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JUNE 2001

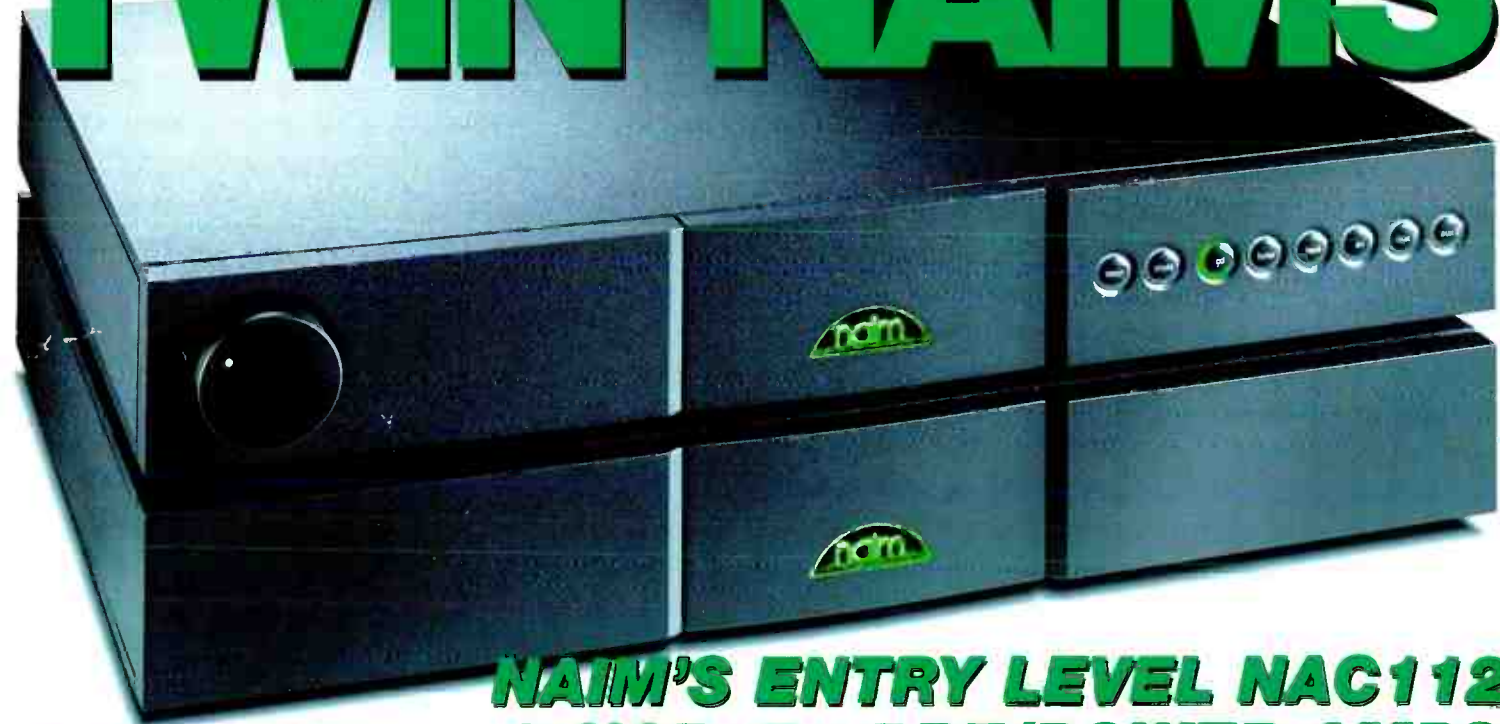
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- Mission m73 speakers
- Denon DVD-3300 & Toshiba SD-900E DVD-A players

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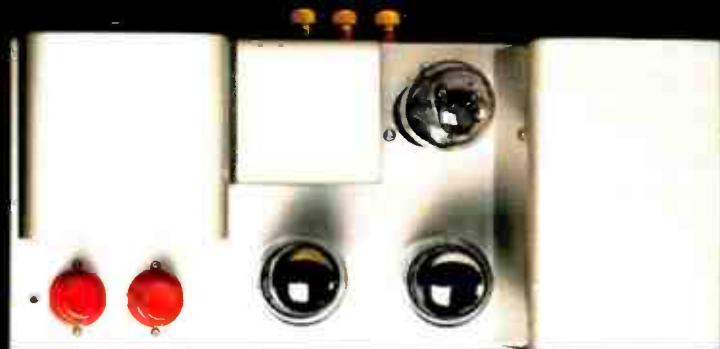
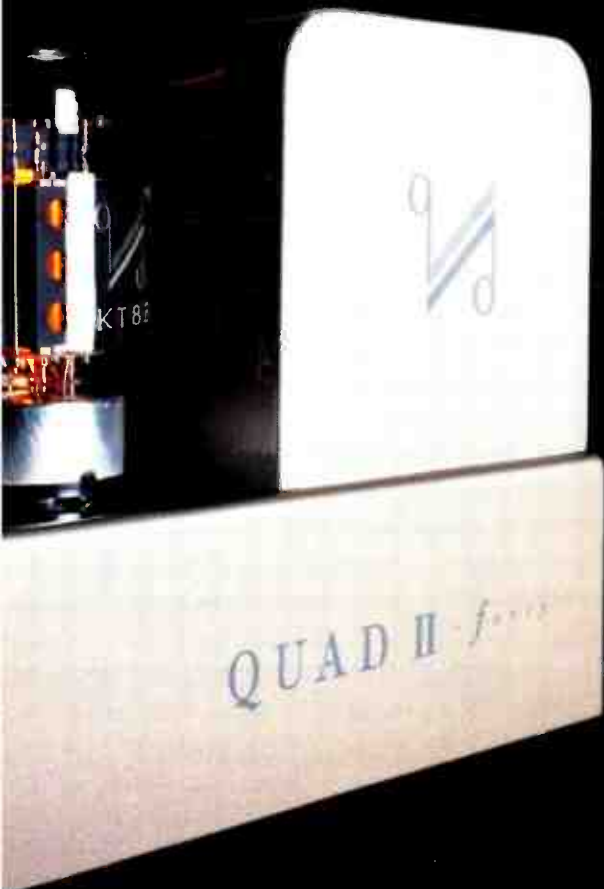
QUAD *II-forty & QC-twenty four*



For many audiophiles, the age of the transistor left a big hole in the emotion and pleasure provided by good valve amplification. The hi-fi world became orientated around numbers and statistics and a new product was bought largely on numerical specifications.

Based on the styling of and reflecting Peter Walker's circuit topology from the original, but brought up to date by the remarkable skills of our mechanical and audio engineers, this new system provides not only significantly more power, but also brings a richness and weight to any recording without the colouration many expect from such amplifiers.

The highest quality components have been used throughout to add a completely addictive dimension to this new pre/power combination. Detail and subtlety are nothing short of remarkable through the entire frequency range creating one of the most pleasurable listening experiences you'll ever have.



Quad Electroacoustics Ltd, IAG House, Sovereign Court,
Ermine Business Park, Huntingdon, PE29 6XU
Tel : 0845 458 0011 Fax : 01480 431767
www.quad-hifi.co.uk

Ask any audiophile how they got bitten by the hi-fi bug and they'll invariably tell you it was because of music, nothing more, nothing less. Well, personally, I don't completely believe them. It's not necessarily music that fuels their fire any more, but the multitude of changing ways in which they can experience it.

What it essentially comes down to is the craving for something different or new - 'fresh blood' in other words. The audiophile looking for their Holy Grail may have already actually found it, but it doesn't stop them from shelling out further thousands in their eternal quest for... well, I don't actually know. And thank the Lord that they do carrying on buying, or we'd all be out of business!

With me, it's got to the point where listening to hi-fi and listening to music are different things. Sounds daft I know, but I truly believe it. The occasions when I stop concentrating on imaging, sound staging and band width actually become pleasurable listening experiences, rather than 'work'. I hate to say it, and I'm sure a groan will emanate from the loyal multitude of readers, but it seems to always happen when I'm using valve amps.

It's not just me, or indeed just audiophiles, who experience this. Tubes are known for transparency and warmth, but bare little resemblance to what I regard as hi-fi, mainly because I don't listen to them as such. Hi-fi is work and valves are pleasure! (Surely this doesn't mean I enjoy my job?) They have a touch of coloration sometimes but it's an enjoyable one, and nothing reproduces the sound of acoustic instruments like a good valve amp.

I have the great fortune to be married to someone who works in the classical music industry, and this gives me the opportunity to attend a multitude of concerts. After an often musically enlightening evening - during the first few minutes of which I have to tell myself not to listen out for bass lightness or digital nasties - I often get to attend the odd dinner or reception with the performers and those who

professionally reside with them. The moment I get the inevitable, "...and what do you do?" question - as you do with any middle class gathering - I have to gird my loins as I spit it out. Musicians, you see, have a love-it-or-hate-it relationship with audio.

If you've studied music and have an interest in hi-fi, you'll invariably end up an engineer or producer with the BBC or in the classical recording industry. And although conductors and instrumentalists make recordings (an essential income booster), they often can't understand why someone would spend twenty thousand quid on hardware on which to listen to them! Yes, musicians often have decent hi-fis, but you can bet your bottom dollar they don't 'muck around' changing it on a regular basis, searching for sweeter treble or better bass grip. Rather, they use it to play music.

As Noel points out in his column this month, reviewers are a law unto themselves - and one that many musicians feel they ought to take legal action against! What I have found though, is that those few professional musicians I've encountered who are seriously into hi-fi almost always own valve amps. As I pointed out earlier, their sheer organic musicality and euphonic 'coloration' means that they often don't think of them, like me, as 'hi-fi' at all. I rest my case. You'll rarely find a classical musician that's also an audiophile - they're far too involved in music for that! ■



Simon Pope

HI-FI WORLD

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Private & Trade Classified Ads
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e-mail: classifieds@hi-fiworld.co.uk

Subscriptions & Back Issues
9:30am - 12:00 noon
tel: +44 (0) 1923 270833
fax: +44 (0) 1923 260 588
e-mail: subscriptions@hi-fiworld.co.uk

Distributed by
Comag Magazine Marketing,
Tavisstock Road, West Drayton,
Middlesex UB7 7QE
Tel: +44 (0) 1895 444 055

Printed by
Southern Print, Dorset
Tel: +44 (0) 1202 622 226

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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.

£ ——— NICE PRICE - Represents

●●●● EXCELLENT - Superb sound

●●● V—— VERY GOOD

●●—— ADEQUATE - Room for improvement

●—— POOR - Seriously flawed. Forget it!

●—— Half globes are added for those products that we feel are between categories

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This is the latest version of the top-loading CD player from Rega. David Price prepares for take off.

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Hailed by many as the best CD spinner in the world and at £12,000, probably the most expensive, the CD12 shouldn't fail to impress. David Price handles it with care.

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Described as a "Micro Floorstander", this incredibly stylish high-end 'speaker has an amazing amount of technology in such a relatively small cabinet. Simon Pope listens with pleasure.

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No less than six 2 and 4 channel multimedia loudspeakers get a grilling.

SONICBLUE RIO 800 VS. AWA MM-VX20052, MP3 PLAYERS

60,61



The latest and greatest Rio does battle with one of the slickest MP3 players to come out of Japan..

world news

► RECORD COMPANIES SIGN UP FOR NEW PORTABLE FORMAT

A new portable digital format for the prerecorded and recording market has been announced in the USA. Colorado based DataPlay Inc. have struck a deal with BMG in which new titles will be released on a miniature prerecorded disc later in the year. Reported to be the size of a small coin, the DataPlay discs are able to store 250MB of info on a single sided disc, including text, graphics and video clips, and 500MB on a dual sided version. The company say that a dual sided disc will store up to five CDs worth of music at "mp3 quality". As well as BMG there is interest from other major players in the record industry due to the apparent difficulty of the format to be copied and pirated.

As far as hardware is concerned, both Samsung and Toshiba, among others will work on portable players and recorders as well as other applications on which the format can be utilised. The appeal of the format comes down to size. With players and recorders possibly the size of a wristwatch the public could well take to DataPlay, as it's always been a matter of size when it comes to portable formats - the smaller the better. In the USA prices are expected to start from around \$200 but the prerecorded discs will offer no saving over CD, as the intention is to price them the same, with recordable discs costing just over \$10.

► MARATHON MAN

For a long time it was believed that the British composer Nicholas Maw held the record for composing the longest published continuous piece of music in the form of his vast one-movement orchestral piece, *Odyssey*, which runs in at a leg-crossing two hours without break - a beer swilling brass player's worst nightmare. Thanks to the DVD-V format, however, this has been broken in a most bizarre way by a good five hours by American 'composer' Robert Rich. His *'Somnium'* runs for seven hours continuously on one DVD-V disc and is a "meticulously crafted" studio version of his "notorious" all night Sleep Concerts.

Using an unusual array of sound sources, including, would you believe 'electric' fish, it's a prime example of a musician being influenced

The format's success in the US is hard to predict, as MiniDisc was a monumental flop over the pond, with the US consumer opting for CD recorders in a big way. MiniDisc was intended as prerecorded as well as recordable medium but prerecorded were limited in availability and expensive.

DataPlay could face the same problem. With CD player sales still mammoth in the States, DataPlay may only find favour with the American consumer as a recording format.

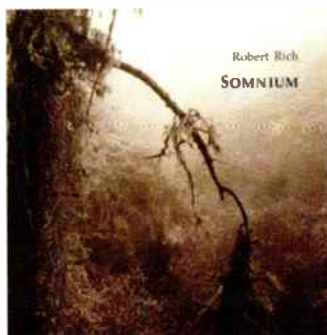
We contacted Dataplay in Colorado and were told that DataPlay enabled devices will be available in the US in the last quarter of this year which will coincide with the release of prerecorded content on DataPlay digital media. A spokesperson for the company also commented "the launch for Europe is currently scheduled for the second half of 2002." Watch this space...

www.dataplay.com



by a format technology to develop work. Taking advantage of DVD-v's storage capacity, *Somnium* fits all of its seven hours on one disc at 16bit/48 kHz. As soon as we can find someone with insomnia to give it a listen, we'll give you our opinion!

www.amoeba.com



► ROKSAN LAUNCH DVD

Roksan are set to release their long awaited DVD player. Part of the Caspian range, the player is housed in the range's trademark zinc plated steel casework with 5mm aluminium front plate. It uses a dual laser mechanism to optimise both audio and video performance, this is decoupled from the chassis and controlled by the main PCB. Microprocessor controlled, it features a comprehensive on-screen display and the usual array of video and audio outputs. Priced at £1195 it joins Roksan's Caspian DSP and five channel power amplifier for a complete surround sound solution.

Roksan Audio Ltd
6 Northfield Industrial Estate
Beresford Avenue
Alperton
Middlesex HA0 1NW
Tel: 020 8900 6801
www.roksan.co.uk



► MISSION BRIEFING

After a combative new range of budget loudspeakers from Wharfedale comes news of Mission's new 70 Series models. The m72 is similar to the existing m71 but sports a larger 17cm bass driver and a Sheer Micro-Fibre 25mm soft dome high-frequency unit, giving an 89dB/W sensitivity and 100W power handling. In tried-and-tested Mission fashion, tweeters and bass units are inverted and isolated from one another. The 12.5 litre enclosure boasts a rigid 22mm MDF with high-impact ABS baffle moulding.

Topping the m70 range is the new £299.90 m74. A floor-standing design, it incorporates two 17cm bass/mid-range drivers using bonded, woven, glass composite cones with the same soft-dome tweeter. The 40 litre speaker has a healthy 91dB sensitivity.

Symphonix Ltd.
Stonehill, Huntingdon
Cambs PE29 6EY
01480 423700
www.mission.co.uk

NO HINT OF HISS



On a Hi-Space™ recordable MiniDisc, you can cut, paste, divide, erase and record a million times. One thing alone will never change. The digital quality of the recording. Just pure sound, no hiss.

TOMORROW'S MEMORY TODAY



▶▶ 'LIMITED' CHOICE FROM MARANTZ

The Marantz 'Special Edition' range was launched ten years ago to encompass the company's standard models that had been tweaked to improve performance. The term soon became commonplace and so the 'Original' Special Edition series was introduced. Now, yes, you've guessed it, we have a 'Limited Edition Original Special Edition' product in the form of the CD600005E Limited Edition CD player!



The player uses a 'full floating' VAM1201 transport mechanism and signal clarity is apparently maintained by use of low noise DACs and 'noise shaping'. Also on board is the company's Hyper Dynamic Amplifier Module (HDAM) housed in a gold casing and the phase compensation capacitors have been improved. "Limited" in as much as the production of the player is for this year only, it's available priced at £299.90.

Marantz UK Ltd.
Kingsbridge House
Padbury Oaks
575-583 Bath Rd.
Middx
UB7 0EH
Tel: 01753 680868

▶▶ NAD SEE THE FUTURE OF CD



Yet another new CD player has arrived from NAD. The C541 is both HDCD and CD-R compatible and features a 24bit Burr-Brown digital to analogue convertor. There are separate power regulators for both the analogue and digital sections. Digital outputs consist of both coaxial and optical versions

and all the usual CD player functions are present, including repeat and random. Audiophile components are employed in the C541 such as metal film resistors and polypropylene stackfoil capacitors, as well as Burr-Brown 2604 op amps, somewhat rare for a £320 product.

Lenbrook UK Ltd.
Unit 2 Old Wolverton
Milton Keynes
MK12 5NP
Tel: 01908 319360
www.lenbrook.co.uk

▶▶ THE RIGHT ANGLE FROM KENWOOD



Hot on the heels of last year's funky Avino systems comes Kenwood's latest even funkier model. The HM-982RW micro system is presently the top selling micro in Japan, and Kenwood UK hope to repeat that success over here. Anticipating the demand for CD-R technology in

the UK, the 982 is a twin deck design, the top loading mechanism being a player and the lower deck, with a drawer, the CD-R/W recorder. Also found in this box of goodies is a cassette deck and RD5 tuner. Ease of use means that cassettes and CDs can be recorded at the touch of a button and the system has a striking design that certainly catches the eye.

Kenwood Electronics UK Ltd.
Kenwood House
Dwight Rd.
Watford
Herts
WD18 9EB
Tel: 01923 816444
www.kenwood-electronics.co.uk

NEW TOP MERIDIAN CD

Since their first model way back in 1984, Meridian has produced no less than twenty different CD players, keeping it's reputation as a pack leader for the high end playback of the CD. The new 588 player takes lessons learnt from producing the classic 508 and £10,000 800 DVD player. It uses a precision ROM drive optimised to read CD and CD-R information, which is in turn checked, corrected and decoded using a digital processing system. The 588 is built using six-layer PCBs, no less than seven separate power supplies, and surface

mount technology. As well as CD and CD-R information, the £1950 588 can also read MP3 discs.

Meridian Audio Ltd.
Stonehill
Stukeley Meadows
Huntingdon
Cambridgeshire
PE29 6EX
Tel: 01480 52144
www.meridian-audio.co.uk



KEF'S CRESTA HITS THE LOWS

To complement KEF's excellent range of budget Cresta loudspeakers, the company have just launched a matching subwoofer. The PSW 1000 is an active bass reflex design with 100W of on-board amplification to drive the downward firing 200mm drive unit. The frequency and gain are both adjustable for better integration and the sub will work equally well in either a stereo or home cinema surround set up. Designed to match the existing Cresta range, it's

available in either Black Ash or Light Cherry at what seems a very reasonable £199.99.

KEF Audio Ltd.
Eccleston Rd.
Tovil
Maidstone
Kent
ME15 6QP
Tel: 01622 672261
www.kef.com



next issue

Here's a small selection of what we hope to bring you next month:

CYRUS ICON LOUDSPEAKER

This is the first high end loudspeaker from the Huntingdon company. Employing flat panel NXT technology, it could be a real groundbreaker.

ARCAM DV88 DVD PLAYER

The first DVD player from the Cambridge hi-fi company promises to be the first true audiophile DVD machine. Find out what we think next month.

AUDIO ANALOGUE MAESTRO

This mammoth new integrated from Audio Analogue is a 250W per channel powerhouse. Read all about it in just four weeks.

AUDIO KILLED



DVD-A players are now established in the consumer electronics world, but do they provide a viable option for the committed audiophile? Simon Pope listens to two examples from Denon and Toshiba.

After the first wave of DVD-video players showed that when it came to playing audio CDs they were way behind dedicated machines, the audiophile world held its breath for DVD-A. With its high resolution capabilities it seems that at last audiophiles will have to swallow their pride and admit that a machine that plays video information can also be a high-end audio player. To test this statement, we gathered in two of the latest DVD-A players and set to work.

For this comparative test we took one example from a Japanese company, Denon, that has a highly regarded background in audio - even having an audiophile recording wing, and one example from a company more associated with more mainstream consumer electronics such as televisions, Toshiba. The format opens doors for those who have previously steered clear of high end audio products.

DENON DELIGHTS

The Denon DVD-3300 is the company's first and only DVD-A player at present and they've entered the market with their usual enthusiasm for new formats. Being Japan's oldest 'hi-fi' company (founded in 1907) it comes as no surprise to find them with one of the world's first DVD-A players. The format

naturally combines their history as an audiophile company with their more recent success as a manufacturer of high quality, solidly engineered DVD-video players. Priced at £1,000 it comes in a choice of two finishes, either Black or the Champagne Gold much favoured by the Japanese. It's not the most flashy or sexy looking of the current crop of DVD-A players but it resembles the rest of the company's range of DVD-video players, having the same style of remote control.

Features and facilities abound. It has both on-board dts and Dolby Digital decoders. It will play DVD-Audio and Video discs, as well as the usual CDs, CD-R/W discs and video CDs. Like all DVD-A players it comes equipped with high resolution multiple 24bit/192kHz digital to analogue converters, as well as a 10-bit/27MHz DAC in the video circuit. There's an 'Audio Only' mode which, when in operation, will shut down all video circuitry to concentrate on the music playing side of the machine, and the 3300 uses audiophile grade components.

This player has 24bit/192kHz digital-to-analogue conversion to cope with DVD-A's extended high frequency response and dynamic range. The 3300's fairly lightweight but rigid casework is a hybrid construction of two different chassis.

One is a rigid design with a metal base and the other a pure moulded design.

Other features and facilities are numerous. There is a headphone virtual-surround feature, which allows the listener to experience 'surround effects' of multi-channel Dolby Digital whilst listening through stereo headphones. In Cinema Voice Mode you can increase the volume of just the film dialogue to adjust it against the rest of the soundtrack. This



The DVD-3300's casework houses a host of audiophile components.

THE VIDEO STAR



feature will only work with the analogue outputs and with Dolby Digital encoded discs.

On the video front, the Picture Mode function has Soft, Fine and Cinema settings and the aforementioned 10-bit/27MHz converter is present in an attempt to glean the highest quality picture detail.

Connections are comprehensive, with composite video output, S-Video output, RGB output, two channel analogue audio output, a set of 5.1 channel analogue outputs as well as an optical and a coaxial digital output.

ALL RIGHT, TOSH

Jumping in at the deep end, Toshiba have two DVD-A players on the UK market, the SD900E being the most expensive of the two at £1,200. Your money buys you a very stylish looking customer with an undeniably high-end product look and feel. Part of this 'high-end' appeal is due to the fact that you can't see the disc drawer. Pressing 'open/close' on the fascia or remote for the first time brings a little "whoop" of surprise as the display window drops an inch or so and the wafer thin, sleek drawer shoots out as fast as Dirty Harry's Magnum does on a "punk".

Described as the company's 'reference' model the 900E comes with all the gadgetry, features and mild confusion that comes with the term. It will play DVD-A, DVD-V, CD, CD-R/W and video CD discs. It comes equipped with both dts and Dolby Digital decoders on-board as

well as 24bit/192 kHz digital-to-analogue conversion.

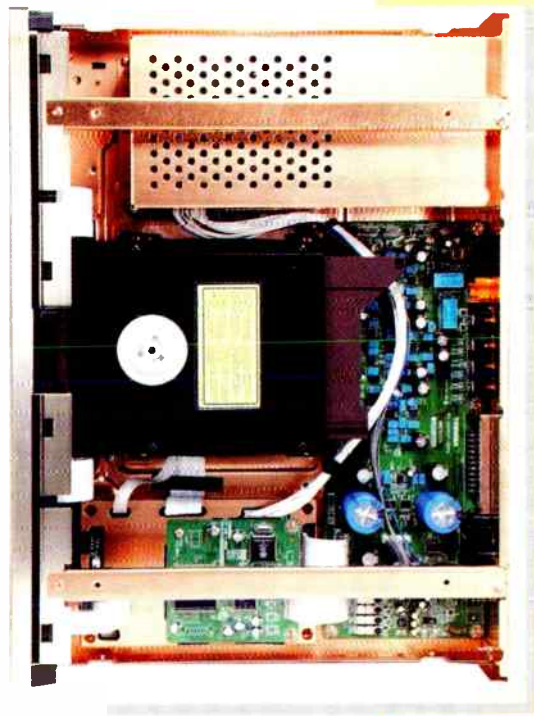
To boost the audiophile status of the 900E, the DAC is described as a 'Mega Resolution Parallel' type. It apparently achieves a dynamic range above 120dB and a total harmonic distortion of less than 0.0006%. Additionally, the 900E also has the bonus of a Pacific Microsonics HDCD chip, making the machine compatible with all discs bearing the hallmark.

A Balanced-Drive digital output circuit and toroidal Pulse transformer are used for the coaxial digital output, making further upgrading to a DAC another audiophile option.

On the video front, Toshiba use a Hyper Anti-Alias Filter (which operates at twice the speed of the Super Anti-Alias Filter!), along with Progressive Scan Processing to increase the picture quality of the 900E.

Connections are plentiful. On the audio side there are coaxial and optical digital outputs, as well as stereo analogue and multi-channel (5.1) analogue and S-Video and composite video outputs.

The machine is a lot chunkier and heavier than the Denon, with a thick aluminium frontplate. There are two bright blue LEDs, one indicating when a DVD-A disc is inserted, the other when the video circuitry is switched off and the player is in audio only mode. The supplied remote control is more comprehensive and a tad easier to use than that of the Denon player.



Under its bonnet the SD900E employs extensive use of audiophile copper shielding.

OPERATION AND SOUND QUALITY

The players were tried out with a variety of discs and formats, including CD, DVD-V and DVD-A in both multichannel and stereo mode. Our previous experience with DVD-A players prepared us for the 'head-scratching' factor of set up procedure, and the Toshiba was more difficult here than the Denon player.

Like the company's other DVD machines, Denon's DVD-3300 is fairly easy for the untechnically minded to get their heads round. After tackling

www.tagmclarenaudio.com

THX



DVD32R

Europe's First THX® Ultra certified DVD player for NTSC & PAL



The DVD32R is Europe's first DVD player which exceeds the high THX® Ultra standards and allows reference standard replay of CDs.

High-mass Transport for Low Jitter

The DVD32R uses a top loading transport, allowing its drive motor and servo electronics to be mounted to a heavy, mass loaded sub-chassis. The result is improved data integrity and reduced jitter.

Automatic, Adaptive Drawer Mechanism

The DVD32R aluminium diecast drawer door runs on a polished steel bar and a Teflon glider for smooth and reliable operation, driven by an adaptively controlled electric motor via a steel wire.

Precise Clock for best Sound and Video

The low phase noise single frequency master oscillator ensures that all video and audio clocks are synchronous, with clock signals being transferred using independently buffered and precisely terminated traces.

Field-leading MPEG Decoder

TAG McLaren worked closely with National Semiconductor's field leading subsidiary Mchamatics, in finding the best MPEG decoder. After long evaluation Pantera DVD™, the

first IC to integrate all back end functions of a DVD player onto a single chip, was selected. This unrivalled level of integration includes host processing, a 32 bit RISC processor, 10 bit video DACs and the NTSC/PAL encoders.

Uncompromised Video quality

The video circuitry uses broadcast quality components, with video outputs being individually buffered and vertical and anti flicker filtering to deliver high quality graphics.

Test-Pattern Generator

In built test patterns and electronics test circuitry assist in calibrating the TV for best picture quality.

Advanced Digital Waveform Control

Advanced circuitry optimises rise and fall times whilst preventing waveform discontinuities, reducing the demand on the digital interconnects.

TAGtronic Link T'L for Minimal Jitter

T'L1 allows the DVD32R to lock its data output to the low noise, ultra low jitter DAC reference clock in the AV32R.

Massive Power Reserves

The DVD32R uses a large toroidal transformer as this has the benefit of a very low stray magnetic field, reducing the possibility of interference with the audio data and video signals. A second, smaller

transformer is used to power the remote control circuitry, allowing very low electrical consumption when switched to standby.

Multiple Power Supplies

Separate power supplies reduce interference between the processing stages, right down to having separate windings on the transformer.

Multi-Layer Printed Circuit Boards

Multi layer pcbs provide controlled impedances and minimise coupling. Performance is further enhanced using leaded components for perfect analog signals and SMD for fast digital transfer, with quality being optimised using inert gas soldering.

Enhanced TAGtronic Bus

The TAGtronic Communication Bus allow products to work seamlessly together to form an effective, integrated system.

Upgrade Path

Building on TAG McLaren's class leading commitment to upgradability, the DVD32R is scheduled to receive a hardware upgrade to DVD Audio, Progressive Scan and Digital Video whilst functionality enhancements are distributed through TAG McLaren's website, allowing convenient software upgrades at home (using a PC).



TAG McLaren Audio, The Summit, Latham Road, Huntingdon, Cambs. PE29 6ZU
freephone: 0800 783 8007 tel. 01480 415600 fax: 01480 52159 e-mail: helpdesk@tagmclarenaudio.com

To book an audition contact one of these authorised DVD32R stockists:

Audio Designs	East Grinstead, West Sussex	01342 314589	Listening Rooms	Chelsea, London	0207 244 7750	Sevenoaks Sound & Vision	Kingston, Surrey	0208 547 0717
Audio Excellence Ltd	Cardiff, Wales	0292 022 8565	Martin Kleiser Ltd	Chiswick, London	0208 400 5555	Sevenoaks Sound & Vision	Liverpool, Merseyside	0151 707 8417
Audio Excellence Ltd	Clifton, Bristol	0117 926 4975	Martin Kleiser Ltd	Uxbridge, London	01895 465444	Sevenoaks Sound & Vision	Nottingham, Nottinghamshire	0115 911 2121
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Audio T Ltd	Basingstoke, Hampshire	01256 324311	Music Matters Ltd	Solihull, Birmingham	0121 742 0254	Sevenoaks Sound & Vision	Reading, Berkshire	0118 959 7768
Audio T Ltd	Brentwood, Essex	01277 264730	Nottingham HiFi Centre	Nottingham, Nottinghamshire	0115 978 6919	Sevenoaks Sound & Vision	Sevenoaks, Kent	01732 459555
Audio T Ltd	Camberley, Surrey	01276 685597	Oxford Audio Consultants	Oxford, Oxen	01865 790879	Sevenoaks Sound & Vision	Southgate, London	0208 886 2777
Audio T Ltd	Chandler's Ford, Hampshire	02380 252827	Peter Tyson HiFi	Carlisle, Cumbria	01228 546756	Sevenoaks Sound & Vision	Tunbridge Wells, Kent	01892 523548
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Audio T Ltd	Headington, Oxford	01865 765961	Prestige Audio Ltd	Lakeside, Essex	0208 868 3300	Sevenoaks Sound & Vision	Witham, Essex	01376 501733
Audio T Ltd	High Wycombe, Bucks	01494 558585	Rayleigh Hi-Fi	Rayleigh, Essex	01708 680551	Sevenoaks Sound & Vision	Worcester, Worcestershire	01905 612929
Audio T Ltd	Reading, Berkshire	0118 958 5463	Rayleigh Hi-Fi	Chelmsford, Essex	01268 779762	Stereo Stereo Ltd	Glasgow, Scotland	0141 248 4079
Audio T Ltd	West Hampstead, London	0207 794 7848	Sevenoaks Sound & Vision	Bedford, Bedfordshire	01245 262542	Suttons Hi-Fi	Bournemouth, Dorset	01202 555512
Billy Yee	Lewisham, London	0208 318 5755	Sevenoaks Sound & Vision	Clifton, Bristol	01234 772779	The Audio File	Bishops Cleeve, Herts	01279 506576
Harrods	Knightsbridge, London	0207 730 1234	Sevenoaks Sound & Vision	Edinburgh, Scotland	0117 974 3727	The Hi-Fi Shop	Belfast, N. Ireland	02890 381296
Harrow Audio	Harrow Middx	0208 903 9933	Sevenoaks Sound & Vision	Epsom, Surrey	0131 229 7267	The High End	Barnes, London	0208 876 3355
HiFi Corner	Aston Quoy, Dublin	00353 1671 4343	Sevenoaks Sound & Vision	Gloucester, Gloucestershire	01372 745883	The Powerplant (Hi-Fi) Ltd	Brighton, Sussex	01273 775978
Linton Audio Ltd	Metro Centre, Gateshead	0191 460 0999	Sevenoaks Sound & Vision	Ipswich, Suffolk	0141 332 9655	Unileil Sound & Vision	New Malden, Surrey	0208 942 9567

World's Best History

▶▶ the on-screen set up without too many problems the first disc in the 3300's drawer was a CD of Copland's Fanfare For The Common Man on a Reference Recordings HDCD played by the Minnesota Orchestra under Eije Oue. The Denon provided a very smooth replay of CD in the company's trademark mould. Whilst not bringing out the very best from the wide dynamic range of the recording it was nonetheless detailed and very tight on the rhythmic thumping of the bass drum. This rhythmic grip was shown again with Rock from the Manic's new CD 'Know Your Enemy'. 'Found That Soul' had a tautness that was very involving, with a lean and tuneful, if not too deep, bass.

Moving on to DVD-A in the form of Blondie's 'One Way Or Another' from a sampler and Steve Stevens's 'Flamenco a Go-Go', a dts Entertainment disc, the Denon showed a masterful way with the format in both multichannel and stereo modes. By its statistics the format is highly detailed compared to CD and indeed the Denon showed this to be the case, but it also offered a full sounding and spacious reading that created a large sound, even in humble stereo. The frequency response was well balanced and midrange open and highly detailed, along with a sweet and unobtrusive treble. This was shown best by frantic acoustic guitar strumming in the Steve Stevens disc.

Trying out the picture quality with a TDK DVD of Boulez conducting Bruckner's Symphony No. 8 in the St. Florian church I experienced clean viewing and sonically neutral results from the 3300.

Things became a little more complicated with the Toshiba. Without a doubt the Toshiba wins on the aesthetics front, looking sleek and sophisticated, but it's hardly the most user friendly bit of kit I've come across. The menus are as sophisticated as the looks, so although pin point set up can be achieved from them it could take you the best part of a Bank Holiday weekend.

The on-screen displays are helpful, in an attempt to simplify matters but it still took this not particularly technophobic reviewer a fair time to figure it all out. However,

once its completed you forget and forgive when you hear it play.

To say the Toshiba is a surprise is something of an understatement. It's a very absorbing and involving player with all formats, with a sound you don't expect from a company with limited high quality audio experience.

The SD900E is a very good CD player. With the manic Street Preachers album it could rock with the best of them, presenting an admittedly forward, yet still quite sophisticated and detailed picture. All layers of the mix were clear and powerful and the player read the music as a cohesive whole, a trait only found in good high-end players from Meridian or Arcam. The Copland disc, which also happens to be an HDCD, sounded less dry than it did with the Denon and dynamics were awesome, shaking the room almost to its foundations every time the bass drum struck!

Things were the same with DVD-A discs. The Steve Stevens multi-layered acoustic guitar fest powered through the 'speakers with real thrust and excitement, showing great control with rhythms and a good deal of detail. The same went for the Blondie track which was fast, funky and fruity with a full and spacious sound. Vocals were clean and warm and the bass firm and controlled, with good depth and drive. There's a certain amount of coloration here, more than the Denon, but it's no less enjoyable or exciting.

The Toshiba is also a cracking DVD-V player. The Bruckner disc possessed a clear and sharp picture as well as an open and natural Dolby Digital sound.

CONCLUSION

The Denon is a good CD and DVD-V player and an excellent, detailed and open sounding player with DVD-A discs. Its sound is rhythmic and smooth, with a good audiophile-like neutrality, although it could perhaps be a little dry for some. It's easy to



The rear of the DVD-3300 is fully equipped . . .



. . . for anything the SD900E can handle!

use and set up but the display window isn't the cleanest around and the looks and build don't really reach expectations for a £1,00 player. This apart, though, it's tough at present to find a player that relays the new format as well as this one.

The Toshiba is without doubt something of a surprise, as the company hasn't really produced anything this sophisticated sounding before. It's as good a DVD-A player as the Denon, perhaps a little less 'audiophile' in nature but all the more exciting due to that. Also it plays CDs with the same control and poise, making it an all-round master. The Toshiba is not cheap at £1,200 and I'm sure there will be players at a lower price within the year to better it, but for the present it is a very good buy if you're after a DVD-A player that will do everything with equal enthusiasm and ability.

DENON DVD-3300 £1,000

Denon
Hayden Labs. Ltd.
Hayden House
Chiltern Hill
Chalfont St. Peter
Bucks.
SL9 9UG
Tel: 01753 888447

TOSHIBA SD900E £1,200

Toshiba UK Ltd.
Toshiba House
Frimley Rd.
Frimley
Camberly
GU16 5JJ
Tel: 01276 62222

World Verdict



DENON DVD-3300

A good CD player and even better with DVD-A. Detailed and neutral sounding, if a tad dry. Not the best build for the money.

Measured Performance
see page 111

World Verdict

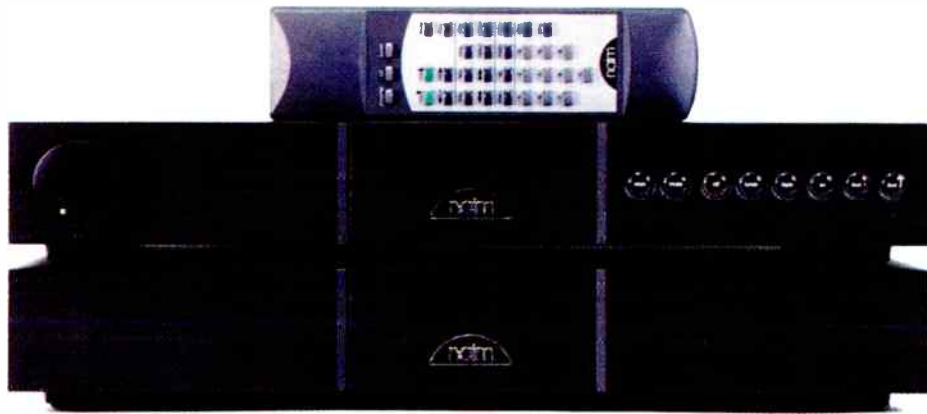


TOSHIBA SD900E

It's not the most neutral player around but it has a very involving, exciting and controlled sound. Equally adept with any format and very well built.

Measured Performance
see page 111

TWICE AS NICE?



Naim's new NAC112/NAP150 is the pre-power version of the highly regarded NAIT 5 integrated amplifier. David Price wonders if it's twice as good, or conversely, whether less is more?

