DVD-A, SACD, DVD-V & CD! We review Pioneer's new high tech DV-757Ai universal player.

- Satellite & subwoofer surround package group test
- Naim 202/200 pre & power amps
- Marantz DV-8300 universal DVD player
- NAD S500i CD player
- Revolver R33 speakers
- Pathos Logos integrated amp
- Linn Klimax Kontrol power amp
- DVD-A feature - part two

COMPETITION
Win one of five pairs of Mordaunt Short 914 floorstanding speakers

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Cyrus' legendary amplifiers have evolved!

Back in 2001, Cyrus began a project to evolve our integrated amplifier designs to incorporate technologies researched over the last five years. After many months of acoustic tuning and detailed electrical re-evaluation lasting more than a year, we are proud to announce the arrival of our evolutionary new Cyrus 8. This extraordinary amplifier sets new standards and strengthens Cyrus' position at the leading edge of what's possible in audio design today.

For the full story on how our amplifiers have evolved, please visit our website at www.cyrusaudio.com.
**how we test the products**

- Hi-Fi World has its own advanced test laboratory and acoustically treated listening room.
- Hi-Fi World has a dedicated in-house team of experienced listeners. We review thoroughly by extensive auditioning, rather than by quick-fire group listening tests.
- Hi-Fi World's engineering team designs a wide range of products in-house. No other hi-fi magazine is so expert and dedicated.
- The days of budget stereo could well be a thing of the past, judging by the current state of play. So integration is by no means bad for the audiophile in that it opens up new possibilities, but perhaps now more than ever you need to get the right tools for the job. Being a music lover and a gourmand was never a cheap hobby, after all.

### £

- **NICE PRICE** - Represents excellent value for money.
- **EXCELLENT** - Superb sound, among the best available.
- **VERY GOOD** - Well worth a listen.
- **ADEQUATE** - Room for improvement.
- **POOR** - Seriously flawed. Forget it!

### Ratings Explained

- **ADEQUATE**
- **POOR**

Half globes are added for those products that we feel are between categories.
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HORN OF PLENTY

In the wacky world of horn designs, few come close to the unusual appeal of the FH001 from newcomers, Ferguson Hill. Based in central London, this is their first product, with a CD player and integrated amplifier to follow.

In the Beauhorn B2 mould of the 'modern horn', the FH001 uses a 'full range' Lowther DX3 drive unit but quotes a frequency response of 150Hz-20kHz, meaning a sub bass unit is required for true full range bandwidth. The single drive unit is mounted on a tubular metal frame, but most eye catching is a massive, elliptical, transparent plastic horn which spreads out from the Lowther unit to reach a height of 1.65 metres and width of 0.92 metres. With a quoted sensitivity of 98dB and an 8ohm load, the FH001, not surprisingly, doesn't come cheap. This mix of cutting edge design and old-school, traditional hi-fi will set you back £5,875 for the pair.

STYLISH NEW SPINNER FROM UNISON

This month sees the launch of Unison Research's first ever source component, the stylish Unico CD player. This smart looking silver disc spinner features, as you'd imagine from the valve amp specialists, a vacuum tube output stage, along with a 24/192 all-time high quality upsampling DAC and a brushless CD mechanism. Further features include an oversized programmable display window. The player comes supplied with a very smart and ergonomic 32 button, wood finished Unico system remote handset and there's also a choice of filter settings. The Unico CD player is priced in the UK at £1095.
**QUBIC CURRENT**

Those owners of power hungry amplifiers who want clean, isolated mains could find an answer in the neat form of the new Qube from Isotek. This product is designed to supply the highest-end amps on the market and is available in three versions - 1kW, 2kW or 4kW output. Inside is a truly massive hand-wound EI isolation transformer with Faraday screens which is preceded with various parallel x and y class filter capacitors. The outer casing is heavily constructed from non-magnetic metal and there is mechanical isolation and stability provided by three specialist feet from RDC. Weighing a hefty 34 kilos, the Qube is priced at an equally heavy £2,250 for the 4kW version which lowers to £1,495 for 2kW and £1,195 for the 1kW version. All come with a lifetime guarantee.

*Activ Distribution*
Tel: +44 (0)1635 291357
www.activdistribution.com

**BRONZED AND FIT**

Monitor Audio have introduced their new Bronze Series of speakers to the market. There are four new generation models, the Bronze B1, B2, B4 and Centre. They feature all-new enclosures constructed from 18mm MDF throughout, with a choice of Black Ash or Beech vinyl and are extensively braced for minimal resonance. All models are bi-wirable and also feature the company's new bass/mid drive unit. This uses a metal matrix polymer cone and an injection moulding process is employed to give differing thicknesses at critical points of the cone. The ceramic coated C-CAM tweeter has been improved since the previous range and now claims to have wider dispersion characteristics.

The two-way standmount B1 is priced at £150, the larger B2 is £200 and the floorstanding B4 is £350, with the new Centre model priced at £130.

*Monitor Audio Ltd.*
Tel: +44 (0)1268 740580
www.monitoraudio.co.uk

**KEF'S BACK TO BASS**

KEF Audio have announced details of a new, top-range subwoofer. The PSW 4000 uses a 12" long throw drive unit in a downward firing, bass reflex configuration. The unit is housed in a hand finished cabinet which features a smoked-glass top. The sub is intended as a 'stand alone' unit for pairing with the new QX or top-range Reference series loudspeakers. Inside the cabinet is a 500W Class D amplifier, showing the PSW 4000 comes well equipped and should be no slouch. It also features radio remote control of output level, phase and the low pass filter controls. Available in a choice of three wood finishes, it is priced at £1,200.

*KEF Audio Ltd.*
Tel: +44 (0)1622 672261
www.kef.com

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**next issue**

Here's a selection of what we hope to bring you in the next issue:

**MUSICAL FIDELITY**

**TRI-VISTA SACD PLAYER**

This is the new flagship digital disc player from Musical Fidelity. Will it impress us? Find out in four weeks time.

**EXPOSURE 23 & 28 PRE & POWER AMPS**

From the revamped Exposure came their new top range amplifier combination in the Classic Series.

**QUAD 99 CD PLAYER**

With the company firing on all cylinders, this latest much heralded CD spinner could be one of the best sounding on the market.
The new
Pro-ject
RPM9

Exclusively at
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For a full dealer list and more information contact:
Hensley Designs Ltd, Unit 11 Moorhouse Industrial Park, Didcot, Oxon, OX11 7HP
Tel: 01235 511166, Fax: 01235 511266, E-mail: info@hensleydesigns.co.uk, WWW.hensleydesigns.co.uk
With the growing popularity of multichannel DVD, big name loudspeaker manufacturers are trying to appeal to the domestically aware audiophile who wants surround-sound. We listen to four of the latest satellite and subwoofer surround 'speaker packages.

In an attempt to prove that surround-sound needn’t be a hazardous mountain of boxes and wires, hi-fi manufacturers now offer compact satellite and subwoofer systems designed to blend into the home unobtrusively. Aesthetic discretion is the key word here but the real art of this approach is getting something that is small and discrete to sound good - alas, it’s always been the way.

This problem grows with the emergence of high resolution formats such as DVD-A and SACD. How do we get to realise the quality potential of these new audio formats from small, inexpensive wall or shelf mountable satellites and a subwoofer? Loudspeaker manufacturers have always struggled to get a big sound from a small box, so with the unobtrusively small speakers appropriate for these new formats they’ve well and truly got their work cut out.

By their nature DVD-A and SACD demand high quality loudspeakers to do justice to the detail, dynamics and breadth of frequency response inherent in the recording. In the past it’s taken 'speaker packages in the region of £4,000-plus to give a realistic taster of the high res. banquet that awaits.

Here we’ve gathered together four satellite and subwoofer packages at different price points that attempt to fill the gap for both multichannel movie soundtracks and high resolution audio. From the likes of JM Lab, Linn, Mirage and Tannoy these set ups claim to be as effective with music as they are with movies. It’s a tough task and they’re facing a strong headwind. Turn the page to find out how they sail in these choppy waters...
TANNOY FX5.1

At just a tad under £600 the Tannoy FX5.1 system is the most affordable package in the test. It consists of five tiny (40 x 97 x 95mm) satellites and a powered 100watt subwoofer and comes complete with attachment brackets and screws, plus 25m bell-wire type cable.

Tannoy's Wideband\textsuperscript{TM} technology has filtered down from their top spec models. This claims to extend the frequency response up to a quoted 78kHz - ideal, in theory, for DVD-A and SACD information. The satellites are shielded, so close placement to a TV is possible. They use a 75mm paper cone mid/bass driver which is coupled to a Wideband 19mm titanium dome high frequency unit. There are optional, matching stands or supplied wall brackets.

The subwoofer isn't the best built of the test but it's of decent dimensions with an internal 8" drive unit and a 100watt RMS amplifier. It possesses both high (speaker cable) or low (line level) inputs. Controls and functions are more basic than found elsewhere but just about make it flexible enough.

The FX5.1 satellites aren't as rough and ragged as you'd expect at the price, having a smooth, if slightly thin, response. Using just two satellites in stereo CD mode gave a forward and surprisingly full sound. With the Queens Of The Stoneage's 'Songs For The Deaf' the fast rhythms held up well and the overall sound was nicely smooth without bordering on muffled. Vocals and other midrange information was good - they're not neutral or particularly 'hi-fi' but were still very enjoyable.

Problems came in the bass, though, which was a bit too plummy for my liking - it's not the leastest sound around. Consequently lower frequency information is lost in a kind of 'one note' bass response - especially with dance music or R'n'B.

I moved on to multichannel high resolution audio with the help of Pioneer's DV-757 and Denon's AVR-3802 receiver. First on was a cracking classical disc of Dvorak's Ninth Symphony on Teldec. The sound was pretty good - although subtle dynamics were lost. Tonalty there was a nice balance and a good sense of spaciousness, thanks to the extended treble of the satellites. Upper strings, although forward, weren't overly scratchy or bright and woodwind was nice and airy.

With movies the sound was very good, the bumps and thumps in the fight scenes of 'Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon' were full and meaty, the sub being better suited to the lack of subtlety of a film soundtrack. The FX5.1 has a balanced and extended sound from the satellites and a nice out of the box appeal. Where the system is let down, especially with subtle music, is with the subwoofer which can sound tubby and slow. This apart, though the system represents decent value for money.

Tannoy FX5.1 £599

Tannoy UK Ltd.
Tel: 01236 420199
www.tannoy.com

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The tiny satellites within Tannoy's system have been neatly tailored to give reasonably even output right up to 20kHz. There's no peaking and the pink noise test signal sounded smooth and natural. Of all the satellites the miniature Tannoy had the smoothest measured frequency response by far. However, they barely make it down to 100Hz and output above this frequency - in the lower midband - peaks up, suggesting the boxes will sound tubby and likely coloured. Sensitivity was very low at 79dB but as a load the satellites should be easy enough.

The subwoofer only just makes it down to 40Hz (-6dB) and it's peaky. Used on the floor, against and end wall should allow it to drive room modes however, bringing up output. The gain control was unusably coarse in adjustment; even with a high resolution real-time spectrum analyser I could barely get its settings right. In use I suspect few owners will get it accurately tuned.

The Tannoy system has been cleverly tailored to get the most from budget components. It should sound smoother and more detailed than the others, but with poorer bass and possibly more colouration.

NK
FOCAL.JM LAB SIB
& CUB

One of this company's strengths is the quality of its in-house designed and built drive units, although tests show nothing out of the ordinary in this case. The Sib satellites share a theme in many of the company's designs: their C-shaped baffles echo the 'FocusTime' technology found in the Electra and Utopia which claims to ensure complete "temporal coherence".

The Sib, like the rest of the group test candidates, can be positioned in a variety of locations. Like the rest of the company's designs it offers a high sensitivity (a quoted 90dB) and uses a 110mm synthetic cone mid/bass unit and a 19mm "metallised" plastic-dome tweeter (as opposed to the company's house-style inverted domes). Build quality is good for the money, with solid binding posts and a generally robust feel. There are lockable, dual-purpose support brackets which can act as a stand and - when flipped over - a wall mounting bracket. The drive units are magnetically shielded.

The Cub subwoofer is cube shaped and measures a compact 30cm in all directions. Again, it is well constructed and finished for the money. The drive unit is an 8" in-house design loaded by a laminar port tube which is flared at both ends. Inside the Cub is a 150W amplifier with effective reproduction down to 35Hz. Connection is via speaker cable from the amplifier (high level) or low level line inputs.

The Sib/Cub pairing has an overall well balanced sound - one of the best in the test as far as comparison to a full range loudspeaker is concerned. This is due mainly to good integration and a well designed conventional two-way configuration of the Sibs. With two channel stereo in the shape of commercial rock/pop CDs the combination put up a good show, with a nice spread of sound and plenty of space, but there was a hard edge at times to the upper mid and treble that made vocals a tad sibilant. Bass was firm and deep, though, with discernable notes as opposed to mere noise.

With DVD-A and SACD programme the sound was quite well refined and a good amount of detail retrieved from the discs. The package was best utilised here than in stereo (a common trait in all of the set ups) as the sound encompassed the room well and had a decent (but not superb) clarity.

With music, this set up wasn't the smoothest or warmest around but there's better to be found. It offers a good balance between detail and excitement and can go loud, but isn't necessarily a sound that will suit audiophiles as well as videophiles as it lacks warmth and low level detail.

Focal JM Lab SIB & CUB £859
Focal JM Lab UK Ltd.
Tel: +44 (0)121 616 5126
www.focaljmlab.com

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The small JM Lab satellites sounded fierce with a pink noise test signal and measurement showed why. They are peaky right across the audio band, with a strong treble rise at 16kHz. However, the flip side to this is that they do get right up to 16kHz before output rolls off, so will have more sparkle and detail than the 'speakers from Tannoy or Linn. However, treble quality is likely to be poor by hi-fi standards and this will be noticeable.

At the other end of the frequency spectrum the small satellites peak up at 125Hz before lower bass rolls away fast. They may well sound thummy as a result. Sensitivity was good at 86dB sound pressure level, but this was partly due to the fact that impedance plummets to an incredibly low 2.5ohms in the midband and bass. If volume is turned up, this may upset some amplifiers.

The subwoofer reaches down to 40Hz, like so many, before output rolls off. As with all these subwoofers the presence of internal amps ensures there's plenty of energy down to this frequency, so the combo will sound weighty enough.

The JM Lab system has bandwidth, but it will likely sound fierce and unrefined. Impedance is too low as well. NK
**LINN CLASSIK SPEAKER PACKAGE**

We have here yet another combination of names that could also be a range of office products from a certain home furnishing superstar. The Classic Speaker package consists of five Unik satellite units, an Afekt "bass reinforcement" speaker (that’s "subwoofer" to you and I) and, should you wish, five Kollums for your Uniks to sit on!

The Unik is a 'full range' design that’s compact and neat. The name may be akin to a certain furniture company’s range but the product build isn’t - they’re as easy as pie to assemble. Get your Unik from its box, put together one of the simply constructed ‘optional extra’ Kollum stands (should you need them) and screw it on top - hey presto!

The Unik has a one-piece case and shouldn’t fall apart in two days. It’s not as well put together as JM Lab’s Sibs, but it’s solid enough nonetheless. They’re a commendably simple design which makes placement easy, too. They can also be wall mounted (with the aid of a Linn ‘Brakit’ - seriously!) or even Blu tacked onto an appropriately located shelf.

Sometimes, the subwoofers supplied with packages leave a lot to be desired but the Afekt that’s part of the Classik package isn’t. It’s a small but substantively built bass unit that has quite a bit in common with its larger Sizmik stablemate. This is the most comprehensive - and labour intensive - sub in the test when it comes to set up. It has a digital display and three push buttons to execute all of the functions which involves a bit of trial and error for success.

Don’t chuck out your Quads, but compared to many other similar products the Linn setup does impress. In bog standard two channel CD mode with Queens Of The Stoneage they gave a convincing, if not all encompassing, reading of discs. Bass weight was good and very fast and the Uniks don’t suffer from eye gouging tinny treble. They are fairly heavily but nicely rolled off and ‘even response’ sounding with good vocal projection. This gives a very smooth and warm sound that whilst not the most detailed around is one of the easiest to live with. Integration between sub and sats (perhaps the most important factor in the test) was very good but you need to work on it to achieve this - be warned.

Again, the detail that could be achieved in Ravel’s La Valse on a fine MDG DVD-A disc was missing somewhat but there was a good sense of space created and in surround-mode they produced an encompassing sound that made for very enjoyable listening.

With their roll-off, though, the Uniks can’t really do full justice to the bandwidth of DVD-A. Having said this, the Poulenc Organ Concerto multichannel SACD disc sounded very good, with a fine sense of ambience and spatial depth. Tonal balance was good too, with a commendable, if not tip-top, relay of instrumental colour. Movie soundtracks didn’t grab me by the collar but the Linn setup did convey a full, bass tight sound nonetheless.

As you’ve probably gathered, the Classik package is smooth sounding and makes a refreshing change to preconceptions of what a system like this generally sounds like. The Afekt is a very a tight sounding subwoofer that adds a certain speed and sparkle to the overall sound. It’s a system that’s easy to live with its smooth and easy going, yet punchy sound.

Linn Classik speaker package £1,320

**Linn Products Ltd**
Tel: +44 (0) 141 307 7777
www.linn.co.uk

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**MEASURED PERFORMANCE**

The small Unik has a soft, warm balance, obvious from the pink noise test signal. Its measured response shows this is caused by a distinct treble roll off, frequencies above 6kHz measuring -5dB down. However, at least the Unik is not ragged at high frequencies, a common problem in small full range loudspeakers.

Bass rolls off fairly early, measuring -3dB at 100Hz. Wall mounting will help but it lacks bass like all small speakers. Sensitivity was a very low 80dB, again like its rivals.

The Afekt can be integrated nicely. When correctly adjusted it extends response smoothly down to 40Hz. As output drops away below this frequency the Afekt really enables the small Unik to get down as far as a modest sized conventional loudspeaker. It isn’t a true subwoofer, although on the floor and against a wall it will give very strong bass, no doubt.

This combo measures well enough and some may appreciate its apparent smoothness. **NK**
Mirage Omnisat SE

The Omnisats are strange beasts and unlike your average loudspeaker. They can be attached to the wall or planted atop of the matching stands via brackets supplied with each 'speaker. Unlike the Tannoy or Linn packages, no wiring is supplied but ‘real’ good quality binding posts are featured.

The omnipolar technology radiates the sound throughout the full 360 degrees, which is achieved by using two drive units - a midrange and a tweeter. The tweeter is mounted above the mid/bass unit and a reflector is offset and angled above the tweeter.

The OM-200 subwoofer that makes up the 'SE' version (there’s another, cheaper version with a smaller subwoofer) weighs no less than 32 kilos and is bi-polar, firing in opposite directions in a bass reflex design. This is by no means your bog standard sub/sat package inclusion.

It’s an attractively looking device, with three controls for gain, phase and a low pass filter, plus a switch for either music or movies (the latter being weightier and overall less subtle). The two drive units are 8” titanium-deposit polypropylene hybrids and use hefty 28oz magnets. Amplification is from a 200W mosfet class A/B design. Although available separately the OM-200 was designed to work especially with the Omnisats in mind.

By its nature, the Omnisat system is entirely different from anything else in the test. They are impressively transparent, to an extent the other auditionees can only dream of. The sound is also big, very big - thanks to that very big subwoofer. It has to be used carefully, as by its sonic weight it can overwhelm but it does give amazing breadth and kick to the sound.

The Queens Of The Stoneage CD saw the omnisats giving a big and airy sound but compressed rock studio mixes - no matter how good - sounded muddled through these ‘speakers with a swamped upper midrange (thanks to heavy guitar lines) which became ragged and hard edged. But the bass was superb!

Things were changed for the better with Ravel’s orchestra piece, La Valse in DVD-A multichannel mode. Here the Omnisats could show their strengths with a spacious and natural sound, one that rose impressively high into the room. This isn’t imaging in the traditional sense of the word, but the sound was still spread impressively throughout the stage - it’s just that it’s hard to tell where the stage actually is!

Integration was good, the sub carrying on naturally from where the Omnisats left off. Again, with the multichannel Poulenc SACD discs the sound was spacious but there were a few minor problems with producing natural timbres of instruments. The system could often sound edgy and synthetic. In movie mode the system gave a good account of itself, delivering deep bass and a big, if not an overtly dynamic sound.

The Omnisat system excels in transparency and overall spaciousness. However, it can at times sound ragged and incoherent, with an edgy upper frequency range.

Mirage Omnisat SE £1,595

World Verdict

Impressively transparent and spacious with especially deep bass from the sub, but the sound is perhaps too quirky to consistently appeal.

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MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The large side-firing subwoofer of this system gives it a measurable advantage over the others. It gets down to 20Hz, a frequency low enough to give it the sort of floor shaking subsonics the others can’t quite manage. With some peaking at 40Hz, bass from this system will likely sound big and gutsy.

On their own the Mirage pod satellites get down to 140Hz or so before output rolls down fast, so they cannot be used solo if bass is wanted. Their output is peaky and a massive phase plate in front of the concentric tweeter predictably kills its output above 8kHz, not a subtle piece of engineering. Sensitivity was low at 82dB for the satellite alone and impedance normal enough, making it a reasonable amplifier load.

The Mirage system is peaky and crude, but it does have the advantage of producing deeper bass than the others - or most floorstanders if it comes to that. NK

---

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f one thing has been apparent
in this test it's that to get the
full potential of DVD-A and
SACD multichannel music you
really require top quality, high
dernd loudspeakers for the job.

Whist the systems in the test all
played surround sound in an involv-
ing and a satisfactory way none of
them came close to reproducing
DVD-A the way it can be produced.
Although being touted as being
acceptable for multichannel music,
they are just that - acceptable, not
superb.

It's the age old argument of size;
products such as this, even the big
sounding Mirage with the hefty
subwoofer, are restricted by
dimension and won't reproduce the
scale and dynamics that are
absolutely essential to deliver high
resolution audio. It is, and will
perhaps remain, essentially a high-end
and therefore expensive area, where
only the best (or nearly best) will do.
This not only applies to 'speakers but
to amplification and source as well.

That said, it was very interesting
listening to the systems in this test
and they differed vastly. Firstly, none
of them actually impressed enough
for me to rush out to my local
retailer. However, all of them had
appealing traits of one kind or
another and all of them easily fit
unnoticed into a domestic

These systems are really for
those who must make some kind of
sonic sacrifice for domestic harmony.

The Mirage Omnisats are a
strange one - literally. Their looks are
definitely an acquired taste, as is the
sound. It's very open and transparent
for such a product and the bass from
that large sub is deep and powerful,
but it's not always that well balanced
and there is a fairly sharp rise in the
upper mid and treble. Not subtle, but
certainly exciting - and that
transparency helps with DVD-A and
SACD.

The Tannoy systems are, in a way, very
good value. If the sub was technically
more proficient it would be excellent
value for money. The sats are open
sounding and smooth and have
excellent extension thanks to the
Wideband tweeter.

Unfortunately though, none of
the systems are truly audiophile in
performance. For that you'll need to
go bigger, better and more expensive.
If space and style are a priority then
getting a listen to any of these
systems should influence your
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The latest generation universal player from Pioneer promises to take high resolution audio to the next level in terms of usability. Alan Sircom explains why.

Performance of Pioneer's new top DVD player, the DV-757Ai, has been significantly improved, our lab report shows. But this performance upgrade is accompanied by greatly improved functionality. Being the company's top multi-standard player, priced at £800, the 757Ai supports DVD-Video, DVD-Audio, Super Audio CD, CD and everything in between.

There have been many improvements to its predecessor, the 747, especially in the day-to-day operation of the player. The DV-757Ai sports the latest version of Pioneer's GUI on-screen set-up display. This makes configuring the player even easier than ever before and takes the need for technological knowledge out of the set up procedure.

What really pushes the DV-757Ai into the 'must have' camp is that little 'i' suffix at the end of the name. It is short for i-Link and the player features two tiny i-Link connections on the back panel. The i-Link system comes from PC technology (it is also known as FireWire and IEEE 1394 in the computer trade) and is used to connect high-speed data transfer devices together. Most commonly, i-Link is seen between Digital Video camcorders and editing PC devices, or between high-quality, high capacity MP3 players and computers. It is a bidirectional, high-speed digital data transmission system that can retain the integrity of both data and security codes. So, i-Link can send DVD-Audio and SACD signals to a multi-channel processor in the digital domain, without undermining the watermarking or copy protection systems. Better still, because the link is bidirectional, it allows the player to sync-lock its datastream to the clock of the processor.

i-Link also means an external decoder can apply DSP parameters (such as speaker distance and bass management) to the digital sound before converting it into analogue.

And that's only the half of what i-Link can offer. It also allows transferal of 'metadata' between i-Link devices, so they can understand each other's parameters. This means, if you have a DV-757Ai connected to an amplifier, the amplifier will recognise the player, what kind of disc it is playing and any other information garnered from the internals of the player, using and displaying any relevant information accordingly.

In an all-too-brief listening session with the DV-757Ai wired to a Pioneer AX10i amplifier (existing AX10 owners will be able to upgrade to i-Link status soon), the difference between i-Link and conventional analogue outputs on a DVD-Audio disc was dramatic. Images are more focussed and precise, leading edges of percussion instruments have more attack, everything just sounds that bit more immediate and directed.

On this player DVD-Audio discs had a dynamic scale and separation that sets it apart from its peers. There's not that much more detail on offer, but it's all presented in a very well-balanced manner that shows off the quality of both the player and the format. DVD-Audio artists like Linkin Park and Missy Elliot can push this new format into brightness all too easily, but with the DV-757Ai handling replay, the sound leaves the disc sounding evenly balanced.
Meridian is the leader in high-end CD playback. Since we revolutionised the performance expectations of CD with the MCD-pro in 1984 we have steadily advanced the art of digital audio. Our reputation in the field is further confirmed by the choice of MLP (Meridian Lossless Packing) as the mandated standard for DVD-Audio.

The New Meridian 507 CD Player features 192kHz 24-bit DACs for outstanding performance and the very latest laser assembly optimised for CD, CD-R, and CD-RW. It comes packed with the Meridian MSR System remote.
In SACD mode, I felt the player was slightly greyer and grainier than with DVD-Audio. Not so badly as to undermine the format, but by comparison to standalone SACD players. The machine still highlights what both stereo and multi-channel SACD has to offer the audiophile, but a good dedicated SACD/CD player still has the edge, just.

CD performance follows along similar lines. The Pioneer makes a good attempt at playing CD, considering it can support all those other audio/video formats, but it isn't as temporally focussed or as natural sounding as a decent standalone CD player. It comes very close though; close enough for the casual user not to complain about its sonic abilities. The vast soundstage of the live recordings on Rare on Air was slightly compressed and the machinegun pace of Eminem softened somewhat, but no other DVD player can do an intrinsically better job.

On DVD-Video, it simply excels. The picture is precise and flexible (thanks to plenty of picture-shaping modes) and the addition of NTSC Progressive Scan is a boon to those with modern plasma displays and projectors, although it's more than good enough with regular TV sets through its RGB-compatible Scart socket. Likewise, the sound — whether Dolby Digital or DTS, through digital outputs or the built-in decoder — is big, bold and powerful when required, or subtle and articulate if the soundtrack calls for it.

The only downside to all this is that there are not many i-Link compatible amplifiers available at present. But that will change, and the Pioneer will remain one of the most significant DVD product launches this year. Future proofed and highly recommended.

Pioneer DV-757Ai £799
Pioneer GB Ltd.
Tel: 01753 789789
www.pioneer.co.uk

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Having passed on its first generation universal-play technology to Marantz and Onkyo, among others, Pioneer has raised the bar with its 'second generation' DV-757Ai. This player represents a significant advance on the DV-747, not least with the change from Crystal to a combination of Burr-Brown's PCM1738 (front) and PCM1702 (centre, sub and rear) DACs. The A-wtd S/N ratio is now some 108dB and while midrange distortion is broadly unchanged at -0.0009%, there's a worthwhile decrease in high frequency distortion to 0.002% (CD, 20kHz/0dBFS) and 0.009% at 40kHz with DVD-A.

The 40kHz plot not only demonstrates a marked improvement in dynamic range across the 20Hz-20kHz audioband but also reveals a substantial reduction (~40dB) in ultrasonic noise with DVD-A software. By way of comparison, this graph is reproduced with the same X/Y scaling as those for the Marantz and Onkyo players. It shows that while the Crystal DACs are responsible for the wash of requantisation noise in the latter, there's simply no avoiding the noise that's part-and-parcel of the SACD encode process (bright blue trace).

Erasing this noise may serve to highlight numerous digital 'spikes' in the dark blue DVD-A trace, but do bear in mind this measurement spans a monumental 130dB range. It's the reduction in ultrasonic rubbish that will ensure the DV-757Ai is the more consistent performer with different amplifiers.

Low 290psec jitter (also reproduced on the same scale as both the Marantz and Onkyo plots) reinforces this model's top-flight performance. The 88dB stereo separation at 20kHz is some 15dB short of what is expected, low-level resolution was some 0.8dB adrift with CD at -90dBFS and the digital filter offers just 79dB of attenuation (100dB+ is commonplace), but these could hardly be described as weaknesses.

All this, plus an i-Link interface (Sony's trademarked version of IEEE 1394) to facilitate a direct digital link to Pioneer's forthcoming VSA-AX10i amplifier, and the DV-757Ai is clearly setting the pace for all others to follow. Quite simply, this player has no competition. PM

Frequency Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distortion (CD)</th>
<th>Left</th>
<th>Right</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>-6dBFS</td>
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<td>-30dBFS</td>
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<td>0.065%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-60dBFS</td>
<td>0.14%</td>
<td>0.17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>-90dBFS</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
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Separation

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<tr>
<th>Separation</th>
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<th>20kHz</th>
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<tr>
<td>DVD-A</td>
<td>103dB</td>
<td>88dB</td>
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Noise (IEC A)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>108.7dB</th>
<th>107.7dB</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World Verdict</td>
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An undeniably impressive and important product. This universal player makes good work of everything and is highly recommended.

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Whilst separates are undoubtedly the choice for the committed audiophile, they may want something a little more user friendly elsewhere in the house. HFW listens to the latest two-box system from the masters of the art, Denon.

Denon have long been making 'mini systems' that whilst previously may not have matched similarly priced separates, have succeeded in getting pretty damned close.

The new D-F101 system that we review here consists of a two-unit 'core system', the DRA-F101, a well equipped stereo receiver, and the DCD-F101 CD player. In addition, we also used the matching SC-M101 loudspeakers, co-designed with and manufactured by none other than Mission. As a bonus there's a choice of added 'extendables' to expand the set up. Both a matching MiniDisc separate and cassette deck are available as an extra recording media component.

All the components have a highly polished finish, are well built but still remain sleek and attractive. Most striking is the aluminium front plate with inlaid soft reflective glass display windows. The matching 'speakers have a Beech finish ideal for today's style conscious abodes. All components have the same dimensions for perfect matching.

The DRA-F101 receiver features an improved power supply and new circuits and delivers 35 watts per channel. There are a total of five inputs including two tape loops and speaker connection are via 'real' terminals that can accommodate 4mm banana type plugs for high quality cable connection. The tuner section has RDS capability with RadioText, search, program type and Traffic Program ID and 40 presets can be programmed. Bass and treble controls are present in the amplifier section.

The other component in the core system, the CD player, is equally well equipped. It features a high performance 24bit/96kHz DAC, 8x oversampling digital filtering, optical digital output and the usual range of CD functions. There's also a daily alarm function and a full system remote that matches the sleek aesthetics of the set up.

Sound wise the D-F101 and 'speakers are a pretty impressive combination. With the Queens Of The Stoneage's 'Songs For The Deaf' on CD, the system gave a good, muscular and detailed performance. Vocals are clean and there's even sound staging to be had - although not to high-end extent! Classical music also fared well. It's not what this system is geared up for but it had a fair crack at reproducing the vast soundscapes of Bruckner. Tonal balance was again good and the complex, thick layers of the orchestration were surprisingly well produced. The tuner section was thrown into action and gave a good account of itself (not surprising considering the company's history with budget radio) with a full and clear sound on BBC Radio 3 and 4.

Gripes? Well it isn't the last word in detail or sheer depth of sound and high frequency information such as violins can be a tad thin. Also, it won't perhaps perform as well as entry level products from the likes of NAD, but it's a more room friendly design. Here's the kind of product that will sit happily in a dedicated hi-fi listener's bedroom or study without the need to be covered over when mates pop 'round for a tinny!

World Verdict

Knocks the competition sideways. A clean, focussed and neutral sound that belies the concept of the 'mini system'.

Denon D-F101 £349.99

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  - Arms: Rega 300/600/900; SME Series IV and V; Kuzma Sloldi; Triplanar; Cartridges: VanDenHul Grasshopper and Colibri; Kuzma KC Ref; EMT; Reson Rea and Elite; Cartridge Man Musicmaker; Benz-Micro including Ruby Open Air; Kondo Le J.
  - Amplifiers: Border Patrol; Canady; Sugden; Art Audio; Monarchy; Western Electric; Icon; Tom Evans Audio Designs; SJS.
  - CD Players: Wadia; Sugden; Primare; Resolution.

Cables and Tables by Living Voice.

