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P Jones

HI-FI
WORLD

Hi-Fi



WORLD

DECEMBER 1998 £2.30

For the love of music

FUTURE SHOCK

Solid-state recording with Nagra's Ares-C

DIY SUPPLEMENT No41
(Overseas inside)
free with this issue

THE ROUND TABLE

Origin Live's new Oasis-A record deck

ROTEL'S ROCKER

The £150 RA931 integrated amp



£2500
COMPETITION
CLASSIFIED ADS

WIN BKS SPEAKERS,
A REL STORM SUB AND CLASSIQUE
SOUNDS' OCTAVIA 401 PLINTH

6 PAGES OF BARGAIN HI-FI

ISSN 0961-7663

9 770961 766062

From dream...

...to reality



The Nautilus™ is an acoustic engineer's dream. Its radical cabinet technology and half-mark sound have reshaped the audio landscape. Literally. For the B&W Nautilus™ loudspeaker sounds like no other. Its performance can only be compared by cables or external source equipment. It is, indeed, the best loudspeaker money can buy.

B&W's Nautilus™ 801 fuses the innovative Nautilus™ tube technology with a series of industry firsts: Fixed Suspension Transducer™, Kevlar® drive units, Matrix® cabinet bracing and Flowport™ technology. The result is an unprecedented purity of sound. The reason EMI's Abbey Road studios, along with best in the recording industry, are now upgrading to the Nautilus™ 801. Listen and you'll see - at your nearest authorised Nautilus™ 800 Series dealer. For more info contact B&W: 01903 750 750 or visit our website <http://www.bwspeakers.com>

B&W

LISTEN AND YOU'LL SEE

World Radio History

As ever, this month you'll discover the best of both worlds, future and past, in *Hi-Fi World*. A sign of things to come is Nagra's Ares-C portable solid-state recorder. Storing music on removable Type II PCMCIA memory cards might not be particularly cheap at the moment (the Nagra sells for over £4000, although some of its competitors can cost as little as half that) but silicon prices have a tendency to do a passable impression of a brick dropped off a cliff as time passes, as does the technology which goes into this innovative design.

If you like your music portable, one of the beauties of solid-state is the fact that you can shake, rattle and roll without your favourite vocalist sounding as though they've just drunk 20 pints and a bottle of port. With no moving parts of any sort, jogging and listening to music need no longer be mutually exclusive.

Prime Benefit Number Two is that there are none of the engineering foibles and vices of a mechanism to worry about - no



JON MARKS

lasers to burn out, no transports to jam, no motors to gradually grind to a halt. This should add up to fairly minimal maintenance costs and a long service life.

While the bulk of this story looks to be sweetness and light, there's one small cloud drifting along the horizon - memory. The cards which the Nagra uses aren't especially capacious - 64Mb is the max at the moment, which means between 45 minutes and 1 hour of recording (depending on how heavily compressed the signal is). Still, as development continues, the rule is higher capacity in smaller

spaces at lower costs, and the Nagra can handle two cards at once.

Harking back to the halcyon days of that black disc known as the LP, we turn an ear to Origin Live's Oasis-A record deck. This sub-£1000 device mixes wood, metal and plastic to lift tunes from grooves in a visually effective way. Fitted with one of OL's own specially-modified tone-arms, it provides proof (as if any were really needed) that the oldest living format hasn't given up the ghost yet.

If your heart yearns for discs which are silver in place of black, though, just make sure you keep your eyes peeled for next month's edition where new subscribers will be able to claim a free gift of Russ Andrews' Relees, which sells for £19.95.

Testing this anti-static spray out on our extensive collection here at World Towers proved how much damage static can do to the sound of digits, as the Relees snapped images into focus, tightened up bass and sweetened midrange and treble.

HOW WE TEST THE PRODUCTS

- *Hi-Fi World* has its own advanced test laboratory and acoustically treated listening room. No other hi-fi magazine has the benefit of such facilities.
- *Hi-Fi World* has a dedicated in-house team of experienced listeners, and uses selected freelance professionals. We review thoroughly by extensive auditioning, rather than by quick-fire group listening tests.
- *Hi-Fi World's* engineering team designs a wide range of products in-house. No other hi-fi magazine is so expert and dedicated.



WORLD VERDICT



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.



POOR - Seriously flawed. Not worth considering.

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ABC
ASSOCIATION OF
CONSUMER PRESS

A SERIES COMPACT - SOMETIMES SMALL IS BETTER.



Model featured above in Cherrywood finish

When it comes to speaker design, bigger isn't necessarily better. In fact, the reverse can be true.

Two minutes of a favourite track through Celestion's remarkable A Series Compact will convince you once and for all.

The Compact delivers the same pure, natural sound quality for which the A Series is renowned. The same unerring accuracy, even with the most demanding material.

It's hardly surprising. The Compact uses essentially the same advanced componentry as the acclaimed A1, partnering Celestion's famously sweet-sounding 25mm titanium dome tweeter with a potent 100mm long throw bass driver.

The use of neodymium for the HF magnet allows their acoustic centres to be aligned closer together on the distinctive die-cast aluminium chassis - a configuration which markedly improves definition and stereo imaging. And as well as looking good, the neat, curved edge baffle virtually eliminates diffraction effects.

You hear the difference straight away. The sound is noticeably sweeter, fresher, more open. The clarity, simply astonishing - and the looks speak for themselves.

As the saying goes, size isn't everything. It's how you use it that counts.



Rosewood



Black Ash

FOR DETAILS ON CELESTION A SERIES PLEASE CONTACT: CELESTION CONSUMER DIVISION, DEPT HPW29, FREEPOST MA 1332, ECCLESTON ROAD, TONIL, MAIDSTONE, KENT ME15 6BR. TELEPHONE (01622) 687442. WEBSITE <http://www.celestion.com>

Celestion A Series authorised dealers:

Alderley Edge Aston Audio 01625 582704
Ashby De La Zouch Zouch Audio 01530 414128
Bath Radford Hi Fi 01225 446245
Birmingham Music Matters 0121 354 2311
Blackpool Practical Hi Fi 01253 300599
Bolton Practical Hi Fi 01524 39257
Bournemouth Sultans Hi Fi 01202 555512
Cambridge The Audiofile 01223 368305
Carlisle Practical Hi Fi 01228 44792
Chandlers Ford Hampshire Audio 01703 252827
Chester Acoustica 01244 344227

Doncaster J Dunhill 01302 781387
Edinburgh Hi Fi Corner 0131 220 1535
Exeter Audio Excellence 01392 491194
Glasgow Hi Fi Corner 0141 226 5711
Hove Churchers 01273 324616
Ipswich Eastern Audio 01473 217217
Lancaster Practical Hi Fi 01533 761683
Kings Lynn Martins Hi Fi 01524 39657
Lee Green Nicholls Hi Fi 0181 852 5780
London N1 Grahams Hi Fi 0171 226 5500
London W1 Hi Fi Experience 0171 580 3535
Manchester Practical Hi Fi 0161 839 8869

World Radio History

Newark Chantry Audio 01777 870372
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne J G Windows Ltd 0191 232 1356
Norwich Martins Hi Fi 01603 627010
Nottingham Nottingham Hi Fi 0115 978 6919
Plymouth Radford Hi Fi 01752 226011
Preston Practical Hi Fi 01772 883958
Rugby Sounds Expensive 01788 540772
Selihull Music Matters 0121 742 0254
St Albans W Darby & Co 01727 851595
Warrington Practical Hi Fi 01925 632179
Worthing Phase 3 Hi Fi 01903 245577

CELESTION

SEMPER FIDELIS

New products keep appearing from Musical Fidelity in a dazzling flurry of code-like names. The latest batch of offerings from the company includes a new pre-amp, a compact dual-mono power amp and another CD player.

The X-P100 pre-amplifier utilizes the circuitry developed for MF's well-known Nu-Vista pre-amp but in place of the miniature valves, MOSFETs are fitted. The company claims that the performance of the X-P100 is very similar to that of the Nu-Vista and cite generous overload margins and a large S/N ratio as being among its desirable attributes.

With all of these virtues kicking around, Musical Fidelity have thoughtfully provided the X-AS100 power amplifier to match. The design draws on the X-A200 monobloc and is intended to offer a more compact version of these 'beer barrels'. Independent

circuitry for each channel includes separate windings on the mains transformer.



In a rather different style from their recent X-RAY player, the E624 24-bit is intended for the sub-£1000 market and is designed for very low jitter and noise, the last tackled with a five-pole filter. MF say these improvements give measurable benefits in the rejection of spurious output content and make for better bass and improved neutrality in the midrange and treble.

Musical Fidelity
15/16 Olympic Trading Estate,
Fulton Road,
Wembley,
Middx. HA9 0TF
Tel: 0181 900 2866

NAD FOR IT!

NAD have produced what they believe to be the successor to the best-selling and ubiquitous NAD 3020. Available now and priced at £199.95, the C320 is described by the company as the "3020 of the Millennium". The amp uses one of the latest developments by Bjorn Erik Edvardsson (of 3020 fame): ISC.

This technology apparently allows the C320 to deliver optimum performance whilst driving any 'speaker load. The circuit recognises the impedance of said 'speakers and

adjusts the power supply accordingly, thus ensuring the 40watt RMS output will remain unchanged into either 4ohms or 8ohms.

In addition to ISC, the C320 has seven line inputs (among them two tape loops), gold-plated sockets, a tone-control defeat switch and Pre Out/Power In for bi-amping.



Audio Club
15 Faraday Road,
Aylesbury,
Bucks. HP19 3RY
Tel: 01296 486331
e-mail:
sales@nad.co.uk

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

Two years' research by Sonic Link has resulted in the release of their first mains cable for five years. The S-Gold is built using 19 0.3mm conductors surrounded in silicone rubber. Sonic Link claim the aural benefits are an improvement in natural note decay and enhanced imagery and ambience. The cable can be used with audio/visual equipment too for improved contrast and focus. S-Gold's price starts at £70 for 1.25m with IEC

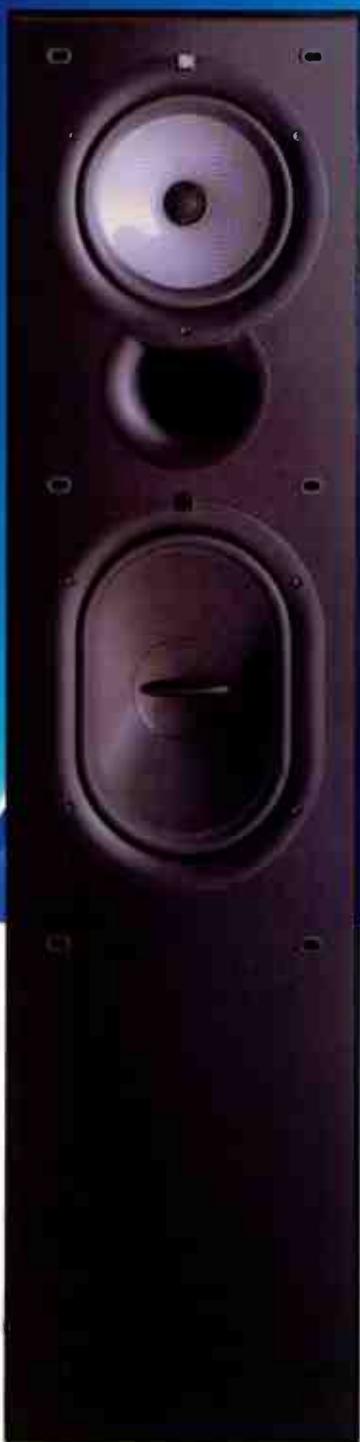


termination or figure-of-eight connectors. Alternately, it can be fitted with 'Hardlink' rhodium-plated and polished connectors from £115 for the same length.

Sonic Link
Derwent Business Centre,
Clarke Street,
Derby DE1 2BU
Tel: 01332 361390

Clearly better.

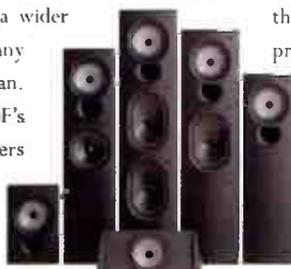
KEF
No. 1
IN THE UK*



When one of the best loudspeaker engineering teams in the world advances its state-of-the-art technology, you'd expect the result to outperform the competition.

It does.

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



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

With the new Q Series, the competition have been decisively out-classed.

The difference is clear.

*According to figures for January 1998 KEF's sales were greater by value than any other speaker company.

Q
SERIES



The experience of sound

SAPPHIRE, SO GOOD

After 16 years of success with the ground-breaking Diamond, Wharfedale have launched a new range of loudspeakers named after another gem. The five models in the Sapphire series all possess a moulded front baffle to ensure controlled directivity, while the tweeters are offset in a mirror-image arrangement to improve stereo imaging.

The smallest Sapphire is the two-way stand mount SP-85 with its front-ported 170mm mid/bass and 25mm dome tweeter. All the other models are floor standers, the SP-86 a two-way and the SP-87 a three-way. The '88 is a



three-way as well, but incorporates both front and rear-firing ports. At the top of the range stands the SP-89 with its sealed, two-way system in the upper section and twin sub-woofer in the bottom.

Prices range from £139.95 for the SP-85 to £379.95 for the SP-89.

Wharfedale
IAG House,
Sovereign Court,
Ermine Business Park,
Huntingdon,
Cambs. PE18 6WA
Tel: 01480 447700

C2 IT

A new floor stander in Celestion's C series line-up has just appeared on the scene. The sleek C2 consists of an aluminium cabinet encasing a ferrofluid-cooled tweeter and two 130mm bass drivers. This adds up to a claimed 91dB sensitivity and 150watts of power handling, all for £699.99.

Celestion
Eccleston Road,
Tovil,
Maidstone, Kent ME15 6QP
Tel: 01622 687442

FOR THE RECORD

TDK have devised a new chrome cassette called the Super D, so-called to persuade home tapists to convert to it from the widely-used ferric D. In addition, TDK's entire range has been re-packaged with the emphasis on taping from a digital source, a graph indicating the formulation best suited to a particular musical genre.

TDK
5-7 Queensway,
Redhill,
Surrey
RH1 1YB
Tel: 01737 773773

MILLENNIUM ITALIANO

Yes, it's that year again. Italian designers Chario are doing their bit to usher in the next thousand with the Academy Millennium 1 stand mounter and a rather bold mission statement: "At the threshold of the new millennium, Chario is ready to tackle all the challenges of the year 2000 and the contributions to be made in redefining the relationship between man, nature and technology that makes harmony between technological conquests and longing for art forms one of the most ambitious goals to be achieved."

The Millennium 1s are a two-way design that incorporates the 29mm Revelator tweeter from Scanspeak and a 130mm woofer



with a carbon-fibre/paper cone which is Chario's own design. These two meet at 1.7kHz to give an overall impedance of 4ohms.

A pair of 1s in their solid walnut cabinets will set you back

£1299. And if this isn't enough, the Academy Millennium 2 is slated for arrival later in '98, the Academy Grand for spring '99 and the Millennium 3 just before the 19 on your calendar turns to 20.

The Musical Design Company
PO Box 4146,
Epping,
Essex CM16 6HJ
Tel: 01992 573030
e-mail: mdc.hifi@virgin.net

O.T.T?



N.A.D.



Some manufacturers like to load their CD players with a huge number of features - Over The Top.

Many of them are rarely used. All of them cost money.

Every pound spent on gimmicks and superficial extras, means less money spent where it really counts.

At NAD, we always remain committed to our 'Sound First' philosophy, so although our CD players may not have the longest list of features, you can be sure that each and every one has been carefully considered in terms of its cost, and overall contribution to the sound quality.

Contact us at the address below for more information on the complete NAD range.



Dept. HFW, 15 Faraday Road, Aylesbury
Buckinghamshire HP19 3RY

Telephone: 0700 00 AUDIO

0700 00 28346

E-mail: sales@nad.co.uk

Web: <http://www.nad.co.uk>

audioclub

TUNE IN

The R881 is the new stereo world band model from the venerable Roberts Radio. In a sophisticated finish of champagne, it has a variety of different functions and accessories. MW/SW and FM are the three wavebands available and it has direct frequency tuning feature via a key pad and can scan to the station with the best



reception. There is also a radio/buzzer alarm with a dual time function and room for 45 stored stations in the memory. Priced at £79.99 it includes a travel pouch, stereo earphones and a guide to the shortwave frequency.

Roberts Radio
Tel: 01709 571 722

DUET FOR ONE

The latest loudspeaker from Heybrook is the second in their range to employ the elliptical, gold-plated polymer, gas-filled tweeter more commonly known as Audax's HD-3P. The £799 Duet also gets a reflex-loaded mid/bass driver of acrylic polymer gel (or Aerogel). Housing this pair is a



cabinet of real wood radiused at the front and the top to reduce diffraction effects.

Heybrook
Language Science Park,
Plymouth,
Devon PL7 5HJ
Tel: 01752 333800

THE FULL MONTY

Combining the latest technology with something just a little older is Tube Technology's new Fulcrum 192 DAC and partnering Drive. Inside the DAC you'll find an analogue output stage with six low-noise 6922 triodes per channel fed from a convertor which can be upgraded to decode 24/192 and 24/96 on top of standard CD. While an HDCD filter handles the latter, a Field Programmable Gate Array deals with

higher sampling rate recordings. All this engineering will set you back £1750 for the DAC and £850 for the Drive.

Tube Technology
214 Station Road,
Addlestone,
Surrey KT15 2PH
Tel: 01932 821111

AND FINALLY...

Analogue & Digital Audio Trading Ltd, the distributors of Orelle and XTC products, has ceased trading. Orelle and XTC can now both be reached on new numbers, the former on tel: 0181 931 1206 and the latter on tel: 0181 997 4280.

On a slightly more positive note, Aphelion (whose plinth we reviewed back in October) have now moved to new premises and can be contacted at: 2 Winscott Cottages, Barton, Torrington, North Devon EX38 7JP. Tel: 01805 625125

NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE

Christmas is a coming, the goose is getting fat, and we're going to be giving away everything reviewed in the January issue, including:

DAC GROUP TEST

Five sub-£300 digital-to-analogue convertors including Midiman's Flying Calf fight it out.

circuit section and a class A push-pull output stage. We surf the airwaves with Myriad in January.

mains leads.

MYRYAD MT-100 TUNER

At £529.95, the MT-100 boasts eight separate regulators for each individual

TOTALLY WIRED

Cater for all your system's cabling needs as we round up a selection of the top interconnects, loudspeaker cables and

AUDIO ANALOGUE PAGANINI CD PLAYER

Audio Analogue add yet another string to their bow, this time in digits. But can the 24-bit Paganini follow in the footsteps of its famous amp brethren?

Jamo®

“THE SOUND OF EXCELLENCE”



Concert 11

Concert



No. 1 IN EUROPE

Over the past 30 years Jamo has established itself as the largest loudspeaker manufacturer in Europe producing over one million speakers every year. This has been achieved by a unique combination of technical excellence and the best in Scandinavian design.

The critically acclaimed Concert series is an expression of these values. Our highly skilled engineers continue to strive for excellence, producing innovative and stylish loudspeakers offering creative solutions for both hi-fi and surround sound.

Millions of people around the world have chosen Jamo products. To find out why you should be choosing Jamo, call free on 0321 300316 for a free information pack. Lines are open 24 hours a day, every day of the week. All callers will be entered for our free draw to win one of 10 exclusive leather CD wallets every month. Don't forget to mention Hi-Fi World when you call.

Call Free 0321 300316 and WIN

<http://www.jamo.co.uk>

WHAT HI-FI?

“The Jamo boasts clarity to rival the very best, offering a wonderfully lucid touch with voices and small off-screen details that draw you effortlessly into the soundtrack. More impressive is the power that roars forth from explosions such as the one that concludes *CutThroat Island*. There's slam and punch before a low bass rumble finale, all conveyed with the minimum of treble harshness. The Concert Center may not be cheap, but makes movies so involving it's worth every penny.”

Concert Center
WHAT HI-FI? First Test May 1997
★★★★★

HI-FI CHOICE

“This transparency makes the speaker sound more like a Quad Electrostatic than many a box, and equips it superbly to portray every nuance of complex musical mixes. To the unaccustomed listener this can be disconcerting, as both harmonious and deleterious recorded minutiae will be revealed for what they are.”

Concert 8
Alan Sircom
Hi-Fi Choice December 1996

HI-FI NEWS RECORD REVIEW

“This is a speaker adept at pulling the music out from its hiding place, making everything clear, open and up-front, the stripped pine of the loudspeaker world; and it makes the normally forward and punchy B&W sound as though it has fallen asleep.”

Concert 8
Hi-Fi News and Record Review
August 1997

Hi-Fi WORLD

“I had I reviewed the Concert 11s before the Concert 8s, I would have rated them as excellent all-round performers. I would also have been at a loss having to describe the Concert 8, which is currently one of the best two-way designs ever built, in my opinion. As it is, if you're after a capable floorstander, you'll be doing yourself a disservice if you don't audition the Concert 11s.”

Concert 11
Hi-Fi World December 1997
★★★★★

Home Entertainment

“In certain respects, the system is capable beyond what most people's dreams, or what many film soundtracks deserve, partly because it's ready to serve another master, namely high fidelity music reproduction.”

Concert 8/ Concert 11/ Concert Center
Surround Sound System
Home Entertainment September/October 1997
★★★★★

WHAT HI-FI?

“Play a disc like Anne-Sophie Mutter's *Berlin Recital* and the Jamos deliver a wonderfully realistic picture of the violin, allowing you almost to feel the resonance of the soundbox and see the bite of the bow on the strings. The music simply flows forth, seemingly passing in the blink of an eye, so caught up in the performance do you become.”

Concert 8
WHAT HI-FI? First Test April 1997
★★★★★

Gramophone

“I was considerably impressed by the Concert 8, which has a seamless clarity rarely to the fore these days. It can exhibit natural dynamics and succeeded in making me jump a couple of times when a sudden transient occurred in the music, even though I had been expecting it.”

“For the classical listener, however, it can offer something that few other box loudspeakers can: that insight into the music that we all desire but all too rarely experience.”

Concert 8
Gramophone February 1997

WHAT HI-FI?

“Indeed, the term ‘non-coloration’ is apt for these speakers, because they add nothing to a system's sound that isn't already there. Their performance is clean and crisp, conveying everything - and we mean everything - a recording has to offer courtesy of their free-ranging clarity, dynamics and soundstaging. It's a breathtakingly involving view.”

Concert 11
WHAT HI-FI? First Test January 1998
★★★★★

Hi-Fi WORLD

“In summary, the Concert 8 is one of the most advanced loudspeaker designs on the market today”

“The '8s are a no-compromise, no-expense-spared credit to their designers. Jamo are now firmly in the super league and the competition had better beware!”

Concert 8
Hi-Fi World June 1997
★★★★★

AWARDS



Concert 8
Highly Commended
“Best Stereo AV Speaker”
Home Entertainment Awards '97



Concert 8
Nominated
“Best Loudspeaker up to £2,000”
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World Radio History

SWISS PRECISION

Jon Marks investigates the future of digital recording with the help of Nagra's Ares-C solid-state recorder.



In the beginning there was the wire recorder. Patented by Danish engineer Valdemar Poulsen back in 1898, this 'contraption' used a steel wire passed between the poles of an electromagnet to capture sound for posterity. Hi-fi it certainly wasn't, but it enjoyed a long lifespan and remained available until 1950. The format which rapidly overtook it from the Fifties onwards was, of course, its much more highly-developed descendant, reel-to-reel. While this remains widely in use in studio circles, Compact Cassette and MiniDisc are now the domestic music storage media of choice. However, back in the professional world, the next generation of recorders is creeping out of the Research and Development labs and into everyday

use. One of these cutting-edge confections is Nagra's Ares-C.

Thus far, recording and motion have been inextricably linked. Whether it's tape passing over a head, a spinning CD being burned with a laser, or a hard drive with its high-speed disc and flying head, storing meant moving parts. There's no problem with this until you start examining areas such as portability, size and longevity.

IMMOVABLE OBJECT

As anyone who has cherished a source of portable music will realise, a gentle run or even a relaxed stroll can cause wowing in cassette and complete surrender in CD. It's a very different story



On the Nagra's left side panel are located left and right microphone inputs, the 15-pin line-level input (far left) and the RS 422 socket which allows connection to a PC.

with the Ares-C. Apart from its beautifully-moulded controls, this £4400 solid-state recorder has not a single moving part involved in the storage and replay chain.

Compared with most of today's technology, the Nagra is a little on the chunky side, its dimensions measuring up at 290mm by 220mm by 92mm. But pure solid-state has a huge advantage over mechanical recorders in that its miniaturisation can be taken way beyond what can be achieved with parts which have to be moulded or machined. Palm-sized units, which again rely on plenty of compression to make them viable, are already not long off. And as memory density increases, so compression rates will drop and sound quality increase.

Where 'solid' wins a third victory is in its freedom from physical wear. OK, ICs, resistors and capacitors all have finite working lives, but these can be much longer than those of devilishly complex feats of engineering like the transports on DATmans and mobile DVD players such as Panasonic's DVD-L10. And in a recording environment, the quieter the equipment the better.

SILENCE IS GOLDEN

It was eerie transferring analogue test tracks from the output of



The Nagra has slot-space for two PCMCIA Type II memory cards. You can toggle between these with the F1/F2 buttons. The 'W' and 'R' LEDs denote Write and Read (or Record and Replay).

the P-30 transport and Chord's DSC 900 digital-to-analogue convertor (as well as Origin Live's Oasis-A turntable through Sonic Frontier's Phono 1) in mechanical silence broken only by the whirring of the Teac and OL. There was no swishing, clunking or vibration, just a moving bar on the Nagra's display to confirm that the signal was wending its way down the interconnect and into one of the 64Mb Type II PCMCIA cards inserted into the appropriate socket on the top-plate of the Ares-C.

Having negotiated the somewhat unco-operative manual (which is understandably aimed at users familiar with the ins and outs of pro machinery), recording and playback proved simple. Microphones can be plugged into left and right XLR sockets on the Nagra's left side, where a 15-pin D-type connector for line-level sources is located as well. A digital input is currently under development at Nagra HQ, so we fed analogue into the Ares with the aforementioned Teac/Chord combo.

Once the relevant socketry has been identified on the Edit menu (accessible via the six-way switch to the right of the fascia), and the card (A or B) to be recorded onto, the amount of compression to be applied needs to be set. There's a range to choose from in both stereo and mono at MPEG 2. These offer sampling frequencies of 16kHz, 24kHz, 32kHz and 48kHz. We opted predominantly for the last of the four at a bit rate of 64kbits/sec for each stereo channel. This gives a bandwidth of around 20kHz at a rather hefty compression ratio of 12:1.

After some initial hiccups in the Nagra's menu, we got down to some proper number-crunching. Given the degree of compression involved, we weren't expecting the Chord's rather impressive presentation to remain 100% intact. The Ares-C still managed perfectly listenable results, the affect of its silicon innards becoming apparent in a loss of tonal richness and ambience, as well as a general coarsening of vocals on discs from Eric Bibb and Voces Sacrae. However, analogue archiving is better left to CD-R domestic units along the lines of Philips' CDR 870 and 880 which make a quicker, more universally compatible job of it. Where the Nagra offers a more important pointer towards what the future might look like for audiophiles is in the way it will soon be able to handle digital inputs.

FUTURE SHOCK

For a long time now, the music industry has been trying to sit on



On the other side are the balanced line outs, the AES/EBU digital output, a connector for sending and receiving over ISDN lines and a headphone socket.

digital recording media, fearing they would lead to wide-scale piracy (although cassette had already seen its emergence) and threaten the way music has long been distributed. Smaller, cheaper domestic variants on the solid-state theme of the Ares-C could indeed alter how we buy music with a number of possible scenarios.

If some kind of card-based system takes off, one day you might be able to walk into your local record (that's "record" as in to store a signal, not "record" as in an LP) shop and download onto a blank card your favourite artists from a super-fast, in-store computer. Pre-recorded cards (similar to the cartridges which hold the programmes run by games consoles) are unlikely to take off - digital recordability is here to stay, and the days of replay-only media like the LP are well and truly over.

CAUGHT IN THE NET

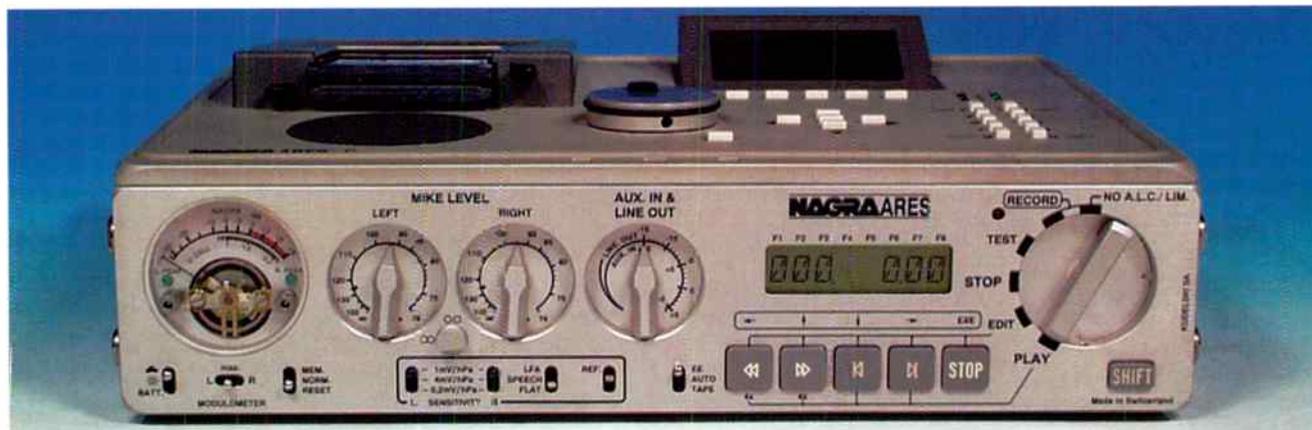
More likely is that albums will be downloaded from the Internet. Heavily-compressed music can already be accessed from a wide range of sites in snippet or single form. Waiting for an hour of CD-quality sound to flow over the Net and into your telephone would be a thankless task now, but as transmission speeds rise with fibre-optic cables and satellites such as Iridium dealing with data transfer, the situation becomes eminently more practical.

This is not an attractive idea for the conglomerates which dominate the music industry. In the past, technological standards (such as RIAA for vinyl and the Red Book for CD) have helped keep distribution concentrated in the hands of large multi-nationals. But this too may fall by the wayside as digital recorders move from being inflexible, specialist electronics to little more than a PC in a hi-fi box. dCS's Elgar DAC amongst others contains its processing circuitry in Field Programmable Gate Arrays, which can be reconfigured in accordance with any coding scheme.

At the recent Renaissance hi-fi show, a number of digital manufacturers we spoke to made mention of DACs which could be programmed to handle 24/96 or DSD simply by loading into their matching transport a CD carrying all the necessary instructions - no need to return the DAC to the company concerned or call out an engineer.

VIVA DIGITAL

Nagra's Ares-C doesn't boast unparalleled audiophile appeal (it is, after all, a piece of professional equipment which carries a price to reflect its fabulous construction), but it does give an insight into things to come. With CD sales starting to look shaky (much to the consternation of the big distributors), we could be witnessing the beginning of the end of traditional music buying and storing habits.



The fascia carries all the major controls like the twin microphone level and single Line In and Out potentiometers. The 'Modulometer' to the far left aids in the setting of the record level, while the rotary switch to the far left controls operational modes like Play and Record.

CHORDIAL INVITE

Jon Marks brings along his ears for a date with Chord Electronics' £1850 DSC 900 convertor.



Only the most optimistic could describe hi-fi as whole as "classy". The bulk of boxes languish on the lowest rung of the industrial design ladder with all the visual kudos of a self-assembly greenhouse. Travelling along their own stylistic trajectory where suave and understated stand in for ugly and agricultural are Chord Electronics and their DSC 900 digital-to-analogue convertor, its brushed aluminium enclosure complemented by Gold lettering.

THE TECHNOLOGY

Inside the swish case, the DSC 900's circuitry is split into upper (digital) and lower (analogue) halves by a 3mm steel plate. This reduces interaction between the two sections to provide a less cross-

polluted working environment for both. Bridging A to D, as well as a length of ribbon cable, are nickel-plated brass pillars 7mm in diameter for the power supply and balanced line-level signals. Not your average connection method, but apparently one which is massively superior to plain wiring.

The digital PCB itself is sparsely populated - one board fits all, and there are fewer parts in Chord's base model than those at more elevated prices. A clue to enhanced longevity comes from the sticker near an unoccupied multi-way socket: "This unit can be upgraded to use 24-bit technology."

At present, the DSC 900 has a pair of mono Crystal 20-bit delta/sigma convertors ensconced in shielding cans on its top deck. These can be replaced

with higher-resolution 24-bit ICs after a brief return to base. And what about 96kHz sampling? Well, the DSC 900 will be left chewing on 48kHz while Chord continue researching their all-singing, all-dancing 'super-DAC'. Once the dust has settled on standards, this will be unleashed onto high streets everywhere. 24/96-ready, its AKM or Analog Devices' convertors will be backed up by a plug-in module for other manufacturers' chips as well as Direct Stream Digital decoders.

LOOK AT THE LEGS ON THAT (AHEM)

There's more in the line of go-faster stripes than specialist innards though. If a plain silver box doesn't pluck your heart strings aesthetically, how about adding



four Integra pods and their support rails (priced at £135 each). Up to eight of these towers can be bolted on, but then you run the risk of turning your DSC 900 into what looks like a high-class spice rack.

IN AND OUTS

Plugging the '900 into our resident Teac P-30 transport was a doddle via AES/EBU and S/PDIF. Analogue outs cover both balanced and single-ended. We used the latter into the Danish Audio Connect CT1 passive attenuator and Musical Fidelity X-A200 monoblocs bi-amping Jamo's Concert 8s and the BKS 107 MkII hybrids.

SOUND QUALITY

Remembering the tonal purity of the last pair of Chord reviewees to come our way - the CPA 1800 pre and SPM 400 power amps back in March 1998 - the selection of first disc in the tray was child's play. Voces Sacrae, otherwise known as Sacred Music For Choir, gives grain and hardness in a component absolutely no place to hide, the choristers and the acoustic of the church of St Martin in East Woodhay captured without either in the tiniest amount.

Swinging the Teac's VRDS mechanism into motion, what emerged from the DSC 900 deflated the hopes of those gathered attentively on the listening room's sofa. The venue was making it out of the Jamos, as was the spread and depth of the choir, but accompanying both was a slight roughness. Hmm. . . Interconnects

and 'speaker cables were duly checked and re-arranged - no luck. Out went the first digital interconnect, its boots filled by CableTalk's Digital 2. Aahhh, that was more like it. The Chord turned out to be rather fussy over its choice of interconnect, so careful matching is a requisite here. Its balance restored, the '900 was now sounding considerably more natural, with individual voices regaining their tonal signatures and the Latin lyrics snapping into intelligibility (oh, Classicists rejoice!)

COOL AND CALM

Another CD which gets hi-fi gear nailing its colours to the mast is Naim's Allegri String Quartet with James Campbell. Schubert's Arpeggione Sonata transcribed for clarinet and string quartet has a slight sharpness to it which, on these instruments, can have a lot of digital kit and solid-state amplification struggling not to sound hard. The Chord stayed well mannered throughout, although the way it opened up whatever was on the disc couldn't disguise the glassiness noticeable on clarinet especially. Where the '900 actually made life more difficult for itself was in the gentle treble emphasis picked up by our measurements. This may help the perception of detail, but it brings with it a cool presentation that predisposes itself to richer equipment downstream. In this respect, the DAC was very like Jamo's Concert 8s - biased towards the midrange and treble, but a lack of nasties in the upper frequencies

means it doesn't cause any ear fatigue.

BRING ON THE SUBSTITUTES

Swapping these two Danes for two others, we hoisted the BKS hybrids into position, et voila! Where the DSC had fallen just short of the smoothness of its same-stable amplifiers, the move from soft-dome to ribbon wiped away any lingering hint of tonal impurity. The ultra-inert cabinets of the stony floor standers were also obviously colouring the music considerably less. The 1in. MDF of the Jamos' enclosures might show most boxes a thing or two, but even these have their limits, with a mild honk laid across the midrange. The hybrids were tall, dark and silent in the cabinet stakes. What this allowed the DSC 900 to do with Eric Bibb was push the rear of the sound stage further back than much digitalia manages, at the same time filling out images in true 3-D and capturing more accurately Eric's movements around the microphone as he was singing.

SOUNDS AND LOOKS

Like its case, the DSC 900 is slightly bright but nonetheless very polished in its musicianship. It steers clear of the pitfalls of flat sound staging and harmonically-stunted woodwind and strings that still catch out a large number of DACs. Site the '900 in a system with a warm slant and loudspeakers such as the BKS 107 MkIIs and your ears will thank you for it.

Analogue outputs cater for both single ended and balanced fans.

Chord DSC 900 £1850

Chord Electronics
Farleigh Bridge,
Farleigh Lane,
East Farleigh,
Kent ME16 9NB
Tel: 01622 721444

WORLD VERDICT



The Chord combines smooth composure with musicality and transparency.

Measured Performance
see p111

from a company best known for high performance, hi-fidelity.



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World Radio History

Alpha 9's fascia (which looks cheap and not so cheerful next to the purposeful and chunky face-plate screwed onto Musical Fidelity's X-Ray) are all the usual suspects - Play, Stop, Pause, Track Skip, etc. Display gives you two levels of brightness and completely extinguished, which generally gave a slightly smoother, more natural sound.

The back panel's socketry has two pairs of audio outputs for multi-room systems and a lone coaxial digital - optical is conspicuous by its absence.

SUPER SONIC

The Arcam was wired into two very different systems in two locations to assess its potential. Number One was a small, lightly-furnished bedroom housing a pair of Magneplanar SMGa panel loudspeakers driven by a gently-modified Mission Cyrus I. Kenwood's 100watt KA-1000 integrated (vintage 1979) with its external dual-mono power supply and Sigma Drive circuitry (see the letters pages for more details) also took a spell at the helm. Cabling came predominantly from QED. Number Two was World Towers, where ancillaries included the Concert 8s bi-amped with Musical Fidelity's X-A1 integrated and a pair of X-A200 monoblocs. Van den Hul and Roksan provided the wiring.

With its display switched off, the Alpha 9 was fed Propellerheads' Decksanddrumsandrockandroll. This

funky Dance album is far superior to many in its production, a fact the player made the most of. Basslines grooved along with an up-beat, booty-moving drive, leaving the hi-hats crisp and clean above. There was no blurring of images or instruments either, the orchestral samples peppering this CD showing an impressive focus and spaciousness. Extra brownie points were picked up for the pace and head-nodding rhythm that never let go throughout.

Lifting off the adrenaline throttle to the strains of Muki's ambient Cabin Fever caught the Arcam in a more relaxed frame of mind. Synthesised sound ebbed and flowed easily from the Maggies, although (said he, raising his head above the parapet in preparation for getting it shot off) the presentation wasn't quite as fluid as that managed by DVD equipment like Denon's DVD-3000. The Arcam seemed to have a little more fire flowing through its veins, and preferred to home in on aspects such as timing and bass grunt rather than the gentler, more uplifting sections of Muki's output. Tori Amos' Boys For Pele confirmed the Arcam's liveliness, number's like 'Professional Widow' packing a

menacing, vitriolic punch while 'Muhammad My Friend' lost a hint of its more contemplative spirit.

CONCERTED EFFORT

Wheeling the Arcam into our main auditioning room, we let it loose on the Concert 8s. Joining the fray was Musical Fidelity's new X-Ray CD player, also at £800. The venue might have changed, but the Arcam's traits remained - punchy, detailed and transparent. There was a commendable lack of grit on the choral work of Voces Sacrae and Eric Bibb as well, which allowed volume levels to rise without any risk of midrange shout. However, a light emphasis of sibilants and a tonal balance on the dry, bright side indicate that partnering equipment of the warm variety would be more appropriate than Audio Analogue's Puccini SE, which was too cool for this pairing to gel.

FINAL STATISTICS

The Alpha 9 may score "nul points" for its drab grey exterior and biscuit-box build, but judged sonically the result is much rosier. With its rhythmic, solid presentation and abundant insight into all the low-level goings-on in a recording, the Arcam proves the pedigree of its DAC and HDCD filter. A brief comparison with the X-Ray revealed that there is warmer, richer machinery to be had, but that can't detract from this player's strengths.

There's not much to ogle with the lid off. The bit that counts is beneath that aluminium cover...

