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CD PLAYER

ARCAM’S NEW
ALPHA 9
INTEGRATED
AND 9P POWER
AMPLIFIERS

THE 8000CD:
AUDIOLAB’S
FIRST EVER
INTEGRATED
CD PLAYER
When one of the best loudspeaker engineering teams in the world advances its state-of-the-art technology, you'd expect the result to outperform the competition. It does.

KEF's new Q Series, with its distinctive clear cone Uni-Q® drivers, delivers a more precise stereo image, over a wider listening area, than any conventional loudspeaker can. This latest advance in KEF's patented technology delivers even smoother midrange response and clarity that's simply stunning.

From bookshelf to 3-way floorstander, the entire range is magnetically shielded for Home Theatre use. And because aesthetics are integral to good design, the two largest models incorporate KEF's new 'racetrack' bass unit. With the performance of an 8 inch driver in the space of a 6 inch, it preserves the slim, elegant Q Series design.

With the new Q Series, the competition have been decisively out-classed. The difference is clear.
This month's Hi-Fi World carries a bit of a British theme. The latest equipment from our home shores has been tested and much of it is exciting. Meridian have completed their impressive new 502 pre- and 557 power amplifiers and Arcam have launched a whole new range of electronics. Audiolab and Mission have introduced new integrated CD players under £1,000, and Harbeth and Castle have new loudspeakers, the latter using carbon fibre in its drive units. We know that carbon fibre has promise. Audio is still one of this country's strengths. In many ways, we lead the rest of the world when it comes to high performance allied to excellent value. There is still a lot of interest in British audio too. The Professional Sound & Light show at Earl's Court was a delight this year. The lower floor was packed with massive loudspeaker systems, live DJs, lasers, lights and high-tech electronic recording equipment. But the Live events have been deserted by the hi-fi industry, leaving no Central London show. A new showcase is needed because there's still a strong interest in hi-fi, as I believe there always will be.

Dominic Baker, Editor

SONY XE-900E CD PLAYER
Setting the world of CD on its head is the new Sony XE-900E, which moves the disc rather than the laser as it reads the digits. Gimmick or breakthrough? We find out.

TECHNICS SU-A700 Mk3 AMPLIFIER
We listen to the sound of Bamboo with Technics' latest integrated. Fitted with Master Series capacitors, which feature a Bamboo dielectric, Technics claim this amp is more dynamic and natural than its predecessor.

TECHNICS SL-1210 LTD
Since their introduction some 25 years ago, Technics have made an astonishing 250,000 SL-1200/1210 turntables. To celebrate (and who wouldn't after selling that many), they're releasing a gloss-black-with-gold-plated-trimmings version as a limited edition run of 10,000! Will it appeal to more than German Techno DJs?

PIONEER CT-95
After getting fine results from Pioneer's CT-740S cassette deck in the June issue, we head to the top of the pile with the flagship CT-95.

ARCAM ALPHA 7/8
When can a 7 be an 8? When it's an Arcam CD player. Buy the new £320 Alpha 7 CD player and you'll be able to upgrade it to the £520 Alpha 8 at a later date. We investigate.

KESWICK AUDIO RESEARCH TORINO
Part of KAR's dramatically styled Italia series, the three-way Torino loudspeakers grace our listening room.

COMPETITION - WIN EVERYTHING!
Once again it's that time of year where everything we review in our special Christmas issue can be won. That's one helluva lot of Christmas presents!
**AMPLIFIERS**

**MERIDIAN S02 PRE AND S57 POWER AMPLIFIERS**  
For £2700, you could snap up Meridian's new pre/power pairing. But was Jon 'Scrooge' Marks impressed enough to part with his readies?

**ARCAM ALPHA 9 INTEGRATED AND 9P POWER AMPLIFIER**  
One feature shared by all components in Arcam's new Alpha range is upgradability. Dominic Baker takes a look at the merits of the Alpha 9 integrated before bi-amping with the addition of an Alpha 9P power amp.

**HARBEATH HL-K6**  
David Price tries out the latest standmounters to emerge from the respected Harbeth stables.

**COMPACT DISC**

**AUDIOLAB 8000CD**  
Having impressed Jon Marks with their two box 8000CDM/DAC combo in October, Audiolab unleash their new £1000 integrated player. Dominic Baker is our man at the scene.

**STAR SEARCH SYSTEMS**  
After months of arduous listening (a hi-fi journalist's lot is never an easy one) to find the creme de la creme in CD players, amplifiers and loudspeakers, we reveal three top-notch systems.

**LOUDSPEAKERS**

**CASTLE AVON**  
With a history of innovative loudspeaker design behind them, Castle now embrace carbon fibre technology for their new Avon. Noel Keywood reports on the results.

**CYRUS dAD3 CD PLAYER**  
Another new integrated CD player born of separate transport/DAC parents is Mission's Cyrus dAD3. Dominic Todd was present at the delivery.
NEXT ISSUE
All the newest and best in hi-fi that we'll be filling next issue's pages with.

NEWS
If it's information from the cutting edge of hi-fi that you're after, this is where to look.

READERS' LETTERS
Discover how to tune a room and make a system sing with letters from this month's varied post-bag.

COLUMNS 53, 61, 63
Words of wisdom from Hi-Fi World's audiophile sages.

HI-FI WORLD LIBRARY 58
If in-depth hi-fi knowledge is your goal, take a look at our well stocked library.

WORLD BUYING GUIDE 70
A thorough run-down of all the products we would be happy to use ourselves, from the budget to the not-so-budget.

MEET YOUR MAKER 73
Search for the source of all the equipment that fills the homes of music-lovers and you'll find these manufacturers.

WORLD AUDIO DESIGN 74
If the words 'kit' and 'sonic satisfaction' are high on your list of priorities, home in on our in-house goodies for the DIY-inclined.

SPECIALIST HI-FI DEALERS 78
Save yourself the bitten nails and grey hairs that component-matching anxiety brings - let the experts do all the work for you.

DIAL-A-DEALER 89
The system of your dreams is just a phone call away, courtesy of the dealers on these pages.

MEASURED PERFORMANCE 103
Hi-Fi World's electronic surgeons peer inside this month's hopefuls to check their vital signs.

READERS' CLASSIFIED 118
With six pages to choose from, there are bargains to suit every audiophile, from the aspiring to the well-heeled.

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JAPANESE HI-FI PART 2 36
This month David Price reports from the front line of the Japanese format war and investigates the components you'll find in hi-fi heaven.

FIRM FOUNDATION 56
With the hi-fi stacked in a corner and your speakers on a bookshelf, more likely than not you'll hear noise instead of music. Read on with Noel Keywood and find out how to get your system singing.

DIY SUPPLEMENT
This month, alongside book reviews and four pages of DIY letters, we reveal the new version of our KLS3 loudspeaker. This retains its carbon fibre drivers, but now sports a new version of the superb Audax gold dome piezo-electric tweeter. Dominic Baker revels in the advantages of an active, three way system with the BSS Omnidrive digital active crossover. And Sovtek's brand-new 300B gets its first test.

DANCE AND AMBIENT RECORD OF THE MONTH:
CJ Bolland: The Analogue Theatre

ROCK AND POP RECORD OF THE MONTH:
Sponge: Wax Ecstatic

JAZZ CLASSICAL

RECORD OF THE MONTH:
Shostakovich: Symphony No 1 in G minor, Op 103 - "The Year 1905"

COMPETITION - PAGE 68
Is there just a hint of jealousy at the World offices as we watch all that lovely hi-fi winging its way to our competition winners? Of course not. Well, just a little perhaps, especially when this month's prize is a superb TEAC/Meridian/Harbeth system worth over £4500.
The NAD 218 THX stereo power amplifier is one of the most sophisticated hi fi components we have ever produced. Yet for all its brilliant features and astonishing levels of performance, it remains true to the NAD "no nonsense" design philosophy.

The very first feature you'll notice is the weight of the 218 THX, due partly to the heavy construction of the chassis and front panel, designed for rack mounting, (its advanced specification makes the 218 THX ideal for professional studio use). But the increase in weight is largely due to the massive Holmgren toroidal mains transformer.

WHY SO LARGE AND WHY HOLMGREN?
Apart from being the ideal design for the huge amounts of power it is likely to handle, the Holmgren offers other advantages. A conventional transformer can be affected by AC mains to produce hum or even buzzing, whereas a Holmgren transformer isn't. Plus, a Holmgren transformer because of its unique design, will not affect other adjacent components.

A feature which doesn't add much to the weight of the 218 THX but certainly adds to the weight of its performance is the bank of eight capacitors, rather than a single pair. This is a comparatively low cost benefit which makes a better power supply because several smaller capacitors have a faster recovery time and have less equivalent series inductance and resistance than a single pair.

The 218 THX incorporates fully balanced XLR inputs, allowing the use of long runs of cable between pre and power stages, without the risk of interference. This thoughtful yet simple feature offers the opportunity to set your system up more flexibly and of course it's a benefit if you are bridging two 218 THX's for mono and locating them nearer your speakers.

The circuitry includes left and right channel pcb's, offering lots of benefits. They include less complicated pcb's meaning extra reliability, more separation of circuits, so like the Holmgren transformer, less interference going out or coming in. All this, plus lower build cost too, means more savings again towards the specification of better components.

Any amp which is overdriven (unlikely on the 218 THX because it is so powerful) can produce distortion or 'clipping'. The NAD Soft Clipping circuit gently transforms the waveform, rounding off the peaks, preventing "dynamic overload" and heading off damage to your ears and your speakers, without losing the sense of musical drama.

There are other more hidden features too which provide specific benefits. Typically, the 218 THX incorporates extensive non intrusive protection circuitry. This prevents damage from accidental overload or misuse which can lead to overheating or circuit failure.

Finally for those for whom the letters THX are somewhat of a mystery, let us briefly explain.

George Lucas, creator of the "Star Wars" epics, went to extraordinary lengths to ensure that the sound quality of his films exceeded anything Hollywood had previously produced and he laid down exacting specifications covering distortion, noise, power etc. to encourage manufacturers to develop products which will reproduce his sound tracks to the standard they deserve.

NAD was first with a power amplifier which met these challenging standards and won the right to carry the THX badge. The 218 THX continues this principle of quality first.

So what do you get for your not insubstantial investment at the end of the day?

A thoughtfully designed, utterly reliable, acoustically stunning 2 x 200 watts, bridgeable to a more than you'll ever need 700 watts mono, with more headroom than your window frames will thank you for, which could even change the way you perceive music.

But with all this capability none of it is a fashion statement. The 218 THX is designed, not designer. Every feature of the 2 8 THX enhances performance and reliability.

That's why our slogan "pure and simple" is as relevant today for equipment as advanced as the 218 THX as it was when NAD was created more than 20 years ago.
NAD GET INTEGRATED

NAD’s latest arrival is the 317 integrated amplifier. Maintaining family tradition, NAD use their 214’s 80w power amplifier section in the 317, complete with hefty toroidal transformer. Fronting the power amplifier is an IC-free pre-amp built from precision metal film resistors and polypropylene capacitors. Precious metal fans will appreciate gold-plating on all input switching relays as well as sockets.

And you needn’t worry that upgrading will mean a new amplifier. Not only can the 317 be bridged to produce 240w, it also possesses separate inputs for pre- and power sections, allowing bi-amping. Complete with a remote control that will operate other NAD components through NAD Link, the 317 costs £469.95.

Also joining the ranks is the 218 THX power amplifier. Weighing in at £849.95 and a very considerable 23kgs, the 218 is capable of supplying 200w. Unlike many other amps, whose power supplies contain a single pair of large reservoir capacitors, the 218 relies on a bank of smaller caps. This configuration lowers the supply’s inductance and cuts down on capacitor recovery time, claim NAD. To reduce crosstalk, left and right channels are laid out on dual mono, mirror image PCBs. A final touch is the separate, regulated power supply dedicated to the input stage which suppresses interstage interference.

NAD
401-405 Nether Street,
London N3 1QG
Tel: 0181 343 3240

START QUEUING FOR KEF

Based around a clear polypropylene-coned Uni-Q driver is KEF’s new Q Series. This driver, which KEF claims gives a better off-axis response and a smoother midrange than previous units, is shared by all the new ‘speakers. Sitting pretty at the budget end of the range is the £200 Q15 standmounter with its single, reflex-loaded driver. First of the floorstanders is the £350 Q35, again with a single Uni-Q, while an extra £150 buys the Q55 with its additional 160mm bass unit. Standing out from the rest of the range are the £800 Q65 and £1000 Q75. These both use a new ‘Racetrack’ 6in. x 9in. oval woofer, in the Q75’s case, alongside a passive radiator.

KEF Audio
Eccleston Road,
Tovil,
Kent ME15 6QP
Tel: 01622 672261

THE BRITISH APPROACH

TEAC’s new CD-3450 Special Edition CD player joins that growing band of components designed in the UK for manufacture overseas. The player uses a 1-bit DAC which passes on its signal unhindered by capacitors thanks to direct coupling between stages. A TOS-link optical digital output is fitted to enable the connection of an outboard DAC, and
"JOIN THE C G N O S C E N T I"

The Caspian

ROKSAN

Stonehill
Huntingdon
PE18 6ED
ENGLAND
TEL: +44 (0) 1480-431577
FAX: +44 (0) 1480-432777
EMAIL: INFO@ROKSAN.CO.UK
DECEMBER 1996

headphone users are also catered for. The CD-3450SE comes with remote control for armchair athletes, and sells for £199.95.

TEAC
5 Marlin House,
The Croxley Centre,
Watford,
Herts. WD1 8YA
Tel: 01923 819630

HANG THE DJ
If you've had enough of verbose DJs interrupting your favourite tracks, then Eurosat have an alternative. Their new £329 Manhattan MDR satellite receiver is specifically designed for reception of the DMX and ADR channels. While Astra Digital Radio transmits over 30 regional radio stations, DMX offers more than 60 non-stop CD-quality music channels free from DJ interruption. The Manhattan also possesses an optical digital output for connection to an external DAC.

Eurosat
1 Oxgate Centre,
Oxgate Lane,
Edgware Road,
London NW2 7JA
Tel: 0181 452 6699

BRITISH APPROACH II
Replacing their PMA-250II integrated amplifier, Denon have come up with the PMA-250SE. As with previous models, the main design work was carried out in the UK in conjunction with Denon Japan. The Special Edition's most important upgrade over the PMA-250II is a power supply with 50% greater reservoir capacity, said to improve dynamics and produce a more consistent sound. While there are 5 line level inputs, lovers of vinyl needn't feel neglected - an optional phono stage is available at a £15 premium.

Denon
Chiltern Hill,
Chalfont St Peter,
Bucks. SL9 9UG
Tel: 01753 888447

VIRTUOSO PERFORMANCE
Owners of low power valve amplifiers and horn 'speaker fans should be of good cheer in this Christmas season. Bravura, manufacturers of the large Brio and Accecorando horn loudspeakers, have just introduced the £2995 Virtuoso. More affordable and smaller than its predecessors, the Virtuoso also features a new midrange and treble horn which, say Bravura, helps the 'speaker produce a smooth, even response. Sensitivity, at 104dB, is a valve lover's dream and the single Lowther PM6C driver promises an easy load for zero negative feedback amplifiers.

Bravura,
White House Hall,
Hadlow Road,
Kent TN11 0AJ
Tel: 01732 851408

MYRYAD DIGITS
The latest member of Myryad's equipment line-up is the MC 100 CD player. The heart of the MC 100 is a Sony 1-bit Pulse Length Modulated DAC. This incorporates four separate converters to provide a pair of push-pull outputs for each channel. The signal is then fed to an analogue filter built around a high speed op-amp before passing on to the discrete, Class A output stage. Eleven regulated power lines help maintain isolation between stages, while jitter is reduced by synchronising the transport with the DAC's timing signal. Sporting remote control, the MC 100 will set you back £699.95.

Myryad Systems
2 Pipers Wood,
Waterberry Drive,
Waterlooville,
Hants. PO7 7XU
Tel: 01705 265508

DON'T GET KNOTTED
The new Ixos 607 loudspeaker cable is aimed at audiophiles on a budget. For £1.95 you get a 192 strand, high purity OFC cable which is designed for low capacitance and inductance despite its slim 1.55mm width. To make installation easier, the underside of the cable's plastic jacket is coated with adhesive, so no tacks or ties are necessary.

Ixos
Unit 2,
Desborough Ind. Pk.,
High Wycombe,
Bucks. HP12 3BG
Tel: 01494 459981

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Ixos
Unit 2,
Desborough Ind. Pk.,
High Wycombe,
Bucks. HP12 3BG
Tel: 01494 459981
The New Meridian 566

A DAC with the performance where it counts. Meridian's twin Phase-Lock Loop yields the lowest jitter whilst our 20 bit DAC offers a new benchmark in clarity and deep fulfilling bass.

The New Meridian 557

Balanced has never been so right. With balanced inputs and a dual mono design this 200W amplifier is the perfect finish to our balanced range. A unique ground balancing system gives you the highest performance in bridged mode without compromising the superb stereo at which Meridian amplifiers excel. Bridged output into 4 Ohms gives a massive 1000W.

The New Meridian 560.20

Taking CD replay to the edge with a new 20 bit converter and precision re-clocking used throughout. With the lowest jitter and pure Class A analogue balanced output the 508 reaches a performance level previously unheard.

The New Meridian 502

A Dual mono preamplifier design. Separating the channels onto individual boards gives Meridian a level of preamplifier performance to match our new 20 bit CD sources. With the highest quality components and Meridian's years of experience in preamplifier design we are now able to offer you a preamplifier that sonically disappears.

Meridian System Remote Control with audiophile quality balanced design from laser to loudspeaker.

What more could you ask?

Meridian Audio Limited
Stonehill, Stukeley Meadows,
Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE18 6ED
Tel 44 (0)1480 434334
Fax (0)1480 432948
MISSION LAUNCH RADICAL NEW FLAT PANEL SPEAKER
Friday, September 27th. In the plush City offices of financial advisers UBS, Verity Group executives (Mission, Wharfedale, Quad, Roksan) announced the successful development of a new form of flat panel loudspeaker. Identified as the Distributed Mode Loudspeaker (DML) and hailed as a major breakthrough, assembled members of industry and press were given some fascinating demonstrations of what appeared to be wall tiles producing music. “With this technology”, we were told, “we can produce talking notice boards and music from ceilings”. Also present were a large pair of panel loudspeakers.

The extraordinary feature of NXT technology, as Verity call their DML, is that the sound it radiates is of uncorrelated phase all over the panel, front and back. So the panel does not beam high frequencies toward listeners. This means it radiates sound all round, from front, back and sides, right up to 20kHz.

At low frequencies, however, the front and rear begin to take on a specific phase and the response forms lobes, just like a conventional loudspeaker, as cancellation sets in. So NXT needs a subwoofer.

Verity Group bought rights to this technology from the Ministry of Defence. It relies on a fairly sophisticated understanding of materials behaviour. As a result, this aspect of the DML is complex and difficult to understand.

Verity told us they had spent £2million in world-wide patent searches to avoid infringement, and to pay for their protective patents. Apparently, everyone and his dog has tried to get panels to radiate sound effectively and masses of patents exist. Verity claim that none of them operate a panel in the manner of NXT, however.

What does all this mean for hi-fi? Radiation from all round gives an unusually even spread of acoustic power into a room, which many people will like. There is no listening hot spot. So an NXT ‘speaker is easy to listen to.

It has low distortion too, another good point. However, a greater proportion of radiated energy will be reflected from walls, floor and ceiling, detracting from overall perceived quality. Building the panel into a wall solves this problem and that of limited bass output, suggesting stations, airports and suchlike will be customers. In the home, NXT will allow a good quality, inexpensive loudspeaker to be produced, one that can be positioned anywhere. Initially, it is unlikely to challenge conventional hi-fi ‘speakers, but this could well change under the influence of future innovations.

CASTLE ANNOUNCE EDEN
Castle have been out in the garden again, cultivating loudspeakers. This time they’ve come up with a tasty piece of temptation called the Eden. Forget apples - this Eden has carbon-fibre. It has been used to form the cone of the 6.5in bass/mid-range unit, to give a fast, clean sound completely free from coloration, Castle claim.

Being relatively small, the new driver allows the Eden to be compact: it measures 50cms high, 24cms wide and 30cms deep. Reflex loading is used to get good bass.

Treble output is handled by a ferro-fluid cooled polyamide dome tweeter. The crossover uses polypropylene capacitors for maximum transparency and it can be bi-wired.

All that stands between desire and fulfilment is £499. This makes available a wide choice of finishes: black, cherry, walnut, plus natural, medium and antique oak. Those interested in lusher surroundings may well opt for Rosewood or Yew options at a price that would have made Eve blush: £529.

Castle Acoustics Ltd
Park Mill,
Shortbank Road,
North Yorkshire
BD23 2TT
Tel: 01756 795333
The lead guitarist of 'Mission Aborted' is about to smash his axe over your head. Don't worry, it won't hurt a bit.

You see you're listening on a Sharp SRS 3D Surround Sound system, so it sounds so real you feel like you're actually there.

Using the revolutionary 'Sound Retrieval System', the audio system engulfs the room with vivid, 3D Surround Sound from just two speakers.

And because you get the same effect wherever you are in the room, you can get up and rock around to your hearts content. There are 4 audio systems with SRS available. Each one provides a more affordable alternative to normal multi-speaker systems. So do the intelligent thing. Surround yourself with sound, not speakers. Ask for a demo at any leading electrical store or call 0800 262 958 quoting SRS/HFW/R for further information.
Using experience gained developing their up-market CD transport and convertor, Audiolab have produced their first CD player. Dominic Baker is surprised to find it challenges the best.

The development of Audiolab's new 8000CD CD player owes a lot to its expensive two-box brother. Many of the techniques Audiolab have learnt in reducing jitter and improving signal integrity find their way into the 8000CD. To great effect - this player had us arguing about whether it deserved to be given a top slot. Not bad at the price - £1000.
Its heart is Crystal's new CS4329 DAC chip, a device which is itself a development from the popular CS4328, recognised for its clear treble and punchy bass.

There's only a single BNC co-axial digital output provided on the rear. According to Audiolab, this gives lower jitter than a standard optical output, if properly implemented. Two pairs of audio outputs are provided though, to allow the 8000CD to serve two systems.

For this review, as with most CD players we test at Hi-Fi World, the 8000CD was asked to stand comparison against our in-house reference CD set-up, comprising 8000CDM transport and Pink Triangle Da Capo convertor. This front end represents the best part of £3000, so a direct comparison is not valid. But the fact that the 8000CD is still being used in the reference system a couple of weeks after it was installed says a lot for its performance straight away.

We listened intently to the new 8000CD, taking turns to swap between the 8000CD and Pink Triangle's Da Capo convertor. This front end represents the best part of £3000, so a direct comparison is not valid. But the fact that the 8000CD is still being used in the reference system a couple of weeks after it was installed says a lot for its performance straight away.

It's something I've only heard a handful of players (three in fact; Da Capo, McIntosh MCD7009 and DPA 1024) achieve to such a believable extent. With such depth and body to vocals, The Cranberries played with real verve, creating a solid soundstage. Images were properly proportioned and precise, although not as tightly defined as with the Da Capo. It was difficult to know which was 'right' here; the Da Capo located images more tightly in a smaller soundstage, which Jon preferred. I found the 8000CD's more open and spacious images and staging musically captivating. Jon felt the precision of the Da Capo was more accurate.

In fact, the 8000CD was musical in a way I wasn't expecting. The word 'clinical' seems to appear in Audiolab reviews regularly. It's a label that they've had to put up with for a long time, even when it's not really merited. The 8000CD certainly breaks the mould here, having the kind of tactile and believable feel for music that made the Quad 67 CD so endearing. There's a sweetness in the treble that makes for enjoyable and unfatiguing listening. It's perhaps a touch soft - the McIntosh CDM7009 I mentioned earlier is every bit as sweet, but with better high frequency extension that gives more insight. But then the Mac's nearly three times the Audiolab's price.

Again comparing the 8000CD to our reference, bass was fuller and delivered with greater authority. It wasn't quite so well defined though, tending to become a little muddled with leading edges blurring rather than striking out sharply. It was fluid and expressive though, in a way few other players achieve, allowing music to flow graciously along. This was particularly noticeable with Classical pieces, where bass parts were full and flowing, benefitting from richness and character.

Cellos sounded powerful, their woody texture and thrumming resonances intact. While kettle drums at the back of the stage didn't have quite the definition and transient attack to make them totally convincing, the scale and power was certainly all there.
Without doubt, the 8000CD is one of the best players around at £1000. It is a notable step up from the Marantz CD-63mkII KI-Signature, which itself has seen off so much of the competition below £1000. But more than that, it is thoroughly musical with a sweet treble, lucid and full midrange and powerful bass. It's been a long time coming, but Audiolab's first integrated CD player has proved itself well worth the wait.

