORN OAK</td>
<td>£3200</td>
<td>£6000</td>
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<tr>
<td>STAX SR34 HEADPHONE</td>
<td>£110</td>
<td>£150</td>
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<td>TEAC VKDS 20 12 MONTHS OLD</td>
<td>£800</td>
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<td>MICROMEGA DUO CD2 TRANSPORT</td>
<td>£1380</td>
<td>£2500</td>
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<td>SNELL ALL 3 WAY LOUDSPEAKER SYSTEM</td>
<td>£1500</td>
<td>£4500</td>
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<tr>
<td>SNELL III 2 WAY LOUDSPEAKER SYSTEM</td>
<td>£450</td>
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<tr>
<td>MONITOR AUDIO MA 800 ROSEWOOD</td>
<td>£375</td>
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<td>MUSICAL FIDELITY CDT VALVE CD</td>
<td>£230</td>
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<tr>
<td>MUSICAL FIDELITY CLASSIC 25 KIT - NEW</td>
<td>£600</td>
<td>£700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUSICAL FIDELITY S200 POWER</td>
<td>£400</td>
<td>£500</td>
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<tr>
<td>VARIOUS EQ SUPPORTS AND USED HIGH END I/C CABLES AND SPEAKER CABLES</td>
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<th>Postal Code</th>
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Tel: 01757 268 267

Tel: 01886 888 772 (West Midlands)

Tel: 0115 974 8296 (Nottingham)

Tel: John 0131 336 1909 work or 0171 226 4386 (daytime)


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ROKSAN Midland Audio Exchange have secured a small amount of new boxed products at special prices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Was</th>
<th>Now</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 x ROKSAN L1 Pre Amplifier (Silver)</td>
<td>£2250</td>
<td>£1195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 x ROKSAN L2 Pre Amplifier (Silver)</td>
<td>£995</td>
<td>£595</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 x ROKSAN TMS Turntable (Piano Lacquer/Artemiz Cut)</td>
<td>£2750</td>
<td>£1995</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 x ROKSAN ATTessa DP2 Transport</td>
<td>£1295</td>
<td>£795</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 x ROKSAN ATTessa DA2 Converter</td>
<td>£549</td>
<td>£395</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 x ROKSAN ATTessa DP2 CD Player</td>
<td>£1495</td>
<td>£995</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 x ROKSAN OJAN 3 Speaker (Black)</td>
<td>£795</td>
<td>£499</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 x ROKSAN DA1 Convertor</td>
<td>£495</td>
<td>£229</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 x ROKSAN DS4 Power Supplies</td>
<td>£495</td>
<td>£275</td>
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WE NOW HAVE ON PERMANENT DEMONSTRATION THE ALL NEW XERXES 10 AVAILABLE IN BLACK OR ROSEWOOD AT £1295. ALSO REQUIRES A POWER SUPPLY XPS 3.5 £169 OR THE NEW XPS V REFERENCE POWER SUPPLY AT £325.

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OWNERS OF DP2 MkII DO NOT DESPAIR. UPGRADES TO THESE MACHINES ARE AVAILABLE

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- NAIM 01 Tuner (New Style) £395

OUR OPENING TIMES ARE FLEXIBLE, SO PLEASE PHONE BEFORE VISITING THE SHOP: 0171-401 3830.”
TRENDSHEND SIR GALAHAD speakers £335 - 3 in stock, moving house 01303 831474
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Tel: 01623 871950 (Wokingham). Hi-Fi World April 1996

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ATTENTION VINYL LOVERS, Michel Schach von Albrecht HR,100 M5S arm, Denon DL304 cartridge, QP power supply, stereo Acro, Appa, 2 x HERA, Van den Hul experimentals. Pro Ac Studio 100 speakers with R2 stands, 14 months old, little use, mint condition. £800. Offers around £250. Tel: 01893 530 713.

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KISSEL 75 black £200, pre £295. Weiss 6 integrated CD player £2395. Both in excellent condition complete £2800. Tel: 01343 719 199 (Bedford/Milton Keynes area).

BEARD 500 POWER AMP, served by Beard (cost £400). £195. Tel/Fax: 0117 459 1432 (evening). Tel: 0121 353 2308 (evening).

LINN KABERS + Linn base plinth, black, £1390. Perfect condition, Reduced from £2900. Tel: 0114 247 6759.

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WANTED: Rega 3 or Systemdek. Also Technics SL-1210. Offers? Tel 01865 59737 (Oxford). Tel: 01862 682 221.


