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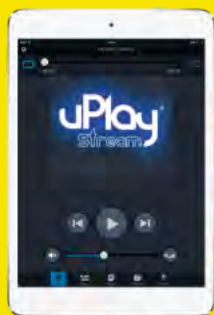
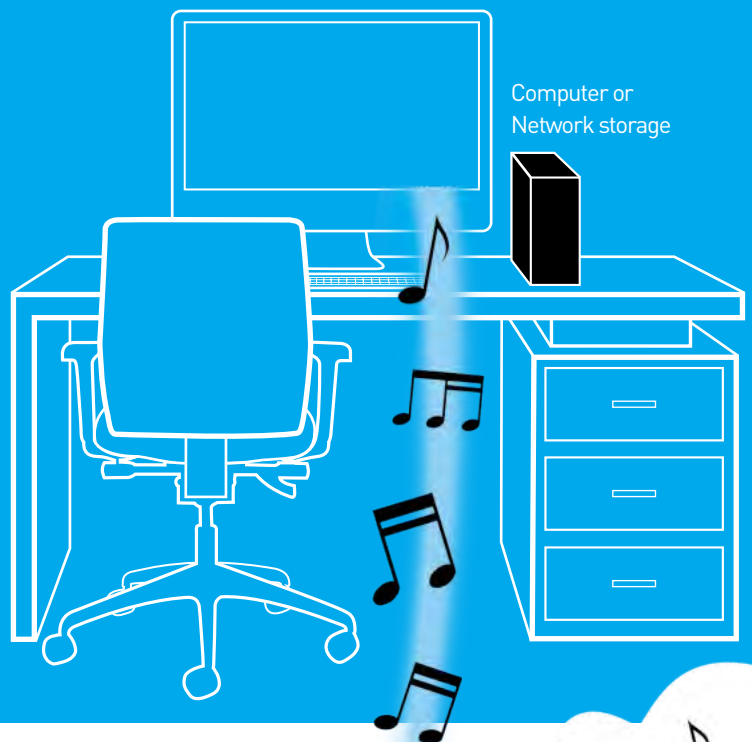
STREAM THE MUSIC 'uPLAY'

Enjoy your digital music collection, through your cherished audio system, with the QED uPlay Stream.

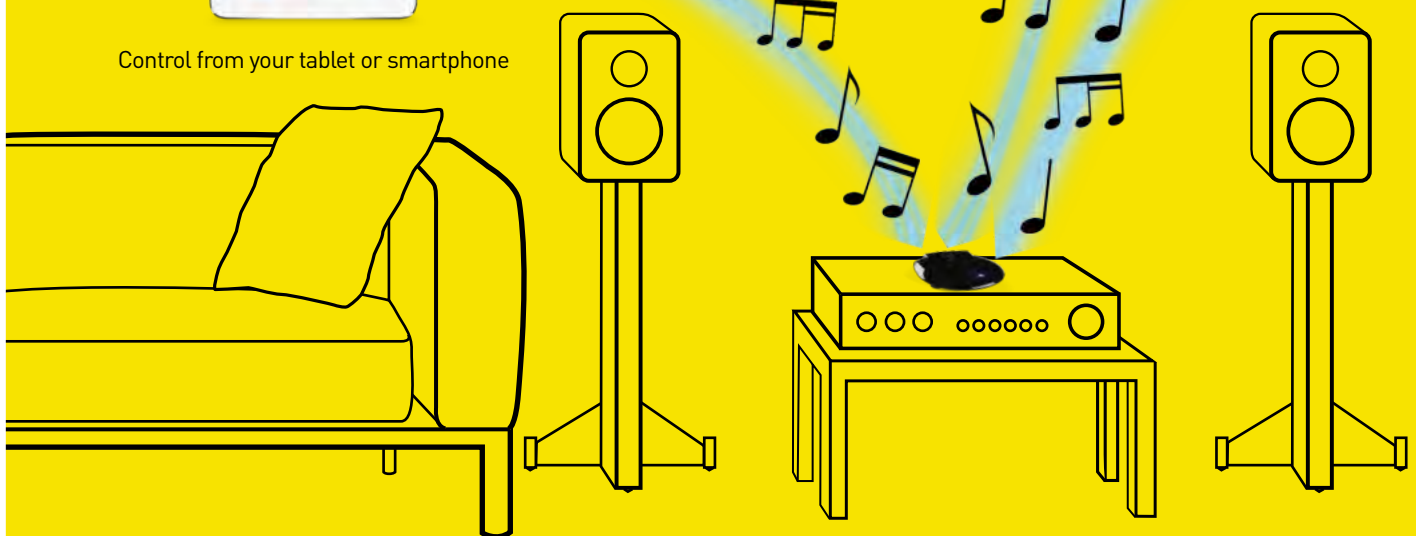
QED uPlay Stream is an ultra-compact, affordable, wireless network music streamer. With support for high definition music and a high quality '24/96' compatible DAC, 'uPlay' allows you to stream all the music you've stored electronically on: a computer, network storage, the cloud, tablet or smartphone, to your existing Hi-Fi or A/V system.

Control your music collection using the free, and easy to use, dedicated uPlay app for both iOS & Android.

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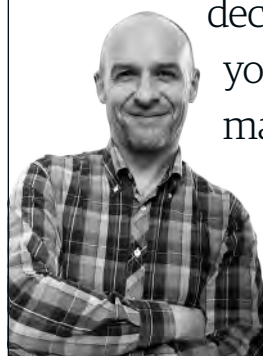
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Will you lift me even higher, to rise above this all?

Just because it's not a new idea, that doesn't mean it's not a good idea. Ever since flatscreen TVs properly hit the mainstream nine years (or so) ago, there have been numerous attempts, in numerous ways, to improve their generally abysmal sound. Equipment racks with in-built speakers; big flapping speaker 'wings' that bolt either side of your telly and instantly make it much bigger and much less attractive; soundbars of various sizes and effectiveness.

Even soundbases have been tried before. But this time everyone (or every manufacturer, at least) seems to think the soundbase a Great Idea. Is it? Have a look at the **definitive** (at the moment) **soundbase Supertest (p32)** and

decide if you're prepared to give your TV a raise in the interest of making it sound, you know - *good*.



Simon

Simon Lucas, Editor

My products of the month

Sony HAP-ZIES

Test p6

It needs a name as widely recognisable as Sony to give hi-res audio a bit of mainstream visibility



AudioQuest DragonFly v1.2

Group Test p69

Better than the (brilliant) original and cheaper too. My laptop wouldn't forgive me if I didn't...

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Group test AV Amplifiers
"It has the looks, the build and the extra features to be extremely attractive"



Our products of the month



Philips Fidelio M1BT
Group test p57

"A winning combination of sound and portability - you'll never want to fly solo again"

Becky Roberts Staff writer



Devialet 110 Temptation p74

"Rarely do we come across a piece of home electronics as innovative as this"

Ketan Bharadia Technical editor



Pioneer SC-LX87
First test p20

"If you're in the market for a high-end AV amp, you must give this a listen"

Ced Yuen Staff writer



Meridian Prime Headphone Amplifier, First test p16

"Top-quality headphone amp that makes a surprisingly superb preamp, too"

Kashfia Kabir Multimedia journalist



Spendor A6R
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"We loved the originals, but now newly revised these floorstanders sound better than ever"

Verity Burns Multimedia editor



Cyrus CDi
First test p10

"Cyrus knows how to make a great CD player - the CDi is a stunning machine"

Andy Madden Reviews editor

Supertest Soundbases
"We're quite taken by the simplicity of the soundbase, and it seems manufacturers are, too"



What's in this issue...

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32 Supertest: Soundbases Looking for an alternative to soundbars? Then look no further with our review of eight new soundbases by the biggest AV brands. They'll help make your tinny TV audio woes a thing of the past. Prices range from £200 to £400.

49 Stereo speakers Tall speakers, huge sound. We dissect four efforts from hi-fi speaker specialists PMC, Spendor, SVS and Tannoy in our look at floorstanding speakers above £2000.

56 Bluetooth headphones Tired of tangles? Salvation may be on its way in this round-up as the Philips Fidelio M1BTs take on three new contenders.

First tests
"It's a multi-talented powerhouse with nearly everything we could ask for"



Insider Bristol Show p24
 We turn our eye towards to the upcoming attractions of the Bristol Sound and Vision show

Round-up Bluetooth headphones
 "We're even more impressed with their superb sound quality, portability and design"

Subscriptions p30
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Group test Stereo speakers
 "Spending £2000+ on a pair of speakers is a serious business, so you've got to be sure"



Group test DACs
 "If you listen to music on a laptop, there's no reason you can't enjoy high-quality sound"

59 AV Amplifiers A new year means another round of surround amps. We take two brand-new entry-level amps from Sony and Pioneer and pit them against our 2013 Award winner, the Yamaha RX-V375.

67 DACs Compact, portable and affordable. We test four DACs under £150 to see which one takes our digital music library to the next level.

74 Temptations Featuring the spectacular Devialet 110 amplifier, Audeze's premium LCD-3 headphones and an impressive music streamer from Pixel Magic.

82 Playlist We review Neill Blomkamp's *Elysium*, give B.o.B's *Underground Luxury* a listen and get stuck into the gaming carnage that is *Dead Rising 3*.

Temptation
 "We can't think of a rival that uncovers as much detail"



New Buyer's Guide... two mags in one!

Revamped hi-fi guide!
 1500 products rated **p91**
 With new categories and key tech specs, we've made it even easier for you to pick the best kit for your cash

Find out...
What to consider: 3D TVs p100
What a speaker crossover does p122
Next-gen console streaming p145



Our ratings explained

We always test products as a team, in dedicated facilities, and always compare them with their peers. That's why our ratings are the most authoritative in the industry.

- One of the best** ★★★★★
- A serious contender** ★★★★☆
- Worth a look** ★★★☆☆
- Disappointing** ★★☆☆☆
- Awful** ★☆☆☆☆

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TEST WINNER

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FIRST TESTS

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FIRST TESTS**



Sony PlayStation 4
£350 **Page 14**
The console war ignites in spectacular fashion



Meridian Prime
£1200 **Page 16**
A top-class headphone amp and pre-amp



Pioneer SC-LX87
£2000 **Page 20**
Trouser-flappingly great performance

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EXCLUSIVE

This is how you do digital hi-fi properly

Sony HAP-Z1ES Music server £2000

The HAP-Z1ES is a serious statement of intent from Sony. This is flagship stereo hi-fi, but the fact you're looking at a server and not a CD player shows modernity and gives an indication that the Japanese giant is taking the future of music consumption seriously.

The Z1ES sits at the very top of a whole new range of hi-fi components from Sony, all of which tie in with the company's push to support high-resolution audio. As such, the Z1ES copes with virtually every audio format and sample rate on the planet, including WAV, FLAC, AIFF and DSD (Direct Stream Digital, see *Jargon Buster*) format.

Full control of source material

The HAP-Z1ES is a very interesting machine. The internal 1TB hard drive brings a slightly different approach to streaming compared with stand-alone products from the likes of Naim and Cyrus. While their servers are more than happy to play music from a NAS (Network Attached Storage) device, the Sony isn't. In fact it won't stream any music this way because Sony wants you to store it all on that 1TB hard drive. It's more of a closed ecosystem, which won't please everyone, but you can see where Sony is coming from. Music on a PC requires the computer to be on at all times and you need to rely on a network connection during playback - the internal

WHAT IT HAS TO BEAT...

Naim ND5 XS | £1975 | ★★★★★

Naim's no stranger to streamers and the ND5 XS is up there with the best - unlike the Sony, there's no internal hard drive.



This is flagship stereo hi-fi, and shows Sony is taking the future of music consumption seriously. The Z1ES copes with virtually every audio format and sample rate on the planet

hard drive method means there's no danger of buffering issues, and stability is improved.

To get started, you'll need to install Sony's HAP Music Transfer software on your PC or Mac. You can then specify which music folders you want the software to access (and which file formats to transfer), and the software does the rest, moving all those files onto the server's hard drive. It's a simple yet effective way of organising things. Every time you add new music to the folder, it's scanned and transfers across, which also helps minimise hassle.

No-frills handset

The supplied remote is minimalist and thin. Part of us admires the simplicity, the other part thinks this plastic, cheap wand isn't good enough given the streamer's beautiful

finish. There are just simple playback controls and ones for volume which you can use if you hook the server up to Sony's matching £2k stereo amplifier, the TA-A1ES.

As a flagship product, the HAP-Z1ES fits the bill. It's modern and retro at the same time, with the neatly finished aluminium chassis and thick front panel giving off a premium vibe. The front of the unit is dominated by a large 4.3in LCD display. It's a good size - bright and punchy, with plenty of room on there for album artwork as well as track information.

The jog dial lets you scroll through the menus but you don't press it to select. There's a separate 'enter' button to the side, which takes a little getting used to. Sony says including push-to-select would have introduced unwanted resonance into the player's structure and hindered its sound.

**It's dazzlingly expressive,
capturing changes of pace
and momentum superbly**

Cyrus CDi, p14



Connectivity is very basic. There's a USB socket around the back, so you can add an external hard drive if that terabyte of storage isn't enough. There's a standard analogue audio output, or you can connect to a stereo amplifier via the balanced XLR output. There's also an ethernet port to get the server hooked up to your network for when it needs to transfer files.

The HAP-Z1ES is one of the first servers we've reviewed to support DSD files and we're straight into that format with some Marvin Gaye and *What's Going On*. You're immediately drawn in by the streamer's invitingly smooth and refined character. Gaye's voice sounds polished and yet there's plenty of emotion to tap into. The soundstage is solid, with instruments

JARGON BUSTER

DSD

Direct Stream Digital is a digital format originally developed for archiving purposes. It's also the way music is encoded on SACD discs.

convincingly placed, and the Sony extracts plenty of detail from the DSD stream. You could ask for a bit more bite and attack, but it's by no means weak or insipid.

It's not just high-res music that impresses through the Sony. Play a

System builder Total build £5200

Speakers

ATC SCM 11 (2013)

★★★★★ £1200

We've been huge fans of the SCM 11s for years, and the latest 2013 version is the best by far. They're capable of a beautifully balanced sound.



Stereo amplifier

Roksan Caspian M2

★★★★★ £1800

The Caspian M2 is a sturdy, solid machine and delivers a dynamic sound, packed with detail, finesse and rich tonality.



Speaker stands

Custom Design FS104

Signature ★★★★★ £200

These Award-winning speaker stands allow the ATCs' rhythmic ability, tremendous insight and expressive delivery to shine.



Free control app



HDD Audio Remote ffree Android/iOS

Better than the standard remote

The lack of a quality remote control is actually a great excuse to download Sony's free HDD Audio Remote app for Android and iOS devices. Sony has obviously put a lot of time and effort into getting it right. It's a really slick, enjoyable operating system for the Z1ES. The glossy interface grabs your attention from the get-go, as does the speed at which you can navigate the app and create and manipulate playlists.

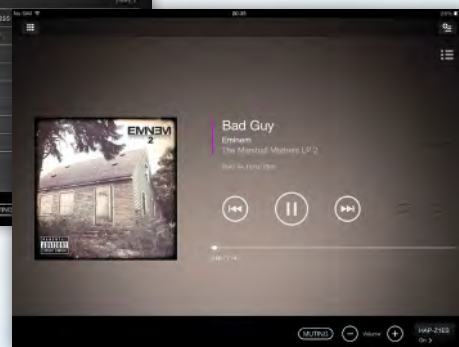
Nice little touches

Little things like being able to wake the streamer from sleep by simply activating the app, and the way the background colour of the app changes according to the colour of the artwork, all bring a smile to your face.



The app is really easy to navigate, and playlists are simple to set up

The app shows the format and sampling rate of your tracks



standard 16-bit/44.1kHz WAV rip of Daft Punk's *Lose Yourself To Dance* and the HAP-Z1ES shows a nice funky fluidity. Pharrell's high-pitched vocal peaks without any hardness or harshness. Bass notes sound weighty and rounded, with even the subtle ones in the background making their presence felt. The repetitive strumming on the lead guitar sounds tight, distinct and punctuates the track perfectly.

Similarly, with Adele's *Someone Like You*, that effortless and enjoyable delivery continues. Adele's beautiful vocal sounds rich and intimate, flowing as smoothly and clearly as the melodic piano playing. The Sony does a great job of communicating



USE IT WITH Apple iPad Air £400

Sony's control app looks stunning on a decent tablet - and the iPad Air is the best of the best.

more attacking character. Switched on, the Sony goes for a fuller, slightly smoother sound with greater body. You lose a little in terms of attack, but we preferred the balance with it switched on.

Good work with low-res files

Even compressed tracks and internet radio stations sound relatively luxurious through the HAP-Z1ES. A 320kbps AAC rip of Eminem's *Bad Guy* obviously lacks the dynamic headroom and outright resolution of the CD original, but the Sony's forgiving ability to unearth detail and keep the organisation and rhythm of the track intact is a real highlight.

it on and off, we couldn't hear any major differences, certainly nothing as obvious as the differences you can hear with the DSD Remastering engine.

The HAP-Z1ES is a great blend of the traditional and modern. If you're already in the habit of using a NAS for storing all your tunes, then the Sony probably isn't for you. But if all your music is stored on a home computer, then this could be the audio solution you're looking for. It's a sensible approach and, with Sony's moreish, musical sound, a successful one.

If all your music is stored on a home computer, then this could be the audio solution you're looking for. A great blend of traditional and modern, it's a sensible approach and, with Sony's moreish, musical sound, a successful one

the emotion and heartbreak of the song without sounding mannered.

Part of the Sony's internal wizardry is its DSD Remastering engine, which converts all music files to DSD, supposedly improving sound quality in the process. Thanks to the latest software update, you have the option of turning it on or off, so during testing we experimented to see if we could hear any differences. Turned off, music seems to have a slightly edgier,

Internet radio is, of course, a hazardous melting pot of seriously low bitrates (some fall well into double-figures). There's no shortage of machines that find it hard work making ridiculously compressed music sound listenable, but the Sony manages it.

To help, Sony recommends using its DSEE (Digital Sound Enhancement Engine) which claims to be able to improve sound quality, but switching

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Excellent build quality; good display; slick control app; produces a refined, hugely enjoyable and beautifully balanced sound

AGAINST Remote feels cheap; it isn't DLNA enabled so won't stream from network attached storage devices

VERDICT Sony's ventured into high-resolution audio delivery with impressive results - this is a smartly designed, superb-sounding piece of kit

TECH SPECS

- Type Streamer • Hard disk 1TB • Wireless Yes • Outputs Analogue • Tuner Internet
- Formats supported, MP3, AAC, AIFF, WMA, WAV, ALAC, FLAC, DSD • Remote control Yes • Dimensions (hwd) 13 x 43 x 49cm
- Weight 14.5kg

REVIEWER'S NOTES... 5 THINGS ABOUT THE HAP-Z1ES

- 1 The Sony's build quality is excellent - there's a real feeling of quality and that large colourful display is an eye-catcher. It feels like you're definitely getting your money's worth.
- 2 Sony's HAP Music Transfer software makes moving music over to the hard drive pretty painless. The fact it can automatically scan for new stuff and transfers it across wirelessly is neat, too.
- 3 We quickly grow tired of the standard plastic remote control and switch to Sony's HDD Audio Remote app. On our iPad Air, the interface looks slick and it's really responsive and satisfying to use.
- 4 The Sony is in its element with high-res music, and we're captivated by the smooth, sultry sound of the DSD version of Marvin Gaye's album *What's Going On*. It's as soothing as a cup of hot chocolate.
- 5 Internet radio comes courtesy of vTuner, and there's a decent range of stations at your disposal. We're particularly taken with AVRO Film, which streams movie soundtracks as 256kbps MP3s.



Hear the full spectrum

P3 Bowers & Wilkins have been established as masters of sound engineering for almost 50 years. We are now able to bring that same expertise to the world of headphones; the same precision, the same care, the same extraordinary range and depth of detail is now available from an ultra-light, highly portable set of headphones superbly designed to fit into your life.

Bowers & Wilkins

Cyrus CDi | CD player | £975

Masters of CD raise the bar higher still

Upgrade when you want
 The CDi carries a connection for an outboard power supply, the Cyrus PSX-R (£500), for when the upgrade bug strikes you.

Cyrus has a brilliant track record with CD players. We can't think of a rival company that has produced so many great players over the last decade or so. So when we say we think the CDi is arguably the best integrated machine the company has ever made, we don't do so lightly.

The CDi replaces both the CD6 SE2 and CD8 SE2 players in the company's range. It falls between them in price, but easily eclipses them both in performance. You'd never guess it from the outside - which looks just like any slot-loading Cyrus we've seen in recent years - but there's been a lot of work put into this player.

Revised transport mechanism

It uses the latest version of the company's transport mechanism. Cyrus has continued to develop this system and the software behind it, and is particularly proud of the transport's ability to read the data from the disc correctly the first time rather than relying on error correction to fill in the gaps.

The company claims 20 per cent fewer reading errors with this transport than the best off-the-shelf alternatives it could find. That's a huge reduction.



less taken with the player's display, unchanged and starting to look dated.

Look around the back of the player and there are two pairs of single-ended analogue outputs and the traditional digital duo of optical and coaxial outputs.

This really is a terrific machine. In true Cyrus tradition it puts detail resolution,

Cyrus has a brilliant track record with CD players, so when we say we think the CDi is arguably the best integrated machine the company has ever made we don't do so lightly

There is a downside to this latest version of the transport though, and that's the agricultural sound it makes when loading a disc. Once it starts playing though, it's as quiet as we would hope for.

The other technical highlight with the CDi is an upgraded DAC section that uses a new 32-bit design. The aim, as always, is to improve resolution and dynamics while keeping noise and distortion to a minimum.

Build quality is good. The CDi is built into one of Cyrus's half-width casings, which give a rigid, low-resonance structure. The company has finally changed the remote control and it's a nice back-lit affair. It's also easier to use than the previous effort. We're

agility and dynamic expression above all else. We certainly haven't come across a more insightful performer below £1500.

Authoritative and expressive

Eminem's *Marshall Mathers LP 2* is a hard-sounding album, but this Cyrus takes it all in its stride. The presentation has greater weight and low-end authority than its predecessors, but it's the CDi's way with rhythms that really catches our attention. It's dazzlingly expressive, capturing the changes of pace and momentum superbly.

Move onto Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* and we're taken by the Cyrus's dynamic

reach and its ability to keep track of delicate musical strands when the piece gets busy. We've heard more expansive soundstages (something the addition of a PSX-R improves) but the Cyrus counters with impressive precision and focus. All in all, a performance full of finesse and drama.

The CDi is an exceptional player that's as insightful as it is entertaining. Naim's Award-winning CD5 si now has a rival to fear.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Exceptional resolution and agility; terrific dynamics; a wonderful way with rhythms; precise sound-staging; upgrade potential

AGAINST It's noisy when loading a disc

VERDICT Arguably the best, most insightful integrated CD player Cyrus has ever made

Needs to beat

Naim CD5 si
£995 ★★★★★

Our current favourite is impressively talented but still has much to fear from the Cyrus.



System builder Total build £3675

Stereo amplifier

Cyrus 8a
 ★★★★★ **£1200**

The natural partner. Will complement the CDi's agility and resolution.



Stereo speakers

Tannoy DC6 T
 ★★★★★ **£1000**

Terrific floorstanders that will ably echo the Cyrus's dynamic and rhythmic abilities.



Power supply

Cyrus PSX-R
 ★★★★★ **£500**

The PSX-R improves pretty much every area of performance.



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Tivoli Albergo+ | DAB/FM radio | £200

Solid Albergo sounds the part



The sound is typical of a good radio - weighted to the midrange to enhance the human voice. It has surprisingly meaty bass for a compact box

The **Albergo+** is a solid, comfortable-sounding DAB/FM radio alarm. It seems to be aimed squarely at the hotel market (at least that's what we infer from a glance at the product page on Tivoli's website), with the emphasis on ease of use and a mellow sound. Tivoli is convinced that such strengths ought to translate to the domestic situation as well. And it's probably right.

FM, DAB and Bluetooth

So what do you get for your £200? A nicely constructed, solid (if a little plasticky) unit in a choice of five finishes: blue, red and green have recently been added to the white and graphite in the shops from launch. There are FM and DAB tuners, and Bluetooth streaming to go along with a 3.5mm input, and a credit-card style remote control unit. There's also the facility to add another speaker (£80) to create a neat little stereo system.

And Tivoli is right: this is a simple-to-use, intuitive unit. Pull up the telescopic aerial, push the button on the top to get things going, select your input and away it goes, scanning the airwaves for stations.

A meaty midrange sound

The sound is typical of a good radio - weighted to the midrange to enhance the human voice. It has surprisingly meaty bass for a compact box - indeed we found the need to fiddle with the settings to dial this down a little. Treble is clean, clear and

nice balanced. But it's the midrange that draws the listener's attention.

The controls on the front are clearly labelled and carry out the major functions of tuning, source input and alarm setting. The remote control carries out the other, more tweaky stuff. This works perfectly well as a control system, but it does mean you'll have to be careful not to lose the slim remote control. Without it, you will have no access to the station presets or the tone controls, for example. And you will probably want to have a tinker to get the unit sounding right for you - we found

there was a definite thickness in the lower/mid area. You'll soon find you can have too much of a chocolatey velvety sound. Tone things down a bit with the controls, though, and you'll be able to hunker down for a good long session.

Decent sound over Bluetooth

The Bluetooth function works nicely. Set-up is simple and the sound is consistent with what we found with radio reception.

There's much to like with the Albergo+. Its problem is that there are rivals out there that sound as good but are cheaper, or have more features for the same price.

This neat unit deserves to be on a shortlist, though. Its mellow tones might be just what you're looking for.

Around the back

1 Add a speaker

You can add a second speaker to make this a neat little stereo unit. It works nicely, but will set you back another £80.

2 Hard-wired

If you can't stream via Bluetooth, there's always the option to send in tunes to the Albergo+ in the traditional wired 3.5mm manner.



Rating ★★★★★☆

FOR Warm sound; good with voices; easy to use

AGAINST That warm sound may be too much for some; no presets without the remote control; a bit plasticky

VERDICT A nicely performing radio, if a little on the expensive side

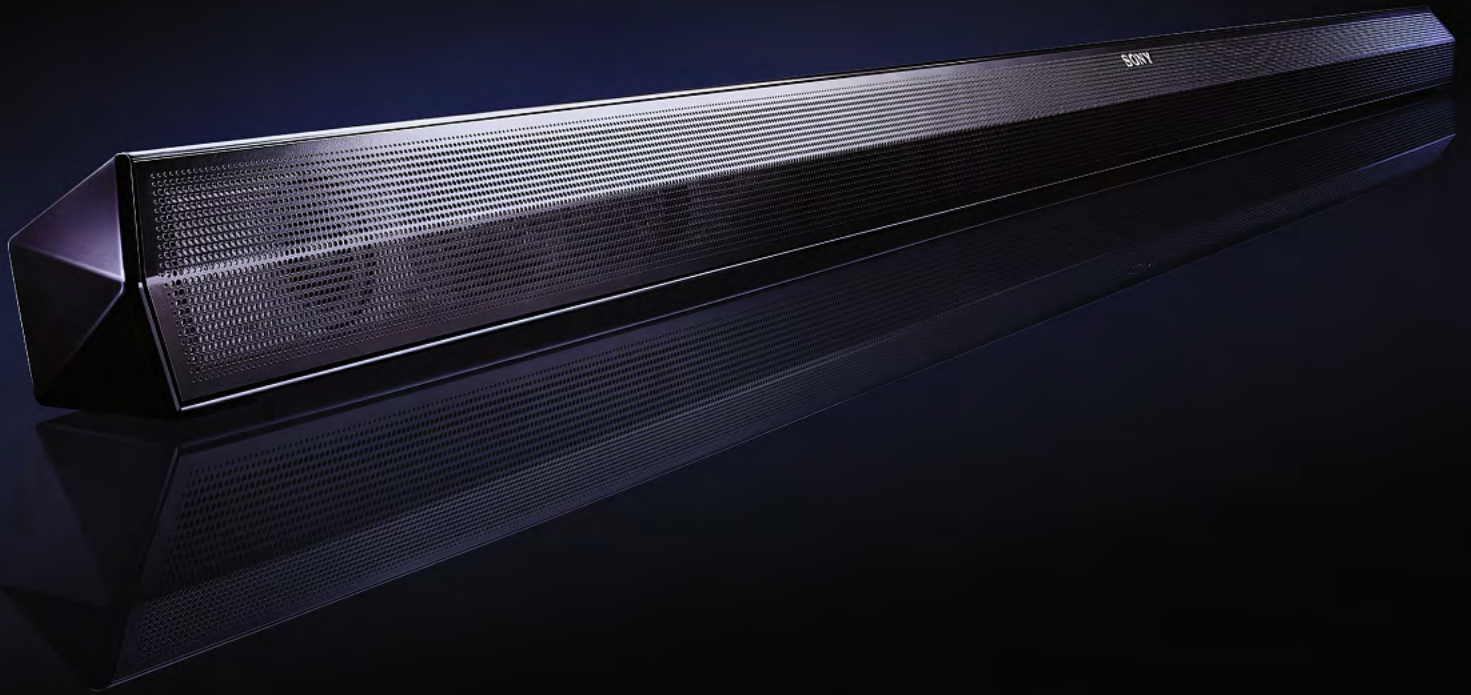
Also consider

Pure Evoke F4
£180 ★★★★★

Our 2013 Award winner is cheaper and has more features than the Tivoli



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*Specifications based on 40 x 32.5 x 900mm (HDW) and verified as of 26th July 2013. For more information: www.sony.co.uk/ST3research. 'Sony', 'make.believe' and their logos are trademarks or registered trademarks of Sony Corporation. Bluetooth and its logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Bluetooth SIG, Inc. All other logos and trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

Sony PlayStation 4 | Games Console | £350

Let battle recommence

You've done well if you've managed to miss the launch of the Sony PlayStation 4. First announced back in February 2013, all sorts of hype and hyperbole has followed since. Now the PS4 is finally a reality, and in time to do battle for next-gen console supremacy with Microsoft's Xbox One.

Much of the talk around these new consoles has concerned their role as all-singing, all-dancing entertainment hubs, ready to take centre stage in your living room and your AV system. However, in the months before launch, Sony took a step back from this, suggesting the PS4 is a games console first, and indeed second.

Conversely, Microsoft has kept on the home-entertainment message, making much of the Xbox One's TV integration and Blu-ray player. However, as our Xbox One review reveals, the console is far from the

to place it vertically and this is an optional extra (despite being pictured on the box). Inside that box is one of the new DualShock 4 wireless controllers, a mono headset (a cheap-looking earbud), an HDMI cable, USB cable and a power cable. Unlike the Xbox One, the power pack is inside the PS4, so there's no need to worry about any external unit.