Dolores' voice, which can often sound slightly rough on lesser hi-fi, was smooth and gentle on The Cranberries' 'War Child' through the 8000CD. Strings swelled sweetly behind her, building into the music a sense of melancholic yearning which the Audiolab managed to transmit without difficulty. The images populating the soundstage were all clearly defined, making individual instruments more obvious on the heavier mixes of this album. 'Hollywood' pointed out this player's power, bass lines pounding out of the 'speakers. This helped the rhythmic content of the track to emerge unscathed and kept my feet tapping and head bobbing.

Another CD full of complex, heavy mixes is Carnival Jump Up, Steel Bands of Trinidad and Tobago. On this bass-fest of an album the Audiolab showed off its upper-bass dynamics. Where it fell slightly short, however, was on the lower frequencies played by the bass drum section of the orchestra. It couldn't quite muster sufficient clarity here to tell apart the various drums, instead sounding slightly thick and blurred. But this CD has caused problems for most of the players I've used it on, so the Audiolab is far from disgracing itself in this respect.

Next up was some good, old-fashioned Rock and Roll in the form of Janis Joplin's Pearl. Dynamics were at the forefront of the 8000CD's presentation once more, percussion crashing, vocals soaring and bass punching out of the 'speakers. Imaging was concise, keeping everything orderly no matter how frenetic the proceedings became. Vocals were powerful and expressive; Janis really let rip.

Representing Classical music were Tchaikovsky and Bach. The former's Symphony No6 Op 74 in B minor 'Pathetique' emerged smoothly and gracefully from the Audiolab. Strings were naturally dynamic, their lack of confusion part of the reason for the depth of the soundstage. The choir and woodwind sections of Bach's Mass in B minor both went to prove the 8000CD was doing a good job of treading the tonal straight and narrow, even if it did miss out on that last final touch of colour which assures the realism of the piece.

Switching to our in-house Pink Triangle Da Capo DAC brought a greater feeling of substance to bass and definition to treble, strings and Rock percussion showing this up most clearly. The range of tonal colours also broadened, although the meagreness of the improvement showed how good a job the Audiolab's internal DAC was doing.

AUdIOLAB 8000CD £1000
Cambridge Systems Technology
Spitfire Close,
Ermine Business Park,
Huntingdon,
Cambs.
PE18 6XY
Tel: 01480 415600

WORLD VERDICT
Sweet treble and full midrange give a lucid and full sound. The 8000CD makes music.

Measured Performance see p103
Noel Keywood, honorary president of the carbon fibre drive unit fan club, enjoys Castle's latest delivery, the Avon.

If you spend weekends gadding about the skies in your private jet or blasting around a secluded race track in a McLaren F1, then you'll be enjoying high technology shared with Castle's new Avon loudspeakers. Carbon fibre is used in turbine blades, racing cars and many other places where enormous strength and light weight are required.

Loudspeaker cones also need to be both strong and rigid, if they are to have a wide operating range, and with two-way designs like the Avon, this is especially important.
Castle's bass/midrange unit uses a woven mat of carbon fibre stiffened by a hard set resin, the normal structure employed for loudspeaker cones. This driver is reflex loaded, in an unusual arrangement where the port fires downward onto a plinth, a technique Castle favour. The floor is used as a reflecting surface to reinforce the bass.

And from experience with other Castle 'speakers, I know it works well.

What carbon fibre delivers is a clear, bright sound that's very clean, if not as squeaky clean as HDA (High Definition Aerogel). It has a relatively sweet tonality about it, but this is weak enough that it amounts to a barely perceptible sonic signature rather than an overt coloration. And this is what I met with in the Avon: it delivers unusually forward, out-of-the-box vocals that come across as impressively clean yet easy to listen to. Having said that, it's best to warn you that the Avon is dry, seemingly bright against most of its competitors, and very lucid. Angelique Kidjo's megaphonic vocals hit me really hard, as I'd hoped. Her shouts on 'Agolo' were vivid and the complex percussion backing her wove a dense pattern of sound that was impressive in its filigree detail.

There's no doubt the Avon is breathtakingly detailed and throws out a wealth of information, but the absence of a midrange dip makes its sound brightly lit against the sort of performance delivered by plastic cones. The electronic effects of the Beatmaster's Hey DJ I Can't Dance To That Music were laid bare, strung out between the 'speakers with almost embarrassing insight; other 'speakers simply don't analyse these effects in front of you with surgical insight to reveal their artificiality. Betty Boop sounded a little light; I wanted some more warmth and body behind her vocals and recalled, when engineering our own KLS-3 carbon fibre drive unit 'speaker, how we put in a bit of upper bass lift to give this. The Avon on the other hand has a ruler flat response.

The efforts of Ashkenazy's right hand were highlighted in Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 2, but as the violins entered, I was reminded of just how sweet they can sound when heard through carbon fibre, the strings vibrating deliciously. By contrast, cone break up within lesser drivers adds screech, jitter and muddle to violins. The Avons pull them out of the mix, dangle them in front of you and say, "There - violins!"

The Avons were "in your face" loudspeakers, possibly not to everyone's taste. This is because they are brutally revealing, projecting images forward in a relentless fashion. The polyamide laminated fabric dome tweeter of this 'speaker doesn't let go either, reproducing highs with vigour. Cymbals rang strongly, if not with quite the sonority of some top rate designs. This tweeter is more amenable in its delivery than the metal dome designs I've criticised in earlier Castle 'speakers, but at the same time, it's still a little, er, vigorous. Stereo images were well placed and the soundstage satisfactorily constructed, if not especially deep because there was little very low frequency ambient information.

Castle's bass loading system gave the tightest, punchiest bass I've heard for a long time. It appears to cut bass off sharply at around 40Hz, so there's little low bass rumble, but by eliminating low frequency overhang subjective speed is maximised. Few 'speakers have their low frequency dryness and control, and Rock fans who love speed and grip will be happy. The Avon's were unmatched in identifying rhythm.

Avon buyers would be well advised to choose a smooth partnering amplifier, like Aura's VA-80. And CD users must take on board the fact that most 'speakers, by dint of cone break up and midrange crossover dip, soften the glare of CD. Not so the Avon; it must be partnered with a good player. Vinyl addicts will love this 'speaker though; it perfectly suits the warm, fulsome bass of LP and the upper midrange droop of most MM cartridges.

Although a little academic in their correctness, the Avons are, all the same, impressive. I've not heard such a well engineered and successfully modern loudspeaker for a while. In a well furnished room with smooth partnering equipment Castle's new 'speaker offers a level of insight, clarity and control that few rivals can at present match.

Castle Avon
Tel: 01756 795333

Castol Acoustics
Park Mill, Shortbank Road, Skipton, North Yorks. BD23 2TT
Tel: 01756 795333

WORLD VERDICT

Taut, dry bass and lucid midrange, but need matching to warm ancillaries to avoid sounding bright.

Measured Performance

see p103
Does the best price always mean the best deal?

I thought I had this buying hi-fi business sorted out. I bought all the hi-fi magazines and read them thoroughly, because I reckoned their experts knew exactly what they were talking about - at least a lot more than I did! It was reassuring to see the same product names cropping up regularly and I figured the writers' experience and guidance would steer me straight to the system of my dreams. The trouble is I've ended up more confused than when I started.

One reviewer said a product I fancied was absolutely brilliant but another said it was nothing special at all. How can that be? Surely one CD player is pretty much the same as another? And how can a loudspeaker that's one magazine's top recommendation not get so much as a mention in any of the others? And then there was the amplifier that was the best in the test six months ago, yet now I never see it mentioned. I don't mind admitting it, I'm completely lost.

Plan B — I'm going for a deal

"So, I've decided to adopt plan B. I'm sure there can't be any really dramatic differences between all this gear and it's all bound to work together properly, so I'm going to check the price lists and the adverts and shop around for the best deal. I know getting the right hi-fi is important — hey, I'm as mad about music as anyone — but if I can get close to the mark and save a few quid, I'm sure I'll end up with a good system and be happy. I know there are specialist shops out there that do demonstrations and reckon they've got all the solutions but, to be honest, I'm a bit scared of going to one. I'd really welcome some advice and guidance but I don't know all the technical jargon and I'd feel daft sitting there trying to "hear the differences" if I couldn't. Anyway, a friend told me that these shops only sell the really expensive gear and that they're not interested if you don't have loads of money to spend."

And so another hi-fi buyer starts his journey down the road to dissatisfaction, endless upgrades and a permanent overdraft.

There is only one way to buy a hi-fi system that will prove satisfying, reliable and deliver true value for money, and that's through a specialist hi-fi dealer. Let's face it, you wouldn't think about buying a car if you couldn't take it for a test drive. You wouldn't buy a house solely on the strength of seeing the estate agent's details and a photograph. Even if you're spending far less, say buying a jacket or a pair of shoes, you want to try them on to make sure they fit you.

Buying a hi-fi system is no different. It doesn't matter what the specifications say or what the "experts" think: if it doesn't measure up to what you want from a system, then it's not the right choice. Knowing that you've bought a room full of five-star favourites or best-buys is no consolation when you can't bear to listen to them for more than five minutes. Even that ten per cent discount on the price won't make them sound any better.

Buying or being sold too!

Mind you, most of us are easily suckered when it comes to buying hi-fi. Given the choice of venturing into the unknown territory of a specialist dealer's shop and exerting some influence over what we buy, or taking what looks like the easy route — having adverts and magazine reviews push us along a path sweetened with discounts and special offers — we opt for the latter. We don't buy a system, we allow ourselves to be sold one. We sideline our own ideas about quality and personal satisfaction and buy someone else's opinion of what's good for us and good value for our money.

Take control!

Now there's a group of long-established, independent specialist dealers who are totally committed to putting the customer back in the driving seat. They're encouraging the buyer to take control ... with a little help and guidance provided where required. They know how difficult it can be to establish the true quality and
Ask the UK's top twenty specialist hi-fi dealers.

They know that without experiencing the performance of the systems they offer, you can't possibly assess the value of them. That's why their idea of "selling" is to play the systems for you and allow you to be the judge.

Listening to your choice of music in a peaceful, well-organised demonstration room, you may be surprised and, almost certainly, relieved to discover how easy it is to hear the differences between components and between systems. With the dealer's help and advice you will be able to make a clear and informed decision about what to buy. It comes down to trusting your own judgement rather than the opinion of a reviewer you've never met … and who won't refund your money if you're not satisfied or be at the end of a phone to sort out any problems you might encounter.

The story doesn't end there. These shops won't abandon you once you've put your hand into your pocket. They won't leave you to set up the system you've selected as best you can. They'll install it in your home, make sure it sounds great, and make sure that you're entirely happy with the way it works.

Why bother?
There is, of course, one question that hasn't been answered: why should you and these dealers go to all this trouble? Well, from your point of view maybe it's because a good deal is about a great deal more than just price. Unless you've got money to burn, you'll be living with your new system for years — years during which most of those five star products will probably stop shining quite so brightly.

As far as the dealers are concerned, maybe they believe that taking care of their customers properly is a nicer way of doing business than just handing over boxes.

Listed on the right of this page are the best hi-fi shops in the country. They all have lots of stars. You'll find them on the shop floor: they're the people waiting to guide customers towards hi-fi for which the appeal won't fizzle out the next time you buy a hi-fi magazine.

Test results

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Jon Marks enjoys his encounter with Meridian’s shiny new 502 pre-amplifier and 557 power amplifier.

Having previously concentrated on light and compact amplifiers using switched mode power supplies, the 557 marks a bit of a departure for Meridian. My spine vividly confirmed that; when Meridian say they use a massive 1.6kVA toroidal mains transformer, they mean it. Trying to swing this beast into our rack had me yearning for a forklift truck. If you’re still unsatisfied with those 200watts on offer though, the 557 can be bridged to produce over 800watts.

Doing the delicate work upstream of the 557 for this review was the new 502 remote control pre-amplifier. Hiding away under the unassuming gloss black glass top is a fully balanced, dual mono design constructed with high grade components. These include Nichicon electrolytics and audio grade polypropylene capacitors with a low-flux toroidal transformer. And with its chunky desk-top remote, the 502 can be used to control an entire Meridian system.
The 502/557 immediately made a positive impression with their rendition of Jimi Hendrix's 'Are You Experienced?' from Kiss The Sky. There was a naturalness to the presentation that caught my attention. The Meridians were an open window into the emotion in the music, not producing their own coloured version of events, but accurately relaying the feeling in the music. I could tell that this was going to be one of those rare combinations that help keep my faith in hi-fi alive.

'Voodoo Child (Slight Return)' and its astonishing guitar riff was a real 'blow my mind' affair, guitar somersaulting around the soundstage while percussion stood out clearly in the mix next to Hendrix's phasey vocals. Image clarity and detail were both first rate, playing their part in building a wide, transparent soundstage hanging free of the 'speaker cabinets, in this case Heybrooks' Sextets. But it was the Meridians' easy-going presentation that really impressed me, music never sounding the least bit artificial or processed. The rhythm set up by the bass guitar on 'Stepping Stone' was infectious. 'Castles Made Of Sand' was another opportunity for bass ability to show, the 557 stopping and starting the Heybrooks' cones without straining or curtailing harmonics and decay.

Wondering how the 502/557 would react to a bass heavy, highly complex mix, I popped Carnival Jump Up (Steelbands Of Trinidad And Tobago) into the Audiolab 8000CDM. The steel drums on this CD are capable of producing lightning fast transients, and these came loud and clear through the Meridians, putting a bass-happy smile on my face. There was tonal colour in abundance too, capturing the innately warm sound of drums and neatly separating gently struck cymbals from the dominant bass section of the orchestra.

The Meridian combo continued to pull out the stops with Buddy Guy's 'Slippin' In' through the Sextets. Drawing on the 557's smooth power, the tortured vocals were really getting their message across. Cymbals through that revealing Tonigen ribbon tweeter perfectly complemented the lament of Buddy's guitar playing, each pluck of the strings carrying weight and impact. The solidity and precision of the imaging allowed the piano to stay firmly out at stage right while drums kicked along at centre rear.

The Meridian/Sextet pairing also thrived on a diet of Moloko. I'd had a sneaking suspicion that 'Butterfly 747' would be able to blast out to its heart's content, and I was happy to be proved right. The thunderous opening synthesiser grew under the rest of the instruments, only to disappear with lightning speed as the drum'n'bass kicked in. Being a bit of a dancer, I thought the neighbours should be let in on this one, so I duly flicked up the volume on the 502's remote to more seismic levels. The Meridian pair, and the performance as a whole, remained unruffled as my internal organs started bouncing to the beat.

The 502/557's delicacy to good effect, soft strings and muted brass flowing gently along with accompanying background coughs and shuffles. With their mix of abilities relaxed, natural rhythmic flow, firm control, broad soundstaging and wide tonal palette - the Meridian 502 pre-amplifier and 557 power amplifier make for a well balanced combination. They have supplies of midnight oil plunging.

502 Pre-amp £1295
557 Power amp £1400
Meridian Stonehill, Huntingdon, Cambs. PE18 6ED
Tel: 01480 434334

WORLD VERDICT

052 Pre-amp Transparent, detailed sound with good tonal range and very natural presentation.
557 Power amp Great control and dynamics allied to seductive smoothness. A rare combination of power and delicacy.

Measured Performance see p103
"All I need is the right lead..."

- Sam Spade-Connector during his undercover investigations into the Mystery of the Lost Chord. He subsequently solved the case by utilizing a pair of ORTOFON SPK100 speaker cables.

The DESKADEL range of Hi-Fi interconnect, speaker cables, hook-up wires and tone arm wires are precision manufactured featuring PURE SILVER conductors insulated with PTFE in a variety of designs to suit all applications. Using only the finest materials and the latest manufacturing techniques we aim to provide a selection of quality products for superb natural sound reproduction on a scale previously unheard.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE ENQUIRIES WELCOME
Most hi-fi manufacturers make simple products and throw money at advertising in the hope they'll sell. A few, like Harbeth, operate at the other extreme, making sophisticated, well engineered products which sell more on merit than brand identity. Still, a little more market presence wouldn't do Harbeth any harm - for a company approaching its twentieth birthday, you'd think more people would know of them by now.

Ironically, their highest profile is in Japan, where their BBC credentials mean more than any amount of glossy...
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For those of you that think
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the advent of nuclear power,
soap operas and the ending
of all wars, you should replace
all your records with CD's.

THIS IS THE RECIPE - COME AND TASTE FOR YOURSELF - AUDIO ILLUSION FOR THE MORE DISCERNING PALETTE
advertisements ever could. But Harbeth aren't just about manufacturing the LS3/5a so beloved of oriental audiophiles. They've got an impressive range of their own designs, including the HL-P3ES, a mini-monitor far superior to the aforementioned Beeb design from which it's descended.

Sitting in at £975 is the HL-K6, Harbeth's definitive medium size standmounter, which designer Alan Shaw feels is his best yet. Indeed, considering the amount of work that's gone into it - four years of SERC (Science and Engineering Research Council) sponsored research into exotic cone materials - it should be something special. To cut a long story short, the K6 has ended up with a 200mm injection-moulded bass unit of 'Radial' material (Research And Development Into Advanced Loudspeakers - an acronym of which even the Japanese would be proud).

This is a custom blend of various ingredients including carbon fibre and polypropylene. Taking care of treble duties is a black SEAS anodised aluminium dome tweeter. Like all Harbeth loudspeakers, they're beautifully built and finished in Walnut, Black Ash, Cherry, Teak or other fruits of the rainforest.

On audition, the Harbeths were impressive from the word 'go', offering an unusual combination of classic monitor neutrality with real speed and grip.

Buoyed by this flying start, I moved to my loudspeaker torture track, Elektric Music's 'Showbusiness'. This electronic production forsakes warmth for swing, energy and thunderous bass. Again, the Harbeths showed their firm grasp of rhythms, displaying a Naim-like ability to stop and start in the blink of an eye. Dynamically strong, the HL-K6s managed to convey the impact of the electronic snare drum's lightning transients. Despite all the fireworks, the K6s weren't imaging as well as I'd hoped, so I tried winding up the volume - and at last things began to fall into place; driving the room more confidently, the Harbeths projected a tad. Now at last things began to fall into place; driving the room more confidently, the Harbeths projected better, vocals imaging slightly forward of the 'speakers' axis.

Only at this point did the Harbeths start to reveal their imperfections. On the song's "Seeing is believing" refrain, the metal dome tweeters hardened up to show a touch of sibilance. Although several orders of magnitude better than most other metal domes, they still lacked the sweetness of good fabric units. Indeed, when asked to reproduce the fluegel horn and tenor saxophone on Herbie Hancock's 'I Have a Dream'. things got a little steely. Still, careful matching should assuage this - I'd err more toward vinyl with smooth moving coils than CD players of an uncouth persuasion. I also detected a slight upper bass boxiness, particularly evident on the double bass runs in the same song, but this never became intrusive.

As expected, the Harbeths were most impressive on Classical, such as IMP's recording of Bach's 3rd Concerto for harpsichord and strings in D major. The allegro of the first movement saw the K6s displaying excellent speed, clarity and depth, the mid-bass driver imposing very little tone of its own. It was more neutral than even HDA or carbon fibre, I'd say. Cellos could have done with a touch more warmth, but were beautifully breathy and crisp, while violins were dry but never wiry. Again, with enough volume, soundstaging was strong and image location excellent.

All in all, another pair of impressively musical and clean sounding boxes from Harbeth. But don't forget they need plenty of watts and a refined front end to give of their best. If you're after a sophisticated pair of loudspeakers for under £1000, you'd be mad to overlook them - they really are that good.

Harbeth HL-K6

Harbeth Acoustics
Unit 1, Bridge Road,
Haywards Heath,
West Sussex RH16 1UA
Tel: 01444 440955

"Harbeths were impressive from the word 'go', offering an unusual combination of classic monitor neutrality with real speed and grip."
MUCH MORE THAN JUST A STAND!

The Reviewer Choice
As a piece of functional furniture the BASE Racks and Platforms together are a work of art - Dave Wilely, 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.

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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.
After three months of in-depth listening, Jon Marks and Dominic Baker reveal Star Search’s winning systems.

Our Star Search began in September, when we tested a group of six mid-price CD players with a keen eye on the best sonic performance available. From these selected players, the Marantz CD-63 MkII K-Signature and the Trichord Genesis emerged victorious.

In the following issue, it was the turn of six amplifiers to show their mettle. Used with the CD players chosen in September as well as our in-house reference system, we found three that delivered exceptional sound quality, the Mission Cyrus III, Pioneer A-400X and Rotel RA-970BX.

November found the final link in the hi-fi chain coming under scrutiny with a group of seven loudspeakers. Again, three stood out above all others: Heybrook’s long-lived HB I S3, B&W’s high-tech DM 602 and Celestion’s sonically imposing Impact 23s.

This month we bring our Star Search series to a conclusion, putting together the winners of each heat to assemble three excellent systems. The decision to assemble three systems was based on the winning loudspeakers. Heybrook’s HB I S3s are tonally pure and transparent but possess a light bass that is best suited to classical or acoustic music in small rooms. The Heybrooks, therefore, form the core of our recommended bedroom or study system.

B&W’s DM 602s have quite a different sound. They’re punchier and engaging, but less subtle as well. Their powerful bass means they work well in medium size rooms with a more up-tempo musical diet like Rock and Dance. They’re also capable of producing party levels without sounding dynamically squashed.

Celestion’s Impact 23s fall somewhere between the Heybrooks and B&Ws in terms of character. They have the best balance of the three with a solid and extended bottom end and powerful enough to drive large rooms matching a range of tonal color and transparency through midrange and treble that can reveal the subtleties in all styles of music.

Of the three amplifiers chosen, only one made it through to the final system selection. Mission’s Cyrus III recently went through an upgrade (now IIIi) which included a price hike to £600, pushing it beyond this test’s price range. And wherever it was used, Rotel’s RA-970BX simply fitted in better than the Pioneer, proving just how important system matching is. The Pioneer is still a fine amplifier in its own right, but in every combination we tried, the Rotel was invariably more at home.

Trichord’s Genesis player found favour in our bedroom system, where its soft nature countered a slight brightness in the HB I S3s, yielding a smooth and detailed sound. This proved to be an ideal balance, as excessive treble energy in a small space becomes aggressive and fatiguing.

Regular readers can’t have failed to notice the praise Marantz’s CD-63 MkII K-Signature has received in these pages. It is a finely balanced machine, smooth and detailed midrange and treble going hand in hand with solid bass. Feeding the neutral sounding and powerful Rotel, it allowed the qualities of both B&W’s DM 602s and Celestion’s Impact 23s to shine.

All three systems offer outstanding value, giving a level of performance that far exceeds the sum of the parts. A well judged system should give years of service, encouraging you to listen to and enjoy your music. These systems do just that.
A system ideally suited to a bedroom or small study with dry, fast bass and a neutral tone.
First I headed for the addictive rhythm and spiky synthesisers of Moloko's 'Day For Night'. I was greeted by crisp percussion and clear vocals, backed up by atmospheric synths that give this track its air of seductive mystery. Lower down the Heybrook's response, bass was tight and tuneful, not driving as deep as either the DM 602s or the Impact 23s, but weighty enough for a smaller room. The dryness of the bass should avoid setting off room modes that result in boomy and one-note bass.

'Day For Night' flowed into 'I Can't Help Myself', which again revealed the combination of crisp, clear electronic percussion and vocals allied to rhythmic bass. Here, that mid/bass driver managed a good impression of extension on the driving, grungy synth that makes up the bridge in this song. Seeking some drum'n'bass, I moved up to track 12, 'Butterfly 747'. Drum machine rhythms pumped away hard and fast, producing a feeling of scale and power counterpointed by the hi-hats that ricochet around the mix.

Wiping the metaphorical sweat from my brow, I took the tempo down a peg with John Lee Hooker's Boom, Boom. Raising the hairs on the back of my neck with its menace was 'I'm Bad Like Jesse James', where JLH's throaty vocals were accompanied by sparse, but powerful guitar dynamically relayed by this system. Adding a sense of ambience to the performance was the metronomic foot-tapping, its reverb echoing loud and clear through the HB1s. 'Same Old Blues Again' had dynamic kick-drum and bass guitar to give it rhythmic direction, the harmonic structure and tone being particularly well revealed by this system. Proof positive of this system's ability to convince with its tonal colour came from 'Boogie At Russian Hill', where funky Hammond, frenzied lead and bass guitar all benefited from life-like colour.

Switching Boom, Boom for Boys For Pele, I homed in on 'Father Lucifer'. Tori Amos' voice was smooth and natural, rather different from the anemic picture a lot of 'speakers paint. Tonal clarity made the looped vocals on this track, where Tori Amos comes at you from three different directions at once, easy to listen in on individually. 'Marianne' was smooth and clearly intelligible, the subtle detail the system supplied adding a sense of space to the presentation and capturing the yearning in this song. 'Talulah', as expected, was powered along purposefully by its military precision harpsichord and percussion. Each instrument played its part in producing a naturally cohesive result that made me want to carry on listening and savouring this CD.

