

hi >> fi

P.T. Jones

WORLD

MAY 2004

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AMPLIFIER SPECIAL

RETRO ACTIVE: NYTECH GTA252/ARC101

CONSONANCE J5000+ S.E. TUBE AMP

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER SUPERTEST

PURE GLASS: THE MAGIC OF VALVES

PIONEER SX-1980 RECEIVER

punchy new Elac FS207.2 loudspeakers

JET POWER!

April Music's stunning Stello DP200 DAC-preamp

SEOUL MUSIC



MAY 2004



i FIDELITY

 Naim's super new CD5i CD player

SHURE M97XE • PRO-JECT DEBUT II • BRISTOL SHOW REPORT

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david price

Hi-fi, like most things, is not immune to fashion. Unlike many other pursuits however, it is worryingly fond of finding deep philosophies to explain these shifting positions.

For example, back in the nineteen seventies, loudspeakers were thought to be what made a system sound good. But this all went out the window a decade

later, with Linn's famous 'garbage in, garbage out' maxim, which preached the exact opposite. Journalists, manufacturers and dealers alike spent years explaining why they all thought one way, then duly changed their minds!

Amplifiers are another case in point. For any self-respecting sixties audiophile, the glory of the thermionic valve was unquestioned – after all, how could there be anything better sounding than a pair of Quad IIs driving ESLS7s? Ten years later and – yes, that's right – valves were so out they were practically off the radar; the only way to listen to music being a muscular transistor pre-power amplifier combination. Valves as real hi-fi? How we laughed!

Although the nineties was a dull decade, one of its finer points was the pluralism it engendered. For audiophiles, this meant valves were socially acceptable – and even desirable – once more.

In this issue, we've taken a broad sweep right across the amplification ambit – from classic seventies Japanese transistor (Pioneer's SX-1980, p130) and radical British solid-state (Nytech CTA252XDII/ARC 101, p34), to modern transistor integrateds (Supertest, p17) and contemporary 'retro' single-ended valve amps (Consonance J5000+, p37). On p42, Noel Keywood explains why the thermionic valve is so special at making music, and our lead review on p12 examines April Music's stunning Stello DP200 DAC-preamp – an exceptionally versatile marriage of digital and analogue.

This issue has a wealth of other kit, too. Naim's new CD5i (p40) is the company's most affordable silver disc spinner to date, and its best value too. Project's Debut II looks set to give its budget turntable rivals a seriously hard time (p57), and Elac's new FS207.2 (p47) loudspeaker boasts real high technology to match its twenty first century styling.

Nowadays, the hi-fi scene is a far more diverse and eclectic place than that of twenty years back, and the better hi-fi manufacturers have turned down the philosophical rhetoric, preferring instead to let their products speak for themselves. May this particular development never fade from fashion!

David Price

how we test the products:

- *Hi-Fi World* has its own advanced test laboratory and acoustically treated listening room.
- *Hi-Fi World* has a dedicated in-house team of experienced listeners. We review thoroughly by extensive auditioning, rather than by quick-fire group listening tests.
- *Hi-Fi World's* engineering team designs a wide range of products in-house. No other hi-fi magazine is so expert and dedicated.

WORLD VERDICTS:

As a rule we only review products we find interesting, so don't expect too many low scores. Likewise, five globe awards will be few and far between because there's only one superlative product of its type. The £ sign denotes great value for money.

	OUTSTANDING	- Simply the best.
	EXCELLENT	- Extremely capable.
	GOOD	- Worth auditioning.
	MEDIOCRE	- Unremarkable.
	POOR	- Seriously flawed.
	VALUE	- Keenly priced.

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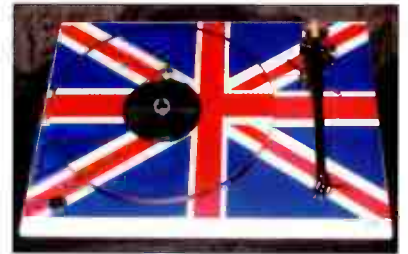
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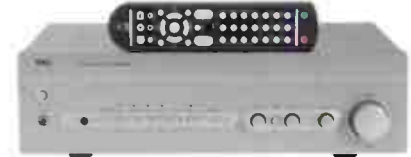
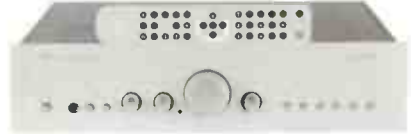
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"The Pathos Acoustics Classic One is one of the finest sounding amps I have ever heard, of any era, from anywhere. . ."

Sam Tellig - Stereophile, Nov 2003



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news



RADIAL PLY

Monitor Audio's Radius loudspeaker range now includes two additions: a super-slim floorstanding loudspeaker called the 'Radius 270' and the 'Radius 225 Plasma', profiled to compliment plasma screens. The 270 is a floorstanding tower loudspeaker 12cm wide and 14cm deep and designed for genuine full-range performance, employing an array of technical developments derived directly from Monitor Audio's reference speaker ranges. Supplied with black or silver grilles, it can be customised to suite specific décor requirements. Real wood veneer and lacquer finishes are crafted to high standards. The new slender Radius 225 Plasma is ideal for use with slim video displays or plasmas, as a centre channel or main speaker. It can be used as a main speaker system, providing bass performance down to 55Hz. The slim wall bracket supplied has a very shallow profile and is supplied with full-length oval black or silver grilles. Prices are £200 for a single Radius 225, or £500 per pair of Radius 270. For more information, contact Monitor Audio Ltd on +44 (0) 1268 740580 or click on www.monitoraudio.co.uk.

ROYAL, FLUSH

HRH The Princess Royal recently visited Linn Products Ltd. to perform the official opening of their recently completed extended premises in Waterfoot, Glasgow. Also present at the ceremony were local MSP's Ken Macintosh and Stewart Maxwell. Ivor Tiefenbrun MBE, Managing Director said, "We are delighted that Her Royal Highness is

prepared to recognise the hard work and creativity that makes Linn different and special..." The £7m expansion and related investment programme, which has taken 18 months to complete, has doubled the scale of Linn's manufacturing operations and will help ensure that Linn will continue to grow. Linn Products was awarded Royal Warrant status from January 2002 as a provider of Entertainment Systems to HRH The Prince of Wales. For further information on Linn, click on www.linn.co.uk.



X MARKS THE SPOT

Musical Fidelity's brand new X~RayV3 24-bit upsampling CD player uses the same DAC and upsampling principles as the Tri-Vista SACD player that Hi-Fi World rates so highly. It has very low claimed jitter (about 130 pps), extremely low distortion (less than .005%) excellent noise ratio (better than 110db down) and outstanding linearity at low levels (typically down to -95db). Precise PCB track lengths and orientation, power supply configuration, internal layout and screening and the precise design of the winding of the mains transformer are claimed. The handsome new casework is custom extruded from high purity aluminium, and is non-resonant and rigid. Internally there is a sub-chassis which further damps the mechanism and acts as internal screening for any stray digital artefacts. The front panel is machined from custom-made high quality extrusion. Priced at £899, it should put the cat amongst the pigeons...

The new X-150 amplifier is packaged in an elegant custom-made extrusion and all fittings are machined from high quality aluminium. The circuit design is a direct derivative from the Tri-Vista series and is claimed to produce an excellent, clean neutral sound. The power supply has been carefully laid out so as not to effect on the signal path. The driver circuit is heavily decoupled and isolated from it. The output stage configuration is two pairs of large output transistors per channel for very high peak current, (75 amps instantaneous unlimited peak) low output impedance and stability. Claimed distortion is extremely low over a very wide frequency range, bandwidth very wide, noise ratios excellent and the output stage will deliver 75 amps instantaneous unlimited peak. Like all Musical Fidelity amplifiers, the X-150 uses a proper dual gang analogue volume control unlike the digital volume control of many rivals. Rated power is 80W RMS per side into 8 ohms, and about 160W each into 4. Price is £799. For more details, click on www.musical-fidelity.com.





GOTCHA!

This month's secret spy pic shows Shure's M97xE going 'absent without leave' – editor DP decided to tighten up the cartridge bolts on the SME M2 tonearm, and the poor Shure duly parted company with its metal mounting plate. A dab of Superglue restored it to (better than) its former glory, but even so – bad show, boys – must do better...

TIVOLI TWOSOME

The new Tivoli Audio Radioworks system is called "the ultimate in small and delicately worked pieces of true hi-fi", no less. It comprises a Tivoli Audio Model Two stereo receiver system plus a Model CD spinner – result: radio tuner, remote control CD player and twenty watts of stereo replay. Finished in a choice of Metallic Taupe, Cherry or (new) Walnut, the system costs £359.99 all in. Click on www.ruark.net/tivoli/index.htm for details.



A MYRYAD OF CHANGES

Myryad's new MX-series includes advanced DVD and CD players, pre-amplifiers, digital pre-amplifier/ processors and power amplifiers, and replaces Myryad's M-Series range. For its new power amplifiers, a totally modular design configuration is used, based around its newly developed 150W mono and 2x80W stereo modules. These modules are employed in Myryad's two new integrated amplifiers while also allowing it to offer no fewer than thirty five 'off-the-shelf' power amplifier options! Multiple separately-regulated power supplies ensure that all low-level circuits deliver

clean and accurate output, and straightforward signal paths reduce hum and noise. As previously, Myryad's in-built Smart My-Link communications protocol is used. All units are fronted by a 9mm anodised bead-blasted aluminium fascia, available in silver or black. Components include the £1,499.95 MXC6000 CD Player, £999.95 MXV3000 DVD Player, £699.95 MXT2000 tuner, £999.95 MXP2000 stereo preamplifier, £2,999.95 MXD6000 digital preamplifier, £799.95 MXA2080 (2x80W) power amplifier, £2,499.95 (5x150W) power amplifier and £2,999.95 (7x150w) power amplifier. For more details, click on www.myryad.co.uk.



SING ME A RIVER

iRiver has announced the new 40GB model of its portable hard disk music player, the iHP-140. The player boasts enough space to store around 10,000 songs on its hard drive, equating to 16 hours of playback, and a built-in FM tuner with 20 presets. There's also real time MP3 encoding, letting users plug the iHP-140 into any source to create MP3s directly without the need for a PC or any other software - via the optical (digital) input, plus a direct digital output. Factor in a large graphic LCD display with backlight, voice recording function and fast data transfer (480 Mbps) with the high speed USB 2.0 connection, and it's a serious challenger to the iPod at £449.

NAKED BEAUTY

Wilson Benesch has two new cartridges. The Analog (£1,450) and The Carbon Naked (£1,200) boast a carbon fibre core structure with "zero shell design" which is magnetically invisible and of very low mass. It is claimed that the Wilson Benesch Carbon Fibre structure "provides the stiffest and most highly damped cartridge platform possible. In terms of

stiffness, damping and mass, this technology is at least ten times superior to materials commonly used." The Analog uses a Japanese sourced generator with Nude Elliptic diamond stylus, complex construction cantilever made of Boron Bar and Alloy pipe and Rare Earth Samarium-Cobalt Magnet. It has a tracking force of 1.4-1.8g and an output of 0.35mv. The Carbon Naked uses a Swiss sourced generator from Benz with Benz Nude Elliptic diamond stylus, Solid Boron Cantilever and Pure Sapphire Coil Former. The tracking force is 1.8-2g with an output of 0.58mv. As usual, all Wilson Benesch cartridges are capable of being re-built and the cost remains constant at £300. For more details, call 01142 852 656 or point your web browsers at www.wilson-besch-cd.com.



REL LIFE

Two completely new REL sub-bass systems are remotely controlled through an advanced digital user interface. The new 'St' Series models, 'Stampede' and 'Strata 5', employ a sophisticated digital control regimen, which claims the most precise and comprehensive control of calibration parameters available in the sub-bass system market. The 'Stampede' is the new entry-level 'St' system, while the 'Strata 5' claims superior sound to its Strata III predecessor despite being physically smaller. Both are closed box designs with downward firing drive units. REL has custom-designed superior drive units for both new models, and optimised electronics for each driver. Amplifiers are fully DC coupled to avoid phase shifts and performance compromises. Audio-grade MOSFET output devices are used. High quality smoothing capacitors offer long life. Transformers are ultra-quiet audio quality low-loss toroids. Filter capacitors are high quality nitrogen filled polystyrene types of 1% tolerance and indefinite life. Very close tolerance components ensure consistency of performance throughout the life of each model. Both subs use superior-grade 30mm MDF, available in Black Brittex, Maple, Cherry and Rosenuit real wood veneers, and are supplied with all the necessary leads for both speaker level and LFE inputs. Prices are £550 for 'Stampede' in Brittex Black or £625 in veneer, and £700 for 'Strata 5' or £800 in veneer. For more information on the complete range of REL sub-bass systems, contact REL Acoustics Ltd on +44 (0) 1656 768777 or click on www.rel.net.

LIFE IN THE BUSH

Bush's new Pocket DAB Digital Radio, the PSDAB2003, is smaller than a pack of cards, and has its aerial cleverly concealed within the stereo inner-ear headphones. The fascia has a tactile deep purple rubberised finish with a large backlit display window to show useful information about the radio station, song and artist, date and time. Powered by two standard AA batteries, the PSDAB2003 gives a claimed 12 hours continuous listening time. For more information, click on: www.bushdigital.co.uk.



THE A TEAM

Denon's new AVC-A1SR flagship AV receiver promises an unmatched combination of "high-end decoding, real-world usability and absolute brute force". The new A version boasts Dolby Pro-Logic IIX (now up to 7 channels of synthesised surround from stereo & 5.1 sources), DTS Enhanced NEO:6 (the latest version with 24bit/96kHz bandwidth), HDCD for CD (for better sound from HDCD encoded CDs when decoded in the amp via Denon Link), and Denon Link 3 readiness (for the forthcoming version that handles all formats including SACD/DSD). Denon says the Denon Link is the highest performance digital link available, substantially outperforming IEEE-1394 FireWire in the areas of jitter, susceptibility to noise and interference and with a massively greater transfer speed of 1.2Gb per second as opposed to 400Mb per sec. The new A1SR will receive, decode and process the raw digital audio data from a matching Denon DVD player, (such as the DVD-A1, DVD-A11). For more information, click on www.denon.co.uk.



next issue

For a twenty one year old format, there's a lot going on in the world of Compact Disc - so we thought we'd round up the best 'affordable audiophile' players around. Then we've got an awesome 'mystery machine' from Marantz, and an interview with Ken Ishiwata in which he shares his sage knowledge on how to design in digital. His fans will love our in-depth piece on Denon's new AVC-A1SR digital linking AV receiver, and there are some great ancillaries too, from Musical Fidelity's brand new X-150 (yes, really!) to Unison Research's new 250W integrated amplifier. Unmissable - reserve your copy at a newsagent now!

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GRADO SR80 HEADPHONES

£100

If there ever was a retro-styled pair of headphones, this is it. With design cues straight out of 1979, 'men of a certain age' will find the SR80s almost supernaturally cool. They're built well, too – with a softly padded steel headband and 'old skool' black foam earpads, plus robust plastic transducer casings. Unlike the silly side mounted lead you find on Beyers, this has the cord coming out from both earpieces for equal pressure distribution, although the cable is a tad short at just 2m. The four conductor lead is terminated with a gold plated mini plug with

quarter inch adaptor. The dynamic, open back design claims a frequency response of 20Hz-20kHz, with a 32ohm impedance. Sound is an interesting mixture of mediocre frequency extremes and one of the most open and engaging midbands this side of Sennheiser HD650s (costing £150 extra). Bass is quite light and wooden sounding, yet decently rhythmic. Although a tad forward, treble isn't harsh but it offers little insight. The midband, however, is deliciously clean and crisp, with oodles of detail and explicit image location – it really gives an insight into a recording that its price rivals lack. The key to these cans is their

general life and bounce – by contrast rival Sennheisers may be more evenly balanced but lack the obvious 'joie de vivre' of the SR80s. Great value, especially when discounted online at websites like www.unbeatable.co.uk.



ROBERTS R761 PORTABLE RADIO

£70

While the latest crop of DAB portables cleverly mix the old and the new, this Roberts table radio is traditionalism done to perfection. Although lacking the facilities Digital Radio fans take for granted, it's exquisitely built and a joy to use. The case is made from solid Ash with a soft, stitched vinyl carrying strap and elegant end caps. Although inconvenient, the 'retro' manual tuning dial and knob is wonderfully

tactile to use, and its sensitive tuner, powerful amplifier and large speaker assure superb sound quality with a rich and vibrant tone. The inclusion of Long Wave will be appreciated by Cricket fans and European-based Radio Four listeners. Mains or battery operation, tone control and a headphone jack complete its useful feature count. For those unconvinced by DAB, nothing compares to this beautiful blast from the past. Click on www.robertsradio.co.uk for more information.



KONTAK CLEANING SOLUTION £14.95

Hi-fi is notoriously full of 'snake oil' remedies for sick systems, many of which are ludicrously overpriced, but Kontak is not one of them. This is one of the best contact cleaners money can buy, thanks to its combination of gunge removing ability and the fact that it doesn't leave any residue. It's amazing to see this stuff in action – just dip one end of the supplied pipe cleaner in the bottle, apply it to your mains plug pins, cartridge pins, fuses, headphone

sockets, RCA phono socketry, IEC sockets (with all mains power switched off, of course) and be amazed as seemingly clean, untarnished metal surfaces deposit vast amounts of black gunk on the pipe cleaner. That's all contamination which is impeding your signal... When you plug them all back in, the difference in sound can be dramatic – often the same order of magnitude as making an expensive system upgrade. Treble opens up and smoothes out, midband becomes wider and more detailed, bass stronger and more articulate. The interesting thing is that the sound often brightens up yet smoothes out at the same time – an apparently contradictory effect. The difference is

noticeable on brand new, out-of-the-box kit – but try it on a twenty year old amplifier and be amazed! Call 01733 327929 or click on www.kontakaudio.com for one of the most cost-effective upgrades you'll ever make.



seoul



Thirty years ago, Japan's assault on the international hi-fi market began in earnest. Now, it's the time of the South Koreans. As one of that country's leading high end distributors, April Music was perfectly placed to assess what makes serious audio equipment, and because it wasn't convinced that the stuff coming from Japan, the US and Europe was all it could be, duly began manufacturing its own kit. The Stello DP200 represents the company's entry level preamplifier, but there's a twist - a 24/192 upsampling DAC built in. David Price tries out this rather intriguing and characterful bit of kit...

If Japan's industrial revolution began in the sixties, South Korea's followed some thirty years later. Just a decade on from this and the country now has an impressively high standard of living, with wage rates comparable with Southern European countries. It's very much a high tech, forward looking and go-getting place, with a rapidly developing market for luxury goods – and no shortage of demand for high end hi-fi. The country is also fiercely patriotic, and if anyone can do it, then they can do it better.

This, pretty much, was what got April Music into manufacturing. Company supremo Simon Lee is an enthusiast who liked audio so much that he abandoned a stable and comfortable life to start importing esoteric foreign brands into his country, and then subsequently decided to make the leap and start making his own stuff too...

Although Korean people are dramatically different in temperament, taste and tradition to

Japanese (somewhat akin to the difference between the English and the French, in my opinion), there's no denying the Japanese styling cues in this preamp, but in other ways the DP200 couldn't be more different – a product of a big, mass-market, Nipponese brand it is not. Indeed, its combination of functionality, connectivity and sonics is quite unique.

Whereas big Jap names like Pioneer and Denon now do massively complicated multichannel digital receivers – with a welter of digital and analogue inputs, switching options, upsampling digital-to-analogue conversion, etc. – they've more or less abandoned the two-channel market. The result is that, unless you can afford stuff from the likes of Meridian (which is also now heavily into multi-channel, too), your two channel options are reduced to ye olde analogue pre-power amplifier and offboard DAC (and there are increasingly few of these around, also).

The £1,495 DP200 you see here rather changes all that. It's an

unashamed, high end stereo device – with no multichannel pretensions whatsoever – that works as an analogue preamplifier, digital preamplifier and upsampling DAC. As such, it's a mightily handy bit of kit, but there's more – it also offers an optional MM/MC phono input card, an optional analogue to digital converter card and a standard headphone preamplifier!

It's a fully balanced discrete Class-A design, with high quality components inside, and very tidy it looks under the hood. Cable runs are neat, and it's been designed with short signal paths and a range of slot in card options (more of which later). There are three analogue inputs (1 XLR balanced, 2 RCA unbalanced) and two analogue outputs (1 XLR balanced, 1 RCA unbalanced).

The first analogue in can be configured for use with an optional phono card (£195). This offers MM and MC input, with six different gain loading and four different gain settings, all of which are switchable by jumpers inside the case on the

music



card itself. This is a general pain to do thanks to the rather unclear instructions. On a cultural and/or anthropological note, the Japanese would never do it this way – it would all be front panel switchable under a little flap. This would be a more ergonomic way to do it, but could possibly have a deleterious effect on sonics (thanks to all those extra switches and wires) and would certainly up the price by a couple of hundred dollars.

On the front panel there's a small row of neat if rather fiddly buttons which variously select Input, Bypass (allowing the connection of a surround processor), Upsample (the internal DAC supports formats of up to 24Bit, 192kHz, with upsampling rates user-selectable from front panel or remote control - settings of bypass, 48kHz, 96kHz and 192kHz are available), Record and Volume. The latter is a 120-step digital affair, and interestingly works individually on each input (so if you've been listening to Aux 1 at 55, say, and switch to Aux 2, the volume goes back to the setting it was last on when you last used Aux 2, rather than staying at 55 (the Aux 1 setting). The 16x2 character alphanumeric fluorescent display keeps you well informed about what's being routed where, and is dimmable – although unfortunately not defeatable.

Moving to the fully spec'd upsampling digital-to-analogue convertor, this takes any digital input (32, 44.1, 48, 96 and 192kHz, 16 or

24bit) and crunches it to analogue at the maximum possible resolution, and also upsamples any of these resolutions to 48, 96 or 192kHz as selected by the Upsample button on the fascia or remote. It's also bypassable completely. And then there's the optional (£145) analogue-to-digital convertor card, which inputs analogue (either line or from the aforementioned optional phono card, and outputs it digitally in 16 or 24bit, 48 or 96kHz resolutions. Those into computer audio with a suitably equipped digital input card (or offboard USB port), have the ability to record to hard disk at 24bit, 96kHz, and then record to DVD in its standard two channel 24/96 PCM mode (which is compatible with all DVD players, not just DVD-A), making a super quality transcription of vinyl, tape or radio – or downsample it (with software such as Adobe's Audition, reviewed in the March 2004 issue) to 16/44 (complete with dither, à la Sony's Super Bit Mapping) and burn it to CD. Finally, there's a rather good headphone amplifier built in, driving phones with 8-300Ω impedance.

Setting up the DP200 is a case of plugging in an IEC power lead, hooking up a power amplifier at one end and whatever source components at the other. Configuring the phono card is a pain however – as you have to undo eight Allen screws and slide the casing off the chassis, find the card, find the jumpers and then wrestle with a

rather arcanelly written appendix in the middling instruction manual. Hopefully, your friendly local dealer will do this for you.

SOUND QUALITY

Fortuitously, I had an MF Audio Passive Preamp (reviewed in the August 2003 edition) to hand as a reference. I've been using this assiduously since then, thanks to its brilliantly open, neutral and self-effacing sound. Priced at £1,499 it's a direct rival, and I think rather defines the state of the preamp art until you start paying silly money. With this in mind, the Stello DP200 faced a stiff challenge...

Running my Trichord Delphini NC phono stage into the Stello and

THE PHONO CARD

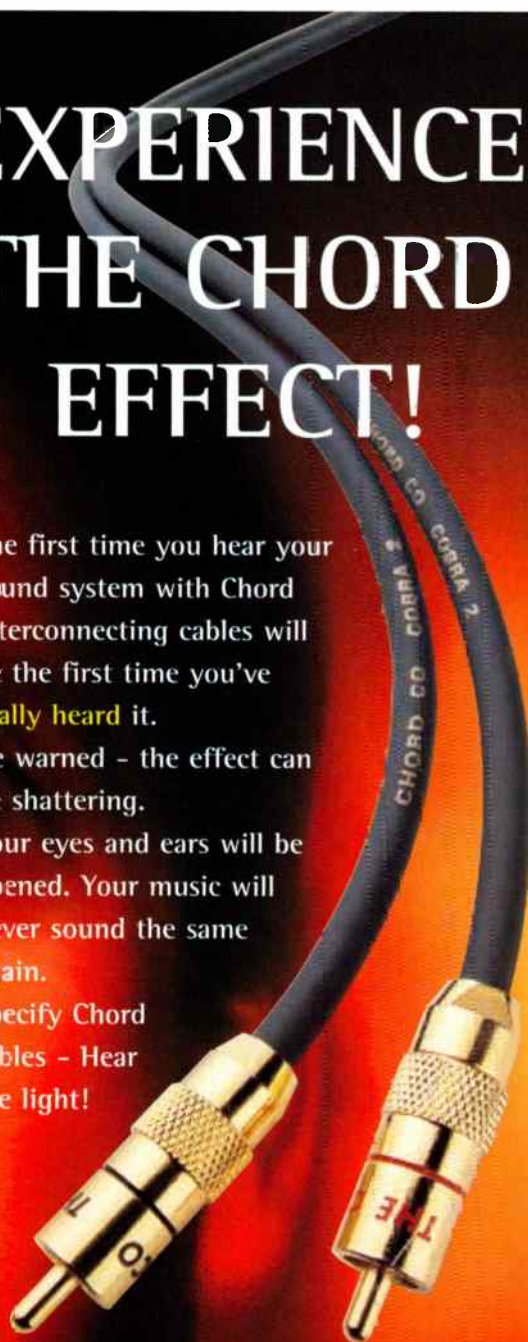
Although not the world's easiest phono stage to configure, it's an undeniably impressive performer, especially when you consider its £195 tag. Easily the equal of any off-board design at this price, only Trichord's Dino at £100 more appreciably betters it, and then not comprehensively. The card is quiet, and boasts an extremely tidy and detailed presentation, with fine dynamics and impressive musicality. It's also capable of communicating a natural recorded acoustic in all its glory, and has oodles of finesse. Unless you've already got something in the £500 price bracket, this is an essential purchase.

REFERENCE SYSTEM:

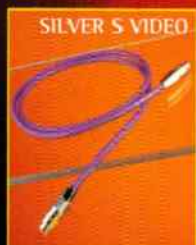
Mitchell Orbe/ OL Illustrious/
Ortofon Kontrapunkt C turntable
Trichord Delphini NC phono stage
MF Audio Passive Preamp
Quad 909 power amp
World Audio K5881 power amp
Yamaha NS1000M loudspeakers

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Voyd turntable standard - ash	£500	£700
Nottingham Analogue Space Deck - with Mystic Mat and psu	£900	£1500
Wadia 850 CD - very chunky chap - means business	£3200	£5400
Avid Volvere Sequel - new - boxed - unused	£2500	£3500
Ariston RD11s with Signet low mass arm - old classic - original box - v. tidy	£300	
Roksan Xerxes Cognesenti - needs service - SME cutout - take it away	£400	
Wilson Benesch ACT1 tonearm - carbon fibre uniphrot	£450	£900
Proac Studio 200 - yew finish - MTM 2 way - very nice	£1250	£2150
SME Model 20/2A (includes Series V tonearm) - serious - no film flam	£3500	£5270
Living Voice Auditorium - cherry	£900	£1500
Ruark Crusader - dark cherry - very tidy	£900	£2000
Hovland Sapphire - stereo power amp - vgc - give away	£3500	£7000
SJS Arcadia Model 2 - valve rectified, choke input - boffin style line pre-amp - copper casework - interesting, lush and lovely	£1000	£2000
T.E.A.D. The Groove - phono stage MM	£1300	£1850
Canary Audio 30B - parallel push-pull - 300B monos - 45 endless watts of beefy joy - ex dem - perfect condition - champagne - boxed	£6000	£10000
Canary Audio 303 push-pull - 300B monos - 22 watts of loveliness - used only once at US hi-fi show - a joy and a steal	£4500	£7500
Audio Innovations P2 phono stage - MM - collector's item (another one!)	£700	
Canary Audio 301 push-pull stereo - 22 watts - great amp - champagne finish - boxed	£3500	£5400
Canary Audio 601 pre-amp - with saucy intestines - beautiful sound - new	£2200	£2850
Audio Note UK ANJ speakers with Huygens high mass 4 leg stands	£500	
SME Series V - with Audio Note silver internal wire - a proper tonearm	£900	£1850
Living Voice Avetar OBX-R1 - cherry - 2002 - ex Hi-Fi World review pair	£2000	£4000
Revolver 45 speakers - cherry - new	£900	£1200
Revolver 45 speakers - standard finish	£700	£900
Quad 989 ESL - brand-new - black - boxed - big	£4000	£4400
Revolver R33 - standard finish - new	£300	£400
Triplanar V1 tonearm - boxed	£2300	£3350
Heart Rhythm - 8 watt valve rectified 300B monos - giveaway	£400	£1600
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REVIEWER'S NOTES

- the different volume control setting for each input makes sense in theory, but proves very confusing in practice. Often you switch to another input and get no sound, because you turned the unit down the last time you used it...
- the up-down volume control isn't the easiest to use, and the dot-matrix display is crisp but not intuitive to read. More work could usefully be done on the somewhat 'utilitarian' ergonomics. The lack of a fully defeatable display is also a disappointment.
- the headphone stage is very good indeed (with a pair of Sennheiser HD650s), far better than most – and it even mutes the preamps output, so whenever you plug the phones in the speakers go quiet, just like the old days...
- the fixed/variable switch at the back means the preamp section can be bypassed – essentially making the DP200 work as a DAC – but it's easy to miss in the set-up instructions (which could be clearer), and will have many wondering why they can't get any volume...
- thanks to its superb metal finish, the remote is a truly impressive bit of kit – aside from its rather excessive weight. It's a shame it wasn't finished in silver and/or gunmetal grey to match the DP200, though.

A-Bing with the MF Audio, I was soon able to get the measure of this new product. Whereas the MF is tonally a little dark and brooding, the April Music is bright and sweet. It's obviously more upfront, pushing the soundstage a little further forward and bubbling with detail and atmosphere. The MF is more laid back, yet more three dimensional, offering a very natural and organic feel. Yet the DP200 cannot be regarded as astringent in any way; rather, it has an impressively open feel that's smooth right across the audio band.

Corduroy's 'Out of Here' was a great showcase for its talents. The DP200 threw out a wide, panoramic recorded acoustic, with a strong and tuneful bass. Although not rich or coloured, it was most certainly not dry in the way that Naim preamps can be so characterised. You could say it was just a touch on the euphonic side of neutral, but only fractionally. Yet it was a spirited performer – tuneful and expressive, it gave a fine sense of the bass player's fretboard antics.

Treble was also excellent, with an upfront and explicit nature, yet things never descended into brightness. There was real atmosphere and space here – more so than the MF which has always seemed a little barren in this region. Delicacy was very much in evidence, conveying all the shimmering, sonorous glory of high hat cymbals. Yet, for all its crispness, there was just 'a touch of silk' that proved rather reminiscent of Japanese high end. Allied to that ever-so-slightly warm bass, the result was an open sound with the merest hint of euphony. By contrast, the MF Audio was more neutral and self-effacing. The DP200 had a beautifully listenable and enjoyable sound, whereas the MF had no particular sound at all.

Although the similarly priced MF Audio passive preamp is ultimately more self-effacing, there's the small matter of the built-in upsampling DAC and headphone amplifier that come free with the DP200. That it can come so close to this superb reference product and offer these for the same money is impressive enough, but the fact that both work superbly is remarkable. Running at its standard 48kHz sampling frequency, my Aiwa DAT recorder was usefully upgraded by plugging it into the Stello, whose internal DAC is quite super. It's very smooth sounding indeed, with a tremendously clean and detailed nature to boot. As with the analogue input, bass was

generously full yet very articulate, midband expansive and atmospheric and treble smooth and sweet. Pressing the Upsample button was the next pleasant surprise; at 96kHz things got more spacious and three dimensional, and 192kHz gave an truly obvious overall improvement – the midband hung back behind the plane of the speakers, yet pushed forward vigorously when called upon so to do. Treble assumed a natural airiness, while bass became fuller and – interestingly – obviously more musical and less 'wooden' sounding.

Frankly, I was deeply surprised by this product. It's not 'the ultimate preamp' and doesn't claim to be, yet it does so much that's right in musical terms whilst remaining affordable. Think of an ideal preamp (neutral, invisible), and add just a smidgeon of bass warmth and treble silkiness plus a well lit midband, and that's the DP200. Better still, its DAC is also excellent – not quite up Musical Fidelity's TriVista 21 in terms of depth and dimensionality, but again not far off. It will upgrade practically any contemporary CD player this side of £1,500, and then add the very worthwhile option of upsampling too. Then there's the excellent headphone amplifier, which isn't quite up to Musical Fidelity's X-CANS v3 standards but again close enough to make little difference.

It's this machine's tremendous all-round sonic competence allied to versatility that makes it such compelling value

for money. The optional phono and ADC cards are also seriously capable too (see boxes), and together make this preamp breathtakingly good value for money. April Music's Stello DP200 is one of those brilliantly conceived but slightly offbeat products that we love so much at Hi-Fi World – tremendously versatile, yet it suffers for this sonically not one jot. As such it comes heartily recommended, and methinks it's a strong candidate for 'product of the year'.

VERDICT ●●●●●

Excellent sonics allied to great versatility and connectivity make this arguably the best all round preamplifier around right now.

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MEASURED PERFORMANCE

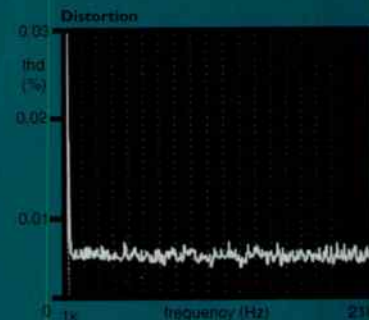
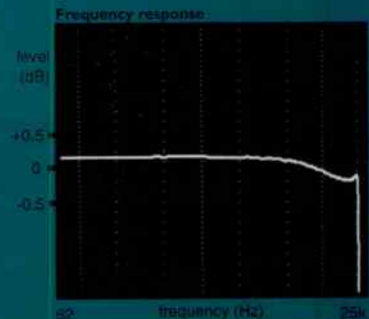
Hooked up to a CD transport the Stello DAC gave a smooth response with a little top-end roll off, just enough to nicely dampen CD's intrinsic brightness. Distortion levels were low on both channels, but a little more than expected at peak level (0dB). However, it's lower down the dynamic range that such things matter and here the Stello measured well, producing 0.01% distortion at -40dB for example. Switching in Upsampling increased distortion at all sample rates, if not by much - from 11% to 12% at -80dB for example.

The phono stage has adjustable gain for MM and MC cartridges with plenty enough for either, measurement showed. Equalisation was accurate from 30Hz to 60kHz. Below 30Hz gain rolled off slowly to -3dB at 6Hz, so expect good deep bass but also cone flap with warped records. Noise was low too and overload satisfactory.

The Stello measured well in all areas. It didn't return the best figures possible but it was very good all the same. NK

Frequency response	5Hz - 20.8kHz
Distortion	
0dB	0.023
-40dB	0.01
-80dB	11.3

Separation	
1kHz	112dB
20kHz	98dB
Noise (IEC A)	-101dB
Dynamic range	109dB
Output	2.56V



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Amplifon WL25 (left): 28W/channel using 6P3, £795
 Amplifon WT40 (centre): 40W/channel using 6C33, £1995
 Amplifon WT30 II (right): 31W/channel using 6H13, £1395

Amplifon is new to the UK, and you will be hearing a lot more about them! These exceptional value for money amplifiers, designed and manufactured in Poland, put to shame more expensive opposition in sound quality, build, and finish. All three models have automatic biasing, so there's no fuss when it's time to change tubes, they all feature heavy toroidal output transformers with a wide bandwidth and 4 and 8 Ohm taps, and the WT30 II and WT40 operate in Triode mode Push Pull, Class A. They have classic valve amp attributes, sounding sweet and natural, but with enough power in reserve to rock when required!



The Trichord Dino (£299) outsells every other phono stage. Why? It sounds clean and clear, it's fully adjustable to virtually any MM or MC pickup, and when you fancy an upgrade, the Dino+ add-on power supply fits the bill, for an extra £225 (or buy them together from the start for £498).

If you prefer, the Tom Evans Microgroove (£450), suitable for MC pickups, is a worthy alternative, giving a level of detail retrieval difficult to better unless you spend an awful lot more. The Microgroove Plus (pictured above) at £800 is even better, and the famous Groove (£1900), below, has been described in various reviews as being state-of-the-art of phono stages. Like all products of it's standing, don't expect to walk away with one - it needs to be configured by the manufacturer for your particular pickup!



Cawsey (top) may not be the best known cable (others spend more on advertising) but it's quite possibly the best sounding. We have been selling these Australian made silver interconnects for several years and can recommend them without reservation. From £250 to £900 per metre set.



Slinkylinks

Slinkylinks (bottom) are solid silver air dielectric cables with the latest bullet plugs, fantastic sound at an amazingly low price: £195 for a 1.2m set!



The Michell Gyro SE (£895 + arm) remains one of the most successful turntables of all times, and for good reason. Sound is fast, neutral, and open. You have an upgrade route via the HR power supply, and the Orbe platter kit. Popular arms include the Regas, the Tecnoarm, the Origin Live Silver, and of course, the SME. Compare the Gyro to the Spacedeck and the new Roksan Radius in our studio.



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Integrated Differentiation

How times change! Just twenty years back, integrated amplifiers were dramatically differing beasts – ranging from sonically accomplished but hopelessly impractical to bland sounding yet user-friendly. These days, many of the latest crop claim the best of both worlds, but is this wishful thinking? Francis Tabor was duly tasked to find out...

Just as the advent of Compact Disc required a step change in mass-market amplifier performance, so the new high resolution digital audio formats are pushing the envelope still further. When CD arrived back in 1983, the standards for noise floor and distortion had to be re-written - time was when a reasonably flat frequency response from 20Hz to 20kHz was good enough, if the distortion was not worse than 0.1% over most of that range. In practice, this figure would generally be achieved at 1kHz and perhaps a couple of watts of output. Distortion over the full frequency range and at maximum output was something else, and not something the manufacturers would be likely to quote in their literature!

The advent of CD required a re-think and the better amplifier manufacturers responded with frequency response figures of at least 10Hz to 30kHz. CD can in fact produce full output below even 10Hz, always assuming a recording engineer somewhere has something to record at that low frequency. Still, the capability is now here, so the amplifiers must make an effort to match it. Likewise, distortion figures needed to drop by at least an order of magnitude to 0.01% and preferably better than that. In addition, these figures should now be maintained over the full frequency range and at all output levels right up to the onset of clipping. A tall order! And now we have SACD and DVD-Audio, the quietness from which is stunning. The amplifiers reviewed here all show an improvement over earlier designs - even the (now) humble CD sounds better with them.

The integrated amplifiers we're looking at here are all new, state-

of-the-art designs. All have five or more line level inputs and a facility for making tape recordings. If you listen with headphones, the Exposure 3010 and the Graves Griffon are not for you, whereas the others all have the standard quarter inch jack. However, if you need an input for a record deck, only the Roksan Kandy III obliges, but it's fixed at moving magnet levels of sensitivity and impedance and so won't work with low output moving coils. This said, all the other amplifiers can have a module fitted by the manufacturer at extra cost.

This is possibly the better option, as you can tell the manufacturer which model and type you have and they should be able to give the best advice on what will be required.

The integrations here are a representative selection of what is available, spanning a wide price range, from £250 to £1,400 – all are solid-state but one, which we threw into the pack to see how it (and they) would compare. They cover an output power range from a fairly small 30 watts per channel to a muscular 90. Only with the smaller powered amps will you need to be careful in your choice of speakers. The 30 watt valve amp is designed for use with very efficient horn type speakers and will surely go loud with them; they made plenty of decibels with my fairly efficient speakers. In fact, bigger speakers are frequently more efficient than small ones. The NAD at 80 watts each and the Arcam at 90 watts each should drive anything made yet should still sound nicer with more efficient speakers. All amplifiers were very quiet, and fully met the requirements for DVD-Audio.



Cambridge Audio 640A



NAD C352



Roksan Kandy MK III



Arcam A90



Exposure 3010



Graves Audio Griffon Boxer

REFERENCE SYSTEM:
Denon DVD 2900 player
Monitor Audio Silver S8 speakers
Sennheiser HD600 headphones

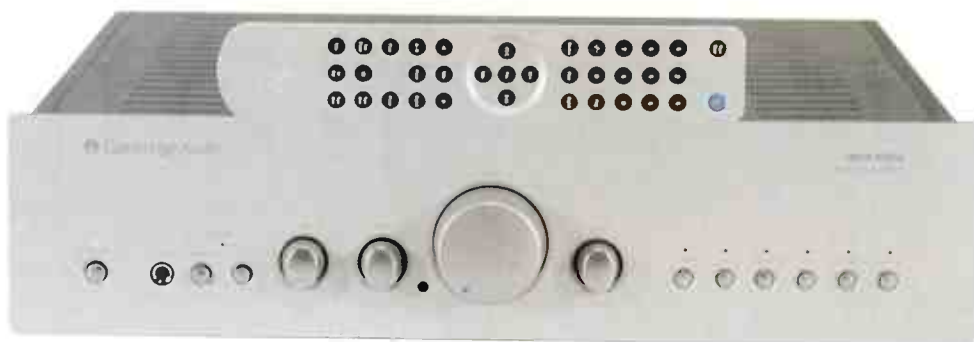
CAMBRIDGE AUDIO 640A £249.95

VERDICT ●●●●£

Decent facilities and build allied to highly competent sonics makes this super value for money

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO 640A £249.95

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Cambridge Audio is well known for turning out incredible value for money products, and this 65 watt is no exception. Least liked are the knobs, which feel lightweight and plasticky. Indeed, it's not as heavy as the others here, despite having similar output power to the Roksan and Exposure – and it also runs quite warm after a couple of hours. Many features are offered - the front panel has bass and treble controls, but can be bypassed, and there's also a headphone socket. There are six inputs, all at line level. Cambridge does offer a phono stage module as an optional extra for those with LPs to play.

The rear offers two tape record outputs and two pairs of speaker connectors plus the usual IEC socket. For some reason the manual is keen to tell the owner that the amp's slew rate is 50V/ms, which is indeed good. I think though that the average user might prefer to know the input sensitivity! it to say that these matters are pretty well standardised these days and there was no problem. The manual is well written with good information about connecting tape decks, bi-amping and using a second pair of speakers. Build was a great improvement on hi-fi of just a few years ago – especially at this price. However, a thin front panel in silver with white writing isn't the clearest I've seen. On the other hand, the remote was very heavy and had quite the best feel of the group.

SOUND QUALITY

Switch on and you're greeted

with a slight mechanical hum from the mains transformer inside. This would only be a problem if you listen at low levels and the amplifier is close to you. Play some music and you're greeted with a big sound that makes this amp seem louder than it really is. The soundstage is expansive, and the recorded acoustic close and immediate. But don't play this amplifier too loud - the rated power of 65W per channel is enough for larger speakers, but some smaller designs will need more. Yet at higher levels, this amp can harden and shout a little, so large and efficient speakers are recommended.

Having said that, bass guitar rhythms on 'Cold, Cold Heart' by Norah Jones were very tuneful and had my feet tapping. I really enjoyed the detail available in the drum brushes on the first track, 'Don't Know Why' which were well placed on the sound stage. Keeping the volume below the high level limit, everything was fine, the 640A

getting into its stride as a big hearted and smooth performer.

Christine Aquilera is a good test for incisive detail, and this amp was not tripped up by the requirements of, for example, 'Walk Away' - where the piano had a tangible, lifelike character to it. Bass was clear and not muddy at all, well separated from piano and vocals on the sound stage. The gentle and wistful lyrics in 'The Voice Within' were portrayed well with good instrument spacing. The same can be said of the vocals in 'Keep On Singin' My Song' which was most enjoyable. Turning to classical music, I found that the long opening of Górecki's third symphony revealed a relaxed character with only a slight muddling of the sound. The detail was all there, although it was not the best amp in this test from this point of view, as you'd expect at the price. Still, given its humble budget origins, this is a very capable bit of kit if matched with the correct loudspeakers.

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The Cambridge Azur 640A produced 78watts into 8ohms and 110watts into 4ohms.

Distortion levels were very low in the midband at around 0.002% and just 0.01% at high frequencies, the analysis showing a trace of second and third harmonic.

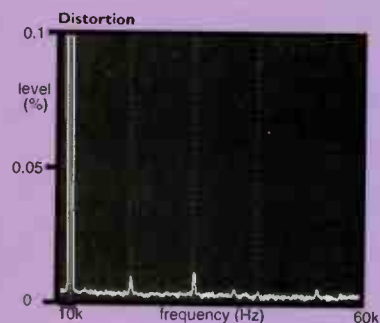
The tone controls work at spectrum extremes, above 5kHz for treble and below 500Hz for bass. There's a little bass lift (audible) unless Deafest is used. With broad frequency response and low noise the A640A measured well. NK

Power 78watts

CD/tuner/aux.

Frequency response 5Hz-35kHz

Separation	67dB
Noise	-93dB
Distortion	0.01%
Sensitivity	400mV
dc offset	13.5mV



FOR:

- owner's manual
- facilities
- value

AGAINST:

- plasticky knobs
- runs hot
- hard sound at high levels

NAD C352 £349.95



VERDICT

Impressively powerful and punchy sound makes this great for some types of music, but middling with others.

NAD C352 £349.95
Leadbroke, UK
☎ +44 (0)1908 319360
www.nad.co.uk

A powerful amplifier, this is rated at 80 watts per channel. Solidly built and well finished, it did its job quietly but efficiently. You get more features than with many others, including defeatable tone controls, a headphone socket and a remote control. A row of buttons selects the input, another row controls bass, treble and balance and a big knob at the right adjusts the volume. Unfortunately, this is one of those amplifiers in which almost all the useable volume is at the bottom of the control.

The back panel contains a row of a dozen pairs of phono sockets and a single pair of speaker connectors. There are four line level inputs labelled disc, CD, video, aux and tuner (the disc input is not RIAA equalised). There are inputs and outputs for two tape decks. The last six are for preamp output (two of these!) and power-amp input. This enables the two to be separated should you wish to use a surround sound processor and/or multiple power amplifiers. The multi-language Owner's Manual was brief and confusing. The description of the tape and pre-out connections referred to numbers that did not match those on the diagram. Lastly, there's a switch for 'soft clipping', a NAD feature for many years. At lower listening levels, I could detect no change on operating this switch. At higher levels with this option switched on, it is claimed that the output is reduced gently to avoid the harsh sound of clipping. It works well, and this feature has been an enduring favourite at student parties over the decades!

SOUND QUALITY

First off, Mariah Carey's 'Vanishing' sounded good, with a clean and detailed midband, sweet treble and strong bass. Indeed, perhaps there was a little too much of it, because it was almost overpowering at times – and tended to detract from the overall flow of the song. Next I listened to Larisa Stow singing 'Blue Mountain' on DVD and again that punchy, dominant bass was in evidence. The music was certainly moving along with great rhythm and speed – it had me sitting on the edge of the chair – but here I had the sense that I was listening to hi-fi rather than to music (a bit like the sounds you get at hi-fi shows!)

Imaging was very impressive, and the NAD's midrange proved superb. Smooth and open, there was just a touch of colouration in evidence, but considering its budget origins nothing to criticise. BB King and Eric Clapton really entertained with

'Three O Clock Blues', again on DVD. But hang on a moment – this song really is about being awake at that time of the morning and should sound more relaxed, yet not so up-front and full on! For a complete contrast I turned to Górecki's Third Symphony, whereupon it proved most enlightening. The long, quiet and slow opening is frequently no more than a growl, but with the NAD I heard the individual notes of the tune right from the start. Wonderful – an unexpected sense of detail at very low levels.

Overall, I was impressed by this amplifier, but it is quintessential NAD and not completely to my taste. Many will love its commanding bass, explicit midband and airy treble – allied to plenty of power and the legendary 'soft clipping' circuit. I, however, have delicate sensibilities and found it a tad tiring for extended listening. Twenty four hour party people audition it with relish, others look elsewhere.

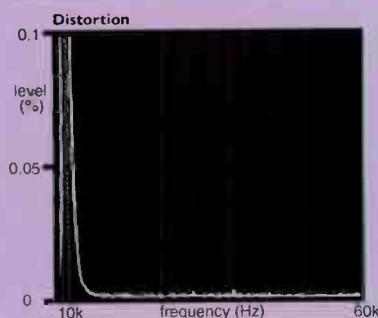
MEASURED PERFORMANCE

NAD always offer power and the big C352 is no exception, matching its solid-state rivals with 120watts into 8ohms. With a low 4ohm load output increased to 140watts, still a good amount if a little down on its rivals here. However, the C352 produced absolutely no distortion at any power or frequency, even when pushed to deliver full output at 10kHz – a grating test. Only when asked to do this into a low 4ohm load did some distortion appear on the analyzer. From this sort of performance I would expect a very smooth and neutral sound. It may well sound brighter than NADs of yore too, since bandwidth was wide, stretching from 5Hz to 75kHz (-1dB).

An input sensitivity of 340mV suits all sources. The tone controls worked well, only affecting spectrum extremes, but must be switched out to avoid some small bass boost being applied when zeroed.

The C352 measured very well. It should sound silky smooth and powerful. NK

Power	120watts
Frequency response	5Hz-75kHz
Separation	91dB
Noise	-113dB
Distortion	0.002%
Sensitivity	0.34V
d.b. offset	2.3/3.4mV



FOR:

- facilities
- soft clipping circuit
- powerful, punchy sound

AGAINST:

- owners manual
- sound lacks finesse

ROKSAN KANDY Mk III £599.95

VERDICT

This is a very musically convincing amplifier, despite its middling detail and grip. Its sweet sound will win it many friends.

ROKSAN KANDY MKIII £599.95

Henley Designs Ltd

+44 (0)1235 511165

www.henleydesigns.co.uk



This new Kandy amplifier (along with its matching CD player) is now in its third guise. For 60 watts per channel, this is a heavy object which together with a big bolt on the bottom indicates a substantial mains transformer inside. The manual is clear and well written. Switching on is more confusing than with the others - when you use the rear panel switch, the amp goes into standby mode. The green 'mode' light suggests it's on, but there is no sound until you press either the 'mode' button on the amp or the power button on the remote... There's a good range of facilities on the front panel, including a tape monitor and headphone socket. To change inputs, press either of the input buttons repeatedly until you get the required source - you cannot directly select the source as with others.

On the rear panel, there is a single set of connectors for speakers, five line level inputs and one for a cartridge - the only integrated in the test that comes supplied with an MM phono input. It is possible for Roksan to modify this cartridge input so that it becomes line level, should you require an additional line input instead of a cartridge, or if you wish to use an external phono stage such as Trichord's excellent Dino (£299). There are two preamp outs for used for multi-amping, or a subwoofer - a useful touch.

