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 outclassed. The difference is clear.
As December 25th looms ever closer, and crowds of shoppers start to fill the streets, we offer you a chance to win the perfect Christmas present. In our special competition this festive month, everything we review can be won. All you have to do is turn to page 66 to find out how to enter.

Mission 752 Freedom loudspeakers £78.00
Arcam Alpha 7 CD player £319.90
Arcam Alpha 8 CD player £519.90
Technics SU-A7000MK3 amplifier £249.95
Roksan Xerxes X (turntable only with basic power supply) £1615.00
Blue Room Minipod loudspeakers £399.95
Monrio MJ amplifier £695.00
UKD Opera Duetto loudspeakers £395.00
TDL T-Line 2 loudspeakers £549.95
QED Discsaver £34.99
KAR Torino loudspeakers £899.00
Kenwood KX-5080S cassette deck £199.95
Interconnect cables £184.96

Total £6641.55

For competition details and entry form see page 66

DAC CD PLAYER
Setting Digital Analogue Company's CDP CD player apart from the masses are its transformer-coupled valve output stage and HDCD compatibility. Will it bring a glow of satisfaction to your ears?

DPA 500s PRE/POWER
Freshly delivered just for Hi-Fi World is the new 500s pre/power combination from DPA Digital. Find out if it can live up to the reputation of its illustrious predecessors.

TECHNICS SL-1200 LTD
Since its introduction some 25 years ago, Technics have made an astonishing 1.6 million SL1200/1210 turntables. To celebrate, and who wouldn't after selling that many, they're releasing a gloss-black-with-gold-plated-trimmings version, with a limited edition run of 10,000! But will it appeal to more than just German Techno DJs?

AURA CA200/PA100
Sitting pretty in their slimline casework are Aura's most recent arrivals, the CA200 pre and PA100 power amplifiers. Find out if this £1500 pair can charm our ears like the £280 VA-80 did.

PIONEER CT-9S
After getting fine results from Pioneer's CT-S740S cassette deck in the June issue, we headed to the top of the pile for the flagship CT-95.

MISSION 751 FREEDOM
Smallest of Mission's 75 series, these newly revised 751 Freedoms promise to pack some punch. Find out if they were a knock-out in the next issue.

SONY CDP-XE900E
Rescuing budget CD technology from its innovation doldrums is this new CD player from Sony. Instead of using a fixed transport and moving laser, Sony have opted for a stationary laser and a transport that moves. Find out if the music the CDP-XE900E makes is equally moving.
THIS MONTH'S REVIEWS

AMPLIFIERS

TECHNICS SU-A700 MK3

Sporting bamboo dielectric capacitors for a more natural sound, Technics hope this integrated amplifier will bring a Yule-tide smile to Dominic Todd's face.

LOUDSPEAKERS

MISSION 752 FREEDOM

If you want silk in your stocking, Nick Tate reckons a pair of Mission's 752 Freedom loudspeakers could be just the thing. Still relying on a High Definition Aerogel bass/midrange driver, the improved 752s now use a silk dome tweeter.

SYSTEM

MONRIO MJ AMPLIFIER AND UKD OPERA DUETTO LOUDSPEAKERS

More season's greetings from Italy, courtesy of Monrio's compact MJ integrated amplifier and UKD's solid Mahogany Opera loudspeakers.

COMPACT DISC

ARCAM ALPHA 7 & ALPHA 8

Two presents in one. If you get a £320 Alpha 7 CD player this year, you can upgrade it to the £520 Alpha 8 next Christmas. David Price is our man with the golden ears.

CASSETTE

KENWOOD KX-5080S

Bigger brother to the KX-3080 we took a shine to in the November issue, the new KX-5080S boasts Dolby S. Noel 'Claus' Keywood finds out if it's a worthy stocking filler.

VINYL

ROKSAN XERXES X

Spinning merrily around the Christmas tree is Eric Braithwaite with Roksan's Xerxes X turntable, DSU and XPS 3.5 power supplies.

QED DISCSAVER

What's the price of salvation for a record collection imprisoned by a low quality phono stage? £35 and a QED Discsaver from Santa, says Jon Marks.

OUTSTANDING - Superb sound, something we'd use ourselves.

GOOD - Has strong merit. Well worth an audition.

ADEQUATE - Mediocre in several areas. May be worth auditioning.


WORLD VERDICT
Not only can you find out which goodies we’ll be revealing in February’s issue, but you’ll be able to take a look at all the superb prizes on offer this month.

If the news was any fresher than this we’d know of it before the manufacturers had designed it.

Wondering how to put a system together or where to turn for the perfect audiophile gift? Turn to the letters pages for inspiration.

Standing on their snow-crested columns, Hi-Fi World’s finest bring you the views from the top.

Stuck for a present for a hi-fi buff pal? Save Rudolph a trip and invest in some high fidelity wisdom from Hi-Fi World’s library.

Our listing of the best equipment we’ve heard over the years.

Hidden away in the depths of Lapland, a factory full of pixies turns out all that hi-fi gear. On the other hand, you might be better off talking to these people.

Whether it’s an amp to warm your hands and ears, or speakers for your sleigh, this is the right page.

Save yourself the disappointment of a duff delivery by Santa. Catch a sleigh down to your nearest expert and make the right choice.

This month’s free supplement celebrates Christmas with a round-up of the best hi-fi we’ve reviewed over the last year. You’ll also find Christmas music reviews and a Christmas quiz for the hi-fi trivialists.

A chance to win everything reviewed in this issue is before you this Christmas, so don’t miss out. Turn to page 66 and make your choice.
At first glance, sitting in the path of a 2 mile high tornado isn't the smartest thing to do. Unless of course you're watching it on a Sharp SRS 3D Surround Sound T.V. Using the revolutionary 'Sound Retrieval System', the T.V. engulfs the room with vivid, 3D Surround Sound. And all from just two speakers.

So, wherever you're sitting and whatever you're watching, the sound is so real it's like actually being there. There are 3 T.V.s with SRS available, each one providing an affordable alternative to home cinema 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/T for further information.
PT IN THE PINK

It looks like Pink Triangle are now working in collaboration with Mr. Claus, bringing out a whole raft of new goodies for Christmas. Tidings of joy for those who find digital delectable come in the form of two CD players, the £2099 Litaural and £999 Numeral. While the former uses PT's own discrete 1-bit DAC to turn numbers into music, the latter relies on a pair of Philips Bitstream convertors. Common to both players, however, are a transport and DAC locked together by a synchronous clock signal to reduce jitter levels.

Audiophiles whose world revolves around vinyl can realise their Christmas wishes with two arms and a new turntable. The £549 LPT II, with its open triangular plinth, is a single speed deck which can be upgraded via a two-speed external supply. Arm options are PT's budget arm (based on the Rega RB300) or their new Brava or forthcoming Trax It.

The £599 Brava, like its more costly sibling the Trax It, is a parallel tracker, its carriage running on low friction knife edge guides. But where the Brava uses aluminium in its arm tube, the Trax It prefers carbon fibre. Also setting the Trax It apart is its remote control which allows the arm to be positioned and the stylus raised and lowered. A price has yet to be finalised, though.

Last present in Santa's bag is the Integral. Unusually for these days, this 100watt integrated amp comes with a phono stage catering for both MM and MC cartridges. And with pre and power sections split, a power amp can be added for bi-amping. Remote operation and a tone control module are optional extras on the standard price of £999.

Pink Triangle Projects
Invicta Works,
Elliot Road,
Bromley,
Kent BR2 9NT
Tel: 0181 460 7299

MAKING HEY

The latest bouncing baby loudspeaker to join Heybrook's hi-fi family is the Heylios. This ported standmounter features a 165mm mid/bass driver with a damped cone, chosen for its extended response. Dealing with frequencies above 3kHz is a 25mm soft dome tweeter. The drivers are fed their separate signals through a bi-wireable crossover built, of course, from audio grade components. With a sensitivity of 88dB, the Heylios will set you back £339.

Other new deliveries from Heybrook headquarters are the Signature II pre and power amplifiers, weighing in at a Christmas-friendly £1600 a set. The pre-amplifier possesses three outputs for tri-amping, while the job of moving voice coils falls to the 100watt Signature II power amp. Last, but by no means least, is a matching £899 CD player. CEC of Japan, famous for their belt-drive CD transports, supply the mechanism and Burr-Brown the DAC, in the form of a 1-bit/18-bit hybrid decoder.

Heybrook Hi-Fi
Clemo Road,
Liskeard,
Cornwall
PL14 3NH
Tel: 01579 342866

World Radio History
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THORN
TOSHIBA
TRIUMPH
UNIROYAL
VAN DEN HUL
WATERS
WHARFEDALE
XLO
YAMAHA
AND MANY MORE
Continuing their pursuit of innovative technology, DPA have just released two new pre/power combos, the 500s and Enlightenment. Good news for couch potato audiophiles the world over is DPA’s novel approach to remote control. This involves a pre-amp with variable gain, the signal passing through a single pair of resistors, as opposed to the FET switches and upwards of 60 resistors usually relied upon. Overall amplifier design is also simplified, fewer stages meaning a cleaner, more transparent sound.

Not content to sit on their design laurels, DPA then started investigating power amplifiers and their associated problems. Sophisticated computer modelling led to the conclusion that traditional push-pull Class A output stages, regarded by many as the sine qua non of high fidelity reproduction, could be improved upon. DPA pin-pointed unnecessarily high crossover distortion and jitter as inherent problems. The solution is ‘Cubed Class A’. This topology is claimed to reduce distortion by a factor of ten, and jitter by a not insignificant 10,000, leading to a more revealing and musically satisfying sound.

While the £3000 500s monoblock power amplifier, with its outboard Cubed Class A power supply, is capable of a voice-coil-cooking 250w, the £995 Enlightenment boasts a more modest 100watts. The Enlightenment (£695) and 500s (£2000) pre-amps are both line level, with optional phono stages on offer for lovers of the black disc.

Keswick Audio
Ferrybridge Workspace,
Pontefract Road,
Ferrybridge,
W. Yorks. WF11 8PL
Tel: 01977 671823

Manufactured by Du Pont, Corian is a mineral-loaded polymer that allows enclosures to be moulded for maximum strength. The Neo 1, 2 and 3 (available in 46 shades) all boast high sensitivity (88dB+) thanks to their custom drivers, and come in at a cool £3000, £4000 and £5000 respectively.

Keswick Audio have come up with their radical Zero 2 design. Taking a dim view of normal cabinet design and the standing waves it encourages, Keswick have built a non-parallel sided enclosure moulded from a Zirconia and ceramic loaded polymer. Crossovers and drivers have also been scrutinised and found wanting. Keswick’s answer is a three-way system whose titanium tweeter and custom HDA midrange driver cross over passively, while the bass driver is actively driven and filtered. Convention is again shunned in the bass driver’s cone which is a flat honeycomb sandwich between carbon fibre layers. Valve aficionados will appreciate a sensitivity of 93dB, although they’re unlikely to seriously test a power handling of 400watts.

Stone Age Speakers
Looking for the ultimate in inert cabinets, Picture The Sound hit upon Corian for their new Neolith range of loudspeakers. Manufactured by Du Pont, Corian is a mineral-loaded polymer that allows enclosures to be moulded for maximum strength. The Neo 1, 2 and 3 (available in 46 shades) all boast high sensitivity (88dB+) thanks to their custom drivers, and come in at a cool £3000, £4000 and £5000 respectively.

Lean, Green Bass Machine
If you like the Environment and love deep bass, then REL brings you tidings of good cheer. The new £375 Q-50 subwoofer steps in to fill the shoes of its predecessor, the Q-bass. But nature-fans who own a Q-bass needn’t despair because they can upgrade to Q-50 status for £75. And if 50watts doesn’t suffice, then there’s also the £475 Q-100 with a 12in. driver.

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EF Q AGAIN
EF's new Monitor Series, running to two 'speakers at the moment, is built around their well-known Uni-Q technology. Parting with £499 will buy you the diminutive RDM One, its 160mm mid/bass driver with centrally mounted soft dome tweeter firing into an eight litre closed box. If a power handling of 125 watt isn't enough however, then there's the RDM Two, with its larger, ported cabinet and 175 watt rating. Bi-wireable and using OFC internal cabling and polypropylene capacitors, the Two will make a dent in your pocket the size of £699.

SALVADOR SPEAKER?
Recently arrived on our shores from Denmark is the new DALI Grand Coupe loudspeaker. The 29mm silk dome tweeter has a rear chamber, and the 6.5in mid/bass driver a vented pole piece. According to DALI, these eliminate the compression effects caused by air trapped under the drive units' dust caps. With bi-wireable gold-plated sockets, you'll have to cross Santa's palm with silver to the value of £1999.99 if you're after a pair.

PAST AND PRESENT FAIR
Silvernote, manufacturers of hand-crafted amps, 'speakers and cables, will be hosting the Herts. and North London Audio and Record Fair on Sunday 15th December. Situated in the Wooley Hall, Windmill Lane, Cheshunt, the Fair brings together hi-fi both vintage and modern, as well as stalls catering to software hunters of LPs and CDs. And if you fancy a trip down Memory Lane, find out how latrers sounded in trade winds the 1930s with a 'live' cutting of 78s on a vintage lathe. A small Christmas tithe of £1.50 is levied, and doors will be open from 11am to 4pm.

For more information, call Steven Mann on 01992 620905.

ALLY PALLY PARTY
The sixtieth anniversary of public service television broadcasting was celebrated on Saturday 2nd November, 1996, by the Alexandra Palace Television Trust. In the original studio, now in tatty condition, Sylvia Peters, who restarted broadcasts in 1947, cut a palace-shaped cake to commemorate the event. She was watched by BBC executives, assorted luminaries and Dr Roger Driscoll, chairman of the trust and acoustics adviser to the Verity Group (Mission, Quad, Roksan, Wharfedale). With our interest in broadcasting issues, Hi-Fi World was there to record the event.

The first public television transmissions were made from Alexandra Palace, a huge Victorian 'leisure complex' situated atop a hill in 196 acres of park land in north London. The BBC leased the east wing in 1935, built a huge aerial which has since become a well-recognised symbol of broadcasting, and started transmitting at 3pm, 2nd November, 1936. War intervened soon after and transmissions were stopped. Now, the studios lie abandoned and derelict. The trust has been set up to restore the site and turn it into a museum.

For details contact trustee Robert Haves on: 0181 808 2838
77 Carbon

telephone: 01480 433777
fax: 01480 431767
With the new 752 Freedoms, Mission have finally improved upon their best loudspeaker, says Nick Tate.

It bores me rigid when hi-fi reviewers recommend the same ‘fave rave’ products month after month, but I fear it’s a necessary evil. Take Mission’s £500 752 loudspeaker for example - there are times when you can’t turn a Hi-Fi World page without seeing one. The reason being that it’s an extremely musical little design, so beguiling that you can still tap your feet when you’ve come from hearing the most expensive ’speakers around.
The 752's trump card is its HDA (High Definition Aerogel) mid/bass driver, which delivers the speed and sensitivity of paper cones without their associated distortion and breakup problems. Normally HDA is too expensive for commercial loudspeakers but Mission feel the extra outlay is worth it and they're very, very right. But if there is one criticism to be levelled at this 'speaker, it's the slightly 'tizzy' metal dome tweeter that sits awkwardly with the smoothness of the mid/bass driver. So it wasn't a complete surprise to discover that its successor, the new £600 752 Freedom, retains the HDA driver but gets a smoother and more expensive silk dome tweeter.

But this isn't all. Far from being just a tweaked 752, designer Henry Azima says the Freedom is "effectively a completely new loudspeaker": Gone is the gently sloping upper front baffle and conventional driver geometry, and in comes a flat front baffle with Mission's favoured inverted driver layout. Inside, the Freedom features a new, patented DCTT (Double Chamber Triple Tuned) configuration, a complex arrangement of three front-firing ports feeding an upper chamber, ported to a lower chamber with its own rear-firing port. Henry says this arrangement eliminates boxy coloration which floorstanders usually suffer from. Happily, the Freedom retains the compact 88x20x25cm dimensions of its predecessor, along with its easy 'amp-friendly' electrical characteristics.

So what of the sound? Well, the Freedoms are a little more fussy than their forebears in the setting up department. They need plenty of running in, spikes, biwiring and careful placement parallel to the rear wall. And while they're easy to drive, they don't suffer poor partnering equipment gladly. Properly set up they come on song in spectacular fashion. With the guitar pop of The Smiths' 'Girl Afraid', they made a direct line for the song's rhythms. Rim shots showed tremendous attack and decay, while cymbals were smooth and finely etched. Clearly capturing Mike Joyce's tight-skinned drum sound, they showed the subtle counterpoint between him and guitarist Johnny Marr's playing like few 'speakers I've heard at any price.

Moving to Miles Davis' 'So What' from Kind of Blue, Paul Chambers' double bass proved remarkably deep and unconstrained, the Missions accurately conveying the difference between a plucked and a struck string. As Chambers worked his way up and down the scale, very little boxiness was apparent, just deep, even bass. Further up the frequency range they continued to impress with their superb soundstaging abilities. Images were accurately placed both in front of and behind the plane of the 'speakers and depth perspective was excellent, the boxes themselves simply dissolving into the recorded acoustic. Highly self-effacing by nature, they proved reticent to stamp their character on anything, allowing Davis's playing to come across with great emotion, while James Cob's hi-hat work was crisp, clear and commendably subtle.

Another fine performance then, so I moved to Steely Dan's 'Doctor Wu', a bright, toppy recording finishing with a powerful saxophone solo over crashing piano chords and heavy duty drumming. Always a good test of any 'speaker's ability to hold things together, the new Missions sailed through it. Where their
Predecessors would grate on high sax notes, the Freedoms showed no sign of harshness or strain.

It was only on dance music that they droved fallible, sounding just a touch too polite on the Beatmasters' 'Rok da House'. Although the Freedoms' excellent dynamics and punch naturally predispose them to this kind of music, they ultimately lacked the Neanderthal 'thwack' of big paper-coned boom boxes such as those from JBL. Still, you can't reasonably expect thin, small-footprint floorstanders at this price level to move air like bigger boxes - that, Mission would doubtless point out, is what the 753 Freedoms are for.

As I ran the gamut of my music collection, the Freedoms continued to delight with everything they played. Tonaly very neutral, a little dry even, they lacked the euphonic warmth of their forebears, but made up for this with their ability to delve straight to the core of the music. They're first rate in all 'hi-fi' respects, from imaging to coloration to bass extension, but you never notice because you're too busy listening to the music. So, if you thought the 752s have had enough media exposure, you're not going to like the brouhaha surrounding their replacements. In my opinion they're the most accomplished all-rounders under a thousand pounds, and Mission's best product ever, to boot. I know it's boring to hear, but Mission have done it again'.

WORLD VERDICT

Dynamic, punchy, and musical yet refined like few others at the price. Bass lacks a little depth though and treble integration isn't perfect.

Measured Performance see p103
Thanks to Arcam's new Alpha CD players, budget CD player buyers need no longer fear the upgrade scrapheap. In the past, once you're ears had tired of your favourite disc-spinner, there was little other choice but to toss it in the bin or sell it second-hand. The outlook with Arcam's new 7 and 8 CD players is a lot brighter though.

These two machines, along with the flagship Alpha 9, all feature a Sony-sourced CDM-14 transport, which is considerably faster and smoother than the previous mechanism. So the 7, 8 and 9 are distinguished by their different...
The 7 has Delta/Sigma conversion, while the 8 enjoys a Bitstream Pulse Width Modulation DAC with 20-bit digital filtering. For around £220 your Arcam dealer can upgrade your 7 to 8 status. Or for £250-£300 (prices hadn’t been finalised as we went to press), you can go straight to Alpha 9 spec, with multi-bit DACs delivering 24-bit resolution.

