

P. Jones

hi-fi

WORLD

NOVEMBER 2004 UK £3.40

ORIENT, EXPRESS!

3D ACOUSTICS by SHANLING SCD-T200C
INCA DESIGN KATANA SE
CAMBRIDGE AUDIO 640T
CHINESE HI-FI FEATURE
CONSONANCE M400S
SONY MDS-500ES
DYNAVECTOR ADP-3
C.A.V. A-10

SCOOP

NOVEMBER 2004



SCOOP
MUSICAL FIDELITY X-PRE V3/X-P200 LINN AKURATE 242
ARCAM AVR-300 vs. DENON AVR2805 * NAIM CD5X

COMPUTER AUDIO APPLE AIRPORT EXPRESS/AIRTUNES

MARKET PLACE 100s OF BARGAIN CLASSIFIEDS INSIDE!

LINN PRODUCTS MULTICHANNEL EVENT - DETAILS INSIDE



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david price

Is it just a case of history repeating? Back in the early seventies, some thirty years ago, the all-conquering British hi-fi industry - with such illustrious names as Garrard and Leak - laughed derisively at the new wave of cheap and cheerful audio electronics from Japan...

The joke was soon on us, as the Japanese took our domestic market and walked away with it, leaving a handful of specialist UK companies to pick up the

pieces. By the late seventies, high end Nipponese kit was as good as anything we'd made, and more reliable too. The UK hi-fi press chose to ignore this, but the rest of the world could see it clearly. Thus ended the domination of the British audio industry - just like our motorcycles and cars...

Is the same thing happening with the Chinese? There are now some blistering 'standout' designs, such as the '3Dacoustics by Shanling' SCD-200C CD spinner tested on p13. This issue is devoted to Far Eastern hi-fi, and how it compares to our own indigenous fare. On p17 our digital disc player supertest shows how British products from Naim, Arcam and Exposure can beat the best from Japan and China, but our review of CAV's AV10 integrated amplifier on p38 shows just how impressive native Chinese designs can be.

Musical Fidelity's X-PRE v3/X-P200 pre-power tested on p40 offers stunning value, thanks partly to its Taiwanese manufacture... so on p34 we look at why many British hi-fi brands are moving production to China. Factor in Cambridge Audio's superb London designed, Shenzhen-built 640T Digital Radio tuner on p48, Dynavector of Japan's quirky ADP3 analogue surround processor on p46, and a look at how Denon and Arcam do AV receivers so differently (AVR2805 and AVR300 respectively) on p50, and this issue is a veritable Orient express!

On a more Caledonian note, if you like Linn Products then you'll love the company's new Akurate 242 loudspeakers - true high end powerhouses that make music sing. Read about them on p62 - or better still, why not attend the forthcoming Linn event at the **Proud Galleries** in London on **Saturday October 16th** (10am-4pm). This will be a great chance to hear a brilliant Linn multichannel system at full tilt, and have a drink and a bite to eat with yours truly and Linn's Ivor Tiefenbrun and the *Hi-Fi World* and Linn teams. If you want to attend this special event, just click on www.linn.co.uk and register, or email linnevent@hi-fiworld.co.uk and let us know. See you there!

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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reviews

far eastern special issue:

SHENZHEN SURPRISE **13**

This is the first UK review of the brand new '3Dacoustics by Shanling' SCD-T200C stereo SACD player – one of China's most outstanding hi-fi separates to date!

SUPERTEST **17**

Today's mid-price CD player market is no longer the exclusive preserve of the British and the Japanese – now, Chinese made products have entered the fray. Dominic Todd compares the best from Exposure, Inca Design, Arcam, Sony and Naim.

CHINESE WHISPERS **34**

David Price visits Beijing, to see the Chinese hi-fi scene for himself, talks to Marantz's Ken Ishiwata about his personal experiences, and interviews Cambridge Audio's James Johnson-Flint about being a British company manufacturing in China.

BRAND NEW, HEAVY **38**

Dominic Todd auditions the monster A10 tube/solid-state hybrid integrated amplifier, from a Chinese company you'll be seeing a lot more of in future – CAV.

CLASS A-CT **40**

Musical Fidelity's brand new X-PRE v3 preamp and X-P200 power amplifier sport the legend 'Built in Taiwan' on the back panel. David Price finds the combo offers a blend of performance and value that this British brand is famous for...

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Consonance's M400S monobloc power amplifier is a beautifully styled Chinese tube design, but can it deliver the sonic goods? Stewart Wennen finds out.

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In the complicated world of digital surround sound, it's fascinating to discover something completely different from Japan - Dynavector's Adp-3 Super Stereo Adapter. Channa Vithana listens in.

AZUR BET? **48**

Cambridge Audio is a British brand made in China. Can this 'golden blend' of western design and far eastern manufacture make the new 640T DAB tuner prevail? Dominic Todd finds out, and compares it to another Anglo-Chinese classic, NAD's seminal 4020.

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Noel Keywood compares two very different mid-price AV receivers - from the east we have Japan's Denon AVR2805 and from the west Britain's Arcam AVR-300...

LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT **56**

At just over £10,000, ELP's LT-2XRC is the most remarkable turntable we've ever seen - not least because it uses a five-laser pickup to read the disc, CD-style, instead of a conventional arm and cartridge! In the second of a two part feature, Noel Keywood gives it a full technical appraisal.

loudspeakers

FIRST CLASS **60**

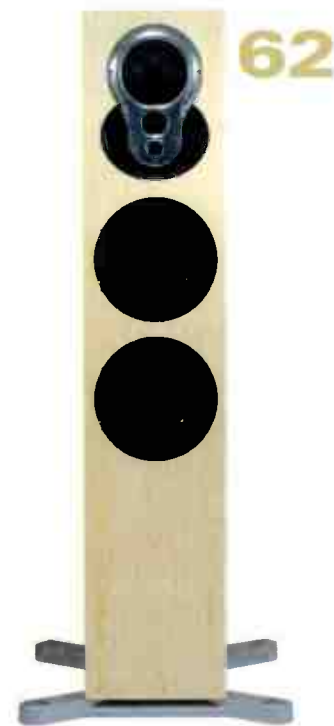
Noel Keywood enjoys the luxury of life with Elac's new 310.2 JET standmounting 'speakers.

RIGHT ON **62**

Linn's Akurate 242 loudspeakers are just the thing for those wanting a serious high end floorstander, says David Price...

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This month, Walker Audio's Super Silver treatment and Pure's Evoke-I XT DAB portable go under the microscope.



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Announcing the Linn Multichannel AV Experience 2004.



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competition

Win a Naim Nait 5i integrated amp ifier in this month's super competition!



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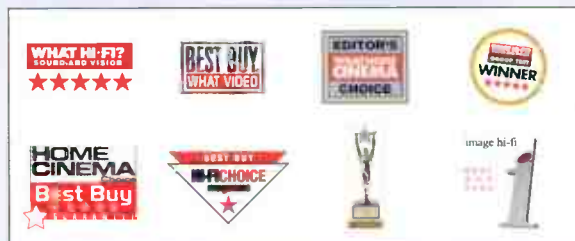


Avant Premiere Plus

The new Mordaunt-Short Avant Premiere Plus system is a complete Home Cinema loudspeaker package offering outstanding sonic reproduction from unobtrusive enclosures.

The individual components combine to deliver a seriously impressive listening experience redefining expectations from speaker systems of this size and price point.

Avant Premiere Plus. Where size is no compromise.



Mordaunt-Short's continued commitment to engineering excellence has seen the company pick up repeated awards.

www.mordaunt-short.co.uk

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news

MICRO MART



Elac's new 301 Micro Monitors and Sub 303 ESP II combine to form a very high quality compact sub-sat system in any number of guises. The 301s cost £198 each, and boast a wide dispersion ringdome tweeter with waveguide, 80mm long-throw woofer with alloy sandwich cone, audiophile crossover with integrated high-pass filter, full magnetic shielding and an extruded aluminium cabinet with metal grille. The £499 303 Sub is a compact high mass design with a powerful 150 watts amplifier, 180 mm long-throw woofer with alloy sandwich cone, and continuously adjustable crossover with level controls. A 2.1 system costs £897, right up to Elac's 7.1 Cinema System package for £1597. Call 0800 652 5002 or click on www.elac.com for information.

808 STATE

Meridian Audio Ltd. has announced the release of the 808 CD player, a special Limited Edition to mark the 20th anniversary of the release of Meridian's first CD player, and the world's first audiophile CD player, the MCD. The 808 Signature Reference Compact Disc Player is hand-signed by Meridian designers and co-founders Allen Boothroyd and Bob Stuart, and claims to offer the highest quality CD replay of any of the two dozen CD players produced by the company over the last two decades. Like the 800, the 808 uses a multi-speed DVD-ROM drive to recover data from the disc. Once the digital data stream has been recovered from the disc, three powerful on-board digital signal processing (DSP) chips take over, each with a capability of an impressive 150 MIPS (million instructions per second). One of them up-samples the digital information from the 44.1 kHz, 16-bit signal of conventional CD to 24 bits, and to a sample rate of 176.4 kHz. This signal is fed to the latest DVD-Audio quality delta-sigma digital to analogue converters to drive the analogue outputs, while a digital signal at 88.2 kHz sampling is supplied to the digital outputs. The 808 employs a triple buffering system to minimise jitter. The buffers, and the digital electronics as a whole, are driven by a new design of high-stability clocking system, which further reduces jitter to below 90 picoseconds. In addition to its capabilities as a CD player, the 808 is optionally available with preamplifier capability, in the form of the 808i, which can act as the heart of superb stereo system, offering full built-in stereo preamplifier functionality including the ability to handle six stereo analogue inputs, three digital coaxial S/PDIF inputs and two Toslink optical digital inputs. The 808 can thus drive Meridian DSP Loudspeakers directly or supply analogue or digital signals to an external amplifier or processor. The unit will ship in early September, with a UK recommended retail price of £7195 inc VAT (808 player version) or £8250 inc VAT for the 808i preamplifier version. See www.meridian-audio.com for more.



SMALL TALK

Denon beware: TEAC's new Reference Series 250 CD/DAB RDS Receiver Model CR-H250 which, when partnered with the new TEAC LS-H250 2-way Speakers, makes a complete CD/DAB Micro System for just £300. The receiver is available separately for £230 and the speakers can be purchased separately for £80. Call 01923 819630 or point your browser at www.teac.co.uk for more.

DUAL DISC ARRIVES

It's official – Dual Disc is coming! The four major labels, along with DVD-Audio proponents Silverline Records, have given a briefing to North American retailers to the effect that the full US market launch of Dual Disc will take place during the fourth quarter of 2004 (i.e. now!) However www.dualdisc.com is still inscrutably saying no more than "coming soon"... At the time of writing, there have been no announcements of firm release dates from any of the majors, although Silverline has indicated that many of its better titles will be out in Dual Disc form in two batches before the end of the year. Attempts to obtain clarification on European launch plans from the majors and Silverline's UK distributors Essential have only elicited 'can't say, won't say' responses thus far. However it would be a fair bet that the announced Silverline Dual Discs will reach our shores before long. Until we either see some of these discs or obtain more specific details of their content we cannot highlight to you which ones risk being less 'audiophile' than their DVD-Audio equivalents, but ironically, although Silverline have recently started to include high resolution stereo tracks on some titles, the Dual Disc versions may well have to drop them again [see p80]!





SUB-MISSION

Very probably the most strikingly individual subwoofers yet devised come from O'heocha Design. Its two new active Isobaric subwoofers, the DSV-1000i (£2,950) and DSW-600i (£2,800), boast stainless steel and aluminium construction, Isobaric loading, rigid 11 inch aluminium coned drive units, a 300 watt amplifier (200 watt in the 600i) and a slim profile with a striking mirror-finish. Designed to be exhibited as functional art, rather than shamefully cloaked in veneer and hidden, the DSV 1000i is the top of the O'heocha Subwoofer range. The key element is that in this stunning design, form really follows function and the 1000i deliver fast tuneful bass down to a gut-wrenching 15Hz! Designed for slightly smaller rooms, the DSW 600i is identical to the 1000i apart from 400mm lopped off the top and a less powerful amplifier. For details, call 0035 391 506 970 or click on www.oheocha.com.

A-CLASS

Musical Fidelity announces the new A5 24bit, 192kHz upsampling CD Player. The root of its design is the Nu-Vista 3D CD player, but MF claims to have exceeded its performance 'in every area' thanks to the latest generation of DACs and filters. The mu-Vista (6112) tube also appears, and there's brand new styling with custom-made extrusions. The A5 CD will be in a limited edition of 1500 pieces, at £1,499 inc VAT. The matching, identically priced new A5 super integrated amplifier is said to follow in the footsteps of the Nu-Vista M3 and Tn-Vista 300. The company claims no sonic fingerprint, low distortion over a wide bandwidth achieved with low feedback, substantial reserves of power, current and stability and ultra quiet mechanical and electronic operation. At 250W RMS per channel and 75 amps unlimited peak, the A5 can deliver a proper dynamic range without clipping. For details, click on at www.musicalfidelity.co.uk.

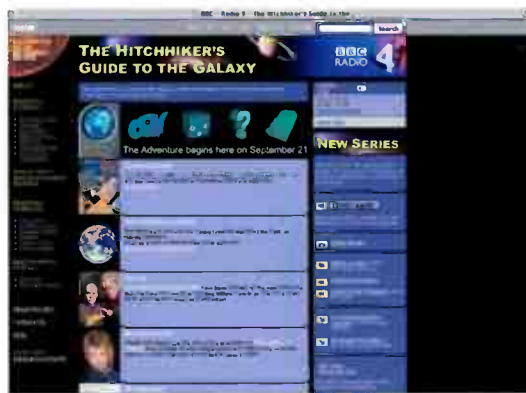


PRE-POSSESSING

Those great champions of affordable hi-fi, Cambridge Audio, have added not one but two new phono stages to their superb budget separates line-up. The Azur series 540P and 640P phono pre-amplifiers are claimed to deliver exceptional phono performance at the price. The £40 Azur 540P – for use with moving magnet cartridges – embraces a new proprietary short path circuit design, utilising high grade, low-noise transistors normally associated with far more expensive equipment, audio-grade poly caps for the RIAA filter section, and includes an integrated subsonic filter which removes low frequency energy. The Azur 640P (£70) embraces improved amplification circuitry to provide even lower distortion, and along with its MM function also incorporates a higher gain stage for compatibility with high-end, Moving Coil cartridges. In addition, the 640P employs multi-parallel capacitors – from respected manufacturer Evox – to achieve exceptional RIAA accuracy of only 0.3dB up to a staggering 50kHz, while the subsonic filter can be bypassed. Both units have gold plated input connectors and come complete with external power supplies to reduce electronic noise interference to sensitive circuitry. Completing the packages are exceptionally solid enclosures, replete with vibration absorbing chassis and thick extruded aluminium front panels. For more information, click on www.cambridgeaudio.co.uk.

DON'T PANIC!

BBC Radio 4 has just re-launched Douglas Adams' classic adventure game to mark the long-awaited return of 'The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy'. The 20th anniversary edition of Hitchhiker Adventure Game is an online adaptation of the text adventure, written by Douglas Adams, made fiendish by the fact that it abuses and lies to you... Adams described it as "the first game to move beyond being 'user friendly'; it's actually 'user insulting' and because it lies to you as well it's also 'user mendacious'." The game, developed by Radio 4 Interactive, also contains original writing by the author that very few people have ever seen and is – in Adams' words – "full of extraordinary ways of dying". Click on www.bbc.co.uk/radio4 to play.



FIVE, LIVE!

Naim's long awaited DVD-Audio player is here. The £2,350 DVD-5 is, to say the least, an interesting alternative to its price rivals, offering line level stereo, rather than the usual 5.1 channel, outputs as standard. It can output 5.1 analogue audio with an optional card, but Naim feels many prospective purchasers will buy the machine primarily for its high resolution (24bit/ 192kHz) DVD-Audio capability rather than surround sound playback, plus its obvious DVD video ability. Film fans wanting 5.1 Dolby Digital soundtracks to go with their moving pictures will have to use the rear mounted digital output to pipe AC3 to an offboard decoder, such as the one fitted to the company's matching AV5 processor/preamplifier.



In a special preview at the Salisbury factory, *Hi-Fi World* was given the chance to try the new machine out. First impressions are extremely positive. Its Chinese sourced DVD transport has rather flimsy drawer loading, but this aside it's a model of sophistication. The control layout is characteristically Naim – purposeful and never needlessly complex – as is the comprehensive on-screen display/ set-up menu system. Inside, the boards are meticulously separated, with discrete CD PCB complete with its own power supply feed from a toroidal transformer (Naim rejected switch modes on sonic grounds). All video circuitry is powered down, and great attention is paid to reclock the data going into the Burr Brown 24/192 DACs.

This shows when you listen; on 16bit it's a smoother and more sophisticated performance than the CD5i CD player, although the latter is gutsier and more commanding. DVD-Audio performance is excellent, as you'd expect, with one of the most gripping and propulsive performances we've heard from the format so far, thanks to the company's traditional attention to rhythms and dynamics. The latest video chips, including Faroudja de-interlacing technology, make for superb video with smooth and crisp pictures. All in all, this machine is the obvious choice for Naim owners wishing to add DVD (of the Audio and Video variety) capability, but should also win newcomers to the brand. For more information, click on www.naim-audio.com – and watch this space for a full review...

RECORD MAKERS

Fancy an Australian-only red vinyl Audiophile LP pressing of The Beatles' 'Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club', of which EMI only made 497 copies? Or are you looking for quadrasonic or half-speed mastered albums from Mobile Fidelity or Mastersounds, by artists such as Pink Floyd, Elvis Presley and Neil Young? Perhaps you seek those elusive 24kt gold CDs from acts like Queen, The Who or Cream? Esprit International Limited has long supplied collectors of rare recordings with practically anything their hearts desire from markets as diverse as Italy and Israel, and now it's taking audiophile pressings seriously with its new 'Audiophile Collectors Index', which gives visitors various simple entry points through their audiophile catalogue. Updated weekly, it highlights particularly unique and interesting pieces, as well as having links to specialist catalogues based purely on vinyl, Compact Disc releases, SACD and DVD-A. Hundreds of rarities are added daily to the system, so tracking down those sought after audiophile releases is now easier than ever before. Click on <http://eil.com/features/audiophile-collectors.asp> to try for yourself.



MOVING PICTURES

Vieta's new £149.99 CDV-50D in-dash DVD player is touted as being one of the very first in-car units to feature DivX (an advanced compression technology that allows users to compress video to fit entire movies onto cheap CD-R discs. DivX programmes are available for Mac and Windows from www.divx.com). It also features On-Screen Displays, 3 video outputs to feed three LCD screens, Aux input 1 with audio for game consoles, Aux input 2 video for rear-view camera, an optical digital audio output for 5.1 sound, an analogue stereo audio output and infra-red remote control – all in a standard DIN size to fit neatly into any dashboard. Call 01494 723 444 or click on www.vieta-uk.com for details.

next issue

December's *Hi-Fi World* examines new and interesting ways of listening to and recording music. We put digital music portables from Apple, Rio, Archos and iRiver against each other, and look at Medio's innovative hi-fi PC. We test Sony's new MZ-NH700 Hi-MD portable, Etymotic's innovative ER-4P in-ear headphones and Apogee's nifty MiniMe and MiniDAC digital convertors. Back to more mainstream matters, and we've a host of goodies from Nottingham Analogue's latest SpaceDek to Denon's new DVD-3910 and Musical Fidelity's KW500 monster integrated. You'll not find a more diverse and far reaching read - reserve your copy of *Hi-Fi World* now!

next issue

Walrus Systems

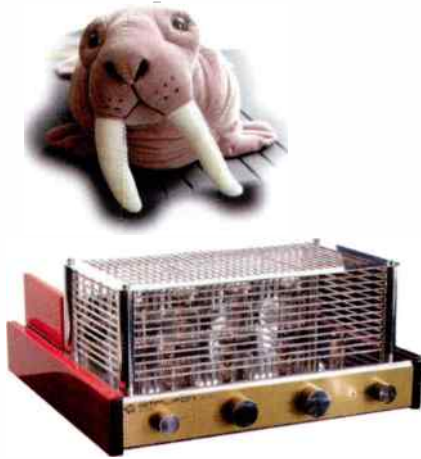
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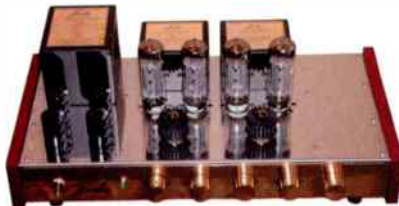
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web: www.walrus.co.uk



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 proving to be a huge success both with reviewers and customers alike - we are delighted! Now made in the EC (a warm welcome to our Polish neighbours is in order), this range of three models, all superbly built, all featuring automatic biasing, and all with large, wide bandwidth toroidal output transformers suitable for 4 or 8 Ohms, offer superb value for money. Sound quality is reminiscent of the best classic designs of the past, but modern circuit techniques and transformers give an authority of presentation and power reserve often lacking in older designs. Truly modern classics!



The Jadis Orchestra Reference (left) from France, at £1699. Output of 40W/ch using KT90s, and even featuring that long missed attribute, tone controls - my, takes me back!

The Consonance M100S (right), £1595, is proving to be a reviewer's favourite, offering a delicacy which is a speciality of the 300B output valve, giving here 25W/channel.



For people who prefer the authentic Star Trek look, the Shanling STP80 (left) fits the bill perfectly! With superb build quality, remote control, digital level indicator, 35W/ch output, all for a mere £1295. Oh, it sounds good too, by the way.

The Audiovalve Assistent 20 (yes, it is spelt like that) is a little gem from Germany, with a very musical performance - sweet as a nut, we say. 30W/ch output, in a neat chassis, for £1600.



The Musical Fidelity Trivista DAC: We have secured some of the last remaining UK stock of this brilliant device. An utter bargain for £1200 - and, as they say, once it's gone, it's gone! Don't delay - pick up the phone now.



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



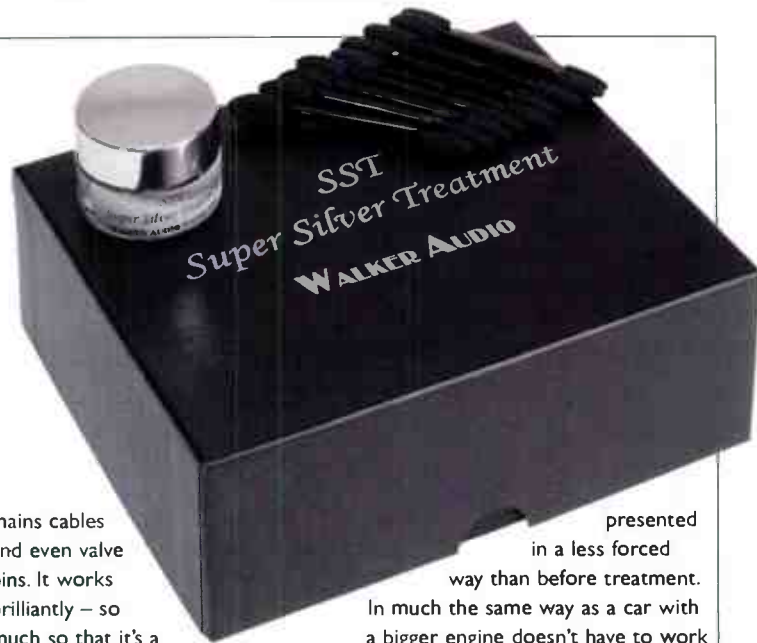
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WALKER AUDIO SUPER SILVER TREATMENT

Regular readers will know how highly *Hi-Fi World* rates Kontak, which at under £20 a bottle is the best value system tweak we've ever tried. At £52, Walker Audio's SST would appear expensive by comparison, but this isn't quite comparing like to like. In truth, this stuff is less about cleaning your connections, and more about augmenting them. Designed to treat power cables, valves and interconnects, SST is essentially pure silver (the best conductor) held in a carrier fluid - actually ultra-pure, thin, long micron-sized silver flake suspended in an organic fluid for its dielectric characteristics. It's such a good conductor that it can short out RCA phono plugs, so only half of the male end (centre pin) should be treated, and the inside of the female end left untreated to prevent precisely this happening. Very small amounts are the order of the day. SST can also treat speaker plugs, IEC

mains cables and even valve pins. It works brilliantly - so much so that it's a rather shocking thought to realise that, if not treated with SST, the system is working with one hand tied behind its back.

SST does precisely what Kontak does, but takes it to a higher level - you get a dramatic smoothing of the sound, yet it opens out the whole recorded acoustic. It brings obviously more depth and space, along with detail, yet it's all



presented in a less forced way than before treatment. In much the same way as a car with a bigger engine doesn't have to work so hard, so the treated system is stronger, more dynamic and musical - yet more relaxed too. There's an obvious stripping away of grain and clearing of 'the mist'. This is pricey stuff, but the results are completely disproportionate to spending £52 anywhere else in your system - and it must be used sparingly if it is to work at all, so should last a long time. Superb.

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PURE DIGITAL EVOKE-1 XT DAB DIGITAL RADIO

Some two years after the original EVOKE-1 portable, a design that has become the world's best selling

digital radio no less, Pure Digital has enhanced it with a number of detail improvements to keep its position safe against the onslaught from the likes of Panasonic. The most obvious change is the radiused edges to the wooden casework, which gives it a more sophisticated look. Then there's the choice of maple or cherry finishes; the latter again

making it stand out from the often rather plasticky looking (and feeling) competition. There's the same easy to read white on blue display with adjustable brightness, a countdown timer, a radio and tone alarm and - here's the rub - the promise of 'greatly improved audio performance via a new custom designed speaker and active filters'. The new 3" speaker, complete with bass port, and Frontier Chorus FS1010 chipset does indeed sweeten the sound; which is stronger, more powerful and richer in tone. True, there will always be hi-fi purists who say a bass port is never a real improvement, but with a small portable asked to 'drive' real rooms, it works. The £99 EVOKE-1 XT can be upgraded to stereo with the optional XT-1 add-on speaker - a nice touch. The same six station presets, headphone socket and stereo line-out are retained, along with the excellent user interface (station select by name; scrolling display which shows track info, news and sports results). The pearlescent white front still looks as fresh as the unit sounds. If DAB is your thing, this is the best portable, if not then buy a Tivoli!

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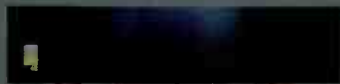
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STAX



David Price is delighted by the new '3Dacoustics by Shanling SCD-T200C' stereo SACD player.

If the average British hi-fi enthusiast was asked to name a Chinese hi-fi brand, the chances are that – if they could at all – it would be Shanling. It's no secret that this magazine, and others, have been impressed by the company's CD player, which has created something of a myth for itself amongst those in the know. Well, with this in mind, we were very happy to listen to the brand new SCD-T200C SACD spinner...

Brand new, you say? Well, it's true that Shanling has made a T200 for many months now, but this isn't the same. Essentially, the official UK importers, Real Hi-Fi, have had problems with people bringing in 'grey imports', bought direct from non-official resellers in China. These units have no UK warranty, and often have inappropriate power transformers for this country. To wit, Real Hi-Fi has commissioned Shanling to make a specially upgraded version – which is fully UK warranted – that claims even better sound due to myriad modifications. This way, buyers can be sure they're getting the 'real deal', rather than some second-hand

warranty return that's been around three provinces in China and had four mains trannies in it already. Okay, well I'm exaggerating for effect, but you get my gist...

There's no denying how visually arresting this silver disc spinner is. In fact, aside from some ultra high end Japanese exotica (Esoteric P0, Deron DCD-as10, Sony CDP-R1/DAS-R1), I've seen few digital disc players that even come close in the sense of occasion they create when you switch them on. Essentially, it's a large, brushed aluminium box, into which is set a centrally mounted, top loading SACD transport. Behind these, rather like the engine in a Ferrari F360, sits a row of four tubes, and behind that four transformers. The disc transport cover is Perspex, lit by a cobalt blue light, and each valve has two circular Perspex discs around it, acting as a cage. The accent lighting throws across to these too, so when switched on, and used in low light, the Shanling glows even bluer than the inside of a Volkswagen Golf...

Personally, I'm not completely convinced about this aesthetic; but

then again if I think about some of the seventies Jap stuff I've had (Pioneer SA-9800, m'lud) then I guess I can't complain. Anyway, in front, we have a relatively modest fluorescent (blue, naturally) display, and two LEDs (go figure which colour) to denote CD or SACD operation. Some parts of the machine are picked out in gold, which looks tasteful, and the control buttons on the top front feel decent too. Overall, it's an interesting design that certainly stands out from the crowd, but contrast this to its closest Japanese rival – Sony's SCD-XA9000ES, and the Shanling's finish seems ever so slightly 'home made'. It has more of the feel of an expensive kit, whereas the Sony boasts an exquisite, hewn-from-solid, 'camera' finish.

In truth, this is precisely what the Shanling is. The exigencies of Chinese manufacturing are such that investment in massive, high capacity presses, tools and robots (which explains the Sony's finish) simply isn't worth it; labour is cheap, and people do much of the bolting, screwing and gluing manually. The obverse of this is



that, because the Shanling could never come from a Japanese giant, there's room for some fascinating design touches which Sony for one would never try. To wit, the rear panel, which has five cheap looking gold plated sockets – one for digital coaxial out (no TOSLINK – you'd never see a Jap machine without one of these!), one pair of RCA phono 'direct outs', and one pair of RCA phono 'tube outs' (more of which later...)

The SCD-T200 is great to use. As anyone who's lived with the original Philips CD100 or Marantz CD63, or latterly Rega Planet, will tell you, there's a lot to be said for top loading CD transports. I don't know if this because I'm from the last generation who grew up with vinyl (as a child, rather than a wannabee DJ teenager!), but there's something extremely satisfying about placing a disc on a platter (oh well, a spindly thing, to be accurate). To further remind me of modern life with my Michell turntable, you then have to place the clamp (sorry, 'puck') on top - and then close the 'lid' before play can commence. Still, the latter is a minimalist affair, and so you can see the disc spin round in front of your very eyes. As digital disc spinners go, it's a veritable riot of the senses...

On either side of the transport, five metal buttons allow play/pause, stop, forward and backward track skip, and CD/SACD selection. These functions are all repeated, (along with various others) on the remote control, which is hewn from three bits of cast aluminium and looks (and feels) very nice indeed (unlike the Sony SCD-XA9000ES's 'festival of plastic').

There's a high-quality volume control for those allergic to preamplifiers (a healthy disposition, judging by the state of most), and the right side panel sports a 6.3mm headphone jack, driven by the tube output stage, and a somewhat inglorious looking power on-off switch (as seen on the back of £12 Ikea desk lamp).

Overall, the player feels very nice indeed to use; but there are detail points like this which simply aren't acceptable on a player of this price. For example, the transport can be quite noisy with some discs, with lots of mechanical whirr from some CD-Rs. Also, when you enter the fast wind or rewind mode (if you pardon my tape recording parlance), it doesn't drop the volume as per every Japanese player I've ever heard – which can be disconcerting. Also, the transport 'lid' isn't damped – it feels more like a mousetrap than a CD player component when it bangs down on the top plate. Don't get me wrong, I'm not having a go at this for the sake of it; it's simply that I'm disappointed that such a lovely looking and creatively conceived bit of kit still has rough edges that not even a £100 Sony CD player would countenance...

SOUND QUALITY

So, how did the great Shanling perform? The first and most fundamental thing is whether it's running CD or SACD (in two channel mode only, remember), and second whether you've opted for the 'direct out' or the 'tube out'. The latter is what any purchaser will first be confronted with when he or she has to connect it up to their hi-fi. I found the two outputs quite dramatically different, and when using tube ancillaries I wouldn't touch the valve

out with a bargepole. Conversely, when I was more solid-state than Japan in the nineteen seventies, I truly welcomed the tube.

The differences between the two aren't exactly the stuff of surprises. The direct out is more, ermm, direct sounding – whereas the tube out sounds, ermm, warm and euphonic and well, you can guess the rest. Essentially then, the Shanling gives you two players in one, and you can choose the type of coloration that you prefer – cool or warm. With this in mind, my subjective listening tests were a sort of before and after...

I'll make no bones about this – in direct mode, the Shanling sounds quite similar to Sony's SCD-XA3000ES. This is a brilliant £600 machine that surprised all of us with its excellent CD sound. This machine is quite similar to the £1,600 SCD-XA9000ES, which (if you read our supertest) has just surprised Dominic Todd with its smoothness and sweetness... What I'm getting at is that the Shanling has the 'house sound' of Sony's latest generation of SACD players, on both CD and SACD. This is no bad thing, of course.

Simply Red's 'Love Me All Around the World' on CD proved spacious, smooth and sweet. Bass isn't the strongest I've heard (try Sony's CDP-X77ES for real CD bass), but is decently rich and warm and it stops and starts when it should do. True, it's not up to a Naim CD5i running an external PSU (which is quite similarly priced to the Shanling), lacking those lightning attack transients, but it is never less than 'conscientious'; it doesn't simply make a token booming noise and then give up.

Moving up to the midband, and we have a wide and expansive soundstage, with lots of detail and a more three dimensional sound than either of the Sonys. Whereas the Jap players can sound a tad 'foggy', the Shanling seems to have better insight, but again it's not as relentlessly revealing as a rival Naim might be. Move up and you get a good, warm and spacious treble, with a touch of silk but the slight sense of clanginess you get from solid-state analogue



3D ACOUSTICS – THE CHANGES

What with Sony championing SACD, it comes as no surprise that most Super Audio Compact Disc spinners of all brands contain lots of Sony bits inside – and the Shanling SCD-T200 is no different. It uses the latest Sony KWM-234AAA drive, but instead of the Sony CXD2752R SACD decoding chip, 3D Acoustics have specified a proprietary Shanling one, claiming 'extremely fast access times' as one of its benefits. Further along the data path lies a Burr-Brown PCM1738 24 bit/192 kHz DAC, which is shared with the standard model. Externally the chassis is now aluminium rather than stainless-steel, and there's a subtle fascia-mounted '3Dacoustics' badge to denote the use of 240V transformers along with all the other aforementioned mods.

output stages.

Marvin Gaye's 'Midnight Love' on SACD showed just how good this machine can sound with a fine recording. All the subtlety of 'Sexual Healing' was there to behold; those early eighties analogue keyboards and drum machines, that taut but rich bass guitar, wonderfully creamy rhythm guitar work and Marvin's uniquely silky vocals. This album can sound very ordinary on most digital disc players, but comes alive with vibrant textures on the best, and the Shanling SCD-T200 was precisely this.

In absolute terms, it's not as good as Musical Fidelity's Tri-Vista SACD player – the best of the breed I've heard to date, and so it should be at £4,000! Neither does it comprehensively outclass the sub £2,000 Marantz machines, but it's very, very good indeed. No, the real difference is when you switch to its tube-aspirated output stage...

My NS1000Ms tell me how clattery my reference Quad 909 power amp is whenever I switch it on. It's not the Quad's fault, as it's a far cheaper product than the Yams were really ever designed for, but there's definitely a bit of grey mush there in the midband that seems to mysteriously disappear when you put the 909 into the 989 electrostatic loudspeakers, or when you plug a big hitting power amp into the NS1000Ms. Interestingly though, switching to the tube out from the Shanling subtly rebalanced the whole system, using the Quac's slight solid-state 'edginess' as a virtue rather than a vice – suddenly, it was giving a welcome degree of bite to what was now a very, very mellow digital disc player – vinylphiles think 1974 Linn/Grace/Supex!

Moving back to the Simply Red track, and the soundstage was at once wider, deeper and less explicit. Instruments appeared to hover in

their approximate area, rather than exhibit pin-point location in the mix. Yet as the whole canvas was larger, the bigger brush strokes suited the mood perfectly. The music took on a more relaxed, yet more emotionally affecting quality. It sounded like Mick Hucknall wasn't just in the recording studio to pay for his next Lamborghini; suddenly you could tell that he really meant it. Bass was obviously looser and warmer (pure tube stuff!), which slowed the song down just a tad, but that three dimensional midrange, which seemed less forward but more engaging nonetheless, really made up for it. What I noticed more than anything was the machine's ability to convey backing instruments like strings with complete disregard for whatever else was happening in the mix. This gave the song a beautiful – and very appropriate – lilting feeling, which I have to say is something I don't normally associate with this particular recording!

SACD via the tube outputs was quite special. Just as Super Audio Compact Disc moves things out of the plane of the speakers and into the room, so the valves augmented the depth perspective still further. The Human League's 'Seconds' was electric – this is a brilliant all analogue recording that's been transcribed superbly to Super Audio CD. It was both tonality faithful; sweet when it needed to be (those keyboards), sour when called upon so to be (Oakey's voice in the verses); and rhythmically true. The drum machine programming was captured with relish, the Shanling showing its deftness and insight into the song's simple but affecting rhythms. The tube outs seem to shave off a fraction of the transient speed, but the extra information 'within the envelope of the note' (timbral, textural) seem to more than redress the balance. The tube also gives slightly better dynamics, as if the player's output stage can drive your preamplifier better. Overall then, I was amazed by just how 'organic' and un-digital this machine can sound.

CONCLUSION

Aside from a few small quality niggles, this is surely the best audiophile digital disc spinner at the price. It's brilliantly conceived – it tries (and largely succeeds) to touch all bases a serious audiophile could possibly want. It's interestingly styled, largely superbly built, has no superfluous (but many useful) features, great operational flexibility and superb sound. Sonically, it's not quite up to the top £1,000 machines as a CD player, but it's extremely listenable all the same, and as an SACD spinner it's peerless at the price – especially via the tube output stage. This machine is simply far sweeter, warmer and more analogue sounding than anything I've heard at the price; some may find it too much so, others might never be able to go back to anything else. I, for one, am in the latter camp...

VERDICT

An outstanding, willfully quirky and charismatic audiophile product.

SHANLING SCD-T200C £2,150

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REFERENCE SYSTEM

- April Music Stello DP-200 preamplifier
- World Audio Design KLP-P1 tube preamplifier
- Quad 909 power amplifier
- World Audio Design K5881 (modified)
- Yamaha NS1000M loudspeakers
- Chord Company Signature interconnects
- Chord Company Odyssey 2 loudspeaker cables

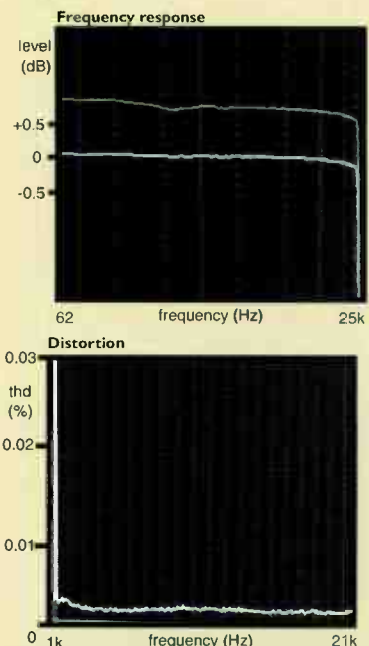
MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Like the CD player, Shanling's SACD has both Direct and Valve outputs. High resolution impulse analysis showed the valve output stages add a small amount of low frequency boost below 500Hz so they will likely give a little added warmth or weight to the sound. Otherwise, they imposed little restriction on bandwidth, SACD measuring -1dB down at 30kHz and -23dB at 100kHz through both outputs. The valves also add a little noise and some second harmonic distortion - up to 0.25% - at high levels, but make little difference below -50dB or so.

Because this player would not play a Philips test disc I couldn't properly measure CD distortion, but a non-ideal Technics test disc suggested distortion was low. With SACD the player was very linear however, managing 1.2% at -80dB at 2% at -100dB, so it looks as if the this player is more linear all round than the CD player.

There was some programme related jitter around 10kHz and above, peaking at 500pS. The Rhode & Schwarz UPL analyser returned an rms sum value of 2.6nS from an digital domain analysis to 100kHz - not as low as I would hope from a serious player. This apart though, the Shanling SACD produces a fine set of results and is likely to sound pretty good in use. It's a gorgeous player to look at and use. NK

Frequency response (CD)	5Hz-21.1kHz
SACD	2Hz-30kHz
Distortion (SACD)	
-6dB	0.006%
-30dB	0.004%
-60dB	0.04%
-80	0.5%
Separation	
1kHz	112
20kHz	102
Noise (IEC A)	-110dB
Dynamic range	112dB
Output	2.2V





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Living Voice Avstar II - cherry - 12 months old, nearly spotless - lovely finish	£2000	£2700
Aloia PST 11.01i - Hi-end 2 box pre-amp - slick and stylish Italian, 12 months old - boxed - perfect	£1500	£2800
Pro Ac Studio 200 - yew - nice - vgc	£800	£2150
Pro Ac Superlower - big bruiser - black. At least 10 years old, very loved and dog-eared Great sounding den/party speaker - good working order	£300	
Lyra Titan mono - cartridge with kudos in a hairshirt style - 40 hours	£1900	£2795
Dynavector 507 tonearm - strange device seeks strange owner	£1500	£3000
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east meets west

Traditional hi-fi lore has it that Chinese manufacture is fine for mass produced, high volume fare (supermarket DVD players, cheap PCs, etc.), but not good enough for the exacting specialist UK audio market – where the premium British brands come into their own. In this supertest, Dominic Todd put a brace of mid-priced digital disc spinners, from the UK, Japan and China, against one another – with surprising results...

Here we have a brace of mid-price machines, spanning from £600 to £2,000, from Britain, China and Japan. Counter intuitively perhaps, the cheapest is British made, and the Japanese one of the most expensive. They represent five very different ways of providing performance in the specialist hi-fi market; some are more successful than others.

The £600 Exposure 2010S is the latest incarnation of the well-received 2010 mid-price British CD player. There's little unusual about the construction of the machine, but Exposure has gone to considerable expense in making its own transport. It's based around a Sony laser and servo, but the mechanism, micro controller and display are all bespoke. This shows a considerable commitment, and it's notable that the money's been spent precisely where you can't see it.

Arcam's £1,000 DV79 DVD player features simplified construction techniques that take less time to build than its predecessors, so the machine can remain competitively priced in the face of far eastern competition. It's an awful lot of DVD player, but with no SACD playback can't match the feature counts of Japanese rivals

from Pioneer and Denon – instead it claims great things from CD replay, hence its inclusion here.

The striking looking Chinese made, British designed Inca Design Katana SE also costs £1,000, and is an esoteric blend of dramatic styling and good audiophile practice. Its low cost of manufacture enables the company to offer, what appears to be, superb value for money – but how does it perform?

Japanese design has, for the past twenty five years, been a sign of real quality – and Sony's £1,600 SCD-XA9000ES is no exception. It's big, heavy, boldly designed, beautifully built and designed to impress like no other here. It represents what the Japanese have always done best: implementing the very latest technology with fastidious attention to detail, and packaging it all up in a casing that demands attention.

Naim, Exposure and Arcam are all quintessentially British brands, but the Naim CD5x/ FLATCAP 2 is probably the most obviously 'homegrown'. Minimal, iconic and unashamedly expensive, this £2,000 machine makes no pretence to value on the basis of price alone yet, in terms of sound quality should comprehensively blow the others here out of the water. Read on for our findings...





