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B&W



This month's reviewee competition prizes add up to a healthy £5400 bonanza. For a chance to win one of those listed below, turn to p34.

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JVC XL-V230	£159.95
Kenwood DPF-3010	£179.95
NAD 522	£169.99
Technics SL-PG490A	£99.95
Yamaha CDX-593	£169.95
Musical Fidelity X-24K DAC	£299.95
Alchemist TS-D-1 DAC	£299.95
Monarchy Audio 18B DAC	£595

AMPLIFIERS

Arcam Alpha 1 integrated	£229.90
Monarchy Audio SM-70 power amp	£595

LOUDSPEAKERS

Music Technology PM15	£474.95
Neat Critique II	£445.00

VINYL

DNM Lexe MC cartridge	£1300
-----------------------	-------

CABLES

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True Colours Viper interconnect	£54.99
Ecosse Maf Reference CS1-010 interconnect	£75/m
Classique Sounds Translucent interconnect	£75/m

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM HI-FI WORLD

HOW WE TEST THE PRODUCTS

- *Hi-Fi World* has its own advanced test laboratory and acoustically treated listening room.



- *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.



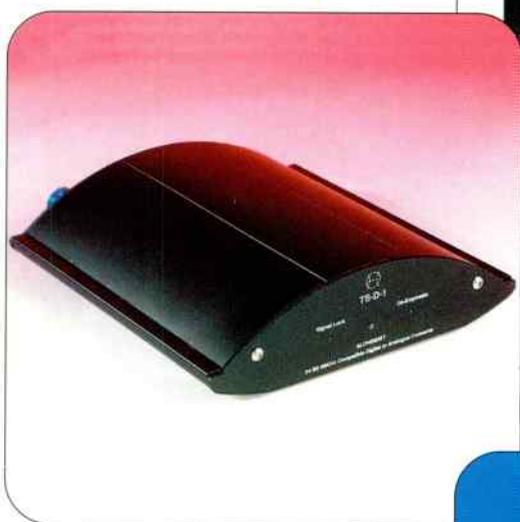
ADEQUATE - Mediocre in several areas. May be worth auditioning.



POOR - Seriously flawed. Not worth considering.

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Hi-Fi WORLD

AUDIO PUBLISHING LTD
64 CASTELLAIN ROAD,
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CONTACT NUMBERS

10am - 6pm
Tel: 0171-289 3533
Fax: 0171-289 5620
Email: edit@hi-fiworld.co.uk
Individual queries cannot be answered by telephone.

MAIL ORDER

Tel: 0171-266 0461
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SUBSCRIPTIONS

See page 97 or our web site: www.hi-fiworld.co.uk for details.

Editor

Jon Marks

Editorial Assistants
Richard White
Simon Pope

Contributors
David Price
Leo Lam
Dominic Todd
Haden Boardman
Tim Liu

Music Reviewers
Peter Herring
Simon Hopkins
Jon Clarke
Sara Davis
Stuart Lenz
Ian Nicolson

Production Editor
Designer
Clive Ashby

Advertising Designer
Faiza Chunara
0171-328 1844
Fax 0171 328 2213

Photography
David Noble

Sales and Marketing Manager
Amanda Sweeney
0171-625 8033
Fax 0171-625 8034

Technical Manager
Nick Lucas
0171-221 0691

Accounts
Michael Ogazi
Credit Control Manager
Louise Palfrey
0171-328 1711

Publisher
Noel Keywood

Distributed by:
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Jamo loudspeakers are No. 1 in Europe

- and this is the story
of a loudspeaker
that wanted to be a
grand piano



Jamo

30th ANNIVERSARY

Ever since it was created, the Concert 8 has been content to retire behind the music. It is specifically designed not to dominate, but to stand unobtrusively in the background. This enables you to concentrate on the music rather than on the loudspeaker itself. It has won numerous awards for this quality, and was voted loudspeaker of the year 1997-1998 by European Imaging and Sound Association (EISA).

At JAMO, we have chosen to do something special for the Concert 8 to celebrate our 30th anniversary - we have decided for the first time further to grace its appearance with a beautiful piano finish. We have given it up to 10 coats of black varnish - each finely prepared by hand before the application of the final lacquer. So now it stands proud in its anniversary colour, blacker than black, and shining beautifully in its surroundings.

However, the sound is still as pure and unobtrusive as ever, creating an image of the real thing - the live performance - in the mind of the listener.

There are only 1,000 sets - consecutively numbered - of the Concert 8 jubilee, and these are available to the first 1,000 music lovers to place an order.

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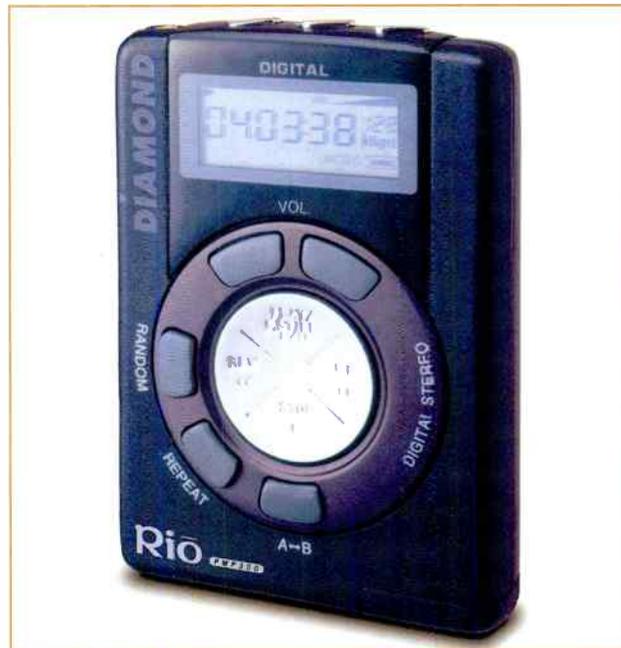
SOLID-STATE PORTABLE ARRIVES

It looks as though the ball is well and truly rolling after our investigation last month of Nagra's Ares-C recorder and the promise it held for a solid-state hi-fi future. Diamond Multimedia, previously known for their computer media and sound accelerators, are already in the process of producing a portable solid-state player.

The Rio PMP300 will be able to store up to 60 minutes of MP3 (MPEG Layer 3 compressed) music downloaded via a PC or a modem from the Internet where MP3 sites are proving very popular. The Jukebox MP3 software also included will allow users to process and transfer their favourite CDs to the Rio.

Weighing only 2.4oz. and measuring 3in. by 2in. by 5/8in., the PMP300 is claimed to provide 12 hours of continuous playback from a single 1.5V AA battery.

Due to go on sale across the UK in November, the Rio will cost around £175. For more information, see page 78.



NO-FAD NAD

Frills-free NAD have come up with a new, sub-£200 tuner. The AM/FM C440 has RDS, 30 presets divided into three banks and a naming capability for non-RDS stations. Unusually the tuning is stepped in 25kHz intervals instead of the usual 50kHz or 100kHz for more accurate tuning. The £200 C440 also features NAD's own Blend function which is designed to reduce background noise on weaker broadcasts and still retain stereo separation. The unit can be hooked up through its 'NAD-Link' socket so one remote control can operate a whole

system of compatible NAD separates.

NAD
Faraday Road,
Aylesbury,
Bucks. HP19 3RY
Tel: 01296 482017



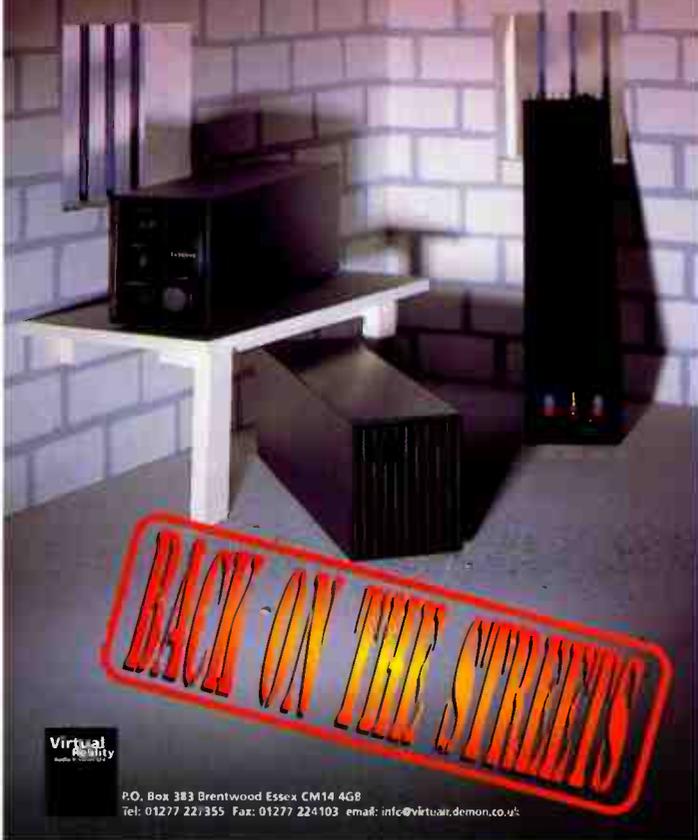
THE SOUND OF THE FUTURE?

The latest incarnation of PC audio has just hit the shops. Microsoft's Digital Sound System 80 is described by the company as "high-end home audio now on your PC" with "earthshaking bass and distortion-free sound" - big claims indeed. It was conceived as a package and includes two satellites and a subwoofer (from Philips) together with a 10-band EQ. The 80watts of on-board amplification works in class D (switching), said to offer a clean, bright presentation with the option of Microsoft Surround Sound.

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London W12 7SL
Tel: 0181 242 4100



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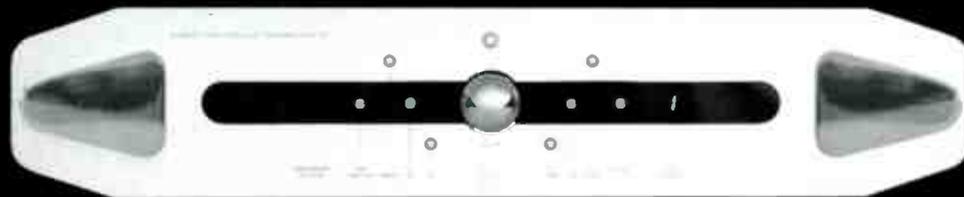
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SONY ON THE MOVE

Sony have joined the growing portable DVD player market with their DVD Discman, the PBD-V30. Power from either the supplied AC adaptor or a Sony Camcorder battery runs audio DACs which will convert 96kHz 20-bit signals as well as standard CD. Fans of MiniDisc can connect their recorders to the PBD-V30's digital output with optional TOSLink cabling. And how much will this tiny tech cost? Unfortunately, its price has yet to be finalised.

Sony
The Heights,
Weybridge,
Surrey KT13 0XW
Tel: 01932 816000



THULE, WHAT A SCORCHER!

After a leave of absence from these shores, Danish hi-fi brand Thule are back. In the electronic vanguard is the Spirit series of amplifiers and CD players. Starting from the £450 IA60 (with, no surprise, 60watts per channel) and the IA100 (£600), the numbers rise with the IA60B and IA150B, each of which has one balanced input. These are followed by a pair of pre-amps - the PR100 (£400) and the PR150B (£700) - and their partnering powers, the PA100 and PA150B (£900).

On the source side you'll find two CD players with Delta/Sigma DACs, the £600 CD100 and its bigger brother, the CD150B, which carries a £100 premium.

Etherphiles are catered for at a cost of £450, which will purchase the TU100 RDS tuner and its 40 presets.

If you'd prefer every box in your system to bear the legend

"Made In Denmark", Glaive can help with Audiovector's latest loudspeakers. The C1 and C2, respectively bookshelf and floor stander, share soft-dome tweeters and 170mm woofers, although four of the latter decorate the C2s where the C1s have only two. Add braced cabinetry, rear porting and bi-wireability to the above and you have a recipe for £400 and £800 loudspeakers.

Glaive
Unit 7,
Wren Industrial Estate,
Coldred Road,
Maidstone ME15 9XN
Tel: 01622 664070

VINYL MISSION

Cyrus have looked back to the future and rustled up something to interest all the vinyl luddites out there. The MC/MM aEQ7 phono stage costs £498 in off-the-shelf form with its own internal power supply but can be upgraded by adding a PSX-R. The heart of the circuitry includes separate MM and MC topologies, a symmetrical circuit layout, triple-screened mains

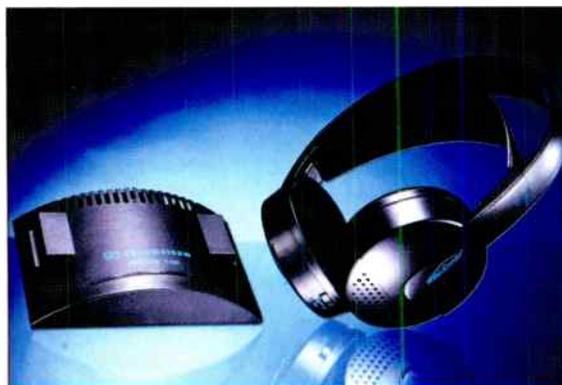
transformer and switchable RIAA and IEC playback responses.

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

A-HEAD OF THE REST

Sennheiser have launched a pair of radio headphones that they claim are the first to deliver hi-fi quality. The RS400s operate on 863MHz from a 10mW transmitter which gives a listening range of 30m-50m. Claimed frequency response is 20Hz-19.5kHz.

Complete with power supply and rechargeable battery for the



headset, the RS400s are priced at £79.99.

Sennheiser
3 Century Point,
Halifax Road,
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Bucks.
HP12 3SL
Tel: 01494 551551

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email: helpdesk@tagmclarenaudio.com

products featured: cd player CD20R, tuner T20,
preamplifier PA10, amplifier 100P

World Radio History

NEW ERA LINN

A new loudspeaker has been conceived by Linn. Keosa is a two-way floor stander whose cabinets house four of Linn's own 130mm mid/bass drivers coupled with two 19mm wide-dispersion ceramic-domed tweeters. The asking price is £495.

Linn
Floors Road,
Waterfoot,
Eaglesham,
Glasgow G76 0EP
Tel: 0141 307 7777

**AMNESIA FOR AUDIO**

Lavardin Technologies of France (who featured in last month's Renaissance show report) are now being brought into this country by Absolute Analogue. The company's amplifiers and cables start at £1245 for the AS line-level integrated and £195 for the CM-R mains lead respectively.

All of the amps are designed to cure the audible problems caused by what Lavardin describe as "the memory affect". Unlike valves whose vacuum allows electrons to flow unimpeded, silicon briefly bears the imprint of the signal which has just passed through it. Eliminating this, say Lavardin, means the smoothness of valves

can be combined with the power and low distortion of solid-state.

The flagship embodiments of this innovative circuitry are the IT integrated at £3200, the £3495 AP power and the PE line pre-amp (whose price has still to be confirmed).

Absolute Analogue
PO Box 1532,
Fordingbridge,
Hants. SP6 1BU
Tel: 01425 654488

FURTHER DOWN THE LOAD

Good news for music-loving computerphiles - a new DVD-ROM/CD-RW reader is available from Sony. The DDU220E is an internal ATAPI drive which the company says is able to read DVD-ROM discs at up to 5X speed and offer an access time of 115ms. The £212 (+VAT) DVD-ROM kit includes a Sigma designs REALmagic MPEG-2 card and an easy installation guide.

Sony
The Heights,
Brooklands,
Weybridge,
Surrey KT13 0XW
Tel: 01932 816000

**HDCD FROM HK**

US manufacturer harman/kardon have fashioned their first HDCD-equipped components. First is the FL 8550 five-disc CD changer, second the Series 3.0 DVD player. This is expected on the market in early 1999 and is one of the first to offer HDCD decoding and filtering for audio CDs. Additional features include an illuminated

disc drawer with stabilisation system and RAM upgrade capacity.

harman/kardon
250 Crossways Park Drive,
Woodbury NY 11797

NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE**MIDIMAN FLYING CALF DAC**

£140 is all it takes to make one of Midiman's tiny Flying Calves yours. Inside the unassuming case lurk 20-bit Crystal converters and impressive sound quality.

FINAL MUSIC-5 AND MUSIC-6 BATTERY-POWERED PRE/POWER AMPS

Pres that don't have to rely on the mains

for power are becoming more common these days, but power amps without transformers are rarer. We find out what advantages pure DC operation offers.

GREGORY GRADO CARTRIDGE

It's modifications aplenty as the Cartridge Man tweaks Grado's Signature Moving-Iron to bring it up to £500 Gregory status.

CHARIO HIPER 1000 LOUDSPEAKERS

Italian build and style cost only £300 in these classy two-ways from Chario.

PIONEER CTS-550 PRECISION CASSETTE DECK

Tom Evans has been at it again, turbo-charging Pioneer's products. This time it's the turn of the '550 tape recorder.

DIGGING THE DIGITS



Value-added reporters Pope and White hit the bargain trail with sub-£200 CD players from Technics, Kenwood, JVC, Yamaha and NAD.

Remember when CD was new, exciting and (above all) confoundingly expensive? There was a time when the vinyl worshipper, with his rapidly growing collection of cherished records (including a lot of jewels other audiophiles had cast away in their mad dash for 'perfect sound') appeared to be nicely set for the foreseeable future, give or take the odd new needle. If and when it became necessary to digitise, it was likely a decent CD player would be available without breaking the bank since prices had already come down precipitously.

And lo! The words of the prophet were subsequently fulfilled - equipment which was streets ahead of stuff only a couple of years old began to undercut the older leftovers and the cost of praiseworthy machinery came within the remit of thrifty audiophiles.

Our group test this month looks at five examples of such budget worthies. Located below our limit of £200 are NAD's 522 (£169.99), Yamaha's CDX-593 (£179.95),

Kenwood's DPF-3010 (£179.95), Technics' SL-PG490A (£99.95) and JVC's XL-V230 (£157).

Given the fact that they're obviously intended for the value-conscious buyer none of these black boxes is going to induce a hernia through bomb-proof construction; nor are they packed full of expensive parts. However, the art of inexpensive hi-fi lies in balancing sonic compromises to produce an enjoyable all-rounder that keeps the discs turning. And recent efforts from many manufacturers have shown that the results can stand up surprisingly well to more costly competition.

Be that as it may, back to the present: the council is convened and the delegates from Yamaha, Kenwood, JVC, NAD and Technics are in their places, ready to put their respective cases. With ancillaries including Rotel's RA931 and Audio Analogue's Puccini SE integrateds attached to BKS's 107 hybrid and Jamo's Concert 8 loudspeakers, it's time to let the listening commence.

JVC XL-V230

£157.00

THE TECHNOLOGY

As with its competitors this month, armchair convenience comes as standard on the JVC. However, unlike the Yamaha for instance, remote control does not include on-board volume, thus side-stepping the need for a pre-amp. Still, it looks as if features have been traded for parts quality inside where a good sprinkling of Elna capacitors decorates the PCB. In common with the NAD, frills-trimming includes no digital outputs - a pair of RCAs and the figure-of-eight mains socket are all that punctuate the back of the XL-V230.

SOUND QUALITY

Splashing gently in at the shallow end, the JVC had an opportunity to take on a spot of easy-listening in Bax's Mediterranean Suite. Ensemble strings emerged smooth and unsullied while the XL-V230's bottom-end gave kettle drums an additional sense of richness. The castanets with which the composer chose to add a touch of the South were also cleanly reproduced, lending a distinctly Spanish (or Battersea wine bar) air to our listening room.

Rolling on from Rio with William Walton's Children's Suite saw a swap from strings to brass. The repeated Toy Town-style interjections shot out of the loudspeakers with an impetus and solidity that confirmed the JVC's rhythmic credentials ahead of exposure to Rockier discs. Strengthening its case as a tunesmith was the side-drum, reproduced without the bass lag or bloat which afflict more sluggish machinery.

Changing tack, we opted for our old friend Eric Bibb and his demonstration of the good-if-you-can-do-it trick of 'Walking Up To Heaven', a mid-tempo number which opens with a revealing one-at-a-time mustering of the instrumentalists. Having passed this test with fine insight and imaging, it was time for the JVC to contend with the obligatory mouth-organ solo, which it caught in all its reedy glory.

That old-time audiophiles' torture genre, pipe-organ music, was next pumped up for a blow. Iain Simcock's tripping interpretation of Bach showed the JVC was capable of a refreshing degree of overall coherence, the pedal woods

rumbling away below these pieces with genuine knee-trembling weight.

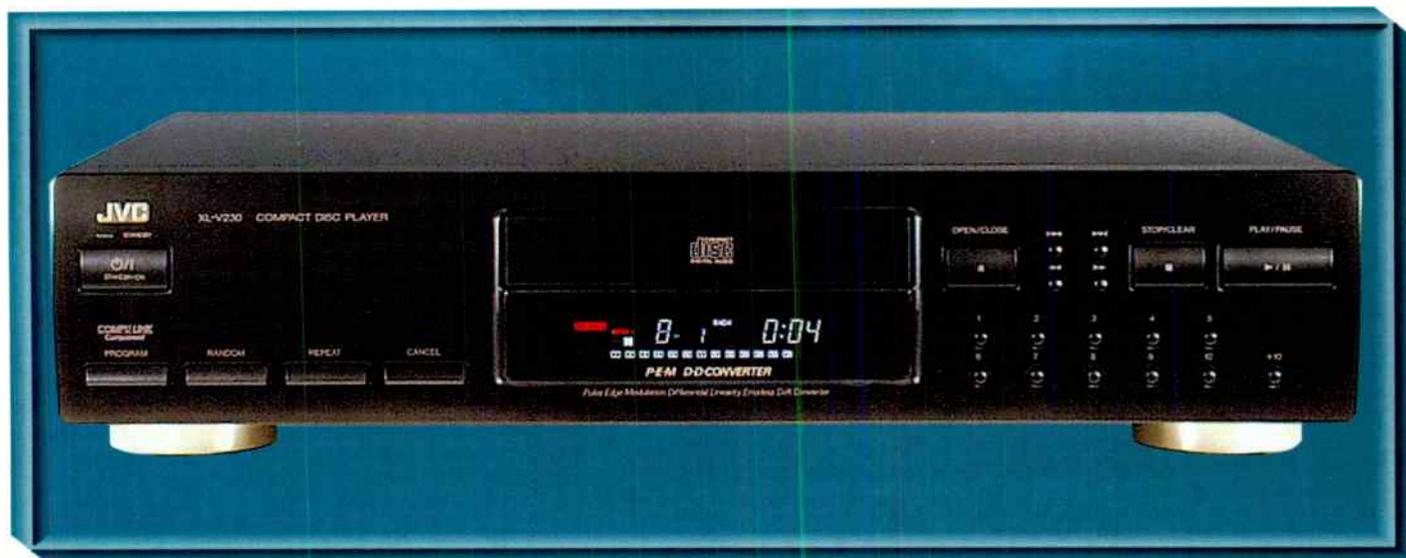
Following in Bach's footsteps were Joe Beard and Ronnie Earl and their Extended Resolution CD Blues Union. The work of these two gentlemen of the Blues is perhaps less than intimate, and the JVC responded in kind, appearing to thrive on the fast, punchy beat of gen-u-wine R 'n' B. Notable too was the stereo spread which reached right across the room. With encouraging results like this, there's a convincing case for budget players and XRCDS. What's more, the improvement was still present in the lowest quadrant of the volume control, an area where many amplifiers seem to delight in exposing faults in source components.

Having played a round with the Blues, how would Jazz come out? Och aye, there's the rub. Back with an all-acoustic sound again, the 'V230 demonstrated a fair eye for detail, even down to that magic moment when a 'tween-phrases twiddle from Coltrane landed on a note tragically at variance with the safety net the pianist had prepared for him.

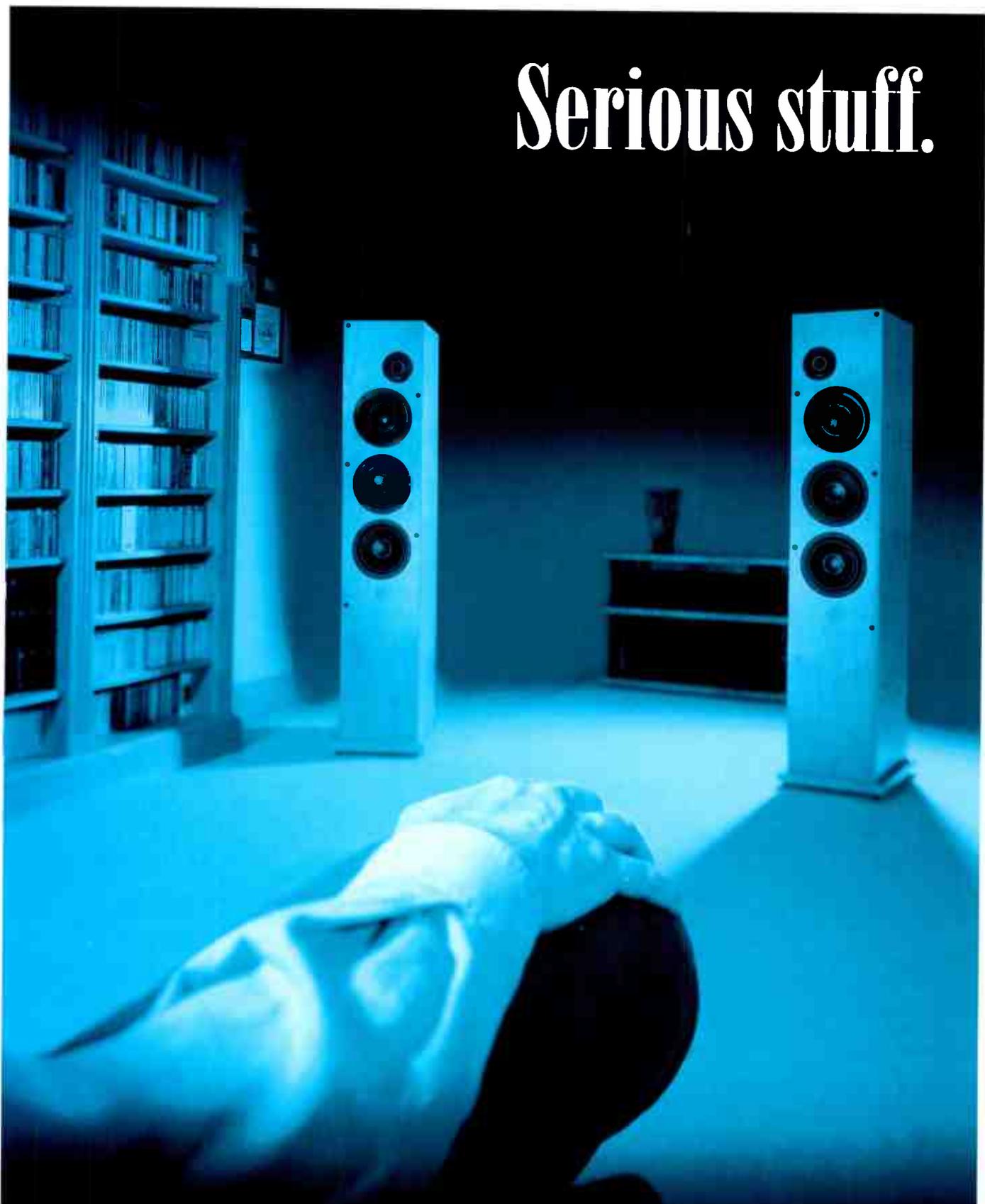
Moving into the future and away from the ballads and standards brought on 'Rise And Shine', a high-speed display of fire-works in what was then the approved 'progressive' style. No matter how fast and complex the sax's out-pourings became, the JVC made certain the drums and bass soldiered right on through, although there was a touch of muddle at times.

For a venture into full dynamics, we mustered Eric Coates' Man From The Sea. While it was possible to unravel the tonal signatures of the rest of the ensemble, when the percussionist was putting in energetic overtime on the bass drum the 'V230 again lost some of its grip on the proceedings.

Striking that compromise which can be so difficult to achieve with budget designs, JVC have managed to turn many of the short-falls in this player's output into euphonic colorations. The XL-V230's foibles avoided the midrange hardness and lack of finesse which cut corners can lead to. Instead it rustled up a likeable concoction of smooth upper frequencies and rhythmic bass on faster-paced numbers that was pleasant on the ears.



Serious stuff.



HIGH FIDELITY LOUDSPEAKERS

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Highpoint House, Riding Road, Buckingham Road Industrial Estate, Brackley, Northamptonshire NN13 7BE

Tel: 01280 700147 Fax: 01280 700148

HF01.99

KENWOOD DPF-3010

£179.95

THE TECHNOLOGY

It's 'one size fits many' as far as the DPF-3010's large PCB is concerned - unoccupied patches of electronic real-estate marked "DPF-2010" and "DPF-1010" denote circuit sections brought to life for this player's stablemates. Apart from a couple of Elna caps, Kenwood have specified no overtly audiophile parts for the '3010.

Via the System Control sockets on the back panel, a single remote handset can control an entire all-Kenwood set-up. Not putting in an appearance is a co-axial digital output - a lone optical permits connection to external DACs.

The Kenwood's own convertor is partnered with the company's D.R.I.V.E. (winner of 1997's prestigious Acronym Of The Year award), otherwise known as Dynamic Resolution Intensive Vector Enhancement. Through a series of switched filters, this process aims to eliminate the quantisation errors which produce 'stepped' rather than smooth waveforms at low signal levels. Judging from past experience of D.R.I.V.E. on MD recorders and CD players like the '3010's predecessor, the DP-3080/II, the claims of improved subtlety and insight are borne out.

SOUND QUALITY

Once the lack of batteries in the Kenwood's remote had been overcome for the benefit of the less athletic members of the World reviewing team, it proved to be a sensible little gadget with a useful volume control incorporated. The level defaults to maximum and the fade-out is perhaps a little leisurely but for fine trimming of the sound level it proved very handy.

John Coltrane blowing away his inhibitions on the old Sinatra ballad 'I See Your Face Before Me' provided a (mercifully) rare opportunity to hear a bowed-bass solo. For all the shortcomings of the instrumentalist's ears, the Kenwood 'told it like it was', with a humming synthesis of the giant fiddle's most striking low timbres.

Extending an invitation to Joe Beard and Ronnie Earl's Broadcasters on their Blues Union XRCD swiftly showed where the Kenwood's main musical allegiance lay. A controlled, vibrant rendition almost allowed us to see the air palpating with the driving bass beats of the kick-drum. Mr Beard appeared to have been shouting himself a little hoarser than usual thanks to a slight

lack of midrange polish on the DPF-3010's part, but this was easily outweighed by the 'you are there' transparency of the lead guitar, which emerged with a convincing sense of open-air concert ambience; a credit to both the player and JVC's XRCD.

From the intensity of the Blues to the quintessential travelogue quality of Parry's perky English Suite is a long (and often difficult) jump in terms of style for digital machinery. Here the Kenwood's humble electronic origins, otherwise cleverly disguised, manifested themselves in a suspicion of scratchiness on strings. Still, it has to be admitted that the sound of a horse's tail being pulled over a steel wire can spring harmonic surprises which the most accomplished machines find uncomfortable. The myriad transients generated whenever a composer scribbles 'sf' against the score tend to give even the smoothest of number-crunchers a work-out.

As an effective cross-check, we selected the Allegro Strings with support from James Campbell on clarinet, an instrument which can present real obstacles to the coaxing of true musicality from audio equipment. Possibly the very rapid transitions this instrument can make from smooth to sandpaper and back again point to an harmonic content which needs to be reproduced very carefully. Nothing to worry about this time though: the upper register was commendably limpid and assured.

The Kenwood won more points for its unflappable sound staging, which was perhaps just as well considering the amount of ducking and diving the first fiddle seemed to be doing, not to mention his quite audible intake of breath before each phrase. At least the stereo image allowed us to keep tabs on him.

Bach's Liebster Jesu chorale prelude brought the bass guns to bear again and offered the DPF-3010 a chance to demonstrate its grip in the 16ft. pedal region. However, once the floor was shaking there was not a lot of room left for midrange subtleties. After the mix of realism and pace we'd heard on Blues Union for instance, the Kenwood's performance on this piece was a mite disappointing.

The DPF-3010 combines a lot of pleasing qualities in a neat and usable package. A slight yen for blood and guts didn't detract from the player's virtues when faced with more sophisticated fare. Boosting compatibility is this player's 'un-snobbish' way with music, offering as it does a little of something for everyone.





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NAD 522

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THE TECHNOLOGY

The only casework to stand out cosmetically in this test is NAD's. The customary grey box remains the company's unofficial trademark, as does solid construction for the money. In a rare break from stylistic tradition, the 522 is complemented by a snazzy little trapezoidal remote control topped off with a metal (instead of plastic) plate. The player's display is pleasingly clear and concise with calendar-style track numbering.

Lurking within, on the sizeable main PCB, is a Burr-Brown 20-bit Delta/Sigma DAC followed by a five-pole analogue filter to reduce the amount of spurious radio-frequencies on the player's output. Also coming to the aid of the final sound are the separate regulators for analogue and digital sections, the metal-film resistors, polypropylene capacitors and NE5532 op-amps employed in the analogue section. One thing missing is any kind of digital output - the rear panel is bare apart for the captive mains lead and Left and Right phono sockets.

SOUND QUALITY

From the outset it was clear the 522 was on the warm and smooth side of the tonally neutral line. Straight from the box it was relaxed, refined and detailed with a gratifyingly sweet treble. When treated to the Brahms Violin Concerto, it delivered an even, unflustered sound which, although occasionally veiled and mildly compressed, was always highly listenable.

Bringing into focus one of the 522's cardinal virtues, its reproduction of the mid/bass frequencies, were the powerful, 'gutty' cellos and violas of this piece. But where the silicon behind the unassuming fascia scored maximum points was, as before, in the treble. Take solo violin as a prime example. There was not a hint of grit or hardness polluting the strings in spite of the rough edge to this recording.

A CD of English orchestral music from Lyrita/Quad fared just as well. With greater overall clarity and more complex bass than the Brahms which had preceded it, this disc was a sterner test for the NAD's innards. It responded creditably with a focused, involving sound.

The same was true of Berkley's *Serenade For Strings*, where flair and class were the two main planks in the player's platform. Double-bass had depth and a lightness of touch which lent it an attractive lilting flow and helped bind the musical whole together. The stereo imaging placed the string orchestra in a panoramic spread across the rear wall of our listening room, from the first violins on the far left to the double-basses on the right. Thanks to decent insight and separation, all of these string departments gelled whilst still retaining their individual clarity and power.

A swap to the retro Mod-fest of Ocean Colour Scene suited the 522 right down to the ground. 'The Riverboat Song' with its subtle, muscular (if slightly light) bassline and crisp percussion was fast and funky. The music becomes intricately layered in the choruses, which can make things difficult for some less gifted components, but the NAD simply took this in its stride - not once did it sound as if it was struggling to keep up with the track. Admittedly, this player doesn't spit out rhythms with all the venom and attack enjoyed by the best of Rockers, but it nonetheless drives along satisfyingly with a smoothness they often lack.

The first minute or so of Eric Bibb's 'Walking Up To Heaven' is a natural crescendo (rather than a recording-desk fade-in) kicked off by the quietly-plucked acoustic bass. The NAD did a commendable job of this, although the way it gently squashed the scale of the track made for less perceived dynamic range than some of its peers. Still, Mr Bibb's voice floated out of the BKS ribbon hybrid 'speakers like warm velvet above his delicate fingerwork. The only other cloud in a blue sky was that all this silky smoothness could get excessive after a while - you can't chomp that many Belgian chocolates in one sitting. This, however, is one minor criticism of a capable player.

At £170 the NAD 522 is a sophisticated performer. It goes for the smooth, classy approach and pulls it off with an easy-going, laid-back sound. This might not be a first choice for Rockers, but in a budget system the NAD is sure to win admirers.



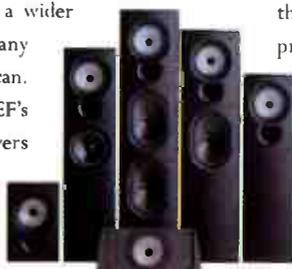
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TECHNICS SL-PG490A £99.95

THE TECHNOLOGY

Despite its featherlight weight, the Technics (which comes with a natty little remote control despite its price) is no 'twist in the wind' biscuit box. Screwed to the stiff baseplate are the transport and a slim Printed Circuit Board where the power supply and analogue output stages co-habit. The control ICs sit on the back of the front panel, leaving only a small board for the headphone amp to reduce the amount of fresh air inside the case.

Making waves of the numbers is Technics' own MASH Multi-Stage Noise Shaping single-bit technology, all the computing power ensconced on one Large-Scale Integration chip. Compilation-constructors will find the TOSLink optical digital output socket handy for hooking up their MiniDisc recorders to the '490A.

SOUND QUALITY

The SL-PG490A may be the cheapest player in this group but its workman-like sure-footedness on the Brahms Violin Concerto raised quite a few eyebrows amongst those who heard it. This recording has fairly dead, dry ambience to it but the Technics succeeded in opening up the sound and breathing life into it. This it did with some judicious tonal tweaking - a little boost for bass and some extra sparkle to the treble. This sometimes meant that solo violin was a touch too rustic, but the advantage was an added richness to Brahms' orchestration which was unexpected. While musical massaging along these lines counts against the Technics attaining high fidelity in its truest sense of a component accurately reproducing the original, it made dull, lifeless recordings such as the Brahms much more enjoyable to listen to.

The lift at frequency extremes was also evident in Ocean Colour Scene's Moseley Shoals. The production clarity of 'The Riverboat Song' with its thumping drum-kit was brought willingly to life by the 'PG490A, which highlighted some of the more subtle details like the Yamaha. The toms and kick-drum were both solid and clear, leaving the shimmering ride cymbal to carry the momentum of the song through.

During the choruses as things became thicker and more complex, the Technics' bias towards the top and bottom of the frequency span unfortunately began to work against it - the ability to tease apart the multiple layers that fill out the sound stage from front to back eluded it. As a result the overall sound was slightly flat and out of focus; vocals shrunk back between the loudspeakers and the whole caboodle was rather constrained.

This affect also made its presence felt on the Blues of Eric Bibb and Needed Time's Good Stuff, although to a lesser extent. The acoustic bass was tight and the guitar smooth and laid-back, but the Technics was too refined for Eric's vocal line which sounded a little less soulful than usual. That's not to say the character of the music was lost because, considering its price, this remained a very musical player. But put it this way - it was as if Bibb's deep-fried Delta cat-fish had been reheated in a microwave. The SL-PG490A was almost the equal of pricier players, but it just missed out on the requisite control, insight and realism.

After Rock and Blues, a return to Classical spelt happier times for the Technics. A rare spaciousness and sprightly dynamics to Berkeley's Serenade had the orchestra never sounding like it was working hard, which is exactly how it should be. Rhythmic subtleties abounded in John Foulds' Dynamic Triptych for Piano and Orchestra, a broad sound stage giving the musicians plenty of room for manoeuvre. The icing on this particular cake turned out to be the bass drum, whose meaty smack and extension gave the sound a solid base to build on.

At its meagre £100, the Technics is something of a bargain. Classical music sounded full and dynamic; this player even had the knack of making duller recordings sound more lively, albeit at the expense of tonal accuracy. Rock and Pop were also both fast and effective, although muddle could set in on denser mixes. Worth auditioning by first-time buyers as well as those audiophiles who don't intend to use Compact Disc as their primary source, the SL-PG490A is a sure-fire budget winner.