Aesthetes will be glad the improvements are not only internal. Out go the anonymous eighties-style black boxes of yore, and in comes elegant, curvaceous casework with an ‘alpha’ legend in the middle of the top plate - a nice touch. Ergonomics and control arrangements are just as thoroughly thought out, with a green display which can be either dimmed or turned off altogether. The supplied remote control includes a volume control for Arcam amps, and the player understands both Philips and NEC (Sony) handsets.

Arcam don’t supply interconnects, pointing out that the usual complementary bell wire is all but useless. So I used budget Van den Hul silver cable, and placed both players on little strips of sorbothane as Arcam recommend. As the Alpha 7 retails for just a little less than Marantz’s CD63SE, I thought this would be a good starting point for comparisons.

Fully burned-in, the 7 proved more upfront and rhythmic than the super-smooth Marantz. Ultra Vivid Scene’s ‘Lightning’ was conveyed with greater speed and urgency than I’d expected, the 7 delivering a punchy bass line and surprisingly tight drum sounds. It was also particularly strong on dynamic contrasts, differentiating between a routine hit and a hard thwack of a snare drum, for example, better than I’d expected.

Although the CD63SE wasn’t as energetic and vivid as its British rival, it had refinement on its side. Treble was smoother and more incisive, midband cleaner and more detailed, and bass warmer. This isn’t to say the Arcam was uncouth - it wasn’t. It just had a bubblier, more lively presentation, as The Black Dog’s ‘Bytes’ went to prove. With this sparse but rhythmically complex piece of music, the Marantz majored on information retrieval. The texture of the different samples was reproduced more accurately, and there was a greater sense of air and space to the acoustic.

The Arcam, on the other hand, failed to pick out the crispness of the cymbals quite as well but held together the rhythms with extra cohesion, giving a more natural, effusive sound to the music. As the most communicative player at the price, I suspect the Alpha 7 will win many friends.

The Alpha 8, with its £520 price tag, retains the strong, rhythmic capabilities of its baby brother. What the extra money buys, though, is a silky refinement similar to the CD63SE’s - the best of both worlds, if you like. The differences between the two Arcam players were manifest from the first bar of Steely Dan’s ‘Do it Again’. First, the 8 is a good deal richer tonally than the 7, with considerably improved bass. Stronger, warmer and deeper, its low frequencies were impressive for such a modestly priced machine. Midband was smoother and soundstaging better, with a more enveloping recorded acoustic. Treble was also less artificial than the 7’s, thanks to an added soft smoothness.

Indeed, I’d say the Alpha 7 might sound more impressive in busy showrooms, where its upfront, punchy sound would be more immediately appealing than the 8’s sophisticated, subtle character. Techno and Rock work particularly well on the cheaper player, while Jazz or Classical fans will find the 8 is more their cup of tea.

Lee Morgan’s ‘The Rajah’, a sweet vintage Blue Note recording, really benefitted from the 8’s refinements. There was added weight to double bass, not to mention a more vivid overall sense of ‘being there’. In absolute terms, the 8 has a rich but slightly indistinct treble, almost as if Arcam have rolled it off slightly. It’s also a little loose in the bass, but then so is every other player under a thousand pounds.

Arcam’s budget CD players have always been a bit special, with a richer, more musical sound than most rivals. But not until now, with the arrival of the new Alpha 7 and 8, have Arcam made true class leaders. They’re real music-makers that punch far above their weight in the sound quality stakes. And they possess a natural, beguiling sound that will be music to the ears of budget buyers who’ve had to suffer uninvolved players far too long. The 7 is the better value of the two and has just become my favourite entry-level machine. The 8, with its subtlety and sophistication, is an essential audition in a crowded area of the market.

Arcam Alpha 7 £319.90
Arcam Alpha 8 £519.90

Arcam Pembroke Avenue, Waterbeach, Cambridge CBS 9PB Tel: 01223 440964

WORLD VERDICT

Superbly designed, instinctively musical players which are surely destined for success.

Measured Performance

see p103
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Mk II

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DIGITAL AUDIO BROADCASTING

DAB now reaches 20% of households, the BBC say.
But you won't have heard it.
Noel Keywood reports.

At present you will probably have heard little about it, and stand even less chance of using it, but a new type of Radio network is coming to the London region in September 1995. Trouble is, no one was listening - except themselves.

It's a chicken and egg situation, this.

FREQUENCY ALLOCATIONS FOR DAB START UP SERVICES

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Band III spectrum required = 12.5 MHz (start phase)
ie 7 x 1.55 MHz blocks + guard bands (~200 kHz)

Transmissions must start before anyone will have the confidence to actually build and offer suitable receivers to the public. However, it looks as if affordable receivers won't be available for some time. They're necessarily very complex, requiring a special chip-set to handle all the digital processing that lies at the heart of DAB.

At present only Grundig, now a part of Philips, have a DAB car radio, the DCR1000, priced at £2700. We were told by a spokesman that it's meant for system assessment purposes only, and isn't on offer to the general public; the chip-set inside will be obsolete and unserviceable by 1998. Less esoteric DAB car radios will become available 1998 at earliest, Grundig UK said.

Philips co-operated closely with the European Union Eureka 147 project that developed Digital Audio Broadcasting. So we dutifully contacted them about the availability of DAB radios and chips. Their consumer division told us that DAB radios were not currently available from Philips, and there was some confusion as to when they would go into production.

So it would seem that while the BBC are proud to announce their early entry into DAB, pointing to an unrivalled record in "developing broadcast technology", down at ground level the picture looks less rosy. DAB radios are unlikely to come off the production line for a few years yet, and when they do, will people rush to buy?

One observer, who has good inside knowledge of DAB from its European heartland, told us he thought the public will see little benefit against VHF/FM. Grundig, quoting consumer research carried out in Germany, confirm this view, saying 96% of people questioned to Britain. Called Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) it will, by March 1998, be broadcast from 27 transmitters the BBC aims to have installed, reaching 66% of the population. The Beeb has been quick to get into DAB, commencing transmission
looked forward to interference-free reception, especially in the car, but were otherwise indifferent to the benefits of DAB.

Potential reluctance to trade up to DAB threatens the BBC’s hopes that 40% of households will be receiving by 2006. An ambitious target like this means around six million sets have to be sold over the next ten years.

DAB is meant to provide consistent reception quality and eliminate the need to re-tune a set. One transmission delivers an 'ensemble' of around six programmes. So, having locked on (a comparatively simple process because there are few transmission frequencies), the user will simply select a programme. Each transmission will carry information about the programmes in other blocks, so re-tuning is automatic. If you want to move from, say, Radio 3 to Classic FM, the radio knows it must jump from block 12B at 225MHz to block 11C at 220MHz. The switch should be instantaneous and imperceptible. This, however, will appear no different to the way a conventional VHF/FM radio with pre-set tuning behaves, so there’s no extra convenience.

DAB transmitters within range of each other can operate at the same frequency without mutual interference occurring. This means car drivers will not need to re-tune their sets as they move out of one transmitter’s service area and into another’s. Home users will also find 'ghosting' (caused by distant transmitters at frequencies close to a local signal) is no longer a problem. But as modern synthesiser auto-tune systems select the most powerful signal anyway, which is the nearest, only drivers will notice much difference.

One benefit of the absence of mutual interference between transmitters is that an area can be blanketed with transmissions, improving consistency of reception quality. So DAB will, when enough transmitters have been installed, become more evenly available than current VHF/FM. For example, London will be served by transmitters at all points of the compass, giving better, more consistent coverage than is possible at present.

By transmitting at frequencies higher than VHF/FM, in slots now vacant since 405 line TV broadcasts ceased, aerials can be made shorter as well. DAB sets will have stub aerials, we are told. Sounds great, but not if sets must also receive VHF/FM, as the BBC suggest in one of their overviews, since this will keep aerial size much as at present. To be compact and portable, sets for home and car need to be DAB-only.

 Asked why DAB aerials will be so small when old outdoor TV aerials operating at this frequency were much larger, the Beeb admitted it’s because of the higher field strength provided by a larger number of transmitters. This allows DAB aerials to be low efficiency quarter-wave stubs. And while the higher frequency will actually make signal screening by buildings worse, not better, an absence of multipath and proliferation of transmitters should combat this potential weakness.

DAB excites broadcasters, that’s for sure. It has a myriad data channels that can carry, in addition to the programmes themselves, information such as station identification (Radio 1, 2, music playing time, etc), set control (where to find other programmes/transmissions), descrambling data, and even television.

Trouble is, any broadcast system, including satellite and telephone services, can do this. If DAB is viewed as no more than a competitive alternative, albeit blessed by public funding of its nation-wide transmission system, then it’s difficult to find distinguishing features or strengths.

Portables especially will not suffer hiss, but it’s disappointing to see simplistic, dated views about ‘CD sound quality’ popping up in BBC literature as a sales point. The world is already starting to move on from old 1970s’ digital coding systems, of which CD is an example.

Yet DAB sound quality will be barely comparable. The music recording business and others in audio accept that more sophisticated coding systems are needed, up to 24-bit at 96kHZ sampling rate, for good audio quality. But DAB mangles sound quality more than CD, using digital data removal schemes, as well as reduced data rates for mono, talk programmes and suchlike. An experienced BBC radio producer told us confidentially that in-house listening tests showed sound quality was dubious at times. So even the Beeb’s own engineers are unhappy about this. “Trouble is”, he moaned, “management think that anything digital is perfect”.

Since DAB has been accepted world-wide (notable exceptions being America and Japan), and since Europe will have broad coverage by the year 2000, DAB is already established as the radio system of tomorrow. So Britain and the Beeb have no option to adopt it. But whether people will rush to the shops to buy receivers is another matter altogether. It’s benefits are not very convincing •
VIBRATION ISOLATION PLATFORMS AND THE MODULAR AUDIO SUPPORT SYSTEM

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As a piece of functional furniture the BASE Racks and Platforms together are a work of art - Dave Wiley, Audiophile Magazine.

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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.

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HI-FI News & Record Review - March 1994

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Audiophile - January 1994

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Audiophile - December 1994

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HI-FI Choice - January 1994

CHOICE VERDICT

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American...
Eric Braithwaite, fan of the old black stuff, is more than happy to track the progress of Roksan's Xerxes X turntable.

Watching Rhodes on the telly and the shenanigans that went into creating the de Beers diamond cartel is probably the best argument for giving up vinyl you could come across. Dropping a diamond into a groove cut into plastic suddenly looks very non-PC. On the other hand, Roksan's new Xerxes X turntable is one of the best reasons for sticking with the old LP I've come across for a long time.

Digital has made morons of us all. Plug the CD player in, press Play, sit back. All that's left for itchy fingers to do is crumple up the packaging. Where's the satisfaction in that? Vinyl users are really closet model makers. Addicts all, their noses twitch at the approach of a 12in. square of Clarifoil the way an Airfix kit builder's does at the first sweet whiff of an open tube of glue.
"THE MOST DESIRABLE DECK BELOW £1500"
Ken Kessler - Hi-Fi News & Record Review August '94

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

"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.

ortofon 01753-889949
Not that the Xerxes X needs gluing together, or anywhere near as much construction work as a model of the Mary Rose. If it's bought with Roksan's own Tabriz, the deck is set up for you. But if you want to employ an arm like the SME 309, there are five socket-headed bolts to twiddle to set the suspension straight. Just enough to exercise the tendons in the fingers, to make you feel you've participated in your purchase instead of simply buying it, to put you in touch with your paleolithic tool-making ancestors again. (Excuse me while I have a quick word with my Jungian analyst.) And if the deck is dressed in black, the 309 has an air of contemporary low-slung bomber about it that makes it look downright mean and purposeful.

Like a stealth bomber on a radar screen, what's so good about this turntable is the fact that it doesn't appear to be there. What you hear (with perhaps one exception we'll come to later) is what's on the vinyl. What you don't hear is just as important. Like just a handful of recent new turntables, all the old banes of turntable-listening have been banished. The Xerxes X (with the arm towing the excellent Ortofon MC 25FL) has excellent pitch stability for a start, aided and abetted no doubt by a new Swiss motor and separate electronic speed control with outboard power supply. Provided the grooves are in good condition (I unwrapped a mint copy of Monteverdi's Orfeo on Archiv to be sure) the underlying silence is almost as silky and midnight-black as the exceptional Michell Orbe. With a bearing manufactured to such tight tolerances it takes ten minutes for the inner platter to sink down to its proper level, there is no discernible rumble, either.

Mechanical integrity like this brings sonic integrity along with it. Rhythmically, it sneaks under the radar screen and delivers straight into the command centres that control the foot-tapping and singing-along ganglia. It couldn't be faulted, whether it was the part-electronic commotion of Andy Shepherd's In Co-motion band, the scherzo from Schubert's 'Great' C Major symphony or the a cappella singing of Ladysmith Black Mambazo. To pick just a single example, it gave Beethoven's Spring sonata just that precisely-judged fluidity and perfection of tempo that makes the CRD collection by David Wilde and Erich Gruenberg with his Stradivarius such a delight.

If a turntable is to keep perfect time, then it's drumming that always gives the game away. Listening to the tips in Chabrier's Espana, it was noticeable that the Xerxes delivers a very tight, well-controlled bass. Its down-to-the-floor gravity had me gravitating swiftly to Little Feat's 'Sailin' Shoes', recorded in the days when there were real, live drummers. That's important because my Gyro, fitted temporarily with the same arm and cartridge, was a smidgin superior in releasing the hall ambience.

Thoroughly excellent in all respects. That said, the Xerxes X will disappoint old-fashioned vinyl lovers for the very reason it should be top of the list for anyone looking for a £1600 turntable. Its very dry, sharp clarity, free from artificial bloom - especially in the bass - brings every LP closer to the master tape. (For which, too many stick-in-the-muds will read 'CD'.) So be it. But if you want seriously to reproduce treasured LPs at their very best, the Xerxes X is a definite 'best buy' at the price. If turntables get no better than this or the current run of 'super decks', and the best over £1000 represent better value for their price than ever before, the record companies will be flooding the world with black plastic again. Making de Beers' profits safe for a while yet.

Roksan Xerxes X (motor unit) £1295
XPS 3.5 speed control (33 and 45) £170
DSU power supply £150
Roksan Stonehill, Huntingdon, Cambs. PE18 6ED
Tel: 01480 433777

*World Verdict*

An undoubted bargain, and class-leader in all areas with a precise, confident and well-balanced sound.

Measured Performance

see p103
La Dolce Vita

To build better loudspeakers, you must first build better loudspeaker cabinets. So why do most manufacturers use MDF for their cabinets? The answer, in case you didn’t know, is that MDF is cheap. But unfortunately, as acoustic materials go, it’s also rather mediocre.

At UKD we do things differently. Every model in our Opera range is made by our own craftsmen from acoustically inert, beautiful hardwood. Take a look at two of our latest models, Duetto and Seconda. Compact two-way designs with one-inch thick solid mahogany* cabinets, their construction is as dense and resonance-free as you can get. That is the right way to build cabinets, and the only way to allow quality drive units to perform at their best.

But Opera loudspeakers are not just a pretty face. In the design of each model, sound basic principles are applied to top quality materials to give fine acoustic results. So as well as solid bass and excellent imaging, both Duetto and Seconda have all the grace and refinement you would expect from thoroughbred Italian loudspeakers.

You might expect to see a hefty price tag on this kind of luxury, but you’d be wrong. In fact, for the same price as an ordinary pair of loudspeakers, Opera give you something rare in the world of quality hi-fi: a bargain. But best of all, you get a real piece of La Dolce Vita.

*from sustainable sources, naturally

For more information on the Opera range of solid hardwood loudspeakers please contact:

UKD

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OPERA DUErTo £395 the pair

OPERA SECONDA £595 the pair
Looking to join the sub-£200 Dolby S club is Kenwood's KX-5080S. Meet
Kenwood puts it through the membership test.

Just bear in mind that there are some trade-offs and this Kenwood starts to look like good value at £200. It's got Dolby S, which not only eliminates hiss completely but also prevents overload by compressing over-loud signals on recording before expanding them on replay to restore dynamic range. Because this process prevents the head overloading as well, manufacturers can use an inexpensive head. So Kenwood do.

That's the main trade-off. And the results are a recording level that can't be cranked past 0VU and, with ferric tape, less than startling sound quality. Chromes and metals, on the other hand, give the KX-5080S a chance to shine.

Joining Dolby S on the noise reduction roll call were Dolby B for prerecorded tapes and Dolby C. In an attempt to make the deck totally user-friendly, Kenwood fit a tape tuning system that retains its setting when the door is opened. It was slow and, like most, a bit approximate in tune accuracy. Ferrics ended up sounding bright, whilst chromes were dulled by treble roll-off. Metals, though, tuned flat, probably because the deck is factory adjusted to get the best results from this formulation.

All listening tests, except those with prerecorded cassettes, were carried out with Dolby S on. Recording levels were kept to 0VU on peaks to avoid overload.

As expected, TDK MA metal tape sounded very balanced tonally after being tuned in and there was no sign of hiss either. Hard guitar transients cut out nicely, leading edges blessed with goodly amounts of incision - a sure sign of freedom from high frequency saturation. Down at the other end of the scale, bass lines came through without wallowing or slurring. Bleak, sustained piano notes at the start of Tori Amos' 'Beauty Queen' sounded perfectly stable, and Chopin’s Opus 48 No.1, from the pitch steadiness of piano through to the reproduction of the crescendo, also failed to trip the KX-5080S up.

Chrome tape (TDK SA) gave a warm sound, but otherwise the Kenwood was smooth and even, delightfully devoid of both hiss and hum. Bass lines and brass from Embry’s latest CD were close to the original; I heard some coarseness, probably from flutter and mild treble saturation, but most people would be happy enough with the performance.

Ferric tapes turned out to be the least impressive of the three formulations, generally sounding rough and 'dirty', although basically correct in balance. I suspect Dolby S was working overtime and the strain showed. Where most S decks deliver great results from cheap ferrics, this one tunes badly, saturates heavily and is none too wonderful on the ears.

The good strong beat, soaring horns and tight timing that James Brown demands showed the KX-5080S could certainly cut it with prerecorded tapes. It came over as smooth and accurate in its rendition, from Chopin Nocturnes through to the Waterboys’ Dream Harder, where psychedelic guitar drove out of the 'speakers cleanly. Tidy bass lines, satisfactorily maintained treble with Dolby B engaged (due to correct head azimuth) plus good speed stability were enough to keep the Kenwood out of trouble.

The KX-5080S offers a good blend of useful facilities, without becoming gadget-laden and impenetrable. It’s very capable with prerecorded tapes, sounds fine with chromes and metals, but can be a little rough with ferrics. As budget Dolby S decks go, this one’s a goodie.

Kenwood KX-5080S £199.95
Trio Kenwood
Dwight Road,
Watford,
Herts. WD1 8EB
Tel: 01923 816444

WORLDERVICT
Stable transport gives fine results with metals and chromes. Ferrics sound rather rough though.

Measured Performance see p103
Five Stars

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 to

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 side-line 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.

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.
Dominic Todd samples Technics' new, specially tuned SUA-700MK3 integrated amplifier. Now in MK3 form, will Technics finally get lucky?

What is it that makes British ears so special? Do we hear higher treble than bats, or lower bass than elephants? Perhaps not. But there must be something that sets us as a nation apart aurally, something that has Japanese manufacturers racing to produce hi-fi tuned to British ears. So Technics find themselves the latest in a growing line to come up with a Brit amp in the shape of their new SUA-700MK3.

Technics have combined some special ingredients in the 700MK3's mix, hoping to produce a tasty sound. There's an anti-vibration base plate and R-core transformer, carried over from the successful MK2 version. There are also the curious Master Series reservoir capacitors which feature a unique Bamboo dielectric. This back-to-nature approach, say Technics, gives the SUA-700MK3 a more life-like sound.

Traditional Technics fans haven't been forgotten though. Unlike most other Japanese 'Audiophile' amps, the 700MK3 is far from minimalist. Remote control, multi-speaker switching, tone controls and (increasingly rare) a phono stage are all standard fare. Siting a pair of Eltax Symphony 6 loudspeakers at the Technics' outputs, I sat back to face the music.