Originally a manufacturer of minimalist, specialist amplification (dubbed 'Flat Earth' for a brief period), the company made its mark in the eighties as a warmer and more beguiling alternative to Naim Audio's (then) hard and acerbic sound. With the new 2010S CD player, Exposure has taken the decision to produce its own CD transport - a brave move because such a thing doesn't come cheap. Although it uses a Sony pickup and servo, designing a bespoke mechanism, micro controller and display takes plenty of both time and money. The competition, which use 'off the shelf' designs, save money on R&D and manufacturing costs. Other features new to the S model are a 20% thicker case with new feet, an all new remote control, and improved fit and finish.

Given that it's the cheapest machine here, it in no way looks or feels outclassed. It's every bit as well made as the Inca Design, and even manages to make the Arcam look slightly flimsy by comparison! Other than the new transport, under the lid remains much as before. There's the same toroidal transformer with separate supplies for analogue and digital. A single surface mount PCM1716 24/96 DAC is carried over, as is the, jitter reducing, high purity master clock.. It doesn't have the Inca Design's XLR balanced outputs, but both optical and coaxial digital outputs are standard.

SOUND QUALITY

I was always rather fond of the original 2010, and the 2010S proved every bit as good. With Daft Punk's 'Voyager' there was certainly something of a Naim-like sound about this new machine. Of all the players here, it was the one that got closest to the CD5x's sense of rhythm and pace - an impressive feat. Because of the snappy timing, it was certainly one of the more involving players to listen to. Yet, this is no do-it-all-budget wonder, and unsurprisingly the Exposure does have its limits. Against all the other players, its sound staging did sound just a little

unfocused. The Arcam, Sony and Naim, in particular, would all give instruments a more rounded balance, with a more accurate position within the soundstage.

One of the criticisms levelled at the previous 2010 was a slight lack of refinement. It was therefore with some trepidation that I put on 'Jupiter'. I needn't have feared. Whilst being slightly forward of balance, I never found the Exposure tiresome. I can imagine that, perhaps with brighter 'speakers, the sound could err on the side of aggression, but the balance remains fine with more neutral components. Timing was greatly superior to the Inca Design Katana SE, for example, and the composition had a sense of spark that was second only to the Naim.

Brass was reproduced well, although the stringed section wasn't quite so well portrayed. For all their

inferior timing however, the Katana and even the Arcam DV79 still produced a smoother string section with a good deal more body. As before, the Inca Design also had the slightly more accurate and slightly broader soundstage. Despite this, it was the Exposure that proved the more engaging player.

Equally enjoyable was Jennifer Warnes' 'Nightingale'. Although a little loose in the treble, the 2010S avoided both the hardened mid-range and rather soft bass of the Katana SE. Instead it proved, given the price, remarkably transparent and consistent in its response across the frequency range. It was by no means perfect, with both the Naim and Sony showing a good deal more insight into the recording, but it still had the measure of the Inca Design. For its price, then, the 2010S is one impressive machine.

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

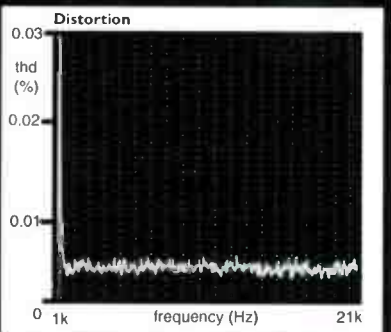
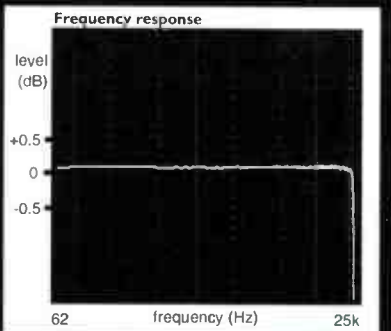
The 2010S has a ruler flat frequency response. Looking at the analysis closely shows there's just a slight rise toward high frequencies, suggesting the player will have a balance that seemingly emphasises treble by a small degree. This usually improves detail and speed, but may also draw attention to sibilance.

Distortion levels were very low, as was noise, resulting in a fine EIAJ dynamic range value of 111dB. With dither applied to low level signals distortion values hovered around a few percent at 80dB and lower, a fine result from quality D/A convertors.

With wide channel separation and an output of exactly 2V this Exposure meets Philips standards closely. There was a little more jitter than is possible, with peaks of 30pS and an rms sum of 235pS that may detract just a little from purity.

The 2010S measured well. It should sound clear and precise. NK

Separation	
1kHz	122dB
20kHz	95dB
Noise (IEC A)	-102dB
Dynamic range	111dB
Output	2.0V



Frequency response (CD)	4Hz-21.2kHz
Distortion (SACD)	
6dB	0.001%
-30dB	0.004%
-60dB	0.2%
-80	4.3%

VERDICT ●●●●£

Vivid pace and impressive transparency make the 2010S one of the most involving players here. Remarkable value.

EXPOSURE

+44(0) 1273 423877
www.exposurehifi.com

FOR

- timing and pace
- finish and build
- bespoke transport

AGAINST

- slightly system dependent

ARCAM DV79 £1,000

The only DVD-Audio player there is, ironically, British from design to manufacture. The restrained styling is tasteful and understated, although the series of legends on the front is now boarding on the excessive. Build isn't as 'heavyweight' as the Sony or as expensively engineered as the Naim, but it's perfectly good enough for a semi-universal DVD player of this price. As with the DV78, the only real let down is the tacky remote. Just as well, then, that there's the marvellous navigation system, which allows for easy operation without it!

In essence the DV79 takes the spec' of the impressive DV78 (reviewed June 2004) and adds DVD-Audio, Dolby ProLogic II decoding and an HDMI link. The HDMI link is particularly impressive as it gives the Arcam one of the highest quality AV connections. It's much more flexible than similar DVI systems, but will happily "talk" to them as well. The toroidal mains transformer, 32-bit Zoran audio DSP, Wolfson WM8740 DACs and low jitter clock all look promising.

SOUND QUALITY

I did rather throw the Arcam in at the deep end, but far from sinking in ignominy, it managed to keep its head well above water. One of the key questions here is whether DVD-A is better than SACD. So, armed with Mike Oldfield's 'Tubular Bells' on both formats, I tested it against the Sony. What was most striking was not actually how different the two formats sounded, but how similar! Both offered an open soundstage and allowed the music to really breathe.

There was an easygoing nature to the Arcam that meant the music simply washed over the listener. It was precise too. Perhaps here the Sony was a tad more focused, but there wasn't much in it. More noticeable was the Sony's extra bass weight. Not only did it go lower, but was better controlled. The Arcam wasn't poor in this respect, just not up to the high standards of the SCD-XA9000ES.



Anyone used to standard CD would still be impressed, especially compared with rival universal DVD players. Daftpunk's, 'Voyager' was ever so slightly slower and a tad more mechanical than with the Naim. Bass also wasn't quite as taut yet got closer than you might expect. Staging and instrument positioning was really every bit as good as either the Sony or Naim. The only point where the Naim showed a demonstrable advantage was with the 'floating synth' which hovered above the mix with the Arcam, but positively bounced off the ceiling with the Naim. Nevertheless the Arcam made a fine job of separating the instruments, and showed a degree of maturity unmatched by other DVD players of this price.

Holst's 'Jupiter' showed the DV79 to have a little more bite in

the treble than the Naim!

Surprisingly, the violins could just occasionally become slightly too shrill. In terms of timing and dynamic contrast, the Naim was also ahead. Yet, the DV79 could still never be described as ponderous. Ultimately the bass response was a little soft, but it still outshone anything comparable in the DVD market. Best of all, the performance was actually exciting to listen to, and rarely felt like the poor relation to the Naim or Sony.

The Arcam doesn't quite beat the Naim with CD or the Sony with SACD. But then, given the price difference, it would be churlish to expect it to. It does, however, run both close and it also has an excellent picture quality with plenty of depth and texture – a trick neither of the others can match.

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

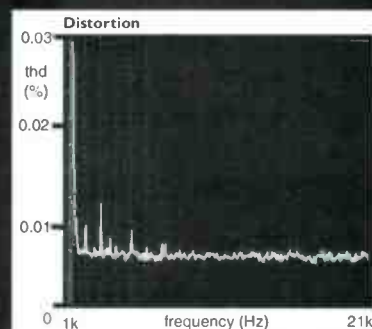
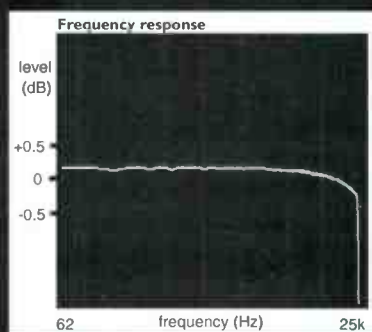
Audio frequency response with 24/192 DVD-A reaches 40kHz (-1dB), measurement showed, before rolling away steadily toward 100kHz. This doesn't match the ruler flat response to 100kHz that some players achieve but it should not be of much subjective consequence. CD reached 21kHz as usual and had Arcam's preferred slow top-end roll-off, which usefully removes the brightness of CD.

Distortion levels were very low with DVD-A, when measuring a 24bit signal, and CD looked good too, but the Arcam refused to play a Philips test CD with tones at sub-multiples of sample rate, so the slightly worse results of a Technics test disc had to be used. An EIAJ dynamic range test yielded a figure of 111dB, in line with very low distortion.

With output at 2.2V and negligible jitter, below 20pS right across the band to 100kHz, the DV79 measures well in all areas. NK

Frequency response	(-1dB)	
CD	4Hz - 21kHz	
DVD-A	4Hz - 40kHz	
Distortion	CD	DVD
-6dB	0.0008%	0.0002%
-60dB	0.25%	0.06%

-80dB	4.6%	0.6%
-100dB		6.5%
Separation (1kHz)		116dB
Noise (IEC A)		112dB
Dynamic range		111dB
Output		2.2V



VERDICT ●●●●● £

Excellent DVD-A and video allied to surprisingly strong CD replay makes this cracking value – and probably the best DVD spinner at its price too.

ARCAM

+44 (0) 1223 203203
www.arcam.co.uk

FOR

- impressive DVD-A and CD sound
- natural picture quality
- HDMI link

AGAINST

- tacky remote
- dedicated CD better

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SYSTEM 8 ★★★★★★		SYSTEM 9 ★★★★★★		SYSTEM 10 ★★★★★★	
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www.kjwestone.com

INCA DESIGN KATANA SE £1,000



Like the Naim, this is a standard CD player developed in the UK, but it's built in China to reduce costs. The elaborate, alloy, casework gives the player a far more expensive look. It combines a familiar Philips VAMI 202 transport with the equally ubiquitous Burr Brown PCM1732 upsampling DAC. The DAC also includes, along with the Arcam and Naim, an HDCD filter. There are some nice touches, even on the basic model. The lid, for example, is damped, and the transport is mounted on a solid metal block. At first glance this appears to be copper, but further investigation shows it to be a multi-layered composite of different metals. Finally, a twin core power supply feeds separate supplies for the analogue and digital sections.

The Katana features both optical and coaxial digital outputs, as well as the rather more unusual balanced XLR analogues. Although I found the player's styling unusual and attractive, I was less sure about the remote. The SE version has been reworked by Nigel Pearson (of Loricraft fame), with choice capacitors, new filters and upgraded power supplies.

SOUND QUALITY

It only took about ten seconds of listening to hear that the Katana SE wasn't on the same level as the Naim – FLATCAP 2 or not. It's really all down to the timing. After listening to Daftpunk's 'Voyager' on the Naim, the Katana SE simply sounded slow. That said, it was still a match for the Arcam, despite its slightly soft responses. Things improved in terms of staging – instrument and effect placement was certainly one up on the DV79 here, but still not at the Naim's level. I felt that the track was reproduced with decent resolution and accuracy, but just not quite the alacrity of the conventionally aspirated CD5x.

Jennifer Warnes' 'Nightingale' showed up something of a weakness with the Inca Design. Although not always noticeable with other music, this recording exposed a very odd hardening of the

upper-mid range. It certainly gave Warnes a striking presence within the room yet, at the same time, made her sound uncharacteristically forced. I can imagine the midband has been voiced in this way in order to improve the apparent projection of sound. In some systems this may work quite well, but I'd be wary if your system is already forward in balance. Bass was pleasingly deep, but the slight bloom suggested that the player would be better suited to leaner ancillaries. Rather an odd balance, then, and one that all the other players here improved upon.

Mind you, although somewhat unusually voiced, the Katana could still impress. The layering of background vocals matched the Sony with CD, and ran the Naim fairly close, too. Vocals aside, timbre was very good. Guitar was reproduced

with a sense of shape and intimacy, and the percussion had an open, expansive quality. The rather uneven balance actually quite suited 'Jupiter' at least in part. Brass benefited from the pronounced upper-midrange, and sounded appropriately raspy and metallic. String tone was sweet, and the percussion well separated. Again, the timing seemed slow after the Naim, but, slightly soft bass apart, the dynamic response was punchy and articulate.

The Inca Design Katana is a gorgeous looking bit of kit, with exquisite styling and excellent build – but sonically it's not quite there. It's a warm sounding machine, and if you partner carefully then you'll be able to accommodate its well lit midband, but the fact remains that the Exposure, at £400 less, gives it a hard time...

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The Katana has a strongly rolled off high frequency response that measures -1dB at 10kHz and -4.3dB at 20kHz, enough to give it a distinctively warm sound. With high output at 2.4V it will have a small loudness advantage in A-B showroom demos, and will certainly seem smoother and more amenable.

Noise levels were unusually high our distortion analysis noise floor shows. With IEC A weighting this player returned -86dB – very high as CD goes, although still not readily audible I must say.

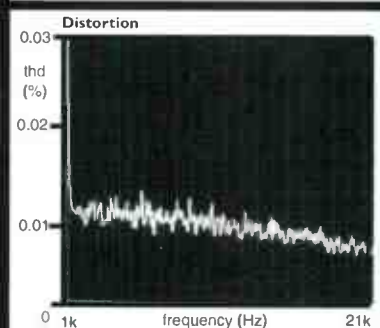
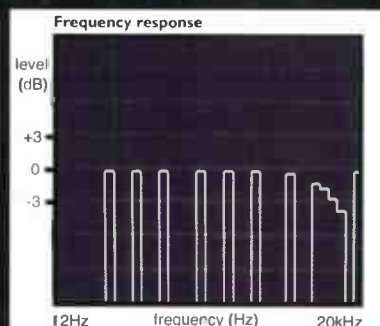
Distortion levels were also high and here the impact is more worrying, likely adding a bit of roughness. However, the rolled down top end will mask the problem. Measured EIAJ dynamic range was a poor 99dB as a result.

Programme related jitter peaks reached 1nS and the rms level over a 100kHz analysis bandwidth in the digital domain was a high 3nS.

The Katana did not measure well. It will sound warm but both distortion and jitter will detract from its sonic composure. NK

Frequency response (CD)	4Hz-10kHz
Distortion (SACD)	
-6dB	0.003%
-30dB	0.02%
-60dB	0.65%

-80	7%
Separation	
1kHz	102dB
20kHz	82dB
Noise (IEC A)	-86dB
Dynamic range	99dB
Output	2.4V



VERDICT ●●●£

Delicious looks, fine build and a decent sound, but not quite up with the best of the rest at its price.

Active Distribution

+44 (0) 1635 291357
www.incadesign.com

FOR

- esoteric styling
- soundstaging

AGAINST

- remote control
- uneven balance

SONY SCD-XA9000ES £1,600

Although only used in a handful of other CD players (but more and more DVD universals) Sony has stuck by SACD. This third generation machine is the company's current flagship. Unlike lowlier Sonys, this range topper is still built in Japan and weighs a mighty 16.2kg. It's generally very well finished – although not up to the standards of ten years ago... Key features are time delay adjustment and DSD audio transfer system (i-Link), which only works with a matching TA-DA9000ES AV receiver and the time delay is for multi-channel only, meaning that neither have an effect with stereo.

The laser uses a fixed pick-up with dual beams, while twin R-core transformers provide the juice, and there is extensive screening for the analogue sections. There are no fewer than 12 DACs of which 2 per channel are used in surround mode and 6 per channel in stereo. All this is housed within a very sturdy frame and beam chassis complete with copper plating. Featurewise the Sony adds an optical and coaxial digital output to the i-Link. CD Text, auto play, index search, timer switch and a headphone socket.

SOUND QUALITY

The SCD-XA9000ES really is about as good as it gets for the money - in the context of a hybrid player, not CD only. So, being something of a jack-of-all-trades, I was surprised as to just how close it ran the Naim with conventional CD! 'Voyager' was reproduced with tight, bouncy timing that was to within an nth degree of the 16-bit wonder. It also possessed extremely good focus and staging. So much so, that I would even say that it surpasses the Naim in regard of the latter. For those, used to Sony CD players of yore, the smooth, refined sound is something of a revelation. It's still very clean at the top end, but now the precision comes without the awful mechanical brightness that used to afflict machines such as the CDP-XE900E. Like the Naim, it gave shape to the instruments, and

had a similarly taut bass response - in both cases however, the Naim still manages to do it that bit better. Ultimate bass depth was also superior with the CD5x/FLACAP 2.

Moving to SACD, with a CD layer for handy comparison, didn't make for as marked improvement as I had initially expected. Yet the more I listened to David Bridie's 'Salt' in SACD the more crude it sounded in conventional stereo on the Naim. In short, the differences were subtle, but there was a seamless flow of music that was more like a good record than CD. Even with 2-channel there was loads more depth, which gave the music a less forced, yet more persuasive quality. It didn't all go the Sony's way, however. As out played as the Naim was, it still sounded more punchy and, perhaps in a crude way, more fun.

Back to CD and Holst's 'Jupiter' showed just how well Sony has matched the two formats to sound consistent. It had a similarly refined quality, which was reminiscent of its performance with SACD. That said, in this case it was no more refined than the Naim. There was little in it, but the Naim pulled ahead ever so slightly in a number of areas, such as the quality of the brass timbre and the ultimate pace. Otherwise, the same focus, detail, and dynamic control made for a highly impressive performance. No matter how complex the music became, the Sony always remained firmly in control.

This an extremely well balanced and complete machine and, therefore perhaps not surprisingly, ends up sounding much more like the Naim than you might have imagined!

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

With CD returning just 0.02% distortion at -60dB and SACD 0.04% SACD's greater resolution becomes obvious at low output levels.

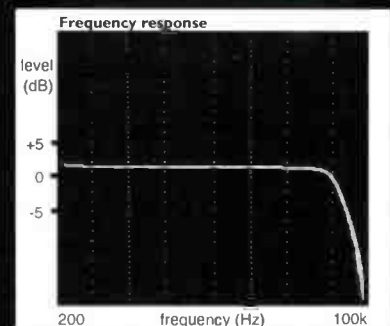
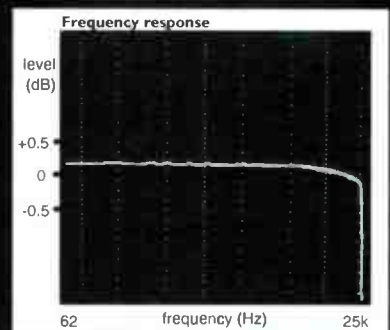
Where in the past Sony CD players have consistently had a ruler flat frequency response, this one shows slight roll off at high frequencies. Sony seem to be adjusting CD to better match SACD subjectively, the latter sounding far smoother and silkier than CD ever did. Traditionally Sony CD players have sounded quite glassy in their treble ranges but I suspect this one will not. With SACD, frequency response extends up to 40kHz (-1dB).

Sony CD players (and Philips) always turn in a fine measured performance and the XA9000ES was no exception. I would expect a silky smooth sound from both CD and SACD. NK

Frequency response (-1dB)
CD 4Hz - 21.25kHz
SACD 4Hz - 40kHz

Distortion	CD	SACD
-20dB	0.004%	0.001%
-40dB	0.015%	0.006%
-60dB	0.2%	0.04%
-80dB	4.3%	0.13%

Separation (1kHz)	112dB
Noise (IEC A)	-113dB
Dynamic range (CD)	111dB
Output	1.9V

**VERDICT**

Hugely impressive and versatile hybrid machine, but the finest 16-bit players still have the edge with CD.

SONY UK
+44 (0) 1932 816786
www.sony.co.uk

FOR

- versatility
- complete sound quality
- build quality

AGAINST

- CD-only rivals better
- basic remote
- some cost-cutting evident

NAIM CD5x/ FLATCAP 2 £2,000



At the vanguard of the trad 16bit camp is Naim's new CD5x and FLATCAP 2 combo, designed and built in Salisbury. The pair are finished to Naim's usual high standards, although the exposed bolt heads on the CD5x's undercarriage came as a slight disappointment. The swing out transport, with magnetic stop, on the other hand, is a tactile treat and makes others look instantly over-complex. New to the CD5x is a Philips VAM1202/12 transport with CD-RW playback capability. A PMD200 digital filter incorporates an HDCD decoder. Tweaks have been made to the PCBs and Naim has fitted 24 bit, dual mono Burr Brown devices as used in the costlier CDX2 and CDS3 players. The large toroidal power transformer remains, and the BHC capacitors and multi-layered circuit boards are typical of Naim's attention to detail.

There isn't much to the FLATCAP 2 at all - inside it's rather empty with a solitary toroidal looking very lonely. Still, with selected low-noise regulators and two separate secondary windings to isolate each of the dual supplies, the resulting PSU represents a serious step-up on the CD5x's already decent mains feed. The casing is actually made to a higher standard than the CD5x - cast side cheeks and all! Yet, despite the three entirely different construction techniques used with the Nait 5, CD5x and FLATCAP 2 they all manage to look remarkable cohesive and, of course, typically understated. Thankfully phono sockets, as well as DIN, are now standard, although the lack of a digital output is baffling, especially for those wanting to record digitally...

SOUND QUALITY

This proved the best sounding CD player here; but that said, the more I listened to the hi res machines doing their stuff, the more I could hear the limitations of 16bit. A Naim wouldn't be a Naim without a taut, rhythmic bass and impeccable timing. True to

form, this particular combo offered just that with Daft Punk's 'Voyager'. There was good depth of staging, although it was somewhat compressed compared to the Sony on SACD, as you might expect. Nevertheless, the Naim did make instruments sound incredibly complete, and there was a sense of realism and cohesion missing from some of the others. One surprise was the treble response - far smoother than I've experienced from previous Naim players. Strings could occasionally sound either a touch too smooth or slightly harsh and mechanical. I found that it couldn't quite match the string tone of the Sony with SACD. That said, there was little wrong with either the brass timbre or the detailed percussion. There was also a super sense of control with an intensity and dynamic aplomb that none of

the others could match. It certainly made for an involving listen and, despite the inferior timbre, sometimes a more beguiling one than with the hi res models.

I next chose Jennifer Warnes 'The Nightingale'. Here the soundstage was not only deep and broad but tall too. It was with this song that the gap between SACD and CD was at its slimmest. The lowest bass notes were a little light - just losing out to the Sony. It was true to the recording in not masking the slight sibilance brought about from close miking.

Overall, the Naim CD5x proved an immensely musical experience - it isn't one of the best in terms of certain technical attributes, here, but it is, by far, the most involving. Factor in the build, styling and general kudos of this brand, and it's a compelling proposition.

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

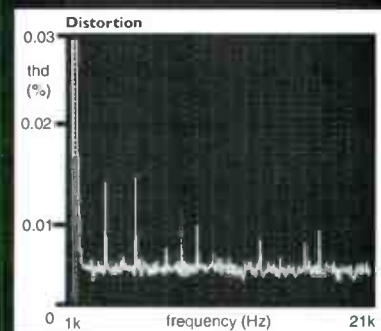
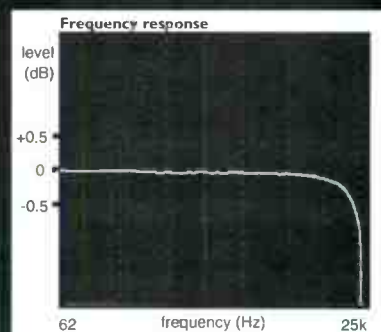
The CD5X has a well damped filtering that gives a very slight response tilt down toward high frequencies with a slow, smooth roll off above 10kHz, quite different from most other players. The measured -1dB upper response limit is still 21kHz, like other players, but the CD-5x will all the same sound darker and less tinny than usual.

Naim likely use multi-bit D/A converters, since there was some measurable distortion, our analysis shows. However, with a -30dB result of just 0.025%, compared to 0.22% or so these days, differences aren't great. The CD5X remained effective at low levels too, returning a reasonable 107dB EIAJ dynamic range figure and just 2% distortion on a dithered -80dB signal.

With low noise and normal output the CD5X otherwise measured well. It should have a solid, sound that's well damped in Naim fashion. NK

Frequency response	4Hz - 21Hz
Distortion (%)	
-6dB	0.0085
-60dB	0.33
-80	4.3
Separation	

1kHz	118dB
20kHz	85dB
Noise (IEC A)	-104dB
Dynamic range	-107dB
Output	2.11V



VERDICT

The most musical 16bit machine here by a considerable margin - if hi res is not for you, then there's no better at the price.

Naim Audio

+44 (0) 1722 332266

www.naim-audio.com

FOR

- finish and build
- timing and control
- involving

AGAINST

- light bass
- compressed against SACD
- no digital output

NO STRINGS.
NO KEYS.

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conclusion

For all the talent shown in this test, picking a tail-ender is easy. Of the players here, it's the Inca Design Katana SE that inspires the least. It is by no means a bad design, but it simply doesn't justify the extra cost over the 2010S, nor does it sufficiently eclipse the, DVD playing, Arcam. On the plus side, I like the styling and there's certainly nothing wrong with the build. There were also times when the Katana did sing. In terms of staging, it was often right up there with the best, but, unfortunately, this talent didn't transfer to other aspects of sound.

The other four are more closely matched, and ranking them is a far harder task. Although it wins this test for value, the Exposure 2010S has to come fourth. It's a really super CD player, and one that most listeners will find hugely entertaining. This side of a Naim CD5i, it's probably one of the most involving CD players about. Equally impressive is the build. Smart, solid and well finished; the 2010S has a very professional and expensive feel about it – it was by no means embarrassed in this company. Yet, for all its credentials, the Exposure couldn't quite live up to the might of the

“fed with a decent CD, the Naim could sing a tune that - even with SACD - the Sony had no answer to...”

Arcam, Sony and Naim.

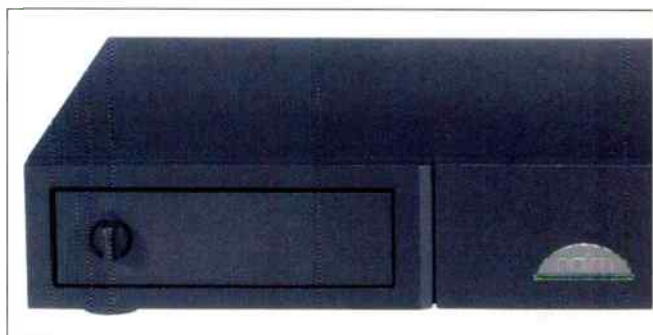
Bronze goes to Arcam. Although there were occasions when both the Inca Design and Exposure sounded better, they were few and far between. Despite the Katana SE having a broader, more densely layered, soundstage, and the 2010S the better timing, the difference wasn't all that great. In other respects, such as instrument formation, focus and consistency, the DV79 actually eclipsed its CD only rivals! Given the talent shown by the other two designs, that's pretty impressive, but when you consider that the Arcam is also a highly competent DVD player, then it's little short of amazing. It also put in a superb performance with DVD-A discs, whilst falling just short of the Sony.

The SCD-XA9000ES may have only shown small improvements over the Arcam, but they were improvements nonetheless. Given how good the DV79 is, you can understand that the Sony is really something special. Much has already been said about the Sony in these pages, and I would only second everything already written. It's a highly competent CD player, yet, as an SACD machine, can get closer to audio nirvana than any other player here. The styling may be a matter of personal taste, but the build is almost beyond reproach. Yet, perhaps even more impressively, was just how much like SACD Sony has managed to make CD sound. It certainly didn't have the same depth or focus, but often proved one of the most consistent and refined performers here. A class act.

Yet, much as I admire the Sony, the Naim is the only one here that I wouldn't think twice about writing out a personal cheque for. What we have is one of - if not the - very finest sub £2,000 CD players on the market. Where the Sony impressed, the CD5x/ FLATCAP 2 astounded by moving the game on still further. In terms of timing, timbre, focus and staging the Naim nearly always pulled ahead of the Sony. It has to be said that,

using SACD, it was a far closer contest, and one that often favoured the Sony. With a decent SACD disc, the Sony made the Naim sound compressed and even somewhat crude. I have little doubt that the future of quality audio lies with 'hi res', but fed with a decent Compact Disc recording, the Naim would sing a tune that, even with SACD, the Sony had no answer to. It's not cheap, but it's the only player here that will have you routing through your CD collection all night...

With British CD players top and tailing this supertest, what it shows is that it's not where a machine is assembled, but how well its technology is implemented that matters. There are few that can do it like Naim - so how about a SACD5x then, Paul and Doug?



RANKING

- [1] NAIM CD5x/FLATCAP 2
get lost in music
- [2] SONY CDP-XA9000ES
floats like a butterfly, stings like a bee
- [3] ARCAM DV79
AV meets audiophile
- [4] EXPOSURE CD2010S
why pay more?
- [5] INCA DESIGN KATANA SE
shiny, but not sharp enough

great giveaway

WIN A **NAIM NAIT 5i** INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER IN THIS MONTH'S SUPER COMPETITION!



competition questions

[1] What does the Naim's casework use?
 [a] aluminium extrusions and covers
 [b] gold and silver medals
 [c] copper coins
 [d] chocolate teapots

[2] What type of remote control handset is supplied?
 [a] iCOM
 [b] IPOD
 [c] ITSBROKEN
 [d] IDONTKNOW

[3] What does it bring to the sub £800 amplifier sector?
 [a] hitherto unknown levels of grip
 [b] previously unheard amounts of zip
 [c] grievously unseen heights of hip
 [d] err, that's it...

[4] What can't you help thinking the Naim is, at the price?
 [a] "amazing"
 [b] "awesome"
 [c] "wicked"
 [d] "bad"

November Competition
 Hi-Fi World Magazine
 Unit G4 Argo House
 The Park Business Centre
 Kilburn Park Rd.
 London NW6 5LF

Hi-Fi World gives you the chance to win a superb Naim Nait 5i integrated amplifier! Last month, David Price tried it out and was bowled over by its rare combination of style, sonics and superb build quality. Here's what he wrote:

"The £699 Nait 5i epitomises Naim's 'traditional values in a modern setting' thinking... (it) shows how far the company has come: its 70x432x301mm diecast zinc casework uses aluminium extrusions and covers to produce a rigid and resonance-free case, protecting the sensitive internal components from the degrading effect of microphonic vibration. Inside, microprocessor controlled protection circuits abound. These days, input switching and volume control is of the highest order, borrowed from the recently introduced Classic series while the programmable unity-gain input allows seamless integration into even very high quality surround sound and audio-visual systems. The supplied iCOM remote control handset provides easy operation from the armchair, and there are even

(whisper it softly) two pairs of RCA phono sockets on the rear panel.

The Nait 5i is superb - in isolation, or against any of its price rivals - because it brings hitherto unknown levels of grip and insight into the sub £800 sector. After you've listened to the best from Arcam, MF, Roksan and NAD, then it's a revelation in terms of speed, rhythms, dynamics and grip. It's all down to that bass, which starts and stops more adroitly than all its price rivals. It's much more on-off - much less slow start, slow stop. This, along with its articulation (an ability to communicate not just temporal information, but dynamic accenting too), makes it uniquely placed to seize a musical performance by the scruff of the neck and 'nail it'. The midband of the Nait 5i is also pretty special... It's fast too, with a fine degree of detail and a fair degree of textural detailing... it's not bright, forward or acerbic in the way that previous incarnations of this integrated could be. In this sense, it's the most listener-friendly amp Naim has yet made. Overall then, the Nait 5i is most accomplished at what it does... you can't help thinking the

Naim is amazing at the price. Verdict: the most musically, ergonomically and aesthetically capable amplifier at the price - and pretty impressive in most other respects, too.

If you'd like to win this superb integrated, then all you have to do is answer the following four easy questions. Send your entries to: November Competition, *Hi-Fi World* magazine, Unit G4, Argo House, The Park Business Centre, Kilburn Park Road, London NW6 5LF.

Hi-Fi 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. Pete Lanning of East Cowes, Isle of Wight, the winner of our August 04 competition.
 A pair of R45 Revolver speakers are on there 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.



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Enjoy the freedom to listen to the music of your choice or watch TV independently from other rooms in the home



Our installation experts are fully trained to the highest standards and will continue to support you and your equipment long after your first visit to one of our nationwide stores



Flush-mounted in-wall speakers can give you all the sound you can handle, but won't eat into your floor space or clash with your decor



NEWS NEWS NEWS



DENON DVD-3910 UNIVERSAL DVD PLAYER

Replacing 2003's all conquering DVD-2900, the new Denon DVD-3910 moves Denon further ahead with a massive performance and feature upgrade.

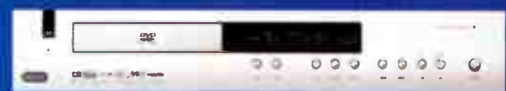
Using leading edge audio and video technology and heavyweight construction, this Universal player promises to deliver the highest quality picture and sound quality from your entire disc collection.

Handling both DVD-Audio and SACD, the '3910 will also play MP3, WMA, JPEG and Photo CD plus all varieties of DVD/CD -R and +R. It includes every digital and analogue audio/video output: HDMI, DVI, FireWire, Component, Composite and S-Video.



ARCAM DIVA AVR250 HOME CINEMA RECEIVER

Following the success of the AVR300, Arcam has introduced its smaller brother, the AVR250. As you would expect from a company with an audiophile heritage, this 7.1 channel receiver has been designed to deliver excellent audio reproduction. This is combined with connectivity and decoding modes that will satisfy even the most ardent A/V enthusiasts.



ARCAM FMJ DV29 DVD PLAYER

Arcam's flagship award-winning FMJ DV27A DVD player is being joined by the DV29 to deliver DVD-Audio compatible HDMI. In addition to excellent video performance, the DV29 promises to deliver first-class sound quality.

- ABERDEEN (NEW)
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- BRIGHTON
- BRISTOL
- BROMLEY
- CAMBRIDGE
- CARDIFF
- CHELSEA
- CHELTENHAM
- CRAWLEY
- CROYDON
- EALING (NEW)
- EDINBURGH
- EPSOM
- EXETER
- GLASGOW
- GUILDFORD
- HOLBORN
- HULL
- IPSWICH
- KINGSTON
- LEICESTER
- LEEDS
- LINCOLN
- MAIDSTONE
- MANCHESTER
- NEWCASTLE
- NORWICH
- NOTTINGHAM
- OXFORD
- PETERBOROUGH
- PLYMOUTH
- POOLE
- PRESTON
- READING
- SEVENOAKS
- SHEFFIELD
- SOLIHULL
- SOUTHAMPTON
- SOUTHGATE
- STAINES
- SWISS COTTAGE
- TUNBRIDGE WELLS
- WATFORD
- WEYBRIDGE
- WITHAM (ESSEX)
- WOLVERHAMPTON

PLEASE SEE PAGE 7
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World Radio History



Arcam DiVA CD192 CD Player £849.95

"Latest DiVA has some fresh vigour, but manages to retain its predecessors refinement and deftness with detail - a great listen"



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Michell Gyro SE Turntable / RB300 Tonearm £1049.95



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

CLAIM £50 TOWARDS THE GOLDRING CARTRIDGE OF YOUR CHOICE*



Marantz CD5400 CD Player £119.95



SAVE £80

Marantz PM7200 Amplifier £249.95

"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."



Musical Fidelity X-80 Amplifier £599.95 X-150 Amplifier £799.95 X-Ray^{VS} CD Player £899.95

Musical Fidelity has unveiled two integrated amplifiers and a CD player as part of its revamped X-series. The 40 wpc, **X-80** and the 80wpc **X-150** amplifiers feature a dual-gang analogue volume control and high-output transistors for each channel. The X-150 also includes a high quality phono stage.



The **X-Ray^{VS}** CD player, is the replacement for the legendary X-Ray and uses the same DAC and upsampling principles as the acclaimed Tri-Vista SACD player. From a technical standpoint, the X-Ray^{VS} is equal of some of the most expensive players on the market.



Pure Digital DRX702ES Analogue/DAB Tuner £279.95

"So do you buy a digital tuner? Or an analogue one? Now you don't have to pick: just buy Pure Digital's DRX-702ES! Whether on FM or DAB, this tuner sounds superb... The overall balance is powerful, clean and crisp, making this a fine tuner by any standards, and a superb buy given its excellent flexibility."



Project 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."



experience more

experience more
experience more



NEW

Cyrus
8vs Amplifier **£799.95**
CD8 X CD Player **£999.95**

Cyrus has been developing high performance hi-fi systems for over 20 years. Today their upgradeable, modular product range includes multi-room systems, home cinema and some of the world's finest hi-fi systems. The new 'VS' preamp circuitry, incorporated in the 6vs and 8vs amplifiers, has dramatically improved their performance while the CD8 X is a heavily revised version of the CD8.



"Here's a machine that advances the ability of its excellent predecessor by an almost absurd degree. The Cyrus 8vs is an absolute superstar"

Cyrus
6vs Amplifier **£599.95**

"A significant upgrade to what was already an impressive amp - Cyrus' new entry-level integrated is a peach"



SEE **FREE GRADO SR60 HEADPHONE OFFER***



Ruark
Epilogue II
Speakers **£344.95**

"...Then there are the classy Ruark Epilogue IIs. They're the priceist here, but with plenty to justify that price tag. They have a warmness about that draws the listener into the music and keeps the senses captivated."

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION • AUGUST 2002

FREE QED CABLE
WORTH £60



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WORTH £60

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.

FREE QED

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WITH ALL HI-FI
SPEAKER PAIRS
OVER £299*

WORTH

£60 WITH SPEAKERS OVER **£299**
£80 WITH SPEAKERS OVER **£499**
£120 WITH SPEAKERS OVER **£899**

FREE QED CABLE
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B&W
DM602 S3 Speakers **£299.95**

"These solidly made standmounters perform well across the whole range of musical styles... Add these speakers to your hi-fi system and you're guaranteed magnificent integration between the drivers and an even tonal balance."



Roksan Kandy
KD1/III CD Player **£649.95**
KA1/III Amplifier **£649.95**

"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



"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."



FREE

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*ADDED VALUE OFFERS - FROM RANGE AVAILABLE IN-STORE. NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER. ADVERTISEMENT VALID UNTIL AT LEAST 21/10/04, E&OE.



Rotel 10 Series RA-1062 Amplifier £594.95 RCD-1072 CD Player £594.95

"At the heart of the 60-watt RA-1062 is a toroidal transformer and a power supply, which Rotel claims, helps the amp maintain performance even at high volumes... Crank up the volume and, as promised, the Rotel keeps its composure and balance... If you want a £600 integrated, be sure to audition the RA-1062.

First impressions of the RCD-1072 are excellent. This is the slickest machine in this group: the casework feels solid and the finish exceptional at the price... On its own terms it remains an enjoyable and informative CD player."

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION • SEPTEMBER 2003

COMPACT SYSTEMS



Linn Classik Music System £799.95

When purchased with speakers over £299*
When purchased on its own £849.95

"The Classik sounds simply marvellous... It offers the performance you'd expect from high quality separates in one lovely package - this is a very superior product."



Denon DM31 UD-M31 CD Receiver £189.95

When purchased with speakers over £99*
When purchased on its own £199.95

"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."

NB - DENON DM31 & LINN CLASSIK PRICES EXCLUDE SPEAKERS

NEW

Acoustic Energy Aelite Three Speakers £749.95

"Acoustic Energy's new Aelite Threes weigh in at a hefty 18kg a piece, and their curved, real wood finished cabinets both look handsome and make good acoustic sense... So how do they perform... Give them a big room and position them in free space and they'll deliver great things... If you want a big sound for sensible money, don't hesitate to audition the Aelite Threes."

WHAT HI-FI? Sept 04
★★★★★

Pioneer PDR-609 CD Recorder £169.95

"This is the third time Pioneer has won Product of the Year in the recorders section. First with the PDR-509, and then last year with the PDR-609.

Features include 24-bit/96kHz digital-analogue conversion, backed up by Pioneer's Legato Link filtering and manual recording level controls, ideal when making compilations to standardise levels. All this means you get great copies from the Pioneer... and remarkable value."



WHAT HI-FI? Product of the year 2002

MUSIC ALL AROUND THE HOME

You've heard of hi-fi - now welcome to the world of wi-fi! Wi-fi devices allow you to network a range of devices together - from your music system to your PC - without the wires. For example, a multiroom system like Yamaha's MusicCAST can wirelessly send music to up to five 'client' playback systems dotted around your home. That music could be stored on the MusicCAST server device or other sources - existing hi-fi kit, maybe, or an internet radio station or MP3 files from your PC: plug-in adapters make it easy to wi-fi-enable products.

B&W 704 Speakers £1399.95

The 704 speakers are part of B&W's new 700 series. These floorstanding, two-and-a-half-way, vented box speakers and are available in a variety of attractive finishes. In a recent What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision group test the 704 offered "Remarkable openness and clarity that is unrivalled at this price."

WHAT HI-FI? Mar 04
★★★★★



FREE QED CABLE
WORTH £120

YAMAHA MusicCAST

MCX A10£599.95
(MusicCAST Client)
MCX 1000£1799.95
(MusicCAST Server)

CYRUSLINK

Linkserver 160£2999.95
(Four Zone HD Server 160Gb Drive)
Linkserver 250£3499.95
(Four Zone HD Server 250Gb Drive)
Linkport£649.95
Linkwand£199.95



CYRUSLINK
Linkserver



AVAILABLE AT SELECTED
SEVENOAKS SOUND & VISION STORES



CYRUSLINK Linkport



YAMAHA'S MusicCAST
MCX-1000 DIGITAL SERVER
& MCX-A10 CLIENT

PLEASE NOTE: SOME PRODUCTS MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE AT ALL STORES. PLEASE CALL BEFORE TRAVELLING.

*ADDED VALUE OFFERS - FROM RANGE AVAILABLE IN-STORE. NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER. ADVERTISEMENT VALID UNTIL AT LEAST 21/10/04, E&OE.

experience more

experience more
experience more



SEPARATE HI-FI SYSTEMS

Rotel
RCD-02 CD Player
RA-02 Amplifier

HI-FI SYSTEM
1

Monitor Audio
Bronze B2 Speakers

For this recommended Hi-Fi System we have combined Rotel's highly rated RCD-02 CD player and RA-02 amplifier with Monitor Audio's beautifully balanced Bronze B2 speakers. This package gives a powerful, fresh and vibrant sound. The compact 'B2' speakers, available in a variety of finishes, were awarded 'Best Buy' by What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision, with the sound being described as "Superb... Speakers don't get much better than the B2's".



