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Hi-fi is now seen as anoraky, or geekish here in the UK, where technology seems to frighten people. A recent trip to China showed things are very different in the Far East, where hi-fi carries status.

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

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

A short stroll round the corner led to a lift in an ordinary looking lobby. It whisked me up to five floors of electronic goodies, including a room containing some of the most serious high-end products known to man. Ten-tonne behemoth power amps from the likes of Jeff Rowland, Gryphen and Pass Labs adorned the floor as music wafted from a selection of high-end 'speakers fit for a king. This was presided over by a jovial and polite assistant a million miles away from the text book patronising and unctuous hi-fi dealer of Western mythology. All of the stores were full of the most

ordinary looking people you could find: office workers, students, housewives and builders all perused the wares on show, without fear of an unwanted, patronising approach.

A bigger surprise came from the People's Republic of China. In the equivalent of Shenzhen's Arndale centre, the top floor possessed numerous 'DIY' style hi-fi shops selling a selection of drive units, electronic components and cable. They were next to dedicated dealerships offering quality hi-fi, as well as smaller shops with an eye-popping array of high-end 'speakers and valve amps from the UK and the US - at around half of the price they'd cost in the country of origin!

Hi-fi might be a dying interest in the West, but it is regarded as a desirable luxury in the East. The way they sell it shows this: accessible environments that don't intimidate or offer the kind of 'personal service' which means

parting with much more cash than you originally intended. Now, where did I put my passport? ■



November Competition Winner

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

Simon Pope

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.
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OFFICE: 64, IMEX HOUSE, QUEENSBURN PARK ROAD, COVENTRY, CV5 8LF

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Contact Numbers

Hi-Fi Team - 4pm

General Editor

Simon Pope
tel: +44 (020) 8796 8141
email: editor@hi-fiworld.co.uk

Computer Audio World Editor

David Price
email: editor1@computeraudio.co.uk

Graphic/Advertising Designer

John Taylor
tel: +44 (020) 7625 3129
fax: +44 (020) 7328 1844
email: artproduction@hi-fiworld.co.uk

Production/Photography Editor

David Noble
tel: +44 (020) 7625 3134
fax: +44 (020) 7328 1844
email: dno@hi-fiworld.co.uk

Advertising & Marketing Manager

Andrew Sawney
tel: +44 (020) 8964 4760
email: advertising@hi-fiworld.co.uk

Accounts

Michael Ogden
tel: +44 (020) 7625 8032
fax: +44 (020) 7328 1844

Credit Control

David Philbey
tel: +44 (0) 1923 270833
fax: +44 (0) 1923 260588
email: subscriptions@hi-fiworld.co.uk

WORLD AUDIO DESIGN

Technical Manager - Nick Lucas

www.worldaudiodesign.co.uk

tel: +44 (0) 1908 218 836
email: nick@worldaudiodesign.co.uk

Publisher

David Heywood
email: publisher@hi-fiworld.co.uk

Private & Trade Classified Ads

tel: +44 (020) 7626 3131
fax: +44 (020) 7328 1844
email: classified@hi-fiworld.co.uk

Subscriptions & Back Issues

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This is Sony's latest budget, full-size MD recorder. Will it knock the competition for six? David Price investigates.

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QUAD ESL-989
11

Noel Keywood listens to the 988s bigger brothers. With extra panel space for more bass, they could well be something special. Simon Pope guides you through HFW's eagerly awaited review.



amplifiers

QUAD QC-twentyfour
AND II-forty VALVE PRE
& POWER AMPS 11



At last they've arrived. These retro styled amps from Quad harken back to the golden days of the valve amp. Tested with the new 989 electrostatics, Noel Keywood listens with relish.

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MUSICAL FIDELITY M3
NU-VISTA INTEGRATED
AMPS 23



This is the long-awaited successor to the limited edition Nu-Vista pre and power. Also strictly limited to only 500 units, will the M3 prove to be as awesome sounding as its mini-valved brethren?

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system

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this is the best CD Burner we've ever tested - find out why here!

WEBWORLD 58



Yet more fixes for online music junkies from Nick 'The Click' Tate.

world news

ACOUSTIC ENERGY AEGO

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

The Aego2 is a neat looking little system with satellites that measure just 68x103x90mm - small enough to fit in

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

Acoustic Energy Ltd
16 Bridge Road
Cirencester
Glos. GL7 1NJ
tel: 01285 654432
fax: 01285 654430
www.aego2.com



DVD UNIVERSAL

ARRIVES

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

TAG POWER ON

News reaches us of TAG McLaren Audio's latest high-end product. The FI-600M is an awesome looking single-channel monobloc power amplifier and the first electronics in the top of the range FI series. It is a balanced output design and features both single ended and balanced inputs.

There's an option of including the CAST (Current Audio Signal Transmission) system designed by Krell Industries. Power output is rated at 300W into 8Ω and 600W into 4Ω and a whopping 1700W into 1Ω. If you're considering a purchase it may be worth noting that the 600M power amps weigh a floorboard-creaking 40 kg each. As far as price is concerned, nothing

has been finalised as yet but you'll have to start saving the pennies now. Being part of the high-end FI series it won't be cheap! ■

TAG McLaren Audio Ltd.
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Huntingdon
Cambs PE29 6ZU
Tel: 0800 783 8007
www.tagmclarenaudio.com





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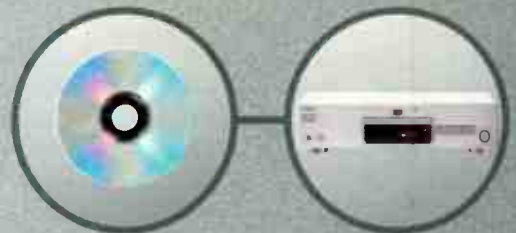


No other music system gets you closer. Sony's new Super Audio CD (winner of the EISA European Audio Player of the year 2000-2001 award) provides you with unrivalled sound reproduction thanks to Direct Stream Digital (DSD). A clever little 1-bit recording system that samples audio signals at a rate 64 times higher than conventional compact disc. Giving you a dynamic range of over 120db and an unprecedented bandwidth of over 100kHz. SACDs also benefit from 6 times the capacity of regular CDs and incorporate a reserved space for non-audio data such as text information which can highlight track, disc and artist name. And because all Sony SACD players are compatible with conventional CDs, there's no need to replace your CD collection. To see Sony's range of Super Audio CD players visit the Sony website. To hear one, why not try your nearest philharmonic orchestra.

www.sony.co.uk

Customer information centre 08705 111 999
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World Radio History



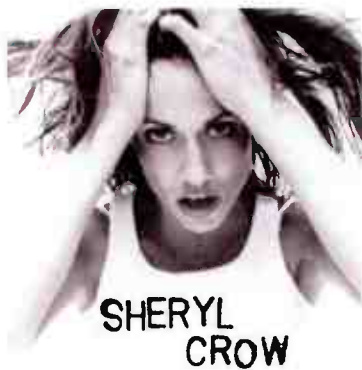
go create

SONY

JUST FOR THE RECORD

Interesting music industry developments reach us from over the pond. Artists such as Sheryl Crow and Don Henley have founded a group known as the Recording Artists Coalition, which recently became involved in the latest round of legal wrangling concerning music industry copyright - The New York Federal Court case against the internet archive and access site MP3.com by industry giants Universal Music, among others.

The RAC are looking to establish 'legal precedent of authorship' under a recently introduced law signed by Clinton in October. This aims to allow musicians to reclaim recordings by those who wrote or performed it. This basically means the artist can claim that they 'assigned' their work



to the record company and that they own the recording, treating it as a "work for hire". A brief was sent by the RAC to the court stating that under this law up to 4000 of Universal's claims of copyright infringement could now be classed as works 'assigned' to the labels. MP3.com are using this argument to strengthen their defence. The case is now in its 'penalty phase', where financial compensation from MP3.com is settled and a brief from the RAC was received. They can expect the dollars to roll in, as Sony Music, BMG and Warner (the other plaintiffs in the trial) all received around \$20million each from the company. ■

GOLD DUST!

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

The Millennium is a single channel power amp delivering 600W RMS

with both balanced and unbalanced analogue inputs, with digital inputs an option. It has a Pentium computer embedded which controls all the amplifier's adjustments. This is done by use of a 10" colour touch screen display on the front panel which also contains the user manual and help screens. The computer also controls sound calibrations, adjustable circuit protection and internal climate control. The Millennium is internet linked for software updates, optional remote maintenance and factory

diagnosis. The user's name is recorded in the software and, for good measure, engraved on the front of the amp. The price? Well... if you have to ask... \$35,000! ■



Digital Audio Trading
2, Chemin de la Grange
1227 Geneve-Accord
Switzerland
Tel: (00) 41 22 823 0000
www.goldmund.ch


SONY'S ON THE PISTE

Sony's first 'ski-slope' CD player, the CDP-MS1 follows the 'retro' trend that's dominating all Japan's new design thinking right now, from motorcycles to mountain bikes. Its distinctive wedge profile is reminiscent of the company's top loading cassette decks of the mid seventies. The Y220,000 (£1,350) player weighs in at a reasonably substantial 7.5kg thanks to Sony's 'Fixed Pick Up Mechanism' and ASC (Anti Standing Wave Construction). It also comes with a 24bit DAC, and an



unusual variable slope Bass, Mid and Treble digital tone control. ■

www.sony.co.jp



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World Radio History



**EMTEC
BASF**

PIONEERING DVD

It comes as little surprise that DVD devotee Pioneer was the first to get its recorder into Japanese shops. After leading the way with everything from LaserDisc in the early eighties to CD-R in the mid nineties, the company has done it again with the DVR- 1000. This chunky (8.5kg) unit can now be found everywhere from electronics stores to supermarkets selling for a discounted price of around ¥160,000 (£970). It records audio onto DVD-RWs

with a maximum 24/96 resolution, or MPEG1 video with a '1 Pass Variable Bitrate Control'. There's full Dolby Digital and DTS functionality, courtesy of Pioneer's patented 'Disc Navi LSI' chip, which handles much of the huge amount of number crunching the player does. Pioneer has also launched a DVD-RW disc to accompany it, storing 4.7GB for ¥3,000 (£18). ■

www.pioneer.co.jp

APOGEE RELAUNCH WITH DIGITAL GROUNDBREAKER

Readers will be familiar with the company Apogee Acoustics, manufacturer of high-end ribbon 'speakers with a firm following from audiophiles around the globe. Unbeknown to many, this company actually stopped making 'speakers in 1995, folded in 1998 and relaunched themselves as Apogee Technology.

Apogee started to develop an interest in digital amplifier technology, actually patenting their first design in 1997, before the new company was launched. At the recent Comdex show in Las Vegas they introduced their latest baby, the DDX-2000 Controller. This is a chip which the company say will dispose of the need for a DAC in amplifiers, making them 'all-digital'. They are busy selling the technology to prospective manufacturers. It could also be used in products such as

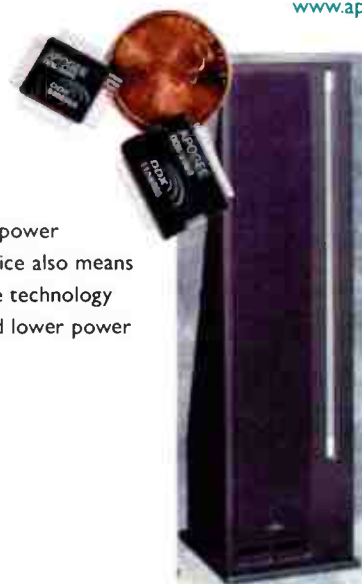
digital powered 'speakers, A/V receivers and amps, and even MP3 playback machines. The DDX-200 has two channels of DDX processing, a digital volume control, mute and processing to reduce distortion due to signal clipping.

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

supply costs.

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

www.apogeeprocessors.totalserve.co.uk
www.apogeeddxx.com



next issue

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

NAIM CD5/NAIT5 CD PLAYER AND INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

The CD5 and Nait5 are the latest products from the Salisbury manufacturer. Read next month's review to see what we made of them.

WHARFEDALE Pi30 LOUDSPEAKERS

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

MARANTZ CD6000SE KI SIGNATURE

This new CD spinner from Marantz is one of their 'specially treated' products from head designer Ken Ishiwata. Will it deserve its 'Ki' status? Find out next month

QUADS IN!!!

Noel Keywood listens in on Quad's new 989 electrostatics and the matching QC twenty four and II-forty valve pre and power amplifiers. Will he be suitably impressed?

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

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

An electrostatic loudspeaker is a panel that radiates forward and backward. It is possible to place a box behind to contain the rear radiation, like an ordinary loudspeaker, but this is never done. Consequently, bass depth depends upon panel

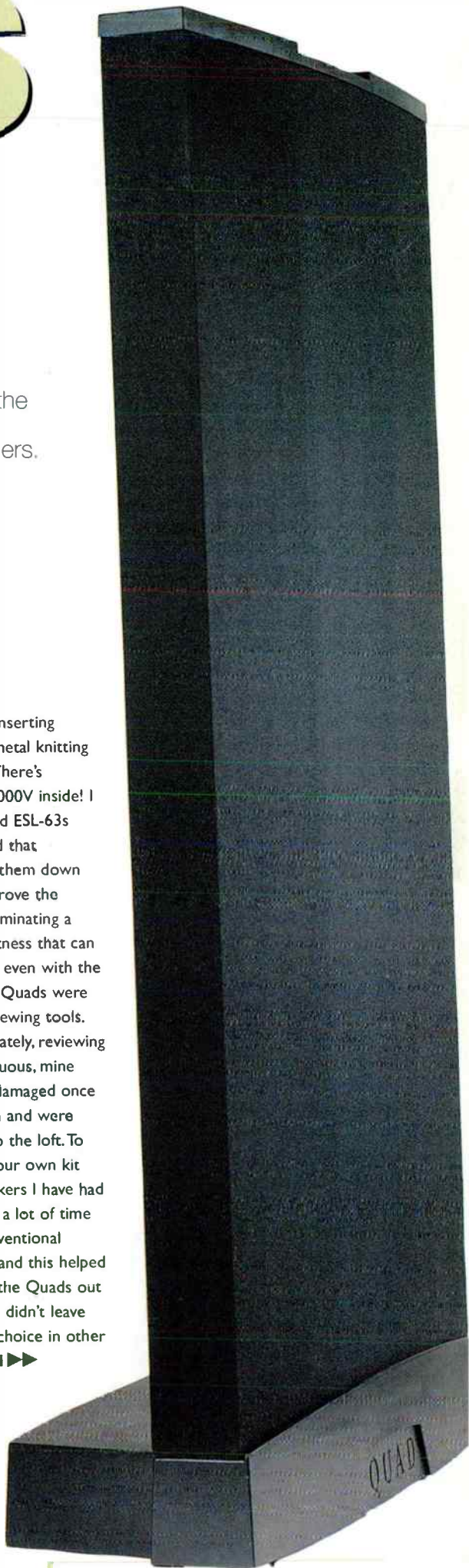
dimensions, the smallest dimension determining the frequency at which bass output starts to roll off. So for deeper bass you need a bigger panel and Quad have not flinched from extending the 988 upward to a height of no less than 133cms (4ft 4in), to come up with the 989.

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

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

Whilst the film of an electrostatic loudspeaker is massless, the electrodes either side of it are not, so the notion of masslessness is a bit simple. The trick is to ensure the electrodes, dust covers and cosmetic 'socks' between massless film and listener don't affect the sound too much. The covers must ensure the loudspeaker is safe too, preventing

children inserting pointed metal knitting needles. There's around 5000V inside! I own Quad ESL-63s and found that stripping them down does improve the sound, eliminating a slight softness that can be heard, even with the 989s. My Quads were once reviewing tools. Unfortunately, reviewing life is arduous, mine became damaged once too often and were retired to the loft. To develop our own kit loudspeakers I have had to spend a lot of time with conventional cabinets and this helped squeeze the Quads out too. They didn't leave through choice in other words! ■▶▶





So I am well acquainted with the wonder of Quad electrostatics, if also aware of their weaknesses. These are more to do with practicality than sound quality. Quads go loud, but not disco loud. They are large and need a long room to give their best and, of course, they are expensive. As the old saying goes, "whether you're rich or whether you're poor, it helps to be rich"!

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

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

RETRO REVIVAL

Quad supplied their new valve QC twenty four preamplifier and 11-forty power amplifiers to accompany the 989s. These amps are only available in one complete pre and power package costing £4,000. Styled like the first Quad 22/11 combination, and of similar proportions, but with lighter paintwork, they look neat and retro, yet strangely modern. Build quality was good, and the large volume control great to use, as always.

Happily Quad haven't replicated the power arrangements of the 22/11 which demanded thick cabling and octal plugs. The new preamp and power amps are self powered.

The QC twenty four has seven inputs, all at line level with a sensitivity of 200mV. There are two sets of tape sockets, but no tape monitor switch. This little item is not needed with digital recorders, since no monitor signal is available.

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

moving magnet cartridges.

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

The 11-forty power amplifiers are monoblocs, each with its own power supply and large output transformer. The output stage uses two KT88s in push-pull to deliver a rated 40W; we measured 45W. There are 4Ω and 8Ω taps.

This is one specialised and unique hi-fi system of course. In my view nothing can touch the openness, stage depth and clarity of a good valve amplifier - and this is a good valve amplifier. Designed by Andy Grove it is not a make-over of the 22/11, although it does follow the basic pattern Quad laid out all those years ago, combining compactness with style and superb sound quality. Then there are the 989 electrostatics of course, which also have enormous signal resolution.

SOUND JUDGEMENT

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

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

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

But it isn't all good news. The sheer resolution of these loudspeakers favours good recordings and

sidelines bad ones. Whilst the Philharmonia performing *Lohengrin* in 1960 was a wonderful experience through the 989s, *Lohengrin* performed by the Philharmonic in 1993 was a screech. An all-digital recording, it had none of the drive, movement and passion of the earlier analogue version.

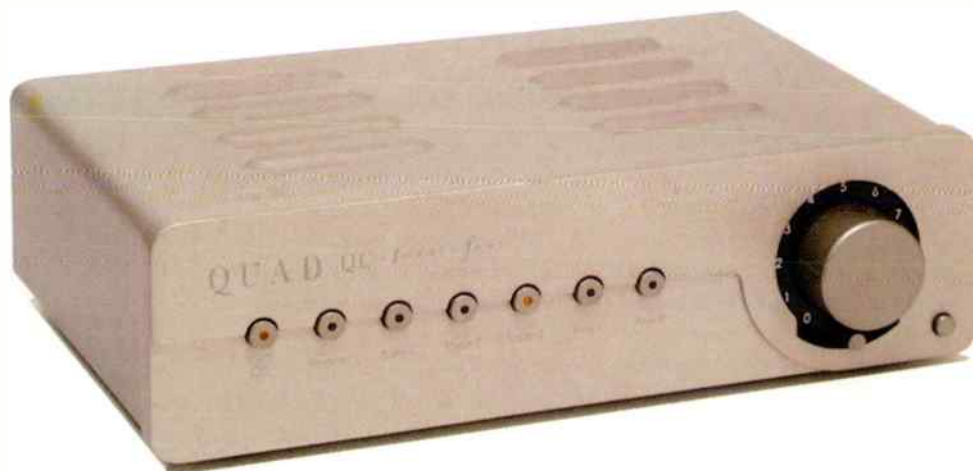
The 989s have an ability to resolve that performs peculiar tricks; some recordings gain stature, others simply become unlistenable. Some recording engineers swear by them and I can see why. The depth of revelation a Quad provides is quite extraordinary. It can make or break. The loudspeaker's a two-edged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

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

revelation. To hear music on these loudspeakers is to hear music, rather than the loudspeaker.

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

The 989s are best used in a large



(again!) about recording quality.