SOUND QUALITY

Mariah Carey's voice has a smooth and relaxed sound, and this amp did not

disappoint here. The dynamics of 'Vanishing' really came across well, with her sounding relaxed and happy. Although refined and smooth, there wasn't a sense of any detail missing on this track. The Kandy isn't one of those amplifiers whose silky sound impresses at first but then leaves the listener with a feeling that there's something missing. Larisa Stow showed how this amp can produce wonderful stereo imaging, standing out from the speakers particularly well on 'Invitation' (she was singing just to me, and it was a most enjoyable treat) [...steady on - Ed]. Perhaps the bass was a little soft, but the sound was certainly very authoritative all the same.

'Three O Clock Blues' from BB King and Eric Clapton again gave splendid insight on the guitar playing - best of all on this track was probably the brushes of the drum kit, which felt really close up

and showed just what DVD can offer over ye olde Compact Disc. Good though this amplifier proved, I was a little disappointed with Górecki's third symphony, whose long, quiet opening sequence sounded a little indistinct and muddled. It was not so easy for me to pick out the tune, thanks to its slightly muddy sound, one which was no better than the Cambridge 640A at less than half the price. Still, the volume control was nice to use. It is necessary to turn it right up to hear those quiet moments, which can give the impression that the amp is underpowered, but don't worry - it was actually capable of going impressively loud - if not quite up to NAD levels! Overall then, the Kandy lives up to its name, inasmuch as it's a sweet and enjoyable little integrated. In ultimate terms, it lacks detail and bass grip, but was nicely beguiling all the same.

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

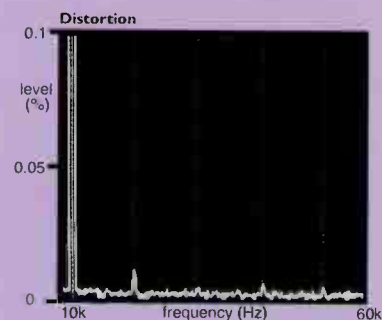
The Kandy outgunned its rivals by producing a massive 180watts into 4ohms, showing better power supply regulation. It was one of the heaviest amplifiers and likely has the beefiest mains transformer inside. With 120watts into 8ohms I would expect the Kandy to have strong, tight bass.

Frequency response extended from a low 3Hz up to 65kHz (-1dB), enough for DVD-A and SACD. Input sensitivity was just adequate for most sources at 120mV although old tuners and such like really need more.

Distortion levels were low under all conditions, but interestingly the Kandy produced inaudible second harmonic: only in practice this suggests the Kandy will sound neutral but dynamic.

The Kandy has more grunt than its rivals. It will sound clean, well timed and likely dynamic too. NK

Power	120watts
Frequency response	3Hz-65kHz
Separation	90dB
Noise	-92dB
Distortion	0.007%
Sensitivity	120mV
d.c. offset	3.1/3.3mV



FOR:

- facilities
- MM cartridge input
- excellent construction quality

AGAINST:

- only one set of speaker terminals
- slightly confusing input switching

ARCAM A90 £765



VERDICT

Consummately musical and open sound allied to superb build and flexibility make this a model integrated amplifier.

ARCAM A90 £765
Arcam
+44 (0)1223 203203
www.arcam.co.uk

Arcam always manages to turn out an impressive product, and this proved no exception. Everything you could think of has been included, yet it isn't difficult to operate – quite the reverse in fact. As for the aesthetics, I think it's one of the cleanest looking designs on the market today, and the finish certainly didn't disgrace it either. As its moniker suggests, it offers 90W per side. The manual also covers the partnering P90 power amp, which can also be upgraded to a three-channel amplifier for surround sound – it is possible to separate the preamp and power amp sections. In addition to the standard features, there is a facility for connecting two tape recorders (but you can only copy in one direction). Extensive user preferences can be set using the remote, leaving the front panel less cluttered. Use of the headphone socket does not mute the speakers. There are two sets of speakers provided with front panel buttons to select either or both (or neither for using headphones).

One novel feature is the ability to set not just the input sensitivity, but also the tone control settings, for each input individually (with restorable factory defaults). You don't get an RIAA equalised input, but you can purchase an optional add-on unit which be fitted by your dealer. The volume control has another novel feature. You can set it for standard or fine sensitivity and in addition there is a 'reference' setting which gives absolute increments in 0.5dB steps. This control rotates permanently and goes completely round about three

times to get from minimum volume to maximum – fantastic resolution only possible with digital circuitry!

SOUND QUALITY

This is one honey of an amplifier. In past times, purists would eschew clever digital switching on (alleged) sonic grounds, but Arcam seems to have proved that today it's no longer an issue – although sound quality is very subtly improved if you turn off the digital display. This done, the A90 was the most capable of the group. Not so in your face as the Cambridge or NAD, it seemed at first to be lacking sparkle compared to these two. In fact, it was simply less showy – with greater soundstaging, image articulation and bass and treble extension. On 'Walk Away' by Christina Aguilera, the piano was the cleanest here, bristling with timbral detail and body. It gave the greatest sense of being present at a live performance.

With classical music, the

Górecki third symphony used in these listening tests proved that as well as just playing those low notes, the orchestra were actually playing in musical phrases. I could hear each instrument getting gently louder and softer during each note. I didn't notice that in any of the other amps, except with the Griffon, which did allude to this effect. With Norah Jones' 'Don't Know Why', the Arcam was the best at giving the full detail effect of the drum brushes, while the guitar on this track was just magic. So clear I really felt I was there with the performers. The key to the A90's sound is its relative invisibility – it simply doesn't intrude, obstruct, obfuscate whereas all the others in this group have their own particular foibles which conspire – to a greater or lesser extent – to mask the music. The Arcam is extremely unprepossessing, and just lets the music come out. Factor in its dazzling array of (useful) facilities, exquisite styling and this is a winner.

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The A90 has a bandwidth nicely tailored for DVD-A and SACD, reaching out to 80kHz within 1dB. The low frequency limit is an appropriate 3Hz. With no less than 120watts available into 8ohms and 180watts into 4ohms, the A90 has plenty of grunt as well as bandwidth, so expect a big, open and powerful sound.

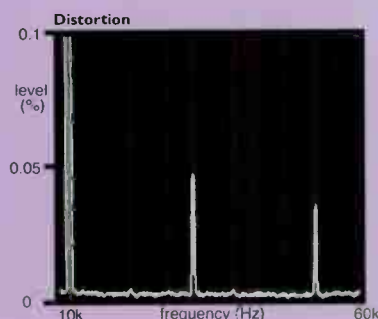
Distortion was negligible into 8ohms, but some harmonics appeared with the higher current draw of 4ohms, especially at low signal levels. Even delivering near full output at 10kHz though, the A90 remained linear, producing just 0.01% distortion, a fine result. It will sound clean.

Input sensitivity is adjustable, but at maximum was a low 500mV, sufficient for modern sources, but not enough for old tuners, tapes etc.

The A90 measures well in all

respects. It should sound clean, gutsy and open. NK

Power	120watts
Frequency response	3Hz-80kHz
Separation	88dB
Noise	-95dB
Distortion	0.006%
Sensitivity	0.5V
d.c. offset	1.5/2mV



FOR:

- superlative sound
- vast range of adjustments
- excellent build quality

AGAINST:

- set up is fiddly
- cannot reduce volume completely to zero

EXPOSURE 3010 £1,000**VERDICT** ●●●●●

An extremely lucid, musical and articulate amplifier - that classic valve sound for those who wish to stay with solid-state.

EXPOSURE 3010 £1,000
 Exposure Electronics
 ☎ +44 (0)1273 428877
 www.exposurehifi.com



Here's a brand that made its mark in the eighties, as a sort of smoother and more palatable alternative to the (then) rather acerbic sounding Naim pre-power combinations. By 1987 however, Exposure launched arguably the first 'super integrated', the X – and very nice it sounded too. Things have moved on of course, but this is its spiritual successor. It's starkly minimalist, especially in comparison to the Arcam, but beautifully made. Like the A90 there is a separate matching power amplifier with the same spec as the integrated version. There is also an RIAA equalisation card available as an optional extra. The instructions are not so much a manual as a single sheet of paper with diagrams – lucky that operation is simple, then!

Two sets of speaker connections enable bi-wiring, and they're unusual inasmuch as they consist of holes into which a standard 4mm 'banana' plug can be inserted. There are no binding posts, so you cannot attach bare wires to this amp. Although there's a pre-out connection, its purpose is for bi-amping – connect this pre-out to the main input of a 3010 power amplifier and you can then bi-amp your speakers. You cannot separate the pre-amp from the power amp and insert a processor between the two. There are five line-level inputs and a tape in and out pair. A remote is provided which was much smaller and neater than those provided with the other amplifiers. At switch-on and switch off, there was a disappointing crack from the speakers, following a short time delay.

FOR:

- clarity and detail
- remote operation system
- those blue lights!

AGAINST:

- switch-on thump
- a little pricey

SOUND QUALITY

If you're a fan of valve amplifiers then this amplifier will win you over, possessing an uncannily tube-like sound. Its midband is clear, sweet and detailed like few others here, with nicely warm frequency extremes. Rated only at 50 watts per channel, it actually sounded far bigger than that and was easily able to produce the deep thud of the bass drum on Holst's March. Celine Dion's 'I'm Alive' offered a precise bass line, and the treble was clean as a whistle. This track had atmosphere aplenty, and was most enjoyable. The 3010 was capable of sounding laid back as, for example, on 'Cold, Cold Heart' from Norah Jones. Yet there is nothing missing here, as it could also sound authoritative and powerful when called upon so to do. More than any other amplifier here – Arcam notwithstanding, perhaps – it refused to stamp its own character on the music being played.

Real piano sounds abound on

Christina Aguilera's 'Walk Away', and again on 'Soar' from the same album, but 'The Voice Within' came across as gentle and wistful – this integrated truly gave each performance its own true merit. Listening to Mary Black's 'Columbus', I really felt I heard the singer's performance for the first time – it was uncannily hearing a disc I know well and hearing small new details. Choral music showed enormous inner detail, and I really felt I was there in the church where the recording had been made. As with the Arcam, I found myself listening to the rest of a album when I should have been moving on – I was simply enjoying the music and didn't want to stop. That's the key to the Exposure – although not quite as 'hear-through' as the Arcam, it's oh-so-beguiling. Unfortunately it does have character, but at least it's a charming one. If the efficiently self-effacing Arcam isn't your cup of tea, then you'll probably love the consummately endearing Exposure.

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The Exposure 3010 produces 120watts into 8ohm and 180watts into 4ohm, matching its rivals in this group. It has plenty enough drive to cope with all loudspeakers and will sound gutsy in use. Exposure roll off high frequency gain a bit earlier than rivals, the -1dB point measuring 20kHz. This is still good enough for new formats but will likely give the amp a sound that is warmer and more atmospheric than the wide bandwidth designs. Combining power with smoothness always was an Exposure characteristic.

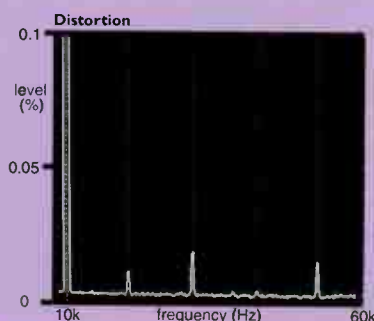
The 3010 is more sensitive than rivals so will cope with all tuners and cassette decks, etc. no matter how old.

Distortion levels were low, measuring 0.015% in the mid-band and 0.03% at high frequencies (1watt). The highest figure was 0.1% so the 3010 stays within acceptable limits.

The 3010 performs well indeed

measurement. It will likely sound powerful and atmospheric. **NK**

Power	120watts
Frequency response	10Hz-20kHz
Separation	10dB
Noise	-82dB
Distortion	0.015%
Sensitivity	270mV
d.c. offset	10.2mV



GRAVES AUDIO GRIFFON BOXER £1,400



VERDICT ●●●

Exquisite midband, but frequency extremes are poor. As such, this beautifully styled tube amp is for enthusiasts only.

GRIFFON BOXER £1,400

Graves Audio

Tel: +44 (0)1442 270141

www.gravesaudio.co.uk

The only valve amp in this group test, the Griffon Boxer is named after the parallel push-pull design of the output stages, which are operated in Class A.

Brian Graves designed his amplifier in a conventional way and then 'tweaked' it by listening to the results of small changes to the circuit. When he was happy he found criticism of 'boring locks' from family and friends, so called in a design artist to give it a rather striking and unusual look that you see here. Being a tube design, it runs so hot that you can actually burn your fingers touching the metal top – there should be a warning about this for those who aren't familiar with the perils of the thermionic valve! The case is brushed steel with a black surround (natural lacquered wood is also available). As expected, it's a very heavy piece of kit.

There's no remote supplied, although one is optional. As such, the four rotary knobs, comprising on/off, volume, input selector and a tape switch, control the unit – and are simplicity itself to use. There are five line-level inputs and no phono stage. The tape switch offers 'off-tape monitoring', a left-over from the days of open-reel tape machines with which it was possible to check the recording quality as the tape passed over the replay head after the recording head! The input connectors on the back panel are described with icon-like pictures – an aerial for the tuner input, a record deck for the phono input, but don't forget that this input is not RIAA equalised. As claimed by the manufacturer, there was no hum at the speakers. This is

quite difficult to achieve with the high impedances that exist in valve circuitry and a credit to the designer.

SOUND QUALITY

Our frequency response tests suggested that it wouldn't be good with low frequencies, so I decided to be unkind and try the Górecki third symphony to start – yet the Boxer proved surprisingly musically communicative, although it did fail to capture the lowest notes accurately. 'Three O'Clock Blues' by BB King and Eric Clapton showed the midrange to be something else, exceeding even the Arcam in the ability to hear little additional notes on the piano and other background sounds deep in the mix that I didn't hear anywhere else. Moving on to Mary Black's 'Columbus', and I was initially very impressed at the midband – the detail of hands stroking the drums was better than any other rival here. Yet the vocals were a little nasal in quality,

coloured in the way that many tube designs can be. Even on this track, where there is no real deep bass, there was a feeling of a whole missing bottom octave in comparison with the other amplifiers in this test. Ho hum.

The March from Holst's First Suite in E Flat features a big drum and the Griffon coped well with this, although again the deepest part was not quite there. That drum didn't sound as big as with other amplifiers. On the other hand, the treble was sparkling and sweet without a hint of hardness. These days most transistor amps have left that 'transistor sound' behind but it was never there in a valve amp and the Griffon shows this well. Apart from the fantastic midrange, then, this amplifier was bettered in most other respects by all the other amps in this group – but then this is a valve amp and a whole different ball game where sound is concerned. As they say, enthusiasts only need apply...

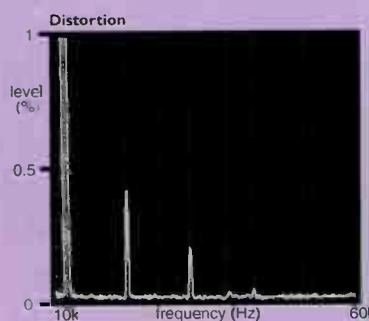
MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The Graves did, as claimed, drive a 4ohm and an 8ohm load equally well, meaning it could maintain an almost constant voltage with changing load, much like a transistor amplifier – but there was a penalty. Power into 8ohms was 12watts and into 4ohms 25watts, so low impedance loudspeakers suit best. There was quite a lot of distortion too: 1.5% for 25watts. The output transformers were not happy with low frequencies, managing 4watts into 8ohms (2.5% distortion) with a 4kHz signal. With low frequencies rolling down below 100Hz (-30dB at 50Hz), the Graves will have light bass. High frequencies were clean enough though.

Valve amps based on the EL84 coil cousins better, but the Graves will likely have a nice enough sound, light in

the bass. NK

Power:	25watts
Frequency response:	100Hz-35kHz
Separation:	60dB
Noise:	-89dB
Distortion:	0.15%
Sensitivity:	210mV



FOR:

- fantastic midband
- super smooth sound
- quiet background

AGAINST:

- poor bass
- low power

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World Radio History

conclusion

Least expensive is the Cambridge Audio 640A, which at £250 is a veritable David among Goliaths. Of course, David defeated Goliath, but that didn't quite happen here. Yet in sonic terms, the differences were surprisingly small, especially considering the price differences. As such, the 640A is an absolute bargain. With most of the features you could ever want, including the sexiest remote of the bunch (heavy metal and not plastic like the others), plus a big and lively sound, it's hard to criticise in any way. Ultimately, it does sound a little mushy and grainy when pushed hard, but match with efficient floorstanders and you'll be laughing all the way to the bank.

NAD's C352 isn't a lot more expensive and gives noticeably more power at 80 watts per channel. It's fuller and gutsy sound than the Cambridge, with an obviously stronger bass and slightly more explicit midband and treble. This is a useful improvement on the Cambridge, but some might prefer the latter's lighter, breezier sound and just save the cash. Others won't think twice to get this big-hitting party machine in their living rooms...

Next we find the Roksan Kandy, now in Mk III form. At last, an amp that seems completely free of the transistor sound. Sweet treble with an unerringly gentle midband, plus a decent degree of power and scale, makes this an interesting proposition. It brings finesse, subtlety and dimensionality to the game, compared to the somewhat 'earthy' charms of the two cheaper designs. Factor in its slick build and user interface, and it justifies its price premium with ease.

If there's one stand-out 'best buy' in this group, then it has to be Arcam's A90. It vies with Exposure's 3010 in overall sonics, yet is cheaper and more versatile. Essentially, it's the most transparent sounding device in most respects, simply dissolving to let the music's flavour flood out where all the others here add their own character to a greater or lesser extent. Of course, it's not absolutely open – but you'll have to spend a good few hundred pounds more to find

something that comes close.

The Exposure is, in the final analysis, a little less detailed yet more lucid than the Arcam. It's liquid and 'valve like' in its presentation, yet doesn't fall into the traps that the Graves valve amplifier actually did. I was surprised to see that the 3010 is only rated at 50 watts per channel, as it sounded louder. The Arcam is the most powerful in this group at 90 watts per channel, but remember that a doubling of output power will not sound twice as loud – in most cases the increase will hardly be noticed. Ultimately, it comes down to preference.

And lastly, the valve amplifier. Until now, the differences I've been describing have been relatively small and subtle between models, but this sounds very esoteric. Midrange and treble were truly lucid, sweet and detailed – but the bass was missing. And wasn't only the organ, piano, electric bass, double bass... but all other instruments and electronic music sounds with low frequencies too. Frankly, this was unacceptable – any modern amplifier should have a response that is quite flat to below 20Hz, but our measurements and listening tests both showed the lowest couple of octaves of sound to be AWOL. As such, the Graves Audio Griffon Boxer is 'voiced' for only certain applications – where it excels – but falls down badly in others. Potential buyers should be aware of this.

Overall then, integrated amplifiers are dramatically better than those of yesteryear in value terms – even NAD's classic 3020 would have learned a thing from the Cambridge Audio 640A – and are sonically impressive too. The Roksan and Arcam, in particular, offer a great marriage of features and sound whereas in the old days it would be one or the other. There are still some real 'individuals' around, like the Exposure and Graves, to make life interesting – and some good old unreconstructed party animals like the NAD too. All, however, offer build and facilities that we wouldn't have thought possible back then. *Vive la difference!*



Cambridge Audio 640A



NAD C352



Roksan Kandy MK III



Arcam A90



Exposure 3010



Graves Audio Griffon Boxer

SOURCE MATERIAL:

- Mariah Carey. CBS 466815 2.
- Mary Black. No Frontiers. Dara 032
- Górecki: Symphony No 3. Naxos 8.550822
- Norah Jones. Come Away With Me. Capitol Records 7243 538609
- Celine Dion. A New Day Has Come. Epic 506226 2
- Christina Aguilera. Stripped. RCA 7432 196125 2
- Larissa Stow. Moment By Moment. DTS 69286-01054-9-2
- BB King and Eric Clapton. Riding With The King. Reprise 9362-47612-9

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- [1] What is a phonostage?
 [a] a convenient plinth for a telephone
 [b] a phono cartridge pre-amplifier
 [c] the time when humans acquire speech
 [d] the sound of old bones rattling
- [2] What distinguishes the Aria from its rivals?
 [a] its unusual 'virtual battery operation'
 [b] its cool looks
 [c] its Italian origins
 [d] its phono connectors
- [3] which great word-smith now works for UKD?
 [a] Paul Foot
 [b] Simon Pope
 [c] Alistair Cooke
 [d] P J O'Rourke

- [4] Anyone seeking refinement will delight in the Aria's what?
 [a] "bread and butter"
 [b] "peaches and herbs"
 [c] "cheese and biscuits"
 [d] "culture and polish"

May Competition
 Hi-Fi World Magazine
 Unit G4 Argo House
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 London NW6 5LF

AUDIO ANALOGUE
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www.ukd.co.uk

Whether you've already got a top turntable, or you have no analogue source at all but want to get into the groove, this is an ideal opportunity to win yourself a shortcut to high end vinyl playback! Audio Analogue's Aria is a phonostage with a difference, thanks to its 'virtual battery' operation which gives an exceptionally open sound. In Hi-Fi World's review last month, Dominic Todd wrote: "As you'd expect there's MM/MC switching, good quality internal components and a solid and well finished aluminium casing. Yet the Aria has two surprises. First is a 'virtual battery' power supply - the outboard power supply unit supplies banks of

power supply capacitors in a double reservoir system. One bank feeds power to the amplifier circuit whilst the other is charged up, and vice versa. This means that the supplying capacitors are never directly connected to the mains, so should reduce mains borne noise and instability... The second is its 'tweakability'. As well as adjustments for MM/MC, there are three other sources of adjustment for perfect cartridge matching... Both the capacitance and resistance can be altered to match your cartridge of choice, done via the simple expedient of plugging different RCA plugs into the rear of the unit... So there's a great deal of scope for those keen to get exactly the right match with their pickup.

Most striking about its sound was the depth and power of the bass - it really is in another league from the Pro-ject Phono Box SE or Musical Fidelity X-LPSv3... It was the sheer depth of sound that impressed. Vocals were extremely well projected, and there was excellent staging and separation of various musicians... Once again, thanks to the depth of stage, Thompson's vocals were brought well forward from the backing vocals, and each given their proper authority within the song. The strong, powerful bass came to the fore with The

Cranberries 'Linger'... 'Rhapsody In Blue' by George Gershwin provided a superb piano timbre that was sympathetic to the key strokes and willing to follow the change in tempo and resonance. Detail ambience was first rate, with subtle decays and strokes audible even when the music was at it's densest. Best of all, the sound had an organic and effortless nature to it - in other words, it sounded most un-hi-fi-like... Anyone seeking refinement will delight in the Aria's culture and polish. Add the superb build and tweakability and it looks as though Audio Analogue has another winner on their hands."

If you'd like to win this superb bit of kit, then all you have to do is answer the following four easy questions, and send your entries on a postcard to: **May Competition**, Hi-Fi World Magazine, Unit G4, Argo House, The Park Business Centre, Kilburn Park Road, London NW6 5LF by **30th April 2004**.

- Hi-Fi & Computer Audio World Competition rules and conditions of entry**
1. Only one entry per house hold.
 2. Multiple entries will be automatically disqualified.
 3. Purchase of the magazine is not a pre-condition of entry.
 4. No correspondence will be entered into.
 5. The Editor's decision is final.
 6. No employees of Audio Publishing Limited, or of any companies associated with the production or distribution of the prizes may enter.

CONGRATULATIONS
 ...to Mr. Peter Nicholls, of Stoke Newington, London, the winner of our March 2004 competition.
 A Pioneer NS-DV990 Style System is on its way to you!

Sevenoaks SOUND & VISION



Sevenoaks Sound & Vision stocks a wide range of Hi-Fi separates, DVD players, amplifiers, speakers, plasma screens, LCD televisions and projection systems from all the leading manufacturers.

From starter systems to custom designed multi-room and home cinema installations, our friendly staff are available in all stores to advise, demonstrate and guide you through the home entertainment jungle. If you're interested in home entertainment and want to avoid the confusion, contact your local Sevenoaks Sound & Vision store and **experience more.**

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

*Written details on request. Licensed credit brokers. Minimum balance £400. Subject to status.



CUSTOM INSTALLATION

Are you looking to neatly and seamlessly integrate a Home Cinema or Hi-Fi System into your home? Our Custom Installation experts are fully trained in all areas and provide a prompt, reliable and professional service. Whether you're looking for lighting control systems, a dedicated home cinema installation with a retractable screen and built-in speakers or an integrated control system, Sevenoaks Sound & Vision has the solution.



MUSICAL FIDELITY INTRODUCES NEW X-SERIES PRODUCTS

The X-150 and X-Ray[®] are the first products from Musical Fidelity's NEW X-Series.

Rated at 75wpc, the X-150 has low distortion, low feedback, wide bandwidth, low noise and excellent stereo separation plus a good quality phono stage. All the hallmarks of a great amplifier. Not only does it look great, its built quality is wonderful - Musical Fidelity having paid close attention the design to maximise reliability.

The X-Ray[™] CD player, is the replacement for the legendary X-Ray Design features include 24-bit 96k upsampling, very low jitter and is, from a technical standpoint, the equal of some of the most expensive players on the market.



MUSICAL FIDELITY



harman/kardon[®]
Power for the Digital Revolution[™]

For over 50 years, Harman Kardon has been at the forefront of musical invention and innovation - it was Harman Kardon that introduced the world's first stereo receiver back in 1958. This unique pedigree is now represented in a NEW range of sleek, beautifully engineered Harman Kardon products available at Sevenoaks Sound & Vision.

This NEW range includes both DVD and DVD-Audio players, A/V receivers and a DAB Tuner. With a musical heritage that is second to none, you can trust Harman Kardon to deliver stunning, ground breaking and uncompromising products that live up to the most demanding expectations. Across the world, professional musicians, sound engineers and producers choose this brand above all others. To find out why, audition Harman Kardon today.



TU970AM/FM/DAB TUNER

- BEDFORD
- BIRMINGHAM
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- SWINDON
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- WATFORD
- WEYBRIDGE
- WITHAM (ESSEX)
- WOLVERHAMPTON

PLEASE SEE PAGE 7
FOR ADDRESS AND TELEPHONE
NUMBER DETAILS



HI-FI SEPARATES

MICHELL GYRO SE
TURNTABLE / RB300 TONEARM
£1049.95



WHAT HI-FI? Product of the Year 2003
Best Buy 2003

"The Gyro SE sounds great, combining the best sonic characteristics of mills... Quite simply, the Michell Gyro SE is terrific. Nothing compares at the price point - it's well deserving another Best Buy!"

CLAIM £50
TOWARDS THE CARTRIDGE OF YOUR CHOICE



SYSTEM PRICE
£949.95

PRICE INCLUDES CABLES & TOWERS



WHAT HI-FI? Product of the Year 2003
Best Buy 2002

PRO-JECT 1 XPRESSION
TURNTABLE (BLACK) **£209.95**



"Compared with a £200 CD player this deck sounds remarkable: dig out your vinyl and give the Xpression a spin."

WHAT HI-FI? Product of the Year 2003
Best Buy 2003

THE PROJECT RANGE STARTS AT ONLY £119.95

ARCAM CD73T CD PLAYER £ CALL



WHAT HI-FI? Product of the Year 2003
Product of the year 2003

FANTASTIC OFFERS ON ARCAM DIVA AMPS & CDS

HI-FI SYSTEM 1

SAVE £149



WHAT HI-FI? Product of the Year 2002
Best Buy 2002

FREE
PRO-JECT DEBUT II TURNTABLE*

ROTEL
RCD-02 CD PLAYER
RA-02 AMPLIFIER
B&W
DM601 S3 SPEAKERS

Rotel electronics and B&W speakers are natural partners for each other, giving excellent sound quality and stunning looks. So what better than this combination of class-leading detail with an even and robust sound.

But at Sevenoaks we always aim to offer you more and this means What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision's Award-winning Project Debut II turntable is thrown in **FREE**.

HI-FI SYSTEM 1 - NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR PROMOTION

experience more

experience more
experience more



MARANTZ
CD5400 CD PLAYER
£119.95

SAVE £30



MARANTZ
PM7200 AMPLIFIER
£249.95

SAVE £80

"This is one of the most powerful amps in its class, at 95w per channel, and it sounds it with anything from dance to a big orchestral work, offering a delicious combination of poise and impact. Stick with fast dynamic speakers such as B&W DM601 S3s or KEF's equally capable Q1s and the results will amaze."



PURE DIGITAL
DRX-702ES ANALOGUE/DAB TUNER
£279.95

SAVE £50

PRICING POLICY

We always try to ensure our prices are highly competitive.

In the event you can find the same products and excellent service at a lower price, please bring it to our store managers' attention

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0%

FINANCE OPTION*

Spread the cost of buying.
0% finance option is available on the vast majority of products we stock.

*Written details on request. Licensed credit brokers. Minimum balance £400. Subject to status.

Please Note: Some products may not be available at all stores. Please call before travelling. *Cable Offer - From range available in-store. Not in conjunction with any other offer. Advertisement valid until at least 07/04/04. E&OE.

HI-FI SYSTEM 2



MUSICAL FIDELITY
A3 CD PLAYER & AMPLIFIER
MONITOR AUDIO
SILVER S8 SPEAKERS

One of our most popular systems at an amazing price. Full-scale dynamics with a lightness of touch makes this combination stand out.



SYSTEM PRICE
£2399.95

PRICE INCLUDES CABLES & STANDS

HI-FI SYSTEM 2
NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR PROMOTION

SAVE £379

MISSION
780 SE SPEAKERS
£349.95

"The revamped Mission 780s are hugely enjoyable: anyone with up to £400 to spend should consider these standmounters. Mission's clever move has paid off."



WHAT HI-FI? Feb 03
SOUND AND VISION
★★★★★

INCLUDES **FREE**
SPEAKER CABLE WORTH £60*



MISSION
782 SE SPEAKERS
£899.95

"Well, with the exception of the alderwood-veneer finish, these floorstanders look identical to the standard model, although there's a new tweeter and crossover design. One of the advantages of the three-way configuration is that each driver deals with only a narrow section of the frequency range, and the designers optimise each unit to perform its respective task. Mission's

engineers have excelled in this area: these elegant floorstanders sound beautifully balanced and few rivals under £1000 can match their wonderful levels of clarity. The 'special edition' tag is overused but these talented floorstanders are bona fide sonic stars."

WHAT HI-FI? June 03
SOUND AND VISION
★★★★★

INCLUDES **FREE**
SPEAKER CABLE WORTH £80*

Sevenoaks SOUND & VISION

ROKSAN KANDY

KD1/III CD PLAYER £594.95

KA1/III AMPLIFIER £594.95



"The Kandy KD1/III CD player offers a great array of talents - team it with its amp stablemate and you have something close to the ideal visual and sonic combination."



"As with most Roksan products, the Kandy integrated amplifier has been regularly refined over its lifetime. The MKIII version builds on the strengths of its predecessors and successfully wipes out their (mostly minor) weaknesses..."

Timing and rhythm are excellent. DJ Shadow is delivered with clarity and a tight bass, while at the other extreme the treble is sweet and detailed, getting

the most from Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries*. The result is a breathtaking Best Buy amplifier that betters its competition with ease."

KANDY KA1/III AMPLIFIER - AWARDS 2003

FREE INTERCONNECT CABLE WORTH £60
WHEN KANDY CD & AMP PURCHASED TOGETHER*

KEF Q4 SPEAKERS £399.95

The Q4 is one of the latest additions to KEF's acclaimed Q Series. At the heart of this floorstander lies the Uni-Q driver array - a 130mm die-cast chassis housing a long throw cone and coincident mounted 19mm aluminium dome HF unit. This driver arrangement makes the speaker much easier to place in the room and alleviates the 'sweet spot' found on 'ordinary' speakers. This has been combined with a dedicated 130mm LF unit for extended bass output which belies the size of its diminutive cabinet.



INCLUDES **FREE** SPEAKER CABLE WORTH £60*

Please Note: Some products may not be available at all stores. Please call before travelling. *Cable Offer - From range available in-store. Not in conjunction with any other offer. Advertisement valid until at least 07/04/04, E&OE.



QUAD 11L SPEAKERS £379.95



"These world beating speakers are at home with laid-back trip-hop, for example, as they are with large-scale symphonies or banging rock. There's very little more we could ask for!

One year on the Quads are still amazing value for money - no rival speakers come close.

FREE SPEAKER CABLE WORTH
WITH ALL HI-FI SPEAKER PAIRS OVER £299*
£60 WITH SPEAKERS OVER £299
£80 WITH SPEAKERS OVER £499

*CABLE OFFER - FROM RANGE AVAILABLE IN-STORE. NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER

HI-FI SYSTEM 3

SAVE £299

CYRUS CD8 CD PLAYER & 8 AMPLIFIER MONITOR AUDIO GR10 SPEAKERS

Another very popular combination that's more than the sum of its already talented parts - and that's before you've examined the upgrade options. The CD8 is a magnificent player (Best Buy - What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision Awards 2003) and like most Cyrus products its performance can be maximised with the addition of a Cyrus PSX-R power supply.

The beautifully crafted, compact, Gold Reference GR10 speakers (★★★★★ - What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision August 2001) from British speaker specialists Monitor Audio complete the package.

HI-FI SYSTEM 3 - NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR PROMOTION



SYSTEM PRICE
£2299.95

PRICE EXCLUDES CABLES & STANDS

experience more

experience more

experience more



LINN CLASSIK ▽

MUSIC SYSTEM (EX SPEAKERS)

£799.95

SAVE £50

"The Classik sounds simply marvellous. Boasting fine impact and drive, it retains its grip even as it thumps out rock and dance tracks. Ask it to



play quiet acoustic music and its smooth, liquid presentation impresses still further. The Classik offers the performance you'd expect from high quality separates in one lovely package - this is a very superior product."



YAMAHA CDR-HD1300

CD-RW/HD RECORDER

£479.95

SAVE £50



PIONEER PDR-609

CD-RW RECORDER

£159.95

DENON DM31 ▶

UD-M31 CD RECEIVER

£199.95

SAVE £30

"The D-M30 was exemplary, as its three What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision Awards clearly show. The D-M31 is even better, making it phenomenal value for money."

OPTIONAL RECORDERS: DMD-M31 MINIDISC RECORDER • DRR-M31 CASSETTE DECK
NB: PRICE EXCLUDES SPEAKERS

HI-FI SYSTEM 4

SAVE £169

ARCAM

CD73T CD PLAYER & A65 PLUS AMPLIFIER

MONITOR AUDIO

BRONZE B2 SPEAKERS



SYSTEM PRICE
£799.95
PRICE EXCLUDES CABLES & STANDS

Arcam and Monitor Audio both have an enviable reputation for producing great sounding kit without breaking the bank. This system shows why with a well balanced sound that's both musically involving and enjoyable.

At the front of this package is Arcam's upgradeable CD73T CD player - a What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision 'Product of the Year 2003'. We've coupled this with Arcam's complementary A65 Plus integrated amplifier and Monitor Audio's beautifully balanced 'Best Buy' Bronze B2 speakers. According to What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision (Awards 2003), these compact speakers "Sound supero... Speakers don't get much better than the B2s."

HI-FI SYSTEM 4 - NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR PROMOTION



WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
Product
of the year
2003
HI-FI & HOME CINEMA AWARDS

Sevenoaks

SOUND & VISION



PRODUCT RANGE

An outstanding selection of products are on display and available for demonstration at all Sevenoaks Sound & Vision stores. However, some products may not be available at all stores.

Please call to check availability before travelling.

TURNTABLES

Goldring GR1	£139.95
Michell Gyro SE/RB-100 £50 TOWARDS CARTRIDGE*	£1049.95
Michell TechnoDec	£599.95
Project Debut Phono SB	£169.95
Project Debut II (Black)	£119.95
Project Debut II (Colours)	£134.95
Project 1 Xpression	£209.95
Project RPM4	£319.95

TUNERS

Arcam DIVA T61	£219.95
Cyrus FM X	£499.95
Denon TU2601 MKII	£99.95
Harman Kardon TU970 CAB/AM/FM	£299.95
Marantz ST4000	£99.95
Pure Evo/ke 1 DAB	£89.95
Pure DRX-701ES DAB	£199.95
Pure DRX-702ES Analogue/DAB	£279.95

CD PLAYERS

Arcam DIVA CD73T	£ CALL
Arcam DIVA CD82T	£ CALL
Arcam DIVA CD93T	£ CALL
Arcam FMJ CD33T	£1299.95
Cyrus CD6	£599.95
Cyrus CD8	£999.95
Denon DCD485	£119.95
Linn Genki	£1099.95
Linn Itemi	£2199.95
Marantz CD5400	£119.95
Marantz CD17/1 M	£799.95
Meridian 507	£1194.95
Musical Fidelity X-Ray	£899.95
Musical Fidelity A3.2	£ CALL
Musical Fidelity A308	£ CALL
Musical Fidelity Tri-Vista SACD	£3994.95
Quad 99 CD-P	£999.95
Roksan Kandy KD1 MKIII	£594.95
Roksan Caspian M	£1099.95
Rotel RCD02	£379.95
Rotel RCD1072	£594.95

RECORDERS

Pioneer PDR609 CD-RW	£159.95
Yamaha CDR-HD1300 CD-RW	£479.95

AMPLIFIERS

Arcam DIVA A65 Plus	£ CALL
Arcam DIVA A80	£ CALL
Arcam DIVA A85	£ CALL
Arcam DIVA A90	£ CALL
Arcam FMJ A32	£1149.95
Cyrus 6	£599.95
Cyrus 8	£799.95
Cyrus Pre X Pre	£999.95

Cyrus Mono X Power	(Each) £1199.95
Denon PMA355	£179.95
Linn Kolector Pre	£574.95
Linn LK85 Power	£544.95
Marantz PM4400	£149.95
Marantz PM7200	£249.95
Musical Fidelity X-150	£799.95
Musical Fidelity A3.2	£ CALL
Musical Fidelity A3.2 Pre	£ CALL
Musical Fidelity A3.2 Power	£ CALL
Musical Fidelity A308	£ CALL
Musical Fidelity Tri-Vista 300	£3994.95
Quad 99 Power	£549.95
Roksan Kandy KA1 MKIII	£594.95
Roksan Caspian M	£999.95
Rotel RA 01	£249.95
Rotel RA 02	£349.95
Rotel RA-1062	£594.95

SPEAKERS

Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo One	£129.95
Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo Three	£249.95
Acoustic Energy AE1 MKIII (From)	£1699.95
B&W DM303	£179.95
B&W DM601 S3	£249.95
B&W DM602 S3	£299.95
B&W 704	£1399.95
B&W 705	£899.95
KEF Q1	£199.95
KEF Q4	£399.95
KEF XD1	£999.95
Linn Kalan	£649.95
Linn Ninka	£1099.95
Mission m31	£119.95
Mission 780SE	£349.95
Mission 782SE	£899.95
Monitor Audio Bronze B2	£199.95
Monitor Audio Silver S1	£299.95
Monitor Audio Silver S6	£599.95
Monitor Audio Silver S8	£799.95
Monitor Audio Gold Reference 10	£799.95
Monitor Audio Gold Reference 20	£1499.95
Quad 11L	£379.95
Quad 12L	£499.95
Quad 22L	£894.95
Ruark Epilogue II	£344.95
Wharfedale Pacific Evolution 30	£649.95

HI-FI SYSTEMS

Denon 201 Ex Speakers	£499.95
Denon DF101 Ex Speakers	£299.95
Denon DM31 Ex Speakers	£199.95
Linn Classic Music Ex Speakers	£799.95
Onkyo CS210 Ex Speakers	£199.95
Teac Legacy 600 Ex Speakers	£199.95
Teac Reference 300 Ex Speakers	£449.95
Teac Reference 500 Ex Speakers	£569.95

DVD SYSTEMS

Denon ADV M71 Inc Speakers	£499.95
Jamo DVR50/A305PDD Inc Speakers	£549.95
Jamo DVR50/A355PDD Inc Speakers	£699.95
KEF KIT100 Inc Speakers	£1199.95
Linn Classic Movie Di Ex Speakers	£2199.95
Sony DAV-SC6 Inc Speakers	£549.95
Teac Legacy 700/LS-1800 Inc Speakers	£849.95

DVD PLAYERS

MAKE & MODEL	REGION 2	MULTI REGION
Arcam DIVA DV78	£ CALL	£ CALL
Arcam DIVA DV88 Plus	£ CALL	£ CALL
Arcam DIVA DV89	£ CALL	£ CALL
Cyrus DVD8	£1199.95	£1199.95
Denon DVD-1400 Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-2200 Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-2900 Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-A11	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-A1	£1799.95	£1849.95
Harman Kardon DVD25	£279.95	£279.95
Harman Kardon DVD22	£299.95	£299.95
Harman Kardon DVD31	£399.95	£399.95
Pioneer DV360	£69.95	£89.95
Pioneer DV464	£89.95	£109.95
Pioneer DV565A Universal	£169.95	£ CALL
Pioneer DV668Av Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DV868Av Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Tag McLaren DVD32FLR	£ CALL	£ CALL
Teac DV50	£3999.95	£3999.95
Toshiba SD330E	£69.95	£ CALL
Yamaha DVD S540	£119.95	£119.95

DVD RECORDERS

MAKE & MODEL	REGION 2	MULTI REGION
Panasonic DMR-E50 DVD-R	£269.95	£299.95
Panasonic DMR-E60 DVD-R	£ CALL	£ CALL
Panasonic DMR-E100 DVD-R	£ CALL	£ CALL
Panasonic DMR-HS2 DVD-R	£ CALL	£ CALL
Philips DVDR70 DVD+RW	£ CALL	£ CALL
Philips DVDR80 DVD+RW	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DVR3100S DVD-R/RW	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DVR5100HS DVD-R/RW	£ CALL	£ CALL
Toshiba RD-XS30 DVD Recorder	£529.95	£ TBA

A/V AMPLIFIERS RECEIVERS & PROCESSORS

Arcam AVR200 A/V Receiver	£599.95
Arcam AV8/P7 A/V Pre/Processor/Power	£5499.95
Cyrus AV8 A/V Processor	£1099.95
Denon AVC-A11SR A/V Amplifier	£1199.95
Denon AVC-A1SR A/V Amplifier	£2199.95
Denon AVR1604 A/V Receiver	£229.95
Denon AVR1804 A/V Receiver	£299.95
Denon AVR2803 A/V Receiver	£449.95
Denon AVR3803 A/V Receiver	£649.95
Harman Kardon AVR2550 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
Harman Kardon AVR5550 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
Harman Kardon AVR8500 A/V Receiver	£1299.95
Harman Kardon AVR330 A/V Receiver	£599.95
Harman Kardon AVR630 A/V Receiver	£999.95
Marantz SR4400 A/V Receiver	£289.95
Marantz SR5400 A/V Receiver	£349.95
Onkyo TX-SR501E A/V Receiver	£ CALL
Onkyo TX-SR601E A/V Receiver	£ CALL
Onkyo TX-NR801E A/V Receiver	£ CALL
Onkyo TX-NR900E A/V Receiver	£ CALL
Pioneer VSX-C301 A/V Receiver	£199.95
Pioneer VSX-C501 A/V Receiver	£329.95
Pioneer VSX-D812 A/V Receiver	£319.95
Pioneer VSX-AX31 A/V Receiver	£649.95
Pioneer VSX-AXS1 A/V Receiver	£949.95
Pioneer VSA-AX101 A/V Amplifier	£2199.95
Rotel RSX1065 A/V Receiver	£1799.95
Rotel RSP1066/RMB1075 A/V Pre/Power	£1799.95
Rotel RSP1098 A/V Processor	£2294.95
TAG McLaren AV30R A/V Processor	£ CALL
TAG McLaren AV192R A/V Processor (From)	£ CALL
Yamaha DSP-AX640SE A/V Amplifier	£299.95
Yamaha DSP-Z9 A/V Amplifier	£ CALL
Yamaha RX-V440RDS A/V Receiver	£219.95
Yamaha RX-V640RDS A/V Receiver	£349.95
Yamaha RX-V1400RDS A/V Receiver	£ CALL
Yamaha RX-V2400RDS A/V Receiver	£ CALL

A/V SPEAKER PACKAGES

Acoustic Energy Aego P5	£369.95
Acoustic Energy Evo 3B	£699.95
B&W VM1/AS1	£849.95
B&W DM300 AV	£899.95
B&W FFM Series	£ CALL
Castle Compact CC3	£999.95
Energy Take 5.1	£399.95
Energy Encore	£999.95
Jamo D6 PTX	£1499.95
Jamo D7 THX Ultra 2 (from)	£3249.95
KEF KHT1005 £100 FREE CABLE*	£499.95
KEF KHT2005.2 £150 FREE CABLE*	£799.95
KEF KHT5005 £200 FREE CABLE*	£1199.95
KEF Q7 AV £300 FREE CABLE*	£2199.95
M&K K5 £250 FREE CABLE*	£1699.95
M&K K3	£1894.95
M&K Xenon 25	£2249.95
M&K 850/CS35/V850	£3899.95
Monitor Audio Bronze B2 AV	£799.95
Monitor Audio Bronze B4 AV	£949.95

Monitor Audio Radius	£999.95
Ruark Vita 120	£1699.95

SUBWOOFERS

B&W ASW675	£649.95
B&W ASW750	£1199.95
MJ Acoustics Pro 50 (Black)	£299.95
MJ Acoustics Pro 100 (Black)	£599.95
MJ Acoustics Ref 100 (Blk) £60 FREE CABLE*	£349.95
MJ Acoustics Ref 1 (Black)	£699.95
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REL Q201E (Brittix Black)	£724.95
REL Q400E (Brittix Black)	£999.95
REL Q400E (Brittix Black)	£349.95
REL Strata III	£549.95
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PLASMA

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Fujitsu P42VHA30 42"	£3299.95
Fujitsu P42HHA10 42" (ED)	£2999.95
Fujitsu P42HHA30 42"	£3599.95
Fujitsu P42HHS10 42" (ED)	£3999.95
Fujitsu P50XHA10 50" (ED)	£5699.95
Fujitsu P50XHA30 50"	£5999.95
Hitachi 32PD3000P 32" (ED)	£2199.95
Hitachi 42PD3000E 42"	£2899.95
Hitachi 42PD5000E 42"	£ CALL
Hitachi 42PMA400E 42" (ED)	£2499.95
Panasonic TH37PA20B 37"	£ CALL
Panasonic TH42PA20B 42"	£3299.95
Panasonic TH42PW6B 42"	£2999.95
Philips 32FP9965 37" (ED)	£2699.95
Philips 42FP9965 42" (ED)	£3499.95
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Retro Active

The seventies was the decade when valves were abandoned en masse, and solid-state adopted in earnest. Although many transistor amplifiers of that time were hard and grainy sounding, there were some sweeter home-grown designs, such as Nytech's CTA252XD - which garnered widespread critical acclaim. However, this Bristol-based company wasn't content to rest on its laurels, and duly partnered with loudspeaker company ARC to produce a seminal active system. David Price takes up the story...

By the mid-nineteen seventies, solid-state was ubiquitous and valves a mere blast from the past – if you believed most hi-fi magazines, at least. And whilst the Japanese had already got the budget end of the market sewn up (this was pre-NAD 3020, after all!), a range of new British specialists (which had appeared on the scene only a few years earlier) like Naim, Meridian and Nytech set about squeezing the very best out of the technology. Transistors, lest we forget, had been popularly available for over a decade, but more audio-friendly variants such as V-FETs and MOSFETs hadn't hit the market yet. So for those wishing to push the solid-state envelope, then, there was only one way to go – active.

To wit, Naim Audio and Linn Products famously teamed up to produce the legendary 'six pack', using six Naim NAP135 power

amplifiers driving the bass, mid and treble sections of Linn Isobarik PMS (Professional Monitor System) loudspeakers, electronically split by a NAXO crossover. Massively expensive, many thought it the best way of listening to recorded music that money could buy. Meridian was another early active adopter – its I01 preamp and M1, M2 and M3 loudspeakers providing superb sound in an altogether more aesthetic package – no massive rack of amplification here, as the power amps were inside the speaker cabs.

Nytech Audio was also intrigued by the benefits that going active could confer. This West Country-based specialist had produced a range of fine sounding receivers for several years. Even by seventies standards, styling was endearingly odd but there was no denying the superb packaging, wide range of facilities and excellent sound that the CTA ("Calculator Tuner Amplifier")

was capable of. The "Nytech receiver", as most audiophiles called it, sold for around £350 in 1977 (quadruple that in today's money) so was very much a specialist product, and the last port of call for many enthusiasts before they remortgaged the house to buy a Linn-Naim six-pack.

The Nytech went through a range of incarnations before the one you see here – from the original CTA302 with DIN speaker terminals and input sockets, to the final CTA252XDII complete with banana speaker sockets and RCA phono line in and outs. Along the line, build quality was improved inside and out. By the end of the decade, Nytech also offered a partnering active power amplifier – the CXA252, containing two more of the same power amplifier channels used in the CTA252XDII, plus an electronic crossover that allocated each of the four channels to drive the partnering



GETTING ACTIVE

Active operation circumvents the troublesome relationship between power amplifiers and passive loudspeakers because the critical job of splitting the frequencies between drive units is done at line levels, where things can be controlled more accurately and with less sonically deleterious results. Active crossovers can be constructed without expensive and inaccurate inductors, and all the parts are small, cheap and better tolerated – and since the output is to an amplifier, impedance is constant. The output from the electronic crossover is sent to individual amplifiers, which then power the drive units directly, meaning each frequency range is amplified independently, ensuring the damping factor of the amps isn't lost and no power is wasted – and the amplifiers themselves have an easier load. The result is a far less electronically problematic (and compromised) amplifier-speaker interface, and it shows when you listen...

ARC101 loudspeakers directly.

By this time, Manchester-based ARC (Audio Reproduction Company) had won many friends with its 101 and 202 loudspeakers. The 101s were 34 litre, two-way infinite baffle standmounters (with 200mm ARC doped paper woofer and Peerless 25mm cloth dome tweeter), measuring 565x310x280mm. A textbook example of late seventies loudspeaker design, by today's standards they look unusually wide for their modest height. However, the crossover wasn't internally mounted, but came as a special 'brick' which could be plugged or unplugged easily so the speakers could be quickly swapped between passive and active modes respectively.

SOUND QUALITY

What then are the benefits of active? Well, Hi-Fi World managed to procure a superbly preserved one owner Nytech/ARC system for some

serious listening, and I have to say how pleasantly surprised I was. Hooking everything up is a bit of a chore – there are lots of wires, and you have to make sure you don't send the bass to those delicate high frequency units! This done, the ARCs were pushed back against a rear wall and the electronics switched on. Having owned an early (1976?) CTA302 for several years, I was first interested to hear how this 1981 CTA252XDII would perform in isolation. Despite its lowly quoted 25W output, it drove my reference Quad 989/Townsend Maximum loudspeakers with surprising aplomb. It's a fast, peppy and lively sound – not quite as antique as the unit's looks suggest – with lots of speed (if not punch) in the bass and an open and incisive midband.