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

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

The RA-02 amplifier features remote control and a phono input. The RCD-02 (★★★★★ - What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision - August 2003) is HDCD compatible and includes a digital output for connecting to a digital recorder.

SYSTEM PRICE **£799.95** SAVE **£129**
PRICE EXCLUDES CABLES & STANDS

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



SEPARATE HI-FI SYSTEMS

Arcam
CD73T CD Player
A65 Plus Amplifier

HI-FI SYSTEM
2

KEF
Q4 Speakers



WHAT HI-FI? Product of the Year 2003

Arcam
CD73T CD Player
A65 Plus Amplifier

KEF
Q4 Speakers

Arcam and KEF 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 KEF's new Q4 floorstanding speakers featuring KEF's unique Uni-Q technology for easier room placement.

SYSTEM PRICE **£999.95** SAVE **£149**
PRICE EXCLUDES CABLES & STANDS

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



SEPARATE HI-FI SYSTEMS

Roksan Kandy
KD1/III CD Player
KA1/III Amplifier

HI-FI SYSTEM
3

Monitor Audio
Silver S6 Speakers



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

The combination of Roksan's Kandy MK3 CD and amplifier is, according to What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision, "Something close to the ideal visual and sonic combination" (December 2003). We have partnered these with the Silver S6 floorstanding speakers from British

speaker specialists, Monitor Audio. The combination of Roksan's excellent rhythm and timing, with its tight bass and sweet detailed treble coupled with the 'S6's' ability to stay unruffled even when the music is at its most complex, makes this a remarkable system.

SYSTEM PRICE **£1889.95** **FREE SOUNDSTYLE RACK WORTH £300***
PRICE EXCLUDES CABLES & STANDS

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

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experience more

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chinese

The best kept secret in British hi-fi is that much of it is no longer made here, but in China. Over the past five years or so, a number of brands have quietly closed their manufacturing plants here, and started up some eight thousand miles east – and are continuing to do so. David Price takes up the story from the People's Republic...



Even to someone who has spent much of his adult life in Tokyo, I find Beijing (Peking) an amazing place to behold. The grandeur of some of its new buildings, public spaces, hotels and shopping centres has to be seen to be believed.

Driving around the city centre in the sweltering August heat, in a shabby locally built Citroen AX taxi (its air conditioning straining to temper the forty degree heat), I am struck by the amazing conjunction of the new and the old. The National Theatre is a magnificent looking steel and glass dome, designed by the architect responsible for France's Charles de Gaulle airport. Tiananmen Square has an epic, grand air. Now packed with tourists, the famous sombre picture of Mao Tse Tung gazes across (its background recently retouched with hints of pink to give him a warmer, more friendly look.) Nearby is The Forbidden City, which to this westerner looks nothing less than the eighth wonder of the world...

Beijing is a city very much on the ascendancy. There's a feeling of confidence, self-assuredness, hope for the future (which I last sensed in Japan in 1990, just months before their 'bubble economy' famously burst). You feel like you're inside a massive economic motor, driven ever

faster by the miracle of conspicuous consumption. For those not interested in paying a few RMB ('Renminbi', meaning 'people's currency') for fake Gucci bags in 'Silk Street', you can always go to one of the capital's stunning new shopping centres, eight floors of shining glass, steel and marble, to pay hundreds of US dollars for the real deal – and many do.

Bicycles are surprisingly rare these days in central Beijing; you're more likely to be run over by a locally built Audi A6, BMW 5-Series or Volkswagen Passat, complete with air con blazing and windows blacked out. The buses are a tad agricultural, but the new underground system makes the London one look like something from the Dark Ages. In the Chinese countryside, things may be simple, but many parts of Beijing are ultra-modern and state of the art – and none of this would have been possible without the country's remarkable economic liberalization.

While many Westerners (who've never been) associate China with authoritarian, martial government, the day-to-day reality of life in Beijing couldn't be more different - it's about working hard, playing hard and shopping hard. In fact, Beijing's a great place to be - the food's delicious (way better than any Chinese restaurants in Britain), the prices low (an official CD on the EMI China

whispers

and it's slowly increasing... you can feel this in Europe too, as AV has peaked and people are moving back to two-channel. Still, affordable locally made AV packages from brands such as CAV are extremely popular. What then of China's own audio brands? A visit to one of Beijing's largest hi-fi emporiums (and with no less than thirty medium sized

too expensive nowadays, and that's not just because of the strong Yen! Starting up here wasn't easy at all. The quality standard we were talking about was completely new for them! So, it was big cultural shock for them to discover what technical standards we had. We spent much time educating them and training them, and it's still a continuous process. From a personal point of view, I believe most Japanese people do have problems working with Chinese people because of the difference in culture and mentality. We've found that you can make very high quality products in China - even better than in the USA - provided you know exactly your own quality standard and are willing to educate the Chinese manufactures! Made in China shouldn't always mean low price and low quality! Of course, where Japanese companies have very unique and new technologies or concepts, it may make sense to produce in Japan. Saul B. Marantz didn't think transferring production to Japan was such a bad thing in the 1970s, because he saw that high reliability! What he insisted was that the products were designed in the USA, and that's really what we're doing now - designing in house and producing in China!"

label costs around £2, a bootleg less than half that) and the girls beautiful. Chinese people are feisty but friendly, socially very conservative yet very much in love with all that's new.

Right now, cars are where consumers are spending their money - and who can blame them when until a 2001 the best they could aspire to was a cynically made-over 1982 Volkswagen Santana? As for hi-fi, the market is surprisingly mature. Marantz's Ken Ishiwata, who has spent an awful lot of time here working on a joint venture project, is in a good position to comment.

"The mid 1990s was the boom period for real hi-fi - today, seventy five percent of the market is taken by cheap local products. On the other hand, there is a very good understanding of high quality two channel hi-fi... If you look into some of the distribution, you'll see how well informed they are. Go into hi-fi dealers like Super Wave in Beijing, and you'll see that they all have proper dem rooms. At present, AV package sales are still the biggest. Yamaha is doing very well in China, but I can't see rapid growth in either the AV or hi-fi markets at the moment. Audiophiles do exist, but as these people have already spent lots of money in the nineties hi-fi boom here, so the replacement market isn't too big. But like everywhere in the world, there's a very steady market

rooms packed with kit from all around the world, this was big!) reveals a dizzying number of names I'd never heard before (Debao, Houston, Audio Space, Elod, Duntoic, Original) and many I had (Shanling, Consonance, CAV). The interesting thing was that, unlike Japanese mass market products, which are generally quite conservative and homogenous looking, these Chinese brands offered a great variety of shapes, sizes and designs. Fascinatingly, tubes were incredibly popular - as Shanling proves, it's very much a case of 'valves in everything' here. The quality, generally, looked very good, too. Indeed, Ken Ishiwata confides, "You'd be surprised how many local made products are sold... all these brands are completely unknown in Europe and some are of very high quality indeed! Of course, the majority of them are copies of pre-existing foreign designs, but due to the low cost of components here the manufacturers can easily upgrade the original designs! This is why, very often, these copies actually perform very well."

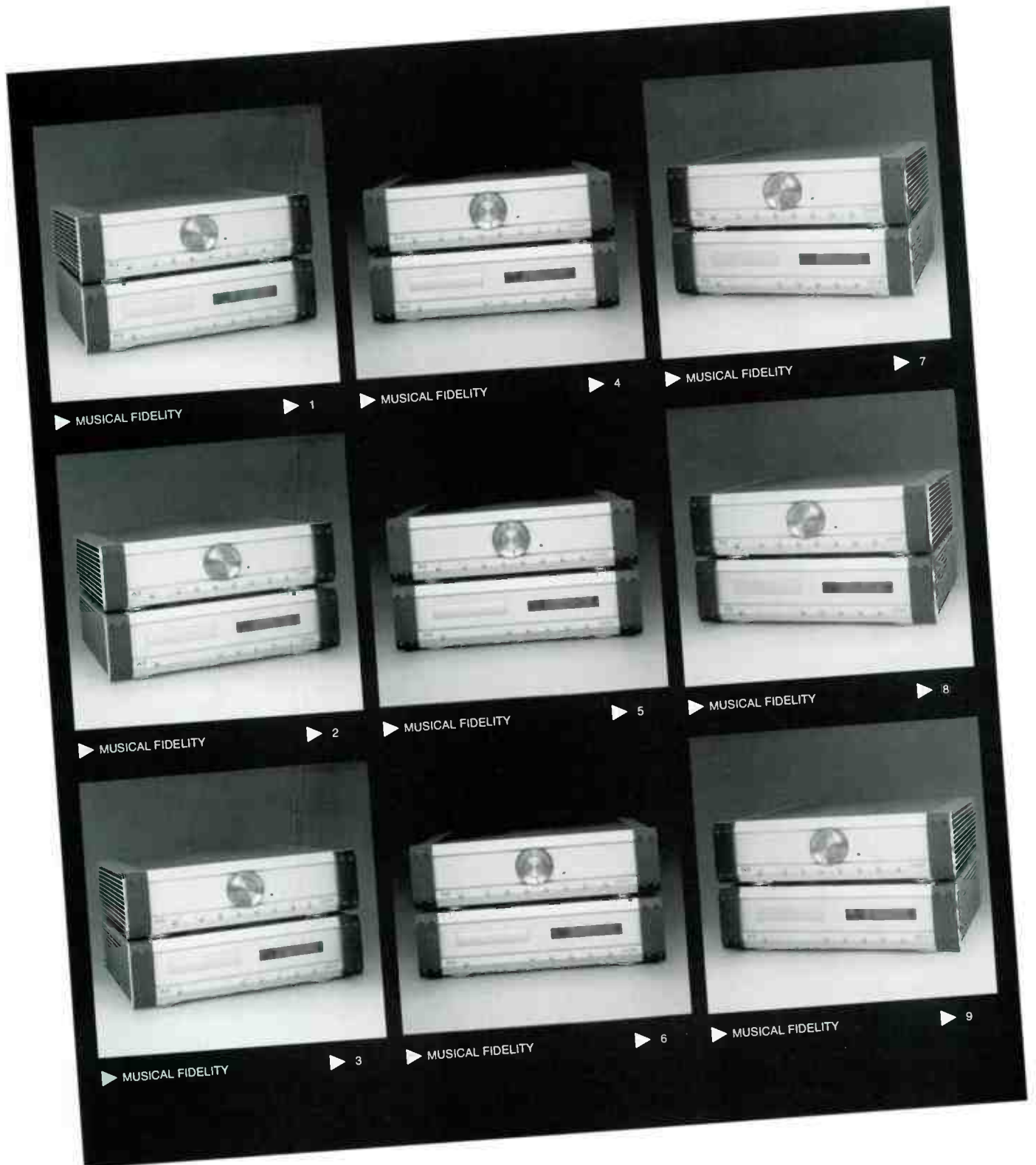
Does China really have the resources to produce such good quality products? Ken Ishiwata thinks so. "We produce our low and mid priced receivers and DVD players here, but engineering is done by the Japanese. The reason we're here is purely cost! Unfortunately Japan is

CHINA FACTFILE

One of the four oldest civilisations in the world, with a written history of 4,000 years. China is most famous for inventing the compass, paper-making, gunpowder and

printing, as well as grand architectural engineering projects such as The Great Wall and Grand Canal, built 2,000 years ago. Situated in eastern Asia, bounded by the Pacific in the east, the People's Republic of China (PRC) is geographically the third largest country in the world, (next to Canada and Russia) with an area of 9.5 million square kilometers, one-fiftieth of the world's land mass. Its population of 1.2591 billion (1999) is about 22% of the world's total. The PRC was founded in 1949, run by the Communist Party of China (CPC), and the President is Hu Jintao. Since the mid-1980s, China has followed a path of economic liberalization which has seen its economy grow at startling rates. GDP (in 1999) was \$980.6 billion US!





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SHOP TALK

DAVID PRICE TALKS TO CAMBRIDGE AUDIO'S JAMES JOHNSON FLINT ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCES OF MANUFACTURING HI-FI IN CHINA...

DP: When did you decide to manufacture in China?

JJF: The decision was made in the very early 1990s, making Cambridge Audio one of the first UK companies to assemble products there.

What were the reasons?

It enables us to make better products. We are able to re-invest money saved on assembly into research and development as well as project engineering in the UK.

Why did you choose the region, and the specific factory, you did?

Due to its close proximity to Hong Kong, which has great accessibility for our UK-based staff and is close to major ports. This offers fast shipping times to the EU and the States, our major markets. What's more, lots of our parts suppliers are located within driving distance. We chose the factory as it already had experience of working with Clarion and therefore was meeting the quality demands of a blue-chip company. The production equipment was already there, due to major contract with a major Western electronics firm.

What problems did you encounter when setting up?

We're always surprised by the immense customs issues that exist in China. For instance, you can't ship parts between supplier and factory without a customs contract. We are now fully aware of the customs issues and they are planned into our production schedule. In some cases it is easier to ship the unit to Hong Kong and back to our factory, than between supplier and factory! We also learnt very early on that we had to have our best people at the factory in order to ensure products met our very high expectations. If you haven't known the people for many years you just won't get the job done. Our UK R&D staff have incredibly close relationships with our project engineers in the factory. This intimate understanding overcomes any cultural differences. Good communication is the key.

Do you think there are any negative associations with the fact that AP products are manufactured in China?

The best Chinese factories are as good as, if not better, than any in Europe. Conversely, you get very poor manufacturing plants. However, with the right facility you can manufacture world-class products. Nearly every hi-fi manufacturer builds in China, or makes complete internal circuit boards in China, even if that product might be labeled 'made in the UK'.

Would there be anything the British government could do to entice you to manufacture in the UK?

Cost, quality and performance all counted against this. We'd prefer not to manufacture with a 6,000 mile gap between our R&D facility and assembly plant, but if we manufactured in the UK consumers would see a 50% rise in retail prices... There will always be a manufacturing base in the UK to handle specialist, low volume products, whereas China excels at high quality, high volume production.

top to bottom:
tube amplifiers are all the rage with Chinese audiophiles, and prices are very low (£300 for a decent integrated); Duntonic is one of the many names we've never heard in the West, but for how long?; Marantz is one of the most popular hi-fi brands in China; Focal has more presence in Beijing than in London...!



brand new, heavy



It's not just the cheap stuff that's made in China. CAV's A10 is a full on, high-end, hybrid amp with plenty to prove, and a price to match...

You may never have even heard of CAV, but just lifting the box is going to spark your interest. You see, at over 35kg, the A10 is not just heavy; it's technically a two-man lift. Once in place it's certainly an impressive looking beast, if not quite the last word in subtlety...

Most of the weight comes from the massive twin heatsinks, which, unlike some of the competition, are beautifully finished and look well up to the job of dispersing the heat caused by 200w per channel. Otherwise, the casing is reasonably well finished, but not without flaw. The silver top plate scratches easily and I'm not sure what Yamaha would have to say about the 'Natural Sound' legend used... The large LCD VU meter is rather fun and funky, but rather curiously, seemed to register 'max' for most of its tenure with me. Further investigation uncovered that it actually displays input level and not the RMS output as suggested by the scale!

Inside is a similar mixture of the seriously impressive with the rather more mundane or just plain bizarre. One can't help but notice the twin power transformers. As you'd expect, they run each channel individually, but the diecast capping is way beyond what I'd expect from an amp' of this price. The separate output boards are rather more conventional, but not without quirk. Quad 4700uf

capacitors and 6 transistors per channel are about what I'd expect for an amp' of this power. What came as more of a surprise, however, was the valve output devices. It's not totally unheard of, but a rare feature nevertheless!

The well screened preamp section also features vacuum tubes yet, like the power amp section, doesn't appear to use components from famous parts suppliers. A balanced XLR input is standard, as are three line-level, phono inputs. There's one line out, an MM phono input and, rather curiously, an MM phono output! The socketry appears to be of good quality but, like the rest of the componentry, is unbranded.

Rather unfortunately a Loudness control is fitted, but at least this is the only token towards low-fi. Much better is the remote control. It's a solid metal handset, with an expensive feel, and even its very own, fountain pen style, red leatherette case – very kitsch...

Importers, Unique Sound & Vision [see box], have decided to price the A10 at £3,495, thereby undercutting much of the competition. Given the serious respect afforded to brands such as Musical Fidelity, Naim and EAR, this seems like a wise move. The key rival to the A10 has to be Musical Fidelity's limited edition kW500 (£4,000). Like the CAV it features valves, but its 500w power output easily eclipses the A10.

Anyone spending this sort of cash is also likely to be swayed by Naim's stunning NAC282/NAP200 (£4,000) combo or EAR's beguiling 864/534 (£4156) pairing, so the CAV has a tough challenge.

SOUND QUALITY

Experience has taught me that an amplifier such as this will sound big, powerful but far from subtle. Processed pop can often sound dreadful on powerful, transistorised amplifiers. Yet given that the A10 also features valves, I was keen to see if these made any difference whilst listening to the highly processed 'Call U Sexy' by VS. Unsurprisingly, the soundstage was vast, with the music driven into the room in exactly in the manner you'd expect from such a powerful amp'. Yet, what came as more of a surprise, is that it wasn't the type of ear-splitting noise that would have you pinned to the seat and reaching for the volume control.

Rather, there were smooth, well-formed vocals, and a powerful bass response with just a touch of softness. It was certainly easy to hear the effect the valves were having and, by and large, I suspect that, they made for a far more engaging listen than if they hadn't been there. Although slightly soft in the bass, there's no doubting the CAV's excellent dynamic control. With Joss Stone's 'Super Duper Love', the nicely articulated vocals met backing percussion that had the sort of

control and immediacy usually associated with Naim. That said, there were details, such as the slightly softened cymbals, that ultimately meant the A10 couldn't quite match the levels of transparency of the rivalling NAC282/ NAP200. For musical presence, the CAV was hard to beat and an easy match for the kW500, despite its lower output level...

Franz Ferdinand's 'Matinee' proved rather more difficult for the A10 to master. Generally it gave a fine account of itself. There was foot tapping pace, and finely detailed percussion, well separated from the backing vocals. Yet as the song became more complex, there wasn't quite the focus, especially in the upper-mid range, of the Naim combo. Whilst generally being well controlled, and certainly on form regarding timing, the A10 couldn't quite match Salisbury's finest when it came to resolution.

Switching to Classical, and Rimsky-Korsakov's 'Sheherazade' appeared to suit the A10 well. The solo violin intro was exquisitely well resolved. Timbre was spot on - not too sweet, but not excessively grainy either. As with previous tracks, there was some muddle as the piece became more complex, but not massively to the listener's detriment. Instead of noticing this, one would be far more likely to be gripped by the A10's immense dynamic headroom.

There was an intensity and power to the music that was real edge-of-the-seat stuff, and the type of sound that only really powerful transistor amps can do. It's true that this did come at the expense of what you might call, "finesse", but the point here is that this particular recording is meant to be fiery and heady, and that's exactly how the CAV presented it. Once again, the levels of pace and drive reminded me of Naim, but even the NAP200 couldn't match the A10 for dynamic firepower. When the moment is right, this is one dramatic amp to listen to.

THE COMPANY

CAV Audio (Guangzhou) Co Ltd is a large company. Surprising, because few people in the hi-fi industry here have even heard of them. Nevertheless, they boast two factories with eight production lines to produce up to 800,000 units a month. Most of the products made are 'badge sourced', such as the typical super-market DVD player, but they also produce their own CAV branded equipment. Partnerships with Pioneer, JVC and French loudspeaker company Audax, along with 1,600 franchised stores across twenty countries, mean that small fry they ain't! Esoteric specialists, Unique Sound & Vision (of JVC AX-SD1GD fame) handle the UK importation and have ensured it's fully CE approved.

With a piece such as this, the A10 conveyed the music full of emotion, if not quite all the clarity of some.

Back to pop and the Crash Test Dummies 'mmm mmm' and the A10 wasn't quite so happy. As with the previous violin solo the, in this case guitar, solo was beautifully resolved in a delicate and textured manner. Yet, as before, some confusion set in as the track became more complex. This time, however, it was more noticeable as a hardening of sound rather than simply part of the drama. That said, the separation and resolution were still to a high standard, just not quite up there with the best. Staging was as vast as ever, and there was excellent vocal timbre. It did, however, come as something of a surprise to find a slight lack of height to the sound stage. Again, others would do this better.

If the Crash Test Dummies had been a slight disappointment, then Carol Kidd's 'Nice Work If You Can Get It' was anything but. This simple, well-recorded, lush piece suited the A10 down to the ground. The vocals had that same in the room presence that had been there with Joss Stone, but it was the



backing band that really impressed. All the instruments had superb definition, accurate timbre and convincing timing. The whole song just gelled, and there was a sense of snap and rhythm to proceedings that many rivals would struggle to match.

CONCLUSION

From the styling to the sound quality, the CAV A10 is just brimming with character. Whether this is a character you'd want to live with is a personal choice, but there's certainly plenty to recommend. The sense of rhythm and drive is easily up with the best in the class and, if you like Naim amps, you're sure to like this. Unfortunately, that particular company's sense of resolution isn't quite achieved by the A10. Then again, it counters this with dynamic might that you'd usually only encounter from more expensive designs. If you're after the ultimate in focus and separation, or would prefer to go for a steady Eddie, safe bet, design, then the A10 is not for you. Those seeking a little more thrills from their music, however, will find the CAV just the tonic.

VERDICT

Dynamic, fiery and yet still composed, the A10 doesn't offer the last word in focus, but is one heck of an involving listen. Superb value for money.

CAV A10 £3,495

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FOR

- pace, power, drive
- wacky VDU!
- superb value

AGAINST

- lacks ultimate focus
- music dependant
- unknown in the UK

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

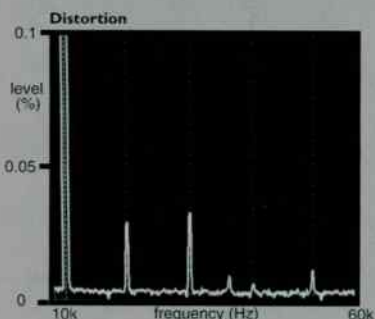
The massive CAV A10 produces a little less power than expected, considering its size. However, at 200V/ into 8ohms and 324W into 4ohms it still manages well enough, having plenty enough output for most rooms. In fact it's the loudspeaker that is most threatened by the sort of power this amplifier and the Musical Fidelity kW500 produce.

Unlike the Musical Fidelity though, the CAV200 produces measurable distortion as output increases. Measuring 0.4% near full output, this would be alarming except for the fact that it is second harmonic only, even at 10kHz. I suspect CAV have deliberately done this to make the A10 sound like - or at least similar to - a valve amp. It's a very unusual property in solid-state amplifiers, which usually possess extended distortion harmonics unpalatable to the human ear.

In all other respects the A-10 measured normally, with good

bandwidth, very high sensitivity and low noise. NK

Table with 2 columns: Measurement parameter and Value. Includes Power (200watts), CD/tuner/aux., Frequency response (5Hz-44kHz), Separation (118dB), Noise (-95dB), Distortion (0.04%), Sensitivity (140mV), and d.c. offset (-16/6mV).



class a-ct



Musical Fidelity's brand new X-PRE v3 preamp and X-P200 power amplifier sport the legend 'Built in Taiwan' on the back panel. Could this be the reason behind this hot combo's exceptional quality? David Price finds it offers a blend of performance and value that this British brand is famous for.

I'll be frank. I think Musical Fidelity's new X-series components are the brand's best ever - in terms of value, styling, finish, build quality and - vitally - sound. This is evidence, as if we needed it, that foreign manufacture has not hurt the company; indeed it may have done the exact opposite. But the design is quintessentially British - and very Musical Fidelity.

The marque has never done 'me too' products. Look back to the A1 integrated amplifier, and you'll find a radically different product to its 1980s contemporaries. In many ways, it raised the game in terms of sonics and styling upon its introduction, making rivals such as Arcam's (then ageing) A60 and Audiolab's 'sensible shoes' 8000a seem positively pedestrian. This theme has continued ever since. I can't say I've loved every generation of MF kit; sometimes Mr Michaelson hasn't quite got the size, styling or sonics right. But this latest era is - by and large - quite formidable.

The X-series is, not to put too fine a point on it, pitched straight at Cyrus. This brand was head and

shoulders in front of its rivals in the mid nineties, when the new generation of '3 series' separates was launched. These were small, cute, beautifully built and possessed of a warm and couthly musical sound. So good were they that they rather carved a niche for 'alternative audiophile' products - half-width boxes that look great and sound no less good. The X-series from MF takes this particular baton and runs with it, and the X-PRE v3 and X-P200 are its greatest exponents.

The new preamplifier has a similar circuit to the original Musical Fidelity Nu-Vista preamp but implemented with solid state. The company claims it has extraordinary overload margins, low distortion, low noise and a wide bandwidth. Listening bears this out, while one look at this compact (218x98x339mm, 5.8kg) box proves how well finished it is. The black painted alloy casing has more fins than the Mika Hakkinen fan club, while the silver brushed metal fascia is a model of ergonomic (and aesthetic) excellence. There's a power on/off button, two source

selection buttons (for four sources) and a large volume control with a deliciously silky action (duplicated on the plasticky remote control). Round the back, there's three line level inputs, one MM phono input, a tape out and pre out - plus the usual IEC mains in. So well finished and sleekly designed, even in isolation the X-PRE v3 is a lovely thing to behold.

The X-P200 is touted as 'a high performance power amp in a modest package'. MF claims 2x 120W RMS [see MEASURED PERFORMANCE], and this doubles when bridged to become, allegedly, a 250W RMS monobloc. When bridged, each X-P200 is said to consume up to 600 Watts of AC mains - on account of its claimed 75A peak-to-peak current delivery. No delicate flower, then... It's a simple enough thing to use - there's a power on button, and, interestingly, a choice of A or B inputs. So effectively you can power the X-P200 via the matching preamp into the A inputs and pipe your CD player's variable line out into the B - thus giving greater input flexibility and the potential for better sound. Round the back, the rear panel has



hitting combo. Driving Yamaha NS1000Ms, the MF threesome provided vast, gut-churning tracts of bass - somewhat reminiscent of the long, lost and loved XA-200s of some five years back. They can really grip those big bass units and pummel large amounts of power into them, which the Yams faithfully translate into seismic movements of tsunami proportions. Glasses

shake, door frames rattle, and you get the feeling someone's hit you in the chest with a baseball bat.

The joy of the X-P200s, especially when bridged, is the way they mix sheer motive force with real finesse. Cue up a DG recording of Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony (Karajan) and there's a real sense of air and space to the recording. Rather in the way a Sugden A21a cuts through the mush like a knife through butter, so the X-PRE v3/X-P200 scythes into the inky black of the recorded acoustic, taking you right to the back of the hall. Yet when the music pulls to a crescendo, there's power and punch that a row of A21as couldn't muster. Real wallop, delivered with a velvet glove. Switch to the Quads and again and you can hear how fast the MF combo is - blistering attack transients, allied to a remarkably 'un-overhung' bass shows they don't hang around.

Is this the ultimate pre-power? No, of course not. There's a slight flattening of stereo perspective - mostly coming from the preamp - in absolute terms. Switch to MF Audio's Passive Preamplifier and you can hear it adding a gentle ray of light to upper midband, subtle solid-state clanginess and a thinning of the thick, fat texture of much analogue recorded music. But, bearing in mind that the MF Audio costs twice as much as the Musical Fidelity, this is no bad show. Then factor in the flexibility of the preamp, its arresting styling and remote control, and the X-PRE v3 appears to do rather

corresponding RCA phono inputs for A and B, plus a pair of line level phono outputs for bi-amping. There's a pair of loudspeaker binding posts per side; bridged mode operation is simply a matter of hooking one loudspeaker lead to the Right minus terminal, and the other to the Left plus, on both X-P200s, of course. Vital statistics are as per X-PRE v3, except its 6.1kg weight. The X-P200 looks and feels a class act.

SOUND QUALITY

This combo is hot - literally. Run the pre-power together for more than a few minutes, and you get the overriding impression that the X-P200 is heavily Class A-biased thanks to the vast amounts of heat it pushes out. It's not quite Musical Fidelity A1 hot (if this amp was a motorcycle exhaust, it would have to have a heatshield fitted to prevent skin burns), but not so far off. With a pair of bridged '200s, one sitting atop the other, any half-decent central heating system becomes redundant. And indeed, it sounds quite heavily Class A biased too...

First impressions, via a pair of Quad ESL989s, are of a very clean transistor amplifier. That's clean as in 'devoid of dirt'; there's very little mull, scunge and general gunk that afflicts oh-so-many transistor designs. It's open, it's transparent. It lets timbre and texture emerge from the loudspeakers in all its glory. It's not romantic though - don't go thinking this is some sepia-tinged retro special; everything is there in its full glory. Pink Floyd's 'Dark Side of the Moon' on LP showed this; you got a great feel for the body of the guitars, the grain of the vocals, the squelch of those primitive first generation synthesisers.

Switch to modern techno, and LFO's 'LFO' shows another side to the combo - visceral punch. There's no shortage of current driving aability to one single, lonesome X-P200, but bridge them and this is big

NEEDLE TALK

Shock horror - modern preamp comes complete with a moving magnet phono cartridge preamplifier! And the good news is, it's a sweetie, too. No, it's not up to Naim's StageLine, nor does it better Trichord's Dino, but when you consider these cost up to half the price the whole preamp, it's a very worthy addition. It's clean, tight, musical and easily up to exploiting the best from our fave affordable MM, the Goldring 1042.

a lot for only half as much as one of the best preamps around.

In isolation, the X-P200 is even more capable - at its price point - than the X-PRE v3. If you want a strong, gutsy source of clean transistor power with real depth, dimensionality and dynamics, I can think of few better. It's an extremely neutral performer - bass is taut yet strong, midband transparent and spacious, treble sweet but detailed. There's absolutely nothing to complain about - and then when they're bridged, they really start to romp away from the competition. The beauty of the bridging option, of course, is that you can buy one, and then save up for the other. My only note is that with very revealing loudspeakers, this combo requires deep, dark and dimensional interconnects - I found Clearer Audio's Silver-Line Optimus interconnect (£320/m) a brilliantly synergistic mix. After you've bought that second X-P200, this is one to point your piggy bank at.

VERDICT

Excellent sonics, superlative styling, top notch build and a canny upgrade path all come together to make this great pre-power combination a star.

MF X-PRE V3	£799
MF X-P200	£899
Musical Fidelity	
☎ +44 (0)20 8900 2866.	
www.musicalfidelity.co.uk	

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Each stereo power amp delivers 100W per channel into 8ohms and 170W into 4ohms, a lot for their relatively small size and reasonable weight. Pressing a front panel button switches to bridge mode, where the two channels act in 'push-pull' as it were, to deliver no less than 242W into 8ohms. So the XV200 power amplifier has plenty of punch, in spite of its compact dimensions.

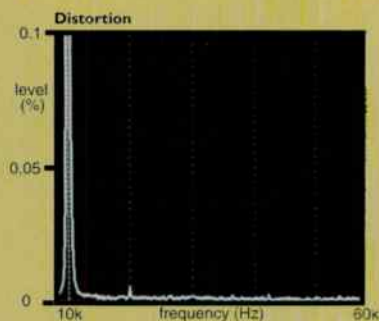
In conjunction with the preamp, frequency response has been tailored to suit modern sources, bandwidth stretching to 76kHz (-1dB) via the normal inputs. With high sensitivity of 190mV, low noise and good channel separation the Musical Fidelity combo will accept all sources, old and new.

Distortion levels were minimal across the audio band, from low to full power output, as usual with Musical Fidelity amplifiers. The worst case figure was 0.01% at 10kHz, near to full output, a grueling test. There will be little audible coarseness from these amps.

The preamp's phono stage was accurately equalised and reaches down to 10Hz within 1dB limits. There's no warp filter, so warped discs will cause cone flap, but conversely LP will have extended bass.

This is a neatly configured system that measures well, offering high power from a compact package. NK

Power	105watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	5Hz-76kHz
Separation	91dB
Noise	-96dB
Distortion	0.006%
Sensitivity	190mV
dc offset	1/22mV
Disc	
Frequency response	10Hz-40kHz
Separation	81dB
Noise	-73dB
Distortion	0.008%
Sensitivity	1.7mV
Overload	85mV



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chinese way



China's audio industry sells to two distinct markets; low cost, high volume consumer electronics and specialist, sometimes quirky, hi-fi that the Japanese – and much of the rest of the world – has overlooked. Consonance is one brand which falls very much into the latter camp; it's a tube amplifier specialist, making a whole range of valve aspirated designs with crisp, modern styling. Stewart Wennen tries the M400S monobloc power amplifiers...

Warp back five years ago, and the number of commercially available valve amplifiers could be counted on the fingers of one hand. There were – and are – a goodly amount of kits, but manufacturing tube amplification, especially affordable stuff, simply wasn't bothered with because it was thought 'uneconomic'.

Unlike Japan, which competes with ultra high technology, robots and the like, Chinese manufacturing is deliberately labour intensive, less automated and more manual – as wages are so low. This predisposes it perfectly to tube amp making, as they demand hand soldering of passive components and intricate wire routing – more of an art than a craft. As such, Consonance is well placed to provide this kind of product, and the tube-obsessed Far Eastern specialist hi-fi scene has been a ready market.

The company is one of China's most visible valve brands. Well distributed (in its native land) and easy to dem at dealers, it's very much a known quantity. Better still, the products themselves are attractively styled and well finished. As for the circuit designs, well we all know that every conceivable tube amplifier topology had been refined to perfection (within the constraints of the component quality) by the time Winston Churchill crossed the floor of the House of Commons. Valve circuits aren't exactly rocket science – the secret of a successful product lies in the execution...

On the outside at least, the M400S are indeed elegantly built and finished. The advantage of their monobloc construction is that the amplifiers are constructed on entirely separate chassis, which obviates power supply clipping which enables the amplifiers to operate with much better stereo separation. It's a sparse, clean looking bit of kit – no

controls are to be found on the wooden front panels, instead all are sited on the rear of the amplifier. There's a power toggle switch, plus one negative and two taps from the output transformer for 4 ohm and 8 ohm loudspeakers respectively. The output terminals are of good quality. There is also a signal input via a gold plated phono socket. Mains power is delivered through the usual IEC socket. User adjustable bias is achieved by plugging the DVM into the top mounted sockets and reading the value, which should be 0.4 volts. On the test units this figure needed slight adjustment – after all China is on the other side of our planet! Sited in the front panel is a single blue power LED.

Inside, it seems that component choice has been achieved to strict budgetary requirements, as the major components are from the bulk catalogues of the major Chinese supply houses. Unfortunately, the output transformers are toroids,

...announcing the

Linn Multichannel AV Experience 2004!

Here's your chance to attend one of the greatest hi-fi events of the year! Linn Products, in association with *Hi-Fi World* magazine, proudly present the Linn Multichannel AV Experience 2004 at the Proud Galleries, 10 Greenland Street, Camden, London, N1 (the venue is just around the corner from Camden Town tube station).

Following on from the hugely successful Linn/*Hi-Fi World* LP12 vs. CD12 event of 2001, we're delighted to bring you a second special event, providing a spectacular multichannel music experience!

This will be a unique opportunity to hear one of the very best multichannel hi-fi systems ever made, in the comfortable surroundings of Proud Galleries. The set-up comprises the Linn Unidisk 1.1, Linn Kisto System Control and Linn Artikulat Multi-Channel Loudspeaker System - the very first UK public preview of the latter.

It will be your chance to hear what an ultra high end, state-of-the-art multichannel music system can really do with DVD-Audio, SACD and Compact Disc sources. You'll be able to compare and contrast the system's two-channel performance with its surround sound capability, and decide for yourself how much multichannel 'brings to the party'!

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The last Linn/*Hi-Fi World* event was a tremendous success - lots of fun was had by all as Linn staff including Ivor Tiefenbrun and Brian Morris, and the *Hi-Fi World* team including Noel Keywood and David Price, chatted informally with the 500 invited guests on matters analogue, digital, stereo, multichannel and more - over drinks and sandwiches. This time round, we hope to repeat the successful formula, and to take a closer look at multichannel too...

If you'd like to attend this unique event, all you have to do is send your name, address, telephone number and/or email address on a postcard (or email: linnevent@hi-fiworld.co.uk) to: Linn Event, *Hi-Fi World* magazine, Unit G4, Argo House, Kilburn Park Rd., London NW6 5LF. Due to the limited space, we can't guarantee you a place - tickets will be issued on a first come, first served basis, so we advise you to get writing now!

DATE: SATURDAY OCTOBER 16, 10am to 4pm
PLACE: PROUD GALLERIES 10 Greenland Street, Camden, London N1





The M400s proved as smooth and warm as you'd expect from a tube amplifier, giving a far from unpleasant sound

another costing exercise by the manufacturer. This is the most important part of valve amp design, as the quality of the output transformers dictates the sound directly. "E+I" transformer core types are much more difficult to build but can offer substantial gains in quality. The tube line up is two EL34s, plus one 6922 and one 12AU7.

This amplifier is of push pull Class AB with little global feedback, and the supplier's specification claims 40W RMS per monobloc [see MEASURED PERFORMANCE]. I burned these amplifiers in for a period of fourteen days, and a very good central heating system they made. There was little subjective difference from the time I switched them on until the listening test started, although I noticed a difference when I exchanged the standard IEC power chords with a pair of 22 amp Auduasa power leads.

SOUND QUALITY

I started with The Velvelettes 'Really Saying Something', a record which played on fine equipment has all the attributes required by a hi-fi enthusiast – height, width, depth and most of all space between the musicians.



– but I can't say I was over-impressed with their ability to recreate the song's recorded acoustic in its entirety. Rather, it sounded a tad two dimensional, and lacking in insight – bearing in mind the considerable price of a pair of these babies – compared to my reference Crown solid-staters. James Brown was next on the turntable, and Bootsie Collins' bass did not come over with as much impact as I am used to.

A John Williams' disc I have is a good test, as it's recorded in mono, and should give the correct spatial positioning of the strings. Here, these seemed correct, but the performance lacked detail. Beethoven's Piano Symphony No.3 is one of his finest works, and the Consonance amps gave a pleasurable rendition, but at high volumes sounded uneasy - presumably due to the output transformers. Still, the music had pace alright, and was satisfyingly smooth and engaging at moderate levels.

Frank Zappa's 'One Size Fits All' again showed the M400s to be competent, if a tad lacklustre, performers. The music was pleasant to listen to, with no obvious ill effects aside from a slight diminution of scale and depth. These amplifiers aren't particularly adept at rock music, sounding indistinct with little drive in the bass and a rather perfunctory treble. They're better of with simple acoustic music, where they make a nice, beguiling noise. Radio Four showed the announcers' voices to be a tad more

'chesty' than usual, confirming my concerns about the M400's neutrality. Later that evening I listened for a couple of hours to Smooth FM to some progressive jazz which I enjoyed thoroughly - this is where these amps excel.

CONCLUSION

Consonance's M400s monoblocs are pleasingly styled, well screwed together power amplifiers all right – they look very good and are subtle enough to sit behind a pair of floorstanding loudspeakers as they have very small footprints. The sound quality is pleasing with middle of the road music at moderate volumes, but they're really not powerful enough to drive even quite sensitive loudspeakers to high levels, especially with rock music. They're vague in the midband, and offer middling bass grip, which means that with classical music the recorded acoustic can sound vague. I'm not sure they offer particularly great value, unless you really like their styling or have very efficient horn loudspeakers and/or gentle music tastes. Worth auditioning certainly, but you'll have to make sure they're right for you.

VERDICT

Soft, beguiling sound and neat styling will please some, but more clarity and grip is needed for universal appeal.

CONSONANCE M400S MONOBLOC £1,295
 Alium Audio
 +44 (0)1273 325901
 www.aliumaudio.com

REFERENCE SYSTEM

Notttingham Analogue Space Deck/ Hadcock GH24/
 Music Maker mk III turntable
 Graham Ston Jazz Club phono stage
 custom built passive preamplifier
 Crown DC300A power amplifiers
 ATC SCM39 loudspeakers
 independent mains supply

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Using two EL34s in push-pull, with fixed bias, the Consonance aims to get as much power as possible from a simple and inexpensive arrangement - and achieves it by delivering no less than 28W into 8ohms before clipping in Ultra Linear mode, but there is a price to be paid. Distortion levels were very high, no less than 0.5%, even at 1W output - not a good sign. Valve amps should can and should be linear at low levels, but the Consonance was not in Ultra Linear or Triode mode; there was little difference between them. Except output power, which dropped to 12W.

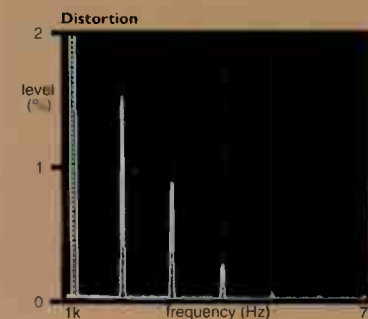
Whilst the output transformer matched into 8ohms, the 4ohm tap was very poorly configured, output dropping dramatically into a 4ohm load. The 4ohm tap was happier feeding 8ohms I found; this amplifier isn't happy with low loading, making it unsuitable for modern 6ohm loudspeakers that dip to 4ohms.

Noise was low, but so was gain, input sensitivity measuring 0.7V. Bandwidth was good though, at 7Hz-54kHz with no h.f. peaking.

The distortion pattern remained steady at all output levels and frequencies, not modulating as it does with high feedback transistor amps.

The Consonance does not measure well. Even fixed-bias, push-pull with EL34s can be better than this. NK

Power	28watts
Frequency response	7Hz-58kHz
Noise	-104dB
Distortion	0.55%
Sensitivity	700mV



sound affects

In the wilfully complicated world of digital surround sound, it's fascinating to discover something completely different - Dynavector's Adp-3 Super Stereo Adapter. Channa Vithana listens in...

Although essentially just a box with analogue signal processing and a low power stereo amplifier to drive two 'rear' loudspeakers, the Adp-3 is a pretty clever product, on several levels:

First, the name cunningly avoids the words 'surround' and 'processor'. Rightly so, as it works in a different way, using the analogue domain exclusively for augmenting two-channel stereo. Second it has flexibility in connection, making it easy to hook up to any integrated amplifier-based hi-fi. Then with its various inputs and outputs you can bypass its internal power amplifier, and substitute one of your own choice if you wish. Thirdly, the Adp-3 is solidly built and at only 70x282x430mm will be a visually discrete addition to any hi-fi system. I love the fascia's dark-copper finish and the solid control buttons that lend it a tasteful understated quality, which is refreshing compared to the usual sea of black and silver that adorns most hi-fi products.

The Adp-3 uses frequency time delay generators to provide signal to a single pair of rear loudspeakers. Super Stereo theory is based on the phenomenon of time delay in enclosed spaces, such as auditoriums and listening rooms, not being constant - unlike digital delay which has a constant delay throughout the entire frequency range.

Dynavector says, "the interaction of the sound between the front and rear speakers produces significant group delays in the listening room. While the group delays are not identical to those in the original listening or recording environment

(theoretically not possible), the feeling of lifelike reality is greatly improved by the use of Super Stereo for the playback of CDs, cassettes and LPs... another good thing about the Adp-3 is that due to its analogue design it is not room dependant and therefore negates the often confusing and lengthy digital room correction procedures used by surround processors."