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

room, two rooms knocked into one being ideal. A length of 20ft or more with a width of 10ft would suit, although any room with a dimension greater than 18-20ft should do. My own room, at 16ft long, was returning the rear wave out-of-phase with the front wave at low frequencies, causing some bass cancellation. The 989s went low and provided plenty of room shaking power, but I detected a strict limit that large box loudspeakers could exceed. Because the 989s provide much more than the ability to just go low the absence of subsonics in my particular situation was not worrying. It was a pity I could not fully hear the resolution of deep bass these loudspeakers bring. ►►

◀◀◀ A compilation of 1960s hits said a lot about what the 989s do with Rock. Differences in recording quality between successive tracks were made obvious, much more so than with other loudspeakers. It's funny how box bass, oft-accentuated frequency extremes, artificial 'detail' and mediocre insight disguise recording weaknesses but tease out the dynamics of Rock. The Quads play it the other way around. The compilation came across as a series of fascinatingly different recordings; it was best not to sit in front of the loudspeakers because the hiss of old analogue master tapes, strange effects, ropey background vocals and peculiar studio acoustics dominated listening. I never realised 'River Deep, Mountain High' was such a messy

out a complex sound stage.

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

Initially I used the silky smooth Cyrus 7 solid-state amplifier with the 989s, followed by Quad's own QC twenty four valve preamplifier and Il-forty valve power amplifier. The civilised

ROUNDING OFF

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

The QC twenty four preamplifier and Il-forty power amplifier have strong



recording until the 989s analysed it so remorselessly in front of me - I almost got up and walked away in disgust!

Electrostatics don't give you the massive resonant bass boom provided by a box, but they do give solid bass that is eerily detailed and revealing of recording method. Most of us are so tuned to the boom of a box, however, that a Quad may seem light or 'peculiar' in this department. In my view, within the right acoustic Quads provide better bass than box loudspeakers.

That the 989s go low was shown by the drifting bass behind Sting's A Thousand Years, which filled the room with a gentle background rumble. Well recorded albums like this were a captivating experience, vocals hanging magically in the air between the 'speakers, at a height that gave them a celestial quality.

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

Cyrus was a good match, where so many other amplifiers failed, sounding hard and brittle.

The valve power amps added stage depth, introduced a greater sense of clarity and, perhaps surprisingly, gave the 989s noticeably stronger bass than the Cyrus. Use of an external PSX supply would probably have improved the Cyrus in this area. However, I enjoyed its silkiness, and remote control. At 70W power output was just right for the 989s.

The 45W output of the valve Il-forty drove the Quads loud but a monitoring oscilloscope showed that the 989s, being insensitive, demand power and going from 'loud' to 'very loud' (over 100dB SPL) induced a little clipping, curiously, on high frequency peaks. I heard harshness setting in so the phenomenon is audible, but of course valve amps can shrug off overload and resist even the crowbar protection circuits that these loudspeakers retain from ESL-63 days. I didn't get the 989s to crowbar the Cyrus 7, by the way, but it has an excellent protection circuit that resets itself, so of all solid-state amps the Cyrus should cope.

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

QUAD ESL-989 £4,600
 QUAD QC-twentyfour preamp &
 QUAD Il-forty monobloc power amps £3,999

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

WORLD VERDICT
 ESL-989



The 989s play music like no other. Open and neutral. The sound is detailed, revealing, ruthless with bad material but downright marvellous otherwise.

Measured
 Performance see
 page 111

WORLD VERDICT
 QUAD QC IIFORTY



A classic combination of the old and new. A big, modern valve sound with space and depth matched with styling that harkens back to the golden age of the vacuum tube.

Measured
 Performance see
 page 111

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we've
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World Radio History

pretty smart



The PA7.5 preamplifier and SmartPower power amp are the latest electronics from the Cyrus stable. Simon Pope checks out their audiophile credentials.

tive figure since we measured 78W.

It's switchable

from stereo to mono operation, so two can be used in monobloc arrangement, increasing the power of each to 105W.

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

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

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

Classical music sounded confident and lush through this pairing. Mahler's demanding (for both hi-fi and listener) Ninth Symphony played by the

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

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

Cyrus aCA7.5 preamplifier £800

Cyrus SmartPower stereo /mono power amplifier £600

Cyrus Electronics Ltd
Spitfire Close, Ermine Business Park
Huntingdon, Cambs PE29 6XY
Tel: 01480 435577
www.cyrus.co.uk

WORLD VERDICT



The Cyrus pair are confident, musical and a joy to use. The competition is tough but they stand their ground admirably. Great upgradability.

Measured Performance see page 111

► The latest integrated amplifiers from Cyrus have been impressive. Both the 5 and 7 have a smooth yet powerful sound, of a sort beloved by owners of the original 1 and 2 models. Factor in the benefit of slicker operation and advanced components and you can see the way the company are heading - upwards and onwards.

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

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

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

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

The SmartPower is a totally new power amplifier capable of delivering a quoted 60W per channel, a conserva-

A lot of changes - and still rather a lot of money.



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Like all the best things in life, they still don't come cheap - but to anyone who really appreciates sound, they're better value than ever.



REFERENCE SERIES



A STRIKING

Simon Pope listens to Linn's £3,250 Genki/Kolektor/LK140/Ninka system.

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

Many a musician too has wandered into their local Linn dealership, mentioned that they've heard the LP12 is the best turntable

around and they'd very much like one, please, Noel Gallagher being one such person, apparently.

However, few of these people are familiar with the company's other products. They have a wide selection of amplifiers, CD players (including the £12,000 flagship CD12) and 'speakers to suit most discerning buyers' budgets.

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



GENKI CD PLAYER - £995

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

The Genki uses surface mount electronics for optimum signal routing and advanced error correction to cope with varying disc quality. A 24 bit Delta Sigma DAC is employed and it's also HDCD compatible, possessing a Pacific

Microsonics chip. An optional RS232 communications module can be added for software upgrades and links to custom home entertainment systems - a rapidly developing part of Linn's empire. ■



KOLEKTOR PREAMPLIFIER - £495

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

minimise unwanted noise.

The tone controls found on the Kolektor are very different from your normal bass and treble controls. The bass control has maximum effect at 40Hz and the treble at 20kHz, therefore they only operate at the boundaries of the audible audio band. They work far more subtly than usual and can be used for adjusting the sound to 'balance out' the characteristics of whatever type of 'speaker you care to use, or whatever type of music you play. Electronic switching and a separate headphone amplifier are also featured in this very clever little package. ■

MATCH



LK140 POWER AMP - £750

The LK140, launched back in April 1998 and the bigger brother of the LK85, can deliver 95W per channel into 8Ω or 140 into 4Ω, hence the name. It is an advance on the design, power and performance of the well received LK100, benefiting from new high density surface mount electronics that minimise signal path lengths and apparently improve pitch accuracy.

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

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

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

NINKA LOUDSPEAKERS - £995

The Ninka floorstanders are the brand new replacement for the popular Keilidhs, so beloved of many Linnies. They are slim and sophisticated looking, yet remarkably solid, the maple version that we had being particularly fetching. It is a two-way, infinite baffle design that features a new wide-dispersion dome treble unit and two Linn polypropylene bass/midrange units with twin magnets.

Upgradability and versatility are to the fore yet again. The Ninka can be easily configured for both passive or active use. Surrounding the terminals at the rear are two removable and reversible connection boards which configure the input terminals for active/passive or single/bi/tri wire use - a very easy and simple way of dealing with a sometimes confusing situation.

These are very attractive 'speakers with a solid build that's somewhat superior to the Keilidhs that they replace. The fact that they are a closed cabinet (infinite baffle) design means that placement is less of a problem than it would be if they were ported. ■

PERFORMANCE

Linn have always emphasised the importance of matching synergy in their products and after spending some time with this system, it became clear what they're on about. With both sound and useability I was mightily

impressed. One remote literally does all here and although adorned with what seems hundreds of buttons, it's a doddle to use.

Burning in the system for a few days the sound became warmer and





CAMARGUE

SERIES



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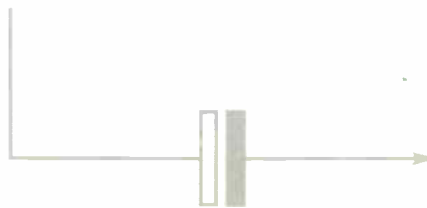
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Mr. Colin Maxted
Technical Manager
Musical Fidelity Ltd
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Wembley
Middlesex
HA9 0TF

smoother as time progressed eventually resulting in a pleasantly full and rich sound that performed equally well with any CD I fed into the Genki. This system has a strangely addictive combination of a sweet smoothness and bass drive that demands you play through your entire collection. Consequently, listening went on for two or three fascinating days. It's not that it made all my CDs sound remarkably different but I found certain aspects in recordings, such as drum kit detail and certain bass notes that had previously escaped my attention. But the Linn system does all this in a very easy going manner. It's literally 'easy listening' without the tacky tag that comes with the phrase.

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

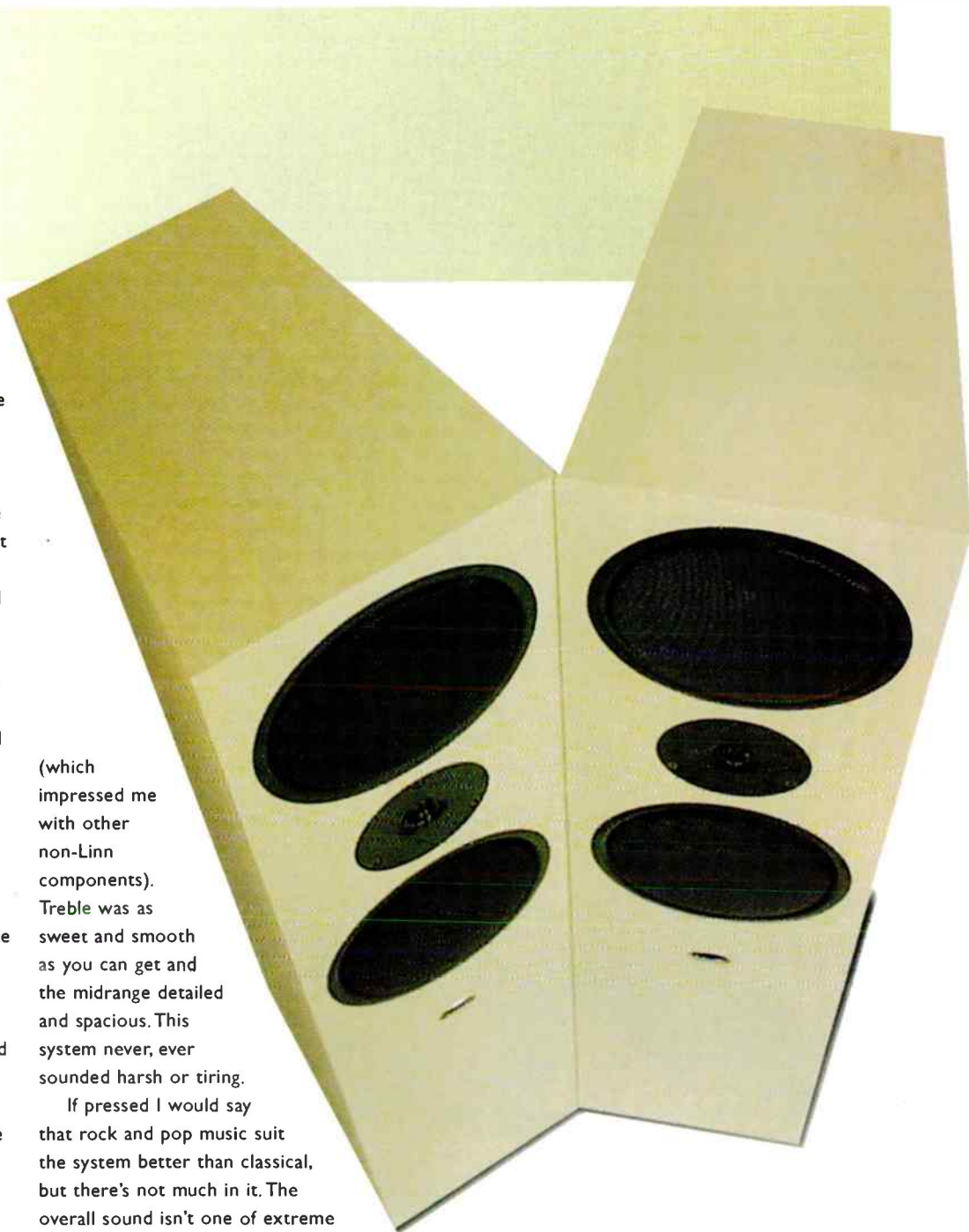
With rock, pop and dance the system delivered equally impressively. Everything from Beth Orton's folk acoustic strumming in 'She Cries Your Name', to the blistering assault of Soundgarden's 'Superunknown' failed to trip this system up. Vocals were clear and forward and drum kits and bass lines sounded forceful and detailed, due in part to the detail of the CD player, the controlled clout of the LK140 and the taut and deep bass of the excellent Ninka 'speakers

(which impressed me with other non-Linn components). Treble was as sweet and smooth as you can get and the midrange detailed and spacious. This system never, ever sounded harsh or tiring.

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

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

I, for one, found it quite hard to tear myself away as it's a great listen. A great system that's highly recommended, even for hi-fi cynics! ■▲



Linn Genki/Kolektor/
LK140/Ninka loudspeakers £3,250

Linn Products Ltd
Floors Rd
Waterfoot
Eaglesham
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WORLD VERDICT



A great, open, warm sound with plenty of drive and power. Could be a little too coloured for some, though.



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World Radio History



GOING FOR GOLD

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

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

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

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

275W per channel into 8ohms.

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

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

Under the bonnet each power amp is effectively a monobloc, featuring separate heat sinking, circuit board, mains transformer and choke. The latter are the same as found in the Nu-Vista 300 power amp, but mounted on the heatsinks. MF says this ensures the micro-vibrations caused by the choke are exactly in

phase with the related circuitry, which improves sound. The preamp section of the M3 employs the same channel separation theory as the power section. It's an excellent combination of electronics and aesthetic design as you're going to get for three grand.

CLEAR WINNER

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

A fine example of this was shown with Eiji Oue and the Minnesota Orchestra's version of Mahler's 'Das Lied Von Der Erde' (The Song Of The Earth) song cycle on a Reference Recordings HDCCD disc (available from Vivante: 020 8977 6600). This is an orchestral song cycle but one of



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symphonic proportions and large orchestral forces. These forces though, like in much of Mahler's final work, are used sparingly to great effect, especially in the last movement, *Der Abschied*. The result is a sparse soundscape of vast proportions, a fine match for both Reference Recordings and the M3 amplifier. It has one of the deepest and most spacious soundstages I've encountered - the orchestra was truly three-dimensional, with timpani placed realistically at the rear and woodwind centrally placed in both the image and the soundstage.

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

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

You get none of the smooth rolled off, sweet sound that many audiophiles still adhere to, but what's

really there, warts and all. You get an insight into the recording - and more importantly the music - that's so rare in hi-fi.

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

SHAKER MAKER

It isn't just with classical music that this beauty shines. Those 275-plus watts per channel really let loose on bassy, rhythmic rock like The Screaming Tree's excellent 'Dust' CD. Well recorded, it soared through the 'speakers like the space shuttle on re-entry, as tight, powerful drums drove the music along fast, as solid as a rock. This was accompanied by some of the most tuneful and taut bass you'll get from any amp, and I'm including the likes of Naim, Krell and

Chord Electronics in this. Indeed it's the more expensive Chord Electronics gear (such as the £5,500 CPA 2200 and SPM600 pre and power) that this fine integrated resembles, and even betters with its musical insight. Bass guitars were bone-crunching without being overblown, and you could hear every single note of it too.

As well as grace and fluidity, the M3 can deliver pure balls-out rock and roll and still have plenty of headroom. Like driving a TVR Griffith in the slow lane, you know there's plenty left under the bonnet, but it's equally enjoyable cruising smoothly at seventy.

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

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

NU-VISTA M3 £2,995
Musical Fidelity
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WORLD VERDICT



One of the best sounding amplifiers you'll ever hear, the M3 has detail and transparency beyond comprehension. Surely a future classic.

Measured Performance see page 111

HI-FI WORLD'S SPECIAL JANUARY

WIN A MUSICAL FIDELITY PRE AND POWER AMP COMBINATION WORTH £2,000 IN THIS MONTH'S



Forget the Santa Socks and twin-pack of boxer Shorts you get every year from Great Aunt Gladys; we're giving you the chance to win an Xmas present to die for. In this month's competition we've managed to procure, courtesy of Musical Fidelity, the A3CR pre and power amp combination - undoubtedly one of the best pairings available on the market right now.

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

A HISTORY OF MUSIC

Founded in 1982, Musical Fidelity was the brainchild of professional clarinetist Antony Michaelson, whose (according to the man himself) "religion is music and fanatical hobby is hi-fi". The first Musical Fidelity

product, named The Pre-amplifier, had an amazingly sweet and musical sound at a fair price. It received ecstatic reviews, despite the fact that every model was knocked up on Mr. Michaelson's kitchen table! The Musical Fidelity wheels were well and truly set in motion with the 1985 launch of the 20W per channel A1. This pure Class A integrated amplifier took the hi-fi world by storm and sold around 100,000 units. A host of products in the A1 mould followed, representing great value for money and possessing a sweet, well controlled sound.

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

Over the past three years Musical Fidelity have also manufactured the flagship Nu-Vista range of products, employing the miniature valve of the

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

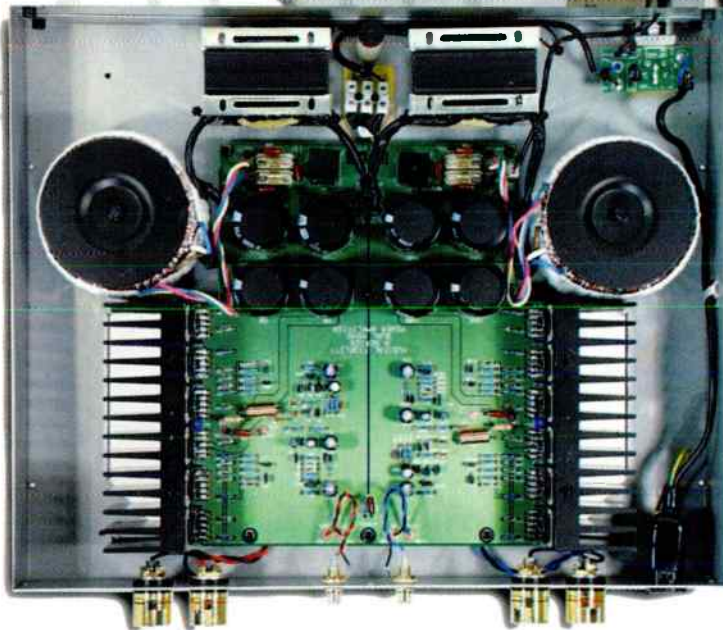
SUPERB PERFORMERS

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

Quite a claim, but when we

CHRISTMAS COMPETITION

...SUPER COMPETITION GIVEAWAY!



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

The power amp uses a unique full choke regulated power supply which eliminates capacitor and mains interference, to allow the circuit a stable performance platform. The sonic benefits of choke regulation are many. Due to the lack of interference

to the circuitry, the A3CR power amp has a clarity and detail that's quite astonishing, especially when partnered with the A3CR preamp as Simon Pope found out in his review: "The MF amps sought something more in this Bach Cello Suite than mere notes. This was due to the exquisite detail present. There was a depth to the sound as the bow dug into the string that was frighteningly realistic".

There's no doubting these amps' sonic attributes, as they play any music or recording with equal realism and true transparency. Factor in an innate sense of musicality and you should be starting to get the picture. Dynamic range is awesome, pieces such as Stravinsky's The Rite Of Spring show that even at full pelt,

the A3CRs still have more to give: "the MFs dug out dance-like tribalism behind the music to result in a consummate listening experience. . .rarely does cacophony sound so good".

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



Competition Questions

[1] What was the name of Musical Fidelity's first product?

