DAB or FM?

New Videologic DAB tested against Denon VHF FM tuner

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Another year, loads more gear, as we say in the hi-fi business. As every twelve months pass, so do us stalwart reviewers encounter yet more new technology to fuel our burning fire for all that is audiophile. Not this year, however. The only gear that's made me want to raid the Pope piggy bank has been resolutely traditional - even retro - in design, and come from the likes of Kef and Quad. Maybe it's just me getting on a bit - pipe and slippers and all that - or maybe it's that 'real' hi-fi has come to the end of its natural life, SACD and DVD-A or not?

It's a bit like the gradually decaying classical recording industry. Who needs another version of a popular seller like Beethoven's Ninth? Although a new rendition may add a bit more sponginess or insight, you can't help thinking it's all been done before. The enormous back catalogue of recordings statistically dictates this and the real musical enjoyment is invariably found in these earlier recordings.

Likewise, another £500 integrated amplifier arrives on the doorstep, for example, and it's good - very good - but it still doesn't overwhelm in the way it should. Reading David Price's column this month, it seems I'm not alone in this view. Maybe the whole point of our hobby is that we have to regress to progress! Indeed, browsing through an old 1997 copy of World I came across DP writing about the forthcoming format war between SACD and DVD Audio. That was three years ago and DVD-A still has to materialise in a nation, plus a number of modern reworkings of older, classic designs like Quad's ESL-988. Indeed, the first 'proper' hi-fi I ever encountered was courtesy of a musical mate in Carshalton with a Micro Seiki DDX-1000 turntable, Quad III and a pair of ESL-57s. After a long introduction to the fineries of this particular set up, he treated me to a privileged hearing of a Bacheanian luxury. "Where's the bass?" I thought. "Call that hi-fi? I must admit I've been far more taken with the esoteric look of the system than with the sound emanating from it.

Encountering the new Quad electrostats and valve amps was enlightening stuff. After a few stints in both the performing and professional audio side of things, not to mention a few years of listening to a lot of hi-fi, I was smitten. A pair now proudly sit in my listening room, with slightly more bass than I remember! Valves and electrostats and the ripe young age of 32? If you'd have told me that five years ago I would have chortled merrily.

No, I'm more interested in the technology involved in new formats, than seeing them as outlets for my particular musical edification. These days that comes from records I love fed into vacuum tubes and large black radiators with Quad badges on the front. Tweaking is fine but in my experience the best upgrade is to pop down the local for a couple of swift halves and come back to your record collection with new ears. Your hi-fi will have never sounded so good, trust me. It's not that I'm cynical, I just get my musical fix trawling through old vinyl played on traditional hi-fi.

You may be thinking, if this is his view then why is he doing this job? Well, I can still appreciate the qualities of many new products on the market, like Naim's brand new Nait 5 or Linn's Genki/ Kollektor/ LK-140/ Ninka combination, plus a number of modern reworkings of older, classic designs like Quad's ESL-988. Of course, SACD is here at last and it's great. You can even buy it in Richer Sounds, but I still fear it's yet to achieve any real market penetration.

Now, that five years ago you'd have told me your mates. Your hi-fi will have never sounded so good, trust me. It's not that I'm cynical, I just get my musical fix trawling through old vinyl played on traditional hi-fi. 

Simon Pope
contents

reviews

tuners

VIDEOLOGIC DAB v DENON VHF/FM TUNER 10
Noel Keywood assesses the new budget DAB tuner from a multimedia manufacturer and puts it against Denon's finest.

amplifiers

KENWOOD DPF3030S CD PLAYER 14
Dominic Todd listens to the latest budget player from Kenwood.

DENON PMA-355UK 16
The replacement for Denon's successful PMA-350 has arrived. Dominic Todd sees if it has its predecessor's quality.

T+A DVD1210R DVD PLAYER 40
This stylish high tech player from Germany promises to be a real audiophile DVD treat. Simon Pope checks its credentials.

EXPOSURE 2010 TITANIUM 21
Exposure return to the fold with a new integrated. Simon Pope listens with interest.

LOUDSPEAKERS

MISSION m71 19
These are the new £120 budget boxes from Mission. Noel Keywood listens in.

NAI M NAIT 5 37
The Nait 5 is the brand new entry level integrated from Salisbury's finest. David Price does the honours.

accessories

CABLES 66
Simon Pope checks out five interconnects over £100.

features

TANNOY HISTORY 26
David Price takes us through the company's rich heritage and interviews the chief designer.

OLDE WORLDE 35
David Price waxes lyrical over Tannoy's gargantuan Westminster speakers.
Is DAB radio good value at £299? That's the price of Videologic's new DRX-601E.

The release by Videologic of a DAB tuner priced at £299, the new DRX-601E, potentially brings a new dynamic to Digital Audio Broadcasting. Until now it has been languishing, with tuner prices of £500-£800 or more.

To see how Videologic's new tuner changes things, we tested it against a quality VHF/FM tuner from Denon, the TU-S10, priced at £350. Denon specialise in broadcast equipment in Japan, producing fine tuners.

Is VHF/FM still worth buying, or is it just way out of date in a digital age, as broadcasters tell us?

VIDEOLOGIC DRX-601E

Styling isn't a word you'd use for the DRX-601E. It is a functional black box built by standard industry method, using a pressed steel chassis, steel cover and extruded front panel. With just one tightly packed main circuit board inside and a small toroidal mains transformer the unit is light and easy to place, aided by reasonably compact dimensions of 430mm wide, 310mm deep and just 59mm high. It stacks nicely and there's remote control. Inside lies one main board with tightly packed surface mount components, dedicated Panasonic DAB chips and a 'Made in Japan' head unit.

Videologic supply a simple wire aerial. I hung the ends vertically from a nearby wall fitting, as many people will, and pressed Autotune. The receiver told me to wait then came up with BBC stations only. This was in a first floor room, brick building, Central London, a normal enough location.

After wire twiddling the weaker commercial station ensemble arrived, but not all programmes, like The Lounge, surprisingly.

My rooftop aerials supply VHF and UHF at 1-10 millivolts. The UHF TV aerial gave the best DAB signal but still got only four segments of the Videologic's 16 segment signal strength meter to light. In theory at least, this is good enough and finally The Lounge arrived.

The tuning knob simply scrolls the tuner between all the pre-tuned stations: twist to tune, press to select. It was a delightfully easy and reasonably self-evident process.

Unprepossessing it may be, but this tuner has a good range of facilities. The normal user will appreciate the scrolling display of the track being played (where the station provides such info.) plus station name and type (Rock, Sport, etc). The technically minded can use the signal strength meter to assess aerial effectiveness. There's also data rate and channel number.

At rear the Videologic has a 75ohm F Type aerial input - not common in Britain - an SPDIF digital output (co-axial and optical), audio output and audio input for loop through of an analogue tuner. I connected the SPDIF to an external DAC to see how this affected sound quality, but there was virtually no difference.

From the outset it was clear to me that the DRX-601E had a fine sense of clarity and delivered, tight bass of good quality. VHF tuners are often weak here. A Hitachi FT-5500 tuner - good technology but now a little old - got close to the DRX-601E but consistently sounded a little fuzzy or soft by comparison, although at times a little more fulsome too. Even in its day though, the Hitachi was more a technical marvel than a revelation in sound quality. This shows, however, that the Videologic will outrun an old tuner.

Denon's TU-S10, however, was on a different level to the Hitachi.

DENON TU-S10

Designed, Denon say, for Europe's now crowded VHF/FM airwaves (sardine packed in London) the TU-S10 has a 'six gang' front end for high selectivity. Denon don't say much about the IF stage or demodulator, but they would not skimp. The chassis is copper plated internally, something the Japanese deeply believe in, to reduce surface currents.

The TU-S10 offers medium wave and VHF/FM. It has 40 station memories, so it can recall as slickly as...
MADONNA NETWORKED
An estimated 9 million Internet users around the world watched an exclusive Madonna webcast sponsored by Microsoft late last November, according to event organisers. Despite widespread reports of problems with fans trying to access the streamed event because of technology glitches, the webcast still ranks as the largest such musical event ever. The previous record holder was the Microsoft-sponsored Paul McCartney webcast that drew about 3 million users. Madonna performed for about half an hour, one of her few live shows since last September’s release of her new album, ‘Music’. Interestingly, Madonna wasn’t paid for the event, but stands to generate substantial income from follow on CD and merchandise sales available from Microsoft’s website, www.msn.co.uk

HIGH 5 FROM NAIM
It appears Naim Audio is prepared to stake a claim for the mid-price market. Following the launch of the first two components in the new look 5 Series, the Nait 5 integrated and CD5 CD player, Naim has announced the arrival of the new NAC112 and NAP 150 entry-level pre and power amplifiers. Both amps have the black finished, low vibration aluminium casework of the Nait 5 and CD5.

The NAC112 attempts to combine the best characteristics of Naim’s excellent top-of-the-range preamps and deliver them in a £625 package. It has a discrete resistor ladder volume and balance control, managed by microprocessor. A dedicated powered output on the 112 is saved for an outboard Naim phono stage and all six line inputs are individually adjustable in gain to accommodate a variety of sources.

The NAP150, with an output of 50W per channel continuous into 8Ω, uses a version of the new circuitry designed for the awesome £10,000 NAP500 power amplifier. This endows the NAP150 with far faster signal transition times and better rejection of power supply noise, says the company. In common with other 5 series components the NAP 150 uses a low vibration chassis, anti resonance circuit board mounting pillars and specially designed compliant feet, all in a £725 package.

Available now in the trademark 5 Series black, this combination promises much, and at a total of £1,350 could turn out to be one of the buys of the year. Watch this space...

INTENSO LOOKING
Intenso has already sold over 100 million blank CDs across Europe, and is now looking for a slice of the UK recordable media market. Its colourful range includes 74min/650MB and 80min/700MB CD-Rs and CD-RWs, plus audio CD-Rs (for hi-fi CD recorders) and black faced CD-Rs (for games). A quick spin in a Pioneer PD-R509 CD recorder and a Creative Labs PC CD-RW Blaster confirmed Intenso’s claim that they’re ‘grade A’ quality, making them fine value at £2.99 per pack of 5 data CD-Rs.

Naim Audio
Southampton Rd.
Salisbury
Wits SP 2LN
Tel 01722 332266
www.naim.co.uk

www.intenso.co.uk

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

MERIDIAN 502/557 PRE & POWER AMPLIFIERS
Next month we listen to this classy looking combo from the Huntingdon-based digital engineering experts. Will they deliver the sonic goods?

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 SA1 SACD PLAYER
This is the £9000 top-shelf digital disc spinner from Marantz, featuring battlehardened build and high quality components. Read all about it next month...
SONY CHANGE TRACK

The only booming area of hi-fi hardware CD sales right now is recorders. The likes of Philips, Denon, Marantz and Pioneer have all had popular sellers in the stores for several months now, but what of Sony? The Japanese giant's official position has been that MiniDisc has been its priority - after all, why introduce an in-house rival to the format the company has done so much to promote throughout the nineties? With this in mind, the arrival of Sony's new CDR-W33 CD recorder in its native Japanese home market marks a substantial sea change in the company's marketing strategy. Retailing at Y75,000 (£440), the 4.6kg unit is well specified and nicely built. One unique feature is switchable Super Bit Mapping (SBM), which dithers digital recordings for a more natural sound. Previously only available on Sony's DAT machines, this would instantly give the CDR-W33 an edge in the competitive UK market.

www.sony.co.jp/SonyDrive

SIZMIK ACTIVITY

Linn has a new subwoofer; or 'Active Bass Reinforcement Loudspeaker', called the Sizmik 10.25. A compact, powerful, efficient design, it is intended for high fidelity music, home-cinema and multi-room applications. Using digital signal processing and adjustable triple filters, it's said to deliver over 1000 watts of music power via a 10 inch long-exursion drive unit.

The 'cool running, hum and buzz free' Linn Sizmik 1000 amplifier is a 'Class V' amplifier using Switch Mode Power Supplies, high density linear power amplifiers and DSP in a balanced bridge configuration. Three buttons offer adjustable digital low and high pass filtering plus subwoofer gain. Adjustible signal sensing enables the Sizmik to power up automatically from standby mode to full operation when it detects an input signal and to revert to low power standby after an appropriate and adjustable time period.

The Linn Sizmik 10.25 is available in Black at £995, or American Cherry and new Maple finishes for £1030.

Linn Products
Tel: 0500 888909
www.linn.co.uk

LIGHTENING THE LOAD...

Panasonic's £200 SJ-MR200 is claimed to be the lightest ever MiniDisc portable. Barely bigger than an actual MD, it weighs a waif-like 94g without batteries. All the more impressive are its claimed 38 hour playback and 15 hour recording times (from one battery). With 40 second anti-shock memory, backlit remote and 5.XBS bass booster, it looks set to give its Sony MZR-9I rival a real hard time.

Panasonic Help Line
Tel: 08705 357357

SHOW TIME!

Bristol Sound & Vision 2001 will soon be here again. From Friday 23 to Sunday 25 February, 10am to 5pm, you'll be able to see vast quantities of hi-fi and AV equipment, from Arcam and Audio Analogue to Wilson Benesch and Yamaha, with everyone from Heybrook to Unison Research along the way.

As usual it's at Bristol's Marriott Hotel (tel: 0117 929 4281). Entry fee is £6 (£3 concessions) and if you've got any enquiries, check out the website at www.bristolshow.co.uk
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After Hi-Fi World's 'CD RIP' feature (November 2000) comes more bad news for Compact Disc. A new survey from market research company MORI, says 'virtual record collections' may replace CDs within the next five years. The study, commissioned by Creative Labs as part of an in-depth look into home audio technology, reports that British music buyers are entering the 'second stage' of digital music where CD collections will soon be replaced by music stored on portable devices. It says British youth are at the vanguard of this 'audio revolution' and are leading the rest of society in planning to abandon CDs in favour of digitally downloadable music.

MORI interviewed 1,629 adults aged between 15 and 64 in July 2000, and found that 37% of under 25 year olds say they will stop buying CDs within 5 years, and 33% of British youth are at the vanguard of this 'audio revolution' and are leading the rest of society in planning to abandon CDs in favour of digitally downloadable music.

The survey also found that currently, 14% of British music fans download music from the net. According to Palmer, "the entire process of identifying and removing the watermark from the music samples took an afternoon". He also believes that any encryption or protection system is only viable for a period of six months maximum.

There is a disclosure agreement that prevents the winners from revealing their methods of cracking the code. However, Palmer had little computer programming knowledge, but was experienced in audio editing and mastering, apparently suggesting a commercial audio editing program could have been useful in the task. He is reported as saying that he, "approached the challenge from a purely musical perspective".

It's the same story in Finland, where it took the hacker just one evening to break the same security system. Like his fellow successful hacker, Olli Parviainen has experience with digital music programming. According to many commentators, the SDMI has reduced the possible systems down to Verance's watermark and one other, as well as two cryptographic systems developed individually by EMI and Philips Electronics.

The biggest problem with watermarking in hi-fi currently lies with DVD-A. Doubts have been cast from industry professionals about the 'invisibility' claims of the new Verance watermark. The original security code was cracked by a hacker and the launch of DVD-A postponed by months. Good news for the many sceptics, though, as this new hack could delay the release of DVD-A discs even further until the record industry is satisfied that the system is hack proof.

HACKED OFF - YET AGAIN

In November's Trade Winds we reported on how the multi-industry SDMI (Secure Digital Music Initiative) committee put $10,000 up for grabs to anyone who could break one of the proposed digital watermarking codes. At www.hacksdmi.com they distributed audio files protected by six security systems - four that embed watermark signals into music, and two that encrypt music files, a potential $60,000. The SDMI has spent the last two years looking for a viable security standard for digital playback. Little did they know how quickly they would have to pay up, as two hackers are now $5,000 each better off.

One is a 21 year old American drummer and regular user of Napster for sampling downloads, Will Palmer. The other is a Finnish student, Olli Parviainen, a 25-year-old information science undergraduate at the Helsinki University of Technology. Both of them were first time hackers.

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The latest news, including a close look at Sony's new VAIO audio computer.

We go to Japan to bring you the low down on all the latest AAC portables.

This cracking new audio player gets an in-depth test from David Price.

David auditions a budget soundcard that's serious about making music.

The definitive list of products that have stood the test of time.

The definitive place to find classic audio components.

The definitive list of products that have stood the test of time.

The definitive place to find classic audio components.
Noel Keywood compares it to a top rank VHF/FM tuner, Denon’s TU-S10.

The TU-S10 is quite bulky and not too pretty in my view. A tuner like this will work from an indoor wire, but give audible hiss, unlike the Videologic. However, a VHF tuner will continue to work right down to almost no signal (one millionth of a volt) and will get stations even in basements, unlike DAB. For optimum quality though, a VHF tuner needs an effective aerial. I hooked the Denon straight into my external aerial to push it into full quieting (>1mV) on most stations. For top quality VHF demands use of an effective aerial.

The TU-S10 is an awesomely good tuner, that’s for sure. It possessed the clarity of the Videologic, if not the razor sharpness of its transient, due to frequency response differences. Superficially, DAB sounded clearer, but Radio 2 - always good for transmission quality - showed quite clearly that the Videologic (and the external DAC) was missing a bass octave. Bass guitar, especially with reggae tracks, came through with force and control through the Denon, which was exceptional in this area. The Videologic lost the power of the fundamentals, leaving behind only the suggestion of a bass line, made by the harmonics. After a lot of changing over between stations duplicated on VHF and DAB, like Heart, it became clear that the TU-S10 offered a broader, more balanced sound than the DRX-601E, with startling clarity and supple bass particular strengths, but also with greater insight that revealed instrument textures and vocal nuances. By contrast the Videologic came over as a little bland and sterile, but my suspicion is that this is due to MUSICAM and the DAB broadcast chain.

And hiss? At -78dB there was none on VHF. Studio noise predominates at this level. The TU-S10 was as quiet as the DRX-601E. But of course you must give a VHF tuner more than 1 mV from the aerial to achieve this. By VHF standards the TU-S10 is one fine tuner, one of the best I have ever heard. Videologic’s DRX-601E got unlucky!

**CONCLUSION**

I was more impressed by Videologic’s tuner than I had expected. It auto-tuned with no hassle, presenting thirty seven stations immediately from a piece of wire hung from the wall - without any hiss. To most listeners it would be the best thing they had ever heard and it was delightfully easy to use. It’s a fine tuner.

The Denon needed more work in tuning in and memory setting (best not to use the auto memory set mode) but it offers equivalent convenience and better sound quality, especially for Rock music broadcast at high quality levels. The Denon also demands a serious aerial if it is to show what it can do. All the same, this is one extraordinary tuner, unequivocally one of the best I have ever heard. Had the Videologic not met it, then it might have prevailed. The Videologic is an excellent tuner for £299. This is a sensible price for DAB.

**DENON TU-S10**

- **Price:** £350.00
- **Suppliers:** Hayden Labs.
  - Hayden House
  - Chalfont St Peter,
  - Bucks SL9 9UG
  - tel: 01753 888447
  - fax: 01753 880109

**VIDEOLOGIC DRX-601E**

- **Price:** £299.00
- **Suppliers:** VideoLogic Systems
  - Home Park Estate
  - Kings Langley, Herts WD4 8LZ
  - tel: 01923 277488
  - fax: 01923 270188
  - www.videologic.com

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WHAT HI-FI? August 2000
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Digital radio has a lot to offer - and there's more to come. A claimed 70% of the population are able to receive it, although the audience for DAB radio in Britain probably numbers no more than 5000 or so at present, due to the high price of tuners. More stations are available on DAB than VHF/FM, and more are due. Here's a look at what DAB offers.

**NATIONAL DAB STATIONS**

**BBC**
- Parliamentary
- BBC Radio 1 - new music
- BBC Radio 2 - popular music
- BBC Radio 3 - classical
- BBC Radio 4 - speech
- BBC Radio 5 - dedicated 24hr live
- BBC World Service - international
- BBC Travel - travel data

**COMMERCIAL DIGITAL ONE**
- Classic FM - classics
- Virgin Radio - contemporary
- talkSPORT - all sports
- Core - teenage chart & club
- Planet Rock - classic Rock
- Prime Time - easy listening
- One Word - speech based
- Life - music for adults
- Bloomberg talkMoney24hr financial
- ITN News - latest news
- PrimeTime Radio - old melodies
- OneWord - plays, books etc

**LONDON DAB STATIONS**

**from BBC**
- GLR - talk and news

**from C.E. DIGITAL**
- Capital FM - contemporary
- Capital Gold - best of rock
- Kiss 100 - dance
- Magic hits from the last four decades
- NewsDirect - news & commerce
- Xfm - Modern Rock
- Sunrise Radio - Asian
- LBC - News, Views

**from SWITCH DIGITAL**
- Heart - soft rock
- The Lounge - horizontal rock
- BigLondon - big rock
- Ministry of Sound - dance
- BBC London live - talk
- Travel Now - travel info
- WILON The Mix
- Jazz FM - jazz
- The Groove - soul and funk

If you go down to the shops today you're sure of a big surprise - digital radio for just £59.99! Lots of 'em in fact, at all sorts of prices, with the words 'digital' plainly visible on the front. But they're analogue. These are normal radios with digital tuning, which offers the convenience of push-button station selection. All the same, the description 'digital' is confusing for people. You will find digital radios commonly have VHF and Medium wave, a sure sign they are analogue radios!

Also, there are 'digital scanners', a type of radio receiver that can cover 0.5MHz right up to 2GHz, including the DAB band (174MHz-240MHz). They will not decode DAB though. Luckily, scanners are not common on the high street or there would be even more confusion. Both these categories are analogue; only DAB is digital radio.

A 'Digital World Receiver' from Philips. This is an analogue radio with digital tuning.
Kenwood’s new DPF-3030 replaces their highly regarded DP-3080 so it has a reputation to live up to.

Kenwood have improved their unique D.R.I.V.E. filter system, which reduces quantisation errors at low signal levels that produce a stepped waveform instead of a smooth one. Kenwood reckon this provides a more natural sound quality.