Arcam Alpha 9 £799.90

Arcam
Pembroke Avenue,
Denny Industrial Centre,
Waterbeach,
Cambs. CB5 9PB
Tel: 01223 203200

WORLD VERDICT



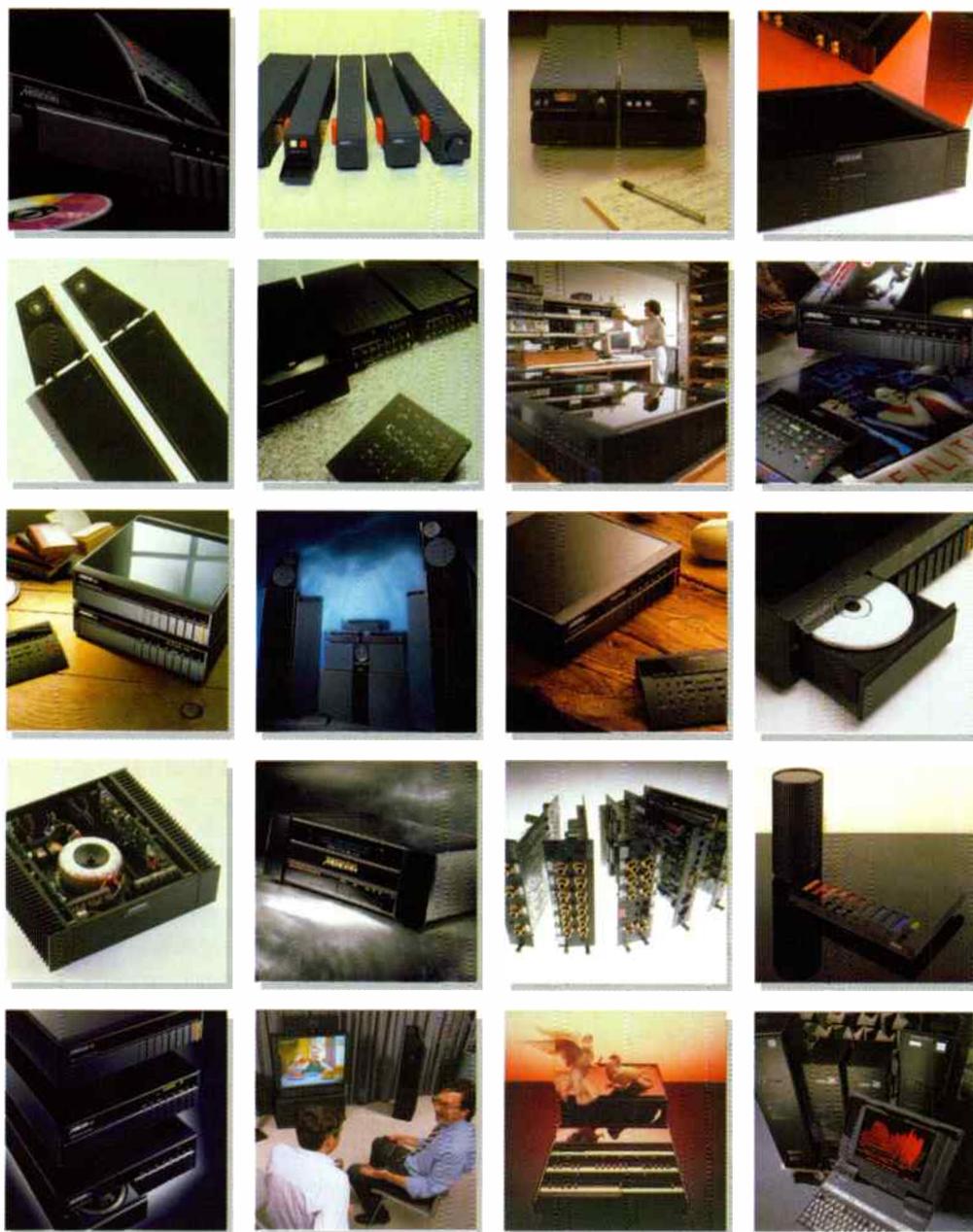
Apart from its tonal brightness, the Alpha 9 is a very capable player.

Measured Performance
see p111



... where the Ring DAC which separates the Alpha 9 from the crowd is to be found.

It was 20 years ago today....



In November '77, the design team of Bob Stuart and Allen Boothroyd launched their first Meridian product, an active loudspeaker of course!

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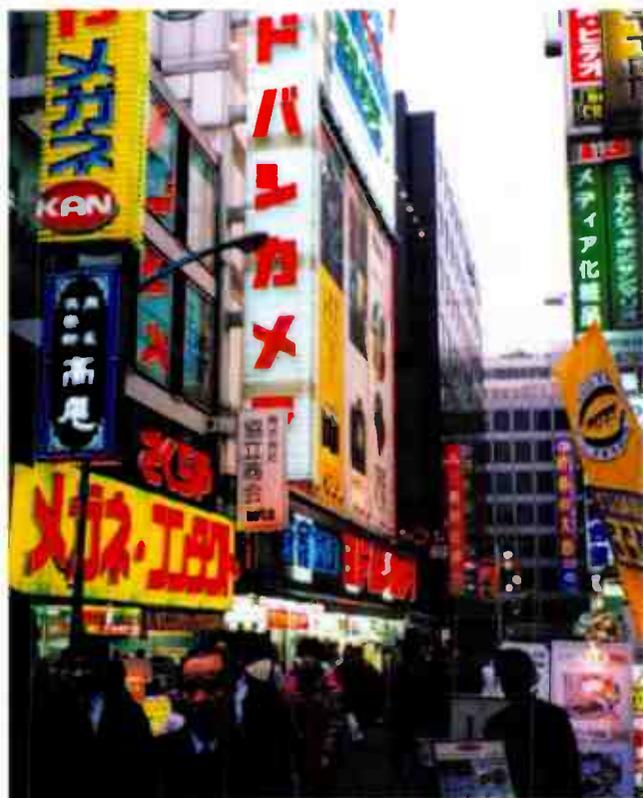
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GOOD BUY OR SAYONARA?

Is hi-fi buying in Japan the sale of the century or a Nipponese nightmare?
David Price was let loose around Tokyo to find out.



Yodobashi Camera sits at the centre of this shot of a Shinjuku street.

We're all familiar with the latest and greatest Japanese hi-fi, but what about Japan's hi-fi dealers? Like much of what this fascinating country has to offer, things don't look so different from the outside, but peer again and they change dramatically. Yours truly decided to pound the streets of Tokyo on a voyage of hi-fi discovery, stopping off for some sushi on the way.

There are two types of Japanese hi-fi dealer - dedicated high-end specialists like Akihabara's Dynamic Audio, and 'pile 'em high, sell 'em cheap' merchants like Shinjuku's Yodobashi Camera. The plan was simple; visit both and try them for size. So one sunny Tuesday morning I ventured out into the heat, armed with a brace of my favourite CDs and a copy of Japan's Stereo Sound magazine for directions.

Phew what a scorcher! By the time I'd reached Tokyo's crowded Shinjuku business district, the electronic display panels adorning the skyscrapers were already reading 37degrees and I was cursing the day I decided to venture outside. Not even those superb, air-conditioned, TV-equipped Japan Railways Yamanote Line trains could hold back the ravages of the Japanese summer.

CAMERA MAN

Thank heavens for the cool of Yodobashi Camera. A giant, multi-floored skyscraper with audio and video wall to wall, it's a veritable Aladdin's Cave for hi-fi buffs. The ground floor has more CD, MiniDisc and DAT portables than you ever knew existed, upstairs contains a similar amount of DVD players and Mini systems, while the large basement houses the hi-fi separates.

I headed straight downstairs and was greeted by the painful sound of about five different systems competing against each other from different corners of the room. We had Eric Clapton going through an Esoteric P-30, Marantz PM-16 and JBL 4312 MkII, Billy Myers (drone) from a Sony MDS-JA30ES, TA-FA50ES and B&W CDM1SE rig, and Bonnie Pink (a dire Japanese Alanis Morissette clone) howling like a banshee from a Marantz CD-17D, Sansui AU-a607NRA and Diatone DS2000ZX system.

Spread around were hundreds of tasty looking Japanese separates glistening under the spotlights. Turntables (like Denon's DP-900M), DAT recorders (including the latest Legato Link S 16-bit/96kHz Pioneers), CD players (from a Marantz CD-67SE at £150 to Luxman's £2400 D10) and MiniDiscs (countless Sonys, plus various Teac, Denon, Yamaha and Kenwood rivals) were all on show. There were also integrated amplifiers from Marantz, Sony, Sansui and Pioneer, plus several rows of loudspeakers all wired into the largest comparator known to humankind. Oh dear.

LAND OF THE RISING POUND

Only in this last category were British brands visible in any number, with plenty of KEFs (mostly Coda 9s), Spondors and Harbeths (LS3/5as), Celestions (A series), B&Ws (including the big Matrix 801S3) and Tannoys (such as the dual-concentric Stirling TWW).

Other imports included a Naim CD3/Nait 3R combo shoved unceremoniously onto a shelf in the corner, an Aura VA100EVII hidden under a plaque reading 'Aura - British Stingray' (you what?) and a brace of big JBL loudspeakers taking pride of place in the multi-speaker dem area.

Devotees of analogue could feast their eyes on Pro-ject 6.1 and Thorens TD320 Mk3B turntables, and a shelf full of moving-coil cartridges from Denon and Ortofon, plus the top Shure and Stanton moving magnets.

ZEN AND THE ART OF HI-FI

There were plenty of accessories too, from a tweaky CD demagnetiser that all the Japanese mags are currently raving about, to several different disc clamps, including the much-loved Audio Technica AT674 'CD Stabilizer' and veteran Nagaoka record weight. And lest we forget, Japan was the birthplace of the sorbothane craze - there was acres of the stuff on show, with a 30sq. cms sheet going for £10. A plethora of little wooden blocks

with Zen-like names were scattered about the place as well.

Within seconds a smart, besuited salesman greeted me and asked if he could help. I explained that I wanted to hear a decent high-end system. He duly ran round to all sources of noise, muted them and returned. Then he ushered me to a corner of the room where I found a Luxman D10 CD player, a Luxman SQ-38 Signature integrated valve amplifier and Diatone DS2000ZX loudspeakers wired with Monster Cable.



Luxman's D10 is no lightweight when it comes to mass and price.

SIGNED AND SEALED

The salesman explained that the Luxman CD player was one of Japan's best-selling flagship machines. Costing £2400, it's more expensive than the top one-box offerings from Pioneer, Sony, Teac et al - he thought the price reflected its higher build quality, which approaches that of the best American exotica.

Featuring 'Box In Box' construction (with individually-housed transport and power supplies) to suppress spurious electrical and mechanical nasties, the D10 also boasts Pacific Microsonics' famed HDCD chip and Lux's 20-bit, 8-times oversampling 'Tower DACs', again housed in little copper boxes.

Moving on to the SQ-38 Signature, the salesman said this particular design was one of the most popular valve amplifiers in Japan at the moment. Unusually, Lux offer both thermionic and solid-state designs in the same price bracket to cater for their customers' individual preferences. Apparently, transistor gear outsells tube, but there's a small and fanatical market for glowing glass nonetheless.

The £1550 SQ-38 is an imposing 20kg monster running a brace of EL34s in push-pull to give 30watts a side. Although its wire mesh gives it the look of a purposeful power amp, it's actually an integrated with MM phono stage and four line inputs. As you'd expect from Lux, the construction is exquisite.



The SQ-38 follows the trend for EL34 push-pull amplifiers.

STATELY SPEAKERS

The loudspeakers were even more of an unknown quantity to me. I was informed that Diatone are one of Japan's most enduringly successful domestic brands. The company has been making 'speakers since 1946, gaining a reputation as a pioneering, innovating organisation along the way. Maybe this explains their extensive technical links with Japan's state broadcaster, NHK.

The £1950 DS2000ZX is a three-way which reaches 110cm high on stands. Notable for the use of 'aramid fibre' (Kevlar to you and me) in a honeycomb weave for its bass and midrange drivers, it also sports a very light but stiff Titanium/Boron tweeter for good measure. A benign load with 89dB sensitivity, it's thought to be a natural partner for valve amps.



Diatone's DS2000ZX floor standers will set you back £2000.

PROOVING THE PUDDING

So, how did it sound? Well, frankly I didn't expect much. A crowded sales area lit by noisy fluorescent lights and packed with loudspeakers, plus the roar of the air conditioning and the sound of Tekken 3 video games next door hardly made for BADA-style, single-speaker review conditions. It was with no little surprise then that I was greeted by an extremely sweet, musical sound.

Despite no prior experience with this system, I could distinctly hear the Lux valve amp's warm and woolly nature. There wasn't much in the way of bass grip (the word 'meringue' springs to mind), but it seemed little the worse for it. Smooth sounds lilted out of the big Diatones, which were obviously coloured but highly musical. Instrumental timbre was rich and resonant, vocals clean and earthy, and those keyboards had tremendous body and presence. It was a refined, enjoyable system with a character not too dissimilar from my own when using Leak TL12s.

Had I wanted to purchase the system, the next step would have been to negotiate a deal. The salesman would tap away into his calculator and come up with a figure around which to haggle. With the economy sluggish at the moment, I could probably have gotten 10% off, making a total of £5310; a lot of money, even if it did sound so sweet.

SHINJUKU SUSHI STOP

Suitably impressed by their recommended system, I left Yodobashi more than a little surprised. While they may not have had the facilities of a serious British hi-fi dealer, they still knew a thing or two about how to assemble a decent system, and stocked a vast range of kit. I wondered how a high-end specialist like Dynamic Audio might compare as I looked for lunch.

At the last count there were 7874000 people resident in



Single-speaker demo room - I think not.

greater Tokyo, and most of them seemed to be in Shinjuku queuing for sushi with me. Luckily I found a little 'kaiten sushi', or revolving sushi bar, just in time.

Guide books say that Japan's main religious faiths are Shinto and Buddhism. But in my experience the Japanese are most devout when it comes to food. By far the most popular dish is 'sushi', or raw fish with rice. It comes in many varieties - salmon eggs, squid, octopus, maguro, red snapper, plaice, cod roe, herring roe, flounder, scallop and prawn. It's served up on little plates with rice and seaweed, soy sauce, horse radish, pickled ginger and green tea. The fish is fresh from the Japan Sea every morning, having been delivered direct to the restaurant in huge blocks of ice. Although people from seaside areas outside Tokyo (such as Kyushu in the south or Hokkaido in the north) would disagree, to my palette it's tastier than a room full of AudioNote Ongakus.

Us Brits who ritually overcook everything are always nervous about eating raw fish, but it's hard to see how 127million Japanese can be wrong; indeed they're the longest-lived people in the world. Still, I draw the line at eating blowfish. With its deadly poison that has to be removed by specially-qualified masterchefs before being safe to eat, it's considered the ultimate delicacy.

SILVER SERVICE

Looking around the sushi bar, I couldn't help noticing a fellow gastronaut sporting a Yodobashi Camera bag. With my investigative journalist hat on, I went over for a quick chat.

He introduced himself as Mr Yamada (first names are only for family and close friends in Japan), and explained that he frequently buys at YC because it's "cheap and easy". Rather than getting lectured by a salesman, they give plain service and very keen discounts. He said that he reads the hi-fi magazines to find the top products, then buys there for the best price.

What about the customer care? He told me of an incident last year when he bought a Sony TC-D8 DAT portable which developed a fault just days after he'd got it. He took it back expecting a long wait as the machine went back to the factory for repair, but instead got a new machine on the spot, a profuse apology, a new tape to replace the one it had eaten plus a free head cleaner and batteries. Two days later he got his lost tape back from Sony, with a letter of apology from the head of the company's Tokyo service centre.

SHOPPING AROUND

Would he not consider visiting a specialist dealer, with all the benefits they bring? Yamada San nodded sagely, but pointed out that it would depend on what he was buying. Core components in his system, such as his CD player, amp and 'speakers, are bought from specialists after many hours of listening in the dem

room. However, for accessories like MiniDisc players and tuners, he goes straight to Yodobashi.

Finally, could he recommend the best specialist dealer in the area? Yamada San opened my Stereo Sound magazine and simply turned to an advert for Dynamic Audio: "there". Just as well that was precisely where I was headed.

BIG IN JAPAN

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- 3) DENON DMD-1800AL-N
- 4) KENWOOD DMF-7002SG
- 5) SONY MDS-JA50ES

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS

- 1) BOW TECHNOLOGIES WAZOO
- 2) DENON PMA-S10 II
- 3) JEFF ROWLAND DG CONCENTRA
- 4) MACINTOSH MA6800
- 5) KRELL K300i

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- 1) HMV SX-V1X
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Next month David Price visits Dynamic Audio for the low-down on Japan's high-end scene.

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EXHIBITIONISTS

Ever on the trail of the best new equipment, the World team of Simon Pope, Richard White and Jon Marks headed for Heathrow airport and the Renaissance Hi-Fi Show.

Heathrow, tranquil beauty spot set in rural surroundings. . . OK, maybe not; the Renaissance and Excelsior hotels situated on the outskirts of a hugely busy airport might not have been havens of peace and quiet, but they played host to a wealth of hi-fi and enthusiasts on September 19th and 20th at the Renaissance Hi-Fi Show.

2001

One of the more eye-catching systems was set up in Sony's rooms. Here they were demonstrating Direct Stream Digital, the company's answer to the question of what will be CD's digital successor. On the top shelf of a Townshend Seismic Sink Stand was a beautifully-built DSD transport in champagne gold feeding a brushed aluminium DAC below. Sony's ultra-wide bandwidth loudspeakers (approximately 15Hz-95kHz) were handling signal transmission duties.

Although we weren't able to compare directly, DSD certainly sounded just as superior to CD as 24/96. A selection of Jazz recordings had a wonderful openness and easy, rhythmic musicality to them far beyond the capabilities of 44.1kHz recordings. The show-down between the two high-resolution technologies on sonic quality looks as if it's going to be very close indeed.



Sony's gorgeous experimental DSD transport.

2001 II

Another future-format room was RT Services', where amplification from Nagra and BKS's small floor standers (as reviewed in this very issue) were enjoying 24/96 recordings drawn from a Nagra D digital reel-to-reel and dCS's Elgar DAC. Hogging its share of the limelight was dCS' upsampler, which was being put to use upsampling 24/96 recordings to 24/192 with very impressive results. Again smooth, open and natural were the orders of the day.

Playing no small part in the system were Nagra's 845 VPA monoblocs, which use a pair of these large power valves in a push-pull configuration. For fanciers of



Nagra, Elgar and BKS work together harmoniously.

solid-state there was the MPA MOSFET power amp, a versatile design which can be converted to an integrated from single-chassis monoblocs.

LE SHOW

Channel-hopping for a long weekend to display their wares were French companies like BC Acoustique, Cairn and Lavardin Technologies. The first of these companies was demonstrating their Gange floor standing loudspeakers as well as other models from their 13-strong range. Lead-lined MDF cabinets were home to 260mm polypropylene woofers,



On the top shelf sit Cairn's attractive two-ways.

170mm midranges and 17mm aluminium-dome tweeters. The result was a sweet and authoritative sound for around £1000.

While Cairn normally concentrate on electronics (like the Nanda pre and K5 100watt power amps, as well as four CD players and a tuner) they were exhibiting a small loudspeaker too. This two-way hit the highs thanks to Audax's piezo-electric gold-dome tweeter, leaving the rest to a 4in. carbon-fibre mid/bass. We hope to review these stand mounters in a forthcoming issue.

Lavardin Technologies have the same enthusiasm for electronics, evinced by a nine-model range backed up by an interconnect and two 'speaker cables.

What differentiates Lavardin's equipment is the way they have attempted to address the hardness and poor tonality of many transistor amps. They believe the root of this particular evil is "the memory affect", which occurs when a circuit's static behaviour (or roughly the way it operates under conventional test procedures) differs from its dynamic (as Lavardin's novel measurements are labelled by the company). The bold claim is that they have pinned down technically the vital elements that make up the valve sound.



Chord and WB sounded great but weren't cheap.

LOUDSPEAKER BAPTISM

Backing up some very tasty pre/powers from Chord Electronics were Wilson Benesch's new £20000 Bishop floor standers. There's certainly no shortage of drivers with four woofers, a midrange and a tweeter on each side. While the former is a Super Revelator from Scanspeak, the latter are WB's latest Tactic unit, its magnet and frame shaped for minimum disturbance of the cone's rearward radiation. Carbon fibre adorns more than just the cones of this slim 'speaker, though, the curved side panels getting the same treatment.

Giving the Bishops a good workout was a predominantly Chord line-up. Heading the list of silver boxes was a Wadia transport and Chord PSC 1500 DAC (£4135). Then came a CPA 3200 pre (£3785) and 1200C stereo amp (£4210) for tweeter and midrange, followed by a pair of 1400 monoblocs (£4210 each) for the bass. Analogue was handled by WB's Full Circle and Chord's new Phono equaliser (£1898). As you'd expect given the price (gulp!), the sound was very, very clear and controlled.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Unison Research were flying the Italian flag with a sweet set-up built around their Mystery 1 valve pre and Smart 300B monoblocs (and prototype PSE 300B). Spinning the black discs was the Platine Verdier turntable. With its 16kg stainless-steel platter and outboard motor, an Ortofon SPU on GT Audio's 3012-R



More curvacious woodwork from Unison Research.

tone-arm was producing sweet and solid sounds through UR's £2000 Phono One with its external PSU.

ON THE INSIDE TRACK

One of the most impressive rooms at the show was Innersound's. They were demonstrating their Eros hybrid electrostatics partnered by a dCS Elgar DAC and Accuphase transport backed up with a Panasonic DVD-A350 DVD player. Included in the loudspeakers' £4000 price is the matching active crossover and a pair of 200watt transistor power amps for the 10in. bass drivers in their transmission-line enclosures.

Many an ESL hybrid has fallen at the fence of integration between the cone woofer and film mid/tweeter panel. However, the Eroses did especially well in



One show-stopper - Innersound's Eros active hybrids.

this area with a seamlessness that was very appealing. Just as attractive were the great dynamics, bass slam and clearly-delineated imaging.

CREST OF THE WAVAC

Yoshiki Industrial Co. Ltd of Japan were going under the name of Wavac with a beautifully-constructed range of valve and solid-state pre/power amps. Wollaton Audio are the proud distributors of the Wavac clan that includes a pair of monoblocs which originate from the 'if you have to ask, you can't afford it' school of design. With their monstrous directly-heated 833 transmitter triodes, these HE-833 single-ended beasts turn out no less than 100watts.



Wavac's top SE monobloc, the back-breaking HE-833.

A more realistic proposition for most audiophiles is the Music Dandy 811 (I kid you not). This single-ender is fitted with a pair of RCA 811s to yield 15watts per channel at a cost of £2995. We'll be finding out how it shapes up in the February 1999 edition.

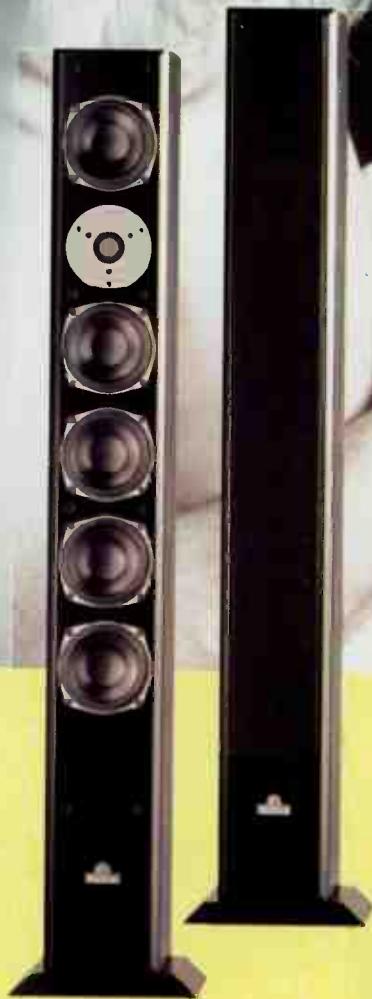
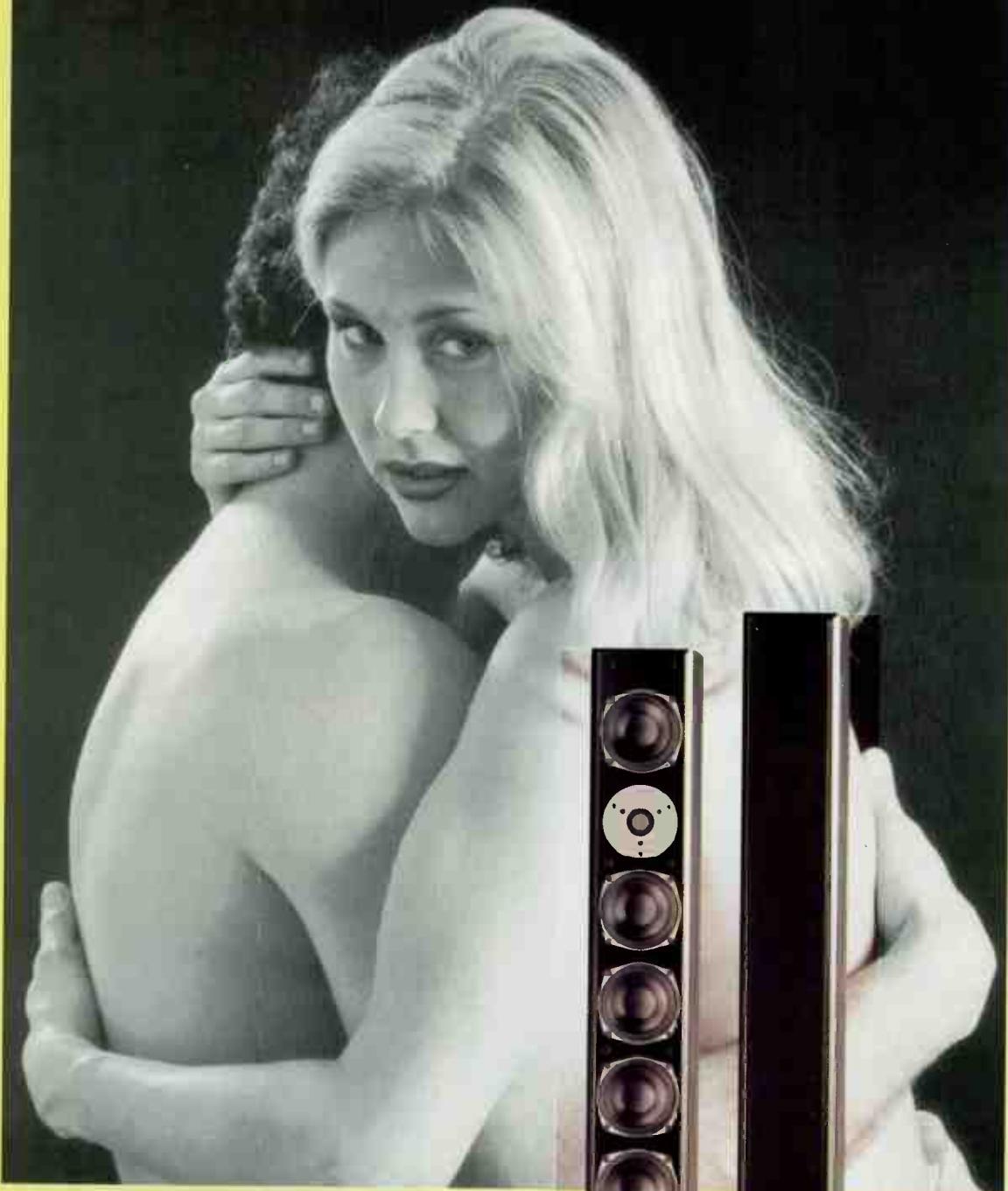
EPOS IS THE WORD

Exiting Epos' factory most recently are their ES15 floor standers. The 25mm aluminium-dome tweeter blends into a 150mm polymer-cone mid/bass via Epos' characteristically minimalist crossover (in this instance, a single capacitor feeding the tweeter). Due out as you read this report, the ES15s will sell for £890.



Epos ES15s - sweet, well-mannered performers.

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IMMACULATE RECEPTION

Simon Pope aims for airwave accuracy with Pioneer's F-504RDS Precision tuner.



As part from a few examples (notably Linn and Naim, who top the £1000 mark), most tuners weigh in at under £800, with the majority costing around £300. Lashing out that sort of money on a tuner like Pioneer's F-504RDS Precision (a modified version of the still available, non-Precision model which is £50 cheaper) should get you something decent for your wonga. With Creek's exceptional T43 lurking nearby, though, the Pioneer has its work cut out.

The Precision alterations include higher-spec components in the front end and extra attention paid to the output stage. This, Pioneer claim, creates a purer signal with a smoother high frequency response and 'real' bass that cuts out the boom and coloration typical of less talented tuners.

The internals might have benefited from a little tweaking, but externally this is still a plain box of not exactly rock-solid build. However, it does have a stylish black-and-gold finish that compensates for the fascia and its button-fest, which would give the bridge of the USS Enterprise a run for its money.

Something the Precision isn't short on is facilities. In addition to manual and automatic tuning, it boasts RDS and EOS (which homes in on traffic reports from other stations). 10 presets divided into four separate categories can also be programmed

into the memory. Then there are the two inputs for those who receive FM via cable as well as aerial.

During its stay at HFW, the Precision found itself in the company of Pioneer's matching A-300R Precision integrated and the Puccini SE. Further down the line sat Jamo's Concert 8s and Neat's Critique II loudspeakers, with cables courtesy of van den Hul and DNM.

As luck would have it, the first signal through the Precision was BBC Radio 3 at the very start of a recorded live performance of Shostakovich's Thirteenth Symphony. 'Clarity' is evidently this tuner's middle name, the announcer sitting in our fireplace briefly, before being supplanted by the host of instrumental images in the orchestra.

Zooming in on those instruments emphasised the difficult balance this slim, black box struck: double-basses were smooth yet tight and muscular, whilst violins and woodwind were lively and open without overstepping the mark. Slotting nicely into the canvas were the voices of the male chorus, the Russian lyrics clearly enunciated thanks to crisp sibilants. Only a touch of thinness to the presentation (which remained after a change of components) prevented the Pioneer scoring a full 10 out of 10.

A play on Radio 4 followed and confirmed the benefits of Tom Evans' under-bonnet tweaking when it came to the spoken word. An inky silence

was the back drop to the stage from which the actors' disembodied voices emerged, rich in tonal colour and expression. Next to the Radio 3 transmission, this was a fuller, weightier broadcast with sound effects such as door knocks so realistic they had me heading for our hallway.

Lasting more than 20 minutes with commercial radio stations via hi-fi tuners can be a major test of endurance thanks to the studio compression applied for the sake of trannies and in-car radios. Jazz FM suffered less from pancake dynamics and musical mush - bass guitar was taut and secure, the midrange detailed and spacious and the treble surprisingly fluid.

In the wake of praise invariably appears a caveat or two. While the Precision's imaging was steady and well defined, and the sound staging broad, front-to-back perspectives lacked depth. A week of burning in pulled the stage rear back a little, but Creek's T43 showed how much more ambient information could be had.

At £300, the Pioneer has few pretenders to worry about - its facilities and sonic prowess see to that. One of the select bunch is Sony's ST-SA3ES at £250. This has a 'gently-massaged' bottom-end which suits all genres and avoids the Precision's lean lower octaves. However, unless you have the extra ton necessary to snap up Creek's T43, the customised F-504RDS is a prime ether candidate.

Pioneer F-504RDS Precision £299.95

Pioneer
Hollybush Hill,
Stoke Poges,
Slough,
Berks. SL2 4PQ
Tel: 01753 789789

WORLD VERDICT



The sole mark against the class-leading transparency and insight of this tuner is its slightly dry character.

Measured Performance see p111

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SOLID AS A ROCK

Timothy Liu searches for a cure from the infectious sound of the BKS 107 Mk2 loudspeakers.

If you're contemplating spending £1500 on 'speakers, you may well be under the impression that shopping around at this level guarantees a quality product. After all, given the amounts of money in question, designers obviously have greater room to produce more exotic products without the usual financial constraints. What you won't be prepared for, though, is the conformity of the components at this level - few buck the two/three-way cone/dome trend. However, few doesn't mean none. BKS Loudspeakers of Denmark have created the 107 Mk2 two-way ribbon hybrid floor standers which break the design monotony.

Standing three feet tall, these slim, black cabinets have a trapezoid shape which tapers towards the top. This profile helps minimise cabinet interaction with the dipole radiation pattern of the ribbon tweeter. The enclosures themselves are literally rock solid, having 18mm-thick granite side panels. Density is also the main note of the front baffle, base and rear panel as well, which incorporate black acrylic sheet bonded to 15mm MDF board.

This unique combination of materials serves two purposes. First, it ensures that the enclosures contribute very little of their own character to the sound. Second, it makes for a loudspeaker most people would welcome into their living rooms with open arms (well, almost.)

Setting the air in motion are a 7in. ribbon tweeter (custom-built in-house) and a 5in. polypropylene-coned woofer matched to a small reflex port. Four chunky, gold-plated binding posts enable bi-wiring or bi-amping. A quick look inside at the crossover reveals a first-order network for the ribbon (which has

the protection of a 2A fuse to keep it safe from Status Quo fans) and a second-order one for the bass.

I spent four weeks with the BKS in my system, the serious listening starting after the second week. A Basis turntable with Airtangent tone-arm and Wadia 6 CD player served as front-ends. A Rowland Coherence pre-amp and Canary 301 valve power amp completed the family tree.

The 107 Mk2s managed to impress straight from cold on the Art Pepper track 'The Autumn Leaves', prompting swift repositioning that left them three feet in from the rear and side walls. Given their radically different construction and operation, the seamless integration of the ribbon's sweet, lucid treble and smooth midrange with the moving-coil bass was something of a relief, as was the weight and extension that belied the cone's small diameter.

The full potential of the 107s only really came through when the Canary 301 was substituted for a battery-powered Rowland Model 2 transistor power amp. With solid-state in the driving seat, the ribbon's output took on the refreshing transparency of an alpine stream. Just a few bars into Van Morrison's 'Bright Side Of the Road' showed the rhythm in this track flowing in a manner not heard via the Canary; the energy and vibrancy in the performance were delivered 100% intact to the joy of my tapping feet.

Time for a spin with Jazz guitar on the Basis turntable from Grant Green and 'Green With Envy'. Coming off the black stuff, this number had frightening realism and scale thanks to genuine



out-of-the-box sound staging and imaging. If you closed your eyes, you could imagine the 'speakers dissolving away into thin air, leaving only the musicians playing in a holographic acoustic.

I have only ever experienced this feat through costlier (actually, much costlier) Martin Logan panels and the outrageously expensive Wilson Watts. If you've ever heard either of these, then you'll understand what all the fuss is about. For their £1500, the BKS 107 Mk2s offer a natural clarity that's highly addictive and normally highly priced. With a rare taste of the Wilsonesque sound for a fraction of the cost. Add to that sensitivity which obviates the need for monster amplification, and these Danes could be the ticket to a once-exclusive high-end club.

BKS 107 Mk2 £1500

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Didcot,
Oxon. OX11 7TG
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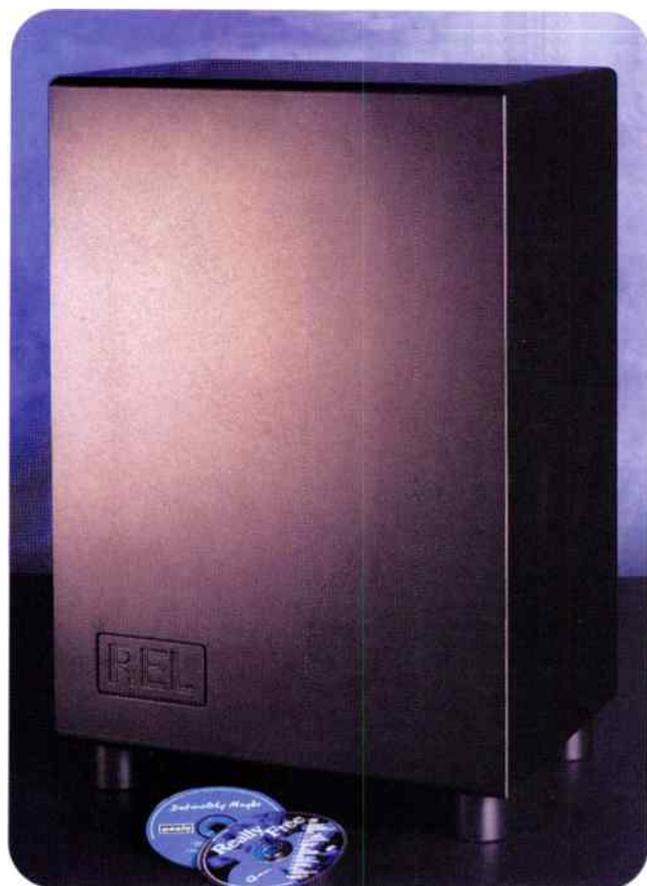
WORLD VERDICT



The 107 Mk2s may look slim, but these backbreakers have a weighty, solid sound allied to outstanding transparency.

Measured Performance
see p111

WIN BKS LOUDSPEAKERS, A REL SUB AND A CS PLINTH FOR THE 401 WORTH £2500



With this December issue comes a trio of goodies. We have BKS's granite-sided 107 MkII 'speakers worth £1500, a £700 Storm subwoofer from REL and a Classique Sounds' £300 Octavia plinth for the Garrard 401.

First up are the 107 MkIIs from BKS. Manufactured in Denmark, these chic little numbers are some of the most attractive floor standers we've had gracing our listening room. A two-way design, the 107s consist of a 130mm polypropylene woofer and a 185mm ribbon tweeter, the two linked seamlessly at 2.5kHz. The 107 MkIIs are built like few other 'speakers, their side panels consisting of 18mm-thick granite, and the front and back of black gloss acrylic laminated

with MDF. As you would imagine, the stone sides hardly make the 107s wafer-light, as they tip the scales at 32kgs each! Moving them may dictate the donning of a weight-lifting belt, but the effort will be worth it.

On p33 this month, Tim Liu praises the sonic attributes of these Danes, comparing their transparency to vastly more expensive Martin Logans and Wilson Watts. Even playing them straight from the box (without any burning in) he was impressed,



noting the "seamless integration of the ribbon's sweet, lucid treble and smooth midrange with the moving-coil bass" and a deep bass extension which "belied the cone's small diameter". A vinyl recording of Grant Green's Green With Envy had him admiring its "frightening realism and scale thanks to genuine out-of-the-box sound staging and imaging".

A transducer with a rather different aim in life is REL's Storm subwoofer. For over seven years this South Wales-based company has been manufacturing highly-acclaimed active subwoofers. Their criteria for a good sub is that it should produce "really deep bass, integrate well with any main 'speaker and be built to last".

The award-winning Storm is certainly no exception to this rule, with a frequency range that runs all the way down to 18Hz and up to 120Hz with its 100watt amplifier. The rest of the electronics revolve around the ABC (Active Bass Controller) variable bass filter. This network was developed by REL and consists of separate controls for the selection of the crossover frequency and the output level.

The heavy cabinet encloses a volume of 40 litres and is made of 30mm MDF to eliminate the booming and rattling which can taint less sturdy subs. These factors, coupled with the performance of the 8in. driver, ensure solid, deep and dynamic bass. And if you want to upgrade the Storm, it can be fitted with the woofer from the flagship Studio II.

Heavyweight MDF plays a large part in the Octavia plinth from Classique Sounds too. With its top-plate cut to take a Garrard 401 motor unit and a Rega arm, we have the £300 veneered version up for grabs. Richard White reviewed the Octavia back in the October issue and awarded it the maximum four globes. Having partnered it with a Reson Mica cartridge and an RB300, he discovered a remarkably smooth and deep sound in a Decca recording of Parsifal, where the "the glories of full-blown operatic soprano floated out of the loudspeakers".

Changing musical tack with Eric Bibb's Hello Stranger on Opus 3 records rewarded Mr White with a taste of the Octavia's rhythmic bite: "The slap/strum guitar was kicked right into my lap" and "the arrival of subtle finger- on-strings sound meant a much more 'live sensation to the sound". This ability owes a great

deal to the Octavia's main attribute, its elimination of vibration through sheer mass.

To snap up one of this audio trinity, all you have to do is pick out the correct answers to the questions that follow and re-live the memories of your CSE English lessons by completing this month's offering from the lost works of Edward Lear in less than 30 words. Please ensure that your entry reaches us by December 7th and that your name, address and telephone number are included so we can contact the lucky winners faster than a flying bullet!

COMPETITION ENTRY QUESTIONS

- 1) Where are the BKS 107 MkII loudspeakers manufactured?
A. Denmark B. Jamaica C. Bognor D. Ulan Batur
- 2) What are the loudspeakers' side-panels made of?
A. Pine wood B. Glass C. Marble D. Granite
- 3) What is the diameter of the REL Storm's woofer?
A. 40cms B. 40ins C. 25cms D. 2.7mms
- 4) What is the power output of the Storm's amplifier?
A. 20watts B. 30hp C. 15mA D. 100watts
- 5) What is the name of Classique Sounds' plinth for the Garrard 401?
A. Olivia B. Octavia C. Thora D. Amanda

TIE-BREAKER (obligatory)

Complete the following in fewer than 30 words

*She had bound her hair in tweeter ribbons sweeter than the norm,
Whilst schooning 'board the good ship Plinth Octavia
When suddenly al! REL let loose and brewed a mighty Storm,
But the BKS stayed on their Best Behaviour. . .*

COMPETITION WINNERS

The lucky winners of our October Competition are John Boyd of Notts. and Neil Jackson from Birmingham.

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A1 AMPLIFICATION

The X series continues to spread. HFW agent Dominic Todd tracks down its latest strain, the X-A1 integrated.

Remember the Musical Fidelity A1? Along with the B1, this was the highly successful amp that launched Musical Fidelity upon the budget market 10 years ago. The new X-A1 trades the kudos of pure class A (and the consequent scrawny 20watt output) for a far more usable 50watts drawn from an external power supply unit. This is a feature which, as far as I'm aware, is unique at the price. You certainly won't find it amongst the X-A1's deadliest rivals, namely the Arcam Alpha 9 (£500) or Cyrus SL (£400).

Other parts of the X-A1 package are the now-familiar odd-ball styling and an input sensitivity identical to that of its stablemates. This allows the use of MF's X-A50 or X-A200 power amps for bi-amping and the addition of tone controls or a phono stage with the X-Tone and X-LP. The permutations are many and varied, but should you decide to use the X-A1 au naturel, you can bet as much thought has gone into this amp's innards as its striking exterior.

Wacky styling and impressive engineering count for little, if the sound quality's not up to scratch. To see if the X-A1 could cut it against more conventional rivals, it was drafted in to drive Mission's 752Fs and Celestion's SL600s, these last not renowned for their sensitivity - 82dB is all one watt will generate from them.

To my surprise, this gutsy metallic lozenge had no problem with the latter. Sheryl Crow's 'Solidify' had a bass depth and weight I hadn't expected given the Celestion's long and illustrious history of killing amps. OK, the lowest octaves didn't go quite as low as those of a similarly-priced Japanese heavyweight such as the Kenwood KA-7090, but the X-A1 triumphed in terms of control; there was no soggy overhang, just plenty of speed, grip and incisive timing.



La Crow's vocals had plenty of elbow room, life-like presence and fine articulation. What there wasn't, however, was that seductively smooth presentation which advocates of the old A1 may miss. Still, many would count the superior see-through detailing and insight into the music as a small price to pay.

The only foible I found cropped up in the area of percussion. Generally, the separation and levels of detail were decent, with firm attack on drums. However, there was a touch of tinniness in the lower treble which robbed some instruments of body and tonal colour.