SOUNDING OFF

The Adp-3 comes supplied with adequate amounts of speaker cable, a detachable IEC power chord allowing for upgrades, and an internal 24w amplifier with loudspeaker binding posts (instead of the spring clips and 15W amp on the lower cost Adp-2). There's also a very good set of instructions - being a model of succinct clarity with good annotated drawings and set-up guide.

It works by linking with your existing stereo amplification and then outputting to a pair of sub speakers. Dynavector states that even a modest hi-fi can be used. Consequently I chose to review the Adp-3 in its simplest form, which should give the widest indication of its abilities in standard stereo hi-fi systems. A relatively low cost Rotel RA1060 amplifier (£600) with switchable A+B speaker outputs was used for ease of speaker connection, and switching 'before and after' comparisons. A Densen Beat-400XS CD player was used,

with Dynaudio Audience 52s (4 Ohm) front loudspeakers and Revolver R33s (8 Ohm) as subs.

I used Kimber 4tc speaker cable from speaker output A of the Rotel to the Dynaudio front speakers and 4tc from speaker output B of the Rotel into the rear of the Adp-3. Then Kimber 8tc from the Adp-3 to the Revolver subs. The front Dynaudio speakers were placed as normal (2.4m apart) with the Revolver subs facing forward towards them just ahead of my seating position. The subs were placed a little higher and a little more spaced out (3.4m) than the fronts. However Dynavector maintains that the Adp-3 is not fussy in placement and that small sub speakers can also be wall-mounted or placed on bookshelves. Further experimentation by angling up, down and sideways in relation to the main speakers is also mentioned, but I preferred the Revolver subs firing in a straight line with a distance of 2m from the front Dynaudios. At the rear of the Adp-3 for this connection I set the speaker toggle switch to high and the input toggle to speaker.





Once the speakers are connected, you can switch on. On the front at the left is an on/off switch with a green LED above to indicate operation. Unlike the cheaper Adp-2's blank visage, there are 3 controls on the Adp-3 front panel. I set the volume knob on the right to lowest and the mode-switch on the left to 2. In the middle is a small polarity switch to reverse the polarity of subs against the front speakers and a red LED for overload. The mode switch has three options, each tailored to an acoustic: mode 1 for rock and jazz for smaller intimate spaces, mode 2 for classical for larger rooms and mode 3 for church music for large halls.

SOUND QUALITY

I started the music at a slightly lower than normal volume from the Rotel, subsequently increasing the Adp-3 volume to determine the amount of influence from the Super Stereo. I preferred mode 1 and polarity off for the listening sessions with Adp-3 volume at the 1 o'clock position - however, different CDs required re-adjusting the Adp-3 volume...

I started with modern classical composer Jocelyn Pook's atmospheric 'Flood' album and used track 2, 'Migrations' with its eastern flavoured strings and huge drum track, which provides a dynamic reference. Played through straight into the front Dynaudios revealed nimble timing and fulsome bass. I then switched to the Adp-3 and it was instantly disconcerting! Gone was the apparent nimbleness and attack of the straight stereo, which left me initially disappointed.

However, listening further with the Adp-3 switched on revealed a much finer separation of instruments and it was an absolute peach with vocals and strings. The vocals were less monochromatic, revelling in a larger sonic hue. Switching back to standard stereo actually was more of a shock than switching to Adp-3 in the first place. The scale was dramatically reduced, the vocals were coarse and the whole musical structure was ironically diffuse and less interesting. Back to Adp-3 and the nimble timing was there all along, it was my perception of a different acoustic that influenced my first

reactions. I now realised that I had acclimatised to the Adp-3!

Next I tried the Nigel Kennedy and the Kroke Band CD, with superb results from the first track 'Ajde Jano' sung by Natacha Atlas. This is a very upbeat track combining the traditional Polish folk arrangements of the Kroke Band with Nigel's mercurial violin playing and the pan-cultural Natacha's beautiful vocals. The Adp-3 showed its superiority over standard stereo immediately by getting a real grip on this track, taking every element and creating a superb ambience to the music's ebb and flow.

Dynavector says that the Adp-3 can improve poor or historic recordings, so on to two murky but dynamic recordings with Tracy Chapman's 'Let It Rain' and Ry Cooder and Manuel Galban's 'Mambo Sinuendo'. Playing the ironically titled 'Happy' by Chapman through standard stereo showcased a very forlorn and shut in vocal. It had some odd shifting effects in the music's structure, where drums and guitar were present but appeared separated as if in different planes when they should be gelling as a whole. The Adp-3 made improved sense of Chapman's vocal, once again revealing increased musical colour over standard, while the music itself gained a fluid and expansive quality previously missing. Her voice no longer sounded like she had a cold but still retained the plaintive theme of the song. The same transformation occurred with the Cooder/ Galban disc that usually sounds plain odd, where instruments are being projected far back - instead now becoming far more dynamic, with better overall resolution and instrumental texture - just plain damn enjoyable!

CONCLUSION

The Dynavector Adp-3 is not the same as just adding two extra speakers or even a digital 'surround sound'

processor. It enhances stereo - ironically making more sense than just using straight two-speaker stereo by providing higher resolution, deeper bass and really natural separation of instruments to give them real breathing space. Therefore music is not shut in, compressed or unsatisfying, especially with the reproduction of strings, lead guitar/violin and female vocal which I usually find disappointing. It is an ideal evolution for those who don't want five or seven speakers plus subwoofers, while also remaining unconvinced by the efficacy of 'surround sound'. In this context, with small sub-speakers, it provides a cost-effective upgrade to a modest hi-fi system in place of purchasing extra speakers and amplifiers and a processor. Superb.

GRIPES!

I have two minor criticisms. One, I would like to see that nice dark-copper coloured front plate as a continuous piece across the top of the casing which would improve its aesthetic. Two, full remote control for the functions, because different CDs required varying amounts of Super Stereo to sound at their best requiring some changing of settings.

MADE IN JAPAN?

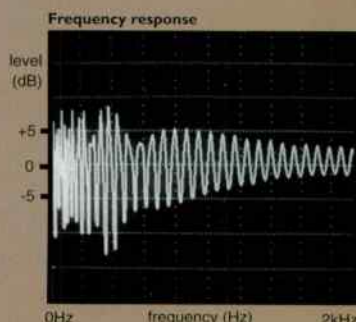
Don't get confused: Dynavector Japan manufactures Super Stereo products, along with its famous and fine range of phono cartridges and tonearms - but it is separate to Dynavector amplifiers, which are designed and manufactured in Australia and New Zealand.

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The Dynavector is a stereo amplifier, preceded by a lot of signal processing. Dynavector say little about what this unit is attempting to achieve, only that it is patented. Frequency response measurement showed a regular set of troughs and peaks, as our noise analysis shows. This is very similar to the comb filtering you get from rear wall reflections, being caused by summing direct and reflected sound. Time delay introduces phase differences that sum and cancel, giving a result similar to that generated by this processing unit. The effect occurs at low frequencies, as it did on this unit. As the unit drives a pair of small loudspeakers facing the front ones it looks like the Dynavector attempts to overcome local room reflections with artificially generated ones that give a sense of a different acoustic. It may well be that the cues inject a sense of spaciousness without the sort of

artificial echo we hear from Hall mode in surround-sound processors, for example. I suspect the Dynavector will work in larger, well damped rooms better than sparsely furnished small ones. NK

Power	32watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	8Hz-35kHz
Distortion	0.01%



VERDICT ●●●●£

This esoteric and unusual product won't suit all, but is ideal for those wishing to give their two channel stereo systems real fillip.

DYNAVECTOR SUPER STEREO ADAPTER DV SS ADP-3 £1,495
 Dynavector Super Stereo
 ☎ +44 (1202) 767873
 www.web.onetel.com/~dynavector/

FOR

- Tangible Stereo Sound.
- Flexibility Allows Upgrades.
- Discrete, Build, Finish.

AGAINST

- No remote

azur bet?



Thirty years ago, Cambridge Audio was designing and building innovative 'mid price' products in England. These days, it's part of the Audio Partnership empire and manufactures in China. This is one of the secrets of its success, and the new Azur 640T tuner promises to repeat the formula. But this 'golden blend' of British design and Far Eastern manufacture isn't a new idea, as its 1970s progenitor - NAD's seminal 4020 tuner – shows...

If anything, the Cambridge Azur 640T is just a little late. When the coverage of Digital Audio Broadcasting was around 60-70%, a year or so ago, a combined DAB/FM tuner made sense. These days, coverage is widespread and most counties even have their local stations transmitted digitally. Yet, a tuner such as this could still make sense for the connoisseur. Even though Radio 3 generally transmits at 192 kbps, it's still not a patch on analogue FM. Hence with a dual format tuner, FM is there for best, with DAB providing background music and a wider range of stations such as BBC 6 and 7.

The Azur's casework looks predictable enough (some folk 'in the know' could even tell you which Chinese factory it was made in, just by looking at it – Ed.), but is none the worse for it. Likewise, the ubiquitous remote makes another appearance, and still proves a joy. Things become less predictable, however, when you lift the lid. Rather than consisting of two separate tuners, the Cambridge actually processes the analogue signal in the digital domain.

Rather than altering the sonic balance per se, processing and sorting IF demodulation digitally is designed to boost weaker signals. A

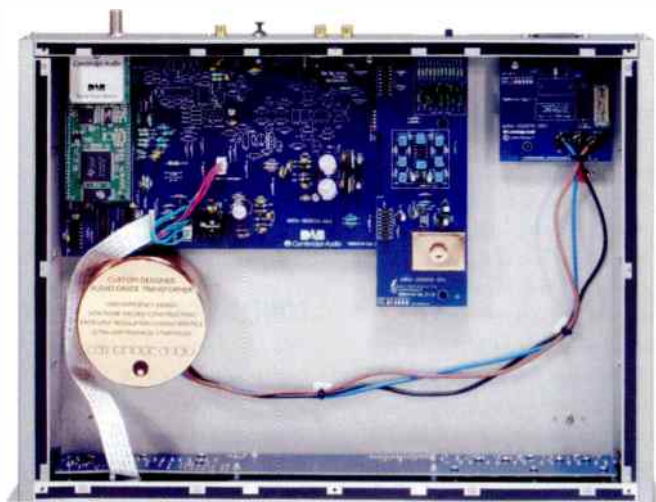
Texas Instruments chip handles the DAB signal, with a Wolfson WM8716 24/196 DAC handling the transfer back to analogue. Cambridge's NCT (Natural Contour Technology) is a user adjustable filter that allows the sound to be sharpened or softened. It sounds rather gimmicky, but has worked well on previous Cambridge tuners. Finally, all this is powered by a small transformer power supply. Nothing wrong with that, you might think, except that this one is covered by a large, circular, copper shield, to make it look like a toroidal. Very sneaky!

Rivals are few and far between, but the key opposition has to come from Sony, with their new ST-

SDB900, combined DAB/FM unit. At £200, it matches the 640T's price exactly. Pure's DRX-702ES is a nice bit of kit, but at £330, a bit off the pace here. If you're quite happy with FM, then you might still be able to snap up a Cambridge T500. At £180, it offered the sort of staging and transparency usually associated with tuners costing twice the price.

SOUND QUALITY

Any tuner offering both DAB and FM is going to face the inevitable comparison between formats. Thus, Radio Times in hand, I switched on to a Radio 3 lunchtime Proms concert. Cutting straight to the chase, FM gave categorically the better sound.



NAD 4020

The Cambridge Azur 640T is far from being the first tuner of UK design and far eastern manufacture. It's actually a practice that many companies, including Cambridge, have followed for some time now. Perhaps the first tuner to follow this approach was NAD's 4020. Now twenty five years old, the 4020 was designed to offer a true audiophile performance at a bargain basement price. As with the matching, and hugely successful, NAD 3020, the design was carried out in the UK, and the manufacturing in Taiwan.

Unlike the Azur, however, the 4020 looked dated the day it was released. At a time when most rivals boasted digital displays, it stuck by a large 'slide rule' tuning scale, that dominated the front panel. Elsewhere there was a tuning dial, mono and muting switches, band selection and that, along with the power button, was your lot. Yet despite, or more likely because, of its simplicity the 4020 actually remains quite a tactile tuner to use. The flywheel-loaded dial allows for both rapid frequency sweeps, and accurate fine-tuning. The 'traffic light' tuning system is a joy to use, and it does make you wonder why we ever needed the synthesiser chip in the first place...

Although Long Wave was never available, the Medium Wave reception is very good. The sound is presentable enough, with a refreshing absence of the usual whistles and hums. AM, however, can never hope to get even close to matching FM, and the 4020 is no different. Contemporary hi-fi magazines usually praised the NAD for its open sound stage, decent imaging, good bass and fair depth of sound. Less good was the slightly hissy background noise, which generally measured as only just being satisfactory. Likewise, the sensitivity only ever measured as "sufficient".

Nonetheless, even with less than glowing measurements, the NAD's beautifully beguiling nature meant that it managed to get itself raved about by both reviewers and dealers alike. Much is the same today. Listening to a 4020 reveals a soundstage on the warmer side of neutral, but with surprising focus and transparency. After listening to a more modern, synthesised digital, tuner, you'll find it's like sitting in front of a huge real fire against a compact gas one; perhaps not as efficient, and a little crackly, but with a great deal more warmth and character! Even put against the super new Azur 640T, on FM it amazes.

There was less background noise with DAB, but every other measure went FM's way. With DAB the strings sounded more mechanical and less open. Neither was the projection of sound or dynamic response as good

however, it's worth noting that the analogue only Cambridge T500 gives a more expansive and transparent sound still. Back to DAB and, at least with Radio 3, I found the NCT filter best left in the "off" position.

"think of it as one of the best budget DABs around, with a decent FM tuner thrown in..."

with DAB. That said, by DAB standards, the performance was fine. Timbre was fairly accurate, and there was reasonable insight into the recording. Switch to FM, though, and the piece became far more involving. As good as the FM performance was,

Switching to the pop station, Core, actually suited the 640T far better. The Scissor Sisters 'Laura' was playing at the time, and compared favourably with my CD copy. There was a surprisingly deep bass response, with a jolly, bouncy nature

that's characteristic of previous Cambridge DAB designs. It may not have offered the sharpest of timing, but it did at least inject some life and vitality into the sound. By the standards of DAB, depth of sound and separation were good, although the brass could have done with a tad more bite. Yet, for once, this could be achieved by setting the NCT to 'lively'. Vocal response was fairly realistic, and the performance as a whole, quite credible. Against the CD the effects of compression were noticeable, but it remained enjoyable enough and, thanks to that vibrant bass quality, more appealing at times.

Switching to Radio 6, I was lucky enough to catch The Blue Nile's 'Days Of Our Lives'. Here I was quite impressed at how well the 640T managed to capture the sparse, hypnotic acoustic. There was also good vocal texture, and fine staging. Whilst, again not being the most acute, bass had a warm and rounded quality that suited the song well.

A quick listen to the analogue, Trent FM, showed that, when it came to Pop, there was a less noticeable difference between DAB and FM. The sound was more fluent, although actually leaner in terms of bass. There was still the same bouncy timing, yet the more open sound stage did just give FM the edge.

Whilst I initially had concerns about Cambridge Audio's timing for this product, the more I used the 640T, the more it made sense. You can take it as read that, as with the rest of the Azur range, the 640T is a copper bottomed bargain, and probably the best tuner under £200. With DAB, there's still no other rival that gets close. With FM, however, the story is slightly different.

Ironically, it is Cambridge's own T500 that really shows the 640T up. Yet the 640T was never designed as an uncompromising FM only tuner in the first place. It still actually sounds mighty good, and would still have the measure of a Denon TU260L! So, as compromises go, this really is a superbly judged machine. Think of it as one of the best budget DABs around, with a decent FM tuner thrown in for free, and you won't find better.

VERDICT ●●●●●

A classic combination of build, value, styling and performance makes this the new budget tuner to beat.

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FOR
 - class best DAB
 - decent FM too
 - that remote, again...

AGAINST
 - restrictions of DAB
 - FM-only T500 better



A/V receivers haven't traditionally enjoyed a great hi-fi reputation, but the advent of high resolution digital has stirred a demand for a new type of multichannel machine that does more than simply punch out powerful action movie soundtracks. Here, Noel Keywood compares two very different approaches; from the east we have Japan's Denon AVR2805 and from the west Britain's Arcam AVR-300...

Surround-sound receivers have traditionally been the realm of large Japanese manufacturers, thanks to licensing and manufacturing costs, and Denon makes them better than most. So what happens when a British hi-fi specialist like Arcam moves into Nipponese 'territorial waters', so to speak?

Well, Huntingdon has made a surprisingly different job of something I'd imagined was unlikely to be open to interpretation. Not in outline are they different, since the Arcam's AVR-300 uses much the same basic processing schemes and approach to signal handling as the Denon, but in style, feel, appearance and sound. The Denon costs £700, and with its welter of facilities and hefty power output offers apparently stunning value for money – classic Japanese territory. The Arcam, by contrast, costs £1,300 and sports considerably fewer features, appreciably lower power and an altogether less glitzy design. Again though, this all appeals to British specialist audio buyers, who'll happily do without any of this is the reward in sound...

Both receivers have seven channels of amplification, but Denon's AVR-2805 has nine pairs of loudspeaker outputs, possessing an extra switched front pair. You have to bear in mind that as loudspeakers sink in impedance toward four ohms, this is going to place a heavy load on the amp if both rooms run simultaneously. But A/V receivers run 'close to the wind', relying on thermal sensing and overload protection to survive the many possibilities for abuse. So it's interesting that whilst Denon's AVR-2805 can supply 136W per channel against Arcam's 85W, the Arcam has considerably more heatsinking and twin cooling fans (which remain off until needed). So whilst the Arcam delivers less peak power than the Denon, it will manage higher overall output levels for longer before overheating. If sound is to match that of a good CD player, then the receiver's

onboard D/As must be good. This is the importance of AL24 Processing used by Denon in the AVR-2805; it reduces distortion on low level digital signals. Measurement showed it worked well, reducing distortion at -60dB and below. The Denon also had wider band and more linear A/D convertors than the Arcam, but if CD is connected digitally (DVD-A and SACD must be connected via separate multi-channel analogue inputs) then A/D quality isn't much of an issue except with LP and tuner. The Denon has a phono stage, unlike the Arcam, but it is of average quality. Receivers like this are a mass of connection options. I was surprised Denon don't fit loudspeaker terminals that double as 4mm sockets, as they do on their new budget receiver. Arcam do however, making hooking up easier. I connected up KEF Q Series loudspeakers and a Denon DVD-3900 to feed in CD digitally and DVD-A and SACD through analogue connection. A VHF/FM aerial feed is also needed, and Arcam and Denon both supply a simple loop aerial for Medium Wave reception. With its neat fluorescent blue display panel and sculpted fascia the Denon looks smartest, especially when switched on. But underneath the hood the Arcam looks better built, with rows of neat green pcbs and some quality components.

The on-screen set-up menus for both the Arcam and Denon were much the same and the set-up procedure similar, with one exception: the Denon will set itself up using a small microphone they supply. By this I mean it sets loudspeaker output levels, delay

two



times and even equalisation to correct room or loudspeaker response errors. Sounds great and it's doubtless a good selling point – but beware. Whilst sensitivity and delay time adjustments are made accurately, in practice you may still need to modify them. I usually reduce Centre channel output to avoid dominance and listening to what sounds like Mono – an ironic problem to plague a technology that's meant to improve upon stereo! And frequency response equalisation is rarely worth having in a half-decent system. Most loudspeakers are pretty flat nowadays, even budget shelf mounters. And you can't satisfactorily correct time domain room problems in the frequency domain by juggling with frequency response using what amounts to a crude graphic equaliser.

Whilst Arcam don't provide automatic set up with the AVR300 it does have the ability to trim frequency response of each loudspeaker using the tone controls. Here, Arcam similarly note that it's best to first try and cure perceived response imbalances by first re-

tribes



atmosphere that fell easily on the ear. At the same time there was no compromise either in detail retrieval or clarity; this

wasn't a warm, muffled sound. Vocals were nicely defined on the sound stage, very clearly presented and projected beautifully. Film dialogue I've become well acquainted with was crisply delivered, had just slightly clearer enunciation but was well balanced tonally. By this I mean that, in particular, sibilance didn't take on the prominence it had with the Denon, or most receivers for that matter. As modern loudspeakers are brightly balanced, especially when they use metal dome tweeters, it's useful to have something in the replay chain that can calm things down a bit and this the AVR300 did well. Tonal balance isn't only strength,

positioning the loudspeakers. Only then should a little trim be used to apply small amounts of correction.

So, auto-set up isn't the panacea you might hope for; in practice the results are usually subjectively gross. Manual set-up is the way to go; both Arcam and Denon supply an onboard noise generator for loudspeaker identification and adjustment and this is a very useful tool. If the Centre speaker then dominates because surround-sound mixing engineers like to cram lead guitar, drums and vocals into the Centre channel, then you have to pull it back by ear to give a satisfactory sense of balance across the sound stage.

SOUND QUALITY

Having set up the Arcam I plugged in an optical digital connection from the DVD player and span a CD. The contrast between this receiver and what I have become used to was striking. It lacks the brightness of Japanese designs, including Denon's AVR-2805. Instead, strings took on a warm tone and stage depth fell back nicely to give an expansive sound stage in which instruments had a sense of body and there was a warm

also there's a good sense of cohesiveness, plenty of believable body in the sound and, last of all, firm bass. It is in fact this receiver's generous but nicely resolved low frequency balance that gives it so much heft; I won't move into descriptions of explosions, nor of the extra might of a Merlin, suffice it to say that the AVR300 is great with film soundtracks, where its particular qualities are quite noticeable.

This character folds though into DVD-A and SACD replay, even though this bypasses much of the internal processing through the Multi-Channel or DVD-A input as Arcam somewhat oddly call it. A disc like The Corrs 'In Blue', which I've thought of as overly bright 24/96 DVD-A, sounded normally balanced through the AVR300;

the difference was startling. There was great resolution of depth and an easy delivery that was relaxing to listen to. Since I rather like surround-sound, but feel its potential is currently under-exploited, the AVR300 did a nice job of confirming my suspicions and showing just how entertaining it can be. Let's face it, five channels of 24/96 should sound pretty good. Spinning SACD I felt there was slightly less of the gap I normally hear against DVD-A, the Arcam less well resolving its smoother flow from DVD-A. But this receiver ably demonstrated its power with Stravinsky's Firebird Suite, kettle drum shaking my windows vigorously. As always with surround, but more so with the Arcam, there's no strain running at high volume with so many speakers to take the load.

The VHF tuner was smooth as a nut too, as measurement suggested. I ran it from a large roof aerial to get into full quieting and couldn't hear a trace of noise on Radio 3, which was delivered with a fine sense of depth and atmosphere. Radio 2 programming highlighted the AVR300's full but firm bass. There was again the smooth, cohesive presence and not a trace of

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

AVR300

The stocky AVR300 develops 85W per channel into 8ohms and 144W into 4ohms, totaling 1008W no less - on par with Japanese rivals. Supply regulation was good, suggesting solid sounding bass.

Distortion levels were low at all frequencies, measuring from 0.005% up to 0.03% when delivering near full output at 10kHz, a severe test. Some unwanted alias products added to the distortion.

There was a little more measured noise than usual on CD input, probably from the A/D convertors. Frequency response with analogue stereo inputs measures 5Hz-22kHz, or 5Hz-63kHz direct and DVD-A (i.e. not via the DSP).

The VHF tuner has a flat frequency response to 10kHz and reaches up to 15kHz before the pilot tone filter takes effect. Distortion was low, sensitivity good and noise fairly low too, as such tuners go.

The AVR300 measures well in most areas. It is powerful and should sound smooth, lacking crossover distortion. The VHF tuner is better than most used in similar receivers, but the A/D convertors let the side down a bit. NK

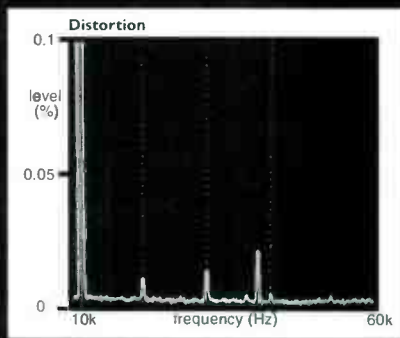
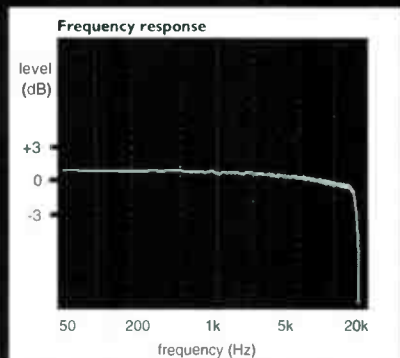
Power 85watts

Frequency response (DVD-A) 5Hz-63kHz
Frequency response (CD, etc) 5Hz-22kHz
Separation 98dB

Noise (IEC A)	-82dB
Distortion	0.01%
Sensitivity	133mV max.
dc offset	2/1.3mV

TUNER

Frequency response	20Hz-10kHz
Stereo separation	34dB
Distortion (50% mod.)	0.2%
Hiss (IEC A)	-69dB
Signal for minimum hiss	0.9mV



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sharpness or spit - impressive and a good display of the quality of VHF/FM when done well.

Automatic set-up on the Denon, which uses a test tone sequence through a microphone, correctly assessed my room conditions, except obstruction of the microphone by a rear acoustic reflector caused it to flag up Phase Error. Moving the mic. forward an inch or so cleared this; the handbook warned of this likelihood and said ignore it! It underlined the sensitivity of the set-up system. All the same it came up with extreme compensation settings that lifted high frequencies by up to +6dB and attenuated bass from frontal KEF Q7s, giving a very brittle sound, but raised bass and lowered treble from rear KEF Q1s. There are Normal, Manual and Flat options, as well as Off - the best option of all! It's a lot of complexity for the usual bizarre result, and it doesn't work with the Multi-Channel DVD-A/SACD direct input, only on signal passing through the DSP. This apart the Denon is much like the Arcam in what it offers, with a few extra bells and whistles relating to functionality rather than sound quality, 96/24 dts excepted.

The AVR2805 has a clear midband that supported vocals nicely. From Norah Jones on CD through to The Corrs on DVD-A at 26/96 resolution the Denon showed itself to be a smoothie that could tease out lyrics and have vocalists sounding alive and vibrant. Perspectives were a little muted, rather than compressed, but I was aware of a sense of cleanliness that gave a nice sense of insight into both vocals and speech on video. However, sibilance in particular was emphasised strongly and at times cymbals crashes from wideband 24/96, like 'Riding With the King', fairly sizzled from the speakers. The emphasis here I would attribute to component quality, which is perfectly understandable given its price, which is half that of the Arcam. Whilst the Denon differs little from its Japanese rivals in this regard,

Arcam's AVR300 underlines how much it detracts from what 24/96 has to offer. The midband seemed sandwiched between the prominent highs and a reasonably generous low frequency end that brought good heft to kettle drum and bass guitar alike, if not any special resolution of

their timbral or textural qualities.

Although the midband was clear enough and supported vocals and instruments well, the spectrum extremes that had an artificial presence. It drew attention to their lacklustre quality and robbed the Denon of the sense of subjective balance it deserves. CD replay was as smooth as I'd expect from Denon's AL24 convertors, and in contrast to the Arcam I'll wager sounded a little pristine. For all its strengths I detected just a hint of wiriness in the Arcam, a smidgeon of grain in the sound perhaps, when compared directly to the Denon.

I was surprised to get similar results from the VHF/FM tuner, since its frequency response has been tilted to soften the sound. Yet all the same I was again constantly aware of the hiss of sibilance, with speech in particular. A live Radio 2 chat programme was punctuated by it to a degree that was irritating. Otherwise, quality from VHF/FM was as high as usual when a strong aerial signal is available. Rock programme had plenty of bottom end kick, radio from the AVR2805's sounding much the same in basic character as other sources.

Having become used to the sound of Japanese A/V receivers, the Arcam

AVR300 was quite a surprise. It offers such a different flavour that I was taken aback. Bringing a sense of subjective balance to modern high resolution digital, free from the usual brightness that is otherwise pervasive, this is one impressive multichannel receiver. The company's experience with quality amplification, coupled with their preference for an atmospheric sound that seemingly eludes rivals pays dividends with modern digital. It's a great product, well honed in many difficult areas. At that low, low price, Denon's AVR-2805 is almost peerless - with its decent sonics, amazing feature set and fine build. Yet this review shows - unsurprisingly perhaps - that spending the extra on a British product, biased for British sensibilities, is well worthwhile for British ears.

VERDICT ●●●●● £

Skilful all rounder with strong build and staggering flexibility at the price. Crisp and spry sound can seem bright at times. Fantastic value for money.

DENON AVR-2805 £699.95

Denon UK

☎ +44 (0)1753 888447

www.denon.co.uk

VERDICT ●●●●● £

Sensible feature set, sophisticated styling and superb sound quality make this a brilliant audiophile bargain.

ARCAM AVR300 £1299.95

Arcam

☎ +44 (0) 1223 203200

www.arcam.co.uk

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

AVR2805

This is a massively powerful receiver, producing 136W per channel into 8ohms and no less than 240W into 4ohms. Since there are seven channels it can turn out 1000W fairly easily and, with plenty of current delivery into low loads, the 2805 will produce a solid wall of sound.

Distortion levels are well contained, a miniscule 0.003% in the mid-band rising to a maximum of 0.02% at high frequencies, when driving a 4ohm load. The harmonic structure was extended, but this is unlikely to be perceptible.

CD goes straight through unprocessed, where bandwidth measures 5Hz-50kHz (-1dB). Switching in Dolby Pro Logic IIx, which demands A/D conversion, introduces a sharp anti-alias filter cut-off at 40kHz, so Denon are using a wide band A-D/D-A processing it appears, although Matrix cuts off hard at 22kHz as usual.

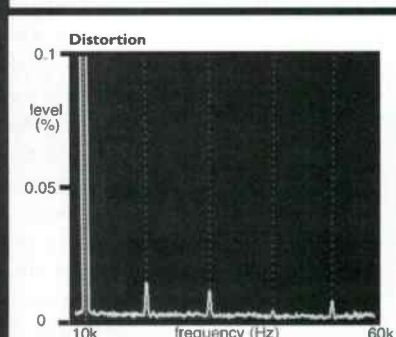
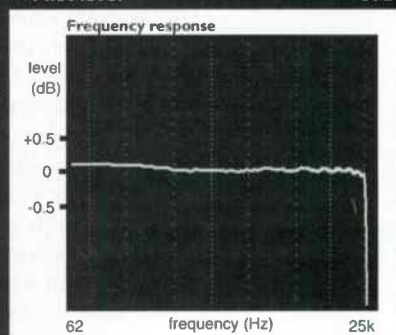
It's best to connect up CD digitally and use the receiver's internal D/A AL24 processor. This produced very little distortion at low levels. Frequency response showed a little low frequency lift that will add heft to the sound.

The VHF/FM tuner measured well, with a smooth flat response characterised by a little high frequency roll down to avoid sharpness, our analysis shows. Distortion levels were in the 0.2%-0.4% range, but the harmonics were low order and unintrusive. Hiss was low enough at -71dB on stereo.

The phono stage is MM only. Equalisation was accurate from 10Hz-80kHz, but there's no warp filter, so cone flap will occur with warped LPs. Bass will sound solid enough though.

The AVR-2805 has very good on-board A/D and D/A conversion. It is powerful and neatly engineered in all respects. NK

Power	136watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	5Hz-50kHz
Separation	87dB
Noise	-103dB
Distortion	0.012%
Sensitivity	240mV
dc offset	3/4mV
Disc (MM)	
Frequency response	10Hz-80kHz
Separation	78dB
Noise	-82dB
Distortion	0.01%
Sensitivity	3mV
Overload	170mV
Tuner	
Frequency response	5Hz-12kHz
Separation	48dB
Noise	-71dB
Distortion	0.3%
Pilot level	-67B



mini super



MiniDisc was a quinesentially Japanese format - small, 'hi tech', super versatile and ultra convenient - and with the MDS-J3000ES, Sony made the machine to match the medium, thinks David Price.

In 2004, MiniDisc seems an anachronism. Despite Sony's recent attempt to breathe new life into the format with Hi-MD, this mobile music carrier is floundering. What the world wants now, it seems, is the Apple iPod - in both its full strength and 'mini' varieties. And why not?

Although physically slightly larger than the latest MD portables, the iPod mini gives you the chance to carry thousands of songs around. To replicate this, you'd have to have vast quantities of MiniDiscs spilling out of your pockets. The iPod also offers a superior compression system (AAC), backwards compatibility (MP3) and the option of better sound (Apple Lossless). Add the fact that it's just about the most fashionable 'gadget' since the original Sony Walkman and you can see why MD is fading fast.

It was not always thus. Back in 1997, the format seemed to be really cooking. After an impossibly slow gestation period of five years, in which hi-fi hacks moaned about its miserable sound and high prices, Sony had finally got the balance right.

The product was the MDS-JE500, whose conjunction of a low, low price with dramatically improved

sound suddenly seemed to let the format's undeniable strengths shine through. The magic numbers were £299 and CXD2650R - the cost and number of the IC that it introduced, respectively. That magic chip was the first to use ATRAC 4, Sony's codec that moved the sound from cold and mechanical to warm and musical at a stroke. It was nothing less than a new dawn for MiniDisc.

The result was a series of rave reviews all around the world. By '97, the world was still using cassette as its recording medium (it seems amazing that as recently as then we were still using analogue recording!), but suddenly here was cheap digital recording, with a brilliant random access operating system (lest we forget, we were still 'fast forwarding and rewinding back then) and - wow - automatic digital music copying from CD! Buyers of the original MDS-JE500 couldn't understand why it hadn't taken over the world, so myriad were its talents...

This machine ushered in the format's first and only lease of life, and now the battle had been won, it was time to showcase the wonderful 'lifestyle' aspect of the format. Suddenly, Sony was putting out a vast

range of personals, portables and hi-fi machines. At first, the company sneakily fitted the old ATRAC 3.5 chip to its non-hi-fi machines (after all, stocks of this magic silicon button were predictably low), so it really paid to check the spec-sheets to see if the CXD2650R was present or not. But as the year passed, more and more thus-equipped machines surfaced, the most beautiful of which was surely the MDS-J3000ES.

Announced in October 1996 at the Japan Audio Fair and retailing for ¥77,000 in its home country, this super mini took a long time to hit the UK (Sony UK is always very conservative about what it brings in), but eventually made it to British buyers for the princely sum of £599.95. Essentially, it was a rehoused MDS-JE500, complete with a fancier RM-D10M remote control and a few useful functional enhancements. UK buyers obviously didn't think much of all this, and preferred to pocket that additional £300 thank you very much - but for the extra money, Sony had ended up making one of its nicest ever MiniDisc machines.

Housed in a gold-coloured aluminium alloy case measuring 280x92.5x80mm, this 'half width'



SPECIFICATIONS (QUOTED)

Frequency response: 5-20kHz +/-0.3dB,
 S/N ratio: > 100dB (digital rec/play), > 94dB (analogue rec/play)
 Dynamic Range: > 98dB (digital), > 94dB (analogue)
 THD < .003% (digital), < .005% (analog),
 Wow and flutter: less than 0.001% W-Peak

separate was wonderfully compact. (Obversely, the MDS-JE500 sported a large 'full size' case that was half full of air, so the 'J3000 wasn't exactly an amazing feat of packaging.) Finish was superlative - the equal of anything Sony has ever done at any price (think 2004 Apple PowerBook G4) - which allied to its compact 'small footprint' made for something that, in hi-fi terms at least, can justly be thought an object of beauty.

Hidden beneath that pretty brushed aluminium fascia panel is a welter of features, some of which are only accessible via the remote control. The Current Pulse DAC has a sampling rate converter, a while there's a data buffer giving a two second 'time machine' function. Sony's R-Core transformer was the J3000's only sonic enhancement over its JE500 cousin. Round the back, there was a connector for Sony's optional controller/ titler, which presented a full size (well, nearly) keyboard for easy titling. Still, Sony's titling was always uncommonly fuss-free (compared to rival MD manufacturers), so it was unsurprisingly overlooked by most buyers. Connections totalled two TOSLINK optical digital inputs and one coaxial, and a single optical digital out, plus RCA phono analogue line ins and outs and a 6.3mm headphone jack.

In use, a nicer MiniDisc machine you could not find. It's brilliantly simple and clutter free front panel (by Japanese standards, at least!) makes it a joy to live with. The eject function is very swift and exudes quality. All the minor controls feel great to the touch, although the small buttons aren't the easiest to use for large fingers. The display is superb, with Sony's 'Music Calendar' telling

you how many tracks you've got on the disc at a glance.

Sonically, the MDS-J3000ES impresses. It isn't the best sounding MiniDisc machine ever, and a good way behind the full size MDS-JA20ES version, but it still sounds musical and engaging with great smoothness and accuracy. The greatest criticism is of its tonal dryness and tendency to be a tad 'polite' - but you can always put it through a modern upsampling DAC like Musical Fidelity's Trivista 21 if you possess such a thing. It sports a good A-D convertor too, making fine sounding recordings from vinyl, tape or FM radio a real possibility. Compared to all but the very best cassette, this must have seemed a revelation back in 1997.

These days, the bottom has fallen out of the MiniDisc machine market. For example, three years ago, a one-year old Sony MDS-JB920QS (the company's flagship 'affordable' machine) would sell for nearly £200, now its 2003 equivalent, the MDS-JB980QS, would sell for half that. The upshot is that there are bargains to be had, and a mint MDS-J3000ES can be picked up for as little as £200. This seems a great bargain, but only if you've already invested in the format. If not, you'll soon find out

ATRAC TALK

The ATRAC compression system has been improved immensely since the first Sony MZ-1 MiniDisc recorder. ATRAC 1 was noisy, with obvious compression and lossy artefacts. ATRAC 2 greatly improved on this, taking away all those strange whistles and chirps, but was hardly a satisfying listen. ATRAC 3 improved to 24/16-bits for word and coefficient length (previously, it had been entirely 16-bit), whereas 3.5 added an input width of 20-bits. In truth, this is the first truly listenable incarnation of the codec, and on the high end machines didn't sound half bad. It wasn't until ATRAC 4 arrived that MD became a consistently good sounding format - thanks to processing entirely in 24-bits with an input width of 20-bits. ATRAC 4.5 arrived on the high end MDS-JA50ES, and then ATRAC DSP Type-R, which offered a slightly cleaner treble and more air and space. Little has really improved since this, as Sony has devoted itself to squeezing more music onto MD, rather than better sounding music. The result is MD LP (and derivatives) which give huge recording times, but poor sound only suitable for speech. ATRAC 3 lives on as

MINIDISC: THE FACTS

Although launched in 1992, work on MiniDisc began in 1986 and involved the bringing together of a number of different technologies (and a wealth of patents). A single 2.5" square 140MB MD holds a CD's worth of music, compressed by a factor of five by Sony's Adaptive Transform Acoustic Coding system (ATRAC). This is a perceptual coding system, a data reduction technique that attempts to encode only the information audible to the human perceptual system. (This is also the principle behind the Philips Digital Compact Cassette PASC compression - ostensibly the same as MP3, Dolby Labs AC-3 compression, and Bell Labs' Perceptual Audio Coding algorithm.) The disc itself is a variation on conventional magneto-optical recording in which data is recorded using a semiconductor laser at high power together with a magnetic head. As the disc sweeps past the laser, a tiny area on the MD's magnetic recording layer is heated to 180 degrees C while the field of the magnetic head in contact with the other side of the disc is switched back and forth to write a data pattern. When the area the head has magnetised moves away from the laser spot it cools to become 'cast' in a string of N and S magnetised regions on the disc, spaced 60 millionths of a centimetre apart, and corresponding to the stream of bits being recorded. Playback is accomplished using the same laser at lower power, the MD optics detecting these polarisation differences to reconstruct the recorded bitstream.

that MD isn't easily playable in the car, bathroom, bedroom or kitchen without buying, ermm, other MD machines. With MiniDisc, if you're in for a penny, you're in for a pound!



The second instalment of our two-part feature on the ELP LT-2XRC laser turntable sees Noel Keywood give an exhaustive technical appraisal of this amazing vinyl replay device...

light fantastic

Playing an LP by firing at laser beam at its sidewalls is a pretty radical idea. Not only is it technically complex, but it also offers a way to hear what has really been cut into an LP without modification by the playback system, something that promises much. A laser turntable seems the only way to find out just what LP really does hold right out at the limit. Will the amount of high frequency detail read by a laser be far greater than that from the best stylus? Will it far surpass CD? A laser turntable promises to answer such questions - and many more - for there are numerous other complicating factors in conventional LP replay, especially RIAA correction, dynamic wow and what have you, only a laser turntable can avoid.

It's long been known that the stylus of a cartridge pushes dirt aside as it traverses the groove. A laser doesn't. Instead, it reads dirt, giving rise to some fierce crackles and pops, as well as a constant background burble. Records need a lot of cleaning to minimise this and I suspect it will always be a problem with the ELP. Back in 1986 an incredibly kind person at EMI gave

me an almost complete set of brand new factory sample Beatles LPs that, deliberately, I have hardly ever played. These were the perfect way to judge this turntable - even the only way it could be argued. For it has a forensic precision and a dry sound that lacks the sweet openness of a pickup cartridge.

What you have to bear in mind here is that the two are very, very different. A coil of wire, especially a small one as in an MC cartridge, is an almost perfect signal source. Just wave a magnet in front of it and - presto - you get a signal, unmodified and uncoloured by transistor, or valve for that matter. I was amused to see a pickup cartridge suggested as a test source for a super low noise IC recently, the very latest in solid-state technology no less, with an apparently archaic signal generator feeding it. A coil of wire holds the input down to ground and provides no input offset current. Which reinforces the point that a pickup cartridge is in many respects, near perfect as a source. So, subjectively, a cartridge isn't quite the technological pushover one might expect.

By way of contrast, the ELP laser turntable, like a CD player, has solid-

state circuits working from optical transducers. You could liken it to a CD player in fact; the basic flavour of its sound is similar. It is not strong on fluidity or sweetness and there's an evenness to the soundstage not common with LP played by rock-in-a-groove method. This turntable is almost diametrically opposed in its characteristics to a pickup cartridge feeding a valve phono stage.

So much for the flavour, but what of the noise and the music itself? Background pops and a little burble were audible when playing virtually new, virgin Beatles LPs, but it wasn't intrusive. And did I hear the Beatles like no one has ever heard them before? Possibly. There was superb resolution of high frequency detail; Paul McCartney's singing 'Your Mother Should Know' has never sounded so lucid, accompanied by beautifully clear harmonies from the rest of the band, with the finest of treble being delivered. It wasn't quite the quantum leap over CD I might have hoped for, but it was a useful step up. Since this is a 1967 recording perhaps I was expecting too much, but I found much the same across a range of LPs, including modern ones. I was impressed rather

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The measured frequency response of this turntable was surprisingly flat considering the variability of LP and the difficulty of cutting modulation in a groove accurately to meet specific time constants.