The rest of the player is pretty much standard fare. There’s a one-bit DAC, and optical digital output. The main output is also remotely adjustable. It’s a pity, then, that a machine as well specified as this doesn’t have the ability to replay CD-RV discs; something that may put off the home-recorders.

The overall finish is now as good as anything at this price point, and reliability and a long life you can take as read if Kenwood’s past reputation is anything to go by.

The player was plugged into my usual system, with both a NAD C520 (£170) and Cambridge D300SE (£170) at hand to act as benchmarks.

It was good to see that the new ‘3030 has lost little in terms of refinement in transition from ‘3080. The Cardigans, ‘Erase and Rewind’, flowed from the ‘speakers as effortlessly as one could expect from this class of CD player. The bass was a touch lightweight in comparison to the NAD, yet both its sense of cohesion with the mid-band, and fine definition are unusually good at this price. The guitar and vocals were equally well refined although, at times, perhaps too much so. Nina Perrson’s vocals, in particular, lacked the usual Scandinavian ‘edge’. The sound staging was fine, but a little extra depth would have been appreciated. Whilst one could never call the Kenwood lean, it didn’t quite have the expansive ‘bloom’ of rivals; something which isn’t always necessarily a good thing in the budget market.

A rather less processed and grander sound came courtesy of the Divine Comedy’s ‘Here Comes the Flood’. Both Piano and brass sections were reproduced with a realistic timbre. However, the vocal arrangements came across as a little pinched. This seemed to compress the sound stage to a degree.

Many budget hi-fi separates show a preference for a particular type of music, and I discovered the Kenwood to be one of them when I switched to jazz vocalist Tina May’s ‘After The Love Has Gone’. The smooth, mellifluous balance really seemed to suit acoustic jazz. May’s vocals had presence and a true sense of realism thanks to the ability to hear her patterns of breathing. The latter is a trick usually only associated with more expensive machines, but I guess Kenwood would attribute this to the D.R.I.V.E. system.

Once again the bass response was a touch light, yet the overall balance had a seamless and beguiling nature that would encourage long term listening. A total lack of exaggerated vocal sibilance helps here too.

The Kenwood could sound dramatic with the right material. ‘Strumgilding’, off the Swim Team’s compilation disc, provided a suitably window-rattling bass line when required. Politeness pervaded again though, with the synthesised drums lacking a certain edge, to the detriment of the track’s atmosphere. The timing and consistency couldn’t be faulted, though, as was the case with all the previous tracks.

To describe the Kenwood as smooth seems as though I’m damning with faint praise. Yet, in many respects, this is the one word that can justifiably sum the ‘3030 up. Detail resolution, timbre and timing also all rate as above class average. The player does shine more with acoustic work rather than Rock or Dance genres.

The level of sonic sophistication still impresses at this price level. Add that to improved cosmetics and it’s hard to imagine a better all rounder, just don’t expect a bright sound. It’s certainly a player to audition.

KENWOOD DPF 3030 £199
Kenwood Electronics
UK Ltd
Kenwood House,
Dwight Rd
Watford
Herts WD1 8EB
Tel: 01923 816444

Like it’s predecessor, the 3030 is simply one of the best players around under £200. Highly recommended. Measured Performance see page 111
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\textsuperscript{\textregistered} 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 biewire 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.
Denon have re-vamped the PMA-350SE amplifier into the UK-tweaked PMA-355UK. Is good rhythm enough, Dominic Todd wonders?

I bought a PMA-350SE I was so impressed by it. Four years on, have Denon moved the game on with its replacement, the new PMA-355UK? Nowadays, there’s the NAD C320 (£200), Cambridge A500 (£200) or Marantz PM6010 ( £230) to compete.

Although having crept up slightly in price to £230, there’s plenty that’s new. A quick glance reveals a remote control (useful), mm phono stage (handy), a second set of switchable speaker and tape outputs (good), pre-amp outlets (also good) and tone controls (master of taste). With the possible exception of the tone controls, all good stuff.

With my trusty PMA-350SE alongside, I began listening with Eagle-Eye Cherry’s, ‘Long Way Around’. Immediately striking was the definite Denon signature. A strong taught bass line that drove the song through with vigour. Vocals were powerfully projected well ahead of the rest of the mix. It was also good to hear the two guitar tracks clearly separated from one another, their own unique characteristics clearly defined. Slightly less impressive was the ‘width’ of sound. Although by no means poor by class standards, there wasn’t quite the expansiveness of one of the Denon’s key rivals, the NAD C320. Likewise, the overall balance could occasionally sound slightly mechanical and detached from the music. Everything was there but it just didn’t seem to quite gel together. For example, percussion sections became more confused as the mix became more complex.

Female vocalists can prove testing for even the finest amps. I selected the next disc, Kirsty MacColl’s, ‘England 2 Columbia 0’. As with the previous song, the vocals stood out with a bold presence. The resolution of fine detail was undoubtedly better than average for an amp of this price, but once again it didn’t quite do enough to really involve me.

Maybe the Denon just wasn’t happy with the music genre. The 355 appeared happier with Richard Thompson’s raw folk drawl than had been the case with previous female vocalists. Lead vocals enjoyed a clarity and level of separation that allowed me to focus upon the subtleties of accent and emphasis but treble performance proved to be a let down here. Cymbals shimmered brightly with a fine, even decay, as soon as the balance erred towards the side of ‘busy’ the Denon seemed to lose it a little. Overall, the balance was suitably punchy, with a good rhythmic drive.

The Denon has everything you’d ever want, featurewise, from a stereo amp. It appears to have taken a step back from its predecessor, if only a small one in sound quality. Whilst there are few at this price that can match its balance of drive and punch with such good detail resolution, it lacks the ability to allow the listener to forget they’re listening to a hi-fi, unlike the less mechanical sounding NAD C320. Proof then, that newer isn’t always necessarily better.
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.
To book an audition contact one of these authorised T32R stockists:

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Digital synthesizer and charge integrating T32R's highly sophisticated phase-locked loop. The 1M section includes switchable IF filters, high-blend and a mono mode. Together with the Hi-technology Analog Radio Audio's specification in conjunction with Robert and L has been developed to TAG McLaren module, which is already prepared for bands III in the new millennium. The (optional) Digital Radio at a later stage, without any penalty or compromise.

Digital Radio
Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) is the future of radio and offers many advantages over existing analog technology. With additional programme choice, functionality and interference-free reception Digital Radio is ready to take radio into the digital age. The T32R is prepared for AV32R station selection can be made via the AV32R using the TAGtronic Communication Bus which enables products equipped with this advanced interface to share and transfer information easily.

Hi-technology Analog Radio
The FM section includes switchable IF filters, high-blend and a mono mode. Together with the T32R's highly sophisticated phase-locked loop digital synthesizer and charge integrating demodulator they provide true hi-fidelity even under difficult reception conditions.

Multiple FM antennae
A second FM antenna input is provided allowing convenient expansion to cable distributed radio programmes.

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The MW and LW sections allows for clear, crisp sound with a minimum of background noise. They have been designed not to impair the audiophile sound quality of FM or DAB.

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Good ergonomics are essential for sophisticated products. The T32R includes an unusually powerful microcontroller, allowing a highly intuitive user interface that provides maximum functionality with unprecedented flexibility, including full remote control, 99 station memories and a comprehensive display.

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The T32R features alarm, mute and sleep functions.

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The intuitively designed Remote Control manages the T32R's many functions.

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Edgbaston, Birmingham 0121 429 2811
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www.tagmclarenaudio.com

Mission’s new m71 loudspeaker produces great images, Noel Keywood finds.

Mission include a ‘how to set up a hi-fi loudspeaker’ by numbers’ guide with their new, budget M71s. It’s short, succinct and on the nail. I followed it and ended up listening to great a performance, good enough to wonder: “who needs a big loudspeaker?” The M71s exhibit “a lively and highly detailed midband”, as well as “an astonishingly low frequency performance seldom found in a compact enclosure” Mission say I’ve read it before, but their claim has substance. Measurement told me this new small speaker was designed to be a wall mounter (close to a wall, not against it) and sure enough Mission’s guide confirmed this, saying 10-30cms was needed to the rear wall.

Placing a loudspeaker close to a rear wall gives more bass, but it is lumpier, due to phase additions and subtractions. The further out the better for imaging and smoothness. Just don’t let the distance to the floor match the distance to the rear wall or the lumps will get large. Because every room is different I experimented, but the M71s delivered good, deep bass even when far from the wall.

However, assuming most people would buy a ‘speaker like this because it can be kept back to free up floor space, that’s how I reviewed them. In line with Mission’s guide I tried the optional foam bungs for tighter bass, ran the speakers in for 24hours and pointed them straight down the room, rather than toed in. This gives a beautifully broad sound stage, at least, from a loudspeaker able to construct such a thing - and the M71s could. After a while I toed the speakers out a little and found they could still construct a solid and credible central image. Toeing out gives an almost ethereal large sound stage, bringing real dimension to large orchestras in particular. Aiming more energy at side walls won’t work in all rooms, but when it works it gives impressive results - and the M71s can pull it off.

In their list line of advice Mission say their ‘speakers will work with “competent budget electronics” but will improve as the source improves. So they should - and it is an important point in the real world. What Mission are saying is the M71s are not difficult to drive. Our tests confirmed this. They go loud with around 40-60 watts, as loud as any rivals, so they don’t stress budget amps. Mission recommend 75 watts maximum. Bi-wiring is possible; I used it and got better insight into a performance. However, throwing money at budget ‘speakers to make them sound better is a bit unrealistic. A good sound should be possible from normal use; I used single wire van den Hul Royal Jade Hybrid running to a Mission Cyrus 7 amplifier most of the time.

A Cyrus 7 is a solid-state amplifier I can live with (being a valve man). It’s smooth, it has stage depth and good imaging. I tried toeing the M71s out slightly to dampen their treble: they are a little on the ‘shiny-bright’ side even with a smoothie like the Cyrus, so I would beware of matching the M71 to hard rockers like the Naim Nait5, TAG Maclaren 60i or most Far East amps (e.g. Denon), all of which have forceful treble. Think Creek or Cyrus perhaps, something with smoothness and finesse.

I’ve never wanted to hi-fi products tuned exclusively to hard rock. There’s a strong element of rocker in this ‘speaker, though ameliorated by subtler properties. The M71s have real speed, aided by a glassy edge to transients that make them incisive. If you want fast rock from a miniature, they’ve got it. There was plenty of bass power in the metronomic drumming behind Billy Idol’s Rebel Yell, but better still Idol had real presence in the room, vividly defined and in great voice. The M71s have good bass punch, lots of speed and great imaging. They’re fine for this sort of Rock.

Mission have engineered in a fine sense of bass control too. Although I could hear some box boing at times - and definitely a little box colouration from the port - the M71s have fast, tight bass that also goes quite low. Even though real deep bass is attenuated, it’s still there. The bass line behind Clapton and Santana on ‘The Calling’ had the power behind it than you’d expect from such a small box, underpinning their performances well. I got no improvement using the foam bungs, but then I never do.

MISSION m71 £129.90
Symphonix Ltd
Huntingdon PE29 6EY
tel: 01480 451777
fax: 01480 432777
www.mission.co.uk
The response to our monthly competition has been beyond our wildest expectations. Keep the entries flooding in, as the more you respond, the bigger and better the prizes get.

Many thanks!

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The lucky winner of December’s KEF competition is Mr. Philip Hurst of West Bridgford, Nottingham.

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Mission is now one of the world’s most famous loudspeaker companies, with a brief but full history that includes many best sellers. Based in Britain’s ‘hi-fi Mecca’ of Huntingdon, the company was started in 1977 by Farad Azima. The engineering talents of his brother Henry soon meant the brand was making waves with products like the 700 and 770, which fast won plaudits from countless UK and international hi-fi magazines.

Mission loudspeakers became famous for their exciting, punchy, musical sound, combined with clean midband and fine imaging. This was achieved by Henry’s talents at using high technology materials and carefully voicing his ‘speakers for real world listening rooms.

A litany of successes followed, from the quintessential budget 760 ‘mini monitors’ of the early nineties, to the storming 752 floorstanders which were the first mass-market loudspeakers to use HDA (High Definition Aerogel) in 1995. Mission went from strength to strength, introducing sweet sounding silk dome tweeters when everyone else was still using edgy metal domes, and innovative cabinet bracing arrangements for extra rigidity.

The bold X-Space of 1998 pioneered the use of NJXT flat panels and showed Mission’s mastery of new technology. Always offering excellent value for money, the company’s latest flagship series comprises the 780 standmounter, plus 782 and 783 floorstanders. True to tradition, the range uses new technology in the shape of the Keraform mid/bass driver.

The £1000 783 is one of the finest ‘speakers available at its price, as we found back in December’s Hi-Fi World. Exceptionally well put together and solid as a rock, it has a wonderfully sophisticated sound. Mission has put a lot of work into reducing cabinet colorations by using asymmetry to disperse panel resonances and foam damping to reduce cavity resonances. Although resembling a two-way design, the 783 is actually a three-way ‘speaker with a side firing 200mm bass unit for a tight, deep and tuneful bass. The Keraform matrix bass/mid cone is used to minimise coloration, which it does with aplomb and the soft dome tweeter gives a smooth and sweet high frequency response.

Noel Keywood found the 783 to have: “a silky smooth and beautifully civilised performance... It performs equally impressively with all types of music. Rock has grip and control with a generous frequency spread combined with a fast and exciting sound due to that stiff drive unit... the kick drum on Billy Idol’s ‘Pumping on Steel’ kicked hard, with lightning attack and real punch. Cross fade images shot between ‘speakers like bullets. The track’s tricks really came across’.

To win these exceptional loudspeakers simply answer the following questions on a postcard, and send it to the address below before January 31st 2001. The lucky winner will be picked out of Hi-Fi World’s well-worn baseball cap!”

---

Questions

1. Mission is based in [John Major’s parliamentary constituency of:]
   a) Bleep and Booster
   b) Farad and Henry
   c) Watt and Ohm
   d) Smith and Jones

2. The company was founded by the Azima brothers, whose first names are:
   a) recycled kitchen utensils
   b) Dustbin lids
   c) High tech materials like HDA and Keraform
   d) sticky-backed plastic

3. Mission loudspeakers are famous for using:
   a) Bleep and Booster
   b) HDA and Keraform
   c) Kensington and Brixton
   d) Huntungdon

4. In Hi-Fi World’s December 2000 review of Mission’s 783, we found them to have:
   a) “a wonderfully full and exuberant bass response”
   b) “a silky smooth and beautifully civilised performance”
   c) “an unparalleled ability to emote”
   d) “a kickin’, bangin’ sound, man.”

Please send all entries to: February Competition, Hi-Fi World Freepost LON3478 London NW6 6YR

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congratulations!

The lucky winner of December’s KEF competition is Mr. Philip Hurst of West Bridgford, Nottingham.

The entries to our monthly competition have been beyond our wildest expectations. Keep the entries flooding in, as the more you respond, the bigger and better the prizes get.

Many thanks!
cast your mind back ten years
and think of five leading
British audiophile amplifier
manufacturers. The name Exposure
would invariably be on the list. At one
point in its previous existence, it was
practically head to head with the likes
of Naim. However when the latter,
der under the visionary leadership of the
late Julian Vereker, started to expand
its empire, Exposure stuck to its
humble origins. Consequently a
company, that perhaps should have
deserved wider recognition since its
launch in 1977, didn't fulfil its
potential share of the hi-fi market.

Recently it has struggled, and even
went through an abortive sale until a
glimmer of light was spotted at the
end of the tunnel. The far east is
always interested in investing in
'traditional' British hi-fi brands like
Exposure whose names carry
prestige, and with this in mind
Malaysian money appeared on the
market in March 2000. Thus was
born the new Exposure Electronics
Ltd.

This new found financial stability
meant the company could start
manufacturing with little constraint
on finance or time, at a lower price.
It's currently working on the next
wave of products, including CD
players, tuners and amplifiers, and also
plans to venture into Home Cinema.

'Old' Exposure front man John
Farlowe is the newly appointed
chairman, with Andrew Whittle
brought in as MD. Whilst finance is
from Malaysia, the first products are
still fully manufactured in the
company's Sussex HQ, although
gradual development in the far east
may well occur, with assembly
probably based still in the UK.

The first new product was the
non-remote version of the 2010
amplifier. The version we have here
has remote controlled volume and
input selection as well as numerous
tweaks on the original. Aesthetics are
still very much in the traditional
Exposure mode, with a no-nonsense
attractive look that retains an air of
specialist hi-fi. It's straightforward
enough, with most of the emphasis
on the inside. Corners are nicely
rounded with an overlapping front
plate adorned with two smoothly
motorised knobs (Alps volume pot
and input selector) that feel good
(and expensive) to the touch.

Exposure has made a nod to
modernity with the inclusion of three
blue LEDs on the 'titanium' silver
fascia (also available in classic 'eighties'
satin black), and they're quite the
brightest I've seen too. You can always
save on electricity though, as the amp
can double up as room lights.

Round the back we have
connections for six line inputs - our
sample had no phono inputs but a
MM or MC stage is available for £100
extra. Two sets of 4mm loudspeaker
sockets are flush with the casing.

Power is conservatively
rated at 50W per channel. It's of
sensible dimensions and sensible
weight, and all components in the
2010 come with a three year
guarantee.
Meridian Audio loudspeakers combine digital signal processing with powerful built-in amplifiers. This provides the greatest performance from the neatest cabinets with perfect control.

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http://www.meridian-audio.com
SONIC SLAM
I say ‘conservatively’ rated, because those 50 watts sound like a heck of a lot more. Using a Linn Genki CD player, Mission 782 loudspeakers and Nordost cabling, I was immediately hit with a fast, punchy sound very much in the old Exposure vein. It’s no wonder that the company was always compared to Naim, as the sound is fundamentally similar. There’s an overall presence, control and bass slam that makes for a very involving listen. After burning in the 2010 for a couple of days the amp really came into its own and a tad more warmth was added to the sound to give a better tonal balance.

It’s a superb performer with rock. The Screaming Tree’s ‘Dust’ was first in the Genki’s drawer and I was instantly hit with a big guitar sound that was both powerful and cohesive. Mark Lanegan’s gruff, sixty-a-day voice was realistic and forward, with the drum (one of the best ever recorded, in my view) extraordinarily detailed and powerfully driven. Most impressive though was the tight and deep bass control. Low end grunt is rarely found at this price coupled with such control and tunefulness. Such slam was also found in Underworld’s electronic dance music. ‘Push, Upstairs’ from ‘Beaucoup Fish’ had relentless energy and drive, bass was solid and taut and the treble showed real detail, with all the tiny intricacies of the percussion present and correct. Still, it wasn’t quite the most neutral or smooth sound I’d ever heard, though.

Moving to classical showed how the 2010 excelled in three-dimensionality. Whilst the previous Exposure sound could be somewhat two-dimensional and flat, the new amp had an ambience and depth with classical that I frankly didn’t expect. Pierre Boulez’s note-perfect reading of Mahler’s ninth symphony is one of DG’s latest audiophile-quality recordings, and has a spacious depth to the sound which was highlighted by the Exposure. The enormous orchestra had weight and presence but wasn’t artificially pushed forward, giving a naturalness to the orchestra matched at this price only by Audio Analogue’s Puccini SE. What the Exposure doesn’t have to the same degree as the Puccini is a sweetness of treble that benefits classical music, but at least its great dynamics and weight make up for it. This said, it’s still far less raw than previous Exposure amps, and adds a touch of ambience, making its reproduction of classical music superior to its predecessors.

This new Exposure sound is highly addictive. It combines the slam, power and immediacy of the old amps with an ambience that was lacking before. The sound, whilst still tiring to some ears perhaps, is less dry and sterile and now enjoys some warmth too. It still isn’t for ‘old buffers’ though - that isn’t what Exposure is about - so if it’s EL34-style sweetness you’re after you should still look elsewhere. A fine amp for the price, then, that prefers kicking rock or banging techno over the impressionistic mist of Debussy’s orchestration. Highly recommended as a step up from entry level integrateds.

Exposure 2010 Titanium £599
Exposure Electronics Ltd.
The Works 59 North St.
Portslade East Sussex
BN4 1DH
Tel: 01273 423877
www.exposure-hifi.co.uk

Audiophilia at a sensible price, with a large, generous sound that’s cohesive and controlled. A rocking sound that’s not for the faint hearted.

Measured Performance see page 111
After the split with Mission, it was only a matter of time before Cyrus launched its own loudspeaker. Simon Pope auditions the Cambridge company’s first solo effort, the CLS70.

For those of you not in the know, Cyrus was launched back in the early eighties as the electronics wing of Mission. Under the charge of Henry and Farad Azima, it made high quality electronics at sensible prices. With sleek looks and lively sound, the original Cyrus 1 and 2 amplifiers gathered strong followings. More recently, the latest 5 and 7 integrateds and the aCA7 and SmartPower pre/power have also gained critical acclaim, especially from us here at Hi-Fi World.

Mission and Cyrus recently went their own separate ways. This opened doors which had previously been shut for Cyrus. While its erstwhile partner had already dabbled in amplifiers with the striking 767/777 pre/power combo of the late seventies - the ones with the company name moulded into the front panel - it had steered well clear of ‘speakers for obvious reasons.

Now the borders are down the Cyrus CLS70 is here. Although the company will do an NXT flat panel ‘speaker early in the new year, this is a standard two-way design, albeit with outlandish high-tech looks that would blend in with the set of any of the Alien movies!

VITAL STATISTICS
The first thing you notice about this ‘speaker is its weight. Build is outstanding, with detachable polypropylene and metal grills, attached with metal fixing pegs. Whilst this may not sound groundbreaking, it’s a welcome “cheerio” to bent up plastic fixing pegs. Indeed, the Cyrus CLS70 is full of little details like this which, you soon realise, justify the £800 price tag. The maple veneer for the cabinet for example, comes from Italy and is smooth and beautiful to the touch. Size is quite chunky for a standmount at 220x330x300mm with an effective volume of 15 litres.