YAMAHA CDX-593 £179.95

THE TECHNOLOGY

The CDX-593 is one of the sleeker looking players in this test, steering clear of over-exuberance in the button department and bearing a subtle orange LED display. Perhaps it's a little too subtle, since even with my glasses on I was still squinting hopefully from about five feet away! Settee spuds please note the Yamaha is also packaged with a 'USS Enterprise'-style remote, albeit one that's not as solid or eye-catching as the NAD's.

Under the bonnet you can see Yamaha have tried hard with the component quality. Keeping Elna capacitors company are Pureism reservoir caps and Muse audio-grade decouplers from Nichicon. Oversize links, similar to those found in Holfi's Xara CD player, also stand out above their slimmer counterparts on the large main PCB. These are all employed in the service of Yamaha's own 20-bit S-Bit Plus DAC.

Back on the outside, you'll find a co-ax digital output in addition to optical. And allowing the CDX-593 to be plugged directly into a power amp is the digital volume control, operable from the remote handset.

SOUND QUALITY

The moment you put a CD in the drawer and press Close you know the Yamaha means business; it retracts so quickly it nearly takes your fingers off! This is also indicative of the player's approach to music: it doesn't so much take you by the hand as grab you by the... Well, anyway, the reproduction is up-beat and forward.

Ocean Colour Scene's 'The Riverboat Song' had plenty of bite and drive, the Yamaha accentuating rhythm in a way that hit straight between the eyes. Stereo separation was excellent and the guitars, 'panned' in the mix to the extremes, were brought straight to the front of the sound stage, fighting fit and rarin' to go. Bass, though secure, was punchy and taut rather than floor-shaking.

There is, however, a flip-side to this sort of enthusiasm. The bright balance which so often accompanies it (as is the

case in the Yamaha) highlights any roughness in recordings, and can tilt up-front productions too far for comfort. Climaxes suffered too: with so much energy in their early stages the dynamics had less space to grow later on and seemed to run out of headroom.

To see how the CDX-593 coped with orchestral fare we treated it to a chunk of Lennox Berkley's *Serenade For Strings*. This two-minute gem is full of jagged rhythms; consequently the Yamaha walked right in and made itself at home.

The staccato notes were pushed powerfully along and helped to emphasise the thrusting momentum that is the essential core of this music. Add vibrant and controlled double-basses to the above and you have a spaciousness and width which are real room-fillers. Flies in the ointment? Violins could on occasion sound a tad rough round the edges. And due to its emphasis on the high frequencies and adrenal presentation, some of the pieces the CDX-593 replayed lacked the delicacy and smoothness which benefit more relaxed passages.

Keeping the tempo laid-back were Eric Bibb and Needed Time with the very natural HDCD Good Stuff. EB's vocals and acoustic guitar were crystal clear and beautifully detailed; you could almost see real fingers strumming real strings. Bass and drums were once again to the fore, but this HDCD has much more front-to-back depth than most compressed discs and the Yamaha capitalised on this fully. With no grit marring the midrange and pure, sweet treble on this disc, the CDX-593 managed to produce a less up-front sound as well.

Mozart's familiar Clarinet Quintet and a Dance disc from DJ Cher summed up the two sides to the Yamaha's character. On the first, while the clarinet sang out with an appealing lucidity, the fact that rhythm wasn't the main feature of this composition made for less involving results than with Rockier recordings. The second found the CDX-593 happier dealing with Dance beats and basslines than the intimate atmosphere of a mellow stroll through the chamber-work countryside.



CONCLUSION

Looking over the protagonists in our group this month, we were once again struck with how listenable inexpensive CD players have become. The differences in sound quality between players were also quite surprising given the bargain prices involved and the constraints these place on design budgets. These five ran the gamut from one end of the presentational spectrum to the other, so there should be machines for almost every system out there.

MIXING IT WITH KENWOOD

There was no doubt at World Towers that the top place should go to the Kenwood. With its mastery of all kinds of music, from Classical

performance. What stopped the 522 rising higher in the rankings was the way its smoothness could gloss over low-level detail, leading to a sense of mild dynamic compression. As an antidote to a set-up that suffers from excessive brightness the 522 would slot in snugly, but next to the energetic DPF-3010 it was left sounding over-polite.

CD WITH THE CDX

Yamaha's CDX-593 was a player that thrived on high bpm's with its ebullient and up-front sound. It gelled almost perfectly with fast and frenetic Rock, Pop and Dance tracks, where it never failed to



to Rock, and a very reasonable £180 price tag, the DPF-3010 was a natural successor to the superb DP-3080/II. Crisp treble and a grit-free midrange (often absent from CD equipment, even some very expensive examples) meant happy listening for our panel. Bass was never less than well-controlled and the dynamics were swift and realistic. It is true that every now and again there was a tinge of scratchiness with orchestral strings and a hint of the metallic elsewhere, but for £180 that's no cause for shame.

TON-UP TECHNICS

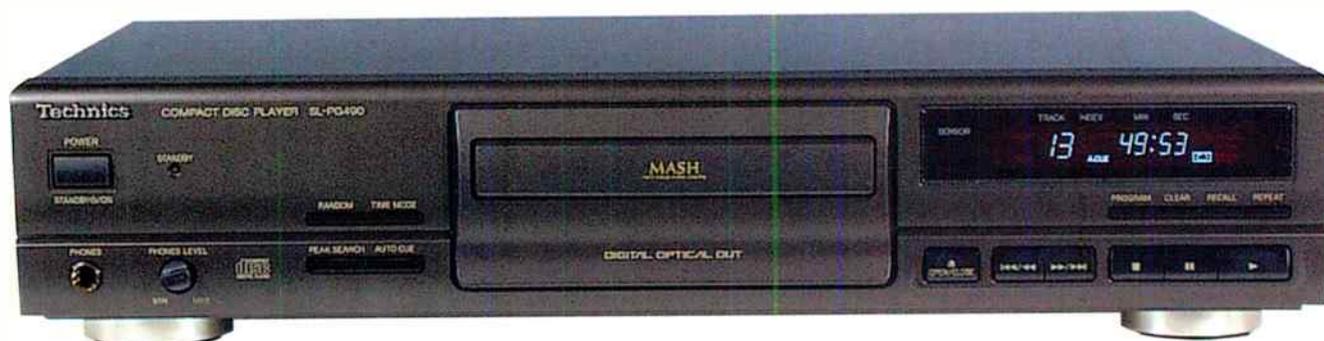
An honourable runner-up, the Technics SL-PG490A was a real treat at the price. Five years ago you would have had trouble just finding a sub-£100 CD player, let alone one that sounded good. Well, the times they have a-changed. The '490A delivers open, involving results and won't turn up its nose at any genre. Apart from a slight roughness round the edges and a bottom-end that could get a bit loose at times, this was an extremely expressive and musical player that fully qualifies for bargain status.

entertain. Although it leant towards tonal dryness, the Yamaha was surprisingly open and 'airy', with a broad sound stage that filled the room on better recordings.

On the downside, while the CDX-593's tonally-tweaked character worked with punchier compositions, it didn't get on so well with mellower numbers. Relaxed Blues and Classical pieces tended to plod along, and what was up-front on Rock could become sibilant or splashy with other types of music. If you like your tunes at full throttle, the Yamaha is one of the best here. However, as an all-rounder the Kenwood pulls ahead.

VICTORY FOR VICTOR?

Rounding up our five contenders for the last bout of auditions which would determine their final positions, we all experienced a feeling of *deja vu* with the JVC after the Yamaha; for the XL-V230 possessed the same wining speed and punch on infectious Dance basslines. The resemblance went further than that, though. Unfortunately, more contemplative tracks also came across as



NAD FOR IT

Playing the mid-field is NAD's 522. This solidly-built box of tricks was sweet and easy on the ear, its warm tonal balance not preventing it mustering a focused and funky rhythmic

they had done with the Yamaha, in a slightly mechanical, uninteresting fashion. And where the CDX-593 had impressive transparency and clarity on its side, the JVC scored lower for its detailing.

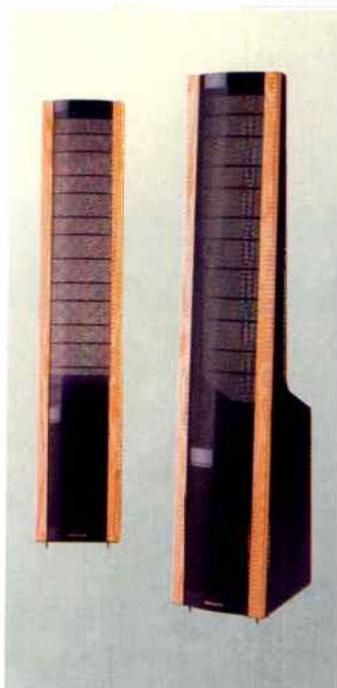
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GOOD BUY OR SAYONARA?

PART TWO

This month David Price samples one of Japan's top high-end hi-fi dealers, Akihabara's Dynamic Audio.



Akihabara is never less than bustling with buyers.

Anyone visiting Japan's capital city should not deny themselves at look around Akihabara, Tokyo's self-proclaimed 'Electric Town'. Suitably refreshed from my sushi stop in Shinjuku, I found myself heading out there via an 18minute train ride (you can set your watch by Japanese trains), to visit high-end hi-fi specialists Dynamic Audio.

Imagine an area several times the size of London's Tottenham Court Road and Edgware Road combined, as busy as they were at the height of Britain's hi-fi boom 20 years ago, and that's how Akihabara looks today. Step off the tube and suddenly you're in an electronics heaven. Stalls by the side of the road sell Black Gate and Elna Cerafine capacitors, reams of silver wire, audiophile output transformers and Alps and Panasonic pots by the van load - straight up!

After a 20second stroll, you're within earshot of countless consumer electronics/hi-fi superstores, sprawling towards Tokyo's crowded skyline. Another few minutes walk under the railway bridge and I'd arrived at my destination. Stepping inside Dynamic Audio's small front doors, things looked even better. With four floors of the world's best hi-fi, it was mightily impressive. Unlike Yodobashi, I was not immediately accosted by a sales assistant, and was left to roam freely around the place. I felt like a kid in a toy shop. Friends of mine would doubtless say that's precisely what I was.

The ground floor was brim full of budget audiophile fare from Arcam, Sony, Kenwood, Thorens, Tannoy, Technics, B&W, KEF et al. Going up a floor, I found acres of Japanese mid-fi - stuff we'd probably call high-end in the UK, like Teac's VRDS CD players, Sony's ES range and Marantz's tastier offerings.

Up another floor and we were entering heading towards the high-end - top integrated amps and CD players from Luxman, Nakamichi, Sony's Reference Series and Teac's Esoteric, plus British kit from Quad, Roksan, Aura, Linn, Harbeth and Naim.

Finally, the fourth floor was stuffed with jaw-droppingly expensive US gear plus the odd bit of British. Want a CD player? How about the Wadia 7+9 at £18500, Denon's DP-S1/DA-S1 at a mere £7300, or a Mark Levinson No.36L+No.37L for a trifling £7700? Or maybe Sony's top CDP-R10/DAS-R10 two-box for £8700, or Studer's D730 Mk2 for £4700?

DACs included DPA's SX256 at £4400, the dCS Elgar for £7900 and Boulder's 2020 at £20000! On dem was a Mark Levinson 380SL (barely cheaper than its Mercedes Benz equivalent), wired up to a gargantuan £35000 Boulder 2050 power amp, driving Tannoy Westminster Royal loudspeakers. Flanking these were two Jeff Rowland 9Tis at £21000 a go, and two Mark Levinson No.33HLs at £14000 a side. Blimey!

And then I beheld another wondrous vision, in the shape of an Oracle Delphi V 15th Anniversary edition turntable (£4200). There was also the top Wilson Benesch ACT1+ACT2 (£3700) and Linn Sondek/Ekos II (price not shown), plus Thorens' TD520RW (£2400) vinyl-spinner for good measure.



There's no getting lost once you step off the train.

Cartridges included the Lyra Parnassus DCt (£1300) and Linn Arkiv II (£1100), plus Ortofon's SPU Meister Silver GE (£850), which is the latest in the line of one of the world's longest-running cartridges. Tone-arms included the Graham, Wheaton and ubiquitous SME 3009S2 II - curiously the newer SMEs were nowhere to be seen.

After all this excitement I needed to sit down, and duly reclined in one of the shop's comfy leather chairs. A salesman appeared and gingerly asked me if I needed any help. Seeing that he wasn't very busy - this floor by its nature never is - I asked him how



The 380SL pre-amp from Mark Levinson - a snip at £5000.

business was going. A young, softly-spoken guy in his mid-20s, he introduced himself as Mr Kengo Shima, and explained that in Japan summer is the busiest time. "It's the company bonus system we have in Japan. Many guys come here with their bonuses, spend loads on a system and then tell their wives after!"

Asked if Japan's recent economic downturn had affected the world of hi-fi, he replied that, "our hi-fi scene has been stagnant thanks to the economy, but there is still a small but dedicated band of high-enders who buy here". What sort of stuff? "The richest customers currently like Swiss high-end, such as Goldmund and FM Acoustics. These are very expensive; a whole system can cost up to ¥30000000" (£131000).

What about the 'cheaper' kit, if that's the right word to use in the circumstances? "Big moving-coil 'speakers are popular. Tannoy Westminster are the best-sellers for Jazz or Classical, while Rock fans like the JBL 4344mkII. We can also sell as many BBC LS3/5as as we can get, which are undoubtedly the most popular mini hi-fi 'speakers in Japan. Harbeth's HL-P3ES isn't such a good seller because Japanese customers want the traditional classic designs", he replied.

"The top budget 'speaker is currently B&W's CDM1SE, which is always in strong demand - we can sell as many as we can get. It's far better than any equivalent Japanese design. Electrostatics aren't so popular anymore, Quad's ESL 63 Pro sales in particular having diminished thanks to problems with Japan's high humidity. Martin Logans are better in this respect but aren't favourites here, despite recent heavy discounting", he explained.

Moving on to front-ends, I asked Shima San what the current fave rave is in Japan. His reply was emphatic. "The Esoteric P-0. It is frighteningly good - too good in fact for the money. There's just no point in buying the more expensive high-end imports from the US and Europe. The engineering is unbelievable. We sell every one we get from Teac within minutes of it arriving!"

A few months ago Stereo Sound magazine published photos of Pioneer's prototype DVD Audio transport, and got everyone excited. What did Shima San reckon of the new formats? "DVD Audio and SACD are currently confusing the customers a bit. People wanting to buy high-end CD seem to be waiting for DVD. In a sense this is a good idea, because both formats promise much better sound, but it's also a bit stupid because there's still virtually no software around at all, and no standard. You don't want to back the wrong format, end up spending huge sums and get a Betamax". He added that, "of the two, I prefer SACD, by the way."

I explained that in Britain, most serious audiophiles think the only truly high-resolution source available at present is vinyl. How about Japan? "Vinyl really isn't doing much here anymore. Generally the only customers are middle-aged Jazz fans who tend to be into tubes as well - they have a 'maniac spirit'. The most popular brand is Thorens, who have products at every market point, from budget to high-end. We sell a few Linn LP12s, Oracles and Wilson Benesch's, but the market just isn't there any more. The best-selling budget deck is the Technics SL-1200 MkII, which is very reliable and strong, and popular with young guys."

I replied that I thought it rather puzzling, considering how devoted Japanese audiophiles are, that they mostly choose an inferior source like CD. I asked Shima San what his opinion was, and he looked a little awkward. He then replied tactfully that, "what I prefer depends on the music and the system. I like Rock on CD through a big transistor amp and JBLs. But I like Jazz on vinyl through tubes and big Tannoys. I also think Classical is best on CD, and Denon have a range of superbly-recorded Classical discs which is popular in Japan."

He was equally diplomatic on the valves vs transistors debate. "Tubes aren't as popular here in Japan, because they're a far more specialised proposition - most people want a reliable, high-power, class A transistor amp from the States or, if they've less money to spend, from Marantz or someone like that. They don't want to bother with tubes. But in the right system and right context, I think tubes are better, especially with LPs. Tube amps sell strongly to one small bunch of people - 'maniacs'. And there are quite a lot of Japanese companies making tube amps now."

We talked at length about hi-fi in general. Despite sitting in a veritable Aladdin's Cave of hi-fi, Shima San echoed the sentiments of many audiophiles in Britain when he lamented hi-fi's relative decline in popularity over recent years. Like many of us, he cited the late Seventies as audio's 'golden age'. Although there are some amazing products around today, he pointed out that they have to compete with personal computers and mobile phones for buyers' attention, which wasn't always the case.

I then asked him to put together a 'typical' system. He went to great pains to point out that at this level it's all down to taste, but after much agonising he came up with an Esoteric P-0 transport, JVC XP-DA999 DAC, Mark Levinson 380SL pre-amp, Goldmund Mimesis 29.4 power amp and Tannoy Westminster Royal loudspeakers. Then, to my surprise, he started assembling it in front of me.

The £5330 Esoteric P-0 is Teac's flagship CD spinner. Having produced a number of designs such as the P-30 that we like so much, the company's top engineers set out to build the best CD transport ever made, anywhere, by anyone. Judging



Hand-built in small numbers by expert engineers - Teac's P-0 transport.

from the stir in the Japanese hi-fi press, it looks like they've succeeded. Quite frankly it's a seminal, epoch-making, state-of-the-art product - the superlatives just run out trying to describe it. Hand-built by a handful of specialist engineers, Teac can't make anywhere near enough to satisfy demand in the Japanese market, let alone abroad. The P-0 features a litany of unique facilities including user-adjustable laser tracking, focus and spindle speed, plus an enormous power supply housed in a separate box.

Clearly something special was needed to partner the P-0, so what better than Victor's XP-DA999 DAC? One of the few 24/96-ready designs currently available, JVC's flagship converter also does the business with 16/44 Red Book CD. Although it features myriad inputs and superb construction quality, its secret weapon is said to be its K2 digital filter system.

Victor have made much of this feature, claiming it to be far superior to rival signal-processing algorithms like Pioneer's latest Hi-Bit Legato Link S. Hype or not, it's certainly made friends, the £2400 '999 having won Stereo Sound magazine's Component Of The Year award in 1997.



JVC's XP-DA999 DAC contains the K2 digital filter used in the company's XRCDs.

Next link in Dynamic Audio's suggested system was the Mark Levinson 380SL pre-amp. Another Stereo Sound Component Of The Year, this £5000 design has been a big seller in high-end terms. It boasts six line inputs fully adjustable by remote control, plus the usual superb construction found in high-end US products. Partnering it was Goldmund's Mimesis 29.4 power amp. Selling for £24000 in Japan, this Swiss powerhouse packs a 350WPC punch. Build quality is in the Rolex league, with separately boxed power supply and amplifier sections inside and signal wiring that puts Monster Cable to shame. Hardly surprising then that one tips the scales at 68kgs!

Transduction was courtesy of Tannoy's Westminster Royal loudspeakers. If an internal cabinet volume of 545 litres per box and horn loading doesn't make for high efficiency, I don't know what does. These 1.4m tall behemoths are the bee's knees as far as Japanese audiophiles are concerned, who seem quite happy to part with £14000 for the pleasure of their acquaintance. A single-ended fan's dream for sure, but I wasn't completely convinced they were a realistic proposition for your average domestic listening room.

Never having heard a £51000 system before I wasn't sure what to expect, but an Eric Clapton Unplugged CD was duly slipped into the P-0 and off we went. In hi-fi terms it was little short of gobsmacking - imaging was holographic, the sound stage vast and



Goldmund's large and rather extravagantly-priced Mimesis 29.4 power amp.

depth perspective awesome (especially considering it was plain old 16/44 CD). Tonally squeaky clean, bass was tight as a drum and treble crisp and smooth with just a touch of silk. Dynamically it was also something else, those big Tannoys going louder then quieter effortlessly and with consummate authority.

Overall, things were incredibly smooth and refined in a way that I've never heard from CD before, but I couldn't help feeling it to be just a touch too aloof and musically uninvolved. In fact, the more I thought about it the more I realised what an antithesis it was to my old Linn LP12/Naim Nait/Linn Kan system - which wasn't much good at anything apart from getting the feet tapping.

In fairness though, had I not known the sums involved I'd have probably been more impressed. It was a superb system, it's just that I've heard more musical set-ups at one twentieth the price. Shima San agreed, saying that for his money he'd substitute the Victor DAC for a dCS Elgar, change to a tube pre/power and go for JBL's top 4434mkII loudspeakers, which he loves. Having subsequently heard the latter in action in a Tokyo jazz-bar, I'd agree 100%.

So there you have it - two Japanese takes on how high-end should sound, one at five grand and one at 50. Both were deeply impressive, but of the two I'd go for the cheaper set-up and keep the rest for a Honda NSX. Either way, it was a fun day out, and further proof (as if I needed it) that this is one of the best places to be if you're into hi-fi.

David would like to thank Yukiko Kubota for help in the preparation of this article

BIG IN JAPAN

Every year Japan's Stereo Sound magazine polls its reviewers for the best products around. Here's a selection of last year's award-winning super-fi.

CD TRANSPORTS

- 1) ESOTERIC P-0
- 2) SONY CDP-R10
- 3) DENON DP-S1
- 4) ESOTERIC P-30
- 5) ESOTERIC P-2s

D/A CONVERTORS

- 1) WADIA 27
- 2) DCS ELGAR
- 3) MARK LEVINSON NO.36
- 4) DPA SX256
- 5) GOLDMUND MIMESIS 20

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- 1) LINN ARKIV II
- 2) LYRA PARNASSUS DCI
- 3) ORTOFON SPU MEISTER SILVER GE
- 4) SHURE V15VxMR
- 5) AUDIOCRAFT AC03

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- 1) TANNOY KINGDOM 15
- 2) B&W SIGNATURE 30
- 3) JBL M9500
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VINTAGE VENUES

Chris Beeching and Richard White hit the road in search of bargains from yesteryear at the Tonbridge Audio Jumble and the GT Audio Fair in Rickmansworth.

Nestling south of London, Tonbridge provided the venue for yet another of John Howes' renowned Audio Jumbles on 12th July. For those not in the know, this has to be one of the best places to pick up a broad range of vintage gear as well as more recent equipment. Alongside the stacks of Garrards, Leaks and less well-known names were plenty of odd bits and



Far from the Nadding crowd?

pieces like paper-in-oil capacitors and carbon-film resistors. Knowing there would be some goodies to drool over, I bundled the family into the car and headed for Tonbridge.

Although you cannot always guarantee to find exactly what you're looking for, there's no doubt that if you're searching for something retro, distinctive, or even just plain old(er) then these jumbles are the place to start. Amps, tuners, loudspeakers,



Stack systems.



Pilgrims kneel at the vintage shrines.

turntables and a whole lot more besides filled the large sports hall, and there was certainly no shortage of interest as the crowd gathered outside attested.

Despite the fact that hi-fi is reputed to be purely 'toys for the



Octave's new-made GRF, dying for a Leak.

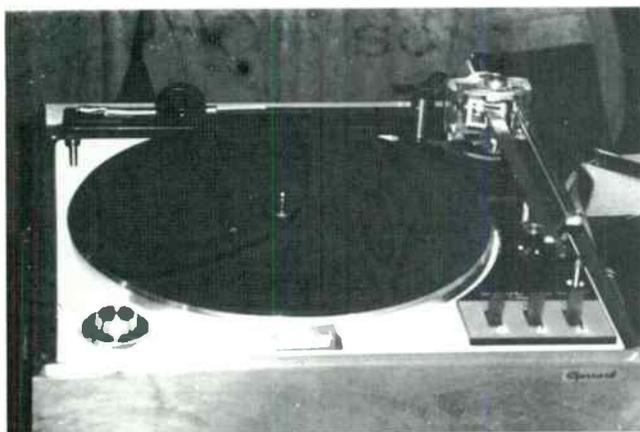
boys', there were plenty of families and partners of the fairer sex in evidence, and their comments were obviously making their mark in determining what was bought. There were even female stallholders, proving this is definitely not an exclusively male pursuit.

The Angel Centre (usually a sports centre) gave over its largest hall for this event, and it was packed with equipment from every

decade. There were even bakelite radios, burr-walnut sideboards (sorry, music systems) from the Thirties and some rarities including Acoustical tuners and the oft-revered Quad ELS 57s.

If DIY is your thing then there were components to suit almost every whim, and capacitors, valves and transistors in abundance. The strange thing about this event is that solid-state and thermionic are held in equal respect. There's no obvious sign of the valves vs transistor argument which causes so many animated discussions amongst audiophiles.

As to the future, well there's bound to be a lot more 'old' gear coming back onto the market as time moves on, so John's jumble



Left on the shelf: one of many Garrard Zero 100s.

looks set to stay with us. Bearing that in mind, next year's is scheduled for February 14th, a date not to be missed. **CB**

RICKMANSWORTH

Personally I always enjoy the buzz and bustle of a well-attended fair or jumble. It's a comfort to know that all the people there, whether lovingly turning over the odd Rogers amp or trying to harvest a bed of Leaks, are all on a similar wavelength. No one will find a request for a female octal puzzling or embarrassing; DA100 output valves can be knocked onto the floor with the "don't worry about it" that has the stamp of real camaraderie.

Audio jumbles are not just for equipment; printed matter gets a



New lamps for old.



Two down-and-outs keep out of the rain.

good airing too, although I have yet to encounter the audiophile's dream of a complete run of Hi-Fi Yearbooks with "£3 the lot ONO" marked on them. On the other hand, I was pleased to be able to plug a few gaps in our World Towers library of Wireless World back numbers - an invaluable source of dates and prices for the vintage equipment we like to feature in the magazine.

Octave were demonstrating their Tannoy re-manufactures to passers-by, and Aphelion had their plinths and loudspeaker cabinets tastefully framed by a copy Hi-Fi World; they're bound to go far, obviously! Dave of DK was in fine fettle with his driver repairs too; we hope to cover this interesting subject later in the year.

I left Jon 'Prince Of Darkness' Marks gloating over some Sussex Surplus rotary switches and made some most fortunate LP choices, in the glories of which I am still basking.

Bargains were to be had in all areas of audio but I noticed, having attended quite a few, that there are 'show favourites' at most of them. By this I mean an item which has unexpectedly turned up in large numbers this time and as a consequence looks suddenly over-priced and fails to sell. Quad tuners suffered from this at Wembley the time before last, Leak TL25s were like autumn leaves at Tonbridge and the Watersmeet victim was the Garrard Zero turntable, a nice-looking piece of kit but difficult to shift if every other stall has one.

On the subject of turntables, I congratulate the unknown person who bought the Connoisseur 'B' before I'd made up my mind! At least the same person didn't spot the all-but-priceless Lenco which I settled for instead, but I think they'd paid a flying visit to the 'Stall Of A Thousand Cartridges' and swept up all the Shure V15s I'd have bought if there'd been any left. Come to think of it I saw Paul from Classique Sounds gloating over a cartridge. . . **RMW**



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GENERATION 2000

The Millennium approaches and DAC technology moves on, as Jon Marks discovers with Musical Fidelity's X-24K and Alchemist's TS-D-1 24/96 convertors.



"Good-bye Piccadilly, farewell Leicester Square, it's a long, long way to Tipperary but my heart lies there." Played on Remembrance Day Sunday, with a little alteration this famous tune could be updated to commemorate less solemn events: "Good-bye Red Book standard, farewell Compact Disc, it's a long, long way to 192 but my heart lies there."

Perhaps the sentiments expressed in the second version above are just a little ahead of the current situation but there's no doubt that over the next decade CD will be eclipsed by higher resolution formats. One of these is the 24-bit 96kHz which the X-24K from Musical Fidelity and Alchemist's TS-D-1 (both £300) have been built to decode.

THE TECHNOLOGY

Curvaceous casework is the order of the day for these two convertors. The TS-D-1 (named after its "Tortoise-Shell Design") is assembled from an aluminium extrusion sealed below with a steel baseplate. Capping the otherwise open ends are two slabs of copper-clad Printed Circuit Board which endow the TS-D-1 with all-round screening from interference.

The back-panel bears Left and Right analogue outputs, co-axial and optical inputs and the three-pin power socket which connects to the external potted transformer. A still-rare addition is the Record Output, which loops the data stream to a CD or MiniDisc recorder without the need to disconnect the TS-D-1.

The silicon cylinders purring away under the bonnet are supplied by Burr-Brown and Crystal. The former's surface-mount 1728 digital filter is complemented by Crystal's 4334 delta/sigma DAC. These, in combination with the Crystal 8414 input

receiver, mean the Alchemist should be able to lock on to any signal with a sampling frequency between 16kHz and 96kHz.

Aluminium also encloses the X-24K. Where its rival here presents only Signal Lock, On/Off and De-Emphasis to the world, the MF gets closer to lighting a Christmas tree with a total of eight LEDs. On the fascia's left are arranged the sampling frequency indicators (32kHz, 44.1kHz, 48kHz, 88.2kHz and 96kHz); on the right De-Emphasis, Input 1 and Input 2. Along with the last two on the black cylinder's rear are the analogue outputs, an optical input and another digital loop. Again, an out-board transformer steps down the juice from the National Grid.

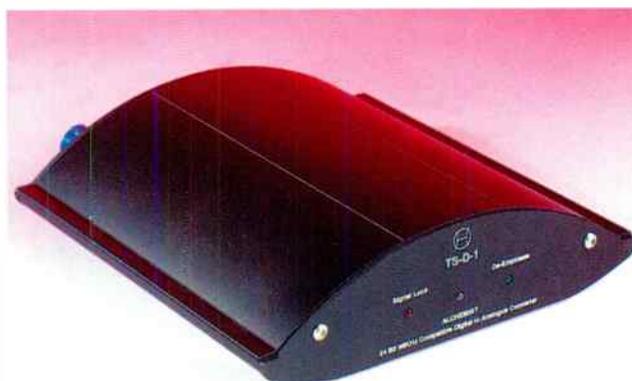
Chip-wise, the X-24K boasts a Crystal 24-bit data receiver along with Burr-Brown convertors and digital filters.

Monitoring the conversion processes of Alchemist and MF were Magneplanar SMGa panels driven by Musical Fidelity's own X-A200 monoblocs and a battery-powered DPA 50S pre-amp. The transport was the excellent £400 DV-505 DVD player from Pioneer (the only company whose DVD machinery is presently fitted with 96kHz digital outs) with predominantly 20/96 at its co-axial output. Set-up number two was Jamo's Concert 8s, Audio Analogue's Puccini SE, Teac's P-30 and MF's X-Ray as transports for CD and the '505 once more for 96kHz discs.

GOLDEN EAR

I headed first for Red Book CD and the Teac P-30 with the X-24K. With digital interconnects from Ecosse Maf, DBF Acoustics and Tara Labs to hand, I grilled the MF with memories of its HDCD-equipped X-DAC stablemate in mind.

Clarity there was by the bucketload with this DAC knitting together the numbers pressed into the disc that always features in our





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Described as "Arcam's finest hour", the new Alpha 9 CD player boasts not only Arcam's renowned engineering principles, but something else rather unique. Patented technology in the guise of a ring DAC chip that delivers unheard-of definition and accuracy. Exactly the same technology, in fact, that's used in the radar system in the Eurofighter.

You see, the technology that tells the Eurofighter's pilot whether that's a friend or a foe lurking over the horizon, is precisely the

same technology that enables the Alpha 9 listener to tell whether that's a Steinway or a Bechstein lurking behind the conductor.

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reviews, Eric Bibb and Needed Times' Good Stuff. The main man's plucked guitar had convincing tonal colour and fluidity of expression, neither of which you might automatically expect to come across in your average £300 convertor. These two plus points stuck out like very welcome sore thumbs on harmonica and accordion, two instruments that get a rough ride from most hi-fi components. Instead of the thin, brash, excessive reediness most digitalia lays on them, the X-24K easily captured the complex signatures of the Blues harp and squeeze box. Natural music making of this ilk means you can just sit back and relax into whatever disc you happen to be playing.

It may be the X-DAC that benefits from Pacific Microsonic's PMD100 HDCD filter, but this didn't stop the MF enjoying a range of appropriately-encoded recordings. Better standard albums too, such as Robert White's Sacred Music For Choir as performed by Voces Sacrae, left no room for doubt as to the MF's kid-glove handling of detail and its spacious sound staging.

The control and transparency which allowed the X-24K to pass untainted low-level signals also did the business for big basslines and frenetic tempos. On Dance tracks the ICs inside that black and silver torpedo kept a firm grip on drum machines and synthesisers, never letting either go off the rails and degenerate into a loose, wobbling mess.

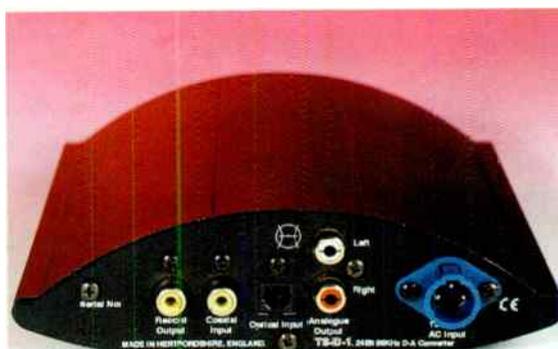
TURNING TURTLE

Returning to EB with the MF's rival at the helm, I found the TS-D-1 in hale and hearty mood as it thwacked out the title track's kick-drum. As had been the case with the X-24K, there was an ear-catching expressiveness to the sound sure to get feet tapping in front of hi-fis everywhere. Delving into the layers of the mix, the Alchemist demonstrated fine clarity as well, digging out some tinkling on the ivories which had lain hidden on most of the occasions this tune has wafted into our listening room.

'Saucer And Cup' with only guitar and vocals slowed the pace and shifted the emphasis away from bass tautness and treble definition towards sound stage and image precision. No problems here as Mr Bibb's voice was rock-steady between the 'speakers, his guitar painted closer to life-size than the broad smear of sound which lesser number-crunchers produce.



For enhanced performance, MF's X-PSU can be added to the X-24K.



Copper-clad PCB boards screen the TS-D-1 front and back.

The Alchemist was turning out to be a smoothie judging from Good Stuff followed by Voces Sacrae. Where the X-24K was a little brighter and more up-front, the Tortoise Shell stuck closer to the tonal mean, eschewing the MF's faint glaze of midrange hardness for a purer, more even balance. This trade-off involved the loss of some detail, dynamics and focus, although the TS-D-1 still had a habit of dredging up information the MF sometimes passed by.

Proof of the pudding above were Dance or Rock tracks. Where the X-24K had the right presentation to really make the most of these, the Alchemist was softer and less punchy. That didn't mean it couldn't deal with said genres, just that its strengths lay more in acoustic fare, the MF's in more artificial and up-beat creations.

GOING ALL THE WAY

With a strong set of marks chalked up for CD replay, the digital duo squared up to their sternest test, the full 96kHz monty. Pioneer's DV-505 was duly wheeled in and placed on Elemental Audio's Monoplith platform.

Ah, now that was more like it. There were grins all round as the superior software rotating in the Pioneer's drawer flattened CD's offerings without any difficulty. Through both MF and Alchemist sound staging swelled, dynamics speeded up and everything became firmer and more life-like. Best of all, there was real anger, power and flow to orchestral compositions such as Rachmaninov's Symphonic Dances, which had terrific smack and scale.

In terms of character, it was the same story as before, only more so. The Alchemist was again sweeter and tonally richer on strings and brass than the MF, which pulled ahead in scale, impact and imaging precision. As a result the MF would be a happier addition to systems that otherwise lack treble sparkle and excitement. The Alchemist steps in when there's too much bite at the top and not enough colour to flesh out instruments.

Whichever way your system leans, if you're a happy owner of a DVD player and some of the rare 24/96 discs you won't be disappointed by what these DACs can do. The innards that permit the X-24K and TS-D-1 to decode them pay dividends as far as humble CD goes too, the lesser format gaining in expression and listenability compared to what emerges from the bulk of DACs. Whether you choose the Alchemist or MF is, as ever, down to demonstration, preferably of the home variety.

Musical Fidelity X-24K
£299.99

Alchemist TS-D-1
£299.95

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

Alchemist
Unit 1,
Furzewood House,
Cranbourne Ind. Estate,
Potters Bar,
Herts. EN6 3JN
Tel: 01707 664607

WORLD VERDICT



X-24K
Crisp, detailed and dynamic, the MF is a genuine music maker, if a touch bright and hard at times.



TS-D-1
Smooth, natural and relaxed on the ear, the Alchemist is highly persuasive with acoustic material. Can sound slightly soft on Rock and Dance.

Measured Performance
see p111

£5400 CHRISTMAS GIVE-AWAY



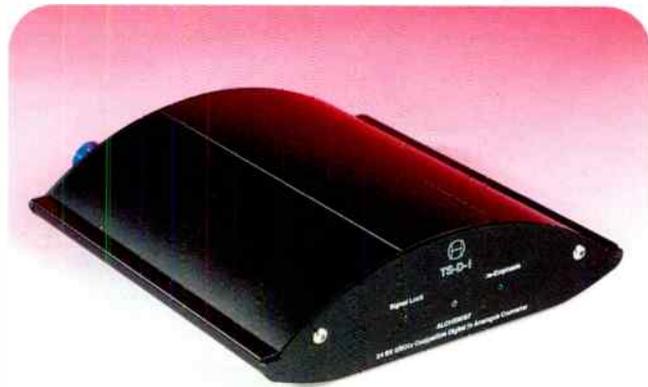
This month we have our special annual bonanza as every component reviewed in this issue must be won.

They say Christmas is a time for tradition, and Hi-Fi World is no exception. In line with Christmases past, we're putting up for grabs all this month's 18 reviewees. With so much equipment on offer, it's vital that you state your order of preference for the prizes as we will be grading the winners on the quality of their tie-breakers and allocating the highest selected prize available. This means winner No1 will get their first choice, winner No2 theirs

and so on. Only if a prize has already been selected by someone else will a winner get one that isn't their first choice.

PREFERENCES:

Kenwood DPF-3010 CD player.
JVC XL-V230 CD player.



- Technics SL-PG490A CD player.
- Yamaha CDX-593 CD player.
- NAD 522 CD player.
- Alchemist TS-D-1 DAC.
- Musical Fidelity X-24K DAC.
- Monarchy SM-70 power amp.
- Arcam Alpha One integrated amp.
- Ecosse Maf Reference CS1-010 interconnects.
- Classique Sounds Translucent interconnects.
- True Colours Viper interconnects.
- Sonic-Link Hardlink mains cable.
- Cable Talk 4.1 bi-wire loudspeaker cable.
- DNM Lexe MC cartridge.
- Musical Technology PM15 'speakers.
- Neat Critique II 'speakers.
- Slate Audio Handstrobe.
- Monarchy Model 18B DAC.

To be in with a chance to win one of this issue's many glittering prizes all you have to do is answer the brain-teasers opposite and complete the fiendish tie-breaker. Fix the entry form (which may be photocopied) to the back of a postcard or sealed envelope. Please make sure your entry reaches the address below no later than January 5th.

Christmas Extravaganza
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Don't forget to include your name, address and telephone number so we can contact the winners promptly.

COMPETITION ENTRY QUESTIONS

- 1) Which other cartridge is DNM's Lexe based on?

A. Goldring Excel	C. Goldring 1042
B. Goldfinger Needle	D. Cann Ti Leva

- 2) What kind of tweeter do NEAT's Critique II loudspeakers have?

A. Ion discharge	C. Soft dome
B. Ribbon	D. Piezo electric

- 3) How long have Musical Technology been making loudspeakers?

A. 10 years	C. 50 years
B. Four years	D. A month

- 4) What kind of DAC is NAD's 522 CD player built around?