Vivaldi's Four Seasons was rhythmically and tonally telling. Here, the Heybrooks' dry bass helped to tip the tonal balance slightly to the brighter side of strictly accurate, but the range of orchestral colour on offer and the insight into the music more than made up for this slight aberration. Violins were smooth and detailed, their strings sounding attractively tart without becoming sharp, while cellos had an impressively organic body resonance that gave the piece substance lower down. Notes flowed in a relaxed, easy way, coming together in a musical whole. Summer confirmed this system was doing its job of communicating the emotion in the music properly, its majesty and anger contrasting with Spring's grace and joy. The voices of the Magnificat choir on the Golden Age CD demonstrated that in terms of tone, subtlety and detail this system is a corker.

Trying The Cranberries for dessert, I was impressed by the way this system's imaging unravelled the heavy mix of songs like 'Hollywood', the frenetic 'Salvation' and the headlong rush of 'The Rebels'.

System Total
£1343.29
MARANTZ CD-63MKII KI-SIGNATURE
ROTEL RA-970BX★B&W DM 602

A lively sounding system that suits more up-tempo Dance and Rock music with deep bass in a medium size room.
ushing the steely sharpness of guitar strings forwards and out of the 'speakers with crystal clarity, I knew right away that this system was going to be an attention grabber. Having slipped Primal Scream’s Give Out But Don’t Give Up CD into the drawer of the Marantz, the system had immediately leapt into life. High up the fretboard, the electric guitar melody cut sharply, metallic leading edges stabbing outwards before decaying softly. What the B&Ws had that so few loudspeakers convey was a real sense of dynamic contrast, free of compression and blandness.

Dry and clean, the Rotel remained cool and unfusttered even at high levels. It gripped the B&Ws firmly at all times, tightly controlling their every cone movement, and giving the impression of tremendous headroom. The system’s character was easy and confident, and dealt competently with a wide range of music. Taking the Marantz’s detailed, transparent upper registers and solid bass lines, the Rotel and B&Ws produced an expansive and effortless sound, capable of providing a truly full scale performance.

Imaging too was impressive. In fact, it was quite breathtaking for such a modest system, handling Primal Scream’s ‘Free’, where the vocal was strongly located at centre stage, stretching forward of the ‘speakers. Bass guitar’s powerful, plucked thwack emerged from the left, while lead acoustic guitar, just to the left and behind vocals, was crisp and rounded. In addition to the fine imaging properties of this system was superb stereo separation, creating a wide expanse of sound across the stage.

The system gave an extremely lively, detailed and articulate sound on Counting Crows’ August and Everything. It wasn’t forced or pushy in any way, but full of life, the whole perfectly in balance regardless of what I threw at it and how hard I pushed it, and believe me, I pushed it hard. Pumping a mixture of Drum Club’s drum ‘n’ bass and Carl Cox’s ultra-hard

Fantasia mix through the system gave it a real full range test, and it coped handsomely, its power and control producing effortless drive and dynamics. Classical music is all very well for assessing tonal shading and definition, but it’s namby-pamby compared to a full-on, hard core dance track.

With the Marantz’s solid bottom end and plenty of power and control from the Rotel, the DM 602s produced quite awesome bass in every respect. The strong bass guitar introduction to The The’s ‘Helpline Operator’ was irrefutable proof of this fact, the incredible extension through the 602s literally rattling windows, pictures and any other items in the room not securely bolted down.

However, unlike many ‘speakers at this price level that attempt to create a similar impression of bass power, the B&Ws didn’t boom or become overblown. Instead bass was tight, fast and dynamic in a way that escapes most, even at twice the price. In this respect they’re up there with more esoteric, audiophile designs like Epos’ ES12s, quite an achievement at £300. Massive Attack’s ‘Better Things’ actually sounded as if its tempo had been stepped up, such was the speed and articulation on the deep bass line. Few loudspeakers are able to differentiate between the notes on this track so clearly.

The tonal purity and smoothness of the Marantz allied to the clean, neutral power of the Rotel helped bring an air of refinement to the B&Ws’ treble. Although never offensive in any way, the tweeter in the B&Ws can become a little too metallic and sharp in its attack at times. This is really their weakest area, but with such a finely balanced front end, it never got out of hand. In fact, I quite liked the extra crisp insight this afforded, matching the dry presence of the midrange well.

The Marantz CD player and Rotel amplifier are certainly class leaders, capable of seeing off competition over a wider price range than you’d expect. But the DM 602s were something really special, outperforming their price tag to such an extent that I’d recommend their audition to anyone in the market for a ‘speaker under £1000. They kept me gripped and enthused by every piece of music I played. It was like lifting the bland veil that covers so many ‘speakers’ sound, making music so interesting and informative I had difficulty pulling myself away.

**The tonal purity and smoothness of the Marantz allied to the clean, neutral power of the Rotel helped bring an air of refinement to the B&Ws’ treble.**

| B&W DM 602 | £299.95 |
| Rotel RA-970BX | £249.95 |
| Marantz CD-63Mk1 KU Signature | £499.95 |
| Heybrook HSBI stands | £109.95 |
| Chord Co. Siren (1m pair) | £65.00 |
| Chord Co. Rumour (3m bi-wire) | £135.40 |
| System Total | £1360.20 |
SYSTEM THREE

MARANTZ CD-63 MkII KI-SIGNATURE
ROTEL RA-970BX CELESTION IMPACT 23

Tonally clean and with extended bass this system has a powerful sound that will fill large rooms well.
I knew I was going to enjoy The Cranberries through this set-up, and 'Hollywood' immediately confirmed it was going to be the case.

The flow of the music was excellent, giving the Four Seasons a natural feel. As Summer turned into Autumn, and Autumn into Winter, the system continued to impress with its lack of musical bias. Vivaldi sounding as enjoyable and convincing as Moloko and John Lee Hooker.

I knew I was going to enjoy The Cranberries through this set-up, and 'Hollywood' immediately confirmed it was going to be the case. Huge, floor-shaking drums opened the track, but they weren't loose or uncontrolled. Dolores really let rip with her vocals, which came through undiluted, the same applying to the cymbals that were taking a pounding from the drummer. Lead guitar jangled towards the front of the soundstage while kick-drum thwacked with impact and extension from further back.

Boys For Pele followed The Cranberries, starting out with 'Caught A Lite Sneez'. Harpsichord was detailed, dynamic and possessed good tonal colour, its freshness contrasting strongly with the obviously artificial drum machine that crashes through the song. There was the same power to the delivery of vocals here as had manifested itself on The Cranberries. More subtle was the following 'Muhammad My Friend', where piano notes died away into a clear, spacious acoustic, unmolested by the bass of the intro. The Marantz's disc-reading skills made their presence known in the way piano notes ran the full gamut from soft and gentle to powerful and heavy, all the intermediate gradations present and correct.

Celestion Impact 23 £299.00
Rotel RA-970BX £249.95
Marantz CD-63Mk1 KI-Signature £499.95
Chord Co. Chrysalis (1m pair) £29.99
Chord Co. Rumour (3m bi-wire) £135.40
System Total £1214.29
In your Hi-Fi system the 8000S can be an Integrated Amplifier or a Pre-amplifier. When combined with the Audiolab 8000P Stereo Power Amplifier it becomes an advanced pre-power amplifier. For the future the possibilities are limitless.

The 8000S is a perfect example of the flexibility, upgradability and superb sound which all Audiolab products deliver.

For more information and details of your Audiolab dealer call or write.
Lumping an assortment of quality components together without a second thought for the synergy between them is unlikely to be very successful. Component matching is important whilst significant differences in sound quality exist between components. And even if a system sounds impressive in a large demonstration room, wheeling it back and setting it up in a room without cat-swinging space may still produce disappointment.

We have spent the last three months carefully selecting the best CD players, amps and speakers for our group reports. Additionally, more time has been spent finding out which components work together to give music that elusive tingle factor.

This month's three systems were chosen with room compatibility as a high priority, ranging from System One for the study, through System Two, aimed at medium size rooms, to System Three with its ability to fill the largest of rooms.

Possessing lighter, drier bass than the other two systems was the Heybrook/Rotel/Trichord combination. There was rhythm aplenty though, keeping feet tapping through a host of albums. Dynamics were also convincing, with guitar and percussion, for example, coming across as fast and clean. Transparency joined a fine sense of detail on the midrange's list of merits, clearly revealing the purity of female vocals and adding a feeling of space to the sound. Setting off the Heybrooks' slight treble brightness was the softness of the Genesis' upper registers, resulting in a tonal balance and range of contrast that made your average system sound bleached and colourless by comparison.

The Rotel RA-970BX accompanied by B&W's DM 602s and Marantz's CD-63MK II KI-Signature, produced a very lively sound. The system handled Rock and Dance particularly well thanks to the2s' ability to make even the smallest dynamic contrasts stand out, making for a presentation full of scale and realism. Keeping firm control over the B&Ws was the Rotel, its uncluttered sound perfectly complementing the Marantz's subtle, detailed midrange and its solid bass.

The Rotel's stable imaging contributed to the soundstage's clarity and depth, but where these 'speakers really stamped their authority on the proceedings was in the bass, which was nothing short of outstanding at this price. Most small 'speakers are engineered to have loose, overblown lower registers to give the impression of depth. But the 602s have punchy, focused bass with real extension, just right for filling medium sized rooms with engaging music on a life-like scale.

Those looking for a system combining some of the best qualities of both of those already mentioned could do no better than the KI-Signature, RA-970BX and Impact 23s. Here, real bass control made for a sense of unfettered rhythm whatever the musical genre, nimble upper bass from the Celestions marrying perfectly with the drive and solidity of the Rotel and Marantz's bottom end.

The Blues brought a tear to the eyes courtesy of this system's ability to transmit the atmosphere of the music. An even tonal balance helped as well, with orchestral sections clearly separated and vocals smooth and pure. Adding the icing to the cake was the Celestions' ever-present ability to endow music with a natural scale and undiminished power, in contrast to many loudspeakers which sound as though they've been designed to impress by 'shouting' at you.

With three of the best systems to choose from, now's the time to dust off all those unloved and unlistened CDs. Make that trip to your dealer and pick up a hi-fi that's music to your ears.
David Price continues his in-depth look at the Japanese audio scene.

One of the keys to understanding Japanese people is the word otaku. It isn't really translatable into English, but it describes someone who's totally, obsessively immersed in their particular interest or hobby. And as any Japanese will tell you, Japan is full of otakus.

Japanese hi-fi otakus are at a disadvantage to Western hi-fi buffs because, cruelly, their listening rooms are invariably a lot smaller. With Tokyo's real estate value greater than that of the entire United States, space is an expensive commodity, so listening rooms are often tiny. Fortunately, they never let this get the better of them, showing TARDIS-like interior design skills, squeezing the full monty of kit into the smallest of rooms. If there's space to swing a cat, thinks the hi-fi otaku, there's plenty of room for a pair of Tannoy Westminster Royales and a brace of Conrad-Johnson Sonographe monoblocks.

The Japanese hi-fi press don't help matters either, with reader's system features showing rooms packed with indecently expensive high end kit sandwiched 'twixt the inevitable horn loudspeakers. Journals like Stereo Sound, MJ and Audio Accessory brim with assorted tweaky tales - the best coin to sit under your sub-table spikes (¥500 is a favourite), the retired guy who's designed and built over five hundred different loudspeakers (and keeps them all in his house), the man whose wife left him after he bought a £35,000 superfi system - read them and weep!

The magazines' quality of writing is matched only by their breadth and diversity - some routinely review key new products with every single permutation of matching ancillaries on the market - no mean feat!

They've also started to offer classified ads for second-hand hi-fi. Until Japan's bubble economy burst a few years ago, most 'obsolete' hi-fi was deemed worthless and when the time came for replacement, it was simply left out with the garbage!

BACK TO THE FUTURE
The strength of the Japanese market is its diversity. The umpteen million lumpen black box separates Japan...
makes are a healthy staple for the world's audio punters, but aren't regarded with such delectation at home. Instead, tasty looking 'mini-compo' (mini-systems to you and me), as pioneered in the eighties by Aurex and popularised in the nineties by Denon, eat heavily into budget black-box separates sales.

The real action is in upmarket separates that are rarely exported to cash-poor markets such as our own. This market sector relies on tireless innovation and forward thinking, engendering a healthy spirit of Research and Development. Outsiders can't help but be impressed by the sheer momentum of the hi-fi scene, the big manufacturers managing several model range changes a year. Japanese people are highly receptive to new technology, and refreshingly lack the cynicism of many Europeans. Indeed, one of the most popular phrases to be heard in TV commercials is shinhatsubai ('new product'), chanted like a mantra, like an automatic guarantee of sales success.

**FORMAT WARS**

When CD was introduced in Britain, it was greeted with little interest, or even derision. It took a big push from the electronics giants and three long years to make any major inroads. By contrast, Japan embraced it so quickly that three years after its introduction, most big music companies like Victor, ALFA, Sony and Polystar had stopped pressing vinyl completely!

But it hasn't all been plain sailing - until a couple of years ago Japanese CDs were very expensive at around ¥3000 (£18), and only after a government inquiry did prices drop by twenty-percent. Today, they face stiff competition from bulk American imports sold at ¥1000 (£7) a shot.

Likewise, DAT didn't suffer the false start it did on Western markets, and by the end of the eighties it was a common sight in many audiophile homes, and a popular provider of background music in shops, thanks to its long play capability. Blanks are readily available (even some supermarkets sell them) and discounted, prices can be as low as ¥350 (£2) for a 90.

In Japan, pre-recorded music cassettes have always been seen as a poor relation to CD and have failed to really take off, but blank tapes are all-pervasive. Not only are they dirt cheap (under £2 for a decent metal 90) but thanks to Japan's unique copyright laws they're very handy for taping CDs from Japan's extensive network of specialist CD libraries which rent albums for a couple of pounds a night. Investing in a budget Nakamichi (at half UK prices), a stack of blanks and a CD library membership is a very cost-effective way of building a music collection, as many enterprising students have discovered.

As for DCC and MiniDisc, although the Japanese press generally agree that the former sounds better, DCC has had a hard time. At the time of its launch, major music retailers like Tower Records put Technics recorders and a sprinkling of pre-recorded tapes in stores, but to little avail. On the other hand, Sony targeted MiniDisc more at department stores and convenience shops - and cleaned up. MD seems to have struck a chord with fashion-conscious teenagers born in the age of random access discs, and with lots of their friends' music to 'tape'.

Nowadays, vinyl's back in fashion, with trendy Shibuya (Tokyo's Soho) trip hop kids and Johnny Walker-drinking, vintage turntable-owning jazz fans alike chasing every new jazz LP going.

Extensive reissues of sixties and seventies rock on vinyl have also proved big sellers, while second-hand record shops like Audio Union, Yellow Pop and Record Hunter seem to be doing a roaring trade.

**GOING TO HI-FI HEAVEN**

Trendy as black plastic is, most Japanese see the future as digital. DVD, SD, HDCD (or whatever you want to call it) is very nearly with us all, and doubtless will be embraced with open arms and wallets, invariably long before us Westerners get our hands on it. All the more reason then for audio-hungry hi-fi lovers to jump on a plane and pay Japan a visit. Flights aren't too expensive but the dangerous hotel bills will probably negate any savings you make on hardware purchases, which is a shame. Still, the people are friendly, the weather good and the food even more mouth-watering than the hi-fi. Heaven indeed!
Harbeth HL-K6: top of the world!

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-incredible clarity through advanced engineering in a very compact cabinet!

For information please contact Heather Lewis,
Harbeth Acoustics Ltd., Unit 1, Bridge Road, Haywards Heath, W. Sussex, RH16 1UA, UK.
Tel: 01444 440955 Fax: 440688 E-Mail: CompuServe 100624,455

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Our patent pending ‘The Little Mead’ is a unique mains conditioner that has been developed for audio equipment to give improvement in stereo image, extra depth and superior placement as well as adding protection from damaging mains voltage spikes. The wooden case also gives a positive improvement on sound quality.

A.E.S. UK has a new series of products being premiered at the Ramada Hi Fi show in September. The “Carlisle”, a hybrid amplifier providing 80 Watts of power with the ultimate in detail, sound stage and control; The “Argisle” speakers, designed to match the quality of the Carlisle. Both of these products are designed and offered as a “complete package” as well as individually.

100 Wood Lane, Sonning Common, Reading, Berks RG4 9SL
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JAPANESE CLASSICS

The late and the great of Japanese hi-fi.

TECHNICS RS 9900
An enormous late-seventies monster two-box cassette deck that makes the Dragon look like a Walkman. One unit contained a three motor closed loop dual capstan direct drive transport, the other the record and replay amps. Even the price tag was fearsome, the equivalent of around £4000 in today's money.

TECHNICS SP 10
Most Technics turntables were nothing to write home about, but this was something else altogether. The SP10 replaced ageing Garrards in Japan's recording and broadcast studios, offering the unusual combination of top-notch measured performance and super sound quality, as satisfied customer Herb Belken, president of vinyl specialist Mobile Fidelity Sound Labs, will testify.

SONY CDP-RI/DAS RI
Sony's late-eighties two box player was one of the first attempts to take CD seriously as an audiophile format, and judging by its clean, detailed sound, all that armour-plating didn't go to waste. Very big, very heavy and very good.

YAMAHA NS1000M
Yamaha's formative attempt to build a studio monitor in the mould of top B&Ws and KEFs turns in an extremely clear, dry sound that came to epitomise Japanese speaker tastes. High tech beryllium mid and treble drivers belie its elderly origins. Many people still swear by them.

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NAKAMICHI DRAGON CASSETTE DECK
Nakamichi's Dragon series of separates have always been popular on their domestic market, but none achieved the notoriety of the cassette deck. More than a decade old, the Dragon is no longer the absolute best, but there's a lot to be said for 'period charm', as any Bentley Turbo R owner will confirm.

MARANTZ 2500
This European-owned, part-Japanese company of American origin was the worthy winner of the 1977 'you cannot be serious' award for receiver design, with 250W per channel, a built-in oscilloscope for multipath indication and more gleaming metal than a '57 Chevy. What were they on, we ask ourselves?

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DENON DL-103
One of Japan's longest serving products with roots going back to the late fifties, Denon's ubiquitous moving coil cartridge is still alive today, if a little unsteady on its feet. Recording studios love it for its dry, punchy sound, but its Mount Fuji-shaped stylus profile isn't the best for inner groove detail. A charmer nonetheless.

HI-FI WORLD DECEMBER 1996
Naim believe that music is for playing. That's why when you're listening to the finest sounding audio equipment in the world you know it. Naim always stands out for the quality of its sound reproduction, whatever the price point, because the same engineering skills and exacting manufacturing standards always apply. Once you've auditioned them yourself we think you'll agree, for the very best hi-fi equipment there's only one name to ask for.
Please help me if you can. My system contains a Pink Triangle LPT-GT1, Roksan Tabriz zi and Ortofon MC 15 Super. The amp is an Exposure 15, with KEF Q60. All items are suitably stand mounted (S. O. and Target) and connected with Exposure cable. I have recently moved and my new sound room is somewhat smaller (12’x15’x8’) with wood flooring. My problem is the system now sounds a touch overbright (it was a close run thing in my previous room, 13’x18’x7.5’ with a concrete floor).

I enjoy a neutral(ish) sound with articulate bass with a clean mid and clear treble (any form of distortion drives me crackers but the sound in my new location is clean but cold). What in your opinion is the best way forward? Should I change my cartridge to something like a Denon 204? Is my amp up to it? Should I change both? Or anything else? My options seem endless, but errors can turn out very dear!

Just to burden you further, could you point me in the right direction regarding CD players; what sort of price range should I be considering for a player that would mesh well with my system?

Steve Hollingbery
Hove, Sussex.

If the system was satisfactory before your move, then the only thing to have changed is the room. You would be best advised to consider modifying your room acoustics first, since even the best components can do nothing to improve a poor room.

A letter by M. D. O’Connor in the October, 1996 issue stated that subjective terms like “fast”, “tight” and “speed” in reviews were meaningless. Whilst I and many others understand his need for accurate portrayal of instruments and voices in a given acoustic, we also show additional understanding of rhythm and timing, qualities that for many of us are the real key to long-term musical involvement.

Consider music for two acoustic instruments played live in a sitting room. Mr. O’Connor would no doubt be perfectly happy with the pitch and timbre, the detail, and the imaging because it would be the real thing. But, if one of the instrumentalists cannot keep time with the other, would Mr. O’Connor still be satisfied with the performance?

Some people do not know that rhythm and timing can be poorly portrayed by hi-fi components. Even Quad has argued that if musical involvement is not heard through their systems, then it cannot have existed during the recording.

I too, used to believe this myth, until I attended a Naim demonstration courtesy of Billy Vee’s in Lewisham. Recordings were played which almost brought me to tears, especially Adolphe Adam’s ‘Julsang’ (Proprius PRCD7762). Yet I already owned this music, and it never had that effect when played on my own system, in spite of how accurate it sounded. There was definitely some other quality that the Naim gear allowed through which impressed me, one which I had hitherto been unaware of.

If Mr. O’Connor can grasp this he might well be able to judge and enjoy Rock and Pop music. If he can’t, then so be it. But it does him, and Quad, little credit to ignore or to pour scorn upon amplified music, for whatever reason. Would it really be so bad to appreciate the likes of Abba, REM and Buddy Holly, as well as ‘real’ music?

Richard Ward
Brightness and hardness result from a surplus of reflected treble energy off walls, ceiling and floor. If you have a hard floor, then carpeting it will do wonders for the sound. Even a rug in the centre will help considerably, if you don’t fancy wall-to-wall carpeting with underlay. Brightly patterned Durries from Habitat, Ikea, etc will help; they suit polished wooden floors.

With the side walls get a friend to hold a mirror and move it along until you can see an image of the loudspeakers from your listening position. At this point, and over an area around it if possible, hang something that will break up (diffuse) treble energy from the loudspeaker. Acoustic tiles, egg boxes, books on a shelf or bookcase, a wall hanging (Durry again, perhaps with a layer of felt behind it), or similar will do the trick. Treat both side walls alike, if possible.

There’s not so much you can do with the ceiling, except use a large, fabric lampshade on a pendant fitting, if this happens to be in the right position. Treating the ceiling too heavily can compress the stereo soundstage downward, by removing what the brain interprets as height information. Many authorities advise against ceiling treatment as a result, but of course a little experimentation here won’t hurt.

This sort of treatment, applied with some imaginative skill, can improve the decoration of a room, as well as make it easier on the ear (fewer reflections) and better in terms of hi-fi reproduction. Stereo imaging and general cleanliness of sound will improve greatly.

Finally, look behind you! If you sit against a rear wall, treat it to remove reflections. Again, an absorptive or diffusing panel will help. NK

My interest is provoked by the realisation that these speakers’ larger siblings, the PS5.1s, are available in kit form at a substantial saving and I plan to build a pair this summer. This in turn, however, raises a query regarding bi-wiring.

My current system (Rega Planar 3; Arcam Alpha One CD; original Cyrus 1 amp; AR 18 loudspeakers) cannot be bi-wired as the speakers do not have this facility, but the ones I plan to build have two sets of terminals and would doubtless benefit from bi-wiring. Is it necessary for bi-wiring that the amplifier also has two sets of terminals, or do both the treble and bass signal leads originate from the same pair of binding posts?

If the former, then my Cyrus 1 cannot be bi-wired either. If the latter, then I have no problem bi-wiring, do I? Which leads (pun intended) to the second part of my query: I read occasional reviews of speaker cables and the like wherein the characteristics of some cables produce a sweet treble, while others offer a firmer bass.

If you are bi-wiring, I assume that it is advisable (due to differing impedances/capacitances etc.) to use the same cable for both runs to the speaker, but I would be interested to learn if any experiments have been tried with, for example, silver plated cable to tweeters and solid core copper to woofers, and whether any particular combinations have been found to work better than twin runs of either cable.

Steven Dickinson
Davyhulme, Manchester.

JM Lab still have no UK importer for their loudspeakers. The company is part of Focal, based in France. Focal manufacture a range of very high quality drive units, supplied in the UK by Falcon Acoustics, Tel: 01508 578272. JM Lab produce a range of loudspeakers using these focal drivers. Falcon in the UK can supply the kits you are interested in, as well as anything else you’ll need for their construction.

Drop them a line with a stamped addressed envelope, they said, for all literature. Their address is: Falcon Acoustics, Tabor House, Norwich Road, Mulbarton, Norwich NR14 8JT.

To bi-wire these loudspeakers you are right in your assumption that both sets of cables, bass and treble, feed off one set of terminals on your amplifier, so you have no problem here. When bi-wiring was the latest fashion, attempts were...
made to use optimised cables dedicated to bass and treble individually, but with no long term success. I'd advise using the same cable for bass and treble. Feel free to experiment though, you can't do any harm and this kind of tweaking can be fun. DB

Try a set of Chord's Cobra interconnects between the Arcam Alpha One CD player and Cyrus I.

TRAIL TRAVAIL
I have travelled the hi-fi trail for many years, starting pre-teens listening to my Uncle John and his mates playing the sounds of Chuck, Buddy and Little Richard. Luckily, I had indulgent parents, and I soon had my very own 'Dansette' record player. This golden era lasted through my Pop, Mod, Blues, Soul, Rhythm & Blues years, 1957-67.