- Sale of Part Exchange and Ex-dem Items
  - Dynaudio Confidence 3, Rosewood, perfect, boxed, giveaway.
  - Gamma Reference 5 speakers - gloss black - giveaway.
  - Mirage 890 - fine condition - give away.
  - Liton Kabel - fine condition - give away.
  - Art Audio Symphony (full chrome) 300 B SE 10 w. int.
  - Art Audio Vinyl 1 mm phono stage. Chrome.
  - Art Audio VP1 line pre. Chrome.
  - Tube Technology MAC mm and mc photo - as new.
  - Audio Innovations L2 line pre.
  - Alchemist Forsetti ADD 15 integrated amp - remote control.
  - Alchemist Forsetti ADD 20 stereo power amp.
  - AudioNote Scan Phono integrated. Serviced, new valves.
  - Cary A23, 8 watt stereo with Cary pre amp. New valves.
  - Unison Research Feather One line pre-amplifier.
  - Mark Levinson 334 Power amp. April 02 boxed perfect.
  - Red Rose Roxette 1 integrated, perfect, boxed.
  - Trichord Dino phono stage and power supply. June 02.
  - Audio Research LSD 5 line pre.
  - Pro Ac Tablette, cherry.
  - Kimshaw Perception 2 box pre-amplifier - Give Away.
  - Vott standard black - perfect - collectable joy.
  - Ortofon Rohmen - June '02 < 10hrs use.
  - Orson Bobman - June '02 <10hrs use.
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  - Art Audio Symphony (full chrome) 300 B SE 10 w. int.
  - Art Audio Vinyl 1 mm phono stage. Chrome.
  - Art Audio VP1 line pre. Chrome.
  - Tube Technology MAC mm and mc photo - as new.
  - Audio Innovations L2 line pre.
  - Alchemist Forsetti ADD 15 integrated amp - remote control.
  - Alchemist Forsetti ADD 20 stereo power amp.
  - AudioNote Scan Phono integrated. Serviced, new valves.
  - Cary A23, 8 watt stereo with Cary pre amp. New valves.
  - Unison Research Feather One line pre-amplifier.
  - Mark Levinson 334 Power amp. April 02 boxed perfect.
  - Red Rose Roxette 1 integrated, perfect, boxed.
  - Trichord Dino phono stage and power supply. June 02.
  - Audio Research LSD 5 line pre.
  - Pro Ac Tablette, cherry.
  - Kimshaw Perception 2 box pre-amplifier - Give Away.
  - Vott standard black - perfect - collectable joy.
  - Ortofon Rohmen - June '02 < 10hrs use.
  - Orson Bobman - June '02 <10hrs use.
  - Audio Innovations L2 line pre.
  - Cary 2A3, 8 watt stereo with Cary pre amp. New valves.
  - Linn Kabel - fine condition - give away.
  - Art Audio Symphony (full chrome) 300 B SE 10 w. int.
  - Art Audio Vinyl 1 mm phono stage. Chrome.
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  - Tube Technology MAC mm and mc photo - as new.
  - Audio Innovations L2 line pre.
  - Alchemist Forsetti ADD 15 integrated amp - remote control.
  - Alchemist Forsetti ADD 20 stereo power amp.
  - AudioNote Scan Phono integrated. Serviced, new valves.
  - Cary A23, 8 watt stereo with Cary pre am...
Like the Ebony and Ivory on Stevie Wonder's piano, you'll find DVD-Audio and SACD logos sitting together happily on the fascia of Onkyo's brand new DV-SP800 DVD 'universal' player. David Price listens in.

Before some of its rivals even had an audiophile DVD player, Pioneer came up with a dual format 'universal' DVD-Audio and SACD player last year. You could almost hear the grinding of corporate teeth across the entire Asia Pacific region.

It's a matter of some surprise, then, that the likes of Onkyo (and Marantz - see p38) have taken so long to catch up. Enter, finally, its DV-SP800 DVD-Audio and SACD player.

It packs a big punch for its £1,200 price tag. In addition to the aforementioned multi-format audio compatibility, there's full Lucasfilm THX-Ultra certification, a brace of Crystal multi-level delta-sigma 192kHz/24-bit audio DACs and Onkyo's Vector Linear Shaping Circuitry. Onboard DTS and Dolby Digital processing is provided, along with Onkyo's Direct-Digital Path switching to switch off that dreaded sound-destroying video circuitry. A welter of video goodies are also included, including progressive scan (via NTSC) and Analog Devices' 108MHz/12-bit Noise Shaped video DACs.

Weighing just 5kg, this player isn't built in the Japanese battleship mould - frankly, with all this gadgetry and gizmology there's precious little funds available for massive power supplies and cases hewn from pure copper. The fact that in the States it retails for just $1000 is further proof that this is a mass market design at heart, rather than a high-end audiophile product like, say, Marantz's SA-12. Still, it's a neat enough design, much like the aforementioned Pioneer in the look and feel of the brushed aluminium fascia. Inside, a high quality shielded cable feeds the rear panel digital output that can be run at 24bit, 96kHz resolution (although it won't run up to 192kHz or output DSD), Pioneer style.

Power it up and you're hit with a sea of blue light - as is Onkyo's current practice - contrasting with a nice, soothing, orange display. Usefully it can be dimmed down to invisibility, and when used in conjunction with the Video Off switch (which turns off all the televisual goings on), it makes a useful improvement to this player's sonic performance. Otherwise, this machine's facilities are pretty average, the ergonomics not ideal (another typically muddled Japanese fascia sadly) and the overall feel very average - it doesn't have the 'aura' of, say, a British made £1,000 hi-fi CD player.

Despite its THX Ultra Certification - which in truth isn't directly relevant to audiophile hi-fi anyway - it's not one of the sonic stars at the price. However, neither is this Onkyo particular poor at anything either. Essentially it's been pitched right down the middle of the road in a way only the Japanese can do - think 'Toyota Corolla' in a sober metallic blue, or suchlike.

Its CD performance is actually pretty good, to give it its due. Goldie's 'Timeless' sounded decently smooth and open, with a commensurate amount of midband detailing and reasonable dynamics. Unlike the risible standards of some big name DVD players of late (playing CD, that is) the Onkyo proved perfectly able to make a nice noise with no sign that it was on the backfoot. Bass wasn't terribly strong, but had a reasonably warm and generous nature - pleasantly soft, you could say. Midband was even and open with a fairly clear window onto the soundstage, with wide (if not particularly strong or well defined) imaging. Only in the treble - as per the Pioneer DV747A - did this player sound a little shut in, with a conspicuous lack of energy or definition. Still, at least it wasn't harsh.
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Shown here: T562 DVD/CD Player and T762 Surround Sound Receiver.

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powered by passion NAD
Moving to DVD-Audio was an ear opener. America’s ‘Ventura Highway’ at 24/96 MLP was a good deal tighter and better defined than the 16/44 performance. As is so often the case with DVD-A, it erred on the forward side, although it most emphatically wasn’t harsh in the way ‘old skool’ CD used to be. There’s an upper midband clarity and smoothness that really lets you hear into the mix which Compact Disc tragically denies you. Bass was obviously tighter and better articulated with plenty more energy, midband had a far deeper, wider and more commandeering soundstage that suddenly injected life into my system. Treble still sounded disappointingly digital however - it’s not coarse by any means, it’s just there’s no real joy to be had from listening to it. It still seems to ‘tinkle’ rather than shimmer as it should.

SACD was probably this player’s most musically convincing mode. The Rolling Stone’s ‘Jumping Jack Flash’ was a great advertisement for the format. Jagger’s voice, so often hard or nasal with CD, was surprisingly deep and natural (just like good vinyl, in fact), while the percussion (maracas, cymbals, etc) all sounded usefully close to real instruments - no digital approximations here. There was real timbre to the keyboards and wind instruments, and even a smidgen of tonal colour. Most importantly, the music became rather beguiling and rhythmically inviting - the song seeming to ebb quite naturally. On so many different players and in so many different systems, to my ears SACD comes out as a duller yet more ‘organic’ format, while DVD-A is more impressive yet less engaging. Let’s not forget that it also plays movies quite well too, so like the other ‘universal’ players emerging it really is a ‘jack of all trades’ which is no bad thing.

Overall, the Onkyo is a tough one, it doesn’t really do anything better that the substantially cheaper Pioneer DV-747 does, while it feels fussier to use and less aesthetically appealing. Although by no means a bad performer with any of its three major audio formats, it’s still less successful than Arcam’s FMJ CD23T at 16/44 and Denon’s DVD-3800 at DVD-A, both of which cost less. So purchasers should seek out this player for its universal nature above its sonics - if the former’s most important to you, then by all means audition it.

Onkyo DV-SP800 £1200
Onkyo UK
Tel: +44 (0)1788 570111
www.onkyo.net

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

This is the fourth universal player to market and the second, after Marantz’s DV8300 (also in this issue) to be based on Pioneer’s first-generation DV-747 chassis. Onkyo’s proprietary analogue filter (VLSC or Vector Linear Shaping Circuit) certainly has an impact on the player’s response which features a +1dB boost at 20kHz with CD but remains flat with SACD and DVD-A software. SACD sources are rolled-off in a more gentle fashion than is usual, so the ultrasonic response is just -4.5dB at 80kHz and -9.2dB at 100kHz. Nevertheless, by comparing the 40kHz plots here and with the Marantz DV8300, it’s also clear that Onkyo has engineered a 5dB ‘reduction’ in ultrasonic noise from its DV-SP800. As an indirect result, its response with 192kHz DVD-A software is fractionally ‘less’ extended than that of the Marantz DV8300, falling to -2.5dB at 80kHz.

Ultrasonic distortion is also lower at just 0.005% re. 40kHz/0dBFS even though, at midrange frequencies, it’s just a little higher at 0.0008%. The 40kHz plot also reveals a pair of sidebands at the base of the (dark blue) peak which are resolved in the jitter plot as supply-related distortions. The remaining, data-induced jitter peaks are indicated by red-coloured markers and contribute to a 1250psec total that’s about double the value suffered by Pioneer’s original DV-747.

Onkyo’s overall S/N ratio is lower too at 102dB which represents some 17bits rather than the 24bit potential of its DACs. In practice, noise from subsequent analogue stages tends to limit the available range of the very best players to less than 120dB. Incidentally, some of the best sounding CD players have a S/N of just 96dB...PM

Frequency Response

CD
-0.03dB (20Hz) to +1.0dB (20kHz)
SACD
-0.03dB (20Hz) to -9.2dB (100kHz)
DVD-A (192kHz)
-0.03dB (20Hz) to -2.5dB (80kHz)

Distortion

Left Right
-6dBFS 0.0008% 0.0008%
-30dBFS 0.040% 0.005%
-60dBFS 0.19% 0.18%
-90dBFS 4.3% 3.8%

Separation

1kHz 105dB 104dB
20kHz 104dB 103dB

Noise (IEC A) 101.8dB 102.3dB

Output

1.80V 1.81V

World Verdict

Multi-format capability is most welcome, middling sonics, ergonomics and build aren’t.

www.hi-fiworld.co.uk
Win one of five pairs of Mordaunt Short 914 floorstanding loudspeakers in this month's superb competition.

Mordaunt Short is an instantly recognisable name in the world of audio and their latest range of speakers have gained an enviable response from the industry and reviewers alike. And we have five pairs of their excellent 914 models to give away to five lucky readers!

Mordaunt Short was founded in 1967 by Norman Mordaunt and Rodney Short and three years later moved from London to Hampshire, where from its factory in Durnford Mill it produced the Festival, Carnival and Pageant models that helped the company gain the reputation it has now.

Throughout the eighties the company went on to introduce groundbreaking technology such as injection moulded baffles and surrounds. In 1987 the company was bought by the TGI group, which also had both Tannoy and Goodmans under its wing - it was at the time Europe's largest loudspeaker manufacturing group. This was soon followed, in 1990, by the Queen's Award for Export Achievement after an export growth to around forty countries - it was throughout this decade that the company launched various award winning products. Despite this, TGI sold the company, which was acquired by Audio Partnership on New Year's Eve 1998.

Mordaunt Short now see the arrival of DVD and SACD as a significant step forward for consumer electronics and an aid to their growth. They recognised the opportunity early on and are now at the forefront of developing loudspeakers to reflect this market trend. They were the first company to introduce a THX Select loudspeaker package, the THX500, which was also the first set up to use two dipoles - "a declaration of intent" according to sales and marketing director, Paul Masson. The company also have a shared distribution with Marantz in countries, including the UK, in which they can develop their new products in the world market. They have a new research and development facility in West Sussex (formerly a Lotus factory) where designer Graeme Foy heads the team.

The excellent 914 floorstanders that we're giving away are part of the 900 series. They use a 165mm bass/mid unit along with the company's own 25mm aluminium dome tweeter. It's a modern and stylish design with a sound quality that defies its price tag, indeed David Price, in his Hi-Fi World review called the 914 "true budget esoterica". He also noted that they are "musical to the core, more transparent than they've a right to be at the price, and yet impressively punchy and powerful too."

And you can get the chance to experience this by entering our competition where we have five pairs to give away! Simply answer the following questions correctly on a postcard and send it to the address at left by January 31st 2003. The first five correct answers out of the hat get the prizes. Good Luck!
Sevenoaks Sound & Vision

Starts 14.12.02

We stock a comprehensive range of DVD players, amplifiers, speakers, plasma monitors, televisions and projection systems from all the leading manufacturers. From starter systems to custom designed multi-room and home cinema installations, our friendly staff are available in all outlets to advise, demonstrate and guide you through the home entertainment jungle. If you're interested in home entertainment and want to avoid the confusion, contact your local Sevenoaks Sound and Vision outlet and experience more.

0% interest free option* is available on most products.

*Written details on request. Licensed credit brokers. Minimum balance £100. Subject to status.

MUSICAL FIDELITY

Tri-Vista Series

Designed to celebrate Musical Fidelity's twentieth anniversary, the new limited edition Tri-Vista series offers both audio excellence and value for money. The first products released are the Tri-Vista 300 Integrated Amplifier and the Tri-Vista CD/SACD Player, with the Tri-Vista Pre and Power Amplifiers following in 2003.

According to Musical Fidelity the Tri-Vista "Produces stupendous performance... No stone has been left unturned in our efforts to make the Tri-Vista series absolutely the best it can be in circuitry and physical layout, build quality and aesthetics."

** XQ Series

By combining technologies from their Reference and Q Series, KEF have introduced the new XQ speaker range. Featuring KEF Uni-Q"point source" arrays for unrivalled off-axis performance and 'super audio' Hypertweeters", the XQ range fully exploits the wide bandwidth of digital formats like SACD and DVD-A. The range comprises the XQ one and three stand mounters, the XQ five floorstanders and XQ two centre speakers. All XQ models are available in a variety of finishes.

48 Outlets Nationwide

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Turntables & Tuners

Arcam DIVA T61 Tuner £249.95
Denon TU260L MKII Tuner £99.95
Marantz ST4000 Tuner £109.95
Michell Gyro SE/RB300 Turntable £159.95
Project Debut II Turntable (£99.95)
Project RPM4 Turntable £129.95
Sony -; T-D777ES FM/DAB Tuner £324.95
Videologic DRX-601E DAB Tuner £499.95

RCD-02 CD Player
RA-02 Amplifier

RCD-02 CD Player £379.95 £349.95
RA-02 Amplifier £139.95

Aegis Evo One Speakers £179.95

ACOUSTIC ENERGY

The Aegis Ones are great speakers, to the extent that they were category winners in our 1998 awards. Since then a host of new models have raised the standards in the sub-£200 category, and the Aegis Ones soon went from stunner to also ran. AE’s response to that is an EVO version.

The Aegis Ones genes are clearly evident! The original’s refinement and bass weight are preserved and backed up with better openness and more free-flowing dynamic ability. The old speakers would have delivered a cool and calm version of Pink’s ‘Misundaztood’ set – they’d be enjoyable, but would lack a little drive and excitement.

The new speakers, however, address those limitations. Add authority and good stereo imaging to the list of plus points and it comes as no surprise to find these speakers at home with classical, too. Indeed, running through our test room’s extensive CD library we couldn’t find a genre that these AE’s weren’t happy playing.”

CD Players

Arcam DVA CD65T £369.95
Arcam DVA CD72T £449.95
Arcam DVA CD92T £899.95
Arcam FMJ CD23T £1199.95
Cyrus CD7 £799.95
Denon DCD405 £1299.95
Linn Akiko £99.95
Linn Akiko £199.95
Marantz CD400D £999.95
Meridian CD50 £1194.95
Meridian 568 £2099.95
Musical Fidelity X33 £1999.95
Musical Fidelity Tri-Vista SACD £3994.95
Rotel RCD1017D £499.95
Sony CDPX570 £99.95

Free Interconnect Cable* worth £60 with ALL CD Players over £300

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When Any Rotel CD & Rotel Amplifier Purchased Together

Free Speaker Cable* worth £30 with ALL Speakers over £170

Claim Free Goldring Ex-Static Cleaner Worth £12
with ALL Project Turntables

Debut II Turntable (Black) £114.95

"The original Debut turntable romped away with a Product of the Year Award in 1999, and the MKII version continues the extremely good work. It’s a simple affair, that’s easy to set up, but don’t let the price fool you - it sounds a whole lot more expensive than that. This is a fine turntable, and it clearly reveals the benefits of listening to vinyl, with a rich and detailed soundstage, and a good dynamic response.

It’s available in six funky colours, so you should find one to suit your decor, and at just a smidge over £100, you can have no excuse not to keep that old vinyl collection in employment for a good few years yet."
Amplifier Selection

Arcam A55 Plus Amplifier £369.95
Arcam A75 Plus Amplifier £469.95
Arcam FMJ A32 Amplifier £1149.95
Cyrus 5 Amplifier £449.95
Cyrus 6 Amplifier £599.95
Cyrus 8 Amplifier £799.95
Denon PMA805 Amplifier £1199.95
Linn Kollector Pre Amplifier £494.95
Linn LK95 Power Amplifier £494.95
Marantz PM4200 Amplifier £1399.95
Musical Fidelity A32 Pre Amplifier £999.95
Musical Fidelity A32 Power Amplifier £999.95
Musical Fidelity A308 Amplifier £1999.95
Musical Fidelity Tri-Vista 300 Amplifier £3994.95
Rotel RA-01 Amplifier £249.95
Sony TA-FE570 Amplifier £139.95

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FMJ AV8 & P7 £5499.95

Also Available NEW Arcam
ARCAM SOUND & VISION Best Buy 2002

DiVA CD82T CD Player
DiVA A85 Integrated Amplifier

DiVA CD82T "Arcam's lastest sounds like a more mature version of its little brother. On an initial listen the increased solidity and refinement are obvious, but over time the subtler..." 5*** September 2002

DiVA A85 "You'll have realised by now that we rather like this amp. It took us completely by surprise, and further..." 5*** March 2001

B&W Bowers & Wilkins
DM602S3 Speakers £299.95

B&W CDM NT Series • Prices start from £749.95

DRX-701ES Digital Tuner £249.95

This new tuner from the recently renamed Pure is based on the 2001 Award-winning Videologic DRX-601ES, but under the lid is an all-new third-generation digital radio engine, in the form of Frontier Silicon's Chorus FS1010. Its biggest advantages are lower energy consumption and above all cost - it's the major reason why the DRX-701ES is £100 less than last year's model.

The tuner uses 24-bit/192kHz conversion with 4x upsampling and data interpolation, and is powered by a low-noise toroidal transformer - such attention to sonic detail pays off. Digital outputs are provided on electrical and optical feed, but most people will use the analogue output, and these sound very good indeed. As usual the tuner is subject to the signal quality of the input, but when it is fed from a high-quality outdoor aerial and a good signal it is capable of a crisp, powerful and detailed presentation. Even more populist music stations like Radio 6 benefit from the mix of a neutral balance and fine weight, while speech is also neutral and easy to follow..." 5*** October 2002

Bowers & Wilkins

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**AYERS**

Free Interconnect Cable* Worth £100
When Any Cyrus CD & Amplifier Purchased Together

**Cyrus**

CD7Q CD Player
£1149.95
8 Integrated Amplifier
£799.95

Cyrus 7Q CD
"How it compares directly with the competition is a matter for a group test, but I can tell you now that it will be a close one, because the CD7Q is a fantastic CD Player, offering all you'd expect from a disc spinner at this price and more. The CD7Q's major upgrade from the class-leading CD7, its weighty, detailed sound puts it at the pinnacle of CD players at this price."  

Cyrus 8 Amplifier
The Cyrus 8 replaces the highly acclaimed Cyrus 7 amplifier. The 7 was described as "Fast and punchy with huge sacksful of subtlety" by What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision in November 1999. The new 8 has been further refined and upgraded to include more power.

**ROKSAN**

Kandy KA1 MKIII Amplifier
£544.95

Free Interconnect Cable* Worth £100
When Any Roksan CD & Roksan Amplifier Purchased Together

Roksan Kandy KA1 MKIII Amplifier
"When we last reviewed Roksan's Kandy integrated amp in February it fought off serious competition to come top in a Supertest. This is its replacement. The MKIII, internal changes include an uprated power supply for the preamp section and identical mono modules for the left and right power amp sections. Roksan also claims 50 percent lower distortion on line-level inputs and a whopping 150 percent less on the phono input. The rated power output is an impressive 120 watts per channel into 8 ohms, and this amp has a confident, muscular way with music that bears this out. But don't be fooled into thinking this amp is raw and unrefined. With Van Morrison's Down the Road the Kandy has the guts to render the performance exciting and dynamic, but also the guile to deliver subtle details.

The upgraded Kandy MKIII is an excellent amp, the MKII version was impressive, but MKIII is a stunner. It better all the amps here in the timing department, and has a wonderfully robust character that works well with all types of music. It manages to retain the good points of the MKII while adding extra resolution and subtlety. All the amps here have a place in the market. It's just that at £550 the Kandy really does set the pace."

**QUAD**

11L Speakers
£379.95

Free Speaker Cable* worth £50
with ALL Speakers over £200

11L Speakers at just 33cm tall, but the scale and authority of their performance is terrific. The laws of physics dictate bass extension limitations, but thanks to a clever dual rear firing port arrangement the 11LS plumb the depths with the determination of a ratter, even when placed in free space. If you're in the market for a pair of top quality standmounters these Quads are a must listen. Quite simply, they're good enough to scare the competition big time."

**MISSION**

Mission 780 £249.95

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MUSICAL FIDELITY

A3.2 Series

A3.2 CD Player £999.95
A3.2 Amplifier £979.95

Replacing the WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION Award Winning A3 CD and Amplifier, the new A3.2 models have been further refined and re-styled. The A3.2 CD Player now incorporates the same DAC, filter assembly and control mechanism as the highly-acclaimed Nu-Vista CD Player. The A3.2 Amplifier draws on experience gained through the development of the Nu-Vista M3 amplifier and as such has inherited many of its qualities, producing a sense of ease and flexibility that is normally only associated with far more expensive designs.

Free Interconnect Cable* Worth £150
When Any Musical Fidelity CD & Musical Fidelity Amplifier Purchased together

MONITOR AUDIO

Silver S6 Speakers £599.95

Free Speaker Cable* worth £70 with ALL Speakers over £500

British loudspeaker manufacturer Monitor Audio has introduced a replacement series for its acclaimed and award winning Silver Series speakers. "The aim has been to offer real advances in performance and value", says technical director Dean Hartley. "New models include the S1 and S2 standmounters, the S6, S8 and S10 floorstanders.

"With a close-miked track such as James Taylor's Line 'Em Up from SACD they really deliver the character of the singer's voice and they're just as expressive with the cultured rhythms of Groove Armada's latest outing, having just the right mix of rhythmic control and fluidity... But amazingly the best is yet to come: these are simply beautiful speakers for classical music, once a few days' thrashing has tamed their initial rawness. With the latest release of Holst's The Planets on DVD-Audio, they thunder out Mars with true conviction. These are rather magical speakers, with a poise and grace that belies their ability to turn on the power when required. Pair them with a good CD player and suitably accomplished amp, and you won't go far wrong."

Pioneer

PDR609 CD-RW Recorder £199.95

While it looks simple, the Pioneer has an impressive array of features, including the handy double-speed disc finalization and CD-Text compatibility. Internally, the PDR609 is a big step up from the Award-winning PDR-509 it replaced: the DAC is now a 24-bit/96kHz number, aided and abetted by Pioneer's Legato Link conversion technology, and it has 24-bit A-to-D conversion, which is ideal for copying your vinyl onto CD. If this is your plan, you'll appreciate that the Pioneer makes it easy to create first-rate copies from any source, helped by the manual recording-level controls. It was hard to tell our copy of Jim White's No Such Place from the original.

While the Pioneer's replay quality can't match the Marantz, it costs £120 less, which would buy you a lot of blank discs. If you've already got a dedicated CD player, we'd go with this recorder.

We always try to ensure our prices are highly competitive. In the event you can find the same products and excellent service at a lower price, please bring it to our store managers' attention.
Free Interconnect Cable® Worth £150

When TAG AV3OR & TAG 100x5R Purchased Together

AV3OR AV Processor £1799.95
100x5R Power Amplifier £2994.95

TAG McLaren's AV3OR AV Processor is aimed at the home cinema enthusiast who is concerned with keeping up-to-date with the latest surround formats. When partnered with TAG's 100x5R Power Amplifier it makes an exceptional combination.

According to What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision magazine in their October 2002 issue: "In use, the AV3OR, connected to TAG's 100x5R power amp, is superb. True, it can't quite match the clarity and power of the latest specification TAG flagship, the AV32Rbp-192, but by any AV standard this is a very high-end piece of kit, with excellent impact and fine detail across a range of movie soundtracks from Once Upon A Time in America to the explosive actionfests. Channel steering is immaculate, and the sense of a soundfield wrapped around you - even in 5.1-channel mode - entrancing, with spine-tingling rear-channel effects. The fine Pro Logic II implementation serves music as well as it does non-discrete AV soundtracks, and with an SACD machine hooked up via the 5.1 channel inputs, the lack of coloration and sheer bass oomph is extraordinary." — What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision October 2002

ACOUSTICS

Pro 50 Subwoofer (Black) £299.95
Pro 100 Subwoofer (Black) £599.95

MJ Acoustics is a new company based in Cambridgeshire. During the past year, they have received favourable reviews across their product range. The Pro 50 was awarded ‘Best Buy’ by What Hi-Fi Sound and Vision in their 2002 awards. "This is a black satin finished miniature sub that nevertheless packs a 20cm long-throw driver and a 50w MOSFET amp designed for good power reserves even at high levels... And it sounds great whether with the floorshaking basslines of dance music, the stem of rock or an orchestral swell, when correctly set-up, the Pro 50 provides a subtle underpinning even of big loudspeakers. The bass it delivers is well extended and tightly controlled with both music and movies, giving a subjective impression of greater clarity across the frequency range, the added low-end complemented by better midband focus. It's truly thrilling stuff." — What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision Awards 2002

Claim £120 Off The Speakers* of your choice when purchased at the same time as the Linn Classik Music System. Minimum Value £300

The Speakers* of your choice when purchased at the same time as the Linn Classik Music System. Minimum Value £300

Linn Classik Music System £999.95

The Classik Music System is an alternative to the sound and looks of mass market compact systems. Designed to be useful throughout the home, the Classik is simple and stylish with all the advanced features needed to satisfy the most demanding hi-fi enthusiast or discriminating music lover.

"Since the Scottish company added a tuner to the amp/CD player, mouths have gaped even wider in appreciation. The addition of colour options panders to the public’s taste for kit to match their interior design, but it doesn’t just look lovely in the lounge: the Classik sounds simply marvellous. Boasting fine impact and drive, it retains its grip even as it thumps out rock and dance tracks. Ask it to play quiet acoustic music and its smooth, liquid presentation impresses still further. The Classik offers the performance you’d expect from high quality separates in one lovely package - this is a very superior product." — What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision Awards 2001

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For the audiophile, DVD-Audio is manna from heaven. Twenty years after the music industry brought us the sonically flawed CD, it has redeemed itself with an excellent ‘advanced resolution’ format — right? Wrong, says David Price in the second installment of our DVD-A feature..

For many audiophiles reared on top quality turntables, the 1990s were wilderness years. Having acquired a taste for music reproduced in the manner it was recorded, it came as no small disappointment to find that the format we were suddenly being asked to switch to – Compact Disc - was sonically inferior to what we’d become accustomed. We increasingly found ourselves unable to get what we wanted on our preferred format of vinyl, while being told by hardware and software manufacturers alike either that we should, or that we’d have to, move to CD because it was ‘the future of recorded music’. As the nineties progressed it became ever harder to find new releases on vinyl, as CD increasingly became the only format around.

The announcement of DVD-Audio was a bolt from the blue. Just as many of us had given up hope of ever getting decent sound from CD, here was the promise of a format that addressed the fundamental flaw of our silver discs – its prehistoric 16bit, 44.1kHz PCM digital coding system. Reading the specs of the proposed new system, it seemed as if all our Christmases had come at once. Not only did it offer 24bit, 192kHz resolution in stereo, but a 5.1 surround mix in 24bit, 96kHz was provided too, in full uncompressed PCM using Meridian’s Lossless Packing system.

The key problem that many had with CD sound arose from its 16/44 digital resolution which offered a frequency range that barely reached 20kHz. Vinyl, on the other hand, was capable of considerably higher, although at the time of CD’s inception this wasn’t thought significant, as it’s generally agreed that human hearing only stretches to around 20kHz.

Subsequently however, many acousticians have come to believe that humans can ‘feel’, if not ‘hear’, well above this. As a result, the new DVD-Audio format was designed to go right up to 96kHz. More importantly however, is that the PCM digital coding system gets distinctly ‘noisy’ as it reaches the upper limits of its bandwidth – precisely where the ear is most sensitive with CD. By extending its frequency response right up to 96kHz, DVD-A gets ragged far out of the range of human perception, making for a cleaner and smoother sound.

All this looked like the stuff of audiophile dreams back in the late nineties – which is precisely what we were worried about. Here was a superb new format that hi-fi buffs would love, which almost invariably meant the commercial kiss of death. Frankly, when was the last time the music industry had given a stuff about sound! The only moment the subject crossed its corporate mind was at the time of CD’s launch, when it was famously touted by Philips as having “pure, perfect sound forever” - and we all new what a hollow ring that had.

MANNA FROM HEAVEN

Amazingly, DVD-Audio was launched. In addition to the aforementioned ‘advanced resolution’ digital audio tracks, the new discs boasted enhanced content such as interviews, behind-the-scenes studio footage, and music videos, as well as photo galleries, liner notes, lyrics and more. Fears of poor ‘backwards compatibility’ were assuaged by their ‘universal’ compatibility — DVD-A discs would play on all DVD machines (including the latest generation of games consoles like Sony’s PS-2, GameCube and X-BOX). On standard DVD video machines they’d give Dolby AC3 quality, while DVD-Audio (or universal) players would give the full 24/192 smash.

John Trickett, Chairman of the 5.1 Entertainment Group called it, “an amazing music experience... like having heard in black and white all of your life and now being able to have colour. Once you have heard it there’s no going back.”

The worries that the public
A3.2 Series.
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wouldn't want yet another new audio format were tempered by the massive - and unexpected - success of DVD video. By the end of 2002, 70 million DVD players had already been sold, amounting to forty percent of homes in the United States. If the DVD drives built into PCs and game consoles are included then this number almost doubled! All this meant that the 'basics' were in place for the format to succeed - music buyers could play multichannel DVD-A discs on their existing kit and then upgrade to 'advanced resolution' machines at a later date to release the full potential of their software.

By the beginning of this year, the DVD-A programme was growing apace, with a surprisingly harmonious relationship between hardware and software manufacturers. With thirty DVD-A players on sale in the UK and forty in The States, casual observers could be forgiven for concluding that, seemingly for the first time in the history of recorded music, 'both sides' are working together to bring punters better sounding music. Over four hundred titles are now available world-wide from the likes of Silverline, Warner Music, EMI and Immergent. John Trickett adds that, "don't be deceived by what you see today on the shelves - there is an avalanche about to happen."

HARD SELLING

There's no doubt, then, that DVD-A has an awful lot going for it in terms of technology and functionality. But for all its dazzling qualities, commercial success is still not assured. Formats like Digital Compact Cassette and MiniDisc have shown that people no longer buy into technologies that can't demonstrate obvious, everyday practical advantages over existing systems. The new format faces a welter of questions that its proponents must answer convincingly before it can succeed.

First, how will the ordinary buying public appreciate the difference between 'standard' DVD and DVD-Audio formats? As most punters have little idea about the sonic merits of DVD, how can they be expected to invest in DVD-A? Early adopters and audiophiles may be prepared to pay for 'advanced resolution' digital but getting High Street buyers to understand why they should is a challenge. Here, the fact that DVD-A shares the immensely popular DVD platform gives it a real fillip. Because every 'advanced resolution' disc features a multichannel mix encoded in either Dolby Digital or dts in addition to uncompressed PCM, every existing DVD machine can play the new discs, albeit not in the 'advanced resolution' quality. This - according to Meridian's Bob Stuart - gives buyers a "way in" to the format; they can buy the discs now, enjoy the multichannel mix and get the full benefit when they later invest in a DVD-A machine.

He adds that with the exception of "£100 players from Tescoes", the next generation of DVD spinners will all be DVD-Audio compatible anyway because, "the cost of adding DVD-A functionality to DVD video machines is really only the extra price of the sockets and DACs, so in the medium term this won't even be an issue". In a sense then, he believes DVD-A will catch on almost 'by osmosis' - simply because all players can play the new discs now and will have full DVD-A functionality soon, it will become the default music format. This makes sense, but remains to be seen.

Ironically, there's a sense that those pushing DVD-A are hiding their light under a bushel. Whilst audiophiles crave the format for its fine sonics, and as Bob Stuart points out, "some of the music labels are very keen about the sound - particularly the artists", this point doesn't seem to register with the general music buying public. "It is difficult. Let's face it - many people are satisfied with the sound of an MP3 file", agrees John Trickett. To wit, the multichannel aspect is really being pushed. "We all feel that the thing that would lure the market - especially the young - is surround sound", says Bob Stuart.

