Tested! Quad's new QC-twentyfour & II-forty pre and power amplifiers, plus the new ESL-989 electrostatic 'speakers

-plus
- Cyrus aCA7.5 & SmartPower pre/power amps
- Musical Fidelity's M3 Nu-Vista integrated amp
- Linn Genki/Kolektor LK140/Ninka system
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Hi-fi is now seen as anoraky, or geekish here in the UK, where technology seems to frighten people. A recent trip to China showed things are very different in the Far East, where hi-fi carries status.

Hi-fi is a hobby in the Far East as it once was here, but it's accepted as mainstream, with no 'weirdo' factor attached. This was brought to light when wandering the side streets of downtown Kowloon. I found myself in a blinding, neon drenched alley that I soon realised was the Tottenham Court Rd. (circa. 1983) of Hong Kong. The differences were the shops' sizes and what they had in them! Being built vertically, space is at a premium in Hong Kong, so in virtually every shop window piles of hi-fi was stacked to the rafters.

And it didn't stop there, the shelves of these minuscule, virtual-kiosks were jammed full of some of the finest audio electronics known to man. Imagine a Richer Sounds crammed with Mark Levinson, Musical Fidelity, Krell and Quad (to name but a few) as well as store-brand 'home made' valve amps. Now imagine a whole street of them and you're starting to get the idea.

A short stroll round the corner led to a lift in an ordinary looking lobby. It whisked me up to five floors of electronic goodies, including a room containing some of the most serious high-end products known to man. Ten-tonne behemoth power amps from the likes of Jeff Rowland, Gryphen and Pass Labs adorned the floor as music wafted from a selection of high-end 'speakers fit for a king. This was presided over by a jovial and polite assistant a million miles away from the text patronising and unctuous hi-fi dealer of Western mythology. All of the stores were full of the most ordinary looking people you could find: office workers, students, housewives and builders all perused the wares on show, without fear of an unwanted, patronising approach.

A bigger surprise came from the People's Republic of China. In the equivalent of Shenzhen's Arndale centre, the top floor possessed numerous 'DIY' style hi-fi shops selling a selection of drive units, electronic components and cable. They were next to dedicated dealerships offering quality hi-fi, as well as smaller shops with an eye-popping array of high-end 'speakers and valve amps from the UK and the US - at around half of the price they'd cost in the country of origin! Hi-fi might be a dying interest in the West, but it is regarded as a desirable luxury in the East. The way they sell it shows this: accessible environments that don't intimidate or offer the kind of 'personal service' which means parting with much more cash than you originally intended. Now, where did I put my passport?

November Competition Winner

The winner of our November competition is Mr. P Newton of Stoke-On-Trent. Congratulations!

**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. 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 experts and dedicated.
reviews

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Simon Pope jets off to the Far East on a visit to Wharfedale’s manufacturing facilities. Read his report of hi-fi life Chinese-style in this double page feature.
The latest developments in the audio world.

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Find out why you should be counting the hours until this time next month!

COMPETITION
In this month's super Christmas competition we're giving away £2,000 worth of Musical Fidelity amplification. The A3CR pre and power amps are among the best available at any price and you could be the proud owner of a pair. Simply answer the questions correctly and they could well be yours!

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A C O U S T I C  E N E R G Y  A E G O

There are plenty of subwoofer/satellite systems around, but quality varies widely. The worst give boomy bass and harsh treble. Acoustic Energy, who certainly know how to make good hi-fi loudspeakers, have come out with their own contribution to this field, the AEGO2. Priced at an affordable £299.95 it comprises a powered subwoofer, with two satellites. The latter each house "a pear shaped drive unit", but there's no mention of a fruity sound. It gives "virtually omni-directional audio" instead, they claim, using revolutionary paper to achieve this.

The Aego2 is a neat looking little system with satellites that measure just 68x103x90mm - small enough to fit in the hand. The subwoofer carries a volume control, plus RCA inputs on the rear panel that will accept all sources except LP. There are four power amplifiers in the Aego 2, for the subwoofer driver, for the two satellites and for an optional centre channel loudspeaker. An add-on package due out soon will transform this system to full surround-sound, or alternatively the whole caboodle can be bought in one swoop as the Aego 5. With audio becoming a big issue in computing it's good to see a serious British loudspeaker manufacturer getting stuck in at last.

D V D  U N I V E R S A L

November 2000 saw the Japanese domestic market launch of Luxman's DU-10, the company's first 'Digital Universal Player'. This Y980,000 (£6,000) behemoth plays no less than DVD Audio, SACD, CD and CD- R/RW formats, and sports the full 24/192 Monty inside its not inconsiderably large casing. There's also the complete set of DVD Video gubbins inside, including 6 channel 24/96 and DTS decoding. You can see it in the flesh at www.luxman.co.jp, but when it will reach these shores is still unknown as we go to press.

T A G  P O W E R  O N

News reaches us of TAG McLaren Audio's latest high-end product. The F1-600M is an awesome looking single-channel monobloc power amplifier and the first electronics in the top of the range F1 series. It is a balanced output design and features both single ended and balanced inputs. There's an option of including the CAST (Current Audio Signal Transmission) system designed by Krell Industries. Power output is rated at 300W into 8Ω and 600W into 4Ω and a whopping 1700W into 1Ω. If you're considering a purchase it may be worth noting that the 600M poweramps weigh a floorboard-creaking 40 kg each. As far as price is concerned, nothing has been finalised as yet but you'll have to start saving the pennies now. Being part of the high-end F1 series it won't be cheap!

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Get inside the music.
Sony Super Audio CD.

No other music system gets you closer. Sony's new Super Audio CD (winner of the EISA European Audio Player of the year 2000-2001 award) provides you with unrivalled sound reproduction thanks to Direct Stream Digital (DSD). A clever little 1-bit recording system that samples audio signals at a rate 64 times higher than conventional compact disc. Giving you a dynamic range of over 120db and an unprecedented bandwidth of over 100kHz. SACDs also benefit from 6 times the capacity of regular CDs and incorporate a reserved space for non-audio data such as text information which can highlight track, disc and artist name. And because all Sony SACD players are compatible with conventional CDs, there's no need to replace your CD collection. To see Sony's range of Super Audio CD players visit the Sony website. To hear one, why not try your nearest philharmonic orchestra.
Interesting music industry developments reach us from over the pond. Artists such as Sheryl Crow and Don Henley have founded a group known as the Recording Artists Coalition, which recently became involved in the latest round of legal wrangling concerning music industry copyright. The New York Federal Court case against the internet archive and access site MP3.com by industry giants Universal Music, among others.

The RAC are looking to establish ‘legal precedent of authorship’ under a recently introduced law signed by Clinton in October. This aims to allow musicians to reclaim recordings by those who wrote or performed it. This basically means the artist can claim that they 'assigned' their work to the record company and that they own the recording, treating it as a “work for hire”. A brief was sent by the RAC to the court stating that under this law up to 4000 of Universal's claims of copyright infringement could now be classed as works 'assigned' to the labels. MP3.com are using this argument to strengthen their defence. The case is now in its 'penalty phase', where financial compensation from MP3.com is settled and a brief from the RAC was received. They can expect the dollars to roll in, as Sony Music, BMG and Warner (the other plaintiffs in the trial) all received around $20 million each from the company.

Goldmund, Ultra high-end manufacturer, of Reference Turntable fame, have announced details of their first computer driven power amplifier. Probably the most awesome technology used in an amplifier yet, the Goldmund Millennium Amplifier is described by the company as a "statement of the ultimate quality possible with today’s technology". It’s a strictly limited edition of 100 and is available by subscription only.

The Millennium is a single channel power amp delivering 600W RMS with both balanced and unbalanced analogue inputs, with digital inputs an option. It has a Pentium computer embedded which controls all the amplifier’s adjustments. This is done by use of a 10” colour touch screen display on the front panel which also contains the user manual and help screens. The computer also controls sound calibrations, adjustable circuit protection and internal climate control. The Millennium is internet linked for software updates, optional remote maintenance and factory diagnosis. The user’s name is recorded in the software and, for good measure, engraved on the front of the amp. The price? Well... if you have to ask... $35,000!

Sony’s first ‘ski-slope’ CD player, the CDP-MS1 follows the ‘retro’ trend that’s dominating all Japan’s new design thinking right now, from motorcycles to mountain bikes. Its distinctive wedge profile is reminiscent of the company’s top loading cassette decks of the mid seventies. The ¥220,000 (£1,350) player weighs in at a reasonably substantial 7.5kg thanks to Sony’s ‘Fixed Pick Up Mechanism’ and ASC (Anti Standing Wave Construction). It also comes with a 24 bit DAC, and an unusual variable slope Bass, Mid and Treble digital tone control.
EXPAND YOUR MIND

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Now EMTEC brings you a complete range of CD-R, CD-RW, DVD and MD products for the digital age. These are available in a range of capacities.

Whether you need to expand your music collection or your data storage, EMTEC disc media always delivers mind blowing results.
**PIONEERING DVD**

It comes as little surprise that DVD devotee Pioneer was the first to get its recorder into Japanese shops. After leading the way with everything from LaserDisc in the early eighties to CD-R in the mid nineties, the company has done it again with the DVR-1000. This chunky (8.5kg) unit can now be found everywhere from electronics stores to supermarkets selling for a discounted price of around Y160,000 (£970). It records audio onto DVD-RWs with a maximum 24/96 resolution, or MPEG1 video with a ‘1 Pass Variable Bitrate Control’. There’s full Dolby Digital and DTS functionality, courtesy of Pioneer’s patented ‘Disc Navi LSI’ chip, which handles much of the huge amount of number crunching the player does. Pioneer has also launched a DVD-RW disc to accompany it, storing 4.7GB for Y3,000 (£18).

www.pioneer.co.jp

**APOGEE RELAUNCH WITH DIGITAL GROUNDBREAKER**

Readers will be familiar with the company Apogee Acoustics, manufacturer of high-end ribbon speakers with a firm following from audiophiles around the globe. Unbeknown to many, this company actually stopped making speakers in 1995, folded in 1998 and relaunched themselves as Apogee Technology. Apogee started to develop an interest in digital amplifier technology, actually patenting their first design in 1997, before the new company was launched. At the recent Comdex show in Las Vegas they introduced their latest baby, the DDX-2000 Controller. This is a chip which the company say will dispose of the need for a DAC in amplifiers, making them ‘all-digital’. They are busy selling the technology to prospective manufacturers. It could also be used in products such as digital powered speakers, AV receivers and amps, and even MP3 playback machines. The DDX-2000 has two channels of DDX processing, a digital volume control, mute and processing to reduce distortion due to signal clipping.

Apparently the new DDX technology combines the function of a DAC with power amplifier control into a fully digital process. It converts audio data into digital signals that control power transistors, which they claim eliminates analog noise and increases the power efficiency three times. The device also means that future amplifiers using the technology benefit from a smaller size and lower power supply costs.

An excellent website for owners of Apogee speakers is listed below, along with the new Apogee Technology website which explains this technology in detail.

www.apogeespeakers.totalserve.co.uk
www.apogeeddx.com

**next issue**

Here’s a small selection of what we hope to bring you in next month’s edition.

**NAIM CD5/NAIT5 CD PLAYER AND INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER**

The CD5 and NAIT5 are the latest products from the Salisbury manufacturer. Read next month’s review to see what we made of them.

**WHARFEDALE PI30 LOUDSPEAKERS**

These are part of the new Pacific range, intended to return Wharfedale to the forefront of speaker design. Will they succeed? All is revealed in four weeks.

**MARANTZ CD6000SE KI SIGNATURE**

This new CD spinner from Marantz is one of their specially treated products from head designer Ken Ishiwata. Will it deserve its ‘K’ status? Find out next month.
Noel Keywood listens in on Quad's new 989 electrostatics and the matching QC twenty four and II-forty valve pre and power amplifiers. Will he be suitably impressed?

Quad electrostatic loudspeakers have traditionally been admired for a whole range of properties, but powerful bass isn't one of them. Describing the preceding ESL-63, one reviewer said that bass "drifted out of the loudspeaker". To counter this criticism Quad have added two bass panels to their new 988 to come up with the imposing 989.

In case you are new to the idea of an electrostatic loudspeaker, here's a simple description. Loudspeaker cones have mass, which is a bad thing. An electrostatic loudspeaker moves air with an almost massless sheet of mylar film (a sort of non-stretch clingfilm). The film is suspended between perforated electrodes and driven by an electrostatic field modulated by the music. Sound from the film passes out through holes in the electrode panels. It sounds great in theory but there are some complex problems that make it difficult to work properly.

An electrostatic loudspeaker is a panel that radiates forward and backward. It is possible to place a box behind to contain the rear radiation, like an ordinary loudspeaker, but this is never done. Consequently, bass depth depends upon panel dimensions, the smallest dimension determining the frequency at which bass output starts to roll off. So for deeper bass you need a bigger panel and Quad have not flinched from extending the 988 upward to a height of no less than 133cms (4ft 4in), to come up with the 989.

Electrostatic loudspeakers need mains power, since on-board they have a high voltage supply unit, as well as electronic protection circuits. The 989s have an IEC mains socket at rear, plus illuminated power switch.

A concentric electrode structure in conjunction with a delay line generates a hemispherical radiation pattern. This makes the loudspeaker act as a point source, eliminating the inherent problem of cancellation that a panel otherwise has. In practical terms it means you get great imaging - and the images stay steady as you move your head.

Whilst the film of an electrostatic loudspeaker is massless, the electrodes either side of it are not, so the notion of masslessness is a bit simple. The trick is to ensure the electrodes, dust covers and cosmetic 'socks' between massless film and listener don't affect the sound too much. The covers must ensure the loudspeaker is safe too, preventing children inserting pointed metal knitting needles. There's around 5000V inside! I own Quad ESL-63s and found that stripping them down does improve the sound, eliminating a slight softness that can be heard, even with the 989s. My Quads were once reviewing tools. Unfortunately, reviewing life is arduous, mine became damaged once too often and were retired to the loft. To develop our own kit loudspeakers I have had to spend a lot of time with conventional cabinets and this helped squeeze the Quads out too. They didn't leave through choice in other words!
So I am well acquainted with the wonder of Quad electrostatics, if also aware of their weaknesses. These are more to do with practicality than sound quality. Quads go loud, but not disco loud. They are large and need a long room to give their best and, of course, they are expensive. As the old saying goes, "whether you're rich or whether you're poor, it helps to be rich".

Funnily, Quads don't lack bass. Measurement shows they go low and, in the right sort of room, I have heard them produce superb bass, good enough even for dub reggae. The problem is that in small rooms the rear wave returns from the back wall to cancel the front wave at bass frequencies. The 989s put more bass into a room however and can handle more bass power than earlier Quads. However, their sheer size demands use in a large room, since they visually dominate a small or medium sized room.

To make absolutely certain the 989s were working properly for review I left them on charge for two weeks then running in for another two weeks. I suspect only a few days of charging is important. I had a bad time with many transistor amplifiers. These loudspeakers are very revealing and they exhibit some difficulties as a load. A hard, tinny sound too often met my ears. Good valve amplifiers match if they can supply power. At least 40W is needed, because the 989s are insensitive.

**RETRO REVIVAL**

Quad supplied their new valve QC twenty four preamplifier and II-forty power amplifiers to accompany the 989s. These amps are only available in one complete pre and power package costing £4,000. Styled like the first Quad 22/II combination, and of similar proportions, but with lighter paintwork, they look neat and retro, yet strangely modern. Build quality was good, and the large volume control great to use, as always.

Happily Quad haven't replicated the power arrangements of the 22/II which demanded thick cabling and octal plugs. The new preamp and power amps are self powered. The QC twenty four has seven inputs, all at line level with a sensitivity of 200mV. There are two sets of tape sockets, but no tape monitor switch. This little item is not needed with digital recorders, since no monitor signal is available.

The QC twenty four is an all-valve preamp. The only question mark at present is lack of a matching external or internal valve phono stage to validate Quad's inclusion of a phono input. There are many external phono stages from other makers that all will match, including our own World Audio Design valve stage that handles moving coil as well as moving magnet cartridges.

Quad's new valve preamp is a quality alternative to solid-state preamps. Generally, a valve preamp behaves exactly like a solid-state unit but has better clarity and neutrality. These days the use of DC heater supplies eliminates hum, and valves are as quiet as transistors in line level preamps, but with much higher overload ceilings. Unfortunately, having said that my sample did have a little hum, something Quad will have to attend to, together with volume spindle earthing.

The II-forty power amplifiers are monoblocs, each with its own power supply and large output transformer. The output stage uses two KT88s in push-pull to deliver a rated 40W; we measured 41W. There are 412 and 812 taps.

This is one specialised and unique hi-fi system of course. In my view nothing can touch the openness, stage depth and clarity of a good valve amplifier - and this is a good valve amplifier. Designed by Andy Grove it is not a make-over of the 22/II, although it does follow the basic pattern Quad laid out all those years ago, combining compactness with style and superb sound quality. Then there are the 989 electrostatics of course, which also have enormous signal resolution.
SOUND JUDGEMENT

An outstanding property of the 989, like any Quad electrostatic, was the cohesive way it treats all instruments, due to the fact that a single drive unit - a sheet of Mylar - handles everything. Violins generate an intense - a sheet of Mylar - handles due to the fact that a single drive unit cohesive way it treats all instruments, like any Quad electrostatic, was the Quads - and the difference is at its largest here. In a conventional loudspeaker the lower notes are reproduced by the bass/midrange driver and the higher notes by the tweeter, giving the violin something of a split personality. Not so in the 989. The 989s revealed the complex detail a split personality. Not so in the 989. The 989s revealed the complex detail of bowed strings, as well as their tonal colour and vibrancy. They also dispelled the coarseness that subtly turns strings into bowsaws with conventional loudspeakers.

The ability of the 989s here is extraordinary, but then Quads are like this. Re-introduced to them after a few years break I was transfixed by the naturalness and vibrant detail of violin, and moved by way the 989s handled a sea of violins in complex orchestral arrangements. Here they could layer an orchestra, bringing a scale to a string section in terms of depth as well as a sheer weight of instruments, all clustered in my living room! The ability to transport string sections into the home was awesome; I had the size and might of the Philharmonia laid in front of me with images that occupied swathes of space, performing the Overture of Wagner's Reinzl in an atmospheric old recording (1960) at the Kingsway Hall, London. Music stands clanked, people coughed, and the strings danced, hovered and soared in great sections in front of me.

Quads always were a reference for loudspeaker designers; I've seen them tucked in the corners of design labs everywhere. To hear the 989s reproduce an orchestra is to know why: cone loudspeakers are not in this league. As the Daily Mirror once said of the Sex Pistols, "they're number one in a field of one." You could say the same of the Quads with classical music.

But it isn't all good news. The sheer resolution of these loudspeakers favours good recordings and sidelines bad ones. Whilst the Philharmonia performing Lohengrin in 1960 was a wonderful experience through the 989s, Lohengrin performed by the Philharmonic in 1993 was a screech. An all-digital recording, it had none of the drive, movement and passion of the earlier analogue version.

The 989s have an ability to resolve that performs peculiar tricks; some recordings gain stature, others simply become unlistenable. Some recording engineers swear by them and I can see why. The depth of revelation a Quad provides is quite extraordinary. It can make or break. The loudspeaker's a two-edged sword!

Not unsurprisingly the 989s made my room move nicely to the kettle drum prominent in Orff's Carmina Burana. The speakers reproduced the scale of this performance well, even if I found myself a little unsettled (again) about recording quality.

With Peter Hurford's fluid playing of Cesar Franck's intriguing Chorals on the organ at the Basilica of Saint-Sernin, Toulouse, the Quads displayed in full glory what I had been getting glimpses of with rock music; that strange phenomenon called "bass detail". Where my large, tuned KLS-9s would sink deep and shake the room the Quads showed me clearly there was more than just depth to be heard; there was the full majesty of this vast organ, the pump, the rush of air and of course the deep, gliding chords that shook the room and held me spellbound. Quads can deliver a sublime experience. They still take my breath away with their profound revelation. To hear music on these loudspeakers is to hear music, rather than the loudspeaker.