You don’t just find attention to detail on the outside either; as its internal engineering is pretty special too. A two-way front ported, bass reflex design, it features a trick 165mm air-dried composite paper cone bass/mid unit complete with a machined aluminium phase plug. A 25mm coated, exposed silk dome tweeter deals with high frequencies. The crossover is a second order design using high specification components, such as air core LF coils and polypropylene HF caps. The cabinet features layered damping technology, as apparently used by the aerospace industry (for passenger airline sandwiches, perhaps?), striving for a rigid yet inert enclosure that’s heavy and thick.

THE SOUND OF CYRUS
We used the CLS70s with their matching Tripod stands, expensive, high quality brutes with vicious bottom spikes best kept well away from any Persian silk rugs you may have. The advantage of these is that the CLS70 can be firmly bolted to the top plate of the stands to ensure extra rigidity and bass control. The whole look of these ‘speakers and the stands is definitely one for the boys - in your face, modern and macho! One thing to note is that they take a lot of driving, especially for a bass reflex design.

Once partnered to a beefy amplifier, however, they bust out bass with the best of them. Free from the waffle and flab often associated with ported ‘speakers, they sound more akin to closed cabinet designs. The bass-heavy electronic pumping of Underworld’s ‘Push, Upstairs’ from the album Beaucoup Fish powered through the room with great attack and control. Bass was deep and fast, and the incessant pounding of the sampled drums kept me on the edge.

PAGE 24 FEBRUARY 2001 HI-FI WORLD
of my seat and the neighbours on my doorstep. Indeed the '70s go loud, but need appropriately powerful amplification so to do. Next I moved to the thrash-rock of the Foo Fighters' 'The Colour And The Shape'. This showed up good detailing, with all that manic drumming present, correct and lacking any signs of muddle. Dave Grohl's vocals sometimes sounded more forced than usual, and guitars could acquire a sharp edge - showing a forward midrange - but this still didn't detract from the effect of the music.

Where these 'speakers found the going harder was with recordings that need space, air and delicacy like the Emerson Quartet's recent live recordings of the complete Shostakovich string quartets on DG. The superb artistry of these players needs a sound that will carry the delicacies and playing techniques forward, but the CLS70s - perhaps due to relatively low sensitivity - rather strangled the atmosphere and made the music slightly compressed. This was a shame, as the recording venue, the Harris Concert Hall in Aspen, is a generous and warm one. Anyone familiar with these pieces will know this is the last thing such music needs, as its tight writing makes it already claustrophobic enough. However the sound was always controlled and cohesive, detailed and exciting when the music called for it.

A showpiece Reference Recording of Copland's 'Fanfare For The Common Man' played by the Minnesota Orchestra found these Cyrus loudspeakers far more at home. The deep bass extension in this recording gave the opportunity for them to show what muscle they have in the nether regions. The bass drum intro thumped impressively with a natural decay and realistic dynamics. The accompanying brass instruments were bright and well polished and here there was more space to the sound than I found with the Shostakovich pieces.

The CLS70s are excellent with powerful and exciting music - classical, rock and dance included. Yet when the forces get smaller and more warmth is needed to create ambience, they seem to wane a little due to their power hungry nature. This apart, they're a very high quality product with fine build and finish. Those who want bass - and plenty of high quality low bass - from a standmount should look no further but if your tastes are a bit more refined you could find them a bit dry. They work best with powerful, smooth sounding amps like Cyrus's own aCA7.5 and SmartPower combination, for example. There's plenty of classy competition around at this price level, so any standmounter has to be good to justify an £800 price tag. Fortunately the Cyrus CLS70s just succeed in holding their own, thanks to that superb build and controlled power. Well worth an audition.

Cyrus CLS70 £800
Matching stands £200
Cyrus Electronics Ltd.
Ermine Business Park
Huntingdon, Cambs
PE29 6XY
Tel: 01480-435577
www.cyrusaudio.com

Measured Performance see page 111

Cyrus CLS70
Great build. Excellent
with rock and dance
but could do with
some warmth with
acoustic music.
Great pumping bass
for a standmount!
TANNOW

With a remarkable seventy-five years of history under its belt, Tannoy has something to shout about. David Price profiles the Glasgow 'speaker manufacturer's illustrious past and talks to its chief designer.

From Andrew Lloyd Weber musicals to the BBC, from ITN to NBC, from Tokyo Broadcast to Universal Studios, from the Sydney Opera House to the Hard Rock Hotel in Las Vegas, Tannoy loudspeakers can be seen and heard all around the world. Indeed, so omnipotent are the company's products that it's the only hi-fi manufacturer ever to have its own place in the Oxford English Dictionary.

It was at the end of the nineteenth century that Tannoy's founder, Rupert Guy Fountain, was born in Selby, Yorkshire. Changing his name to Guy R. Fountain in 1905 he later moved south to London. Radio was the new wonder of the time, spurring innovation. Guy was just 25 when he built his first wireless, developing a passion for audio electronics that would shape the rest of his life.

Shortly after John Logie Baird transmitted the first television pictures in 1926, Guy founded the Tulesmere Manufacturing Company. At the time, early radio sets used expensive, short lasting dry batteries or 'wet' lead acid cells that were in constant need of charging. Dissatisfied with the expensive mercury vapour rectifiers these chargers used he began researching ways of simplifying the charging process, perfecting a new type of electrolytic rectifier which used two different metals, Tantalum and Lead Alloy. The name Tannoy was coined when he subsequently set up a tiny factory in Dalton Road, West Norwood, London to manufacture them.

The company was renamed Guy R. Fountain Ltd. in 1928, owners of Tannoy brand name. Bertram Mills Circus was an early customer for Tannoy Public Address equipment. Back then Tannoy PA used valve amplifiers with Western Electric 555 tubes driving Voigt loudspeakers.

Two years later the thriving company moved to a new factory in Canterbury Grove and by the time the Second World War started in 1939 it was
employing a workforce of 40 people. Contracts with the Ministry of Defence saw PA systems installed in RAF airfields. 'Tannoy' fast became a verb, then a household name. By 1944, there was even 'a Tannoy' in the House of Commons too and in 1947 the word entered the Oxford English Dictionary for the first time.

A catalogue of ever more ambitious P.A. installations continued for Tannoy, from the UN building in Geneva to acoustically synchronised fairground systems. It was 1948, however, the year LP records were introduced and Bell Labs invented the transistor, that Ronald Rackham produced Tannoy's well known 15" Dual Concentric loudspeaker unit; Decca ordered 900.

The company became increasingly involved in the recording side of audio, and studios from Decca's FFRR to EMI's Abbey Road bought Dual Concentrics.

Tannoy launched its 10" III LZ bookshelf loudspeaker in 1958, followed by the Monitor Red range the next year. By the time SME debuted its first pickup arm a year later, Tannoy had already appointed its first agent in Japan and Taiwan. Guy R. Fountain's son Michael was made MD in 1962.

As Beatlemania gripped the world, Tannoy introduced its VariTwin Mk II Stereo pickup and the Lancaster loudspeaker. P.A. duties in the world cup the following year went to Tannoy and the famous Monitor Gold Dual Concentric range made its debut.

The 1970s started strongly when the new Q62 ocean liner got its P.A. and Sound Reinforcement courtesy of Tannoy, and George Martin's Air Studios were kitted out with Monitor Golds. Disaster struck in 1974 when a fire at a cone manufacturing facility destroyed all the tooling, the result being no Dual Concentrics for 8 months. At this time the company was still in Norwood, but was looking a bit dated to the outside world. Hi-fi was now flowing in from Japan, stimulating a mass market in which Tannoy played little part. Everything was about to change.

In 1975 the company was sold to Harman and duly moved from London to Coatbridge in Glasgow, where it remains to this day. Harman sold Tannoy on to Beatrice Foods in 1977, also the year the company's founder, Guy R. Fountain, died. Tannoy's management team bought the company from Beatrice Foods in 1981, starting a new era. By the early eighties, the tube-obsessed Japanese market was appreciating the benefits of Tannoy's large Dual Concentrics, and the Westminster picked up the country's coveted Golden Sound award. On a more modest level, the two-way Planet range was launched, including the Jupiter, Venus, Mercury and Saturn. This was extremely well received, the Mercury picking up a number of accolades.

Gathering strength progressively the company became the founding member of TGI Group (Tannoy/Goodmans International), and started reorganising the range yet again. After the middling sales performance of the distinctive Profile series, the more conventional looking Mercury range arrived, and proved a great success. With one of Europe's best selling loudspeakers on its books again, Tannoy was cautious about changing too much, and the subtly revised mX series was the result last year. At the same time, the company made sweeping changes, launching the new Saturn and Revolution ranges, giving the product line up of today.

www.tannoy.com

HIFI WORLD FEBRUARY 2001 PAGE 27
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WHAT HI-FI? • AWARDS 1999

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selected cd players

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<th>Model</th>
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<td>£229</td>
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also available at selected outlets

Arcam FMJ CD23, Cyrus CD7, Naim CD5, Linn Genki, Meridian 508 24-Bit and Sony SCD555ES.

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WHAT HI-FI? • DECEMBER 1999

which loudspeakers? sevenoaks can help you decide

As the final component in any hi-fi or home cinema system, the loudspeakers determine the way sound is presented. However, not only is it imperative that the loudspeakers work correctly with the amplifier and source components, but also do not react adversely with your room. With such a variety of bookshelf, stand mounted and freestanding loudspeakers available, it makes sense to choose Sevenoaks Sound & Vision, where we can help you find the perfect solution - all you need to do is listen!

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| Tannoy MX2 | Sale £119 |
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**IMPORTANT:** Due to regional variations, please confirm opening hours with your local outlet before you travel.
DAVID PRICE INTERVIEWS ALEX GARNER, TECHNICAL DIRECTOR, TANNOY.

WHAT IS TANNOY'S PHILOSOPHY?
To be a world class designer and manufacturer of all types of speakers, for both consumer and professional applications.

HOW IS TANNOY DOING RIGHT NOW?
As a subsidiary of a plc, I can't give specific sales figures but our holding group TGI plc has a publicly stated turnover of around £55M, and Tannoy is a substantial part of this. Our market is split into three equal sectors, the Far East, Europe and North America. Our product ranges have always catered for individual tastes in different markets, both consumer and professional. We have a very healthy spread around the world.

WHICH PRODUCTS CAPTURE THE COMPANY’S ESSENCE?
In the beginning, under Guy R Fountain's control, Tannoy produced corner horn enclosures incorporating Dual Concentric designs which have a massive following. Speakers like the Autograph and Corner GRF (signed personally by Guy Fountain) are still highly regarded. The compound horn loaded design of the Autograph was brought up to date with the Westminster Royal, which has a huge reputation and following around the world. Now, the Dimension Wideband range and the add-on SuperTweeter look set to become 'classics' for the next generation of music lovers.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITES?
The Westminster compound horn loaded speaker is still my favourite BIG speaker (four men are required to lift it into place) and when carefully set up this speaker can stir up the emotions with its fast transient performance. The 15 inch Duals never cease to amaze me in theatres around the world where the audience has no idea that they're providing substantial sound amplification for the performance.

Current favourites include the Dimension 12 Wideband for it's ability to make your brain to forget you're listening to speakers.

WHAT OF TOMORROW'S TECHNOLOGY?
There are many things to be investigated, such as new materials, finite element analysis to simulate the auralisation of speaker systems, innovative magnetic drive systems, cabinet construction and materials, filter design, active systems for the performance. Expect more focus on appearance - our speakers will blend with the sound reproduction chain except to explore and innovate electronic systems where they can have a direct effect on speakers.

WHERE DO YOU SEE THE FUTURE?
You can expect a move towards speakers offering very wideband performance with linear time responses. Expect more focus on appearance - our speakers will blend more effectively into domestic and business properties and also include a few 'statements' about classical British and European design thinking.

Active electronics will be incorporated within our speakers in the search for musical experiences in both consumer and professional applications.

Audio will continue to compete against the many other demands on peoples' spending abilities. I see a joining together of the various sources - movies, video, computing, broadcasting, home automation, music delivery software, home studio composition and recording. And they all require an audio element to make them acceptable to human beings.

Music is a part of our lives and will continue to be so. Fashions will change and the appearance design of audio will follow suit. The basic requirement for sound to be heard in a natural way will always be present and there will always be a dedicated band of people who appreciate this concept and hunt out the very best way of doing it.

WHERE DO YOU SEE THE COMPANY, THE SPEAKERS, AND THE FUTURE?
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WHAT OF TOMORROW'S TECHNOLOGY?
There are many things to be investigated, such as new materials, finite element analysis to simulate the auralisation of speaker systems, innovative magnetic drive systems, cabinet construction and materials, filter design, active systems for the performance. There's time, amplitude and phase relationships in the psycho-acoustic interactions of the ear, body and brain, and visually new and attractive industrial designs. Commercially we don't want to branch out into the other parts of the sound reproduction chain except to explore and innovate electronic systems where they can have a direct effect on speakers.

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POWER POINTS
Why dual concentrics are better - Tannoy owes much of its success to Dual Concentric technology. By positioning the tweeter immediately behind the bass driver cone, all frequencies emanate from a single point. This 'point source' mirrors the way sound is produced in real life, giving a naturally located and well dispersed acoustic. It also gets a frequency response and phase response that is not affected by nodal cancellation that's unavoidable in conventional multi-way speakers. The system is also able to go loud without compression, and is famous for its fine transient response and load characteristics. There are a number of famous designs based on this principle, including Scanning, JBL, the RCA "LCI/1A" and the famous Attac 604 series. Tannoy's successful use of dual concentric drivers has made its speakers a particular favourite of valve amplifier users around the world, particularly in the Far East.
There are big 'speakers, massive 'speakers and Tannoy Westminsters. Surely one of the most striking things ever to make a sound, other manufacturers' top-of-the-range designs look small and flimsy by comparison. The king of Tannoy's Prestige Range, this product is truly remarkable, however you look at it.

Intimidating physical presence aside, the fact that it's lasted so long is a testament to Tannoy design philosophy. While loudspeaker fads come and go, the Westminster has remained loyal to tradition. For example, back in the seventies and eighties, everyone from KEF to Linn were doing hopelessly complex, multi-driver designs that sapped power so much you needed a direct line into the National Grid to get a squeak out of them. Back then, the Westminster would have seemed a silly irrelevance, a ridiculous anachronism, a blast from the past. Now though, tubes are back in fashion and efficiency is good, and the big Tannoy's design seems plain commonsense.

Although its styling makes it look like something from the early Baroque period, it does not sound old and limp. Actually, this is one of the fastest, most lithe and musical speakers you'll ever hear. This is down to a combination of its huge Dual Concentric driver in Tannoy's largest 15 inch (380mm) incarnation, and the awesome compound horn loaded 530 litre cabinet. The result is a mind boggling 99dB sensitivity figure, which even if powered by a Discoman would most likely blow your windows out. Couple this to 225W RMS power handling, thanks to the driver's premium spec twin roll fabric surround, Alnico magnet system and Tulip Waveguide, and you've got something that's louder than a Motorhead gig with the PA turned up to eleven.

The frequency response characteristics are another reason to drop your jaw - the Westminster goes down to 18Hz (at -6dB), making it possibly the best ever loudspeaker for the likes of Roni Size and LTJ Bukem - drum'n'bass will never sound the same again. Despite this the dual Concentric tweeter manages 18kHz (at -6dB), which is just about decent enough for smooth treble. But couple it to Tannoy's Prestige SuperTweeter, and you're really talking.

With its massive power handling, tremendous sensitivity and subterranean bass characteristics, the Westminster can easily get the better of most PA stacks, but its air shifting abilities aren't really the point. Musicality is what this speaker has in spades, thanks to its lightning transient response (a drive unit with a magnet the size of China moving a featherweight paper cone is hardly going to be slow, now, is it?) There's also the fact that the Dual Concentric tweeter manages a magnet the size of China moving a featherweight paper cone is hardly going to be slow, now, is it?) There's also the fact that the Dual Concentric design crosses over acoustically at 200Hz and electrically at 1kHz, both of which are a long way from the ear's most sensitive area. Factor in the Westminster's almost unique attribute of having an enclosure with a waveform area approaching that of real instruments, and you can see why sound flows out of this behemoth so effortlessly.

The downsides of the Westminster are twofold. Firstly, with that huge paper cone flapping around in the breeze, there's quite a lot of cone distortion that you wouldn't get with stiffer, more advanced materials like Aerogel or Carbon Fibre. So don't expect it to be as refined, subtle and detailed as an electrostatic. The second problem is placing the darned things. Assuming you can afford to buy a pair, you'll have to be rich to own a listening room large enough to swallow two 1395x980x560mm boxes (or should that be buildings?). Oh, and best pay someone else to install the combined 276kg of heavily damped and internally cross-braced solid walnut with 25 birch ply!

It's a shame that these loudspeakers are so comprehensively ignored in their home market of Great Britain. Ironic, considering that in Far East markets they're practically de rigueur for lovers of valves and vinyl. Used in conjunction with a decent single ended tube power amp and a well preserved Garrard/ SME/ Decca combination, there are few better ways to experience jazz music without going to New Orleans. Still, this latter option may be cheaper in the long run - if you can find a pair of Westminsters, expect to pay what the seller is asking, which will likely be at least a king's ransom.
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As sure as night follows day, the Nait 5 dynamics is totally unlike other amplifiers. Those hi-hat cymbals that feather through the song sweetly with other sub-£1000 integrateds. Amazingly, even at really high volume levels driving difficult loads, the baby Naim goes ever louder when the occasion demands it, while others run out of steam despite their higher ‘on paper’ output power. Driving my big Yamaha NS1000Ms hard (which have high sensitivity but are a nightmare load), the Nait just kept going louder without a hint of break-up, whereas lesser amps just lose it in the bass or trigger their thermal cut outs. The only better amps I’ve heard in this respect are Naim’s own NAP250 and Musical Fidelity’s XA-200 - every other one I’ve tested - valve or transistor, power amp or integrated - has come off severely bruised after trying to wrestle my NS1000Ms at very high levels.

The combination of power and control is the key to the Naim sound, one which some love and others hate. Music suddenly becomes tremendously urgent and engaging, what ever it is you’re listening to. Because baselines don’t stop playing as soon as there’s a loud bit elsewhere (i.e. a drum hit hard, or crashing piano cadences), you get a convincing sense of ‘liveness’. If this is what you’re after, no other integrated amp anywhere near the price comes even close.

The trouble starts when you begin to listen ‘critically’, rather than relaxing into the groove of the music. As you’d expect, Chic’s ‘Good Times’ is a feast of rhythms through the Nait 5, but the female singers’ voices sounded just a touch too glassy. Those deliciously sumptuous strings - a jaw-dropping delight with valves - came across as generic and airbrushed, almost as if they’d been sampled. Those hi-hat cymbals that feather through the song sweetly with other amps sounded grey, unatmospheric and rolled off through the Nait. It’s lacking in other respects too. MJ Cole’s ‘Crazy Love’ showed how the Cyrus 7 set up a considerably wider soundstage which really reached out of the speakers and grabbed you. The Nait 5 on the other hand seemed to be working on an altogether smaller canvas. Although image location was supremely tight and accurate within the soundstage, the soundstage itself reached out less both vertically and horizontally.

So, the new Nait 5 is nothing new inasmuch as it’s a highly focused design which over-achieves dramatically in some respects, but is an also-ran in others. What’s so great is the balance Naim has struck with its new baby - it’s so supremely capable at what it does well AND it now boasts similarly accomplished build, facilities, connectivity and upgradability. This makes it one hell of a bargain if a punchy musical sound from MM or MC. Nait 5 owners should have no hesitation choosing it over similarly priced nevals from other manufacturers.
The latest in a fast developing line of 'audiophile' DVD players hails from the T+A.

When the first few DVD players from the likes of Panasonic seeped onto the market, many audio reviewers' ears pricked up at the smooth, sophisticated sound, especially with 24/96 audio recordings. As the public became more interested in the format, things tailed off at the audiophile end slightly and the next generation of models concentrated on what's essentially the bread and butter of the Digital Versatile Disc, visuals.

What goes around comes around however, and in addition to high-end DVD models from Meridian and TAG McLaren Audio we've recently seen UK audio companies such as Arcam and NAD launch AV products with the emphasis on audio performance. They're not alone - DVD players from specialist hi-fi companies such as Musical Fidelity, Roksan and Sonneteer are imminent.

Another company renowned for its audio products trying out the choppy DVD waters is German high-end manufacturer T+A, with the DVD 1210R. Until very recently 'Theory plus Application' was little known outside Germany and Scandinavia. The company was founded in Herford, Germany in 1978 and started by designing transmission line and active loudspeakers. Now the product range is so varied it even includes CD players, amplifiers, loudspeakers and other electronics, including digital A/V systems in the Meridian mould, plus its own TV.

However, there's no hint of 'Jack of all trades, master of none' about T+A. Although its heart remains in true audiophile hi-fi, it has put equal time, research and preparation into every product. Like Naim, the distinctive 'house' looks are functional and cool, concentrating on what's inside as opposed to flashy front panel adornments. It's this deep belief in true hi-fi that benefits the DVD 1210R. Whilst other manufacturers' high end DVD players simply don't match their similarly-priced CD players (Denon's £1,500 DVD-5000 springs to mind), the DVD 1210R most certainly does.

HIGH TECH

The drive mechanism used in the 1210R is a pressure cast chassis with linear laser guidance and two matched lasers of different wavelengths, each designed specifically for DVD and CD discs. It also reads CD-R/RW discs and the trademark slimline but solid casework ensures very little vibration indeed. The DVD 1210R also uses the same dual mains power supply unit as the 1210R CD player, which has separate sections for digital and analogue circuits with separate transformers. Number crunching is by 24/192 digital converters used in double mono, symmetrical mode, leaving the 1210R potentially upgradeable to DVD-A.

Round the back we have three digital outputs, one coaxial in stereo mode for an external stereo DAC or digital recording use, plus one optical and one coaxial for connection to a surround processor. Analogue outputs are limited to stereo only (two sets), the lack of surround analogue outputs showing the 1210R has no internal decoder, like Philips' DVD960 'audiophile' player. Presumably the manufacturers think discerning buyers will appreciate the advantages of an external processor, or alternatively could be showing that this is predominantly an audio player that also happens to play DVD discs. On the video connection side we have a SCART AV output, coaxial video out and an s-video socket.