Then came marriage and my first stereo. A combined amplifier and turntable with attached speakers (wow!!) Whilst collecting net curtains from a department store, I heard the Beatles on a stereo Radiogram and I was hooked. That in turn became my National Panasonic music centre. I then made a real mistake, saying goodbye to the whole point of this epic. I love the sound of my present system and like Eric Clapton - I have returned to my roots. Listening to the Blues, and buying vinyl - albeit at £25 a shot, which I consider good value - from Audiophile International.

I would like to upgrade the Audio Technica AT-OCS cartridge. Any suggestions (£200)? Is it possible to bi-amp with the I40s? Is it possible to bi-amp ES11s? (they are the bi-wireable type).

Lingo, Armageddon or new CD player? This is a dilemma. What CD player would you recommend? Vinyl and CD about equal in numbers.

Bob Walker
Esplanade,
Rochester.

I suggest you replace your AT-OCS with an Ortofon MC 10 Supreme moving coil cartridge. Like the AT it has fast, punchy bass. However, the OC-5 had peaky treble and was overbright in my view. The MC 10 measures flat but still has clean, vibrant treble, giving it a similar character, but with more refinement. Like the OC-5 it is very suited to Rock. Ortofon tell us its price is £299.95, a little out of your range, but they offer 10%-25% off the price of a new cartridge, if you trade in your old MC. I suggest you phone them on 01753-889949.

Naim told me there's no problem bi-wiring with a Hi-Cap. Both power amps can be plugged into this supply and it parallels the input connections too. Without the supply you have to solder up a jumper lead to connect the inputs in parallel. You can of course bi-amp the ES11, Naim's suggestion being that you use one power amp for the bass on either channel, and one for the treble on either channel. NK

Run your new Ortofon MC 10 in with one of DCC Compact Classics choice pressings.

TOP RANKIN
Please could you provide me with some advice and also information. My current system is; TEAC P500 Transport, Arcam BB1 (with Crown grade chip set), Pas01 Passive Preamp, Krell KSA50 MkI, Celestion SL600 Si. The amplifier has been slightly modified with the kind assistance of Mr Russ Andrews and the speaker crossover has been removed to a separate box close to the amplifier and all components upgraded to Kimbercups and Russ Andrews inductors. I have also bypassed a notch filter section of the crossover in order to reduce the number of components.

This provides me with a very easy to listen to system with little listener fatigue. I also realise it is not the most dynamic of systems, but is certainly much better in this area than the original components. However, the CD converter is not only showing its age, but it is also suffering electrical problems. Due to its age I feel a repair may neither be possible or even economical. Please could you suggest a current replacement that would work with the above. I don't have a lot to spend at present so £250 would be about the limit. I do appreciate that this is not a great deal, but in my view components seem to range from sensible prices to
van den Hul Carbon Cables

Speaker cables
Snowline £4.99
Clearwater £6.99
Snowtrack £9.99
CS122 Hybrid £11.99
D352 Hybrid £19.99
The Magnum £37.99

Interconnects
The Source £49.99 (0.8m)
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HI-FI WORLD
silly prices with very little in between.

On a more serious point I was recently changing channels on my satellite system when I landed on the CMT channel. I have never really liked country music in general but I do like KD Lang and Lyle Lovett. A group were playing with one male and three female singers. The music was brilliant with voices to die for. Their name was The Rankin Family and they come from Canada, but as yet, this is as much as I know. Please, if anyone has any information about a current release, I would be grateful.

Andrew McBride Walton, Liverpool.

Spending £250 on a replacement for the BB1 will be a sideways step and a waste of money in terms of the improvement you'll gain. It really will strangle the potential of the rest of the system. I understand that it has to be replaced because it is faulty though, so you are left with little choice here.

Bluntly, what I'd do is sell the whole lot. It should reach a very reasonable price as you have some expensive and esoteric items there. With the money you get, allocate around £2000 or so towards assembling a better balanced system, which will almost certainly out-perform what you have, and pocket the change for a nice holiday or several hundred new albums.

You need to visit a good dealer where you can audition a new system properly. A good start would be Marantz's CD-63MKII KI-Signature CD player, a Meridian 551 or Audiolab 8000S integrated amplifier and Epos ES12 loudspeakers. This should give you a sweet, musical, dynamic and enjoyable sound, the system being better matched and tuned. At the very least, selling the TEAC transport to help toward the Marantz CD player. This alone should bring a worthwhile improvement.

As far as the Rankin Family go, you could try their Collection album which was released on Grapevine Records on October 14th. Any good record shop should be able to order a copy for you. DB

I would appreciate some answers to questions that have been generated by your excellent magazine. Namely, how does a modern valve unit compare with second-hand vintage valve gear such as a Quad II? What speakers are really suited to valves? Shall I look for a pair of re-conditioned electrostatics or continue with my well loved and polished MA-IIs?

Do you consider the Quad II, although a sweet and musical sounding amplifier, won't produce the same bass depth and power or have such extended treble compared to a modern design. The Quad II has quite a soft, midrangey sound, whereas your Sterling should be clearer and more open at the top with more welly at the bottom end.

With the Sterling's limited output power you are going to need some sensitive loudspeakers to get the best results. Heybrook's HB1 S3s and their Quartets fit the bill nicely here, both offering high sensitivity and a smooth, high overall impedance that will match a valve amplifier well. I can't think of many other models at an affordable price that have the kind of easy drive characteristic you need, but look for 88dB+ sensitivity and an impedance curve that stays between 6-12Ω across the whole audio band.

And finally how about a regular article on vintage gear. According to your sales section an awful lot of equipment is ripe to change hands, but I'm sure not all of us know the quality of the items advertised.

Nigel Masters Heckington, Lincolnshire.

A modern valve amplifier, at least one that has been designed properly, should provide a wider bandwidth and lower distortion, due to the higher grade modern components and materials available today. For example, the Quad II, although a sweet and musical sounding amplifier, won't produce the same bass depth and power or have such extended treble compared to a modern design. The Quad II has quite a soft, midrangey sound, whereas your Sterling should be clearer and more open at the top with more welly at the bottom end.

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**AUDIO WITH AUDION**

In March this year I decided to upgrade my ageing hi-fi set the following system: Audion ETSE Sterling operating as a power amp due to its restricted number of inputs; Rose RV-23S valve pre-amp; Arcam Alpha 5 Plus CD player and Monitor Audio MA-I Gold II speakers. The speaker cable is Monster Bi-Wire and the interconnects are a mixture of Audioquest Topaz 2, Hi-Q Silver and Tandy Gold.

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Do you consider the Alpha 5 Plus to be worth upgrading to the '6' or purchasing a separate DAC? I know, questions, questions, but I am learning that this upgrade bug just keeps digging its teeth in.
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The Arcam Alpha 5 Plus player is a smooth, detailed sounding player which I suspect will shine through even better once you have found a good match between amplifier and loudspeakers. Upgrading from this level really does demand you look at two-box systems, first adding a DAC and then a dedicated transport at a later date. DPA’s Enlightenment would be a good choice, with the kind of detail and spaciousness that your valve based system will relish. DB

With this length in mind, will my system suffer from voltage drop and if so, is there any simple remedy to this problem? Would it help if I chose high sensitivity speakers (perhaps you could recommend some between £500 and £600)? Should I bi-wire the speaker or should I aim to upgrade to a pre/power amplifier?

Looking at the problem from a different angle, is there a maximum length for speaker cable? If so perhaps you could let me know. Then I could site my new speakers with this in mind.

R. J. Clarke Gravesend, Kent.

Naim didn’t think you’d have too much of a problem driving 60ft of their A5 cable with your Nait amplifier, its total resistance only being around 0.2Ω, not really enough for you to lose a significant amount of power.

A sensitive loudspeaker will certainly help here, allowing you to get the most out of your amplifier. Naim have two new floorstanding loudspeakers, both claiming healthy 89dB sensitivity, so these may be worth an audition. The £596 Intro fits your budget nicely.

Another option, and also an upgrade at the same time, would be to have your Nait 3 converted by a Naim dealer so that you can access the pre- and power amplifier sections separately. This would cost around £15 for the kit of parts plus labour on top. The pre-amplifier section of your Nait 3 could then be used to drive both its own internal power amp section for your existing system, and a £427 NAP90 power amp, say, in your lounge. The pre-amplifier section of the Nait 3 will happily drive this length of interconnect without loss, and having the NAP90 close to the loudspeakers would certainly bring a worthwhile improvement to the sound. Any Naim dealer will be more than happy to explain and demonstrate this system to you.

When you’ve modified your system, have a listen to how it sounds with a DCC Compact Classics LP.
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Review of PASSION - Martin Colloms
HiFi News April ’93 and November ’94

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TOPHATS: End unwanted noise/microphony - attach to top of valves. Revelation at... £125 a pair
Cyrus' new dAD3, based on the dAD7, has a slimmer price tag and cheaper mechanism. Dominic Todd finds out if it can keep sonic quality in the family.

As we enter a season of hysterical political campaigning, the question on everyone's lips is just how good we feel about the feel good factor. The FGF certainly seems to be taken seriously among British hi-fi manufacturers. Most of the big players, such as Arcam, Audiolab and Celestion, are bringing out a plethora of surprise new models.
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The new Cyrus dAD3 CD player from Mission is a case in point. A machine that undercut's the dAD7 by £300, yet gives little away, wasn't really expected. The main difference is a switch to a cheaper CD\$9/12 transport in place of the top loading, 'professional' version used for the dAD7. Otherwise, the exquisite diecast casework, 18 bit DAC chipset and the ability to upgrade (with the addition of a PSX power supply and/or an uprated internal DAC known as the Q-Module) are largely unchanged. An outboard DAC is also an option, although it's a shame to see that this can only be accessed via an optical output (the dAD7 also features an electrical one).

The first disc to be digested by the slightly noisy Cyrus was Jam Nation (World music inspired by Peter Gabriel). To borrow a line from Volvo, the dAD3 proved itself to be a true control freak. With 'Sunstroke', it displayed a taut, powerful bass, sharp transients and effective dynamics, a combination that makes you sit-up and take notice.

Don't get me wrong - there's never any suggestion that the Cyrus is all brute force and no subtlety. Proof par excellence of this was provided by female vocals, which were smooth and well projected. Bass had fine depth and background percussion could clearly be heard without it being 'thrown' at the listener. The only small faults were a slight edginess to female vocals and an electric guitar timbre that was perhaps too smooth - a little more energy and effervescence wouldn't have gone amiss.

'She Moved Through The Fair', reiterated the Cyrus' sonic prowess. As well as sustaining shelf-rattling bass notes, electric bass guitar had texture and definition, each individual strum and finger movement clearly audible.

Classical music didn't prove quite such a success, however. On Corelli's Concerto da chiesa No. 8 there was a hint of muddle when a larger instrumental backdrop joined the quartet, and the quartet itself wasn't quite as well defined as it should have been. This diffuseness wasn't helped by a slight edginess to the lower treble of the violins. In all fairness, though, this is something that you'd only really notice when comparing the dAD3 to a machine as coherent as a CD-63 KI-Signature. These glitches meant the music wasn't quite as involving as before, and didn't tug at the heart strings to the same degree. Yet the dAD3 was still more than competent in terms of soundstaging, depth and instrumental timbre.

Female vocalist Sheryl Crow found the Cyrus more at home musically, her portrayal sounding tonally natural and well separated from the rest of the mix. Timing was excellent, with the strong bass once again proving no hindrance to upbeat rhythm. That said, the player could at times sound as though it was going through the motions rather than beguiling the listener - details such as a guitar which lacked the last degree of definition detracted from the overall vitality. Despite this, in the final reckoning the dAD3 pulled through due to its superb handling of musical contrasts. Helped by a very low level of background noise and sharp transients, the Cyrus fashioned a dramatic and realistic picture of the music.

Sonicly the Cyrus dAD3 is up there rubbing shoulders with some of the best at its price, but it doesn't quite top the wants list. Its disappointing performance with Classical music, edgy lower treble and slight lack of vigour at higher frequencies see to that. A KI-Signature, for example, would provide all the dAD's control, but with an even more coherent and balanced sound. But because the dAD3 is so good with Dance, Jazz, Funk and a range of vocal styles, and still better than average with other types of music, it rates very highly. The dAD still has a trump card to play, though. While a few rivals offer better sound quality, not one can come close to matching the Cyrus' combination of style, build quality and upgrade potential. And for many would-be owners, I can see this as justification enough for choosing the dAD over its rivals. Thanks, dAD.

Cyrus dAD3
Mission Cyrus
Stonehill, Huntingdon, Cambs. PE18 6ED
Tel: 01480 451777

World Verdict
One of the best with a dynamic, well-lively portrayal of Dance and Rock. Can sound slightly lacklustre with Classical.

Measured Performance
see p103
The demonstration equipment has been carefully selected on the basis of sound quality but also offers something special at their respective price levels.

Auditions are carried out by appointment during which we help you to select the best sound within your budget.

All our systems provide a natural, open sound with a realistic musical presentation.
Polypropylene quacks and paper cones have a 'cardboard' sound. The material of a cone imparts a coloration to music (especially vocals) similar to how that material sounds in everyday use. Some modern mineral-loaded plastics are very neutral compared to the older plastics. Modern mineral-loaded everyday use. Some material sounds in loudspeakers. Carbon fibre has a different signature though. It delightfully combines the sort of cleanliness and lack of coloration that modern plastics display, with a peculiar sweetness. Imagine, for example, a bell made of brass and a bell made of iron. They'll both ring, but the iron one won’t.

In spite of the fact that carbon fibre has one of the most attractive characters I've ever heard in a cone material, it has been a long time coming to market. I believe Marantz used it way back in the late 1970s, but apparently the 'speaker had problems and was no great success. There was a lot of talk in those days about carbon fibre's wondrous properties, talk which the aero industry hyped up. Rolls Royce use it in their RB211 turbofan engine, an auspicious start indeed.

Nowadays carbon fibre is famous for withstanding those dramatic Formula 1 crashes. Even when the car has shed its wheels along with just about everything else, the driver is still able to emerge casually from his protective carbon fibre tube.

In loudspeakers though, we need more than just strength allied to light weight. The material's internal damping must be just right, so it doesn't break up too badly. Our work with carbon fibre drive units has shown us that they don't have the smooth response roll-off of heavy, well damped plastics. On the other hand, they don't break up as badly as treated paper. Carbon fibre lies neatly between the two sonically, with a crisp, clear sound free from any coarseness.

All the same, while we first used carbon fibre-coned drivers in 1994 for our KLS3 loudspeaker, it has only rarely put in an appearance in commercial loudspeakers. That's why I made a beeline for the Castle Avon floorstander when it arrived. Castle know their stuff and I was hoping to hear something a bit different and a bit better than run-of-the-mill plastic-coned 'speakers. All in all, I think the Avon is a real success. It has a forward sound, but then carbon fibre does have an uncanny ability to project images strongly. There's no artifice behind this; our measurements show the Avon has a flat frequency response. It doesn't rely on special effects. One loudspeaker engine, upon hearing our KLS3 project images so strongly, declared it must have a midrange peak. But it doesn't - that's just the way a good carbon fibre driver performs.

The use of high technology cone materials is a long awaited initiative from Britain's loudspeaker manufacturers. Better cone profiles with wave breaks, smoothed contour changes and such like would also help improve the breed.

My experiences with electrostatic and ribbon drive units have vividly taught me what a difference good drivers can make. But I also know that in a depressingly large number of cases, manufacturers spend as little as possible on the drive units of commercial loudspeakers. Some take a perverse pride in buying in and using the cheapest possible drivers, and by cheap I mean as little as £2 a piece. Even with a high overall mark up ratio of 8x (not manufacturing profit, since it includes dealer margin), two drivers of this sort will contribute around £35 to the final buying price. If it's a 'budget' design costing around £200 then drive units will constitute 50% or 25% of the materials cost. At £500 however, a total drive unit bill of £50 is disproportionately low. I've heard manufacturers brag about this sort of achievement, as if squeezing an acceptable performance (well, that's their view) from cheap drivers was equivalent to turning water into wine. This approach perpetuates mediocrity. That's why we've always been so keen to fly the flag for high technology drive units. Low cone weight also contributes to high sensitivity. So high tech drivers should give a loudspeaker that needs less power.

The industry's disregard of drive unit quality is slowly receding, under pressure from ourselves, who use both carbon fibre and High Definition Aerogel (HDA) in kit 'speakers, and manufacturers like Mission who use HDA in their new Freedom Series. As these synthetic materials appear in commercial loudspeakers I feel sure people will clearly hear and appreciate their benefits. It's good to see a company as skilled as Castle - who have a tradition of making their own drivers - offering the market carbon fibre in a well designed package like the Avon. It's a speaker worth hearing.

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**EDITORIAL ASSISTANT (TECHNICAL)**

*Hi-Fi World* is looking for an editorial assistant with good technical knowledge. Ideally, we would like someone who has studied electrical engineering and is keen on hi-fi. An ability to write simply but clearly is preferred.

You would gather great experience in audio engineering, helping develop our Supplement designs, measuring products for review and speaking to manufacturers about their design methods.

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**HI-FI WORLD**

*World Radio History*  DECEMBER 1996  53

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Mysteries from Noel Keywood

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Here are some tips that’ll help you to get the best from your system, courtesy of Noel Keywood.

As most hi-fi buyers realise, it’s pointless spending hard-earned dosh on quality components without a second thought for setting them up to work at their best. Seeing a system that consists of a tottering tower of black boxes and a spaghetti-jumble of scrawny cable is enough to bring tears to any audiophile’s eyes. But where should you turn first to get the best from your hi-fi - cables, stands, spikes...?

SYSTEM SUPPORT
Hi-fi systems are most conveniently located on wall shelving or purpose designed racking systems, such as those from Mana Acoustics. Wall racking, on adjustable spur shelving for example, is effective in keeping intrusion down to a minimum - few people enjoy sharing their lives with black boxes. Custom racks sound better and should be considered for expensive systems.

CD PLAYER
CD players are relatively religion-free. They can be placed anywhere, bearing in mind that a solid, level surface well isolated from vibration is best. This is where dedicated stands, stabilised by their own weight and floor spikes, win out over bouncy wall shelves. And remember to use good signal cables to make the connection to the amplifier.

CASSETTE
If a cassette deck has no tape-tuning system, then you need to find tapes that will match the deck. As tapes rise in performance (i.e. their coercivity increases), they sound progressively brighter - and they get more expensive. So, for example, if a cooking ferric like TDK D gives recordings that sound a little dull or warm, choose a more expensive formulation like TDK AD; it will sound brighter and more balanced.

TUNER
The key to getting really good results from any hi-fi tuner lies in feeding it a strong aerial signal. Forget all those amazing sensitivity figures - they don’t relate to hi-fi sound quality. To give their best, all modern VHF FM tuners need 1mV or more from the aerial, and only those within about 10 miles of a transmitter can expect to approach this with an indoor aerial. Powered indoor aerials do not offer any benefit. They amplify noise and garbage as much as the signal. Use a full size multi-element aerial mounted as high as possible, in the loft or on the roof if possible, to get a clean, strong signal.

DECEMBER 1996 HI-FI WORLD
RECORD PLAYER

A pick-up cartridge is a very sensitive vibration transducer. Consequently, record decks must be mounted on firm surfaces, as far away from loudspeakers as possible. Sturdy wall shelves are a good choice. Very low tracking forces encourage mistracking, which damages groove walls faster than anything. Better to track at a heavier force, to keep the stylus in contact with the groove. These days, 1.8gms or so is a commonly quoted figure and is best adhered to. Moving coil cartridges usually need 2gms or more.

Ensure your cartridge is upright (looking from the front) to optimise stereo channel separation, and the arm is horizontal, for correct stylus rake angle and cantilever vertical tracking angle.

Be sure to keep your stylus very clean. It pushes aside a lot of fluff and rubbish in the groove. Use a soft stylus brush and stylus cleaner to remove gunk of all kinds, brushing from back to front.

Avoid cold air from a window. It will lower tracking ability. Ensure a deck works in the warm.

LOUDSPEAKERS

The idea of stereo is to set up an illusory soundstage between the loudspeakers. Performers should be positioned on this stage as if it was real and in front of you. The strength of effect is dependent on equipment and recording, but relies on basic conditions being met. Keep the 'speakers around 6ft apart and make certain they fire at the listening position without furniture between you and them.

A good perception of depth can be recreated by keeping the 'speakers away from a rear wall. This positioning gives the best stereo soundstage illusion.

Placing speakers against a wall strengthens bass output, but it also makes the response lumpy. Stereo image sharpness is reduced in this position as well, so there’s a compromise here.

Finally, quite high transient currents pass through 'speaker cables. Keep them as short as possible and use thick cable. Special cables, bi-wiring and suchlike alter or improve quality. Rigid stands, sitting on floor spikes, improve transient handling and sharpness of stereo imaging.

Check your room acoustics. Use books (irregular surfaces) to disperse sound, and curtains to absorb it. Do not put speakers in the corner, and keep them away from the rear wall (except wallstanders). Space roughly 6ft apart.
**VALVE BOOKS**

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I worry about people like myself who blow silly sums of money on hi-fi. They often become obsessed with their system to the exclusion of all other aspects of human life, turning into one of those raving hi-fi snobs that everybody hates. They laugh disdainfully at their friends' hi-fis, until very soon they have no friends. And, as the addiction grows, they find themselves listening solely to their systems, not the music they once bought to play on them.

Instead of going to dealers' dems with an open mind, hoping to hear something to bring them closer to the music, hi-fi snobs go to show off their vast quantities of frivolous knowledge. A first listen to new 'speakers will elicit a complaint about those "vulgar" metal dome tweeters, and the insistence that, "If it can't be an electrostatic, only ribbons will suffice". Snobs lament a system's "crude upper bass peak at 120Hz thanks to unsympathetic room resonant modes", when others would call it "boomy". They break out in fits of uncontrollable laughter if the system's not bi-wired, and are always, "quite sure that the left bass driver has been wired out of phase".

Soon, their local dealers are always fully booked and their friends invariably out when they call.

This is what audiophilia gone-mad can do to you. It's not quite autobiographical, but there are still some painful similarities in there. People talk about being bitten by the 'hi-fi bug', but for many it's more like a flesh-eating virus. Once you've got a decent basic system, you want to make it better. So you become obsessed with upgrading. When this doesn't give you what you're looking for, you get into the black art of tweaking. This moves from fiddling with interconnects to rewiring your 'speakers, from upgrading your amp's power supply capacitors to building your own power amp.

Such behaviour is all right in small doses of course, but if you ever find that you stop enjoying the music, you've got it bad and might not pull through. Several times over the last decade I've tried to lose the hi-fi bug been near me. In fact, such was my euphoria at its new-found musical capabilities that I elected never to tweak again.

Then one day I called on a friend for a drink and had a quick listen to his Rega/Creek/KEF system on the way out. Having bought the whole lot from a good dealer and never so much as tweaked it since, he was a hi-fi agnostic, sensibly preferring to spend his cash on vinyl. As we sat back with a coffee, he cued up MARRS' 'Pump up the Volume', and the sound just blew me away. Either he'd slipped something funny into my Nescafe, or that was the sound of a genuinely well matched, synergistic system.

For instance, in the late eighties I went through hell trying to get my flat-earth system of the time (Linn Sondek/Itok LVIII/Supex 1000, NVA amp and Kan speakers) working properly. Despite much tweaking of my LP12's inards, I was getting nowhere so I decided to entrust it to my local dealer. It came back sounding great, as only turntables that have never fulfilled didn't last. For, one Autumn day in 1992, I found a magazine in the newsagent that sung the praises of valves. I'd been intrigued by glowing glass bottles since inheriting an old valve Cossor tape recorder that sounded amazing. Thanks to Hi-Fi World I caught the bug again, and am now assembling my first real post-flat-earth system around a World Audio K5881 valve power amp. So, if you ever manage to kill the hi-fi bug inside you, don't read the DIY supplement! You have been warned. It's a transmitter of contagious audio diseases which can seriously damage your wealth.

Unfortunately this addiction never quite worked when I next moved house. The acoustics in my old, sparsely furnished, small, symmetrical and square listening room were dreadful. I couldn't have made them worse if I'd tried. Set up in my new place, my system suddenly came on song, and all thoughts of upgrading, fiddling, tuning and tweaking disappeared. My record collection swelled and I suddenly realised I had indeed made it to that higher, non-hi-fi dependent state of being. I lost interest in hi-fi for its own sake, and became a far less critical listener.