The 989s are just as good with Rock in most respects, even if they reproduce bass in a different fashion to the sound we are all so used to. And what we are used to is the sound of a resonating box. Once you remove this pervasive influence it's possible to hear into a recording, but the 989s don't match the resonant power of a box unless they are placed in a suitable room. The trick is to have a long, narrow room with the Quads placed two-thirds of the way down (approx) but against the side walls. The rear wave is 'lost' down the room behind the loudspeaker, returning much weakened. The side walls extend the panel area of the loudspeaker, reducing local cancellation, Peter Walker, founder on Quad, once explained to me.

The 989s are best used in a large room, two rooms knocked into one being ideal. A length of 20ft or more with a width of 10ft would suit, although any room with a dimension greater than 18-20ft should do. My own room, at 16ft long, was returning the rear wave out-of-phase with the front wave at low frequencies, causing some bass cancellation. The 989s went low and provided plenty of room shaking power, but I detected a strict limit that large box loudspeakers could exceed. Because the 989s provide much more than the ability to just go low the absence of subsonics in my particular situation was not worrying. It was a pity I could not fully hear the resolution of deep bass these loudspeakers bring. 🎵
A compilation of 1960s hits said a lot about what the 989s do with Rock. Differences in recording quality between successive tracks were made obvious, much more so than with other loudspeakers. It's funny how box loudspeakers, with their resonant box bass, oft-accentuated frequency extremes, artificial 'detail' and mediocre insight disguise recording weaknesses but tease out the dynamics of Rock. The Quads play it the other way around. The compilation came across as a series of fascinatingly different recordings; it was best not to sit in front of the loudspeakers because the hiss of old analogue master tapes, strange effects, ropey background vocals and peculiar studio acoustics dominated listening. I never realised 'River Deep, Mountain High' was such a messy recording until the 989s analysed it so remorselessly in front of me - I almost got up and walked away in disgust.

Electrostatics don't give you the massive resonant bass boom provided by a box, but they do give solid bass that is eerily detailed and revealing of recording method. Most of us are so tuned to the boom of a box, however, that a Quad may seem light or 'peculiar' in this department. In my view, within the right acoustics Quads provide better bass than box loudspeakers. That the 989s go low was shown by the drifting bass behind Sting's A Thousand Years. The Quads play it the other way around. The compilation came across as a series of fascinatingly different recordings; it was best not to sit in front of the loudspeakers because the hiss of old analogue master tapes, strange effects, ropey background vocals and peculiar studio acoustics dominated listening. I never realised 'River Deep, Mountain High' was such a messy recording until the 989s analysed it so remorselessly in front of me - I almost got up and walked away in disgust.

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Thousand Years, which filled the room, the complex background beautifully wrought clear, natural and celestial quality. The speakers, at a height that gave them a magically in the air between the

Macy Gray's husky voice was beautifully wrought clear, natural and full bodied with a tantalising presence in the room, the complex background arrangements of Why Didn't You Call Me seeming a whole extra performance in their own right, such were the 989s abilities at revealing and laying out a complex sound stage.

I wasn't surprised though that Jackie Leven's superb recordings were given star billing by the Quads. His rolling, resonant vocals came across powerfully on Boy Trapped In A Man, the superb clarity these loudspeakers bring to strings allowing acoustic guitar to scythe out. Quads can amplify a performance too and with Leven's songs they did. He's a powerful singer with moving songs, sung from the heart. With beautiful recording quality the album Fairy Tales for Hard Men jumped from the 989s. They can offer real drama with Rock, as well as classical.

Initially I used the silky smooth Cyrus 7 solid-state amplifier with the 989s, followed by Quad's own QC twenty four valve preamplifier and II-forty valve power amplifier. The civilised output right across the audio band, giving a clean, clear and muscular performance. This is what KT88s, in conjunction with good transformers can do. They have a surprisingly 'modern' sound, by which I mean there's little of the softness and warmth people expect from valve amplifiers. Instead, there's great clarity, excellent stage depth and a lack of hardness that valves are renown for. The QC twenty four pamp needs some tiding to eliminate a slight hum at full gain and a buzz from the volume control when touched. In spite of these niggles, this is a unique and fabulous system that could justify any price, it is so much better in terms of high fidelity, in its purest sense. It reminded me how Quad retain an almost unique grip on the concept.

Quad's new 989 electrostatics go low and can deliver real bass power, but they do need a large room. In the right setting they offer an extraordinary insight into any recording, and a level of fidelity beyond conventional loudspeakers. Like earlier Quads, the 989s are tonally neutral and totally cohesive, having little sound of their own. They construct a massive sound stage, with high definition images often of much greater scale than is usual. They go loud, but are not meant to provide disco levels, especially in the sort of large room they need for best results. This is a real monitor loudspeaker, one that holds a magnifying glass up to recording quality, which at times is disconcerting.

The QC twenty four preamplifier and II-forty power amplifier have strong
Clearly we've moved on

The original Q Series won so many awards that it was tempting to leave well alone.

So we changed it.

We improved the Uni-Q® driver array with an acoustically purer polypropylene midrange cone, and a high frequency unit with a more powerful magnet for greater accuracy at high volume. We fine-tuned the crossovers for even smoother response, and mounted them directly to the bi-wire terminals for optimum signal transmission.

The gorgeous new front baffles are contoured to eliminate edge diffractions, and finished to match the cabinets in Natural Cherry, Dark Apple or Black Ash.

And the end result? All the acoustic transparency of the original, with an even sweeter, more open sound.

There's no such thing as perfection - but now, you can get pretty close.
The latest integrated amplifiers from Cyrus have been impressive. Both the 5 and 7 have a smooth yet powerful sound, of a sort beloved by owners of the original 1 and 2 models. Factor in the benefit of slicker operation and advanced components and you can see the way the company is heading - upwards and onwards.

The aCA7.5 preamp is a new design that builds and improves on its predecessor, the aCA7. The Cyrus design team recently reviewed the aCA7 and decided that changes to the existing audio signal circuits and layout could improve the performance of the preamp, enhancing transparency and general presentation of the sound - enter the new aCA7.5.

A nice touch this preamp shares with the Cyrus 7 integrated is a digitally controlled analogue volume control. It adjusts the volume in response to how quickly you twiddle it; the volume control actually reacts to how fast you turn the knob: very natty and great fun.

A full remote control is supplied which also controls other Cyrus electronics with its Cyrus Auto Commander feature. An external Cyrus PSX-R power supply is an upgrade option.

In addition to the five line inputs, there are two tape outputs, the first of which is designed for use with digital recorders or two-head cassette decks, the second offers full-off-tape monitoring for three-head tape decks, cassette or open-reel.

The SmartPower is a totally new power amplifier capable of delivering a quoted 60W per channel, a conservative figure since we measured 78W. It's switchable from stereo to mono operation, so two can be used in monobloc arrangement, increasing the power of each to 105W.

Star earthing is used throughout the design to help enhance low level resolution and there is a chain output facility which will enable bi or even tri-amping, if you so wish. Two sets of speaker connections are present for bi-wiring and, like the aCA7.5, the SmartPower can be hooked up to the PSX external power supply.

As far as the looks go, they wouldn't be Cyrus products without the trademark 73 x 215 x 360 (mm, HxWxD), die-cast chassis, but instead of the previous block of black or dull grey, we now have a snappy silver sheen to the products, bringing them slightly more up to date.

Cyrus recommend at least six hours powering up before even listening to the amps! I let them run continuously for a good two days before any serious listening was attempted. Kicking off with the Sweeney Todd's kick-ass rock album, 'Dust', the Cyrus partnership showed an immediate grip of the music, with a nicely balanced tonality. Bass was tight and tuneful, midrange detailed and treble smooth. Although these speakers aren't immediate sounding or particularly grumpy, this suited the all-out rock of this music. Every layer of the at-times complicated mix was pretty discernable, drums exact and fast and vocals lyrical and tuneful, although the sound at the climaxes was more of a cohesive whole, rather than detailed strata.

Classical music sounded confident and lush through this pairing, Mahler's demanding (for both hi-fi and listener) Ninth Symphony played by the Cleveland Orchestra under Pierre Boulez on DG showed that the treble is sweet and airy; upper frequency woodwind and percussion floating elegantly though the soundstage, which was wide, if not the deepest about. This was my only gripe with the sound quality. Sometimes I felt I wasn't getting the full picture of the depth of the orchestra. Timpani and double basses, for example, could have been better placed in the stage, making the sound just a tad thinner than I'd have liked. However, dynamics were excellent (this is a very dynamic recording and piece) with the Cyrus taking each fortissimo cleanly in its stride. Tonal balance was, again, superlative ensuring a very musical sound.

At their prices, the Cyrus pair have a lot of good competition from the likes of Audio Analogue with their Bellini/Donizetti pair and Musical Fidelity's slightly more expensive gear. They excel in musicality and balance, though, and the preamp is especially user friendly and fitted with all manner of little quirks of operation which makes using it a pleasure. The overall sound is smooth and refined, not unlike Fidelity's slightly more expensive gear. They're well worth a listen should you be in the market for a pre/power at this price and their upgradability is a definite bonus.
A lot of changes—and still rather a lot of money.

Speakers as universally revered as our Reference Series are a tough act to follow. After all, what can you do to improve on excellence?

Rather a lot, as it happens. Take the high order crossovers, for example. They’ve been completely redesigned, using advanced polypropylene capacitors for even greater lucidity. And every crossover is further fine-tuned to match the parameters of each individual drive unit. We even found ways of making the drivers themselves with greater precision to iron out the slightest sonic imbalance.

Having perfected the acoustics, we turned to aesthetics. Hence the choice of five stunning contemporary finishes—exquisitely book-matched veneers, now including Cherry and the highly figured pale Albina Burr, with corners carefully radiused to eliminate residual edge diffractions. In all, literally hundreds of painstaking improvements were made.

So many small improvements can make a big difference to sound quality—and these do. You’ll find the Reference Series—Two vastly more accomplished than its illustrious predecessors. Sweeter. Purer. Even more lavishly detailed.

Like all the best things in life, they still don’t come cheap—but to anyone who really appreciates sound, they’re better value than ever.
Simon Pope listens to Linn's £3,250 Genki/Kolektor/LK140/Ninka system.

Mention the name 'Linn' to those outside the hi-fi business, or 'hi-fi as a hobby' club, and they will likely recognise the name - or the turntable.

Many a musician too has wandered into their local Linn dealership, mentioned that they've heard the LP12 is the best turntable around and they'd very much like one, please, Noel Gallagher being one such person, apparently. However, few of these people are familiar with the company's other products. They have a wide selection of amplifiers, CD players (including the £12,000 flagship CD12) and 'speakers to suit most discerning buyers' budgets.

This gear also looks good, the sleek black lines of the 'LK style' electronics and the cherry and maple finishes of the new 'speakers are very 'now'. Here we've gathered together a Linn system that will set you back £3,250 - by no means a bad price for all you need to join the road to musical enlightenment.

**GENKI CD PLAYER - £995**

Like every other component in this system, the Genki CD player is a very smart bit of kit, in both looks and facilities. It's a fairly lightweight and slim machine that will blend in anywhere with its Linn 'LK' look. It's designed with both fixed and variable volume control outputs so that it can be connected either straight into a power amp using the internal volume or into a preamp/integrated using the fixed outputs. This means it can also be used as a source for a simple two-room system - one room using the conventional connections and another system using the variable outputs into a power amp and a pair of 'speakers (or even straight into active monitors, should you wish). If using Linn equipment, both of these can be controlled by the one system remote by using the remote in/out connections. A single BNC type digital output is supplied.

The Genki uses surface mount electronics for optimum signal routing and advanced error correction to cope with varying disc quality. A 24 bit Delta Sigma DAC is employed and it's also HDCD compatible, possessing a Pacific Microsonics chip. An optional RS232 communications module can be added for software upgrades and links to custom home entertainment systems - a rapidly developing part of Linn's empire.

**KOLEKTOR PREAMPLIFIER - £495**

With a look not a million miles away from Meridian, there's not an 'old school' rotary knob to be seen on the front panel of the Kolektor. Like the rest of the products in this system the keyword here is 'versatility' and this preamp has a whole shed load of facilities packed into it's casework. There are ten numbered solid state inputs, number one of which doubles as a precision equalised MM phono stage. It has electronically controlled volume and surface mounted components to help minimise unwanted noise.

The tone controls found on the Kolektor are very different from your normal bass and treble controls. The bass control has maximum effect at 40Hz and the treble at 20kHz, therefore they only operate at the boundaries of the audible audio band. They work far more subtly than usual and can be used for adjusting the sound to 'balance out' the characteristics of whatever type of 'speaker you care to use, or whatever type of music you play. Electronic switching and a separate headphone amplifier are also featured in this very clever little package.
The LK140, launched back in April 1998 and the bigger brother of the LK85, can deliver 95W per channel into 8Ω or 140 into 4Ω, hence the name. It is an advance on the design, power and performance of the well received LK100, benefiting from new high density surface mount electronics that minimise signal path lengths and apparently improve pitch accuracy.

Other features include automatic signal sensing for remote power on/off (it will go into standby if no signal is fed into it), and a full protection circuit that will shut the power down should it be over powered or over heated.

In line with the rest of the system, the 140 also self-configures for active loudspeaker playback and the tuning adjustments are made via a rotary switch at the rear, as active crossovers are made available for Linn ‘speaker models.

In size the power amp is the same as both the Genki CD player and Kolektor preamp. Due to these dimensions, together with case ventilation on the top plate, and a shielded toroidal transformer, it can be stacked safely with the other Linn system components.

**PERFORMANCE**

Linn have always emphasised the importance of matching synergy in their products and after spending some time with this system, it became clear what they're on about. With both sound and useability I was mightily impressed. One remote literally does all here and although adorned with what seems hundreds of buttons, it’s a doddle to use.

Burning in the system for a few days the sound became warmer and
THE idyllic landscape of southern France, known for its wild horses, has been the inspiration for our finest loudspeaker series. Good food - good wine - luxury. Imagine the best chefs, the finest ingredients - a feast. This is how the Camargue series was created. Our development team had no constraints, no time limits, no economic limits.

Musical Fidelity Ltd is a British high-end Hi-Fi manufacturer. Due to continued expansion they have two new vacancies in their engineering department. Both positions will be working for a small R&D department that specialise in the design of Hi-end audio products.

POSITION 1.
R&D Engineer/Technician
Duties will include:-
DESIGN/TEST of DIGITAL & CONTROL ELECTRONICS.
PROTOTYPE BUILDING & TESTING
SUBMITTING NEW PRODUCTS FOR CE APPROVAL
(EMC/SAFETY TESTING)
Previous experience with PIC programming required, salary 20K - 30K dependant on experience

POSITION 2.
Duties will include:-
UPKEEP OF ALL EMC/SAFETY APPROVAL ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS
PREPARATION OF USER MANUALS
PREPARATION OF PRODUCTION TEST PROCEDURES
ASSISTING WITH RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT OF NEW PRODUCTS
Salary 15K - 20K dependant on experience

In the first instance please send a current CV and covering letter to:-
Mr. Colin Maxted
Technical Manager
Musical Fidelity Ltd
15-17 Olympic Trading Estate
Fulton Road
Wembley
Middlesex
HA9 0TF
smoother as time progressed
resulting in a pleasantly
full and rich sound that performed
equally well with any CD I fed into the
Genki. This system has a strangely
addictive combination of a sweet
smoothness and bass drive that
demands you play through your entire
collection. Consequently, listening went
on for two or three fascinating days.
It's not that it made all my CDs sound
remarkably different but I found
certain aspects in recordings, such as
drum kit detail and certain bass notes
that had previously escaped my
attention. But the Linn system does all
this in a very easy going manner. It's
literally 'easy listening' without the
tacky tag that comes with the phrase.

With its HDCD compatibility, the
'real' listening started with Mahler's
Das Lied von der Erde recorded by
the Minnesota Orchestra on Reference
Recordings. The sound was full and
smooth without sacrificing detail,
strings lush and yet transparent and
woodwind airy and light. A deep sound
stage was present, with the voice of
the alto soloist in the last movement
balanced exceptionally well against the
orchestra. Tonal colour wasn't as
transparent as others in the hi-fi
domain but a bit of slight bloom here
and there actually added to listening
enjoyment. It's hard to deny that this
system creates a very musical sound,
albeit a million miles away from the
often cold, hard sound of professional
equipment.

With rock, pop and dance the
system delivered equally impressively.
Everything from Beth Orton's folkly
acoustic strumming in 'She Cries
Your Name', to the blistering
assault of Soundgarden's
"Superunknown" failed to trip this
system up. Vocals were clear and
forward and drum kits and bass
lines sounded forceful and detailed,
due in part to the detail of the CD
player, the controlled clout of the
LK140 and the taut and deep bass
of the excellent Ninka 'speakers
(which
impressed me
with other
non-Linn
components).
Treble was as
sweet and smooth
as you can get and
the midrange detailed
and spacious. This
system never, ever
sounded harsh or tiring.

If pressed I would say
that rock and pop music suit
the system better than classical,
but there's not much in it. The
overall sound isn't one of extreme
detail and transparency a la Musical
Fidelity or Krell. This isn't really
what Linn are about. They're about
toe tapping, good old fashioned
enjoyment of music via electronics,
not the other way round.

I'd recommend this system to
those who wish to enter the hi-fi
arena at a high level without the
domestic hassle that esoteric gear
can often bring. It could also be for
those who have become fed up
with the 'hi-fi as a hobby' world and
wish to settle down with something
to enjoy music through, perhaps for
the rest of their days.

If, for one, found it quite hard to
tear myself away as it's a great listen. A
great system that's highly
recommended, even for hi-fi cynics!
On a Hi-Space™ recordable MiniDisc, you can cut, paste, divide, erase and record a million times. One thing alone will never change. The digital quality of the recording. Just pure sound, no hiss.

TOMORROW'S MEMORY TODAY
After the Nu-Vista pre and power amps comes the gleaming M3 Nu-Vista Super Integrated from Musical Fidelity. Simon Pope welcomes it to the fold.

While the concept of 'super integrated' amplifiers is somewhat alien to the UK, it's far more common in the Far East, and especially Japan, where one-box behemoths are things to be treasured.

Surprisingly, few UK manufacturers have ever wandered down this particular path, with the notable exception of Musical Fidelity and its A1001 of a few years back. Just to recap, this £2,500 monster was capable of slamming out over 200W per channel, weighed about the same as a Boeing 767 and ran hot enough for you to knock up a tasty mixed grill on its top plate. Of course, it drove almost absolutely any awkward speaker load with consummate ease - including Yamaha NS1000Ms - and was therefore handy to have around if you needed to fill spaces the size of the Millennium Dome with sound!

Now Musical Fidelity has surpassed even this. The new Nu-Vista M3 integrated - the third and last MF amp to use tiny Nu-Vista valves - is superior even to the A1001 in the build and power stakes - the latter clocks in at a substantial 275W per channel into 8ohms.

Surprisingly though, despite its beefier looks and thicker aluminium front plate, it actually weighs less because it comes with a separate off-board power supply. This chunky item is linked to the amplifier via two (one per channel) Neutrik-type connectors (and supplied rope-thickness cable). Preamp power comes separately by way of a five-pin cable. Once connected the four deep blue LEDs that adorn the front panel will illuminate.

As well as these sapphire lights, there are other luxurious touches to be found in the M3. It has more 24 carat gold plating than you'd find in a Bavarian Baroque monastery, while the two control knobs (input and volume) are pleasingly large and 'reassuringly expensive'.