The X-A1 returned to winning form when the pace slowed with Jacki Leven's 'Shadow In My Eye', where the level of atmospheric retrieval passed many of the more clinical competitors straight by. Thanks to the accurate timbre and texture, both acoustic and electric guitars enjoyed the contrast necessary to make the song involving. On the mild hiccup side, vocals were pushed a little way forward in the mix and the bass wasn't quite as thunderous as some, but the X-A1's crisp transients assured an engaging listen.

The Musical Fidelity remained untroubled whatever the musical type. Schubert's Symphony No5 was reproduced with as much commitment and verve as the previous genres. Broad sound staging allowed lots of space between the instrumental images, while spot-on timing meant this composition never became disjointed or clinical. Welly wasn't in short supply either - considering the 50watt output, dynamic contrasts were striking, with a speed and definition you'd usually associate with pre/power designs.

Once more, the chink in the armour turned up in the lower treble. Violin timbre wasn't all it could have been, the X-A1 reproducing violins without the tonal richness of some rivals.

Musical Fidelity have come up with the amplifier goods again. The X-A1 looks different without being impractical or ugly, and sounds better than much of the competition. It has an enthusiastic drive married to real control that will handle all types of music. The amp has only one minor problem, and that's the coloration in the treble (which could be minimised with the right choice of cables). Different, in this case, is most definitely better.

Musical Fidelity X-A1
£480

Musical Fidelity
15/16 Olympic Trading
Estate,
Fulton Road,
Wembley,
Middx. HA9 0TF
Tel: 0181 900 2866

WORLD VERDICT



Two boxes don't form a pre and power in the X-A1, but the result is nonetheless a winning combination.

Measured Performance
see p111

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MYRYAD TALENTS



Leo Lam opens his ears to Myryad's fresh digital face, the T-20 CD player.

It may be long in the tooth by hi-fi standards, but Marantz's CD-63 mkII KI-Signature CD player has come under little threat from other sub-£700 machines. No new model has been significantly better to justify the extra outlay, especially since the KI-S's price was dropped to £400. But that situation is changing. Not only is Creek's £500 CD43 a name to conjure with, but Chris Evans, the seasoned British audio engineer, has come up with Myryad's answer to the SE: the £600 T-20.

Perched above the T-10 in the company's new, affordable T-series, the '20 is loosely based on the more up-market MC-100, re-engineered with the frills removed. Shared by the two is Sony's reliable CDM14 transport backed up by a surface-mount Cirrus Logic 20-bit Delta/Sigma converter. This DAC is one of the smallest 20-bit devices in the world and possesses high precision and a very low noise floor.

The corner-cutting and budget-tightening don't show in the circuit design. Analogue filtering is implemented with high-speed, FET-based op-amps from Burr-Brown, 1% resistors and metal-film capacitors. The analogue audio circuit is DC-coupled and output offsets are adjusted by an active DC servo. PSU regulation is widespread - each circuit area (right down to the crystal oscillator) has its own dedicated

supply section. The circuit is tidily laid-out, having been optimised for ground and clock routing to maximise performance.

One point to note is that the co-axial digital output is a proper job, thank goodness. The number of S/PDIF outputs which do not abide by the Red Book standard is frightening. It was no shock that the T-20 proved itself a very capable transport during audition.

The T-20 isn't quite as convincing on the outside - the casework is a little flimsy, and produced a 'honky' sound on operating the transport. At least the black, finely-brushed aluminium fascia (also to be made available in chrome) is uncluttered; 'extras' like Programming, Shuffle, Repeat, Direct Track Access and Display have been relegated to the ergonomic remote control.

The T-20 joined the candidates of September's active loudspeaker group test where it spent most of its time with Harbeth's Xpression! DPM-1 Pro Actives. For more in-depth listening, it was coupled with Audio Analogue's Puccini SE, together with an Assemblage L-1 pre linked to Unison Research's Power 35, these driving a pair of Heybrook Heylettes or ProAc Studio 150s. As usual, cabling was by Kimber.

The T-20 provided an enticing cocktail of the virtues of two of today's most accomplished budget

CD players, the aforementioned Marantz and the Denon DCD-1550AR which we reviewed in July. It had a generally up-front presentation that brought background detail to the fore. This went hand in hand with a real dynamic enthusiasm and energy which preserved most of the delicate pointers like the plucking of guitar strings or violin pizzicato. Fine resolution on dense orchestral material and a bass that was fast and solid meant the T-20 got its musical balance pretty much spot-on.

No component has it all, and the Myryad didn't break any rules here; the smoothness and musical flow which distinguish equipment like Teac's T-1 transport with Assemblage's DAC-2, or Pink Triangle's Numeral, were missing. Vocal material was natural and articulate with sibilance carefully controlled and well rendered. However, that mild forwardness compressed sound stage depth (although L/R spread was unaffected). But given the fact the Teac/DAC-2 and PT cost around twice as much, the T-20 easily achieves much more than half their performance.

In spite of its imperfections, the Myryad has plenty to offer at £600. Simple and dynamically correct, it combines different musical elements into a superbly-balanced whole.

Myryad T-20 £600

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

WORLD VERDICT



With its slight brightness counterbalanced by warm surroundings, the T-20 is sure to win friends.

Measured Performance
see p111

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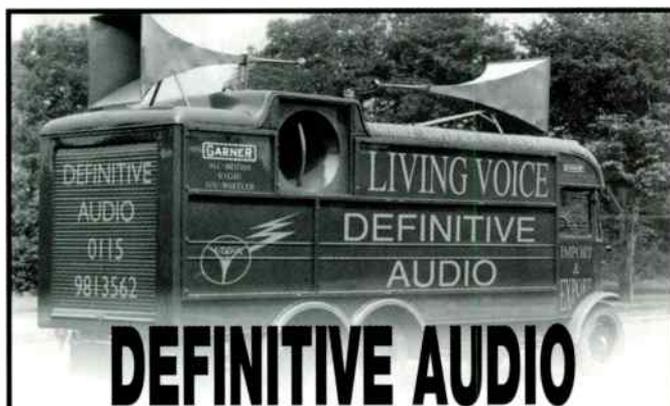
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IF I WERE A RICH MAN

Editorial stalwarts Pope and White investigate two not-quite-budget interconnects.

The very idea of paying a thousand pounds for a 'bit of wire' will bring incredulous screams from some; on the other hand, in a system of true high-fidelity components on which thousands has already been spent, it can seem just as suicidal to compromise on cabling.

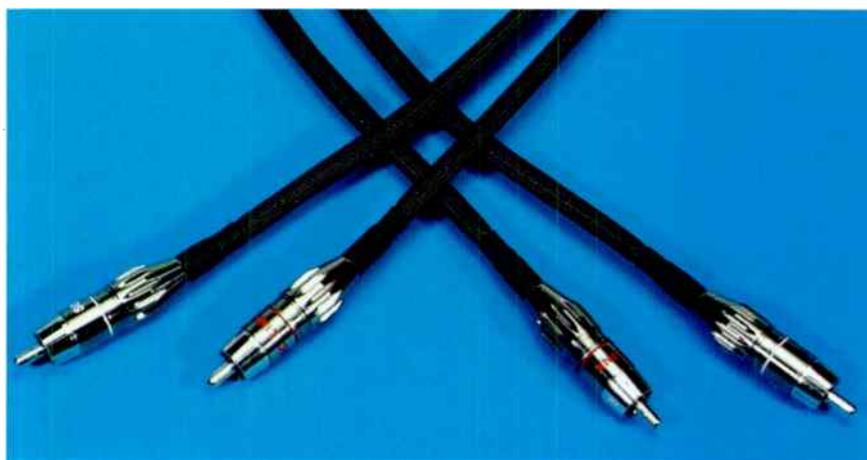
Rhodiums to The Stone Roses whose Love Spreads was well handled, with a wide, deep sound stage and plenty of insight.

If you like rhythmic smack and an up-front sound the Black Rhodiums are just the ticket, but avoid using them in cool or treble-heavy systems.

tastefully chased into its surface.

Sound-wise these interconnects are equally tasteful, and very musical. The phrasing in both choral music and the Mozart overture was exceptional. Smooth, sweet treble coupled with instrumental and vocal detail made for involving listening. There was great depth too, the realistic and vibrant bass crowned with a seductive midrange.

Dodgy's Free Peace Sweet still sounded compressed as it had done through the Black Rhodiums (reproduction will only ever be as good as the source material!) but had a deeper sound stage, and the Stone Roses were almost as large as life. The Selects are all-round classy performers, as they should be at £1000!



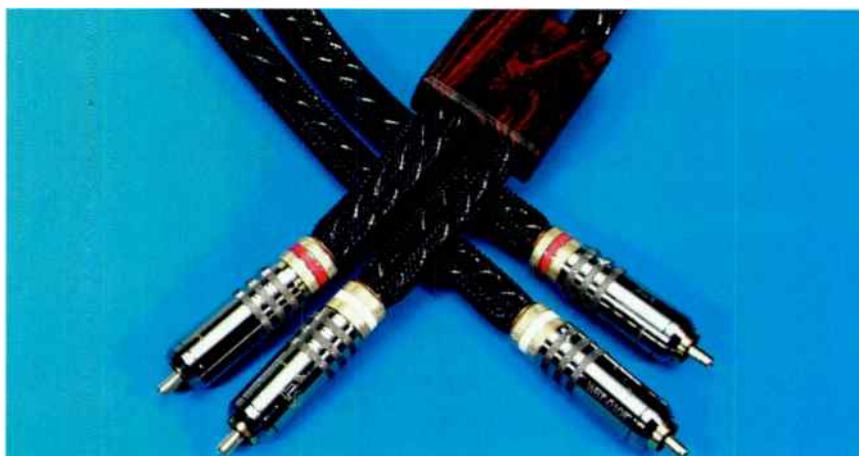
SONICLINK BLACK RHODIUM (£995/m)

The plain looks of the hand-made Black Rhodiums belie their price tag. The signal conductor is where the money's gone - high-purity, laboratory-grade molybdenum which is plated by specialists in Birmingham. The phono connectors are also plated in rhodium rather than gold.

Like SL's Vermilion interconnects, the Black Rhodiums have a fairly bright, forward sound. Unaccompanied choral music on CD could come across as a trifle hard and compressed with a hint of the clinical about it.

The Rhodiums took much better to vinyl. The overture to The Marriage Of Figaro had an incisive bite to it that made for exciting listening; it was possible to distinguish the bows of the 'cellos and double-basses really digging into the strings, and individual instrument detail was excellent.

Sticking with vinyl we treated the



KIMBER KABLE SELECT KS1030 (£1000/m)

This cable uses the company's customary topology with four silver wires loosely plated in the familiar Kimber geometry then enclosed in a mesh tube. Terminations are gold-plated WBT locking types. The Selects are directional, hence the decorative cable-retaining chunk of wood with an arrow

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Letter of the Month

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NEGATIVITY

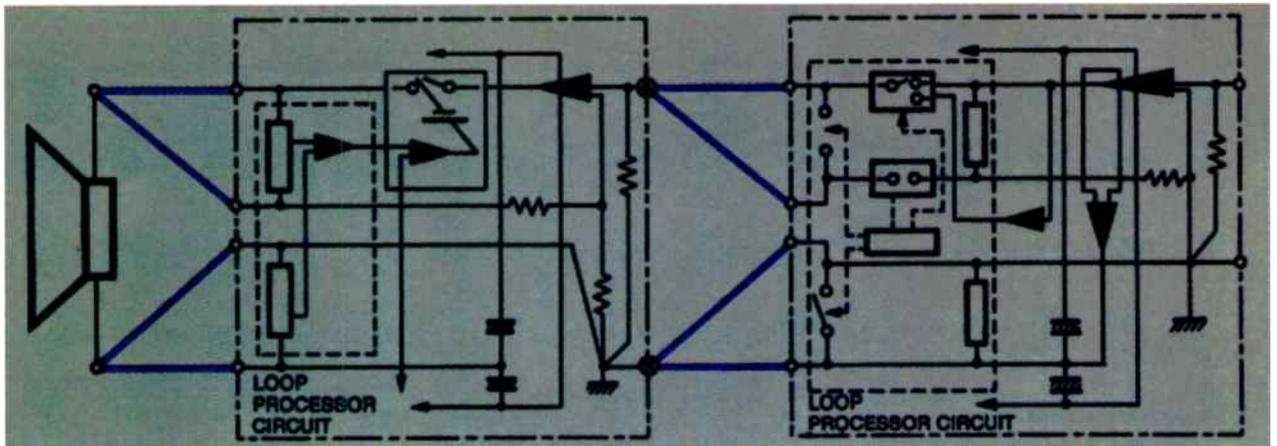
Negative feedback in an amplifier is taken from its output terminals with the intention of correcting any errors created by the amp's circuitry. This feedback only corrects errors that are generated up to this point, though, and doesn't take into account the affects of the cable between the amp's output terminals and the 'speaker itself. These errors therefore remain uncorrected. As the cable which is attached to the terminals makes up part of the amp's output circuit in the form of capacitance, inductance and resistance, the effect of the cable is not covered.

With the above in mind, would it not be more advantageous to take the feedback from the loudspeaker's terminals? If this was done, would it

dilute the influence of different cables? Would it cause any problems or instabilities if I was to try this in my valve amp (Jadis or EAR 859 amps)? I look forward to hearing your opinions.

Derek Walton
walton@indigo.ie

In theory, it would be indeed be advantageous to make the loudspeaker cable part of the amplifier's feedback loop. However, very few companies have chosen to go this route. DPA is one well-known brand, with their 50S pre and power. Less well-known is the company who patented this technique and were the first to try it out commercially - Kenwood.



The Sigma Drive circuitry (which Kenwood still use on some of their in-car amplifiers) in outline form.

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Back in the late Seventies, they came up with a number of amps which featured 'Sigma Drive' as it was called. One of these was the very chunky L0-2A integrated.

This beast had an external power supply with a huge mains transformer and a vice-like grip over loudspeaker cones, according to one lucky owner. This comes as

no surprise when you bear in mind that Kenwood claim a damping factor of around 10000 for this amplifier, as opposed to more mundane equipment which normally fails to rise above the low hundreds.

Modifying your own amps to operate in this way is probably not too wise. Unless you're very gifted

electronically, the experiment would most likely end in smoking silicon, barbecued loudspeakers and tears. If you want to investigate this sort of feedback further, you could try picking up a DPA or some of Kenwood's L series amps (like the L-08M monoblocs or the earlier KA-1000) second-hand, but the prices aren't cheap. JM

A QUESTION OF BALANCE

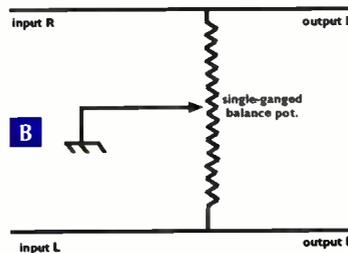
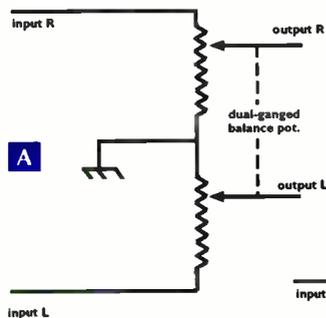
Given that stereo is the wonderful illusion which demands each loudspeaker has no more than its perceived share of the appropriate channel, despite unfavourable listening environments, equipment or recordings, please could you write an editorial feature: why my magazine has a policy of never criticising the absence of a balance control on the amplifiers we review. I would be genuinely interested to read your point of view.

Edward Courtney
Gloucester.

The current orthodoxy is, of course, that balance controls are unnecessary for today's programme sources and that, in any case, they are a cause of pollution to the signal. The question of necessity could give rise to endless debate; we have all experienced 'rogue' rooms.

It is also true that many sources are so far from unimpeachable as to represent a serious irritation to the user. What with these nuisances and

the affects of non-uniform ageing of loudspeakers and electronics, it looks on the face of it as if a balance



Shown above (A) and to the right (B) are two possible arrangements for balance controls.

control is the first thing needed, rather than an oft-omitted extra.

However, except with very primitive 'ping-pong' stereo, there will always be a proportion of L signal in the R

channel and vice versa, so the 'mind's ear' will not be wholly drawn in any one direction. If the stereo effect is unbalanced, all that tends to happen is that the middle of the image, instead of being in the centre, shifts slightly to one side.

Balance controls would be relatively harmless if there was such a thing as a perfect conductor. In my experience, the volume potentiometer is the single

component which causes the most sonic damage in a pre-amp. Adding another degrades the signal even further. A far better idea is to split the volume control into separate left and right channels and kill two birds with one stone. Quite why more manufacturers don't do this is a mystery to me. RMW

Details of more controls than you can shake a stick at are contained in Audio Electronics.

AGE BEFORE BEAUTY

Recently I heard a record that I know well played on a system more expensive than my own. Although the sound wasn't as warm and rich as my system's, I did notice the wider sound stage, greater detail and superior instrumental separation it produced. Could you advise me on what I could change in my set-up to gain these extra attributes without sacrificing the richness.

I play my records on a Rega Planar 3 with Origin Live-modified tone-arm and Elys cartridge. Amplification is via a Croft Micro pre and Quad 405/2 power (serviced). My 'speakers are TDL Studio 2s with Kimber 4PR cable. These play down the length of a 14ft. by 22ft. room.



With a modified arm, the Planar 3 turntable has plenty of ability, but Moving-Magnet cartridges would make better partners than MCs.

David Woods
Norwich.

As a first step, the warmth and richness which you note as a feature of your system needs tracking to its source. We have

found that generally TDL's transmission lines tend to favour the bass end of the spectrum, so they are playing a part here. The Croft pre errs to the warm side of neutral as well.

As the easiest thing to try, how about upgrading your cartridge a step or three? The Planar 3 is a little limited (unless you go for a Linn Valhalla PSU to drive the motor), so I'd opt for MM over MC. DNM's Mica and Rica would both outperform the Elys easily, as you'd expect given that the Rega only costs £85. RMW

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HELP!

I had bottom-line 'hi-fi' for around 15 years before recently upgrading my amplifier from a QED AZ-30 to a second-hand Leak Stereo 20 with Varislope pre-amp. This is fed primarily from a Pink Triangle front-end.

This is my first foray into the valve world and I would be grateful for any advice or suggestions you may be able to give. Unfortunately, there are no manuals with the Leaks and, although it's pretty obvious what goes where, it would be nice to have a reference to work from.

The power amp is just so musical it's led my wife to thoughts of complete room re-arrangement! I'm led to believe that the Varislope, on the other hand, is not a top-flight pre, but at least it gets me started.

I wasn't able to audition the aforementioned through its phono input. I've now discovered there is a problem with the right-hand channels on both Phono and Tuner - the music is non-existent on the former and very quiet on the latter. Any obvious causes for the 'missing' channel?

**Andy Norris
Staffordshire.**

The Leak Varislope Stereo is, in my opinion, an unfairly maligned item nowadays, I suppose chiefly because of the number of feedback components in the circuitry.

ARE YOU RECEIVING?

My equipment list runs to an Audiolab 8000A (used as a pre-amp) partnered by an 8000P. Tannoy's 631SE loudspeakers are bi-wired with Linn K20 cable to the latter and sit on filled stands. A Sony '77ES CD player and Musical Fidelity X-10D along with Chord Cobra Mk1 interconnects constitute the source.

I'm pleased with the system's sound when it comes to playing Jazz fusion. Listening to Orchestral or Opera music on CD, however, scale, bass and depth are diminished, making for uninvolved results. To fill in the Tannoys' bottom end I have considered a subwoofer.

I also listen to Classical on Radio 3 and Classic FM through a Hitachi 5500 tuner with an eight-element roof aerial. The reproduction at times is breathtaking, with a sense of realism and spacial depth that my CD player cannot match.

I would like to try and get my hi-fi to sound closer to broadcast standard. My

There are some who hold that pre-amps were the Achilles heel of the valve era; I can't entirely agree. Given the millions of pre-microgroove records still in use then, it was imperative that a range of equalization beyond the capabilities of standard treble and bass controls was offered. The Quad control units



Unsung hero or has-been? Leak's Varislope pre-amp has the potential to surprise given a spring clean.

and most firms' pre-amplifiers with any pretensions to quality had some sort of extra treble control. For playing 78s and older microgrooves, I have yet to meet a more flexible domestic unit than the Varislope.

From what you say about yours, it sounds as if one of the valves is not operating as it should. The first thing is to whip them out and clean the pins before trying to re-arrange them to see if the problem swaps to

CD player was a flagship model back in 1991 and I would like to keep it. Would adding an external DAC help?



They may take months to run in, but Castle's Edens are well worth the wait.

**Joslyn Willis
London.**

I am staggered (as a Tooting man myself) that you find an eight-element aerial necessary in

the other channel. Assuming you have the original version and not the black-and-silver Varislope II Stereo, I suspect you are playing your 200mV-output tape machine into Tape instead of Extra. Tape has a 3mV sensitivity for full output and should be connected to a tape head.

In my experience the volume pot is a source of heart-ache, but it is unusual for it to fail altogether. Similarly, because of their less frequent use, the Treble and Bass and Balance pots have a reasonable life expectancy. The decoupling capacitors are another matter: should these go short-circuit, you will get DC HT leaking into the grid circuit of the second stage.

Something I would advise any Leak pre-amp user to do is remove the switch cable, bridge the switch terminals on the power amplifier and switch the power amp on from the mains every time. This can greatly reduce the amount of hum picked up and also ensures the set-up is safely isolated from the live mains when switched off.

For a copy of the circuit diagram, write enclosing £4 to: L & W Services, 9 The Parade, Bramhope, Leeds LS16 9AF. RMW

Pry open the electronic secrets of pre-amplifiers with John Linsley Hood's Audio Electronics.

Streatham; it seems a bit like belt, braces and a piece of wet string!

One simple and effective move would be to bi-amp your loudspeakers with the 8000A's power stages. This should go a long way towards producing the scale and space you miss on CD.

Capable though the Tannoys are, they are more responsible for the short-fall than you might think. Still, a DAC might help your Sony player soldier on more happily. Demos of Musical Fidelity's £300 X-DAC and second-hand convertors like DPA's Enlightenment or Arcam's Black Box 500 would be a start.

You could fill the boots of the 631SEs with KEF's Q35s at £350 or Castle's Eden stand mounters at £450. RMW

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THE GREAT DVD DEBATE CONTINUES...

Having recently read the six DVD player review in one of your competitors' publications, I have to say that I am most alarmed at their findings. Players that you have reviewed recently and found to be comparable to conventional CD players costing up to £2000, they found to be most disappointing and barely up to the standard set by sub-£200 pound CD players.

In light of this I have to say that your DVD player reviews are, at best, misleading, and at worst fraudulent. In many years of being interested in hi-fi I cannot ever remember such a gulf between two reviews of the same product.

I believe that you owe it to your readership to provide some kind of satisfactory explanation as to the outrageously different findings. If you are unable to do this I am afraid your magazine will have lost all credibility with me and I shall no longer be purchasing it.

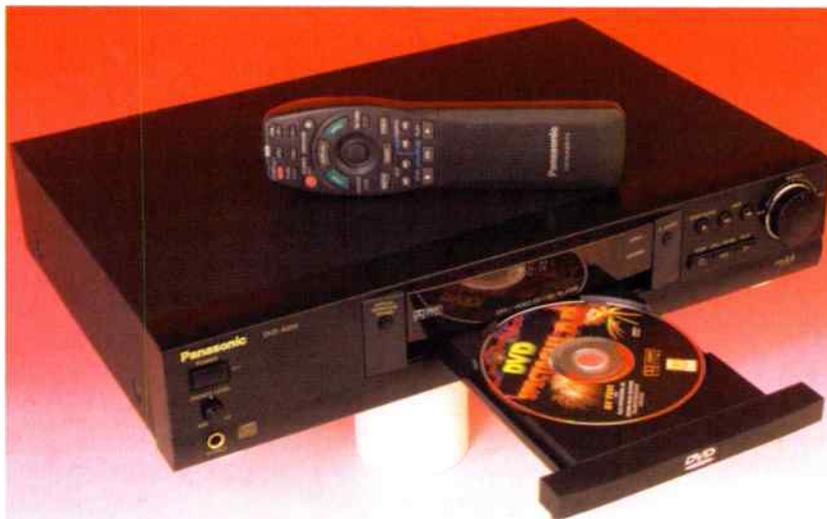
Allan Probin
allan.probin@dial.pipex.com

Hmm, the DVD player reviews have certainly stirred up some controversy, which is hardly surprising given the gulf in perceived performance which no one can fail to have noticed. Allow me to put the Hi-Fi World reviews and the events that led to them taking place into context.

The raison d'être for these DVD machines is to play back videos - two-channel audio quality is a secondary consideration. When we first received press details on the launch of the various players, I was

sceptical as to their sound quality - after all, there's plenty of RFI and a nice assortment of clocks inside the casework to pollute the sound. At that stage, I had no intention of getting any of the DVD players in for review.

Then I had a phone call from a respected manufacturer of loudspeakers, turntables and supports. He was blown away by the sounds he was getting from a Panasonic DVD-A350. I was somewhat surprised to hear this and didn't find myself reaching for the phone and Panasonic's number.



Love them or hate them, the way DVD machines like Panasonic's DVD-A350 stack up as CD players is the subject of hot debate in the world of hi-fi.

What prompted me to investigate the potential of the 'A350 was a second enthusiastic call from another manufacturer, who also said that the Panasonic was one of the most involving and enjoyable pieces of CD-replay machinery that he'd come across in years.

Another interesting conversation I had was with a CD player and amplifier manufacturer who sat in on one of the other magazines' DVD player group tests. He told me his conclusion on those players' sound was very different from the one

reached in the article, that they were poor performers.

DVD players as viable alternatives to CD-only machinery at higher prices is clearly an issue which is polarising the audio press. I'm sure those who are disappointed with these players' sonic performance feel their views are completely valid. Equally, I stand by all that I've written on the same subject.

None of us has an axe to grind - there is no shady cabal at work promoting DVD players. We're all simply looking for the component which gives what each of us feels is

the most musical satisfaction at a given price.

The polarisation of opinion merely re-emphasises a maxim which many on both sides of the hi-fi fence, press and public, seem to forget alarmingly often - don't take ANYONE's word as Gospel; before you buy something, let YOUR ears decide if it's the best thing you've heard.

Another golden rule is that poor measured

specifications do not automatically guarantee poor sound quality. Most often they do, but there are always exceptions that prove the rule, both in the form of products which measure superbly sounding dire and vice versa.

As for myself, I'm picking up a Panasonic portable DVD player this weekend, and I hope to lighten Pioneer's stock room of a DVD-505 at some point in the not-too-distant future too. JM.

Whatever spins your discs, one of Ringmat's Statmats will sweeten the sound.

If you do not want your e-mail address published, please let us know.

DANCING ON THE CEILING

I was wondering if you could recommend a pair of loudspeakers, a power amp and cabling for attachment to the ceiling. That might sound a bit unusual, but there's a very good reason - I'm opening a bar. Distressed by the frequently appalling sound in public places (and the amount of money I spend in them), I thought I'd do it for myself.

I envisage a 'speaker set-up which is a horizontal mirror-image of a regular floor-bound system (obviously normal stands aren't designed with this in mind!) consisting of one main pair of enclosures with a subwoofer providing the bass depth.

My first concern is the 'speakers will be too directional, causing dull sound in most of the room. However, I'm reluctant to use 'professional monitors' as I've always found them fatiguing.

Second, support. In order to attach brackets, is it advisable to drill into the cabinets (taking care to avoid going all the way through and chewing up any delicate bits - my own and the loudspeaker's)? Or should I have special 'stands' made?

Third, as the 'speaker set-up will be some distance from the sources and pre-amp, could you confirm my suspicion that it is preferable to have long interconnects between pre and power amps rather than miles of 'speaker cable. If so, could you recommend some cable and plugs (I'm well practised with a soldering iron).

Jeff Pickthall
jeff@interactivate.force9.co.uk

As you say, this isn't a common-or-garden enquiry! Any improvement over the usual pub ear-shredders has got to be a good thing though. The furthest I've seen hi-fi in a bar taken was in Tokyo, where a pair of huge ex-cinema horns driven by a



The Absolute 4P active loudspeakers from Soundcraft may be small but they have no trouble reaching high volumes.

couple of tiny valve monoblocs, valve pre and a Micro turntable produced some amazingly sweet sounds. If you don't have space for a 10ft. filing cabinet either side of the counter, there are alternatives.

Evidently, important considerations are the shape and size of the room. If you're talking of a rectangle about 20ft. wide by 30ft. long or less, that shouldn't be too much of a problem for a single pair of well-powered stand mounters. A larger or L-shaped room would

make things more difficult and would probably call for an extra pair of boxes.

You're right as far as long interconnects rather than 'speaker cabling goes. In fact, the best solution would probably be active loudspeakers like those we reviewed back in September 1998. A pair of these could be flown from the ceiling on chains or wall-mounted, although this last option won't do their sound many favours. Speak to the company concerned about how to mount the enclosures.

You needn't worry about the sound being too dull. Most modern tweeters are domes 25mm in diameter. Up at 15kHz, they're still throwing out a cone of sound with roughly a 55degree spread horizontally and vertically.

Depending on the flexibility of your wallet and the room's size, I'd be tempted by Soundcraft's Absolute 4Ps, the Bellini pre-amp from Audio Analogue and interconnects from DNM and The Chord Company. And take the easy route to bigger bass - leave the subwoofer on the floor, its location decided after experimentation. You might have to do this with some tipplers in the bar, as the change in sound between empty and full can be quite radical. JM

Stop dirty sockets holding your hi-fi back with a bottle of DNM's Licon.

SCHOOL DAZE

I bought my hi-fi whilst at school, and now as a wage earner I feel I deserve an upgrade. I currently possess an Aiwa XC-700 CD player, Rotel RA-820 BX4 amp and Cyrus 780 loudspeakers on Atacama SE24 stands. I am happy with the Cyruses but am considering a subwoofer to go with them. I've avoided hi-fi magazines until recently at the risk of temptation, but can resist no longer, so I need suggestions as to what to audition up to a total of about £2000.

P. Griffiths
p.griff@usa.net

Two grand opens up a lot of component choices for a single-



The D102MkIII from van den Hul mixes carbon fibres and copper in a tasty recipe.

source system. Good though the 780s

are, it would be wiser to sell them off and start from scratch. I'm afraid that "active" word is going to be bandied around again. Lashing out £850 on Harbeth's Xpression! DPM-1 Pro Actives would allow you to indulge in CD players like Musical Fidelity's X-Ray at £800 followed possibly by Musical Fidelity's X-Pre (£200) or the Bellini once more.

Keep the Atacama stands and sell the rest of your old equipment. This will raise the funds for long pre-to-active interconnects such as van den Hul's D102MkIII.

Use this free pair of Chameleon cables from The Chord Company to link CD and pre-amp.

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OPTICAL DILLUSION

I have a Marantz PM-57 integrated, Sony XE-310 CD player, Tannoy m2 'speakers, Cambridge Audio Arctic interconnects and Gale XL189 cable. When I originally put the system together I was working on a tight budget; now I have a little more cash and I would like to upgrade.

I believe the weak link is the source and I was thinking of adding the Cambridge Audio Dacmagic to improve things. My question is, should I go ahead and purchase the DAC, or would I be better off selling the Sony and going for a £250+ machine (I do love certain features on the Sony such as the jog dial)? In terms of D/A

conversion, why is it that a separate DAC can raise the quality of a CD player?

Stephen Wheston
E-mail address withheld by request.

To answer your questions in reverse order, an external DAC should (but doesn't always) outstrip a player's own convertor for a number of reasons. Having a dedicated power supply really helps, as the transport section in a one-box machine injects plenty of

solution. The disadvantages in interfacing DAC and transport are that the interconnect used will have an impact on the sound, as will any jitter introduced by the data transmitters and receivers.

Unfortunately, your Sony only has an optical digital output,

which ranks below its co-axial cousins sonically. Still, the Dacmagic has an optical input, so you could road-test this duo. However, I suspect Cambridge's superb £200 CD4SE would fit the bill more snugly, leaving cash spare for a set of CableTalk



Killer CD on a shoestring - Cambridge's CD4SE.

pollution into the power lines and this degrades the sound. Electromagnetic interference between circuitry is also minimised with a two-box

Advanced 2 interconnects at £30. JM

Let us take care of the 'speaker cabling with a set of DNM's Reson.

TURN IT DOWN

I read the article by Haden Boardman on the Quad 33/303 combination and it stirred me to purchase a set for a reasonable price recently. You mentioned the necessity of an attenuator on one of the radio inputs for CD-player use. Which of the two tuner inputs is most suited, and how does one go about this modification? What value should the attenuator have?

Eduard Roesdi
eduard.roesdi@tip.nl

Giving this as a tip straight from the Haden's mouth, with the odd additional thought of my own, you need two resistors per channel: 220kohms across the input (ie, between the 'live' conductor and earth) and 680kohms in series with the input. It is easier to

fix the components into the interconnect plug body than to faff about soldering them inside the pre-amp. Which of the tuner inputs you choose is up to you.

You can reduce the series resistor values a little, if the volume level from your CD is too heavily attenuated. Take a look at this month's supplement for a clue or two to network values; once you've

got a result which is either more or less than you want, you can select a few dB either way and hey presto! work out the new values by our handy formula.

As an Awful Warning to those with a Quad pre-amplifier but no power amplifier, you will discover (possibly the hard way) that Quad pre-amps have an enormous output. I had a good deal of fun trimming a

33 to drive a couple of Leak monoblocs and the net result was quite worthwhile; so, if you want to run a different amp from your 33, you'll probably need to attenuate quite a bit. RMW



The stylish 33/303 from Quad can be made CD compatible with a simple resistor network.

Uncover the secret life of transistors with a copy of Audio Electronics by John Linsley Hood.

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The KEL34 is our all-new budget stereo integrated valve amplifier, providing a massive 40 watts of pure valve sound, with 4 line level inputs and one tape output, fully controllable from the front panel. The KEL34's simple and elegant circuit design utilises a 6AU6 pentode input valve, an ECC82 double-triode phase splitter and a push-pull pair of Ei 6CA7s (a turbo-charged EL34). The result is a typically sweet, open valve sound with atypical bass control and power. And with 40watts output, KEL34 will work its magic into 'speakers of average sensitivity too. "When I first heard the KEL34 under test I was astonished at the strong, punchy bass which, good as it was, did not compromise the smooth clarity and true detailing in the treble. What I most appreciated about this amp was the sumptuous valve midrange; the feeling that the sounds were being painted from a broad and secure palette." At the price, this kit is second to none and will open up the benefits of valve amplification to a whole new class of audio nuts! Weight 10kg. External dimensions with valves: 33cm(w) x 27.5cm(d) x 18cm(h).

300B VALVE AMPLIFIER KIT

This is a specialised 28watt amplifier based on the highly linear 300B triode valve. Our 300B runs in Class A, giving one of the most sweet, open and neutral sounds possible today. Matched with good loudspeakers, it is unsurpassed. All parts are included in the kit, except valves since different 300B makes are available. Weight 26kg, external dimensions with valves 44cm(w) x 35cm(d) x 20cm(h).



£850

K5881 MkII VALVE AMPLIFIER KIT

MkII with SRPP input stage!

A 20watt, Class A power amplifier that uses reliable Russian 5881 output valves, a military version of the American 6L6, designed for low distortion audio work. Now with a super shunt regulated push-pull (SRPP) input stage K5881 offers amazing sound quality. It can be used with a simple passive pre-amp or one of our own pre-amplifiers, and it matches modern loudspeakers well. Weight 15kg external dimensions with valves 40cm(w) x 32.5cm(d) x 17cm(h).

K5881 MkII Upgrade kit

Upgrade your pre November 1996 K5881 amplifier to MkII status. The kit converts your amplifier to the new 7025 double triode input stage in place of the original EF86 pentode input.

£35



£395

KLPP1 VALVE PHONO PREAMPLIFIER

KLPP1 has five line inputs, a tape input with monitor, and a unique low noise valve MM/MC phono stage. There is a switchable subsonic filter to prevent output transformers of valve amplifiers saturating. The line stage has gain, so it will drive any power amplifier. Audio grade components are used and many parts are custom made for highest quality. KLPP1 has a super clear sound, sweet and detailed through line and phono inputs. Weight 6.5kg external dimensions 28.5cm(w) x 23cm(d) x 8cm(h).

£495



KLPP1 & KLP1 use the same chassis

KLP1 VALVE LINE PREAMP

The KLP1 line level preamp uses one an elegant cathode follower line drive circuit 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. With a gain off x1, it matches our sensitive power amplifiers. Beautifully built, with solid machined alloy fascia and gold anodised knobs, it looks compact and elegant in the home. Weight 5kg external dimensions 28.5cm(w) x 23cm(d) x 8cm(h).

£345

K5881PSE VALVE AMPLIFIER KIT

An audiophile parallel single-ended valve amplifier at an affordable price. K5881PSE uses the reliable Russian 5881 output valve. Its 17watts is enough to drive most loudspeakers, making high-end sound quality and design available to everyone. Can be easily monoblocked to give 32watts. Weight 17kg external dimensions with valves 40cm(w) x 32.5cm(d) x 17cm(h).

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Want high technology loudspeakers without a high cabinet high price? You couldn't do better than build KLS10, our latest mini-marvel. Using an Audax carbon fibre bass/midrange unit, married to the world's most advanced tweeter, the piezo-electric gold dome HD3P from Audax, KLS10 offers high performance from a small package. The main 'speakers are designed to work alone, or with a dedicated subwoofer to extend their bass. Alone, they are suited to near-wall mounting and can be tuned by port adjustment to suit personal taste and location. They are easy to drive and need just 30-60watts. Those who want the bass of a big loudspeaker can build our inexpensive dedicated subwoofer at a little extra cost or intrusion into the room, this custom designed addition offers big loudspeaker performance. KLS10 is unique. Technically advanced, yet compact and relatively inexpensive. There is little to match it. Sensitivity 89dB 1W/1m, 15mm MDF, internal volume 9Ltrs, external dimensions 19cm(w) x 31cm(h) x 23cm(d).

DRIVE UNITS & CROSSOVER KIT £394.00
DRIVE UNITS ONLY £358.00

KLS10 GOLD SUBWOOFER

Our new KLS10 Gold subwoofer was designed to compliment KLS10 Gold stand mounters by providing a deep and open bass. The subwoofer is inexpensive, easy to build, comprising a simple crossover network to a high quality 8 inch Aerogel, dual voice coil bass unit. A must for all KLS10 Gold customers. Sensitivity 89dB, volume 25 litres, external dimensions 28cm(w) x 43cm(h) x 34cm(d).

Drive unit and crossover £149.95 GBP
Drive unit only £71.00GBP

NEW!



£149.95

KLS9 TWO WAY FLOOR-STANDER

Here's a storm for you - KLS9, with its BB4 alignment bass cabinet and Audax High Definition Aerogel 8in bass/midrange unit. Designed by Noel Keywood to possess optimal bass damping and a clean step response. Aided by a teensy bit of bass lift, KLS9 really thunders; it will rearrange your furniture. But it does not waffle falling silent when there's no bass in the music. Aided by a high power 1in fabric dome tweeter, KLS9 is detailed, evenly balanced and images superbly. It is an easy 12ohm load and is 88dB sensitive. For amps up to 60W. Easy to build and great for beginners. Internal volume 70Ltrs, 18m MDF external dimensions 25cm(w) x 93cm(h) x 40cm(d).

DRIVE UNITS & CROSSOVER KIT £230.00
DRIVE UNIT PACK £160.00



£230

KLS3 Gold Mk II ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY THREE WAY LOUDSPEAKER

KLS3 Gold uses the latest version of Audax's innovative oval gold dome piezo electric tweeter, giving it the sweetest and most extended treble. Married to a 4in. carbon fibre cone midrange driver for neutral and clear reproduction, and a powerful 8in. bass driver for superb depth, this is our top-of-the-line reference 'speaker. Sensitivity 90dB at 1W/1m, 25mm MDF, internal volume 60Ltrs, external dimensions 26cm(w) x 100cm(h) x 35cm(d).

DRIVE UNIT & CROSSOVER KIT £575.00
DRIVE UNIT PACK £450.00



£575

KLS3 THREE WAY CARBON-FIBRE DRIVER LOUDSPEAKER

KLS3 uses extremely light and stiff carbon-fibre cone drive units for a fast, accurate sound. A dedicated 4inch carbon-fibre midrange drive unit provides the clean, smooth and detailed midrange characterised by superb projection. Its high 90dB sensitivity and near flat 8ohm impedance make it one of the easiest loudspeakers to drive. An ideal loudspeaker for high-end valve amplifiers. 25mm MDF, internal volume 60Ltrs, external dimensions 26cm(w) x 100cm(h) x 35cm(d).

DRIVE UNIT & CROSSOVER KIT £350.00
DRIVE UNIT PACK £230.00



£350

KLS8 TWO WAY HIGH SENSITIVITY

With a sensitivity of 94dB, KLS8 needs very little power. Its 10in. professional bass driver and horn loaded tweeter give it a BIG sound. Ideal for low power amplifiers. Provides high level listening without fatigue! Internal volume 50.5Ltrs, 18m MDF, external dimensions 29cm(w) x 65cm(h) x 36cm(d).

DRIVE UNIT & CROSSOVER KIT £260.00
DRIVE UNIT PACK £175.00



£260

KLS4 TWO WAY CARBON-FIBRE DRIVER LOUDSPEAKER

A two way standmounter using stagger-tuned reflex loading for good bass, plus light and fast carbon-fibre drivers. Sensitivity 86dB at 1W/1m, 18mm MDF, internal volume 15.3 Ltrs, external dimensions 21.6cm(w) x 42cm(h) x 25.8cm (d).

DRIVE UNIT & CROSSOVER KIT £230.00 DRIVE UNIT PACK £120.00

KLS7 TWO WAY CARBON-FIBRE DRIVER FLOORSTANDER

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ROTEL YER MAMA!

Timothy Liu experiences hi-fi deja-vu with Rotel's RA931 amplifier.