Moving to the Nytech/ARC101s in passive mode, and I couldn't help but be reminded of Linn Saras. These speakers are smooth but quite lithe in the bass, with a truly musical nature and a nice 'physicality' that you don't get from today's waif-like 'small footprint' floorstanders – the ARC101s are Size 10 Dr Marten boots, and never let you forget it. Just as well really, as their treble quality and imaging isn't anything to write home about by modern standards. They're a nicely engaging and powerful performer, but not flawless by any means. Going active was an ear opener. The system suddenly assumed tremendous brio and focus, making the passive version sound muddled, ponderous and generally out-of-time. At a stroke, the music gained a real 'live' feel – there was speed, sparkle, vim. Instruments previously buried in the mix

jumped out and assumed their own independence – you got the sense of a group of musicians playing together, rather than just a piece of music playing. Bass was the obvious beneficiary, with great power and slam where there was previously just a big, warm, boom. Treble gained extra extension, getting just a touch brighter and more incisive – this was perhaps a downside, as the passive treble wasn't anything special and more of the same wasn't really what was called for. (If only the 101s had that superb Scanspeak unit fitted!)

At the time, going active would have represented a large outlay to any Nytech/ARC owner, but it would have been well worth it all the same. It's quite fascinating to see that, despite the styling and engineering from another age, in active mode this system can easily mix in with two grand's worth of amplification and loudspeakers today – particularly in terms of musicality and life (lovers of subtlety and finesse had better stick with a Sugden A21a and Castle Conway IIIs, though). Nytech and ARC's active partnership was a great moment in hi-fi history – both companies are to be congratulated for their imaginative implementation of (then) new and unconventional thinking. More's the pity that now they are no more...





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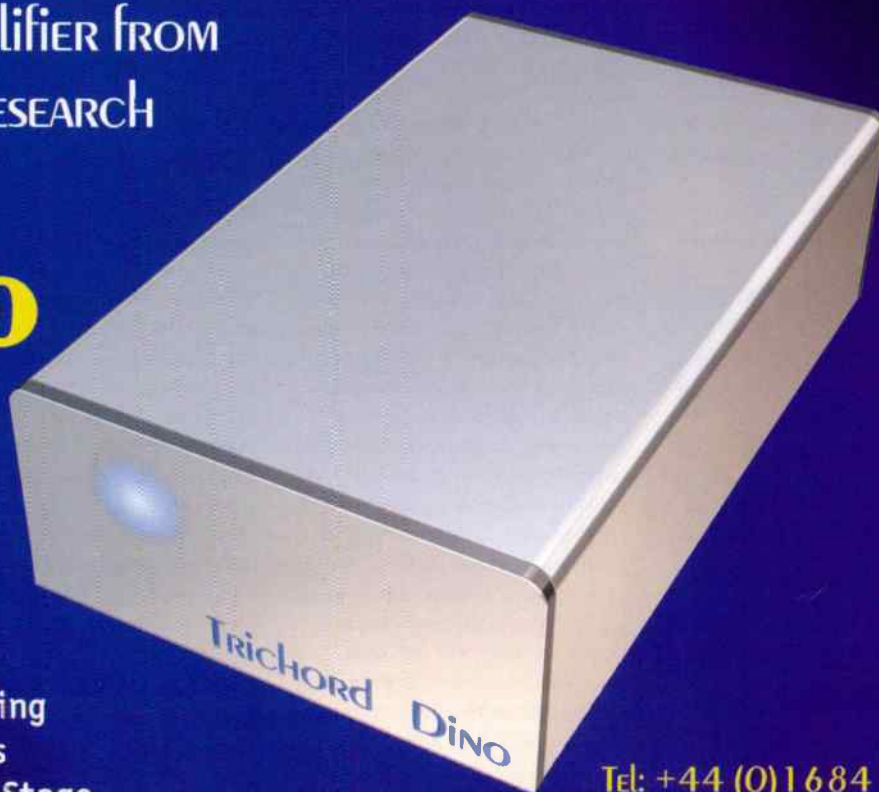
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China Doll?



Opera Audio's Consonance J5000 Plus is a genteel single-ended tube amplifier with an extremely diminutive nine watt output. Stewart Wennen wonders whether this Beijing beauty has what it takes to cut it on the international audio scene...?

Single-ended valve amplifiers have long been shrouded in mystery. Thanks to their highly focused design, they have an enviable reputation as one of the most musical stars in the audio constellation. Reputed to possess ultra-precise image location, super smooth frequency response and tremendous transients, they have a small but passionate band of devotees – yet even many valve aficionados find them simply too uncompromising thanks to the oh-so-low power output that seems in inverse proportion to their retail price...

Unusually then, at £1,695 Opera Audio's new Consonance J5000+ integrated is aimed at the 'affordable audiophile' end of the market, rather than the true high end. UK importer Alium Audio believes that the company's Chinese manufacturing base will enable cost savings that will put hitherto esoteric tube products

within touch of UK buyers. To wit, there's a wide range of Opera Audio products, including a single-ended Class A class monobloc power amplifier called the m500, and this - the J5000+ - is the stereo version of these.

Considering that this sum won't buy you much more than 'a super integrated on steroids' these days, the J5000+ is well styled and built. Measuring 435x390x 215mm, its dimensions are fairly standard, notwithstanding the black cage protecting the tubes and the three transformer covers at the rear. Stainless steel has been used as the chassis material, with a pair of polished timber side cheeks. On the front panel there are three controls, the first is a solid toggle switch, next is a volume control and finally a rotary selector switch. These work very well and have a reassuringly weighty feel to them. Also included is a remote control, working the

motorised volume control. Unusually, the remote is hewn from a solid billet of alloy and works very well. Opera also supplies a decently readable user manual, which explains most of the topology used in modern valve amplification.

At the rear there are three pairs of RCA phono sockets and the loudspeaker output terminations. These are grouped in two sets so the user can decide which tap, from the output transformer, to use. This is much easier to use than the likes of the Quad II (which is a pain to set up as the output taps are inside the case and needed a small soldering iron and some pretty deft fingers), so setting this up is relatively straightforward. Also on the rear panel sits the usual IEC mains input connector. To obviate the use of a preamplifier they have raised the input sensitivity to 180mv so this unit can be used with most line level outputs.

Inside, the toroidal transformers

OPERA - THE RIVALS**UNISON RESEARCH S6 £1,625**

A styling tour de force, this Italian designed and built tube integrated will warm the hearts of anyone – even spouses! The opulent slither of wood and large spun aluminium fascia knobs feel more like a Maserati 3200GT than a hi-fi separate. The output valves and input double triodes are all housed under a neat, hinged grill that can be conveniently lifted in a trice. There are four inputs, all at line level, plus a tape in/out with accompanying monitor switch. Outputs are provided for 4ohm and 8ohm loudspeakers. The S6 works in Single Ended operation, yet despite this manages no less than 28watts per channel from three EL34s working in parallel per side. Sonically it's an impressively finessed performer - wonderfully open and uncoloured with lots detail and clarity that takes you right into the recording. Yet its dynamic prowess is superb too - startling speed allied to real welly makes for a more forceful and emotive performance than the Opera. It has real bass power and punch to match its excellent grip – not up the Audio Research, but quite close nonetheless. The only downside is just a touch of brightness in the midband – compared to either, it can sound slightly forward and 'well lit'. For more information, call UKD on +44 (0) 1753 652669 or click on www.ukd.co.uk.

AUDIO RESEARCH VS155 £2,895

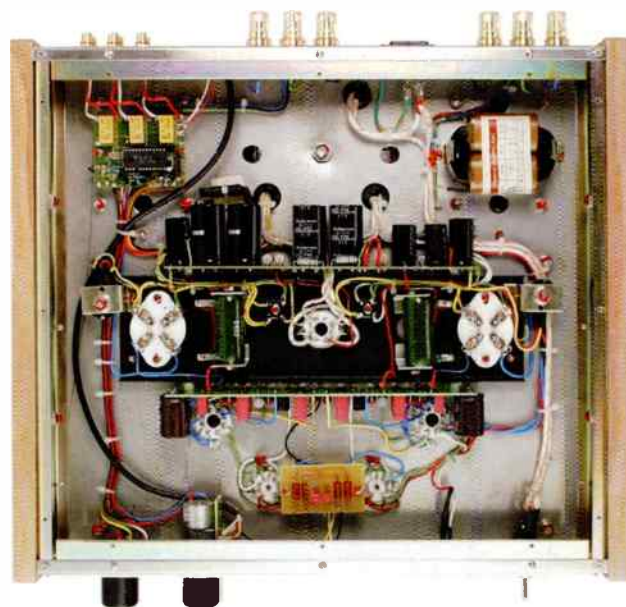
An imposing looking device from the company of William Z. Johnson from Plymouth, Minnesota, this Yank tank is by no means unattractive. It features a centrally mounted, milled, anodised aluminium top plate, complete with large inset Audio Research logo. The casing is beautifully finished in a sober, purposeful matt black, along with the output and mains transformer covers. The gently recessed front panel features a long LED volume display, which also shows the electronically selected source. Round the back are voltmeter test points for setting bias – unlike the Opera, this is not self-biasing. Sonically, this is pitched at people who are serious enough about sound to consider valve amplification, but not those prepared to buy six foot high horn loudspeakers – it's unashamedly an easy, user-friendly, one-box solution. Given this remit, the Vsi55 sounds quite spectacular with a seemingly ideal mixture of serious power and speaker driving ability and a wonderfully engaging and propulsive sound. It actually sounds much like a valve version of a superb transistor integrated – by which I mean it has masses of grip, punch, power and precision – with a frankly staggering bass – but adds real timbral accuracy and a highly lucid midband. One of the most well rounded and user-friendly valve amplifiers we've come across, its supreme ease of use, tremendous power reserves and myriad facilities will endear it to tube first timers. For more information, contact Absolute Sounds on +44 (0)20 89 71 39 09 or click on www.absolutesounds.com.

have been chosen to give both channels more than enough current supply to respond to even the most brutal of musical programme. Tube line up is 12AX7LPS (from Sovtek) as an input stage, with a pair of Shuguang 6N8Ps (6SN7) in the driver stage, and the output stage comes courtesy of a single Valve Art 300B (one per channel). Rectification is also by valve. Opera has chosen to run this amplifier without any global feedback, whereas semiconductor amplifier manufacturers generally use a lot of negative feedback to help the amplifier to present a flat frequency response. This is often to the detriment of the resulting sound quality and also covers up basic design faults. Of course, feedback can be used but it has to be sparingly applied in order to enable the product to really sing! Single ended amplifiers do not need this severe application of global feedback. So as a

when run as Class A single-ends, this is diminished by a large margin and 300Bs are expensive to replace – you have been warned!

SOUND QUALITY

First disc in the CD player was 'Songbird' by Eva Cassidy, and it was immediately obvious that this is very charismatic performer that some will love, but others will hate. It's not



result of a cleverly thought out design, Opera has avoided this trap.

The manufacturer has considered the end user, in that the J5000+ does not need to be re-biased when replacing valves, as it has the ability to self-bias - so keeping me out of the chassis! 300B tubes emit a blue glow when fired up, but don't despair as this is normal! If the colour changes to a deep purple or pink then tube replacement is required, as there has been an air leak in the vacuum. Generally speaking, vacuum tube amplifiers have a long service life, although

neutral, self-effacing or largely anonymous in the way that many all transistor amplifiers are, and even compared to its market rivals (see box), it's rather out on a limb. How so? Well, this amplifier produces a very warm and beguiling sound, with an expansive stereo image and real musical immediacy, but is also obviously limited at the frequency extremes, and not great in terms of dimensionality, either. Its soundstage was very wide, and detail retrieval was good - the rhythms of the music presented well, but the J5000 seemed to run out of power quite early with my Lowther loudspeakers.

Next on was Joni Mitchell's album 'Hejira', a superb disc not only to listen to but great for reviewing equipment, too. Again, I heard a nicely warm and sweet bass – albeit lacking definition and articulation. Midband was most agreeable, with a wide stereo image and very fast transients, which enabled me to hear every inflection of her voice. Timbrally excellent, the Consonance gave a very immediate and 'lifelike' tone indeed – it was just like Joni was sitting in my room. Treble was sweet, as you'd expect from an amplifier of this type, although lacked the extension and air that a similarly priced transistor amplifier would



REFERENCE SYSTEM

- Origin Live Aurora Gold turntable
- Hadcock GH242 pickup arm
- Cartridge Man Music Maker mk 2 cartridge
- Trichord Dino phono stage
- Creek CD50/II Compact Disc player
- Lowther Auditorium loudspeakers
- All leads custom built and carefully run in.
- AC mains supplied by an extra feed from a separate fuse box

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

- CONTROL FUNCTIONS: Remote Volume, Input, Power On/Off
- INPUT SENSITIVITY: 180mV (quoted)
- INPUT IMPEDANCE: 100k ohms (quoted)
- OUTPUT IMPEDANCE: 4, 8 ohms (user selectable.)
- POWER CONSUMPTION: 182watt (quoted)
- INPUT INTERFACES: 3 pairs RCA phonos
- VACUUM TUBES: 300B x2, 6SN7 x2, 5AR4x1, 12AX7 x2

MINI £

Beautifully lucid and finessed like only a single-ended tube amp can be, this is nevertheless compromised by its low power.

OPERA AUDIO CONFORMANCE

J5000+ £1,895

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have. Again, stage depth was slightly curtailed – something that was a disappointment compared to the similarly priced Unison Research S6, which itself isn't famously good in this respect.

As with many valve amplifiers, the J5000+ excelled at relatively low levels and with simple acoustic music. Given these conditions, it made any similarly priced solid-stater sound frigid, semi-detached and aloof. Miles Davis's seminal 'Kind of Blue' has a distinctive tone to his trumpet, which the J5000 reproduced beautifully, as was the chilled mood of the other musicians. There was real engagement and emotion here, with lots of expression and the

tend to limit the bandwidth of the equipment. In most amplifiers this would be extremely limiting for the listener, but with the J5000 this effect was not obvious until the amplifier was turned up to above half way on the volume control, whereupon things got a little soft in the low bass and high treble.

Moving on to rock music, and unsurprisingly perhaps, the J5000 did not fare brilliantly. At low levels this amplifier always did a fine job of presenting the music, but at realistic rock levels it showed it had not enough power reserves to cope with the varied transient content of either Frank Zappa or James Brown. I next started the turntable, and placed Ry

for something more user-friendly and better at general music duties, such as Unison Research's S6. Yet given that you have ultra high efficiency loudspeakers, a smallish listening room and a taste for light classical, jazz or vocal music – you'll probably find nothing to touch it at or near the price, thanks to a beautifully euphonic, lucid and engaging sound. I can only give this amplifier a guarded recommendation. Listen carefully before buying, and be sure it's right for you!



emphasis on mood and atmosphere rather than on accuracy or technical ability. With relatively uncompressed acoustic music such as this, it was a whole other world from a transistor amplifier – this is why people love valves!

Just as well, really, because at higher levels, things fell apart slightly. Well, I grant you that any potential purchaser of a 9W single-ended valve amplifier is unlikely to want to run a nightclub with this. Remember it's a seriously low powered amplifier that needs loudspeakers of very high sensitivity (90dB or above) and/or very small listening rooms to work at all. Some manufacturers increase the amount of third harmonic distortion in order to make their amplifiers sound "fast", and Opera seems to have taken this route with this design. However, in doing this they

Cooder's 'Bop Till You Drop' onto the platter. This is a great example of mid nineteen seventies multi-tracking, and again it was the midrange that caught my ears. His guitar was prominently displayed along with the vocal track, sounding very articulate and musically enjoyable. Again, though, it demonstrated poor bass control at higher levels.

Overall, Opera Audio's Conformance J5000+ is best described as a very 'focused' product. To be brutally frank, most people will find its limited power an impracticality – and opt

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The Conformance is a low power amplifier, occupying 1.8watts at a 1% distortion level and 4.5watts at 2%. It will need a very efficient loudspeaker to reveal much interest. Distortion levels were high at treble, lowering around 6dB across the audio band (100Hz = 105Hz). Locally, valve distortion is usually pretty innocuous with excessive 1:1.5. All valves can be more linear than this at low levels.

Frequency response from a low (100Hz) to 14kHz (100) was very good, at just 2dB, in the Conformance will sound better. Sensitivity was high at 100Hz and low, 5dB there was probably a total loss from the directly heated 300B (0.5mV).

The Conformance will provide a gentle, warm sound, measured 100dB.

Power	9watts
Frequency response	100Hz-14kHz
Separation	60dB
Noise	-81dB
Distortion	0.7%
Sensitivity	100mV



i Fidelity

After three years at the top, Naim's range of 'entry level' separates has been subtly revamped with a host of detail changes. David Price auditioned the new CD5i CD player...

Strange things are afoot in Salisbury. In launching the new '5i' range of entry level separates, the company looks set to confuse audiophiles the world over. How so? Well, the new Nait 5i amplifier is actually an 'improved' version of the current Nait 5 (which is now deleted) – offering detail changes for better sound. Yet the matching CD5i CD player you see here is not actually an 'improved' CD5 at all, but a cost-cut, more affordable incarnation which does not replace the existing player, but simply undercuts it. Understand? Me neither...

And if that's not odd enough, for nine months now, Naim has been lavishing precious R&D resources on 'the party pack'. This bears no relation either to large cans of 1970s Watneys Pale Ale or a special 'something for the weekend' that gentlemen carry in the gloveboxes of their MGBs. Rather, it's a clip-on bit of silver trim for the 5 series – the Salisbury audiophile's equivalent of the go-faster stripe... Without the aforementioned, the new CD5i retails for £825 (which is several hundred pounds less than the standard CD5), yet offers few obvious compromises and some improvements too.

Genetically, it's ostensibly a CD5 with a smattering of stuff from the new CDX2. From the former comes that exquisite die-cast zinc and aluminium (70x432x301mm) casework, crisp green LED display and tactile, backlit control buttons. In my humble opinion, this is one of the coolest looking CD spinners around – exquisitely hewn, it has the beautiful feel of an SME tonearm or Leica camera. Inside,

there's the same suspended transport and low mass magnetic puck clamping system. Paths between critical components are designed to be as short as possible, with great attention paid to earthing and mains issues. There are fourteen low-noise, regulated power supplies on the main circuit board, separate digital and analogue transformer windings plus additional screening to reduce the intrusion of RF interference.

From the CDX2 comes a glass-reinforced front loading drawer mechanism, which along with the transport is suspended to combat the effects of mechanical vibration. Also featured is Naim's bespoke replay and control software, as seen on the reference CDS3. This not only ensures that the laser reads the disc in the most accurate way possible, but provides an extremely intuitive user interface with extra features such as 'display off' (for improved sound quality) and program cancel, where the listener can quickly select tracks not wanted to be played. The CD5i also continues the trend of the latest Naim reference products by including RCA phono sockets alongside the company's traditional DIN sockets. Rest assured, the company still thinks DINs are the business – but the RCA phonos allow easy connection to non-Naim amplifiers, and experimentation with a variety of interconnects. Oh, and they make reviewers happy, too. Impressively, the line outputs are individually switchable (DIN only, phono only, DIN and phono) via the player's operating system, accessible by pressing the DISPLAY button on the

remote for a few seconds.

The only obvious compromises in the new CD5i are the disc clamp puck, which is a slightly cheaper looking affair, and the lack of provision for an external power supply. (The CD5 can be substantially upgraded with a Flat-Cap, Hi-Cap or Super-Cap external power supply at extra cost.)

SOUND QUALITY

First, to recap on the CD5: By Naim standards, it has a tremendously accessible and open sound. It's not as immediately gripping or enthralling as the CDX2, which means it endears itself to those looking for a less 'full on' performer. Yet it retains much of the more expensive machine's magic, inasmuch as it's super fast, focused, detailed and propulsive right across the audio band. Well, the CD5i is pretty much the same. First on was 4hero's 'Escape That', a brilliantly rhythmic slice of acoustic drum'n'bass, and the CD5i instantly impressed. There's simply no denying that this machine is faster, tighter, more grippy and engaging than the best of the rest at the price (from Meridian's recently discontinued 507 to Creek's new CD50/2). Its transient ability is dizzying, and makes rivals seem ponderous and vague, as if they were dancing ballet with hobnail boots on. By contrast, the lithe, fleet-footed CD5i relishes rhythmically driven music – and boy, doesn't it show!

Impressive stuff, but there are two other factors key to this CD spinner's sound. First is its dynamic ability, because as well as being able to move back and forth very briskly, it can also jump up and down with aplomb too. It

VERDICT ●●●●●£

Near-identical sonics to the superb CD5, but with improved connectivity and an even lower price make this silver disc spinner superlative value for money.

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was possible to discern whether snare drums were being brushed or belted, whether bass guitar strings were being caressed or assaulted. This was also evident on female vocals too, the CD5i displaying tremendous insight to the subtle inflections of singers' voices. The other key to its sound was that bass. It wasn't sumptuous, but was never less than strong, firm and insistent. Interestingly, when other apparently 'bassier' machines get dynamic crescendos to deal with, their low frequencies often go light, but the CD5i remained consistent regardless of whatever else it is asked to play further up the audio band. It simply holds fast whatever's going on elsewhere, the result being a brilliant sense of natural musicality. It sounds less like a CD player, and more like music.

Slip in Donald Fagen's 'Tomorrow's Girls' and you'll see what I mean. You

get a hypnotically rhythmic and brilliantly syncopated groove, with oodles of midband detailing, superb voice articulation across the plane of the speakers, an impressively three dimensional soundstage all laid out with almost architectural precision and a crisp, open treble. Yet despite pressing all the right 'hi-fi' buttons (so to speak), the music ebbs and flows with tremendous lucidity, and when things come to a climax, the CD5i stays resolutely in control – almost as if it's not there at all. The result is a consistently commanding and musical sound, whatever source material you throw at it.

In a sense, this is actually my main criticism of it too. The CD5i does what it was designed to do so well that others – who don't value those particular characteristics so highly – will be less predisposed to it. To wit, if

you don't want something that enchants and invigorates, then look elsewhere. Creek's much vaunted CD50/2 is a more laid back and forgiving machine with an altogether richer and more opulent tonality – the audio equivalent of a big comfy chair, if you like. It shows the CD5i as being a tad tonally dry and perfunctory in its handling of textural detailing – there's less of a sense of Randy Crawford's deliciously rich and fruity vocal sound in 'You Might Need Somebody'. There's also less 'sweetness' to the Naim's treble, but this is more of an issue of taste than of faithfulness to the original recording.

And so, in the CD5i, Naim has another winner. The company's new entry-level machine displays superlative (and I use the word deliberately) build and ergonomics, a welcome few sensible facilities (such as RCA phono socketry) and deeply convincing sound (assuming it's your cup of tea). In a sense, the lack of an external power supply option is no great shakes, because Naim's own CDX2/XPS2 (£2,650/£2,300) is the only logical place to go if you love the CD5i's sound, anyway... By reducing the price to £825, Naim has made a more distinct niche for the 5i, where it looks even more of a bargain than its slightly pricier progenitor. Simply put – for the money, nothing comes close.

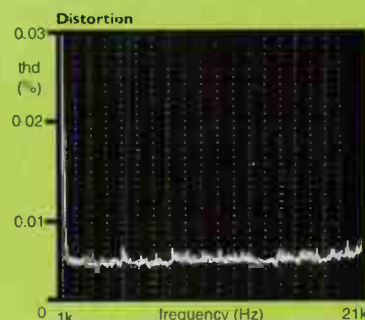
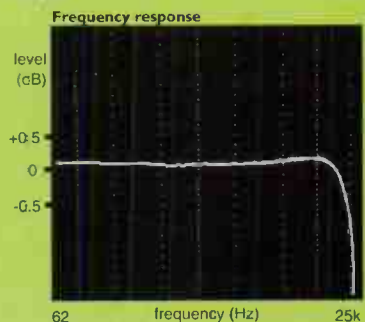
MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The convoluted impulse response of this player differs from most. Our analysis shows a small amount of treble lift before the fast roll off of the anti-aliasing filter. Sweep tone measurement confirmed this result. It suggests the CD5i will have fast transients and possibly a well lit sound that may at times seem bright, depending upon the recording.

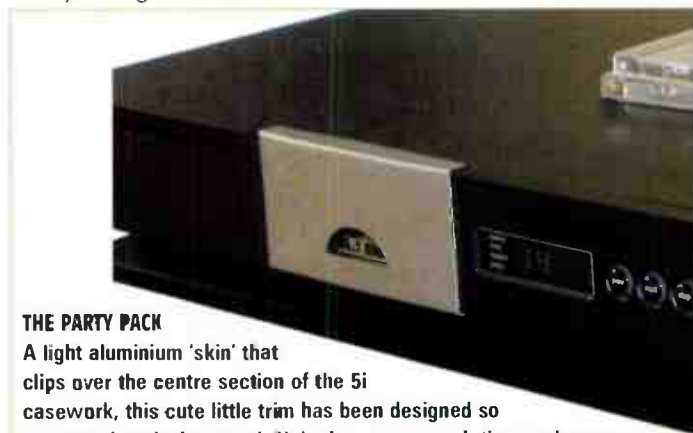
Distortion was low at all signal levels and a good EIAJ dynamic range value of 100dB was achieved. Output was a little lower than Philips standard 2V, which is surprising, so the CD5i might well sound a little less forceful if compared directly with rivals of higher output - a subtle point this.

The CD5i measures well in all areas but it does appear to have the usual filtering and will likely have its own fast sound. NK

Separation	
1kHz	80dB
20kHz	80dB
Noise (IEC A)	-90dB
Dynamic range	100dB
Output	1.04V



Frequency response	5Hz - 20.0kHz
Distortion	
0dB	0.002
-40dB	0.025
-80dB	11.3



THE PARTY PACK

A light aluminium 'skin' that clips over the centre section of the 5i casework, this cute little trim has been designed so as not to impair the sound. Naim has spent much time and money 'tuning' it, so it introduces no sonically deleterious resonances. Result: a clever retro touch that's ever-so-slightly redolent of the original 1970s black and silver series (NAC32/NAP250, NAC42/NAP110) - but it will cost you £35 (each) for the privilege...

Hheavy, bulky and power hungry - the valve is all these things. But its close cousin the cathode ray tube still gives a good enough picture - literally - of just how good electrons in free space can be. And how difficult it is to match them. The speed and fine detail available from a cathode ray tube is difficult to match and here's a warning for us all about being dismissive of such an old technology. Passing a signal through a semiconductor isn't the same and it's no wonder they sound different - they are very different. But just because the valve is old fashioned doesn't automatically mean it is outdated. Like the CRT it is hard act to follow.

It was AT&T and Western Electric that developed Lee De Forest's Audion into a working valve usable in their telephone amplifiers. These companies badly needed a means of amplifying weak signals over long distances and saw the potential of the triode valve immediately. A telephone amplifier was put into service in 1915 and in 1917 they paid De Forest handsomely for all his patents. The valve's principles of operation were becoming understood not only in America, but in France and Germany too. Valves were used for communication by the French during World War I, and it was brought to Britain to become known as the R valve.

By the mid-1920s valve manufacture was in full swing in Britain, but in those days radio communication was the end use, for military purposes, then for transmitted entertainment. The radio was the wonder of those times and people endured all sorts of difficulties with early batteries and dodgy A.C. and D.C. mains supplies just to be able to enjoy the radio. It wasn't until 1938 that companies like Leak took up the manufacture of amplifiers for domestic entertainment purposes, to be joined by Quad just after the war. As the LP replaced the fragile shellac 78 during the 1950s playing pre-recorded music at home became a viable proposition.

As wonderful as early Leak amplifiers can be though, they were still a mainstream audio component that had to fulfill limiting criteria, like

reasonable cost and weight to be acceptable in the home. Measure amplifiers like this nowadays and their imitations are quite obvious, mainly at low frequencies where their small output transformers just don't contain enough iron to avoid magnetic overload, or saturation. Transformers always were the bane of valve amps, contributing greatly to both cost and weight, as well as limiting performance. When the transistor arrived engineers saw that technically, being a low impedance device it could - in theory at least - be connected directly to a loudspeaker without any need for impedance transformation. Blocking capacitors were used until reliable direct coupling was developed. Solid-state amplifier design had become a pretty routine affair by the mid-eighties, by which time most designers were using well worked out building blocks to come up with a product that measured well and worked reliably.

A major tool in the design armoury of solid-state amplifiers has, of necessity, been the use of feedback to suppress distortion. This always raises the issue of whether the basic

amplifier is, in itself, good enough for its intended purpose. Fundamentally, it isn't, or feedback would be unnecessary. That's one big question that hangs over every modern solid-state amplifier.

Another concern is whether we can hear, by some means or other, the properties of materials used in electrical components, from capacitor dielectric through to resistor composition. Most people with experience of this phenomenon are confident that component quality, including the materials used in construction, do make a difference to the sound.

Looked at from the points of view of both construction and fitness of purpose, the valve starts to look very well suited to audio amplifi-



pure

Noel Keywood takes an affectionate



glass

look at the thermionic valve...

tion. It passes relatively little current and has a low current density, unlike a transistor, so conducting materials are unstressed. The signal passes through a vacuum rather than semiconductor junction, which must surely have less affect upon any subtle properties important to audio. Unsurprisingly, a linear audio valve like the 300B or KT88 produces little intrinsic distortion and the 300B at least I know for sure does not need to be "corrected" by feedback. It is good enough without it, like other triodes such as the 211 and 845. Taken together as a set of properties, it's difficult to see how a transistor could ever match a valve properly used, but of course they do - sort of.

I have ignored the sins of the

transformer, as well as its many impracticalities. Transformers tend to set the limit on what a valve amplifier can achieve. Being such cussed things to design and wind most come with severe limitations. But it

doesn't have to be like this, even if it usually is. It is possible to design and build a transformer that works well across the audio band and Audio Research, World Audio Design and Tim De Paravicini manage to achieve this. Sadly, most others don't, measurement shows, obscuring the true abilities of the valves themselves. It is when the transformer ceases to be a hindrance that the true ability of the valve as an audio amplifying device becomes apparent. Isn't it common to read that such and such a valve amp has a wonderful mid-band but is deficient in its bass and treble. This is down to transformer limitations. You end up with soggy bass from an inadequate core, and poor treble due to slewing and distortion from excess winding

capacitance or inductance.

Overcome these difficulties and the real strengths of a valve as an amplifying device start to shine through. You get a wondrous mid-band of course, one that falls away to give a deep, open sound stage. Even today this still catches me unawares. As a reviewer I use solid-state amplifiers of all descriptions, but returning to a 300B valve amp with decent components and no feedback is always a shock. I ask myself how I could ever listen to anything else, the liquid clarity, sense of ease and timbral resolution are so stunning in contrast to solid-state. My own amp does have softer bass than a solid-state power house but it's inconsequential to me compared to its advantages.

People are surprised when I tell them that valve production is increasing nowadays, not decreasing. Go to www.westernelectric.com to read how the factory is now back up and running producing 300Bs and KT88s, after being shut down in the 1980s when valve sales seemingly came to a halt for lack of demand. But as I once told a bemused engineer starting up a whiz-bang audio company in Britain's hi-fi heartland, "you are in competition with garden centres". This is the leisure pound, and as both leisure time and disposable income increase the market expands. Valve factories are in the same category as garden centres and demand is increasing roughly 10% per annum. There are currently 19 factories worldwide producing valves, in Russia, China, America, Yugoslavia and the Czech Republic.

So I'm not being wistful talking about valves as modern day amplifying devices. The level of expenditure nowadays devoted to proper hi-fi (rather than budget audio which is a cost conscious market) is sufficient to support valve technology properly implemented. People are willing and able to pay for something special. This is slowly but steadily opening up the market for amplifiers that in themselves work properly, based on a simple but remarkably effective amplifying device that sends the delicate audio signal so perfectly through a deep vacuum - the valve.

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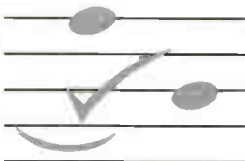
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TAKING THE TUBE

The Pleasure and the pain of glass audio...

Aside from vinyl purists, valve amplifiers are where opinions differ more than anywhere else in audio – they're invariably polarised into 'for' and 'against' camps. On one hand, there are folk who swear they 'cannot listen to anything that's solid-state', or the other, it's not unusual to hear people saying 'valve amps are crap'. Strange that a small glass bottle, a distant cousin of the cathode ray tube, should arouse such passions...

Of course, both of the aforementioned positions are open to ridicule. Even myself, someone who's used a tweaked World Audio NLP-P1/558BT pre-power combination for nearly a decade and absolutely loved it, wouldn't pretend that valves are perfect. What they do, however, is show precisely what's wrong with transistor equipment – and if you listen to solid-state all the time, it's easy to be-verseble yourself to its faults.

A properly designed valve amplifier will show even good solid-state up as rather grey, mushy and veiled in the midband. This is where the human ear is most sensitive, so perhaps it's not so fortunate for solid-state that its weakest point is here, rather than the high treble, for example... Female vocals, in particular, are where valves literally jump away from the best transistors – sounding texturally rich and vibrant with a supremely smooth and seamless quality. By comparison, transistor amps sound fuzzy and somewhat

disinterested in colouring this, one of the most exquisite sounds around.

That's just colouration, you say. Well, if you've heard a properly designed tube amp, such as one from the likes of AudioNote, Audio Research, Great or EAA, then you'll realise just how transparent tubes can sound. Of course, there are many valve amplifiers which use colouration as a selling point – Great's II is a classic example. Sweet, smooth, soft and rich, it's hard not to like its sepia-tinted sound. But sweetness isn't automatically a hallmark of valve operation, merely a common characteristic of many valve amplifier designs. Don't confuse the

stuff. If you think tubes are warm and wobbly, listen to Radio Research's Vx155 (E2:898), which is the closest you'll get to a Valve that glows in the dark.

The golden rule is – buy a high quality, established brand and partner it with efficient loudspeakers that are a relatively easy load. If you're going into single-ended (or parallel single-ended) territory, the chances are that the power will be well driven on similarly priced push-pull designs, and you'll have to look forwards from limited designs. Make sure you hear your prospective purchase driving your

speakers in your own room beforehand, and turn the first potful up as far as you'd ever want to listen – if it starts falling apart at the frequency extremes fairly early on up the scale, then the chances are that the amp has mediocre output transformers. As for tube choice, you should always follow the manufacturer's recommendations – and make sure you know the cost of replacements (our primary valves are a matter of pounds, whereas

a set of power valves such as the 300B will make a serious dent on your wallet).

Finally, once you've found a valve amp that's right for you, but craves just a little more grip and punch in the bass, then you might like to consider adding a small active subwoofer (or better still, a stereo pair). The extra hertz three give, added to fast and crisp transients right down at the bottom of the frequency spectrum (something which frankly even the best valve amps can't do well) make for a wonderful synergy between tube and transistor. You see, the two can live in perfect harmony...

DP



trap!

The downsides with the frequency extremes. I have never heard any tube amp that betters, say, a Naim NAP250 transistor power amplifier in the bass. Of course, transistor amps can also sound soft and loose too, but a properly designed one such as the Naim is quite stunning. Grip is vice-like, transients are lightning fast, articulation and drive is breathtaking. Not even the best most high powered valve amplifier can match this. This said, valves are not necessarily loose and woolly in the bass – the poorly designed and/or built ones are – but higher end designs with excellent output transformers get surprisingly close to serious transistor

the valve sends the audio signal through a deep vacuum in a sealed glass bulb; this means voltages are high but currents - importantly - are low. By way of contrast, the transistor sends the signal through a solid; voltages are low, currents high. This likely explains why transistors impact the signal more than valves



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Jet Power

Elac's new FS207.2 floorstanding loudspeaker ushers in the third incarnation of the company's famous 'JET' ribbon tweeter. David Price has a blast ...

Designing average loudspeakers isn't big and it isn't clever – the real challenge is to do a class leading one. These days, any small manufacturer can afford software that practically does the job automatically – you just input the box size, drive unit impedance, press a button and Bob's your uncle. The result is something that doesn't sound half bad, and that's just about "race pace". There are few appalling designs around any more – although I suppose it's reassuring to know that despite the 'plug and play', 'loudspeaker-U-like' computer applications around today, some folk still manage to make stinkers...

The logic of computer aided design packages is that, as with motor cars, mini-systems and quartz watches, most stuff around is competent enough and err, that's it. The homogenising imperatives of AutoCAD don't do the market any favours. It's easy to get half-decent results by buying cheapo drive units off the shelf and number crunching their vital statistics through the computer, and the upshot is lots of similar sounding (and looking) boxes using similarly designed drivers, with the money wishfully spent on marketing instead of R&D. Not that I'm cynical or anything...

Elac doesn't do things this way. The company is unashamedly engineering-led, in the way that Lotus, Honda or Pioneer are. The FS207.2 you see here represents a broadening of the marque's appeal, but Elac aficionados should nevertheless rest assured that the company hasn't lost any of its characteristic quirkiness. Here's an affordable mid-price floorstander with an unusual and anachronistic design – which, more to the point, works cracklingly well.

Although it would be unfair to

talk about the JET III tweeter as the beginning and end of the FS207.2, there's no denying the importance of this transducer. As soon as you set ears upon the speaker, you can hear how it informs its sonic character. A new neodymium magnet system allied to new ribbon geometry, provides a cut-off frequency of 50kHz and improved dispersion over the already excellent predecessor, while new inner damping enables a more linear frequency response. Make no mistake, ribbon tweeters (at any price) are no small feat – I love the smoothness and sweetness that this particular design of HF driver affords. It makes most moving coil domes (as fitted to all of the FS207.2's rivals) seem slow, coloured, phased and congested.

Working in conjunction with the JET III tweeter are two 150mm concave high-power aluminium woofers with broad rubber surrounds. Again, these aren't bought in off-the-shelf from the local Maplins – a special gluing procedure is used, where a 0.2 mm aluminium layer is bonded to a pulp fibre cone to form a sandwich diaphragm. Elac claims that the result is perfect tension of the diaphragm, resulting in strong large-signal behaviour; dampening on the back of the diaphragm for strong bass. The dreaded "computer-optimised" crossover network is used, which overload protects all drivers. Elac's new bi-wiring terminal, with separate circuit boards for bass and treble circuits is fitted, which can allow cable diameters (up to 16 sq.mm) as well as high-quality spade ends.

The 15kg cabinet is probably the most conventional aspect of all, yet it isn't completely standard issue either. A 'two and a half way' design, it separates the high frequencies from the lows and offers twin ported enclosures in one cabinet, complete with a single foam bung provided per



speaker, for that all-important final tweaking. Measuring 935x170x285mm, it's a small-to-medium design, one that's at home in smallish rooms (ideal for the UK market, then) but that can just about function in larger rooms without sounding lost.

The review samples were supplied in a natty lacquered 'Silver Shadow' paint finish (a cost option), not wholly dissimilar to the Monitor Audio GR60s we reviewed a few months back – and very nice they looked too. Other finishes include black, cherry veneer and beech veneer. The overall effect is very good; the grey/silver livery won't be to every taste, but it's superbly finished and compliments the metal drive units.

POSITIONING

The FS207.2's are remarkably easy to get good results from, thanks to their taut, tight cabinets and undeniably fine drive units. There's also the small matter of their twin reflex ports and single supplied foam bung (per speaker), which gives a welcome extra degree of fine tuning. Essentially, both 150m drivers are pretty well damped anyway, but you can very subtly pull their respective levels down with the insertion of the aforementioned bit of foam rubber. I found they worked best about 30cm from the wall, with the bung in the upper port to take the mid-band down just a smidgeon while offering light bass reinforcement from the rear wall. This took all of two minutes to effect, and the results were grin-inducing...

Around the back lurks the biwireable connector panel, complete with binding posts fitted with those pain-in-the-neck plastic inserts that Eurocrats deemed essential some years back – urgh! The drivers cross over at 2,500 and 2,700Hz, with a quoted frequency response of 36-50,000Hz, sensitivity of 89dB (see our measurements) and nominal impedance of 4Ohms. Each speaker comes with screw on plinths and feet, which we found were well worth using.

SOUND QUALITY

Even straight from the box and with no miles on the clock, it was fascinating to hear how special these speakers were. Their essential nature was immediately discernable, and it was one that was dominated by that much-vaunted JET III tweeter. Three

days of running in later, and they were really coming on song, and beginning to produce results that justified their inclusion on this

” In terms of their mid-to-treble integration and smoothness, plus treble extension, they're a whole league above anything else I've heard at this price

magazine's front cover. In short, in terms of mid-to-treble integration and smoothness, plus treble extension, they're a league above anything else I've heard at the price. Oh, and the bass isn't half bad, either.

New Order's 'Vanishing Point' on CD was the first piece of music I put through the FS207.2s. Anyone familiar will know how mid-forward it is, with a very compressed and upfront

REFERENCE SYSTEM:

- Michell Orbe/ OL Illustrious/ Ortofon Kontrapunkt C turntable
- Trichord Delphini NC phono stage
- Sony CDP-X77ES CD player
- MF Audio Passive Preamp
- Quad 909 power amp
- Yamaha NS1000M loudspeakers
- Quad 989/Townshend Maximum loudspeakers

balance allied to some quite hard sounding electronics, guitars and vocals. Well, these Elacs made no effort to disguise this at all, but what I didn't hear was a cacophony of cheap drive units and ill-conceived cabinetry rattling and squawking around with heady abandon. Rather, the midband was incredibly s and couth – totally unexpected this price – with the amazing spectacle of a hi-hats glinting away in the background, whereas lesser loudspeakers would either obscure them in the din of the mix or turn them into hard-edged and acerbic high frequency zing.

Despite the poor sonics of this great song, I found myself able both to enjoy the music and the intricacies of the recording, too. Vocals were eerily clean and clear – with an almost electrostatic-like lack of muddle, honk,

chestiness or hardness. Bernard Sumner's voice is cold enough at the best of times, but the Elacs proved remarkably open and even-handed. All this time, copious amounts of filigree detail shimmered through the dense acoustic, instruments and elements of percussion having an unusually discrete and defined presence.

Bass proved extremely capable too. While the FS207.2's mid-treble band is sheer artistry, I've heard price rivals (specifically Mission's 782) better it in terms of tightness, tautness and articulation. Yet it was still unerringly well behaved. It doesn't go down as low as some, but still proved deep and even with very little of the lumpiness associated with ported designs – indeed, aside from a barely discernable softness on the leading edges of bass guitar notes, there was precious little sign of it being a reflex design at all. Very subtly on the warm side of neutral (but not far), it proved extremely tuneful, showing unusual lucidity and expressiveness when asked to follow Peter Hook's commanding bass guitar lines.

Moving to some superbly recorded acid jazz, and Corduroy's 'Don't Wait for Monday' was a joy. This super clean and expansive early nineties analogue recording proved a great showcase for the Elacs' neutrality. Imaging was quite superb (doubtless helped in no small part by the ribbon tweeters), the FS207.2s throwing out an inordinately wide and capacious soundstage inside which the speakers themselves dissolved. This happened with total ease – there was no need to pace around the room, contort my neck, toe them in or out – even just plonked down straight out of the





box I could hear their promise. It's fair to say that I've not heard another £1,000 box hang images back so far, or push them out ahead so forcefully – the Elacs are sublime in this respect.

Their rhythmic prowess was ably demonstrated by this track too – having heard this band live several times (and been amazed by their incredible chemistry and consummate musicianship), it was great to see how well the FS207.2s communicated the fact that Corduroy were 'cooking'. There was a great sense of rhythmic and dynamic cohesion – instruments stopped and started with ripping speed, and went loud and quiet precisely when called upon so to do. The result was a brilliantly foot tapping sound. Once again, all the component parts of the speaker cohered superbly – bass was snappy, taut, propulsive and integrated flawlessly well; midband razor

sharp and treble effortlessly gentle and open. Result: a deeply engaging and fulfilling musical experience.

Next, it was time to invoke the ultimate sanction – female vocals and violins! Out came the turntable and my original 1970s all-analogue vinyl pressing of Rose Royce's 'Wishing on a Star'. Any loudspeakers which make this sound anything else than creamier than a bottle of Baileys simply aren't in the game. The Elacs not only proved that they were up for it, but that they were tremendously talented too. You can get smoother, silkier female vocals – but you'll have pay thousands more for the privilege. The strings were also enchanting. "Ethereal" is justifiably a 'no go zone' in the hi-fi reviewer's lexicon, but you'll forgive me if I transgress – the FS207.2s gave a heavenly violin sound, with an unerringly neutral shimmering texture. By contrast, all their price rivals sound nasal, ragged or just plain coarse.

Downsides? None at the price – aside from the issue of matching with a suitable power amplifier. I admittedly had these loudspeakers running highish volumes for longish periods, but was amazed to find that they tripped the protection circuitry of several transistor amplifiers, including my hardy Quad 909 power

amplifier. Their middling sensitivity and lowish nominal impedance means that they do need a largish, muscular amp which isn't shy driving into low loads – so best give that seven watt single-ended tube amp a miss...

If I have in any way intimated that I rather like these loudspeakers, then I make no apologies. In many respects they run rings around their price rivals. Mission's 782 (£899) is altogether tighter and tauter, with more scale and power, whereas Castle's Conway III (£930) is obviously warmer, sweeter and more euphonic – but neither can offer anything like the midband and treble insight of these, allied to superlative imaging.

Closest comes Monitor Audio's superb S8 (£799), which is voiced very similarly but gives away some midband insight, treble extension and depth perspective for £200 less. Personally, I'd pay the extra – even having come from listening to Yamaha NS1000Ms and Quad 989/Townshend Maximums (both at around five times the price), I never tired of listening to the FS207.2s with their delicious JET III tweeter. Of course, it can't match these brilliant reference designs, but unlike the treble units of some rivals, won't have you running for the mute button. Quite the reverse...

VERDICT

Amazingly insightful, dimensional and detailed sound makes these the class of the thousand pound loudspeaker field.

ELAC FS 207.2 £999.99pr

Elac

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MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Elac sandwich their own ribbon tweeter between two metal cone bass/midrange units in a popular D'Appolitto arrangement that gives symmetrical vertical dispersion and a consistent sound balance. Elac's ribbon driver is a quality unit that always measures well, and does so in the 207.2. Our response analysis clearly shows its output is fairly even up to 20kHz. I have seen better from ribbons, like the Tonigen for example, and suspect the louvered grill of this unit has some small effect.

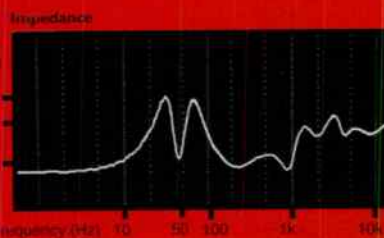
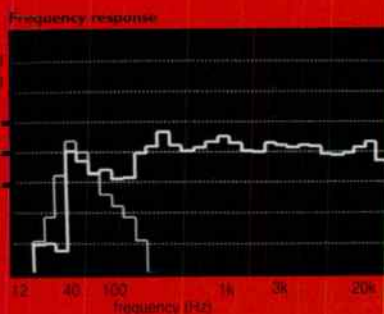
Frequency response is flat down to 125Hz and dips below this, an unusual trait rare in modern reflex loudspeakers, which usually have bass lift. Even far from the loudspeaker, where port output integrates better, there was a dip, so bass is likely to be light; near-wall use may well be best.

The port peaks sharply at 40Hz, and this is reflected in the impedance curve by a highly tuned (narrow and deep) port notch at 40Hz. This effect will add occasional weight to the sound. The bass unit is 4ohms, like most nowadays, which boosts sensitivity to a healthy 87dB SPL from one nominal watt (2.8V).

The impedance curve is unusual,

with a sudden transition from 4ohms to 8ohms at 1kHz. Above and below this point the speaker is largely resistive as a load, having a nominal value of 6ohms.

The 207.2 will sound fast and open, but less weighty and warm than rivals. I'd expect excellent treble. Elac speakers are very revealing and amplifier choice will likely be crucial. NK



Bristol

All the best of British – and foreign – hi-fi was on show in Bristol at Sound & Vision 2004 at the end of February. Who better than local yokel David Price to bring you all the fun of the fair...?



Despite all the arm activity, Michell hasn't forgotten the decks. To wit, the Orbe gets a new intelligent PSU, the Orbe Controller – watch out for a review soon ▼



▲ Roy and the boys have been busy – Rega premiered its new P5 and P7 turntables, with upgraded tonearms and modified platters (ceramic on the P7), plus svelte new R9 loudspeakers



◀ Can you feel the force? Tannoy's new Fusion range looks exceptionally well executed – the finish on this £150 wouldn't disgrace a £600 speaker – watch this space for a review!



◀ "Hey baby, come back to my hotel to see my show..." Arch show-man Rob Follis in restaurant repose...



◀ After feverish speculation that the Naim 'classic' range would get a silver colour option, enter the new CD5i complete with a dash of the aforementioned hue! How about adding silver around the front edges and wearing platform soles again, boys?



▲ Denon's tiny ADV-M1 offers Dolby Virtual Surround from just two tiny speakers; the results are surprising considering the diminutive dimensions

Fashion



◀ With exquisite build and clever design, Unison Research's Unico Pre valve/solid-state pre-amp and Unico DM £1,395 Dual Mono Valve-MOSFET power amplifier should give the likes of Linn and Meridian something to worry about



◀ Elac had a new range of hi-fi and AV speakers on show, the most 'esoteric' looking surely being the madcap Cinema Pipes



◀ The new Opera Mini - an adventurously compact £495 standmounter with wood veneer to die for and old fashioned good looks. Rather reminds one of the ProAc SuperTablette in some ways...



After such success with budget and high end designs, Sennheiser is now gunning for the mid-price sector of the headphone market with these cool looking new HD595s...▲

UKD's weapon of mass distraction - the stunningly styled Pathos Inpol 2 50W Class A tube integrated. Not sure about the sculpted heatsinking however - smacks of mono-programmed pyjamas and gold taps, methinks... ▶



Okay - so it was just a poster, but what a sight! The vast range of turntables old and new - all of which ClearCover makes covers for, had me transfixed ▶



◀ Diamond Geezer: AJ Van den Hul and his toys for the black stuff



◀ It was interesting to see an old, but not so familiar, name at the show. Canton's Karat's S1 is a very neat baby standmounter...



◀ The prospect of a sound beating at Counterstrike by a pair of nine year old Ninjas forced yours truly to gracefully decline the chance to try Sennheiser's tasty new gaming headsets ...



▲ ...and finally, the Ed enjoys a glass of 'apple juice' as he discusses, errm, 'industry politics' across town at the RiverStation...



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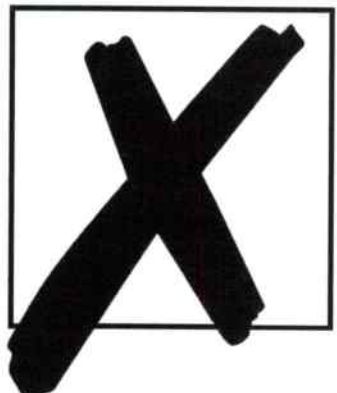
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Shure, Starter

Regular readers will know how highly we rate Shure's flagship V15VxMR, but it's not the company's only serious cartridge - the M97xE is the modern version of the classic M95, an affordable audiophile pickup with a long following. How does it stack up? Self-confessed Shure aficionado Noel Keywood listens in...

I have a soft spot for Shure. Long ago their lectures on vinyl replay, preceding every V15 update, were amongst the best any journalist could attend.