ELP warn of the potential invalidity of response tests, due they feel to prior groove damage from pickup cartridges. However, I have found in the past, using Shure's clever Two Speed technique, that most test LPs are inherently inaccurate, even undamaged. Then JVC released a disc cut at half speed, said to be super accurate - TRS1007. The Two Speed technique confirmed JVC's claims and I, like most cartridge manufacturers, use it for frequency response measurement.

Testing the ELP with TRS1007 I was amazed at just how flat this test disc and the ELP are in conjunction. From 16Hz to 16kHz variation in response flatness is no more than 0.5dB - as good as CD for heaven's sake! The ELP is -1.5dB down at 12kHz and 20kHz but this is not especially consequential subjectively.

What is important is the trend of the response curve, which tilts up slightly toward high frequencies, explaining why the ELP has a brighter sound than an arm/cartridge transducer, with less deep bass. There is none of the lift at low frequencies caused by arm/cartridge resonance, which adds power to bass, nor the slow roll down of highs introduced by generator losses which warms the midband. Nor is there any peak from tip mass resonance, which can blur and colour treble. You get instead, a smooth, even response that - tilt apart - is fundamentally accurate, and this explains the ELPs uncoloured sound, as well as its delivery of detail.

Although the ELP is truly accurate and revealing of LP, the lift in output toward high frequencies makes it sound quite different to a pickup cartridge, and subjectively isn't entirely favourable I feel. High frequency emphasis accentuates both noise and distortion from LP; if there is be error, the one we get from a cartridge - bass lift and a little treble loss is the way to go to keep things sounding sweet. It always has been the case that good analogue components turn weaknesses into attributes.

Channel separation was high at 30dB, so the two laser beams act capably in this respect. They are also unperturbed by either lateral or vertical modulation, allowing the ELP to negotiate all test tracks on a CBS test disc, cut at 300Hz. The lasers seem able to handle high amplitudes. However, they are less happy when asked to accelerate quickly it appears, as the ELP had difficulty with 1kHz test tracks on a B&K 2010 test disc. Today's cartridges can get through 20cms/sec and almost negotiate 25cms/sec at 1kHz, but the ELP jumped over anything greater than 16cms/sec - not so good. Occasional mis-tracking on high level vocals or sibilance may occur as a result of this, but at least it won't damage the groove. The laser sled makes unhappy clunking noises when a mistrack occurs; it sounds serious, even though it isn't.

I was a bit surprised to see high frequency output roll off substantially on inner grooves, measuring -5dB down at 20kHz. Since signal wavelength is very short here this may be due to an acceleration limit being reached. As the ELP is only -1dB down at 10kHz, subjectively the effect isn't too great, but it is worse than most good pickup cartridges.

Distortion levels were much the same as those measured from a pickup cartridge. Our analysis shows second and third harmonic dominate. This is distortion cut into the groove, so it looks as if the ELP is clean enough in its signal recovery.

Measurement largely explains why the ELP sounds the way it does. I feel the tilt toward high frequencies is a little unwise subjectively and ELP could usefully carry out some judicious re-balancing here. All the same, this turntable's response flatness does guarantee a colour free, accurate portrayal of what is on LP, without any possibility of groove damage. This is a complex but unique product.

than entranced.

Tonally, the ELP differs most noticeably from other turntables in its rather dry and slightly light bass. It took an LP like 'Synchronicity' from the Police, known for its solid basslines, to get the bass cones moving. 'Wrapped Around Your Finger' had a satisfying sense of body to it, plus a good feeling of rhythmic drive. The difference in bass quality almost certainly arises from the lack of low frequency emphasis caused by arm resonance that colours LP reproduction. The +5dB or so lift at around 10Hz this introduces spills up into the audio band to subtly but perceptibly boost very low frequencies below 30Hz, adding both warmth and weight to the sound. Like all good analogue systems the LP disgraces itself gracefully, in such a way that an improved system like this turntable cannot.

Whilst a traditional arm and cartridge arrangement can deliver bass that's more supple and muscular, the amount of detail this turntable teased out of Sting's vocals was superb, and filigree detail at high frequencies bettered CD. There's also a sense of precision timing not normally associated with the LP, likely due to lack of dynamic wow. All the same I couldn't get the breathtaking speed and awesome dynamics of a Garrard 401 handling 12in singles like John Lydon and Africa Bambaataa's 'World Destruction'.

The ELP delivers a dry, uncoloured and accurate sound from LP that truly shows what the medium was always capable of. It lacks the magic of cartridge and valve, that's for sure, but it also lacks the colour. It's a highly complex player that's for sure and, if you've got invaluable LPs, perhaps a necessity - assuming you have pockets deep enough...

VERDICT

Nothing less than a seminal technological and manufacturing achievement.

ELP LT 2XRC £10 500

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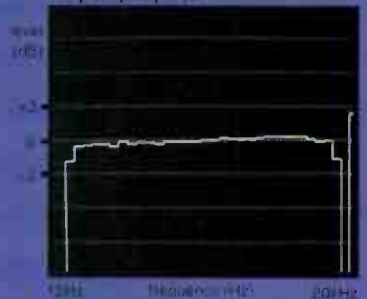
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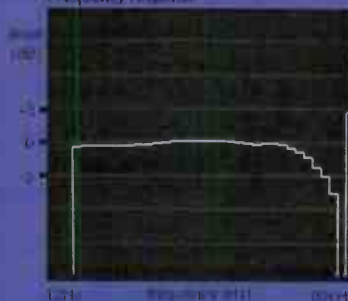
MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Frequency response	20Hz-20kHz
Channel separation	30dB
Tracking ability (300Hz)	
lateral	90µm
vertical	45µm
lateral (1kHz)	16cms/sec.
Distortion (45µm)	
lateral	1%
vertical	1.5%

Frequency response



Frequency response



Distortion



Not for conservatives



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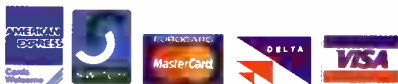
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first class

Noel Keywood enjoys the luxury of life with Elac's new 310.2 JET standmounting 'speakers...

So what's new in 'speakers? Not a lot, many of you tell us, and I wouldn't disagree. But although we don't have any attractive new technologies, we still have plenty of old ones worth pushing a little harder, and the ribbon tweeter is one of them.

Alongside electrostatic loudspeakers it's one of the best ways I know of getting past the limitations of today's conventional loudspeakers. Okay, it's only a tweeter, but to my ears at least a really good tweeter makes quite a significant contribution to sound quality. Elac think so too and continue to develop their own Jet ribbon tweeter; it's now reached JET III status. This was sufficient reason for the company to re-launch their baby 310 loudspeaker, now the 310.2 JET. Which in turn was a fine excuse for me to re-acquaint myself with the delights of Elac's ribbon, adorning a high quality miniature. When most baby loudspeakers are also budget loudspeakers a design like this has little competition. So how good can a small 'speaker get?

Elac are proud of their origins and their plant in Kiel Germany. Upholders of 'Finest German Engineering' as they put it, I couldn't disagree. The 310.2 cabinet is beautifully

made from an extruded aluminium section, with a smooth, gloss lacquered silver finish. The optional stand is a complex affair, again beautifully made and finished. Cables can be hidden in the hollow central pillar. This can also be sand filled and the base spiked. I bolted the speaker to the stand and spiked it to the floor. Sturdy gold plated rear terminals accept bi-wiring as usual. I'm not sure buying a small loudspeaker and mounting it on a large stand makes much sense, since the whole assembly takes up as much space as a floorstander. But people can make their own mind up on this; a wall bracket is available or the speakers can be shelf mounted. The only difficulty here is their 270mm depth; in practice, to accommodate rear connecting plugs a 12in shelf is needed. This is a two-way reflex with rear port, so the port also needs a little space to avoid chuffing sounds. Wall mounting compromises apparent sound stage precision and depth a little, but I suspect buyers for a miniature like this will be prepared to make small sacrifices in areas like this for gains elsewhere, especially in small size and lack of intrusiveness within the home. Elac make the point that a set of 301.2 JETs on wall stands are a good idea for high quality surround-sound.

The JET II tweeter is complemented by a small 115mm inverted aluminium cone bass unit of 4ohms impedance, meaning this is really a 4ohm loudspeaker. It's no problem with solid-state amps, but valve amps will need to be set to 4ohms. Another small point worth bearing in mind is that A/V receivers use little heatsinking. A brace of five or six 4ohm loudspeakers like this driven hard in surround-sound - say in a large room - will certainly lead to overheating. I drove the Elacs from a Naim NAC282/ NAP200, a Denon PMA-1500 RII and my tuned up World Audio Design 300B, without feedback as usual. All did a good job but the Naim was most appropriate, being persuasive at low frequencies, but nice and dark with highs, which

suited the Jet tweeter's slight prominence. The 310.2, like many really small loudspeakers, needs a bit of pushing to bring it to life, an area where Naims excel. And this isn't a loudspeaker to partner with bright amplifiers...

SOUND QUALITY

Offensive treble is, for me, the bane of high fidelity. Edginess, graininess and - especially - that hard clatter that comes from digital through a hard plastic dome tweeter is an audio nightmare. Whilst companies like Focal do their darnedest nowadays to convince us only their dome tweeter has overcome the problem of the breed, my ears tell me otherwise. As they did immediately I clapped my ears upon the JET ribbon tweeter of these new Elacs.

Ribbon tweeters have one massive advantage: they possess no voice coil. The sound comes instead from a directly driven, lightweight ribbon and in this case the characteristic sound of a ribbon jumped out at me. A mass of super fine high frequency detail tumbled from the JETs in a manner quite unlike that from any dome. Like other ribbons I have heard they have deliver treble that all but glistens with filigree detail, yet is at the same time curiously even and unchallenging to the ear. Orchestral strings possessed a fine textural complexity absent from normal tweeters, no matter how hard their designers promote them. Like other ribbon speakers Elac, having spent the dosh, wish to make the point. So the 310.2 JETs are a little shiny bright - output from those tweeters being prominent enough to not go unnoticed.

I'm no fan of this approach; good tweeters contribute most to a loudspeaker when they strike an empathic balance, not when they stand out to make a separate case. All the same, the Jet was no more prominent than a lot of tweeters these days - loudspeakers have just got brighter and brighter. And, apart from the enthusiasm of the designer



trying to get his creation heard, some good engineering reasons help ensure that ribbon tweeters often have a unique aural identity. A differing dispersion pattern from the cone driver with which they are paired is one of them. A wholly different way of producing sound that, measurement shows, is substantially free from the minor local

inverted cone driver does a sterling job of keeping up, but the enclosure is so small it does sound a little dynamically limited and congested at times. Not in any large way, but whilst bass lines are resolved, it was with some effort when a lot of low frequency energy was being fed in. Small 'speakers commonly struggle to deliver unrestrained dynamics and the baby Elacs were no different here. They are accurate and free from colour with vocals, generally coming over as smooth and insightful, but you can't expect too much from small cones. In general tonality, the 310.2s are light and detailed, with sense of revelation at high frequencies that was best shown, I found, with SACD. Horns, interjections from the strings and prominent cymbal crashes from Prokofiev's 'Death of Tybalt' were sharply resolved, the 310.2s displaying a wonderful sense of grip upon rhythm, resolving sudden changes with little sign of overhang. They're a speedy little speaker with a tidy way of handling fast changing orchestral dynamics, without degradation. KEF XQ Ones manage much a similar performance, but not

much else.

Their ability to resolve stage depth was a trifle limited, making for some image flattening in contrast to rivals like the V60s from Mission, which I ran alongside. But then the 310.2s are smaller. In truth a loudspeaker this small should be chosen for its size, because some limitations imposed by size are obvious. There's little deep bass of course.

Looked at as a high quality miniature for use in situations where anything larger would be out of place the 310.2 JETs are impressive. The ribbon tweeter is conspicuously capable and always a delight. Sad that so few manufacturers are prepared to develop components like this. Elac stand apart in their conviction that a ribbon tweeter advances the art of high fidelity. The 310.2s make good use of them I feel, delivering what at times is a uniquely clean and finely detailed sound that's difficult to match.

VERDICT ●●●●£

High quality miniatures with finely etched treble from a lovely ribbon tweeter. Small size limits bass, but well worth auditioning.

ELAC 310.2 £800
ELAC
☎ +44 (0)800 652 5002
www.elac.com

SPECIFICATIONS:

size:	208x123x282 mm
volume:	7.2l
weight:	6.5 kg
principle:	2-way, bass reflex
woofer:	115 mm AS cone
tweeter:	JET III, (mag. shielded)
power:	50-150W
crossover:	3kHz

"a mass of fine high frequency detail tumbled from the JETs in a manner quite unlike that from any dome..."

resonances that colour to most drive units is another.

These properties help make a ribbon stand out and the 310.2s are no different. Elac have given them a light, bright balance, but on the other hand it isn't offensive in that spitty manner of a mediocre dome. Instead there's a sense of evenness of handling, which is very real to the ribbon. But this is not to say that at times a ribbon can be anything other than challenging. Whilst Gabrielle's 'There She Goes' sounded sweet, with wonderfully detailed cymbals, at times sibilance from her microphone lanced out from the JET III with surgical precision. A dome tweeter would blunt this sort of thing, but not a ribbon. Challenging it may be but not unpleasant. Ribbons work - and Elac's is as good as any I have heard. I believe them when they say it has been upgraded to the best modern standards using powerful Neodymium magnets and an improved internal structure. It also reaches 50kHz, they claim, making it suited to high resolution digital.

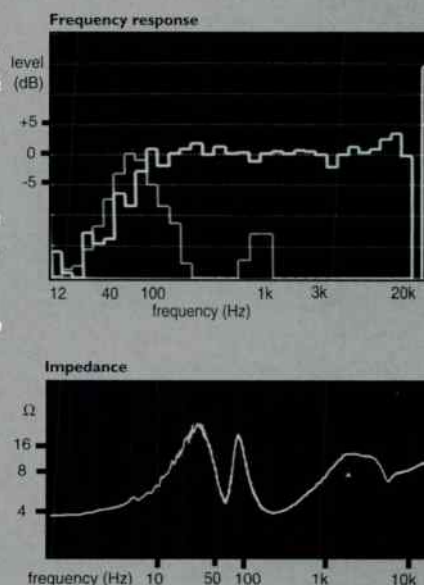
Below the ribbon a small

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Frequency response of the 301.4 deviates little from perfect flatness our analysis shows. The tweeter peaks up by +4dB at 16kHz and this will add some sense of sharpness or 'hiss' to the treble on occasion, when energy in this region exists. Bass rolls down below 80Hz, aided little by the port; the 301.2 is too small to go low, although the oft quoted -6dB point is a creditable 50Hz. With no low frequency lift and a smooth, steady fall in low bass the 301.2 will lack the sense of body and warmth of many rivals, instead sounding dry, light but well damped and free from chestiness or boominess. It is also a very accurate and, the trace smoothness suggests, uncoloured - treble peak apart.

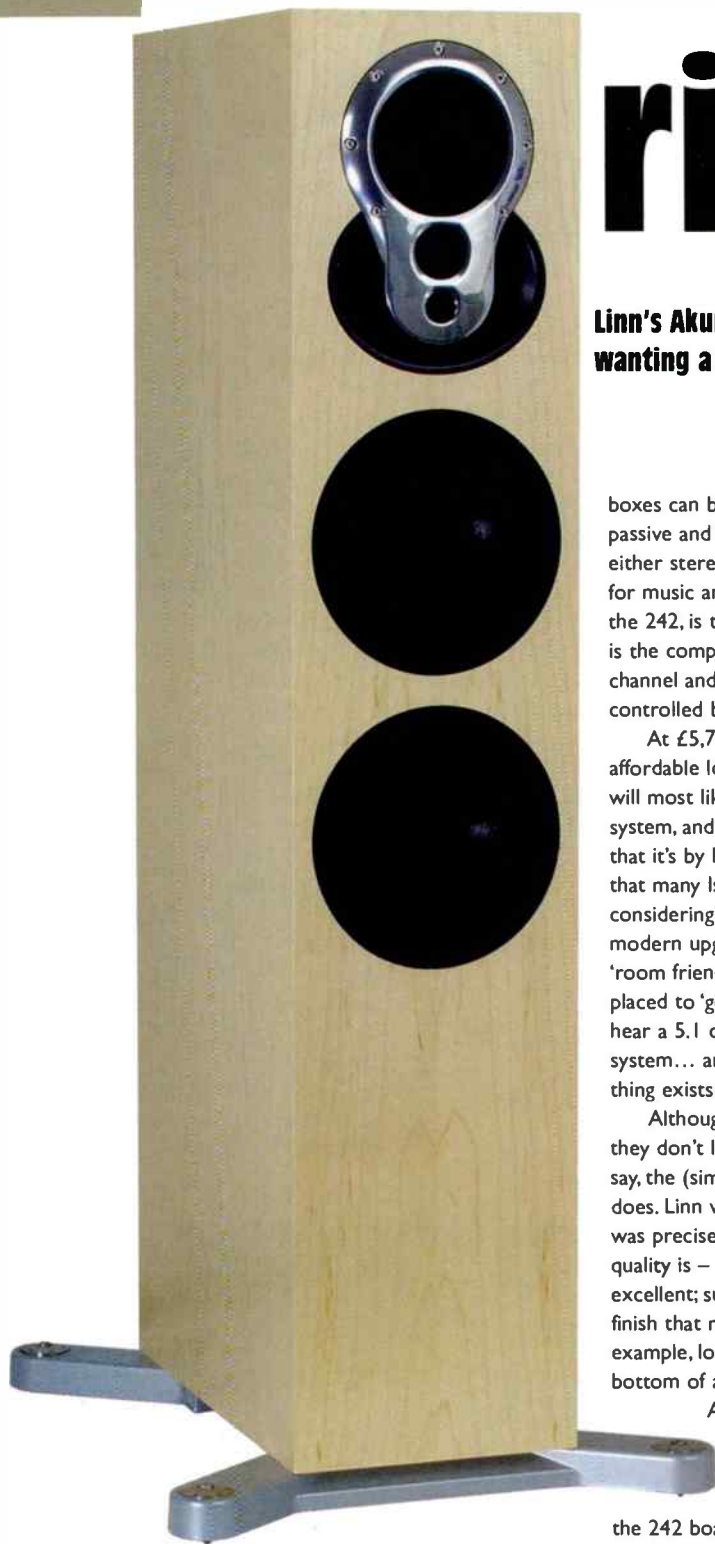
With a DCR of just 3.7ohms the 'speaker relies on drawing current to gain voltage sensitivity, in order to make it go reasonably loud at low volume settings. The port is very narrowly tuned, as response analysis confirms. Sensitivity was a reasonable 86dB - good for such a small loudspeaker. Amplifiers of around 60W should be suitable in most situations.

The 301.2 Jet measures well. It is academically flat in frequency response, meaning a bright balance in practice, accentuated by the Jet's treble peak. Consequently the 301.2 is best not paired with bright sounding amps. NK



right on

Linn's Akurate 242 loudspeakers are just the thing for those wanting a serious high end floorstander, says David Price...



Linn's inexorable march into multichannel music continues unabated, and the company is now developing all its new products with this in mind. Long gone are the days of tweaky but characterful loudspeakers with curious drive unit configurations, excessively large (or small) boxes and legions of owners who've had to design their entire systems around them. Now, the company has a very structured range of modern monitors, sharing much technology, of which the Akurate is the latest (and greatest) exponent.

In fact, there isn't one Akurate, but four. These acoustically matched

boxes can be simply configured for passive and active playback to deliver either stereo or multichannel sound for music and/or home theatre. This, the 242, is the floorstander - the 212 is the compact, the 225 the centre channel and the 221 an active servo controlled bass reinforcement design.

At £5,750, these are not affordable loudspeakers. The buyer will most likely have a very high end system, and there's a sporting chance that it's by Linn. In fact, I'd venture that many Isobarik owners may be considering precisely this design as a modern upgrade that's a tad more 'room friendly', and also better placed to 'go surround'. (I'd love to hear a 5.1 channel Isobarik based system... anyone know if such a thing exists?)

Although aesthetically pleasing, they don't look dramatic in the way, say, the (similarly priced) Quad 989 does. Linn would doubtless say this was precisely the intention. Still, build quality is - as you'd expect - excellent; superb cabinetry and a finish that makes the old Isobarik, for example, look like it was made at the bottom of a Glaswegian garden.

A 42 litre twin ported floorstander measuring 1,000x 210x 380mm and weighing 32kg each, the 242 boasts a bespoke adjustable loudspeaker base for optimum stability. Linn's proprietary '3K Driver Array' is fitted, comprising a 75mm soft dome midrange driver, 25mm soft dome tweeter and 15mm soft dome supertweeter - all mounted close together to provide a 'point source' (not a key design priority on the old Isobarik, bless it!). Linn claims the minimal baffle area around the tweeter and supertweeter reduces baffle effect smearing', and Linn's 'acoustically matched double-flared bass ports' (unique, mirrored, 'rifled' designs to reduce turbulence) work with a pair of 6.5 inch polymer sandwich coned bass units. Round the back, there are 5-way connectors (for each individual driver), with a +/-

2dB bass lift/ lower option. The clever input connector enables passive multi-amplifier operation, and simple, clear upgrade path to AKTIV operation. Cabinet options comprise Maple, Cherry, Black Ash and Rosenut finishes

SOUND QUALITY

Having been a long term user of the aforementioned Quad 989 electrostatic, I'd begun to develop a thesis that the more expensive speakers get, the worse all-rounders they become. Unfortunately, the Akurate 242s went and disproved it, at a stroke. Here we have a strong, open, even and powerful sounding floorstander, one which - completely unlike the Quad - succeeds through its across the board ability.

Kicking off with CD, and 4hero's 'Escape That' showed the Akurates to be engaging and challenging performers - there was none of that polite, matter of factness of the Quad 989s. These loudspeakers know what their remit is, which is to extract as much music as possible out of the partnering system. Attack transients aren't quite as lightning-fast as the Quads, but not far off, and the sound is backed up by a physicality which the 989s - for obvious reasons of physics - simply can't muster. There's real 'thwack' to the snare drums, backed up by a deep, grumbling bass that shows no sign of compression whatsoever.

Better still, the opposite end of the frequency spectrum is no less uncompressed. The Akurate 242 is, after all, a five way design complete with supertweeter. As a result, its treble is airy, spacious and nicely relaxed and fluid, yet it also has great speed and articulation. Even with the (obvious) help of Townshend Maximum supertweeters, my reference Quads fail to achieve this degree of atmosphere.

Move back down to the midband, and the Linns are at an obvious disadvantage to the Quads (well, so are most...), but for a

AKTIV

In passive configuration, the Akurate 242s work with any hi-fi or home theatre system from single wiring to 5 x wiring with a single amplifier to 5 amps in passive mode. In Aktiv mode, £195 Linn Aktiv crossover cards are supplied for Linn dealer install into Linn amplifiers. Current Linn amplifier owners can upgrade to Aktiv in the same way. The Akurates can be converted from passive to active operation in five minutes, says Linn, requiring the removal of the terminal panel and the swapping of two connectors – although it's only to be done by authorised Linn dealers, just in case you get one of the two steps wrong!

FAMILY FORTUNES

Akurate loudspeakers were created by Linn's Philip Hobbs, designer of the Linn 328A Professional Monitor, Komri, Artikulat and Kaber loudspeaker, with some of the technology developed on from the Komri, specifically the upper array which is different in the Akurates and specific to this loudspeaker. The Linn loudspeaker hierarchy at the top of the domestic range is: Komri (when fully active), Artikulat (out now) and then the Akurate family.

conventional moving coil design they're models of good behaviour. Perhaps it's due to the 3K array, but we have fine transparency allied to a real sense of phase coherence, which lets the soundstage project forward – and back – with particular ease. So

rhythms, which combined with the 242's tremendous dynamic articulation, make powerful rock a veritable white knuckle ride.

Switch to jazz and you begin to hear their compromises. Yes, that's right, you've guessed it. That typical

"powerful rock is a veritable white knuckle ride..."

much so that, even in fairly large rooms, the 242s offer up a commanding performance; they can drive rooms like few others, and make the Quads seem quite asthmatic by comparison.

Move to rock and the Linns are at their happiest. Yes 'Roundabout' on DVD-A showed them to be utterly gripping. Snare drums pound out like machine guns, bass is super fast and oh-so fluid. Vocals are transparent, enthralling and three-dimensional. Cymbals are crisp and sonorous, without so much as a hint of tizz. The Akurates are never less than musical – like the bigger Komris they offer a short cut to any song's

Linn 'dryness' is there – not overwhelmingly so – but it's not to everyone's taste. Interestingly though, move to classical (Mahler Symphony No. 10, Simon Rattle; EMI Classics DVD-A) and this 'spry' tonality translates to 'even handedness'; it's insightful, appropriate and not distracting from the mechanics of the music... Image location is very good for a large loudspeaker, and it can hang instruments back in the mix with more precision than any other Linn loudspeaker I've heard – but it is, let's be honest here – no planar electrostatic. Here, the 989s romp off into the distance. Hit a dynamic crescendo however, and the situation reverses itself; the 242s have visceral punch that no amount of REL subwoofers can lend the Quads...

Overall, an excellent multi-purpose loudspeaker – it works superbly across a wide range of music. Although very well balanced (as Linn loudspeakers go), it's still a rocker at heart



VERDICT

Probably Linn's best balanced loudspeaker ever; brilliant power and punch allied to excellent imaging and insight. Rock fans queue here...

LINN AKURATE 242 £5,750 (INC. STANDS)
Linn Products
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www.linn.co.uk

(albeit a very slick one). In a sense, it's a kind of latter day Yamaha NS1000M in temperament – it just cuts to the quick of the music. For this reason, I loved it.

REFERENCE SYSTEM:

- Linn Unidisk 1.1 DVD universal player
- Linn Kisto system controller
- 2 x Linn 5125 five channel power amplifiers
- Linn Akurate loudspeaker system

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

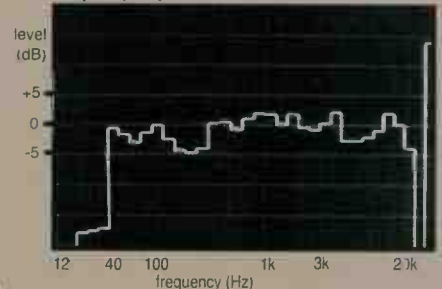
Linn loudspeakers differ somewhat in conception to the mainstream. Response flatness is not usually much of a concern, and the Akurate - which isn't - reflects this. Best to stand back and take a view, though. A large diameter midrange dome makes more sense than a midrange cone, mainly for smooth off-axis integration which in turn provides good cohesive imaging and a nicely integrated top end. It also yields good midrange speed and detail, making for clean vocals with good projection and an insightful sound. The Akurate is reasonably smooth across the midband, on and off axis, but becomes variable higher up, where there is a tweeter and a super tweeter, no less. The pink noise test signal was audibly affected.

At low frequencies the multiple bass units integrate in the far field to provide substantial bass down to 40Hz, likely with some deep bass peaking in most rooms that will add seismic weight to the sound. Our main analysis doesn't show this, but the lower resolution one does.

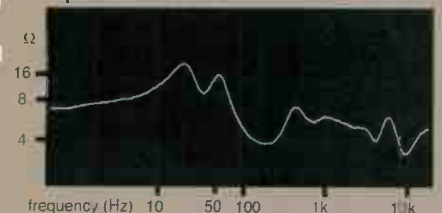
Sensitivity was fair at 87dB, impedance measuring Solus. The

impedance curve is bizarrely different to the norm, being a high Ohms or more at low frequencies, but a low 4ohms at high frequencies! Shaped like a worm with bowel problems, it warns that the Akurate does things differently. The Akurates will increase high frequency distortion from many amps, but draw less low frequency current.

Frequency response



Impedance



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SINGLE-ENDED PURITY

Our Parallel Single Ended (PSE) power amplifiers offer ultimate sound quality. Each monobloc has two beautifully linear 300B directly heated triodes in its output stage, producing 20 watts into an 8 ohm load. At the front of the circuit we there is a 6AU6 pentode, followed by an ECC82 as the driver valve. This design uses a 5U4 rectifier valve in the power supply, in combination with a 10H choke, giving an extremely quiet supply. Both mains and output transformers are built on high quality E/I pattern cores.

Feedback can be switched in or out whilst running, using a rear panel switch. Complex layered and sectioned output transformers give full output and low distortion across the audio band even without feedback, making such an option possible.

This is one of the few amplifiers in the world so good it will work without feedback - and no feedback is the preference of most buyers. It gives a spacious, relaxed and fluid sound quite unlike that of solid-state amps, all of which use feedback to correct deficiencies.

By operating linearly in feedbackless, pure Class A, single-ended mode these



300B monoblocs are as pure as it gets - and sound quality reflects the fact. Fast, clean and clear in their presentation, at the same time their purity of sound is easy on the ear.

The kit is totally hard-wired; it does not use circuit boards. We can supply without valves, or with the superb Tesla 300Bs, Russian 5U4s and European 6AU6s & ECC82. Our 300B PSE kit bears an affordable price of £895.00 (UK price) excluding valves. Each monobloc weighs 23kgs (50lbs). External dimensions with valves: 25cm(w) x 38cm(d) x 22cm(h) per monobloc.

PUSH-PULL POWER

For more power, we also offer 300B in Push-Pull (PP) form. 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 power. With a pair of 300Bs in push-pull configuration providing 26 watts output, they 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 hard 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

£1197 per pair

300B PP MONOBLOC KIT

£1197 per pair

The PRE-II is a high quality valve pre-amplifier that will drive any power amplifier. It has a gain of x5 which, with CD, enables it to deliver a large 10V output swing. To keep the amount of active amplification low, this pre-amp uniquely uses a line drive transformer to deliver a pure signal to the power amplifier. There are six inputs, a tape monitor and two sets of output sockets. It is powered by the external PSU-II power supply. The volume control uses high quality Alps Blue potentiometer which, with our solid, turned brass, chromed knob, gives a quality feel rarely encountered these days.

PHONO-II is a dedicated valve phono stage for MM cartridges, with MC input transformers an option. By using all-d.c. supplies from PSU-II and a case in which there is no power supply, PHONO II is hum free, something that is difficult to achieve with valves. With accurate RIAA equalisation right down to 10Hz (-3dB) PHONO II gives a wonderfully pure, dimensional sound from LP, possessing a sense of life and dynamism quite different to solid-state preamps.

Finally, PSU-II is a power supply unit that feeds both the PRE-II and PHONO-II. Keeping the power supply separate removes hum, often the bane of valves.

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



SERIES II MODULAR PRE-AMP KIT

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Kel84 is an affordable, integrated valve amplifier for those who want to enjoy the valve sound, but from a simple, easy to build kit. It uses inexpensive EL84 output valves, known for their sweet sound, in conventional push-pull arrangement to provide 15 watts into an 8 ohm load. The output transformers are our own quality Ultra Linear design. Up front, the circuit employs an ECF80 input/phase splitter valve, which contributes to Kel84's extremely smooth sound.

The amplifier has very low hum and for simplicity it is built on a printed circuit board. A strong steel chassis is fronted by a 3mm anodised front panel and attractive brushed aluminium effect 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, phono sockets, and 4mm banana sockets for loudspeakers. 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).



KEL84 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT

£298



Our 6550 series amplifiers are built around the rugged 6550 beam tetrode that's popular in America. This valve is widely available at a good price. Producing no less than 40 watts into an 8 ohm load, (available in a 4 ohm version if required) our 6550 is a power house, since valve watts always sound louder than transistor watts!

The difference between our 6550 and most others is that we use valve rectification (5U4) and a choke pi filter, for a power supply that is quiet and free from solid-state hardness. This is a true high-end design from Andy Grove, hard wired. It is a cut above the many other 6550s, with enough power to drive most loudspeakers, including insensitive electrostatics for example. 6550 combines high

power with a top-end smoothness of sound, yet doesn't cost the earth to run, as the valves are inexpensive and have a long life.

The amplifier weighs 19kg. Dimensions are 390mm(w) x 330mm(d) x 190mm(h) with valves, or 220mm(h) with cage.

KIT6550 - An integrated amplifier with line inputs and volume control. Accepts CD, tuner, tape etc., but not LP.

KAT6550 - A power amplifier for use with a separate pre-amp. Paired with PRE II and PHONO II (+PSU II), can provide LP reproduction.



KIT6550 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT

£615

KAT6550 VALVE POWER AMPLIFIER KIT

£580

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 pure Class 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. Treble has the crispness of the best solid-state, but with the tonal resolution and delicacy associated with valves. Bass is punchy and controlled without becoming artificial.

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

TRANSI 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 Oh 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-1watts, 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. 1inch 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

- add 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)
- Kel34 Printed Circuit Board 140mm(w) x 310mm(l) x 2.4mm(d).
- KECL80 Printed Circuit Board (a pair) 120mm(w) x 215mm(l) x 2.4mm(d)
- HO83 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



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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 (multiloop 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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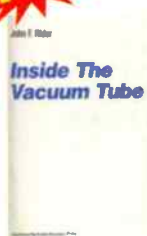


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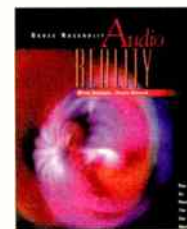
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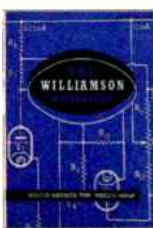
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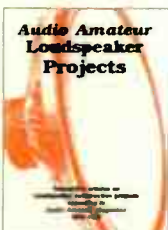


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Surround-sound has been a dominating technology for some years now as far as manufacturers are concerned, but at last people at the top are starting to step back and appraise what is happening in the marketplace - and at the bottom of the balance sheet. Video sales are booming, that's for sure. But surround-sound audio is looking like its got stuck, which hardly surprises me. The sales are there, but the profits are not. Instead, they are being made in good old stereo we are now told and, as a result, quality stereo is coming back into fashion.

With manufacturers that is; I'm not sure it ever went out of fashion with buyers.

All this is likely to be great news for *Hi-Fi World* readers, who seem largely uninterested in competing with loudspeakers for a place in their lounge. It's the domestic intrusion that people in the industry refuse to acknowledge, as well as the absurd technical complexity. Britain in particular is a nation of homeowners for whom an elegant, well furnished lounge is a priority. In many homes there just isn't room for three front and two rear loudspeakers, nor is there much interest in installing them. Two stereo loudspeakers are enough for most people; the thought of cramming in another three is out of the question, especially with the amount of cabling this requires.

And then there's all that technology, which again doesn't seem to ring bells with a lot of people. This seems a little more curious, because there's no doubt that readers of this magazine are savvy enough about technicalities, when it interests them. But what interests hi-fi magazine readers is the pleasure they can get from music convincingly reproduced and, by and large, the technologies of

surround-sound seem at best loosely related to this aim. Neither Dolby nor dts are directly associated with good sound quality in normal high fidelity. And so it is with a lot of surround sound kit: ranks of patented and protected technologies, accompanied by obligatory logos that now adorn the fascias on DVD

“surround-sound audio is looking like its got stuck, which hardly surprises me...”

players and receivers. Even Windows is starting to appear, for heaven's sake, and this demonstrates well enough where A/V surround sound is going - mass consumer electronics...

Personally, I like surround-sound - it can be dramatic. And it is possible to install surround-sound so it takes up less room than stereo; I have done it. But it takes a lot of effort. In my case a large fireplace was removed to house a widescreen TV, together with the centre speaker on a strong shelf above it. The cables go under the floor and the rear loudspeakers - up to four of them for 7.1 surround-sound - go along a rear wall. This isn't ideal, but like everyone else I need to free as much floor area as possible and I don't have the luxury of a large spare room purely for cinema use.

When it takes so much effort to install a dedicated surround-sound system, little wonder there's so little interest in doing so. The introduction of extra channels to hoist 5.1 to 7.1 hasn't helped either I feel. The benefits are too small to outweigh the drawbacks, which are invisible to the industry but very real to the consumer. Yet more cables, more boxes and an even bigger and

more complex receiver. Here again the A/V market is doing itself no favours by engaging in a simple numbers game.

It may well be that 7.1 is a Bridge Too Far for surround-sound. Anyone savvy enough to consider getting a full 5.1 system will be aware that it's already been superceded - or so it might seem - by 7.1. It took the CE business just a few years to decide 6.1 then 7.1 were far better than original 5.1, destabilising confidence in the basic 5.1 surround-sound format. What comes next people may well ask themselves? It was DVD's ability to provide

theatre surround-sound that started the surround-sound ball rolling and the world's Consumer Electronics companies soon got caught up in a feeding frenzy. If people everywhere were willing to buy into surround-sound it would be the most fantastic sales lead manufacturing boom ever, but it ain't happening.

Cost cut Home Cinema systems are selling, but they are not making anyone a useful profit. So they are not worth selling! It's very easy to give something away, not so easy to make a living doing it. Most low cost electronics is sourced from China, even when it carries a Japanese brand name, so the big Japanese names are starting to look hard again at quality stereo. The problem with stereo is that it's a mature technology that's getting ever more difficult to advance. All the same there's still leeway here to move technology forward and produce attractive products people want to buy.

As emphasis drifts back to stereo, I can't help feeling a little more thought and imagination is needed to produce products that deliver the quality people want to buy, and are willing to pay for. ●

david price



Thirty years back, if you'd been in the market for a Honda, Kawasaki, Suzuki or Yamaha motorcycle, it would have been made in Japan. Now though, the likes of Honda and Yamaha build their budget bikes in Southern Europe, and it shows...

Take, for example, the quality of the paint finish on the new Spanish-built Honda CB500; it's alright, but look at the lustrous shine on the Japanese VFR800's tank and you can really see how much better it's done in Japan. The cycle parts, frame, welding, chrome plating, enamelling and rubber fittings all tell the same story – only 'made in Japan' is a copper-bottomed guarantee of the best quality.

Likewise, look at Sony Corporation, which manufactures its audio-visual wares all around the world these days. Its CD portables are made in Malaysia, but for the company's high end hi-fi – such as the CDP-XA9000ES tested in this issue – the only place to guarantee superlative levels of fit and finish is Japan. MiniDisc is another fine example – so important is the format to the Japanese giant that the only place it manufactures its MD portables (which require extremely high tolerances) is – that's right, you've guessed it, Japan.

Interesting then, that back in the early 1970s, Japanese products were dismissed as 'Jap crap'. With thirty years of hindsight, there is absolutely nothing to bear this out, save the nasty, smug, conceit of those who wielded the term. 'Made in Japan' went on to become something the whole world wanted, and on the back of that, the country went from being wrecked, broken and exhausted immediately after World War II to the world's second largest economy with

the world's highest ever property prices in the space of thirty years.

It shouldn't have escaped your notice that this issue looks at Chinese manufactured hi-fi. Now, before I visited Beijing in August, even I – as one who takes pride in his open-minded, anti-xenophobic world view – couldn't help but feel ever so

“ **China's audio industry is about where Japan's was in around 1972...** ”

slightly sniffy about both the quality and design of this country's audio products.

This, I suspect, is because until now I'd subconsciously equated Chinese stuff with £30 'supermarket special' DVD players, conveniently forgetting that thirty years back, Japan used to make precisely this sort of stuff by the tonne – cheap radios, cameras, tape recorders and eight tracks for mass consumption. At precisely the same time – the mid seventies – however, companies like Sony, Technics, Nakamichi and Pioneer were gearing up to make some of the best high end audio the world has ever seen, using the low cost of labour and the low value of the Yen to deliver some breathtaking bits of kit.

Seems to me that the same thing's happening in China now, too... I think that this vast country's audio industry is about where Japan's was in around 1972. Now as then, a number of large European and American consumer electronics names had already moved manufacturing from their own countries to the new 'Asian Tiger'. Now as then, this 'Asian Tiger's economy was growing at nearly 10% per annum (a startling figure). Now as then, the native hi-fi

companies started by doing OEM and then subsequently good – if not particularly distinguished – copies of existing audio separates. And now, as then, some brands leaped ahead of the game by designing their own kit, and showing- in some cases – an extremely original – approach, too.

Chinese hi-fi can be divided into three categories. First, in the case of Cambridge Audio, it's 'British made in China' – just as NAD's famous 3020 amplifier was designed here in 1978 and made in Taiwan. Nothing new there, then. Second, there's a mass of weird and wonderful brands

making – let's be frank here – copies of existing products, often using their OEM experience ('have factory, will dabble'). These are beginning to appear on these shores, by a process of 'audio osmosis' (the passing of products from a weaker to a stronger market) simply because they're cheap. Thirdly, there are quintessentially Chinese brands, like Shanling, which are both very well engineered, impressively built and like nothing Japan Inc. would ever dream of doing. They're really tweaky, niche products with loads of character (which is sometimes a tad brash for conservative British tastes).

It's these which really interest me. Anyone who's used an Apple PowerBook, G5 or iPod mini will know the stunning levels of quality Chinese factories are capable of, and owners of Shanling digital disc spinners can appreciate all those clever little audiophile touches (separate tube output stage, bundled audiophile power lead, quality headphone output, swish remote control). Combine the two and Chinese hi-fi brands soon could be doing to the Japanese what the Japanese did to the British motorcycle industry, some thirty years ago... ●

dominic todd



When your hobby becomes your job, and you find that rather than your enthusiasm growing, it can actually wane.

Still, as I recently found out, the situation can work the other way too. A good friend of mine has recently left the hi-fi retail industry to pursue an entirely different career. He always was a bit of a hi-fi enthusiast but selling products all day long dampened his enthusiasm. Now he's no longer connected with the business, he's got his enthusiasm back, and it's quite infectious. Over a drink the other day, the subject of hi-fi inevitably arose and, more specifically, the subjects of upgrading and tweaking. After having just bought both the, genuinely effective, Ringmat and Statmats he's now a true convert to the odd bit of tweekery. Nothing wrong with that I thought, at least until he mentioned his next purchase was going to be a £200 mains cleaner. Now I've absolutely nothing against someone spending £200 on a mains cleaner, but it seems to me that it's a more expensive tweak that will have limited effect on his type of system.

The system, incidentally, consists of a Cambridge Azur 640A and 640C, Pro-ject Xpression, and Mordaunt Short 906 'speakers. I reckoned that for the same money, a series of tweaks could be made that would have a far greater combined effect than the mains block. Of course, the moment I opened my mouth, I knew that I'd be asked for the exact whys and wherefores. The challenge was on...

Although I would generally spend an even amount on hi-fi components, there's certainly something to be said for the classic '80s adage of 'garbage in, garbage out'. With this in mind, the first focus of attention had to be the turntable.

Tweak number one, and absolutely critical to a turntable, is the set-up and support. The turntable was currently situated on a cabinet along with the other components, which, due to resonances, is never ideal. Fortunately he had a concrete floor, so the obvious solution was to mount the deck on a separate table. Had the floor been of the suspended variety, incidentally, then I would

“ there's certainly something to be said for the classic adage of 'garbage in, garbage out'...

always recommend wall mounting, especially for a non-suspended deck such as the Xpression. On a sound per pound basis, bargains come little sweeter than the Ikea LACK side table. It is unbelievably cheap at £8, comes in all sorts of colourful hues and sounds better than some dedicated designs costing ten times as much.