One of the most impressive and interesting aspects of the player lies in its four digital audio filters. The 1210R employs a programmable digital signal processor which can use digital filters capable of better oversampling than that found in 'off the shelf' filters, the company claims. In addition to the ordinary filter setting (long FIR) there is a short FIR filter [1], an IIR [2], a Bezier/IIR [3] and pure Bezier type [4]. These four filters all have different but subtle tonal characteristics that proved effective and fun to play with. The look of the player is one of sleek sophistication. This is deceptive as it's...
German high-end engineering company T+A. Simon Pope is suitably impressed.

with drive and control. Most important was the fact that I could hear everything that was going on, which is no mean feat as this is one pretty tripe recording! It’s as if the producer got a little too drunk one night and tried every outboard effects unit in the studio, all at once. The result is a sound which demands the best equipment to bring out every layer in the mix, which the T+A did without any problems. Billy Corgan’s Kermit-like vocals were detailed and forward, with just the right amount of sibilance while the awesome drumming of the opening track beat away behind, every nuance and cymbal hit clear as a bell. When the guitars became a bit too grating, a swift run through the filters smoothed out the edges very subtly.

Next I trawled through my usual array of acoustic review discs such as Copland’s Fanfare For The Common Man on Reference recordings, Eric Bibb and Needed Time’s ‘Good Stuff’ on Opus 3 and Beth Orton’s ‘Trailerpark’. All were reproduced with control, sensitivity and involvement in equal measures, each passing the essential ’toe tap test’ - and when you tap your toes to music you don’t particularly care for, you know your hi-fi is doing its job.

Remembering that this thing actually played video discs as well, I loaded up Karajan conducting the Vienna Philharmonic in Dvorak’s ninth symphony (with such as musical sounding player, it hardly merited The Matrix) and linked it up via SCART into the TV. Getting the settings sorted was a bit of a hassle, especially with the slightly ambiguous remote but once I was up and running in two-channel mode the performance was excellent. Picture quality was natural and clear and for a moment I was transformed into the Musikverein’s front row watching the old man wag his stick at first hand. This is where blockbuster movie haters can still benefit from the DVD format. The whole point of hi-fi (correct me if I’m wrong here) has always been to bring live performance into the home, so you could theoretically say that, at this level, DVD is one step closer to this, with the prospect of DVD-A a further leap forward.

The DVD1210R is a bit of a rarity among DVD players because you basically forget it is one! In direct opposition to the majority of the competition, this machine plays music so well that it’s worth considering as a primary music source that just happens to play films, rather than the other way round. If I have any complaints, it’s that it can sometimes sound unmistakably Teutonic (i.e. a little sterile and dry), but it’s always controlled and detailed. So if you’re thinking of buying a CD player at this price, give yourself an earful.

T+A DVD 1210R £1,500
BBG Distribution Ltd.
Unit 3 Barrett Way Tudor Rd.
Harrow Middlesex
HA3 8QS
Tel: 020 8863 9117
**Christmas opening hours**

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**Miscellaneous**

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- **NAD**
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LETTER OF THE MONTH

LET'S GET PHYSICAL

Dear David,

First let us get one bit of nonsense out of the way. Of course MP3 has a physical form! You may not be able to pick it up like a CD or a record (unless you count picking up the complete hard disk) but it is there on your hard disk. You can (with a small enough pointer) point to exactly where it is. Even when being downloaded it has physical form. If you don't think electricity is physical, try sticking your finger into the nearest three-pin socket!

As to MP3, you seem to miss one important point. It exists for one reason only, bandwidth. Currently, and you must stress the currently, we haven't got the bandwidth available to transmit the full musical content (taking, for now, CD as representative of full musical content.) The rule of thumb is that processor power doubles every 18 months. Bandwidth is doubling in less time than this, and don't forget that we are considerably behind the States. MP3 is going to have a considerably shorter life than CD.

This in itself will probably dictate that the digital component of your hi-fi system will be a PC, simply because it is cheaper to change software rather than hardware. Hardware will have its place. My soundcard can take input from either my DAT player CD player or CD recorder and store it for re-transmitting to either of the recorders. I eventually expect a combination of hardware and software to handle DAB, SACD and DVD-A. One problem. PCs are currently just so noisy. I can't have it running for serious listening. As for my (huge) vinyl collection? Well first it keeps growing as people ditch their collections and I can't resist the bargains!

I'm one of those people who don't believe that you can tear the Mona Lisa into a million pieces (bits) and then stick it back together and expect it to look the same! When the sampling rate and word size has significantly increased you will need even more bandwidth. It will happen. At that time CD will be recognised as a stepping stone. One of the DVD formats will probably be significant. MP3 will be lucky to get a mention.

Anton Britton
anton@ab-computing.com

Hi Anton, Well, yes, if you want to be completely pedantic then atomic particles have a physical form too. What I was trying to do was to draw a distinction between formats and media. Traditionally, they've been conjoined - CD for example, is a 16/44 PCM digital audio format. MP3 won't roll over and just die.
format stored on a 650MB optical disc medium. MP3 and the new generation of compressed formats can be stored on all variety of media, from hard drives to memory cards to CDs, and more. For me at least, this is a very exciting development and makes music potentially far more accessible.

You're right to say that MP3 is simply a line drawn in the sand - a format that's become popular due to a particular set of historical, cultural and technological circumstances. When bandwidth increases and - importantly - the cost of flash card memory decreases (industry insiders predict it will drop to one quarter of its current price in one year from now) - then another format will come along. My bet is that MPEG4 will be this year's big thing (with AAC as a subset), but MP3 is still a massive 'legacy' music resource. As vinyl proves, popular formats don't die overnight!

I completely agree that the digital components of hi-fi systems will start migrating to computers. In fact, they're already doing it, as Sony's new VAIO audio computer shows. However, I'm now running two systems, one computer based for general audio duties - including making music compilations for portables, the car and casual listening - plus international radio listening (streamed over the Net) and vinyl archiving. My other system has become my 'shrine to vinyl', highly tuned and focussed on this fantastic format. It also runs a CD player and DAT, which plays stuff recorded on my audio computer, plus my CD collection. I seem to have evolved this arrangement and it works very well, and I suspect many other people are doing the same.

How important MP3 will be in the scheme of things ultimately doesn't amount to a hill of beans. Of course, I've been enthusiastically arguing its case, but I'm really talking about it as a generic term for 'digitally downloadable music' (including AAC, WMA etc.). I don't actually worship at the altar of MP3's coding algorithm at night - actually my true passion is analogue which is a completely different kettle of fish!

No, I just love the possibilities and the potential for music fans opened up by the Internet and music portals in general. DP.

---

**CONTROLLED DEVICES**

Dear Hi-Fi World

I hope you may be able to advise me on my current dilemma. I am looking to upgrade my amplifier and speaker combination but I am having more difficulty fulfilling all the criteria than I anticipated.

I currently own an Audiolab 8000C/P driving Linn Keliaths with an Arcam Delta 250 Transport / BB50 DAC. I actually quote many aspects of the sound including the punchy quality and the way the music is projected into the room. Unfortunately, when the going gets tough the system falls apart. Complicated multi-layered tracks with difficult rhythms seem to become messy, as does harsher sounding rock. I'd like to find a system with better control in difficult circumstances. A little more detail and warmth wouldn't go amiss either.

My local Sevenoaks Hi-Fi has been knocking out Monitor Audio Studio 50s on the cheap, so I went along initially thinking they might work with the Audiolabs. Apparently not. The treble and midrange detail improved dramatically although it had a slightly zingy sound and the control under pressure was amazing. Unfortunately, all bass weight and warmth had disappeared and it sounded like a satellite/subwoofer combination without the subwoofer. I then tried the Ruark Talisman Is. These had a nice overall sound but were lacking in the drama department and sounded a bit flat. Next I tried the Monitor Audios with a Musical Fidelity A3CR pre/power combo. This was massively bottom heavy and all the mid and treble detail got overwhelmed. I had high hopes for that combination too.

Finally, I booked a demonstration at a different dealer and I got to listen to some ProAc floorstanders (I forget the model) and some KEF Reference 2 - both driven by my Audiolabs. They both sounded quite good although the ProAcs seemed to lack a bit of bass weight, something I suspected was down to my amp. Unfortunately, there wasn't enough time to even shortlist them let alone make a decision.

That's where I am now. In an ideal world, I'd find an amp to go with the Monitor Audio Studio 50s. This is mainly because Sevenoaks Hi-Fi (Bromley) have been really helpful and patient, allowing me home trials and plenty of time sitting around in their listening room. Ultimately, though, the music comes first so the right equipment must take priority. I have £4000 to £5000 to spend and listen to everything - Jazz, Dance, Rock, Classical, Peruvian Ritual Folk Music and anything else I can get my hands on.

Someone, somewhere knows the answer.

Gareth Cameron

I hate to say it, as it's probably the last thing that you want to hear, but there are plenty of options open to you. As usual, we only have a certain number of pages reserved for letters.

So here's my particular suggestions.

Firstly, you say that you'd appreciate a little more warmth in the sound, plus detail as well as control. In that case, ditch the Audiolabs.

Whilst they're fairly controlled and powerful, the sound can often be a little cold and hard. This can also be the case with the Studio 50s and putting them both together could well take your fillings out. The Arcam pairing is also knocking on a bit and can sound a little dull if put into the wrong situation, i.e. the one they're in now, so your source could do with sprucing up.

The first, and by far the easiest, option is to sell everything, pop down to Sevenoaks and ask to listen to the Linn system I reviewed last month. The Genki CD/Kolekore pre/LK140 power and Ninka 'speaker set-up is one not to be sniffed at. Whilst the individual components won't work quite as well in a hotch-potch arrangement, together they're very impressive. The new Ninka 'speakers replace your existing Kefis and improve on them in many ways.

They're more three-dimensional, with deep but taut bass weight and a real kick, yet in a Linn system they can also sound warm and detailed. The whole shebang will set you back no more than £3500 including Linn cables, if you so wish.

My second suggestion would be to perhaps try the Musical Fidelity A3CR pair again, this time with the Kef Reference 2s. The big, civilised sound of the KEFs will balance out the transparency of the MFs and you'll get a mixture that could take some beating. This would leave you a grand or so to spend on a CD player, for which I would go with Arcam's CD23 in the FMJ series which has good tonal balance that shouldn't mess with the overall sound, and is very easy on the ear.
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Thirdly, you could take the valve option. A good choice would be the excellent Copland CDA289 CD player matched with the their 30W, CTA-402 pure valve integrated. This isn’t the teary-smooth sound much beloved of many old school valve heads, but rather the combination has oodles of detail and spark, mixed with sophistication in buckets, courtesy of those vacuum tubes. These two will cost you around £3,700 leaving £1,300 to make up your £5,000 budget. You’d need a pair of speakers with relatively high sensitivity to cope with the output of the CTA-402 (your power hungry Keilids are out of the picture here). You could go for B&W’s DM605 S2s for £1,400. With a sensitivity of 91 dB, these have excellent bass control and a big, open sound. Alternatively, there’s KEF’s new revamped Reference One-Two at £1,350, or even Mission’s £1,000 783s with their mix of punchy drive, deep bass and detail.

Whichever route you take I hope your Peruvian pan pipes sound a little more detailed. SP

**BACK TO BASS-ICS**

The system comprises a Copland CDA289 CD player matched with their 30W, CTA-402 pure valve integrated. This isn’t the treacly smooth sound much beloved of many old school valve heads, but rather the combination has oodles of detail and spark, mixed with sophistication in buckets, courtesy of those vacuum tubes. These two will cost you around £3,700 leaving £1,300 to make up your £5,000 budget. You’d need a pair of speakers with relatively high sensitivity to cope with the output of the CTA-402 (your power hungry Keilids are out of the picture here). You could go for B&W’s DM605 S2s for £1,400. With a sensitivity of 91 dB, these have excellent bass control and a big, open sound. Alternatively, there’s KEF’s new revamped Reference One-Two at £1,350, or even Mission’s £1,000 783s with their mix of punchy drive, deep bass and detail.

Whichever route you take I hope your Peruvian pan pipes sound a little more detailed. SP

Ironically, your last room had theoretically inferior acoustics to your present attic flat. Square listening rooms are an acoustic nightmare, a breeding ground for standing waves that hang around and muddy the sound. Part of that fulsome bass was, I suspect, actually coloration added by your room. It just so happens that you’d assuaged your acoustic nasties by using a brightish cartridge. Now you’ve moved to a more neutral room your system’s true colours are showing.

As vinyl’s your main source, start with the cartridge. As you already have a Goldring body, a 1042 is the easiest upgrade. It’s a far more symbiotic match than your K5, which is well off the pace these days. Next, rather than going for a new set of budget floorstanders, I’d get a REL Q50 subwoofer, simply because it lets you tune your system to what is an unfamiliar and potentially difficult room better. Also, by going this way you’re giving yourself more leeway to experiment with positioning of your existing speakers.

The Tannoy mx3s are indeed excellent loudspeakers, and might give a quick fix. You’d find they’re faster and better extended than your old MS20s, but they still may not add the oomph you’re after thanks to their more even upper bass response. True, they go down lower, but also lack the Mordaunt Shorts’ upper bass peak which is already injecting some perceived weight into the sound. It’s a common mistake to assume floorstanders instantly add bass - they’ll extend it, but not necessarily increase the amount unless they’re positioned too near a wall or corner, in which case they’ll ruin the sound. No, in your unusually dimensioned room, a high quality sub matched to smallish standmounters should work much better. After this, an OL RB250 tonearm upgrade should tighten things up even more. DP

The 783s could feature in your set up.
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**REBUILD BLUES**

I have been extremely happy with my system for several years, but have just had the Quad ESL 57s rebuilt and suddenly things don't seem to be quite as satisfying as they were. The amplifier especially suddenly seems a bit unadventurous. My usual equipment comprises: Quad 500/54, Ongen Live/Onofio 510/ Creek OBH-8SE, Sony MDS-JE520 and a Leak Stereo 20.

I have recently tried my bedroom amp in the system, a Rote RB890 which has good detail but no depth or warmth. At the moment I have a Mission Cyrus One which is a good cross between the two other amps but the input switch is dodgy. I can get round it by using the record switch with the input to tape and the recorder on, but wonder if I should consider a new amp and if so which? At what level?

The system seems well balanced and at this stage I can't upgrade everything to the level the Quads would probably justify. The Cyrus is a surprise. It seems to punch well above its weight. At the moment I have a Mission Cyrus One which is a good cross between the two other amps but the input switch is dodgy. I can get round it by using the record switch with the input to tape and the recorder on, but wonder if I should consider a new amp and if so which? At what level?

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The latest news, including a close look at Sony's new VAIO audio computer.

E-Music Goes East 52, 53
We go to Japan to bring you the low down on all the latest AAC portables.

Creative Labs DAP Jukebox 55, 57
This cracking new audio player gets an in-depth test from David.

TurtleBeach Montego II Plus 58
David audits a budget surround sound system

STORAGE WAR HEATS UP

It's probably fair to say that the market for digital music portables is at least equivalent to the number of Napster users, which is currently put at 30 million. As a result, a battle is now emerging amongst developers of storage media to fit them. Flash memory is currently the favoured solution—made by the likes of SanDisk, Samsung, Toshiba, Hitachi and Sony, it can be found in virtually all MP3 players right now, despite being relatively expensive. Nevertheless, SanDisk predict sales rising from 4 million in 2000 to 7.8 million next year and 13.3 million in 2002. Still, there's a sense that there's a gap in the market for cheaper music storage. Last year logema introduced the PocketZip disk (formerly known as Clik), which is a 40MB disk one quarter of the size of a CD that sells for around £15. Now, DataPlay has announced a rival system that stores 500MB for around £15. The company hopes to have the disks on UK shop shelves by mid-2001. Whether this will be needed depends on the price of flash memory though. Currently, huge demand for it in devices like mobile phones and digital cameras has kept supply short and prices high. But with new factories being built to manufacture it, prices are predicted to drop by 75% within a year from now, from $2 per MB to 50 cents. Meanwhile, Logema has announced a portable audio player that uses both flash memory cards and disk systems, called the HipZip, and Creative Labs now has its hard disk-based DAP Jukebox, which gets a full review on page 55.

SONY HAS IT ALL

October 2000 saw the Japanese launch of Sony's PCV-MX3K VAIO audio computer, the first ever PC offering fully integrated audio capability. Boasting CD, MiniDisc and FM Stereo sources, plus full MP3 functionality and optional DVD and TV/Video, it catapults computer audio and multimedia into the 21st century. The sleek main unit comes with an orange backlit LCD displaying everything from radio station names to CD text, and there's bundled 'OpenMG Jukebox' software offering fully integrated recording and dubbing between CD, MD and MP3 sources using Sony's proprietary ATRAC 3 codec.

The front panel of the computer has a large rotary volume control knob with a dedicated 'record' button. There's also a front mounted headphone jack and USB sockets for portable audio devices. There's extensive control options in software, including source selection, tone controls, recording quality etc., as well as the most comprehensive timer record facility yet seen on any audio device, using Sony's 'Media Bar MX Stage' software.

A one bit Delta Sigma DAC does digital conversion duties, and a 2x10W RMS amp is included onboard to drive the matching ported VAIO loudspeakers. There's a built-in modem for music downloads, and plenty of room to store them thanks to a 40GB hard drive. Full MPEG1 and 2 capability is included, and there are also two remote controls to play with! It's an amazing package, and Japanese AV retailers tell Computer Audio World that it's proving a real sales success in its native Japan. We hope Sony bring it over here as soon as possible, but if you want to see more you can always point your web browser at www.vaio.sony.co.jp.

SONY GETS REAL

Sony and RealNetworks have gone into partnership in a bid for music format supremacy. Sony's ATRAC audio codec forms the back end of the latest RealAudio player, claimed to make RealPlayer sound better than ever at high compression rates. Sony can now put a recognized face on ATRAC, which to all but MiniDisc devotees is a pretty anonymous technology. The deal also means all Sony devices will support RealPlayer from this year.

Radiohead's US record label Capitol Records has attributed much of the success of the band's new album to its online marketing activities. Radiohead's new 'Kid A' album was extensively promoted on the Internet, using an on-demand listening promotion involving one thousand web sites, as well as strong pre-release marketing. Ironically, the album was also available on Napster in its entirety for quite some time before the album was released in the UK or the States, but there's no way of telling whether this helped or hindered its sales. Capitol's press release declined to mention the online file swapping site at all, which is curious considering the band's recent pro-MP3, pro-Napster pronouncements!

RADIOHEAD - COMPUTERS OK!

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BOXMAN SHUTS

Swedish online music retailer Boxman has closed down, and may go into voluntary liquidation if it can't find a buyer. Another 'dot com' casualty, the company's backers include pop bands Roxette and Ace of Base. As recent as last year it was considered a leading music software retailer, operating for three years in eight European countries and claiming over 700,000 customers.

www.boxman.com

www.realaudio.com
I remember pounding the streets of Tokyo during Japan's scorchingly hot summer of 1998, in search of new and interesting audio/visual happenings. MiniDisc was the big thing at the time, and Sharp and Sony were fighting it out doggedly in every electronics and 'camera' store I visited for MD portable supremacy. DVD was still very much in its early days (and still is, arguably) so there was little of any interest in the portables field, bar a couple of notable exceptions from Panasonic and Pioneer.

Now, as I write this at the end of 2000, things couldn't be more different. Cassette has almost totally disappeared off Japanese shop shelves and MiniDisc has the feel of a mature format whose aura of excitement is waning, if not its actual sales. Whereas the CD portables market of two years ago was bristling with new and exciting designs, today there's little new to look at. DVD's growing steadily, but the real action has been in - yes, you've guessed it - MP3 players, or 'digital audio portables' to use the name everyone's adopting right now. (Let's ignore the fact that CD, MD and DVD walkies also technically come within this ambit!)

Whether it's a shopping arcade in Kichijoji frequented by the general public, or Shinjuku's Yodobashi Camera which attracts audio geeks from miles around, MP3 is

Sony has surprised many by its early entry into the digital audio portables market, and the quality of the products it is offering. Whereas Panasonic has put all its eggs in the one AAC basket, Sony has taken the more sensible approach of offering dual format (MP3/AAC) players. It too is doing players in both the traditional 'walkman' and new 'headphone' designs, but it's offering lower prices. Sony's SSP-HP7 is a headphone product that costs just ¥37,000 (£225). The specs are lower than the Panasonic though, as it offers just 32MB of memory from its MultiMedia (MMC) card and higher weight at 154g. It also has 1.5mW lower power output at 3.5mV per side. Again connection is by USB, and the player comes bundled with Sony's version of the Liquid player, a set-up CD, batteries and carrying case. The conventionally styled SSP-PD7 offers the same features in a sleek (38.6x83.5x24.8mm), metallic finish case weighing 58g complete with MMC card. There's a backlit, dot-matrix LC display, too. www.sanyo.co.jp/STS/

An early entrant - as far as the Japanese are concerned at least - Aiwa's range now comprises the Y39,900 (£240) MM-FX500 'portable MP3 recorder' and the Y23,000 (£140) CD/MP3 player. The former is a neat looking conventional MP3 walkie weighing in at 77g and measuring 65x89.9x18.7mm. The twist is that it's got a built in microphone which records voice content in MP3 format for storage on your computer hard drive, making it just perfect for student lectures. It's nicely made with 32MB of MMC storage, and features a wired remote control and headphones. The XP-MP3 is essentially a CD walkman using a data CD-ROM drive, allowing it read MP3 music CDs written on computer data CD-Rs. It comes with all the usual Discman features, but is rather bulbous and heavy at 285g.