- [a] The Power Amplifier
- [b] The Preamplifier
- [c] The CD Player
- [d] The Mains Conditioner

[2] The A1 amplifier used which type of operation?

- [a] Class A
- [b] Class B
- [c] Class D
- [d] Class E

[3] In which year did Musical Fidelity launch its X and X-A Series?

- [a] 1982
- [b] 2000
- [c] 1995
- [d] 1999

[4] What is the name of the mini valve used in Musical Fidelity's flagship products?

- [a] Nu-Vista
- [b] Nu-Dista
- [c] Nu-Order
- [d] Nu-Tron

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Please Note: Advertisement valid until at least 13th December 2000, E&OE



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Pioneer PDR509 CD-RW Recorder

CD-RW ♦ Digital Recording Level ♦ Coaxial & Optical Connections



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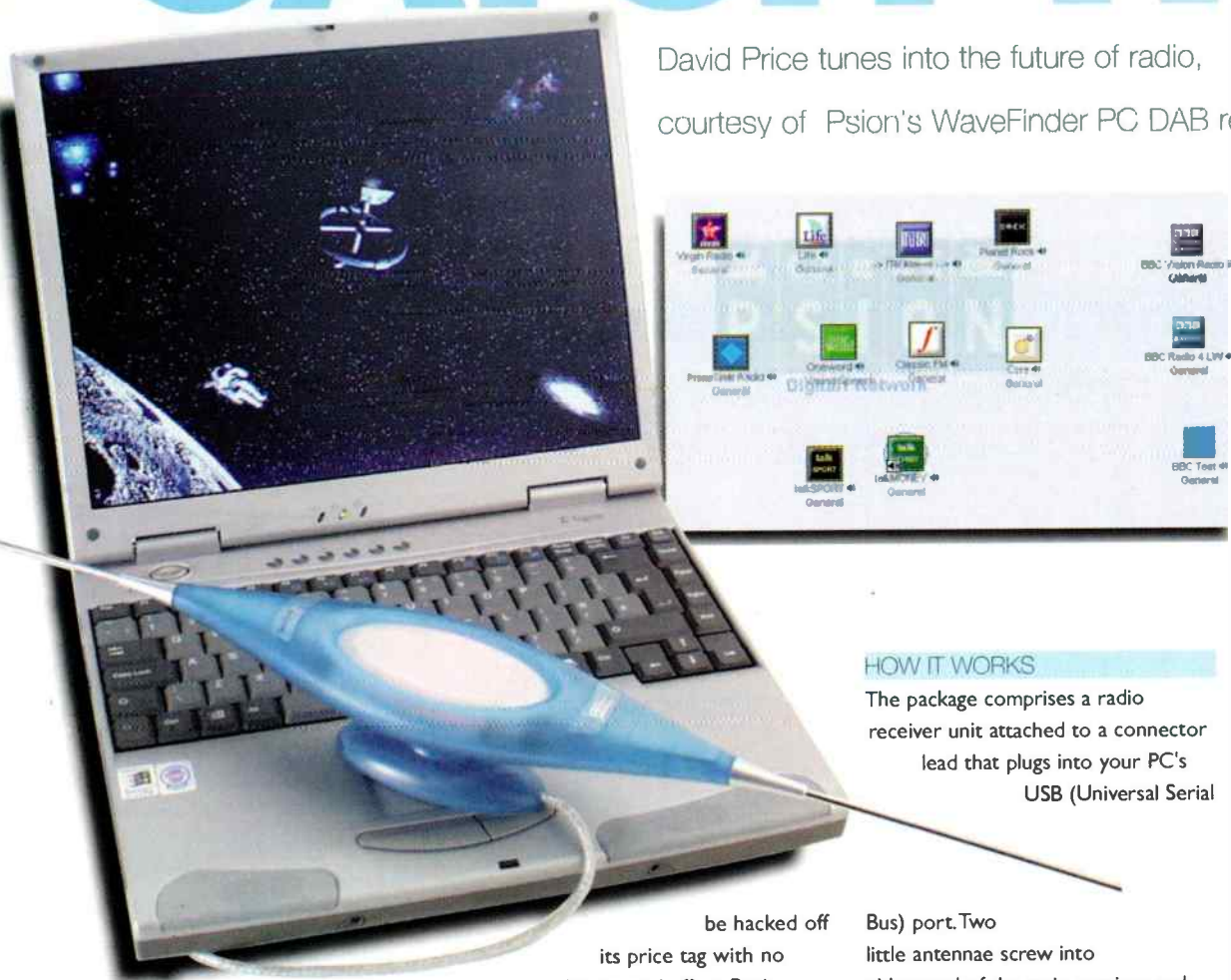
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CATCH THE

David Price tunes into the future of radio, courtesy of Psion's WaveFinder PC DAB receiver.



HOW IT WORKS

The package comprises a radio receiver unit attached to a connector lead that plugs into your PC's USB (Universal Serial

Without doubt, Digital Audio Broadcasting is the future of radio. Leak Troughline users may disagree, but not everyone listens to radio purely as a super-high quality music source. Others are after good sound allied to superb convenience, which is where DAB excels. With this in mind, dozens of manufacturers are now scrambling to offer just such a package at the right price. Until now, all that's reached the market are a few boxy black hi-fi separates with very expensive price tags. While these are worthy ways of surfing the digital ether, they've hardly filled the listening public with awe and wonderment about the new radio revolution. What was needed is an easy to use, mass market product that looks good and costs next to nothing. Enter Psion InfoMedia's WaveFinder. By using the PC platform to take care of all digital processing duties, vast amounts can

be hacked off its price tag with no detrimental effect. Both a novelty product and an immensely practical tool at the same time, it makes an extremely persuasive argument for DAB at a price everyone can afford.

WHAT IS IT?

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

Bus) port. Two little antennae screw into either end of the main receiver, and the USB plug attaches to an offboard power adaptor via a piggyback minijack socket. The package also comes with a set-up CD and a couple of brackets, letting you mount the receiver unit onto anything you so desire.

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

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

WAVE



follow the rules. The WaveFinder must be positioned vertically, where it will not be affected by the close proximity of large metal objects (e.g. radiators) or other electrical equipment. Psion supply some adhesive pads for you to experiment with location before final installation. The idea is to look for the best location by checking the software 'reception indicator' lights, then mount the aerial permanently using screws provided.

Once up and running, the WaveFinder flashes funny colours at you, denoting the fact that it's surfing the digital waves looking for stations. Then the tuner software kicks in to display the stations it's found which are currently broadcasting on-air. After that, it's simply a matter of clicking on the station you want and listening in.

If this all sounds complex, then it's my description rather than the set-up process. The whole thing is very straightforward, even if you're a newcomer to PCs. For me at least, the hardest part of the entire set-up process was getting the damn thing out of its over-elaborate box!

WHAT IT DOES

Whenever you want to listen to DAB from your computer, just click on the WaveFinder logo on the Windows desktop and the application loads up in a second or two. It offers a 'palette' of options. 'Open Map' prints a 'WaveMap' of stations available, represented by Windows-style graphic icons. To tune into a station, just click on its Icon. Each station is categorised according to content (i.e. 'Pop Music' or 'News'). Radio stations broadcast different types of data (like text and images) as well as audio, so there's also an icon indicating the type of data being transmitted. The 'Last Stations' button is like a 'History' file in your web browser, showing the stations you've accessed recently. 'Find

Station' scans all the DAB multiplexes to find the one you want. Along with Help and registration information, 'Options' lets you record audio broadcasts in MP2 or MP3 format and save the file to your PC.

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

HOW DOES IT SOUND?

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

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

If you don't pipe it out to an external DAC, you're relying on the digital convertors inside your PC. With a decent card (like VideoLogic's SonicFury or Yamaha's WF192XG) you'd be surprised how closely it approaches decent FM radio, with a

clean, detailed and full bodied performance. With a poor soundcard like the one your PC comes bundled with, don't expect it to better AM radio. The relative merits (or demerits) of the MPEG2 compression system that DAB uses are for another time and another place. Suffice it to say that FM stereo isn't the purest and most uncompressed music carrier known to man, and both have their strengths and weaknesses.

WHAT DO WE THINK?

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

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

PSION INFOMEDIA WAVEFINDER

£299

www.pSION.com/infomedia

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Intel Pentium II/III 333MHz or higher, or Intel Celeron 400 MHz or higher, or AMD K6-II/III 450 MHz or higher, or AMD K7 (Athlon) 500MHz or higher. Microsoft Windows 98/98SE (64MB RAM), Microsoft Windows ME (Millennium Edition) or Microsoft Windows 2000 (128MB RAM). 64MB RAM minimum (128MB for Windows 2000). 50MB minimum free hard disk space for installation, plus space for your recordings. 16-bit stereo sound card. USB port - CD-ROM or DVD-ROM drive - Modem (or Internet connection) for 'Click thru Radio' services.

WORLD VERDICT



Limited reception capabilities notwithstanding, this is a cracking product that will enrich the life of any radio head!

DAB update

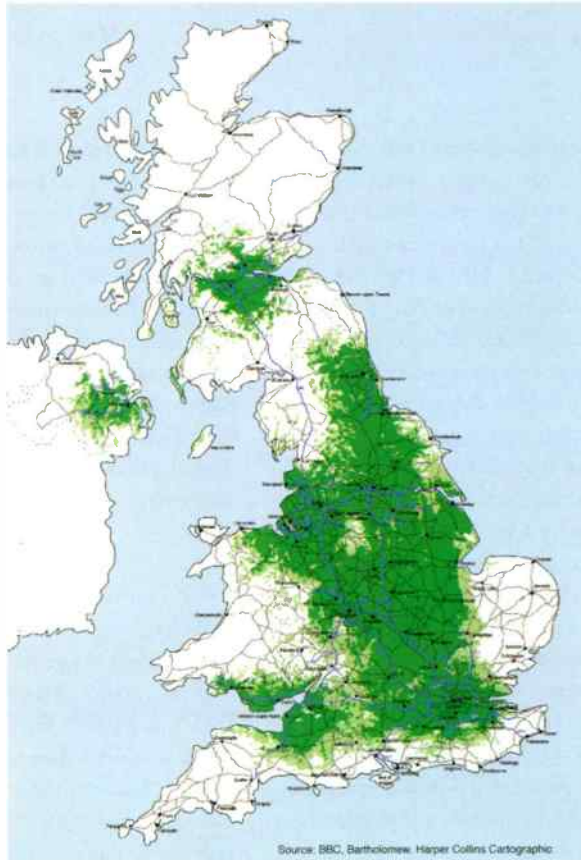
Noel Keyword discusses the future of Digital Audio Broadcasting

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

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

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

DAB does work. It delivers fine sound quality from a weak signal, our tests show, but it has limitations. DAB broadcasts are conducted in a narrow part of Band III, from 217MHz-230MHz, double the frequency used by VHF/FM broadcasts in Band II, from 88-108MHz. You might notice vhf/fm fade or disappear when driving past a large building; DAB is even more sensitive to this phenomenon. So, for example, whilst London is fully served you may well be



unable to receive DAB in a basement flat (see our Psion review) where VHF/FM is available, albeit with hiss. When a DAB receiver fails to get enough signal it falls silent, becoming useless, unlike VHF/FM which becomes hissy but remains usable.

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

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

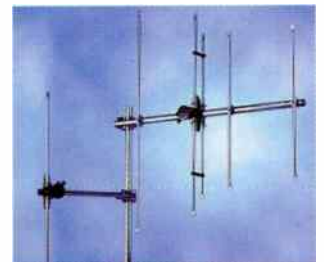
Around 70% of the UK's population can receive DAB, we are told. The BBC's coverage map (below) shows that

the densely populated South Coast, East Anglia, the West Country, Northern Britain and much of Scotland cannot receive DAB however. The Beeb now advise, like us., that the "location and structure" of your building can determine reception or not, even in the areas of high signal strength shown on the map. You can call them for reception advice on 08700 100 123. There's also a Digital Radio Helpline at 0870 90 90 250.

DAB is ideal for car radios and portable radios, since the aerial can be smaller and outdoor locations suit it better, due to lack of screening. It is fade free and does not suffer

multipath flutter, nor do you have to retune whilst driving when leaving a transmitter area. Sound quality is extremely good and there are myriads of stations broadcasting, all desperate for listeners. DAB actually has stations that are not available on VHF/FM!

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



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World Radio History

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BURNING



Of all hi-fi CD recorders around right now, Marantz's DR6000 is seen as the one to beat.

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

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

digital sound on a format that the most of the public are familiar with.

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

The differences extend more to a different fascia badge and a lick of paint though. This new machine gets a number of useful tweaks, not least of which is the new MAR770+C40 transport. This is a real class act, using a die-cast mechanism and dual bearing optical pickup. When burning, the laser continuously readjusts laser power to allow for variations in disc construction, and it also detects and

adjusts itself to the brand and type of CD blank being used. Tested with Digital Recordings CD Check, the Marantz tracked all but the final band five, which was an excellent result and shows the Philips guys know what they're up to.

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

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

Features-wise, it's familiar Philips territory with its Dutch CD-R951 cousin's array of handy recording aids (CD Sync with memory buffer, auto

AMBITION



David Price finds out if it's really digital recording's highest achiever.

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

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

The DR6000 has a sound traditionally associated with the Marantz brand. Smooth but soft around the edges, you get a warm but rhythmically unengaging view of your silver discs. It smooths over rough edges well with a slightly rolled-off and sophisticated sheen, but if rough edges are your listening


bread and butter, you could well die of starvation. Whilst a Karajan/DG recording of a Strauss tone poem will glide richly and effortlessly through your 'speakers, Motorhead will sound more like the Carpenters. Put it through an external DAC though, and things get better - it isn't a million miles behind top mid-price transports like TEAC's VRDS-T1.

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

This still isn't the best digital

recorder you'll get for the money. At around £550 discounted, Sony's giant killing TCD-8 DAT portable has noticeably better analogue to digital converters and a more open and incisive sound. Then again, you can't play DATs in your car or computer. So if it's all round ability you're after, the Marantz DR6000 is now the one to have at the price. It does most things well, and advances the cause of CD recorders just that little bit more. However, if you're intending to use it as a serious, standalone playback machine too, then invest in a good, cheap DAC as quick as you can. ■▲

MARANTZ DR6000 £500
 Marantz Hi-Fi UK Ltd.
 Kingsbridge House, Padbury Oaks
 575-583 Bath Rd.
 Longford
 Middx UB7 0EH
 Tel: 01753 680868
www.marantz.co.uk

WORLD VERDICT

 Great all rounder
 with no serious flaws
 - makes great
 recordings and plays
 back well. Fine value
 for money.
*Measured
 Performance see
 page 111*

China in your

China is firmly established as the new heartland of hi-fi 'speaker manufacturing. Simon Pope travelled to Shenzhen to check out Wharfedale's production facilities.

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

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

First, a brief résumé of the recent history of the company may help

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

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

With the Chinese interest in the company and the gradual movement of the whole industry towards manufacturing in such countries, it was obvious that production of the mass market models should move

from Wharfedale's Bradford factory to China. In late 1997 Wharfedale started manufacturing their loudspeaker and professional audio products in a factory just outside Shenzhen, a boom city just north of Hong Kong and a Special Economic Zone within the People's Republic.



"Around 700 employees work at the Shenzhen factory"

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

hands

testing drive units. Each section has at least one manager present to oversee quality. It was quite a sight to behold, and admittedly, a surprise.



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

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

Whilst part of the same company, only a few mouldings and circuit boards for the Quad 99 series are made in China, and the finished products are assembled in the UK. All other Quad products, due to the limited numbers and work involved, are designed and built in the old

Wharfedale factory in Bradford. But IAG's commitment to Quad products is as strong as in Wharfedale, as high end hi-fi matters in China, as I well discovered.

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

"Who buys this stuff in China?" you may well be thinking. I visited a plush PGA golf club in the Chinese countryside whilst on my little jaunt that confirmed a couple of suspicions. [1] I'm not very good at golf, and [2] there are more rich people than you think in China. This plush set up could have been in Palm Springs, except for the fact that the members arriving in top of the range Mercedes and buggy cruising in Ralph

Lauren polo shirts were young Chinese entrepreneurs doing business, as opposed to retired attorneys with nothing better to do. It's not for nothing that many predict Shanghai to be the main world banking capital ten years from now, with China the world's strongest economic force.



"Tubes are hot stuff in China!"



"Steve Hewlett, Wharfedales head of R&D in China"

What's important for us in the audio industry to remember is that hi-fi is very much a part of this boom. The future of our renowned audio heritage, to a certain extent dead and buried here (walk down Tottenham Court Rd. for a reminder) is being continued, with quality as important an issue as ever. ■ ▲

'SONY ROCK 'N' ROLL..



MiniDisc has had a stormy past. Launched in 1992 it spent its early days in a dogfight with Philips' now moribund DCC format, then pretty much disappeared off the scene. When I joined Hi-Fi World in 1994 I remember seeing a MiniDisc T-shirt lying around the office, and thinking how it would soon be a museum piece! Despite its superb ergonomics, the format sounded so bad that its premature demise looked assured.

Fast forward to 1997, when I was asked to review Sony's new MDS-JE500 MD recorder. Singularly underwhelmed by the prospect, I tried to postpone the evil day as long as I could, but when I eventually came round to plugging it in, I got one hell of a shock. At the time, I'd been archiving my records onto DAT using a Sony TC-D7 portable, and was well versed in the sound quality of this 'pure' digital format. I decided to spin off a few MD copies of my DATs out of interest, and was gobsmacked. Although still quite a way behind DAT, it was nevertheless very musically convincing, especially considering its low £300 retail price.

Hi-Fi World ran what was probably the first glowing review of any MiniDisc machine ever in Britain (doubtless users of previous genera-

tion MD machines thought we'd gone off our trolleys!) and the Sony duly cleaned up in the High Streets. Indeed, I reckon much of the drop in sales of cassette hardware can be traced back to this very machine. Sony then followed it with a range of budget MD machines, from the super-budget 300 series, through the 500 series and up to the 900 series. The 920 was another cracker which Sony soon replaced with the MDS-JB930, which brought the latest ATRAC DSP-Type R to the party, plus other goodies like a switchable digital filter.

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

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

washers in the casing fixings.

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

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

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

Finally, the new machine offers Scale Factor Edit, which lets users change recordings after they've been made. For example, you can Normalise the level of each individual track so one doesn't sound far louder than the rest, or you can post fade (in or out) all your tracks. It's a minor but worthwhile new facility, and adds even more to MiniDisc's formidable editing capabilities.

..BUT WE LIKE IT!

David Price boogies on down to Sony's latest budget MiniDisc machine, the MDS-JB940.



So how do the tweaks work out in practice? Having used this new Sony's MDS-JB930 predecessor extensively, I was able to do some detailed comparison work. First, the newbie feels better built, with a cleaner fascia layout that also includes the large recording mode selector and warning light to the right of the disc loader. It retains the oldster's useful keyboard link (you can plug in a standard computer keyboard for faster titling, if you can be bothered), and there's a powerful Set-Up facility accessible via the Edit Menu.

There's a real sonic improvement over the previous model. Although still a long way from the superb standards of the top-of-the-range MDS-JA555ES, you'll hear a touch more detail, finesse and naturalness to this new machine's sound. Essentially the new Sony's a neutral performer, adding just a touch of warmth and bloom to the upper mid-band and subtracting the same further down from the low bass. Midband is impressively smooth and open, with plenty of detail and a fast, lithe character. Only up in the high treble do its failings become apparent, with a slightly thick, cloudy quality devoid of real shimmer. With the bright, brash mix of ACT's 'Absolutely Immune' the 940 detracted little from the proceedings. The overall sound was fast, punchy, bouncy and rhythmi-

cally engaging with no obvious MiniDisc nasties to be heard anywhere. Right throughout the song's loud, crashing chorus lines, Claudia Bruken's piercing voice maintained an impressive smoothness and clarity.

Lesser MD recorders flatten out the soundstage, bringing all the action closer to the plane of the speakers, but this one did not. It's one area the new model is better than its predecessor.