Under the bonnet each power amp is effectively a monobloc, featuring separate heat sinking, circuit board, mains transformer and choke. The latter are the same as found in the Nu-Vista 300 power amp, but mounted on the heatsinks. MF says this ensures the micro-vibrations caused by the choke are exactly in phase with the related circuitry, which improves sound. The preamp section of the M3 employs the same channel separation theory as the power section. It's as excellent a combination of electronics and aesthetic design as you're going to get for three grand.

I might as well tell you what you're aching to know. All the above pays off, as the sound of this amplifier is extraordinary - quite how MF is going to top this is beyond me. The M3 creates the most transparent and spacious sound I've heard at this price and well beyond. Partnering the amp with Copland's CDA289, Quad's ESL-988s and Nordost's SPM interconnect and 'speaker cable its neutrality and transparency was unbeatable.

A fine example of this was shown with Eiji Oue and the Minnesota Orchestra's version of Mahler's 'Das Lied Von Der Erd' (The Song Of The Earth) song cycle on a Reference Recordings HDCD disc (available from Vivante: 020 8977 6600). This is an orchestral song cycle but one of
A3 RANGE.
MACHINED, MIL-SPEC ALUMINIUM
FRONT PANEL.

TWENTY-FOUR CARAT GOLD
PLATED FITTINGS.

REMOTE CONTROLLED.

PHONO STAGE.

POWERFUL, ROBUST, BUILT.

MUSICAL FIDELITY

A3 RANGE: INTEGRATED AMPS, PREAMPS, POWER AMPS, TUNER, CD PLAYER AND HOME CINEMA DECODER. FOR DETAILS OF YOUR NEAREST STOCKIST RING 020 8900 2866.
symphonic proportions and large orchestral forces. These forces, though, like in much of Mahler's final work, are used sparingly to great effect, especially in the last movement, Der Abschied. The result is a sparse soundscape of vast proportions, a fine match for both Reference Recordings and the M3 amplifier. It has one of the deepest and most spacious soundstages I've encountered - the orchestra was truly three-dimensional, with timpani placed realistically at the rear and woodwind centrally placed in both the image and the soundstage.

As well as loads of power, this amplifier has quite the best low level detail I've ever encountered. Everything is there, including players shuffling their backsides in chairs and turning the music pages. It was quite phenomenal!

Tonally the M3 shows up instruments as they sound in the concert hall. Clarinets are slightly sharp (as they always sound to me), brass fresh and clean, and strings rich and sinuous. Flutes and piccolo hang ethereally in the air. All this is not due to the sonic stamp the amp puts on the recording, as it simply doesn't have one, but more due to the fact that the M3 literally plays music unsullied, with vibrancy and ambience. Higher frequencies have such extension and air that I could have been listening to SACD - it really is that good.

You get none of the smooth rolled off, sweet sound that many audiophiles still adhere to, but what's really there, warts and all. You get an insight into the recording - and more importantly the music - that's so rare in hi-fi.

More detail was highlighted in a recording of the BBC Singers performing John Taverner's haunting, hypnotic choral music. This however, wasn't always a pleasant experience. Not due to the M3, but to the fact that a few of the more 'mature' women have an oscillating warble more akin to 1920s music hall drag queens than professional choral singers. The point is that such was the M3's accuracy, I felt I could point them out as if in a Police identity parade. I found myself wincing as I waited for the next obtrusive note, which is something rarely done in front of a pair of 'speakers. This reaction is usually the sole right of the audience in a live performance. Again, there was an intimacy and realism in the sound that convinced me I was sitting in on the recording session.

Musical Fidelity's Nu-Vista M3 is a more-than-worthy addition to its pre and power brothers, and in certain respects like low level detail and spaciousness exceeds them both. During reviewing I was always listening to the music's emotive effect rather than just another amplifier at work, which is the whole point of hi-fi.

This is one bit of kit I'm dreading giving back, but go back it must since only 500 will be made. If nothing else, this ensures it will attain cult collector status - expect to see one on Antiques Roadshow in a hundred years from now! 😊

NU-VISTA M3 £2,995
Musical Fidelity
15-17 Olympic Trading Estate
Wembley
Middlesex HA9 0TF
Tel: 020 8900 2866
Forget the Santa Socks and twin-pack of boxer Shorts you get every year from Great Aunt Gladys; we're giving you the chance to win an Xmas present to die for. In this month's competition we've managed to procure, courtesy of Musical Fidelity, the A3CR pre and power amp combination - undoubtedly one of the best pairings available on the market right now.

Since its first products hit dealers' shelves nearly twenty years back, Musical Fidelity has been top of the dedicated audiophile's Christmas list. Its products' mix of eclectic styling, battleship build and remarkably lucid and powerful sound is recognised by even the most discerning audiophiles as among the best around. Factor in the value for money price of every component in the not-insubstantial range, and you have the recipe for success which has been the story of this London-based manufacturer from the word go.

A HISTORY OF MUSIC
Founded in 1982, Musical Fidelity was the brainchild of professional clarinettist Antony Michaelson, whose (according to the man himself) "religion is music and fanatical hobby is hi-fi". The first Musical Fidelity product, named The Preamplifier, had an amazingly sweet and musical sound at a fair price. It received ecstatic reviews, despite the fact that every model was knocked up on Mr. Michaelson's kitchen table! The Musical Fidelity wheels were well and truly set in motion with the 1985 launch of the 20W per channel A1. This pure Class A integrated amplifier took the hi-fi world by storm and sold around 100,000 units. A host of products in the A1 mould followed, representing great value for money and possessing a sweet, well controlled sound.

1995 saw the launch of the snazzy X and X-A range of components, and so began another successful era in the company's history. Again well received by the world's press, their unique styling and powerful sound far belied their modest price tags. As well as having tremendous aesthetic appeal, these products were technically excellent, with measurement showing distortion to be virtually non-existent. They had the build, look and sound of products at least twice their price.

Over the past three years Musical Fidelity have also manufactured the flagship Nu-Vista range of products, employing the miniature valve of the same name for the first time in audio. All limited editions, these products sold like hot cakes (the preamp in four weeks and the awesome £3,000 A300 power amp in eight) and now demand higher than original prices on the second-hand market. Who said hi-fi devalues? The latest in this exclusive range, the M3 Nu-Vista integrated, is reviewed in this very issue.

SUPERB PERFORMERS
After the radical X-Series, in 1999 Musical Fidelity reverted back to oblong boxes with the A3XX series. Gold trims and chunky knobs with a slightly nautical feel added a fresh look, showing that you can be 'square' yet still sexy. Part of this range, the A3CR pre and power are without doubt, two of the best Musical Fidelity amplifiers ever produced. With a wonderfully transparent sound, they compete easily with the best at over twice their price. Indeed, such was Musical Fidelity's confidence in these amps that at the time of launch they somewhat modestly claimed they where the best amplifiers available at any price!
CHRISTMAS COMPETITION

SUPER COMPETITION GIVEAWAY!

reviewed them back in April’s issue we found that they were indeed two of the finest amps to pass our hallowed portals. As well as looking sleek and sexy on the exterior there’s a lot of good stuff going on under the bonnet. The technical aims behind the amplifiers is very low distortion throughout the frequency range, vast dynamic range, excellent stereo separation, immunity from mains interference and finally, oodles of power (200W-plus per channel into 8 ohms).

The power amp uses a unique full choke regulated power supply which eliminates capacitor and mains interference, to allow the circuit a stable performance platform. The sonic benefits of choke regulation are many. Due to the lack of interference to the circuitry, the A3CR power amp has a clarity and detail that’s quite astonishing, especially when partnered with the A3CR preamp as Simon Pope found out in his review: "The MF amps sought something more in this Bach Cello Suite than mere notes. This was due to the exquisite detail present. There was a depth to the sound as the bow dug into the string that was frighteningly realistic".

There’s no doubting these amps’ sonic attributes, as they play any music or recording with equal realism and true transparency. Factor in an innate sense of musicality and you should be starting to get the picture. Dynamic range is awesome, pieces such as Stravinsky’s The Rite Of Spring show that even at full pelt, the A3CRs still have more to give: "the MFs dug out dance-like tribalism behind the music to result in a consummate listening experience...rarely does cacophony sound so good".

Well leave the final comment to Mr. Pope again: "The best amps in the world...ever! Well I can’t really answer that, as there’s a lot I haven’t heard. But they’re among the best in this ‘World, if you get my meaning. You’d be very silly not to give them a listen should you be in the market for a pre/power at any price. Heck, give them a listen even if you’re not - you may even blow the ‘new kitchen’ money on them! Listen and weep." If you long for a real treat this Christmas, getting your hands on this awesome pair of amplifiers couldn’t be easier! Simply answer the following questions on a postcard, and send it to the following address before December 31st, 2000. Musical Fidelity would like to send you details of their forthcoming products. Please put a large ‘X’ on the bottom left hand corner of your postcard if you DO NOT wish to receive any product information from Musical Fidelity. The lucky winner will be picked out of Hi-Fi World’s well-used baseball cap.

Competition Questions

1. What was the name of Musical Fidelity’s first product?
   [a] The Power Amplifier
   [b] The Preamplifier
   [c] The CD Player
   [d] The Mains Conditioner

2. The A1 amplifier used which type of operation?
   [a] Class A
   [b] Class B
   [c] Class D
   [d] Class E

3. In which year did Musical Fidelity launch its X and X-A Series?
   [a] 1982
   [b] 2000
   [c] 1995
   [d] 1999

4. What is the name of the mini valve used in Musical Fidelity’s flagship products?
   [a] Nu-Vista
   [b] Nu-Dista
   [c] Nu-Order
   [d] Nu-Tron

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WHAT HI-FI? JULY 2000

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selected digital recorders turntables and tuners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arcam</td>
<td>Alpha 10 DRT</td>
<td>£799.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michell</td>
<td>Gyro SE (RB300)</td>
<td>£919.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pioneer</td>
<td>PDR509 CD-RW Recorder</td>
<td>£299.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>Debut II - Black V.1 Turntable inc OM5</td>
<td>£109.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sony</td>
<td>MDSJE330 MinDisc Recorder</td>
<td>£119.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sony</td>
<td>MDSJB940 MinDisc Recorder</td>
<td>£249.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sony</td>
<td>STD777ES DAB tuner</td>
<td>£549.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yamaha</td>
<td>MDX596 MinDisc Recorder</td>
<td>£199.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please Note: Some products are not available at all outlets. Colours available at additional cost.

also available at selected outlets

Arcam FMJ DT26, Cyrus FM7.5, Linn Sondek LP12, Marantz ST17 and TAG McLaren Audio T32R.

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WHAT HI-FI? • DECEMBER 1999

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At Sevenoaks Sound & Vision you'll find the widest range of quality products anywhere in the UK. Everything from the latest DVD players and Widescreen Plasma Televisions to amazing special offers, all with our outstanding service. You can be sure that Sevenoaks are always more entertaining.
Without doubt, Digital Audio Broadcasting is the future of radio. Leak Troughline users may disagree, but not everyone listens to radio purely as a super-high quality music source. Others are after good sound allied to superb convenience, which is where DAB excels. With this in mind, dozens of manufacturers are now scrambling to offer just such a package at the right price. Until now, all that's reached the market are a few boxy black hi-fi separates with very expensive price tags. While these are worthy ways of surfing the digital ether, they've hardly filled the listening public with awe and wonderment about the new radio revolution. What was needed is an easy to use, mass market product that looks good and costs next to nothing. Enter Psion InfoMedia's WaveFinder. By using the PC platform to take care of all digital processing duties, vast amounts can be hacked off its price tag with no detrimental effect. Both a novelty product and an immensely practical tool at the same time, it makes an extremely persuasive argument for DAB at a price everyone can afford.

WHAT IS IT?
WaveFinder is a fully featured Digital Audio Broadcasting radio receiver that runs on PCs. Properly set-up, DAB provides clearer, less static-prone reception than analogue, plus a more user-friendly interface. The Psion package consists of a curiously styled digital antenna (complete with centrally mounted flashing disco lights - very Buck Rogers!) and a software receiver, which together make for an extremely versatile radio experience. Ease of use aside, you get full digital audio recording to your computer at the touch of a mouse button, multimedia information to accompany music, plus an 'Interactive Click-thru Radio' feature for programmes broadcasting live web links.

HOW IT WORKS
The package comprises a radio receiver unit attached to a connector lead that plugs into your PC's USB (Universal Serial Bus) port. Two little antennae screw into either end of the main receiver, and the USB plug attaches to an offboard power adaptor via a piggyback minijack socket. The package also comes with a set-up CD and a couple of brackets, letting you mount the receiver unit onto anything you so desire.

Getting going is simple. Once you've plugged the USB connector into the PC, and the power plug into the USB connector, you insert the set-up CD and follow the instructions. First the Windows Operating System tells you it's found a new USB device and is locating the drivers. Providing the set-up CD-ROM is in place, it takes care of that by itself and you then progress to the Installation Wizard. This 'walks you through' the whole process, meaning there's no annoying instruction sheets to fumble with.

Positioning the receiver unit (or 'antenna') correctly is essential. Here's where DAB draws a line in the sand and refuses to work at all unless you

David Price tunes into the future of radio, courtesy of Psion's WaveFinder PC DAB receiver.
Station' scans all the DAB multiplexes to find the one you want. Along with Help and registration information, 'Options' lets you record audio broadcasts in MP2 or MP3 format and save the file to your PC.

DAB uses MPEG2 compression, so a direct save takes around twice the space of MP3 on your hard disk, but uses less system resources as the codec requires less number crunching. As a guide, one hour of MP3 recording takes approximately 60MB of disk space. To record audio broadcasts, you just click the record audio icon in the Station Bar and the icon flashes red to signify recording. Usefully, you can also click the record audio icon to a different station while recording, if both are broadcast on the same multiplex. When you've finished, simply re-click the record audio icon, specify the filename and location, then click Save.

**HOW DOES IT SOUND?**

Because the WaveFinder acts as the radio equivalent of a CD transport, sending a digital signal to the PC, which acts as the DAC, it's your soundcard that determines sound quality. Better digital to analogue conversion is provided by a good external DAC, connected to the digital (SP/DIF) output of the soundcard.

Listened to this way, the Psion sounds superb - the equal of any standalone hi-fi DAB tuner selling for twice the price, or more. For review purposes, I auditioned the WaveFinder through a Cambridge Audio DACMagic 3, and found it made a pleasing enough noise that was easily the match of a Denon TU260 I had to hand.

If you don't pipe it out to an external DAC, you're relying on the digital converters inside your PC. With a decent card (like VideoLogic's SonicFury or Yamaha's WF192XG) you'd be surprised how closely it approaches decent FM radio, with a clean, detailed and full bodied performance. With a poor soundcard like the one your PC comes bundled with, don't expect it to better AM radio.

The relative merits (or demerits) of the MPEG2 compression system that DAB uses are for another time and another place. Suffice it to say that FM stereo isn't the purest and most uncompressed music carrier known to man, and both have their strengths and weaknesses.

**WHAT DO WE THINK?**

If you're looking for a cheap, easy and interesting way into DAB, this is a great product at a great price. But we do have a couple of reservations. First, there's no external antenna socket so if it doesn't work then that's it. This is a shame, because DAB is still hard to pick up in some areas and the Psion's short aerial lead and small antennae didn't help. Not everybody will be able to get DAB with it. I tried the Psion on a fell side in The Lake District, in a basement in Central London, and in a house in Bristol - and it only worked in the last of the three locations. With a better aerial arrangement I should have at least been able to get it going in London!

My other quibble is the silly flashing light which was a distraction, although would doubtless be the star of the show at 1970s theme parties. All in all, it's clear that computers and audio are now inextricably linked, and in future they're going to get closer. The surprising thing about the WaveFinder is that Psion InfoMedia picked up on this so soon, and has produced such an impressive product from an entirely clean sheet of paper. Not only did it have to invent the unit itself, but the concept of a DAB radio that plugs into your computer!

**MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS**

- Intel Pentium III/800 333MHz or higher, or Intel Celeron 400 MHz or higher, or AMD K6-2 450 MHz or higher, or AMD K7 (Athlon) 500MHz or higher.
- 50MB minimum free hard disk space for installation, plus space for your recordings.
- 16-bit stereo sound card, USB port - CD-ROM or DVD-ROM drive - Modem (or Internet connection) for 'Click thru Radio' services.

**WORLD VERDICT**

Limited reception capabilities notwithstanding, this is a cracking product that will enrich the life of any radio head!
Now that prices are coming down, Digital Audio Broadcasting might at last stop being a broadcasters plaything and start to have some relevance to the man on the street. Research was started in Germany during the early 1980s, then got a push from the E.U. as the Eureka 147 project. The BBC were early adopters, going on-air in 1995. But just to see the BBC website (www.bbc.co.uk/digital radio), with its retail advice, is to know they know few are listening.

Hardly surprising really, DAB is a fiercely complex radio technology implemented from an expensive chip set. Consequently, DAB has been obtainable only in the form of hi-fi tuners and car radios, priced at around £800. And the sad truth is a £200 vhf/fm tuner hooked up to a good aerial offers similar sound quality.

During 2000 however, Philips Electronics and Panasonic introduced new DAB chips. This has spurred manufacturers into action and now, suddenly, DAB receivers are coming to market at £299. Psion’s WaveFinder is in this issue and we will be reviewing Videologic’s similarly priced DRX-601E in the next issue.

DAB does work. It delivers fine sound quality from a weak signal, our tests show, but it has limitations. DAB broadcasts are conducted in a narrow part of Band Ill, from 217MHz-230MHz, double the frequency used by VHF/FM broadcasts in Band II, from 88-108MHz. You might notice vhf/fm fade or disappear when driving past a large building; DAB is even more sensitive to this phenomenon. So, for example, whilst London is fully served you may well be unable to receive DAB in a basement flat (see our Psion review) where VHF/FM is available, albeit with hiss. When a DAB receiver fails to get enough signal it falls silent, becoming useless, unlike VHF/FM which becomes hissy but remains usable.

Our advice is make sure you can install a DAB aerial if needed - and make sure any DAB radio you intend to buy has an aerial socket if you have doubts about reception.

There’s been so little demand for DAB that only recently have proper aerials become available. Antiference (www.antiference.co.uk) recently introduced two, both tuned specifically for DAB frequencies, rather than Band Ill. In good reception areas their simple DAB2301 vertical dipole placed high up should do fine. The more complex 4-element 2304 is only needed in fringe reception areas. Which brings us to the latest coverage situation.

Around 70% of the UK’s population can receive DAB, we are told. The BBC’s coverage map (below) shows that multopath flutter, nor do you have to retune whilst driving when leaving a transmitter area. Sound quality is extremely good and there are myriads of stations broadcasting, all desperate for listeners. DAB actually has stations that are not available on VHF/FM!

Will DAB ever be successful? Possibly. DAB suits low cost radio but chip prices militate against this. Internet radio and radio transmission of digital data by schemes other than DAB could displace it in the home. The wild card is America, who refuse to adopt European-style DAB, one reason chips are so expensive. European broadcasters have issued desperate appeals for action and Germany is even threatening to pull the plug on VHF/FM to force people to buy DAB!

Whether Europeans will answer these clarion calls looks ever less likely as time goes by, however.
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Of all hi-fi CD recorders around right now, Marantz's DR6000 is seen as the one to beat.

With the last rites currently being administered to Compact Cassette, everyone wants to buy a CD recorder, and why not? Ken Ishiwata, "Company Ambassador" of Marantz and audio designer par excellence, saw the potential of the domestic CD recorder as a replacement for the humble CD player some time ago and the company have obviously taken this route rather than the DVD-video one, sticking firmly to their strong history in audio. Mr. Ishiwata, incidentally, would appear to be right, as sales of CD recorders have rocketed, with at least two of the UK's top CD machines being recorders and the US market welcoming the format with open arms, and wallets.

Marantz, an arm of Philips, have championed the CD recorder for some time now and have a line of recorders that record as well as they playback, in quality terms. The bonuses of CD recording are many, the main being a crisp and hiss-free digital sound on a format that the most of the public are familiar with.