A. Ultra-Widget UW522	C. Crunchbot 997A
B. Crystal CS4329	D. Burr-Brown 20-bit

- 5) How much does Arcam's Alpha One amp cost?

A. £500	C. £175
B. £230	D. £1000

TIE-BREAKER (obligatory)

Complete the following in fewer than 30 words
Angels from the realms of Audio
 Spread their cheer o'er Hi-Fi World
 You might win some sweet accord, so
 Get your rhyming caps uncured....

COMPETITION WINNERS

Mr and Mrs Taylor of Notts. win Micromega's Tuner, M. Leach of Kent JVC's TD-V662 tape deck and T. Carter the Elemental Audio stands.

Congratulations!

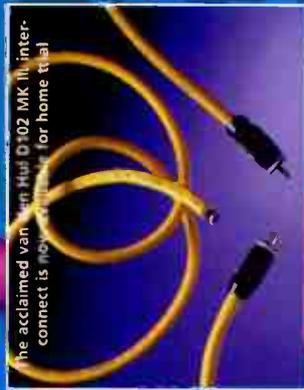


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A DAB HAND

In a special sneak preview of Digital Audio Broadcasting, Jon Marks and Richard White tune in to Arcam's Alpha 10 DRT.

The prize for hogging more headline space this year than just about any other topic has to go to Digital Audio Broadcasting. This system has proved controversial for its fait-accomplis introduction (you can have any form of digital radio you like as long as it's DAB) and the compression it uses.

On paper, the almost inevitable "CD quality sound" claims made by some of DAB's proponents look shaky in view of the MPEG 2 compression applied to the 48kHz sampled signal. This is worrying news for audiophiles who have invested substantial amounts in analogue tuners only to have their equipment made redundant when FM transmissions are finally switched off in 10-15 years' time. Getting hold of domestic (rather than

in-car) hi-fi DAB tuners has thus far proved difficult too, which has done little to allay fears. However, we recently managed to spend some time with a late pre-production Arcam Alpha 10 DRT, which will be on sale

performances with very little of the chesty upper-bass coloration that puts boom into male voices on a lot of FM tuners.

Separation between instruments was also surprisingly good, with clean-cut images set in a sound stage with fine breadth as well as depth. Free from OTT compression, commercial stations were actually superior to their non-numerical counterparts.

Without being able to wire the Alpha 10 DRT into another system to narrow down exactly what it was doing to the signal, it was impossible to be more specific about its quality. Still this was, after all, only a pre-production sample, but what it vitally confirmed was that DAB is far better than the early-days, hard-and-nasty digititis that was the stuff of nightmares.



before the end of the year for around £800.

Plugged into Alpha 10 integrated and Alpha 10 power amps bi-amping floor standers from B&W, what emerged was a million miles from the grainy, flat and unconvincing sound many had been dreading. A spin round the dial with the station names flashing up on the Arcam's display revealed on Radio 3 crisp

FLASH HARRY

Richard White steadies his turntable with the help of Slate Audio's Handstrobe.

When AC mains became more widely used for domestic light, it was not long before some bright spark had the idea of using the stroboscopic phenomenon to test the speed of gramophone turntables. Almost from the year dot, electric turntable and record manufacturers issued little paper discs which, fitted over the spindle of a turntable, appeared to be stationary when rotating at the appropriate speed under AC-powered light.

There is a catch though - the generating companies are only obliged to average out the 50-cycle frequency over 24 hours; this keeps, say, synchronous electric clocks correct overall, but for the user of a turntable with a synchronous motor, there is no guarantee that things will remain at the right speed. Mains-lit stroboscopes cannot show this because the 'flicker' will vary at the same rate as the mains frequency. What is required is an

independent and accurate source of 50Hz light. This is where Slate's Handstrobe comes in.

Adapted from the circuitry used for Slate's own Powerhouse quartz-referenced turntable supply, the Handstrobe gives 100 precise pulses every second, with enough

brightness to give a firm, clear image of the stripes on the supplied strobe disc even in daylight.

Priced at £120, the Handstrobe is certainly no give-away item, but for those turntables with variable speed and listeners who sometimes wonder about little extras like correct pitch, remember that 3% mains frequency either way doesn't sound much in figures but the resultant 6% swing adds up to a whole semitone variation. And all the while a strobe disc viewed by mains-light would show that everything was hunky-dory!

For the avoidance of embarrassments such as Beethoven's Minuet in F#, the Handstrobe is handy indeed.



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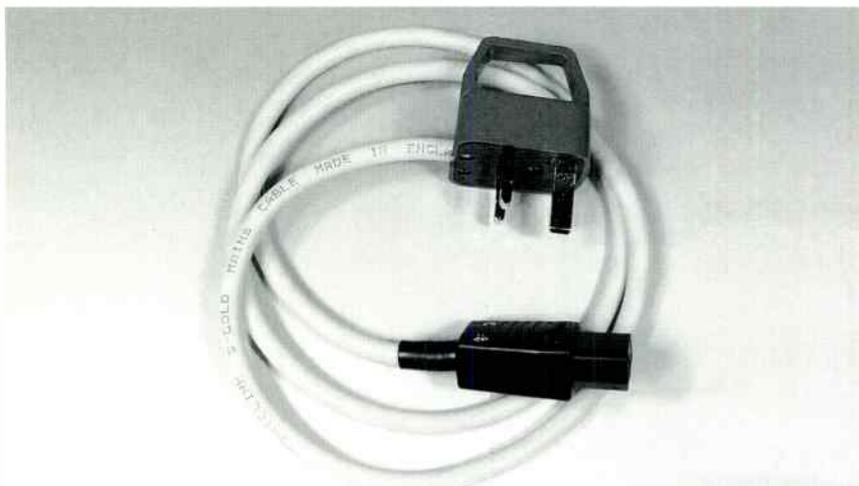
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SONIC-LINK HARD LINK S-GOLD MAINS CABLE £125/1.25m

That rather wordy moniker breaks down into a mains plug and IEC connector with Rhodium-plated contact surfaces (the "Hard Link" part) terminating 19 0.3mm silver-plated copper conductors in a silicone rubber sheath.

The SL plugged into the back of the Puccini SE and Arcam's Alpha 9 CD player at one end and a wall socket as well as a Kimber mains block at the other.

The S-Gold was not one of those components whose affect is so subtle it takes a week of listening for the changes to creep into your consciousness. Compared to bog-standard mains leads it was far more detailed, dynamic and weighty. Blues Union's first couple of bars was all it took to realise that what was coming out of the Jamos and 107s was much more musical and realistic. Where give-away cabling was flat, dull and blurred, the S-Gold was lively and controlled.

Swapping back to Kimber's 8TC PowerKord showed that the differences here were very similar to those that separated the DNM and CableTalk. The 8TC was smoother, more fluid and had a broader tonal range; the Sonic-Link was slightly brighter and drier but more upbeat. As before, sound staging was deeper with the Kimber but wider on S-Gold.

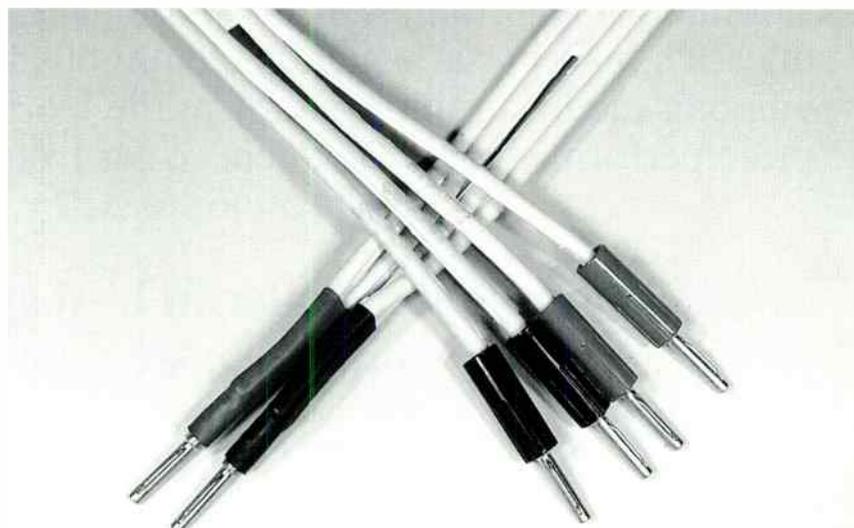
At £125 the Sonic-Link is hardly cheap. The price is reflected in the improvement it brings to a system's sound though.

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

ribbon hybrids the CableTalk mixed a large dose of the solid-core DNM's tonal colour and freedom from midrange grit with extra blood-and-guts drive. With the Blues Union XRCD whirring away inside Arcam's Alpha 9, the drummer's handiwork had smack, presence and bags of rhythm in spite of a little blurring around the edges of notes.

Substituting the Jamo Concert 8s for the BKS's somewhat unusual impedance curve, Eric Bibb and Stravinsky (both HDCDs) confirmed the CableTalk's calibre. Apart from vocals which were a touch dry and sound stage depth marginally flatter than the DNM's, the 4.1 cooked up an eminently listenable version of events.

Where the DNM departs from the strictly neutral with a sweetened top end and mildly softened dynamics, the 4.1 leans the other way with an excitement bolstered by a punchier, brighter presentation. At less than £10/m, though, that adds up to a fine cable.



CABLETALK TALK 4.1 BI-WIRE £8.50/m

Going up against our in-house stalwart, DNM's Reson bi-wire at £6.95/m, the 4.1 struck a fine balance. Between The Puccini SE and BKS's 107

CableTalk
Unit 12,
Farnborough Bis. Centre,
Eelmoor Road,
Hants. GU14 7XA
Tel: 01252 373434

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CLASSIQUE SOUNDS TRANSLUCENT £80/m

The Classique Translucents are robustly-constructed cables with pure silver conductors and an overall shield connected at one end only in a pseudo-balanced configuration. They were strung between an Audio Analogue Puccini SE integrated and a Pink Triangle Litaural CD with Stravinsky's demanding Firebird Suite nesting in its drawer.

Translucent turned out to be an apt description of this cable's treble, with string transients crisp and clear. There were no audible signs of muffling or, what's worse, harshness or distortion on top. Midrange was also smoothly managed with no trace of chestiness. At the other end bass had realistic depth and never seemed to run out of control, an advantage on systems where the slightest kick can sound like an empty oil drum. All-in-all the tonal spectrum was neatly balanced and very musical.

An outing with Joe Beard on XRCD added exemplary stereo imaging and sound staging to the attributes above. Finally, a convincing touch with vocals yielded some of the more subtle rewards which come with prolonged listening.

Considering their quality construction and very fair price, the Classique Translucents are something of a bargain.

Classique Sounds
60 Aylestone Drive,
Aylestone,
Leics. LE2 8QE
Tel: 0116 283 5821

ECOSSE MAF REFERENCE CS1-010 £75/m

Another interconnect that's obviously been lovingly built, the References gave a vibrant

account of themselves on Classical music. The quiet opening of Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony was the epitome of Slavic cool - the strings had just the right amount of 'swell' to produce that edge-of-the-seat tension. Staccato passages combined a good dose of weight with pace, and the depth to the sound stage was also impressive. As for detail, even the distant moaning and groaning of the conductor was captured!

Very different fare, such as Skunk Anansie's studio-processed 'Weep',



extended the References' run of controlled and transparent signal transmission. This track's Rock formula of quiet verse/loud chorus gave the Maf's a dynamic work-out they evidently enjoyed - vocals were expressive and climaxes taut and exciting thanks to kick-drum that never became flabby while the rest of the music charged through our Concert 8s like a wounded buffalo.

These are very worthy cables for the money which won't stand in the way of whatever travels along them.

Ecosse Maf
48 Bridgehousehill Road,
Kilmarnock
KA1 4AD
Tel: 01563 524320

TRUE COLOURS VIPER £54.99/m

These bright red cables with chunky locking plugs possessed a solid sound with meaty, confident bass and broad sound staging. They allied this power with a rare insight. In the Shostakovich, for example, they picked out the delicate phrasing and vibrato in instruments that others in this test had glossed over. Strings were warmer and more detailed in the lower registers than the upper, although at least this balance ensured crisp percussion and clean brass with an attractive bite.

The switch from Classical to Rock caused few problems for the Vipers. With Skunk Anansie these cables brought out the midrange intricacies of the guitar and gave a vivid eloquence to Skin's vocals. When the volume hit 11 on the CD, the True Colours remained comfortably controlled, although a touch of boost in the bass and treble yielded a slightly coloured sound

which actually gelled nicely with this rather clinical, compressed recording.

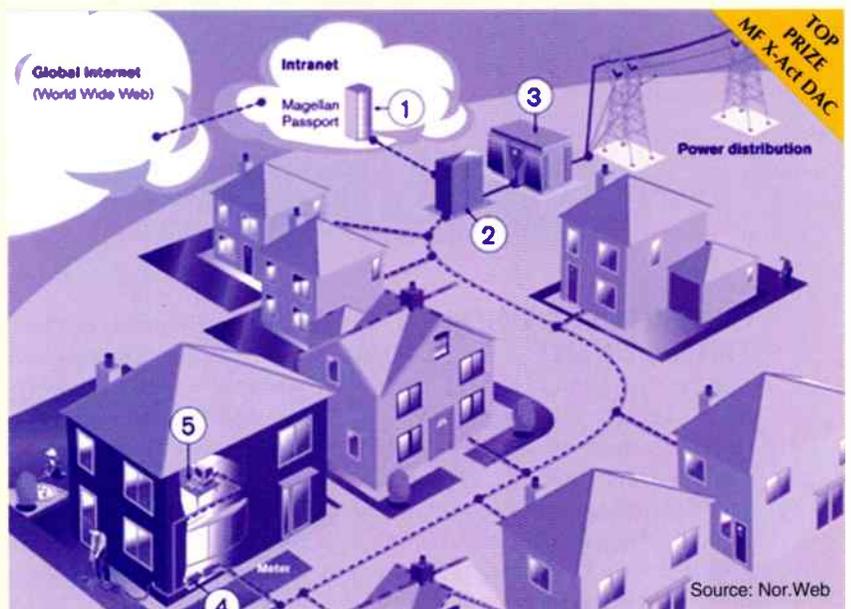
These interconnects might not rate as mega-neutral but they have a smooth, detailed presentation that makes for enjoyable listening.

True Colours
Unit A103,
Port View Trade Centre,
310 Road,
Belfast BT4 1RX
Tel: 01232 739170



Letter of the Month

The writer of the 'Letter of the Month' wins a free subscription to Hi-Fi World as well as a Top Prize every other month



How Digital PowerLine uses the mains electrical distribution system to connect homes to the Internet.

MAINS A PAIN?

Most people will be familiar with the moral about the First World War having been fought with guns in the trenches; the Second World War having been fought with tanks and aeroplanes; the Third World War will be fought with nuclear weapons; and the Fourth World War will be fought with bows and arrows.

Consider this: according to a report in Short Wave Magazine, plans are afoot to transmit digital data along the mains power lines. This system has become known as Digital PowerLine. The intention is apparently to

superimpose a 1MHz data stream on top of the mains. It also raises the possibility of street lamps acting as vertical antennas, chucking out vast amounts of RF noise.

Is this hi-fi's World War Three? Will there be any point in spending large sums of money on hi-fi equipment, only for it to be plugged into a heavily-contaminated mains supply, which reduces the level of performance to that of a ghetto-blasters?

Michael Leverton
Nottingham.

RFI has been identified as one of the mainstays in hi-fi's Hall Of Electrical Pollution over recent years. Eliminating its affects has seen the creation of companies like Kimber which rate reducing RFI as one of their top priorities. The current situation is bad enough - thanks to mobile phones and the increasing use of digital telecommunications, there's already plenty of hash out there waiting to damage the sound of your system. The possibility of even more RF deliberately added to

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Fax: 0171 289 5620
E-mail: edit@hi-fiworld.co.uk



the mains is not immediately appealing.

Digital PowerLine is a scheme proposed by Nor.Web, a joint venture between Northern Telecom and United Utilities. The first stage in the system (1 in the illustration) is the DPL 1000 Mainstation which forms a bridge between the Internet and the DPL network. This then feeds a number of DPL 1000 Basestations (2) through copper cables, line-of-sight radio or fibre-optic connections.

Situated close to an electricity generator's substation (3) where the high transmission voltages are stepped down to 240V, it is the Basestation that actually injects the datastream (at 1Mhz-10Mhz) on to the mains. These two are separated by the DPL 1000 coupling unit (4) which sits between the main service fuse and your electricity meter. Finally, a

DPL 1000 Communications Module (5) and Ethernet interface allow you to link in your PC or other compatible equipment like fax machines.

From the point of view of Internet access and communicating electronically between a company's offices spread over several sites for example, DPL's proposition looks like an attractive idea. You don't have to dial into it via a modem and it can carry up to a claimed 1Mbps (1Megabits per second) of information, which makes existing modems (56kbps) and ISDN (128kbps) look truly pedestrian.

After overcoming problems with noise and interference on the mains (it's not only hi-fi that suffers, it seems!), DPL underwent technical testing in 20 homes in Manchester from 1995 to 1997 as well as in the US and Australia.

Other interested parties apparently include two Swedish electricity distributors, Vattenfall and Sydkraft, and Singapore Power. Marketing trials in 200 homes in Germany and Sweden are currently under way.

When it comes to sending the DPL signal down the mains and into the home, it arrives on the Live and Neutral wires. It is lifted from these by the coupling unit. According to Nor.Web, very low transmission powers are used (they were unwilling to be specific here for commercial reasons). There is also a filtering affect on the signal as it passes through the electricity meter, which reduces the amount reaching equipment like hi-fi. In fact, the company say that, according to their research, switching fluorescent lights on and off causes more noise on the mains. JM

BLOWING HOT AND COLD

I am a proud owner of a KLPP1 pre-amp and the single-ended triode power amplifier you used to sell. When partnered with a Gyrodec and my Mission 'speakers, the result is hi-fi heaven. However I have two questions:

- 1) Why is my equipment so temperature-sensitive? In summer there is far more bass and midrange detail than in winter.
- 2) How about a World Audio Design turntable power supply (in kit form) as I am sure there would be a demand amongst hi-fi tweekers?

A. Redding
South Yorkshire.

Temperature sensitivity is a part of the way the cosmos seems to function, and this is particularly noticeable with the propagation of sound waves. Because the speed of sound in air becomes greater with an increase in

temperature, summertime is usually when the hearin' is easy.

In addition, in the warm weather there is a considerable

faster and harder. In the winter by way of change, the lower ambient temperature not only slows the rate of propagation but also tends to precipitate out the vapour in the form of fog, rain, etc, so that it tends to find its way to the ground and stay there.

As a parallel instance, any woodwind player will tell you that trying to get an instrument to 'sing' in a cold room is absolute purgatory. What's more, the affect of this sound-speed phenomenon tends to push the pitch down as well.

In short, sound waves are a bit like us - they prefer warm, moist air to propagate. This, I think, also explains the proliferation of seaside holiday romances, but that's another story. . .

As regards a turntable power supply, no plans in the immediate future I'm afraid. RMW

Make your components' connections more transparent with a bottle of DNM's Licon.



Low temperatures don't make for sweet sounds.

amount of evaporated water in the air. Since the speed of sound in water vapour is greater than in the normal nitrogen/oxygen mixture, warm, moist air delivers the goods

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WHATS AND WATTS

As a newcomer to hi-fi who has had the opportunity to purchase a variety of equipment, I would be grateful if you could answer a few audio-related questions for me.

First, can 4ohm 'speakers be driven by an 8ohm amplifier if the wattages of both are the same or vice versa. Also, is there a way of measuring the loss of current when installing one 'speaker close to the amplifier and the other with a much longer run of cable?

John Hobson
Co. Armagh.

Although loudspeakers are often categorised according to their overall impedance (their actual impedance at a particular frequency tends to vary quite dramatically), amplifiers aren't. The output impedance of most amplifiers is a fraction of an ohm. Generally, valve amps (especially the single-ended, feedback-free variety) have higher output impedances than their transistor counterparts.

As far as an amp is concerned, the main difference between 4ohm

and 8ohm loudspeakers is how much current they draw from it. In the case of transistors, the voltage delivered remains constant while the amount of current into 4ohms is around twice that into 8ohms.



Unlike transistor amps, valve versions need 4ohm/8ohm taps on their output transformers to match loudspeakers of different impedances.

One rough gauge of an amp with a beefy power supply that should be able to cope with tougher loads and lower impedances is power output figures for 4ohms which are about double those at 8ohms.

It's a common misconception that 100watt 'speakers must be driven by a 100watt amplifier. In a smallish living room, your average loudspeaker rarely needs more than 10watts from an amp to go loud. If your listening room happens to be very large, you're actually better off driving say 100watt 'speakers with a 150watt amp as long as you exercise common sense when it comes to volume (don't expect PA levels from a domestic device). This way you avoid running the amp flat out - where many of the breed will sound pretty nasty - and stressing its component parts.

You can measure current loss in a cable with a multi-meter and the application of Ohm's law, but with the resistance of many loudspeaker cables very low, it can be a rather delicate job. If you're talking about a major disparity in lengths, you'll hear the difference anyway - bass becomes woollier and less distinct, and the sound as a whole more veiled with longer stretches of cabling. JM

Amplifier technology revealed - John Linsley Hood's
Audio Electronics.

NEEDLING

I've reached the point where my Goldring 1000 series cartridge needs replacing and preferably upgrading as I now have a Musical Fidelity X-LP phono stage which also gives me the option of plugging in a moving-coil cartridge.

With this body the obvious move is to trade up to a 1022 or 1042 stylus. However, in recent issues I have noticed your liking for the DNM Mica and I was wondering how much of this is down to the stylus and how much is related to the reworking of the Goldring body?

As another alternative, for the cost of a 1042 stylus I can afford a Denon D110 moving-coil cartridge but I can't see that this would be a better alternative when comparing the full cost of both items.

Other than the above I'm a little unsure what else to consider and would welcome any suggestions. My turntable consists of a Systemdeck IIX/900 with an RB300 arm.

The deck is fitted with a glass platter

and a felt mat. In the past I have considered removing the mat but have felt a little nervous about placing my vinyl on such a hard, unyielding surface. I have visions of it slipping and becoming damaged. Is it best to use a disc clamp in these circumstances and if so are they universal?



One way to combat warps and keep records secure on the platter is a clamp like this one from Michell.

Steven Brooks
Northants.

Cartridge choice comes down to cost, really. A replacement 1042 stylus is priced at £85. Trading in your existing cartridge will enable you to pick up a Mica (whose tweaks affect both body and stylus) for £135.

I wouldn't worry too much about placing a record directly on a hard surface like glass. I ran an Origin Live kit turntable with a glass platter for a couple of years and couldn't detect any damage to the albums I listened to on it. And the LPs definitely do not slip when being played normally (although they might do if you try to clean one on the turntable with a thick record brush). If you still have reservations, a Michell clamp at £25 fits most decks and can help boost sound quality. JM

Try a length of The Chord Company's Siren
interconnect between your X-LP and amp.

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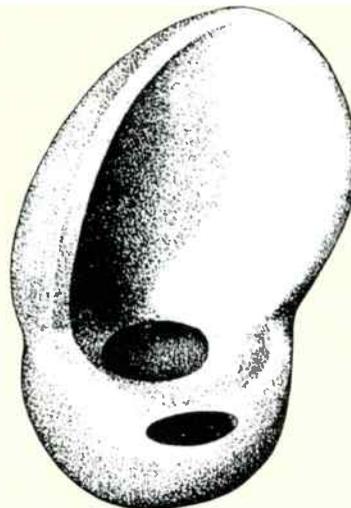
I am considering inserting 'speakers in my ceiling(s) for background listening. Whilst I imagine that high-fidelity is not possible with such an arrangement (it never is in lifts!), are there any simple ways to obtain a relatively decent sound quality?

Rick Gregory
r.w.g@mail.btinternet.com

An interesting question this; admittedly high fidelity is not often achieved in ceiling-mounted arrangements, but this doesn't invariably have to be the case.

In some respects, there are advantages to such a method; there is much less clutter up there for a start, so a nice spread of sound stage can be achieved with little effort, provided you use a quality driver. I would be inclined to try a full-range type if you can lay your hands on one.

Practical points to consider include keeping dust and plaster chips off the back of the cone; a judiciously-arranged piece of close-



An early attempt at a highly directional loudspeaker: the Conque Elipson.

weave cloth can help here. It will obviously be necessary to mount the driver on some sort of sub-baffle and then fix that to the ceiling, so get your dust-proofing done at ground level where falling off a ladder doesn't enter the equation.

If you were able to angle the baffle for a bit of directionality, so

much the better but avoid anything like a small box behind the driver. Instead, allow it to work into the ceiling cavity. A true infinite baffle will keep all the rear radiation away from the front so I would expect the bass end to be quite clean sounding although, of course, as an infinite baffle throws away half the driver's output, efficiency is not that high.

On an historical note, Briggs' Fourth edition shows a wonderful ceramic urinal for just the sort of application you are contemplating. I should think that all the originals of these found other uses but it'll give you an idea of paths already trodden.

Given, say, eight inches between floors and a foot between joists, the 'organ pipe' effect could become marked if you are unlucky. If you get an unbearable resonance in the 'one-note' frequencies around 80Hz you can try an old blanket as damping, but ambient ceiling sound ain't worth falling off a ladder for! RMW

Delve into the secrets of hi-fi electronics with John Linley Hood's Audio Electronics.

CURRENT THINKING

At first I thought my AudioNote Oto valve amplifier and Jamo Concert 8 loudspeakers worked well together. However I began to notice the bass was not what you might call 'controlled'. In fact, on some 12in. singles it was positively delinquent. DNM cable helped and so did careful positioning of the 'speakers, but the over-exuberant low notes still annoy me.

The Jamos are great in most respects and I haven't heard anything as good in the top and middle ranges for sheer transparency and openness. So what can a poor boy do? Adjust the port in some way? Invest in a Border Patrol power supply maybe, or punt them on to someone who can give them what they need? Could I bi-amp with a solid-state device or am I just getting desperate?

Donald
DOdon42513@aol.com

Hmm, the answer really comes down to what your budget for solutions is. The Concert 8s can work with valve amps, but the Oto, fine thermionic



If you need transistor power with a natural valve-like sound, try Sonneteer's Alabaster integrated.

performer though it is, doesn't have sufficient grunt to control the bottom end with only 12watts on tap. The bi-amping you mention is one answer, but matching volume levels between

the two amps will be difficult as the Oto doesn't have a separate Pre Out socket. The simplest route to sonic satisfaction would be a new prepower or integrated.

Sonneteer's £900 Alabaster is a very capable transistor device which has a smoothness reminiscent of glass bottles. On the other hand, if you can spend around £3000, one solid-state power amp which also manages to emulate the grainless, sweet sound of valves is Chord Electronics' SPM 400 (which we reviewed back in March 1998). £1325 buys you 112watts into 8ohms and 182watts into 4ohms, so driving the Jamos won't be a problem as we know from happy hours listening to this in combination with the matching £1800 CPA 1800 pre-amp. JM

Link up your new amp with a set of The Chord Company's Siren interconnects.

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

OUTBACK AUDIOPHILE

A friend of mine will be visiting the UK early next year at which time he will be looking for his last turntable purchase. He is currently using an old Technics and has at last decided that, after adding a Pioneer A-400 and a pair of B&W DM602s in the past couple of years, it's time to sort out his vinyl source.

Any new record deck needs to be fairly cheap. The Oz dollar is currently worth slightly (only slightly) more than a pinch of billygoat poo after all. Also it should be of the set-and-forget variety since it's a long way for a quick dash to the shop should there be a problem. Since it will travel to Oz in the cargo hold of an aircraft it would make sense for it to be both well packed and reasonably light. And finally it must, of course, be as close to state of the art that somewhere in the region of £300 can buy. Put like that I'm certain that the answer must be blindingly obvious. What is it, please? And is the phono stage of the A-400 good enough?

The second query is for me. My 10-year-old Technics SL-P777 CD player is starting to become cantankerous. Trouble is, at present I cannot afford much more than £200. Can you recommend anything



One of the vinyl enthusiast's longest-lived friends, Rotel's RQ-970BX phono stage.

that will be worthwhile in my system (currently LP12/Ittok/Asaka into McLaren pre/powers from New Zealand which drive Kabers)? By golly I hope that you can.

My system is sibilance on some material. I believe this is probably the fault of the CD player, though you may know better. My musical preference is for Rock, though Frank Sinatra, Mozart and Buddy Rich are no strangers to my turntable. Close-mic'd

NOT SO GOLDEN OLDIES

I have had a long and beautiful friendship with my current system, which consists of an Acoustic Research EB101 turntable, standard arm and Ortofon OM10; Rotel RCD-855 CD player; Mission Cyrus One amp (metal-cased version with a headphone socket on the front) and Rotel RL-850 loudspeakers on Linn Ku-stone stands. The lot is wired up with QED Qnect 2 interconnects and QED 79-strand 'speaker cable.

We have been together for 10 years now (longer in the case of the 'speakers and turntable), but the time has finally arrived. The builders are in creating larger rooms (not specifically for my hi-fi, you understand) and after a decade of abstinence I feel an upgrade coming on.

After a long, hard think, I have decided to start with the loudspeakers. I believe a worthwhile turntable upgrade might prove expensive, and I am going to sit out the battle of CD formats before upgrading there (I wake up in a cold sweat at night shouting "Betamax!") So the question is: which 'speakers? The Rotels are prone to boom unless moved well out into the room, and as my old farmhouse is no mansion, this is a luxury open to me only when my wife is out.

The one other annoyance with the



Mission's 771 loudspeakers sound just as good as they look.

Jazz may be a true test of a system's mettle, but as long as the drums on Led Zeppelin's 'Kashmir' sound like thunder, then I'm a happy headbanger.

RWill70126@aol.com

If you haven't cleaned your system's

Name and address withheld by request

On the turntable front, there's only really a couple of candidates - Rega's Planar 2 (£214) and Project's 1.2 (£199). The Planar 2 is the more robust for my money, and the arm is highly amenable to upgrading by Origin Live (tel: 01703 442183). If your budget is reasonably elastic, go for a DNM Mica MM (£135) on the end of the RB250 tone-arm. And if the A-400's phono stage is holding things back, Rotel's RQ-970 at £170 would be the best answer.

Only £200 for a CD player? The McLaren equipment is unknown to any one here, but I'd tend to favour Cambridge's CD4SE at £200 for its sweet, very slightly rolled-off top-end and musicality. JM

Take the Cambridge's sound a step further with one of Ringmat's Statmats.

connections for quite a while, give them a going over with cotton buds soaked lightly in Isopropyl alcohol (chemists can order this for you, if they don't already have some in stock). Do the same for the pins and fuses in the mains plugs (having first switched everything off, of course!) This alone should make a pretty big difference to the sound. A Statmat or a spray of Russ Andrews' Reveel would also boost the Rotel's performance.

One way to counteract sibilance is loudspeakers like Mission's 771s. Their suspended, silk-dome tweeters steer well clear of this annoying habit. However, headbangers they aren't, although at least they don't boom. A demonstration will tell you whether to plump for the 771s or, say, Tannoy's Mercury m2s, which have deeper bass but less civilised treble. If floor standers are an option, consider KEF's Q35s at £350 too. And don't forget new 'speaker cable either. DNM's Reson at £6.95/m is fine value. JM

Let us take care of your loudspeaker cabling with this free set of DNM Reson bi-wire.

Connect a CD player directly to your power amplifier and cut out the preamplifier. Even connect your turntable through the CD ...

Dump

the preamplifier

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Of course, there are systems where the best solution overall is still a good preamp. We have **very good ones**.

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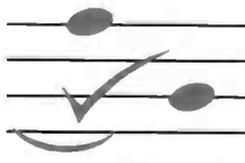
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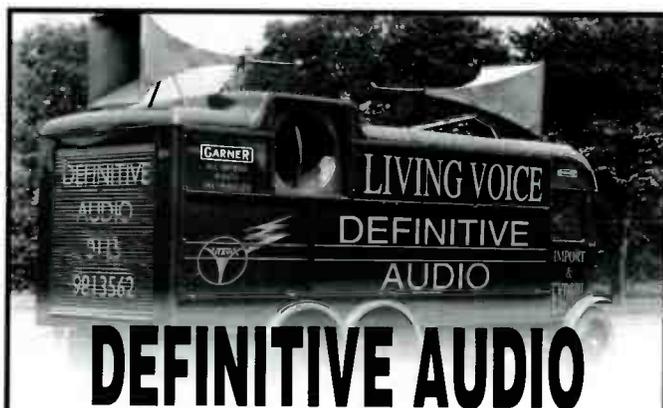
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EAR WARMERS

My system consists of a Pink Triangle Tarantella with RB300 and Rega Super Bias cartridge, Audiolab 8000A amplifier, Arcam Delta 270 CD player and Ruark Icon 'speakers mounted on Atacama SE24 stands. Cables are Cable Talk 3.1 Bi-wire and Cable Talk Monitor 2.1 interconnects.

First, I would like to upgrade the cartridge using a budget of £200-£250 and would appreciate your advice, as it is a little difficult to review a wide range of cartridges at a dealer's premises. Second, I would appreciate any recommendations you may have regarding cables, particularly the 'speaker cables, as I am wondering if there would be any benefits gained from an upgrade here.

I would also welcome any comments you may have on the system as a whole as I find it sounds a little 'thin' and lacks warmth. Do you have any suggestions for improving this without compromising stereo imaging and detail? I listen to a wide range of titles although Rock music is my main genre.

David Fudge
david.fudge@kvaerner.com



DNM's Mica MM will give many cheaper MCs a hard time.

The finger of blame in the 'thin and lacks warmth' case swings mainly in the direction of the 8000A, to be

instead of a cassette deck. Would this be a good move?
4) Do I need to replace everything or can I just get some of the items serviced?
5) If all-out replacement is the best option, what would you recommend? I will also need new interconnects, a rack and 'speaker stands and cabling.

Name and address withheld by request

Seeing as your listening priorities

honest. The Icons are involved as well, with tweeters which can occasionally be over-enthusiastic. While the latter aren't a major hurdle, the former probably is.

I would recommend transferring a chunk of your cartridge money (about £100) to buying a new amp, as a £250 needle would really be wasted going through the 8000A. Selling off the Audiolab should net around £250-£300. Add the £100 and, with a little bit of haggling, you should be able to pick up an Audio Analogue Puccini (non-SE, reviewed in November 1998). As ever, demonstration sessions are advisable.

Hang on to your Super Bias to trade in against a DNM Mica MM (£135, smooth and sweet but still a Rocker). Stick with your current loudspeaker cables for the time being. JM

Take another step up the interconnect ladder with a free set of The Chord Company's Siren interconnects.

buy a combined CD/DVD machine now? Pioneer's DV-505 will only set you back £400 and sounds rather good. You could add Denon's very capable new £300 DMD-1000 MD recorder to this. You could then fill in amp and loudspeaker blanks with Pioneer's A-300R Precision (£400) and B&W's DM305 floor standers (£350).

If you sell off your old amp, 'speakers and CD player, this should raise enough money for three sets of SonicLink Bonus interconnects (£15 each), two 3m (or 5m) runs of CableTalk 3.1 Bi-wire at £4.50/m, and a service for your tape and record decks.

The latter might enjoy a switch from aged AT to Ortofon 510 MM at £40. JM

Clean your connections with a bottle of DNM's Licon contact enhancer.

FROM THE GROUND UP?

I am currently planning to upgrade or replace my old hi-fi (Onkyo A8057 integrated, Onkyo TA-RW66 cassette deck, Philips CD460 CD player, Jamo Dynamic D5E 'speakers, Acoustic Research EB101 turntable and tone-arm and an unknown Audio Technica cartridge).

I listen predominantly to CDs followed by albums and occasionally cassettes. My musical taste is mainly heavy Rock/Metal along with a lot of Indie, Brit Pop and some Classical.

I have a planned budget of around £1500 and wondered if you could advise on the following points:

- 1) Is the turntable good enough to fit a better tone-arm and cartridge to?
- 2) I am interested in DVD. Would it be better to soldier on for a while and then purchase a combined CD/DVD player?
- 3) I am also interested in MiniDiscs and am considering purchasing an MD player



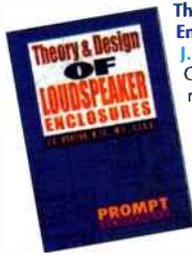
£400 amplifier heavyweight - Pioneer's A-300R Precision.

are CD, LP and Tape in that order, you'd probably reap the biggest rewards from a new CD player and serviced record and cassette decks. Why soldier on when you can

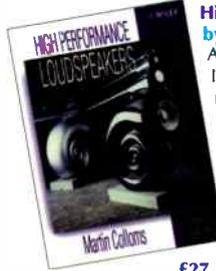
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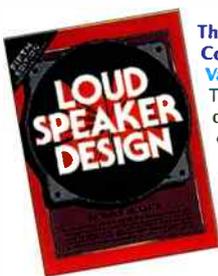


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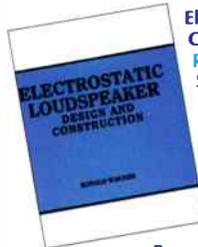


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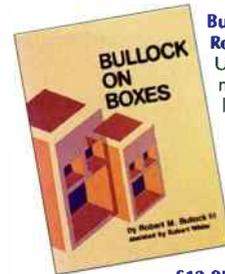
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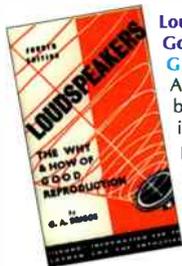
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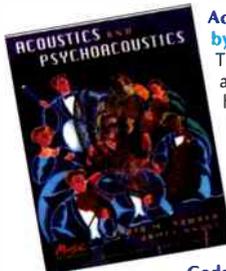
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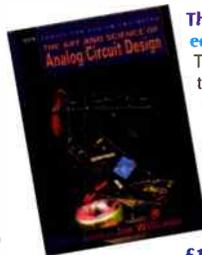


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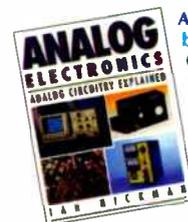
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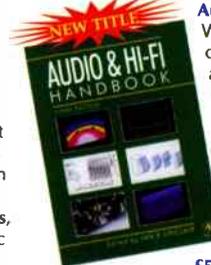
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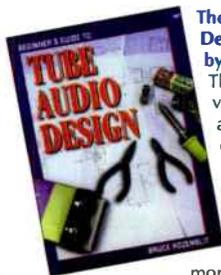
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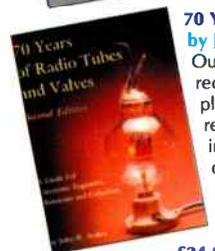


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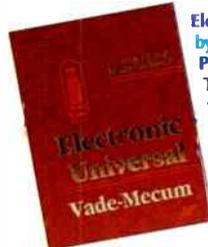
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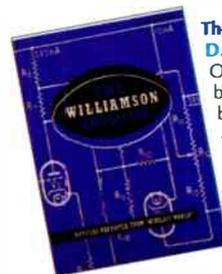
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LEXE ELEVEN

Richard White gets uncharacteristically groovy with DNM's Goldring cartridge mutation, the Lexe.

DNM's Lexe cartridge bears more than a passing resemblance to Goldring's Excel, which is not altogether surprising when you consider that it is an improved, 'freely adapted' version thereof. Presented in what at first glance appears to be a small cigar box and packed lovingly with its certification of tracking ability, the Lexe has much of the aura of class which you might expect £1000 to buy. Naturally we haven't taken it out of the box yet, but still. . .