Digital all the way

The PS4 connections come in the form of an HDMI and a digital optical output, two USB 3.0 inputs and an auxiliary connection for the new PlayStation Camera (see panel). There's an ethernet connection, too, though the PS4 also has built-in wi-fi. There are no



Sony has chosen its battle cleverly with the PS4. Gaming is where it wants to win the next-gen console match-up and, on this evidence, it might just have the first victory in the bag

finished article in that respect. So, does the PS4 carry on where the PS3 left off? Or is it games over features to the detriment of wider home entertainment functionality?

A new slant on design

The PlayStation 4 design looks more like the PS2 than the PS3 - "a PS2 on the wonk" is how we described it in our unboxing video - but it's certainly more compact and generally easier on the eye than the black block that is the Xbox One. The angular edges, touchscreen front buttons and glowing blue power strip make for a suitably next-gen appearance.

It can stand flat or upright, though you're advised to use the official stand if you want

analogue connections, an omission that raised some eyebrows at launch.

The PS4 will happily play games, Blu-ray discs and DVDs, but the drive won't play 3D Blu-rays or CDs. Strange but true. The reaction to these missing features appeared to take Sony by surprise, and the firm has since announced that an update to allow this functionality may well roll out.

There's also no DLNA streaming - another feature present on the PS3 - nor support for streaming Bluetooth audio or generally playing your digital music. So while the original PlayStation, the PS2 and the PS3 all jumped aboard the disc of choice at the time (CD, DVD and Blu-ray respectively), it seems Sony doesn't see the



USE IT WITH

Panasonic TX-P42GT60B £1000

Our Product of the Year in the TVs category delivers the best picture-per-pound performance bar none, and is a fitting accomplice to Sony's shiny new PlayStation

3D Blu-ray, or streaming your own personal audio, as worthy of inclusion at launch.

Essentially, Sony would rather you used the PS4's apps for streaming music and video, mainly Sony Music (monthly subscription) and Video Unlimited (pay-as-you-go). There are other apps for music and video available from the PlayStation Store, such as BBC iPlayer, Lovefilm and Netflix. The PS4 comes with 500GB storage - you do have the option to upgrade this by replacing the internal hard disk - but this is mainly for saving games.

Beyond the games

It's a sign of the times that even a console that puts gaming front and centre still offers all sorts of extra entertainment. The PlayStation Store sells apps, movies, TV shows and access to Music Unlimited, as well as games, while there's an internet browser and Facebook integration, too.

Navigation is essentially through two rows of icons. A top line gives you access to the general settings and your profile; drop down a level and your games and apps appear in order of most recently opened.

PS4 vs Xbox One



The Xbox One - some £80 more expensive, albeit with the Kinect included in that price - arguably looks more interesting and innovative, in no small part down to the TV integration and PVR functionality, but at launch the Xbox's key features are something of a let down. A little buggy or simply not UK-ready.

Sony has headed in the other direction with the PS4. Games are the focus and for a gaming

machine, it's the more impressive. That said, there's still plenty of additional functionality - on-board streaming, catch-up TV, web browsing - but the omissions of 3D Blu-ray, CD and DLNA streaming, are a shame.

It's a real score draw. If you want next-gen gaming, we'd plump for the PS4, but if you're after that home entertainment hub of dreams, think Xbox One.



Despite the elegant PS4's versatility, it's clear gaming is still Sony's top priority

The interface itself is nice and nippy, but jumping between open apps takes 10 seconds or so which, while understandable, feels like a delay compared with the smartphones and tablets we've become accustomed to.

While Microsoft makes a big play of the Kinect system, which comes bundled with the Xbox One, your first port of call for controlling the PS4 will be the standard controller, the new DualShock 4. And it's a big improvement. It feels more comfortable, the grips are bigger and the triggers seem more accurate. There's also a standard headphone jack so you can now connect any pair of headphones to hear PS4 audio. And sound quality is decent.

Ticking the Blu-ray box

So, it won't play 3D Blu-rays or CDs, but how does it perform with what it can play? More than adequately - but not a patch on a dedicated player. Compared with the Sony BDP-S370, a £200 spinner, it gives away sharpness, dynamic colour and overall detail. Motion isn't handled quite as smoothly either, but there's little sign of noise, colours are presented faithfully and the level of insight is adequate. Sonically it's a little less substantial, too.

Music Unlimited works pretty nicely. There's a thorough library and a neat and fast interface. The bitrate is now thankfully

Kinect's rival

The **PlayStation Camera**, which is used for voice control and facial recognition, is an optional accessory (around £60). It's a lot smaller than the new Kinect (which Microsoft aims to make more integral to the Xbox experience - hence it's bundled with the console), and in reality a lot less impressive. There are limited voice commands and no gesture control.

An app, The Playroom, feels rather shoe-horned in to the PS4 experience as an effort to show off what the Camera can do. It's essentially simply some augmented reality, albeit very impressive at first. Once again, this would seem to be a 'watch this space' feature.



up to 320kbps, to match the likes of Rdio and Spotify, and it sounds fine.

Of course, it's the games where it comes in to its own - and excels. There's no backwards compatibility with PS3 games but you will be able to buy digital copies of your existing games. PS4 launch titles include *Battlefield 4*, *Knack*, *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag* and *Call of Duty: Ghosts*. And they all look great - even though we still expect it to take time for developers to get the best out of the hardware. *Killzone: Shadow Fall* has some particularly neat use of the new controller, great surround sound effects and detailed, expansive landscapes to enjoy - all running in glorious 1080p/60fps. It's also worth

In detail



The DualShock 4 controller is more comfortable than its predecessor, and its triggers seem more accurate



The PS4 has waved goodbye to analogue connections, but you can output sound via HDMI and optical digital

noting that you don't have to be a paying subscriber to access apps such as Netflix and Lovefilm - you do on Xbox.

Sony has chosen its battle cleverly with the PS4. Gaming is where it wants to win the next-gen console match-up and, on this evidence, we think it might just have the first victory in the bag. It's undoubtedly the PS4's strongest string, which may be no great surprise, but with all the talk of the wider home entertainment capabilities of such devices, it's no longer a given.

Neat integration of catch-up TV and music and movie apps is good, but there's no denying some of the holes in the wider spec sheet when it comes to home entertainment.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Simple set-up and interface; games look and sound great; good selection of apps

AGAINST No 3D Blu-ray, CD or DLNA support; not as accomplished as a dedicated disc player

VERDICT Next-gen gaming is a glorious reality but you'll have to forgo some last-gen features

Also consider Xbox One £430



What else? There are myriad reasons to choose one console over another but bear in mind the Xbox's flair with non-game home entertainment

Meridian Prime | Headphone amplifier | £1200

Multi-talented Prime is a hit

This is a small unit at 5x16x15cm, but it delivers hugely

ASP options
The electricrky works surprisingly well at making the sound for headphones more realistic. We prefer setting 'i'.



The name of the Prime Headphone Amplifier makes its intended purpose clear. It has built-in digital-to-analogue circuitry, but we get the feeling most of the effort has gone into the analogue amplification stages.

It has no fewer than three headphone outputs: two 6.3mm and one 3.5mm option. It's happy to drive multiple headphones, but we find the sound is a little better defined when just one pair is driven.

Meridian is a master at signal processing, so it's no surprise to find 'Analogue Spatial Processing' on board the Prime.

It's a function designed to counteract the fact that stereo recordings are designed to be played over speakers, not headphones. ASP blends the left and right channels to

varying degrees - there are three options - to try to create a more natural presentation.

These features can often compromise clarity and focus to improve sound staging, but ASP sounds pretty convincing.

This is a small, beautifully built unit. We're not totally taken with the display, though. The three indicators represent a range of source sampling rates, from 44.1kHz up to 24-bit/192kHz. We'd like a more informative display showing both bit depth and sampling rate.

We start by connecting the Prime to our Mac laptop. We use a variety of headphones, and the results put us in mind of Meridian's £450 Director DAC in terms of character,

though at a higher level when it comes to sound quality.

The tonal balance is nicely judged and the Prime never sounds flustered or rushed. It's totally in control - perhaps a bit too much, as some of the excitement is tempered. Dynamic punch and rhythmic drive are reined in a touch, too.

It's when we try the line-level inputs that we're surprised. Through the analogue inputs the Prime sounds more entertaining. Rhythmically it's more forceful, and there's plenty of punch with music as diverse as Adele's *19* and Metallica's *Enter Sandman*. All the insight and composure we noticed through the USB input is still present, but there's more spice to the sound.

The Prime also works well as a dedicated stereo preamp. It's certainly right up there with some of the best preamps we've heard at around the £1000 mark.

We were worried Meridian had been too ambitious in its pricing - if this were only a DAC we'd mark it down because of that high price. But this is a supremely capable headphone amplifier and also a fine, if slightly feature-limited, stereo preamp. And that is enough for the full five stars.

Through the analogue inputs the Prime sounds more entertaining. It's more forceful and there's plenty of punch. All the insight and composure is still there, but there's more spice to the sound



USE IT WITH
Shure SRH1840
£500

The Meridian needs top quality headphones and these Shures fit the bill perfectly. They're detailed and precise without diluting any of the excitement in the music.

In detail

1 Line-level in

There are two line level inputs: one stereo RCA and one 3.5mm - and the Prime's analogue performance is particularly good.

2 Analogue outputs

The analogue outputs can be put to good effect, too: the Prime works impressively as a pre-amplifier in a larger stereo system.

3 USB

The Prime performs very well as a digital to analogue converter, but it isn't a stand-out unit in this regard at the price.



Rating ★★★★★

FOR Detailed, precise and composed; fine build and finish; great as a preamp; can drive a wide range of headphones; ASP function is useful

AGAINST The display; more inputs would be nice

VERDICT A top-class headphone amp and a talented preamp. Treat the DAC as a nice bonus

Needs to beat

Naim DAC-V1
£1250 ★★★★★

Our current DAC champ delivers an engaging and entertaining sound



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THE
TRUTH.



Denon CEOL RCD-N8 | Stereo system | £350

Everything but the kitchen sink



USE IT WITH

Q Acoustics 2020i speakers £170

The perfect size to sit alongside the petite Denon, the 2020is are a well-judged and refined pair of budget speakers.



If you have some music to play, there's a good chance the RCD-N8 will find some way of playing it. This little unit is capable of an awful lot - take a deep breath. It's a CD player; has a 30-pin Apple dock for playback and charging; lets you hook up an Apple device or flash drive with USB; accepts other gadgets via the 3.5mm port; there's AirPlay and wi-fi on board (the latter for playing directly from Spotify and Last.fm through the system's built-in apps); it receives FM and internet radio too; is DLNA 1.5-certified for streaming music from a connected laptop or NAS drive; and has an optical input for connecting to your TV. Phew. There's no Bluetooth, though, which seems like quite an oversight.

Warm and punchy sound

Denon offers matching speakers, but we tested the RCD-N8's main unit with a pair of Award-winning Q Acoustics 2010is. Play a CD and it shows off a warm and punchy character, with a decent level of detail and a well-balanced sound. It's no slouch either: there's plenty of get up and go here, all helped along by an expressive, fluid midrange, and tight bass (we never felt the need to use the subwoofer output). The treble steers clear of sounding harsh or thin and playing The Fratellis' *Henrietta* cymbals stay crisp and realistic. It's not the most refined treble we've heard - the Marantz CR610 does a better job - but it's not offensive to the ears, which is often half the battle on smaller systems.

Organisation isn't class-leading either. We liked it best with simpler music.

We like the Spotify and Last.fm access. Once online and signed in, you'll have the ability to search as normal or access your playlists, all displayed on the OLED screen. Playing music through Spotify sounded a little more congested and disorganised than CD, and dynamically lacked a bit of punch. But there's little doubt most will be happy to trade a little clarity for the convenience.

Playback was stable throughout too, no doubt helped by the inclusion of Wi-Fi Multi Media, a feature that prioritises audio data on a network over less time-sensitive applications.

The Denon's OLED screen and nice remote make it easy to get the system on to your network

Playback via USB offers a fair amount of format support, including MP3, WMA, AAC and ALAC, plus FLAC and WAV in 24-bit/192kHz quality. Feed this system the best quality you can and it will reward you, but lower quality material is given a polish too, and sounds perfectly listenable.

Of course it's very hard not to draw comparisons with the similar Marantz M-CR610, and Marantz's unit takes the Denon when it comes to refinement, organisation and detail. There's a bit more punch here, but everywhere else the Denon just falls a little short.

But then the Marantz is £100 more, which is a consideration to be made when many will be paying for speakers on top. It might not quite match the Marantz, but the RCD-N8 is worth a look if you want compact kit that does a bit of everything.

Round the back

1 Want more bass?

The subwoofer output lets you hook up an external unit and add more weight to the low end.

and hard-wire the system to your router. It's a more stable connection than wi-fi.

2 Networking options

If your wireless network isn't up to much, use an ethernet cable

3 Better TV sound
The digital optical input means you can hook up the RCD-N8 to boost your TV's sound.



Rating ★★★★★

FOR Well built; well featured; warm, punchy character; well-balanced sound

AGAINST No Bluetooth; no DAB; not the last word in refinement; can lack organisation

VERDICT Stacks of connectivity in a compact system makes this an attractive option

Also consider

Marantz M-CR610 £450 ★★★★★

Our Systems Product of the Year, this Marantz just pips the Denon on refinement and detail.



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MA MONITOR AUDIO

Pioneer SC-LX87 | AV receiver | £2000

The home-cinema jackpot

Behold: the SC-LX87 - Pioneer's flagship home cinema amp for 2014. This is a show-stopping powerhouse that builds on the sturdy foundations laid down by last year's Award-winning SC-LX86.

There are plenty of budget AV receivers on the market, but £2000 gets you a boost in power, a wealth of connections and features, and a properly impressive 9.2-channel surround sound performance.

Startlingly precise and powerful

We start with an exercise in annoying the neighbours with a Blu-ray of *Man of Steel*. The scene where Zod is overwhelmed by sound is an excellent test of effects placement. Your attention is grabbed by the fire alarm from the front-right channel, and then yanked over to the surround-back-left where a dog is barking. Then tyres screech around you and planes zoom overhead. Precision is the key here, and the SC-LX87 is so spot-on we almost found ourselves glancing at the off-screen commotion.

It's not just the location and panning of sound that impresses us. The Pioneer shows remarkable agility, throwing effects around with confidence and extraordinary speed. You also get far-reaching dynamics, thanks in part to the sheer power on hand. Combine that with a big, open soundfield: it's a convincingly immersive atmosphere.

Fantastic finesse

This is helped by the sound's insight, transparency and texture. In fact, you can close your eyes and still not be in the dark about just what is going on around you. Is that the sound of someone getting shot? No, it's someone getting

shot while wearing impervious armour, and bullets are bouncing off as empty cases clink to the ground.

It's not all about the action, of course. The Pioneer is more than willing to shift down a few gears. It's as adept at low-key contemplation as it is with large-scale mayhem. Speech, as with everything else, is delivered with precision. Words are enunciated clearly, never glossing over even the subtlest inflection.

You can add tonal balance to this extensive list of praise too. Last year's SC-LX86 tended to edge ever so slightly to the bright side, but that doesn't happen with the LX87. Here you get an even-handed approach to the frequency range. The bass is taut and judged well enough not to be imposing. Treble is prominent, but rounded just enough to avoid sharpness.

What of the competition?

The Pioneer even fares well against the Award-winning Yamaha RX-A3030. The LX87's agility and precision are its greatest strengths, and here it has an edge over the Yamaha. The champ counters with a slightly bigger soundfield, as well as a richer, smoother presentation.

It's a really tough call, and a lot of it is down to taste. We'd give this one to the Yamaha for being more comfortable with longer listens, but it's very, very close. As ever, we'd recommend an audition to see which side you come down on.

We'd consider slapping a five-star badge on the Pioneer for its stonkingly good sound alone, but there are other elements to consider. You'd expect plenty of tech from a high-end amplifier, and the SC-LX87 impresses here too.



What App? iControlAV2013

The remote control is clearly laid out, but the best way to control this amp is Pioneer's fabulous iControlAV2013 app for Android and iOS. We found it much easier and more intuitive than the traditional remote. Its slick panels let you tinker to your heart's content, as well as scroll through music folders on different streaming options.

There are nine channels of amplification, each delivering 220W (last year's SC-LX86 had 140W per channel). You get 4K pass-through and upscaling through the nine HDMI inputs, one of which is MHL (Mobile High-Definition Link) compatible. This means it will accept 1080p video and surround sound from compatible phones. There are not one but three HDMI outputs.

Streaming and networking

The Pioneer is DLNA-certified, so you can play music from NAS devices and networked computers. AirPlay handles streaming from Apple devices, and HTC Connect does the same for select HTC devices such as the HTC One. Spotify Connect is on hand for sending music directly to the amp from a device running Spotify on the same network too. And you can also play music from iOS devices (Lightning or otherwise) and USB sticks through the front panel's USB port. Supported formats include AIFF, WAV, FLAC, Apple Lossless and DSD.

There's also an asynchronous USB input: you can plug your computer into the Type B USB socket at the back of the machine so you can use the Pioneer's built-in DAC instead of your computer's if you choose. Stereo audio performance is very good for a surround-sound amplifier. It's clear and detailed, with plenty of pluck and there's a good degree of cohesion.

In detail

1 Connect all your kit

There's a plentiful supply of HDMI ports here - nine in and three out. So the Pioneer should cope with even the most outlandish of kit-racks.

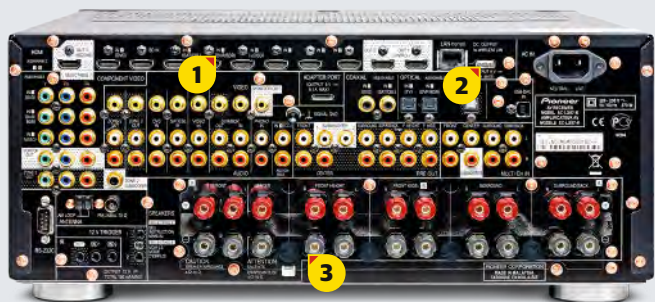
2 Networking options

There's an ethernet port for wired networking duties, and you can use the USB port for a wi-fi

adapter if you'd rather go wireless. It's a bit fiddly to set up, though, and we prefer a wired connection for better stability.

3 User-friendly socketry

The nicely spaced speaker terminals are sturdy enough to cope with pretty chunky cable. It makes set-up easier on the knuckles, too.





It's not just the location and panning of sound that impresses us. The Pioneer shows off remarkable agility, far-reaching dynamics, power and a big, open soundfield

For digital audio, there are two each of coaxial and optical inputs. Analogue is well catered for, thanks to the smattering of stereo sockets and a full set of multichannel inputs. There are also four inputs for composite video and three for component.

An ethernet socket handles wired internet, and there's a bundled adaptor for wi-fi. We'd stick to ethernet: it's more stable and the wireless adaptor is a bit fiddly. An optional Bluetooth adaptor is available too.

This amp is a joy to use. The interface is easy to navigate, and updating it to the

latest firmware version is a swift task. Setting up the speakers is simple, too: the auto-calibration process takes a little while, but it is thorough and accurate.

A must-audition amp

We love the Pioneer SC-LX87. It's a multi-talented powerhouse with nearly everything we could ask for. We're deeply impressed by its precise, punchy sound and delighted by its host of features. If you're in the market for a high-end home cinema amp, you must give this a listen.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Remarkable precision; bags of detail; awesome power; fantastic specification

AGAINST Nothing of note

VERDICT Pioneer strikes gold again. This is a stunning amp with extraordinary performance and features. You simply must listen to it

Also consider

Yamaha RX-A3030
£2000 ★★★★★

Not as precise, but you get a bigger soundfield and a richer, smoother character.



System builder total build **£9900**

Blu-ray player
Marantz UD7007
★★★★★ £700

This universal player delivers great performance across the board.



Speaker package
B&W CM9 Theatre
★★★★★ £4200

Outstanding scale, excellent integration, brilliant detail and refinement, and its build is ace.



Projector
Panasonic PT-AT6000E
★★★★★ £3000

If you have £3000 to spend on a projector, this is the projector to spend it on.





Lightning does strike twice.



NAD D 3020
Hybrid Digital Amplifier



Legend has it that the NAD 3020 brought true hi-fi sound to music lovers the world over, stunning millions by sounding bigger and way more powerful than it had any right to. NAD now introduces the D 3020 Hybrid Digital Amplifier, a completely modern take on the original NAD 3020 for the digital audiophile. Using the latest lightning fast digital technology, wireless streaming with aptX Bluetooth, an unique implementation of NAD PowerDrive™, and hybrid digital architecture, the D 3020 represents the same game-changing innovation that raised the original 3020 to cult status.

The D 3020 is no accident. Lightning really does strike twice.

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Samsung Galaxy Note 10.1 | Tablet | £450

Big Android goes gunning for Apple

The Samsung Galaxy Note 10.1 (2014 Edition) is much closer to the tablet we wanted the original to be, and finally looks like something that could take on the iPad.

For a start, it looks a lot nicer than the old model, having shaved a centimetre from either side of the bezel, slimmed down to an iPad-bothering 7.9mm and dropped 60g in weight too.

Stunning screen

Its 10.1in, 2560 x 1600-pixel screen has a super-sharp density of 299 pixels per inch, and is one of the best on the market. It doubles the resolution of its predecessor and pips the iPad Air for on-paper specs.

But the proof is, of course, in the viewing - and there's no doubt that the Note 10.1's screen looks stunning. Icons and text are seriously sharp, while colours are bold and punchy, demonstrating the vivid palette we've come to expect from Samsung kit.

We found colour in video to be more natural than we've seen on some previous Samsung tablets and smartphones, which have had a tendency to look oversaturated. We still prefer the iPad Air's more neutral

The Note 10.1's 2560 x 1600-pixel screen looks stunning. Icons and text are seriously sharp, while colours are bold and punchy

colour balance overall, but there's no denying that the richer hues make for attractive viewing. Elsewhere, whites are impressively punchy, though blacks could be deeper. Knock the brightness down a few notches and this does improve, though you will lose that zing from your whites...

As you'd expect from such a high-res screen, detail is superb, with sharp outlines and smooth motion. The iPad Air has a better way with fine detail though, giving a better sense of depth, and we did have instances where some colour gradients suffered from banding rather than being smooth, which wasn't the case on the Air.

Sound could be better

The Note 10.1's stereo speakers are placed so they won't get covered when held in landscape or portrait. Their position, not to mention that of the home button and Samsung logo, would suggest the Note is intended to be used in landscape, though.

The result is a mixed bag. The soundfield is better than the iPad's mono speaker, and it goes louder too. However it's thin and lacks warmth or friendliness, with very little bass and a treble that's dangerously close to sounding harsh at higher volumes. The Air is much more subtle and dynamic.



Living with it

This is a rapid tablet, but Samsung's TouchWiz Android skin looks dated and cluttered. Vanilla Android, please!

Headphones are therefore a better solution for movies and music. The performance isn't quite as punchy or solid as the Air, but it's rich and detailed, with reasonable timing and a good handle on dynamics for a portable. It supports most popular formats too, including FLAC and WAV up to 24-bit/192kHz.

Really nice to use

Performance is quick. Very quick. Web pages and apps load swiftly (though we found some Samsung apps a bit crash-prone), menu swiping is fluid and multitasking is, on the whole, stutter-free. That's hardly surprising considering the power behind the Note 10.1, which uses the eight-core Exynos 5 chip.

There's also 3GB of RAM, 1GB more than we're used to seeing (even in premium devices), and a choice of 16-, 32- or 64GB storage options with microSD card support.

One of the Note 10.1's main selling points is its stylus, the S Pen. Whether this will be of use will depend entirely on what you use your tablet for - heavy movie watchers might find less use for it, while business users and arty types will undoubtedly find the note-taking and design apps handy.

USE IT WITH

AKG K451
£50

Not only are these headphones brilliantly enthusiastic and wonderfully detailed, they're an absolute bargain too.



After falling short in the tablet market for a while now, Samsung has finally produced a tablet that could prove a credible alternative to the iPad - though its price might prove a stumbling block.

It still can't match its Apple competitor for video or audio prowess, but its screen, performance, form factor and S Pen stylus will doubtless be a draw for many who aren't so taken by Apple's tablet.

Without the Samsung skin on the Android OS, and with a more competitive price tag, we'd like it that little bit more.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Superb screen; slim; S Pen stylus; largely fast, reliable performance; microSD card slot

AGAINST Too expensive; plastic design; occasional Samsung app instability

VERDICT A great screen and stacks of power, let down a bit by a cluttered UI and thinsound

Also consider

iPad Air
£400 ★★★★★

The iPad Air has a way with music and video that rivals just can't match.



Smart TV

How we watch TV

Smart, mobile and on-demand increase – but live TV still dominates

Tablet and smartphone usage for TV and radio may be on the increase – but the TV remains more central than ever to the average family's home entertainment, according to the latest research.

While we now own on average three internet-enabled devices and 40% of people consume catch-up TV content at least once a month, the vast majority of TV programmes (90%) are still viewed live and on a large TV.

Unsurprisingly, multitasking has massively increased, with 81% of tablet users and 79% of smartphone users admitting to doubling up on screens while watching telly. Tablets are now the main method of connecting to the internet for a third of tablet owners.

The figures were revealed in the annual survey of media consumption by telecoms regulator Ofcom.

Bigger, smarter TVs

The type of TV in UK homes has, perhaps unsurprisingly, got smarter and bigger in the past 12 months.

7% of the UK population owned a smart TV in Q1 2013, a 2% increase from the previous year, with 77% of those connecting their set to the 'net.

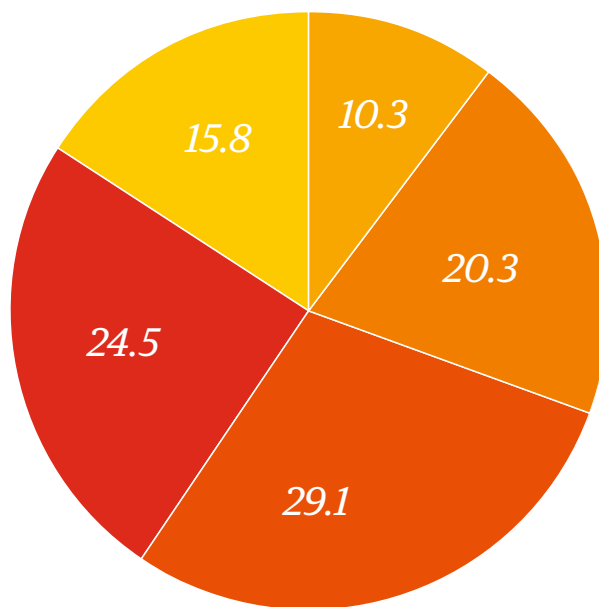
That said, 60% of people said that smart TV hadn't been a factor in their purchase, but they bought a set that happened to have the functionality – it's simply a function of the set rather than being a demanded feature.

Meanwhile, the average TV has got bigger – 69% of TV sets sold in Q1 2013 had a 26in screen or larger, while 43in+ TVs now account for 15.8% of sales, a 4.3% increase over the previous year.

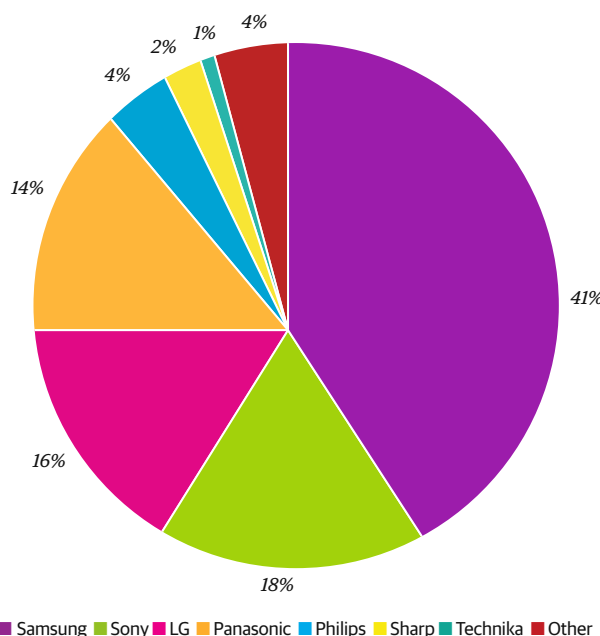
UK smartphone ownership hit 51% in Q1 of 2013, up from just 27% two years ago, while tablet ownership more than doubled from 11 per cent to 24 per cent.

Radio listening has meanwhile seen impressive growth on mobile and the internet, up from 13% to 20% on smartphones in the last 12 months.

Percentage of TV sets sold, by screen size: 2004 to Q1 2013



Ownership, by smart TV brand



FACTS & FIGURES

One in 10 households has more than one tablet

46% of tablet users have a 3G tablet – but less than half of those have a 3G subscription

90.3% of the UK adult population tune in to radio at least once a week

Just over half (56%) of tablet owners use their device for watching AV content; the most common are streamed TV programmes and film

Nearly half of all time-shifted viewing takes place on the same day as broadcast; and a quarter within an hour of transmission

*** LG 105in curved 4K TV**

This giant 105in Ultra HD 4K curved TV was unveiled at CES 2014. Samsung also had one
www.whfcm/LGcurved4K



*** Netflix 4K on 2014 TVs**

Netflix will stream *House of Cards* season 2 on next-gen TVs with 4K compatible app
www.whfcm/Netflix4Kapp



DAB switchover delayed

The Government has again delayed the planned switchover for digital radio in the UK. Communications Minister Ed Vaizey said: "We are not ready for the radio switchover." The switchover could now be delayed until at least 2020.

Vaizey said he wanted to improve the digital radio service and coverage before the switchover took place. "We are putting in place the conditions to get us ready to set a date." But the Government "can't simply wave a wand and make it happen." He would not be drawn into giving a firm date for digital switchover.

Under the last Labour Government digital radio switchover was planned for 2015. But concerns about infrastructure costs and delays in consumers' take-up of digital radio - particularly in cars - led to a belief that switchover could be delayed until at least 2017, or even 2020.

The Government's criteria set out for switchover still stipulate that the digital listening share in the UK must reach 50 per cent of all listening hours, that local commercial and national DAB coverage should be equal to that on FM and that there should be "significant progress on conversion of cars to digital radio".

The aim is for 50% of new cars to have DAB radio by next year. Currently 41% of

"We are not ready for the radio switchover. We can't simply wave a wand and make it happen." Ed Vaizey

new cars have DAB fitted as standard, with another 20% having it as an option.