"Several times over the last decade I've tried to lose the hi-fi bug by performing that last little tweak after which I'd never touch my system again..."
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Waiting. Compact Disc technologies, has meant analogue cassette decks, popularity of Dolby S on DCC, Minidisc and DAT. However, the continuing available, and the format below £ 500, and make great technological manufacturers to bring falling. All it needs is for hardware much the one to watch as Compact Disc) is very domestic market. Is too costly to succeed in professional format, but is fairly clear. DCC and Minidisc both seem to be in the doldrums. A combination of scarce pre-recorded software, manufacturer uncertainty, and the sheer strength and popularity of analogue cassette has proved too much even for the likes of Philips and Sony. DAT has established itself as a serious professional format, but is too costly to succeed in the domestic market. CDR (recordable Compact Disc) is very much the one to watch as prices of both hardware and discs are constantly falling. It all needs is for manufacturers to bring the price of a recorder to below £500, and make blank discs more widely available, and the format could really take off. At the moment though, it seems as comatose as the moment though, it could really take off. At the ush industry is going through a fairly stagnant stage at the moment. We ongoing interest, you could be feeling that the hi-fi industry is going through a fairly stagnant stage at the moment. We may be on the edge of great technological breakthroughs in broadcasting, recording and CD, but, as yet, none have really had an effect on the market.

The future of the various recording formats is fairly clear. DCC and Minidisc both seem to be in the doldrums. A combination of scarce pre-recorded software, manufacturer uncertainty, and the sheer strength and popularity of analogue cassette has proved too much even for the likes of Philips and Sony. DAT has established itself as a serious professional format, but is too costly to succeed in the domestic market. CDR (recordable Compact Disc) is very much the one to watch as prices of both hardware and discs are constantly falling. It all needs is for manufacturers to bring the price of a recorder to below £500, and make blank discs more widely available, and the format could really take off. At the moment though, it seems as comatose as the moment though, it could really take off. At the ush industry is going through a fairly stagnant stage at the moment. We ongoing interest, you could be feeling that the hi-fi industry is going through a fairly stagnant stage at the moment. We may be on the edge of great technological breakthroughs in broadcasting, recording and CD, but, as yet, none have really had an effect on the market.

The future of the various recording formats is fairly clear. DCC and Minidisc both seem to be in the doldrums.

"The future of the various recording formats is fairly clear. DCC and Minidisc both seem to be in the doldrums."
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Arcam have just launched a whole new model range, including the Alpha 9 integrated amplifier and 9P stand-alone power amplifier. Dominic Baker tries the integrated then takes to bi-amping.

Arcam's styling gives the new Alpha range a smart, functional look. Their CD players, amplifiers and tuners all share the same dimensions, so they stack neatly too.

Arcam have been working hard over the last few years to make their products accessible and upgradable. This month we decided to look at the amplifiers. Bearing the potential for upgrading in mind, we tried out the Alpha 9 integrated amplifier and a 9P power
amp, which can be added at a later date for bi-amping.

The Alpha 9 integrated is a 70w design with a wide range of facilities. Separate listen and record selectors are provided for the five line inputs and optional phono stage (MM or MC at £50), as well as a second tape loop for a three-head cassette deck or AV processor. There are also tone controls, along with a ‘Direct’ switch which removes them from the signal path. Two sets of ‘speaker terminals on the rear make bi-wiring or connecting a second set of ‘speakers easy. There’s even a balance control and headphone socket. And a complete Alpha system can be controlled from one hand-set because the 9, like the rest of the range, has a remote receiver.

Also sporting a headphone socket and individual ‘speaker switching, the Alpha 9P is essentially the same amplifier as the 9 without the pre-amp stage.

**ARCAM ALPHA 9 INTEGRATED**
Fed from a Marantz CD-63MKII KI-Signature, bass guitar was taut, well defined and authoritative on the Cranberries’ ‘When You’re Gone’. It gave the track a deliberate and well timed delivery. From bass through to snare, drums had impressive attack and were tightly knit into the mix. But where the integrated immediately scored was with Dolores O’Riordan’s vocal. Smooth and full, it pushed clear of the ‘speakers in a natural and unforced manner. Treble too was sweet, even with ‘speakers as clear and revealing as the Harbeth HL-K6s I used. Cymbals had just the right balance between realistic bite and soft decay, sounding clear and strong without searing my ears.

I had our Star Search amplifier winner, the Rotel RA-970BX, to hand as a reference alongside Audiolab’s 8000S. Sonically, as its price would suggest, the Alpha 9 fell nicely between the two. The Rotel’s smoothness sounded a little overpolished compared to the 9, which was more detailed and vibrant. The Arcam gave the 8000S a good run for its money, only being beaten in the end by the Audiolab’s extra bass depth and control and more sharply focused sound.

The Alpha 9 integrated was sailing through all my sonic tests with ease. An SBM recording of Tchaikovsky’s ‘Pathetique’ showed its ability to reveal all the rich layers of tonal colour in music, violins coming complete with a thin, woody resonance. Woodwinds were smooth and characterful, oboe underpinning the flute’s dancing melody. The overall scale of the performance impressed, with plenty of space around a well structured image of the full orchestra.

Faster, harder Dance melodies from Moloko gave the 9 a more difficult task to handle. Dub bass on ‘Party Weirdo’ had the Alpha driving out a strong rhythm, cool and funky. At higher levels a little compression and muddle set in, closing down the spread of sound somewhat. This was only a small effect, but noticeable none the less, especially with complex, wide ranging pieces.

Swapping back to lighter, more acoustic music gave the Alpha 9 a better chance to show its mettle in the fidelity stakes. Heading for the mainstream, Oasis proved a telling test. Tape hiss was clearly noticeable throughout this messy recording, but the Alpha 9 did well to bestow some order and structure on the proceedings. ‘Married With Children’, one of the simpler, better recorded pieces, was rich with the detail and atmosphere captured by the Arcam. It gave a walk-into-the-studio feel to the track, acoustic guitars and close mic’d vocal sounding particularly realistic. There was plenty of insight as well, aided by the brightly lit presence of the midrange.

**BI-AMPING WITH THE ARCAM ALPHA 9P**
Inside the 9 and 9P, the power amplifier sections are identical. The integrated 9 has a simple pre-amplifier section though, so to keep heavy-duty signals away from these more sensitive input stages, it is best used to drive the treble in a bi-amp system.

Connecting the two amplifiers was easy. First, a set of phono leads was wired from the 9’s ‘pre-amp out’ sockets to the 9P power amplifier’s inputs. Then, remembering to remove the bi-wiring links from the loudspeaker terminals first, the power amp section of the 9 integrated was connected to the tweeters, and the 9P to the bass.

So the connection is straightforward, but why would you want to use two amplifiers to drive just one pair of loudspeakers in the first place? A power amplifier dedicated to each driver improves control and lowers distortion as the amplifier is only faced with one drive unit, not two or three. Also, because bass and treble are driven from separate amplifiers, a strong transient in the bass won’t affect the treble amplifier, which will stay sweet and clean.
becoming clearer, cleaner and even more detailed. At higher volumes it was notably sweet, but still powerful enough with cymbals to give good attack. In addition, there was more space and atmosphere to the music, decay on strings and hi-hats extended and natural.

A second visit to Tchaikovsky found more presence and a greater ease at frequency extremes. Trumpets enjoyed more dynamic headroom, allowing the volume to be pushed to higher levels without compression becoming audible.

At lower levels as well the increase in detail was noticeable; the sound was more focused, with less blurring on complex pieces.

Moving back to Moloko, 'Fun For Me', with its forceful, electronic bass line and complex percussion effects was faster, punchier and more clearly structured. The 9/9P combo was capable of really pounding this stuff out with a full-on, attacking sound.

A real acid test for treble purity was Steve Earle's 'Esmeralda's Hollywood'. Cymbals, steel-strung guitar, snare and tambourine combined to mount quite an assault with strong treble energy and high-reaching harmonics. The 9/9P gave its best here, sounding sweet and clearly focused. Attack wasn't blunted in any way, with a real bite and metallic sharpness ringing through. Vocals also had great presence, helping to enhance the depth of the performance. All in all, this was an impressively confident and energetic portrayal.

CONCLUSION

At £500 the new Arcam Alpha 9 turns in a creditable performance. It has a fast, crisp sound with open and extended treble that reveals well the atmosphere in a recording. Adding the 9P in a bi-amp arrangement opens things out further still. I must say that I'm becoming quite a fan of bi-amped systems, their extra control and headroom bringing effortless dynamics and a cleaner, sweeter sound at the same time. There are good pre/power combinations around at £900, but I'd wager the Arcam 9/9P set-up will give most some stiff competition.

Arcam Alpha 9
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Bi-amping connects a power amplifier to each drive unit. The loudspeaker crossover comes in-between, as we show here using a simplified one-component representation.

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The benefits are faster, cleaner transients and less apparent muddle.

WORLD VERDICT

Either on its own or in combination with the 9P, the new Alpha 9 integrated represents excellent value. A detailed and open sound gives great atmosphere to all types of music.
You could win a complete system this month, comprising: TEAC VRDS-T1 transport and D-T1 CD convtector, Meridian 502 pre and 557 power amplifier and Harbeth HL-K6 loudspeakers.

Fronting this month’s competition system is TEAC’s digital combo, the D-T1 DAC and T1 transport. The T1 features TEAC’s proprietary Vibration-free Rigid Disc-clamping System (VRDS) and, as with the D-T1 DAC (with its chassis copper-plated to reduce eddy currents), is built like the proverbial brick outhouse. In our October review, we found this pairing capable of producing a very clean, lively sound, rock and classical alike benefiting from the TEAC’s powerful dynamics. We concluded that both DAC and transport had “been built up to a standard rather than down to a price.”

The job of passing on the delicate signal from source to speakers falls to Meridian’s 502 preamplifier and 557 200w power amplifier. The 502 is a fully-balanced, dual mono design. Component quality is high, with Nichicon and polypropylene capacitors used, as well as a low-flux toroidal transformer. There is also a sizeable remote to transmit your every beck and call to the 502. The powerhouse of the duo is the 557. This back-breaker of a power amp can produce 200w for the timid, while those looking to give their house a structural work-out can take advantage of the 800w on offer in bridged mode.
What impressed Jon Marks about these amps (as you can discover on page 20) was a neutrality and power which gave music a sense of life-like scale and impact without ever sounding anything less than convincingly natural. Completing the line-up of star qualities was a tonal colour and precision of imaging that made it possible to listen into the heart of the music, communicating the emotion caught in the recording.

The HL-K6 is the latest standmounter to arrive from Harbeth. Its conventional looks belie the fact that four years of research into special cone materials have gone into the design of this loudspeaker. The end result is an advanced 200mm injection-moulded mid/bass driver whose cone is constructed from RADIAL (Research And Development Into Advanced Loudspeakers), a blend of carbon fibre and polypropylene, amongst other ingredients. Doing treble duty is a black anodised aluminium dome tweeter from SEAS.

The research has obviously borne fruit - David Price (on page 23 of this very issue) found the K6's combination of neutrality and speed immediately appealing. Dynamics were handled with ease, producing tuneful bass, transparent midrange and detailed treble. On top of this, the Harbeths never sounded less than musical, serving up a sonic treat regardless of genre. A rare mix of abilities, one that we appreciated - we now use the K6s in our reference reviewing system.

If you'd like the chance to turn all here at World green with envy, all you have to do is answer the questions opposite and complete the tie-breaker. Send in your entry form on the back of a sealed envelope or postcard to reach us before December 4th to:

TEAC/Meridian/Harbeth Competition
Hi-Fi World Magazine,
64 Castellain Road,
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London W9 1EX

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

COMPETITION ENTRY QUESTIONS

1) What does VRDS mean?
A. Vertical Radiator with Dishwasher Supplied  
B. Virtual Random-access Digital Simulator
C. Vibration-free Rigid Disc-clamping System  
D. Verbal Return of Damp Squib

2) How is the Meridian 502 pre-amp configured?
A. Fully balanced  
B. Three-legged
C. No sense of balance at all  
D. A sandwich

3) What is the 557's maximum power output?
A. 2.75mW  
B. 800w
C. 16 Centigrade  
D. Gas Mark 3

4) What kind of tweeter does the HL-K6 use?
A. Tweety Pie  
B. Nuclear powered
C. SEAS aluminium dome  
D. Clingfilm

5) What are some of RADIAL's ingredients?
A. Baking Soda and Lemon juice  
B. Carbon fibre and polypropylene
C. Cardboard  
D. Sun-dried Yak bladder

TIE BREAKER (obligatory)

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OCTOBER - SHEARNE AMPLIFIERS

In our October '96 issue, we gave you the chance to win a Shearne Phase 6 pre-amplifier and Phase 3 power amplifier. We also printed the vital JBL competition token. So this month, we have two sets of winners to announce.

The winner of the Shearne competition is:
John Sansom of Wareham.

And the winner of the JBL competition is:
Katherine Dye of Leyton.

Congratulations to you both!

COMPETITION RULES AND CONDITIONS

[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.

[3] Purchase of the magazine is not a precondition of entry.

[4] No correspondence will be entered into; the Editor's decision is final.

[5] 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.

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COMPACT DISC PLAYERS

QUAD 67 second-hand
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.

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 510 £200 A competent all rounder with lifelike soundstaging and impressive treble clarity.

NAD 512 £250 Its smooth sound and fine treble extension make the 512 something of a rarity at the price. For the money rivals are few.


NAD 514 £350 The 514 conveys deep bass notes with conviction and weight. A supremely relaxing player to listen to with fine build quality.

MARANTZ CD-63MKII KI-SIGNATURE £500 Similar to the CD-63SE but more powerful bass and an all-round smoother sound.

TRICHORD GENESIS £549 Conveys music in a powerful and dramatic fashion. Smooth and sweet, with a good sense of depth. A little soft sounding though.

DPA RENAISSANCE £895 Words cannot describe its infinite variety, but suffice to say you'll love it or hate it. Highly musical and revealing. Good enough to match the best at any price, losing little to the big guns.

THORENS TDA2000 £700 Used with the TCD2000 as a transport, the TDA2000 produces a sound that is focused, detailed and spacious. Good value.

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

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

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 like few others, but lacks the Gyrodec's detail or rendering studio than almost any other deck.

GARRARD 401 second-hand
In a decent plinth with an arm of SME309 calibre, the 401 has a highly authoritative overall sound with the most solid, expressive bass in the business. Very musical. but treble isn't up to modern standards.

THORENS TD124 second-hand
One of Thorens' best-ever turntables. Needs a modern plinth to give it its best. Duly installed, it's good enough to face off the Garrard 401, swapping some of its bass power for a more delicate, incisive treble.

SYSTEMDEK 2X2 £499 Although tuneful, bass isn't as deep as some rivals. More than makes up for it though with neutral and precise midrange and treble.

SYSTEMDEK IIIX900/BB250 £330 A fine all rounder and easy to upgrade. Brings more depth and breadth than a Rega 3.

MCINTOSH CDM7009 £2435 A thoroughly inspiring machine. One of the most musical CD players around; sweet, open and detailed.

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.

PRO-JECT 6.15A £999 The Pro-ject places the listener in the best seat in the control room. Outrageous dynamics and a punchy, seriously deep bass. Comes with Sumiko arm and Ortofon MC30 Supreme.

LINN SONDEK LP12 £840 - £1530 Cirkus bearing puts it back up with the best. Superbly beguiling, rhythmic sound that plays jazz like few others, but lacks the Gyrodec's detail or imaging. With a Lingo PSU and EKOS tonearm, you'll forget CD's were ever invented.

MICHELL ORBE £1950 The Darth Vader of analogue, the Orbe builds on the strengths of the Gyrodec. An ultra-tuneful, expansive sound.

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, tidy, rhythmic sound but tonally rather grey and cold-sounding.

LINN AKITO £100 A well made entry-level tonearm which works especially well with the LP12, but struggles to match the RB300 on other decks.

SME 300PSII £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?

SME 309 £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 £650 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.

LINNEREKOS £1400 A thunderous battleash of an arm, with a very impressive sound, masses of detail and dynamics, but lacks the SME V's cohesion and musicality.

CARTRIDGES

ORTOFON VMS-2E £10 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.
GOLDRING 1012GX £60
An accomplished MM with a solid bass, slightly forward midband and clean transients. £20 buys the faster, more dynamic 1022GX.

GOLDRING 1042 £100
The best moving magnet available. Has an extremely cohesive sound that's warm but highly involving. Deliciously delicate treble and strong, powerful bass.

ORTOFON MC1 SUPER II £110
An excellent budget moving coil with a smooth, polished, detailed sound. Tracks superbly but verges on the analytical at times. A bargain.

ORTOFON SUPREMES £225-£450
The MC10, MC20 and MC30 Supremes all offer superb sound and value for money, with a distinctively rich, smooth and detailed musical performance. The valve brigade love them.

ORTOFON MC2000 £650
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.

LYRA LYDIAN £649
A truly musical, sophisticated device that makes most other MCs sound frigid.

VAN DEN HUL MC-10 £840
Fluid bass, finely etched treble and highly tuneful in between. The MC10 is honey, pure and simple.

ORTOFON MC7500 £2000
Conclusive proof that there's hope for humankind. Makes music of enormous scale and vibrancy. CD lovers would die if they heard it.

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS

NAD 3020 second-hand
Classic sweet sounding, punchy budget super-amp with strong phono stage. Able to embarrass many modern budget amps.

NAD 310 £130
A real hi-fi amplifier at a bargain price. Forms the heart of a separates system that will murder any mid system at twenty paces. No phono stage, but you can't have everything at this price.

NAD 312 £200
Smooth, clear and dry. Fine detailing with little to complain about at the price. Good facilities.

ROTEL RA-970BX £250
With its smooth and powerful sound, the Rotel sings a seductive song with all types of music. Powerful enough for most 'speakers too.

AURA VA-40 £280
The VA-80 is superb for the price with a confident, powerful sound. One of the smoothest around, it is capable of embarrassing more upmarket competition.

ORELLE SA-100 £449
Clean, open, active sound. Smooth and detailed with good punch too. One of the best at the price.

ARCAM ALPHA 9 £500
A detailed and open sound lends great atmosphere to music. Wide range of facilities too, including optional MM/MC phono stages.

AUDIOLAB 8000A £500
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.

NAIM NAIT 3 £500
A taste of high-end audio. The most involving, musical design at the price, but low power. Superb phono stage is £100 extra.

MISSION CYRUS 3 £500
Superb engineering, a solid cast chassis and a clear, spacious sound. Phono stage could be better.

SONNETEER CAMPION £579
An amplifier that delivers near studio definition along with exemplary timing. Utterly gripping.

DPA RENAISSANCE £595
Rich and smooth, the Renaissance is one of the sweetest amps around, if lightweight.

AUDION STERLING ETSE £600
Economically well built single-ended valve amplifier. Wonderful clarity with vocals. £600 with 1 line input, £800 with 5.

SUGDEN A21a £640
Class A transistor amp. Rich, crisp, deep, tight sound and it images well too. Wonderful.

AUDIOLAB 8000S £650
Fast, clear, crisp sound with a wide-open sound stage. One of the best at the price.

MERIDIAN 551 £795
Beautifully-integrated facility with a sweeter, clearer sound than mid-price alternatives. Plenty of facilities and remote controllable.

UNISON SIMPLY 2 £995
This single-ended valve amplifier is smooth, sweet and open. An extremely musical amplifier.

UNISON SIMPLY 4 £1495
Sonomically similar to the Simply 2, but with more power and control.

AUDIONOTE OTO SE £1500
Ten watts of the sweetest sound around. Use sensitive speakers though, because it's unlikely to crack windows or trigger earthquakes.

McINTOSH MA6800 £3735
The MA6800 not so much plays music as takes it on. A sonic bargain.

PRE-AMPLIFIERS

NAIM NAC32.5 second-hand
Naim's one-time top pre-amp is still a force to be reckoned with thanks to its precise, last sound and excellent phono stage.

ROTEL RQ-970BX £130
Superb value entry-level phono stage with audiophile quality components and clear sound.

DPA DSP2005 £495
Not quite the SOS, but there's little to match it at this price if outright sound quality is your priority.

ROSE RV23.5 £495
This interesting valve/transistor hybrid has a smooth, rich, spacious sound.

AUDIOLAB 8000C £520
Versatile with superb phono input. Can sound sterile, but latest version is much improved.

MICHELL ISO/HERA £530
This phono stage has fine midband and treble detail, with taut bass. The £850 ISO/HR brings more of everything, and for many people is the last word on the subject.

AUDIO INNOVATIONS P2 £749
Fantastic bass and super insight make this one of the best phono stages around. One for vinyl lovers.

AUDIOLAB 8000Q £995
Excellent line-level only pre-amp, greatly improves on 8000C with a more fluid, musical sound and greater grip. Remote control.

NAIM NAC82 £1945
This remote control pre-amp thrusts detail forth in true Naim fashion.

POWER AMPLIFIERS

QUAD II second-hand
Classic valve monoblock with many thousands still in use around the world. Archetypal warm, smooth valve sound, although not the last word in detail or dynamics.

LEAK STEREO 20 second-hand
The Stereo 20 can sound impressively up-to-date, although power and detail are ultimately limited.

QUAD 405II second-hand
Solidly built, but lifeless sounding, power amp which can be substantially improved by a Quad factory service.

ARCAM ALPHA 9 £400
With 70watts on tap, the 9P will drive most loudspeakers with a spacious and detailed sound. Good bass drive too.

MISSION CYRUS POWER £450
This power amplifier is a honey. Rich and smooth, but with a firm grip; a fine blend of properties.

ROSE RP190 £495
Used with the partnering pre-amp it gives 70watts of smooth, relaxing sound.

SUGDEN AU41P £530
Extremely competitive at the price with 100W of unusually smooth, full-bodied sound.

SHEARNE PHASE 3 £619
A neutral, highly dynamic and thoroughly exciting amplifier. A sonic bargain.

HI-FI WORLD
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 transparency and a full, warm, easy-going sound. The £1800 Alecto monoblocks have rare lucidity and three dimensional realism.

MERIDIAN 557 £1400
Great control and dynamics allied to seductive smoothness. A rare combination of power and delicacy.

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 valve rivals.

TUNERS

LEAK TROUGHLINE second-hand
Our favourite way of listening to the wireless. A deliciously smooth, mellifluous sound that will have you juking your transistor radio in seconds. Ergonomics are crude, and you'll need a decent aerial and stereo decoder.

NAD 412 £190
The 412 is remarkably musical and natural sounding. Rich sound and full bass are a rarity. Unbeatable at the price.

KENWOOD KT-6050L £100
Very, very tuneful and as clear and detailed as CD. Tuners like this have you sitting in your seat, wondering at the sheer wealth of music out there.

MISSION CYRUS FM7 £90
Clear and lucid sound that puts it up with the best regardless of price. Superb build and superior ergonomics to the NAD.

ROTEL RT990BX £500
High quality Fmico-based tuner with a sophisticated, forward sound with great imaging and soundstage. Sensible facilities and remote control.

NAIM NAT01 £500
The NAT03 is further proof of Naim's proficiency with tuners, with a warm, easy sound and a good sense of atmosphere.

FANFARE FT-1 £1350
In its native US the FT-1 is no mere tuner but a 'broadcast monitor' no less, a task at which it acquits itself well, with a clear and powerful sound.

NAIM NAT01 £1380
The best solid-state tuner available. For better radio, live in the studio.

CASSETTE DECKS

AIWA AD-S750 £150
Sonically a very decent machine. For the price there's nothing better. With Dobly B, C and S.

KENWOOD KX-3080 £160
A simple deck, but high quality head and transport give an unusually high level of performance at this price. Not to be missed.

DENON DRM-6505 £230
Forget metal tapes, but sound quality with ferrics and chromes makes it a bargain.

AIWA AD-S950 £300
A stable transport, superb head and Dobly S makes this an excellent recorder.

PIONEER CT-57405 £430
A great piece of engineering from Pioneer, a bit complex, but a first rate sound on playback and recording. Dobly S included.

NAKAMICHI DR2 £600
Where serious cassette decks start. The DR2 pushes recordings to the limit, remaining unfatigued at all times.

NAKAMICHI DR1 £850
Better still than the DR2, with manual head azimuth to boost.

NAKAMICHI CR7 £1500
Kills every other cassette deck and stamps on their graves.

LOUDSPEAKERS

MISSION 731i £130
A truly worthwhile improvement on the old 731s, sounding faster, stronger, tighter and more subtle. Able to take all on comers.

MISSION 731 LE £149
An extensive reworking of Mission's entry level 'speaker, much tighter on transients and more refined treble. Neutral and revealing.

TANNOY 631 SE £170
Great bass extension, super open and focused midrange and fine detail up-top. Work best on filled dedicated stands; unmatched at the price.

HEYBROOK HB1 S3 £269
Fine tonal resolution through midrange and a smooth and extended treble make the HB1s ideal for classical/acoustic music. Bass is a little boxy and constrained though.

CELESTION IMPACT 23 £299
Smooth and even handed. Clear and well extended treble and deep, tight bass. Midrange is focused and pure with plenty of detail and speed.

B&W DM 602 £300
Deep and strong bass, pure, projected and uncumbered midrange. Treble quality a little metallic, but imaging precise. A lively, enjoyable sound.

REL Q-BASS £350
Few subwoofers match the Q-Bass at the price. The tuning controls can be a bit of a fiddle, but once set up the rest is pleasure.

EPOS ES25 £1505
Epos' best. Combines near-uncoloured tonality with characteristic fireworks in the rhythm department. Superb by any other name.

SPENDOR SP7/I £1970
This big Spender is very appealing thanks to its lucid sound and valve-friendly load.