In the eighties, to record digitally you had to pay thousands of pounds for a DAT machine. Philips talked about CD-E (erasable) but did little because of music industry pressure. It was 1998 when they launched the CD-RW870 - a blockbuster that brought digital recording to the masses for under £500. At the time, the only other silver disc burners were from Pioneer, and cost an awful lot more. Being an identically priced, rebranded evolution of Philips finest recorder, Marantz's DR6000 could be regarded as its spiritual successor.

The differences extend more to a different fascia badge and a lick of paint though. This new machine gets a number of useful tweaks, not least of which is the new MAR770+C40 transport. This is a real class act, using a die-cast mechanism and dual bearing optical pickup. When burning, the laser continuously readjusts laser power to allow for variations in disc construction, and it also detects and adjusts itself to the brand and type of CD blank being used. Tested with Digital Recordings CD Check, the Marantz tracked all but the final band five, which was an excellent result and shows the Philips guys know what they're up to.

At 4.6kg, the 440x87x317mm case is well built and substantial, with a nicely crafted metal front panel. Marantz claim special attention to power supplies, and the use of Circuit Conversion Noise Eliminators to prevent rectifier noise moving into the signal path.

Digits are handled courtesy of a multi-bit Philips AK5351 analogue to digital converter (for analogue recording) and twin TDA1305T Bitstream DACs for playback. Round the back, there are the standard audio ins and outs, plus coaxial and TOSLINK digital inputs and output respectively.

Features-wise, it's familiar Philips territory with its Dutch CD-R951 cousin's array of handy recording aids (CD Sync with memory buffer, auto
David Price finds out if it's really digital recording's highest achiever.

track numbering, easy finalising, CD Text, etc.). You also get a large remote, digital and analogue connection cables and a slab-like multi language instruction book.

Much has been made of the DR6000's ability to function as a full blown CD player in its own right, and to be fair it isn't bad. Compared to my favourite budget reference, the now-defunct £200 Cambridge CD-4SE, it's a fair way behind, sounding just a touch too wishy-washy for my tastes. True, there are no nasties, and it's a modest improvement over Denon's CD-R1000 reviewed in December's Hi-Fi World, but it's still a long way behind the likes of players like Arcam's Alpha 8SE.

The DR6000 has a sound traditionally associated with the Marantz brand. Smooth but soft around the edges, you get a warm but rhythmically unengaging view of your silver discs. It smooths over rough edges well with a slightly rolled-off and sophisticated sheen, but if rough edges are your listening bread and butter, you could well die of starvation. Whilst a Karajan/DG recording of a Strauss tone poem will glide richly and effortlessly through your 'speakers, Motorhead will sound more like the Carpenters. Put it through an external DAC though, and things get better - it isn't a million miles behind top mid-price transports like TEAC's VRDS-T1.

It's a great recorder too. Copying digitally, it smooths rough edges left by the likes of Philips' CDR-951 and the aforementioned Denon, giving just a tad more grip and gusto to the discs it burns. Treble is slightly sweeter and better resolved (less fluffiness) and bass is firmer and more tactile, imparting a better sense of ebb and flow to the music. The differences are mors apparent through the analogue-ins though. Although the same basic presentation is there, you hear better low level detailing and a lower noise floor. Dynamics are better too, making for genuinely enjoyable listening.

This still isn't the best digital recorder you'll get for the money. At around £550 discounted, Sony's giant killing TCD-B8 DAT portable has noticeably better analogue to digital converters and a more open and incisive sound. Then again, you can't play DATs in your car or computer. So if it's all round ability you're after, the Marantz DR6000 is now the one to have at the price. It does most things well, and advances the cause of CD recorders just that little bit more. However, if you're intending to use it as a serious, standalone playback machine too, then invest in a good, cheap DAC as quick as you can.

MARANTZ DR6000
£500
Marantz Hi-Fi UK Ltd,
Kingsbridge House, Padbury Oaks
575 S83 Bus Rd.
Longford
Middx UB7 0EH
Tel: 01753 680868
www.marantz.co.uk

World Radio History

WORLD VERDICT

GREAT all rounder with no serious flaws
- makes great recordings and plays back well. Fine value for money.

Performance see page 111

HI-FI WORLD JANUARY 2001 PAGE 39
China is firmly established as the new heartland of hi-fi speaker manufacturing. Simon Pope travelled to Shenzhen to check out Wharfedale’s production facilities.

Your average hi-fi manufacturer visit invariably involves a three hour traffic jam on any one of Britain’s motorways, followed by a tour of the premises including maybe quick lunch and perhaps a pie and a pint in the local at close of play. Not that there’s anything wrong with this (apart from the traffic jam), as these visits are often enlightening and enjoyable. However, I recently had the opportunity to experience something slightly different from the norm. Swap the three hour traffic jam for thirteen hours on a Cathay Pacific 747 to Hong Kong, the UK company tour for a factory in the People’s Republic of China and the pie and a pint for snake stew with chilli and marinated ducks’ stomachs washed down with rice wine. Be it your idea of heaven or hell, you can’t deny that it’s definitely different.

The increasing cost of manufacturing in Western Europe has led many electronics companies, including many hi-fi speaker manufacturers, to start making goods abroad. To make economic sense, many have moved manufacturing to countries where labour is a fraction of the cost of the UK, or most of Western Europe. These locations include Hungary, Portugal, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam and, of course, China. Most mainstream British loudspeaker manufacturers have moved at least a certain part of the manufacturing process to the Far East at some stage, Wharfedale being one such company.

First, a brief résumé of the recent history of the company may help. Wharfedale, Quad and Leak come under the umbrella known as the International Audio Group. This was once part of the Verity Group along with the likes of Mission, NXT and Roksan. As NXT technology started to advance, the necessary money and time needed to develop the Wharfedale and Quad products wasn’t available, so IAG sought backing from other parties. Sanecore Ltd. were the Chinese distributor for Wharfedale and Quad (they also dealt with Shure microphones and Martin lighting, among others) and the heads of this company, Chinese twins Bernard and Michael Chang, were also two directors of the international investment company, Jetop, whose money therefore funded Sanecore. Meetings were held, arrangements come to and to cut a long story short, IAG was duly liberated from Verity’s chains.

There were many reasons for the interest in the company but one major factor was that Wharfedale and Quad were recognised brand names, traditionally associated with British quality, which the Far East values above all. British audio engineering, for both professional and home use, is looked upon as among the best in the world, and owning prestigious names such as Wharfedale and Quad gives any company clout in the audio business.

With the Chinese interest in the company and the gradual movement of the whole industry towards manufacturing in such countries, it was obvious that production of the mass market models should move from Wharfedale’s Bradford factory to China. In late 1997 Wharfedale started manufacturing their loudspeaker and professional audio products in a factory just outside Shenzhen, a boom city just north of Hong Kong and a Special Economic Zone within the People’s Republic.

Around 700 employees work at the Shenzhen factory.

With the development of more and more hi-fi and speaker factories in China, came the industry’s observers’ doubts of quality control. However, visiting the Wharfedale production factory it occurred to me how things were actually going back to the old way of speaker manufacturing. It’s a simple fact that, economically, more workers can be employed in a Chinese factory than one in the UK, so a more hands on approach can be developed, indeed the total number of employees in the building reaches a mind-boggling 700. The one thing that was always admired about traditional British hi-fi was the way it was hand-built and this is exactly what is continued in the Wharfedale factory. Line upon line of workers concentrate on building cabinets, assembling crossovers and PCBs and
testing drive units. Each section has at least one manager present to oversee quality. It was quite a sight to behold, and admittedly, a surprise.

"Wharfedale's is very much a hands-on approach"

Most R&D work for Wharfedale is also dealt with in China. Heading the department is Steve Hewlett, once of Celestion, who has been working in China for over five years. He oversees a team of thirty working on both existing ranges and new products. As well as electronics, the R&D team also involve themselves in moulding and cabinet design, all dealt with 'in-house'. In close collaboration with the UK HQ, Wharfedale products are developing thick and fast, with important products due in the first quarter of next year. At present, some 75-100 containers (each holding cubic metres) of equipment are shipped from the factory each month, 75% of which are domestic products.

Whilst part of the same company, only a few mouldings and circuit boards for the Quad 99 series are made in China, and the finished products are assembled in the UK. All other Quad products, due to the limited numbers and work involved, are designed and built in the old Wharfedale factory in Bradford. But IAG's commitment to Quad products is as strong as in Wharfedale, as high end hi-fi matters in China, as I well discovered.

Wander around any of the many shopping malls in Shenzhen, a boom city just north of Hong Kong and a Special Economic Zone within the People's Republic, and you'll be quite simply amazed at the amount of specialist home audio shops that will greet you. Whole floors are devoted to DIY speaker building and there are dealings with mainstream home audio products from the likes of KEF, Mission and of course Wharfedale. Also to be found among these more mainstream dealers are small shops with literally tens of thousands of pounds of audio gear inside. Megabuck valve amps from the likes of Audio Note sit crammed next to high-end loudspeakers in a veritable treasure trove of audiophile delights and all of it cheaper than in the UK or the USA, where they're built! Even the Chinese department stores stock hi-fi gear that you'll be hard pushed to find in the equivalent shops elsewhere in the world.

"Who buys this stuff in China?" you may well be thinking. I visited a plush PGA golf club in the Chinese countryside whilst on my little jaunt that confirmed a couple of suspicions. [1] I'm not very good at golf, and [2] there are more rich people than you think in China. This plush set up could have been in Palm Springs, except for the fact that the members arriving in top of the range Mercedes and buggy cruising in Ralph Lauren polo shirts were young Chinese entrepreneurs doing business, as opposed to retired attorneys with nothing better to do. It's not for nothing that many predict Shanghai to be the main world banking capital ten years from now, with China the world's strongest economic force.

What's important for us in the audio industry to remember is that hi-fi is very much a part of this boom. The future of our renowned audio heritage, to a certain extent dead and buried here (walk down Tottenham Court Rd. for a reminder) is being continued, with quality as important an issue as ever.
MiniDisc has had a stormy past. Launched in 1992 it spent its early days in a dogfight with Philips' now moribund DCC format, then pretty much disappeared off the scene. When I joined Hi-Fi World in 1994 I remember seeing a MiniDisc T-shirt lying around the office, and thinking how it would soon be a museum piece! Despite its superb ergonomics, the format sounded so bad that its premature demise looked assured.

Fast forward to 1997, when I was asked to review Sony's new MDS-JE500 MD recorder. Singularly underwhelmed by the prospect, I tried to postpone the evil day as long as I could, but when I eventually came round to plugging it in, I got one hell of a shock. At the time, I'd been archiving my records onto DAT using a Sony TC-D7 portable, and was well versed in the sound quality of this 'pure' digital format. I decided to spin off a few MD copies of my DATs out of interest, and was gobsmacked. Although still quite a way behind DAT, it was nevertheless very musically convincing, especially considering its low £300 retail price. Hi-Fi World ran what was probably the first glowing review of any MiniDisc machine ever in Britain (doubtless users of previous generation MD machines thought we'd gone off our trolley's!) and the Sony duly cleaned up in the High Streets. Indeed, I reckon much of the drop in sales of cassette hardware can be traced back to this very machine. Sony then followed it with a range of budget MD machines, from the super-budget 300 series, through the 500 series and up to the 900 series. The 920 was another cracker which Sony soon replaced with the MDS-JB930, which brought the latest ATRAC DSP-Type R to the party, plus other goodies like a switchable digital filter.

The MDS-JB940 reviewed here is its latest incarnation. The key change is the use of a 24bit digital filter, still with its switchable variable coefficients, which is incorporated into one single chip substrate along with the accompanying noise shaper and pulse generator. Presumably this means lower costs, freeing extra cash to be spent elsewhere.

It isn't hard to spot where this has ended up. There are more facilities, a sprinkling of better components and a beefier case compared with the previous machine. You get a double top plate which makes the cabinet more rigid (and therefore less resonant) for better sound, plus selected op amps for the D-A converter output, and the use of copper plated screws and washers in the casing fixings.

Feature wise, a major change is the use of ATRAC3 compression technology (as seen in Sony's Memory Stick Walkman) to give up to 320 minutes of stereo recording time onto an 80 minute MiniDisc. You can choose double (LP2) or quadruple (LP4) recording times, in addition to MD's standard double-time mono Long Play facility.

You can mix MDLP and non-LP tracks on one disc, and they can be edited even on a machine that doesn't otherwise play MDLP tracks.

Not everyone's going to want what's essentially quarter bitrate recording capability (because the sound quality invariably suffers), but for my money it's a great feature that's perfect for recording anything from Radio 4's 'Any Questions/ Any Answers' to Radio 5 Live's Formula One Grand Prix commentary.

Finally, the new machine offers Scale Factor Edit, which lets users change recordings after they've been made. For example, you can Normalise the level of each individual track so one doesn't sound far louder than the rest, or you can post fade (in or out) all your tracks. It's a minor but worthwhile new facility, and adds even more to MiniDisc's formidable editing capabilities.
So how do the tweaks work out in practice? Having used this new Sony's MDS-JB930 predecessor extensively, I was able to do some detailed comparison work. First, the newbie feels better built, with a cleaner fascia layout that also includes the large recording mode selector and warning light to the right of the disc loader. It retains the oldster's useful keyboard link (you can plug in a standard computer keyboard for faster titling, if you can be bothered), and there's a powerful Set-Up facility accessible via the Edit Menu.

There's a real sonic improvement over the previous model. Although still a long way from the superb standards of the top-of-the-range MDS-JA555ES, you'll hear a touch more detail, finesse and naturalness to this new machine's sound. Essentially the new Sony's a neutral performer, adding just a touch of warmth and bloom to the upper mid-band and subtracting the same further down from the low bass. Midband is impressively smooth and open, with plenty of detail and a fast, lithe character. Only up in the high treble do its failings become apparent, with a slightly thick, cloudy quality devoid of real shimmer. With Claudia Bruken's piercing voice maintained an impressive smoothness and clarity. With Neil Young's 'Harvest Moon', the Sony MDS-JB940 again acquitted itself well. With a wide, expansive soundstage, warm bass and a beautifully clean and detailed rendition of Young's acoustic guitar work, it made some very nice noises indeed. Neil's melancholic voice was carried in all its plangent glory, with just a touch of atmosphere sacrificed against the reference CD recording. The only blot on an otherwise immaculate copybook was a slight loss of shimmer in the treble, which detracted just a touch from the song's sense of occasion.

Moving to the spacey, ambient jazz of Special EFX's 'Masterpiece' showed the 940's weaker side. Although less processed sounding than both my old Denon DMD-1000 reference and the Sony's 930 predecessor, ultimately it never loosened up enough to really let the music breathe in an organic way. Although it got so much right, the song's crashing climaxes underlined its ultimate dynamic limitations. It's certainly very good at 'microdynamics' (those little changes in accent, inflection and phrasing), but when someone hits a piano keyboard or guitar string in anger, it doesn't quite get it across properly.

You might think this an inherent limitation of the MiniDisc format itself, but hearing Sony's battleship MDS-JA555ES will soon convince you otherwise! Ultimately I suspect the answer lies in beefier power supplies, which of course cost too much for a budget design like this.

Running the gamut of jazz, rock and pop the Sony proved an extremely impressive performer. Last year's MDS-JB930 really struggled to improve upon my reference Denon DMD-1000, whereas its replacement is clearly superior in almost every respect. For its modest retail price it makes a compelling case for itself, not least because to significantly improve on it you have to spend nearly three times as much on the company's own MDS-JA555ES.

SONY MDS-JB940
£249
Sony UK Ltd.
The Heights, Brooklands, Weybridge, Surrey KT13 0XW
Tel: 01923 816 000

Measured Performance see page 111
LETTER OF THE MONTH

LIGHTNING UPGRADE

I hope you can throw some light on some problems I'm having replacing some of my hi-fi, after our house was zapped by lightning a few months ago! I have bought a TEAC Reference 500 system for my "den", with my Linn Sondek LP12 Valhalla coupled to it. The turntable has a Mayware Mk IV tonearm and Sonus Blue cartridge fitted. I'm unable to get a replacement Blue stylus and don't know who makes the tonearm - I'd like to get another headshell to try another cartridge to compare with my Sonus without having to reset the tracking as well as re-balancing the arm. What do you know of this tone-arm and the cartridge set-up that I am using? What does it compare with? In the lounge my Trio KA900 amp is replaced by a Marantz PM6010 OSE, but the Marantz does not have a tight grip on the bass when coupled to my Celestion Ditton 300 speakers using the existing Bandridge speaker cable. The bass can be boomy, something the Trio did not give. I've internally re-wired the speakers but the bass is still not clean, although an improvement is there. I've a sneaky feeling my existing cables are past their use by date - if so, what do you suggest? I'm not too keen to replace with untinned OFC cable if a few years down the road I experience the same. I've internally re-wired the speakers but the bass is still not clean, although an improvement is there. I've a sneaky feeling my existing cables are past their use by date - if so, what do you suggest? I'm not too keen to replace with untinned OFC cable if a few years down the road I experience the same. I have Tannoy Revolution R1 speakers wall mounted in the den, and I am very pleased with the sound of the TEAC and Tannoy set-up. I bought the Marantz as I plan to replace the old CD player (a Technics SL-P220) with possibly the Marantz CD6000 OSE using IXOS Gamma Encore interconnects. Your thoughts would be appreciated on my choice. My music tastes cover Bert Kaempfert, James Last, Sounds Orchestral, Neil Diamond, The Shadows, Lenny Dee, Stanley Black, André Brasseur and Duane Eddy etc.

Bill Nixson, Jersey

The Mayware was a popular mid-price unipivot of the late seventies, comparable to a Hadcock or Michell Focus arm. It was good in its day, but is now way off the pace. It's boring to have to restate this, but an Origin An Aro straight to the heart!
Modesty prevents us from quoting the rest of these reviews, but you get the idea!

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Deon Schoeman Audio Video South Africa

RINGMAT FEET

"...much more important...is that the music, all the way through, sounds warmer and more like reality, as if you have taken an electronic veil away from your system. You are now able to close your eyes and feel that the performers are in your room..."

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campaign audio design

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Musical Realities

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Tel: (01252) 702705
email: info@audioreference.co.uk
Live modded RB250 would be the cheapest way to blast your ageing vinyl front end into the 21st century. Find a Linn dealer who’s prepared to get his chisel out and file off a little of the right rear plinth corner brace, which will then enable you to fit the Rega arm.

If you really want to swap cartridges then SME’s excellent 309 is the arm to have. A bit more expensive than the Rega and ultimately a little flatter and less dynamic, it’s still one honey of an arm that’s exquisitely built.

If you love the sweet, beguiling nature of unipivots however, the one to have would be the Naim ARO, which would pair up a treat with the Linn. It’s expensive though, and if you’re using it with your Teac amp (good though it is), you’ll find it’s overkill! Personally, I’d fit a Dynavector DV10X4 high output moving coil to the Rega and have done with it - it’s a dynamite combination and cheap too.

As for your errant Marantz amp, I’m afraid you’re not the first person to have replaced a late seventies high end amp with a modern cheapie, only to be disappointed. Considering your Marantz costs in real terms around a quarter of your Trio, you’re never going to equal it in all respects. To tighten the bass, change the speaker cables to DNM Reson which is a typically lean, fast, detailed sounding solid core design that will reign things in downstairs. Also consider mounting those lovely old Celestions on low level stands like Atacama B200s - I use these with my big Yamaha speakers to great effect, and they only raise things 20cm off the floor. You’ll also find a new CD player helps no end, as your Technics is frankly not up to the job of feeding the Dittons. A CD6000KIS would be the minimum I’d suggest, but an Arcam FMJ CD23 would be money well spent in the long term. I’d recommend LFD Spirolink 3 interconnects from amp to CD, which are very neutral and transparent but will tighten bass still further. Good luck! DP

As for your errant Marantz amp, I’m afraid you’re not the first person to have replaced a late seventies high

CD player (£1,200), which is a far more neutral and detailed performer than your very 'eighties' sounding 200/203. Then replace the preamp with a 502 (£1,295).