Another factor challenging DVD-A's future success is Super Audio Compact Disc. Whilst DVD-A titles are now being rolled out with aplomb, there's no denying the large number of titles available on SACD particularly coming from the Japanese market - and the clarity a focus of Sony's hardware marketing strategy. By contrast, Bob Stuart is not impressed with "the miserable job" originally made of launching DVD-A. Still, he rebuts SACD as a serious challenge to DVD-A, citing the latter's technical superiority (unlike SACD's DSD coding, DVD is "pure and uncompressed"), additional functionality and natural orientation towards multichannel.

Many of DVD-A's proponents appear to regard SACD as more about Sony and Philips' response the expiry of CD patents. "At the risk of being somewhat cynical - has to consider the motivation. If owned the patent on CD I would not be terribly enthusiastic about another format that has the pot to remove my income stream", so John Trickett.

THE BOTTOM LINE

If we are being conspiratorial however, there's plenty of evidence to suggest that the interest shown in DVD-Audio by the music industry is more about its own parlous state than the new format's intrinsic technical excellence. Global music sales are in deep decline, down from $37 billion in 2000 to $33.6 billion in 2001 [source: IFPI], but there's absolutely no evidence to suggest this is down to any lack of interest in music on the part of buyers. Rather, music consumption is actually up, with 6 billion tracks consumed per month in 1996 and 9.3 billion in 2001 [source: IFPI].
This is down to the combination of free internet music downloading and, more importantly, the proliferation of CD copying. The upshot is that global music piracy is now costing the music business $1.9 billion. This is engendering a ‘culture of free music’ which is “terrifying” the industry, to use Bob Stuart’s phrase. For example a recent survey for market research organisation Gartner G2 revealed that 88% of respondents said they believed it legal to make copies of CDs for personal backup use while 77% felt of respondents said they believed it legal to make copies of CDs for personal use in another device. It is personal backup use while 77% felt of respondents said they believed it legal to make copies of CDs for personal use in another device. It is becoming ever harder, it seems, to get music fans to pay for music.

What DVD-A brings to the party is robust copy protection. Bob Stuart intimates that two major music labels have professed a desire to “be out of CD within five years because they want better copy protection. After a couple of years of ludicrous attempts to copy-protect CD, the big guns are saying right now we want to go for this”. Of course, DVD-A isn’t impossible to pirate, but it’s not ridiculous easy either, not least because MP3s don’t come mixed in 5.1 channel surround.

For all its ‘advanced resolution’ multichannel sound, ‘enhanced’ content and universal compatibility, DVD-A is being given the hard sell because of its robust copy protection. For a recording industry flailing in the face of MP3 and CD-R, DVD-Audio is the obvious way ahead. Compact Disc, thanks to its vast market penetration, low ‘added value’ and ‘copy-friendly’ nature, is something many industry figures would rather forget. It is DVD-A that they want to see succeed. As Naim Audio’s Paul Stephenos succinctly puts it, “copyright issues are the big driver for the big guys, and the multichannel disc releases help this cause.”

David Price talks to John Trickett, Chairman of the 5.1 Entertainment Group about selling DVD-Audio.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF DVD-A TO YOUR AVERAGE MUSIC BUYER?
An amazing music experience… DVD Audio works just like a CD — you put the disk into the machine and it plays. If you wish you can also switch on the TV and then get access to a host of bonus features including such things as an artist commentary, lyrics, behind the scenes/making of videos, never seen before photographs, bonus tracks, live performances, alternative mixes, charts, guitar tabs … the sky’s the limit.

WHO’S DRIVEN THE DEVELOPMENT OF DVD-A — ARTISTS, STUDIOS OR RECORD COMPANIES?
All of the above. DVD Audio was originally conceived as an extension of the DVD format in the planning stages back in 1995. At that time over 40 companies including the major hardware manufacturers, technology companies and record labels were involved in the process to develop something that would provide an experience that far surpassed anything that was then available. Today the level of cooperation between those involved is unprecedented — artists, labels, studios, manufacturers, pressing plants — you name it. Everyone feels what is possible and are working together to make it a reality. From the perspective of the artist — I’ve been fortunate to be in the studio with a number of major artists as they heard 5.1 surround sound and DVD-A for the first time. Without exception they have had the same creative epiphany — this is the way that music should be heard. There are many artists today who are chosen to focus exclusively on DVD Audio for a few simple reasons: [i] SACD requires that the consumer buy a new piece of hardware, DVD does not. [ii] The DVD format is a household identity. DVD Audio is a natural extension of that brand name that is synonymous with better quality. DVD Audio is a natural extension of that brand identity. [iii] DVD Audio permits bonus features which adds to the experience of the consumer and gives them more of a reason to buy albums. SACD does not. At a fundamental level I see DVD Audio as being the mass market format of choice.

WHAT’S YOUR POSITION IN THE DVD-A vs. SACD DEBATE?
Both sound fantastic. Personally I find that SACD smothers out a lot of the end ranges of the spectrum and it is somewhat like listening to music through rosy coloured glasses whereas I feel that DVD Audio does a better job in reproducing the tonal quality of the original master tapes. In my opinion the sonic difference is largely immaterial to the average consumer. My company owns or has licensed over 300 albums (with many more coming in the next few months) all but a few of which we have the rights to release in both formats. We have chosen to focus exclusively on DVD Audio for a few simple reasons:
[i] SACD requires that the consumer buy a new piece of hardware, DVD does not. [ii] The DVD format is a household name that is synonymous with better quality. DVD Audio is a natural extension of that brand identity. [iii] DVD Audio permits bonus features which adds to the experience of the consumer and gives them more of a reason to buy albums. SACD does not. At a fundamental level I see DVD Audio as being the mass market format of choice.
If it's a dual format DVD player you're after, Marantz's DV8300 DVD-A/SACD spinner fits the bill nicely, says Noel Keywood.

If the music industry is polarising into SACD and DVD-A high resolution formats, and you want something better than CD, then a dual-standard player like Marantz's DV8300 reviewed here is the way to go. The problem is price - the new DV8300 costs £1400, which is a lot of wonga for any silver disc spinner. The Marantz plays both SACD and DVD-Audio discs. It also handles CD of course, including mini 8cm types which I tend to favour, as well as CD-R/RWs, video CDs, MP3 discs (ISO9060, but not VBR) and DVD-R/RW (but not DVD+R/RW). As you might expect from such an expensive machine, there is a Component Video output through three phono sockets, plus two Composite Video outputs, an S-Video and two Scarts, one with RGB. The machine can output either PAL or NTSC through its composite outputs, or both for dual system TVs. It also provides progressive scan via the component outputs as an option, and in fact some of the £1,400 asking price goes into advanced video processing, much of which is user adjustable through a Video Adjust setting. This is an eyeball roller - you can even reduce mosquito noise (MNR - Mosquito Noise Reduction - I kid you not!), most effective when watching David Attenbrough I imagine! If video turns you on, this is the machine for you.

On the audio side, on-board decoding is provided for Dolby Surround Sound and dts, analogue being available from rear phono sockets. As always, the player will mix down to stereo as an option. There are electrical and optical digital outputs, but note that all DVD-Audio and SACD is output only through the analogue outs. Via digital link DVD-Audio is downmixed to stereo and 24/192 is downmixed to 24/96.

Surround-sound 'speaker settings are comprehensive, with both speaker size and delay (i.e. distance from listener) adjustable over a wide range of 0.3m to 9m for the fronts, and -6m to +2m for the rears. Speakers cannot be individually adjusted, except the subwoofer, which can also be switched off. A test signal is provided to aid set-up, and that includes channel gain so that different power amps can be used for front and rear.

You don't have to worry about video quality with the DV8300 - it is superb. I use Scart/RGB/progressive for best quality, but even interlaced was fine, if not as silky smooth. Pressing the remote's Video Adjust button accesses all the picture adjustments whilst a disc is playing, so you can see changes immediately. Indeed the Marantz offers one of the best pictures I have seen to date, well ahead of Denon's highly rated DVD3800. In (don't laugh) Jimmy Neutron (which I am forced to watch a lot) colours were denser, with better contrast and seemingly more luminous than I have hitherto seen. Outdoor scenes in Dark Blue World looked natural and rich. Detail was superb, even in shadows. Of course, fine differences in video colour level settings affect our perceptions of a picture, so I'll add the caveat that the Marantz was superb 'as set', but it is undoubtedly a fine video player in absolute terms.

Whilst in some ways the Marantz DV8300 was inferior in its handling of DVD-Audio to Denon's DVD3800, the situation isn't a simple one. The Denon was poor with CD, so poor that I chose not to use it as a CD player. Measurement shows the Marantz is far more linear in its replay section, born out by its decent CD sound which is clean but a little bright, well detailed and with nicely portrayed depth perspective. Bass was a little mellifluous perhaps, but entirely satisfactory all the same. Violins in both digital and analogue recordings of Wagner highlights came over as vibrant and well separated, but also smoothly too. Drums and bass in Angelique Kidjo's 'Agolo' had all the power you normally get from a decent player.

Denon's big machines have a 'rock solid' bass quality that eludes the Marantz, which simply didn't have the visceral punch of the drums on Toy Maicinee's 'Turn it on Salvador' (DVD-A). Still, it wasn't so far behind as to be seriously wanting. Fleetwood Mac's Rumours (DVD-A) came over very well. This new transcription sounds a little bright but it still has the fulsome bass of the original - and the Marantz lost none of it, while also sounding pure across the top end.

SACDs were generally easier on the ear and more fluid than DVD-A discs, which is how the two formats generally pan out sonically. The
Marantz changed nothing here, getting equally good results from both.

As the Denon’s clarity and cleanliness faded in my memory, and the Marantz DV8300 very compellingly strode through just about every test I threw at it (including fine CD replay), I couldn’t help but end up admiring it. This player does everything — and does it well. Both impressive and very relaxing to listen to, Marantz have used their considerable knowledge and ability to ensure that the background weaknesses it has — see our Measured Performance — don’t in practice make themselves much known. However, as Paul Miller makes quite clear in our Measured Performance, at least in audio terms, better is available for less elsewhere.

While I would rate this player comfortably above Denon’s DVD3800 in terms of sound and video quality — making it well worth its price — it still faces stiff competition from the likes of Pioneer’s £500 cheaper DV-757Ai. It remains a great player though, one which I have been happy to use at length. To date I can only say this of a select few players — so many machines I’ve encountered seem to have near-fatal weaknesses in one area or another, but not so this Marantz. It might not be perfect, but it is very, very good.

Marantz DV8300 £1,400

www.marantz.co.uk

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

This is the second sample of Marantz’s DV8300 that I have tested, and while their general specifications are similar, this second unit does suffer from a marked increase in supply-related noise and jitter. Jitter has increased from the ~680psec expected to ~2090psec while, even with A-weighting, the overall S/N ratio has fallen from 107dB to 103dB. These extra peaks are clearly visible in the jitter plot (picked-out by a wave of blue coloured markers) which, otherwise, is comparable to that from Onkyo’s DV-SP800 (see page XX). This type of jitter will add more than a little warmth to the sound of the DV8300 but is just as likely to soften its bass and compromise the clarity of its imaging.

This noise is also visible as a ‘clump’ at the base of the 40kHz signal in the second graph (dark blue trace). Because the DV8300 uses Pioneer’s first-generation DV-747 player as its foundation, it also shares the same pattern of ultrasonic noise which, typically, is worse with SACD (bright blue trace) than DVD-A. Of course, SACD’s increased noise does serve to camouflage any distortion harmonics of signals above 15kHz or so, although this amounts to just 0.0125% at 40kHz with DVD-A.

Through the midrange, distortion is as low as 0.0004% with all CD, SACD and DVD formats just as its low-level linearity holds true to +/-0.2dB (-90dBFS) and +/-1.9dB (-110dBFS). The increased SACD noise is at least partly explained by Marantz’s gentler analogue filtering which leaves the <response> just -2.6dB at 60kHz, -7.6dB at 80kHz and -16dB at 100kHz. While this is more than ‘flat’ enough for human ears, the DVD-A response is, as expected, flatter still with a mere -1.7dB dip at 80kHz! In practice, while the DV8300 offers little advantage over Pioneer’s original DV-747 the variation in performance between samples suggests it has not fully settled into production. Will the real DV8300 please stand up?

PM

Frequency Response
CD -0.02dB (20Hz) to +0.06dB (20kHz)
SACD -0.02dB (20Hz) to -16.3dB (100kHz)
DVD-A -0.02dB (20Hz) to -1.7dB (80kHz)

Distortion

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<td>-6dBFS</td>
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<td>-30dBFS</td>
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<td>-90dBFS</td>
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Separation

| 1kHz | 105dB | 104dB |
| 20kHz | 107dB | 108dB |

Noise (IEC A) 103.1dB 102.9dB

Output 2.00V 2.00V
Pathos Acoustics have always had great taste when it comes to styling and the new Logos integrated from the Italian company is a real feast for the eyes. Will it feast the ears, though, asks Alan Sircom?

Pathos and Logos are two out of the three types of persuasion of classical rhetoric; just add 'ethos' to complete the set. Pathos is an appeal to emotion whereas Logos is an appeal to reason (and ethos is an appeal to the character of the person).

That seems to be about right; the company Pathos makes fantastic-looking products that appeal to the heart, while the £2,495 Logos integrated amplifier is a logical choice for many systems. Styling of the Logos makes you wonder if Frank Lloyd Wright ever died. It has the gorgeous lines of the Guggenheim Museum or Fallingwater, not the bluff square exterior of your average integrated amplifier. Some touches are pure Art Deco, especially the heatsinks that spell out the Pathos name; when the amp is picked up, these leave an almost-indelible reminder of the company name in your palms. Then add the curved light grey front, the twin tubes in a mirrored V sitting back from the wood centre panel with the name, main knob and LED display. Short of a very select handful of other components of similarly elegant design, this will be the product to draw all the attention in any hi-fi system.

Beneath this stylish exterior is a hybrid design typical of the Pathos, er, ethos. It's a pre/power in a single chassis and a no-feedback design. The MOSFET based dual mono output stage is claimed to deliver a healthy 110Watts into eight Ohms, doubling perfectly into four Ohms to give 220Watts. The literature suggests that the output transformers are 'oversized'. After wrangling with this massive, sharp-edged beastie I wouldn't dispute this claim.

The preamplifier stage sits firmly in the Class A realm, using a tasty 100-step digital volume control which features a network of high-precision laser-trimmed resistors in place of the more commonplace potentiometer. Not only does this make for spot-on channel balance, it prevents tonal change through the sweep of the volume control. It also means the volume control operates at the merest twist of the knob - which looks and feels very cool indeed.

It's the preamp section where the hybrid part of the amplifier lies. There are a pair of ECC 82 double triodes in fancy chrome protectors which drive the preamplifier stage in Class A. This section has a pair of balanced inputs, plus five conventional (i.e. unbalanced) inputs.

There's even a remote control hewn out of solid wood. It looks neat and elegant, but with no instructions at all, using it is down to guesswork and then memory.

This amplifier's hybrid sound is truly magical across mid and high frequencies, presented seemingly without favouritism but with an honest three-dimensional neutrality that forces the listener into a mixing-desk accurate soundstage. Better still, this amplifier sounds good while conveying a mass of detail. Few amplifiers get this much information from a source without sounding a bit stark, etched or somehow unappealing; most are amps you will respect rather than like. Then along comes the Logos and all bets are off. You get the information retrieval of a
SPIRIT

genuine detail-hound product, but
that info is so damn musical that you
just can’t help listening to more.

As a hi-fi reviewer, this quality
makes this a bit of a nemesis product
— you sit down with your pad and
try to jot down notes about the
performance and end up listening to
another disc, and another, and
another… It manages to combine
high-end sheen and oodles of grunt
with a degree of happy listenability
that often characterises good budget
products. This delicate balance
between the smooth tones and
resolute solidity of high-end
performance and the almost raw fun
of cheaper gear comes across
whatever is played through the
Logos. However, anything with plenty
of vocals – like the arch weirdness of
The Polyphonic Spree – has a
fantastic sense of layering and articu-
lation that makes you hear every
breath of the dozen or more white
kaftan’d singers.

Bass is a slight issue, but only if
you partner the Logos with true full-
range speakers. Most hi-fi designs
have strongly rolled off bass and the
thickness of the Logo’s bottom end
enhances and complements that roll
off, making speakers sound fuller,
warmer and a bit more musical. Stick
a ‘real’ full-
range
speaker in
the system
and that full,
warm and
musical sound turns
fat, syrupy
and
ponderous, especially when played
loud with something with a bit of
bottom-end welly, such as Gorillaz vs
Spacemonkez dubbed up remix
album. This made me wish for a bit of
lean in my musical bacon, as it
sounds rather too packed with The
Full English bloac. But, as this would
mean partnering a two-and-a-half-
grand amplifier with ten g’s plus
worth of loudspeaker system, most
Logos users will never discover that
chubbiness; instead, they will marvel
at all that extra richness and tonality
to the bottom end.

You cannot sum up a product
like the Logos in one word, but there
are words that keep re-emerging —
and one of those is ‘bouncy’. The
bouncy sense of rhythm (even if that
is produced by a slight thickening of
the bottom end) gives even dense
classical music the sort of groove Ry
Cooder would be proud of. Yet, it
doesn’t force a rhythmic structure
on the music played, it merely digs
out a beat no matter how
camouflaged that beat may be. Such
infectious beat structures are the
stuff of dreams for most valve
designs, but come as standard here.

If the Logos only sounded slightly
as good as it looked, it would more
than justify the price tag. However,
sprinkle in that wonderful mid-band
transparency, vocal articulation and
natural imagery and the Logos starts
to prove that beauty isn’t only skin
deep. Unless you have top-class full-
range speakers, this is an elegant and
highly recommended choice.

Pathos Logos £2,499
UKD
Tel: +44 (0)1753 652669
www.ukd.co.uk

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The Logos certainly has plenty of
power, producing 128watts into
8ohms and 210watts into 4ohms.
Power supply regulation was good
and it will go loud. Measuring
distortion, to see how it handled
heavy current delivery into a low
load showed, however, that at full
gain the front-end triode valve
produce quite a lot of hum and its
harmonics on the output. Since this
was gain dependent, its audibility
depends upon the gain of a
preceding pre-amp and the setting of
the Logos volume control, but all
the same the amplifier should have
been quieter. Input triodes only hum
when the base used lacks critical
screening or the heater is a.c.

This apart, there is a little
distortion with extended harmonics
at high output, but the amplifier is
clean enough at low output.
Bandwidth was an extended 150kHz
with good low end extension down
to 5Hz.

The Logos measured fairly well,
with the exception of hum from the
triodes. NK

Power
CD/tuner/aux.
Frequency response
Separation
Noise
Distortion
Sensitivity
dc offset

128watts
6Hz-150kHz
90dB
-81dB
0.04%
800mV
2/5mV

World Verdict

Stonking looking and highly detailed
sounding, the Logos is a lot of amplifier
for the money. High end at a sensible
price.
The Revolver R33 is the first product from the new, re-vitalised company. Dominic Todd listens to this new two-way standmount.

Those with longer audio memories may well remember Revolver. Along with other smaller UK hi-fi companies they were a brand that went to the wall during the early 90s as turntable sales dramatically declined. However, just as many other names have been resurrected, so too has Revolver. The company behind the resurrection, The Acoustic Partnership, is based in Cornwall and includes amongst its crew an ex-Heybrook man, Mike Jewitt. It’s therefore not that surprising to see a range of speakers as their first venture back into the hi-fi market.

The £500 R33 here faces extremely tough competition. There are literally dozens of ‘speakers around this price point, and designs such as the Quad L Series have moved the game on in terms of what can be expected in both finish and sound quality.

Initially, the Revolvers came as something of a disappointment. After the beautifully veneered cabinets of many rivals I find the laminate and grey cloth finish of the R33s rather cheap and impractical. Surely it wouldn’t take long for that cloth to rip and stain in most households, especially those with curious cats!

Personal issues of aesthetics aside, though, the R33s appear well made. The MDF cabinet is solid and internally braced. The hardwired crossover uses some decent quality components, although it’s a shame that a higher grade of internal speaker cable couldn’t have been used. The drive units are pretty much what you’d expect at this level: there’s a custom designed glass fibre woofer, accompanied by an aluminium tweeter with ring magnet.

It’s a competent design, yet one that boasts little to differentiate it from a proliferation of rivals.

As ever in high fidelity though, even the unlikeliest looking designs can spring a surprise when it comes to sound quality and I’m pleased to say that this was very much the case here. Tom Jones and The Stereophonics’ ‘Mama told me not to come’, revealed a vibrant, upfront sound that appealed to me from the off. Much of its appeal lay in sheer transparency: Vocals were wonderfully open and projected well into the room, clear of the rest of the mix. Separation and sound staging were excellent, even for a design of this price range. There were times when I could easily believe it was a ‘speaker of twice the price I was listening to, such was the R33’s insight into the music.

Thankfully, their bass response had plenty of weight, otherwise the balance could have tipped just a little too much towards being forward. As it was, I found the balance ideal, at least for the average UK sized living room.

Excellent timing was a characteristic of Richard Thompson’s ‘Hand on me’. There was just enough bass to push the strong rhythm through, without it becoming bogged down and soggy, a problem with poorer floorstanders. In addition to the tight, focused bassline, my enjoyment was further enhanced by the texture and delay afforded to percussion. Thompson’s vocals, too, benefited...
from the R33's open and honest representation. With all these aspects combined I found a great sense of realism and very little to grouch about here.

Much the same was true with Classical music, in this case Chabrier's, orchestral piece, Espana. This is one of the most vibrant and dynamic Classical pieces I know, and it's to the R33's credit that they coped admirably with it. First of all the downside: There can be no doubt that a hefty floorstander would create a superior sense of scale and weight to the sound, yet in other respects the Revolver's passed with flying colours. Their balance was dynamic and blissfully free of compression. They also managed the trick of sounding vibrant and exciting, without missing out subtler details. Amongst the almost uncontrolled outbursts from the brass sections, even the quietest chimes could still be heard. Yet, when a soloist should be heard above the orchestra, they were given the proper treatment. The closely recorded solo horn, playing during the middle of the piece, fairly leapt out from the 'speakers. I could of course argue that this wouldn't be the case at a live concert, yet it was clearly what the recording engineers had intended, and therefore true to the original recording. The R33s did more than simply stage the piece well, they made it involving and real. I've not heard brass timbre as good from a 'speaker of this price range for some time. It got just the right balance of power, richness and, well, brassy exuberance.

My one fear had been that the Revolvers might be a little too forward, and perhaps sibilant, with female vocalists. I needn't have worried as Dave's True Story's 'Daddy-O' proved. The vocals showed no hint of excess sibilance, despite being powerfully projected well into the room. There was also plenty of height given to the stage, and plenty of clues to the recording venue, given the echo, decay and ambience. Finally, it was a real pleasure to hear the tenor and baritone saxophones sounding as though they were sparring with one another, such was their vivacity.

As you've probably gathered by now, I came to the conclusion that Revolver's R33s are sonically pretty special. Not surprisingly, they reminded me of the best characteristics of Heybrook 'speakers. In terms of transparency, separation and staging they are amongst the best in their class. Furthermore, they manage to achieve such insight without sounding anemic or at all harsh.

Whilst I wouldn't describe the R33s as being the most refined 'speaker on the market, you would have to have a pretty harsh system to be upset by the effect. Likewise, whilst the bass may not be quite as deep as some, I found it to be ample, yet cohesive and powerful enough to balance the forward mid-range. So, despite the dubious aesthetics, the R33s get my wholehearted recommendation. Just make sure that all cats are kept well away!

Revolver R33 £499
Acoustic Partnership
Tel:08700470047
www.revolveraudio.co.uk

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Although the Revolver R33 looks flat enough in terms of its frequency response, a close look shows that bass output is well damped and treble peaks above 2kHz. With no crossover dip to soften the sound, on balance this means the R33 will likely sound tight and bright. In particular, its well damped bass output suggests near-wall mounting.

Like most reflex loudspeakers of reasonable dimension nowadays, the R33 gets down to 40Hz and measurement suggests it will produce healthy bass. It's no boom box though, in spite of a large rear port, which in fact keeps bass compression and distortion low. Small ports make for a choked sound at high bass levels. It looks like the R33 has been engineered to sound fast and clean, but with bright recordings it may well sound sharp at times.

Voltage sensitivity was good at 86dB, especially since impedance was high at 9.5ohms. This is a good loudspeaker for 8ohm valve amps and an easy load for transistor amps. Impedance plummets above 6kHz and if this was corrected the tweeter would not peak so heavily.

Revolver's R33 is a neat enough design that will likely appeal to those who want a fast, controlled sound from a near-wall mounter. NK
LEFT ON THE SHELF

When our first child became a toddler I hastily raised my stereo from its Sound Organisation rack on the floor to any old shelf or cupboard top available to keep it out of reach of inquisitive little hands. Speakers too went from dedicated stands to bookshelves. The turntable has always been on a Target wall shelf, which works fine but is of a rather industrial design. The imminent arrival of our second child has finally forced me to accept that this is going to be a permanent arrangement. So I’ve decided to put some shelves up.

The system consists of Roksan Xeres, Meridian 200/203, Cyrus Two and a cheap radio. Speakers are Celestion DL4. I like my stereo - it sounded great on a dedicated rack, it still sounds remarkably good on top of a cupboard. So I don’t want to change any of the bits - just give them the best chance I can. The question then is, what’s going to do this on a budget of not very much?

A quick trawl of the web has yielded a grand total of zero dedicated wall shelves for hi-fi. I suspect this isn’t really the case but it’s not encouraging. Does anybody make such a product? If they do, I’ll need at least two - one each for turntable and CD player - the radio and amp can fend for themselves to some extent.

My other option is a trip to the local DIY superstore. If I do go for ordinary shelving should it be a heavy (solid wood) shelf rigidly fixed to the wall or would a lightweight (MDF?) shelf on those plug-in bracket thingies be the way to go?

With no evidence to back it up whatsoever, my preference would be for the solid variety, coupled with a support for the turntable of the Mana type. Some years ago a dealer demonstrating a CD player put Sorbothane pads underneath - and transformed it. Are these still considered a good idea and can you still get them (cheaper than a Mana table)?

Finally, what about the speakers? Are there any decent wall brackets available? The only things I’ve ever seen advertised look ghastly - designed for use by the kind of people who like to keep one speaker behind the sofa and the other in the airing cupboard - nicely out of the way.

Regards
Guy Coulson

And pray what’s wrong with one speaker behind the sofa and the other in the airing cupboard? I’ve known certain models to sound much better this way!

Onto the real subject, though. Yours is a very common case and one all us dads have to consider. We also have to consider that if we want excessive detail and pin-point precision sound, we aren’t going to get it unless the garage is transformed into a ‘no entry’ listening room.

Consequently it’s quite hard to enjoy hi-fi when your children are in the early stage, unless you’ve a good pair of headphones.

There is just the design you are looking for, made especially for those in your position and it comes from none other than Mana Acoustics. The Sound Shelf (£275) is a dedicated shelf for use with either a turntable or a CD player, and it is solidly bolted into the wall. It can be upgraded to Reference Shelf status by adding a Mini Table (£175) for further isolation. It’s not cheap but definitely effective.

Otherwise, look around for supports such as the RDC platform which can be placed under the turntable on a self. It is available from hififorsale.com in their accessories section.

For the rest of the system, the ‘real world’ solution is, for me, the following. I’d suggest placing your equipment on some fairly wide and solid shelves (solidly fixed and bracketed into the wall). These can be well out of reach from little inquisitive hands, and I suggest you use subtle looking and effective supports such as Ringmat’s Feet at £75 for four (which fit under each ‘foot’ of a component) for a little fine tuning of the digital source - although they are a tad pricy.

Where this type of support is less necessary is with amplifiers, where vibration has less impact compared to that of a disc spinning mechanism.

A cheaper option is available in the form of simple but effective RDC cones which slip under the component, spiky end down. These things do work and often to the extent of many ‘dedicated’ stands.

Equipment support is far less of a grey area when it comes to loudspeakers however. Very, very few loudspeakers will work effectively when mounted on wall brackets or in corners. There’s always Mission’s fs2 NXT panels, but whilst good enough, they are more a domestic compromise than an audiophile transducer.

Wall brackets for loudspeakers are, as you suggest, not really for the hi-fi fanatic and are essentially a sonic trade off for getting the things out of the way! If you have to use a wall bracket make sure that the ‘speakers are placed low enough down the wall for optimum listening (tweeters ideally at ear level or just above) and away from any corners. Also, if the ‘speakers are bass reflex designs, choose a model that is front ported so it won’t boom when placed close to a rear wall.

SP

A Sound Shelf from Mana could be the solution to your problem!
PERPLEXED OF PEACENHAVEN!

My mind is totally scrambled with well
power amps and Mission 852 speak-
current modest set of boxes-
and producing it with a spinning disc
to prove that “sound” is so subjective
may have a few suggestions). It all goes
meaning but contradictory advice on

tion I find myself looking for improve-
(or valves) has too many variables to
performance on what I already had and
opinion it wasn’t a huge hike in

but it’s praises).

I would value your unbiased
opinion and don’t delay, as I can
already feel the urge to ring another
poor dealer!
Dominic Taylor
East Sussex

Well, hi-fi is a subjective thing, and so
who can tell whether those dealers’
respective contributions were heart-
felt or financially expedient!

Personally, I’ve heard all manner
of stories about the Gyro - it goes
out of tune, it sounds dead, etc. etc.
- and all I can say is that if you set it
up properly (not difficult, considering
its three spring adjusters are out-
side, not inside, the ‘plinth’) then
you’ll be amazed. In fact, your prob-
lem will be saving up for a suitably
superb tonearm and cartridge!

There’s a knack to setting up a
Gyro - as per any belt drive, sus-
ended subchassis deck - but it’s not
rocket science and once mastered
won’t need to be repeated very
often. Simply get the deck on a level
surface so the height adjusters don’t
need to be set differently, twiddle
the springs so the bounce is a
healthy ‘up and down’ motion (and
dress the arm cable likewise) and
you’re off. Also, make sure you’ve got
the right arm base for your arm, not
just your arm mounting, as the bases
are mass - as well as geometrically-
matched to the GyroDec’s balanced
subchassis.

If it were my money I would go
for the Gyro without hesitation -
the Systemdek is an old design from
another era that although worthy is
off the pace now. To this I’d fit a
- you’ve guessed it - Origin Live mod-
ded RB250. The dealer who says it’s
different not better is obviously run-
ding whether the problem may be
with the size of the speakers and
whether they take too much driving and
whether the addition of a power amp
will help.

I did hear some Totem speakers in
a hi-fi shop with a Cyrus set up and
they seemed to play louder than the
Missions at a lower volume. Could it be
efficiency related?

Dave
North Yorkshire

Hi Dave. The Cyrus 7, whilst clean
and forward is no out and out pow-
erhouse amp - there’s only so much
you can squeeze into a box that

was a huge hike in
performance on what I already had and
I could achieve as good, if not better,
sound by changing the motor to an
Origin Live DC and swapping the arm
for one of their tweaked RB250s.

This was the start of my journey
through a whole chunk of your
classifieds bothering each dealer in turn
for their views. I have to say that each
and every one was both courteous and
helpful, albeit often giving completely
opposite advice. The trouble is I’m none
the wiser, hence my letter...

On the GyroDec - dealer one said
‘good deck but goes out of tune too

easily and I’d be better off with a
Nottingham Analogue Spacedek. Dealer
two disagreed saying the Gyro once set
up could be left without problem.
Another dealer when asked about the
Origin Live modified arms said he
thought they were out performed by a
standard RB300 they just gave a
“different”, not necessarily better, sound.

You can see my problem. All
I hoped to find out really is how much I
would need to spend and in what
direction to hear a significant
enhancement in reproduction? Is it still
worth keeping the Systemdek and
improve it in the areas mentioned or
ditch it altogether in favour of, say, the
Origin Live Ultra with their modded
RB250 despite the ‘thumbs down’ from
dealer three (most other dealers sung
it’s praises).

I would value your unbiased
opinion and don’t delay, as I can
already feel the urge to ring another
poor dealer!

Cut it Out!

I have an ongoing problem with my sys-
tem in that through various set ups
(Cyrus based) it has continually cut out.

The current system consists of a
Cyrus 7 amplifier with PSX, a DAD 3
CD player and bi-wired Mission 753
Freedom speakers. This year I replaced
the Cyrus Illi with the Cyrus 7 which
has helped but not altogether solved
the problem. I normally play the amp
between nine and ten o’clock and my
musical taste includes Flaming Lips,
Mercury Rev, Blue Oyster Cult and
Sonic Youth.

The amp cuts out on some discs
quite regularly. I warm the hi-fi up for a
day prior to playing and do not think
that there is a particular fault as the
previous hi-fi, virtually the same set up,
had the same problem. I am now won-
dering whether the problem may be
with the size of the speakers and
whether they take too much driving and
whether the addition of a power amp
will help.

I did hear some Totem speakers in
a hi-fi shop with a Cyrus set up and
they seemed to play louder than the
Missions at a lower volume. Could it be
efficiency related?

Dave
North Yorkshire

Hi Dave. The Cyrus 7, whilst clean
and forward is no out and out pow-
erhouse amp - there’s only so much
you can squeeze into a box that
size! At 12 o’clock the Cyrus amps
are on the edge and at maximum
drive. They can take some stick but
everything has a limit, unfortunately.
Pumping Flaming Lips and Sonic
Youth through the Cyrus 7 at ten o’
clock will actually push it to the
type of performance with the 753s,
which are a ‘difficult’ Sohn load.

This would have also applied with your
older Illi.