So, that leaves £192. The next tweak would cost a lot more, but be well worthwhile. As fine as the Ortofon OM10 is as a budget cartridge, it can be a little jagged around the edges. As he had a Pro-ject phono box with Moving Coil compatibility I suggested trying the Ortofon MC15 Super II. Now, whilst many hacks will tell you not to bother with MC unless you're spending at least £300, I've always been of the opinion that MC is generally worth going for as soon as possible, even from the £100 mark. For my money, the extra refinement and subtlety of sound is worth the trade off for the sense of "excitement" you get with the more expensive MMs. Of course I'm generalising here, but the MC15 is a sweet little needle, and actually

suited the system extremely well.

With just £42 it was time to look at other cheapo options. Amazingly, although he'd always told customers to fill their stands and 'speakers with sand or lead shot, he'd never actually done it himself. The 906s have a sealed cavity and so, at the cost of about £3, they were duly filled with sand. Two important things to note here. The first is always to use a dry sand. We found something called 'bird sand' did the job just fine here. The second piece of advice is to mix in pieces of polystyrene. Simply attack the nearest piece of errant packaging with a cheese grater and, bingo, polystyrene shreds which will prevent the sand from sinking and settling.

With around £40 left the final tweak had to be the good old contact clean. When cleaning contacts, the best results come from pure hard graft. Cleaning not only the 'speaker, phono and mains sockets, but also the fuse clips, cartridge pins and internal 'speaker connections can pay dividends. Be careful what you use, as some solutions appear to have no, or even a negative, effect upon sound quality. Personally I rate both Kontak (£15 a bottle) and van den Hul "The Solution" (£25). We used Kontak, and after an hour or so of toil, the work paid off. With absolutely everything that connects, coated, the sound stage opened up noticeably and there was a great deal more detail evident.

The combined effects had brought about a more refined sound with superior integration due, no doubt, to the cartridge. There was greater detail, a broader sound stage and superior bass timing. Better than a mains cleaner? I would be amazed if the combined effect of the smaller tweaks weren't. In case you were wondering what happened to the final £20 - well, it came in very handy down the pub later. ●

patrick cleasby



o it feels like a final roll of the dice for the DVD-Audio format. It's now a year since Warners declared that they would be adopting a form of dual sided flipper disc to

combat the perceived advantages of the single inventory hybrid SACD in the market place. With what is now called 'Dual Disc' about to launch before the end of the year in the US and early next year over here, has it all come too late to rescue MLP surround on the standard Digital Versatile Disc? Some industry PRs obviously think so, noting that their manufacturers are dropping universal player capabilities from their DVD machines, and posing questions such as, "the death of high resolution audio - will we miss it?"

The time it has taken to iron out the various issues around Dual Disc has definitely not done DVD-Audio based high resolution sales any favours. If it is next to impossible to find any new and interesting material, all but the most enthusiastic potential purchasers will tend to get frustrated and bored, and may not even be there when Warners (and the other companies) want to sell them some Dual Discs.

The hiatus has allowed even companies such as DTS, who had started to migrate towards DVD-Audio, to have second thoughts. They are certainly not interested in getting on board with Dual Disc, regarding it as a flawed format. Some have even been moved to state that they don't really care about DVD-Audio as DTS on a CD or DVD-Video is plenty good enough.

Quite sensibly, more than one DTS representative has expressed the view that they, and the public at

large, do not like flippers. After all, barring the region 1 'Terminator 2' and 'Men In Black', how many DVD-18s has anyone seen? DVD-10s aren't that common. The model which has taken hold in the music and movie

dual Disc is a lame transitional tech- nology destined for failure

DVD market of having DVD5/DVD9 or twin DVD9 double packs might tend to suggest that DTS have got it right by releasing projects such as BT's 'Monster' soundtrack and the forthcoming Porcupine Tree album as more practical pairings of a DVD-Audio for the home and a CD for the car. Even Warners seem likely to go this route for some prestige titles such as the fabled 'Running On Empty' DVD-Audio from Jackson Browne. Its producer states that it is 'too special' to be cut down to fit into one side of a dual disc and is most likely to see the day (please?) in the double pack format.

The delay has also given industry-types and commentators enough time to assess all of the downsides to the new bastardised format, and the feeling of positivity following a relatively successful market test has been forgotten. Take these comments from the manager of a band with a real interest in bringing surround titles to market: "We will have absolutely nothing to do with the Dual Disc, it is a lame transitional technology destined for failure, it is cheap and stupid".

Strong words indeed, but not really if you consider that the CD side is non-Redbook standard and only

holds 53 minutes (Phillips will not put the CD brand on it), and the DVD side is a cheap DVD-5, which is useless. Add to that the fact that between 12-15% are being returned as defective, and you have a piece of

crap transitional technology that will end up turning off more people than on. In response to my query on that cited running time, he said, "There's 60 minutes possible, 53 minutes with copy protection. Still a piece of junk. Don't get me wrong

- if they could create a proper 'dual disc' that had a multilayer DVD-9 on one side, and an industry standard CD, then it would be a great idea. Until then, it's crap and destined for the dustbin of history..."

This guy does not mince his words, and there are plenty others out there of a similar mind. So there are a number of issues which appear to make the high resolution surround market even more confusing for the average punter, and more irritating for the audiophile than the standard format war bifurcation. Not least among them is the fact that Sony's Dual Discs will only contain lossy surround audio in the DVD-Video format.

Thankfully, standard DVD-Audio will continue to exist, even if it is just in the form of 24/192 stereo discs from the likes of High Resolution Music and Classic Records, but probably in the aforementioned double pack model too. DVD-Audio lovers can always content themselves with the fact that MLP is in the spec for HD-DVD! But what about Blu-ray? Let's save that one for another day shall we? There, I got through a whole column without mentioning Apple once! [shurely shome mistake? - Ed.]

life, deluxe

With Bill Nelson about to go on his first tour with a full band for many years, and EMI making much of Be Bop Deluxe's catalogue available again in remastered form, Patrick Cleasby spoke to him about this year's big project...

Bill Nelson is one of this country's legendary guitar innovators, constantly generating new work, but unusually 2004 seems to have become a year predominantly taken up with retrospective activity. Bill and I spoke the day before he was about to start rehearsals for his October UK tour. "It has been very hectic getting the tour set up. I started back in January, just planning it and deciding how we go about it. There are a lot of things which go with the tour besides the actual playing bit - there are a couple of new albums which we're exclusively doing for the tour, and a 24 page glossy program - there's a lot of peripheral stuff which needs taking care of, so it's been quite intense. Plus it's a long show, it's almost three hours divided into three sections, and one of those sections is a film which I've made specially for the tour."

I asked Bill which came first, the idea of doing the retrospective tour, or EMI kicking off another round of Best Of and remasters: "Well they jumped on the bandwagon really. Basically I did a solo tour last year, just playing solo guitar pieces, which was quite successful, and for the last two years I put a one-off band together for a fan convention called Nelsonica. The band was made up of friends of mine and we just had a lot of fun with it, doing a short set with a mixture of different kinds of music. I thought it might be worth taking that out on the road, but because it's a seven piece band, there's a hell of a lot of expense involved. Sound on Sound magazine very generously came in with some sponsorship money to help us put the tour together. EMI heard about it and decided to do these reissues, so the tour came first really."

Having thoroughly enjoyed the exemplary remastering of the new Be Bop Deluxe compilation

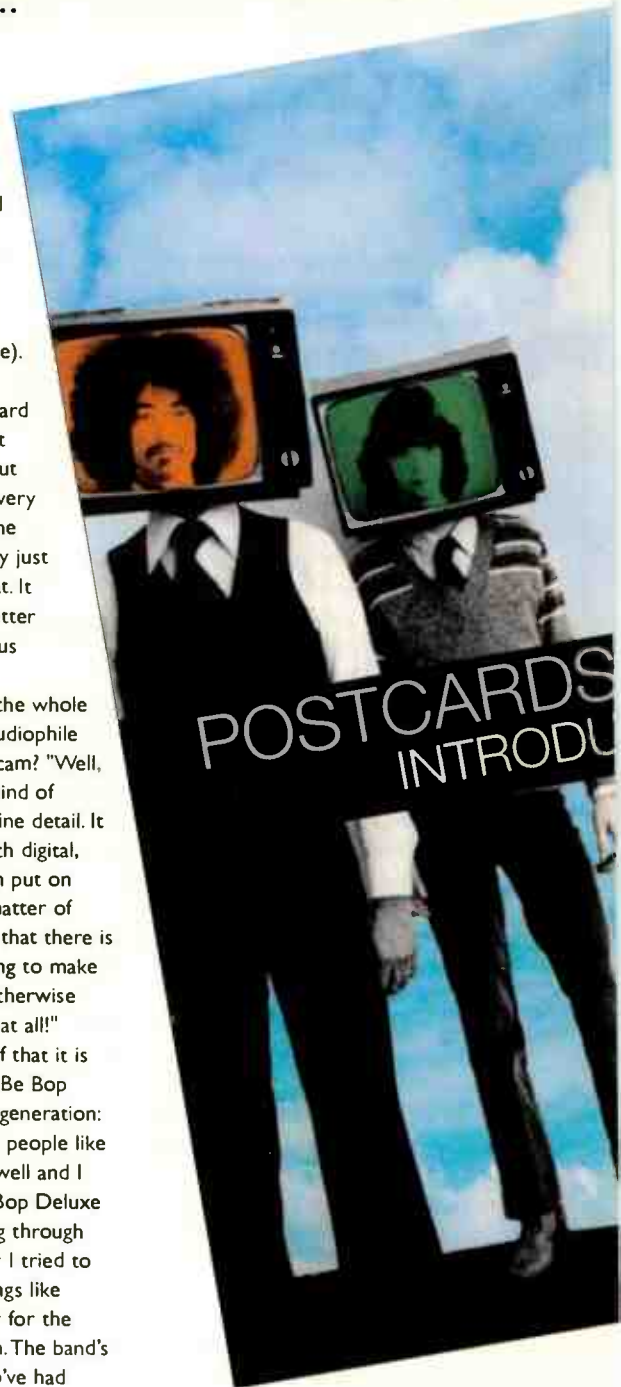
'Postcards From The Future' myself, I asked Bill what he thought, and whether he had heard the remastered albums (basically everything except 'Sunburst Finish' which is still on catalogue). "I haven't heard the individual albums. I've heard the compilation. I am not sure who's done them but the compilation sounds very good. I had no hand in the remastering process, they just did that off their own bat. It certainly sounds a lot better than some of the previous reissues."

Does Bill believe in the whole remastering process - audiophile heaven or sales-driven scam? "Well, you know, if you're the kind of person who is into the fine detail. It can go so many ways with digital, because the spin you can put on things ends up being a matter of personal taste. I suspect that there is a certain amount of trying to make more money out of it, otherwise they wouldn't put it out at all!"

I expressed my belief that it is useful to get a band like Be Bop Deluxe across to a new generation: "It's ironic when you see people like The Darkness doing so well and I keep hearing bits of Be Bop Deluxe in that. When I was going through the material for the tour I tried to think about practical things like what's going to be easier for the band to get to grips with. The band's a mixture of people who've had experience and those who've only had home recording experience. It's got an edge - it's almost like when Be Bop started out - we weren't completely seasoned and we still had things to learn and this band is rather like that. I think that will make it quite exciting because it will have the freshness that a band which is too slick and too polished loses

eventually. The tour isn't just about Be Bop Deluxe material - it's covering thirty years of work - but I was surprised listening back to those tracks how much they do still hold up, because it's not stuff I've paid a lot of attention to these last twenty years..."

I feel obliged to ask if Bill has



paid any attention to DVD-A or SACD Yet? "I haven't done yet, no. Ironically all through the years my hi-fi system has always been way behind my studio system - my home studio is all digital and I can do 5.1 up there if I chose to do."

I wanted to know if the 5.1 on the Flashlight Dreams and Fleeting

CDs and fed them through various processors - Eventide harmonizers and so on - to get the surround sound thing happening. It's quite interesting - when I went back and listened to the same material in stereo it sounded really small in

comparison! I would like to develop more of the video side with sound. "I'm doing three solo sets during the tours, a different one on different night, and

side. If you put that kind of facility in the hands of people with no imagination and very little talent you're just going to get lots of things out there which aren't very good and probably wouldn't have been made otherwise."

Bill recently posted a vehement condemnation of the lack of real adventure in modern music on his website diary - I wondered whether the music industry has got worse and whether it really did feel less corporate in the seventies, "I think we've been going through a bad patch these last few years, not just from the point of view of the music, but from the point of view of the people who deal with putting records in front of people - it's got to be such a corporate thing and people don't dare take risks because their job's at stake. I think the accounting end of it was always there - at the end of the day they were looking at figures on paper to see how many people were buying the records, but there was a period, a kind of golden age, when the people on the shop floor who were actually signing bands, the A&R staff, were given a lot more freedom and were trusted. Some of those guys had good taste and would take risks. They would sign artists who weren't particularly mainstream but might cross over and they took a chance with them. Now I think it's become delineated, so itemised and formulated. Market research is very high science now, everything is targeted and I don't think it takes into account the fact that people are quite flexible in their taste and they buy all kinds of music, and also people of a certain age actually still like to listen hard to music and we want something we can get our teeth into".

I note that both artists and consumers seem to stick with music so much longer these days, and ask if Bill intends to carry on pursuing music until he drops... "I'm passionate about music, I love music. It's brought meaning to my life, and it's helped me understand myself, and sometimes people tell me it's brought meaning to their lives and it's helped them to focus on certain things in their lives as well. That seems to me to be worth doing, and I can't think of anything else I could do which would be that satisfying. I am hoping that this little tour will at least make a few people aware of what I'm doing. I am getting to that age now where a bit of recognition wouldn't go amiss, you know!" (Bill laughs).



FROM THE FUTURE...
NG BE BOP DELUXE

Shadows DVD Bill did with David Singleton at DGM was discrete mixed or treated, I suspected the latter, but some pleasing rear channel action had been achieved:

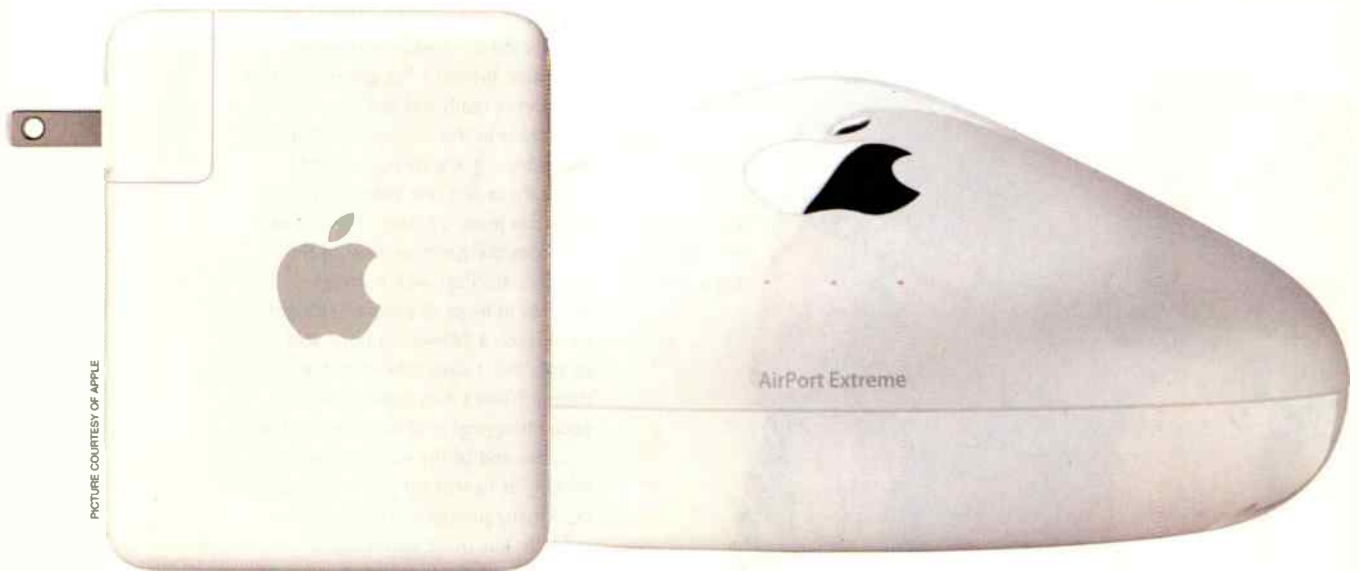
"It was actually treated because there were no master tapes or multi-tracks. A lot of that instrumental material I had recorded on old 16 track or even 8 track. Once I'd got a mix of something I'd use the tape again! What we did was we took the

I've put together video for each of those sets. Then there's the little film I've made about Be Bop Deluxe, which is actually old cine footage from 1977 of the band in the south of France recording the final album. I bounced that to digital and into the computer and made a little half hour feature.

I asked what Bill felt about the democratising effect of all this really powerful technology being available to anyone with a semi-decent computer these days? "Well, it's got its good side and it's got its down

Further details of all of Bill's varied endeavours can be found at
www.billiejean.com
www.billiejean.co.uk

air-way to heaven



PICTURE COURTESY OF APPLE

Apple has released the ideal accessory for the iTunes obsessive, so who better than Patrick Cleasby to assess? Be amazed - enter Airtunes...

What is this thing called Airtunes? If you've been paying attention to the advance references we have made for the last couple of months you may have some idea, but to recap: the essence of this wonderful concept is the ability to listen your iTunes music library, be it PC or Mac, WAV or AIF, MP3 or AAC, bought or ripped, anywhere in your house where you have powered speakers or a hi-fi system!

How is this achieved? Well, you may know that Apple were at the forefront of wireless networking (Wi Fi) many years ago. Their name for the 802.11b (11mbps) wireless standard was Airport, and

more recently they have moved up to the more recent and much faster 802.11g (54mbps) standard, labelled Airport Extreme by Cupertino. The new Airport Express is merely a cut down version of the usual base station. What these do is attach to your fast internet connection and make it available wirelessly to any Wi Fi computer on your home network. The Express adds the ingenious ability to output 'Airtunes' passed across from an iTunes client.

Technically this happens by taking whatever format happens to be sitting in the iTunes library and encodes it into Apple Lossless format on the fly, then encrypting it for transmission. The reverse process happens at the Airport Express end of things, reconstructing the audio bitstream for conversion to analogue, or passing out as S/PDIF. The really cunning part is that Apple's engineers have been careful enough to ensure that if that PCM stream is not audio, but lossy multi-channel wrapped as PCM, that information is preserved and remains decodable on the target amplifier (providing you use the digital connection and the amp has decoding capabilities of course). More on these claims later! What this means is that DTS and Dolby Digital can be passed – Apple must have an eye on a future where this

technology will be employed for DVD-Video wireless transport at some stage...

There really isn't that much in the by-now-familiar clamshell Airport Express box. The manual is admirably clear, and there are two CD-ROMs in case you need them. If you do not run iTunes or have not kept your copy up-to-date you will have to install 4.6 either over the net or using the supplied CD. The good news for the networking averse is that whether you are PC or Mac, as long as you have a set-up which meets the requirements, you can basically use Airport Express straight out of the box. Trust me, I have tried both platforms, and if all you need is a two-point network of iTunes playing into Airport Express, plug and play and you're away. Integrating into an existing Wi Fi network will definitely require installation of the specific Airport Express software, and is outside the scope of this review.

TAKING OFF

The unit itself is like an oversized Apple iPod or iBook wall wart, (and like them the UK plug is separate but locks snugly onto the corner of the unit). It is only distinguished by a single LED on its visible edge, and three ports on the underside. These



PICTURE COURTESY OF APPLE

SPECIFICATIONS

SIZE: 3.7 x 2.95 x 1.12 inches

WEIGHT: 6.7 ounces

RANGE: 50 feet for 802.11g, 150 feet for 802.11b

PC SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: PC with a Wi-Fi- certified IEEE 802.11b or 802.11g wireless card, Windows 2000 or XP

MAC SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: Mac with an AirPort Extreme Card or AirPort Card, OS X Panther (10.3) recommended

include the usual Cat5 port for connection to your router or ADSL modem, and a USB port for the attachment of a printer which can be shared between client computers using Apple's zero-config Rendezvous technology. But let's face it, how many audiophile users are going to have a printer or even their main internet connection behind their hi-fi? I don't intend to consider the non-audio capabilities of the device – what we're interested in is the third, innocuous looking port: a simple 3.5mm one which doubles as analogue stereo and S/PDIF output. But don't forget that if you are lucky enough to have either an iPod mini or a 4G with USB2.0 charging capability, the USB port here will feed it!

Options include a travel power pack which is the same one sold for iPods, and a kit of Monster Cable both sold by Apple for £29. If you have used fixed 3.5mm optical jacks with MiniDisc Walkmans or the adapters which come with Terratec soundcards and Cambridge optical cables these will serve just as well, and of course if you're going in analogue any 3.5mm stereo to phono pair lead will do.

SOUNDING OUT

Obviously my initial test was Apple-based. I had to get an AirPort Extreme card for my 1GHz G4 iBook with 640MB of memory. The OS was at 10.3.5 level, and the AirPort support was the established 3.4 level. The card was fitted under the keyboard with ridiculous ease and I plugged the AirPort Express into the wall, and into the amplifier (the usual Denon AVC-A1SRA) using S/PDIF. Once iTunes was fired up there was a new button in the bottom left edge of the window pane, containing that default base station name, and a few new options in the preferences. Select the base station, press play and deeply

satisfying bass was emitted from the Monitor Audio GR20s as Bloc Party's 'Little Thoughts' stormed out in old-school indie style - nice! It may not quite equal playing the CD on a serious bespoke transport, but it's damn close. Unfortunately the analogue output is not so stellar, but you can't have everything...

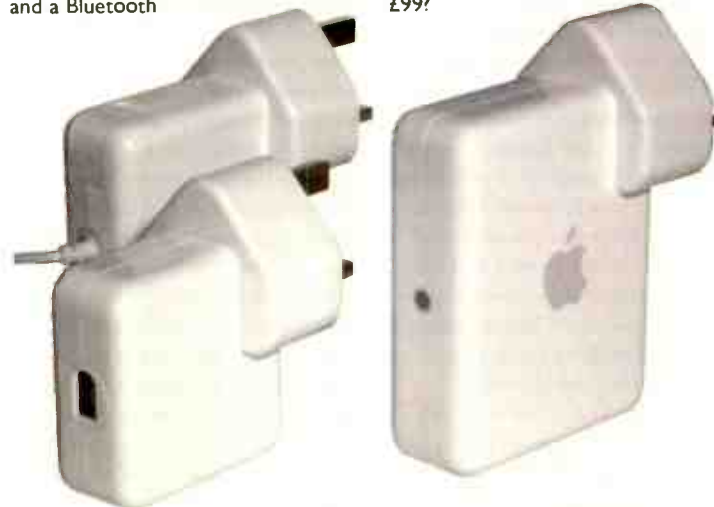
To be fair to those of you who haven't seen the light yet, I also tested using my usual PC laptop set-up – an ageing Dell Inspiron 7500 PIII 600Mhz with 256MB of memory, loaded with Windows XP Pro SP1. I borrowed a PCMCIA Lucent 802.11b card, and joy-of-joys it was immediately detected by the OS, and picked up the wireless network at full strength. A quick iTunes update to 4.6 gave me exactly the same interface changes as on the Mac, and playback was equally immediate and glitch free, even at the lower 11Mbps bandwidth. (Although remember that there is less headroom to achieve internet downloads etc. over the same connection which Airtunes is using compared with Airport Extreme, which is much more robust if you want this kind of concurrency). Both systems have a slight lag after pressing play – as the iTunes info window shows, for these couple of seconds the base station is being contacted (and the buffering/streaming process is being initiated).

Of course this is all fine if you want to bring your work laptop into the living room and flip between tracks. But if your library is on a Power Mac in an office how do you control things? Apple high-ups have teasingly intimated that there is more to come, but in the meantime you could do worse than getting yourself a Bluetooth phone which is compatible with the ingenious third-party Mac program Salling Clicker and a Bluetooth

adapter with enough range to cover the house. You then have control over iTunes and much more besides...

All this was so ridiculously easy that I decided to challenge myself by attempting to verify those lossy surround transport claims. There is a real trick to this and the secrets are contained in an Apple knowledge base article. Basically we are only talking wrapped .WAV files here, not .AC3, .DTS or .CPT files, and you must use maximum volume within iTunes, and defeat all EQs, crossfades and enhancements. Then and only then will the surround bitstream be untouched and decodable. It really works! There is however, a considerable downside. Testing reveals that for some reason only 44.1kHz wrapped .WAV files will pass. Although straight 16/48 audio works, 48kHz DTS or Dolby Digital .WAV files do not. Maybe this is to discourage DVD ripping, (DVD-Video spec files are almost always 48Khz, and never 44.1Khz), but at least if you have DTS CDs you can now rip them and playlist them! They even work if they have been losslessly compressed, but only 10% compression is achieved, rather than the usual 50%-odd...

There is obviously work to do to correct these surround oversights (?) and to come up with a suitably jaw-droppingly clever remote control method, but if this is what Apple's financial muscle and technical nous can now deliver with a v1.0 product, rest assured that whatever happens next will be equally if not more exciting. Thankfully they have even managed to get this one available in sufficient numbers. Who needs media centre computers or jukebox servers if your existing set up can play flawless digital as easily as this for £99?



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Brilliant. Apple continues to innovate with style and class – what will they think of next?

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- surround possibilities
- iPod charging

AGAINST
- lacklustre D-A
- remote needed
- err, that's it!



DAVID BOWIE
HEATHEN
(NON-HYBRID SACD: STEREO AND MULTI-CHANNEL DSD)

This month our four discs all ably demonstrate that the twin benefits of high resolution and surround sound can make listening to any type of music more involving and enjoyable. Both SACDs also highlight the importance of having a surround evangelist on your team if you want to do this stuff well. In Bowie's case 'Heathen' marked the renewal of his creative relationship with Tony Visconti. The American is a great enthusiast for surround, and although his production career still keeps him busy with all kinds of grade A talent, he manages to find time for surround reworkings of his seventies productions such as 'Electric Warrior' and the mooted Bowie live albums. The ideal approach for new material is to produce the surround version in tandem with the stereo, although in the case of 'Heathen' it was more of an immediate follow-on: Visconti presented a demo surround mix of 'Slow Burn' to the powers that be, and got not only the commission to do the whole album, (this is often the way – it's how Greg Penny won control of Elton John's back catalogue surround projects), but also the trust which enabled him to give its successor 'Reality' the same

treatment straight off the bat. Supplies of both Bowie discs have been erratic, so I have only just got hold of this one from a couple of years ago and have yet to track down the second - but on the evidence of Visconti's masterful mix here I may have to make a purchase. 'Heathen' has a densely layered sound, ideally suited to having its atmosphere and effects spread into the surrounds. You should not be feeling the need to return to the stereo version. The only shame is the disc's lack of a CD layer for easy ripping for iPod use...

DIANA KRALL
THE GIRL IN THE OTHER ROOM
(HYBRID SACD: STEREO AND MULTI-CHANNEL DSD)

Diana Krall is in that enviable position of almost inevitably selling whatever she puts out by the truckload. It must be difficult to retain the enthusiasm to produce more strong work - after all, once you've got the knack of this kind of sultry jazz it would be very easy to churn out more of the same. Thankfully this album has a slightly different spin on it, with left-field cover version choices, and some interesting self-penned pieces. The influence of her recent marriage to Elvis Costello is also of interest, particularly given that one of those

covers is an excellent version of 'Almost Blue', a song rapidly working its way to standard status with Alison Moyet also torching it up recently.

The other notable cover is less successful - for this listener taking on Joni is ill advised (die Counting Crows, die!) – and the 'Black Crow' here adds little to an unimpeachable original. Conversely the moody autobiographical piano ballads which close the album represent a pleasant change to Krall's habitual style, and are obviously rooted in the 'Blue' period work of the senior Canadian songstress. The recording is excellent – unlike Costello's 'North' where the wonderful Peter Erskine's drums are hidden away in Kevin Killen's mix, here long-time Krall engineer and mixer Al Schmitt foregrounds his swinging style gorgeously. I spoke to Schmitt earlier in the year and he described the whole process of working on Krall's records as an easygoing joy. He revealed that while Krall was not a surround listener herself at that time, she did believe in the alternate mix format. Schmitt's work here is admirable – a DSD stereo track which sounds super smooth is turned into a 'centre of the band' surround experience. Choose whichever version you like, but if you want to sample just one of Krall's SACDs this is the one most worthy of your attention.



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

In theory, being in possession of the complete recorded works of Rush and Saga as I am, (how's about that for a brave confession?!), the elaborate pomp-rock of Styx should be right up my alley. The fact is that bar over-familiarity with the dreaded 'B-word' song, somehow I never got around to checking them out seriously. On the basis of Silverline's DVD-Audio of their current album 'Cyclorama' I may be forced to backtrack twenty or thirty years and see what I was missing.

It's unlike me not to have the slightest inkling just when the band and original vocalist Dennis De Young parted ways, but I don't. At least they have retained their twin lead guitarists and part-time vocalists Tommy Shaw and James Young. These men are archetypes of the American generation who had their lives changed by seeing The Beatles on the Ed Sullivan show, and there are plentiful Beatles influences on display throughout, albeit put through the expected AOR wringer. Despite the slightly dubious Storm Thorgeron sleeve the album displays a fascinating variety and vitality: the playing and engineering are top-notch and vocal duties are shared around, all participants acquitting themselves well, including Billy Bob

Thornton and Tenacious D! Interested parties will have heard much of this before, but fans of the band, the genre, or any of the other bands mentioned here could do much, much worse than to sample this fine disc. In this age when bands just keep on going forever it is good to see some continuing to plough their particular furrow with panache, rather than becoming pastiches of their former selves. Although there is no high resolution stereo track, (strangely there's a Dolby one, so the issue isn't lack of rights to the stereo master), the surround track spreads those guitars and lush backing vocals beautifully. Recommended.

DAR WILLIAMS
THE BEAUTY OF THE RAIN
 (DVD-AUDIO: 24/88.2 STEREO 24/88.2 MULTI-CHANNEL)

I am a real sucker for introspective singer-songwriters, but although I had bought a couple of her earlier albums, in stereo Dar Williams never really grabbed me enough to make me listen frequently. As Silverline have made a couple of her more recent efforts available in DVD-Audio form a reappraisal was in order. Although comparisons are invidious and unfair, for the uninitiated Dar could be summed up as sounding like Sarah MacLachlan performing Shawn Colvin's material, or as being in a similar ballpark to Jonatha Brooke at one

moment and Jane Siberry the next. Although Dar has a fiercely loyal following, and I will probably be attacked for that pat summary, lovers of the aforementioned will be on safe ground here.

I headlined the more recent album on a random basis, but its immediate predecessor 'The Green Room' is also available, with the added bonus of a short tour rehearsal video. The discs are nicely presented, with track screens bearing musician credits. On both discs the surround mix is surprisingly discrete, but retains and enhances the subtle sense of intimate involvement.

With these new discs (which are separate from their Sanctuary hook up) Silverline are once again demonstrating that more thought and consideration is being put into the conception and execution of their DVD-Audio projects, often in close collaboration with the artists. The inevitable result is that the end product is finally beginning to give the lie to that old tease 'the Pickwick of DVD-Audio'. It's a real delight to see more hi-res stereo tracks on their output. That's not to say it's all good, (as a rule of thumb steer clear of anything that says 'From The Front Row - Live' on the cover - it means stereo-track-free, fake-surround-only stuff), but the sensitive contingent should order both Dar discs from www.amazon.co.uk forthwith...

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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 CD11986 [£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 bought new standards of noise performance and stability to the class, plus a low friction S-shaped tonearm. Later PL112D 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-shape 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.

THORENSTD124 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.

TONEARMS

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 HRI00S 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 LVII 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 LVIII 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 CS1/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 CAS404** 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 tool.

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.

LECSO 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.

**LECSO 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.

ROGERS T75 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.

SANSUI TU-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 rew/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 / BI10 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 focussed 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.

IMF TLS80 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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Digital to analogue conversion - the current state of the art?

Words are easily spoken. Yet are we to believe that the amount of superlatives extolled on the Perpetual Technologies P1-A P3-A combination is hype or the over zealous rantings of biased reviewers? We don't think so! Infact, we know that these two diminutive boxes, (upsampler and dac) plus Monolithics dedicated power supply, set the standard for digital to analogue conversion. What's more, now upgraded to full "signature 2" status by electronics wizard Dan Wright, they now rival units costing 10 times the price.



Before you make a substantial investment in this delicate, yet important area, we invite you to see what the hi-fi press have said. Hi-Fi News said "units that do something special, communicating the illusion of real musicians" Previously only available via mail order, we can offer these remarkable units to European audiophiles. Please contact Paul at Weald Audio, for those with computer access go to <http://stereotimes.com> and to <http://modwright> for more technical details and reviews.

Weald Audio can be contacted on
07966 267404 between 9am and 8pm

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 HBI 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 coarse at high frequencies and limp in the bass. Speakers would never be the same again...



QUAD ESL63 1980 [£1200]
An update of the ESL57, with stiffer cabinets. Until the 989, the best of the Quad electro-statics.



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!



LEAK SANDWICH 1961 [£39 EACH]
Warm sounding infinite baffle that, with a reasonably powerful amplifier can sound quite satisfying.



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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Arcam DV89* DVD-A Player New (2Yr G/tee)	(1299.00)	£649.50	Loewe 24" High Definition 16:9 TV (1Yr G/tee)	(999.00)	£499.00
Arcam DV27A FMJ DVD Player (2Yr G/tee)	(1899.00)	£1195.00	Naim CDS2/XPS Player & P/Supply S/H (1Yr G/tee)	(6265.00)	£2995.00
Arcam CD62T* CD Player (2Yr G/tee)	(369.00)	£229.00	Naim Nait 5 Amplifier (1Yr G/tee)	(890.00)	£659.00
Arcam CD82T CD Player - New (2Yr G/tee)	(599.00)	£449.00	Naim NAC 112 Preamp (2Yr G/tee)	(660.00)	£499.00
Arcam CD93 CD Player - New (2Yr G/tee)	(979.00)	£659.00	Naim NAC102/NAPSC Preamp	(1570.00)	£825.00
Arcam A65+ Amplifier (2Yr G/tee)	(369.00)	£249.00	Naim NAP 250 P/Amp - Old style S/H (1Yr G/tee)	(1890.00)	£895.00
Arcam A85 Amp Sil/Blk (2Yr G/tee)	(849.00)	£499.00	Naim NAP 150 Power Amp (2Yr G/tee)	(785.00)	£595.00
AVI Pro 9 Plus Speakers - Cherry (2Yr G/tee)	(799.00)	£569.00	Naim NAP 180 Power Amp S/H - (1Yr G/tee)	(1225.00)	£795.00
Linn KoleKtor Preamplifier S/H (1Yr G/tee)	(575.00)	£345.00	Naim Hi-Cap 2 P/S - old casework (2Yr G/tee)	(930.00)	£639.00
Linn Kaim Pro Line Preamp S/H (1Yr G/tee)	(1400.00)	£599.00	Naim NBL Speakers - Beech (2Yr G/tee)	(7700.00)	£4295.00
Linn Trikan Centre Spkr - maple (2Yr G/tee)	(549.00)	£299.00	Pioneer DVD656S Multiplayer (1Yr G/tee)	(349.00)	£219.00
Linn Ekwall Centre - maple (2Yr G/tee)	(795.00)	£559.00	PMC TB2 Speakers - Black (2Yr G/tee)	(740.00)	£539.00
Linn Espek Speakers - maple (2Yr G/tee)	(2800.00)	£1985.00	PMC DB1 Speakers - Cherry (2Yr G/tee)	(555.00)	£399.00
Linn Keltik Spkrs - Wal inc Aktive Cards (2Yr G/tee)	(6000.00)	£2195.00	Yamaha RXV 630 RDS A.V. Amp (1Yr G/tee)	(459.00)	£269.00
Linn LP12/Ekos/Arkive Boron (2Yr G/tee)	(5350.00)	£2675.00	Vibe Zeta SubWoofer (2Yr G/tee)	(600.00)	£469.00

meet your maker

A reference guide to Britain's manufacturers and distributors

CREEK AUDIO LTD

12 Avebury Court, Mark Road, Hemel Hempstead, Herts, HP2 7TA.
Tel. 01442 260146
E-mail: info@creekaudio.com
Internet: www.creekaudio.com
Creek Audio manufactures in the UK. Current products include A50i, A50iR and 5350SE integrated amplifiers, CD50 Mk2 CD player, and T50 tuner. All products are similarly styled providing an easy mix and match choice depending on budget. Our miniature OBH range includes two phono pre-amplifiers, two headphone amplifiers and a passive pre-amplifier.

EPOS ACOUSTICS

2 Avebury Court, Mark Road, Hemel Hempstead, Herts, HP2 7TA
Tel. 01442 260146.
Email: info@epos-acoustics.com
Website: www.epos-acoustics.com
Innovative design and superior sound distinguishing EPOS speakers from other brands in similar price categories. Five speaker models and two centre channels are currently available with a sub woofer in development. Supporting stands and plinths complement the speakers. In addition to its two channel appeal, Epos is now equally sought after in the fast expanding world of home cinema.

FALCON ACOUSTICS LTD

Unit 12 Damgate Industrial Estate, Damgate Lane, ACLE, Norwich, Norfolk, NR13 3DJ
Tel. 01493 751100 Fax 01493 751155
e-mail: sales@falcon-acoustics.co.uk
UK distributors of FOCAL drive units, SOLEN (SCR-Chateauroux) polypropylene capacitors, TAYDEN high quality PA loudspeaker units. Falcon are the largest specialist Audio-inductor manufacturer in the UK Comprehensive range of DIY speaker parts and kits, Accessories and Books. Sub-bass and electronic filters. Audio Amateur Publications and Audio Computer Software. Everything but the wood! Enquiries should be accompanied by a 47p stamped address envelope or see full price list with illustrated details and pdf data sheets on our web site: www.falcon-acoustics.co.uk.

GARRARD and LORICRAFT

4 Big Lane, Goose Green, Lambourne, Berks, RG17 8XQ. Tel / fax: 01488 72267.
We make the all-new Garrard 501 and 601 turntables and can service/repair the older 301 and 401 models. We cannot help with the many other turntables that Garrard made. We are also manufacturers of the Loricraft Record Cleaning Machine, as reviewed in the July issue of this magazine. See our website at www.garrard501.com for more information.

HORNS & VALVES

Unit 5, Bards Corner, Hemel Hempstead HPI 3RR. Manufacturers of audiophile quality valve amplifiers and horn loudspeakers, handcrafted in the UK. Tel 01442 270 141 for the designer Brian Graves, and for details. 'Koronglay' - Lowther driven, floor standing horn loudspeaker. 100dB sensitivity. Available in oak, ash or cherry. Size 25cm wide x 35cm deep x 106cm high. From £1399. 'Merlin' - Integrated single end triode amplifier designed to specifically match the 'Koronglay' or any other horn enclosure. From £1199. 'Griffon' - Push Pull ultralinear valve amplifier. Powerful enough to suit almost any loudspeaker. From £1299. All of our amplifiers are totally enclosed in laser cut stainless steel cabinets to blend with any furnishings. Size 43cm wide x 33cm deep x 16cm high.

MONITOR AUDIO LIMITED

24 Brook Road, Rayleigh, Essex SS6 7XL
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website: www.monitoraudio.co.uk
Monitor Audio designs and manufactures British loudspeakers of the highest quality. Since 1972 Monitor Audio has been developing and perfecting the implementation of metal drivers, innovative crossovers, and exemplary speaker cabinet construction and finish to further the ideal of achieving sound which to the original is "as close as it gets". As we enter the 21st Century, Monitor Audio leads the way in offering speakers that suit every pocket and which integrate seamlessly with both Hi-Fi and AV systems.

PMC/BRYSTON

PMC & Bryston are used during the production of both Harmonia Mundi and Deutsche Grammophon recordings in both stereo and surround. Emmy award winning manufacturers of the highest quality loudspeakers and amplification. Industry standard in Mastering, Film Scoring, Broadcast and Post Productions. (5.1 & Stereo) PMC Products: Compacts, Floorstanders, and Large passive & active monitors. Prices range from £500 to £32,0000. Finished in a large selection of exquisite real wood veneers, all PMC loudspeakers are available in horizontal mirrored pairs, centre channels and complementary subs for 5.1 surround systems. Bryston's balanced range of products include R/C Preamps, Integrated, Amp modules for all the PMC range, Mono, Stereo 150W to 800w per ch, 3 Ch, 4 ch and 5 channel THX amplifiers, Surround processors, all with distortion figures and build quality to die for. Every product is available in silver or black backed by a 20 year warranty. PMC Ltd 43-45 Crawley Green Road. Luton, LU2 0AA.
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Email: sales@promonitor.co.uk
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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...!

TURNTABLES

AN TTI/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.



PRO-JECT 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 B8 base platform.

REGA P25 2001 £619
Until the TechnoDec, 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.

TO NEARMS

HADCOCK 242 SE 2000 £649
Latest of a long line of unipivots, with added mass, revised geometry and a 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 fettled 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 MIMs 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 DVD57 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

Oft-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 C5411 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 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 converter 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 nigh-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 CDI100EVO 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 non-sense 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-2ISE 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/MMC. 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 PLUS 2002 £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 incisiveness. 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 CS411 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 HEADMASTER 2003 £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 PRE 2003 £1500**

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 MUSICMASTER2003 £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 VS1552003 £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/NAPV 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 (nee 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 9142002** £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 GR602002 £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 MAXIMUM2003 £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 TD190 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.

"One might expect the Stereo 40i to cost in the region of £2,000..."



Stereo 40i EL34 integrated 40+40w (or 19+19 Triode)

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1022 GX	£124 £100 GEX £86	AN2, AN 70 £15
1042	£143 £114 GEX £100	Airwa AN11 £13
Eroica LX/H	£133 £109 GEX N/A	Dual DN 145 E, DN 165 E £17
Elite	£232 £190 GEX N/A	JVC DT 55, DT 60 £13
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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 Michell TechnoDec rival, and the bundled Nima Unipivot arm is a superstar.

**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.

**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.

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.

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...

**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

HANG THE DJ?

I've been reading your magazine for a few months now and am impressed by the fact that you seem the only audio journalists in the UK press not simply selling the latest and best kit, but reviewing it within the context of everything that has been made before. However your historicism seems profoundly lacking when it comes to your reverence for records and your apparent complete disdain for DJs (ref: the previous month's Stanton review; "DJs... have no desire to understand how their turntables work"). Without Hip Hop and what is broadly referred to as "dance music" in general, there would most probably be no vinyl being pressed today. If you look at the BMI figures for the 1990s it was the year on year growth especially of 12 inch record sales which kept the whole pressing industry alive. And therefore by extension made it feasible for the continued development of high-end reproduction of the format.