If you want to move away from Meridian you’ll find more options available to you. As you like rock music, you might want to tighten up the sound and buy yourself some dynamics, in which case your two and half grand would be better spent on a Naim NAC82/NAP180, which you could ultimately match with a CDX.

A new Naim range is coming out, but I think it’s reasonable to assume that it will improve on its very able predecessors.

If you want a more even handed sound then Musical Fidelity’s A3CR could be the combo to aim for, thanks to its spectacularly powerful but smooth character. Match it to that Meridian 506.24 and you’d have a supremely big hearted and musically engaging set-up that would work with anything.

Finally, when funds permit, Quad’s new ESL-989 would be the speakers to use in this context. DP

ONCE BITTEN... FOREVER SMITTEN
The bug is starting to bite again and the urge for something new and better is increasing! My present system is Meridian 200/203 CD/DAC, Meridian 201 preamp, Meridian S55 power amp, Mission 782 speakers, Denon TU260/2 tuner, Philips 750 DVD and Panasonic 680 video. Interconnects are vdH I02mk2, Audioquest quartz3 (CD-pre-power) and vdH Snow knekttrack biwire speaker cable. Room size is 12x12ft, with a suspended wooden floor no carpet, leather sofas and one wall covered floor to ceiling wall to wall with heavy curtains. The system is fed from its own dedicated distribution board, each item being protected by its own feed via 6mm cable. My music tastes range from classical to Zappa, Floyd, Genesis etc. The system sits on an Apollo soprano table spiked to the floor, and the speakers sit on a sub-base then spiked to these. Well now you have all the info, what can I do to improve upon what I have? My budget will run to £2500. I feel the first upgrade should be the disc player/preamp. So what’s new and improved? Sorry for the length of this query, and thank you for a response!

Simon Morton via email

Your existing set-up is a good, fairly well balanced system but you’re right to identify the source and preamp as the weak links. The speakers and power amp are certainly deserving of better. If you wish to stick with Meridian gear, go for a new 506.24...
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CD SHOOT OUT
My system comprises an FT Audio Passive Controller, 47Lab Comcard power amp and Duntech Opal speakers. The sound of the amp is close to DNM - direct and transparent - and the speakers are like Spendor or Harbeths. Rather than spending big money on CD players like the Linn Ikem, I'd like your opinion about mid-price around £1000 designs. I own a Rega Planar before and changed to a Creek CD43 later. I like the sound of the Roksan Caspian, but the Creek CD43 gives an exceptionally musical sound that's just a little bass-light by comparison. Using the Roksan and Creek as the reference, where will the Musical Fidelity A3CD stand? The latter seems to have had good reviews in the UK press but it is quite a bit more than the others here. How different is the Musical Fidelity A3CD (considerably cheaper here) from the Genki, and can the CD43 still compete in this company? Your opinion will be very much appreciated.

Paul Lam via email

The MF A3CD is a fine mid-price CD player but isn't a million miles ahead of the Creek or Roksan, and is in the same ball park as the Genki. Haven't heard the new Rega yet, so I can't comment on that. To be frank, I think you'd be better spending an extra £300 or so on Arcam's FMJ CD23, which is both considerably more refined and musically engaging than all the other players you mention here. It's a great all round upgrade, and you have to spend another £1000 to get anything appreciably better. With your 'DNM-sounding' amp though, you might like to consider the excellent Meridian 506.24 which has a slightly fruitier bass at the expense of a tiny bit of detail. The Ikemi promises to be a great CD player (the Karik 3 certainly was) and would be worth the extra money if funds permit - look out for more on Linn high end CD soon in Hi-Fi World! SP.

STRINGING TOGETHER A SYSTEM
My old system (Marantz CD63SE, Aura VA100II and Ruark Templar speakers) has served me well, but the amplifier has just gone in for a repair, and I have been looking at other options, either with or without my existing speakers. So far I have listened to a Musical Fidelity CD and amp (both about £800) which wasn't to my taste. Linn (Genki, Wokanda, Li40)- which was much better but too warm and unfocused, and a Naim (CD5, NAIT 5, Intro speakers) which delivered great detail and focus but was too dry and bass-light. Budget is about £2500 if I keep the Ruarks, and about £3000 if I also get new speakers. What are the best options? My main musical interest is string quartets, with some opera. Thanks for any help you can give me.

David Hedley via email

Instead of one-make solutions, I'd start mixing and matching. If you like your Ruarks (and they're fine music makers, if not exactly the state-of-the-art anymore) then go for the best CD source you can afford and match it with Naim's new NAIT 5. The Copland CDA 289 is our latest fave in the sub-£2000 silver disc spinning stakes, thanks to its really strong, confident and smooth sound that almost makes you forget you're listening to digital. Factor in its HDCD capability and it's a fine package for £1898. Then, when more funds come along, you could split your NAIT into a pre-power (whilst upgrading the power amp and HICAPping the pre) and audition better loudspeakers like Jamo Concert IIs, Dynaudio Audience 70s or KEF Reference Series One-Twos. DP.
Wednesday, 11th October 2000 was the day Microsoft chose to unveil its new multimedia plans to the world, and the good Lord joined in with some spectacular special effects. As the US computer giant’s top brass briefed London’s Streaming Media Europe 2000 conference on its view of the future of home entertainment, there were storms and floods the like of which the South East hadn’t seen for many years. In this shower of publicity, the word ‘streaming’ could not have been more appropriate!

Despite the weather, the mood was amazingly upbeat. Those present were excited at the prospect of regular computer users suddenly having easy access to an infinite amount of video and audio channels via the Internet. The key is Microsoft’s new Media Player bundled in the new Windows Millennium Edition operating system. As well as providing an integrated music recorder and player, it simply and conveniently lets users go online to enjoy streamed music or video. Effectively, this gives everyone access to any broadcasting organisation (known these days as a ‘content provider’) that decides to transmit (or ‘stream’) its programmes (‘content’) over the Net (telephone lines, in other words).

**THE PROMISE**

The implications are huge. Suddenly, music fans have access to vast quantities of radio and video material on practically any artist they can think of, from servers dotted all around the world.

With more and more stations streaming their output over the Net, the sky is literally the limit. Soon, the trick won’t be finding music, radio or TV you like, but finding time to watch or hear the vast mass of fascinating content available.

After Microsoft’s multimedia conference it announced strategic alliances with several international content providers. The likes of Sony Music Entertainment Europe, Netcine (which is a subsidiary of Pathé, one of the leading film production companies in France) and Yacast will all be using the Windows Media format for streamed audio, video and film distribution via the Internet.

Additionally, leading European content delivery network Global TeleSystems Inc. (which owns the largest fibre-optic backbone in Europe) and Servecast.com have chosen Windows Media to make massive new content delivery services across Europe.

Microsoft doesn’t intend to get involved in the creative ‘content generation’ process, but sees itself as bringing an enabling technology to programmers and consumers alike, that connects one to the other. It sees the Windows PC as moving from the ‘productivity centre’ of the nineties to the ‘activity centre’ of the noughties.

Pete Fester, General Manager of Microsoft’s flagship Digital Media Division, told Hi-Fi World that their goal is, “to make Windows Media technology available everywhere, anywhere, anytime on multiple devices”.

To this end, fifty new ‘Windows Media Service Providers’ across eleven European countries (making a total of 330 world-wide) have been set up to help provide aspiring online broadcasters with the technological know-how to stream their content over the Net. There’s a directory of these at www.microsoft.com/windowsmedia/wmsp/.

Will Poole, vice president of Microsoft’s Windows Digital Media Division, said, “Windows Media Technologies is transforming the digital media experience. The new relationships unveiled today will bring to millions of European users the great quality, scalability and reliability of Windows Media”. Here are some examples of action in this field.

In November, Sony Music Entertainment Europe and Microsoft are launching a streamed European music video channel. This brand new ‘21st century MTV’ is the first streamed music video channel and will be tailored to European tastes. It will be offered at bitrates suitable for standard ‘dial-up’ modem users and broadband users who want near-VHS quality 300kbps streaming.
Netcine is releasing 1,000 movies in Windows Media format via the Internet from Pathé's library of films. Offering full 'video-on-demand', viewers will be able to watch them whenever they like, rather than having to wait for them to be broadcast at particular times.

French radio webcaster Yacast will be offering webcasts of some leading French radio stations, such as RTL, RTL2, Skyrock and Fun Radio, which currently have combined audiences of nearly 16.3 million terrestrial listeners, using the Windows Media Format.

**THE TECHNOLOGY**

Microsoft has grand designs for audio and video streaming, and this is just the start. There's no doubt it's deadly serious about the new venture, but readily admits it's still early days. In Europe at least, the information pipelines have to be there to make it viable. For example, MP3's detractors are quick to point out that downloading a song takes upwards of twenty minutes (for a 4MB file), and often use this to dismiss the whole idea of digitally downloadable music. However, Microsoft's Digital Media supremo says this is a short-sighted position. Pete Fester agrees that broadband has to be in place for streaming to replace conventional disc based audio and video storage (i.e. DVDs and CDs), and says that behind the scenes there's a lot of work going on to realise this. "Right now, downloading an average movie via a 56k dial-up modem takes 833 hours, but Europe will soon be able to look forward to just 53 seconds by cable."

In conjunction with Global TeleSystems Inc. and Compaq, Microsoft is working on the largest pan-European streaming service, with an eventual capacity to serve up to 1 million concurrent streams across Europe. Servecast.com also announced it will promote Windows Media as part of its development of a state-of-the-art network infrastructure for video and audio broadcasting across Europe. A series of powerful servers will form a high-capacity network for online video and audio delivery, linked by a high-speed backbone. The company is already operational in London, Amsterdam, Frankfurt and Stockholm, and will expand to a total of 16 European points by March, 2001.

**THE DREAM**

The first stage of streamed multimedia is already here. You can log onto one of any number of sites (from BBC Online to Servecast.com) to see jerky, blocky, constantly rebuffered video and audio on your PC.

Although Microsoft says it has given Windows Media "a huge kick" with these announcements, there's still a way to go. The next stage will be when broadband cable access reaches normal consumers, which is still a year or two off (thanks to the politics of the British telecomms industry), but when this finally happens, life will never be the same again.

The quality of streamed audio and video should be high enough to be acceptable to most people. The major benefit, however, will be convenience. In the same way that video recorders brought liberation from TV timetables for the first time, high-quality broadband streamed content will give listeners and viewers complete control over when and where they enjoy their programmes. Video on demand will mean you can get home and catch up on the latest news or soap instantly. The idea of 'missing' programmes will be banished to the history books, as will the need to physically go to a video shop or music megastore to get your entertainment.

According to Pete Fester though, the final goal is a new generation of wireless portable devices. They'll give users complete independence from their PCs. "Your computer at home can download a streamed concert or football match and transmit it to your electronic organiser for you to watch while you're still on the train coming home from work, many miles away."

Thanks to the importance of news and entertainment in people's lives the world's computer, music and film companies are finally getting to grips with multimedia in a serious manner. It's a fascinating time to be around right now.

Rather than taking over the world as some anti-Microsoft factions have suggested, Pete Fester says, "It's simply about reaching more eyeballs and ears"
Analog is everything

Ortofon - the world's oldest and largest cartridge manufacturer

With award winning record playing systems available from as little as £110, a range stretching to £2,000 and fortunes still being spent on R&D, there never has been a greater choice for the vinyl lover and music enthusiast.

Pro-ject - the world's largest Hi-Fi turntable manufacturer
With its beautiful aluminium finish, Aiwa's MM-VX100 is proof the Japanese can do a good MP3 portable at the right price. Nick Tate listens in.

Here then, not a moment too soon for some of us, is Aiwa's first MP3 walkie, and what a revelation it is! As soon as you pull it from its sturdy cardboard box you realise it's a quality item. Although not as tiny as some latest generation machines like Vivanco's Vmax, at 66x86x22mm it's still far smaller than the likes of the new Rio, and puts behemoths like Thomson's Lyra to shame. It weighs a respectable 72g, and has the best build quality of any MP3 portable I've seen so far. With a sleek aluminium body, top ergonomics, a high quality three line dot-matrix display (sadly not backlit, though) and sensibly placed access for the PC connection cable, it really does make you realise how poorly turned out most of its rivals are.

Being Japanese and beautifully built (in Korea, under Nipponese supervision, natch!) begs the question, 'Okay, so how much does it cost, then?' I was expecting a hefty price tag. However, I was pleasantly surprised to discover that it's available direct from Aiwa's UK website [www.aiwa.co.uk] for £129.99, including VAT and carriage. Considering its comprehensive spec, you get a lot for your money.

First, there's 32MB of built-in flash card memory, which is respectable at this price considering the overall package, with the option to upgrade with another 32MB later. There's a voice recorder and microphone built in, so the MM-VX100 will also function as a dictaphone, which records up to two hours and 99 sessions of voice notes. Four centrally mounted buttons control the unit's functions, including power on/off, volume, recording, track search, repeat and play modes, plus a switchable DSP offering Classic, Rock, Pop and Jazz presets. There's also a 3v DC jack for external power, should the 15 hours of juice provided by the Aiwa's single AA battery be exhausted.

The unit also comes with a soft carrying case, a detachable wired remote control (giving the usual play, track search etc. functions) and a passable set of in-ear stereo earphones. The rest of the package comprises a CD-ROM with Aiwa's excellent VX-100 Manager MP3 software and a parallel port connection cable. This combination works very well, and the software is just the sort of bug-free, fuss-free, easy to use package you'd expect. Just a shame that the MM-VX100 is still using an old fashioned parallel port connector, which is slower and more fussy compared to the latest USB affairs. The supplied instruction booklet is excellent - easily the best written for any MP3 portable I've reviewed to date.

This little Aiwa continued to impress on audition, but with reservations. The player itself is excellent, but the bundled shareware version of RealAudio's RealJukebox looks distinctly below par. It permits a maximum bitrate of only 96kbps which simply does not qualify as hi-fi. If only Aiwa had bundled the latest shareware version of MusicMatch Jukebox which comes with free, unlimited ripping at up to 320kbps...
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World Radio History
Computer CD writers have just taken a dramatic step forward with the advent of new technology. David Price looks at one of the first BURN-Proof designs, Creative Labs' CD-RW Blaster 121032.

Since CD writers first reached the mass market - only two years ago, amazingly enough - they've got faster and more reliable. The April 1999 issue of Computer Audio World reviewed Philips' first attempt, which offered a blazing 2x burning speed, and even at that dizzying velocity it sometimes crashed! Then only a few months later we were looking at 4x Yamaha thinking they were a miracle of modern technology. These days, the 12x Creative Labs design reviewed here will doubtless seem pedestrian by the time this review goes to press!

Ultimately though, speed is much of a muchness. When you're burning audio CD-Rs you want something that does it swiftly and without fuss, rather than a pocket rocket that hangs up all the time, causing you to bin yet another unfinished CD-R. No, what's really important is reliability and consistency, and up to now that's been lacking. Ironically, fancy CD burners with fast SCSI interfaces and large data buffers tend to crash mid-burn because the host computer momentarily decides to do something you didn't expect. All it takes is a screensaver to pop up or a fax to arrive and suddenly there's one more wasted blue CD in your rubbish bin.

Now though, that's all history thanks to a jolly clever - and if I may be so bold, bleedin' obvious - technology called 'BURN-Proof'. The aforementioned crashes occur because of something called buffer underrun - while burning it's necessary to send the CD writer a constant stream of data. However, this isn't always constant, especially when other applications - from word processors to screen savers start up. Once buffer underrun occurs, the burner has nothing to write to its rapidly spinning CD-R and duly calls it a day. This new technology lets CD-R/RW writers record data seamlessly between the end of one recorded point and the start of another even if buffer underrun occurs.

Although a Sanyo-designed system, it's been licensed to various manufacturers and Creative Labs has been an early adopter. The company claims that as well as saving you from losing CD-R blanks, BURN-Proof has several other advantages. For example, you can now safely multi-task with your PC while CD burning - assuming your Windows OS doesn't crash for some other unconnected reason that is! It also means that lower performance PCs may also perform high-speed recording, which is a boon if you'd rather spend your money on hi-fi hardware or music software rather than constantly upgrading your audio computer.

Creative Labs' new CD-RW Blaster 12x10x32 costs around £230, which is a lot of money for a silver disc burner these days, but then again, it's very well specified. As well as the aforementioned BURN-Proofing, it boasts 12x CD-R writing speed, 10x CD-RW writing and 32x CD-ROM reading, meaning it can do a full music CD in approximately eight minutes at full pelt. The package includes the drive itself, a CD-R and a CD-RW blank, an IDE data cable, audio cable, a manual and burning software. Much to my approval, this means the NERO 5.0 Burning ROM which we reviewed a couple of months back. Although a little fiddly, it's probably the best CD authoring software of its type around right now, and Creative gets thumbs aloft for bundling it. There's also Prassi's aCD packet burning software for CD-Rewritable drives which lets you drag and drop files onto CD-RWs easily.

In other respects, the Blaster is pretty run-of-the-mill. A reasonably well screwed together unit, it doesn't have the quality feel of Plextors or HPs, but isn't below par either. It has a front-panel headphone jack (for masochists only) with a volume control (best left at MIN), an LED 'busy' indicator, a close/eject button, emergency eject hole, and reasonably smooth front-loading tray mechanism that's pretty pedestrian to open or close (around four seconds by my watch). The whole lot measures the standard 146mm x 120mm x 202mm and weighs in at 1.2kg.

So how does it work? Brilliantly! Despite hours of fiddling around, desperately trying to get the Blaster to crash mid-burn, it wouldn't. Even at its top 12x writing speed, whatever application you start up simply causes the drive to stop and wait until the data starts flowing again. Not even a quick blast of Half-Life jeopardised the recording process! Sound is very good, with a clean and detailed presentation that rounds off the sharp edges of the source disc and softens things just a touch. Still the effect is so subtle that it depends more on your choice of CD-R media. Highly recommended then, and may there be plenty more BURN-Proof burners where that came from.

TECH SPECS

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<td>150ms (12x PCACV speed) average access time</td>
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WORLD VERDICT

A great, fully featured machine that does the job superebly and comes with a fine bundle of software too. Good value despite its high price.
NEW DEMONSTRATION ROOM NOW OPEN AT NEW 12A SPRING GARDENS, NEWPORT PAGNE.

KEL84 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT

This is our brand new low cost, beginner level amplifier kit, featuring the popular 5844 valves in push pull configuration per channel, providing 16 watts into an 8 ohm load, plenty for most medium sensibly loudspeakers. The output transformers are Ultra Lineare, keeping distortion down to a minimum. Up front we have the EC80 valve, a very smooth pentode/triode tube. The KEL84 has an extremely low hum level, down to a minimum.

The Ke184 mains switch is, positioned at the rear of the amplifier and is easily accessible, the mains is received via an IEC lead, an earth post is also positioned at the back.

This kit is suitable to the beginner in that the instructions now include pictures as well as diagrams, making them very easy to follow. At a UK price of £250.00 all inclusive you cannot ignore this kite. Simon Pope says, "The quality that can be gleaned from this amp is a fine introduction to the joys of the valve sound. The KEL84 will highlight all the intricacies and depth of detail in your favourite recordings whilst retaining a warmth and musicality as well as power, at 500.00 GBP a pair, a definite valve bargain.' Weight 15kg, external dimensions with valves are 300mm(w) x 370mm(d) x 150mm(h).

KIT88 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT & KAT88 VALVE POWER AMPLIFIER KIT

Here is the amazing KIT88. The circuit is similar to that of the ever popular KEL84 with a few changes to incorporate the Tesla, JJ branded KT88 power triode. This is a pure Class A push-pull design providing 36 watts into an 8 ohm load. Gary Devon has come up with a gem of an output transformer (E8). Combined with the KIT88 it offers a virtually unattainable result for a valve amplifier. Frequency response measured 11Hz to 76KHz, separation 71dB, noise 0.0044mV, sensitivity 400mV and distortion 0.003%.