Sony's October 2000 launch of its stunning VAIO audio computer (as featured in this month's news section) looks set to do much to advance the cause of multi-format, multimedia music. But there's more, because the Japanese giant is never one to rest on its laurels. November 25th, 2000 saw the release of a number of 'VAIO gear' products, including two stick-shaped portable digital audio players, the pendant styled MC-550 and the strap-on MC-PII. Both feature dinky backlit LC displays, plug in stereo earphones and Sony's OpenMG Jukebox Version 2.0 software. Weighing a mere 33g, they're amazingly inconspicuous and look superb. Both run WMMA, MP3 and Sony's ATRAC 3 format, soon to form the backbone behind RealAudio - at 105kbps this gives 80 minutes of playing time from 64MB. However, Sony's MC-PIII signals which way the wind is blowing, in Japan at least, by incorporating a digital music player into one side of a set of stereo headphones. For Japan's youth, phones are a potent fashion accessory, so these should go down just great! Finally, Sony is also offering the PCGA-JR1 which is a USB digital walkie which connects direct to one of Sony's Psion-style personal organisers. At the time of going to press, prices on all these have yet to be announced.

www.vaio.sony.co.jp/
everywhere. With characteristic pragmatism and interest in the new, the Japanese have taken to this format - and indeed its rivals - with unbelievably little fuss. Whereas the British audio scene feels it has to take some kind of overarching 'pro' or 'anti' stance (usually the latter, unfortunately), the Japanese simply regard computer audio as an exciting new audio possibility.

However, while British and US music portals have burgeoned, the Japanese have been a bit slower off the mark in this respect. This has meant that most Nipponese fans of 'e-music' either go to Napster like the rest of the world, or to their domestic record company sites for downloadable sounds. The hardware side of things has also been slow off the mark too, arriving too late to make any mark in 1999 or 2000. However, the big Japanese companies are finally in on the act, and boy have they come up trumps. If you expected Sony, Sharp and Sanyo versions of pre-existing US designed, Korean built MP3 portables, then you're very wide of the mark. The big Japanese audio manufacturers are now launching a raft of extremely impressive - almost stunning - products which remind us that it's the 21st century we're living in - science fiction is rapidly becoming science fact!

Here's the pick of the bunch:

TOSHIBA

In a daring deviation from accepted convention, Toshiba calls its MEA 10AS a 'mobile audio player'. Aside from that, its specs aren't radically different to Panasonic's SV-SD70, which means 64MB from a sleek oblong case measuring 50x97x12.5mm and weighing a middling 75g. The player is another dual format AAC/MP3 design, running the former at 128, 64 and 32kbps giving around 60, 120 and 240 minutes playing time respectively. It comes in three lurid finishes, from the carbon fibre-look - ZB and blue flame - ZA to the dreadful plastic wood veneer effect - ZC (last seen on Korean car dashboards!) Y48,000 (£295) buys you the package which includes 64MB from a Sharp MagicGate Memory Stick (a la Sony), rechargeable battery and charger. Dodgy colour schemes aside, it's a slick product which weighs just 149g all in, and includes a USB connector and top notch software. ATRAC 3 and MP3 comes as standard, but there's no AAC compatibility as yet.

www.toshiba.co.jp/mobileav/

SHARP

The strikingly styled WA-HP1 is Sharp's entry into the digital portable fray, a headphone model featuring a display set into the middle of the headband, rather than in one of the earpieces. It comes in three lurid finishes, from the carbon fibre-look - ZB and blue flame - ZA to the dreadful plastic wood veneer effect - ZC (last seen on Korean car dashboards!) Y48,000 (£295) buys you the package which includes 64MB from a Sharp MagicGate Memory Stick (a la Sony), rechargeable battery and charger. Dodgy colour schemes aside, it's a slick product which weighs just 149g all in, and includes a USB connector and top notch software. ATRAC 3 and MP3 comes as standard, but there's no AAC compatibility as yet.

www.sharp.co.jp

PANASONIC

Matsushita's mass market AV brand offers the SV-SD01, a digital audio player in the shape of a pair of stereo headphones with a confirmed price of Y49,800 (£300). Using Panasonic SD cards (in either 32MB or 64MB), this player runs AAC at 128, 96 or 64kbps bitrates, giving 64, 86 or 129 minute playing times respectively. Weight is quoted at 104g including card, and the frequency response 20Hz-20kHz - which is AAC's theoretical limit anyway. Bundled with Panasonic's SD-Jukebox software, the player hooks up to your PC via a USB interface. Panasonic also offer the SV-SD70, which is a more conventionally styled design retailing for the same price. It features a cool looking backlit inverted LC display and comes with a strap that lets you wear it like a watch. Together, these new AAC players should give Panasonic a weighty market presence, and extra cred amongst computer audiophiles thanks to its single-minded adoption of AAC.

www.panasonic.co.jp/avc/audio.
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Pro-ject - the world's largest Hi-Fi turntable manufacturer
Franco de Bonis has a good reason to be a happy man - he's European Brand Manager for Creative Labs' Audio products. In that capacity, he's demonstrating the company's brand new DAP Jukebox to a group of assembled computer scribes on a rainy Dublin Friday afternoon. Yours truly is present at this assembled gathering of hungover hacks (Guinness, Dublin, journalists - geddit?), struggling to keep my eyes open during the morning after the night before. But as soon as Franco announces the DAP, I'm sitting bolt upright, thinking, "wow!" This new gadget from Creative Labs is by any standards a landmark product for audio, very much a taste of things to come.

Although it looks - rather disingenuously in my opinion - like a conventional CD Discman, there's actually no CD transport inside at all. Rather, nestling on a densely packed circuit board is a small 2.5 inch notebook-grade 6GB hard drive. This is a dedicated device specifically designed to store music data files. Although visually similar to any other IDE drive, Creative say the firmware has been rewritten to optimise it for accessing large music files at high speeds.

How many music files? Well, that all depends on the quality that you encode them, but given that an average pop song in reasonably good 128kbps MP3 format takes about 4MB, that's around 1,500 songs or around 150 CDs-worth! Even if you want the best 192kbps quality option, you're still talking around 650 songs, equivalent to a shed-load of MiniDiscs or cassettes. Last but not least, it also records pure, uncompressed 16/44 PCM as WAV files. This means you can make identical, bit-for-bit digital copies of music CDs and store them on the DAP - the only downside being that at around 60MB per song, you can 'only' record about a hundred before you run out of disc space. Pretty impressive, huh? I thought so too.

Outside, its 125x37x125mm clamshell case boasts a slick 55x28mm backlit alphanumeric liquid crystal display. There's a smattering of control buttons on top, including Play, Forward, Reverse and Stop, plus rocker switches for navigating menus and special keys for Library and EAX (Environmental Audio eXtension, natch). Underneath is a battery box taking AA cells, into which four supplied NiMH rechargeables go. Creative say they last four hours, which isn't far off the mark.

Round the back are three 3.5mm stereo minijacks, including two LINE OUTs and a LINE IN to 'record' CD, MD or DAT sources, or even your LP12. There's also a headphone socket, power point and - most usefully - a USB connector. The latter means quick and easy connection to PCs, as well as that vital hi-fi lifeline, a direct digital audio feed. A TOSLINK optical digital in and out would have been nice, though.

**PLAYING THE JUKEBOX**

So, what does it do then? The answer is 'not much without the bundled Playcentre 2 software'. It's a daft name for an impressive bit of code which gives the DAP tremendous power and versatility. It consists of two windows, one showing all the music on your PC, the other the music on the DAP Jukebox. You can then move your music to and fro at the click of a button.

Specifically, Playcentre 2 has a number of ways of looking for music on your PC. One is 'My Computer', which accesses your entire hard drive. Another is 'PC Music Library' which is a special folder on your computer you've designated to store your fave choons. You can also look at the CD loaded into your CD-ROM drive, whether it's a
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conventional audio CD or an MP3 data CD-R. The idea is that you import music files from the Net or your CD-ROM to your music library, then label them (Playcentre will go online and access the Compact Disc Data Base to find out what they are by itself if you can't be bothered), then squirt them to the DAP Jukebox. Squirt is the operative 'conventional audio CD or an MP3 just a case of joining groups of
playlist (or whatever), then
afraid). You select your artist, genre, tempo, playlist (or whatever), then press 'Play' and the Jukebox does its stuff. This is where hardened hi-fi hacks such as yours truly would expect to be greeted with the usual appalling cheapo portable sound, but it isn't so.

It is to Creative Labs credit that after penning such an impressive piece of cutting-edge industrial design, they bothered to think seriously about its sound. To wit, the Fraunhofer Advanced MP3 codec comes bundled with the DAP, which means fine sounding MP3s and bitrates going right up to 320kbps. What's more, with 6 gigs of storage you can store many hundreds of tracks at this maximum quality bitrate and not have to worry about what it's doing to your computer hard drive. At bitrates of 192kbps or better, the DAP gives any MiniDisc player (maybe with the exception of Sony's superb MDS-JA55ES) a seriously hard time. The audio electronics are excellent (at the price) with no nasties audible and a full, clean musical sound.

Of course, this £379 do-everything super-gadget isn't going to trounce your dedicated high end hi-fi, but really is good enough to plug into the AUX input of your amp and listen at least half-critically. With 320kbps MP3, high treble and low bass are just a touch too soft and fluffy, but there's always an impressive force and drive to the sound, with plenty of detail, bold (almost analogue-like) soundstaging and even a good bit of depth perspective. It sounds great through its headphone jack too, IF you deliberately use a sensitive pair of cans. It doesn't have the beefiest headphone amp in the world and this is one area that could be improved. Recording WAV files, you get a close facsimile of what was in your CD-ROM drive, with just a touch of dryness and looseness added from the unit's DAC and analogue audio outs.

The great news is that the DAP Jukebox is reasonably future-proof. Not limited by any one format's theoretical limitations (16/44 PCM notwithstanding), it is 'codec agnostic' (to use the latest buzzword). This means that while it currently supports MP3 and WMA, its reprogrammable firmware will let it handle new digital audio formats and software extensions as they become available. This means AAC, MP4 and whatever else comes along, and will have the added benefit of letting you store even more music files as the new formats get ever more efficient with their 'bit budgets'. Creative Labs are famed for superb support for their products via their website downloads, and the DAP should be no exception.

Downsides? Well, call me pedantic but its 440g weight does seem a bit of a chore after using CD portables that weigh less than half as much. But then again, they don't offer nearly ten thousand minute playing times, so I guess I can't complain. This bulk, plus the lack of a remote control (one's said to be in the pipeline, though) and no direct digital ins and outs (although you can buy USB converters that give this facility), is all I can think of before scratching my head. If you already have a PC and harbour even the slightest interest in music, it really is a remarkable bit of kit. Franco de Bonis has the easiest job in the world selling this.

CREATIVE LABS DAP JUKEBOX £379
Creative Labs 01245 265265
www.creativelabs.co.uk
Unlike many other soundcard manufacturers, Voyetra Turtle Beach has been making computer audio products for years, and acquired an enviable reputation amongst serious users in the process. The £129.95 Montego II Plus is the latest evolution of a card that’s been around for a while now, but is still far from old hat. We thought we’d take a look.

The first thing that struck me when opening the box was the quality of the card, the packaging, the manuals and the bundled software. While you’d expect to see a well assembled product from manufacturers asking £200 or more, such fine build is unusual at this near-budget price. The specification is good too. Your money buys you an 18-bit /48kHz full duplex audio card with both SPDIF optical and gold plated RCA digital inputs and outputs. The company claim “outstanding audio quality”, quoting a signal-to-noise ratio of better than 97 dB (A-weighted), low 0.0032% THD at -90dB (A-weighted) and a frequency response of 10Hz-20kHz (+/-1 dB).

The digital audio processor offers full duplex recording and playback with independent sampling rates. Automatic cuts off the signal after periods of digital silence, while 16 hardware digital mixers are available for audio mixing, and all sample rate conversion is done in hardware for faster speeds with no additional CPU load. There’s the increasingly common Aureal 3D 2.0 interactive sound positional audio wave-tracing engine for clever sound effects from games, and a 10 band graphic equaliser built into hardware. A wavetable synthesiser is fitted, offering 64-voice hardware and 256-voice hardware-accelerated software wavetable synthesis, as is full MIDI. The card uses its PCI bus to transfer data faster than ISA sound cards, and lets you mix up to 96 DirectX streams without recourse to your PC’s CPU resources, meaning any audio work you do on it won’t slow the rest of your system down.

The Montego II Plus package comprises the main ‘mother card’ and a plug in digital interface ‘breakout board’ that attaches to the former via a ribbon cable. Together they offer stereo AUX IN, MIC IN and optical and coaxial digital ins, plus LINE OUT, two pairs of speaker outs and optical and coaxial digital outs. The card also comes bundled with Turtle Beach’s AudioStation 32 audio application which lets you play and edit WAV and MIDI files, as well as playing your audio CDs through the CD-ROM.

Installation was easy enough. You unscrew two expansion covers at the back of your PC and then push the main card into a spare PCI slot on the computer’s motherboard, ensure there’s an empty slot (of any type) next to it for the breakout board to fit in. You then screw both boards into place and connect them up with the supplied ribbon cables. There’s also a CD-ROM connector which goes onto the 4-pin header marked ‘CD IN’. Next you switch the PC on, with the enclosed set-up CD in the CD-ROM, and install the drivers. Then it’s the usual ‘plug’n’play’ routine as Windows looks for them on the CD-ROM and installs them. Last but not least, you reboot.

The supplied software is excellent. AudioView 32 is a fully featured digital audio recorder and mixer (a la SoundForge XP), and PC Audio Mixer is like a glorified Windows Volume Control, letting you set levels for everything from the analogue auxiliary inputs to the digital ins. The Digital I/O Control Panel gives you full control of the MIDI, A3D settings and the digital ins and outs.

Its sound will be familiar to anyone using a CD player with a budget Crystal Semiconductors DAC inside, because that’s what the Montego uses too. This means it’s warm, fluffy and quite musical, lacking the more precise analytical feel of budget Sony players, for example. There’s a pleasantly full bass, although it’s hardly extended, and a wide, open midband with a reasonable amount of detail and stereo imaging. Treble is obviously looser and more smeared than the better budget CD players, but still listenable enough. Essentially though, it gives a fine performance for the money, and easily the equal of your average £129.95 hi-fi CD separate.

In the scheme of things, it’s not an awesome bargain like Yamaha’s evergreen WF-192XG, but it’s still comfortably better than VideoLogic’s £80 SonicFury, for example. This makes it serious value for money, a worthwhile first audio card and the one to have if you simply don’t want to spend £200 on a Guillemot MaxiSound Isis. Build, features, set-up and bundled software are as good as you’ll get at the price, proving that this is a quality item through and through.

---

**SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS**

PC equipped with Windows 95/98/NT4.0, 75 MHz Pentium CPU or higher, 16 MB RAM (32 MB required for NT). Hard drive with 32 MB required for NT). Hard drive with approximately 12 MB free for software installation, available PCI slot, CD-ROM drive, powered speakers and/or headphones.

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**WORLD VERDICT**

A fine value for money budget audiophile soundcard, with the emphasis on quality build and classy packaging. Recommended.

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Turtle Beach Montego II Plus £129.95

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KE184 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT

This is our brand new low cost, beginner level amplifier kit, featuring the popular pair of EL34 valves in push pull configuration per channel, providing 15 watts into an 8 ohm load, plenty for most medium sensitivity loudspeakers. The output transformers are Ultra Linear, keeping distortion down to a minimum. Up front we have the EC80 valve as a extremely smooth pentode with excellent drive. The Kit184 has an extremely low level input to solid state standards. The kit is based on a printed circuit board. We have given the kit a high class look with a 3mm anodised front panel and around the valve sockets chrome over brass. The amplifier has the capacity to receive 5 line level inputs, plus one monitor input, with a tape output included, all controlled from the front panel. Both the phone sockets and 4mm banana socket speaker terminals are the gold plated. The Kit184 mains switch is positioned at the rear of the amplifier and is easily accessible. The mains is re-wired via an IEC lead, an earth post is also positioned at the back. This kit is sujected to the beginner in that the instructions now include pictures as well as diagram, making them very easy to follow. At a UK price of £250.00 all inclusive you cannot ignore this kit. Simon Pope says, "The ease that can be gleaned from this amp is a fine introduction to the joys of the valve sound. The Kit184 will highlight all the intricacies and depth of detail in your favourite recordings whilst retaining a warmth and fullness. This combination of both detail and warmth is almost the exclusive of pure valve amps and is rare at this price point."

The Kit184 weighs in at 10kg. External dimensions with valves are 300mm(w) x 270mm(d) x 150mm(h).

K7188 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT & K430 VALVE POWER AMPLIFIER KIT

Here is the amazing K7188. The circuit is similar to that of the extremely popular KE184, with a few changes to incorporate the Tesla JJ branded KT88 power transistors. This is a pure Class A push-pull design providing 16 watts into an 8 ohm load. Gary Devon has come up with a gem of an output transformer (E1). Combined with the K7188 it offers a virtually unnoticeable result for a valve amplifier. Frequency response measured 11Hz to 75kHz, separation 71dB, noise 58dB, sensitivity 400mV and distortion 0.03%. "As valve amplifiers go, the K7188 is one of the best I have ever come across", says Noel Keywood. Jon Marks says, "The K7188 pulled a series of surprisingly fast, meaty bass lines from Miles Davis in a mid 1960s recording when dealing with Suzanne Vega's Nine Objects Of Desire album. As if this wasn't enough, the mid and treble were nice too - cymbals had a deliciously natural, golden shimmer without sounding soft, and vocals were extremely transparent and crisply defined. K7188 didn't hang around when it came to exploring the virtues of its four output valves on numbers such as 'Leaves' and 'Suspect Sustain' from Curtis Land's End Jazz CD. Saxophone had a wonderfully smooth, realistic character, and acoustic guitar mixed speed with harmonic richness to very impressive effect. Asian Dub Foundation and Moloko showed no sign at all of the jiggly, woolly bottom-end and poorly-delineated bass beats that most valve amps are to blame for. Which makes the K7188 an all-round, high-end bargain." Weight 90kg. Dimensions with valves are 330mm(w) x 300mm(d) x 190mm(h).

NEW ALL SERIES II MODULAR POWER UNIT

The Pre-II is a valve pre-amplifier with six inputs, tape monitor and two sets of output sockets. It utilises a high quality line driver transformer and kit's gain. The PHONO-II is a dedicated valve phono stage that incorporates a very quiet supply. For the mains and output transformers we have used the EI type. Feedback is switchable for all those purist out there and the kit is totally hard-wired. For those that require valves we provide the superb Tesla 300B, Russian 6J5s and European 6U6s & ECC82. Simon Pope says, "Not to put too fine point on it, the sound these monoblocks create is among the finest that can be encountered in hi-fi." Our 300B PSE kit bears an affordable price of £796.00 (UK price excluding valves.) Each monoblock weighs 23kgs... external dimensions with valves: 25cm(w) x 38cm(h) x 22cm(d) per monobloc.

THE ALL NEW 300B PSE MONOBLOC KIT

Our Parallel Single Ended amplifiers offer the ultimate sound quality. Featuring two of the beautifully linear 300B directly heated triodes in the output stage (per monobloc) pushing out 20 watts into an 8 ohm load. At the front we have a 6AU6 pentode and the famous ECC82 as the correcting valve and the kit utilises a F.U.A. rectifier valve for the power supply using 220v. Each monobloc weighs 14.5kgs, external dimensions with valves: 18cm(w) x 8cm(h) x 43.5cm(d).

HD383 VALVE HEADPHONE AMPLIFIER KIT

The HD383 is our new headphone amplifier, a beautiful simple design using Mullard ECC83 valves, a mode and power period in the same envelope. It works directly from any source, be it CD, tape, tuner etc., or from an amplifier's tape monitor and from CD, tape, tuner etc., or from an amplifiers tape monitor. Our Parallel Single Ended amplifiers offer the ultimate sound quality, featuring two of the beautifully linear 30013... We have brought this design up to date with a power step-up transformer for MC users. Finally.

KEL383 MONOBLOC KIT

Following the success of our budget KEL34 40watt kit amplifier, we have come up with a "bigger brother" design. The KE183 utilises two pairs of TESLA EL34 pentodes in parallel-push-pull mode, allowing KEL80 to turn out 80 watts into an 8ohm load. Headlining the input stage we have the wonderfully linear Russian GA14G working into an American 567EH phase-splitter. KEL80's output transformers are 4ohm and 8ohm tapped. With an input sensitivity at around 380mV for full output, it will happily partner both passive and active pre-amplifiers. It is easy to assemble. Simon Pope says, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating and the KEL80 is a feast for the ears, with solid bass attack, lightning fast reactions, that emphasises musingness as well as power at 510.00 GBP: a definite valve winner. Each monobloc weighs 14.5kgs... external dimensions with valves: 14cm(w) x 8cm(h) x 43.5cm(d).
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Drive unit Pack £160.00

KLS14 COMPACT TWO WAY STANDMOUNTER

The KLS14 is an extremely simple design and was designed to complement our new K84 budget amplifier. It uses a K84TG-36-06, a 26mm trapezoid dome tweeter from Vita and a Seas CA14RE 8 inch paper cone driver.

The KLS14 is exciting and immediately percussive, creating a big sound from a small size and deep bass with control. It has a frequency response of 50Hz - 18kHz + - 3dB, a good sensitivity of 89dB and a nominal impedance of 8 ohms. Internal volume 20.6 litres, external dimensions 376mm(h) x 312mm(d) x 256mm(w).

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The DESKADEL range of Hi-Fi interconnect, speaker cables, hook-up wires and tone arm wires are precision manufactured featuring PURE SILVER conductors insulated with PTFE in a variety of designs to suit all applications. Using only the finest materials and the latest manufacturing techniques we aim to provide a selection of quality products for superb natural sound reproduction on a scale previously unheard.
Digital Audio Broadcasting has been with us for five years, but few are listening. During May 2000 a European Broadcasting Union Conference in Stockholm declared that DAB, “has been held back by the unwillingness of manufacturers to cut the price of receivers.” More sinisterly, they state, “European administrations need to be convinced that a migration timetable from analogue to digital radio is needed”. By this they mean switching off VHF/FM to force people to buy DAB, which is a political hot potato if ever there was one.