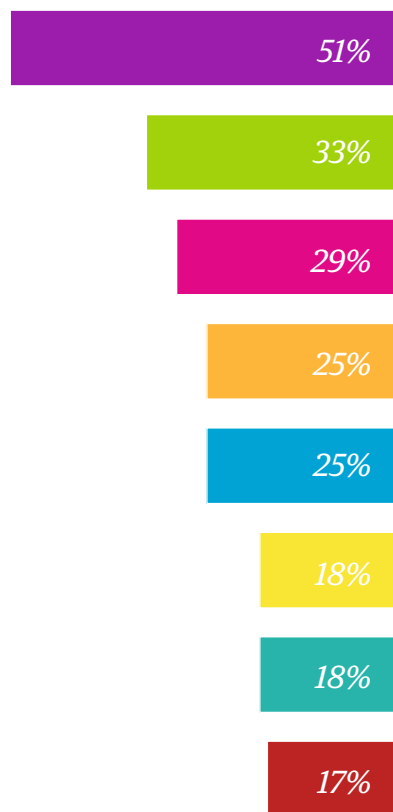
Vaizey is not giving up on the plan however: "I absolutely believe that the future of radio in this country is digital. We cannot go backwards. The radio listener will get a much better service, and better functionality. There will be far more choice, with many more stations."

Ford Ennals, chief executive of Digital Radio UK - the body in charge of switchover in the UK - added: "We will continue to plan for radio switchover and the achievement of the criteria, and look forward to the future confirmation of a switchover date which will give industry the certainty it needs."

In the third quarter of this year, 35.6 per cent of all radio listening was through digital platforms - a slight decline on the previous three months.

To boost take-up and coverage of digital radio, Ofcom says it will begin the licensing process for a second national DAB network, Digital Two (D2).

Reasons people buy a smart TV



- I needed a new TV and decided to buy one with the latest technology
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- I wanted the best screen
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- I like the range of internet connected services
- I wanted to stream TV programmes /films / video clips straight to my TV
- It was nothing to do with the internet functionality of the TV

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TOP 5 New launches

Spotify on LG smart TVs, retro TEAC music centre, Spondor D1 speakers

* **Chord Electronics** will be launching "the world's first reference-class portable DAC/headphone amp" at CES 2014, with its claimed studio-master-tape sound quality. www.whfcm/ChordHugo



1 Rara Music Streaming System £325 (first year)
Rara is the first dedicated in-car music-streaming service available in Europe and it is now rolling out across the entire BMW range. The service will be made available through BMW's ConnectedDrive Online Entertainment service. Instead of streaming via a smartphone, music is streamed directly to the head unit, which has its own sim-card. A £325 fee is required for the service, with subsequent payments of £225 to be made annually. For more information, head to www.whfcm/BMWrara

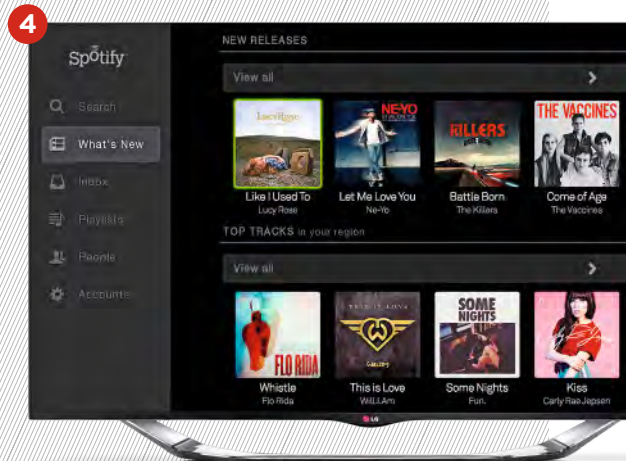
TOP 5 New launches

2 Spondor D1 speakers £1795
The Spondor D1 standmount speakers are the latest addition to Spondor's D-line. They comprise Spondor's own 15cm mid/bass drive unit to handle low frequencies, and a newly designed LPZ tweeter for treble. Optional stands are available for £595. The D1s are available in Spondor Dark, Spondor White and Dark Ebony finishes. Check out www.whfcm/SpondorD1 for more details.



3 Geneva Model XL Wireless £1800
The Geneva Model XL is a behemoth of a speaker, at 61cm tall and 55cm wide, so you're going to need some space to house it. However that size means it can house six drivers, which deliver an astonishing 350 watts of Class-D amplification. The Model XL features aptX wireless streaming, a CD drive, and now includes DAB/FM radio. Two analogue inputs are available for external equipment. The Model XL is available in white, red, black or walnut finishes, and a £190 optional aluminium stand is available too. Go to www.whfcm/GenevaXL for more information.

4 Spotify app for LG Smart TV £10/month
LG is adding Spotify to its growing list of Smart TV applications. A £10/month Spotify Premium subscription is required to gain access to the 20million+ strong library of music. New users can sign up for a one-month free trial. The app is available now. See more at www.whfcm/SpotifyLG



5 TEAC LP-P1000 Music Centre £450
The LP-P1000 is a record player, CD player, AM/FM tuner and Bluetooth wireless receiver, all in a glorious retro casing. Two-way bass-reflex loudspeakers are supplied and it is available in black or cherry wood finishes. Want to know more? Head to www.whfcm/TeacMusicCentre



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BRISTOL SHOW 2014 PREVIEW

We'll be heading west next month for the UK's leading hi-fi and home cinema show. Here's a taste of what's in store

The Bristol Show is in its 27th year of celebrating all the best hi-fi and home cinema kit in the industry. And for 2014 more than 140 brands are already confirmed as exhibitors.

It's the only place to see all your favourite companies and products in one place, and get your hands, eyes and ears on all the products you've been reading about - and plenty of new ones besides.

As well as lots of hot discount deals on new kit, and free entry into the Bristol Show competition, the *What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision* team will be on hand to answer your questions and deliver another of our legendary demos!

Highlights at the show will include Cyrus Audio's new all-in-one Lyric Series streaming systems, the legendary KEF Blade speakers, a new flagship speaker

and 25th anniversary Full Circle 25 turntable from Wilson Benesch, Sony's full range of new high-res audio products, and Chord Electronics' Hugo portable DAC/headphone amp.

Ultra HD 4K TV demo

There will be any amount of new speakers, docks, DACs, accessories, electronics and wireless systems too, and in the Bristol Suite we'll be putting on a demo of 4K Ultra HD TV so you can see for yourself what all the fuss is about.

Tickets for the show are on sale now via the Bristol Show 2014 website www.bristolshow.co.uk. Book online and you'll save 10 per cent on the door price.

We'll be bringing you regular updates about the show on whathifi.com from January, so keep an eye on the website.



The details

- Friday 21st - Sunday 23rd February 2014 10am to 5pm every day
- Tickets now on sale! Save 10% on the door price by buying online
- Adults £10, Senior Citizens (over 65)/ Students £7, accompanied children under 16 free
- Marriott City Centre Hotel Lower Castle Street Bristol BS1 3AD

Exhibitors

140 brands confirmed to date: for the full list go to whathifi.com

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tannoy.com



October 2013 - Precision 6.2



Precision 6.2



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SOUNDBASES £200-£400

SUPERTEST

WHAT ON EARTH IS A SOUNDBASE?

Imagine a soundbar that doesn't block your screen, doesn't need a separate subwoofer, does away with extra cables and sits neatly under your TV stand. Well done! You've just imagined a soundbase...

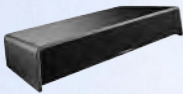
Think soundbar, but bigger. In the past year, soundbars have become the most popular way of boosting the characteristically thin sound of TV speakers without having to splash out on a full 5.1 home cinema system.

But now there's a new product in town. A soundbase is a flat, rectangular box instead of a slim bar. It's a bigger, simpler, one-box solution to improving TV sound - and you can put your telly right on top of it.

We're taken by the simplicity, and so, it appears, are manufacturers. We have eight new soundbases from eight big-name brands, all aiming to get into your living room.

With prices ranging from £200 to £400, these fledgling products have to prove they're more than just a glorified TV stand. Is a box better than a bar? Start reading to find out...

Tested



**Cambridge Audio
Minx TV £200**
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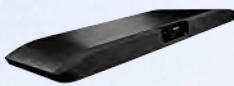
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**LGLAP340
SoundPlate £350**
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**Maxell
MXSP-SB3000 £220**
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**Onkyo
LS-T10 £350**
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**Orbitsound
SB60 AirSound £300**
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**Panasonic
SC-HTE80 £250**
Page 45



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Proof positive that you can get quality sound across the frequency range without paying through the nose

It incites interest, whether you're watching repeats of *The Big Bang Theory* or settling down to space-western *Firefly* on Blu-ray

Cambridge Audio Minx TV £200



Superb sound at a budget price - it's a combination we love, and the Cambridge Audio Minx TV soundbase embraces our performance-per-pound ethos to a tee.

As part of Cambridge Audio's successful and Award-winning Minx range, this new soundbase (or sound 'plinth' as Cambridge Audio calls it) comes with high expectations. And it meets them confidently.

The Cambridge Audio Minx TV is, quite simply, a fantastic listen. Switching from the TV to the soundbase sounds a bit like when you're on a plane and 'pop' your ears - suddenly it sounds as though the entire world has opened up and everything sounds clearer and more spacious. That's exactly the effect of the Minx TV soundbase.

Great sound across the board

It's spacious, dynamic, vibrant and full of satisfying weight. The punchy and agile low end brings some much-needed muscle without sounding too laboured, while the top end sparkles with attack and tension. If you want near-immediate results, though, we would advise running the soundbase in for a couple of nights, as it sounds a bit bright when played straight out of the box.

The Cambridge Audio Minx TV has a similar driver complement to the Minx Air 200 wireless speaker - and this is

very good news indeed. Two 6cm balanced-mode radiator drivers and a 16.5cm subwoofer perform together seamlessly to deliver a powerful and wonderfully integrated sound.

It incites interest, whether you're watching repeats of *The Big Bang Theory* or settling down to the delights of space-western *Firefly* on Blu-ray.

Songs streamed via Bluetooth have that lively sense of rhythm, too. While the Minx is no substitute for a dedicated hi-fi system, it does a great job in getting the best out of your digital tunes.

There are four EQ settings, but the differences between them are generally too small for our liking. It's still worth playing around with them though.

The Minx TV's solid build and matt finish look reassuringly stable, although the wooden finish betrays where Cambridge Audio has saved the money. The raised feet lend themselves to the 'plinth' status, and the wooden cabinet is sturdy - we wouldn't be worried about placing a large-screen TV on top.

Fit for purpose

Connectivity is limited but practical. The main connection is the digital optical input, but there's also a pair of phono inputs and a 3.5mm jack. You can stream audio files from your smartphone via Bluetooth, too.

There is, however, no display. We feel the need to gripe about this, as the Maxell MXSP-SB3000 (the Minx TV's direct price rival) spoils us with a fantastic one. The Minx TV does have an LED status indicator though.

The fly in the ointment

The remote control, on the other hand, is an abysmally flimsy and dinky plastic wafer. It's similar to the remote you get with the Minx 100 and 200 wireless speakers, but we'd like something more substantial for a soundbase.

The Cambridge Audio Minx TV is everything we want from a soundbase. Punchy, dynamic, clear and exciting - it improves upon flatscreen TV's tinny sound in every way. The only rival that delivers a superior performance is the Canton DM 50, but that's double the price. The Minx TV is an utterly engaging listen, delivering enthusiasm and subtlety in the same breath.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Engaging, agile, taut sound; great detail and dynamics; sturdy build; inexpensive

AGAINST Deserves a better-quality finish; flimsy plastic remote control; no display

VERDICT This Cambridge Audio delivers a fantastic, exciting sound at a great price

The DM 50 sets the bar for soundbase design: it looks gorgeous, it's the ideal size, and we reckon it'll look good with any TV

It looks good, but there's quality in depth here, from the deep, rich sound to the thoughtfully designed remote

Canton DM 50 £400



The Canton DM 50 is a lesson in what a soundbase should sound and look like. With its premium quality build and lavishly detailed sound, it fully justifies its £400 price tag.

Our first impression of the Canton DM 50 is one of power. This is a big and muscular sound for a soundbase, filling the room with breathtaking dynamics. We are enveloped by a rich, full-bodied sound that packs a punch while also allowing space for the top end to soar.

Bass that'll make you smile

The DM 50 digs up plenty of detail, with voices packed with emotion and subtlety. The bass performance is the star here, sounding gorgeously deep, taut and agile with TV and music. Stream Kansas's *Carry On Wayward Son* over Bluetooth and the Canton charges along with great rhythm, taut guitar pluckage and bagfuls of energy.

It's the most dynamically subtle soundbase we've heard so far, too, with more depth and insight than the rival Cambridge Audio Minx TV. The trade-off for that authoritative bass performance is that it can sound a bit too rich at times.

Sound mode options

It's worth experimenting with the two sounds modes available on the DM 50. In Stereo mode, the Canton is tightly

focused and cohesive. Surround mode predictably injects a sense of space, but without pushing voices to the back. We are happy listening to either.

The Canton goes to the top of the class with its stunning build and elegant design. It has a satisfying heft to it, and feels like it will easily shoulder the weight of most big-screen TVs. It's impeccably finished too, the smooth, semi-gloss finish (available in black, white or silver) adding a touch of class.

The DM 50 sets the bar for soundbase design: it looks gorgeous, it's the ideal size, and we reckon it'll look good with any TV, in any living room. If you want a great-looking soundbase, then your £400 will be well spent.

The fly in the ointment

Single optical and coaxial inputs and a pair of phono connectors are all the connections you get on the Canton DM 50. It's adequate enough for a direct connection to your TV (optical connection is our favourite method), but we would like a better breadth of connections, such as HDMI inputs. There is a subwoofer output too, in case you want more bass (you don't need it.)

Bluetooth streaming is on board, complete with the aptX codec support that boosts the streaming quality from your smart device.

The Canton's front panel has a blindingly bright blue LED display that indicates all the basic and important information, such as the selected input, the volume level and sound mode.

You can also control the bass and treble levels. We toned down the bass just a touch, but left the treble alone.

All of this can be adjusted from a nicely made, big chunk of remote control. Unlike the small, flimsy flat remotes that are supplied with most rival soundbases (the Cambridge Audio Minx TV and Orbitsound SB60 are the worst offenders), the Canton's is solid and reassuringly hefty. The buttons are large, neat, responsive and easy to use.

The DM 50's rich, velvety sound, deep subtlety and effortless power easily wins us over. It's a thrilling performance. The only fly in Canton's ointment is the Cambridge Audio Minx TV, which performs almost as well, but for half the cost. For some, the extra will be justified.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Rich, powerful sound; agile bass; detail and dynamics; build and finish; good remote

AGAINST HDMI connections would be a useful feature

VERDICT With gorgeous sound and looks, this is an immensely satisfying upgrade to TV sound



This is the kind of size and shape a soundbase should be, we reckon. And this one has one or two other neat design tricks up its sleeve too

The DHT-T100 just plays it a little too safe. It's definitely inoffensive, but at the cost of a truly engaging and punchy sound

Denon DHT-T100 £250

★★★★☆

What do you do with a soundbase that's nicer to use than it is to listen to? The Denon DHT-T100 presents such a conundrum. On the one hand, it's effortless in use. On the other, it's not the exciting, involving listen you'd hope for.

The DHT-T100 delivers a smooth and balanced sound, but just plays it a little too safe. There's decent weight to its presentation, one that ties the overall sound together with a smooth, civilised treble. It's definitely inoffensive, but at the cost of delivering a truly engaging and punchy sound. There's a good spread of sound, but it's not as open and powerful as the likes of Onkyo's LS-T10 or the Canton DM 50.

Indifferent presentation

Dynamically it's a little flat. There needs to be more subtlety and clarity to convey the nuances in dialogue, and excitement of sound effects, in Joss Whedon's *Dollhouse* TV series.

Voices sound a little muffled and indistinct too, and it's a quality that makes us feel indifferent towards the Denon's sound.

The same characteristics apply to songs streamed over Bluetooth, which don't sound as cohesive and rhythmic as they should, their basslines short on tautness and agility. Things do, however, sound more focused in Music mode.

The DHT-T100 is a good size and shape for a soundbase, we reckon: not too bulky, not too slim, and it has a discreet black finish to boot.

It does feel just a little plasticky to touch. We'd like a more substantial feel, even though its stated 27kg weight limit will easily support most flatscreen TVs.

Connectivity is mostly digital

The DHT-T100 focuses on digital connections, with optical and coaxial inputs on the rear panel, but there are no HDMI inputs. The optical input is the main connection to the TV. A 3.5mm input is the only analogue connection.

The higher-quality aptX Bluetooth codec is supported here, although we don't find the Denon discriminating enough to emphasise the difference.

This is the point at which we'd normally launch into a tirade about how there's no display, but Denon has a way around this issue: LEDs that glow in different combinations to indicate status.

A light touch

The touch-sensitive controls on the top panel light up with white LEDs when a certain input is selected (there are buttons for power, TV, Bluetooth, volume, mute). But the clever touch is how the entire row of logos lights up and goes up or down in line with volume

changes. They all dim again after a few seconds too, so there's no confusion about what mode you're in.

The Denon's five listening modes have distinct LED combinations that are easy to decipher at a glance. It's a great visual aid, and is easy to get accustomed to after the first cycle of button-pressing on the remote control.

The remote is nicely made, too. It's slim and small, with a smooth rubber finish and responsive inlaid buttons. It's these little touches that make the Denon soundbase so nice to use.

It's a bit telling that we're more excited about the Denon's dancing LEDs than we are about its sound. It's an inoffensive listen, but it just doesn't stand out from the crowd - a crowd that includes exciting and dynamic rivals such as the Cambridge Audio Minx TV and Canton DM 50. It's decent value if you want smooth and easy operation, but we'd look elsewhere for outright sound quality.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Smooth, balanced, open sound; easy to use; good build and remote

AGAINST Needs more dynamic subtlety and excitement; rivals are more insightful

VERDICT It's lovely to use, but the Denon's unremarkable sound fails to spark our interest

GO ANALOGUE!



Pro-Ject Essential II

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Our reference screen, the Panasonic TX-P42GT60B, has a smoother, clearer and more focused sound. Yes, we were shocked too

LG LAP340 SoundPlate £350

★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆

You know something's wrong when your TV sounds better than the soundbase that's supposed to provide it with an audio upgrade.

The LG LAP340 SoundPlate came with high expectations. LG's budget soundbars, after all, have won group tests and Awards in the past year. In this new soundbase form, we expect LG to deliver just as good TV-bettering sound.

So we're baffled, and downright disappointed, that the LG LAP340 SoundPlate sounds so shockingly poor. This soundbase delivers a confused, disorganised sound. It sounds very weak, and has a coarse, harsh edge that's really hard to ignore. Or like.

Unpleasant combination

The sound manages to be both boomy and bright - it's a rather unpleasant combination. The bass is loud and unruly, while the top end is prone to brightness. It tones down after a couple of days' running in, but the bright edge doesn't fade entirely. Activating the Cinema Sound mode does open up the performance, but it also over-emphasises the bass.

The midrange has a scooped-out quality to it. Voices sound lost and hollow and, coupled with the muddled detail definition, there's precious little emotion conveyed through dialogue.

When it's all put together there's a real lack of cohesion and refinement here. Even worse, we found ourselves preferring the smoother, clearer and focused sound of the TV we were using for the test. Our reference screen, the Panasonic TX-P42GT60B, has a smoother, clearer and more focused sound. Yes, we were shocked, too.

Points for design

We can see why LG calls the LAP340 a 'Plate' - it's slimmer and flatter than any other soundbase we've seen so far, and an ideal design for the minimalist-minded, tucking away neatly under any big-screen TV. Despite the LG's somewhat lightweight and plasticky feel, we've no doubt its sturdy 38kg weight limit will easily support most large tellies. It's nicely put together too, although it doesn't quite exude the same quality of finish as the Canton DM 50 or Panasonic SC-HTE80.

The bare minimum

The SoundPlate has an optical input, and Bluetooth streaming. And that's it. Given the £350 price, we feel short-changed. Compared with the multiple HDMI and analogue connections offered by the Panasonic SC-HTE80 and Maxell MXSP-SB3000 for £250 and less, the LG's sparse offering leaves us underwhelmed.

Still, a colour-changing LED makes it clear when the soundbase is muted (red), connected via optical (green), or in Bluetooth mode (orange).

We do like the LG's remote control, though. It's small and light, but with big, simple buttons that are easy to find in the dark. The black rubber finish with orange accents is nice, it's responsive, and we like how simple it is to use.

There are also control buttons for power and volume, but they're at the back of the unit. Why? We have no idea.

We're dismayed by the LG LAP340 SoundPlate's performance. It's relatively pricey, too, which further hurts its case. A £350 bill comes with certain expectations of sound quality and features, and the LG simply fails to deliver.

We're surprised at how much LG has missed the mark here, given its soundbar successes. As a solution to improve the sound of your TV, the LG SoundPlate fails spectacularly.

Rating ★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆

FOR Slender build; easy to use; good remote control

AGAINST Unwieldy bass; coarse treble; lacks cohesion; limited features; expensive

VERDICT We're utterly disappointed by this LG - an uncharacteristically poor performance



IN ADMIRATION OF MUSIC

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www.dali-speakers.com



Head-turning looks indeed, but that centre display is also attractively practical and the Maxell is very well connected

We quickly warm to the Maxell's crisp, easy-going sound. Connect it to your telly and enjoy a smooth and engaging performance

Maxell MXSP-SB3000 £220



We haven't seen a Maxell thing in our testing rooms in a very long time, so we were pleasantly surprised when the company put forward the MXSP-SB3000 in the new soundbase category. And we are pleasantly surprised again when it sounds pretty damn good.

We quickly warm to the Maxell's crisp, clear and incredibly easy-going sound. Run it in, connect it to your telly, and simply enjoy a smooth and engaging performance. Sure, it lacks the outright subtlety and dynamism of rival soundbases such as the Cambridge Audio Minx TV and Canton DM 50, but there's enough detail here to bring out the nuances in voices.

Turn it up to feel the benefit

We'd like a touch more weight and power to the sound, but we like the clarity and agility on offer. The volume has to go quite high for maximum impact, though. At low volume, the Maxell's crisp edges sound just a little subdued, making it hard to hear clearly.

If you do want to inject some width to the Maxell's sound, turn on the 'SRS' function. It claims to enhance the stereo field and deliver 3D sound, but what it *actually* does is pull apart the SB3000's naturally cohesive sound - not a good thing in the slightest. The sound is bigger and peripheral sound effects are

given more attention, but it's at the cost of that wonderfully expressive and focused midrange. We'd keep it off.

There are five EQ presets to choose from, with the 'Standard' mode being our favourite for its balanced sound.

Maxell calls the SB3000 a 'soundbar', but it looks more like a hoverboard to us. The slender box's tapered edges prevent it from looking bland, while the matt-black finish and fluorescent display look smart. We like it, but it lacks the outright quality of finish and build to compete against the likes of the Panasonic.

It's big, though. We suspect not everyone will have a big enough TV or AV rack to accommodate this soundbase. The Maxell has a proper, informative display, making it the most user-friendly soundbase we've come across so far. It tells you in one glance which input is being used, the current volume and which sound mode is turned on. It even has four dimming levels.

Nice operation, nicely displayed

You can mute the sound, employ the 'SRS' mode and pair your smart devices to stream music via Bluetooth - all options are clearly displayed on the Maxell's front panel. There are responsive touch-sensitive control buttons on the top panel, too, and the remote, though small, is also responsive.

This first generation of soundbases is pretty scant on connectivity, but the Maxell breaks the mould by offering a generous helping of digital and analogue connections. Three HDMI inputs is the highlight; the Panasonic SC-HTE80 is the only other soundbase to offer HDMI connections. It also has optical and coaxial inputs and an HDMI (with ARC) on the digital side, while a pair of phono connectors and a 3.5mm input are available for analogue sources.

Quality wireless mode

You can stream from smartphones and tablets via Bluetooth (which supports the higher-quality aptX codec), and a front USB port will charge your smart device.

Its size might be ludicrous, but the MXSP-SB3000's excellent feature count and affordable price is hard to ignore. Most of all, we just really like listening to it. For £220, its clear and balanced sound is well worth a listen.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Crisp, clear yet easy-going sound; good tonal balance; great set of connections; price

AGAINST Too large for some living rooms; rivals sound subtler, punchier and more dynamic

VERDICT An enjoyable performance and impressive features at an attractive price

The almighty punches thrown between the monsters and robots on the Blu-ray of *Pacific Rim* have a great 'whomp' to them



You can't accuse the chunky LS-10 of holding back in its sound delivery, but a little more refinement would have been nice

Onkyo LS-T10 £350

★★★★☆

If you like your sound big, loud and bassy, you're going to like this Onkyo. But you will have to put up with its shortcomings in other areas.

High hopes and low frequencies

Described as the 'Ultimate One-Box Home Cinema System', the LS-T10 soundbase certainly instils high expectations. It digs deep into the lower frequencies to deliver weighty, rumbling bass. It's open and expansive too, and easily fills the room with dynamic sound.

The almighty punches thrown between the monsters and robots on the *Pacific Rim* Blu-ray have a great 'whomp' to them, but the impactful bass does boom too much. It isn't particularly taut or agile, but the strong, slightly thick sound is a vast improvement on flatscreen TV speakers.

The Onkyo's booming quality is more apparent when streaming songs over Bluetooth. Tracks with a prominent bassline, such as Led Zeppelin's *Dazed and Confused*, sound rather unwieldy - the bass really sticks out. Onkyo does let you adjust the level though, which helps.

Clarity, but at a price

It's a mixed bag with the rest of the frequencies. The treble is clear and has enough space to soar, but it is edged with hardness. Midrange performance,

especially voices, suffer as a result: they sound quite hollow and indistinct. Placing your TV directly on the LS-T10 will give dialogue a little more connection to the on-screen action.

The T10 is big, solidly built and feels reassuringly stable. It's nicely finished, too. It's also wide and sturdy enough to hold any big TV with an elaborate stand.

There are a couple of touch-sensitive buttons for power and volume on the top of the panel, while a white LED indicates which input you've selected: TV, USB or Bluetooth. There's no interesting LED light-show like on the Denon DHT-T100, and a proper display would've been nice, but it's a simple and easy-to-use unit nonetheless.

Bigger buttons, please

The remote control is small and wafer-thin. It's responsive and logical, but we would like bigger, more substantial buttons. It does feature all the (limited) options of the soundbase, though, from changing inputs and volume to adjusting the bass level and setting up Bluetooth connections.

The Onkyo LS-T10 keeps its rear panel simple, with one digital optical, one digital coaxial and one analogue 3.5mm input available. It's similar to the selection offered by the rival Denon DHT-T100, and once again doesn't

include HDMI inputs. There is also Bluetooth on board, which is a nice addition even if the soundbase isn't that great with music.

A USB port round the back got us excited, but that elation quickly deflated once we found out it neither charges nor plays music from your smartphone or tablet. It only supports playback of MP3 files stored on a USB stick, but the fine print in the manual states it doesn't guarantee playback from all flash drives.

The LS-T10 is stuck between boomy bass and a hard top end, and doesn't deliver the most engaging and smooth performance. It tries to hit all the right notes - expansive sound, lots of bass, clear treble - but doesn't strike the right balance between them.

If you can look past its shortcomings, the LS-10 will reward you with a huge, dynamic sound that's rich and deep. But 'ultimate' it isn't - for £350 we'd like more from our home-cinema experience.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Huge, expansive sound; dynamic and open; deep bass; sturdy build; simple to use

AGAINST Bass is too unwieldy; hard edge to sound; voices aren't very clear; expensive

VERDICT The Onkyo goes loud and deep, but there are more refined rivals for a better price

Build quality might not be exemplary, but the AirSound is at least eye-catching. No display though, and that's a shame



It serves up a robust sound that needs only a hint more refinement. But little things - such as how intuitive it is to use - matter. A lot

Orbitsound SB60 AirSound £300



The new Orbitsound SB60 AirSound soundbase looks like a larger version of the company's T12v3 soundbar. It sounds like it, too, which is great news. It's just a shame it's less good in other areas.

The SB60 delivers a signature Orbitsound performance: loud, spacious and tremendously weighty. It's a robust performance, packed with energy to liven up the sound of daytime telly.

It's got plenty of attack, with a 13cm downward-firing subwoofer doing all the heavy lifting. Bass notes are deep, luscious and full of rumble - maybe a little too much at times. The roar of engines on *Top Gear* is loud and aggressive, although a touch of tautness would add even more excitement.

No one-trick pony

But the Orbitsound SB60 isn't just bluntly loud. It can distinguish between different acoustic spaces, easily delivering changes in scale from outdoor scenes to indoor conversations.

It has two side-firing speakers that are essential in spreading that big sound across the room. So make sure you leave plenty of space around the SB60, and don't block those side speakers.

Despite the emphasis on a rich, bassy sound, the SB60 still has plenty of bite at the top end. Voices sound direct, clear and emotive, but we could do with more

refinement and subtlety to compete with the superb Canton DM 50. The Maxell MXSP-SB3000 also offers a cleaner, more precise sound for less money.

Beauty is skin deep

At first glance, the Orbitsound SB60 catches the eye with its sleek, glossy black finish. But look closer and that finish masks a cheap-feeling quality of build. The wooden shell feels rather hollow when you tap on it, and it's not as finely finished as its rivals - we'd like more heft and finesse for £300. The Canton DM 50 might cost £100 more, but it gets the build and finish spot on.

(There is an extra feature: you can swap the black front panel for a silver one, included in the box.)

Digital connections are limited to a single optical input, while RCA inputs and a 3.5mm jack take care of the analogue side. There's no Bluetooth streaming, though - something many of the Orbitsound's rivals offer.

Basic featuring

While the AirSound excited us with its enthusiastic sound quality, its meagre feature count is less inspiring. First, there's no display. And that, coupled with a poorly designed remote control, is rather frustrating. There's a single LED indicator, but it isn't that informative.

The remote is slim and light, but the cluster of slender buttons is annoying. The volume controls aren't distinguishable from the treble/bass level buttons, so trying to use them instinctively is out of the equation. Bigger, simpler buttons would have been more useful than the playback buttons.

So where does that leave the Orbitsound SB60 soundbase? If we were judging it on sound quality alone, this would be a strong four-star performance. It serves up a robust, wide and satisfyingly punchy sound that needs only a hint more refinement. But when you have to live with a product on a daily basis, little things - such as how intuitive the remote is to use, whether it has a display, how nice it is to use - matter. A lot.

We found the SB60 frustrating to use, and its limited features further dispirited us. At £300, we expect more, so three stars it is.