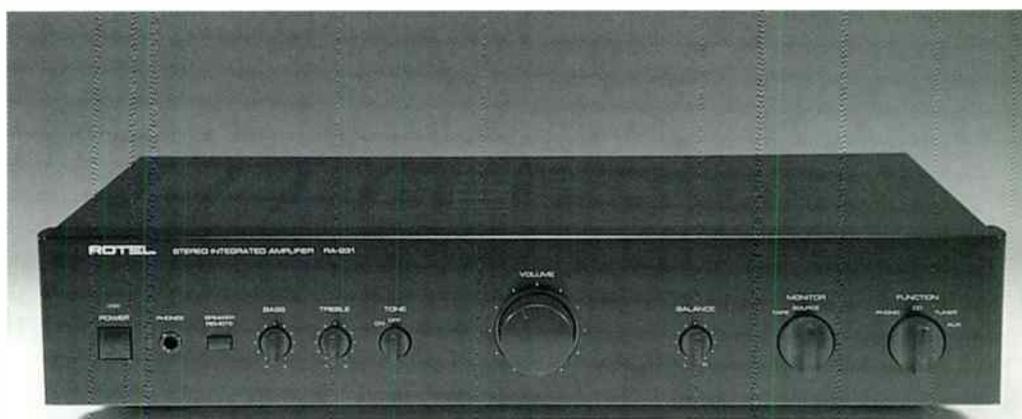
Every great journey starts with but a single step, and those of you about to take the plunge towards audio nirvana will want to tread with particular care if the coffers don't have much in reserve. Targeted at neophyte music-lovers, Rotel's RA931 integrated amplifier hopes to achieve the success of its inexpensive forefathers and make that first step into hi-fi a little easier.

Rotel take full advantage of the lower manufacturing costs implied by the Made In China sticker on the back panel to grace this amp with a £149 price tag. If this raises an eyebrow, try getting your head around the fitted phono stage too!

There's little corner-cutting evident on the outside as well, where you'll see the customary tin box with black aluminium front punctuated by a large volume knob, tone controls and input selectors. Turning the RA931 around reveals additional binding posts for a set of remote 'speakers and a grounding post for the phono stage. A welcome inclusion are the RCAs on the phono stage which have been gold-plated for low noise.

If you're worried by the somewhat Cortina aesthetics, don't be. A quick peek inside reveals mirror-image PCB layout for the power amplifier section, discrete components as opposed to ICs, and a mix of standard metal-film resistors with audiophile Roederstein versions in critical locations. Finally, a substantial toroidal transformer (custom wound in-house), along with Rubycon reservoir capacitors ensure smooth power delivery and a healthy 30watts into 8ohms.

After reviewing some high-end equipment recently, the Rotel had me breathing a sigh of relief as far as setting up (and lifting!) goes. Just take it out of the box and connect up the



ancillaries - you don't even have to put on a mains plug!

Wasting no time, I hooked the RA931 up to a pair of Chario Hiper 1000 'speakers. CD front-ends were a Marantz CD-94 and a Wadia 6. An ancient but still sprightly direct-drive Trio turntable (with an Ortofon FF15E MM cartridge) was used to evaluate the moving-magnet-only phono stage.

The Rotel faced up first to a dose of the Blues. Before the opening bars of Rory Block's 'Bye, Bye Blues' had even been and gone I was having to pinch myself as a reminder that I was listening to a budget amp. Courtesy of elevated levels of neutrality and insight, the air and space of this recording (made in a methodist church) were captured intact. Underneath Mr Block's wailing vocals, pumping Blues harp and steely slide guitar created an infectious foot-tapping rhythm that was hard to ignore.

From natural acoustics to synthetic, and 'Mountain Of Needles' from the David Byrne/Brian Eno album My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts. This number offered incontrovertible proof that the Rotel

could portray both subtlety and scale to good effect; synthesisers were powerful and majestic, allowing the treble to scale highs I've never previously heard at this price point. Although the sound stage had class-leading width and depth, images out to the extreme left and right lacked the focus and solidity you can find on some of the costlier competition.

Spinning through my vinyl collection turned out to be a blast from the past - the sound was reminiscent of my original Dual 505/NAD system in terms of how musical it sounded. The fast, fresh dynamics of Seventies Disco tracks like the O'Jays' 'I Love Music' fully exploited the RA931's rhythmic bass and the drive of the song, bringing back heady memories of clubbing days. It was in the areas of sheer musicality and enjoyability that the Rotel left a lot of amps at two or three times its price looking distinctly sheepish.

Rotel have managed to make life for hi-fi newcomers easier in spades with the RA931. It offers genuine finesse and involvement for a measly £149, and those who cherish LPs needn't feel shunned either.

Rotel RA931 £149

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WORLD VERDICT



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see p111

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Noel Keywood

You may have noticed by now that McLaren cars have entered hi-fi. The industry is a-twitter over it. I'm as intrigued by what the possible outcome might be as anyone else. At worst this wind of change will just blow itself out, at best it could re-introduce hi-fi as something other than a £600 all-in-one from Currys or Dixons.

What McLaren have, apart from deep pockets, is marketing power, and in the broad scheme of things it is marketing, practised most persuasively by market-leaders like Sony and Panasonic, which has shaped our current perceptions. The scale of Japan's electronics companies dwarfs all others in the field and sets the agenda, at least in the popular press and mind. When you consider that Sony claim to employ around 93000 people worldwide and that Panasonic are even bigger, you begin to realise just how vast these companies are.

All the technological wonders which once distinguished separates are now priced for mass sale, including CD, DVD, synthesizer tuning and much more. Sony have even included electrostatic drive units and motional feedback in an otherwise unremarkable system of black boxes. The retailer I spoke to was trying to sell the whole lot off cheap because at this price level people have no real interest in such esoterics.

The point I am making here is that the Japanese giants have, for their own purposes, devalued important audio techniques, leaving the public little apparent reason to buy a more expensive, complicated, often ugly and space-consuming separates system. If the man in the street, as opposed to the hi-fi buff, can buy a hi-fi replete with every modern feature in one convenient box at a

sensible price, why shouldn't he?

To compete, separates must appear to offer either something more or something different. We, the buffs, all know there can be a world of difference in sound quality, but this is not necessarily readily 'proved' or even perceived at the point of sale. Once you take sound quality out of consideration the arguments in favour of a modern separates system barely exist. Most rely on the simple black box as a housing, associating them visually with budget Japanese systems. There's no attempt to ensure these products can be distinguished by eye from the mass market products, which I believe is a mistake. You've spent all that money on a real hi-fi - so why doesn't it look the part?

When stacked, such a system is intrusive, ugly and out-of-place in a modern, well-furnished home. The profusion of wires at the back and the cables snaking forward across a carpet to the loudspeakers do not help. A technological advantage might swing

Howard design which better drives the room, giving firmer, cleaner bass. There are plenty more ideas about and, properly engineered, they are sufficient to give separates the sort of perceived and concrete advantages they need to justify the continuing existence of quality hi-fi.

So where does McLaren come into all this? As Dr Udo Zucker points out, "we have the world's best known brand name and nothing to sell under it except some watches" (the car is out of production). They also have an exceedingly fat wallet. McLaren is so well known because its cars get première position on televisions around the world, exposed to around 80 million viewers every time they race. Sony or Pioneer would have to work pretty hard to get that sort of exposure every few weeks. Of course each would pay the same amount to explicitly advertise their hi-fi products, but even then a McLaren ad. slotted into the commercials during a F1 race would

"Once you take sound quality out of consideration the arguments in favour of a modern separates system barely exist."

some people's interest but nowadays there is little sign of this in hi-fi. CD players are constrained by a 1970s coding scheme and modern silicon chips; amplifiers by lack of ingenuity; and as for loudspeakers. . . They of all components illustrate how things have become mired.

Why is it that most loudspeakers nowadays use two drive units and reflex loading, when there are trillions of different ideas afoot in this richly-researched, idea-filled area of high-fidelity? The two-way reflex is simple to make, cheap to build and certainly cost effective but it is hardly impervious to further improvement. Bass unit damping is arbitrary; port behaviour is sub-optimal and theoretically unresolved. How a port should integrate with the forward radiation within the confines of a room is a question rarely even posed. So whilst a reflex can possess good downward extension, it always produces mediocre bass. Castle show that more effective alternatives exist with their

probably raise far more interest simply through association than any campaign the opposition could run. Whether McLaren would ever consider it worthwhile is another point. They might just do it to raise brand awareness in the first instance though.

McLaren make no bones about their obsession with quality and, like the aircraft industry, are a slave to it too. If, through the strength of their image and the extensiveness of their marketing, they convince people that real hi-fi is worth having, then no one will have suffered (even Sony, who of course make real hi-fi as well). The industry is not just a-twitter, it is also agog; everyone is waiting to see what happens next. I hope we will see some serious innovation in the near future, which will extend the whole argument past just marketing. In the meantime McLaren have opened up with the big guns and they might just be powerful enough to change the landscape.



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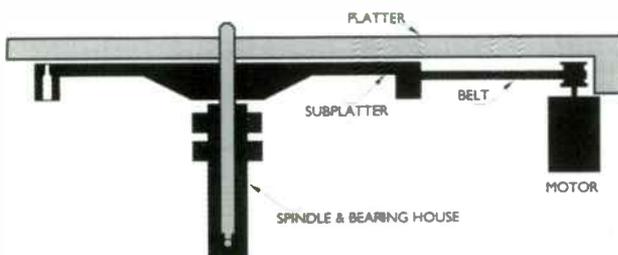
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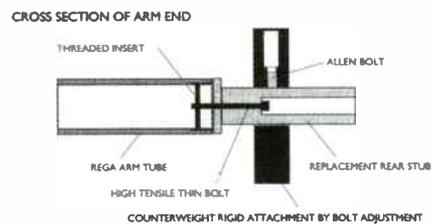
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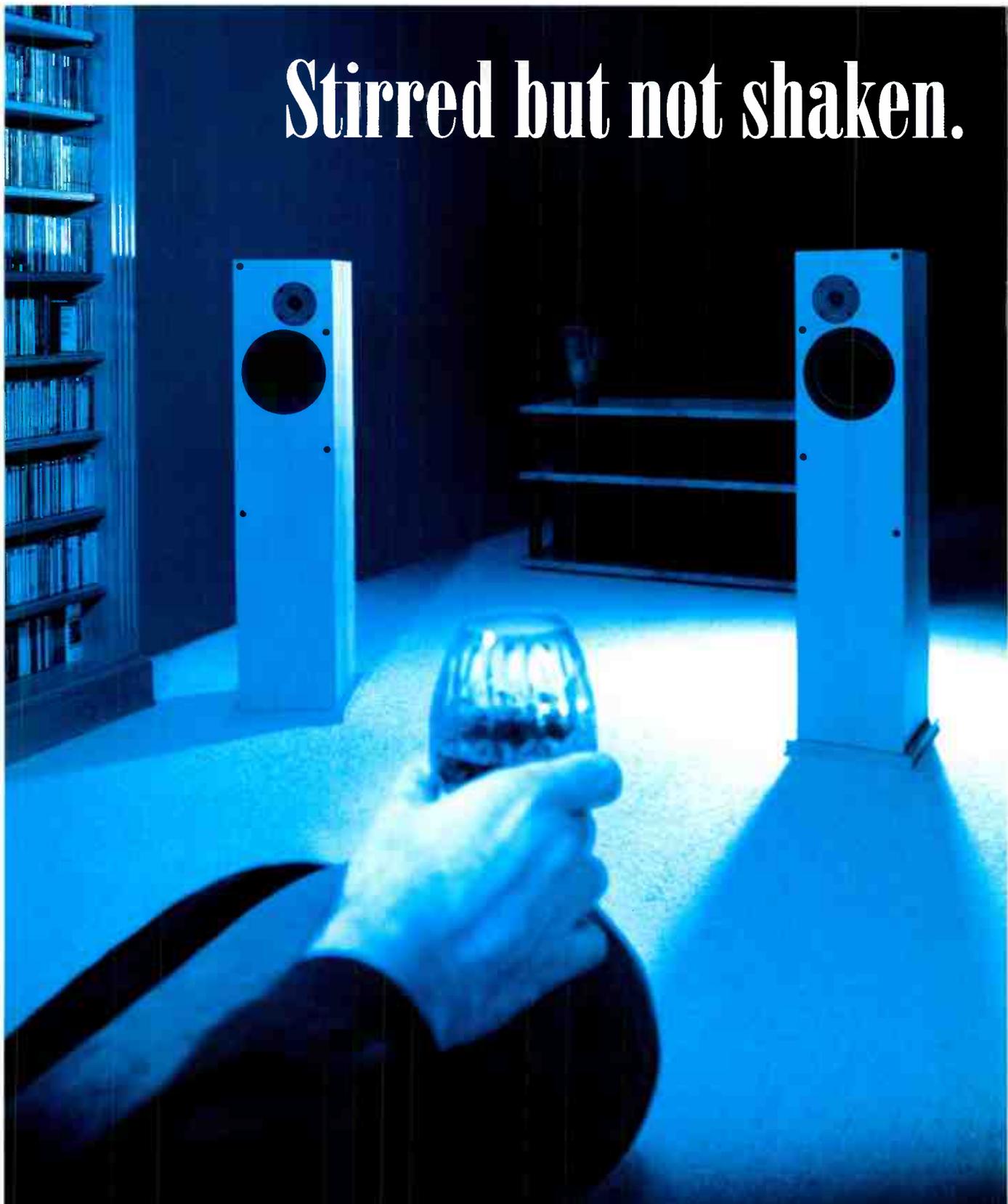
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APRIL 97

WHAT HI-FI?



HADCOCK'S HALF HOUR

Richard White greets an old vinyl trooper recalled to the colours.

A tone-arm which went out of production in 1982 might seem an unusual candidate for resurrection. Manufacturers who have tried to revive names or designs, whether their own or others', have often come a cropper. Perhaps nostalgia only paints its rosy shades on to the originals and stubbornly refuses to bless later arrivals.

Hadcock's GH 288 tone-arm and its Phœnix imitation were sparked by a continuing demand from one-time owners and an inquisitive new generation. Realizing that the fashion for ultra-compliant cartridges has waned a smidge since the Seventies, George Hadcock (in consultation with Len Gregory of Cartridge Man fame) set about up-dating the design for modern-day MCs by adding the necessary mass to the design.

The anodized aluminium arm-tube was replaced with stainless steel; the bearing housing and counterweights were machined from brass, and the bearing itself upgraded to take the extra weight. The result? The GH 288 Special Edition.

It is difficult for a unipivot to avoid a certain amount of fiddliness in the initial setting up as a greater degree of care is necessary than with standard arms. All this, coupled with the unnerving fact that the thing arrives in what appears to be kit-form, makes for a touch of performance scepticism at first glance.

Notwithstanding these points, it's got to be admitted that there is an attraction about this arm - the way it attempts to reach its goal in such modest garb attracts a slice of respect which grew as I discovered how easy it was to set up once the knack is acquired. The completely detachable arm-assembly made its presence felt here: align the arm horizontally, fix the pillar to the armboard and you can take your time doing the cartridge fixing and fine tuning. The main counterweight needs a little wiggling to get the headshell azimuth correct, but this took seconds rather than minutes.



Unless you always win the 'follow the wire without ringing the bell' game, I would strongly recommend you use the Hadcock's excellent lift/lower device. Since this arm can tilt in any direction, an uncommon degree of muscle control is required for accurately depositing the needle in the groove.

The string quartets of Schumann's youth are a handy test, with an instrumental line-up comprising two violins, 'cello and double-bass instead of the more usual viola and 'cello. All the upper-harmonic complexity which strings can deliver is coupled with a realistically low bass content. I was at the end of a side before I realised the Hadcock had not drawn attention to itself.

Impressed, I turned to the dynamic severity of Orff's Carmina Burana and again, everything was rock steady, the percussive excesses of the opening sequence well managed. This in itself was distinctly promising - the ideal of high-fidelity reproduction lies in the self-effacing properties of the equipment.

As I delved further into my record collection, I discovered that the

Hadcock was capable of an engaging, unflustered performance even supporting MCs it wouldn't at first sight gel with. Although perhaps not a marriage made in heaven, the Ortophon MC 15 and Wilson Benesch's Matrix made few grumbles about the lowish arm mass.

The late David Oistrakh was in fine fettle with Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto. This record of mine might not be in mint condition, but the Hadcock didn't make a meal of surface noise - having braced myself for the 'emptying of the dustbins' on a worn patch, I was taken aback to hear considerably more music than mush.

Inevitably there is the question of price to be considered. At £595, the Hadcock SE is not bargain-basement stuff; the stainless steel and brass do contribute a suggestion of 'hand-made' exclusivity which many will find attractive, but it's not everyone's cup of tea. The convenience of the detachable arm and the tinkability of the various parameters will bring round many not yet converted, and the arm's winning way with a multitude of different cartridges will keep ears eager.

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WORLD VERDICT



The SE's construction won't worry SME, but its sound quality will unsettle a lot of the competition.



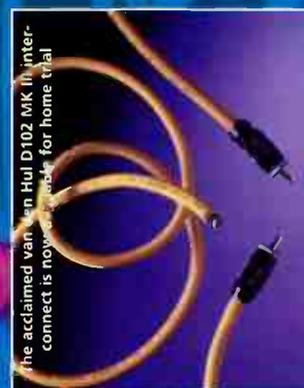
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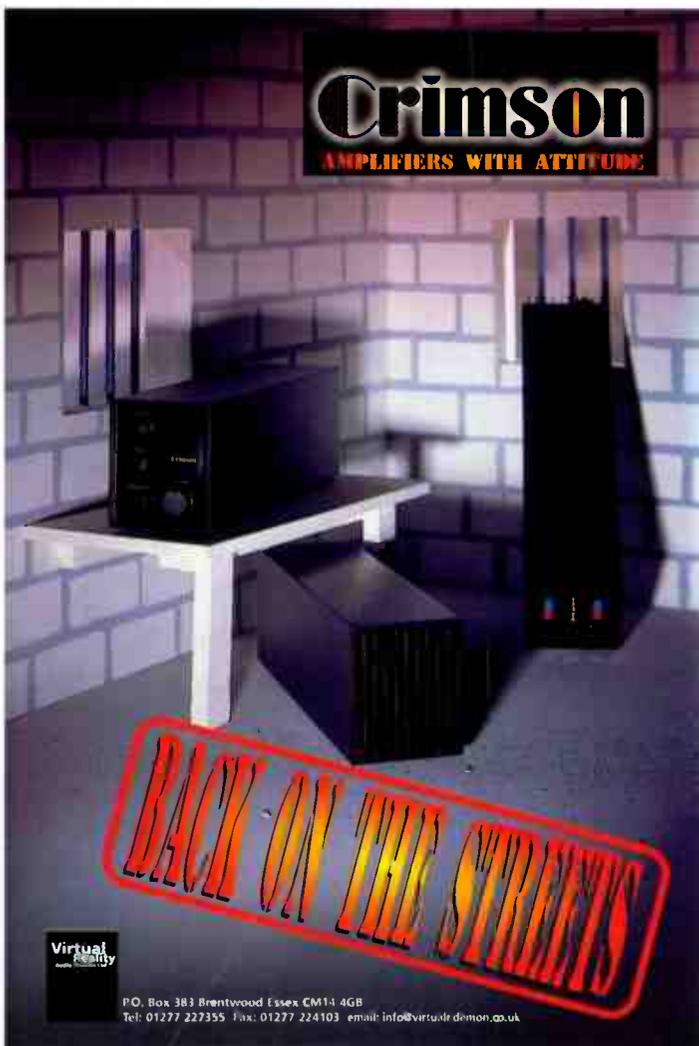
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David Price

Last Wednesday I did something quite remarkable - I deliberately didn't buy my weekly copy of the NME. I've read New Musical Express since 1978, enjoying all the great music writers from Charles Shaar Murray to Ian Penman. For me at least, it's always been a must-read for what's going on in Pop music.

But recently it's gone stale. This isn't down to the writers so much as the present dearth of good new music. And it seems I'm not alone in thinking this. Recent industry reports have noted that Pop album and singles sales have plummeted, citing the difference in figures between a Number-One album of three years ago (Oasis's *What's The Story Morning Glory?*), with this year's highest sellers like Pulp's *This Is Hardcore*. The Pulp album has sold in far fewer numbers than the Oasis disc yet still climbed to the top of the charts.

This is bad news for the music biz, make no mistake. There are loads of clever theories as to why music is declining in popularity - market demographics point to an increasingly fragmented and ageing buyer profile. There's also a wider choice of things for consumers to buy, such as cheaper games machines and mobile phones.

Some quarters of the industry have responded to this with talk of different music delivery systems, identifying the things we buy music on (pre-recorded CDs mostly) as the problem. Wouldn't it be great, they say, if music fans could choose their favourite tracks from the latest albums and burn their own custom CD at their local music shop? Alternatively, they could download them from the Internet, storing them on CD-R or

MiniDisc. This latter idea's time has come, almost - a host of music streaming sites are now springing up on the Internet, such as www.spinner.com and www.VoxPop.co.uk.

Some have predicted that super-fast, Internet-linked PCs with huge hard drives will bring 'integrated home entertainment systems' offering a whole new musical experience. For example, we'll be able to get our computers to guess which new releases we might like and download them automatically. In short, it will change the way we buy music.

There's something in this. I remember veteran Radio One DJ John Peel talking about how the explosion of the 7in. single in the late Seventies fuelled the Punk explosion. He argued that vinyl's cheap, universal nature gave ordinary kids access to the means of music production for the first time, resulting in a rapid growth in

a new idea (synthesisers have been using memory cards to store samples for over a decade), at Y4,400 (£20) for 8Megabytes, it's the cheapest so far.

The Memory Stick would be the ideal bridge between Internet audio and the outside world. A kind of 21st-century cassette, you could record anything you wanted and play it back on your PC-linked hi-fi, a flash-memory-card Walkman or in the car. Idle speculation, you say? Well, card portables using MP3 (MPEG3 compression running at a ratio of around 10:1) are already with us. Prototypes from various companies exist and it's simply a matter of waiting for memory prices to fall, which won't take long.

As for me, I'm dead excited by it all. Don't get me wrong, I'm no fan of MP3's "CD quality" sound, but using compression is only necessary while flash-memory prices are high. There are also

"Some have predicted that super-fast, Internet-linked PCs with huge hard drives will bring 'integrated home entertainment systems' offering a whole new musical experience."

easily-available, original new music. Maybe Internet audio streaming, integrated with our home hi-fis, offers similar promise?

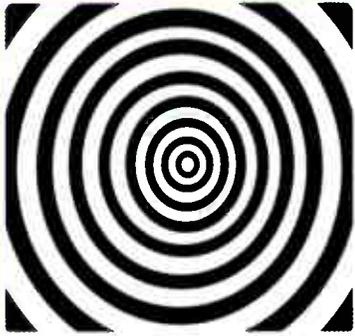
This is all very well, but how do you store your newly-downloaded music? Every 15-year-old has access to a £20 Walkman, but P450 computers with 20Gig hard drives are less common. As music distribution over the Net grows and the market shifts away from physical retail spaces, we're going to need something to store our music on.

Until recently, MD would have been the obvious choice thanks to its durability and portability, but it may soon be surpassed by a newer music carrier. According to Japan's *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, Sony have just announced the Memory Stick, a 21.5mm by 50mm by 2.8mm flash-memory module designed for use in personal computers, digital cameras and digital audio equipment. Although not

other, more music-friendly options to consider, such as Meridian's Lossless Packing system. At the current scorching rate of technological advance, hours of 24-bit 192kHz digital will fit onto something the size and cost of a postage stamp by next Tuesday. This will bring hitherto undreamed of possibilities for music production and consumption. It could herald a new 'Indie' ethos where bands make their music freely available on the Net, bypassing over-cautious record companies completely.

But what I don't think Internet audio will do is necessarily make people buy more music again. Marshall McLuhan was wrong, the medium is not the message. Fancy 'delivery systems' won't have us buying significantly more, only good new music will do that. At the first sniff of a decent release, I for one will be straight down to my local megastore. And I may even start buying NME again too●

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DRIVING UP THE WALL

Do Carlsson's Ortho-Acoustic 50.2 loudspeakers offer an alternative route to hi-fi bliss? Your map-reader is Richard White.

The Carlsson Ortho-Acoustic 50.2s fly in the face of many current orthodoxies concerning what a loudspeaker should be. In the first place, the styling has more than a touch of Bertie Bassett about it - with the complete absence of drivers poking out the front, you could be forgiven for assuming that you're inspecting a pair of stereo subwoofers.

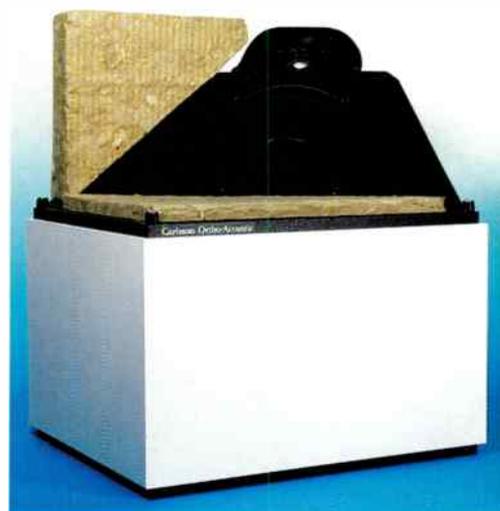
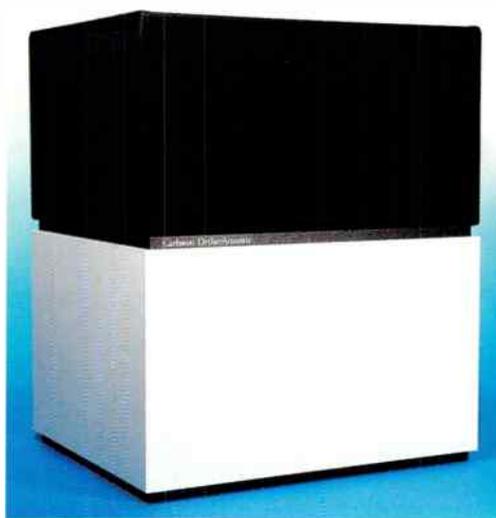
Lift off the cloth dust covers (not the place for a mug of tea, incidentally) and the visible works look even weirder. The two drivers are set at an angle on one corner of the box with no other visible means of support. A couple of inches' of absorbent felt guards against unwanted reflections from the adjacent wall.

Anyone who finds the get-up reminiscent of old Sonab omnidirectionals would be right; Stig Carlsson was the designer in both cases and was still hard at work developing his very individual acoustic ideas until his death last year. Since then the Swedish government has set up the Stig Carlsson Foundation to continue research along the lines he plotted.

The 50.2s are designed to work against a wall, so we made a couple of generous clearings in our listening room and connected them up to Musical Fidelity X-A200 monoblocs, Creek's OBH-12 pre and the Teac P-30/Chord DSC 900 for what had the makings of quite an unusual airing.

The first thing you notice about the Carlsson presentation is its 'from out of nowhere' quality, a sense that the sound is originating from sheer nothingness in front of you; this can be psycho-acoustically disturbing.

Once I'd become used to the idea that there would be nothing to look at I found that, given the right record, it was pleasantly possible to 'bask' in



the Carlsson sound, a musical wall spreading the full width of the room.

To give some more credit where it's due, the crossover point is skilfully hidden from prying ears which resulted in a very easy sound on most recordings. Piano concertos are not one of my musical passions but the 50.2s had me listening a lot more closely to a recording of Sterndale Bennett.

In spite of the overall smoothness, there was just a hint of edge to strings emerging from the metal-dome tweeters; nothing desperately offensive, but noticeable all the same. The bass response loosened its grip at times too, although a spell with the 16ft. range of an organ proved the Carlssons could deliver depth when it counts.

An outing with Arne Domnérus' Live Is Life album gave some more clues to 50.2s' capabilities. On the old Ellington signature 'Take the 'A' Train', Domnérus' alto was reproduced with a convincing full-bodied solidity that had me wishing he was a better player. As you might expect from a loudspeaker designed to operate close to the floor and one wall, stereo spacing was not pin-sharp, but what was lost on image

precision was amply re-paid by the great sense of naturalness. I found myself unconsciously craning my neck to improve my ear-sight of the rhythm section - it was that natural.

These 'speakers' self-effacing ways were further tested by our old friend Eric Bibb. Again, an acoustic recording gave very satisfactory results with the proviso that the wide sound stage could seem over-generous with more intimate music. Correct positioning is essential so I sampled 'Walking Up To Heaven' with channels reversed to check for any real anomalies in our placement. Nothing much to report, except that the mandolin and mouth-organ players took turns apparently peeping from behind the armchair - this was one of those tracks when closer spacing might have been more suitable.

A direct comparison of the Carlsson 50.2s with a conventional loudspeaker at the same price is practically meaningless. These iconoclasts demand a more individual assessment. The enormous sound-stage width might not be to everyone's taste, but with orchestral items the 50.2s lay on a generous spread and their endearingly natural balance gives very good results with most acoustic music.

Carlsson OA 50.2

£585

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WORLD VERDICT



Acoustic music gels very nicely through these 'speakers. More artificial pieces sometimes don't work quite so well.

Measured Performance
see p111

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VINTAGE VIRTUES

by Haden Boardman

There has been but a handful of truly original products in audio, items so advanced or so different they are in a class of their own. The Quad ESL 57, the first commercial electrostatic, is one of the easiest to put in this class. Voigt's original 1933 corner horn loudspeaker might not seem such an obvious one, nor Decca's Decola and its FFRR Full Frequency Range Recording system (the world's first complete high-fidelity system) but pivotal products they were.

At first glance, even less likely to be included in this group is the Alphason HR100S tone-arm, but let's consider the situation back in the late Seventies. What choice in high-end tone-arms was there? The Grace 707? Nice bearings, but nasty, cheap plastic head-shell. SME series III? Ultra-low mass but a little uncomfortable with heavier cartridges. The Hadcock unipivot and the odd Japanese import (Audio Technica, Fidelity Research, Micro, etc) just about completes the list - in short, not a lot!

The HR100S is a most unusual arm. An ultra-strong, one-piece titanium casting forms the arm-tube and head shell; tool-grade steel is used for the gimbal-bearing housing and ultra-tough ceramic for the bearings themselves. The titanium arm-tube is lined with an absorbent foam, and is shaped in an 'S' instead of the more usual 'J' shape. This gives a stronger design since it allows more rigidity in the arm/head-shell area. Although most certainly not the world's first one-piece arm (look at those pretty

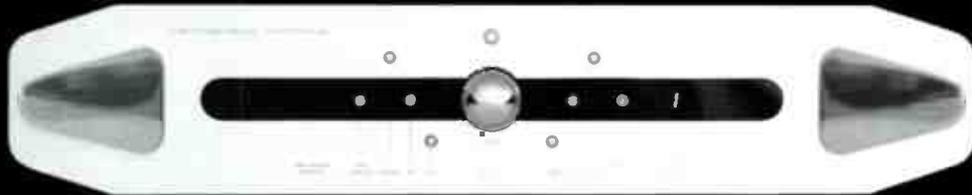
bakelite things fitted to 1930s radiograms!) it was the first such arm which could be considered truly high-fidelity.

The HR100S's inventor, Mike Knowles, was a top-flight gauge engineer by trade, and had an eye for quality and an ear for sound. He actually started making these beautiful tone-arms in his garage at home! This is well beyond what most of us mere mortals are capable of, considering that titanium is next to impossible to cut and requires the pressure of a 35 ton press just to put a kink in it. At hi-fi shows, Alphason would offer a free turntable and arm to anybody who could bend the arm-tube. Needless to say, despite the efforts of some very heavyweight bodybuilders, nobody managed to win the prize.

The arm is a work of art and something of a bargain. It is elegant, simple and it works. As regards sound, it is very, very neutral as you would expect. Its clarity and transparency come from a minimum of (carefully-controlled) resonances, the first of which starts at around 1kHz. For a medium-mass arm like this, I would recommend cartridges of 8gms-15gms as being most suitable, specifically something like an Ortofon Rohmann.

Back in 1980 the HR100S sold for a pitiful £100. Alright, Mike was making them in his garage, but how could anyone consider this the world's finest arm when it cost a 'ton' - even an early Itok was double that! The arm was finally discontinued in 1993, when the retail price was around £500 complete with monocrystal silver wiring.

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Talk about underpricing! The manufacturer's view was that, if the price was kept low, it would enhance its enthusiast appeal and consequently sell more easily. This, sadly, just does not happen. If a manufacturer does not make enough money on a product, how can he afford to tell the world about it?

For all that, Mike Knowles shifted a lot of arms. His dedicated family helped out, and a whole range of products was built up. Other arms included the Opal, Delta and Xenon. All were impressive, but none on a par with the HR100S.

In 1986 the Sonata, a sophisticated suspended turntable, was launched. Its chassis was made from drop-cast pig-iron hanging from long, adjustable, damped springs in little suspension turrets. An acrylic platter, twin motors, adjustable feet and (gasp!) a decently solid plinth rounded out the package. Again, this wonder product was very much underpriced and, despite several rave reviews, it never really stood much of a chance against the onslaught of CD. All the original models had proper electronic power supplies, but it wasn't until two years later that the superb ATLAS power supply arrived.

This PSU digitally generated the drive waveform at the requisite frequency, amplified it and applied it to the twin motors. It was built so that fussy, pitch-sensitive clients could adjust the speed of their records slightly, but the difference it made to the sound was amazing. Naturally, other manufacturers took note, and similar devices rapidly began to appear.

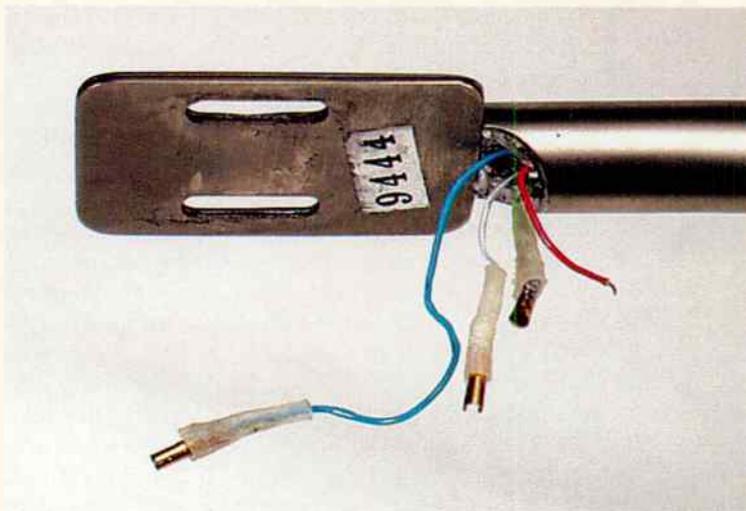
This wasn't the first time poor old Mike had suffered from imitation being the sincerest form of flattery. Another manufacturer had approached Alphason with the idea of tying the two companies up together. This opportunity came about largely as a result of the ground-breaking HR100S. After a round of visits and discussions, the deal came to nothing, but in the process Mike had naturally shown how the HR100S was made. Nothing further was heard until the launch by the other manufacturer of a one-piece arm, which has since had a long and successful life.

Another nightmare was the electronics. To complete his range, Mike looked at making amplifiers and loudspeakers as well. The amplifiers were a total disaster. A pre/power combination cooked up by an 'expert' for tens of thousands of pounds would go into complete melt down at the very slightest provocation. This was not just the power amp, but some of the early pre-amps as well!

The 'speakers were more successful, Mike putting some of his own ideas into a unique version of the well-known Tonigen ribbon tweeter. A diaphragm was developed that could survive running at temperatures in excess of 200°C (most tweeters fry once they get near 70°C). In addition to this, the unit was designed with a mechanical roll-off that side-stepped the need for a crossover. The bass unit was a TPX cone, with a simple inductor fitted to limit its high-frequency response. And under the name Sonata, two turntables were launched, the successful Solo and the not-so-successful Apollo.

The complete Alphason system sounded great, but Mike's interest had waned. To rub salt into his wounds, at the time of the electronics problems, a representative was going around telling everyone that Alphason were in dire straights when this was simply not true.

On top of this, an enthusiastic customer, thinking he was doing Alphason a favour, would badger local dealers into getting the Sonata in stock by ringing up and posing as a potential customer. Unhappily, the gentleman had a pretty distinctive accent and would also accompany Mike on dealer demonstrations! Dealers aren't stupid and spotted the 'plant' even though Alphason were completely in ignorance of his activities!



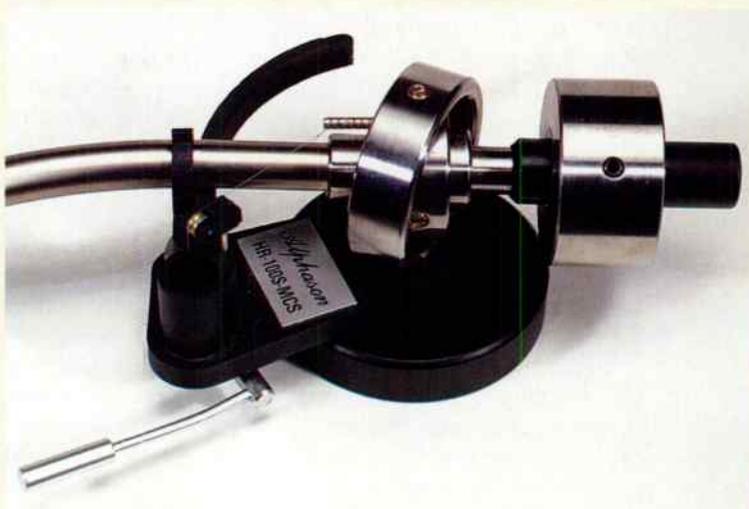
The lack of a bonded joint at the headshell plays a large part in the Alphason's sound.

Thanks to this mis-directed enthusiasm, Alphason began to lose what dealers it had and was forced to sell 'factory seconds' direct to customers. This way, you soon end up with no dealers at all.

Between 1980 and 1990, Alphason had its (unfortunately unpatented) ideas copied by other manufacturers, was ripped off for dodgy amplifiers, bad-mouthed by an ex-employee and suffered an enthusiast muddying the water with the dealers. Oh, and did I mention the peeling veneer problem on early Sonatas, which forced Mike to open his own cabinet shop?

Nobody said making hi-fi was easy, but the odds seem to have been well and truly stacked against Mike. His current range of hi-fi furniture has been a market leader for the past nine years or so, but what about the hi-fi itself? The last product to be launched was the Symphony, basically a luxury Sonata, which was a sort of swan song.

All of Alphason's components (bar the amps, of course) are good second-hand buys, especially the Sonata/Symphony and the loudspeakers. But it is the HR100S tone-arm that remains virtually untouched as a high-end bargain. It suits most expensive MC cartridges very well, offering a lucid, controlled sound quality. Beware though: Alphason has no spare parts for these units; luckily, they don't tend to need them, but avoid any arm that has bits missing. Pay between £250 and £350 (depending on age, and whether the wiring is MCS silver) and simply enjoy the music.



The ceramic bearings are located in a tool-steel housing.

There's never been a better time to buy a cassette deck. How so? Well, with MiniDisc sales beginning to soar and CD-Recordable finally making inroads, suddenly there's a plethora of decent second-hand tape decks littering the market. Yesterday's technology it may be, but choose wisely and you could pick up a machine that will still give an excellent account of itself. When used with quality tape, you'd be surprised how the best of the breed can still outperform all bar the top MD equipment.

Unlike MiniDisc, cassette suffers from no shortage of pre-recorded material, high-quality blanks can be bought almost anywhere for a quid or two, and servicing is usually a straight-forward task. So if you are tired of playing technological wait-and-see and decide on an old-fashioned tape deck to see you into the next century, which are the best used buys?

Naturally no column on the virtues of cassette could be complete without mention of Nakamichi. Despite having



Marantz's CP430 portable cassette recorder.

ceased production nearly two years ago, they are still undisputed monarchs of all they survey. Virtually any Nak is a safe bet as spares are still available for all except the oldest samples. There are, however, a few models that still stand out as the absolute best. Don't expect bargain prices, though.

When the names "CR-7E" or "Dragon" crop up in conversation, any audiophile worth his salt knows exactly what you're talking about. These two colossi cast a shadow over the whole of the cassette deck industry for nearly a decade - nothing on the market came close. So, even now, these revered three-headers don't come cheap; net either for under £1000 and you can give yourself a pat on the back.

Distinguishing features were that the CR-7 had the edge musically, while the Dragon was a gadget-freak's delight with auto-reverse and manual adjustment for just about any tape parameter you could imagine.

If these leave you sighing for fresh

worlds to conquer, there's always the 1000ZXL with its case the size of a microwave and (whoopie!) even more buttons. This is quite possibly the ultimate cassette deck, but don't strain your eyes looking for it at boot sales - the going rate is around £1500.

Thudding back down to earth, the rest of the Nakamichi CR range is getting to be pretty good value. Basic CR-1s are available from upwards of £100, whilst the CR-5 (second place to the CR-7) could be yours for under £500. Don't ignore later machines either: of the final releases, the items of choice are unquestionably the Cassette Deck 1 or DR1. Although both were pretty much identical internally, the later DR1 marked a return to traditional Nakamichi styling, being chunky and glossy rather than curvaceous like the Cassette Deck 1. Both units have manual azimuth control and can thus make a decent fist of things with pre-recorded cassettes. The new price a few years ago was between £800-£900, but now either machine can be snapped up for

between £400 and £550.

Lest we forget, it wasn't just Nakamichi that could magic compact cassette into true high-fidelity. Whilst the CR-7 was riding high, Revox pitched their similarly-priced B215 onto the market. Although it didn't sound quite as good as the CR-7, the lack of 'Nak cachet' means that they can now be picked up for around half the price, £500-£600 (a third of their price new) if you're lucky.

The B215 is merely one of many half-forgotten, latter-day bargains. The rest are mostly from the larger Japanese multi-nationals who, when they put their minds to it, could produce some very impressive kit. The honourable exception, not all that long ago, was the British company Arcam, who produced their £850 Delta 100 Dolby S deck, still a very sound machine quite readily available at prices from £400.

Of the Japanese contingent, here's a list of those worth seeking out. Aiwa are perhaps more noted for their budget



Dominic Todd

equipment, but they made some impressive high-end stuff too. The XK-009 Excelia and XK-S9000 are two oldies that can both be yours for less than £200 these days. Rather newer and still a World Favourite is the ADS-950. Again, around £200 should secure one of these stalwarts. For twin-deck fans, the ADWX-929 was one of the best to be had but you shouldn't part with more than £150.