With Neil Young's 'Harvest Moon', the Sony MDS-JB940 again acquitted itself well. With a wide, expansive soundstage, warm bass and a beautifully clean and detailed rendition of Young's acoustic guitar work, it made some very nice noises indeed. Neil's melancholic voice was carried in all its plangent glory, with just a touch of atmosphere sacrificed against the reference CD recording. The only blot on an otherwise immaculate copybook was a slight loss of shimmer in the treble, which detracted just a touch from the song's sense of occasion.

Moving to the spacey, ambient jazz of Special EFX's 'Masterpiece' showed the 940's weaker side. Although less processed sounding than both my old Denon DMD-1000 reference and the Sony's 930 predecessor, ultimately it never loosened up enough to really let the music breathe in an organic way. Although it

got so much right, the song's crashing climaxes underlined its ultimate dynamic limitations. It's certainly very good at 'microdynamics' (those little changes in accent, inflection and phrasing), but when someone hits a piano keyboard or guitar string in anger, it just doesn't quite get it across properly.

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

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

SONY MDS-JB940 £249
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WORLD VERDICT

 Superb value for money thanks to its heady combination of great sound, top feature count and impressive build. The best budget MiniDisc recorder around right now.
Measured Performance see page 111

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LETTER OF THE MONTH

LIGHTNING UPGRADE

I hope you can throw some light on some problems I'm having replacing some of my hi-fi, after our house was zapped by lightning a few months ago! I have bought a TEAC Reference 500 system for my "den", with my Linn Sondek LP12 Valhalla coupled to it. The turntable has a Mayware Mk IV tonearm and Sonus Blue cartridge fitted. I'm unable to get a replacement Blue stylus and don't know who makes the tonearm - I'd like to get another headshell to try another cartridge to compare with my Sonus without having to reset the tracking as well as re-balancing the arm. What do you know of this tone-arm and the cartridge set-up that I am using? What does it compare with? In the

lounge my Trio KA900 amp is replaced by a Marantz PM6010 OSE but the Marantz does not have a tight grip on the bass when coupled to my Celestion Ditton 300 speakers using the existing Bandridge speaker cable. The bass can be boomy, something the Trio did not give. I've internally re-wired the speakers but the bass is still not clean, although an improvement is there. I've a sneaky feeling my existing cables are past their use by date - if so, what do you suggest? I'm not too keen to replace with untinned OFC cable if a few years down the road I experience the same. The speakers are on triple spikes at floor level, experimenting with height and position does improve the situation a little but it is still tiring to listen to them. The Celestions sound very good when connected to either my TEAC or the Marantz when installed in my den. I have

Tannoy Revolution R1 speakers wall mounted in the den, and I am very pleased with the sound of the TEAC and Tannoy set-up. I bought the Marantz as I plan to replace the old CD player (a Technics SL-P220) with possibly the Marantz CD6000 OSE using IXOS Gamma Encore interconnects. Your thoughts would be appreciated on my choice. My music tastes cover Bert Kaempfert, James Last, Sounds Orchestral, Neil Diamond, The Shadows, Lenny Dee, Stanley Black, Andre Brasseur and Duane Eddy etc.

Bill Nixon, Jersey

The Mayware was a popular mid-price unipivot of the late seventies, comparable to a Hadcock or Michell Focus arm. It was good in its day, but is now way off the pace. It's boring to have to restate this, but an Origin



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Live modded RB250 would be the cheapest way to blast your ageing vinyl front end into the 21st century. Find a Linn dealer who's prepared to get his chisel out and file off a little of the right rear plinth corner brace, which will then enable you to fit the Rega arm.

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

If you love the sweet, beguiling nature of unipivots however, the one to have would be the Naim ARO, which would pair up a treat with the Linn. It's expensive though, and if you're using it with your Teac amp (good though it is), you'll find it's overkill! Personally, I'd fit a Dynavector DVI0X4 high output moving coil to the Rega and have done with it - it's a dynamite combination and cheap too.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DP ■

ONCE BITTEN... FOREVER SMITTEN

The bug is starting to bite again and the urge for something new and better is increasing! My present system is Meridian 200/203 CD/DAC, Meridian 201 preamp, Meridian 555 power amp, Mission 782 speakers, Denon TU260/2 tuner, Philips 750 DVD and Panasonic 680 video. Interconnects are vdH102mk2, Audioquest quartz3 (CD-pre-power) and vdH Snow line/track biwire speaker cable. Room size is 12x17x8 5ft, with a suspended wooden floor no carpet, leather sofas and one wall covered floor to ceiling wall to wall with heavy curtains. The system is fed from its own dedicated distribution board, each item being protected by its own feed via 6mm cable. My music tastes range from classical to Zappa, Floyd, Genesis etc. The system sits on an

Apollo soprano table spiked to the floor, and the speakers sit on a sub-base then spiked to these. Well now you have all the info, what can I do to improve upon what I have? My budget will run to £2500. I feel the first upgrade should be the disc player/preamp. So what's new and improved? Sorry for the length of this query, and thank you for a response!

Simon Morson via email

Your existing set-up is a good, fairly well balanced system but you're right to identify the source and preamp as the weak links. The speakers and power amp are certainly deserving of better. If you wish to stick with Meridian gear, go for a new 506.24



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CD SHOOT OUT

My system comprises an FT Audio Passive Controller, 47Lab Gaincard power amp and Duntech Opal speakers. The sound of the amp is close to DNM - direct and transparent - and the speakers are like Spendor or Harbeths. Rather than spending big money on CD players like the Linn Ikemi, I'd like your opinion about mid-price around £1000 designs. I owned a Rega Planet before and changed to a Creek CD43 later. I like the sound of the Roksan Caspian, but the Creek CD43 gives an exceptionally musical sound that's just a little bass-light by comparison. Using the Roksan and Creek as the reference, where will the Musical Fidelity A3CD, the new Rega Jupiter and Linn Genki stand? The latter seems to have had good reviews in the UK press but is quite a bit more than the others here. How different is the Musical Fidelity A3CD (considerably cheaper here) from the Genki, and can the CD43 still compete in this company? Your opinion will be very much appreciated.

Paul Lam via email

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

look out for more on Linn high end CD soon in Hi-Fi World! SP ■

STRINGING TOGETHER A SYSTEM

My old system (Marantz CD63SE, Aura VA100II and Ruark Templar speakers) has served me well, but the amplifier has just gone in for a repair, and I have been looking at other options, either with or without my existing speakers. So far I have listened to a Musical Fidelity CD and amp (both about £800) which wasn't to my taste, Linn (Genki, Wakanda, L14U) which was much better but too warm and unfocused, and a Naim (CDS, NAIT 5, Intro speakers) which delivered great detail and focus but was too dry and bass light. Budget is about £2500 if I keep the Ruarks, and about £3000 if I also get new speakers. What are the best options? My main musical interest is string quartets, with some opera. Thanks for any help you can give me.

David Hedley via email

Instead of one-make solutions, I'd start mixing and matching. If you like your Ruarks (and they're fine music makers, if not exactly the state-of-the-art anymore) then go for the best CD source you can afford and match it with Naim's new NAIT 5. The Copland CDA 289 is our latest fave rave in the sub-£2000 silver disc spinning stakes, thanks to its really strong, confident and smooth sound that almost makes you forget you're listening to digital. Factor in its HDCD capability and it's a fine package for £1,898. Then, when more funds come along, you could split your NAIT into a pre-power (whilst upgrading the power amp and HICAPing the pre) and audition better loudspeakers like Jamo Concert IIs, Dynaudio Audience 70s or KEF Reference Series One-Twos. DP ■



The new One-Two - KEF'S Reference standard

stream on



Wednesday, 11th October 2000 was the day Microsoft chose to unveil its new multimedia plans to the world, and the good Lord joined in with some spectacular special effects. As the US computer giant's top brass briefed London's Streaming Media Europe 2000 conference on its view of the future of home entertainment, there were storms and floods the like of which the South East hadn't seen for many years. In this shower of publicity, the word 'streaming' could not have been more appropriate!

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

THE PROMISE

The implications are huge. Suddenly, music fans have access to vast quanti-

ties of radio and video material on practically any artist they can think of, from servers dotted all around the world.

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

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

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

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

the 'activity centre' of the noughties.

Pete Fester, General Manager of Microsoft's flagship Digital Media Division, told Hi-Fi World that their goal is, "to make Windows Media technology available everywhere, anywhere, anytime on multiple devices". To this end, fifty new 'Windows Media Service Providers' across eleven European countries (making a total of 330 world-wide) have been set up to help provide aspiring online broadcasters with the technological know-how to stream their content over the Net. There's a directory of these at www.microsoft.com/windowsmedia/wmsp/.

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

In November, Sony Music Entertainment Europe and Microsoft are launching a streamed European music video channel. This brand new '21st century MTV' is the first streamed music video channel and will be tailored to European tastes. It will be offered at bitrates suitable for standard 'dial-up' modem users and broadband users who want near-VHS quality 300kbps streaming.

David Price looks at the next logical step in online audio – streaming.



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

Netcine is releasing 1,000 movies in Windows Media format via the Internet from Pathe's library of films. Offering full 'video-on-demand', viewers will be able to watch them whenever they like, rather than having to wait for them to be broadcast at particular times.

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

THE TECHNOLOGY

Microsoft has grand designs for audio and video streaming, and this is just the start. There's no doubt it's deadly serious about the new venture, but readily admits it's still early days. In Europe at least, the information pipelines have to be there to make it viable.

For example, MP3's detractors are quick to point out that downloading a song takes upwards of twenty minutes (for a 4MB file), and often use this to dismiss the whole idea of digitally downloadable music. However, Microsoft's Digital Media supremo says this is a short-sighted position. Pete Fester agrees that broadband has to be in place for streaming to replace conventional disc based audio and video storage (i.e. DVDs and CDs), and says that behind the scenes there's a lot of work going on to realise this. "Right

now, downloading an average movie via a 56k dial-up modem takes 833 hours, but Europe will soon be able to look forward to just 53 seconds by cable".

In conjunction with Global TeleSystems Inc. and Compaq, Microsoft is working on the largest pan-European streaming service, with an eventual capacity to serve up to 1 million concurrent streams across Europe.

Servecast.com also announced it will promote Windows Media as part of its development of a state-of-the-art network infrastructure for video and audio broadcasting across Europe. A series of powerful servers will form a high-capacity network for online video and audio delivery, linked by a high-speed backbone. The company is already operational in London, Amsterdam, Frankfurt and Stockholm, and will expand to a total of 16 European points by March, 2001.

THE DREAM

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

Although Microsoft says it has given Windows Media "a huge kick" with these announcements, there's still a way to go. The next stage will be when broadband cable access reaches normal consumers, which is still a year or two off (thanks to the politics of the British

telecomms industry), but when this finally happens, life will never be the same again.

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

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

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

INTERNET KILLED THE VIDEO STAR?

Sony has ambitious plans for its new online, streamed music video channel launching later this month. Sony Music Entertainment Europe's media technology vice-president says, "We are eager to offer music fans an online video channel that will additionally serve the growing base of broadband users in Europe with a high-quality local experience. We also see this as a great opportunity to provide additional exposure to both established superstar acts and more cutting-edge artists, developing local and international acts. The Windows Media Player fits in well with this vision, as it provides an excellent user experience and has been localised to serve the needs of our European customers." The new channel will showcase Sony artists including Bob Dylan, Fat Boy Slim, The Fugees, Michael Jackson, Jamiroquai, the Manic Street Preachers, Oasis and Sade.

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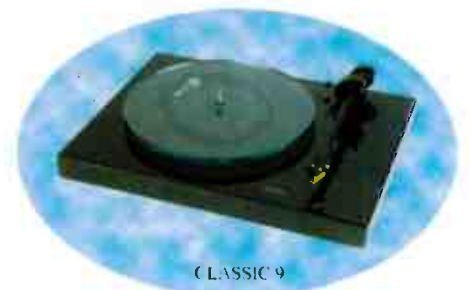
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THE PERSPECTIVE



CLASSIC CHERRY



CLASSIC 9

SILVER DREAM MACHINE

With its beautiful aluminium finish, Aiwa's MM-VX100 is proof the Japanese can do a good MP3 portable at the right price. Nick Tate listens in.

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

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

First, there's 32MB of built-in flash card memory, which is respectable at this price considering the overall package, with the option to upgrade with another 32MB later. There's a voice recorder and microphone built in, so the MM-VX100 will also function as a dictaphone, which records up to two hours and 99 sessions of voice notes. Four centrally

mounted buttons control the unit's functions, including power on-off, volume, recording, track search, repeat and play modes, plus a switchable DSP offering Classic, Rock, Pop and Jazz presets. There's also a 3v DC jack for external power, should the 15 hours of juice provided by the Aiwa's single AA battery be exhausted.

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

This little Aiwa continued to impress on audition, but with reservations. The player itself is excellent, but the bundled shareware version of RealAudio's RealJukebox looks distinctly below par. It permits a maximum bitrate of only 96kbps which simply does not qualify as hi-fi. If only Aiwa had bundled the latest shareware version of MusicMatch Jukebox which comes with free, unlimited ripping at up to 320kbps



with the Fraunhofer Advanced codec! Still, Aiwa users can always subsequently download this, or better still buy the full retail version at a later date.

Still, given decently ripped MP3s the Aiwa sounded superb. Donald Fagen's 'Tomorrow's Girls' ripped on MMJ5.0 proved the MM-VX100 to be one of the best sounding MP3 portables around right now. Essentially it combines a smooth, sweet and detailed treble with a good clean midband and a powerful, punchy bass. The overall effect is one of great sophistication and refinement (for a portable, at least) and means you can listen for long periods without fatigue. Indeed, it's such a well rounded performer that it's churlish to criticise at the price. A great result.

An excellent debut from Aiwa then, with only its middling bundled software and parallel port connection to let it down. When these issues are addressed, the opposition will be well and truly on the run! ■

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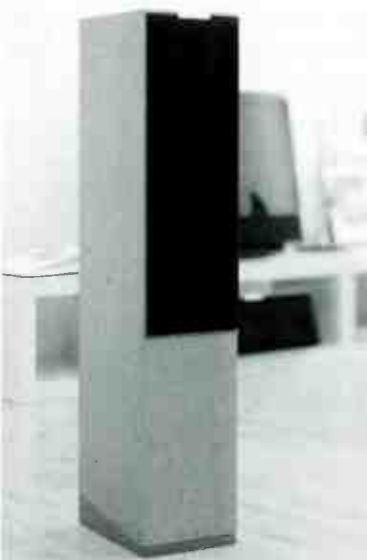


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burning, brightly

Computer CD writers have just taken a dramatic step for the better with the advent of new technology. David Price looks at one of the first BURN-Proof designs, Creative Labs' CD-RW Blaster 121032.



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

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

Now though, that's all history thanks to a jolly clever - and if I may be so bold, bleedin' obvious - technology called 'BURN-Proof'. The aforementioned crashes occur because of something called buffer underrun - while burning it's necessary to send the CD writer a constant stream of data. However, this isn't always constant, especially when other applications - from word processors to screen savers start up. Once buffer underrun occurs, the burner has nothing to write to its

rapidly spinning CD-R and duly calls it a day. This new technology lets CD-R/RW writers record data seamlessly between the end of one recorded point and the start of another even if buffer underrun occurs.

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

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

easily.

In other respects, the Blaster is pretty run-of-the-mill. A reasonably well screwed together unit, it doesn't have the quality feel of Plextors or HPs, but isn't below par either. It has a front-panel headphone jack (for masochists only) with a volume control (best left at MIN), an LED 'busy' indicator, a close/eject button, emergency eject hole, and reasonably smooth front-loading tray mechanism that's pretty pedestrian to open or close (around four seconds by my watch). The whole lot measures the standard 146mmx41.3x202mm and weighs in at 1.2kg.

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

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 max rewriting rate of
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KEL84 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT

This is our brand new low cost, beginner level amplifier kit, featuring the popular pair of EL84 valves in push pull configuration per channel, providing 15 watts into an 8 ohm load, plenty for most medium sensitivity loudspeakers. The output transformers are Ultra Linear, keeping distortion down to a minimum. Up front we have the ECF80 valve a extremely smooth pentode/triode tube. The Kel84 has an extremely low hum level, to solid state standards. The kit is based on a printed circuit board. We have given the kel84 a high class look with a 3mm anodised front panel and our famous chrome custom made knobs. The amplifier has the capacity to receive 5 line level inputs, plus one monitor input, with a tape output included, all controlled from the front panel. Both the phono sockets and 4mm banana socket speaker terminals are the gold plated. The Kel84 mains switch is , positioned at the rear of the amplifier and is

easily accessible, the mains is received via an IEC lead, an earth post is also positioned at the back.

This kit is suited to the beginner in that the instructions now include pictures as well as diagram, making them very easy to follow. At a UK price of £250.00 all inclusive you cannot ignore this kit. Simon Pope says, "The quality that can be gleaned from this amp is a fine introduction to the joys of the valve sound. The KEL84 will highlight all the intricacies and depth of detail in your favourite recordings whilst retaining a warmth and fullness. This combination of both detail and warmth is almost the exclusivity of pure valve amps and is rare at this price point."

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



NEW

£250

KIT88 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT & KAT88 VALVE POWER AMPLIFIER KIT

Here is the amazing KIT88. The circuit is similar to that of the ever popular 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. Gary Devon has come up with a gem of an output transformer (E/I). Combined with the KT88 it offers a virtually unmatched result for a valve amplifier. Frequency response measured 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", says Noel Keywood. Jon Marks says, "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 exploring 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).



£245

£382.50

Kat88 VALVE POWER AMPLIFIER KIT



£240

£396.00

KIT88 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT

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)	£175.00
Pre-amplifier (PRE-II)	£175.00
Phono Stage (PHONO-II)	£100.00
Moving coil step-up transformer	£70.00



THE ALL NEW 300B PSE MONOBLOC KIT

Our Parallel Single Ended amplifiers offer the ultimate sound quality, featuring two of the beautifully linear 300B directly heated triode in the output stage (per monobloc) pushing out 20 watts into an 8 ohm load. At the front we have a 6AU6 pentode and the famous ECC82 as the driver valve and the kit utilises a 5U4 rectifier valve for the power supply in combination with a 10H choke, giving an extremely quiet supply. For the mains and output transformers we have used the E/I type. Feedback is

switchable for all those purist out there and the kit is totally hard-wired. For those that require valves we provide the superb Tesla 300Bs, Russian 5U4s and European 6AU6s & ECC82. Simon Pope says, "Not to put too fine 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.



NEW

£795.00

KEL80 MONOBLOCK AMPLIFIER KIT

Following the success of our budget KEL34 40watt kit amplifier, we have come up with a 'bigger brother' design. The output stage utilises 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, lightening fast reactions, that emphasises musicality as well as power, at 590.00 GBP a pair, a definite valve winner. Each monobloc weighs 12kgs., external dimensions with valves: 14cm(w) x 8cm(h) x 43.5cm(d).



NEW

£531.00

HD83 VALVE HEADPHONE AMPLIFIER KIT

The HD83 is our new headphone amplifier, 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 sockets. The circuit utilises high specification output 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 that added purity and is a 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.