▶ The NAIT 5 struck a chord with me - it's the integrated of choice if you want grip and dynamics above all else. Quite frankly, I'd expected as much, although I hadn't bargained on the amp's other obvious abilities. It's also surprisingly smooth and refined sounding, as well as satisfyingly well built and finished and - wait for it - flexible and convenient too.

Although the latter characteristics are hardly rare amongst sub-thousand pound integrations, if you warped back in time to the late eighties, the notion of a user-friendly Naim amp would be anathema. (Come to think of it, go back another ten years and the very existence of a Naim integrated would be unbelievable.) The NAC112/NAP150 retains the NAIT 5's fixtures and fittings, but puts the pre and power amp sections in separate boxes for £625 and £750 respectively. The result is an entry level pre-power combo that's ready and waiting for easy upgrading whenever you are.

The NAC112 is, like the range topping NAC52 preamp, microprocessor controlled. It offers

full remote control, a useful mute facility and six line inputs (although you can specify the optional £175 - and very good - StageLine phono stage to occupy one of them), each of which has adjustable gain. Inside it follows the pattern of all of Naim's latest amps - including the NAIT 5 - of featuring time-aligned filter networks, star earthing and optimised circuit layouts. Volume and balance are controlled via a sophisticated discrete resistor ladder to optimise sound quality and channel matching. As with conventional Naim practice, the NAC112 doesn't have its own power supply. Rather, it works piggy back from the generously specified unit in the NAP150. You can, of course, add an outboard Naim PSU too. The build quality of the metal casework (58.4x432x301mm) is superb.

The NAP150 power amplifier draws on circuitry developed for Naim's flagship NAP500. As its nomenclature suggests, it's a 50W RMS per channel design, but anyone who's had experience of Naim amps knows this is a conservative estimate. They're designed to drive real

loudspeaker loads and are said to be able to deal with any impedance from zero Ohms to infinity without damage or instability. I, for one, believe this is true - the old NAIT 1 had a ridiculously low power output figure of around 7W, but seemed to go louder than many 60W Japanese amps! Extensive attention is paid to power supplies, and the NAP150 features a beefy toroidal transformer. It's housed in a low vibration chassis fitted with anti-resonance circuit board mounting pillars and compliant feet.

SOUND QUALITY

To use that wonderful Spinal Tap analogy, the NAC112/NAP150 is like a NAIT 5 turned up to eleven - that's bass, midrange and treble. You also get 'one extra' image width and soundstage depth too. The overall effect is very nice indeed, with reservations. As the NAIT 5 is already so good, that additional 'one' may not seem much, but believe me, it really makes a worthwhile difference. Essentially, your £1375 buys you an extremely open and musically communicative amplifier

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with oodles of power (for most purposes) and great dynamics.

I hooked it up to my reference system, comprised (temporarily, alas) of a Linn CD12 and Yamaha NS1000M loudspeakers. Chord Company Anthem interconnect went between the Linn and the NAC112, and Naim's own stuff between the NAC112 and NAP150. Naim's NAC05 speaker cable wound its way to the Yams. I also used a Rega Planet 2000 as a more real world CD source, plus my own Michell Orbe/Ekos/Arkiv turntable (and Michell Delphini phono stage).

POWER SOUNDS

Thanks to their famously 'brightly lit' midbands, strings can do Naim amps in. Being an obstreperous sort, I duly reached for my copy of EMI's Sound Gallery CD, complete with more violins than your average matinee tearjerker. I hit track five on the CD12 (Neil Richardson's 'The Riviera Affair'), cranked up the volume and waited to have my insides rearranged. Ouch! That hurt. Yes, it's true, Naim upper mids are still a little on the forward side. By comparison, the NAIT 5's 'one less of everything' was more palatable. It was immediately obvious that this pre-power combo does all sorts of things its baby brother doesn't.

Now we've established that Naim hasn't radically changed its brand values overnight, it's time for the good news. Properly warmed up, tweaked and matched to the right

every amp I've heard simply gives up and dies (at least, when asked to tickle the NS1000M woofer voice coils at high volumes). The bass sequencing on this track arpeggiates up and down like a rollercoaster, but the Naims hung on for dear life,

to Run' sound so powerful and thrilling.

Jazz tracks like Lou Donaldson's 'One Cylinder' work differently - the mood of the music isn't evoked by lightning reflexes - of course this is important - but by a close attention



Loudspeaker terminals and preamp input on the NAP150

pushing out vast tracts of circa 40Hz sound in a vaguely rhythmic and tuneful way. True, they didn't quite get it right, but virtually all the other amps I've ever reviewed simply didn't try in the first place.

For under £1400 this is quite some party trick, and gives you a clue as to whether you'd like the Naim combo.

SPEED AND POISE

Cue up 4hero's 'Parallel Universe' - the fully electronic album before they went acoustic - and you get the same. An outrageously fast and punchy sound that pins you against the wall with its lightning attack transients and cannon-like dynamics. Move to Goldie's 'Inner City Life' and it's doing the same again, assaulting your senses with its speed and dexterity. If it's vaguely dancey, this combo will love it - and you'll love

to the texture of the instruments and the subtleties of the recording itself. To wit, when Donaldson's alto sax sounds just a little too close to Melvin Lastie's cornet for comfort (i.e. when all the brass instruments sound the same), you know you're not getting the performance as it was intended. True, the lightning syncopations of George Benson's guitar work went some way to making up for it, but you still find yourself being distracted - rather than enlightened - by the amplification. Likewise, cue up a DG Karajan recording of Beethoven's 'Eroica' symphony and you get a tonally rather grey and unforgiving environment, even if you do find yourself tapping your feet like it was a Chic disco anthem!

If you know what you like, the Naim will help you love it - if you see what I mean. If you're into rock and dance stuff (the more electronic the better), the Naim NAC112/NAP150 will ensure that you never watch TV again. With the right ancillaries, set up and programme material it is utterly addictive and engaging. If you have more catholic tastes, you won't find it a brilliant all rounder - simple as that. Think of it as a brilliantly focused solution to one particular set of hi-fi requirements. The cheaper NAIT 5 is significantly less good, but is still a better all rounder.



The DIN socket inputs on the rear of the NAC 112

music, this is a stunningly good performer. It sounds electric. Fantastically engaging and totally dedicated to the task of conveying what's on the original recording, it really goes the extra mile to bring you the whole story. Cue up 808 State's 'Azura' and you hear the glassy, digital synth intro (true, the Naims did add just a touch extra edge of their own), then you get a mouth-wateringly powerful stab of Moog synth and then the sub bass cuts in. It's at this point that nearly

this combo! Ditto late eighties pop - Seal's 'Future Love Paradise' got a widescreen acoustic, into which all of producer Trevor Horn's clever little touches were set. With stacks of detail (far more than I can remember with the NAIT 5) and the ability to keep small parts of the mix going even when overshadowed by other more prominent instruments, this combo was yet again in its element. Likewise, rarely have I heard Frankie Goes to Hollywood's cover of 'Born

Naim NAC112 £625
Naim NAP150 £750
Naim Audio Limited
 Southampton Road
 Salisbury, SP1 2LN
 01722 332266
 www.naim-audio.com



World Verdict

A more gripping and thrilling sound at this price you will not get, but this combo won't be to everyone's tastes.

Measured Performance see page 111

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REFERENCE SERIES



PARADISE

Simon Pope embarks on a voyage of Discovery with the new loudspeaker from high-end British company Wilson Benesch.

In tune with Sheffield's past as a historic industrial centre, Wilson Benesch are a company that have invested heavily in manufacturing technology. The new £5,500 Discovery 'Micro Floorstander' loudspeaker is the first of the Sheffield based manufacturer's Odyssey range and employs the technology used in their £20,000/pair flagship Bishop model.

Every aspect of the Discovery's manufacturing process is carried out 'in house', including the production of items such as the raw resins and fabrics. Indeed, many of the company's innovations have been adopted by more mainstream companies. Their intense attention to detail results in the exceptionally high quality finish of each product - but also a complementary price tag.

Here's an example of the company's philosophy in action: if they can't find a suitable process or material for the desired result, they invent or make one. A prime example being the company's classic curved A.C.T One loudspeaker, that used an assembly process which was an industry first.

BUILT TO LAST

Wilson Benesch products are highly individual. You have the distinct feeling - if you're lucky enough to have the Discoveries arrive on your doorstep - that this speaker is a lovingly crafted bespoke product, such is the superb finish and attention to detail. Indeed should you wish for a certain hue, there are a range of alternatives to the standard graphite polymer finish available.

The company state that there has never been a loudspeaker like this one. The combination of cutting edge design combined with a strangely habitat-friendly elegance suggest it may become a classic.

Latex rubber apart, never has black looked so sexy. A lot of the overall look is down to the innovative technology used in the 'speaker.

Described by Wilson as a Micro Floorstander, 80% of the parts used are of either carbon fibre composite or aluminium alloy. The aluminium spine that constitutes the 'stand' is identical in form to the one used in the A.C.T. One. It extends the entire length of the 'speaker. The bi-wire binding posts are located at its base.

The conventional appearance of the Discovery is deceiving; the cabinet has hidden secrets. Inside the carbon fibre/alloy enclosure there are three of W.B.'s Tactic 'multi-role' drive units, plus a 25mm fabric dome tweeter in a two and a half way configuration - with a twist.

The Tactic driver located on the front of the Discovery acts as the midrange unit inside its own ported chamber, whilst the bass frequencies are handled by two Tactic units in 'clamshell' (or Isobaric) formation, where the two units fire against each other - the bottom one of which is seen outside the enclosure, directly beneath the two forward firing units on the front baffle. This separate bass section is also ported.

The differing ports sit alongside the protruding bass unit underneath the enclosure. The tweeter is placed below the midrange unit on the front baffle, on-axis at the centre of the output from the midrange and bass units. This, says the company, results in a seamlessly integrated spherical radiation pattern. The bottom mounted Isobaric bass system also apparently serves another purpose. Being located where it is, the unit stabilises the system, by being in a "more vertical direction" that "exploits the earth's gravity and the earth itself to the full". Profound stuff!

SOUND DISCOVERY

Whether you believe in the gravitational qualities of the Discovery or not, there's one thing that can't be questioned and that's the exceptional sound quality of this 'speaker. As our measurements confirm there's definitely some serious engineering in this design and all the time and expenditure of R&D has paid off. I tested out the Discoveries with a range of amplifiers ranging from the power house of Meridian's 557 power amplifier with a Creek OBH-12 passive preamp, through to a Cyrus 7 integrated and even a pair of our own World Audio Design 20W per channel 300B power amplifier monoblocs. Source work was down to Meridian's 506.24 CD player and a Michell Gyrodec with a Rega RB250/Ortofon MC30 Supreme and VC power supply.

The sound from every front end source and amplifier was superb. Again, as our measurements show, the Discoveries have an almost uncannily well integrated sound that measures as flat as a pancake. This seamless frequency package also has detail that approaches that of a Quad electrostatic and a very fast and high quality bass response that goes down



FOUND



to 40Hz without so much as a slight puff of breath. The sound bears little relation to the woofy, coloured, stereotypical box 'speaker.

Where the Discoveries perhaps showed their mettle to the best of their ability was in well produced rock and pop music and jazz. With Paul Weller's version of 'I Walk On Gilded Splinters' from his excellent 'Stanley Road' album I was treated to a full, rounded and highly detailed performance. The treble response deals out a good balance between smooth sweetness and detail, delivering the panned tape effects in the track with an uncanny realism that jumped out of the cabinet to smack me 'round the chops.

With exciting music such as this, you'll get one of the most involving performances you've ever heard with the Discoveries. Even Noel Gallagher's blink-and-you'll-miss-it acoustic guitar strumming from the right channel was easily discernable - only with Quad's 988s do I get as good. I went for years thinking that the sleeve details were incorrect, having never heard it properly such

is the heavy camouflage of the track. Everything in the complex mix was present and correct, with Weller's deft guitar work and strong vocals clean and fluid and the drumming detailed and speedily driven, sounding just before the beat, as it well should!

Changing the mood with Miles Davis's seminal 'So What' from 'Kind Of Blue' showed what the Wilson's could do with instrumental timbres. These are very neutral and transparent 'speakers that show up different sounds in a way that had me on the edge of my seat. Coltraine's smooth tenor came flowing from the left channel as smooth as silk and the barren blowing of Davis's trumpet mixed with the sound of his breath flow made it all the more realistic. Other highlights were the subtle brushing on the snare in 'Flamenco Sketches' and Bill Evans's sparse piano sounding full and resonant.

With classical, the Discoveries delivered the same level of detail that I'd

encountered with Paul Weller, except this time it was highlighting the deft playing of the Emerson Quartet in Shostakovich's third string quartet on a new DG recording. The quartet was nicely balanced with a natural sound stage that was both deep and spacious. The violins remained sweet and rich throughout, free from scratchiness or harshness and the lower instruments, especially cello, were rich and woody.

Orchestral music such as Mahler's seventh symphony, whilst again detailed and transparent, was slightly held back by the restrictions of cabinet size but was otherwise open in timbre and very dynamic.

So, a bargain then? I'd have to say no as they are a serious price. However there's a lot of stuff going on here that is head and shoulders above many designs on the market pitched at a slightly lower and seemingly more competitive price.

In my experience the Discoveries are one of the best loudspeakers money can buy at the moment, the only drawback being a lack of breadth with large classical pieces, due to enclosure size and imaging properties.

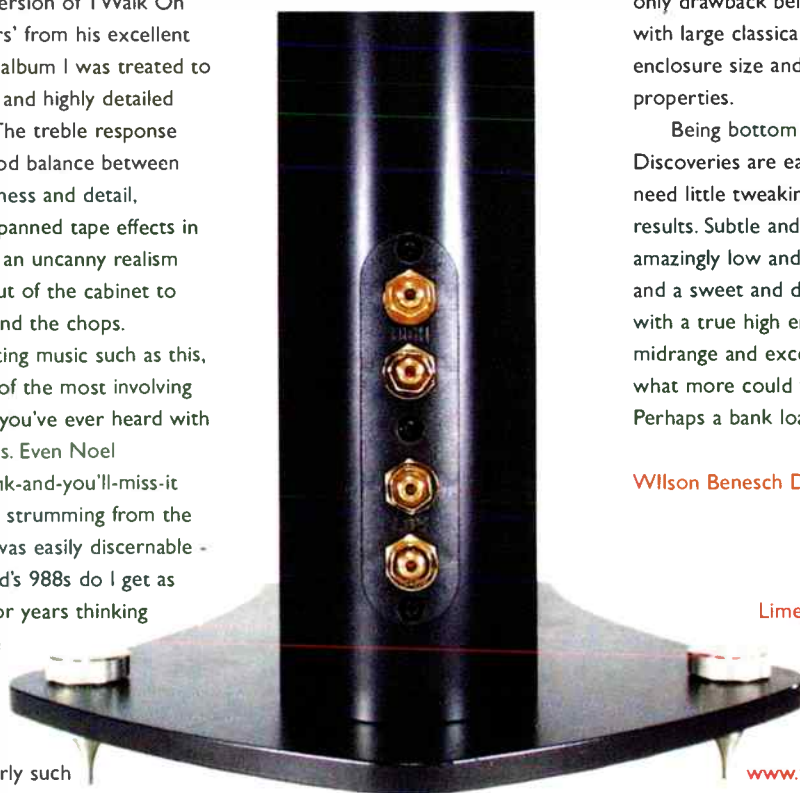
Being bottom ported the Discoveries are easy to place and need little tweaking to gain the best results. Subtle and fluid, with amazingly low and tight bass response and a sweet and detailed treble, along with a true high end sounding open midrange and excellent imaging - what more could you ask for?

Perhaps a bank loan! ■ ▲

Wilson Benesch Discovery £5550

Wilson Benesch
Falcon House
Limestone Cottage Lane
Sheffield S56 1HJ
Tel: 0114 285
2657

www.wilson-benesch.com



World Verdict



Amazingly detailed and open with a deep and tight bass, sweet treble and wonderful integration. The Discovery is simply one of the best 'speakers currently available.

Measured Performance
see page 111

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Jimmy Hughes writing in Hi-Fi Choice, issue 210, January 2001

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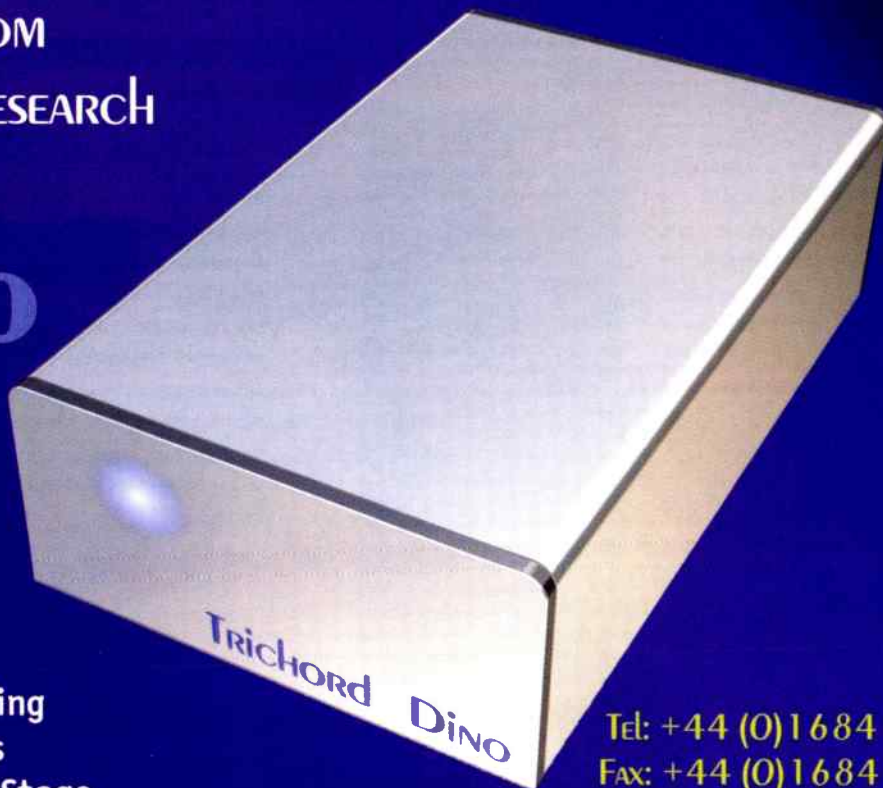
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BASS-IC NEEDS

REL continue to ride high in the sub World, despite competition from all comers. Simon Pope rocks the house with their latest incarnation of the Stadium.

The subwoofer has an almost unique stance in the consumer electronic market - it can straddle the fields of two channel hi-fi, multi channel A/V and even multimedia, unlike any other product. REL's products have all the exits covered, right from budget A/V products right up to the bass-monster models such as the Stentor and the Studio, which can easily double up as a dinner table for an extended family. The Stadium III is just about coffee table size, although our particular review sample didn't possess the most aesthetically pleasing grain for domestic integration, unless your idea of style is the '70s MFI look, that is. However, looks aren't what REL's speakers are about. What matters here is build, technology and sound - all of which have come well up to scratch in previous encounters.

The Stadium III features a totally new designed cabinet, amplifier and crossover. The cabinet is similar in construction to the aforementioned Stentor II, consisting of a 30mm MDF balanced-veneered enclosure with hardwood shoulders and radius-edged contours. It is reshaped to accommodate the new 300mm (12") Volt driver and the 200W fully-discrete MOSFET amp.

As far as connections go, the Stadium III accepts balanced high and low level signals via Neutrik and XLR inputs and unbalanced high and low level signals through both the Neutrik and phono inputs. There are also both high and low level input gain controls to allow individual settings for a 2-channel music system (high level) and multi-channel AV system (low level). Like other REL subs, the Stadium is fully adjustable to your requirements. The four position mode

selector allows the choice of line/high level input (zero degrees phase), LFE input - bypassing the crossover circuitry - (zero degrees phase), line/high input (180 degrees phase) and LFE input (180 degrees phase). Also found on the control panel is REL's Active Bass Control (ABC) crossover circuitry calibrated in twenty four semi-tone increments



(two octaves), allowing for extremely accurate integration with the main 'speakers. This function also comes in useful for adjusting the sub for either bass heavy or light recordings.

The ultimate test for an audiophile sub comes down to speed and integration and the test partners for the Stadium came in the distinctive shape of Quad's 988 electrostatic loudspeakers. Whilst an improvement on the first Quad models, the Archille's heel of any flat panel speaker ('hybrid' models excepted) is deep bass, so a good sub - used subtly - is an excellent choice for those who crave a tad more low end grunt or sub sonic 'space' to the sound.

The Stadium III comes up trumps in all areas. You want plenty of bass? You'll get it here. From the pounding, floor-trembling beats of Underworld's 'Push Upstairs' to the low, low bass lines of Odyssey's drum 'n' bass track, 'Submerge', the Stadium plumbs the

depths with a taut and fast sound that easily keeps up with the Quads. Fine tweaking with the ABC system not only integrates the sound better but also widens and deepens the sound stage, as well as improving the midrange clarity in an astonishing way.

Every reviewer has their favourite bass piece and mine happens to be a recording of Mahler's Symphony No. 5 with the Vienna Philharmonic conducted by Leonard Bernstein. The recording location (the Alte Oper In Frankfurt) contributes to a spaciousness and breadth rarely found in today's recordings. There's amazing low level information here that's simply lost on the majority of loudspeakers and it takes a good sub to pick up the sub sonics.

The stadium homed in on Bernstein's podium thumps in the third movement, rolling the sound throughout the room with lifelike presence.

A good sub such as this simply makes audiophile life a little more fun. Not that it isn't a serious product. With certain recordings you've known and loved for years it may well dig out something that you simply haven't heard before - always a great experience. It's not the cheapest option around but if you want to experience earth tremors and shell shocked neighbours, it will deliver. If, like me, you like a subwoofer used subtly, to bring space and depth to your music, the Stadium will equally astound. ■ ▲

REL Stadium III £1500

REL Acoustics Ltd.
Bridgend Industrial Estate
Bridgend CF31 3TP
Tel: 01656 768777

World Verdict



Providing earth shaking and taut bass as well as subtly and breadth, the Stadium III is a winner.

Ortofon



Pro-Ject

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INTERSTELLAR



Rega's new Planet 2000 could be its most popular product since the Planar 3. David Price turns on and tunes in.

No, the original Rega Planet wasn't this little beauty's predecessor. Launched around 1975 as far as I know, it was Roy Gandy's first ever turntable and the start of his twenty five year success story. Boasting an Acos-sourced S-shaped tonearm, white plinth and bizarre podular platter, its madcap, cod sci-fi styling ensured it didn't sell very well. It was duly replaced by a near identical record player sporting a platter fashioned from a plane of glass called - funnily enough - the Planar. The rest, as they say, is history...

The next Planet was Rega's entry-level CD player of the mid-nineties, which proved a hit with dealers and punters alike, but was sadly overlooked by the UK hi-fi press. How so? Well it could be that Rega is notoriously backward in coming forward as far as hi-fi magazines are concerned. To that end, the company's profile has been low. Rega have been overshadowed by more media savvy, proactive and 'out there' manufacturers. If you want examples, just pick up any of the mainstream magazines and you'll soon realise who I'm talking about.

All of which brings us to the Planet 2000. To my eyes at least, it's a gorgeous looking product with the air of a true piece of hi-fi esoterica, especially in its silver finish.

Ergonomically it's a treat, largely because it has a novel disc tray arrangement. Rega call it a "cantilevered top loading" system, which allows more funds to go to the transport and case design. Better still, the front fascia isn't festooned with every feature under the sun, or any nasty hard plastic buttons. Rather, you get four differently shaped bits of rubber plus a circular backlit power switch. Cool. If you want anymore features, you'll have to buy the optional remote control.

The display is a run-of-the-mill Sony fluorescent affair, but there's even a twist here. Rather than the cold blue hue you get on the Japanese giant's budget CD spinners, Rega gives you a soothing crimson red. It looks fantastic and is the perfect finishing touch to what is a beautiful piece of industrial design.

Having owned three Planar 3s (in various weird and wonderful hues), the fact that Rega can draw such a brilliantly proportioned budget product doesn't surprise me - but what's got me scratching my head is why did we have to wait this long? Oh, and another small puzzler is - what with this being Rega - why wasn't the display green?

Inside, beneath the top loading lid assembly, lurks a new underslung Sony transport and much of the old Planet circuit topology. The difference

is that the 2000 model features improvements to the DAC, power supply and coupling capacitors. The former is a 24bit Delta Sigma Rega IC40 affair (rumoured to be a Burr-Brown modified to be a Burr-Brown modified to Rega's specifications), with an extra power supply for the digital section. The latter uses a toroidal transformer with separate windings for the display and analogue audio stages. Evox film and non-polarised electrolytic capacitors can be found in the signal path, with low impedance caps used in the power supplies.

The extruded aluminium case is well built but hardly from the Japanese school of heavyweight manufacturing. It's pretty compact at 435x100x270mm but don't forget that being a toploader it won't slot into your system rack. The Planet 2000 uses Rega's VCS feet (viscous coupled system) to give it a degree of mechanical isolation from its environs, which the company claims to 'eradicate the need for a suspension'. Round the back there's the usual fixed audio line outputs, plus optical and coaxial digital outputs, and an IEC mains socket.

The player comes supplied with 'get you started' phono leads, but Rega recommends the use of their own Couple interconnect.

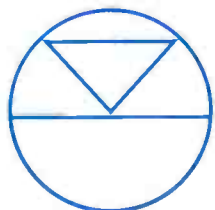
The optional remote control adds a host of features, including



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SONDEK CD12



LINN

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Inside, the player's digital and analogue specs read like a pedigree:

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MORE GOOD NEWS: there's an equally impressive integrated amplifier. It looks like an expensive mega amp:

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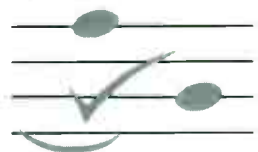
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Music in the home



BATH

01225 874728

CD: ACCUPHASE, ADVANTAGE, AUDIO SYNTHESIS, BAT, dCS ELGAR, DELIUS AND PURCELL, MERACUS, PASS, SAT, SUGDEN, WADIA. **VINYL:** BASIS, CLEARAUDIO, CROWN JEWEL, DNM, GRAHAM, THE GROOVE, LEHMANN, MICHELL, SUMIKO BLUE POINT SPECIAL, TRANSGURATION. **AMPLIFIERS:** ACCUPHASE, ADVANTAGE, BALANCED AUDIO TECHNOLOGY, CAT, DNM, GAMUT, NAGRA, PASS, SAT, SONNETER, SPECTRAL, SUGDEN. **LOUDSPEAKERS:** AUDIO PHYSIC, BKS, ETHOS, LUMLEY, NEAT, TOTEM, VERITY AUDIO. **TUNERS:** ACCUPHASE, MAGNUM DYNALAB. **CABLES:** ARGENTO, CHORD CO., DNM, HOVLAND, NORDOST, SILTECH, SPECTRAL, YAMAMURA CHURCHILL ETC. **SUPPORTS:** STANDS UNIQUE, VIBRAPLANE ETC.

Program, Repeat and - most usefully to me - Display Off functions.

SOUND QUALITY

The Planet 2000 is not a rich sounding player like its immediate predecessor, but nor is it dry and clinical as some of its Oriental rivals can be. Instead it treads a fine line between dryness and neutrality - there's a slight thinness in the upper midband, which you notice especially on female vocals such as Kate Bush's 'The Man with the Child in his Eyes'. Rather than carrying the full breadth and body of Kate's voice as say, the more expensive Arcam FMJ CD23 does, there's a slight lightness of touch and edge to the sound. Don't get me wrong, it isn't roughness or rawness, but we're definitely in another country to the rich, resonant roundness of the previous Planet.

Move down to the midband proper and there's still some remnants of the old Planets fullness, with the added benefit of a deeper soundstage. Indeed this is where this player positively thrives. Cue up Kraftwerk's 'Expo 2000' and you hear a beautifully sumptuous analogue synthesiser sound (the sort of thing you heard on early Human League or Depeche Mode).

Most striking is the Rega's handling of harmonics - it carries these better than any player I know of at or near the price and the result is that it's great at telling you about the texture of instruments. Although not artificially tonally rich, everything sounds vibrant and alive. There's detail aplenty and it all gels together quite magically considering the modest price.

Go down into the nether regions and the Planet is a contradiction. It isn't the most extended or 'hi-fi' sounding player, and sometimes sounds compressed. Cue up MJ Cole's 'Crazy Love' and those deep bass transients can have it sounding out of breath - but what subsonics

you do get are beautifully pieced together. The result is extremely musical basslines - Nirvana's 'Come As You Are' can sound too disjointed and 'hi-fi' through the likes of equivalently priced Marantz's or Sonys, but the Rega makes them cohere. Add this to the player's liquid midband, where tunes are easier to follow than any other sub-thousand pound silver disc spinner I've heard, and the effect is fantastic.

While the player isn't the most dynamic you'll hear - although it isn't really any more compressed than its price rivals - its excellent rhythmic abilities make it an extremely musical sounding machine. By contrast, rivals seem mechanical and stilted. Put on Quincy Jones' 'Children of the Ghetto' and you'll appreciate the way the Planet 2000 hangs together those powerful piano cadences that drive the song, and enjoy the way it weaves in those exquisite female vocals and that loose percussion work too. Switch to a rival Sony and the whole effect falls apart.

Again with the Rega you can hear that slight thinness of vocal tone, some loss of top end air and space and a less than muscular low bass performance. But again you just sit there and enjoy the tremendous sense of occasion the Planet 2000 brings to anything with music hidden away inside it.

I found myself quite enraptured by Air's 'All I Need'. It's a make or break piece of music, this. Many far more expensive players will start drawing your attention to its middling sound quality ('Moon Safari', from

where it comes, sounds good on cheap stuff but isn't the best dem disc through more forensic gear). I'm afraid to say that this can often spoil the track for me - when you start fussing about production details instead of swimming around in



that wonderful tune, you know something's wrong. Not so with the Rega though - it seemed completely in command of its game and I was well and truly riveted.

Put torture tracks through the Rega and again it shows you why it's such a cracking listen. Crashing dynamics plus complex, intricately sequenced electronic drums courtesy of one Mr R. Sakamoto make YMO's 'UT' a right old workout even for the best of them (only Linn's CD12 makes it seem easy). To its credit, the little Planet hung on like grim death and managed to sound composed when I've heard players at twice the price scream for mercy.

Rega's latest Planet 2000 is a superbly accomplished 'budget' player. It has its limitations, but the most important point is that it sounds musical and involving at all times. I reviewed it the day after I gave Linn's £12,000 CD12 the final going over, and would you believe I still spent hours and hours going through my CDs, desperate to hear more and more music, through a player that probably costs less than the CD12's packing case?

From this you can gather that it's an addictive listen, with an organically musical nature that you normally have to spend thousands to experience. At the price, it's cosmic! ■ ▲

REGA PLANET 2000 £498

Rega Research Ltd.
119 Park Street
Westcliff-On-Sea
Essex
SS0 7PD
Tel: 01702 333071



World Verdict



A fantastically musical performer for the money, the Planet offers a taste of the high life at an everyday price. Right now, it's the best budget CD player money can buy.

Measured Performance
see page 111

TAKE II



Linn's CD12 is the Sondek's second coming. David Price auditions the new 24bit version of what is surely the world's most expensive CD player.

Is Linn's CD12 the ultimate CD player? One wag has suggested that it doesn't sound like any other CD player in the world, but neither does it sound like music. I'll get back to this point later, but suffice to say that I at least agree with the first part of that statement. No less interesting - for me at least - is that it doesn't feel like any other CD player. Linn is to be commended for designing a novel user interface centred around - logically enough - the drawer.

Hewn from alloy and chromium plated - it glides in and out of its recess as if it was on air. In this respect it makes the best of the Japanese transports - Sony's 1987 CDP-R1, in my humble opinion - feel like an eighty quid Sherwood from Richer Sounds. Better still, it controls all the player's transport functions with nothing more than a subtle nudge. A shove denotes Open or Close, a gentle tap is read as Play, or if a CD's already playing it's interpreted as Next Track. Brilliant! Why on earth did nobody think of it before? It goes a small way to

restoring the tactility that inveterate vinyl-ists like myself miss so much with the silver disc.

The case design is no less original. Machined from two plates of solid aluminium alloy to a tolerance of about 1um by Castle Precision Engineering (which is Linn's sister company) and then anodised, it feels like metallic velvet. The transport - sorry, 'CD Engine' as Linn calls it - also comes from anodised aluminium and is decoupled from the main case. A Philips laser assembly complete with Linn-designed magnetic puck reads the digits via custom servo and decoder circuitry. Just for good measure, the entire transport assembly is housed in its own black box.

The very latest version of the CD12 reviewed here boasts four specially selected 24-bit Burr Brown DACs working in dual differential mode, with 'extensive measures taken to avoid jitter'. Digital filtering comes from the now ubiquitous Pacific Microsonics PMD-100 (offering HDCD, of course). Juice is courtesy of Linn's Brilliant switch mode power

supply, and there are sixteen stages of power supply regulation.

The CD12 isn't a large player - vital statistics are 320x 350x 80mm - which is cool in a 'less is more' kind of way, and it weighs 12kg.

SOUND INVESTMENT

Over the past decade, the best turntables have sharpened up their act no end, and have got far closer to digital in terms of grip, image stability and low frequency control. Likewise, CD players have moved closer to vinyl in terms of sounding smoother and more organic.

The CD12 continues this trend, offering an extremely fluid 'analogue' sound without taking on any of vinyl's nasties (pitch and image instability, etc). Of course the CD12 doesn't sound like a turntable, but neither does it sound like a CD player. So does it sound like music? Yes, I'd say so, with provisos.

Cue up MJ Cole's 'Crazy Love' and you'll hear possibly the most liquid and organic performance you'll ever get from Red Book CD. All the fundamentals are there in spades.

Bass is surprisingly full and warm, especially in the upper regions (shades of the LP12 here), treble amazingly rich and slick (ditto) and midband beautifully open and smooth (but I can't say the same for the turntable on this point). Imaging is fantastic - where, say, Marantz's SA-1 (£5,000 CD/SACD player, in 16bit mode) pushes the whole mix up to the line of the speakers, the CD12 projects vocals forward and hangs the rest of the mix well back. But the Linn weaves all these pieces together better. The overall effect is that against the Marantz, the Linn simply sounds faster. The gaps between the beats appear to pass quicker and the whole song takes on a sense of progression. It feels like it's going somewhere, whereas the Marantz somehow feels more disjointed.

MUSICAL REALISM

The CD12 is not only a beguilingly, enchantingly, melliflously musical and melodic player, it's also a festival of the senses too. By this I mean it's amazingly good at reproducing the texture and grain of individual instruments, voices and sounds. Instead of sounding like a digital approximation of trumpet, the CD12 actually sounds like a real one. Of course, 16bit CD is still somewhat hamstrung on this point, but the CD12 is far more texturally accurate than any other CD player I've heard.

There's an amazing lack of apparent distortion. My lugholes told me this thing is unbelievably clean, even before seeing its measured performance. The digital 'hash' that vinyl users hear so acutely as soon as anyone cues up a CD is mostly gone. The result is a silky smoothness right across the frequency spectrum, again, funnily a trait it shares with the LP12.

But don't assume for a minute it's over polite. CD players often sound artificially detailed thanks to a brightly lit upper midband (a result of distortion) which pushes certain things like percussion and female vocals forward. The Linn CD12 is very probably the smoothest, most distortion-free Red Book CD spinner I've heard, and yet it chucks low level 'ambient' information out in spades.

It is also the most dynamically expressive player I've heard to date, able to go both loud and quiet with effortless ease.

Quincy Jones' 'Summer in the City' is a case in point. Compared to all the other players I've reviewed of late, the Sondek CD12 performs the amazing trick of going for the rhythmic and melodic jugular (a la Naim CDX, for example) and sounding as sweet as an EL34 power valve bobbing in a vat of melted chocolate.

The Linn went straight for the lead keyboards and almost accentuated the tune (you get this feeling when listening to music slightly drunk too, although I hasten to add I wasn't!), while also holding together a



rock-solid groove behind it. Despite the fact it was singing like a bird, the CD12 went into exhaustive detail about the drummer's subtle rimshot patterns, the force of the bass drum and the beautifully fluid hi-hat work. Likewise, its imaging ability is something very special indeed - the phrase 'walkaround soundstage' springs to mind.

The CD12 hangs all the elements in the mix into a wide, expansive frame with an almost architectural precision - there's no question of squeezing everything into a recorded acoustic the size of letter box, as so many other CD players invariably do.

Go back to lesser CD spinners like my reference Sony and the track sounds different in two respects. The first is musicality. The organic flow of the song suddenly disappears - all the elements in the mix seem disparate and poorly integrated rather than the 'seamless parts of the whole' that the CD12 makes them.

The second aspect is textuality - cymbals now sound harsh and forward, bass wooden and midband boxed in and constrained. Switch back to the CD12 and the surface of the sound is smoother and less grainy, and everything falls straight back into place.

Getting the aforementioned two essentials right means you can listen to whole albums on the Linn whereas halfway through the first track you'd

be hunting for the Off button on lesser machines.

This, methinks, goes a long way to unpacking the aforementioned jibe about the CD12 'not sounding like CD players but not sounding like music either'. My theory is that when we hear the mushy, chrome-plated sonics of your average CD player, we learn to not expect real music. The CD12 does away with all these nasties, and you find yourself expecting to hear everything exactly as it was recorded. Unfortunately, being only 16bit, the Linn can't quite fill in all the gaps (thanks to Red

Book's technical deficiencies), and the result is an eerily un-CD-like sound that's closer to real music than any other 16bit player, but still not quite there.

TOP OF THE TREE

It's awesome. It's stunning. It's incredibly lifelike - for 16bit. It makes you get into the groove, love your CD collection and spin your digital discs all night. Hearing my silver Frisbees on the CD12 for the first time was an experience no less profound than upgrading from my Rega Planar 3 to an LP12 back in December 1987. It really moved me.

But it's still not quite up with the best analogue, and is still a way away from the real deal that is live music. Is it worth twelve grand? To the lucky few for whom £12k is not a big deal, yes. That's under half cost of an AudioNote Ongaku valve amplifier and £3k less than a pair of Tannoy Westminsters - to get things into perspective.