ARCAM 350 transport + Black Box 50: DAC, sync lock, with video X interconnect. Boxed, as new. £950. Tel: 0181 773 2978 (Evesham, L.S.E.).

REI STADIUM SUBWOOFER, boxed, mint condition, £250. Tannoy M20 audio phono assembly £60. Tel: 0131 235 8441 (Leeds).

WANTED: Alkern Music M408 power amps, as new, £150 each. Money available. Tel: 0171 536 7019.

VALVE AMPLIFIERS, updated Mullard 5, 20, 25w, Sowter ESL34, 450, £50, pair. Sorensen transformers, GEM 595, 500w, £40. Sylvania, Ge, etc. superb quality valves, phone for list. Tel: 0181 427 3728 (Harrow).

LINN LP12 Valhalla, Black, Acito and K9 £250, 4535, Linn Kan speaker stands £45. Harbeth LHP3 £350, Crossfire integrated £700. All in excellent condition. Tel: 01275 260 403 (Lancs).

AUDIO PHYSIC Tempo speakers with electronic equaliser. New £300. Offers. Tel: 0161 860 1148 (Surrey).

LINN TARGET 124 items, Target AER 4 table £85. Tel 01233 593 449. New WordPress £600.

TDI 124 items, Target AER 4 table £95. Tel 01233 593 449. New WordPress £600.

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ROGERS CADET III bookshelf monitors, matching height £65. Pair Searam valve amplifiers £190 o.n.o. '90s box £15. £125 o n o. "Very open and musical. Vec. £700. o.n.o. FULLY INTACT sound isolation bases £34. £16. £12. £7. £5. £3. Made for Jelco 500 power amp £75 each. Target stands, 2 x PSA amplifier isolation bases £70. PSW1 wall shelf £35. TTW1 wall shelf £35; 4 Sony Esprit FW200 sound bases £75 each. All boxed, instructions etc. Target 3.5 crossover £75. Supreme mode, slate and brass turned feet with matching cones £38 each. Tel: 01883 851 381. TEL: 01343 710 461.

TALSTUDIO speakers, black, boxed, £475 o.n.o. with stands. Awesome bass, must sell due to neighbours! Mint condition, 3 years old, less than half price at £175.

DIAMOND Stereo Hawks £350. £200 (prices, less than half price at £75). Various other valve equipment. All good working condition. Tel: 01343 710 461.


Hi-Fi World April 1996
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Conrad Johnson Premier Sonographe SA 135 power amp £ 750
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“Gamma Rhythm REF (aeon) is a welcome new comer to the single ended fold. Suddenly it had soul” “I had a clearer idea of what they were feeling”, “The Gemini presents the bass authority of the best transistors with the sonic refinement and finesse of a Single Ended design.”

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“The Gamma is especially skilled at placing the listen in the position of a observer at a live event...”

“This amp has a raw vitality and realism that the others can’t match” (Hi-Fi News & RR March)

“The Gamma Rhythm REF (aeon) is a welcome new comer to the single ended fold. The design offers the sort of acoustics treasures that are usually the domain of far more expensive amplifiers...” (Hi-Fi Choice Jan. ’94)

“The Gemini is a peach. Switch it on leave it for a couple of minutes to settle down and (once run in) it will give a truly amazing sound. CD, radio broadcast, tape can all sound stunning through this device. The Gemini will charm the very best out of your music collection. For £699 you’d be hard pressed to match this design for sheer sound quality and enjoyment” (Hi-Fi Choice March ’95)

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“Gamma Rhythm is a welcome new comer to the single ended fold. The design offers the sort of acoustics treasures that are usually the domain of far more expensive amplifiers, "Gamma is to be applauded for this exciting new product!"”

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For our latest free catalogue of used Rock/Jazz/Classical Vinyl LPs, send 19p SAE to:

P.O. Box 55, Reading, RG4 OUE

**TRADE**

SITUATIONS

HI-FI WORLD APRIL 1996

WANTED

SLATE AUDIO are looking for Garrard 301s and 401s. Fair prices paid for fair examples, better prices paid for fine examples. We can arrange collection if necessary. Telephone Peter Soper on 0525 384174

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SITUATIONS

SWWANTED: Position in Hi Fi industry. Vast experience - home demonstration room available (Dealership and or Sales) Tel: 01225 480 990

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Mission Group, Huntingdon. PE18 6ED  Tel: 01480 451777  Fax: 01480 432777