TANNOY AMS5 £2700
Bold sounding professional active monitor with solid bass, clearly focused midrange and delicious treble. Built-in amplification.

QUAD ESL-63 £2860
A reference against all other loudspeakers, with superb imaging qualities and genuine transparency. Earlier ESL model is an excellent second-hand buy; both enjoy legendary Quad service back-up.

KEF REFERENCE SERIES FOUR £3099
Superb bass and near-electrostatic soundstaging make these involving loudspeakers a reference to all others. Need a strong amplifier though.

JBL S2600 £3500
Smooth, detailed and spacious with great dynamics and fine imaging. Capable of producing a superb performance when used in a big room.

TANNOY WESTMINSTER ROYAL £10,000
An incredibly dynamic, detailed full-range horn design with a rich sound. Its high sensitivity predisposes it to valve amplification.
A phenomenon Norway reference converter able to dig deeper into high output amplifier allowing owners of the Phase 2 or 3 or both to upgrade from £ 185.

ELTON ELECTRONICS (Yachten) - c/o Dan Fury Ltd, 4 Maple House, Windmill Road, Ipswich, IP2 8QH. Tel: 01473 748560, Fax: 01473 748561.

EPMENT ELECTRONICS, 2 F archival, London NW1 3BH. Tel: 0171 287 3926, Fax: 0171 727 3926. Manufacturers of 8000 series integrated amplifier (600w) and other products.

FAIRCHILD ELECTRONICS LTD (a subsidiary of Fairchild Camera and Instrument Corporation, USA) - 505, Ruislip Road, Middlesex, UB6 0EF. Tel: 01895 506777. Manufacturers of Fairchild audio products.

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FALCON ELECTRONICS LTD (a trade name of NEOH Mambo Electronics) - 66 Merrion Row, London W1. Tel: 0171 227 3926, Fax: 0171 227 3926. Manufacturers of Falcon products.

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K5881PSE KIT
£650
An audiophile parallel-single-ended valve amplifier at an affordable price. K5881PSE uses the reliable Russian 5881 output valve in parallel-single-ended mode for outstanding detail and atmosphere. Its 17watts is enough to drive most loudspeakers, making high-end sound quality and design available to everyone. Can be easily monoblocked to give 32watts.

K5881 KIT
£395
A Class A, 20watt power amplifier that uses Russian 5881 output valves, a military version of the American 6L6, designed for low distortion audio work.

Designed for long life and excellent sound quality, K5881 can be used with a simple passive pre-amp or one of our own pre-amplifiers, and it matches modern loudspeakers well.

300B VALVE AMPLIFIER KIT
£850
This is a specialised 28watt amplifier based on the highly linear 300B triode valve. Our 300B runs in Class A, giving one of the most sweet, open and neutral sounds possible today. Matched with good loudspeakers, it is unsurpassed. All parts are included in the kit, except valves since different 300B makes are available.

DEMONSTRATIONS
Selected World Audio Design Products are on demonstration at:

HORSHAM HI-FI
28 Queensway,
Horsham,
W. Sussex
Speak to Jeff on
Tel: 01403 251587

2ND AUDIO
17 Maritime Court,
Harboro Road,
Sale, Manchester
Speak to Andy on
Tel: 0161 969 0460

OVERSEAS DISTRIBUTORS
Selected World Audio Design Products are on demonstration at:

Octave Electronics
No. 81, Jalan 1/12,
46000 Petaling Jaya,
Selangor Darul Ehsan,
West Malaysia.
Tel: (603) 793 7939

New Best Co. Ltd.
No. 199, Sec. 3,
Cheng-Teh Road,
Taipei, Taiwan. R. O. C.
Tel: (886) 2 599 2598

SB International Inc.
Zenkyoren Bldg.,
2-7-9 Hirakawaiyo, Chiyodaku,
Tokyo 102, Japan.
Tel: (81) 3 3264 5321
KLPP1 VALVE PHONO PREAMPLIFIER £495
KLPP1 has five line inputs, a tape input with monitor, and a unique low noise valve MM/MC phono stage. There is a switchable subsonic filter to prevent output transformers of valve amplifiers saturating. The line stage has gain, so it will drive any power amplifier. Audio grade components are used and many parts are custom made for highest quality.
KLPP1 has a super clear sound, sweet and detailed through line and phono inputs.

HIGH TECH AUDAX DRIVE UNITS
We offer a range of the highest quality drivers. Cone drivers include High Definition Aerogel (HDA), carbon-fibre and high sensitivity paper. There are four superb soft dome tweeters as well as the HD-3P oval gold dome piezo-electric tweeter, which comes complete with matched crossover.

KL53 THREE WAY CARBON-FIBRE DRIVER LOUDSPEAKER
KL53 uses extremely light and stiff carbon-fibre cone drive units for a fast and accurate sound. A dedicated 4inch carbon-fibre midrange drive unit provides the cleanest, smoothest and most detailed midrange characterised by superb projection. Its high 90dB sensitivity and near flat Bohm impedance make it one of the easiest loudspeakers to drive. An ideal loudspeaker for high-end valve amplifiers.
Drive Unit & Crossover kit etc £350
Drive Unit Pack £230

KL54 TWO WAY CARBON-FIBRE DRIVER LOUDSPEAKER
A two way standmounter using stagger-tuned reflex loading for good bass, plus light and fast carbon-fibre drivers.
Drive Unit & Crossover kit etc £230
Drive Unit Pack £120

KL56 ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY THREE WAY LOUDSPEAKER
KL56 uses the HD-3P gold piezo-electric dome tweeter and High Definition Aerogel (HDA) midrange and bass drivers. The midrange driver is mounted on an open baffle for a transparent and open sound. With 89dB sensitivity KL56 can be easily driven with amplifiers capable of producing 20 watts or more.
Drive Unit & Crossover kit etc £825
Drive Unit Pack £640

KL57 TWO WAY CARBON-FIBRE DRIVER FLOORSTANDER
Compact and affordable two way reflex loudspeaker. KL57’s slim dimensions make it easy to accommodate, but it uses top quality carbon-fibre drivers, so performance isn’t compromised. An audiophile bargain.
Drive Unit & Crossover kit etc £195
Drive Unit Pack £110

KL58 TWO WAY HIGH SENSITIVITY LOUDSPEAKER
With a sensitivity of 94dB, KL58 needs very little power to drive. Its 10in. professional bass driver and horn loaded tweeter give it a powerful sound too. Ideal for low power amplifiers or for high level listening.
Drive Unit & Crossover kit etc £260
Drive Unit Pack £175

KL1 VALVE LINE PREAMP £345
The KL1 line level preamplifier uses one of the simplest and most elegant circuits to give a sound with remarkable clarity and detail. The components are all high quality and include Sovtek valves, Alpe volume control, polypropylene signal capacitors, silver plated wire etc.
CHORD LEGEND (Patent pending)

This is something really special. A unique flat cable specially designed to optimise the performance of bi-wireable speakers. Constructed from four runs of oxygen free round copper conductors (two x seven strands for the bass and two x four strands for the treble).

The larger conductors used for the bass and the smaller conductors used for the treble are spaced in a way that produces ideal inductance and capacitance figures for perfect bass and treble reproduction. It is extremely unusual to find this in speaker cable. Bass needs more current than treble, therefore Legend provides more current carrying capacity.

Chord Legend will give you all the openness and detail that a good bi-wire cable produces, together with a wonderful degree of coherence and musicality.

For information on the finest handmade a/v leads, interconnects, speaker cables — loudspeakers, please return the coupon. Tel: 01722 331674 Fax: 01722 411386

The Chord Company, 30a Sarum Business Park, Portway, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EA

"I WANT ONE"

HI-FI World

Now you don’t often hear a reviewer say that about a product, do you? So what exactly was it that moved H.F.W. to lavish such fulsome praise on the Unison Research Simply Two? Was it the specification? (12 Watts of single-ended pure Class A). Or the finish? ("It would do a Ferrari proud"). The price maybe? ("real value for money with no compromise"). All very impressive, no doubt. But the real answer is both deeper and more subtle. Simply Two is one of those rare products that makes listening to music a magical experience. Just as it should be.

SIMPLY TWO

BY UNISON RESEARCH

For a list of approved stockists and full details on the Unison Research Simply Two Integrated amplifier (£995), Simply Four (£1555), or the amazing ‘Smart 845’ monoblocks (£3250), contact:

U.K.D.

23 RICHINGS WAY, IVER, BUCKS. SL0 9DA
TEL: 01753-652669 FAX: 01753-654531

DECEMBER 1996
WARNING
THESE ARE EXPERT KITS, NOT FOR THE INEXPERIENCED. YOU MUST BE ABLE TO SOLDER AND READ A CIRCUIT DIAGRAM. THE VALVE KITS CONTAIN LETHAL VOLTAGES. WE CANNOT BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY ERRORS ARISING FROM THE CONSTRUCTION OF THESE KITS.

ORDER FORM
Please send your completed order form to: WORLD AUDIO DESIGN, 64 Castellain Road, Maida Vale, London W9 1EX
Tel: 0171 289 3533 Fax: 0171 289 5620

240/120 option - delete the voltage NOT required. Valves included except where otherwise stated.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE A DATA SHEET ON ANY OF THE KITS, PLEASE WRITE A 'D' IN THE QTY BOX

WARNING - World Audio Design Ltd accept no responsibility for kits, parts or modifications made or supplied by third parties.

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The Boo Radleys have always tended towards the loopy but this fourth album is their craziest yet, a wild wallow in psychedelia nouvelle with less beer than in earlier days. The opening title cut may be a nod to crowd-baiting hard Rock but from then on it is, for the most part, a demented journey through several dimensions of mad sounds and blown mindstapes. Take, for example, the ensuing 'Meltin's Worm', a spooky and perhaps salutary tale that’s all soft, weird vocals, eerily twisted post-Beach Boys backing harmonies and bucketloads of mad axeman guitar - guitar upon guitar, etcetera. And 'Melodies For The Deaf (Colours For The Blind)' is almost a jolly sing-along, again with a sandbox-era Brian Wilson middle bit, after which it takes off at such a bizarre tangent that one is tempted to think it’s two songs stuck together, ‘Day In The Life’ style.

You can’t be psychedelic without treading in the footsteps of early Pink Floyd, hence 'Bullfrog Green' with its Roger Waters phrasing on the vocals offset by more falsetto parts. Other unusual echoes, tributes, call them what you will, include such early folkies as Donovan and even Simon and Garfunkle. As you can well imagine, all this sounds very odd indeed when laid among some of the strangest productions ever heard by human ears. But that doesn’t mean there aren’t some great tunes in there. The enigmatic and reverberomanic ‘What's In The Box’ is one such, all grand melody and guitars that sound like an entire orchestra of Pete Townsend at his wildest and meanest. This will be a real triumph live, no discussion needed. The cynical ‘Fortunate Sons’ is all booming percussion, nuclear rimshots and enough massed guitar madness to defoliate a rainforest in thirty seconds. But then more glorious harmonies appear alongside gentle acoustic guitars, somewhat Lennonish phrasing and phasing galore in the oddly named ‘Ride The Tiger’.

Certainly it is a real oddity of a record, but that don’t mean it isn’t one of the most adventurous and awesome to have emerged in years. A sure-fire end-of-year fave.

**SUEDE**

**COMING UP**

NUDE 6CD
(Also available on vinyl)

Much as I must confess that I loved Suede’s debut single, I did, like many fans of Mr Bowie’s carrot top era, quickly find singer Brett Anderson’s vocal similarities somewhat forced, if not absurd. But my mind’s made
something of a U-turn, and this newest disc has helped no end. For example, 'Trash', the hit single and opening cut here, has no small amount of charm. Similarly 'Filmstar' boasts a great zooming bass, punch a'plenty and a grand centrepiece. 'Picnic By The Motorway' would have to be a fave for anyone who's read J. G. Ballard's 'Crash', while druggy 'The Chemistry Between Us' manages to overcome some rather unsubtle drug references chiefly by dint of a strong tune and imaginative arrangements. I did admire 'Lazy', however, largely because of its neat collage of seventies' pretty kids with too much make-up alongside the more contemporary world of raves, cable and Sky TV. The sturdy spinal bass even carries echoes of Paul McC in his mop top glory days. And 'By The Sea' may well be Brett's most honest and personal song to date, an appropriately idyllic romance with gently coaxed ivories and Brett at his most sincerely pained.

Brett and company may still be classic no-hope, bored teenagers, but there is every evidence available here that they're on the brink of becoming future princes - ones with plenty to say and even more to teach. All power to their elbows.

**NENEH CHERRY**

**MAN**

_HUT CDHUT38_  
(Also available on vinyl)

This may be merely her third album but she has a pedigree the length of King Kong's arm. This is down to being born the daughter of rebel Jazz giant Don, stirs with the likes of nouveau funksters Rip, Pig and Panic and even Punk dominatrices The Slits, and a sparse but highly successful solo career.

This third LP in a long gestation period finds her as soulful as ever but, for the most part, laid-back and melodic (though she proves more than once that she can be as potentially forceful as ever). It starts out busy and soulful but ends up with an inspiring frenetic climax.

The fact that passion is not one of Neneh's shortcomings (not to mention her three offspring to date) is more than evident on the impassioned 'Kootchi'; the guitar is lunacy incarnate, there is a true banshee finale and some extremely naughty but still rather restrained lyrics, i.e. "I'll show you the trigger to my witch switch/And how to play with my witch stitch". Naughty or what? Yet still a zillion miles from the forced coarseness of the likes of Ice-T or the Artist Formerly Known As A Pompous Moron. And as for Neneh's version of 'Trouble Man', one of the bestest songs ever penned by one of Motown's bestest writers and performers, she carries it off with style, imagination and considerable aplomb. It's an admirable and notable achievement.

In short, this is a subtler Cherry than one might have expected, and thus not heavy on the hit singles front. For all that, it remains a subtle work of the imagination, and one that deserves not to go unnoticed. Brave and talented and full of promise.

**rock & pop record of the month**

**SPONGE**

_WAX ECSTATIC_  
_COLUMBIA 01-484186-10_

Public Enemy may well have warned us "Don't believe the hype", but there are exceptions. Sponge for example, are a Detroit-born combo dating from '93. They spent a solid year working their proverbials off, by which time their debut album had sold a million Stateside. They were soon headliners at the influential Lellapallooza tour, are currently supporting that good-taste gent Neil Young, and will visit our shores shortly.

When this second disc kicks off you could be forgiven for thinking the age of stagediving was not over, and scribes of little brain could well be reaching for their 'new Nirvana' labels. This, however, is patently not the case. For together, lead vocalist Vinnie Dombroski, Joey Mazzola (electric and slide guitar), Mike Cross (electric, acoustic, bass) fellow bassist Tim Cross and drummer Charlie Grover are a formidable and highly talented combination with as wide a spread of talents and styles as one could wish for. Small wonder Rolling Stone said this was to be one of the ten most anticipated discs of the Summer. Here we find the ghosts of everyone from the classic Stones to the best of Southern Rock - Lynyrd Skynyrd, The Allman Brothers Band and so on. There are gentle ballads laden with lovely slide, and touches of everything from Blues, Soul and Country.

Examine the rollicking opener 'My Purity' and merely compare with such diverse concoctions as 'I Am Anastasia' (featuring Psychedelic Furs founder Richard Butler on back-ups) or 'Got To Be A Bore', its power chords galore spread over the immortal line, "I hope my head will heal". If anything, concussion is more likely. That said, this is a group of multitudinous grace, imagination, style and consummate professionalism. A name to remember •
The prat in the hat is back. And this time the '90s space cowboy says we should be especially 'proud' of him. As Jamiroquai's third album is released, singer Jay Kay informs us with considerable hilarity that his long-lost father would be proud of him if only he could be located.

He may not be the most respected personality with his infamous slips of the tongue, collection of stupid hats and far too many Ferraris for his own good, but Jay Kay is really quite an endearing sort of cove. Another thing of little doubt; his band of talented funksters - particularly guitarist Si Katz - know how to knock out a good pop song. The group have already sold 3 million albums worldwide and this should add a few more to the tally.

Despite the originality of the music being called into question once again - Stevie Wonder comparisons abound - Travelling Without Moving is a pleasant little LP, with a series of groovy tracks and irritatingly catchy choruses. The 12-track album, which follows hot on the heels of the band's top 3 single 'Virtual Insanity' and 'Use The Force' to really get the foot tapping. Using the band's now trademark Didgeridoo sound, 'Digital Vibrations' and 'Everyday' show a mellower, chilled side of the album.

Not a world different from anything else the boy wonder has done, and if that means maintaining his ever so perfect standards, then indeed his dad should be proud.

But the new offering is nothing to get too excited about and is a distinctly rap fan-only LP. It has neither the freshness nor the originality of Three Foot High and the rhymes are mostly a few strides behind their best.

There are, however, many good moments on Stakes Is High and the single 'The Bizness' is a particular case in hand with its lazy rambling style, which has made the DJ world listen up. A pastiche of interesting samples and laid back beats ensures that Stakes Is High is an album as good, if not as commercially viable, as the current vogue in the pop charts, the Fugees.

It is a little disappointing that a band with a very obvious talent for music will never be able to quite match up to their faultless debut, by which they will always be measured. Still, things could, and have been, a lot worse for De La Soul, and Stakes Is High sounds like the start of a return to form.

Many moons ago, we all went wild to Three Foot High and Rising and its wacky singles 'Me, Myself and I', 'Eye Know' and 'Jennifer'. It was an album that heralded a great change in Rap. The sound of De La Soul came to mean Peace and 1988 became an exciting time of rejuvenation for Hip Hop.

When the threesome - Trugoy, Posdnos and Maseo - came over to the UK they were mobbed and labelled hippies and peaceniks. Things indeed went high and rose to such heights that the debut album soon went Gold. But the band were not happy. They didn't like their mellow image and in 1991 they suddenly returned with a second LP, De La Soul Is Dead.

Despite a couple of memorable singles ('Ring, Ring, Ring' and 'Roller Skating Jam Named Saturdays') it was a stinker and lost the band valuable cred points. The result being they disappeared, only to resurface briefly in 1993 with the average Buhloone Mindstate album.

Now in 1996 the threesome are back with a new release. And the stakes are indeed high.
Memories, memories. And once upon a time, they were made of this. For Biology Memories is exactly what it says, nostalgia from a more innocent time when House was young. In the late '80s House meant burning around the M25 looking for that elusive party, then dancing until dawn in fields and warehouses. Those were days when people really did love each other. Honest.

When the House scene exploded onto UK dancefloors there were the great party organisers: Shoom, Spectrum, Sunrise, Energy and Biology. Biology began in true entrepreneurial spirit with a certain Jarvis Sandy holding his first warehouse party in '89 with the dream DJ line-up of Paul Oakenfold, Trevor Fung, Grooverider, Paul Trouble Anderson and Nicky Holloway. Of course, breaking the law couldn't go on forever, so now we have the party piece repackaged as a double CD stuffed to bursting with that thing we called House.

Mixed by early heroes Kid Batchelor and Trevor Fung, what you get is classic after sweaty classic, House with soul.

Disco tinged and flavoured with Balearic influences. The choicest cuts are tracks like Adeva's 'Musical Freedom', Nomad's 'Devotion', Shut Up And Dance's '5,6,7,8', Coldcut's 'People Hold On' and Bang The Party's 'Bang Bang you're mine'. These and many others here quickly became UK underground classics and were among the first tracks to gain respect on the US scene. And the rest, as they say, is history...

A superb mishmash of a first album, and it'll slot in nicely at the Portishead/Tricky/Fugees/Nightmares on Wax end of yer Dance collection. Hell, why not buy two copies and frame one on your wall.

Gnaside II
NEW LIFE 4 THE HUNTED
INTERNAL TRUC14
(Also available on vinyl)

Gil are a collective of Brixton-based musicians described by The Prodigy's Liam as, "The people who invented Jungle" when they released their 1991 single 'Narramine'. But don't think that this is another let's-milk-Breakbeat-for-all-it's-worth album, because it occupies a completely different league altogether.

Producers Kao Bonez and Chilli Phats have poked their heads above the Brixton clouds and sought out musical slices from the worlds of Hip Hop, House, Soul - in fact, just about every genre under the sun - then hacked them all about and transformed them into pure, deranged beauty.

From the moving chill-out grooves of tracks like 'Distant Noises' and 'Come the Fools' to collaborations with the Wu Tang Clan, there's a world of diversity strung together with a head-nodding common thread. Luscious vocals on many tracks come courtesy of Soul II Soul's Ross Windross, while 'Just as Rough' features Jamaica's legendary Eek A Mouse. They even cover (surprisingly successfully) The Red Hot Chilli Peppers' ballad 'Under The Bridge'. And just to top the collaborations front they've gone and got The New Power Generation to cover four album tracks for a bonus CD. Erm, yes, well... A superb mishmash of a first album, and it'll slot in nicely at the Portishead/Tricky/Fugees/Nightmares on Wax end of yer Dance collection. Hell, why not buy two copies and frame one on your wall.
leftfield Dance for drinkers in indie T-shirts and all of a sudden people are labelling them Brithop (a media label about as lame as Britpop). You mean they're British and you can hop around to a groovy beat? No, a few people doing something a bit different doesn't warrant such spurious terms as Brithop and Amyl House. What I think we're referring to here are clubs such as the Heavenly Social and the likes of Lionrock, Daft Punk and Monkey Mafia. This is the sound of music with souped-up, looped beats and samples, a nice side serving of 303 squelches and a bass heaviness and structure usually left to the Hip Hop brigade.

The thing is though, Eboman aren't British, they're Dutch. And they're signed to XL, so they must have a good buzz flowing, particularly as they've been supporting the Prodigy on their recent tour.

So what about the music then, eh? Well, Amyl House is a good way to describe it (hypocrite!), but a better way is to check out top single 'Donuts With Buddhah' - a slithering, bouncing little number that's bound to get any yob with a pint in his hand making a fool out of himself. And this nine track EP is more of the same. Electro noises by the bag full, 303s moaning painfully and the all important funky, nodding beat. Keep an eye out, their energy's infectious, and Eboman could well be blowing a gail of fresh air into the Dance arena.

It's a funny thing this drum 'n' bass lark. Way back when, it was all Ragga samples and cut-ups complete with moronic MCs, and the word was, "We can't dance to this". Then Hip Hop oozed into the picture and everyone wanted a piece of the action. I'm just waiting for the Spice Girls' Breakbeat pop hit, or perhaps East 17 working with Goldie. OK, that may be going a bit far, but the point is that Breakbeat has opened up from its clique beginnings to allow Jazzy licks, Soul divas and film soundtrack wannabes to join in. And this is where Nubian Beats comes in. From smoky 110 bpm tunes to the old school 160/170 bpm hardcore, this compilation covers all bases from Hip Hop to Jungle and back again, showcasing a range of emerging talents.

On the dark, heavy side there's the likes of Public Domain's 'Levitation', while Nikki C's 'Sunshine Ride' ranks high among the Jazzy coffee-table twitchers. If you want your beats cutting edge and innovative, this could be a good place to start looking...
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The rise and rise of Jungle, or Drum and Bass, has been quite a phenomenon to watch, a perfect model of how an element of fringe culture can filter through the cultural strata until it reaches everywhere.

I remember an evening, not two years ago, when a friend, a fellow devourer of the more radical, er, ‘New Music’, refused to play for me a tape of what was, even so recently, a fiercely underground dance music. Two years on, and Jungle, transformed through some bizarre process of street-level PC into Drum ‘n’ Bass, is inescapable. The charts, of course, are full of the stuff, but it goes way beyond that. Seemingly every Dance single has at least one format with a Jungle mix, no matter how inappropriate.

Elsewhere, erstwhile yuppie-soundtrackers Everything But The Girl have miraculously melded Jungle rhythms and their own highly distinctive, plaintive balladeering to come up with perhaps one of the year’s very small handful of essential pop albums, not to mention a clutch of must-have, mix-laden singles. And TV advertising has been utterly seduced by the stuff (a musician recently commented to me that he knew Jungle had well and truly arrived when he heard it used to advertise an air freshener!)

It’s perhaps surprising then, that there hasn’t been more overt crosspollination between Jungle and Jazz. It’s not just that Jungle has become so ubiquitous, but that the musics share so much. The development of Drum ‘n’ Bass has been like a microcosmic version of Jazz’s, springing from a street music, a music to dance to. Both have grown to become immensely sophisticated and rhythmically dazzling, and are so widely accepted you’d happily play either at a dinner party. It’s perhaps an index of our own accelerated culture that a development which took Jazz forty years has taken Jungle a decade at the very outside.

To be fair, there has been some cross-over. John McLaughlin dabbled on his last album, and further towards the avant-rock end of the spectrum, Bill Laswell and various affiliates have been exploring to great effect some common ground between Drum ‘n’ Bass and improvisatory, ambient textures. That British Free Improv guitarist Derek Bailey should have recorded a Jungle record has to rate as one of the more astonishing facts in recent musical history.