Older Denons like the DRM-800 and DRM-44 are worth a look, and can be spotted garnering dust for £200 or less (sometimes much less). If you have a yen for battleship build and shiny wooden cheeks (in cassette decks, of course!), then the Pioneer CT-91a and CT-93 may suit: both have a level of sound quality which will put the wind up some of the lowlier Nakamichis. To name but a few more, the Akai GX-95, Marantz SD-60 and Yamaha KX-580 were all decent performers in their day and can now all be had for £150 or so.

Finally, let's not forget Sony's WM-D6C, better known to its friends as the Pro Walkman. This little baby can still be seen new in Sony Centres and duty-free stores, but plenty are knocking about second-hand from £150 upwards. A word of warning, though. Due to their appeal to the professional market, these particular decks have sometimes had a hard life and are expensive to fix. Sturdier alternatives, and my particular preferences, are the three-head portables from Superscope and Marantz. Bulkier than the 'D6C they may be, but both the CP330 and CP430 offer surprising sound and an on-board 'speaker for location work.

So there you have it, a brief guide to the pick of used cassette decks. All you have to do now is stock up on blank tapes and relax as the battles between MiniDisc and CD-R rage on. Happy taping!

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Joseph Guarneri del Gesu was both an

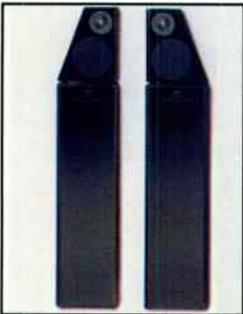
innovator and master of his craft. Attention was drawn to his instruments by Nicolo Paganini whose own "Red Cannon" can be seen in the town hall at Genoa.

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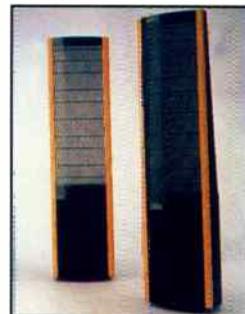
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DESERT SONG

Richard White heads into the palms for a date with Origin's Oasis-A.

An artist's palette; a cheese board; a proto-frisbee? Guess again - it's the latest arrival in the Origin Live turntable family, the Oasis-A. Eschewing conventional plinth designs (in other words it's not a box), the A's mechanics are mounted on a stylish wooden board. A simple On/Off knob to kick the platter up to 33rpm (there's no 45rpm) comprises the only control. The sample we gave ear to was fitted with one of OL's own modified Rega RB250s fitted with a Stilton-tweaked Audio-Technica OC9 cartridge.

The platter is machined from a slab of polycarbonate and has a pattern of felt dots which act as minimalist cushions for the vinyl itself. The motor is discreetly mounted at 10 o'clock and runs a standard plain drive-belt round a PVC sub-platter. As with the Oasis-S we reviewed recently, the tone-arm is fixed to a box-section steel outrigger which also carries the main bearing housing. For resonance reduction, an MDF damping block is fitted within the box-section. Sadly none of the above precautions could prevent the motor transmitting some noise via the belt to the platter.

So to play. From the start, our Decca 1974 Monteverdi set was suffering from a lack of lustre. Rank heresy I know, but I found myself doubting whether the record had been correctly cut given the dearth of sparkle. Bass, although well defined, had a spot of the 'wouldn't be here if I could avoid it', which contrasted markedly with the assurance with which the difficult string tuttis were being tracked - no mean feat given the slight warp which our copy has acquired.

Kreisler's solo violin compositions with their tortuous double-stopping and left-hand pizzicato passages can give a needle a lot to think about, particularly if spurious resultant tones are to be



avoided. The Origin/Rega/Audio-Technica collection navigated the shoals comparatively easily, but again in a dulled manner, almost as if the treble was being rolled off.

On the track of that elusive spark, we changed over to a Reson Recca MM cartridge to check whether it was simply an excess of good manners on the part of the OC9. The proceedings were soon restarted with Benny Carter's *Swingin' The Twenties* album. Although the sound of Earl Hines trying to escape the chains of the rhythm section threatened to drag my attention from the turntable itself and on to the music, Benny Carter's smooth but breathy alto was manifestly in good voice. This re-master of a 1958 stereo record naturally suffers from ping-pong tendencies in the mixing but the recording itself is surprisingly sprightly for 40 years old. Breathiness needs plenty of treble clarity to put across well and I was reassured by the urgency with which Carter's deceptively languid-sounding phrasing came over.

Cross-checking with the Monteverdi once more confirmed that the Reson/Origin was a much happier combination, the ultra-courtesy gone and more genuine excitement discernible.

An outing with a staggeringly poor pressing of the Oistrakhs, father and son, laying into the Bach Double Violin Concerto failed to shake the Origin's composure. Considering that this piece of vinyl had all the sonic symptoms of a Hoover-load of fluff trailing from the needle with a couple of ashtrays thrown in for good measure, the tracking performance with which the Oasis-A endowed the arm and cartridge was exemplary.

The Oasis-A is another solid performer from the Origin Live stable. However, the biggest hurdle it faces is the price. In its field there's a lot of competition from the likes of Pink Triangle's Tarantella and VPI's Junior; good design, good performance and good looks are not enough to put the OL at the head of its class, even if it's not far off.

Origin Live Oasis-A
£950 (without arm)

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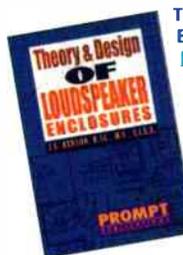


Nice looks and good sound but expensive with it.

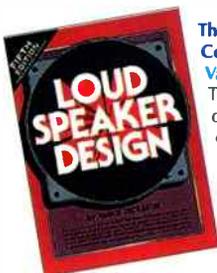
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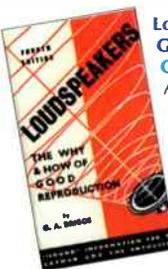
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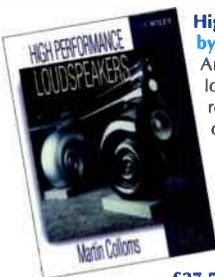
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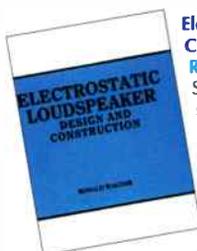
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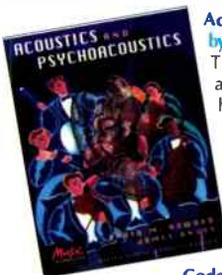
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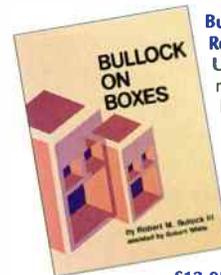
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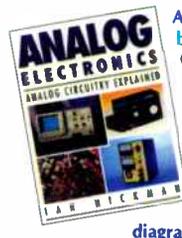
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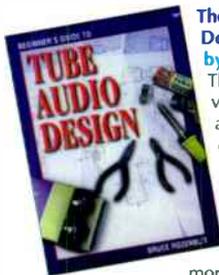


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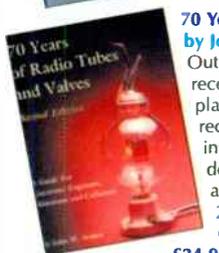
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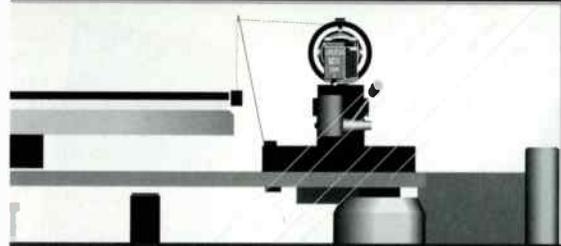
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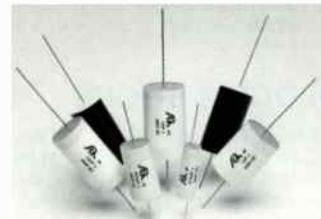
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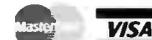
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FOUNTAIN OF KNOWLEDGE

Richard White spends an evening of hi-fi Nirvana in the company of reader Colin Dobson and his rather special loudspeakers.



Some months ago I found myself giving Colin Dobson a lift home. We had been playing at a pub gig in north London and, as is usual on a longish drive, we were busy putting the world to rights. In the course of the conversation, we got on to the subject of 'recreational listening', and from there it was a comparatively short step to, "what do you listen on?"

I tentatively started with my usual line: "Do you remember a firm called Leak, valve stuff?" which I use in order to avoid boring non-initiates with a catalogue of vintage high-end equipment. Colin did remember the said company and soon had me on the ropes with the catalogue of loudspeakers he had given house-room to. When he concluded with "I've got a pair of Autographs now," I was at first none the wiser (ignorant swine, I know!), so obviously I had to see them for myself. From seeing them to Reader's System was but a short step. Now read on. . .

RMW Where did you first see the Tannoy Autographs?

CD I heard them before I saw them, in a way. I had popped

in to an audio show at a hotel over Swiss Cottage way and heard something that sounded special even when I was outside in the corridor; I just stuck my head round the door and saw them. I'd never heard anything like it!

RMW Love at first hearing?

CD Yes. It was the first time I'd heard what you might call real realism in a loudspeaker, just the music floating out with no sense of a 'box' being involved at all.

RMW Tannoy didn't exactly give them away though, did they? I mean it would have taken a good few piggy-bank raids to have bought them from new.

CD That's right - a lot of money. When the Tannoy works were in Norwood I dropped in once and found one of the carpenters making an Autograph up in the reception area, so they might have been just made to order as required.

RMW Aside from the Swiss Cottage experience, what put you on to Tannoy loudspeakers in the first place?

CD Well, from 1961 I was with the Billy Cotton band. Being a musician was almost a 'proper' job in those days because all the variety shows (and there were loads of 'em) had a live show band to accompany everything. Even if the show was recorded it was done as if 'live', which obviously made a lot of work for musicians.

RMW I know it strikes me sometimes as a bit quaint that 'just' a comedy show like the Goons or Kenneth Horne still had a live orchestra.

CD That's right - 'full employment'! We did all the 'Band Show' television and the famous "Wakey! Wakey!" Sunday morning shows. When we recorded for the radio at the Aeolian Hall in Bond Street, all the monitor 'speakers were Tannoy drivers in a sort of square Lancaster cabinet; some of them were self-powered with an amp mounted on them. Hearing those monitors week by week made me think a bit, especially with the reputation the BBC had then for using quality stuff.

RMW What sort of equipment had you tried thus far, and what was the amplification you were listening to?

CD When stereo came along I had an HMV Stereoscope integrated amp which did very nicely.

RMW Wasn't that the one with the oscilloscope on it for adjustments? What happened to it?



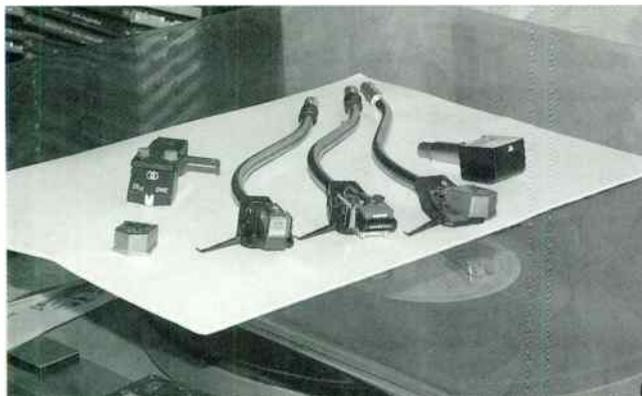
Colin's Thorens TD125 with its SME III tone-arm.

CD Unfortunately the output transformers burnt out; I took it for repair-assessment to a fella that ran a second-hand shop and while it was there his shop got burned down! The last I heard of that amp, someone else had got the blackened remains to have a look at but I don't think he could do anything with it.

As far as loudspeakers go, I've had a few; one of the earlier ones I tried was the Decca Corner Horn; that was a sort of folded pipe which was a bit fierce facing outwards but if it spoke into a corner as it was designed to, it didn't sound too bad. Then I had one of the Voigt Corner Horns, the Punch and Judy cabinet! I bought it from a chap in North London and fetched it home half poking out the back of a little Fiat estate; that would've been about 1960, I suppose. When I'd got it at all set up I remember we sat down to listen to a symphony concert being broadcast live. Someone coughed in the audience and my wife, Joyce, looked round to see who was in the room, it was such a natural sound! I ran that one along with my little Decca horn for a bit but then the Voigt got wood-worm and I didn't dare keep it in case it got into everything else. I sold it to one of the members of the Harry Kline Saxophone Quartet who wanted to make up a pair.

RMW I know from personal experience that horn loudspeakers can be a bit more-ish once you've had one, but did you ever consider anything like, say, electrostatics along the way?

CD Now, I heard some of them and didn't really get on with 'em. I felt that they sounded a bit 'electricity'. On gigs I never liked playing against electric instruments like Hammond organs and electric pianos, so that may be why I didn't take to electrostatics.



One point in the SME's favour are its interchangeable arm wands.

I had a pair of Lowther Audiovectors which did me quite nicely; that was the one with one upward facing driver, a PM4 I think; bulky job about the size of a fridge! Someone came all the way from Norfolk to buy those in a little Morris traveller; I don't think he'd realized quite how big they were. We had a lot of fun trying to get them in his car, first getting one wedged in and then trying to find room for the other; he went back to Norfolk with his back doors flapping!

RMW Once the Tannoy bug had bitten, did you have a long wait for the Autographs to turn up?

CD Well, long enough to consider maybe something like the GRFs. I went to see a chap who had about three pairs of those but he'd 'modernized' them by stripping off all the finish and painting the enclosures black. They didn't look very handsome after that!

I managed to get a pair of 15in. Monitor Golds; they were out in the barn on a farm. Whoever had been using them had put the drivers into a couple of monster cabinets like Disco boxes. I said, "Well I don't need all that stuff, I've just come for the drivers," so they simply sawed off the rest! I had those built into small-ish cabinets and used them for PA on gigs for a bit. They wound up with a buyer who had them put into York-type cabinets, so after a long journey I s'pose they found a good home.

When at last I saw the Autographs advertised I was practically in the car before I'd put the phone down.

RMW I've been wondering why anyone who'd got a pair would willingly give them up. You'd think that these would be a 'loudspeaker for life'.

CD Actually their owner had his hand forced a bit. He and his missus were in a flat in Wimbledon and the Autographs were placed so that they overlapped a large window a bit either side; only a matter of six inches, but she didn't like it so they had to go!

RMW I hope they then lived happily ever after! Was your wife pleased to see them?

CD Well, when we got home from collecting them and were tugging them out of a borrowed Dormobile, she did say, "You said they were big, but not that big!" As a matter of fact, most visitors scarcely notice them, because the cabinet work is good at blending in with the surroundings. Down the length of a longish room like this they tuck in quite nicely, although I s'pose in a bedsit you might have a job.

RMW Before we take an earful, I notice that you've got quite a bundle of cartridges to choose from and you still use an SME Series III. As far as I can recall these seem to be thought of as a good arm that sort of 'missed the bus'.

CD Ah! But you get all the convenience of being able to change cartridges easily plus, in any case, it's a top-grade arm; the only thing I can't use it for is one of my Decca ffs cartridges. Before the Series III came along I used a 3009 which dates back to when they used to advertise as 'the best in the world', so I've kept it to use with the really heavy cartridges.

Before the Thorens TD125 Mk2 I've got now I had a couple of Connoisseurs. To get the 3009 to fit on one of those I had to carry

out a bit of adaptation to the plinth. Eventually I thought I'd make myself a complete new custom job for the deck and the arm, but you know how things go. The deck and the wood for the plinth is still up in the loft, waiting! My Thorens is housed in an SME custom plinth which suits it quite well.

RMW Odd having 16rpm but no 78. . .

CD Well, I don't know whether 16s fizzled out before they got anywhere but I don't want to be playing 78s on these cartridges anyway so I'm not worried. I've found the speed variation handy for getting in tune for practising along with, although I think I might have once burnt out a Thorens motor by trying to slow it down even more manually!

RMW Do you have a favourite out of all these pick-ups?

CD Not really - it's horses for courses, in a way. For instance, although they're supposed to be the same, each of the Decca Golds behaves differently. The Ortophon I used to use with a transformer but my current Sony amplifier has good MC provision so I rely on that. What with those and the Shure V15 you can imagine why I hesitated a long time before getting into CD because logically it could lead you into replacing your entire LP collection. Some of my records are irreplaceable but in the end I succumbed and got a CD player. As I feared the collection is already beginning to eat into living space!

RMW Those appear to be fairly serious cassette machines you have wired into your system.

CD I use those for transcribing tape to tape; they used to belong to a BBC man who lived round here. They're Sony TC158SDs which came out at the end of the Seventies, I think, and were dearish then.



Cassette replay and recording comes courtesy of a pair of Sony TC158SDs.

RMW You've had no urge to surround yourself with batteries of valves and low-output stuff to match your Tannoys?

CD No. In any case I've got other 'speakers to run as well, so I like to keep my options open. These were knocked up with KEF drivers amongst others by a Mr Rogers - not the amplifier man, but one who used to review in the hi-fi press; he made them for a friend of his and I find that they still have their uses at times when I don't want a full 'wall of sound'. I've tried running them with the Tannoys as well but unfortunately any other 'speaker always

sounds so inefficient beside them: you can hear the effect of an extra pair but only just.

RMW Speaking of playing the Tannoys...



Looking like matchboxes next to the Tannoys are Colin's other 'speakers with KEF drivers.

Colin put some music on and we luxuriated in a room full of glorious sound. No struggling, no straining, just unbelievable chunks of solid music. To listen in the kitchen, put the volume up half a notch; to listen upstairs, up another fraction. The funny thing is that, wherever in the house you're listening to the Autographs, you hear the full music with practically no noticeable reduction in quality or bandwidth. How it's done I don't know, but I could probably get used to it.

Having thanked Colin for his time, I drove home and stupidly decided to put on some music. It was when I heard what now sounded like tinny rubbish wafting out of my Leak-driven three-way corner horns that I realized the deadly lure of the Tannoy Autographs; unless you're very careful, they could just spoil you for anything else!



ROCK & POP

by Jon Clarke & Stuart Lenz



100% COLUMBIAN
**FUN LOVIN'
 CRIMINALS**
 CAPITOL 7243 4 97056 2 3

What a difference a couple of years and a few quid makes. It's nigh on 700 days since the Criminals' Come Find Yourself first larged it into the charts with its streetwise Big Apple charm. With bags of swagger, it had attitude to match and became an anthem for B-boys and students alike.

While they still wear the Tarantino-style zoot suits, sneakers and De Niro smirks, their (un)subtly titled new album, 100% Colombian, finds Huey and his fun lovin' mates on a far more even keel, with raps about robbing banks on valium swapped for tender love songs. Well, not exactly, but their maturity shows in spades, and below the cartoon, gangsta shtick, these platinum-selling wiseguys show us an enviable musical ability - with large dollops of phat, white homeboy Soul churned out with Huey's inimitable semi-whispered, pimp rolling prose.

On 100% Colombian, the

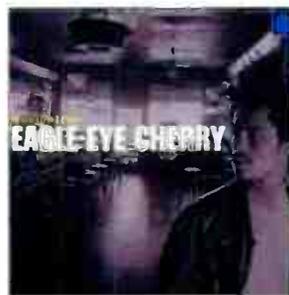
FLCs favour street narratives along the lines of the beat poets; if you've missed the likes of Kerouac and Burroughs, then 'Back On The Block' and 'Big Night Out' are real treats, conjuring up little snapshots of life. The latter is, amusingly, about treating Huey's homeboys to an extravagant model-strewn night on the town, reinforced with the teasing chorus, "I got a model on my 'D'" - it doesn't take much to work that one out.

But there are other great compositions here. The husky voiced 'We Are All Very Worried About You' is the tenderest ballad yet. Recent single, 'Love Unlimited', is a smooching homage to Barry White (you know the one: "Barry White saved my life") with a plot similar to Space's brilliant anthem 'Tom Jones'. Then there's the smooth '10th Street', which alternates between Skiffle verses, Rock choruses and police sirens: JJ Cale meets Aerosmith if ever such a union could be achieved.

There are some lower-grade ingredients cut into the mix too though. A tendency to peddle the same formulas found on their debut - building moods through repetition - mars things a little, and the well-heeled grooves they use can get tiresome. 'Sugar', a song about a dog, may be a funny anecdote, but we've heard it all before and Huey's not fooling anybody.

The rest of the album is left dangling until the very last track, when BB King's cameo appearance on 'Mini Bar Blues' brings a much needed restorative swing into the proceedings.

But what do they care? New-York laissez faire is the attitude and if it all went belly-up tomorrow, to keep them going they'd still have - and I kid you not! - the Di Fontaine Carting And Asbestos Removal Company, the dustcart investment vehicle for Huey, Fast and Steve's songwriting profits. And you can't get much more 'street' than that.



EAGLE-EYE CHERRY
DESIRELESS
 POLYDOR 5372262

"Cherry" is usually a word associated with Datsun. Fortunately for Eagle-Eye, in his case the link is to Neneh and Don, his dad and half-sister respectively. And when you've got one of the world's most famous Jazz trumpeters as a father and a sexy hussy of a sibling like Neneh, you've got to have some sort of musical talent. And it's no

surprise this man does.

Neither textbook Pop, nor anything like Neneh's eclectic, wilful Soul, Eagle-Eye still has the necessary depth and a quiet strength to pull off a major musical coup.

For all the diversity of his background (which includes endless shuttling between urban New York and rural Sweden, where he currently lives), Eagle-Eye's influences are far less exotic than his sister and dad's. In fact, they're strongly American in flavour. Imagine formative years weaned on Bob Dylan, Neil Young and Jackson Browne followed by a nod to more contemporary singer/songwriters like Lenny Kravitz and you wouldn't be too far from the truth.

Eagle-Eye writes the sort of songs that either rate as slow growers or instant lemons on first listen for being, ostensibly at least, AOR nonsense. Patience is rewarded however.

A stripped-down, band-based production reveals songs to be chiefly split between rootsy-Blues stories ('Indecision', 'Worried Eyes') and starry-eyed ballads with a heavy emphasis on acoustic guitars ('Conversation', 'Permanent Tears').

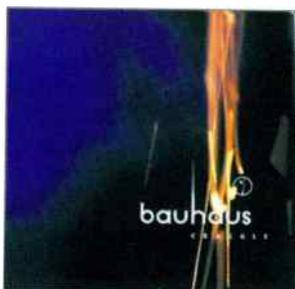
The obvious effortlessness of Cherry's songwriting is enviable, but let down occasionally by a nagging tendency to play out the same musical ideas. Take 'Save Tonight' and 'Falling In Love': he should be impeached for

ROCK & POP

employing exactly the same driving hook in both.

The balance is redressed, however, by a few bold experiments like the Beckesque 'Shooting Up In Vain' and the free-flowing Jazzy title track, which shifts curiously into a mantra-driven invocation of the spirits (par for the course if you're Santana in '69, but highly unusual for anybody in 1998). These excursions offer proof that his talent is far from spent. And thankfully not once does he even begin to sound like fellow Scand-Pop creations, Ace Of Base or Aqua.

Eagle-Eye Cherry, so named because at birth he gave his father a fixed stare, certainly has the world in view now, but whether he will take it by storm or not is open to question. More probably his zen-like inner peace will produce a restraint which means the world will simply have to come to him.



BAUHAUS
CRACKLE
BEGGAR'S BANQUET
BEGL2018CD

The driving rain, the gaunt

skeletal looks and a Maxell cassette on the stereo - few can forget the TV advert that brought Goth to the mainstream. Featuring handsome Bauhaus frontman Pete Murphy, it helped gain his band overnight recognition, but swiftly ended in tears when the band split up in 1983.

Now, 15 years on, there's something of a rebirth. With the rise of Placebo, Marilyn Manson and the Smashing Pumpkins, the bloated and rotten carcass of Goth has been resurrected, and next thing you know the original innovator has stirred from its coffin. God forbid that this now sets a precedent for the likes of Alien Sex Fiend and Sex Gang Children!

Out of the blue, Bauhaus decided to return and booked two LA shows amid a flurry of media attention. The result was the fastest sell-out shows since the 1991 tour by Jane's Addiction (so there is still an appetite out there for whiny vocals, repetitive beats and creepy guitars).

Bauhaus haven't just been loafing around since 1983 however: guitarist Daniel Ash and original Bauhaus bassist David J. rubbed shoulders in Love And Rockets. Vocalist Peter Murphy has also been involved in an interesting range of solo vocal and Dance projects. But none of these efforts quite reached the enduring highs of Bauhaus' four-year reign together, what

with their stylish visual image and original, thrusting music style, which is encapsulated in this intriguing compilation.

Crackle is a timely reminder that it was possible for Goth bands to produce songs that were both spunky and menacing, yet still commercial, an achievement equalled by few of their twisted contemporaries.

Although this compilation contains no new tracks, it does include the legendary and very spooky 'Bela Lugosi's Dead' (still great after all these years) and is their only album to do so. Neatly straddling the band's four albums and various EPs, this collection's choice of songs strikes a decent balance between their heaviest and most commercial tracks.

'Double Dare' and 'In The Flat Field' sound as frantically primal as they did in 1980, as does 'Dark Entries'. Of the other highlights, it's their dabbling with Bowie's influence, most straightforwardly on 'Ziggy Stardust', and then on camp capers such as 'The Passion Of Lovers' and 'She's In Parties', that hold up best. The presence of 'Lagartija Nick' and 'Telegram Sam' would have made Crackle a superlative compilation, but these have been left out for reasons best known to the label.

Whether this compilation is an exercise in nostalgia or some new chapter in

Bauhaus' future no-one quite knows at present. A European tour beckons and then it's back into the unknown. So for the present at least they can still be remembered fondly as the only Northampton band to have created a European art movement.



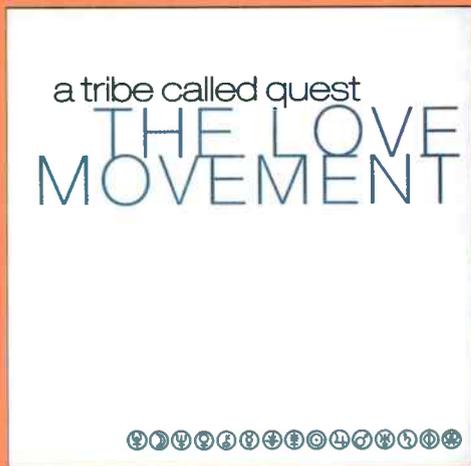
BABYBIRD
THERE IS SOMETHING
GOING ON
ECHO ECHCD24

Babybird frontman Stephen Jones used to live in a cramped Sheffield bedsit, comprising a bed and a four-track on which, for little other reason than his own amusement, he recorded over 400 songs. Releasing some of them independently on his own (too uncommercial for the labels), he spawned a minor cult. Then came 'You're Gorgeous' and Ugly Beautiful, and he became a household name overnight.

There Is Something Going On, Babybird's second album, continues this rather strange tradition of making commercially unworkable songs viable. The byproduct

ROCK & POP

RECORD OF THE MONTH



A TRIBE CALLED QUEST
THE LOVE MOVEMENT
JIVE 705.2103.2

The Love Movement will one day stand as the final chapter of an education in street style. The last of five innovative albums, it sadly marks the end of the finest Rap band of the decade.

A Tribe Called Quest, who hit the ground running in 1990, will certainly be missed. Kicking off with the much acclaimed (and brilliantly-titled) *People's Instinctive Travels And*

The Paths Of Rhythm, they made an immediate impact as a posse exploring the possibilities of psychedelic Hip-Hop. While the turf may already have been laid by De La Soul's *Three Feet High And Rising*, ATCQ took things further, and following the release of their excellent single 'Can I Kick It?' ("yes

yer can!") which sampled Lou Reed's 'Walk On The Wild Side', they firmly established themselves as the undisputed champions of the renaissance.

Here on their epitaph it's fitting that they don't stray too far from their roots. Fusing the cheery melodies of *People's Instinctive* and the incessant head-nodding beats of 1991's wicked *Low End Theory*, the Love Movement is in many ways the best of the five albums.

Opening well with 'Start It Up', a Dubby rant reminiscent of earlier Tribe, the album picks up pace slowly with the smoochy, soulful 'Find A Way' before heading on into 'Da Booty' and the firing 'Steppin' It Up', featuring troubadours and men of the moment Busta Rhymes and Redman. But the

lyricists from Queens and turntable wizard Ali-Shaheed don't blend perfectly until 'Like It Like That' and 'Common Ground'.

Generally the songs are ultra-minimalist, each one quite different from what has gone before. As we all know, love has many forms and The Love Movement tries to cover them all. 'Find A Way' deals with the unrequited love you might feel for a girl who's only been a friend, and who you have only ever flirted with. 'Da Booty' follows hot on its heels and is a freestyle record suggesting things have hotted up somewhat. . . Now is that the way to behave, gentlemen!? It's love, love, love all the way down the line, which is the way the Tribe are thankfully gonna leave us. Peace, brother.

is odd and rather mixed, with some high as well as very low points.

Making awkward songs palatable is a tricky affair at the best of times, and doomed if their substance is suffused with a dark morbidity. Lyrically, this record is infested with all manner of unpleasanties - songs about twisted individuals who put razor blades in ice-cream, for example. The message is plain: all humans are contemptible and humour itself has vacated the premises and slammed the

door as it went. Ugly, ugly rather than ugly, beautiful.

If the text depresses, it is the delicate charm of the instrumentation and the cleverly simple melodies that hold Babybird together. But there are few strident anthems in the vein of 'You're Gorgeous' or that other surging masterpiece, 'Goodnight'. There's *Something Going On* goes one step further than trying to just hang songs on contagious choruses.

Babybird seem this time to have gone for a more rounded quality and the

result is sublime cinematic majesty. 'If You'll Be Mine' is perhaps closest to the first album in style, outwardly sweet but inwardly sour. It's songs like the possessive 'You Will Always Love Me' and 'Bad Old Man' which are the classics here.

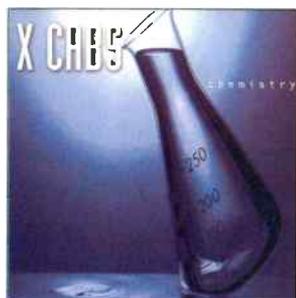
The band's readiness to mix it up too helps for a maturer sound. Alongside the liberal use of strings and jangly Indie guitar Pop, Babybird throw in a little Drum 'n' Bass, with Stephen himself displaying a real talent for several vocal styles. 'I Was Never Here' for

instance bears more than a passing resemblance to Julian Cope's yodellings.

Cut from the same cloth as this year's Pulp record, *This Is Hardcore*, *There Is Something Going On* is a wander through Stephen's warped mind. Not everyone's idea of entertainment is to survey scenes of uncompromising extremes, neglect and hideousness, but he has made a sterling effort to popularise just that. Eccentric to be sure, but frankly and surprisingly up there with 1996's *Ugly Beautiful*.

DANCE & AMBIENT

by Sara Davis



X CABS
CHEMISTRY
HOOK HKCDXY03

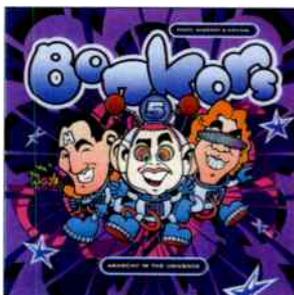
X Cab's musical baptism stormed into popular consciousness with dancefloor classic 'Neuro', a special favourite with just about every DJ who counts. One reason for the support might be the DJ-friendly intro of sustained, thumping bass and little else - mixing was never easier. But from here on in, uplifting Trance riffs mount logically into the type of rising orchestral melody Robert Miles might produce, a formulaic but infectious recipe for Dance anthem status.

'Cut To Zero' will be the next 12in. to hit the decks and showcase the X Cabs commercial-Trance angle, which can be described as unrelenting Trance rhythm broken down by waves of orchestral chords à la epic House, but bounced-up melodically.

Chris Cowie, the man behind X Cabs, has already achieved ample success with this musical philosophy. Track 9, 'Infectious', (the most recent single) was a huge hit that brought further kudos to the Scottish Trance

scene and built on the foundations laid by Limbo, Soma, Slam and so on. 'Engage' is yet another sample of solid Trance made spiritual and commercial with no loss of musicality.

Few can claim the support of DJs as diverse as Kevin Greening, John Peel, Oaky, Digweed, Billy Nasty and Danny Rampling. The chemistry must be working.



VARIOUS
BONKERS 5: ANARCHY IN THE UNIVERSE
REACT CD141

The fact that Bonkers 5 has turned up at all is a surprise. This release, the fifth in a series of consistent Hardcore compilations which have so far achieved, um, 'reasonable' success, comes at happy Hardcore's all-time low in terms of popularity. After a long-winded, low-in-substance debate in the music press that revolved around 'House vs Hardcore?', most of the genre's loyal ravers either got fed up with the abuse or just grew up and ditched the vibe.

The decline of the scene was augmented by badly-managed Hardcore events

and a tight-knit posse of DJs who seemed to panic and churn out 'safe' releases that inadvertently stunted the music's growth. But it now seems that Kiss FM's Hardcore show featuring Hixxy, Sharkey and Dougal may have saved the day by bringing quality Hardcore to the South East, thereby securing serious promotional opportunities for the sound.

Bonkers 5 may well help revitalise the scene too. It showcases three CDs of classy tunes - speedy, uplifting, cheesy and proud of it. Trendy Southerners can sneer all they like, it's about time Hardcore was given a bit of respect and airtime, even if it does sound like a cross between Europop and Gabba. Don't expect profound musicality; do expect manic bpm's that only the youngest and fittest will be able to keep up with, gradad.



LARRY HEARD
ICE CASTLES
MECCA MECCD-002

Heard earned the nickname 'Mr Fingers' for his digital talents and, although he started his career as a drummer in a covers band,

it's his quick-fingered production skills that fans lust after. Stylistically, the man swings between virtuous House albums such as Introduction and Back To Love and textural works like Alien and Scenarios Not Songs, the only common feature being the self-explanatory titles.

So, Ice Castles then: a slice of House with a frosty bite or chilled-out Ambience? Well, neither, actually. The opener, 'Crystal Fantasy', is filled with warm and smoochy Soul-Funk and sounds something like an instrumental version of Barry White low-tempo bump 'n' grind. It's a style to suit a fondue party in a dodgy Seventies Funk club called Volcano rather than Crystal Fantasy.

'Tryblennasense' is a less-misleading moniker. It spreads the same cheesy hand-claps and melodies over a tribal beat and has a classy feel along the lines of 'Barry White gets down to the rhythm of the rain forest'

On the whole, Ice Castles is one of those pieces that treads the fine line between slowed-down soulful Techno and something that's so bland it can only be termed a 'dinner-party sound track' from your mum's days as a hostess 20 years ago. Now you might hear this type of music on one of those 'picturesque landscape' programmes found on late-night TV, complete with aerial shots of crisp ice caps and polar sunsets.

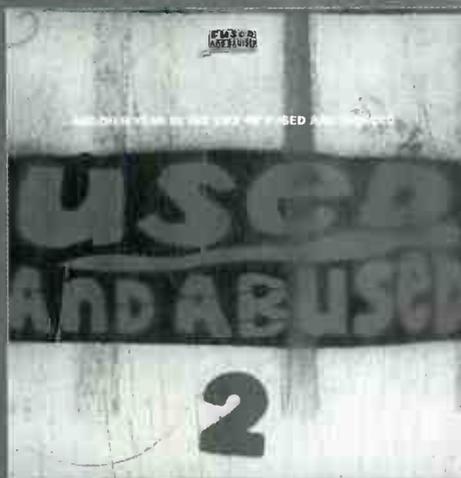
DANCE & AMBIENT

RECORD OF THE MONTH

USED AND ABUSED - ANOTHER YEAR IN THE LIFE OF FUSED AND BRUISED

FUSED AND BRUISED FABRCOMP2

As seen in last month's competition issue, Used And Abused is the second album release from the label to grace these pages. The first introduced F&B concept 'Brisco' (that's Breakbeat crossed with Disco), an underground version of the Big-Beat thing which Fat Boy Slim has made popular. This compilation features all the regular artists from the label - Surreal Madrid, Subtropic, Silverkick and so on - and much of the album is dedicated to more of the Brisco vibe with shallow, tinny samples over bustin' Big Beats taken



from the Hip-Hop scene. Much as the Brisco vibe sounds ever-fresh, the beauty of Used is that a good

portion of the CD devotes itself to pushing forward the boundaries of the musical category. Futurecore's offering springs instantly to mind with its falloping, yawning and oh-so-Funky 'Anno Mundi 6000'. Faultline's 'Papercut' is possibly the most experimental addition (they are new to the label), laying long drawn-out piano solos or sections of strings over low, low bass with excessive feedback at a crazy tempo.

Silverkick's offering stands out as the brightest and coolest version of Brisco, though, swapping chunky Breakbeat for a steady Trance bassline and hi-hat whilst maintaining the genre's trademark Disco pizzazz. If you didn't enter last month's competition, I'm afraid you're a donkey.



K-KLASS
K2 - THE SECOND ALBUM
PARLOPHONE 7243 4969 4729

Only two albums in 10 years means that this K-Klass release is a little bit special. Anyone who picked up a copy of the first outing, Universal, back in '93 will remember how refreshing its blend of big, twangy beats and Housey choruses was in a stagnant musical atmosphere of laborious, repetitive House. K-Klass captured the emerging vibe of Tricky and Leftfield and fused it into soulful, energetic House and Garage. So what now?

Five years and a fair few

prestigious remix projects later and K-Klass should have evolved a sound to really aspire to. Well, some will aspire to the sounds of K2 but not those that prioritise innovation or character - this is unfortunately K-Klass going

through the mediocre Garage motions. Every track features the same mix of cool hand-clap Garage and funky Gospel vocals, but there's nothing to really get your teeth into.

There's no doubt that K-Klass can do this vocal-orientated thing better than most, and with on-going sets and contacts with the biggest US House DJs they're still experts of the genre. However, K2 has lost the underground vibe that made Universal so fresh and exciting. Instead, it comes across sounding like a slightly improved Rick Astley album, which ain't saying much.



JOUJOUKA
JOUJOUKA
MATSURI MPCDP19

Rumour has it the Japanese have a talent for reproducing technological products in miniature. Without wishing to condone such a blatant generalisation, it has to be said that Joujouka is an innovative reproduction of fantastic Techno, if not in miniature then minimalism. Not only that, but it comes with perfect styling, a sleek and forceful character bristling with flair that traces a musical tangent away from the beaten

tracks Matsuri usually follows.

Track 1, which gives the album its name, opens with the sounds of distant war drums and a haunting vocal yodel that builds up the rhythm and sound effects with increasing power. 'Re-psyche Frequency' revamps this concept of gradually rising tempo but at about a million bpm higher thanks to a top-pitch Drum 'n' Bass line studded with the trademark Matsuri Trance noises. It's fast, fiery and frantic; call it Speed Drum 'n' Bass.

After the likes of 'Talking Drum No Maho' (another particularly hectic number with pounding bass and more hollow beats than a drum workshop) you'll have come to the same conclusion about Joujouka as the final tune, 'The Right Stuff'. The combination of hard-fisted beats, menacing Techno effects and saucy vocal sampling is the stuff that electric dreams are made of.

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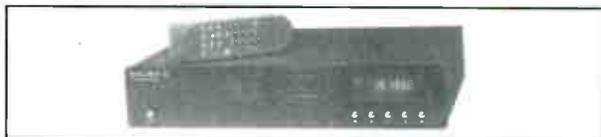
Rega System



★★★★★ June '97



★★★★★ March '97



★★★★★ Dec '97



★★★★★ Good Hi Fi Guide '98



★★★★★ June '96



JAZZ

by Ian Nicolson



CARLA BLEY
**FANCY CHAMBER
MUSIC**
ECM/WATT CDS39 937

Carla Bley is sixty this year, which factoid seems so far beyond the range of the probable that it's worth repeating to myself every time I listen to her astonishing compositions and equally astonishing ensembles.

Bley's latest set, with the eight-piece band she named after the new recording (which came first, chicken or egg?), is as calmly revolutionary as even the best of her Seventies work. Meanwhile, ECM have also chosen to simultaneously re-release two of those gems on CD to coincide with her current live project, the first concert performances of the liberating *Escalator Over The Hill*.

If you're new to the sound and shape of Bley's iconoclastic Jazz-to-Classical hybrids, don't hesitate - ask your local outlet to play some of this on the in-store radio and watch pigs fly.

I suppose it's my job to choose words to describe sounds, but I've put off reviewing these revelatory tunes since July because I just don't know what to say. How

about: "I love it to death, and please, Carla, keep 'em coming"? If that's no good to you, then chuck Monk, Stravinsky, the Penguin Cafe Orchestra, Mozart, Ellington, Satie, Gershwin and Schubert into a big pot, get Spike Jones to dish it up and then tell me what it sounds like. Yup, this is Carla Bley at her most accessible and most rewarding.



MIKIO MASUDA
BLUE DUMPLINGS
JVC JVC9040

Japanese pianist Masuda has already released one fine trio album (with Ron Carter and Lewis Nash) this year, called *Black Daffodils*. It might seem a little premature to release another so soon (with Grady Tate replacing the unavailable Nash on drums), but Masuda obviously feels like making up for lost time. After breaking through with Art Blakey and Sadao Watanabe in the late Seventies, a massive car crash that almost crippled his right hand cost him six years of recuperation, then three albums for GRP were interrupted by the nightmare of MS.

10 years on, that shadow seems to be lifting as well, and

despite the restrictions he has had to cope with, Masuda's own economical, engaging, up-tempo tunes and by turns elegiac or romantic ballads are full of the kind of emotion and commitment that stems from battling against the tide.

Masuda is never frantic or soporific on this strong selection of standards (like 'Stardust' and 'It Could Happen To You') but it's the originals and left-field covers (Milt Jackson's 'Bags Groove', or Monk's 'Trinkle Tinkle') that stick in the memory. An inspiring player in many ways, and a rewarding recording which creates a bright, live ambience that audibly benefits from using JVC's proprietary K2 Super Coding system to downsample from the 20-bit master to 16-bit CD.