Only KEF did it better, and no one matched KEF, so this is no disgrace. Shure were consummately professional. All the way from Illinois, USA, they looked suave and well presented, spoke with quiet confidence and walked us through superbly illustrated technical explanations, carefully assembled, to explain succinctly to the densest of journos why Shure were the best. It was a great performance, thoroughly convincing and very persuasive too, the only problem being UK journos were a hard bitten bunch of cynics little swayed by such a master class.

I have owned, used and worked to death many Shure cartridges and whilst they were often workmanlike, they did their job. You did have to buy in high up the range to get anything half decent by today's standards and that meant the M95 as I recall, one step below the V15. Not so much has changed. Nowadays, it's the M97xE, reviewed here, and it sits one step below the V15, now in V15VxMR form.

So nothing's changed then? Err - yes it has. The V15 of yore has been comprehensively re-worked to transform its sound from sleepy smooth into but-kicking dynamic; the V15VxMR is a great moving magnet cartridge. But I'm not so sure about this 'ere M97xE pardner. Whilst the packaging possesses all the slick

professionalism that is Shure, the product wasn't quite what I was hoping for as a 'budget' V15.

Open the matt silver metal box (very nice) and you are greeted by a card insert bearing the description "M97xE Audiophile" and "Very High accuracy sound reproduction". Shure accentuate the "Very High" part, but I went to their lectures, learnt about accuracy (two-speed technique, etc.) and found the M97xE less accurate than I am used to. Which for me is a disappointment. LP replay technology moves slowly but steadily on, and today cartridges from Ortofon and Goldring, to name just two rivals, are more accurate. Does this matter? Am I being unfair?

The M97xE is cleverly designed to withstand rigorous use, thanks to the retractable dynamic stabiliser that performs many useful functions. It has a de-static brush that rides the

surface of the disc, cleaning and getting rid of static at the same time. It also damps arm/cartridge resonance, tightening up bass a little and helping the cartridge ride severely warped records. It softens the blow of a heavy landing on a disc too, protecting the stylus cantilever. I was surprised to see Shure now say this brush can be lifted up and locked out of the way to improve sound quality, providing playing conditions are good. The corporate line used to be the opposite. I used to feel there was a little more incision and clarity if this brush was lifted, but it didn't amount to much in the scheme of things and I never became as worked up about it as some journos. In the real world a cartridge that offers high quality with exceptional durability will have a place in many homes - and that's the M97xE. Shure's Dynamic Stabiliser works well, doing just what they have always claimed.





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Within the attractive packaging you also get mounting screws, a small instruction sheet, brush and mini screwdriver. Being a normal moving magnet cartridge, the stylus assembly is removable and it's best to slide it out before mounting. Shure use a traditional screening can mounted on a bracket to house the static coils, nowadays commonly replaced by the machined one-piece body. The bracket lugs are accessible, but Shure do suggest it's easier to mount the M97xE with screws pointing upward. With a weight of 6.6gms all arms will accept it, balancing out properly. Arm compatibility is good, as you might expect.

The M97xE looks good and is nice enough to use. Purists don't like the brush assembly and it does make manual cueing less accurate, because the stylus is hidden. Although the brush can be locked up out of the way, the arm must be re-balanced, so this isn't something that can be done on a whim. Shure stick to low tracking forces, so whilst 1.7gms downforce is common elsewhere the optimum for this model is quoted at 1.25gms, with 1.5gms maximum. An additional 0.5gms must be applied to compensate for the stabiliser if it is used, meaning 1.75gms for the suggested optimum.

Measurement showed the M97xE cannot get through top level test tracks so it needs all the downforce it can get and I used 1.4gms. This ensures a steady presentation even with high level vocals, which otherwise can sound a little strained - a sure sign the stylus is about to wave 'adios' to the groove.

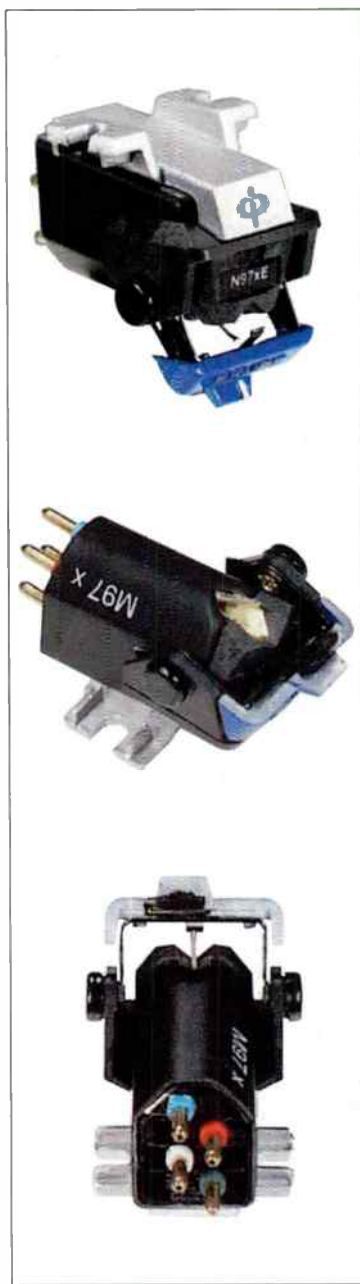
The M97xE did not strike me as a de-tuned V15VxMR. It has its own sound and one not so far removed from Shures of yore. The stylus is nice enough, retrieving oodles of fine detail from Randy Crawford's 'Nightlife', for example, bringing a delicacy to high frequencies unknown to the silver Frisbee. Things got more dramatic with George Thorogood's 'The Sky is Crying', the strings of his pedal steel guitar coming over with a vibrancy and a depth of resolution that had me wondering at times, but then I have to admit I moved through a few phono stages before inevitably settling on one of our own valve Phono IIs, tuned with special components and this was finding things others cannot.

Cartridges with a flatter frequency response are more forward and upfront sounding, if a bit lead footed in the treble region if their stylus isn't too hot. In other words, accuracy carries a penalty

unless everything else is up to scratch. Not so the M97xE. It's delicate and refined, but it is also quite laid back and easy going, painting the stage onto a plane further back than some would have it, with a realistic if unchallenging dynamic. Eddy Grant's 'Romancing the Stone' had plenty of vigour, Grant's voice sounding convincingly strong, the background beat muscular and well timed. Better recordings had even more vigour, The Human League's poignant 'Seconds' striding along with a well defined beat and swirling synthesiser. Full and detailed, the M97xE had body in its presentation, even if it lacks the hefty bass slam of its distinguished superior, the V15VxMR.

The hypnotic beat of Donna Summer's 'Try Me' trilogy propelled the track forward, having a rhythmic drive that did justice to the song's intent. Perhaps there wasn't the last sense of resolution and slam of the sort so adeptly presented by the V15VxMR but this only makes the M97xE a safe choice rather than a bad one. I found it worked better with classical than Rock, massed strings seeming well separated, each section given its own air and space. Again I felt the stylus was showing its mettle here.

As a whole, Shure's M97xE is easy going, insightful and detailed, sweet across the treble region and full but not explosive in its bass. I was taken back to Shures of yore. It's a capable soul, strong enough to withstand the rigours of home life whilst at the same time delivering a sound that is entertaining but civil.



VERDICT ●●●£

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MEASURED PERFORMANCE

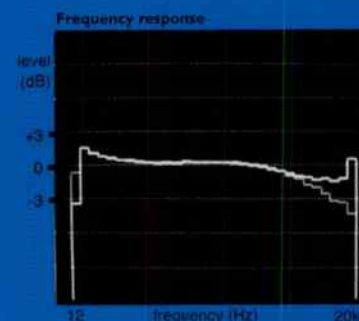
At the recommended tracking force of 1.25gms the M97E mistracked on the highest level test tracks and was marginal even with the stabiliser and maximum VTF of 1.5gms. Today's cartridges commonly clear these tracks; I was surprised the M97E could not. All the same it will track most LPs well enough.

Frequency response has the classic high frequency roll off caused by generator losses, which gives a warm sound. There is some recovery due to tip mass resonance, but on inner grooves additional tracing losses will give the M97E a warm or dull sound. Again, modern cartridges commonly do better.

The stylus cantilever exits the body at a steep angle and vertical tracking angle was high as a result, measuring over 30degrees. This produced more than 8% distortion on vertical modulation, luckily mostly innocuous second harmonic.

The M97E looks like an old design. It lacks the ability of many rivals and doesn't approach the excellent V15VxMr. Expect a warm sound. NK

Frequency response (2dB)	20Hz-20kHz
Separation	27dB
Distortion (-6dB)	1.3%
Output (5cms/sec rms)	4.2mV
Tracking (lateral)	
300Hz	65um
1kHz	22cms/sec
VTA	>30degrees
weight	6.6gms
VTF (optimum)	1.25g



wishful

Patrick Cleasby talks to ex-Propaganda singer Claudia Brücken about past, present and future projects...



PHOTOGRAPHY: JON RUSSELL

January saw the legendary ZTT label release of not only Propaganda's 'A Secret Wish' album in an excellent new multi-channel SACD guise, but also the entire recorded output of lead singer Claudia Brücken's post-Propaganda collaboration with Thomas Leer. ACT, as a remastered three CD anthology – an entirely justified resurrection of an interesting project dogged by record company ownership and distribution problems.

These albums can only be regarded as exemplars of top-notch eighties music and production, so the opportunity to discuss the past and the future with Claudia proved too

difficult to resist, particularly as she is just readying herself to release two new projects, again both duos with male counterparts, on an unsuspecting world. In a busy Hampstead café in January, she and I talked the last couple of decades over.

'A Secret Wish' was good fun – I had a good time. Working with Stephen Lipson (Producer) was a scream. I had no studio experience whatsoever. I had never heard my voice, it made me want to run away! I miss Stephen's attitude – one day Paul Morley came into the studio with a bunch of punk records, and said Steve, listen to this! Steve was so into Pink Floyd and the Stones, a

fantastic musician, but when Paul did that Steve went away, listened to all this stuff, and programmed *Duel*. He obviously got it – it had this edge. I think in his productions in latter years he's lost that edge.

"Trevor (Horn) was the executive producer, the only song he really did was 'Dr. Mabuse'. Everything else was Stephen, and a lot of people presumed it was Trevor. But at the end of the day Trevor would come in and discuss the work, say "why don't you try this?" Trevor was fantastic when it came down to rhythm and bass".

I asked Claudia something which had always mystified me in the credits – what did David Sylvian do on the album?

"He wrote the whole verse of 'p-Machinery' – he didn't get a credit, but I think he should have, sore point there. It was quite magical as we asked him if he had any ideas for this track because we only had the chorus for it. He called up and said "I've got something now" and he came in and played that part. We took the whole thing because it was so lovely."

Lipson also produced Act's 'Laughter, Tears and Rage' album, a period which Claudia finds difficult to remember because of its unhappy memories of label upheavals,

"I like 'Snobbery and Decay' – it's a real journey and a real statement. I enjoyed working with Thomas Leer very much, but ACT was never meant to be an ongoing thing. It was great for me to hear it again, but the end of it all left a bit of a bitter taste.

"Of the three albums, I look upon 'A Secret Wish' most fondly. To be honest I listened to it the other day for the first time in years, curious to see what it sounds like now. I love Stephen's guitar playing, and I love the way electronic programmed music is embraced by great musicianship. There were lots of bad times and egos, but the passion we felt is recorded. Anger, envy, all of

thinking

these big emotions, it's all on there. I hold that very dear. And also working with Stephen, from a singing point of view he could say "Oh Claudia that was shit", and I wouldn't get offended by it, I'd go "OK, let's try again". He had a way of working with female vocalists to get a great performance out of them!

"I cherish that experience, but I'm very proud of 'Love: and a million other things' (the often overlooked third installment of Claudia's early career). I shook off the ZTT bit and stood on my own. I think there were some really nice songs there if only they could have been heard. Released in 1991 on Island Records, it was a largely electronic album combining tracks from two very different producers, the then very fashionable Pascal Gabriel, along with Steve Nye. Unfortunately record company wrangles were to halt its progress once again.

"The person who signed me, Clive Banks, left and all the people who were working with me left too, so while we were still in the studio we already knew it would be hard for us to get any push. I would like to contact Island Records and see if I can do something with it, maybe release it on my website".

After 'Love...' during the 1990s Claudia sang on a number of one-off single projects - with The Brain, a cover of Can's 'Hallelujah' with a band called Spirit Fear on Mute records, and more besides. These records are all now very sought after and expensive.

"It was all just to keep me busy really, I hadn't really tried to go to record companies, as I had been a bit disillusioned with what happened with my last two albums. The thing is it's about people hearing the records, and I've been unlucky twice in a row. I've been really busy - I haven't actually stopped writing, I just stopped releasing albums".

"A few years ago I performed with Propaganda again, but it kind of fell apart, as Michael (Mertens) was living in Düsseldorf - it became difficult flying back and forth. For me being in a band is like a full-time job

- it's eight hours a day, and it was impossible for me to control the situation - three hours here and there was not enough to make this thing work".

Brücken confirms that she then left the band, and does not see it happening again. Her next step resulted in both of the projects, which have taken up much of the last few years.

"I went on tour in America with Paul Humphreys and I did all the Andy (McCluskey) parts on the OMD songs, that was such good fun - I had such a good time working with Paul that I found it more inspirational. I always go with what grabs my attention. It was great to pick the best songs from such large body of work. We did Propaganda songs too. Paul is very good with editing, and recording vocals and he did the whole project I did last year, almost out of frustration, because Propaganda didn't happen. I wanted to sing a few good songs, so I did twelve cover version songs with Andrew Poppy. Bobby Kraushaar mixed all the tracks, as he had kept in touch with Andrew. In fact with Paul Morley doing the artwork for the website and the record, it's like the old ZTT team back together!"

"We've done Kate Bush 'Running Up That Hill', Elvis Costello, David Bowie 'Drive in Saturday', Radiohead's 'Nice Dream', a Franz Schubert song, Presley's 'Wooden Heart', Marianne Faithfull's 'Broken English'. It's all one voice - one instrument, Andrew mostly playing piano, four tracks electric piano and three guitar. It's something so raw - I really had this urge to do some instant music, to be able to sing and perform songs with no hassles. I'm so proud of it".

The resultant album 'Another Language' should be available by the time you read this. Check on www.theremusic.com, the web portal for Claudia's new label therethere Records. I have not heard it yet, but if the preview MP3 of 'Running Up That Hill' that Claudia passed my way is anything to go by the whole album should be entrancing. Rest assured

that we will review the album as soon as it is available to us. As well as the Poppy / Brücken album, Paul and Claudia are finalising their own duo project.

"We want to see how the internet will work for us, and if we're struggling then we'll go and find some license deals. But we're back! Of course, all these writers of the eighties, they keep on writing, and their skills actually improve! I'm very optimistic".

The newly christened twosome will be known as onetwo. Only the mix remains to be done with Bob Kraushaar and a five track EP with specially recorded B sides will be released towards the end of April, closely followed by an album. In a pioneering move the onetwo project looks likely to be made exclusively available through eBay's new venture eBay Records, which should ensure wide scale coverage.

As at least two (if not all) of her three projects prior to these new records have not received the recognition and sales they deserved it would be delightful to see this unique artist realise her full potential, particularly if this is achieved through the use of independent Aimee Mann-style web initiatives and great fan base word-of-mouth. You know it makes sense - support our independent artists!



A Second Coming



Right now, it's game on for budget turntables. The sector is booming and competition is hotting up. To reflect this, Pro-ject has just launched its new Debut II turntable, a premium entry level 'real hi-fi' design. Dominic Todd goes for a spin...

Looking at the new Debut II, it's not hard to see why the original was one of the UK's best selling turntables. A solid MDF plinth houses a decent quality bearing and a motor, which is isolated via a rubber suspension system. The plinth in turn sits on four squishy feet that should do a good job in isolating the deck, but aren't adjustable - take note as this makes a level surface essential. The pressed steel platter is rather basic, but then at least it's not plastic, as some rivals are at this price. Considering the price, the tonearm is surprisingly good, with an effective anti-skating weight and the essential of adjustable tracking weight. As if it weren't enough of a bargain, Pro-ject has even chucked in a decent Ortofon OM5e cartridge. The new

Debut is also remarkably easy to set up, with the cartridge already fitted, aligned and even the counterweight correctly set! So at £120, it offers serious value for money - but then again, with the impressive Goldring GR1 now out, it actually has some real competition...

SOUND QUALITY

The first disc to hit the felt was Coldplay's, 'Don't Panic'. From a very early stage I was made aware that the Debut II really is something special at this price. Its enthusiasm issued forth from the speakers with obvious relish. Bass was powerful and well integrated, vocals had a fine open quality and were precisely imaged, with the overall timing foot-tappingly good. Of course there were weaknesses - bass was ultimately

rather soft and those used to more expensive decks would find the dynamics somewhat restrained. I also noticed a touch of sibilance from vocals, although an upgrade of cartridge should sort that particular one out. I know it's been said many times before, but it is worth reiterating that certain aspects of the sound, such as the timbre of plucked guitar strings, leave an equivalently priced CD spinner for dead.

The Divine Comedy's 'I'm All You Need' was a little lacking in punch and tautness, yet imaging and stage depth were exceptionally good. Vocals, in particular, held a solid position in the sound stage and were well projected from the rest of the mix. This particular track also showed up the Project's weakness when music becomes more dense



BOXING CLEVER – A HISTORY OF BUDGET TURNTABLES

PIONEER PL72D 1973

The original – this integrated turntable/toner package (often sold with Shure's M75ED II cartridge) proved a staggering success. Although nothing special in design terms, it bought excellent build quality to 'entry level' audio buyers. Smooth and warm but with great get-up-and-go, it was amazingly refined by the standards of the day, and pretty much did for British rivals from Garrard and BSR. Even today, it's a great first deck for around £30.

REGA PLANAR II 1978

The company's first turntable, the Planet, was too much of an oddball, despite being quite capable. The Planar 2 evolved the formula, offering a thin glass platter and felt mat instead of its predecessor's wacky podule record support. The excellent, Japanese sourced modified Acos arm was retained. The result – fantastically smooth and smooth sound and the best entry level 'super deck' ever made. Still available new in P2 form (£199), and a great buy if you can afford it.

DUAL CS505 1980

Surely the best selling budget turntable ever. Launched at the Harrogate Hi-Fi 80 Show, this cost-cut CS506 went on to storm the UK sales charts for over a decade. Excellent 'ultra low mass' tonearm (now unfashionable) and stable belt drive with stroboscope and pitch control made for a full-featured budget machine to beat all comers up to the Rega Planar 2. Still capable by modern standards, it has a smooth and tidy sound with lots of detail and no nasties. Only the soft bass lets it down. Brilliant used buy for under £40, and tweakable too.

NAD 5120 1983

The Dual put the 'black cat' amongst the pigeons in the vinyl war – and this was NAD's response. Characteristically eccentric – or just plain odd – its tonearm was essentially a long thin piece of circuit board! This was later substituted for a more conventional design, but it was more about reassuring punters than improving the sound. Speaking of which, its sonics were really rather good. It sounded far better than it looked – which wasn't difficult – giving a wide, open and stable performance. Very cheap second-hand, this is one for the anoraks at around £50 a time.

and complex. There was a degree of harshness that set in at such points, but it was never serious enough to truly detract from the song.

I was most impressed with June Tabor's 'Sophisticated Lady'. I had expected the Debut to be less than a paradigm of refinement with female vocalists, but it proved me wrong. There was real strength in the midrange with an excellent insight into Tabor's vocals. Furthermore the Debut II presented a surprisingly accurate piano timbre, which only wanted for that last degree of solidity only really available from decks costing a great deal more. It wasn't totally unexpected to find a slight hardening of vocals at higher frequencies, but I'd consider this to be a minor flaw and probably again solved by the fitment of an upgraded cartridge.

Finding myself enjoying the Debut II's cohesive and exuberant nature, I didn't think that classical music would really be its forte but, yet again, the Debut surprised. Brahms Symphony No. 1 (Vienna Philharmonic/ Herbert Von Karajan),

proved remarkably coherent. The sweet, textured string tone is alien to many CD players, and to combine it with such a vibrant brass section is quite an achievement. Despite the underlying softness of sound I also found the timing to be consistent and accurate and, as such, the Debut sufficiently built up the tension in the piece. Dynamics were helped by a bass that, whilst not the sharpest, at least carried sufficient weight. Separation of instruments was no better than average, but the staging was still good and there was a seamless nature to the frequency response. Perhaps the Debut II is a little on the coloured and euphonic side of neutral but, in terms of musical enjoyment, is none the worse for it.

The Pro-ject's sheer flexibility was once again proved when switching to Tom Waits' 'Romeo is Bleeding', where vocals proved exceptionally vivid for the price, and easily rivalled players costing twice the Debut's £120. Percussion did lack bite, and there perhaps wasn't quite as much decay from the cymbals as

I'm used to, but it was all still very atmospheric nonetheless. Again, it was the midrange resolution that really stood out, with the saxophone striking a fine balance between aggression and warmth. The frequency extremes weren't particularly poorly dealt with; it's just that by comparison with the exceptional mid-range they failed to shine quite so brightly. Still, there was enough bass for the sound not to sound too lean, and the treble at least blended well with the mid-range.

For its price the Debut II's build is exceptional, especially when you remember that some of the competition still uses plastic plinths and wafer-thin platters! There's no area in which corners have conspicuously been cut, and no potential buyer is going to feel short-changed. Highly enjoyable, open handed towards different types of music and with exceptional mid-range resolution, it is bound to impress.

Downsides include its bass, which isn't the tightest, the occasionally hard treble and a lack of midband detail – but this is churlish talk at the price, and I believe that upgrading the cartridge should go some way in alleviating these niggles. So the Pro-ject Debut II richly deserves its success and shows maturity well beyond its price range. All told, the new Debut II is a worthy improvement over its predecessor and deserves to succeed.

VERDICT ●●●●£

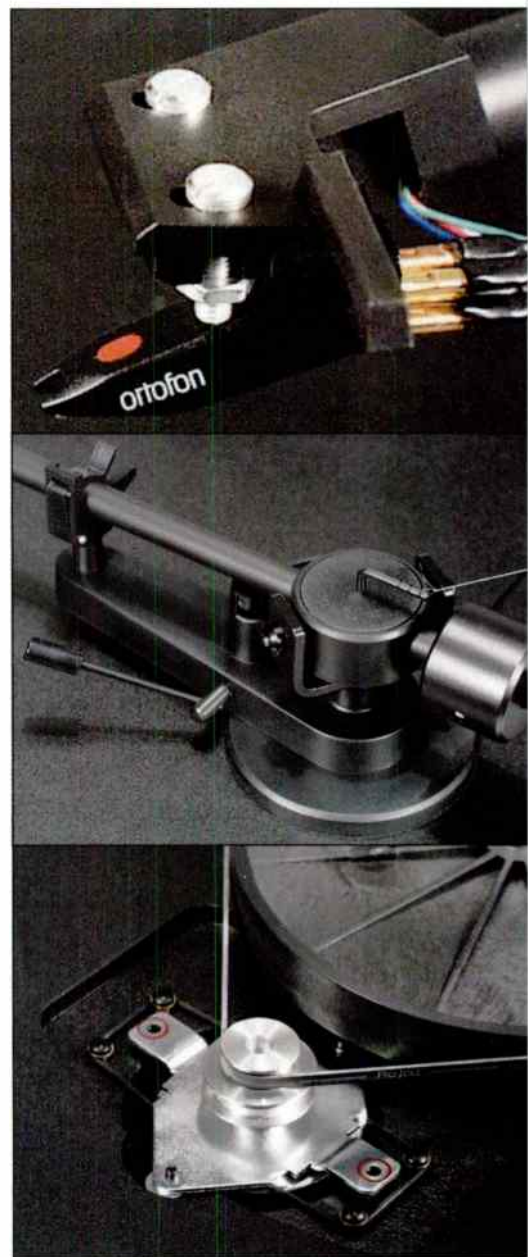
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Listening Panel

The NXT revolution continues unabated, and now the technology's available in the most modest of micro systems. Patrick Cleasby tries TEAC's new sub-£200 MC-DX10...

A quick visit to Currys will show you how fiercely fought the cheaper end of the all-in-one system market is, with some truly hideous and poorly-made designs crowding the shelves. TEAC's decision, with the new MC-DX10, to avoid lots of whistles and bells (this basically does CD, FM and AM and that's all) and to use flat panel NXT speaker technology is a breath of fresh air, then – but how does it translate in practice?

An attractive cardboard box, equipped with carrying handle to haul your booty from the out-of-town mega-shop to the car, reveals a very well-put-together front-ported subwoofer unit, about the size of two shoeboxes on top of each other; two NXT speaker units and a transport, each about the size of an Amaray case, standing raked slightly back on bases a couple of inches wide, and all wall-mountable; a very nice remote control, about the size and depth of an early eighties Casio calculator, with skin covered buttons to match; and a useful enough manual.

The whole is assembled easily, with a DC cable running from the sub, which plugs into the mains, and a 3.5mm audio cable running from the head unit back to the sub. The NXT panels are each attached to the sub

unit using speaker cables terminated with phono plugs. I was ready to go in a matter of minutes. Unfortunately however, things didn't go to plan, as the very first CD I attempted to load ended up off the spindle behind the closed sliding door – potentially scratched, owner not very happy.. Further investigation revealed that the spindly metal rods along which the front door slides are sensitive to inadvertent touch, and cause the door to shut willy-nilly. You have been warned!

The MC-DX10 is a sealed-box solution – the wire FM Antenna is fixed, and the internal AM antenna means you might not have much choice where to mount it if you want to listen to 5Live. In fact the only expansion option is stereo phono sockets for an auxiliary device, which at least means you can plug your iPod in.

A quick blast of Gary Numan's Cars as 192kbps AAC revealed a deeply satisfying analogue synthesiser sound, and a convincing vocal with decent stereo imaging. Its performance is very impressive – the subwoofer lends a rich warmth to spoken word on 5Live, and with a decent placement the ever-present AM hiss is minimal. Bottom end reinforcement, along with the detail and clarity in the upper ranges

supplied by the NXT panels, means that rock music sounds involving, whether listening to FM radio or CD. Bass swoops in hip-hop music, or Danny Thompson's plunging lines in Kate Bush's 'Pull Out The Pin' are particularly effective.

My experience of TEAC's new micro system was bittersweet. Aside from the CD drawer mechanism's volatility, the review unit emitted an irregular intermittent 'chirruping' sound whether in CD, Radio or Standby mode. One can only presume this is a one-off...surely manufacturing QC should not allow faults of this order to escape?

Provisos aside, the MC-DX10 is unusually gifted considering its low price (£169.99 from www.unbeatable.co.uk, for example). You get superb aesthetics, intelligent facilities, decent electronics and excellent loudspeakers – here's hoping our review sample was the exception and not the rule.

VERDICT ●●●£

An intelligently designed kitchen or bedroom hi-fi solution, but there are question marks over build quality.

TEAC MC-DX10 £180

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FOR

- minimal footprint
- Svelte sound
- ease of use

AGAINST

- faulty review sample
- flawed ergonomics
- mediocre connectivity

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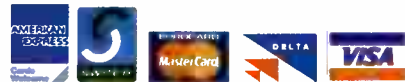
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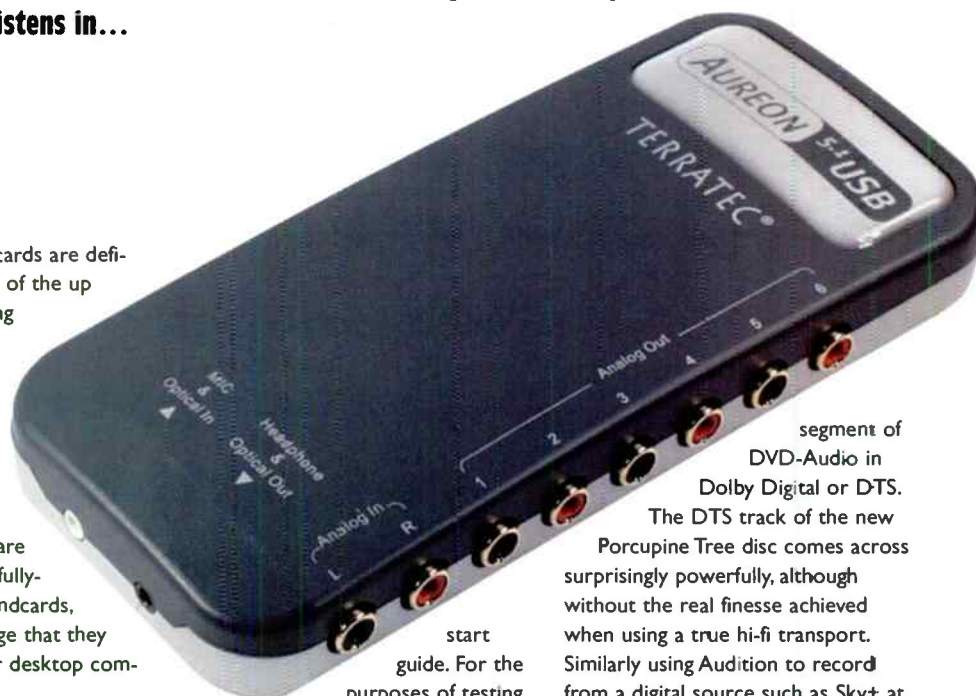
German computer peripheral specialist TerraTec has launched the Aureon 5.1 USB soundcard as a simple do-it-all 16bit solution for DVD users and gamers. IT boy Patrick Cleasby listens in...

USB soundcards are definitely one of the up and coming areas of the computer peripherals market – for those seeking to add digital connectivity to their laptops these solutions are usually cheaper than fully-fledged PCMCIA soundcards, and have the advantage that they can easily be used for desktop computers as well.

Roland's Edirol badged offerings have included simple input-output devices in both analogue and digital flavours for some time now but the various Creative externals, and now a range of TerraTec cards have raised the bar. The Aureon offers everything you need for simple analogue and digital i-o, in one neat little USB-powered box about half the size of a DVD case.

The finish and the design are nothing to write home about - what you are really paying for here is the interface technology. Ingeniously, on the base of the device the analogue (microphone) input is combined with the TOSLINK digital input using the MD Walkman digital 3.5mm connector idea. The same principle is employed for the headphone out, combined with the TOSLINK output. The gold-plated stereo analogue input and the six channel output phono terminals run along the long edge of the box. Two TOSLINK adapters are supplied to turn the end of a normal optical cable into a 3.5mm plug. There are also some fairly cheesy phono leads in the box, which could not really be dignified with the term interconnects.

The installation instructions form part of a relatively slender quick



start guide. For the purposes of testing I did a fresh install of Windows XP SP1 on an old 400MHz Pentium II desktop with 128MB of RAM. Recording testing was done using Adobe Audition 1.0 as reviewed a couple of months ago.

Basic Windows USB Audio support installs automatically when you plug the device in for the first time. The software disc includes a specific control panel application for the Aureon, the loading of which will prompt you to install DirectX 9.0b if you do not have it already. The control panel installs easily, and enables switching between analogue and digital recording sources. There are also individual channel level adjustments for 5.1 speaker set ups, and the installer is actually invoked again from the Misc tab if you need to toggle between the DVD usage setting (which permits Dolby and DTS bitstreams to be passed) and the Gaming setting which uses a 3D audio simulation called Sensaura.

Once installed all the basic functionality can be achieved with minimal head scratching necessary. When WinDVD had been switched to output S/PDIF to an external processor, I was free to listen to the DVD-V

segment of DVD-Audio in Dolby Digital or DTS.

The DTS track of the new Porcupine Tree disc comes across surprisingly powerfully, although without the real finesse achieved when using a true hi-fi transport. Similarly using Audition to record from a digital source such as Sky+ at 16/48 resolution was simplicity itself – I selected S/PDIF in the Aureon control panel, and 'USB Audio' in the recording software and I was able to record to hard disk successfully, despite my processor being below the ideal spec.

So I could find little to fault with the Aureon, which is available for under £70 by hunting on the web. However if you require a coaxial option and nothing more than 16bit S/PDIF the Edirol UA-1D has been forced down to below £60, and by spending up to around £100 you can get 24/96 and DVD-Audio capability from the Creative Audigy 2 NX, or some of TerraTec's higher end 7.1 offerings.

VERDICT ●●●£

Already one of the prime candidates on reference lists supplied by the well-informed, the Aureon 5.1 USB is an ideal solution if your digital requirements extend no further than 16bit and 5.1.

TERRATEC AUREON 5.1

USB £70

TerraTec UK

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www.terratec.co.uk

FOR

- fully flexible connectivity
- useful bundled software
- simple to use

AGAINST

- limited to 16bit
- No coaxial S/PDIF
- Windows 2000 / XP only

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Microsoft Windows 2000 / XP
1 free USB V1.1 or V2.0 port
600MHz Pentium 3 or AMD Athlon processor
128 MB RAM
Videocard supporting SVGA and DirectDraw overlay (for DVD-Player)

SUPPLIED ACCESSORIES

4 Stereo Phono leads
2 TOSLINK adapters
Software including Aureon Control Panel, WinDVD4.0 and Traktor DJ V1.0

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TEL: 01908 218836 FAX: 020 72861123 EMAIL: info@worldaudiodesign.co.uk**

The Kecl82 is our latest introduction for the true beginner and designed by Andy Grove. A simple and elegant design based on the classic ECL82 valve, a triode and power pentode sharing the same glass envelope. The amplifier consists of two ECL82s per channel, the triode sections work as the input/phase splitter and the pentode sections work in push-pull for the output stage. The amplifier offers 8 watts into an 8 ohm load, the hum level is extremely low, comparison to solid state standards. The chassis is constructed of 1.6mm mild steel with a black powder coat finish, there is only one signal input pair controlled at the front by a volume control for that simple touch. The speaker connects are the standard 4mm banana type, positioned at the rear, as are the mains input which is received through an IEC lead, mains switch and earth post. We have made the construction as simple as is humanly possible with comprehensive instructions. The circuitry is based on a single printed circuit board. Ultimately this kit is for the guy who has always fancied a go at building a kit, but never dared. Simon Pope says, "It's a great introduction to the valve sound. For its humble price it delivers a full and rich sound with great detail and good depth." Kecl82 weighs 9kg. External dimensions are 30cm(w)x23.5cm(d)x11cm(h)

NEW KIT**KECL82 VALVE AMPLIFIER KIT****£195**

These are our new 6550 series amplifiers. A pure class A design providing 40 watts into a 8 ohm load. (available in a 4 ohm version if required) A truly high end design by Andy Grove, using Svetlana 6550Cs in push-pull (any 6550 or KT88 tube can be used with this amp). It features valve rectification (5U4) a choke pi filter power supply and is hard wired. Weighs 19kg with dimensions



390mm(w) x 330mm(d) x 190mm(h) with valves or 220mm(h) with cage. Simon Pope says - "If you favour attack and rhythmic grip, together with a smoothness of sound that's incredibly easy to live with, the KIT6550 could well be the kit amp for you. The 6550 is one for those who like a valve sound married to the attack and clout of a good quality solid state design".

KIT6550 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT**£615****KAT6550 VALVE POWER AMPLIFIER KIT****£580**

The Kel84 features a pair of EL84 valves per channel in push-pull configuration. They give 15 watts into an 8 ohm load. The output transformers are Ultra Linear. Up front the ECF80 input/phase splitter valve has an extremely smooth sound. The Kel84 has very low hum, for simplicity the kit is built on a printed circuit board. A strong steel chassis is fronted by a 3mm anodised front panel and attractive chromed custom made knobs. There are five line level inputs, plus one monitor input, with a tape output included, all controlled from the front panel. At the rear is a mains switch/IEC power input, earth post, phonos, and 4mm banana sockets. 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 that is almost exclusive to pure valve amps and is rare at this price point." Kel84 weighs 10kg. External dimensions with valves are 300mm(w) x 270mm(d) x 150mm(h).

**KE184 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT****£298**

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

**2A3 PSE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT****£570**

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)	£205.00
Pre-amplifier (PRE-II)	£215.00
Phono Stage (PHONO-II)	£110.00
Moving coil step-up transformer	£77.00
Passive pre-amplifier (PAS-II)	£235.00



SERIES II MODULAR PRE-AMP KIT



KIT34 is a 32 watt stereo valve integrated amplifier, featuring a pair of EL34s, in push-pull mode, per channel, plus an ECF80 pentode/triode as input/phase splitter. The power supply is valve rectified (2 x 5U4), using a heavy duty choke to achieve exceptional smoothing. The output transformers are 14% Ultra Linear tapped to keep distortion down to its lowest level and the kit is totally hard wired utilising three tag boards. It has five line level inputs, plus a tape-in and



tape out, all controllable from the front. Simon Pope says, "This integrated brings together the best sonic virtues of our KIT88, kel34 and top of the range 300B PSE in an affordable package. The highlights of the sound are a deep and taut bass response, together with an open and highly detailed mid and high frequency response that only the best valve designs can achieve... a true valve classic." Weight 22kg, External dimensions with valves fitted - 390mm(w) x 360mm(d) x 210mm(h)

KAT34 VALVE POWER AMPLIFIER KIT

£480

KIT34 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT

£515

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

For purists, feedback is switchable and the kit is totally hard-wired. For those that require valves we provide the superb Tesla 300Bs, Russian 5U4s and European 6AU6s & ECC82. Simon Pope says, "Not to put too fine a point on it, the sound these monoblocs create is among the finest that can be encountered in hi-fi." Our 300B PSE kit bears an affordable price of £895.00 (UK price) excluding valves. Each



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

The 300B PP monobloc shares the same look and chassis as the 300B PSE monobloc.

The 300B PP kit has been created for those who prefer a bit more dynamics and drive to their valve sound. With a pair of 300Bs in push-pull configuration providing 26 watts output, these beauties will drive most modern loudspeakers to perfection. Andy Grove's design is totally feedbackless, using a 6AU6 pentode as the input valve and a 5687 as the phase splitter, the power supply uses

a Russian 5U4 for rectification. The kit is constructed by point to point wiring so some experience is required. 300B PSE owners do have the option to buy the conversion kit for £250.00 to turn their monoblocs to push-pull status. Each monobloc weighs 23kg.

300B PSE MONOBLOC KIT

£895 per pair

300B PP MONOBLOC KIT NEW

£895 per pair

The HD83 headphone amplifier is a beautifully simple design using Mullard ECL83 valves, a triode and power pentode housed in the same envelope. It works directly from any source, be it CD, tape, tuner etc., or from an amplifier's tape out or pre-amp out sockets. The circuit uses high specification E/I output transformers that will drive any headphone load from 16 ohms to over 300 ohms depending on how the secondaries are wired up. The HD83 is a single-ended design with the power pentode wired up in triode configuration for added sonic purity, and it is as quiet as a mouse. For sound quality Jon Marks says, "The bass is punchy and controlled without becoming artificial, while treble has the crispness of the best solid-state, with the tonal purity, delicacy and speed associated with valves." External dimensions 18cm(w) x 30cm(l) x 8cm (h) weight 4kg.



HD83 VALVE HEADPHONE AMPLIFIER KIT

£195

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KIT6550/KAT6550 mains transformers

2 inch stack, 130mm(h)x120mm(w)x135mm(l)
drop through fitting with zinc cap. Secondaries
425V-0V-425V, 350mA, 0V-5V, 6A, 3.15V-0V-3.15V,
9A. Suitable for 120V & 240Vac operation

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

KIT34/KAT34/KIT6550/KAT6550 choke

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

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

HD83 mains toroidal transformer

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

PSU-II mains toroidal transformer

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

TRANS I mains toroidal transformer

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

KEL84 E/I choke

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

PSU-II E/I

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

KIT34/KAT34 mains transformer

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

2A3 PSE mains transformer:

2.5inch stack, on a 120 size lamination,
120mm(h)x115mm(w)x95mm(d), drop through
fitting with zinc plated transformer caps.
Secondary winding: 370V-0V-370V, 250mA, 0V-5V,
3A, 0V-4V, 2A x4. Suitable for
110V/120V/220V/230V operation. Can be used
for a valve rectified, dc heater (2A3), dc regulated
heater(input valve) stereo 2A3 PSE/PP amplifier.

KECL82 mains transformer:

1.25inch stack, on a 29 size lamination,
80mm(wide)x70mm(height)x70mm(depth), frame
type 2 hole fixing. Secondary winding: 0V-185V,
200mA, 0V-6.3V, 3.5A. Suitable for
110V/120V/220V/230V operation. Good for low
power amp, solid state rectification achieves a HT
of 240Vdc. Could be used for ECL82 PP/PSE
stereo amp.

MAINS TRANSFORMERS & CHOKES**KIT6550/KAT6550 E/I 16% TAPPED UL**

push-pull output transformer 2 inch stack, 80mm
(w) x 95mm(l) x 100mm(h), drop through fitting
with zinc cap. Primary-secondary 4.5K, 16% UL
tapped. Secondary 4 0r 8 ohm, pls specify on
order. max output 45 watts, max current 180mA,
valves, KT88, 6550 etc

KEL84 E/I Ultra Linear push-pull output transformer

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

KIT88/KAT88 E/I push-pull output transformer

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

Pre-II E/I driver transformer

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

KIT34/KAT34 E/I 14% tapped Ultra Linear push-pull output transformer

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

HD83 E/I single ended output transformer

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

300B PSE E/I parallel single ended output transformer

130mm(h) x 95mm(w) x 115mm(d).
drop through fitting with zinc cap.
Primary 1K5 Secondary 8R, output .

2A3 PSE E/I output transformer:

2A3 parallel single ended transformer, 2 inch stack,
78 size lamination. Primary impedance is 2.5K,
secondary impedance is 4ohm or 8ohm, max
current is 100mA. Output is 8.5Watts.

KECL82 PP output transformer

ECL82 push-pull ultra linear. 1 inch stack, on a 29
size lamination,
80mm(wide)x70mm(height)x60mm(depth), frame
type 2 hole fixing. Primary 7.5Kohm, secondary
8ohms. Max current 85mA,
Good for numerous low output pentode valves in
push-pull configuration.

300B PP E/I push-pull output transformers

2.5inch stack, on a size 120 lamination.
130mm(h)x95mm(w)x115mm(d) drop through
fitting with zinc plated cap. Primary impedance 4K,
secondary 6ohm. Will suit 300Bs, 2A3s etc in
push-pull configuration.

PRINTED CIRCUIT BOARDS

- ◆ KECL82 Printed Circuit Board 200mm(w) x140mm(l) x1.6mm(d).
- ◆ KEL84 Printed Circuit Board 280mm(w) x 135mm(l)x 1.6mm(d).
- ◆ KIT88/KAT88 Printed Circuit Board 140mm(w) x 310mm(l) x 2.4mm(d).
- ◆ KIT34 Printed Circuit Board 140mm(w) x 310mm(l) x 2.4mm(d).
- ◆ KIT6550 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).

OUTPUT TRANSFORMERS**Hi-Fi World in Malaysia at Millennium Hi-Fi & Av. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**

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e-mail: info@millennium-audio.com

These are expert kits, not for sale. You must be able to solder a circuit diagram. The valve kits contain lethal voltages. We cannot be held responsible for any errors arising from the construction of these kits.



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AMPLIFIER KITS DESCRIPTION	ORDER NO.	QTY	UK (inc vat & carriage)	OVERSEAS (exc. vat & carriage)
Kec182 (8 ohm)	Kec182 (with valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£195.00	£170.00
2A3PSE with valves (4ohm or 8ohm, pls specify)	2A3 PSE (with valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£570.00	£485.00
2A3PSE without valves (4ohm or 8ohm, pls specify)	2A3 PSE (without valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£470.00	£400.00
KaT6550 with valves (4ohm or 8ohm, pls specify)	KaT6550 (with valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£580.00	£495.00
KaT6550 without valves (4ohm or 8ohm, pls specify)	KaT6550 (without valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£450.00	£380.00
KiT6550 with valves (4ohm or 8ohm, pls specify)	KiT6550 (with valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£615.00	£525.00
KiT6550 without valves (4ohm or 8ohm, pls specify)	KiT6550 (without valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£485.00	£415.00
KaT34 with valves (4ohm or 8ohm, pls specify)	KAT34(with valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£480.00	£410.00
KaT34 without valves (4ohm or 8ohm, pls specify)	KAT34(without valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£415.00	£354.00
KiT34 with valves (4ohm or 8ohm, pls specify)	KiT34 (with valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£515.00	£440.00
KiT34 without valves (4ohm or 8ohm, pls specify)	KiT34 (without valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£450.00	£385.00
Kel84 with valves (8 ohm)	Kel84 (with valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£298.00	£255.00
Kel84 without valves (8 ohm)	Kel84 (without valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£268.00	£230.00
PSU II	PSU - II	<input type="checkbox"/>	£205.00	£175.00
PRE II	PRE - II	<input type="checkbox"/>	£215.00	£185.00
PHONO II	PHONO II	<input type="checkbox"/>	£110.00	£95.00
PAS II	PAS II	<input type="checkbox"/>	£235.00	£200.00
Step ups transformers for MC use with PHONO II	MC - step up (pair)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£80.00	£68.00
HD83 with valves	HD83 (with valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£195.00	£167.00
300BPSE with valves (4ohm or 8ohm, pls specify)	300B PSE (with valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£1197.00 per pair	£1020.00 per pair
300BPSE without valves (4ohm or 8ohm, pls specify)	300B PSE (no valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£895.00 per pair	£765.00 per pair
300BPP with valves (6 ohm)	300B PP (with valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£1197.00 per pair	£1020.00 per pair
300BPP without valves (6 ohm)	300B PP (no valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£895.00 per pair	£765.00 per pair

PARTS DESCRIPTION	ORDER NO.	QTY	UK (inc vat & carriage)	OVERSEAS (exc. vat & carriage)
2A3 mains transformer	2A3 PSE mains T	<input type="checkbox"/>	£115.00	£98.00
6550 mains transformer	6550 mains T	<input type="checkbox"/>	£120.00	£105.00
34 mains transformer	KiT34 - mains T	<input type="checkbox"/>	£100.00	£85.00
kel84 mains transformer	Kel84 - mains T	<input type="checkbox"/>	£60.00	£47.00
HD83 mains transformer	HD83 - mains T	<input type="checkbox"/>	£40.00	£34.00
PSU II mains transformer	PSU-II - mains T	<input type="checkbox"/>	£40.00	£34.00
300B mains transformer	300B - mains T (each)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£115.00	£98.00
34/6550 choke	KiT34 - choke	<input type="checkbox"/>	£40.00	£34.00
kel84 choke	Kel84 - choke	<input type="checkbox"/>	£20.00	£17.00
300B choke	300B choke	<input type="checkbox"/>	£40.00	£34.00
2A3 PSE choke	2A3 PSE choke	<input type="checkbox"/>	£40.00	£34.00
PSU II choke	PSU-choke	<input type="checkbox"/>	£20.00	£17.00
6550 output transformer (4ohm or 8ohm)	6550 - O/P T (pair)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£130.00	£112.00
34 output transformer (4ohm or 8ohm)	34 - O/P T (pair)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£130.00	£112.00
kel84 output (8 ohm)	Kel84 - O/P T (pair)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£90.00	£78.00
2A3 PSE output transformer (4ohm or 8ohm)	2A3 PSE O/P T (pair)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£130.00	£112.00
HD83 output (multiload secondary)	HD83 - O/P T(pair)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£100.00	£86.00
PRE-II driver transformer	PRE-II - driver T(pair)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£80.00	£68.00
300BPSE output transformer (4ohm or 8ohm)	300B PSE - O/P T (each)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£110.00	£94.00
300BPP output transformer (6ohm)	300B PP - O/P T (each)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£110.00	£94.00
kel84 PCB	Kel84 - PCB	<input type="checkbox"/>	£30.00	£26.00
kel34 PCB	Kel34 - PCB	<input type="checkbox"/>	£12.00	£11.00
kel80 PCB	Kel80 - PCB(pair)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£52.00	£45.00
KECL82 PCB	KECL82 - PCB	<input type="checkbox"/>	£25.00	£21.00
HD83 PCB	HD83 - PCB	<input type="checkbox"/>	£20.00	£17.00
PSU II PCB	PSU-II - PCB	<input type="checkbox"/>	£20.00	£17.00
PRE II PCB	PRE-II - PCB	<input type="checkbox"/>	£20.00	£17.00
PHONO II PCB	PHONO-II - PCB	<input type="checkbox"/>	£20.00	£17.00
tag board	TAG	<input type="checkbox"/>	£4.00	£3.00
ALPS 50K dual potentiometer	ALPS - 50K	<input type="checkbox"/>	£14.00	£12.00
ALPS 100K dual potentiometer	ALPS - 100K	<input type="checkbox"/>	£14.00	£12.00
stepped attenuator (10K or 50K)	Attenuator + resistor pack	<input type="checkbox"/>	£75.00	£65.00
LCR 22.5uF 440Vdc polyprop. Cap	LCR - 22.5U	<input type="checkbox"/>	£10.00	£8.00
Jensen 0.47uF 630V, aluminium foil	JEN - 0.47U 630V	<input type="checkbox"/>	£20.00	£17.00
Safety gloves	SAFETY GLOVES	<input type="checkbox"/>	£25.00	£21.00
2A3PSE/6550/34 safety cage	2A3 PSE/34/6550 cage	<input type="checkbox"/>	£80.00	£68.00

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Title	Description	Price (exc. VAT + Carriage)	Title	Description	Price (exc. VAT + Carriage)
1A40	40W EL34 integrated	£590.00	MB80	80W EL34 monobloc	£1190.00
1A36	36W KT88 integrated	£895.00	PA11	Valve pre-amplifier	£699.00
P20A	20W 5881 power amp	£795.00	PH11	Valve phono stage for PA11	£199.00

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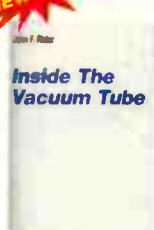


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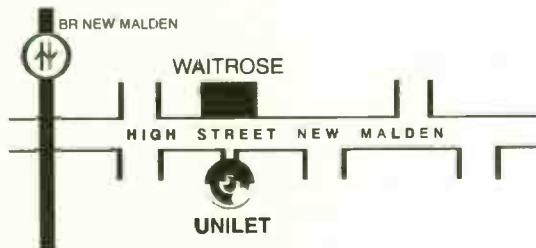
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 (DVD-AUDIO: 24/96
 MULTI-CHANNEL ONLY)

This month we are able to take a slightly different look at the high resolution market, as we abandon the conventional major labels altogether, and examine how some more independent set-ups put together their product. We also have some new DVD-Audio for the first time in a while, from two of the main players in the American market.

Living Colour's fourth album after a hiatus (barring the inclusion of some new tracks on the 'Pride' compilation) of over ten years was released on CD through the ever-expanding Sanctuary label last year. Its appearance on DVD-Audio is due to a relationship which has existed for the last couple of years whereby Sanctuary catalogue is licensed to Silverline. The latter have now started releasing a selection of their better titles in the UK, with www.play.com being a good place to seek them out. The Sanctuary tie-up has yielded a sizable proportion of the DVD-Audios which make up the global title count, but unfortunately much of it is stereo material of dubious provenance, fed through some Unwrap-type processing and released as surround product. For licensing reasons the discs (as here) very rarely have a stereo track, and if they do it is

usually only of CD resolution.