"As valve amplifiers go, the KIT88 is one of the best measured performances I have ever come across," says Noel Kingwood. Jon Marks says, "The KIT88 pulled a series of surprisingly fast, mostly bass-free notes out of its tubing when dealing with Suzanne Vega's Nine Objects Of Desire album. As if this wasn't enough, the mid and treble were nice top-cymbals had a deliciously natural, golden shimmer without sounding soft, and vocals were extremely transparent and clearly defined. KIT88 don't hang around when it comes to exploiting the virtues of its four output valves on numbers such as 'Leaves' and 'Suspect Susurrus' from four Land's End Jazz Band. Saxophone had a wonderfully smooth, realistic character, and acoustic guitar mixed with harmonic richness to very impressive effect. Asian Dub Foundation and Mekons showed no sign of all the sluggish, wooly bottom end and poorly-delineated bass beats that most valve amps are to blame for. Which makes the KIT88 an all-round, high-end bargain." Weight 16kg, external dimensions with valves are 330mm(w) x 300mm(d) x 190mm(h).
KLS10 HIGH TECHNOLOGY COMPACT MONITOR

Our mini-marvel uses an Audax carbon fibre bass/midrange unit, married to the world’s most advanced tweeter, the piezo-electric gold dome H302. The KLS10 offers high performance from a small package. The main speakers are designed to work alone, or as a dedicated subwoofer to extend their bass alone, they are suited to near-wall mounting and can be tuned by port adjustment to suit personal taste and location. They are easy to drive and need just 30 watts. KLS10 is unique. Technically advanced, yet compact and relatively inexpensive. There is little to list it. 88 dB 1W/1m, 15mm MDF, internal volume 9Ltrs, external dimensions 19cm(w) x 31cm(h) x 23cm(d).

Drive units & Crossover Kit £394.95
Drive units only £358.00

KLS10 GOLD SUBWOOFER

Designed to complement KLS10 Gold stand mounters by providing a deep and open bass. The subwoofer is inexpensive, easy to build, comprising a simple crossover network to a high quality 8 inch Avenger dual voice coil unit. A must for all KLS10 Gold customers. Sens. 89dB.

KLS9 TWO WAY FLOORSTANDER

Here’s a storm for you - KLS9, with its B84 alignment bass cabinet and Audax High Definition Aerogel 8in bass/midrange unit. Designed by Noel Keywood to possess optimal bass damping and a clean step response. Aided by a teency bit of bass lift, KLS9 really thunders; it will re-arrange your furniture. But it does not waffle, falling silent when there’s no bass in the music. Aided by a high power 1 in fabric dome tweeter, KLS9 is detailed, evenly balanced and images superbly. It is an easy 120w load and is 88dB sensitive. For amps up to 60W. Easy to build and great for beginners. Internal volume 70Ltrs, 18mm MDF, external dimensions 25cm(w) x 93cm(h) x 40cm(d).

Drive units & crossover kit £320.00
Drive unit pack £160.00

KLS10 COMPACT TWO WAY STANDMOUNTER

The KLS14 is an extremely simple design and was designed to pong our new Keilburg megaphone. It uses a 8DKT-36-06, a 25mm fabric dome tweeter from Vifa and a Seas CA2RE misfused 8 inch coded paper cone, driven from Seins. It is a 210l load, priced very well and is a friendly load so will work well with most amplifier types from 10 - 100 watts. Simon Pope says, “The sound of the KLS14 is exciting and immediate, it also has an overall fluid and smooth response which adds a touch of sophistication to the sound, as its never too hammy; its basically everything you hope for in a standmount but better.”

Crossover to the sound, so its not too hammy, its basically everything you hope for in a standmount but better. It creates a big sound from a small size and deep bass with control. It has a frequency response of 50Hz - 18kHz w/ -3dB, a good sensitivity of 90dB and a nominal impedance of 8 ohms. Internal volume 20.6 litres external dimensions = 376mm(h) x 312mm(d) x 256mm(w).

Upgrade your KLS3e to Gold stock. Includes initial over budget dome piezo tweeter and all components.

KLS3 Gold Mk II

ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY THREE WAY LOUDSPEAKER

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8in. bass driver for superb depth, this is our top-of-the-line reference speaker. Sensitivity 90dB at 1W/1m, 25mm MDF, internal volume 60Ltrs, external dimensions 28cm(w) x 93cm(h) x 40cm(d).

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Drive Unit Pack £125.00

capacitors & potentiometers

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## Loudspeaker Kits

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<td>HD83 mains toroidal transformer</td>
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- **ADDRESS:**
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<tr>
<td>Wadia 900c CD Player</td>
<td>£5900</td>
<td>£7200</td>
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<td>Living Voice Auditorium. HFC best buy - immaculate</td>
<td>£900</td>
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<td>Living Voice Avatar - cherry. Slight second.</td>
<td>£1800</td>
<td>£2500</td>
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<td>Border Patrol 300B SE (Western Electric valves)</td>
<td>£3300</td>
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<td>Border Patrol Power supply for valve amplifiers</td>
<td>£400</td>
<td>£585</td>
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<td>Cary 800c 845 30watt SE monos</td>
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<td>Linn LPI12 with Avantdale PSU</td>
<td>£190</td>
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<td>Hadcock Tonearm - 1 NEW, 1 used</td>
<td>£400/£350</td>
<td>£600</td>
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<td>Nottingham Analogue Foot tonearm. 12&quot; carbon fibre un gloss. NEW</td>
<td>£500</td>
<td>£900</td>
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<td>Spaghetti hoops (tall tin)</td>
<td>5p</td>
<td>7sp</td>
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<td>Nottingham Analogue Space Deact. Ex Dem</td>
<td>£490</td>
<td>£760</td>
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<td>£2000</td>
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<td>Ortofon MC7/50 cartridge - less than 50 hours use</td>
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<td>Croft Series 6 monos</td>
<td>£580</td>
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<td>Audio Innovations Series 500 line integrated - Classic</td>
<td>£450</td>
<td>£1200</td>
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<td>Audio Innovations Series 1000 Anniversary (silver circuit)</td>
<td>£650</td>
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<td>Art Audio Quintet monos</td>
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<td>Cary 3008 SEI triode line integrated amplifier</td>
<td>£1700</td>
<td>£4000</td>
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<td>AudioNote ANSI silver speaker cable 2x 3m sets</td>
<td>£900</td>
<td>£2100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Snell Types, Jll and Ell - including Pirate stands</td>
<td>£550</td>
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**Definitive Cables**

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<td>Best Buy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Storm II Hybrid</td>
<td>£23.99/m</td>
<td>Best Buy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Best Buy** Hi-Fi Choice

March '98

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**World Radio History**
The primary purpose of DIY to me - and this is a personal view - is not to save money but to engage in an absorbing quest for better sound quality.
David Price tries out two interesting new test discs from Digital Recordings.

**DIGITAL RECORDINGS**

**CD CHECK £ 17.95**

This is for serious Compact Disc users who wonder how well their CD player's transport is functioning. Think of it as a digital version of the old Hi-Fi Sound HFS75 and HFS81 test records of yore (remember those?). It contains a series of bands or 'levels' which range from average to very high error levels. To use it, all you have to do is press Play and see how many transport 'tracks' are coped with before you hear a nasty digital clicking sound, indicating the laser is mistracking. Successful, glitch-free playback of Check Level-1 shows your CD player meets the 'minimum' sound reproduction and error correction criteria specified in Philips/Sony's Red Book specification. If your CD player can't track this, then it's probably due for a new laser assembly pronto.

Check Level-2 shows 'average' error correction capabilities. Level-3 shows 'good' and Level-4 shows 'very good'. Finally, Level-5 shows 'excellent', indicating that the player is, according to Digital Recordings, "most capable of perfectly correcting errors caused by CD manufacturing faults, disc surface imperfections, scratches, etc., without sound alteration or distortion".

The disc proved fascinating to try in all number of CD players I had lying around. To my amazement, a number of £ 2000-plus machines struggled with Level-4, whereas my ancient and very cheap Philips CD624 did superbly, almost tracking Level-5. The worst performer was an eighties Sony ES player which struggled with Level-3, and the best was the TEAC CD-ROM drive in my notebook computer, which did Level-5 faultlessly! Fascinating and great fun for tweakers!

**DIGITAL RECORDINGS**

**AUDIO CD £ 17.95**

Rather than testing your system, this Canadian sourced disc tests your hearing. For it to work properly, a high quality set of headphones is required, with a frequency response of at least 20Hz to 20kHz - anything more is unnecessary because the CD format itself is restricted to this bandwidth. It's pretty simple to use - you just insert the CD, slip on your cans and run through the tracks. To assure reliable results, the first set of tracks test your CD player's error correction - there's no point in proceeding if it can't track these.

After this, you get a series of sounds at differing frequencies, and you have to take a note of how far into each track (in minutes and seconds) you can hear a sound, for your left and right ear respectively. By plotting this information on the graph supplied with the instructions, you can get a reasonably accurate idea of the frequency response of your lugholes.

It's easy enough to do, and seems to be reasonably accurate (although I didn't have Noel's FFT to hand, it gave plausible enough results for my shell likes!).

Even without proper measuring equipment, finding the relative abilities of my left and right ears was interesting, and confirmed my suspicion that my right ear is a little less capable at detecting very high frequencies. This also explains why I have the treble control on my right Yamaha NS1000M loudspeaker tweaked just a tad higher than the left. If these things bother you, then Audio CD is well worth the money, otherwise, as far as I'm concerned at least, ignorance is bliss.

Website: www.digital-recordings.com

Digital Recordings discs are available in the UK exclusively from Vivante Music Ltd.

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The problem with hi-fi is that people forget that it's merely the means to an end, and make it an end in itself. Rather than being a window to the world of music, it's easy to find your music taste skewed by how your hi-fi performs. In an attempt to make your system sound better, you find yourself descending into the abyss of 'hi-fi records' you wouldn't otherwise buy. Luckily for me, I've never succumbed to this syndrome - hearing the opening sequence of Dire Straits' 'Industrial Disease' in a hi-fi shop dem room is all it takes to remind myself not to go there. It's all the better, then, when you find a stunning piece of music that also happens to be amazingly well recorded. Suddenly, you can have your cake and eat it. For me at least, 4Hero's 'Two Pages' is just such an album.

Released on Talkin' Loud back in 1998, it was nominated for the Mercury Music Prize but lost to Gomez's far inferior debut album. One of the reasons for this was that it didn't fall comfortably into any one musical genre, unlike the mind-numbingly derivative winner. 'Two Pages' mixes drum and bass, jazz, techno, fusion and rap in many different measures, and is one of the most successful alliances of electronics and acoustic instrumentation I've heard for a long time. Everything from the breakbeats to the melodies, the harmonies to the playing is quite exceptional, the only criticism being its tiresome mid-nineties-style 'new age' lyrics.

If you're into jazz, soul or techno, you might wonder how something this good can appear seemingly out of the blue. The answer is that the people behind 4Hero, Dego MacFarlane and Mark Mac are already legendary in the drum'n'bass underground. Responsible for the genre's first longplayer (1991's 'In Rough Territory'), the introduction of jazz to drum'n'bass and the unleashing (!) of Goldie to the world, their Reinforced label has been this music's most influential imprint since its inception in May 1990. They also released two critically acclaimed techno albums on R&S under the Jacobs Optical Stairway name, plus a hip hop outing as Tek 9 (SSR's 'It's Not What You Think It Is'), before they released 4Hero's first album, 'Parallel Universe' on Reinforced in the summer of 1994. From this came 'Universal Love', an epic piece of electronica that laid down the blueprint for the drum'n'bass of Alex Reece and LTJ Bukem.

As kids, London-based Dego and Mark listened to pirate radio like JFM and Horizon, hearing soul, funk, jazz and hip hop from the likes of Mazzelle Brothers and Patrice Rushen to Afrika Bambataa and early Tommy Boy. They've also cited Paul Weller's much-maligned Respond label as an influence, which lay down blueprints for the early nineties 'acid jazz' explosion, and saw The Style Council's Mick Talbot (keyboards) and Steve White (drums) working with Galliano, who were subsequently signed to Talkin' Loud. 4Hero's decision to join the label came out of their love for its early nineties roster - Young Disciples, Omar, Galliano, Urban Species.

The move brought a far higher recording budget for 'Two Pages', and the chance to push the limits of the genre and reach more people. A total departure from accepted drum'n'bass practice, the opening 'Loveless' uses live instrumentation to dramatic effect, with double bass mechanics breaking out into freeform jazz. 'Cosmic Tree' uses expansive Juno 60 synth pads over one of the fattest Mini Moog basslines ever committed to disc. 'Universal Reprise' is a festival of saxes, trumpets, cellos, violins and violas. The string arrangements are stunning - reminiscent of everything from Charles Stepney's work for the Chess jazz label to The Art Ensemble of Chicago and Roy Ayers. The way they syncopate with the album's subtle breakbeats and double bass playing is a joy. And for good measure, the beats are constantly reworked via subtle phase shifting and hi-hat reconfigurations, which lets the rhythms progress rather than simply repeat.

The fact that the recording quality of the album is superb - tight and open in a modern 'analogue' kind of way - is welcome news for audiophiles looking for something to put their system through its paces. And the fact that the LP version 'Four Sides' is properly mastered onto high quality vinyl (once again, respect due to Talkin' Loud!) and sounds dramatically better than the already excellent CD gives vinyl junkies no excuse for not owning it. The sequel to 'Two Pages' could well be one of 2001's musical highlights.
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With a mass of new computer-based technology working its way into the market and a huge public demand for DVD, audio production is enjoying the limelight once again for the first time since the launch of C.D., although in somewhat piggy-back fashion, as a branch of computer technology. The rise of 'computerised' hi-fi and DVD has been well documented in these pages.

Although computer/audio integration and home cinema seem to be getting all the press of late, there are other areas of hi-fi doing very nicely too. Take muti-room. Yes, remember multi-room, the buzzword from the mid-nineties? An approach that never really appeared to take off, with cynics suggesting it was for the super rich or sonically obsessed only. Well, as we've been focusing on other aspects of hi-fi, multi-room appears to have made something of a comeback.

In the past year two trade magazines have been launched devoted to the subject. You can bet that when such publications are released there's more than a passing public interest. Furthermore, whereas more specialised manufacturers were once involved in the production of multi-room equipment, we are now seeing larger UK companies such as Arcam, Audio Partnership (Cambridge, Mordaunt Short etc) and Linn taking a more active role. It's not just the above mentioned companies' high end products that are suitable either. Even Linn's brilliant new Classik has the potential for music as plumbing.

Apartments are wired for sound as a mere facility, much like being plumbed for air conditioning. Having told all my mates for years how good records still sound, and for it to simply fall upon deaf ears, I'm nowSpotting with reservations, appealing to me. With many of the country's former industrial cities enjoying rejuvenation, the potential to raise the interest of the high disposable income to hi-fi is considerable. Local hi-fi retailers can only benefit from customers who would have previously been happy with a tiny Sony cube thingy - or a B&O glass and steel contraption at best.

My reservations are more subjective. In a radio interview the other day someone expressed the view that during the twentieth century our understanding and appreciation of music had actually decreased despite all the resources we now have on which to reproduce it. Surely there is some truth behind this statement. Music has become a commodity.

Apartments are wired for sound as a mere facility, much like being plumbed for air conditioning or cable TV (I can see the estate agents ticking off their "points for sale" sheet as I speak). The mere fact that the potential for music exists doesn't necessarily mean it will be appreciated, especially with equipment tailored for style and convenience more than sound quality. Multi-room is becoming popular perhaps, but it is hi-fi as plumbing. For me plumbed in background music isn't hi-fi, even if it might be so in a technical sense. A hi-fi system is only successful if it makes me actually stop what I'm doing and sit down and listen to it, or rather, the music it plays. How it looks and how clever it is are both secondary.

What a coincidence then that during the very same month, two pals of mine had both, quite independently, purchased their first separate turntables. Neither are particularly into audio as a hobby, but both appreciate music enough to have owned separate systems for years. The reason for them to take the plunge was merely to play old records they'd had lying around for years. To put it bluntly, the purchases were due to nostalgia really! Yet thanks to Project, and their excellent range of budget decks, both have become overnight converts.

After getting over the shock of having to "rescue" the arm at the end of a side, on their respective Debut and 1.2 decks, they're now suitably impressed. Having told all my mates for years how good records still sound, and for it to fall upon deaf ears, I'm now accompanied to the pub by two evangelists bursting with enthusiasm for the latest vinyl they've unearthed in the city's few remaining record stores. It beats background music.

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- Advanced Speaker Designs by Ray Alden
  One of the multi-purpose volumes with all the equations one would need to design a speaker. Driver parameters are discussed. Sealed & Vented Enclosures have a chapter to themselves. Crossover design is covered as well as a hands-on discussion of testing drivers and systems. He brings you the theory and physics behind loudspeaker testing in this volume. Paperback Code No: 1580 £24.95 + £2.50 P&P (UK)

- Electroacoustic Sensors by Ben L. DiNicola
  A readable introduction for those with little prior knowledge of the subject. The use of amplifiers is central to modern high-end audio equipment. This book describes amplifier types, how they work, their properties, advantages and disadvantages, and applications. Amplifiers are treated with the same level of detail as books and lots of illustrations. Paperback Code No: 1560 £16.99 + £2.50 P&P (UK)

- Audio Amateur Loudspeaker Projects
  A collection of the 25 best speaker articles, articles in the Audio Amateur throughout the 1970s, this popular book is proof that good design and good performance always survive. This volume is a rich source of theory, practical design. 135pp 8" x 11" Paperback Code No: 1550 £16.95 + £2.50 P&P (UK)

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- Troubleshooting by Robin Pain
  Practical Electronic Fault-Finding and Troubleshooting by Robin Pain
  This book explains the basic techniques needed to be a troubleshooter, using only basic equipment: a digital multimeter and an oscilloscope. Simple circuit examples are used to illustrate principles and end of each chapter with a real-world example. Paperback Code No: 1460 £19.95 + £2.25 P&P (UK)

- The Joy of Audio Electronics by Charles Mason
  This is a full-size guide to the pleasures of hands-on electronic construction. This book covers test and measurement projects,analog and digital electronics, basic circuit design, and a number of test instruments and auxiliaries. The designs range from a simple multiplex cable tester to a special purpose circuit, drawing of which are given in an appendix. Paperback Code No: 1400 £13.95 + £3.25 P&P (UK)

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- Making Sense of Sound by Abe J. Erans
  This is an all-inclusive compact introduction to audio technology in all its forms. Covering the basic concepts of sound itself, its hardware and software, recording and reproduction. This book is designed to be the perfect introduction to the world of audio electronics. Paperback Code No: 1590 £19.99 + £3.00 P&P (UK)

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welcome to

world favourites

Here's a list of products that are a good buy. We've tried to cater for a range of tastes, identifying strong products in every area. We're agnostic so you'll find a wide range of products, from valve pre-amps through to MiniDisc players. Products marked * are recently out of production but make a good second-hand buy.

Prices shown are those at the time of the review

COMPACT DISC

ARCAM FM8 CD23 £1100
This British-built player is extremely versatile. Controlled and detailed with a musical insight that few match. (Jul 00)

CAMSIDE CD4SE £180
A touch soft in the treble but outstanding in every other respect. (Feb 98)

KENWOOD DP-3080 £175
Has great clarity and presence for the price. Not as naturally expressive as the CD4SE though. (Feb 98)

LINN KARK III £1775
Under rated and overlooked, the final Kark was a gem. Superb transport gives a brilliantly tight, gritty dynamic sound, albeit tonally rather dry.