Robert Miles on vinyl swiftly showed the phono stage to be adequate but not as good as competing NAD or Rotel
devices. The sound seemed veiled and lacked detail, especially in the treble. Having said that, the overall balance was smooth and unfatiguing, with a satisfactorily seamless integration across the spectrum. The hollow heart beat-style bass lines of this album were also tight enough to convey a good sense of timing. Although the soundstage had reasonable depth, that reticent treble prevented it being as spacious and expansive as it could have been.

Changing pace with Peter Gabriel’s ‘Mercy Street’ found the 700MK3 showing similar strengths and weaknesses. Vocals, for example, had fine projection but weren’t especially colourful or vivid. Despite Technic’s claims, I found vocals rather grey and unnatural, in the manner of Japanese amplifiers of old. Treble detail was again blurred, reducing the soundstage’s height. Bass, on the other hand, was deep and well sustained for an amplifier of this price, although some looseness made its presence felt. While this trait might be no bad thing with smaller, bass light speakers, it became annoying with larger floorstanders.

Looking to test the SUA-700MK3’s handling of female vocals, I pressed Sheryl Crow’s Tuesday Night Music Club album into service. Unfortunately, the Technics made Crow live up to her name. Vocals were boxy and shut-in at normal levels; upping the volume in search of a more spacious sound only hardened the music and emphasised sibilance. Part of the problem was the lack of definition and presence that afflicted key instruments like guitar, drums and percussion. I was left feeling the Technics was sacrificing vitality and detail retrieval in order to sound as smooth and unobtrusive as possible. With Classical music the 700MK3 sounded slightly more at home, although its sonic footprint was still obviously imposed upon the sound. Violin strings on a Schubert quartet seemed to have been glossed over and there was some harshness in the upper midrange too. But this rarely detracted from what was otherwise a soothing and generally well portrayed performance. The difficult tests of instrumental separation and timbre were also passed. As far as scale and impact were concerned, the Technics had little problem conveying the full weight of larger orchestral pieces, no doubt due to its ample power output of 66 watts.

Finally, I returned to vinyl and Tom Waits’s ‘Strange Weather’. The Technics had a fair stab at creating the continental atmosphere of the piece but couldn’t quite make it. Sax didn’t breathe and lift the whole track as it should, sounding muted and constrained instead. Waits’ clearly imaged vocals were suitably guttural though. But once again, finer detail in both the vocals and backing were subdued in favour of warmth.

The SUA-700MK3 comes up trumps in certain areas - it has good timing, deep and generally well controlled bass and fine staging. But it fails to sing because musically it plays safe. The Technics doesn’t really have what it takes to be a front runner in its class, especially when you consider the opposition. Amplifiers from NAD, Rotel, Arcam, Sony and Pioneer all offer greater insight into music. The SUA-700MK3 fails to communicate those vital and delicate nuances that make you actually listen to the music rather than just being aware of it.

Used in a shrill system the Technics might just work. And if you really need remote control and all the trappings then it could still be one of your first ports of call. But those after an amplifier to breathe new life into their music collection would be better off looking elsewhere.

Technics SUA-700MK3 £249.95
Technics
Willoughby Road,
Bracknell,
Berks. RG12 4PF
Tel: 01344 862444

WORLD VERDICT
A smooth, unassuming sound misses out on the subtlety that brings music to life.

Measured Performance see p103

HI-FI WORLD JANUARY 1997
In his hunt for extended bass from a diminutive loudspeaker, Jon Marks lends an ear to TDL's new T-Line 2.
How can I get deep bass without having to buy a loudspeaker the size of a fridge? is probably the one hi-fi question asked more often than all others. Unfortunately, the laws of physics dictate that big bass means big box. However, TDL, with a long history of transmission line loudspeaker design behind them, are attempting to bend the bass rules with the new T-Line 2.

Volume cranked in anticipation, I sat back as Grace Jones hurtled out of the T-Line 2s, propelled by the driving Pomp Pop of Slave To The Rhythm. Hooked up to our Audiolab and Pink Triangle reference system, the mid/bass drivers were certainly having to pay their way, slamming back and forth, the mid/bass drivers were certainly having to pay their way, slamming back and forth, tracking the drum machine that gives this song its scale. Percussion was crisp and fast, well audible even alongside the musical explosions of the rest of the song. The T-Line 2s almost had me bouncing around the listening room to this song's tempestuous power, but not quite. They didn't have enough punch or control to their lower bass to catch the 'I'm cooler and sharper than a carefully sharpened ice cube' feeling of this number.

While soundstaging was rather immediately obvious on this album's title track, I was more impressed by the spread of sound on offer from 'The Crossing (ooh the action...)' Percussion samples studded the soundstage, helping to increase stage width. Even with this relatively spartan track though, there still wasn't a great deal of depth to the sound. The T-Line 2s' strengths lay more with detailing and tonal colour. Wood blocks and soft-struck cymbals, for example, both displayed their characteristic resonances as they died away slowly.

“The T-Line 2s' strengths lay more with detailing and tonal colour. Wood blocks and soft-struck cymbals, for example, both displayed their characteristic resonances as they died away slowly.”

Bass guitar and Hammond were both slurred and slowed, preventing the full rhythm of the song pouring through. It was up to the rest of the frequency range to carry the message of this album's extreme funkiness. The diminutive transmission lines managed to redeem themselves to some extent on the more relaxed strains of 'Evil Ways'. The manner in which tonal colour and separation were dealt with on this song had me raising an eyebrow, Roger Moore style. The vocals that work together on this song each had its own completely individual signatures. The TDLs impressed by steadfastly refusing to blur together the vocals, giving this song the vocal power it needs. However, I was left feeling Carlos wasn't quite able to shake off the shackles of a sluggish bass to achieve his full groove potential.

With the phrase 'tonal colour' uppermost in my mind, I decided to find out how the T-Lines would handle one of my favourite CDs, Magnificat's The Golden Age, Volume I. The TDLs' tonal clarity on the individual voices making up the choir made for an easily intelligible performance, proving they were more than adept at following the musical flow.

Joining Magnificat on the list of creditable performances courtesy of these 'speakers was Wagner's Traume for violin and orchestra. Violin's open, woody character showed that detail was one of the T-Lines' forte regardless of genre. More proof came in the form of numerous background clicks and pops as musicians fiddled with their instruments and moved around as their circulation slowed on hard seating. While the representation of violins might have put a smile on Wagner's face, he would have been less happy with the TDLs' version of cellos. Instead of being crisply defined and powerful, these slurred together into an amorphous whole, diminishing the scale of the piece. Brahms would have had no problems with the way his violin sonata No1, Op78 was handled though, the TDLs toying the 'Vivace ma non troppo' line nicely. The T-Line 2s are a bit of a mixed 'speaker bag. To their credit, they are capable of a tonal resolution and detail that works a treat with the upper registers. They're also sufficiently dynamic to reproduce music with a healthy dose of rhythmic pizzazz. Where they lose out is in bass quality, which at the lower end fails to keep up with the speed of the midrange. There was plenty of bass weight though, and for this the TDLs are likely to find favour with listeners who demand bottom end power.

TDL T-Line 2 £549.95

TDL Electronics Chiltern House, Knaves Beach Business Centre, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP10 9QR Tel: 01628 850111

WORLD VERDICT 000

Midrange and treble have good tonal colour, detail and speed. Bass is slow and blurred.

Measured Performance see p103
Looking like they were styled by the team that put pointy ears on Vulcans, Blue Room's Minipods beam down to meet Jon Marks.

Disguised as something from another planet, the Minipods are actually a standard Earthling two-way design, with a reflex-loaded 4in. mid/bass driver with a Kevlar cone. Coming in a range of subtle shades from bright red to, er, bright blue via black and white, the enclosures are sculpted from GRP (Glass Reinforced Plastic) to give the unique peapod shape. But style like this also happens to have a useful sonic offshoot. Rounded edges reduce high frequency diffraction, giving cleaner treble and better imaging.
On paper and in the flesh the Minipods give the impression of moving at Warp 9. Would their sound be just as enterprising?

I fired them up gently with the Allegri Quartet and their rendition of Schubert's Quartettsatz in C Minor. Right from the start the little Minipods drew a 'Mmm... of appreciation from me for the clarity of their imaging. Violins were crisply pictured in a broad soundstage, alongside viola and cello. A healthy dose of detail added to the music's realism, clearly revealing the bowing inflections that help the music to flow along naturally. This meeting with the Minipods was turning out to be an enjoyably foot-tapping affair.

Moving on to Haydn's Quartet in C, Op33 No3, found me again tipping my hat to the Ulysses imaging of these dinky speakers. However, this piece underlined a couple of facets of the Minipods' character which were a little less attractive.

While clarity was impressive, a forward midrange (which tends to highlight detail) made its presence felt by pushing violins out towards the front of the soundstage. Lower down the spectrum, things also got a little overexuberant in the bass, with cello nonhonking rather obviously at times, losing some of its definition and power in the process. That said, the overall balance made listening to the quartet easy and enjoyable, as the Minipods had sufficient bass extension not to sound thin and wiry.

Malicious grin on face, I thought it was probably time to give those little mid/bass drivers something more substantial to deal with. Jimi Hendrix' Kiss The Sky was duly brought up to bear, and 'Voodoo Chile' put into action. The opening phasey guitar cleared those bright blue cabinets easily, pushing out into the room followed by the sizeable spread of sound of the rest of the band. While Hendrix' guitar took up position at the front of the soundstage, the fact that his voice was located near the back of the soundstage meant that either Jimi had longer arms than I'd previously thought or the Minipods' midrange emphasis was coming into play again.

The Minipod's diminutive size and corresponding lack of real bass weight was more obvious here than it had been with the Allegri string quartet although, conversely, the bass honk kept a lower profile. A swift upper bass alongside the light overall balance meant the Minipods were a dab hand with Rock rhythms. Jimi's 'Stepping Stone' bowling along frenetically.

The Chemical Brothers' 'Setting Sun' and 'Buzz Tracks' had those little Kevlar mid/bass drivers flapping gamely back and forth. In spite of their bass-light balance, these heavy tracks still had enough meat on their musical bones to get me bouncing to the rhythm on the sofa. Aided and abetted by the Minipods' clarity in the upper ranges, the densely stacked samples were easy to listen in on.

Lubricating my ears with a drop of Midnight Oil and their 'Underwater' CD had the Minipods puffing away merrily through the ports, tracking the bass guitar, the music still engaging and enjoyable in spite of the bass amorphousness. Even Carnival Jump Up with its 'speaker-grilling heavy weight steel bass drums had enough get up and go to make me hanker after a hot day and a long line of floats in Notting Hill at Carnival time.

With their fresh, innovative styling the Minipods would make any house-proud music lover a fine pair of 'speakers. They work well as true, hi-fi loudspeakers, although there's a lot of standard competition that would see them off sonically. But that's missing the point. If it's a combination of real style and sound you're after, then it's, "Beam me up, Blue Room."

Blue Room Minipods £399.95
Blue Room
Marlborough Road,
Churchill Ind. Est.,
Lancing,
W. Sussex BN 15 8TR
Tel: 01903 750750

WORLD VERDICT

Arresting style allied to an engaging sound makes the Minipods an attractive offering. Best partnered by smooth amplification and source.

Measured Performance see p103
Checking out the digital groove of Jimi Hendrix was taken aback by the width and transparency of the soundstage that the MJ/Duetto combination produced. Even with a track like 'Are You Experienced?' whose chaotic mix can easily cause 'speakers problems, the Duetto spread cleanly defined images across a soundstage that stretched from far left to far right. This transparency also let through the subtle nuances that make for natural sounding music. Both the amp and 'speakers were doing particularly well in the 'barely a hint of artifice' stakes. The only area where confusion put in a slight appearance was the lower registers of the bass. Here, that little 4in. midbass driver started to sound slightly indistinct compared to the rest of the 'speaker's performance. Nonetheless, bass attack and drive were still impressive as that driver thrashed backward and forward, pumping enough air out of the rear-firing ports to keep a skinnning elephant happyly underwater.

The MJ and Duetto were a stab into the breast of Hendrix's 'Kiss The Sky, tanked along addictively, getting me
into the feel of the music. The way this pairing communicated the emotion in music never failed to capture and hold my attention.

Skunkhour, with their Red Hot Chilli Pepper style bass lines, had the Duettos blowing up a gale. That slightly indistinct bass was present again, contrasting with the clarity and solidity of the imaging which held lead and backing vocals clearly in position on the soundstage. Blistering percussion and guitar pyrotechnics failed to throw either the MJ or the UKDs off the musical scent. Part of the reason for this was doubtless the system’s smooth, confident midrange and treble. Vocals in particular had power and projected well without ever thrusting towards the front of the soundstage, a transparency that laid different production techniques open to scrutiny. But the MJ/Duettos pair were never ruthless in their revelations, demonstrating insight rather than gruff or aggressive detail brightly lit by excessive treble.

The Monrio and UKDs crossed from one genre to the next without difficulty. Schubert’s Six Moments Musicaux, D780, set the stage for a fine show of subtlety and delicacy. All six Moments were demonstrations of gently decaying piano notes, followed clearly by the system as they died away into the recorded acoustic. Equally impressive was the flow of individual notes, the delicate but vital spacing that separates one from the other lending the performance a sense of natural, unmechanical progression. Air-baton in hand, I found myself conducting to the music. This isn’t the kind of embarrassing behaviour I normally admit to, but it just goes to show how the system managed to get under the emotional skin of a recording and transmit its message to my ears.

As suspected, that diminutive driver couldn’t quite fill in the lower registers convincingly with Classical music. The result was a light tonal balance. This caused no problems with either violins or pianos, as Brahms’ Violin Sonata No.1 in G major Op78 Reprint confirmed. Being fussy by birth, however, I wouldn’t have minded a little extra bass to balance the tonal picture perfectly.

All in all, the Italian Monrio and homegrown UKDs left me with a lasting impression of musical capability. For their size, price and finish, the Duettos would make shelling out £395 a very pleasant experience. The Monrio MJ, at its £695 asking price, would also have me happily reaching for my wallet.

Monrio MJ £695
UKD Duetto £395

Monrio MJ
UKD Duetto
23 Richings Way,
Iver,
Bucks. SLO 9DA.
Tel: 01753 652669

WORLD VERDICT
MONRIO MJ
An engaging, musical performance is allied to a sweet overall sound. Doesn’t get on quite so well with difficult loudspeaker loads though.

UKD Duetto
Solid hardwood cabinet, superb build and a genuinely transparent and musical sound. A bargain at £395.

Measured Performance see p103

Audiolab’s soundstage was narrower and shallower than the Monrio’s. Images were also smaller and denser, as though they had been shrunk to fit the soundstage. Musically as well, the Monrio was out ahead, leaving the Audiolab sounding rather lacklustre by comparison. Hooking the Monrio up to Castle’s Avons had it sounding slightly less happy though. Here, it was struggling a little, lacking the grunt necesary to get these ‘speakers really singing.
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Review of PASSION - Martin Colloms
HiFi News April '93 and November '94

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The Chord Company, 30a Sarum Business Park, Portway, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP2 8EA
Jon Marks finds that rejuvenating your record collection with QED's £35 Discsaver makes uncommon sense.

O, all ye of little faith, who have forsaken the way of truth and own midi systems, rejoice. Raise your voices in praise also those small in wallet but large in record collection. Your plight goes not unnoticed by QED. For they saw a distinct lack of cheap phono stages, and in their wisdom, they did create a little box of RIAA tricks. And its name was Discsaver.

Ahem. Excuse me while I climb down off my soap box. It’s not too often a product as cheap as this makes such an impression on me. If you want to get the most from your record collection but don’t fancy decimating your savings this Christmas, then QED have the solution: a mere £35 buys you their Discsaver. This is a small black plastic box (containing an NE5532 dual op-amp, 1% metal film resistors and polystyrene caps) that steps up and equalises the signal from your cartridge.

Volume raised at the ready (the Discsaver doesn’t have particularly high gain), I bounced through Bob Marley’s Exodus album. The QED immediately started making its character clear with a generally relaxed, mellow presentation. ‘Natural Mystic’, for example, bobbed along with a funky dread pulse, its bass line throbbing throughout. The lower registers weren’t absolutely pin-sharp, but had a great deal more power and pungency than the price tag would lead you to expect. The Discsaver also did well not to produce splashy hi-hats as most genuinely cheap electronics do.

Instead, it sounded cleanly controlled, even if it couldn’t quite resolve the subtle sheen of a struck cymbal as it decayed.

Without drive and accurate timing, Reggae can easily sink into the mire of bloated, wobbling bass that removes any musicality from the recording. Through the Discsaver, Bob Marley never produced less than 100% pure Reggae rhythms, timing intact and precise. The soundstage stretched wide across the front of the ’speakers (Sextet IlUs) and, although it wasn’t particularly deep, it gave the images of the band members enough elbow-room for a good dread-shaking.

Enter Georg Solti conducting the LSO in Mahler’s Symphony No I. It was Brownie points for the QED again in the areas of soundstaging, image clarity and musicality. Brass sections and the upper reaches of strings pointed out how broad a tonal palette the Discsaver was working from, both sounding surprisingly realistic. Lagging slightly behind in terms of tonal definition and detail was the bass, where cellos and tympani tended to lose a little of their form and focus as they blurred.

In spite of its drawbacks (and they are very slight at the price), the QED painted a musical, engaging picture. In fact, the natural way music flowed along put to shame many more expensive disc stages. This was, no doubt, partly down to the sophisticated power supply I used - a single PP3 battery, costing £2-£3 from most newsagents.

Stepping forward to give the Discsaver its sternest test yet was the Dave Brubeck Quartet, with Time Out. It was with this jazzy slice of vinyl that the QED provided undeniable proof of its one weakness - curtailed bass depth. Piano and plucked double bass both fell short on substance and body, sounding rather thin. But given the fact that the Discsaver will often find itself equalising the signal from a small plastic turntable swaying around on top of a midi system, dry bass and a little midrange and treble boost are no bad thing.

Leaving the most permanent impression in my mind was that cohesive, easy musical flow. And while this isn’t one of the most detailed or revealing phono stages I’ve ever heard, it is, without doubt, one of the most entertaining. For just £35, the Discsaver is a bargain.

QED Discsaver £34.99

QED Audio
Ridgeway House,
Ridgeway Close,
Lightwater,
Surrey GU18 5XU
Tel: 01276 451166

WORLD VERDICT
Beguilingly musical presentation, with more than enough detail and power for a mere £35. Won’t suit thin sounding systems though.

Measured Performance see p103
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“One day son, all of this will be yours”
SHOW-DOWN AT SPAGHETTI JUNCTION

To help you get the sort of sound you want from your system, Noel Keywood reviews seven budget interconnects that add pizzaz without breaking the bank.

**Apollo Midas**

£14.99/m

The Midas lit vocals quite brightly and pushed them forwards in the soundstage. Midrange could also ‘shout’ at times, but was clear and explicit all the same.

An unusually sweet and delicate treble possessed sufficient filigree detail to turn in an impressive performance.

Overall, a forward, upfront sound, but very listenable.

**Chord Co Chrysalis**

£29.99/m

This Chord Co interconnect has a gentle, nicely balanced sound with smooth treble and slightly softened midrange transients. Surprising detail retrieval means this cable is easily able to communicate the emotion in music. Its cohesive, well integrated sound makes for engaging listening. One of the best at the price for relaxed, long term listening.

**Apollo Black Velvet Std**

£29.99/m

The Black Velvet’s unusually atmospheric sound proved engrossing over the long term. There was great insight into performances, thanks to an uncanny retrieval of low level subtleties. Detailing was good as well.

While treble was definitely soft it was also very well integrated, keeping our Sextets’ revealing Tonigen ribbon tweeters in line.