Is the CD12 a stunning product that puts Linn back at the very top of the hi-fi tree? Absolutely. ■ ▲

Linn Sondek CD12 £12,000

Linn Products Ltd.
Floors Rd, Eaglesham,
Glasgow, G76 0EP
Tel: 0161 280 5115
www.linn.co.uk

REVIEW SYSTEM

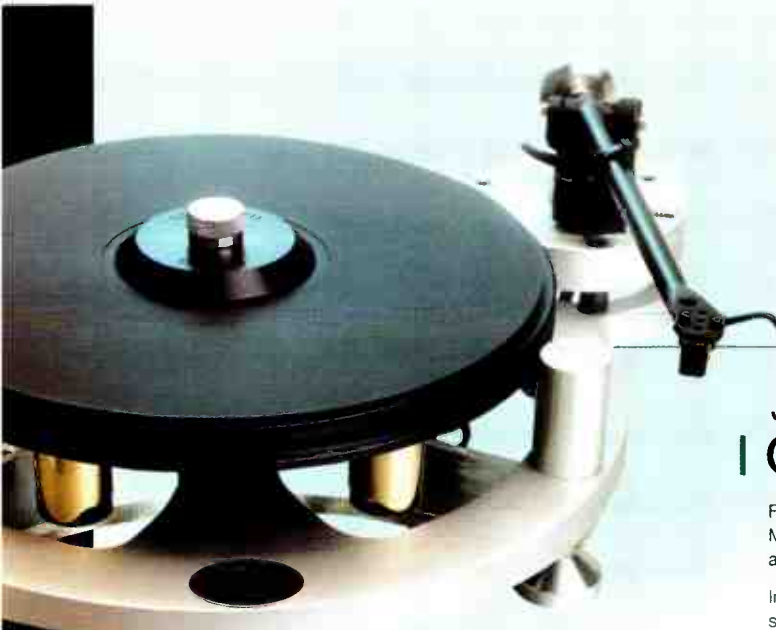
LFD Spirolink 3 interconnect, LFD Passive preamp, World Audio K5881SRPP power amp, NVA LS2 speaker cable, Yamaha NS1000M loudspeakers, Sony CDP-557ES (Trichord Clock 3) CD player, Michell Orbe/Linn Ekos/Arktiv turntable, Michell Delphini phono stage.

World Verdict



As far as it's possible to discern, this is probably the best CD player in the world, ever.

Measured Performance see page 111



J A Michell Gyrodec SE Turntable **£974.95**

Founded in Borehamwood by mechanical engineer John Michell. For over thirty years, Michell Engineering have been at the forefront of quality audio, with world-wide appreciated products like the GyroDec and Orbe Turntables.

In the early eighties, the revolutionary GyroDec Turntable, with its elegant and effective suspension system, was introduced. The **Gyro SE** is a smaller and cheaper package that retains the classy sound of the GyroDec and can be upgraded to the full GyroDec specification by adding a plinth and dustcover.

Price includes Rega RB300 Tone Arm

CYRUS

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The new **CD7** combines the latest transport developments with 24-bit DAC technology. The CD player can be easily upgraded by adding the external PSX-R power supply.

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MISSION

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780 and **781** are the pinnacle of Mission's research into creating a three dimensional soundstage, extensive bandwidth and dynamic range from the smallest possible cabinet dimensions. The **780** is diminutive in form but massive in its sonic capabilities. Its 130mm Keraform bass unit is carefully matched to a novel reflex enclosure for full bodied bass extension. the qualities of Keraform produce a dynamic and ultra detailed midrange. In the **781** a 165mm Keraform driver takes advantage of a larger, stand mount cabinet to extend bass performance and increase efficiency whilst maintaining that superb midband transparency and finely detailed treble.



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Mission **780** Series

783	£999.95
782	£699.95
781	£499.95
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| DiVA A85 Integrated Amplifier £749.95

Arcam's quest for higher performance, has led to the development of the new **DiVA** series, the most complete range of high performance home entertainment equipment ever launched by a specialist audio manufacturer. Innovative design and production techniques have enabled Arcam to build on established values of excellent sound quality and value.

The DiVA series comprises, two CD Players, three Integrated Amplifiers, two Power Amplifiers, an AM/FM Tuner, a high performance DVD Player and Arcam's first Home Cinema Receiver. All models are available in either silver or black.



Please Note: Price Excludes STAE1 Stands



| AE1 Series II £699.95

In 1988 the original AE1 was launched. Designed to satisfy the needs of the professional audio sector of the market, by offering great accuracy, precise stereo imaging, dynamics, and transparency coupled with high power handling and linearity. The AE1 quickly acquired a global reputation with musicians, recording artists and studio engineers.

Subsequently the AE1 won the British Hi-Fi Award for Best Speaker in 1991 and 1992, and acclaim within the hi-fi press grew world-wide.

Unrivalled in its class the AE1 is renowned for superb bass, speed and dynamics.

The **AE1 Series II** retains these qualities and provides greater clarity, transparency and harmonic timbre, coupled with a larger stereo sound stage and increased sensitivity.

Critical matching of the voice coil and metal-cone have improved the mid-range, allowing for a much simpler, short path crossover network achieving gentle first order acoustic slopes and a seamless blend between the drivers.

The crossover features upgrades to the internal wiring and Industrial grade encapsulation is also applied to the total crossover assembly eliminating resonance, microphony and increasing power handling.



SONY

SUPER AUDIO CD

SACD is a superior performance format, developed by Philips and Sony, the original inventors of the Compact Disc.

New Dual Layer SACD Discs will facilitate a seamless transition to the benefits of the new format, although SACD is fully compatible with existing CD software.

The very latest processing technology used in SACD will allow recorded music to be reproduced at a much higher level.

Super Audio CD Players are available through all Sevenoaks Sound & Vision Outlets.



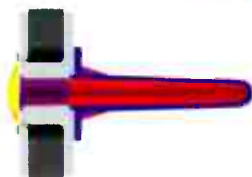


CDM™NT Series

The CDM™NT series from B&W combines the unbeatable sound purity of their highly acclaimed Nautilus 800 Series and the classic looks of their predecessors, the CDM SE. Complete in both looks and sound quality, this is one of B&W's finest loudspeaker ranges to date. The CDM™NT Series is available in a choice of beautifully finished real wood veneers.

CDM™NT Selection

CDM™1NT	£749.95
CDM™7NT	£1249.95
CDM™9NT	£1799.95
CDM™CNT Centre	£399.95
CDM™SNT Surround	£749.95



Nautilus Tapered Tubes
The most effective way of absorbing unwanted sound from the back of the drive unit.



Kevlar™ Cones The same properties that make Kevlar the right material for bulletproof vests also benefit the design of wide bandwidth drivers.



Flowport™ Technology
Golf ball aerodynamics theory points the way to lower distortion reflex ports.



LINN
the only sound™

Founded in 1972, independent precision-engineering company, Linn Products Limited, specialise in top performance sound reproduction.

Linn's first product was the revolutionary Linn Sondek LP12 Turntable. 25 years later it is still, for many, the reference Turntable. Today, Linn's hi-fi range includes over 50 products including CD Players, Tuners, Amplifiers and Loudspeakers.



Classik CD Receiver £999.95

The **Classik** 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.

The Classik combines an extensive and flexible control system, high quality CD, Tuner, and powerful Amplifier, capable of driving any Loudspeakers, in a single, compact package and is available in a choice of colours.



Genki CD Player £994.95

The **Genki** is a versatile, high performance CD Player combining value and multi-zone flexibility. With both fixed and variable outputs, the Genki can be connected to a Pre Amplifier in the conventional way or, using its local volume control, connected directly to a Power Amplifier. **Features include:** HDCD playback capability, Delta-Sigma digital-analogue conversion, carefully implemented low-noise circuitry to deliver pitch accurate sound, surface mount electronics for optimum signal routing and layout and Linn proprietary Brilliant silent power supply technology.

Pekin AM/FM Tuner £544.95

Integrating the knowledge gained from developing other Linn Tuners such as the Kremlin, the Kudos and most recently the Classik, the **Pekin**



AM/FM Tuner takes it one step further, to produce a powerful and truly musical performance to the unique standards that you expect from Linn.

Features include: 80 memory pre-sets, upgradeable software, fully screened low-noise circuitry, high overload margin and high sensitivity, low noise switchmode power supply and two audio outputs.

Linn Selection

Ikemi CD Player	£1949.95
Majik Integrated Amplifier	£694.95
LK85 Power Amplifier	£494.95
LK140 Power Amplifier	£749.95
Katan Speakers	£634.95
Ninka Speakers	£894.95
Kolektor Pre Amplifier	£494.95
Wakonda Pre Amplifier	£794.95



more entertaining



MUSICAL FIDELITY

Musical Fidelity's A-Series is a ground-breaking range of CD Players, Pre-Power and Integrated Amplifiers. The whole series has received enormous acclaim and has won many hi-fi awards worldwide.

X-Ray CD Player	£799.95
X-A2 Integrated Amplifier	£499.95
A3 Pre Amplifier	£999.95
A3 Power Amplifier	£999.95
A300 Integrated Amplifier	£1399.95
A3 Tuner	£599.95
NuVista M3 Integrated Valve Amplifier	£2974.95



A3 CD Player **£799.95**
A3 Integrated Amplifier **£849.95**



MONITOR AUDIO

Gold Reference Series

Monitor Audio has been designing and manufacturing high quality British Loudspeakers since 1972. In the mid-eighties, the R852MD was launched utilising Monitor Audio's unique C-CAM™ Metal Dome Tweeter. It sounded significantly smoother and more musical than its rivals and formed the basis for a whole new generation of Monitor Audio Loudspeakers. The company has been at the forefront of Loudspeaker technology ever since.

The new *Gold Reference* Series introduces advanced Drive Unit technology and the highest standards of engineering currently available. Each cabinet is hand crafted from 22mm thick MDF, using mirror matched veneers. Multiple internal bracing is positioned at critical resonance nodes to eliminate flexing and audible cabinet artifacts.



ARCAM

Arcam's approach to hi-fi has always been to provide the best combination of performance and price in the hi-fi separates market. The FMJ series not only continues this tradition but also evolves and extends it.

It quickly became apparent to Arcam's design team that the significant performance improvements gained from using more advanced chassis and casing materials and a solid metal front panel, could be taken further by revisiting the mechanical design of the units.

All FMJ products have finely textured, 8mm thick, aluminium machined front panels. These panels are then "sealed" by baking them in industrial ovens to ensure the durability of their high quality finish. Even the control knob on the A22 Amplifier is turned from solid aluminium before being given the same finishing treatment.

The **CD23** benefits from a second power supply transformer. This, like the power supply transformers used in nearly all Arcam amplifiers, is a toroidal transformer. Whilst being expensive compared to the alternatives, toroids are known to dramatically improve the audio performance of many hi-fi products. In this product, both transformers are custom made for Arcam and are used to supply the analogue and digital circuits separately.

Please Note: Some products may not be available at all outlets. Advertisement valid until at least 6th June 2001. E&OE.





who are **sevenoaks?**

Founded as Sevenoaks Hi-Fi in the summer of 1972, the original shop, in the market town of Sevenoaks, Kent, quickly gained a reputation for offering a wide range of products at competitive prices, and providing excellent service.

Exciting new technologies like compact disc, meant that throughout the 1980's there was considerable interest in hi-fi and Sevenoaks were able to grow. By 1990, the company was established as one of the leading independent hi-fi specialists in the country.

More stores were opened and a number of the original shops were relocated. In 1995 the important decision was made to change the name to Sevenoaks Sound & Vision, reflecting the wide appeal of new audio visual products.

After twenty-eight years of trading, the company has more than forty outlets nationwide, and is for many of the UK's leading manufacturers of electronics and loudspeakers, their largest and most successful retailer.

solutions

solutions



DVD Video is a great way of enjoying movies at home



The people at Sevenoaks appreciate that customers have a choice. This appreciation has meant that over the years Sevenoaks have had to adapt.

As new products and technologies have arrived, the staff have been trained to ensure that they can explain the issues, simply and informatively.

This orientation to customer service remains, and the implementation of a company charter is one example of this commitment.

By staying true to the original ideals of offering a wide range of the latest products, at competitive prices, and providing superb service in pleasant surroundings, Sevenoaks are able to listen, recommend, demonstrate and supply the products that best suit the needs of their many customers.

As the world becomes a more complex place and people search for entertainment and relaxation, Sevenoaks Sound & Vision believe that whatever the requirement, they have the solution.

brochure

available in all outlets

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- Oxford** 41 St Clements Street **01865 241773**
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linn products

Founded in 1972, Linn Products are synonymous with quality sound reproduction. Linn's first product was the revolutionary Sondek LP12 Turntable. A generation later it is still the turntable by which all others are judged.

An ambitious expansion programme enabled Linn to meticulously develop other products, including solid-state, pitch-accurate amplification and hand-made loudspeakers. Today, their portfolio includes over fifty products, which are sold in thirty countries, worldwide.

Linn pursue the very best and most accurate sound quality through uncompromising and innovative design and precision engineering. Making products upgradeable whenever possible ensures their customers can benefit from the latest advances in technology.



With their Knekt system which was launched in 1994, Linn are also leaders in multi channel and multi room hi-fi. This advanced sound distribution and control system aligns performance and ease of operation.

In 1995, Linn entered the new digital multi channel market with the superb AV51 home cinema system. Specialist amplification and a choice of discreet, attractive and versatile loudspeakers integrate into most environments, creating a totally involving cinema experience.

Linn also own their own record label, Linn Records, recording and producing a wide variety of musical styles. Artists include the internationally acclaimed Carol Kidd, Martin Taylor, Claire Martin and Nigel North. The engineers in the sound booth pay critical attention, ensuring that reproduction is of the highest standard.

installation centres

With the pace of life and demands of work increasingly prying into our leisure time, being able to relax while enjoying music at home is a priority for many people.



By using a number of techniques, the hi-fi system, once confined to a single room, can be liberated to give musical pleasure all around the house. Hence the term 'multi room'. The degree of liberation can extend to every room in the house or even outside into the garden, although simple solutions, providing music in two or three of the most frequently inhabited rooms, are readily available.

Areas can be activated or deactivated when required, and the source being replayed can vary, along with the volume, in each of the different rooms. The possibilities with 'multi room' are endless.

The outlets in Bristol, Edinburgh, Manchester and Sevenoaks have been appointed as Installation Centres, because of their level of expertise in multi room solutions, system integration and remote programming.

Each Installation Centre is able to provide a complete service, including the manufacture and supply of 'bespoke' furniture, designed to house all of the components, whilst complementing the decor of the room into which it is placed.

David Price profiles one of Britain's most important hi-fi manufacturers, Linn Products, and speaks to its managing director, Ivor Tiefenbrun.

ON THE

R C O R D



The ultimate Linn Product is arguably its Waterfoot factory. Designed by Richard Rogers, it's located on a 20-acre site on the south side of Glasgow

► Editor Pope and yours truly are in the plush surrounds of Glasgow's Malmaison hotel restaurant, sitting waiting with Linn's PR supremo Brian Morris. In scurries his boss, Ivor Tiefenbrun MBE and quietly exclaims in his thick Glaswegian accent, "Sorry for being late boys, ah've been really busy, and ah'm really knackered!"

The great man duly grabs himself a chair, interrogates the waiter about the menu, and then proceeds to not stop talking for the next four and a half hours. Any fears I had about not getting his thoughts on everything from Japanese 'just in time' production techniques to stopping smoking are fast dispelled. The man is a human dynamo! Today, we've visited Linn's main factory at Floors Road, Waterfoot, and seen the old Castlemilk factory in its original unspoiled glory. We've had a chance to wander around, chat to any number of Linn Products' two hundred plus employees, meet the guy who hand-builds the CD12 and the lady who assembles the Ekos,

hang around in the canteen and hear some good music.

It's been a busy day but SP and I still feel extremely relaxed. Everyone we spoke to was jovial and calm yet very 'on message' and focused. The general mood is a good one, and there's obviously a tremendous pride being taken in the work. When I tell Ivor this, he nods sagely. To outside observers such as Simon and I, there's an obvious sense of family at Linn, with IT very much playing the patrician role. Although not the most physically imposing of characters, his combination of razor sharp mind, earthy Glaswegian wit, affability and charm make him stand out in any crowd. While many English 'captains of industry' think strictly in terms of the success (or otherwise) of their companies, he sees himself very much as someone in a community of people with responsibilities to them.

"I am a striver and I am always trying to improve things, and so I tend to focus on our shortcomings rather than our successes or achievements. Most of the people at

Linn are pretty much like me - although perhaps not quite as extreme. I am very proud of the personal achievements of people in our company. In Linn we focus on our improvement processes, and personal development is the thing that gives us the most satisfaction and the most pride. But pride is not a word that describes Linn because as a manufacturer, we are conscious that we can never be perfect and that we have to strive continuously to maintain, let alone improve our quality, so modesty comes with the territory and is more in keeping with our national character!"

Family is a theme IT keeps coming back to. He loves talking about the (redoubtable) achievements of his children, his wife Evelyn and the importance of the education his father gave him. Indeed, his dad played a key role in his love for audio from a very early age. "I first became interested in audio as a youngster after my father assembled our family home's first audio system. It was built by a Scottish engineer called James

Kerr who previously worked for Decca. He founded a retail outlet in Glasgow and built his own pre and power amplifiers, loudspeakers and so on. Jim Kerr then went on to be part of the Audio Design Group and to work as a consultant in the recording industry in many different capacities including the development of professional tape recorders and so on. In fact my late father made quiet running bearings for his original prototype tape recorders."

This system that his father bought proved the base from which young Ivor's audio interests grew. "The turntable was mounted on a strong motor board inside a very substantial cabinet and all the electronics were similarly housed. The loudspeakers were pretty substantial and used a Goodmans 12" bass unit and Decca Kelly ribbons. The sound was pretty accurate and seductively enjoyable".

Hi-fi's transition from a specialist hobbyist pursuit in the early 1960s to the status of mass market consumer durable by the early 1970s was a key reason for him going into the business. As he saw it, the high standards of mechanical engineering seen in hobbyist systems were disappearing as hi-fi became ever more popular. "By the time I came on to the hi-fi scene, separates ruled the roost. Turntables were exposed and subject to acoustic feedback and the market had started to fill with budget low cost electronics from the Far East. Price pressures, mass production and loss of involvement by specialist retailers, combined with the limitations of early transistor designs, meant that hi-fi for the many sounded worse than the previous generation's hi-fi for the few."

It was this that caused IT to form Linn Products in 1972. Using personal experience of working at his father's company, Castle Precision Engineering, he was able to bring a rigour to quality hi-fi manufacturing that he felt was lacking at the time. The story of the LP12's introduction is now part of hi-fi folklore. An unassuming belt driven turntable with a Thorens-like suspended subchassis arrangement, he claimed it sounded "simply better" thanks to superior engineering and build, rather than black magic as some seventies hi-fi journalists believed!

He duly launched an aggressive marketing campaign which changed the face of the UK hi-fi scene for good. IT's forceful personality was undoubtedly a great help in getting his views out to hi-fi buyers, but was not - as some have suggested - the secret of his success. Rather, his philosophy about the sanctity of the source proved decisive. Whereas accepted 1970s industry wisdom had it that the loudspeakers were the most important part of the system chain, Linn argued the opposite, quoting a favourite computer industry maxim, "Garbage In, Garbage Out". He was right, of course, and by the end of the decade people were for the first time building systems around the best source available - which at the time just happened to be the Linn LP12!

Determined not to be regarded as a one product company, Linn quickly started work on a range of hi-fi separates, "I was a professional, not only a hobbyist, and my interest was in fine music reproduction - not simply LPs or record players. From the beginning I wanted Linn to be a full range manufacturer and I launched the Isobarik loudspeakers within a year of the LP12 launch. Over the next ten or fifteen years we addressed new formats of stereo radio and CD, made our own pre amplifiers and power amplifiers and of course went on to introduce Knekt multi room and home theatre system once Dolby Digital made this rewarding for music lovers".

More than just a brand, Linn has come to embody a particular way of listening to music. Back in the seventies, IT spent much time and effort demonstrating to press and public alike why and how the LP12 was better than its rivals. Instead of accepting the sole goal of 'neutrality' as the ultimate arbiter of sound quality, he argued that 'pitch accuracy' was equally important to the successful reproduction of music. To this day, this is the cornerstone of Linn's philosophy.

"All our products exhibit a common character because they are all designed to do what we term 'pitch accurate' sound reproduction. Recovering all the recorded information captured by the medium and reproducing it accurately has always been our goal. That is why at



Automated Guide Vehicles distribute materials to work stations around the factory floor. The AGVs follow cables buried under the floor and are controlled by a central computer



Staff seem relaxed and happy - and it wasn't even Friday afternoon.



The single-station build concept means one person assembles, tests and packs each product. Diametrically opposed to 'Fordist' mass production techniques, Linn says this approach is essential for quality.

Neighbouring Castlemilk is Linn's original factory, and is still used to produce a number of components for Linn Products, including Ekos arm tubes and headshells





The controversial retailing policy remains - it does not sell to discount houses or multiple chains, only expertly trained specialist retailers.

▶▶ Linn we are involved in every step of the process from recording the live artist to its playback in the customer's home. We are able to check, monitor and compare the quality at every stage."

This is contentious stuff, even to this day. No one would argue against it - without doubt, the ability to reproduce the rhythms and dynamics within a piece of music are essential - but IT's critics believe this goal is pursued to the exclusion of other fundamental aspects of a musical performance such as tonal accuracy. I pressed him on this, suggesting that all Linn products are 'voiced' in a very consistent way, which makes them musically involving but tonally rather grey. He wasn't having any of it, vehemently disagreeing that he sets his products up for a particular 'type' of sound.

"Obviously it is very satisfying when people appreciate the consistency of our products. We judge performance by using quality criteria rather than quantitative ones and how we judge and assess the communicative power of music and its accuracy when reproduced by hi-fi equipment is well documented on our website, so anyone who wishes to test our methods should be able to learn what we do from our site and with a little practice judge equipment as consistently and effectively as we can."

What then of the great CD vs. LP debate? IT was a prime mover in denouncing Philips and Sony's contention that Red Book CD was 'perfect' back in the early eighties. And in those dark days of the late eighties when it looked like the vinyl format was done for, he was one of

its most outspoken (and erudite) exponents. Linn did finally bite the bullet with the Karik/Numerik CD player in the early nineties, but this wasn't until he was sure he'd overcome CD's key problems. Now though, he believes the two formats (through Linn's own LP12 and CD12 respectively) are just about equal and the format you choose is governed not by the ultimate sound quality achievable, but by the music available.

"In my home we still use my LP12 and at Linn we continue its development and the developments of components associated with LP sound reproduction. Like many people, I have an irreplaceable collection of LPs and because my interest is in the music rather than the playback equipment, although I am obviously passionate about both, whether I use my LP12, Kremlin tuner or CD12 depends on the source material I wish to access. There is no real quality issue involved. Although the CD12 is seductively convenient to use there is something very satisfying about playing an LP. Perhaps it is just my age, but I am personally also a great fan of the Kremlin tuner which is now being phased out of production. I warmly recommend it as a collector's piece for anyone who wishes to enjoy only the best from FM radio, especially for live broadcasts."

Ivor Tiefenbrun is obviously very proud of the CD12. "(It) is a very special player because it is designed to get the very most out of the current CD format. It means that people can do justice to the recordings captured on CD and enjoy them at a level which is equal to that

promised by newer technologies. In short, the CD12 like the LP12 is built to last and stand the test of time and together with a software collection can develop, expand and be appreciated more and more over its owner's lifetime."

Whether this is true or not potential purchasers can decide - but check out the review on page 26 for our thoughts on the subject. Meanwhile, despite producing the world's most expensive (?) sixteen bit digital disc spinner, IT is very excited about the new developments in audio that are finally reaching the market now.

"I believe that diversity is healthy and that DVD will interest more and more people in quality home entertainment. A percentage of them will be interested in music broadcasts, concerts, opera and so on and so some will then discover that specialists can offer higher fidelity sound for both music and movies. This offers companies like Linn and our customers enormous opportunities for more involving and communicative entertainment experiences in our own homes."

Some hi-fi manufacturers have intimated that the CD12 was an audacious, and perhaps misguided move. Why, it's argued, pin your colours to the 16bit mast when it's the least 'sexy' game in town right now? IT believes

LINN LOVES

Ivor Tiefenbrun's favourite products of yore." The historical music products I appreciate most are the old drum music boxes, the original kind that worked with a pin activated comb and their disc playing successors, which even included jukebox-like changers. In modern times products like the original Sudge Class A amplifiers, the Decca London cartridge and other Decca products stand out for me. Decca engineers, and Blumlein in particular, are the industry giants in modern times following on from Maxwell, Thomson, Fleming and Baird. I suppose the LP12, as my first born product, should and does occupy quite a special place in my affections but it is also associated with a lot of pain and aggro! The Isobarik and the Kremlin both remain very special to me, and right now of course my Nekt system, AV51 03 cinema pre-amp, CD12 and Klimax amplifiers hold me enthralled with music on my Keltiks.



Linn now has its own dedicated store in a plush Glasgow shopping centre . All the gear is on dem, including the CD12 and LP12

Linn was self-evidently right to do the CD12, because it's proved surprisingly popular (especially in Japan) despite its telephone number price tag, and it has put Linn well and truly back on the high-end map.

I suggest to Ivor that just because the CD12 currently 'only' plays 16/44 Compact Discs, it doesn't mean the next version won't do DVD-A or SACD too. For once, the Linn boss is saying nothing. ■ ▲

SANDY SURE

Noel Keywood finds a little bit of sand makes Mission's m73 loudspeakers stand solid and sure.



A bag of silver sand please mate. How much does it weigh?". "About 35 kilograms guv". "I can lift it to the car then" I said, forgetting to multiply by 2.2. He took one look at me and said "Naw, I'll do it". Just as well, 'cos at the other end of my journey I'll swear the bag had become permanently attached to the car's floor; it wouldn't move.

This vital material was about to make its way into Mission's m73 floorstanding loudspeaker. Part of the company's budget m70 Series of loudspeakers, the m73s are the least expensive floorstanders the company makes, priced at just £199.90. A conventional two-way, they use an interesting bonded woven glass composite bass/midrange driver allied to a fibre dome tweeter.

But although the cabinet has plenty of volume, the lower half isn't used. A plastic cap seals a 78mm diameter hole on the rear panel that gives access to this lower chamber.

Initially I was a bit baffled by this because Mission make no mention of it in the instruction manual. Usually, there'd be a recommendation to fill the cavity with silver sand, lead shot or something similar. We were missing a separate info sheet, I found, that shows the speaker lying on its front being filled with 'dry sand'. Importantly the spikes are attached. A couple of logos show weight at 2.5kgs, and a 'no hooks' sign. This is to warn you against using a crane in your lounge to haul them upright.

Making a scientific assessment of volume by sliding my hand into the hole I knew that 2.5kgs of sand would fill so little of the space a crab wouldn't feel at home. I first listened to the m73s without sand, because I try to avoid builders yards on blustery Spring days with rain driving vertically and fork lifts driving horizontally. In the end though I decided I had to try this awkward option because they showed so much potential.

I transferred sand from car to home in a domestic bucket and one bucket three-quarters filled a chamber with what I would estimate to be around 25lbs or 12kgs of sand. I 'phoned Mission about this and they were worried about the practicality of filling a chamber and of adding too much mechanical reactance (energy storage) - mass, hence their 2.5kgs figure. I have no such qualms. Sand is a composite that absorbs energy; try throwing a brick into it. It sticks, it doesn't bounce off! The lower chambers, with thin-ish 15mm walls (I use 19mm or 25mm MDF for loudspeaker cabs) need damping.

Filled whilst in position, the m73s became barely liftable at around 30kgs or so, I'd guess. I spiked them and toed them in just slightly by one or two degrees after experiment.

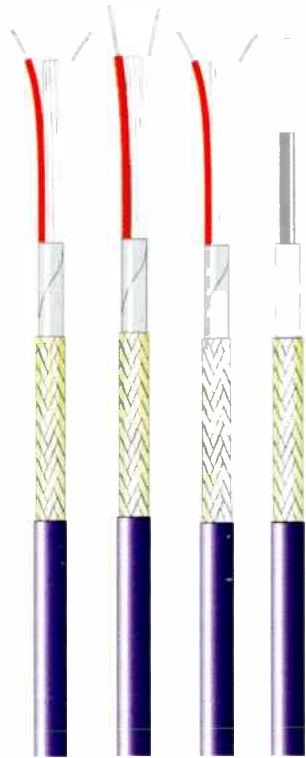
Running in on radio Mission's loudspeakers seemed silky smooth, quite shiny clear - and I hope that means to you what it does to me - and well detailed. The opening sequence of Santana's Put Your Lights

On brought home to me just how intensely detailed these loudspeakers are, strummed guitar chords sounding richly complex and vibrant. There's a sense of ease in their sound that comes from avoiding a peaky frequency response. It's quite obvious the M73's woven glass fibre cones do an exceptional job in presenting vividly detailed percussion, the voice of Everlast placed tidily alongside Santana, both in the plane of the loudspeakers. Without sand there was a little warmth or box return somewhere in the midband, just a hint of character to add a little thrum, but it was so minimal as to be difficult to identify with any certainty in Rock like this.

Listening to Beethoven's 'Moonlight' sonata I heard all the

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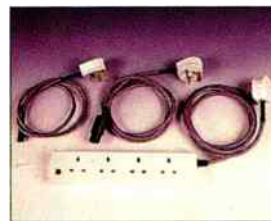
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same characteristics, but rearranged in importance. There was body and richness to the sound of the piano, conveyed with an easy smoothness that was impressive by today's standards. However, I became more aware that the piano seemed to be coming from within the cabinet rather than outside it. The small element of boxiness I detected with Santana became more readily identifiable and a little more obvious with solo piano. This is one reason I decided the m73s deserved sand filling.



They sounded superb, but slight boxiness was a limitation. With sand the improvement was great. Not only did the boxiness disappear but the extra cabinet damping and weight made the whole bass end tighten up and become more tuneful. The piano seemingly moved out the speaker cabinet and into the room. I became aware of the piano strings resonating and the way the instrument's body worked to enhance them. The whole lower midrange and bass end were resolved into a clear and well defined picture through the addition of the sand; it was a startling reminder to me of just what effect mass and damping can have, even though I often listen to our own KLS9s whose 25mm braced cabinets psycho-acoustically 'throw' an image well because their resonant output is so low there's little correlated colouration signal to link music to cabinet.

The sheer smoothness of the m73s and their ability to paint a richly detailed panorama lent impressive weight and scale to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra performing Scheherazade. Horns

were rich and fruity, violins wonderfully smooth yet full of fine, vibrant detail. It was only the timpani that tended to get a little bogged down within the cabinet when not sand filled, although there was good weight behind the bass.

It was modern Rock with heavily accentuated bass that gave the m73s most to think about when untreated. Timing wise they were a little

imprecise, sounding none too tightly damped. Strong walking bass lines from Angelique Kidjo's *Fifa* were clean enough but lacked real push, and the speakers also lacked punch with UB40's version of *Cherry Oh Baby*. Ramping up the bass by playing something like Toni Braxton's heavily eq'd "He wasn't man enough" showed the speakers were none too happy about reproducing heavy kick drum without the stabilising influence of sand, although the more fluid and less taxing bass line behind Spanish Guitar flowed nicely. When sand filled, the picture changed quite dramatically; kick drum became very forceful.

It was Sly and Robbie's *Make a Move* that showed the m73s have explosive dynamics provided they are anchored really firmly with sand and splks.

My attention was really taken by the astonishing levels of detail and insight provided by the M73's drivers, especially the glass fibre bass/mid, which pushed Toni Braxton's vocals out with almost alarming reality. In this respect these 'speakers move the game ahead, even though they are

basically a budget design. Mission have got a nice drive unit here and its strengths are clearly apparent. The tweeter is so well integrated it more or less passes unnoticed.

The m73s offer real detail. They provide a richer picture than most loudspeakers, one that's also convincingly smooth and natural. There's no artificiality here, but there is a great insight into performance.

Mission's leaflet shows you how to add sand to their m73. The advised 2.5kg weight limit amounts to very little sand. Filling the space available, will give you a very heavy, but very stable loudspeaker. Our experience showed bass quality and imaging were greatly improved.

These are great loudspeakers for both Rock and Classical. They're fast and forceful with Rock, but equally they reveal timbral colour and range in wind and string instruments, bringing a lovely sense of richness to classical works.

The cabinets need spiking in and, ideally, filling with dry sand, or possibly lead shot, to minimise the boxiness that exists. So you have to do a little work to get the most from them, but for £199.90 the final result is completely impressive. Although adding sand may seem like a bit of hassle, it can be seen as a great way of turning a £199.90 product into something possessing a performance worth considerably more, for £4 of sand. Now Mission have to try and get them back. The telephone number for Coles Cranes is... ■ ▲

MISSION m73 £199.90

**Symphonix Ltd
Huntingdon
PE29 6EY
Tel: 01480 451777
www.mission.co.uk**

World Verdict

An exceptionally detailed, smooth and rich sound. Weak bass impact and a little boxiness without sand filling, but spectacular in this area when filled. **Measured Performance see page 111**

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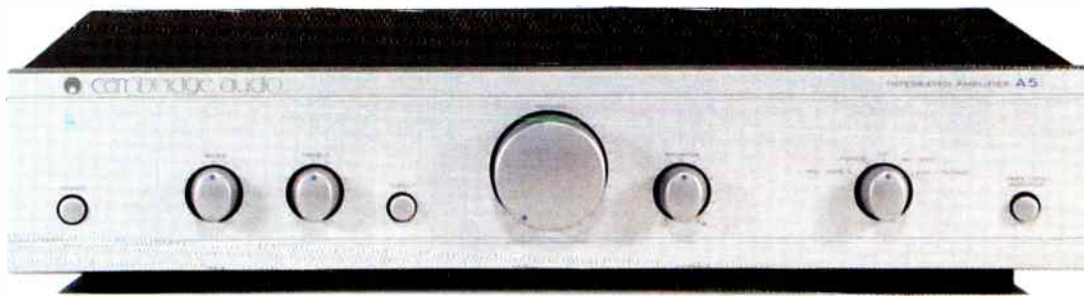
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4 Richer, Poorer



David Price wonders how Cambridge Audio's poverty spec A5 integrated amplifier makes richer sounds?

After countless middling Sonys and Pioneers, here's a cheap transistorised amplifier that actually sounds both musically rewarding and sonically benign. In this respect at least, is not like other budget rivals I know. The A5 is no Cyrus 7/PSX-R but neither is it as conspicuously flawed as the Kenwood KAF-3030R tested in March, or indeed as practically any other budget bit of 'wire with gain'. Oh, and it costs just £120.

Both the casing and fascia are metal, and the whole unit feels far better built than the company's budget stuff of yore. It's surprisingly heavy considering the modest 90x430x300mm dimensions, and really rather well finished too. In this respect it's certainly as good as the aforementioned Kenwood, even though it costs less than half the price. True, you won't mistake it for a Krell, but neither does it look like it will melt in direct sunlight like some of this company's earlier designs.

Inside, you'll find generously specified power supply components, a custom designed, low flux power transformer with high speed reservoir capacitors and discrete diode rectification. Cambridge claims that signal paths have been kept as short as possible and there are close tolerance metal film resistors in selected areas,

and audio grade coupling capacitors used throughout.

Facilities aren't abundant, but you do get a large volume control, defeatable tone controls (which are best left in a state of surrender), a balance control, a six position input selector and tape monitor. Round the back it's all run-of-the-mill RCA phono socketry, with the exception of a preamp output. As NAD's classic 3020 proved, these can be amazingly useful things - it opens up loads of upgrade potential, not to mention biwiring and biamping possibilities.

The A5 sounds superb for the money. No, it isn't going to put Cyrus out of a job, but neither does it sound anywhere near as bad as you'd expect at this low, low price. The Cambridge is a surprisingly accomplished all rounder that simply doesn't let on about its poverty price tag. It's as warm and smooth as cheap transistors allow - put it through a revealing pair of speakers like Mission's 782s and you'll hear a cleanish, open sound with no grain or harshness. Importantly though, it doesn't swing too far the other way. You also get a very bouncy, musical presentation.

The Clash's 'London Calling' showed the Cambridge at its best - there's a strong backbone to the acoustic this amp sets up. I heard a

wide soundstage projected confidently from the speakers, complete with a solid and supple bass, plenty of midrange detail and a sweet if slightly curtailed treble. Tonally refined - if a little grey in absolute terms - the A5 didn't have me running to turn the volume down as with most other budget amps. Instead, I found myself cranking it up and enjoying myself.

Low frequencies were tight, supple and surprisingly grippy for an amp of its modest origins - unlike most of its price rivals, the Cambridge hung on tenaciously to the bassline from The Whispers 'And the Beat Goes On'. At the same time there was an impressively even handed and spacious midband and very little grain to vocals. Hi-hats sounded rather hi-fi - clean but not terribly atmospheric.

The Cambridge A5 sounds like its creators actually listened to music while designing it. It's far more emotionally uplifting than your average 'universal Japanese amplifier'. This is a classic piece of hi-fi at a silly price. It's a cracking product, and its low cost will let you save money on a better, more expensive source. Thoroughly recommended! ■ ▲

CAMBRIDGE A5 £119.95
www.richersounds.com

World Verdict

Superb sound per pound makes it the class of the budget field. A great starter amplifier and sure to become a big seller.

Measured Performance see page 111

Up 2 Scratch

Want to run a turntable? Noel Keywood looks at modern budget cartridges, including those designed for the DJ.

Now that vinyl is coming back into fashion and a good selection of modern bands are being released onto LP as well as to CD it makes sense to think of getting a turntable. LPs have an easier, smoother sound than CD; 12in singles stayed popular because they've got real bass kick.

The sort of sound quality you'll get depends much upon the cartridge you use and here there are balances and trade-offs to consider. The purpose of this round up of inexpensive cartridges is to explain what the market offers and how to narrow your choice according to your requirements and your pocket. This will help you get a cartridge that gives a good sound and doesn't chew your new records, or your old ones for that matter.

Today's market for vinyl has changed. It's the demand for Dance and club music that's the driving force keeping sales alive, whilst introducing a new generation to an old medium, ironically on the basis of sound quality.



Playing vinyl for club work, including back-cueing (scratching) has been catered for enthusiastically by Stanton of the USA and Ortofon of Denmark. Both were producing pickup cartridges long before the Dance craze arrived, but they've adapted well with ranges of specialised cartridges. These are rugged, have high output and are easy to cue, all seen as prime requirements for Dance use.

The original back-cue cartridge is Stanton's 500AL-II (£37.50), designed for radio station work back when LPs provided music on-air. It is still in Stanton's range. I've measured, used it - and was impressed. Tracking at 2-5gms it's a good choice today for anyone wanting a very robust unit that tracks well and gives a good sound.

An example of a cartridge designed specifically for disco work is Stanton's personalised Trackmaster II RS, Roger Sanchez edition. Claimed to have 'kickin' bass, the dude and his cartridge are pictured here (above right). This is a combined cartridge/headshell unit with no less than 7mV output - very high by normal standards. It tracks between 2-5gms, higher than normal



hi-fi cartridges.

Ortofon also have a range of DJ cartridges. One is thoughtfully designed and named to keep hi-fi buffs at a safe distance and it's a good example of how Dance cartridges differ from hi-fi types. Called the OM Scratch, it's a violent shade of pink. If this isn't enough to keep the sane away a tracking force range of 3-5gms, with a massive 4gms recommended, should do the trick. It would take a crane to cue this thing up. To handle the downforce the needle is spherical.

What the club world wants is largely at odds with what is thought to be sensible for hi-fi use. Before Dance arrived, downforces of 4gms or so were last seen in the 1960s. Monster weights like this might keep the needle in the groove on a turntable under assault in a club but



it isn't going to do anything for groove life.