There are a few options open to
you here. One is to sell the 753
but keep the PSX and upgrade to
the new, more powerful (by 10W)
Cyrus 8. This should make a small,
not significant, difference. Perhaps
a better option is to go for a pair of
‘speakers that are an easier load, or
more upfront in performance.

Cyrus 7 and keep the PSX and upgrade to
the new, more powerful (by 10W)
Cyrus 8. This should make a small,
not significant, difference. Perhaps
a better option is to go for a pair of
‘speakers that are an easier load, or
more upfront in performance.

Cyrus 7 and keep the PSX and upgrade to
the new, more powerful (by 10W)
Cyrus 8. This should make a small,
not significant, difference. Perhaps
a better option is to go for a pair of
‘speakers that are an easier load, or
more upfront in performance.

Anything from Triangle, for example,
is very easy to drive and has a for-
ward and exciting sonic stamp.

Alternatively, listen to a pair of
Mission 753s which have a big, bass-
tight sound. They’re not the easiest
90% of our customers prefer our "warm and old-valve" sound to their expensive transistor preamplifiers & power amplifiers. We have a signed testimonial to prove that one customer prefers £1,000 "EL34 Lim Signature" to £2,600 preamp / power amp/power supply made by a famous name.

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Money back guarantee (less £30 return carriage, within 1 month) that our valve amplifiers deliver clear sweet treble, without harshness, from CD players + 100% fatigue free + Sibilance on female voices is well controlled and greatly reduced.

'His' sound like 'His' and not 'Hisssssssk'

+ Singers accentuation and accents become blatantly obvious + Random background noise/crossover distortion disappears, creating an inky black silence, so you can hear quiet notes, breathing noise, artificial reverberation, etc

+ more powerful bass slam than most transistor amplifiers and most Single Ended amplifiers + 40 watts (EL34)

Money back guarantee (less £30) that you prefer our £1,000 or £1,450 "KT88 Triode Connection" valve amplifiers to most transistor amplifiers, most transistor / valve hybrid amplifiers, most Single Ended valve amplifiers, most Ultra Linear valve amplifiers selling for £2,000 to £20,000.

"Proper" Triode Push Pull valve amplifiers should sound better, so they are excluded from our Money Back Guarantee. However, they cost £6,000 and upward.

Price is not a guarantee for sound quality. Some products are overpriced and pretentious.

Telephone 01634 268662 anytime or 01634 373410 for Mr Andrew Everard's review in Gramophone Magazine and Summary of 18 testimonials from satisfied customers + www.affordablevalvecompany.com + Amplifier shown without CE safety cage, to prove that this is a genuine valve amplifier. Customers must not remove the CE safety cage.

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Return carriage for Money Back Guarantee is £30 for U.K. £100 for other countries.

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Beauhborn™

The Beauhborn Virtuosos simply manage to make music of all kinds more interesting and involving than conventional speakers.

Paul Messenger Hi-Fi+

In fact, the sound had clearly the "Beauhborn" signature.

True, the B2's are less sensitive than the Virtuosos, but the vivid, uncolored midrange that I so much liked on the Virtuosos was there, fully there.

Thorsten Loesch Enjoy the Music

the Beauhborn sensation - feeling that you are there

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£1,000  £700

more bass
to drive but have a bigger sound than the 753s.

Lastly, presuming you'd like to stick with Cyrus, you could go for the Smartpower power amplifier, using the 7 as a preamp. Whilst the Smartpower quotes only 60W per channel, we measured up to 80W in our tests and two can be bridged in monoblock form for a (conservative) quoted 105W per channel and more clout and drive than the Cyrus 7 can deliver. SP

**ESCAPE TO A WARMER CLIMATE**

I need to warm up the sound of my hi-fi. I've currently got a Meridian 200 transport with Audio Alchemy DAC, Audiolab 8000A/8000P amplification and a REL Strata II subwoofer and Acoustic Energy AE I speakers. These are bi-wired with QED profile 4x4. Whilst the sound is beautifully open and detailed, it can lack warmth when playing Rock music. I suspect this is down to the Audiolabs.

I've got around £2000 to spend on upgrading the amps. Do you have any recommendations? There's so many good pre/power combos out there, I don't really know where to start.

Rick Williams

The obvious answer is to get a valve amp like AudioNote's superb Oto SE (£1200), but the problem is that it will struggle to sound louder than your mobile phone through those AEIs! Your loudspeakers are an acquired taste, and having acquired it many years back I can see where you're coming from! You obviously like fast, tight, punchy sound, methinks. To wit, Naim's brand new entry-level pre-power should fit the bill nicely.

The NAC202/NAP200 (£1170/£1142) pre-power combo will sound dramatically different to your 'Audiodrabs' - feisty, muscular, grippy and involving in a way your 8000s could only dream of but with more, yes, warmth. Indeed, I feel that your system has been suffering from mismatched amplifiers - the 8000Ps are a mediocre design that is grey as a wet Wednesday afternoon and your AEIs will be communicating this relentlessly.

How can I muster the Naim name and the word 'warmth' in the same sentence? Well, the latest generation of Naims is warmer (shall we say less cold?) than those of yore, and really are getting neutral. Certainly, they're far less grey and foggy than your 8000Ps.

Alternatively, consider Musical Fidelity's A308 (£2000) integrated, which is a brilliantly clean and powerful amplifier that errs on a warmer side of neutral. I'm using this right now and am growing ever more impressed with it as time goes by - it's also brilliant with my metal-coned (as per your AEIs) Yamaha NS1000Ps, which are a real trial to drive (as per your AEIs)! By all means listen to this with your speakers, but be aware that any upgrade to your amps will reveal your Audio Alchemy DAC in all its (unlovely) glory. There's also the superb valve/hybrid Unison Research Unico DM power amp at £1,500 which delivers 150W per channel of smooth power. You could then hang fire until the matching preamp (UR's preamps are usually highly commendable) is available early next year. You might also like to upgrade your DAC to a Meridian 203 (£125 from the classifieds) as a quick fix, or better still go for a Meridian 507 (£1195) as that superb 'last' CD player before you go to DVD-A. This has warmth and opulence in spades, and would be a great match for the AEIs too. Good luck. DP

The 507 CD from Meridian would be an effective 'quick fix'

**REMAIN IN THE PINK**

My fifteen year old system needs its first major upgrade/replacement. It comprises Pink Triangle Export turntable recently "GTI" modified with new PSU/Rega RB300/Audio Technica ATFS cartridge, QED SA240 integrated amp Marantz CD651SE CD player and Wharfedale S50.2 speakers on QED Tristonds.

I am looking to optimise a vinyl-playing system first before dealing with the CD.

I don't really want to replace the turntable yet, I've hardly used it (due to numerous house moves in the last twelve years it's never been set up permanently anywhere until now). I feel I have not heard what it's sonically capable of, given the limitations of components in the remainder of the current system. Besides, I cannot justify the considerable expenditure of replacing it with a state-of-the-art deck offering what could only be relatively modest improvements in sound.

The plan with the PT is to upgrade further over time. First of all, I am considering the Origin Live Counterweight modification on the Rega plus internal and external rewiring. And perhaps at a later date, the Origin Live DC motor replacement. Is this a sound idea (excuse the pun)?

For now though, the priorities are a new moving coil cartridge, a new amplifier with a good MC phono stage and new speakers. My budget is about £4000-£5000. I don't know where to start - help!

My music tastes now are acoustic, vocal, R & B/Latin/Jazz fusion, classical (especially solo guitar). Very loud listening levels would not go down well with the neighbours so absolute amp power is not so important. What I want is an amp/speaker combination where I do not have to turn the volume up to hear good detail.

I always thought my current system's bass could be improved. I don't want extended bass if it is all woolly and uncontrolled; rather, firm, tight and rhythmic bass to coin a few phrases that hi-fi journals have been overzealous at using. Put short, from the whole system I want realistic (neutral not coloured), detailed sound balanced over the whole range.
the entire sonic spectrum with good stereo focus. This could be a description of the ultimate in hi-fi terms but can I get a flavour of it with this budget?

On the amps, what do you think about the Croft Vitele pre-amplifier (has this even got a MC phono stage?) in combination with Croft power amps. Also, the Unison Research Uno or SR integrated, possibly the C5P i/P30ks pre/power combo (I am currently living in Milan so have a better opportunity to audition UR products).

For speakers, I fancy the Snell E.S mk2 speakers based simply on descriptions of their bass control, plus having heard and loved the old type Jils. What others should I consider? And what about MC cartridges at or under the £500 mark?

Thanks in advance if you can help!

Chris, Ex-Pat
Milan, Italy

A pretty tall order, this. Firstly, I agree that you don't need to replace your PT - it's by far the strongest link in the system and capable of truly excellent sound even if it isn't the very best around these days. To wit, I'd agree that you should get your Rega OL modded, or if at all possible get a new OL Silver 250 (at around £600). To this, fit an Ortofon Kontrapunkt B which The Pope and I both agree is something deeply special. Others to audition are the Dynavector DV17D2 and the Lyra Lydian Beta - both are excellent coils so you're somewhat spoiled for choice. I can't tell you which one to buy - I'd say this is very much a matter of what speakers you end up with, so sort these first, then decide.

Next is an amplifier for around £2000-£3000. The Crofts won't give the firmness and control in the bass you strive for, although they are nicely transparent. The Unison Research valve amp combination you mention is a good package. The P30K gives out a healthy 30W of muscular valve power from four KT88 tubes and the preamp has a very decent switchable phono stage.

There's also the Argo/Alecto II Stereo full Class A pre-power combination (£1650/£1950). If you're the kind of guy who knows what he likes and knows that it isn't Naim, then this is probably your dream pre-power. It's awesomely open, clean and clear yet has a valve-like liquidity and smoothness. This is all despite its use of transistors - but the upside is the brilliant bass grip and big, broad shouldered speaker driving ability.

Also consider the Sugden Masterclass integrated, which at just over £3,000 gives you a taste of real high-end fluidity thanks to a pure Class A design. Again this amp isn't about power, but detail and refinement. At 30W, though, it ideally needs speakers that are an easy load.

Speakers? Well that's a tricky one, and genuinely hard to answer until you've decided on the components in your system higher up in the chain. If it was my money I wouldn't go near the Snells - I see what you're trying to achieve by suggesting them, but to my ears they're simply too coloured and compromised to be taken seriously. If you went with the valve option then maybe they'd be a more synergistic match but if you opt for the 70W RMS per channel Alecto Stereo, you'll have no such load limitations. Personally I'd be looking at a used pair of Magneplanar MGRMs Is or Quad 988s, both of which would really benefit from your REL sub (I agree - ed!).

The ESL 988 and a Rel Sub are a marriage made in hi-fi heaven

NU-VISTA NEW SOUND?
I would like some advice on upgrade options. My current set-up is Sony X-33ES/ Cyrus DAD3Q.24 and Project Perspective/MC30 as sources, and a Musical Fidelity series II MVT pre and P270 power amps driving Dynaudio Audience 50 speakers. Despite this I am curious as to whether a valve preamp wouldn't combine with the P270 to offer the best of both worlds without too much compromise. Again, this is difficult territory to predict. I would value any opinions or recommendations.

Many thanks
Oliver Wilkinson

Frankly, I'm not sure that the Sony transports/MF upsampling DAC would be dramatically better than the Cyrus DAD3Q.24, if at all. I simply don't believe you can make gold out of base metals, which is what all upsampling DACs (of whatever ori-
gin) attempt to do. Personally, I'd either stick with the Cyrus and buy a PSX-R, or - if you must get the MF A3192 - then I'd get my Sony CDP-X33ES Trichord Clock 3 modded first. The Sony isn't a bad machine, but as you correctly identify, the X77ES is a far better place from which to start.

Your DAC can only work as well as the transport that drives it, and the Sony, although a rather polite Bistream design, has a stonking transport akin to that found in Sony's (£5000) CDP R1 Reference. So this would be the one to go for, then a Clock 3, then the MF.

Given that you've PSX-R'd your Cyrus or got your Sony/MF combo sorted, you should next turn your attention to the preamplifier. The MVT is indeed a fine preamp, and you'll struggle to find a tube design that comprehensively outclasses it. If you wish to stick with tubes, then the World Audio Design modular preamp kit is a quality candidate, otherwise I'd probably go for an extremely open sounding transistor design such as Michell's Orca (with Delphini phono stage).

Another interesting alternative, bearing in mind your expressed preferences, is a second-hand Finestra preamp which is a classic late eighties design that offers all the grip of the Naim school with a good deal more tonal detailing. This would represent a better 'bargain buy' than the NuVista you mention (which, even secondhand, is expensive) and work brilliantly with your P270s.

I agree with your prognosis on the Dynaudios, which I think are ultimately more self-effacing and transparent than the AE-1s, but also far harder to get to work at their best and - if we're honest here - a touch less involving. The Acoustic Energys are very much of the old, eighties school of un-reconstructed 'flat earth' loudspeaker design where attack transients were everything and to hell with tonal accuracy, transparency, bass extension and the rest. The result is an incredibly interesting and involving listen that's not strictly accurate in the way the Dynaudios can at least claim to be. Given that you've got a decent front-end and amplifier driving them, I'd personally plump for the AE-1s, which are sort of 'Linn Kans on steroids', if you get my drift!

However, best get your front end and amplification sorted, then audition and decide. DP

**TIME TO GO TUBULAR?**

My system has been together now for around 5 years, and although I'm reasonably happy with it I feel a case of upgrades/coming on, evident by the recent copies of Hi-Fi World lying about the place. Trouble is, I'm not sure where to start.

The system is built around a Gyrodeck turntable driven by a QC power supply, an RB300 tonearm rewired by Manicore and until recently a Denon 304 cartridge at the sharp end. This cartridge unfortunately suffered a demise due to the over enthusiastic administrations of an up and coming 3 year old DJ and has since been replaced by an Ortofon MC25 FL. The is fed through an ISO/Hera combination to Audio Analogue Bellini/Donizetti pre/power amps driving bi-wired B&W 881W CDIs mounted on Atacama sand filled stands. Although this is my main listening setup, a Micromega stage 6 CD player completes the hardware.

Interconnects are Audioquest Quartz and speaker cable is QED 4x4.

If I'm correct the first area to look at are the speakers (and cable) and secondly the amplifiers, although I'm open to any suggestions, my budget is around £2000.

My shortlist of speakers includes the Klipsch Hersey IIIs, Elac 510s, or possibly Concert 8s, again I'm open to suggestions. However, maybe my amplifier preference will have a big bearing in speaker choice, as I would like to enter that strange world of the valve. My listening tastes are varied from rock to classic with no particular favourite. Your help would be greatly appreciated.

Jim Taylor, Tyne & Wear

Hi Jim. On the amplifier front I'd go for a cross between the sound of your present Audio Analогues and a fully blown tube amp. There so happens to be a product from Unison Research that could exactly fit your bill - the Unico integrated. This gives a big but valve-like sound thanks to its smooth yet powerful 80W per channel of valve/Mosfet hybrid power. The £750 line-only version can be upgraded to include a switchable MM/MC phono stage for just £50.

Now for speakers. The Klipsch and Jamo models are perhaps too 'quirky' for your requirements. The Unico integrated will go very well with the Elac 510 'speakers that you mention, which have good, tight bass and a beautifully sweet and detailed treble thanks to the folded ribbon tweeter. Keep your stands and you'll get a big, detailed and out of the box sound.

With the handful of dollars you have left invest in some cabling from the Chord Company. Their products have a transparent yet smooth sound which runs throughout the range, so whatever you can afford from the range will improve on your current wiring.

DP

The Elac 510s are an ideal match for the Unico integrated.
HI, HO SILV

The latest NAD CD player to get the upgraded 'i' tag is their high-end Silverline Series S500i. Dominic Todd listens in.

I've always been a fan of the higher end NAD products. The Monitor Series cassette decks of the late eighties were good enough to wipe the smile off any rival's face, but the top Nakamichis. Equally the 208 power amp of the nineties proved that one could have mega muscle with decent refinement, and at a reasonable price.

NAD's Silverline range isn't new, and neither is the S500i player, yet it's just received a few tweaks in the hope that it will keep the player amongst the best at the £1000 price mark. Those unfamiliar with the Silverline range would barely recognise the S500i as a NAD player. The solid, metal casing with ribbed extrusions is a world away from the company's more usual grey affairs. But, as NAD would be keen to point out, there's far more to this machine than mere appearance.

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Whilst the Philips transport and Crystal 24 bit DAC aren't remarkable at this price point, NAD's attention to detail should set the S500i apart. The power supply stage uses an oversized toroidal with separate windings for digital and analogue stages. Component fans will also be pleased to see the liberal use of decent quality Elna capacitors in both the power supply and output stages. The analogue stages are Class A biased, with a 5-pole, as opposed to the more usual 4-pole, filter being deployed. Even the PCB is of a decent quality, and is star-earthed to reduce noise. Finally, in addition to phono sockets, and in true high-end style, NAD offers XLR balanced outputs for both analogue and digital connections.

Although CD is facing the heat from DVD-A, there are still plenty of rivals worthy of note. The Arcam CD92T (£900), Cyrus CD7Q (£1150), Meridian's 507 (£1200) and Marantz's stalwart CD17 K1 (£1200) all offer formidable competition.

The first disc to hit the tray was Rimsky-Korsakov's 'Festival at Baghdad' (which I'm sure was a different kind of place in those days!) played by the Kirov orchestra, conducted by Valery Gergiev. Whilst perhaps not being the most refined of renditions, it's one full of passion and colour, in true Russian style. The NAD more or less arose to the occasion. One could hear the individual strokes of violinist Sergei Levitin, and even the "cluck" sound as the fingers unstuck from the strings. It was also pleasing to find that, although refined, the violin still had decent texture and attack, and was far from sounding bland. Indeed, the piece as a whole was involving, with excellent separation and a particularly fleet of foot timing. The sharp dynamic response was no doubt aided by very low levels of background noise, although I did feel that the overall effect was perhaps let down by a lack of real bass weight. Deep drum notes, for example, didn't quite have the authority within the piece that I'd have hoped for.

Similarly involving was Steely Dan's 'Jack of Speed'. This revolves around a tight, coherent brass section, which can sound hopelessly fiaccid given the wrong equipment. Again the S500i remained musical and vibrant. The percussion had a fine depth and good timing, with a rhythmical nature that Naim would be proud of. It should also be noted that this was achieved without resorting to an overly forward balance that can become too intrusive. Again, I did just wish for a little more bass weight, but the broad sound staging and excellent separation went some way towards making up for this.

Another key feature of the S500i that I approved of is that it always appeared to know just which instrument was key. Before it had been the violin, this time it was Becker's guitar that captured the attention with a fine sense of realism.
Turning to the less well recorded ‘Well, well’ by Nelly Furtado, showed that the NAD wasn’t overly critical of less than perfect recordings. Yet again I found the bass line disappointingly thin, even compared to my elderly Cambridge CD13/DAC3, although it maintained dynamic integrity by banishing any form of slop with each and every note. Furtado’s vocals were well resolved and there was the same sense of attack and speedy, fat free, timing that the previous tracks had enjoyed. As before I also sensed that the 5500i is the type of player whose transparency almost sneaks up on you, making you forget about the hi-fi and simply get on with enjoying the music.

Although equally transparent, there’s no doubting that Jeff Healey’s ‘My Life Story’ was just a little too polite. The vocals had a fine sense of weight and conviction, yet the guitar didn’t quite fizz as it should and the piece lacked a little grit. What the NAD did bring to the proceedings, though, was the ability to follow individual instruments amongst a broad and spacious sound stage. Also, despite an earthy bass response, such was the quality of the timing that it was easy to involve oneself in the music.

There’s little doubt that the NAD 5500i is a super player and worthy of serious consideration at this price range. However, the competition is very strong and what it does not do is comprehensively blitz the competition as its junior brother the C521i does. Even the mid-range C541i can claim a level of class superiority that the 5500i simply can’t replicate. The main reason for this, is that at this price point there are other machines that simply punch harder, or offer an even more holographic insight into the music. In other respects the NAD does impress, as any £1000 player should do. There’s consistently good timing, and a sense of attack that goes some way to making up for the lack of bass. Equally, vocal and instrumental timbre can’t be faulted at this price range. The depth of quality also means that the NAD would stand many an upgrade in amp and speakers before the cracks began to show.

For those who find their system a little too bloated or synthetic, the 5500i could be ideal, otherwise I’d strongly recommend listening to the NAD alongside the opposition before taking the plunge.

NAD 5500i £1,195

Lenbrook UK Ltd.
Tel: +44 (0)1908 319360
www.lenbrook.co.uk

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

In line with its up-market status perhaps, NAD have given the Silverline 5500i a flatter frequency response than their standard players. It’s likely to lessen the warmth and apparent cohesiveness, bringing a more obviously concise presentation. The upper limit of 21.125kHz is as far as CD goes.

Linearity was good, if not quite up with the very best. Distortion at high levels was minimal. Down at -60dB it reached 0.4% where other players now reach 0.3% or lower. Similarly, at -90dB there was just a little more distortion that the best, but differences weren’t so great. In spite of this I would expect the 5501i to sound clean enough.

With output at a healthy 2.24V, good channel separation and low noise this CD player measures well enough in all areas, even though it isn’t up with the best. It is likely to sound fairly crisp, but should not offend. **NK**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Frequency response</th>
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<tr>
<td>4Hz - 21.125kHz</td>
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<tr>
<th>Distortion left</th>
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<td>-90</td>
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<th>Separation left</th>
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<tr>
<td>1kHz</td>
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<tr>
<td>20kHz</td>
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| Noise | -112dB |
| Dynamic range | 110dB |
| Output     | 2.24V  |
Most systems are spoilt by the preamp. Listeners do not realise how much information is being lost or corrupted by this under-rated item...

Preamps - is "good" enough?

Respected audio journalists sometimes remark that there is only a handful of good preamps in the WHOLE WORLD. Exaggeration?

Remember the best sound stage you ever heard: NATURAL-SIZE musicians, placed with pinpoint accuracy in WIDTH, DEPTH AND HEIGHT. Now imagine the PHASE precision – throughout the chain at all frequencies – needed to create that 3D holographic image.

We are very sensitive to TIMING with sound. Phase change, or time "smearing", confuses imaging. Our brains also detect an "EVENT" before the pitch, so the START of notes is critical. Any damage will be amplified through the chain – and preamps are major suspects.

Preamps with wide bandwidth, fast power supplies and low noise are hard to design and expensive to build. Be cautious about anything costing less than £3k.

We offer some very good preamps: Balanced Audio Technology (eg the VK555E), CAT SL1 Ultimate, DNM, Holand HP100 and Nagra.

BUT DO YOU NEED A PREAMP? If your main source is CD consider a preamp costing less than £3k. If the dac or player has preamp built. Be cautious about anything with sound. Phase change, or time "smearing", confuses imaging. Our brains also detect an "EVENT" before the pitch, so the START of notes is critical. Any damage will be amplified through the chain – and preamps are major suspects.

Customers say we make some of the best preamps they have ever heard, so you know we can do the same in your home. Our advice will take account of your best components and guide you where change is needed, in stages you can afford.

You AVOID EXPENSIVE MISTAKES, enjoy music along the way and save money in the long run.

JUST LISTEN AND YOU'LL KNOW...
For the first time in the company's history, it has revamped its entire 'Classic' model range. The NAC202/NAP200 is Naim's most affordable 'grown up' pre-power combo - David Price listens in.

Changes are afoot in Salisbury. The company most famous for not following fashion and rarely replacing or relaunching a hi-fi product has just revamped its entire line-up. Coming from the company that has shocked the entire audiophile community with things like a simple casework change, the inclusion of remote volume control on a preamp or even the decision to make a Compact Disc player - for heaven's sake, then a wholesale range replacement is a big issue!

Were it any other company, the raft of revisions featured in these new products would barely cause a raised eyelid. But as we all know, Naim has done things differently from day one, resolutely sticking to its guns on issues like speaker cables and interconnects when practically every other company has gone the other way. Now - shock horror - we find the new NAC202 fitted with two pairs of RCA phono sockets. Think of it like this - if you were to warp back fifteen years and tell a Naim addict that his beloved brand would be making remote controlled multichannel AV products with Digital Signal Processing and phono plugs round the back, they'd have laughed in your face!

With the new £1,170 NAC202, Naim says that all those years of research spent developing its flagship NAC 552 pre-amplifier have given it a wealth of experience which has been applied in this, the entry level preamp in the new 'Classic' range. New high quality star-earthed circuit boards, anti-vibration, resonance-controlling feet, carefully matched precision rotary potentiometers with precious metal wipers and intelligent
balance controls with high quality motorised potentiometers with intelligent circuitry to indicate the centre position, all figure in the preamp range. It can be powered either by a NAP150 or NAP200 power amp, or upgraded by adding an external Naim Hi-Cap or Super-Cap power supply for the analogue audio, or NAPSC for the digital control, circuits.

The days of a Naim fascia troubled only by a couple of potentiometers and a switch are long gone. The NAC202 features a silent microprocessor that sleeps during listening and controls all aspects of the amplifier, including the optical protection circuits that continuously monitor the power supplies, ensuring safe shut down in the event of a power cut. Its six inputs can be selected directly from either the front panel or the supplied NARCOM system remote. In addition to the usual DIN inputs, which the company famously prefers for their 'superior earthing and impedance matching', two inputs can be configured for use with the aforementioned RCA phono sockets. A dedicated unity-gain input is also provided for use with the Naim AV2 processor or similar.

At £1,142, the new NAP200 is the company’s cheapest ‘Classic’ power amplifier. Again it follows wisdom accrued from the genesis of Naim’s flagship NAP500 amplifier. A new circuit design with improved earthing arrangements is built on an anti-resonance main audio circuit board. Anti-vibration feet serve to protect the sensitive internal components from vibration. The new 430VA toroidal transformer provides over 300VA of transient power, with separate windings for dedicated left and right channels, and rectified supplies with two smoothing capacitors per channel and a separate winding for a pre-amplifier power supply. The result is a claimed 70W RMS per channel into 8 ohms, and the claimed ability to drive a 2 ohm load for long periods of time.

In the flesh, I’d say the new ‘Classic’ series looks Naim’s most successful to date. The styling isn’t awkward or idiosyncratic, but elegant and fuss-free. Build is superlative – the NAP200 in particular is an incredibly heavy bit of kit, its chunky 432x314x87mm casing looking a million dollars. As usual, Naim electronics need a good burn in period and prefer to be left permanently powered up. For the purposes of the review, I hooked them up to my Michell Orbe/OL Illustrious/Ortofon Kontrapunkt B/Michell Delphi front-end and Yamaha NS1000M loudspeakers via Naim NACA5 speaker cable.

**SOUND QUALITY**

First things first. If you have a penchant for single-ended triode valve amplifiers then may I politely suggest you turn the page! While Naim’s amplifiers are smoother and sweeter than ever, they are not of the ‘sepia tinged’ school. If, however, you want a high quality £2,300 transistor amplifier, then I’d go as far as saying this is the best around right now. I found it particularly amenable to vinyl, where it really managed to get the music ‘out there’ into the room with tremendous verve. CD was a less happy experience however, not least because of the format’s inherent upper-midband hardness that is not a synergistic mix for the Naim sound. Again, it’s happier with SACD than DVD-Audio discs for these same reasons, although either ‘advanced resolution’ format is a quantum leap over Compact Disc.

I started with Freeez’s ‘Southern Freeze’, a slice of beautiful Brit funk from 1980. The first few bars showed this combo to have incredible detail resolving capability, the Naims going deep into the wide, capacious soundstage. Bass was taut, with a particularly solid and powerful kick-drum sound. Although I’ve heard other amplifiers producing a fuller bass guitar sound – warmer with more presence – this combo nevertheless made it feel very real. Despite being a little lean, the way the notes stopped and started give the bassline a live feel that the likes of Musical Fidelity’s equivalent priced A308 integrated lacked.

Interestingly, although bass was just a little lighter – you got the sense that the levels had been turned down by one (on a scale of eleven, Tap fans!) compared to the MF, it somehow seemed more muscular. I put this down to the Naim combo’s ability to go loud when it counted.
Also remarkable was the sheer tunefulness of the NAC202/NAP200, its ease and fluidity made the song bounce along with aplomb.

Moving to the midband, and Lee Morgan’s ‘The Rajah’ proved a delight. Stereo image location was excellent, the recorded acoustic (courtesy of the old Blue Note trick of one crossed pair of microphones) being faithfully recreated in terms of left to right and front to back dimensions. Here though, I have to confess I preferred the MP’s softness and sweetness. The sound of the trumpet was a little ‘forward’ for my tastes, even if its every rhythmic inflection was superbly carried.

Up top this combo further impressed. Rush’s ‘Fly By Night’ showed its superb air and space. Hi-hats had a metallic clang - as they should - but were never harsh or distorted. Instead, these amps provided a very vivid and lively picture of the track’s high frequency content, which did no harm at all to the song’s sense of air and ambience. Once again, the drummer’s rhythmic and dynamic accents were superbly communicative, making for an electrifying sound on rock music.

Overall, the NAC202/NAP200 is a dazzlingly capable twosome at the price. It’s not a case of simply saying ‘great if you like the Naim sound’. I’d say that if you’ve decided valves aren’t your bag, baby, then this combo is the one to have. Nothing else for the same money will punch upgrade path, it really is churlish to complain. Although the Naim changes, some things stay the same.

Naim NAC202/NAP200 £2,312

Naim Audio Ltd.
Tel: +44 (0)1722 332266
www.naim-audio.com

The 202/200 combination benefits from the use of an external power supply

Out vast amounts of power in such a musical and lively way. Brilliantly involving, tremendously capable in hi-fi terms (detail, soundstaging, etc.). Beautifully built and endowed with Naim’s superb aftersales support and technical expertise, the NAC202/NAP200 is a highly desirable amplifier. Power is up to 72 watts, which is enough for most applications. The CD/tuner/aux. board is a powerful performer, delivering clear and dynamic sound. The separation is excellent at 62dB, and the noise level is very low at -87dB.

The distortion is very low at 0.01%, ensuring that the amplifier delivers a pure and accurate sound. The sensitivity is high at 80mV, allowing for a wide range of speakers to be driven. The dc offset is very low at 8/9mV, minimizing any potential for feedback or interference.

Frequency response is Band Limited to 24kHz (-1dB), ensuring that the amplifier can reproduce a wide range of frequencies. The spectral pattern is held at all output levels, ensuring a consistent and accurate sound.

This combination measures very well in all areas. I’d expect and smooth, powerful and fairly atmospheric sound, much in the Naim tradition. NK

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Power 72 watts
CD/tuner/aux. 10Hz-24kHz
Frequency response 62dB
Separation 80mV
Noise -87dB
Distortion 0.01%
Sensitivity 8/9mV
dc offset 8/9mV

World Verdict

Powerful, detailed and involving like no others at the price, Naim’s new ‘Classic’ pre-power is a high end bargain.

www.hi-fiworld.co.uk  FEBRUARY 2003 HI-FI WORLD & COMPUTER AUDIO
David Price listens to what's claimed to be one of the most important new tonearms for a decade, Origin Live's Illustrious.

Any hi-fi manufacturer will tell you how great its products are. Some say it with a passion bordering on the psychotic, showing how completely blinkered they are to other companies' designs. Others say it with just the slightest hint of irony, as if to say "come on, we're not that bad really." Origin Live calls its new Illustrious, "unquestionably the best tonearm in the world by a staggering margin." This surprises me, because it hails from OL's Mark Baker, who is absolutely the last man on this planet prone to bouts of hyperbole or overstatement. If he's right, it could be one of this decade's most important products - to us analogue addicts, at least.

Mark is a very quiet man with patience, an enquiring mind and forensic attention to detail. These attributes, plus thousands of hours of listening time, enabled him to come up with a 'thesis' on what he regarded was wrong with the existing Rega design. First and foremost, he came up with the revelation that it was the cheaper RB250 and not the RB300 that was the better of the two designs, thanks to the former's superior bearing housing and lack of sound degrading tracking weight spring. Next, he correctly identified the standard arm's slapdash counterweight mechanism as a terrible source of coloration. Finally, he came up with a better internal/external wiring combination, complete with a separate earth lead.

The result was an arm that came oh-so-close to being one of the world's best, at a ridiculously low price. For under £300 the OL modded RB250 was a giant killer in exactly the same sense that the original Rega RB300 was back in the early eighties - open, incisive, detailed, powerful, dynamic; it had it all. Now, for a pretty hefty £1570, his all-new Illustrious arm seeks to improve on this still further - hence Mark's claim that it comprehensively outclasses the best of the rest of the super-arm world.

**DESIGN**

Rather than doing anything too radical, Mark Baker followed an evolutionary path to achieve his avowed design aims. These include low resonance (for tonal accuracy), high rigidity in all planes (to render powerful dynamics), low friction (to aid tracking and subtle low level information retrieval), fast energy transmission (for timing and treble clarity) and medium mass (for compatibility with most modern cartridges). He stresses that he spent a "great deal" of time researching different types of metals for the armtube.

The result was a black anodised armtube profiled from a solid billet of a "certain type" of aerospace alloy, tapered and of large diameter for optimum torsional strength. At the end is a high strength, low mass sculpted headshell machined from a solid alloy block, that's decoupled and rigidly attached to the armtube. The geometry - unsurprisingly - is as the Rega RB300, meaning it will fit straight into any Rega mounting board or hole. However, this arm also boasts full VTA adjustment, so the days of cheap and nasty (and fiddly) spacers are over.

Headshell wiring is silver plated copper, insulated in robust PTFE, with gold plated copper beryllium cartridge tags. Inside the arm itself is a run of high grade Litz wire, said to be selected from hundreds tested. It terminates in high grade aluminium phono plugs, with over twice the conductivity of brass. Mark says this has a very audible effect on the sound. As the other end, the rear end stub and counterweight design is as OL's successful Rega 'structural modification'.