Rating ★★☆☆☆

FOR Weighty, loud, energetic sound with impressive clarity; deep, rich bass

AGAINST Could be more subtle; build quality; remote is frustrating; no display; no Bluetooth

VERDICT A strong, detailed sound is let down by a lack of subtlety and frustrating operation

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The Game Changer

Once in a while, a product comes along that 'redefines the meaning of excellence'. That time is now.

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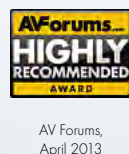
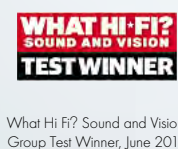
The Concept 20 is a truly remarkable new loudspeaker which delivers a level of sonic performance previously only available to audiophiles able to invest in high-end models.

This exceptional performance has been achieved by using breakthrough technology and applying scientific methodology to overcome the fundamental problems of speaker design.

As well as class leading drive units and crossover, the beautifully lacquered Concept 20 cabinet utilises Gelcore™ construction, specifically developed for acoustic enclosures. In effect this is a 'cabinet within a cabinet'; separated by a special, resonance cancelling compound. This enables the drive units to simply reproduce music, completely unencumbered by cabinet induced colouration.

The result is nothing short of sensational.

For the very best results the Concept 20 should be used on its unique dedicated speaker stand, which uses the same Gelcore™ construction technique.



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armourHOME



It's no coincidence that the compact SC-HTE80 is shaped to fit the stands on Panasonic TVs. Build quality is good

There are two integrated 'woofers' inside, but they can't quite convey the deep and rich bass that would bring a more engaging listen

Panasonic SC-HTE80 £250

★★★★☆

We can imagine the SC-HTE80's smart looks and compact size looking at home placed under your TV. But as neat and discreet as it is, we wish there were more oomph to this soundbase's crisp sound.

Lean in the extreme

We didn't expect a huge amount of bass from the Panasonic's compact frame, but we did expect a little more weight than we got. Everything sounds a bit insubstantial next to the more rounded and balanced sound of the Canton DM 50 and Cambridge Audio Minx TV.

Detail is crisp and clear, though, and the overall sound is focused on the midrange and upwards. The treble has plenty of bite and sparkle, but doesn't veer into harsh or sharp territory. It can sound a touch bright when watching standard-definition TV, though.

Dialogue is direct and easy to hear, although the Panasonic needs more subtlety to bring out the nuances in voices. There are two integrated 8cm 'woofers' inside the SC-HTE80, but they can't quite convey the deep and rich bass that would bring a more engaging listen.

Speed and agility

The lightweight sound does mean the Panasonic has a fast, agile delivery. Songs streamed via Bluetooth sound lively, but can edge towards brightness.

This is the smallest soundbase we've come across yet, and we suspect it's no coincidence that it seems purpose-built to support Panasonic's own square TV stands. It makes sense for Panasonic to keep it in the family, and the sturdy build will withstand most screen sizes (as long as the set weighs under 30kg). If you own a TV with a wide stand, though, we suspect it might overhang quite a lot and may not be adequately supported.

The build quality itself is impeccable, the MDF casing coming in silver or black brushed-aluminium effect finishes. It's a neat and tidy box, with discreet power and volume buttons on the side.

Visual information

It has a display! Large blue letters let you know which input you're using, from TV (optical) to Bluetooth pairing, as well as the volume level.

The display makes it easy to access and navigate the Panasonic's menus with the rather dinky remote. There are plenty of options to tweak the SC-HTE80's sound, starting with a much-needed boost in bass performance. Activating H (for Harmonic) Bass adds some much-needed weight, but at the expense of clarity.

There are also six sound modes on offer. They're worth experimenting with, but we'd suggest picking 'Music' when

streaming songs via Bluetooth and selecting 'Standard' when you want to watch broadcast TV or a film.

There's a decent selection of inputs on the SC-HTE80, with the presence of HDMI connections a tick in Panasonic's favour. An optical input seems standard on soundbases, but HDMI (one input with ARC output) is rare in this first generation. Analogue connectivity is represented by a pair of RCA inputs.

The soundbase also supports NFC connectivity for one-tap connection to your Android or Windows tablet or smartphone. Along with ensuring Bluetooth is turned on, you will need to download the free Panasonic Music Streaming App for NFC-tapping to work.

It's a step up from tinny TV speakers for sure, and its very affordable, but the SC-HTE80 doesn't feel like the complete solution. We'd like a more even balance across the frequencies, with punchier, more substantial bass.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Crisp, clear sound; lively delivery; easy to use; good connections; build quality; price

AGAINST Lacking in solid, punchy bass; lightweight sound; treble can sound bright

VERDICT Crisp sound and good features, but a lack of bass weight spells trouble

TEST VERDICT

THE WINNER

Cambridge Audio Minx TV

£200 ★★★★★



The **Cambridge Audio Minx TV** takes the first-ever win in this new category for its great sound, great build and great value

This was no straightforward *Supertest*. With soundbases still finding their feet in terms of sound and features, there were ups and downs with nearly every product here.

However, two soundbases stood head and shoulders above the others: the Canton DM 50 and Cambridge Audio Minx TV showed us exactly what this new product category is capable of.

Both delivered stunningly detailed and clear, balanced sound, with plenty of bite and character to voices as well as punch and oomph in crashes and explosions. They do a great job with dynamics, and keep you completely engrossed in what you're watching. They're solidly made, too.

A question of value

But there can only be one winner, and the Cambridge Audio has one big advantage over the Canton: price. At £200, the Minx TV is simply better value than the £400 Canton. The Canton has a more premium feel and sound, but the Cambridge Audio sounds almost as exciting - for half the price.

The hoverboard-sized Maxell is the only other soundbase to come close to that level of performance. It might lack

some bass and dynamism, but its crisp, easygoing sound was simply lovely to listen to. And when it comes to features, the Maxell makes all of its rivals look bad. The excellent display and multiple connections feel worth more than the £220 price tag, especially when rival companies are charging more for less.

What of the runners up?

The remaining soundbases, however, don't fare so well. A combination of uneven sound performance and limited features leaves us with a huddle of three-star products. The Orbitsound SB60 sounds big, rich and loud, but the bass is just too overstated and unwieldy. The large-scale and spacious Onkyo LS-T10 is let down by a hard top end and a boomy bass. And the Denon DHT-T100 trades excitement for a flat, (albeit even) sound. The Panasonic SC-HTE80's small build seems designed with only Panasonic TVs in mind, and its lightweight sound and top-end focus won't satisfy those who crave punch.

But it's the LG that disappoints us the most. The company produces some great soundbars, so we expected good things. But the harsh, disorganised sound takes us by surprise. A real shame.

You can position a soundbase directly underneath your TV, and you won't need a separate subwoofer

So, what of the soundbase concept? Whether it's on a shelf or directly under your TV's stand, the single box construction is a neater alternative to soundbars that must sit in front of the TV, sometimes even obstructing the bottom of the screen. The bigger size of the soundbase also means it produces deeper, weightier bass for a fuller, richer overall sound, too. And it also means you don't have to fuss about with a separate subwoofer. Slim soundbars, on the other hand, might be more visually appealing if your TV is wall-mounted.

The limited set of connections (apart from on the Maxell) was a point of contention. We'd like more choice, such as an HDMI input or two. A readable display wouldn't go amiss, either.

A category that's worth watching

It's only the first generation, though, so we're (almost) willing to forgive the spec hiccups. But the products struggling with sound need only to look to Cambridge Audio and Canton. A few tweaks might be needed to iron out all the issues, but for now the Cambridge Audio Minx TV's excellent sound quality for such an affordable price gets the invitation to our living room.



WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
TEST WINNER

Cambridge Audio Minx TV

£200 ★★★★★

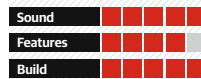
Claimed power 100W • Inputs Optical, RCA, 3.5mm • **Outputs** None
• **Bluetooth** Yes • **Dimensions (hwd)** 8 x 43 x 38cm • **Weight** 5kg



Canton DM 50

£400 ★★★★★

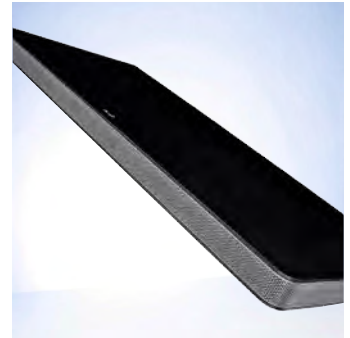
Claimed power 200W • Inputs Optical, coax, phono, 3.5mm • **Outs** Subwoofer
• **Bluetooth** Yes • **Dimensions (hwd)** 6.5 x 55 x 30cm • **Weight** 5kg



Denon DHT-T100

£250 ★★★★★

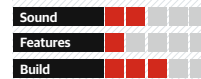
Claimed power 75W • Inputs Optical, coaxial, 3.5mm • **Outputs** None •
Bluetooth Yes • **Dimensions (hwd)** 7 x 61 x 35cm • **Weight** 4kg



LG LAP340 SoundPlate

£350 ★★★★★

Claimed power 120W • Inputs Optical
• **Outputs** None • **Bluetooth** Yes •
Dimensions (hwd) 3.5 x 70 x 32cm
• **Weight** 4kg



Maxell MXSP-SB3000

£220 ★★★★★

Claimed power 160W • Inputs 3 x HDMI, optical, coaxial, RCA, 3.5mm • **Outputs** HDMI (with ARC) • **Bluetooth** Yes •
Dimensions 8 x 94 x 39cm • **Weight** 9kg



Onkyo LS-T10

£350 ★★★★★

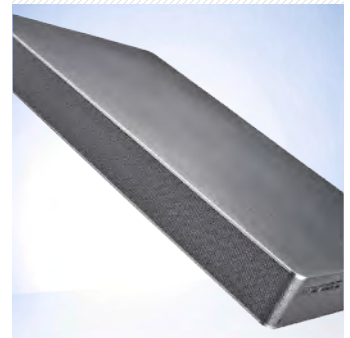
Claimed power N/A • Inputs Optical, coaxial, USB, 3.5mm • **Outputs** None
• **Bluetooth** Yes • **Dimensions (hwd)** 10.5 x 70 x 35cm • **Weight** 9kg



Orbitsound SB60 AirSound

£300 ★★★★★

Claimed power 200W • Inputs Optical, RCA, 3.5mm • **Outputs** None •
Bluetooth No • **Dimensions (hwd)** 8 x 60 x 33cm • **Weight** 9kg



Panasonic SC-HTE80

£250 ★★★★★

Claimed power 120W • Inputs HDMI, optical, RCA • **Outputs** HDMI (with ARC) • **Bluetooth** Yes • **Dimensions (hwd)** 6 x 46 x 28cm • **Weight** 3kg



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Spendor
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PMC Twenty 23

£2300 ★★★★★

Next to some other speakers at this price, the Twenty 23s seem a little small. These slender two-way floorstanders look like they'd be eaten alive by beefier competitors. And yet they can teach many rivals a thing or two.

Of course, simple physics dictates that a slim cabinet containing just one 14cm mid/bass driver and a 25mm tweeter will never match its rivals in pure volume levels and deep bass reach.



That said, the combination of a high-quality doped-paper mid/bass driver and PMC's transmission-line bass-loading technique means the Twenty 23s aren't a million miles away - and surprisingly capable in both respects.

In our 5.5m x 4.5m listening room, we never feel left wanting. Their design might not immediately give away the premium price tag in the same way the Tannoy Precision 6.4s do, and they might not be able to compete with the scale and power of the SVS Ultra Towers, but instead the Twenty 23s wow us by just being beautifully balanced.

Dynamic and entertaining

Play *Elephant* by Them Crooked Vultures and the fast-paced guitar intro is relayed with bite and attack, but also with well-judged tonality and a strong sense of refinement. Notes are well formed, the treble is handled well and the song charges along with a confident sense of rhythm. Even when things get busy, every instrument knows its place.

Dynamically the Twenty 23s never hold back either, and you can really hear



There's a surprising amount of low-end punch for such small speakers, and while bass lovers might feel short-changed, the 23s' low-frequency performance is still splendidly fast, tight and detailed

the peaks and troughs within a piece: the stops and the starts; the quiet as it builds into loud and back down again. It's precise, yet organic, and never feels false or overdone. There's a large, well-focused soundstage too.

Surprising bass for their size

Strip down to something more vocal based, like Emeli Sande's *Clown*, and you'll hear just how expressive and articulate the PMCs' midrange is. There's stacks of detail up for grabs here, and you can be sure that the 23s will convey every ounce of emotion in a recording.

There's a surprising amount of punch to the low end and, while bass lovers might feel short-changed given the performance of some larger competitors, the 23s' low-frequency performance is still splendidly fast, tight and detailed.

That's in no small part down to the transmission-line design - a technique used by a handful of companies to improve bass performance. It takes the rear output from the mid/bass driver and forces it through a damped path within the cabinet. The higher frequencies are

mostly absorbed en route, leaving the lowest notes to exit the speaker at the bottom of its front panel, augmenting the driver and boosting the speaker's bass power in the process.

There could be more weight, and the 23s can't quite compete with larger peers for scale, but we'd pass up a bit of heft to get a compact design that's laid-back on placement and easier to make space for.

The Twenty 23s are proof that you should never judge a book by its cover. Yes, there are more impressive-looking speakers at this price - with better specification sheets, to boot - but when it's performance that matters, these double Award-winning floorstanders speak for themselves.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Beautifully balanced; exciting, refined sound; expressive and articulate; unfussy on placement and easy to match; compact design

AGAINST Lack the scale of larger rivals

VERDICT These superb floorstanders still show Award-winning qualities against newer rivals

Spendor A6R

£2500 ★★★★★

When a manufacturer revises a product we love, it's always going to go one of two ways. Luckily, in the case of the Spendor A6Rs, the result is all good.

The Award-winning Spendor A6 speakers from 2009 have been given a makeover, with big changes including a new mid/bass drive-unit and a re-engineered crossover. You'd never know it to look at them, though, as they keep the same compact, understated design as their predecessors.

There's a lot of the A6 charm in these new speakers. The musical ability is very much still there, and the A6Rs show a keen interest in making any music you throw at them feel right at home.

Coherent across the board

They put in a superb performance across the frequency range, showcasing a surprisingly deep and punchy low end alongside an expressive midrange and a detailed, refined treble. Each feels like a well-judged part of a whole, slotting together perfectly to produce a well-balanced, coherent listen.

This is in no small part down to that new 18cm mid/bass driver, which uses materials developed for Spendor's much pricier D7 speakers.

Detail is second to none too, and there is layer upon layer of subtlety and fine detail to grasp onto. Notes have depth and dimension, nuances are picked up in all their glory and vocals are conveyed with all the reality and emotion with which they were recorded.

The original A6s were never dynamic slouches, but the A6Rs show another



Just try to fluster them - you'll quickly find it's next to impossible. From full-on orchestral pieces to DJ Shadow's beat-shifting *Organ Donor*, these speakers never lose their cool or composure

level of dynamic attack that outshines even our Award-winning PMC Twenty 23s. They keep a strong grasp on bouncing basslines, with a low end that's both punchy and agile enough to keep up with the energy found elsewhere in the frequency range.

Excellent with dynamics

Listen to Miley Cyrus's *Wrecking Ball* and the A6Rs do a great job of contrasting the powerful choruses against the quieter, more melancholy verses. They're not scared of going quiet either, something that really makes all the difference when building momentum in a track.

And just try to fluster them - you'll quickly find it's next to impossible. From giving them full-on orchestral pieces to feast on to challenging them with something like DJ Shadow's beat-shifting *Organ Donor*, they never lose their cool or composure.

Their upfront character does require some consideration when it comes to system matching, though. The treble stayed just on the right side of bright and

aggressive when we were testing them with our reference Bryston and Naim kit, but matching with a similarly forward amp could tip the scale into hardness - something worth considering if you're building a system from scratch.

The Spendor A6Rs are a fantastic pair of speakers that manage to do so much right and very little wrong. They won't go as loud as something like the Tannoy Precision 6.4s, but they'll go pretty close challenging for scale and stereo image.

Of course, this all comes at a premium that puts them towards the top of the price bracket compared with their competitors. Audition them, though, and you'll hear where every penny of your money is going.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Great dynamic attack; admirably rhythmic; stacks of detail; organised; well-balanced

AGAINST Treble could become too bright if paired with the wrong amp

VERDICT An outstanding pair of speakers that deliver detail and dynamic punch in spades

SVS Ultra Tower

£2200 ★★★★★

The **SVS Ultra Towers** are big speakers. At 1.14m tall, our piano-black review pair dwarfs the majority of the competition at this price. They're deep too, due to their unique slanted trapezium shape. Want understatement? Move on.

Of course, one of the benefits of that big cabinet is that it allows for big drivers - and plenty of them. Each of the 3.5-way Ultra Towers has a 25mm aluminium dome tweeter, dual 16.5cm glass-fibre

mid-range drivers and dual horizontally opposed 20cm woofers, mounted in this way to help reduce distortion.

There's a rear-firing port at the back too, which, combined with the side-firing woofers, means giving the Ultra Towers really need space. Put them too close to a back wall and they'll sound overly bassy; too close to a side wall and they can sound closed-in.

They sound as big as they look

The bigger-is-better theme doesn't stop at design. If you're looking for speakers to impress in scale, volume and bass weight, you'll get that by the shed-load.

Going loud enough to seriously bother your neighbours, these speakers excel in deep, tight, impactful bass which, for all its heft, is still agile and responsive.

But they aren't without fault. The Ultra Towers can bring a feeling of heaviness when it's not really wanted, and lack the ability to handle more delicate tracks quite as well as their more articulate counterparts.

And the weighty bass only emphasises the Ultra Towers' rather unrefined treble,

These speakers are more than capable of going loud enough to seriously bother your neighbours. They excel in deep, tight, impactful bass too, which, for all its heft, is still agile and responsive

as a run-through of Eminem's treble-heavy *Berzerk* shows. There's a harsh edge and lack of detail to the treble that can sound rather unpleasant at certain frequencies and, while it improved during testing, this was still noticeable after several days of solid playback.

So, be careful with system-matching - and feed these speakers the best quality tracks you can. They aren't very forgiving with poor recordings.

Not the last word in finesse

Subtlety and dynamics are a little awkward too. Listening to *Harvey Two-Face* from the *Dark Knight* soundtrack, we don't get the sense of build-up to a crescendo we do with something like the Spondor A6Rs. It's almost as if the SVSes are scared to go quiet, so you don't hear that dynamic shift as strongly; they start off loud, only to go louder still.

However, the scale these speakers offer is undeniable, and they ensure a spacious, open sound with good stereo imaging - each instrument is placed well in the mix. Individual notes can lack the same sense of insight and texture

though, and the start and stop of notes can be missed, once again showing up the Ultra Towers' lack of subtlety and precision compared with competitors.

And despite the surprisingly agile bass, the Ultra Towers still lack bite. Vocals are clear, articulate and well-balanced, but lacking a little pep. This leaves tracks feeling rather emotionless, as if the artist was just doing a guide track rather than the final recording.

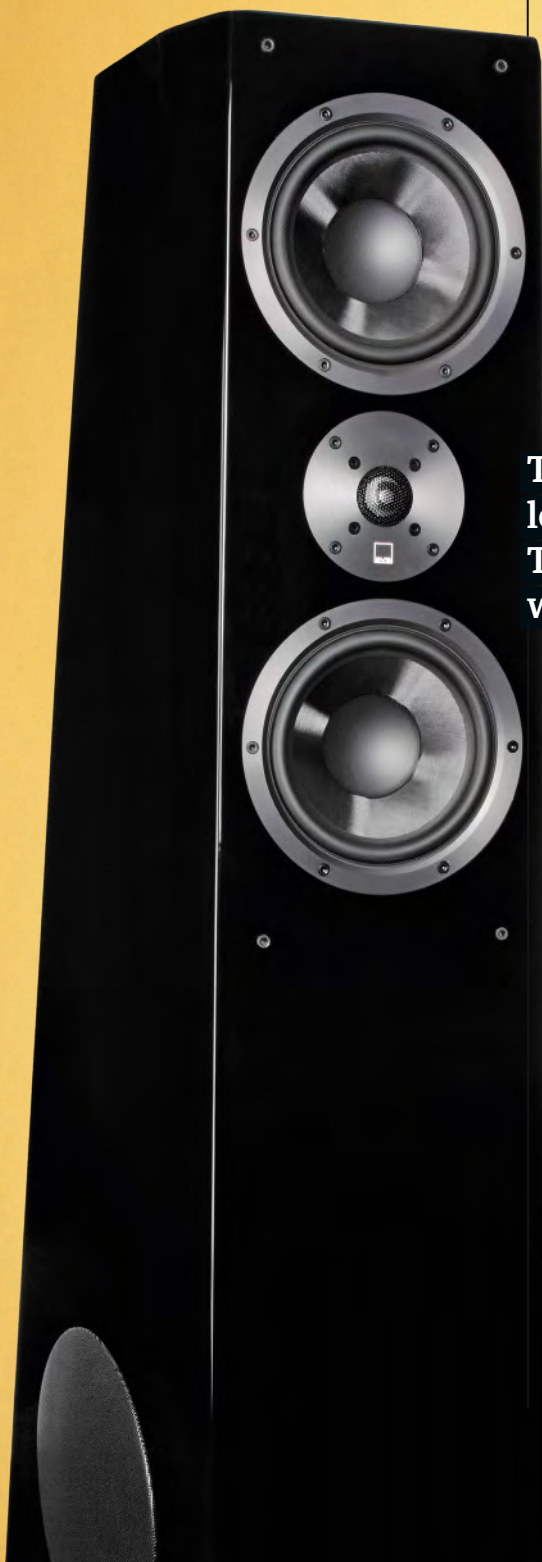
These speakers are a tale of two halves. What they do well is instantly impressive, but take a little longer with them and the story begins to unravel. You get a lot of speaker for your money, but there are more rounded, better executed speakers out there at this price.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Great scale; superb bass; powerful; good stereo imaging; clear, articulate midrange

AGAINST Unrefined treble; lack dynamic punch; unsubtle; need a big room to shine

VERDICT Great scale and bass weight, but there are too many gripes here at this price



Tannoy Precision 6.4

£2200 ★★★★★

When we reviewed the Tannoy Precision 6.2s in 2012, we said they could well mark the sweet-spot of the range, and even outshine these, their bigger, flagship brothers. We were right.

That's not to say the 6.4s aren't a great pair of speakers. They make a good case for themselves. But while the 6.2s blew us away with beautifully balanced sound and excellent stereo imaging, their flagship siblings fall slightly short of the same wow-factor.

They're extremely well made, though, setting a good first impression with a gorgeous satin dark-walnut veneer and a curved cabinet. High-gloss dark walnut or black finishes are also available.

Clever driver design

The top driver is the latest of Tannoy's dual-concentric units, which has a 25mm titanium-dome tweeter set in a 15cm paper-pulp cone mid/bass driver. Tannoy says this helps improve focus, integration and dispersion.

Below this sits a 15cm bass driver, and lower still are two 15cm auxiliary bass radiators. Among other things, these allow the 6.4s to be more flexible with their positioning than rear-ported rivals.

If there's one thing these Tannoys have over their smaller siblings, it's authority. These will go seriously loud, reach into the bass in a way the PMC Twenty 23s can't and showing a sense of scale that rivals the much larger SVSes.

The excellent stereo image we loved so much in the 6.2s is here too, but feels bigger still, positioning instruments accurately around the room.



Faithless's *Insomnia* builds steadily, and as each element of the song gets introduced, it's given the space it needs to be identifiable. Then when the drop finally comes you can't help but want to hit 'play' again

There's loads of detail to get stuck into here as well, and the 6.4s keep a good handle on dynamics. Faithless's *Insomnia* builds steadily, and as each element of the song gets introduced, it's given the space it needs to be identifiable. When the drop finally comes you can't help but want to hit the back button and start it all over again.

Not too subtle, but really likeable

It's fair to say, though, that they're not the subtlest of speakers. While they'll easily show up the likes of the SVS Ultra Towers when it comes to fine detail, compare them with speakers of a subtler nature, such as the Spendor A6Rs or PMC Twenty 23s, and we find they gloss over some of the texture and insight that the very best excel at nurturing.

And while they're far from ponderous, the Tannoys do show some signs of being less rhythmic than their livelier rivals. Play A Tribe Called Quest's *Excursions* and there's a feeling of them being just slightly 'off' with their handling of the energetic double

bass part. It's agile, considering its weight, but not quite agile enough.

Those things considered, it's still hard not to like the Tannoys. Their scale, detail and excellent stereo image makes them a thoroughly enjoyable, not to mention impressive, listen - all finished off in a design that's pleasing to the eye.

The Tannoy Precision 6.4s balance good (but not market-leading) handling of detail and dynamics with deep bass, power and scale. In this respect you get the best of both worlds, but not the last word in either.

There are better-rounded speakers available at this price, which loses them a star but, if bass is important to you, these are certainly worth an audition.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Nice build; focused soundstage; good detail; deep bass; go loud

AGAINST Not the last word in subtlety; less rhythmic than rivals

VERDICT Great looking speakers that offer plenty of scale, but fall short on subtlety



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TEST VERDICT

THE WINNER

Spendor A6R
£2500 ★★★★★



If you're after scale and finesse in equal measure, the fantastic **Spendor A6Rs** fit the bill. They're a no-brainer audition

The **PMC Twenty 23s** have been our favourite floorstanders at this price for more than two years, but the new **Spendor A6Rs** have just pipped them to the post in this test.

Everything we love about the 23s remains, though, and they're still five-star speakers. They can't compete with larger speakers when it comes to scale, bass and pure volume, but everything that they do is executed with such precision and clarity that they're hard to fault. Fast, detailed and dynamically strong, their compact size will also be a plus-point for many setups that struggle to fit in a larger floorstander.

Of course if you want big, look no further than the **SVS Ultra Towers**. Superbly built and dwarfing the other speakers on test, they're large in looks and character, and offer impressively deep bass, scale and neighbour-baiting

volume. Unfortunately they fall down when it comes to fine detail and dynamics, and while the bass is surprising agile, timing could be better.

We had high hopes for the **Tannoy**s - they look stunning. And their performance is relatively impressive too. Offering scale to challenge the **Ultra Towers** and displaying the refinement the **SVSes** lack, there's a lot to like. We wanted only for better rhythmic ability and attention to detail.

Which brings us nicely to the **Spendor A6Rs**. Well-judged and well-balanced, they show up the **PMC Twenty 23s** with their dynamic prowess and impress with their excellent timing, expressive nature and layers of fine detail. They require thought when it comes to kit matching, but do this well and you'll be rewarded with a pair of speakers that'll breathe new life into your music library.

SYSTEM BUILDER

Want to get the most from your new **Spendor A6R** speakers? Try using them with this great kit...



CD player

Roksan Caspian M2 CD £1800 ★★★★★

The **Roksan** offers great dynamic ability, tremendous focus and a seriously engaging presentation.



Stereo amplifier

Roksan Caspian M2 £1800 ★★★★★

Sharing many of the qualities of the **M2 CD**, the **M2 amp** is also well balanced, and rich enough sounding that it will keep the **A6R's** treble from ever sounding hard.



Streamer

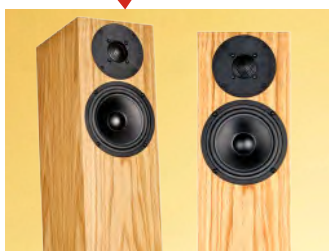
Sony HAP-ZIES £2000 ★★★★★

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Total build £8100

For a full list of specifications and other useful info visit whatifi.com

Facts & figures



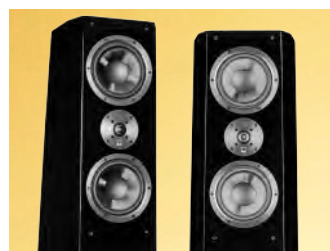
PMC Twenty 23
£2300 ★★★★★

Type Floorstanding • **Sensitivity** 87dB/W/m • **Impedance** 8 ohms
• **Max power handling** 200W •
Biwireable Yes • **Finishes** 4
• **Dimensions (hwd)** 92 x 15 x 33cm



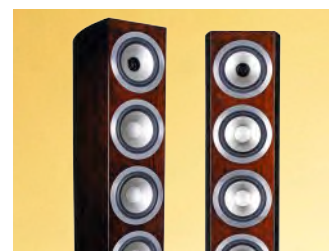
Spendor A6R
£2500 ★★★★★

Type Floorstanding • **Sensitivity** 88dB/W/m • **Impedance** 8 ohms
• **Max power handling** 200W •
Biwireable No • **Finishes** 5
• **Dimensions (hwd)** 87.5 x 19 x 28cm



SVS Ultra Tower
£2200 ★★★★★

Type Floorstanding • **Sensitivity** 88dB/W/m • **Impedance** 8 ohms
• **Max power handling** 300W •
Biwireable Yes • **Finishes** 2
• **Dimensions (hwd)** 114 x 35 x 41cm



Tannoy Precision 6.4
£2200 ★★★★★

Type Floorstanding • **Sensitivity** 90dB/W/m • **Impedance** 8 ohms
• **Max power handling** 200W •
Biwireable Yes • **Finishes** 3
• **Dimensions (hwd)** 105 x 31 x 35cm

Linked in

In the world of wireless headphones it's important to be well connected. And these premium examples will keep you in the loop



1

AKG K845BT

£250 ★★★★★

AKG is no stranger to five-star reviews in this magazine - so the fact the K845BT wireless headphones are talented comes as no surprise, even if they are bigger and heavier than most Bluetooth headphones we've tried.

We put on a black pair (they also come in white) and the pads fitted securely over our ears, which did get a little hot after 45 minutes of listening, it should be said. They do, however, isolate you well from external noise.

Easy to control and connect

The controls on the right earcup are easy to use - push the Bluetooth pairing button once to pair the K845BTs with your device, and hold it down to unpair. The AKGs might not have the higher-quality aptX version of Bluetooth (they run Bluetooth 3.0 + HS) but they do have the benefit of NFC (near-field communication) which gives you the fuss-free method of pairing them to a compatible device.

We get half way through The Cure's *Friday I'm In Love* and it's plain that those large drive units produce an incredibly clear sound - crisp, detailed, open and precise across the frequency spectrum. Turning the volume up for The Darkness's *Love Is Only A Feeling* delivers a firm, defined bass. In fact, everything we play is delivered with a sense of effortless cohesion, even if we don't find the sound quite as exuberant as the Philips Fidelio M1BTs. If you like your music clear and uncoloured, these AKGs are well worth an audition.