Low down-force is necessary to minimise groove wear. In practice it is best to use no more than 2.2gms downforce, but no less than about 1.25gms either. It's not the force itself that is important so much as tip pressure (force per unit area). Beyond a certain pressure, known as the plastic limit, permanent surface deformation of an LP occurs. Modern long-contact tips distribute a downforce of 1.5-1.8gms well, to give low tip pressure and groove wear, plus secure tracking. I have, in the past, run delicate ADCs and Empires at 1gm or so and don't recommend it.

The need for ruggedness in a DJ cartridge also compromises high frequency tracking ability and frequency response. So be aware of what you are getting with these cartridges. Their specs are way different to those of the average hi-fi cartridge.

If you are starting out there are a few important points to bear in mind. Firstly, ruggedness is at odds with good tracking performance, and if a



cartridge doesn't track properly it will damage a record permanently. So don't buy a cheap, rugged design thinking it will do. Your LPs will soon start to sound distorted on vocal peaks.

My advice is to spend around £30 minimum. Ortofon seem to worry more about tracking than most, their OM10 (£32.50) being a fine choice for first timers. It tracks at 1.5gms and has quite a 'soft' sound. I am not especially keen on

budget Shures or Goldrings, but Audio Technica's AT-120 (£39.95) which tracks at around 1.5gms, does work well, sounding sharper and faster than the Ortofon.

Above this price level Goldrings start to be good value, their 1012GX at £90 giving a muscular sound when mounted in a Rega arm. Audio Technica have their smoother sounding AT-440 (£89.95) with micoline tip. Ortofon offer the OM20 at £75.00 and the OM-30 at £100.00, both of which offer a lovely smooth sound.

Alternatively, take a look at Shure's M94E (£55.00) with SideGuard protection or, better still, their M97XE (£100.00) with viscous damped stabiliser and SideGuard. The latter model offers a high standard of performance with good robustness. It is detailed and smooth and I know from experience Shure's guard system does a good job of stabilising performance and providing a useful measure of protection.

Don't forget to ask about the replacement stylus price of any cartridge you may be interested in if it's life could be short!

If you can use a turntable carefully, high performance cartridges costing more than £100 become a possibility. Here things start to get interesting, as pickup cartridges go. This article is really about getting your bearings as a beginner to vinyl and I suspect most beginners would put £100 as a top limit. At not too much more though comes Goldring's top 1042 model, price £140. This is a cartridge I use out of choice for its lovely balance of properties, including superb resolution of high frequencies due to fine tip geometry, a flat frequency response that gives even tonal balance, good dynamic properties and general unfussiness.

Compare this to the £320 asked by Shure for their top ranker, the V15 VxMR and you can see the Goldring is good value. However, Shure's predecessor, the V15 VMR was one of the most impressive

moving magnet cartridges I have ever heard, with a lightning fast Decca-like sound quite unlike the V15s of old, the big difference being its Boron cantilever.

Newcomers may quake at the thought of destroying the stylus of an expensive cartridge but the Shure's is well protected by a damped stabiliser.

Cartridges like the Goldring, Shure and top Stantons such as the 681EEE MkII (£169.95) and 881 MkII (£179.95) are good choices for beginners with a bit of money and confidence. At this level you'll find LP giving CD a run for its money.

A moving magnet cartridge runs straight into a normal phono stage, unlike a specialised moving coil type, and it has a



user-replaceable stylus. The top moving magnet models I've mentioned above offer very serious sound quality, yet they'll work happily in a turntable like a Rega P3 or Project Debut. This is how to get the most from LP at minimum cost. Armed with a decent turntable beginners can start out with a £30 budget cartridge and slowly upgrade without having to change anything else. This is an inexpensive but sensible way to start playing vinyl. ■ ▲

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www.audio-technica.com

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LETTER OF THE MONTH

HEARING BY NUMBERS?

I have just been reading David Price's review of the Marantz SA 1 SACD player with interest. David asserts in his final paragraph that we have "analogue ears" Could someone explain to me how our hearing is analogue?
Anon

My reasoning goes like this: sound travels as analogue longitudinal pressure waves, and our ears detect and analyse the frequency and amplitude of them. With the briefest reference back to my old Biology text books, you can break this down to three stages:

[1] Sound waves are detected by the outer ear and directed to the eardrum, which vibrates. Attached to the eardrum are three small bones (ossicles) which magnify and transfer the vibrations across the middle ear to a membrane on the inner ear. This membrane is part of the cochlea, a fluid-filled structure shaped like a snail shell. Within the cochlea is a

fibrous basilar membrane that runs along its length. The fibres vary in length and tension and have attached to them numerous sensory hair cells.

[2] As vibrations pass through the fluid of the cochlea some of the fibres move parts of the basilar membrane. This in turn causes the hair cells to distort and generate impulses that are conducted to the brain by the auditory nerve. Low frequency vibrations are detected nearer the pointed end of the cochlea while the higher frequencies stimulate the wider end. This allows the brain to discriminate pitch.

[3] The rate at which a sensory cell repeats its generation of an impulse determines the volume or loudness of a sound - higher rates of repetition mean louder sounds. Fibres in different areas within the cochlea can vibrate simultaneously so harmonics can be detected. The brain can identify the tonal quality of a particular sound by the loudness and variety of its harmonics. Receptor cells in the inner ear, like all sensory cells, function in an 'all or nothing' way so I guess you could call

them analogue-to-digital converters.

DP ■



Ear, is this analogue or what?

II>POWER PROBS

I have recently moved from NZ to the US and have found that the mains supply voltage is different. I own a Rega Planet CD player and a Rega Brio amp with Mission 751 bookshelf speakers and am terrified of plugging this 240V system into the 110V supply here. Somebody also mentioned that the US uses a different 'cycle' as well. What will

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happen if anything? Can I overcome this obstacle, if so how? Or do I now own a rather expensive ornament? My first instinct was to contact the manufacturer but I have been unable to locate Rega anywhere through the net, even my manual doesn't have it! Please advise, missing my stereo!

Yours,
Jason M.
MacDonaldjmacnz@yahoo.com

Fear not, because many Rega customers have had their products converted to US spec and it's quite straightforward to do. Steve Lauerman is the guy you need to talk to. The contact details are: Lauerman Audio Import, 103 West Fifth Avenue Knoxville TN 37915 USA tel: 001 865 521 6464 fax: 001 865 521 9494 mobile: 001 865 806 2297 email: realhifi@regausa.com

DP ■

▶▶ RDA LATEST

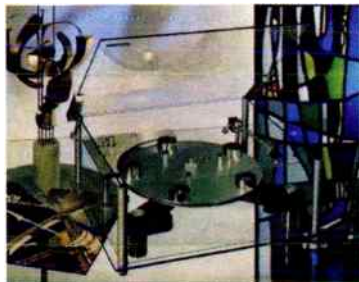
I was thrilled to read of the new advancement in audio playback, namely the RDA turntable in your April edition. Audio fans left wondering what had happened to Chris Frankland will be glad to see that he has finally come to terms with digital audio, and is fighting back. I'm sure a similar system was demonstrated a couple of years ago, using a CD that had been cut as a vinyl recording. However I'm sure these comparisons will be explained in the next edition of 'The Flat Response'. However, there was another turntable advancement in the same issue that was overlooked - a redesigned turntable that has its tonearm on the opposite side of the platter! This allows the tonearm to work in compression against the recording, giving greater detail retrieval. Regards,

Shawn Mullins.

The left-handed tonearm is a classic hi-fi mag error. Once upon a time it used to happen when a transparency was scanned the wrong way around. This time we received a reversed file from another magazine - an unfortunate occurrence. **NK ■**

We've scooped a sneak pic of the forthcoming Michell RDA player and I think you'll agree that in the words of Austin Powers, it's groovy, baby!

DP ■



Groovy baby - Michell's skeletal vinyl information retrieval mechanism!

▶▶ CALMING INFLUENCE

Dear Hi-Fi World,
 My current system consists of a Musical Fidelity A3 CD player, an Ion Obelisk 200 amplifier and Mission 782 loudspeakers. The problem is this: most of the music I play is exciting and involving across a great deal of different styles ie: funk, jazz, classical and other laid back types. It's when I get to rock and indie music that I get problems. I find it quite fatiguing for any great length of time and I feel my amplifier is the source of the problem. Could you suggest a shortlist of amplifiers for me to audition as my shortlist seems to get longer and longer. What I am looking for is an amp that will offer greater control, taking the edge off the top end and tightening up the brass. Any suggestions will be gratefully accepted and acted upon. My budget is £750 and upwards depending on the improvement in sound, lets say up to £1000.

regards
Neil.

It sounds as if you've an aversion (quite rightly) to modern mastering of rock and pop recordings, Neil. These days, whilst mastering, popular music is often monitored through tripe. Whacking up the level and adding oodles of compression during mastering suits it, greatly reducing dynamics. Consequently, listening to the stuff on something that resembles a hi-fi results in a bout of GBH of the lugholes.

Of course, it's not always the case but it's extremely common. In some cases tracks are mixed on a mono 'tranny radio' style monitor.

There are ways of softening the blow and in your case a couple of demos with a few amplifiers may help. Your Musical Fidelity CD player has a revealing and detailed sound, which with some equipment could sound a little 'bright' and the Mission

'speakers, although excellent and a choice of Hi-Fi World as 'reference', are fast and detailed but can sometimes sound a little hard due to the ceramic Keraform drive unit. They are strong and tight in the bass though, so it looks like a change of amplifier is just what the doctor ordered.

You could start by listening to two integrateds priced around £700. One is the Cyrus 7 which, as DP comments on these very pages, is fluid, controlled and fast with an easy going yet involving sound. The other is the Audio Analogue Puccini SE Remote, which I find a good match for the 782s. Whilst perhaps not overall as well balanced as the Cyrus 7, the sound is nevertheless laid back and very musical, bringing the best from all recordings with a lyrical sound and deep sound stage, with excellent imaging and a cracking MM/MC phono stage to boot. Don't rule out the Roksan Caspian integrated either, which at £800 is an accomplished performer with a high-end sound full of insight and detail but without the sterility often associated with such traits. **SP ■**



The Puccini SE could smooth things out.

▶▶ LOGICAL RESTORATION

I was delighted to see your article on the Logic turntable. When I first got mine in 1985, I heard music from LP that was more believable than ever before, rediscovering my record collection over again. The bargain price (£160) seemed great value, even after shelling out £90 for an RB300 arm to partner it. Over the years I've had a great deal of pleasure from the deck, and it has seen a fair amount of abuse, mostly from continually being moved. From room to room and town to town, it has been torn down and reassembled at least ten times, by my own inexperienced hands. However, before our last move, when the springs nearest the arm had just about reached the limit of the adjuster, the electronic power supply burnt out. Up until then, it had got by very nicely on the occasional clean and adjustment, and the odd replacement belt.

An upsampling CD player for £1500?! Amazing sound from the Swedish firm Advantage, whose amplifiers already give high-end performance at real world prices.

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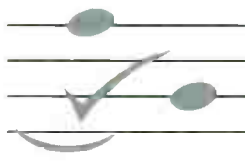
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As my wife and I have a large collection of treasured LPs, I'd love to carry on using the Logic. The helpful guys in the local hi-fi shop suggested that as the motor was a common one, adapting an existing power supply might not be too difficult. I wonder if you could give me any further information that would help in restoring the deck to its former glories? Obviously I'd like to get it spinning again, but am also interested in any suggestions - from spring replacement to a suitable cartridge and arm upgrade - that would get it into peak condition - any thoughts?

**Yours sincerely,
Paul Dabinett
Aylesbury**

Like almost all British built belt drive turntables over the past twenty years - including Linn, Rega, Heybrook and Ariston (but not Michell), the Logic uses a Philips (sometimes called Impex) AC synchronous motor. As a result, you should be able to use a Linn Valhalla board with the Logic - I once got one secondhand from a Linn dealer for around £30 and used it with my Rega with no problems whatsoever. This would improve your Logic's sound considerably, but you'd lose your 45RPM facility because the Valhalla board, famously, lacks such a feature!

There are also several separate outboard power supplies available, such as Heybrook's TPS and the HFN Flutterbuster. You'll find these in the classifieds and they're designed specifically with Impex-aspirated decks in mind, and so would be ideal for your DMI01. Expect to pay between £50-£100 depending on condition. The simplest, best and most expensive solution is Origin Live's DC motor and power supply. This a superior motor to the Impex and would further upgrade the Logic's sound quality. It also has the added benefit that you can buy the motor and PSU 'off the shelf' from Origin Live, without any fiddling around involved. Expect a far cleaner, firmer and more musical sound from your deck.

If these options don't appeal, the cheapest solution is to convert your deck back to its original direct mains operation. You'll need a dropper resistor, phasing capacitor and an on-off switch from RS or Maplin - don't

expect a great sound though. **DP** ■



Logical Progression

▶▶ **WHAT (IS) HI-FI?**

This is a thought that has been playing on my mind for a while. Ultimately the whole point of our hobby is the enjoyment of the reproduction of recorded performance in whatever format that maybe. The problem I have is that this is all highly subjective and individual. For example Itzhak Perlman plays a particular piece on his Strad, say Summertime by Gershwin. At an adhoc meeting with Larry Adler they decide to have a jam playing this same piece, however his Strad is not with him so he is lent a much lesser instrument to play. The result is a jewel of a session that all who hear and see it are enthralled (this actually happened). Is it any less of a performance than the first because he did not have his Strad or is his mastery of the instrument, whatever the instrument, the important fact and the pleasure he brings to his audience?

To equate this with hi-fi, is it enough for a piece of esoteric equipment to reproduce accurately but coldly, or to fail to pass on the emotional intent? Is it enough that you hear every note perfectly but the human perspective is missing? Is not the point of the exercise, the ease that any component allows the whole system to reproduce this important experience. In terms of the old Linn vs. Pink Triangle argument, the LP12 had questionable accuracy, especially in the lower midband but was highly involving, whereas the Pink had slightly more accurate placement but lacked that essential toe-tapping quality. I consider music a very emotional and evocative subject. Should not our review of the equipment be a measurement of how well they do this rather than just accuracy?

**T Stewart
London**

I could write a treatise on this, but I'm sure editor Pope would rather everyone else wrote in with their thoughts instead. **DP** ■

Indeed so... **SP** ■

OK, I'll make an observation (says NK). Many reviewers I have visited, and by inference many normal people (if the two are the same), listen to powerful solid-state amplifiers playing Rock at high volume levels, expecting maximum speed and impact. This, for them, conveys the emotion in music. Rock systems don't favour classical music, where different parameters are important for conveying the essential message well. I am thinking especially of tonal colour and sound stage depth, not "toe tapping". So which item best conveys the emotion depends upon what emotion it is. It remains a delightfully complex subject. **NK** ■



Itzhak Perlman



Perlman and his million Dollar high end system!

▶▶ **ARMED FORCES**

Greetings and thank you for the most varied and enthusiastic magazine on the market! I like your unbiased treatment of a wide(r than some) range of equipment, coverage of DIY kits and second-hand gear, and particularly the computer audio section.

My main point concerns the recent unfortunate demise of my cartridge and my dilemma of what to do next. My equipment is a Systemdek 2X2 turntable/ RB300/ Audio Technica OC9, LFD, Mistral phono stage, Cyrus Straight Line and Heybrook Optimas.

I was considering having Origin Live working their magic on the RB300 with their counter-weight mod and re-wiring. Secondly, while I am arm-less I was wondering whether I might be better

considering a quality moving magnet cartridge in the £200-£300 bracket. My vinyl collection is mainly rock/ blues/ indie/ dance.

Lastly, would the AT-OC9MC be worth anything as a trade-in, despite the loss of tip. Thank you for your assistance, and please continue with the excellent magazine!

Yours

Rod Smith

Flattery will get you everywhere Rod, including straight into the letters pages! Your Systemdek is an excellent mid range turntable, but if you're contemplating spending up to £600 on it (arm mod, rewiring and £300 cartridge), why not upgrade the deck? If I were you I'd go for a Michell GyroDec SE (a nation groans with deja-vu!). Quite simply, your arm and cartridge are only as good as the deck you play them on, and I fear that if you upgraded them you'd just get a better idea of the problems inherent in your Systemdek. The trick is to get the best source you can and then upgrade the ancillaries later. This would entail buying a cheap

starter cartridge at first, like an Audio Technica AT-110E (£25). A Gyro/ RB300/AT-110E would give you a far more powerful and transparent sound than you currently enjoy, with bold imaging, an airy treble and a far tighter and better extended bass - all this despite the cheaper cartridge!

Keep your OC9 for trading in for a decent mid-price MC like a Dynavector DV20X-H, Ortofon MC20 Supreme or even a Lyra Lydian Beta if you can afford it. The exchange value would certainly be nominal, but don't just throw it in the bin. Don't get too depressed about its demise though, as the OC9 was good in its day but is well off the pace against the latest designs - it sounds very cold and mechanical by comparison. When you've got your deck sorted and have bought a new MC, you can then go for the full Origin Live treatment - the counterweight mod is the most important - rewiring won't really benefit you unless you're running a top class MC like a Linn Arkiv. **DP** ■



Rod's system needs a new dek!

▶▶ NO PAIN NO GAIN

My current system is based around a GyroDec/ Regal Ortofon 510II, Sony CDP-791, Arcam Alpha+ and Rotel RL850 speakers. As most of my equipment is getting on a bit I am considering a new CD player along the lines of the Arcam FMJ or the new Sony SCD-555. But I am a bit stuck when it comes to the amplifier. I have auditioned the Naim 5 series CD/amp and Musical Fidelity A3 CD/amp (both using B&W CDM1 NTs). The Naim sounded dense and fatiguing to me, the MF was wonderfully transparent and detailed but a little lacking in bass

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punch. Bearing in mind that I listen to everything from drum & bass and nu-metal to classical and jazz, what amp do you suggest for MF-like transparency and detail but more rhythmic punch? Any suggestions for small room friendly speakers also welcome!

Andy Moore

Your query illustrates many people's thoughts on the subject. However much it has been refined over the past few years, Naim gear is still too 'full on' for many people. Likewise, MF products can be a little less focused, if more insightful. Fortunately, help is at hand in the shape of the Cyrus 7 amplifier at £699.99. I'm using one as my own 'budget reference' right now (with Mission 782s) and it's simply superb. It has just the right combination of speed, grip and warmth and neutrality - it's pitched right down the middle of the Naim/Musical Fidelity divide. Whether I'm playing Goldie or Alphonse Mouzon, it really is a cracking amplifier (especially when powered by a £349.95 PSX-R) which covers all the bases superbly. And if you needed further proof, even Noel 'thermionic' Keywood approves of it!

As for CD players, you should go for the Arcam FMJ CD23 if you don't intend to replace your CDs with SACDs, but try to hear it against the excellent (matching) Cyrus CD7 CD player at £799.99 too. **DP** ■



Seventh heaven!

Marantz CD36 CD player, a Pioneer tape deck and tuner (both of which are quite old but serve me well, as they did with my dad as well) and Eltax Symphony 6.2 speakers I have this setup connected with Audioquest Turquoise interconnects, and vivanco silver cable. I would be very grateful if you could help me upgrading my hi-fi even more, by answering a few questions.

1) I would like to upgrade my CD player in the near future. I would like one that plays CD-RW discs as well as CD R discs I would be willing to pay around the £200 mark. Any suggestions?

2) I am also thinking of buying a second Cambridge Audio A1 mk3 SE amp, and bi-wiring them. Would you recommend this, or would it be better to upgrade to a single, better amp? I thank you in answering these questions.

Andy Rogers

Hi Andy. I think owning a hi-fi at ten beats me by at least five years and also perhaps our resident anorak, DP. As someone that waves the flag for audiophilia in the future, we'll be more than chuffed to help you out!

On the CD player front you could try a number of models. Ones that immediately spring to mind are Marantz's CD5000 at £150, which is an improvement on your current player, or NAD's C520 which is very musical at £170, or Sony's CDP-XB740E at £200 which has sound and build quality beyond its price.

On the amplifier front, it depends how much cash you can cough up. Indeed, bi-amping the two Cambridge amps is a viable option, providing a cleaner sound with better separation, imaging and a tighter bass response. This is the best option if you're limited to around £100 or so.

However, if you can spare, say,

£250, there are many good options around that will take your hi-fi that next notch up. NAD's C320 and pricier C340 are superb little amps, giving slam and power as well as detail and insight.

Another option is the excellent Rotel RA-921 for £140 or the £180 931 MkII, both of which have the added bonus of a good mm phono stage - a great opportunity for an introduction into the wonderful world of vinyl. **SP** ■



Rotel's RA-931 would be a good step up.

▶▶ HIT THE HIGH SEAS!

Hi guys. I am seeking your urgent assistance. I need to provide the music for a holiday aboard a sailing boat. The boat has a standard car hi-fi with CD and tuner. I need to buy a CD recorder which allows me to compile 'mixed' CDs, but haven't the faintest idea which one to buy. My budget is £150 - £300. All I want is to produce good quality recorded CDs for this trip and any others in the future. Are you able to help me?

**Regards
Matt**

Hi Matt. What tracks are you planning to record? 'If I Were a Rich Man', 'Who Wants To Be A Millionaire' or perhaps 'Sailing'? Methinks Marantz's cracking DR6000 which can be picked up cheaper than its RRP of £400 could be the answer to your prayers. It has the ability to play CDs to a high standard and recordings are top hole. Or Pioneer's PD-509 is another good buy, with an RRP of £300. Again if you shop around you'll find it cheaper. **SP** ■

▶▶ EARLY STARTER

I am a 15 year old male, who has been interested in the world of hi-fi separates since I was ten. I started off with a budget system, and have gradually upgraded to what I believe is a good starter system for someone of my age. My setup consists of a Cambridge Audio A1 mk3 SE amp, a Sony MDS JE 530 MiniDisc player, a



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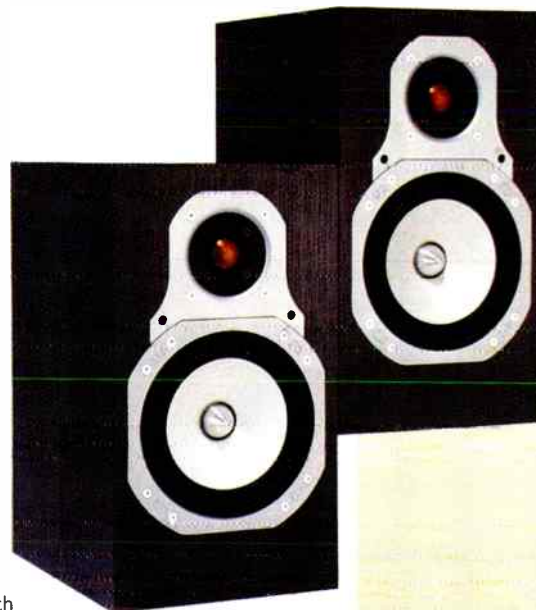


WHAT HI-FI?
June 1999

Michell Engineering Ltd, 2 Theobald St, Borehamwood, Herts, WD6 4SE
Tel: 0208 953 0771 Web: www.michell-engineering

NEW GOLD DREAM

Monitor Audio are replacing their classic Studio range with the Gold Reference series. Simon Pope listens to the baby of the family.



▶ The new boys at the helm of Monitor Audio have decided to start at the top in replacing their 'high end' range of Studio loudspeakers. The successor Gold Reference series encompasses four models - one standmount (the 10, reviewed here), two floorstanders (20 and 60) and a centre model. With the range comes new drive unit technology in both the tweeter and mid/bass drivers.

The mid and bass units use a cast aluminium/magnesium alloy chassis which feature Monitor's own Rigid Surface Technology (RST). The drive unit has a dimpled effect surface that's used to eliminate bending, increase stiffness and lower the mass. Taking care of the high frequencies is a C-CAM tweeter developed for the Gold Reference series which consists of an alloy only 0.03mm thickness weighing a fraction of a gram. It is treated with a ceramic coating and the rear section is loaded with a glass fibre material to provide damping for rear radiated waves.

The Reference Gold 10 is a two-way bass reflex design with a rear firing, fairly large port, one of the RST bass-mid units, resplendent with central silver 'phase plug', partnering one the aforementioned new tweeters. The cabinet is made from 22mm thick MDF at the company's own factory in Essex which is then veneered.

Our samples came finished in black, which with the brilliant white of the mid/bass drive unit and the gold of the tweeter was an attention grabber.

Placement of the 10s I found was important. They fire out some pretty deep bass for their size, so

away from a rear wall is recommended to avoid room boom. The cabinets, as a rap on the side will confirm, have a fairly boxy ring, so there is some cabinet coloration to contend with anyway, although they're well put together and weighty.

Straight from the box I got a cold and hard sound that demanded a good few days hard running in, which got them loosened up and warmer. Using a variety of amplifiers from powerful solid state through to valve gear showed that the 10s favour a rounder sound more akin to tubes than heavyweight and hard sounding solid state; a Cyrus 5 or 7 integrated would be a good choice.

Manic Street Preacher's new 'Know Your Enemy' CD showed the 10s have a very forward and undeniably exciting sound that makes for an involving listen. There's plenty of bass present, thank the Lord, as a limited bandwidth with this kind of forward sound could take your filings out. The drum kit was well detailed and vocals forward, yet clean, and the whole sound had an edge-of-your-seat excitement and drive that was undeniably impressive.

Similarly powerful results were had with the electronic dance music of the Chemical Brothers and Underworld, with pumping fast bass driving the music. High frequencies from this kind of material could sometimes sound a little tinny but it's by no means the worst I've heard from a metal dome tweeter.

Moving on to classical orchestral in the shape of Beethoven's Symphony No.5 conducted by Carlos Kleiber in an unusually excellent mid 70s recording on DG saw the 10s pounding rhythmically into the room

with authority and power. Tonal balance was good but acoustic instruments lacked that last ounce of natural warmth. Violins were sometimes scratchy and brass a little too raspy for my taste but the midrange was open and detailed. The 10s pick up on rhythm, the music having an unmistakably dance like quality to it, with plenty of weight. Imaging was impressive, as was the wide sound stage, but I felt the front-to-back image could have had a bit more depth.

The pipe and slippers brigade had better look elsewhere, as the 10s have a young and thrusting sound for young and thrusting customers. They can pump out beats and bass with the best at the price and although they image well and have commendable detail, they do lack a bit of subtlety.

These speakers need good recordings and a well controlled yet smooth amplifier. Although they're also good with fast and rhythmic classical, if it's rock and dance that fuels your fire the 10s are well worth an audition. ■ ▲

Monitor Audio Reference Gold 10 £799

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World Verdict



A 'speaker for younger audiophiles, perhaps. A big sound for a standmount with plenty of low bass and rhythmic drive. Maybe too forward for some though.

Measured Performance see page 111

NAD 4



Dominic Todd gets really heavy with NAD's latest power house, the C370 integrated amplifier.

There's no two ways about it, NAD's new C370 is a bruiser. 120W per channel (quoted - our measurements show much more) for £450 is pretty good value by anybody's book, but then NAD has always had a fine reputation for offering top wattage per pound with decent sound quality. When noting down the feature count it's easier to say what NAD have left off their amp. For a company that makes such good phono stages it's disappointing not to see one included. Yet, as well as all the possible socketry and features one could hope for, NAD have added a few extra! The unit is switch bridgeable to supply up to 300W in mono, and features two pre-outs. One of which boasts a separate gain control to aid amp matching when bi-amping. With such versatility it is a shame then that, when rivals are looking slicker by the day, the C370 has all the style of a breezeblock. Actually, once the lid is removed the amp takes on a certain industrial beauty. An empty barn this is not. It's a Dr. Who's Tardis of an integrated, full to the heat sinks with high quality components and a whopping power supply.

Rivals? It has to be said that I can't really think of any at this price with such power, although I guess the Marantz PM6010 KI Signature (£400) is something of a benchmark here. The test is whether or not the NAD can overcome its brutish image, by turning in a graceful performance.

Since their early days, NAD have showed their mettle in amplifier design and they continue to do so on an alarmingly regular basis, the C370 being on heck of an example. To reach this conclusion I began by listening to The Divine Comedy's, 'Bad Ambassador'. The C370 proved anything but! It showed no problem what so ever in driving my current hungry, 82db sensitivity, Celestion SL600s. As expected, the volume potential was huge. More surprising was that despite the potent bass response, the NAD never succumbed to wallow or "bloom". All that was apparent was a slight softening at extremes. A high power output, if well engineered, will often be a recipe for a vast soundstage, and the NAD didn't disappoint here. Lead vocals had all the projection, presence and "height", one could which for. Less expected was the

pleasantly refined treble response. If not quite showing the ultimate resolution of the KI Signature, upper responses never stung, and provided decent levels of detail retrieval. The whole performance hung together well, with the excellent timing guaranteeing a grin from most listeners, for the amp's loveable 'bad boy' attitude.

Cold Play's, 'Don't Panic', was also presented in such a way as to demand attention. Vocals were vividly reproduced and fairly leapt from the 'speakers voice coils. There was real drive to the performance helped by the strength of bass and accuracy of timing. In short it was difficult not to become involved in the music, despite a few apparent niggles. Such niggles being the slight softness in bass response and the good yet not exceptional resolution of guitar strings.

A harsh response was not on the table when it came to reproduction of female vocals either. Carol Kidd's, 'You're awful' (I thought that was Dick Emery - ed), provided a startling vocal response yet again. Just as impressive was the way in which the NAD accurately captured the

THE FEINT HEARTED

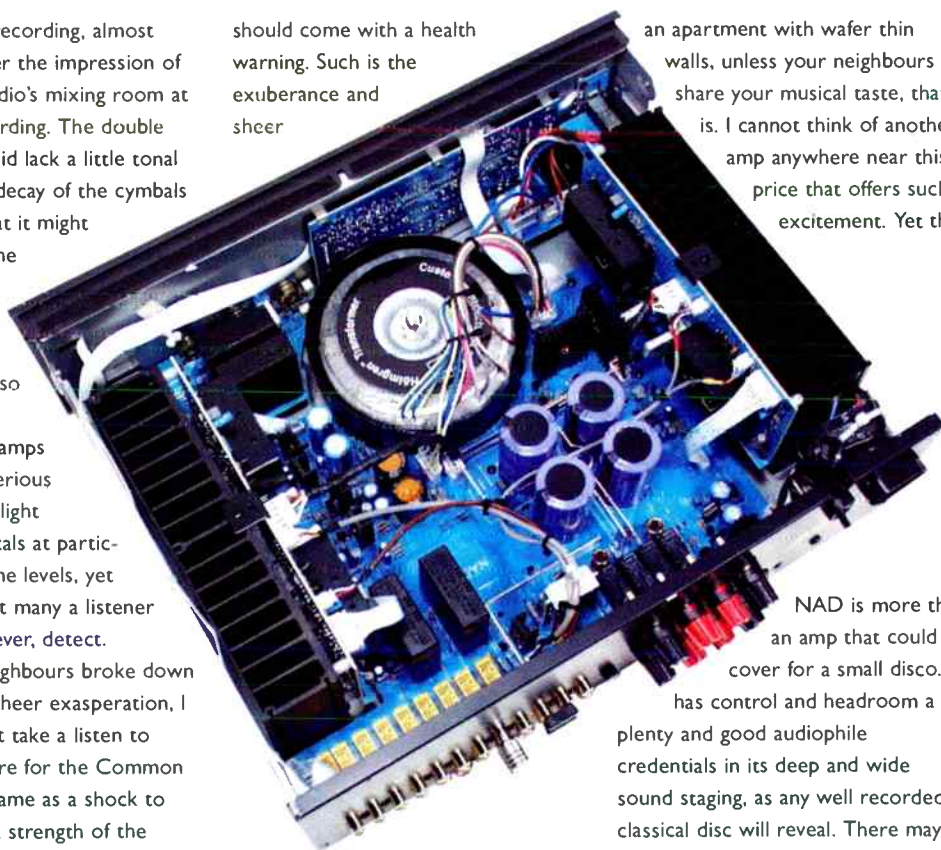
acoustic of the recording, almost giving the listener the impression of sitting in the studio's mixing room at the time of recording. The double bass and piano did lack a little tonal colour, and the decay of the cymbals wasn't quite what it might have been, yet the whole proved so cohesive that this didn't seem to matter so much, especially considering the amps price. A more serious criticism was a slight hardening of vocals at particularly high volume levels, yet this is a trait that many a listener would rarely, if ever, detect.

Before the neighbours broke down the wall out of sheer exasperation, I couldn't help but take a listen to Copland's 'Fanfare for the Common Man'. It hardly came as a shock to find the dynamic strength of the piece made me flinch in my seat! Yet, the excellent decay from the drums, spacious orchestral staging, and smooth brass section, meant there was more to the C370's repertoire than mere cheap thrills.

Amps like the NAD C370 really

should come with a health warning. Such is the exuberance and sheer

an apartment with wafer thin walls, unless your neighbours share your musical taste, that is. I cannot think of another amp anywhere near this price that offers such excitement. Yet the



The C370 is stuffed to the gills with goodies

drive, that it's almost impossible not to keep turning the volume ever higher in order to realise the energy, so it's not ideal for those who live in

NAD is more than an amp that could cover for a small disco. It has control and headroom a plenty and good audiophile credentials in its deep and wide sound staging, as any well recorded classical disc will reveal. There may not be quite the resolution and refinement of the best amps at this price, yet the C370 has nothing to be ashamed of. It's quite capable of providing a relaxed, insightful performance when required. Just watch that volume control! ■ ▲

The back of the NAD is a veritable socket-fest



NADC370 £450

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World Verdict



Insightful and detailed as well as amazingly powerful, the C370 is a bargain buy for those seeking musical thrills.

Measured Performance
see page 111

computer

audio world

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MULTIMEDIA MONITORS

55, 56, 57, 58

No less than six 2 and 4 channel multimedia loudspeakers get a grilling.

SONICBLUE RIO 800 vs. AIWA MM-VX20052, 60,61

The latest and greatest Rio does battle with one of the slickest MP3 players to come out of Japan...

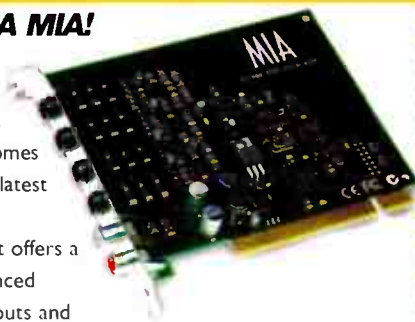
NAPSTER BLOCK THWARTED



Napster lawyers and engineers have been scrambling to fend off legal attacks while building the company's new secure subscription service. At the time of going to press it has been ordered to remove 135,000 songs from its central index, identified by the US music industry as being illegally traded over the popular song-swapping service. The song list comes from BMG, Warner, EMI, Universal and Sony, the 'Big Five' record labels which first sued Napster for copyright infringement in December 1999. For the first time in its controversial two-year history, Napster has begun blocking songs. However, users quickly found ways of getting around the filter by using small variations in song filenames. For example, users have changed Metallica's 'To Live is to Die' to '2 Live is 2 Die'. Some people, it seems, have got rather fond of the idea of free music! www.napster.com

MAMMA MIA!

After Darla, Gina, Mona, and Layla comes Mia, Echo's latest high quality audiocard. It offers a pair of balanced analogue inputs and outputs, a dynamic range of 106dB and a 24-bit/96kHz digital converter. The new £220 card comes with an S/PDIF digital audio interface allowing connection to other digital audio equipment. It is unique in having 'virtual outputs', meaning that, as far as the computer's operating system is concerned, the Mia appears to have eight separate outputs, so more than one application can be played through it at any one time. Syntrillium's superb Cool Edit Pro SE software comes bundled, and drivers include Windows 95/98/ME, with Windows 2000/NT/GSIF and Mac to follow soon. Point your browsers at www.ultimate2tap.com.



CONCERT GRAND

We can thank computer chip manufacturer Intel for moving the MP3 portable market forward a step by introducing the first digital walkie with 128MB of memory as standard. This equates to two hours of reasonable (128kbps) - or one hour of excellent (256kbps) - quality music. The new Intel Pocket Concert Audio Player boasts a USB connection system and built-in FM radio. Optional accessories include rechargeable batteries, car adapter, and docking station. Currently available in the US only for \$300, expect to see it in British shops by the summer. www.intel.com



MP3 OF THE MONTH:

www.goldfrapp.co.uk Here you can download the following top Goldfrapp tunes for free: 'Physical', 'Human', 'Lovely Head', 'Utopia' and 'Pilots'.



NET AUDIO 'STILL NOT THERE'

Digitally downloadable audio manufacturers had high hopes for the year 2000 - they wanted to build consumer demand, strike distribution deals with off-line retailers, complete their technological development programmes and secure their funding. But many are disappointed with their progress last year. In the US, which has had unmetered access for some time, issues of connection speed and low data rates have retarded the growth of streamed audio. Thanks to low fidelity, tied up phone lines and connection difficulties, the net still has a long way to go as a universal content delivery system. Only 5 million American homes currently have broadband connections and although that number is expected to double next year, it still leaves most of the population out of the equation. This is hardly encouraging reading in the world's most technologically advanced society.

FIVE ALIVE

The fifth and best incarnation of Adaptec's EzCD is here. Going under the Roxio brand, it's called Easy CD Creator 5 Platinum and includes a number of useful additions which should consolidate its position at the top of the CD authoring software pile. There's an intuitive new user interface, an MPEG1 and MP3 encoder and MS audio support. You can also cross fade between tracks and enhance the sound quality of MP3s. Price is £44.99 for the full retail version, or £30 to upgrade v4. Check out www.roxio.com

PHONE-Y PLAYER

Nokia and RealNetworks have unveiled the Mobile RealPlayer for the Nokia 9210 Communicator. A wireless version of the world's most popular digital media player, it's designed specifically for communicators using Symbian's EPOC platform, the open operating platform for the new generation of communicators and smart phones. Users can download and play their favourite Internet media, including music, news and sports events, whenever and wherever they want. You can download RealNetworks consumer software from <http://www.real.com>

YOU'RE SURROUNDED!

Where next for multimedia speakers? With more and more designs reaching the market, there's a confusing array of stereo and multi-channel systems to contemplate. David Price looks at the latest.



Creative Labs

CREATIVE LABS CAMBRIDGE SOUNDWORKS DIGITAL

Awesome is the only word to describe these. Although not the best multimedia speakers in the world, they're not that far off and cost a paltry £69, which I for one have seen discounted to under £50. What you get for your money is quite staggering. Compare either the sound quality or the physical build quality to the Sonys tested later on in this review and you'd think the CSWD cost about £150 more.