Therefore Caveat Emptor must be the watchword - the trick here is to read the booklet and make sure that there are proper mix credits in there, although this can make web purchasing tricky. The good news is that Collideoscope is one of their true discrete-mixed projects, (the mix and mastering work is usually done at parent company 5.1 Entertainment's in-house facilities), and the patent Living Colour eclectic techno-rock sound is still there. Whether the same can be said for their audience is open to question, but if you like the band, and surround is your bag, it's worth a go.

AIMEE MANN
LOST IN SPACE
 (HYBRID SACD: STEREO DSD
 ONLY)

Both of this month's SACDs are reviewed courtesy of www.vivante.co.uk, who are exhaustive stockists of a wide variety of audiophile formats. They are also Mobile Fidelity's official distributor over here. MoFi should be familiar to any self-respecting audiophile, and their recent renaissance has naturally lead to their espousal of the SACD format for carefully chosen audiophile stereo remastering projects such as this one. Just like half speed mastered vinyl and gold CDs, claims are made for

interestingly-named trademarked processes, but essentially GAIN 2 (Greater Ambient Information Network) is just sensible top-notch mastering practice, meaning as it does (according to the blurb) that high quality analogue tape machines and digital convertors are used. Similarly, the designation Ultradisc UHR (Ultra High-resolution) just seems to denote "it's an SACD", and the description intimates that the CD layer is the result of a down-conversion of the DSD transfer. Stop me if I'm being cynical here but really, most SACDs are made this way too you know...

The important thing is whether this new stereo version of a great album is worthy of being purchased again by those hardcore fans who may well have got the original CD issue, and possibly even the recent double disc set? The answer is an emphatic "yes", as the new DSD transfer makes the drum kit, bass playing and that gorgeous voice real like never before. The only caveat is that if you prefer her true masterpiece Bachelor No. 2 that is coming from MoFi any day now too.

Finally, it's difficult to advance this as a reason to spend twenty quid, but this edition does add excellent sleeve notes from both producer (and Mann band member) Michael Lockwood, and co-producer / engineer Ryan Freeland, explaining how and why



they were going for a specifically intimate feel on this recording – an aim in which they were wholly successful.

ELEANOR MCEVOY
EARLY HOURS
(HYBRID SACD: STEREO AND MULTI-CHANNEL DSD)

Irish singer-songwriter Eleanor McEvoy has a distinguished pedigree, having written the renowned and oft-anthologised *Only A Woman's Heart*. Her last recording *Yola* also found success as a much-admired stereo hybrid SACD. *Early Hours* demonstrates once again the gorgeous naturalistic recording style of *Yola*, while upping the game in that it adds both the choice of a multi-channel version (mostly of an ambient soundfield nature but with some centre channel use for isolated or phantom-supporting lead vocal, and some surround excursions for supporting instruments and vocals), and varies instrumental options by adding Calum MacColl (of the MacColl clan, and Brian Kennedy/ Ronan Keating sideman fame) to the already excellent band. The album has been produced by McEvoy and her gifted pianist Brian Connor, and like its predecessor the sleeve proudly proclaims that it was recorded and mixed using analogue machines. The result is a wonderfully warm sound, faithfully reproduced with stunning realism in its DSD incarnation

– particularly when conveying McEvoy's likeable Irish brogue.

While *Yola* had co-writes with Lloyd Cole and Henry Priestman, the songs here are predominantly originals in an acoustic folk vein, although a languorous take on Chuck Berry's *Memphis Tennessee* puts an interesting new spin on an old tune, and Bert Jansch's *Where Did My Life Go?* is a particular highlight. McEvoy's songs are predominantly set to strummed or picked acoustics and real piano, with occasional use of other keyboards, trumpets and fiddle as adornments. Bass and drums are used sparingly but effectively where appropriate, with a full rock arrangement only appearing on the up tempo *Days Roll By* and the charming *At The End Of The Day*. Recommended to those in search of a tranquil listening experience.

PORCUPINE TREE
IN ABSENTIA
(DVD-AUDIO: 16/48 STEREO 24/48 MULTI-CHANNEL)

The name Porcupine Tree may not mean much to you now, but trust me – by the end of the year, it will. In an inspired move DTS Entertainment have taken an act that is still relatively underground on both sides of the Atlantic, albeit with a large and devoted following, and transformed their latest album into a stunning DVD-Audio using the best surround talent money can buy – just like Steely

Dan's superb *Everything Must Go* DVD-Audio, this mix was done by Elliot Scheiner, and mastered by Darcy Proper.

The result is a great surround mix. Some might view it as a shame that the maximum possible resolution is not used but the album is so well recorded that there is very little to remind you that this is not a 24/96 mix – it is such an accomplished and enjoyable one that you simply forget about matters of resolution. Unfortunately, despite announced plans to feature 24bit stereo on the disc, the stereo track has had to be included as a 16bit 48KHz version.

The main bonus is three extra tracks in fully realised surround versions. *Drown With Me* and *Chloroform* were on the European version of the CD, but closer *Futile* is an exclusive. Other extras include three videos, full lyrics, a couple of stills galleries and there is a band bio which is worth a read, as main-man Steven Wilson and Richard Barbieri (of Japan fame) reveal the band's philosophy.

The band have always resisted attempts to pigeonhole their music, but if comparisons have to be drawn this music has to fall into the oft-dreaded categorisation of Progressive Rock, but on this latest album with a very modern, Tool-like edge. Rush, Floyd and King Crimson fans should form an orderly queue.

noel keywood



It seems like a year ago, but the Bristol show took place just four weeks ago. This year I manned the World Audio Design room and it was quite an experience - great fun most of the time, but embarrassing too! What happened to me is just the sort of thing I dread, expecting fate not to be so cruel. Well, the dice were loaded against me and it was cruel, like the icy wind outside that scoured Bristol's Broadmead Shopping Centre...

The Bristol show is now a favourite that nearly everyone in Britain's hi-fi industry attends. Once, way back in the mists of time that honour went to Harrogate. London shows then took over, but by the early nineties fierce organisers and disruptive squabbles between rival events put a lot of us off. Another difficulty with London is location: a Central London Show is easy to reach if you use public transport and want a good day out in the big smoke, but no fun if you are driving or coming from abroad and hoping to be able to afford a nearby hotel. I love Central London shows because they're on my doorstep, but am not so fond of Heathrow, especially now there's no chance of seeing Concorde swoop in or - better still - take off!

Concorde these days is in Bristol, back where it came from, and reportedly looking sad standing in the open at the end of Filton's enormous runway. I know it well because I worked on 001 whilst studying electrical engineering, and lived for one glorious year as a student in Barnwell Hall, within the guarded perimeter fence of the airfield. As London Shows struggled to attract British hi-fi manufacturers, Bristol has attracted them as well as Concorde. It

now has familiarity and stability on its side. Access is good from the M4, the Marriot hotel venue adequate and nearby accommodation reasonably priced.

When you attend a hi-fi show as an exhibitor, you'll need a good

“ the Bristol Show is now a favourite that nearly everyone in Britain's hi-fi industry attends ”

breakfast washed down with volumes of black coffee, because it's going to be a long day. The three days of Bristol are also entertaining days where we get a steady stream of dedicated enthusiasts who have built World Audio Design kits and discovered just what can be done when a system comes under your control. Funnily, I envy many, because when your hobby becomes a business some of the fun and wonder departs. For them this hasn't happened and theirs is great delight in listening to music on a great system that they have built.

I was envious of the visitors who have KLS3 Golds for example, with the wonderful Audax HD3P tweeter - this was always a wonderful loudspeaker. Mine were savaged for parts then Audax stopped making the HD3P, leaving me Gold-less! But we ran the PHONOII in the room, playing LP with an Ortofon Kontrapunkt MC cartridge and it was great to hear how wonderful good vinyl can sound. It helped to use our 300B PSE parallel single-ended amplifiers. I don't really understand why single-ended working sounds so good, but it does. I ran into difficulty

though when asked to switch to our big 6550 amplifier.

Switching off the 300Bs left the room sounding deathly silent. An expectant audience waited whilst I wrestled with cables to make the change over. The big 6550 lit up

beautifully and we were off - or so I thought. I turned up the volume and there was nothing - nada - not even a slight hiss or hum to indicate any sign of life. The preamps had been working and the power amp hummed nicely when I touched its inputs, so how could there be such

total silence? I was baffled and unable to find a solution quickly enough to prevent many of the audience walking out in disappointment. What embarrassment!

It transpired that one rear power cable connector hadn't been locked and had moved out just enough, when I disturbed the system, to sever all power to the preamp. When I twisted the locking ring of the Cliffcon contact was remade, PRE II sprang into life and we were off again. And what a relief that was...

Happily, that was the only difficulty we had in our demos over the duration of the show. Otherwise I loved hearing just what everyone was up to and as always was pretty amazed by it all; World Audio enthusiasts are the hard core of the hard core, and know more about hi-fi than most people in the industry it seems to me! I staggered out of our room at 6pm every day thinking 'Wow!' If you came and visited us, or spoke to me, then thank you very much. It is always an honour and a delight for me. Bristol might be a little bleak in February but the show is anything but. This year - as always - it was friendly, enjoyable and fun. ●

David Price



I think of integrated amplifiers as the hi-fi equivalent of the four cylinder petrol engine. They started from humble beginnings, produced very little power, made a largely unpleasant noise and were best ignored. They were there out of historical and economic necessity, rather than any romantic notion of their intrinsic merits. As the years progressed however, some manufacturers refined them with clever design, the result being that now there are actually some highly desirable ones which people deliberately choose over larger, more complicated types.

It was products like the original NAD 3020 which actually made the breed respectable. Back in 1978, affluent buyers would go for the likes of Quad's 33/405 pre-power amplifier combination, but then this little giant killer arrived to offer nearly all the performance at – literally – a fraction of the price. And it was cool, too. Resplendent in a dull dark green-grey colour, it raised two fingers to the styling conventions of the day, which were all about acres of silver brushed aluminium and ludicrously lavish control knobs. Better still, the 3020 had one single row of five LEDs as a power meter – whereas twin analogue 'VU' style affairs adorned every Japanese rival. And although the little NAD was only rated at 20W RMS per channel, owners would delight in the way that that last "35W" LED would routinely blink with no sign of strain.

Such star quality was evident to me from an early age. After an £11 kit amp I bought from Edgware Road as a fourteen year old kid finally blew its transistors, one transformed my system. I was suddenly bitten by the hi-fi bug, and a Rega Planar 3/R100 turntable and KEF Coda speakers

soon followed, tragically – but forcibly – financed by the sale of my beloved Suzuki TS50ER motorbike.

As always, the more you spend, the more you need to spend to get those gobsmacking results you experienced upon your first upgrade. My next serious amplifier purchase

” **Gobsmacking is an objectionable and tired old cliché, but this was – and more..**

was a good six years later – an NVA AP30. I'm not sure if Nene Valley Audio are still around, but believe me I took every opportunity to dem this against variously, Naim's NAIT, Exposure's X and IncaTech's Claymore. These late eighties turbocharged black shoeboxes were all superb in their own way, it's just that the NVA had the most fluid and lucid sound – it made my Linn LP12/Ittok/Supex sound out of this world, and even mustered enough watts to drive my beloved Linn Kans in my tiny bedsit. Aged twenty one, the fact that it constantly kept blowing up, had fewer inputs than a micro system and only half the power didn't seem to matter. Even my friends thought it was cool.

Of course, the NVA eventually went up in more smoke than my Triumph Dolomite, and it was time to replace it. What followed was an odyssey of old and new odds and sods (mostly the latter), until I settled with a Sony TA-5650 V-FET integrated. A bizarre mid-seventies high end Japanese flight of engineering fancy, the fact the you couldn't buy V-FETs didn't dissuade me, and for several years I basked in

one of the smoothest, sweetest sounds I've ever heard from solid-state.

Then the inevitable happened, and I was back in search of an amplifier. By this time, I was a staffer on Hi-Fi World. With no previous tube experience, I was most

interested to hear what glass audio could do.

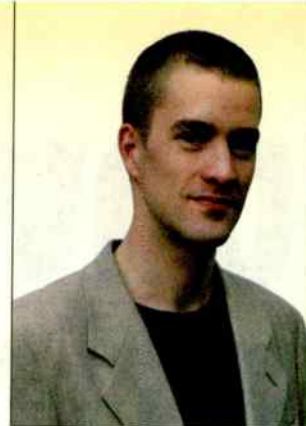
Unfortunately for me, the first thing I set ears on was the then new 300B power amp, which Andy Grove had just productionised. Suffice to say that it was akin to upgrading from my old kit amp to a shiny new NAD3020 all those years

ago. "Gobsmacking" is a particularly objectionable and tired old cliché, but this was – and more.

For the first time, I heard a staggeringly open and lucid midband – in its full three dimensions – allied to lightening attack transients, exquisite treble sweetness and tremendous bass articulation. The strangest thing was reconciling this with what I'd been told about tubes – everyone from friends to dealers and manufacturers had constantly used them as a generic term of abuse. But this simply didn't compute with this audio equivalent of a Jaguar V12.

Ironically, ten years later and tubes couldn't be more in vogue, despite the fact that there are countless stinkers on the market – more so than ever, quite possibly. The tell-tale is poorly designed output transformers, giving fat, flouncy bass, cloudy midbands and vague treble – all of which is excused under the mask of 'character'. Well, as LJK Setright said to me over lunch recently, "cars should not have character, it is their owners who should possess this". This goes for amplifiers too! ●

dominic todd



There's never been a better time to buy a turntable. I really do think there has been something of a vinyl revival of late. Let's not get carried away here, vinyl is still very much a specialised format, and it would be highly unlikely to see it make even modest gains in terms of software sales. Yet, some of the new kit I've seen over the past year has really impressed me.

My first observation of the market over the past couple of years has been a switch away from the DJ type stuff and back to the good old budget audiophile deck. If you take a look at the big box shifters, in terms of hi-fi separates at least, then companies such as Richer Sounds and Superfi have whittled their DJ ranges down to next-to-nothing. There may still be the Technics SL1210, and a handful of other bits and bobs, but the days of rows of decks and mixers are long gone from all bar the real specialist. It's fair to say that the space saved hasn't gone entirely the way of the turntable. These days, it's more likely to have been taken up by DVD, DVD recordables and the wave of new portables, yet new decks there are.

What has come as quite a surprise is that there is now some choice at the £150 end of the market. More choice in fact, than I can remember since the demise of the NAD 5120 and Dual CS505 series some ten years ago. The product that kicked things off was undoubtedly the Pro-ject Debut. It still sells well and accounts for more profit for some mass retailers than all the rest of their range combined. We are, of course, still talking small numbers here, but not small enough to put off

the likes of Goldring to launch their £140 GR1 recently. This is a basic, yet impressively engineered little deck for the money, and should do well in its specialist market. Dealers who can't get their hands on the Pro-ject range should be especially pleased. In

“ These days, it's more likely to have been taken up by DVD, DVD recordables and the wave of new portables

addition at this type of price there is also the surprisingly good Marantz TT42, which itself is a Dual clone, and the stalwart Technics SLBD22. Both prove rather more user friendly than the other duo, but just miss out on that last degree of sound quality. Nonetheless, there's now a decent choice of decks below £150, rather than the one size fits all situation of before.

Yet it's not just the budget market that offers more choice than ever. The mid-range of decks offers a decent and, perhaps more importantly, fresh range of products to. The Michell TecnoDec showed just what sort of quality engineering was available from the sub £1,000 category. It's a superb deck with the only criticism of why couldn't they have made it sooner? Still, good as it is, the TecnoDec is far from getting it all its own way. Pro-ject are stronger than ever at this price, and their RPM6 offers seriously good value. As a long term Roksan Xerxes fan I was also pleased to see the brand producing the Radius 5 last year. This really is a match for the TecnoDec, and the unipivot NIMA arm shows

Roksan innovation at its best, complete with wire-free tonearm transmission. As well as a deck at this price using something other than a Rega clone arm, it's also great to see variety of design, with Roksan not "outboarding" the motor, as seems to be the current fashion for turntable design. As with the budget end of the spectrum there is real choice for the more discerning vinyl listener.

Yet even the extremely dedicated and/or rich have had plenty to choose from of late. Over £1,000 I have been particularly impressed by the carbon fibre armed RPM9X.

As you may have read from our twin test last month, it soundly beat the CD opposition, and offered a level of control normally only associated with much more expensive decks. Anyone looking around this price range would also be foolish to overlook the Origin Live Aurora. Finally, let's be thankful that the stalwart decks are still around. Roksan, Michell and Linn will still happily provide versions of their respective super decks right up to the price of a new shopping car. Little has changed, each brand has its own characteristics but at least now, thanks to the likes of Pro-ject and Origin Live, there is even greater choice at the top. Finally, from Goldring and Project's new phono boxes to the recently reviewed Audio Analogue Aria, there are also plenty of new phono stages capable of really doing justice to the new wave of turntables.

The category may not exactly be booming, but it seems that the turntable has now finally come of age, with nothing left to prove with a resulting mature market. For anyone looking to go vinyl, that can only be a good thing. ●



Ijk setright

A plague upon the decimal system, upon the Napoleonic French who encouraged or even enforced it, and upon the scientific establishment

which is so unimaginably unimaginative as to be content with it! It is a system with few virtues and numerous vices, one of which is to tempt people to speak in decades when they should be speaking in round numbers.

Which of all those ten-fingered scientists (having ten fingers was the only possible excuse) was it who declared the limits of human hearing to be 20Hz at the bottom and 20kHz at the top? And why was there no music-loving scientist ready to disabuse him and us of that ridiculous notion before it took hold and became the confident belief of whole generations of music-lovers and loudspeaker manufacturers?

The hi-fi industry, such as it was and has since become, no doubt found it very convenient to go along with the scientific theory. It saved them a lot of hard work: anything outside those limits could be ignored, formally dismissed by science – and science, as lesser members of the scientific world are always telling us, is always right. Pop music, especially in the rock era, has misled us further: apart from synthesizers, which are always judged a bit freakish even by the rock audience, the lowest note uttered by any musical instrument within the rock conventions is the bottom E of the bass guitar, a mere 40Hz.

Imagine how incensed I was when the science correspondent of some forgotten newspaper last year

perpetrated the 20-20k myth, adding that the lowest note sung by the human voice was the 8ft C below the bass clef, which is 64Hz. In one of the choirs in which I used to sing a lot, the six basses were divided

” who declared the limits of human hearing to be 20Hz at the bottom and 20kHz at the top?

into profundo and cantante sections; I found myself in the former because I could sing down to the B flat below that C, while my two colleagues could manage respectively the G and the F sharp even further down, and I have heard Ivan Rebroff sing a gorgeous F natural, just below 43Hz. To suggest that hearing stops at 20Hz is sheer nonsense, for music is written and heard down to 16Hz, the 32ft organ stop which features not only in the solo repertoire available to that instrument but also in orchestral scores by Holst, Respighi, and others. How many loudspeakers (or indeed other elements in the hi-fi chain, so often beset by roll-off and filtration) sink audibly anywhere near such levels?

At the other extreme, 20kHz is an even more unfortunate figure. High frequencies are the quickest to go as we grow older: I could hear 21kHz when I was 21, but when I was twice that age my ears could manage nothing higher than 18kHz – and incidentally I tested the hearing at that time of some children who had been exposed to a lot of loud pop and found them deaf above about 11kHz, which was sad. It is

also sad that radio has to be cut off at about 17kHz because of the carrier wave at 19kHz, and ordinary CD at 21 to stay below the sub-octave of the sampling frequency.

Just because our ears do not work beyond these limits, it does not follow that we are insensitive to sounds beyond them. The chest cavity and belly are aware of sub-bass airborne vibrations; the skin (especially on our faces) detects higher frequencies than our ears can. That is why the new super-tweeters

lately in evidence in this magazine can make such a difference to our perception of the music, and are a thoroughly good idea deserving an enthusiastic market.

Sub-woofers can make a difference too, but are much trickier to arrange because of the air movements involved and the potential effects of listening-room characteristics. Such speakers should encompass frequencies well below 16Hz, because if that pedal C and the G above it are sounded together we should sense a difference-tone at 8Hz – but not too strongly, please, for that is a real genuine gut-churner!

Finally, a plea to the scientific chaps who delight in measuring the performance of hi-fi apparatus: by all means keep the logarithmic scales used for graphic presentations, but why not superimpose musical clues, if only the series of Cs at what we know as 'philosophical pitch'? The numbers are all powers of 2, and easy to assimilate: the bottom of a big organ is 16Hz, middle C is 256, the top note on many pianos is the C at 4096Hz. Hi-fi is, after all, not meant to involve science; it is meant to transmit music. ●

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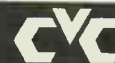
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THE BLUE NILE

A Walk Across The Rooftops

1983

A couple of years after the release of this album, a friend of mine passed me a bare pre-recorded cassette and told me, "Have a listen to this - it's the kind of thing you listen to at four o'clock in the morning when you're pissed out of your mind on red wine and wondering about the meaning of life..." Of course, it turned out she was right: that's exactly the kind of record this is.

I was immediately spellbound, if not a little discomfited, by the almost completely alien feel of the initial title track - the kind of thing which is difficult to find outside of Scott Walker's 'Climate Of Hunter'. Just listen to the way it eases its way into your consciousness and try to figure out how Robert Bell decided to play that strange, slightly dissonant, loping thumbed bass part, and why it works so well against those pizzicato strings, the desiccated drum sound, and the emotionally weary vocal which Paul Buchanan delivers. When this man sings, "I am in love with you", you really believe it. Throughout the album, his voice is recorded in a wonderfully intimate way, rarely at the front of the mix, but integrated within. It's a supremely expressive instrument, and the recording really does it justice.

Within the record's seven tracks are the two more conventional singles, 'Tinseltown In The Rain', and 'Stay', but even though they feature guitars, they are always completely subservient to the song. The main rhythm part on the former is supplied by keening strings, along with another propulsive thumbed bass track while the treated guitar is more of an effect. When solos do occur, like the flailing funk chords happened out on 'Stay', they are wonderfully simple in their approach. Indeed that solo is such an event that it was always the standout part of seeing the band live as it is so unlike

them to solo at all. Fundamentally, these are not the kind of songs that are written on guitar, indeed the remaining five tracks could, for once, completely justify the appellation 'tone poem'.

Certain members of the band regard track five, 'Easter Parade', as the core of this collection. It is very hard to disagree - the juxtaposition of Buchanan's poetic imagery with a perfect piano part, augmented with surrounding synths always had the greatest emotional pull, and its structure and phrasing are so reminiscent of some of Rickie Lee Jones' more abstract works that it was no surprise when she later appeared as the guest on an excellent B side reworking of the track.

It is not difficult to see why The Blue Nile received such approbation from luminaries such as Peter Gabriel and Tears For Fears - they were all working in the same area of trying to find not only novel uses of synthesisers for sound textures, but also whole new song structures on which to hang them. The Scottish trio were always quite clear that their naive approach arose in part from their relatively limited technical ability, but there is real art in what they do. Two subsequent albums retained all of the characteristics of

the first, and the two brief tours which accompanied the latter releases saw many grown men in tears.

Of course this album is legendary for reasons completely separate from its musical qualities, as it is essentially the main reason why Linn have a record label - they were so impressed with the band's demos, which had been passed to the company for the purposes of gear testing, that they effectively commissioned the album and built the label around it. It's almost a shame that Virgin got involved in distributing this album, as if it had remained pure Linn product we would no doubt have seen an HDCD and then an SACD by now. For a number of years now former Dire Straits manager Ed Bicknell has been guiding the band out of their contractual niggles and towards a fourth release, and he is currently arranging a deal for that album, now completed. Regrettably he tells me that at the moment this has to be the priority over any prospect of remastering the catalogue, so for the moment we will have to content ourselves with the fact that this album is still available and sounding fine on CD, but a high resolution stereo version would be something of great beauty indeed...

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world classics

In this heavily revised section, you'll find the great and the good from audio's glorious past. Most are seminal designs which have earned their place in hi-fi history, but you'll also see some oddities which aren't classic as such, but are great used buys. The year of introduction is given, alongside the original UK launch price. Think we've overlooked something? Then write in and let us know!

DIGITAL

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO CD1 1986 [£1500]
Inspired Stan Curtis redesign of Philips CD104, complete with switchable digital filter. Lean but tight and musical performer.

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO CD4SE 1998 [£200]
A touch soft in the treble and tonally light, but outstanding in every other respect.

LINN KARIK III 1995 [£1775]
The final Karik was a gem. Superb transport gives a brilliantly tight, grippy dynamic sound, albeit tonally dry.

MARANTZ CD73 1983 [£700]
A riot of gold brushed aluminium and LEDs, this distinctive machine squeezed every last ounce from its 14x4 DAC -super musical



MARANTZ SA-1 2000 [£5,000]
The greatest argument for SACD. This sublime Ken Ishiwata design is utterly musically convincing with both CD and SACD, beating most audiophile CD spinners hands down.



MERIDIAN 207 1988 [£995]
Beautifully-built two-box with pre-amp stage. Very musical although not as refined as modern Bitstream gear. No digital output.

MUSICAL FIDELITY TRIVISTA 2002 £4000
When playing SACDs, the sweetest, most lucid and lyrical digital disc spinner we've heard. Old school stereo, pure DSD design. CD sound is up in the £1000 class, too! Future classic.

MERIDIAN MCD 1984 [£600]
The first British 'audiophile' machine was a sweeter, more detailed Philips CD100. 14x4 never sounded so good, until the MCD Pro arrived a year later.



NAIM CDS 1990 [£ N/A]
Classic Philips 16x4 chipset with serious attention to power supplies equals grin-inducing sonics.



SONY CDP-101 1982 [£800]
The first Japanese CD spinner was powerful and involving. Brilliant transport more than compensated for 16x2 DAC, and you even got remote control!

SONY CDP-R1/DAS-R1 1987 [£3,000]
Sony's first two boxer was right first time. Tonally lean, but probably the most detailed and architectural sounding machine of the eighties.



SONY CDP-701ES 1984 [£890]
Sony's first ever bespoke high end audiophile machine used a 16x2 DAC to provide a clinically incisive sound; supreme build quality allied to the pure unadulterated luxury of a paperbook-sized remote control.

YAMAHA CD-X1 1983 [£340]
Nicely built 16x2 machine with a very sharp and detailed sound; sometimes too much so. Excellent ergonomics, unlike almost every other rival of the time.

COMPACT DISC TRANSPORTS

TEAC VRDS-T1 1994 [£600]
Warm and expansive sound made this a mid price hit. Well built, with a slick mech.



ESOTERIC P0 1997 [£8,000]
The best CD drive bar none; TEAC's Tokyo boys pushed the boat out in style. Brilliantly incisive, ridiculously over engineered.

KENWOOD 9010 1986 [£600]
The first discrete Jap transport was beautifully done and responds well to re-clocking even today.

DACs

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO DACMAGIC 1995 [£99]
Good value upgrade for budget CD players with extensive facilities and detailed sonics.



DCS ELGAR 1997 [£8500]
Extremely open and natural performer, albeit extremely pricey - superb.



DPA LITTLE BIT 3 1996 [£299]
Rich, clean, rhythmic and punchy sound transforms budget CD players.



PINK TRIANGLE DACAPO 1993 [£ N/A]
Exquisite; the warmest and most lyrical 16bit digital audio we have ever heard. Clever plug-in digital filter modules really worked!



QED DIGIT 1991 [£90]
Budget bitstream performer with tweaks aplenty. Positron PSU upgrade makes it smooth, but now past it.

TURNTABLES

ARISTON RD11S 1972 [£94]
Modern evolution of Thorens' original belt drive paradigm, Scotland's original super-deck was warm and musical, albeit soft. Still capable of fine results today.

PIONEER PL12D [1973] £36

The beginning of the end for the British turntable industry. When vinyl was the leading source, this brought new standards of noise performance and stability to the class, plus a low friction S-shaped tonearm. Later PL12D was off the pace compared to rivals



DUAL CS505 1982 [£75]

Simple high quality engineering and a respectable low mass tonearm made for a brilliant budget buy. Polished, smooth and slightly bland sound.

GOLDRING Lenco 88/89 1963 [£15.65]

Simple, well engineered middleweight with soft, sweet sound and reasonable tonearms. Good spares and servicing support even today from specialists.

LINN AXIS 1987 [£253]

Simplified cut-price version of the Sondek complete with LVX arm. Elegant and decently performing mid-price package. Later version with Akito tonearm better.

LINN SONDEK LP12 1973 [£86]

For many, the Brit superdeck; constant mods meant that early ones sound warmer and more lyrical than modern versions. Beguilingly musical but now off the pace.



TECHNICS SP10 1973 [£400]

Seminal Japanese engineering. Sonics depend on plinths, but a well mounted SP10/II will give any modern a hard time, especially in respect of bass power and midband accuracy.

MARANTZ TT1000 1978 [£ N/A]

Beautiful seventies high end belt drive with sweet and clean sound. Rare in Europe, but big in Japan.



MICHELL GYRODEC 1981 [£599]

Thanks to its stunning visuals, this bold design wasn't accorded the respect it deserved until recently. Early examples sound cold and mechanical, but now right on the pace. Clean, solid and architectural sound.

REGA PLANAR 3 1978 [£79]

Brilliantly simple but clean and musical performer, complete with Acos-derived S-shaped tonearm. 1983 saw the arrival of the RB300, which added detail at the expense of warmth. Superb budget buy.

GARRARD 301/401 1953 [£19]

Heavy metal - tremendously strong and articulate with only a veiled treble to let it down. In many respects, better than the seventies 'superdecks' that succeeded it.



ROKSAN XERXES 1984 [£550]

Supposedly the first to 'better' the LP12. Super tight and clean sound, with excellent transients. Less musical than the Sondek, but more neutral. Sagging plinth top-plates make them a dubious used buy.

THORENS TD124 1959 [£ N/A]

The template for virtually every 1970s 'superdeck', this iconic design was the only real competition for Garrard's 301. It was sweeter and more lyrical, yet lighter and less impactful in the bass.



TOWNSHEND ROCK 1979 [£ N/A]

The product of academic research by the Cranfield Institute, this novel machine has an extremely clean and fluid sound. Substantially modified through the years, and capable of superb results even today.

TRIO LO-7D 1978 [£600]

The best 'all-in-one' turntable package ever made, Trio/Kenwood threw their 'engineering best practice' book at this one with startling results. Clean, powerful and three-dimensional sound, ultimately limited by the tonearm.

TO NEARMS

ACOS LUSTRE GST-1 1975 [£46]

The archetypal S-shaped seventies arm; good, propulsive and involving sound in its day, but ragged and undynamic now.

AUDIO TECHNICA AT 1120 1978 [£75]

Fine finish can't compensate for this ultra low mass arm's limited sonics - a good starter arm if you've only got a few quid to spend.

ALPHASON HR100S 1981 [£150]

First class arm, practically up to present-day standards. Buy carefully, though, as there is no service available now. Totally under priced when new, exceptional.



SME 3009 1959 [£18]

Once state of the art, but long since bettered. Musical enough, but weak at frequency extremes and veiled in the midband. Legendary serviceability has made it a cult, used prices unjustifiably high.

GRACE G707 1974 [£58]

This early Japanese example of the tonearm art has a smooth, lyrical sound. Imported by Linn, fitted to early LP12s. Sonically way off the pace now, though.

REGA RB300 1983 [£88]

Inspired budget esoterica. Detailed, tight, neutral sound but tonally grey sounding in absolute terms. Responds well to tweaking, and its cheaper RB250 brother better still.



SME SERIES III 1979 [£113]

Clever variable mass design complete with Titanium Nitride tube tried to be all things to all men, and failed. Charming nonetheless, with a warm and inoffensive sound.

HADCOCK GH228 1976 [£46]

Evergreen unipivot with lovely sweet, fluid sound. Excellent service backup.



LINN ITTOK LV11 1978 [£253]

Arguably the first 'superarm'; Japanese design to Linn specs made for a muscular, rhythmic sound with real dynamics. Now off the pace, but the final LV11 version worth seeking out.

NAIM ARO 1986 [£875]

Truly endearing and charismatic performer - wonderfully engaging mid-band makes up for softened frequency extremes.



TECHNICS EPA-501 1979 [£ N/A]

Popular partner for late seventies Technics motor units. Nice build and Titanium Nitride tube can't compensate for middling sound.

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS/COMBOS

DELTEC 1987 [£1900]

Fast, dry and with excellent transients, this first DPA integrated is the real deal for eighties obsessives. Ridiculously punchy 80W per channel from a tiny, half-size box. Radical, cool and more than a little strange.

ROGERS A75 1978 [£220]

The prototypical Audiolab 8000a – lots of sensible facilities, a goodly power output and nice sound in one box. The later A75II and A100 versions offered improved sonics and were seriously sweet and open to listen to.

EXPOSURE VII/VIII 1985 [£625]

Seminal mid-eighties Exposure pre-power, offering most of what rival Naim amps did with just that little bit extra smoothness and sweetness. Still, it's by no means 'sweet' by today's standards, being lean, punchy, musical. It's also possessed of that quintessentially eighties look – frumpy black steel boxes with rough silk screened logos!

**SUGDEN C51/P51** 1976 [£130]

Soft sounding early Sugden combo with a plethora of facilities and filters, complete with seventies-tastic DIN socketry. A sweet and endearing performer as you'd expect, but lacking in power and poor load driving ability, so partner carefully.

VTL MINIMAL/50W MONOBLOCK 1985 [£1,300]

Vacuum Tube Logic was one of the Europe's biggest tube names in the eighties, and it shows. Rugged, professional build and finish allied to a lively and punchy sound (albeit with limited power) make them an excellent used buy.

A&R A60 1977 [£115]

Sweet and musical feature-packed integrated; the Audiolab 8000A used its blueprint to great effect.

**CREEK CAS4040** 1983 [£150]

More musical than any budget amp before it; CAS4140 loses tone controls, gains grip.

AUDIOLAB 8000A 1985 [£495]

Smooth integrated with clean MM/MC phono stage and huge feature count. Extremely reliable, too. Post '93 versions a top used buy.

**MCINTOSH MA6800** 1995 [£3735]

Effortlessly sweet, strong and powerful with seminal styling to match.

SUGDEN A21 1969 [£ N/A]

Class A transistor integrated with an eminently likeable smoothness and musicality. Limited inputs via DIN sockets.

MISSION CYRUS 2 1984 [£299]

Classic eighties minimalism combines arresting styling with clean, open, lively sound. Further upgradeable with PSX power supply.

**MUSICAL FIDELITY A1** 1985 [£350]

Beguiling Class A integrated with exquisite styling. Questionable reliability.

**NAIM NAIT** 1984 [£350]

Superb rhythms and dynamics make it truly musical, but tonally monochromatic. Fine phono stage, very low power.

NAD 3020 1979 [£69]

Brilliantly smooth, sweet and punchy at the price and even has a better phono stage than you'd expect. The archetypal budget super-amp.

**MYST TMA3** 1983 [£300]

Madcap eighties minimalism, but a strong and tight performer all the same.

ROGERS CADET III 1965 [£34]

Sweet sounding valve integrated, uses ECL86 output valves, even has a half useable phono stage, sweet, warm a good introduction to valves

**ROTEL RA-820BX** 1983 [£139]

Lively and clean budget integrated that arguably started the move to minimalism.

PREAMPLIFIERS**AUDIOLAB 8000C** 1991 [£499]

Tonally grey but fine phono input and great facilities make it an excellent general purpose too.

AUDIO RESEARCH SP-8 1982 [£1,400]

Beautifully designed and built high end tube preamplifier with deliciously sweet and smooth sound. Not the last word in incision or grip, but that didn't matter to those who aspired to it.

CONRAD JOHNSON**MOTIV MC-8** 1986 [£2,500]

Minimalist FET-based preamplifier from the Yank valve specialists is brilliantly neutral and smooth with a spry, light balance in the mould of Sugden high end stuff. Something of a curio, but worthwhile nonetheless.

CROFT MICRO 1986 [£150]

Budget valve pre-amp with exceptionally transparent performance.

LEAK POINT ONE STEREO 1958 [£ N/A]

Good for their time, but way off the pace these days. Use of EF86 pentode valve for high gain rules out ultra performance. Not the highest-fi!

LINN LK-1 1986 [£499]

A brave attempt by the Glasgow boys to bring remote controlled user-friendliness to hair-shirt audiophile hi-fi. Didn't quite work, but not half bad for under £100.

NAIM NAC32.5 1978 [£ N/A]

The Salisbury company came of age with this, their classic high end pre. Brilliantly fast and incisive sound that's a joy with vinyl but a tad forward for digital.

LECSON AC-1 1973 [£ N/A]

Amazing styling courtesy of Allan Boothroyd can't disguise its rather cloudy sound, but a design classic nonetheless.

**QUAD 22** 1958 [£25]

The partner to the much vaunted Quad II monoblocs - cloudy and vague sound means it's for anacrophiles only.

QUAD 33 1968 [£43]

Better than the 22, but Quad's first tranny pre isn't outstanding. Responds well to tweaking/ rebuilding though...

POWER AMPLIFIERS**LEAK STEREO 20** 1958 [£31]

Excellent workaday classic valve amplifier with decent power and drive. Surprisingly modern sounding if rebuilt sympathetically. Irrepressibly musical and fluid.

**LECSON API** 1973 [£ N/A]

Madcap cylindrical styling alluded to its 'tower of power' pretensions, but it wasn't. Poor build, but decently clean sounding when working.

MARANTZ MODEL 9 1997 [£8000]

Authentic reproduction monoblocs still more than cut the sonic mustard. Highly expensive and highly sought after.

MICHELL ALECTO 1997 [£1989]
Crisp, clean and beautifully controlled with gorgeous styling. Partnered with the £1650 Orca this sounds delicious!

LEAK POINT ONE, TL10, TL12.1 1949 [£28]
Early classics that are getting expensive. Overhauling is de rigeur before use, using original parts if possible. Surprisingly crisp and musical sound, that's far more modern than Quad IIs. Deeply impressive when in fine fettle.



MUSICAL FIDELITY XA200 1996 [£1000PR]
200W of sweet smooth transistor stomp in a grooved tube! Under-rated oddity.



RADFORD STA25 RENAISSANCE 1986 [£977]
At the time, very possibly the least cool amplifier on the planet – and we're not talking heat dissipation here. This reworking of Radford's original late sixties design was possessed of a wonderfully rich, old school valve sound with enough power (25W) and lots of subtlety.



QUAD II 1952 [£22]
The all-time classic valve amplifier, with a deliciously fluid and lyrical voice. In other respects though, it sounds hopelessly dated. Low power and hard to partner properly.



QUAD 405 1978 [£115]
The first of the current dumpers is a capable design with smooth, effortless power and a decently musical sound. 606 and 707 continue the theme with greater detail and incision.

QUAD 303 1968 [£55]
Bullet proof build, but woolly sound. Off the pace, but endearing nonetheless. Some pipe smoking slipper wearers swear by them!

KRELL KMA100 II [1987] £5,750
Ludicrous monoblock version of the giant KSA-100 is one of the seminal eighties transistor power amplifiers. Massive wallop allied to a very clean and open Class A sound makes this one of the best amplifiers of its type, ever.

PIONEER M-73 1988 [£1,200]
Monster stomp from this seminal Japanese power amplifier, complete with switchable Class A and Class B operation. Clean, open and assured sounding, albeit a tad behind the pace on high speed dance music. Rosewood side cheeks and black brushed aluminium completes the eighties-tastic experience.



PHONO STAGES

CREEK OBH-8 SE 1996 [£180]
Punchy, rhythmic character with oodles of detail makes this a great budget audiophile classic. Partner with a Goldring G1042 for an unbeatable budget combination.



LINN LINNK 1984 [£149]
Naim-designed MC phono stage built to partner the original Naim NAIT - yes, really! Fine sound, although off the pace these days.

MICHELL ISO 1988 [£ N/A]
This Tom Evans-designed black box started the trend for high performance offboard phono stages. Charismatic, musical and punchy - if lacking in finesse.

TUNERS

MARANTZ ST-8 1978 [£353]
Marantz's finest radio moment. Warm, organic sound plus an oscilloscope for checking the signal strength and multipath.



CREEK CAS3140 1985 [£199]
Excellent detail, separation and dynamics - brilliantly musical at the price. T40 continued the theme...

NAD 4040 1979 [£79]
Tremendously smooth and natural sound allied to low prices and good availability make this budget analogue esoterica. Needs a good antenna to work properly, however.

NAIM NAT03 1993 [£595]
The warm, atmospheric sound is further proof of Naims proficiency with tuners.

PIONEER TX-9500 1976 [£295]
Another of the serious classic solid-staters. Boasts the usual high end Jap package of fine sound, brilliant sensitivity and superb build.

LEAK TROUGHLINE 1956 [£25]
Series I an interesting ornament but limited to 88-100MHz only. II and III are arguably the best-sounding tuners ever. Adaptation for stereo easy via phono multiplex socket. Fed by a modern outboard decoder they're deliciously lucid with true dimensionality.



YAMAHA CT7000 1977 [£444]
Reputedly the best of the classic Jap analogues, this combines sleek ergonomics, high sensitivity and an explicit, detailed sound.

QUAD FM4 1983 [£240]
Supreme ergonomics and styling allied to a pleasingly lyrical sound with plenty of sweetness and detail made this one of the best tuners around upon its launch.



REVOX B760 1975 [£520]
More of a semi-pro machine than a domestic bit of kit, the Revox offers superlative measured performance although the sound isn't quite as staggering as the numbers. Fine nonetheless, and surely the most durable tuner here?

NAD 4140 1995 [£199]
Brilliant affordable digital tuner has a smooth, detailed musical sound plus sensible real-world facilities.

ROGERST75 1977 [£125]
Superb mid-price British audiophile design, complete with understated black fascia. Fine sound in the true Rogers mould – smooth and sweet with fine dimensionality.

SANSUITU-9900 1976 [£300]
A flagship Japanese tuner designed to steal sales from the likes of Accuphase and Revox, it boasts superlative RF performance and an extremely smooth and lucid sound, along with very fine build and finish.

SONY ST-5950 1977 [£222]
One of the first Dolby FM-equipped tuners, a format that came to nought. Still, it was Sony's most expensive tuner to date, and boasted a very good sound quality allied to brilliant ergonomics.



TECHNICS ST-8080 1976 [£180]
National Panasonic's specialist hi-fi brand was a big hitter back then, and this is no exception. Superb FM stage makes for a very clean and smooth listen with lots of detail and depth.

ANALOGUE RECORDERS

YAMAHA TC-800GL 1977 [£179]
Early classic with ski-slope styling courtesy of Mario Bellini. Middling sonics by modern standards, but cool nonetheless!



AIWA XD-009 1989 [£600]
Aiwa's Nak beater didn't, but it wasn't half bad nonetheless. Massive spec even included a 16x4 DAC!

NAKAMICHI CR-7E 1987 [£800]
The very best sounding Nakamichi ever - but lacks the visual drama of a Dragon.



PIONEER CTF-950 1978 [£400]
Not up to modern standards sonically, but a great symbol of the cassette deck art nonetheless.



REVOX A77 1968 [£145]
The first domestic open reel that the pros used at home. Superbly made, but sonically off the pace these days. B77 better, but couldn't match the Japanese.



SONY WM-D6C 1985 [£290]
Single capstan transport on a par with a Swiss watch, single ree/replay head better than most Naks. Result: sublime.

**DIGITAL RECORDERS**

SONY MDS-JE555ES 2000 [£900]
The best sounding MD deck ever, thanks to awesome build and heroic ATRAC-DSP Type R coding.



PIONEER PDR-555RW 1999 [£480]
For a moment, this was the CD recorder to have. Clean and detailed.

MARANTZ DR-17 1999 [£1100]
Probably the best sounding CD recorder made; built like a brick outhouse with a true audiophile sound and HDCD compatibility.



KENWOOD DM-9090 1997 [£500]
Serious and sophisticated sound thanks to well implemented ATRAC 4.5; surprisingly musical MD recorder.

SONY TCD-8 DATMAN 1996 [£599]
Super clean sound makes this an amazing portable, but fragile.

LOUDSPEAKERS

ACOUSTIC RESEARCH AR18S 1978 [£125]
Yank designed, British built loudspeaker became a budget staple for many rock fans, thanks to the great speed from the paper drivers, although finesse was most definitely not their forte...

BBC LS3/5A 1972 [£88]
Extremely low colouration design is amazing in some respects - articulation, stage depth, clarity - and useless in others (both frequency extremes). Came in wide variety of guises from various manufacturers building it under licence. Partner with Rogers ABI subwoofers for an extra two octaves of bass!



LOWTHER PM6A 1957 [£18

EACH]

This seminal full-range driver is still manufactured. High sensitivity, as fitted to many classic horn designs.

TANNOY WESTMINSTER 1985 [£4500]
Folded horn monsters which certainly sound good if you have the space. Not the last word in tautness but can drive large rooms and image like few others.



JR 149 1977 [£120]
Infamous cylindrical speaker that was ignored for decades but now back in fashion! Based on classic KEF T27 / B110 combo as seen in the BBC LS3/5a. Doesn't play loud, needs a powerful transistor amplifier, but rewards with fine clarity in imaging.



SPENDOR BCI 1976 [£240]
Celestion HF1300 tweeter meets bespoke Spendor Bextrene mid-bass unit - and the result is a beautifully warm yet well focused sound. A little bass bloom necessitates careful low-stand mounting, but these prove that the seventies did have some fine designs after all!

QUAD ESL57 1956 [£45 EACH]
Wonderfully open and neutral sound puts box loudspeakers to shame. Properly serviced they give superb midband performance, although frequency extremes less impressive. Ideally, use in stacked pairs or with subwoofers and supertweeters.



KEF R105 1977 [£785]
Three way Bextrene-based floorstander (complete with castors!) gave a truly wide-band listen and massive (500W) power handling. A very neutral, spacious and polite sounding design, but rhythmically well off the pace. The quintessential nineteen seventies loudspeaker.

IMFTLS80 1976 [£550]
Warm and powerful nineteen seventies behemoth with transmission loading and a mixture of KEF and Celestion drive units. Impressively physical wideband sound but rhythms aren't its forte.