£175

£155.00

parts directory

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-195V/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

TRANS1 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

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) x 95mm(l) x 100mm(h), Primary-secondary 10K - 8ohms, max o/p-40watts, max current-160mA valves-KT88, 6550, EL34

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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 units & Crossover KIT £394.00
 Drive units only £358.00



£394
 £354.60

KLS10 GOLD SUBWOOFER

Designed to compliment KLS10 Gold stand mounters by providing a deep and open bass. The subwoofer is inexpensive, easy to build, comprising a simple crossover network to a high quality 8 inch 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 £149.95
 Drive unit only £71.00



£149
 £134.10

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. 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 units & crossover kit £230.00
 Drive unit pack £160.00



£230
 £207.00

KLS14 COMPACT TWO WAY STANDMOUNTER

The KLS14 is an extremely simple design and was designed to complement our new KelB4 budget amplifier. It uses a H26TG-35-06, a 26mm fabric dome tweeter from Vifa and a Seas CA21RE mid/bass 8 inch doped paper cone, driver from Seas. It is a 20 litre, sealed box design and is a friendly load so will work well with most amplifier types from 10 - 100 watts. Simon Pope says, "The sound of the KLS 14 is exciting and immediate, it also has an overall fluid and smooth response which adds a touch of sophisti-

cation to the sound, so it's never too harsh. It's basically everything you hope for in a standmount but rarely encounter, creating a big sound from a small size and deep bass with control." It has a frequency response of 50Hz - 18kHz +/- 3dB, a good sensitivity of 89dB and a nominal impedance of 8 ohm. Internal volume 20.6 litres external dimensions = 376mm(h) x 312mm(d) x 256mm(w)
 Drive unit & crossover kit £165.00
 Drive unit Pack £125.00



£165
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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 £575.00
 Drive Unit Pack £450.00



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 £517.50
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capacitors & potentiometers

- a. ALPS blue audio grade 50K or 100K dual log potentiometer 8.5mm diameter fitting hole
- b. AEROVOX 150uF 500Vdc v. high quality electrolytic (solder tag radial) 55mm(h) x 35mm diameter
- c. AEROVOX 220uF 500Vdc v. high quality electrolytic (solder tag radial) 90mm(h) x 35mm diameter
- d. TROBO 470uF 450V high quality electrolytics (snap in radial) 50mm(h) x 35mm diameter

- e. TROBO 100uF 450V high quality electrolytics (snap in radial) 40mm(h) x 20mm diameter
- f. LCR 22.5uF 440Vdc polypropylene capacitors (wire leadouts radial) 100mm(h) x 45mm diameter
- g. ANSAR 22.5uF 630Vdc polypropylene capacitors (wire leadouts radial) 85mm(h) x 45mm diameter
- h. AMPOHM 0.47uF 630Vdc paper in oil capacitor (axial) 45mm(l) x 20mm diameter



Kel80 E/I parallel-push-pull output transformer
 95mm(w)x115mm(l)x133mm(h). Primary-secondary 4.6K - 8.8, 4ohms, max op-80watts, max current-250mA valves-EL34,5881,6L6

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

printed circuit boards
KelB4 Printed Circuit Board
 280mm(w) x 135mm(l) x 1.6mm(d)
KT88/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)
KelB0 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 chassis
 330mm(d)x130mm(h), ideal for the constructor who requires a compact chassis 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.

parts directory

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amplifier kits description

Kel84 valve integrated amplifier kit (with valves)
 Kel84 valve integrated amplifier kit (without valves)
 PSU II power supply unit module
 PRE II pre-amplifier module
 PHONO - II phono stage module (with valves)
 Moving Coil step up transformers
 Kit88 Valve integrated amplifier kit (with valves)
 Kit88 Valve integrated amplifier kit (without valves)
 Kat88 Valve integrated amplifier kit (with valves)
 Kat88 Valve integrated amplifier kit (without valves)
 HD83 Valve Headphone amplifier kit (with valves)
 Kel80 Valve Monobloc amplifier kit (with valves)
 Kel80 Valve Monobloc amplifier kit (without valves)

order No.	qty	uk (inc vat & carriage)	overseas (exc. vat & carriage)
Kel84-K240/K120 (with valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£250	£215
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PSU - II - K240/120	<input type="checkbox"/>	£175.00	£150.00
PRE - II	<input type="checkbox"/>	£175.00	£150.00
PHONO II	<input type="checkbox"/>	£100.00	£85.00
MC - step up (pair)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£70.00	£60.00
KIT88-K240/120 (with valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£440 £396.00	£375 £337.50
KIT88-K240/120 (without valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£325 £292.50	£275 £247.50
KaT88-K240/120 (with valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£425 £382.50	£365 £328.50
KaT88-K240/120 (without valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£310 £279.00	£265 £238.50
HD83-K240/120 (with valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£175 £157.50	£150 £135.00
Kel80 -K240/120 (with valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£590 £531.00	£500 £450.00
Kel80 -K240/120 (without valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£520 £468.00	£445 £400.50

loudspeaker kits

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 KLS3 Gold mk II Drive Units + Crossover Kit etc
 KLS9 Drive Units
 KLS9 Drive Units + Crossover Kit etc
 KLS10 Drive Units
 KLS10 Drive Units + Crossover Kit etc
 KLS10-Subwoofer Drive Units
 KLS10 Drive Units + Crossover Kit etc
 KLS14 Drive units
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KLS9C	<input type="checkbox"/>	£230.00 £207.00	£200.00 £180.00
KLS10D	<input type="checkbox"/>	£358.00 £322.20	£311.00 £279.90
KLS10C	<input type="checkbox"/>	£394.00 £354.60	£343.00 £308.70
KLS10-subD	<input type="checkbox"/>	£71.00 £56.80	£61.00 £54.90
KLS10-subC	<input type="checkbox"/>	£149.00 £134.10	£130.00 £117.00
KLS14D	<input type="checkbox"/>	£125.00	£107.00
KLS14C	<input type="checkbox"/>	£165.00	£140.00

parts description

Kel84 E/I mains transformer
 KIT88/KaT88 mains toroidal transformer
 Kel80 mains toroidal transformer(encapsulated)
 HD83 mains toroidal transformer
 PSU-II mains toroidal transformer
 TRANS1 mains toroidal transformer
 300B PSE E/I mains transformer
 Kel84 E/I choke
 300B PSE choke
 PSU-II E/I choke
 Kel84 E/I push-pull output transformer
 Kit88/Kat88 E/I push-pull output transformer
 Kel80 E/I parallel-push-pull output transformer
 HD83 E/I single ended output transformer
 Pre-II E/I driver transformer
 300B PSE E/I output transformer
 Kel84 Printed Circuit board
 KIT88/KaT88 Printed Circuit Board
 Kel34 Printed Circuit Board
 Kel80 Printed Circuit Board
 HD83 Printed Circuit Board
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We've started a chat room on our World Audio Design internet site (go to Bulletin Board at www.worldaudiodesign.co.uk). This really opens up the subject of DIY, demonstrating the gulf between what you can do at home and commercial audio, a gulf that manufacturers like Marantz wisely recognise and attempt to bridge, but some see as a potential threat to their business, which is a pity.

Superficially DIY is 'geeky', but underneath, lies quite a large and important subject, touching on product mark up ratios, profitability, the nature of specialist knowledge and the real aims of hi-fi companies, as well the commercial constraints upon them. Also, being stubbornly non-commercial (i.e. it's difficult to make money from DIY) it gets little coverage except in geeky paradise - that wonderful place called the internet, of which I'm a fully paid up member.

My motto is: if you want to do something properly, do it yourself! The primary purpose of DIY to me - and this is a personal view - is not to save money but to engage in an absorbing quest for better sound quality. Only DIY can

provide it. The reason is that if commercial hi-fi is to be priced 'sensibly' in the common perception, high quality components of the sort so intensely discussed in our chatroom are far too expensive to use.

This raises some sensitive issues. Commercial products, for all the hype, commonly use low cost, everyday components intended for general electronics. Sadly, too many senior engineers and MDs I have spoken to at reputable audio companies over the years have totally dismissed the importance of component quality. Integrated circuits in particular, at 30p a shot, seem to hold them in thrall. It takes more than this, a lot more, to produce a good hi-fi product however. Casting my mind over company failures in the 1990s, in most cases those running the company had lost sight of that elusive goal known as sound quality, running their company on a simple 'measured performance-versus-cost' view of hi-fidelity. You can't reduce high fidelity to simple objective parameters like this.

Commercial audio is constrained by cost ceilings that do not affect DIYers - and the differences this makes is often considerable. For example, loudspeaker manufacturers expect to

pay around 50p for a tweeter, bought in bulk. A good one will cost £1. The art of manufacturing to many companies lies in getting the best sound possible from cheap components like this. In too many cases the result is, at best, sonic mediocrity. You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.

By way of contrast look at the Audax HD3P tweeter, which is an astonishing device, both technically and in sound quality, but it costs £130! Much like the Tonigen (from Japanese Foster company) ribbon tweeter, once seen in the Heybrook Sextet, the HD3P offers a level of fidelity way above any conventional tweeter, but the chances of buying a loudspeaker with an HD3P are minimal. In quantity two HD3Ps would add £600 or so to the retail price, after manufacturing and retailer margins have been added, plus VAT. Loudspeakers using the HD3P do exist (in

France, where it is made) but they cost thousands. To the DIYer though £260 for 2 HD3Ps is not beyond consideration.

This is where DIY so manifestly justifies itself. The sort of DIY I am talking about seeks to advance sound quality, through the use of higher quality components, and/or techniques that would generally be considered non-commercial, such as external crossover networks, hard wiring instead of circuit boards, silver solder, non-magnetic aluminium or copper casework, etc., in addition to items like the HD3P.

Let me return to Marantz and how they embrace this ethos, rather than reject it as a threat. You will often see references in their publicity material to component quality. Their guru, Ken Ishiwata, is a hands-on man like myself - and a valve expert by the way. He also embodies the Japanese passion for attention to detail, component quality being a big issue in Japan in a way it is not in the U.K. Not for no reason do the Japanese copper plate screws, produce the Black Gate organic electrolyte capacitor, OSCONs and what have you, as well as worship the most esoteric valves ever pro-

duced. Ken carried that outlook to Philips in effect, using it to tune up fundamentally well designed Philips products to produce the Marantz brand. And Marantz have done very nicely, thank you.

Ken is a man after my own heart. Now he's talking about cutting down regulator noise, just something I have become a little obsessed with. Choke smoothing does just this, as well as draw power from the mains more evenly. But you can't easily use chokes in commercial hi-fi: too much weight and expense. Ken understands why chokes improve sound quality (as do Musical Fidelity) and uses this knowledge to enhance Marantz sound quality. Here's a clear example of using true hi-end DIY solutions to improve commercial audio by subtly re-working a good basic principle. Ah, the magic of hi-fi! It's engineering carried through to art form.

Any audio product is the sum total of its parts, limited by the weakest link - and too often this means poor components. I have spent hours capacitor changing and listening to quite extraordinary results. The careful use of Black Gate electrolytics and Jensen paper-in-oil capacitors will allow a good amplifier to more clearly convey the timbral properties of instruments, making commercial designs equipped with mediocre parts seem grimly monotonous by comparison.

Until you have done it yourself, you may never know what good sound quality is. What a pity so few people understand this, thinking

DIY is just plain geeky - something that's obsessive and little else. Not true. It can move sound quality up onto another plane, as the enthusiasts in our chatroom well know.



The primary purpose of DIY to me - and this is a personal view - is not to save money but to engage in an absorbing quest for better sound quality.



• Noel Keywood

testing times

David Price tries out two interesting new test discs from Digital Recordings.

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

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

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

**DIGITAL RECORDINGS
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Rather than testing your system, this Canadian sourced disc tests your hearing. For it to work properly, a high quality set of headphones are required, with a frequency response of at least 20Hz to 20kHz - anything more is unnecessary because the CD format itself is restricted to this bandwidth. It's pretty simple to use - you just insert the CD, slip on your cans and run through the tracks. To assure reliable results, the first set of tracks test your CD player's error correction - there's no point in proceeding if it can't track these. After this, you get a series of sounds at differing frequencies, and you have to take a note of how far into each track (in minutes and seconds) you can hear a sound, for your left and right ear respectively. By plotting this information on the graph supplied with the instructions, you can get a reasonably accurate idea of the frequency response of your lugholes.

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

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

Website: www.digital-recordings.com



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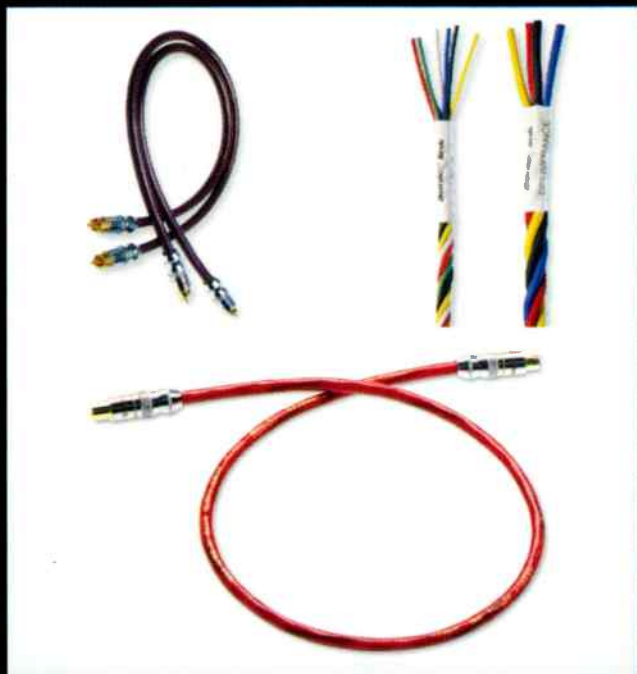
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The problem with hi-fi is that people forget that it's merely the means to an end, and make it an end in itself.

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

Released on Talkin' Loud back in 1998, it was nominated for the Mercury Music Prize but lost to Gomez's far inferior debut album. One of the reasons for

this was that it didn't fall comfortably into any one musical genre, unlike the mind-numbingly derivative winner. 'Two Pages' mixes drum and bass, jazz, techno, fusion and rap in many different measures, and is one of the most successful alliances of electronics and acoustic instrumentation I've heard for a long time. Everything from the breakbeats to the melodies, the harmonies to the playing is quite exceptional, the only criticism being its tiresome mid-nineties-style 'new age' lyrics.

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

You Think It Is'), before they released 4Hero's first album, 'Parallel Universe' on Reinforced in the summer of 1994. From this came 'Universal Love', an epic piece of electronica that laid down the blueprint for the drum'n'bass of Alex Reece and LTJ Bukem.

As kids, London-based Dego and Mark listened to pirate radio like JFM and Horizon, hearing soul, funk, jazz and hip hop from the likes of Mazelle Brothers and Patrice Rushen to Afrika Bambaataa and early Tommy Boy. They've also cited Paul Weller's much-maligned Respond label as an influence, which lay down blueprints for the early nineties 'acid jazz' explosion, and saw The Style Council's Mick Talbot (keyboards) and Steve White (drums) working with Galliano, who were subsequently



recording quality of the album is superb - tight and open in a modern 'analogue' kind of way

signed to Talkin' Loud. 4Hero's decision to join the label came out of their love for its early nineties roster - Young Disciples, Omar, Galliano, Urban Species.

The move brought a far higher recording budget for 'Two Pages', and the chance to push the limits of the genre and reach more people. A total departure from accepted drum'n'bass practice, the opening 'Loveless' uses live instrumentation to dramatic effect, with double bass mechanics breaking out into freeform jazz. 'Cosmic Tree' uses expansive Juno 60 synth pads over one of the fattest Mini Moog basslines ever committed to disc. 'Universal Reprise' is a festival of

saxes, trumpets, cellos, violins and violas. The string arrangements are stunning - reminiscent of everything from Charles Stepney's work for the Chess jazz label to The Art Ensemble of Chicago and Roy Ayers. The way they syncopate with the album's subtle breakbeats and double bass playing is a joy. And for good measure, the beats are constantly reworked via subtle phase shifting and hi-hat reconfigurations, which lets the rhythms progress rather than simply repeat.

The fact that the recording quality of the album is superb - tight and open in a modern 'analogue' kind of way - is welcome news for audiophiles looking for something to put their system through its paces. And the fact that the LP version 'Four Sides' is properly mastered onto high quality vinyl (once again, respect due to Talkin' Loud!) and sounds dramatically better than the already excellent CD gives vinyl junkies no excuse for not owning it. The sequel to 'Two Pages' could well be one of 2001's musical highlights. ●



David Price

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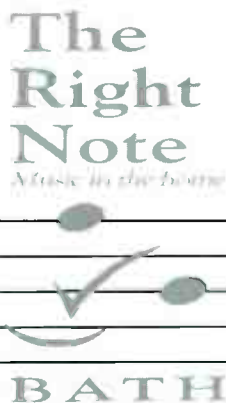
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With a mass of new computer based technology working its way into the market and a huge public demand for DVD, audio reproduction is enjoying the limelight once again for the first time since the launch of C.D., although in somewhat piggy-back fashion, as a branch of computer technology. The rise of 'computerised' hi-fi and DVD has been well documented in these pages.

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

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

This is all well and good you might think, but has multi rooming really entered the public's perception yet? Up until a few weeks ago I would have been sceptical, yet flicking through a local property paper recently, changed my view. There, alongside the 'compact and bijou' spiel, was an article concerning multi-room audio. It discussed a site that had recently been converted from a warehouse to flats. The entire complex had been wired for multi-room music as the renovation had taken place. Furthermore, the builders had consulted a local hi-fi shop to ensure the proper cables were used and not just Jewson's lighting flex!

Now here's the rub. The very same

hi-fi store would have the opportunity to present all new tenants with a range of equipment suitable for their "pre-equipment cabling".

This concept, with reservations, appealed to me. With many of the country's former industrial cities enjoying rejuvenation, the potential to raise the interest of the high disposable incomer to hi-fi is considerable. Local hi-fi retailers can only benefit from customers who would have previously been happy with a tiny Sony cube thingy - or a B&O glass and steel

” Apartments are wired for sound as a mere facility, much like being plumbed for air conditioning

contraption at best.

My reservations are more subjective. In a radio interview the other day someone expressed the view that during the twentieth century our understanding and appreciation of music had actually decreased despite all the resources we now have on which to reproduce it. Surely there is some truth behind this statement. Music has become a commodity. Apartments are wired for sound as a mere facility, much like being plumbed for air conditioning or cable TV (I can see the estate agents ticking off their "points for sale" sheet as I speak). The mere fact that the potential for music exists doesn't necessarily mean it will be appreciated, especially with equipment tailored for style and convenience more than sound quality. Multi-room is becoming popular perhaps, but it is hi-fi as plumbing.

For me plumbed in background music isn't hi-fi, even if it might be so in a technical sense. A hi-fi system is only successful if it makes me actually stop what I'm

doing and sit down and listen to it, or rather, the music it plays. How it looks and how clever it is are both secondary.

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

After getting over the shock of having to "rescue" the arm at the end of a side, on their respective Debut and I.2 decks, they're now suitably impressed.

Having told all my mates for years how good records still sound, and for it largely to fall upon deaf ears, I'm now accompanied to the pub by two evangelists bursting with enthusiasm for the latest vinyl they've unearthed in the city's few remaining record stores. It beats background music.