The bearing housing has been designed to offer high mass in the horizontal plane for cartridge stability, whilst maintaining low mass in the vertical plane for optimal tracking ability. The bearings themselves are said to be the most highly specified of the company's range, widely spaced outside the arm tube in the bespoke bearing house. The arm base is made from a "large number of specially selected materials" which OL is unwilling to divulge for obvious commercial reasons. It's interesting for its infinitely variable side bias adjustment and new VTA adjuster.

It's an impressively built device. A whole step up from the rebuilt Rega arms, it rather reminds me of the late lamented Zeta. It is not, however, finished as exquisitely as an SME IV or V. I have no reason to doubt that its internal engineering is no less exacting, yet it simply doesn't have that exquisite 'Swiss watch' feel that SME owners know and love. Slightly
disconcerting is the play in the bearing housing, but - sure enough - read the instructions and you find this is 'designed in' and nothing whatsoever to worry about. The instructions also lack SME-like clarity - a few photos wouldn't go amiss - but there's an impressive section on general tuning and tweaking of both the arm and cartridge, which is most welcome.

SOUND QUALITY
The Illustrious is an extremely big, powerful and confident performer, one which I'd describe in terms of being an amalgam of the best bits of both the Linn Ekos and SME V. It offers 99% of the former's rhythmic and dynamic fluency with 101% of the latter's tonality and detail resolution. In short then, it's pretty awesome. Grace Jones' 'My Jamaican Guy' was a revelation - the midband had an incredible 'hear-through' quality, the OL placing instruments precisely in three dimensions and yet relaying masses of tonal and textural information. It's also beautifully subtle and organic - whereas SME's Series V sucks out all the music's emotion and Linn's Ekos fetishises it to the exclusion of all else, the Illustrious treads an oh-so-clever path that lets the song's groove pour forth whilst not impeding the amazing flow of detail. To wit, Sly and Robbie's stunning percussion work was allowed to shine in all its glory - bass, snares, cymbals, kettle drums, maracas, triangles, tambourines etc. lifted out of the mix with both precision and ease.

Moving to ACT's 'Absolutely Immune', I was again stunned at this arm's combination of clarity and musicality. Its midband is so startlingly clear that the limitations of the LP's mastering (and indeed its 44.056kHz Sony PCM-F1 recorder) were obvious, and yet unlike the SME the OL didn't suffer 'analysis paralysis'. Rather, Claudia Brucken's icy voice was carried in all its Teutonic glory, right down to her smallest breathing motions. More impressively still was the way this arm hung her vocal in space so confidently, way out of the instrumental mix.

Bass was another revelation; deeper and more powerful than the Ekos, only the SME surpasses it for extension and even then, it loses much of the OL's articulation. Fast and extremely tuneful and yet disarmingly strong and muscular, this arm offers tremendous grip and dynamics. Indeed, it's so good in the latter respect that you realise how compressed rival arms are!

Moving up the frequency range, the Illustrious's treble proved damn-near unsurpassed. Just as its midband exhibited revelatory clarity and detail, so its high frequencies were beautifully open and flowing. Joan Armatrading's 'Me, Myself I' had an incredibly open, spacious and crisp hi-hat sound that made the Ekos sound fizzy and the Series V unincisive and matter-of-fact. Better still was the way the OL was supremely airy yet never once became bright or forward. Rather, from bottom to top, it sounded highly integrated, even and all of a piece. This was even easier to discern on old, over-played discs such as my 'distressed' pressing of CSN&Y's 'Country Girl', where the OL arm threw out lots of previously unheard treble detailing that all my other arms had kept down in the 'mush' of the mix.

I could go on and on. To my ears and through my system, this is simply the best tonearm I've heard to date. It is both very transparent and extremely engaging - steadfastly refusing to forsake one characteristic for the other, it ends up doing them both together with hitherto unheard alacrity. The result is the famous 'new record collection syndrome' where you end up running through all your vinyl in a hurry, desperate to hear how every disc you own 'really' sounds. Although it's a good deal more expensive than an OL RB250, the extra expenditure is well worth it if you have the cash, and especially if you're running a decent cartridge. Indeed, it's so marked that I'd venture to suggest you'd even notice the difference if this was bolted to a Rega P3. My only gripe is the Illustrious's finish - it's extremely well made of course, but as I've said before, it simply doesn't feel like a million dollars a la SME. Not that you'll be wanting to look when there's some serious listening to be done, however.
After the launch of their high-end, slimline Klimax Twin, Linn have now introduced the matching high specification, advanced technology Klimax Kontrol preamplifier. Simon Pope gets out the manual.

The Linn sound has, traditionally, been categorised as rhythmically precise and accurate, sacrificing overall tonal colour for this end. At least, that's how some people have seen it. Things started to change with the introduction of the Genki/Kollector/LK140/Ninka system of products which brought a touch of colour to the previously grey-tinged world of Linn. This sound was fuller and more rounded than before and, for me, ultimately more involving and musically satisfying.

At the top end - and I mean top end - of the Linn range came the awesomely constructed (and priced) £12,000 Sondek CD12. It was followed by the Klimax mono power amps and the Klimax twin stereo power amp. At £6,000 a pop these amps were heavily priced - but they were also heavily built and had an unmistakably smooth and detailed 'high end' sound.

Now the latest product in the range has arrived, in the form of the Kontrol preamp, a full system can be constructed, which with the Komri loudspeakers, would set you back somewhere in the region of £60,000 or more. This isn't the 1970s/80s Linn of K9 cartridges and Kan 'speakers we once knew - this is Linn as an unashamedly high-end contender, and to a certain extent how the brand is now recognised in the US.

The Klimax Kontrol has the same impressively constructed casework as the Klimax power amps and CD12, a machined-from-solid "clamshell" chassis which has a mass akin to that of gold bullion, yet combined with slimline elegance. This industrial standard casing mechanically and electrically screens a total of four circuit boards, each in an individual "perfectly still" compartment. The amp features the secret recipe Linn switch-mode power supply that provides so-called Silent Power and helps create the superb sound quality and domestically acceptable size of the matching Climax power amps. The audio path is, like the rest of the range, kept as short as possible.

Where the fluorescent blue 'crescent' appears on the power amps, the Kontrol features a smallish (when compared to the competition, but large considering the size of the case!) but very clear blue dot-matrix display which can show a variety of things, from the 200 step volume calibration to the Linn logo. It's here that some of the
wizardry inside becomes apparent. It has user configurable source inputs consisting of three line level stereo inputs, plus one balanced stereo input and one balanced stereo out. It's compatible with Linn's Knekt multi-room system and an optional Kontrol source expansion module is soon to be available for further input versatility. There are six function buttons on the fascia for both basic and advanced functions.

The Kontrol comes with the heavyweight, top-end system remote supplied with the CD12. Twenty user configurable options are available to customise operation and you can personalise the inputs and choose what to display in the window during standby, including, should you wish, your dog's name or similar! Put simply, it's a very intelligent bit of kit that requires a read through of the manual before prodding any buttons.

Let's get the nasty business out of the way first. £6,000 for a preamp is a lot of money. Actually, £6,000 for anything is a lot of money but it all depends on your priorities. There are plenty of people out there willing to spend this kind of money (after all there are some that spend this alone on cable!) so there's no point in moaning about it. At the end of the day if you have the money for it - and many do - an item like this may be a 'must buy' purchase, a bit like a top BMW or Porsche.

I can tell you that the Kontrol is a joy to use both practically and sonically. For the review I lined it up with a matching Klimax Twin power amp and used a cheaper Meridian 557 as a non-stablemate comparison. Source was a Meridian 506.24 and a Sony 555ES CD/SACD player. Speakers were, after a variety of 'running-in' variations, a pair of trusty Quad ESL-988s and cabling was Chord's Anthem interconnects and Odyssey 'speaker wire.

Immediately the Kontrol has the unmistakable sheen of high-end audio electronics. By this, I mean super-clean, transparent and totally inoffensive but also smooth. Not smooth and sweet in the kind-of sugary Levinson way but warm without being synthetic. It's very impressive in the way it does what a good preamp should do, which is nothing, but you also know it's there sonically by its great detail.

Kicking off with the rollicking 'Songs For The Deaf' by Queens Of The Stoneage, the Kontrol partnered with the Klimax Twin gave a fast and very involving reading. This combination managed to dig very deep into the disc to retrieve some deliciously impressive detail in the layers of the mix- and in the instruments themselves. Vocals were clean as a whistle with a 'flat' production, and instruments themselves. Vocals were clean as a whistle with a commendable 'flat' production, and they were well placed in the mix. Both drumming and bass playing were as solid as a rock, with fast transients and a full, yet lean sound, devoid from overhang.

Moving onto the Meridian power amp the effect of the preamp was still present but the sound had a slightly fuller and leaner quality - as is the nature of Meridian (admittedly one I quite like - not necessarily prefer - but like) even with this fairly neutral amp.

As host to rock recordings the Kontrol was well at home and a superb sounding option, as indeed it was with jazz from Miles Davis and Chet Baker, which sounded smooth and again superbly detailed.

With classical the overall sound was more suited to the genre than I've found with previous Linn products. Poulenc's Organ Concerto on SACD had good space and ambience (not a traditional Linn trait) with perhaps just a tad less window like transparency and orchestral timbre than that found in quality single-ended valves - which, design wise, is as far away from this product as you can get anyway, so potential buyers should never choose between them! Having said this, the sound is by no means grey or lifeless - it's vibrant and dynamics are realistic.

Preamps aren't just volume controls, they really make a difference and can be the make or break of a potentially excellent system. Just compare the sound of the Kontrol to a Levinson, Meridian or even a £120 Creek passive preamp to find out how big the differences can be. The Kontrol has all the high-end appeal of a Meridian, Krell or Levinson, but a more punctuated and transparent sound than the former and a less hi-fi sound than the others - it could double up as an effective choice as a professional product (although I can't see studio owners shelling out full price!).

The Kontrol is damned expensive, make no mistake, but it's a great product, both in and out of a complete Linn system where it's simply effective yet a vitally important part of the sonic chain. High cost but undoubtedly high-end as well.

Linn Klimax Kontrol £6,000
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ROLL OVER, BEETHOVEN

From Vienna Acoustics comes their latest cutting edge design 'speakers. Alan Sircom encounters the eye-catching Schonberg.

Schonberg, the inventor of the twelve-tone scale and one of the founding fathers of modern classical music, would approve of putting his monika to this intriguing slice of transducer design from Austria. He wouldn't be alone, every speaker in the company's range is named after a famous Austrian or German composer; Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Webern and Berg. Unsurprisingly, the Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven are more classical wooden cabinet designs, whereas the more avant-garde 20th Century composers get a 21st Century silverly look.

And what a look it is! It's not for everyone — many people still like their speakers to look like big square wooden boxes — but those who want something elegant will love the sleek, shiny Schonberg. These tall, thin floorstanders are deceptively thin, thanks to a unique sandwich arrangement which looks more like the wing of a light aircraft than a loudspeaker.

A lot of smart touches went into the Schonberg design, touches that may not be immediately apparent. The tweeter sits in an alloy housing between the main cabinet and the curved rear panel, which cleverly isolates the 25mm silk dome tweeter from vibration within the main body of the speaker, without making it look too noticeable. Along the other side of the speaker, between the two alloy facings of the speaker is a kinky black rubberised cabinet with a pair of side-firing ports and — at the base of the speaker — a pair of speaker terminals. Vienna are not that impressed with bi-wiring, but it would also be incredibly difficult to make bi-wire terminals that didn't prove to be some of the most fiddly around.

The main cabinet itself features a pair of 150mm drive units made specifically for Vienna Acoustic. They feature a material called XPP, a custom-specified polymer unique to Vienna and chosen for its light weight and excellent damping factor. The speaker is configured as a two-way design and has an extremely low crossover point, suggested to be around 100Hz, so the bass drivers do not impinge on the tweeter in the all-important midrange. This also makes the speaker easy to drive, with a quoted 91dB efficiency with a nominal impedance of four ohms.

Even the feet are custom designed for the task. The Schonberg sits on an alloy plate connected to a thick alloy 'X' base terminated by spikes. These help to lower the centre of gravity and stabilise the speaker far more than they really should be capable of. The tower is tall and thin and looks set to topple at a moment's notice; with the bracing in place, it barely moves.

This stand is removable for a reason; the speaker is a true multi-purpose affair, designed to work on a wall as much as in free space. One of the joys of the Schonberg speaker — aside from the distinctive elegance, that is — comes from that comparative freedom from room acoustic limitations. Most speakers with high-end aspirations make demands on the listener and their room, requiring the speaker to sit a metre or more from any kind of wall for the best sound. Not so the Schonberg; put it where you want, in free space, up against the wall, whatever, and the speaker will sound relatively unchanged. There is a slight thickening of the upper bass when butted up against a load-bearing wall and a slightly more open soundstage in total free space, but the differences are mild — consider it fine...
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tuning the sound.

The cabinet is remarkably dead acoustically, leaving most of the sonic action in the hands of the drive units. Fortunately, they seem more than up to the task; creating a tight, detailed and ordered sound free from cabinet colorations and angry boomy resonances that beset many a traditional speaker design.

While the speaker is not the deepest, most bassy around, it delivers coherent bass at almost electrostatic speeds and this more than makes up for that last octave or so. Even the ultra-fast drumming of Billy Cobham soloing on the 'Spectrum' album stays coherent — this normally leaves most box speakers with a very sore port and gasping for air if played at volume. The Schonberg passed muster with pace to spare.

It's a high-precision sound; you get the impression of a warts 'n' all exactness that makes lo-fi recordings like The Datsuns sound like a wall of noise. That said, every dynamic change, every note and every breath into the microphone is accurately presented. This will leave many conventional speakers out in the cold, but the Schonberg is not without fault. That informative nature can be too intense an experience at times, pitching edgy recordings into the realm of the too bright and making brash sounds seem almost glassy. A good source and amplifier help keep the speaker in check, but as this speaker is designed to look elegant, it may feature in sparsely decorated rooms, and that is a combination that could make music more stark than stony.

Except for occasional flashes of brilliance, 'Designer' speakers are often not worth the money. They may look fantastic, but often what makes them look good is what makes them unsuitable for good hi-fi use. Thankfully, the Schonberg is one of the exceptions, thanks to some well-engineered touches that back up the pretty looks. It almost makes a class of its own, sonically, having removed the wooden coloration of traditional boxes but retaining the dynamic drive of cones and domes. It may be a bit bright at times, but if you like a bit of excitement in your music, Schonberg's shiny charms may well seduce.

Vienna Acoustics Schonberg £1,500

Henley Designs
Tel: +44 (0)1235 511 166
www.henleydesigns.co.uk

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The Schonberg has some emphasis at both ends of the frequency spectrum, to give it both warmth and quite strong treble. A dip across the upper midband will recess voices a little and soften violins. This sort of response characteristic tends to make the treble unit sound a little divorced from the rest of the 'speaker and bright CDs may well seem a little overpowering in their treble.

Down at the other end of the frequency spectrum, bass output rolls down slowly in what is quite a well damped response, suited to near-wall use. With forward output reaching down to 40Hz and the ports extending down further the Schonberg should give a fair account of itself at low frequencies.

With a sensitivity of 85dB SPL from one nominal watt of input a reasonable amount of power will be needed for decent volumes. Amplifiers of around 40W minimum will suit. Like most loudspeakers nowadays, this one uses a 4ohm bass unit and it will draw current, making it a reasonably demanding load, albeit one with little V/I phase shift to upset feedback.

The Schonberg is neatly engineered. It doesn't excel, but nor is it flawed. Conventional equivalents are generally more accurate and revealing nowadays however. NK

World Verdict

Well engineered, exciting and stylish but can sound brash if partnered with the wrong equipment or recordings.
World Audio

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KECL82 VALVE AMPLIFIER KIT

The KECL82 is our latest introduction for the true beginner and designed by Andy Grove. A simple and elegant design based on the classic ECL82 valve, a triode and power pentode sharing the same glass envelope. The amplifier consists of two ECL82s per channel, the triode sections work as the input/phase splitter and the pentode sections work in push-pull for the output stage. The amplifier offers 8 watts into an 8 ohm load, the hum level is extremely low, comparison to solid state standards. The chassis is constructed of 1.6mm mild steel with a black powder coat finish, there is only one signal input pair controlled at the front by a volume control for that simple touch. The amplifier offers 8 watts into an 8 ohm load, the hum level is extremely low, comparison to solid state standards. The chassis is constructed of 1.6mm mild steel with a black powder coat finish, there is only one signal input pair controlled at the front by a volume control for that simple touch. The KECL82 weighs 9kg. External dimensions are 30cm(w) x 27cm(d) x 11cm(h).

NEW KIT

£195

KIT6550 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT & KAT6550 VALVE POWER AMPLIFIER KIT

These are our new 6550 series amplifiers. A pure class A design providing 40 watts into an 8 ohm load (available in a 4 ohm version if required). A truly high end design by Andy Grove, using Svetlana 6550Cs in push-pull (any 6550 or KT88 tube can be used with this amp). It features valve rectification (5U4) a choke pi filter power supply and is hard wired. Weights 19kg with dimensions 390mm(w) x 330mm(d) x 190mm(h) with valves or 220mm(h) with cage. Simon Pope says: "If you favour attack and rhythmic grip, together with a smoothness of sound that's incredibly easy to live with, the Kit6550 could well be the kit amp for you. The 6550 is one for those who like a valve sound married to the attack and clout of a good quality solid state design."

£595

£120

£580

£278

£550

2A3 PSE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT

The 2A3 PSE integrated amplifier offers a seriously hi-end sound, but without the cost usually associated with single-ended amplifiers. The stereo chassis houses, on the output, 2 x 2A3 in parallel single ended configuration and a single 6SN7 as the driver tube per channel. The valve rectified power supply consists of a 5U4 and a 10h choke. This feedbackless design provides 8.5 watts into an 8 ohm load, so a good sensitivity speaker is required above 90dB. It can accept 6 line-level inputs fully controllable from the front panel. We provide the excellent Alps Blue potentiometer as standard. The amplifier is hard wired so plenty of scope for tweaking in the future. Simon Pope says: "The 2A3 PSE is extremely impressive piece of kit, good imaging, wide sound stage, nicely extended on the high frequency and tremendous bass thump. Weight: 20kg, external dimensions with valves fitted - 390mm(w) x 360mm(d) x 220mm(h)."
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The PRE-II is a valve pre-amp with six inputs, tape monitor and two sets of output sockets. It utilises a high quality line driver transformer and x5 gain. The PHONO-II is a dedicated valve phono stage that incorporates a step-up transformer for MC users. Finally, PSU-II is a power supply unit that feeds both the PRE-II and PHONO-II.

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Pre-amp (PRE-II) £195.00
Phono Stage (PHONO-II) £110.00
Moving coil step-up transformer £77.00
Passive pre-amp (PAS-II) £215.00

PHONO-II is a dedicated valve phono stage that incorporates a step-up transformer for MC users. Finally, PSU-II is a power supply unit that feeds both the PRE-II and PHONO-II.

PHONO-II £110.00
PSU-II £77.00
PAS-II £215.00

KAT34 VALVE POWER AMPLIFIER KIT & KIT34 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT

Kat34 upgrade kit now available £120

KIT34 is a 32 watt stereo valve integrated amplifier, featuring a pair of EL34s, in push-pull mode, per channel, plus an ECF80 pentode/triode as input/phase splitter. The power supply is valve rectified (2 x 5U4), using a heavy duty choke to achieve exceptional smoothing. The output transformers are 14% Ultra Linear tapped to keep distortion down to its lowest level and the kit is totally hard wired utilising three tag boards. It has five line level inputs, plus a tape-in and tape out, all controllable from the front. Simon Pope says, "This integrated bring together the best sonic virtues of our KIT88, ke134 and top of the range 300B PSE in an affordable package. The highlights of the sound are a deep and taut bass response, together with an open and highly detailed mid and high frequency response that only the best valve designs can achieve."

Weight 22kg. External dimensions with valves fitted - 390mm(w) x 360mm(d) x 210mm(h)

300B PSU MONOBLOC KIT

Our Parallel Single Ended amplifiers offer ultimate sound quality. Each monobloc has two of the beautifully linear 300B directly heated triode in its output stage, producing 20 watts into an 8 ohm load. At the front we have a 6AU6 pentode and an ECC82 as the driver valve. This design utilises a 5U4 rectifier valve in the power supply, in combination with a 10H choke, giving an extremely quiet supply. Both mains and output transformers we E/I pattern.

For purists, feedback is switchable and the kit is totally hard-wired. For those that require valves we provide the superb Tesla 300Bs, Russian 5U4s and European 6AU6s & ECC82. Simon Pope says, "Not to put too fine a point on it, the sound these monoblocs create is among the finest that can be encountered in hi-fi." Our 300B PSE kit bears an affordable price of £875.00 (UK price) excluding valves.

Each monobloc weighs 23kgs., external dimensions with valves: 25cm(w) x 38cm(h) x 22cm(d) per monobloc.

HD83 VALVE HEADPHONE AMPLIFIER KIT

The HD83 headphone amplifier is a beautifully simple design using Mullard ECL83 valves, a triode and power pentode housed in the same envelope. It works directly from any source, be it CD tape, tuner etc., or from an amplifier's tape out, or pre-amp output sockets. The circuit uses high specification E/I output transformers that will drive any headphone load from 16 ohms to over 300 ohms depending on how the secondaries are wired up. The HD83 is a single-ended design with the power pentode wired up in triode configuration for added sonic purity, and it is as quiet as a mouse. For sound quality Jon Marks says, "The bass is punchy and controlled without becoming artificial, while treble has the crispness of the best solid-state, with the tonal purity, delicacy and speed associated with valves."

External dimensions I8cm(w) x 30cm(h) x 8cm (d) weight 4kg.
Mains transformers & Chokes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kit</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Price</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KIT8550/KAT8550</td>
<td>Mains transformers, 2 inch stack, 130mm(h) x 120mm(w) x 135mm(d), drop through fitting with zinc cap, Secondary: 4.5K, 12% UL taps.</td>
<td>£125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIT8550</td>
<td>Mains transformers, 2 inch stack, 120mm(h) x 115mm(w) x 95mm(d), drop through fitting with zinc cap, Secondary: 300V.400mA.</td>
<td>£90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAT8550</td>
<td>Mains transformers, 2 inch stack, 80mm(h) x 95mm(w) x 100mm(d), drop through fitting with zinc cap, Secondary: 300V.400mA.</td>
<td>£100</td>
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Output transformers

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<tr>
<th>Kit</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Price</th>
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<tr>
<td>KIT4/KAT4</td>
<td>1% tapped Ultra Linear push-pull output transformer, 1 inch stack, 80mm(h) x 35mm(w) x 70mm(d), drop through fitting with zinc cap, Primary: 150V.75mA, Secondary: 240V.25mA.</td>
<td>£130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIT4/KAT4 1%</td>
<td>Tapped Ultra Linear push-pull output transformer, 1 inch stack, 80mm(h) x 35mm(w) x 70mm(d), drop through fitting with zinc cap, Primary: 150V.75mA, Secondary: 240V.25mA.</td>
<td>£115</td>
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Printed circuit boards

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<th>Description</th>
<th>Price</th>
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<tr>
<td>KI844/KAT844 1%</td>
<td>Printed Circuit Board, 105mm(w) x 130mm(l) x 1.6mm(d), drop through fitting with zinc cap, Primary: 150V.75mA, Secondary: 240V.25mA.</td>
<td>£130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KI844/KAT844 1%</td>
<td>Printed Circuit Board, 105mm(w) x 130mm(l) x 1.6mm(d), drop through fitting with zinc cap, Primary: 150V.75mA, Secondary: 240V.25mA.</td>
<td>£130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KI844/KAT844 1%</td>
<td>Printed Circuit Board, 105mm(w) x 130mm(l) x 1.6mm(d), drop through fitting with zinc cap, Primary: 150V.75mA, Secondary: 240V.25mA.</td>
<td>£130</td>
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ORDER FORM
The first ever UK review of this recording of Henryk Górecki’s Symphony No. 3, in 1993, described the work as ‘one of the most important symphonies of the century,’ I know, for I wrote it. A smart Press Officer at Elektra Nonesuch, aware that I wrote for Q Magazine, sent me an early copy, hoping to promote the piece to a wider audience with a review therein. Fortunately I was short of decent copy material at the time so I proposed to dash-off a couple of hundred words on this unusual offering (well, certainly for Q readers). In the event, I found it hard not to write two thousand words on it – I was entranced.

A few weeks later saw the recording smash not only into the top ten classical charts but also, incredibly for those days, ride high in the pop album charts. You couldn’t top ten charts but also, I found it hard not to write words on this unusual offering posed to clash-off a couple of handfuls of press material at the time so I proposed to dash-off a couple of hundred words on this unusual offering (well, certainly for Q readers). In the event, I found it hard not to write two thousand words on it – I was entranced.

The Symphony was completed when Górecki’s style was undergoing a fundamental change from modernist 20th century music, using a definite order of notes as a thematic basis for composition, to a more approachable style, fixed to more tonal traditions. He seemed, and this is a trite but understandable analogy, to have completed a reversal of, say, Schoenberg, and decided to lean towards the musical and accessible as oppose to the atonal and less appealing. Schoenberg did it the other way round, going ‘bonkers’ as has been described, after such gems as Verklärte Nacht and stretching tonality to its limits thereafter. The Symphony’s simple thematic basis for composition, to a more approachable style, fixed to more tonal traditions. He seemed, and this is a trite but understandable analogy, to have completed a reversal of, say, Schoenberg, and decided to lean towards the musical and accessible as oppose to the atonal and less appealing. Schoenberg did it the other way round, going ‘bonkers’ as has been described, after such gems as Verklärte Nacht and stretching tonality to its limits thereafter. The Symphony’s simple theme to the final glorious movement. But all this serves only to elevate this most effortless symphony to that of the arcane and unfathomable. The work is undeniably well structured but is complex only in the sense that its thematic course remains unhindered by fanciful orchestral meanderings. It is all there, stark and yet wonderfully ethereal.

There are detractors to this symphony – as can be expected – and I regret that they are amongst those dinosaur diehards of the classical music cognoscenti that brought the more serious musical world into disrepute and made it incredulous as once they might seem. The banal descriptions of this work as ‘film-music’ or as a ‘mawkish advertising theme tune’ are as ridiculous in their pomposity as they are wholly incorrect.

This is a piece of music in a million. A piece to cherish, a piece to, above all, enjoy. Its appeal lies in its haunting beauty, never overstated and with its obvious melancholy held in check by its overriding sense of redemption, frail forgiveness and hope. And if it fails to move you, then there is little hope for you, I’m afraid.
The surround-sound speakers we have tested this month say a lot about the upcoming DVD market and — possibly — the future of audio. As matters stand you'll doubtless be aware that stereo isn't so much dying a natural death as being killed off, in favour of surround-sound. Yet replacing a decent pair of inexpensive stereo speakers with an affordable surround package like the ones we have tested this month will destroy the sound quality of your system.

Am I arguing against surround-sound? Not! At this very moment I am in the process of re-arranging my lounge in a fairly substantial way to do surround-sound properly — without the wires or the intrusion. It can be done. But this means getting the circular saw out, removing the furniture, ripping up the floorboards and what have you. Not everyone is into house surgery to accommodate their hi-fi, but less expensive and more convenient solutions will walk you backwards in terms of sound quality. Let me explain just what our package systems give you.

The cabinets of these loudspeakers have to be small, because there are so many to accommodate in a living room. The satellite units use cheap full range drive units. Some have separate tweeters, some have a parasitic centre dome/cone but under test I found all have a ragged frequency response inferior to any normal hi-fi loudspeaker. In other words, they will sound rough. The cone materials used will add coloration, as will the small, cheap plastic cabinets.

There are no engineering benefits to be had in a small loudspeaker other than good dispersion. These systems are about convenience rather than sound quality. They are for the uncommitted user who wants surround-sound at minimum trouble and expense. The drawback is that their quality is so poor it wouldn't normally be considered hi-fi.

The economic argument looks no more convincing. If you were to buy three pairs of Mordaunt Short MS912s — an excellent hi-fi loudspeaker — they would cost you £600. Believe it or not, an MS912, like any small-ish modern loudspeaker, will get down to 40Hz like most of the subwoofers in budget surround-sound systems. With five MS912s you would have a superb hi-fi surround-sound 'speaker system for just £600.

This comparison simply makes the point that budget surround-sound systems represent very poor value. Of course, Mordaunt Short have proper centre 'speakers and complete cinema systems, as do Mission, et al, which incorporate real hi-fi loudspeakers. But even with a proper REL subwoofer at £300 or so, a brace of small high performance hi-fi loudspeakers will still not take you above £1000 — less than two of these packaged systems.

Home cinema in a box offers dismal sound quality, well below what would be considered hi-fi, for prices higher than a six channel hi-fi system — quite an amazing situation. This contradicts a basic tenet of both DVD and SACD to provide not only surround-sound, but sound quality at least as good as CD or better. DVD video discs have Dolby surround sound, ds or 24/96 digital, in respective quality order. The last of these, 24/96, is like CD (linear pulse code modulation or LPCM) but much better; with considerably less distortion on low level music signals and a bandwidth to 48kHz rather than CD's 21kHz brick wall limit.

What does it sound like? Hard, fast and very solid, as a generalisation. In one word: vivid. I generalise because in practice how any disc 'sounds' depends mostly upon recording quality, but traits are evident once you have listened to a good cross sample of recordings. What I would say though, is 24/96 is worth having; you not only get visceral punch to your dynamics, you also get extreme, or shall I say conspicuous clarity. Believe me, friends will walk in and go "wow!" - if you do it properly.

Of course, surround-sound through a poor set of speakers still gives you noises from every corner of the room and in most cases, if not all, it's more involving than stereo, in the sense that you are immersed in the sound field. But try to listen to an orchestra, or even violins on a Rock recording, and your ears will certainly protest using the 'speakers I tested this month.

SACD and DVD Audio offer even higher sound quality than DVD video. Our experiences to date at Hi-Fi World suggest you need a decent hi-fi system to clearly resolve the improvements these new high resolution digital systems offer. It seems a shame people should be drawn into using low grade surround-sound loudspeakers for the sake of convenience and domestic harmony, because it smothers much of what high resolution audio can do. Instead of going "wow" a word more likely to be used is "ouch". And that's not how it should be.
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Several months ago, I wrote about what I expected to be a DAB Christmas. Well with the Christmas season well under way now all the signs are that the public's response to Digital Radio has been even better than many had imagined. Although there is little choice in DAB tuners at present, the two budget models that made it in time for Christmas have sold exceptionally well. Both the Acoustic Solutions 120 and Cambridge Audio's DAB300 have been so popular there will be shortages over the season.

The problem has been that retailers have found it tricky to gauge demand. For one reason, the whole country has yet to get DAB coverage, and the other is that it's difficult to estimate just how many people will buy into the technology.

Although the DAB alliance had hoped that coverage would be around 75% by now, the deadline has been moved forward; the BBC still quote early 2004 for 85% coverage. More encouraging has been the recent launch of extra stations including another new BBC station, Radio 7.

I also hear that Ford is to be the first to fit DAB tuners to their range of cars, giving the format a potentially massive boost.

With the modest excitement generated by the format I decided to try the new technology for myself just before Christmas, with an early present of a Pure Evoke I. Pure, formally VideoLogic, have been at the vanguard of digital tuner technology. Vanguard of digital tuner technology they were. The £100 Evoke I is the standard of cars, giving the format a potentially massive boost. The better to fit DAB tuners to their range of cars, giving the format a potentially massive boost.

The inbuilt speaker is rather 'plummy' in tone and obviously short of power, yet when plugged through a separates system, the sound quality's not bad. I say 'not bad' because I still feel that an analogue tuner of the same price sounds better. A Cambridge T500 with a decent outdoor aerial outperforms its digital brother similarly equipped.

For any hi-fi fan this is a major handicap. Yes the Tag McLaren no doubt will sound very impressive, but I doubt if it will match the magic of a well set-up Naim NAT. Much of the problem is down to reduced data rate. In order to provide more stations the forum has reduced signal quality - a trade off that is available in digital. Now that all the digital tuners are equipped with a data rate meter, the listener can see just how good - or rather, poor - the quality of the transmitted signal is. The best data rate possible is 192kbps. This falls to a mere 48kbps with the financial station Bloomberg. This is set by the broadcaster and it comes as no surprise to find Radio 3 has the highest quality signal as this has always been the case with their FM broadcasts. Most BBC stations use a 128kbps rate, although this does vary. Although broadcasters have always altered rates at different times of the day, now the listener can actually see exactly when the rate changes. It can actually be rather alarming to see the rate fall, especially if you were quite looking forward to the following program! The sound quality may not be discernably different through the Evoke's own 'speaker' but it's certainly noticeable through my separates system. In this respect then, the old bugbear of stations such as Radio 1, being almost unlistenable on a decent separates system, is the best data rate possible is 192kbps. This falls to a mere 48kbps with the financial station Bloomberg. This is set by the broadcaster and it comes as no surprise to find Radio 3 has the highest quality signal as this has always been the case with their FM broadcasts. Most BBC stations use a 128kbps rate, although this does vary. Although broadcasters have always altered rates at different times of the day, now the listener can actually see exactly when the rate changes. It can actually be rather alarming to see the rate fall, especially if you were quite looking forward to the following program! The sound quality may not be discernably different through the Evoke's own 'speaker' but it's certainly noticeable through my separates system. In this respect then, the old bugbear of stations such as Radio 1, excluding its convert to Digital Radio, however. There's no doubt that the choice of stations is excellent, and most of the time the quality is fine for speech, dramas, comedy and pop music. Given the choice of listening to the Proms on digital or analogue, though, I'd still plump for the latter. Here's hoping the reception improves in time for the summer!
The eighties was a "troubled" decade for loudspeaker design. Although a number of 'milestone' products appeared - such as Celestion's SL6 and Acoustic Energy's AE-1, it's hard to argue these were completely successful designs in themselves. Rather, they proved more notable for what they subsequently made possible, rather than for what they actually did. The decade is best remembered as an important 'rite of passage' in loudspeaker design, sweeping a new broom through a sea of metal dome tweeters, minimalist crossovers and small, pert cabinets in their place.