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Audio Refinement Pre 5 "new"	£395.00	£895.00
Quad 33/ 303	£195.00	-
SD Acoustics SD1	£325.00	£1,650.00
Rogers LS55 "new"	£195.00	£430.00

New this month

POWER AMPLIFIERS	Our Price	Original Retail Price
Gamut D200 mk II "Hi Fi Choice Product of the Year"	£3,990.00	£9,000.00
Melos 402 Gold Tiode Plus Monoblocks 400wpc	£4,995.00	£12,000.00
Krell FPB 600	£1,895.00	£2,350.00
Bryston 4B5ST	-	-

PRE AMPLIFIERS	Our Price	Original Retail Price
Audio Research LS5 mk II	£2,495.00	£6,435.00
Mark Levinson 380 S	£4,495.00	£6,995.00
Krell KRC HR	£2,750.00	£6,949.00

LOUDSPEAKERS	Our Price	Original Retail Price
JM Lab Nova Utopia	ASK	£21,500.00
JM Lab Diva Utopia BE Signature Finish	ASK	£7,600.00
JM Lab Micro BE Utopia + Stand	ASK	£4,400.00
Revel Studio	Coming Soon	-
Revel Salon	Coming Soon	-
Linn Kiehlids (+ Active Cards)	£395.00	£1,000.00
Talon Chorus 5 mk II (Upgrade)	£4,995.00	£14,000.00
Wilson ACT 2 (Upgrade)	£4,995.00	£9,000.00

CD PLAYERS & DACS/DVD PLAYERS	Our Price	Original Retail Price
Wadia 850	£2,495.00	£5,000.00
Gamut CD1R mk II	£2,995.00	£2,950.00
Mark Levinson 31 Transport	£4,000.00	£9,900.00
Mark Levinson 390S	£4,500.00	£6,500.00
Audio Synthesis DAX Decade (Bal)	£1,795.00	£4,000.00
Audio Synthesis DAX	£1,395.00	£2,200.00
Acoustic Arts Drive 1	£1,995.00	£2,890.00
Mark Levinson 31 Transport	£3,500.00	£9,900.00

TURNTABLES, ANALOGUE, VARIOUS	Our Price	Original Retail Price
Audio Research PH2 Phono stage	£1,195.00	£2,895.00
SME 20/2A	£3,495.00	£5,275.00

AV COMPONENTS	Our Price	Original Retail Price
Primare A30.3	ASK	£1,300.00
Primare A30.5	ASK	£1,700.00
Parasound C2 (Halo)	ASK	£3,500.00
Parasound C1 (Halo)	ASK	£5,500.00
NAD	ASK	-
Marantz	ASK	-

PLASMA PROJECTORS	Our Price	Original Retail Price
In Focus 5700	ASK	£3,000.00
In Focus 7200	ASK	£6,000.00

Power amplifiers

Conrad Johnson Premier 140 5A	£5,250.00	£7,000.00
Krell KSA 80B	£1,395.00	£3,600.00
Krell KSA 250	£2,250.00	£6,500.00
Mark Levinson 383 Integrated	£4,950.00	£6,000.00
Naim Nait 3	£375.00	£608.00
Cary 805 C Monoblocks "new"	£4,500.00	£8,250.00
Bel Canto Evo 4	£2,895.00	£3,895.00
Cary 5LA 70 mk II Silver	£995.00	£2,250.00
Conrad Johnson MF2500	£2,795.00	£4,000.00
YBA Passion Monoblocks	£4,995.00	£9,500.00
Audio Flight 100	£On Dem	£6,500.00
Audio Flight One Integrated	£On Dem	£4,500.00
Linn Klimax 500 Solo (4)	£3,995.00 each	£6,000.00
Musical Fidelity NuVista 300	£2,695.00	£3,300.00
Boulder 500 AE	£2,495.00	£5,500.00
E5 Lab DX-S4	£1,395.00	£2,000.00
Krell KAV 250A	£1,795.00	£3,650.00
Roksan Caspian Integrated	£On Dem	£895.00
Roksan Caspian Power	£On Dem	£645.00
Krell FPB 700cx	£11,995.00	£15,000.00
E5 Lab DX-58	£On Dem	£2,995.00
Plinius 820P	£On Dem	£1,550.00
Plinius SA 102 "new"	ASK	£3,750.00
Bryston 4 B5ST	ASK	£3,350.00
Jadis Defy 7 mk III	£On Dem	£6,000.00
Linn Bass Active Card	£69.00	£120.00
Krell MDA 300	£4,995.00	£12,000.00
Linn Klassik CD/Amp silver	£895.00	£1,030.00
Boulder 1060 Power "new"	£On Dem	£16,500.00
Primare 30.1 mk II Integrated	£1,350.00	£1,500.00
YBA Passion Stereo "new"	£3,995.00	£5,995.00
Plinius 250 mk IV "new"	ASK	£6,350.00

AV components

AV COMPONENTS	Our Price	Original Retail Price
Linn 5103 System Controller	£2,395.00	£3,285.00
Parasound A52 - 5 Channel	ASK	£1,700.00
Lexicon MC1	£1,995.00	£5,500.00
Lexicon MC8/ MC8B	ASK	£5,000.00
Lexicon RT10 DVD Player	ASK	£7,500.00
SIM 2 HT 300	£7,500.00	£9,000.00
Primare P30 Processor	£1,295.00	£2,000.00
Linn Klassik DVD	£On Dem	£2,000.00
Lexicon MC12 / MC12B	ASK	£8100.00/ £8900.00
Loewe Xemix DVD "new"	£On Dem	£495.00

PLASMAS/LCD/PROJECTORS	Our Price	Original Retail Price
From NEC/ Panasonic/Pioneer/Sharp from	£4000.00	POA
Electrograph Delphi/Selec/Sony/Sanyo	POA	POA
Panasonic TH-42 PWD6 "new"	£4,400.00	-

Pre amplifiers

Audio Research LS2	£1,395.00	£3,300.00
Boulder LSAE Pre Amp	£1,750.00	£3,500.00
Klein 7LX 3.5B	£2,900.00	£5,400.00
Audio Research LS3	£795.00	£1,997.00

Cary SLP98L Remote Pre x-demo	£1,295.00	£2,794.00
Conrad Johnson PV14L	£1,650.00	£2,250.00
Audio Flight Pre 200	£On Dem	£4,500.00
Musical Fidelity NuVista	£995.00	£1,700.00
Audio Research LS25 mk II	£4,250.00	£5,995.00
YBA 2a Line	£1,295.00	£1,995.00
Tom Evans The Vibe Pre	ASK	£2,700.00
Chord DSC 1600E (dac/pre)	£3,250.00	£6,500.00
AVI S2000 MP remote pre	£395.00	£800.00
Boulder 1012 (pre amp/ 24.96 dac/ Phono)	£On Dem	£13,000.00
YBA Passion Pre (inc Phono)	£3,595.00	£5,595.00
Boulder 2010 Pre	£POA	£30,000.00
Plinius 16L "new"	£On Dem	£3,200.00
C.A.T. ultimate reference Pre Amp Inc/Phono "new"	ASK	£7,350.00

Quality speakers

Shahinian Obelisk	£995.00	£3,500.00
Heybrook Sextet (new drivers)	£395.00	£1,200.00
JM Lab Sib & Cub (5.1 spk sys)	£695.00	£859.00
JM Lab Micro Utopia BE	ASK	£4,400.00
JM Lab Mezzo Utopia	£3,000.00	£7,890.00
Audio Physic Avanti	£4,995.00	£7,800.00
Wilson Audio System 5.1	£6,995.00	£19,000.00
Avante Garde Trio	£9,995.00	£17,000.00
Proac Ref 125 Yew	£1,295.00	£1,700.00
Proac CC1 Centre	£595.00	£800.00
2 x Proac ER1 Sub	£595.00	£1,000.00
JM Lab Nova Utopia	ASK	£21,500.00
Revel Ultima Studio	£7,495.00	£13,000.00
ATC 5CM 10 Passive Black	£495.00	£1,100.00
JM Lab Alto Utopia BE	ASK	£9,999.00
Wilson Vtct mk I	£3,750.00	£9,000.00
JM Lab Utopia	£9,995.00	£18,000.00
Reference 3A	£1,750.00	£2,750.00
Audio Physic Spark	£1,150.00	£1,795.00
Talon Kite Centre & Bracket	£795.00	£1,750.00
Aerial Acoustic SW12 Sub Woofer, Maple/remote	£2,995.00	£5,200.00
Mirage M3 si	£1,595.00	£4,100.00
Linn Kabers (Active)	£995.00	£2,500.00
Rel Q 200 E	£On Dem	£650.00
Rel Q 150 E	£On Dem	£500.00
Audio Physic Luna Sub (wood)	£On Dem	£1,799.00
Audio Physic Tara	ASK	£999.00
Vienna Acoustics Mahler	ASK	£6,000.00
Vienna Acoustics Mozart	ASK	£1,700.00
Vienna Acoustics 5.1	ASK	£3,500.00
Cabasse io 5	ASK	£2,170.00
Blue Room Minipod (White)	£225.00	£298.99
Blue Room Minipod + Sub (Blue)	£625.00	£749.00
Blue Room Minipod Sub	£415.00	£468.99
Genelec 205 Active Monitors	£On Dem	£750.00
Audio Physic Virgo III "new"	ASK	£4,000.00
Audio Physic Tempo III "new"	£On Dem	£2,000.00
Naim SBL's	£995.00	£2,225.00

CD players DACS

EAD DSP9000 Pro Series III	£2,795.00	£8,000.00
Micromega Classic Solo	£995.00	£2,500.00
Wadia N6 27 Dac	£3,750.00	£9,000.00
Mark Levinson 31.5 Transport	£3,995.00	£9,600.00
Chord SPH 1600E Dac/ Pre	£2,750.00	£6,500.00
Theta Pro Geny	£495.00	£1,195.00
Acoustic Arts Drive 1/Dac 1 mk II	£On Dem	£6,500.00
Acuphase DP70	£1,595.00	£4,000.00
Linn Sondec CD12	£7,995.00	£12,000.00
Linn UNIDISK 1.1	£On Dem	£6,500.00
Linn CD12	£On Dem	£12,000.00
Linn Numerik	£595.00	£1,500.00
Pink Triangle Da Capo 1307	£695.00	£1,400.00
Roksan Caspian CD	£On Dem	£995.00
Trichord PD-S 503	£295.00	£500.00
YBA CD1 Delta (Twin psu)	£3,995.00	£5,500.00
Audio Synthesis DAX Decade	£1,695.00	£3,250.00
YBA CD 3 Delta	£On Dem	£2,200.00
Audiomeca Damnation CD Transport	£750.00	£1,600.00
Primare V20 DVD/CD	£750.00	£1,600.00
Audio Aero 32/192 Capotele CD (Ver. 4)	£On Dem	£4,500.00
Primare V25 CD/DVD	£On Dem	£1,000.00
Boulder 2020 dac	£POA	£24,000.00
Theta Data II Transport AT + link	£1,995.00	£4,000.00
YBA CD Integre "new"	£On Dem	£1,195.00

Turntables & analogue

Tara Labs 10m Bal The 2 Interconnect	£2,000.00	£5,000.00
Tara Labs Monoblock FGS	£500.00	£1,000.00
Tara Labs The 2 Speaker Cable 4ft	£1,300.00	£3,000.00
Trichord Dino (Phono)	£345.00	£498.00
Roksan Xerxes 10/D51.5/ Artemiz/ Jubilee	ASK	£4,500.00
Ortofon Jubilee	ASK	£1,500.00
Roksan Caspian Phono se	£On Dem	£950.00
SME 20/2A	£On Dem	£5,273.53
Roksan TM52/ Artemiz	£On Dem	£8,500.00
Michell Orber VCI/ RB300	ASK	£2,350.00
Project RPM 6 "new"	£On Dem	£500.00
Project RPM9/ arm	£On Dem	£1,000.00
VPI TINT mk IV/ Rockport 6000/ Flywheel/ VPI Stand/ Clearaudio	£8,500.00	£16,000.00
Accurate/ Pump etc. "new"	£On Dem	£850.00
Roksan Radius 5 (Acrylic)/ Nima arm "new"	£On Dem	£1,100.00
Loricraft record cleaning machine	£On Dem	£1,100.00
Earmax Pro	£On Dem	£425.00
Revox B160 Tuner	£450.00	£995.00
SME 30/2 A "new"	£10,495.00	£12,289.00
Moth Record Cleaning m/c	£395.00	£ -
Project RPM4/ Ortofon 510 "new"	£245.00	£325.00
Ortofon Rohmann	£On Dem	£1,050.00
Ortofon Kontrapunkt a/b "new"	£On Dem	£500.00
Michell Gyro SE/ RB300 "new"	ASK	£1,100.00
Audio Synthesis Phono Eq mm/mc	£495.00	£ -
SME Series V Arm "new"	£1,350.00	£1,650.00
Pink Triangle PT Ext psu	£495.00	£ -
Plinius 14 Phono "new"	£On Dem	£2,750.00
Nackamichi DR 3	£195.00	£400.00
Tom Evans - The Groove "new"	ASK	£1,795.00
Clear Audio Reference Mc phono stage X-demo	£1,695.00	£2,795.00
Rega Planer 3 + Hi Fi News Out Board Power Supply	£320.00	£423.00
Clear Audio Symphonic phono stage X-demo MM/MC	£640.00	£740.00

* Reduced this month

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- Egglaston Works
- Electrograph Delphi
- Genelec
- Graham
- Gryphon
- Immerge
- In Focus
- J M Lab
- KEF
- Krell
- Lexicon
- Linn
- Loewe
- Lutron
- Lyra
- Mark Levinson
- Michell Eng.
- Musical Fidelity
- Naim
- NEC
- NEC
- Nordost
- Oracle
- Ortofon
- P.M.C.
- Plinius
- Primare
- Project
- Quadraspire
- REL
- Rockport
- Roksan
- Rotel
- Ruark
- Selec
- SME
- Soundations
- Straight Wire
- Sugden
- Tara Labs
- Teac
- Theme Scene
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- Transfiguration
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MAGNEPLANAR SMGA198X [£800]

Technological loudspeaker with genuinely musical abilities; fast, smooth, open, dry.

**MISSION 770 1980 [£375]**

Back in its day, it was an innovative product and one of the first of the polypropylene designs. Warm, smooth, clean and powerful sound.

**MISSION 752 1995 [£495]**

Cracking Henry Azima-designed floor-standers combined HDA drive units and metal dome tweeters with surprisingly warm results. Benign load characteristics makes them great for valves.

HEYBROOK HB1 1982 [£130]

Peter Comeau-designed standmounters with an amazingly lyrical yet decently refined sound. Good enough to partner with very high end ancillaries, yet great with budget kit too. A classic.

CELESTION SL6 1984 [£350]

Smallish two way design complete with aluminium dome tweeter and plastic mid-bass unit set the blueprint for nineteen eighties loudspeakers. Very open and clean sounding, albeit course at high frequencies and limp in the bass. Speakers would never be the same again...

**LEAK SANDWICH 1961 [£39 EACH]**

Warm sounding infinite baffle that, with a reasonably powerful amplifier can sound quite satisfying.

**QUAD ESL63 1980 [£1200]**

An update of the ESL57, with stiffer cabinets. Until the 989, the best of the Quad electrostatics.

**YAMAHA NS1000 1977 [£532]**

High tech Beryllium midband and tweeter domes and brutish 12" woofers in massive sealed mirror image cabs equals stunning transients, speed and wallop allied to superb transparency and ultra low distortion. Partner carefully!

**MISSION X-SPACE 1999 [£499]**

The first mass production sub and sat system using NXT panels is a sure-fire future classic - not flawless, but a tantalisingly unboxy sound nevertheless!



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Stereo 40

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"Icon Audio offers sensible, well sorted valve amps, with adequate power for most users and built to a good standard. Valve amplifier ownership without tears".



Stereo 40 EL34 integrated 40+40w (or 19+19 Triode) Hi Fi News Feb '02 said...

"I was impressed not only by the almost tangible three-dimensional quality of performers but the depth and width of the soundstage..." "ample, deep, rhythmic, tuneful bass, underpinning a lucid and effortless midrange and treble". "I liked the impeccable finish and feeling of bomb-proof solidity as well some of the most natural sounding music that I have heard at home". Tony Bolton

We also have many customer testimonials with similar comments. See our website or contact us for more info.



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Stereo 20 EL84 15watts integrated £649.95*

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Goldring		Swiss Quality Diamond Styli	
1006	£76 £62 GEX £52	ADC XLM Mk III	£16
1012 GX	£95 £76 GEX £67	Akai AN 5, AN 60	£12
1022 GX	£124 £100 GEX £86	AN2, AN 70	£14
1042	£143 £114 GEX £100	Aiwa AN11	£12
Eroica LX/H	£133 £109 GEX N/A	Dual DN 145 E, DN 165 E	£16
Elite	£232 £190 GEX N/A	JVC DT 55, DT 60	£12
Audio Technica		National EPS 24 CS, P 30 D, P 33 D	£12
AT 95 E	£23	Ortofon FF15/VMS20 EII, OM20	£16
AT 110 E	£28	Pioneer PN 210/220/240	£12
AT OC9 ML II	£330 £280 EX	Shure N 75 C, SC 35 C	£12
Grado		N 75 ED T2, N 75 EJ T2	£16
Prestige Black	£40	N 95 ED/EJ, N 75 3 (78)	£16
Prestige Gold	£110	VN 35 E	£18
Ortofon		N 97 HE, VN 35 HE	£25
510 Mk II	£34	Sony ND 142/155 G, CN234	£12
MC 15 Super II	£130 £110 EX	ND 143/150/200 G	£14
MC 25 FL	£227 £193 EX	Stanton D 681 EEE	£19
MC 10 Supreme	£304 £258 EX	***Over 500 Styli Types Stocked***	
MC 20 Supreme	£382 £323 EX		
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Kontrapunkt B	£643 £548 EX		
Rohmann	£837 £742 EX		
Shure			
M 97 XE	£98		
V 15 V xMR	£304	£204	
Sumiko			
Blue Point Special	£265 £237 EX		

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EX - Exchange price for any moving coil cartridge

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Audiogram MB2- Integrated Amplifier	£265.00
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Apogee Mini Grands - Loudspeakers	£3499.00
Audio Research DAC1-20 - DAC	£800.00
Audio Research VT50-Valve Amplifier	£1999.00
California Audio Alpha - DAC	£199.00
California Audio DX1-CD Player	£349.00
Copland CDA277 - CD Player HDCD	£799.00
Copland CDA288 - CD Player HDCD	£1149.00
Copland CSA301 MKI - Valve Preamplifier	£720.00
Copland CSA303 - Hybrid Preamplifier	£650.00
Copland CTA504 - Valve Amplifier	£1099.00
Goldmund Mimesis 6B - Amplifier	£1400.00
Jadis Orchestra - CD Player	£899.00
Krell KAV250P- Preamplifier	£1599.00
Krell KSL - Preamplifier	£600.00
Krell CD-DSP-Top loader CD Player	£1200.00
Martin Logan Cinema - Centre channel	£949.00
Martin Logan Theatre - Centre channel	£1499.00
Martin Logan Prodigy - Electrostatic	£7299.00
PS Audio Ultralink II - DAC	£985.00
PS Audio Reference Link -Digital Preamp	£1999.00
Sonus Faber Concertino Home Loudspeakers	£429.00
Sonus Faber Grand Piano Home Loudspeakers	£1208.00
Theta Digital Dreadnaught -5 ch-amp	£4735.00
Theta Digital Carmen II - CD/DVD Drive	£2379.00
Theta Digital David II -CD/DVD Drive	£2999.00
Wilson Audio CUB - Loudspeakers Silver	£2900.00
Wilson Audio CUB II w/stands Black	£6999.00
Wilson Audio Witt II Loudspeakers Black	£5400.00
Z Systems RDQ1- Transparent Digital Equalizer	£1850.00

no grey imports - all equipment comes with 1 year full warranty

World standards

These are the best products we've heard that are currently on sale in the UK, complete with the date they were originally launched and their current retail prices. Watch out for regular updates...!

TURNABLES

AN TT1/ARM ONE/IQ1 1998 £725
Redesigned Systemdek IIX now off the pace, but the arm and cartridge are both star performers.

LINN LP12/LINGO 1973 £2100
The quintessential belt drive superdeck offers a beguilingly musical midband at the expense of lumpy bass and nebulous imaging. Latest Lingo brings a new lease of life, with even more punch and polish.

MICHELL TECNODEC 2003 £575
Superb introduction to Michell turntables on a budget. Top quality build and elegant design make it the class of the mid-price field right now.

MICHELL GYRODEC SE 2002 £870
Its beauty is more than skin deep - superbly build and finish allied to clever design equals class leading performance. Latest DC motor with 'Never Connected' PSU make it all the more unassailable.

MICHELL ORBE SE 2002 £1916
Cost-no-object evolution of the Gyro adds massy acrylic platter and two-stage isolation. Fantastically capable all rounder with commanding, powerful, detailed sound that gets the best from almost any arm and cartridge



PROJECT DEBUT II PHONO SB 2002 £170
Fuss-free all in one starter turntable, complete with built in phono stage. Not a star performer, but a fine midi system upgrade all the same.

REGA P3 2000 £298
Great entry level audiophile deck with fine bundled tonearm. Tweakable, and responds well to careful siting on a Base platform.

REGA P25 2001 £619
Until the TecnoDec, the best mid-price turntable package. Fine build and elegant styling. Clean, open sound but limited at frequency extremes in absolute terms.

SME MODEL 10A 1995 £3333
Exquisitely engineered deck and arm combo, but dry and clinical sounding compared to rivals. Accomplished performer with classical music, nonetheless.

MICHELL TECNOARM A2003 £399
John Michell's brilliant reworking of the Rega RB250 theme, using blasting and drilling techniques usually seen in motorsport! The result is the best sounding arm at £400, and as good as most at four times the price. Runs SME V very close in all except bass, and betters it for musicality. Stunning



TECHNICS SL1200/III 1973 £395
Slick build makes it a respectable performer, although the cheapo arm limits it - fit a Rega RB250 and it's suddenly a serious mid-price machine.

TOEARMS

HADCOCK 242 SE 2000 £649
Latest of a long line of unipivots, with added mass, revised geometry and better finish. Musical like few others at or near the price.

LINN EKOS 1987 £1700
Subtle mods over the years, including revised bearings and the recent new wiring has kept it a serious contender in the superarm stakes. Lacks the SME's slam, the OL's clarity or the ARO's emotion, but has a feisty musicality all of its own.

NAIM ARO 1987 £1425
Charismatic unipivot is poor at frequency extremes but sublime in the midband; truly emotive and insightful.

ORIGIN LIVE SILVER 2502001 £625
This fully developed and expertly fiddled Rega boasts a superbly even, transparent and tuneful sound. Gives away only a small degree of finesse and dimensionality to top arms.

ORIGIN LIVE ILLUSTRIOUS 2002 £1570
A modern superarm with battleship build. Extremely strong, even and open sound in the mould of the late, lamented Zeta, plus fine tonal colouring. Exquisite.



REGA RB250 1984 £112
Sold through Moth Marketing, this is capable far beyond its price point, with a tight, lean and detailed sound. Responds brilliantly to Origin Live counterweight modification, and well to rewiring.

SME 309 1989 £767
Entry level SME complete with cost-cut aluminium armtube and detachable headshell. Tight, neutral sound with good tonality, but lacks the IV's pace and precision.

SME SERIES IV 1988 £1127
Offers nine tenths of the SME V's magic at just over half price. Exquisitely built and finished, and a design classic. Faces stiff competition these days, but lovely nevertheless.

SME SERIES V 1987 £1614
The so-called Best Pickup Arm in the World isn't, but comes close. Vice-like bass with incredible weight, ultra clear midband and treble. Does everything except beguile the listener.

CARTRIDGES

ORTOFON KONTRA 'B 1999 £720
Surprisingly articulate performer by Ortofon standards. All the brand's usual polish and detail allied to real vim. Loves making music!



AUDIO TECHNICA AT-110 1984 £29
Great starter cartridge that's refined, detailed and musical beyond its price.

DYNAVECTOR DV10X5 2003 £250
A distant descendent of the classic Ultimo 10X, this has warmth and sweetness in spades, allied to a punchy bass. Beats G1042 comfortably.

GOLDRING G1042 1994 £135
One of the best MMs going, with sweet and extended treble and punchy, muscular bass.

LYRIA LYDIAN BETA 1998 £600
An altogether more beguiling listen than the MC30S, although not quite as incisive. Superb all rounder, nonetheless.

SUMIKO BPS 1995 £250
Charismatic performer with rhythm aplenty, but in other respects way off the pace - lacks smoothness and sophistication of the DV10X5.

DYNAVECTOR DV20X-H2003 £395

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.

**LYRA PARNASSUS DCT 1997 £1895**

Jonathan Carr's masterpiece is a brilliantly lyrical and fluid performer, with a deliciously sweet tone and immense subtlety and polish.

ORTOFON MC25FL 1994 £285

Strong budget MC with a cleaner and more detailed sound than the Dynavector; more sterile and less emotive, however.

ORTOFON MC30 SUPR' 1995 £550

Beautifully clean and detailed device with real finesse, albeit a tad mechanical sounding.

MUSIC MAKER 1999 £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.

SHURE V15XMR 1994 £350

The most musical MM yet made – brilliantly dynamic and punchy in the classic Shure mould, yet refined and tidy too.

DIGITAL DISC PLAYERS**ARCAM DIVA CD82T 2002 £600**

Oodles of finesse, but not the most gripping performer at the price. A fine all rounder in the classic Arcam mould.

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO DVDS7 2003 £200

Crisp, lively DVD-A sound makes this superb value for money, but 16bit playback is way behind similarly priced CD spinners.

CREEK CD5011 2004 £699

Extensive revisions make this an altogether more beguiling machine, and one of the best at its price. Extremely musical sound that's surprisingly upfront for a Creek design. Excellent mid-price purchase, with only its Marantz rival to challenge it.

CYRUS CD8 2003 £1000

Highly incisive, engaging, grippy and dynamic sound, but needs careful matching to smooth ancillaries. Optional PSX-R adds bass and dimensionality.

DENON DVD-A1 2002 £2500

Middling CD performance, but a genuinely strong DVD-A sound with masses of space and detail. Excellent pictures, too!

**LINN GENKI 1999 £995**

Undeniably fast, lithe, musical and fun - but some won't take to its dry, wry character. Works best in all-Linn systems, where it really rises to the challenge!

LINN IKEMI 1999 £1950

Has the brilliant focus and clarity of the previous Karik III with a dose more tonal richness and polish. More grip and poise than most at any price - still superb!

MARANTZ CD6000KI 2001 £500

Brilliantly warm and voluptuous sound will endear it to vinylphiles and tube lovers alike. Musical, colourful, polished and powerful like none others at or near its price.

MARANTZ CD17 II 2002 £800

Of-overlooked middleweight boasts a truly beguiling sound with lots of tonal flavour. Sits awkwardly between the £600 and £1000 price points, where some brilliant value buys reside, though.

NAD CS411 2002 £330

Highly musical and articulate budget machine in the classic NAD mould. Second only to Cambridge's CD500SE in the value stakes.

NAIM CDS 2001 £1195

Taut and grippy like no others at the price, but lacks the warmth of the Marantz CD6000KI at half the price. To wit, it's a very focussed product, best used in Naim systems.

MERIDIAN 507 2003 £1195

Quintessentially Meridian mid-price machine; smooth, warm, expansive and seductively musical. The best all rounder at this competitive price point.

**NAIM CDX2-XPS2 2003 £4950**

A fine high end machine, but add an XPS2 and it becomes one of the most charismatically engaging 16bit machines we've ever heard. Plays music with such passion!

DENON DV-2900 2003 £850

Superbly designed and built do-it-all player that delivers fine sound and great vision. Sonically class of the sub-£1000 DVD universal field, but the i-Link and HDMI direct digital capability of arch rival Pioneer DV-868AVI may swing some towards the latter, and its DV-2200 baby brother is even better value, though.

**NAIM CDS3 2003 £7050**

The most polished Naim CD to date; tremendously capable and musical, but lacks the Rotweiler quality of the cheaper CDX2-XPS2.

ARCAM FMJ CD33T 2003 £1,300

Superbly detailed midband allied to excellent bass extension makes this a powerfully musical machine in the best traditions of Arcam CD spinners. Nothing to criticise at the price, everything to recommend it!

**PHILIPS DVD963SA 2003 £400**

Creamy CD sound allied to superb SACD and DVD video playback makes this brilliant value for money.

REGA PLANET 2002 £498

Rhythmic and beguiling performer, although lacks the warmth of tone needed to better its Marantz rival. Superb ergonomics and design, nonetheless.

REGA JUPITER 2002 £1000

A Planet on steroids, this machine adds depth and breadth to its baby brothers already impressive sound. Good, but facing stiff competition.

MARANTZ SA-17S1 2003 £1400

Brilliant CD playback comes close to the best at any price, while SACD performance is almost as convincing - superbly warm and three dimensional nature makes listening a joy. However, the lack of DVD-Audio decoding and poor feature count makes it look middling value compared to some of the universal players here.

**CAMBRIDGE AUDIO 640C 2003 £250**

Tremendously well-rounded yet engaging sound makes this the best budget silver disc spinner by far. Build quality is excellent at the price, and the styling bang up to the minute. Blistering value for money.

CREEK CD5011 2004 £699

Extensive revisions make this an altogether more beguiling machine, and one of the best at its price. Extremely musical sound that's surprisingly upfront for a Creek design. Excellent mid-price purchase, with only its Marantz rival to challenge it.

MUSICAL FIDELITY TRI-VISTA21 DAC 2003 £1,200

Superbly neutral and expansive sound makes this offboard digital-to-analogue convertor an excellent upgrade to any mid-price CD player - fed by a decent transport, few 16bit players at any price come close.

**DENON DVD-2200 2003 £499**

Superb do it all mid-price player; fine DVD-A and SACD sound allied to excellent video performance will be all many could ever want. Ultimately it's a little bright and mechanical sounding, but you have to go into high end territory to truly better it. Stunning value.

PANASONIC DVD-S75 2002 £120

Real ability and fine measured performance for an unbelievably low price. Impressive in its own way, if not truly audiophile. If you just want a cheap DVD spinner with DVD-Audio as a bolt-on goodie, this is the one.

PIONEER DV-868AVI 2003 £799

Pioneer's most accomplished mid-price machine to date, this boasts full DVD-A/SACD playback, a welter of facilities and the all-important HDMI video and i-Link audio digital outputs, making it high-on future-proof. Factor in fine - if not outstanding - sound and superb pictures and it's practically impossible to fault.

SONY SCD-XB790 2003 £250
Quite unlike any other budget Sony CD spinner we've heard, here's a very 'analogue' sounding machine that's smooth and warm and even. Factor in fine SACD playback and this machine is a brilliant budget buy – unless you want DVD-Audio that is, which it lacks.



ORELLE CD100EVO 2003 £1,200
Extremely engaging and musical sound, but maybe a tad too bracing for some tastes. Superb aesthetics complete an attractive package.

DIGITAL RECORDERS

APPLE IPOD 40GB £399
Genre-defining best of breed, thanks to supreme ergonomics and build allied to fine sound.

PIONEER PDR-609 2001 £200
Brilliant value CD recorder that makes excellent recordings from its digital inputs. Half decent digital converters, too.

PHILIPS DVDR880 2003 £370
Poor CD audio playback, but makes great DVD video recordings and boasts fine ergonomics. Top AV value.

SONY RCD-W3 2002 £250
Usual superb Sony ergonomics make for no-nonsense budget buy. Fine direct digital copies, but analogue input poor. Middling sonics, but there's a digital output!

YAMAHA CDR-HD1300E2002 £600
HD means MD-style ease of editing, but compromises recording quality ever-so slightly. Add decent CD replay and it's a fine all rounder nonetheless - top value.



ONKYO MB-S1 2001 £1100
An interesting machine complete with MP3 functionality, but high price, fussy ergonomics and over-smooth sound make it mediocre value against the Yamaha.

PHONO STAGES

CREEK OBH-2|SE 2003 £250
Musically enjoyable yet highly refined for the price - a superb buy. Gives the Dino a real hard time.

EAR 834P 1993 £400
Classic tube design with a deliciously warm and expansive sound - shame about the loose bass and veiled treble!

LINN LINTO 2000 £900
A musical and incisive performer, with more speed than the Delphini at the expense of detail and tonal colour.

QED DISCSAVER 1995 £35
Rhythmic, bouncy sound via battery, although it's bright and forward. Great value, but £100 more on the X-LP is well worth it!

TRICHORD DINO 2002 £299
Great all rounder with switchable MM/MC. Fast, fluid and smooth like no others at the price.

TRICHORD DELPHINI 2003 £995
The very latest 'Never Connected' variant is easily the best, bringing velvety smoothness to an already refined and engaging performer. Neutral to a fault - some will mourn the passing of the charismatic ISO.

MUSICAL FIDELITY XLPSV3 2003 £249
Fine all rounder at the price, which a satisfyingly full bodied sound that's smoother than the Creek but a tad less engaging. Only Trichord's Dino, with its easy upgradability for just £50, reflects badly on this fine bit of kit.

PROJECT PHONOBOX LE2004 £99
Great little box that improves on most bundled phono stages found in budget integrated amplifiers. Adding detail and definition and a measure of smoothness too. If £100 is all you're prepared to spend, then do it happily on this, but you'll get obviously better results from the £250 brigade.

AMPLIFIERS

ARCAM DIVA A65 PLUS2002 £370
Classic budget Arcam fare - decently sweet and open with sensible facilities and plenty of power.



ARCAM FMJ A32 2001 £1150
For those who value serious power and labyrinthine facilities over outright clarity or grip. A very impressive all rounder with an unusually muscular power amp at this price.

AUDIO ANALOGUE PUCINNI 1999 £495
Brilliant value mid-pricer is a real step up from budget designs. Smooth, fluid, natural sound with adequate power and no nasties. Fine phono stage too!

AUDIO NOTE OTO SE 2000 £1199
This baby tuber is beautifully sweet and creamy, but lacks solid-state's clarity, detail and incision. Low, low power means speaker choice critical.

AUDIO NOTE SORO SE 2000 £1699
Wonderfully out-of-the-box sounding tube middleweight is all about sweetness and fluidity. Limited power and loose bass, but little the worse for it.

CYRUS 6 2003 £600
Cracking do-it-all mid price design, bringing svelte sound, good connectivity and upgradability and stunning style and build.

CYRUS 8 2003 £800
Unusually warm and lyrical for a solid-stater, with decent power and punch. PSX-R adds dynamics, detail and dimensionality.



MERIDIAN 551 1994 £895
Evergreen middleweight is a serious performer even now. Tonally a tad dry, it's still very smooth and svelte with bags of power, detail and grip. Class act.

MUSICAL FIDELITY A308 2002 £2400
Impressive monster integrated. Vast power delivered with clarity, even-handedness and finesse. Musical, with real tonal colour. Separate pre-power version better still, but less good value.

NAIM NAIT 5 2001 £845
A fast and thrilling listen, thanks to taut and articulate bass and midband. Surprisingly polished for a budget Naim amp, both sonically and ergonomically.



NAD C320 2002 £220
Not the giant killer that the 3020 once was, but a very strong budget design. A great starting point; forms a fine system with NAD's partnering C541i CD player.

SUGDEN A21A 1993 £1020
The most musical amplifier at the price, bar none. Delicious Class A sound is smooth, sweet and wonderfully transparent with true tonal colour. Low power, so match carefully.

HEADPHONE AMPLIFIERS

SUGDEN HEADMASTER2003 £600
Unusual combined preamplifier and headphone amplifier, this boasts a surprisingly smooth and open sound which suffers only when compared to preamps at twice the price.

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-CANS V3 2003 £249
Mr Michaelson's best headphone amplifier to date, with an extremely open and explicitly detailed sound plus serious bass wallop and the ability to drive any phones to very high levels. Errs towards brightness with some headphones, so match carefully and use smooth cables.

PREAMPLIFIERS

CREEK OBH-12 2000 £220
Brilliant value budget passive, giving little away in sonics to far more expensive designs. Connectivity and build aren't great, but what do you expect at this price?



MF AUDIO PASSIVE PRE2003 £1010
Novel and effective pre with switchable gain via a transformer, and balanced operation. Open and incisive sound, yet makes most active rivals sound edgy by comparison.

NAIM NAC112 2002 £660
Affordable admission ticket to the Salisbury high end experience. Detailed and dynamic, if tonally rather lacklustre.

LINN LK140 2000 £800
Dry and grey sounding, but decently dynamic and musically engaging all the same. A worthy worker in a budget Linn system.

MUSICAL FIDELITY**A308 CR** 2003 £2400

Superb transistor behemoth, worth partnering with any high end CD player or preamp. Oodles of grunt served up with poise and purpose.

MARANTZ SM-17 2001 £700

Useful budget power amp with plenty of clean transistor power. Not the most transparent, but sweet and clean all the same. Fine build completes a great value package.

**NAIM NAP150** 2002 £795

Driven by a decent source and a NAC112, this gives highly enjoyable results - providing you like the Naim sound! Taut, fast and feisty despite its relative lack of power.

QUAD 909 2001 £900

The latest current-dumper has a smooth and expansive character with enough wallop to drive most loads. Not the most musical, but super value all the same. Lovely build, finish and Quad's legendary service are nice.

CROFT TWIN STAR 2003 £1750

With a taste of the best of both tube and transistor, this latest update of the Croft classic is a truly endearing experience.

**GRAAF GM20 OTL** 2003 £3,300

Awesome output transformer-less valve power amp gives dazzling speed and incision, with an ethereal soundstaging and delicious filigree detail. Tremendous punch belies its humble 20W power rating. Factor in one of the most exquisite finishes this side of an Aston Martin and it's very hard to say no...

SUGDEN MUSICMASTER 2003 £1,300

Quintessential Class A Sugden sound is not warm as many expect, but extremely neutral and open with real tonal colour. By comparison, tubes sound bloated and standard solid-state hazy and brittle. Superb when partnered with efficient loudspeakers like Revolver R45s, but many will find it under-powered.

**INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS****AUDIO RESEARCH VSI55** 2003 £2,895

The Naim NAP250's tubular alter ego; oodles of power allied to a strong bass and smooth open midband makes this a brilliant all round amplifier. Lacks the subtlety and finesse of the low powered single-ended brigade but makes up for it with sheer brio.

CREEK A501R 2004 £550

Consummately smooth yet engaging sound makes it a serious player at the price, but don't expect Creek's traditional sumptuousness. Fine value nonetheless.

MONRIO MC207 2003 £1,100

Powerful, muscular sound allied to real finesse makes this unusual integrated an essential audition at the price.

MARANTZ PM-17MKII KI MODIFIED 2004 £1,500

Gloriously offbeat do-it-all design with a truly warm, smooth and three dimensional sound. Think of this as a latter-day Audiolab 8000a - with a good deal more colour and finesse - and you'll have its measure. Lowish power output at the price, but fine real world speaker driving ability.

UNISON RESEARCH S6 2002 £1,625

Tremendously musical and lithe sound with real finesse and subtlety too. Very slightly upper mid forward (encourages careful partnering with ancillaries (Revolver R45s are ideal), but overall fantastic value for money.

**ORELLE SA100EVO** 2003 £1,200

Fine build, exquisite design and a wonderfully lucid sound make this an essential audition at the price.

AV AMPLIFIERS**DENON AVR-2803** 2003 £650

Superb mid-price 7.1 channel extravaganza with nearly all the decoding power you'll ever need. Powerful, open and clean sound (at the price) makes it capable with music, and superb on movies. Fine ergonomics and great build makes this receiver hard to beat as an all-rounder.

**NAIM AV2/NAP 150/NAPY 175** 2002 £4,190

Brilliant audiophile multichannel pre-power amplifier combo; not as good with music as a two-channel Naim set-up at the same price, obviously, but surprisingly close. Elegant control layout plus a strong, clean and brilliantly engaging sound make this a serious crossover product. Ultimately lacks power compared to similarly priced Arcam gear, but is more musically involving.

PIONEER VSA-AX51 2004 £1,000

The ability to hook up to Pioneer's DV-868i via i-Link (see FireWire) means that this multichannel AV amplifier can do all the digital conversion onboard makes the a very special product, which when used with the aforementioned DVD spinner sounds better even than the sum of its parts.

**LOUDSPEAKERS****EPOS ELS-3** 2003 £200

Plenty of brio and a decent degree of refinement makes this budget baby a fine value contender.

**B&W CDM1 NT** 2002 £750

Fine clarity and imaging allied to pleasing warmth and great rhythmic cohesion make these standmounters an essential audition.

CASTLE CONWAY 3 2003 £930

Superbly smooth and crisp performers, with a big hearted musical sound. Ultimately coloured though, with a slow, plummy bass.

CYRUS CLS70 2001 £800

Charismatic performer with a fast, tight and open midband, but lacks cohesion and scale..

KEF Q1 2003 £250

Highly polished and articulate standmounters at the price, but demand good ancillaries for best results.

KLIPSCH HERESY II 1997 £1100

An outstanding high sensitivity loudspeaker with midrange and treble horns coupled with infinite baffle 12" bass driver. Effortless, fast and accurate.

TDK S-80 2002 £90

Ingenious NXT multimedia sub/sat system has a wonderfully even and open sound - like baby electrostatics.

**LINN NINKA** 2001 £995

Major on rhythms and dynamics, making them an involving listen. Reasonably refined, too - but tonally disappointing.

MISSION 782SE 2003 £900

Bright and tight design capable of brilliant speed and grip, at the expense of warmth. Demands high quality, high powered ancillaries.

W'DALE DIAMOND 8.1 2001 £120

Still the best baby budget standmounters around. Tight and grippy thanks to Kevlar drivers, but invariably limited in the frequency extremes.

**MONITOR AUDIO B4** 2003 £350

An unusually smooth and lucid performer at the price, and its 3-way design means it drives rooms well. Fine engineering, but build and finish so-so.

REVOLVER R45 2003 £899

Wonderfully easy to drive floorstanders that are a dreamboat for tube amplifiers, and great for party-minded transistor users too. Great attack transients, fluid and musical bass and midband and couth treble make them fine all-rounders.

**MORDAUNT SHORT 914** 2002 £300

Warm, detailed and articulate performer, but a touch loose in the bass and veiled up top. Fine partner for budget valve amps.

NAIM ALLAE 2002 £1990

Taut and grippy like few others, this speaker majors on transient speed. Surprisingly smooth for a Naim box, with nicely etched treble. As always, tonally dry.

QUAD ESL-988 2001 £3400

Wonderfully neutral and self-effacing with sublime imaging and projection. Treble lacks extension, bass lacks weight - although the pricier 989 answers the latter resoundingly.

PERIGEE FK-1L 2002 £5000

Charismatic Aussie ribbon design with deliciously open mid and treble, allied to fine bass weight. The right room and ancillaries essential. Engaging, musical and powerful sound. Superb.

MARTIN LOGAN CLARITY 2003 £2,895

Supremely transparent and open with brilliant depth perspective and image projection. The midband is up there with the very best at any price, while the bass and treble integrate well but don't especially shine. Dynamically limited, with middling bass punch, but that's not the point - that deliciously fluid and intricate midband wins great respect.

**TANNOY EYRIS DC1** 2003 £699

The combination of dual concentric treble/midband drivers plus supertweeters make for a very spacious and expansive sounding loudspeaker, albeit one that's a little bright and loose in the bass. An excellent mid-price design well worth auditioning.

MONITOR AUDIO GR60 2002 £2,295

In some ways, these come close to Yamaha's legendary NS1000Ms, thanks to their tremendous clarity, great transients and 'full-fat' wide bandwidth performance. Bright and clean, but never fatiguing or uncouth. A truly accomplished all rounder that gives a real taste of 'super-fi' at a reasonably affordable price.

TOWNSHEND MAXIMUM 2003 £800

Another brilliant niche product from Max, these ribbon aspirated supertweeters add space and atmosphere to any good high end loudspeaker, and more surprisingly perhaps make things more fluid and musical too. Superb affordable esoterica.

HEADPHONES**JECKLIN FLOAT TWO** 1998 £99

Wonderful panel-like sound from these esoteric-looking headclamps.

SENNHEISER HD-590 1998 £199

The company's best real-world cans to date. Open and smooth with plenty of detail. Brightly lit midband makes them an ideal partner for a valve headphone amp.

**SENNHEISER MX-500** 1999 £19

Our unqualified recommendation for those seeking a serious sounding pair of in-ear phones. Smooth, detailed and musical.

SENNHEISER PX-100 2002 £29

Cracking pair of lightweight open back cans ideal for personals, but good enough for real hi-fi use. Superb build allied to a smooth and engaging performance make them the spiritual successor to the HD400s.

**INTERCONNECTS****WIREWORLD OASIS 5** 2003 £99/M

Excellent mid-price design with a very neutral, silky and self-effacing sound. Superb value for money.

CHORD CO. CHAMELEON 2 £90/M

One of our favourites, these are musical performers with a smooth yet open sound.

VDH ULTIMATE THE FIRST £260/0.6M

Carbon interconnects that help you forget the electronics and concentrate on the music. Miraculous transparency. Tight and tuneful bass mixed with air and space results in a cracking cable for the money.

**DNM RESON** £40/M

Neutral and transparent - a steal!

TCI CONSTRICTOR**13A-6 BLOCK** 2003 £120

Top quality 'affordable' mains outlet block, with fine build and good sonics. Well worth the extra over standard high street specials, which sound coarse and two-dimensional by comparison.

NORDOST BLUE HEAVEN £150/M

Some of the fastest and most transparent cable around.

**VINYL****CLEARAUDIO REFERENCE** 1996

£4,070

Fine bass articulation and power allied a stunningly open and atmospheric midband and beautifully etched treble makes this one of the very best sounding turntables at any price. Michell's Orbe offers marginally more impactful bass, but can't touch that amazing mid. Exquisite.

ORIGIN LIVE AURORA**GOLD** 2004 £1,470

Seminal 'entry level high end' deck showing Mark Baker's characteristically obsessive attention to detail. The result is an extremely wide open and natural sounding machine that lacks the Michell GyroDec's slightly 'mechanical' nature - along with some of its scale and accuracy. Ideal for those seeking that classically beguiling vinyl sound.

**GOLDRING GR-1** 2004 £140

Essentially a Rega P2 built down to very low price and bundled with a decent Goldring MM, this is cracking value for money. Head and shoulders above its immediate rivals, it offers a surprisingly musical and detailed sound that will stun those new to vinyl - which is precisely what it was designed to do.

THORENS TDI 90 2003 £290

Ease of set up and use, allied to fully automatic operation mean that, although hardly the last word in performance, this deck is most certainly a model of convenience.



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VALVE AMPS

AIR TIGHT ATM-2 80 watts kt88 amp 3000
 AUDIBLE ILLUSIONS MODULUS 3 preamp with mm phono, boxed 900
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 AUDIO RESEARCH VT50 boxed POWER amp 1750
 AUDIO RESEARCH VT60 1000
 AUDIO RESEARCH REFERENCE 600 monos mk2, boxed 12000
 AUDIO RESEARCH L58 mk1 line pre, black front boxed 850
 AUDIO RESEARCH L525 mk1, black front, remote, balanced 2600
 AUDIO RESEARCH PH3 boxed 1000
 AUDIO RESEARCH SP8, with phono, boxed 900
 AUDIO RESEARCH SP9 upgraded to MK3, boxed 1100
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 CONRAD JOHNSON PV12A pre with phono 1250
 CONRAD JOHNSON PV12 pre with phono 1000
 COPLAND CIA401 integrated valve amp with phono 30 watts 850
 CR DEVELOPMENTS CALYPSO 12 watts integrated amp 350
 CR DEVELOPMENTS ROMULUS amp 600
 CROFT SUPERMICRO black, tweaked 375
 CROFT SUPERMICRO A iv BOXED 350
 CROFT SERIES IVs POWER AMP, JUST SERVICED , 650
 CROFT APPARTITION OIL 700
 EAR 802 pre with mm phono 850

EAR 980 stereo power amp 1 year old 1500
 EDISON 12 HFA power amp, faulty 100
 GAMMA AEON monoblocks, great single ended 211 VALVES 2000
 ICON AUDIO MB25 with few months use 300b pp 1200
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 ROGUE AUDIO TEMPEST INTEGRATED BOXED 1100
 SHANLING MONOBLOCKS 40 watts with remote 1500 pair
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 SONIC FRONTIERS SF540 800
 UNISON RESEARCH FEATHER ONE/POWER 35 pre/power, boxed 1200
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 AUDIO PHYSICS SPARK boxed, 900
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 AYALON AVATAR maple 2250
 APOGEE DUETTA SIGS with DAX active crossover 1300
 ATC 12 cherry mint boxed 600
 B&W 805 cherry mint boxed with HNE granite stands 1250
 B&W 605.2 speakers boxed 800
 B&W 4000 subwoofer 1500
 BOSE 901 series 2 with equalizers 300
 CASTLE HARLECHS, neat floorstanders 500
 CELESTION A1, cherry boxed 400
 CELESTION A3 cherry 1250
 CELESTION 5000 boxed with stands 800
 CHARIO ACADEMY 1, excellent 300
 DIAPASON KARIS with stands, boxed 800
 EPOS ES11 black 300
 EPOS ES14 cherry 300
 HALES TRANSCENDANCE 8, serious speaker 3250
 HEYBROOK QUARTETS with stands, 400
 INFINITY KAPPA 9i serious 1500
 JIM LABS MINI UTOPIAS with stands, BOXED 3500
 KEF REF 2 walnut 900
 KEF REF 2.2 black ash ,boxed 1000
 KEF CONCERTO 2, recent pair floorstanders, boxed 350
 KEF 105.4 pair 500
 KEF RDM2 cherry mint 350
 KHARMA CERAMIQUE 3.0 champagne finish , excellent 2250
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 LINN KANS teak mk1 200
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 REL Q-BASS subwoofer 200
 REVOLVER 250 FLOORSTANDERS,unused boxed 125
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 ROKSAN QJANS plain black finish 300
 RUARK PALADINS boxed 500
 RUARK PRELUDES REFERENCE boxed 400
 RUARK CRUSADERS mk1 walnut boxed, 600 with 2 line inputs, boxed 1200
 RUARK ACCOLADES, boxed, mm, TAPE, mc 300
 SONUS FABER ironwood stands adjustable 300
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AIWA XK-007 cassette deck boxed 100
 AKAI 4000D serviced 75
 AURA tuner ALT 80 , black 100
 BEYER DT 931 headphones boxed 80
 GRAHAM SLEE SOLO headphone amp 400
 LEAK TROUGHLINE III STEREO legendary tuner, serviced 120
 LUMMAN T2 tuner 100
 MERIDIAN 204 tuner 225
 MUSICAL FIDELITY X-100 AT 03 100
 NAKAMICHI BX2 a few scratches but just serviced 90
 NAKAMICHI BX125e cassette deck 100
 NAKAMICHI RX202 auto reverse deck 350
 NAKAMICHI 582 dual capstan 3 head, lots of buttons and switches nice machine 250
 PIONEER F91 tuner boxed 250
 QUAD FM3 excellent 110
 QUAD FM4 brown boxed 250
 QUAD FM4 GREY boxed 275
 REVOX B710 mk2 400
 REVOX B77 2 track high speed, nice condition 400
 SEHNHEISER 580 headphones 70
 SONY TC 766-2 2 track reel to reel player takes 10" spools 175
 STAX LAMDA NOVA SIGNATURE headphones with SSM-TIS 900
 TEAC 6030 cassette dolby s etc 250
 TECHNIS RS1500 us 2 track reel to reel, nabs z-systems rdp-1, DIGITAL EQ 1750

TRANSISTOR AMPS

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 ANCAN ALPHA 8 integrated boxed 150
 ATC PREAMP, se2 half width line only 500
 AUDIO INNOVATIONS ALTO amp chrome 150
 AUDIOLAB 8000c black PFE 375
 AUDIOLAB 8000A black 250
 AUDIOLAB 8000Q pre 600
 AUDIOLAB 8000S with remote 375
 AUDIO RESEARCH l9/ D130 pre/power amp,silver 2200
 AUDIO SYNTHESIS DESIRE DECADE power amp 1750
 AUDIO SYNTHESIS DESIRE power amp , boxed 800
 AVI INTEGRATED AMP , boxed 500
 AVI 2000 pre/power 750
 BARTOLOMEO ALOIA st 140 trasparenza power amp 500
 CAIRN ARIA HE integrated boxed 300
 COPLAND CSA 8 integrated with remote BOXED 500
 CYRUS TWO scruffy 150
 CYRUS TWO with PSX excellent mk2 boxed pair 375
 CYRUS TWO with psx EXCELLENT mk1 boxed pair 340
 CYRUS STRAIGHTLINE integrated amp 225
 CYRUS XPA power amp, 250
 DNM 2 preamp, metal cased but 3 boards, mc 400
 DOLAN PM1 PRE WITH PHONO 1500
 DPA 505 pre/power, with cables 3500
 DPA 2005 line pre 900
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 HEYBROOK C2/P2 pre power with mm/mc phono 2250
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 LFD PAD power amp 250
 LINN L1/K2 pre power , no remote 375
 LINN KAIRN with phono, 650
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 MARANTZ SM 17 power amp, mint boxed 2 available 350
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 A power amp from the 60s 600
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 with mc phono stage 125
 MERIDIAN 105 MONOS 600
 MERIDIAN 201 with 605 monoblocks 300
 MERIDIAN 201 with 205 monoblocks 500
 MERIDIAN MCA component pre amp 400
 with 2 line inputs, boxed 600
 MERIDIAN MCA modules, boxed, mm, TAPE, mc 500
 METAXAS CHARISMA PREAMP, chrome finish 500
 MICHEL ALECTO MONOBLOCKS 1250 pair
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 PASS LABS ALEPH 4 100watts class A serious amp 2500
 PASS LABS O monoblocks class A single ended 75 watts 3250
 QUAD 33/303 160
 quad 33/fm3 405 1 all nice with leads 330
 QUAD 34/306 with manual excellent 400
 QUAD 77 PR, carbon with remote 400
 QUAD 33/405 MK1 100 watts of power 240
 SUGDEN A21A black front with phono 600
 TALK ELECTRONICS HURRICANE 2 power amp 300
 TECHNIS SU-C3000 pre, battery powered 600
 TRISHOLD CAS 2 100 watt power amp, boxed 500
 XTC pre One 450
 YAMAHA FZ200 professional 200 watts 350

TURNABLES, ARMS, CARTRIDGES

ARISTON RD80 with adc arm 200
 AUDIO RESEARCH PH3, silver front, boxed 1000
 CLEARAUDIO SOLUTION with parallel arm 1250
 DECCA LONDON GOLD excellent boxed 200
 DENON DL304 250
 DYNAVECTOR 10XS in stock new 100
 DYNAVECTOR DYZOK new 350
 EAR MC3 boxed 500
 GARRARD 401 in behrens plinth with rb300 ARM 600
 GARRARD 401 in SLATE PLINTH WITH ORIGINAL LIVE SILVER 800
 GRAHAM SLEE PHONOSTATES IN STOCK AND AVAILABLE FOR HOME DEMO
 KUZMA STABI S/ STOGI S boxed with optional lid 175
 LFD MISTRAL PHONOSTAGE 150
 LINN LP12 valhalla with mission 774 and dynavector 400
 LINN LP12 valhalla/akoto/k9 375
 LINN LP12 with audio elite psu 500
 LINN AXIS, with bassik arm 200
 LINN KARMA boxed 150
 LORICRAFT 800 YA psu 500
 MANTICORE MANTRA with modded rb300 & dynavector 10x2 400
 MICHEL GYRO SE & TECHNIO A available new decent trade in given 500
 MICHEL TECHNO A arm in stock 400
 MICHEL ORBE /ORIGIN LIVE encounter 20000
 MICHEL ISO mc phono stage 200
 NITTY GRITTY RECORD CLEANING MACHINE new 400
 NOTTINGHAM ANALOGUE MENTOR with PARAGON arm, and Tracer 3 cartridge 2000
 NOTTINGHAM ANALOGUE - ANNALOG mahogany, wave mechanic psu & ORIGIN LIVE ENCOUNTER ARM 3800
 ORACLE DELPHI mk1f with Turbo psu, with SME 345 arm 1500
 ORIGIN LIVE ARMS AND TURNABLES IN STOCK, decent trade ins given 600
 ORIGIN LIVE RESOLUTION turntable on dem 850
 ORTOFON KONTRAPUNKT A/B/H/C all new boxed 350/500/500/750 200
 ORTOFON ROHMAN NEW BOXED CANCELLED ORDER 2000
 ORTOFON JUBILEE boxed 750
 PINK TRIANGLE ANNIVERSARY with battery psu & SME IV 2000
 REGA COUNTERWEIGHT MODIFICATION KIT in brass 500
 REGA PLANAR 2 with rega cartridge 140
 REGA PLANAR 3 200
 ROCK turntable, Townsend elite mk2 , no arm 275
 ROCKPORT SIRIUS 2 16,000
 ROKSAN XERKES walnut with ZETA 750
 ROKSAN TABRIX II arm 225
 ROKSAN 10 phono stage, with bigger psu 500
 SAEW we 407 tonearm, knife edge bearings, detach headshell, boxed 450
 SNE IV 700
 SHURE V15 xxr in stock 275 NEW BOXED 200
 STRATOSPHERE deck, with origin live dc motor upgrade and 7 air pods 900
 TOM EVANS MICROGROOVE 450 450
 THORENS TD124 /sme 3009 in hardwood Aphelion plinth 300
 TRICHORD DINO mm/mc phono stage, ex dem 600
 TRICHORD DELPHINI 2 with bass psu new AVAILABLE FOR HOME DEM 595 250
 VOOODOO ISOLATION TABLES in stock, recommended 750
 3 point suspension version ex dem 200
 VPI HW16.5 RECORD cleaning machine new/ex dem 475/420

CABLES

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ROKSAN RADIUS 5 2003 £750

Fantastic value allied to intelligent, interesting and 'out of the box' design makes for a wonderful entry-level superdeck. Open and musical sound is more inviting than the Mitchell TecnoDec rival, and the bundled Nima Unipivot arm is a superstar.