Now where's that property paper? Ah, here we. Three Bedroomed, detached house, in need of modernisation, with large cellar suitable for conversation to audiophile haven. Multi-room not fitted. Perfect, hand me the 'phone! ●



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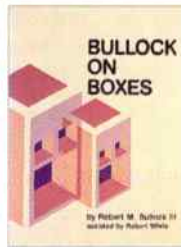
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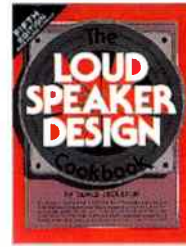
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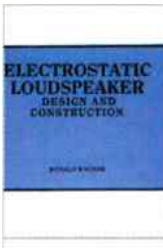
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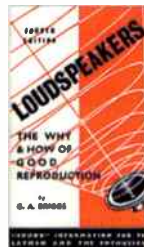
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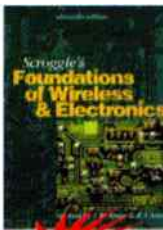
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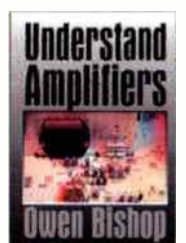
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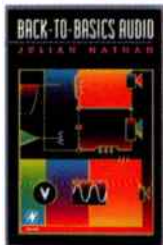
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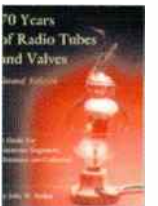
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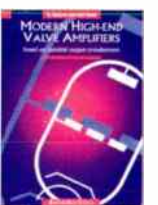
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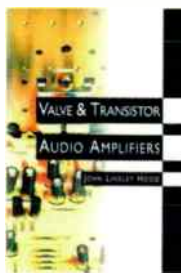
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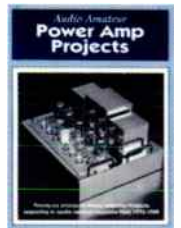
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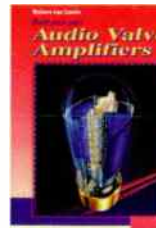
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A bargain for normal CDs and even better with HDCDs. (Nov 97)

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)

TUNABLES

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
DSU or XPS 3.5 power supply £150/170 extra. Excellent pitch stability from a new Swiss motor and outboard power supply. Very tight bass, fine dynamics and revealing clarity. (Jan 97)

SYSTEMDEK IIX900*/RB250 £330
A fine all-rounder and easy to upgrade too. More depth and breadth than Rega Planar 3. (Sep 94)

VESTAX BDT-2000 £225
A stylish looking deck with infinitely variable speed 16-90 rpm, DC belt drive and built-in MM phono stage. Good value, with plenty of chassis room for alternative arms, if required. (Sep 99)

TO NEARMS

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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Hi Fi World Feb 98 **Outstanding** ●●●●●
What Hi Fi July 98 ★★★★★
Home Entertainment Oct 98 ★★★★★
Stereoplay (Germany) Feb 99 **Outstanding**
What Hi Fi June 99 ★★★★★
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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 98)

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

SONNETEER SEDLEY £399
Combines transparency and fine dynamics with excellent rhythmic ability. (May 98)

PRE-AMPLIFIERS

AMC 1100 £150
Suffers from un-deletable tone control, 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
Showcase 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 regard-less. (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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CD Master Player £1249 Head & Ampmaster £1148

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

MINIDISC PLAYERS

KENWOOD DM-9090 £500
One of the best MD players yet. ATRAC 4.5 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 '530'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 recorder on the market. Built like a brick out house with a true audiophile sound. HDCD compatible. (July 2000)

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

PIONEER PDR-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

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

SENNHEISSER 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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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 22/11 PRE/POWER

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

SUGDEN A21

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

TECHNICS SE-A5 Mk2

Nice transformer and electronics, shame about the casework. With tweaking, this 150watter can sound sweet.

LOUDSPEAKERS

KLIPSCHORN

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

LEAK SANDWICH

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

LOWTHER PM6A

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

MAGNEPLANAR 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.

WORLD CLASSICS

TANNOY GRF & AUTOGRAPH

Folded horn monsters which certainly sound good if you have the space. For Tannoy vintage see HFW November 1998.

WHARFEDALE SUPER 8 RS DD

Ideal experimenters' driver. High sensitivity ~14,000 Gauss magnet and extended frequency range. Inexpensive too!

TANNOY YORK, LANCASTER ETC.

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

VINYL

ACOS LUSTRE

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

ALPHASON HR100S

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

ARISTON RD11

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

LINN AXIS

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

GARRARD 301 & 401

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

GOLDRING LENCO 88 & 99

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

HADCOCK 228

Recently out-classed by 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.

THORENSTD124

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

THORENSTD150

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

TRIO L-07D

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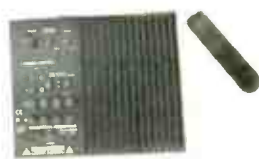
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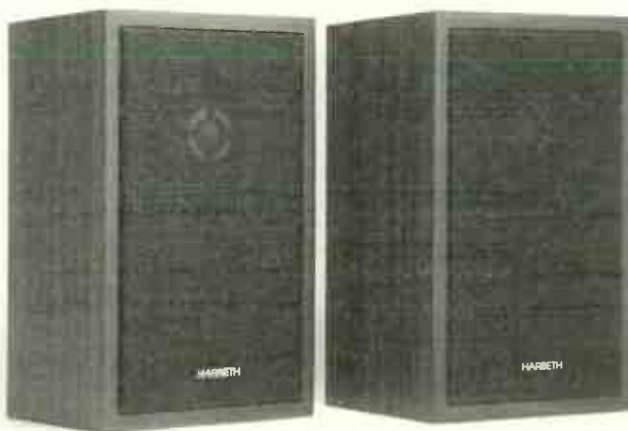
These very high quality, stylish integrated amps feature four line inputs plus a high quality phono stage. The E-40a Improved is suited to low, medium and high sensitivity loudspeakers, and of course it's the ideal amplifier for driving the LS3/5a and AB-1 combination.

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Special Offer 2



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Please note: These are the very rare and collectable final production run version of the LS3/5a loudspeaker, featuring gold tweeter mesh and lucky '8' suffix serial numbers, originally built for the demanding Far Eastern markets. Limited stocks, so don't miss out on this extra special offer.

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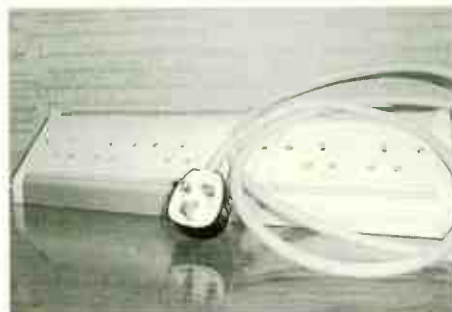
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ART AUDIO QUINTEZ stereo power amp	1500 700	ARCAM ALPHA 8 power amp		ARCAM DELTA 170 transport	COUNTERPOINT DA10 SE/11 top transport/disc combo	ALPHASON HR100s arm based
AUDIO NOTE H2 RIAA phono stage EX DEM	1050 500	ALBARRY AP4(mm)S 508 PRE/POWER		ARCAM DELTA 170 transport	COUNTERPOINT DA10 SE/11 top transport/disc combo	ALPHASON SONATA with ATLAS pau and HR100s arm
AUDIO NOTE Z20 power amp	1500 750	AVI 52000P/52000P/1 pre & monoblocks 150 watts		ARCAM DELTA 170 transport	COUNTERPOINT DA10 SE/11 top transport/disc combo	ALPHASON SOLO + BASKI arm
AUDIO NOTE P2	1500 500	AVI INTEGRATED		ARCAM DELTA 170 transport	COUNTERPOINT DA10 SE/11 top transport/disc combo	ARISTON RD11 ELECTRONIC with arm
AUDIO NOTE P4 monoblock	1200 2300	AUDIOLAB 8000C/P pre/power grey colour		ARCAM DELTA 170 transport	COUNTERPOINT DA10 SE/11 top transport/disc combo	DYNARECTOR XGL moving coil excitation
AUDIO NOTE ZERO pre/monoblock silver finish	4500 800	AUDIOLAB 8000C/P pre/power nice late black pair		ARCAM DELTA 170 transport	COUNTERPOINT DA10 SE/11 top transport/disc combo	GARRARD 301 in green marble plinth with SME V arm
ex dem with full warranty	2250 1200	Base 1801 250W		ARCAM DELTA 170 transport	COUNTERPOINT DA10 SE/11 top transport/disc combo	GRAHAM 1.5 ARM
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CROFT VI power amp	1500 650	LAVARDIN IT line integrated		ARCAM DELTA 170 transport	COUNTERPOINT DA10 SE/11 top transport/disc combo	LINN LP22 Black Chisel/ARMAGEDDON/ARO
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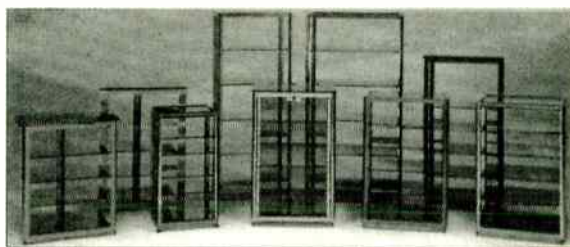
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WHAT HI-FI: Verdict ****

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Small but perfectly formed MC3

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MC3
Producing the very best from vinyl has long been a black art and it's no wonder with so many permutations involved. Most people agree that Moving Coil cartridge design is technically superior than the Moving magnet but demands much more from it's ancillaries, especially the phono stage.

E.A.R/Yoshino have just launched the MC3 Cartridge Transformer with a hand width of 3Hz-100kHz, facilities for a wide range of quality cartridge outputs and twin isolated earth terminals for maximum noise reduction.

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ART DUDLEY: Leading American hi-fidelity critic.
'I'm impressed with the MC3, and from a musical point of view, I think it's worth every penny of the price. Those of you who have tube-based systems & can afford it should pester your local dealer until he lets you take one home and try out Value/Quality *****'

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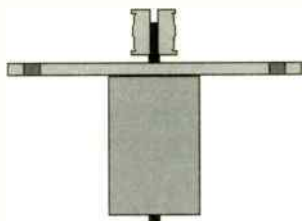
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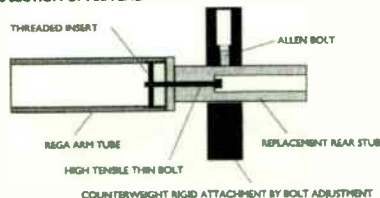
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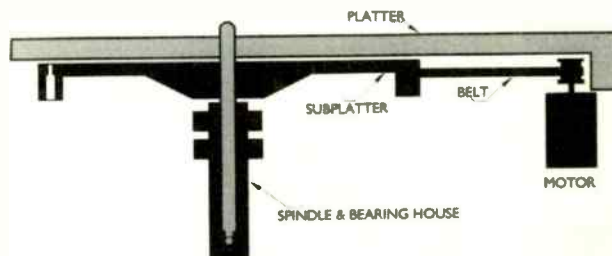
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Nordost Cables & accessories - Full range of Nordost products available directly from Audio Direct
 Considered by many to be the best range of cables available on the market today! Please inquire for price & delivery

****Note that we have many used p/x cables available at bargain prices inc. Goertz and Nordost and many others****
 For example - TaraLabs balanced 1m Decades @ £250.00 - Masters @ £175.00 and Ref 2s @ £150.00

Jumper Cables Goertz and Nordost jumper sets from £20.00 - the difference is amazing - almost like bi-wiring!

Nordost hook-up wires Exclusive to Audio Direct! Totally stunning cables of the very highest quality - guaranteed to blow away all other more expensive copper or silver chassis wires on the market! Simply amazing quality!
 Nordost Silver Note chassis wire- multi purpose 20awg parallel pair made of ultra pure copper and silver - Teflon dielectric £7.95/m
 Nordost Blue Vulcan 2 signal wire - screened twisted pair with drain wire. 8 nines copper/silver 26awg cable with pure Teflon £16.95/m
 "Our Customers are simply astounded at the available performance in all amplifier, speaker & signal applications."

AudioLinx new Silver Max Interconnect superb quality screened high purity copper cables with Neutrik RCA or XLR plugs. Constructed with Wonder Solder and treated with Deoxit and Progold to enhance their performance & longevity
 Extremely natural and transparent performers at only £59.95/0.6m or £89.95/1m pair - better than some "£800 interconnects"....

PowerLinx Power Cords manufactured for audio using the best materials and construction techniques
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 Red Baron 2m/15 amp cord for preamp and CD etc. £69.95 1.2m/25 amp cord for integrated amps etc. £89.95
 Blue Max 1.5m/25 amp 12mm cord for all applications. £149.95 1.5m/35 amp 14mm cord for all applications. £199.95
 All cords are fully screened. The Red Baron is fitted with Rendar IEC. The Blue Max with WattGate. All use MK 13A plugs.
 These cords sound quiet, dynamic, natural and transparent, and will outperform anything available near or above their cost!

PowerLinx Distribution block 6 way Brennenstuhl distribution unit fitted 25 amp cord, MK plug, Rendar IEC and non-invasive noise and surge protection. Integral mountings. Superb quality, looks and performance on offer at only £109.95

PowerStation Power Supply Available soon. The Power Station features a 1kVA double C core transformer and non-invasive passive filtering system mounted in a superb bonded metal chassis. It has an integral 35A power cord and 8 non switched socket outlets. Internally hard-wired with the best quality cable we can find it features full star earthing and bonding. This product will exceed the best features and performance of a separate mains cord, distribution block and power supply set-up all in one neat integrated unit customised to suit individual needs. It will totally outperform the usual collection of untidy separate bits and pieces at a lower overall cost having vastly better dynamics and shading combined with total silence.

Selected Valves - super quality premium valves (no rubbish!) - offered at the best available prices

ECC82 JJ	£5.85	300B JJ	£69.95	6L6GC JJ	£9.95	6B4G new Sovtek single-plate	£25.95
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ECC99 JJ	£9.95	6AS7G Sov.	£4.95	12AX7LPS	£9.50	5814a (ECC82) Jan Phillips nos.	£5.95
6922 Sov	£8.95	5881 Sov	£4.95	ECC81 Jan	£5.85	5687WB Jan Phillips nos.	£5.95

Full matching and burn-in service available @ 80p/valve. Factory selected pairs and quads also available at no extra charge

New "C" Core Mains Transformers Top quality units. Improved dynamics, less noise and cooler running Prices comparable with standard products. For example C Core mains for Hi Fi World KAT88 amp now offered at £95.00 The quality of these transformers is the best available at any price. The overall sonic improvements are not subtle! Please ask for a quotation for your individual requirements. Delivery is appx. 21 days from date of order.

Special Offer Valve mains and output transformers - High Quality 6K P/P outputs @ £29.95, 3K P/P @ £34.95
 Range of Mains transformers from only £39.95 Genuine 5K Audio Note 300B P/P output transformers at £39.95

Voodoo Airtek Isolation Platforms Excellent pneumatic platforms finished in black veneer complete with pump and oak cone feet These platforms have a much more natural sound than glass or metal. Superb value at £149.95

Vibropod Isolation feet Stereophile recommended multi-function component - now in-stock at £4.75 each.
 Range of sizes available covering up to 30 lbs. per unit. Use 3 or 4 per component or loudspeaker base. Superb value.

Vibropod Isolation platforms- Appx. 42 x 33 cms. Complete with 4 vibropod feet (please specify exact loading)
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JJ Capacitors Superb new range of capacitors for valve amp power supplies etc.- quiet, transparent & dynamic
 Values available now include 32+32 uF, 50+50uF, 100+100uF, 22uF, 47uF, 68uF, 100uF, 200uF, 250uF and 500uF - all at 500V
 Prices range from £4.95 to £9.95 according to value and capacitor physical size. Tag and snap-in connections available.

JJ Amplifiers Stunning new high-end amplifiers available from the makers of JJ valves - 2 models available JJ 322 - Parallel 300B dual-mono power amplifier. Output 20 wpc. Polished wooden plinth, black or mahogany / 24 ct Gold top plate. Weight appx. 90 lbs - no lightweight empty box! C Core transformers, full dual mono layout. Staggering construction quality and performance. A 300B with real bottom end built regardless of cost. A serious high-end amp for £2495 delivered JJ 828 - Parallel Push Pull integrated KT88 amplifier. Output 70 wpc - mainly Class A. Features a Natural alloy faceplate with a Black or Blue alloy chassis. Weight appx. 70 lbs. - true testimony to the superb construction quality and features 5 inputs + tape out. This amp has real power and drive with beautifully balanced sonics. Superb value at £1295.00 delivered

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All major credit cards accepted. ***All prices now include vat*** Insured carriage at cost.

Ortofon WARNING

We have recently been advised that there may be some non-original and / or defect cartridges available on the UK market. Needless to say, these items are offered at very attractive prices and appear to be excellent value for money. Do not be fooled, only Ortofon products purchased from an authorised dealer are guaranteed authentic and are covered by the distributors and manufacturers warranty.

Please contact Henley Designs should you have any doubts or wish to locate your nearest authorised dealer.



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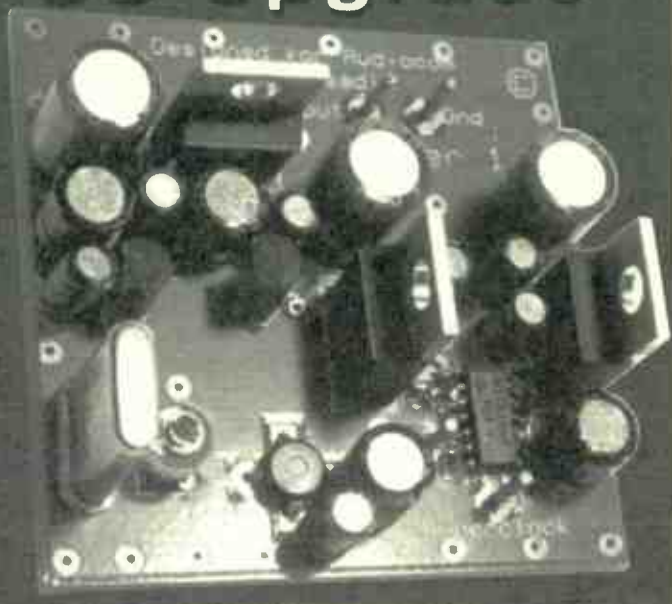
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QUAD 989

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

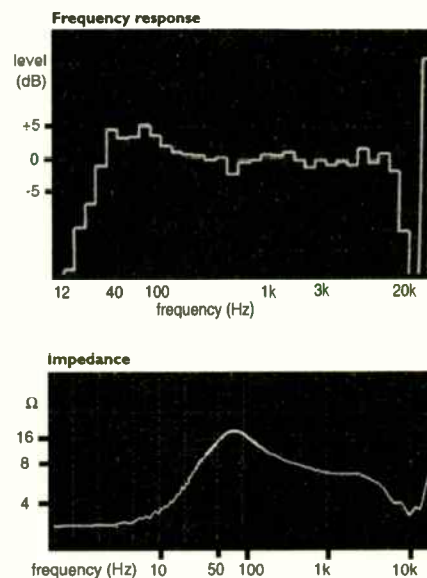
Impedance measured 5.6 ohms, when tested with pink noise. In spite of having extra bass panels the new 989 draws no more power than the 988, which seems a little odd. Quad say the extra power comes from the mains supply but this is a light polarising current; as Peter Walker always pointed out, it is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

Over much of the frequency range

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

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

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



supremely deep phase-coherent bass in a long room. Quad have significantly improved bass depth, smoothness and power handling in this loudspeaker.

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

AMPLIFIERS

QUAD QC twenty four and II-forty

Rated at 40W, the Quad II-forty power amps delivered a healthy 45W into 8 or 4ohms. At -1dB below full output distortion measured 0.14% in the mid-band and 1.2% at 10kHz, comprising second

and third harmonics. At 1W output these values fell to 0.02% and 0.2%, respectable for any valve amplifier. The KT88 beam tetrode is a 'modern' (1950s) design from GEC, intended pri-

marily for low distortion, high power audio work. Used with a good output transformer they deliver fine results, high frequency crossover distortion being fairly benign compared to that

from transistors, with far lower levels of feedback. Full power is delivered from 10kHz down to 40Hz.

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

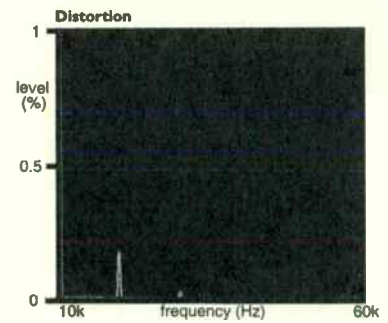
Sensitivity was high at 200mV, enough to allow the Quad to match old components producing low output. The power amplifier alone needs 1.1V though, so it cannot be used with a passive preamp., unless fed only from a CD or DVD player (2V output).

Noise measured -89dB (CCIR weighted) and channel separation 72dB, but there was 3mV hum with the sys-

tem at full gain, where 1mV or less is required. The hum came from the pre-amp, not the power amps.