2

Beats Wireless

£250 ★★★★★

Portability is key for wireless cans, so this compact pair, with their signature Beats design and smart oval carry-case, make sense. The headphones, which support aptX, come in six colours - red, white, black, grey, red and blue. They feel reasonably sturdy, but the creaky noise of the plastic when they're handled lets the side down somewhat. Battery life is a generous 10 hours from a one-hour charge, so they should keep you going during the long-haul.

It's when we put the Wireless on that we hit our first hurdle. We feel the headband's rubber lining could be more cushioned, and while the soft leather pads are comfortable, they don't feel secure enough. Hardly any room noise is blocked out, either.

Navigating the controls while you're wearing the Beats takes practice, but most operations are convenient one-click affairs. That said, a clunky feel puts a downer on what's otherwise a neat five-button control cluster on the right earcup.

Back to bass-ics

True to the Beats' 'bass is power, power is music' formula, the bass here pounds with mighty punch and attack, thumping its way through the Ying Yang Twins' *Dangerous* with exuberance. Trouble is, if the music doesn't have a 'beat', the Wireless seem incapable of summoning as much enthusiasm. The sound lacks detail and articulation higher up the frequency range, feeling flat and lifeless with anything other than pop or dance music. Sadly, not the subtlest performance at this price.

Battery life Ready, charge...

Rechargeable batteries make Bluetooth headphones great travel partners. Playback typically lasts eight hours and, when they run out of juice, they can be recharged via a USB cable.



3

Bose AE2w £200 ★★★★★☆

The AE2ws have a nice thin, flexible headband, but what strikes us most is the removable control module needed to make a Bluetooth connection. It connects via the 3.5mm jack and sticks out like a sore thumb. Having internal wireless electronics is do-able, so why not do it? The earcups do fold flat though, and fit nicely in the supplied black drawstring bag.

Snug and tidy

What the AE2ws do well is comfort; they feel sturdy yet light on all our reviewers' heads. The soft leather ear pads completely envelope our ears, giving them plenty of space inside and blocking out external sound too. All controls are on the module, so everything is at least tidily in one place.

There's no higher-quality aptX Bluetooth on board, but the standard Bluetooth connection doesn't appear to compromise the AE2ws' sound. It's very listenable. There's a strikingly spacious and open sound with plenty of detail and body. Though it's less direct than the Philips M1BTs, there's a clarity and finesse in vocals that is able to draw out the vulnerability and intimacy in Pilot Speed's *Alright* before crashing with impact into an electric guitar riff.

Dynamics are forthright, though the Bose headphones have less of a spring in their step than the Philips cans. At frequency extremes the bass is a little boomier than we'd like and the treble feels a touch hard, but Bose has done well to tick most of the Bluetooth headphone boxes here.

4

Philips Fidelio M1BT £250 ★★★★★

When we first reviewed the Fidelio M1BTs earlier this year, we gave them five stars and they ran away with a 2013 Award. Now we're matching them against new, similarly priced rivals, we're even more impressed at their superb sound quality and design.

The leather headband and modest-sized faux-leather earcups sport a classy navy blue finish, and everything is neatly contained. The spongy memory-foam ear pads latch on to your ears securely and cushion them snugly - even if, much as with a memory-foam mattress, they get a bit warm after an hour.

The controls are on the right earcup, and they're a doddle to use. The M1BTs have two integrated microphones - one for the voice, the other to optimise sound quality - and they really help make voices clear when making calls.

Rich musicality with accurate detail

It's in sonic terms that these headphones really come into their own. Vocals are rich, full-bodied and clearly more focused than on any of their direct rivals. The exasperation in Jack White's voice on *Blunderbuss* is palpable. Scrolling down our playlist, every genre sounds effortlessly musical, while detail is delivered with just the right amount of analysis.

The M1BTs also capture the right amount of buoyancy in the dynamics and are transparent in their responsiveness to shifts in pace, as well as being sensitive across the frequency spectrum. Balanced, punchy and musical; that's the Philips M1BTs - we wouldn't leave home without a pair.

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WHAT'S ON TEST
Pioneer VSX-528

Sony STR-DN840

Yamaha RX-V375



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Pioneer VSX-528 £285

★★★★☆

If you don't want to choose between performance and functionality, here's a good option. The Pioneer VSX-528 is a 5.1-channel AV receiver that slots in just below the middle of the firm's 2013 range. It offers a good balance between sound and useful features.

Atmosphere and balance

After a simple set-up, we play a Blu-ray of robots-vs-monsters-fest *Pacific Rim*. The Pioneer's sound is good for the price. During an ocean-based fight scene, the crashing waves and sounds of crunching metal sweep across the room, giving a good sense of atmosphere. It's a clean sound, and speech is clear.

The tonal balance is good too, with no part of the frequency range given undue attention. Bass is prominent but not overpowering, while the treble offers crisp detail without hardening up. It's a neutral sound that gets the job done with minimal fuss. Plenty of agility helps.

The sense of scale is decent, but it's not the massive, enveloping sound we get from the Yamaha RX-V375. It doesn't punch quite as hard as we'd like either, and struggles a little with dynamic shifts. Volume isn't an issue - it just doesn't sound that dramatic.

NEED TO KNOW

Consider if You want performance and features in equal measure.

Make sure You set the amp up properly. Calibration is a quick, simple process.

Avoid if You're after a really powerful, punchy sound.

Highlight The selection of features is great for users of mobile devices.

Overall, the Pioneer delivers a capable, functional sound that nevertheless needs more punch to be great.

When it comes to connections, the VSX-528 is fairly well equipped. You get six HDMI inputs, which handle HD and 3D pictures as well as 4K pass-through. There's also a USB port, one each of digital optical and coaxial inputs, as well as three sets of analogue inputs.

There's no wi-fi on board, but you do get internet access via ethernet. The Pioneer is DLNA-certified, which means you can stream music from a networked computer or storage device. Internet radio is an option too, or you can wire up with an old-school antenna for FM radio.

Pioneer seems to have taken the stance that smartphones and tablets are integral to the AV experience. As such, mobile connectivity is here in a big way.

Connections up front

The HDMI input at the front of the machine offers MHL 2.0 connectivity, which lets users play high-definition content from compatible devices.

Apple support includes iPhones and iPods. These are handled by the front USB port, which also charges the devices. Alternatively, you can stream

wirelessly via AirPlay, which uses your home network to send music from Apple devices to the Pioneer.

Don't have an Apple device? The Pioneer also supports HTC Connect, which lets users of compatible HTC phones (including the HTC One) play music and control the volume wirelessly. Bluetooth isn't built-in, but there is a port for a dongle.

There's also a free remote control app for iOS and Android. It's not the full iControlAV2013 app we know and love, but Pioneer's simpler ControlApp, which offers basic control and content-browsing.

We like this amp. It doesn't offer the final word in sound or specs, but it does occupy a comfortable spot in the middle ground. If you want good surround sound with a handful of features, this Pioneer is a very good candidate.

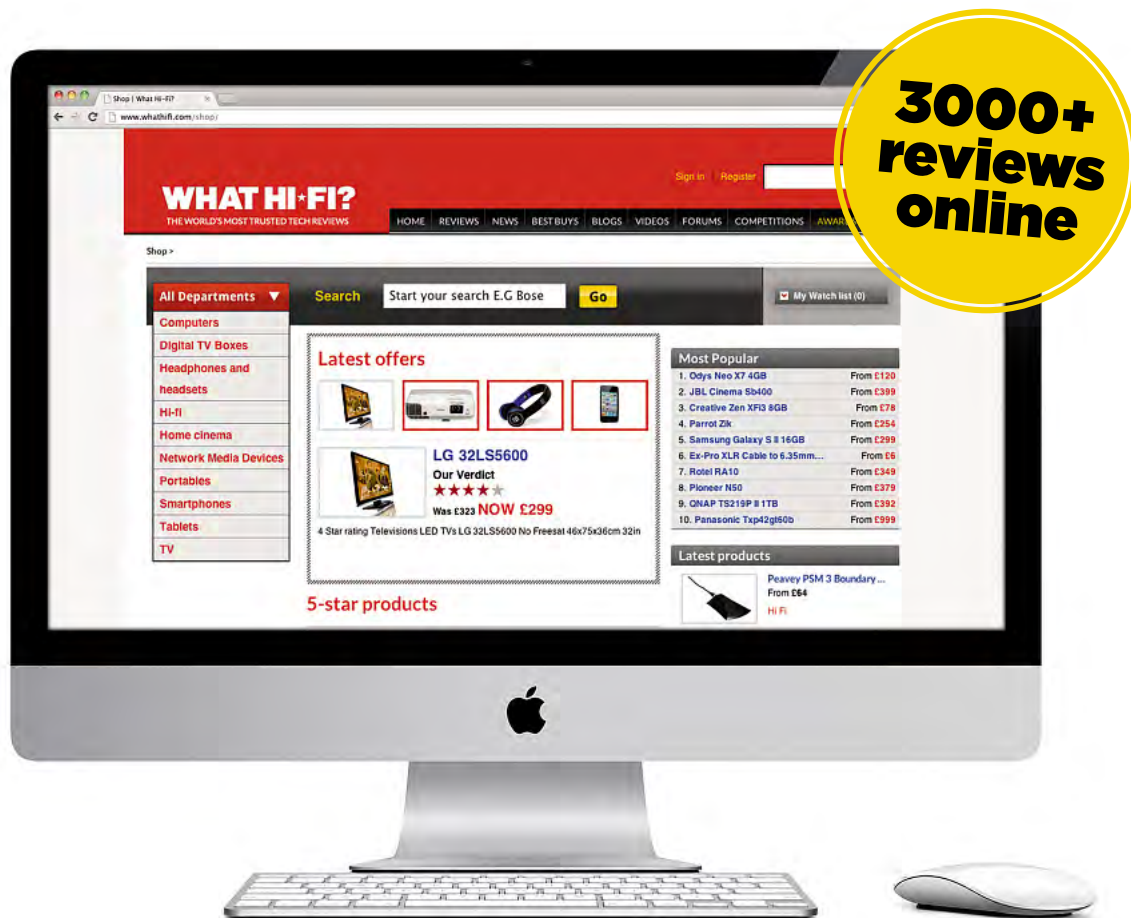
Rating ★★★★★

FOR Balanced, articulate and detailed performance; good features

AGAINST Sound could do with more power and scale

VERDICT Pioneer's budget amp is an impressive balance of sound and features

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Firmware
Slow on the update
 Unlike the rather tricky business of network configuration, updating the firmware is a simple affair, but it does take a very long time, during which the Sony seems to hibernate. For us, this went on so long that we panicked a little, but it woke up again after about 45 minutes.

Sony STR-DN840 £350

★★★★☆

The Sony STR-DN840 sits below the 2013 Award-winning, Product of the Year-grabbing STR-DN1040 in Sony's range. Can it live up to its big brother's reputation? No pressure...

For the money, the STR-DN840 is very well equipped. You get 7.1-channel sound and internet access with built-in wi-fi as well as an ethernet socket.

Wireless AirPlay streaming takes care of Apple devices, while DLNA certification means you can play audio from NAS drives and networked computers. File compatibility includes WAV, MP3, FLAC, WMA and AAC. You can also stream music from internet services such as vTuner radio and the Sony Entertainment Network. Our European model didn't have Bluetooth, but we hear the US version does.

Ample connectivity

At the back, there are six HDMI inputs and one output with 3D and 4K pass-through. You get four sets of inputs for analogue audio and three for composite video, as well as one digital coaxial and two optical inputs.

Meanwhile, the front USB port will cater for Apple devices and memory sticks with files up to 24-bit/192kHz.

NEED TO KNOW
Consider if You want a good budget amp with 7.1-channel surround sound.
Make sure You are patient with firmware updates.
Avoid If your system already sounds lean.
Highlight A budget amp with seven channels and lots of features? Yes please.

Setting up the DN840 is quite a mixed bag. Turning it on for the first time brings up the well-named Easy Setup screen, but network configuration is less straightforward, partly because of the remote control, which isn't as intuitive or responsive as we'd like. Trying to input the password to our wireless router had us swearing a bit. Still, you only need to do it once.

When it comes to sound, the STR-DN840 performs a lot like the bigger DN1040. We put on a Blu-ray of *The Wolverine* and it's a forceful sound. Punches and gunshots hit hard, and arrows have a satisfying zing to them.

The soundfield is wide, and effects are steered with precision - all of which contributes to an immersive sense of atmosphere. The low end is taut and articulate, and the midrange is clean. There's plenty of subtle detail too, conveying with ease the emotions and inflections in speech. The bigger, pricier STR-DN1040 sounds weightier and more dynamic, but what we have here is a highly commendable performance.

It's not an all-rounder, however. Surround amps at this price often sound brittle, and this is the case with the STR-DN840. A lean sound is often

advantageous, particularly when it creates a sense of agility, but here the amp just crosses the line from lean to thin, and at higher volumes gets a bit bright for our tastes.

Happy with music

Stereo performance is good, though. The Sony does better here than many price rivals, delivering music with rhythmic precision and plenty of attack. But we would like more delicacy. As always, we recommend a dedicated stereo amplifier if you're serious about listening to music.

The Sony STR-DN840 is good news, even if it doesn't quite display the all-round strength of its bigger sibling. It's very well equipped in terms of features and connections, and its performance is precise and energetic. Match your system carefully and you're in for a treat.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Precise, agile sound with lots of energy; plenty of connections and features

AGAINST Can sound thin and bright, especially at higher volumes

VERDICT A talented, well-equipped amp - just make sure it's a sonic match for your system



Yamaha RX-V375 £250

★★★★★

For two years in a row, our Award for the best budget AV receiver has gone to Yamaha. The latest winner is the Yamaha RX-V375, a relatively simple box that trades fancy tricks for thrilling surround sound. For £250 (less if you shop around) it is a fantastic proposition, and a great first step if you're ready to make the leap from two channels to five.

Full of life

The RX-V375 follows in its predecessor's footsteps to deliver a really lively sound. It bounds along to movie soundtracks with plenty of energy and soaring dynamics. Tonal balance is good, the top end is textured, voices are solid and the bass is pleasingly punchy.

Many receivers at this price sound thin and insubstantial, but not the V375. It shares the same characteristics as the bigger, more expensive RX-A3030 - a satisfyingly solid sound, with plenty of weight. It's rich and smooth, and never sounds hard-edged, even when pushed.

Then there's the sense of scale: the Yamaha offers a big, immersive sound and a convincingly cinematic experience. This kind of money won't give you the widest soundfield, but given this amp's other strengths we

NEED TO KNOW

Consider if You value impressive sound over features.

Make sure You don't need too many connections.

Avoid if You're after something with internet access.

Highlight Rich, weighty, punchy sound with accurate effects steering.

aren't too bothered about that. And, as we've come to expect from Yamaha, surround sound steering is excellent.

We load up our Blu-ray of *Man of Steel* and the sound effects are precisely located. We switch to Formula 1 drama *Rush* and it's hard not to be impressed by the cars zooming past your ear and sweeping across the room.

The Yamaha doesn't produce the most refined sound we've ever come across, but it does deliver the most detailed and dynamic performance we've heard at this price - with the bonus that dialogue is clear and expressive.

Stereo music doesn't hang together as well as multi-channel movie soundtracks. The RX-V375 doesn't quite convey that crucial sense of rhythmic cohesion. If stereo music is a priority, we think it's best to leave it to a dedicated stereo amplifier if possible.

A question of priorities

Connectivity is good, but it's not the Yamaha's priority. You get the necessities: four HDMI inputs that support Full HD and 3D playback, 1080p upscaling and 4K pass-through. There are also two each of component, optical and digital coaxial inputs, as well as four

composite and analogue audio inputs. The single HDMI output features ARC (Audio Return Channel) to replay TV sound, and the USB port at the front of the unit can handle audio from your iPod or iPhone.

What you don't get is anything network-related: there's no wi-fi, and no ethernet connection. As a result you don't get DLNA, AirPlay, or a remote control app. It's not surprising to see Yamaha sacrificing this to keep the price down and focus on the sound, though. It's a wise decision in our ears.

The Yamaha RX-V375 is an excellent AV receiver that prioritises the most important thing of all: sound. If you're desperate for features it probably isn't for you, but if you just want to get into home cinema, this budget offering is a fantastic bargain.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Good detail and dynamics; energetic performance; precise effects steering; price

AGAINST Fiddly spring-clip terminals for centre and surround channels; no network features

VERDICT It's light on features, but the punchy sound will thrill and the price is irresistible

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K2 BT

- aptX Bluetooth streaming input
- Increased output for greater power and clarity
- Improved circuitry for greater efficiency
- Even better sound performance

ROKSAN

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* On compliant devices.

TEST VERDICT

THE WINNER

Yamaha RX-V375

£250 ★★★★★



Pitching in at a tempting price, the **Yamaha RX-V375** cleverly eschews fancy features to make it all about the sound. And it's paid off

We thought this was going to be a tough one. The fight to be the best budget home cinema amp is always a struggle, even if each company's approach is a little different. Some prefer to pile on the features, while others would rather concentrate on sound. And in the case of this test, there are reasons to heartily recommend each of these contestants.

The Sony STR-DN840, for instance, impressed us with its features and connections. It's the only amp here capable of handling 7.1-channel sound, and we also liked the energetic, forceful sound it puts out. Sadly, the Sony's treble oversteps the line from lean to thin, which makes for a more tiring long-term listen. Combine that with the highest price tag here, and Sony loses a star.

Next up we have the Pioneer VSX-528, which offers slightly less in terms of connections, but makes up for it with a more balanced, rounded sound that's clear and a little easier to live with than the Sony's. There's a sensible, if not outstanding, level of features, but we nevertheless wanted that smooth sound to offer more in the way of power, punch and scale.

Sitting proudly at the top is the Yamaha RX-V375. Its low price offsets the conservative approach to features and connections, but really it's all about the sound. It's clearly the best performer here, with the large-scale, cinematic sound we wanted from the Pioneer, and the kind of smooth, rich presentation that the Sony lacks. Combine that with Yamaha's trademark precision with effects steering, and you have one seriously talented AV amp.

SYSTEM BUILDER

Get the best out of the Yamaha by giving it quality kit to work with. These three all fit the bill



Television

Samsung PS51F550 £700 ★★★★★

The Samsung rewrites the all-rounder rule book by combining a fantastic picture with a strong feature set and an affordable price



Blu-ray player

Sony BDP-S4100 £95 ★★★★★

Terrific value and an attractive level of features from our 2013 Award-winner for the best Blu-ray player up to £100.



Speaker package

Q Acoustics 2000i £600 ★★★★★

An attractive and affordable 5.1 system that will complement the Yamaha's talents with a big, detailed and cohesive sound

Total build £1645

For a full list of specifications and other useful info visit whathifi.com

Facts & figures



Pioneer VSX-528

£285 ★★★★★

Video scaling 1080p • Channels/power 5/130W • Inputs 6 x HDMI, USB, opt digital, 3 x composite • Outputs HDMI • HD decoding Yes • 3D/4k pass-through Yes • Dimensions (hwd) 17 x 44 x 33cm



Sony STR-DN840

£350 ★★★★★

Video scaling 1080p • Channels/power 7/150W • Inputs 6 x HDMI, USB, 2 x opt digital, 3 x composite • Outputs HDMI, coax digital • HD decoding Yes • 3D/4k pass-through Yes • Dimensions (hwd) 16 x 43 x 33cm

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
TEST WINNER



Yamaha RX-V375

£250 ★★★★★

Video scaling 1080p • Channels/pwr 5/100W • Inputs 4 x HDMI, USB, 2 x opt digital, 3 x c'ite, 2 x c'ponent • Outputs HDMI, composite, c'ponent • Decoding Yes • 3D/4k Pass-through Yes • Dimensions 15 x 44 x 32cm



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YAMAHA RX-A3030

Powered by music

Hi-fi for the long-haul

If you've got your music stored on a laptop, you owe it to your tunes to get a portable DAC. Your headphones will thank you



If you listen to music stored on a laptop or a desktop computer, there's a good chance your PC's internal DAC and headphone output can be bettered by a device more suited to the task. This is where a portable DAC/headphone amp comes in handy, taking over the bulk of the sonic work from your computer and ensuring you're getting the best possible performance. Here are four affordable, portable superstars, which will take any computer-based music to the next level...

JARGON BUSTER

DAC

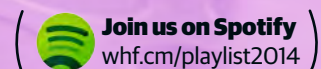
A digital-to-analogue converter turns digital information into an analogue signal that's then converted by the amp and speakers to sound. Anything digital has one.

Asynchronous

Asynchronous USB operation puts the DAC in charge of information flow, not the computer it's attached to. Usually leads to better sound.



For more news, reviews and buying advice, visit whathifi.com



Listen to our favourite tracks every month!

Audioengine

D3 £170

★★★★☆

Clad in an aluminium case, held together by the tiniest of bolts, the D3 looks and feels like a solid little unit with a robust case that resists any attempts to flex it out of shape. Trying to magic what to many people is simply a USB stick into an attractive piece of hi-fi equipment is no mean feat. But the D3 gives it a jolly good go.

We're slightly disappointed, though, that there is no matching aluminium end-cap to protect the USB connector when it's out in the open, or in your pocket. The D3 does at least come with its own woolly carry pouch - perfect for keeping it warm in the cold winter months if nothing else.

Also in the box is a brief yet easily understandable set-up guide and an adapter cable for making the D3's 3.5mm

Unlike the Cambridge Audio DacMagic XS, but like the AudioQuest DragonFly v1.2, the D3 does without any external volume controls. Instead, it uses the control on your music-playing software.

Decent detail and impact

Play a WAV rip of Eminem's *Bad Guy* and the D3 extracts a fair level of detail from the track. The device favours a direct, unfussy sound. The track's brooding bass notes hit with a decent sense of impact, and the claps that litter the track sound precise and well-defined - although the emotion in Eminem's voice doesn't come across quite as convincingly as it does when heard through the AudioQuest.

We'd like a bit more subtle detail and texturing of notes too. There's a lack of

The device favours a direct, unfussy sound. *Bad Guy* by Eminem's brooding bass notes hit with a decent sense of impact, and the claps in the track sound precise and well-defined

output compatible with headphones that use a 6.3mm connector. We listened to the D3 using a pair of AKG K550s over-ears and a pair of Klipsch X7i in-ears.

Can deal with high-res audio

This Audioengine is compatible with Apple Macs and Windows computers, and, unlike some, it doesn't need any additional drivers for Windows. Like the AudioQuest DragonFly v1.2, the D3 can play sample rates up to 24-bit/96kHz natively - the computer will have to downsample 24-bit/192kHz music files to 24/96 for the D3 to be able to play them. The D3 also allows for the asynchronous movement of data between your computer's USB output and the Audioengine, for supposedly improved sound performance (see Jargon Buster on p67).

On the face of the stick there are two tiny indicators. The outer one glows blue when the Audioengine is being used with tracks boasting a sample rate of 88.2kHz and above. Otherwise, the indicator remains unlit. The inner light glows white simply to show that the DAC is powered up and ready to receive data.

refinement to the general sound, which takes some of the gloss and joy out of the music.

We play Lily Allen's Christmas cover of *Somewhere Only We Know*, and while the delicate piano play and her sweet vocal sound focused and distinct, the D3 doesn't manage to make things sound as natural or believable as they do via the DacMagic XS. The tune doesn't display the same sonic subtleties, nor does it have the same emotional impact as when the piece is played via the DragonFly, either.

The Audioengine is a solid little device, but sonically it fails to grab your attention and make enough of a lasting impression. And, when you consider the D3's isn't the cheapest of its kind, this leaves it lagging behind the pack leaders.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Nicely weighty sound; solid build quality; decent detail

AGAINST Sound is lacking a little in clarity, detail and dynamics; pricey

VERDICT It sounds fine, but key rivals perform to a higher standard and for less money

The Audioengine is a beautifully finished little aluminium stick - it's a shame there's no matching cap to complete things



AudioQuest

DragonFly v1.2 £130

★★★★★

The DragonFly created a huge buzz when it launched in 2012. AudioQuest took a DAC and headphone amp, two traditional hi-fi components, and served them up in a great-sounding, consumer-friendly package.

What you see here may look identical to the original DragonFly we reviewed back in 2012, but this is actually DragonFly v1.2. You can tell if it's the new version, not just because of the new price (£130 compared with £215 when it launched) but also because a sticker on the box tells you so, and the ring around the headphone jack is now grey (instead of black). There's also a subtle smattering of new markings and logos.

It's inside where AudioQuest has made some pretty big changes. In an attempt to squeeze out even greater

thrust. Tracks sound more pristine and more communicative than before.

Up Is Down, from the *Pirates of the Caribbean* soundtrack, for example, is a blockbuster of a track - pacy, powerful and dynamic. And the DragonFly easily communicates all these facets to the listener. With a WAV version of the track, strings flow naturally and wind instruments combine with percussion for a rousing, dynamic and explosive end to the track.

Excellent rhythm and tempo

The DragonFly's ability to follow a track's rhythm and timing is superb. Calvin Harris's *Under Control* is a feel-good dance tune and the DragonFly matches it with a fine sense of enthusiasm and an equally upbeat tempo. Listening to

The DragonFly is decisive and confident in its delivery of Jay-Z's *Empire State Of Mind*. The drum-kicks hit with real purpose, with leading edges clearly defined, as are piano-key strikes

sound quality, the signal path between the DAC chip and the analogue output has been shortened and the internal power supply has been tweaked.

Otherwise, the general specification of the DragonFly hasn't changed. This means the unit's still asynchronous, PC and Mac compatible, and piggybacks the volume control of your music player's software. It can play up to 24-bit/96kHz files, but high-res 24-bit/192kHz files will have to be downsampled by the computer to 24/96.

Colour-coded lighting

We've always been huge fans of the DragonFly's design. It's weighty enough in the hand, while the matt finish feels smooth and satisfying to the touch. The logo lights up in different colours to indicate the type of file being played: green is 44.1kHz, blue is 48kHz, amber is 88.2kHz and magenta is 96kHz.

Play a couple of tracks and you realise the open, spacious and detailed sound of the original DragonFly is still there, but the new version sounds even cleaner and clearer.

This DragonFly picks out greater detail and displays even greater dynamic

the track is an uplifting and hugely enjoyable experience.

There's a great sense of solidity and depth to bass notes too - the DragonFly's decisive and confident in its delivery of Jay-Z's *Empire State Of Mind* whether it's a CD-quality rip or a compressed version played through Spotify. The drum-kicks hit with real purpose, with leading edges clearly defined, as is the striking of piano keys in the background. Alicia Key's vocal doesn't sound quite as smooth as it does when heard through the Cambridge Audio, but you are getting a getting greater transparency and detail.

The icing on the cake with this DAC, though, is that you're getting all this outrageously good sound quality at such a tempting price. DragonFly has us buzzing all over again!

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Superbly clear and detailed sound; awesome dynamics; great sense of timing; attractive design; new aggressive pricing

AGAINST Nothing at this price

VERDICT The original blew us away, but the v1.2 takes performance to a whole new level

It looks the same as the original unit, but the DragonFly v1.2 is even more impressive in performance - and it's cheaper. Bargain...



Cambridge Audio

DacMagic XS £100

★★★★☆

Cambridge Audio already has a couple of very capable DACs on its books in the shape of the DacMagic 100 and DacMagic Plus - but these are both reasonably hefty desktop units that require mains power. The ultra-portable DacMagic XS that completes the range is a dinky USB model.

And, although the DacMagic XS is one of the cheapest devices in its class, there's little to suggest this: the packaging is slick and the product itself has a nice finish. It's a little chunkier and wider than the DragonFly and the Audioengine, but build quality is impressive - it feels just as substantial and looks the business too.

Connections are simple: there's a micro-USB input on one end for connecting to your computer (a supplied

focused, stable and confident and there's plenty of well-organised detail for the listener to take note of.

The Cambridge gives the track good weight and momentum too, with agile, precise and subtle lows spurring the tune along. The DacMagic's refined tonal balance is hugely comforting, and helps take the edge off brittle- or bright-sounding recordings. If you're used to using your laptop or desktop computer's headphone output for listening to music, the DacMagic is likely to be a big step up.

Smooth, full-bodied sound

Make the switch to a higher-resolution track and the your enjoyment goes up with the jump in bits. Kate Bush's *50 Words For Snow* (24-bit/96kHz)

The DacMagic's refined tonal balance is hugely comforting, and helps take the edge off bright-sounding recordings. It's a big step up from a computer's headphone output

connector cable completes the chain) and a standard 3.5mm socket for your headphones on the other.

A single, hardworking LED shows the sample rate of the incoming audio signal - blue for 44.1/48kHz, green for 88.2/96kHz and purple for 176.4/192kHz - as well as the amp's volume limits.

Really easy to use

Where the AudioQuest and Audioengine DACs take their volume cues from your computer, the XS has its own in the shape of circular '+' and '-' buttons on top of the device. If you press them both at once and hold for a few seconds, they also switch the DAC operation from USB 1.0 to 2.0. The advantage here is that the DacMagic XS will now accept a native high-resolution 24-bit/192kHz stream. In USB 1.0 mode it is limited to 24-bit/96kHz (PC users will have to download additional drivers from Cambridge's website to enable this).

There's a hidden benefit to the USB 2.0 mode, and that is better sound quality generally. Even with a standard 16-bit/44.1kHz rip of Lady Gaga's *Do What you Want*, we preferred listening in USB 2.0 mode. The track sounds more

sounds subtle and intricate. The XS delivers plenty of insight and has a silky smooth, delicate way with vocals - there's plenty of warmth here and a nice, full-bodied balance. The story is similarly positive with a recording of Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No.4 in G Minor, Op.58*.

We do think AudioQuest DragonFly sounds clearer, though, and also has the edge in terms of outright resolution and dynamic subtlety.

The Cambridge Audio has no trouble dispatching the Fiio and Audioengine DACs. Its main problem is the fierce competition provided by the AudioQuest DragonFly and its all-new pricetag. That DAC is only £30 more and is definitely worth spending the extra on for the notable jump in sound quality.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Beautifully refined balance; easy to listen to; can handle 24-bit/192kHz files; great finish

AGAINST Detail and dynamics could be better

VERDICT The DacMagic XS is a delightful little device and those with a strict budget won't be disappointed

No, this picture isn't actual size. In real life the DacMagic XS measures just 5cm high, 3cm wide and 1cm deep



FiiO

E17 £100

★★★★☆

The **FiiO E17** looks more like a portable MP3 player than a petite headphone amp/DAC. Nevertheless, it's still portable enough to slot in your pocket and be considered in the same class as the DragonFlys and D3s of this world.

Lots of features

The E17 picks up early bonus points as it manages to pack in a lot of features and functionality for the money. The most obvious inclusion is the small OLED screen. Where other devices in its class use (sometimes confusing) colour-coding systems and minuscule LEDs to show sampling rates, you can take a quick look at the display here to double-check what's being played.