MOSES TAIWA
MOLELEKWA
GENES AND SPIRITS
MELT 2000 BW079

One of the delights of reviewing Jazz these days is that there's so much cross-fertilisation going on. Africa is still injecting new rhythms, instruments and structures into the mainline; Asia is producing astonishing technicians who play with respect for their own

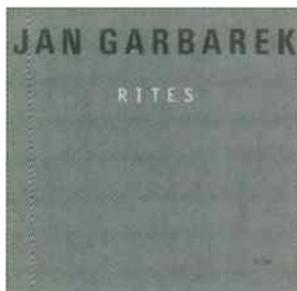
traditions and true soul as well; and as for Latin America, well, if all the dancers in all the Salsa clubs around the world decided to link hips simultaneously, it would make one hell of a block party.

Take 24-year-old South African pianist Moses, for example. He grew up in Tembisa - a township near enough to Jo'burg to make the contrasts painfully stark - listening to Parker, Miles and the Fifties canon of immortals on wickedly expensive vinyl passed like scripture from one believer to another. But all around him was the potent influence of Hugh Masekela, Abdullah Ibrahim, Kippie Mokoetsi and Dudu Pukwana, and it's an updated version of just their magical integration of late-20th-century African harmonies, melodies and rhythms into modern Jazz that Moses is after.

His latest for the 'no boundaries' M.E.L.T. 2000 label (which specialises in modern music from Southern Africa) is a delightful dip into a barrel filled with seductive influences. Moses has layered Cuba (with celebrated Cuban pianist Chucho Valdes as mentor), Brazil (Flora Plurim's unmistakable vocalisations), the Cameroon (funked up by Brice Wassy's infectious time-keeping) and even Bristol (just a lickle Drum 'n' Bass) over his own instinctive township feels. The resultant blends are so cheering I think Taiwa's left hand could probably heal the sick - or at least make them feel a damn sight more chirpy. Heartily recommended.

JAZZ

by Simon Hopkins



JAN GARBAREK
RITES
ECM 1685/86 CD

Rites is the long-awaited new studio album by Norwegian composer, saxophonist and multi-instrumentalist Jan Garbarek and it's a major piece of work. Garbarek is, of course, one of the true giants of European contemporary jazz, whose 25-year association with the German jazz label ECM has reaped creative and latterly commercial rewards undreamt of by many of his contemporaries. Indeed much of the saxophonist's work over the last few years has disappointed his more long-term fans who still recall earlier fiery output which marked him out as one of the most significant of all Coltrane-influenced saxophonists. This strikes me as missing the point slightly. It's true that Garbarek's playing now, not to mention his composition, is highly polished and very rarefied. It has little, if any, grit in it, and also very little connection to the standard jazz canon but then he has moved beyond that music's audience, reaching out instead to an audience who might otherwise never listen to music of such intelligence. A good thing, I reckon. Rites is

cast in much the same mould as his other recent work. On this double CD he plays not only saxes but percussion and keyboards, helped occasionally by long term associates Eberhard Weber (bass), Marilyn Mazur (percussion) and Rainer Bruninghaus (keyboards). The album also features the more contemporary programmer and keyboardist Bugge Wesseltoft, who brings a certain groove to some of the pieces. Then there's probably the album's most ambitious piece, *We Are The Stars*, Garbarek's setting of a Passamaquoddy poem for boys' choir. The generous inclusion of Georgian composer Jansug Kakhidze's *Moon Over Mtatsminda* is also noteworthy. This piece, performed by the Tblisi Symphony Orchestra, doesn't feature Garbarek at all, but is included because he wanted it heard by a wider audience. It's a measure of Garbarek's influence that it certainly will be. Once again - a major work.



FUSHITSUSHA
A LITTLE LONGER THUS
TOKUMA JAPAN
TKCF-77020 CD

Yes, yes, I know I've reviewed A LOT of underground Japanese rock and improv -

and a lot of Haino Keiji's work in particular. Hey, sue me! Believe me, we're still barely scratching the surface and if any "scene" in the world right now needs documenting then it's the one roaring away in tiny basement clubs and run-down studios across Tokyo, Kyoto and Kobe.

Guitarist Keiji is one of the scene's more way, way out practitioners but I've tried to introduce him generally, so here goes...

A Little Longer Thus features Keiji with his power trio Fushitsusha; I would have assumed it was a live record, but the album's liner notes claim "recorded February-April 1998, Tokyo", so who knows? It certainly has the rawness of a live record and, as always with Fushitsusha, what you get is an overdubless, post-prodless straight-up encounter with the trio: Keiji, bassist Yasushi Ozawa and drummer Ikuroh Takahashi. Nonetheless, this is a substantially different record from some of their other recent work. Instead of the group's characteristic thirty-minute-plus Free-Rock jams and Keiji's wall-of-distortion guitar, what we are offered is a set of nine discreet, freely improvised "songs" which pretty much eschew monster lead guitar soloing altogether. Keiji's vocals are very much to the fore in all their stark, eery, moaning glory; the rhythm section are at their most free; constantly halting, juddering, unpredictable, strictly grooveless.

What guitar cuts through is a spidery, scratchy thing indeed. Impossible to categorize, Fushitsusha yet again pushes the boundaries of guitar-bass-drums rock further than anyone might dare expect.



MICHAEL FORMANEK
AM I BOTHERING YOU?
SCREWGUN SCRU U70006

A veteran member of jazz groups led by artists as diverse and as celebrated as Tim Berne, Marty Ehrlich, Chet Baker, Joe Henderson and Tony Williams, acoustic double bassist Michael Formanek is one of the finest manipulators of his instrument currently working in contemporary jazz.

Taking this into consideration, it's odd that *Am I Bothering You* is his first solo album but, then again, this may not be surprising at all. Solo double bass records are hardly ten-a-penny in any genre. While the instrument is undoubtedly capable of great expression and drive, it's not necessarily one on which anyone but a total virtuoso would dare to express himself unaccompanied. When it works, though, it can really work: just think of Barre Phillips.

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by Peter Herring

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RECORD OF THE MONTH

Music by Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli, Gioseffo Guami, Cesario Gussago, Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger, Tiburtio Massaino, Claudio Monteverdi, Alessandro Piccinini and Lodovico Viadani
The Choir of the King's Consort; The King's Consort; conductor, Robert King

HYPERION CDA67048 (2-CD SET) (DDD 08139)

From the 13th century, Venetian churches engaged in an annual ceremony offering prayers to their patron saint, St Nicolas. By the 17th century, what had begun as a simple ritual had developed into a grand spectacle involving all the leading dignitaries of the Venetian republic, including the Doge himself. The event took place on Ascension Day (which falls 40 days after Easter Sunday) and began with a procession from St Mark's Square to the waterfront where the Doge and assembled dignitaries would board an ornate ceremonial galley, the *buclabon*. 400 oarsmen would then row this vessel to the centre of the lagoon, all the way

accompanied by music: brass ensembles, instrumental pieces, madrigals and oratorios.

Around the lagoon would swarm hundreds of other boats, all decorated for the occasion.

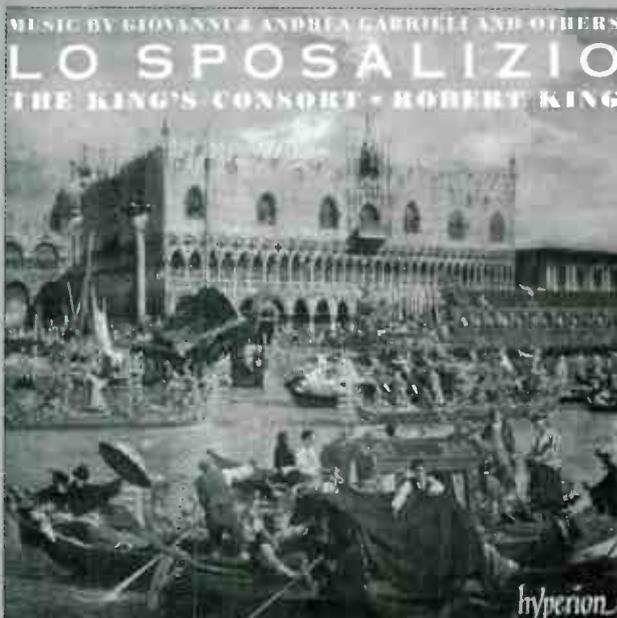
At the mouth of the lagoon, the *buclabon* would halt and the Doge would drop a gold ring into the waters of the Adriatic, symbolically wedding Venice – a city state

complexly reconstructed, principally using the music of Andrea Gabrieli and his nephew Giovanni. One of the sites devoted to the procession and the voyage across the lagoon, and begins with the tolling of a single bell from the Basilica of San Marco (repeated, as with the church bells which conclude the Mass, on location in Venice

choirs of instruments and one of the musical glories of its age. If it played with appropriate majesty by the canons and sackbuts of The King's Consort.

It would be wrong to give the impression that Robert King has put together a programme consisting entirely of 'pomp and circumstance'. There is abundant contrast and colour in this reconstruction, examples being the delicious sets of variations on the popular tunes *La Folia* and *La Ciaccona*, Giovanni Gabrieli's exquisite 8-part madrigal *Deo Gratias*, *Sedendo*, and the broodingly somber *Canzon Per Gio: Tomason* by the much-loved-down Tiburtio Massaino.

Robert King has waited a long time to realise this project. It was planned as a television production 10 years ago but never came to fruition, a cause for regret as those who enjoyed the premier of *Lo Sposalizio* at the Albert Hall during last year's Proms will surely testify. That said, the atmosphere and colour of the musical spectacle are vividly conveyed by Hyperion's recording, and Robert King and his enthusiastic collaborators serve up a rich feast of entertainment, a dish fit for a Doge no less.



that prospered through its maritime trade. As the sea for a further year. The 'marriages' secured, the Doge and his entourage were rowed to the Church of San Nicolo' a Lido where a solemn Mass would be celebrated.

It is one of these aquatic pageants, from around 1600, which Robert King has re-

Disc Two resumes the Mass held in San Nicolo' and includes some sumptuous examples of the Gabrieli' flair for the grand sound: Giovanni's 12-part *Kyrie* and Sanctus, Andrea's 16-part *Gloria* and, in a magnificent final flourish, Giovanni Gabrieli's 22-part *Sonata XX*, written for five separate

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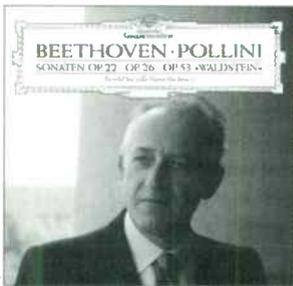
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LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
Piano Sonata No11 in B flat major, Op22
Piano Sonata No12 in A flat major, Op26/Piano Sonata No21 in C major, Op53 'Waldstein'
Maurizio Pollini, piano
 DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON
 435 472-2 (DDD/65.34)

Maurizio Pollini's new recording of the 'Waldstein' sonata is far removed from the coolly clinical and uninvolved reading which appeared some 10 years ago. It, and the other two sonatas here, were taped at concerts given in Vienna's Musikverein during January and February of last year and, as was abundantly evident from his performance of Brahms' Second Piano Concerto (reviewed April 1998), far from being intimidated by the demands of live recording, Pollini relishes the challenge. The playing, as ever, is clear, direct and technically assured, but there is also a freedom and unforced lyricism which

were not always part-and-parcel of Pollini's style. When this is welded to a peerless grasp of structure, it is a compelling combination.

The programme is an imaginative one, opening with two sonatas - Nos 11 and 12 - from Beethoven's 'transitional years' of 1800-1801, and concluding with the tautly dramatic and highly original 'Waldstein' (No 21). This was written around the time of the epoch-making 'Eroica' symphony (1803-1805) and shares its urgency and intensity. In the finale especially, Pollini's playing is simply electrifying.

For those who enjoy delving into the history and the background of a recording, this is the first of six being issued by Deutsche Grammophon in a format called "CD plus score". The CD is encoded with an AV programme developed jointly by DG and Schott Musik International and offers a selection of visual information (which includes the full score of each work) to accompany the audio. These additions can be accessed via a CD-ROM drive on a personal computer: you'll not only be able to follow the scores but also print them out and even edit them. There are commentaries on the composer, the music and the performer as well. It's a worthwhile supplement to some outstanding

performances, truthfully recorded with a sonic presence to match that of the playing.



ANTONIN DVORAK
Stabat Mater - Cantata for Soloists, Choir and Orchestra, Op58
Eva Urbanova, soprano; Marta Benackova, contralto; John Uhlenhopp, tenor; Peter Mikulas, bass; Prague Philharmonic Choir; Bambini di Praga; Prague Symphony Orchestra; conductor, Jiri Belohlavek
 SUPRAPHON SU 3311-2 231
 (DDD/79.44)

The Stabat Mater, a 13th-century Latin text depicting the sorrowing Virgin at the foot of the Cross, has inspired composers as diverse as Palestrina and Krystof Penderecki. The treatment of these harrowing sentiments - supposedly written by a Franciscan monk, Jacopone da Todi - has varied from the

bleakly austere (Palestrina) to the operatic (Rossini) and the exotic (Szymanowski). Dvorak's setting, like Rossini's, is on a large scale yet retains a sense of personal intimacy.

Given the fundamental and very human tragedy expressed (a lament on the death of one's own child), Dvorak's response can be readily explained; he experienced such a tragedy before, and during the composition of the work.

In 1875, his daughter, Josefa, died when just two days old. Dvorak began to sketch his Stabat Mater the following year, only to suffer the loss of his two surviving children in 1877. That November, the work was completed, but had to wait three years for its first performance, in Prague on December 23, 1880.

The popularity of the Stabat Mater spread quickly: its London première in March 1883 was a triumph, and was followed in 1884 by a performance in the Albert Hall conducted by the composer. The choir was over 800 strong, prompting Dvorak to comment that "the impression of such a mighty body was indeed enchanting".

The 10 sections of the text are each skilfully and imaginatively worked by Dvorak, who draws on a variety of combinations of

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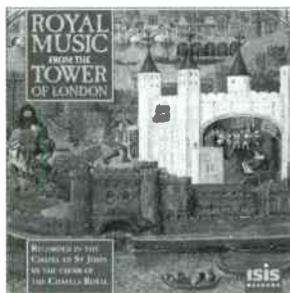
instrumental and vocal forces. The result, while dignified and dramatic, is far from unrelieved gloom. Considering the circumstances of its composition, it would have been understandable if Dvorak had ended the Stabat Mater on a note of poignant resignation; instead, the concluding sentiment is resolutely affirmative.

This magnificent work, an oratorio in all but name, has been overshadowed - as with all Dvorak's choral compositions - by the popularity of his symphonies and chamber works. The Czech conductor, Jiri Belohlavek, is clearly determined to redress that imbalance; this is his second CD of the piece to appear in recent years. Both were made in Prague, the first in the city's famous castle for the Chandos label, and this new Supraphon production in the Dvofak Hall of the Rudolfinum, a superb recording of a concert performance during June 1997. Both are authoritative and idiomatic, but the extra intensity of the latter sets it apart.

The orchestral playing of the Prague Symphony is first-rate, but it is the fervour and commitment of the chorus and the quartet of Czech soloists which is particularly thrilling, and often moving. Together, they produce a

quite distinctive sound, the kind which I would imagine Dvorak envisaged and quite probably obtained at the Christmas-tide première in 1880.

Dvorak's Stabat Mater is an unashamedly devout, even innocent expression of faith, something which Jiri Belohlavek clearly appreciates and succeeds in conveying supremely well.



ROYAL MUSIC FROM THE TOWER OF LONDON
Motets, anthems, hymns and plainchant by William Byrd, Giles Farnaby, Orlando Gibbons, John Sheppard, John Taverner, Thomas Weelkes, Robert White and Anon
Choir of the Chapels Royal of St Peter ad Vincula and St John the Evangelist, HM Tower of London; Ronan de Burca, organ; Master of Music, Stephen Tilton
ISIS RECORDS CD021 (DDD/68.20)

Unusual and attractive programming is consistently an attractive feature of Isis recordings, and this issue of mainly early English choral music is no exception. All the works here were composed for the celebrations, coronations and private devotions of seven English monarchs, beginning with Henry VI (1422-61) and ending with Charles I (1625-1649), and all have been recorded in a most appropriate location: the Chapel of St John the Evangelist situated in the White Tower within the walls of the Tower of London itself.

The chapel, like the White Tower, has altered little since it was built under the direction of William the Conqueror during the 11th century, and retains the full, silvery, pleasingly reverberant acoustic which would have graced music-making here throughout the Middle Ages. It supplies an ideal setting for the richly diverse tapestry of plainchant and polyphony featured here.

This is a first recording by the Choir of the Chapels Royal under the direction of Stephen Tilton, and it offers several gems from what amounts to a roll-call of the greatest composers of the Tudor and Stuart periods.

The choir, following hundreds of years of tradition,

is made up of professional singers drawn from the London area, except that women's voices rather than boy trebles are now entrusted with the top vocal line. The selection of pieces is most appealing, ranging as it does from the plaintive intimacy of Tallis's hymn *Te Lucis Ante Terminum* and anthems by Byrd and Mundy to the splendours of Cornysh's setting of the *Salve Regina* and Taverner's *O Splendor Gloriam*. There are also two stirring items of plainchant and two instrumental interludes: *Wolsey's Wilde* by Byrd and Farnaby's *Tower Hill*, both played on the chamber organ by Ronan de Burca.

If I have a criticism of this recording, it is that on occasions the choir is overstretched by the more complex polyphony and the high treble lines push the sopranos to the limit of their range, with an accompanying unevenness of pitch. The booklet notes enlarge on the historical as well as the musical background to the programme too, but the absence of translations earns a black mark. However, this hardly detracts from the overall appeal of what is a captivating production. Indeed, I sincerely hope that the Isis recording team of Martin Souter and Geoffrey Horn is sent back to the Tower!

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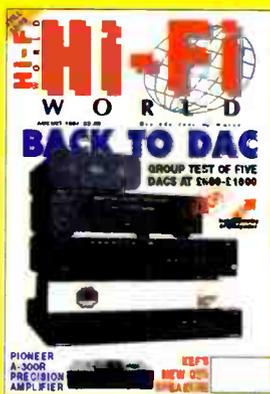
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NAD 6050C B/C etc (f.c.) s/h	-	69.95
Technics RS B305 B/C etc (vgs) s/h	-	99.95
Yamaha RX 1020 3 head/DBX/HX Pro etc (vgs) s/h	400.00	189.95
Sony ST 5A 3ES digital tuner (mint/as new) s/h	300.00	399.95
Denon DR 2000 remote DAT recorder (mint/as new) s/h	330.00	169.95
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A selection of our ever changing offers for sale (all fully guaranteed)

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Arcam Delta 250 transport/Black Box 50 DAC (mint) s/h	1250.00	795.00
Arcam Alpha Plus remote player (vgs) s/h	500.00	229.95
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Musical Fidelity X-Ray 24/96 player (superb player) (new)	799.00	-
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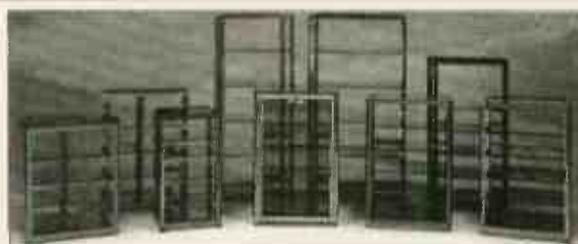
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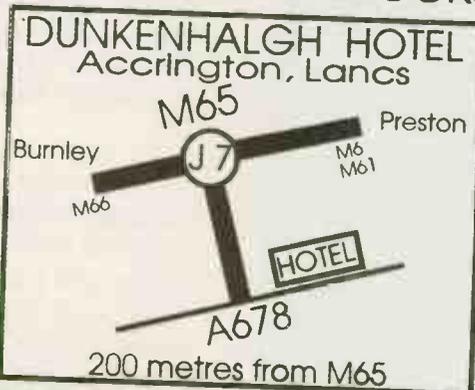
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Audiolab 8000M Mono Blocks	1995	1099
Audiolab 8000Q Remote Pre-amp	1295	725
Audion Golden Knights 300B Mono Blocks	3995	1799
Audion Premier 2.0 Phono 2 Box Pre	2499	1295
Blueprint Point 1 Loudspeakers	1000	749
Celestion SL600 Speakers	650	279
Cogan Hall Intermezzo REF 0.5M	375	100
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dpa Enlightenment DAC	825	475
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Heybrook Quartet Loudspeakers inc. Stands	785	425
Linn Index Speakers inc. Stands	425	99
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Early indication of price, around £600. Available end of November.

New CD Transport 'Jupiter' will be available in conjunction with a new DAC the 'lo'

The price is around - £950 per pair

New products now on demonstration

Mark Levinson have a new leading edge digital to Analogue Converter incorporating full 96 kHz/24 capability and 44.1 sampling rates. It made big waves at this year's Renaissance Show in conjunction with Pioneer DVD players which have a 96 kHz output on the rear.
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The Lyra Beta is the latest edition to the Lyra family of cartridges it weighs 8.0 gms. has a compliance of 12cu at 100hz an output voltage of 0.5mv it is recommended that high quality rigid bearing resonance free tone arms are partnered with it. The price is - £599.00

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Teac VRDS T1 transport	549	399	Naim NAP 250	1720	1150	Acoustic Energy AE1/AE2/AE3	check for details	
XTC CDT-1 LE transport	1250	1095	Exposure 18 mono PR	1800	1290	RECORD DECKS		
Audiolab 8000 CDM transport	1400	1190	Audiolab 8000MX mint	1800	1550	A.R. EB101, complete		149
Teac P30 transport	2499	2099	SPEAKERS			Linn Sondek LP12, choice of 3, from		399
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Cambridge DAC Majic	159	99	Heybrook Heylo	449	299	SME 20, No Arm	2995	2250
Audiolab 8000 DAX	1000	799	Mon. Audio mon. 3 Rosemah	460	325	Also available:- Pink Triangle, Michell Wilson Benesch, Oracle, Basis, Thorens, A.R., Systemdek, Project, Ariston.		
Teac DT1 Esoteric DAC	1000	850	TDI Studio 1	849	349	A selection of used or ex display equipment from our stock. All equipment can be heard before pur- chase either in store or in your home, and is guaranteed.		
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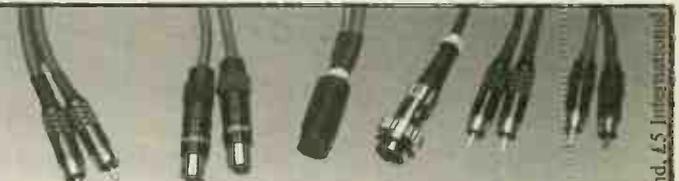
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MEASURED PERFORMANCE

CD PLAYER

ARCAM ALPHA 9

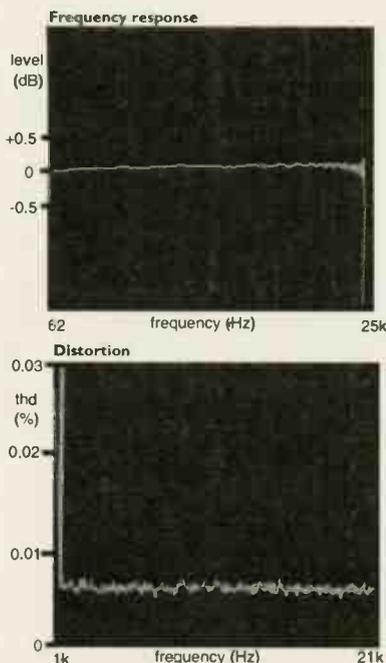
Frequency response measured flat to 21.2kHz, with a small amount of digital filter ripple at high frequencies evident in our response analysis.

The absence of a roll-off means treble is likely to be reasonably strong. Low distortion levels suggest it will be clean, although the Arcam wasn't all that special at -60dB and this reflected back into a poorer than usual dynamic range figure of 103dB.

Channel separation was good at around 97dB and output healthy at 2.35V. The Arcam measured well in most areas. NK

Frequency response 4Hz-21.2kHz

	left	right
Distortion (%)		
-6dB	0.004	0.004
-30dB	0.008	0.008
-60dB	0.577	0.57
-90	31	31
Separation (dB)	left	right
1kHz	97	98
20kHz	93	95
Noise		-92dB
with emphasis		-92dB
Dynamic range		103dB
Output		2.35V



CHORD DSC 900

The Chord convertor is unusual in possessing a rising frequency response at high frequencies. In most cases this results in bright sound, sometimes with a glassy quality. It also emphasises detail and, in poor convertors, contributes to the somewhat coarse sound of digital. These generalisations apply to ordinary CD players using mass-produced boards with conventional (i.e. cheap) components. Whether they will apply to the Chord, a somewhat more specialised product, is open to question and can only be judged by listening tests.

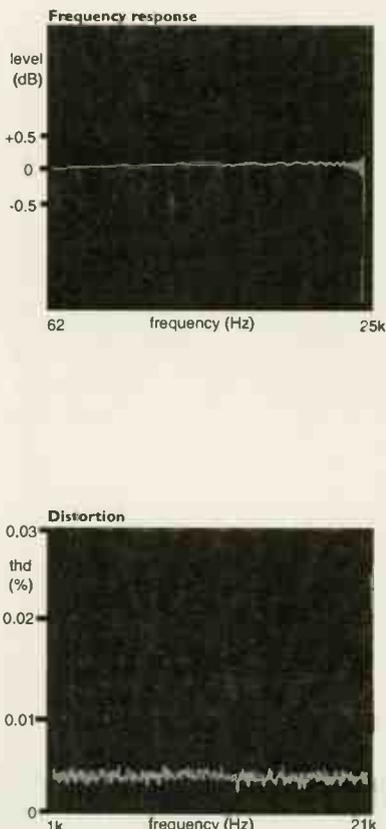
Measured distortion levels were low from peak music level right down to -60dB. Our analysis clearly shows distortion products were absent at -30dB music level, a good result. I would expect the Chord to sound fairly clean and grain-free.

Channel separation was high and noise very low at -108dB. Similarly, dynamic range looked good at

106dB, due primarily to the absence of quantisation noise and rubbish at -60dB. Output was a little low at 1.85V so in side-by-side comparisons the Chord may lack a little. It is likely to produce a bright, clean sound. NK

Frequency response 4Hz-21.1kHz

	left	right
Distortion (%)		
-6dB	0.006	0.006
-30dB	0.007	0.007
-60dB	0.4	0.388
-90	29	29
Separation (dB)	left	right
1kHz	115	111
20kHz	97	100
Noise		-108dB
with emphasis		-108dB
Dynamic range		106dB
Output		1.85V

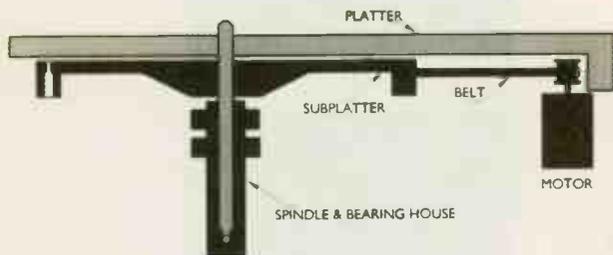


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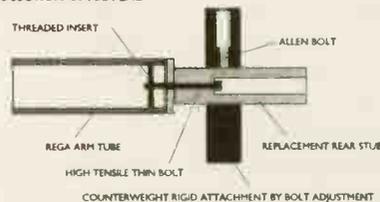
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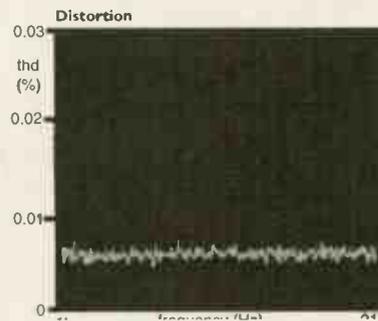
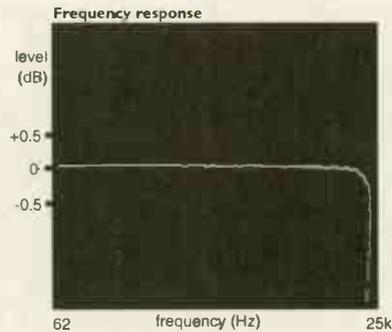
MYRYAD T-20

Myryad have engineered a roll down of high frequency output and this invariably results in a smooth, integrated sound from CD players. Since treble can so often be coarse from CD this is a safe way of going about things. I would expect the T-20 to sound a little more smooth and balanced than CD players with rising or flat treble.

The T-20 produced little measurable distortion at all signal levels. Our analysis shows a complete absence of harmonics and the player was linear in this fashion right down to -60dB. Myryad have set output high at 2.6V, giving it a head start in demonstrations where loudness counts. All the same, the T-20 measured well and should give a

good account of itself. NK

Frequency response	4Hz-21kHz	
	left	right
Distortion (%)		
-6dB	0.004	0.0045
-30dB	0.007	0.0087
-60dB	0.47	0.47
-90	30	30
Separation (dB)	left	right
1kHz	114	114
20kHz	91	89
Noise		-94dB
with emphasis		-94dB
Dynamic range		103dB
Output		2.6V



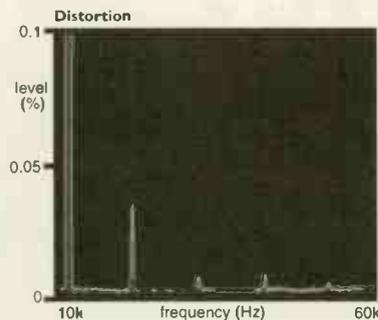
AMPLIFIERS

ROTEL RA-931

The RA-931 offers a fairly modest output of 50watts, rising to 80watts into 4ohm loads. This is plenty enough to go loud in most homes, providing reasonably efficient loudspeakers are used. Both the CD input and the phono stage (MM only) have wide bandwidth; Japanese manufacturers like Rotel prefer not to use warp filters to cut low frequency gain through the phono input. As a result record warps will produce some loudspeaker cone flap.

The Rotel produces little distortion and it has a quiet phono stage. All parameters measured well. I found no weaknesses. NK

Power	50watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	8Hz-78kHz
Separation	58dB
Noise	-96dB
Distortion	0.01%
Sensitivity	180mV
DC offset	70mV/75mV

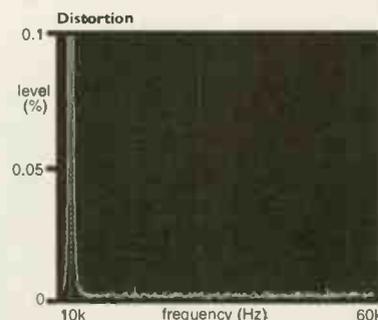


MUSICAL FIDELITY X-A1

The X-A1 produces a clean 78watts, with little distortion right up to full power. It was clean at high frequencies too, as our distortion analysis shows, so there will be little sign of coarseness in the sound. With 120watts delivered into a 4ohm load this amplifier has some grunt in spite of its size.

With low noise, wide channel separation and normal sensitivity the X-A1 is a well designed package that measures well and offers lots of power for its size. NK

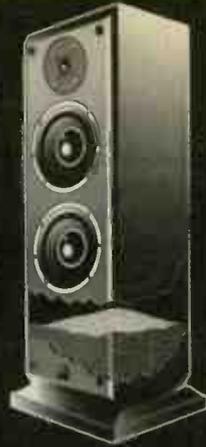
Power	78watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	7Hz-49kHz
Separation	73dB
Noise	-98dB
Distortion	0.005%
Sensitivity	240mV
DC offset	6mV/6mV





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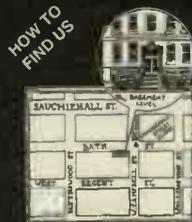
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WAD HD83

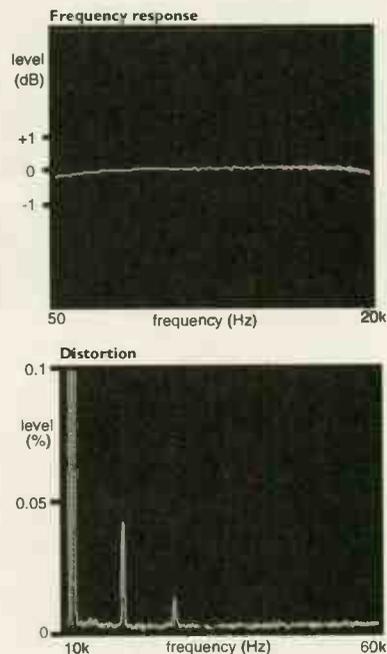
To judge a headphone amplifier you need to know what is expected of it. Super lightweight diaphragms very close to the ear give enormous sensitivity. Headphone sound pressure level specs give the 'volume' achieved from an input power of 1 milliwatt (one-thousandth of a watt). Figures of 90dB-110dB are quoted, meaning headphones produce more volume from one-thousandth of a watt than loudspeakers do from one watt. The Sennheiser HD565 headphones for example produce 96dB SPL from 1 milliwatt and have an impedance of 150ohms.

Our headphone amplifier will drive loads as low as 8ohms with all secondary windings in parallel. Bandwidth extends to 87kHz. The low frequency -1dB limit is 17Hz and it is independent of frequency.

The circuit needs just 30mV input to deliver 180mV into 30ohms - roughly 1 milliwatt/decades connected

for 70ohms. This high sensitivity means the amp will work from any source, but it also needs a volume control. Distortion at 1 milliwatt out into 30ohms measured 0.04%, mainly second harmonic as our analysis shows. This is a worst case figure. As load increases and/or volume decreases distortion diminishes. Under working conditions distortion will be much below this value. Maximum output from the HD83 is way above that needed for loud volume, no matter how insensitive the 'phones.

Bearing in mind that this minimalist valve circuit replaces all the paraphernalia of an ordinary amplifier, including the complexities and non-linearities of its output stage, not to mention the huge amounts of feedback that must be applied to ensure the innately high distortion of transistors is kept under control, and you can begin to see how an independent valve headphone amplifier such as this



makes good sense. It can work from Tape Out sockets too of course, or from Preamp Out sockets, although this will put transistors in the signal path (horrid!). NK

TUNER

PIONEER F-504RDS

The Pioneer has a flat audio frequency response with a slow roll off at high frequencies, just enough to soften its sound a little.

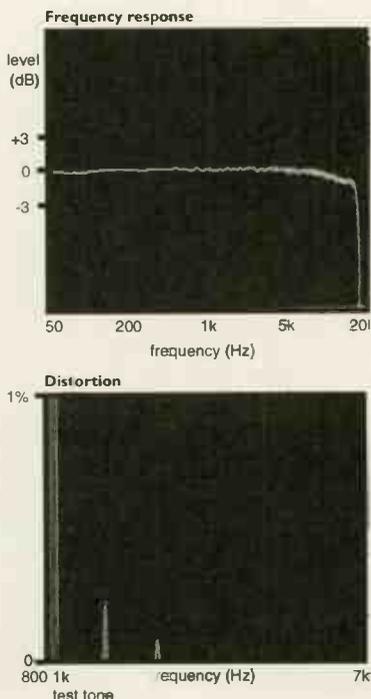
Distortion measured a low-ish 0.14% overall which our analysis shows was primarily second harmonic with a little third. I would not expect this to affect the sound in any significant manner. Noise measured very low at -76dB so there will be no hiss from this tuner, providing it receives a strong enough aerial signal. Selectivity was high at 80dB with Narrow Band selected but sensitivity was mediocre at 40µV for -50dB of noise, as it usually is with RDS tuners. The signal-strength meter usefully displayed no fewer than seven signal levels, ranging from a very low 2µV up to a high

800µV. The tuner needs to light all sectors to give its best -76dB signal-to-noise ratio.

The Pioneer measured well all round and should give a smooth, evenly balanced sound. NK

Frequency response	15Hz-15kHz
Stereo separation	38dB
Distortion (50% mod.)	0.14%
Hiss (CCIR)	-76dB
Signal for minimum hiss	40mV
Selectivity (at 0.4MHz)	80dB
Sensitivity	
mono	2.5µV
stereo	40µV

signal strength meter:
(µV) 2, 8, 20, 40, 125, 320, 800



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LFD LS2/PA1 (Pre/Pwr)	£2600	£1198
LFD Mistral (MM Phone Pre-pre)		£198
Linn LK100 Power		£398
Linn Kairn Pre	£1850	£1095
Mark Levinson No.28 Pre		
+ PLS 228 PSU + No.29 Pwr	£6500	£3498
Meridian 101/103 Pre/Pwr		£238
Meridian 603 Pre/DAC	£1750	£794
Meridian 562V Pre+MM	£1095	£678
Michell Argo + Hera	£900	£595
Mod Squad Live Drive (Passive pre)		£POA
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Musical Fidelity 3a Pre	£379	£248
Musical Fidelity 2a Pre	£299	£178
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Naim NAC32.5		£195
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Naim NAC22		£145
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Naim NAP160 (Old style) Kimber wired		£395
Naim NAP135 (2 x monos) Ex-dem	£3410	£2980
Naim NAP135 (2 x monos) Old style		£1648
Naim NAP140 (Old Style)	£750	£428
Naim Hi-Cap (Old Style)	£720	£378
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Quad 34 Pre-amp	£430	£200
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Thorens TTP2000 Mk1 Pre (Ex Dem)	£499	£397
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Arcam Alpha 5 Tuner	£230
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Magnum Dynalab FT11	£550
Marantz SD55 3 hd / 2 mtr	£400
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Nakamichi 1000ZXI	£1098
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Marantz CD63Mk2 KI Signature	349	500

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Naim 180 poweramp	850	1,090
Alchemist Nemesis incl. Phono stage	499	750
Roksan Caspian inc remote	549	700
Rotel 921 New Model	79	100
Marantz PM66 KI Signature new unused	300	400

Loudspeakers

Naim SBL, latest, (black)	1,400	2,300
ProAc Tablette 50 (Light Oak, mint)	450	600
Roksan Rok 1 (Light Elder)	450	645
Kef Q55	350	500

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s/h Leavers Rich professional NAB reel to reel stereo master tape machine; 2 speeds, balanced in/out etc. 500 (£0.000's)

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COMPACT DISC PLAYERS

QUAD 67 SECOND-HAND

One of Quad's best products for a long time, the '67 is warmer and smoother than most, yet is highly musical and revealing.

KENWOOD DP-3080/II £180

Has great clarity and presence for the price. Not quite as naturally expressive as the CD4SE though.

CAMBRIDGE CD4SE £200

A touch soft in the treble but outstanding in every other respect.

ARCAM ALPHA 7 £330

This British-built player is extremely good value. Up-front, punchy nature suits Techno and Rock.

MARANTZ CD-63MKII KI-S £400

Similar to the CD-63SE but more powerful bass and an all-round smoother sound.

PHILIPS CDR 870 RECORDER £500

Replay quality is on a par with £250 machines but analogue and digital recordings on CD-R and CD-RW are outstanding.

ROKSAN CASPIAN £895

The Caspian has a smooth, slightly bright sound with some of the clearest treble in the business. Very engaging, dynamic character.

MERIDIAN 506 20-BIT £1100

Very detailed and revealing player. More cerebral than visceral though.

MARANTZ CD-17 KI-S £1100

The Marantz excels in all areas. Without doubt this is one of the most involving CD players on the planet. Build quality is also exemplary.

DENON DCD-S10 £1300

A warm, atmospheric and smooth performer that never fails to involve.

PINK TRIANGLE LITAUERAL £2100

Possesses the same lush tonal colour as the Da Capo but is far superior in every other way.

MCINTOSH CDM7009 £2635

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

TEAC P-30 £2500

Cheap it isn't, but then it sounds like a million digital dollars. Nothing short of superb.

CD CONVERTORS

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MARSTON SILHOUETTE £795

With Crystal Semiconductors' 18-bit DAC the Marston produces clean-cut images and a transparent sound stage. Very rhythmic too.

PINK TRIANGLE DA CAPO £1450+

Offers a choice of filter modules. The Da Capo is good in many respects, but can sound a touch polite on Rock and is showing its age.

DPA 1024 £6000

Proof positive that today's CDs needn't sound CD-like! Uses an in-house discrete convertor, and DPA haven't skimped on the build either!

DCS ELGAR £8500

Future-proof convertor which will handle 24/96 and 24/192 in addition to CD. Extremely open and natural performer that sets the digital benchmark.

TURNTABLES

GARRARD 301/401 second-hand

In a decent plinth with an arm of SME 309 calibre, the 301 is capable of a highly authoritative sound with surprisingly solid, expressive bass. Very musical, but treble isn't up to modern standards. Slightly easier to service than the later 401 but otherwise similar.

THORENS TD124 second-hand

One of Thorens' best turntables. Needs a modern plinth to give its best. Duly installed, it's good enough to face off the Garrards, swapping some of its bass power for a more delicate, incisive treble.

ORIGIN LIVE STANDARD £145 (KIT)

Fine in standard form with AC motor, frighteningly good with a DC motor and battery PSU.

SYSTEMDEK IIX900/RB250 £330

A fine all-rounder and easy to upgrade too. Has more depth and breadth than Rega Planar 3.

PINK TRIANGLE TARANTELLA £680

Not only does the Tarantella have more style than a catwalk full of models, it also combines PT's usual clarity with real authority. The biz.

VPI HW19 JUNIOR/RB300 £599

With its control and grip on music the Junior never fails to engage. Set-up is a piece of cake and there's a whole range of upgrades on offer too.

MICHELL GYRODEC £875

Stunning looks, build and fine sound. Standard PSU has detailed, architectural, if undynamic sound. With QC PSU, scale and insight excel.

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 MC 30 Supreme.

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 £1995

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

SME MODEL 20 £3400

Including the excellent SME V tone-arm, the Model 20 is one of the last great turntables, unless you've got £11000 for the Model 30, that is.

TONE-ARMS

LINN ITTOK second-hand

This early heavyweight arm benefits from fine engineering. Good dynamics and grip.

REGA RB300 £180

Supremely capable at the price, but not quite humankind's salvation. Some may prefer the simpler RB250 at £130. Detailed, tight, rhythmic sound but tonally rather grey and cold-sounding.

SME 3009SII £309

This Paleolithic device is no longer state-of-the-art with frequency extremes or detail, but its legendary serviceability makes it a cult in Japan. Can be picked up for peanuts second-hand.

SME 309 £689

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.

COMPACT DISC TRANSPORTS

TEAC VDRS-T1 £550

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

World favourites guide

SME V £1460

A masterpiece of precision engineering with a cohesive, ultra-transparent sound.