**Sonic Link Silver Pink**

£30 (0.5m)

The sound was obviously bright and forward with a rather hard, clanky treble. Low level detailing was limited, but the cable preserved high frequency transients well, giving strong attack. This Sonic Link may have deep, solid bass but it lacks subtlety.

**Van Den Hul Storm**

£29.99/m

Astonishingly loud and peculiarly megaphonic, the Storm seems to shout at you. The treble is vivid but mechanical and bass well defined. This cable is characterised most strongly by its sheer impact, but it is none too subtle and may be wearing. Heavy Rockers will choose it above others for its powerful dynamics and in-your-face presentation.

**Silver Tone Ex-Static**

£35 (0.5m)

Smooth, graceful sounding interconnect with deep bass and attractively sonorous treble. This added up to a delightfully clear, wideband sound. It only lacks the deep insight and sense of atmosphere preserved by more expensive cables.

**The System**

This month’s interconnects were auditioned between our Pink Triangle Da Capo convertor and Aura CA200 pre-amp, as well as between the CA200 and PA100 power amplifier.

Valve amplification was also employed, with our own KLP1 pre and K5881 power amps, to check the effect on the cables’ sound of a change in source and load impedances. Heybrook’s Sextet II ‘speakers were used with Chord Co Rumour ‘speaker cable.
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GATHERING MOTION

I read with great interest your article in the August supplement about Motional Feedback. This article was long awaited in my view. I have been an advocate of Motional Feedback for some years now, but have always been unsuccessful in finding out any information about it - countless journeys to libraries have yielded nothing.

The first time I heard Motional Feedback was at my aunt's house about seven years ago. She had a pair of Philips RH544s together with the tuner/pre-amp that partners them. The power amps are inside the speakers, making them active. One cable connects the pre-amp to one speaker, and from that first speaker a second cable runs to the other speaker in a daisy chain fashion. There is even a switch that allows you to designate the channel left or right.

After a conversation with my uncle about the speakers, I was left with the following information: instead of having a bass unit with two voice coils, there is some sort of accelerometer or transducer mounted on the drive unit's cone. The signal from this is fed into a comparator and then corrected if different from the signal input.

I have also found out that as well as the RH544 there were two larger models in the range. Judging by the astounding bass quality of the 544s, I shudder to think what the larger ones sound like.

M. Watchman Dukinfield, Manchester.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

CABLE CONCERNS

I am a regular reader of your magazine and a real hi-fi and music addict. I have a number of different systems but am seeking to have one set up in a room dedicated to listening to music.

The system I will be using is a Linn LP12 with Grace G707 arm, Sony X55ES CD player and Aiwa XK009 cassette deck as source. I mainly listen to vinyl and CDs.

I have recently purchased a Musical Fidelity set-up consisting of two monoblock MA65 power amplifiers and a Pre 8 pre-amp. I have also invested in a pair of B&W Matrix 804 loudspeakers and am very happy with their sound.

My question is a technical one. I have two methods of wiring up my system and would like your views on the pros and cons of each.

Arrangement 1: have the power amplifiers located as near as possible to the speakers and connected to the pre-amplifier with long (10 metre) phono leads. Bi-wire each monoblock to the loudspeakers with, say, Concert 2 cable (0.5 metres).

Arrangement 2: have the power amplifiers located as near as possible to the speakers and connected to the pre-amplifier with long (10 metre) phono leads. Bi-wire each monoblock to the loudspeakers with, say, Concert 2 cable (0.5 metres) and then have the loudspeakers bi-wired with Concert 2 speaker cable (10 metres).

Which way is best? A short run of speaker cable or a short run of phono cable?
Welcome to the Philips Motional Feedback loudspeaker fan club, Mr Watchman. I’ve managed to pick up a couple of pairs of Philips’ MF ‘speakers, the 532 and 585 ‘Black Tulip’, trawling through Loot. Like the other models, these ‘speakers have an accelerometer attached to the end of the bass unit’s voice coil former, which sits under the dust cap.

The output signal of the accelerometer is fed into the power amplifier’s input as negative feedback to correct drive unit non-linearities and produce deeper, cleaner bass than would normally be available from a given size of driver and cabinet.

While the 585s are a small, two-way active model, the three-way 532s (Philips’ first MF loudspeaker into production) use a single 20w power amp followed by a passive crossover to feed the midrange and tweeter. The bass driver has its own 40w amplifier.

In terms of sound quality, the 585 is worth a listen if you’re not paying more than about £100. Expect to pay more for the 532 though - it stands up well to modern competition. Bass in particular is good, especially when it comes to control and detail, but I wouldn’t expect to peel floorboards off of joists with seismic bass lines. JM

I’ve never forgotten hearing Motional Feedback in the late 1970s (I believe!) at a Philips press conference in their home town of Eindhoven, Holland. The bass quality was so much better than I had ever heard at that time. Motional Feedback has a lot of potential benefits and we will continue with our interest in this subject. NK

I look forward to your ideas with interest as I am sure there must be others with monoblocks that have asked themselves the same question.

Stephen Weigel
Bexley,
Kent.

We asked Rob Watts of DPA Digital to comment:

Well over a decade ago, I conducted a number of investigations into the sound quality differences of loudspeaker and interconnect cables. I was interested in listening to lots of different cable constructions in order to discover why cables had such a huge impact on sound quality. Virtually every factor is important in the design of cables, and it was necessary to understand what makes cables sound the way they do.

Increasing the understanding of the mechanisms behind cable sound allows performance to be improved in unexpected ways and takes the designer down avenues not opened by the traditional technique of trial and error.

One aberration I was particularly interested in was damping factor, or the output impedance of loudspeaker cables. Traditional wisdom has it that as long as you have a damping factor greater than 10, you needn’t worry. I had a prototype amplifier with a low output impedance which enabled me to test this assumption. I did this by adding very high quality resistors so that I could hear the effect of changing damping factor. The results surprised me; damping factor had a huge effect on sound quality. Damping factors between 10 and 50 degraded pitch definition and rhythm. Increasing cable resistance made the bass softer and less precise with poorer pitch reproduction. What was really interesting though was that even the lowest cable resistance was audible. A 10 milliohm cable changes the music’s sense of timing and dynamics. Putting in an additional 10 milliohms slows the tempo down slightly and reduces dynamics and bass tightness. For this reason we use feedback around the loudspeaker cable on our high-end power amplifiers. This makes for amazing bass tightness and control.

So, from a definition and transparency point of view, it is much better to have a short loudspeaker cable and long interconnects. In terms of length, you can almost hear the effect of cutting one inch off a loudspeaker cable. You can only hear down to feet with interconnect cable.

Noel says:

But you need to be aware that a long phono interconnect places a heavier capacitive load on the output driver of the pre-amp. At around 100pF/metre for most cables, according to our measurements, your 10m run will put 1000pF across the output, which represents 10kΩ at 20kHz. This is a relatively high load value so it should present no problem. But users need to be aware of this possibility, which could result in dull treble. For cable, Sonic Link’s budget Bonus lead, which has a very low capacitance of 50pF/metre, would be a good bet in terms of value for money. NK
SYSTEM SORT OUT
My main system comprises a Philips CD960 CD player (used as a transport), Musical Fidelity P170 power amp, QED passive pre-amp, Arcam Black Box 1 and B&W P5 'speakers. I have recently only bought the P5s - before that I was using a pair of Arcam Alpha 2+ 'speakers. The P5s are bi-wired using twisted copper cable about 2mm in diameter, and the Philips CD960 is connected to the Black Box by an Arcam coax cable (blue in colour).

My musical tastes are mainly Pop, FM Rock and easy listening (e.g., Celine Dion, Journey, Foreigner, etc), although I do like the occasional bit of Classical. Having dispensed with the preliminaries, I must confess that I think I've made a big boo boo!

Although at first it seems sensible to try and compensate for the P5s by re-balancing the rest of the system, I think at the end of the day you'll still have something you're basically unhappy with.

Therefore, with a budget of about £800, here's what I would do. The Black Box 1 is getting a little long in the tooth now. I think you'd get an appreciable improvement in sound quality by upgrading this to match the calibre of the rest of your system. Have a listen to DPA Digital's £300 Little Bit III. This is a discrete CD convertor, built from individual high quality components rather than 'off the shelf' chips. It has a very exciting sound, thoroughly detailed and musical. Use DPA's own recommended digital interconnect; I find that the digital cable recommended or used by the manufacturer of the DAC always works best. This is probably because it's the same cable used during the DAC's design and development stage.

You're now left with around £500 for a good pair of 'speakers. I'd start by auditioning Epos' ES12s, which I think will suit your system especially well. They are very clean and clear, but not too forward and have superb bass for their size. Use the ES12s on Epos' dedicated open-frame stands to get the best out of them. This is where I'd start your auditioning, but as you have found, 'speakers are a very personal choice - you'll need to invest some time having a careful listen. Good luck. DB

The clarity and lucidity of Epos' ES12 loudspeakers will work well in your system once it's properly balanced.

I find the P5s a little too forward, particularly on vocals, compared to my old Arcams. When I switch back to the Arcams, I'm amazed at how much bass they really have considering that they were only £250 a few years ago and I've just shelled out over £700 for an ex-demo pair of P5s.

I'm prepared to spend about another £500 on new components. If I change the P5s, this gives me a total of about £800 to £900 to be spent on new 'speakers and components, or £500 if you advise me to keep the P5s.

Colin J. Coles
Southall,
Middlesex.

A CD TO MATCH LP
Our problem is probably the same one many of your readers have - we see, we like, we want, but unfortunately, we can't afford. Our main priorities are sound quality, longevity, and value for money.

Over the years, we have made gradual changes and improvements to our system. Currently it is: LP12 (Cirkused and Trampolined), Ittok LVIII, AT-OC5, Ariston CD 3 and Micromega Micro DAC, Naim 62/HICAP/140, Epos ES11, Sony tuner and Yamaha tape deck.

When we auditioned the Ariston, Jackie preferred its sound to all the others in its price range, but later we found the Micromega DAC improved clarity. Our next priority is to change the CD player.

Bob's primary source of listening pleasure is still the slightly warmer sounding of the two, with a highly musical sound. Where the Marantz scores is its greater insight and tighter bass though. I'd audition

Unless you're prepared to spend £2000 to £3000 on a DAC and transport, a one-box player like Audiolab's £1000 8000CD makes a lot of sense.
Both in your own set-up, giving yourselves a few days with each to become accustomed to the sound.

The one-box players around at the moment for under £1000 are so good that it's not really worth looking at separate DAC/transport CD systems unless you are prepared to go the whole hog and buy a proper dedicated transport and high quality converter. If you are, then audition Leac's VRDS Ti transport with Pink's Ordinal DAC or DPA's Enlightenment drive and DAC.

If you're after a 'speaker with all the Kan's speed and punch as well as a more even tonal quality, try Tannoy's 631SE.

KAN CAN!

System: Audiolab 8000A/Sony 77ES CD player/Linn Kan Mki speakers on stands/Goertz M1 'speaker cable/Campaign Audio Design silver interconnects and mains cables/Little Mead Mains Conditioner/Seismic Sink under the amp/stdard Sink, 40lb Marble slab, and EXHD Sink under CD player.

I have put the above system together over a period of time and generally I'm pleased with its performance replaying jazz fusion: Lee Ritenour, Dave Sanborn, Bob James. My 'speakers deliver music as a large, illusory picture within the soundstage, resulting in a rich, powerful bass. When listening to Orchestral or Opera music though, things go drastically wrong: scale, bass and depth are seriously diminished, making my system sound unconvincing.

I borrowed an 8000P power amp from a dealer. Using my 8000A as a pre-amp, I felt there wasn't significant improvement over the 8000A on its own. And I like the Kans for their fast, punchy sound and would like to keep them, although I will change them, if neccessary.

Can you please advise on the following. Would a REL subwoofer give me the low-end detail I seek? Will it integrate with my Linn Kans?

I am a joiner. Would the KLS3 be a better solution as my 'speakers are low efficiency at 82dB? Any other help you can give me to solve this problem will be most appreciated.


I knew the Kan Mki well, plus the controversy that surrounded it. It had a huge midrange peak in its frequency response and was tonally imbalanced. However, driven by a powerful amplifier and put close to a wall, this 'speaker certainly had punch and presence, plus a dedicated following. Subsequent Kans were more accurate but had less character, for want of a better word.

Recently though, I was taken aback by the Tannoy 631SE, which has tremendous impact; it immediately reminded me of the Kan. This 'speaker has a better magnet than the standard 631 and an upgraded crossover. Tannoy seem to excel with their 'specials, and this one is superb. It has a flat frequency response and should handle Classical music well too. Your Audiolab 8000A will be fine for driving it. At £170, this 'speaker is a real bargain.

The REL subwoofer works below 100Hz, covering only low bass frequencies. It should integrate with the Kan but it won't provide 'detail' as such. Our KLS3 loudspeaker is a different proposition altogether, being relatively large and more costly than the Tannoy, NK.

FRONT END FROLICS

My system is a mix of Gaelic front end (LP12, Lingo, Ittok, Karma, Karik) and Yankee back end (Audio Research SP-9 MkIII with D-200 and Apogee Centaurus Minors). I find the American amps and 'speakers hard to live without for their wonderful soundstage and presence. The upgradability, robustness and long term service and corporate viability of the Linns (the bits with mechanical parts) is also important to me though.

I am delighted with the sound, but I face the inevitable replacement of the cartridge. I have auditioned the Ekos but cannot hear the advantage over my old LVII. So unless somebody

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higher output MCs solve my problems, or would I be better off with a Kylde and a transformer (if so which one)? I don't think I could live now with MM's, but would appreciate your opinions on this as well.

I know that I should audition the various options, but these days it is difficult to find dealers willing to set up esoteric systems to try cartridges out (certainly the Linn dealers will not). In any case, I am looking for some advice to narrow down the options.

Paul Johnson Indianapolis, USA.

It sounds as if the Audio Research pre-amplifier you are using doesn't have quite enough gain for the Linn's notoriously low output signal. You really need to look at alternatives with a more healthy output signal.

There are some superb cartridges around that will work well in your Linn LP12/1ttok and provide a stronger output for your SP-9 MKIII. We got superb results with an Ortofon MC 30 Supreme (0.7mV output) in an LP12 at a show we did, so this should definitely be on your short-list.

Others to try, all with output above 0.7mV, are: Ortofon's £225 MC 25FL, which has superb detail thanks to its fine line stylus; the £350 MC 20 Supreme (which is very nearly as good as the MC 30 Supreme but £100 more affordable); and the £680 MC 10. This is the most expensive at £840, but sounds as smooth as silk and sweet as honey.

Another option, although not the most elegant, would be as follows. The Karma is a superb MC, so I certainly wouldn't bin it completely. Only the tip

SHERMAN TANK
I have just bought a Troughline Mk II tuner from Paul Greenfield at Classicque Sounds who, like yourselves, extols the virtues of vintage hi-fi.

Being vintage myself and having owned products from Messrs Quad, Leak, Thorens, etc, I decided to indulge myself in some musical nostalgia. It cost me £75, a small price to pay for hours of fun.

I decided before listening to clean and lubricate it - easy enough even for me. Whilst undertaking this task, I was reminded of why I bought a Mk III Troughline way back in '65. It's built like a Sherman tank in

The best person to carry out Troughline restoration is Graham Tricker of GT Audio. He can be contacted on 01895-833099.

The Tim de Paravicini decoder is one of the best, being valve on the mono (sum) channel, and solid state (1310 IC decoder) in the stereo (difference) channel. It is not now available though, and needed pilot tone phase adjustment during set-up, which is a bit specialised. Graham can help you with a modern 1310 decoder that fits neatly into the Troughline, being designed specifically for this increasingly popular tuner.

The first requirement of any advertisement is that it gets seen. No use spending megadosh if everyone just turns the page. It's interesting how many people complain about the Audionote ad.; it obviously fulfils its primary requirement rather well. Next, they should tape a plastic magnifying glass onto the page. Or should they? We've politely pointed out that no one can read it to which the reply comes: it's very successful the way it is. The moral is, don't become an optician in Britain. NK
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Tall, dark and beautiful, Keswick Audio Research's Italian influenced Torino loudspeakers seduce Dominic Baker.

As most astute audiophiles will have noticed, the shape of hi-fi is a straight-sided box. Cheap to produce and easy to design, this kind of box gives shape to just about every component, including loudspeakers. But Keswick Audio have decided on a rather more adventurous option for their Torino loudspeakers.
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The Torino’s pyramid-shaped cabinet helps to restrict standing waves. The result is lower coloration as well as a smaller baffle, especially at the top where midrange and treble drivers sit. As it’s high frequency reflections around these drivers that can confuse imaging, this looks like a neat bit of design.

Keswick Audio Research, founded by ex-Wharfedale engineer Dean Hartley, have been around a couple of years now, carefully assembling a range of high performance loudspeakers. Probably their most complete line-up is the Italia series, comprising two floorstanders, a subwoofer and the obligatory centre channel ‘speaker that every manufacturer carries these days.

As the name suggests, the Italia series is elegantly styled - just take a look at the sweeping lines and rich finish on the pair of £899 Torinos we treated our listening room to. They blend a hard wearing, black leather effect finish and user-replaceable wood veneer trim (available in light and dark Cherry as well as Walnut) to create a classy appearance.

Getting to grips technically with the ‘speakers, I discovered a two-and-a-half-way design. The Torinos use a 6.5in. doped paper cone bass/midrange driver assisted by a second unit below 800Hz. Dealing with the highs is a 28mm soft dome tweeter. Sited in a free space position around 2ft. from rear and side walls, the ‘speakers were driven both by Audiolab’s 8000S integrated and Meridian’s 502/557 pre/power amplifiers. Source material was provided by our trusty Garrard/SME/Goldring set-up and Audiolab 8000CDM transport and Da Capo convertor.

Briskly plucked acoustic guitar on Jam and Spoon’s 12in. ‘Right in the Night’ had full, three dimensional body to it. Leading edges were sharp, carrying transients right the way through to their peak. Keswick have used a fine sounding fabric dome tweeter that gives a detailed and articulate sound allowing highs to soar naturally upwards without ringing unharmoniously.

Bass had good impact as well, which is sadly about as expressive as it gets on this track. Even though its electronic ‘boof-boof’ can become a little monotonous, the Torinos impressed with a slamming kick in the lower octaves.

Stone Roses’ ‘Straight to the Man’ had vocals clearly separated in the rather grumpy mix while bass strutted its stuff again with the deep, funky rhythms. Treble was also crisp and well defined, resolving the tonal character and form of each cymbal strike accurately enough to produce a convincing display.

With their high quality paper cone midrange driver and fabric dome tweeter, the Torinos have impressive tonal neutrality and colour. These drivers complement each other effectively and are as much at home with Locatelli’s soaring violins as their Italian links would have you suspect.

One impression reinforced by Classical pieces was the smoothness and fine sense of proportion these ‘speakers possess. No one part of the musical spectrum was over-emphasised - bass, midrange and treble were all in perfect balance. That said, treble was a little limited in terms of extension. But where hi-hats weren’t as sharp as they can be, lower down there was plenty of power, giving a solid, hard crack to cymbals.

Buzzing with harmonics and overtones, guitars sounded natural and easy on Pink Floyd’s ‘Fearless’. The similar tonal character and fine integration between midrange and treble drivers fully revealed the timbral shades and sonority of stringed instruments. The Torinos’ imaging on this Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab Original Master Recording placed instruments with reassuring solidity across a wide stage.

From the same CD, Meddle, the powerfully swelling undertones of ‘Echoes’ had the Torinos rumbling and shaking the floorboards with deep bass. On the downside, lower frequencies could become a touch overblown in our modest 12x16ft. listening room at times, even with the Reflex Port Air Flow Restrictors (foam bungs to you and me) in place. That second 6.5in. driver rolling in below 800Hz gives nearly the same area as a single 10in. cone. So the Torinos may have near-subwoofer depth and power, as well good control, but they need space to perform at their best.