All of which has absolutely nothing to do with the speaker you see before you. In a world moving inexorably towards stand-mounted minisporting aluminium dome tweeters, Monitor Audio's R352 must have looked a complete anachronism upon its introduction back in 1984. Rather than being a 'brave new world' design, it was much more a case of 'traditional values in a modern setting'. Intriguingly, this loudspeaker was the brainchild of Robin Marshall, more famous for the brilliant work he went on to do with Epos and the ES14. He had started his career at the BBC, entering directly from university as a mathematics and computer science graduate. There he'd got to work on a number of speakers, including the famous LS3/5A. Upon leaving, he hooked up with the retailer KJ Leisuresound, whose owner John Read gave him a job making loudspeakers, effectively starting the Audiomaster brand. His Beb connections ensured that it won a license to manufacture the LS3/5A, causing the company to grow at an alarming rate. By 1981 the business imploded and it was then that Monitor Audio's Mo Idqal offered him a job. The MA R352 and R252 were his first two designs, and the aluminium domed R852/MD, and R952/MD followed. After two years, Marshall finally left to set up Epos Acoustics and launch the famed ES14.

He has described the MA R352 as a "mould-breaker", saying that when he looked around at what other people were doing, he thought it seemed pointless to "just make another clone". Indeed it is not - at 640x250x318mm it's a pretty big box and taller still on the custom MA stands, which are angled slightly up to improve dispersion. The cabinet is beautifully veneered - MA produced some spectacularly finished boxes through the eighties - and thick, strong and solid at 13kg apiece. Inside sit a 200mm plastiflex mid/bass unit and a 25mm soft dome tweeter, with a large bass port completing the front baffle layout.

Its driver compliment is remarkable for being entirely 'old school', albeit done to very high standards. The combination of relatively unsophisticated drive units and a large, bass reflex cabinet made for an excellent 91dB sensitivity and a very benign nominal 8 ohm load. Compare that to the 85dB sensitivity of the then 'flavour of the month' Linn Kan (sealed box mini monitor) which retailed at a similar price to the R352's £350 and you can see how different it must have seemed!

One obvious result of all this sensitivity is brilliant transient performance, and this is where the Monitor Audio shines. Don't expect it to have the neutrality of a classic BBC design, or the clarity of an electrostatic - this is to miss the point. The R352 is all about giving a fast, involving and tuneful sound, and this is what it does - in spades. Moreover, whereas price rivals like the Kan were also very musically engaging but had precious little bass, the MA has loads of it. Interestingly though, it's not a seventies style fat, bloated low frequency performance. Rather, it's decently tight, taut, grippy and tuneful. However, you still get the distinct impression that this is a big, barrel-chested loudspeaker that's at home in something bigger than a box room.

This is the beauty of the R352 - it has that large, warm seventies sound that so many of us living with nineties speakers yearn for, yet it has a good deal of eighties-style speed and rhythm - the best of all worlds, in other words. The R352 was a popular product in the mid-eighties, but these days you see precious few around (either their owners are holding on to them, or they're downright ashamed of them!)

Prices range from around £90 for a tatty pair up to £200 for a mint set complete with the very desirable factory spiked stands. Either way, you're getting a lot of loudspeaker for your money - precisely why people bought them all those years ago.
In 2002, hi-fi had a most excellent year. It saw several strands coming together to mark a sea change in audio – namely 'advanced resolution digital', multi-channel and high end analogue. It was probably one of the most important years hi-fi has had since the early eighties advent of Compact Disc. Last year's goings on strike right at the heart of the future of high fidelity.

Although DVD-Audio and SACD are technologically yesterday's news – the cutting edge is now hard disk and flash memory-based audio devices – 2002 was the year they became a commercial reality. Granted, they haven't yet reached ordinary homes, but there's no denying that these two audiophile digital formats (arguably the first ever) have made great strides in getting to shops.

This time last year, most hi-fi nuts had never seen a DVD-Audio disc but now there's over four hundred of the things on sale. Likewise, one year ago you could count the number of SACD players on the fingers of one hand – now, Philips sells a £200 DVD player with SACD built-in.

Until the advent of DVD-A and SACD, there was precious little justification for the purchase of a high quality multichannel sound system, as far as out-and-out audiophiles were concerned.

Until the advent of DVD-A and SACD, there was precious little justification for the purchase of a high quality multichannel sound system, as far as out-and-out audiophiles were concerned.
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The design principle behind the Dual is to offer high noise immunity as well as top musical performance. In an attempt to achieve these ends it's a 'figure-eight' design (two separate cables joined together) and is terminated with the company's RCA6 gold-plated, all metal constructed phono plugs.

Each channel uses two conductors, one of which is the 'send'; the other is for 'return'. A separate 100% coverage aluminium/poly foil screen is then used for earthing with a drain wire connected at the 'send' end, making the cable directional (a small arrowed yellow tag signals the directivity). The audio signal uses two conductors made from 19-strand, 0.127mm diameter Oxygen Free Copper inside a polyethylene isolation.

The Dual is finished in a kind of wishy-washy pale blue hue but thankfully it’s shielded by whatever words of Sade, a smooth operator. When it comes to sound quality you’d be hard pushed to find anything more neutral and transparent for this money – even at half a metre! The Dual is refreshingly (get it?) open and airy and breathes life into equipment – it will give budget, midpriced or ageing components a real boost. ‘Kind Of Blue’ had plenty of insight and it was resplendent with detail – the old analogue tape hiss was realistically present, and brushes on the skin of the snare had a startling presence. Tonaly the Tonik errs on the bright side but as long as your amps aren’t equally crispy then you’ll be alright. Such was the realism, at times the sax and trumpet was so forward in the mix that I felt the bell was poking through the Quad’s grill.

With the Foo Fighters latest album, it served as long as your amps aren’t equally crispy then you’ll be alright. Such was the realism, at the mix that I felt the bell was poking through the Quad’s grill.

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Whilst the Tonik is very low priced for Kimber, you’d need to have slim components for using the starting price, as 0.5m doesn’t get you very far if you favour 50kilo monoblocks (in which case you’d probably get something more expensive anyway).

Having said this, the Tonik is available in longer lengths to order. The new Tonik replaces the PBj as the company’s entry level interconnect and uses the traditional Kimber tri-braid geometry and Varistrand™ “ultra-pure” copper conductors. There’s also a special PE dielectric and the Tonik is available in both XLR or the company’s Ultratike (sounds like a super-brat) RCA connectors.

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COPY PROTECTION VOX POP
US market analyst GartnerG2 has found that most consumers believe they have the right to copy their own music CDs, and copy-coded discs to come with mandatory warning labels. The study involved 1,005 adults and 1,009 teenagers being interviewed in the US. It found that most consumers believed that copy-protected CDs threatened their legal right to make personal-use copies of discs, causing its authors to conclude that copy-protected CDs without warning labels could have a negative impact on sales.

A statement released by GartnerG2’s research director, P.J. McNealy says that, “Since it’s clear consumers perceive they have the right to make some copies, the lack of labelling will only contribute to declining revenue for the music industry as those who are still buying CDs become frustrated. Consumers will balk if they bring home a CD and find it won’t play on every CD player they own.”

The survey found that 82% of respondents believe it is legal to make copies of CDs for personal backup, while 77% think they should be able to copy the CD for personal use in another device. 60% thought it was legal to make a copy for another member of the household. 74% thought the music industry should be required to label CDs that include copy protection.

REPORTED TO HAVE SAID THAT, “ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY HAVE MEANT THAT I HAVE FINALLY BEEN ABLE TO DUMP THE MIXING DESK. THANKS TO CREATIVE, HALF A TON OF METAL AND 24 FADERS HAVE LEFT THE BUILDING AND NOW EVERYTHING IS MADE ON MY PC! IT’S GIVEN ME THE EDGE TO PRODUCE BROADCAST QUALITY AUDIO QUICKLY AND EASILY”. THOSE WISHING TO PURCHASE THIS SEMINAL MOMENT IN POP HISTORY CAN E-MAIL TONYB@DEBBIEFLETINT.COM.

SOUND BYTES
In tech news, Macrovision Corp. is acquiring both Midbar Technology Ltd. and the assets of TTR Technologies Inc., bringing together three top CD copy-protection technology developers in a concerted effort to enable acceptable consumer CD-burning and transfer of music files. Market research company Comscore reports that CD burning and file-sharing are impacting online music sales to the tune of a 25% online sales drop, or $545 million for the first nine months of 2002 compared to the same time last year.

Universal Music Group has launched a digital download program offering over 43,000 tracks in Liquid Audio format. Burnable to CD and transferable to portable devices, they’re available from Best Buy.com, BET.com, CircuitCity.com, FYE.com, MP3.com, RollingStone.com, Tower.com, and WindowsMedia.com.

Aimster has now been ordered by a US Federal judge to employ filtering technologies to block such swapping of unauthorised copyrighted content. This is the result of an RIAA lawsuit against the service, now called Madster, over copyright infringement.

Listen.com’s Rhapsody subscribers, who are already allowed to burn to CD tracks from Universal Music Group and Warner Music Group, can now burn tracks supplied via BMG Entertainment for 99 cents each. The just relaunched MP3.com site has ‘digital music tutorials’ for newcomers, increased coverage of digital hardware and software, expanded artist information, 40 channels of streamed radio from Radio Fren Virgin, and a chart tracking its most popular downloads and streams.
Aopen has launched its new SilentTek 'silent PC technology' on its latest generation of motherboards. Its combined "Hardware-Status Monitoring", "Overheat Warning" and "Fan Speed Control" lets users strike the right balance between noise, system performance and stability. Featuring a wealth of information from voltages, CPU and chassis temperature and fan performance, the system automatically trims the speed of your cooling fans (or you can manually set them) and adjusts your CD-ROM rotation speed to the lowest that is appropriate. More information is at: http://english.aopen.com.tw/tech/techinside/SilentTek.htm.

The leading edge Japanese home computer market has seen the launch of NEC's VALUESTAR FS, an all-in-one PC combining LCD monitor and PC, featuring NXT's SoundVu technology. This follows the success of NEC's first SoundVu system, the VALUESTAR T, launched last month. It has been well received, winning the 'Best Desktop PC Award' at the World PC Expo in Japan last month. The new machine is being sold as a 'one-stop entertainment centre' combining traditional PC use with watching and recording TV programmes, as well as listening to music and watching DVDs.

By integrating the speaker into the screen, the SoundVu technology gives perfect synchronicity between sound and vision, as well removing the need for boxy loudspeakers which in turn saves living space (much prized in Japan) and adding to the home's interior design. For more details point your browser at http://www.emissionuk.com/product/pc/2002/02/family/vsfs/html/index.html.

Dension's DMP3 is a £400 MP3-based hard drive unit that slots into your car dashboard and hooks up its existing hi-fi - either via the FM radio, auxiliary input or CD changer controls. Its vast 80GB storage capacity means tens of thousands of MP3 songs can be stored and accessed by easily managed playlists. Every time you want to add more music, the DMP3 can be unclipped from the dash and hooked up to a PC, either by the standard docking station or an optional (£49.99) USB 2 lead. Head units fitted to countless cars (from Audi to Volkswagen) will control it, but a small remote is supplied for those that don't. For more information, check out www.In-CarMP3.com.
COOLER STILL?

Syntrillium's Cool Edit Pro is, for many, the industry-standard digital audio editing package. Now, with Cool Edit Pro 2, it's been updated. David Price asks if it's improved a winning formula?

One of the best digital music editing packages has just been given a major revamp. Cool Edit Pro users include The Byrds' Roger McGuinn, the BBC and Abbey Road Studios, such is this software's respect throughout the audio industry. Essentially it's an audio recording application which lets you store music from an analogue or digital source (depending on your computer soundcard) on your PC and manipulate it in the digital domain using the program's powerful digital signal processing functions.

Such is its power that you can record, mix, and master up to 128 tracks of stereo audio (up from 64 in the original version). It comes complete with over 45 DSP effects, audio restoration, mastering and analysis tools. CEP2 also adds loop-based song creation and sequencing for musicians, and allows direct import of ACID file format songs (not just ACID loops, but actual .acd files.) It even has SMPTE/MTC master and slave, DirectX, MIDI and video support.

Of greatest interest to me is the software's wider compatibility - it talks to myriad file formats, including WAV, AIFF and all the other standard audio formats. A handy new bonus is its MP3 support, and Syntrillium hasn't done this by half. There's a full Fraunhofer MP3PRO codec bundled for the very best sound. Likewise, the new version supports even higher sampling rates, meaning it will record and playback (soundcard permitting) in up to 32bit, 192kHz resolution. It will even upsample from 16/44 to 24/192, or downsample and dither - effectively offering 'Super Bit Mapping'!

The software is an easy install for all Windows 98, Windows Me, Windows 2000 and Windows XP PCs, taking less than 20MB of hard disk resources. The program auto configures itself to use your PC's soundcard as its recording and playback devices, but if you've got several soundcards fitted you can select your desired one by going into the OPTIONS/ SETTINGS menu. As before, wide bar-graph meters running all the way along the bottom of the screen are provided, but with a smoother, finer action.

Recording and editing is pretty much as before, which means extremely easy and straightforward - simply a case of locating the start and stop points of the recording you wish to cut, paste or delete. You can use the ZOOM IN and ZOOM OUT buttons to display your edit. Vast digital signal processing is then available, including noise reduction, click and pop elimination, clip restoration, compression, convolution, delay, sustain, echo, chorus, expanding, FFT, distortion, normalisation, phasing, vocoding, sample rate conversion, time stretching, tempo compression, parametric equalisation and DC bias adjustment, multi-band equalisation and powerful filtering.

Once you're done, you can save it to disk or - new for CEP2 - burn it to CD directly. This feature is brilliantly easy to use, and powerful too, but does require downloading the free Downloadable Disk-At-Once CD Burning Plug-in from the website first.

Overall, the package feels slicker and more elegant than the original, and adds some very useful features. It remains incredibly stable and impressively fast, however, the very qualities that have endeared it to so many users in the past. The extra functionality hasn't compromised its ease of use, either - if anything it's improved it because the program feels far more 'all of a piece', more coherent and convincing. Overall then, Syntrillium's premium package gets a hearty thumbs up - with its high UK retail price the only disappointing factor.

Syntrillium Cool Edit PRO 2
£249.00
www.syntrillium.com
After launching what was effectively the world's first hard-disk based digital audio player back in 2000, Creative Labs has a new 'DAP Jukebox' for our delectation, cunningly entitled the Jukebox 2. David Price takes it out on the road.

How times fly! This time two years ago I was over in Japan, waxing lyrical about something I was immensely impressed with - Creative Labs' DAP Jukebox. Its amazing claim to fame was that it was the world's first-to-market hard drive-based digital audio player. By using the (then still fairly new-fangled) MP3 format, it could store thousands of hours of music on its internal hard drive. It was a classic case of yours truly marvelling at the miracle of modern technology. Although I admitted it had a few faults, the concept totally knocked me out. I was smitten.

Things have changed since then. The idea of a dinky device that holds vast amounts of music and plays it back with fairly high fidelity has become pretty much routine. A number of such devices have appeared on the market from a range of hitherto unknown manufacturers such as Archos, while one unlikely name has moved in and completely transformed the landscape - Apple. The iPod is - to my mind - the most brilliant example of the breed. Its ergonomics, software, sound quality, visual design and build is superb - and now, surprise, surprise, it's available for PCs too.

Much has happened in the intervening two years, then. Having invented the breed, Creative Labs reappear on the 'MP3 jukebox' scene almost as an interloper. No longer acknowledged masters of the art, their new Jukebox 2 faces dramatically tougher competition - forget who invented this market segment; anyone who can take on Apple and win has got to have something special up their sleeves. The question is: has Creative Labs?

To be fair, the Jukebox is appreciably cheaper than the iPod. Although the latter has had its price cut, the Creative Labs unit is still almost half price at £199. Considering that it was launched at £249 just a few months back, and that the original DAP Jukebox cost £349, that's a lot of product for your pound. Factor in the myriad improvements that Creative has made over the original and it scores highly on the value front before you even pull it out of the box.

The unit itself has a 10GB hard drive built in, which is appreciably faster and quieter than the original machine. This translates to being able to store around 5,000 songs in WMA format (333 hours), or up to 2,500 songs in MP3 at 128kbps (166 hours), or around 300 songs in uncompressed 16bit, 44.1kHz PCM digital audio (30 hours). Other improvements include a new USB 2.0 connector which permits obviously faster transfers from computer to Jukebox 2 than was possible with USB 1.1 - although this older format is available if your PC lacks the new type. Other improvements include a new USB 2.0 connector which permits obviously faster transfers from computer to Jukebox 2 than was possible with USB 1.1 - although this older format is available if your PC lacks the new type. I have to say that FireWire wouldn't have gone amiss, but the designers have obviously taken the view that it's simply not 'universal' enough yet, I guess? The latest type of lithium-ion rechargeable battery is supplied, giving up to sixteen hours of playback.

The unit itself is noticeably smaller and lighter than the original DAP at 123x130x32mm and 249 grams, although in homage (?) to the first of the breed it retains the 'Discman' shaped case. I had questions about this two years ago, and have to reiterate them here. Why isn't it square like the iPod? It simply doesn't fall 'to hand' easily, and the buttons aren't labelled in English (only graphical legends) making it baffling to use.

It's quite well made. Although the case is moulded plastic, it's good quality stuff and doesn't feel flimsy in the least. Once again though, a sleeve of Perspex (a la iPod) would work much better, and wouldn't present the possibility of that nice silver paint wearing off six months down the road. Round the back is a 5V DC in (for the supplied AC adapter/charger) and the USB socket, while the 3.5mm stereo headphone jack sits to its right - shame there's no direct analogue line out, or digital for that matter.
with the Jukebox 2, the package includes a cheap set of headphones (as usual, buy a pair of Sennheisers!), the USB 2.0 connecting cable, power adapter, installation CD, Quick Start guide and Lithium Battery.

Creative Labs has always had more than a passing interest in sound quality, as the fine standards set by the original DAP Jukebox showed. This time, the company claims that careful attention to detail at the design stage has resulted in a signal-to-noise ratio of up to 98dB, a channel separation figure of 74dB, a frequency response of 20Hz - 20kHz and total harmonic distortion of less than 0.1%. Hooked up to my main reference system, driving Yamaha NS 1000M loudspeakers, the unit certainly impressed.

As ever, sound quality with MP3 files depends on the codec used, but a Fraunhofer encoded I92kbps file of AC/DC's 'Highway to Hell' proved most impressive. Bass was powerful and well articulated with no sense of anaemia found in many MP3 portables, midband crisp and clean and treble smooth and even. Stereo imaging was bold, pushing vocals way ahead of the plane of the loudspeakers, and failing back way behind. Cueing up an uncompressed WAV file of The Dandy Warhols 'Bohemian Like You' revealed the Jukebox 2 to be easily the sonic prime exponent of this art and isn't entirely fair, as Apple is the prime exponent of this art and charges its customers for the privilege. Sonically however, it's up there with more expensive designs, and really very good for its modest retail price - don't forget, the very first 32MB Rio barely cost any less!

Creative Labs Jukebox 2 £199.99

Creative Labs
Tel: + 44 (0)1245 265265
www.creativelabs.co.uk
David Price looks at the most polished SONICblue Rio so far, the S35 portable digital audio player.

Three years ago, Diamond Multimedia - the company that is now SONICblue (after previously being called 'S3') - was the word upon everyone's lips. The company was at the centre of a much-publicised legal battle with the Recording Industry Association of America, which slapped a court injunction on Diamond to restrain sale, contending that the 'Rio' (and all other devices of its type) was an illegal copying device. To cut a long story short, Diamond argued that it was merely a playback device (essentially it was just flash memory with a digital-to-audio converter), and therefore exempt. After weeks of wrangling, it won.

It's important to recognise how important this all seemed at the time. The Rio was not the world's first MP3 player - it's generally agreed that South Korean company Saehan has that particular accolade - but was the first to make it to the shops en masse, thanks in no small part to the company's pioneering legal struggles in the US. The original PMP300, launched Spring 1999, became quite an icon - much in the same way as the likes of Sony and Samsung moved in with far trendier looking designs. SONICblue has now completely revamped the range with its new S10, S30, S35 and S50. The previous models' awkward 'memory backpack' modules have gone, to be replaced by MMC memory expansion slots, offering up to 256MB of storage. The S30 you see here comes with a perfectly adequate 64MB.

In marked contrast to many of the latest crop of portable digital audio players, which are made from brittle, featherweight plastic that feels like it won't last a week on the road, the tiny (64mm diameter) S30 feels rugged to the touch. At the centre is a brilliant, fine-pitch backlit LC display - beautifully crisp and clear and bristling with information (artist name, song title, playing time, etc). As per the last Rio range it plays both MP3 and WMA files - disappointingly there's still no AAC or MP3 Pro support, although SONICblue says it's "upgradeable to future audio formats". Built in is an FM stereo tuner and a clock/stopwatch.

The package contains the player itself, a pair of mediocre in-ear phones (as usual, get a pair of Sennheiser MX500s), a carrying case with belt clip, an adjustable armband, a battery, USB cable and a disc containing Rio Music Manager software for both the PC and Mac. A 'getting started guide' completes the package.

Rio Music Manager is excellent. It's an improved version of the code offered with the previous generation of Rios, which was already serious stuff: its easy-to-use interface allows quick transfers of MP3 and WMA files from PCs or Macs via USB, RealOne (PC) and iTunes (Mac) software is also included - all I can say is that, as for the latter, it's at moments like this that I wish I'd bought a Mac!

Out and about the Rio feels great, whether you choose to use the armband or simply put it in your pocket. It's durable, and all the facilities (clock, equaliser, etc.) are easy to get to without fumbling through menus and submenus. One AAA battery provides a claimed fifteen hours of battery life, but my review sample was closer to ten. NiMH rechargeable batteries can be fitted if desired, but aren't standard.

The USB connection is a joy - the Rio 500 was the first to pioneer this, and the S30's implementation feels smoother and faster still. This diminutive heart-shaped gadget with its well designed display and buttons is a true pleasure to carry around.

The Rio S30 sounds genuinely impressive - up there with the best digital audio players I've heard (such as the old Rio 800 and the Philips Rush SA 126). It's on the analytical side - clinical even - but there's a wealth of midband detail, nice crisp treble and a taut, firm bass response. Stereo imaging is well defined, and the images project out into space well at high bitrates, when feeding a serious hi-fi system via its 6.3mm headphone jack at maximum output. The only downside is that the Rio is just a little too 'digital' sounding compared to the warm, lush, big hearted character of the aforementioned Philips.

Overall, it's an excellent product - a true fourth generation design with all its concomitant refinements and strengths. There's very little to criticise at the price, something you can't say of most digital audio portables even now.

SONICblue Rio S30 £160

www.riohome.com
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 may make a good second-hand buy.

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MARANTZ CD-17 KI-S £1100
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LINN SONDEK LPI2 BASIK £1100
Quality never comes cheap! This DAC oozes commanding, powerful, detailed sound that gets the best from almost any arm and cartridge. Supreme build, brilliant value. (Apr 98)

MICHELL GYRODEC SE £775
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MICHELL ORBE £2000
Fantastically capable all rounder with commanding, powerful, detailed sound that gets the best from almost any arm and cartridge. (Apr 97)

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PINK TRIANGLE TARANTELLA £880
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DACs

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TONEARMS

HADCOCK 242 SE £649
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  - 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.

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

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

**SYSTEMS**

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

Would you like to upgrade your Naim?

Call 020 8318 5755 or 8852 1321 now!
SONNETEER SEDLEY £399
Combines transparency and fine dynamics with excellent rhythmic ability. (May '98)

PRE-AMPLIFIERS

AMC1100 £150
Suffers from un-defeatable tone controls but an extremely good value piece of kit. Partners the similarly budget level AMC2200 power amplifier, also at £150. Comfortable beginners' choice. (Mar '99)

AUDIO ANALOGUE

BELLINI £475
Showcases AA's characteristic mix of clarity and musicality and blasts the competition. (Apr '98)

CHORD CPA1800 £1800
Clarity, insight and control are second to none - an addictive mixture. (Mar '99)

CROFT VITALE £350
A modestly priced valve pre-amp with exceptionally transparent performance. MM phono stage plus three line stages are standard. Volume controls are separate for each channel, thus giving balance adjustment. A remarkable item in all respects. (Feb 2000)

XTC PRE-1 £1000
Almost valve-like in its smoothness, the line-level Pre-1 is warm and seductively clear. (Nov '99)

POWER AMPLIFIERS

ARCAM 9 £400
With 70W on tap, the 99 will drive most loudspeakers with a spacious and detailed sound. Good bass welly too. (Dec '96)

CHORD SPM400 £1400
There's a sense of effortless power to the Chord that gives music real scale and presence. (Mar '98)

MARANTZ MODEL 9 £8000
Authentic reproduction monoblocks still more than cut the sonic mustard. Highly expensive and highly sought after. (Mar '97)

MICHEL ALECTO £1989
Crisp, clean and beautifully controlled with gorgeous styling. Partnered with the £1650. (Oct '98)

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-A200E1000/power
200WV high-end monobloc power in a
grooved tube. (Aug '98)

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

TUNERS

CAMBRIDGE T500 £180
An extremely engaging tuner with a performance at odds with its low price. Not exactly a Troubline, 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 dreamboat 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 NATO3 £595
The NATO3's warm, atmospheric sound is further proof of Naim's proficiency with tuners. (Sep '93)

SONY ST-SA3ES £250
Sought to leave all the competition with the line-level ST-SA3ES. (Feb '95)

CASSETTE DECKS

AIWA AD-5750 £200 Asonically very decent machine at the price.
Comes fitted with Dolby B, C and the dead handy Dolby S. (Apr '96)

AIWA AD-5950 £300 A stable transport, superb head and Dolby S. (Apr '96)

KENWOOD KX-1080 £160 A simple deck, but excellent-quality head and transport give top quality sound. (Oct '96)

PIONEER CT-57405 £430 A great piece of engineering from Pioneer, with first-rate sound. (Jun '96)

YAMAHA KX-580SE £2350 The "SE" tag is more than a marketing gimmick. Sound is solid and clear with Dolby S. (Sep '97)

LOUDSPEAKERS

KEF CRESTA. £469
Impressively vice-free Speakers that offer great transparency and involvement. One of a select band that simply makes music regardless. (Mar '99)

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

KEF CRESTA. £100
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 752 £495
Cracking mid-price mini towers combined HDA drive units and metal dome tweeters with surprisingly warm results. Siege load characteristics makes them great for valves. (Sep '97)

MISSION 771 £170
Characteristically fast, punchy Mission sound from the Aerogel mid/bass and silk-dome tweeter. (Jul '98)

Each year we replace our Naim demonstration stock giving you an opportunity to make a substantial saving on our normal price! All products are boxed with full two year warranty. Only one of each available.

Interest Free Period of nine months available - please call for details.

NAC 52 Preamp (£3850) £2690
A SuperCap Power Supply (£2550) £1795
NAC 102 Preamp (£1210) £799
NAP 180 Power Amplifier (£1220) £859
NA COX Player (£2470) £1729
NA CDX Player (£2470) £1729
NA NAP 250 Power Amplifier (£1910) £1339
NA CDS/2 Player (£4165) £3099
NAP 500 Power Amplifier (£10995) £7985

We have a few new units available at 15% off list price - please call for details.

Job Opportunity

We have a vacancy for a young enthusiastic 18 - 20 year old sales and customer service person. Experience not necessary but good communication skills would be an advantage. Average above average income potential. Please write to Ian Anderson sending your C.V to the address above.

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Bilfly Vee
SOUND SYSTEMS
QUAD ESL 63 * £3450
A reference against which all other loudspeakers are judged. The 63s have superb imaging and genuine transparency.

TANNY A580* £3700
Bold sounding pro active monitor with solid bass, clear midrange and delicious treble. (Aug '96)

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

MINIDISC PLAYERS

KENWOOD DM-9900 £500
One of the best MD players yet. ATRAC 4.5 gives clean and very musical recordings from this Kenwood. (Jan '98)

SONY MDS-JB90IQ £250
Great mid-price machine that adds better build and facilities to the '530's already excellent sonic.

SONY MDS-JAS05E* £1300
This Sony can put the wind up Nakamichi cassette decks when used with better blank MDs. (Apr. '98)

SONY MDS-JESS55E MiniDisc Recorder £520
The best sounding MD deck made so far, thanks to awesome build and heroic ATRAC-DSP Type R coding.

SONY MDS-J510 £300
An impressive sound and unmatched convenience make this MiniDisc player an excellent buy.

DIGITAL RECEIVERS

ALESIS MASTERDISK £1400
A groundbreaking hard disc recorder with a built-in CD drive. An amazing bit of kit, and a glimpse of the future. (July 2000)

Pioneer DVD-717. A well built and solid performer.

DVD PLAYERS

DENON DVD-5000 £1600
Monster build as you'd expect at this price. Facilities and gadgets galore and a controlled, exciting way with CD decoder. (Sep '99)

PIONEER DV-717 £700
Well built and a solid performer, with a 'true' 24/96 digital output. Facilities in abundance and performance more than make up for the high price. Excellent value. (Mar '00)

SONY DVP-S725 £490
One of the best buys in the DVD market. Available in a dodgy white case, but the music. Miraculous transparency.

JECKLIN FLOAT - MODEL TWO £99
Wonderful panel-like and open sound from these esoteric-looking headclamps. Do not wear in public unless you like being made a fool of.

HEADPHONES

LEXICON MCA Processor (2Yr Gtee) £650
Perfectly in tune with the electronics and concentrate on the music. Miraculous transparency.

CHORD COMPANY

RUMOUR £9.95/m
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.

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

LOUDSPEAKER CABLE

Nordost Blue Heaven £375/3m pair
An open and spacious sound that simply carries music.

MINIDISC PLAYERS

KENWOOD DMF-9020 £500
An excellent tool for home recording, combines convenience, superb sound and a fair price. (Aug '99)

MARANTZ DR-17 £1100
Probably the best sounding CD recorder on the market. Built like a brick out house with a true audiophile sound. HDCD compatible. (July '2000)

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

PIONEER PDR-555RV £480
Excellent mid-priced CD recorder that both plays and records with equal panache. (Oct '99)

SONY TCD-8 DATMAN* £599
Super clean and detailed sound makes this an amazing portable. Not as robust as it should be though.

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LOUDSPEAKER CABLE

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0% APR is available on purchases of more than £660. Please call for details. Confirm stock before visit. EXDE

Lexicon MCA Processor (2Yr Gtee) £3795.00

Naim CDX CD Player (2Yr Gtee) £1729.00

Naim CD5/2 Player (2Yr Gtee) £625.00

Naim 102 Preamplifier (2Yr Gtee) £899.00

Naim 72 Preamplifier (2Yr Gtee) £767.00

Naim NAP 180 Power Amp (2Yr Gtee) £1805.00

Naim NAP 250 Power Amp S/H (1YR Gtee) £1805.00

Naim Intro S/NK - Beech (1YR Gtee) £949.00

Naim NAP500 Power Amp (2Yr Gtee) £1099.00

Rotel RV 985 DVD Player (2Yr Gtee) £279.00

TAG DV32R DVD Player (2Yr Gtee) £2959.00

Yamaha AX620 AV Amplifier (2Yr Gtee) £279.00
welcome to world favourites

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 ugh.

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 CD 1
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, T L12 & T L10
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 ERF6 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 320
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.

ACCESSORIES

CUSTOM BUILT:
Centre Speaker Stand — Ex.Demo/Mint £ 250  E 90

A200X3:
3-Channel (3x200w) Power Amp. (Black) Ex.Demo/Mint £ 1600  E 850

A250:
250W Stereo Amplifier (Black) Ex.Demo/Mint £ 1400  750

RENAISSANCE AUDIO CABLES:
Many in Price Ex.Demo/Mint £ Call  Call

MONDIAL:
MAG BOX Improves your Picture! NEW £ 99  E 49

ARIA:
40W Integrated Amplifier — Remote (Silver) Ex.Demo/Mint £ 450  £ 225

480B:
30W Integrated Amplifier — Remote (Silver) Ex.Demo/Mint £ 650  £ 325

ARIA:
40W Integrated Amplifier — Remote (Silver) Ex.Demo/Mint £ 450  £ 225

NANDA:
Face Nord + Preamplifier + Analog Chn. Ex.Demo/Mint £ 1000  £ 499

Mass Filled (Black High Gloss) Fits almost all Centre Speakers — Call to Check

Plus Special Plinths

S4C:
Centre Speaker (Aluminium) Ex.Demo/Mint £ 525  £ 275

S3:
Satellites with Wall Brackets, Pair (Aluminium) Ex.Demo/Mint £ 499 £ 250

BPS-400:
400W Active Bipolar Subwoofer Ex.Demo/Mint £ 840 £ 430

P4C:
Centre Speaker (Aluminium) Ex.Demo/Mint £ 840 £ 430

P4L:
Floorstanding Speakers — Pair (Aluminium) Ex.Demo/Mint £ 695 £ 350

S4:
Floorstanding Speakers — Pair (Aluminium) Ex.Demo/Mint £ 695 £ 350

S4C:
Centre Speaker (Aluminium) Ex.Demo/Mint £ 440 £ 220

Perry 3 Plus Special Plinths

CAIRN / EZO

AVM
V1:
Remote PreAmplifier (Black) Ex.Demo/Mint £ 1175 £ 999

M7:
Mono Power Amplifiers — Pair (Black) Ex.Demo/Mint £ 1975

CARN / EKO

ARIA:
40W Integrated Amplifier — Remote (Silver) Ex.Demo/Mint £ 450  £ 225

NANDA:
Face Nord + Preamplifier + Analog Chn. Ex.Demo/Mint £ 1000  £ 499

BPS-400:
400W Active Bipolar Subwoofer (Piano Black) Ex.Demo/Mint £ 1300 £ 695

JP 4:
Reference Bipolar Loudspeakers (White) Ex.Demo/Mint £ 600 £ 319

M7:
M 140watter can sound sweet.