CARTRIDGES

GOLDRING 1012GX £74

An accomplished MM with a solid bass, slightly forward midband and clean transients.

ORTOPHON MC 15 SUPER II £140

Not quite as good as the dearer Ortophon Supremes but the Super II is a splendid introduction to the joys of moving-coil cartridges.

DNM MICA £185

Bettors Goldring's 1042 and costs only £135 on trade-in. A very assured and transparent MM.

ORTOFON SUPREMES £299-£549

The MC 10, MC 20 and MC 30 Supremes all offer superb sound and value for money, with a rich, smooth and musical performance.

ORTOFON MC 2000 £799

We came across this in an SME IV on a Garrard 401; it gave one of the best results we've heard.

ORTOFON ROHMANN £1000

In a way it's MC 2000 meets MC 7500 with great tonal strengths and a dynamo sound.

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 tuneable in-between. The MC-10 is honey, pure and simple.

ORTOFON MC 7500 £2000

Conclusive proof that there's hope for the world. CD lovers would die if they heard it.

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS

MISSION CYRUS I/II S/H

Both versions give a detailed, articulate and dynamic sound.

DENON PMA-250SE £160

It might not have bags of grunt but the Denon can sound very natural and open.

ROTEL RA-970BX £250

With its smooth and powerful sound, the Rotel sings a seductive song with all types of music.

PIONEER A-300R PRECISION £399

This is the A-300 tweaked. Rhythm and detail are first-class and the phono stage isn't far behind.

AUDIO ANALOGUE PUCCINI SE £595

This superbly-built Italian integrated has a lucidity and control which leave the competition at up to £1000 standing. Sound stage depth is unequalled.

SUGDEN A21A £640

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

ROKSAN CASPIAN £695

Smooth, warm integrated with remote control that works happily into most 'speakers.

SONETEER ALABASTER £995

Builds on the strengths of the Champion with ample control, colour and drive.

UNISON SIMPLY 2 £995

This single-ended valve amplifier is smooth, sweet and open. An extremely musical performer.

UNISON SIMPLY 4 £1495

Sonically similar to the Simply 2, but with more power and control.

MCINTOSH MA6800 £3735

The MA6800 not so much plays music as takes control of it, with effortless bass drive.

PHONO STAGES

QED DISCSAVER £35

A true bargain that offers a cohesive, musical sound but avoid using it in thin sounding systems.

NAD PP1 £39.99

An unassuming little box that nevertheless gets on with it. Comes complete with wall-plug power supply. No provision for battery power.

ROTEL RQ-970BX £130

Superb-value entry-level phono stage with audiophile quality components and clear sound.

LFD MISTRAL PHONO STAGE £300

The Mistral has a warmth and involvement that make many pricier stages sound overpriced.

MICHELL ISO/HERA £530

Open, spacious and 3-D sound. Not for fans of warmth though.

AUDIO INNOVATIONS P2 £749

Fantastic bass and super insight make this one of the best phono stages around. One for vinyl lovers.

ROKSAN ARTAXERXES X £950

With the Atessa PSU the Artaxerxes X MM/MC stage still shines. Its fortes are great stage depth, neutrality and tonal colour. Musical too.

PRE-AMPLIFIERS

CREEK OBH-12 PASSIVE £200

If you're not driving long cables, the remote-control Creek is a star.

AUDIO ANALOGUE BELLINI £475

Showcases AA's characteristic mix of clarity, detail and musicality and stomps on the competition.

XTC PRE-1 £1000

Almost valve-like in its smoothness, the line-level Pre-1 is warm and seductively clear.

CHORD CPA1800 £1800

Clarity, insight and control are second to none - an addictive mixture.

MARANTZ MODEL 7 PRE-AMP £3500

A Sixties reissue, the Marantz pre-amp still sounds superb. Has a great phono stage.

POWER AMPLIFIERS

QUAD II second-hand

Classic valve monobloc with many thousands still in use. Archetypal warm, smooth valve sound.

LEAK STEREO 20 second-hand

The Stereo 20 can sound impressively up-to-date, although power and detail are ultimately limited. The TL10, TL12 and TL12+ are also worthy contenders but all have very high sensitivity (125mV for full output) so beware of overloading.

ARCAM ALPHA 9 £400

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

MISSION CYRUS POWER £450

This power amplifier is a real honey. Rich and smooth, but with a firm grip.

SUGDEN AU41P £530

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

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-A200 £1000/PAIR

200watts of high-end monobloc power in a grooved tube.

NAIM NAP180 £1060

Partnered with a NAC82, this has classic Naim control, and a superbly rhythmic presentation.

MICHELL ALECTO STEREO £1300

A refined transistor amp with valve-like transparency and a full, warm, easy-going sound. The £1800 Alecto monoblocs have rare lucidity and three-dimensional realism.

World favourites guide

CHORD SPM400 £1400
There's a sense of effortless power to the Chord that gives music real scale and presence.

CHORD SPM1200 £2995
Like the SPM400 but loads more power on tap. Will drive just about anything.

XTC POW-1 £2000
As smooth and composed as the Pre-1, the POW-1 has bags of power and refinement.

MARANTZ MODEL 9 £8000
Authentic reproduction monoblocs still more than cut the sonic mustard.

TUNERS

LEAK TROUGHLINE second-hand
Our favourite way of listening to the wireless. A deliciously mellifluous sound will have you junking your transistor radio in seconds.

NAD 412 £190
The 412 is remarkably musical and natural sounding. Rich sound and full bass are rarities.

SONY ST-SA3ES £250
Beguiling RDS tuner for sonically discerning button-lovers. Good ergonomics and sensitive too.

MISSION CYRUS FM7 £300
Clear and lucid sound puts it up with the best. Superb build too.

ROTEL RT-990BX £500
High-quality Michi-based tuner with a sophisticated, forward sound with great imaging.

NAIM NAT03 £595
The NAT03's warm, atmospheric sound is further proof of Naim's proficiency with tuners.

FANFARE FT-1 £1295
In its native US the FT-1 is no mere tuner but a 'broadcast monitor', a task at which it acquits itself well, with a clear and powerful sound.

NAIM NAT01 £1380
This is the best solid-state tuner available bar none. For better radio, go and live in the studio.

CASSETTE DECKS

KENWOOD KX-3080 £160
A simple deck, but excellent-quality head and transport give an unusually high level of sound.

AIWA AD-S750 £200
Sonically a very decent machine. Comes fitted with Dolby B, C and S.

YAMAHA KX-580SE £250
The 'Special Edition' tag is more than a marketing gimmick. Sound is solid and clear with Dolby S.

AIWA AD-S950 £300
A stable transport, superb head and Dolby S make the AD-S950 an excellent all-rounder.

PIONEER CT-S740S £430
A great piece of engineering from Pioneer, with first-rate sound on playback and recording.

NAKAMICHI DR2 second-hand
Tragically discontinued, the DR2 pushes recordings to the limit, remaining unflustered at all times.

NAKAMICHI DR1 second-hand
Better still than the DR2, with manual head-azimuth adjustment to boot.

NAKAMICHI CR7 second-hand
Kills all other tape deck and stamps on the graves.

LOUDSPEAKERS

TANNOY MERCURY M2 £140
A true audiophile bargain which embarrasses many more expensive boxes.

KEF Q15 £199
These stand mounters offer impressive bass and excellent clarity but need a powerful amplifier to perform at their considerable best.

MISSION 771 £170
Characteristically fast, punchy Mission sound from the Aerogel mid/bass and silk-dome tweeter.

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

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

CASTLE EDEN £469
Impressively vice-free 'speakers that offer great transparency and involvement at the price.

EPOS E512 £495
Strong, punchy bass is allied to detailed and articulate midrange and treble.

REL STRATA £500
The Strata subwoofer is not a toy. It offers superb, true hi-fi bass depth and power, and opens up sound stage depth in particular.

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

HARBETH HL-K6 £1049
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, polite balance. Good, agile bass.

JAMO CONCERT 8 £1500
With their inch-thick cabinets and fabulous drive units, the Concert 8s are the most transparent stand mounters around.

EPOS E525 £1505
Epos' best. Combines near-uncoloured tonality with characteristic fireworks in the rhythm department. Superb by any other name.

TANNOY AMS8 £2700
Bold sounding professional active monitor with solid bass, clear midrange and delicious treble.

QUAD ESL 63 £3450
A reference against which all other loudspeakers are judged, the '63s have superb imaging and genuine transparency.

KEF REFERENCE SERIES FOUR £3299
Superb bass and near-electrostatic sound staging make these involving loudspeakers a reference for others. Need a strong amplifier though.

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

TANNOY WESTMINSTER ROYAL £14920
An incredibly dynamic, detailed full-range horn design with a rich sound. Its high sensitivity predisposes it to valve amplification.

MINIDISC PLAYERS

SONY MDS-JE510 £300
An impressive sound and unmatched convenience make this MiniDisc player an excellent buy.

KENWOOD DM-9090 £500
One of the best MD players yet. ATRAC 4.5 gives clean and very musical recordings from this Kenwood.

SONY MDS-JA50ES £1300
The Sony can put the wind up Nakamichi cassette decks when used with better blank MDs.

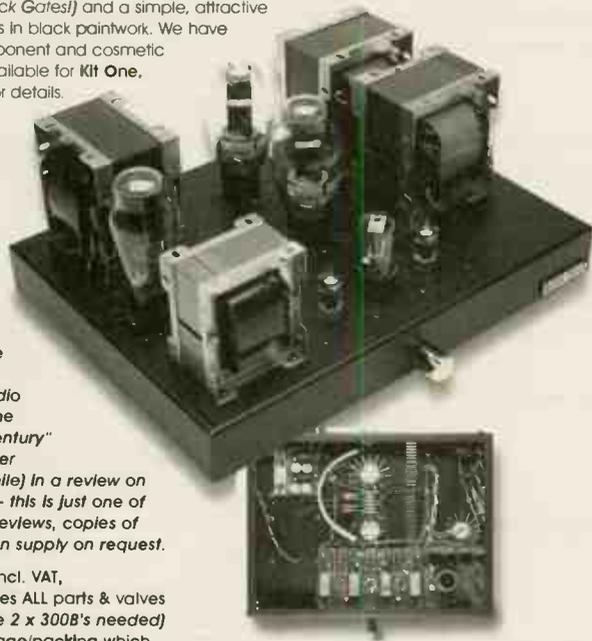
Audio Note Kit Amplifiers -

Power-Amp Kit

The Audio Note Kit One *(Illustrated)*

Based around the justly famous 300B directly heated triode, we see this kit as the introduction to *real* Audio Amplification, as it covers all the important aspects of design necessary, Single Ended, No-Feedback, Class A, Directly Heated Triode, to become a member of this exclusive club of amplifiers.

Kit One has one 300B per channel running at 420 volts with 75mA current giving 8-9 watts of the cleanest power you will ever hear, the input stage consists of a 6SN7GT with a 5687 double triode driver stage running in SRPP. The power supply is capacitor-choke-capacitor configuration with a 5U4G HT rectifier, the 300B's have a DC filament supply for hum-free operation whilst the other valves are AC heated. Component quality is similar to our Level 2 finished products, **Audio Note** paper in oil signal capacitors, Beyschlag 1 watt 1% metal film resistors, good quality electrolytics (*sorry NO Black Gates!*) and a simple, attractive stereo chassis in black paintwork. We have several component and cosmetic upgrades available for **Kit One**, please ask for details.



The Kit One has recently been awarded the title "The Greatest Audio Bargain of the Twentieth Century" by Dick Olsner (*ex-Stereophile*) in a review on the Internet - this is just one of many rave reviews, copies of which we can supply on request.

Price: £799 Incl. VAT, which includes ALL parts & valves (yes, also the 2 x 300B's needed) but not postage/packing which to UK customers is £12.00.

KIT ONE ORDER CODE: AN-KIT-001

Audio Note is happy to provide a wide range of complete kits, output and mains transformers, chokes, paper in oil, aluminium, tin, copper or silver foil signal capacitors, Black Gate, Cerafine or standard electrolytic capacitors, tantalum, carbon and metal film resistors, silver wires, interstage and driver transformers, switches, balance controls, potentiometers, attenuators, chassis's and fittings for the quality oriented DIY'er, whether you are a beginner or hardened experimenter, male or female, we have the best (*and not always most expensive*) parts for most projects.

Audio Note Loudspeaker Drivers & Kits

We shall be offering the speaker drivers that we use in our own loudspeakers for general sale from now on. You can buy the drivers individually or together with matched and tested cross-overs, cabinet drawings and reflex ports.

Audio Note Circuits, Valvedata & Basic Technical Information

If you would like some suggestions which to base a future project around, then we shall be happy to provide you with a circuit pack containing good circuits like ONGAKU, KEGON/KASSAI, NEIRO, GAKU-ON plus several other power amplifier circuits and the M7Tube & M10 pre-amplifiers, which are the best sounding pre-amplifier circuits we have come across.

Audio Note Quality Output Transformers

We are in the process of building up four separate ranges of **Audio Note** output transformers, in order to offer the best possible outputs at different pricepoints, they will fall into four categories,

Economy range Selected to ensure quality audio in a price efficient package.

Mid-price range Top quality with specially selected components.

High Quality range Double C-core outputs for single-ended circuits exclusively.

Super High Quality range All-silver wired outputs of the best possible quality.

Audio Note offer a design, prototyping and production service, where we can supply for almost any requirement. Please telephone for details.

Audio Note Mains Transformers

Available for most popular designs. We shall continue to expand the range as opportunities become available.

The Audio Note Kit Two

Kit Two features a single 6550 tetrode running in Single-Ended mode, yielding some 12 watts of pure Class A. With a valve rectified HT for the output stage, stereo chassis, and 6SN7GT input and 12AX7/ECC83 SRPP driver stage, componentry and chassis as Kit One.

Kit Two costs £599 Incl. VAT, includes valves, but not postage/packing.

KIT TWO ORDER CODE: AN-KIT-002

The Audio Note Kit Three

Kit Three features 2 x 300B's per channel running in single-ended parallel yielding 16/17 watts in pure Class A. This kit is on two mono chassis with valve rectified HT supplies, no signal feedback, it uses a 6SN7GT double triode as input valve and a pair of 5687 double triodes running in SRPP as drivers. The **Kit Three** is essentially a mono version of the Kit One with double the power, the same component choices and on two chassis' instead of one.

The Kit Three costs £1,550 Incl. VAT but excluding delivery.

KIT THREE ORDER CODE: AN-KIT-003

The Audio Note Kit Four

The **Kit Four** is really our introduction to valve amplifier kit building, the circuit and power supply being mounted on a single printed circuit board. The high-quality push-pull output and mains transformers are all mounted in a small aluminium chassis covering everything so nobody will be able to see that you have succumbed to the lure of the valve amplifier which is sweeping the world. The circuit consists of two 6V6GT tetrodes running in Push-Pull class A, yielding about 10 watts, driven by a 6SN7GT and a 12AX7/ECC83 input stage. Easy to build, even for the beginner. Visually **Kit Four** matches the **Audio Note** Pre-amplifier shown here but with a single chrome-plated volume control. As with all **Audio Note** kits everything (*except solder!*) is included. The **Kit Four** costs: £279 Incl. VAT but not delivery.

KIT FOUR ORDER CODE: AN-KIT-004

Audio Note Driver, Interstage & Pre-Amplifier Output Transformers

Here is a product group that you do not see advertised every day! As usual we start small with the intention to grow quickly.

Audio Note Paper In Oil Signal Capacitors

These handmade signal capacitors are sonically superior to any of the plastic or other paper types we have come across. If you have never experienced the difference that a really good paper / oil capacitor can make in a valve amplifier, then you really should try.

Audio Note Paper In Oil Tin Foil Signal Capacitors

The tin foil is better than alu-foil for most applications, we recommend you try them.

Audio Note Paper In Oil Copper & Silver Foil Signal Capacitors

These copperfoil paper signal capacitors are considerably better than both the standard offerings and the tin foils. To start with there will be a few values / voltages of each available and we shall expand as fast as we can to cover all the popular values.

Audio Note Acid & Chloride Free Silver Solder

The best solder available, used in all our amplifiers from OTO to the mighty GAKU-ON.

Audio Note Cables & Wires

Audio Note manufacture a range of high quality copper and silver coax, speaker and wiring cables, which, depending on the overall price of the project, will do justice to any hifi system, regardless of price. Please call for prices and details.

Audio Note High Quality Stepped Attenuators & Switches

These handmade attenuators and switches are manufactured by a friend of Mr Kondo of **Audio Note**. They are the best you can buy.

Audio Note High Quality Valve Bases

All of our valve bases are of the highest possible quality materials. Ceramic, Teflon and gold and silver plated. If you want the best look no further - they are the ultimate!

Audio Note Resistors

Audio Note endeavour to stock the entire E12 range of all the different makes of resistor, since most are used in our products stock is generally available within four weeks.

BEYSCHLAG - HOLCO - SHINKOH Tantalum Film Resistors

AUDIO NOTE 1/2 Watt Tantalum Resistors

AUDIO NOTE 1 Watt Tantalum Resistors

AUDIO NOTE 2 Watt 1% Tantalum Resistors

AUDIO NOTE Precision Carbon Film Resistors

ALLEN BRADLEY 1 Watt 5% Carbon Film Resistors

Components & Valves

Pre-Amp Kit

The Audio Note Pre-Amplifier Kit (illustrated)

A complete kit loosely based on the Audio Note M7Tube pre-amplifier circuit is now available. The moving-magnet compatible phono stage consists of a cascode input, with passive RIAA equalisation and anode-follower output using the 12AX7/ECC83. Line buffer/amplification for the four line inputs consists of an ECC82 configured in parallel anode-follower mode. For the power supply a valve rectifier and choke-input filtering are employed. All circuitry is housed in a non-magnetic aluminium chassis giving the very best sound quality.

Both phono and line stages are built on 'track-less' pcbs allowing easy construction but with the sonic benefits of hard-wiring.

The standard-quality version of the pre-amp kit includes Roederstein polyester film capacitors, Beyschlag 1 watt 1% metal film resistors, Noble open-frame style potentiometers and all pcbs, valves, wire etc. Various component upgrades are available, details upon request.

Cost of The Pre-Amplifier Kit is: £299
Incl. VAT but not delivery.



Audio Note Black Gate Electron Transfer, High Performance, Graphite Foil Capacitors

Audio Note is currently the sole source in Europe that holds any significant range of values in stock, we use literally 1000's in production, as we were the first company to realise the tremendous benefits that Black Gate capacitors offer, and we are to date the only high-end audio company in the world to incorporate Black Gate capacitors consistently in our finished products.

There are very few audio parts that promise a guaranteed improvement when replacing practically any other part, but this is what the BLACK GATE capacitors actually do. Exchanging any electrolytic capacitor anywhere in the circuit of an amplifier or in the crossover of a speaker will greatly improve sound quality. We are working on some guidelines as to where, how and which types of Black Gates to use in different circuits, the first such technical guideline is available now and is called "Improving your CD-Player" and can be obtained by sending a stamped addressed envelope to us requesting this leaflet. All AUDIO NOTE Level 2 Signature products use Black Gate Electron Transfer in critical signal / power supply junctions.

Audio Note Cerafine Powdered Ceramic Electrolytic Capacitors

We have at long last secured a reliable source for these fine power supply filter capacitors, a must in any single-ended project. The Cerafines really cover many of the Black Gates values and where the prices for the BG's are prohibitive the Cerafine is a fine sounding alternative. We have increased the range of Cerafines we stock quite recently, and strongly recommend all the Cerafines as a far superior replacement or substitute for ordinary electrolytics, and at the prices offered that should be within most budgets. All power supply Cerafines are supplied with a capacitor clamp and are upright mounting.

Audio Note Potentiometers

The best available from a sound quality / price viewpoint, made by Noble in Japan, utilising high quality conductive plastic film. However a better alternative is the KO-ON volume controls which are used in pre-amplifiers like the M7 Tube, M7Line, and in a mono version on the input in the NEIRO, KASSAI, KEGON and GAKU-ON, these are very good sounding pots by any standard.

Audio Note also carry large quantities of STANDARD TYPE SWITCHES, STANDARD ELECTROLYTIC CAPACITORS (good quality industrial types), RCA, BNC, BANANA, PLUGS, RCA SOCKETS, SPEAKER & GROUND TERMINALS & LOUDSPEAKER SPADES.

Audio Note Moving Coil, CD Line & Input Matching Transformers

Audio Note now offer moving coil, CD and Input matching transformers for general sale. Common to all of these small signal transformers is that they come in a mumetal screening can with a threaded spindle with a nut for mounting.

Valves

The Audio Note AV300BSL (illustrated)

Audio Note has very limited stocks available of the AV300BSL and AV32BSL.

AV300BSL - 50 watt dissipation for about 12 watts class A, single ended configuration.

AV32BSL - 65 watt dissipation for about 18 watts class A, single ended configuration.

These super linear output tubes are widely regarded as the best amplification devices available.

Previously offered with a 2 year warranty at \$250 and \$300 respectively.

They are now available without warranty for the unbelievably low prices of \$50 and \$75 each.

Offer subject to availability on a first come first served basis.

Prices are exclusive of VAT.



Audio Note Selected Audio Valves

Our valves are selected from the best available sources and are tested to the same stringent standards that we apply in the production of our own amplifiers. They fall into two categories, standard production items and rare, mostly NOS (New Old Stock) valves which are no longer in production. We have compiled a special list of the NOS items, which is available against a stamped self addressed envelope. If you live outside the UK, send US \$2. You should be aware that the valves on this list are NOT cheap, but we have stock of original GE, RCA and United Electronics 211, both standard versions and reinforced anode type for the US airforce, 845 Westinghouse, VT25/10/10V, VT62/801A, WE300B, STC4300A, Mullard GZ34/CV1377, Tungsol 5U4G (best sounding 5U4G we have ever heard!), Chatham 5R4WGY and many others.

Audio Note Recommended Magazines

Listener

Review based music & hi-fi magazine that contains some of the best considered & well written articles in print. A very good read £4 per copy.

The Audio Adventure

Glossy, well produced publication that provides a good alternative to the established magazines. Not afraid to be controversial. £4 per copy.

A full list of available issues on request.

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Audio Note

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RETRO REPRODUCTION

Exclusive Scottish distributor for
E.A.R./Yoshino Equipment V20 & MC3 now in stock.
Agents for SME, Michel, Lowther, DNM



The Outstanding V20 Integrated Amp



Small but perfectly formed MC3

V20

Introducing Tim De Paravacini's latest masterpiece, the outstanding V20. Using no less than 20 ECC83 triodes operating in Class A with no overall feedback, the result is the most natural and uncoloured sound available today.

MC3

Producing the very best from vinyl has long been a black art and it's no wonder with so many permutations involved. Most people agree that Moving Coil cartridge design is technically superior than the Moving magnet but demands much more from it's ancillaries, especially the phono stage.

E.A.R./Yoshino have just launched the MC3 Cartridge Transformer with a band width of 3Hz-100kHz, facilities for a wide range of quality cartridge outputs and twin isolated earth terminals for maximum noise reduction.

The MC3 captures all the subtleties from the most complex recording without resorting to thrusting or spitting it out. Its extreme clarity and grainless presentation makes for a superb vinyl experience.

Used Equipment For Sale

Roksan Xerxes with PSU	£295.00	Michel Argo pre with Hera	£375.00
Sumiko Tone Arm	£225.00	Audio Innovations L1 Pre	£195.00
Quad FM3 Tuner with Wooden Sleeve	£125.00	Source Turntable with Odyssey Arm	£450.00
Tannoy Mayfair 10" DC with 10" ABR	£150.00	Stax Lambda Signature head phones with	
EAR 834P	£375.00	SRM TIS valve energiser	£795.00
Leak TL12+ pair	£300.00		
Radford STA 25 III	£695.00	Due in:	
Beard P50 KT88 Valve Power Amp	£395.00	Revox & Naim Tuners, Kerr McKosh pre amp.	
Kerr McKosh EL84 monoblocks	£250.00	Thorens 124, Sugden FM Tuner,	
EAR 834P	£235.00	Zeta Tone arm,	
Concordant Excelsior Pre	£595.00	Leak TL50 + mono blocks and various leaks	
Kef 102/2 Mahogany Speakers	£225.00	new spares,	
RB 300 Tone Arm	£85.00	Leak TL10s, Garrard 301,	
Accuphase E101 Tuner	£259.00	Radford STA15	
Meridian 206 Delta Sigma CD	£395.00	SME 12" Tonearms (various models).	

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**Buying & Selling Vintage HiFi, Valves,
Classical LP Records & Spare Parts.**

Quad

FM1 Tuner	£10
QCII Pre-Amp	£30
QA12P Amplifiers (Pair)	£Offers
405	£130

Spare Parts For Quad + Leak - Transformers etc.

Servicing for Quad II + Leak Amplifiers

Leak

Leak TL10 -1 (Single)	£250
TL12+ (Pair)	£300
Stereo 20	£250
TL12.1 (Pair)	£1300
TL25+ (single) Black	£150
Troughline II FM Tuner	£60

Lentek moving coil pre-amp	£25
Garrard 301	£150
Thorens TD 125 MK II with	
SME 3009 MK II improved and	
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BOB DYLAN "BOOTLEG SERIES LP CANCELLED

It is with much regret that I have to inform you that the Royal Albert Hall Concert will not now be available on vinyl. Sony Music have informed us that Dylan himself pulled the plug on the project when he heard that the packaging was so elaborate, the only way to possibly release a vinyl version would be in a box set format. Dylan was apparently unhappy with this arrangement and thus rejected it. Voice your disgust to Sony.

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PLASTIC FANTASTIC

David Price looks at one of Mission's forgotten classics, the polypropylene-coned 770 loudspeaker.

How many seminal Seventies loudspeakers can you name offhand? Me neither. Aside from a few exceptions like the BBC LS3/5a and Yamaha's NS1000M, the decade that fashion forgot wasn't exactly hot for 'speakers either. But think a bit harder and one design springs to mind. The Mission 770, largely unrecognised today, was nevertheless a charismatic and innovative package which made quite a splash in those dark days of audio.

Although not the first loudspeaker from the Huntingdon company - they'd already released several unsuccessful behemoths - the 770 was the most interesting by far. Its main distinguishing feature was the use of polypropylene in the mid/bass driver, which was (back then) as rare as a British Leyland car that didn't break down. Since polyprop has better internal damping than most standard-issue doped-paper cones, it is less prone to break-up. It is also lighter than the previous high-end cone material, Bextrene, which sounds sluggish and sat-upon by comparison. As a result, distortion was dramatically reduced, giving a cleaner and more refined sound.

This clever mid/bass driver partnered a Ferrofluid-cooled, synthetic-dome tweeter, fed from what was, at that time, an unusually simple crossover with very high power handling. Reflex loaded by a small 55mm forward-facing port, the 770 measured 590mm by 300mm by 285mm. This was fairly typical of 'full-size' 'speakers back then, giving a cabinet volume of 38 litres. Designed for use on its matching L-shape stands, the Mission came with a very period, detachable foam grille as well.

The combination of modern drivers and a fairly large box meant the 770 gave a distinctly above-average (compared with its contemporaries) 87dB sensitivity figure, plus benign load characteristics that rarely dropped below 10ohms. Factor in the 200watt peak power handling and a bass response that reached down to 50Hz, and you have a powerful, big sounding, easy-to-drive loudspeaker.

Given a decent transistor amp and source - easier said than done back in the

late Seventies, mind - the big Mission was a cracker. Next to rivals like IMF's TLS50 and Celestion's Ditton 66 (which had hopelessly complicated, power-sapping crossovers and more drivers than a busman's holiday) the Missions sounded remarkably fast, agile and clean. The simple crossovers and intrinsic quality of the drivers made for very low coloration too.

While many high-end loudspeakers possessed a random assortment of midrange and bass units, ABRs, tweeters and super-tweeters scattered higgledy-piggledy around the front baffle, the 770's two units were as close as they could be, for near point-source imaging. Sound staging was a treat, with superb lateral image precision and class-leading depth. Tonally they were refreshingly neutral, with powerful, tight bass and clean, almost stark highs.

Surprisingly for a top-seller, development work began on the 770 almost as soon as it had hit the market. The 770 II featured a smaller mid/bass driver with a larger 33mm coil for improved power-handling and even lower distortion. While the 'II seemed even happier on punchy Rock music - the new driver achieving clean peaks of nearly 500watts - the tweeter came in for some criticism. Unlike most of its contemporaries, the 770 II tended towards brightness, which could approach hardness with unsympathetic power amps.

By the early Eighties, the 770 had become the 770 Freedom, gaining a few internal tweaks and new visuals in the process. Although not a bad 'speaker, it was beginning to drop off the pace in development terms. Young upstarts like Celestion's SL6 had come along sporting flashy metal-dome tweeters and laser-modelled woofers. Although inferior to the Mission at music making, they nevertheless stole the limelight. The 770



was no longer a reviewers' fave.

This is a shame, because a pair of 770s driven by a modern integrated such as the Sugden A21a or the Sonneteer Campion can really do the biz. Today's best floor standers make them sound a little loose and vague, but they're also impressively big and powerful too, without the frigid, over-analytical quality you get from many current models.

The closest peers you'll find are from Mission's very own stable. Listen to either the original 752 floor standers or the subsequent 751 Freedom stand mounters and you'll get an idea of the 770's clean, warm, big-hearted, musical sound. The great thing about the 770s is that these days, a decent second-hand pair will give you a real bang for your buck. Pay around £150 for a pair of well-preserved 'IIs, and you'll not be disappointed. ■

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New Items For The New Season

So the 1998 Hi-Fi Show at Heathrow has been and gone, so hopefully the season has now started. Not that I heard a great deal of interest and in some ways it's getting too big, with too many European manufacturers looking for world-wide distribution. It makes it difficult to get around in one day. However, one new speaker from AVI, the Gravitron, was shown for the first time and caused quite a stir. It has been amazing how a small company like AVI has so quickly produced two excellent small speakers in the Positron and Nu-Neutron, which are so domestically acceptable, and have immediately caught on with the public and reviewers alike. In comparison, the Gravitron, at £4000, is large and contains two 10 inch bass units in a large cabinet with a triangular mid/top in a separate enclosure, the whole thing standing 4ft tall. Should have them in soon so ring for a demo.

The Inner Sound Eros, a hybrid electrostatic transmission line bass unit, is now on demo and coming complete with an electronic X-over and 200 w/ch power amp for the bass unit, allows lots of tweaking to get the balance to suit. The end results are well worth it. Now that Michell have a new remote controlled pre-amp, the Orca (never liked the Argo much) and re-vamped more powerful Alectos, they are going to be interesting, especially for anyone who has Alon speakers, which the Alectos drive beautifully. Naim CD2 plus 102 pre plus 140 power plus 02 tuner going for £3k, 9 months old.

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MARK LEVINSON 23.5 power amplifier, 200wpc, £3250 (£7450), Wilson Watt 5/Puppy 2 £7250 (£7000), Wadia 21 CD player, digital volume control £2995 (£5500), Gryphon Exorcist £50, may p/x. Tel: 01449 676 335 (Dec/I)

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BEAM-ECHO Avantic SPA-11 integrated valve amp £200. Also pair Lowther PM6C drivers (need re-coning) £80. Sony 3 head cassette deck, excellent condition £85. Tel: Jon 0181 904 8023 eves and w/end (NW London) (Dec/I)

TDL STUDIO ONE floor-standing loudspeakers, black ash, spiked stands, excellent condition £395. Leak Truspeed turntable, Acos arm, Shure M75ED vgc £45. Celestion Ditton 15s vgc £45. Tel: 01703 666 632 (Southampton) (Dec/I)

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NAIM NAP 110 Power amplifier and NAC 42.5 pre amplifier. Both units are in absolutely mint condition. Tel: Paul on 01223 203 273 or 01763 853 102 evenings (Dec/I)

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X Dem. Sale...

	Was	Now
Acoustic Energy AE1 II r/w	£995	£745
AE2 II r/w/wood inc stands	£2090	£1400
Audiolab 8000C	£580	£475
8000LX	£470	£395
8000CDM+DAC	£2300	£1725
8000DAC	£900	£650
8000MX pair	£1800	£1495
B&W CDM2 r/wood	£400	£320
Copland CDA288	£1999	£1599
Cyrus 11 li	£598	£475
Commander remote	£100	£50
PSX-R	£328	£275
Power	£498	£395
SL integrated amp	£398	£325
JBL Aquarius S119 LSs	£1250	£625
KEF LS3/5a piano bk. LE	£1800	£895
Krell 250 Pre+power	£5195	£4650
KAV300 cd	£3550	£3195
Marantz CD17 bk.	£800	£650
PM17 gold	£900	£695
Meridian A500 r/wood	£875	£650
M60 r/wood	£2500	£1875
566.20	£1095	£750
500 CDT +566.20 DAC	£2420	£1795
Michell Argo pre.+Hera	£885	£595
ISO phono stage	£420	£320
Mission 753f oak	£898	£750
754f oak	£1498	£1125
Monitor Audio Studio 50SE		
r/wood piano laq.	£5000	£2995
Studio 12 r/wood	£1100	£825
Pink Triangle Litaural CD	£2099	£1675
Tarantella+RB+XLZ	£1054	£750
Pioneer CLD-D925	£800	£595
A300 Precision	£400	£300
PDS505 Precision	£460	£350
Quad 77 Power amp	£600	£450
77 Pre-Amp	£700	£525
77 Remote	£300	£150
77 CD bus (all carbon)	£700	£595
REL Q100E bk.	£495	£395
Yamaha DSP-A3090	£1500	£1125

Classic second-hand...

Acoustic Energy AE1 r/w	£495
Audiolab 8000C pre-amp	£375
8000A integrated amp	£350
Audio Innovations Series 1000 monoblox (were £1799)	£750
2nd Audio (was £3000)	£1000
Gale 401 chrome/black	£250
HK Citation 11/12 pre/power & 15 tuner the very first models, in walnut cases	£300
KEF 104/2 r/w (£2000)	£850
Marantz CD63 II K1-S	£275
CD85 (built like a tank)	£250
Mission 776/777 batt pre amp & 2 x 100w power amp	£950
Argonaut bk., big, twin bass	£325
Quad 22 pre & powers	£600
ESL57 pair bk latest spec.	£750
34 pre-amp	£150
44 pre (din)	£185
405 power amp	£200
FM4 tuner (din)	£150
Revox G36 1/2 track 10" B77 reel-reel 1/4 track, 7.5ips pro-nabs, op cover	£850
Rogers LS6 teak	£175
Ruark Sabre bk.	£250
SME original 3012 3009 mk1 original box	£75
Tandberg TD20A 1/4 track 7.5ips 10" reel	£650
Tannoy Cheviot 10" Dual Concentrics, walnut	£350
609 marble effect inc. stands	£195
Thorens TD124 mk2 +3012	£150
TD125 mk2 +3009	£200
TD150+3012 in SME plinth	£300
Vortexion Series 4 recorder	£100

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GZ33	Mullard	£15	1 µF
GZ37	Mullard	£10	.25 µF
GZ34	Mullard	£18	.25 µF
GZ32	Mullard	£20	.5 µF
GZ32	Philips	£18	.5 µF
KT66	GEC	£65	
KT61	GEC	£25	
EZ80	Mullard	£8	
EZ81	Mullard	£10	1.2H
ECC33	Mullard	£25	45H
ECC35	Mullard	£25	2H
ECC81	Mullard	£6	16H
ECC82	Mullard	£10	6H
ECC83	Mullard	£12	10H
EF86	Mullard	£12	
EL84	Mullard	£12	
E88CC	Mullard	£15	
M8137	Mullard	£15	8 µF
EF37A	Mullard	£10	8 µF
EL84	RCA	£12	12 µF
A2900	GEC	£20	4 µF
EL37	Mullard	£40	4 µF
ML6	Marconi	£25	4 µF
KT88	GEC	£125	4 µF
6SL7	STC	£8	2 µF
6SN7	STC	£15	2 µF
6SN7	USA	£5	
EF86	Brimar	£6	
8D8	Brimar	£15	
6SN7	Brimar	£6	
5Y3GT	Halttron	£5	
5R4GY	USA	£8	
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3A/110B	STC	£20	
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COM/4V/6.3V at 3A
COM/4V/5V at 3A
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NAIM NAC 72. Current model. Fitted MC boards. In mint condition. Can post if required. £375. Tel: 01986 895 631 (Suffolk) (Dec/1)

CORNUCOPIA! ARCAM: AV50 Surround £495. 9P power £295. 8SE CD £495. B&W: CDMI & Atacamas £350, DM302 & Atacamas £75. Kef: 103/4 £450, REF 100 Centre £195. Polk: PSW100 Sub £195. Rotel RB970BX power £95. Sony: ST-S311 tuner £85, ST-SE500 tuner £95, MDS302 £95, MDS-JE510 £125, TC-K611S cassette £95, KV29-FIU Nicam £275. Teac: VRDS7 £350. Technics: A900MK2 £200, SL1210MK2 £195. Yamaha: DSPE200 £125. Sound Organisation stand £50. Most items boxed. Tel: Roy 0181 941 5100 (Dec/1)

PROAC RESPONSE 2 speakers in black with foundation stands, mint condition £800 ono Tel: 0181 681 6849 (Dec/1)

ARCAM ALPHA CD player £170 (£420) boxed with manuals. Naim NAC A5 cable 2x7m, 2x14m £20. Tel: Pete 01908 690 096 (Milton Keynes) (Dec)

NAIM NAIT 2 latest model, 3D logo (rare). pristine condition. Boxed. very reluctant sale! 1st class phono stage. £280. Better NAIT3. Wanted: Rega Kytes. Tel: Anwar 01422 310 464 (Dec/1)

FREE 1M Audio Note AN-V cable and Target 3 tier support with Gamma Era pre-amp with phono £500 (£2500) and Gamma Space Reference power amp, silver wired, titanium 300Bs £1000 (£4000). Impulse H2 speakers £700 (£2250). Tel: 01962 774 218 (Dec/1)

AUDIOLAB 8000P stereo power amp, 18 months old, £450. Denon DCD825 CD player £80. Cambridge Audio DACMagic II DAC £50. All equipment mint, boxed & instructions. One very careful owner! Tel: 01444 410 445 (Dec/1)

KRELL FPB200 three years warranty, original packing and manual £4500. Tel: 01482 563 833 (Hull) (Dec/1)

AUDIOLAB 8000A. 1 year old £350. Musical Fidelity Typhoon power amp £150. Arcam Alpha 7 CD £200. Mordaunt Short MS3.10 speakers £50. JVC TD-W253 cassette £50. Tel: 0141 649 8413 (Dec/1)

TANNOY EATON 10" dual concentric loudspeakers, teak with brown grills including Heybrook open frame stands. Immaculate condition £295. Tel: 01295 261166 evenings (Dec/1)

AUDIOLAB 8000C/P (old style), CDM/DAC, Ruark Sabre speakers (walnut), Sony TC-K611S Dolby S tape deck, Mission/V.D.Hul cable - £3000 package. Toshiba 25in TV/Sony SLV-E7 Nicam video - £300 pair. Micromega Stage 2 CD - £250. All perfect condition. Move abroad forces sale. Tel: Ian 0141 881 1373 (Dec/1)

LINN MIMIK II CD player, mint, boxed, £550. Dual CS505-4 record deck £80. Tel: 01904 627 437 (Yorks) (Dec/1)

FINESTRA PREAMP with dedicated MC input and external power supply £700. Lectern power amp £400 or both for £1000. excellent sound and condition. Tel: Steve 01229 827 980 (Dec/1)

JOHN SHEARNE Phase 2 integrated amplifier £320 for a superb warm involving sound. Tel: 0121 733 1961 (Dec/1)

MISSION 751 F (Prima) on sand filled Atacama stands with 4 lengths of DNM Reson cable. Mint £250. Cyrus XPA power amp, mint £200. Appolo hi-fi rack £50. Tel: 01765 600 450 (N Yorks) (Dec/1)

NAKAMICHI CR7E discrete head cassette, boxed, serviced, mint £950. Rega Radio less than two hours use £140. Nakamichi 582 cassette deck £150. Tel: Jeff 01785 214 678 evenings (Dec/1)

QUALITY LOUDSPEAKER cabinets ready for Tannoy 12" drivers. very smart satin black finish, £150 ono. Tel: 0171 381 1539 (Dec/1)

TOWNSHEND ROCK turntable, Rega arm, Linn K18II, new motor by Townshend 1997, plinth and lid, amazing sound. Best offer secures this increasingly rare turntable. Can deliver if required. Tel: 01782 397 204 (Staffs) (Dec/1)

MERIDIAN M2 active loudspeakers plus 101B pre amp (boxed). MM and MC modules. Speaker cabinets marked. Mechanically perfect £450. Tel: Nathan 0171 929 3940/3 (work) (Dec/1)

MERIDIAN 506 16 bit CD £500 - Exposure XV amplifier £400. Both in excellent condition/boxed etc. LFD Airoflex speaker cable/2x4m/bi-wire/terminated £50. Tel: 01492 547 200 (Dec/1)

MARANTZ CD63 II KI Signature boxed £260, meridian 263 DAC £225, Arcam Delta 290 with phono stage & remote £240. All mint condition. Tel: 0113 293 1524 (Dec/1)

LEAK SANDWICH speakers £85, Decca Deram speakers £25, Heathkit S-99 amplifier £55. Wanted - circuits for Revox A77, Leak Troughline 3. Tel: 01323 500 174 (E.Sussex) (Dec)

NAIM CD 2, 102 pre (R), 140 power, 02 tuner, new, still boxed, Audionote speakers AN/ED (1 month old). Linn LP12, Lingo, Ekos arm, AT OC9 cartridge. Offers. Tel: 01794 523 746 (Dec/1)

MISSION 754F speakers in Primavera oak. £845. Rega Hal pre amp with 4 Exon monoblocs £1650. All in A1 condition. Tel: 01908 510 838 (Milton Keynes) (Dec/1)

WANTED: QUAD CD 67. Tel: 003 259 51 51 51 (Belgium) (Feb/1)

LINN PRETEK vgc £200. Audiolab 8000A vgc £250. Rotel RB 850 £90 ono. Nytech active speaker system: CTA 252XD, CXA252, Arc 101 speakers with own stands & MC, MM & low MC phono cards £300. NAD 3020A £60 ono. Tel: 01623 644 474 (Dec/1)