It was the generation that didn't grow up with vinyl that realised its beauty was worth saving, made DJs and record buying into an aspirational cult and kept vinyl alive. Next time you go into a large record store to hunt for the

latest 180g Miles Davis special edition repressing, take note of the fact that there is a queue for the row of battered Technics in the corner. To the kids in front of them the turntable is a musical instrument and playing records is just as potent a form of self expression as picking up an electric guitar once was. Without them there will be no future record buying public and when many of them realise that SL1200s aren't the last word in sound quality there might be some future audiophiles amongst them that will buy your magazine.

Dominic Gallager

True, sales of 12in singles were three times the value of those for LP during the first quarter of 2004, BPI figures show. As you say, 7in and 12in singles are sold in special areas and, apart from this, the LP has all but disappeared from shop shelves today. It is Dance that sustains LP and nothing else. But to me at least "scratching" is a bizarre form of musical expression. I suppose it's time to admit I'm becoming an old fogey! **NK**

Hi Dominic - it's me who was 'guilty' of that alleged 'anti-DJ' quip. I'm not

anti-DJ per se, but I have to say that most DJs I've met don't give a stuff about the sound they get from those SL1200s; it's merely an anecdotal observation from real personal experience. You'd think that all that 'needle time' would make them tired of the 'boom tizz' emanating from their Stanton 500As, which was a bad cartridge when it came out in 1976, and is a bad cartridge still. Don't confuse this with my opposition to 'dance music' though - you've got the wrong guy! After a decade of buying plaintive guitar-based indie rock, I found myself in love with early Detroit techno and Chicago house music back in 1986-87, and have collected vast amounts of house, acid house, new beat, ambient, techno, electronic, trip hop and drum & bass ever since. All of this came from my love of Kraftwerk, which was the first band I saw live (on the 1981 Computer World tour). Still, I'm not convinced that sampling seventies soul classics, adding formulaic beats and rapping over them - for obvious commercial consumption - is quite as musically creative as those who champion rap music would have you believe... **DP**



audiophile DJs? - pigs might fly...

EAGLE IS LANDED?

Just as I'd await the 'Eagle' comic (it was after all 'the read of the day') to drop through the door as a lad, I've waited with similar anticipation your second rundown on tonearms. The first one was, as usual, excellently written and crafted. I also found the review on the Kontrapunkt 'C' of similar ilk. Bearing this in mind - and the praise garnered - which arm would you recommend?

Considerations so far are the Michell TecnoArm and maybe a Hadcock 242 Integra. Another consideration is the Music Maker Mk 3. Given the price differential, which would be the better or more suitable choice anyway? My system is Roksan Xerxes X with accompanying 1.5 PSU, Kinshaw Perception, Musical Fidelity A3 pre/power and KEF Reference 203s. I'm patiently awaiting the delivery of the new 'Eagle' and your thoughts on the above...

Doug Heimat

p.s. Can you thank KEF for fixing my 203s? I bought them in good faith from a dealer at a "sale price". They turned out to be short of the mark in many ways. They are now back on song thanks to their Quality Manager and KEFs engineers.

Hi Doug - glad you liked the first tonearm supertest some months back. You're right, we're planning another - but next on is turntables. A few months from now, Stewart Wennen and I will be assessing a large crop of sub-£2000 decks; we're gearing up for it now. As for tonearms, we'll do a roundup of those in a later issue - so I suppose I better help you now, as The Eagle certainly isn't going to. We reckon the Hadcock 242 unipivot is the best overall arm at the price; despite its



Hadcock 242 unipivot - brilliant, but does it better multipivot rivals?

olde worlde styling, it's brilliantly designed and screwed together, and has an exceptionally open and musical sound. The TecnoArm is its best conventional multipivot rival; it has an obviously different presentation to the Hadcock, which some will prefer and others not. As you've got a Xerxes, I'd hazard a guess that you might plump for the Michell, with its tighter, grippier and tauter sound (especially in the bass), more explicit detailing and a better extended treble. Yet still, the Hadcock beats it for overall musicality and more expansive soundstaging. Just like your favourite colour, it's a question of predisposition. Finally, nice one KEF! **DP**

EVERYTHING AND NOTHING

I am an avid reader of your excellent magazine, and am in serious need of your opinion. My system comprises of a Marantz CD6000 OSE KI, Marantz PM66 SE KI amplifier and Sonus Faber Concertino speakers with Monster Cable ZR1 speaker cables. Last week I wanted to hear the difference between the revered CD6000KI and the 'cheap and nasty' Technics SL-PG490 CD player bought for £80 in Tottenham Court Road, which I used use in my previous Cyrus One/ Dual CS505 system. So I went to the garage, brought it into the house, connected it and: no difference, they both sound exactly the same. I have been comparing them every night - playing CDs that I know better than my wife, and there's absolutely no difference - if anything the Technics may even retrieve more detail. How can this be? Could it be that the Marantz is not compatible with the amp? Please find a couple of minutes and let me know your opinion - I am going mad about this.

Franco

Hmmm... I have to say I'm a bit stumped on this one too. How can there be 'absolutely no difference' if the Technics is more detailed? I suspect that what you mean is that there is a difference, of sorts, but it doesn't really bear out the respective prices of the two machines. There should of course be - no, I'll rephrase that, there is - a real difference between the two CD players. The problem obviously is that the rest of your system isn't sign-posting this, that the synergy between the respective components and/or acoustics and ancillaries is such that, if anything, you prefer the Technics. I guess that your amp and speakers are a tad soft and vague in your listening room, and that the

thinner, leaner and more analytical sound of the cheapo CD spinner 'bring them out of themselves'. Answer - replace the amp with an excellent mid-price design like a Naim Nait 5i or Musical Fidelity X-150, and things will become altogether more clearer. **DP**

THE SOLUTION

I think a decent record cleaning machine (RCM) should feature large in any vinyl head's wish list. After all, the Moth is only £500 in its most expensive, ready-made version. I have used a Moth Mk I RCM for some years now and consider it essential equipment, enabling me to make full use of an up to forty year old collection, plus making second hand and charity shop records very presentable. An RCM can also improve the performance of new records by removing the mould releasing gunge that afflicts most of them. I have considered moving on to a Loricraft or VPI machine, but I find that neither improves radically on the (much simpler) Moth, excellent though they are. The Moth's 'platter' is only the diameter of the record label so the newly cleaned first side does not rest on a possibly contaminated full width platter while you are cleaning the second side. So do buy an RCM as soon as you can. The Moth machines are obvious candidates for anyone who sees cost as an issue! All the best, and long may HFW flourish.

S. Martin

New Zealand

One of my best sounding records (musically and from an audiophile point of view) is my original pressing of Isaac Hayes's 'Shaft' OST on Stax. I bought it from a record shop bargain bin in Brighton for 10p and spent £2 cleaning it on a Keith Monks machine at a hi-fi dealer, then I replaced the inners with Goldring Ecstasies. I bought a new reissue recently, and it doesn't touch the re-release. The RCM made all this possible, because without a proper wet clean, it would have wrecked my stylus. The Moth is an excellent affordable DIY alternative to the other, pricier RCMs; I've heard many good things about it. Thanks for the sage advice. **DP**

JITTER BUG

I was a fairly early adopter of CD and gave up vinyl pretty early. I eventually settled on a pricey transport, a Meridian 200 back in 1991, working on the theory that if the transport was of good quality all I had to do was to periodically upgrade the DAC as

processor technology improved and the sound became more sophisticated. I have held true to that thinking ever since, and the trusty Meridian has even followed me to a new life in Australia. It is now partnered with a Musical Fidelity A324 DAC and together they are making some beautiful music.

However, one thing has been nagging at me. There is a thin layer of grain in the upper reaches that, whatever I do, I can't seem to shift. It comes over as a slightly exaggerated sibilance on vocals, cymbals, etc. This is only exposed on brighter recordings but when it comes through I just can't sit still in my chair. It's been there all the time from Arcam Black Boxes 1 and 3 as well as with a Meridian 563 right through to the MF A324 and it's been decreasing as a problem all the time - but it never goes away; things always sound a little bit thin and scratchy.

I'm also a bit of a sad tweaker and have managed to limit the problem as much as possible by judicious use of different mains, digital coax and interconnect cables. I finally settled on some very deep, warm sounding mains cables, an old Audioquest Video Z cable that I found at the bottom of a draw (made a huge difference - really sorted the sound) and some old American Masterlink Interconnects (very musical).

A mate of mine, a red hot Naim man with a good ear, reckons jitter is causing the grain and thinks the 200 should get the boot for a CD player from the 21st century. I don't think he likes the 200 much, particularly the way it thinks about every instruction you give it for a while before it carries it out. I have to admit I love it and it's never missed a beat in 13 years and I'm not sure I'm ready for a divorce quite yet!

Anyway, I'm not so sure about the jitter. Everywhere I have lived has been of an extended age; here in Melbourne it's a 1930s house with wiring to match. Recently, as an experiment, I bought a couple of cheapo mains conditioners for use with computers, which really did help pull the sound into line, making it deeper, more solid and lifelike. They even had a fairly dramatic effect on the amp (Myryad MI 120), all of which has got me thinking that mains quality may be a bigger factor than jitter - or perhaps the cause of it?

My options are to somehow sort out the mains - maybe get a dedicated spur put in or a proper power conditioner. This is not easy in Oz - different plugs, etc. Or get a new, cheap, CD player to partner the 324 (would things be better if the clock ran at exactly the same speed as the 324?). Or invest in a re-clocking kit for the 200 and find some kind soul to fit it for me (I'm in Oz remember - not easy. Funds

are short (young kids) but I'm keen to sort it out as I feel really close and I can taste audio nirvana just around the corner. Any advice would be much appreciated.

**Rupert Drescher
Australia**

Don't flog your Meridian - it has an excellent mech and, despite its lackadaisical transport control software, isn't obviously off the pace even now. It will be a higher jitter design than the best of today's, but I'm not convinced that this is the beginning and end of CD transport sound, and certainly not uniquely responsible for your grain. Indeed, you're right to suspect the mains, and your partnering interconnects, etc. I'd suggest a multi-pronged attack. First, get a Trichord PowerBlock 500 mains conditioner - these really do work brilliantly, pulling out a whole layer of glare from the midband and lowering the noise floor. Second, clean all your interconnect/ mains plugs and fuses with Kontak, an apparently minor point, but again, this stuff pulls the zing out of the upper mid and makes the treble silkier. Third, if this doesn't work (and I'd be surprised), then consider changing interconnects and speaker cables. First, a few metres of Chord Odyssey 2 (£18/m) will be just the ticket, with its open, dark and velvety sound. Second, £320 buys you one metre of Clearer Audio's Silver-Line Optimus interconnect - this is one of the very best cables I've heard at any price, and would wash away the scunge with a vengeance. It's expensive alright, but it produces superb results. (It's available direct from www.cleareraudio.com). Finally, you



Kontak - the cheapest way to remove grain from CD sound

might like to consider getting a Trichord Clock mod for your Meridian - the company can supply it as a kit, and you then simply need to find a local electronics engineer (or

repair shop) to fit it, which isn't such a hard job for anyone who's ever wielded a soldering iron in anger before. DP

SPEAKING OF WHICH...

Until recently I was under the impression that the BBC LS3/5A reference monitors were no longer manufactured and only available second-hand. It was only a chance mention in one of the articles in your magazine that alerted me to the fact that they are still alive and well, and manufactured in Huddersfield. As you are no doubt aware they are now made by Richard Allan using KEF-supplied B110 and T27 drivers, which I believe were used in the original design. I first heard the LS3/5A in the mid 1980s at Thomas Heinitz in Moscow Road. The late, and charming, Mr Heinitz was a great promoter of these 'speakers and sold them as package with a sub-woofer from, I think, Denmark or Sweden, and a Denon midi-system. I shall never forget my surprise at the clarity and realism of the system I heard in his shop playing a CD of Verdi's Macbeth. At that time I could not justify purchase, and in any case I owned, and still own, a pair of Yamaha NS-1000M, and heartily concur with Mr David Price's opinion of these. If only someone would begin production of the Yamahas again - Richard Allan maybe?

As a civil engineer I live and work mainly overseas, with frequent moves between countries, and need a portable 'speaker system to play my collection of mainly classical CDs and LPs. I ordered a pair of LS3/5As from Richard Allan and had them shipped to Dubai, where I am listening to them as I type. They have the same clarity that I remember, but I boost the bass with a Yamaha YST-SW45 sub-woofer. My source players are a Denon DVD 2900 and a Marantz TT-45 turntable. Although by no means a top ranking turntable the LPs played on it, some over 40 years old, certainly give CDs a run for their money!

My amplifier is a Sansui AU-D9 with 95 watts per channel, which I purchased in Dubai around 1981. It has since travelled the World but still sounds clear and powerful, with no distortion that I can detect at normal listening volumes, or even "realistic" ones. Interestingly, I have been advised on four separate occasions by four different dealers, two in Kensington and two in Dubai, not to change my amplifier for a more modern one. One of the dealers was the one I originally bought it from, and another said that present day digital amplifiers do not reproduce the music as well as the older analogue ones. They all advise me that there has been little improvement upon the

standard of this amplifier, at a reasonable price, in the last twenty-three years; although at the time the hi-fi press described it as just bordering on the upper hi-fi standards of the day. What does this say for development?

One aspect of the Sansui is that it is described as having "Super Feed Forward" rather than feedback circuits. I have never heard of this before or since. Maybe HFW might like to comment. I would appreciate your advice on what present day amplifier I might buy to replace the Sansui should it ever cease to operate, or alternatively where I might get it serviced. I had considered a Sugden 21a because of its reported clarity, but I am doubtful that it could drive the NS 1000Ms. One dealer suggested a 300+ watt, high quality public address amp might be the answer?

Just in passing, your recent articles on the early history of British hi-fi noted the number of companies grouped in the Huntingdon area. Quite a number were also based around West Yorkshire. For example Leak, Wharfedale, Sugden, Castle, Connoisseur, Richard Allan... any others? I happen to come from that part of the country and believe in supporting home industries. My congratulations on a most interesting and enjoyable magazine.

**John Walker,
Dubai.**

Both Sansui and Technics did, for a short time, use error feed-forward, a technique proposed by A.M. Sandman in *Wireless World* in 1971. There was some argument about their rights to do this, without acknowledging the source of the innovation. However, any gains over conventional feedback were felt to be minimal and the subject of amplifier control has since moved on. Amplifiers haven't changed much in principle but they have in detail and, when properly crafted, can now sound smooth, clean and precise. You need a lot of power for the Yamahas and Naim have some serious solutions I'd suggest you audition. Harold Leak would turn in his grave to hear he ran a Yorkshire based company! Strictly London, mate. Only when Harold was forced to sell up did his operation move up North, as a part of the Rank Leak Wharfedale Group. **NK**

It's interesting how you as an LS3/5a user have ended up with NS1000Ms; there's a real link between the respective sounds of the two loudspeakers - notwithstanding the extra two octaves of bass and rather

higher achievable sound pressure levels. I came from Linn Kans to NS1000Ms, and Kans are - in some respects - the closest designs to LS3/5as, so I can see a pattern emerging here! Anyway, as for your Sansui, you're right - the AU-D9 is a superb bit of kit. I'd trawl the internet for a service manual and/or circuit diagram; given the vintage, it's unlikely that it uses anything particularly esoteric inside and so if it does go pop, then you should be able to get your local repair man to fix it relatively simple. It would also doubtless benefit from new capacitors in the power supply, and a good cleaning of all its plugs and sockets with - that's right - Kontak. If the fateful day comes when it blows up, then NK's right - you'd need something of the calibre of Naim's NAC282/NAP200 to truly improve upon it. This would bring loads more grip and focus, yet it's surprisingly smooth - something that Naims of your Sansui's vintage weren't... DP [pic: Naim NAC282/NAP200] [caption: only something of the calibre of Naim's NAC282/NAP200 would truly improve on a late seventies Japanese super-amp like John Walker's Sansui AU-D9...] **DP**

REALISTICALLY SPEAKING

With regard to the letter about the TANDY-LX5 loudspeaker and your request for information to assist in HFW April 2004:

There is no "MRCY14P" listed in the current SEAS catalogue, nor can I find any records of such in past SEAS catalogues. As "M" is added to the number for all SEAS midrange drivers, I think your questioner has likely bought a midrange driver. The Wormer/Wallin reference lists the SEAS MPI4RCYIP. A simple glance at the SEAS data sheet for MPI4RCYIP could lead one to think it may work to some degree as a bass/mid driver, however a thorough study of the data indicates that it is intended as a midrange driver only. I would not use it below 200Hz. It will have substantially reduced bass response in any enclosure as he has found in his application in the LX5. The LX5's enclosure is too small to obtain good bass response from any current SEAS drivers, and its ports are tuned too high to give any genuine bass sound other than a superficial impression of with some craftily engineered recordings of the type intended to sound impressive through small audio sets.

Of the five currently listed SEAS 14 series bass drivers, the basic PI4RC would work better than the MPI4RCYIP in the LX5 enclosure, but

would require some application of acoustic filling in the Villchur/Acoustic Research/Acoustic Suspension manner to overcome the limitations of the small enclosure, and with such filling carefully placed so as to not overly compromise the audible dynamic response. The PI4RC will work okay in its midrange with the Wormer designed SEAS-MP crossover, but better could be achieved for the PI4RC midrange with some change to the low pass section of that crossover.

The SEAS T14RCY may adapt better to that small enclosure for bass response, but will require greater change to the low-pass arm of the crossover to obtain smooth midrange. Similar results may be got from VIFA MG14SK09 and MG14WK, and perhaps best from VIFA PL14WJ09 if these will fit the baffle cut-out. As the questioner has likely bought the MPI4RCYIP midrange drivers, I suggest he consider building a 3-way system with separate enclosures for large bass drivers and designing for such to be the optimum height as speaker stands to give ear-level SEAS midrange axis. Likely better, given that the LINAUEUM tweeter is a dipole, would be to place the MPI4RCYIP's unenclosed, plus LINAUEUMs, at the centre of large, stiff, flat panels to give dipole midrange also, and use 10" drivers in enclosures for bass. This could be better discussed in *World Audio Design's Bulletin Board "Forum"*, which if your questioner with will post in, I will respond.

**Chris Logan
Australia**

Phew - thanks Chris! **DP**

CAT ATTACK

It's a Sunday afternoon at the end of July and I'm sitting here listening to the system, writing this letter thinking this is the best, most musical, most enjoyable sound I've had at home from records in almost thirty years of hi-fi listening. And yet according to the accepted wisdom of certain sections the hi-fi establishment handed down over the past twenty years this should not be the case. You see I'm listening to my latest vinyl acquisition via a non-suspended Perspex turntable with an acrylic platter and a floppy unipivot tonearm. Within the clear plastic headshell of this thing there sits no less than a disco cartridge held there by a gull wing bracket sporting open-ended fixing lugs straight out of the 1970s.

At the business end of this study in rigidity, glints a mere conical stylus tracking at 3 grams on the end of a cantilever so hefty in its construction and so fearsome in aspect that it

seems for all the world as if its creators had intended it to survive a nuclear strike. Yet the sound is fabulous, holographic, wall-to-wall stuff, deep imagery with this enormous soundstage. And you have to believe, I've never experienced this before and it's simply marvellous.

The Roksan Radius 5 turntable that fronts the vinyl section of my system was bought after it had been featured in *HFW*. After audition at my local store and I just had to have it - fabulous. It looked and sounded a million dollars with the added bonus of oodles of wife appeal. She called it the 'ice sculpture'.

At home in my system the Ortofon MC25 it came with was good, if a little soulless and I didn't like the fact that the counterweight was right at the end of its travel because of the weight of the cartridge. The cantilever ended up off-centre after an encounter with the cat so the turntable was not used until I could get a new cartridge. A Corus Black seemed the obvious choice until I read Stewart Wennen and Noel Keywood's piece on Stanton cartridges in the July issue.

I did something I should not really have done. On the strength of an enthusiastic subjective review and a set of great looking measurements I ordered the Stanton 890FS off the Internet from the *dstore.co.uk* and two days later it was being installed in the Nima unipivot arm atop the Roksan. The rest is history, as they say.

It's funny how things turn out. I've strayed off the beaten track and got the best sound I've ever had from vinyl. I'd never have even considered this combination had I not seen that review. I've searched the Internet for other reviews of this cartridge and turned up nothing, so well done chaps. I've also acquired a Pro-ject Tube Box to go with the Musical Fidelity X-A1 and KEF KMS 2002 sub sat speakers that make up the rest of my system. This little phono stage is very impressive and has made the sound even bigger.

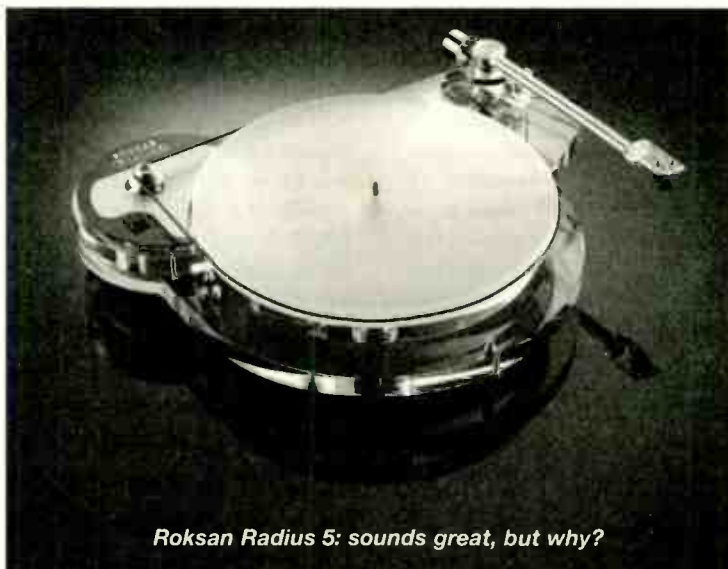
I now have a music system that looks great and sounds beautiful, yet the engineering philosophies that make up the arm / cartridge / turntable combination in particular would have been laughed out of court a few years ago. How times have changed. Now I wonder what a valve amp would sound like with this lot - now look what you've made me do!

Steve Cresswell

It's funny how philosophies change. I suspect that in hi-fi, as in life, there's more than one way to 'skin a cat' (especially if he's snapped your cantilever). In my experience, anyone who preaches absolutism in anything,

doesn't quite have both oars in the water. Getting the best sound is a case of logical decision-making based on practical experience and careful auditioning. Science is work in progress; in medicine, for example, we can often observe consistently demonstrable effects without actually having a comprehensive explanation for them (yet). But because we can't explain such effects, it doesn't mean they're invalid - it simply means our analytical ability is. Map this back to hi-fi, with wobbly pickup arms and tubes kicking out vast quantities of distortion sounding better than the apparently better measuring digital sources and transistor amplifiers, and that's precisely where you are now. Valve amps - they'll never catch on!

DP



Roksan Radius 5: sounds great, but why?

LINN TO NAIM

Due to *Hi-Fi World's* enthusiasm about vinyl and the fact that I have quite a nice collection of old 12" singles I am interested in buying a budget turntable for occasional use, but with decent sound. My current system consists of the following: Marantz CD6000K1, Naim Nait 5, Epos M12, Chord Solid interconnect and Naim NACA5 speaker cable.

I would like your advice on what budget turntable to buy with a budget of around £200-300 excluding cartridge. I have shortlisted the following: Pro-ject 1 Expression, Rega P2 with OL structural mod, Rega P3 (without structural mod for the time being) and wonder what would be the best value turntable up to £300?

I would also be interested in your recommendation of a budget cartridge, i.e. should I go for, say, an Audio Technica 110E or is it worthwhile to go for a Goldring 1006/1012GX using a budget phono stage like the Pro-ject phono box? Also I have not seen you test the Pro-ject 1 Expression yet, is that planned for

the near future?

I also have a question regarding my current CD based system. I once had a Linn Intek and with the change to the Nait 5 I got the more dynamic sound and scale I was after. It has also become somewhat more engaging. In terms of detail, transparency and being able to separate instruments I have to say though that I am disappointed, especially in the mid/high frequencies as the Naim seems to be voiced much darker than the Intek, which might have been too bright and aggressive on the other hand...

It still however sounds 'shut' with limited stereo detail and not very involving. This is more apparent on some, more produced, songs than others. Some 'electronic' songs even sound like they are in mono compared

to previous experiences!

I have tried to position the speakers further away from the rear wall (helped), changed to Chord Cobra interconnect, as apparently KI does not recommend solid interconnects (no change in sound) and bought an Audusa Eupen mains cable. To my astonishment, it actually did affect the sound much more than expected! Nevertheless, I am still not totally happy with the sound as it still is lacking in stereo detail (for some songs).

Thinking that I might have done the wrong thing buying the Naim Nait 5 I need your advice. Is detail retrieval analytical sound/stereo detail a weakness for the Nait 5 and should I consider replacing it, and if so with what? Or should I instead save up to a Naim CD5i? I listen to primarily electronic music like New Order, Depeche Mode etc, but also some rock like Nirvana, U2, etc. My budget is not fixed but I would hope to spend between £300 to £500.

If you feel more of your readers would be interested in the same quest

for the 'ultimate' budget turntable, why don't you have a budget turntable test, possibly including a couple of budget cartridges and phono stages as well? I'd then also like to understand how to best divide the available budget between turntable, arm, cartridge, and phono stage. Looking at the Origin Live web site it seems that rather than spending money on the cartridge it is better to spend that on arm upgrades (but they would say that wouldn't they...) or a better phono stage.

Paul Bjernklo

Naim amplifiers are band limited and this usually gives a 'warm', dark sound that you could describe as 'shut in', at least in comparison to a wideband amplifier. The idea is to reduce transient intermodulation distortion, as it was once called. Naims are also dynamic and, usually, very detailed too, although this more in terms of mid-range insight than the fine, filigree detailing that comes with extended high frequency response. I'm not convinced you will return to this sort of presentation by buying a Naim CD player. They offer more of the same, namely a tight, clean and well controlled sound with good insight. Best to accept what you have or, more expensively, consider wider-band DVD and SACD for the sort of presentation you describe.

I'm uneasy with rules and apportionments of budget. And budget cartridges in particular can be very bad buys if they permanently damage your records or convince you that LP is a nasty, scratchy, noise ridden medium. Keep away from the AT110 and go for the Goldring as a minimum. We recently tested the 1006 and found it has been improved to deliver superb results. It's the least you should buy. **NK**

I think what you're saying is that you rather liked the incision of the somewhat mid-forward Linn Intek; your system is balanced in such a way that this gave more apparent 'zing', whereas the more neutral Naim can sound less explicit. This makes sense, because the Marantz CD player is a tad on the warm and soft side, and so counterpointed the Linn perfectly with your fairly neutral Epos loudspeakers. So what we're looking for here is a brighter and more spry sounding CD than your Marantz, but one that adds depth and dimensionality too. My instinct is that Musical Fidelity's new X-RAY v3 would be ideal - it delivers precisely this. But you could

start with an X-10 v3 (£295), which should give the analogue output stage of your K1 a fillip. This would also work well with the X-RAY, should you move to this. As for vinyl, I'd go for a Rega P3 (get a silver one,

comprising separate amplifier, record player, CD player, turntable, double tape deck and speakers. I have a Compaq Presario PC, model SS500uk, with an AMD Athlon XP3000, 120GB hard drive, 512 Ram. ATI Radeon 9220.



Linn Intek - better than Naim's new Nait 5?

which matches...) and a Michell TecnoArm (buy this at a later date and then sell your RB300). The Goldring 1006 would work well, and you can later upgrade to a 1042 with a change of stylus. Naim's StageLine would be the ideal phono stage to use. We'll be doing more stuff on turntables soon, but spare a thought for all those digi-philes who lose the will to live at the merest mention of an Origin Live modded RB250! Space prohibits anything on budget TTs for another few issues - we've only just put the last 'vinyl special' to bed. As ever, thanks for your support. **DP**

CUEING ADVICE

Ken Middleton's problem with his SME arm (letters page 100, September '04 issue) sounds similar, if not identical, to the one I had with my old Goldring GL75. I wonder if Ken has tried hand cueing rather than using the cueing device. The reason I ask is 'cos my GL75 cueing mechanism used to stick briefly before the stylus had fully lowered itself into the record groove. From memory the arm would traverse several grooves before settling properly. Manual cueing solved the problem. Also, I remember the GL75 as being quite a solid bit of kit and am blown if I can remember why it went down the tip! I wonder how it would compare nowadays to the LP12 you kindly recommended in your reply to my previous email.

Mike Farrow

With vast amounts of fettling, a full strip and rebuilt, lots of new bits, a great plinth and meticulous set-up, then the GL75 should compare favourably with the Linn - but I'd still go for the LP12 if starting from scratch; it's still an extremely capable deck. **DP**

COMPUTER WORLD

I wish to copy my collection of records to CD with my JVC hi-fi system,

NVIDIA nFORCE audio. O/S is Windows XP. I propose to use Windows Media Player software to carry out transfer. I understand that I can connect from the back of my amplifier to the soundcard on my computer - this will enable me to transfer the contents of my vinyl records to CD. I am aware that problems arise when I want to copy the 78s, so I'm afraid they will have to wait. However, I have been informed (unreliably) that there is a piece of equipment on the market that will copy both 78s and vinyl records to CD via a PC, using a laser rather than a stylus... do you know anything about this, or is someone pulling my leg?

Henry O. Hodgetts

Hi Henry - you need to take a line out from your JVC amplifier's tape out RCA phono sockets, and run it into your soundcard's line in jack (most likely a 3.5mm stereo mini-jack). You can buy a lead for this from Maplins, although if you're of an audiophile predisposition, then specialists such as Chord Company can oblige with excellent quality products. This done, you need a good audio recording software package - Windows XP has software built in, but it's very crude and not ideal for the serious transcription you're doing. So I'd invest around £35 in the latest Steinberg WaveLab, which is massively powerful yet reasonably easy to use. This done, you should record your files at 16bit, 44.1kHz resolution, and record them as .WAV. Any good CD authoring package will then burn them to CD with ease. As for the laser turntable, it's not a joke. In the October 2004 issue we reviewed it, and it does, indeed, play 78RPM discs. The trouble is it costs £10,500 - so I'd recommend you pick up an old Garrard to do the job. Better still, Rega makes a 78RPM version of the P2 - this sounds about as good as any 78 ever will, and costs a mere £200 or so! **DP**

DUAL POWER

I wonder if you can help me. I have a Dual CS 5000 turntable here in the USA. The mains transformer has burnt out and I cannot obtain a replacement. I was planning to connect to an external transformer, like those used for charging a mobile phone but the original booklet does not give me the voltage of the motor. It indicates that the power consumption is 9 watts. I believe the voltage may be 6 volts or 12 volts DC. Is there anyway you can help me find out? I appreciate any help you can give me.

John R Guest
USA

Sorry John - I can't advise, but I have a sneaking suspicion that we have someone out there reading this who can - so please who ever you are, make someone across the pond very happy and save John's Dual with a one quick email to: editorial@hi-fiworld - then his eighties classic can live again! **DP**



help! reader required rescue John's Dual

BRIDGING THE GAP

Some time ago you kindly helped me out when I was struggling to drive a pair of Linn Kabers, which lead me to bridge some NAD power amps (2x C270 and a C160 preamp) which did the trick (thanks NAD, thanks Hi-Fi World). You also advised me to seek a better CD player to give the system a lift. It was whilst following your suggestions that I have reached the point I am now at - frustrated, confused, bemused, kicking the dog, looking for divine intervention! I have been to a handful of dealers to demo the CD suggestions you made as well as many other odds and sods, the problem is, however, that most dealers

tell me to ditch the NADs before upgrading the CD, saying that I need better amplification before I will hear real improvements from a better CD player.

The suggestions have been varied but a couple have mentioned bridging better amplifiers. Do I change the amps, change the CD player (Linn Mimik) or both? (Heaven knows what the wife will say!) If so, what first? Are there any other bridging upgrades out there? What improvements could I expect? Budget will be around £1,500 and second-hand suits just fine. I like crisp, clear and detailed sound, play mainly rock music and like to pump the volume up from time to time. Please help me before I put the lot up into my loft and re-connect my 1982 Amstrad back up.
D.J.Mayer

Funnily enough, I've just been living with a pre-power combo that would suit perfectly, and is also bridgeable when you get the funds for an additional power amp. Musical

weakest links. The CD player is easily good enough to please with better amps, and your speakers deserve them too. Kick the Amstrad, not the dog. **DP**

JAYNE: THE COMEBACK

I'm surprised that letters are still being written to you about the relative merits of LP and CD. Ms. Jayne Lee Wilson goes further than usual when she compares the two formats to concerts at Liverpool's Philharmonia Hall and the Bridgewater Hall. Maybe she finds that CDs give a more satisfactory simulation of a concert hall sound than LPs. Personally, I can listen to both CD and LP and get enjoyment from both formats. But I wouldn't suggest that either one sounds more realistic than the other. Ms. Wilson suggests that her concert hall listening is the 'real thing'. But is it? How much 'sound reinforcement' is used in the concert halls she refers to? There is some I expect so in effect, at these locations she is only listening to somebody else's 'hi-fi'.

There are places where there is no electronic enhancement of the instruments. Those I know of include the Wigmore Hall, John Keble Church in Mill Hill (where I heard John Lill perform Beethoven's 'Hammerklavier' sonata on a Faziola piano courtesy of the Hendon Music Society) and, most recently, the White Hart pub in Drury Lane in London. At this last gig I heard clarinetist Wally Fawkes, trumpeter John Chilton and pianist Doug Murray. Wally and John were seated at a table in the back of the bar alongside the piano, and I was sitting no more than ten feet from them. There were no microphones in sight.

I know it's impossible for me to retain the memory of that sound and use it to make a comparison with my record playing equipment. Maybe other people can do it but I certainly can't. However, I have been able (with the agreement of some very courteous band leaders) to make some recordings of professional music making, albeit in a hall with sound reinforcement. I used a Sony portable DAT recorder, model number TCD-D3, to make the recordings and later made CD's from them with a Yamaha CDR-HD1300 hard disc recorder. The bands varied in size from a quintet to a big band of sixteen musicians. They were all top class players amusing themselves by 'having a blow' on Sunday mornings. All I did was to place a Sony stereo electret condenser microphone, model no. ECM-MS907, on a table in front of the band and hoped for the best. I have been more than pleased with the results.

Fidelity's X-PRE/XP200 is a very powerful, low distortion combo with a sound that's just on the sweet side of neutral (it's pretty highly Class A biased). At the time of going to press, we believe prices are £799 and £899 respectively. You could usefully get by with your NAD as stop-gap preamp with two X-P200s and then get the MF preamp when funds permit. See this month's review for specifics on sound; suffice to say if you want lots of very crisp and clean watts at a lowish price, I can't think of anything better for the money right now. I actually believe you'd be better served by upgrading your power amps first, as they're the

These recordings are certainly different from commercial products because I know exactly where the musicians were in the sound stage. So whenever I play them I can visualise the musicians in front of me. They are certainly very satisfactory simulations of what I heard but as to how accurate they are it is impossible to measure. Obviously, the sound reproduced will depend on the equipment used and the room it's used in. So my conclusion is that if you enjoy the sound your system makes go ahead, enjoy it and don't worry about it!

E. Gascoigne

Quite! Jayne's letter certainly stirred up some strong feelings re: the relative merits of live vs. recorded, not to mention CD vs. LP, and it's been fun reading the replies. As for me, the very best recording I have in my possession is not some Classic Records audiophile vinyl pressing of 'Rumours', or a dazzling 24/192 DVD-A of 'Hotel California', but a live recording I made in 1984. I simply placed a Sony ECM-99 stereo electret condenser microphone about 50 yards in front of the band playing open-air in a field, and plugged it into a Sony TC-399 open reel running Maxell UDXL tape at seven-and-a-half IPS. To this day, it still makes my Michell Orbe/Origin Live Illustrious/Ortofon Kontrapunkt C vinyl front end sound like a DAB portable from Dixons... There's a lot to be said for outdoor live performances, recorded as simply as possible, with no 'cooks' (i.e. recording engineers, producers) around to spoil the broth. **DP**

THE CORAL BRIEF

I wonder if you could solve a mystery for me please, I have just dug out an old cartridge from the bottom of a draw. I bought it awhile ago and in the draw it remained until I fitted it to my deck, a Systemdek 11920 and Rega RB250. It is very good but I don't know much about it. Could you perhaps enlighten me please and, also, is it worth fitting to my Origin-Live turntable and arm? The details I have are it is a Coral MC 82 made by Coral Corp of Japan, and it's high output.

Alan Collingburn.

This was a late 1970s design from one of Japan's established cartridge manufacturers, now long discontinued. Assuming the stylus and cantilever is in good nick, then by all means use it. Here's a tip – cleaning the four output pins with isopropyl alcohol will remove decades of

oxidation and scunge, and should really bring its sound to life. This done, you'll find it a relatively warm and beguiling performer, although it was never the equal of Supex's rival SD901, so was rarely recommended in the UK hi-fi press of the day. Should it wear out, you can get it re-tipped by The Cartridge Man, but frankly I'd invest in the new Dynavector DV20X-H (£285), which is due out within weeks. This is also high output, but benefits from two and a half decades of technological advances. While Noel says that not a long has happened in amplifier design of late, I reckon that turntables, arms and cartridges continue to jump forward in leaps and bounds – a shame they weren't doing this when vinyl was still the world's primary source! **DP**

KEFS IN CAPTIVITY

I have happened upon a pair of KEF104 Reference speakers, described by yourselves as "(these) big three-way floorstanders with large bass units are a bit of a rarity these days, especially at the affordable level. Good examples such as the bigger KEF Reference range models can run into second mortgage territory". My problem is that they are the only piece of hi-fi equipment that I have! Do I build a CD or tape system (I have very little vinyl left!) around them, in which case what do you suggest, especially a suitable power amplifier? I only have a 12'x10' room on the first floor of a terraced townhouse, so I don't think I'd ever be able to listen to them loud enough to do them justice! Or do I try and pass them on to someone who'll appreciate them and already has a system that can drive them properly? In which case, how do I go about finding such a welcome recipient? The cabinets are in need of slight refurbishment and they have no front grilles, but speaker-wise they are almost perfect - still air-tight. Please advise me as to any possible options I might have. I would love to hear them, even if it is only on someone else's premises!

**Paul Mason,
Feltham UK**

You do not say which version of the 104 you own, I am going to presume it is either the original or the more common AB variant, rather than one of the more modern models. By modern standards they are not difficult to drive, and only need modest power. No mention of budget is given, but I would say something like an Arcam A65+ as a minimum to drive them, and the matching CD62 CD player as a good

combo. If you are running the later units, then look at the Cyrus 8 integrated and PSX power supply (you might be lucky and pick up an older 7 at a discount here) and again a decent £1000 CD player. **HB**

POINTS WEST

Hi David,

I was intrigued to read your review of the Whest PS.20 and MsU.20 phono stage. I am lucky to have this with me at home right now as part of a home loan for a few days, along with a Renaissance RPO1 phono stage and my current LFD MC1 phono stage. The reason why I have the Whest and Renaissance? Because my LFD has so high a gain that there is quite a lot of noise coming out of the speakers, even with the volume pretty far down (say 9 o'clock). Anyway, to cut the story short, in your review of the Whest, you mention makes like LFD amongst others. Do you have any experience of the MC1? If so, what are your observations between the Whest and LFD? I'd be glad to hear any views you have on them. The only thing I can say is that in my system, the Whest has the lowest gain of the 3 phono stages and is the most "analytical" sounding of the three, but is very fast and detailed. Due to its lowest gain, it's also the quietest of the 3.

Chi

I haven't put the Whest and LFD directly against one another, although I've heard them both against my reference Trichord Delphini NC on different occasions. The LFD is superb, but I still think that, on balance, to my ears, the Whest is the better - because its brilliantly clean, ultra low noise, ultra low distortion (and as you rightly point out, quite low gain, too) sound is stunning through my reference system. I think it's unfair to call it 'analytical', although I know what you're driving at, as it's very 'meticulous'; the Trichord sounds quite rough and raunchy by comparison. I'm still using the Delphini NC by the way, as it's an excellent bit of kit, and better with 'kick ass' rock than the oh-so-finessed Whest. Watch this space, and the story will unfold... **DP**



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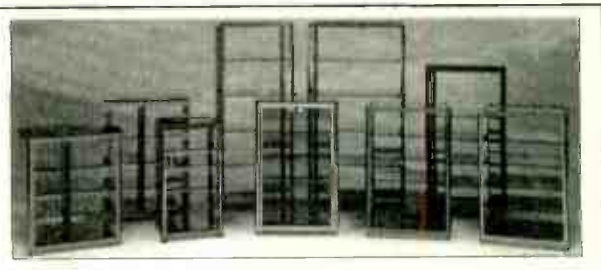
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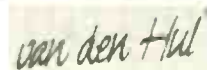
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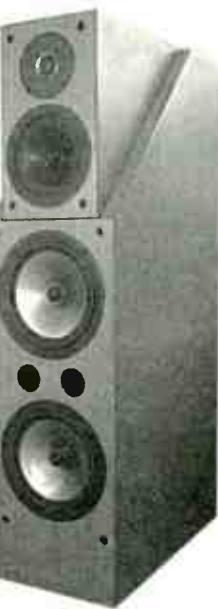
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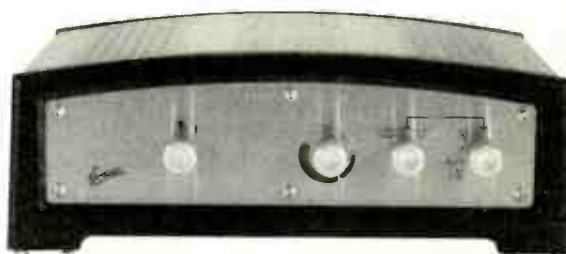


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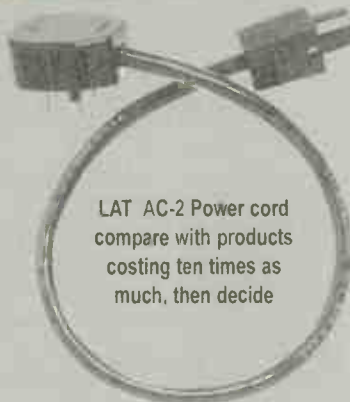
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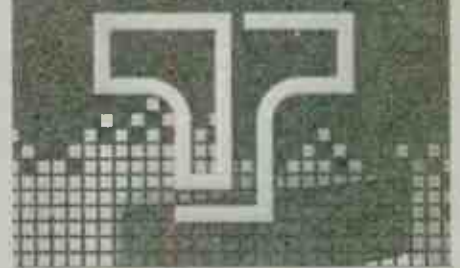
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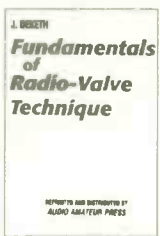
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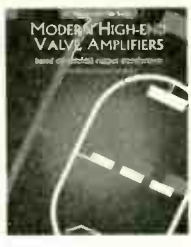
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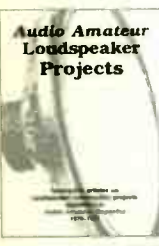


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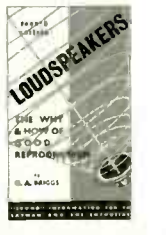
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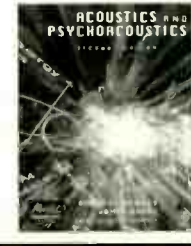
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Lets face it. Hi-Fi is being swamped by the onslaught of Home Cinema and Surround Sound. Hi-Fi has always been a male oriented hobby, but because families enjoy Home Cinema men can now get approval for spending for the family on a H/C setup. More speakers means smaller speakers, so whereas 10 years ago most of my business was selling large Ruark and ATC speakers, it's now very difficult. I'd hate to be a manufacturer! But come on chaps, there's nothing really like Hi-Fi and it can be combined with surround sound, and H/C does sound better with larger front speakers, rather than small satellites. So dig out that old turntable, have a D.C. motor fitted, even try a valve amp and larger speakers, try new technology such as the superb range of ESLAB digital amps, (now down in price). Why not investigate DVD-A, SACD and equally important music DVD's, which provide more enjoyment on a good H/C setup than most films made today! We are here to give you advice and let you hear what can be achieved, even if it has to be H/C! You won't find it in the shops! We do specialise also in projectors and screens, as you ideally need a 6/7ft. picture to go with that superb sound. If you have to have H/C, have the best!