TECHNICS SE-A5 Mk2
Nice transformer and electronics, shame about the casework. With tweaking, this IS an audiophile drama...

LOUDSPEAKERS

Garrard 401
A legendary turntable.

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

NAD 320
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.

OTHER CHORD PRODUCTS AVAILABLE — PLEASE CALL FOR MORE INFO

EMBLYNNED AUDIO DESIGNS

MIRAGE — Just a few of the AWARDS won — bottom centre

M13:
Reference Bipolar Loudspeakers (Piano Black)

M23:
Bipolar Floorstanding Speakers (Piano Black)

M33:
Magnetically Shielded Centre Speaker (Piano Black)

BPS-400:
400W Active Bipolar Subwoofer (Piano Black)

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HALL OF FAME

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TECHNICS SE-A5 Mk2

LEAK TL12+

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** AWARD WINNERS / 5 STAR BEST BUYS ! ! ! ! ! !

# Email for picture of unit/item

HI-FI WORLD & COMPUTER AUDIO FEBRUARY 2003

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ALPHASON HR1055
First class arm, up to present-day standards
Buy carefully, though, as there's no service available now.

ARISTON RD1
A one-time king of turntables very similar to the Linn LP12 Now deposited 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.

HADDOCK 228
Recently out-classed by Haddock's updated 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 IIS
Everlasting classic tone-arm. Spares permanently available from SME. No longer
the last word but peanuts second-hand.

THORENS TD124
Best classic deck ever!
Judged by the prices they fetch it's possible -
78rpm too!
Choice hi-fi makes it easy for you to fulfill your sonic dreams. 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.

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**Genelec**

**Gryphon**

**Graham**

**Immerge**

**Jab)**

**Krell**

**Lexicon**

**Linn**

**Light**

**Lutron**

**Lyra**

**Mark Levinson**

**Michell Eng.**

**Musical Fidelity**

**Naim**

**NEC**

**Nordost**

**Oracle**

**Ortofon**

**Plinius**

**P.H.C.**

**Prime**

**Prime Audio**

**Project**

**Quadraspire**

**REL**

**Rockport**

**Roksan**

**Rotel**

**Ruck**

**Seleco**

**SME**

**Straight Wire**

**Sugden**

**Tara Labs**

**Teac**

**Toetem**

**Transfiguration**

**Trichord**

**Trixie**

**Van den Hul**

**VP**

**Wilson Audio**

**Wilson Research**

**YBA**

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**New this month**

- **FEATURED SYSTEM OF THE MONTH**
  - Exposure 2000 iPre £4,195.00 £7,995.00
  - Exposure 5020 DAC £995.00 £1,995.00
  - Exposure 9600 CD £3,200.00 £3,899.00
  - Exposure 9800 DAC £10,495.00 £12,289.00
  - Exposure 10000 DAC £20,000.00 POA

**POWER AMPLIFIERS**

- **Krell FPR 500** £2,995.00 £6,000.00
- **Primare PA-2000** £1,495.00 £2,400.00
- **Chord PDM 1200 (2 Channel)** £495.00 £750.00

**LOUDSPEAKERS**

- **Aural Audio Phono Preamplifier** £495.00 £695.00
- **Audio Physic Fidelity 15** £1,750.00 £2,149.00
- **Musical Fidelity 5100** £1,495.00 £1,995.00
- **Boulder 2020 DAC £10,495.00 £12,289.00

**CD PLAYERS & DACS**

- **Krell Dacc 300** £395.00 £599.00
- **Audio Physic Phono Mini** £320.00 £400.00

**Players**

- **Krell Dacc 300** £395.00 £599.00
- **Audio Physic Phono Mini** £320.00 £400.00

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**NEW ITEMS**

- **Kenwood L1000C pre £1,200.00**
  - **Power Amp £2,500.00**
  - **Exposure 700 pre £995.00**
  - **Power Amp £1,500.00**
  - **Dynaudio Di 3.8 £600.00**
  - **Power Amp £995.00**
  - **Triumph R1 £2,500.00**
  - **Power Amp £2,500.00**

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**Quarterly Sale**

- **Original Price**
  - **Our Offer**
  - **Original Price**
  - **Our Offer**

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**Components**

- **AV COMPONENTS**
  - **Lexicon XM32** £995.00 £1,500.00
  - **Lexicon XM32** £2,050.00 £2,500.00
  - **Lexicon XM32** £1,750.00 £2,000.00

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**Turntables & Analogos**

- **Revolution S60 Tirtter** £495.00 £599.00
- **Linn Lingo Phono** £320.00 £395.00

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**Electronic Literature**

- **POA**
  - **POA**

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**Subscribe**

- **Free**
  - **Free**

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**Quality speakers**

- **Meze 12 line Spectrum** £1,495.00 £1,995.00
- **Magico S3** £1,995.00 £2,495.00
- **Magic 83** £1,295.00 £1,795.00
- **Wilson Benesch Acta 2** £945.00 £1,445.00

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**DACS**

- **Reference DAC** £795.00 £995.00
- **Lexicon MC1** £695.00 £900.00
- **Lexicon MC12** £8900.00 £9995.00

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**Buy / Sell**

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All the latest from the weird and wonderful world of DIY hi-fi.

BUILDING STONES

Clive Meakins assembles the Visaton Topas — a Gem from Wilmslow Audio.

THE VINYL WORD

Neville Roberts encounters an interesting vinyl test disc.
NEW!
Visit our web site at www.chelmervalve.com to view our entire valve catalogue and buy online!

We have been supplying tubes to the audio market for over 40 years. Only valves that pass our stringent in house QC tests are used for the CVC Premium brand, and our no fuss guarantee ensures your complete peace of mind. When available, we also stock the justifiably famous brands such as Brimar, GEC, Mullard, RCA Telefunken etc. So why compromise? Our sales and technical staff are just a telephone call away. To put it simply.........

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We have been supplying tubes to the audio market for over 40 years. Only valves that pass our stringent in house QC tests are used for the CVC Premium brand, and our no fuss guarantee ensures your complete peace of mind. When available, we also stock the justifiably famous brands such as Brimar, GEC, Mullard, RCA Telefunken etc. So why compromise? Our sales and technical staff are just a telephone call away. To put it simply...
**MOTH TO A FLAME**

The website www.mothaudio.com belongs not to Moth of U.K. audio but an American company that details numerous esoteric valve amplifiers which have a particular retro look about them - it's equipment that wouldn't look out of place in Captain Nemo's submarine. All items are fully built and look totally individual. They have a 300B single-ended stereo integrated, giving 10watts aside, a single-ended using a 45 valve giving a gentle 2watts, also a 2A3 integrated giving 3watts. And a couple of passive pre-amplifiers.

An amplifier that you will see in their special offers section is the M304TL, a 35watt single-ended amplifier that uses the colossal 304TL. Also they have a barmy novelty item called the Nitelite that you can buy for $595.00. Basically, it is an elaborate box that holds a 15e radar tube with a huge dial on the front panel that varies its light intensity.

With all these single-ended designs you need a high sensitivity speaker and lo and behold they have just the one, the Cicada, that has a sensitivity of 94dB, using a full frequency range driver of their design. The built speaker is only $595.00 and they sell the drivers at only $89.00 a piece.

You will find the items that Moth sell are actually very reasonably priced and definitely worth a look.

**FULL OF ESTONIAN SOLDERING ON**

‘Audio from Estonia’, as it says on the site. Here’s a well structured site that details a huge range of speakers from hi-end hi-fi to surround-sound. The drivers are their own brand and definitely look the part. The company also make and sell transformers, chokes and power supplies. What interested us was their excellent documentation for a six-strong range of kit speakers, with full box plans, crossover diagrams and even explanations of where to put the wadding.

**SOLDERING ON**

For those of you who only buy the best in tools then may we point out Weller’s WSL precision soldering station. This beauty can warm up from 50 degrees centigrade to 350 degrees in 7 seconds flat, plus an automatic temperature set back facility that reduces the tip temperature to 150 degree after 20 minutes of no use to prolong tip life. Temperature is set by means of up and down push buttons and a 3 digit LED display. Excellent for those who like to experiment in different melting point solders. The new device is available from Rapid Electronics, price £199.50 excluding VAT, code number 85-5150P.

**RESPECT THE AUTHORITY**

Another American site - these guys love their hi-fi. This site represents Samaghi Acoustics who make speaker kits that specialise in upward firing driver arrangements. Also, detailed are Black Dahlia Acoustics, who also do speaker kits. One took my interest immediately, the Basszilla kit. Available in two versions, both feature a 15 inch bass unit. The more expensive one uses the Lowther DX4 full range driver and sells for $2700.00. All in, whilst the cheaper version uses Fostex FEZ0B and sells for $1000.00. Both version boast 97-98dB sensitivity so are excellent for the single-ended valve user.

http://store.hifiauthority.com
Visaton are a German speaker technology company that offers a huge range of drive units and complete speaker designs. Their products are now available in the UK from Wilmslow Audio. You can buy drive units with pre-assembled crossovers and Wilmslow Audio are starting to produce Visaton-designed cabinets. This provides a very quick and easy way to build a pair of speakers without needing special tools or skills. The first full kit available from Wilmslow Audio is the Visaton Topas, featured here.

Unlike so many “generic” speakers on the market today, the Topas features high quality drive units that suggest it will have an interesting, high quality sound. The drive unit and crossover kit costs £646.25, the cabinet kit is £150 extra at a good price. The Topas is a small floorstanding speaker that is designed to be on the borderline between vented bass and transmission-line. It certainly possesses a small footprint. Just 165mm wide, 225mm deep and standing 900mm tall or a touch more with spikes. The front edges of the cabinet have a chamfer to aid soundstaging. The speakers are ported at the front, offering the likelihood they’ll work close to a wall. By the way, do use spikes; the speakers won’t be stable without them.

Visaton claim a frequency range
prepared and soldered to the boards as well as tied temporarily across the binding post aperture.

I borrowed some woodworking clamps to hold the cabinets while the glue dried. You can bind the cabinets together with masking tape instead, but clamps are better. Just ensure you don’t over tighten the clamps or you’ll squeeze all the glue out of the joints. I suppose I’m too generous with glue, the supplied amount was only enough for one cabinet but I made sure I had some spare before I started. To run out with a half assembled cabinet would not be a good idea.

To assemble you build up the cabinet while it’s lying on it’s front. Fitting the angled port requires at least three hands but otherwise all is straightforward. You must then leave the cabinets to dry for 24 hours. When dry I spent a few minutes with a detail sander cleaning up the joints, getting them smooth. Wilsom did such a good job of cutting the panels, there was actually very little to do. I then fitted the spikes. This meant drilling holes in the bases and hammering in threaded collets. Be careful not to drill too deeply - one of my holes went right through the 18mm MDF! I packed the back of the hole and sealed it with glue to ensure it didn't cause an air leak.

Nearby there now just drill pilot holes for the binding post plate and then screw it down. Next, stuff the supplied lambs wool evenly into the cabinet and then prepare to mount the drive units. Again, drill pilot holes before finally screwing in the drive units.

Take care to ensure the drive units have an even gap around them, they look better this way. Also, be sure not to slip with the screwdriver - they are expensive units! I try to be very careful when building kits and test where I can do so; I used a full range car speaker to check bass and treble were output as expected from the crossover boards.

Lastly I soldered the internal wire to the drive units. It’s very much up to you how you finish the speakers. Suggestions include veneering, staining/spray varnishing or take them to your local car repair centre and have them sprayed any colour you want!

LOOKING GOOD

For a kit, the speakers do look very good indeed. They should be highly acceptable in most domestic situations. The titanium bass/mid is especially attractive. I found the speakers needed a couple of weeks to loosen up and open up fully. The change wasn’t night and day but it happened, mostly increasing the level of bass output.

First of all I used the speakers in my usual free-space position: bass was somewhat curtailed. Then I tried them close the rear wall and the missing bass arrived. They worked well just a couple of inches from the rear wall, though for the best balance I ended up with them around 8inches from the rear wall.

These speakers are clearly quite forgiving about placement. Where they work best will depend on your room and how much bass you like. Just don’t expect the Topas to work 100cm into a room without a subwoofer. The quality of the bass you get is slightly dry and very textured. You don’t get lots of bass bloom with overhang, but instead you get detail. As you would expect from a 4 inch titanium driver, the Topas bass will not pin you to the wall. It’s much more subtle than that, but I am quite prepared to believe they do go down to the specified 35Hz.

Vocals project well into the room, especially considering the closeness of the cabinets to the rear wall. There’s bags of treble detail but,
It you've always thought of valve amps as temperamental and expensive beasts, think again. World Audio Design's latest kit is designed with the budget conscious beginner in mind.

The Kec182 was created from a brief that demanded simplicity, ease of build and a super low cost. In order to achieve a reasonable power output we went for a push-pull amplifier.

We chose the ECL82, a triode/output pentode. This tube is readily available and has a good sound. In push-pull mode it delivers 8 Watts. Realistically you need a speaker of around 89 dB or above. This is possible at a budget price - try the smaller Triangle models, or a Tannoy mX3 or even one of the older Missions like the 773e, or if you like building your own speakers, try the Adire Audio HE 10.1, as reviewed in HFW October 2002 issue.

You will see that the front has only a volume control, and it is fed by one pair of phono sockets. A selector and tape/source switch were not used in this amplifier as they are tricky to wire up, and the aim was to make it easy to build. In fact, in many ways the Kec182 would be great powering a second system, using a CD player as a source, and will definitely give you a taster of what valves can offer. Measuring 30cm wide, 23.5cm deep and 11 cm height with feet, it is entirely self-enclosed. The valves are visible through the four upper circular vent holes (one directly above each valve). We have kept the look simple with the minimalist front panel holding the volume potentiometer. The two-part chassis is constructed from 1.6mm mild steel with a durable black powder-coat finish. The whole unit is very sturdy, weighing in at 9kgs.

The signal input is in the form of a pair of gold plated RCA phono sockets that sit at the rear of the chassis. The speaker sockets accept 4mm banana plugs as well as bare wire. The mains switch is positioned at the rear of the amplifier, on the right hand corner for easy access. Mains power is received via an IEC lead. The Kec182 is based on a printed circuit board (PCB). The PCB is easy to follow with all component names, locations and orientations shown clearly. The amplifier requires no set up, you just turn it on. The kit will come with comprehensive instructions taking you through the build step-by-step.

**SOUND QUALITY BY SIMON POPE**

Purity is the key to this amplifier's design and sound. Because there's very little to get in the way of the signal what you get is an exceptionally sweet and simple sound that also has a superbly wholesome roundness to it. A high quality recording of Mahler's Das Lied Von Der Erde on Reference Recordings showed that the Kec182 faithfully reproduced all the depth and space of a full symphonic orchestra without any problems. Violins were smooth and sweet, as was percussion (which virtually sparkled) and the woodwind section was especially impressive, with a spacious and airy sound.

A run through Miles Davis's Kind Of Blue saw the little integrated delivering a detailed and precise sound that highlighted the warmth of Coltrane's tenor sax and the rich, deep sound of the upright bass. Rock and Pop records such as Radiohead's 'Lucky' demonstrated that the valves inside the amp, whilst small, are quite robust sounding, with commendable clout and bass depth for a humble budget 8W valve amp. This is a great introduction to the sonic art of the valve amp and a big upgrade for anybody with a mid-price solid-state amp that wishes to swap over to something more musically engaging, for a price that's virtually as cheap as chips!

**MEASURED PERFORMANCE**

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<tr>
<th>Specification</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
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<td>Frequency response</td>
<td>+/- 3dB 15Hz - 75kHz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Power output</td>
<td>8 watts into an 8 ohm load</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity</td>
<td>850mV (suitable for CD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hum</td>
<td>0.5mV</td>
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The Kec182 amplifier kit is available from World Audio Design
Tel/fax: 00 44 (0) 1908 218836 or order on-line at www.worldaudiodesign.co.uk

**Kec182 amplifier kit (UK price)** £195.00 (inc. vat & carriage)

**Kec182 amplifier kit (EU price)** £195.00 (incl. vat, exc. carriage)

**Kec182 amplifier kit (Overseas price)** £170.00 (exc. carriage)
The MDF cabinets for the Topas come flatpacked and are easy to assemble
that's not to say the speakers are bright. Treble sparkles in a way that few other speakers achieve, pretty much at any price thanks to that ribbon.

Overall I would say the sound of the Topas is detailed but not over analytical. It is tight, clear, clean, fast and provides plenty of "air". Integration between the drivers is excellent; they complement each other very well. The sound is very different to the Adire Audio HE10.1 that I reviewed recently. The HE10.1 is very much more "muscular", providing more wallop in general. The Topas are about subtlety and finesse with treble that not only sparkles beautifully but is so incredibly refined.

I drove the Topas with solid-state and valve amps from a Meridian 588 CD player. For solid-state I used a Michell Orca/Alecto monoblock combination. Though these 128W amps are overkill for the speakers, they worked very well indeed. The Michell Alecto stereo amp would be more in keeping with this speaker. I would imagine that some of the several quality 50W / 60W integrated amps on the market would also be a good match for the Topas. I tried a couple of cable set ups: Nordost Red Dawn interconnects with Blue Heaven speaker cable and then Chord Company Chorus / Odyssey. The Nordost accentuated detail whereas Chord gave a fuller bass. I'd say both makes matched the speakers well, the differences were very clear to hear as the speakers are revealing. Personal preference will determine how you want to tune the Topas sound.

You would expect the soundstage of such a narrow speaker to be good and the Topas did not disappoint. Along with tremendous ambience there is a very spacious sense of atmosphere. Instruments are placed beautifully between the speakers, there is little sound that is perceived to come directly from the drivers.

I originally had no intention of driving 80dB efficiency speakers with a 9W single-ended triode but curiosity got the better of me. It's quite well understood that a 9W SET sounds more like 20W or 30W of solid-state. Perhaps I shouldn't have been surprised. The Transcendent Sound Grounded Grid preamp with DIY Hi-Fi Supply Billie 300B SET monoblocks proved to work rather well the Topas speakers. The speakers proved their ease of drive with no signs of the Billies being uncomfortable at any frequency. For many prospective purchasers of the Topas this combination is not quite as mad as it first seems. A 20W 300B PSE would also be an interesting option and, of course, bigger valve push-pull amps of around 40-50W would be a great match.

So who is the Topas likely to suit? These are not middle-of-the-road speakers that try to appeal the mass market. Some people will prefer non-Topas attributes such as lots of bass and high volume. If this is the case then the Topas are not for you. The archetypal British living room is likely to be ideal. You will need to be able to cope with a little DIY. As long as you can manage a little soldering you should be fine. You will want clarity, subtlety, fabulous refinement coupled with an "airy" sound plus a very classy looking speaker. Placement near a wall is likely to be necessary. If you value what the Topas do so very well here is a gem.

Visaton Topas £646.29
(drivers and crossover)
£150 (cabinet)

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THE VINYL WORD

If you’re running a vinyl source, it’s essential that your arm and cartridge are properly set up, but the process can be hit and miss without knowledgeable help. Neville Roberts checks out a handy accessory that could be just the job.

In order to get the best from your investment in a turntable, arm and cartridge combination, it is vital that the system is correctly set up. Unfortunately, it can be a time-consuming process to do properly and, in my experience, not all Hi-Fi shops can be relied upon to do this satisfactorily. It also requires a test record of some sort and to the best of my knowledge, the only one available until recently was the trusty HFS75 Hi-Fi Sound Test Record - and the ‘75’ in the title give a clue as to when it was produced!

Unfortunately, my copy of that record has endured a variety of lathes over the years in my quest for true Hi-Fi sound. Some of the more extreme tracks have the scars of earlier cartridge mistracking. I was therefore delighted to learn of a new record produced and manufactured in Germany and available in the UK from Roksan.

The record is made by a company called Image Hi-Fi and has the modest title of “Vinyl Essentials - The Ultimate Pickup Test Record”. It costs £35 - not cheap, but when this is set against the cost of your system, it is a small price to pay to get the best from your vinyl investments. As a further incentive for purchase, it has a highly jocular bilingual cartoon on the back which will doubtless give some light relief during the many hours of tweaking!

The record itself is stated as having six tracks on Side I, although Track 6 (the Tonearm and Cartridge Resonance Test) is repeated as a seventh track for no explained reason. Side 2 contains two tracks; both are a repeat of Side 1, Track 2, the Tracking Ability Test. The reason for this, according to the sleeve notes, is that these extreme tests can cause the vinyl to be heated to several hundred degrees centigrade at certain points while being tracked by the stylus and therefore these tracks should be played in sequence to allow for the necessary cooling time and thus reduce record wear.

Lest you should feel cheated by having spent so much money on what is essentially a single sided LP, I should mention that, judging from the sheer weight of the record, it is made of very high quality vinyl. In fact, they state that it is 100% virgin 180g vinyl and manufactured to the closest cutting tolerances possible. Who am I to argue with that?

IT'S A SET UP

Enough of the record itself, how does one go about setting up a cartridge and arm combination and how does this record help with the process? Well, the first two tracks are the obligatory channel identifi-
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**OTHER TYPES**

| E88CC | TESLA | 4.00 |
| ECC81 | RFT | 3.00 |
| ECC82 | RFT | 6.00 |
| ECC83 | RFT | 8.00 |
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The inside cover showing the detailed instructions

cation and phase tests with the help of some pink noise. This is fairly self-explanatory, except to say that you should ensure that your phasing and channels are consistent throughout your system. If, for example, you have the left and right channel connections to your cartridge and also the connections from your pre-amp to your power amp swapped over, your record deck will sound fine, but your CD player won't!

Having confirmed a well-defined central image with the in-phase pink noise tests, we move on to a rather clever method of checking the crosstalk between the channels. On Track 3, a burst of pink noise is recorded on the left channel only alternating with a low-level reference burst of pink noise at -25dB recorded on the right channel only. By muting your left channel (unplugging the left channel to your pre-amp or using your balance control) you hear on the right channel only the crosstalk from the left channel alternating with the reference burst. If they are both at the same volume, then your crosstalk is -25dB - simple! The test is repeated with -30dB and -35dB reference bursts. Track 4 repeats the test for the right-to-left crosstalk measurement - remember to mute the right channel this time.

The point of all this is that if there is a significant difference in crosstalk between the left and right channels, it indicates that your cartridge is probably misaligned vertically. Viewed from the front, your stylus should be exactly perpendicular to the surface of the record. If your arm has an adjustment to rotate the headshell to achieve this, all well and good. If, however, your headshell is fixed, instead of using a Mole wrench on your cartridge, you can use thin shims of paper or washers between the cartridge and the headshell to achieve the desired effect.

Next comes the test that strikes fear into all cartridge manufacturers - the Tracking Ability Test. This is simply a tone recorded with increasing amplitude ranging from a 40micron peak-to-peak sinusoid cut in the vinyl to 100microns, in 10micron steps. When the cartridge starts to mistrack, a very clear buzzing is heard. This is an extreme test for your system and it is repeated twice recommended by the manufacturer of your cartridge. Too low a tracking weight will result in poor tracking and do more harm to your records than erring on the high side, but don't overdo it.

Tracking ability isn't everything and will very much depend on your tone arm and cartridge combination. The Tonearm-Cartridge Resonance Test to be discussed later will indicate how well your arm matches your chosen cartridge.

THE RAKE'S PROGRESS

There is no test on the record for setting the Vertical Tracking Angle (VTA), which sets the Stylus Rake Angle (SRA) of the cartridge. The VTA is the angle of the cantilever to the record surface (usually around 20 degrees), which in itself is not that critical. However, the SRA, which is the angle of the stylus in the groove, is very critical and has a major impact on sound quality. The VTA will vary depending on the tracking on side two for the reasons previously mentioned.

I noted that the frequency chosen for the tracking test is 315Hz and I wondered why they have chosen that particular frequency. However, if you look at the photograph I took of the record surface, you can see that this frequency allows successive grooves to nestle with the previous grooves on the record given the huge displacements (yes, I know there is only 1 groove on a side of a record, but ...!). Incidentally, between the bursts of 315Hz, there is an announcement in German and English to inform you of the amplitude in microns.

The Tracking Ability Test can assist in setting the tracking weight but this should be within the range
Steady arm above resonance

weight so it is important to set this before attempting to adjust VTA. Once you have set tracking weight, the VTA is adjusted by altering the height of the arm and the correct point is best determined by ear. A good starting point is to set the arm height so that the arm is parallel to the record when it is playing and to choose a well-known record with some bass and either a solo violin or a female vocalist. If the arm is too high (VTA too great), the sound will be harsh and thin with poor imaging. If set too low, the sound will be dull with 'boomy' bass, lacking detail and again with poor imaging. The correct point is unmistakable where the instruments and vocals snap into focus and everything sounds clear. A simple gauge can be made using a piece of card temporarily fixed to the turntable to help adjust the height and note the position where the VTA is correct.

Last, but not least, is the Tonearm-Cartridge Resonance Test. Every combination of arm and cartridge has a natural resonant frequency, which should be about 10Hz. If it is much higher than this, it will intrude into the low frequencies of the recording, such as low organ notes. If much lower, resonance will be at warp frequency, producing strong cone flap.

Before embarking on the test itself, a word on matching cartridges to arms. One of the physical properties of an arm is its effective mass, which is the mass of the arm as seen by the cartridge. Cartridges have a property called compliance that, in simple terms, is the ability of the stylus to 'comply' with the groove and is measured in terms of the distance the stylus is displaced for a given force (either l/mN or cm/dyne). That doesn't mean to say that low compliance is bad and high compliance is good. It means that, generally speaking, a low compliance cartridge matches well with a high effective mass arm, and vice versa. It is this combination of effective mass and compliance that results in a particular resonant frequency and also has an impact on the tracking ability.

So, back to the test. Track 6 consists of an audible tone that is modulated with a sub-audible low frequency - the frequency that is being tested. If the arm is not resonating, the tone will sound constant. At resonance, the tone 'warbles' and the arm and cartridge can actually be seen to vibrate, which is quite an amazing sight! The track has six tests ranging from 16Hz down to 6Hz and a sequence of introductory short or long 'beeps' tell you which frequency is being tested.

If this test reveals a problem, you could try adjusting the damping of the arm (if possible) or fitting a lighter or heavier headshell.

The alternative is, of course, to change the arm or cartridge. Indeed, a friend of mine, who has a Roksan Xerxes X, Artemiz arm and Lyra Clavis DC cartridge, was unable to identify a frequency at which the arm did not vibrate. We decided this might be the root cause for the overly powerful low bass his system puts out with the dance/trance music he listens to. He is now thinking of replacing the Lyra with a Roksan Shiraz, which he assumes will be a good match.

My verdict? A test record is an essential tool to ensure the proper setting up of a record deck and this offering from Roksan utilises some very clever techniques and is clearly made to very high standards. You can obtain a copy directly from the company.

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FEBRUARY 2003 HI-FI WORLD & COMPUTER AUDIO 111
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Audio Analogue Bellini Pre/AMP Silver...£ 20.00

Alpyn Sort 7 Shelf Sound Glass Rack...£ 150.00

Amplivox DVA48 DVD Black...£ 45.00

Arcam Alpha 10 Dac Module Black...£ 475.00

Audio Note CDI100s, A & 11 DAC...£ 795.00

B&W Silver Signature, Inc. HME...£ 275.00

Creda Stands...£ 250.00

B&W ASW 205 Sub...£ 165.00

Cayin ME7500 AV Surround Receiver 325.00

B & W CCS S 2 Center Black...£ 125.00

Cayin ME7500 AV Surround Receiver 325.00

Bell & Howell Retractable Microphone...£ 20.00

Cayin ME-210 ST Power, Silver...£ 160.00

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**APEX**

**ACOUSTICS**

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**HI-FI WORLD & COMPUTER AUDIO FEBRUARY 2003**

www.biwworld.co.uk web: www.hicam.co.uk
AUDUSA - OOM Silverlink Mono Crystal balanced speaker cable - conductor of 3mm diameter (approx 8 gauge), stranded silver on OFHC, plus three strands of Mono Crystal Copper for improved bass performance. Mylar infill and with designed in protection against RF and EMI. Cable OD 14.72 mm Priced at £12.95 per meter

AUDUSA EUPEN CSA 2.5 MAINS CABLE - HI FI CHOICE SEPT 2001 BEST BUY

GNLM 05/04 and GNLM 05/2.5 (CSA 2.5) Cable with FERRITE TECHNOLOGY - A polymer material mixed with a considerable quantity of homogeneously fine high quality ferrite powder, is extruded around the copper conductors. As a ferromagnetic material, it will go through hysteresis loops whenever it is under influence of an alternating magnetic field. Consecutively magnetizing and demagnetizing the material will cause considerable losses of high frequency energy. This energy is absorbed in the ferrite grains and converted into heat. This effect is more or less proportional to the field frequency; high frequencies will be strongly attenuated, because their energy will be absorbed by the ferrite powder. The GNLM cables which in addition to the above described ferrite technology is further protected with a foil shield and a drain wire and specifically manufactured for High End audio use. Said by some to be the most neutral sounding mains cable on the market

Fitted with IEC (Martin Kayser) and MK Tough Cable can be supplied fitted to our all steel 4, 6 and 8 way distribution blocks. We can rewire the distribution blocks with Eupen cable as an extra cost option. Refer to our web site for details.

AUDUSA - Eupen and LAT AC-2 mains cable available with 16 amp IEC (for certain models of amps by Krell, MF, Levinson etc), Marinen 320 IEC, Figure of eight, Bulgin, USA Hubble, European Schuko, Australian, Swiss, Danish, and Neutrik plugs.

SILVER SILVER SILVER - Upgrade the cable with silver plated contacts on IEC and MK plug for an extra £6. IEC's and MK plugs with silver plated contacts available separately at £6, £8 and £9 Why Silver plated contacts? Simple, silver is THE BEST conductor of electricity.

LAT AC-2 HI-FI CHOICE - SEPT 2001 - RECOMMENDED MAINS CABLE

We have developed a cabling (weaving) pattern along with an unusual shielding/filtering system that gets rid of the garbage that contaminates your components. The difference you hear with our cord is astounding. Our power cord takes advantage of silver in its design through use of our proprietary Silverfuse conductors. The conductors are 10 gauge and with PTFE; the best insulation available. Fitted as standard with IEC / MK Toughplug. 60cm £52, 90cm £75, 1.2m £88, 1.5m £101, 1.8m £112 etc Other lengths available and off the reel. 4,6 and 8 way all steel mains distribution blocks fitted with UK, Schuko or USA sockets. CE tested & approved mains distribution units manufactured of heavy gauge steel, finished in black and fitted with high quality 13amp sockets. It has no fuses, circuit breakers, surge protection, transformers, resistors, capacitors, LED's, on/off switches, chokes, regulators, just fitted with 1m of AC-2 mains cable. From £166 for 4 way, £198 for 6 way, £229 for 8 way.

LAT INTERNATIONAL - Analogue, Digital and Video interconnects and Speaker cable - better than most others at double the price. Refer to www.audusa.com for further details or ask for reviews.
Now Demonstrating

Sale List December 2002

Audio Research LR25 preamplifier £2995 SH
Musical Fidelity A3 CD player £895 SH
Thieta Dreadnought 5 channel £5495 XD
CR Developments Romulus amplifier £1450 SH
LGWE TV's - various dem models £1095 XD
Onkyo Insignia system - our dem models £750 XD
Musical Fidelity PX Power Amplifier £695 XD
Veritas P400 Power Amplifier as new £595 XD
Naim 52 preamp as new £2750 XD
Sonus Faber Concertino Home Boxed £425 SH
Kimber K-5.1 1.5 Black Pearl Balanced 1.5m interconnect £1100 SH
Sonus Faber Concerto GPs with Stavros ST 1 Wall Unit £1095 XD
Graaf GM300 Monoblocks POA SH
Linn Sara speakers, walnut £295 SH
Transparent Cables - various POA SH
Musical Fidelity MV1 preamp £195 XD
Theta Carmen D/D/CD/Player silver ex dem £2495 XD
Martin Logan Prodigy ex dem £2600 XD
Sonus Faber Signature Ex Dem £895 XD
Audio Research VT60 Power Amp £850 XD
Audio Research D100.2 £795 XD
Naim 140 power amp £795 XD
Naim B2 Preamp as new ex dem £1985 XD
Naim 180 Power Amp £895 XD
Naim Super Cap Ex Dem £1995 XD
Naim 102 £895 XD
Audio Analogue Bellini Preamp Silver £2750 XD
Wilson System 5.1 £4995 XD
Wilson System 6.1 Ferratti Grey £1295 XD
Musical Fidelity A1 Preamplifier/Power Amp Ex Dem £1295 XD
Kent CD DSP Mk 2 CD Player Glorified Hi-Fi Top-Loader £1295 SH

SH - Second Hand XD - EX Demonstration

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Second hand ex dem deals

ATC A7 Tower loudspeakers. Rosewood veneer, no marks other than some minor chips to the (black painted) bays. $5/ boxed. Originally $1250. £495

Audiothleic Spark 3 slim, pretty, accomplished floorstanding loudspeakers. American Maple veneer. Ex demonstration, unmarked, boxed and fully warranted. (£250)

Heybrook Sextet compact floorstanding loudspeakers. Cost £1500, originally sold by Signals, £350 boxed, in light ash veneer with burr maple trim. Ported to the floor (they need to be on speaker), they will normally work well near walls. Ribbon tweeters. £495

Jamo Concert Eight loudspeakers in cherry, 5/8 boxed, excellent. (£85)

Jamo Concert Twelve loudspeakers in cherry veneer, 5/8 boxed, excellent. (£200)

Jamo Concert centre loudspeaker in maple (£600) 5/8, no box. £25

VNW APro amplifier. 5/8, unmarked £90.