Declarations like this annoy me. DAB is a clever system in all respects except one: it was designed by broadcasters for broadcasters, which is why only broadcasters are listening. DAB is the broadcasting equivalent of Concorde - way ahead of its time and convincingly elegant, yet commercially bananas.

Blaming manufacturers, the European Broadcasting Union shows how unworliday people who are funded by public money can be. DAB is an astonishingly complex technology, so much so that no manufacturer, except the largest, could ever produce a DAB receiver in-house. Companies like VideoLogic, whose tuner I review in this issue, have to buy in a ‘solution’, meaning a dedicated chipset or even a complete board system, costing hundreds of pounds. This is why the price of DAB tuners is so high. The latest price I can get is "around £40 out" for a complete DAB board solution, resulting in a tuner costing at least £200.

It wasn’t manufacturers who got together to design DAB, as the EBU seem to imagine, but the European Union. European governments and publicly funded broadcasters between them decided the broadcasting technology devised by Germany’s Rundfunktechnik (IRT) in the early 1980s should become part of European research project Eureka I47. To cut a long story short, we ended up with a radio transmission system of undoubted early 1980s should become part of European research project Eureka I47. To cut a long story short, we ended up with a radio transmission system of undoubted ability that no one could produce at a sensible price.

And things are getting worse, too. Although Europe represents a sizeable market of 385 million, the other great markets of the world - USA and Japan - have both rejected DAB. As a result, both American and Japanese chip manufacturers have little incentive to get involved in a complex technology which may never sell, and this is a real problem. The situation on the ground is complex. DAB chipsets are made by Panasonic, Temic, Philips and Hitachi - three Japanese companies and one European. Although Philips Components produce the 3500 DAB chip in the USA, European Philips Consumer Electronics does not have a DAB receiver in its product range due to supposed lack of demand.

Those who want FM 'switched off' believe this will create the demand Philips says is missing, but why should EU consumers be forced to abandon existing analogue radios and hi-fi tuners they're perfectly happy with? FM is a thoroughly good broadcasting system that not so long ago was considered the height of technology. I come across comments like, "my radio cost £20, it's waterproof and gives great quality in the shower. I don't need anything else". Analogue radios are inexpensive, effective and everywhere. They range from cheap ‘transistors’ up to Denon’s TU-S10 which I’ve reviewed this month, and gives astonishing quality. The problem for DAB is that it must convince people it’s obviously better than FM for them to move to it willingly, and at present it simply can’t, in my view. Analogue radio already gives 'near CD quality' and DAB can do no better.

Analogue receiver manufacturers are the general public, who will have to pay out for DAB radios and also for the £10 million the BBC has spent to date on the transmitters. DAB hasn’t been held back by the "unwillingness of manufacturers to cut the price of receivers" as the EBU believe, but because it was poorly conceived. It isn’t being bought by the public because it’s too expensive and is likely to stay that way, now that both America and Japan have walked away.
CHORD COMPANY CHORUS £200/METRE

The next step down from the Chord Company’s Anthem range-topper, the Chorus is a far more ‘industrial’ looking design than the others tested here. Apparently four years in development, it has ‘twisted pair’ construction with a braided, floating screen. Both the conductors and shield are silver plated and all the insulation is Teflon. It’s terminated with the Chord Company’s usual silver plated phono plugs using silver solder to create a single material signal path. Incidentally, there should be little problem with getting your negatives and positives muddled either. No more squinting at the connector for the red and black bands here, as one whole cable is red and the other black!

The Anthem is a favourite of this magazine, due to its naturalness and way with phrasing which makes it so inherently musical. This attribute carries down to the Chorus, which has a lyrical, smooth sound coupled with bone crunching bass. The sound may be a tad dry for some tastes, but to me adds to the overall realism of the cable. It has the knack of making complicated passages of music sound remarkably easy going, an example being The Screaming Trees’ heavily processed and complex mix, which was handled with a deftness that impressed immensely. Bass was well focused and detail was brought to the fore in both the midrange and high frequencies. Drums were well defined and guitars smooth and tuneful, as opposed to merely noisy. Its innate smoothness is well suited to classical vocal music such as the Verdelot madrigals on the Linn Records label. Voices were rich in timbre and lacked any edge to the sound. The general ambience could have picked up a tad more but I got an immensely enjoyable and easy listening experience with the Chorus.

This cable is particularly well suited to valves and smooth sounding equipment, where it brings out the best in warm components. It will also calm down over-bright or harsh systems with its tuneful and sympathetic ear. Highly recommended.

SONICLINK CONTROL £135/METRE

Part of the all-new Second Generation range, the Control supersedes the long-lived Blue Nickel and is slightly different in construction, look, sound and price. We now have a fatter sheath with weight and substance, certainly different from SonicLink’s previous tradition of ‘bootlace’ cable. It’s altogether more luxurious looking, with the addition of SonicLink’s new solid, chunky plugs. It also takes a price drop, as the Blue Nickel sold for £150 per metre. The Control is constructed of four individually insulated solid core nickel conductors, two at 0.5mm and two at 1mm thickness, all screened, with PTFE insulation.

This new breed of SonicLink has a slightly warmer sound than you’d expect. Its cables have always had a tradition of ‘brightness’, one that I personally didn’t mind. The advantages of this sound are rhythmic attack and good detail and separation. The Control keeps these traits and adds some roundness to the sound, giving a less raw account of things. The Screaming Trees ‘Dust’ album had presence and excitement - ‘old’ SonicLink traits - but added a smoothness of vocal line and warmth in the midrange, especially with the heavy guitar layers. This warmth was best exposed was in acoustic vocal music - the Verdelot madrigals showed good detailing, voices blended well and the edge to high female voices which often occurs with this recording was absent. Staging and separation were also good.

A well balanced cable from SonicLink, then, if you favour detail and cleanliness of sound or need to spark up a dullish system, it could well be for you.
Fancy a quick and easy upgrade? Simon Pope listens to five premium interconnects priced above £100.

**MONSTER CABLE M1000i £299.95/metre or £219.95/0.5 metre**

Monster Cable hails from San Francisco and comes to the UK by Lenbrook, distributors of NAD and Dali amongst others.

This cable, as the inhabitants of its homeland would say, is one heavy mother, and is far the weightiest interconnect I've come across. It's actually constructed from 'virgin' copper and features Monster's MultiTwist design which aims to minimise intertransient noise and improve dynamic range. The M1000i also features three precision-wound Bandwidth Balance networks. These multiple-gauge groups of wires separately guide the bass, mid and high frequencies down the cable and are specially wound to optimise varying magnetic fields.

Monstrous by name, monstrous by nature? No way - this is a fine sounding interconnect indeed, it may lack the neutral transparency of others but still boasts a tremendously musical sound. Highlights are dynamics, plus a rock-solid, super tuneful bass. The Screaming Trees sounded full and powerful, with a strong physical presence and a very deep sound stage. The detailed drumming and thumping kick drum had a good dose of 'wow' factor; the panned tom-toms showing up the excellent imaging of the M1000i. The lyrical elegance of Verdelot's madrigals had plenty of detail and presence.

The M1000i is by no means cheap, but you get a strong and sophisticated sound for your money. Here's a cable that makes a big difference.

**VAN DEN HUL INTEGRATION HYBRID £199/0.8 METRE**

Like the SonicLink Control, the Integration is a replacement quadruple core cable from the pioneer of carbon cable technology, and the first product in the latest Fusion Series. This uses a totally new conductor which combines pure copper, zinc and silver, as opposed to the two stranded metal cores of the D-102-111 which the Integration replaces. This is combined with vdH's famous Linear Structured Carbon technology, so the conductors are embedded in a layer of the carbon structure. The appearance of the Integration is very much van den Hul, and isn't going to win the 'Best Looking Interconnect' category at the next international hi-fi awards dinner! The 'gold' halogen-free Hullflex jacket is actually more 'mud brown' to my eyes, but who's going to notice it hidden behind an array of hi-tech hi-fi anyway?

It would, however, stand a chance of winning the 'Best Sounding Interconnect' gong. Here we have all best van den Hul traits, like neutrality, mixed with firm rhythmic grip and fluidity. The Screaming Trees' 'Dust' album had depth and breadth, the integration creating a big yet extremely cohesive sound with every layer of the complicated mix clearly audible. Drums and bass sounded powerful and detailed whilst the treble is innately smooth to the ear, with vocals well positioned and rough and ready, which is no bad thing as Mark Lanegan sings as if he's gurgling with shards of glass. Moving on to Renaissance vocal music saw the Integration delivering a sweet and extremely natural sound, making the bare and exposed voices wonderfully realistic.

Van den Hul's carbon technology is some of the finest around. It gives a full yet very natural sound to any recording, studio-based or acoustic. Highly recommended.

**PRECIOUS METALS SILVER SIGNAL 100 £120**

Precious Metals cables are designed and distributed by high-end AV specialist Picture The Sound, with a range of eleven interconnects and four speaker cables available in a range of terminations. The Silver Signal 100 sits in the middle of the interconnect range (£25-£490) and is constructed from three alloys, the first two of which are silver and copper, while the third remains a 'company secret'. All Precious Metals cables use the company's own AirTight plugs, a one-piece, solder-free design. The cable is prepared and inserted into the plug, then crimped into a hex shape that hermetically seals the design. This apparently removes most of the air and the plug is surrounded by an air tight non-conductive adhesive.

All this, plus the 'secret recipe' alloy seems to pay off, as its musical traits are as valid as anything else tested here. They have a uniquely sprightly sound that's ideally suited to rock music, as I found with The Screaming Trees' guitar driven 'Dust' album. Drums were fast and furious, with bass guitar notes quick and deep. Vocals were clean and forward, if a tad sibilant, and the overall sound very open. With classic vocal music in the form of an HDCD recording of the Renaissance Madrigals of Philippe Verdelot songs on the Linn label, the Silver Signal 100 showed good detail and presence, with a wide sound stage and fine imaging. Female vocals didn't suffer from too much edge and male singers were realistically portrayed.

This isn't the smoothest sounding cable around but the treble is sweet and the bass response excellent. A super-fast and exciting performer.

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A space odyssey. The mission, if I chose to accept it, was to throw out all my old hi-fi junk in the desperate search for much needed additional cubic centimetres inside my listening room. Fortunately, I didn’t. My spring cleaning efforts came to nought and I instead found myself powering up all my old, discarded hi-fi separates for a real blast from the past.

Right now, my system comprises a Michell Orbe/Linn Ekos II/Linn Archiv vinyl front end, Michell Delphini phono stage, World Audio Design KLP-P1 preamp, World Audio Design K5881 power amp (Nicholas Lucas Signature edition) and Yamaha NS1000M loudspeakers. In support roles there are Michell GyroDec/SME Series III/Dynavector 10x4, Rega Planar 3/Goldring 1042 and Dual CS505/Audio Technica AT 110E turntables, Sony CDP-557ES and Marantz CD54 CD players, NAD 3020, Myst Rose Scion and Cyrus 2 integrated amps, Mission 752, Linn Kan, KEF Coda and Tannoy Mercury loudspeakers, plus Musical Fidelity XA-200 and Leak TL12+ power amps.

Phew. It may take a lot of space, but it’s a great way to remind myself how I used to live. Having kept my old cast-offs, I’m in the fascinating position of being able to warp back to them whenever I so desire.

The Clash on my 1980 vintage Dual/NAD/KF Coda system still sounds enormous fun. By modern standards it’s comically loose but there’s still an innate musicality. Most remarkable is its ability to fill the room with sound, something that takes a big step backwards if you substitute the Dual for my 1985 Marantz CD54 silver disc spinner. ‘London Calling’ suddenly becomes a thinner and less gutsy sounding album. Warp ahead to 1985 and wire up the Rega Planar 3/Myst TMA3/Tannoy MERCURYS and there’s a tidying up of sound with better detail, bass and treble extension, but analogue’s essential naturalness and warmth is still much in evidence. By today’s standards there’s a lot wrong with it, but it’s still great fun to listen to - now I understand why I couldn’t stop playing The Smiths’ first album for the best part of a year!

Resurrect my 1990 system (Sony CD/ Crys/ Linn Kans) and BOB State’s ‘Ninety’ is brilliantly fast and punchy, with stacks of detail and dynamics. Yet it lacks the ease and insouciance which the 1980 system had in spades. Playing techno music, it’s grippy bass and incisive, glass-clear treble is a treat, but somehow it’s an empty experience. By the mid nineties I was back with vinyl, running a Michell GyroDec/ Rose Scion/ Mission 752s. A cracking combination, it brings together the warmth of the ’80 system with the grip of the ’85 and the detail of the 90, and adds more too. This one finally feels like where the ’80 system had plenty of coloration, making everything sound gloriously warm and luxuriant, this one can run the gamut between dry and cold and rich and warm whenever the situation demands. Whereas modern transistor amps superficially convey oodles of detail, I can now see what they’re missing.

Whereas modern transistor amps superficially convey oodles of detail, I can now see what they’re missing. I’ve made it, and won’t want for more. Doh! Compared to my current system, the ‘95 sounds like AM radio. Together, the ‘Yamas’ Beryllium drivers and the K5881’s tubes and carefully selected components introduce something previously unheard - tonal colour. Where the ‘80 system had plenty of coloration, making everything sound gloriously warm and luxuriant, this one can run the gamut between dry and cold and rich and warm whenever the situation demands. Whereas modern transistor amps superficially convey oodles of detail, I can...
Why settle for anything else when you can OWN something this good!

The PowerKord

...KIMBER cable has miraculous mains conditioning properties, cancelling high frequency noise by virtue of its special inter-woven construction...The more KIMBER mains-cables you use, the better it gets.

Nigel Hughes, Hi-Fi Chaos, October 2000

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Even the most casual of hi-fi observers can hardly failed to have noticed the expeditious arrival of constant 'new tech' within the industry. Hardly a month goes by without there being a development within DVD or memory recording systems.

Yet, until now at least, this explosion of new technology does seem to be very much driven by source. That is to say, even though the front end of our hi-fi systems look set to change, as they've done already, the actual amplification and speaker side stay pretty constant.

Despite a tweak here and there amplifier technology has remained fairly consistent since the wide spread introduction of the transistor in the 1960s. There wouldn't be much, if anything, inside a typical amplifier today that would surprise an amp designer from the sixties.

Stick memory, MiniDisc, DVD and even the now seemingly ancient C.D. would all be very different. And even the now seemingly ancient 'speaker not much bigger than a light bulb, there seems little point.

The basic design of the loudspeaker harks back to a time so long ago - the early 1920s - that even amplifiers appear like spring chickens in the grand scheme of things. Loudspeakers too have seen recent challenges to the conventional way of doing things. Flat panel technology from the NXT group works well and shows potential. Yet I believe a wholesale switch by loudspeaker manufacturers is still some way away. From a retail point of view, NXT a product that's compact, efficient and discreet with decent sound quality couldn't fail, could it?

I don't mean to mock the technology as it's still in its infancy and, as the new icons should prove, has much potential. Yet I know consumers are going to look at the 'speakers and think they don't look a great deal different from other designs on the market today. Unlike the digital amplifier in a personal stereo that allows it to be tinier than ever before, the benefit to the layman seems harder to justify. NXT has to prove itself on sound quality alone for the time being.

Whatever the outcome from these developments, surely the best possibly use of both technologies has been over looked! Despite the many benefits of active 'speakers, they are still sorely undersold. I know from a retailer's point of view it's tricky selling something that combines two processes, as the reason most want separates in the first place is because they are just that: separate! Yet I can't help but think how good an active 'speaker combining both a digital amplifier and NXT technology could be. Surely a product that's compact, efficient and discreet with decent sound quality couldn't fail, could it?

One for the wish list methinks! •

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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 FMJ CD33** £1100
This British-built player is extremely versatile. Controlled and detailed with a musical insight that few match. (Jul 2000)

**CAMBRIDGE CD4SE** £200
A touch soft in the treble but outstanding in every other respect. (Feb 98)

**KENWOOD DP-3080** £180
Has great clarity and presence for the price. Not as naturally expressive as the CD4SE though. (Feb 98)

**LINN KARL III** £1775
Under rated and overlooked, the final Karl was a gem. Superb transport gives a brilliantly tight, grippy dynamic sound, albeit tonally rather dry. (Sep 98)

**MARANTZ CD-17 KI-5** £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** £400
Similar to the CD-61SE but more powerful bass and an all-round smoother sound. The famous KI tweaks pay off again. Whether or not it is still pre-eminent against the vastly improved competition is a matter of opinion. (May 95)

**MERIDIAN 506 20BIT** £1100
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)

**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)

**NAI M ARCA** £975
Truly endearing and charismatic performer - wonderfully engaging mid-band makes up for softened frequency extremes (Jun 2000)

**REGA PLANAR 2** £124
Brilliant starter deck with extremely polished manner. Better built £274 Planar 3 is a great all-in-one package that exists mid-price CD players for breakfast.

**ROKSAN ORBE** £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)

**TEAC VRDS T1** £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 99)

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

**C D TRANSPORTS**

**CAMBRIDGE AUDIO DADCAGIC 3** £199
Superb value for money with extensive facilities and solid, detailed sonics. Upgrades any sub-£350 player. (Nov 97)

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

**MEDIMAN FLYING COW** £299.9
Excellent as a DAC and doubles as an ADC for archiving to CD. (Jun 98) Great value, as is junior version Flying Calf at £109. (Feb 99)

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

**SONIC FRONTIERS PROCESSOR 3** £699
Quality never comes cheap! This DAC oozes class and when matched with the Transport 3 is certainly up with the best. (Sep 98)

**TONEARMS**

**LINE SONDEK LP12 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 upgradable deck that gives true high end sound at mid-fi prices.

**MICHELL ORBE** £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)** £145
Good in standard form with AC motor, 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)

**REGA PLANAR 3** £214
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. CD belt drive and built-in MPH phonostage. Good value, with plenty of chassis room for alternative arms, if required. (Sep 99)

**COMPACT DISC TRANSPORTS**

**ARCAM FMJ CD33** £1100
This British-built player is extremely versatile. Controlled and detailed with a musical insight that few match. (Jul 2000)

**CAMBRIDGE CD4SE** £200
A touch soft in the treble but outstanding in every other respect. (Feb 98)

**HADCOCK 242 SE** £649
Latest of a long line of unipivot arms. Added mass makes the 242 suitable for both low compliance MCs and screw-in-the-wind high compliance types. Reverses geometry and chrome plating completes a first-class job. (Jun 2000)
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Total peace of mind
1. A 10-day purchase exchange programme (returns as new & excluding special orders)
2. BADA’s Free extended 2-year Guarantee on all new hi-fi and home cinema separates
3. The option to transfer the Guarantee to any one of 120 BADA members nationwide
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

SME 3009SII £309
Once state of the art, but no longer. Weak at frequency extremes and detail, but its legendary serviceability makes it a cult in Japan. Can be picked up for peanuts second-hand. (Jan 93)

SME 309 £689
A down-market version of the IV and V with aluminium arm tube and detachable headshell. Tight, neutral sound with good tonality, but lacks the IV's pace and precision. Like the older SME 3009 series, this arm is also available in 10" and 12" versions. (Jan 93)

CARTRIDGES

AUDIO TECHNICA AT110E £30
Great starter cartridge that's refined, detailed and musical beyond its price. Best value MM under £50.

GOLDRING 1012GX £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
Betters Goldring's 1042 and costs only £335 on trade-in. An assured and transparent MM. (Feb 98)

DYNANEVTER DYX20X-H £299
The best modern budget MC combines deliciously sweet sound with fantastic get-up-and-go. High output version works a treat with valve phono stages too.

MUSIC MAKER £575
When mated with a good quality arm, this hand finished high-output pick-up gives an ear-boggling 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 Magnet cartridges going, with beautiful treble and muscular bass. New low price makes it a bargain.

ORTOFON ROMMANN £1000
In a way it's MC 2000 meets MC 7500 with neutrality and tonal colour. (Oct 97)

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS

AUDIO ANALOGUE POCCHI IS £295
This superbly-built Italian integrated has a lucidity and control which leaves others nowhere. Sound stage a wow. (Dec 97)

AUDIOLAB 8000A £495
Well rounded integrated with smooth and detailed sound plus a huge feature count. Great builds later versions a top used buy.

DENON PMA-250SE £160
It might not have bags of grunt but the Denon can sound exceedingly natural and open. (Feb 97)

 McIntosh MAA800 £375
The MAA800 not so much plays music as takes control of it, with effortless bass drive. (Sep 95)

MISSION CYRUS 2 £299
Classic eighties minimalism combines arresting styling with clean, open, lively sound. Further upgradeable with PSU power supply.

MUSICAL FIDELITY X.CANS2 £160
Warm, sumptuous, sweet sound HiFi phono amp gives startling results with a decent set of headphones.

NAIM NAIT 3 £575
Superb rhythms and dynamics make for great music making, but totally monochromatic. Super optional phono stage makes it ideal for vinyl junkies.

ROKSAN CASPAN £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)

PHONO STAGES

CREEK OBH-8 SE £180
Punchy, rhythmic character with coves of detail makes this a great budget audiophile product.

LFD MISTRAL PHONO STAGE £300
The Mistral has a warmth and involvement that make you pricier phono stages sound overpriced.

MICHELL DELPHINI MONOBLOCS £1995
Analogue tour-de-force gives supremely clean, detailed and finely resolved sound with breathtaking dynamics. Great value, even at this price.

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-LP £335
One of the famous NMF X series. Full marks throughout for clarity and detail. Switchable between MM and MC. Indestructible build! (May 99)

PROJECT PHONO BOX £39
Not the last word in many respects but a thoroughly honest piece of work. Inexpensive introduction to all that vinyl has to offer. MM and MC provision plus choice of two impedances.

ROKSAN ARTAXERXES X £950
With the Atessa PSU the Artaxerxes MM/MMC stage still shines. Great stage depth, neutrality and tonal colour. (Oct 97)

Sometimes it just happens, a new range appears to replace existing products that have already carved and enviable reputation for affordable excellence and you think, Oh no - how can it be better? And it is! The new 5 Series is right here, right now. Call Paul or Patrick for more info, a leaflet or more importantly an audition, you won't be disappointed - promise!