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

Power	45watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	8Hz-43kHz
Separation	72dB
Noise	-89dB
Hum	3mV
Distortion	0.02%
Sensitivity	200mV
dc offset	-



CYRUS aCA7.5 / SMARTPOWER

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

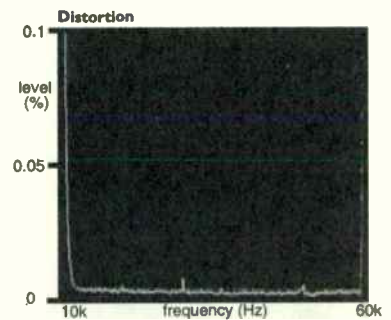
Frequency response, through the aCA7.5 pre-amp and Smartpower, was reasonably wide at 5Hz-35kHz. Although the latter figure looks limited for SACD and DVD-A use, output measured -7dB down at 100kHz, so the unit reaches high frequencies, if with attenuation.

Like Musical Fidelity, Cyrus keep high frequency distortion right down, to ensure the amplifier produces clean treble, free from crossover distortion. Delivering full output at 10kHz the Smartpower produced just 0.01% distortion, the figure rising little to 0.015%

into a 4ohm load. These are fine results under very arduous conditions. In the mid-band distortion was a minimal 0.005%, so this is a very low distortion amplifier.

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

Power	78watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	5Hz-35kHz
Separation	80dB
Noise	-90dB
Distortion	0.006%
Sensitivity	270mV
dc offset	13/19mV



MUSICAL FIDELITY M3

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

The bandwidth of this amplifier was fairly wide, measuring 7Hz-61kHz within 1dB limits, output being -3dB down at 100kHz, respectable enough for SACD and DVD-A. The lower limit complements CD and DVD well too, so the M3 satisfies source demands.

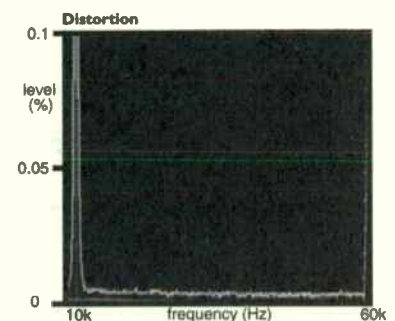
A sensitivity value of 280mV is good enough to accept old tuners and cassette decks, as well as all modern sources. Channel separation was wide and noise low.

Musical Fidelity minimise high frequency distortion in their amplifiers,

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

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

Power	250watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	7Hz-61kHz
Separation	78dB
Noise	-86dB
Distortion	0.003%
Sensitivity	280mV
dc offset	14/15mV



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CD RECORDERS

MARANTZ DR6000

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

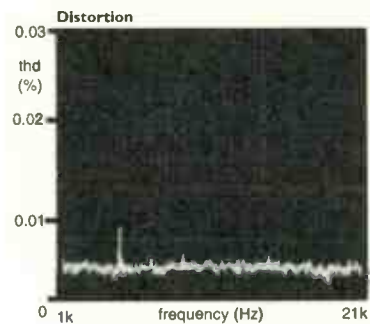
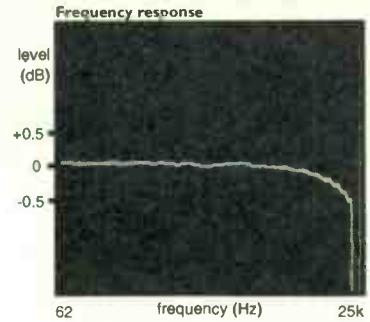
Coupled with low distortion and noise though, this characteristic helps ensure 16-bit coding isn't quite the pain it can be when untamed. As a result the DR6000 will have less bite to its sound, especially with poor recordings, than most CD players.

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

The DR6000 has a fine measured

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

Frequency response	4Hz-21kHz	
	left	right
Distortion		
-6dB	0.005	0.005
-30dB	0.02	0.02
-60dB	0.26	0.27
-90	30	29
Separation	left	right
1kHz	-112	-112
20kHz	-101	-101
Noise	-105dB	
with emphasis	-105dB	
Dynamic range	109dB	
Output	2.1V	



MINIDISC

SONY MDS JB-940

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

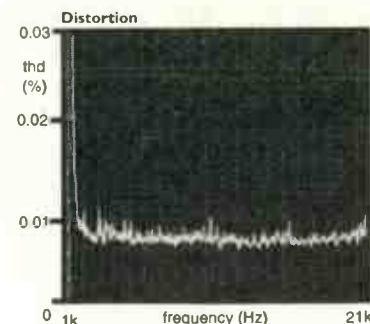
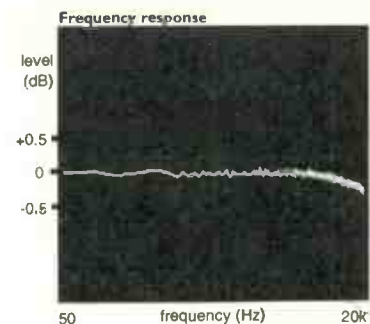
Frequency response in record-pause mode (A/D to D/A) was flat enough across the audio band, with a slight top end roll off, as our response analysis shows. Playing back a recorded signal gave much the same result, after averaging to reduce the randomness of the medium.

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

The MDS-JB940 was reasonably sensitive, reaching 0dB record level from 500mV input, output measuring 2.2V at this peak level.

The MDS-JB940 measured well enough. It is not as phase coherent as CD-R but otherwise distortion is low, noise fairly low and all other features good. **NK**

Frequency response	4Hz-21.6kHz	
	left	right
Distortion		
-6dB	0.006	0.006
-30dB	0.03	0.03
-60dB	0.56	0.6
-90	12	13
Separation	left	right
1kHz	-108	-109
20kHz	-98	-98
Noise	-92dB	
Dynamic range	105dB	
Output	2.2V	
Sensitivity	450mV	



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NAD 533 Turntable	S/H		£150
NAIM CD 3.5 CD Player	EX/DEMO	£1,112	£1,000
NAIM FLATCAP Power Supply	EX/DEMO	£370	£330
NAIM NAC 92 Pre Amp	EX/DEMO	£515	£470
NAIM NAC 92R Pre Amp with remote	EX/DEMO	£690	£590
NAIM NAP 90/3 Power Amp	EX/DEMO	£487	£420
POLK RT8 Speaker	S/H		£180
PRIMARE A20 Amp	S/H	£700	£500
REL STADIUM Subwoofer	S/H	£1,095	£600
ROKSAN RADIUS Turntable	S/H		£200
ROTEL RB985 Power Amp	S/H	£625	£380
SONY MDSJB930 Mini Disc Player	S/H	£300	£250
SONY SS176E Speaker	EX/DEMO	£200	£80
TAG McLAREN PA10 Pre Amp	EX/DEMO	£850	£500
TANNOY MERCURY 2.5 Speaker	S/H	£170	£100
TUBE TECHNOLOGY UNISIS Stereo Power Amplifier	S/H	£3,000	£1,500
YAMAHA DSPA3090 AV Amplifier	S/H	£1,300	£650
YAMAHA RXV590RDS AV Receiver	S/H	£400	£150

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Quad 44 Pre-amp (serviced)		£ 150
Quad QCI Pre-amp (early model)		£120
Quad QC II Pre-amp		£ 40
Quad FM1 Tuner		£ 40
Quad II mains transformer		£100
Quad II output transformer		£100
Quad II output transformer (100v line)		£ 30
Quad II choke		£ 30
Quad II Fuse Holder		£ 7
Quad II Chassis - wiring loom		£ 35
Please phone for details of other Quad/Leak/Garrard spares		

Leak

Leak TL12.1 (pair)		£1700
Leak TL12+ (pair)		£350
Leak Stereo 20		£250
Leak Stereo 60		£550

Most Models Of Leak Mono + Stereo Pre-Amps In Stock.

Ortofon MC101 arm		£ 50
Garrard 901	(from)	£150
Garrard 401		£150
Garrard 401 + SME 3009 II + Plinth		£250
Ortofon RS212 arm		£125
SME 3009 II Arm		£ 75
Nakamichi 610 Pre-amp/ 620 Power-amp/ 630 fm tuner		£500
Nakamichi Remote Control Unit RM-610		£ 20
PYE HFS/8 Amps (pair)		£450
Tannoy HPD15" gold crossover (single)		£ 50
SME 3009 Series 1		£175
SME 3009 II improved fixed headshell late type with phono connections		£ 80
SME 3012 arm (new rubber bushes etc.)		£240

Cartridges Moving Magnet

Shure V15II (no stylus)	£10
A.K.G. P6R (boxed/unused)	£20
Pickering TL2S (boxed/unused)	£20
Decca London Gold (boxed/unused)	£200

Moving Coil

Pickering P-20 Moving Coil pre-amp	£40
Garrard Stylus Pressure Gauge	
SPG3 (boxed)	£20
Shure Stylus Pressure Gauge	
SFG2 (boxed)	£25

Valves (G.E.C. Mullard etc.)

PX25, KT66, ECC81/84, EF80
Many Others. Please Phone For Details.

Valve Alert

Mullard ECC81 Genuine N.O.S.
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G.E.C. PX25 (single) £120

Photocopies Of Circuit Diagrams
+ Vintage Hi-Fi Literature
Spare Parts For Quad + Leak -
Transformers etc. Garrard 301 spares

Speakers

Celestion 12" bass drive units (pair)	£ 30
Goodmans 5K/20L Trebax	
Leak Sandwich speakers, early type, 15 ohm	£100
Tweeter units with built-in crossovers (pair)	£ 75
Goodmans Trebax Tweeter Units	£ 50
Goodmans Midax Units	£ 50
Goodmans Axiom 150 12"/15 ohm /15 watt (single)	£ 50
Tannoy HPD 315 Drive units with crossovers (pair)	£200
Tannoy Lancasters (various) please phone for details	

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HI-FI WORLD KLS3 speakers, built by Wilmslow Audio in 25mm rosewood cabinets. Superb depth, scale and imaging. Too big for the wife. Offers over £800. Tel: 07973 409 694 or Email: peter.stevenson@virgin.net (Jan/I)

TAG McLAREN DAC 20 HDCD £480. Elac Jet 310 speakers + stands £550. Rotel RB981 power amp £150. all excellent condition. Tel: 01604 645 590 (Jan/I)

RUARK SOLSTICE (Black Piano Lacquer) £3200. Musical Fidelity A3CR Pre-amplifier £650. Musical Fidelity A3CR Power Amplifier £650. Meridian 541 Processor £390. All are as new with original packaging. Tel: 01622 721 011 or 07973 899 651 (Feb /I)

JPW AP2 loudspeakers, recommended by Hi-Fi Choice £75 ono. Garrard 401 chassis £65 ono. Tel: 0117 906 2728 (weekdays 0900 -1900 ask for Ross) (Jan/I)

BRYSTON 4BST 250 watt power amplifier, 20 year guarantee, stunning high end performance. Hi-Fi News highly recommended. Absolutely mint, you will not see a finer example. £1195. Tel: 01536 763 737 or 01536 764 039 (Jan/I)

COULD BOB JONES please call Jon Marks about SR929. Tel: Jon 020 8546 6558

NAIM NAP/160 Original poweramp, recent full Naim service £425. NAC32.5 £145. Linn Sara loudspeakers and stands £245. Meridian 203 DAC £115. All items boxed and excellent condition. Tel: 0121 258 1607 (Jan/I)

MVL A2+ integrated in chrome finish, mint, less than 1 year old, £600 ono. Tel: 020 8355 1196 (Jan/I)

NAIM CPSI £2000. NAIM NAXD 2/4 £225. SBLs very latest drivers £800. Flash remote £130. LP12 Cirkus kit £150. Linn size stand £60. Happy Karma £80. AV5140 Aktiv bass cards £40. Tel: 01782 595 073 (Jan/I)

MERIDIAN 500 CD Transport with MSR. Boxed, manuals, excellent condition £650 ono. Tel: 0191 416 6866 after 6pm or Email: cj@37fatfield.freemove.co.uk (Jan/I)

AUDIO RESEARCH CD2 Stereophile Class A (£3500) £1550 ono. Helios One CD (£1300) £800 ono. Stax Lambda Nova Classic system (£750) £400 ono. Mint records available, all vgc, boxed, manuals. Tel: Roy 01902 892 613 (Jan/I)

MORDAUNT SHORT Performance 860 Reference speakers, excellent condition, cost £1895, accept £895. Yamaha DSP E 492 Dolby Processor, rave reviews £120. Tel: 01869 278 249 (Mar/I)

NAIM ARO, boxed £600. Linn Lingo, boxed £350. Teac D-T1 DAC £150. Rega Planar 2, boxed £60. Audiolab 8000A (1994), boxed £225. Rega Planet CD, boxed, remote, mint, £295. Tel: 0114 221 5271 (Jan/I)

MERIDIAN 502 preamp in mint condition with manual. No box £950. Tel: 020 7603 2730 (Jan/I)

EXPOSURE 21RC remote control pre-amp £550 (£1100) Mint. Tel: 01372 468 266 (Jan/I)

DELTEC 50S preamplifier, line level not altered, superb, offers over £300. White Slink interconnect 1.4m and 1.0m lengths £30/£25. Deltec PDM 1 Series 2, heavily modified (RATA) poor case, offers (£60?) Tel: 01443 412 390 (Jan/I)

TUNERS RADFORD, Leak FM, Troughline 3, Quad FM3, QUAD 33, Reel/Reel G36, Teac Tascam tapes new/used pre-amp Meridian 101 transformers, chokes, microphones, Mission 771 speakers, magazines, Audio Research MD90. Tel: 0131 332 7536 (Jan/I)

NAIM NAC62 moving magnet moving coil, excellent condition £150. Linn Index Mk2 speakers with dedicated Kustone stands, excellent condition £125. Tel: 01484 841 482 (Jan/I)

EPOS SPEAKERS ES30-LC, 150 watts per channel, light cherry finish, 3 months old, immaculate condition. £2700 new, £1700 ono. Tel: 01892 527 971 (Jan/I)

MICROMEGA TEMPO pre and power £950 Audio Note CD2 valve CD player £495. Meridian 501 pre + MSR £360. All boxed, as new, 5x1m vdH 'Source' £20ea. Tel: 01425 489 682 (Jan/I)

GARRARD 401 heavy plinth oak £140, B&W DM2 transmission lines £70. Heybrook HB1 stands £45. Infinity RS 3000 speakers £30. 12uF 350v Dublineer capacitors paper block 18off £30. Tel: 01827 261 082 (Tamworth) (Jan/I)

LINN SONDEK Valhalla, recently serviced, SME IV tonearm, van den Hul MC One cartridge £800. Michell ISO phono stage £150. Tel: 020 8868 8851 after 6pm (Jan/I)

LINN AV5140 speakers £1350. Opera Callas Gold speakers £650. Linn Karik III £1100. Pair of bridged Rotel RB971 power amps and Rotel RC971 pre-amp £330. Slate 24" stands £270. Tel: 01922 640 737 (Jan/I)

QUAD ELS 63s £1000. Quad 67 CD £450. Quad 34/306/FM4 £600. Nakamichi DX2 cassette £300. Leak Troughline Stereo £100. Stax headphones £75. SME 3009/S1 £100. Some other items. Tel: 01224 646 473 or 0778 855 1492 (Jan/I)

KEF REFERENCE Model One, black, perfect condition £500. Various van den Hul and D.N.M. speaker and interconnect cables. Tel: 07967 646 089 (Jan/I)

LINN KAIRN preamp, BPS, remote £550 (£1700). Linn Kolektor preamp £275 (£500). Audio Note DAC3 Signature £875 (£2700) Proceed (Mark Levinson) Amp2 poweramp 150 wpc £850 (£2000). Swaps or P/Ex? Tel: 01372 468 266 (Jan/I)

LEAK TROUGHLINE tuner, fully rebuilt by GT Audio, early case £275 ono. Arcam Delta 170 CD transport, with output stage and power supplies modified by Audio Synthesis. Co-axial output only £175 ono. Tel: 01962 851 802 (Jan/I)



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see page 130 for details

HITACHI FT5500 MkII, classic tuner, good condition with manual £45. van den Hul Thunderline 1m interconnect £70 (£145) 2x4m QED Profile 4x4 biwire £40, terminated. 2x4m QED Qudos silver £25, terminated. Tel: Harry 01803 812 525 (Jan/I)

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B&W 801 SII Abbey Road monitors, walnut (£3000) £1300. B&W MPA1 monoblocks, balanced 100w £300. Naim NAP250 x2, Naim service, guarantee, boxed, mint, £660 each. Linn Isobarik's, active, mint, boxed £450. Tel: 07720 392 792 (Jan/I)

PRIMARE A30.1 integrated amp, as new, boxed, just one year old, with receipt. Can demonstrate. New £1500, will accept £950 ono. Tel: 020 8395 0026 or Email: michael@frenchpolishing.co.uk (Jan/I)

MUSICAL FIDELITY A3CR dual mono pre-amplifier, three months old, boxed, mint £725. Yamaha DSP-A1, black, boxed etc, £525. Tel: Steve 01943 864 097 after 7pm (Jan/I)

AUDIOLAB 8000 S integrated amplifier, as new, boxed £475. Sony MDS JE510 minidisc deck, as new, boxed £95. Sony ST-S311 FM-AM stereo tuner, RDS-EON, as new, boxed £95. Tel: 0116 237 4533 (Jan/I)

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PIONEER TX9800 tuner £110, Musical Fidelity Digilog £70. Technics SU9011 pre + SE9021 power vintage £150. QED T260 tuner £70. Harman Kardon PM655VX1 amp £140. Arcam Alpha 5 amp £80. Sony TCK870ES cassette £150. Nytec CS202 amp £40. Transcriptors Saturn £150. Wanted: Non working Cyrus 1 or 2 Mk1. Tel: 020 7394 0870 (Jan/I)

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

QUAD FM4 boxed, matching 44, 405 II, excellent condition. G.W.O., handbooks plus pair Quad ESL 63's (boxed) with alloy stands, super condition, but need service/repair £695. Tel: 01234 711 657 (N. Bucks) (Jan/I)

UNISON RESEARCH Simply 845, perfect condition, bargain £1375. Elma 12 and 24 way stereo stepped attenuator switches, N.O.S. £15 and £20 each. Tel: Steve 01964 551 436 (East Yorks) (Jan/I)

NAIM NAC52 with Supercap. 2 years old. 'S' phono boards. Perfect with boxes, manuals, cables etc. £3950. Naim Prefix £220. Tel: 01245 283 125 (Essex) (Jan/I)

QUAD ELS 57, black, boxed. Yamaha NS 1000M, Linn Isobariks, boxed, Kef 104, boxed, Rogers Studio 1, boxed, Ear 502/509, boxed, Audio Research SP11/2, boxed, Sonus Faber Musica, Audio Invicta 200, boxed. All mint. Tel: 01992 718 265 (Mar/I)

SONUS FABER grand piano speakers, with plinths, 9 months old. Been boxed for 6 months. Mint condition. £1100 ono. Tel: 01206 298 836 (Jan)

PIONEER PDS904 CD player. Stable platter mechanism (as Trichord Digital turntable and Pioneer Precision). Good player already but could be upgraded into great transport. £85 ono. Tel: Gary 0141 942 9240 (Jan/I)

NAIM 250 Hi-Cap 32.5 MM/MC, boxed £1100. Technics SL1000 Obsidan base remote SME arm Koetsu black (300 hours) boxed, serviced, mint £995. Wanted: Rel sub-woofer Storm Stentor Studio or M+K sub. Tel: 00 3531 295 4076 (Jan/I)

LINN WAKONDA pre-amp, LK100 power-amp £550. Linn Mimik CD player £300. Naim Credo loudspeakers £700. Arcam Alpha 5 CD player £75. Tannoy P30 loudspeakers, cherry £275. Tel: 0115 844 9141 or 07974 769 249 (Jan/I)

HALES TRANSCEDENCE 5 loudspeakers, cherry (40x12x17). Superb, compares with JM Lab Utopia. Too big for room! £5825, going for £3250 or decent P/X. Tel: Kevin 01245 251 235 (Jan/I)