The satellites are little black cubes just 89x89x89mm in size, which come complete with desktop stands and wall mount sockets (best left alone, really), and the 203x165x203mm subwoofer is big enough to look after itself on the floor. The latter is a sturdy, MDF box finished in a businesslike shade of black and contains one 24W amplifier section for low frequencies, plus a 2x8W stereo feed for the satellites. Best of all is the little coaxial S/PDIF connection on the back, which alludes to the fact that despite its peanuts

price tag, the SoundWorks Digital (as its name suggests) comes with a built in digital to analogue converter. True, it's no DCS Elgar, but you'd be surprised just how good it sounds. Feed the digital out from your computer soundcard, CD or MD portable into these speakers and get ready for a surprise. The sound is incredibly large, and boasts a 'walk around soundstage' that you rarely hear on more expensive dedicated hi-fi speakers. Midband is very clean and has little audible distortion or break up even at very high levels. Bass is ridiculously deep and extended for the cost of this package - it's easily the equal of the Bostons and far, far better than Mission's otherwise excellent FS-mm1 tested last month. It's tight too, and stops and starts with a rhythmic alacrity you don't hear very often from speakers anywhere near this price. Treble isn't the best in the

group - the Labtech just about prevails here - but it's still perfectly listenable and the rest of the frequency range is so good - for the money - that you don't really notice.

Not since I reviewed VideoLogic's superb Sirocco (at £199) a couple of years back have I heard something that is so obviously better than all the other rivals at or around its price point. If you want the elegant industrial design of Mission's FS-mm1 then forget it, but in terms of sound per pound then Creative has a winner.

Creative Labs Cambridge
Soundworks Digital £69
www.creativelabs.co.uk



Sony SRS-Z500

SONY SRS-Z500

If looks were everything, these Sonys would win hands down. Finished in sci-fi silver, they're pretty as a picture sitting next to your Yepp or DAP Jukebox, not to mention Sony's own Memory Stick Walkman. A two channel system with built-in 6W amp, it's magnetically shielded like all the others here, and boasts the usual volume and power on-off controls. Otherwise, that's your lot - with no sub or satellites, these are a 'plug in and play' product.

By the highish standards of the rest of the group, the Sony system is poor. True, the midband is satisfyingly clean and boasts a decently rhythmic nature, but frequency extremes are very limited and these speakers simply don't tell the whole story.

In truth, compared to the similarly priced CSWD, they sound like AM radio. To be fair though, these are designed more as sleek lifestyle products than hi-fi. If you're after a compact system you can easily cart around in your suitcase or travel pack, you could do worse. Use as miniature mobile music makers and they'll do you proud, but for roof raising duties look to the Creative Labs or Boston systems.

SONY SRS-Z500 £60
www.sony.co.uk



Labtech pulse 415

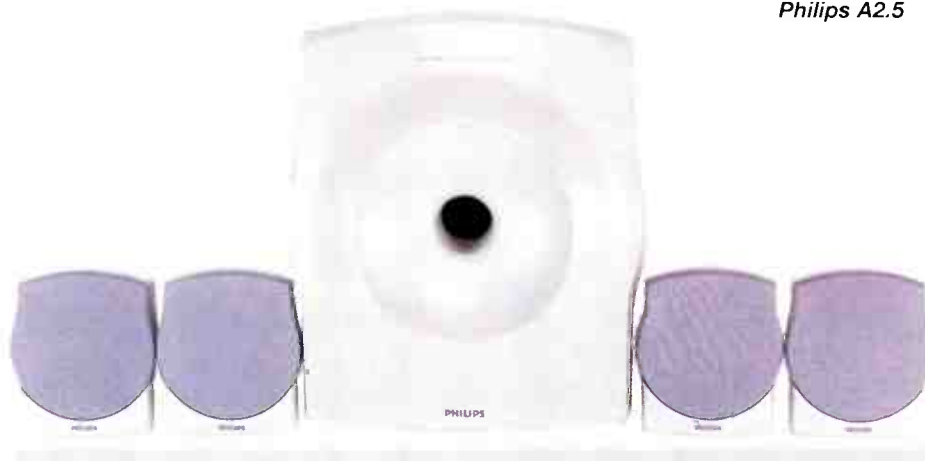
LABTECH PULSE 415

There's not much to say about this dowdy looking all-black American made multimedia loudspeaker system, which retails for around £65 this side of the pond. There are no remotes, no buttons that pretend you're listening to surround sound, no fuss, no gimmicks, no hype. You plug the twin 2 inch satellites and the mains power adaptor into the 4 inch-coned sub, and your MP3 portable or computer into the green ended flying lead that's hard wired into one of the satellites, and go!

The Pulse

doesn't sound bad for the money, but falls victim to the curse of the similarly priced CSWD with which it simply can't compete on sonic terms. With the 15W sub down on the floor and the 5W satellites blu-tacked to your table, you'd be forgiven for thinking you were listening to a bigger system, but the Cambridge sounds far larger still. Bass is punchy, and to give the Labtech system its dues, the midband and treble are amazingly

Philips A2.5



clear and undistorted at this price. You get fine detailing, lively dynamics and the whole shooting match goes loud for its dinky size. There are few signs of breakup until you've cranked the volume right up to 'eleven', with the exception of the sub which needs to be turned right down. A decent performer then, with particularly sweet treble - actually the best in the test - but this feature alone can't redeem it.

LABTECH PULSE 415 £65
www.labtech.com

PHILIPS A2.5

As you'd expect from Europe's electronics giant, Philips' new baby surround sound speakers are well put together. The problem is that they come in a 'nice' office white finish that suits your PC perfectly but looks dull sat next to your Rio 800. The system comprises four 2.5 inch satellite speakers, an aerodynamically styled, front firing 4 inch subwoofer, plus full (wired) remote control. It's designed to plug into computer soundcards with 4-channel outputs, but for those still using stereo MP3 portables there's an 'Incredible Surround' DSP feature, best left alone unless you like 'tunnel' acoustics.

Effects switched off, the system makes nice enough noises in isolation. There's surprising punch from the 6W satellites and 20W sub. Clear and detailed with fine treble extension and more bass than you'd think, it's as good as you'll get at this price if you want multichannel, and certainly better than the Logitechs. The only trouble is that up against the best of the rest it begins to sound rather constrained and bandwidth-limited. Good value as a starter surround system, but still miles behind the pricey Boston kit. Better still, stay in stereo and get the CSWD.

PHILIPS A2.5 £55.25
www.pcstuff.philips.com

BOSTON ACOUSTICS BA7500

This name should be familiar to anyone who was in the market for a decent pair of hi-fi speakers about twenty years ago. An American

company, Boston Acoustics was famous for a while in this country thanks to its superb A40. A budget blockbuster, it momentarily cleaned up on the entry-level standmounter market in the UK, and then seemingly disappeared from view. Now the name is back, and I have to say I was surprised just how good this package was.

First things first - although the BA7500 looks quite like an NXT SurfaceSound design (a la Mission FS-mmI reviewed last month), it is not. Rather it boasts 'SST' (Slimline Speaker Technology), which as far as I can discern is just conventional short-throw moving coil drive units squeezed into a low profile frame. Still, don't be discouraged by this, because this non-NXT flat speaker makes very nice noises nonetheless. It's also, as you might have gathered from the pictures, a surround sound design, although I auditioned them in stereo mode.

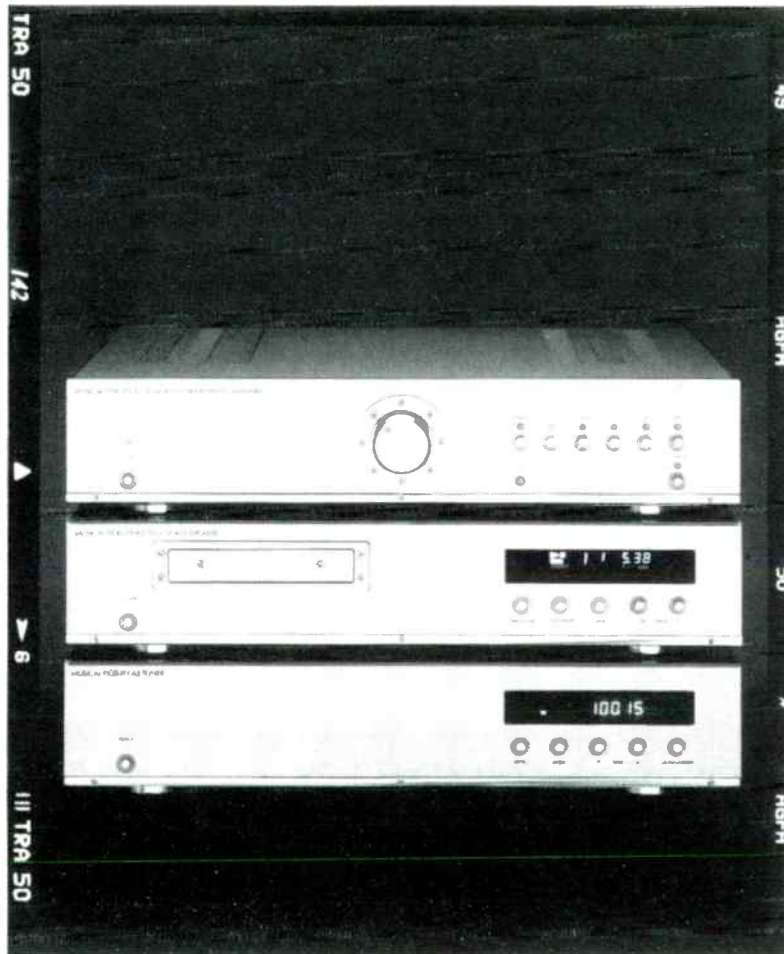
The BA7500 costs a tidy sum at

£249, but does not hide its light under a bushel. You get full Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound decoding (digital signal processing is used to give you that missing centre channel in surround mode). Although not totally relevant to hi-fi, some people have been known to watch DVDs on their PCs and will doubtless appreciate this. This is made possible by the built in DAC, complete with coaxial digital input, which is also a boon for high quality computer audio - middling soundcards with digital outputs can be upgraded by running the digital signal direct into the main unit. There are also two (front and rear) analogue line level inputs. The four wafer-thin satellites (246 x 103 x 29mm) are nicely built items, and the 6.5 inch subwoofer (299 x 178 x 372mm) solid enough to sit on. There's a wired remote offering Master Volume, Surround Volume, Surround Balance and Sub level controls.

Sound quality is really rather good. Given that you're listening to a five channel set up complete with internal DAC and amplifiers, rather than a dedicated stereo pair of passive hi-fi loudspeakers of the same price, you get a tremendously clean and open performance. Although they don't use NXT technology, they've certainly got a similar sort of clear, expansive and analytical nature.

The Bostons do everything well there are few obvious nasties so they pull you into the music. Bass is better than you'd expect from a sub of the size - you can hear the port working just a little too obviously, but careful tweaking of the level controls and plenty of time spent positioning will have the BA7500 singing away merrily. Neither is treble particularly well extended, but what there is, is sweet and crisp. Midband is detailed





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MUSICAL FIDELITY

with fantastic projection, giving a completely out of the box experience.

This is the best sounding speaker here, but there's one cloud on its horizon - the Cambridge SoundWorks Digital is very nearly as good at under one quarter of the price. Ultimately, if home theatre is important for you then go for these, otherwise it's the Cambridge.

BOSTON ACOUSTICS BA7500
£249.95

www.bostonacoustics.com

LOGITECH SOUNDMAN SR-30

From a company famous for its cute little mice comes a multimedia speaker system complete with a cute little mouse. Well, okay, it's a wired remote control, but it sure looks like those funny rodent-shaped things that sit next to your computer keyboard. This four satellites-and-a-sub system is a gamely made piece of kit that comes in the now



Logitech Soundman SR-30

compulsory iMac-style translucent plastic with gunmetal coloured grilles. Feature count isn't bad, and that cute little remote even has a headphone jack built in! The overall effect is desktop-friendly - it looks smart and bang up to date.

Treble is crisp but not particularly well extended, and the midband clean and tidy enough even if it does lack detail. Bass is reasonably tight and punchy, although compared to the CSWD it's distinctly lightweight and plasticky

sounding. Lacking the scale and power of rival two channel systems, I'm afraid I can't really recommend this as a computer audiophile product. Although not that bad, you're paying extra for the surround feature that you probably won't really need, and frankly the system struggles in the face of its rivals. 🐹 🐹

LOGITECH SOUNDMAN SR-30
£79.95

www.logitech.com

CONCLUSION

Two clear winners emerged from this line of rivals. If it's multichannel you want, save your pennies and get the Bostons. If it's two channel, the winner by a country mile is Creative Labs' Cambridge SoundWorks Digital. I still think Mission's FS-mmI tested last month is very special, but unless space is at a premium then the former is the one to go for under the £200 price point. If you've got more than this to spend on stereo multimedia monitors, we still reckon VideoLogic's Sirocco is the best system currently on sale.

World Verdict



CREATIVE LABS
SOUNDWORKS DIGITAL
Great sound and a sweet internal DAC make these the best value multimedia loudspeakers you can buy right now.

World Verdict



SONY SRS-Z500

Totally outclassed sonically, these simply aren't anywhere near the pace.

World Verdict



LABTECH PULSE 415

Sparkling treble and decent midband makes it a perfectly good buy.

World Verdict



PHILIPS A2.5
Another competent design from Eintracht, but not accomplished enough to beat the best of the rest.

World Verdict



BOSTON ACOUSTICS
BA7500

Highly gifted performers, but pricey.

World Verdict



LOGITECH SR-30

Nice design and reasonable sound, but out of its depth in this company.

The Good

MP3 has been a largely teenage phenomenon until recently, but now SONICblue's new Rio 800 seeks to change all that. Likewise, Aiwa's MM-VX200 is a sophisticated, latest generation product also with upmarket aspirations. Young urban professional David Price puts the two upwardly mobile digital audio portables to the test...

SONICblue RIO 800

SONICblue is the latest name for a company that previously called itself Diamond Multimedia and then s3. Its product, the Rio MP3 portable (or digital audio portable as it's now described, thanks to it no longer being restricted to MP3!) is now in its fourth incarnation, having gone from 300 to 500 to 600 and now 800. Strictly speaking, it's a replacement for the 500 which appeared on UK shelves in September 1999. It's a tribute to that player that it managed to last so long on the market without seeming ridiculously dated. For my money at last, the 500 was a classic.

Like its forebear, the £269 800 is a premium product with a commensurate price tag. It's aimed, says SONICblue, at business travellers, whereas the 600 we reviewed last year is more for college students. To wit, you get up to two hours of music storage from its 64 MB standard memory, a voice recorder, rechargeable battery and remote control. You can also plug in one of several 'Backpacks' which offer facilities like an FM tuner and car cassette adapter, as well as extra memory (32 and 64MB) and the forthcoming Microdrives and MMC/SD removable memory.

For me at least, these are truly worthwhile features - a 128MB MP3 walkie will have all the storage you'll ever need. Another good feature is that these Backpacks are compatible with both Rios 600 and 800, meaning that 600 buyers won't lose their investment, should they decide to upgrade.

Being the prestige product that it is, you get all the goodies on the Rio 800. The unit itself is physically quite a lot smaller than the 600, which was less than impressive in size compared to other recent entrants to the market. With a high quality rubberised plastic case it's very nicely built, and has the same excellent fine pitch, backlit alphanumeric display as its cheaper brother. You also get a full-function remote control, the voice record function (which lets you store up to four hours of personal memos or conferences using the Rio 800's built-in microphone) and Ni-MH rechargeable battery giving around 10 hours of playing time. There's even a pilot LED to tell you when the battery is charging.

Like the Rio 600, the new design is 'codec agnostic', meaning it not only reads MP3s but WMAs too, and can be upgraded to AAC (and indeed any other format) by software download. Unlike most other digital walkies, the new Rio even comes with a half-decent free music disc, including stuff from Primal Scream and Les Rythmes Digitales. The bundled Rio Audio Manager 3.4 is excellent, boasting powerful playlisting facilities and a seamless online track information grabber via the CDDb. For Macintosh users, the Rio 800 ships with Casady and Green's SoundJam MP, by the way. The USB connection is superb - lightning fast, it's around five times quicker than your average parallel connector. The box includes some reasonable headphones, the remote, a USB cable, AC adapter/charger and software, a carrying case with belt clip and a



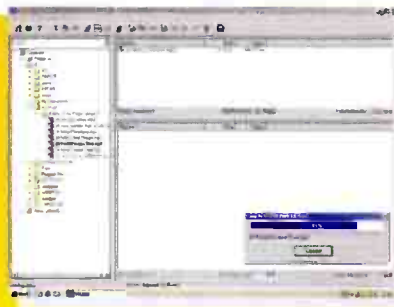
getting started guide.

The Rio 800 is an excellent performer with a clean midband, strong, taut bass and detailed treble. Compared to the Philips Rush that I reviewed in the April 2001 edition, I can't help feeling the 800 is still a tad clinical, though. Whereas the cheaper Rio 600 has a very 'late eighties Japanese hi-fi' sort of presentation that has you thinking how good it sounds without getting you involved with the music, the 800 is an improvement but still retains this characteristic. To wit, you find yourself thinking what a fine performer it is - there's oodles of low level detail, good frequency extremes and wide and powerful soundstaging - but never really get into the groove. The Rush doesn't sound quite so 'hi-fi', and therefore just has the edge.

AIWA MM-VX200

Eagle-eyed computer audio-philosophes will know that we tested the MM-VX100 back in January. I have to say that at the time it was one of the most impressive

Life



Aiwa MM-VX200 Manager

digital walkies I'd seen, such was its sleek finish and lavish construction quality - no low rent plastics here, thank you very much.

Well, things have moved on a bit in six months. While outwardly very similar to its predecessor, the '200 no longer feels such a tactile treat. Don't get me wrong, it's still one of the best screwed together digital audio portables around right now, but we're in a post Philips Rush SA-126 (and now SONICblue Rio 800) world and the standards have got higher.

The main area where the newcomer improves on its predecessor is, funnily enough, it's PC link system. Now a swish USB arrangement, all you do is plug one end into your PC and the other into the Aiwa. Windows auto-detects a new USB device and goes looking on your CD-ROM for the driver, which Aiwa has thoughtfully placed there. Windows then tells you it's installed it, and you're ready to go.

Next, you install Aiwa's manager software, which lets you transfer MP3s to and from the portable. This isn't the most lavish affair in the world but does the job alright, and will have you squirting music hither and thither in no time. Indeed, the MM-VX200's USB link is lightning fast - some four times faster than I remember the previous serial port version being. This done, you can play music to your heart's delight. So simple and fuss free is it, that you start wondering how they managed back in the days of MiniDiscs!

At 61.3x85x19mm, the unit itself is satisfyingly petite - although not quite as dinky as the Rio 800 - and weighs a respectable 72g plus battery. It comes with 32MB of built in flash memory and the facility to take an additional SmartMedia card offering (up to) an additional 64MB storage. It offers the usual functions - plus a voice recorder which is dead handy if you're a student or a globe-

travelling businessman. Battery life is up to 15 hours using an LR6 cell.

The alphanumeric display is of good quality, apart from the fact that you can't see the damn thing because it isn't backlit. The main buttons on the front take care of power on and off, play, track search and volume. There's also an easy to reach 'Rec/Stop' button for the aforementioned voice recorder, a DTP button giving a choice between four preset Eqs (all terrible as usual, best leave set to Classic for a flat response), plus the usual play mode and repeat facilities.

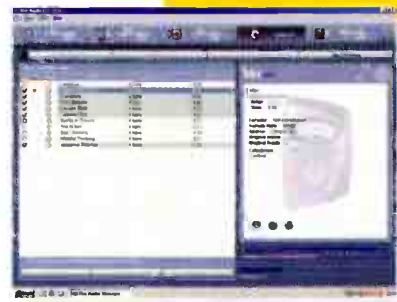
The package includes the machine itself, a frankly dreadful pair of in-ear headphones (best get some Sennheisers), a neat wired remote control, a useful carrying case, the aforesaid USB cable and installation CD-ROM. As well as the Aiwa manager software, this comes with a 'lite' version of RealJukebox that only offers ripping at up to 96kbps. Ho hum, as I said in back in January.

Good though the sound quality was, I'm afraid it didn't



match the Rio 800 in any respect. With a far warmer and woollier nature than the Rio, it's closer to the class leading Philips Rush in terms of neutrality, but it lacks both other players' detail, dynamics and bite. 4 Hero's 'Escape That' made a nice enough noise (when put through my hi-fi, as opposed to the supplied headphones), but you could hear it struggling to really boogie. As with so many MP3 portables, the main problem is the headphone output section, which simply doesn't have the oomph to make the most of the music. The effect is a rather 'sat

upon' sound that can seem closed in and compressed. Taken in isolation though, there was nothing particularly offensive about it - bass was very warm and full, the midband wide and spacious (if not the most detailed) and at least the treble wasn't of the fierce, headache inducing variety.



Rio 800 Audio Manager

AND THE WINNER IS...The SONICblue Rio 800!

Although the Aiwa feels better made, works perfectly and is considerably cheaper, the new Rio is a cracker. A very interesting and focused design, it blends superb sound and great flexibility (don't forget those

World Verdict



SONICblue Rio 800
SONICblue Rio 800
One of the very best portables ever made - sound, ergonomics, packaging and build are all superb.

World Verdict



AIWA MM-VX200
Top build quality and ergonomics can't quite make up for a middling sound.

SONICblue Rio 800 £269
www.rioport.com

Aiwa MM-VX200 £175
www.aiwa.co.uk

probably the best

NEW DEMONSTRATION ROOM NOW OPEN AT 12A SPRING GARDENS, NEWPORT PAGNELL

Kel84 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT

This is our brand new, low cost, beginner level amplifier kit. It features a pair of EL84 valves per channel in push-pull configuration. They give 15 watts into an 8 ohm load - plenty for medium sensitivity loudspeakers. The output transformers are Ultra Linear, keeping distortion down to a minimum. Up front the ECF80 input/phase splitter valve has an extremely smooth sound.

The Kel84 has very low hum, to solid-state standards. For simplicity the kit is built on a printed circuit board. A strong steel chassis is fronted by a 3mm anodised front panel and attractive chromed custom made knobs. There are five line level inputs, plus one monitor input, with a tape output included, all controlled from the front panel. The phono input sockets and 4mm banana socket speaker terminals are gold plated.

At rear is a mains switch, an IEC power input and an earth post. This kit is aimed at beginners. The instructions include pictures as well as diagrams, making them very easy to follow. At a UK price of £250.00 all inclusive you cannot ignore Kel84. Simon Pope says, "The quality that can be gleaned from this amp is a fine introduction to the joys of the valve sound. The Kel84 will highlight all the intricacies and



£278

depth of detail in your favourite recordings whilst retaining a warmth and fullness that is almost exclusive to pure valve amps and is rare at this price point."

Kel84 weighs 10kg. External dimensions with valves are 300mm(w) x 270mm(d) x 150mm(h).

KIT88 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT & KAT88 VALVE POWER AMPLIFIER KIT

Here is the amazing KiT88. The circuit is similar to that of our popular KEL34 with a few changes to incorporate the Tesla, JJ branded KT88 power tetrode. This is a pure Class A push-pull design providing 36 watts into an 8ohm load. Andy Grove has come up with a gem of an output transformer (E/I). With the KT88 it offers a virtually unmatchable result for a valve amplifier. Frequency response measures 11Hz to 75kHz, separation 71dB, noise 98dB, sensitivity 400mV and distortion 0.03%. "As valve amplifiers go, the KiT88 is one of the best measured performances I have ever come across", said Noel Keywood. Jon Marks said, "The KiT88 pulled a series of surprisingly fast, meaty basslines out of its trickbag when dealing with Suzanne Vega's Nine Objects Of Desire album. As if this wasn't enough, the mid and treble

were nice too - cymbals had a deliciously natural, golden shimmer without sounding soft, and vocals were extremely transparent and crisply defined. KiT88 didn't hang around when it came to exploiting the virtues of its four output valves on numbers such as 'Leaves' and 'Suspect Sustain' from Cirrus' Land's End Jazz CD. Saxophone had a wonderfully smooth, realistic character, and acoustic guitar mixed speed with harmonic richness to very impressive effect. Asian Dub Foundation and Moloko showed no sign at all of the sluggish, woolly bottom-end and poorly-delineated bass beats that most valve amps are to blame for. Which makes the KiT88 an all-round, high-end bargain." Weight 16kg, external dimensions with valves are 330mm(w) x 300mm(d) x 190mm (h).



KaT88 upgrade kit now available £140

£468

← **KaT88 VALVE POWER AMPLIFIER KIT**



← **KiT88 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT**

£484

KiT88 upgrade kit now available £150

ALL NEW SERIES II MODULAR PRE-AMP KIT

The PRE-II is a valve pre-amplifier with six inputs, tape monitor and two sets of output sockets. It utilises a high quality line driver transformer and 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.

Power Supply Unit (PSU-II)	£195.00
Pre-amplifier (PRE-II)	£195.00
Phono Stage (PHONO-II)	£110.00
Moving coil step-up transformer	£77.00



diy kits in the world

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KAT34 VALVE POWER AMPLIFIER KIT & KIT34 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT

£480



NEW KITS

£495



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, kel34 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... a true valve classic" Weight 22kg, External dimensions with valves fitted - 390mm(w) x 360mm(d) x 210mm(h)

300B PSE 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 £795.00 (UK price) excluding valves. Each monobloc weighs 23kgs., external dimensions with valves: 25cm(w) x 38cm(h) x 22cm(d) per monobloc.

300B PSU upgrade kit now available £150

£875
A pair



KEL80 MONOBLOC AMPLIFIER KIT

Following the success of our budget KEL34 40watt kit amplifier, we have come up with a 'big brother' design. The output stage uses two pairs of TESLA EL34 pentodes in parallel-push-pull mode, allowing KEL80 to turn out 80 watts into an 8ohm load. Heading up the input stage we have the wonderfully linear Russian 6AU6 working into an American 5687 phase-splitter. KEL80's output transformers are 4ohm and 8ohm tapped. With an input sensitivity at around 380mV for full output, it will happily partner both passive and active pre-amplifiers. It is easy to assemble. Simon Pope says, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating and the KEL80 is a feast for the ears, with solid bass attack, lightning fast reactions,

that emphasises musicality as well as power. At £590.00 a pair, a definite valve winner. Each monobloc weighs 12kgs., external dimensions with valves: 14cm(w) x 8cm(h) x 43.5cm(d).

£649
A pair



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 out 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 18cm(w) x 30cm(l) x 8cm(h) weight 4kg.

£195



World Audio design

probably the best

NEW DEMONSTRATION ROOM NOW OPEN AT 12A SPRING GARDENS, NEWPORT PAGNELL,

KLS10

HIGH TECHNOLOGY COMPACT MONITOR

Our mini-marvel uses an Audax carbon fibre bass/midrange unit, married to the world's most advanced tweeter, the piezo-electric gold dome HD3P from Audax. KLS10 offers high performance from a small package. The main 'speakers are designed to work alone, or with a dedicated subwoofer to extend their bass. Alone, they are suited to near-wall mounting and can be tuned by port adjustment to suit personal taste and location. They are easy to drive and need just 30-60watts. KLS10 is

unique. Technically advanced, yet compact and relatively inexpensive, there is little to match it. Sensitivity 89dB 1W/1m, 15mm MDF, internal volume 9Ltrs, external dimensions 19cm(w) x 31cm(h) x 23cm(d).

Drive Unit & Crossover kit **£433.00**

Drive Unit only **£394.00**



£433

KLS10

GOLD SUBWOOFER

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

Drive Unit & Crossover kit **£164.00**

Drive Unit only **£78.00**



£164

KLS3 GOLD MK II

ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY THREE WAY LOUDSPEAKER

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

dimensions 26cm(w) x 100cm(h) x 35cm(d).

Drive Unit & Crossover kit **£633.00**

Drive Unit Pack **£495.00**



£633

Upgrade your KLS3s to Gold status. Includes latest oval gold dome piezo tweeter and all components.

for

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KLS9

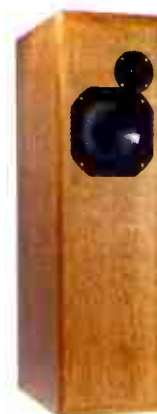
TWO WAY FLOORSTANDER

Here's a storm for you - KLS9, with its BB4 alignment bass cabinet and Audax High Definition Aerogel 8in bass/midrange unit. It's designed by Noel Keywood to possess optimal bass damping and a clean step response. Aided by a teensy bit of bass lift, KLS9 really thunders; it will re-arrange your furniture. But it does not waffle, falling silent when there's no bass in the music. Aided by a high power 1in fabric dome tweeter, KLS9 is detailed, evenly balanced and images superbly. It is an easy

12ohm load and is 88dB sensitive. For amps up to 60W. Easy to build and great for beginners. Internal volume 70ltrs, 18m MDF external dimensions 25cm(w) x 93cm(h) x 40cm(d).

Drive Unit & Crossover kit **£253.00**

Drive Unit pack **£168.00**



£253

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- B. BLACK GATE 4700 μ F, 16V electrolytic
- C. JENSEN 0.47 μ F, 630V paper in oil capacitor
- D. LCR 22.5 μ F 440Vdc polypropylene capacitors (wire leadouts radial) 100mm(h) x 45mm diameter
- E. ANSAR 22.5 μ F 630Vdc polypropylene capacitors (wire leadouts radial) 85mm(h) x 45mm diameter
- F. ALPS blue audio grade 50k or 100k dual log potentiometer 8.5mm diameter fitting hole

KIT88 upgrade kit

- 4 x Jensen 0.47 μ F, 630V
- 4 x Black Gate 220 μ F, 50V
- 2 x Black Gate 4700 μ F, 16V
- 1 x 100k Alps pot

KaT88 upgrade kit

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- 4 x Black Gate 220 μ F, 50V
- 2 x Black Gate 4700 μ F, 16V

300B PSU upgrade kit

- 300B PSE upgrade kit (for a pair of monoblocs)
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- 2 x Jensen 0.47 μ F, 630V
- 2 x Black Gate 470 μ F, 16V
- 4 x Black Gate 100 μ F, 100V
- 4 x 35A 200V bridge rectifier
- 4 x 4700 μ F 16V capacitor



World Audio design

parts directory

NEW DEMONSTRATION ROOM NOW OPEN AT 12A SPRING GARDENS, NEWPORT PAGNELL, MILTON KEYNES, BUCKS MK16 0EE- CALL FOR DETAILS ON 01908 218 836

Mains transformers & Chokes

KEL84 mains transformer

1.5 inch stack, 90mm(h)x 80mm(w)x 95mm(d) drop through fitting with zinc cap. Secondaries: 0V-240V 300mA, 3.15V-0V-3.15V, 5.5A, suitable for 120/240V operation

KIT88/KAT88 mains toroidal transformer

120mm dia. x 60mm(h). Secondaries: 195V-0V-95V,450mA/0V-27V, 100mA/3.15V-0V-3.15V,9A, suitable for 120/240V operation

300B PSE mains E/I transformer

130mm(h) x 95mm(w) x 115mm(d). drop through fitting with zinc cap. Secondaries: 380V-0V-380V, 180mA/150-0V-150V, 25mA/0V-5V, 1.2A/0V-5V, 1.2A/0V-5V,3A/3.15V-0V-3.15V,0.4A suitable for 120/240V operation

KEL80 mains toroidal transformer (encapsulated)

130mm dia. x 65mm(h). Secondaries: 195V-0V-195V,390mA/0V-27V, 100mA/3.15V-0V-3.15V,7.5A, suitable for 120/240V operation

HD83 mains toroidal transformer

80mm dia. x 35mm(h). Secondaries: 0V-165V,75mA/3.15V-0V-3.15V,1A, suitable for 120/240V operation

PSU-II mains toroidal transformer

80mm dia. x 35mm(h). Secondaries: 0V-270V,60mA/0V-10V,2A, suitable for 120/240V operation

TRANS I mains toroidal transformer

95mm dia. x 50mm(h). Secondaries: 0V-370V,150mA/0V-6.3V,3.5A 300B E/I choke 65mm(h) x 70mm(d) x 80mm(w) open frame fitting, 10H, 180mA.

KEL84 E/I choke

0.5 inch stack, 40mm(h)x 35mm(d)x 70mm(w) clamp fitting, 1H, 250mA

PSU-II E/I

40mm(h) x 35mm(d) x 70mm (w) clamp fitting, 15H, 20mA

KIT34 mains transformer

2.5 inch stack, 120mm(h)x115mm(w)x95mm(d), drop through fitting with zinc cap. Secondaries 365V - 0V - 365V,300mA/0V - 5V, 6A/3.15V - 0V - 3.15V, 7.5A. Suitable for 120/240V operation.

KIT34 choke

1.25 inch stack, 65mm(h)x105mm(w) with fitting holes x 60mm(d), clamp fitting, 2.5 H, 350mA

Output transformers

KEL84 E/I Ultra Linear push-pull output transformer

1.25 inch stack, 76mm(h)x 65mm(w)x 76mm(d) Primary - secondary, 8K with 12.5% UL tap - 8ohms, max o/p-15watts, max current 150mA valves EL84 etc

KIT88/KAT88 E/I push-pull output transformer

80mm(w)x95mm(l)x100mm(h). Primary-secondary 10K - 8ohms, max o/p-40watts, max current-160mA valves-KT88, 6550, EL34

KIT34 E/I 14% tapped Ultra Linear push-pull output transformer

2 inch stack, 80mm(w)x95mm(l)x100mm(h), drop through fitting with zinc cap. Primary-secondary 6.4K, 14% UL taps, Secondary 8ohm, max output 34watts, max current 150mA, valves EL34, 6L6, 6CA7

KEL80 E/I parallel-push-pull output transformer

95mm(w)x115mm(l)x133mm(h). Primary-secondary 4.6K - 8 & 4ohms, max o/p-80watts, max current-250mA valves-EL34,5881,6L6

HD83 E/I single ended output transformer

40mm(w)x50mm(l) x55mm(h). Primary-secondary 4K - 4 x 64ohms windings, max o/p-1watts, max current-25mA valves-ECL83 etc

Pre-II E/I driver transformer

80mm(w)x60mm(l) x65mm(h). 6:1 step down transformer, max current-10mA valves-6922 etc pre-amp stage

Printed circuit boards

Kel84 Printed Circuit Board

280mm(w) x 135mm(l)x 1.6mm(d)

KIT88/KAT88 Printed Circuit Board

140mm(w) x 310mm(l) x 2.4mm(d)

Kel34 Printed Circuit Board

140mm(w) x 310mm(l) x 2.4mm(d)

Kel80 Printed Circuit Board (a pair)

120mm(w) x 215mm(l) x 2.4mm(d)

HD83 Printed Circuit Board

140mm(w) x 160mm(l) x 1.6mm(d)

PSU-II Printed Circuit Board

105mm(w) x 130mm(l) x 1.6mm(d)

PRE-II Printed Circuit Board

105mm(w) x 130mm(l) x 1.6mm(d)

PHONO-II Printed Circuit Board

105mm(w) x 130mm(l) x 1.6mm(d)

TAG board

2 x 16 connections (hard wiring)40mm(w) x 140mm(l) x 3mm(d)

special offers

K5881 chassis

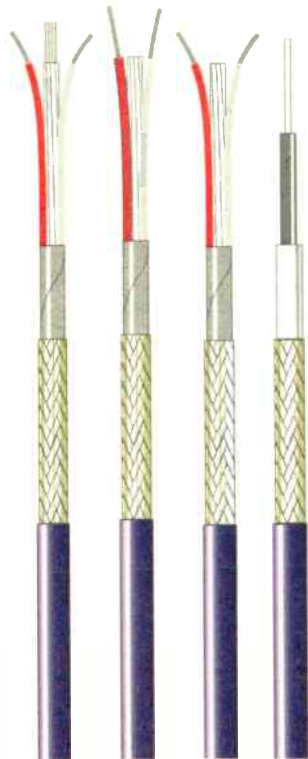
70mm(h) x 400mm(w) x 325mm(d) ideal for hobbyists. has punched holes for 4 octal & 4 B9A valve bases, 2 x 78 lam and 1 x 120 lam. Front has switch hole, Rear has 4mm spk. socs. & phono socket pair.

Kel34 chasis

330mm(d)x 190mm (h). ideal for the constructor who requires a compact chasis to incorporate 4 octals, 2 B9A & B7G bases mounted on kel35 PCB - £12.00 2x 78 lam holes, and fixing for a 115mm dia toroidal mains. rear has 5 phono pair holes & 2 XLR holes.

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HI-FI WORLD'S

GREAT COMPETITION GIVEAWAY

TEN PAIRS OF WHARFEDALE'S STUNNING DIAMOND 8.1 LOUDSPEAKERS TO BE WON IN THIS MONTH'S SUPERB COMPETITION



This month's competition will see ten lucky winners receive a pair of Wharfedale's spanking new excellent Diamond 8.1 loudspeakers, the latest product that confirms the return of a company with a long and rich history to true audiophile status.

Producing "Britain's most famous loudspeakers" for many years, Wharfedale is one of the world's most recognised names when it comes to quality music reproduction. Founder Gilbert Briggs constructed his first loudspeaker way back in 1932 in the cellar of his home in Ilkley, Yorkshire, in the dale of the River Wharfe.

One of the world's most renowned loudspeaker pioneers, Briggs' well designed drive units soon became so popular that within a year of his first design he'd set up a factory in Bradford, calling the company Wharfedale Wireless Works. In 1936 the company moved to larger premises to cope with demand, producing up to 9,000 'speakers a year by 1939.

More prominence came to Briggs and his company with his famous book 'Loudspeakers and Sound', published in 1948. In it he claimed recordings could sound very close to a live performance. To prove this in 1955 he travelled the world with Quad's Peter Walker devising 'live versus recording' demonstrations in places such as London's Royal Festival Hall and Carnegie Hall in New York.

With the introduction of stereo reproduction in the 1950s, the hi-fi industry grew massively, with Wharfedale at the centre of its development. A purpose-built cabinet factory was opened in 1957.

Wharfedale Wireless Works was bought in 1958 by the Rank Organisation, who were able to

provide the financial investment needed to cope with market growth.

In 1974 the company move to an even larger premises in Bradford consisting of 170,000 square feet containing manufacturing, office space and R&D departments, including that of Leak, acquired by Rank in 1969.

By the end of the 1970s competition from other parts of the globe, especially the Far East, meant that the heyday of British hi-fi manufacturing was coming to an end. The company continued to produce quality products, however, such as the ground-breaking Diamond Mk1, the budget bookshelf 'speaker that spawned a thousand imitations.

In the next few years Wharfedale, under control of the Verity Group, ran alongside Mission. Verity went on to acquire big names such as Premier Drums, Quad and Roksan, among others.

Innovation continued when Wharfedale played a pivotal role in the first tentative steps the Verity Group took towards acquiring NXT technology from the British Defence Research Agency. The Verity Group eventually decided to concentrate concentrate on NXT technology and Wharfedale was once again 'on the move', along with Quad, Roksan and Leak.

Along with Quad, Wharfedale joined with its Chinese distributor

(the company's major customer at the time), headed by Bernard and Michael Chang, to form the International Audio Group in September 1997.

By 1999 Wharfedale had moved its manufacturing to a factory in Shenzhen, China. It's from here that the latest batch of products have been developed and built, including the Pacific range and the Diamond 8 series. Featuring quality cabinet work and Kevlar drivers at a decent price, David Price reviewed the 8.1s in last month's issue and was mightily impressed, considering them to be perhaps one of the best hi-fi products we'll see this decade. He described them as being a "quintessential 'budget audiophile' product." He summed things up by commenting "(they have a) . . . clean, smooth, open and engaging sound makes them a modern hi-fi classic."