I’ve banged on about Bailey enough over the years, but it should be reiterated that this last year or so has seen him involved in some pretty extraordinary projects, even by his own standards. Not least of these are Arcana (a power trio with Laswell and Tony Williams) and the brilliant Harras trio with John Zorn and William Parker. But this album trumps the lot. Whether inspired by his association with Laswell and Laswell’s own experiments with Jungle, or by private, solo jam sessions for pirate radio stations, Bailey has recorded a series of duets with drum programmer DJ Ninj.

On the surface this is an unexpected pairing. As a musician, a writer, an organizer of festivals and as the man behind Incus Records, Bailey has constantly espoused a radical, non-idiomatic improvisation. By contrast Jungle is, of course, a music of strict, if pretty wild rhythms. Yet this music works incredibly well, Bailey’s minute sound incidents piling up against dazzling breakbeats to constantly nerve-jangling effect. It’s certainly an eye-opener for types who’ve always managed to dismiss Bailey, somehow mistaking his boundary-pushing extended playing techniques for technical ineptness. It is impossible to listen to this album and not be amazed by Bailey’s ability, and most especially his high-precision timing, which this album has really brought to the fore.

An astounding record.
Don't be deceived; there's a lot more to this than the Swing itself, but it's very different from Hamilton's sweetness. The feeling is West Coast, with the dry Summer dust trudged by a thousand film noir heroes in stark contrast to Hamilton's New England spring. And if (as they say) down these mean streets a Jazz band must swing, these are the men for the job.

The men are James 'Alto Sax' Mahone, Willie Jones III on drums, Nicholas Payton and Gilbert Castellanos (taking turns) on trumpet, Ark Sano and Greg Kurstin on piano and Mark Anthony Shelby on bass. Tenor saxophone is supplied by a man with a couple of far-from-criminal records behind him, Teodross Avery.

You get thirteen reasonably recorded tracks on this CD, twelve of which are credited to band members. While the technical side is more than adequate, the band do not seem any less capable or enjoyable for not being allowed to swing free of the 'speaker cabinets. In fact, the restricted ambience lends a certain tautness and energy to the few moments of the CD where the band seem to lose pace. In all, a satisfying set on an album from the harder side of Swing.

Dennis Irwin does duty plucking the bass and Chuck Riggs is the man on the drums. These last two are players who can, with equal alacrity, either play solid backdrop lines or step into the limelight. This is a line-up with a palpable sense of interdependence, their performances displaying a mutual respect and admiration which is clearly audible in the mix.

Hamilton's recent works have left me feeling that he is at best resting on his laurels, and at worst losing that grasp of the music which he once displayed. If this is a feeling you share, just listen to Norman Simmonds' 'Abundance', and you will - I guarantee - find that your doubts don't last through the first four bars. Deeper into the number you might still be able to find fault with Hamilton's authority or ability in this idiom, but to do so would take some fairly extreme churlishness. The album really is one of Hamilton's best, and not just his, but the band's too.

There are ten tracks on this CD, all from Scott's 'home territory': tracks like the Hart/Rogers title track, Golden/Hubbell's 'Poor Butterfly' and even Hamilton's own 'Sugarchile'. All come from a school of Jazz with which Hamilton has a long-standing affinity. But this time the selection seems to have been made to give him a chance to stretch out on some less covered turf and play away from the rusty old gig favourites which he's covered so well in the past.

This is a well recorded release which shows an excellent player on form with a band to match, all laid out in a luscious, spacious presentation on CD. A must for middle-aged swingers everywhere •
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Ken Kessler - Hi-Fi News & Record Review August '94

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Images of courtly love from Renaissance Italy, a powerful reminder of a bloody episode in Russian history and some far from stately keyboard virtuosity from one of England's stateliest homes come commended this month.

Girolamo Frescobaldi, born at Ferrara in 1583, was a keyboard virtuoso of such repute that, when he was appointed organist of St Peter's in Rome, thirty thousand people are said to have flocked to hear his first performance there. To this day, Frescobaldi's reputation rests upon his output of instrumental music.

His First Book of Madrigals was completed in his early twenties and published by the Antwerp-based Phalese in 1608, when Frescobaldi was twenty-five (he had encountered Phalese the previous year, during a visit to Brussels). First, youthful attempts though they may have been, these nineteen compositions display a remarkably individual expressive style; a beguiling mix of charm and purity, with a pungency and intensity that recalls Monteverdi.

The musical language is highly accomplished and refined, sufficient to allow Frescobaldi to indulge in subtle dissonances which enrich the colours of his sound-painting. And while some of the devices employed may lack originality, there is no escaping the emotional impact of much of the writing, as in the exquisite setting of Rinaldi's S'io miro in te, m'uccidi.

Regrettably, this First Book of Madrigals also became Frescobaldi's last. In his remaining thirty-five years, he never returned to the genre, preferring to concentrate on instrumental composition. We can only speculate how he would have developed as a composer of vocal music, and whether the often startling invention of his keyboard compositions would have been mirrored in other genres.

The Primo Libro was never republished following its initial appearance in 1608, but a manuscript - bereft of the alto part - is housed in Oxford's Bodleian Library, while the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris was able to supply the full five parts, so allowing the complete reconstruction heard here. And what a delightful and seductive recording it is, wonderfully well sung by the members of the Concerto Italiano under the sympathetic direction of Rinaldo Alessandrini (who also supplies a revealing introduction to the music in the accompanying booklet). The sheer commitment of the performers makes for an involving experience, one enhanced by the clear, well balanced sound and agreeably airy and resonant acoustic. A commendable achievement by all concerned.
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recording. The better known Stabat Mater, a wholly apt partner for the Salve Regina, also benefits in many details from the use of the manuscript rather than the corrupt Italian edition long regarded as the definitive text.

Although Alessandro Scarlatti’s achievements are now overshadowed, unfairly, by those of his more famous son, the harpsichord virtuoso Domenico, in his day he enjoyed a notable reputation as a composer of both opera and sacred music. His output of the latter was prodigious: fifteen masses, over thirty oratorios, some sixty motets and a wealth of cantatas. Born in Palermo, Sicily, in 1660, Alessandro studied in Rome and, in 1683, was appointed concert-master and theatre director in Naples. He remained there for twenty years before returning to Rome and then moving on to Florence and Venice, his composing style being enriched all the time by exposure to the six different schools.

Scarlatti enjoyed a second spell in Naples between 1708 and 1717, and it was here that his music developed a more intimate and personal character with a greater and freer depth of expression and intensity of emotion. These aspects inevitably spilled over from his operatic works into his religious compositions, including his setting of the Stabat Mater. This is a different vein, rich in expression and intensity of emotion. The work was a commission from the Order of the Cavalieri della Virgine dei Dolori (The Knights of the Virgin of Sorrows), pious men who, annually in the Franciscan church of San Luigi in Naples, honoured the Virgin by dedicating a Stabat Mater to her.

The text of the Stabat Mater, Mary’s lament at the foot of the Cross, was the work of a thirteenth century Franciscan monk, Jacopone da Todi, and came to enjoy wide popularity, although it was not admitted as part of the Roman liturgy until 1727. Its most famous setting, and arguably its most harrowing and powerful, is that of Palestrina. Scarlatti’s setting, supervised by Yolanta Skura, who has been responsible for many a fine recording on the Erato label, is warm, clear and sensitively balanced, and supplies exactly the right stage for this unexpectedly engaging music-making.

Organ Imperial


Martin Souter, organ

ISIS RECORDS CD022 (DDD/76.51)

Organist Martin Souter has chosen an intriguing pot-pourri of pieces to show off the capabilities of the 1891 Willis organ in the Long Library at Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire. This instrument, one of the largest house organs in the world, was commissioned by the Eighth Duke of Marlborough and built to a very high specification. The front pipes are of ninety-three per cent tin and many of the internal parts of the organ were constructed in mahogany. Organs designed by Henry Willis are notable for the quality of their pipework and particularly mellifluous sound, and that at Blenheim is no exception. The instrument also possesses some special stops, ranging in volume from quiet, restrained, but the work is quietly involving, especially given as persuasive a performance as here. The two vocal soloists are first-rate, and there is a telling contribution from Hiro Kurosaki on the solo violin, pointing up the vocal lines.

Alain Zaepffel speculates that the delightful setting of the Salve Regina may also have been written for the Cavalieri of Naples, but there is no firm evidence to confirm this. Regardless of any historical associations, it complements the Stabat Mater perfectly. The recording, supervised by Yolanta Skura who has been responsible for many a fine recording, is warm, clear and sensitively balanced, and supplies exactly the right stage for this unexpectedly engaging music-making.

That sound, I should add, has been captured with ravishing fidelity by recording engineer Edward Horn. Using just a pair of omni-directional microphones, he has succeeded in capturing not only the full range and wealth of detail of the instrument, but also the generous ambience of the room in which it is housed. The clarity and presence of the sound is striking, not least in Martin Souter’s gloriously unbuttoned performance of Sousa’s Stars & Stripes Forever – pure kitsch perhaps, but fun. This is one of three American pieces on the disc, doubtless reflecting the strong transatlantic links of the Marlborough family. The others are Charles Ives’s splendid set of variations on the tune America (better known to us Brits as God Save the Queen), and Virgil Thomson’s equally enjoyable variations on Shall We Gather at the River?

Edward Elgar makes three appearances in the programme, first in a transcription of Pomp and Circumstance March No 1 (a la Land Of Hope and Glory) then in the Imperial March composed in 1897 to mark the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria’s reign. The finest of the Elgar pieces, though, is the allegro maestoso from the G Major organ sonata of 1895, richly melodic and reminiscent of Wagner in its long-breathed phrases and continually evolving themes.

It is Wagner who supplies the final flourish to Martin Souter’s recital, with a rousing performance of the overture to Tannhäuser, but not before he brings us three items from the French organ repertoire: the well-known (hackneyed, I would suggest) Tocata from the Organ Symphony No 5 of Charles-Marie Widor, and the pleasingly less familiar Berceuse of Louis Vierne – a real oddity. Alexandre Guilmant’s Fantasy on two English melodies, the melodies in question being Home! Sweet Home and Rule Britannia. An interesting combination to say the least. All are played with great virtuosity and panache by Martin Souter, who clearly sounds as though he enjoyed making this recording; I certainly enjoyed listening to it, if occasionally more to savour the technique than the content.
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<td>Spendor BC1/69 Ltd Edition L1 &amp; Dk Cherry</td>
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<td>Professional Monitor Company LB1 Black</td>
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**AMPLIFIERS**

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<tr>
<th>Model</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chameleon 900S 200wpc (level control)</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>835</td>
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<td>Chameleon 900S 200wpc (no level control)</td>
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<td>Chameleon Ruby 200wpc</td>
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<td>Quad 240 power amp (professional slave amp)</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>595</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quad 520f power amp (stereo 100w - professional)</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>679</td>
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</table>

All of the above items come complete with full manufacturers warranty. Prices include UK mainland carriage and VAT. Access and Visa credit cards accepted.

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---

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Of Shostakovich's overtly 'Soviet' symphonies, the Eleventh is unquestionably the most convincing and affecting. The reason for this is not hard to find: despite its precise programme and historic references, this is music of enduring relevance, a tribute to the courage of the Russian people, not a paean to their leaders. Few other works of art so effectively portray brutality and suppression, and, it has to be said, bloody horror.

When the symphony was first performed in 1957, it was greeted with a measure of scorn by many Western critics. They believed it to be little more than superior film music or - worse - mere propaganda (it was written for the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution). But, then, could anyone in the West be wholly in sympathy with a work intended to recall and reflect upon one of the pivotal moments in Russian history?

On a bleak, cold day in January 1905, a huge demonstration of workers and their families converged on the Winter Palace in St Petersburg. It was a peaceful protest about food shortages and the appalling conditions under which people laboured in Russian factories and farms. The protesters wanted to make an appeal to the Tsar - they even carried portraits of him and religious icons. Their ruler, however, was conveniently absent. But Tsar Nicholas II had left behind his Cossack bodyguards. Did the guards fear the crowd was going to attack them? Did they imagine this bedraggled, unarmed horde was about to storm the Palace? Whatever, a shot was fired, panic broke out, and a massacre ensued. Those that were not mown down by gunfire fell under the swords of the Cossack cavalry. At least one thousand died, and the snow-covered square in front of the Palace was stained deep with blood.

It was, said Shostakovich, a turning point - the moment the people stopped believing in the Tsar, and the beginning of the end of the Romanov dynasty. In the Eleventh Symphony, much more than just an historic tableau. Was it coincidence that Shostakovich was composing this rallying call against oppression while Soviet tanks were crushing the Budapest uprising of 1956 at the cost of some 20,000 Hungarian lives? The timelessness of the symphony's message is encapsulated in the third and fourth movements, the former a sombre, chilling requiem and the latter - Tocsin (Alarm) - sounding a warning to all oppressors.

Andrew Huth's illuminating essay reveals that, surprisingly, the Eleventh Symphony has been little heard in Russia in recent years, an unfortunate consequence, no doubt, of its associations with the Communist past. Yet there is no hint of unfamiliarity in the playing of the St Petersburg orchestra, who clearly share their conductor's belief in the work's enduring qualities. This is a thrilling and compelling performance and, importantly, Ashkenazy conveys the overall symphonic structure of the work where other conductors have seen it more as four, almost unconnected tableaux (which could not be further from the truth: the symphony is full of thematic links).

The recording, made in the Great Hall of the St Petersburg Philharmonia, is as distinguished as the performance, one of Decca's finest. Weight, scale, impact, detail, clarity - all are present in abundance. I hesitate to use the well-worn term 'demonstration quality' - to me it denigrates the musical experience - but very demonstrable this production is.
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- Audiolab 8000CD
- Harbeth HL-K6
- Rotel RA-970BX
- Celestion Impact 23
- Castle Avon
- Marantz CD-63 KI-S
- Heybrook HB1 S3
- Mission Cyrus DAD3
- Meridian 502/557
- Trichord Genesis
- B&W DM 602
- Arcam Alpha 9/9P

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With 1240 volts to the HT and a very substantial power supply it delivers and caters for every demand conceivable. The Rhythm presents the authority of the best transistors with the sonic refinements and finesse of the Single Ended designs. A superb pre-amplifier stage is also incorporated to offer the connoisseur a complete one chassis design; without compromise or the need for multiple amplifiers. It offers sonic levels of excellence up till now completely unobtainable, except in a very few esoteric elite designs with extortionate price tags attached. Presenting a staggering flawless performance, awesome dynamic resolution and a tonal accuracy, it promises to thrill and enrapture its listener passionately. A very simple sonic comparison allows the listener to discover for him / herself the obvious superiority over conventional and alternative amplifier designs.

A STATEMENT NOT TO BE LEFT UNCHALLENGED

WORLD VERDICT

Partnered with sensible 'speakers of good bass depth, the Rhythm is capable of impressive performance.

Hi-Fi World July 1996

Gamma Acoustics
Ivy Lodge, 81 Sussex Place
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Hi folks, You’ve guessed it as soon as the “season” arrives so does the Newsletter. Plenty to talk about this month mainly that Serious Kit have taken plunge and opened a shop. This means simply that you don’t have to make an appointment simply walk in drink some coffee, peruse over some of the finest Hi-Fi in the world. Demo facilities are available, but it would be adviseable to book an hour or so for those of you who wish to have a serious listen. Of course home demos are still available. New products this winter include a new floorstander from Pro-Ac the studio 250. Excellence is assured from this sonic bargain. Audio Note have amazed me with the arrival of the Ankoru mono blocks at 70 watts of class ‘A’ power, these amps are simply awesome. To listen to the Ankoru’s simply ring me, these amps will be busy so book early as usual as this time of year I have many ex dem and s/hand units available including:

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<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>New Price</th>
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<th>S/H</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<td>Chario Academy 2</td>
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<td>Chario Hiper 2</td>
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<td>Marantz CD63SE</td>
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<td>TDL Reference Standard</td>
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<td>Tesseract Audio Tamp 60 (Pair)</td>
<td>£7700</td>
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- MARANTZ – CD63SE, CD63 K.I.Sig
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- MICHELL – Gyrodec + Alecto Monoblocks
- MCINTOSH – U.S. Amplification + of course, the 7009 Compact Disc Player
- RESTEK – German reference standard
- SONNETEER CAMPION – The best sub-£1000 amp we’ve heard in years
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- TOTEM MANI 2 – Simply stunning
- TRICHORD GENESIS – Reference on a budget

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AMPLIFIERS

MERIDIAN 502/557
The 557 power amplifier was impressive in the way it doubled power as load was halved. Few amps do this, Naim being the best example. It demonstrates superb power supply regulation which usually means the amplifier will deliver sledge hammer bass. The 557's output rose from an impressive 200 watts into 8 Ω to a massive 380 watts into 4 Ω, enough for large rooms and power hungry loudspeakers.

Bandwidth was a wide 5 Hz-33 kHz, the upper limit being just high enough to give flat response to 20 kHz and the lower limit matches that of CD. With big 'speakers this sort of downward extension can be heard.

Sensitivity was very high, again like that of Naim, measuring 60 mV. This is high enough to match a tuner like a Leak.

Troughline. Distortion was incredibly low, even when delivering full output power at high frequencies (10 kHz), a gruelling test.

The 502+557 combination measured superbly in all areas. NK

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Power (CD/tuner/aux.)</th>
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<td>5 Hz-33 kHz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Separation</td>
<td>81 dB</td>
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<td>Noise</td>
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<td>Distortion</td>
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<td>Sensitivity</td>
<td>60 mV</td>
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<tr>
<td>dc offset</td>
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</table>

ARCAM ALPHA 9/9P
The Alpha 9 delivers a healthy 84 watts per channel, and no less than 130 watts into a low 4 ohm load. This is more than enough to make even insensitive 'speakers go loud, so the Alpha 9 can cope with most domestic situations.

Distortion was reasonably well suppressed, measuring 0.006% in the midband, but rising to 0.04% at high frequencies, with a spread of odd order harmonics, especially into a low 4 ohm load. Some slight treble roughness or graininess might be evident as a result.

Bandwidth was wide at 6 Hz-34 kHz; there should be good bass slam. The tone controls worked very well, giving a useful 8 dB of lift and cut at spectrum extremes.

Sensitivity of the integrated amplifier was normal at 180 mV, but that of the power amplifier alone low at 700 mV. Otherwise, the 9P power amp measured like the integrated. Both turn in a creditable performance. NK

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<td>Noise</td>
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<td>Distortion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sensitivity</td>
<td>180 mV</td>
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<tr>
<td>dc offset</td>
<td>2 mV</td>
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</table>

ROTEL RA-970BX
The RA-970BX is a real powerhouse, turning out 100 watts per channel into 8 Ω and no less than 156 watts into 4 Ω. This is an amp for insensitive speakers, big rooms and headbangers.

It has an incredibly wide bandwidth of 8 Hz-150 kHz, for deep bass and open treble. However, wideband amps usually sound bright too.

With minimal distortion and noise, the RA970BX measured well. It's a great amp for those who want plenty of power. NK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Power (CD/tuner/aux.)</th>
<th>100 watts</th>
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<tr>
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<td>8 Hz-150 kHz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Separation</td>
<td>88 dB</td>
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<td>Noise</td>
<td>-94 dB</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distortion</td>
<td>0.004%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity</td>
<td>200 mV</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Lowther Acoustica, horn, pair PM&C...£400
Swallow Active Loudspeakers, mint...£395
Phonophone HPI, unique open design...£395
ATD Pata Acoustica, compact speakers, box...£250
Box 501 "Direct Reflect" very clean...£225
Lowther TP-1B, poor cond, PM&A, pair...£POA
Tannoy original 15" golds, Lancasters...£150
Wevers 2000 15" bass units, due in stock...£POA
Vivax S2, pressure units pair...due in soon.
Garrard 401, SME 3009/II, 3001...plinth due in.
Garrard 301, Docea London, plinth...£POA
Alphonsona, Atlas PSU, late spec...£600
Elite Townsend ROCK, finn, LINN Bank...£250
Hydraulic Reference Take ese, rare...£200
PeroGraph Logic Seven, semi-pro open reel...£250
UHER 4200 open reel, stereo, pu & case, mint...£300
Snider 863, pro half trash stereo open reel...£350
Mackie 1200V10LZ mini mixer, latest version...£265
Sugden A48, amplifier, original, mint...£75
Rogers CADET III valve power amplifier...£120
Lek Stereo 70 valve amplifier, rebuilt...£300
QUAD 405, in stock, from Mkt & Ih...£150
QUAD 22, valve pre for use with Qlls, £40
QUAD 33, cLAud Bri preamp, mint...£75
Sony TAN-9000, pair 200 watt monoblocks...£99
PS Audio ELITE, 70 wpc, integrated amplifier...£295
Zeta Eclipse preamp, as new condition...£195
Audio PRO, receiver, digiral, pretty funny, 85wpc...£199
Pioneer SX-747, Quadraphonic receiver, very big...£250
Sugden R21, Haden's face very tunny tuner, stunning...£350
QUAD FM II, (for 22) with stereo decoder...£60
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**Turntables**

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## CD PLAYERS

### AUDIOLAB 8000CD

The 8000CD is the first player I've measured to use Crystal's new CS4329 convertor chip. In measured terms it proves itself well in the Audiolab, setting a high level of performance. It is very linear, distortion staying low at all levels. At -30dB, a level picked to represent a typical music signal, there are no distortion harmonics visible, and at -60dB, distortion is as low as the best yielding a healthy dynamic range of 111dB (EIAJ test).

This, allied to a frequency response showing subtle bass lift and a gently rolled off treble, should ensure a smooth sound. Output was spot on the Philips standard at 2.0V. With wide channel separation and low noise, this completes a set of measurements revealing fine engineering.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency response</th>
<th>4Hz-20.8kHz</th>
<th>Separation (dB)</th>
<th>1kHz</th>
<th>20kHz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distortion (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-6dB</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-30dB</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-60dB</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-90dB</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### MISSION DAD3

Showing a little bass lift and gentle treble roll-off, I'd expect the Cyrus CD player to have solid bass and smooth treble. This is a response characteristic becoming more and more common in CD players we measure, helping to bring extra fullness to bass and remove sting from CD's treble.

Combined with low distortion this should give a smooth sound. At -30dB some 2nd, 4th and 5th harmonics are clearly visible. Even order distortion is generally innocuous though, so it is only the small amount of 5th that may add a little sharpness. At -60dB the Cyrus turns in the lowest figure I've measured at 0.22%, so it resolves low detail well. The distortion structure of each channel was identical too and channel separation above 125dB at 1kHz and 20kHz. This suggests careful board layout and highly tolerated components have been used in the Cyrus CD.

Output was 2.1V and noise low enough to be inaudible at -101dB. A nicely engineered player.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency response</th>
<th>4Hz-21kHz</th>
<th>Separation (dB)</th>
<th>1kHz</th>
<th>20kHz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distortion (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-6dB</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-30dB</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-60dB</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-90dB</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### MARANTZ CD-63mkII Kl-Signature

On the test bench the Marantz measured well. Frequency response was smooth and flat, but with a subtle plateau lift around 5kHz, I'd expect detail to be pushed well forwards.

Distortion figures were around average at all signal levels. There was just the smallest amount of 2nd order poking through the noise floor, but even order distortion tends to be innocuous anyway.

Separation was very wide, being above 125dB at 1kHz and 20kHz. Dynamic range exceeded the 100dB barrier and noise was very low indeed.

Compared to the 63SE reviewed in the May'95 issue most of these results are virtually identical, with the exception of distortion which appeared slightly worse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency response</th>
<th>4Hz-21kHz</th>
<th>Separation (dB)</th>
<th>1kHz</th>
<th>20kHz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distortion (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-6dB</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-30dB</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-60dB</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-90dB</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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- Hi-Fi Choice, Marantz, Audiolab, Cabletalk & Mordaunt-Short (especially Gary Mardell of MS) for services beyond the call of duty, ie replacing drive units at a moment's notice. Sorry about that.)
- ATC for producing the amazing 100As (you were right Alan Ainsley, we could not blow them up!)
- Naim Audio for the best tonearm in the world (ARO) and the NAC 52 preamp.
- Path group for the Sumiko Sho cartridge.
- The following people for giving their time and effort (in no particular order): Paul Ogle, Ian Wright, Davey Cameron, Adrian Cowderoy, Tony Vassello, Paul Williams and - of course - Damian.
- And - the biggest thank you to all the music lovers who attended the show.
- Hope to see you all next year.

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CD PLAYERS

**TRICHORD GENESIS**
The Genesis player is based on the Pioneer PD-5504, but modified by Trichord. Its frequency response shows strong treble roll-off, 1dB down at 15.2kHz with both channels displaying virtually identical characteristics. This I would expect to give a soft, warm sound.

Distortion levels were low right across the board. At -30dB, a level picked to represent a typical music signal, there's only a small amount of 2nd harmonic visible. As even order distortion is generally innocuous, especially at such a low level, I'd expect a smooth sound from the Genesis. Separation remained above 90dB even at 20kHz. No noise figure could be obtained because the Genesis mutes under test.