More cleanly recorded bass on The Cranberries’ ‘When You’re Gone’ gave the Torinos a chance to show off their dexterity, notes punching out from the cones fast and tight. Vocals and strings were once again smooth and balanced, possessing sufficient presence to push towards the front of the mix. The Torinos created a performance with real scale in terms of power as well as acoustic space.

I finished my audition of the Torinos as I’d started with some good, solid, trancey House courtesy of Encore’s 12in. dub mix of ‘Happiness’. Bass kicked, acid percussion sizzled, and synths powered out the bouncing melody. Musically, it may have been a long way from any Italian heritage the Torinos can lay claim to, but from their easy, controlled performance I knew they, like me, enjoyed it.

Keswick Audio Research Torino £899.00

Keswick Audio Research Ferrybridge Workspace, Pontefract Road, Ferrybridge, West Yorkshire WF11 8PL Tel: 01977 671823

WORLD VERDICT

The Torinos’ stylish and civilised sound won’t shame any system. That powerful bass does need space to breathe properly though.
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MILANO
TORNIO
POMPEII
CENTRALE
I
understand that DVD, the high capacity CD, destined to carry films as well as music, wasiltered in its progress to market. I was surprised it ever seemed a good idea, since the computer business is already using 1.3Gig and 2.7Gig recordable optical discs and CD-R is taking off. No one needs a non-recordable medium like this any more.

The success of CD would seem to prove otherwise, but that’s only because the music industry has sought to keep high quality audio recording systems from reaching the market. Look at the stink they raised over DAT. They fear private copying and its over DAT. They fear reaching the market. Look recording systems from DAT. They fear keeping high quality audio industry has sought to prove this any more. It’s interesting, in view of practices that shackle audio developments nowadays, the adoption of CD-R by the computer business has happened with lightning speed. A few years ago, recorders cost $50-$10k; now they can be bought for well under $1000. You won’t easily find CD-R discs in

ultimately, end up as a recordable medium. And I suspect we are seeing a lunge in this direction.

Philips made the prediction because they were working on recordable optical disc technology at the time (mid-eighties). It’s interesting, in view of

what is happening now, to recall that although CD-E was the logical end product, as an interim we were to get a Write Once medium called CD-R.

At the time, I couldn’t see the attraction of a Write Once medium. If you made a mistake whilst recording, it meant throwing the disc away and starting again. At anything up to $30 per disc (the price at the time) this seemed a bit steep. Surely, I thought, no one used to buying a TDK D six-pack for $5. 50 or so is going to take to this?

Well, they have. But not in audio of course. All the action these days is in computers, and this is where CD-R is beginning to take off. Free from the restrictive agreements and the hi-fi mags, but you will find them plastered all over the computer mags.

The way CD-R has rocketed through the computer business, unhindered by copying issues and buoyed by healthy computer sales, has astonished me. It started off as a ‘professional’ carrier used only by those that could afford to access the technology. In this early guise, CD-R looked much like CD in its accessibility. Prices were commensurate and high and popularly limited.

Once recorders became available at around $7k, bureaus started to offer CD archiving services. Suddenly, committing info to CD became quick and affordable. However, this idea evaporated when, doubtless under weight of demand and competition, recorder prices fell dramatically. You can now pick up a Yamaha CD Writer for £500.

But why bother? As Philips said long ago, CD-R is just a gap-filler on the path to CD-E. With the availability of 1.3Gig recordable optical drives, and now 2.6Gig versions, why bother with CD-R, which can only store a quarter as much data in non-eraseable form?

It is hardly surprising that the optical drives are now made by Philips. That’s where CD-E went! Against this background, and the implications for consumers, CD-E might have become politically incorrect for audio use, but it’s doing nicely elsewhere.

In the end, the recordable optical disc will find its way back into audio. I strongly suspect that in no more than three years or so we will see such a development. CD-E will arrive, albeit in a different form and from a different direction than we in audio currently imagine. If people take to it, prerecorded software will appear in the shops or it will be downloaded from cable or satellite.

Then DVD will start to look like the outdated animal it really is, an unrecordable old medium like LP and CD. That’s not where the future lies. •
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World Radio History
HI-FI WORLD
“Will you be at Audio Fair 96 this weekend?”, I asked. “Do you mean Connect at the NEC in Birmingham?”, came the reply from a puzzled PR man. I’d already asked the question a few times and always got the same reply. Audio Fair might be the show the hi-fi business doesn’t know or care about, yet every year it gets a little bigger and more popular, unlike the mainstream commercial shows. They don’t know what they’re missing.

I left home late on Sunday 18th October and trundled gently through Hertfordshire’s leafy lanes, washed by rain and covered with gold and brown autumn leaves. It was a peaceful and relaxing drive, made serene by the gentle burble of the Range Rover’s lazy engine. Parking was easy with an abundance of free spaces right next to Watersmeet, the hall holding this year’s fair. Organiser Graham Tricker of GT Audio chose this spot because Rickmansworth is close to the M25 and there’s a good restaurant inside the hall itself. What a contrast to the usual pandemonium surrounding the big commercial shows.

These Sunday-only Audio Fairs are invariably a good day out because manufacturers and magazines stay away (there’s little in the way of new products to be seen). Their absence keeps the events pleasantly low-key and friendly. Yet although I arrived early afternoon, after most of the crowd had departed to the cozy local pubs, there were still plenty of interesting items to be seen.

The variety is extraordinary, with private individuals and dealers (65 this time) buying and selling used/old/vintage hi-fi, components, custom-built hi-fi, accessories, books and magazines. Every time I visit I see something new to me. Dealers actually fly in for these shows. Why? The reason is obvious. “How much are you asking for that Triotron 450-25”, I asked John Howse. “I’m not”, came the reply, “it is too valuable to sell”. Foreign buyers don’t travel half way around the world just to buy a new Japanese mass-produced amplifier - there are plenty of them at home. Had any of the dealers seen this Triotron though, the heavens would have opened and rained down Yen, Deutschnnarks, Ringgits or Dollars. For this is a desperately rare pre-war power triode valve which collectors around the world hanker after. Want a pair of original GEC KT88s, which are as rare as hens’ teeth? They were here, sitting cossetted in a box full of protective packing. Want a hi-fi for £160? I saw a beauty, and it wasn’t a Japanese mini-system either (although I did see even one of those!)

As always, beneath the first trestle table I came across, sat a pile of unloved Quad FM1 tuners. Difficult but not impossible to get working, these are a bargain for anyone with the knowledge to fix them. The table was manned by Classique Sounds (0116-283-5821) and they had more goodies besides. Like a pair of restored Leak TL-25+ valve power amplifiers in perfect working condition, price £560. Not only are these valuable in their own right, but they offer superb sound quality. Then I spotted a Garrard Zero-100 turntable in its original stainless steel base. This is another rarity able to give a good account of itself.

Not far away stood a lovely wooden radiogram complete with Rogers valve amplifiers and Garrard record deck, price just £160. It’s worth more for the valve amps alone. Close by sat a...
Stand and Deliver!

No Name Acoustics (NNA), a small Norfolk-based company, have just launched a bright new range of Audio Equipment supports, the NNA 500 series. Constructed of bright mild steel sections, the stands are silk powder coated and fired at 200°C to produce a black sheen finish.

The free-standing shelves are available in 15mm MDF and 10mm clear float glass. These can be isolated from the stands themselves using adjustable 8mm stainless steel spikes. To guarantee precision levelling the shelves also utilise a unique ball-bearing and brass disc levelling system, and all units come complete with Allen keys and a bullseye spirit level to enable setting-up.

The 500 Series consists of an isolation platform, wall mounted shelf, and range of free-standing supports with two, three, four or five tiers. These can all be upgraded with additional isolation stages. The isolation platform is priced at £175, the wall mounted shelf £350, with the multi-tiered stands can all be upgraded with additional isolation stages.

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To guarantee precision levelling the shelves also utilise a unique ball-bearing and brass disc levelling system, and all units come complete with Allen keys and a bullseye spirit level to enable setting-up.

The free-standing shelves are available in 15mm MDF and 10mm clear float glass. These can be isolated from the stands themselves using adjustable 8mm stainless steel spikes. To guarantee precision levelling the shelves also utilise a unique ball-bearing and brass disc levelling system, and all units come complete with Allen keys and a bullseye spirit level to enable setting-up.

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Got a Quad 211111 If you have, these high quality military valves from Watford Valves might have been of interest, price £23 apiece.

Talking of loudspeakers, I also bumped into a pair of original Leak Sandwiches. Released in 1963 I believe, these were Leak’s first proper cabinet loudspeakers, and I can’t recall seeing a pair for the last twenty years.

Although these fairs are relaxed and lack the hustle of large-scale commercial events, prices vary wildly. Which is one of the wonders of course. Near to the Mac sat a Quad 33/303 pre/power combo with a single original electrostatic (ESL 57) - a more affordable proposition for most people.

Although these fairs are relaxed and lack the hustle of large-scale commercial events, prices vary wildly.

Audio Fair 96 held all sorts of surprises, from the old to the new, the cheap to the priceless. That’s the way these fairs are - great Sunday entertainment where you never know what you’ll find.

Garrard’s Zero-100 turntable, with fascinating zero tracking error arm. It’s a satisfactory starter’s turntable or collector’s piece. Note also the Trio receiver, Leak valve power amp and valve tester, items brought along by Classique Sounds.

You never know what you’ll find. I was surprised by a box of original Mullard and GEC GZ34 double-diode rectifier valves, priced at £8 each. Obscure, perhaps, but these originals are valuable because they offer higher performance than today’s Russian and Chinese equivalents.

Most people would find the many Quad 22/11 pre/power amplifiers and electrostatics more useful and attractive, I suspect. Unfortunately, Quad cannot at present repair the film of early ’57s, which is why they may start to appear at very low prices. My advice is to get a pair cheap and put them in the loft as a new film may well be found soon.

A pair of Leak Sandwich loudspeakers. These were the company’s first loudspeaker. They used a 13in bass driver with polystyrene/aluminium foil cone. Released 1963 and now very rare.

Audio Fair 96 held all sorts of surprises, from the old to the new, the cheap to the priceless. That’s the way these fairs are - great Sunday entertainment where you never know what you’ll find.
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This will be my last column for Hi-Fi World. I'm signing off as Editor to pursue a career in loudspeaker design at Tannoy. It's quite a move, both in terms of the distance between London and Glasgow where Tannoy are based, and swapping back from four years as a journalist to engineering.

I'm intrigued most though by how life is going to be 'on the other side'. Writing for a magazine gives you great influence with manufacturers, who are all only too willing to please. In return, journalists can often be cagey, awkward types, reluctant to disclose their thoughts or feelings. Yet their words, which go into print, are taken almost as gospel, something that must be a frightening prospect for any manufacturer.

There they are, having spent two years developing, testing, listening to and marketing their new product range, when some journalist tells their thousands of readers that it sounds rubbish. It may do, it may not; a lot will depend on the conditions of the review. This must be pretty hard to stomach from a manufacturer's point of view. You've a team of highly qualified and dedicated engineers, most of whom get into audio for a serious passion for music and audio. But you've just been informed, along with the masses, that your latest creation is a pile of tut.

And by a writer with little understanding, sometimes none, of how hi-fi actually works.

I see a purist argument along the lines of "You don't need to understand it to know whether it sounds right", raising its head here. I can sympathise with that to a certain extent. It's all very well for the person on the street to visit a hi-fi shop with a short-list formed from informative reviews and then pick the sound of their choice. But if you're the one who's writing those reviews that are influencing other people's purchases, I feel it's only professional to have a reasonable understanding of the product.

At Hi-Fi World, our engineering background and in-house test equipment allow us to take a sensible and considered approach to what we review. An obvious example, and one distortion set in. But there's also an impedance matching problem here. The load the Quads present to the amplifier varies from around 6Ω to 30Ω. The output impedance of your 300B amp is, say, 8Ω, so only at frequencies where the 'speaker presents an 8Ω load to the amplifier is maximum power transferred. Everywhere else the amplifier will be delivering less power than it should, altering the frequency response and re-balancing the loudspeaker's sound, usually for the worse. It's a small point and something that is easily spotted, but only if you are aware that this is a potential problem.

There are so many variables like this in hi-fi that there's little point talking about retrieving minute detail and subtle nuances in a recording, if the amplifier and loudspeaker are poor partners. Properly matched they could both be outstanding products, badly matched they could be the worst you've heard.

But manufacturers beware. It's all very well nodding in agreement that not all journalists know what they're talking about, but you have to remember that they are the best-equipped to promote your products to the people you want to reach - buyers.

There's also no use being well-versed in all the technical aspects if you have trouble stringing words together. A good writer is able to keep the reader interested in what he's saying and work within the discipline of publishing. There are few manufacturers who meet their product launch deadlines by a month, let alone by an hour.

I believe manufacturers need to explain, in as much detail as possible, exactly what the aims of a particular product are, and what type of system/equipment will make a suitable partner.

"I believe manufacturers need to explain, in as much detail as possible, exactly what the aims of a particular product are, and what type of system/equipment will make a suitable partner."
Next time you glance in the mirror, take a good, hard look at those things that (if you're like me) hold your glasses on. You see, in the world of hi-fi, as Brits are renowned as having very special lugs indeed.

Our taste in hi-fi (especially amplifiers and 'speakers) is very different from that of our European counterparts. Americans and Japanese: whilst the rest of the world would seem to prefer a more 'forward' and, some would say, brash sound, we generally go in for something rather more polite and mellow. I believe this comes from a long tradition of valve amplifiers and a certain amount of BBC influence. In terms of hi-fi, the Beeb have always had strong beliefs as to what is correct and what is not. This has filtered down into domestic hi-fi, with products such as the BBC-approved classic, the LS53/54 loudspeaker, finding their way into hi-fi enthusiasts' homes across the land.

We're obviously getting something right, however, as other nations have been taking an avid interest in the way we like things to sound. By others, I really mean the Far East, and especially Japan. Major companies such as Pioneer, Technics and Sony have been getting on to the bandwagon with minimalistic amplifiers and loudspeakers that are deliberately engineered to appeal to the British ear. In many cases, they've employed British design teams to do the job as well. And some of the final products are sold further afield than the UK, such is their sonic integrity.

But certain idiosyncrasies that can make British hi-fi sound so good are under fire; not from foreign competition, but from our own legislators. Without trying to appear a James Goldsmith groupie, I have to say EC legislation has recently come close to stifling much of what makes British hi-fi so unique in the first place.

In the early nineties we had strict RF leakage regulations that meant a few classic amplifiers had to be thoroughly revised or fall by the wayside. This had a similar effect to the tightening of car emission controls in that some models were never quite the same after the revisions.

As you read this, another bastion of British hi-fi, the humble 4mm banana plug, has also been condemned. Because the plugs just happened to fit into European mains sockets they were deemed hazardous. Which I suppose is fair enough, unless you own a pair of electrostatic loudspeakers, it's not really a good idea to put mains voltage through your latest floorstanders.

Initially, we saw products fitted with banana sockets sporting plastic buings. The idea, I think, was that you at least had time to ponder the effects of 250 volts on your bass cones whilst prising out the buings.

But all is not yet lost. Determined not to be consigned to the jaws of the spring clip, specialist companies have been working on alternatives to the erstwhile banana plug. Mission have come up with the idea of a 3mm plug and socket. This initially seems a fine idea, but it would reduce surface contact area, meaning a slight reduction in sound quality. It would also still fit, albeit loosely, into a continental mains socket.

"EC legislation has recently come close to stifling much of what makes British hi-fi so unique in the first place."

A better bet is the offering from The Audio Partnership (Richer Sounds' sister company). This comprises a high quality 6mm plug and socket, giving improved sound quality through a larger contact area whilst simultaneously meeting safety regulations. A 5mm plug could still possibly be forced into a mains socket whereas a 6mm one couldn't.

But perhaps the most innovative idea of all comes from those boffins at Arcam. They suggest reversing the gender of plug and socket. Let me explain. Their plug features a hollow centre and a plastic shield. The matching socket looks similar to the original 4mm type but features a pin at its centre. This ensures that the hi-fi plugs can't be inserted into mains sockets, and electrical plugs can't be connected to the amplifier. A further benefit is, again, the increased surface contact area. The plug and socket are slightly larger than usual, and come into contact on two surfaces - the usual outer circumference of the plug, and the inner pin too. It's one of those neat pieces of engineering that makes you wonder why on earth nobody came up with the idea before now.

Of course, it's all well and good being innovative, but standardising one of these designs (or even a different one) is another matter entirely. We have only recently seen different brands starting to come into the highstreet with a (fairly) standard width for full size hi-fi. NAD and Marantz have had to increase the size of all their units slightly to conform. So it could be years before a true successor to the universal 4mm banana plug surfaces.

One thing for sure though is that despite (in fact probably because of) such stringent legislation and tough competition, many specialist British hi-fi companies are in greater shape than ever. They're now efficient and flexible enough to meet changing demands. Which leaves us to sit back and enjoy our hi-fi systems with our treasured ears. Just remember - don't turn it up too loud or the noise-pollution police will be on to you!
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January 1997
If you’re yearning for an audiophile stocking filler that would have Santa green with envy, take a look at our special competition this month. Our Christmas bonanza means absolutely everything reviewed in this issue can be won. That’s twelve superb components and interconnects, adding up to a prize value of over £6500!

It’s important you state your order of preference for the prizes as we will be grading the winners on the quality of their tie breaker and allocating the highest selected prize available. So Winner No 1 will get their first choice, Winner No 2 theirs and so on. Only if a prize has already been selected will a winner get a prize which isn’t their first choice.

PREFERENCES:
Mission 752 Freedom loudspeakers
Arcam Alpha 7 CD player
Arcam Alpha 8 CD player
Technics SU-A700MK3 amplifier
Roksan Xerxes X
Blue Room Minipod loudspeakers
Monrio MJ amplifier
UKD Opera Duetto loudspeakers
TDL T-Line 2 loudspeakers
Keswick Audio Research Torino loudspeakers
QED Discsaver
Kenwood KX-5080S cassette deck
Interconnect cables

To enter this fabulous festive competition 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 January 4th to:

Hi-Fi World Christmas Competition
Hi-Fi World Magazine,
64 Castellain Road,
Maida Vale,
London W9 1EX

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

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

1) How many prizes are on offer in our Christmas competition?
   A. 13  B. 14  C. 12  D. 16

2) Which is the closest figure to the total prize retail value?
   A. £5500  B. £6000  C. £6500  D. £7000

3) How many complete systems (a source, an amp and a pair of speakers) could you make from the prizes on offer?
   A. 1  B. 3  C. 2  D. 4

4) What is the most expensive prize on offer?
   A. QED Discsaver  B. Mission 752 Freedom
   C. Roksan Xerxes X  D. Arcam Alpha 8

TIE BREAKER (obligatory)
Complete the following in less than 30 words
Christmas will soon be upon us,
So we've a comp. that's the business,
Ring in the new year with a fabulous prize,
Take a chance, you know it's wise,

Name: ____________________________
Address: __________________________
Post Code: _________________________
Tel No: ____________________________

Please do not add my name to your mailing list.

COMPETITION WINNERS
NOVEMBER ISSUE COMPETITION
SPENDOR LOUDSPEAKERS

In the November issue of Hi-Fi World, we gave you the chance to win one of three pairs of Spendor 2000 Series loudspeakers. The prizes go to these lucky winners:
Ross Sargent of Folkestone wins Spendor 2040 loudspeakers.
R. Charles of High Wycombe wins Spendor 2030 loudspeakers.
Simon Filmore of Ulverston wins Spendor 2020 loudspeakers.

Congratulations!

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.

Hi-Fi World magazine is published by Audio Publishing Ltd.
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)
D102III Hybrid £59.99 (0.8m)
The First £199.99 (0.8m)

van den Hul information line
0181 810 9388
PO Box 31
Bishop Auckland
DL14 7YX

XTC

CDT-1 CD transport, FRTB clock, silver cable £1250
DAC-1 DAC 18bit x8 o/s, twin transformers £1000
PRE-1 Preamplifier, Class A, system remote £1000
POW-1 Power amplifier, 4 channels at 175W £2000

The ultimate listening experience. Indulge yourself... call 0181 810 9388
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.