A cartridge this costly needs a fair touch of care in handling; one false move or, more prosaically, one false sweater sleeve could leave you with a rather hefty bill for tip replacement. Of course if you're really lucky you might tear off the cantilever as well - you never can tell!

Fitting the Lexe with due care and attention to a succession of tone-arms (SME 312, Hadcock GH 228 SE, Origin Live-modified RB250 and an Acos Lustre) became quite a fun-filled task during the time we had the cartridge under our reviewing wing.

For its first trip the Lexe was bolted into the Rega arm fitted with Martin Bastin's Black Plastic low-slung counterweight.

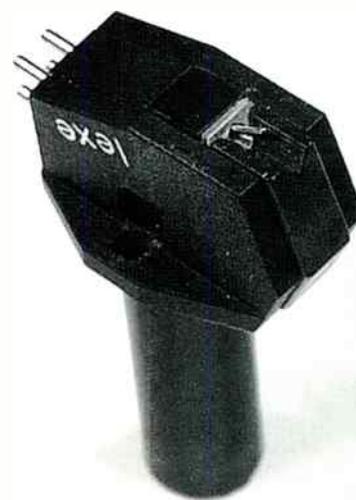
LP number one was Pinchas Zukerman playing the Elgar concerto. The glorious orchestral romp which begins this piece had just the right amount of richness in the lower strings and some very creditable fire in the brass - no sign of mistracking here despite provocation. When the soloist entered the fray with those familiar rhapsodic cadences, although there was not the slightest hint of grit or glassiness, violin tone was just a

fraction on the thin side. As this might have been down to the arranged marriage with the Rega, for the Lexe's next test we turned to the Hadcock Special Edition (with its higher-mass arm tube).

Lilting lightly through the ethereal gossamer that comprises the finale of the 1812 showed the DNM was more at home with the Hadcock. The truly alarming vigour with which the bells clanged away was marred only by the patently over-dubbed cannon fire on this particular version. Let it not be thought that the piece is lacking in delicacy though; somehow or other the cartridge has to resolve all of that muddle until it sounds like an orchestra with artillery accompaniment, and not like a string trio stuck at some road-works. Happily the Lexe acquitted itself honourably, sailing through with enough real bass to please the deafest adder and a resolution of treble 'difficulties' which would keep the neighbourhood bats happy indefinitely.

Swapping the 1812 for a record of a rather different ilk, we grilled the Lexe with an out-of-phase test track. While crosstalk was minimal, the cancellation effect was not as complete as expected. Further adjustments to the azimuth and lateral alignment failed to cure this foible. Part of the reason might have been the fact that the sample we received from DNM seemed unwilling to align spot-on - it was close but no cigar whatever arm it was resident in.

For a grand tour de force we transferred the Lexe to our 'house' SME 312 and let our Garrard 401 (newly reconditioned by Martin Bastin) put it through its paces. Earl



Hines and Benny Carter seemed keen to join in the fun with 'Who's Sorry Now?', the whole performance enjoying a pizzazz which no amount of simplistic mastering could entirely hide from the DNM. Transient response from the saxophone 'tonguing' (don't get ideas now!) was crisp and accurate, not to say unforgiving in the rare places where Mr Carter came off the rails.

All in all the Lexe gave almost as good as it got. Certainly it had something less than a Midas touch with tired records and mid-price gear generally, but considering its price no-one is likely to buy one for their old Manfred Mann singles. The sole worry was the problem with alignment. Given the sensitivity of previous DNMs in this area, it looks like there's more performance to be squeezed from the Lexe (a second sample unfortunately failed to arrive before our print deadline). None of this disguised the fact that the Lexe is far superior to the standard Goldring, and when matched with a record and ancillaries worthy of its attention, it could sing like a real diamond.

DNM Lexe **£1300**
(£975 with trade-in)

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WORLD VERDICT

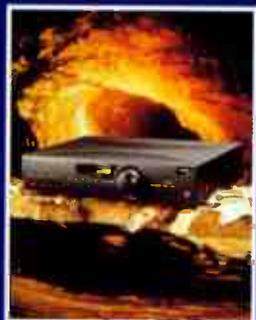


This Goldring make-over tracks well and sounds good. Price is on the high side though.

Measured Performance
see p111



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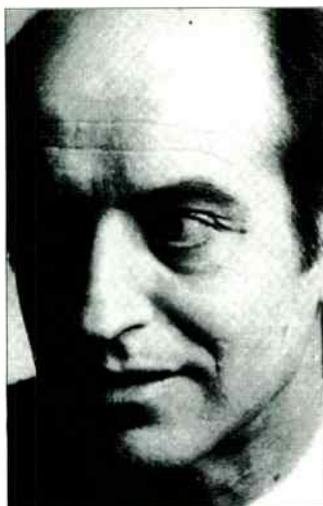
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Noel Keywood

The last time I took an interest in a digital recording system was 1986. I remember it well. Innocently I penned a little piece, quite heavily researched I might add, about how a new system called DAT would likely wipe out CD. I wrote "To The Sunday Times" on the envelope, popped it into the post, then wandered off down Brighton's charming Lanes for a drink, pleased at my efforts.

A month or so later, around 11am one Sunday morning the phone started ringing. It was the first caller bellowing apoplectically that I was out to ruin the industry, that all my arguments were incorrect. My Sunday Times article had appeared. The phone nearly went into melt-down after that, so I scampered out of the door for another drink.

The British hi-fi industry, represented by BREMA (British Radio Equipment Manufacturers Association) decided that it was all wrong and misleading and bad for their business, which lay in CD. So we duly had a dust-up in front of the Press Council, an altercation The Sunday Times and I won with ease.

That experience taught me just how sensitive commercial interests are to the marketplace and how far they will go to influence it and control it to protect their livelihoods.

The presence of MP3 (MPEG 3 compressed) music recordings on the Internet never concerned me until I saw a recent article in the Financial Times entitled "Record Groups Sue Over Copying Device". Two plus two immediately made five, my mind went into DAT combat mode and my fingers started air-typing. This level of controversy about a "copying device" would surely have substance - and it does.

The MPMan is a portable that stores MP3 recordings in solid-state memory.

With 64MB on-board, one hour of music can be played. It might not be super-fi but it could be the future as MPMan is an infinitely flexible concept backed up by the Internet from which, at present, it records MP3 songs via a computer.

The copying device under fire was the Rio from Californian company Diamond Multimedia. This is the first MP component over which US courts could exercise their jurisdiction. The American music biz represented by the RIAA attempted to obtain an injunction preventing its distribution. The injunction has been refused so the Rio is now going on sale in the States and it should be in Britain in time for Christmas. However, the court declared it a recording device (Diamond defended it as replay-only) capable of breaching copyright under the American Home Recording Act through its lack of Serial Copying Management System (SCMS). But the legally complex issues raised would be considered in a future hearing. Meanwhile Rio will go on sale, together with MPMan from other manufacturers no doubt.

"MP3 music is available direct from the Internet, where literally thousands of songs can be found."

Before you consider getting the £165 Rio for Christmas, there are some severe usage restrictions to bear in mind. Diamond have fashioned it as a computer peripheral, not as an independent audio recorder like MiniDisc. At present you must own a PC in order to load MP3 recordings onto the Rio. MP3 music is available direct from the internet, where literally thousands of songs can be found, or from any conventional CD via the computer's CD ROM drive through MP3 compression software. In other words, you use your computer to turn CD recordings into MP3 recordings which then take up around one-twelfth of the original's file size. These are then loaded into the MPMan, in any order and with song titles, etc. In effect, you compile music into an MPMan for personal headphone listening.

This might strike you as a pretty limited bit of technology. Indeed it is at present, because Diamond were trying to get the Rio classed as a computer peripheral replay device under US law. However, it seems that argument went out of the window when the court declared it a recording device. With a few additions,

albeit cost-raising ones, an MPMan could be freed from computer loading. It would need an on-board analogue-to-digital (ADC, or A/D) convertor and an MP3 data-reducer. A MiniDisc recorder has both of these (with ATRAC data reduction instead of MP3) and in truth MPMan is a direct rival for MiniDisc. It looks as if Sony will have to put their thinking caps on.

MiniDisc is starting to sell well as a recording device but pre-recorded software is still scarce and expensive. This is where MPMan looks strong, because of its close association with the Internet. MPMan comes software driven; when you buy one you may even get a CD full of MP3 songs to load up. That is a big perceived advantage, one that appears to make it a more lively and connected technology than MiniDisc, whose musical soil remains barren, unless you are into Maria Carey that is. MPMan is also small, light, incredibly robust because there are no moving parts, and cheap.

As it stands a MiniDisc recorder can load MP3 material in analogue form and with a few mods it could do all an MPMan

can do and more. The main technical difference between the two is that MD stores compressed music onto a disc and MP stores it into solid-state memory. Memory is not cheap but duplication might be, in which case pre-recorded MP memory cards could rival pre-recorded MiniDiscs. Because any Joe can record a memory card, whilst MiniDisc stamping needs a special factory, large order quantities, etc, I'd expect to see MPMan software starting to appear very quickly.

It is here I feel MPMan has it. MiniDisc might well be an effective, high-quality recording medium, but it is basically a proprietary Sony technology that will comply with industry demands first, consumer wishes second.

MPMan is a product of the wilder, bigger and more wayward computer industry. It does not use proprietary technology, will not need a manufacturing licence, nor a levy on all units sold. The Koreans and Taiwanese are likely to run with this idea very quickly I feel. Even Hi-Fi World could design an MPMan (yes, I have considered it) There might just be poetic justice in the idea●



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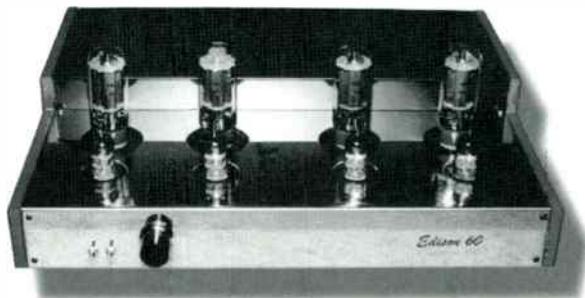
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ON THE CRITICAL LIST

Simon Pope takes his music neat with the help of the Critique IIs.

Way back in April 1994 we reviewed these stand mounters in their original incarnation (the Critique I), where they scored high marks for their warm sound. Having donned their transducer thinking caps, NEAT Acoustics have now brewed up the Critique II as heir apparent.

The drivers are housed in the same solidly-constructed cabinets as the previous models, the cherry-veneered samples we reviewed looking particularly fetching and, er, neat. Like their predecessors, the IIs also boast an off-set tweeter for improved imaging.

The changes that mark out early from late models have been effected in the drivers and cable terminations. The first plastic-dome tweeter with its titanium coating has been replaced with a fabric-dome unit and the crossover modified with heavier gauge inductor wire. There has also been a move from 12dB/octave to 6dB/octave slopes. Finally, the panel-mount bi-wire sockets have been replaced with natty gold-plated binding posts. Not all is change however; the small, rear-firing port remains, but how about the sound. . . ?

We used the Critique IIs here at World Towers for the best part of six weeks. Initial impressions, before the formal review, were that the frequency response was top-heavy with a bright, slightly harsh treble. A few cable and source changes and sympathetic ruhning-in removed some of this and the sound started to warm; we in turn started to warm to the sound.

For the review proper I teamed the NEATs up with Creek's CD43, Audio Analogue's Puccini SE integrated and DNM Reson bi-wire cable. The initial torture-track was the syncopated Infernal Dance from Stravinsky's Firebird Suite on HDCD as performed by the Minnesota Orchestra.

This well-known piece starts with a sharp orchestral 'slam', repeated several times during the opening bars. The NEATs' take on the bass drum especially was tight and powerful with good depth.

Depth of a different kind was obvious in the sound staging, where crisp separation was maintained at all frequencies. At the top end, treble was generally smooth, although violins working in their high register sounded a mite 'scratchy'. The midrange was curiously veiled too, with clarinets and bassoons sitting to the back of the mix.

Given the lack of synergy between the Critiques and the slightly cool, very controlled character of the Puccini SE, an alternative amplifier was called for. Cue Myryad's more adrenal and up-beat T-40. In this happier marriage the 'speakers gained speed and excitement, the Firebird's opening 'slams' far more realistic.

Likewise, John Lee Hooker's Boom Boom, punchy and taut, positively burst out of the cabinets with Mr. Hooker in as desperate a need of Strepisils as ever. Subtle? Not particularly. Exciting? Yes, with knobs on! The Myryad was manifestly a perfect partner for the NEATs, the two creating an open vibrancy that drew me, feet a-tapping, straight into the music. From the Blues to OTT Rock and The Cult was but a short step. 'Love Removal Machine' hammered



along like a rush-hour tube train, the Critiques confirming their preference for modestly-priced amplification.

By way of contrast, I settled down to some of Satie's piano works played by Olof Hojer. The first three of the hypnotic Gnossiennes fared better than might have been predicted given these stand mounters' predilection for high-octane bpm's. After the very up-front sound of the previous records, the NEATs managed the switch to relaxed and contemplative.

Ambience and warmth predominated in spite of the right-hand melody suffering a tinge of hardness.

The Critique IIs are very strong contenders when it comes to build and looks. Sonically, if your main taste is for Rock, they're certainly up there with the best at the money. Plied with Classical the results are a touch on the bright side and perhaps a little bass light, but driven by a powerful, dynamic amplifier and the right tunes they can be exhilarating.

NEAT Critique II £389

**NEAT Acoustics
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WORLD VERDICT



Deserving little 'speakers with good looks and construction. Can fail to shine if partnered with over-polite ancillaries.

Measured Performance
see p111

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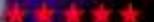
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KING OF THE JUNGLE?

Jon Marks warms his hands and ears over Monarchy Audio's SM-70 class A transistor power amp.

Anyone who's felt the bite of the hi-fi bug over the last two decades can't fail to have noticed that more than a few changes have taken place. Back in the Seventies, when distortion was the prime audio evil and plenty of power the be all and end all, designers who stuck up for inefficient class A operation would have been looked at as if they were from another planet. Those who uttered the words "feedback" and "small amounts" probably would have been torched at the stake. What with the current popularity of valves and single-ended operation, now it's the turn of companies like Monarchy Audio and their SM-70 amp to have the last laugh.

There may be no 'tubes' within the SM-70's black-anodised exterior but the single pair of output transistors in each channel puts out enough heat to give milk-bottle triodes like the 211 a real run for their money. Where the circuitry again harks back to days thermionic is in Monarchy's claim that this is a zero-feedback design. By their own admission, though, around individual stages there is local feedback (rather than the more common global type, which is taken from the output back to the input).

It's on the rear panel that you'll find two more of the SM-70's distinguishing features, a balanced input and the Stereo/Mono switch. Flick the latter up and you can plug your XLR into what the company says is then a 70watt monobloc. Only having the one in for review, we were unable to investigate the Monarchy in mono; instead it met up with a variety of loudspeakers as a 40watt stereo chassis.

The first line-up consisted of a Pioneer DV-505 DVD player chomping on standard CD as well as 24/96 recordings, pre-amps from DPA (modified 50S) and Aiwa (an

old C50) and Magneplanar's SMGa panel 'speakers. Cabling came from QED and DNM.

Having turned off the central heating I powered up the SM-70 and let it warm the room for half an hour before letting rip with the music. Decks and drums and rock and roll (for thus is it written on the album) from the Propellerheads bounced along happily, the Monarchy sounding surprisingly refined for a sub-£600 item. This album is far smoother and clearer than many of the Dance genre, a fact emphasised by the rich, polished midrange and treble which the SM-70, like so many class A devices, possesses in abundance. The bass might not have had the same wallop as the more expensive X-A200s which had previously driven the Maggies, but that's no sin considering these loudspeakers prefer the plentiful watts and amps usually provided by class AB.

In the search for subtlety I reached for Tori Amos' Boys For Pele. With their close miking of vocals and harpsichord, the tracks on this CD can frequently come across as sharp and bright. No fear of either with the SM-70, which avoided offending sensitive ears with its lush rendition. However, where powers from Audio Analogue and Musical Fidelity steer away from sibilance without a loss of transparency, with these 'speakers the Monarchy took a more trans-Atlantic route to the same goal by softening transients and veiling finer details.

Returning to World Towers, the SM-70 had another bite at the



cherry. Teac's P-30 transport fed Monarchy's own Model 18B DAC (which can be bought along with an SM-70 for £895 instead of £1200 prior to Christmas), its volume control permitting direct connection into the amp. Through the Jamos and Musical Technology PM15s (both lighter loads than the SMGAs) the results were more promising - there was a punchier, more up-beat energy to the SM-70 and an insight enhanced by the addition of Sonic-Link's mains cable (reviewed on p39). Now orchestral pieces and Blues wafted free of the confines of loudspeaker cabinets to fill out a more realistic sound stage.

No power amp which sells for less than £1000 has an easy time of it these days, what with such fierce competition for the contents of audiophiles' wallets. At £475 Audio Analogue's Bellini is a class leader and there are pretenders to the throne from Crimson Electric and Musical Fidelity too. Nonetheless, if you have loudspeakers which go light on the Amperes and favour the treble a touch, the SM-70 with its genuinely outstanding build, monobloc upgradability and civilised sound is definitely worth a demonstration.

Monarchy Audio SM-70
£595

Wollaton Audio
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WORLD VERDICT



The Monarchy is a smooth, warm amp most at home with 'speakers that are easy to drive.



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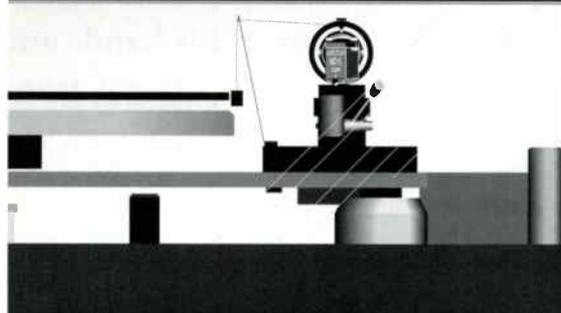
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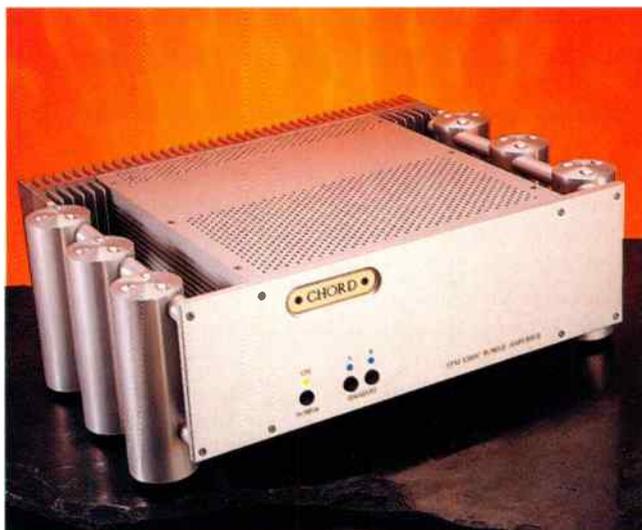
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David Price

Mini systems - don't you hate them? I know I do. From that low-rent, black plastic casework to those cheap and nasty op-amps inside, you just know the music you play on them will come out a mess.

All it takes is a quick stroll down to your local electrical retailers and there they are, flashing lights and graphic EQs plastered all over the place, pounding out some tiresome Eurodisco which reduces all who hear it to shaking wrecks.

I'm not sure who I pity more - the sales staff who have to sell them or the punters that end up buying them. If I had the grim task of shifting five before Friday night, I'd bottle it. How, in all honesty, could you con someone into getting one when you know it's a crock of you-know-what?

But 'twas not always thus. Those of us old enough to know better may remember the Aurex Micro system. Back in the dim mists of time, when silly distractions like mobile phones and personal computers had yet to displace hi-fi as Britain's fave leisure pursuit, people routinely spent loads of money on audio equipment. Sensing a gap in the market, Japanese electronics giant Toshiba created a high-end brand called Aurex and launched a series of tiny separates barely larger than a transistor radio.

Naturally, any audiophile worth his Linn Sondek instantly assumed it was rubbish; after all, it was 1978. So hearing the Aurex proved quite a shock. Its PC-D15 cassette deck was one of the most advanced around, the ST-F15 tuner one of the neatest. Then there was the SY-C15/SC-M15

pre/power amp combination, which was as sweet and clean as it was powerful. True, the sound wasn't quite up there with a NAT-01, NAC32.5 and a brace of NAPI 35s - more Cinquecento Sporting than Chevrolet El Camino - but it was remarkably good for one of such pint-size proportions.

Unfortunately, making the acquaintance of the Aurex Micro system in my formative hi-fi years planted a seed in me that was to grow and grow. So recently I started looking around for a thoroughly modern Mini system for my spare room.

My priorities were clear. It had to be small, cute and fun to use. Being a hi-fi reviewer is great, but sometimes you need a day off from manhandling room-size power amps with the visual appeal of a car park in Reading. I love tweaky vinyl as much as the next guy, but it

To cut a long story short (oh, alright then, if I must), I ended up with a Teac Reference 500 system for my troubles. It's an interesting one, this. I can't say I'm a fan of champagne gold, but the quality of build beneath its chintzy exterior is not to be denied.

Its amplifier, for example, is blessed with an outside toroidal transformer and a kerbweight to put many larger 'real hi-fi' amps to shame. Likewise the CD player, which isn't exactly up there with a VRDS-25 in the sound quality stakes but sounds pretty impressive through its digital out nonetheless. Neither would the full Radio Text-equipped RDS tuner beat a Troughline in a straight fight, but I know which one I'd rather have for casual airwave surfing duties.

Sitting on a Base isolation platform and driving Castle Severn 2 floor

*"Being a hi-fi reviewer is great,
but sometimes you need a day off
from manhandling room-sized power amps
with the visual appeal of
a car park in Reading."*

would be nice to just put some music on for a change without having to adjust your stylus pressure to suit the prevailing barometric conditions.

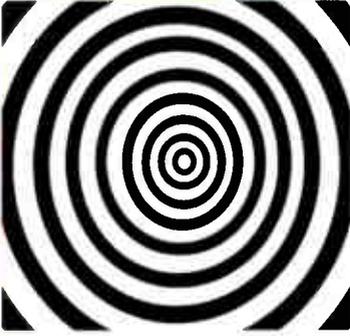
The system also had to be upgradeable. Memories of using a Denon D70 several years back taught me how invaluable a digital feed from the unit's CD player was. Using its in-built convertor the Denon wasn't half bad, but via its co-axial digital out into my Sony DAT it positively sang. It also had to have proper, grown-up RCA phono sockets. The Denon's only blot on an otherwise spotless copybook was its nasty computer-style ribbon connectors. These were a breeze to wire up but I'd rather sacrifice a few seconds plugging-in time for a say in the type of cabling chosen.

After hours battling with specifications and sales brochures, I was off down to the shops for a listen.

standers via DNM solid-core cables, the whole lot makes a very nice sound - it's clean and lucid without ever sounding harsh or in-your-face. I can stick a CD in and relax without ever having to worry about how noisy the mains is today. The other half can use it without me having to say prayers for my MC 30 Supreme's cantilever in advance. One system remote does everything, and you can even get it to switch on at certain times to record radio programmes.

So, a totally uncool and frivolous toy for a hard-bitten, take-no-prisoners hi-fi nut such as myself then, but if I'm honest it often gets more use than my big, black-box system. Like the Aurex Micro system before it, it's a high-quality budget hi-fi that's been shrunk down almost until you can't see it. But don't scoff - for something so little, it has a hell of a lot going for it.

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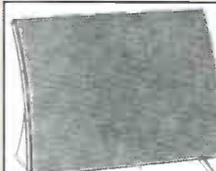
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ALPHA MO

Richard White auditions Arcam's new entry-level integrated, the Alpha One.

One feature of Arcam's latest which is bound to please some readers if our post bag is anything to go by are its tone controls and balance pot (all provided by Alps). For sterner ears, a Defeat switch has thoughtfully been provided as well as a loudspeaker On/Off button for headphone listeners. These controls are neatly distributed across the customary dark grey Arcam fascia, a touch of class provided by the shiny cursor pips on the knobs.

The back of the Alpha One with its five line inputs, a tape loop and pre-amp outputs is equally tidy. Unfortunately, compliance with European legislation means you'll also find those annoying non-banana loudspeaker terminals foisted on hi-fi by Brussels bureaucrats.

Opening the proceedings for the Arcam were the ever-green Benny Carter and Earl Hines fed into the Aux input via Sonic Frontiers' Phono 1 phono stage and our Garrard 401. This smooth analogue front-end had the 35watt Alpha One sounding very much at home, double-bass commendably firm and comfortably controlled. Confirming the close match between amp and source the careful brushwork on the drums was allowed to take an easy back seat as the drummer had intended.

When Carter switched instruments to the trumpet, the jump to its markedly different transient signature failed to trip up the Alpha. Aiding in the revelation stakes was decent detailing which proved his trumpet had not been as closely miked as the alto, giving a slightly glib affect that obviously owed more to the recording than to the amplifier.

Following Carter's example, I



swapped one instrument of sonic investigation for another, Musical Fidelity's X-Ray CD player, and tried a touch of organ for subtle starters. The tone values of Iain Simcock's Koenig were well preserved, solo stops properly highlighted in the sonic mixture. The sound stage, of necessity much broader with a very large acoustic instrument to reproduce, was nonetheless nicely defined.

Tucking in to a Lyrita compilation of British Classical, the Stanford C minor piano concerto was brought to bear. The Arcam's presentation was commendably full-blooded and substantial, with the 'body' for good string tone present and correct. The bass end certainly benefited from this meatiness to a considerable extent. 'Dull' transients such as the plucking of harp strings were offered with an extra power that made this integrated's slightly sharp way with the brass easier to excuse.

Changing the subject slightly, John Lee Hooker took a spin on the old black stuff. His Boom Boom album gave the Arcam a somewhat less acoustic bone to chew on, with the distortion pedal on the lead

guitar retaining all its urgency and aggression. The curiously ethereal Hammond accompaniment feather-bedded the arrangements very subtly and on lead guitar solos the 'coat button' plectrum style picked its way through the crowd with considerable verve.

Having metaphorically dropped Mr Hooker off at the chemist's for a pint of cough mixture it was time to reflect on the One's character. While its enthusiasm, punch and bass welly went down a storm on Rock and Blues, I have heard soft organ notes and Benny Carter's breathy tone more gently portrayed, a slight bright edginess making itself known here. A smooth sounding system or a vinyl front-end through an external phono stage would be the best counterbalances.

Take its very tempting price into account and the Arcam Alpha One represents a very square deal. The build is solid for the money, and the Pre Out sockets ensure longevity through bi-amp upgradability. Even as a lone integrated the Alpha One's control and vitality will see a lot of the competition foundering, even if it's not the most delicate of performers.

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£229.95

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WORLD VERDICT



In a smooth system with a warmish bias the Alpha One makes a strong case for itself.

Measured Performance
see p111

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VINTAGE VIRTUES

by Haden Boardman

EMI, the result of amalgamation between the British wing of the American Columbia company and our own HMV (The Gramophone Co.), is a company that has a long and complex history. The firm that brought us the Beatles has many other technical and artistic credits to its name, including instituting the first 'Golden Disc' ceremony in the Thirties.

EMI also played employer/host to an intuitive genius of an audio engineer, the all-but-venerated Alan Blumlein. In addition to his ground-breaking work on just about everything he touched (including television), Blumlein was the Father of Stereo. As a result of his experiments at EMI, a breath-takingly comprehensive description of the process of stereo recording and retrieval for gramophone discs was duly patented - in 1931! Tragically he was killed in an air-crash in 1942 while testing what was to become RADAR. He left behind him a wealth of ideas waiting for technology to catch up with them.

EMI, marketing through its wealth of brand names, went on to produce some fascinating domestic hi-fi equipment. For example, the world's first ever true Stereo system was launched in the autumn of 1955. The HMV "Stereosonic" Model 3034 was a "twin set" two-box tape reproducer system, which

looked very much like a petite pair of radiogram cabinets. One contained a loudspeaker system and amplifier, while the other housed a Model 3035 quarter-inch tape player. Priced at £288, and with only six pre-recorded tapes launched at the time (priced between two and three guineas!), it was aimed pretty much at the wealthy.

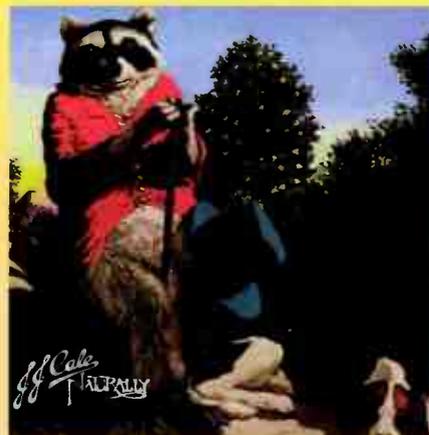
Unhappily for EMI's tape-based system, Decca was also working on stereophonic recording using the medium of Long-Playing gramophone records. Their prototype employed a lateral-cum-vertical system which, after consultation with the industry in the United States, was amended and standardised at the now-familiar 45/45-degree groove slope standard. By a keen irony, all this was mentioned in Blumlein's patent of 1931!

With its huge resources, EMI was unlikely to break its heart over a missed opportunity and was in any case producing some fancy stuff as well. The "Orthotone" and HMV 3050/3051 amplifiers and 3052 loudspeaker (ribbon tweeter, two 6in. midrange units, and three 12in. bass units) were all pretty much at the top of the tree.

One thing I have never been able to comprehend is the complexity of the company's output - all of the models appear to have been made by different manufacturers within the giant

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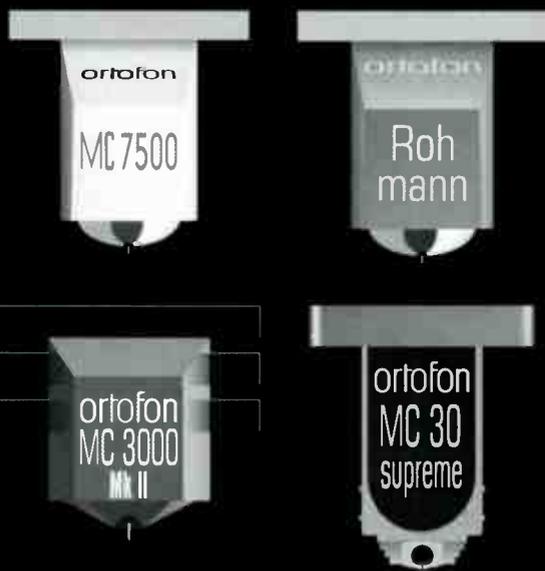
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'umbrella' of the EMI company. For example, the Orthotones are nothing at all like any later products and are also completely different from the tape recorders.

Perhaps more of a household name is the later and lower-priced 555 of 1959, otherwise known as the Stereoscope. For slightly less than the price of a complete stereo Quad outfit, EMI would sell you the incredibly complex 555 integrated. Intended presumably for the export market, this beast was available as an Empress, an HMV, or a plain old EMIscope.

The 555's styling is very American, with four little tell-tale lights, and more knobs and switches than Mission Control: loudness controls, separate bass and treble for each channel, centre outputs, three phono inputs (two MM and one crystal), comprehensive EQ for records (78 enthusiasts take note), separate input selectors for each channel, a tape monitor and, most famous of all, that little oscilloscope!

A 'scope can be a very useful little thing in an audio product but this one is pure decoration. It has no user calibration, and is no more informative than the ordinary 'magic eye' indicators. Surely this is the fore-runner of spectrum analysers and the waterfall displays you can see on nearly every Midi or Micro system of today.

Under the cover, the transformers have little chrome-plated covers and the wiring is exceptionally neat and tidy. The heart of the power amplifier section is based around the Mullard 5-10 but with an ECC83 triode input instead of an EF86. The real surprise, however, is the use of C-core output transformers, devices still the stuff of legend today.

Filling out the range was the 556, one of the few British self-powered pre-amplifiers. This had exactly the same fascia as the 555, but obviously no power amplifier section. This was provided with the matching 600, which is now very rare indeed. With it EMI moved up a league. Based around a pair of EL34s, the 600 gave 35watts per channel, quite a bit more than the 555's modest 12.5watts.

After about 1963 the Stereoscope range was modified. The 555's power amplifier section was launched on its own, with a matching simplified pre. It then appeared as the Clark & Smith (CSI on some) 656 and 657. The 'scope disappeared, as did the crazy switching arrangements and lights, but underneath it was mostly as before. These units are a little more plentiful than the earlier ones nowadays.

The 555 doesn't sound at all bad; it has a usable 2mV phono sensitivity and the overall sound is very pleasant. The balance is a little warm and rose-tinted and, unless properly serviced, those complex switches can generate a hell of a lot of noise. The best buy has to be the smaller stereo power amp. This has a great midrange, far better than its 'plain box' exterior might suggest. Bass and treble are a little rolled off but that's OK - it's not obvious and overall it's probably sonically beneficial.

As regards servicing, the 555 is also the easiest to deal with. There are all the usual 'old amp problems': failing coupling caps, resistors doubling their value - all the ordinary hassles. On the other hand, the electrolytics on these units seem more long-lived than those fitted to similar contemporary amps. Having said that, I would still advise replacing them with small switch-mode-supply capacitors.

One point to watch out for is the metal rectifier. If this has failed, and there is no alternative but to fit a modern device (like a WO4), make sure you fit a high wattage resistor in series



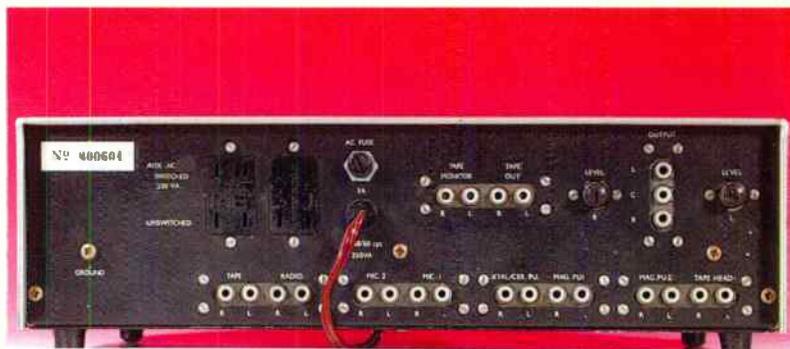
The Empress 556 self-powered pre-amp is a world away from the simplicity of some valve gear. Its plethora of switches and potentiometers can cause lots of noise unless they're properly cleaned.

with the HT supply, otherwise the voltage will rise too high and, in addition to shortening output-valve life, it may damage the output transformers themselves.

This unit is not popular on the second-hand market; perhaps the fact that the valves are covered up counts against it more than anything else. Similarly the Stereoscope pre-amp and integrated suffer the same sort of low esteem; the gimmicky looks seem to put people off, with the result that any of this range can be picked up in good working order for between £100-£150.

After years of disuse, it is not un-common for half of the knobs and switches on the pre-amp to have given up the ghost, rendering the unit all but unusable because of noise. Although it can be a pain to get going, a good worker is not at all bad sounding and, as touched on briefly before, is very suitable for 78s. Even the little 'scope tube is just about available if you can be bothered with it.

Of course, the integrated has the combined problems of both separates, hence its value is about the same. This is a shame - all three are much more capable than the 'Rogers Cadet' sort of price they tend to fetch. I guess that 'American' look just does not suit our more conservative British tastes.



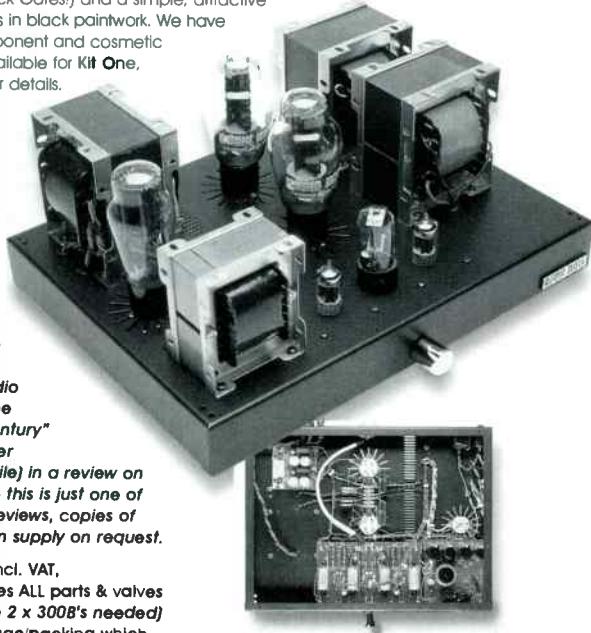
If you thought only modern AV equipment had this many sockets, think again!

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 Konodo 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

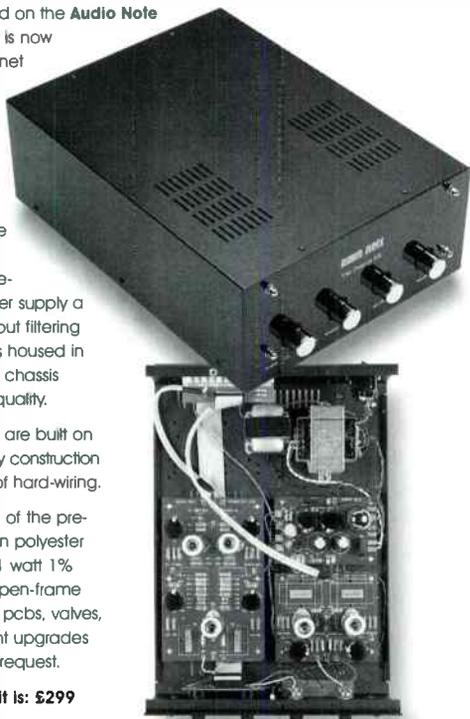
The Audio Note Pre-Amplifier Kit (illustrated)

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 SPACES.

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, VT25/10/10Y, 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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Buzz words - everyone recognises them and none of us are immune to them. Speak to anyone in the hi-fi industry today and it would be hard work to finish the conversation without mention of such terms as DVD, DTS, DAB, MiniDisc, CD-R and so on. The acronym DAC (for Digital-to-Analogue Converter) is less likely to come up in conversation these days in spite of being bandied around almost universally four or five years ago. In this case I'm referring to a self-powered external DAC rather than simply the chip, with apologies to Audio Alchemy and their DAC-In-The-Box. In the world of the hi-fi industry we have seen the rise and fall of the DAC in 10 short years.

History has shown that the company most responsible for bringing DACs to

the market at a lower price. So quick, in fact, that it took the rest of the industry a couple of years to catch up.

However, it wasn't until the advent of single-bit that the marketing men really became excited. The technology was receiving rave reviews and anyone possessing an 'outmoded' multi-bit player fitted with a digital output could easily upgrade. Arcam dutifully launched the Black Box 3. This time they weren't without competition. Digital gurus Meridian, Micromega and Deltec (later to become DPA) all had rival units available from £300-£500. Other companies who'd never really had much of an association with digital home hi-fi took an interest too. Audio Alchemy produced the £376 DDI, whose quirky styling lead from the fact that it was (allegedly) originally designed for in-car



Dominic Todd

"Is the DAC as we know it well and truly six feet under? You'd have thought that with so much new technology in the pipeline their future would be assured."

the masses is Arcam. They have since become renowned for putting into practice the latest technological advances, DAB (Digital Audio Broadcasting) being one of the more recent examples.