QUAD 66 CD £300. Tel: 01452 523 077 or 0385 381 699 (Dec/1)

MERIDIAN DSP5000 digital speakers £2150 ono. Meridian 500 transport & MSR remote £750 ono. Both items 18 months old. Immaculate condition. Boxed. Tel: 0113 253 8238 (Dec/1)

MICROMEGA DUO CD transport and Duo BS DAC, excellent sound and condition, selling due to upgrade cost £2200 new, sell £1100 ono. Tel: Tim 01892 549 779 (Dec/1)

NAIM CD2 5 months old, selling due to upgrade, as new cost £2000, sell £1400 ono. Naim 72 preamp, new style, as new £425 ono and Naim 250 power amp £975 ono. Tel: Tim 01892 549 779 (Dec/1)

LINN KEILIDH speakers. Mint. Boxed. 10m bi-wired Linn K20 ans stands. Walnut £495. Tel: 0116 270 5149 (Leicester) (Dec/1)

PIONEER ELITE DVL-90 combi DVD/LD/CD. As new boxed (list £1450) £950. LDs: Broken arrow, Heat, Independence Day, Michael Collins, Mission Impossible and Star Wars Trilogy - Boxed set. Tel: 01945 463077 (Dec/1)

SPENDOR SP2/3 Rosewood with stands (£1195) £525. Mint condition Woodside ISA 230 integrated valve amp, involving sound and smart looks (£1000) £425. Linn Theta quality analogue tuner £125. Tel: 01707 891 974 (Herts) (Dec/1)

3/4 METRE PAIR XLO Signature cable £225. 3/4 metre pair MIT 750 speaker cable £100. Lynwood mains cleaner six outlets £185. 4 shelf Target AER rack £100. 3 shelf Target AER rack £75. 2 Target amp stands £35 each. 3 Arjay Record and CD storage units various sizes £40 to £100 each. Audio Research LS5 Mk3 pre-amp (black) mint, inc. remote control £3250. Tel: 0171 702 4984 (eves) (Dec/1)

TEAC VRDS10 immaculate and boxed £395. Townshend Rock Mk2, plinth, lid, Moth, recent GX22 £295. Cambridge R45 loudspeakers, spiked, silver wired £95. Armstrong valve receiver (mono) £25. Tel: 01480 353 649 (Cambridge) (Dec/1)

Choice hi-fi

Clearance Items

	Choice Price	Original Retail Price
Quad II's 2 x 2 monoblocks (special)	£ 495.00	£ -
Audio Research D240 mk II	£ 1495.00	£3500.00
Chameleon Ruby Power Amp (200W)	£ 495.00	£1200.00
Alchemist Kraken x 2 Stereo & Pre-amp	£ 695.00	£1400.00
Audio Innovations S500 Integrated	£ 450.00	£ 999.00
Exposure V Active x over	£ 295.00	£ 995.00
EAD 7000 Transport	£ 995.00	£2495.00
Roksan ROK-DAC 1	£ 250.00	£ 495.00
AVI 2000 pre/ remote	£ 495.00	£ 900.00
Tesseract Tala	£ 750.00	£1495.00
Magnum P200	£ 950.00	£1895.00
ATC SCM 10 Black	£ 695.00	£1150.00
Alon IV mk II	£ 1800.00	£3500.00
Monitor Audio 700 PMC	£ 395.00	£ 600.00
Royd Priors	£ 450.00	£ 950.00
Sonus Faber Gravis Sub woofer + X-over + power amp	£ 1395.00	£3200.00
Kenwood 9010	£ 250.00	£ 500.00
Audio Alchemy Transport DDS 2	£ 395.00	£ 900.00

New in This Month

POWER AMPLIFIERS

Audio Note Ankora Monoblocks	£ 8500.00	£14500.00
VTL Monoblocks	£ 1795.00	£ 4000.00
Mark Levinson 332	£ 5500.00	£ 6500.00

PRE AMPLIFIERS

Audio Research LS7	£ 1095.00	£ 1620.00
QED Vector + Positron P/S	£ 195.00	£ 300.00
Rotel RC995	£ 395.00	£ 550.00
Audio Synthesis Passion	£ 395.00	£ 600.00

SPEAKERS

Thiel CS2.3	£ 2600.00	£ 3600.00
CLS IIZ & Arcicci Stands	£ 2250.00	£ 4500.00
Rel Stentor Sub	£ 750.00	£ 1600.00
Apogee Stage	£ 995.00	£ 3000.00
Totem Staff (Cherry)	£ 750.00	£ 1150.00
Alon Adriana	£ 3995.00	£10000.00
Alon PW1 Subwoofer (Passive)	£ 295.00	£ 750.00

TURNTABLES/ ANALOGUE/ VARIOUS

Musical Fidelity Electra Tuner	£ 295.00	£ 395.00
Audiolab 8000 Tuner	£ 550.00	£ 895.00
Rega Planar 3/ RB 300/ Elys	£ 250.00	£ 450.00

C.D PLAYERS & DACS

Audio Research CD 2	£ 2495.00	£ 3500.00
Micromega Duo CD 2	£ 895.00	£ 2000.00
Krell Studio 2 DAC	£ 1295.00	£ 3198.00
Teac T1 Transport (Black)	£ 395.00	£ 525.00
Mark Levinson No. 39	£ 4250.00	£ 4995.00
Mark Levinson No. 35 Dac	£ 3500.00	£ 8000.00
Mark Levinson No. 31 Transport	£ 3500.00	£ 8500.00

Power Amplifiers

Exposure XV	£ 495.00	£ 795.00
Jadis JA500	£ 7995.00	£21000.00
Audio Research Classic 60	£ 1495.00	£ 3600.00
Boulder 102 AE	£ 2650.00	£ 3400.00
Pioneer A400	£ 195.00	£ 300.00
Conrad Johnson MF 2300	£ 1895.00	£ 2990.00
Audio Research M300 monoblocks	£ 4995.00	£10000.00
Boulder 500 AE	£ 3795.00	£ 5000.00
LFD PA1/LS1	£ 895.00	£ 1998.00
Audio Note P1 SE	£ 595.00	£ 950.00

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Krell KSA 80	£ 1495.00	£ 3000.00
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Quad 77 Integrated	£ 495.00	£ 700.00
Audio Research VT150 SE	£11995.00	£17000.00
Micromega Tempo 2 Integrated	£ 595.00	£ 900.00
Krell KSA 100S + Remote	£ 2995.00	£ 5843.00
Krell FPB 600	£ 8995.00	£12900.00
Krell KSA 250	£ 2750.00	£ 6700.00
Mark Levinson No. 331	£ 2995.00	£ 5000.00

Pre Amplifiers

Chord 3200 pre	£2250.00	£ 3800.00
Conrad Johnson PV12 (mm/mc)	£1995.00	£ 2590.00
Krell KRC	£3795.00	£ 6700.00
CAT SL1 mkII Black/ Silver	£4500.00	£ 6500.00
McCormack Micro Line Drive	£ 395.00	£ 595.00
Audio Research LS3	£1195.00	£ 1900.00
Audio Research LS5 mk II	£3000.00	£ 5700.00
Meridian 541 Dolby Surround	£ 795.00	£ 1095.00
Conrad Johnson PV10 (mm/mc)	£ 895.00	£ 1250.00
Audio Research LS3B	£1295.00	£ 2250.00
Audio Research Reference 1	£5995.00	£ 8500.00
Audio Research LS 22	£2950.00	£ 4000.00
Naim Nac 72	£ 550.00	£ 650.00
Unison Research Mystery One	£1095.00	£ 1800.00
Burmester 785	£ 395.00	£ 900.00
Hafler Iris Remote	£ 295.00	£ 800.00
Audio Research LS2	£1495.00	£ 2798.00
Angstrom 200 (Home cinema controller)	£1800.00	£ 3495.00
Trilogy 901 Pre	£ 550.00	£ 895.00

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Acoustic Energy AE1	£ 595.00	£ 795.00
Acoustic Energy AE2 + Stands	£ 1095.00	£ 1700.00
Gale 401	£ 250.00	£ -
B & W 802 mk III (Walnut)	£ 1895.00	£ 2800.00
Acoustic Energy AE1 Signature	£ 1195.00	£ 2200.00
Ensemble PA1	£ 995.00	£ 2000.00
Alon V mk II Bik	£ 2500.00	£ 5000.00
Wilson 3/2 (Black)	£ 5995.00	£15000.00
Alon Lotus SE	£ 3000.00	£ -
Sonus Faber Extrema + Stands	£ 4250.00	£ 7000.00
Linn Kan	£ 250.00	£ 500.00
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Wilson 5.1 (Piano White)	£12000.00	£19000.00
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Mini Grand	£ 2995.00	£ 7600.00
Dalquist DQ10	£ 395.00	£ 1090.00
Acoustic Energy AEGIS 1/ Stands	£ 295.00	£ 590.00
Martin Logan SL3	£ 2795.00	£ 3499.00
Tannoy D700	£ 1750.00	£ 2500.00
B & W 801 Series 2 (Black Ash)	£ 2200.00	£ 4000.00

CD Players & DACS

EAD DSP 1000	£ 695.00	£ 1495.00
Theta Data basic 2	£ 1695.00	£ 2397.00
Audio Alchemy DDE V1.0 + psu 1	£ 195.00	£ 300.00
P.S. Audio Ultralink	£ 795.00	£ 2390.00
EAD 9000 Series III HDCD	£ 3250.00	£ 6000.00
M C McCormack DAC-1	£ 395.00	£ 995.00
Acuphase DP70	£ 2250.00	£ 4500.00
Acuphase DP90/91	£ 9950.00	£20000.00
Forsell Air Ref Transport mk II	£ 8995.00	£13800.00
Forsell Air Ref dac	£11500.00	£24000.00
Mark Levinson 30.5/31	£ 1895.00	£ 3995.00
Meracur Transport	£ 895.00	£ 1095.00
Meridian 566 DAC (20 Bit)	£ 995.00	£ 1500.00
Micromega CD3 Transport	£ 295.00	£ 500.00
Micromega BS DAC	£ 495.00	£ 700.00
Quad 77 C.D Player (Quadlink)	£ 550.00	£ 1000.00
DPA PDM 2 mk III	£ 550.00	£ 1300.00
Meridian 200/ 203	£ 650.00	£ 1600.00
Marantz CD94/94A	£ 495.00	£ 900.00
Meridian 563 18 bit	£ 3995.00	£ 8000.00
Sony R1/ S1	£ 800.00	£ 1500.00
Roksan Attessa CD Player	£ 2195.00	£ -
Vimak DS2000 DAC/ Pre-Amp	£ 2195.00	£ -

Turntables & Analogue

Linn LP12/ Avondale/ Akito	£ 595.00	£ 2000.00
Piere Lume J1/SL5	£ 1750.00	£ 4500.00
Piere Lume J1/Sowther mk III	£ 1800.00	£ 4500.00
Forsell Air Force One	£11995.00	£25000.00
Kinshaw Overture Phono	£ 250.00	£ 395.00
Systemdek II XE 900/ RB 250	£ 395.00	£ 650.00
Quad FM3 Tuner	£ 225.00	£ -
Voyd Reference	£ 5000.00	£10000.00
SME IV	£ 750.00	£ 980.00
Clear Audio Sigma	£ 450.00	£ 600.00
Kiseki Agat Ruby	£ 1450.00	£ -
Linn Klyde	£ 450.00	£ 600.00
Ortofon MC 7500	£ 1250.00	£ 2500.00
Pink Triangle PT Too Ref Bearing, platter, clamp	£ 950.00	£ -
Stax Lambda Nova Signature /SRM-TIS	£ 995.00	£ 1195.00
Golding Eroica	£ 75.00	£ 100.00
Audio Technica AT-OC9	£ 250.00	£ 400.00

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MICHELL ARGO HR preamp + Hera power supply + Michell Alecto monoblock (pair) mint condition. Little used, been in storage. Cost new £3300, asking for £2000. Tel: 0115 922 3677 (Dec/1)

NAIM NAC 72K pre amp. Immaculate condition. MM boards boxed £300 ono. Tel: 01905 458 473 eves (Worcester) (Dec/1)

LINN KAN 2/stands £200. NAD 3240PE £75. Denon DRM550 £70. Linn Index/stands £75. Philips CD721 £45. Pioneer F303RDS £50. JPW Sonata £35. 100w/ch PA amp £60 grunge-cheap!!! Tel: 0151 546 7949 (Merseyside) (Dec/1)

KEF 104 Reference 2's, + Kube, light oak, unmarked, £350. Tel: 01923 857 348 (Dec/1)

MICROMEGA

TRANSPORT/DAC. T-Drive, Duo. Pro 2 (£2500). XLO Signature 4.1B digital XLR I/C (£275). Stunning performance. Full demonstration. Mint, boxed, manuals, reviews. Must be heard. £1375 ono. Absolute bargain. Tel: 0131 538 9073 (Dec/1)

MICRO SEIKI CDM100 rosewood surround a rare classic fitted with Krell AMD's (removable) cost £6000. Offers around £2000. Krell MD/trans & SBP64X DAC, £1700 & £2700. Both mint (cost £16000). Tel: 0181 882 4287 (Dec/1)

RELUCTANT SALE, July Hi-fi Choice winner, SMS CD jukebox system: 2xPioneer PD-F906 CD Carosels; Music Maestro mixer/controller; IBM compatible PC plus software package. retail = £2850+. Offers please. Tel: 0181 681 7609 (Dec/1)

SUGDEN SRD-T1 Pro CD £6550. Townshend Glastonbury 2 loudspeakers £600. Tannoy D700 loudspeakers (rosewood) £1100. Naim SBL Mk2 loudspeakers £950. Musical Fidelity Elektro E200 preamp 2xE300 power amps £950. Nakamichi cassette deck 2 £250. Tel: 01952 502 097 (Telford) (Dec/1)

SUGDEN AU41P power amp - see World Favourites guide. as new £299. Tel: 01254 249 897 (Blackburn) (Dec/1)

NAIM NAP 180, less than 1 year, £775. Rotel RQ970BX phono stage £75. Atacama SE24 stands £45. Linn LP12 Valhalla. Ittok, Asaka, very good condition £675. Tel: 01793 526 796 (Dec/1)

PINK TRIANGLE Ordinal DAC, 20 bit filter, £450. Sugden C41/P41 preamplifier and power amplifier £450. Pioneer C73 Reference preamplifier £200. Marantz PM66SE integrated amplifier, 3 weeks use, £150. Tel: 01702 306 498 (Southend, Essex) (Dec/1)

JVC QL-70 heavyweight direct drive turntable £75. Moth arm £25. Nottingham Analogue Tracer 3 cartridge 100 hours (£410) £140. Kenwood DP7090 CD Hi-Fi Choice Best Buy (£400) £130. Wharfedale Harewoods - What Hi-Fi 5 stars (£500) £100. Tel: 0181 672 4319 (Dec/1)

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO CDI (£1500) £275. Marantz DA-12 DAC (£1250) £300. MF X-ACT £75 X-10D £65. Genexxa Pro LX5 £50. Mordaunt-Short Pageants new Audax TW034XO tweeters £60. Wharfedale Active Diamonds (£200) £50. Heybrook HBS1 stands (£100) £30. Tel: 0181 672 4319 (Dec/1)

WANTED: AKAI GX-4000DB reel to reel tape deck with Dolby B in good condition or for spares willing to pay up to £200. Also wanted Technics or Pioneer DAT. Tel: 01925 822 897 (Dec/1)

QUAD ESL63'S, teak and brown finish, serviced by Quad, immaculate condition, £1150 ono. Tel: 0181 444 4902 (N.London) (Dec/1)

WANTED: ARAGON 404 power amplifier also Leak Stereo 50 or 60 gold or black in good condition. Tel: Tim 0121 236 1174 daytime (Jan/1)

WANTED: CAMBRIDGE T55 stereo tuner. Silver finish. Good condition. Will collect. Please call 01332 514 857 after 6pm (Dec/1)

PAIR OF Quad II amplifiers rebuilt by professional engineer £420, additional audiophile upgrades by arrangement. Pair of Mission 751 Freedom speakers in rosewood, hardly used, boxed £260. Tel: 01834 860 681 (Dec/1)

NOTTINGHAM ANALOGUE Hyperspace turntable with rewired space arm (£2300) £1000. Linn LP12, Valhalla, SME, Dynavector 17D 2, regularly serviced £450. Tel: 01392 668 613 (Dec/1)

EPOS ES 30 speakers, 8 months old, cost new £2300, asking £1300. Acoustic Precision Eikos FRI spkrs, 6 months old, cost new £800, asking £400. Tel: 01296 437 314 eves (Aylesbury) (Dec/1)

CHORD CPA 2200 R/C preamp, cost new £2200, asking £1450. Acoustic Precision 'Eikos' CD player, recently upgraded. Cost new £2200, asking £1450. Tel: 01296 437 314 eves (Aylesbury) (Dec/1)

WILSON BENESCH Act One speakers, dark cherry finish, selling due to financial reasons, cost new £6800, asking £4200. Chord SPM 1200C 315 wpc power amp, asking £2700. Tel: 01296 437 314 eves (Aylesbury) (Dec/1)

MICROMEGA STAGE 6 CD £495. Linn Kan II include stands £250. NVA P60 preamp, PSU and 2 A50 monoblock power amps £300. Complete system £950. Tel: 01509 260 537 eves. (Dec/1)

FERROGRAPH S1 speakers £150, Teac X10 open reel, new heads £500, Armstrong A10 £80, Leak Stereo 20 restored £230, Telequipment D83 oscilloscope £120. Sony SLHF100 £120. All ono. Tel: 01372 456 921 (Surrey) (Dec/1)

SUGDEN C128SL preamp and PSU, Avondale mods, £220. NVA Cube 2, plus Alphason Titan stands £225. Atacama SE24 £50. Pioneer PD 8700 Trichord Clock 3 & PSU £330. Tel: 01974 251 420 (Dec)

QUAD ESL63'S, rosewood - black, perfect working order, boxed, with stands £1250. Second pair of stands - offers. Tel: 01386 861 283 (Dec/1)

HEYBROOK SIGNATURE 303 pre/power amps. Only a few months old £1100. Also Harmon Kardon HK1400 as new £150. Tel: 01926 314 618 (Dec/1)

TRIPOD EQUIPMENT stands. 3x2s, 1x1s, 1xNACDS, 2xFrames. Medite shelves. 2xAudiotech shelves. Mana sound frame £45. Denon DMR400 cassette recorder, Dolby B/C £45. All very good condition. Tel: 01625 432 889 (Dec/1)

ROKSAN XERXES, Walnut, XPSIII/DSU, Tabriz-Zi £475. Rega Elicit amp £375. Snaps power supply £150 ono. Tel: Richard 07970 862 187 (W.London) (Dec/1)

MUSICAL FIDELITY Nu-Vista pre amp. Brand new unopened box. £1100 ono. Audio Research SP9 pre amp £750 ono. Pair Epos ES 14s on dedicated stands. Walnut. Boxed. Immaculate. £350. Rotel RT 950 BX tuner mint. £150. Linn Majik I amp. Mint £430. DPA Renaissance CD player. Black 1 year old. Mint £550. Naim NAC72 Hi-Cap 180, boxed, as new £1600 ono. 4xSovtek Russian valves £3.00 EL349+. Arcam Alpha CD PCB board £5.00. Pair Heybrook Quartets, 6 months old, as new £500. Acoustic Energy AE2s on dedicated stands £750. Linn Sondek LP12 Val, Afro, Ittok LVII £500 ono. Tel: Jules 01792 280 061 (Dec/1)

LIVING VOICE Auditorium loudspeakers, 94dB light beech, Dynamic and elegant £850 (£1500). Also the wonderful Electrocompaniet EC1-2 high end integrated amplifier £600 (£995). Both less than 18 months old. Any trial! Will deliver Tel: 01308 868 044 (Dec/1)

QUAD ONE pair Quad 22/11 amplifiers GEC KT66 and Quad 22 control unit. One pair Quad Electrostatic speakers. All in good order £1000. Tel 01983 87220 evening 01983 528697 office. (Dec/1)

NAIM 42.5 preamp, Hi-Cap, NAP 250 amp £10505. Linn LP12, Basik, K9 £495. Linn Kans, stands, Naim cable £195. All vgc. Tel: 0116 279 2844 (Dec/1)

SPENDOR 2040 floor standing loudspeakers, bi-wirable, (£900) six months old, mint, boxed, £450 ono. Tel: 0121 427 8810 (Birmingham) (Dec/1)

MUSICAL IMAGES

PRODUCT	LIST	NOW
AVI S2000 MC/20 REF CD PLAYER	EX/DEMO	£1400 £1000
ANTHEM INTEGRATED AMP 1	EX/DEMO	£1300 £1100
ANTHEM CD1	EX/DEMO	£1700 £1355
B&W-MATRIX 801 walnut speaker	EX/DEMO	£4000 £2800
AUDIO LAB 8000CD cd player	EX/DEMO	£1000 £800
AUDIO LAB 8000CDM cd transport	EX/DEMO	£1400 £1100
AUDIO LAB 8000DAX dac	EX/DEMO	£1000 £800
AUDIO LAB 8000LX line amp	EX/DEMO	£470 £375
AUDIO LAB 8000PPA phono pre amp	EX/DEMO	£1000 £800
AUDIO LAB 8000PX power amp	EX/DEMO	£850 £675
AUDIO LAB 8000Q pre amp	EX/DEMO	£1250 £950
AUDIO LAB 8000S amp	EX/DEMO	£700 £560
AUDIO LAB 8000SX power amp	EX/DEMO	£550 £450
AUDIO LAB 8000MX (pair) power amp	EX/DEMO	£1800 £1350
AUDIO LAB 8000CDM cd transport	S/H	£1400 £700
AUDIO LAB 8000DAC d/a convertor	S/H	£1000 £500
DENON PMA Q5 10II amp	EX/DEMO	£1800 £1200
DENON DCD Q5 10II cd	EX/DEMO	£1300 £900
DPA SX 128 D/A convertor	EX/DEMO	£2000 £1300
DPA LITTLE BIT 3	EX/DEMO	£325 £275
EXPOSURE 25 R/C PIANO integrated amp	EX/DEMO	£1000 £700
LINN AV 5105 POWER amp	EX/DEMO	£1200 £840
LINN KELTIC ACTIV speaker	EX/DEMO	£6000 £2500
LINN KAIRN PRO pre amp	S/H	£1500 £900
LINN MAJIK/PHONO amp (mint)	S/H	£800 £500
LINN KLOUT POWER amp	S/H	£2400 £1400
LINN LP12 LINGO/TRAMPOLIN (AFROMOSIA)	EX/DEMO	£1875 £1350
LINN EKOS	EX/DEMO	£1500 £1050
LUMLEY VTP1000 pre amp	S/H	£1000 £500
MUSICAL FIDELTY E600 cd player	EX/DEMO	£600 £200
MUSICAL FIDELTY A1000 amp	S/H	£1500 £850
PINK TRIANGLE NUMERAL cd player	EX/DEMO	£1050 £850
PROAC STUDIO 150 WALNUT speaker	EX/DEMO	£1400 £1000
QUAD II LIMITED EDITION	EX/DEMO	£5950 £4000
ROGERS E20A VALVE amp	EX/DEMO	£1230 £700
ROGERS E40A VALVE amp	EX/DEMO	£1900 £1000
ROKSAN RADIUS turntable (MINT)	S/H	£620 £500
ROKSAN S1.5 SILVER power amp	EX/DEMO	£1495 £1150
ROKSAN XPS V CONTROL UNIT	EX/DEMO	£320 £240
ROKSAN DS 1.5 POWER SUPPLY	EX/DEMO	£695 £525
SONY MDSJA30ES mini disc player	EX/DEMO	£700 £500
SOUNDLAB PRISTINE electrdtatic speaker	S/H	£8000 £2000
TEAC P30 cd transport	EX/DEMO	£2500 £2000
THORENS TDA2000 dac	EX/DEMO	£750 £575
TRICHORD REVELATION cd player	EX/DEMO	£820 £410
TUBE TECHNOLOGY PROPHET pre amp	EX/DEMO	£1970 £1500
TUBE TECHNOLOGY GENESIS mono power a	EX/DEMO	£4700 £3500
TUBE TECHNOLOGY SEER phono pre amp	EX/DEMO	£1000 £800
TUBE TECHNOLOGY UNISIS power amp	EX/DEMO	£1900 £1500
KTC POW1 POWER amp	EX/DEMO	£2250 £1850
KTC PRE1 PRE amp	EX/DEMO	£1250 £1000

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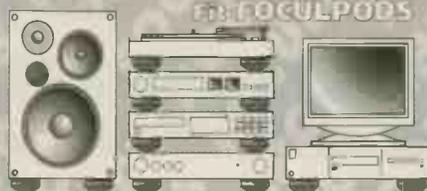
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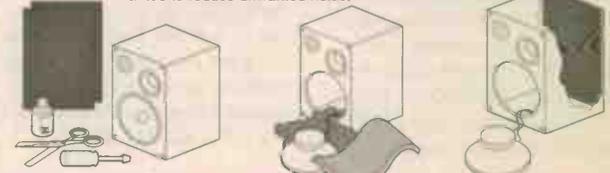
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the result was sharper imaging, wider dynamics and a more natural sound...
Hi-Fi Choice - January 1994

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Sound Quality ■■■■■
Value for money ■■■■■

...a marked improvement was obvious from the first few bars of REM's Automatic for the people album...
Hi-Fi Choice & Record Review - March 1994

But one thing for sure - the Deflex panels are no gimmick. They work.
Audiofile - February 1994

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PIONEER PD-S904 CD player. Legato Link. Stable Platter mechanism. Great sound - eats Marantz CD63SE's. 18 months use, as new. Cost £400, great value to sell at £170. Tel: 01203 851 974 days 01203 326 897 eve (W/Midlands) (Dec/I)

NAIM CD2 £995. Naim NAP 180/NAC 62 £925 with M/M boards. All new style & boxed. All three for £1850. Tel: Miles 01604 770 350 or 0421 995 054 (Northants) (Dec/I)

AUDIOLAB PREAMP £320, Musical Fidelity X50 power amps £320, Teac D500/P500 CD player £600, Mission 753 speakers £450. Tel: 01977 643 629 (Dec/I)

HI-FI WORLD KLS3 professionally built (cabinet maker), verified by Dominic Baker - offers. B&W 805's plus stands £600 ono. Marantz SP-50 s/s processor & Kef's & Linn K20 3.5 bi-wire offers. Tel: 0131 657 3622 (4-9pm) (Dec/I)

RADFORD STA 15, nice original condition. Superb value sound £600. Quad 22 preamp £50. FMI £30. Mordant Short Pageant 2 speakers & stands £80. Classical LPs Decca SXL, etc. Tel: 01543 454 910 (Dec/I)

MERIDIAN 206/203 DAC 7 transport and DAC in immaculate condition £525. Tel: 01202 888 832 (Dorset) (Dec/I)

ROKSAN CASPIAN integrated (£695) £450, Caspian power amp (£599) £400, sell together £800 ono. 6 Weeks old, under warranty, superb bargain. Or exchange for Naim amplification. Speaker upgrade forces sale. Tel: 01793 784 207 (Dec/I)

ARCAM DELTA 290 amp (MM phono stage) and Arcam 290 power amp boxed with manuals £550. Royd Doublets (walnut) £275. Tel: 01473 412 823 (Ipswich) (Dec/I)

KELVIN LABS integrated amp. Sweet sound. Recent transformer - changed to Quad. £200. Rotel CD 965BX vgc. £165. Wharfedale 340 floorstanders vgc. £165. Tel: 01275 472 178 (Dec/I)

PRO-AC STUDIO Two loudspeakers, black ash, 15" Target stands, fabulous sound, vgc £350. Tel: 0171 715 8374 weekdays (Dec/I)

ROGERS LS4a speakers, black ash & black foundation stands, both boxed, mint condition, had very little use in last 3 years. £120 ono. Tel: 01524 62809 (Lancaster) (Dec/I)

CYRUS III I AMP. Excellent condition £350 ono. Tel: 01487 824 418 eves/weekends (Dec/I)

ROKSAN ROK-DAI DAC, £250. Mission 753 speakers, £390. Musical Fidelity "The Preamp" plus two bridged typhoon power amplifiers, boxed, £450 (includes bridging kit). All in excellent condition. Tel: 0116 255 0172 (Leicester) (Dec/I)

PINK TRIANGLE Ordinal DAC with 1307 module. Boxed with instructions and leads. £450 ono. Trichord digital pulsewire 1 metre (BNC/BNC) £38. Tel: 01908 260 112 eves/weekends (Dec/I)

MARANTZ CD84 £150. Yamaha CA 1000 amp £150, Meridian 563 DAC £350. Akai GX 221 D auto reverse reel to reel £175. Goodmans Audiom in original enclosure (offers) Wanted transistor power amp. May p/ex. Tel: 0191 422 3415. (Dec)

QUAD 606 amp £250. Thorens TD147 £140. Yamaha CDX 1060, CD £240. Trio KX747R cassette deck £50. JBL L96 loudspeakers £200. Sound Organisation floor & speaker stands, £50 pair. Tel: 0956 444 157 (Dec/I)

LINN KEILIDH speakers, black ash, polymer stands, Naim A5 speaker cables, 7 months old, immaculate, boxed and guaranteed (£920 new). £600 ono. Tel: 0802 346 860 or 0181 421 4684 (Harrow, Middlesex) (Dec/I)

TOWNSHEND ROCK/Excalibur/Merlin. Audio Innovations 800 preamp £250. Series 800 power amplifier £350. Original Snell K's/Huygen K4 stands. Rowe variable output valve power amplifier (0.3 to 24 watts). Tel: 0113 255 9475 (Dec/I)

PINK TRIANGLE Export turntable with Rega RB300 arm £550. SD Acoustics SD3 speakers with Alexandra stands £490. Meridian 104 FM tuner £150. All excellent condition. Tel: 0181 658 2490 (Dec/I)

PROAC TABLETTE speakers with Target stands, like new (£500) £250. van den Hul MC-silver IT interconnect. 0.8 metre stereo (£1000) £500. Tel: 07771 888 696 or 0171 403 7865 (Dec/I)

PAIR AUDIO Research M300 monoblocks, excellent condition, spare valves £3000. Mark Levinson No.37 CD transport, mint condition £2000. Fax: South Africa 31 764 3999 e-mail: mh@iafrica.com (Dec/I)

KEN ISHIWATA Marantz PM17 amp. 2 months old £1300 new, boxed, mint £1125. Castle Harlech cherrywood bi-wire floorstanders, unused, boxed, mint, new £880, £629. Creek headphone preamp power supply upgrade unused new £170, £120. Tel: 0115 952 1820 (Nottm) (Dec)

SONY TAE-7B/TAN-7B pre-power. One of Sony's most expensive ever high end combinations. 100w V-Fet Class A. Stunning vgc. £600 ono. Sony TCD-D100 Datman, brand new, boxed, £800 new, asking £495. Rega Planar 3, £95. Tel: 016974 78537 (Dec/I)

TOWNSHEND ROCK MkIII MB5i power supply, RB300 Goldring 1042, Aura VA100 Celestion 5000 speakers and stands, complete with tables and cables, boxes £1000 (£2800 new). Tel: 01782 853 921 (Dec/I)

WANTED: MISSION 753 speakers, rosewood, prefer original version. Must be unmarked and perfect working order. Tel: 01341 422 211 (Gwynedd, N.Wales) (Dec/I)

MERIDIAN 207 CD/preamp, Meridian serviced Sept 98, 209 remote £325. Meridian 551 int. amp £395. Linn Kan II stands 2x5m Linn bi-wire cable £200. Tel: 01493 851 296 (G.Yarmouth) (Dec/I)

ARCAM 270 CD player £295. Quad 33 preamp £60. Yamaha stereo tuner £45. Rogers LS 6A speakers £150. Naim 42 preamp £130. Musical Fidelity P172 preamp with Musical Fidelity MA50 monoblocks power amps £575. Linn Cans speakers plus stands vgc. Tel: 0181 406 4460 (Dec/I)

PIONEER D05 DAT player £550. Sony X55ES CD player £350. Akai 4000DS reel to reel tape deck £80. Tel: 01707 267 379 (Dec)

QUAD ESL63, late model, excellent condition, £1195. Krell KSA-50 Mk2, vgc, £895. Tel: 01491 651 278 (S.Oxfordshire) (Dec/I)

TECHNICS HI-FI separates comprising ST-K808 tuner/preamp, SE-A808 power amp (2x40w), RS-M45 cassette deck. SH-R 808 remote control, SL-D33 turntable £60. Pair Rogers LS3/5a speakers £100, plus collection of LPs. Tel: 0171 727 2502 (Dec/I)

NU-VISTA for sale. Excellent performance and very attractive design. Wanted: Wilson Benesch Circle turntable, Dynaudio Contour speakers. Offers. Tel: +45 86 137 043 or fax: +45 86 120002 (Denmark) (Dec/I)

AUDIOLAB 8000C preamp £250, Sugden A48 £65. Kef Concord III £55, Audio Alchemy DITB £95, Ariston RD80, Linn Basic Plus arm, K9 £85. Linn Ittock LVII £250. Tel: Adrian 01992 478 698 (Dec/I)

LEAK STEREO 20 valve amplifiers. Two. Just serviced by Audio Laboratories of Leeds. The best! Excellent condition. Beautiful sound. £350 each. Tel: 0161 205 5023 (Dec/I)

QUAD ELECTROSTATICS (ELS57) in excellent, pristine, original condition. £400. Quad II power amps rewired and with phono inputs. £290. Tel: 0141 571 3596 (Dec/I)

YAMAHA CT 7000 FM stereo tuner. recently overhauled £350. Croft Micro pre-amplifier £50. Tel: 01452 713 211 (Gloucester) (Dec/I)

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MERIDIAN D600 digital active remote speaker system (2995) £1250. Lexicon CP3+ THX processor (3295) £995. Sony SDP-EP9ES AC-3 processor £299. All boxed unused. Sony TCD-D3 DAT walkman complete £295. Tel: 01704 833 601 (Dec/1)

MICHELL ARGO HR pre-amp £500. Trichord Research digital turntable £200, Trichord Research Pulsar DAC One £550. Tel: 01703 611 581 (Dec/1)

MICHELL GYRODEC, RB300, QC £800. Musical Fidelity, Elektra E600 CD £275. LFD, linestage, LSO, powerstage, PAO, phonostage MMO, £700. Infinity, REFF10, £80. All mint condition, ono. Tel: 01787 881 582 (Sudbury, Suffolk) (Dec/1)

TANNOY LANCASTERS, rectangular, 15" golds, original teak cabinets, badges etc. Excellent condition £700. Tannoy III/LZ, 10" golds, mahogany. Good condition. £250. B&W DM14 excellent condition £125. Re-advertised due to timewaster. Tel: 01892 662 967 (Sussex)(Dec/1)

MERIDIAN 201 pre-amp (850) £299. 208 CD/amp (1550) £599. 207 CD/amp (950) £299. D600 speakers (2995) £1250. Pioneer LDWI Laserdisc dual draw NTSC AC-3 unique (1800) £899. Tel: 01704 833 601 (Dec/1)

NAIM CDS best possible example. Fully serviced. £2450 (ono). Linn Sondek LPI2/ Lingo/ Cirkus/ new Aro tonearm/ Lyra Parnassus cartridge. Immaculate £2350 (ono). Wilson watt/Puppy 5.1 in gloss black. New. £12900. Mana Reference table, sound stage, Mini Mana, speaker stands, £600 (complete). Naim cable & Grahams Hi-Fi 4 way gang sockets (2) £100. Tel: 0385 575 643 or 0171 801 0905 (Dec/1)

SDI SPEAKERS, black, 3-way, ribbons, £425. tripod, spiked tower shelving, ideal for Naim, record box, £150. Decca London cartridge, Target turntable shelf, Quad FM valve mono tuner, £20 each or offer? Tel: Les Charles 0171 488 1895 (Wapping) (Dec/1)

KRELL KAV250a remote control preamp. Absolutely mint. Boxed. Can demonstrate. £1199. Tel: 01234 713 199 (Bedford area) (Dec/1)

OMNI AUDIO 88.2 floor standing speakers boxed. Unused. Black ebony. Cost £700 - bargain £400. Tel: Matthew (day) 0171 330 0001 (eve) 0171 256 0762 e-mail: mattsfox@saintly.demon.co.uk (Dec/1)

AUDIO INNOVATIONS LI mint used twice boxed collectors item £195. Arcam Alpha 5 excellent condition £165. Heybrook HBI 33 sens. 90dB excellent condition boxed £110. Tel: 0113 277 2112/252 2820 (Leeds) (Dec/1)

QUAD 77/707 pre power, with remote control £1100. ATC model 50SL active speakers current spec £4400. Spendor LS3/5A speakers in black with stands £400. Tel: 01977 643 629 (Dec/1)

IMPULSE H2 3 way horn speakers, 94dB, latest specs, beech/black, mint £1100 (£2450). Leak TL12+ refurbished pair £325. Leak Troughline stereo tuner £85, mono £60. Croft Supermicro A valve pre-amp £175. Tel/Fax: 01279 629 708 (Dec/1)

ROSE RV23 valve pre-amp, mint, boxed £350. Sony 555ES heavily modified CD transport (16 Kg), Trichord 2+ digital power supply, unique example, stunning sound £395. DACMagic I boxed £85. The Rock Elite II turntable £195. RB300 £95. Tel/Fax: 01279 629 708 (Dec/1)

TRILOGY 948 and 901 pre/power amps. Black/chromed finished, manuals, 2 years old. Cost £3250. Sell £1475 ono. Tannoy Cheviot 12" D/concentric pair £350 Tel: 0171 349 9675 (Dec/1)

WANTED SAGE AUDIO Supremos 200 power amp. Modules (May consider 300, 500 etc.) may also consider fully built amps, with above modules. Also: Meridian 101 preamp, preferably with moving coil phono stage. Tel: 0161 351 1598 eves/weekends (Dec/1)

DPA 50S power amp with speaker cables and interconnects. Mint £350. Townshend Elite Rock, Excalibur arm, plinth, vgc £600. AT OC9 cartridge, vgc £150. Tel: 01222 616 151(H) or 01633 811 069 (W) (Dec/1)

MICHELL MICRO/RB300 £450, Pioneer VSP200 surround processor £100, Revolver rosewood with arm and cartridge £130, vdH Second 0.6 mtr. £80. Tel: Roger 0467 264 203/0181 395 8537 (Dec/1)

ORELLE 180 DAC £225. Campaign Audio 8 way distribution block £35. Tel: 01633 667 346 (Dec/1)

REVOX B77 4-TRACK tape recorder. NAB spool adaptors and spare reels tape. Also DBX sound reduction unit. Very light use. Excellent. £575 the lot. Tel: 01279 830 910 (Dec/1)

KEF REFERENCE 3 speakers. Rosetta Burr. £2400 new, accept £1500. Linn Klout amplifier, £2400 new, accept £1300. Linn Kairn pre-amplifier, phono output £1700 new, accept £900. Pristine. Boxed. Bargain. Tel: 01992 460 831 (Dec/1)

LOWTHER, FIDELIO horns PM7A teak, superb £650. Rotel BX 965 CD £90. Pioneer PDS703 CD £90. 6B4G triode 3.5 watt monoblocks £250. Pair Audax TOW25MI tweeters £20. Tel: 01827 261 082 (Tamworth) (Dec/1)

WANTED: CASTLE Harlech speaker, also Rose Scion amp or Quad 77 integrated. For sale: Micromega Tempo 1 offers. Tel: 0161 727 8885 (Dec/1)

NAIM NAIT 3 remote, includes interconnect and Naim speaker cable. Boxed 9 months old £550 ono. Tel: 0171 226 7481 (Dec/1)

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AUDIOLAB 8000CDM mint boxed £850, Audiolab 8000DAC boxed £375, Rotel RHC10 passive preamp boxed £375, XTC DAC latest spec £700, A&R C200 preamp £90. All items ono plus P&P. Tel: 01179 466 123 (Dec/1)

QUAD ELSS7, matched pair, mint, recent service. Can demonstrate, £450. Also AudioNote M3 phono preamp (mint) £2500. Tel: 0370 920 040 anytime (Dec/1)

SONAB P4000 amplifier (40wpc) and 555 record deck inc. 2 Shure M75 cartridges. £80 the pair including free pair of (non-Sonab) loudspeakers. Sony CDP-M20 CD player, has drawer fault but does work, suit 'enthusiasts'! £5. Tel: Jem 0161 432 8132 (Dec/1)

ART AUDIO Tempo monoblocks £1050 ono. Orelle DA180 Mk2 DAC £300 ono. Kimber Power Kord 8TC 4 feet £65. Tel: 01235 850 393 eves and w.e. (Dec/1)

MACKINTOSH MC60 (1962) valve monoblocks, rare, collectable, original box - offers. Quad 306 power amp £159 ono. Quad 34 preamp £159 ono. Croft valve preamp £155 ono. JBL Century L100 speakers £349 ono. Tel: 01746 768 000 (Dec/1)

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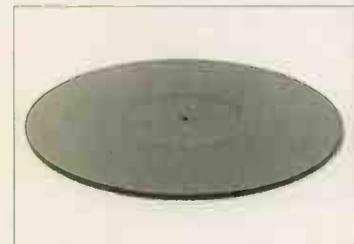
THE REVIEWERS

"The Slate deck defines what real instrument solidity should be, it's in a class of its own." Alan Sircom, Hi-Fi Choice. "The build and performance of the Slate Audio 401 are the audio equivalent of the E type Jaguar." Audiophile. "I have never used a system like this one, it gets everything right. Peter Soper insists Garrards are best mounted on Marble or stone, and from my experience with this plinth I wouldn't disagree." Noel Keywood, Hi-Fi World. "The Garrards main problems are dealt with most effectively by three cures; correct set up, heavy plinth and appropriate mat. Peter Soper has mastered them all, the results are close to miraculous." Ken Kessler, Hi-Fi News R/R. "I have been using the fantastic Slate plinthed Garrard, the sound was nothing short of breathtaking. The basic Garrard without the Slate plinth is well engineered and pleasant sounding, but they only give exceptional results with the right kind of treatment." Dominic Baker, Hi-Fi World.

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