Getting a pair of these mini marvels couldn't be simpler. Answer the following questions on a postcard and send it to the address below by May 31st. The first ten correct entries picked out of our hat will be the lucky winners. Good luck! ■ ▲

Competition Questions

[1] Who was the founder of the Wharfedale Wireless Works?

- [a] Raymond Briggs
- [b] Gilbert Briggs
- [c] Graham Briggs
- [d] Ronnie Biggs

[2] Which famous book did the founder write?

- [a] Loudspeakers and Sound
- [b] Sound and its Reproduction
- [c] Amplifiers and Loudspeakers
- [d] War and Peace

[3] Which other famous hi-fi name did the Rank Organisation buy in 1969?

- [a] Tannoy
- [b] Quad
- [c] Leak
- [d] Tandy

[4] In which Chinese city is the new Wharfedale manufacturing site?

- [a] Beijing
- [b] Shanghai
- [c] Xian
- [d] Shenzhen

Please send all entries to:

June Competition
Hi-Fi World
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CONGRATULATIONS!

...To Paul Smith of Gillingham, The winner of our April competition. A Linn Classik/Katan combination is on its way to you!

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**Saturday 9th June 2001
The Time: 10.00am - 4.00pm**

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Are reviewers normal human beings? Probably not. I've received some interesting e-mails recently at my new address: publisher@hi-fiworld.co.uk. Two readers made me pause to think about where a reviewer such as myself sits in the scheme of things. The simple answer I came up with after hours of serious thought was that I don't know! But I do have suspicions.

Those readers listened to the Castle Howard I reviewed in the April 2001 issue and were not impressed. I have always liked the Howards, so why this discrepancy? OK, just two people doesn't exactly represent a statistically valid poll sample; Mori wouldn't want to get involved. All the same obvious disparity like this, where my taste seems at odds with what might well be the norm, is a little puzzling. Interestingly one writer owned a pair of conventional Castles and loved them. Moreover, he was not quite sure why he did not like the Howards

So are reviewers normal human beings? Not really, because sitting in front of a steady stream of differing products removes the natural affinity listeners can develop for a sound they are regularly exposed to.

A Castle Howard has a different presentation to most forward-only firing loudspeakers, but having heard so many differing presentations through my lifetime I can easily accept the Howard for what it is rather than find it unsettlingly different.

The best example of an unsettling product is the Quad Electrostatic. After listening to box loudspeakers the Quad comes as something of a shock - and not even an impressive one necessarily. It can seem quite flat and lifeless after a big, tubby sounding box 'speaker. You just have to put up with it, fortified by the knowledge that others seem to think it's good. After a while, perhaps short, perhaps long, according to the tenacity of your beliefs, its strengths should start to appear. A bigger shock awaits your return to the box 'speaker. Whoa! What is all that honking and booming?

Moving from one type of presentation to another regularly doesn't erase preference, but it does seem to move it away from the mainstream, which is why reviewers are, arguably, not 'normal'. I asked Alvin Gold and Paul Messenger what they used.

Alvin Gold uses J.M. Lab Mezzo Utopia loudspeakers (French) and in an ideal world would like to use Pass Labs amplification, perhaps the Aleph P preamplifier and X350 power amplifier. The speakers in particular are not strictly neutral. They have an almost clinical precision and presen-

” All the same the unusual circumstance of a reviewer does mean that you may not agree with his opinion.

tation reminiscent of a good electrostatic, despite being forward radiating box speakers (Alvin says).

Paul Messenger uses NAC52/ NAP500 amplification from Naim, either with German Rehdeko RK175 loudspeakers, or a pair of Tannoy 15in Dual-concentric Westminster drivers mounted in the wall, one using a luo as a bass chamber - which makes my point nicely!

I feel a bit sheepish in admitting that I don't listen to hi-fi, not commercial hi-fi that is. No manufacturer can afford to use Black Gates or Jensen paper-in-oils, yet without them you cannot start to talk about timbral qualities. So when not reviewing I happily fall back to a tweaked valve amplifier and tweaked loudspeakers of our own design, notably a World Audio Design 300B zero-feedback push-pull with KLS9s or KLS3 Gold loudspeakers.

Reviewers don't have the time to acclimatise to a product so their conclusions are reasonably dispassionate. But whether this means they are representative of the majority view is open to question. Perhaps reviewers are more likely to accept an unconventional loudspeaker like the Howard than someone strongly tuned to the conventional - a normal person in

other words.

Whilst reviewers seem to make quite extreme personal choices by everyday standards this should not affect their ability to report usefully on how an amplifier, loudspeaker or what have you performs. By and large, within the sort of wide-ish tolerance you might expect when it comes to opinion, I have always felt reviewers agree more than they disagree. All the same, the unusual circumstance and experience of reviewers does mean that you may not agree with their opinion, as two readers did not with my view of the Howards.

You could say this again makes the point that even if reviewers know what they are talking about, at the end of the day you have to listen too. I feel this is easier preached than done; it isn't easy to form a useful opinion in a showroom. But whilst a reviewer can arm you with - hopefully - a good insight into a product he cannot predict your own taste, borne of experience.

On the same note, if you get to hear Mission's m73s I'm reviewing this month, tell me what you think of them by e-mail. Then I'll know how close I am to being normal. ●



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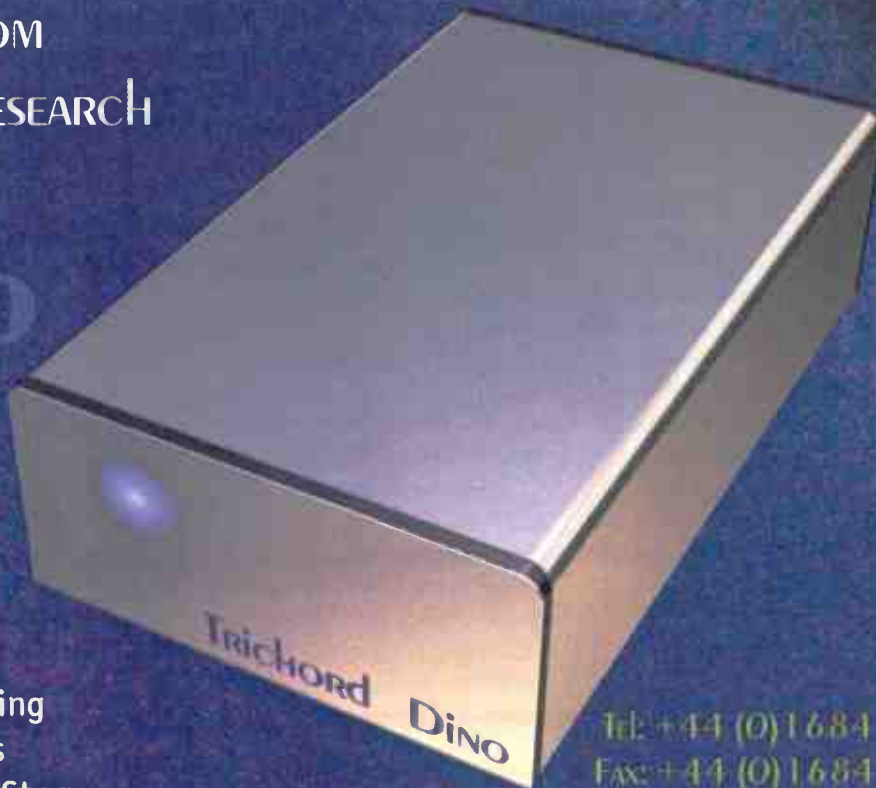
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As far as I'm concerned, the great vinyl vs. CD debate is closed. The arrival of DVD Audio and SACD is a tacit admission from Philips, Sony and the rest of them that CD is not, as they'd all once claimed, perfect. Now of course, we'll be able to sit back and watch them claim exactly the same about the new digital formats, which will doubtless be fun.

Saying that CD isn't perfect might seem like stating the bloody obvious, but if you thumb through almost all British and US hi-fi magazines of the late eighties, the so-called superiority of 16/44 PCM digital audio was taken as read.

People wishing to shell out large sums of money on high end vinyl systems were denigrated as 'flat earthers' and the letters pages of many publications were full of readers being urged to go digital.

Even now though, I can in all seriousness say that my £3000 Michell Orbe/OL Rega RB300/Ortofon MC30 Supreme is, for me, preferable to Linn's fabulous £12,000 CD12. The CD12 is the best CD player I've ever heard bar nothing, but CD still can't equal a LP even when using what is far from the most expensive turntable. You may also be interested to know that it isn't the equal of Linn's best vinyl replay system either, despite the former being designed some thirty years earlier.

Linn very kindly allowed me to make the aforementioned comparison at the company's own Castlemilk dem room. The equipment present was enough to get any audiophile drooling - a 5103 System Controller (£4,000), eight Klimax Solo power amps (£6,000 a piece), 2 Active Tuneboxes (£4,000) and a pair of Keltik Active loudspeakers (£6,400). To that, add a Linn CD12 (£12,000) CD player and an LP12/ Ekos/ Arkiv/ Lingo/ Linto turntable (£6,000). There was also an Ikemi CD player (£1,900), which is an improved version of the Karik 3 I know and love.

We kicked off with the Ikemi and

the system sounded great, with oodles of drive and gusto, a deep powerful extended bass, a clean (possibly too dry) midband and a fine sense of rhythm and musicality. Moving to the CD12 was a revelation. I was - and still am - gobsmacked by how good this player is. You simply would not think it a 16bit machine. Twelve years ago, Linn introduced the Lingo (power supply for the LP12) just when it looked like the format was on the way out - now the company seems to have repeated itself with the CD12 and Compact Disc.



People wishing to shell out large sums of money on high end vinyl systems were denigrated as 'flat earthers'

On the Screaming Trees' 'Dime Western', the CD12 proved far more liquid - it made the Ikemi sound stilted and mechanical by contrast. I heard better dynamics and far more clarity around the snare drums. Treble was beautifully sweet but still with that characteristic 16bit 'crispness', whereas the Ikemi's treble sounded splashy and loose by comparison. The CD12 had far better low level detailing and a sense of natural musical cohesion, whereas the Ikemi sounded on edge and uptight.

Moving to the LP12, the order of magnitude of the improvement I'd heard by moving from the Ikemi to the CD12 was repeated. Starting with the treble, hi-hats were far sweeter, more liquid and atmospheric sounding, while the midband took on a far more natural sound. Left to right and front to back imaging expanded out dramatically (rather than being confined to near the speakers), and there was a sense of a living, breathing, recorded acoustic with oodles of depth and space. Best of all was the LP12's rhythmic performance - there was a better sense of timing. The drummer

hung around the beat more - as human drummers do - rather than turning in a metronomically perfect performance. The only weakness from the vinyl spinner was the LP12's characteristically wooden, slightly 'one note' bass.

For me at least it was no contest, with the turntable the clear winner. But that isn't to denigrate the CD12, which is very probably the best the venerable Red Book format will ever achieve. It's very unusual for me to say this, but I could put on a CD with this player and get totally lost in the music, just as I do with vinyl. Short of the Marantz SA-1, I don't think I've been able to do this completely with any other silver disc player to date. It really is a cracking machine.

The great thing is that you too can judge for yourself. In conjunction with Hi-Fi World magazine, Linn has arranged a musical event in London in June, in which a number of lucky readers can A-B the LP12 and CD12 to their hearts' desires. Whether you come out in favour of vinyl or silver disc, you can bet it's going to be a fantastic occasion, and a dream for many hi-fi nuts - myself included. See you there... ●



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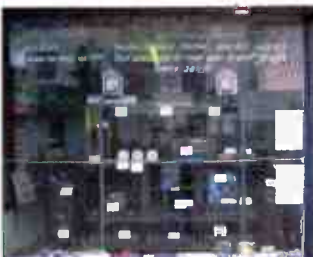
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Time for another look at recording formats. Anyone with even a casual interest in hi-fi will probably know by now that in the future cassette tape, CDR and MiniDisc are all doomed. Instead we'll all be using card memory type devices and evolved versions of MP3. Perhaps so, but I reckon it will be at least five to ten years before we reach this stage.

It takes the public at large some time to catch on to new technology. The classic "bell curve" of product lifespan dictates that sales will start slowly. That leaves the rest of this decade for the existing formats to fight it out. Viewed from a specialist hi-fi point of view, CDR looks set to be the victor. Sales of tape decks are still in steep decline. One only needs to enter the local hi-fi emporium to see evidence of this. What few tape decks there are, are usually pushed into the "dusty corner" of the store.

MiniDisc still has the upper hand but as we know, sales of MiniDisc are on shaky ground now too. From a subjective point of view I feel that it's really only the portable MD market that's keeping the format alive. If you remove those who use MD to record for their portable, and the few that are used for commercial purposes, I bet there wouldn't be that many home MD recordists left. Despite this, I feel the portable market is strong enough to keep MiniDisc going for sometime yet.

CD-R, by contrast, is growing from strength to strength. If you speak to those within the manufacturing and sales divisions of hi-fi companies, many would put money on CD-R being the key recordable format over the next decade. This hardly comes as a surprise, though, due to the number of computers now equipped with CD-R/RW drives, as well as the increasing number of stand-alone audio recorders available.

The cost of CD recorders is finally coming down too. Buying one from the discount retailers would have cost at least £200. Yet recently I've seen Philips and Pioneer models

from as little as £150. Next season I wouldn't be at all surprised to see that fall further to around £120, or even £100 depending upon exchange rates and the like. The fact that even MiniDisc's strongest advocate, Sony, have now launched CDR machines seals the argument.

So, for the interim period, CD-R/RW it is then. But things are never that simple. Although recordable CD does appear to be taking the lead, the question as to volume of trade is open to debate. I don't think it will ever appear in as many households as

” The virtual absence of CD in cars, perhaps because CDs were never ideal for such work, could well limit CD-R/RW growth.

the humble cassette deck once did and indeed, still does. Being involved in the hi-fi industry can lead one to be rather blinkered as to the real status quo, i.e. most people that buy hi-fi have very little interest in the subject at all. We all probably know of hi-fi illiterate mates who'd cheerfully state that they only ever really listen to music in the car. I'd wager that more music is heard competing against road, wind and engine noise than in any other environment. With this in mind I undertook some research to see the exact state of play when it comes to In Car Entertainment playback.

The results proved an eye opener. Of 1968 new cars on sale would you believe that only 11 have no form of in-car entertainment whatsoever? That's a measly 0.56%. Now for the real surprise. Of the rest 1069 (54.32%) are equipped with a tape deck alone, and just 344 (17.48%) with a single CD player. The remaining 544 (27.64%) are provided with both. Out of interest, few cars sold in the UK are equipped with a MiniDisc player, although it is an option on around 10%.

Despite the fact that CD sales now outstrip those of pre-recorded cassette and that separate cassette decks are few and far between, the

enduring tape still dominates in the car - the environment in which so much music is listened to. I would have thought that car manufacturers need to redress this imbalance.

Or perhaps they feel that in a few years time juke box type downloadable files will be all that's needed in a car. The technology for this is already here. This suggests that in the motoring world CD is being by-passed. Oddly, even though CD players are now cheap it appears mostly in the luxury end of business.

In-car hi-fi installers must be rubbing their hands with glee as they make up this situation in the after-market for CD player fitment. The virtual absence of CD in cars, perhaps because CDs were never ideal for such work, could well limit CD-R/RW growth. The format looks set to dominate, but perhaps not by quite the margin some may have thought.

Now I just need to figure out where I'm going to put my discs in my CD equipped car. Yes, it has a neatly moulded storage area, but for tapes only. Good to see it's not just the hi-fi industry that often defies logic! Happy recording. ●



Dominic Todd

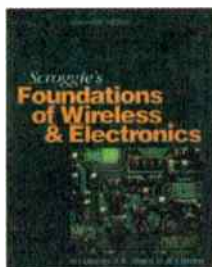


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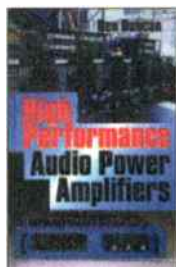
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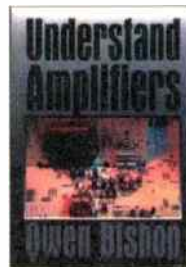
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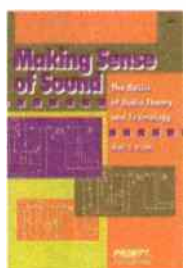
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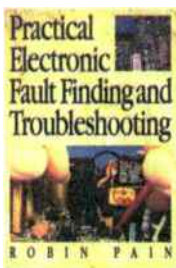
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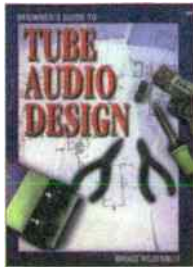
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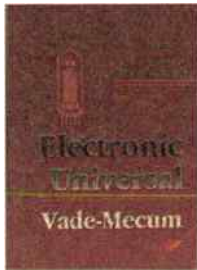
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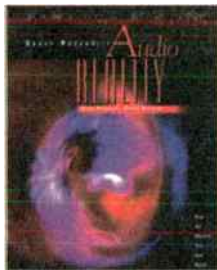
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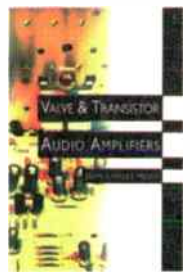
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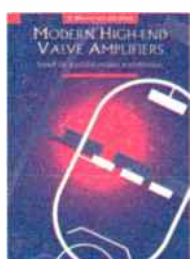


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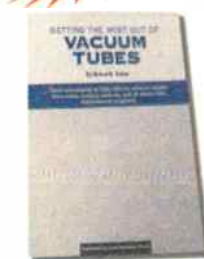


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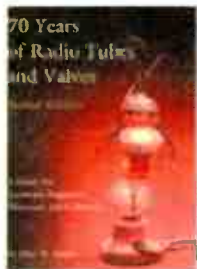
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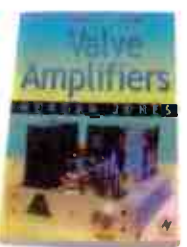


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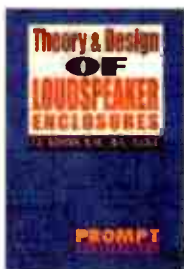
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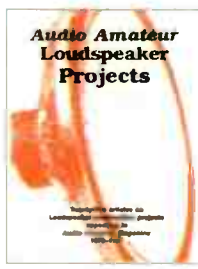
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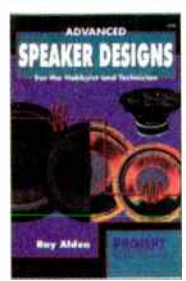


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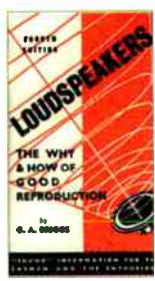
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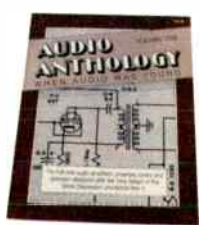


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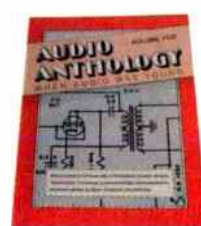
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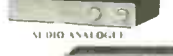


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Ecosse Maf/Reference Cable has won many awards, and the few examples that we've listened to have all been very high quality, delivering a balanced and neutral sound. The MS2.15 is one of the more expensive cables from the company and is one of their Monocrystal designs. It uses a patented method for the extrusion of Monocrystal copper that eliminates grain boundaries, resulting in a single crystal unidirectional wire which is 99.9997% pure copper. The conductor material is 1.5 mm square, with the primary dielectric being polypropylene.

Configuration is a twisted pair with cotton yarn filler and a paper tape shroud. The olive coloured outer sheath is made of soft PVC. It uses high quality 'low loss' dielectrics to facilitate long runs and it attempts to maintain a low DC resistance to keep low frequencies controlled and extended, say the company.

Our samples were terminated with hollow style 4mm plugs, which will fit those amps with BFA approved terminals, discarding the need for adapters (although 6mm spades are available at the same price).

Playing the unaccompanied choral music of the Eton Choirbook from the 15-16th centuries, sung by The Sixteen, resulted in a very detailed and fluid performance. High voices

With more and more hi-fi accessories available, buying can be a daunting task which shouldn't be taken lightly. Simon Pope and David Price round up two loudspeaker cables, an interconnect and some supports.

never became harsh or screechy and there was a fine sense of space, the warm acoustic of the (unnamed) recording venue being sympathetically treated. There was good balance between the voice sections and natural decay. The same fluidity was shown with both Rock and Dance. The electronic soundscapes of Talvin Singh's latest opus, 'ha', sounded detailed yet controlled, with a good solid bass and even better midrange and treble. Likewise, the guitar rock of the Smashing Pumpkins provided a full sound that was powerful and clean.

This is a fluid yet neutral and detailed cable, that should suit most systems and last for the rest of your audiophile life. Highly recommended.

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The Townhouse
No.1 Park Gate
Glasgow G3 6DL
Tel: 0141 353 0509
www.referencecables.com

LAT INTERNATIONAL BI-WIRE £25 per metre

This cable impresses even by its looks - it's extremely well put together with good industrial-style LAT locking connectors (or banana plugs should you wish). A four conductor cable using high quality PTFE Teflon insulation, it's unusual to find twelve gauge conductors - heavy-weight stuff for a bi-wire 'speaker cable.

The company uses a proprietary Silverfuse material for the conductor. This is a 'near alloy' of silver and copper, not silver plating or cladding but the result of a process where copper wire is pulled through molten silver, and the

silver and copper are fused under high pressure. The result is a sound which combines the best of both copper (smoothness) and silver (detail and clarity). The shiny black outer jacket is stiff to prevent sharp bending of the cable.

This is an excellent sounding cable with superb imaging and detail, but it never sounds over bright or harsh. The LAT suited the Eton Choirbook choral music perfectly, with impressive imaging, soundstaging and detail retrieval. With Talvin Singh's Indian-influenced electro dance, it showed fine control over deep and powerful bass lines, with decent speed and extension too. Upper frequencies were sweet and open and vocals well defined. With Rock music there was great imaging and detail, with accompanying acoustic guitars well presented.

Although smooth and musical, you'll also benefit from this cable if you have a system that's slightly enclosed or claustrophobic sounding. It will open things up with its sweet treble and spacious imaging. Good stuff indeed.

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SOUND



LINN SILVER INTERCONNECTS £185 per 1.2m pair

This is the famous Glaswegian hi-fi manufacturer's new top of the range interconnect.

Notionally, it's supposed to be used with the Linn Sondek CD12 CD player, but of course you can slot it in between any two pairs of RCA phono sockets. It's a low resistance, low loss interconnect using a very fine strand, high copper content, insulated tri-wire configuration. An inner copper signal conductor has twin outer screens, encased within an outer sheath made from flexible polymer insulation materials.

Although the cable contains a lot of copper, it remains soft and flexible thanks to its special braiding and fine, flexible copper strands. The phono plugs are precision machined from solid brass and gold plated, and the entire gold plated inner-plug-body-collar firmly fastens the interconnect cable with a secure single-screw fastening cord grip.

Sound quality is superb, but not as invisible as equivalently priced stuff from the likes of van den Hul.

Where as Linn's entry level Black Interconnect has a terrier-like get up-and-go, the Silver Interconnect takes this theme and adds a large dose of sophistication. The result is a great all rounder, that adds just a touch of extra crispness to over-smooth sources, but doesn't severely colour the proceedings. As you'd expect from Linn, there's an extremely bouncy, rhythmic feel to things, with just a touch of dryness

(but only a touch, mind) which complements the rich sound of both Linn's LP12 and CD12 superbly. Cue up Marvin Gaye's 'What's Going On' and you'll get a superbly tuneful, detailed and spacious presentation, with just

a touch of the original recording's 'bloom' removed. Try it with more forward recordings like Herbie Hancock's 'The Prisoner' and things sound a little too thin. Overall, brilliant with smooth sources, but not the most neutral at the price.

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Tel: 044 161 280 5115
www.linn.co.uk

VIBRAPODS £4.75 each

These cute bits of black plastic are designed to fit directly underneath your

equipment, where they're claimed to absorb vibrations and improve the sound. Said to work in both horizontal and vertical planes, they're made to fit at or near the heaviest areas of the equipment's casing and at the edges. Alternatively, if there are no flat areas (such as under some turntables, for example) then you can place your component on a piece of half inch thick MDF and put the Vibrapods underneath.

There are five models available, all of which have different load capacities. You can combine them, so heavy weight-bearing pods go directly under the feet of a heavy unit, while lighter weight bearing pods go

round its centre where there's less apparent load.

You can of course just use three or four (in triangular or rectangular configurations respectively), but the manufacturer recommends more should be used for better sound.

They are also suitable for use under speakers on a wooden floor or paving slab, but not on carpets. Amusingly, if you overload them and squish them into oblivion, the original shape can be restored by placing them on a flat baking tray and cooking them in the oven at 175F for ten minutes. Just don't tell the missus!

Yes, they really work. It always puzzles me why people spend hundreds of pounds on fancy supports when a basic coffee table with a few of these things underneath give such good results in all but the most exacting systems. Quite simply, the sound opens out and gains focus, as well as becoming more relaxed (i.e. less edgy) at the same time. You'll find the bass takes on a life of its own, and things cohere better right across the frequency spectrum. It's a subtle effect, but you can hear the difference every time. In short, these Vibrapods can make an also-ran system sound surprisingly close to a decent one, if you spend enough time placing them correctly under your electronics.

Three Vibrapods and a bit of MDF also makes a dramatic improvement to unsprung turntables (like Regas) too, for ridiculously little money. Fantastic - power to the Pods! ■ ▲



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ARMED & DANGEROUS

This month's Olde Worlde is a treat for all tweakers. 'Ladies and gentlemen, please be upstanding for the Syrinx PU2 tonearm', writes David Price...

Even though we've only reached the June issue, I'll lay odds on this delightful creation being the tweakiest product featured in Olde Worlde this year. The story starts at the end of the seventies with the arrival of Linn's Ittok LVII tonearm. The Tik-Tok put the cat amongst the pigeons in an analogue landscape dominated by the SME 3009S2 (which appeared on virtually every turntable motor unit at the time). There was also the Grace G707, which had been Linn's tube of choice (and indeed imported from Japan by them) before the Ittok hit the shops, but this had achieved only limited sales success. No, if you were a superarm in 1979, the Ittok was your nemesis.

It came as no small surprise then, when a number of dealers, punters and finally hi-fi mags started raving about Scott Strachan's Syrinx PU2. The word was that this curious Edinburgh creation was outperforming the hitherto unassailable Ittok in straight A-B dems in dealer showrooms. More surprising was that it was neither from the established 'old guard' (such as SME, which later came back for revenge with the Series V) or (what was by now becoming) the Linn establishment. Rather, Syrinx Precision Instruments manufactured, ermm, pregnancy scanners and ultrasonic measuring equipment.

The Ittok was always a coloured device. It sucked out some of the richness and tonal vibrancy from recordings, and replaced it with an addictive boom-tizz that made rock music sound exciting, but wasn't so hot with classical or jazz where greater subtlety was required. The Syrinx, by contrast, was an altogether sweeter and more beguiling affair with less braun and more brain. Could it be that the mighty Linn had a rat in their kitchen?

It was a bizarre design. Whereas SME and Linn arms were reasonably

sensible and straightforward to set up and get the best from, fettling a PU2 into optimum alignment was a feat bordering on the Herculean. Part of the problem was that the bearings responsible for lateral movement weren't on the same axis as the vertical ones. Even more unusual was the fact that one side of the horizontal and vertical bearing sets was rubber mounted, and the opposite set was not. The idea was that this provided a single ground path for the energy in each bearing set.

The brass arm tube was a long spindly affair that was completely devoid of a headshell. Again, Syrinx figured that headshells are nasty, bendy, resonant things that were best avoided. To wit, the PU2 featured an aluminium 'headlock', threaded to take cartridge mounting bolts, complete with a fingerlift of sorts (cheers, guys...)

Cartridge alignment was carried out by pushing it up and down the end of the arm tube. In this respect, as in many others, a more annoying design you could not find. Still, in terms of optimising sound quality, it worked a treat. By contrast, the hitherto 'minimalist' Ittok felt like a Sony Biotracer arm complete with remote control stylus pressure and height adjustment!

If this all looks decidedly Heath Robinson, Syrinx surpassed itself with the Mass Ring. Essentially a heavy weight that bolted - by means of three fiddly little allen bolts - onto the rear of the bearing housing, it was a half-hearted attempt to raise the effective mass of the PU2 for it to get the best out of the new breed of moving coil cartridges which were coming into favour. Attaching the Mass Ring onto the PU2 was a process fiddly enough to make neurosurgery look like a quick bit of fun with a scalpel. Come back the Hadcock unipivot, all was forgiven!

By the time the Syrinx was



generally available in 1980, it cost £198.38 plus an additional £22.54 for the Mass Ring. That put it very close to the £.253 Linn Ittok and far, far above the price of its home-grown competition. Properly set up, many believed it to be better, with a more 'unipivot-like' sound that made vinyl sing like nothing before. The good news is that while second-hand Ittoks still go for over £130 in the classifieds, used PU2s can be had for as little as £30. So, if you're an inveterate fiddler, you can pick up an amazing bargain. Finally, most arms of the PU2's vintage will benefit from rewiring - the good news is that Origin Live do a basic (but excellent) service from as little as £30. Find a Syrinx, refurbish it and burn the midnight oil setting up the darned thing, and you'll have a great arm at a fraction of the price! ■ ▲

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welcome to world favourites

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

Prices shown are those at the time of the review



Roksan Caspian CD player
Solid as a ROK

COMPACT DISC

ARCAM FMJ CD23 £1100
This British-built player is extremely versatile. Controlled and detailed with a musical insight that few match. (Jul 2000)

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

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

LINN KARIK III* £1775
Under rated and overlooked, the final Karik was a gem. Superb transport gives a brilliantly tight, grippy dynamic sound, albeit tonally rather dry.

MARANTZ CD-17 KI-S £1100
The Marantz excels in all areas. Without doubt this is one of the most involving CD players on the planet. Build quality is also exemplary. (Sep 97)

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

MERIDIAN 506 20-BIT* £1100
Very detailed and revealing player. More cerebral than visceral sounding, however. (May 95)

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

NAD S500 £1000
This dynamic top of the range Silverline spinner delights with any type of music. Exciting, sophisticated sounding and highly recommended. (Jun 2000)

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

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

COMPACT DISC TRANSPORTS

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

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

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

DACS

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

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

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

MIDIMAN FLYING COW £299
Excellent as a DAC and doubles as an ADC for archiving to CDR. (Jun 98) Great value, as is junior version Flying Calf at £109. (Feb 99)

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

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

TURNTABLES

LINN SONDEK LP12 BASIK £1100
Off the pace these days in many respects but still an extremely sweet and engaging listen with a quintessentially analogue sound.

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

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

ORIGIN LIVE STANDARD (KIT) £145
Good in standard form with AC motor; frighteningly good with a DC motor and battery PSU.

PINK TRIANGLE TARANTELLA £680
Not only does the Tarantella have more style than a catwalk full of models, it also combines PT's usual clarity with real authority. (Oct 97)

PRO-JECT DEBUT £110
Straight out of the box and onto the shelf! Nothing short of a bargain. Vinyl's never had it so good, so cheaply!

REGA PLANAR 2 £214
Brilliant starter deck with extremely polished manner. Better built £274 Planar 3 is a great all-in-one package that eats mid-price CD players for breakfast.

ROKSAN XERXES X £1295
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SYSTEMDEK IIX900*/RB250 £330
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VESTAX BDT-2000 £225
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TONEARMS

HADCOCK 242 SE £649
Latest of a long line of unipivot arms. Added mass makes the 242 suitable for both low compliance MCs and straw-in-the-wind high compliance types. Revised geometry and chromium plating completes a first-class job. (Jun 2000)

NAIM ARO* £975
Truly endearing and charismatic performer - wonderfully engaging mid-band makes up for softened frequency extremes

REGA RB300 £180
Some may prefer the simpler RB250 at £130. Detailed, tight, rhythmic sound but tonally rather grey and cold-sounding. Still excellent value, though.

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Prices shown are those at the time of the review



Musical Fidelity X-Cans2
Warm, sumptuous, sweet sound

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

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

CARTRIDGES

AUDIO TECHNICA AT-110E £30
Great starter cartridge that's refined, detailed and musical beyond its price. Best value MM under £50.

GOLDRING 1012GX £74
An accomplished MM with a solid bass, slightly forward midband and clean transients. Very reasonable price for such an able performer. (Jul 93)

DNM MICA £185
Beaters Goldring's 1042 and costs only £135 on trade-in. An assured and transparent MM. (Feb 96)

DYNAVECTOR DV20X-H £299
The best modern budget MC combines deliciously sweet sound with fantastic get-up-and-go. High output version works a treat with valve phono stages too.

MUSIC MAKER £575
When mated with a good quality arm, this hand finished high-output pick-up gives an ear-boggling account of itself. Very high compliance ensures maximum information retrieval. An absolute (grain orientated) gem. (Feb 99)

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

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

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

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

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS

AUDIO ANALOGUE PUCCINI SE £595
This superbly-built Italian integrated has a lucidity and control which leaves others nowhere. Sound stage a wow. (Dec 97)

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

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

McINTOSH MA6800* £3735
The MA6800 not so much plays music as takes control of it, with effortless bass drive. (Sep 95)

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

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-CANS2 £160
Warm, sumptuous, sweet sound h/phone amp gives startling results with a decent set of headphones.

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

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

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

PHONO STAGES

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

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

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

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-LP £125
One of the famous MF X series. Full marks throughout for clarity and detail. Switchable between MM and MC. Indestructible build! (May 99)

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

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

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world favourites I

SONNETEER SEDLEY £399

Combines transparency and fine dynamics with excellent rhythmic ability. (May 98)

PRE-AMPLIFIERS

AMC 1100 £150

Suffers from un-defeatable tone controls but an extremely good value piece of kit. Partners the similarly budget level AMC 2200 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 98)

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 96)

POWER AMPLIFIERS

ARCAM 9 * £400

With 70W on tap, the 9P 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 monoblocs still more than cut the sonic mustard. Highly expensive and highly sought after. (Mar 97)

MICHELL ALECTO £1989

Crisp, clean and beautifully controlled with gorgeous styling. Partnered with the £1650 Orca this is a superb winning combo. (Oct 98)

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-A200£1000/pair

200W of high-end monobloc power in a grooved tube. (Aug 98)

NAIM NAPI80 £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 Troughline, but you may not notice... (Feb 99)

CREEK T43 £399

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

MARANTZ ST17 £600

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

MISSION CYRUS FM7* £300

Clear and lucid sound puts it up with the best. Superb build too. (Apr 94)

NAIM NAT03 £595

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

SONY ST-SA3ES* £250

Beguiling RDS tuner for the sonically discerning. Good ergonomics and sensitive too. (Apr 97)

CASSETTE DECKS

AIWA AD-S750* £200

Sonically a very decent machine at the price. Comes fitted with Dolby B, C and the dead handy Dolby S. (Apr 96)

AIWA AD-S950* £300

A stable transport, superb head and Dolby S make the AD-S950 an excellent all-rounder. (Feb 95)

KENWOOD KX-3080* £160

A simple deck, but excellent-quality head and transport give top quality sound. (Oct 96)

PIONEER CT-S740S £430

A great piece of engineering from Pioneer, with first-rate sound. (Jun 96)

YAMAHA KX-580SE* £250

The 'SE' tag is more than a marketing gimmick. Sound is solid and clear with Dolby S. (Sep 97)

LOUDSPEAKERS

CASTLE EDEN £469

Impressively vice-free 'speakers that offer great transparency and involvement. One of a select band that simply makes music regardless. (Mar 97)

EPOS ES12 * £495

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



Kef Cresta I loudspeakers
A very musical sound

KEF CRESTA I £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. Benign load characteristics makes them great for valves.

MISSION 771 £170

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

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Linn AV 5103 DTS Preamp (RF Demod) £3395

Linn CD12 CD Player normal price £12000
Linn AV 5103 Preamp normal price £5100

QUAD ESL 63 * £3450
A reference against which all other loudspeakers are judged, the '63s have superb imaging and genuine transparency.

TANNOY AMS8 * £2700
Bold sounding pro active monitor with solid bass, clear midrange and delicious treble. (Aug 96)

TANNOY MERCURY m2 * £110
A true audiophile bargain which embarrasses many more expensive boxes. Never mind the price, let your ears decide. (May 97)

MINIDISC PLAYERS

KENWOOD DM-9090 £500
One of the best MD players yet. ATRAC 4.S gives clean and very musical recordings from this Kenwood. (Jan 98)

SONY MDS-JB930Q £250
Great mid-price machine that adds better build and facilities to the 'S30's already excellent sonics.

SONY MDS-JA50ES * £1300
This Sony can put the wind up Nakamichi cassette decks when used with better blank MDs. (Apr 98)

SONY MDS-JE55ES
MiniDisc recorder £520
The best sounding MD deck made so far, thanks to awesome build and heroic ATRAC-DSP Type R coding.



Alesis Masterdisk
A glimpse of the future

SONY MDS-JE510 £300
An impressive sound and unmatched convenience make this MiniDisc player an excellent buy.

DIGITAL RECORDERS

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)

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 recoder 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-555RW £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.

DVD PLAYERS

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

PIONEER DV-717 £700
Well built and a solid performer, with a 'true' 24/96 digital output. Facilities in abundance and a controlled, exciting way with CD replay. Shame it lacks a Dolby Digital decoder! (Sep 99)

SONY DVP-S725 £490
One of the best buys in the DVD market. Available in a dodgy white case, but the facilities and performance more than make up for this. Excellent with both music and visuals, and a whole host of up to the minute facilities to keep you occupied. (Mar 2000)

HEADPHONES

JEKLIEN 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!

SENNHEISER HD-490 £50
Good value cans with an exciting and bassy sound. Everything one should look for in headphones at a sensible price.



Nordost Blue Heaven
A simple and effective upgrade

INTERCONNECTS

CHORD COMPANY CHAMELEON 2 £90/m
One of our favourite favourites, the Chameleons are musical performers with a smooth yet open sound.

DNM RESON £40/m
Neutral and transparent, and a steal at forty quid!

NORDOST BLUE HEAVEN £150/m
Some of the fastest and most transparent cable around. A simple and effective upgrade.

VAN DEN HUL ULTIMATE THE FIRST £260/0.6m
Carbon interconnects that help you forget the electronics and concentrate on the music. Miraculous transparency.

LOUDSPEAKER CABLE

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.

NORDOST BLUE HEAVEN £375/3m pair
This isn't cheap, but it sounds absolutely fab. An open and spacious sound that simply carries music.