There's a mini-USB input for connecting to your computer's USB

Move up a level to a high-res version of The Rolling Stones' *Gimme Shelter* and the amount of detail on tap goes up too. The FiiO conveys this newfound resolution reasonably well. Keith Richards' wailing guitar solo sounds suitably edgy and sharp, even if it doesn't quite have the same dynamic and emotional reach as the DragonFly or DacMagic XS.

Not the last word in transparency

We'd like greater clarity, too: the DragonFly opens out the music, giving spacious, transparent and detailed sound. The E17 digs out just enough detail from music to strike a chord and paint a basic picture for the listener, but struggles with those subtle nuances that really drag you into a piece of music.

Play a 16-bit/44kHz rip of Naughty Boy's *La La La* and the track flows along efficiently. The FiiO's tonal balance is more pleasant and pacifying than forward and aggressive

socket. As the FiiO only meets the USB 1.0 standard it can't accept any files above 24-bit/96kHz. If you have 24-bit/192kHz files, you'll need to go into the E17 via its dedicated digital input, using a coaxial cable and the supplied adapter. If you use optical, bandwidth is limited to 96kHz.

Either way, you can also take the feed from another source such as CD player and use the FiiO's internal DAC before passing music into an amplifier or straight into a pair of active speakers.

Talking of amplifiers, there's a special connector on the bottom of the E17 which docks into FiiO's own optional E09K desktop amp. There's also a 3.5mm jack so you can plug in a smartphone or MP3 player and use the FiiO as a basic headphone amp.

Play a 16-bit/44kHz rip of Naughty Boy's *La La La* and the track flows along efficiently and without incident. The FiiO's tonal balance is more pleasant and pacifying than forward and aggressive.

Listening through a pair of AKG K550s, strings sound delicate and intimate, and bass notes sound just punchy enough to communicate the upbeat tempo of the track.

We had good results turning the E17s volume all the way to maximum and just hiking up our MacBook Pro's volume a couple of notches. There's a subtle increase in spaciousness and dynamics, but still not enough to elevate it above the class-leaders.

Lorde's *Royals* sounds reasonably exciting but the bass could explode with greater purpose and power. The FiiO doesn't really communicate the dynamics and scale of the track as easily as the likes of the DragonFly.

On paper, the FiiO is a useful little box of tricks and some of the added features and functionality might entice some users. Compared with its closest rivals, however, the sound quality doesn't set the pulse racing. The E17's an adequate listen, but nothing more.

Rating ★★★★★

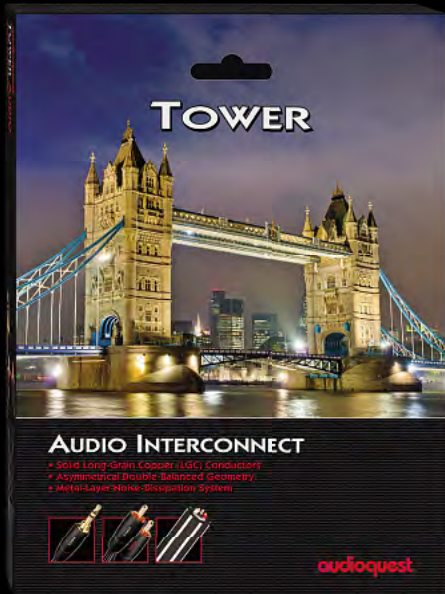
FOR Pleasant, inoffensive sound; balanced, with good detail; good feature set

AGAINST Could sound punchier and more exciting; transparency and insight a bit lacking

VERDICT The E17's a flexible and versatile device, but it won't worry the class-leaders

We like the FiiO's addition of a screen. It makes it far easier to use the device on the go, and see options at a glance during set-up





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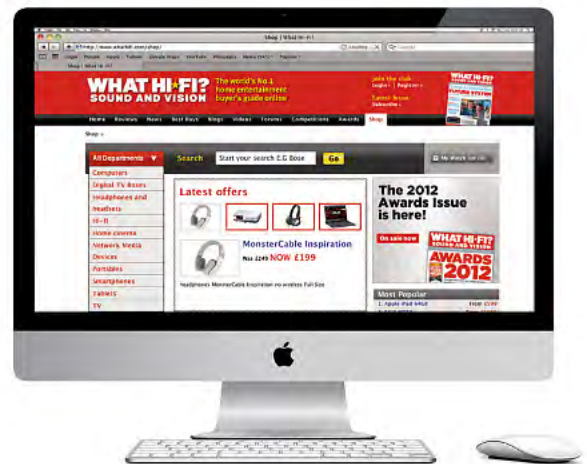
3.5mm socket for extension
cables

From solid conductors, superior metals (conductors and plugs) and low-interaction insulation to AQ's Noise-Dissipation System and AQ's Dielectric-Bias System, all of AudioQuest's proven distortion-minimizing ingredients are used to ensure that all eight models of Bridges & Falls cables bring you beautiful music, clear dialog and thunderous sound-effects.

audioquest

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TEST VERDICT**THE WINNER****AudioQuest DragonFly**

£130 ★★★★★

The new version of the **DragonFly** costs a third less than the original model, yet it sounds even better. It seems, for now, that there's no competing with that combination



Desirable, pocketable and packed full of sonic thrills, it's the AudioQuest DragonFly that wings its way to victory.

You have to feel a little sorry for Cambridge Audio DacMagicXS, previously five stars, now bumped down to four by our winner. If you can't spend a penny over £100 the DacMagicXS still represents a really good buy - it's exceptionally well made and produces a wonderfully refined sound for the money.

But the jump to £130 for the AudioQuest isn't a massive one and we'd have to say it's worth saving and then spending the extra. The new DragonFly v1.2 is very much improved.

Yes it has a new, lower price tag, but performance has improved quite dramatically too. Music sounds wonderfully clear, detail levels are

stunning, and dynamically the DragonFly manages to scale highs that no other at this price can. It's a spectacular all-rounder.

Fiio's E17 puts in a perfectly respectable showing. The device is a little bulkier than its rivals, but then it does pack in extra functionality for you to take advantage of. The sound's safe rather than stunning - we long for a bit more bite and drama - but you can't be super-critical, especially when you take into account the Fiio's price and features.

This leaves the Audioengine D3. Performance is on a par with the Fiio's. It's a solid little unit that sounds ok without ever setting your world alight. Not only does it sound a little lacklustre when compared to its peers, the D3 is also the most expensive of the group and by quite some margin, hence the three-star rating.

SYSTEM BUILDER

This fine-sounding duo will put the DragonFly to exceptionally good use

**Laptop****Apple MacBook Pro £1000**

We love the Pro's ease of use and slick interface for storing all types of music files.

**Headphones****Philips Fidelio M1 £160 ★★★★★**

A warm and natural-sounding presentation goes hand in hand with high levels of detail.

Total build £1260**BEFORE YOU BUY****File resolution**

It's easy to get hung up on specification. Many of the DACs in this test top out at 24-bit/96kHz through USB rather than delivering the full 24-bit/192kHz. How important this is depends on the music files you use. If you buy from iTunes or at best rip uncompressed from CDs then that lower 96kHz limit is still far beyond what you'll need. But if you're dedicated to the highest-resolution recordings, make sure your DAC will cope.



For a full list of specifications and other useful info visit whathifi.com

Facts & figures**Audioengine D3**

£170 ★★★★★

Inputs N/A •

Outputs 3.5mm • Max native sample rate support 24-bit/96kHz •

Dimensions (hwd) 6.5 x 2 x 1cm

• Weight N/A

**AudioQuest DragonFly**

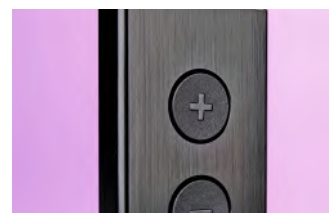
£130 ★★★★★

Inputs N/A •

Outputs 3.5mm • Max native sample rate support 24-bit/96kHz •

Dimensions (hwd) 6.2 x 1.9 x 2.1cm

• Weight N/A

**Cambridge Audio DacMagic XS**

£100 ★★★★★

Inputs Micro USB •

Outputs 3.5mm • Max native sample rate support 24-bit/192kHz •

Dimensions (hwd) 5.4 x 3 x 1cm

• Weight 100g

**Fiio E17**

£100 ★★★★★

Inputs 3.5mm aux, optical/coaxial digital, mini USB • Outputs 3.5mm • Max native sample rate support

24-bit/192kHz • Dimensions (hwd) 9.6 x 5.5 x 1.5cm • Weight 112g

The world's most desirable kit

TEMPTATIONS

“Devialets are like no other amplifiers on the market”

■ Devialet 110 Integrated amplifier

■ £4490 ★★★★★

Devialet's original amplifier, the D-Premier, caused something of a storm in high-end circles. Here was a slim unit - looking more akin to a pair of posh bathroom scales than any traditional piece of hi-fi - that not only challenged the very best amplifiers around in sound quality, but did it with a hybrid electronic design that was as innovative as any we've come across.

A few years on and the company has enjoyed massive investment. The result is a three-strong range of amplifiers to replace the original. The 110 is the baby of the range: it may look much like the original, but it sells for half the money.

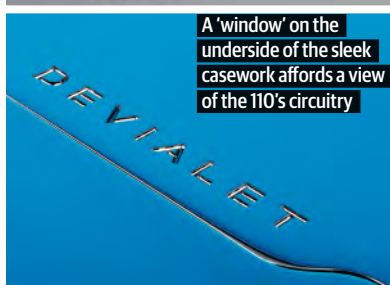
Look for the areas where money has been saved and you'll find them. Power is down from 240W per channel to (as the model name implies) 110W per channel. That shiny casework is subtly different, as is the distinctive remote control - both look and feel less luxurious than the original, but still have more than enough quality for the price, even if the finish is a magnet for fingerprints.

A chip off the old block

The heart of the 110 is still pure Devialet. Take off the cover and look inside and we'd bet a sack of money that even experienced electronic engineers would struggle to figure out how the circuit works. Devialets are like no other amps on the market, and don't use any of the conventional circuit structures. Like its siblings, the 110 has a clever arrangement whereby a low-power, high-quality Class A amplifier works in tandem with a more powerful Class D circuit to drive the speakers. The idea is to deliver top-quality sound from a compact, environmentally friendly box, and it works.



A 'window' on the underside of the sleek casework affords a view of the 110's circuitry



Distinctive remote has dual-function buttons but is not always as responsive as it might be



All the internal workings happen in the digital domain, so even analogue signals (including those from a record player) are converted before the amplifier processes the signal.

Go configure

The cleverness extends well beyond the electronic design and space-age appearance though. Devialet has had a fresh look at the features set too. Like the D-Premier before it, this amplifier is configurable.


The physical connections at the back include optical, coax and USB as well as a pair of RCAs. Each of these can be fine-tuned to an appropriate source, so, for example, the analogue RCAs can be set for line-level use or configured as a phono stage (moving-magnet only in this case). All this is done by means of an on-line configurator, which downloads onto an SD card. The SD card fits into a rear-panel slot and the 110 automatically uploads the configuration data.

Connect the 110 into your network wired or wirelessly (with an optional £1000 module), and this amplifier will even stream music from your computer. Just download suitable software (Mac or PC) and off you go. It's easy to implement, and the losses involved in going wireless are far less than such a connection normally entails. There are even iOS and Android smartphone apps that control volume level and source selection.

The Devialet's unusual shape means that while it can be used in a conventional manner on a decent equipment rack, it's also suitable for wall mounting. That

TECH SPECS

Type Integrated
Power 110W
Line level in 1
MM phono in 1
MC phono in 0
USB in Yes
Tape loops 0
Preamp out No
Headphone out No
Tone controls Yes
Remote control Yes
Dimensions (hwd) 4 x 38 x 38cm



The cleverness extends well
beyond the electronic design
and space-age appearance
See overleaf for more detail...

Behind the music
Pierre-Emmanuel Calmel
Co-founder and designer



"Our intention is to create the perfect balance between high-technology and exceptional design.

We deliver this with the help of our ADH® (Analogue Digital Hybrid) technology, with its clear and measurable sonic benefits, and our future-proof system architecture: configurable firmware with free software upgrades.

ADH® technology uses both analogue and digital amplification in parallel. The Class A amps provide the signal, and are responsible for the sonic clarity and purity, while the Class D amps deliver the power. Since we made the D-Premier amp, we've also improved the circuit board, and enhanced the power supply and signal processing."

In detail

1 Power supply A traditional arrangement is too bulky to fit into the Devialet's slimline casework. The company has therefore chosen to follow the switch-mode route to ensure the 110 has ample reserves of power.

2 Hybrid amplification The heart of the Devialet's innovative design is the combination of a powerful Class D circuit working with a small but high-quality Class A partner.

3 Input processor The 110 works in the digital domain throughout, so even analogue signals from, say, a record player are converted to digital before the process can begin.

4 Configurable inputs Sockets can be assigned specific functions using online software downloaded onto an SD card which is then loaded into the back of the amplifier.



small display changes orientation accordingly. Clever.

So it's unusual and clever, but does the 110 sound any good? The answer is a resounding 'yes'. If you're looking for a clean, precise-sounding amplifier we don't think you'll find better for the money. We can't think of a rival that uncovers so much fine detail, making even dense pieces of music such as Steve Reich's *Music For 18 Musicians* easy to unravel.

Agility and bass resolution

It's an agile sound, one that defines the leading and trailing edges of notes superbly. We're particularly impressed by the way this amplifier renders bass frequencies - there's no sense of blur with overlaid notes, and lovely resolution.

Move on to something harder-edged, such as Nirvana's *Nevermind*, and the Devialet responds with glee. It's a rhythmic amplifier, one with solid punch and the ability to communicate the aggression in the music well. High volumes aren't an issue either - the amp stays astonishingly clean - although in the end the limitations of 110W a channel are heard. Push too hard and the presentation starts to sound a little grubby and strained.

We played a range of music, from Mahler's *Symphony No.4* (24-bit/192kHz fed through the 110's asynchronous USB) to a heavily compressed 256kbps version of Eminem's *Mockingbird*, and in each case the Devialet's clarity and insight impresses. It will show up any flaws in the recording but never overplays the shortcomings.



Surprisingly, despite the tonal neutrality and precision, this amplifier doesn't fall into the trap of sounding clinical or sterile either. The joy and energy in music is kept intact and communicated well.

Drop the volume right down and the story changes a bit. The impressive clarity remains for the most part, but the sound loses a surprising amount of dynamic sparkle and rhythmic cohesion. Most amplifiers suffer from losses in these

areas when the volume level drops, but the effect here is far more obvious. We'd even go as far as to say if you regularly listen to music at very low volumes this is probably not the amplifier for you.

Hot stuff

Play the amplifier at the kind of volume levels it encourages and it runs pretty hot too. Make sure it has plenty of ventilation to prevent overheating.

Is the 110 a D-Premier on the cheap? For the most part it is. The sacrifices in build are well judged and, for outright clarity, we think the cheaper option is good enough to worry the older amp.

As a package we can't think of another option that marries such sonic skill in such a neat and stylish package. Provided the low-volume issues don't bother you, this amplifier positively demands an audition.

Even the power button exhibits the design flair apparent all over this amplifier

Profile

Consider if you want fine sound and clever tech in a compact, stylish package.
Highlight Innovation is rare in high-end hi-fi, but the 110 really is cutting-edge.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Crisp, articulate and massively detailed sound; innovative engineering; sleek looks

AGAINST Loses some of its sonic magic at low volumes

VERDICT An exceptional all-round package. The 110 is an amplifier to lust after

It's unusual and clever, and if you're looking for a clean, precise-sounding amplifier we don't think you'll find better for the money. We can't think of a rival that uncovers so much detail

Xpression Carbon

Xpress your sound,
Xpress your look...



A Classic Made New...

The Xpression Carbon is the latest version of Pro-Ject Audio Systems' original turntable, the Pro-Ject 1. This new model employs a brand new carbon fibre tonearm with an Evolution-inspired support structure. The superior motor, with isolation blobs designed by Ortofon, drives a high-gloss platter that can be fitted with either a Cork or Felt mat. The plinth is available in three stunning finishes*, and the arm is rounded off with an Ortofon 2M Silver cartridge to create a comprehensive package that would suit any system.

Available in the UK through Henley Designs Ltd.

T: 01235 511 166

E: sales@henleydesigns.co.uk

W: www.henleydesigns.co.uk

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 /HenleyDesigns1



* Bordeaux finish shown

“All parts of the frequency range blend in seamlessly”

Pixel Magic Lumin Music streamer

£5000 ★★★★★

Pixel Magic's Lumin music streamer's big selling point is its file compatibility. This wouldn't normally be considered a particularly glamorous virtue, but when it comes to streamers it's worth a pot of gold.

This streamer can play back all the usual suspects - WAV, AIFF and FLAC - as well as those less commonly seen, such as Apple Lossless.

The specification highlights are the ability to play up to 32-bit/384kHz PCM files (good luck with finding anything you want to listen to in this format) and the slightly more useful ability to replay native DSD music. The Lumin is the first standalone streamer we've reviewed with this capability.

Insight with *Innervisions*

Curious as to what the player sounds like with DSD, we feed in Stevie Wonder's 1973 classic *Innervisions*. Made early on in Wonder's run of superb '70s albums, this set is packed full of brilliant songs.

Higher Ground is a stern test for any system, but the streamer makes relatively light work of the dense musical mix, keeping the hard-charging rhythm track moving along with considerable momentum.

The player renders the textures of instruments well, and paints Wonder's distinctive voice with a pleasing combination of delicacy and force. We're taken with the unit's ability to draw low frequencies with agility and articulation.

Move to *All In Love Is Fair* and the Lumin has no issue dropping a couple of gears, showing impressive refinement and bags of dynamic subtlety as the song builds to its climax. Upbeat or relaxing - this streamer does both with ease.

This streamer's neat-and-tidy approach to music replay continues when we stream a (24-bit/192kHz) FLAC file of Mahler's *Symphony No.4*. Here it delivers a decently sized soundstage and populates it with crisply drawn instruments. There's good stability to the image even when the music becomes complex, and the streamer impresses with its ability to keep instrumental strands separate and easy to follow.

Things are spot-on tonally, with all parts of the frequency range blending in seamlessly and evenly. There's a consistency of character throughout the range that's a real pleasure to hear.

Large-scale dynamics are delivered with pleasing confidence even if the Lumin doesn't quite deliver a full dose of authority. By the highest standards, this player has a slightly polite way with music, rounding off attack just a bit and taking the edge off rhythmic drive. But the upside is lovely fluidity.

The news is equally positive with low-bitrate files such as a 256kbps version of Eric Bibb's *Flood Water*. A file as compressed as this invariably loses a sizeable dose of subtlety, but through the Lumin it still manages to sound engaging - that's not a feat many media players can match.

Surprisingly, this unit has no digital inputs (bar a pair of type A USBs). That's a shame as it means the impressive digital-to-analogue circuits, which have a pair of Wolfson WM8741 DAC chips at their heart, can't be used to improve the sound of other sources.

High standards of construction

General build quality is excellent. The main unit's casework is machined from a solid slab of aluminium and is generally finished to a very high standard. This kind of casing is more usually found on products that cost double this price. Add another £495 to the price we've listed and you can have one finished in black.

The external power supply is built to similarly high standards. A design such as this keeps high currents and any related magnetic fields away from the sensitive audio circuits, which is always a good thing as far as sound quality is concerned.

Take a look around the back and you'll find the option of balanced XLR and single-ended RCA analogue outputs. The player works equally well through both. Delve into the set-up menus and you'll find that it's possible to vary the output. In this configuration the Pixel Magic can drive a power amplifier directly.

TECH SPECS

Type Music streamer

File formats WAV, AIFF, FLAC, Apple Lossless, AAC, MP3, DSD

Inputs 2 x USB

Outputs HDMI, coaxial digital, analogue stereo

Wireless No

Dimensions (hwd) 6 x 35 x 35cm

Weight 8kg





The Lumin has no issue dropping a couple of gears, showing impressive refinement and bags of subtlety as the music builds. Upbeat or relaxing - this streamer does both with ease

There are notable gains when it comes to outright transparency and detail resolution over a system that has a dedicated preamp in the signal path. Of course, the system would have to be purist in the extreme, as the only source would be the player itself.

There are a couple of digital outputs - one HDMI and the other a BNC coax - just in case you have a top-quality outboard DAC to add to your system. We don't think we'd bother, because the DAC inside the product is talented enough.

There aren't any controls on the Lumin's elegant front, so all functions are controlled by a dedicated iPad app. For the most part the app works well, though some of the buttons are rather small, and sometimes the controls aren't wholly intuitive. But, give it a couple of days and most of it will make sense.

Overall, the Lumin is a fine unit. It played everything we threw at it without

complaint, and did so in some style. Add the lovely build into the equation and it's clear that this unit is well worth serious investigation if you're in the market for a high-end streamer.

Profile

Consider if you want a quality music streamer that plays all major file formats

Highlight No music streamer we've reviewed has greater file compatibility

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Impressive file compatibility; neat and fluid sonic presentation; terrific build quality

AGAINST No digital inputs; some may find the sound just a little polite

VERDICT The Lumin is a fine player that leads the field in terms of file compatibility

Main unit and separate power supply both exhibit high standards of build and finish

Behind the music Alex Simon Chief Design Manager

"At Pixel Magic Systems, we were frustrated by the fact that high-end streamers weren't always stable and their software was often unintuitive, so we set about fixing the problem.

After two years and hundreds of hours of listening we had a final circuitry design, including Wolfson DAC and Lundhal output transformers - they sounded the best and have a good reputation for reliability. We tried many configurations for a DAB radio receiver, but all our tests indicated it introduced interference, so sadly it had to go.

We were also dissatisfied with the available iPad controllers, so aimed to develop one that worked well from an album-centric perspective."

“Greatness is apparent straight from the off”

■ **Audeze LCD-3** Over-ear headphones

■ **£1725** ★★★★★

Can any headphones be worth £1725? It's a question we found ourselves asking more than once when reviewing Audeze's (pronounced Odyssey) LCD-3. By the end of the test period we had our answer, and it's firmly in the positive.

Provided the source and amplifier are up to the job these 'phones deliver a scale and authority of sound we didn't think headphones could ever manage.

The first hint of greatness is apparent straight from the off. We start with Beethoven's lovely *Moonlight Sonata* (otherwise known as *Piano Sonata No.14*), and get treated to a rich, vibrant sound that lacks for nothing in resolution or dynamic subtlety. We're taken by the amount of insight on offer, from the LCD-3's convincing rendering of the layered harmonics of a piano to their ability to convey the low-level details that define the size and acoustic of the hall the piece was recorded in.

We're also struck by the solidity of the presentation. There's a real feeling of physical presence to the sound, a quality that eludes even the best of rivals such as the similarly priced Grado PS1000.

Pace and depth

Move onto *Before Your Very Eyes* from Atoms For Peace and the LCD-3s are happy to move up the gears. Here they charge along, keeping a firm grip on the intricate rhythms and delivering a full dose of the music's momentum. It's also here we notice the Audeze's terrific low-frequency performance - seriously weighty yet finely articulated.

Balance is the key to most top-class products, and the LCD-3s deliver plenty of attack without sacrificing refinement.

This level of performance requires a top-quality source and headphone amplifier. We used our Naim NDS/555PS streamer with our MacBook as back-up, plus Naim's DAC-VI and Meridian's Prime headphone amp. The Audezes are right at home with such electronics, but such is their resolution we're sure the benefits of even more ambitious headphone amplifiers would be clear.

Take the earpieces apart (if you're brave) and you'll find planar magnetic drive units. A conventional drive unit consists of three main parts - a



Planar magnetic drive units use a flat diaphragm and an array of magnets to improve resolution

diaphragm, voice coil and motor assembly (which includes the magnet).

In the Audeze, the voice coil is printed on a flat diaphragm, so reducing mass and complexity. This diaphragm sits between an array of magnets and so is driven across its entire surface as the music signal flows through the voice coil. This reduces distortion and improves resolution compared with conventional driver technology.

As expected, the LCD-3s' build quality is lovely. They have a retro feel, but there's no denying the quality of the materials used. The ear cups use nicely

crafted Zebrano wood while the earpads are covered with beautifully soft lambskin. It's a world away from the plastic-and-more-plastic approach of many cheaper headphones.

Sizeable but comfortable

These are large headphones - the earcups are 11cm in diameter - and fairly weighty at 548g, but they are slightly angled to sit comfortably on the head. We found this worked well, though our ears did warm up as a session went on.

The LCD-3s are an open-backed design, so leak sound. A lot. Not great if someone else is watching TV in the same room.

These things apart, there's little to complain about here. While the price may be a stumbling block, it would take tens of thousands of pounds to buy a pair of speakers that can even approach the LCD-3s' level of sound quality. Looked at in that way these Audezes almost seem like good value. Almost.

Profile

Consider if you want one of the best pairs of headphones money can buy
Highlight Sound quality - we've never heard this authority from headphones

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Authoritative presentation; excellent detail and refinement; fine rhythmic ability

AGAINST Big and heavy; they need a top-quality source and headphone amplifier

VERDICT There's no denying the LCD-3s are expensive, but such is the quality of their performance that they almost seem good value

TECH SPECS

Type Over-ear/
open
Outputs 6.3mm
Wireless No
Weight 548g
Cable length 2.5m

While the price may be a stumbling block, it would take tens of thousands of pounds to buy a pair of speakers that can even approach the LCD-3s' level of sound quality



Yes they're big, but there has been no compromise on build, finish or sound quality

PLAY LIST

The movies, music and games to test your system

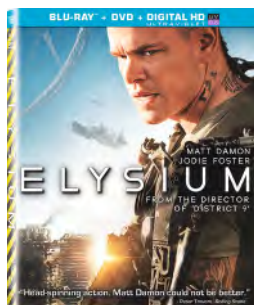
Out this month...

Elysium

Blu-Ray

Out Now

★★★★☆



Special Features

- Extended scene
- Visions of 2154 – an interactive exploration of the art and design of Elysium
- The Journey to Elysium – Envisioning Elysium, Capturing Elysium, Enhancing Elysium
- In Support of Story: the visual effects of Elysium
- The Technology of 2154
- Collaboration: crafting the performances in Elysium
- Engineering Utopia: creating a society in the sky

Duration 109m

Audio English: DTS-HD Master Audio 7.1

Picture 2.40:1, 1080p

Picture	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Extras	★★★★★



There's no reason for Matt Damon to get an exoskeleton drilled into his body, but it works – there's a sense of vulnerability

Fun enough, but no *District 9*

Poor Planet Earth. If it's not being invaded by aliens, it's getting overrun by zombies. This time it's the year 2154, and humanity is on the receiving end of a lecture.

Humans are split into two distinct groups. The rich live on Elysium, a gorgeous space station where mostly Caucasian people divide their time between garden parties and magical healing beds. The poor (and mostly Hispanic) get to stay on an overpopulated slum of a planet, where they toil and get sick.

And then you get Matt Damon, who has robot bits screwed into him and ends up a robo-Messiah. Elsewhere there's a shouty mercenary (Sharlto Copley, wasted) and a murderous politician (Jodie Foster, French).

There's a lot to digest. Dystopia is preachy in nature, but director Neil Blomkamp really piles on the social critique.

That was kept in check with the brilliant *District 9*, but there's too much in *Elysium*. The overriding flavour is the issue of immigration, with a sprinkling of healthcare. There's not that much room for anything else, which is a shame.

The flashy science fluff is fun

To an extent this is offset with flashy science fluff, which is fascinating. Futuristic machinery demonstrates imagination, and elevates the action from generic to vaguely memorable. Bullets fly around corners and there's an innovative use of lasers.

But what really intrigues is the merging of man and machine. There's no real reason for Matt Damon to get an exoskeleton drilled into his body, but it works.

Fights are that much more lethal, but there's still a sense of vulnerability because it's not an Iron Man-style suit of armour.

It's different, refreshing, and it should have been afforded more attention. Sadly, this film seems more concerned with spreading a message about socioeconomics. Combine that with clichés such as the romantic subplot and all the good stuff is well outweighed.

It's a good test disc, though. The film looks lovely. Earth's gritty greys and browns contrast sharply with the bright whites and vibrant hues used to denote the opulence of Elysium.

The DTS-HD Master Audio 7.1 has a nice mix of nattering, an effective score, and explosive action that offers plenty of opportunities to test your system's scale and effects steering.

On its own terms, *Elysium* is a fine (if forgettable) 109 minutes. But Neil Blomkamp is capable of better, and this is a pale shadow of his earlier work. Rent this, and then watch *District 9*.

Spotify highlights [Join us on Spotify whf.com/playlist2014](http://whf.com/playlist2014)



Laurie Anderson: Let X=X
You'd have thought from the media reaction that Laurie Anderson was merely Mrs Lou Reed. Emphatically not the case.

Busta Rhymes: Thank You Nice to be able to call on support from heavyweights like Kanye West and Q-Tip. A substantial groove, and predictably potty-mouthed.

Tame Impala: Mind Mischief If it's Antipodean psychedelic dream-pop you want, don't look any further. This is taken from 2012's splendidly inventive album *Lonerism*.

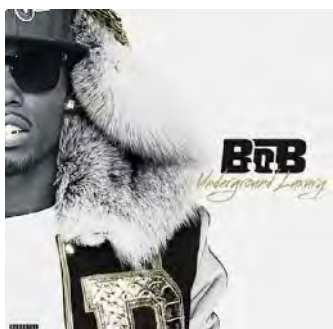
Clara Smith: Rock, Church, Rock Billed as "Queen of the Moaners" - it was meant as a compliment - Clara excelled with both religious and secular material. Guess which this is?

Music

GAMES, MOVIES
& FORTHCOMING
RELEASES
p84



Download, CD, vinyl



B.o.B. Underground Luxury Out now

★★★★☆

It's a strange and awkward corner hip-hop has backed itself into during the course of this century. The world of popular music is shallow and narcissistic at the best of times, so for hip-hop to stand out as the shallowest, most narcissistic and intellectually bankrupt of all popular genres speaks volumes for the dead-end down which it has slowly and ostentatiously driven.

That's to generalise somewhat, of course. But once through *Underground Luxury* may be enough to convince even hip-hop evangelists

of the vacuity at the heart of mainstream acts like B.o.B. There's the well-worn narrative ('grew up poor and humble, always knew that cars and houses and furs and bitches could be mine. And now they're mine, thanks to my overwhelming force of personality, so everyone else can do one'), endless self-aggrandisement, casual and relentless misogyny, and a gimlet-eyed devotion to money for money's sake. The album opens ominously with *All I Want*: "All I want is money. Money money money money. That's all I want."