Looking back to past glories, for just £250 Arcam's Black Box offered decent sound quality and an easy upgrade path. It went on to precipitate the Frequently-Asked Question in readers' letters sections of magazines everywhere, "Will adding a separate DAC to my system improve the sound. . .?" At the time there were other DACs on sale, but they were mainly sold as two or three-box combos with matching transports. Meridian's 207, Cambridge's CDI and Marantz's CD-94 created the interest, and Arcam were quick to spot a gap in

use. Who could have blamed them for a little diversification?

At the sharp end of things, QED took the budget market by storm with the £125 Digit. And as the DAC market grew, so too did the Digit family. First it received an optical input, then an off-board PSU, and finally a full-size, chromed case. The trouble was the Reference Digit, as it was called, had simply become too big for its own boots. The price tag of £450 was a million miles away from its bargain root stock and there were better DACs at the price.

In a way, the Reference DAC was symbolic of the lives and times of all bar high-end convertors. The performance of integrated machines had improved in leaps and bounds, and mid-priced DACs were finding the

going tough. However, the days of the DAC weren't numbered yet.

Firms such as Pink Triangle and Select Systems (remember the Dacula?) entered the fray to be followed by Cambridge Audio, who had just been bought by Richer Sounds. In 1995 the original Digit was getting long in the tooth but there remained a demand for capable budget DACs. The result was the Cambridge Dacmagic 1, which proved very popular amongst upgraders.

In a way, though, this was the beginning of the end for DACs, at least as far as selling in large numbers was concerned. There will always be a demand for out-board convertors in the same way as there will always be a demand for phono stages, as a specialist accessory. In the recent past, retailing has seen a slowing in DAC sales, even with new units like Musical Fidelity's X-DAC and X-ACT.

The ironic twist to this story is that now there are more CD players than ever equipped with digital outputs, only this time it's there for the sake of digital recordings into a MiniDisc machine. Is the DAC as we know it well and truly six feet under? You'd have thought that with so much new technology in the pipeline their future would be assured as people upgrade. The trouble is HDCD, which is ideal for fitting to a DAC, hasn't really taken off in a truly major way. With DVD and 24-bit 96kHz audio already here and Super Audio CD just around the corner, many manufacturers are still playing a game of wait and see. Still, once the dust has settled on future formats, we could see the stand-alone DAC making a come-back●

METAL MASTERS

David Price finds Musical Technology's metal-coned PM15 loudspeakers are no fools' gold.

Despite four years in the business, Chesham-based Musical Technology have yet to become one of hi-fi's household names. But co-founders Clive Gibson and Martin Nobbs are no Johnny-come-latelys to loudspeaker design. Clive is ex-IMF, Acoustic Energy and latterly TDL, while Martin was a BBC broadcast engineer of 15 years' standing before he joined the company. Together, they produce domestic and pro-audio 'speakers for customers like the BBC and MTV.

The PM15 is the baby of the range, but its lowly place in the MT hierarchy is far from evident on inspection. First there's the unusually high standard of cabinetry for the £475 asking price. Then there's the long-throw mid/bass driver with its black anodised aluminium cone, which is all MT's own work.

Similar technology crops up in the tweeter, a 25mm anodised aluminium dome sourced from VIFA of Denmark. The crossover features decent polypropylene capacitors with laminated soft-iron and air-cored inductors plus wire-wound resistors. These are hard wired with quality solid-core cabling which runs to the customary gold-plated bi-wire terminals at the back.

As is usual for metal cones, the MTs weren't much fun while they burned in, sounding about as smooth as a bag of chisels. But after a week or so, things took a turn for the better. Indeed, my first reaction was how alike they were to Harbeth's HL-K6 we tested a couple of years back. With a neutral, even-handed tonality, the only difference was that the Harbeths cost well over twice the MTs' price. Driven both by Musical Fidelity X-A200 monoblocs and a Rose Scion integrated, they proved very refined for a mid-market

loudspeaker. And unlike most competing designs, their weaknesses were few and forgivable.

B&W's CDM-1SE has recently been the one to beat, albeit at £125 more, but it's let down by a tweeter whose sibilant sound betrays that beautifully clean Kevlar mid/bass unit. The Musical Technologies show no such failing - the drivers integrate well and cross over seamlessly.

Kicking off with Chic's 'Le Freak', the PM15s proved slightly dry but never shaken or stirred. With impressive neutrality, they let the song's richness shine through without ever sounding coloured. Better still was the way they handled rhythms. Extremely fast on their feet, they caught Bernard Edwards' killer basslines with unerring speed. Grin-inducingly tight and dynamic, they were a joy.

The midband was equally polished, these 'speakers proving particularly adept at vocal projection. Joe Jackson's 'Stepping Out' had JJ crooning clean out of the boxes, while the backing pianos and bass sequencer were held way to the rear of the sound stage. Even on heavyweight crescendos, the PM15s remained composed.

Moving to a Blue Note reissue of Lou Donaldson's 'Alligator Boogaloo', the MTs impressed again. Many metal-dome tweeters flounder when asked to reproduce a close-mic'd ride cymbal, but the PM15s remained commendably clean. Although nowhere near as sweet as my reference Yamaha NS1000Ms,



they were head and shoulders above their rivals from B&W or Castle. Across all musical genres they proved highly accomplished at carrying both crashing musical peaks and subtle rhythmic phrasing.

Downsides? Well, apart from the merest hint of sibilance you could also bemoan the lack of any real low bass. But at least MF have resisted the temptation to engineer in a blatant upper-bass peak. And even with the X-A200s cranked up, the MTs remained composed, although if really provoked they do harden up.

The PM15s are great little 'speakers, offering the combination of neutrality with musicality. As they don't suffer fools gladly you'll have to match them with care - avoid cheap, rough CD players at all costs. But with a sweet, warm front-end the PM15s should prove cast-iron, copper-bottomed bargains.

Musical Technology
PM15 £475

Musical Technology
Unit 10,
Howard Industrial Estate,
Chilton Road,
Chesham,
Bucks. HP5 2AU
Tel: 01656 842000

WORLD VERDICT



Sophisticated, neutral sound and fine musicality put the MTs up with the best in the class.

Measured Performance
see p111

KITS HAVE NEVER

NEW!



£175

HD83 VALVE HEADPHONE AMPLIFIER KIT

The HD83 is our new headphone amplifier a beautifully simplistic design using Mullard ECL83 valves, a triode and power pentode housed in the same envelope it works directly from any source be it a CD, tape, tuner etc., or from an amplifier's tape out or pre-amp sockets. The circuit utilises high specification output E and C output transformers that will drive any headphone load from 16 ohms to over 300 ohms depending on how the secondaries are wired up. the HD83 is a single ended design with the power pentode wired up in triode configuration for that added purity and is as quiet as a mouse. For sound quality Jon Marks says, "The bass is punchy and controlled without becoming artificial, while treble has the crispness of the best solid-state, with the tonal purity, delicacy and speed associated with valves. External dimensions 18cm(w) x 30cm(l) x 8cm(h) weight 4kg.

Please note that we are selling the full range of sennheiser headphones at discounted prices when purchased in combination with our HD83. Please ring 0171 221 0691 for further details.

KEL34 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT

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).

NEW!



£295

K5881 MkII VALVE AMPLIFIER KIT

MkII with SRPP input stage!



£395

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

300B VALVE AMPLIFIER KIT

£850



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

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

£345



KLP1 VALVE LINE PREAMP

The KLP1 line level preamp uses one 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).

K5881PSE VALVE AMPLIFIER KIT

£650

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).



BEEN SO GOOD!

NEW!



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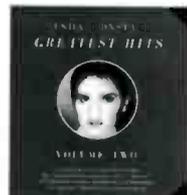
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ROCK SOLID

Noel Keywood looks at the implications for recorded music as we know it with the arrival of inexpensive solid-state portable music players.



The player that started it all, Saehan's MP10.

Out of cyberspace comes MPMan, a brand new form of Walkman and the future of music, commerce and almost all else if you believe the eulogies of the Internet community. Like any good recording technology this one has become immediately controversial. The music business detests such recorders and the Recording Industries Association of America (RIAA) recently attempted to slap an injunction on US company Diamond Multimedia to prevent distribution of their new model, the Rio.

THE START OF SOLID-STATE

With so much smoke, somewhere there's a fire. It was started in Korea by Saehan Corporation. They produced the MPMan as a successor to the Walkman. But where the Walkman uses cassettes, MPMan records compressed MP3 music (in full, MPEG 1, Layer III) into solid-state memory; it's basically a Walkman without the cogs and wheels. At present no fewer than 16 manufacturers have MP3 portables either in prototype form or in production and doubtless there'll be many, many more soon.

Temperatures are likely to rise as American courts try to decide whether these things breach U.S. law, whilst wily Korean and Taiwanese companies pile on features, cut prices and sell them wherever they can, probably throughout the Far East to avoid Western legal restrictions.

MP3 portables are an exciting idea. I'm going to give an overview

of the technology and the products based on it because both are potentially complex in what they offer.

MAINLY MEMORY

The idea of solid-state in hi-fi has been waiting to happen for a long time, delayed by the fact that computer memory is expensive and music demands lots of it. Even in these depressed times 64MB of computer memory costs around £70 on the High Street and a solid-state Walkman would demand no less than 650MB if it was to record a whole CD. But out on the Internet people are offering music in digital form, compressed down to around one-tenth (1:12 max) its original size by MP3 encoding. This allows it to be stored on a computer server easily and transmitted across the Net with reasonable haste. In this highly-compressed form most CDs, when MP3 encoded, will fit into a

64MB memory chip. It will come as no surprise therefore that the tiny Diamond Rio (see News, p7) has 64MB of memory. It will cost £165 in the UK and should be in the shops before Christmas.

Although Diamond's little Rio attracted the wrath of America's RIAA, Saehan Corporation of South Korea have also produced a new model, the MP30, that weighs just 65gms. It is fitted with 16MB of flash memory, expandable up to 64MB. Saehan have controversially also included a microphone, which clearly makes the MP30 a recording device, albeit with no copyright worries unless you take it to a concert.

PC PARTNERSHIP

You have to load these MP players with MP3 music. At present - and unlike an MD recorder - they do not possess on-board compression circuits so you must apply MP3 reduction on your home computer, or you can load up MP3 recordings from an MP3 CD, but again only through a computer via its CD ROM drive.

If all this sounds a little complicated, you're right. If you don't have a computer it's a little early to buy an MPMan. The biggest potential difference between MPMen and MDMen is software availability. Lack of pre-recorded software in the shops has severely limited the potential of recording formats like DCC, Betamax, DAT and MD in the past. MD suffers because it is a Sony product carrying mainly Sony acts, like Bob Dylan and Maria Carey. Only pre-recorded cassettes and CDs are available just about anywhere you go

(record shops, newsagents, railway stations, Costa Brava, etc). Any new format must overcome this availability problem if it is to succeed.

WANDERING THE WEB

One big advantage MP has over MD and most earlier formats is its linkage to software, at present through the Internet. There are thousands of downloadable songs in MP3 form and new bands looking for exposure can post tracks onto the Net. German manufacturer Pontis is already talking about ROS (Record On Silicon) cards being made available for its MPlayer3 model in 1999. These will be solid-state Read Only Memory (ROM) chips the size of a postage stamp that carry pre-recorded music. Only price is likely to be a problem, since 16MB-32MB of memory would be needed at no more than £6-£8 retail.

At present the music biz would not license material for this purpose. However, they could decide to sell MP3-CD versions of popular bands, or put MP3 tracks into the spare space available on today's conventional CDs. Pressure will come from the Internet and from break-away bands and labels. Musicians like Thomas Dolby have been warning for a long time that the Net will become a serious force in music marketing in the future and MPMen are part of the scenario. Low-cost MP3 3in. CDs would be great promotional devices; the music industry could (and may) be forced to adopt this lower-fi medium for promotional purposes.

Whilst most of the world's population do not own a computer and are not connected to the Internet MPMen have a limited audience. All this could change very rapidly however. If MP3 CDs or ROS cards were to appear in the shops, if radio stations were to broadcast data-reduced MP3 music (as is happening in Germany), or if MPMen were fitted with on-board data-reduction circuits so they could be hooked up to an ordinary hi-fi, then MP3 recorder sales would likely take off.

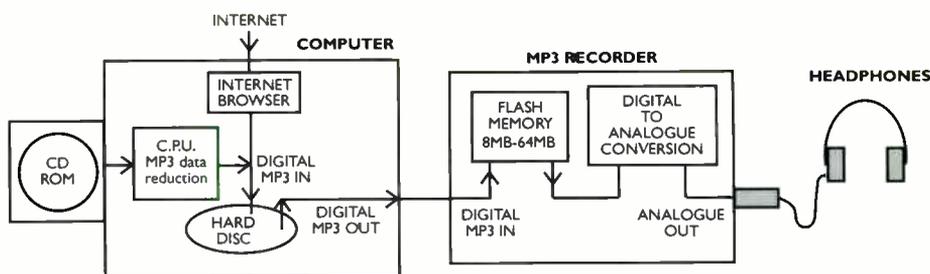
Lacking Serial Copyright Management System (SCMS) their legality will be called into question. But cassette recorders do not have SCMS but get away with it because of poorer-than-CD quality. Currently MP manufacturers somewhat optimistically describe MP3 as "CD quality". If they argued otherwise MP might well clear legal hurdles and become the popular music medium of the future.

THE TECHNOLOGY

Having read some pretty confused explanations about MP3 recording techniques I think a simple diagram best illustrates the processes involved. Music must be in digital form before it can be data-reduced via MP3 into a file small enough to be stored in an MPMan. In the diagram the player accepts MP3 signals at its INPUT and records them into solid-state memory. To play this music it is read out of the memory through a digital-to-analogue (D/A or DAC) convertor and thence to headphones.

There are some things to note in this basic scheme. MP3 is actually data-reduced music. This description is more concise than calling it either "compressed" or "encoded" because traditionally the terms "compression" and "encoding" are the first part of a two-part complementary process. For example, Dolby compression is followed by Dolby expansion to restore the signal to its original form.

By contrast, when music is data reduced into MP3 form, quality is reduced too and it stays that way. There is no complementary restoration process on replay. When music is converted back into



At present MP3 recorders load data-reduced MP3 songs into memory from a computer. Song and track details are shown on a display. Music is played out of memory through a DAC and amplifier to headphones or an earpiece.

Variants have other facilities, like microphones, added to this basic scheme.

analogue it will not sound like the original, unless the original was mediocre in the first place. This should not be an issue in a MPMan that uses headphones - quality will likely be good enough.

Most MP3 sites on the Internet and manufacturers describe MP3 music as "CD quality" but when Philips, in conjunction with Decca Records, researched MPEG their view was that only Level I, similar to the PASC system used in Digital Compact Cassette (DCC), reached CD standards, they told me. The greater reductions of Level II and III resulted in audible degradation. That is not to say music becomes unlistenable - cassette measures like a dog but can still sound good.

MP doesn't have much of an act to follow in this respect, but it does have a rival, MiniDisc (MD). This uses ATRAC compression which is comparable to MPEG Level I (around 5:1 reduction in file size) and should offer better sound quality than MP3.

Finally, conventional measurement of digital data-reduction systems with single tones reveals little. They cope with such tones much more easily than wideband music. DCC and MD measure perfectly and MP3 is likely to as well, but that is not to say they sound perfect. Measured specs are a poor guide to quality in such systems.

Maximum data reduction and hence quality loss occurs when music is at high level and there is strong bass and treble, so judge sound quality subjectively with this sort of music when assessing an MPMan or MiniDisc recorder if it comes to that

Expect to hear a lot more from cyberspace soon. Samsung have just announced their first player, the Yepp, and there are many more to come ●

Saehan Information Systems of South Korea produced the MP10, the world's first MPMan. It is pictured at the start of this article. They have just announced the stylish new MP30, shown here. It will hold messages and computer data, in addition to music, and it has a microphone.



EXTRA! EXTRA. . !

Richard White unwraps a few stocking-fillers of days gone by.

Since 'tis the season to be tolerably jolly we thought we'd take a look back at a few classic products of yesteryear which were produced for the Audiophile Who Has Everything.

Gadgets have existed almost as long as musical instruments. Even before Edison had put voice to tinfoil there were little companies who would sell you gadgets to 'improve the tone' of your piano or turn your music pages when you pulled a trigger.



The Watts Parastat.

With the new gramophone getting on its feet, one of the earliest gadgets I've seen consists of a little horse-hair brush on a brass clip. When attached to the sound-box of a gramophone pick-up the brush was intended to delicately remove dust and fluff before the needle reached them. Unfortunately, the surface noise inherent in the old slate-filled records added far more crackle than a little surface dust could possibly have contributed. In any case, with a playing weight measurable in ounces, it was unusual for anything with less mass than an anvil to derail the needle.

Although the horse-hair brush and others like it were before their time, Cecil

Watts, the pioneer of direct-lacquer recording, revived the idea with his Parastat machine and the famous Dust Bug. Watts originally stumbled upon the concept whilst trying to remove dust from the grooves being inspected under his microscope. The Dust Bug idea was fundamentally simple and worked well. Where the whole practical application fell down was in the 'anti-static' preparations which for years seemed to be de rigueur for, ahem, 'cleaning' records.

Magic preparations were sold by the gallon for record cleaning after the post-war introduction of microgroove and vinylite records. Whereas the old-style 78s could be ruined by immersion due to



A basic record-care kit from Boots.

impurities in the shellac 'blooming' with the moisture, the new flexible records were fair game for untold experiments. Then, as now, nothing home-brewed was as good as something you could buy.

Technical writers could tell you a hundred times to use isopropyl alcohol and water without affect: put the same thing in a spray bottle with "Stat-O-Gone" on the label and people simply had to have it. Some

record-care outfits included a sponge, presumably for removing the invariably too-liberally applied cleaner but nothing to get it out of the actual grooves unhappily.

Of course there is little point ensuring your stylus is clean unless you can see for yourself, hence the proliferation of little magnifying gadgets. Most of these were similar to the jeweller's



Bellanger's beautifully-built pocket microscope offers up to 60x magnification.

loupe but the piece-of-resistance has to be the pocket microscope, recommended by hi-fi writer John Earl amongst others for diamond prospecting. These well-made instruments are actually quite handy on the 40x settings. However, by the time you get much beyond this to genuinely useful degrees of magnification the problem of keeping the damn thing still enough to see anything has to be overcome. It is also alarmingly possible to scrape off the very diamond you are trying to inspect.

The new breed of somewhat more dainty tone-arms gave rise to their own series of lift/lower gadgets to eliminate the risk of damaging records when lowering the needle. Many variations on this simple theme were marketed, but by the early Seventies record-playing outfits were commonly already provided with a built-in device. It was only the poor old high-end mob with their non-matching arms and super-compliant cartridges who needed to patronize the likes of Hadcock (Uni-Lift), Decca (Microlift or motorized Deccalift) and Colton (Varilift).

Although dreadful plastic-covered wire record racks are still a regular item in charity shops and the like, it's not so easy to find one of those tip/tilt 'automatic' record racks in working order. As every audiophile knows, the best way to store records is to hold each one in a hinged nylon clip on the bottom edge. I suspect the pitiful condition of many old record covers owes something to the popularity of this item.



Decca's Microlift for tone-arms.

There are thousands of left-over gadgets which turn up at audio jumbles and an interesting collection can be built up for pennies. Just treat the anti-static preparations with considerable caution - even if it IS Christmas, don't drink 'em!

ROCK & POP

by Jon Clarke & Stuart Lenz



PJ HARVEY
IS THIS DESIRE?
ISLAND

Life has never really smiled on PJ Harvey, the Nick Cave of female balladeers. Three years since her album *To Bring You My Love*, she's been saddled with health problems and reputedly had a series of run-ins with her record company. Amidst these setbacks her said company would dearly have loved her to release a commercial album, with the lure of all sins forgiven. But being a feisty kind of gal, PJ took up the challenge and did the polar opposite.

Back together with highly-rated engineer Flood, she has stitched together 12 mostly excellent tracks where the main threads appear to be percussive rhythms, eerie electronics and vocals that often do not rise above a hoarse whisper. Like Tricky's last effort, *Angels With Dirty Faces* (unsurprisingly a previous collaborator) it's dark, alienated and downright ugly in places. But unlike Tricky of late, it has melody and some sort of purpose, albeit a tenuous one.

If the Biblical heaviness of it all isn't that obvious, the lyrics

come replete with the kind of Old-Testament verse normally associated with Spaghetti Westerns, terse comments on the hard realities of life. Lines on 'Angelene', the opener, bear this out: "Dear God, life ain't kind, people being born and dying." This is surely the stuff of *High Plains Drifter* - The Man With No Name, about to chalk up his next victim as he ejects the contents of his mouth on to a mangy mutt.

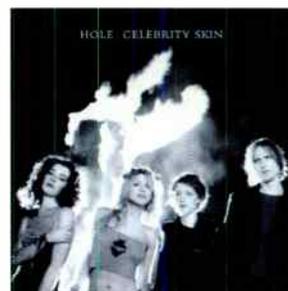
But *Is This Desire* is about as far from comedy as you could possibly imagine, and not even tongue in cheek for that matter. In fact, it's an austerity measure that even a Latin American dictatorship would be proud of. Pinochet, you have met your match. It is as if PJ has locked herself away and harnessed all the extreme elements in the craft of songwriting and gone one step further than even her nemesis Nick Cave, the result having scarcely any connection with his recent semi-spiritual confessional pieces on *Boatman's Call* nor indeed with the witchy Blues cocktail of her own previous albums.

What *Is This Desire* does use, however, is a lot of trashed Electronica and warped Drum 'n' Bass, all added to a refined orchestral backdrop. At its worst it's dirgey and black. In the case of 'Joy', and the insufferable 'My Beautiful Leah', it's one long stream of amp distortion. With the exception of 'Angelene' it is safe to say that song titles

built around girls' names are the ones to avoid.

Relief to the general cacophony comes in the shape of 'The Garden', a delicate piano and drum-looped number, and 'The River', a haunting ballad where PJ manages to control her vocals to perfection. 'The Wind' too has much to commend it and is driven by one of the most infectious Stax-style basslines around. It's these 'environmental' songs that win through, and it's only a shame that on balance there weren't slightly more of them.

While black and gloomy, PJ's return is a good one, and something to build on. It's actually a miracle the album was released at all given that it was said to be her second attempt, with the first being rejected out of hand for being too gloomy by half.



HOLE
CELEBRITY SKIN
GED 25164

Mother of all 'Rriot' girls, Yoko Ono-style Rock widow, former lap dancer and drug addict; whichever way you look at Courtney Love there's got to be

some grudging respect for her ability to survive. This woman is a fighter of real low-down, bar-brawling class. But her reputation has suffered of late, trawling as she has Hollywood's watering-holes in a bid to re-invent herself as an actress.

With little critical acclaim for her thespian exploits, apart from possibly in the guise of the drug-addled girlfriend of real-life porn peddler Larry Flynt in Milos Forman's film, she was left looking rather sidelined. Then came the much-rated and highly scathing documentary into her life by British journalist Nick Broomfield.

Celebrity Skin, her band Hole's follow-up to 1994's breathtaking *Live Through This*, couldn't have come at a better moment. And with it, she has certainly answered her critics who hoped it would see her off as the Joan of Arc of the Girl-revolution.

Fact: *Celebrity Skin* is a captivating piece of music, by Courtney's own admission a classic Southern California Rock album that follows in the tradition of The Eagles' *Hotel California* and The Doors' *LA Woman*. With stylish production and slick ballads, possibly the most subversive thing on the LP is the photo of burning palm trees on the cover. It is certainly clean sounding and will surprise and confound, but ultimately seduce those who give it a chance. Sleek, bold and beautiful in the way that *Live Through This* and *Pretty On*

ROCK & POP

The Inside were, their successor has been designed to be unappealing, cool and guarded.

No longer feeling constrained to write short bursts of anger, Courtney, alongside long-time guitarist Eric Erlandson (and more recent members like the wonderfully named Melissa Auf Der Mauer) have moved gracefully into Pop City, and seemingly without irony - check out the positively jangly 'Awful', the brilliant, Cure-influenced 'Malibu', and the bubblegum song, 'Boys On The Radio' (very Teenage Fan Club). There may be more than a hint of British Indie influence around (she was once an Echo And The Bunnymen groupie and thanks them on the sleeve), but the meat of the album is still prime US Rib, somewhat like a female version of Tom Petty with a lot more cred.

The title track and a few of the others are spunky enough to inspire a driver's seat sing-along, while the helping hand of Billy 'Pumpkin' Corgan on at least four tracks gives Hole a smashing new commercial allure.

The angry though unusually stifled Courtney does occasionally blast off in the lyrics, most conspicuously on the more Rockin' arrangements where she rails against the cheap, exploitative nature of beauty, 'Reasons To Be Beautiful' and 'Use Once And Destroy' continuing the line forged by the violent 'Doll Parts' on the debut. However, that is as bestial and vitriolic as it gets,

her concerns for her daughter Frances Bean (to whom 'Heaven Tonight' is dedicated) sweeping all before them evidently. And it soon becomes apparent that the real strength of Celebrity Skin is in the new-found tunesmithery of the band and ballads like 'Northern Star'.

Courtney and Hole were within an inch of losing all credibility, but can now hold their heads up again. Kurt Cobain (yes, at last he gets a mention - you knew he had to!) would probably have hated this album, but he's dead and for most people the mourning is over. I suspect the same goes for his widow, who on this showing has never been more full of life.



SOUL COUGHING
EL OSO
SLASH RECORDS 556 049-2

An eclectic bunch, this Soul Coughing lot. Not content with having the kind of name that's picked out of a dustbin, this band of misfits from the New York melting-pot have also named their third album after a Spanish bear!

Going to extraordinary lengths to sweep up every genre of music known to humanity,

their composite is an intriguing and original bag. Mixing Funk, Techno, Jazz, Punk, and Rock is never going to be easy, but they do it with reasonable aplomb. To try and give you some guidance, imagine the B52s with Lou Reed, Captain Beefheart and Kurt Cobain writing the songs. But is it all too weird? Well, their 1994 debut Ruby Vroom was a landmark album, catching many people off guard Stateside and having near to no impact here in the UK.

Rhythm is very much the mainstay of Soul Coughing's work. Vocalist Doughty and his cronies, never having once favoured the verse/chorus/verse songwriting convention, make the most of loops, deep grooves, big noises and sneaky little samples. The best moments come in their ripping-off of Roni Size-like basslines, such as on '\$300', or when they open up with the bass-heavy but truly excellent 'St. Louise Is Listening'. They also use liberal helpings of Drum 'n' Bass to fine effect, courtesy of street wizard Optical on tracks like 'Blame'.

Doughty does sadly have a tendency to let his whiny, nasal yodellings get the better of him at times, and to repeat dozy lines like "Roller Boogie Mutha F***er" is plain and simply silly. He should stick to the vocals of 'Monster Man' which whizz by so fast that their nonsense has absolutely no time to sink in.

The single 'Circles' may be as close as the band will ever get to being mainstream Pop (and even then it misses by a

mile) while cuts like 'Rolling' and 'Misinformed' are packed with the kind of lyrical madness and rhythmic obsession which rather ruin them for neophytes (but may please fans of their previous efforts).

Avant-garde and Funky to say the least, Soul Coughing are fun and a surprisingly good listen. You may even be able to dance to their sound.

MINISTRY OF SOUND CD COMPETITION

Ministry of Sound, London's most happening Dance club, has released its fourth annual review-of-the-year album. Featuring sets of masterful mixes by Radio One DJ Judge Jules and Boy George on the flipside, it contains a 38-page clubland retrospective and a collection of storming Dance anthems which have kept a nation of clubbers shaking their booties throughout 1998.

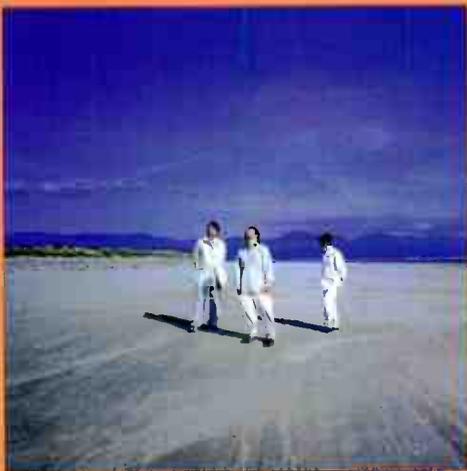
We've managed to secure 10 copies of these CDs to be given away to the those lucky entrants (selected at random) who can correctly inform us whether the Ministry of Sound is:

- A) A Dance music venue or
- B) A Government Department

Please send your answer on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope with your name and address to: **Hi Fi World, 64 Castellain Road, Maida Vale, London W9 1EX**. Entries should reach us no later than January 11th.

ROCK & POP

RECORD OF THE MONTH



MANIC STREET PREACHERS
THIS IS MY TRUTH, TELL ME YOURS
 EPIC 491703 2

Apparently too depressing for the US market (with none of the major labels Stateside agreeing to release it there) *This Is My Truth, Tell Me Yours* sounds to me like a further step towards world domination for the Preachers.

Depressing? Don't be daft - this is as uplifting as a Snowdonia valley on a bright spring mornin', as cheerful as Alan Partridge. The Yanks obviously haven't heard *The Holy Bible*. With Richey definitely gone (please stop this debate - he's dead, drowned, not coming back!) the murky days of make-up, self-mutilation and being Generation Terrorists are over for the Manics. And that's a fact. Of course, there is the ever-present socialist whine in the lyrics of Nicky Wire, but as the pinnacle of

rebellion they have certainly moved on.

Everything Must Go of two years ago was a barnstorming album which smashed once and for all the brick wall of indifference the group had been confronted

with up to that point. It was a triumph of dignity and style over adversity, an emotional washing of the slate - the entire album seemed so grandiose and positive. It was about putting your life on track ('A Design For Life') and boundless hope ('Australia'). *This Is My Truth, Tell Me Yours*, while having a gnawing sense of darkness hovering over it, continues the change.

This, their fifth album, is far from the scarring experience of *The Holy Bible* and does at last represent their first genuine departure from the legacy of Richey Edwards, consciously refraining from using any of his text. But that's not to say the lyrics talk only of love and romance. They may not exactly be wrist-slashers, but they're deadly enough to have you reaching for the Prozac, and Wire is not exactly Mr Cheerful. "I'm sick of being sick. . . I'm bored of

being bored, I'm happy being sad" ('My Little Empire') says it all. In sentiment at least, it seems a lot hasn't changed.

Starting with 'The Everlasting', the mood is quickly set. An expansive epic, it demonstrates as well as any of the other numbers here how the group's songwriting and stacked vocal/guitar splendour has grown leaps and bounds from their early shotgun-Pop, pugnacious days.

The second song, 'If You Tolerate This, Your Children Will Be Next' is not only the longest title since their little ditty 'If White America Told The Truth For One Day, Its World Would Fall Apart', but is also the sort of song which inspires unequivocal devotion in their fans. Apart from being the first single off the album, it is one of the best tracks they've ever recorded and fittingly shot straight: to number One in the charts. Heartfelt and catchy, if it were a currency it would be the Euro - understood across the continent (this one, not the American one obviously. Their loss).

'You Stole The Sun From My Heart' and the Japanese-flavoured 'Tsunami' which follow are not quite as uplifting, but still have rosy dispositions.

And then it's back to business as usual. 'My Little Empire', 'I'm Not Working' and 'Born A Girl' are gloomier and more

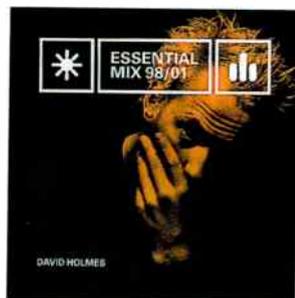
introspective, but that's what comes of musicians who, when not touring, vacillate between lethargy, unemployment and flouncing around in floral dresses. They may be too earnest, too outspoken perhaps, but then isn't this the band who dedicated a song to the International Socialist Brigade of the Spanish Revolution?

Moving on, the Manics continue to exorcise the demons with a series of stunningly disjointed songs: the oddly hummable 'Black Dog On My Shoulder', 'Be Natural' and the lyrically-challenged 'SYMM (South Yorkshire Mass Murderer)' which ends oddly, albeit with a rare glint of humour, on the line "The ending for this song, I haven't really thought of one." All are haunted by vague traces of Radiohead, U2 and Pink Floyd.

Overall *This Is My Truth* is a progressive, four-square, panoramic-vision Rock type of album, well-executed and with many high points, but it's hardly ground-breaking and not quite up there with *Everything Must Go*. In the final analysis, though, what would you rather listen to; this or Oasis' last album? Easy choice really, and fitting that they should beat the Manics off for Best Band In The World award at the recent Q awards ceremony. We'll just ignore the Yanks, eh?

DANCE & AMBIENT

by Sara Davis



DAVID HOLMES
DAVID HOLMES ESSENTIAL MIX
FFRR LC7654

"Fierce competition for the women, especially that bottle blonde in the corner grinding her hips to the bass, that's all you hear from the one huge 'speaker'. These bizarre ramblings in the form of a time-travel novel-cum-sleeve notes accompany an equally strange selection of tunes from David Holmes.

The words, written by one Ralph Williams, require some suspension of disbelief but could easily qualify as the most interesting Dance music biog of the year. At the very least they set the scene for the music, a surreal mixture of Jazzy coffee-club accompaniment like Bridget Bardot's 'Contact' and Marlena Shaw's 'California Soul' with raw drum-oriented Funk along the lines of the Googe Rene Combo. Yep, it feels like going back in time, and just like the mini-novel there's a dreamy atmosphere, haunting voices crackling like old vinyl, telephone conversations, vocal samples and monologues, each weaving a narrative into the proceedings and building a sense of soulful character to

the vibe.

The above is definitely not what you would expect from Mr Holmes, House DJ and remixer of Sabres, The Aloof and St. Etienne. More often than not this respected Irish DJ is to be found in the middle of a sweeping breakdown at a hyperactive, pounding House/Techno event, not feeding the juke box in a retro Soul café. Even more surprising is the fact that FFRR have chosen this risky route for the latest in their Essential Series, its revisitation of what it describes as "the very roots of Dance music history".

The reproduction of old Soul classics will be too pure for some, the Hip-Hop influence too subtle for the mainstream. This musical slant is one generation ahead of chart Big Beat - it depends on Funky riffs and Jazzy beats where Breakbeat is still regurgitating that lolloping off-beat rhythm. This is far more sophisticated. This got soul!



VARIOUS ARTISTS
RETRODELICA 2: BACK 2 THE FUTURE
FLYING RHINO AFR CD12

Another album to take on a retro feel this month is

Retrodelica 2 from Flying Rhino, the label with a reputation for Trance whose fame for Techno classics is less.

This record company has always been closer to the dancefloor mood of the moment than most. In the past they have brought out plenty of hard-nosed anthems that were way ahead of their time. This addition to the Retrodelica series goes some way to making sure everybody knows who should be thanked for the this musical sub-culture which spawned X-Dream, Juno Reactor, Kox Box, Eat Static and so on.

All of the revamped tracks on Retrodelica 2 are crowned classics that have stood the test of time, many of which your average crusty raver will have heard and experienced but never recognised before now. For example, 'The Wipe' by Teste (aka Richie Hawtin) is a storming Techno piece with self-sustaining waves of distortion suited only to a big, dark field where structural damage can be avoided.

Eat Static's 'Implant' needs no introduction. This seminal number has been catalogued many times over, invariably with the word "classic" mentioned somewhere in preceding sentences. This particular take on the original is slow to build but well worth the wait. The same is true of the other partners in crime, Voodoo People, Moog, Microwave Prince and so on. On the whole, expect squelches and driving Techno bass, Trance-treated harmony

and psychedelic twists.

Before you buy, check the track listing because these are all fairly well documented tracks. However, if you missed more than three of these tunes the first time round, Retrodelica 2 would be well worth investing in as there's not a dull moment anywhere on the CD.



SHPONGGLE
ARE YOU SHPONGLED
TWISTED RECORDS TWSCD4

According to the sleeve notes, the definition of "shpongled" is "akin to kippered, fried, mashed, etc", and rest assured this is not in reference to food preparation. Much like the parent label Twisted Records, this album's name hints at the more psychedelic side of Dance music combined with a cheeky character.

Like many of Twisted's recent releases, Shponggle is a quirky creation that somehow spins Acidic Trance and erratic Funky beats into a laid-back, Ambient mood. There are Eastern influences hidden inside too - Shponggle's Raja Ram (credited as the "Space-Techno Astronaut") and Simon Posford (top Twisted engineer) joined forces after a

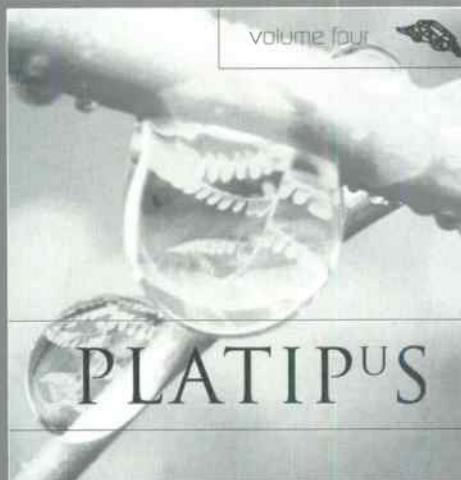
DANCE & AMBIENT

RECORD OF THE MONTH

VARIOUS ARTISTS
PLATIPUS RECORDS VOL 4
 PLATIPUS

The Platipus sound is one of the most distinct Trance/Techno strains out there. It all began with Poltergeist's 'Vicious Circles', a storming 12in. which redefined the limits of Trance by making it hard but infectious. The label's pick of producers went on to consolidate the sound through releases from Union Jack, Art Of Trance, Pob et al. But it wasn't until Robert Miles' 'Children' that the driving breakdowns and epic proportions of musical Trance really caught the imagination of the general public and Platipus finally made a name for itself.

That was back in 1995. Most people don't realise that Platipus has been churning out tracks of even greater



quality ever since. As big-name DJs Sasha, Digweed, Oaky and Nick Warren know to their advantage, these days it's safe to assume that every Platipus release will get the crowds jiving and moving; in the years

since Robert Miles, not one single release has failed to live up to standard.

Volume 4 features more of the best from the likes of Bedrock (mixed by Digweed), Oliver Lieb and a new signing, Narkotic from Australia. There are also traditional acts such as Art Of Trance, Pob and Union Jack who (rest assured) have definitely not produced a Trance remix of an Eighties Rock band this time.

Although the Platipus sound can be quite formulaic, it's a formula that works incredibly well. The use of melody and breakdown builds musical tension that Alfred Hitchcock would have been proud of. Put it this way: 'Children' is probably the weakest track to have come out of Platipus and that was the biggest-selling Trance record of all time!

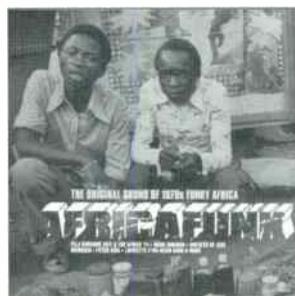
bonging - sorry, bonding - session in India. Their experience - witnessing a solar eclipse - has been translated directly into the last track 'And The Day Turned To Night' which features soundbytes from others watching the spectacle.

Like all good Ambient tunes this one (and most of the others on the CD too) features a fair helping of woodwind while still managing to steer well clear of that pan-pipe style usually played out in hippy shops and new-age markets.

The Shpongle talent definitely lies in evolving samples lifted by subtle Trance elements and a pumping rhythm, 'Shpongle Falls' being a case in point. It's also great to hear such a variety of instrumentation woven into gentle Trance - so much of the

trance around these days is bpm orientated and formulaic.