**ARCAM ALPHA 7** £320
This British built player is extremely good value. An upfront, punchy nature suits Techno and Rock particularly well.

**MARANTZ CD-63 Special Edition** £350
A superb budget buy. Addressing the problems of the CD-521/SE, its detailed and musical sound embarasses many expensive players.

**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 emotional, involving presentation with not a hint of self-doubt.

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

**CD CONVERTORS**

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

**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 converter around. A truly charismatic performer, it dives into Rock music with rare passion.

**PINK TRIANGLE ORDINAL** £837
Pure, smooth sound free from harshness. 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 CD-like! Uses an in-house discrete converter, and DPA haven't skipped on the build either!

**TURNABLES**

**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 of 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 IIX900/RB250** £330
A fine all rounder and easy to upgrade. Brings more depth and breadth than a Rega 3.

**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.

**RESON r1** £600
A lean, yet vibrant sound quality that really draws the listener in. Good detail and rhythmic integrity this is an impressive tunable package.

**MICHELL GYRODEC** £800
Stunning looks, build and engineering, and don't underestimate the sound. Standard PSU and Rega arm gives a detailed, architectural, if undynamic sound. With QC PSU and SME V, its scale and insight kills the competition at the price.

**PRO-JECT 6.1SA** £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
Cirrus 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. You'll forget CDs were ever invented.

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

**ROKSAN XERXES X** £1295
DSU or XPS 3.5 power supply £150/170 extra. Excellent pitch stability from a new Swiss motor and outboard power supply. Very tight bass, fine dynamics and revealing clarity.

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

**SME 3009SII** £375
This Paleolithic device doesn't bother with frequency extremes or detail, but its legendary serviceability makes it a cult in Japan. Oh death, where is thy sting?

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

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

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

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

**CARTRIDGES**

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

**REGA R1300** £130
One of the finest-sounding turntables around, the Anniversary takes the listener nearer the recording studio than almost any other deck. Works with Rega, Linn and SME arms alike.

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**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.
World favourites guide

**INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS**

**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 MC 15 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 MC 10, MC 20 and MC 30 Supremes all offer superb sound and value for money, with a distinctively rich, smooth and detailed musical performance. The valve brigade love them.

**ORTOFON MC 2000** £650
We came across this one in an SME IV on a Garrard 401; it duly gave one of the best results between. The MC 10 is honey, pure and simple.

**ORTOFON ROHMANN** £1000
In a way it's MC 2000 meets MC 7500 with the tonal strengths and dynamic sound Ortofon have been putting into their moving-coil cartridges of late.

**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 MC-10 is pure, honey and simple.

**ORTOFON MC7500** £3000
Conclusive proof that there's hope for humankind. Makes music of enormous scale and vibrancy. CD lovers would die if they heard it.

**PRE-AMPLIFIERS**

**NAIM NAC 32.5** second-hand
Naim's one-time top pre-amp is still a force to be reckoned with thanks to its precise, fast sound and excellent phono stage.

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

**AUDIOLAB 9000Q** £995
Excellent line-level only pre-amp, greatly improves on 8000C with a more fluid, musical sound and greater grip. Remote control.

**MICHELL ISO/HERA** £1295
Transparent, detailed sound with good tonal range and a neutral presentation. Flexible and remote controlled too.

**NAIM NAC 82** £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 RP 190** £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.

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

**DPA DSP200S** £495
Not quite the 505, but there's little to match it at this price if outright sound quality is your priority.

**ROSE RV13-5** £495
This interesting valve/transistor hybrid has a smooth, rich, spacious sound.

**AUDIOLAB 8000C** £570
Versatile with superb phono input. Can sound sterile, but latest version is much improved.
QUAD 406I £795
Quad's latest 140W powerhouse is smooth and civilized, 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 800M £1500
Beautifully built, powerfulamps that will drive anything you care to throw at them. Detailed, analytical sound, but a touch grey compared to valve rivals.

LEAK TROUGHLINE second-hand
Our favourite way of listening to the wireless. A simple deck, but high quality head and transport and chromes makes it a bargain.

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

PIONEER CT-S7405 £430
A great piece of engineering from Pioneer, a bit complex, but a first rate sound on playback and recording. Dolby S included.

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

NAKAMICHI DR1 £650
Better still than the DR2, with manual head azimuth adjustment to boot.

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

LOUDSPEAKERS

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

MISSION 711 LE £149
An extensive reworking of Mission's entry level 'speaker, much tighter on transients and more refined treble. Neutral and revealing.

TANNOY D100 £650
This small dual-concentric loudspeaker produces believable three dimensional imaging.

CASTLE AVON £700
Taut, dry bass and lucid midrange from their carbon fibre driver, but need warm ancillaries to avoiding sounding bright.

HARBETH HL-P3ES £799
A fine example of good loudspeaker engineering. The top of the mini-monitor league.

HARBETH HL-K6 £975
Clean, musical and classy - Harbeth have done themselves proud again.

KEF REFERENCE SERIES ONE £995
The KEFs combine pin-point imagery and detail with a smooth and polite balance. Great, agile bass too.

HEBDROY SEXTET II £1129
Heybrook have retained the strengths of the original Sextet, whilst improving on bass extension and smoothness. Treble and imaging still up with the very best.

MISSION 754 FREEDOM 5 £1299
Highly articulate and informative sound with fine imaging and tight, deep bass extension. Uses silk dome tweeter, HDRA midrange and 8" bass driver.

HARBETH HL COMPACT £1329
Dry and analytical, but truthful and uncoloured with it. A cohesive sounding top class monitor.

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 Spendor is very appealing thanks to its lucid sound and valve-friendly load.

TANNOY AHM58 £2790
Bold sounding professional active monitor with solid bass, clearly focused midrange and delicious treble. Built-in amplification.

QUAD ESL £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 others. Need a strong amplifier though.

JANUARY 1997
Hi End Export discount 50% or more

Only few units left! Some prices negotiable

AUDIO RESEARCH
DAC1 D/A converter - LS1, SP15
preamplifiers - D250 MKII, M300
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Record Player, Classic, Signature

export price from £590

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AUDIO VISION

Audio Research LS3 £1299 S/H
Heybrook C2/P2 £499 S/H
Linn LP12 Valhalla Basik plus brand new K9 (bik) £569 S/H
Moth Phono pre/prepower £399 S/H
Rega Planar 3 £199 S/H
Marantz CD644 (DAC) £299 S/H
Quad 306 £199 S/H
Quad 405 £199 S/H
Quad 31 £169 S/H
Quad 11/22/FM2 £695 S/H
Revox B77 £695 S/H
NAD 910 (Pro-Logic Preamp) 4 months old £299 S/H
Pioneer CLD 2950 £550 Ex dem
Pioneer CLD 515 £450 Ex dem
Yamaha DSPA970 £569 S/H
Kelvin Labs Absolute Zero Phono pre/premono £569 S/H
Michell Focus One £149 S/H
Spektor SP2/2 (Marked) £349 S/H
Pioneer C731 £699 S/H
Pioneer PD73 £499 S/H
SAC Acoustics SD1 £649 S/H
Audio Alchemy Dac in the box £139 S/H
Pioneer SDT1407 TV inc. cabinet (marked)
(10 months old) £2599 Ex dem
Meridian 511 (integrated) £649 S/H
S/H
Roksan Xerxes R8250 £449 S/H
Ruark Accolade RB250 £3000 £1949 S/H
Ruark Accolade Black (ex-demo) RRP £400 £389
Ruark Sabre II Walnut (ex-demo) RRP £440 £299
Ruark Broad Awakn (ex-demo)RRP £699 £649
Ruark Talismaker II Walnut (ex-demo) RRP £550 £599
Ruark Paladin Walnut (ex-demo) RRP £699 £799
Tanoo 625 AFL (subwoofer) new RRP £699 £399
Ruark Crusader RRP £450 £799
Audio Al 8000M X 4 £550 each S/H

AUDIO VISION
228 Lincoln Road, Millfield, Peterborough, PEI 2NE
Telephone: (01733) 352752

Stereophile “The most natural amp I’ve used.”
D.A.S.

J.G.H. “... the most accurate amplifier he’s heard. The highs are smooth but not sweet,
the midrange was nothing short of remarkable,
the 500AE (M) has a superbly powerful well
defined and extended bass.
Highly recommended.”

L.L. SS. J.G.H. would argue for class A rating for
the 500 AE(M)

Hi Fi Cabinets?

Jan’s SUPERB hand made units are the
bees knees -
OAK ASH MAHOGANY
TEAK WALNUT ROSEWOOD

IAN EDWARDS
THE OLD CHAPEL
262 SKIPTON ROAD
HARROGATE HG1 3HB
PHONE: (01423) 500442
K5881PSE VALVE AMPLIFIER 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 17 watts is enough to drive most loudspeakers, making high-end sound quality and design available to everyone. Can be easily monoblocked to give 32 watts.

K5881 MkII VALVE AMPLIFIER KIT
£395
A Class A, 20 watt 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 28 watt 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 Hirakawacho, Chiyoda, Tokyo 102, Japan.
Tel: (81) 3 3264 5321
**KLP1 VALVE PHONO PREAMPLIFIER**

KLP1 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. KLP1 has a super clear sound, sweet and detailed through line and phono inputs.

**KLP1 VALVE LINE PREAMP**

The KLP1 line level preamp uses one of the simplest and most elegant circuits to give a sound of remarkable clarity and detail. The components are all high quality and include Alps volume control, Sovtek valves, silver plated wire etc.

**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.

**KL5.3 THREE WAY CARBON-FIBRE DRIVER LOUDSPEAKER**

KL5.3 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 Ohm impedance make it one of the easiest loudspeakers to drive. An ideal loudspeaker for high-end valve amplifiers.

- **Drive Unit & Crossover kit etc**: £280
- **Drive Unit Pack**: £220

**KL5.3 Gold ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY THREE WAY LOUDSPEAKER**

KL5.3 Gold uses the latest version of Audax's innovative oval gold dome piezo electric tweeter, giving it the sweetest and most extended treble.

- **Drive Unit & Crossover kit etc**: £765
- **Drive Unit Pack**: £630

**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**: £620
- **Drive Unit Pack**: £475

**UPGRADE KITS**

- **K5881 MkII**: £35
  - Upgrade your pre November '96 K5881 amplifier to MkII status for just £35. Includes new 7025 double triode input stage in place of the original EF86 pentode.

- **KL53 Gold**: £450
  - Upgrade your KL53s to Gold status. Includes latest oval gold dome piezo tweeter and all components.
Mail Order Specialist
The Design Series System Table
The Unique construction of the design series of system racks offers greater flexibility for housing a variety of equipment sizes. The elegantly sloping central back column is arranged to house all of your system cables, enhancing both safety and appearance. It is available in three, four or five shelf form and you can either have wooden or glass shelves.

SPECIAL OFFER!
WOOD & GLASS SHELVES ARE NOW SAME PRICE!
3 shelf wood £159.99 Glass £159.99
4 shelf wood £179.99 Glass £179.99
5 shelf wood £199.99 Glass £199.99
Postage and Packing FREE!!!

Audio Alchemy Headphone Amp.

If you desire the same sound quality produced by a high performance, pure class “A” separate power amplifier - then the HPA v1.0 is for you. Because that’s exactly what it is! The HPA v1.0 was designed to drive any pair of headphones to realistic levels with incredible musicality. And with the Incomparable HeadRoom® Audio Image Processor, the sonic presentation becomes even more incredibly natural and lifelike. Rather than three disparate, rather disconnected sound sources, music will appear as a natural and expansive continuum from one side of your head to the other! The musical excellence of the HPA v1.0 must really be heard to be appreciated.

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It's been a long enough time since Kurt Cobain's tragic and horribly untimely death that nobody can accuse either Geffen or the remaining ex-band members of cashing in on the poor soul's departure from this world with the present selection of live recordings - they tastefully left that to the bootleggers. It's also been long enough for the Kurt legend to take on even greater status and popularity than when he was alive. I was gobsmacked about a year ago when my ten year-old cousin asked if I'd heard of Nirvana.

Hearing this set of live cuts only makes me sadder that I never got to see the group live. Not that me and my best friend didn't try. We trekked all the way across London to The Forum and paid thirty quid for a pair of forged tickets, but that's history.

And so is From The Muddy Banks. Whether it'll sell as much as Nevermind or In Utero will be interesting, but that doesn't really matter either. Without a shade of a doubt, the sixteen cuts here are a fitting tribute to what was one of the best live bands of their time at their peak, fronted by one of the most original writer/singers to have arrived in yonks.

But this isn't about Grunge, it's about Rock. This slab of recorded history contains some of the most awesome, thundering live music I've heard in ages, and that's for sure. Even the most familiar and popular item here - 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' - is as fired-up and scintillating as the first time you heard it. That primal scream introduction really says it all.

Be prepared then for an all-out assault on the senses, the sort of thing Heavy Metal writers go totally over the top trying to describe in words.

But the sawn-off volleys of pain and anger are by no means the whole story. 'Been A Son', 'Polly' or 'Lithium', say, are ample examples that Cobain could handle melody with deceptive ease, even if he did commit the odd venal sin, as in that bit of 'Teen Spirit' that sounds like The Police. So what? He probably never even noticed it at the time, and Oasis do it (not that they don't own up to it) a heck of a lot more frequently.

Bassist Krist Novoselic and drummer Dave Grohl were the perfect complement for his unique talents. Men who could play with ease and passion and great ingenuity and inspiration. The songs span the band's career as both their popularity and creativity were rushing to their peak, namely from '89 to '94, so inevitably the songs are mainly from the better known studio albums. Again, so what? In fact, some of them are even better live.

Nirvana were first and foremost a live band, as Novoselic points out in his brief but useful sleeve notes. This disc is them at their best. Little matter if the recordings came from professional sources, or were taped straight through the mixing desk - they definitely work.

A fitting epitaph to a tragic but nonetheless important talent in pop history. Exciting to the max, it really was the sound of a time and the marching anthem of a generation with nowhere to go. Like Novoselic, I wipe a tear from my eye and say (breathlessly of course - this is the music that makes you fly), "Thank you Kurt."
Much as I loathe using such an old but enduring cliche, it is actually possible that R.E.M. really are the best Rock group in the world. You may disagree but millions surely wouldn't.

Indubitably, it's been years since they've produced anything remotely like a clinker, apart from the unfabulous 'Fables Of The Reconstruction' perhaps. But I'm sure not everyone thought that it was exactly a flop. Anyway, this one certainly couldn't get knocked under the Trade Descriptions Act. Yes, it is new, it is adventurous and it is in Hi-Fi, or at least its modern equivalent.

What can I say that hasn't been said a thousand times before? My friend's ten year-old says it's boring, and so most of her pals would surely agree. For your average, broad-tongued music fan though, there are lashings of cream on this confection from the lads who put Athens, Georgia on the map.

From the opening 'How The West Was Won And Where It Got Us', Michael Stipe and company barely put a foot wrong until track 14, the bemusing 'Electrolite'. It sounds, yes, extremely R.E.M., and that may be a criticism if you don't like their other discs. But nobody's going to send the music police around to kick your door in and force you to listen.

Stipe's amiably emotive vocal hooks the ears, the band do dizzying things with guitars and all the rest of the musical machinery and so on. Not every track is a hit single, sure, but maybe they aren't always aiming for that. I mean, could you imagine something called 'Binky The Doormat' being No 1? Yeah, you could and so could I, but I'm sure you catch my drift.

Now some people find R.E.M. depressing, and the aforementioned 'How The West... ' could easily be labelled that way. Stipe's lead has a bitter edge, the music underlining it with a sheer feeling of angst, despair or whatever. The fact remains that it moves and touches you in places few contemporaries have even thought about. But it's not all the Rock world's answer to Edward Munch or Woody Allen in his downer moods.

The succeeding 'The Wake-Up Bomb' lives up to its title alright. This is a sparkly, bubbly item that would certainly sound grand first thing in the morning; up-tempo, with those epochal jangling guitars - the full enchilada, as they say. Now this one could and probably will find its way onto an A Side sooner or later.

The cover (is it Ayers Rock shot from a train?) is a barren landscape shot in monochrome, its starkness contradicted by the title's humorous, even ironic quaintness. No mistaking it - this definitely isn't R.E.M. doing 'Low', but then they can afford to have their little joke. After all, Americans, as someone famous said, aren't exactly noted for their sense of irony. Mind you, that could equally be said of most Pop musicians anytime, anywhere.

Of course, the words are generally unintelligible and quite often a title may not have any obvious connection to the song, but that's nothing new. Whether Stipe is a poet or a verbal con-man remains neither here nor there - that's just another one of those old saws that's been around in Pop since at least early Bob Dylan. I'll leave it up to you. I like Stipe's way with words, from the weirdness of something called, say, 'E-Bow The Letter' or 'New Test Leper' to the mild distraction of 'So Fast, So Numb', with its hint of a pun (or at least I think it's a hint).

But the verbal quirkiness is only part of the whole picture as we all know. What is impressive is that so many years after I was introduced to their very first album (thanks a million to Max Bell for that), they can still make my hair stand up, my ears tingle, my heart beat faster, and induce the proverbial shivers up my spine.

In short, this is a jolly good record brilliantly played. Millions will no doubt agree. It could even be their best work yet - it certainly lives up to the best of what they've done before and will sound just as good far beyond the end of the millenium.

Today, for me at least, this really is the best band in the world. Isn't this where we came in...?
Experimental dance posse The Shamen make a welcome return with the predictably titled Hempton Manor (the altered stately home) album. And despite the band's unsubtle drug connections (remember Ebenezer Goode on TOTP, "E's are good" and all that) this is a surprisingly good release.

However, be prepared - the Shamen have not mellowed with age. Far from it. Turn the lights down, blacken the windows and fuse the washing machine, or Hempton Manor is a journey back to the warehouse. Returning to their roots and a sound not a million strobe lights away from their thrusting Synergy tours of the late '80s, Colin and Mr. C have used a pumping mix of electronic sounds and hectic beats. With no apparent track listing, the band - who saw one of their members die in a tragic drowning accident some years ago - have gone for the no compromise hard core return.

Apparently an offshoot of the band's latest venture - the Shamen Sound System - the album appears to be more of an advert for their new internet page (http://www.nemeton.com), features a yawning resource centre for the three P's of hemp - Plants, Politics and Prohibition. That's presumably something to do with a new American form of gardening.

In the words of the band, combining analogue synths with digital mixing, the Sound System "gives the duo the freedom to explore the realms of tripped out techno, spacey dub and frenetic drum 'n' bass". Who am I to argue?

Despite any great originality, the hour-long Hempton Manor rolls along with a confidence not often heard in dance and techno, and shows a musical know-how not to be argued with. Rave on!

Number six and not a chance of ending up like And Now That's What I Call Music. Rebirth of Cool just keeps going on and on and on. Compiled by Kiss FM late night genius Patrick Forge and friends, it is a distinct improvement on their last offering too. Not that that was by any means bad.

In a word Rebirth Six is 'educative'. Always looking to teach a music-loving public where the latest vogue for club music is going, the Rebirth boys have constantly had to adapt in time. Thus, where they began with predominantly rap fusions, they have now moved onto rare grooves and a distinct slice of drum 'n' bass. And tracks like Ernest Ranglin's 'Surfin' and the brilliant 'Horizons' by LTJ Bukem have that familiar hard core rattling bass sound. But this is not mindless club rave - this is stylish drum 'n' bass and the highly-rated LTJ Bukem has a real belter of a track here.

Nicolette of course has her say and the only real surprise is no track from either Massive Attack, Tricky or MC Solaar. Promising and strongly-tipped Lamb have the inclusion of their excellent 'Cotton Wool', with its haunting chorus and classy junglist break, and Alex Reece of course had to be included with 'Feel The Sunshine'.