**TUNERS****ARCAM T61** 2002 £250

This sleek looking and refined sounding FM/AM tuner isn't the last word in musical involvement, but is fine value, nonetheless.

**ARCAM DT81** 2003 £650

A fine radio, hampered only by its seriously compromised DAB medium. Probably the best DAB tuner ever, but one for Digital Radio enthusiasts only...

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO DAB300 2003 £150

Fine ergonomics allied to great ease of use and respectable DAB sound makes this superb value.

**DENON TU-260L MK II** 1998 £130

If you want the best FM sound at the lowest possible price, then this ancient tuner remains peerless after all these years. There are better analogue designs around, but are either near-impossible to find or are now long-deleted.

CYRUS FM X £500

Great for Cyrus users, but its dry and precise sound can't match the best of the rest at the price. Worthy, nonetheless.

**MYRYAD MT 100** 1999 £600

One of hi-fi's nice surprises, this is a beautifully designed and built bit of kit with a deliciously sweet and svelte sound which really does justify its high price.

PRIMARE T21 2002 £600

Seriously accomplished design with mature sonics, great styling and fine build.

**NAD S400** 2003 £600

Highly accomplished specialist high end analogue tuner with a deliciously open and lucid sound, but it can't quite match the Myryad all the same.

PURE DIGITAL DRX-702ES 2003 £249

Great with Digital Radio, but thin a tad sounding on FM at times. It's a top hybrid, nonetheless...

**SYSTEMS****DENON D-M31** 2003 £250

Excellent CD receiver package with surprising sonics and a brilliant tuner as a bonus, although its amplifier section doesn't quite match the Onkyo. Optional speakers are mediocre.

ONKYO CS-210 2003 £300

Superb value thanks to excellent sound, great build and ease of use, but the bundled 'speakers' rather let the side down.

LINN CLASSIK MOVIE SYSTEM DI 2002 £2,995

Superb ergonomics and performance from this one-box beauty, but it's just a tad expensive and in value for money terms, compares poorly to the original Classik Music System.

**PIONEER NS-DV990** 2003 £799.95

Whiz-bang technology fest with DVD universal playback, discrete display and NXT flat panel speakers. Superb for the spare room or study – truly intelligent and elegant design – but don't expect it to match the sonics of AV separates.



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Letter of the Month



FREDDY AHMET

FELINE, GROOVY

For many years LJK Setright has been one of the most perceptive and informative journalists. And now the cat is out of the bag, literally. His review on the Creek T50 discloses the use of his cat. Bravo. The cat has a superbly developed sense of hearing, specifically in matters of higher frequencies and

imagery. We use two cats for this purpose. After much auditioning our cat of choice is the American Maine Coon, graced with a very fine pair of ears. Each ear can be rotated independently and has a fine hair mesh across the aperture, acting as an acoustic window to enhance treble sensitivity. We would recommend to all audiophiles this feline

accessory for fine tuning hi-fi systems, with one firm exception - vinyl systems, which are wholly incompatible with cats.

Adam Stanhope

For decades, hi-fi reviewers have turned to cats when their own human ears fail them. The cat, as you point, has superior auditory powers and the ability to deliver one swift and wholly damning indictment of a product by emitting its characteristic 'mewling' sound. There have been times when I, struggling to hear the difference between one budget DAB tuner with VideoLogic chipset and another budget DAB tuner with VideoLogic chipset, have turned to my own cat, 'Bleep', for additional feedback. If he is hungry - which is almost all the time - he is able to deliver a summary verdict, before squeezing through his cat flap in the kitchen door to terrorise any garden creatures (providing they are, variously, lost, dazed or smaller than him). Any other readers with audiophile cats are most welcome to email in pictures - the fluffier the better. DP

HE'S A BELIEVER - KIND OF...

Despite the apparent contradictions that follow I would like to start by publicly affirming my belief in vinyl. Back in 1986, lacking the funds for a fully spec'd Linn and seeing the writing on the wall for the then dominant format, I threw caution (and £400) to the wall and splashed out on a Meridian MCD which duly elbowed aside my Dual CS505, despite not sounding significantly better.

Ten years later (and in spite of its Philips origins) the MCD gave up the ghost, the final nail in its coffin being the brusque assurance from Meridian via telephone that the 'laser reader' had gone and that it was beyond repair. Via Rega's excellent Planet I subsequently settled for a Trichord 3 clocked Quad 77, which for quite some time I was

very pleased with (I still am). However the siren call of the black stuff persisted throughout the digital years. Finally, buoyed by endless comment in the hi-fi press as to how pound for pound vinyl would give CD a thorough kicking, I parted with £1,050 for a Michell GyroDec, RB300 and Sumiko BPS, and after much careful setting up, confidently sat down to listen to vinyl punt CD into the weeds.

The medium I'd chosen was a head to head of Neil Young's Harvest on CD against a 180g audiophile recording of the same album. All I can say was that it didn't. With this recording CD was better in every respect. After much frantic adjustment of tracking weight, arm height etc, etc plus several more analogue to digital head to heads (burning in, et al) I was left with the

inescapable conclusion that £1,050 worth of gorgeous Gyro was no match for £975 worth of modded Quad. At this point I should mention that the rest of my system consists of a 77 preamp with two 707s bi-amped into a pair of Mission 752Fs via VDH Snowtrak.

Undeterred, and with the continuing weight of hi-fi press opinion behind me, I set about righting a few wrongs. As a result I now have a VC'd Gyro sporting a Music Maker 2 on the end of an OL silver 250 feeding a Trichord Dino. Result? At a considerable price differential most vinyl now sounds 20%-50% better than CD. However, I dread the consequences of getting a power supply for the clock 3. Can someone please tell me where I'm going wrong?

Tim Rogers

Hi Tim – well, I think you're barking up the right tree, inasmuch as your original arm and cartridge (the latter, especially) were doing the Michell no favours. Make no mistake – this deck is capable of superior sound to any digital source, providing it's been set up properly. And this, methinks, is the key to your problem.

First, site your Gyro on an Audiophile Furniture Base isolation platform. Ensure it is level – if not, put 1p coins underneath the relevant feet of the Base to achieve this. Then, place your Gyro on top. Set its three feet at the end stops of the adjusters – if possible never use (ironically) its height adjustable feet to set its height per se, only to fine tune it – as this will alter the angle between the belt and the motor. Then adjust the suspension springs so each of the three subchassis height adjusters are at their (bottom) end stops too, so there's the maximum (and equal) amount of bounce on all three springs. As you've already leveled the deck at the base, the platter should still be completely level now (because you've not fine tuned the subchassis height via the spring adjusters).

Next, check the arm lead dressing. It should be secured at the back by the clamp, with a good two inches of free play available to allow the suspension to bounce up and down. This is critical, as the arm lead is effectively part of the suspension system – like it or not. Then it's time to adjust the concentric bounce of the three springs. With the belt and motor attached to the platter, tap the platter top at about 2'o'clock (taking the centre spindle as your middle) and watch it bounce. It should go directly up and down freely, bouncing a few times and then coming to rest. If not, you'll have to twiddle all three springs (whilst ensuring you don't move the central height adjusters) until it does.

Finally, make sure that the spindle belt grooves and outer platter grooves are clean and devoid of debris by cleaning them with a cotton bud or pipe-cleaner dipped in isopropyl alcohol (vodka is also quite good if you don't have any isopropyl). Also clean the belt too. If the bearing oil pan is looking empty, refill with Mobil One motor oil (although I've tried Redline D4 fully synthetic ATF with even better results). Use the deck without its spring covers, and without its dust cover – which wrecks the sound. When you've taken these simple but careful measures, your Gyro will

sing. Back in its early days of the nineteen eighties, this deck got consistently bad reviews ("unmusical", "analytical", etc.) – and I'm afraid these said more about the reviewers' respective inability to set-up the deck's suspension properly, than the deck itself. It's incredibly easy to get a 'decent' sound from Michell decks, but about twenty minutes of careful fettling will push it up to the stratosphere.

DP



Quad 77 CD player – "GyroDec meet thy doom...!"

PLUS CA CHANGE...

I thoroughly enjoyed your article comparing the Meridian MCD Pro with the newer 507. It seems to have concluded with what I had always suspected, that there has been far less advancement than the manufacturers have been insisting. It leaves me increasingly uncertain of the benefits of spending many thousands on pieces of equipment - especially of the digital kind. How much better is a £7,500 Naim CDS3 or £5,000 CDX2/XPS2 than the currently lauded £400 Philips DVD963SA? After all, in the same edition as the previously mentioned Meridian comparison, you claimed that the Philips player was the best bit of hi-fi kit of the last twelve months. In your top 12 list, the CDX2/XPS2 player is named too, (no pun intended) at number 4. With a ten times price differential, is the Philips really better? If as I hope and guess, the extra cash does give you more, how much? Would someone on a blind listening be able to hear the extra four and a half thousand pounds?

I have to admit that this is not a selfless attack on the excess of the hi-fi industry. There is, as is so often the case, an ulterior motive. I have been putting together a system over a couple of years, and I have to admit that I started backwards. I had a 1960s Dynaco Stereo 70, which I picked up for \$125. This is perhaps where my

suspicions were first raised about the supposed advancement of audio technologies. I have since completely rebuilt the unit employing a UK spec'd power transformer and the Alan Kimmel modification to the power supply and driver circuit. Overall, it is very satisfying, even more so having built it myself and for a total cost of about £400. I partnered this with a pair of Thiel CS1.6 speakers, which seem a very enjoyable musical match. However, this was only ever supposed

to be a temporary measure. I had planned on upgrading to a decent CD player and a pre-amp, my current CD player having a variable output. I then came across cheap offers on the amps I had planned to upgrade to anyway.

So now I find myself with a VAC Auricle MkII power amp partnered with an Eastern Electric Minimax pre amp and the previously mentioned Thiels. And so to my question - I was considering a number of different CD players, including the 507, the Naim CDS or perhaps a second hand CDX or 508.20. Would I be better off buying the Philips and spending the rest on software? Is the Philips that good? If not, which player would you suggest has the best synergy with the rest of the system? Would the higher level gear give that much more?
Eric

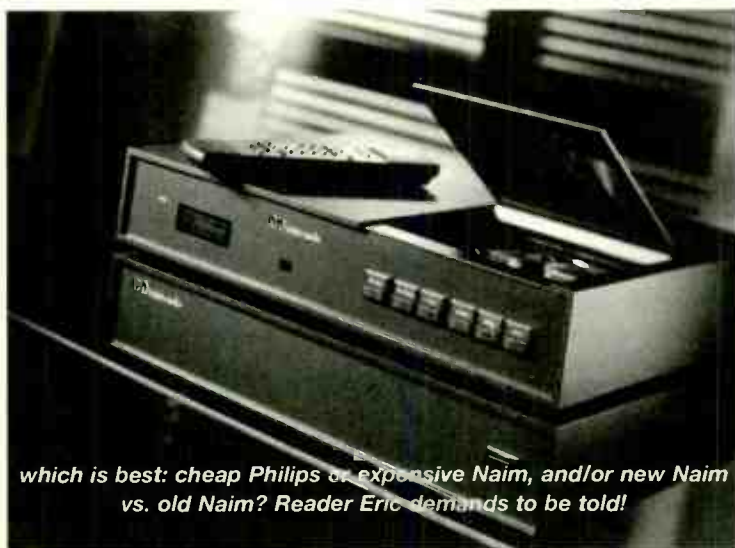
Oh boy, I hope it was reasonably obvious (and implicit) that although the Philips DVD963SA was number one and the Naim CDX2/XPS2 number four, that doesn't mean the former was better than the latter in absolute sonic terms. Of course, this wasn't the case. The Top Twelve in our January issue wasn't an absolute gauge of sound, but of the products as value for money propositions. The Naim was way, way better than the Philips, but the latter was unexpectedly capable (and also –

importantly – versatile) at the price, which is why it got the top spot. So yes, in blind listening, you would easily hear the extra £4,500 – but whether you thought it was worth that £4,500 is an entirely different question, and one that's very apposite – and I thank you for raising it.

Now – is it worth it, and would you be better buying the Philips and investing the rest on software? Well, in a sense yes, because surely that's what we're here for. However, the problem arises when you think the Philips isn't quite good enough for you, and wish to upgrade. The question is when? Have you reached that point? I don't know – because I don't know you! Surely, this is something only you can know. What I can do is give a 'broad brush' perspective, so here goes:

The Philips is remarkable for the money. It sounds sweet and smooth with CD, but against, say, a Naim CD5i it is vague, emotionally uninvolved, a little standoffish. It plays the music nicely enough, and if you

CDX – or indeed the first CDS/XPS [pictured] which would cost around the same secondhand? Well, the new machine is even and transparent in a way that the oldsters can never be, whereas the oldies (especially the CDS) have wonderful brio. This exuberance is so obvious that, for some, it can actually detract from the experience of listening to music, as you tend to get distracted by the character of the CD player! I'd say that whilst the CDS isn't as capable overall as the latest CDX2/XPS2, it's no poor relation – and well and truly scotches the myth of giant steps being made in CD sound over the years. What you buy depends on your taste and your pocket, but methinks the CDX2/XPS2 is just a tad pricey for your system, so I'd counsel the CD5i complete with matching power supply. For half that, a second-hand Meridian 508.20 buys you a warmer and more expansive sound than the Naim, but with a rather more vague and lazy midband. Best of luck! **DP**



which is best: cheap Philips or expensive Naim, and/or new Naim vs. old Naim? Reader Eric demands to be told!

already have very accurate ancillaries, it will make pleasant noises to your heart's content. But the CD5i has power and passion, fun and brio, drama and scale. The aforementioned CDX2/XPS2 is another order of magnitude altogether – just as the Philips sounds meek by comparison to the CD5i, so the CD5i sounds meek compared to the CDX2/XPS2. The latter has a dizzyingly fast and energetic bass, along with tremendous 'hear through' midband detailing and super air and space in the treble. Most obvious, however, are the dynamics, which approach the best LP has to offer – fearsomely fast and with real clout, this machine sounds musically erudite in a way that the CD5i can only dream of.

What then of the new CDX2/XPS2 against the original

BEWITCHED, BOTHERED AND BEWILDERED

I am getting increasingly confused - maybe it's old age or maybe it's just conflicting points of view from online reviews. The current state of my deck is as follows: The LP 12 is about ten years old, but has the CIRKUS upgrade. Power Supply is a DIY Armageddon and my arm is a Linn Akito version 1. Cartridge is a recently acquired Dynavector 10x5. There are two more things I want to achieve with this deck:

1. To get 45RPM for my currently redundant collection of 7 and 12 inch singles. I have the Linn 45 Adaptor but the thing worries the hell out of me regarding the amount of force required to get the damn thing on. As I see it, I have two options in this area, either save for a very long time (years!) and get a Lingo (currently c. AU\$3000), or

get an Origin Live DC motor Kit or Ben Duncan Pure Cycle (both c. AU\$1000).

2. A new tonearm - once again, it is a question of saving for a long time to get something like an Ekos or ARO (both of these arms are about AU\$3000-4000 here), or looking at something else. Immediate options seem to either an OL modded RB250 (approx AU\$900) or Michell TecnoArm A, or a Hadcock GH228 (AU\$1100). However there are possible installation issues with the RB250 regarding the arm interfering with the corner braces in the LP12 plinth. My nearest Linn dealer seems to concentrate more on their Home Theatre products and there is not an LP12 to be seen in their showroom. The next nearest dealer would be in Sydney, about 1000km away from me, so any installation would need to be done by me. As far as the GH228 is concerned the question that arises is the synergy of Unipivots with the LP12, although the ARO reportedly works very well with the LP12. Would either of these alternatives present a viable upgrade to the Akito?

Another option is to buy a used Ittok (as a rare as an oscillating wooden equine's faeces, as far as I can see). Are there any other viable options? I have read some positive comments regarding the Bluenote U-3 from Italy (another unipivot). Due to financial constraints, the Origin Live/Michell/Hadcock path would suit better at the moment. The Lingo/EKOS/ARO could be a possibility in the much longer term. Whichever way I decide to go, I would be buying one item at a time. Would it be more beneficial to get the arm first or the power supply? My musical Tastes are mainly Rock orientated. Classical and Jazz form a very small portion of the collection.

Phil Johnson
Brisbane

Hi Phil – well, in order to take advantage of all that 45RPM vinyl you have, I'd go for the motor mod first. You're right – I don't believe the Linn 45 Adaptor is the ideal solution either, as all that down force on the motor bearing as you desperately try to prize the frigging thing on simply can't do it any good. That's only my suspicion, I hasn't to add – I have no evidence. Anyway, with this in mind, a new Lingo would make very nice noises indeed – but as you point out, it's a tad pricey. The Origin Live DC motor mod is a perfectly viable alternative, and as Simon Pope found out just over a year ago, it improved the sound too – giving greater grip and more dynamics. I haven't A-B'ed the OL motor and the new Lingo via the standard Impex 24 pole AC synchronous, but again I'd hazard a

guess that the DC motor would give superior results, simply because the Impex is an old stalwart in both the good and the bad senses of the term. And yes, you should be able to fit it yourself, because the Popemeister – who's mechanically challenged to the point of... (well, the only thing he can do is uncork a wine bottle – something he's grown quite good at of late) ...was able to fit the OL motor to his Linn with his own fair hands...

Second, the arm. Well, I hope this the April issue was an eye opener. The Ekos didn't come off so well, although we have to thank Linn for the 'sportsmanship' in letting us fit it to a rival deck. On the LPI2, it's a fearsome tool, and well worth the money – if you've got it. If not, then I have good news for you. The Hadcock should work very well indeed – at a fraction of the price and with no need to start performing surgery on the LPI2's inner plinth braces. I've spoken to a number of folk using the latest Hadcocks on Linns and Thorens TD124s (very similar to the Sondek in design), and thumbs are very much aloft. On the OL Aurora, it was a stunner – its value for money is superb. If you've got the time and the inclination, I'd go for this above all others you mention – the problem being that it's a right fiddle to set up. If you don't mind, then go for it. It will sound dramatically more expansive and musical than your Akito, and suit you Dynavector well enough. DP



Linn Sondek LP12 – or should that be 12/33.3...?

BITTEN AGAIN!

Many thanks for the recent piece about the Creative Labs I-Trigue 3500. It finally pushed me into having a go at something I've been meaning to do for ages. My music system has been buried in a cupboard for several years now -

and is mostly very old stuff. This apathetic situation came about due to a combination of living room unacceptability, heavy work load, and horrid Tinitus. The love of music still burned though, and a decent set-up in the car to help with all too frequent long journeys, coupled with laptop and headphones for the nights in hotels, played their part in keep me sane. Hi-Fi World has also played its part. The pragmatic approach to kit - both old and new - makes yours the only publication I purchase on a regular basis.

I have now given up the road job and have a home office. So thoughts turned to a music system. Given that I make my living from computers, interest in your Computer Audio section has been high. I have become intrigued by the convergence of computers and entertainment. My curiosity has also been aroused by the possibilities of using computer related mass-market products to build a music/entertainment system with results beyond the humble origins of the parts. Your piece on the '3500 finally pushed me into action.

A look on the Internet showed that the price of the '3500 has come down to about £100! Clearly the value part of the plot was already looking good. So I made a purchase and eagerly unpacked the box. I was very pleased with the build quality - which is all you could possibly want at the price. Hooking it up to a PC with a (very low quality built in) sound card was easy. I placed the sub box off the floor - and

on the table with the PC monitor and between the two Satellites (but not equidistant to them). Playing CDs on the PC produced encouraging results. The sub only needed about a quarter of the available range for the bass setting, and clearly things needed

running in for a time. Some experiment showed that pulling the Satellites out to the front of the table and spacing them about five feet apart - with a listening distance of about seven feet - give a very acceptable sound. Within about two hours running the sound had become very well integrated with a sound stage nicely spread over, between, and beyond the speakers. Surprising too, was what was missing - no harshness, no buzz, no indication at all of the £100 price tag. So too good to be true then? Well no - it gets better!

The sound was so - well - civilised, but without being flat or bland, that I got the feeling that there was more to come. The '3500 comes with a tethered (wired) remote control. In this there is a USB 2 socket (for a M-port device), a headphone socket, and a mini jack input socket. At this point I got lucky. I pulled my dusty old Arcam Alpha 5 CD player from its grave. A clean up, some power and playing a CD showed it was still working. A bit of a hunt resulted in the purchase of a Twin RCA plug to mini jack connecting lead. So I now had the Arcam playing CDs via the '3500. The results exceeded all my expectations - including the unreasonable ones!

Sound staging was nicely defined - with depth - where present in the source. The Philips - English Baroque Soloists - John Eliot Gardiner - Mozart Symphonies 38 and 39 are the best illustration of this I have in my collection. Positioning of individual instruments where clearly portrayed in both depth and width. Jools Holland's Solo Piano CD is (in my experience) a wicked finder of any weakness in speakers - and other components too. It is a recording of a piano - recorded as the percussive instrument that it is - which is why I love it so. All the rattling, buzzing and clunky noises where as recorded, the '3500 making no obvious contribution, as far as I could tell. At this point I started to realise that the quality of what I was hearing exceeded anything that my old system had ever been capable of - including my much loved Sennheiser HD570 headphones. The following hours were spent in that wonderful - but so rare - activity of re-discovering one's music collection. Any downsides? Well - the ability to go loud is limited by the need to keep the base box under control, but I feel that a small to medium lounge with modest levels may be achievable. The high frequency range lacks a little air and space (but at least is not bright or glary). Overall, a result then!

So what next? Well - dig out the Rotel Tuner and Amp and see if they add or subtract. Then there is the small

question of the vinyl. Those Decca and DG Classics, and Blue Note jazz albums are calling! How much more can I (we?) get from the '3500? Will the Satellites perform stand mounted? Will they need a "shelf" to correctly load the side mounted drive unit? How can I integrate the standalone soundcard I've just spotted - the one with the built in DVD-Audio? Oh, and how about the USB widget that has inputs for a MM pickup? I think I've been bitten by the bug all over again.

Nick Johnson.

Hi Nick – glad you like the Creatives – this company always does fine and often imaginatively designed stuff at shockingly low prices. Methinks a lot of hard-bitten hi-fi heads who are too proud to 'mess around' with computer audio would get quite a surprise if ever they put their prejudices aside. Of course, much 'multimedia' stuff is rubbish, but the things that appear in these pages are there for a reason – so they're always worth a look. And as you say, no sooner than I've checked the prices with the public relations person, then it goes and drops. And then by the time the mag's come out, it's often half the original price on the web – if only all hi-fi was like that! **DP**

ONE LOVE, ONE PIVOT

You were expecting some debate on the test bed used for the tonearm group test in the April 04 issue and I would expect the OL deck used to favour Rega and OL arms. So it was with great pleasure that I saw the GH 242 Export do so well against SME, Linn and OL arms at several times the price, and this is not the most expensive Hadcock 242. Why "pleasure"? As you might expect, or even remember from the letters pages of the March issue, I use a Hadcock 242, the more expensive (circa £650) SE with Incognito wiring, which I think is a not unobtrusive improvement over the cooking 242 Export, and still considerably cheaper than most of the arms in the test group.

It is suggested that the Hadcocks are better suited to rigid, high-mass turntables. I don't agree with this as a blanket statement, but would have thought the (very fine) OL deck you used might be just a trifle bouncy for an undamped unipivot. Mine plays quite happily on a Michell Gyro SE, with Orbe platter, DC motor and HR PSU. The Michell, particularly with the Orbe upgrade, is one of the less excitable suspended decks and, crucially, horizontal movement is very well controlled, so this may be a "best of both worlds" combination.

The marriage of Hadcock arm and Cartridgeman Musicmaker, as depicted in the Hadcock advert in the same issue, is one made in Heaven, although I use a secondhand Ortofon MC3000 II, re-tipped by The Cartridge Man, which I already owned before I bought the turntable and arm. This combination works very well and I heartily endorse your findings with solo piano. A word of caution here: the slightly older generation of Ortofon MCs have very low outputs, and not many phono-stages can cope well (i.e. quietly). You will have more experience than I have in this area but I would favour Trichord or, as I have chosen, Tom Evans (Microgroove Plus).

Bob Parsons

Thanks for the feedback Bob. Methinks that it isn't unipivots which are better suited to rigid, high mass turntables – but their users! A wibbly-wobbly arm on a bouncy subchassis is a recipe for 'inadvertent cantilever recalibration' (i.e. snap!), unless you're careful. Still; Thorens TD124/Mayware and Linn LP12/Naim ARO – I rest my case, your honour! Both excitable, both great one pivot pickup pairs! **DP**

the comfort of my armchair. Then, last week, horror of horrors, I damaged the stylus, which is a more painful point of contrast with the convenience of CD technology.

However, the minor physical attention that vinyl demands is not the only difference. More significant is the superior quality of the sound. The vinyl sound is oh so smooth, round, and very easy on the ear. By contrast my Musical Fidelity A3 produces a compressed sound spectrum that is noticeably grainy, bright, and lacking in richness in the bass end. I happen to have a copy of Lloyd Webber's Requiem on both vinyl and CD, and in comparison the vinyl sound wins by a head. At least it did until I damaged the stylus!

Consequently, I've decided that a better CD player is a must. As my wife has a few months to save up for my next birthday present, may I ask for your advice about what she might buy? I have the Meridian 588 on my list for audition, but what else would you suggest I hear, either new or used, up to a £2K price level? My system is a Quad 99 pre, 909 power and 989 speakers (I love the 989s almost as much as my wife), Van den Hul The First interconnects and 13amp mains cable



Hadcock – the comeback...

SNAP!

After many years without a turntable, my wife, bless her, bought me a Michell Mycro as a birthday present. This is a wonderful machine and using it reminded me that vinyl is a very different world to CD. It is far more tactile. I find myself taking great care when handling the records, each one being thoroughly cleaned with an anti-static duster before the delicate arm is placed carefully into position. The shorter playing time per-side requires me to apply the record turning procedure: lift and return the arm, turn the record, clean the record and engage the stylus. There is as yet no convenient hand-held gizmo that allows this to be done from

to the speakers (a controversial choice no doubt, but it works well). Finally, have you any advice about choosing a new stylus as there aren't too many articles about these? Thanks for a great journal! **Phillip Evans**

What a wife! She buys you stuff you actually want! How did you manage that, Philip? Or is this code for 'I buy, she pays', which is also a not entirely undesirable marital condition. You snake in the grass, you... I'm so jealous that – frankly – I'm glad you bent your cantilever. (Bend any more and you can come and do the next Hi-Fi World tonearm supertest...) Anyway, yes - it's not unheard of for

a mid-price turntable to race away from an equivalently priced, but capable, CD spinner such as your MF A3. To wit, I'd counsel that along with the Meridian 588 (which is excellent), you also audition Musical Fidelity's Tri-Vista2i DAC (£1,200) to work with your A3, or Marantz's SA-175I (£1,400). The latter has the benefit of superb SACD playback too, while the former is slightly warmer and richer, with greater midband insight too. As for a new cartridge for you to bounce, Goldring's (£120) G1042, Dynavector's DV20X-H (£400) or Ortofon's Kontrapunkt C (£1,000) depending on how flush 'her indoors' is feeling... **DP**

ITUNES CONFUSION

I am an audiophile who knows how to troubleshoot his high end hi-fi system, but is a novice at PC audio! Concerning the iTunes article, all I want is to listen to the best classical sound from Apple's iTunes (without downloading) before buying a disc. Will the AAC Encoder accomplish this objective at bitrates of 128kbps-192kbps? If so, what are the simple steps to do it?

Sal

I only really referred to the iTunes Music Store in passing, as it has yet to arrive in Europe, frustrating many would-be purchasers (it is currently expected to launch around May time). I'm afraid I may have baffled you with all my encoding instructions – essentially the answer to your question is that it is incredibly simple to use the Music Store for audition-only purposes, and you can freely use the US site for this. There is no encoding bit rate issue at all – you are stuck with the 128kbps rate that Apple use for the downloads, as the preview AAC streams are encoded at that rate. Regrettably they are only thirty seconds long, but you can audition every track on any album.

Initially the Music Store had a reputation for being poorly stocked on the classical side, but recent additions to the catalogue are reputed to have remedied this. Just fire up your PC (or Mac) with the free-to-download of iTunes, select the Music Store in the pane on the left and see if they have anything that floats your boat. I hope your connection is up to it though, as on my lousy 42kbps dialup connection I see a lot of "Rebuffering Stream" messages – the sound quality in between is great! Of course I would recommend that to get the audible

benefit that even 128kbps AAC encoding can bring, you use either a quality USB or standard soundcard to output to an amp, either digitally or analogue as appropriate. **PC**

the MuVo. I plugged in my Sennheiser MX500's, and listened – and was seriously unimpressed. The resulting sound was flat, lifeless and with no 'air'. Several MP3 files later and my views



iTunes Music Store – a classical alternative...?

A WORD FROM THE HEADMASTER...

For those who mix family life and hi-fi, like myself, then one answer is the use of headphones. A number of years ago I bought a pair of Stax SR34 electrets which served me faithfully for around ten years before giving up the ghost nearly a year ago. I replaced the Stax with a pair of Sennheiser's HD600s along with a HD83 to drive them. The HD600s are unmodified, though the HD83 is now running with Hexfred diodes, Black Gate and Audio Note copper-foil-in-oil capacitors, tantalum resistors, solid silver cable, stepped attenuator, etc.

I have a Meridian 507 CD player providing the tunes, and the headphone sound I get is as near perfect as I can afford (other sounds are provided via a Pre-II with a Power-II, which I've converted to valve rectification, feeding a pair of unmodified Quad II amplifiers powering a pair of Lowther Acousta's fitted with EX3 drive units).

As a Christmas present to myself this year, I purchased a Creative Labs Muvo 128NX, not just on your December 2003 edition's recommendation (noting you rated the Philips' Key005 higher) but I was swayed by the built in voice recorder which I use at work. I do work away from home sometimes and I like to take music with me, normally an old Technics portable CD player along with a pair of Sennheiser's MX500s.

Even though I mainly bought the MuVo more for its voice recording capabilities than music, within 30 minutes of receiving it from our friendly postman I had ripped a 128kps MP3 music file from CD and transferred it to

hadn't changed, and I blamed the MP3 compression for squeezing the life out of the music. As an experiment I thought I'd try a different pair of headphones and plugged my HD600's in. What a revelation! It sounded like music again, which didn't say much for the MX500s. I scoured my house and turned up no less than five pairs of portable headphones from the freebies provided with the MuVo to others bought over the years from Sony and Panasonic and a pair of Sennheiser HD497s. A listening session followed with the conclusion that all the in-ear headphones I had are very poor compared to either of my full size models.

I turned to the Web and found two sites, www.headwize.com and www.head-fi.org, which are a mine of information for headphone users. The Headwize site is mainly North American and from reading the posts and browsing the archives it became apparent that the most respected in-ear headphones were Etymotic ER4P's & S's (they are one and the same though the ER4-P(portable) have 73 ohms less resistance than the ER4-S(stereo) to increase their sensitivity for portable player use). I turned to eBay and found a company, called Idealsound, selling brand new Etymotic ER4P's & S's for £120 from San Jose in the 'States. I duly ordered a pair, the additional P&P amounted to under a tenner and they arrived by tracked parcel service within five days, excellent service!

These headphones are different, they resemble in-ear noise reduction ear plugs. They suffer from terrible microphony but the sound is hi-fi

quality! I would greatly recommend these headphones - could you not do a test of in-ear headphones, obvious competitors would be the Stax SR001 electrostatics and the Shure e2c in-ear headphones?

Also due to the Headwize site, I have built the Chu Moy portable headphone amplifier (uses a pair of OPA132 op-amps as amplifiers) with built in Chu Moy acoustic simulator. The acoustic simulator is a cross-feed circuit to reduce "super-stereo" and a incorporates a "perception" switch to move the perceived soundstage. I can recommend the circuit - there is little comparison to a portable player's built-in amplifier's circuits and it is a worthy addition to any portable hi-fi, driving the ER4Ps wonderfully with 130ohm and HD600s with 27ohm output resistors. I've managed to fit both Chu Moys circuits into a 160x50x90mm diecast alloy box whilst using physically large polypropylene capacitors with a pair of 9v PP3 batteries. This makes it portable though not pocket size.

I have now constructed the acoustic simulator as a standalone in a aluminium box and am currently using it connected to my HD83/HD600s. I have yet to draw a firm conclusion over the use of this circuit here, as it consumes a reasonable power (with resulting loss of volume) and there is an apparent loss of dynamics which I need to investigate further. This is, of course, the fun of DIY hi-fi, endless hours of perfectly legal and morally correct pleasure and fiddling!

Phil Roberts

Phew! I agree - in-ear phones aren't anywhere near as good as Sennheiser HD600s, which until the advent of the HD650s were the best 'affordable' cans around. It's kind of a no-brainer, as the MX-500s are under £20 and the HD600s were over seven times that. But I still believe the MX-500s are the best of their type, by a country mile. I use mine every day when I'm out walking and have had consistently good results, providing you fit a pair of foam earpads to them and run them at maximum volume on the in-line volume control - not, I hasten to add, at maximum volume from the player! Thanks for the tip off about the Etymotics - I've been hearing consistently good things about these and rest assured we'll be doing a massive group test of headphones of all shapes and sizes as soon as the weather gets better. Muchos gracias for the website URLs too. As for me, I'm about to buy an Apple iBook and iPod and embark on a voyage of Advanced Audio Coded discovery -

my MiniDisc portable days are reaching an end. Time to move on, methinks, but the MX-500s will stay.
DP



Amazingly, Creative's Mu-Vo MP3 portable sounded better with Sennheiser's £150 HD-600 hi-fi headphones than with £20 MX-500 earbuds, according to Phil Bell...

OUT DEMONS OUT!

I've been a subscriber to your magazine for the last couple of months and basked in some of the reminiscences about the olden days of British hi-fi. One of my childhood neighbours in Leeds used to work as an engineer at Wharfedale's Idle Factory [ouch!] back in the Flower Power days and used to crank up the Armstrong! Garrard! Wharfedales set up with Harvest vinyl obscurities such as Forest, Edgar Broughton and Bakerloo!

I want to upgrade my current thrift shop assembled system and have a budget of £1500. I enjoy the MF X-PRE valve sound very much and would be reluctant to ditch it as I have replaced the tubes only recently. I feel the weakest link are my speakers, and was impressed with the ATC SCM-12s reviewed this month. My listening room is small - about 15x12 feet. I enjoy the overall sound even though the soundstaging is well below your high standards, and as you can probably guess, listen to a lot of 60s vinyl. I have a huge vinyl and CD collection and want to get the most out of it.

Can you help me focus the sound of this bunch: Ariston RD 80 / Linn Basik plus / Denon DLI 101MF X-LP, Marantz CD 63 KI Sig + MF X24K DAC, MF X-PRE, Quad 303 Power, MF XPSU, TDL RTL2 floorstanders.

Alistair MacDonald

Craven Arms

Well, you have a pretty well matched

system, to my eyes. I'd say the CD side is particularly strong (the vinyl side is let down by the tonearm), and the speakers are the obvious weak link. By the look of your system, I reckon you're into warmth and sweetness, so I'd advise you to try the Castle Conway 3s (£930), which have a wonderfully capacious sound with a lovely sweet, dark, silky tone thanks to those carbon fibre drivers. The aforementioned ATCs are also excellent, but have a lighter, tighter and more immediate sound with more precise imaging - try to audition both. Then, junk your arm for an Origin Live modded RB250 - yes, really! **DP**

You could pension off that Quad 303 too. Nice, but warm and fuzzy. Don't throw it away though; 303s are lovely. It should be paired up with a 33 preamp and sold to an appreciative owner, or perhaps kept as a classic and a standby. I sold off a 33/303 in my unthinking youth and regret it! Why not try listening to a Musical Fidelity power amp? **NK**

THAT INFERNAL DILEMMA AGAIN...

Currently, my system consists of Spendor BC1 speakers (modified internally), Roksan Kandy MkIII amp and NAD 521BEE CD player. The CD player seems to be the weakest link and was bought as a stop-gap while I decide on a long term upgrade. Can you suggest a suitable CD player under £800 that will be future-proofed to some extent? The question is do I stick with standard 16bit CD or HDCD, SACD, DVD-A or whatever?

Graham Rollings

Taking the most old-hat format first, personally speaking I would find it very hard to do without HDCD decoding as you are generally losing the benefit of a much more refined 20bit sound on some exemplary back catalogue remasters, notably including most of King Crimson, Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, Scott Walker (separately, not the recent box set), Bryan Ferry, Roxy Music, The Doors, The Teardrop Explodes and Mark Knopfler. That's nearly one hundred great albums right there. Then there are many one-off efforts, including the remastered Dire Straits compilation, and sometimes unmarked, such as the UK version of the John Mellancamp Collection, and those Doors remasters (or the versions in my Complete Studio Recordings box set at least).

HDCD is one of the reasons I am very attached to my Toshiba

SD900E DVD-Audio spinner, which is also a brilliant DVD-Video machine, and a highly capable CD and HDCD player, which has recently been available for around a third of its original £1,300 ticket price. If you can track one down, audition it! If that machine has disappeared, or the idea of HDCD doesn't grab you and you feel tempted towards the currently more prevalent and stronger selling SACD format, may I suggest you revisit last month's DP review of the Sony SCD-XA3000ES pitted against the Pioneer DV-868AVi, as these are the mainstream SACD-capable (with the backup of DVD-Audio in the case of the latter) machines to audition in your chosen price range. Regrettably neither feature HDCD playback, so if you leap that way the hidden joys of HDCD may never be revealed to you! **PC**



Pioneer DV-868i – the best do-it-all digital disc spinner under £800, complete with iLink digital output for future-proof connectivity

WHERE TO NOW?

I would firstly like to congratulate you on producing one of the few hi-fi magazines still worth reading. I hope you can help me with my upgrading query. My system has been built up over the last 10 years or so and consists of a Michell GyroDec with QC power supply, SME 309 arm with upgraded wiring and Kontrapunkt A cartridge. I equally use a Meridian 506 20bit CD player. Amplification is by a Musical Fidelity MVX preamp with Audionote MC step-up transformers and A370 power amp. Speakers are Castle Howard Mk I. Cables are all either Van den Hul The Second or Audioquest Emerald with Audioquest Midnight speaker cable. I am fortunate to have these located in a large room 26ft x 28ft x 21ft.

I have been relatively happy with the sound for the last few years but recently I have noticed a slight lack of transparency in the midrange of the above stereo system. This is apparent with either vinyl or CD. Am I right in thinking this has to do with the Castle

Howards, or are other upgrades a better idea? I do love the bottom-end of the Howards and would like to keep them if possible. So is it a good idea to rework the crossovers with better components? I have access to pro quality measuring gear.

Or are the amps in need of an upgrade or indeed my CD player and turntable? How do the modern designs compare to my ageing system.

I have a budget of £3000 to spend. My tastes range from Metallica to Mozart. Unfortunately, as I live in Australia, access to good quality hi-fi is not so easy but I may be taking a trip to the UK in the next few months.

What should my short list consist of?
Andrew Muir

Hi Andrew – I actually think it's your speakers which are at fault here. You should try Monitor Audio's fine GR60s (£2,295), which are very

clean and open sounding (far more so than your old Castles), while Martin Logan's Clarity (£2,895) electrostatic hybrids offer better transparency still, at the expense of the MA's massive physical scale and articulation. For Metallica get the MAs, for Mozart then there's little to touch the MLs! **DP**

That's a massive room by UK standards – and surely the ceiling isn't 21ft high? How do you change a light bulb – hot air balloon? Elsewhere I have suggested Castle Howards for high ceilings / large rooms, because they fire sound upward and because they can generate the high sound pressures needed to fill large spaces. Then there's their excellent bass quality, which is no accident. The bass unit loading is very well worked out. Newer Howard S3s might well be a wise choice.

I find it best to remove crossovers altogether and mount them externally, in a non-magnetic

box. There's too much vibration within the cabinet. Tannoy warned us many moons ago that internal mounting carries a noticeable penalty and subsequent experiment confirmed this.

Whatever you do bear in mind that a room so large needs pretty special speakers to provide adequate SPL. Look for sheer cone area in order to develop bass, or you will simply be listening to bass doubling (i.e. distortion) from an overworked bass unit. Massive Tannoys are another possibility and B&W make biggies.

Large bass units mean wide cabinets which give poor imaging. Vertically stacked bass drivers (e.g. Revolver R45) are one solution. Another is to use one or two subwoofers. Which brings me on to surround-sound. In your space, which sounds like a good slice of Outback to me, a surround-sound array is another possibility. How about newer Castle Howard S3s up front and your old ones at rear? That'll scare a few kangaroos. You would still need a subwoofer for the 0.1 (LFE) channel and a good centre speaker, but again Castle could help. It's a thought! **NK**

TALKING LEAKS

I loved the Leak amplifier review, and was very interested in Noel's comment about a base for the Stereo 20. I have never seen a base for this amp, from the original I saw in 1958 as a child in NZ, through the five I have since owned along the way. Could Noel describe the base please? I agree about raising the amps on wee legs, as it improves their cooling a lot. It is the power supply transformer that is to blame, as it is specified too close to its (long-term thermally-determined) power limit. Thus in Aussie and NZ, they mainly failed spectacularly sometime during the summer months, after a nice long listening run!

Incidentally, following the Quad ESL57 review last issue (love them too, and currently have a few), the Leaks are great for the ESL57s, despite some comments about instability into them – most of my experience is with well-repaired Leaks. Certainly the Leak ST20 is superior to the Quad 22 into the ESL57s. Thanks for all the great work. Always a really good fun read for me, from the valves to the computer audio.

Richard

A base plate is square plate with holes in it for ventilation and screws. It is needed for safety. **NK**

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SPHINX Project 12 mono.s	£3000	£1495
SONY SDPE9ES (Digital)	£600	£298
SONY VA333ES (AV System)	£799	£395
SONY TAE-1000ESD Pre	£495	£248
TAG McLaren F3 Prozor	£1500	£648
TALK ELECTRONICS Storm	£650	£375
TESSERAC Pre	£1500	£598
THORENS TTA 2000 Power Amp	£1000	£498
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● Amplifiers Valve

AUDIO INNOVATIONS 800 Monos	£1200	£598
AUDIO INNOVATIONS 800 Mk11	£1500	£688
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AUDIO RESEARCH Classic 60	£3300	£1795
AUDIO RESEARCH LS28 Mk2 pre	£3000	£1295
AUDIO RESEARCH VT100 Mk1 Pwr	£5500	£2996
CARY Pre-amp	£3500	£1296
CARY CAD300SE Monoblocks	£5000	£2998
CONRAD JOHNSON PV 10AL Pre	£1400	£676
CONRAD JOHNSON PV 10 Pre	£1600	£845
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CONRAD JOHNSON Premier 140SA	£7000	£5248
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CONRAD JOHNSON PV12L	£2000	£1296
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GAMMA HBC 'The Beastie'	£2000	£1298
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HOWLAND HP 100 + MC Phono	£5750	£3496
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LUMLEY Ref 250 monoblocks	£3500	£2996
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UNISON RESEARCH Unica	£895	£695
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DENON DRM 22	£200	£55
DENON TU450L	£150	£ 65
DENON DR-M07	£150	£65
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LUXMAN ST50 (Rare)	£900	£555
LUXMAN T210	£295	£145
LUXMAN T50A	£695	£395
MERIDIAN 104 Tuner	£295	£195
MICROMEGA FM tuner	£300	£145
M.I.T. 330 1m pair Phono	£475	£338
M.I.T. 330 1.5m pair Phono	£520	£358
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MYRIAD T30 tuner	£250	£128
NAD 402 Tuner	£125	£ 68
NAKAMICHI 480 black	£495	£196
NAKAMICHI 481Z (Silver)	£495	£166
NAKAMICHI 600	£400	£198
QUAD FM2 tuner	£200	£125
QUAD FM3 tuner	£200	£95
QUAD FM4 tuner	£300	£198
QUAD 66 Tuner	£595	£398
QUAD 99 Tuner (Bus)	£695	£495
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REVOX Pra H577 (Reel to reel)	£950	£398
REVOX A77 2 track (Reel to reel)	£750	£378
REVOX PR9911 2 track (1.75/15ips)	£1500	£595

REVOX 8910 Pro cassette deck	£1500
REVOX A76	£500
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SILTECH HF-9G3 5.E.DIG. (1M)	£230
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ACOUSTIC ENERGY AE3	£3500	£1495
ACOUSTAT Model 2 Electrostatics	£2500	£674
ACOUSTAT Spectra 1100 Hybrid electrostatics	£1500	£578
ACOUSTIC ENERGY AE120	£800	£ 295
ACOUSTIC ENERGY AE1	£895	£475
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ACOUSTIC PRECISION Elkos	£650	£348
AJ ACOUSTICS Ref 1 (active sub)	£700	£495
APOGEE Caliper Signature	£3800	£1998
AUDIOSTATIC ES300 Electrostatics	£1500	£578
AUDIONOTE ESP (Inc stands)	£1850	£1098
AUDIO PRO B250 Sub	£1000	£356
B & W CM1 (white)	£195	£ 75
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B & W CC6 (centre)	£200	£ 75
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B & W CM4 Rosenuit	£900	£595
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CASTLE Durham (Marked)	£230	£ 95
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MISSION 753 (Rosewood)	£799	£425
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MISSION 733 MkII (Blk)	£295	£145
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MONITOR AUDIO Studio 14 (Marked)	£900	£299
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 ARCAM Alpha 10 DAB Tuner
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 CYRUS CD6 and CYRUS Smart Power
 EAR 324 MM/MC
 JBL 250TI Series Speakers
 LINN Ittack III Arm
 MARANTZ ST450 Gyro Touch Tuner
 MERIDIAN 556
 MUSICAL FIDELITY NuVista M3
 MUSICAL FIDELITY XAS100 Power Amp
 MUSICAL FIDELITY A300 Int Amp
 NAIM 250
 NAIM Nat 01 Tuner
 NAIM CDX
 NAKAMICHI CR7E Cassette Deck in Mint Condition
 QUAD 77 Int
 QUAD 2 x Mono (22) blocks
 QUAD 99 Power Amp
 ROTEL RMB 1075 5-channel power Amp
 ROTEL RB 985 5-channel power Amp
 SME 309 Arm IV - V
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Mark Levinson No 360s x-demo	7495	4499	Transparent Music Link Ultra Balanced 7.26m S/H	2349 1499
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McCormack Phono Stage New and Boxed	650	399	Krell	
Roksan Artexerxes X MC/MM Phono Stage S/H	450	299	Krell	
Roksan Cognoscenti Xerxes Piano lacquer /Tabrizi / Corus Black S/H	2700	799	Mark Levinson	
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Graaf GM13.5BII Valve Preamplifier Balanced S/H	4000	1999	Dcs	
Gryphon Sonata Allegro 2 box preamplifier x-demo	9739	5995	Wadia	
Naim Audio NAC62 (old style) with phono stage S/H	N/A	175	cash paid call John Roberts: 01562 731100	
Naim 72 k Preamplifier S/H	789	349		
Roksan L2 preamplifier S/H	1295	299		
Spectral DMC12 Line New&Boxed	4250	2999		
Spectral DMC12 s Phono x-demo	4750	3299		
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Cyrus Straightline Amplifier S/H	549	175		
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Naim Audio NAP140 (old Style) power amplifier S/H	N/A	299		
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REL Strata III Subwoofer Cherry X-demo	695	449		
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Cardas Neutral Reference 1m RCA-BNC S/H	550	375		
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Madrigal CZ Gel 1.5m Balanced new&boxed	599	299		
Madrigal MDC 1pro 1m AES/EBU Digital cable new&boxed	319	159		
Madrigal MDC 2 1m Fatboy Digital cable new&boxed	319	159		
Madrigal MDC 2 0.5m Fatboy Digital cable new&boxed	279	139		
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AUDUSA

AUDUSA EUPEN CSA 2.5 AUDIO AC MAINS CABLE

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AUDUSA - OOM Silverlink OCC balanced speaker cable - stranded, silver on OFHC plus three strands of OCC (Ohno Continuous Casting - single crystal copper) for improved bass performance. Mylar infill and with designed in protection against RF and EMI. conductor of 3mm diameter (approx 8 gauge). Cable Overall Dimension: 14.72 mm.

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Eupen GNLM 05/2.5 (CSA 2.5) shown with Maringo IEC 320 will be fitted at extra cost.