There are only seven tracks on the CD but all last about 10 minutes, so there's no rip-off factor in terms of running time. As ever, Twisted Records' knack for billing adventurous Techno has worked a treat - it's mellow, it's long-winded but it definitely isn't boring.



VARIOUS ARTISTS
AFRICAFUNK
 HARMLESS RECORDS HURTCDD016

Although the fusion of

traditional Africa with raw Seventies, James Brown-inspired Funk has long been a favourite of the more discerning Jazz/Soul DJs, the music has seen a huge resurgence since the tragic death of the great Fela Kuti earlier this year. From the Nuphonic stable to Kerri Chandler, producers have been mining a whole new source of samples whilst DJs are madly hunting out the originals.

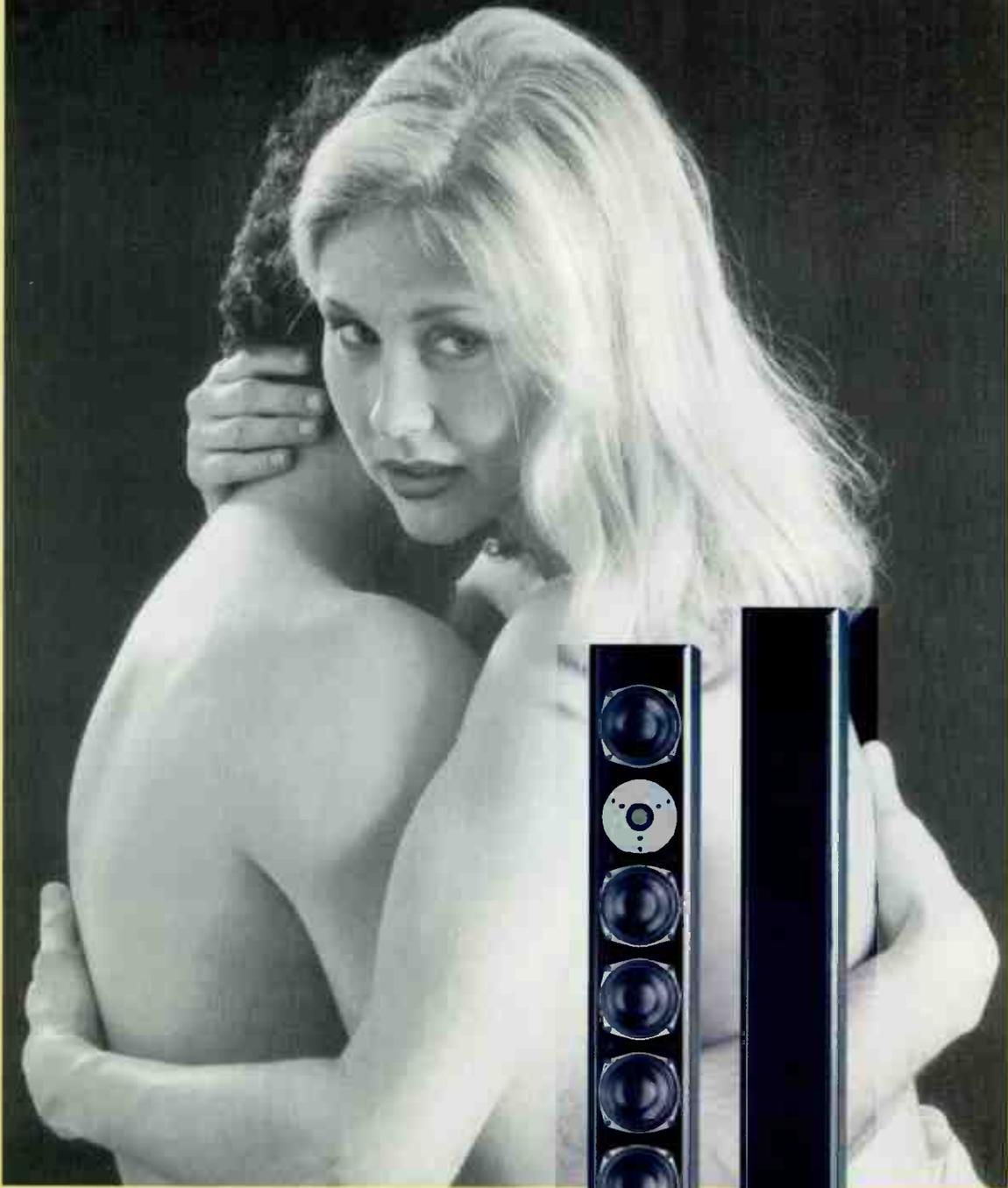
Cue Harmless, stepping in with a round-up of some of the most popular Afro-Funk from the last 20 years which they have presented in a dancefloor-friendly vibe. Contributors such as Mombassa and Mandingo nestle alongside big guns Fela and Manu Dibango under the watchful ear of Russ Dewbury, the man who brought Jazz to

the masses of Brighton.

This one is for purists and Funk-fiends. There may be plenty to groove to - Mandingo's breed of spangly Afro-Funk being one prime slice and Peter King's Bluesy melt-down another - but equally there's a proportion of unretouched Afro-Funk that will simply sound like tribal hoe-downs to uninitiated individuals.

Manu Dibango's 'New Bell' mixed by Masters At Work really captures the Seventies Funk edge; this is the number most likely to get picked up by the masses, a true contender for the Starsky and Hutch remake theme tune. In short, Africafunk is throaty vocals, backing by latter-day Pips, Jazz, smooch and so on, and there's only one way to describe it - Afrofunk.

MAGNETIC ATTRACTION



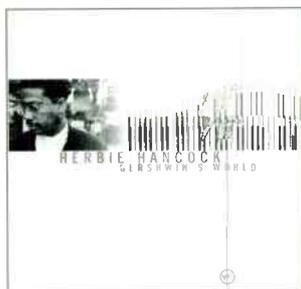
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JAZZ

by Ian Nicolson



HERBIE HANCOCK
GERSHWIN'S WORLD
VERVE SACDVER85

While Cher and George Michael are cloning late-Seventies Disco to conquer the charts, Jazzers have been dipping into the same decade for a little inspiration - or cashflow. But Hancock's re-invention of his seminal Seventies *Headhunters* for a world tour this year (and another blinding Jazz-Funk album) shouldn't obscure what may yet prove to be an equally lasting set.

These days, Hancock says he wants to make records that are "events", music that "reaches into people's lives through more than just their ears". *Gershwin's World* evokes the outpouring of artistic exuberance that swept around the Western world in the Roaring Twenties, dissolving creative and social barriers in a wave of cross-fertilisation and optimism - until the impact of the Depression broke its force.

But don't be misled into thinking *World* is a set of covers of Gershwin standards. Hancock and producer Robert Sadin wanted to recreate the spirit of the age that framed Gershwin's output, so there's Blues from W.C. Handy and James P. Johnson, as well as Classical from Gershwin's contemporary Ravel, plus Joni Mitchell wrapping her unique and smoky

tones around 'Summertime' and 'The Man I Love' and a riveting re-Africanisation of 'Fascinatin' Rhythm'.

Hancock's 1996 Verve debut, *The New Standard*, picked up one of those nice Grammy awards, and *Gershwin's World* is an early hot-tip for next year's nominations. Since his very first hit back in 1962 with *Watermelon Man*, Hancock's mixture of invention, technique and musicianship have made him the most popular Jazz pianist ever. And if them apples don't shake your tree, perhaps being able to pull Stevie Wonder, Kathleen Battle and Joni Mitchell to sing with players including Chick Corea, Wayne Shorter and Stanley Clarke - and the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra - may do the trick. Timeless class.



YELLOWJACKETS
CLUB NOCTURNE
WARNER BROS. 70312

And speaking of the Seventies, fans of that decade's magnificent Soul-to-Jazz-to-Funk session superstar band *Stuff* are in for a treat with the new release from the Yellowjackets. These chamois-polished fusioners add Brenda Russell, Kurt Elling and Jonathan Butler on vocals this time to introduce a lucrative new phase.

Mellow, melodic and unfrontational, the sixth album from the Californian four-piece deftly rides the cusp between bland and bitchin' by fusing delicately-rendered Funk rhythms with surprisingly unpredictable solos from pianist Russell Ferrante and Bob Mintzer's athletic and charming saxes. Factor in occasional expressive and scatty vocals that add a touch of bold to a predominantly pastel palette, and superb, forward engineering and it's not hard to see more platinum on the way.

Smooth Jazz gets a mixed press these days, but this is music that draws you into its mood, rather than drenching the listener in syrup. Once described as music to clean the house to, I've yet to reach for the Dyson myself.



STAN KENTON
STANDARDS IN SILHOUETTE
CAPITOL JAZZ 94503

It's doing that November rain thing outside again, the leaves are piling up to the eaves and, as the too-soon-forgotten Lowell George once wrote, there's 20 million things to do. . . So how can I get away with sitting in my favourite chair, sipping mango tea and luxuriating in the sound of a 50-year-old recording that's

just reappeared on CD at mid-price?

Easy. Suddenly it's September 1949, New York City, and the huge, empty ballroom of the plush Riverside Plaza Hotel has been booked by Capitol Records' staff producer Bill Matthieu to capture controversial bandleader Kenton's latest adventure in breaking out of the straightjacket of Big Band Swing.

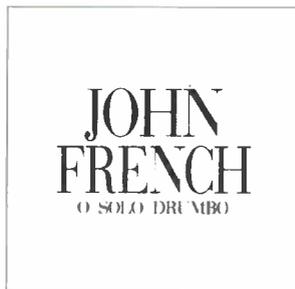
By the end of 1949, what Kenton was about to rename the Progressive Orchestra already included celebrated soloists like Charlie Mariano, Archie LeCocque, Rolf Ericson and Don Sebesky. They'd taken over from Kenton's pre-war stars like Stan Getz, Anita O'Day and Art Pepper who'd powered a string of smashes including 'Artistry And Rhythm', 'And Her Tears Flowed Like Wine' and 'How High The Moon'.

Those tunes owed much to the mould-breaking arrangements of Pete Rugolo, and Kenton had just unearthed another young Turk to take the Orchestra to a new plane. When he joined the band as a staff arranger in January 1949, Bill Matthieu was just 21. By the end of that first summer the young man's unique touch at reinventing and revitalising tunes already embedded in Joe Public's mental jukebox had convinced Kenton to give him his own album to score, and this is it.

All of this comes digitally remastered with generous notes and a brilliant bonus track, the whole available at a lot less than a tenner. If you don't know this record - or have ever grown a goosebump at Gil Evans, Rickie Lee Jones or Tom Waits' takes on Big Band Jazz - do yourself a favour.

JAZZ

by Simon Hopkins



JOHN FRENCH
O SOLO DRUMBO
AVANT AVAN024

No doubt about it, drummer John 'Drumbo' French may well be one of the oddest drummers in Rock music, but a quick glance at his CV confirms that his eccentric, brutalist, almost child-like style has brought him into contact with some of modern music's brightest stars, Ry Cooder, Richard Thompson, Frank Zappa and Fred Frith among them. But if there is one association for which he is best known, it is with Don Van Vliet, aka 'Captain Beefheart'.

With the Magic Band he was given free rein to thrash out his unique rhythms, and there can be no doubt that, although Van Vliet's own personal vision defined the band, it would nonetheless have sounded very different indeed without Drumbo.

This solo drum album on John Zorn's Avant label originated in a performance put on two years ago by the London Musicians' Collective, which was broadcast on BBC Radio 3's ever-eclectic Mixing It programme.

According to Drumbo's own sleevenotes, when San Francisco experimental guitarist Henry Kaiser heard a tape of the show he insisted on

producing a similar set of French's drum solos. Between them they have chosen a set of songs which span his career - Beefheart songs, Crazy Backwards Alphabet songs, songs he recorded with Frith, Kaiser, Thompson and so on - from which French uses the drum parts as the basis for his eccentric improvisations. True, this is pretty arid stuff - I'm not going to pretend that an album of solo drums isn't a lot to take in one sitting, and yet. . .

Many other drummers would take this opportunity to indulge in ostentatious, gratuitous displays of their hard-won technique. Not so Drumbo, of course; he allows instead his stark, elliptical rhythms to induce something akin to a trance-state in anyone who listens closely. A fascinating insight into the musical approach of one of Rock music's most unique instrumentalists.



LOREEN MAZZACANE
CONNORS
EVANGELINE
ROAD CONE ROCO 021 CD

I've written about American guitar maverick Loreen Mazzacane Connors before in this column. Frankly, he seems so dazzlingly prolific at the moment that it would be difficult to avoid him if I wanted

to. This sudden high output is a nice bit of irony from a musician who spent the first 20 years of his career practically unknown.

Like the newly-discovered John Fahey before him, Connors has stripped away from his technique the easy draw of cliché and gesture that guitar playing so often provides. Instead, he somehow has the knack of identifying the gold at the heart of any melody or phrase and bringing it into the light of day. Mind you, *Evangeline* is a very different record from the last I reviewed here, *A Possible Dawn*. The fact that the album included contributions from, among others, Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore was truly telling.

Evangeline, recorded almost a decade ago, is an altogether calmer affair. Drawing on the influence of Folk and Country melodies, Connors teases from his material lines of a startling fragility, lines which on the surface are almost sentimental yet which have at their core a sense of loneliness and desolation which is characteristically American.



DAVE DOUGLAS
CHARMS OF THE NIGHT SKY
WINTER AND WINTER
910 015-2CD

Charms Of The Night Sky is

almost certainly the most melancholic record I've heard all year. Trumpeter Dave Douglas is probably best known as part of John Zorn's Masada group, although his name has been cropping up more and more frequently on some of the most interesting straight-ahead Jazz records.

It's no wonder JZ recruited him for Masada, as he is that rare improviser who can play with total intensity yet remain wonderfully melodic. *Sanctuary*, the album he released last year, was a very surprising record to many ears; a long composition which incorporated acoustic instrumentation, sampling, drum machines and so on.

This new W&W release is a very different beast. The composer has written a suite of songs for an acoustic Chamber-Jazz group, albeit one consisting of highly versatile NYC down-town mavericks. There's Douglas himself on trumpet; accordionist Guy Klucsevsek; violinist Mark Feldman; and fellow Masada-man Greg Cohen on double-bass. The music - almost entirely Douglas' own - is full of sad but utterly lovely melodies which at once recall Eastern European Folk music, klezmer and tango. Put another way, it's a kind of freewheeling, meta-Folk music.

From this base the players spin out staggeringly adept, impassioned solos which again show life still teeming within acoustic Jazz. Wonderful!

AVON

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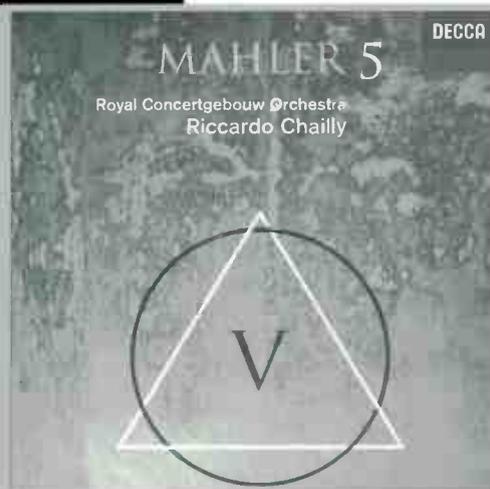
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RECORDS OF THE MONTH



too, charts a fresh and thought-provoking course through the equally familiar territory of the Fourth Symphony - and just when you could be forgiven for concluding

temperament, from funeral march to rustic dance, to the poignant tenderness of the famous Adagietto which Chailly allows to unfold with a natural, unforced momentum. He draws wonderful playing from the Concertgebouw, deploying its power and tonal depth to maximum effect in the symphony's many climactic moments. The woodwind and brass playing is especially fine and, deservedly, the orchestra's principal trumpet, Peter Masseurs, receives individual credit. The performance, though, is a triumph for the entire orchestra, its sound captured with exceptional fullness and spaciousness by the Decca engineers, and with the warmth and sense of perspective for which the Concertgebouw acoustic has become legendary.

and the kind of precision which has become the CBSO's hallmark under Rattle.

As with his superlative interpretation of the Seventh Symphony, Rattle has clearly pondered the Fourth afresh, uncluttered by the standard wisdom concerning the piece. He finds shadows cast across its path of child-like innocence; the macabre and sinister elements of the score are emphasised, as is the intentionally jarring collision of styles. Eventually, this mixture of sublimity, naivety, irony and plain kitsch is resolved in the artless joy of the final movement, the setting for soprano of *Das Himmlische Leben* (The Heavenly Life). Here, this beatific, wide-eyed vision of the eternal is glowingly depicted by Amanda Roocroft, and with Rattle deftly painting in the orchestral backdrop, the effect is irresistible.

EMI's sound for Rattle's performance of the Fourth, recorded in the Symphony Hall, Birmingham, is clear, detailed and truthful, if on the 'dry' side and wanting for some atmosphere. The playing is first-rate, with superb solo contributors



Symphony No5 in C sharp minor
Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Amsterdam;
conductor Riccardo Chailly
 DECCA 458 860-2 (DDD/71.05)

Symphony No4 in G major
Amanda Roocroft, soprano; City Of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra;
conductor, Sir Simon Rattle
 EMI CLASSICS 5 56563 2 (DDD/59.24)

Not since Bernstein's Vienna performance of 1986 has there been a recording of Mahler's Fifth as involving and stimulating as Riccardo Chailly's with the Amsterdam Concertgebouw. Simon Rattle,

there was nothing new to say about Mahler. The Amsterdam orchestra's association with the Fifth Symphony goes back to 1906 when the composer conducted them in the work's Netherlands premiere. This was one of the formative elements in what has become an enduring Concertgebouw-Mahler tradition, a tradition that Riccardo Chailly evidently enjoys continuing. He has expressed a fascination with what he once described as Mahler's 'spider's web of sound', and he elicits some unexpectedly strange and exotic sonorities throughout this performance. But this ear for detail is never used at the expense of conveying the structure of this huge work, or of pointing up the inter-relationships between the five movements.

Chailly has the measure of this symphonic odyssey, its kaleidoscopic instrumentation and its fluctuating



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CLASSICAL



SERGEI RACHMANINOV
10 Preludes, Op23
13 Preludes, Op32
John Lill, piano
 NIMBUS NI5555 (DDD/75.28)

It's refreshing to hear the Rachmaninov piano preludes treated on their musical merits rather than as vehicles for flashy virtuosity. Anyone familiar with John Lill's recordings and concert performances will know that vacuous display is not his style. He takes few liberties with the score, and his scrupulous attention to detail and the nuances of the piano writing can be revelatory.

Rachmaninov's art is encompassed in these two sets of Preludes, the 10 of Op23 composed between 1901 and 1903, and the 13 Op32 pieces from seven years later. Add the early Prelude in C sharp minor from his Op3 set (not included here) and it can be seen that, like Chopin and Scriabin before him - and, for that matter, J.S. Bach - Rachmaninov employed all the major and minor keys of the chromatic scale. Unlike these earlier models, however, Rachmaninov's Preludes are not presented in a formal sequence of keys, nor did he intend them to be played as such. When planning his recitals, the composer would choose pieces randomly from the two sets. However, simply by being listed in alternate

major and minor modes, strong contrasts in mood naturally permeate each set and - as John Lill demonstrates - performing them as integrated cycles works well.

In the main, his unshowy approach is very satisfying, although his steady tempo for the swaggering G minor prelude Op23 No5 deprives it of some of its impact. By contrast, his subtle shading of pieces such as the lovely Andante Cantabile No4 in D and the tranquil Largo in G flat, which concludes the set, is finely-judged.

There are occasions, notably in the Op32 set, where Lill's range falls short of the softness demanded, although this may be largely down to the surprisingly (for Nimbus) close and bottom-heavy recording. Otherwise, the sound is clear and full-toned, and Nimbus earn a plaudit for squeezing all 23 Preludes on to a single CD. Among rival versions, to my knowledge only Peter Katin's 1972 recording for Carlton's IMP Classics offers comparable value.



MAURICE RAVEL
L'Heure Espagnole - comic opera/L'Enfant Et Les Sortilèges - lyric fantasy

NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV
Capriccio Espagnol, Op34

IGOR STRAVINSKY
Le Chant du Rossignol

Jane Berbie; Jean Giraudeau; Gabriel Bacquier; Jose van Dam; Michel Senechal; Françoise Ogeas; Jeanine Collard; Sylvaine Gilma; Colette Herzog; Heinz Rehfuss; Camille Maurane; Chorus and Children's Choir of RTF; Orchestre National de la RTF; Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra; Radio-Symphonie-Orchestra Berlin; conductor, Lorin Maazel
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 449 769-2 (2-CD SET)
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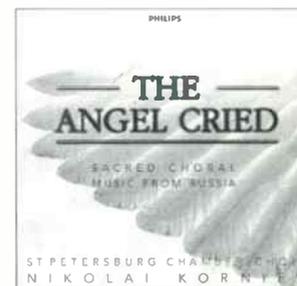
Though both recordings are now well over 30 years old, these performances of Ravel's two operatic masterpieces remain unsurpassed. Handsomely repackaged as a two-disc set in Deutsche Grammophon's 'Originals' series, they have also been generously coupled with two well-chosen 'fillers', Rimsky-Korsakov's picture-postcard Capriccio Espagnol and Stravinsky's delightful Chant du Rossignol (Song of the Nightingale).

The 'lyric fantasy' L'Enfant Et Les Sortilèges (The Child and the Magic Spells) is based on a story by Colette which tells of an ill-tempered, petulant child who abuses his toys and possessions only to have them come to life and take their revenge on him. It inspired Ravel to some of his most witty and enchanting music.

Like L'Enfant, the one-act comic opera L'Heure

Espagnole is ripely colourful and entertaining, with a rich cast of characters. Its lively humour and delicious wordplay need an alert interpreter if they are to make their mark and the youthful Lorin Maazel proved wholly attuned to the nuances of the score. In this 1965 recording, he was blessed with some outstanding soloists: Jane Berbie as the amorous, frustrated spouse of the old clockmaker, Torquemada; Jose van Dam as the fatuous Don Inigo Gomez; and Michel Senechal as the dreamy, air-headed poet, Gonzalve.

Maazel directs both works with panache and exuberance, and in terms of style and atmosphere he is spot-on. And it is not only the performances which have lost none of their brilliance and vitality over the years. In these new transfers, the recorded sound too displays a striking presence and clarity, with sparkling orchestral detail. It's an unbeatable combination, and the ideal partnering of two classic recordings.



THE ANGEL CRIED
 SACRED CHORAL MUSIC FROM RUSSIA
Works by Pavel Chesnokov, Aleksandr Grechaninov, Viktor Kalinnikov, Yuri Sakhnovsky, Konstantin Shvedov and Peter Tchaikovsky

CLASSICAL

St Petersburg Chamber choir; conductor, Nikolai Korniev

PHILIPS CLASSICS 454 461-2 (DDD/53.07)

This is the latest in a series of outstanding recordings by the St Petersburg Chamber Choir, under Nikolai Korniev, to be issued by Philips. Having tackled the two great masterpieces of the canon of Russian sacred music, Rachmaninov's settings of the Vespers (the All-Night Vigil) and the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom, and in addition produced albums of Easter and Christmas music, the choir here surveys late Romantic liturgical music by Russian composers ranging from Tchaikovsky and Grechaninov to names that remain unknown in the West.

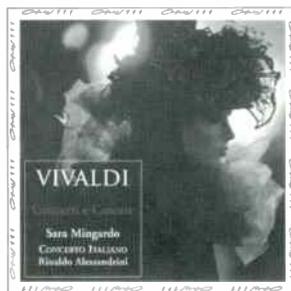
Pavel Chesnokov, for example, was the most prolific composer of sacred music of his generation (he was born in 1877 and died in 1944). He wrote more than 400 pieces, about a third of which are based on forms of Eastern plainchant. As in his *Fervent Prayer*, he relies on repeated rhythms and melodic tags to build to dramatic climax, and there is no denying the effectiveness of the technique.

Yuri Sakhnovsky's *Cherubic Hymn* is typical of the 'saturated' choral sound, and in sharp contrast to the more austere work of Konstantin Shvedov. His setting of the *Lord's Prayer* is ethereally beautiful. Shvedov generally found the basis for his compositions not in the ancient chants but in folk song, and the five pieces from his *Divine Liturgy* recorded here show how skilful were his adaptations

with their lilting melodies and surprising harmonies.

This is music by turns contemplative and ecstatic, but always utterly distinctive. The Russian choral sound is like no other and the immaculate, rapturous singing of the St Petersburg choir leaves an indelible impression. They conclude with works by the two most familiar names among these composers: Grechaninov and Tchaikovsky. Neither was involved in producing liturgical music to the extent of Pavel Chesnokov, though they grew up with it. Grechaninov's *Fervent Prayer* has the intensity and impassioned climax that its title implies, while Tchaikovsky's *The Angel Cried* is a choral gem and deservedly lends its name to the entire CD.

The choir makes an intoxicating, almost overwhelming sound and has been cleanly and atmospherically recorded in the Cathedral of St Peter and St Paul in its home city of St Petersburg. Full Russian texts and translations are provided.



ANTONIO VIVALDI
Concerto for Strings in C major, RV117; in E minor, RV134; in G major, RV151, Alla Rustica/ Cello Concerto in A minor, RV422/ Concerto for Violin and Strings in D minor, Op4 No8,

RV249/Cantatas for Alto and Strings, RV883, Amor hai vinto; RV684, Cessate Omni Cessate Sara Mingardo, alto; Francesca Vicari, violin; Luigi Piovanno, cello; Concerto Italiano; director and harpsichord, Rinaldo Alessandrini
OPUS 111 OPS 30-181 (DDD/59.33)

Following their superlative recordings of Monteverdi (those of the books of madrigals can be recommended almost without reservation), Rinaldo Alessandrini and his colleagues in *Concerto Italiano* bring an equivalent vitality and freshness to Vivaldi - and rare Vivaldi at that. The programme has been imaginatively planned, interspersing five concertos with two secular cantatas (Sara Mingardo in ripe voice) and the result is wonderfully entertaining music-making from first to last.

Three of the concertos are for string orchestra alone, including RV117, two movements of which were reworked by Vivaldi as the opening *sinfonia* to his serenata *La Senna Festeggiante*, written for King Louis XV of France. Another of these concertos, that in G major, RV151, is one of only two among Vivaldi's numerous concerti a quattro to possess an illustrative title, in this instance *Alla Rustica*. The bucolic reference is rooted in the energetic first movement whose 9/8 metre bears the unmistakable imprint of an Italian folk dance such as the *Tarantella*.

The remaining two concertos are both for solo instruments, one for violin from the Op4 set titled *La Stravaganza* and the Cello Concerto, RV422, one of 27 to be penned by Vivaldi for this instrument, the first fully-fledged examples of the genre to enter the musical canon. Violinist Francesca Vicari and cellist Luigi Piorano are the stylish soloists in what are highly characterful as well as technically assured performances.

Above all what emerges most forcefully in these concertos is their wealth of invention and remarkable variety, although on occasions Rinaldo Alessandrini's harpsichord contributions prove a little too inventive, becoming intrusively elaborate. Moreover the very fast tempos he adopts for the quick movements sometimes test his colleagues to the limit.

Just as Vivaldi's command of the concerto form is ever-evident here, so in the two cantatas - both concerned with themes of unrequited love in classical Arcadia - is his mastery of two vocal styles, the accompanied recitative and the aria. Sara Mingardo's rich coloratura is ideally suited to these pieces, as is her unforced sense of drama and mellifluous, natural phrasing. A finely-focused, pleasingly balanced (if slightly dry) recording serves her well while illuminating each strand of the instrumental texture. Indeed, my only real criticism of this most enjoyable Vivaldi collection is that the enjoyment could have continued for a while longer: with just under 60 minutes' playing time, another concerto - even two - could easily have been accommodated.

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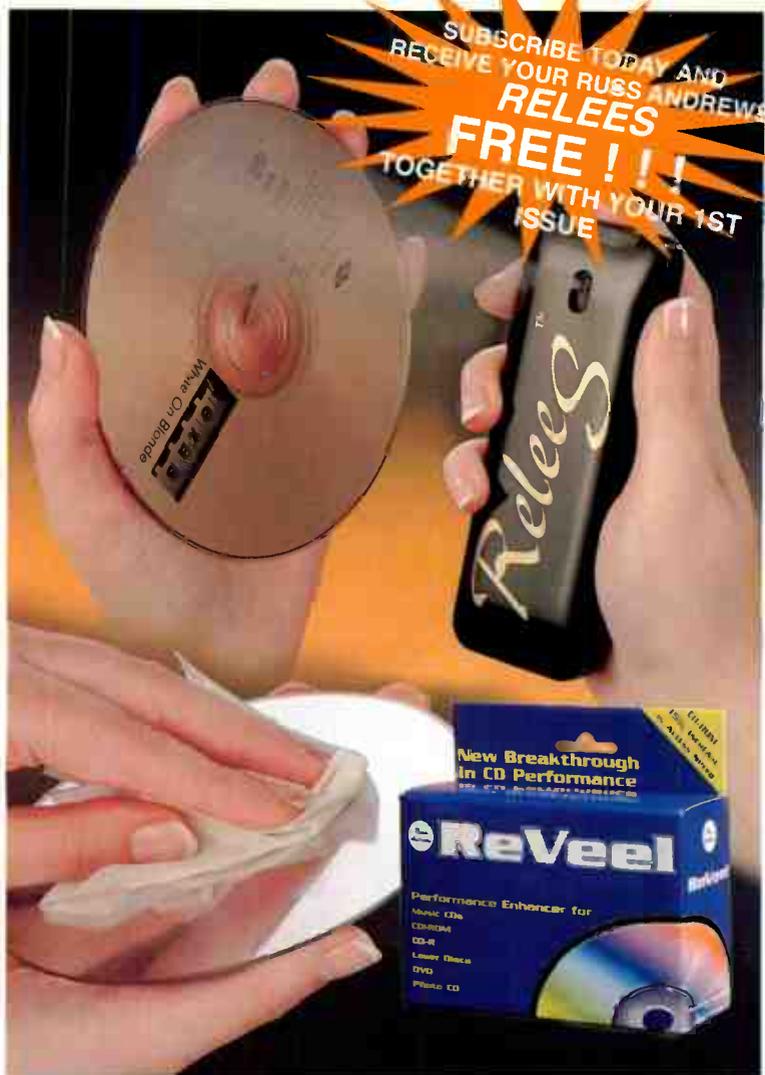
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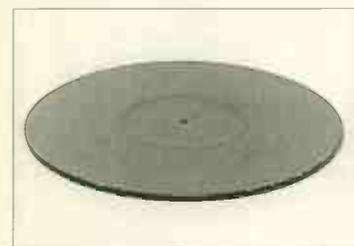
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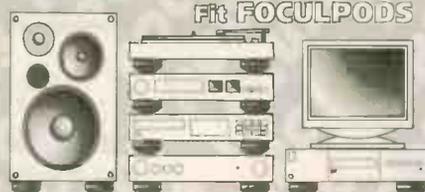
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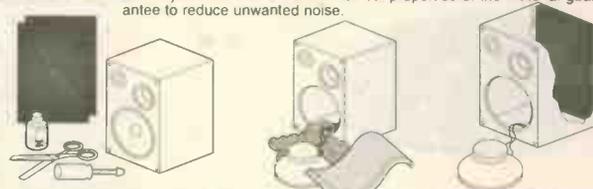
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You need at least 2 Deflex panels for a pair of small bookshelf speakers, 4 panels for a pair of Tannoy 6's, and at least 6 panels for larger cabinets.

Once you have gained access to the inside of the cabinet, remove foam and/or wool damping from the inside of the speaker (if fitted).

Place the flexible Deflex panel thru the speaker cut out and stick to the inside of the cabinet using the recommended adhesive.

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Deflex panels seemed to give greater tightness and control, improved internal clarity, and pitch definition - all without deadening the sound in any way.

the result was sharper imaging, wider dynamics and a more natural sound

CHOICE VERDICT

Sound Quality **■■■■■**
Value for money **■■■■■**

a marked improvement was obvious from the first few bars of REM's Automatic for the people album

But one thing is sure - the Deflex panels are no gimmicks. They work.

Now sit back and listen to the extra detail in sound, and far less distortion when played loud

PANEL PRICES

Standard Panel	£7.95	(28cm x 21cm)
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(cash sale)		
Papworth M100 100 watt valve monoblock power amps (mint/as new) s/h	3800.00	2000.00
Audio Sher Highs (300B) Class A monoblock power amps (mint/as new) s/h	2250.00	1395.00
Audio Innovations Alto into amp (mint) s/h	330.00	239.95
AudioLab 80005 remote int. (mint) s/h	750.00	429.95
Unison Simply Two valve int. (mint/as new) s/h	1150.00	795.00
Lumley YTP 1000 valve line pre-amp (vdc) s/h	400.00	299.95
Luxman LV 1040 U hybrid valve/SS int. (vdc) s/h	500.00	349.95
Chameleon Nuby power amp (2x200 watts) (vdc) s/h	1200.00	449.95
Quad 77 int. with 77 CD player (bus) (carbon fibre)/controller (weeks old) (mint) s/h	1550.00	1199.95
Quad 33/303 pre/power amp (very good example) (vdc) s/h	-	POA
Quad 34 pre-amp (mint) (vdc) s/h	388.00	199.95
Quad 520P poweramp (professional) (vdc) s/h	600.00	299.95
Quad 405 I power amp (vdc) s/h	-	199.95
Quad 44 pre-amp (vdc) s/h	700.00	249.95
Rushaw Overture int. (mint/as new) s/h	4350.00	249.95
Technics SUY 9080 remote pre/pwr (mint/as new) s/h	500.00	349.95
Technics SUY 450 (2x60watts) int. (vdc) s/h	-	119.95
Pioneer A400 (longtail) (2x50watts) int. (g.c.) s/h	280.00	179.95
Pioneer A400A (2x50watts) int. (vdc) s/h	280.00	179.95
Creek CAS 1040 int. (g.c.) s/h	180.00	109.95
Sugden CS1 pre-amp (vdc) s/h	-	89.95
Rotel RX-850 AL tuner-amp (g.c.) s/h	-	149.95
Rotel RB 9608L (2x60watts) power-amp (vdc)	-	149.95
Naim NAC 62 (pre-amp) old style c/w Cobra Snac (vdc) s/h	-	199.95
Naim NAC 62 (pre-amp) new style c/w Naim Snac (mint) s/h	-	219.95
Rega Ekort 2x70watts dual mono int. (mint/as new) s/h	730.00	499.95
Melodian 101 Preamp (M.C. Board) (g.c.) s/h	-	79.95
Kenwood DP3080R remote int. (vdc) s/h	250.00	169.95
DPA DSP 2005 pre-amp (vdc) s/h	495.00	299.95
ABR A60 (original) int. (vdc) s/h	-	79.95
QED C300/300 pre/power amps (f.c.) s/h	700.00	299.95
SAE Mark IV CH 2x100watts American power amp (g.c.) s/h	loads	169.95
Marantz PM80 2x80watts int. (mint) s/h	400.00	249.95
Cambridge Audio C10/A70 pre/power (MM/MC) (g.c.) s/h	-	199.95

Equivalent New Price

AMPLIFIERS

	Equivalent New Price	Sale Price
SME Series III arm (g.c.) s/h	-	79.95
Linn K18 MM cart (boxed) (vdc) s/h	200.00	79.95
Orion Super OM20 MM cart (boxed) (mint) s/h	40.00	40.00
Linn LP12 armboard for Linn/Alphason/Zeta etc (mint) s/h	-	20.00
Linn LP12 (all) / Alphason delta/ K18 II (vdc) s/h	1700.00	595.00
Linn LP12 (valued) / Bask amp k.9 (vdc) s/h	1500.00	495.00
Linn Akoto Tonearm (mint) s/h	500.00	169.95
Michel Phoro/RB/300/Goldring 1012 (mint) s/h	632.00	399.95
Hi-Fi News Walnut II (wallmount for turntables) (vdc) s/h	65.00	49.95
Decca International uniprot tonearm (g.c.) s/h	-	49.90

A selection of our ever changing offers for sale (all fully guaranteed)

COMPACT DISC PLAYERS/TRANSPORTS/D.A.C.S.

	Equivalent New Price	Sale Price
Arcam Delta 250 transport/Black Box 50 DAC (mint) s/h	1250.00	795.00
Arcam Alpha Plus remote player (g.c.) s/h	500.00	229.95
Audio Innovations Alto (black) remote (mint) s/h	400.00	249.95
Audio Innovations Alto (chrome) remote (vdc) s/h	400.00	229.95
Cambridge Discmagic I / Dacmagic I (vdc) s/h	500.00	269.95
Marantz CD.65 II remote (vdc) s/h	300.00	89.95
Micro Mega CD3 top loader transport (Acrylic) (vdc) s/h	1500.00	795.00
Musical Fidelity X-Ray 24/96 player (superb player) (new)	799.00	-
Philips CD1 210 (interactive) (mint) s/h	400.00	109.95
Technics SL PS770A remote (mint/as new) s/h	250.00	189.95
Technics SL PS 770D remote (mint/as new) s/h	250.00	189.95
Technics SL PG 520A remote (vdc) s/h	200.00	119.95
Technics SL PS550 remote (vdc) s/h	-	129.95
Kenwood DP 3060 remote (g.c.) s/h	200.00	119.95
Denon DCD 925 remote (mint) s/h	-	109.95
Denon DCD 890 remote (vdc) s/h	200.00	109.95
Sony X-33 ES remote (g.c.) s/h	500.00	169.95
Musical Fidelity X-Act DAC (new)	-	130.00
Musical Fidelity X-Dac (HDCD) DAC (new)	-	300.00
Musical Fidelity X-100 (missing Link) CD/Line buffer (ex-dem)	120.00	80.00
Musical Fidelity X-PSU (new)	-	130.00
Pioneer PDR 901 (stable platter) remote (vdc) s/h	500.00	269.95
Pioneer PD 9700 (stable platter) remote (vdc) s/h	400.00	149.95
Pioneer PDS 703 (stable platter) remote (vdc) s/h	450.00	179.95

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PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Klipsch KG 3.5 Loudspeakers in medium oak
94 db sensitivity/great with valves!
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LOUDSPEAKERS

	Equivalent New Price	Sale Price
Dali 104B 100 watts/3 way floor standers (mint) s/h	370.00	249.95
Epox ES 14 (black) inc. stands (vdc) s/h	675.00	369.95
Mission 7331 (black) (mint/boxed) s/h	330.00	229.95
Wharfedale Diamonds 7.2 (black) (new)	140.00	99.95
Celestion SL 65 (black) (f.c.) s/h	400.00	169.95
Tannoy 625 ALF 100watts active sub (mint/as new) s/h	600.00	299.95
Ruark Templar II (natural oak) (mint) s/h	600.00	299.95
Linn Helix LS 150 (vdc) inc. stands (black) s/h	280.00	179.95
Linn Helix II/Ki-Stone stands (black) (vdc) s/h	350.00	199.95
Griffin Omega 2S plus (walnut) (vdc) (these speakers are good!) s/h	-	129.95
B&W DM1600 (black) (vdc but no grills hence) s/h	380.00	129.95
Monitor Audio Monitor 9 (black) (mint) s/h	220.00	149.95
Monitor Audio R300 MD (black) (vdc) s/h	300.00	159.95
Monitor Audio 7 (black) (vdc) s/h	200.00	129.95
Ref Q15 (Uni Q drivers) (few weeks old) (mint) s/h	200.00	159.95
Yamaha NS10 (studio monitor) (mint/as new) Rare s/h	300.00	229.95
PIW Monitors v/c stands (black) (vdc) s/h	250.00	139.95
Denon SC E 313 (Rosewood) (mint) s/h	140.00	99.95
Klipsch KG 315 (94db) (medium oak) (mint/as new) s/h	650.00	449.95

A selection of our ever changing offers for sale (all fully guaranteed)

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

	Equivalent New Price	Sale Price
Mordant Short Decoder One (Dolby Pro Logic Processor) (inexpensive route to home cinema) (mint) s/h	400.00	149.95
Technics SB G350 remote Pro Logic tuner amp (mint) s/h	330.00	199.95
Yamaha DSP A592 remote pro-logic/DSP amp (mint)	340.00	249.95
Yamaha DSP A492 remote Pro Logic amp (mint) s/h	250.00	169.95
Musical Fidelity X-Tone (new)	-	130.00
Ampod AP2 ambig isolators (mint) s/h	320.00	129.95
Senheiser HD 600 cans (mint) s/h	250.00	149.95
Alphason Glass 4 shelf mini stand (ideal for X Series) (mint) s/h	100.00	69.95
A few Target stands left (5 shelf) (seconds)	-	POA

Equivalent New Price

TURNTABLES/ARMS/CARTRIDGES PHONO-STAGE ETC

	Equivalent New Price	Sale Price
STD 305M c/w Mayware Uniprot/Goldring Eban cart (vdc) s/h	loads	249.95
Nokian Aeneas/E 300/Phy/Chrysal PSU (mint) s/h	loads	599.95
Moson 775 SW/74 arm/HMS 306 (vdc) s/h	loads	399.95
Reveler Rebel c/w arm/ALT. cart (mint) s/h	-	149.95
Musical Fidelity X LP (The One At This Price) MM/MC NEW	-	130.00
Musical Fidelity X LP (ex-dem)	130.00	90.00

Equivalent New Price

TAPE DECKS/TUNERS ETC.