Things get all jazzed up in classic Rebirth style later on, when De Lata appear with their very Latino-flavoured 'Ponteio' and Akasha do the delicious 'Jazz Garage' - all pipes, flutes and beats combining in a kind of up-tempo Gil Scott Heron.

The perfect compilation for the car, work or play. But don't take my word for any of this, go out and buy it silly.
Blimey, nostalgia seems to come around early in the dance scene. There have already been a good few comos of yesterday floating around, with Biology getting into the act recently. But a history of trance '91-'96 is a bit of a tall order. Who do you include? Who do you miss out? And more importantly, does it really matter? Surely 20 top tracks will do, coz who's to say who the definitive exponents of the genre are?

So OK, we've all got our favourites - if I'd put this one together Josh Wink's 'Thoughts of a Tranced Love' would most certainly be up there with Sussex's 'Paranoya', but then that's just me.

The two CDs you do get are ample for any acid head, concocting a subtle blend of big names and semi-forgotten gems. There are a few obvious choices (LSG's 'Fragile', Union Jack's 'Two Full Moons and a Trout'), but these are balanced beautifully next to the likes of Hardfloor's 'Trancescript', The Vision Of Shiva's 'How Much Can You Take' and the rollocking Paragliders' 'Paraglide'. Plus if you're still in any doubt there are old favourites by CJ Bolland, Laurent Garnier and The Orb. In ten, even five years time, you'll wish you'd bought this album. If I were you, I'd put it on my Christmas list now.

Farley and Heller have always played fair and true, and so for all their hard work the people at Journeys By DJ have given them their extra value double CD to trail us through all that's righteous and good about house. As a superb mix team and DJ partners Terry and Pete have always delivered the goods. From eye-opening early remixes like Happy Monday's `Stinkin' Think' and the dubbed out bliss of Degrees of Motion's 'Shine On', excellence has always been the goal (and pretty damn successful they've been). 

With such a penchant for house that you can spot the roots (disco and funky stuff), the British scene has always had plenty to satisfy. But of course, a large chunk of this album centres around the US of A., from Louie Vega and Li'l Louis to new up-starts promising great things (Armand Van Helden, DJ Sneak). There's even an acappella cut of Superstars of Rock's beautifully constructed 'Orange Sunshine'.

Big tracks come from all over the shop; F Communications' 'St. Germain in Paris' to Junior Boy's Own's Black Science Orchestra with their sumptuous cut 'Save Us' to CJ Bolland to Thelma Houston. If it's got a groove then it's on here somewhere.

Farley and Heller don't stop at a great selection of tracks either. The mixing is smooth without losing a minute of party-pumping funk. There's a host of specially cut acappellas and rare mixes from the duo's vaults. They've even chucked a load of special 3D effects onto the second CD, with dynamics that really kick in on decent equipment.

JDJ comos have always been synonymous with style and top mixing, and the next instalment in an indispensable collection is here.

Emmanuel Top is one very happy man at the moment, I should think. Emmanuel who? I hear you crying. Would it help if
I mentioned BBE and the chart bashing single of the last couple of months 'Seven Days and One Week'. If you still haven’t guessed it, Mr Top is the E in BBE. But of course most artists don’t just have the one personality in their music. There’s the matter of Emmanuel’s acid stormers ‘Acid Phase’ and ‘Ecsta Deal’ on his own French label ‘Seven Days and One Week’. If you still haven’t guessed it, Mr Top is the E in BBE. But of course most artists don’t just have the one personality in their music. There’s the matter of Emmanuel’s acid stormers ‘Acid Phase’ and ‘Ecsta Deal’ on his own French label ‘Seven Days and One Week’. If you still haven’t guessed it, Mr Top is the E in BBE. But of course most artists don’t just have the one personality in their music. There’s the matter of Emmanuel’s acid stormers ‘Acid Phase’ and ‘Ecsta Deal’ on his own French label ‘Seven Days and One Week’. If you still haven’t guessed it, Mr Top is the E in BBE. But of course most artists don’t just have the one personality in their music. There’s the matter of Emmanuel’s acid stormers ‘Acid Phase’ and ‘Ecsta Deal’ on his own French label ‘Seven Days and One Week'. And there’s the small fact that BBE collaborators - B & A are no less than Age of Love.

So with this calibre of musical discourse flowing down Emmanuel’s stream, what’s the water taste like? Are we talking chart-friendly house, or crazy acid excursions? Well, neither.

There’s the bass squelches and turns of ‘Asteroid’, with itchy hi-hats and omnipresent bass lines that wander off into the realms of acid torture, before pulling back into a bass heavy haven once more. Then there are other tracks, notably ‘Development’ and ‘Replay’ that live in that dusky morning-after realm of being placed mid-way between dancefloor and chill-out room tappers. However, what the album gives away in tempo and predictability it gains in the ability to take you to an acid plane, bringing in heavy bass, using percussion to its fullest potential, then adding that element of surprise. There are the anthemic undercurrents and builds that creep up on you. Perfect to take you on one long, warped, journey.

Platipus - cool name, cool label. They've trod just the right line in the trance arena, keeping their distance from commercialism, banging bass lines and anthemia. For those of you not too au fait with all that label worship stuff, it helps to know that they’re home to Union Jack, Universal State Of Mind, and let’s not forget that it is they who brought Robert Miles' ‘Children’ into the home of every Phil Collins and Dire Straits fan. Still you can’t blame them for that, it was just a top crossover track.

And now it’s Platipus’ head honcho biokke Simon Berry’s turn to turn his hand to the Platipus formula for quality. No stranger to ethereal, life force-giving trance, he’s got his hands dirty in the creative processes of Poltergeist and Union Jack.

Still, doesn’t guarantee a wicked new album. But trust in Platipus for it doth trance verily like there’s no tomorrow. Mr B does us proud with the singles so far: ‘Octopus’, ‘Cambodia’ and ‘Gloria’ and newbie ‘Kaleidoscope’. The rest of the album is totally Platipus. There are tracks like ‘Mosquito’ that are all fluffy and soft up top, but gripped to the earth with an intense machined bassline. There’s ‘Golden Rain’ which is as it says, skippety synths and gloopy effects gliding through.

Yep, if your favourite tipples are relentless beats, riff-a-gogo and sensuous melodics dripping with emotion, then look no further. These guys deserve your appreciation.

This man gives the scariest interviews known to man, has the scariest dope obsession, and the scariest twisted gravelly voice, all pure velvet with sadist wishes tripping from his tongue. In combination with the bittersweet vocals of Martina and beats deconstructed, it’s a recipe for paranoia and fear.

You see the thing with Tricky is that no one really knows who he is, but everyone’s fascinated by his street days in Bristol, and his collaborations with Massive Attack, with Garbage, with Bush, and with Suggs (!!) Innovative album ‘Maxinquaye’ was a revelation, the furthest out-there music in years, a logical progression from Portish’s ‘Die’ an oasis of jittery cosiness, of sweet lamenting vocals, of lost moments.

But you see, it’s an acquired taste and one, like the taste of money, people are willing to swallow as we reach the 21st century. But with suffering, comes respite in the form of ‘Make Me Wanna Die’ an oasis of jittery cosiness, of sweet lamenting vocals, of lost moments.

Pre-Millenium Tension is Tricky’s vision of a future world, a scared man with reason to run. Or maybe he just read Brave New World once too often. Either way, you better start listening just in case.
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After a collective absence of over a decade, the Gateway trio - guitarist John Abercrombie, drummer Jack DeJohnette and bassist Dave Holland - reformed last year to record once again for ECM. Their work in the 70s did as much to establish the German record label’s elusive ‘sound’ as the records of, say, Keith Jarrett or Jan Garbarek. Sure, they had at that point all performed in various groups for the label - and have all continued to do so since. But as a trio, their collective sound was pretty special, an at once earthy and yet sky-bound combination of folk music melodies, gritty grooves and searching improvisations.

In The Moment, I’d say, lives up to the 70s group’s promise far more than their ‘re-debut’ Homecoming. There’s a delight in collective improvising here that’s all too rare in contemporary jazz. Its range of compositional feels is much broader than one might expect elsewhere, from faux-middle Eastern raga-rock grooves to implosive free jazz freak-outs.

Abercrombie and Holland are on their usual fine form (the latter remains, for my money, easily the greatest jazz double bassist currently working). But it’s DeJohnette’s performance here that deserves special mention, I feel. DeJohnette has consistently been one of jazz’s most creative drummers for the best part of three decades, sublimely fusing his free jazz and R’n’B background into a style full of propulsive dynamism which skirts precariously around strict time keeping. On In The Moment he makes incredible use not just of the kit, but of ethnic drums and drum synths, spinning out mesmerising, hugely seductive rhythms and textures. Stunning stuff.

James Plotkin

A STRANGE, PERPLEXING

A brief mention for a couple of albums which really only touch jazz at the most oblique tangent, but deserve coverage and are unlikely to receive it elsewhere. Guitarist James Plotkin is perhaps best known - if at all - for his involvement with avant-rock power trios. But in his solo life, Plotkin creates minimalistic electronica of distinct, if austere beauty.

There are, of course, many musicians currently performing what gets lumped together as ‘dark ambient’, ‘isolationist’ or even - get this - ‘illbient’. Plotkin’s music though has an organic warmth often missing elsewhere. Whether this is as much to do with his methodology (the music is almost entirely performed on heavily signal processed electric guitar) as his vision, is a moot point. But this is well worth checking out, not least for those of you interested in what’s being done at the limits of the world’s most overplayed instrument.

Russell Mills has previously been known for his superb album sleeve design and installation work, but his debut album marks the emergence of a very serious musical proposition indeed. On Undark, Mills, along with T:me Recording’s Miasma, has pasted together an incredibly lush and diverse canvas of textures and rhythms. They’re formed from pieces contributed by musicians as diverse and renowned as My Bloody Valentine’s Kevin Shields, David Sylvian, Brian Eno, The Edge and Bill Laswell. Easily the most impressive debut album I’ve personally heard in a long, long time.
Released last August, this CD has just come to my attention as one of three new releases on the Zephyr label.

Brian Lemon’s name may be well known in British jazz circles, but overseas readers may require an introduction. He has been described as a ‘national treasure’ (attributed to Warren Vaché) or ‘world class’ (an anonymous fan in the Bull’s Head, Barnes.) In short, Lemon’s talent is known and respected by many, from all walks of life, not least Zephyr’s founder John Bune; a cursory glance at the Zephyr catalogue reveals Lemon’s name on all fourteen CDs.

Alan Barnes probably requires less introduction, if only because alto saxophonists are probably more common and definitely more high-profile than pianists today. Nevertheless, with Lemon on the ivories they create a sound with a real WWII vibe.

You get thirteen tunes by Harold Arlen; ‘Ill Wind’, ‘Come Rain or Shine’, ‘Don’t Like Goodbyes’, and the title track. To talk about the technical side of a CD like this is probably pointless, but as far as it goes it’s a crisp, clear recording which gives the players space without clipping their range. Enjoyable.

The Vaché/Watkins axis provides cornet, trumpet and flugelhorn while Lemon’s quartet consists of himself, Dave Cliff, Dave Green and Martin Drew playing piano, guitar, double bass and drums respectively.

This gives the technical chaps a bit more grist than the previous CD, but the players are adequately imaged in space and tonally defined.

This thirteen track CD lasts a few seconds under the hour and contains a whole set of mainstream favourites such as Gershwin’s ‘I Got Rhythm’, Carmichael’s ‘Stardust’, Styne/Cahn’s ‘Time After Time’ and even a Vaché original, ‘Blues For Bune’.

Sweet, stylish and vivacious, it’s almost as good as being there.

Here the line-up begins to get complicated, but I’ll try to keep things clear and simple. Lemon plays piano, Barnes, Iain Dixon and Andy Panayi constitute the reed section, Gerard Presencer plays trumpet and flugelhorn, Anthony Kerr vibraphone, Clark Tracy drums while Alec Dankworth along with Dave Green alternately take credit for bass.

Confused? You won’t be because it’s a straightforward feast of favourites such as Van Heusen/Burke’s ‘Polka Dots and Moonbeams’, the Ellington/Bigard/Mills ‘Moon Indigo’, Strayhorn’s ‘Chelsea Bridge’ and Porter’s ‘Just One Of Those Things’. What more can you ask for?

Well you could ask for a good, clear crisp recording with sweet tones and a solid soundstage. Enough said, it’s here. And if you still want more after that you can keep looking forward to next year when ‘Young Minds - Old Hands’ will be released on Zephyr. Watch this space.
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The solo challenge is on, for both voices and instruments. The songs of Berg and Mussorgsky bring out the best from Anne Sofie von Otter and Sergei Leiferkus, while Andrew Manze goes bravura in Biber. And clarinettist John Denman is simply splendid - in a very British sense.

But also the many, often bizarre effects which Biber introduces. All of which may give the impression that these sonatas are little more than virtuoso exercises. In fact, they are full to the brim with fine melodies, and the passages of pure display are always subservient to the line and rhythmic impetus. Indeed, their capacity to constantly surprise brings an invigorating element of improvisation, not to mention an 'edge of the seat' tension as the solo fiddle runs through its repertoire of seemingly impossible sonic gymnastics.

Andrew Manze, violinist with the trio Romanesca, clearly relishes the challenge these sonatas present. His is a true bravura performance, tackling the phenomenal technical complexities head-on and producing breathtaking playing. Yet, throughout, the style maintains an expressive, musical quality and the result is involving, stimulating and, ultimately, highly rewarding.

Inevitably, Manze's colleagues, lutenist Nigel North and keyboard player John Toll, play secondary roles here, but their contribution to the vitality of the music-making shines through. In addition to the eight Salzburg sonatas, Romanesca perform two passacaglias by Biber (one for solo violin and - somewhat less of a showcase for the performer's skills - one for solo lute) and the quirky Sonata Representativa, composed for Biber's first employer, the Count of Kromeriz in Moravia. It seems the Count had a fondness for programme music and Biber certainly supplies that with his violinistic impressions of birds, frogs and cats! A fine recording, combining accuracy and good balance with a bright, airy acoustic that captures the solo violin at its most stratospheric, completes the attractions of this fascinating recording.

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currently to be heard anywhere is beyond dispute. But he brings more than polish and power to these songs of Mussorgsky. Crucially, he also brings a memorably distinctive character to each one. Whether it be the impassioned declamations of The Field-Marshal (from Songs and Dances of Death) or the mischievous pleadings of the child in The Nursery, Leiferkus has the measure of what is required. He can be lofty or earthy, arrogant or doleful, drawing on an extraordinary range of vocal colours and, in every instance, being utterly compelling and convincing. There is nothing timid or restrained about Leiferkus's style, but it is harnessed to an impeccable technique and purity of tone. You are left in no doubt about Mussorgsky's quest for realism, both emotional and dramatic, in his songs. This Conifer CD, the first of three from the label embracing all of Mussorgsky's songs, opens with the best-known cycle, the Songs and Dances of Death. All four songs are based on dialogues with Death, who speaks with a dying child's mother, a young girl, a drunken peasant and a field of dying soldiers. Seldom can the cycle have been performed more tellingly, with the accompanist, Semion Skigin, as commanding as his partner. This standard is maintained through The Nursery, seven short songs in which Mussorgsky used his own texts to display his ability to 'get inside' the mind of someone self-evidently very different from himself. This cycle also finds the composer at his most musically original - both harmonically and rhythmically. The Puppet-Show finds him, again in his own words, roundly lampooning his enemies in the musical world - "Our lords of music" as he describes them. There is pungent humour, too, in The Seminarist and The He-Goat, alongside the pathos of the moving Forgotten. The recording, engineered by Tryggvason in All Saints Church, Petersham, Surrey, is a model of transparency and balance, according Leiferkus's voice the space and range it needs.

SPLENDID BRITISH CLARINET WORKS
Music for clarinet and piano
by Arnold Bax, Gerald Finzi, Eric Hughes, John Ireland and Charles Villiers Stanford
John Denman, clarinet; Paula Fan, piano
BRITISH MUSIC LABEL BML009 (DDD/79.37)

The title doesn't exaggerate - these are splendid pieces, from the cheery tunefulness of Finzi's Five Bagatelles to the more profound appeal of Bax's Sonata of 1934, a work of notable invention and intensity. The harmonic language, as in so much of Bax's music, is both idiomatic and adventurous, and while there are no obvious references to Irish music, Bax's love-affair with Ireland and things Celtic is seldom far away.

The Bax sonata is not the only work here with more than a hint of Irishness. Although sometimes described as "the English Brahms", Charles Villiers Stanford was born a Dubliner and wrote several works which reflected the musical heritage of his homeland - the Irish Rhapsodies, for example. The Clarinet Sonata of 1912, one of three works Stanford wrote for the instrument, carries no similar title but does contain an elegiac middle movement entitled 'Caoine' (the mournful wailing heard at an Irish funeral or wake). Stanford employs the soulful tone of the clarinet to compelling effect in this fantasy-like movement, while paying homage in the outer movements of the sonata to his German classical models, and to Brahms in particular. (A subtle reference to the latter's Op120/2 clarinet sonata occurs at the end of the first movement).

Between the Bax and Stanford sonatas, clarinettist John Denman and his accompanist Paula Fan insert some lighter fare in the shape of Eric Hughes' rollicking Sonata Capriccioso. Hughes, better known by his nickname of Spike, and more famous as a jazz composer and performer, wrote this sprightly piece in 1964 especially for John Denman, who plays it here with sparkling dexterity.

The final work in the programme, the enjoyment of which is enhanced by Mike Skeet's warm, clear and truthful recording from the Music Hall of London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama, is the Fantasy Sonata of John Ireland. Composed in 1934 for the clarinettist Frederick Thurston, the Fantasy Sonata is considered by some to be the crowning glory of Ireland's chamber music. Certainly, its wealth of lyricism and tonal colour is fully evident here, thanks to both the quality of the recording and the committed playing of the performers. And those sentiments apply to all the works on this engaging CD, as splendid a production as its title suggests.
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In a way, these three works by the most approachable of the composing triumvirate of the Second Viennese School could all be described as apprentice pieces, although that may seem an odd description for a composition - Der Wein - dating from Alban Berg's forty-fourth year. The Seven Early Songs, however, are precisely that, the products of both an enduring love of literature and the tutelage of Arnold Schoenberg. In his late teens, Berg produced over thirty settings of German poets, all firmly rooted in the Romantic tradition. These possessed sufficient individuality to impress Schoenberg, to whom Berg had shown the scores after answering the former's advertisement for composition pupils. Berg studied with Schoenberg for some six years between 1904 and 1910, and during that period composed a great many more songs, mainly in a style that hovered between Brahms and Hugo Wolf but with strong echoes of Schubert, Mahler and, in particular, Robert Schumann.

After 1912, however, Berg was drawn to composition on a larger scale, and the German lied lost its attraction for him. His portfolio of songs lay gathering dust until shortly before he began work on his second opera, Lulu, in 1928. He then selected a group of his favourite settings and published them as Seven Early Songs. These settings became Berg's most complex score. Yet, while radical, the score is also in evidence of his progress as a composer. The most important influence in the Three Orchestral Pieces was not Schoenberg, but Mahler, whose Ninth Symphony had had such an overwhelming impact on Berg (he had attended the symphony's first performance in 1912, the year after Mahler's death).

The Three Orchestral pieces are written on a large scale and, with their elaborate thematic inter-relationships, constitute Berg's most complex score. Yet, while radical, the score is also in some respects very formal, displaying a debt to the pre-atonal works of Schoenberg, and being very strictly organised. Certainly, the range - both dynamically and emotionally - and the impact of the work come over strongly in this outstanding recording. Claudio Abbado first recorded Berg's Op6 for DG a quarter of a century ago and it has been intriguing to compare the two readings. The newer version is more spacious and underlines the Mahlerian influence, but remains as powerful and immediate as its predecessor - the impact of the concluding March verges on the terrifying.