The dynamic range figure of 105.9dB is very good echoing the low distortion at -60dB. Output voltage was above standard, the Genesis providing 2.4volts rms. Apart from the discrepancy in the frequency response the Trichord Pioneer fairs well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency response</th>
<th>4Hz-15.5kHz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distortion (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left</td>
<td>0.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right</td>
<td>0.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-6dB</td>
<td>0.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-30dB</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-60dB</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-90dB</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HEYBROOK HB1 S3**
Age matters not, it would seem in the case of Heybrook's HB1, which has been around in various forms since 1982. It is an extremely well engineered loudspeaker, with a smooth frequency response and good phase alignment, which should ensure a balanced sound with fine focus. A rising treble and falling bass may make them sound a little thin, if insightful, but near wall placement should at least bolster bass.

The HB1s are sensitive too, producing 89dB SPL at 1m from a nominal watt (2.83V) pink noise signal. This coupled with a smooth impedance curve averaging out at 8.2Ω will make them very easy to drive. Fine engineering, DB.

**B&W DM602**
B&W's DM602s had a smooth frequency response that showed good phase alignment, which normally ensures a focused sound with fine imaging. Treble output is a little high, but I suspect it will be just enough to provide extra insight and detail without becoming too sharp. There is a little upper bass lift too, which should give a good impression of speed and punch.

With a highish sensitivity of 88dB at 1m for a nominal watt (2.83V) pink noise signal, the B&Ws should go loud with few watts. Overall impedance is 7.2Ω, but they are strongly reactive, described by the sharp changes in the impedance curve. Most modern amplifiers should be able to cope with this well enough though. DB.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impedance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

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CELESTION IMPACT 23
Celestion's Impact 23 has been very carefully engineered, the frequency response being especially flat. There are some subtle trends though, including a peak in the bass around 160Hz which will help to give them good punch and speed. Through the midrange there is a very shallow dip above which treble gently rises again. This should ensure a smooth midrange and good insight respectively.

With a sensitivity of 89.5dB at 1m for a nominal watt (2.83V) pink noise signal and an overall impedance of 9.312, the Impact 23s will not only go loud with few watts, but won't draw strong current either. Any amplifier of around 20watts should be more than capable of driving Celestion's Impact 23s.

CASTLE AVON
Castle have chosen to use a carbon fibre drive unit for bass/midrange duty in the Avons, allied to a fabric dome tweeter. Carbon fibre is light and stiff, generally giving good sensitivity and a clean, fast sound. In the Avons though, some of this sensitivity has been traded against bass extension. They produced a just below average 85dB at 1m fed with a nominal watt (2.83V) pink noise signal. With a high overall impedance of 11.51Ω and a smooth impedance curve indicating a mainly resistive load, most modern amplifiers should have little problem driving the Avons.

Frequency response is impressively smooth through midrange and treble, although their output here is 1-2dB above bass level. I suspect that bass will need to be reinforced by near-wall placement to balance the Avons, but this is no bad thing allowing them to be kept discreet in domestic surroundings. The Avons appear to be well engineered on paper, the magic of carbon fibre can only be heard subjectively though.

HARBETH HL-K6
As with all Harbeth loudspeakers I’ve measured over the years, the new HL-K6s have a flat and smooth frequency response. There is the slightest dip at the crossover point, but it’s so small it will be inaudible. Other trends that may affect subjective performance are a gently rising treble response for extra detail and insight and a lift in the bass for a good solid punch. I would expect the Harbeths to have a balanced, but punchy and informative sound.

With an average sensitivity of 86dB at 1m, and an overall impedance of 8.5Ω, the 'K6s will be easy enough to drive. The impedance curve is a touch lumpy, hinting at their reactive nature, but it’s nothing that any modern amplifier shouldn’t be able to cope with. I’d aim for a quality fifty watter for best results.
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Audiomeca: MePhisto, Kreatura and Damnation Teac, Vrods 7, 10SE, 25, T1, 7020, 7700, Sugden: Optim, SD-1, SD-1, SD-1, AJS + AUS DAC, Audio Alchemy Drive + Dacs, Audionote DAC 1, 2, and 3, Audio Synthesis DAX-2 and Transcend Transport, Pro Industry Integrated, Creek.

AMPS-
Sugden: Wholesales, Chord 3200Pre, 800, 1000 + 1200, Power: Michell, Isos, Argos and Alectos, Audionote OTO, Messiah, Quests + Conquests and M2, Pre, Tube Technology, Union Research 845s, SMPY Two and Four, Denseq, and DA10, Parasound Pre+POWERS, Conrad Johnson, PJ10-MV55 Audio, Stebens + Monolocks, LFD Pre-POWER, Graaf Valve Pre+Power Amps, Creek, MOTH, Audio Synthesis Passion.

LOUDSPEAKERS-
Proac R15, R25, R3.5 and R3.5 Tablette, Studio 100, 150 + 200, Impulse Lalu + 1TA's, SD Acoustics S03, S1 and S1, Ikko Opera + Callas Audionote K, + E. Spendor, Origin Live, J.P. TDL, Quantum Audio, Harlequin, Alon Piteit, 0.5 and 1, Audiostatic Electroluis, Analysys Ribbons, Rel Sub Woofers, Morel, Optiton Triangle.

ANALOGUE-
Michell, Myro Gyro + Orbe, Voxt, VPI, Systemdek, Project, SME, Ortofon, Lyra, Denon, Golden, Grado, Rega Arms.

STANDS + TARGETS-
Sound Style, Sound Organisation, Alphason, Bata + Tripod.

CABLES-
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Valves and the CD medium

Of all hi-fi magazines I suppose Hi-Fi World includes more than most on valve amplifiers including home-built kits. Certainly, there can be no doubt that there has been an amazing resurgence in valve amplifiers and the main reason I believe lies in it's ability to tame some of the nasties of the CD medium, or at least make them more palatable. Another reason is the comparative simplicity of manufacture and far too many valve amps are simple rehashed old designs put into pretty boxes, that don't sound all that special! You won't find many references in my adverts about valves as the systems we put together using solid state equipment sound perfectly acceptable even with CD, so we don't feel the need to get too involved with valves, which always raise the problem of reliability and valve replacement. A number of valve amps are too low powered for most of the speakers we recommend, and mean we are restricted to highish efficiency units by Triangle, Heybrook and possibly The Alon 1. We do like powerful, dynamic valve amps such as the Primary Acoustics Cadence 100 watt (£2.2k) monoblocks, which will drive any speaker we sell, including even the difficult ATC 10's, 20's and 50's (Passive). As they don't now make a matching preamp, we usually front the monoblocks with the AVI preamp, but that's not unusual!

Record cleaning using VPI HW17F, available from colleague 'The Audio Valet' at 80p per record.

Phone (0117) 987 7905

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Mesa Baron

Last week however we auditioned another valve power amp from America by Mesa Engineering, namely the Baron, which was very favourably reviewed by Ken Kessler in Hi-Fi News. This amp unusually can be operated in either triode mode at 55 w/ch and in various mixtures of triode and pentode until full pentode operation at 150 w/ch. Although expensive at just under £4K. it impressed enough in 30 minutes, mainly in pentode, for me to include it in this advert. The amount of feedback is also adjustable, but I suspect that zero feedback would generally be preferred. The triode option gave a slightly softer focus which might be preferred on some systems, but as the Ruark Accolade and Alon II's were used, the pentode operation sounded sweet and dynamic. If of any interest do give us a ring. It's fun watching those meters and it is beautifully built!
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<td>£205 SH</td>
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<td>THETA DATA 2 CD TRANSPORT</td>
<td>£179 SH</td>
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<tr>
<td>MUSICAL FIDELITY F25/E16</td>
<td>£595 SH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KRELL INTEGRATED AMP</td>
<td>Yes, we've finally got it!!</td>
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</table>

**MORE CHOICE**

We are delighted to announce our success in obtaining the following carefully selected agencies.

**ATC, CHORD, ACOUSTIC ENERGY, BRYSTON, ALON, BOLDER, SME, VPI, ROCKPORT, GAMMA, TRILGY, van den Hul, XLO, STRAIGHT WIRE, SOUNDSTYLE, TARGET and many more.**

Your choice is now complete, we offer generous part exchange on your equipment purchased. Show room/dem room - single speaker demo room trade in policy - credit card facilities.

**Oxford Audio Consultants**

**CHOOSE**

10am-8pm 7 days by appt.

**Tel 0181 392 1959 0181 392 1963**

**FAX 0181 392 1994**
Hi-Fi World

THORENS TD160 II Rega RB300. Solid mahogany. AT4060DC. £reg. top. All in vg - £50 Lps mixed. £300 ono. Tel: 0184 742 446.

NAIT 82 R/C Rega RB300. Solid top. All in vgc + 50 LPs mixed. £300

ALPHA FIVE CD player £40. Alpha Six amp £200. Mod. Musical Fidelity Elea 100 amp £175. Arcacc Delta 70 transports with hifi.

REVOX B77 Stereo Tape recorder 1/2 track, 3/4, 7/8, 12 cm. general condition £425. Revox B75 amp £160, treble monitor control. £425. Yamaha DSP £100 sound source processed. Yamaha stereo rear speakers. AST E10 £500. Tel: 01438 822 270.

SILTECH HD-6 Digital W, £60. £59. £50. £42. £37. £38

NAIM SBL Loudspeakers, black Ash, 4 years old, excellent condition. £800 ovno.


SILTECH HD-6 Digital W, £60. £59. £50. £42. £37. £38

THORENS TD160 II Rega RB300. Solid mahogany. AT4060DC. £reg. top. All in vg - £50 Lps mixed. £300 ono. Tel: 0184 742 446.

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WANTED: ELACASET Machine in any condition. Also Elicas service manual and end user manual. Tel: 01233 592 136 (Carlisle)

PAIR OF PHILIPS Digital active speakers + digital pre-amp. Original price £1700. Part exchange welcome. Tel: 01333 842 237 (E. Sussex)

VALVENE Amplifier, Mullard, thirty watts per channel, uncalibrated. Soviet EL34s, bespoke not taken up, hence only £250. Wilkinson triode or 3820c, monolithic, 15-50 watts, from £250. Enquiries: Tel: 0181 427 1378 (Harrow)

LINN LP12 Black. Valhalla, Kirckbusch, Tenor turntable, Linn Dacette £700. Linn Basik Plus arm £40. Tel: 01237 870 007 after 6pm (Brighton area)

UNISON RESEARCH Simply 2, 6434 (h). Tel: 01903 716 275 (West Sussex)

WANTED: ELCASET Machine in any condition. £1750. Meridian 500 Series CD loudspeakers, new £3300. Accept offers around £700. Tel: 01952 502 097 (Bucks)


Naim S200 power amp plus two Exposure 4 power amplifiers. £150. Tel: 01395 255 232

Pioneer A400 amplifier in perfect condition, boxed with manual £150. Armstrong 521 amplifier, in excellent condition £50. Tel: 01252 622 403 (London)

LEAK STEREO 20 New valves £300. AUDIO Innovations S200 power amp £300. First Audio monos amps, Choke PSU £600. Hand built stereo amp £700. Assorted PX4 O/P tubes £10. Tel: 01305 784 050

Harbeth HLCOMPACT 7. Walnut. As reviewed in June issue of Hi-Fi World, vg. Cost new £1329. £795 ono. Tel: 01702 501 397

WANTED: MUSICAL Fidelity power amp 140 in good condition! Please write to: Paul Hartmann, D-45437 Mülheim, Boeverstr. 4 (BDR) (Germany)


STILTECH MC4-24 Silver interconnects with WBT plugs. 18" pair and 12" pair £60. New Soni Link Trionic interconnects, metre pair (cost £150) + 5M + 5A Powercord £55. Post free. Tel: 03331 459 1432

RAARRGI 400, MIE 309 Series 2. Iorlen ton cartridge on Teak plinth with cover. Spare spindle for 401 and Shure cartridge. Excellent condition £170 also Leak Stereofon tuner £20. Tel: 01244 378 388 (Chester)

ROGERS LS3/5A (Teak), 5 years old, vg condition (1 l oom), lightly used £350. Tel: 01223 662 502 (Ashford, Kent)

KRELL AMPLIFICATION KSP-78 balanced pre-amp, external power supply, adjustable MC/MM options. KSA-200 200Wpc Caix A power amplifier, bi-amp outputs, both mint, boxed with instructions. Giveaway £250. May split. Tel: 01199 676 335

WANTED: JBL 2620 or similar horn or hybrid speaker. £50. Tel: 01298 786 888 (Middlesbrough)

ATC 20 SPEAKERS, black, boxed, mint £75. Target R1 stands £175. ATC 10 speakers £600. Target R2 stands £150. Chord SPM 200B 200Wpc Caix A power amplifier, bi-amp outputs, both mint, boxed with instructions. Giveaway £250. Wanted: Sonab speakers. Tel: 01226 710 655 (Yorkshire)

NAIM 45.5, MIN2 (Serviced and updated by Naim’S) £160. Naim MC boards, unused, cost £70, bargain £25. Carico 2800 pre £250. Wanted: Sonab speakers. Tel: 01217 825 319 419

VIP HMW 19 JUNIOR portable with headphone. £50. £640 £200 $95. £640 £200 £650. XLO Pro 150; Ix Chord T-1 valve mint £750. Armstong 525 £125. High end monitors with 19/96. RRP £1000. £275. VD HUL MCI SPECIAL (unique), mint, £440. £320. £450.

MIKE STANNARD Audio Innovations S200 power amp £300 pair. Tel: 01494 874 381 (Bucks)

WOODSIDE/RADFORD MA30 Class A valve amp. Works very well. One 50% bowler, excellent condition, boxed £650 each. Nakanichi RXK-500 auto reverse cassette deck, vg £275. Tel: 01245 252 651 (Chelmsford)

MICHEL ARGRO (new front panel) with Hera PSU £525. Michell ISO (MC) with HERA PSU £250. Excellent condition. Also Dox 5.2 speakers £50. Tel: 01344 21388 (Asco)

NAIM AUDIO System comprising CDI, 62, Hi-Cap, 250. Will not split. All new style and boxed £350 (6000 new). Matching (green) Soundstyle 4-shelf tripod support available. Tel: 01283 813 136 (Middlesbrough)

MARA NTZ CD-63 KI signature. £400. Loudspeaker cable 6x0.5mm Cable Talk 3, 2x4mm. NAC'S, phono inputs: interconnects. Sromatic M1000 (lots of bass), 3 x XLO Pro 150; 1x Chord Siren. Tel: Michael 0171 937 9735 evenings

MICHELL GYRODEC Complete with QSC power supply. As new. Breeze ment sale. Tel: Dennis 01905 25198 anytime (Worcs)

PINK TRIANGLE PT 70 with RB300. £400. Target stil £30. £50. £41.2 speakers with Epos stands £200. Tel: 0181 557 5854

AUDIOLAB 8000CP £800, B&W P5 rose wood speakers £800 (both one year old, boxed. Also Rogers Cadet valve power amps £300 pair. Tel: 0131 326 6083 (Birmingham)

For sale: Linn UX 100 power amps boxed excellent condition can deliver if required £325 each. Wanted: Linneaud Phono tuner must be recent spec. Tel: 01925 866020 (evenings/weekends)

KEF REFERENCE 107 Loudspeakers, active Kube Equaliser, floorstanding, black Ash, £600. £395. £385. Use, £180. £600. £1500. Module £500. £200. £1500. £950. £649. £2500. £2500. £1750. £1000. £500. £300. £200. £150. £100. £50. £35. £20. £15. £10. £5. £3. £2 (Walsall)

NAP 135 Mono Bloc power amplifier (one only). Perfect working order. 4 years old. Naim main dealer report available. Slight facia damage. Open to offers.

Tel: 0191 416 1092 (antaphone)

AUDI O NOTE M1 phono pre-amp £50. Stax Lambda Signature headphones SRM T1 valve mint £350. AVI Reference turntable with Lunley Reference L2 loudspeakers £8000, new slight scratch £1250. Tel: 0121 784 6785

VANDERSTEEN 2CEs excellent full range Stereophile magazine favourite references speakers. 3 years old, 3, boxed £1250 (both one year old, boxed, £750 each). Set with 3x Chord T-1 valve mint £750. 2xSharda DDU 1604 headphones £20 each. £400 per pair. Tel: 0191 416 1092 (antaphone)

SALE: TECHNICS RS 3300 turntable, superb £1250. Tel: 01199 740 940 (Queensway)

BRENNING System comprising CDI, 62, Hi-Cap. £350. Will not split. All new. £150 (6000 new). Matched (green) Soundstyle 4-shelf tripod support available. Tel: 01737 722 36 11

HALLMARK CD-55 £1600. All valve mono blocs, superb condition, boxed £650 each. £200. Tel: 01199 740 940 (Queensway)

VPI HWI9 JUNIOR turntable with Ortofon MC plug in. £625. £450. £375. £250. £175. £95. £75. £50. £35. £25. £15. £10. £5. £3. £2. £1 (Walsall)

Model 270 £800. £550. £300. £200. £150. £100. £50. £25. £20. £15. £10. £5. £3. £2. £1 (Walsall)

SOUNDSTYLE 4-shelf tripod support available. About £150. £125. £100. £75. £50. £25. £20. £15. £10. £5. £3. £2. £1 (Walsall)
THE HI-FI CLEARING HOUSE

Special Sale of Ex Demo Hi-Fi & Home Theatre Equipment. Most items are in as new condition and boxed in original cartons. Contact Paul Tel: 0161 439 4246 Fax: 0161 442 1375

Audio Rhythm Stage reduces acoustic feedback reaching your equipment due to its unique glass & steel design.

Iso Lok - Audio Equipment Securing Device (Patent Pending)
Customised by Emelex to fit within your existing shelving system, Iso Lok mechanically secures your equipment to its support, reducing audio vibrations due to acoustic feedback.

For further information, please contact:
Emelex (UK)
17 Wigmore Street
London W1H 9LA
Tel: 0171-580 5816 Fax: 0181-292 3410

Rhythm Stage - Audio Equipment Table Top Platform (Patent Pending)

Listening

Second hand & ex demo equipment

Triangulum Zeppelin loudspeakers ex display with "something solid" stands were £810... £550
Harbichord 811/33 loudspeakers black... £199
Audiovector 3 loudspeakers black ash, ex demo were £140... £299

Great VIB Two valve pre-amplifier with a stunning output of 100w per channel and Nordost Tatine Twin or Chord Turntable loudspeaker cable.

This is one of those more - than - sum - of - the - parts systems and costs around £1800. It can also demonstrate with the K! Signature If you really insist!

By the time you read this the new and aptly named Triangulum Revelation CD player should be available at a little under £2000. Genesis owners can upgrade for the price differential.

At a more exotic level I am having real success with the Union Research Smart 88 power amplifier controlled by either the Audio Synthesis Passion or Sound Plays a pre-amplifier.

This combination, with the right source, has sounded pure and broad into a wide range of loudspeakers from Audiovector, Harbeth, Rogers, Triangle, AudioNote, Chord, and Martin Logan.

Come and listen. The coffee machine is fixed and you are welcome to call for a relaxed chat (or just to "fuss" me out).

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Hi-Fi World

LEAK POINT One TL10 amp, with pre-amp in original condition £225. Also Nytech CPH (2 pre-amp with MM phono stage £150) (9 years old). Tel: 01462 678 158 (N-Herts).

AUDIO RESEARCH VT60 Stereo power amp. About 1 year old. Perfect condition £1700. For quick sale (£2650 new). Tel: 01462 688 656.


FIDELITY 65X speakers - excellent condition £1750 (£2600 new) £1300. Nottingham Spacedeck/Possett ALBATROSS Speakers (250 £1100. Garrard 301 £100. Quad ESL 63 speakers, comes with on-ear headphones. £149. £250. Tel: 01462 681 802 (Hampshire).

ONE PAIR Vann Den Hul Thunderline interconnects 6m RCAS £280. Two parts Sonoran speaker cables (USA) 46. Tel: 01942 811 810.

TRI-SONICS Class A (100w monoblocks and preamplifier) line out for bi-amping, 6 inputs, chrome polished with real Mahogany. Exclusive in sound and looks. Half price at £900. Tel: 01903 716 209.

QUAD FM4 3 months old, boxed and with instruction manual £250. Garrad 50 £100. Tel: 01322 367 784.

TOP QUALITY Hi-Fi supports from Frameworks. Tubular steel, smoked glass shelves. H500 2 shelves, H700 3 shelves. Original boxes £150 the pair. Buy Direct.

Tel: 0181 472 8131.

POSSELT ALBATROSS Speakers (250 £1200. Nottingham Spacedeck/Possett ALBATROSS Speakers (250 £1100. Garrard 301 £100. Quad ESL 63 speakers, comes with on-ear headphones. £149. £250. Tel: 01462 681 802 (Hampshire).


MERIDIAN 200 CD Transport, 4 years old, excellent condition £375. Meridian 209 remote control £40. Tel: 01604 410 716.

LINN SARAs, boxed, stands, cables £225 ono. Crimson Electric, pre + power amps (CPI + CE 1708) 170 watts £225 ono. Tel: 01296 226 668.

LINN KELTIK System. Kaarin pre-amp, 4 Klouts, Mahogany Kabik speakers Kaarin. CD, Numerik DAC. Proseine condition £950.

Tel: 01466 706 038.

TEKTRONIX SN45A, £49 storage oscilloscopes and 575 transistor curve tracer, plus spare valves, plug in and some manuals. Heroic 1960's, professional valve & hybrid technology. £100 the lot. Tel: 0181 317 8013.

MISSION 751 s/m, and Mission stands £250. Mission F/751/2 speaker boxed c/w £150. DPA 2005 s/p, pre-amp, immaculate 6 months new £700. DPA Little Bit £15, boxed as new £200. Tel: 01792 280 600.

LINN AXIS, Bazline PXL, 99 (new stylus) in original box £275 ono. Music Hall MCD2 speakers 100 watts, two way, in black Ash £85. Foundation single pillar £18 stands £25. All immaculate. Tel: 01625 613 404.

ROGERS LS3/5A £650. Used for home demo only £650 (£600). Rogers Studio M £400 (£400). Rogers CD player £400. £650. Tel: 01792 568 155 or 01487 577 114 (Eastleigh).

FOR SALE Sonorous, Cerius, Lingo, Akioto, £125 each, Marantz speakers £14. £375. Tel: 01792 383 596 or 01202 501 988.

MANTICORE MANTRA turntable, Rega £1300. Line Nebula amplifier £150. Arkansas Deck £45. £1100. £320 ono. £400. Tel: 01268 435 188 (Essex).

AUDIO SYNTHESIS, Passive attenuator and input selector. 1993 model, Holofraskan. Well run. In current model is £695 new, this one will sell for £500. Tel: 0171 435 3083, e-mail: Woisfandmann@msn.com

B+W 802 MONITOR speakers £600. £400. £200. £150. £100. £50. £25. £20. £15. £10. £5. £3. £2. £1. £0. £200. £150. £100. £75. £50. £40. £30. £25. £20. £15. £10. £5. £3. £2. £1. £0.

LINN MIPHI CD player, mint condition, boxed £950. Tel: 01245 215 373.

TEAC VRS T1, Good entry level transport, as new £320. Cambridge Audio Dac Magic II, as new £110. Tel: 01432 850 157 (Hersfordshire).

SONUS FABER Electa, vgc £795 Apogee Stage speakers, boxed, manuals £215. Excell (£4100). AudioQuest Cobalt Hyperlitz speaker cable £2.5m pair £50 (£209). Tel: 0161 873 5202 work or 0161 330 7912 home.

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AKD 058 MARTIN TAYLOR Years Apart
AKD 051 BURNS SONGS Volume 2
AKD 054 TOMMY SMITH Beasts
AKD 052 MAGNIFICAT The Golden Age, Vol 1 : Europe
AKD 060 MAGNIFICAT Victoria: Officium Defunctorum

Also available LINN SAMPLER CDs for £4.99

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Also available LINN SAMPLER CDs for £4.99

These amplifiers have been designed with power supplies large enough for the demands of the new VV 30013AN 3013 Vaic valve but can be supplied with standard 300B’s for later upgrades. (Being fitted with internal switching facilities, they can be rebiased for VV300B.)

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Burt-on-Trent
01283 530558/538682

Audible Difference
Din's Norton 01377 720277

Paul Green Hi-Fi
Bath Aven 01225 315107

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Leicester 0116 257 1444

The Audio Consultants
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DECEMBER 1996
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TECHNICS SLP1200B CD player £450. EMT 948 turntable £700. Revox B710 Mk11 cassette £550. Revox B77 Mk11 HS £550. Revox G36 MkIII HS £700. Tel: 01246 275 479


SPEAKERS: End of line, ex-demo, damaged cabinets, fix-pack etc. Factory clearance to make room for new models. Please send s.a.e. for list. Harbeth Acoustics, Unit 1, Bridge Road, Haywards Heath, RH16 1UA

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TURNTABLES
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VALVE AMPLIFIERS
AEI, EMI, Leak, Rogers, PYE, Quad, WE etc.

AUDIO VALVES
DA30, KT66, KT88, PX4, PX25, PS5/250, WE 300

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