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Arcam Alpha 10 DAB Tuner	(799.00)	£569.00	Nakamichi DVD10s Reg0 DVD (2Yr G/tee) .(599.00)	£395.00
AVI Biggatron Speakers	(599.00)	£349.00	Naim CDI CD Player S/H (1Yr G/tee)	(1650.00) £929.00
KEF Concerto 1 Spkrs (5Yr G/tee)	(599.00)	£359.00	Naim Nait 3R Amp (1Yr G/tee)	(799.00) £569.00
KEF Concerto 2 Spkrs (5Yr G/tee)	(799.00)	£499.00	Naim AV1 Surround Procs E/D (2Yr G/tee) .(1835.00)	£795.00
Linn Qudos Tuner ("Yr G/tee)	(775.00)	£499.00	Naim SBL Passive Speakers S/H (1Yr G/tee)(2475.00)	£1295.00
Linn AV5103 RF Demod DTS Preamp(2Yr) .(5100.00)	£3395.00		Naim SNAXO 2/4 Crossover S/H (1Yr G/tee) (770.00)	£375.00
Linn CD12 CD Player E/D (2Yr G/tee)	(12000.00)	£7995.00	Naim Credo Speakers (2Yr G/tee)	(1285.00) £895.00
Linn Keilidh Spkrs Black inc Stands	(885.00)	£699.00	ProAc Response 2 Spkrs S/H (1Yr G/tee) .(1995.00)	£1190.00
Linn Kaber Passive S/H(1Yr G/te)	(2000.00)	£795.00	PMC LB1 Speakers (2Yr G/tee)	(1150.00) £825.00
Marantz DV4000 DVD Player (2Yr G/tee) . .(399.00)	£259.00		Rega Luna Amplifier (2Yr G/tee)	(375.00) £249.00
Marantz CD 6000 Ki CD Player (2Yr G/tee) .(499.00)	£359.00		Rega Jura Speakers (2Yr G/tee)	(498.00) £329.00
Marantz PM 6010 Ki Amplifier (2Yr G/tee) .(499.00)	£349.00		Yamaha DSP A5 AV Amplifier	(349.00) £269.00

World Classics

CASSETTE

NAKAMICHI DR-2

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

NAKAMICHI CR-7

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

YAMAHA TC-800G

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

CD PLAYERS

MERIDIAN 207

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

PIONEER PD-91

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

CAMBRIDGE CD1

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

AMPLIFIERS

LEAK POINT ONE, TL12 & TL10

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

LEAK PRE-AMPS

Line of 'good for their time' pre-amps. Use of EF86 pentode valve for high gain rules out ultra performance. Not the highest-fi.



Garrard 401
A legendary turntable.

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+

Plentiful monobloc equivalent of Stereo 20. Reasonably inexpensive and a tweekers' dream. Genuine valve hi-fi on a budget.

NAD 3020

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

QUAD 33/303 PRE/POWER

Great style and construction, also bullet proof. Warm and wooly sound, but easy going. A good introduction to early transistor audio classics.

QUAD 22/II PRE/POWER

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

SUGDEN A21

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

TECHNICS SE-A5 Mk2

Nice transformer and electronics, shame about the casework. With tweaking, this 150watter can sound sweet.

LOUDSPEAKERS

KLIPSCHORN

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

LEAK SANDWICH

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

LOWTHER PM6A

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

MAGNEPLANAR SMGa

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

MISSION 770

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

QUAD ESL57

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

YAMAHA NS1000M

Hi-tech favourites of the Japanese and Americans. Viewed more warily in the UK but can give excellent results.

TANNOY GRF & AUTOGRAPH

Folded horn monsters which certainly sound good if you have the space. For Tannoy vintage see HFW November 1998.

WHARFEDALE SUPER 8 RS DD

Ideal experimenters' driver. High sensitivity ~14,000 Gauss magnet and extended frequency range. Inexpensive too!

TANNOY YORK, LANCASTER

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

VINYL

ACOS LUSTRE

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

ALPHASON HRI00S

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

ARISTON RD11

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

LINN AXIS

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

GARRARD 301 & 401

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

GOLDRING LENCO 88 & 99

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

HADCOCK 228

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

MICHELL FOCUS ONE

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

SHURE M75

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

SME 3009 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? Judging by the prices they fetch it's possible - 78rpm too!

THORENS TD150

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

TRIO L-07D

Knockout heavyweight from 1980 with stainless bearing and 11lb platter! Not a give-away and beware! - spares scarce.

TUNERS

LEAK TROUGHLINE (ORIGINAL)

Interesting ornament but no longer hi-fi. Limited coverage of 88MHz to 100MHz only.

LEAK TROUGHLINE II & III MONO

Arguably the best-sounding tuners ever. Adaptation for stereo easy via phono multiplex socket.

LEAK TROUGHLINE III STEREO

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

MARANTZ ST-8

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



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PREAMPS

Musica Fidelity MV7 P Amplifier with Phono stage & PSU
Musica Fidelity The Pre-amp
Michell Argo line level pre-amp
Lumley passive pre-amp
Gasse CP35 remote pre-amp balanced
Burmester 785 with phono stage
2 Channel digital pre-amp
Audio Research phono 1 phono stage MM & ML
Exposure 21 Pre-amp NEW with remote

AMPLIFIERS

Mark Levinson ML334 Power Amplifier (5 year guarantee)
Meridian 605 Mono Blocks

Sugden Audion P Power Amplifier
Sugden AD51p amplifier
Pioneer PD-S505 Precision CD Player
Rogers E40a Integrated Amplifier with phono-stage (NEW)
Exposure 1112 Super 8
Cello Performance 11 Mono amplifiers
Audionote P4 Monoblocks
Adcom GFA 5300 Power amp

CD PLAYERS & TRANSPORT

Teac X1 Balanced CD Player
Classe COP 5 HD CD Balanced CD Player
Mark Levinson ML39 CD Player (ex demo) full guarantee
Pioneer PD-S505 Precision CD Player
Cec TL Zero Mk2 CD Transport
ICost new £12300, 2nd or 3rd old (Stereophile Class A1 recommended)
Denon DCD660 CD Player
Mark Levinson ML37 CD Transport

DAC'S

Mark Levinson ML360S DAC
PG Audio U11 Pro D/A Processor
Cello Reference DAC
LFD DAC 3
Audio Synthesis DAX

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£595
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MISCELLANEOUS

Graham Azimuth Adjustment Device £65
Revolver turntable with Linn Bas x arm £195
Musica Fidelity X Cans Headphone Amplifier (MINT/BOXED) £99
Quad FM4 Tuner £249
Teac A-33405 Tape recorder £595
Selections of MIT cables available at discounted prices

TURNABLES, CARTRIDGES & TONEARMS

Revolver Turntable with linn basic arm £195
Linn LP12 with Rega Tone-Arm and Avondale PSU £495
Luxman PD 282 Turntable £75
Heius Silver wired tonearm £995
VPI T11 Turntable £2695
Thorens TD125 Turntable £295

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your choice

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- Advantage
- Alon
- ATC
- Audible Illusions
- Audio Physics
- B.A.T
- Boulder
- Bryston
- Cary
- C.A.T.
- Chord
- Clear Audio
- Denon
- DNM
- Dynavector
- Egglaston Works
- Electrograph Delphi
- Genelec
- Gryphon
- Graham
- Helios
- J M Lab
- John Shearn
- Krell
- Lexicon
- Loewe
- Mark Levinson
- Michell Eng.
- Musical Fidelity
- NEC
- Nordost
- Oracle
- Plinius
- P.M.C.
- Primare
- Quadraspire
- Seleco
- REL
- Rockport
- Roksan
- Ruark
- Shahinian
- SME
- Straight Wire
- Sugden
- Tara Labs
- Teac
- Thule
- Totem
- Transfiguration
- Trichord
- Trilogy
- Van den Hul
- VPI
- Wilson Audio
- Wilson Research
- YBA

H I - F I

HOME CINEMA

MULTIROOM INSTALL

RESELL

New this month

POWER AMPLIFIER

	Our Price	Original Retail Price
Krell FPB 350 Mc Monoblocks	£12,500.00	£18,900.00
Krell 250 A/3 3 Chanel amp	£2,995.00	£4,698.00

SPEAKERS

Audio Physics Steps and Stands	£899.00	£1,300.00
Audio Plan Contrast 3	£1,795.00	£3,200.00

CD PLAYERS & DACS

YBA CD1 Alpha	£3,495.00	£5,000.00
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TURNTABLES, ANALOGUE, VARIOUS

SME Series IV Tonearm	£750.00	£1,150.00
Naim Nat 02 Tuner	£695.00	£1,100.00
Pink Triangle PT Too Ref Platter & bearing/ SME IV/ Lyra Clavis	£1,695.00	£3,100.00
Linn LP12/ Cirkus/ Ittok LVII	£695.00	£ -

AV COMPONENTS/TV/Plasma

Krell HTS (AV Processor)	£4,495.00	£6,498.00
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Pre amplifiers

YBA 2 Alpha Pre mm/mc	£On Dem	£2,200.00
Trilogy 901 Pre	£549.00	£995.00
Krell KSL + Phono	£1,295.00	£ -
Mark Levinson 380S	£3,995.00	£6,495.00
Naim Hi Cap	£350.00	£ -
Cary 5LP 50	£795.00	£1,195.00
YBA Pre I Alpha & psu mm/mc	£ On Dem	£4,900.00
YBA Passion Pre + mc	£On Dem	£5,595.00
Boulder 2010 Pre	£p.o.a.	£25,000.00
Plinius I6L	£On Dem	£3,200.00
Krell KSL pre	£1,295.00	£ -
Audible Illusions L1	£1,595.00	£2,000.00
C.A.T. ultimate reference Pre Amp Inc/ Phono Stage X-Demo	£4,895.00	£5,750.00
Tube Tech Seer Pre Amp	£595.00	£935.00
Audible Illusions P3A Pre MM/MC	On demo	£3,140.00
Audio Research L59	£1,995.00	£2,500.00
Electrocompaniet EC 4.5 (new)	£895.00	£1,195.00
Exposure VII	£295.00	£600.00
Exposure XI pre XII psu	£795.00	£1,500.00
Jeff Rowland Constate + phono (3box)	£3,750.00	£8,000.00
Mark Levinson No 28	£1,750.00	£4,000.00
Naim 42.5	£195.00	£450.00

Quality speakers

JM Lab 810 New	£POA	£799.00
JM Lab 815 New	£POA	£999.00
JM Lab 807 New	£POA	£599.00
JM Lab 515 New	£POA	£499.00
Proac Response 3.5 Cherry	£2,250.00	£4,250.00
Proac Response 3 Rosewood	£1,495.00	£ -
Sonus Faber Guarneri + Stds	£3,995.00	£6,000.00
Avalon Ascents	£6,995.00	£12,000.00
JM Lab Micro Utopia	£On dem	£3,899.00
JM Lab Mini Utopia	£On dem	£4,500.00
JM Lab Mezzo Utopia	£On dem	£7,300.00
B & W Nautilus 801	£6,995.00	£8,500.00
JM Lab Electra 915.1	Ex Dem	£1,895.00
Audio Physics Tempo III	£On Dem	£2,000.00
Cadence Arca	£6,995.00	£10,000.00
Naim SBL's	£1,695.00	£2,225.00
BC Acoustics Tibre	£795.00	£1,100.00
ClaraVox Magnifica	£9,500.00	£14,500.00
BC Acoustics Araxe	£895.00	£1,195.00
Ensemble Speakers PA1	£995.00	£2,000.00
Acoustic Energy AE120	£350.00	£500.00
Alon Adriana (new)	Special	£10,000.00
Alon V MK III	Special	£5,500.00
Audio Physics Caldera	On demo	£10,000.00
Audio Physics Libra	X-demo	£4,799.00
Audio Physics Rhea Sub	£2,350.00	£3,099.00
Audio Physics Spark	On demo	£1,749.00
Audio Physics Steps	On demo	£999.00
Audio Physics Virgo	£2,395.00	£3,295.00
Orelle Swings	£695.00	£1,200.00
Rogers LS55 (new)	£330.00	£430.00
Wilson Cubs	£4,995.00	£6,000.00
Wilson System 5.1	£8,500.00	£18,000.00

Power amplifiers

Jadis JA30 Monoblocks	£2,495.00	£6,000.00
Trilogy 948 Stereo	£1,295.00	£2,000.00
Audio Note P2 SC	£850.00	£1,500.00
Graff GM200	£4,750.00	£8,000.00
ML 436 Mono Power Amps	£10,500.00	£12,000.00
Advantage M300 Monoblocks	£2,750.00	£4,000.00
Cello Duette 350	£4,995.00	£10,000.00
Cary SLA 70 mk II/70	£1,450.00	£2,250.00
YBA 2 Alpha amp (DT, HC)	£2,295.00	£3,050.00
Audio Refinement Complete Amp	£695.00	£895.00
Audio Research VT200	£7,795.00	£9,998.00
Audio Research Ref 600 mk II	£29,995.00	£ -
YBA Passion Monoblocks	£On Dem	£8,995.00
YBA Passion Stereo	£On Dem	£5,995.00
Krell FPB 300c	£8,500.00	£9,998.00
Krell FPB 200c	£7,500.00	£8,450.00

Sunfire 300 Power Amp	£1,495.00	£2,400.00
Plinius 50s	£On Dem	£3,000.00
Krell FPB 250M Monoblocks	£7,990.00	£10,796.00
Krell FPB 200	£4,750.00	£7,000.00
Plinius 250 mk IV	£Dem	£6,000.00
Audio Note Kasi	£14,950.00	£30,000.00
Cary 805 C Monoblocks	On Demo	£8,250.00
Lavardin Model IS Integrated x 2	£995.00	£1,495.00
Boulder 500 AE	£3,495.00	£5,500.00
Audio Note Neiro (as new)	£7,995.00	£16,500.00
Audio Note Ongaku (new)	p.o.a.	£45,000.00
Cary 300 se LX20 Monoblocks	£3,750.00	£5,250.00
Cary 572 se Monoblocks	£1,750.00	£2,350.00
Counterpoint SA12	£795.00	£1,400.00
Exposure IX Power supply	£795.00	£1,500.00
Exposure VIII	£450.00	£700.00
Jadis Defy 7 MK III	£2,000.00	£4,790.00
John Shearn Reference Phase 3 Power Amp	£550.00	£749.00
Kenwood L1000C pre/ L1000M Power Amp	£1,195.00	£2,500.00
Krell FPB 300	£6,500.00	£9,990.00
Krell FPB 600 c	£9,995.00	£14,994.00
Meracus Intrare 6 (int) X-demo	£1,795.00	£2,000.00
Sugden AU51	£995.00	£1,500.00
Pioneer A300 Int	£90.00	£180.00
YBA 3x Pre/PWR	£1,295.00	£2,400.00

CDplayers & DACS

YBA CD Speciale	£495.00	£675.00
Theta Data II/ Progen III Bal	£2,750.00	£8,500.00
Advantage CD 51	£2,750.00	£4,000.00
Thule Spirit CD 150B	£ On Dem	£899.95
Audio Refinement CD Complete	£650.00	£875.00
Wadia 860	£5,495.00	£8,500.00
Teac P30	£1895.00*	£2,500.00
Boulder 2020 dac	£p.o.a.	£24,000.00
California Audio Lab Sigma II dac	£1,495.00	£2,400.00
/California Audio Lab Delta Trans		
Cyrus Dac Master &	£450.00	£899.00
Cyrus Disc Master	£495.00	£899.00
Forsell Air Ref Transport MK II	£4,995.00	£8,000.00
Helios Model 3	£450.00	£700.00
Krell KAV 250 CD	£1,895.00	£2,599.00
Krell KAV 300 CD	£2,750.00	£4,290.00
Krell KPS 25sc	£18,995.00	£23,498.00
Marantz CD14	£1,295.00	£1,699.00
Mark Levinson 30.5/31	£11,500.00	£24,000.00
Mark Levinson No.39	£4,250.00	£5,000.00
Micromega CD 3.1	£1,095.00	£1,995.00
Oracle CD 2000 Transport	P.O.A.	£7,299.00
Pink Triangle Da Capo	£795.00	£1,595.00
Teac P500	£395.00	£600.00
Theta Data II Transport AT + link	£1,995.00	£4,000.00
YBA CD Integre	On Demo	£1,095.00

AV components

Harmon Kardon AVPI	£250.00	£ -
Pioneer CLD 2850 Laserdisc	£250.00	£ -
Thule PR250B DTS/ Dolby	£On Dem	£1,549.95
Thule PA250B 5 Channel Amp	£On Dem	£1,549.95

TELEVISIONS & DVD PLAYERS BY LOEWE

Loewe DVD	On Demo	£495.00
Loewe Aconda	-	POA
Loewe Planus + Std	-	POA
Loewe Xelos + Std	-	POA
Loewe L2A Active Speakers	-	POA

PLASMAS

From NEC	-	POA
From Electrograph Delphi	-	POA

Turtables & analogue

TURNTABLES/ ANALOGUE/ VARIOUS

Rockport Capella/ Air Tangent 2B/ Clear Audio Insider	£11,995.00	£17,000.00
Roksan Shiraz (New)	£550.00	£1,000.00
Transparent Music Wave Ultra 8ft Pair	£1,495.00	£2,100.00
Ortofon MC 3000 mk II	£695.00	£1,000.00
Voyd Reference/ IO Limited/psu/ reference psu/ step up	£12,999.00	£25,000.00
Plinius I4 Phono	£1,995.00	£2,750.00
Transparent Audio Music Wave Ultra XL Bi-Wire	£2,100.00	£3,200.00
Cary PH301 MM/MC	£995.00	£1,695.00
Koetsu Red K Sig.	£1,295.00	£2,000.00
Michell Orbe	£1,395.00	£2,000.00
SME V Gold (Silver Wired)	£1,595.00	£2,500.00
Nackamichi DR 3	£225.00	£400.00
Ortofon MC7500 Cart. (NEW)	£1,295.00	£2,000.00
Nakamichi 202E	£295.00	£600.00
Tom Evans - The Groove	£On Dem	£1,500.00
Clear Audio Reference Mc phono stage X-demo	£1,695.00	£2,065.00
Rega Planer 3 + Hi-Fi News Out Board Power Supply	£320.00	£423.00
Clear Audio Symphono phono stage X-demo MM/MC	£640.00	£740.00
Lavardin Reference Phono	£ -	£2,500.00
Musical Fidelity XLP2	£395.00	£495.00
Oracle MK V Turntable	P.O.A.	£4,199.00

Clearance items

Burmester 850 Monoblocks	£1,295.00	£3,000.00
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NAIM SBL BLACK EX DEM PASSIVE	£1495	XD
NAIM 180 POWER AMP	£795	SH
NAIM 92/90 PRE/POWER AMP EX DEM	£750	SH
NAIM 90.3 POWER AMP	£450	SH
NAIM 72 PREAMP	£495	XD
NAIM FLATCAP EX DEM	£250	XD
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THETA PROGENY	£795	SH
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KRELL KAV300 CD PLAYER EX DEM	£2995	XD
KRELL KAV300i CD AS NEW	£3450	SH
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ALCHEMIST TS-D1 24 BIT DAC	299	225
AVI S2000MC 24 BIT CD PLAYER SEALED BOX	999	895
ALPHASON AKROS 2 SPEAKER STANDS BOXED	65	40
AV1 S2000 MM MONOBLOCKS SEALED BOX	1399	1225
AVI S2000MT11 AM/FM REFERENCE TUNER SEALED BOX	899	750
EAR MC3 MC TRANSFORMER	629.95	495
DALI ROYAL MENUET MK2 CHERRY FINISH	399.95	295
DALI EVIDENCE C70 CENTRE SPEAKER	399.95	325
HEYBROOK QUARTET ROSEWOOD FINISH	550	295
LAT AC2 6 WAY DISTRIBUTION BLOCK 3 FT	194	170
LAT AC2 POWER CABLE 3 FT	65	55
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TALK ELECTRONIC THUNDER 1 CD PLAYER	599.95	495
NAIM 01 TUNER BOXED	1800	1095
NAIM CDX CD PLAYER	2300	1800
MICHELL GYRODECK SE/RB300 MINT BOXED	975	895
MICHELL AHGO/HEHA PRE/FSU		325
TALK ELECTRONIC CYCLONE 1 INT AMP R/C	599.95	495
MICHELL ALECTO MONOBLOCKS	1989	1599
TRICHORD RESEARCH DINO MM/MC PHONO STAGE NEW		299
NAIM 72 PRE		395
MICHELL ORBE SEALED BOX	1995	1800
MICHELL ORCA PRE AMP	1286	1100
MONRIO ASTY INT AMP MINT/BOXED	425	225
LINN PRETEK MM/MC PHONO		150
MICHELL QC POWER SUPPLY/BOXED	419	375
EAR 834P CHROME MM/MC PHONO MINT/BOXED	740	600
NAIM 250 POWER AMP	1750	1095
ATACAMA SE 24 SPEAKER STANDS NEW	75	65
LAT POWER CABLE AC2 NEW	41	35
LAT SS800 SPEAKER CABLE 5MTR NEW	206	175
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NAIM HICAM NEW STYLE		475
LAT IC100 MK2 1 METRE BOXED	105	90
LINN INTEK INT AMP/BOXED		150
QUAD 405 MK 2 POWER AMP		225
MARK LEVINSON 27.5 POWER AMP		3500
KRELL KAV 300 CD /BOXED	4200	2995
MERIDIAN 501 PRE/MSR		425
PRECIOUS METALS SILVER SIGNAL 202B BALANCED	430	295
PRECIOUS METALS SILVER SIGNAL 204 INTERCONNECT 1 METRE	430	295
JAMO CONCERT 8 SPEAKERS	1400	895
LINN KARIK CD PLAYER		799
MERIDIAN 500 TRANSPORT	1325	995
PSB ALPHA 6 ACTIVE SUBWOOFER	499.95	425
PROJECT CLASSIC/PROJECT9/510 CHERRY MINT	450	295
LAT 8 WAY DISTRIBUTION BLOCK 3 FT	226	195
PROJECT PERSPECTIVE/PROJECT 9 ARM BOXED MINT	750	495
AVI PRONINE MONITOR SPEAKER SEALED BOX	699	625
MERIDIAN 206B CD/REMOTE/BOXED		325
SONICLINK VIOLET INTERCONNECT (OFF THE REEL)		15 PER METRE
PROAC RESPONSE 1S BOXED INC STANDS		725
STAX SRS 2020 MK2 EARSPEAKERS	395	325
TARGET MX100 SPEAKER STANDS PIANO BLACK	79	60
TRICHORD RESEARCH 500 POWERBLOCK	299	265
SUMIKO BLUE POINT SPECIAL MC NEW UNUSED	249	225
SONETEER THE BYRON CD PLAYER	795	645
SONETEER THE SEDLEY PHONO STAGE MM/MC	399	325
NAIM CD3 BOXED	1000	495
LYRA LYDIAN BETA MC CARTRIDGE	599	495
SONICLINK 8 WAY DISTRIBUTION BLOCK 2 METRE CABLE	225	175
TOM EVANS MICROGROOVE MM PHONOSTAGE	400	295
EAR 834P MM/MC PHONOSTAGE	529	450

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S/hand and ex-demo clearance items - June '01

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CD Players & DAC'S		
Accuphase DG28 Digital Equaliser S/H	5690	3750
Audio Analogue Paganini CD Player S/H	750	549
Audio Note CD2/Border Patrol PSU Ex-Demo	1694	1199
Densen Beat 400 CD player HDCD S/H	1280	899
Einstein Valve CD Player Ex-Demo	2899	1899
Mark Levinson 31.5 Transport S/H	9500	5999
Monrio Astly CD Player Ex-demo	695	549
Naim Audio CDS/CDPS S/H	5300	2295
Roksan DA2 DAC S/H	599	299
Teac T1 Transport S/H	599	299
Roksan DP2T Transport S/H	1295	599
Theta David II CD/DVD Transport (4 Months old) S/H	5698	4500
Theta Digital Pro Prime II DAC S/H	1699	599

	Was	Now
Turntables Tonearms & Cartridges		
Basis 1400/RB250 (New & Boxed)	1200	899
Basis 2000/RB300 (New & Boxed)	2000	1599
Garrard 401/Aphelion/RB300 Ex-Demo	N/A	599
Linn Sondek LP12/Black/Rega RB200/Goldring1020 S/H	N/A	349
Roksan Radius 3 Turntable (98) Ex-Demo	470	250
Roksan Xerxes Piano Lacquer XPS 1 (SME Cut) S/H	1295	399

	Was	Now
Preamplifiers		
Alchemist Forsetti Signature Preamplifier S/H	1500	749
Audio Research LS22 VT Line Preamplifier with Remote S/H	3999	2250
Conrad Johnson PV 10 A Ex-demo	1399	899
Conrad Johnson PV 12 A Ex-demo	2300	1799
Densen DM20 Preamplifier Ex-Demo	1380	899
Einstein Valve Preamplifier Ex-Demo	6000	2999
Graaf WFB2 Preamplifier (Hybrid with Phono) S/H	1350	995
Naim Audio NAC 52/NAPS S/H	5600	2395
Michell ArgoHR/Hera Preamplifier S/H	N/A	479

	Was	Now
Amplifiers		
Alchemist Forsetti Signature Power Amplifier S/H	2000	1395
Arcam Alpha 10 Integrated Phono/Remote S/H	850	499
Audio Analogue Puccini SE Integrated S/H	635	449
Bow Technologies Wazoo XL Integrated S/H	2499	1895
Chord SPM1400B 400W Mono Blocks (Silver) S/H	11200	5999
DNM PA3S Stereo Power Amplifier 6 months old S/H	2999	2495
Naim Audio NAP135 (Old style) S/H	3200	1599
Graaf 50/50 Push Pull Power amplifier (New&Boxed)	2100	1695
Graaf GM100 Power Amplifier (New&Boxed)	4450	3299
Jadis Defy 7 100W Stereo Power Amplifier (Re-Valved) S/H	4790	2499
Krell KAV 300I Integrated S/H	2790	1799
Pass Labs Aleph 4 100W Class A Stereo S/H	5100	2750
Primare A30.1 Integrated Ex-Demo	1500	1099
Rega Maia Power Amplifier Ex-Demo	475	349
Sugden SP30 Class A Stereo Power Amplifier S/H	950	599

	Was	Now
Loudspeakers		
Audio Note AN-K/SP Light Ash Loudspeakers Ex-Demo	1070	629
Audio Note AN-Z Two Floor standers (Black) Ex-Demo	549	395
Boston Acoustics VR 10 Centre Channel (New&Boxed)	250	175
Diapason Karis Walnut 2 Way Monitor (New&Boxed)	1250	899
Infinity Outtrigger jr Outdoor Speakers (New&Boxed)	249	129
JM Lab Colbalt 807 Cherry Monitors Ex-Demo	595	425
JM Lab Colbalt 815 Dark Cherry Floor standers Ex-Demo	950	749
Martin Logan SL3 Hybrid Electrostatics S/H	3400	2299
Royd Sourceror Walunt Bookshelf S/H	650	379
Sonus Faber Concerto Walnut Ex-Demo	899	699

	Was	Now
Loudspeakers (con't)		
Totem Mani 2Reference Monitors S/H	3300	1999
Velodyne TX810MK2 Subwoofer S/H	695	379

	Was	Now
Cables & Accessories		
Audio Sculpture 2m RCA Interconnect Ex-Demo	380	149
Bow Technologies Wand Remote S/H	349	199
Deskadel 1M Interconnects WBT/RCA S/H	300	150
Einstein Octopus 8 Way Mains Block (Ex-Demo)	199	149
G- Flex isolators (New & Boxed)	199	75
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Naim Audio NAC A5 2X6m S/H	N/A	50
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Vdh Skytrack 2X4M Bi-wire Speaker Cable S/H	75	39

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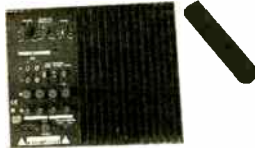
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MEASURED PERFORMANCE

LOUDSPEAKERS

WILSON BENESCH DISCOVERY

The Discovery uses a woven carbon fibre cone bass/midrange unit and carbon fibre cabinets. This approach finds a lot of sympathy with me, since carbon fibre can, used properly in a drive unit, give a superb sound and making the cabinet of the same material harmonises the acoustic signatures of both sources. To achieve a good sense of cohesion this is the way to go about things. The converse, where many different materials are used, like Kevlar bass/mid with a metal dome tweeter, in a wooden cabinet, gives a disjointed sound. High fidelity can be both a science and an art; its best practitioners understand the artistic side and it is in such carefully wrought balances that really superb sound quality can be attained.

Measured frequency response of this loudspeaker was remarkably flat, and although the cabinet is not large, output was well maintained right down to 40Hz -

MISSION m73

A glance at Mission's m73 frequency response shows it is flat within a few dB across most of the audio band. In practice I move the measuring microphone vertically over a reasonable "listening arc" to check phase matching of the drivers and they were tightly matched together here. The m73 is well integrated and has no crossover suckout to soften the sound, a feature that contributes much to the presentation of detail.

Mission use modern lightweight composites for their cones. I heard the difference immediately, the pink noise measurement signal sounding unusually silky and refined from this 'speaker.

There are a few other features worth noting. One is a small amount of lift at 250Hz which might signal the presence of a small amount of box colouration; I did detect a hollow sound with pink noise.

MONITOR AUDIO GOLD 10

The bass end of this loudspeaker displayed a steady roll off in output below 100Hz, which suggests it is quite well damped acoustically. Our frequency response shows this, but as a step, which isn't quite right, room effects causing this. A well damped bass end can sound good with a powerful solid-state amplifier, and it also implies the Gold 10 had been optimised for near-wall placement.

an impressive result. I'd expect the Discoverys to deliver good quality bass.

As a load these loudspeakers are resistive over most of the audio band, which is a good thing, since energy storage is low and influence upon an amplifier's feedback loop minimal. Measuring 8ohms at 20kHz our analysis shows their impedance rises to 25ohms at 1kHz before gently descending to 5ohms at 200Hz. Below this, however, an amplifier will be required to push current into 3ohms or so at 50Hz, so a fair amount of grunt is needed. Sensitivity was average at 86dB from one nominal watt of input; they'll need a 100W amplifier. Overall impedance measured a reasonable 5.5ohms.

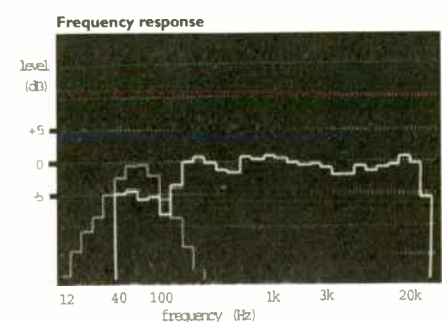
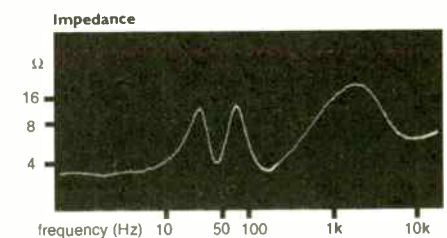
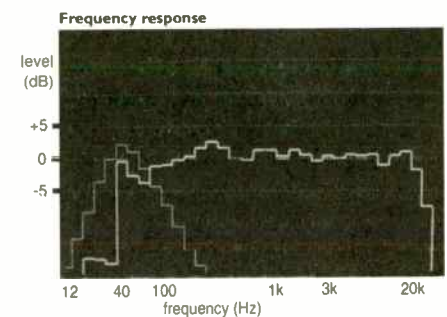
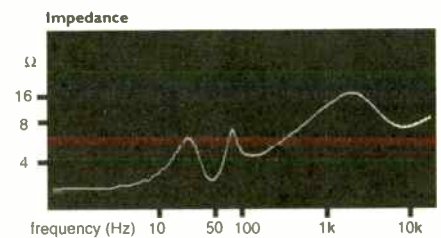
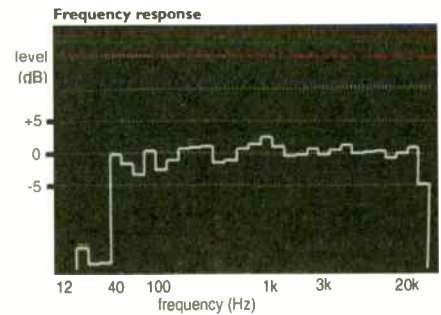
There's some good engineering in these loudspeakers. They are more than just show. Certainly worth a serious listen. **NK**

And the other interesting feature is that forward response continues smoothly right down to 40Hz. There should be some good, solid bass from the M73 as a result. Its port seems to do little, being tuned quite high at 40Hz.

Mission use a 3.4ohm DCR bass driver in this loudspeaker, so not surprisingly its impedance bottoms out at this low, low value. As a result the loudspeaker draws current from an amplifier and yet it still is not very sensitive, delivering 85dB SPL from one nominal watt of input. Overall impedance measured 5.7ohms, largely because an 8ohm tweeter brings things up a bit. None of this is a wonder to behold, I'm afraid to say. The M73s need a good, powerful amplifier.

In some areas the new M73 looks quite special. As a load it is not too easy though, demanding a quality amplifier. **NK**

A sensitivity figure of 84dB SPL from one nominal watt of input is none too good nowadays. Nothing is amiss in terms of driver efficiency; it's just that Monitor Audio have used a 6ohm DCR bass/mid driver where everyone else uses 4ohms or less nowadays. As a result overall impedance is higher than the norm. of 6ohms, measuring 8ohms. The impedance curve is smooth and reactance free so the

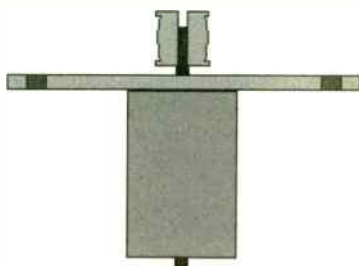


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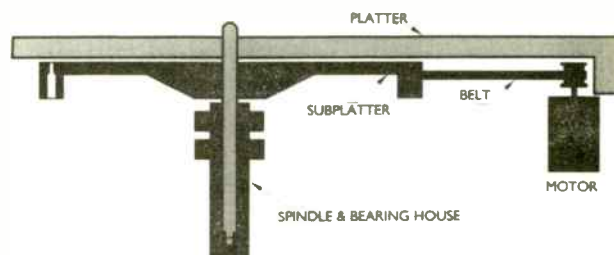
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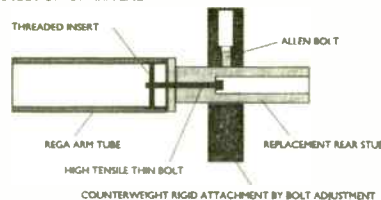
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test results

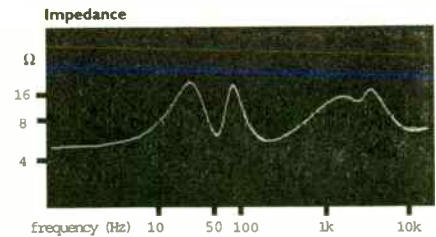
Gold 10 is an easy load in every sense, but it does need a little more voltage swing than usual, meaning amplifiers of around 60W-100W might be best if high volume is wanted.

Where the Gold 10 rolls off below 100Hz the port fills in, output centring at 50Hz. Forward output reaches down to 40Hz, which is low enough, the port and forward radiation overlapping somewhat above this frequency - an unusual situation. Bass quality is best judged subjectively but I would expect the acoustic loading to predominate, meaning a tight and likely fast sound.

Contributing to this impression is

healthy treble output, a small peak existing at 12.5kHz. The large dome tweeter may well sound a little obvious in what it is doing, but it is sufficiently smooth in response terms to seem smooth, and large domes integrate better off-axis with bass/mids than small ones, often giving a lively and spacious sound, with a large sound stage. Absence of a crossover suck-out means the Gold 10s will sound detailed and quite forward.

I would expect a tight, fast sound from this 'speaker, with plenty of detail and sharp, yet spacious imaging. Front baffle geography can make or break a 'speaker in this area of performance though, so I



can't be too certain - only listening tests can ascertain the full picture. Metal cones may well impart their own pervasive tonal colour; again only listening tests can tell.

The Gold 10s are well engineered and likely to sound distinctive, probably excellent for Rock with the right partnering equipment. **NK**



AMPLIFIERS

NAIM NAC112/NAP150

The NAP150 power amplifier produces a useful 50W into 8ohms, enough for modern, sensitive floorstanding loudspeakers in small to medium sized rooms (up to 18ft or so). Excellent power supply regulation results in minimal voltage drop as load decreases, so power nearly doubles into 4ohms, rising to 90W. Since a majority of today's loudspeakers use 4ohm bass/mid drivers the NAP will seem to go louder than most '50W' amplifiers.

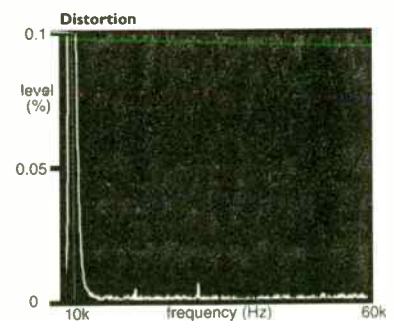
Not only is the power supply 'stiff', in Naim tradition, but it remains relatively distortion free under the heavier current draw of a 4ohm 'speaker. With distortion levels acceptably low at 0.05% maximum this is a good sign. I also noticed that in the midband at least the NAP150 produced mainly second harmonic, from low output up to full output. At high frequencies the harmonic structure was a little more extended, but higher order compo-

nents were still not strong. The amplifier looked clean enough in terms of distortion, the transfer characteristic did not change with level and high frequency distortion remained low.

Frequency response was band limited to 23kHz, as with all Naims. The company have not extended it to 100kHz to accommodate DVD-A or SACD. Band limited amps are generally cleaner and a little less bright than those running out to 100kHz or more. This, in conjunction with a stiff power supply, contributes to the Naim sound.

Input sensitivity is now variable. It now measures 400mV as set, instead of 70mV of earlier models.

The NAC112/NAP150 combo is a neat 50W amplifier with good grunt. Use it with modern floorstanders of good sensitivity and/or low impedance and it will shine. **NK**



Power	50watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	12Hz-23kHz
Separation	62dB
Noise	-94dB
Distortion	0.005%
Sensitivity	400mV
dc offset	4.5/13mV

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test results

NAD C370

This is a beefy powerhouse of an amplifier that produces no less than 180W into 8ohms and a good 300W into 4ohms. The latter figure is for a short period of one second at most, after which current limiting comes into play, pulling maximum output back to 180W again. The amplifier can be bridged for even more power - roughly double - but it becomes a single channel unit.

These power levels are sufficient to cope with any loudspeaker in just about any room. Amplifiers as powerful as this need to be used with care since they can fry loudspeaker cones. NAD include their "soft clip" option to make high power working aurally acceptable. Heaven help the loudspeaker!

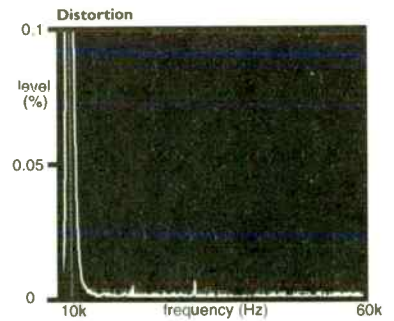
In spite of all this power, NAD's C370 produces almost no measurable distortion, even under the most difficult conditions of

delivering full output at 10kHz. NAD have always managed to produce low distortion designs and this model continues the tradition.