MARANTZ CD-17 KLS £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. (Sep 97)

MARANTZ CD-63 MKII £400
Similar to the CD-63SE but more powerful bass and an all-round smoother sound. The famous Kikis tweak has paid off again. Whether or not it is still pre-eminent against the vastly improved competition is a matter of opinion.

MERIDIAN 506.20 BIT £180
Very detailed and revealing player. More cerebral than visceral sounding, however. (May 95)

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-RAY £800
Commonsense sturdy CD player of exceptional ability. Clear and detailed with high quality internal processing system. The X-Ray is inclined to show up poor recordings, but it's only doing its job! (Feb 99)

NAD 5500 £1000
This dynamic topper of the range Silverline spinner delights with any type of music. Exciting, sophisticated sounding and highly recommended. (Jun 00)

ROKSAN CASPIAN £895
The Caspian has a smooth, slightly bright sound with some of the clearest treble in the business. Very engaging dynamic character. (Aug 97)

ROTEL RCD 951 £300
HDCD capability at a midrange price. Plain Jane looks but solid construction. There is some higher than average measured distortion which may take the edge off this otherwise tempting product. (Aug 99)

SONIC FRONTIERS TRANSPORT £6999
Cutting-edge design and technology combine to make this one very desirable product. The only problem is the fantasy hi-fi price. (Sep 98)

TEAC P-30 £2500
Cheap it isn't, but then it sounds like a million digital dollars. Nothing short of superb. (Jun 97)

TEAC VRF-5-T £600
Excellent mid-price silver disc spinner with a powerful, expansive and warm sound. Easily beats most sub-£1000 designs. A good choice for the budget conscious who want the best. (Feb 95)

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO DACMAGIC 3 £99
Superb value for money with extensive facilities and solid, detailed soundings. Upgrades any sub-£300 player.

DCS ELGAR £8500
Future-proof converter which will handle 24/96 and 24/192. Extremely open and natural performer. (Nov 97)

DPA LITTLE BIT 3 £299
A taste of the high end on a budget. Rich, clean, punchy sound transforms budget CD players.

MIDIAN FLYING COW £299.9
Excellent as a DAC and doubles as an ADC for archiving to CDR. (Jun 98) Great value, as is junior version Flying Calf at £199. (Feb 99)

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-DA £300
A bargain for normal CDs and even better with HDCDs. (Nov 97)

SONIC FRONTIERS PROCESSOR 3 £6999
Quality never comes cheap! This DAC mates class and when matched with the Transport 3 is certainly up with the best. (Sep 98)

TONEARMS

LINN SONDEK LPI12 BASIK £1100
Off the pace these days in many respects but still an extremely sweet and engaging listen with a quintessentially analogue sound.

MICHELL GYRODEC SE £775
Exquisitely built, infinitely upgradeable deck that gives true high end sound at mid-fi prices.

MICHELL ORFEUS £2000
Fantastically capable all-rounder with commanding, powerful, detailed sound that gets the best from almost any arm and cartridge. Supreme build, brilliant value. (Apr 95)

ORIGIN LIVE STANDARD (KIT) £45
Good in standard form with AC motors; frighteningly good with a DC motor and battery PSU.

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. (Oct 97)

PROJECT DEBUT £1100
Staight out of the box and onto the shelf! Nothing short of a bargain. Vinyl’s never had it so good, so cheap!

REGA PLANAR 3 £314
Brilliant starter deck with extremely polished manner. Better built £274 Planar 3 is a great all-in-one package that eats mid-price CD players for breakfast.

ROKSAN XERXES £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. (Jun 97)

SYSTEMDEK IJK900/R250 £330
A fine all-rounder and easy to upgrade too. More depth and breadth than Rega Planar 3. (Sep 94)

VESTAX BDT-2000 £225
A stylish looking deck with infinitely variable speed 16-90 rpm, DC belt drive and built-in MFI phono stage. Good value, with plenty of chassis room for alternative arms, if required. (Sep 99)
Hi-Fi Choice
An earth-shattering upgrade
for your Hi-Fi system
Best Buy September 1999

Customer Selection
The BASE platform must rank as one of the great bargains in Hi Fi

WHAT Hi-Fi?
extract from June 1999
This nicely finished platform works superbly and for sheer value for money, the Audiophile BASE 01 takes top honours.

 WHAT Hi-Fi?
Top Accolades for BASE Audio Supports
Stereo (Germany) Feb 97 Maximum
Hi-Fi World Feb 98 Outstanding
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4. Deposits safeguarded by the BADA Bonding Scheme
Prices shown are those at the time of the review

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-CANS2
Warm, sumptuous, sweet sound

MUSIC MAKER £375
When mixed with a good quality arm, this
hand finished high-output pick-up gives an
ear-bugging account of itself. Very high
compliance ensures maximum information
retrieval. An absolute (grain orientated) gem.
(Feb 99)

ORTOFON MC 7500 £2000
Conclusive proof that there’s hope for the
world. It’s a long time ago now but this high-
priced favourite still earns its niche - CD
lovers would die if they heard it. (May 94)

ORTOFON MC 15 SUPER II £140
Not quite as good as the dearer Supremes
but the Super II is a splendid introduction to
the joys of moving-coil cartridges.

GOLDRING 1042 £130
One of the best Moving Magnets cartridges
going, with beautiful treble and muscular bass.
New low price makes it a bargain.

ORTOFON ROHMANN £1000
In a way it’s MC 2000 meets MC 7500 with
great tonal strengths and a dynamo sound.
(Apr 96)

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS

AUDIOLAB 8000A £495
Well rounded integrated with smooth and
detailed sound plus a huge feature count.

DENON PMA-2505E £160
It might not have bags of grunt but the
Denon can sound exceedingly natural and
open. (Feb 97)

DEMON PMA-250SE £160
One of the famous MF X series. Full marks
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MISSION CYRUS 2 £299
Classic eighties minimalism combines arrest-
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Warm, sumptuous, sweet sound phono amp.
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Superb rhythms and dynamics make for great
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Super optional phono stage makes it ideal for
vinyl junkies.

ROKSAN CASCADE £695
Smooth, warm integrated with remote
control that works happily into most
speakers. (Dec 97)

SONNETEER ALABASTER £995
Builds on the strengths of the Campion with
ample control, colour and drive. (Oct 97)

ALTO 108 £30
Great starter cartridge that’s refined, detailed
and musical beyond its price. Best value MM
under £50

GOLDRING 102GX £74
An accomplished MM with a solid bass,
slightly forward midband and clean transients.
Very reasonable price for such an able
performer (Jul 93)

DNM MICA £185
Bestenv Goldring’s 1042 and costs only £135
on trade-in. An assured and transparent MM
(Feb 98)

DYNANEWVTOR DV20X-H £299
The best modern budget MC combines
deliciously sweet sound with fantastic get-up-
and-go. High output version works a treat
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nowhere. Sound stage a wow. (Dec 97)

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An extremely engaging tuner with a performance
at odds with its low price. Not exactly a Troubline, but you may not notice... (Feb 99)
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Impressively vice-free 'speakers that offer
great transparency and involvement. One of a
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(Mar 97)
EPOS ES12 £495
Strong, punchy bass is allied to finely detailed,
articulate midrange and sparkling treble. (Oct 96)

LOUDSPEAKERS
XTC PRE-1 £1000
Almost valve-like in its smoothness, the line-
level Pre-1 is warm and seductively clean. (Nov '96)
EPOS ES12 £495
A simple deck, but excellent-quality head and
tweeter. (Jul '98)
KENWOOD KX-5805E £250
200W of high-end monobloc power in a
grooved tube. (Aug '98)
YAMAHA KX-5805E £250
The 'SE' tag is more than a marketing
gimmick. Sound is solid and clear with Dolby
S. (Sep '97)
CHORD CPA1800 £1800
Charm, insight and control are second to
none - an addictive mixture. (Mar '98)

POWER AMPLIFIERS
ARCAM 9 £400
With 70W out tap, the 9P will drive most
loudspeakers with a vengeance and detailed
sound. Good bass welly too. (Dec '96)
CHORD SPM400 £1400
There's a sense of effortless power to the
Chord that gives music real scale and presence. (Mar '98)
MARANTZ MODEL 9 £800
Authentic reproduction monoblocks still more
than cut the sonic mustard. Highly expensive
and highly sought after. (Mar '97)
MICHILL ALECTO £1989
Crisp, clean and beautifully controlled with
gorgeous styling. Partnered with the £1650
Orca this is a superb winning combo. (Oct '98)

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**Quadrax ESL 63** £450
A reference against which all other loudspeakers are judged, the 63s have superb imaging and genuine transparency.

**Tannoy AMSi 50** £700
Bold sounding proactive monitor with solid bass, clear midrange and delicate treble. (Aug 96)

**Tannoy Mercury m2** £140
A true audiophile bargain which embarrasses many more expensive boxes. Never mind the price, let your ears decide. (May 97)

---

**Kenwood DM-9709** £500
One of the best MD players yet. ATAC-4.5 gives clean and very musical recordings from this Kenwood. (Jan 98)

**Sony MDS-JB930Q** £350
Great mid-price machine that adds better build and facilities to the $300's already excellent sonic.

**Sony MDS-J55ES** £1300
This Sony can put the wind up Nakamichi cassette decks when used with better blank MDs. (Apr 98)

**Sony MDS-J55ES** £520
The best sounding MD deck made so far, thanks to awesome build and heroic ATRAC-DSP Type II coding.

---

**Alesis Masterdisk** A glimpse of the future

---

**Alesis Masterdisk** £1400
A groundbreaking hard disc recorder with a built-in CD drive. An amazing bit of kit, and a great buy.

**Alesis Masterdisk** £1400
An impressive sound and unmatched convenience make this MiniDisc player an excellent buy.

---

**Denon DVD-5000** £1600
Monster build, as you'd expect at this price. Facilities and gadgets galore and drop-dead high end looks. A very smooth and sophisticated sound, although not as good as similarly-priced CD players. (Mar 99)

**Philips CDR-765** £360
One of the first twin deck recorders/players that boasts high speed dub facility. Playback could be warmer, but still a bargain. (Oct 99)

**Pioneer PD-555RVR** £480
Excellent mid-priced CD recorder that both plays and records with equal panache. (Oct 99)

**Sony TCX-854 Datman** £599
Super clean and detailed sound makes this an amazing portable. Not as robust as it should be though.

---

**Nordost Blue Heaven** £1150
Some of the fastest and most transparent cables around. A simple and effective upgrade.

**Van den Hul** £2610/4m
Carbon interconnects that help you forget the electronics and concentrate on the music. Miraculous transparency.

---

**Headphones**

**Jekill Float** £99
Model Two. Wonderful panel-like and open sound from these esoteric-looking headphones. Do not wear in public unless you like being made a fool of.

**Headphones**

**Chord Company**

**Chameleon 2** £90
One of our favourite favourites, the Chameleon is magical performers with a smooth yet open sound.

**DNM Reson** £40
Neutral and transparent, and a steal at forty quid.

**Nordost** £150
One of the best MD players yet. ATRAC 4.5 digital output. Facilities in abundance and a controlled, exciting way with CD replay. Shame it lacks a Dolby Digital decoder! (Sep 99)

**Sony DVP-575S** £490
One of the best buys in the DVD market. Available in a dodgy white case, but the facilities and performance more than make up for this. Excellent with both music and visuals, and a whole host of up to the minute facilities to keep you occupied. (Mar 2000)

**Denon DVD-9000** £1600
A true audiophile bargain which embarrasses all others heard. (July 2000)

---

**Nordost Blue Heaven** £1375/3m pair
This isn't cheap, but it sounds absolutely fab. An open and spacious sound that simply cleanses the ears.

**ProAc Response 2** £250
A simple and effective upgrade

**Chord Company**

**Ripcurl** £9.95
The Ripcurl is our reference at the price. Tight and tuneful bass mixed with air and space results in a cracking cable for the money.

**DNM Reson** £6.95
This cable has a transparency of sound that's rarely heard at the price. Excellent value for money.

**Nordost** £475
One of the best MD players yet. ATRAC 4.5 digital output. Facilities in abundance and a controlled, exciting way with CD replay. Shame it lacks a Dolby Digital decoder! (Sep 99)

**Sony DVP-575S** £490
One of the best buys in the DVD market. Available in a dodgy white case, but the facilities and performance more than make up for this. Excellent with both music and visuals, and a whole host of up to the minute facilities to keep you occupied. (Mar 2000)

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CASSETTE

NAKAMICHI DR-2
A great machine with Nakamichi's legendary heads. The lowest cost 'true' Nakamichi at the time, retailing for £600.

NAKAMICHI CR-7
The last of the great ones, and definitely the best Nakamichi ever (yes, better than a Dragon)

YAMAHA TC-800G
Early classic in serious cassette. Its ski-slope looks got it a cult following once it had ceased to be simply ugly.

CD PLAYERS

MERIDIAN 207
Beautifully-built two-box with pre-amp stage. Very musical although not as refined as modern Bitstream gear. No digital output.

PIONEER PD-91
Built-to-last player with easy upgrade routes for modifiers. Not knockout as it stands but get one cheap and have a go!

CAMBRIDGE CD1
The first two box player with weighted mechanics and even an optional Dropout/error counter. Radical and effective at the time - a classic.

AMPLIFIERS

LEAK POINT ONE, TL12 & TL10
Ancestors of hi-fi, consequently expensive nowadays. As with all vintage valve stuff, overhauling is de rigueur before use, using original parts if possible.

LEAK PRE-AMPS
Line of 'good for their time' preamps. Use of EF86 pentode valve for high gain rules out ultra performance. Not the highest-fi.

LEAK STEREO 20
Excellent workaday classic valve amp. In good order the 20 will not disgrace itself. Various upgrades are available from specialist repairers.

LEAK TL12+

NAD 3020
You can't argue with success! NAD's budget transistor integrated gave thousands their first taste of hi-fi and remains great value.

QUAD 33/303 PRE/POWER
Great style and construction, also bullet proof. Warm and wooly sound, but easy going. A good introduction to early transistor audio classics.

QUAD 22/I PRE/POWER
One of the all-time classic valve amplifiers. Unusual circuit but it works beautifully. 22 pre-amp not up to today's standards.

SUGDEN A21
Seventies transistor integrated has an eminently likeable smoothness and musicality. Limited inputs via DIN sockets.

TECHNICS SE-A5 Mk2
Nice transformer and electronics. shame about the casework. With tweaking, this 150watter can sound sweet.

LOUDSPEAKERS

KLIPSCHORN
Not exactly plentiful or cheap but a splendid beast. For efficiency they have seldom been equalled. Space hungry!

LEAK SANDWICH
Rather warm sounding big infinite baffle but cheap with it. With a reasonably powerful amp can sound quite satisfying.

LOWTHER PM6A
High quality full-range driver; still manufactured. High sensitivity, as fitted to many classic horn designs.

MAGNEPLANAR SMG
Touch dry in the bass but a technological loudspeaker with genuinely musical abilities.

MISSION 770
Father of the 77 range which continues to this day. Well mannered with a warm sound and a kind load to amplifiers.

QUAD ESL57
Unrivalled. Properly serviced there is nothing like them. Their natural presentation may make them caviar to the general.

YAMAHA NS1000M
Hi-tech favourites of the Japanese and Americans. Viewed more warily in the UK but can give excellent results.
TANNOY GRF & AUTOGRAPH
Folded horn monsters which certainly sound good if you have the space. For Tannoy vintage see HFVW November 1998.

WHARFEDALE SUPER 8 RS DD
Ideal experimenters' driver. High sensitivity ~14.000 Gauss magnet and extended frequency range. Inexpensive too!

TANNOY YORK, LANCASTER ETC.
Many similar models of infinite baffle or reflex design. Not the last word in tautness but the drivers work well in modern cabinets.

VINYL

ACOS LUSTRE
Very honest piece of kit, well made and easily adjusted. Vinyl beginners could do very much worse.

ALPHASON HR1005
First class arm, up to present-day standards. Buy carefully, though, as there's no service available now.

ARISTON RD 11
A one-time king of turntables very similar to the Linn LP12. Now deposed but worth a look at the right price.

LINN AXIS
Uncomplicated, lower-price version of the famous Sondek. Less expensive than some of its stablemates.

GARRARD 301 & 401
Legendary turntables, once fairly plentiful. Excellent back-up available; many different custom plinths available. High quality.

GOLDRING LENCO 88 & 99
Great deck for the kitchen table enthusiast. Garrard fans won't look at 'em but cheap and capable. Servicing available.

HADCOCK 228
Recently out-classed by Haddock's updated 228 Special Edition but a proper hi-fi arm for all that. Makers still service.

MICHOLL FOCUS ONE
20 years and still going strong. Early runner in the 'modern' turntable cycle with a first class arm. Factory servicing available.

SHURE M75
Recent line-contact improvements have left the M75 behind but the wide range of needles make it a handy tool.

SME 3009 IIS
Everlasting classic tone-arm. Spares permanently available from SME. No longer the last word but peanuts second-hand.

THORENS TD 124
Best classic deck ever? Judging by the prices they fetch it's possible - 78rpm too!

THORENS TD 150
Mid-price deck with a keen following. No real difficulty with servicing - novices may find the suspension system unnerving.

TRIO L-07D
Knockout heavyweight from 1980 with stainless bearing and 1 lb platter! Not a give-away and beware! - spares scarce.

TUNERS

LEAK TROUGHLINE (ORIGINAL)
Interesting ornament but no longer hi-fi. Limited coverage of 88MHz to 100MHz only.

LEAK TROUGHLINE II & III MONO
Arguably the best-sounding tuners ever. Adaptation for stereo easy via phono multiplex socket.

LEAK TROUGHLINE III STEREO
Excellent tuner with indifferent stereo decoding circuit. Best when adapted to use modern outboard decoder.

MARANTZ ST-8
Possibly the ultimate Tardis console, including an oscilloscope for checking the strength of signal. Expensive even now.

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<td><strong>LOUDSPEAKERS</strong></td>
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<td>Notts. Analogue Paragon-One (Linear Tracking Tonearm)</td>
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<td>Sounds Incredible</td>
<td>If Your Patient</td>
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<td><strong>OTHERS</strong></td>
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<td>Van den Hul CS-122 LS. Cable</td>
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<td>Monacor Power Concept Incons gem.</td>
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<td>Excellent Value Interconnects</td>
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<td><strong>DIGITAL</strong></td>
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**World Radio History**

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MEASURED PERFORMANCE

LOUDSPEAKERS

QUAD 989

The new 989 has slightly lower sensitivity than the 988, producing just 81.5dB sound pressure level (SPL) for a nominal watt of input (2.8V). Rear radiated energy will lift this a little in practice, returning as dispersed, reflected energy to add a dB or so to the apparent loudness. Although this suggests a powerful amplifier is needed to go loud, 60-100W is the power it’s best to use in practice to avoid overload. Although the Quads can accept very high peak powers they are not so keen on continuous inputs, protection circuits kicking in after a while. With such low sensitivity you do have to go easy on the volume control because clipping sets in quickly and with apparent ease I noted from monitoring with an oscilloscope.

Impedance measured 5.6 ohms, when tested with pink noise. In spite of having extra bass panels the new 989 draws no more power than the 988, which seems a little odd. Quad say the extra power comes from the mains supply but this is a light polarising current; as Peter Walker always pointed out, it is the stepped up audio current that carries 000mph within an electrostatic. When fiddling with my own ESL-63s I was always aware that this was the one area of hi-fi where the music could literally kill me! Across the audio band, from 10Hz up to 20kHz minimum impedance of the 989 is a safe 4ohms. Below 10Hz it falls to the DCR of 3.2ohms.

Over much of the frequency range the 989 looks largely resistive to an amplifier, except above 3kHz where impedance dips to 4ohms then peaks suddenly to a resonance just above 20kHz. It is here the Quad is reactive, where most loudspeakers are not. Such high frequency reactance may well upset some amplifiers, possibly causing bursts of instability. There’s no doubt that transistor amplifiers can sound bad through Quads, but this may be down to their unusual transparency, rather than reactive load characteristics.