Primare VSP DVD player. Ex demo, boxed, excellent (£999). A slightly revised new model is now out, time for a new demo unit. £75

Primare Aso amplifier. Ex demo, boxed, unmarked (£999). Remote control. A very good little amplifier. £85

Primare TAO RDS FM tuner. Ex demo, boxed, unmarked (£999). Remote control. A very good pictcher, visual match for the 10, 20 and 30 series components. £85

Package deal: all three of the above Primare units for £999

Quad 4 preamplifier, 5/8 phono sockets (grey), good condition £95

Quad 405 power amplifier, beige, quite an early specimen with DIN input. 5/8, good condition £95

Rega Radio 71 turntable. Approx 2 years old. 5/8, boxed unmarked. (£900) £220

Nordost specials

1 x 5m pair red Dawn (rev) single wire spkr cables (£125) £60

1 x 2m pair red Dawn rev II bi-wire speaker cable (£550) £85

v'audio Hi-Fi Consultants

TURNTABLES

In the October issue I referred to eagerly awaited items such as the new AVI Integrated and Pro-Nine Plus speakers, but as happens with new products the amp is still not quite ready and I will probably think evaluating the Pro-Nine Plus until I get the new amp. Having just acquired an SME 10A turntable, and having found that the new Infinity Prelude MTS speakers (see Oct) sound particularly good with vinyl, I have spent time playing this turntable, an old VPI TNT, an Audiomeca J1 with SLS arm, an old Oracle, and plan to dig out one of the original Pink Triangle's. The trouble always with turntables, now we have become accustomed to CD etc, is the time it all takes, especially as the eyes and hands aren't as good as they were! Invariably they have different arms and cartridges and comparisons are difficult. They all should sound good however. I am playing them through the Trichord Dino Phono Stage. AVI preamp & ESLAB Digital poweramp which suits the Preludes very well.

The Preludes are very open and detailed but never get hard when driven. Looking forward to the next 350 watt ESLab amp, which although more powerful than the Preludes need, being efficient, will no doubt change the balance. Will keep you up to date.

Just in however is the VPI Scout turntable, which at £1250 complete with superb unipivot arm, makes it an excellent bargain.

Superb open sound!
### PHONE FOR LATEST LIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEW, EX-DEM AND CLEARANCE ITEMS</th>
<th>RRP</th>
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<tr>
<td>Acoustic Energy AE1 MkII</td>
<td>£995.00</td>
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<td>Arcam Alpha 10</td>
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<td>Cyrus AV Master Processor</td>
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<td>Krell KAV 500i Int. Amp.</td>
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<td>Linn Kabel</td>
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<td>Rotel RX965RDS A/V receiver</td>
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| A3 pre amp                      | £999.00 | £559.00 | D+N |
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**D = EX DEMONSTRATION, N = NEW, SH = SECOND HAND**

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- Miles Davis Cookin/Relaxin/Steamin (OJC) each £9.90
- Sonny Rollins Way Out West/ Sax Colossus each £9.90

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- Justin Timberlake Justified £14.90
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Crimson 610 pre amp £ 95
Copland CSA8 Integrated Amp as new £ 595
Cary SLP94 Valve Preamp with Outboard Audio Research Remote Integrated Amp CASO £ 1,895
Audmnote MI Valve Pre Amp with Phonostage and Audio Innovations Series 400 Integrated Amp with Amplifiers
Quad FM3 Tune (Boxed Mint)
EAR 834L Valve Line Stage £ 275
EAR 834P Valve Phono Amp £ 235
PSU and Phono Stage £ 835
Audiolab 8000C pre amp £ 150
Excellent Valve Phone Stage £ 450
Arcarn 10 Power Amp £ 495
Tascare 22/2 Open Reel
Rotel RT930 AX Tune MC stage (new £ 270)

Tube Technology Genesis Monoblocks 100Watts
Sugen A48 Integrated Amp
Sony TA/FB93OR Integrated Amp with remote
Richard Allan Class A Integrated Amp
Project 7 Amp - very good phono stage
Pioneer A400 Integrated Amp
Micrornega Minuet Integrated Amp with GE Valves) £ 1,495
Lurnley 120 Mono Blocks 120 Watts per channel (Revalved
Linn Preamp and Digital Processor (New £ 4500) £ 1,495
Linn Cairn pre amp with latest PSU £ 495
Tube Technology Prophet 2 boxed pre with rare
InorantRafti t. Rae Cassette Deck. miss

Selected products from ATC, Audio Physic, EAR Yoshino, Nottingham Analogue, Revox G36 Open Reel Mint Creek, Triangle, Sudgen, Dynavector.
Private Ads

Dealers must not advertise in the Private Classified section. Monthly consecutive insertions will be considered Trade advertising. The Publisher reserves the right to judge submissions.

Special Internet offer see page 130 for details

MUSICAL FIDELITY M3 Nu
Vista integrated amplifier £2250
ono. Thiel CS3.6 loudspeakers, world class leading speakers (£5495) absolute bargain at £2495. Tel: 01508 499586

MEADOWLARK SHEARWATER TRANSMISSION line speakers colour cherry £1100 ono (£2700 new). Quad 36 amp £1200. Yamaha Theatre processor DSP 990 £150. Stax SR5 electrostatic Ear speakers £100. All immaculate. Tel: 01634 724081 (Feb)

MARK LEVINSON No. 3605 & 334 £7300. No. 39 £2500 also C2-GEL interconnects. PMC IB1 speakers and stands £2000. Tel: 07956 922061 or Email: Jonathan Page@t-mobile.co.uk (Feb)

KRELL KSA 150 Class A 150 - 220 watts into 8ohms, RCA and balance inputs. Add another KSA-150 and have MDA-300. Very clean, manual, £2250. XLO Type 6 speaker cables, 8ft bi-wire, excellent condition £375. Tel: 07919 211 332 or peterroy@btconnect.com (Feb)

KRELL FPB600 £4795 (£13,500). B&W Nautilus 801, red cherry, £4750 (£8500). Audioquest Caldera 8ft bi-wire speaker cable type £895 (£465). Audioquest Midnight+ 10ft, spades £150 (£450). All reasonable offers considered. Tel: 07767 478 056 or Email: andrew.lucas@cw.uk.com (Feb)

LINN KELTIK speakers in cherrywood finish, latest spec, boxed, £3000. Linn Klimax Twin, 6 months old, boxed, £3600. Linn Kremlin tuner, with manuals, S MPs Model, £995. Linn Klimax Crossovers, £3600. Tel: 01582 456 137 (Feb)


LOWTHER LOWTHER Acousta Twin Cabinets wanted. Made 1960s. Also wanted: PM1A, PM2A drive units, any condition, working drawings, Twin feet, drive unit mounting screws. Tel: Jeff 020 8220 0380 (Essex) (Feb)

INTERCONNECTS DIGITAL Speaker cable and mains leads from Transparent, Yamamura, Art, Silver Sound, Nordost, Shunyata. Synergistic Research, Kondo, Precious Metals. All top quality items. Tel: Porteous 01923 826 830 or Email: derek.schelis@btinternet.com (Feb)

KRELL KMA 200 Monoblocks. Excellent condition, few in the UK. Massive heavy amps difficult to lift one. Very clear and transparent without being clinical. Drive any load. Tel: 01803 214 200 (Mar)

QUAD 33, 303, PM3 £200. Wanted: Quad 405-2 modules to convert standard 405 amp. Quad M.C. input module Type C for 44 preamp. Also required Denon DDL103 cartridges. Tel: Mike 01758 613 790 (Feb)


TAG McLAREN PPA20 phono pre-amp, black, mint, £900 ono. Tel: 01242 675 719 (Cheltenham) (Feb)

MUSICAL FIDELITY A324 Upsampling DAC £525. Tuners: Arcam Diva T61 Silver £160. Videologic DRX-601ES DAB £150. Mana Glass Frame £60. MIT Digital Reference Cable £90. Tel: (daytime) 020 8871 5098 or Email: fotos@btinternet.com (Feb)

LEAK POINT One Stereo pre amp, Leak Stereo 20 amplifier, Leak Trougihline 3 tuner. All in good worker order, £400. Tel: 01691 679 248 (Feb)

NAKAMICHI CRH4 Tape deck, hardly used, mint, includes DM10 head demagnetiser, £390 ono. Denon 1500II CD £90 ono Tel: 0781 329 7022 (Maindon, Kent) (Feb)

MARK LEVINSON No.36 3.4 £1400 (£4000). Martin Logan Quest loudspeakers £1400 (£5300). Both Stereophile A rated. Boxes, manuals, mint, perfect. Tel: Bill 01993 851 508 (Feb)

RARE OPPORTUNITY, pair of Lowther Audio Vector's PM4 and PM2 HiFiForic speech coils Anico magnets. Good condition, offers over £1700. Garrard 301, new plinth, SME £500. Tel: 01446 418 207 (Feb)

NAIM 32/50 MM + MC homemade power supply £750 ono. Linn Ittock LVII on mint LP12 arm board £275. Deca Jubilee Gold, needs re-tip, boxed, £150. Deca Blue, boxed, needs re-tip, £100. Tel: 0121 350 0600 (Feb)

PATHOS TWIN Towers, pure Class A hybrid integrated amplifier with remote control, mint £2250 (£3250). Quad III speakers, maple, £290. Tel: 01202 767 873 (Feb)

LINN LP12 Lingo Cirkus Nirvana mods. AT/1010 arm, AT MM cartridge, immaculate £700. Cable Talk 3.1 bi-wire 2x 3.4m £15. Can dem. Tel: 01909 470 192 or Email: rayspink@supanet.com (Feb)

WHARFDALE AIDALE corner speakers early 1960 vgc, 39 x 28. No time wasters. Reasonable offers. 01733 349 923 (Feb)
HEATHCOTE AUDIO

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ARAGON 4004 £695. Ian monoblocks £595. DPA Pre/Pwr £695. Little Bit Two £125. Audio Note Mo Pre £250. Mo Remote £295. Exposure IV £595. Ojan 3X (rosewood) £955. Unison 4 £695. Pathos One £695 (new). DNl Pre(£) £595. Tel: 07966 267 404 or Email: coom@btinternet.com (Feb/I) DNM PRE £795. Exposure pre £595. Edens £275. Cairn pre/mono’s £895. Croft pre £295. NAD 4720 wanted and preferable to £300. (Peterborough) (Feb/I) MERIDIAN 561M processor, latest spec, 358 five channel poweramp and 506.24 CD player. Cost £2825, will sell for £1845, or will split separately, Mint condition. Tel: 01483 890 561 (Feb/I) FOR THE Collector: Ferrograph Log 7 tape recorder with manual. Little use since service by Ferrograph in 1997. £380. 70’s style Sony ST 5066 recorder £30. NAD 712 receiver (mid 80’s) £40. Dual 504-4 turntable with Audio-Technica cartridge £40. All above excellent. Tel: 029 20 617 767 (Feb/I) PINK TRIANGLE LP1 turntable with Helios Aureus arm, Glanz arm, 20E cartridge, £200. Pair B&W DM601 Series 1 speakers, £100. Tel: 01908 501 937 (Feb/I) TWO VALVE Amplifiers. One 15 watt the other 20 watt. Built using separate circuit boards, both built on chassis constructed from 3mm aluminium with flat black finish, £200, £300. Tel: 01708 749 280 (Feb/I) LOWTHER HORN speakers 33 x 39 x 69 cm. 17.5 kg. Walnut veneer, 30 years old. Offers in the region of £450. Tel: 020 8460 0871 or Email: djpeebles@btinternet.com (Feb/I) MAINS BLOCK. Russ Andrews 8 way. Black metal case with 3ft high current Powerkord. Mint. £100. Tel: 01752 773369 (Feb/I) AUDIONOTE OTO SE with Border Patrol PSU. As new condition. Danish Audio Connect volume, Black Gates and many other internal upgrades. Mullanard valves plus other upgrades. £1000. Tel: Colin 020 8607 6777 anytime or Email: colin.clark@equant.com (Feb/I) LINN LP12 Aro Troika Lingo rosewood very rare beautiful woodwork fully boxed collector’s item £2000. Tel: 07973 405916 or Email: adam.stanhope@btinternet.com (Feb/I) ROGUE AUDIO 88 Magnum power amp. 60wpc ultra-linear 40wpc Triode switchable. Fabulous sound solid build black £1250. AVI pre stereo power £750. Naim 425 £1400 £300. Wanted: Lescon AP3 Tel: 01226 710605 or 07779 274655 (Feb/I) B & V NAUTILUS 805 Signature/H.N.E. standalone £2000. A.T.C. SIA-2-150 integrated amp, new £2375, asking £1450. JPS NC2 speaker cable 8 foot pair, new £1900, asking £900. Tel: 01296 437314 (Aylesbury, Bucks) (Feb/I) WANTED: AUDIOLAB 8000T FM/AM tuner black must be in perfect working order and vgc Tel: Pete 0115 975 4070 (Feb/I) SUGDEN SIGNATURE 41 remote line pre-amp with 100 watt AU41 power £550. Tannoy Mercury M3 floorstanders £100. Tel: 01733 810516 (Peterborough) (Feb/I) MUSICAL FIDELITY 3D NuVisa CD player. Why settle for second-hand? Consider mine – late serial number, everything absolutely mint, just a few hours use and boxed virtually since new. Musical heaven. Very reluctant sale due to house purchase. £2500. Tel: 01480 463102 or Email: Brian@flatman.vispa.com (Feb/I) QUICKSILVER VALVE monoblocks superb condition genuine hi-end sound many spare matched valves £650. Meridian 203 DAC £180. Tel: 01432 275203 Ray Thompson please do not phone. (Feb/I) KRELL 300i integrated amp. Hardly used, as new. Boxed. Great sound £1590 (£2660). Tel: 01895 623020 day or eve (London/Middx) (Feb/I) NAKAMICHI CR7 excellent condition, just serviced, boxed with manual and remote, stunning sound for analogue fans, possibly the best cassette deck in the world. £800. Tel: 07973 405916 or Email: adam.stanhope@btinternet.com (Feb/I) WADIA 861 built in digital pre amp upgrading to 270X transport and DAC 8000 new bargain for quick sale £4750 ono. Tel: 07929 063676 anytime (Feb/I) MARK LEVINSON 334 as new £3950 (£6000). Sonus Faber Guarnerius, as new, £3500 (£5300). Sensible offers considered. With crates, documents. Tel: 01273 464449 or Email: sales@sprays.co.uk (Mar/I) ARCAM A85 amplifier mint £500. Tel: 01925 852316 (Warrington) (Feb/I) SPENDOR SP2/3 loudspeakers in black with stands and oak cones. Good condition. £250 ono. Tel: Martin 01268 764542 evening, 07027 375114 days (Essex) (Feb/I) COLLECTOR HAVING big clear out - 5 shelves of good quality books on electronics, analogue fans, possibly the best cassette deck in the world. £800. Tel: 07973 405916 or Email: roro@btinternet.com (Feb/I) LEAK STEREO 60 wanted and American Stereo Varsilope II will consider faulty or incomplete – but transformers must be good cash waiting WHY. Tel: Gary 01484 328296 (W/Yorkshire) (Feb/I) SPENDOR SPI speakers teak £190. Tel: 01827 262310 (Tamworth) (Feb/I) NAIF CDS II £3600 Naif 135 monoblocks £1600. MIT MH4700 high resolution interface speaker cable £950. Tel: 01462 483646 (Herts) (Feb/I) QUAD 33/303 amplifier preamp recently serviced by Quad. Excellent condition £200. Tel: 01404 805089 (East Devon) (Feb/I) MARANTZ CD6 £150, Sony 9000 ES pre-amp processor Dolby digital DTS Sharc DSP 24-bit 96kHz compatible mint (£1300) £300. Tel: 07754 976443 or Email: mugury@ntworld.co.uk (Feb/I) GARRARD 401 transcription turntable £150. Tel: 070 020150 or Email: michael.turbin@lineone.net (Feb/I) DENON AVDSP surround sound amplifier 70w front 70w centre 20w rear. Inputs for phono CD tape tuner VCR etc. £145 ono. Pair Revolver miniature speakers £50. Tel: 0212 472 8746 (Birmingham) (Feb/I) MICHELL ALECTO stereo power amplifier superb condition high end sound boxed £700 ono. Audio Analogue Bellini pre amp mint boxed £275. Email: jjjaames@aol.com or phone 01822 334585 after 5pm (Feb/I) LOWTHER PM65 100 watt 8 ohm in Acousa enclosures, walnut, perfect, £150 pair, also KEF C80’s walnut enclosures, boxed, perfect, £100 pair Tel: 01226 753796 (South Yorks) (Feb/I) C.R. DEVELOPMENTS Romulus valve amplifier 30w. CH finished in S&S and black (£1299) £650. I.P. A2 Mk4 HDA floorstanding speakers finished in mahogany veneer. £100. Tel: 01205 753014 (Feb/I) KLIPSCH HERESY II with plinths 96dB horns £650. Audio Analogue Puccini SE immaculate £300. Alchemist Axiom amp £100. Rega Planar 2 ’S’ arm £90. Denon TU 260L tuner £60. Tel: 01827 261082 (Feb/I) NAIM CDS II £3600 Naim 135 monoblocks £1600. MIT MH4700 high resolution interface speaker cable £950. Tel: 01462 483646 (Herts) (Feb/I)
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TNT Audio

...if you are thinking of upgrading your system.....the Origin Live DC-motor kit should be high on your list for consideration"  
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Hi-Fi World

If you are the proud owner of any rega toneram, you are now in the enviable position to transform its performance into the league of super arms with modifications offered by Origin Live - the Origin live structural modification at £75 will enable your Rega to perform at a level exceeding that of arms costing over £1200. High performance rewiring with high grade litz cable is also offered at an additional £70 and external rewiring is £70 this further increases the performance.

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Hi-Fi World, Nov 97 (structural modification on RB250)

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Hi-Fi World

"the best sounding deck here (group comparison test of 8 leading turntables)...sounds fantastic."

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http://www.originlive.com
**MUSICAL FIDELITY P270 power-amp immaculate condition £390. No offers. Roksan Xeres turntable SME cut. Immaculate £200. No offers.** Tel: Matt 07775 56357 Email: ahankinson@clara.net (Feb)

**ORTOFON MC25FL cartridge, never been used £200. Lehman Black Cube phono stage, still sealed, never been used, £240. Obviously both mint, boxed, instructions. Tel: 01597 860 166 (Feb)**

**WANTED: CREEK OBH-12 preamp. Tel: 01323 737 850 (Sussex) (Feb)**

**LINN BASIK turntable. Linn KKS MM cartridge. Spare stylus. Dedicated audiophile stand. As new, little used. Retro reviewed HPW October 02. £290. Buyer collects. Tel: 01376 328 502 (Essex) (Feb)**

**NAIM 32.5 preamp with 72 boards, serviced by Naim, £250. Wanted: Old style Naim HiCap. Tel: 01302 865 282 (Feb)**

**NAIM HICAP, new style, boxed, £400. Possible PX Naim 02 tuner. Tel: Richard 01795 842 392 (Kent) (Feb)**

**QUAD ESL63 Electrostatic loudspeakers, recently serviced, excellent condition, £1100. Albery 408 SiI monolocks, vgc. £350. Tel: 01406 364 935 (Feb)**

**WANTED: NAKAMICHI PS-100 10volt power supply for use with Nakamichi MX-100 Microphone Mixer. Tel: Duncan 01733 266 566 (Peterborough) (Feb)**

**AUDIO AERO Capitole MkII CD player. 32bit/192kHz. Built in valve pre-stage, hence can drive a power amp directly. Cost new £4500, asking £3200. Tel: 01296 437 314 (Aylesbury, Bucks) (Feb)**

**NAIM. TWO 250's - serviced Naim, £50 each. NAP 180 £500. NAC72 £375. HiCap £375. Rogers Studio One’s £150. Quad 33,303,FM3 £300. Hi-Fi World Active Dipole Subs for ESL-63’s £250. Tel: 01202 752 787 (Feb)**

**EPOS ES14, mint, boxed, plus stands £280. Audio Synthesis Passion passive preamp, mint £395. Nytel CA252, tatty £50. Tel: 0208 986 1762 (evenings) (Feb)**

**MONITOR AUDIO MA R352 Loudspeakers & Factory Stands, Robin Marshall Design, £175. Aiwa XD-S1100 Date Recorder, High End, £245. Aurex Microsystem, Pre, Power & Tuner, superb quality, £3295. Pioneer Pf640 Quartz Direct Drive Turntable, fully automatic, £15. All boxed, mint. carriage arranged. 07870 657173 or hifi@space.net (Feb)**

**APOLLO ARIA Interchangeable hi-fi unit. 9 glass shelves (2 sizes), black supports. CD/Record storage. Immaculate condition. Buyer collects. Tel: 07720 402 426 after 5.30pm (Feb)**

**ROKSAN OJAN speakers, black, excellent condition. Can demonstrate £350 ono. Tel: 01970 632847 (day) 01970 871143 (evening) (Feb)**

**MUSICAL FIDELITY M3 Nu Vista integrated amplifier £2520 ono. Thiel CS3.6 loudspeakers, world class leading speakers (£5495) absolute bargain at £2495. Tel: 01508 499586 evenings or leave message by day (Feb)**

**MEADOWLARK SHEARWATER Transmission line speakers colour cherry £1100 ono (£2700 new). Quad 36 amp £120. Yamaha Theatre processor DSP 590 £150. Stax SR5 electrostatic Ear speakers £100. All immaculate. Tel: 01634 724081 (Feb)**

**LINN UK100s x2 £275. Onkyo K611 cassette deck £125. Hardly used, QED Silver Anniversary speaker cable (4 metre pair Airloc plugs £30 (2) 4 metre pair bi-wired Airloc plugs £50. Tel: 07889 840724 (Bromley, Kent) (Feb)**

**WANTED: STAX SR-Lambda professional headphones (year 1982) must be in excellent/mint condition (unmarked and not damaged). Will pay £400 for mint condition headphones. Tel: 01865 378578 (evenings) or Email: fiskalan@hotmail.com (Mar)**

**DENON GOLD SD10 II battleship high end CD player, smooth and dynamic, mint condition, boxed. 12 months guarantee £375 (£1300). New. Tel: 01308 868 044 (Feb)**

**QUAD ESL63 electrostatic loudspeakers + stands (£1100). Quad 606 power amplifier (£400). Meridian 207CD Pro player + phono pre-amp option + 209 remote (£430). Also Quad ESL57 electrostatics (£350). Tel: 07855 254158 or Email: IPS@PATENWorks.com (Feb)**

**FOR SALE Audio Analogue Pucceini SE integrated silver fronted non remote £300 ono. Baby forces sale. Tel: Dave 01483 487647 (Surrey) (Feb)**

**LINN SONDEK LP12 turntable with plinth, tinted perspex cover, Linndttok LVIi pick-up arm, Valhalla upgrade, new cartridge, plus Skyline platform. Very good condition £750. Tel: 023 92 838 500 or Email: youngh22@hotmail.com (Portsmouth) (Feb)**

**MARK LEVINSON No. 360S & 334 £7300 No. 39 £2500 also £5750. PMC IB1 speakers and stands £2000. Very clean, manual, £2250. XLO Type 6 speaker cables, 8ft bi-wire, excellent condition £375. Tel: 07919 211 332 or Email: peterrey@t-mobile.co.uk (Feb)**

**KRELL KSA 150 Class A 150-220 watts into 8ohms, RCA and balance inputs. Add another KSA-150 and have MDA-300. Very clean, manual, £2250. Thiel CS3.6 loudspeakers, recently serviced, £4750. Tel: 07795 922061 or E-mail: Jonathan.Page@t-mobile.co.uk (Feb)**

**KRELL FPB600 £4795 (£13,500), B&W Nautilus 801, red cherry, £4750 (£8500), Audioquest Caldera 8ft bi-wire speaker cable (£895) £650, Audioquest Midnight+ 10ft spades £150 (£450). All reasonable offers considered. Tel: 07767 478 056 or Email: andrew.lucas@cwt-uk.com (Feb)**

**ARCAM A85 amplifier mint £500. Tel: 01925 852316 (Warrington) (Feb)**

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**GUIDELINES FOR BUYING AND SELLING SECOND-HAND EQUIPMENT**

**FOR THE BUYER**

1. Not everyone is honest - Buyer Beware!
2. Don't send cash!
3. Accept no verbal guarantees.
4. Have you heard the item or something similar? If not, why do you want it?
5. Don't pretend to have knowledge - it's your fingers that will get burnt!
6. Is it working? If not, why not?
7. Has it been modified and, if so, have notes been kept?
8. Was it any good in the first place?
9. Don't send cash!
10. If you are in the slighest doubt, arrange an audition (see point 5).
11. Either buy it or don't: vendors are excusably impatient with 'consultation' exercises.
12. Don't send cash!

**FOR THE SELLER**

1. Not everyone is honest - Seller Beware!
2. Make no verbal guarantees.
3. Even 'nearly new' is still second-hand. If the manufacturer's guarantee is no longer in force, your price should reflect this.
4. There is very little intrinsic value in second-hand hi-fi, it's only worth what someone will pay for it.
5. The best guide to pricing is last month's Classifieds: that a 'classic' was worth £XXX a year or two ago is no guide. Values fall as well as rise.
6. Amateur second-hand dealing is not a big money game: you win some, you lose some.
7. Be prompt with despatch. If in doubt about buyer's bona-fides, either wash out the deal or send C.O.D.
8. There will always be time-wasters; be tolerant within reason!
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Hi-Fi News, Dec. 2000

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AMAZING CABLES! Unlock your system’s full potential. Hand-built silver interconnects FROM £85, solid silver speaker cables FROM £220, £5 p & p. Fantastic performance, money back guarantee. Details: 0115 982 5772 after 7 pm or Email: bob@skydivers.co.uk (Mar(I)

AUDIOPROJECT, 78 Otley Road, Headingley, Leeds, 0113 217 7294. Yorkshire’s newest Hi-Fi retailer. representing Naim, Rega, Creek, Totem, Quadraspire, Dynavector, Roksan, Teac and more. Used £125, Lingo’s, Linto’s stocked. Call for advice. Tel: 0113 217 7294 (Feb(I)

FARADAY CONCRETE Cabinet loudspeakers, ‘a sonic revelation’, What Hi-Fi? Our unique low density formulation and design really does produce the ultimate in audio transparency. DIY options available. Tel: 01603 762967 (Feb(I)

KRELL KRC-2 pre-amp, as new £1650. Meridian 500 transport, immaculate, 2 years old , boxed , manual, everything as new. (£1400) £750. Infinity Renegade 80 floorstanders, oak, £550. Telephone Jules on 01792 280061, Email: info@sounddrjuleshifi.co.uk Web: www.sounddrjuleshifi.co.uk (Feb(I)

WOODLAND ELECTRONICS. Website: www.woodlandelectronics.co.uk Tel/Fax: 0207 349 9675 - 01903 860 7613. High-end audio equipments, Home cinema, components, cables & connectors, lighting, surveillance equipments, plus mega more items. (Feb(I)

NAIM SPECIALIST has the following equipment for sale: CDS II + XS - £4495. NAC 52 + PSU - £3995. NAIT 02 - £850. Credo Speakers - £895. All first class condition + 6 month money back guarantee. Call Tom Tom Audio on 01792 207242 or Email: tunes@tomtomaudio.com (Feb(I)

KRELL KAV-300i integrated amp, Krell KAV-300cd CD player, Martin Logan Aerius I speakers. Transparent. Musicwave plus speaker cable £4995, or call for individual component prices. Demo available + full 6 month money back guarantee. Call Tom Tom Audio on 01797 14468 or Email: tunes@tomtomaudio.com (Feb(I)

LAURI-VOLPI loudspeaker stand interfaces, Hi-Fi Choice favourably reviewed in Hi in instant upgrades 12/02. Handmade by Lauri-Volpi, the interfaces effectively convert vibrational energy into heat energy. Priced @ £12 inc. M&P. Tel: 0117 212 3220 or Email: laurivolpi56@btinternet.com (Feb(I)

VINTAGE WIRELESS
COMPANY LONDON
Website: www.vintagewirelesslondon.co.uk
Buy-Sell-Exchange. Vintage wireless and classical audio. Repairs, spares, restoration, modification to all valve equipment. Quad II, Leaks etc. shipped worldwide, best prices, call us at 17 Bell Street, London, NW1 SBY. Tel: 020 7258 3448 Fax 020 7258 3449 Email: vwirelesslondon@aol.com (Oct(I)

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www.hi-fiworld.co.uk
**Classified Ads Order Form**

**RATES - ALL ADVERTS MUST BE PRE-PAID**

Maximum length per advert is 30 words, each additional word is 50p extra. Telephone numbers and E-mail addresses are treated as one word. Model numbers are treated as one word i.e. Quad 303 = two words. Please tick the box for the advert required.

Dealers must not advertise in the Private Classified section. Monthly consecutive insertions will be considered Trade advertising. The Publisher reserves the right to judge submissions.

In a rush to get your advert published? Why not use our Instant Internet Advert to get on our website immediately. Only £15 per week (7 days)

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Book a private or trade classified advert, and get one months *FREE internet advert

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Please tick here if you DO NOT WANT your FREE internet advert

Please write or type your advertisement copy in block capitals with one word per box. Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

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Post Code
Daytime Tel:
Please debit my VISA/MASTER/ SWITCH Card No.(Switch card issue No.)
Expiry Date:
Cardholder Signature:
I enclose a cheque/postal order for £ Made payable to: Audio Publishing Ltd.

Please send in your private classified ads with our new Freepost service. No need for a stamp!

Send this form together with your payment in an envelope marked:
Hi-Fi World, FREEPOST LON1478, LONDON NW6 6YR

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- Billy Vee
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- Central Audio
- Choice HiFi
- Classic Sound
- Custom Cable
- Cyrus
- Definitive Audio (Brighton)
- Definitive Audio (Nottingham)
- Diverse Vinyl
- Emperius (The)
- Going On Ltd
- Heartbeat Audio
- Heathcote Audio
- Heatherdale
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- Hi-Fi Trading Company
- Hicam
- Ian Edwards
- Ian Harrison
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- Mutonic
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- Naim
- Origin Live
- Oxford Audio Consultants
- Real Hi-Fi
- Retro Reproduction
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- Signals
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- Soundcraft
- Sounds Expensive
- Sounds Perfection
- Soundstage
- Stow Sounds
- Supra Direct
- The Chord Company
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- Williams Hart Electronics
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**DIY Supplement No.71**

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- Chelmer Valve
- Falcon Acoustics
- Kit & Components
- Langre Supplies
- Watford Valves
- Whitenoise

**Private & Trade Classified Adverts Copy Deadlines**

MARCH 2003 ISSUE - WEDNESDAY 8TH JANUARY 2003
APRIL 2003 ISSUE - TUESDAY 5TH FEBRUARY 2003
UNISON RESEARCH
UNICO

The new Unico integrated amplifier from Unison Research has an impeccable pedigree. Triode valves give natural purity of sound and effortless listening pleasure. With styling of understated elegance and 80 watts of power, Unico offers an unbeatable package. As top reviewer Ken Kessler put it (Hi Fi News, July 2002): "No integrated I've used in recent memory delivers so much at this price". Unico has the look, build quality and sound of pure luxury — at a real world price. Supplied complete with radiowave remote control.

The matching Unico CD-Player is now available, with 24-bit/192k upsampling, valve output stage and a sound which will convince you that CD replay has finally come of age.

**Unico Remote (line) £775, (line + phono) £825. Unico CD-player £1095.

**

OPERA
SP2

Beautiful to behold and a delight to listen to. Opera loudspeakers are the genuine article. The solid hardwood "boat-tailed" cabinet allows the SP2's top quality drive units to produce a lovely, natural sound. Italian craftsmanship, advanced acoustic technology and the very finest materials make SP2 the perfect choice for the discerning music lover.

*Opera SP2 (mahogany), £1350/pair. Other solid hardwood finishes available.

**

TRIANGLE
Loudspeakers that love music

Five stars for sound and five stars for value. Triangle are regular winners of top accolades from the world's most prestigious reviewers. As What Hi Fi recently put it "Rarely have we come across loudspeakers that are so lively and communicative...they turn in a sparkling performance that makes others seem bland in comparison". Listen for yourself. You'll be amazed.

**

PATHOS ACOUSTICS
The Unorthodox Approach

After almost two years of design and perfection, the stunning new Logos integrated amplifier is finally here. For the lucky few who will own one, it has been worth the wait. Logos is an object of rare bellezza - a swan in a world of ugly ducklings. A future classic. Hi Fi News were deeply impressed and summed up their review thus: "If you're considering an integrated amp up to £4000, listen to the Logos after everything else. Then spend the £1500 you saved on a decent wristwatch worthy of a Logos owner".

**

Contact us for more information or visit our website

23 Richings Way, Iver, Bucks, SL0 9DA, England
Tel: 01753 652 669 Tel: 07000 853 443 Fax: 01753 654 531
www.ukd.co.uk
Simple Perfect Sound

mission

tel: +44 (0) 1480 423700
www.mission.co.uk