NAIM POWER amplifier NAP140 old style boxed £295. Can demonstrate if required. Tel: 01707 655471 after 7.30pm ask for Dave. (Hertfordshire area.) (Jan/I)

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

LINN AKTIV Kabers (special finish) £895. Linn Aktiv cards £225. Linn LK100 power amps £300 each. K60 cable £95 all items boxed mint condition. Tel: 01482 618 116 (evenings), 01482 896 001 (daytime) (Feb/I)

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MERIDIAN 505 amplifiers £1095. Michell Delphini H.R. phono amp £595. Audiolab 8000Q pre-amp £525. All owned from new, boxed and mint condition. £2000 the lot. Tel: Rod 020 8205 6778 (NW London) (Jan)

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5H 100mA Oil, Parmeko, £15.00

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Oxyzen (single-ended, Class A Triode) (Brand New)	£650
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Accuphase E-202	£350
EAR 859	£950
Magnum Class A SE	£450
Musical Fidelity A-X1	£350
NVA 9 Box Amplifier	£850
Triangle TEO	£200
Loudspeakers	
Sonus faber Signum with A/Stands	£1350
Cabasse Skiff 401 (Beech)	£950
Klipsch RC5.5 (Light Oak)	£600
Cabasse Farella 401 (Bubinga)	£550
B&W Matrix 2 SE (Black)	£400
B&W DM 70 Electrostatics	£600
Triangle Sealeme (Black)	£300
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MARANTZ CD94 player vgc, little use, boxed £475. Tel: 07957 855 787 (Jan/I)

SIMPLY THE best smart 300B m-blocks, new + boxed £3250 (£4250). Simply 845 int, 8 months £2000 (£3150). Sony CD player 557 - ESD mint £475. Jadis JA-80 £4450 (£10,000). 6 x KT88 lot £125. Tel: 01562 827 710 N-T-W (Jan/I)

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

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

LINN KELTIK crossovers in Klimax style case £3300. Linn Klimax power amps £7750. Linn Karik III 2 yrs old £795. Tel: 01582 456 137 (Jan/I)

BRAND NEW Thorens 124 original packing with special plinth £225. KEF 104 never used original packing £400. Leak Troughline £50. Tel: 0771 297 6103 (Jan/I)

WANTED GARRARD 4HF turntable in excellent condition ideally in original Garrard plinth. Tel: Mike 0121 475 1730 (Jan/I)

AVI BIGGATRON speakers cherry three months old boxed £399. Marantz PM66SE Kl amplifier £180. Tel: 0115 952 1820, Mobile: 07747 762 672 (Nottingham) (Jan/I)

NAKAMICHI CASSETTE deck 2 £140. EPOS ESII's black bi-wire, mint £240. Denon DCD-890 £50. QED digit DAC including interconnect £50. Tel: 01992 445 177 7.30pm, Email: cparthur@hotmail.com (Jan/I)

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

ROKSAN XERXES, Tabriz, Denon DL-304, black, vgc £390. Royd Edens (walnut) £100. Foundation Designer stands (very heavy) £100. QED A240 SA/T260 (amplifier/tuner) £180 the pair. Tel: Peter 01442 823 880 (W.Herts) (Jan/I)

SPEAKERS KRK V8 studio reference active near field monitor with 60 watts and 120 watts amplifiers XLR and phono inputs £500. Wilmslow Elegance speakers £150. Tel: 020 8531 5979 (Jan/I)

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

CABLE SALE Audio Note anv i/c £90, Cogan Hall digital i/c £50, QED 4 x 4 bi-wire 3m set £30, QED silver 12 bi-wire 3m set £45, Keswick Audio 1m set i/c £30. Tel: 07767 273 858 (Jan/I)

KT90 BILLINGTON gold matched Quad £50, Cogan Hall 1.5m bi-wire set of speaker cable £70 - stunning! Tel: 07767 273 858 (Jan/I)

LINN: KAIRN line level slim-line 'Brilliant' £700. LK280/Spark £350. LP12, lttok LVIII, K9, Lingo £700 (may split). Tukan active cards, £100. Arcam Alpha 7 CD player £150. Epos ES11 speakers with stands £200. Tel: 01622 858 085 (Jan/I)

LINN SARA speakers excellent condition one owner, with Target stands and leads £295 ono. Tel: 01202 821 296 (near Bournemouth) (Jan/I)

CONRAD JOHNSON PV10 AL valve pre-amp (SE version) £595. Musical Fidelity P270 power amp, just serviced £625. Both sound superb. Tel: 01903 507 489. Mobile: 07881 550 627 (West Sussex) (Jan/I)

LEXICON DC2-EX seven months old, perfect condition, boxed as new £2750. Epos £512 vgc £310. ES22 slightly marked £690. KEF TDM45B 300W subwoofer vgc £425. Tel: Alex 07970 484 253 anytime (Jan/I)

BBE 362SW Sonic Maximimer with Sub Woofer control. The best tweak known improving sound. Two as new £100 each. Sony TU-1040E professional Broadcast Standard TV tuner £150. Tel: 01945 463 077 (Jan/I)

TEAC TI transport plus Pink Triangle Ordinal DAC with 1307 filter. Mint condition, boxes etc £650. Also Bowers Wilkins original P2 speakers, new tweeters. Free, yes, free. Tel: 01782 256 087 (Jan/I)

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

AUDIO NOTE goodies: AN/EL speakers/ rosewood mint on MAF stands, worth £2500 accept £1250. Also Meishu phono integrated new 300B's £1750 ono. Tel: 020 8239 0409 also leads/cables (Jan/I)

ARCAM 8SE CD player HDCD compatible, rlnnt condition, boxed with manual £300. Tel: 0131 667 4531 (after 7pm) or Email: agg@geo.ed.ac.uk (Jan/I)

QUAD ESL 63 speakers, two pairs, one pair recently serviced £1200 ono per pair. Tel: 01993 883 523 (Jan/I)

RB300 £90 ono. MFX-10-D £50 ono. Quad FM3 £60 ono. AKG K370 £70 ono. Cables - VDH D102 III 2m bal. £70 ono. MFX-Links £20 ono. Cambridge Reference 1m £20 ono. Cabletalk 8.1 2.5m spades £40 ono. Tel: Steve 07879 646 186 (Jan/I)

WADIA 830 black, 1, 5 years, boxed, as new, infrequently used, £1900 (incl. shipping) send a mail or call me. Tel: 00317 0394 4245, Email: umatzdorf@epo.org (Jan/I)

ALCHEMIST FORSETTI pre-amp mint and boxed £375. Leak Stereo 20 Haden Boardman perfect phase rebuild £235. Tel: 01246 569 732 (Chesterfield) (Jan/I)

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

QUAD 405 II 34, excellent condition, manuals, both boxed, £420. Sony ST-D777ES tuner (DAB/FM/MW/LW) as new boxed, manuals £500. Tel: 01886 812 651 (Worcester) (Jan/I)

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

HI-FI WORLD 300B power amp, hard wired, star earthed £595. Audax HD3P oval gold domed tweeters (pair) £75. Tel: 0115 966 5121 (Jan/I)

AUDIOLAB 8000C pre-amp as new boxed with manuals £235 ovno. Tel: 07811 317 914 (preferably evenings) (Nottingham) (Jan/I)

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HI-FI SHOW 2000

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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IMPULSE H6 loudspeakers (special finish). Excellent condition. Boxed. £390. Pioneer PD 505 precision (Lithos D) CD player. Boxed. £225 ono. Audio Innovations L1 pre-amp revalved £100. Tel: 0141 339 7387 (Jan/I)

CASTLE HARLECH loudspeakers £495. Rel Strata 3 subwoofer cherrywood finish £449. Audiolab 8000S £400. 8000PX £449. 8000CD £549. Sennheiser electrostatic headphones HE60 £449. All immaculate condition. Genuine reason for sale. Tel: 01429 274 867 (Jan/I)

MERIDIAN 201 MK.3 pre-amp 204 tuner 204 Delta Sigma CD 209 remote all mint boxed manuals £1100 ono. Tel: 020 8746 0220 (evenings) (Jan/I)

NAIM NAX0 (SBL) and Hi-Cap, new style, boxed, latest black Snאים, mint condition, £850 for both. Tel: 01452 613 661 (Jan/I)

NAKAMICHI DRAGON, 1 owner, little use £1200. Tel: 01926 881 500 day, 01789 490 975 night (Jan/I)

VALVE MONOBLOCKS 45watts channel. EL84s twenty hours use (£1500) asking £750. Manley valve pre-amp (£600) asking £300. Linn LP12 complete (£889) asking £350. Sony SA1L monitor speakers (£480) asking £200. Tel: 01702 612 588 (Jan/I)

JBL 120Ti's teal mint condition, original packaging. Fantastic sound £750. Custom stands enhance sound further £150. Kimber 8TC (2 x 3m) just run in £200. Total package £1000 plus P/P. Tel: 01337 831 842 or 07939 571 186 (Fife) (Jan/I)

MARANTZ CD-67 SE £150. Marantz CD 50-SE £80. Rogers BBC Export Monitors, asking £200. Denon DR-M44 Three head cassette deck £80. Croft valve monoblocks £600. Tel: 01323 729 971 (Jan/I)

GARRARD 401 mint £150. SME 3009 £50. SME Series 3 £50. Audiolab 8000A £170. Arcam Alpha CD £90. Arcam Delta 60 amp £50. Arcam black box £50. Marantz tuner £25. Tel: 0121 421 2138 (Jan/I)

RARE OPPORTUNITY pair of Lowther Audiovectors with PM4 drive units £1300 ono. Garrard 301 white grease baring SME arm heavy marble effect plinth £200 ono. Radford STA15 Mk 3 SC 22 pre mint £800 ono. Radford Renaissance £550 ono. Pair Quad 63 mint £1000. Tel: 01446 418 207 (Jan/I)

SONAS FABER Electa Amator speakers solid walnut cabinets "now run in" superb open detailed sound, mint condition, can demonstrate with valve amplification, cost £2800, offers. Tel: 01767 677 634 (Cambridge area) (Jan/I)

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

FERROGRAPH SUPER seven model 7502H half track stereo reel to reel. Tape speed 3.75, 7.5, 15 inches/second £250 ono. Series 4A mono half track integral valve amplifier £100 ono. Tel: 01179 629 482 (Jan/I)

QUAD ESL63 electrostatic speakers. 5 years old, excellent condition, with boxes and speaker cables. Must sell due to house move £1300 (£3450 new). Tel: 01283 704 227 (Derby-Burton area) (Jan/I)

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

SONY DTC-60ES DAT deck £250, TC-KA6ES cassette deck £200, PS-LX431 record deck £60, CDP-770 CD player £60, TA-F246E amplifier £60, ST-S311 tuner £50, SEQ-411 graphic equaliser £50. Tel: 01656 746 293 (Jan/I)

PIONEER PD91 CD ideal D.I.Y. updatable £150. Pioneer A-91D amp 120 watts channel £200. Heybrook 2 record deck £60. Phillips DCC deck plus portable player £60. Tel: 020 7253 3883 daytime (Jan/I)

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

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

EXPOSURE MONO amplifiers, stereo power amplifiers integrated and pre's all boxed brand new £600, £395, £395, £395 respectively. Kelly KT3's £350. Audio Research Classic 30 £795. C.A.T. pre £1200. Tel: 01580 850 924 or 01273 239 356 (Jan/I)

CHORD SPM1200C power £2700. Chord CPA2200 pre £1600. Atoc SCM20SL speakers £1100. Voyd Helius Cyalene, Vdh MC10 £1200. AVI S2000 MP with phonostage £600. Bryston 4B power £700. Spondor SP100 speakers £700. Teac VRDS-T1 transport £250. Teac D-T1 DAC £200. Teac VRDS 10SE CD player £350. Sony CDP-X3000ES CD player £200. Tel: 0113 288 6605 (Jan/I)

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

TANNOY 609 speakers black hexagonal dualconcentric biwireable vgc includes stands 2 x 4m cabletalk3 2 x 6.5m. Audioquest type 4 £150. Audiolab 8000T tuner mint £425. Marantz CD17 (Mk1) CD player champagne gold mint £425. Tel: 020 8668 7459 (Jan/I)

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

LINN AKTIV system, Karik, Numerik, Kairn-Pro, 2 LK 100, Keilidh (walnut, ceramic plinths), black Soundstyle stand, cables £3500 ono. Can deliver home counties. Tel: 01628 473 264 Email: david.norris@compaq.com (Jan/I)

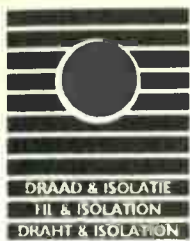
VAN-DEN-HULL REVELATION speaker cable 4 of 1.5 stereo metre lengths (allows bi-wiring) £300. Retail £119 stereo metre. WBT spades. Yamaha TC800D "classic" wedge cassette deck excellent condition £100. Tel: 01733 350 681 (Jan/I)

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

QUAD VALVE system 22 pre amp FM1 radio and 2x Quad II valve amps £400. Tel: 01329 841 252 (Fareham) (Jan/I)

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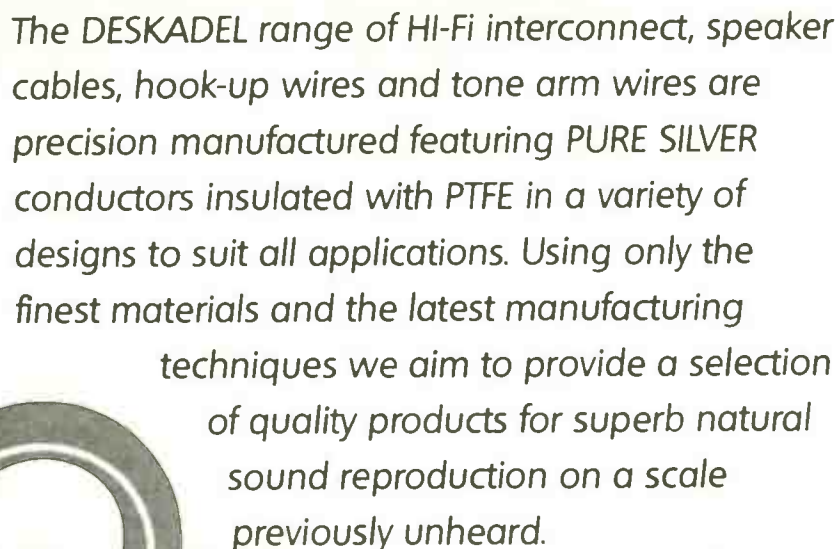
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LINN KELTIK Aktiv speakers nearly new £2600. Audiolab 8000C £250. Spondor Preludes speakers £120. Arcam Delta 70-3 C/D £150. Nakamichi MR2 cassette deck £165. Naim-NAP 140 £260, vgc. Tel: 020 8681 1054 (Croydon) (Jan/I)

WANTED: SHACKMAN 220 amplifier 1976 - 1980. Search your loft. For Sale: Pair Linn interconnect £25. Ortofon MC20 Supreme for trade in £60. Garrard SP25 MkIV deck £30. Tel: 0161 291 9331 (Jan/I)

MARTIN LOGAN Quest loudspeakers vgc £1575. Fantastic sound for larger rooms or part of AV system. Rogers ABI sub units for Rogers LS3/5a speakers new boxed black £299. Linn Kans vgc & stands £250. Tel: 01527 401 954 (Jan/I)

MIRCROMEGA CD3.1 transport and Duo Pro2 Dac, updated model, acutrans, balanced and single ended outputs, with AES/EBU interconnect £975 (£3300). Sony JA50ES flagship Minidisc player £795 (£1300). Tel: 0113 266 3749 evenings (Jan/I)

SONY 557 CD player, 38lbs! Superb sound and Battleship construction, excellent condition. Box and manual £350. 020 7636 9464 (day), 01582 629 556 (eves) (Jan/I)

KUZMA STOGI Reference tone arm boxed new (£800) accept £350. Zeta Tone arm V.D.H. M.C.S. silver wired accept £275. Aragon 24k pre-amp new (£1700) accept £495. Tel: 01634 387 686 (Jan/I)

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

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

MUSICAL FIDELITY A1000 mint £875. Musical Fidelity A1 mint £160. Living Voice Auditorium speakers £850. Creek T43 tuner £225. Leak Troughline 3 tuner £60. 2 pairs Pentacone silver interconnects £113. Tel: 0161 291 9331 (Jan/I)

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

AUDIOQUEST speaker cables, biwire or single wire. Multiple solid cores using single grain, extremely pure copper. 3.5m Midnight £129 (£260) and 3.5m Cobolt £179 (£360). Tel: 01296 747 852 (home) 07748 313 340 (mobile) (Jan/I)

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CLEAR AUDIO Reference turntable (mint), silent running base, Souther TQ parallel tracking arm (mint), Transfiguration Temper Supreme (new) £3500 (£8000 new). Wanted: Musical Fidelity A1000 £500 cash waiting, Tel: 020 8363 4963 (London) (Jan/I)

REPAIRS, MODIFICATIONS, restorations and upgrades to all amplifiers, ancient and modern. One offs built to order, kits debugged, power supplies etc. Design work undertaken. Ex-Alchemist products and Musical Fidelity engineer. Tel: Arkless Electronics 01642 860 881 (Jan/I)

EPOS ES30 speakers brand new, boxed, full warranty £995. Harbeth LS3/5A new, boxed £600. Rogers speaker cabinets various models. Telephone for details. Tel: Avanti 01344 638 830 (Jan/I)

M.T. CABLES quality interconnects silver plated OFC copper PTFE dielectric gold plated plug compare with cables costing £70-90. Money refunded if not satisfied £35. EAR 843L preamp £350. Musical Fidelity A270 £600. Tel: 01443 423 402 (Feb/I)

HORSHAM HI-FI offer:
Unison Research Mystery One preamplifier (£1750) £875. Opera Operetta loudspeakers (£895) £450. Audio Analogue Puccini SE (£635) £470. BKS 107 II Hybrid ribbon loudspeakers (£1750) £1195. Martin Logan SL3 loudspeakers (£3300) £1995. Tel: 01403 272 931 Email: info@homecinema.uk.net (Jan/I)

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

EMT 950 £800. 948 £550. Technics SP10 MkII £260. SLP1200 CD £500. Revox PR99 MkIII £800. Studer A80 VU £800. A807 VU £1100. B67 VU £750. A710 £550. A730 £750. D730 £950. Nagra IV5 £1200. Tel: 01246 275 479, Fax: 01246 550 421 (Jan/I)

EX DEMONSTRATION Klipsch horn loudspeakers KG3.5 £395 pr. KG4.5 £595 pr. KG5.5 £795 pr. Heresy £795 pr. Forte £995 pr. Klipschorn £3495 pr. Tel: Midland Radio Supplies 0121 430 7817 (Feb/I)

HARBETH LS3/5a Limited Edition 'Alan Shaw Signature' in Rosewood. The very last production run of this classic BBC loudspeaker! BRAND NEW £688.00 pair. Available from stock, exclusively from: Stirling Broadcast 01256 851 001 (Feb/I)

Most cables have a sonic signature or tonal character to match specific components. In well-matched systems these cables are often found to be harsh or dull.

Petro's cables were designed for AudioSOURCE to complement transparent components in a well-matched system: the goal was neutrality - musical flavour transmitted as water flows along a smooth pipe. If our cables sound bright or blurred, be confident that it is the equipment that you are hearing! Stratos cables have the greatest differentiation of all interconnects we have compared, that is to say that different recordings and different components just yield their own characters, transparently.

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

what you are missing. £14.95 per bottle.

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

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

Dirty mains has been neglected for too long in the UK but conditioners can degrade sound by limiting speed and power. The best place to clean up your mains is between your wall and the equipment. We are at beta test stage on effective AC mains cords, and can advise you on high-end products from America before you invest. Advice on speaker cables freely available.

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(Apr01)

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(Jan/I)

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nel amp £350. 2 Linn Klimax
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