At least it's a decent test disc

Underground Luxury lists 13 producers, but musically it's a reasonably unified recording. Low frequencies are attacking, subterranean and fulsome, requiring absolutely iron-fisted control. The midrange will need speed and detail if the interminable braggadocio is to be heard in full. In fact, perhaps it's possible to retrieve *too much* detail.

Specifications

Duration 57m 14s

Standout track *Back Me Up* "Most of y'all ain't got, most of y'all ain't got no swag. Most of y'all bad."

Download, CD, vinyl



VARIOUS ARTISTS I Heard The Angels Singing Out now

★★★★☆

Subtitled *Electrifying Black Gospel from the Nashboro Label, 1951 - 1983*, these four discs do exactly what you'd expect: deliver joyful, devotional songs with varying degrees of surface noise.

Undoubtedly four discs and a total of 80 songs is too much praising for one sitting, but judicious dipping in and out reveals some irresistible gems. *In My Saviour's Care* by Sons of the South, for instance, is a close-harmony tour de force of rare power, while The Christland Singers' *You Got To Be Born Again* seems to

generate its own light and heat. Bear in mind those songs were recorded in 1951 and 1956 respectively - they suffer the indignities of cheap recording methods and an utter lack of care taken with master-tapes. It follows the best available sources are vinyl copies, and they're transferred to CD pops, scratches, clicks and all.

An authentic, grimy sound

Fast-forward to 1970's *Wrapped Up*, *Tied Up*, *Tangled Up* by Rev. Cleophus Robinson or Troy Ramey and the Soul Searchers' *It's Jesus, Y'All* (1977) and the sound tidies up dramatically without any of the literal Soul Power going astray. There's something about the griminess of the earlier records, though - there's somehow more authenticity to them.

Either way, *I Heard The Angels Singing* is a treat even for the godless. And all of these recordings will test your system's powers of midrange resolution. After all, if the voices don't convince there's very little point.

Specifications

Duration 213m 28s

Standout track Edna Gallmon Cooke - *At the Gate*. A jaunty shuffle with brilliant organ accompaniment.

Listen to it this way

The system

Roksan Caspian M2 CD £1695 ★★★★★
Speed, rhythmic excellence and low-end wallop all suit the album. As does the price and the bling

Roksan Caspian M2 amp £1696 ★★★★★

Dynamic, detailed and not easily overexcited, this is the M2 CD player's perfect partner

Spendor A6R £2500 ★★★★★

Brilliantly balanced, dynamic as they come and able to charge through a bass-line. Ideal



A cast iron grip on
timing, fast, decisive
bass and great control

Listen to it this way

The system

Cambridge Audio Minx Xi £600
★★★★★ Great sound, particularly adept with dynamics, and aptX Bluetooth streaming too

Q Acoustics Concept 20 £350 ★★★★★

Refinement and insight to spare, and impressively natural-sounding partners for the Minx Xi

HTC One ★★★★★

aptX Bluetooth equipped and about as engaging a smartphone sound as we've heard



A modern system
for this traditional,
uplifting music



Movie shorts

The Hangover part III

This third outing trades substance abuse for kidnapping as an excuse for a series of stupid things to happen. Oh, and there's no hangover.

Pain & Gain

Michael Bay tackles a true story about kidnapping, torture, extortion and murder. And he reckons it's funny. We really don't recommend it.

Big Ass Spider!

A delightful and utterly daft B-movie in which a pest controller and his Mexican sidekick fight CGI with casual racism and oneliners.

Riddick

Seen *Pitch Black*? Seen *Chronicles of Riddick*? It's somewhere in between: neither brilliantly thrilling nor comfortably trashy. It's fun, though.

On-screen

System tester



Bates Motel, Season One Blu-ray Out 3rd February

★★★★☆

If we were to compile a list of films that really don't need the prequel treatment, *Psycho* would rank highly.

But someone went ahead anyway and created a tale of Norman Bates' childhood. For TV. As if that wasn't bad enough, they modernised it - with smartphones and all.

Bates Motel reeked of a cynical money-grab and was bound to be atrocious. Or so we thought.

But it's good. Really good. Set aside the Hitchcock purism and you get a dark tale about a troubled mother and son, played by Vera Farmiga and Freddie Highmore with creepy empathy. Factor in the small-town fishiness of *Twin Peaks* and it's seriously compelling.

Admittedly it's a little odd to see Norman Bates with an iPhone, but it takes little away from the sense of eeriness woven throughout.

Bates Motel isn't here to set up the events of *Psycho*. It's more concerned with dark, mysterious drama. And it's marvellous.



Watch it this way

The system

Panasonic TX-P42GT60

£1000 ★★★★★

Weep for the demise of Pana plasma

Sony BDP-S790

£200 ★★★★★

Will pay for itself in no time. Superb

Sony STR-DN1040

£500 ★★★★★

Sounds a fair bit more expensive

DALI Zensor 15.1

£980 ★★★★★

Born to entertain. And inform

Games

Super Mario 3D World Wii U Out now

★★★★★



It may not quite have the wonder and majesty of *Super Mario Galaxy*, but *SM3DW* is undeniably brilliant, providing spot-on brick-butting, tortoise-stomping, platforming thrills, especially in four-player (local) co-op. It's certainly better than any of the exclusive games on PS4 and Xbox One.

Dead Rising 3 Xbox One Out now

★★★★☆



This is faster-paced and more serious in tone than the previous *DR* games, but most importantly the power of Xbox One is used to put hundreds of zombies on screen at once, making this feel far more epically apocalyptic. The low resolution and flakey framerate are decidedly not next-gen, though.

Gran Turismo 6 PS3 Out now

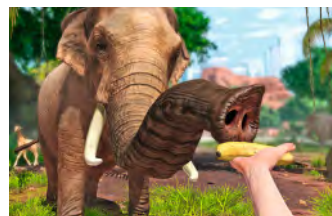
★★★★☆



At times it looks incredible, but at times it looks rubbish. It's massive (1200 cars, loads of tracks), but it's got huge holes (unfinished sound effects, no livery editor, poor damage simulation). It can be terrifically exciting, but it can also be terminally boring. *GT6* is half a great game.

Zoo Tycoon Xbox One Out now

★★★★☆



Build a zoo! Fill it with totally adorable animals! Race around your zoo on animal-shaped golf buggies! All in 1080p! Kid-friendly but fairly deep and rewarding, *Zoo Tycoon* is a management sim with added cuteness. But no, you can't let a tiger loose in the penguin pen.

What we are waiting for...

Movies (Blu-ray)

Rush (27th January)

Ron Howard's dramatic take on the rivalry between Formula One legends James Hunt and Niki Lauda.

Movies (Cinema)

I, Frankenstein (29th January)

Frankenstein's monster gets involved in a war between demons and gargoyles. Enough said.

Music (Download, CD, vinyl)

Elbow - Album #6 (10th March)

Just because we know what it's going to be like doesn't mean we're not wildly excited to hear it.

Music (Download, CD, vinyl)

Joan as Police Woman - The Classic (10th March)

Even though we've no idea what it will be like, we're wildly excited etc etc.

January in Hi-Def

The best on the box



Young people all over the world start to exhibit superpowers. Their new-found abilities are not met with understanding...

Drama

The Kumars Sky 1 HD

The Kumars have moved. In the seven years they've been absent from our screens, the British Indian family has relocated from No. 42 to a little Hounslow flat above a shop run by the father, Ashwin. Host Sanjeev (played by Sanjeev Bhaskar) is now divorced but shares custody of his eight-year-old daughter, while Granny/Ummi (Meera Syal) can't wait to invite celebrities back into the living room for a chat. They're repainting the flat for a brand-new run of the comedy chat show. We can't wait to step back in.

Sherlock BBC One HD

Is it the last episode already? Typical: you wait two years for the third series of *Sherlock*, and then three episodes go by in two weeks.

The third episode, titled *His Last Vow* and written by co-creator Steven Moffat, tells the tale of stolen letters and introduces a new villain. Played chillingly by Lars Mikkelsen (yes, he's Mads 'Hannibal Lecter' Mikkelsen's older brother), Charles Augustus Magnussen is 'the Napoleon of blackmail', and the one man Sherlock truly despises. Will our favourite consulting detective be able to take on this new threat without having to jump off a building again? There's sure to be another cliffhanger...

This is Jinsy Sky Atlantic HD

The fictional island of Jinsy and its eccentric inhabitants are back on our screens for a second series. Based on writers Chris Bran and Justin Chubb's experiences of living in Guernsey, the eight episodes are littered with surreal sketches and musical interludes.

Big-name guest stars - Stephen Fry, Dame Eileen Atkins, Sir Derek Jacobi and Olivia Colman, to name a few - join in on the fun. Fry plays Dr Bevelspepp, whose encyclopaedic knowledge of the island saves them from an attack.

The South Bank Sky Arts Awards Sky Arts 1 HD

This is no Bafta or Oscars. The South Bank Sky Arts Awards, presented by Melvyn Bragg, celebrates the best achievements in British arts. Literature, film, dance, theatre, music, opera, ballet, comedy and TV drama - all creative fields are recognised in the glitzy awards ceremony held at London's Dorchester Hotel. Outstanding new British artists and lifetime contributors are also honoured. Past winners of the Outstanding Achievement Award include JK Rowling, The Who and Dame Judi Dench.

The Tomorrow People E4

Based on the 1970s British sci-fi series of the same name, this US remake continues the theme of teenagers with superpowers. The 'tomorrow people' represent the next stage in evolution: young people all over the world start to exhibit powers such as telepathy, telekinesis and teleportation once they reach a certain age. Predictably, their new-found abilities aren't met with understanding and kindness from the greater society.

The outcast group takes refuge in an abandoned subway station, hiding from the world and a paramilitary group of scientists called Ultra, who see the advanced teens as a threat. However, young Stephen Jameson is tempted by Ultra's promise of returning him to his old life and giving him answers to his father's disappearance - will he risk the lives of his friends to get what he wants?

Awards highlights 2013

Weighed, measured and handsomely rewarded

Each year, the *What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision Awards* celebrates the absolute best of the year's new (and sometimes returning) crop of consumer electronics. The decisions don't happen overnight: the awards marks the culmination of another year of rigorous testing and measurement, followed by a whirlwind of impassioned debate by the *What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision* team. And the event grows in size and standing every year as the field of included product categories expands. Here we bring you a taste of some of the finest Hi-Fi equipment and accessories from across the awards, from a fantastic pair of AKG headphones for just £50 to the four-times award-winning Roksan stereo amp for £1695. In fact, along with a helping of the stellar AudioQuest FLX-SLiP 14/4 cable, all that's needed is a best-in-class set of speakers and you've got yourself an entirely award-winning Hi-Fi setup.

What the team say

"In the end there were 99 trophies awarded in total, including 22 Products of the Year - that's more categories than ever before"

Turntables

Best turntable up to £400 Pro-Ject Essential II £209

What it is

It's a straightforward, no-frills record player from a company that's done as much as anyone to facilitate the current vinyl revival. Stripped back, but with high-quality components where it matters (motor, bearings, arm and cartridge particularly), the Essential II is the latest in a long line of frill-free, high-quality Pro-Ject turntables.


Why it won

Without hyperbole, this may well be the best pound-for-pound source of music in this whole magazine. The Essential II delivers rhythms crisply, has abundant drive and punch, and delivers low frequency with a depth and nimbleness that's strongly at odds with its pricetag. Dynamic, detailed and with timing to die for, this record player gets to the heart of the music.

To find out more:

Visit henleydesigns.co.uk

Call 01235 511 166

 @HenleyDesigns

Buy direct today:



What the team say

"What's perhaps most remarkable is the way the Essential II excels in those areas - such as scale and composure - where you'd least expect it to"



CD players**Best CD player £1500+**
Roksan Caspian M2 £1800**What it is**

It's a four-time Award-winner, that's what it is. In some ways the Caspian M2 is unremarkable - it isn't as brimming with features as some of its nominal competitors - but as a package it's got enough to frighten CD players at two or three times the price. On the outside it's built like a bank-vault, while inside its independently suspended disc transport is a work of thorough delicacy. The Roksan's also unfussy about the electronics it's asked to partner, and it's logical to use either via the fascia buttons or remote control.


Why it won

Put simply, it's about performance. And don't forget, this is performance that has seen off the best rivals for four years now. It's a full, smooth and engaging listen, rigorous enough to express the finest details in a

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tender vocal while remaining an easy fit into systems of all kinds. Forceful and dynamic if your tunes demand it, utterly commanding of a soundstage and with an effortless grasp of timing, the Caspian M2 has the sort of all-court game that could make a competitor weep. Don't bet against it showing up in this slot a year from now.

What the team say

"If you want your CD player to do stuff beyond play CDs, look elsewhere. But if sound quality is your be-all and end-all, there's nothing to touch it"

Stereo amplifiers**Best stereo amp £1500+**
Roksan Caspian M2 £1800**What it is**

Just like its CD-playing sibling, this is the Caspian M2 amp's fourth consecutive Award. And, for the fourth time, the Roksan's been recognised thanks to an unbeatable combination of attributes. Built to withstand small detonations, engineered to feel every penny's-worth when you're using it and with a competitive feature-count, this amplifier could turn out to be the last one you ever need to buy. It's ready to survive any number of upgrades to the electronics you partner it with, and capable of bringing the best from each and every one of them.


Why it won

At this price, sound quality has to be stunning, and the Caspian M2 never comes close to disappointing. This is an amp to satisfy every one of your hi-fi requirements.

To find out more:

Visit henleydesigns.co.uk

Call 01235 511 166

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Buy direct today:

Detail resolution? In spades. Stereo focus and separation? Class-leading. Hair-raising dynamic prowess? Of course. In every meaningful act of music-making, the Roksan gets the job done with the sort of casual authority that's the mark of a master. It's powerful, it's composed, it likes all your music and it will keep you coming back for more. After four years our admiration hasn't dwindled in the slightest.

What the team say

"The overall package is brilliantly judged. There isn't a single area where the Roksan doesn't compete, and it leads the way in most of them"



Wireless speakers & docks

Best wireless speaker £400+
Audio Pro Allroom Air One £500

What it is

If you need to be made to feel good about your purchasing decisions, the Air One will reassure in a big way. A sophisticated AirPlay/DLNA wireless speaker available in several real-leather finishes, the Audio Pro will create its own wireless network in case you don't have one. It's a premium product in every respect.

Why it won

On top of all the visual and tactile pizzazz, this is a wonderfully balanced-sounding speaker. Integration of the frequency range is silky smooth, and there's a winning combination of refinement and excitement to the Audio Pro's presentation. It's weighty and dramatic at the right time, but delicate and precise when it needs to be too - this is the way to spend £500 without feeling any guilt whatsoever.

To find out more:

Visit audioprodirect.co.uk
Call 01908 282498

Buy direct today:



What the team say

"If you're looking for the convenience of a wireless speaker but in a premium package with premium sound quality, well, here it is"



Headphones

Best portable on-ears up to £100
AKG K451 £50

What it is

A light (120g), sturdy, easy-to-stow pair of on-ear headphones that are comfortable in situ and built to last. They'll stay in place under even under 'sprinting for the train' duress and the snug fit, combined with the closed-back design, inhibits sound leakage. Throw in an in-line remote with mic and the K451s want for nothing. But the best news of all is that when the K451s first won an Award in 2012 they cost £80.

Why it won

What really elevates the K451s is their sound. They dig deep and punch hard, with ample control over bass sounds, while the midrange is expressive and detailed. There's enough bite at the top end, scale and dynamics impress, separation is excellent... All this for £50? It wasn't difficult to give the AKGs another Award.

To find out more:

Visit uk.akg.com
Call 01707 278113

@AKGheadphones

Watch video:



What the team say

"You can buy flashier or more colourful headphones, or headphones with fatter bass. But you can't buy better for £50. No chance"

★
Accessories

Best equipment support
Atacama Eris Eco 5.0 £460

What it is

Here's a handsome, high-quality, modular equipment rack that offers superb isolation from vibration and sonic resonance for your electronics. It's made from steel and bamboo, which simultaneously maximises its chances of doing the job properly while keeping ecological considerations to the fore.

Why it won

The key is resonance and vibration control, of course, and put simply the Atacama Eris Eco 5.0 performs better than anything else we've come across this year. Whatever the characteristics of your electronics - detail, dynamism, bass definition, whatever - it's given greater expression via the Eris Eco 5.0 than on any alternative. And the flexibility of the modular design means it can grow with your system.

To find out more:

Visit atacama-audio.co.uk
Call 01455 283251

Buy direct today:



What the team say

"A good kit-rack is a must-have - and not only does the Atacama perform brilliantly, it's modular and it looks good too"

★
Accessories

Best speaker cable
AudioQuest FLX-SLiP 14/4 £5.80/m

What it is

Every stage of your system is critical, of course, but there's nothing more important than the union between amplifier and loudspeakers. Which is where the superb AudioQuest FLX-SLiP 14/4 speaker cable comes in. It's sturdy, flexible, has integrity enough to perform perfectly over very long lengths and, best of all, it does its job brilliantly.

Why it won

Back-to-back Awards tell their own story. The AudioQuest facilitates a balanced, well-organised and natural sound, impressively rhythmic and dynamically assured. The attack and decay of individual notes or hits is described with something like fanaticism. But what's most impressive about the FLX-SLiP 14/4 is how it just gets out of the way so you can enjoy the music.

To find out more:

Visit audioquest.com
Call 01249 848873
@audioquest

Find your local dealer:



What the team say

"It all comes together in the most natural and unforced way - nothing is stifled. Recordings simply sound open and clear"



WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION

iPAD EDITION

February issue available on iTunes now

The No.1 source of clear, expert and independent advice

BUYER'S GUIDE

NEW

Don't miss our tips on what to look out for before you splash out on that new **3DTV** you've been promising yourself...

If you've bought a next-gen console, you'll want to check out our tips on the streaming options for the **XBox One and PS4**



QR (quick response) codes

For full reviews, get a barcode scanner app on your smartphone. Scan these little squares and they'll take you to the relevant section on whatifi.com

All the latest kit, all the latest ratings...

Welcome to the **UK's best guide** to TVs, hi-fi, home cinema and mobile, with star ratings for more than **1500 products**. Where other magazines rely on isolated

writers reviewing in a range of locations, our star ratings are decided by an **expert team** of reviewers working together, in a **state-of-the-art testing facility**.

Within this guide you'll find all our favourite **four- and five-star** products - including **Award-winners** - to help you pick the best kit for your budget.



Kobina Monney, Buyer's Guide Editor

Exciting new additions...



Apple iPad Air

"With improvements everywhere, the iPad Air is a stunning piece of technology"

p148



Dali Zensor 3

"If you crave entertainment, these deliver in spades"

p118

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Your essential system set-ups

BEST BUYS

GET THE
BEST KIT
FOR YOUR
BUDGET

Home Cinema Systems

Hi-Fi Systems

BLU-RAY PLAYERS



SONY BDP-S4100
★★★★★

£95

Simply astonishing performance and pictures for less than £100. Smart functionality too: you can't go wrong...

RECEIVERS



YAMAHA RX-V375
★★★★★

£250

This is the perfect entry-level option for those upgrading to five-channel sound on a budget. It's a brilliant buy.

SPEAKERS



Q ACOUSTICS 2000i 5.1 PACK
★★★★★

£625

Our 2013 Award winner produces sound with impressive scale for movies and music.

DISPLAYS



PANASONIC TX-L32E6B
★★★★★

£380

If you're after a great all-rounder in both picture quality and smart features, this TV is it. Splendid.

TOTAL
£1350

CD PLAYERS



MARANTZ CD6005
★★★★★

£350

This incredibly musical player offers great detail in spades, not to mention a great way with dynamics.

AMPLIFIERS



ROTEL RA-10
★★★★★

£350

Our 2012 stereo amp Product of the Year has a level of control and poise above and beyond what we'd expect at the price.

SPEAKERS



Q ACOUSTICS 2020i
★★★★★

£165

Refined, exciting and detailed - the 2020is deliver an endlessly listenable performance.

TOTAL
£865



SONY BDP-S790
★★★★★

£200

What a bargain! Not only is this a superb 2D and 3D Blu-ray player, it is also the first to upscale to 4K ultra high definition.



SONY STR-DN1040
★★★★★

£500

Punch, detail and power combine in this great receiver - and it's good with stereo music, too.



DALI ZENSOR 15.1
★★★★★

£980

This package is as entertaining as it is insightful, delivering all the drama and punch we could hope for. Superb.



PANASONIC TX-P42GT60
★★★★★

£1000

Truly deep blacks, beautiful colours and winning smart features - this TV is a tough act to beat.

TOTAL
£2680



AUDIOLAB 8200CD
★★★★★

£800

This player, with its stunning sound, great DAC and digital inputs, is a big achievement.



ARCAMA19
★★★★★

£650

A refined amp with full-bodied tonal balance, this is a deeply impressive piece of hi-fi for the money.



TANNOY DC6 T SE
★★★★★

£1000

Purposeful looks mate with a solid sound to produce a pair of exciting, agile and nuanced floorstanders.

TOTAL
£2450



MARANTZ UD7007
★★★★★

£700

This universal player is fantastic with Blu-rays, CDs and even SACD and DVD-A formats.



YAMAHA RX-A3030
★★★★★

£2000

As muscular as it is detailed, this amp will make you feel as if you're sitting in a large cinema hall.



KEF R100 5.1
★★★★★

£2850

Best Buy for 2013, the R100 5.1 is simply superb with demanding film soundtracks - and is great in stereo too.



PANASONIC PT-AT6000E
★★★★★

£3000

Superb in 2D, this projector also excels at 3D. Edges are sharp, pictures have depth and stability.

TOTAL
£8550



ROKSAN CASPIAN M2 CD PLAYER
★★★★★

£1695

Combines bite, refinement and rhythm better than anything else we've heard at this price.



ROKSAN CASPIAN M2 AMPLIFIER
★★★★★

£1695

The perfect partner for the M2 CD player. This amp is dynamic, detailed and entertaining.



SPENDORA6R
★★★★★

£2500

Attacking, detailed and balanced, these floorstanders demonstrate a winning way with dynamics.

TOTAL
£5890

Complete your home cinema system

SET-TOP BOXES

Sky+HD 2TB £250
Humax HDR-1000S (500GB) £220
Humax DTR-T1010 £230

COMPACT SPKRS

Tannoy HTS101 £400
Q Acoustics Q7000i £900
B&W MT60D £1950

FULL-SIZE SPKRS

Q Acoustics 2000i 5.1 Pack £625
DALI Zensor 15.1 £980
B&W CM9 Theatre £4200

SUPPORTS

Target CL430 £190
Atacama Eris Eco £460
Custom Design FS 104 Signature £200

PROJECTORS

Epson EH-TW5910 £900
Epson EH-TW4400 £2000
Panasonic PT-AT6000E £3000

SUBWOOFERS

B&W ASW610 £400
B&W ASW610XP £700
Velodyne SPL-1000 Ultra £1400

SOUNDBARS

LG NB4530A £300
Philips HTL 9100 £600
Monitor Audio ASB-2 £1000

REMOTE CONTROLS

One For All Zapper £10
Logitech Harmony One £125
Logitech Harmony 1000 £280

Grow your hi-fi system

TURNTABLES

Pro-Ject Essential II £200
Rega RP3/Elys2 £550
Rega RP6/Exact £1000

RADIOS

Pure Evoke F4 £170
Geneva WorldRadio DAB+ £270
Arcam T32 £480

MICRO SYSTEMS

Denon D-M39DAB £310
Marantz M-CR610 £500
Naim UnitiQute 2 £1150

TABLETS

Google Nexus 7 £200 (16GB)
Google Nexus 10 £390 (32GB)
Apple iPad Air £480 (32GB)

HEADPHONES

AKG K451 £450
Grado SR80i £135
Beyerdynamic MMX 101 IE £100

AUDIO CABLES

Audioquest FLX-SLIP 14/4 £5.80/m
Atlas Elements Integra £45
Supra USB 2.0 £30

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NEW **ESSAV** **.COM** **WHAT HI-FI? BEST BUY AWARDS 2013**
MARANTZ • CD6005 / PM6005 • CD / AMPLIFIER
 Replacing the 6004 models, the 6005 amp gains digital inputs using the same 24-bit/192kHz DAC as the CD player which now features enhanced USB playback and improved performance.

£399 **OR LESS** **EXR2X** **Bluetooth** **WHAT HI-FI? BEST BUY AWARDS 2013**

NAD • D 3020 AMPLIFIER / DAC
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FREE CHORD DIGITAL CABLE WORTH UP TO £50

£299 **OR LESS** **SAVE £50**

NAD • C 326BEE • AMPLIFIER
 The latest in NAD's range of affordably priced, yet very high performance amplifiers. Features 7 line inputs, including tape in/out and delivers 2 x 50W continuous power into both 4 ohms and 8 ohms.

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YAMAHA • CRX-550 • CD / DAB SYSTEM
 Yamaha's CRX-550 offers excellent audio quality from a CD / DAB System. Includes iPod digital connection for superior audio performance, USB input and subwoofer out.

£199 **OR LESS** **SAVE £300** **Bluetooth**

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PSB IMAGINE MINI SPEAKERS
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DENON & Q ACOUSTICS
D-M39DAB • CD/DAB SYSTEM
2020i • SPEAKERS*

*Standard Finishes



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D 3020 • AMPLIFIER / DAC
CONCEPT 20 • SPEAKERS



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NAD
VISO HP50 • HEADPHONES
D 1050 • DAC/HEADPHONE AMP



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MARANTZ & MONITOR AUDIO
M-CR610 • CD/NETWORK SYSTEM
BRONZE BX2 • SPEAKERS



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SAVE £69

GRADO & MERIDIAN
SR80i • HEADPHONES
EXPLORER
DAC/HEADPHONE AMP



The stylish and compact D 7050 combines NAD's most advanced digital platform, Direct Digital technology with Apple AirPlay creating the ultimate plug 'n play solution for wireless music.

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SAVE £199

NAD & KEF
D 7050 • NETWORK AMPLIFIER / DAC
LS50 • SPEAKERS

DACS



ARCAM • irDAC • DAC

Designed to be the heart of a digital system. Includes asynchronous USB and a direct iPod input to optimise sound quality. All inputs can be controlled through an IR remote that will also control iPods, iPhones, PC and Mac computers.

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NAIM AUDIO & TANNOY
UNIQUE 2
STREAMING SYSTEM
DC6T SE
SPEAKERS

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ARCAM & Q ACOUSTICS
FMJ A19
AMPLIFIER
2050i
SPEAKERS*

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*Standard Finishes



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WORTH £55

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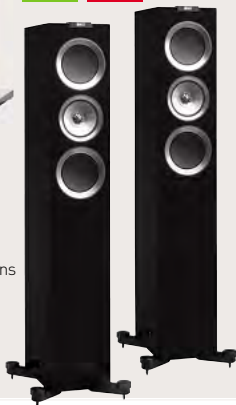


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The smallest floorstanders in the R Series. Uses the latest generation Uni-Q driver array and two 5.25-inch aluminium bass drivers. Its slim proportions make it perfectly suited for any interior.



BOWERS & WILKINS • CM10
Introducing the CM10, a new flagship for the CM series that combines technologies from the Reference ranges with innovative new construction techniques. The result is simply spectacular.



PMC • TWENTY-23

An open, engaging and communicative loudspeaker that defies its size both the depth of bass and scale of presentation by taking any music or film material in its stride. The sound is vivid and dynamic and delivered with authoritative bass.



PMC • TWENTY-22

An astonishingly natural balance and high dynamic capability are the hallmarks of this speaker. It creates a precise sound stage and profound bass performance from its compact cabinet.



MONITOR AUDIO • BRONZE Bx2

Award-winning stand/bookshelf speakers featuring a 25mm C-CAM tweeter and 165mm bass/mid driver. Compact in size, but equipped to reproduce sound of immense stature and detail.



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- CONNECT: AMP
 - IMAGINE MINI SPEAKERS
- WALNUT FINISH ONLY



PRO-JECT • ESSENTIAL II • TURNTABLE

Entry-level "plug n' play" two speed turntable with single piece aluminium tonearm and pre-fitted Ortofon OM5e cartridge.



NAD • C 556 • TURNTABLE

Time to enjoy vinyl collections with extraordinary quality! With a minimalist design, the C 556 turntable offers accurate reproduction by using performance-focused parts and components that put music first.



PRO-JECT • 1 XPRESSION CARBON • TURNTABLE

With its Carbon armtube and supplied Ortofon 2m Silver cartridge, the 1 Xpression Carbon sets new standards in its price range.

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Real Stores

Sevenoaks Sound & Vision have 26 stores nationwide with plans to open more during 2013. Each carries the best in home cinema and Hi-Fi equipment on display, ready for you to watch, listen to and compare in our dedicated demonstration rooms.

Real Products

A wide selection of products from the world's leading manufacturers is in stock and available for you to take home. We also offer a delivery and installation service as well as a convenient on-line click and reserve option for many of our products.

Real People

Our staff are friendly, knowledgeable and passionate about music and film and the equipment needed to get the most out of your collection. They will be delighted to assist you in making the right selection to ensure you enjoy your system for years to come.

Real Value

Fantastic value for money is our aim. Although we remain independent, you will be pleasantly surprised just how competitive we can be - with the added benefit of seeing, hearing and touching the product before you buy, and someone to help if things go wrong.

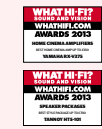
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SOUND & VISION

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HTS-101 • SPEAKER PACKAGE



£499
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PIONEER & Q ACOUSTICS
VSX-923 • AV RECEIVER
2000i 5.1 • SPEAKER PACKAGE*



£799
SAVE £299



*Standard Finishes

YAMAHA & MONITOR AUDIO
RX-V675 • AV RECEIVER
MASS • SPEAKER PACKAGE



£899
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YAMAHA & Q ACOUSTICS
RX-V675 • AV RECEIVER
Q7000i • SPEAKER PACKAGE



£1099
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YAMAHA & KEF
RX-A1030 • AV RECEIVER
E305 • SPEAKER PACKAGE



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SC-LX57 • AV RECEIVER
MT-50 • SPEAKER PACKAGE



£1999
SAVE £289



AV RECEIVERS



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7.1-channel AV receiver combines 4K "Ultra HD" upscaling and 3D video capability with Arcam's legendary sound quality.
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DENON • AVR-X2000 • AV RECEIVER
7.1-channel receiver featuring support for Apple AirPlay, DLNA 1.5 compatibility and online music services such as Spotify.
Also Available: DENON AVR-X3000 & AVR-X4000



ONKYO • TX-NR626 • AV RECEIVER
7.2-channel receiver with excellent audio and video performance plus Internet radio and music streaming services.
Also Available: ONKYO TX-NR828

BLU-RAY

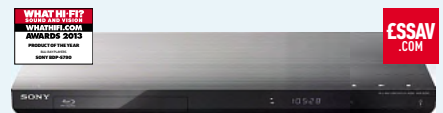
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ARCAM • FMJ BDP300 • 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER
Arcam's BDP300 Blu-ray player delivers outstanding sound quality with audio CDs along with excellent movie performance from either 2D or 3D films.
Also Available: YAMAHA BD-A1020



MARANTZ • UD7007 • UNIVERSAL DISC PLAYER
Enjoy exceptional sound and picture quality from many formats including SACD, DVD-Audio, 3D Blu-ray and your home network.
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SONY • BDP-S790 • 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER
Give your movie collection the red carpet treatment with this award-winning player with advanced networking features, superior audio performance and support for SACD.
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LCD, LED & plasma TVs

LCD	Once only in smaller screens; now the most common type of panel
LED	This refers to the kind of backlighting used on an LCD panel
Plasma	The rival to LCD, now usually only seen on larger screens

The shortlist



AWARD WINNER

Hannspree SL22DMBB

"It may be light on features, but it excels in performance. If you want a small, no-frills TV, this Hannspree is an excellent choice."