	Equivalent New Price	Sale Price
Nakamichi BX 125 (f.c.) s/h	400.00+	169.95
NAD 6050C B/C etc (f.c.) s/h	-	69.95
Yamaha RX 1020 3 head/DBX/HR Pro etc (vdc) s/h	400.00	189.95
Sony ST SA 3ES RDS digital tuner (mint/as new) s/h	230.00	169.95

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Denon		Goldring G800 Super E £14.00
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DL 304	£190 £160 EX	National EPS 24 CS, P 30 D, P 33 D £10.00
Goldring		Ortolon FF 15 E II, VMS 20 E II, DM 20 £14.00
1012 GX	£76 £50	Pioneer PN 210, PN 220, PN 240 £10.00
1022 GX	£94 £62	Shure N 75 C, SC 35 C, N 75 E T2, N 75 EJ T2 £12.00
1042	£115 £76	N 95 ED, N 95 EJ, N 75 3 (78) £14.00
Eroica (LX or H)	£102 £78 EX	VN 35 E £16.50
Elite	£200 £153 EX	N 95 HE, N 97 HE, VN 35 HE £22.00
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Grado		CN234 £12.00
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Prestige Gold	£134 £74	originals
Ortolon		ORTOFON DJ PACKS (CARTRIDGE + 2 STYLI)
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MC 15 Super II	£120 £102 EX	Concorde Nightclub SSS Pack £106 Stylus £27
MC 25 FL	£210 £178 EX	Concorde Nightclub EEE Pack £82 Stylus £33
MC 10 Supreme	£263 £224 EX	Concorde DJ SSS Pack £82 Stylus £21
MC 20 Supreme	£330 £280 EX	HEADPHONE SELECTION
MC 30 Supreme	£392 £333 EX	GRADO Prestige Series
Rohmann	£725 £645 EX	SR-40 £45
Shure		SR-60 £75
V 15 V XMR	£265 £178	SR-80 £90
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KEF 104 Loudspeakers	£450
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KRELL Studio Dac	£2000
KRELL CD-DSP MKII Cd Player	£1995
ORACLE Premier Mk III Turntable with psu	£1495
REVOX 877 Tape Recorder Excellent condition	£595
REVOX PR99 MK3 Tape Deck	£1995
REVOX 8215s Cassette Deck	£995
QUAD FM4 Tuner	£275
VOYD Turntable/SME V & Clearaudio Delta Cart	£2495
VOYD Turntable (upgraded psu & mtr) / Helius option	£1495
VOYD Standard Turntable MINT	£1495
DENON PDA 4400A Monoblocks EX CON	£895
AVALON ASCENT Speakers (light wood) MINT/CRATED (£16000)	£7000
AUDIO RESEARCH SP10 MK2 Pre-amp	£1395
NAKAMICHI RX505 Cassette Deck	£495
HELIUS Silver Wired tonearm	£995

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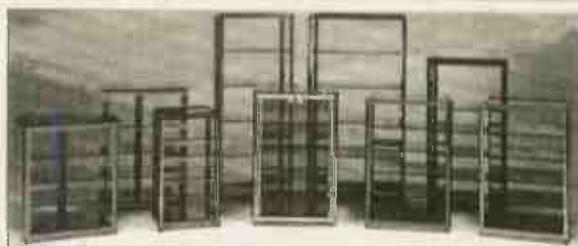
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...Jason Kennedy Hi-Fi Choice April 97

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Audio Designs of East Grinstead Mail Order and Export Service

PRODUCT	STATUS	WAS	NOW	PRODUCT	STATUS	WAS	NOW
Arcam Alpha 9 CD	xd	799.00	679.00	Linn Keltik	sh	6000.00	3500.00
Arcam Alpha 10 Amplifier	sh	799.00	549.00	Linn Kremilin	sh	1750.00	889.00
Arcam Alpha 8 Tuner	sh	279.90	179.90	Linn Kaber Active (in active cards)	xd	2375.00	1950.00
Arcam Xeta 2	xd	649.90	339.00	Linn Majik Phono	xd	800.00	660.00
Arcam Alpha 7 CD	sh	329.90	199.00	Linn Tune box	xd		689.00
Accuphase DP70 V CD	sh		2500.00	Linn Kudo module	sh	500.00	300.00
Audiolab 8000S	xd	699.00	559.00	Mission 754F	xd	1298.00	799.00
Audiolab 8000S	new	699.00	595.00	Naim 72 pre	xd	745.00	635.00
Audiolab 8000 MX	xd	899.00	719.00	Naim Intro	xd	680.00	565.00
Audiolab 8000 CDM	xd	1399.90	1099.00	Naim CDS	xd	3940.00	2990.00
Audiolab DAX	xd	899.00	719.00	Naim AV1	xd	1730.00	1099.00
B & W P5	xd	875.00	745.00	Naim32.5	sh		239.00
Castle Howard S2	xd	1199.00	959.00	Naim NAP 135	sh	3410.00	2387.00
Chord Electronics SPM 1200	sh		1900.00	Naim NAP 180	xd	1090.00	949.00
Cyrus DAD 1 CD	xd	398.00	338.00	Naim92/90	xd	945.00	805.00
Cyrus SL	xd	398.00	338.00	Pioneer PD 05 DAT	new	899.00	719.00
Cyrus PRE	xd	648.00	425.00	Pioneer Precision A300R	xd	400.00	320.00
Cyrus AV Master	cd	698.00	349.00	Pioneer Precision PDS505	xd	460.00	368.00
Epos ES12	new	550.00	465.00	Quad 77 amp	xd	699.90	349.00
Linn Arkiv	xd	1000.00	550.00	Quad 77 remote	xd	299.90	199.00
Linn LP12 Basic/Akito/K9	sh	1810.00	999.00	Rel Stentor	xd	1665.00	1085.00
Linn Ekos	sh	1500.00	1125.00	Thorens TD166UK	xd	399.00	299.00
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Linn Klout	sh	2400.00	1200.00				

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Thorens TD125		£195
Van den Hul The Frog Cartridge		
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Arcom Alpha 5	£250	£148
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Arcom Alpha 9 Integrated	£500	£375
Arcom Alpha 9 Power	£400	£295
Arcom Delta 120		£250
Audiolab 8000A	£500	£365
Audiolab 8000LX	£470	£378
Audiolab 8000C	£550	£325
Audiolab 8000Q Pre	£1100	£798
Audiolab 8000MX Pair	£1700	£1058
Audio Research D200 (Ex Dem)	£3250	£1997
Aura 80 SE-X (Integrated)	£250	£175
AVI S2000 MP Pre	£799	£498
Chameleon 900S 2 x 300w pwr	£1000	£495
Counterpoint Solid 1 Pwr	£1495	£675
Cyrus 2 + PSX (70wpc)		£440
Cyrus Pre/Power	£1095	£850
Cyrus Pre inc MM + Remote	£800	£478
Cyrus Power 50wpc	£500	£368
DPA DSP200 Line Pre (Ex Dem)	£499	£397
DPA Renaissance (Ex Dem)	£595	£477
Dynaco ST120 (Classic circa '76)		£328
Gryphon The Pre-Amp	£6000	£2000
Harmon Kardon AVP1a Processor	£2000	£495
John Shearne Pre/Pwr	£2300	£1295
Krell KBKL Pre	£4998	£1898
Krell KAV300i (Intgrd) Mint	£2550	£1998
Krell KSA80		£1495
Krell KSA100 Mk2	£4000	£1495
Krell KSA200B	£5500	£2758
LFD LSB + PA2 (Pre/Pwr)	£3800	£1498

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Meridian 603 Pre/DAC	£1750	£794
Meridian 562V Pre-MM	£1095	£678
Michell Argo + Hera	£900	£595
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Musical Fidelity A1 (Integrated)	£359	£225
Musical Fidelity P270/1 Power	£1395	£648
Musical Fidelity 3a Pre	£379	£248
Musical Fidelity 2a Pre	£299	£178
Musical Fidelity A200 (Integrated)	£725	£495
NAD 1000 Pre		£145
Naim NAC12		£165
Naim NAC32.5		£195
Naim NAC12S		£95
Naim NAC22		£145
Naim NAC42		£195
Naim NAC72	£725	£425
Naim NAPI60 (Old style) Kimber wired		£395
Naim NAPI135 (2 x monos) Ex-dem	£3410	£2980
Naim NAPI135 (2 x monos) Old style		£1648
Naim NAPI140 (Old Style)	£750	£428
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Naim MC Board for 92 Pre	£80	£58
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NVA

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Quad 66 Pre-amp		£498
Quad 44 Pre-amp		£265
Quad 405 Power-amp		£195
Rega Elicit Integrated	£730	£498
Revox B750	£550	£358
Roksan L1 Pre + PSU	£1100	£758
Sonographe SC1 Pre	£1250	£450
Sony FA3ES (Current model)	£400	£275
Sugden AU51 (Pre)	£750	£450
Sugden Optima 140 (2X70w Intgd)	£770	£448

Thorens TTP2000 Mk1 Pre (Ex Dem)	£499	£397
Thorens TTA2000 Pwr (Ex Dem)	£599	£477
YBA 2 Pre-amp	£1700	£878

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Integrated 300B	£1125	£897
Audio Innovations 500 (25w Int)	£1100	£495
Audio Innovations 200 (13w Pwr)		£295
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Audio Note OTTO	£1350	£795
Audio Research BLI Cnvr (Ex Dem)	£888	£587
Audio Research V70 Pwr (Ex Dem)	£4480	£2487
Audio Research LS5/1 Line Pre (Ex Dem)	£5295	£2997
Audio Research LS7 Pre	£1550	£1098
Audio Research SP14 Pre (silver)	£3300	£1495
Audio Research SP15PS 2 box pre	£6000	£2594
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UNWANTED PRIZE!!	£10,000	£5298
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Avantic SPA II Vintage valves		£188
Balanced Audio Technology Pre-VK-3i		
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Cary SLA-70 Mk11 (Pwr)		£998
Croft Series 5 (Power)		£495
Croft Absolute Pre-amp	£2400	£1395
Copland CTA501 Power amp	£1800	£998
EAR 859		£1298
Gordon Welford (Pre) Hand made, hard wired		£448
Graaf 5050 Power (Ex Dem)	£2150	£1657
Graaf WFB 2 Pre (Ex Dem)	£1195	£897
Grant G100 Pre / Pwr		£650
Luxman LX33 (Integrated)		£698
Muse Model 300 (Mono powers)	£4400	£2898
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Arcom Delta Black Box (DAC)		£148
Arcom Delta Black Box 5 (DAC)		£248
Audiolab 8000CDM Trans	£1400	£988
Audiolab 8000DAX DAC 24 bit	£1000	£678
Audio Research CD2	£3399	£2398
Audio Alchemy Vac-In-The-Box	£249	£175
Audio Alchemy Drive 3		£695
Audio Alchemy DACMAN(Ex Dem)	£149	£117
Audio Alchemy DAC-IN-BOX(Ex D)	£229	£177
Audio Alchemy V1 DAC		£168
Audio Research DAC 1 (20 bit)		
Plus ATNT	£3800	£1745
AVI 2000MC Reference CD	£1300	£898
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DPA Little Bit 2 (DAC)	£250	£148
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Krell SBP64X DAC	£9900	£1798

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Musical Fidelity X-PRE	£200	£145
Musical Fidelity Digilog DAC		£140
Naim CDS System (Ex-dem)	£3940	£2995
Naim CD1	£2000	£1178
Naim CD2 CD Player	£2000	£1378
Orelle CD10T (Trans)	£800	£548
Orelle DA180 Mk11 (DAC)	£600	£378
PS Audio REF Link		
Digital Processor	£5500	£2248
QED Digit Reference		£450
Quad 66 CD Player		£448
Roksan DP1 Trans		£598
Roksan Atessa (Trans)	£2300	£575
Teac VRDS7 CD Player	£600	£398
Teac VRDS10 CD Player	£770	£538
Theta ProGen III DAC	£4600	£2798
Theta Data Basic II Transport	£2397	£1398
Theta TLC	£230	£178
Trichord Pulsar I (DAC)	£1195	£658

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Arcam Alpha Tuner		£75
Arcam Alpha 5 Tuner	£230	£168
Arcam Alpha 7 Tuner	£230	£165
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Circa 1960 (no decoder)		£148
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Leak Trough Line 3		£98
Magnum Dynalab FT11	£550	£328
Marantz SD55 3 hd / 2 mtr	£400	£195
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Nakamichi Cassette Deck 2		£230
Nakamichi 481Z		£298
Nakamichi 630 Tuner/Pre-amp	£500	£295
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Quad FM2 Valve Tuner		£150
Quad FM3	Choice from	£95
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Revox B77 Mk's 1 & 2 (Call for details)		£POA
Sequerra Reference	£5973	£1998
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Sony 730ES	£300	£198
Theta Lynx Tuner	£500	£324

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Celestion SL6 + stands		£198
Gale 301 (Black)	£250	£159
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Linn Kan (Black & Teak)		£295
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Mission 727 (Teak)		£158
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Musical Fidelity MC2		£150
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ProAc Response 3.5 (Ex dem)	£4250	£2995
Quad ESL57	From...	£395
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Royd Minstrel (Walnut/Black)	£240	£168
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Spendor BC1		£238
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Tangent Monitor 2 (Rosewood)	£200	£140
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Wilson Witt Mk1 (Ex dem)	£8888	£6887

MISCELLANEOUS

Harmonix TU812 LP Record Clamp	£220	£170
Siltech 560 Balanced cables 1mtr pr	£1600	£600
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0.5m pair	£485	£398

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Heybrook C3+P3 Pre/Pwr	£1425	£795	£600
Krell Ref KRSBP(6 comp balanced pre)	£15,000	£3250	£2995
Linn Kaiir Pre	£1850	£1095	£750
Quad 33 Pre			£65
Threshold S300 (Nelson Pass)	£4500	£1500	£995
Audio Alchemy Drive System 3			
4 Box CD Player	£1950	£898	£695
Audio Research DAC 1 20 Bit	£3800	£1945	£1495
Meridian 606 DAC	£1500	£600	£550
Pink Triangle Da Capo Plus DC-PSU		£1675	£1500
Balanced Input (1307 Chip)£3350			

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Denon DCD825 CD Player	£240	£185
Mission 73 Centre	£150	£119
KEF 80C Centre	£129	£99
Yamaha DSP A970 Pro-logic amp	£800	£450
NAD 208THX Power amp	£1199	£750
Technics SCHD70 Mini System	£650	£575
Audiolab 8000A Integrated amp	£500	£420
Audiolab 8000LX Integrated amp	£470	£400
Audiolab 8000CD CD Player	£1000	£850
Monitor Audio Monitor 3 + plinths (Rose)	£460	£360
Monitor Audio Studio 12 + plinths (Rose)	£1160	£999

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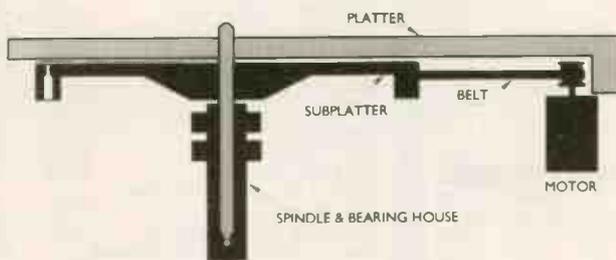
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"this Vinyl font end had my jaw heading towards the floor with the solidity and transparency of the music it was making"...
"the standard came up with crystal clear images set in a broad sound stage"... *"With all these goodies in place, the standard would give turntables at the £1200-£1400 mark a hard time."*
 HI-FI WORLD SUPPLEMENT NOV 97

"is exceptionally easy to build and professional in both sound quality and appearance"
 HI FI NEWS SUPPLEMENT NOV 97



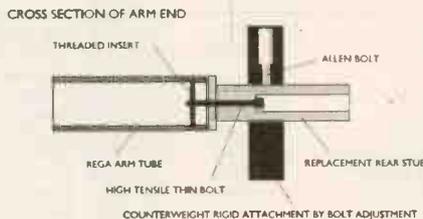
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If you are the proud owner of one of these two arms why not utterly transform it into the league of super arms with the Origin live structural modification:- £75 inc post & packing. This modification will enable your Rega to perform at a level exceeding that of arms costing over £1200. Rewiring with silver high grade litz cable is also offered at an additional £70.

"I have to say the Rega modifications turn this humble arm into a real Giant killer. Gone is the rather grey, sterile sound of the cooking Rega. Instead, tonal colour is fresh, dynamics have great speed and impact, and the sound stage is huge." HI FI WORLD SUPPLEMENT NOV 97 (structural modification only to a RB250)

WHAT HI-FI Sept 98 gave this modification a 5 star rating.

For arm modifications we normally return your arm in 2-3 days



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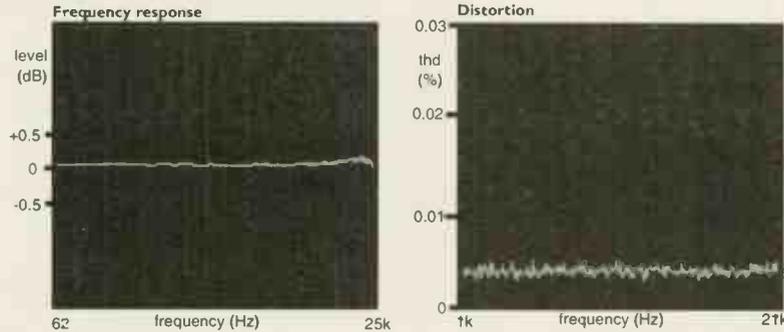
CD PLAYERS

ALCHEMIST TS-D-1 DAC

There was little distortion right down through the dynamic range of the Alchemist. In this area it performed very well. Our analysis shows an absence of distortion and quantisation products and dynamic range was high at 111dB, an excellent result.

Frequency response displays a slow lift toward high frequencies which may add some detail and forwardness to the sound. This DAC should not sound dull.

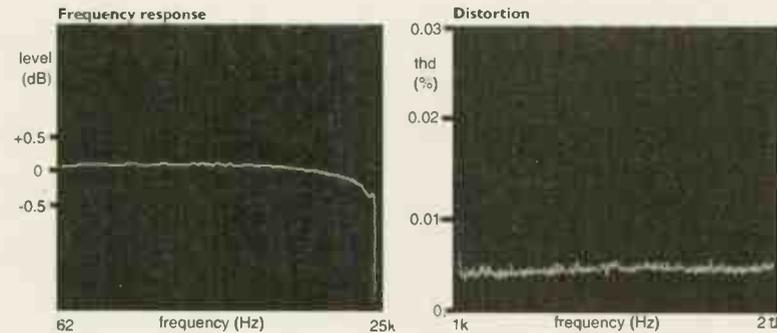
Channel separation was lower than usual but this will have little subjective affect. Output was normal at 2.17V. This DAC measured well. NK



Frequency response	4Hz-21kHz		Separation (dB)	left	right
	left	right	1kHz	90	85
			20kHz	63	58
Distortion (%)			Noise		-101dB
-6dB	0.004	0.004	with emphasis		-101dB
-30dB	0.005	0.006	Dynamic range		111dB
-60dB	0.46	0.4	Output		2.17V
-90dB	29	30			

JVC XL-V230

The pronounced overall fall in high frequencies of this player will inject some softness or warmth into its sound. Low levels of distortion all round should ensure the player does not get gritty or harsh though. I would expect a soft, laid-back sound. NK

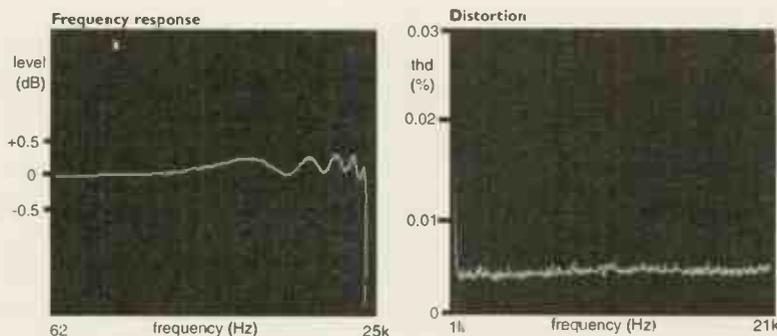


Frequency response	4Hz-20.5kHz		Separation (dB)	left	right
	left	right	1kHz	115	118
			20kHz	93	98
Distortion (%)			Noise		-109dB
-6dB	0.005	0.007	with emphasis		-109dB
-30dB	0.006	0.008	Dynamic range		111dB
			Output		2.3V

KENWOOD DPF-3010

The most noticeable thing about the Kenwood's measurements are its response ripples, caused by the digital filtering used. Our high-resolution analysis tends to emphasise aberrations like this. Although overall level appears raised, the dips will reduce energy giving less of a net lift than appearances may suggest. The upside of this is that distortion levels were unusually low.

The Kenwood should, as a result, sound



smooth and possibly detailed. It could be interesting subjectively. NK

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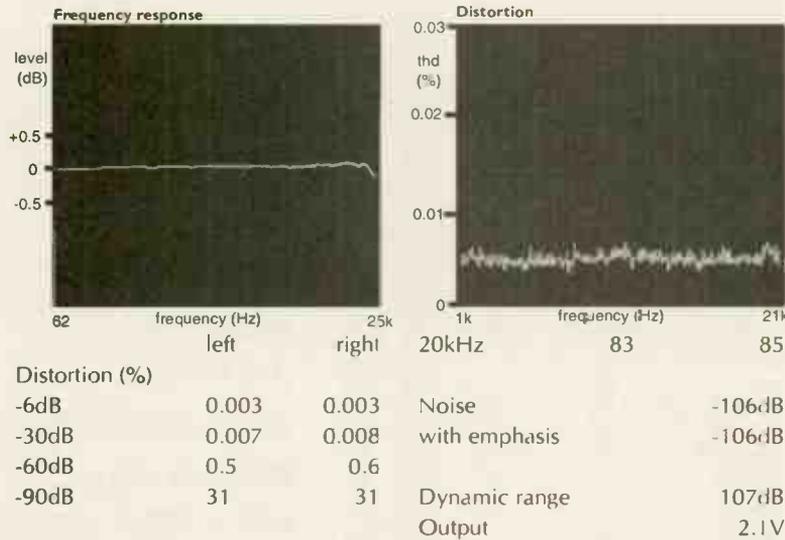
Frequency response	4Hz-20.6kHz		Separation (dB)	left	right	Dynamic range	110dB
	left	right	1kHz	105	106	Output	2.2V
Distortion (%)			20kHz	80	81		
-6dB	0.007	0.007	Noise			-118dB	
-30dB	0.007	0.008	with emphasis			-118dB	
-60dB	0.56	0.05					
-90dB	21	23					

NAD 522

The NAD 522 has a flat, smooth frequency response as our analysis shows. This will give it a fairly even tonal balance, although NAD like to make their products deliver strong bass.

Distortion was well suppressed at higher signal levels, but the 522 was nothing special lower down, producing 0.5% at -60dB. This compromised the dynamic range figure in particular. Output was a normal 2.1V.

The 522 measured well and should produce good results. NK

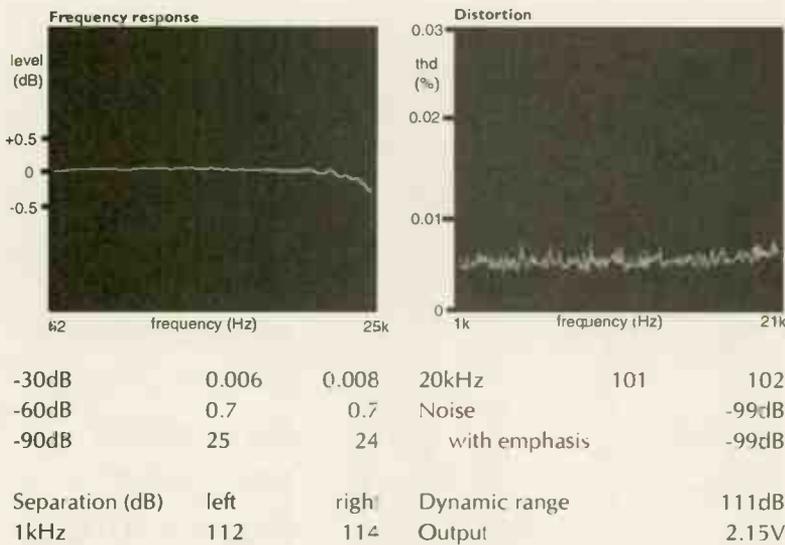


Frequency response	4Hz-20.8kHz		Separation (dB)	left	right
	left	right	1kHz	110	111

TECHNICS SL-PG490

A slight roll down in high-frequency output should give the SL-PG490 some smoothness to its sound. Distortion levels were reasonably low, except at -60dB where 0.7% was recorded against an expected value of 0.4% or thereabouts. Dynamic range was a bit low as a result. Output measured a normal 2.2V.

The Technics measured pretty well all round and should sound respectable. NK

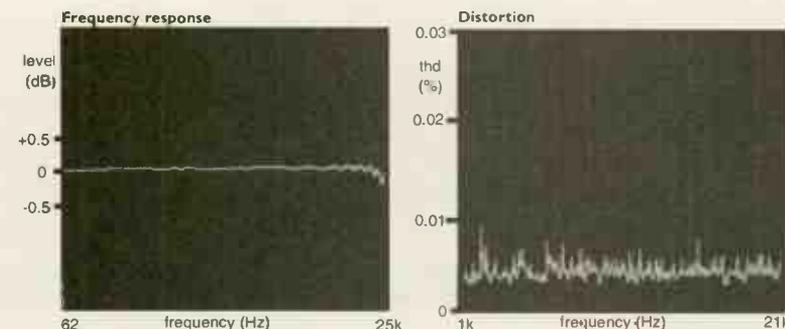


Frequency response	4Hz-20.8kHz	
	left	right

Distortion (%)			Separation (dB)	left	right	Dynamic range	111dB
-6dB	0.004	0.006	1kHz	112	114	Output	2.15V

YAMAHA CDX-593

The Yamaha CDX-593 produces distortion at lower music levels. It was particularly poor at -60dB where it produced 1.5% distortion, and further down the channels became unbalanced. I would expect some coarseness to be apparent. Otherwise, the Yamaha measured normally enough in all areas. NK



Frequency response	4Hz-21.3kHz	
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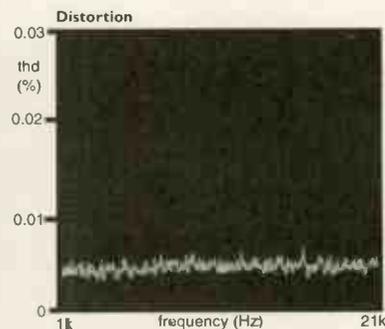
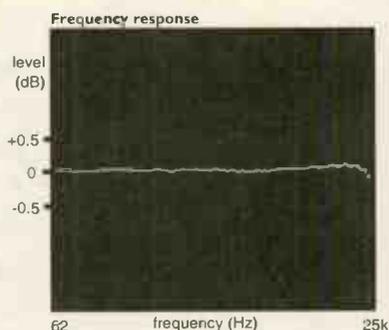
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	left	right	-90dB	41	54	Noise	-114dB
Distortion (%)						with emphasis	-120dB
-6dB	0.005	0.006	Separation	left	right	Dynamic range	98dB
-30dB	0.02	0.03	1kHz	108	109	Output	2.0V
-60dB	1.46	1.5	20kHz	103	102		

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-24K DAC

The X-24K DAC measured well in all areas. It has a small lift in upper-frequency response which will almost certainly ensure it is forward and detailed. Being a smooth trend I would not expect it to produce brightness.

Distortion was very low right down through the range of music levels. Our analysis at -30dB, a normal music level, shows little sign of unwanted distortion products. A good performance at -60dB helped toward producing a high dynamic range value of 110dB. With a normal output level of 2.27V the X-24K showed no weaknesses. **NK**



	left	right	20kHz	98	97
Distortion (%)					
-6dB	0.005	0.006	Noise	-96dB	
-30dB	0.006	0.007	with emphasis	-96dB	
-60dB	0.38	0.4	Dynamic range	111dB	
-90dB	29	30	Output	2.27V	
Separation (dB)	left	right			
1kHz	120	120			

Frequency response 4Hz-21kHz

AMPLIFIERS

MONARCHY AUDIO SM-70 POWER AMP

The Monarchy Audio SM-70 produces a modest 21watts into 8ohms. This rises to 30watts into 4ohms. Neither amount is great. This is enough power to drive a modern, sensitive loudspeaker loud in a modest-sized room, but not very loud. Perhaps contrary to what you would expect, large floor standers are generally more sensitive than smaller bookshelf or stand mounters, so they make the best choice for such a specialised amplifier.

The Monarchy has curtailed bass to limit subsonic power below 25Hz and this is likely to give it a fast sound, but at the expense of real authority in the bass.

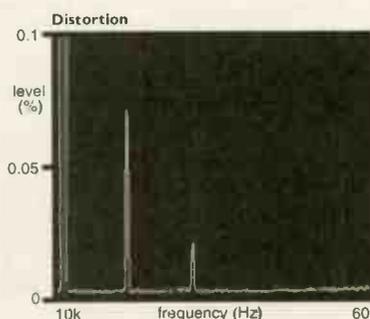
Distortion was low at low power outputs, our analysis showing it comprised mainly second and third harmonic. Just below full output however the figure rose to a high 0.6%. This is

likely to be heard as a little hardening and muddle on music peaks. Overload was reasonably smooth due to the absence of overall loop feedback and this helps keep things sounding reasonable when overload starts.

Input sensitivity was not high at 450mV. Although good enough for CD and most modern sources, older cassette decks and tuners produce around 300mV. With such items a pre-amp is necessary.

This sort of amplifier must be used with care but can reward with good sound. **NK**

Power	21watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	25Hz-68kHz
Separation	78dB
Noise	-98dB
Distortion	0.07%
Sensitivity	450mV
DC offset	20mV/21mV



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Audio Research VT50	£ 2095.00	£ 2895.00
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PRE AMPLIFIERS		
Audio Research LS15	£ 2400.00	£ 3200.00
Musical Fidelity Nu-Vista (un opened)	£ Offers	£ 1200.00
Gryphon Electra pre amp, Aretise phono stage	£ 3995.00	£ 7200.00
SPEAKERS		
audionote AN-e/B	£ 795.00	£ 1520.00
Totem Staff (Black) X-Dem	£ 750.00	£ 1099.00
Totem Mite (Cherry) X-Dem	£ 395.00	£ 549.00
Totem Rokk (Mahogany) X-Dem	£ 459.00	£ 650.00
Linn Kabers (Walnut,Passive)	£ 1150.00	£ 2200.00
Sonus Faber Electa Amator	£ 1495.00	£ 2992.00

TURNTABLES/ANALOGUE/VARIOUS		
Townsend Rock/Excabillur	£ 650.00	£ 2000.00
Clear Audio Reference W/Arm	£ 4500.00	£ 6500.00

C.D PLAYERS & DACS

Micromega Duo CD 2 Transport	£ 895.00	£ 2000.00
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Power Amplifiers

Exposure XV	£ 450.00	£ 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	£ 175.00	£ 300.00
Conrad Johnson MF 2300	£ 1695.00	£ 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	£ 550.00	£ 950.00
Jadis JA 80 Monoblocks	£ 4995.00	£10000.00
Audion Golden Knights	£ 2250.00	£ 4000.00
Audion Silver Knights (Gold)	£ 1250.00	£ 2250.00
Jadis Defy 7 mk III	£ 3250.00	£ 4790.00
Krell KSA 200 B	£ 2495.00	£ 5550.00
Quad 77 Integrated	£ 495.00	£ 700.00
Audio Research VT150 SE	£11995.00	£ 17000.00
Micromega Tempo 2 Integrated	£ 595.00	£ 900.00
Krell FPB 600	£ 8995.00	£12900.00
Krell KSA 250	£ 2750.00	£ 6700.00
Mark Levinson No. 331	£ 2995.00	£ 5000.00
Audio Note Ankor Monoblocks	£ 8500.00	£ 14500.00
VTL Monoblocks	£ 1795.00	£ 4000.00
Mark Levinson No. 332	£ 5500.00	£ 6500.00

Pre Amplifiers

Conrad Johnson PV12 (mm/mc)	£ 1995.00	£ 2590.00
McCormack Micro Line Drive	£ 350.00	£ 595.00
Audio Research LS3	£ 1095.00	£ 1900.00

Audio Research LS5 mk II	£ 2695.00	£ 5700.00
Meridian 541 Dolby Surround	£ 695.00	£ 1095.00
Conrad Johnson PV10 (mm/mc)	£ 895.00	£ 1250.00
Audio Research LS3B	£ 1195.00	£ 2250.00
Audio Research Reference 1	£ 5995.00	£ 8500.00
Audio Research LS 22	£ 2950.00	£ 4000.00
Naim Nac 72	£ 450.00	£ 650.00
Burmester 785	£ 395.00	£ 900.00
Audio Research LS2	£ 1495.00	£ 2798.00
Angstrom 200 (Home cinema controller)	£ 1800.00	£ 3495.00
Audio Research LS7	£ 1095.00	£ 1620.00
QED Vector+Positron P/S	£ 195.00	£ 300.00
Rotel RC995 (Balanced out)	£ 395.00	£ 550.00
Audio Synthesis Passion	£ 395.00	£ 600.00

Quality Speakers

B & W 802 mk III (Walnut)	£ 1895.00	£ 2800.00
Acoustic Energy AE1	£ 550.00	£ 795.00
Ensemble PA1	£ 995.00	£ 2000.00
Alon V mk II Blk	£ 2500.00	£ 5000.00
Wilson 3/2 (Black)	£ 5995.00	£15000.00
Alon Lotus SE	£ 2500.00	£ -
Sonus Faber Extrema + Stands	£ 4250.00	£ 7000.00
J M Lab Alcor	£ 2750.00	£ 5000.00
Wilson 5.1 (Piano White)	£11500.00	£19000.00
Thiel CS1.5	£ 1595.00	£ 2700.00
KEF Reference Model 101/2 (Walnut)	£ 350.00	£ 795.00
Mini Grand	£ 2995.00	£ 7600.00
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
Thiel CS2.3	£ 2600.00	£ 3600.00
CLS IIZ & Arccicci 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

CD Players & DACS

EAD DSP 1000	£ 695.00	£ 149.00
Audio Alchemy DDE V1.0 + psu 1	£ 150.00	£ 300.00
P.S. Audio Ultralink	£ 795.00	£ 2390.00
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Acuphase DP70	£ 2250.00	£ 4500.00
Acuphase DP90/91	£ 9950.00	£20000.00
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Forsell Air Ref dac	£11500.00	£24000.00
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Meracrus Transport	£ 895.00	£ 1095.00
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Meridian 563 18 bit	£ 3995.00	£ 8000.00
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Micromega Duo CD 2	£ 1295.00	£ 3198.00
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Teac T1 Transport (Black)	£ 4250.00	£ 4995.00
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Mark Levinson No. 35 Dac	£ 3500.00	£ 8500.00
Mark Levinson No. 31 transport	£ 3500.00	£ 8500.00

Turntables & Analogue

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Piere Lurne J1/SL5	£ 1500.00	£ 4500.00
Piere Lurne J1/Sowther mk II	£ 1800.00	£ 4500.00
Forsell Air Force One	£11995.00	£25000.00
Kinshaw Overture Phono	£ 195.00	£ 395.00
Systemdek II XE 900/ RB 250	£ 350.00	£ 650.00
Quad FM3 Tuner	£ 195.00	£ -
SME IV	£ 750.00	£ 980.00
Clear Audio Sigma	£ 450.00	£ 600.00
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
Goldring Eroica	£ 75.00	£ 100.00
Audio Technica AT-OC9	£ 250.00	£ 400.00
Audiolab 8000 Tuner	£ 550.00	£ 895.00
Rega Planar 3/RB 300/Elys	£ 250.00	£ 450.00

STOCKIST OF:

- Acoustic Energy, SME,
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- ATC, Straight Wire,
- Boulder, Tara Labs,
- Bryston, Target,
- C.A.T., Totem,
- Chord, Trichord,
- ClearAudio, Trilogly,
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- Graham, VPI,
- Helios, XLO,
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ARCAM ALPHA ONE

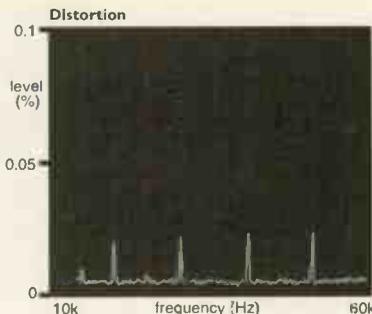
Arcam's Alpha One produced a healthy 50watts into 8ohms and 72watts into 4ohms. That's enough to cope with most loudspeakers in most rooms, giving good volume without stress.

Distortion was low, but the harmonic structure was extended and could well add some slight coarseness or greyness to the treble. I wouldn't expect this to be too intrusive, though, as distortion at 10kHz measured a satisfactorily low 0.04%. Our analysis

shows the harmonic structure.