GNLM 05/04

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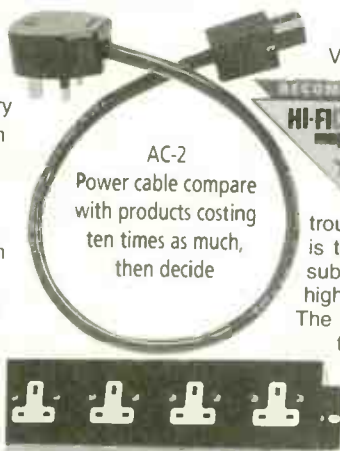
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Power cable compare
with products costing
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 THETA DS Pre GEN III (PRE-AMP/DAC) EXCLT/BOXED £2295
 THETA DS PRO GEN 11 MINT/BOXED £1295
 THETA DS PRO BASIC-11 DAC MINT/BOXED £1275
 MONRID 18B DAC & SEPERATE PSU. MINT £495

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MARTIN LOGAN CLS11-2 & KINERGETICS SW-800 SUBWOOFERS AND EXT.X/OVER (SUPERB) MINT/BOXED £5750
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 CELESTION A-2 FLOORSTANDERS MINT £650
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 TARGET 24 INCH STANDS MINT £75
 ACOUSTIC ENERGY AE-2 TWIN PILLAR LEAD FILLED STANDS MINT £375
 ATTACAMA R-274 LEAD FILLED (£275) EXCLT £175

CABLES
LOUDSPEAKER CABLE
 TARA LABS PRIME 1800 18 FEET PAIR BI-WIRE AS NEW BOXED ETC £750
 MIT MH-750 12 FT.PAIR BI-WIRE £850
 MIT MH-750 8 FT. PAIR BI-WIRE £650
 NIRVANA AUDIO SL-SERIES 2.3 METRE PAIR EX DEM. FACTORY TERMINATED £525
 VAN DEN HUL REVELATION 2 METRE STEREO PAIR TERMINATED £575
 XLO REFERENCE 6 FT. PAIR TERMINATED SPADES/BANANAS £275
 QED XT-400 4 X 3 METRES AIRLOCS ONE ENO £175
 TRANSPARENT WAVE 200 2 METRE PAIR £175
 CAROAS HEXLINK 2 METRE PAIR (FACTORY TERMINATED) £275
 AUDIONOTE AN-SP 2 METRE PAIR (FACTORY TERMINATED) £375
 AUDIONOTE AN-L 4 METRE PAIR (FACTORY TERMINATED) £225
 VANDEN HUL MC CS 122 2 X 3 METRE PAIR AS NEW £99
 AUDIOQUEST CRYSTAL HYPERLITZ 2 METRE BI-WIRE TERMINATED £75
 JPS LABS ULTRA CONDUCTER 8 FT.PAIR AS NEW £100
 LFD 3 METRE PAIR £150

INTERCONNECT
 HARMONIC TECH MAGIC LINK ONE 1 METRE EX DEM £650
 SILVER ARROW 1 METRE BALANCED XLR EX DEM/AS NEW £650
 SILVER ARROW I METRE PAIR EXPENSIVE PHONO POTION EX.DEM £650
 XLO 3 METRE PAIR (PHONO) EX.DEM £225
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 GRYPHON 'THE GRYPHON GUIDELINE' 1.5 METRES BALANCED XLR £300
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 AUDIOQUEST DIAMOND 2 X 2 METRE PAIRS (MINT) EACH £550
 AUDIOQUEST LAPIS 4 METRE PAIR £450
 VAN DEN HUL FIRST ULTIMATE 0.5 METRE PAIR £150
 VAN DEN HUL FIRST 0.8 DIGITAL CABLE NEW BOXED £99
 AUDIOQUEST EMERALD 0.5 METRE £140
 NDRDDST BLUE ANGEL 1.5 METRE PAIR BRAND NEW PACKAGED £65
 NDRDDST BLUE ANGEL 1.0 METRE 5 PIN DIN TD PHONO'S £50
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Turntableworld		
ARR	EB101/AR arm - vgc, black	99
Garrard	301 - recon unit in Martin basin plinth	499
Garrard	401 - nr mint major unit	179
Garrard	401 - ex, Plinthed c/w SME3009	299
Garrard	401 - ex, gorgeous Aphelion plinth	499
Melius	Scorpio - ex, black/brass	149
Linn	LP12 - early original p/s, fair	199
Linn	LP12/Valhalla/ItakVII - nr mint, afromasia, boxed	699
Linn	LP12/Valhalla/ItakVII - nr mint, rpsent, boxed	749
Linn	LP12/Lingo/ItakVII - nr mint, black, boxed	999
Linn	LP12/Lingo/ItakVIII - nr mint, afromasia, boxed	1099
Linn	LP12/Valhalla/LUX - fair, afromasia	399
Linn	LP12/Valhalla/LUX - vgc, black	499
Logic	Tempo Electronic/LV2 - vgc	149
Michell	Focus One - fair to good nick, with fab Focus arm	249
Michell	Gyradee SE - Best Trade ins	ON DEM
Michell	Gyradee - ex, gyropower ps, Orbe platter, smoked case	Due in
Michell	Gyradee - ex, gyropower ps, export colours, smoked case	Due in
Michell	Orbe SE/Vc - Best Trade ins	ON DEM
Musical Fidelity	Rega Arm mods - Amazing value	ON DEM
Project	0.5/arm/Octaton - as new, boxed	99
Project	Classic - vgc, cherry wood plinth, very pretty and capable too	299
Rega	Planar 2/RS200 - nr mint, wood plinth original	119
Rega	Planar 3/RS300 - vgc, ex	179
Rega	Planar 7B/RS250/Mono Cart - ex/ex	175
Revoiver	Revoiver/Revoiver/AT95E - ex/ex	125
Rokson	Revoiver/LVA - ex/ex	199
Systemdek	IX - ex, wood finish no lid/arm	79
Lowstead	Rock Mk2 - c/w plinth and lid, nr mint	449
Transcriptors	Skeleton/Vocal - ex/ex	799
Trichard	Dino - Best Trade ins	ON DEM
	Most of our turntable combinations come fitted with free cartridge	
	Digital	
Bow Technologies	ZZ8 - nr mint, black boxed	1999
Cyrus	Dad1 - nr mint, black, remote	199
Cyrus	Dad3 - nr mint, black, remote	299
Cyrus	Dad7 - nr mint, black, remote	399
Cyrus	Dad7 - nr mint, black, remote	399
Cyrus	CD7Q - nr mint, black, remote, boxed, lovely	599
Cyrus	PSX - nr mint, black	279
Kenwood	DP1100 - ex, v underrated	89
Marantz	CD635E - nr mint, remote	89
Marantz	CD605E - ex, remote	89
Meridian	200 transport and main deck - ex, superb combination	449
Meridian	200 transport - ex, Irichard mod excellent	379
Micromega	Solo - ex, acrylic lid, lovely	375
Micromega	Optic - nr mint, remote	129
Myriad	T20 - black, nr mint, boxed, bargain!	379
Pink Triangle	Original DAC - nr mint, boxed	379
Pioneer	CLD SB15 - Loversdisc, vcd, cd, PAL, NISTC	119
Rega	Planar 7 - nr mint, boxed	249
Rolei	RCD95BX - ex, black, remote	119
Rolei	CDP333esd - ex, manual, remote	129
Sony	CDP4500 - ex, remote	89
Teac		
	Amplifiers	
Arcam	Delta 90 2 - good condition, boxed	79
Arcam	Alpha 7 - ex, highly rated amp	129
Arcam	Alpha 7B - ex, as above with remote	149
Arcam	Alpha 10 power - nr mint, boxed	349
Audio Experiment	Valve preamp - rare, pretty and excellent sound	349
Audiolab	8000C - ex, black	249
Audiolab	8000S - nr mint	329
Audiolab	8000C - nr mint, late boxed	249
Audiolab	8000P - nr mint, late boxed	449
Audiolab	Silver Knight - Memmmmmmonoblocks	1199
Corver	CM1040 - vgc, nice integrated	225
Creek	CAS4020 - ex, boxed	79
Conrad Johnson	Songrapher SA250 poweramp - ex	599
Cyrus	Power - nr mint, boxed, black	279
Cyrus	PSX-R - nr mint, black	279
John Shearman	Phase 2 integrated - nr mint, vg phono stage	349
Krell	2x KWA100 - ex	2499
Leson	Quattro - Fab 80's integrated	199
Linn	Pretek - ex, black	149
Linn	UK1/Dirok - ex, black, mm/mc exceptional vfm	199
Magnum Ref	MP300 & 2x MF1 - ex, ex, ex, mm/mc, tabulous!	479
Marantz	PM66SE KI - nr mint, boxed	149
Marantz	PM6010 Ki Sig - nr mint, boxed, black	199
Meridian	603S - ex, pair, boxed, monoblocks	795
Mission	Cyrus One - ex, boxed, black, late model, mm/mc	149
Mission	Cyrus Two and PSX - ex, grey, mm/mc	279
Muth	100w Monos and Passive pre - ex, wood fronts	399
Musical Fidelity	A1 - nr mint, four stars A, integrated	149
Musical Fidelity	3a pre and 12v off board p/s - nr mint, boxed	75
Musical Fidelity	P150 power - nr mint, boxed	199
Naim	Nait 1 - ex, phono	149
Naim	405 2 - nr mint, boxed	199
Rega	Luna - nr mint, black, boxed, better than O Brio	199
Rolei	RB970BX power - nr mint	125
Rolei	RTC950L - nr mint, pre with built in tuner, remote	79
Rolei	RC850 - good condition	72
Sugden	A48mk3 - ex, boxed	249
Sugden	A28mk2 - fair, excellent vfm	149
Sugden	AU41 pre/power - ex, black	79
Trio	2x L-05M - ex, rare and gorgeous!!!	749
	Speakers	
Bose	Poir Model 100's and Subwoofer - nr mint	149
Castle	Howard - ex, mid oak	549
Celestion	Kendal - nr mint, new model in light ash	195
Celestion	9000 - vgc, superb standmount	249
Celestion	7000 - fair/good, huge ribbon and heavy bass bargain!	79
Celestion	DL6 - ex, black, boxed	75
Epos	M15 - nr mint, light cherry, boxed	449
Epos	ES11 - vgc, 80's classic	125
Epos	ES14 - nr mint, boxed 80's classic c/w dedicated stands	125
Harbeth	HJ Monitor Mk II - fair	Offers
Heybrook	Prima - set of 5 ideal for AV, black	99
Heybrook	H8100 - vgc, superb vfm	79
KEF	103 2 Ref - nr mint, boxed	199
KEF	Coqa 8 - nr mint	80
Mission	753 - nr mint, midrange, black, boxed inc plinths	Due in
Mission	763i - ex, black, floorstander, boxed	119
NEAT	Elite - nr mint v, underroted floorstander, maple	379
NEAT	Elite - nr mint v, underroted floorstander, maple	379
QUAD	Peithe - Best trade ins	ON DEM
Rogers	ELS63 - nr mint, due back from Quad, serviced with new boxes	Due in
Rogers	Studio Monitor - Original vgc, with stands - suit valve amps	199
Ruark	Epilogue - good, cherry	149
Sonus Faber	Grand Piano - Ex, black, original and best version	899
lannoy	R2 - good, boxed, cherry floorstander	79
TDI	Studio 1 - vgc, wood finish transmission line	279
Wharfedale	Diamond 40th anniversary prototype	199
Wharfedale	rosewood box like Quad 111, the only pair in the world!!!	299
Wharfedale	Pacific P30 - nr mint, boxed, light cherry, excellent	299
Wharfedale	505 2 - nr mint, boxed, black standmount	75
	Miscellaneous	
Arcam	Alaha tuner - vgc, boxed	59
Atacama	Equipment supports - Your kit deserves them!	ON DEM
Cyrus	FM7 tuner - black, digital, presets, nr mint, boxed	249
Cyrus	Original Mission tuner - vgc	99
Denon	TU260L tuner - ex, black, digital, presets	59
Nagra	III tape - c/w power pack, case etc	Due in
Nakamichi	SB0 cassette - nr mint, black	79
Onkyo	TX595 av amp - nr mint, boxed, DTS 5.1 etc	199
Sony	STR-D8940 av amp - vgc, DTS 5.1 etc	199
Teac	TX3000 tuner - ex, digital, presets	69
Teac	WT10 cassette - vgc, 3 head	79
Technics	STC90L tuner - ex, digital, presets	89
Yamaha	VS10 decoder & 5 spkr system - nr mint, boxed	179

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Audio Analogue Maestro Integrated ex dem	£1495
Theta gen V dac (£6200)	£1695
Audio Research sp9 mk2 (£2850)	£1095
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Apogee Duettas mk2 (brand new custom finish ring!)	£2995
Accuphase dp801 cd transport (£6000!!)	£1095
Unison Research smart 845 monoblocks (the best)	£2095
Mark Levinson no.23 pwr amp	£2595
Mirage 1090i omni dir. Spkrs	£495
DPA Enlightenment pre/pwr (late chrome models)	£795
Nakamichi CR1E 2 head tape deck	£195
Audiostatic ES200 e/stats	£1395
Art Audio Quintet, 15 watts of valve loveliness!	£745
Conrad Johnson PF1Lpreamp	£695
Conrad Johnson PV5 valve preamp	£595
Counterpoint SA12 valve hybrid (unbeatable!)	£595
Counterpoint SA20 valve hybrid (more unbeatable!)	£895
Counterpoint DA11E cd transport (philips cdm4)	£495
Krell KAV-300ii integrated (300 watts/channel!!)	£2195
Meridian 601 dac/preamp (£2700)	£695
Audiolab 8000s remote amp	£345
Krell 300i integrated amp	£1295

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PAIR TAG McLaren 250MR monoblocks, black as new, boxed still under warranty, includes cables plus Aphrodite anthracite, boxed, mint. £3600 ono. Tel: 020 7480 7964 or 07932 063 335 or Email: thewaldrons01@tiscali.co.uk (May/1)

CYRUS SYSTEM, dad3Q, Cyrus III, Cyrus power, Mission 752 rosewood, Chord interconnects and DNM Reson speaker cables. Stands Unique midi sound tower + ISO platform. Cost new £3000, sell £1200. May split. Tel: 07739 078947 or Email: ewan.bowie@tiscali.co.uk (May/1)

COINCIDENT TOTAL Eclipse speakers, www.coincidentspeakers.com for details, reviews. Perfect for sets 94dB, 14 ohm. 24Hz to 20kHz, were £6000+ 3 years ago, now £3000 ono. Tel: Nick 01373 463780 or Email: nicholas.welsh@blueyonder.co.uk (May/1)

PAUL HYNES Extreme valve phonostage MM perfect for Cartridges Musicmaker 4x 6SL7's Jensen coppers caps, new £3000+, £1500 ono. MF M3 New Vista integrated £800. Quad 57's excellent condition £400. Tel: Nick 01373 463780 or Email: nicholas.welsh@blueyonder.co.uk (May/1)

YAMAHA NS1000M's plus stands. Light domestic use only. Good condition, £600. No offers. Tel: 01935 702643 (day), or 01935 432417 (eve) (May/1)

MICHELL GYRODEC, brown perspex, deep lid with ET2 Airbearing tonearm fitted. Art 1 MC cartridge and Rega RB300 fitted Technics MC 305 cartridge. Superb performance, £1950 ono. Tel: Richard 07710 124262 (May/1)

LEAK VARISLOPE stereo preamplifier. Leak Troughline 3 FM tuner. Sony stereo turntable system PSLX5. Pioneer stereo cassette tape deck CT540. Rosewood reproduction cabinet. Two Leak 15ohm Sandwich loudspeakers, mahogany cases. Offers invited. Tel: 01249 715752 (May)

NAIM CDX mint £1500. Linn LP12, Cirkus, Armageddon £800. Kimber PowerKords 3/4 feet £30/£50. Naim black SNAIC-5 £30. Naim grey SNAIC-5 £20. Target TT2 £30. Naim Lilac interconnect £25. Mission bi-wire speaker cable £25 (5 metres). Chord Chrysalis Phonos £25. Stands Unique carbon-fibre feet £10. Ancient Quad leaflets £20. Tel: 01285 862539 or 07967 031286 (May/1)

WHARFEDALE PACIFIC Evolution 20 loudspeakers, beech finish, £350 ono. Tel: 01383 416263 (Fife, Scotland) (May/1)

VALVE MONOBLOCKS single ended using 5881. Made by VRR 8 watts, used with Lowthers £350 pair. Tel: 01293 824 667 after 6pm or Email: JLC@beeb.net (May/1)

"BEST BUYS" boxed as new. Triangle Antal floorstanders, valve friendly £595. Monarchy SM70 Class A zero feedback amplifier £440. KEF Q15 MkII £120. Tannoy MX2 £95. Stands available. Tel: 01243 863 371 (West Sussex) (May/1)

SONY SCDXB 790 SACD player, unwanted gift, boxed, as new. Hi-Fi World Standards recommended product. Accept £200. Tel: 01773 860 776 (Notts, Derby area, just off Junction 28 M1 motorway) (May/1)

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CONRAD JOHNSON Premier 18LS pre-amp. Excellent condition with brass remote control. Can demonstrate. £1750 ono. Tel: 07887 99 1428 or 01983 756 104 (May/1)

SONUS FABER Extrema with stands £3200 ono. Pass Labs Aleph 5 £1600. Pass Labs X2 pre £1200. Krell KAV 300 CD £1300. Tel: Colin 01293 417 785 (May/1)

AUDIOLAB 8000Q pre-amp £650. Audiolab 8000P power amplifier £350. £900 the pair. Audiolab 8000CDM CD transport £450. DPA Enlightenment DAC £450. Trichord Pulsar Series One DAC £450. Transport and DAC £800. Tel: 01296 398 166 or 07801 909912 (May)

NAKAMICHI DRI tape deck £450. Rotel RT990BX tuner £250. Sony DVP-S735D Region One DVD £200. Sony SCD-XB940 SACD £450. 3VC digital VHS HM-DR10000 £350. Tel: 01296 398 166 or 07801 909912 (May)

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ATC SCM12 speakers stands. Primare 30.1 amp. Rotel 965 BX CD. Audiolab 8000 DAC. Denon 260L tuner. Ecosse cable £4000+, £1700. Red Rose Spirit system £800. Tel: 0121 246 0486 (May/1)

EXPOSURE 15 integrated amplifier, MM phonostage £200 ono. Tel: 01825 761 827 after 6pm or leave message (East Sussex) (May/1)

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ECC93 MULLARD	£45	6233 PHILIPS	£25	0.1UF 350V TCC O/F	£5		PRIMARY 115-230 50CS SCR	GARDENERS POTTED
ECC95 MULLARD	£40	157 GEC	£60	0.01UF 1000V TCC O/F	£3		SECONDARYS	PRIMARY 115-230 50CS SCR
ECC95 MULLARD	£40	6550GE USA	£35	0.25UF 500V PLESSEY	£5		450-400-0-350-400-450	SECONDARYS
E280 MULLARD	£10	5U46B RCA	£20	0.5UF 350V TCC O/F	£5		380MA DC (CH)	350-300-0-300-350 100MA
E281 MULLARD	£13	G233 MULLARD	£30	1.7UF 1000V SPRANGE	£5		240MA DC (CO)	£95
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G237 COSSOR	£50	0.25UF 1000V TCC	£15	10H 100MA PARM O/F	£35			
ECC88 PHILIPS	£15	0.1UF 3000V DUB	£20	5 H 500MA PARM O/F	£50			
E88CC MULLARD	£30	0.25UF 1700V TCC	£20	5 H 250MA PARM O/F	£40			
CCASIE MENS	£40	0.1UF 5000V DUB	£20	5 H 180MA PARM O/F	£40			
EF37A MULLARD	£15	1UF 1500V TCC	£20	5 H 100MA PARM O/F	£35			
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EL34 MULLARD	£80	.8UF 200V TCC	£10	2 H 300MA PLESSEY O/F	£20			
EL37 MULLARD	£80	0.5UF-0.25UF 350V	£7	6 H 250MA PLESSEY O/F	£35			
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65N7 BRIMAR	£30	1UF 600V TCC	£12	10H 150MA VARNISHED	£30			
65N7 USA	£20	4UF 600V DUB	£10	10H 75MA VARNISHED	£20			
12AX7 WAGE	£25	4UF 800V DUB	£15	50H 25MA POTTED	£45			
E290 MULLARD	£12	4UF 800V DUB	£15	15H 120MA POTTED	£40			
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TAG MCLAREN 250MR
monoblocks in black, boxed, mint condition, still under warranty with Tag McLaren RCA-RCA interconnects. Will swap for Krell KSA-200S, KSA-300S, else £2600 ono. Tel: 07932 063335 or 020 7480 7964 or Email: amwlondon@tiscali.co.uk (May/1)

CROFT EPOCH Elite, wooden fascia, gold knobs, NOS valves (gain too high for my Leak ST20) £475 (£1000) ono. Kimber Silver Streak interconnect £75 (£150). 4TC speaker-cable 3m £95 (£200). Powercord Wattgate £55 (£120). Tel: Alex 01206 511 299 or Email: alexhieatt@yahoo.com (Essex) (May/1)

ENTHUSIASTS CLEAROUT:
Audionote ANE-SP, oak, silver wired plus stands £1000. Audionote ANK-B oak £300. Audionote OTO split PSU £750. NAD C160 pre-amp £350. NAD C270 power amp 3 pieces £350 each. The Head M/C transformer £100. Amcron DC300A £200. Audionote silver cables, various. Tel: 01892 539511 (May/1)

PRO-AC STUDIO 125, yew finish, mint condition, excellent sound £575 ono. Mana Reference wall shelf £75. Various cables ring for details. Yamaha K340 cassette deck £45. Tel: 01525 854 652 (Beds) (May/1)

STUDER A725 fully balanced CD player, excellent sound, c/w balanced cables £400 ono. Tel: 01903 741 297 or 07765 230 771 (May/1)

PIONEER CLD1750 Laserdisc player, Trichord clocked, excellent condition, also Laserdiscs. Tel: 01903 741 297 or 07765 230 771 (May/1)

DPA IS.19 SPEAKER Cable, 3mtr pair, cost £180, bargain £90. Tel: 0121 303 1944 or 07817 241 911 (May/1)

NAIM AUDIO SBL loudspeakers, black, s/n 128518, £1200. Naim Audio CD1 CD player, s/n 85969, £500. Naim Audio HiCap power supply, s/n 123266, £370. Naim Audio NAP 180 power amplifier, s/n 122878, £690. All ono, boxed. Current valuations! Tel: 020 8300 3265 (Kent) (May/1)

MERIDIAN 207, two box CD player, instructions, boxed, including 209 master control, £400. Meridian 204 tuner, boxed, no mains cable, £200. Tel: 01883 722841 evenings or Email: a.sharp43@ntlworld.com (May/1)

SPENDOR SP1, rosewood, Rogers Studio1 equivalents. cost loads and ain't as good! Deserves discerning audiophiles for £375 each. You can't get better. Also Tannoy T225, £225. Tel: Kevin 01245 251 235 (May/1)

EPOS 22 SPEAKERS (cherry) £380. DPA Enlightenment transport & DAC, little use, with remote £450. Tel: 01225 481 155 or Email: p.g.b.berry@bath.ac.uk

NOTTINGHAM ANALOGUE Spacedeck, brand new, Rega RB250 and Tracer1 cartridge, £595. Nottingham Analogue Hyperspace (white) with Paragon1 linear carbon arm £1400. Meridian 508 20bit £750. Tel: Philip 020 7912 9410 (Ealing) (May/1)

Mk2 ROCK SIEMIC Sink acrylic and original platters MC 25 FL valve phono stage with silver captive leads, Target TTI no plinth. £500 ono. Tel: 023 92 753 833 (May/1)

QUAD ESL63 with cartons, excellent condition £849. Also 15 Sheffield Lab Direct To Disc Series mint condition £949. Also Sony PCM F1 digital processor £399. Tel: Alan 02392 453 382 (May/1)

ROKSAN CASPIAN integrated amp, silver. Roksan upgrade to Mk 2. Manuals, remote, boxed, mint, £500. Roksan Caspian tuner, silver, boxed, £200 ono. Musical Fidelity X-Cans, boxed, £50. Tel: 07941 213 107 (May/1)

AUDIO MAGIC ST-1 speakers/stands, very like Wilson WATT's, truly wonderful, £1100 for quick sale (£3800). Nordost Valhalla digital interconnect, Eichmann Silver upgrade, wooden presentation box, £650 (£1200). Tel: 0131 6610126, 07811 335060, or Email: zebshaw@hotmail.com. (May/1)

DENON AVC A1D (£2000) £600. Denon DVD 3300 (£1000) £400 or both for £900. Ecosse Reference MS-2.3 speaker cable 2x 9ft £100. MS-2.2 1x of 9ft used for centre channel £50. Tel: 0141 646 2545 after 6pm (Jun/1)

TANDBERG SERIES 15 machine £50. Chilton M12-4 mixing desk £100. Revox G36 £200. Revox A77 £200. Yamaha KX380 cassette deck £30. Revox A77 acrylic cover £35. Tel: 07710 828286 anytime (May/1)

ROGERS STUDIO 7 loudspeakers, excellent condition apart from small chip on one corner. Teak colour, 120w. Due to weight to buyer collect Glasgow. £349 ono. Tel: 01389 752 044 after 5pm (May/1)

SPENDOR 2040 speakers, 1050mm tall, 4 drive units, black, boxed, £400 (£900). Audio Innovations Alto amp, £80. Marantz CD63, £40. Denon PMA 250, £40. Tel: 01749 678 698 or Email: jeffandmaggie@tiscali.co.uk (Wells) (May/1)

LOWTHER ACOUSTA/PM6A horn loudspeakers with the original and best birch-ply cabinets, PM6A silver drive units, all vgc. Garrott Microscanner Decca London cartridge with Decapod mount. Tel: Richard 020 8991 0762 or 020 8885 6339 (May/1)

MARK LEVINSON ML 23.5 power amp 200 watt per channel, boxed, manual, £2495. Mark Levinson ML 20.5 monoblock power amps, 100 watt per channel. Pure Class 'A', boxed, with manual, £3595. Tel: 01634 387 686 (May/1)

ROTEL RA840BX integrated amplifier 40wpc, phono inputs £200 plus carriage. Audio Technica OC7 phono cartridge with AT630 transformer £120 plus carriage. Tel: 01740 651 637 or Email: jwdavison@breathemail.net (May/1)

AUDIONOTE SPEAKERS E/SP, black, silver wired, stands, boxed, 3 years old, £750. Pro Passion preamp with RCA's, £300. Trichord Pulsar Series 1 DAC with power supply, £450. Tel: 01993 883 253 or Email: kgtoft9@tiscali.co.uk (Oxon) (May/1)

NOTTINGHAM ANALOGUE turntable, 12" Anna arm, Tracer 4 cartridge, PSU, £3200. Croft Absolute pre-amp £1500. Posselt Albatros loudspeakers £1300. All mint condition. Tel: 01604 404 499 (Northampton) (May/1)

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LINN KABER Floor standing speakers, Linn Classik CD-amp, Linn LK85 power amp (two). All immaculate Quad tri-wired speaker cables included. £995 Tel: 0151 709 4540 (home), 0151 709 7706 (office) 07836 221 717 (mobile). (May/1)

HERTFORDSHIRE/NORTH LONDON Audio/Record Fair. Sunday 25th April 2004. 11.00 to 4.00. £3. 9.30am early entry £10. At Cuffley Hall, Maynard Place, Cuffley, Herts. 5 minutes from M25 Junction 25. Tel: 07944 909 209 for details (Apr/1)

DALI ROYAL Menuet II boxed immaculate £199. (£399). Dali SC5 centre £75 (£150). ATC SCM10 walnut £275 some marks. NAD T770 boxed, immaculate (£699) £150. Two pairs Menuets available. Tel: 020 7237 4475 (Apr/1)

TANNOY AMESBURY (pair). 152 HPD. Big and go deep. £475. Sony FM stereo tuner 5950 SD, with Dolby NR £85. JBL L50 Speakers, dynamic sound, £250. Sony digital tuner. FM MW LW £30. Tel: 01983 247593 (Apr/1)

ROGERS AUDIONOTE improved F40A valve amp, 3 years old, Audionote revalved & coolers 12 months. Excellent, boxed £450. Tel: 01522 558 137 (day), 01522 694 371 (evenings/weekend) (Lincoln) (Apr/1)

MISSION 78DS dipolar surround speakers, black ash finish, bi-wireable, mint condition, boxed £175 including delivery within the UK. Contact: magurry@supanet.com (Apr/1)

LOUDSPEAKERS FOR discerning listeners. Two pair D'Appolito Configuration £200, pair large floorstanders £300. Recently built and custom designed. Superior to comparable mass produced and kit products. Seriously good! Tel: 01943 468 835 (West Yorks) (Apr/1)

KEF REFERENCE 105's £295. Early Kef Duettes £85. Ariston RD80, Basik LVV arm £100. Single Tannoy Dorset £40. Musical Fidelity A100 £150. Goodmans Midax horn £40. Wanted: Lowther PM6C. Tel: 01362 687 615 (Apr/1)

LINN LK140 £425, Kolector £275, Keilidh (walnut) £375. All new in 2000, as new condition. Tel: 01322 436 097 or 07802 265 786 (North Kent) (Apr/1)

HEYBROOK HB100s £60, stands £30, Leak Troughline 3 Stereo £85, Leak Varislope III £30, Leak Mono pre-amp £30, Leak Point One Plus £30. Tel: 01322 436 097 or 07802 265 786 (North Kent) (Apr/1)

MISSION 753 floorstanding loudspeakers in rosewood finish, excellent sound, original packing. Can demonstrate. £325. Tel: 01308 459 443 or Email: mikehousell@compuserve.com (Dorset) (Apr/1)

INCATECH CLAYMORE integrated with VG phono £130. Faulty Nakamichi BX-1 (No FFwd or reverse but plays and records fine) Offers. Tel: Adrian 020 8699 3252 or Email: buddam@screaming.net (Apr/1)

QUAD ELS 63's, good working order, boxes. Look good £500 ono. Tel: 01323 737 850 answerphone (Eastbourne) (Apr/1)

THORENS TD160. Ortofon M20 Super cartridge, Thorens plinth and cover including manuals, in very good original condition £120. Tel: 01273 307 995 (Brighton) (Apr/1)

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO amplifiers. C70 preamp. Two A70 power amps. Used as monoblocs. 90wpc, vgc, excellent sound. £250 ono. 0114 234 4200 (Sheffield) (Apr/1)

QUAD 33/303 pre and power amps, FM3 tuner, excellent condition, original boxes, manuals. £200. Tel: 01953 601 939 evenings (Norfolk) (Apr/1)

ATC SCM20 SLT, vgc, boxed, £1995. Meridian 508 20bit £795. AVI monos latest spec £750. Shanling CDT 100 £1100. Tannoy Stirling HE £1695. Wanted: Cello Etude Passive Pre. Tel: 07947 700189 (Apr/1)

AUDIO INNOVATIONS Series 1000 monoblocks, new Billington Gold tubes. Requires attention, boxed, £500. Linn Kairn pre-amp + phono, boxed, £500. Ruark Accolade loudspeakers, £500. Tel: 0117 909 6025 (Bristol) (Apr/1)

SPENDOR SP2/3E rosewood, mint, boxed, hardly used, £850. Quad ESL57's, black pair, £375. Lumley Ref120 monoblocks, triode switchable, mint, boxed, revalved, £1100. Tel: 0113 257 7793 (Apr/1)

KRELL KSA 80B power amplifier, immaculate, complete with box and instructions, £1395. Audio Research LS2 balanced pre-amp, excellent condition, box and instructions, £795. Tel: 07973 242 975 or Email: hifibri@hotmail.com (Eastbourne, East Sussex) (Apr/1)

COPLAND CTA 505 power amp, new, matched 6550C's and input valves. Triode mode. Spare 6550B's. Fully serviced 2003. Mint (25kg!) condition, boxed, £1000 ovno. Tel: Chris 020 8543 5531 evenings (Apr/1)

RB300 INCOGNITO rewired tonearm, four stainless steel spacing washers, spanner, with all setting up instructions, vgc, £180. Tel: 01642 456 228 anytime (Cleveland) (Apr/1)

NAIM AUDIO CD3.5 £500. NAC102/NAPSC £800. Flatcap x3 £150ea. HiCap £350. NAP135 x2 £1400pr. Headline amp £200. Credo's (cherry) £650. Mana Sound Frame £130. All boxed, excellent condition. Tel: 01934 511 803 (Apr/1)

FURUTECH FP202 angled locking banana plugs. Rhodium plated, screw fixing - no solder. 3 sets of 4. Mint. Superb. £24 (£50) per set. Tel: 01752 773 369 (Apr/1)

YAMAHA NS1000-M, Orbe DC-NC, boxed. Garrard 301, SME 3009-imp, mint condition. Thornes TD-124, SME 3012-R, excellent. Oracle Delphi - Mk1, good condition. Rega RB-300, ESL-57. Audio Research VT100. Thorens TD166-VI. Tel: 0117 955 6555 or 07979 514 450 (Apr/1)

NAIM CDX £1300. Naim 82 £1200. Naim 180 £600. Naim Hi-Cap £300. PMC 0B1 speakers £2000. All in mint condition with manuals and boxes, leads etc. Tel: 020 8270 9393 (Apr/1)

TANNOY EDINBURGH Prestige loudspeakers, 40" x 26" x 18". Big, bold, dynamic plus crafted cabinets. Expanding family forces reluctant sale. Happy to demo. Looking for 2K. Tel: 01245 251 235 (Apr/1)

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TANNOY T225 loudspeakers, 10" dual concentric, glass tops, fine example of Tannoy engineering. Max spl 111dB. So possible studio/home use. Good condition. £250. Tel: 01245 251 235 (Apr/I)

MCINTOSH 6450 integrated amp, 3 years old, mint condition, boxed (£2250) £1200. Rega Radio, mint, boxed, 3 years old (£300) £150. Tel: 0117 305 2563 (work), 07974 176 634 (mobile) or Email: Ray.hamilton@kone.com (Apr/I)

MUSICAL FIDELITY
 XPI00. Bought April '02. Occasional use, excellent condition, virtually half price £375. Boxed as bought. Will pay transit cost for sending this preamp. No time wasters please. Tel: 024 764 16979 (Apr)

SUGDEN MASTERCLASS integrated amp. Class A. 34 w.p.c. R/control. Seductive, full bodied sound with a wonderful midband. Cost new £3150, asking £2250. Tel: 01296 437 314 (Aylesbury, Bucks) (Apr/I)

NORDOST VALHALLA interconnect, 1m, phono terminated. Asking £1400. JPS, Superconductor+ biwire, 5 foot pair with gold w.b.t. banana locking plugs. Asking £550. Tel: 01296 437 314 (Aylesbury, Bucks) (Apr/I)

QUAD ESL 63 plus stand and deliver stands £799. Quad 606 Mark I £325. Rel Strata III £299. Croft Supermicro upgraded to Epoch £299. Meridian DAC 203 £90. Tel: 01706 351 962 (Apr/I)

LINN BASIK turntable with Akito tonearm and Reson Mica cartridge £290 ono. Ring Graham after 6pm 01482 641 261 (Apr/I)

NAIM CDS Mark I £1100. Naim 135's silver £1200. Naim 135's olive £1400. Naim SuperNaxo 3-6 crossover £299. Townsend Rock Mark I, Merlin power supply, Rega RB250 £399. Tel: 01706 351 962 (Apr/I)

NOTTINGHAM ANALOGUE turntable, 12" Anna arm, Tracer 4 cartridge, PSU, £3200. Croft Absolute pre-amp £1500. Posselt Albatros loudspeakers £1300. All mint condition. Tel: 01604 404 499 (Northampton) (May/I)

ACTIVE LINN System, 6 years old, as new condition. Karik, Numerik, Wakonda with Sneaky tuner, 3x LK100 power amps, Keilidhs on granite base. £4000. Tel: 01305 776 932 or Email: c.cooknell@tiscali.co.uk (Weymouth) (Apr/I)

A.V.I. SERIES 21 MC4 Reference CD player, boxed, mint condition, only 2 years old. No remote. £450. No offers. Tel: 01502 518 938 (Apr/I)

CLASSIC ACTIVE system. Nytech CTA 252 XD, MM phono. Spare CTA 252 XD MC phono. Active CXA 252 XD. Arc 101 speakers. All boxed. £199. Tel: 01474 702 939 (Dartford) (Apr/I)

A AND R (ARCAM) SA 200, 100 watt amplifiers. 3no, two bridged £100 each. C200 pre-amplifier £75. Minim AD10 ambisonic decoder £100. Tel: 01642 559 078 (Stockton) (Apr/I)

QUAD ESL63, brown, excellent condition £1150 ono. Upgraded to 988. also JBL 4311 Control monitors, walnut, fair condition £250 ono. Plus Target spiked stands £25. Tel: 07970 575 547 or 01525 371 730 evenings (Apr/I)

NAIM CDS II/XPS Flash R/C. immaculate, low usage, boxed, can dem, £2900. Tel: 0121 553 1121 or Email: r.p.stop@ukgateway.net (Midlands) (Apr/I)

PAIR TAG McLaren 250MR monoblocks, black as new, boxed still under warranty, includes cables plus Aphrodite anthracite, boxed, mint, £3600 ono. Tel: 020 7480 7964 or 07932 063 335 or Email: thewaldrons01@tiscali.co.uk (Apr/I)

NAIM HI-FI System Sale, CD2 CD player, NAC 82 pre-amp, Hi-Cap power supply, NAP 250 power amp, SBL loudspeakers (cherry), QLN Projekt equipment rack (cherry). Complete system purchased new from Grahams HI-FI in December 1997. Mint condition, very low usage, boxed with manuals. For prices please ring Mark 01708 224 319 or 07813 332301 (mobile) (Essex) (Apr/I)

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NAIM CDX, 18 months old, mint condition, box, manual, remote, £1650. Naim 282 pre-amp, 3 months old & new Hi Cap 9 months £2800. Naim 250 £800. Arcam DAB 10 £320. Contact Richard 07956 594 104 or Email: richard.jones87@ntlworld.com (London) (Apr/I)

LOWTHER ACOUSTAS with remounted PM6A drivers, original plywood cabinets, sound but scruffy. Non-matching pair. £185 ono. Tel: 020 8677 8183 (Apr/I)

MICHELL ORBE full size QC. Black clear silver. As new, boxed, instructions. Upgrading. £925 ono. Tel: 07958 944 424 (Cleveland) (Apr/I)

EXPOSURE 7-8 Pre and Power plus Expander £200. Thorens TD 124 II, SME S.3 £200. Sony STR-DB 940 D.T.S. surround receiver 6.1 - 110w per channel, mint, £200. Tel: 01273 454 108 (Apr/I)

TAG MCLAREN DPA 32R D and A preamp with DAB (£2500) £1400 ono. G.Tee Oct 05. Myriad MP100 pre £250. Musical Fidelity A300cr power-amp (£2300) £1150. Audiolab 8000 DAC £220. All mint with boxes. Tel: 0121 742 1270 (Apr/I)

MUSICAL FIDELITY A1 amplifier £125. NVA A80 monoblocks £300. Infinity Kappa Reference 5 speakers £225. Marantz CD94 £225. Rotel RCD965BX £90. Manticore Mantra turntable £175. Marantz ST5OL tuner FM.AM.LW. Tel: 01224 646 473 (Apr/I)

MERIDIAN 507 CD player, two months old, £600. Aloia PST II.01i pre-amp plus power unit. Aloia 15.01i power amp plus power unit. Amp power 60 + 60 watts. £2000. 4 box system. Tel: 020 8531 5979 (May/I)

QUAD ELS 63's, good working order, boxes. Look good £500 ono. Tel: 01323 737 850 answerphone (Eastbourne) (Apr/I)

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AUDIOQUEST OPAL Truth RCA, 1.0 mtr (£260) £160. **QUAD 989** Brand new, cancelled order (£4600) £3900. **Naim NAC 32.5 pre**, with phono stage, mint condition £195. **Koetsu Red K Signature** (£2200) £600. Telephone Jules on 01792 280061, Email info@sounddrjuleshifi.co.uk Web: www.sounddrjuleshifi.co.uk (May/1)

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AUDIONOTE M3 Pre amp, includes very good phono stage, excellent condition, ex-dem, fully guaranteed. (£4650) £2100. **Mark Levinson ML383** integrated amp (as new) (RRP £6000) £4200. **Wadia 16**, 4yrs, mint (£7450) £2900. Telephone Jules on 01792 280061, Email: info@sounddrjuleshifi.co.uk Web: www.sounddrjuleshifi.co.uk (May/1)

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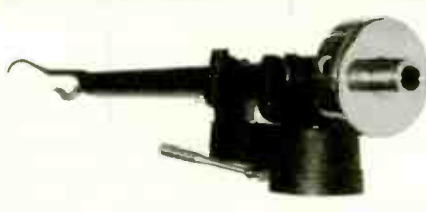
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Special Internet offer see page 129 for details

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GUIDELINES FOR BUYING AND SELLING SECOND-HAND EQUIPMENT

FOR THE BUYER

1. Not everyone is honest - Buyer Beware!
2. **Don't send cash!**
3. Accept no verbal guarantees.
4. Have you heard the item or something similar? If not, why do you want it?
5. Don't pretend to have knowledge - it's your fingers that will get burnt!
6. Is it working? If not, why not?
7. Has it been modified and, if so, have notes been kept?
8. Was it any good in the first place?
9. **Don't send cash!**
10. If you are in the slightest doubt, arrange an audition (see point 5). If it's too far, wait for another time.
11. Either buy it or don't: vendors are excusably impatient with 'consultation' exercises.
12. **Don't send cash!**

FOR THE SELLER

1. Not everyone is honest - Seller Beware!
2. Make no verbal guarantees.
3. Even 'nearly new' is still second-hand. If the manufacturer's guarantee is no longer in force, your price should reflect this.
4. There is very little intrinsic value in second-hand hi-fi: it's only worth what someone will pay for it.
5. The best guide to pricing is last month's Classifieds: that a 'classic' was worth £xxx a year or two ago is no guide. Values fall as well as rise.
6. Amateur second-hand dealing is not a big money game: you win some, you lose some.
7. Be prompt with despatch. If in doubt about buyer's bona-fides, either wash out the deal or send C.O.D.
8. There will always be time-wasters; be tolerant within reason!

DEADLINE FOR JUNE 2004 ISSUE IS 7TH APRIL 2004
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DEADLINE FOR JULY 2004 ISSUE IS 6TH MAY 2004
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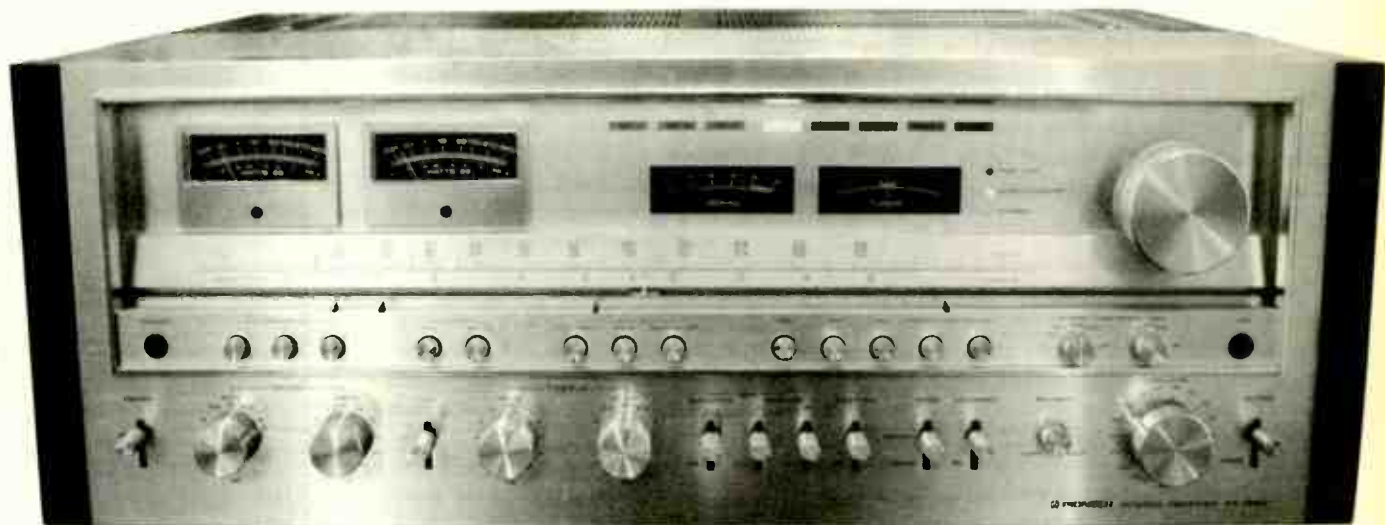
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JUNE 2004 ISSUE - 7TH APRIL 2004
 JULY 2004 ISSUE - 6TH APRIL 2004

King Of The Hill



Haden Boardman worships Pioneer's ultimate nineteen seventies receiver, the gargantuan SX-1980...

In this country, receivers never attained the mass popular following that they garnered in the United States or Japan. Even today, these behemoths can be found in America, and McIntosh still make a huge two channel beast which still looks like it belongs in the nineteen seventies!

Pioneer's SX-1980 first appeared at the back end of 1977. A definite cut above the not insubstantial SX-1250, this is one heck of a big bit of kit. Vital statistics are a massive 270 watts per channel power output, a huge 23" width and not insubstantial 50lbs weight. This was the top of the range beast, and boasted one of the finest FM tuners ever made, along with one of the most gutsy power amplifiers ever fitted to a receiver.

Fit and finish are amazing. The quality of the anodising and lettering is something only the Japanese can do. There's no silk screening - all the labels and lettering are deep etchings, and the vast case a real solid piece of walnut! Towards the back are the huge heat sinks (on USA models these are exposed), and visible through the centre vents is one of the largest toroidal mains transformers I have ever seen, never mind the equally impressive bank of power supply capacitors... By modern standards it's festooned with buttons, and capable of driving

three sets of speakers.

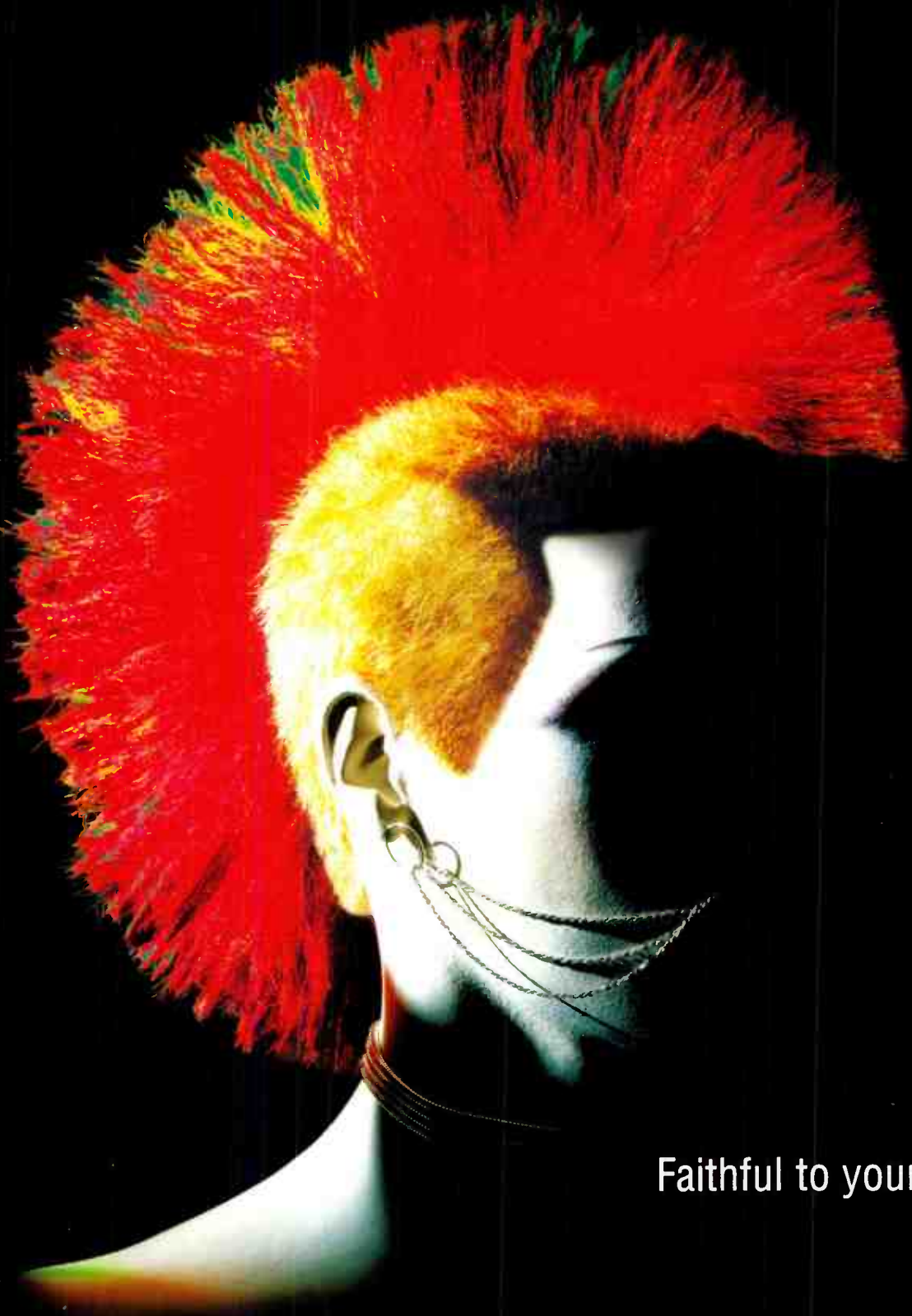
Hooked up with a classic old pair of JBL L100 century speakers (I would love to try it on an old pair of JBL L250s) and fed off a Thorens TD160/SME/Grado, it really was 'sounds of the seventies'. In some ways all of these components had too much of their own sound, and although the results were still quite spectacular, there was a degree of colour and compression that frankly, we would not really tolerate these days. Ditching the turntable, and plugging in my Linn CD12, revealed the SX1980 does sadly not have the finest phono stage on the planet; a lot of that pinched slightly nasal quality was really down to it. Running line-in was much better, and its own in built tuner better still. The Pioneer had no difficulty controlling Gale GS401s either; there was more than enough weight and slam, midrange was open enough if perhaps still a little bit 'cuppy', and the treble a tad dry. Still, for a 25 year old unit, which has never been touched since it left the factory, it sounded remarkable.

The tuner section of this beast is just amazing. Sensitive, quiet, and with that solid 3D stereo image stuff coming clean of the Pioneer's multiplex decoder. Running the tape outputs straight in to my main hifi system proved the point; the unit

was clearly better than my normal radio tuner, despite the tweaks and mods done to it! AM radio was a bit half hearted, but then it is rare I listen.

Service wise, the amplifier sections are nothing fancy, and service should be a doddle. The tuner uses pretty up to date ICs as well as discrete components, but again basic alignment should provide easy enough for a qualified engineer, there is not much to do here. The tuner's tuning gang can get noisy with age, I would recommend one of those little canisters of compressed air just to give its delicate fins a clean (never touch them with your hand) and to blow out all the dust from within the unit. A well used example is likely to have noisy switches, and none are available. On one of my units I did disassemble the fascia and strip, clean and rebuild the switches, it did clear the faults but was one of those jobs I do not think I would ever like to attempt again!

These are not common in the UK, but sold well in Europe and the USA. They are very well recognised as something special and you would be very lucky indeed to find one for less than £600. As a technical tour-de-force, visually it looks somewhat dated, but what a great piece of kit. This must rank as one of Pioneer's finest moments.



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