Frequency response was, interestingly, smoother than that of the 988s, although there was some variation in response vertically, the centre of this loudspeaker offering the best result. Our response analysis clearly shows the 989s measured very flat up to 16kHz, ignoring bass performance. They sounded tonally neutral and are so, being a true reference loudspeaker in this respect.

Below 200Hz bass output from the 989s rose steadily to reach +4dB, rolling off to become -6dB approx. at a very low 25Hz. This is what I’d expect the 989s to do. The ESL-63 and 988 successor peak up around 90Hz due to panel dimensions. The larger and more staggered dimensions of the 989 should allow response to go lower, and more smoothly. Our measurements clearly show the 989s go very low and this is in-phase forward response, not out-of-phase port output like today’s reflex loudspeakers. So the 989s will give supremely deep phase-coherent bass in a long room. Quad have significantly improved bass depth, smoothness and power handling in this loudspeaker.

The 989 really measures very well, except in a few key areas. The main difficulty is low sensitivity. Otherwise, they are a reference loudspeaker alright and a frighteningly revealing one I found. Great for large recording studios as an ultimate quality monitor, even if they might cause some consternation by showing things to be worse than imagined. For the home, measurement shows they are more truthful than most alternatives, but you need a big room and big pockets to appreciate this. The 989 is, all the same, one of the world’s great loudspeakers, a tour-de-force in engineering. NK

AMPLIFIERS

QUAD QC twenty four and II-forty

Rated at 40W, the Quad II-forty power amps delivered a healthy 45W into 8 or 4ohms. At -1dB below full output distortion measured 0.14% in the mid-band and 1.2% at 10kHz, comprising second and third harmonics. At 1W output these values fell to 0.02% and 0.2%, respectable for any valve amplifier. The KT88 beam tetrode is a ‘modern’ (1950s) design from GEC, intended primarily for low distortion, high power audio work. Used with a good output transformer they deliver fine results, high frequency crossover distortion being fairly benign compared to that
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from transistors, with far lower levels of feedback. Full power is delivered from 10kHz down to 40Hz.

Alone, or with the QC twenty-four preamp, frequency response measured 8Hz-43kHz, -1dB - wide enough to suit modern sources and loudspeakers. The system even goes high enough to do SACD justice.

Sensitivity was high at 200mV, enough to allow the Quad to match old components producing low output. The power amplifier alone needs 1.1V though, so it cannot be used with a passive preamp, unless fed only from a CD or DVD player (2V output).

Noise measured -89dB (CCIR weighted) and channel separation 72dB, but there was 3mV hum with the system at full gain, where 1mV or less is required. The hum came from the preamp, not the power amps.

The new Quad valve amplifiers measured well in most areas and should give excellent sound quality with modern loudspeakers. I presume Quad will cure the hum problem. NK

### CYRUS aCA7.5 / SMARTPOWER

Although compact, the Cyrus Smartpower amplifier delivers 78W into 8ohms and 110W into 4ohms. The figures can be doubled if each Smartpower is used as a monoblock, configured to bridge mode.

Frequency response, through the aCA7.5 pre-amp and Smartpower, was reasonably wide at 5Hz-35kHz. Although the latter figure looks limited for SACD and DVD-A use, output measured -7dB down at 100kHz, so the unit reaches high frequencies, if with attenuation.

Like Musical Fidelity, Cyrus keep high frequency distortion right down, to ensure the amplifier produces clean treble, free from crossover distortion. Delivering full output at 10kHz the Smartpower produced just 0.01% distortion, the figure rising little to 0.015% into a 4ohm load. These are fine results under very arduous conditions. In the mid-band distortion was a minimal 0.005%, so this is a very low distortion amplifier.

With low noise at -90dB, good channel separation and low d.c. offset the Cyrus combination measured well in all areas. It delivers plenty of power from a small package and will likely have smooth treble. NK

### MUSICAL FIDELITY M3

In line with its size Musical Fidelity's M3 amplifier produces plenty of power, swinging 250W into 8ohms and 400W into 4ohms. That's enough for high volume even in big rooms.

The bandwidth of this amplifier was fairly wide, measuring 7Hz-6kHz within 1dB limits, output being -3dB down at 100kHz, respectable enough for SACD and DVD-A. The lower limit complements CD and DVD well too, so the M3 satisfies source demands.

A sensitivity value of 280mV is good enough to accept old tuners and cassette decks, as well as all modern sources. Channel separation was wide and noise low.

Musical Fidelity minimise high frequency distortion in their amplifiers, the M3 showing little sign of harmonics at 10kHz. In the midband distortion measured a very low 0.003%, the figure rising to 0.02% at high frequencies, at low or high powers. Results into 4ohms were little worse.

This amplifier measured well all round. It has plenty of power, plus very low distortion. NK
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CD RECORDERS

MARANTZ DR6000
A pronounced downward tilt toward high frequencies in the response analysis of this recorder will certainly make itself known as a softness or smoothness in the sound. It should also make the DR6000 sound more cohesive than most players by ensuring the bright treble of CD is muted just enough not to attract attention.

Coupled with low distortion and noise though, this characteristic helps ensure 16-bit coding isn't quite the pain it can be when untamed. As a result the DR6000 is will have less bite to its sound, especially with poor recordings, than most CD players.

The record amplifiers added a few dB to the noise floor, as they usually do, but otherwise added no distortion, showing Marantz use good A/D converters in this recorder. Frequency response was very similar to that for replay only.

The DR6000 has a fine measured performance in terms of linearity, but it will have a distinctively smooth and slightly soft sound, lacking CD bite or glare. NK

MINIDISC

SONY MDS JB-940
MiniDisc gives a good measured performance, although it cannot retain the phase coherence of a pseudo-random noise test signal, unlike CD-R. This is almost certainly due to the antics of its signal compression system, and our FFT can certainly distinguish between the two, even if the ear finds it difficult.

Frequency response in record-pause mode (A/D to D/A) was flat enough across the audio band, with a slight top end roll off, as our response analysis shows. Playing back a recorded signal gave much the same result, after averaging to reduce the randomness of the medium.

MiniDisc produces little distortion through its dynamic range, reaching a maximum of 12% at -90dB. At a crucial -30dB distortion measured 0.03%, but much of this was noise, as our analysis shows.

The MDS-JB940 was reasonably sensitive, reaching 0dB record level from 500mV input, output measuring 2.2V at this peak level.
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Heart (Bolton)CD-500 Valve CD-Player (Brand New) $350
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Tel: 44 (0) 1635 40242. Fax: 44 (0) 1635 524239
www.multiplex.co.uk/Records
MARANTZ CD94 player vgc, little use, boxed £475. Tel: 07957 855 787 (Jan(l))

SIMPLY THE best smart 300B m-blocks, new + boxed £3250 (£4250). Simply 845 int, 8 months £2000 (£3150). Sony CD player 557 - ESD mint £475. Jadis JA-80 £4450 (£10,000). 6 x KTB8 tot £125. Tel: 01562 827 710 N-T-W (Jan(l))

AUDIOLAB 8000 C/P pre-power combination. Black, mint, boxed, manuals. Offers over £550. Will not split. Linn LP12 Valhalla Ittof ATF5 £500. Ono. Extra plinth available. Tel: 01953 860 071 evenings/weekends (Jan(l))

12" TANNOY monitor golds in birch ply cabs - fully re-conditioned. Re-advertised due to time waster £750. Tel: 07939 250 022 (Lancs) (Jan(l))

LEAK TROUGHLINE £50. Tel: 0771 297 6103 (Jan(l))

Nakkamichi CASSETTE deck £140. £120. Denon DCD-890 £50. QED digit DAC including interconnect £50. Tel: 01992 445 177 7.30pm, Email: cparthur@hotmail.com (Jan(l))

LEYBROOK QUARTET speaker with Atacama sand filled stands. Black ash walnut fillets. Mint, boxed, manual. 90dB sensitivity ideal for valve or good transistor amp £320 ono. Tel: 01480 354 218 (Cambs) (Jan(l))

ROKSAN XEREXES, Tabriz, Denon DL-304, black, vgc £390. Royden Edens (walnut) £100. Foundation Designer stands (very heavy) £100. QED A240 SAT260 (amplifier/tuner) £180 the pair. Tel: Peter 01442 823 880 (WVHerts) (Jan(l))

SPEAKERS KRK V8 studio reference active near field monitor with 60 watts and 120 watts amplifiers XLR and phono inputs £900. Walslows Elegance speakers £150. Tel: 020 8931 5979 (Jan(l))

THETA DATA Basic CD transport, boxed, as new £950. Tel: 01636 830 944 or 07979 536 753 (Jan(l))

CABLE SALE Audio Note ann. i/c £90, Cogan Hall digital i/c £50, QED 4 x 4 bi-wire 3m set £30, QED silver 12 bi-wire 3m set £45, Kesswick Audio 1m set £30. Tel: 07767 237 858 (Jan(l))

KT90 BILLINGTON gold matched Quad £500, Cogan Hall 1.5m bi-wire set of speaker cable £70 - stunning! Tel: 07767 237 858 (Jan(l))

Linn: KAIRN line level slimline 'Brilliant' £700. LK280/Spark £350. LP12, Ittof LHVIII, K9, Lingo £700 (may split). Tuken active cards. £100. Arcam Alpha 7 CD player £150. Epson ES12 vgc £310. ES22 slightly marked £690. KEF TDM45B 300W subsampler £425. Tel: Alex 07970 484 253 anytime (Jan(l))

BBE 3625SW Sonic Maximixers with Sub Woofer control. The best tweak known improving sound. Two as new £100 each. Sony TU-1040E Professional Broadcast Standard TV tuner £150. Tel: 01945 463 077 (Jan(l))

TEAC TI transport plus Pink Triangle Ordinal DAC with 1307 filter. Mint condition, boxes etc £650. Also Bowers & Wilkins original P2 speakers, new tweeters. Free, yes, free. Tel: 01782 256 078 (Jan(l))

QUAD 99 tuner and stereo power amplifier for sale. £400 (amp) £450 (tuner) or sensible offers. Both unused six months old with 18 months warranty unwarranted. Tel: 0411 225 399 or 01189 318 672. Email: j.b.sweeney@rdg.ac.uk (Jan(l))

AUDIO NOTE goodies: AN/EL CD player 557 - [SD mint months £2000 (£3150)]. Sony ST-D777ES £625. Both sound superb. Tel: 020 8690 1939 (London SE13) (Jan(l))

UNISON RESEARCH Mystery One pre-amp £800 (£1800). Pair Art Audio Quintet monobloc power amp chrome and gold £900 (£2800). Michel Is® Hera phono pre-amp £350 (£900). Tel: 01604 410 726 (Northampton) (Jan(l))

QUAD 405 II 34, excellent condition, manuals, both boxed. £420. Sony STF777ES tuner (DAB/FM/MW/LW) as new boxed, manuals £500. Tel: 01886 812 651 (Worcester) (Jan(l))

LEAK SANDWICH speakers, classics over time size 25 3/4" high x 12" deep x 14 3/4" wide. Teak wood finish cabinets, perfect speakers going strong. Offers welcome. Tel: 020 8690 1939 (London SE13) (Jan(l))

HI-FI WORLD 300B power amp, hard wired, star earthing £595. Audax HD33 oval gold domed tweeters (pair) £75. Tel: 0115 966 5121 (Jan(l))

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Theo these and show what we in the U.K. are missing. Very expensive but excellent, as was the sound.

Secondly, a demo of the french Lavardin amplifier sounded very clear, open and dynamic, and although relatively expensive is one I certainly plan to investigate, when time permits.

Thirdly, the Nordost cable demo went beyond the cables and showed the contribution of the equipment stand (AaviK) and Nordost Pulsar points in Aluminium and Titanium. Excellent demo!

Next, purely from a visual aspect, as no music was playing, the Timbre Stage equipment supports in Aluminium/glass, stole the show, so we have to see if they sound as good as they look.

Finally, Disc Emporium put on one of the better home cinema demo’s using Von Schweikert Audio speakers and Theatremaster/Powermaster electronics.

P.S. it was nice to still see so many turntables around.

It has to be said that even the Hi-fi show is more a/v orientated, but considering that appears to be the way business is going these days, it's hardly surprising! The less said about Live 2000 the better, from the Hi-Fi aspect, and even the Warner's demo of 'The Three Kings' was very disappointing.

As always it is impossible to hear everything, but certain demo's stood out.

Firstly, Path Premier's demo of digital recordings made off U.S. domestic HDTV transmissions, displayed via a Madrigal CRT projector onto an 8ft screen, simply made one envious and showed what we in the U.K. are missing. Very expensive but excellent, as was the sound.

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LARRD KLARK IC CD player £600. Numeric DAC £300. Both mint and boxed. Would accept £850 for both. Linn Kainr pre-amp, excellent, boxed, £350. Tel: 01252 870 861 (North Hants) (Jan)

FERROGRAPH SUPER seven model 5020H half track stereo reel to reel. Tape speed 3.75, 7.5, 15 inches/second £250 ono. Series 4A mono half track integral valve amplifier £100 ono. Tel: 01179 629 482 (Jan)

QUAD ESL63 electrostatic speakers. 5 years old, excellent condition, with boxes and speaker cables. Must sell due to house move £1300 (4540 new), Tel: 01283 704 227 (Derby-Burton area) (Jan)

UNISON SIMPLE two amplifier mint, boxed £500 (£995). Audio Synthesis Dax balanced and single ended mint £500 (£1100). Denon AVR3300 A/V receiver unused mint box £450 (£800). Tel: 01491 572 684 days (Jan)

SONY DTC-60ES DAT deck £250. TC-K.streaming cassette deck £200, PS-LX431 record deck £60, CD-770 CD player £60, TA-2466 amplifier £60, ST-311 tuner £50, SEQ-411 graphic equaliser £50. Tel: 01656 746 293 (Jan)


KIT BUILT. South coast speakers model Alto III. Latest design. Tall slim floorstanders professionally finished in light beech, with spiked plinths. Exceptionally solid construction. Performance equal to many £1000 speakers. £395 ono. Happy to demonstrate. Tel: 01274 632 492 (Bradford, Yorkshire) (Jan)

STUDER 807 1/4" tape recorder, 3 speed, Nub reels, monitor and stand options. Said to be the best master recorder ever made. Still on sale at £12,000, £800 ovno. Tel: 01565 777 256 Email: iamn@excite.com (Jan)

EXPOSURE MONO amplifiers, stereo power amplifiers integrated and pre's all boxed brand new £800, £395, £395, £395 respectively. Kelly KT3's £350. Audio Research Classic 30 £795, C.A.T. pre £1200. Tel: 01580 850 924 or 01273 239 356 (Jan)


KEF REFERENCE Four speakers, rosewood. superb open sound with incredible bass. Sadly too large for new listening room £1700 or may swap for smaller floorstander plus cash. Tel: 020 7231 3518 (London) (Jan)

TANNOY 609 speakers black hexagonal dual concentric biwires £1220 includes stands 2 x 4m cable £3.5m. Audioquest type 4 £150. Audiolab 8000T tuner mint £425 Marantz CD17 £1200. CD player champagne gold mint £425. Tel: 020 8668 7459 (Jan)

PAIR STUDIO monitors acoustic 3311 "12" polywoofers 3" liquid cooled tweeters 2 frequency controls 1 instant circuit protector liquid cooled max power 125 watts £900 ono, boxed, unused. Tel: 020 8343 1576 Email: colin@cutney6s.net.co.uk (Jan)

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PASS ALEPH 0 monoblocks, Stereophile Class A rated. Mint, boxed with manuals £3500. Also Pass Aleph P pre-amp, mint, box etc £1000. Superb hi-end sound and Battleship build quality. Tel: 020 7636 9464 (day), 01582 629 556 (eves) (Jan)

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**SUGDEN MASTERCLASS AA power amplifier £2000 (£3000 new). 70w Class A, gold plated PCBs, silver signal wires, WBT speaker posts, gun metal grey. 3 months old. Tel: 01635 299 619 evenings (Newbury) (Jan)

**TEAC 500 system AV amp tuner CD cassette M&S pearl speakers £475. Lin Kans II + stands £225. Naim 72 £350. Sennheiser HP600 headphones £105. Philips 850 CD r/c (£400) £75. Wanted: Linn Klassic, old style. Tel: 0121 246 0486 (Jan)

**HORSHAM Hi-Fi offer: Unison Research Mystery One preamp £1750. Opera Operetta loudspeakers (£895) £450, Audio Analogue Puccini SE (£635) £470. BKS 107 II Hybrid ribbon loudspeakers (£1750) £1915. Martin Logan SL3 loudspeakers (£3300) £1995. Tel: 01403 272 931 Email: info@homecinema.uk.net (Jan)

**VOODOO ISOLATION Systems, Airtek launched at the London Hi-Fi Show 2000. Airtek is a air suspension platform designed for use under all audio electronics, Benefits gained, tighter extended bass, cleaner more detailed treble, better imaging, a more open natural presentation. Price £149, 14 day money back guarantee if not satisfied. For more information Tel: 01643 822 128 9am-9pm Mon-Sun (Jan)

**MUSICAL FIDELITY A1000 mint £875. Musical Fidelity A1 monitor £160. Living Voice Auditorium speakers £850. Creek T43tuner £225. Leak Troughline 3 tuner £60. 2 pairs Pentacore silver interconnects £113. Tel: 0161 291 9331 (Jan)

**NAIM NAC 32 pre amp, CD and MC boards fitted, spare MM boards, NAP 160 power amp, Snap3 power supply, old style, will split, £525. Tel: 01404 44728 (Devon) (Jan)

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The design is the attention to many details, based on simple physics and many listening tests. We are now so far ahead of the game - and still moving the goal posts - that we will disclose the basic principles. The two major principles are conductivity and contamination. Conductivity: low resistance, capacitance, etc, using the highest purity copper (silver content acid-free solder) in very fine but many strands. In outer space, such cables would transmit Nothing But Signal (hence the esteemed American NBS brand! Incidentally, we have some of their amazing cables for sale at half-price). Contamination: since the invention of radio we are aware that your wires act as aerials. Designers cannot eliminate this in the equipment without serious degradation of the music signal. Planet Earth is now contaminated with EMI, RFI, you name it fields from cellular phones to AC mains. Coming from your neighbours, factories, and your own hi-fi and non-hi-fi devices. Our cables use twin axial (quasi-balanced) plus and minus wires, inside a triple-shielded braided earthed at source only and taken through to the plugs. We also apply Konta k cleaner to greatly reduce RF rectification and enhance surface conductivity. It lasts for about six months. If you haven't tried it, you don't know what you are missing. £14.95 per bottle.

Stratos Series II (launched in August) is a major leap forward in interconnects which exceed the sonic performance of all but one extremely expensive (NBS) digital and stereo interconnects we have tried in a wide variety of equipment. Series two features our own RCA state-of-the-art phono plugs which use our tried materials (solid phosphor bronze, not bent copper) for enhanced contact and noise rejection. Do not judge the performance by the price. Customers are disposing of major brands now shamed by Stratos II because our cables are sold direct to end-users without marketing costs. This saves at least 75% when you consider that packaging and promotion double the cost of cables and dealer margins and vat double it again. One stereo metre of Stratos II thus sells for only £125. Stratos Digital costs £59. Terminations are RCA or Neutrik Block Gold XLR from stock; others to order.

"These cables are everything you said they were ... this has been the cheapest and by far and away the most significant upgrade I've done to my hifi in years. I ordered cables, and when I opened the box, the contents looked like cables but these Stratos cables are much, much more than that. They have made such a huge difference to my listening pleasure that it's the equivalent of replacing one or more of the key items of hardware. At £120 (series II now £125) a 1 metre pair, they are the cable bargain of the decade." — Mr E.H., Aberdeen, 12/08/99.

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