The final work here, again showcasing the voice of Anne Sofie von Otter, is Der Wein, settings of verses by the French poet Charles Baudelaire in translations by Stefan George. This was the product of a commission, in the spring of 1929, from the Czech-born soprano Ruzena Herlinger, who was then working in Vienna. Berg was attracted both by the fee on offer and by the chance of writing for the kind of light, flexible soprano voice that he envisaged taking the title role in his opera Lulu. In the event, this thirteen-minute concert aria, with its important roles for piano and saxophone, became an extended study for the opera. The orchestral scoring is light and delicate, never swamping the voice, and the atmosphere of hedonistic excess and gaiety is wonderfully sustained. Der Wein was destined to become Berg's last completed vocal work. He died in 1935 at the age of fifty, leaving his operatic masterpiece, Lulu, unfinished.

Anne Sofie von Otter is in magical voice here, if at times reluctant to explore the seedier nature of Baudelaire's poetry too deeply. Abbado's treatment of the orchestral accompaniment, though, is wholly idiomatic, the elusive dance rhythms allowed to insinuate themselves into the sound picture surely in just the way Berg intended. With immaculate and inspired playing from the Vienna Philharmonic and a 4D recording that really does live up to DG's claim for the system, this is a welcome addition to the Berg discography, even if by present standards it is not over-generous in terms of playing time.
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January 1997  

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☐ Harbeth HL-K6  ☐ Marantz CD-63 KI-S  ☐ Trichord Genesis  
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HI-FI WORLD  

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TECHNICS A700 Mk3 AMPLIFIER

The A-700 Mk3 delivers a healthy 66 watts per channel, making it suitable for general domestic use. This is enough to drive most loudspeakers to high level in a medium sized room. Its power supply had good regulation. There was little voltage drop delivering current into a low four ohm load, output going up healthily to 100 watts per channel.

The CD input goes low, down to 4 Hz. I was surprised, however, to find that the upper limit was volume control dependent, reaching just 14 kHz at a high setting (2 o'clock) which will give a warm sound. Set at 11 o'clock, the normal position, it was alright. The tone controls gave very symmetrical lift/cut characteristics, affecting only their intended spectrum, but they must be switched out to obtain a flat response.

There was little distortion, as expected, since a lot of feedback can be applied with MOSFETs. Odd order harmonics were present, which suggests some lack of smoothness might be perceptible. Noise was low and channel separation high via CD, whilst sensitivity was normal at 200 mV.

The phono stage was more band limited than CD, reaching just 21 kHz. This will add a little warmth. Equalisation proved accurate but there is no warp filter, so tone cone flap is likely with reflex loudspeakers (as most are nowadays). Hiss was very low, sensitivity normal at 3.4 mV and the overload ceiling high.

The Technics measured well, proving absolutely conventional, with the minor exception of some attempt at band limiting, possibly in an attempt to ensure clean treble. NK

Power 66 watts
CD/tuner/aux. Frequency response 4 Hz-30 kHz
Separation 66 dB
Noise -95 dB
Distortion 0.004%
Sensitivity 200 mV
dc offset 1.8/2 mV

MONRIO AMPLIFIER

The Monrio turns out a useful 45 watts per channel, enough to go loud with most loudspeakers, if not very loud. Output increases to a useful 72 watts into a low 4 ohm load, showing the power supply has good regulation, which bodes well for bass dynamics.

Frequency response was well extended downward, hitting 10 Hz - low enough to reproduce most of what CD can produce. The amplifier has been band limited to 20 kHz at high frequencies, the idea of this being to provide clean treble, and a 'warm' sound too.

Unfortunately, this amplifier displayed significant treble distortion (10 kHz) of 0.3%, with an extended harmonic structure. The figure rose to around 0.5% at full output, both values being high enough to add coarseness to the sound.

It's difficult to know these days whether designers are lowering feedback to gain space and dimensionality, trading this benefit off against low distortion, because solid state amps don't normally produce so much high frequency distortion.

In all other areas the Monrio measured well, exhibiting low noise, good channel separation and low DC offset at the output. NK

Power 45 watts
CD/tuner/aux. Frequency response 10 Hz-21 kHz
Separation 68 dB
Noise -80 dB
Distortion 0.005%
Sensitivity 3.4 mV
Overload 190 mV
Audio Classics

Lowest Acosta, constant with horns, pair cabinets.
Refurbished Lowther P6/6AS
Swallow Active Loudspeakers, ALSII mint and rare.
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Ektors.
Alphason Sonita, Atlas PSU, v. late spec., no arm.
Alphason Symphony, HR-100-MCS, pristine.
Consonance BD2 original factory plinth and arm
Garrard 301, cream, mint.
UHER 4200 open reel. stereo, psu and case, mint
Mackie 120V/L2 mini. mixer. latest version, new
Sugden A44, amplifier, original real case model, mint
Musical Fidelity F22, remote tube line preamp, as new
Musical Fidelity TYPHOON, upgraded, boxed as new
New Rogers CADET III valve integrated amplifier, mint.
Rogers HCS85I valve integrated amplifier, v. good
Leak STEREO 20 valve amp, immaculate.
Musical Fidelity A1, class 'A' amp, due in soon.
QUAD 22. valve preamp for use with QLIs, mint
PS Audio ELITE, 798wpc, integrated amp.
Zeta Eclipse preamp, at new condition
Audio Pro. receiver, digital, quite funky, 85wpc
Pioneer SX-747. Quadrophonic receiver, very big.
 Sugden R31. Haden's fave tranny tuner, stunning
QUAD FM II. (for 22) with stereo decoder.
Manatsu CD368. original top loader, black, mint.
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Lumley Reference passive preamp (chrome)
Audioscape 800 power amp
Electrocompaniet ECI-1 integrated amp
Spectral preamp, phono
Alchemini Kraken integrated amp
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Lumley Reference 4 - bookshelf speaker - amazing value.

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ARCAM ALPHA 7 CD
It's becoming a familiar trait of Arcam's affordable players, treble roll-off, that is. It is a sensible move too, removing some of the glare from CD and sweetening out that sting from the cheap tweeter in your budget speakers.

Unusually, bass level falls slightly too towards low frequencies, which may weaken bass. Distortion stays low right across the board, with only slight 2nd harmonic visible at -30dB, a level picked to represent a typical music signal.

Output level was 2.4V, a touch above the 2V standard, but allowing useful extra headroom for passive preamplifiers. Separation was wide, around 100dB even at 20kHz suggesting good board layout. Noise was low at -107dB and dynamic range healthy at 108dB. DB

TEST RESULTS
Frequency response 4Hz-20kHz
Distortion (%) left right
-6dB 0.005 0.006
-30dB 0.006 0.006
-60dB 0.51 0.47
-90dB 3.13 3.05

Separation (dB) left right
1kHz 116 112
20kHz 102 98
Noise with emphasis -107dB
Dynamic range 108dB
Output 2.4V

ARCAM ALPHA 8 CD
Unlike its more affordable sibling, the Alpha 8 has an extremely flat and extended frequency response. This flatter response up to 20kHz will reveal more detail and insight in a recording, giving a more open sound. If distortion stays low enough to be inaudible, this can be a good thing.

Luckily this is the case, with just the smallest amount of 2nd harmonic (deemed innocuous anyway, especially at such a low level) visible in our plot taken at -30dB. At -60dB distortion rises to 0.8%, giving a relatively low dynamic range figure of 102dB (EIA test).

Again, like the '7, the '8 has an output above the standard at 2.5V. Separation was wide and noise low. The '8 appears to be a competent player with a well balanced performance. DB

TEST RESULTS
Frequency response 4Hz-21.25kHz
Distortion (%) left right
-6dB 0.008 0.007
-30dB 0.006 0.006
-60dB 0.80 0.77
-90dB 29.2 29.0

Separation (dB) left right
1kHz 103 102
20kHz 83 97
Noise with emphasis -108dB
Dynamic range 102dB
Output 2.5V

Frequency response
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LOUDSPEAKERS

TDL T-Line 2
Although described as a transmission line the T-Lines are more a hybrid between this loading system and reflex. The impedance characteristic shows the twin peaks associated with reflex loading. Transmission lines are acoustically resistive, which reflects back into the impedance trace to give a near-flat response. Overall impedance was 9Ω, a high-ish figure that helped keep sensitivity down to a mediocre 86dB.

Frequency response was very flat, especially through the bass regions - a good sign. The T-Line 2 should have plenty of bass. TDL have engineered in a smooth overall balance, but there is a peak around 1.6kHz, likely to add some brightness to the sound. This is a well balanced design, but conventional. NK

MISSION FREEDOM 752
The tweeter on this speaker integrates on the bass/midrange axis and above, so listening (ear) height should be no lower, or a phase cancellation suckout will make the tweeter sound divorced and obvious. At this height and above response was broadly flat as our analysis shows, with some peaking between 1.6-2.5kHz, at the top end of the bass/mid's range. The 2dB dip in the crossover region around 3kHz is too small to mute detail rendition. Bass extends down to 63Hz in our analysis, wall and floor reinforcement acting to lift output.

Frequency response was high at 89dB, especially considering the 752's overall impedance is high at 9.6Ω, hitting a minimum of 6Ω at 10kHz. These speakers are a light load and need little power, but they are also heavily reactive around 80Hz, which doesn't suit all amps.

A well engineered speaker, but sit high! NK

B&W Minipod
The Minipod demonstrates just how well, technically, a miniature can perform. It has a ruler flat response that was maintained over a wide frontal range, showing excellent drive unit integration. Bass output is limited; it peaks at 160Hz and drops rapidly below 80Hz due to limited cabinet volume.

Overall impedance measures 6.5Ω, a sensible value, but the impedance swings are wild (4Ω-35Ω) and the reactance high in places, making them an awkward load. Sensitivity was good at 88dB for 2.8V input (nominal watt). They need a moderately powered (around 40W) solid-state amplifier. NK
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<td>Musical Fidelity E 50 liner</td>
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<td>Meridian A 500 speakers, black</td>
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<td>Alchemist Kraken amp</td>
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LOUDSPEAKERS

KAR Torino
The Torino has raised lower bass, our analysis shows, a property that will give it good bass weight. Bass output was very smooth too. There's a small spike in the treble, a part of some peakiness in the tweeter. This may well detract from treble smoothness. Overall though, the Torino's response is well balanced and free from suckouts.

It was obvious during tests that this is a very sensitive loudspeaker - it delivered 91 dB from a nominal 1 watt (2.8V), no less. However, this was due mainly to a low impedance of 5Ω overall, with inima of 3Ω. With steep rates of change, there's plenty of reactance too, making the Torinos a difficult load. They should be matched with care. NK

UKD Opera
The Opera has some peaks in its response, notably at 160Hz, below which the bass rolls away slowly. All the same, it reaches down to 63Hz with ease, so it should give some good wallop. The upper bass emphasis will strengthen bass speed. Absence of a crossover suckout will ensure the Opera has a clear midrange and good vocal projection though. Overall impedance is high at 91Ω and sensitivity correspondingly low at 85dB. There are some steep impedance changes around bass resonance, indicating heavy reactance. Although an easy-ish load, the Opera needs a well rated amplifier to swing volts, even though it will not actually draw much power, around 60 watts being advisable. NK

CASSETTE

KENWOOD KX-5080S CASSETTE DECK
Carefully adjusted to possess correct head azimuth, the KX-5080S we reviewed performed well with prerecorded tapes. Frequency response measured flat to 16kHz, showing good basic replay equalisation accuracy. However, the head itself rolls off above 16kHz, due to head gap width. This affected recordings too. Replay amplifier noise was low at -60dB and speed accuracy good at +0.4% fast.

Frequency response when recording depended upon tape type and consistency of the tape system, which was so-so. Ferrics generally tuned with upper mid-range peak and high treble roll off. Ferrics tuned fairly flat, metals flattest of all. However, the head overloaded at +1dB (ref. IEC0dB) with metals, a low value. Ferrics and chrome were better in the midband, but ferric was over-biased, giving early treble overload. This will result in soft, muddled treble. Dolby S has broadband overload prevention and will compensate for the Kenwood's mediocre overload performance to some degree.

RECORDING (blank tapes)
Frequency response (IEC Primary Refs.)
ferric (IEC1) 25Hz-13.5kHz
chrome (IECII) 25Hz-15kHz
metal (IECIV) 25Hz-19kHz
Separation (1kHz) 68dB
Distortion (315Hz) 2.2%
Hiss (70uS, Dolby out) -56dB
Speed variations (DIN total) 0.08%
Flutter energy (3-3.13kHz) -30dB
MOLUSAT (IEC Refs) 315/10k
IEC I (ferric) 3.5dB/-7dB
IECII (chrome) 3dB/-7dB
IECIV (metal) 1dB/0dB

REPLAY (prerecorded tapes)
Frequency response (-2dB) 30Hz-18kHz
Speed accuracy +0.4fast
Hiss (70uS, Dolby out) -60dB

The transport was satisfactorily speed stable, displaying just a little regular cyclic drift (wow below 1Hz). Hiss levels were as expected for Dolby B and S, but at 2.2% head distortion was double that normally encountered.

The KX-5080S offers a reasonable set of performance figures, being hampered by a head of very mediocre performance. NK
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We also have a few slightly substandard items on special offer this month.

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<td>Roksan Affessa D/P Mill P</td>
<td>£1495</td>
<td>£995</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roksan L2.5 preamp</td>
<td>£995</td>
<td>£525</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roksan L2 preamp</td>
<td>£995</td>
<td>£450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roksan L1 preamp</td>
<td>£2250</td>
<td>£925</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OTHER NEWS

After the release of the Rega Planet and the rush for the first few players in stock, we now have more time to demonstrate this amazing CD player which truly out performs many of its peers. If you’ve got a little more money to spend on a CD player, why not listen to the DPA Renaissance CD player, our favourite at £995 inc remote. Now on to my favourite subject, analogue record players. MAX have noticed a growing interest in the underestimated format with vinyl becoming an easier format to obtain. (We ourselves have over 150 new titles on sale) I have listed our best top selling turntables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>WAS</th>
<th>NOW</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rega Planar 2 inc super bus</td>
<td>£273</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rega Planar 3 inc Elys</td>
<td>£395</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syquestro 2 X 2/Rega RB300/MS15S</td>
<td>£804</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 6 IBM 20 Super</td>
<td>£1070</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roksan Radius/Talara/Corus/Black</td>
<td>£1070</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michell Gyrus/Rega RBX900/MD20</td>
<td>£1524</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rega Plan 9 inc RB900/Exact</td>
<td>£1844</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Roksan Xeres/X/Talara/Corus Black</td>
<td>£2170</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Ex Demo/Secondhand Goods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>WAS</th>
<th>NOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vold Valhalla ATTS</td>
<td>£1200</td>
<td>£450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manta Electronic/RB20/bias</td>
<td>£850</td>
<td>£550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thorens TD168/RB250</td>
<td>£185</td>
<td>£179</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rotel RCD 995 BK discrete CD player</td>
<td>£495</td>
<td>£395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotel RX 970 BX phono stage</td>
<td>£139</td>
<td>£129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roksan DP 1.5 transport</td>
<td>£695</td>
<td>£695</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roksan Darwin (Lenman black) inc Xeres</td>
<td>£1795</td>
<td>£1395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonus Faber Metaefis</td>
<td>£365</td>
<td>£395</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martin Logan Aerius</td>
<td>£8100</td>
<td>£4195</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arcam Alpha 5a CD player</td>
<td>£479</td>
<td>£295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B &amp; W CDJ 1 Red Ash Speakers</td>
<td>£279</td>
<td>£139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orfeo SA100 Amplifier</td>
<td>£449</td>
<td>£395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 0.5 turntable (cracked lid)</td>
<td>£149</td>
<td>£129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 1.2 turntable</td>
<td>£199</td>
<td>£159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thorens TD 160 (no lid)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leak Toulonine X/A (mono)</td>
<td>£225</td>
<td>£225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roksan Xeres/Talara/Corus</td>
<td>£1650</td>
<td>£950</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Top quality turntable and phono stages.

Top quality turntables, SME, Rega, etc.

Top quality phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono phono 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Ad Audio 1951 value preamp £1,479 £1,095
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Linn Kudo Power Amplifier £2,400 £1,850
Arcam Delta 290 Amplifier £3,300 £2,975
Audiolab 8000CD/FP Black Mint £1,300 £1,075
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Audio Innovations 200w £1,300 £995
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Nakamichi IA-3 Amplifier £3,800 £2,975
Cyrus 2/PSA Line Out Model £2,200 £1,995
Moth Passive Pre 2 x Monoblocks £899 £795
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B + O Beocentre 90010 £1,170 £725
Meridian 200 System £2,070 £1,250

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Nakamichi Cassette Deck 2 £389 £239
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Microagiga Trio Trichorded £4,200 £2,150

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Riva E18 Black/Mint £350 £240
Quad ESL57 equivalent price £1,500 £1,495
Speckay BC3 equivalent price £1,700 £1,600
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Rogers LS7 £999 £495
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Rayd Axiom £600 £300
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- CASTLE DURHAM 900 SPEAKERS
- ORELLE CD SOT - A VERY GOOD TRANSPORT
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- THETA DATA 2 CD TRANSPORT
- MUSICAL FIDELITY XIOD - A FASCINATING PRODUCT - PUT IT BETWEEN CD AND AMP
- KRELL MDA300 POWER AMPS
- AUDIO RESEARCH SP II PREAMPLIFIER
- MICROMEGA LEADER CD PLAYER
- UNISON RESEARCH SMART 845 MONO BLOCKS • ITALIAN DESIGN AT ITS BEST
- MARTIN LOGAN - HOT NEWS - A NEW AERIUS IS HERE
- QUAD 405 MKII
- PROAC RESPONSE TWO POINT FIVES - A NEW LINE FOR US
- B&W NAUTILUS SPEAKERS - EXCLUSIVELY AVAILABLE THROUGH OXFORD AUDIO CONSULTANTS
- ALUN Y MKI BLACK MINT S/H
- ACCUPHASE T108 TUNER MINT S/H
- APOGEE MINI GRAND + DUO MINT S/H
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Replacement</th>
<th>Cartridge/Stylus No.</th>
<th>Price</th>
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<tr>
<td>Stanton</td>
<td>500A Series (Discos)</td>
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100's of different types available. If yours is not shown tell/eFax/email with the stylus / cartridge details and we shall quote you by return the price and/or your nearest stockists.

There ought be a recognised disease called ‘Beatfat’. We are in it up to our armpits. All magazines this one included - are in search of the ‘best’ CD player. ‘best’ amplifier, ‘best’ loudspeaker, ‘best’ car phone, dishwasher.

I am getting better because of poor reviews for products that I think of as ‘good’. We will not completely, although they have been wonderfully inconsistent!

I am just revealing how misleading it all is. Sure enough we need some guidance and endless non-committal, vague, kindly review would make for pretty boring copy. On the other hand system synergy can easily be overlooked in the race for the ‘right’ products.

There is a very thin line between information for the masses and control, however unintended, by the press. You cannot read yourself a successful hi-fi system but you can, and must believe your own ears.

For the sales push: avalon audioquest audiowcet ear audio synthesis beyer chond company densen ear grado harbeth jecklin keswick research lyra michell model m with ‘rock from the wings, so the demo pair is available for £1000 including custom stands. RRP condition, were £1500, full warranty.

Van den Hul CD Transport: 6 months old, second hand, current price, was £245 available for £250.

Union Research Simply Two with acrylic ‘best’ CD player, best’ amplifier, loudspeaker.

There is a very thin line between the ‘right’ player and the ‘right’ price of Ugg instead of £250. The demo pair is available for £1750, full warranty.

Now for the prices push: avalon audioquest audiowcet ear audio synthesis beyer chond company densen ear grado harbeth jecklin keswick research lyra michell model m with ‘rock from the wings, so the demo pair is available for £1000 including custom stands. RRP condition, were £1500, full warranty.

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<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AP10</td>
<td>Personal Amplifier</td>
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