Sensitivity was low at 400mV and noise also very low at -113dB. The tone controls were bizarre, offering a minuscule 1dB of lift or cut at spectrum extremes, so little as to be almost inaudible. This offers a subtle change of amplifier character rather than an obvious change in tonal balance, needed to re-balance a recording for example.

NAD once bandwidth limited their amplifiers as a matter of design philosophy, but with the arrival of DVD-A and SACD this has been dropped. The C370 extends to 150kHz.

Used with care the C370 should give a smooth, but muscular sound. It measures well. **NK**



Power	180watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	2Hz-150kHz
Separation	50dB
Noise	-113dB
Distortion	0.006%
Sensitivity	400mV
dc offset	1mV

CAMBRIDGE A5

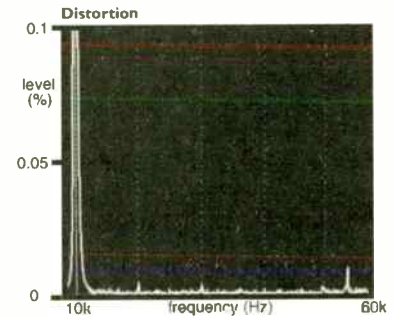
Delivering 72W into 8ohms and a healthy 110W into 4ohms, the Cambridge A5 amplifier is powerful enough and has a fairly robust power supply, capable of delivering good amounts of current. It's got just the right amount of output to handle modern loudspeakers, both large and small, without the sort of excess that pushes costs and case size right up.

Distortion levels were low enough, reaching 0.01% maximum when delivering 1W at 10kHz. The harmonic pattern was none too pretty, with higher orders looking as strong as less audible lowers, but hopefully under dynamic conditions these will remain low enough not to make their

presence known.

Frequency response extends to 88kHz (-1dB) so the A5 is suited to extended bandwidth formats like SACD and DVD-A, as well as CD of course. A sensitivity of 300mV means it will match all sources, including old cassette decks and tuners.

The measured performance of the A5 is neat in all areas. It should give good results. **NK**



Power	72watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	9Hz-88kHz
Separation	65dB

Noise	-93dB
Distortion	0.01%
Sensitivity	300mV
dc offset	1/2mV

CD PLAYERS

LINN CD12

The CD12 needed some warm up time of around 5 minutes, then it gave the frequency response shown in our analysis, where upper treble rolls off gently to around -0.8dB down at 20kHz. The -1dB limit measured 21.05kHz - much like any good modern player. I'd expect it to sound balanced and fairly cohesive as a result, with little sign of treble hardness.

The digital-to-analogue convertor not only produces little quantisation noise but it has a low noise floor too. This gives the CD12 a good set of distortion figures, from 0dB down to -90dB. Although not class leading - the -60dB result could be better - these figures are, all the same, amongst the best.

Not surprisingly noise output was very low, measuring -114dB. Output met Philips 2V standard almost exactly and channel separation was very wide.

The CD12 produces a fine set of figures under test. It doesn't put a foot wrong. **NK**

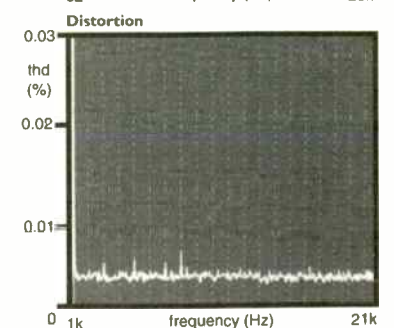
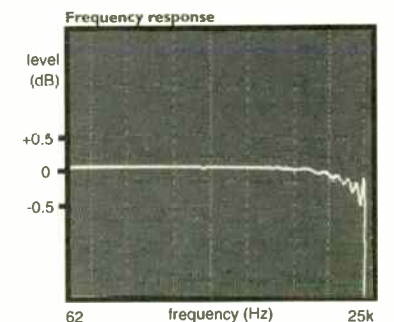
Frequency response (std) 4Hz-21.05kHz

Distortion	left	right
-6dB	0.006	0.006
-30dB	0.018	0.018
-60dB	0.42	0.42
-90	28	28

Separation	left	right
1kHz	122	123
20kHz	97	99

Noise	-114dB
with emphasis	-116dB

Dynamic range	110dB
Output	1.99V



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DENON DVD 3300

The Denon player had a wide, flat frequency response characterised only by a small amount of filter ripple, our analysis shows. This should give the player a bright, fast sound, albeit one that could sound glassy bright with some recordings.

There was little sign of distortion or quantisation noise from 0dB down to -30dB. Our analysis of a -30dB, 1kHz tone shows only a clean and smooth noise floor - quite a tidy performance. Being a linear coding scheme discontinuities inevitably creep in at lower levels causing distortion to rise. The DVD3300 produced 0.43% at -60dB and 29% at -90dB, both fairly standard figures for 16-bit. I would expect this player to sound clean enough, due to low distortion levels. Dynamic range measured 110dB - an excellent figure.

Output measured a normal 2V and channel separation 130dB at 1kHz and 101dB at 20kHz.

REGA PLANET

This player's frequency response was unusual, with a pronounced rise in output at high frequencies. Subjectively it will give the Rega a more incisive sound that with good recordings will usually be OK, but with bad ones may accentuate problems. The Planet needs to be matched with care, which means not with bright sounding transistor amps, like Sonys for example, nor with metal dome tweeters.

Measurement showed the convertors were as linear as the best, with no sign of harmonic distortion or quantisation noise our analysis shows. Dynamic range (EIAJ) was predictably high as a result, measuring 110dB. So the Rega is in itself as distortion free as 16-bit can be.

Output was 2.0V precisely and channel separation high. Noise was very low at -121dB.

All in all the Planet turns in a fine set

TOSHIBA SD-900E

The Toshiba measured neatly. Our analysis shows its audio response rolls off just a small amount at high frequencies, which is likely to result in a smooth sound. There is a little emphasis lower down the band also, suggesting good bass.

Distortion figures were low right across the player's full dynamic range, from 0dB down to -90dB. The distortion analysis at -30dB clearly shows an absence of harmonics and quantisation noise. This is another factor that helps contribute to an acceptable presentation.

Noise was very low and channel separation high. Output measured a normal 2.15V.

Toshiba's SD-900E measured well in all areas. It should sound smooth and clear. **NK**

The DVD3300 measured very well in all respects. I'd expect a bright but clean presentation. **NK**

Frequency response (std) 4Hz-21.05kHz

Distortion	left	right
-6dB	0.006	0.006
-30dB	0.018	0.018
-60dB	0.42	0.42
-90	28	28

Separation	left	right
1kHz	122	123
20kHz	97	99

Noise	-114dB
with emphasis	-116dB

Dynamic range	110dB
Output	1.99V

of performance figures, up with the best, but it does need careful system matching to avoid brightness. **NK**

Frequency response (std) 4Hz-21.3kHz

Distortion	left	right
-6dB	0.004	0.004
-30dB	0.016	0.0165
-60dB	0.37	0.37
-90	29	28

Separation	left	right
1kHz	121	120
20kHz	99	98

Noise	-121dB
with emphasis	-121dB

Dynamic range	110dB
Output	2.00V

Frequency response (std) 4Hz-21.25kHz

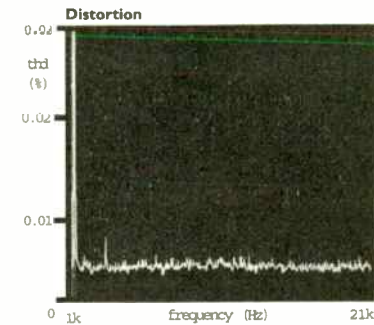
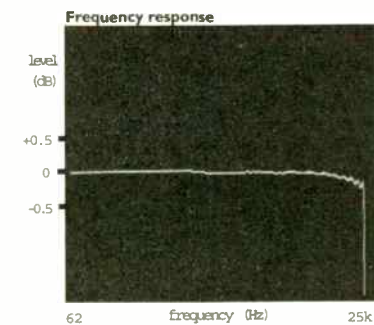
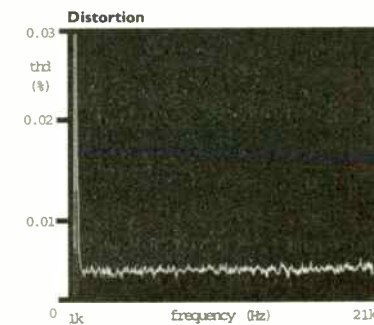
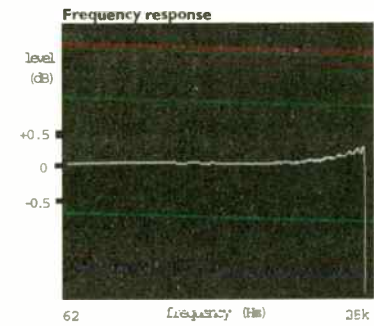
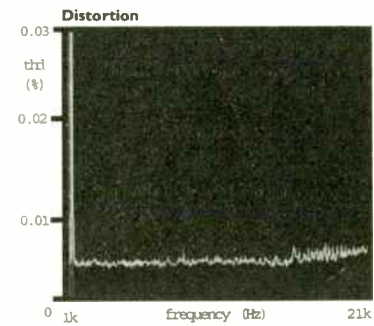
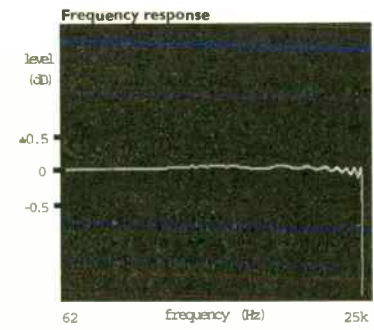
Distortion	left	right
-6dB	0.009	0.009
-30dB	0.017	0.017
-60dB	0.37	0.38
-90	29	29.5

Separation	left	right
1kHz	120	120
20kHz	117	118

Noise	-121dB
with emphasis	-121dB

Dynamic range	110dB
---------------	-------

Output	2.15V
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LINN KAN II black £150. Incatech Claymore integrated amp offers. Tel: Alan 01132 783 951 (Jun/1)

MAGNEPLANAR SMG speakers £600 ono. Kef Q15 speakers £100 (pair). Kef Q90C Centre speaker £75. Atacama stands for Q15 £40. Yamaha DSPA590 surround sound amplifier £100. Tel: 0121 426 2739, mobile 07790 263 980 (Jun/1)

AUDIO VALVE PP45 monobloc power amplifiers. German made GL84 valves, 2 years old, 30 hours use. Stunning new (£1500) £500. Manley Tanard valve pre new (£450) £250. Tel: 01702 612 588 (Southend, Essex) (Jun/1)

WANTED: WADIA 860 CD player, Meridian 500/566 transport/DAC with MSR, must be mint condition with boxes/manuals/accessories. Prompt purchase, private buyer. Tel: 07941 279 826 evenings (July/1)

FOR SALE: Meridian 500 CD transport and AVL DAC both £550 (would separate). Also Mission 753 speakers, black ash £450. All boxed and mint. RFS upgrade. Tel: 01273 500 909 (Jun/1)

LINN LK1/LK2-75 (upgraded to LK280 by Grahams Hi-Fi, London). XLR interconnects & leads £500 ovno. Tel: 020 8995 4312 ask for Roy (Jun)

RADFORD STA 15 Series 3 amplifier and SC 22 pre-amplifier. Excellent condition. World Audio Design KEL84 valve integrated stereo amplifier. Elna Ansar capacitor upgrade. Stainless steel fasteners, chrome handles. Well built. Details 01736 360 367 (Jun)

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Linn Wakoda pre-amp & remote. Mottle finish.	£ 199	Ptron AP1000 pre-amplifier. Superb quality.	£ 99
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NVA A80 mono power amplifiers X 2. Good cond.	£ 199	Rotel 981 power amplifier. Mint. Boxed. 1 have 2.	£ 195
NVA P80 passive pre-amplifier. Good condition.	£ 500	Alchemis Fucosu power amplifier. MBL. Boxed.	£ 850
Alchemis Fucoseti pre-amplifier. Mint. Boxed.	£ 135	Pair of Lunley M100 mono valve power amplifiers.	£ 750
Rotel RB971 power amplifier. Mint. Boxed.	£ 175	Arcam Alpha 3 amplifier. Mint. Boxed/ Instructions.	£ 100
Musical Fidelity Pre 8 pre-amplifier. Mint. Boxed.	£ 505	Nad 303H integrated amplifier. Mint condition.	£ 80
Exposure 1V power amplifier. Excellent condition.	£ 275	DP Precision pre-amp & power supply. 230W model.	£ 125
Jon Cheelsk 2 integrated amplifier. Good condition.	£ 225	Rotel RC972 pre-amplifier. Mint. Boxed. Remote.	£ 150
Audio innovations SF400 int valve amp. Class A.	£ 495	Quad 303 power amplifiers. From.	£ 150
Quad 405/1 power amp. Fitted with 405/2 boards.	£ 249	Quad Alpha 2 amplifier. Good condition.	£ 89
Leak stereo 50 valve power amplifier. Very rare.	£ 199	Quad 34 pre-amplifier. Grey finish. 5 pin din. Boxed.	£ 195
Pair Heathkit MA12 mono valve amplifiers.	£ 195	Processor C/w centre and rear spkrs & remote. Mint. Boxed.	£ 250
Yamaha DS1E580 Dolby prologic digital sound-field.	£ 99	Sugden Optima 140 int line amp/remote. Ex con. Boxed.	£ 275
Sony TAF300E-S int amp with remote. L5000 mint.	£ 195	Towmsend 600C pre-amplifier with mm/mc phono.	£ 99
Quad 303 power amp. Ex cond. Serviced. New caps.	£ 199	Technics SHG70 Graphic Equaliser. 12 presets.	£ 80
Musical Fidelity The Pre-amplifier with MM/MC	£ 499	Missoua Cyrus 1 amplifier. Good condition.	£ 120
Scot 410A integrated transistor amplifier.	£ 450	Quad 33 pre-amplifier. From.	£ 75
Arcam Zeta 1 Pro logic Cinema amp. Cost £999.00	£ 10A	Marantz PM60100SE int. amp/remote. Mint. Boxed.	£ 140
Leak Stereo 20 valve power amplifiers. From	£ 95	Conestoga/Sugden stereo valve pre/power amp. Mint.	£ 249
Arcam Alpha 2 amplifier. Mint. Boxed/Instr	EPOA	Sugden CS1 pre-amplifier. Excellent condition.	£ 99
Quad 11 Various. Price depends on condition.	£ 125	Naim Nac 42.5 pre-amplifier with MC boards.	£ 195
Pioneer A400 amplifier. Ex condition. Boxed.			

TURNTABLES

Thorens TD125/Audio technica 1100 arm/plinth.	£ 250	NVA phono 2 MC pre-amp + 2 X PSU. Awesome.	£ 499
Michell Focus One with 1mm Bask Lsv arm. Ex con.	£ 199	Rega Planar 2 c/w rega RB200 arm/Wood plinth.	£ 95
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Dunlop Systemdek. Turntable Complete with Synms 2 pick up.	£ 75	Technics SL150 DD deck. CW SME3090 innr arm.	£ 150
Amson RD110 turntable. Cut-out for SME 3009	£ 60	Thorens TD166BC. Deck only. Cut-out for SME D200 plinth. Cut-out for SME	£ 125
Thorens TD166BC. Deck only. Cut-out for SME D200 plinth. Cut-out for SME	£ 95	Garrard 301 & 401 motor units all serviced from	£ 125
Rega planar 2/Rega RB200. Wood plinth.			

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Pair Linn Kestrel in black with Kustone stands. Absolutely.	£ 695	B&W DM4s in teak. Good condition with annual	£ 89
JM Labs. Electro 905. Bxd. CW. dedicated stands.	£ 450	Paradigm mini monitor speakers. As new. Boxed.	£ 100
Naim Intro speakers in black ash. Mint. Boxed.	£ 99	Celestion Dinton 15 complete with stands. Glassed.	£ 495
Russ Andrews Tarhite speakers. Stand. Cost £599	£ 750	Another pair NS1000M spkrs. Cabs need minor work	£ 289
Yamaha NS1000M monitor speakers. Ex cond.	£ 290	Pair IMF TLS80 Monitor speakers. Incredible	£ 80
Rogers studio 7s. Walnut. (E910). No grilles hence	£ 79	Celestion Dinton 44.	£ 125
B&W DM220. slight cabinet marks. Boxed.	£ 169	Richard Alan monitor speakers. Good condition.	£ 199
Mordant Short MS20H Pearl. Black finish. New	£ 259	Heybrook Heylos. Black. Boxed. Ex condition.	£ 295
Cambridge R50 transmission line speakers. Rare.	£ 125	Expensive X over. Gut wrenching base. Awesome.	£ 170
Ker kit 62 with B139/B110 Scanspeak D2905-9300 tweeters.	£ 595	Ker Cresta 2. Black. Mint condition. 4 months old.	£ 110
Rogers 156 speakers in teak. Mint. Boxed	£ 249	Heybrook HBI speakers. Priced to sell.	£ 450
Speaker SP23. Black finish. Boxed/Instructions.	£ 499	Dynalab 2.8 reference speakers. Cost \$1200. Unused.	£ 40
Russ Andrews Tarhite speaker stands. Cost £599	£ 499	Mordant Short MS10. Mint. Boxed. Black finish.	
SDAcoustics SD1 Ribbon tweeters. Cost £1650.	£ 250		
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OTHER ITEMS

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Linn Mimir CD player. Ex condition. Mottle finish.	£ 450	Revov B77. Reel reel 2 track. 3.75 & 7.5 & manual	£ 450
Nakamichi CR3E cassette deck. 3 heads. Good cond.	£ 299	Nakamichi CD12E CD player. Good condition.	£ 249
Ortofon MIC A76 MIC pre-amplifier. Suitable MC20	£ 75	Otelson MC20 moving coil cartridge. Little use. Bxd.	£ 70
Goldring Electro11 MC cartridge. Bxd. Ex cond.	£ 60	Sine series 3 arm. Black. Boxed with damping top.	£ 150
Nakamichi BX300E 3 head cassette deck. Glassed.	£ 249	Quad channel Interconnect. Suitable Naim eqpt	£ 250
Quad 44 MC board. Boxed and instructions.	£ 49	Michell Iso phono pre-amplifier.	£ 100
Sugden SDF1 & SDA1 Transport & Dac/remote.	£ 89	Sony S770HS award winning tuner. Ex condition.	£ 69
Rotel RQ970 MM/MC phono pre-amplifier.	£ 150	Marantz 105B auto/tuner. Ex condition.	£ 250
SME series 3 3009 arm. Mint. Boxed. Ex condition.	£ 150	Nakamich CD player. Good condition.	£ 55
Rotel 965 BA CD player. Excellent condition	£ 195	Spire arm/bush for SME series 3. New. Unused. Boxed.	£ 55
SME 3019 Series 3 tone arm. Mint. Boxed	£ 195	Senniser HD530 MK2 Headphones. Unused. Boxed.	£ 69
Leak Troughline 3 stereo valve tuner. Fully serviced	£ 249	Teac TR450 tuner. AM/FM synthesizer/RDS. Boxed	£ 25
Linn Tuner. Mint. Boxed. Very unusual. Cost £549	£ 59	Quad FM3 tuner in excellent condition.	£ 59
National Parasicon 209C. 11 low impedance stereo cartridge	£ 195	Phillips 100 cd player. The first. Good condition.	£ 100
Arcam Alpha 5 cd player. Mint. Boxed/remote	£ 75	Denon DC1170 CD player. Cost £650. Boxed.	£ 45
Aiwa AD-S750 Dolby B-C S/FX pr Cassette. Mint	£ 35	Nakamichi CD 50 CD player. Ex condition. Boxed.	£ 49
Graino SR60 headphones. Ex condition.	£ 99	Leak 2400 tuner. Serviced by One Thing. Mint.	£ 25
Leak stereofonic tuner. Similar to Troughline	£ 99	Audax HD 13D 34H tweeters. New. Old stock.	£ 240
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Sugden T48 tuner. Sounds superb	£ 149	Tro KT880L synthesizer tuner. AM/FM. Black.	£ 75
Meridian 201 MKV. B/S DAC. Mint. Boxed	£ 40	SME 3019 Arm/bush. From.	£ 95
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Aiwa XT550 tuner. Bxd. In m/v. w/MC. w/tuner.			

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CYRUS FM7 tuner as new, boxed £245. Audio Alchemy DLC remote control preamp with power station 4, boxed £150. Van Den Hul D102III hybrid interconnects £40 per pair (2). Tel: 01978 780 580 (Jun(I))

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QUAD 34/306 new £400. Trichord Genesis C/D as new £500. Gamma Acoustics Epoch Ref speakers as new £750. Beam Echo DL7-35 unused £1000. Micromega CD3.1 transport £500. Henley HMC100 £100. Tel: 01707 672 945 (Jun(I))

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WANTED QUAD ESL63's any condition for spares phone Steve on 02476 274 573 (Jun(I))

CROFT VITALE, black fascia, mint condition £325. Rare pair of Rogers LS 5/8 BBC monitors, 15 ohm £475. Tel: 07721 470 286, Email: neilasilmon@yahoo.com (Jun(I))

ROGERS LS3/5A (15 ohm) loudspeakers £265, Tangent TM3 bookshelf speakers (KEF drivers) £65. Target HR38/3 speaker stands, matt black £75. Tel: 0115 914 7094 evenings (Nottingham) (Jun(I))

ROTEL RX-970-BX phono stage £70. Audioquest Jade interconnects x 2 £15 each. All items vgc. Tel: 020 8809 2363 (Jun(I))

LINN KEILIDH speakers including stands, cherrywood, spare grillcloth £425 ono. Audiolab 8000 DAC £350 ono. Micromega Stage 1 CD £150 ono. Wanted Linn LK280 and Spark. All equipment boxed, manuals. Tel: 01228 514 966 (Cumbria) (Jun(I))

MISSION 782 floorstanding speakers, beech, one year old, excellent condition £500 ono. Tel: 0161 286 7832 or 07941 743 312 (Jun(I))

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QUAD 2 x 405 MkII bi-amped set up gold phono Quad 34 pre all gold phono's £425. Tel: 01929 423 037 (Swanage) (Jun(I))

AMPLIFIERS, MUSICAL Fidelity X-A1 £295. XAS-100 £475. CD players, Rotel 971 £290. Denon 835 £185. Speakers, Dynaudio 40 £275. MS201 pearl £85. Stands if required. All perfect boxed. Tel: 01243 863 371 (Jun(I))

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WORLD AUDIO EL34 valve amp Svetlana tubes Alps pot, £250. Reson DNM interconnects £20. SD1 Accoustics speakers 3 way £175. Kenwood Thx Av amp, mint cond £1300 new £400. Tel: 01634 723 223 (Jun(I))

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	Tag McLaren PA-10 Pre	£849	£449
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SONY TUNER FM/AM ST-3950 £50. Sony cass/deck TC-229 SO £75. Rotel G/EQ RE-860 £70. Nikko FM tuner £80. Sony CD player f/ship CDP-557 ESD £450. New/boxed Smart 300B s/ended £3000. Simply 845 £1800. Mint all + valves K88. Tel: 01562 827 710 N-T-W (Jun/I)

FOR SALE QUAD FM3 tuner recent service by Quad, excellent condition £80. Rotel RCD 951 CD player, 7 months old. JUC KDA5 cassette recorder, little used. Tel: 01463 811 779 (Jun/I)

NAIM NAC 82 preamp, boxed, manual, mint condition, will demonstrate £1590. Upgrading to NAC 52. Tel: 01273 556 458, Mobile: 07971 131 324 (Jun/I)

TDL STUDIO 1 transmission line monitor speakers £350 ono. Tel: Fred 01633 266 647 evenings (South Wales) (Jun/I)

NAIM 82 pre-amp £1350. 250 power amp, new style, 3 years old, £1050. Hi-cap overhauled and reboxed to new style by Naim £350. All mint, boxed etc. Tel: 01638 668 299 (Jun/I)

ROGERS LS7T speakers £175. Target HJ15 stands £25. Audio-Pro Bi-45 sub-woofer £50. Four Volt DUC-250.1 speaker units. Not used £50 each. Tel: 01642 559 078 (Jun/I)

2 X MONOBLOCK valve power amps, Class A push pull pentodes 27 watts. Built by V.R.R. electronics Worthing. Superb sound can demo, cost £1200 accept £600. Tel: 01903 740 232 (Jun/I)

SD LOUDSPEAKERS, hybrid ribbons strictly high end cost £3500 will sell for £1000. Monitor Audio Speakers in black ash asking £120. Croft Micro preamp for sale £220. Tel: 01323 729 971 Email: Biswasbiss@aol.co.uk (Jun/I)

B & W 80i Mark 1 loudspeakers. Rosewood bi-wired with Russ Andrews crossovers and Kimber cable. Awesome full-range speaker but my study is too small. Bargain at £800. Tel: 020 7435 1716 (Jun/I)

LINN LP12, black ash, Lingo, Ekos, Lyra Clavis da Capo £1400. Tel: Martin 01837 840 438 (Jun/I)

BW DM 602 S2 speakers cherry with stands, 8 months old, cost new with stands £350. £150: no offers. Tel: 01772 687 748 (Jun/I)

LINN SONDEK LP12 Valhalla, new Origin Live RB250, new armboard; new K9, cartridge. Do deal for Naim Nap 160 or sell £300. Tel: 01274 492 617 (Jun/I)

LINN LP12 Afromosia Valhalla K18 boxes, manuals, mint condition £550. Two Musical Fidelity Typhoon power amps. Rainbow preamp (phono). Balanced interconnect good clean condition £350. Tel: 01933 411 774 evenings (Northants) (Jun/I)

NAIM 62/90 pre/power amplifier combination. M/C boards. Boxed £320. Tel: 01297 442 545 evenings (Jun/I)

GARRARD 401 record deck with SME 12" arm £400 plus optional 300 mainly early 70's LP's £600. Tel: 07929 255 517 (Jun/I)

MUSICAL FIDELITY A200 60W integrated amp. Classic MF design. Perfect working condition, 8 yrs old. New £800 will accept £250 or sensible offer. Tel: 0117 924 3755, Email: MMIKELUCKETT@aol.com (Bristol) (Jun/I)

BTH AIA stereo control power units with Mullard valves. Similar circuits valves as Leak Stereo 20 but with printed circuits. In daily use. £150. Tel & Fax: 01524 701 051 (Jun/I)

QUAD 33/303 amplifier, FM3 tuner, excellent condition, serviced 1996, all leads supplied £150 lot (will not split). Tel: Phil, (Home) 01903 877 351, (Mobile) 07946 533 822 (Worthing) (Jun/I)

FOR SALE Quad 33 control unit £60. Yamaha TX 480L am/fm tuner little used £60. Sennheiser HD490 headphones unwanted gift £30. Contact Mike 01758 613 790 (Jun)

REVOX A77 recorder £300. Castle loudspeakers: Avon (cherry) £450. Tay £350. Severn 2 SE brand new £500. Beyer headphones: DT220 DT770 DT990 £50 each. Tel: 01373 822 040 6-8pm (Jun)

TI IETA CHROMA 396 DAC inexpensive quality upgrade. Only £250 with Theta ILC anti jitter box and free digital cables (worth £100) £400 the lot! Tel: 020 7916 0527 or 07973 278 216, Email: davidmundy@aol.com (Jun/I)

FOR SALE. Ear 834P MM/MC phono amp with volume control £250. Michell ISO MC phono amp £160. MF MM/MC LP amp £50. Audio Technica MC trans £25. Signet MK10T MC trans £25. Tel: 01903 247 779 (Sussex) (Jun)

ARCAM 8R amp £150. Arcam 8P poweramp £100. Both boxed remote mint condition. Eltax LR 6.5 speakers beech veneer bi-wireable spiked sand filled excellent build quality £150. Tel: 01423 562 106 (Harrogate) (Jun/I)

PERREAUX SM6P and 350P pre and power amplifiers, latest spec, 350 watt, dual mono, fully balanced £1950. Tel: Dave 01306 886 606 days, 01293 772 052 evenings (Jun/I)

NAIM CD 3-5 player, little use, remote control, boxed, mint condition (£1100) £675 ovo. Linn Kaber loudspeakers, latest model and drivers, detailed sound, rare cherry finish (£2200) £675 ovo. Tel: 0121 358 0459, Mobile: 07960 945 994 (Jun/I)

REVOX 285 RECEIVER £550. Revox 215 cassette deck £550. Revox 225 CD player £200. Quad System ELS 57s, valve amps, FM1 Garrard 401 Technics SLPS900 CD £850. May split offers considered. Tel: 01224 646 473 (Jun/I)

KEF REFERENCE 104/2 speakers rosewood. Good condition, one owner. Selling due to upgrade to Thiel. £350 ono. Tel: 01243 555 921 (South coast West Sussex) (Jun/I)

REVOX H series system, H2 CD player, H5 amplifier. H6 FM tuner and H11 cassette deck, complete for £1950, may split. Tel: 07900 230 985 (Jun/I)

LIVING VOICE Auditorium walnut excellent £700 ono World Audio KLPP1 Holcos Vishays Kiwames P.I.O.'s and more £350. Systemdeck IIX900 Moth arm £125. Tel: 0113 2950 885 (Leeds) (Jun/I)

TANNOY ARDENS 15 inch dual concentric cones in black £850. Tube Technology CD player 24 bit tube DAC HDCD mint condition boxed £750. Tel: 01634 723 223 (Jun/I)

REGA PLANET 2000 CD player with remote, 3 months old. Mint manual boxed £375 ono (£525). Audio Research LS7 pre-amp mint with manuals £750 (£1700). Tel: Bill 01993 851 508 (Oxford) (Jun/I)

QUAD 67 CD player £350. Exposure XV amplifier, M/C and M/M boards £250. Castle Howard loudspeakers, yew £400. All boxed in excellent condition. Tel: 01428 605 002 (S.W. Surrey) (Jun/I)

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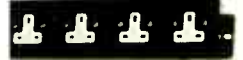


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418 -★★★★★ WHAT-HIFI, What Hi Fi Ultimate Hi Fi Guide

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STEREO POWER AMPLIFIER 300 wpc HEXFET with no heat sinks

FIVE CHANNEL POWER AMP 200 wpc x 5 - HEXFET with no heat sinks
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Anthem CD player (5 star What Hi-Fi)(ex/d)	£1699	£899
Audio Research D240 Mk.II	£3500	£1195
Audion Black Shadows 845 valve monoblocks	£4000	£POA
Audion Silvernight 300B monoblocks	£2250	£POA
Audio Alchemy drive 3 + V3DAC + 3PSU	£1649	£759
AV1 S2000MP Pre + Rata PSU	£1450	£750
AV1 S2000 Monoblocks	£1400	£750
Chario Academy 1 solid walnut (ex/d)	£1299	£800
Chario Academy 2 solid walnut (ex/d)	£1649	£1100
Conrad Johnson PV10AL Pre	£1095	£595
EAR 859 pwr. amp	£1599	£750
Krell Kav 300I	£2495	£POA
Krell KSA 80 pwr. amp	£3498	£1495
Krell KSA 250 pwr. amp	£6700	£2500
Krell KSL pre amp	£2298	£995
Krell KAV-S Prologic, AC3, DTS, THX PRE	£13500	£6500
Macintosh 7106 6ch. THX pwr. amp	£4000	£1999
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MUSICAL FIDELITY A370 power amp (Mk2 spec) £2500 new. Super amp, now replaced by Nu-Vista £800 ono. Will exchange for Tannoy D700 speakers. Tel: 01202 697 798, Email: flints@callnetuk.com. (Bournemouth)

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DPA LITTLE bit (DAC) £95. Cable Talk reference 2 x 0.5 metre £55 ono. Tel: 01224 483 642 (evenings), Email: barmonte@aol.com (Jun/I)

LINN LP12 Ekos Troika £900. Linn Kaber speakers £600. Linn LK1 pre £100. Denon 4400 monoblocks £300. Mission PCMII CD £120. Marantz CD 50 SE £120. Cyrus II amp £120. Matching Cyrus tuner £100. Technics RS-BX 646 cassette £90. Tel: 01785 761 295 (Staffordshire) (Jun/I)

MUSICAL FIDELITY A3 CD player, box remote, manual pristine condition £450. Tel: 0191 284 3374 (Jun/I)

MARANTZ CD10 £450. Late Naim 62/90 £350. Mission Cyrus Oone £75. Yamaha T2 tuner CT7000 killer £400 boxed. Arcam C200 preamp £75. Technics ST9038 tuner £75. SVA200 preamp £200. Tel: 01704 530 928 (Jun/I)

MUSICAL FIDELITY T1 tuner £110 (£300). Goertz M2, 2x3m £100 (£200). Chord Flatline Twin 2x5m £90 (£200). AudioQuest Crystal 2x3m £60 (£150). Chord Siren £30 (£70). All professionally terminated. Tel: 07967 646 089 (Jun/I)

LINN KARIK Mk1 CD player excellent condition with remote £650 (listed £1497). Callers call Tuesday, Thursday, Sunday evenings or call weekdays before 3.30pm please. Tel: 0113 225 3987 (Jun/I)

B&W 801 Matrix Series 2 loudspeakers excellent condition, walnut finish. A real reference monitor as used at many recording studios. Tel: Ken 01903 690 055 (Worthing) (Jun/I)

ARCAM ALPHA 10 integrated amplifier, with installed phono stage, mint condition, boxed with manual £530. 18 months old. Tel: Mobile 07769 708 922 (Jun/I)

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RADFORD STA15 Mk3 pre, power, boxed, vgc £675. Quad II's, vgc £375. LP12, Valhalla, Basik+, no arm lift £275. Technics SL110 3009 arm £140. Oscilloscope £65. Tel: Steve 01964 550 762 (E. Yorks) (Jun/I)

MICROMEGA 'MINIUM' system. Amplifier, FM tuner and CD player. Mint condition, full remote control on all units. In makers carton. £300 for all three. Tel: 01923 671 984 (Jun/I)

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QUAD 77 Carbon Stereo power amplifier. Bought November 1999 new (fine condition) £320. Tel: 0121 240 3497 (Sutoon Coldfield) (Jun/I)

GROOVE TUBE Dual 75 watt power amp. New vintage General Electric 6550 valves fitted in recent service by G.T. Audio. Great sound, condition. Selling due to upgrade. £1000 ono. Tel: 020 8893 1619 (Jun/I)

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NAIM SYSTEM comprising CDi CD player, NAC102 pre-amp, NAPI80 poweramp, and HiCap power supply. All boxed and in A1 condition. £2400 ono. Tel: 07957 808 490 (Jun/I)

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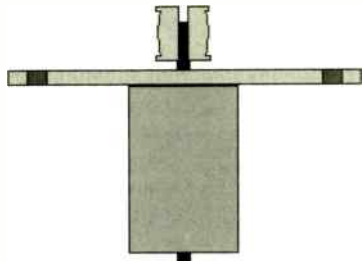
PSB STRATUS Mini loudspeakers from Canada, piano black lacquer with dedicated stands. 'Stereophile' magazine's loudspeaker of the year 1997. See PSB's website for reviews. Very high quality sound at less than half price £495. Tel: evenings only 01803 770 006 Email: jlove@freenetname.co.uk (Devon) (Jun/I)

UPGRADE YOUR TURNTABLE

"If you are thinking of upgrading your system...the Origin Live dc-motor kit should be high on your list for consideration" TNT AUDIO internet magazine April 2000.

"The single most important upgrade you can ever make to any record deck concerns the motor drive ...nothing can compare you for the shock of going DC, in a word Gobsnacking" COMMON GROUND MAGAZINE

"Its value is nothing short of tremendous" LISTENER MAGAZINE



Whether you own a Linn Valhalla/Lingo, Rega or any other deck, the results of upgrading to the Origin Live dc motor and power supply are simply astounding. This high grade motor kit is designed as a drop in replacement for almost all turntable motors. Decks benefiting so far from this ultimate of upgrades include Linn, Roksan, Michell, Systemdeck, Rock etc. With a 12 Volt power supply it is safe and easy to fit. Guidance instructions are provided. At £250 (add £25 for fully soldered and tested regulator board) with money back guarantee this is a bargain out of all proportion to its value in terms of performance. An optional, larger purpose made transformer is also available as an add on at £175

AURIOS ISOLATION MOUNTS



"highly recommended" March 2001

HI-FI WORLD

With the Aurios, I am now (finally) consistently hearing what I've always wanted out of audio"

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SOUNDSTAGE

Placed under Turntables, CD Players, Amplifiers, Loudspeakers etc these amazing devices dramatically upgrade the sound of your Hi-Fi. Reviewers who try them won't be without them. The investment made in the Aurios will last a lifetime. They reflect excellent value in terms of outstanding performance which is only possible through expensive production techniques and the finest engineering available.

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ORIGIN LIVE TURNTABLE KIT

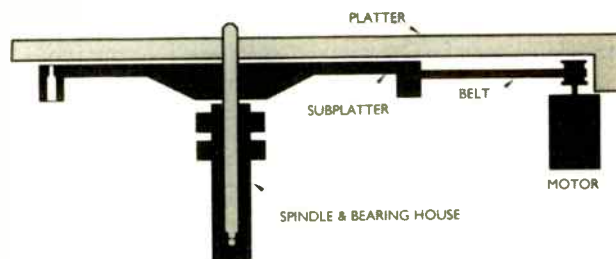
Now you can save money and build your own high performance deck. The standard kit is offered at £195 and is complete apart from a plinth. The kit comes with a full set of drawings and guidance instructions. It allows for your creativity or there are optional parts that will enable you to assemble a tried and tested design within 1 - 4 hours. The optional parts include the ultra platter (£84), plinths for suspended and non-suspended designs along with sub-chassis etc. The optional parts upgrade the standard kit to high end performance levels and is probably the easiest kit you will ever make.

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

HI-FI WORLD SUPPLEMENT

"is exceptionally easy to build and professional in both sound quality and appearance"

HI-FI NEWS SUPPLEMENT



TURBOCHARGING YOUR REGA ARM

"Nothing less than total dynamite" HI-FI WORLD

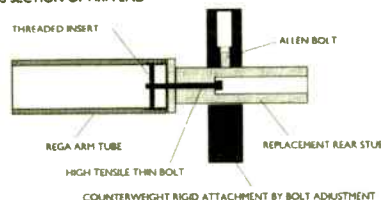
If you are the proud owner of any Rega arm, why not utterly transform it into the league of super arms with the Origin Live structural modification:- £75 inc post & packing.

This modification will enable your Rega to perform at a level exceeding that of arms costing over £1200. Rewiring with high grade litz cable is also offered at an additional £70, and external rewiring is £70.

"I have to say the Rega modifications turn this humble arm into a real Giant killer. Gone is the rather grey, sterile sound of the cooking Rega. Instead, tonal colour is fresh, dynamics have great speed and impact, and the sound stage is huge." HI-FI WORLD SUPPLEMENT NOV 97 (structural modification to a RB250) WHAT HI-FI gave this modification a 5 star rating.

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

CROSS SECTION OF ARM END



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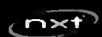


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