- Local delivery and installation included in purchase price.
- 3 year warranty for all 5 Series products - part exchange available.
- Deferred and Interest Free Credit available at 0% APR - Call for details.
- Complete Naim range available for audition inc NAP500 & NBL.

248 Lee High Rd, London SE13 5PL (Mon - Sat 10am to 6.30pm Closed Thurs & Sun)

SAME NAiM, BUT A WHOLE NEW GAME
Call 020 8318 5755 to find out more...

Featured - CDS Player (Top) £1125 & Nait 5 (Bottom) £799

Billy Vee

SOUND SYSTEMS
the rest is here and if you want small elegant boxes that please the one hand. The first of the Bijou range and did it sound good! Now, the man from Sugden said. A choice piece of engineering he held in eye. satisfy the soul and fit in a small space. This is for you. Yorkie got something new for you, bar Hi-Fi. Come and have an audition - and be amazed.

- 3 year warranty for all Bijou Series products.
- Local delivery and installation included in purchase price
- Deferrred and Interest Free Credit available at 0% APR - Call for details
- Masterclass & A21 series also available for audition

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-A200 £1000/pair 200W of high-end monobloc power in a groove tube. (Aug 98)

NAIM NAP180 £1060 Partnered with a NAC82, this has classic Naim control, and a superbly rhythmic presentation.

CAMBRIDGE T500 £180 An extremely powerful tuner with a performance at odds with its low price. Not exactly a Trougline, but you may not notice… (Feb 99)

CREEK T43 £399 Excellent detail, separation and dynamics. A great little tuner and unbeatable at this price. (May 98)

MARANTZ ST17 £600 A positive dreadnought of a tuner. Sweet and refined but with a heavy punch when needed. A tuner of this quality demands a decent aerial. (Jul 99)

MISSION CYRUS FM7 £300 Clear and lucid sound puts it up with the best. Superb build too. (Apr '94)

NAIM NAT03 £595 The NAT03's warm, atmospheric sound is further proof of Naim's proficiency with tuners. (Sep 93)

SONY STS16ES £250 Reguiling KDS tuner for the sonically discerning. Good ergonomics and sensitive too. (Apr 97)

YAMAHA KX-580SE £250 Exceptionally transparent performance. MM phono stage plus three line stages are standard. Volume controls are separate for each channel, thus giving balance adjustment. (Nov 96)

PIONEER CT-S740S £430 A great piece of engineering from Pioneer, with first-rate sound. (Jun 96)

YAMAHA XX-SB0SE £250 The 'SE' tag is more than a marketing gimmick. Sound is solid and clear with Dolby S. (Sep 97)

CASTLE EDEN £469 Impressively value-free, speakers that offer great transparency and involvement. One of a select band that simply makes music regardless. (Mar 97)

EPOS ES12 £495 Strong, punchy bass is allied to finely detailed, articulate midrange and sparkling treble. (Oct 96)

KEF CRESTA I loudspeakers A very musical sound

KEF CRESTA II £1000 Delightfully sophisticated presentation for the price. Won't blow the roof off, but will deliver a very musical sound. (April 2000)

KLIPSCH HERESY II £1100 An outstanding high sensitivity loudspeaker with midrange and treble horns coupled with infinite baffle 12" bass driver. Effortless, fast and accurate. (May 99)

MISSION 732 £495 Cracking mid-price mini towers combined HDA drive units and metal dome tweeters with surprisingly warm results; benign low characteristics makes them great for valves.

MISSION 771 £170 Characteristically fast, punchy Mission sound from the Aerogel mid/bass and silk-dome tweeter. (Jul 98)
The best sounding MD deck made so far. Gives clean and very musical recordings from TANNOY AMS8 £2700

A reference against which all other cassette decks when used with better blank tapes and clean, clear midrange and delicate treble. (Aug 96)

Naim NAP 250 Power Amp S/H Old Style £3699.00 (£249.00)

Excellent mid-priced CD recorder that both plays and records with equal panache. (Oct 99)

Sony TCD-8 DATMAN £995.00 (£249.00)

Super clean and detailed sound makes this an amazing portable. Not as robust as it should be though.

Pioneer DVD-5725 £990

One of the best buys in the OVO market. (Jan 98)

Philips CDR-855ES £130.00 (£20.00)

Great mid-price machine that adds better facilities to the '530's already amazing portable. Not as robust as it should be though.

Jecklin Float

Model Two £199

Chord company

Chameleon 2 £950

One of our favourite favourites, the Chameleons are musical performers with a smooth yet open sound.

DmN Reson £410

Neutral and transparent, and a steal at forty quid!

Nordost Blue Heaven £1550

Some of the fastest and most transparent cable around. A simple and effective upgrade.

Van den Hul Ultimate the First £240/0.6m

Carbon interconnects that help you forget the electronics and concentrate on the music. Miraculous transparency.

LoUDspeakEr CamBle

Chord company

Rumour £95.95

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

DmN Reson £6.95

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

Nordost Blue Heaven £375/0.5m pair

This isn't cheap, but it sounds absolutely fab. An open and spacious sound that simply carries music.

SAVE ££££S ON OUR DISPLAY CLEARANCE

Some as new with 1 yr warranty. 24hr del only £5. Check availability before ordering.

Call Sales: (020) 8318 5755 or 8852 1321 - 248 Lee High Road, London, SE13 5PL

0% APR is available on purchases of more than £160. Please call for details. * Prices Correct at 12/12/00 E&OE

Billy Vee

The best sounding MD deck made so far. Gives clean and very musical recordings from TANNOY AMS8 £2700

A reference against which all other cassette decks when used with better blank tapes and clean, clear midrange and delicate treble. (Aug 96)

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Chord company

Rumour £95.95

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

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Nordost Blue Heaven £375/0.5m pair

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Some as new with 1 yr warranty. 24hr del only £5. Check availability before ordering.

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0% APR is available on purchases of more than £160. Please call for details. * Prices Correct at 12/12/00 E&OE

Billy Vee

SOUND SYSTEMS

AVI Biggatron Speakers (599.00) £449.00

Linn LK85 Power Amp S/H (1 Yr G/tee) £375.00

Linn LK100 Power Amp S/H (1 Yr G/tee) £425.00

Linn Genki CD Player S/H (1 Yr G/tee) £650.00

Linn Keilidh Spks Rosenut inc Stands £985.00

Linn Kabar Active Spks/Cards S/H (1Yr G/tee) £795.00

Linn Isobarik Active Speakers (1Yr G/tee) £395.00

Linn 5103 AV Preamp - DTS (2Yr G/tee) £3395.00

Naim NAC 72 Preamp E/D (1 Yr G/tee) £790.00

Naim NAP 140 Power Amp E/D (1 Yr G/tee) £859.00

Naim 102 Preamp S/H (1 Yr G/tee) £1145.00

Naim NAP 180 Power Amp S/H (1 Yr G/tee) £849.00

Naim HiCap Power Supply S/H (1 Yr G/tee) £475.00

Nakamichi DR3 Cass/Deck S/H £449.00

Naim SNAXO 2/4 Crossover S/H (1 Yr G/tee) £770.00

Sennheisser HD-490 £50

A very smooth and sophisticated sound from these esoteric-looking headclamps. Do not wear in public unless you like being made a fool of.

One of our many expensive boats. Never mind the price, let your ears decide. (May 97)

Chord company

Rumour £95.95

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

DmN Reson £6.95

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

Nordost Blue Heaven £375/0.5m pair

This isn't cheap, but it sounds absolutely fab. An open and spacious sound that simply carries music.
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' pre-amps. 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 22/11 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 SMGs
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.
classics

TANNOY GRF & AUTOGRAPH
Folded horn monsters which certainly sound good if you have the space. For Tannoy vintage see HFW 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 HR100S
First class arm, up to present-day standards. Buy carefully, though, as there's no service available now.

ARISTON RD11
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.

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

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

THORENS TD124
Best classic deck ever! Judging by the prices they fetch it's possible - 78rpm too!

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

THORENS TD150
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 11 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.

Tel: +44 (0)1684 573524
Fax: +44 (0)1684 577380

Trichord Research
Convert your CD player to a high performance transport with our Digital Output Board Genesis Mk3 CD Player, Digital Turntable CD Transport, Pulsar Series One DAC with HDCC High performance 75 ohm Digital Interconnect suitable for CD and DVD Transports Upgrade your CD player with Clock 3 and dedicated Power Supply Mains Conditioners, Cables and Accessories

Visit our Web Site @
www.trichordresearch.com
A selection of our ever changing offers for sale (all fully guaranteed)

**AMPLIFIERS**

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<tr>
<th>Model</th>
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<th>Sale Price</th>
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<td>Quad 33 Pre / 303 Power</td>
<td>350.00</td>
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<td>Musical Fidelity MOT Pre Amp / Power Supply</td>
<td>350.00</td>
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<td>Arcam Alpha 9P (2 x 70 Watts Power Amp.)</td>
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<td>Systym Reference Monitors (Cherrywood)</td>
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<td>Monitor Audio Studio 12 (Rosewood)</td>
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<td>Audio Note ANK/D (92dB / 100 Watts / 0.2m Wire)</td>
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<td>Rogers AB-1 (Rosewood)</td>
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<td>Yamaha SW-90 (100 Watts Active Sub-Woofer)</td>
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<td>138W 802 Series 80 Monitors</td>
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<td>Mission 700 Minn</td>
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**DIGITAL**

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<td>Technics S-2400</td>
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<td>Meridian 566 DA C (24 Bit Modified By Meridian)</td>
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<td>Meridian 200 Transport, 203 Da C</td>
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<td>Yamaha DSP-A2 Dolby Digital Remote Amplifier</td>
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<td>Meridian 768, 0.500 (Transport &amp; DAC)</td>
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**OTHER ITEMS**

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<td>Technics SU-940</td>
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<td>Rotel RCC-955 (5-Disc Multi-Player / HDCD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yamaha DSP-A2 Dolby Digital Remote Amplifier</td>
<td>350.00</td>
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**STEREO**

affordable-audio will happily "build" systems to your individual requirements, and if you purchase three or more components, i.e. (C.D. Players, Amplifiers, & Loudspeakers), we will give you a 10% discount on the total price. Please enquire for further details.

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Here are a wide variety of specialist hi-fi products and services. Keep an eye open for regular advertisers, who know the market and serve their customers in a friendly and reliable manner.

Apex Acoustics

Audio Consultants

Manley Amps At Apex!!

The Stingray 50Watt Integrated

Purist Pre-Amplifier

50Watt Monoblock

120Watt Monoblock

All on demo at Apex. These amps from Manley Labs U.S.A. are elected winner's no recount required! Prices from £1895.00

Prices from £1000.00 regardless of finish. Coming soon the new P400 poweramp.

Veritas - The Truth

These speakers are beauty to behold and sound as good as they look. Cabinet construction is first class. Colours & finishes to grace any home this is the truth. Now on demo at Apex Acoustics!!

2001 A Space Odyssey

Global invasion has begun the pod has landed, yes we mean the Blueroom Minipod mini monitors, with a space age look and finish plus serious sound too. From single speaker to five speaker AV setup in great funky colours. Sputnik stands or Omni-wall mount the choice is yours.

Einstein Octopus Eight Way Mains Blocks - Black or Chrome Finish. Prices from £199.00

First Class Quality Second User Equipment

Micromega Data-Dialogue transport and Dac X10 digital interconnect (£800.00)
£1925.00 o.n.o

Sony 777ES SCAD player. Ex. Dem £1400.00

Roksan LS2.5 pre S1.5 power and DS1.5 power supply silver £1650.00 o.n.o

Conrad Johnson PV10A and MV55 pre and power £1550

Loads of interconnects and cables available.

For appointments ring Steve Mosedale

01527 450 500

Email: apexsnm@aol.com
### Power Amplifiers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Original Price</th>
<th>Retail Price</th>
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<td>Audio Technics CS2-C2</td>
<td>$1,195</td>
<td>$2,200</td>
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<td>Audio Golden Knight</td>
<td>$1,145</td>
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<td>Exposure E-9X</td>
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### Turntables & Analogue

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### CD Players & DACs

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<tr>
<td>Yamaha CS-1000</td>
<td>$1,145</td>
<td>$2,200</td>
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### Audio Components

- In-depth experience on high end new and used equipment
- Best prices paid for top quality equipment
- Generous part exchange
- Show room/dem room
- Long term credit in policy, also continuing upward
- All credit cards inc. Amex
- Mail order
- Export service
- Finance arranged subject to status
- Widest range available
- Unbiased advice

### Choice hi-fi

- Unique 'Hi-Fi Exchange' - a computerised database of sales and wants - will put you in touch

### AV COMPONENTS

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<tr>
<th>Model</th>
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### TELEVISON & DVD PLAYERS

- Sony DVP-NS750K - $2,200
- Panasonic DMR-ES800 - $2,200
- LG Electronics PDP-1950S - $1,995

### Contact

- Tel: 0208 392 1959 & 0208 392 1963
- Fax: 0181 392 1994
- E-mail: choice@hi-fimsn.com
- Open from 10am to 6pm by appointment

- All previously cherished items in mint, second hand or as new condition guaranteed

- Choice hi-fi allows you to suit your sound. Quality hi-fi is not just about expensive brandnames, it's about aspiring to the very best sound, choosing your ideal system from the widest selection in the country, in a unique no-pressure environment. It's about taking advantage of our unrivalled knowledge and being given the freedom to choose and upgrade the audio equipment you want, when you want. Others may sell you hi-fi, Choice hi-fi will sell you solutions.
# CLEARANCE BARGAINS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Product Description</th>
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Plus a selection of TOTEM SPEAKERS and CITATION electronics - call for full details and prices

AVI, ANTHEM, BEYER, BOSE, BOULDER, CASTLE, CHARIO, CITATION, ELECTROCOMPANIET, EXPOSURE, GENESIS, HEYBROOK, JAMO, KEF, LINN, LUMLEY, MARANTZ, MARSTON, MERIDIAN, MICROMEGA, MONARCHY, MYRYAD, PRECIOUS METALS, PRIMATE, PROJECT, ORTOFON, QED, QUAD, RESTEK, REVOX, RUARK, SEQUENCE, SOUNDSTYLE, SONNETEER, SONICLINK, SENNHEISER, SONIC FRONTIERS, SME, TDL, TEAC, TOTEM, TRICHORD, TANNOY, TARGET, XANTEK

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WORLDWIDE MAIL ORDER +44 208 876 3355

"MARANTZ IS NOT AVAILABLE ON MAIL ORDER, BUT ONLY TO PERSONAL CALLERS"
### Audio Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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<td>Audio Note AN-KSP Light Ash Loudspeakers</td>
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<td>Disapason Korte Walnut 2 Way Monitor (New &amp; boxed)</td>
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<td>Disapason Ascotantes III &amp; Stands (New &amp; boxed)</td>
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<td>Royd Sourceur Walnut</td>
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<td>Velodyne TX10 MkII Subwoofer</td>
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**Midland Audio X-change is looking for good used British & American Hi-fi**

cash paid call John Roberts on 01562 822236

---

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- DNM / Reson: Spectral
- Einstein: SPK
- Electroroom: Sugden
- Final: UKD
- Finite Elements:  

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e-mail sales@midlandaudiox-change.co.uk

Mobile 07721 605966

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**World Radio History**
### CLEARANCE BARGAINS

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- **The Preamp**: Ended Class A boxed as new.
- **Naim 32/110**: Old style.
- **Naim SNAPS**: Naim NAC 32.
- **Musical Fidelity Synthesis**: 60 watt power amplifiers wood mint boxed.
- **Mission Cyrus Two & PSX**: Naim.
- **Meridian 101/105 Monos**: Bone'd.
- **Unlk Lk 1 / Lk 280**: Unlk KAIRN PRO.
- **Heybrook C3/P3 Pre/power with Teak cases**: DPA DSP200S pre amp.
- **Cyrus Two with PSX 650**: Cyrus STRAIGHT UNE integrated amp 400.
- **Burmester 838 Ilkyphonostage silver front 1500**: TWIN 101/02.
- **Audiolab 80000P pre/power nice late black por**: 400.
- **Avi Integrated 1000**: ARCAM DELTA 290 with phono 500.
- **Arcam Alpha old model**: ARCAM DELTA 290 with phono 500.
- **Albarry AP4(mm)5 508 Pre/power 850**: ALBARRY AP4(mm)5 508 Pre/power 850.
- **Heybrook C3/P3 Pre/power with Teak cases**: 1500.
- **Counterspoint Sai00 100 watt valve/mosfet**: Counterpoint SAI00 100 watt valve/mosfet.
- **Audiol Silver Night 2250**: Audiol Silver Night 2250.
- **Audio Note P2se power amp 1500**: Audio Note P2se power amp 1500.
- **Audio Note M2 RIIA phono stage EX OEM 1050**: Audio Note M2 RIIA phono stage EX OEM 1050.
- **Audio Innovations Classic 25**: Audio Innovations Classic 25.
- **Almara Valve Integrated**: AMC valve integrated.
- **Audiogb Silver Nights 2250**: Audio Note P2se power amp 1500.
- **Audio Innovations Classic 25**: Audio Innovations Classic 25.
- **HDCA "Beastie" 211 Single Ended Power Amp**: HDCA "Beastie" 211 Single Ended Power Amp.
- **Croft Vpon Amp 1500**: Croft Vpon Amp 1500.
- **COUNTERPOINT SAI00 100 watt valve/mosfet**: Counterpoint SAI00 100 watt valve/mosfet.
- **Usonic Nights 2250**: Audio Note P2se power amp 1500.
- **Audio Innovations Classic 25**: Audio Innovations Classic 25.

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### All Musical Tastes and Pockets

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**Tel: 01562 865 788  Fax: 01562 865466**

**As reviewed by Richard White Hi-Fi World June 99**

**As reviewed by Simon Pope Hi-Fi World October 99**

---

**ARCAYDIS**

Hand crafted speakers to suit all musical tastes and pockets.

**ARCAYDIS ASC**

**ARCAYDIS AS2**

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**World Radio History**
**Special Offer 1**

Rogers E-40a Improved Pure class 'A' valve amplifiers. Special IMPROVED version by Audio Note UK. You get the stunning sound quality of the original E-20a but with double the power output! Improvements include factory pre-set bias adjustment, gold plated input / output connectors and world renowned Audio Note sound quality.

These very high quality, stylish integrated amps feature four line inputs plus a high quality phono stage. The E-40a Improved is suited to low, medium and high sensitivity loudspeakers, and of course it’s the ideal amplifier for driving the LS3/5a and AB-1 combination.

Superb value: 40 watts per channel of top quality pure class 'A' amplification at a bargain price (the last list price was £1,898.00 !)

**VERY RARE AND COLLECTABLE!**

Brand new and supplied in sealed boxes, with 12 months warranty:

**Special Offer 2**


Brand new and supplied in manufacturers sealed boxes with 12 months warranty

Per pair: £688.00

Please note: These are the very rare and collectable final production run version of the LS3/5a loudspeaker, featuring gold tweeter mesh and lucky 'B' suffix serial numbers, originally built for the demanding Far Eastern markets. Limited stocks, so don’t miss out on this extra special offer.

Available exclusively from Stirling Broadcast.

Add a pair of AB-1 bass extenders in Rosewood for only £338.00

**Special Offer 3** Amazing value package deal:

Rogers E-40a Improved with Harbeth LS3/5a Limited Edition Rosewood and AB-1 bass extenders in Rosewood (original price for this combination was £3,267.00 !)

Package price: £1,998.00

**Stirling Broadcast**

Charter Alley, Basingstoke, Hants. RG26 5PX

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**Fibre optic cables (1m)**

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<td>ZAC (Available in 3 varieties: 2GB, 3GB &amp; 4GB)</td>
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<tr>
<td>X-ZAC (Mini-End)</td>
<td>£95.95ea</td>
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<td>Mbs bipolar satellites s/h with stands to clear</td>
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<td>£1575</td>
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<td>EAD ENCORE Processor Dts latest spec</td>
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MEASURED PERFORMANCE

TUNERS

VIDEOLOGIC DRX-601E
I could not measure the DRX-601E under lab conditions, lacking a DAB modulator (rare and expensive). However, a lot can be gleaned from transmitted programme and DRAFFT test transmissions, using our FFT.

DRAFFT test transmission stepped tones produced the response shown in our third-octave analysis. The DRX-601E’s lower limit (-1dB) was 30Hz. There’s some slight bass loss from 100Hz to 200Hz, on stepped tones and white noise bursts, then a marked plateau high frequency lift of +1dB above 3kHz. Transmitted test signals include modulator and MUSICAM performance; they’re not a true receiver response, so I’m reluctant to point to the tuner. All the same this isn’t a very flat response by VHF tuner standards, as comparison with the Denon TU-S10 shows (the analyses using the same vertical scales). Videologic told me their tuner measured ‘flat’, albeit not within the unrealistic 0.15dB limits quoted.

DRAFFT appears to confirm what I heard in comparative listening tests: that DAB and/or the DRX-601E emphasise high frequencies a little, giving a bright sound, one that is also a little light on bass. More attention needs to be paid to sound quality before DAB rivals VHF/FM. There’s the usual simple and complacent view that because it is ‘digital’ it is perfect.

Most transmitted DAB programme produced strong music energy levels from 30Hz-18kHz. XFM actually aged 20Hz right up to 18kHz almost flat and I measured and could hear subsonic bass (10Hz-40Hz) from this station too. I noticed that transmitted energy levels cut off sharply at 18kHz though, instead of rolling down smoothly, suggesting MUSICAM imposes an 18kHz limit, making DAB little different from VHF/FM.

The tuner delivers 2.1V output maximum, so it will match all amplifiers easily.

Distortion from a transmitted DRAFFT signal measured 0.009% on a 440Hz, 0dB tone - a very good result. Videologic claim 0.01% distortion at 1kHz. Our analysis shows distortion harmonics barely exist.

There’s no quoted channel separation figure. Psychoacoustically, only 30dB or more is needed for full perceived stereo, and I am sure DAB can achieve this.