With good sensitivity and low noise the Arcam worked well. However, there is a sub-sonic roll-off in the frequency response that may well make itself known as a lack of real bottom-end authority. The overall performance looks tidy though. NK

Power	50watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	16Hz-68kHz
Separation	71dB

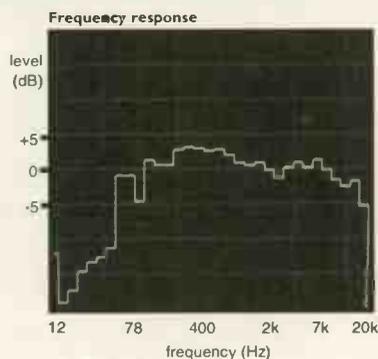


Noise	-96dB
Distortion	0.005%
Sensitivity	230mV
DC offset	1.2mV/0.2mV

LOUDSPEAKER

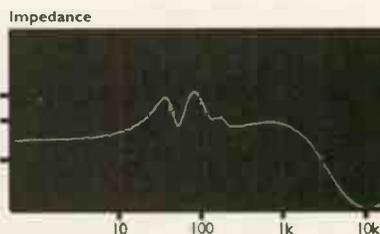
BKS HYBRID 107 Mk II

Ribbon tweeters in themselves exhibit a very low impedance of 0.5ohms or so. It is common to feed them from a step-down transformer so an amplifier sees at least 4ohms, to avoid excessive current delivery, overheating and output device failure. I was very surprised to see the impedance of this loudspeaker above 2kHz plunge to an extremely low value of 1ohm by 10kHz. This will demand a lot of current from an amplifier if volume is turned up whilst playing music with strong treble. Generally, this means close-miked Rock, which our analyses show can possess an almost flat energy curve. I would exercise caution with these loudspeakers as a result. They need to be driven by a beefy amplifier running well below its rated output if things are not to get out of shape at high volume.



Doubtless BKS felt obliged to do this to keep tweeter sensitivity up. As it is, integration with the small bass unit was good as regards phase and amplitude. The 'speaker has a reasonably flat frequency response, with some useful bass lift to maintain a sense of warmth and body, plus an upper treble roll-off to make certain there's no sharpness. An absence of peaks over the working range of the ribbon suggests

From December 1998



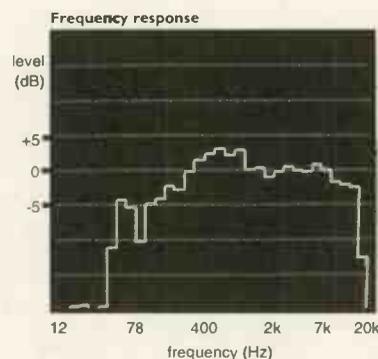
it is well designed, free from spurious resonances or irregular behaviour.

Overall sensitivity of the loudspeaker measured out at 85dB. Had the tweeter been fitted with a step-down transformer this would drop even further. I can't say their decision was wrong because either way the loudspeaker needs to be driven by a powerful amplifier, but this way the tweeter is cheaper and free from any degradation a transformer might introduce. Whichever way, the BKS must be driven with care. NK

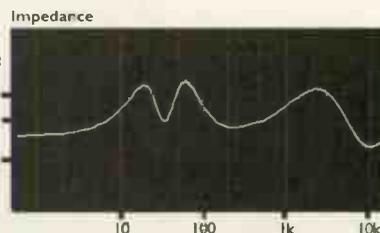
CARLSSON 50.2

The Carlsson had a reasonably consistent frequency response, on and off the main axis of the drive units. There is some slow bass roll-off to compensate for close wall placement and the upper bass hump will help compensate for out-of-phase wall reflections. Deep bass extension was good, reaching 60Hz.

How all this works 'at home' is more room and placement dependent than conventional loudspeakers though. All we can say is the Carlsson meets its own particular set of design criteria well enough.



In line with this the rest of the loudspeaker looked well enough thought out. The impedance curve is smooth, meaning there is little reactance in the load, and it is high



too, measuring 3.8ohms overall, using pink noise. The Carlsson is an easy load for an amplifier and yet it produces 88dB from a nominal watt of input, meaning it goes reasonably loud with little power.

This loudspeaker is well engineered, but how it performs will be heavily room influenced. NK

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TEAC VRDS 7 CD PLAYER(650)XD £449	HEYBROOK HEYLETTE LOUDSPEAKERS £150
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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 LITAURAL £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.

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.

TEAC P-30 £2500

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

CD CONVERTORS

MIDIMAN FLYING CALF £130

Great-value DAC which has a superbly smooth and fluid presentation.

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-DAC £300

A bargain for normal CDs and even better with HDCDs.

ASSEMBLAGE DAC-2 £400 (KIT)

Takes little building to produce a clean, clear sound. HDCD filter included.

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.

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
Better 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 tuneful 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 £399
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 Campion 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 Attesa 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 ES12 £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 ES25 £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.

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8000DAC	£900	£650
8000MX pair	£1800	£1495
B&W CDM2 r/wood	£400	£320
Copland CDA288	£1999	£1599
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Power	£498	£395
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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
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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"	£195
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Rogers LS6 teak	£175
Ruark Sabre bk.	£250
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Dual Concentrics, walnut	£350
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ECC88 TESLA	6.00	6L6 GC	14.90
ECC88 SIEMANS	4.95	6L6 GT/C	2.50
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E88CC	10.00	6L6 WGB	12.00
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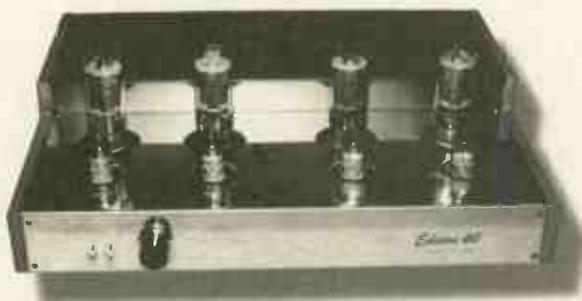
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Used Equipment For Sale

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Rega RB20 Tone arm with cartridge	£40.00	Michi RHQ -10 Phono stage black gate	£295.00
Roksan Xerxes with PSU	£295.00	Musical Fidelity XA50 mono blocks	£195.00
Sumiko Tone Arm	£125.00	Quad 405 II power amp	£295.00
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Tannoy Mayfair 10" DC with 10" ABR	£375.00	Sugden A21 Class A amplifier	£75.00
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CODE KEY:- N = NEW X = EX DEM S = SECOND HAND

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B&O	DM 580'S	Floor standing speakers	S	1		£200
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TOWER

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OF POWER



David Price remembers Lecson's striking cylindrical AP3 II power amp and its multi-coloured AC1 partnering pre-amp.

Hi-fi isn't just about listening to music. Of course, sounding good has to be its primary function, but it also serves an aesthetic purpose too. There's no shortage of equipment that fulfils one of these roles perfectly well, but rarely do you find something that excels in both, like Lecson's legendary AC1/AP3 II pre/power.

Back in the mid-Seventies, hi-fi design was in crisis. Most British products were utilitarian to say the least, while Japanese electronics were usually as over the top as Gary Glitter in maximum stage garb. Until the advent of the Lecson, that is. With electronics by Bob Stuart and industrial design by Allan Boothroyd, the AC1/AP3 II looked more stunning than Farah Fawcett in hot pants. Undoubtedly one of the most visually arresting designs of its time - or ever, for that matter - it predated Bang and Olufsen's famously sparse, elegant brand of modernism by several years.

While everyone else's pre-amplifier was either a dull black box with cheap looking switches or an aluminium-clad behemoth with an array of huge knobs, Lecson's AC1 dared to be different. A sleek planar design, its 11 rainbow-coloured sliders controlled volume, balance, input selection, tape monitors, bass, treble, headphones, stereo or quadrasonic operation, high and low filters and power on/off.

Inside, things were no less innovative. The five inputs were switched by FETs via reed relays, not to prevent the frequent pops and clicks that many contemporary designs made when changing input, but for longevity. As the tracks on conventional switches - even gold-plated

ones - invariably oxidise, Lecson decided to do the switching electronically. The pre-amp's flexible filtering options were also said to be designed for low transient distortion, and the tone controls were automatically by-passed when set to zero.

The AP3 II was Lecson's top of the range power amplifier, offering a claimed minimum of 100watts per side into 8ohms. Although Boothroyd's industrial design is striking by any standards, this component's beauty was more than skin deep. Its distinctive metal canister construction was ideal for dissipating heat, as Musical Fidelity's Anthony Michaelson subsequently confirmed with his X-A200 monoblocs.

Unlike most mid-Seventies transistor amps, the AP3 II was designed to be good at real-world music making rather than achieving amazing measured specifications. Whereas contemporary Japanese super-amps used shed loads of negative feedback to get massive power levels with infinitesimally low distortion, Lecson took the other route. Instead, the circuitry was designed to be as linear as possible before negative feedback was applied. This meant overall feedback levels were kept right down, making for a highly natural sound.

To help it along the way, the AP3 got an extremely beefy toroidal power transformer with unusually small smoothing capacitors, plus oversized, fuse-protected 30Amp output transistors and an internal thermostatic cooling fan. Together, these meant the amp could handle the full energy of the power supply without blowing, thus obviating the need for sound-degrading protection circuits. Yet the output stage was still protected - in the

event of a short, the transistor fuses would blow to protect it.

Together the AC1/AP3 II sound surprisingly close to a good modern transistor amplifier. Lively, open, clean and immediately musical, this combo avoids the showy, artificial feel of much Japanese transistor exotica, but still manages to do the biz as far as smoothness, detail and neutrality are concerned. While not as tuneful as, say, the latest Naim NAP250, it's far sweeter and smoother. Likewise, today's top integrations like Sonneteer's Alabaster are more transparent and refined, but not much. Indeed, for a 20-year-old design, there's a remarkable smoothness to the treble and tautness to the bass, plus a musicality that will never go out of fashion.

The Lecson family didn't stop with the AC1/AP3 II. There was the FM1 tuner too, blessed with the same stunning visuals as the AC1, which also came with the DR1, a totally out-of-space optional digital read-out module. Then there were the AP1 and AP1X power amps which had similar looks to the AP3 but lower power (the AP1 put out 50watts, the beefier AP1X 75watts). Pay £250 to £350 for a good AC1/AP3 II - a lot of money, but remember that when new back in 1977 the pair cost £440.

The Lecson team were a talented bunch who went on to even greater things. Hi-fi trainspotters may know that Allan and Bob went on to form Meridian, while Lecson's Technical Director, Stan Curtis, set the world alight (figuratively speaking) with his seminal Cambridge CD1 back in 1985 and now heads a certain 'speaker company called Wharfedale.

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B&W P5 Cherrywood	799	459
Blueprint Point 1 Loudspeakers	1000	749
Cambridge Audio DAC Magic II	149	89
Cogan Hall Intermezzo REF 0.5M	375	95
Epos ES 11 Loudspeakers (black)	479	299
Gordon Wellford Naim 120 Poweramp	500	249
Linn LK100 Power amplifiers	650	349
Mark Levinson NO331 Power Amplifier	4500	3450
Meridian 208 CD Player	1500	395
Michell Orbe 9 months old (gold plated)	2000	1495
Micromega Stage 3 CD Player	999	495
Mission 754 Freedoms Primavera	1499	995
Naim Audio 72 Preamplifier MC Boards	680	395
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TDL RTL 3 Rosewood Loudspeakers	399	225
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Unison Research Smart 845 Mono's	3250	2199
VDH CD 102 Mk2 3.0M WBT	N/A	115
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New products now on demonstration

Primare Audio is now in stock and on permanent demonstration the amazing A30.2 remote controlled integrated amplifier and the D30.2 compact disc player, with the unmistakable Scandinavian styling and build quality. Prices start at £1500.00

We will also be carrying the 20 series remote system comprising of the D20 CD player the A20 Integrated Amplifier and the T20 RDS tuner. A DVD player will also feature in the new year Prices start from £600.

Sugden have re-emerged with some old favourites and two new complete ranges. Well known for their class A designs, Sugden will still be running the A21 Series Class A Amplifier. The A21A Integrated Line Amplifier will retail for £799. A matching power amplifier (so bi-amping can be achieved) will cost £649. An optional phono board MM/MC is available at £99 factory fitted

The Audition T and C Series are two new ranges of amplifier and CD designs which incorporates a new EQ system which many people will find handy in these days of no tone controls. The Audition T line amplifier with EQ is £649. The Audition C is £899. Optional remote control and phono stages are available at £89 and £99 respectively

The Audition Compact Disc player is a high performance single box player integrating both digital retrieval and analogue conversion at an attractive price £649. It incorporates a Phillips 12.1 transport and utilises an 18 bit, four times over sampling DAC. The analogue output stage has zero feedback and utilises discreet components to ensure the smoothest of digital sounds

The Master Class Series. The Master Class Series will comprise of a pre-amplifier and a power amplifier. The pre-amplifier features gold plated PCB's, balanced inputs and outputs and a fully regulated twin power supply. The Master Class Power Amplifier is a seventy five watt per channel, pure Class A amplifier. Prices will be £1,995 for the Pre amplifier and £2,995 for the Power Amp. The Master Class Compact Disc player will feature balanced and single ended outputs and will utilise a Pure Class A output stage in a single box. Price to be arranged in early January

Sirius D 200 Power Amplifier fully balanced studio quality. Precise imagery and depth at a realistic price £2995.00

Bks Hybrid 107 Mk II Loudspeakers from Denmark made from the finest granite known to man. Amazing sound from this small floor-standing ribbon hybrid £1500.00

Nagra PLP Valve Preamplifier uses a battery and fully rechargeable power supply thus making it the quietest phono stage around in the vinyl domain. The price is £6995.00

Pass Labs Aleph 3 power amplifier a pure class A 30 watts per channel into 8 ohms won the stereophile amplifier of the year gives a new dimension to realistically priced high end £2250.00

Basis 2000 Series Turntables. A new range from the USA's leading turntable specialist. Prices start at £2000.00 including the Basic Rega RB300 with fully adjustable VTA. The 1400 series. All new perspex turntable from the leaders in American turntable technology. An amazing £995.00

Michell Engineering New Orca Pre amps and redesigned Alecto stereo / mono power amps. Transparency from the UK's leading turntable manufacturer. Prices start at £1650.00 for the preamp - and £1995.00 for the mono's

Electrocompaniet All new EC1-3 fully remote control integrated amplifier, with that unmistakable Class A sound and Norwegian build quality £995.00

Audio Analogue Paganini 24 bit after the initial delays this machine has been worth the wait. Now in stock £695.00

dpa Renaissance 24 bit CD player. A new look and a new sound from the leaders in Welsh digital. Priced at £950.00; also available - the new Enlightenment 24/96 DAC £850.00

Audionote CD 3 / CD 1 these machines are the answer to many audiophiles problems. Yes... you can hear the valve sound of CD from £599 to £1699

Audion Sterling. We are now the Midlands stockist for this formidable single ended Class A valve manufacturer £599

Diapason Karin/Adamants III the most beautiful loudspeakers know to man. Italian craftsmanship and with a superb sound quality to match. Prices start at £1250

Wadia Digital we are pleased to announce that we are the exclusive West Midlands stockist of this renowned American digital product range. The new 830 which incorporates the Pioneer stable platter system starts the ball rolling at £2995.00 the 850 and 860 are also now on demonstration

Vinyl!

Lori Lieberman - Home of Whispers 180 gsm.	£21.95
Janis Ian - Breaking Silence 180 gsm.	£24.95
Oscar Peterson - We Get Request 180 gsm.	£19.95
Sara K - Play on Words 180 gsm.	£21.95
Midnight Sugar - E B M 23 180 gsm.	£17.95
Rebecca Pidgeon - The Raven 180 gsm.	£21.95
Amanda McBroom - Midnight Matinee 180 gsm	£21.95
Gomez - Bring it On	£15.90
Eric Clapton - Pilgrim	£15.90
Dimeola, McLaughlin, Delucia - Friday Night	£19.95

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EAR phono head amp MC/MM boxed as new cost £450, sell £300 onvo. MIT terminator 2 interconnect cost £130 sell £70. New amp forces sale. Tel: David 01442 890 862 eve. (Jan/I)

NAIM NAC 42.5 pre amp MC, NAPI10 power amp, both in mint condition £300 ono. Tel: 01299 825 298 or mobile 07801 660 473 (Jan/I)

THORENS 320 Mk2, three MC cartridges, £475. Tel: 01793 824 288 (Swindon) (Jan/I)

AUDIO SYNTHESIS DAX2, transport, Passion DPA amplifier and DAC. Myriad amplifiers, Robertson amplifier. Harbeth, Mirage, RMS speakers. DAC in Box, Stax/AVI DAC. Other equipment. Tel: 01924 255 045 (Jan)

AUDIO INNOVATIONS
Second Audio monoblock amps. Recently serviced and fitted with new output valves. Audio Innovations 1000 pre-amp. Offers to A.Harris. Tel: 0171 262 6275 (Jan/I)

REL Q100E subwoofer, instructions, wires £270. B&W C16 centre speaker, instructions £100. Both hardly used. Tel: 01483 481 196 (Jan/I)

ROGERS STUDIO 7 loudspeakers, walnut (£900) £375. Audio Analogue Puccini SE (£595) £350. NAD 306 amplifier (£350) £175. All boxed, excellent. VDH 1s: 0.8 interconnect £75. Aura chrome tuner (new) £100. Tel: 01398 323 101 (Jan/I)

SPEAKERS. MONITOR Audio R852 MD complete with spiked stands. All black. Good condition. £125 ono. Tel: 01992 576 533 (Jan/I)

SOUND ORGANISATION equipment tables, mint condition. two shelf Z021 (495W x360H x395D) £40. Two four shelf Z060 (495W x620H x395D) £65 each. Other Sound Organisation turntable table £50. Tel: 0116 275 1732 (Leicester) (Jan/I)

ARCAM 290P for £199
includes 2x4mtr Audioquest Indigo 2 bi-wire cables and Cabletalk Studio 2. Mint boxed with manuals and receipt. Ony 20 months old. Tel: Mike 0468 238 281 day or 01827 314 170 eve/weekend (Jan/I)

ROKSAN DP1 transport, £500. DA1 converter £150. DS4 power supply, £250. Or all three for £850. Syrinx PU2 gold tone arm on Linn board £45. Nakamichi BX125E £150. Garrard 301 chassis, offers. Tel: 01708 851 324 (Jan/I)

ORELLE CD 10 transport and DAC 180. Receipts, boxed, and in perfect condition. cost £1400 sell for £720 ono. 01703 432 635 (Jan/I)

SONY CDP-555ESD. The fabulous 555 compact disc player, generally acknowledged to be one of the best-sounding machines yet built. A rare opportunity. New £1000, for sale at £270. Tel: Thorne 01462 456 006 or 01582 738 659 (Jan)

QUAD ELS 63 loudspeakers, black, with stands, 10 years old £1200. DPA 200S stereo power amps, can be bridged for mono. £325 each or as a pair £600. Tel: 01724 710 547 (Lincs) (Jan/I)

NAIM NAIT 2 mint £250. Snell J12, silver-wired, exl. £359 (swap ESL 57's?). Accessories available. Tel: 0171 431 4387 eves/sundays. areid01@student.bbk.ac.uk (Jan/I)

COUNTERPOINT SA5.1 preamp vgc. £800. Tel: 01782 415 699 (Jan/I)

DNM SERIES 3 pre-amp "six" power supply pack £650, Art Audio Tempo Class A triode monoblocks chrome finish £1100. Tel: 01444 417 911 eves or weekend (Sussex) (Jan/I)

LP 12 VALHALLA Zeta arm VDH wired Karma cartridge Mana sound frame £795 ono. Naim 250 new style £995 ono. Plus record collection for sale. Tel: 01708 760 571 (Jan/I)

CASTLE HARLECH floorstanding loudspeakers. Light oak veneer finish, excellent condition. Bi-wire, big powerful sound. Complete with original boxes etc. Offers around £550. Tel: 01925 813 499 (Jan/I)

LOWTHER SUPER Acousta speakers, PM6 units, walnut veneer and black cloth. Units getting tired, cabinets ripe for re-use. £100. Leak Stereo 30 amplifier, boxed, fine condition £40. Tel: 01494 813 045 (S.Bucks) (Jan/I)

SOUNDSTYLE X310, black, 1 year old £120. Tel: 01727 827 087 e-mail: rnorris894@aol.com (Herts) (Jan/I)

NAIM 101 tuner with Snaps £425. Ron Smith Galaxie 17 Aerial £85. Digital Capacitance meter (Precision Gold Academy PG015) £25 Tel: 0181 991 1089 (Jan/I)

MARANTZ DC82 Digital Compact Cassette recorder/player and Philips portable DCC player with approximately 50DCC tapes. Makes superb digital recordings. mint condition and boxed. £275. Tel: 01453 766 453 eves or 0374 795 121 (Jan/I)

GAMMA SPACE Reference Mk1 single-ended power amplifier, recently fully overhauled and upgraded by GT Audio. £1500 ono, including spare 4.300Bs. Excellent sound. Will demonstrate. Tel: 01962 851 802 (Jan/I)

MUSICAL FIDELITY A1001 integrated amplifier. RRP £2500. As new condition £1300. Tel: 0181 452 1452 eves and w/e (Jan/I)

KEF REFERENCE Model 3 speakers black ash finish. One year old, 4 years warranty remaining. Sound and look superb. Upgrading to Reference 4S. Come and listen £1500 ono. Tel: 01622 763 741 (Jan/I)

TECHNICS, THORENS 160, SP10 turntable Audionote transformer, Goodmans 80, Audionote M2 pre amp, Troughline Tim DP decoder, Trio K917, Meridian M/block, Tascam 34B, Studer B62, Nagra, Tannoy Golds, Kefs, Radian 12, lots more. Tel: 0181 443 0557/01992 620 905 (Jan/I)

LFD INTEGRATED Zero. MM/MC phono stage. Superbly detailed natural sound. 60 wpc. 2 years old. A very fine amplifier £350 (£730 new) boxed. Tel: 01455 636 695 (Jan/I)

SME 3012 12" arm with Shure V15 IV & spare h/shell on Garrard 401 in SME 2000 plinth with period accessories, immaculate £295. Quad 33 pre/405 power, boxed manuals etc. £170. Tel: 0181 255 3816 eves (Jan/I)

TEAC VRDS 7 CD player. Engaging natural sound, battleship construction. Boxed & as new. £265 (£600 new). Linn Nexus LS250 speakers. Black ash veneer on Linn Kustone stands. Excellent condition. £195. Tel: 01455 636 695 (Jan/I)

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Musical Fidelity X Pre & XA50 x2	£ 700	£ 595
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Tannoy P40 E/D	£ 800	£560



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SONY CDP-552ESD CD player with matching DAS702ES DAC. Superb build quality, condition and sound. They don't make kit like this anymore. £795. Tel: Andy 01959 524 258 eves/w/ends (Kent) (Jan/I)

QUAD 66 PRE & remote; 67 CD; 66 FM tuner, in Quad console, £1100 may split. Spondor SP2/3 limited edition speakers with Target HJ15/3 stands, £600. All mint condition with boxes. Tel: 01703 738 935 (Southampton) (Jan/I)

PAIR 125w (Audio Technology USA) linear phase studio monitors, Series 8810 loudspeakers. 12" polypropylene woofer, 5" midrange, 3" tweeter. circuit protection and two frequency controls. Never been used, in original boxes and packaging £1400 ono. Tel: 0411 036 896 (Guildford) (Jan/I)

LINN KLOUT amp £1150, Linn Kairn preamp £990, boxed ex. cond., current spec; Pass Aleph 3 amp. £1400, boxed, mint. Klipsch Heresy speakers £350. Tel: 0171 892 4905 (London)(Jan/I)

MERIDIAN 207 CD transport/preamp £390. Quad 33 £50. Rogers Cadet III stereo integrated £45. Pioneer SA-810 valve amp (spare set power valves) £290. Tel: Mark 0181 347 7466 (Highgate, London) eves (Jan)

B&W DM3 monitor loudspeakers, hardwood rosewood veneered, 28 1/2"X15 3/4"X11 1/2". 3 unit system, bass/mid freq. Wide dispersion. HF & UHF. £60. Tel: 01276 682 954 (Jan/I)

WADIA 23 CD player 12 months old. Excellent condition £2995 new, only £1495. Radford WSI CD player only £350, Oracle Alexandria Mk3 turntable £395. Krell KC 100 moving coil cartridge new £795 only £350. Tel: 0410 275 149 anytime (Jan/I)

NAIM CD3 CD player, £550. Naim NAPI40, new style, upgraded by Avondale Audio, £250. Tel: 01925 727 243 (eves & weekends) (Jan/I)

MICROMEGA T.DAC £300 ono, surplus upgrade to DVD player. Boxed with instructions. Tel: 0131 332 4478 (Jan/I)

CHORD 1200b power amp £1650 (£3600): black faceplate, boxed, mint, documentation. ATC20T floorstanders £995 (£2700): Walnut, boxed, mint, guaranteed. (Gone 'active'). Can demonstrate in Edinburgh or courier. Tel: 0131 556 7545 Email: s.hussain@ed.sac.ac.uk (Jan/I)

KRELL KSA200 - £1950. Apogee Mini Grands - stages with dedicated active crossover and subwoofers. Panel virtues with real slam and extension £1950, cost £8000. Tel: 01270 759 143 eves (Jan/I)

AUDIOLAB 8000 DAC. 2 years old, mint condition, boxed etc and original receipt. Excellent upgrade to one box CD players. £450 including postage within the UK. Tel: 0976 623 338 (Jan/I)

LINN SONDEK LP12, Avondale power supply, Ittock LVII, Goldring Eroica high output MC, excellent condition £475. Denson DP Drive/DP-02 MC off board phono stage £175. NOTTINGHAM ANALOGUE Tracer 4 MM cartridge only 200 hours use (list £650; will accept £150. Tel: 01524 381 389 (Lancs) (Jan/I)

THORENS TD 125-2 (new belt required) fitted with SME 3009 arm - Denon 103 and step-up, in SME plinth, £170 ono. Buyer collects. Tel: 01225 315 394 (Lingfield, Surrey) (Jan)

EAR 834P MM/MC phono stage, £285. (other phono preamps available) QED Digit Plus, boxed £65. Tannoy Chatsworth 12in. Golds, £300. Leak TL12+, pair, rebuilt, £300. Rogers Cadet pre/power, £80. Sony portable MiniDisc player, £30. Tel 01942 257 525 (Jan/I)

LEXICON DCI. AC3/DTS/THX upgrades. Mint condition. 3 months old. £2995. Celestion A2 speakers. Cherry finish. 6 months old. Mint condition. £895. Tel: 0113 240 2043 / 234 6111, e-mail: tompledge@msn.com (Jan/I)

QUAD 33 preamp, Quad 303 power amp, Quad 405 power amp, Quad ELS 57 speakers. Any sensible offers. Wanted: EAR 519 amp Tel: 01745 331 681 (Jan/I)

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-A200 monoblocks, unique tubular design, mint, boxed RRP £1000. Sony XA50 ES, EISA award winning CD player, champagne finish, pristine, boxed RRP £1000. ProAc Tablett 50 loudspeakers, made to order, brand new boxed, RRP £600. REL Stadium II subwoofer, made to order, brand new boxed, RRP £1000. All items under guarantee, offers invited. Tel: 0956 997 543 (Surrey) (Jan/I)

ORIGINAL MISSION 752 speakers Rosewood finish £300. Cyrus power amp £300. PSXR power supply £200. Cyrus Discmaster and DACmaster £800. Tel: 01924 498 955 after 6pm. (West Yorks) (Jan/I)

SME 3009 Series III arm fluid damper and ADC ZLM cartridge on Technics SL150 direct drive turntable £200. ADC XLM cartridge £30. ADC R78 stereo cartridge £15. Tel: 0181 788 3196 (Putney, London) (Jan/I)

QUAD ELECTROSTATICS. Tannoy Berkeley speakers both excellent condition. Also for sale, TEAC reel/reel (Tascam), Revox G58 reel/reel, Quad 405, Garrard 301 Tel: 0131 332 7536 (Edinburgh)(Jan/I)

MUSICAL FIDELITY MVT Mk3 preamp with separate power supply. Cost £1500, accept £450. Epos ES14 speakers with stands, £350. Rotel 965BX CD player £140. Tel: 01535 654 211 (Jan/I)

ROKSAN XERXES turntable/RB250/OC9 (5 hrs) £400. Musical Fidelity MVT preamp £300, cost over £1000 new, REL Strata subwoofer £200. Can demo. Tel: 01536 485 293 (Northants) (Jan/I)

GARRARD 401 with SME 3009 II arm and Ortofon VMS 20E cartridge mounted on mahogany plinth with perspex lid. Near mint condition £285. Tel: 0181 372 0276 (N London) (Jan/I)

NAIM NAP 180, mint, £750 ono. Audio Technica ATH9000 electret headphones, by far their best, mint, £130 (half price). Tripletone stereo valve amp, mid-sixties, £35 ono. Audioquest Video-Z £45. Tel: 01793 526 796 (Jan/I)

UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY! Quad II & 22 boxed, unused since new. Marantz model 7T pre/model 15 power, very rare. VAC TA 801 integrated new. TVA power amp, mint. TEAC X10 reel to reel/DBX unit. Harbeth HLK6 new. Tel: 01992 718 265 (Jan/I)

MARK LEVINSON No.36 DAC £2100, Audio Research LS7 preamp £900, Chord SPM 1000B power amp £1100, Proac Response ISC speakers (Burr Oak) and Target R1 stands £900, all excellent condition and boxed. Tel: 0151 526 5344 or 0370 826 980 (Jan/I)



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COPLAND 288 CD player, mint condition, boxed. £1200 ono. Tel: 0181 449 8639 (Barnet, Herts)(Jan)

REVOX B77 MkII 1/2 track, 7 1/2, 15 ips. Completely reconditioned machine, recently bought from Ramtek, superb condition, still 8 months warranty left. £575. Genuine reason for sale. Tel: 01780 784 694 (Jan/I)

ROGERS STUDIO Seven speakers for sale. In walnut and hardly used. Slight unnoticeable chip in one corner, hence only £420. Tel: Davie 01546 603 594 after 4. (Jan/I)

LINN BASIK turntable, Akitto arm £150; Marantz ST70 tuner £70; Marantz integrated amplifier PM40SE £80. All boxed and in excellent condition. Tel: 01768 88296 (Jan/I)

LINN AXIS turntable, Akito arm and almost new G1042 cartridge. Low use. (£550) £300 ono. Denon DRM24HX cassette recorder, low use (£300) £80 ono. Tel: 01482 881 561 (Beverley, Yorks) (Jan/I)

ELECTROSTATIC RESEARCH Vista 2 loudspeakers. Electrostatic/dynamic hybrid. Impressive sonically and beautiful to look at, £1250 (£3900). Krell KAV250a 250wpc power amp. Serious power and transparency. £1550 (£3200). Both have rave reviews Hi-Fi News. Stunning combination for £2500. Offers considered. Tel: 01372 468 266 (Surrey) (Jan/I)

LYNWOOD ADVANCED mains cleaner £110 (£199). Sonic Link mains cables £40 (£100) each (4 available). Hitachi SSX-102 speaker cable, 5m pair, £60 (£140). Tel: 01372 468 266 (Surrey) (Jan/I)

WANTED: NAIM 250 power amp under three years old. Tel: 01984 629 086 (Jan/I)

HELIUS SIRIUS 2 loudspeakers, 95dB sensitivity. Very open, fast and detailed sound. 4 foot floorstanders that are beautifully styled (not your standard box at all). A little tatty round the edges, hence £500 (£2395). Serious sound for silly money. Tel: 01372 468 266 (Surrey) (Jan/I)

JEFF ROWLAND Consummate remote control line level pre-amplifier. Stereophile Class A. Clean, open and powerful. Best offer over £1000 secures (£5500 new). Or interesting hi-end swaps. Tel: 01372 468 266 (Surrey) (Jan/I)

AUDIOLAB 8000P power amplifier in excellent condition (purchased May 1996). Boxed with instruction manual £449. Tel: 01357 522 006 evenings and weekends (Lanarkshire, Scotland) (Jan/I)

MERIDIAN 200/203 transport/DAC £450, Meridian 566 24 bit DAC only 6 months old £800, Pioneer DV500 Region 1 DVD player £325. All mint, boxed as new. Tel: 01952 660 207(Telford) (Jan/I)

KEF 107 Reference speakers, French polished walnut with hoods, Kube, manual and boxes, mint and superb, cost £2800. £1295. Tel: 01623 551 506 eves. (Mansfield)(Jan/I)

MUSICAL FIDELITY A1001 amplifier purchased 21/10/98 not used £1800. MF X10D Missing Link £55. Arcam black box 50 Delta 250 transport with Optilink X cable and video X coax cable £550. Tel 0121 783 3928 (Jan/I)

QUAD ESL 63 loudspeakers, black covers, oak tops. recent Quad service over £200. Unmarked condition. Boxes/leads £1075. Tel: 01782 502 106 (eves) or 01782 273 510 ext 2501 (Jan)

LINN KAN II speakers, black, with stands, boxed £195. Sound Organisation 5-shelf equipment rack, boxed £55. Tel: 01296 436 024 (Aylesbury) (Jan/I)

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO CDI (£1500) £250. Counterpoint SA7 valve preamp seriously upgraded by GT Audio £325. Gamma Space 300B amplifier, Space Reference III power supply (£3500) £750. Tel: 0181 672 4319 (Jan/I)

TDL STUDIO monitors, walnut finish, stands, boxed, excellent condition, great sound, £1200 ono. Hafler XL600 power amplifier, 400 watts per channel, boxed, good condition £600. Tel: 01242 582 601 (Jan/I)

KENWOOD DP7090 CD Hi-Fi Choice Best Buy (£400) £120. MF X-ACT DAC (£130) £65. Mordant-Short Pageants new Audax TWO34XO tweeters (£200+£50) £50. Target 6" speaker stands £25. Tel: 0181 672 4319 (Jan/I)

AUDIO INNOVATIONS Series 500 valve stereo amplifier boxed as new £420. Marantz CD 63 SE boxed as new £140. Linn Index speakers vgc £100. Denon TU 600L tuner £75. Quad 33 £65. Bose 201 speakers £100. Tel: 0181 681 1054 (Croydon) (Jan/I)

REL Q50 SUBWOOFER. Boxed as new. very little use. £265. Celestion 7000 ribbon hybrid floor standing speakers. Unique design. Fabulous sound. Must be heard. £400. Tel: 01788 544 889 or 813 076 (Rugby) (Jan/I)

CROFT OTL valve monoblocks £1300, SD1 large 3-way ribbon speakers £500. USA Infinity RS111a ribbon speakers £500. Musical Fidelity DAC £150. Thorens TD124/II SME £250. Luxman tuner T2 £100. Quad 57 electrostatics £450. Tel: 01342 850 306 (Jan/I)

LINN KAIRN pre-amp £575, Linn LK 100 power amp £375 both mint and boxed. Harman Karden 730 tuner/amp twin power supply £80. Tel: 01432 275 203 (Hereford) (Jan/I)

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AUDIO ANALOGUE Bellini pre amp, mint £325, Cardas Quadlink 1m high end interconnect £100 (£200). Tel: 0181 906 3492 (Jan/I)

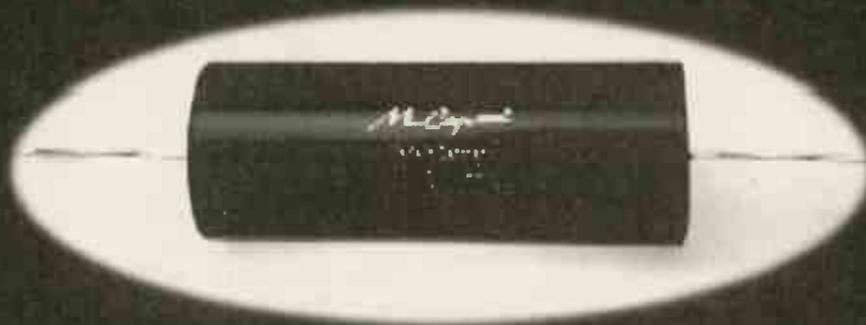
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GARRARD 401 & SME in very special custom plinth £1200. Thorens 124 £265. JR 149 & stands £180. Custom Hi-Fi rack marble shelves (5) £350 all vgc. Some other items. Tel: 01224 646 473 (Jan/I)

TWO LINN LK100 power amps, one (1996) £350, the other eight months old £450. Boxed with manuals, mint condition. Tel: Barry 01242 234 796 (Jan/I)

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NAIM 32.5/140 with interconnect and boxes. Very good condition. £400 ono. Tel: Nick 0121 684 9791 (Jan/I)

ATC MODEL 50SL active speakers current spec £4200, Quad 77/707 pre/power, with remote control £1000, Spendor LS3/5A speakers in black with stands £400. Musical Fidelity FCD CD player with valve output stage £650. Tel: 01977 643 629 (Jan/I)

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QUAD FM 4 tuner £250, Mission 753 speakers £450, Audiolab pre amp £300, Musical Fidelity X50 power amps £300, Teac D500/P500 CD player £550. Tel: 01977 643 629 (Jan/I)

NAIM - NEW style NAP 135s matched pair (recent) £2100, also latest 98 Model MkIII SBL woofers (new) £360, Naxo 3-6 DBL new £475, hi-cap old style factory reconditioned (£140 spent) £385, 250 OS FR £200 spent £895 all mint, boxed with instructions, Ekos wanted. Tel: 01924 271 043 (Jan/I)

TEAC 500 Series CD player and amplifier plus Musical Technology Kestral speakers (bi-wired) What Hi-Fi Award winner, cables supplied £500. Tel: 01344 488 342 (Jan/I)

LINN KEILIDH speakers, black ash including polymer stands and Naim A5 speaker cables, 8 months old, immaculate, boxed and guaranteed (£920 new) £550 ono. Tel: 0802 346 860 or 0181 421 4684 (Harrow, Middx)(Jan/I)

JAMO CONCERT 11s (£2000). These speakers outperform some of the best high end speakers at twice the price, exceptional reproduction of music. £1500 brand new boxed. Meridian 200. DPA DAC £350. Tel: 01273 679 789 (Jan/I)

NAIM 42.5/NAP90/Hi-cap all boxed and including instruction books £550 complete. Naim 72 boxed £450. QED headphone amp £55. All in excellent condition. Tel: Neil 016977 41586 (Cumbria) (Jan/I)

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NAKAMICHI 680ZX good clean condition but needs BW service. I cannot afford service as now retired. Reluctant sale allowing for service in price £185. Tel: 01703 737 823 (Southampton) (Jan/I)

REASONABLE OFFERS. Naim 52 NAPI80 CDS. NAT01 IBL speakers inc. Naim cable. 2x2.5 metres. Buyer collects. Tel: Paul 01482 447 938 (Jan)

GARRARD 301, new idler, heavy plinth, Ariston arm £90. Leak Troughline Stereo 3 £70. Trio valve receiver £50. Hacker valve record player £20. Tel: Milton Keynes (01908) 674 193 (Jan/I)

ROKSAN L2.5 pre & DS1.5 power supply "high end" combination (new £2000). Great Xmas prezzie! £889 ono. Tel: 01245 250 779 (Essex)(Feb/I)

NAIM NAP 180 power amp, (see Hi-Fi World favourites), 1 yr old (under guarantee till Dec 99), boxed, and mint. £775 ono. Linn Kabers, latest spec, black ash, boxed and mint £725 ono (new £2000). Tel: day 0370 893 531, eve 0118 941 2221 (Berkshire) (Jan/I)

NAIM NAP 90 power amp, 2 years old, perfect, £275; Linn Kabers passive, black, latest spec, perfect £825. Wanted: Naim 250 old type. Tel: 0181 657 0981 (Jan)

QUAD 22/11 amplifier with GEC and Mullard valves and FM2 tuner. £600. Goldring Lenco turntable in good condition. Offers. Tel: 01286 881 744 (Jan/I)

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