V'audio HI-FI Consultants

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SUMMER SALE MANY ITEMS REDUCED

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...announcing the

Linn Multichannel AV Experience 2004!

Here's your chance to attend one of the greatest hi-fi events of the year! Linn Products, in association with *Hi-Fi World* magazine, proudly present the Linn Multichannel AV Experience 2004 at the Proud Galleries, 10 Greenland Street, Camden, London, N1 (the venue is just around the corner from Camden Town tube station).

Following on from the hugely successful Linn/*Hi-Fi World* LP12 vs. CD12 event of 2001, we're delighted to bring you a second special event, providing a spectacular multichannel music experience!

This will be a unique opportunity to hear one of the very best multichannel hi-fi systems ever made, in the comfortable surroundings of Proud Galleries. The set-up comprises the Linn Unidisk 1.1, Linn Kisto System Control and Linn Artikulat Multi-Channel Loudspeaker System - the very first UK public preview of the latter.

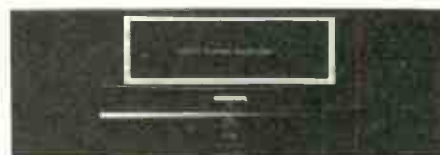
It will be your chance to hear what an ultra high end, state-of-the-art multichannel music system can really do with DVD-Audio, SACD and Compact Disc sources. You'll be able to compare and contrast the system's two-channel performance with its surround sound capability, and decide for yourself how much multichannel 'brings to the party'!

And more importantly perhaps, you'll be able to relax and enjoy some great music - including Beck, Barber, Clapton, Coltrane, Eminem, Gabriel, Linn Records, Mozart, Pink Floyd, Talking Heads, Who and Led Zeppelin (and much, much more) - in the congenial company of the Linn and *Hi-Fi World* teams.

The last Linn/*Hi-Fi World* event was a tremendous success - lots of fun was had by all as Linn staff including Ivor Tiefenbrun and Brian Morris, and the *Hi-Fi World* team including Noel Keywood and David Price, chatted informally with the 500 invited guests on matters analogue, digital, stereo, multichannel and more - over drinks and sandwiches. This time round, we hope to repeat the successful formula, and to take a closer look at multichannel too...

If you'd like to attend this unique event, all you have to do is send your name, address, telephone number and/or email address on a postcard (or email: linnevent@hi-fiworld.co.uk) to: Linn Event, *Hi-Fi World* magazine, Unit G4, Argo House, Kilburn Park Rd., London NW6 5LF. Due to the limited space, we can't guarantee you a place - tickets will be issued on a first come, first served basis, so we advise you to get writing now!

DATE: SATURDAY OCTOBER 16, 10am to 4pm
PLACE: PROUD GALLERIES 10 Greenland Street, Camden, London N1



private ads

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MUSICAL FIDELITY A370
Class A power amplifier £890 (£2500) Boxed and original condition. Audio Research and DNM cables complete sets. Tel: 07973 220 663 (Leicestershire) (Nov/1)

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tuner (£2200) £1100. 'Stunning'. Beard CA 506 preamp with phonostage, new valves, classic £450. SA EC WE 308L tonearm, boxed, unused £500. Tel: Paul 029 20 369 052 or Email: llyndes@hotmail.com (Nov/1)

KUZMA REFERENCE
turntable, tri-planar arm, Benz LP cartridge, cost £10,000+, now £5000. Tom Evans Groove £1000. Polaris Loth-X speakers, 104dB £2500. Velodyne DD10 subwoofer, was £2000 now £1000. Tel: Nick 01373 463 780 or Email: nicholas.welsh@blueyonder.co.uk (Nov/1)

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RECENT HEART attacks force drastic reductions to clear. Purchaser to arrange packaging and transport. Revox A77 Dolby half track 3.3/4 and 7.1/2. Operating instructions. Clean machine and cabinet. No feet, no spools, no NAB hubs. Needs calibrating, otherwise seems ok. Best offer over £150. Revox A77 half track 7.1/2 and 15ips in P.O. rack chassis £95. Revox G36 half track 3.3/4 and 7.1/2, uses NAB spools, 1960's valve model £125. Tel: 07710 82 82 86 (Nov/1)

TED JORDAN JX 92 full range units. £100 pair. Tel: 01442 874 749 (Berkhamsted, Herts) (Nov/1)

QUAD 405-2, 34 and FM4
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TDL REFERENCE monitors, rosewood, exemplary condition, manual, £400 ono. Audiolab 8000Q, vgc, boxed, manuals, £120 ono. Audiolab 8000T, vgc, boxed, manuals, £120 ono. Tel: John 01403 251 935 or Email: john501hifiman@aol.com (Dec/1)

RUARK PROLOGUE I
speakers, yew finish. 2x 7m bi-wired ribbon cables (QED Profile Silver 12) with 1xos plugs for speakers. £575 ovno. Tel: 01323 511 204 or Email: garytowner@hotmail.com (Nov/1)

ACCUPHASE T105 FM tuner. Cossetted classic. One owner. Superb. £270. Tel: 01752 773 369 (Nov/1)

SHAHINIAN COMPASS loudspeakers, 3 years old, unmarked in light beech: half price and run in at: £1350. Also Sansui A80 tuner £40. Tel: 01636 830 944 or 07979 536 753 (Nov/1)

WANTED: ONE PAIR
Wharfedale TSR 110 hi-fi loudspeakers. Tel: 07876 710 945 or Email: kevinjpmurphy@yahoo.co.uk (Nov/1)

QUAD II PAIR with GEC and Mullard valves. Original condition, £550. Klipsch Heresey II speakers in mahogany on Atacama SL200 stands, excellent condition, ideal with valve amps, £650. Tel: 01487 824 418 daytime (Nov/1)

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boxed, superb, serviced 2004. Remainder guarantee transferable, £1800 ono. Simaudio Moon Nova CD player £2000, mint, boxed, 2 year warranty, transferable. Tel: Chris 020 8543 5531 evenings (Nov/1)

WANTED: DPA 50s pre/power amplifiers. Sony MiniDisc recorders: JA50ES, JA30ES, JE555ES. Must be good condition. For Sale: Nakamichi cassette deck 2, £90. Tel: 01306 887 554 (Nov)

QUAD 306 amplifier, 34 control unit, FM4 tuner. All mounted on QRackC3. Email offers to: a-kerr@amserve.com Purchaser to collect from Worcester. (Nov/1)

SHANLING CDT 100 CD player, With Western Electric valve upgrade and originals. Valve or solid state output, £1150. Linn LK1, LK2 pre power £365. Tel: 01424 446 282 or 07729 858 551 (East Sussex) (Nov/1)

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Technology: BAT VK-60 tube power amp. Perfect working order and condition. One owner since new. Box and manual. With 2 complete sets of valves, 1 set new. £1900 ovno. Tel: Mike 020 8550 4223 evenings or 020 7401 5119 day. (Nov/1)

AUDIO RESEARCH VT-100/2
Spondor SP2/3 stands Thorens TD-125/2 SME 3009-imp Systemdek IIX SME 3009-imp Quad ESL-57 Quadropod stands black Trichord Delphini Mk2-NC new Leak Stereo 20 Krell KSA-80. Tel: 01179 556 555 or 07979 514 450 (Nov/1)

THIEL CS3.6 floorstanding loudspeakers. World class 'speakers over £5000 brand new, absolute bargain at £1700. Excellent condition. Tel: Mark 01609 772 917 (Nov/1)

MARANTZ PM-94 integrated amplifier, superb condition/sound, 23 kilos, boxed, manual, Japanese Krell/Levinson? £665. Nakamichi BX2, vgc £115. Luxman R-1040 receiver, rosewood, 40W, vgc, excellent tuner £75. Tel: 01273 541 462 (Brighton) (Nov/1)

TAG MCLAREN DAC20.
Excellent. Hardly used. £450 including link cable and carriage. (£420 without cable) UK buyers only. Cash or personal cheque only. Tel: 01287632279 or Email: derek.bollen@ntlworld.com (Nov/1)

MISSION 782 floorstanding speakers, excellent condition £300. Magnum pre-amp, upgraded by manufacturer to high-end spec, £350. Tel: 01704 550 247 or Email: whitewllgg@aol.com (Lancs) (Nov/1)

PRIMARE SYSTEM for sale, A30.1 amplifier £795 ono, A30.2 CD player £795 ono, T21 FM tuner £345 ono. Little use, good condition, will demonstrate. Tel: Shaun 01226 244 341 (Nov/1)

SILTECH INTERCONNECT
cables. SQ28-G, 1 metre pair. WBT plugs, cost £280, 3 months old, boxed with instructions. Half price £140. Tel: 01274 632 492 (Nov/1)

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JM LABS ELEKTRA 907 BE LIGHT GOLD LTD ED 4MTHS OLD	1700	995
KIMBER 4TC 2X4 MTR BANANA'S	250	150
KRELL KAV 250A	3698	1795
KRELL KRC-HR KPE PHONO	7639	3295
KRELL FPB 600C	15000	5995
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NAIM AV2	2250	1695
NAIM 175	1270	895
NAIM 112	660	495
NAIM 92	N/A	195
NAIM CDS MK1	4000	1795
NAIM FLASH 2 NEW	350	195
NORDOST BLUE HEAVEN 3MTR BIWIRE BANANA REV 11	650	350
PLINIUS CD LAD PRE	2400	995
PLINIUS SA100	3500	1995
QUAD 606 MK1	N/A	295
QUAD 99 POWER	550	395
REGA ELA CHERRY	800	395
REGA PLANET CD	450	250
REVOLVER R33 CHERRY NEW	600	295
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TARA LABS DECADE 2MTR BALANCED	2300	595
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THORENS TD160B MkII, STD 305M, Both working, scruffy, £50 each. Suit DIY. Wharfedale M3, DVD 750S, £30 each. Denon DCD 435 £40. AudioQuest CD Feet £15. Nordost Flatline Gold Stereo pair 8m £100. Tel: 028944 79 053 (Nov/1)

B&W P5 floorstander speakers in mahogany veneer complete with granite plinths, mint condition, boxed, cost £900 new, sell £350. Tel: 01869 241 358 (Bischester) (Nov/1)

WANTED FOR Sale Wanted Radford SC22 preamp and matching tuner, consider not working. For Sale: Totem Arro speakers, cherry, 20 hours use £700. PSE 2A3 amp Dual mono Neuro circuit £600. Tel: John 01268 455 966 (Nov/1)

ACOUSTIC ZEN Silver Ref 0.5m £150. Hologram-2 2.5m £395. Missing Link Cryro Ref 1m £160, 1.5m £225. Shunyata Diamondback (three) 6ft £120 each. Guardian 4HT £215. Tel: Ming 07984 682249 or Email: chmjn@aol.com (Nov/1)

E.A.R. 864 valve pre-amp, manuals, boxed £750. Nordost 2 metre stereo pair Solar Wind speakers cables £60 ono. Tel: 01745 331 681 evenings. Mobile 07714 530 889 (Nov/1)

SONY X3000ES system. CDP-X3000ES CD £200. TA-F3000ES Mosfet amplifier £250. MDS-J3000ES MiniDisc £250. ST-S3000ES FM/AM RDS tuner £100. Full system £700. Prefer to sell as complete system. All items unused. Tel: 01706 345 418 (Nov/1)

RUARK EQUINOX speakers, piano black lacquer. Audionote AN/ED speakers 94dB/w. Kelvin Labs M60 monoblocks + pre-amp. All in good condition. May swap for interesting hi-fi. Sensible offers please telephone Alan 01395 275 698 (Devon) (Nov/1)

NORDOST SILVER Shadow digital interconnect 0.6mtr £200 ono. Tel: 01249 821 288 (Nov/1)

AUDIO RESEARCH CD3 Mk2, silver face plate. Four months old in pristine condition with original box. £3750 ovno (£5200) or possible swap for Levinson 390-S. Tel: 01202 624 094 or Email: Paulfrend123@aol.com Serious enquiries only. (Nov/1)

RETIRED HOBBYIST requires for spares etc faulty or non-working Quad 34 and 44 pre-amps, 405 power amplifiers. Also boards and modules for same. I'm not a dealer! Tel: Mike 01758 613 790 (Nov/1)

PMC TB2's, mint, boxed etc £430. Please 'phone before 7.00pm 01745 832 134 (North Wales) (Nov/1)

DYNAUDIO CRAFTS boxed mint with stands £1750. Tel: 07791 720 602 (Nov)

NAIM NAP 250, early, £500. Naim 32.5 £175. Naim SNAPS £125. Naim S.B.L. £750. Linn Isobariks, final type, £750. Naim 32 and power supply £120. Tel: 0191 281 0260. All calls returned. (Nov/1)

ROGERS LS3/5A's teak, 11ohm, virtually unused since 1998, vgc £500 ovno. Tuner Pioneer TX-9800 large silver capacitor tuning quartz locked £100 ono plus postages. Tel: 01292 269 477 (SW Scotland)(Nov/1)

ROTEL 965BX discrete Kelvin Class A integrated. NAD 402 tuner. Ruark Sabres, stands £450. Sony CDP990, Ariston turntable, Incatech Claymore, Ruark Swordsmans, stands £375. All leads included. Excellent condition. Tel: 01722 334 694 (Salisbury) (Nov/1)

RARE EMPIRE Troubadour belt-drive suspended sub-chassis turntable and arm £300. Denon 304 moving-coil low hours £125. Sugden A48 amplifier £100. T48 tuner £25. Tannoy Lancasters 12" LSU Monitor Golds £450. Dual 505 II turntable £50. Tel: 01709 555 403 (Nov/1)

NAIM NAIT 3 for sale, vgc, can demonstrate, £300 ono. Tel: 01483 571445 Evenings. (Guildford)(Nov/1)

PAIR OF KEF 107s circa 1990. new x overs, mf & hf plus 2 spare hfs, fitted & serviced by KEF summer '04. Mint condition £850. Tel: 01622630282 Mob 07754794151 (Nov/1)

KEF REFERENCE 3.2 loudspeakers in absolutely mint condition. Rosetta burr finish. Includes manuals and original packing boxes. £1600 or very nearest offer. Tel: 01463 811 779 (Nov/1)

CASTLE KENDAL floor mounted speakers real mahogany cabinets £100 ono. Mission 771E bookshelf speakers £100 ono. Marantz 63MkII Signature CD player £75 ono. All with manuals, receipts etc. Tel: 07786437074(mobile) or 01980 630170 (home eves) (Nov/1)

ROKSAN ARTAXERXES X phono amplifier configurable for MM/MC. Atessa PSU, electronically identical to Caspian. Some paint knocked off amplifier. Beautiful clean sound but I'm all valve now. £500. Tel: Guy 01293 782 153 (Surrey) (Nov/1)

AUDIOLAB 8000C boxed £250. 8000P £450. Marantz CD63 KISig £220. Mission 782se £650, boxed. Rumour 4m bi-wired silver plated £60. (£160 new). Tel: 01344 867 390 or Email: winchgroveroad@hotmail.com (Nov/1)

PIONEER CTF-950 High end cassette deck, top of the range, cost £400 in 1979 - more than a Linn LP12! Amazing build and styling, Mint condition, perfect working order. £195. Tel: 07834 737865 (Nov/1)

WANTED: LEAK Stereo 20 with preamplifier. please Email Walter at warvint@libero.it. (Nov/1)

MUSICAL FIDELITY A370 Class A power amplifier £890 (£2500) Boxed and original condition. Audio Research and DNM cables complete sets. Tel: 07973 220 663 (Leicestershire) (Nov/1)

MAGNUM DYNALAB MD 102 tuner (£2200) £1100. 'Stunning'. Beard CA 506 preamp with phonostage, new valves, classic £450. SA EC WE 308L tonearm, boxed, unused £500. Tel: Paul 029 20 369 052 or Email: llyndes@hotmail.com (Nov/1)

KUZMA REFERENCE turntable, tri-planar arm, Benz LP cartridge, cost £10,000+, now £5000. Tom Evans Groove £1000. Polaris Loth-X speakers, 104dB £2500. Velodyne DD10 subwoofer, was £2000 now £1000. Tel: Nick 01373 463 780 or Email: nicholas.welsh@blueyonder.co.uk (Nov/1)

FABULOUS VALVED CD Audio Aero 24/192 £1750. Large floorstanding speakers Coincident Total Eclipse, 104dB, 14ohm, ideal for 300B. £2000, were £6000 3 years ago. Tel: Nick 01373 463 780 or Email: nicholas.welsh@blueyonder.co.uk (Nov/1)

AUDIO RESEARCH VT50 boxed, superb, serviced 2004. Remainder guarantee transferable, £1800 ono. Simaudio Moon Nova CD player £2000, mint, boxed, 2 year warranty, transferable. Tel: Chris 020 8543 5531 evenings (Nov/1)

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

FROM OCTOBER 2004 ISSUE

VAST QUANTITY of hi-fi items still available from last two months full page ads. Most items can be delivered for a modest extra charge. Both Leak 20-75's speakers still available. These are still probably the best available anywhere. Offers on £500 a pair. Tel: 01548 560 913 (Devon) (Oct/1)

MARTIN LOGAN QUEST electrostatic hi-fi speakers. Absolutely mint condition. You will not find a finer example of this beautiful speaker. Walnut trim. Original boxes. £2000 ono. Tel: 07748 612 279 or Email: ian@imurray.com (Oct/1)

WADIA 301 CD player £2750. Chord amplifiers 1200C power and 3200 pre, £4995 pair. A.T.C. SCM20/speakers, piano black £1750. All boxed including manuals. Less than 12 months old. Mint condition. Tel: 07813 763 913 (Oct/1)

WHARFEDALE EVO 30 floor-standing speakers for sale. Rosewood finish, good condition. Genuine reason for sale. One year old. £330 ono. Tel: Colin 0161 303 8859 or 07985 781177 (Greater Manchester) (Oct/1)

AMAZING SPEAKER bargains, enclosures offered for sale 2 way floor stander and book-shelf designs, professionally built, £25 and £15 a pair, further details ring Mike on 0118 969 3377 (Oct/1)

VANDERSTEEN 3A Signature speakers. One year old. Mint. £2100. Kimber KS1121 .5m £280, KS1120 3m. £495, KS3033 1m. £420 and Monocle 1m. £180. Tel: 01488 648 272 or Email: Kevin@sagepartnership.com (Oct/1)

FOR SALE: Totem Arro, black with 'bullets', immaculate £750. Rotel RCD 971, with fitted LK audio clock £250 as new, Rotel RA 971 Mk2 £150 as new, Cyrus I £95. Mission 751 with upgraded capacitors £95. Tel: Nigel 01332 865 381 (Derbyshire) (Oct/1)

KEL80 MONOBLOCKS, professionally built, recently serviced, Electro Harmonix tubes, £400. Tel: 020 8668 2409 (Oct)

WANTED: HITACHI HA7800 amp, Hitachi DE65 cassette deck. Armstrong 621 amp. Leak 2200 amp. Sugden A48 amp. teak case. Tel: 01843 843 145 (Oct/1)

QUAD ELS 57 speakers, superb clarity. Demonstration. Excellent condition. Also experimental stands for vertical mounting. Improved bass and imaging, but ugly. £450. Tel: 01483 422 901 (West Surrey) (Oct/1)

PARASOUND HCA 3500 350wpc power amp £1400 (£2800). Parasound HCA 1200II 220wpc power £400 (£1600). Parasound HCA 750 75wpc £250 (£750). Rotel 03 pre £150 (£290). Transparent Music Waveplus speaker cable 2x 15ft £300 (£850). Audioquest Midnight II 2x 4m £150 (£550). Counterpoint Pro 708e Prologic £160 (£1800). Boxes. Manuals. Tel: Bill 01993 851508 (Oct/1)

SHANLING SCD-T200C valve/solid state CD/SACD player £1699 (new). Shanling CD-T100 CD valve/SS CD player £1049. Both UK spec. Sony SCDI SACD/CD player £1849. Bel Canto DAC2 (new) £749. Tel: 07979 903 989 (Bristol) (Oct/1)

ROGERS CADET II control unit and amplifier two horn loaded speakers Goldring Lenco GL70 turntable all in teak chest stored last 20 years. Offers. Tel: 01892 82 2213 (Oct)

CYRUS SMARTPOWER mint condition, one year old £450 ono. Tel: 0116 274 5056 or Email: JB81@Le.ac.uk (Oct/1)

TACTAUDIO RCS 2.0S new £1500. Tel: 020 8473 6997 (Oct/1)

AUDIO INNOVATIONS amplifiers, S1000 monoblocks £750. P2 phono amp £300. S200 pre-amp £100. Snell K light oak speakers and Pirates stands £250. Tel: 01484 845 905 (Oct/1)

TDL REFERENCE standards. Rare opportunity to acquire this unique 7 driver design. Latest 1995 spec. Metal cone, midrange units, bass to 16Hz. Awesome presence, great imaging. Last available at £7000. Reluctant sale £2500. Tel: 01344 751 446 or 07713 622 115 (Oct/1)

VINCENT SP-991 plus monoblock pair 36kg weight each. 6 months old, £1700. JBL TI 5000 speakers in perfect condition, £1300. Tel: 077737 88317 (London, Paddington) (Oct/1)

CELESTION DITTON 66, stained black, rebuilt crossovers and OFC rewired £300. Also 66 original £260. Ditton 25 original £180. 15's £40. Heybrook HB2 £35. All prices o.n.o. Tel: 01332 780 884 (Oct/1)

ROKSAN CASPIAN CD player. Hardly used by elderly owner. As new. Cost nearly £1000. Bargain, £350. Tel: 01473 682 909 (Ipswich) (Oct/1)

CHORD SPM 1200, CPA 1800, £1350 each, £2500 pair. ATC SCM 10 monitors with Target 4 pillar stands £495. Roksan ROK DPI transport £450. All boxed, black, as new. Tel: 01909 518 131 (Oct/1)

DAVIS CINEMA One Projector £2000 new £4250. Owl 6' motorised screen £425. Kimber speaker cable 8TC 8' (pair) £400. Krell 400 XI amplifier £2300. Naim CDS II CD player £3650. Electa Amator II speakers Ironwood stands £1950. Transparent Ref SE interconnects. Tel: 01792 798 253 (Oct/1)

SIMAUDIO MOON Nova CD player, less than 1 year old, £2000 ovno. Audio Research VT50 superb - still under guarantee £1800 ovno. Both boxed, manuals. Also Sony SCD-XB940 £200. Tel: Chris 020 8543 5531 evenings (Oct/1)

QUAD ELECTROSTATIC loudspeakers ESL 57s, reconditioned by Classique Sounds. Original bronze grills, excellent condition £800. Tel: 020 8783 1250 or Email: anthonymurphy@blueyonder.co.uk (West London area) (Oct/1)

MERIDIAN 563 DAC boxed, immaculate, £325 ono. Meridian 200 transport, Trichord Clocked, remote, as new, £275 ono. Yamaha DSP E580 surround sound processor £30 ono. Can demo. Call 0781 781 2614 anytime. (Oct/1)

MERIDIAN D6000 (pair) £4000 (good condition). Meridian 562 digital/analogue controller £950 (excellent condition). Meridian 500 CD transport £1100 (excellent condition). Prefer not to sell separately. Tel: Roberts 020 8991 2731 (London) (Oct/1)

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Joss Stone	Mind Body And Soul	£TBC
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ALBUM OF THE MONTH

TOM WAITS "REAL GONE" £14.90

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John Cale	New York In The 60s - 5LPs	£59.00
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Nick Drake	Treasury (Definitive Collection)	£15.90
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Roy Orbison	All Time Greatest Hits (S&P)	£TBC
Scott Walker	Scott 4 (Universal Germany)	£19.90
The Who	Sell Out (Universal Germany)	£19.90
Various	Studio One Funk (Soul Jazz)	£14.90

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CELESTION - C2 - Floorstanders	£499.00	£299.00	D
CELESTION C1 - Compact speakers	£199.00	£114.00	D
CYRUS 5 AMPLIFIER	£500.00	£329.00	D+N
CYRUS 7 AMP	£700.00	£479.00	D+N
CYRUS DVD7	£1,000.00	£599.00	D
AVANCE TECHNOLOGIES Active Subwoofer	£1200.00	£695.00	N
MARTIN LOGAN SCENARIO	£2,498.00	£1,629.00	D
MERIDIAN DSP1500 Subwoofer	£1350.00	£895.00	D
MERIDIAN 562v.2 Controller	£1,500.00	£995.00	D
MERIDIAN 568.2 mm Smartlink (as new)	£4,305.00	£2,995.00	D
KRELL 250P PRE AMP	£2199.00	£895.00	SH
LINN ESPEK	£2500.00	£1695.00	D
MISSION 773E SPEAKERS	£399.00	£249.00	D
MISSION 780 - ROSEWOOD	£300.00	£219.00	D
MISSION 783 - BEECH (Good condition)	£1,000.00	£599.00	D
DENON DVDA11	£1699.00	£1295.00	N
MUSICAL FIDELTY XA100R - INT AMP	£900.00	£599.00	N
MUSICAL FIDELITY TRI-VISTA AMP	£3999.00	£2599.00	D
PROCEED AVP PROCESSOR. VGC/LIGHT USE	£4,700.00	£1995.00	D
PROCEED PMDT DVD PLAYER. VGC/LIGHT USE	£5,495.00	£2495.00	D
REDROSE Valve system (amp & speakers) lyr old	£10,000.00	£3,995.00	SH
VIENNA MALHER (Beech)	£6000.00	£3295.00	D
TAG MCLAREN DPA32R (Digital pre inc DAB)	£1,990.00	£995.00	D
TRICHORD GENESIS CD PLAYER	£500.00	£150.00	D
VIENNA BEETHOVEN Speaker (Beech)	£2,500.00	£1,595.00	D
VIENNA MOZART Speakers (Beech)	£1,500.00	£995.00	D
VIENNA WALTZ centre Speaker (Beech)	£500.00	£350.00	D
YAMAHA HD1000 Hard Disc Recorder	£699.95	£500.00	D

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private ads

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

FROM OCTOBER 2004 ISSUE

NAIM SALE, CD2 CD player, NAC 82 pre-amp, Hi-Cap power supply, SBL loudspeakers (cherry), QLN Projekt equipment rack (cherry). All equipment 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) (Oct/1)

WANTED: PAIR Celestion Kingston speakers. For Sale: Celestion SL700SE with stands, as new boxed. Pair restored Leak 3090 speakers which now weigh 102kg. A rare and unique speaker system (would part exchange or swap these for something else smaller). Pictures available on request. Tel: 020 7480 7964 or 079320 63335 or Email: amwLondon@tiscali.co.uk (Oct/1)

WANTED: ROGERS: Harbeth or similar, one pair of BBC LS3/5a speakers. Private buyer. Tel: 01394 388399 (Nov/1)

LINN, KARIK, Numerik, Kairn (all SPS), Chord 1200C, LP12 Lingo, Arkiv, Proac Response 2.5 rosewood. Awesome performance. Boxed. Mint. Cost £17,500+ new. Sell together for £7500 ono. Bargain hi-end system. Tel: 0161 962 6319 (Oct/1)

LINN TROIKA in good condition, re-tipped by The Cartridge Man, complete with stylus guard etc. £230 no offers. Tel: 01302 854 426 (South Yorkshire) (Oct/1)

FINITE ELEMENTE Pagode Reference 5 tier rack in black with premium chrome uprights. Stunning sonically and aesthetically. £1100 or swap for 2 or 3 tier plus cash. Tel: 01312259002. or Email: S.Hussain@ed.sac.ac.uk (Oct/1)

ANALYSIS EPSILON ribbon speakers, good condition £3500 new, £750 ovno. Pioneer PD9700 CD player £400 new, £100 ono. Rotel RA 820A mint condition £70 ono. Tel: 01634 323683 or 07901 893 982 (Oct/1)

GARRARD 401, SME 3 arm, Denon DL110 £350. IMF TLS80 speakers £325. Michell Hydraulic Transcriptors turntable £325. Thorens TD160 turntable £90. Luxman T112 tuner £55. Quad 44, faulty, £35. Tel: 01273 299 718 (Oct/1)

LENTEK INTEGRATED amplifier £525. Revox A77 including 50 tapes £125. Audio Technica 1130 arm £75. Pioneer PD-S703 £40. AR 91 speakers £35. Leak Stereo 70 £20. Rogers Ravensbrook amp/tuner £40. Tel: 01273 299 718 (Oct/1)

MARANTZ CD-63 MkII KI Signature £200. Marantz PM-66SE KI Signature £200. Tannoy Revolution R2 (cherry) £150. Standesign Saturn 5 rack (cherry) £150. Denon TU-260L tuner £50. Aiwa AD-F450 cassette deck £50. Kimber PBJ interconnect (1mtr) £30. All immaculate, boxes, instructions. Tel: 01827 282 430 (Oct/1)

MAGNUM DYNALAB MD 102 tuner (£2200) £1100. 'Stunning'. Beard CA 506 preamp with phonostage, new valves, classic £450. SA EC WE 308L tonearm, boxed, unused £500. Tel: Paul 029 20 369 052 or Email: llyndes@hotmail.com (Oct/1)

QUAD ESL 57s, black cloth, with stands, supplied 2002 by Classique Sounds with refurbished treble panels, £750 (in West Midlands), too large to post. Audio Innovations S500 Integrated Amp £475, Audionote 'Snell' J type speakers in black £475 both plus carriage. Tel: 01445 712023 or Email: ian@santosa.co.uk (Oct/1)

NOTTINGHAM ANALOGUE Graphic turntable, Alien arm, Tracer 3 cartridge, excellent sonics/condition (£2750 1995) £625. Quad 2 monoblock amplifier, perfect original, £130. Armstrong 224 valve tuner, no sound?, £10. Tel: 01273 541 462 (Oct/1)

FOR SALE: Quad 99 pre and 909 power. Excellent condition. Boxed, manuals, remote, links (£1650) asking £1250. Tel: 0131 664 5433 or Email: phillip@evans1952.freeserve.co.uk (Oct/1)

WANTED: SUGDEN A21a, Mission 782se speakers, Yamaha CDR-HDI 300 recorder, AVI Laboratory Series amp or Cyrus 8 amp. Tel: 01225 317 127 (Oct/1)

LOWTHER ACOUSTAS, PM7As, silver wired £400. Leak Stereo 20 (rebuild) and Point One Stereo pre (with Octal) £400. Leak Troughline II Stereo tuner £85. All items in very good condition. Tel: 01737 771 570 evenings (Surrey) (Oct/1)

AVANTGARD UNO Horn speakers £3500. Sonus Faber Cremona speakers £3000. EAR V20 integrated amplifier £1500. Aloia PSTII.01i pre-amplifier, Aloia 15.01i power amplifier 60 x 100 watts £1800. Tel: 020 8531 5979 (Oct/1)

PINK TRIANGLE
Anniversary SME arm, Pink Triangle Ventral speakers, Sugden Bijou CD player, EAR 834P phono amp, DPA pre amp, power amp, best offers accepted. Tel: 0777 912 3411 (Oct/1)

CYRUS III int amp, Cyrus power amp 2x PSX-R power supplies mint condition and boxed cost £1700 sell £650. Tel: 01869 241 358 (Oxen) (Oct/1)

AUDIO SYNTHESIS Pro Passion duel mono 3 box pre-amp balanced singlended, mint £295. Pink Triangle Ordinal 1307 DAC, mint, boxed, inst. £295. Garrard 401 chassis SME plinth £150. Tel: 01246 209 578 or 01246 570 556 (Oct/1)

VAST QUANTITY of hi-fi items still available from last two months full page ads. Most items can be delivered for a modest extra charge. Both Leak 20-75's speakers still available. These are still probably the best available anywhere. Offers on £500 a pair. Tel: 01548 560 913 (Devon) (Oct/1)

MARTIN LOGAN QUEST electrostatic hi-fi speakers. Absolutely mint condition. You will not find a finer example of this beautiful speaker. Walnut trim. Original boxes. £2000 ono. Tel: 07748 612 279 or Email: ian@imurray.com (Oct/1)

WHARFEDALE EVO 30 floor-standing speakers for sale. Rosewood finish, good condition. Genuine reason for sale. One year old. £330 ono. Tel: Colin 0161 303 8859 or 07985 781177 (Greater Manchester) (Oct/1)

AMAZING SPEAKER bargains, enclosures offered for sale 2 way floor stander and bookshelf designs, professionally built, £25 and £15 a pair, further details ring Mike on 0118 969 3377 (Oct/1)

VANDERSTEEN 3A Signature speakers. One year old. Mint. £2100. Kimber KSI 121 .5m £280, KSI 120 3m. £495, KS3033 1m. £420 and Monocle 1m. £180. Tel: 01488 648 272 or Email: Kevin@sagepartnership.com (Oct/1)

TACTAUDIO RCS 2.0S new £1500. Tel: 020 8473 6997 (Oct/1)

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 HALEY PRE £130.00
 TAG MCCLARIN F3 PA10 - MC & MM £349.00

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 NEW - SHANLING STEREO INTEGRATED AMP SEE WEB SITE - ORDERS TAKEN NOW £1,300.00
 AUDIO RESEARCH CLASSIC 60 - MINT COND £1,899.00
 AUDIO INNOVATIONS SERIES 1000 MONO BLOC'S £449.00
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 YAMAHA RX480 CASSETTE DECK £304.00
 YAMAHA RX500 CASSETTE DECK £254.00
 YAMAHA CT 10 TUNER £45.00

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 PINK TRIANGLE ORIGINAL DAC £299.00
 SHROMEGA DRIVE 2 AND DAC MINT - BOXED £749.00
 HILIOS CD2 £499.00
 SHANLING CD T100 HDCD EX DEMO £750.00
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 SHANLING SCD T200 SACD (SEE WEB SITE) £1,000.00
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trade ads

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@ Leatherhead Leisure Centre, M25, Junction 9, Sunday 7th November, 10.30am. Tel: 07730 134 973 for details (Dec/I)

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NAKAMICH TAPE Decks. Dragon, mint with original boxes and owners manual copy of service manual included £1050. RX505 unidirectional mint with original manual copy of service manual included £800. LX5, 3 head £300. RX202 £275. TDK MA-XG90 ceramic tapes call for availability they are to limited supply. Quality interconnects ordered to length. Unique Solid Stainless Steel and glass equipment stands made and designed to order. Call for details: 01843 599980 (Nov/I)

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UNICORN HI-FI Accessory Store. Cartridge tags; alignment gauges; mounting bolts; Nagaoka sleeves; Goldring record cleaner; Ortofon stylus cleaning brush; Shure stylus balance. Worldwide delivery. Tel: Mick Seymour 01462 813 573. Full details www.mickandviv.com/hifiaccessories (Dec/I)

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DAVID SYLVIAN *Everything And Nothing* 2000

By the year 2000, David Sylvian had spent twenty years on the Virgin label, but the relationship was slowly drawing towards its end. Sylvian had wrestled to complete the 'difficult' (in more ways than one) 'Dead Bees On A Cake' album which had finally been released the previous year. It wasn't a huge commercial success, and when such an expensive project meets the remaindered-in-WH Smith fate, the writing is on the wall...

However, an artist such as Sylvian deserves to be treated with respect. He was allowed to complete several retrospective projects which were already under way to his own satisfaction. Sandwiched in between 'Dead Bees...' and this collection was 'Approaching Silence', a summary of his pieces created to accompany art installations, and 'Camphor', another instrumental compilation, was to follow. But 'Everything And Nothing' is the main event - described by Sylvian as an overview of his work, rather than the conventional 'Best Of' which Virgin EMI so plainly craved. After all, once he was off the label they would be free to compile away without his "meddling" (Sylvian's own words).

If only other artists would do as much meddling when they are anthologised! 'Everything And Nothing' contains much that was previously unheard, and some things which only the most assiduous collector would have come across. Familiar tracks are often found in subtly remixed form - as is Sylvian's wont. This necessitates the recall of multi-track tapes, and it was the absence of, or delay in obtaining such which resulted in some obvious tracks, including 'Forbidden Colours' not being included. As well as the reworkings, Sylvian's compilations also include finished versions of tracks previously left incomplete - many of those featured here were started during the 'Dead Bees...' sessions. Most notable is the sublime



opener 'The Scent Of Magnolia', which almost equals the high point of 'Dead Bees', the gorgeous 'I Surrender'. As with many of his standout tracks over the last ten years, starting with the Ryuichi Sakamoto track 'Heartbeat', these songs feature the contributions of Sylvian's wife, one-time Prince protégée Ingrid Chavez.

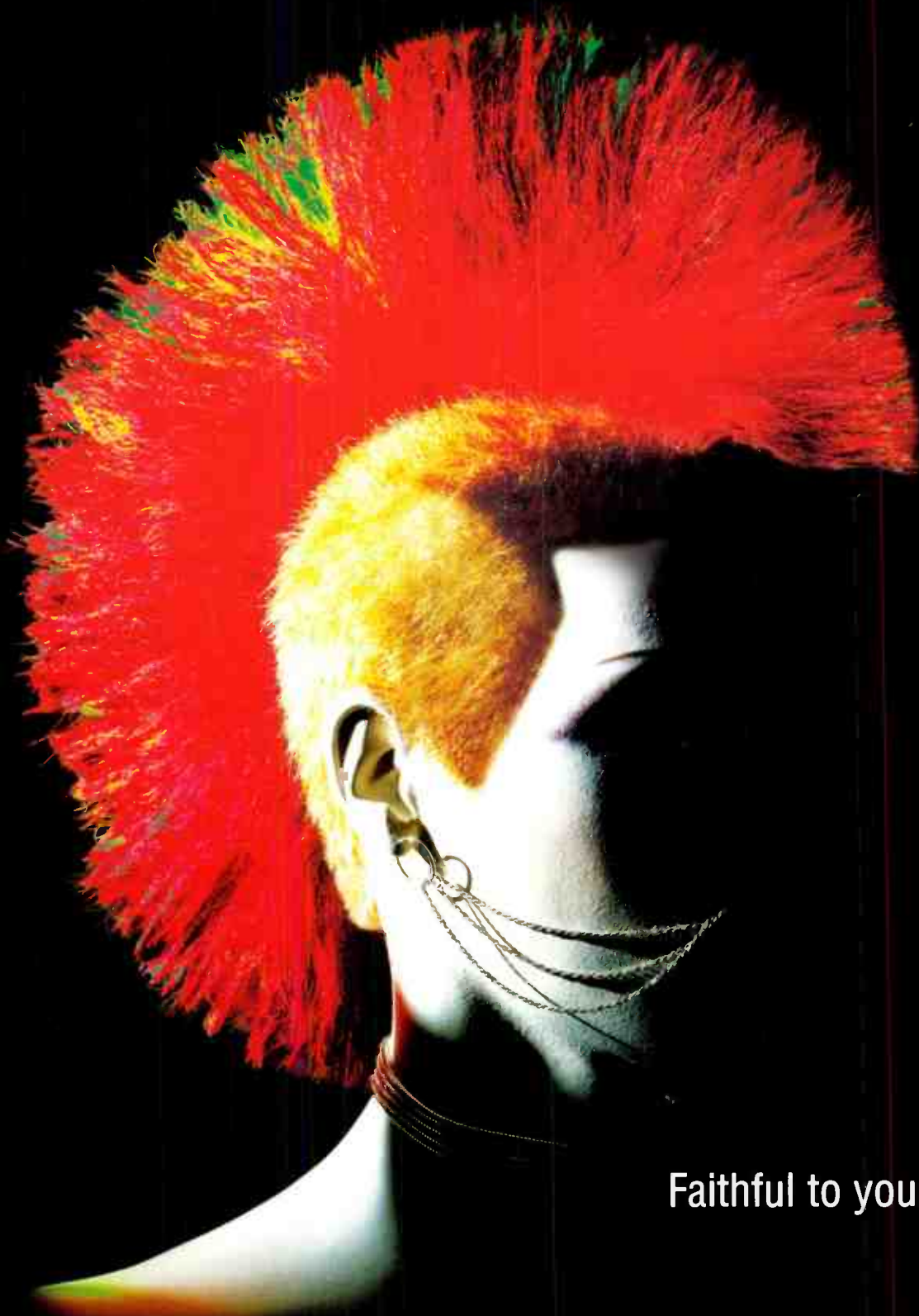
The sound of the album, particularly on the limited 3 CD gold disc edition, is exemplary throughout. This is no doubt the benefit of all that dedicated tape research and a 24bit Bob Ludwig mastering. That limited third disc includes alternate versions of 'The Scent Of Magnolia', and the studio version of 'The Blinding Light Of Heaven' from the Sylvian/ Fripp project, which is more weighted toward the Fripp end of the spectrum.

As anyone with a nodding acquaintance with Sylvian's path should be aware his approach to his distant past is quite revisionist. He only acknowledges 'Ghosts' as year zero for his subsequent career: it is the only Japan track to feature in 'Trophies', the anthology of his lyrics, and the only one to appear here apart from 'Some Kind Of Fool' - an outtake from the 'Gentlemen Take Polaroids' sessions.

After touring this album with a band including Steve Jansen, Sylvian has since gone on to record and tour (once again accompanied by his

brother) with 'Blemish', the first release on his independent Samadhisound label. He has also collaborated with a number of newer, more leftfield artists, including Tweaker and Readymade, as well as continuing to work with Ryuichi Sakamoto. Working away from major label budgets appears to suit him - as this month's interviewee Bill Nelson, a one-time collaborator, remarked (not unkindly), 'it should curb a few excesses and make him focus'.

Look out for our summary of the complete Japan remasters from both BMG and EMI, along with the classic Sylvian solo projects, in our next issue. With the issues around high resolution formats still all up in the air at EMI I have been told not to expect any such versions in the short term. Maybe Sylvian's efforts to locate his multi-tracks will benefit them if they manage to justify a multi-channel reworking at some point. Whether through respect or lack of commercial impetus, (regrettably I recently saw the 2 CD version in a Woolworth bargain bin for £2.99 - so much great music for so little!), EMI have so far refrained from further compilation of Sylvian's work. The dignity of this is perhaps just - when asked what the ultimate goal of his music was, Sylvian simply replied immediately, "To blow people's hearts wide open". For this listener at least, he succeeded...PC



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