Noise measured -103dB, IEC A weighted. There was a measurable 50Hz hum component, giving a -93dB unweighted figure, but this was too low to be audible. The tuner is totally silent in use.

Muting lifted above 6µV or so, making the DRX-601E very sensitive. Videologic told me it has a Panasonic head unit, which obviously has a good performance in this important area. The signal strength display has sixteen segments, of which I could get only 5 to light (around 80µV). It would take a lot of signal to get them all to light I suspect, and Videologic have not linked full illumination to input overload, stipulated as 125mV across 50ohms for DAB. I feel this display could be better thought out and specified in the handbook, which currently says little about it.

The DRX-601E measures well in all areas, except frequency response, which does not look very flat. This could well be attributable to DAB transmission chain characteristics, rather than the DRX-601E.

DENON TU-S10
The audio frequency response of this tuner extended just a little further than most - to 16kHz rather than 15kHz. The slight blip at the top end of its response, seen at right in our analysis, suggests Denon are using a highly tuned mpx filter to suppress pilot tone at 19kHz, squeezing just a little more bandwidth from VHF/FM. Response limits (-1dB) were 5Hz-16.1kHz, with just 0.25dB total variation across the band. Denon consistently produce good tuners and quite obviously this one measures unusually well. A DAB tuner can manage little better than this, in theory reaching 20kHz - just a little further right in our analysis.

Distortion was minimal, hovering just below 0.1% in stereo. At this level the generator cannot be discounted from the measurement, although distor-
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Channel separation was wide at 52dB and noise very low at -78dB in stereo. This is as low as VHF goes and in use it is low enough, hiss being inaudible at this level. The Denon needed 2mV to achieve this performance - known as full quieting - much like any VHF tuner. An outdoor aerial is usually needed for this, except close to a transmitter.

By comparison the Videologic managed -103dB noise, and could do this from an indoor wire. Technically, it is quieter, but in use there was no obvious difference on Radio 3 silences.

Pilot tone and sub-carrier suppression were good, at -77dB and -82dB. The TU-S10 produces little unwanted output.

Sensitivity was high at 1.2μV in mono mode, and just 26μV in stereo.

**LOUDSPEAKERS**

**CYRUS CLS70**

This loudspeaker has a slightly odd response in places, the drivers going out of phase above axis. The phase matching is not wonderful. Response varied quite substantially according to microphone position, so where you sit will affect things. Overall, treble is shelved a dB or two below bass/midrange output, whilst bass rolls off smoothly in what looks like quite highly damped reflex loading. Pink noise sounded silky smooth with little bass rumble from the port. Loudspeakers like this are normally used close to a rear wall, and driven by a very powerful amplifier. The result is dry, tight and tuneful bass.

The impedance curve is unusually flat and very high up too, meaning the CLS70 has high impedance and is an easy, non-reactive load. The DCR was a high 70ohms and overall impedance no less than 9.5ohms. However, this did result in low sensitivity of 85dB, another reason for using a powerful amplifier. I should point out though that this is a better option than using low impedance to draw more current, because most solid-state amps produce considerably more distortion than specified when driving low loads, a point commonly overlooked. The CLS70's need a muscular amplifier, a Musical Fidelity or Cyrus Smartpower coming to mind.

The CLS70 looks as if it's been designed for Rock, so listen first. It will likely sound tighter, faster and more impactful than many reflexes. **NK**

**MISSION m71**

This small loudspeaker has an almost reference standard flat frequency response; our analysis clearly shows there's little variation right across the audio band. Particular strengths are a peak-free tweeter, suggesting smooth sounding treble reasonably free of colouration, and an absence of crossover region suckout. This last phenomenon, in moderation, softens the sound of a loudspeaker but also suppresses detail. Conversely, I'd expect the m71 to sound smooth but highly detailed across its high frequencies. This sort of performance comes from fundamentally good drivers, something that tends to bring more than the obvious benefits I've mentioned.

Lacking any bass peaking, and displaying a smooth roll down in output below 80Hz the m71s are likely to sound bass dry and well damped. They should be used close to a rear wall to bring low frequency output up a little. The large port needs some clearance behind it, so stands a foot or so from the rear wall are the best idea. The port peaks at 60Hz and reaches down to 40Hz (-3dB). Our analysis shows it also outputs a strong midrange box honk, which may be returned from a hard rear surface. The impedance curve shows symmetrically placed port resonance, which...
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applies maximum acoustic damping. The port is well tuned to damp the bass unit effectively. The impedance curve is pretty benign too, displaying no sudden V/1 phase changes, apart from the peaks around bass unit resonance which all reflexes suffer. Low reactance at middle and high frequencies is a good sign.

The impedance curve has an 8ohm upper section and 4ohm lower one, measuring out at 6ohms overall. However, to an amplifier, pushing most current in the bass region, this will look more like a four ohm loudspeaker - but then most loudspeakers are like this nowadays. Mission are trying to keep the voltage sensitivity up, so the m71s appear to go loud at any particular volume setting. They have managed quite well; a reasonable 86dB SPL was returned - good for a small loudspeaker.

As always Mission offer a loudspeaker engineered neatly all round in the m71. NK

### DVD PLAYERS

**T+A 1210R**

The frequency response of this player varied according to filter used, No1 giving a conventional flat to 21kHz characteristic, as shown in our analysis. No2 and No3 gave faster roll off in the stop band to better suppress unwanted images. The trade off here is a non-flat in-band response, seen as 0.4dB ripple in No2 and a treble peak in Filter No3. The high resolution vertical scale of our analyses (0.5dB/division) emphasises these effects.

Filter No4 (not shown) rolled down early, measuring -1dB at 12.6kHz and -3dB at 20kHz. Subjectively this will be quite audible as a warmth or lack of top end sparkle in the sound from filter No4, depending somewhat upon programme. Modern Dance, for example, which can a lot of treble energy will clearly lack top end zing, but with a lot of classical differences might be difficult to detect.

Filter No4 also gave most energy above 20kHz with 24/96 audio. With 24/96 audio.

There was minimal distortion, very low noise and high channel separation, so otherwise the player was fine. Output was a high-ish 2.5V.

This player will sound smooth with filter No1, probably a bit drier and brighter with No2 and 3, and warm but likely most atmospheric with No4. It's handling of 24/96 sound track wasn't ideal but the audio side can be set as desired, much like the venerable Cambridge CD-1. NK

**Kenwood DPF-3030**

The DPF-3030 has a shallow dip in its frequency response just above 1kHz, which may well produce a little softness in its sound, even though high frequencies rise back up to normal level. In conjunction with DRIVE, which effectively reduced low level (-90dB) distortions from around 30% to 10% it's likely the Kenwood will sound different from usual, likely smoother and easier going than most budget CD players.

These unusual characteristics apart the DPF-3030 measured well in all areas, so it is likely to give an interestingly different presentation to the norm. NK

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Filter No1</th>
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DENON PMA-355 UK

Developing 66W into 8ohms and a healthy 110W into 4ohms, the PMA-355 has enough power for most situations. The power supply has good regulation and the rise in distortion caused by the heavy current draw of a four ohm load did not hamper the Denon in the way it did the Exposure tested this month. As loudspeaker impedances fall this becomes more of an issue. In fact, distortion levels were low all round, the very worst case being at full power, 10kHz into a 4ohm load, where 0.15% distortion was produced. Otherwise levels stayed below 0.1%, as they should in a transistor amplifier.

Frequency response was wide and flat, providing the tone control override switch was in. Otherwise, the PMA-355 had a bizarrely non-flat response, with bass roll-off. The tone controls themselves work well, but at zero they must be switched out.

The phono stage measured very well. It has no warp filter, so there'll be some cone flap with warped records,

NAIM NAIT 5

The Nait is a low power amplifier, producing 32W into 8ohms and 56W into 4ohms. This is enough to go loud in small to medium rooms, especially if the loudspeakers are efficient floor standers.

Distortion levels were low, even when delivering current into 4ohms, the worst case being 0.06% at 10kHz, full output. Otherwise, levels hovered around 0.01% and, being primarily second harmonic, the Nait should sound smooth and clean.

Frequency response rolls off above 35kHz, again a characteristic likely to make the amplifier sound smooth.

EXPOSURE 2010

The 2010 produced 50W into 8ohms and 56W into 4ohms, a minimal increase that points to mediocre power supply regulation. In conjunction with quite a steep rise in distortion into 4ohm loads the 2010 is best matched to sensitive high impedance loudspeakers for best results. These days, there aren't so many around, Castles being one appropriate choice.

Distortion at high frequencies measured 0.15% at low or high output levels, rising to 0.3% into 4ohms. With extended harmonics, this was classic crossover distortion and will likely give an edge to the amplifier's sound.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRODUCT</th>
<th>LIST NOW</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A&amp;R PHA 6 CD Player</td>
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<td>A&amp;R DELTA90 Amp</td>
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<td>Acoustic Energy AE 105SE Speaker</td>
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<td>Acoustic Energy AE 509 Speaker</td>
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<td>AVI POSITRON Speaker</td>
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<td>CHORD CPA2200 Silver Pre Amp</td>
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<td>CHORD DSC1100 Silver DAC inc Trigger</td>
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<td>CHORD SPM1000B Black Power Amp</td>
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<td>CHORD SPM12000C Silver Power Amp</td>
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<td>CHORD SPM5000 Silver Power Amp</td>
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<td>CYRUS 7 Amp</td>
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<td>CYRUS DAD 1.5 CD Player</td>
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<td>CYRUS PSX-R Power Supply Unit</td>
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<td>CYRUS SL Amp</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEFINITIVE TECHNOLOGY CLR1000 Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>DENON AVC2800 Surround Amp</td>
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<td>DENON AVC3800 Surround Amp</td>
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<tr>
<td>HARMAN KARISON 4V80 &amp; APD303 AV COMBO</td>
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<tr>
<td>KEF Q90 Centre Speaker</td>
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<td>KEF TDM5 Subwoofer</td>
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<td>LINN KLOUT Power Amp</td>
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<td>LINN KOLEKTOR Pre Amp</td>
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<td>LINN MIMIK CD Player</td>
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<td>MARANTZ DV 4000 DVD Player</td>
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<td>MERIDIAN 561 AV Processor</td>
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<td>MICROEVA DVD DVD Player</td>
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<td>MISSION 774 Speaker</td>
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<td>MUSICAL FIDELITY E60 CD Player</td>
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<td>MUSICAL FIDELITY XA-1 Intergrated Amp</td>
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<td>MUSICAL FIDELITY XA-1 Intergrated Amplifier</td>
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<td>MUSICAL FIDELITY XRAY CD Player</td>
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<td>NAD 114 Pre Amp</td>
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<td>NAD 533 Turntable</td>
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<td>NAIM CD 3.5 CD Player</td>
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<td>NAIM FLATCAP Power Supply</td>
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<td>NAIM NAC 72 Pre Amp</td>
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<td>NAIM NAC 92 Pre Amp</td>
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<td>NAIM NAC 92 Pre Amp with remote</td>
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<td>NAIM NAP 140 Power Amp</td>
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<td>NAIM NAP 903 Power Amp</td>
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<tr>
<td>NHT X102 Black Surround Speakers</td>
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<td>NHT VS 1.2 White Centre Speaker</td>
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<tr>
<td>POLK RT8 Speaker</td>
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<td>PRIMARE A20 Amp</td>
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<td>REL STADIUM Subwoofer</td>
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<td>ROKSAN RADIUS Turntable</td>
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<td>ROTEL RB981 Power Amp</td>
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<td>SOUNDSTYLE X310 Black Rack</td>
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<td>SOUNDSTYLE X6310 Green Rack</td>
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<td>TAG McLaren PA10 Pre Amp</td>
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<td>TANNY MERCURY 2.5 Speaker</td>
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<td>TUBE TECHNOLOGY UNIS</td>
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<tr>
<td>YAMAHA DSPA3090 AV Amplifier</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODEL</th>
<th>Speaker Type</th>
<th>LIST NOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KEF MODEL 1</td>
<td>Rosetta Speakers</td>
<td>£1,550</td>
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<tr>
<td>KEF MODEL 1</td>
<td>Classic Rosewood Speakers</td>
<td>£1,450</td>
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<tr>
<td>KEF MODEL 2</td>
<td>Rosetta Speakers</td>
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Tel: Jon 020 8546 6558 (Feb(I)

MORDAINT SHORT
Performance 860 Reference speakers, excellent condition, cost £1895, accept £850.
Yamaha DSP E 492 Dolby Processor, rave reviews £120. Tel: 01869 278 249 (Mar(I)

CONRAD JOHNSON
PV-8 valve pre-amp with phono stage. Brand new valves from Audiofreaks, plus two spare sets. Immaculate, boxed with manual £895. Beautiful sound. Upgraded to costlier C.J. Tel: 01245 283 125 (Feb(I)

QUAD ELS 57, black, boxed. Yamaha NS 1000M, Linn Isobariks, boxed, Kef 104, boxed, Rogers Studio 1, boxed, Ear 502/509, boxed, Audio Research SP11/2, boxed, Sonus Faber Musica, boxed, Ear 502/509, boxed, Rogers Studio 1, Yamaha NS 1000M, Linn 825018 or 07748 115 355 ( daytime)(Feb(I)

EXPOSURE 25 amp. Mint condition. Boxed. £500 ono. Tel: Per 01454 411 093 (Bristol area) (Feb(I)

MONARCHY AUDIO DAC
(£800) £400. Electrofluidics 5MX2 ( £500) £250, Klitzt balanced XLR £50, Technics SL1200 Gold £450, Dual CB508 upgraded £70. Pioneer SA8800 integrated amp £110. Various other items - please phone for details. Tel: 01597 825 018 or 07748 115 355 (Feb(I)

LINN AKTIV Kabers (special finish) £985. Linn Aktiv cards £225. Linn DK100 power amps £300 each. K60 cable £95 all items boxed mint condition. Tel: 01482 618 116 (evenings), 01482 896 001 (daytime) (Feb(I)

ELECTROCOMPANET EC1-3 balanced remote integrated amplifier, gorgeous sound, stunning appearance, 8 months old, mint. Any trial £625 (£1000). Audiosource Stratos II balanced interconnect £55 (£125). Tel: 01308 868 044 (Mar(I)

ALBARRY MUSIC
(monobloc) power amplifiers, M1008 Series Two. 200wpc. excellent condition. Cost £1900 (pair). Will accept £850 ono. Tel: 0133 283 1363 eve after 7pm (Feb(I)

AUDIO PHYSIC Virgos, cherry £1250. Transparent Ultra: £1900 ( pair). Will accept £850 ono. Tel: 0115 952 1820, mobile 07747 762 672 (Feb(I)

MERIDIAN M605 monoblocs SE/Bal inputs, immaculate, £990. Marantz CD16, rare, (£1500) £620. Altec Lansing Full Trichord DOB modifications, £1000 passive controller £75. Hart Phono Stage built by AudioLinx, excellent sound quality £250. Tel: 01624 817 230 evens (Feb(I)

THETA DATA Basic CD transport, boxed, as new £950 ono. Tel: 01636 817 230 (evenings) 0161 284 8651 (Mar(I)

SD ACOUSTICS Ribbons. 5 feet tall ribbon dipoles on twin bass unit with custom made HNE marble stands bolted on. 91dB £600. Swap subwoofer or exotic cartridge. Tel: 01273 727 476 (Feb(I)

CASTLE HARLECH loudspeakers, delux yew finish, stunning sound and looks, mint condition £480. Castle Howard S2 loudspeakers, mahogany silver wired £680. Wanted: B&W 801 Matrix Mk2S. Tel: Steve 01429 268 218 or Email: steve.petch@ntlworld.com (Feb(I)

WILSON BENESCH Matrix cartridge, two years old, approximately 300 hours use on cleaned (Motl machine) records. Superb, detailed. dynamic sound. Will demonstrate. £350 ono. Tel: Malcolm (day) 01274 582 266 or (evenings) 0161 284 8651 (Feb(I)


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LINN LP12, Lingo, Ekos, 17DII, £1600. Linn LP12, RB250, AT0C9 £450. Naim NAC 32.5 £150. Tel: Paul 01305 770 222 (Feb)

AUDIOLAB 8000P power amplifier, 2 years old, as new, mint condition, boxed, hardly used £495. Sony ST-S31 FM - AM stereo tuner, RDS-EON, as new, boxed £50. Tel: 0116 237 4533 (Feb)

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SUGDEN AU41 Signature remote line pre with AU41P power amp £550. Naim MC phono stage with OTT power supply and separate MM boards £150. Tel: 01733 810 516 (Peterborough) (Feb)

TARGET STANDS 10” high, 11” square, 3 column with studs and spikes. Excellent, heavy. Buyer collects or pay carriage. £50 ono. Tel: 01423 504 373 (Harrogate) (Feb)

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TEAC SERIES 500 Pro Logic AV amp CD tape RDS tuner, MS Pearl speakers £425. Sennheiser HD 100 £100. MF XCan V2 £90. Philips 850 CD £50. Tel: 0121 246 0486 (Feb)

SUGDEN MASTERCLASS phonostage. Tremendous sound from the masters of Class A amplification. Very little use, effectively as new, 4 years unexpired Sugden warranty, £850 ono. (Cost £1250) Demo will convince. Tel/Fax 0113 284 3770 (Leeds) (Feb)


ALBARRY MUSIC (monobloc) power amplifiers, M1008 Series Two. 200wpc. excellent condition. Cost £1900 (pair). Will accept £850 ovno. Tel: 01333 283 1363 evenings after 7pm (Feb)

PAIR KEF Concerto £40. Leak amplifier Stereo 70 £40. Leak Delta FM tuner £40. Leak Delta FM tuner £40. Garrard 401 turntable, Lenco Goldring arm, share cartridge £100. Tel: 020 8480 2060 work, 020 7737 4526 home (Feb)

CABLE TALK Reference 2 x1m £75. 1x0.103 x1m £20. Yello Power Cord 2 metres £15. Carriage paid. Tel: evenings 01224 483 642 (Feb)

VPI HW19 MkII £525. Technics SP10 Stirling plinth £425. MP 211 monoblocks £900. Sony XA50 ES CD player £495. QLN Spittfield Signatures £395. SME Five Gold, boxed £1050. All xno. Tel: Jim 020 8670 6796 (Feb)

NAIM AUDIO 140 power-amp £400 ono. Nait 3 amp £375 ono. Good condition. Tel: 01784 866 215 after 6pm or 0777 959 3704 anytime (Feb)

PIONEER PD-91 CD player, classic heavyweight, recently serviced, new laser, £400 ono. Elemental Audio Monopinith, Rolls-Royce of platforms, tubular steel and granite, £500 new, £225ono. Tel: Jon 020 8546 6558

BAIT TV3i preamp £1500. PS Audio P300 multivave and fan £1200. Copland CTA 401 £600. Rogers LS3/5A as new £350. Revbox B225 CD £150. Tel: 020 8856 1047 (Feb)

ROTEL RB870/RC870 pre and power, manuals £100 the pair. Wharfedale 708 speakers £150, Thorens TD125 IV, RB 250 A.T. cartridge £100. All vgc. Tel: 01483 416 493 evenings and weekends. (Mar)

KEF REFERENCE Model One speakers, black ash, boxed, excellent condition £500. Tel: 0117 984 7365 (day), 07779 036 657 (mobile) (Bristol) (Feb)

INTERCONNECTS ALL 0.5m length SonicLink Vermillion £60. Campaign Audio Design Anacore £50. DBF Azure £20. Russ Andrews PB1 CD £20. Tel: 01293 786 453 (Gatwick area) (Feb)

NAIM AUDIO preamp 92 £300. Two NAP 903 £300 each. Linn Keilidh speakers and stands £500 all one year old boxed. Good condition. Tel: 01180 81 097 (Basingstoke) (Feb)

AUDIONOTE KIT preamp built upgraded £300. Leak S20 rebuilt blackgates etc revived £300. Garrard 401 heavy plinth £140. Garrard 301 £100 b/w DMZ speakers £60. HB1 stands £40. Tel: 01827 261 082 (Tamworth) (Feb)
QUAD ESL63 speakers £995, 66 preamp and control panel £300 or 606 power amp £600, 44 preamp £150, FM tuner £150. Tel: 01993 883 523 (Feb(I)

WANTED BY private user. G.E.C. Gold Lion KT88 valves. New or good used items, to get my amp up and running again. One to four units purchased. Tel: 01785 840 724, Mobile: 07941 255 112 (Feb(I)

AUDIO RESEARCH SP9 Mk2 £550. Musical Fidelity P270 upgraded by MF to A370 specification £750. Audio Synthesis DSM 2 box DAC £250. SL 600 speakers £250. Tel: 0118 981 5681, Mobile: 07944 426 046 (Feb(I)

BARGAIN CORNER Epos ES22 floorstanding speakers light cherry finish £575. Meridian 206 CD player £295 or open to offers can demonstrate. Call Jon 01992 578 954 (Epping) (Feb(I)

RESTEK FANTASY amplifier superb sound £750. Castle Harlech speakers (yew) £650. Both boxed and in very good condition. Tel: 01903 717 826 (Feb(I)

NAIM CDS player complete boxed immaculate £2100 no offers. Tel: 01752 509 236 (Feb(I)

ROTEL RB981 power amplifier, two years old, superb sound and condition, boxed, must sell hence £190. Could deliver within 100 miles of North Staffs. Tel: 01782 397 204 or 07844 430 988 (Feb(I)

B&W NAUTILUS 802 loudspeakers for sale, £4500, 10 months old, as new, boxed with manuals, including free delivery. Tel: 00353 509 35469 or 00353 86 619 6711 (Feb(I)

FOR SALE: Unison Research Simply Four Triode version, very rare. Fitted with four Svetina EL34's and three Mullard ECC 82's, £1200 o.v.n.o. with spare valves. Tel: 01924 515 006 (West Yorkshire, Dewsbury) (Feb(I)

LOWTHER D.X.2 drive units fitted in Fidello cabinets, finished in light oak veneer. Should be seen and heard to appreciate £400. Tel: 01279 426 046 (Feb(I)

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6. Amateur second-hand dealing is not a big money game: you win some, you lose some.
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