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

Panasonic TX-P42GT60B

"Panasonic may be vague on the future of plasma, but if this TV is anything to go by, the tech has never been better."



AWARD WINNER

Samsung PS51F5500

"A superb all-rounder with a fantastic picture and a strong feature set. At this price you won't find a better 50in set."

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Type	Size (in)	Resolution	Smart	Active 3D	Passive 3D	Freeview	FreeSat	HDMI	Dimensions (HxWxD, cm)
Up to £500														
Alba AMKDVD22W	130	11.13/GT	★★★★★	A capable set but there are better options for broadcast TV	LED	22	1920x1080						1	38x52x17
Celcus LCD40S913FHD	250	02.13/ST	★★★★★	Big screen on a budget: a real supermarket special	LED	40	1920x1080						3	97x22x66
Finlux 26F7030	240	12.12/GT	★★★★★	Avery fine and flexible passive 3D 26in screen	LED	26	1920x1080						2	29x65x45
Finlux 32F8030-T	280	02.13/ST	★★★★★	Great picture and the latest online features: bargain	LED	32	1920x1080						4	49x78x4
Finlux 32F7020-T	280	09.13/ST	★★★★★	Patchy 3D but still worth a look for budget buyers	LED	32	1920x1080						4	48x77x4
Hannspree SL22DMBB	135	01.14/GT	★★★★★	Best 22in TV, Awards 2013	LCD	22	1920x1080						1	53x39x17
Hannspree AD32UMMB	220	02.13/ST	★★★★★	A solid option set for mainly watching TV	LED	32	1366x768						3	44x73x7
Kogan LULED24DVDYA	134	02.13/ST	★★★★★	This versatile little set is fine value for money	LED	24	1920x1080						2	38x58x5
Kogan KULED22XXXYA	110	11.13/GT	★★★★★	Cheap and cheerful and all the better for it	LCD	22	1920x1080						2	39x54x17
Linsar 22LED906T	230	12.12/GT	★★★★★	A great 22in set with a DVD player and Freeview HD	LED	22	1920x1080						2	38x53x4
LG 32LS5600	299	02.13/ST	★★★★★	This budget TV gets the basics right	LED	32	1920x1080						3	46x75x36
LG 50PA650T	499	01.13/GT	★★★★★	Good picture and price, but we'd like more detail	Plasma	50	1920x1080						3	70x117x5
LG 32LN575V	400	09.13/ST	★★★★★	A decent looking TV with credible smart and streaming features	LED	32	1920x1080						3	45x74x8
Panasonic TX-L24X5B	260	12.12/GT	★★★★★	Smooth and accomplished picture with so-so colours	LED	24	1920x1080						2	37x57x5
Panasonic TX-L24X6B	300	11.13/GT	★★★★★	If you can stretch your budget then this TV offers great value for money	LED	24	1366x768						2	42x58x17
Panasonic TX-L32E5B	400	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Great value if you're not fussy about 3D	LED	32	1920x1080						4	47x76x5
Panasonic TX-L32E6B	380	01.14/GT	★★★★★	Best 32in TV, Awards 2013	LED	32	1920x1080						3	43x72x5
Panasonic TX-P50X50B	453	01.13/GT	★★★★★	Hard to beat on performance per pound	Plasma	50	1024x768						2	72x118x8
Philips 22PFL3517T/12	270	12.12/GT	★★★★★	An accomplished set with Freeview HD and YouTube	LED	22	1920x1080						3	32x51x5
Philips 32PFL4258T	480	09.13/ST	★★★★★	A talented TV with excellent picture quality	LED	32	1920x1080						3	45x74x2
Samsung UE32E5500	400	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Exciting, but the same money could buy better	LED	32	1920x1080						3	45x74x5
Sony KDL-26EX553	400	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Capable enough for a kitchen or child's bedroom	LED	26	1366x768						2	41x64x6
Sony KDL-32W653A	430	09.13/ST	★★★★★	Its picture lacks subtlety but this Sony is still a worthwhile option	LED	32	1920x1080						2	44x73x7
Technika 22-212i	168	02.13/ST	★★★★★	Great value, with plenty of features	LED	22	1366x768						2	37x54x1
Toshiba 23RL933B	230	12.12/GT	★★★★★	Feature-packed but needs slightly better colour	LED	23	1920x1080						3	34x55x5
Toshiba 40TL868	480	03.12/GT	★★★★★	Formidable value meets good performance	LED	40	1920x1080						4	63x92x24
Toshiba 32L6353	450	09.13/FT	★★★★★	A decent TV for the money but response times can be sluggish	LED	32	1920x1080						4	44x76x7
£500-£2000														
LG 32LM620T	550	11.12/GT	★★★★★	A good effort with tough competition	LED	32	1920x1080						4	47x75x4
LG 42LM660T	750	10.12/ST	★★★★★	Good screen, good price, tough competition	LED	42	1920x1080						4	57x95x3
Panasonic TX-L32ET5B	530	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Price drop pushes this firmly into five-star territory	LED	32	1920x1080						4	47x76x5
Panasonic TX-L42ET50B	900	10.12/ST	★★★★★	Good effort, great images, beaten by direct rivals	LED	42	1920x1080						4	60x99x4
Panasonic TX-L42FT60B	1100	08.13/ST	★★★★★	Likeable TV with a fine picture and great features	LED	42	1920x1080						3	56x96x4
Philips 42PFL6008	1000	08.13/ST	★★★★★	Impressive picture with comfortable 3D – a strong contender	LED	42	1920x1080						4	56x95x3
Samsung PS51E550	850	09.12/GT	★★★★★	A pedigree 50in plasma at a steal of a price	Plasma	51	1920x1080						3	72x120x6
Samsung UE32E56800	700	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Great, feature-packed TV but with tough competition	LED	32	1920x1080						3	45x75x5

TELEVISIONS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Type	Size (in)	Resolution	Smart	Active 3D	Passive 3D	Freeview	HDMI	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Samsung UE40ES6800	950	07.12/FT	★★★★★ Good spec and looks, but the backlight isn't great	LED	40	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	67x92x33
Samsung UE40F6500	900	08.13/ST	★★★★★ Not a class leader but offers a lot for your money	LED	40	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	91x60x27
Samsung UE32F6400	500	09.13/ST	★★★★★ Some niggles but a desirable set with excellent catch-up TV features	LED	32	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	44x74x5
Sony KDL-32HX753	580	11.12/GT	★★★★★ Best 32in TV, Awards 2012	LED	32	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	47x76x6
Sony KDL-40HX723	650	03.12/GT	★★★★★ A super smart TV that's full of frills	LED	40	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	59x94x4
Toshiba 42VL963	750	10.12/ST	★★★★★ Good set, with lots of features, at a reasonable price	LED	42	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	58x100x3
Finlux 47S9100-T	800	06.13/GT	★★★★★ Good picture, decent 3D and a low price. Worth a look	LED	47	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	67x112x4
LG 47LM670T	1350	05.12/FT	★★★★★ Great spec, great looks, great performance	LED	47	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	63x106x3
LG 47LM860V	1600	08.12/ST	★★★★★ Lots to like: top-notch HD pics and easy-going 3D	LED	47	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	63x106x3
LG 55LM760T	1700	10.12/FT	★★★★★ Scores on value and features. A solid all-rounder	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	72x123x34
Panasonic TX-P42GT50B	1200	10.12/GT	★★★★★ This sensational all-rounder remains a favourite	Plasma	42	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	60x99x5
Panasonic TX-P42GT60B	1000	01.14/FT	★★★★★ Best 40-46in TV, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	Plasma	42	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	60x99x5
Panasonic TX-L47ET50B	1300	08.12/ST	★★★★★ This set gets plenty more right than it gets wrong	LED	47	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	66x110x4
Panasonic TX-L47DT65B	1600	06.13/GT	★★★★★ User-friendly set with clean, detailed images. A stunner	LED	47	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	63x107x4
Panasonic TX-L50ET60B	1300	05.13/FT	★★★★★ Solid telly but could perform better	LCD	50	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	66x112x4
Panasonic TX-L50E6B	850	10.13/GT	★★★★★ Fine picture quality but there are TVs that give more for less	LCD	50	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	71x112x27
Panasonic TX-P50GT60B	1200	01.14/GT	★★★★★ Best premium 47-52in TV, Awards 2013	Plasma	50	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	70x117x5
Panasonic TX-P50VT50B	1900	07.12/FT	★★★★★ Stellar performance in every area from this Plasma	Plasma	50	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	70x117x5
Philips 46PFL8007	1700	12.12/FT	★★★★★ A strong start for Philips' new range	LED	46	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	5	67x104x21
Philips 47PFL6008	1200	06.13/GT	★★★★★ A few niggles but forgivable thanks to its brilliant picture quality	LED	47	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	63x106x3
Philips 55PFL6007T	1500	01.13/FT	★★★★★ This should be on anyone's big-screen shortlist	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	74x124x3
Samsung PS51F5500	680	01.14/GT	★★★★★ Best budget 47-52in TV, Awards 2013	Plasma	51	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	71x112x27
Samsung PS51E8000	1700	06.12/FT	★★★★★ A big-screen plasma that should be tried out	Plasma	51	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	71x119x5
Samsung PS51F8500	1900	07.13/FT	★★★★★ A top-class plasma screen	Plasma	51	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	74x119x6
Samsung UE40ES7000	1300	11.12/FT	★★★★★ A great TV with dazzling looks and performance	LED	40	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	55x91x38

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YSP-1400
DIGITAL SOUND PROJECTOR

The new Yamaha YSP-1400 soundbar reproduces presence-rich sound over a wide area. Supporting both Bluetooth and a dedicated app for smartphone control, this new-generation soundbar increases enjoyment and convenience.

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YSP-2200
DIGITAL SOUND PROJECTOR

Only 79mm high, so you can place it in front of most flat screen TVs without blocking the picture. The height-adjustable feet let you achieve optimum positioning while the Subwoofer can be placed vertically or horizontally.



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WIRELESS ACTIVE SUBWOOFER

YSP-3300
DIGITAL SOUND PROJECTOR

The YSP-3300 from Yamaha is a slim, high sound quality Digital Sound Projector with a Wireless Active Subwoofer that delivers exceptionally high surround sound performance with wireless music streaming.



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Other brands available include: **DENON ONKYO Pioneer**

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TELEVISIONS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Type	Size (in)	Resolution	Smart	Active 3D	Passive 3D	Freeview	Freesat	HDMI	Dimensions (w/h/d, cm)
£500-£2000													
Samsung UE40ES8000	1450	10.12/ST	★★★★★	Impressive features and HD picture, but pricey	LED	40	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	54x91x3
Samsung UE46ES6800	1150	08.12/ST	★★★★★	A fine performer – but with strong competition	LED	46	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	64x107x5
Samsung UE40F7000	1200	08.13/ST	★★★★★	A lovely TV with a great picture and a wealth of smart features	LED	40	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	90x58x24
Samsung UE46F7000	1600	06.13/GT	★★★★★	Great picture coupled with smart features make it one to watch	LED	46	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	59x104x3
Sony KDL-40HX853	1000	10.12/ST	★★★★★	Best 40-42in TV, Awards 2012. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	LED	40	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	57x94x4
Sony KDL-46HX753	1150	08.12/ST	★★★★★	A must-see TV: superb performer for the price	LED	46	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	65x108x5
Sony KDL-46HX853	1250	08.12/ST	★★★★★	Best 46-47in TV, Awards 2012	LED	46	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	64x108x3
Sony KDL-55HX853	1440	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Best 55in TV, Awards 2012	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	77x129x3
Sony KDL-42W805A	1000	08.13/ST	★★★★★	A great-looking TV with many strengths	LED	42	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	58x97x6
Sony KDL-46W905	1550	09.13/FT	★★★★★	A very capable TV with stunning detail but the picture lacks vibrancy	LCD	46	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	65x105x30
Toshiba 46YL863	1200	05.12/GT	★★★★★	A breathtaking television in its class	LED	46	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	77x127x3
Up to £8000													
Bang & Olufsen BeoVision 11	5250	01.14/GT	★★★★★	A truly luxurious TV that delivers a great performance too	LCD	40	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	6	89x96x6
LG 47LM960V	2000	08.12/ST	★★★★★	An accomplished, covetable TV – but pricey	LED	47	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	61x105x4
LG 55LA860W	2300	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Close but no cigar. A good TV but the competition is strong	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	72x123x4
LG 55LM960V	3300	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Impressive, but let down by price and sound	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	77x122x4
LG 55LM980W	8000	01.14/FT	★★★★★	A great first OLED effort from LG	OLED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	80x123x19
LG 65LM960W	5500	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Fantastic to look at, but lacks the detail of depth of rivals	LED	65	3840x2160	●	●	●	●	4	84x143x41
LG 84LM960V	22500	02.13/FT	★★★★★	Stunning with Ultra High Def, but ordinary elsewhere	LED	84	3840x2160	●	●	●	●	4	102x190x4
Panasonic TX-L47WT50B	2000	08.12/ST	★★★★★	Stylish, with real areas of expertise	LED	47	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	63x107x3
Panasonic TX-P55VT65B	2000	01.14/GT	★★★★★	Best 55in+ TV, Awards 2013	Plasma	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	77x132x5
Panasonic TX-L55WT65B	2470	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A good performer but there are more capable sets	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	72x123x3
Panasonic TX-P60ZT65B	3850	08.13/GT	★★★★★	An accomplished set, but not the best TV pound-for-pound	Plasma	60	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	83x140x5
Panasonic TX-P65ST50B	2500	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Best 60in+ TV, Awards 2012	Plasma	65	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	89x151x5
Panasonic TX-P65WT600	5500	12.13/GT	★★★★★	A capable set that handles 4K footage very well	LED	65	3840x2160	●	●	●	●	4	86x147x6
Philips 46PFL9706	2300	05.12/GT	★★★★★	A great flatscreen from Philips	LED	46	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	66x108x4
Philips 50PFL7956T	2000	09.12/GT	★★★★★	The best 21:9 set we've seen: brilliant for films	LED	50	2560x1080	●	●	●	●	4	58x124x3
Philips 55PFL8008	2500	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A great TV from Philips	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	72x124x3
Philips 65PFL9708	4500	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Smart features aren't as good we'd like but this is still a strong 4K set	LED	65	3840x2160	●	●	●	●	5	84x146x4
Samsung KE55S9C	7000	01.14/GT	★★★★★	An excellent first step for large screen OLED TVs	OLED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	78x142x14
Samsung UE46ES8000	2000	05.12/GT	★★★★★	A benchmark set for 2012	LED	46	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	61x104x3
Samsung UE55ES8000	2500	09.12/GT	★★★★★	A towering bruiser, with an added control twist	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	78x136x38
Samsung UE55F8000	2500	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Can't keep up with the very best. Still a smart, user-friendly set	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	71x122x4
Samsung UE65F9000	5000	01.14/GT	★★★★★	A talented set with few weaknesses to speak of	LED	65	3840x2160	●	●	●	●	4	84x146x4
Samsung PS64E8000	3000	09.12/GT	★★★★★	This is as smart as smart TV gets	Plasma	64	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	88x149x5
Sony KDL-55W905A	2400	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A great-looking TV but a few issues knock it down a star	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	72x124x6
Sony KD-65X9005A	5000	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Good looks and great sound but needs 4K material to shine	LED	65	3840x2160	●	●	●	●	4	90x168x10
Toshiba 55ZL2	7000	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Struggles at this price level. But it's the future	LED	55	3840x2160	●	●	●	●	4	79x125x4

What to consider... 3D



Reconsider your screen size

You should sit close enough to the TV for the image to fill your peripheral vision. Aim for a viewing angle of 40 degrees: that means sitting around 1.5m away from a 50in TV, which is closer than you'd need with 2D.



The two types of 3D technology

Active-shutter 3D is (in theory) the higher-performance way to watch 3D at home, but it costs more per pair, and some users don't like its flickering effect. Passive 3D, the same as used by cinemas, is cheaper and simpler.



The supply must meet the demand

Don't imagine that buying a 3D telly will automatically open the door to a world of 3D viewing. There's currently hardly any 3D on free-to-air TV, so make sure you have, pay TV or 3D Blu-rays to make it.



Blu-ray players

- Smart ability** _____ Extends the viewing choice beyond discs with apps like BBC iPlayer
- Multichannel out** _____ Analogue outputs that feed high quality sound to a non-HDMI receiver
- Twin HDMI outputs** _____ These are used if you have two displays, say a projector and a TV

The shortlist



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
Sony BDP-S790



AWARD WINNER
Marantz UD7007



AWARD WINNER
Sony BDP-S4100

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	HDMI out	Optical out	Co-axial out	Multichannel out	Dimensions (hw d, cm)
Up to £500								
LG BP420	160	06.12/ST	★★★★★	1	1	0	No	4x43x19
Panasonic DMP-BBT01	279	08.12/FT	★★★★★	1	1	0	No	2.7x18x18
Panasonic DMP-BDT220	155	06.12/GT	★★★★★	1	1	0	No	4x43x18
Panasonic DMP-BDT230	160	07.13/GT	★★★★★	1	1	0	No	4x43x18
Panasonic DMP-BDT330	200	09.13/GT	★★★★★	2	1	0	No	4x43x18
Panasonic DMP-BDT320	220	05.12/FT	★★★★★	1	1	0	No	3x43x18
Panasonic DMP-BDT500	300	07.12/FT	★★★★★	2	1	1	8ch	6x43x24



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A digital music system that combines the innovative digital audio technology with renowned NAD performance, simplicity and value. Integrated Bluetooth means you can wirelessly play your music from your iPod, iPhone, iPad or any Bluetooth-enabled smartphone, tablet, or laptop.

Bluetooth

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WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
WHATHI.FI.COM
★★★★★

APRIL 2012

£199
OR LESS

SAVE
£300

B&W ZEPPELIN AIR WIRELESS MUSIC SYSTEM WITH DOCK

Re-Certified Model*

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
WHATHI.FI.COM
★★★★★



30-PIN MODEL
£299
OR LESS **SAVE**
£200



*Bowers & Wilkins Re-Certified products are 'pre-owned' products that have undergone rigorous testing to ensure they meet Bowers & Wilkins strict quality standards for both sonic performance and mechanical integrity. On occasion Re-Certified products may contain minor cosmetic blemishes. Bowers & Wilkins back every Re-Certified product with a two-year warranty.

B&W A7 WIRELESS SPEAKER SYSTEM

Re-Certified Model*

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
WHATHI.FI.COM
★★★★★



£525
OR LESS **SAVE**
£174



B&O BEOLIT 12 WIRELESS SPEAKER SYSTEM

Bang & Olufsen have squeezed decades of audio expertise into the Beolit 12. Super-portable and hand assembled, it features the flourish of an aluminium grille with smooth lines that will look great sat on a shelf or at the heart of the party. Complete with Apple AirPlay support, it combines intuitive controls and easy streaming to set all your tunes free.



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BLU-RAY PLAYERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	HDMI out	Optical out	Co-axial out	Multichannel out	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	
Up to £500									
Philips BDP3380	80	01.14/GT	★★★★★	Avery good performer that lacks some smart features	1	0	1	No	4x41x21
Pioneer BDP-160	120	01.14/GT	★★★★★	This entry-level unit is pretty spartan, but it delivers an impressive performance	2	0	1	No	6x44x25
Pioneer BDP-450	225	01.12/FT	★★★★★	This budget deck is a real rival for the top performers	1	0	1	No	9x43x25
Pioneer BDP-LX55	350	03.12/ST	★★★★★	Essentially, you can't go wrong with this disc spinner	2	1	0	8ch	9x43x25
Samsung-BD-F6500	130	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Competitive but not the best in class	1	0	1	7ch	4x43x18
Sony BDP-S4100	80	01.14/GT	★★★★★	Best Blu-ray player up to £100, Awards 2013	1	0	1	No	4x36x20
Sony BDP-S5100	140	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Best Blu-ray player £100-£150, Awards 2013	1	0	1	No	4x36x20
Sony BDP-S390	90	11.12/FT	★★★★★	Best Blu-ray player up to £100, Awards 2012	1	0	1	No	4x20x23
Sony BDP-S490	110	12.12/FT	★★★★★	An excellent budget Blu-ray player that also does 3D	1	0	1	No	4x43x20
Sony BDP-S790	200	09.13/GT	★★★★★	Best Blu-ray player £150-£300, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	2	1	1	No	4x43x19
Sony Playstation 3 (2012)	250	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	Super slim PS3 feels less special, but it's still multi-talented	1	1	0	No	6x29x23
Xbox One	430	01.14/FT	★★★★★	As ambitious a game console as there has ever been, but yet to fulfil its potential	1	1	0	No	8x33x27
£500 and above									
Cambridge Audio Azur 651BD	500	04.12/GT	★★★★★	Avery talented Blu-ray player	2	1	1	8ch	9x43x31
Cambridge Audio Azur 751BD	800	08.11/GT	★★★★★	Ideal for those who want more than a budget player	2	1	1	8ch	9x43x31
Cambridge Audio Azur 752BD	800	04.13/FT	★★★★★	Features and functions combine in fine style, but audio performance could be a little better	2	1	1	8ch	9x43x31
Denon DBP-2012UD	500	04.12/GT	★★★★★	A price cut makes this disc spinner even more appealing	1	0	1	8ch	11x43x32
Marantz UD7006	550	04.12/GT	★★★★★	A splendid master of all trades	1	0	1	8ch	11x44x33
Marantz UD7007	700	12.12/FT	★★★★★	Best Blu-ray player £300+, Awards 2013	1	1	1	No	11x44x31
Marantz UD8004	2449	03.10/FT	★★★★★	A brilliant player – if you want one box to do it all	1	1	1	8ch	12x44x39
Onkyo BD-SP809	500	04.12/GT	★★★★★	A fine choice, but not an all-rounder	2	1	1	No	10x43x31
Oppo BDP-93EU	500	04.12/GT	★★★★★	Perfect for the midrange Blu-ray player market	2	1	1	8ch	8x43x31



Projectors

- Screens** Buy one of these. A painted white wall is simply not good enough
- Noise** Fan noise can be a major issue if you sit close your projector
- Lamp life** Projector bulbs have limited lifespans and need to be changed regularly

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Type	ThrowRatio	Resolution	Rated Brightness (Lumens)	HDMI in	DVI in	PC in	Component in	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	Weight (kg)
Up to £1000													
BenQ W1060	700	11.12/FT	★★★★★	Solid effort for a budget projector	DLP	1.59-1.9	1920x1080	2000	2	1	1	15x33x25	3.6
BenQ W1200	1100	04.12/ST	★★★★★	Best projector up to £1500, Awards 2012	DLP	1.44-2.1:1	1920x1080	1800	2	0	1	14x34x26	3.6
BenQ W1080ST	850	12.13/GT	★★★★★	A good fit for small-scale home cinema entertainment	DLP	0.69-0.83	1920x1080	2000	2	0	1	10x31x24	2.85
Epson EH-TW5900	950	04.12/GT	★★★★★	Sturdy and impressively spec'd	LCD	1.32-2.15:1	1920x1080	2000	2	0	1	14x42x37	6
Epson EH-TW5910	900	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Best projector up to £1000, Awards 2013. Product of the Year	LCD	1.32-2.15	1920x1080	2100	2	0	1	14x42x37	6
InFocus IN3118HD	990	05.13/GT	★★★★★	A few niggles but a bright and capable projector	DLP	1.6-1.92	1920x1080	3600	2	0	1	10x34x25	3.7
Optoma HD23	800	04.12/GT	★★★★★	Affordable, but not the last word in performance	DLP	1.5-1.8:1	1920x1080	2500	2	0	1	10x32x33	2.9
Optoma HD25	800	05.13/GT	★★★★★	Plenty of features for a budget level projector	DLP	1.5-1.8	1920x1080	2000	2	0	2	12x38x31	4.5
£1000-£3000													
Epson EH-TW6100W	1600	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	Best projector £1000-£2000, Awards 2013	LCD	1.32-2.15:1	1920x1080	2300	2	0	1	14x42x37	6
InFocus Screen Play 8604	2500	10.11/FT	★★★★★	A fine projector in many regards	DLP	1.54-1.93:1	1920x1080	1700	3	0	1	18x43x34	8.6
Optoma HD83	2400	02.12/FT	★★★★★	Healthily priced, with a solid performance	DLP	1.45x2.28	1920x1080	1600	2	0	0	19x49x37	8.4
£3000 and above													
Epson EH-TW9000W	3200	06.12/FT	★★★★★	If you need wireless HDMI, buy this Epson	LCD	1.34-2.87	1920x1080	2400	2	0	1	16x47x40	8.5
JVC DLA-X35BE	3000	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Good but not great, this JVC appeals if you like bright pictures	D-LIA	n/a	1920x1080	1300	2	0	1	18x46x47	15
Panasonic PT-AT6000E	3000	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	Best projector £2000+, Awards 2013	LCD	1.18-2.36	1920x1080	2400	3	0	1	15x47x36	8.7
Runco LightStyle LS-5	7500	01.11/FT	★★★★★	Glorious performance at a high price	DLP	1.85-2.40	1920x1080	754	2	0	1	20x45x53	10
SIM2 C3X Lumis 3D-S	30000	11.11/FT	★★★★★	The best 3D projector we've ever seen	DLP	1.82-2.48:1	1920x1080	3000	2	0	0	146x21x46	11
Sony VPL-HW30ES	3000	02.12/GT	★★★★★	Very capable, but there's better for the money	SXRD	1.47-2.18	1920x1080	1300	2	0	1	18x41x46	10
Sony VPL-HW50ES	3000	12.12/FT	★★★★★	Shows why home cinema can't be beaten	SXRD	1.64-2.37	1920x1080	1700	2	0	0	18x41x46	9.6
Sony VPL-VW95ES	5000	01.12/FT	★★★★★	By class standards, it's one of the best projectors around	SXRD	1.37-2.19:1	1920x1080	1000	2	0	1	18x47x48	11



AV receivers & amplifiers

Up to £500 Well-equipped and deliver convincing surround sound
£500-£1000 There are gains in features, build quality and sonic performance
£1000+ Real powerhouses that pack loads of features and cinema-style sound

The shortlist



AWARD WINNER

Yamaha RX-V375

“As an introductory step into home cinema sound, you’re in extremely good hands with this budget Yamaha receiver.”



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

Sony STR-DN1040

“Insightful and dynamic, exciting and punchy, this talented AV receiver will charm its way into your home cinema room.”



AWARD WINNER

Pioneer SC-LX57

“Outshining its predecessor in every way, the impressive SC-LX57 once again sets the bar for home cinema amplifiers at this price.”

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Channels /power (w)	HDMI in	HDMI out	Networking	3D passthrough	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Up to £300										
Sony STR-DH820	230	04.13/GT	★★★★★	A capable, if not faultless, option for those looking for a sub-£250 7.1 channel amp	7x115	4	1	●	●	16x43x32
Yamaha RX-V373	250	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	Best home cinema amplifier up to £350, Awards 2012	5x100	4	1	●	●	15x44x32
Yamaha RX-V375	250	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	Best home cinema amplifier up to £350, Awards 2013	5x70	4	1	●	●	15x44x32
£300-£500										
Harman Kardon AVR-171	450	10.13/FT	★★★★★	Could be subtler but delivers a powerhouse performance	7x100	6	2	●	●	12x44x30
Onkyo TX-NR515	450	11.12/GT	★★★★★	The amplifier to beat in 2012, now beaten	7x130	8	2	●	●	17x44x33
Sony STR-DN1030	470	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Gives the best (at this price) a run for their money	7x120	5	1	●	●	17x43x33
Sony STR-DN1040	500	08.13/GT	★★★★★	Best home cinema amplifier £350-£700, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	7x100	8	2	●	●	16x43x32
Yamaha RX-V675	500	08.13/GT	★★★★★	A powerful and thrilling amplifier for the money	7x150	6	1	●	●	17x44x36
£500-£1000										
Denon AVR-2113	550	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Solid, likeable option for both novices and enthusiasts	7x125	6	1	●	●	17x44x33
Denon AVR-X2000	500	08.13/GT	★★★★★	Marks a fine return to form for Denon	7x150	7	1	●	●	17x43x33
Denon AVR-X4000	900	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Decent if you're looking for a sub-£1000 AV receiver	7x125	7	3	●	●	17x43x38
Harman-Kardon AVR-365	800	03.12/ST	★★★★★	Great looks, but lacks some precision	7x110	6	1	●	●	17x44x39
Pioneer VSX-923	450	08.13/GT	★★★★★	Needs more heft but it's still a confident and compelling amp	7x150	8	2	●	●	17x44x36
Yamaha RX-V673	500	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Best home cinema amplifier £350-£700, Awards 2012.	7x150	6	1	●	●	17x44x36
Onkyo TX-NR626	500	08.13/GT	★★★★★	Well-featured but not as compelling or as immersive as rival products	7x160	6	2	●	●	17x44x33
£1000-£2000										
Denon AVR-4520	1970	03.13/ST	★★★★★	An enjoyable, easygoing sound, pipped only in terms of absolute excitement	9x150	7	2	●	●	20x43x42
Onkyo TX-NR818	1000	09.12/FT	★★★★★	Impressive AV amp with features aplenty	7x180	8	2	●	●	34x59x55
Pioneer SC-LX56	1300	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	Best home cinema amplifier £700-£1500, Awards 2012	9x170	8	2	●	●	19x44x44
Pioneer SC-LX57	1200	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Best home cinema amplifier £700-£1500, Awards 2013	9x190	9	3	●	●	19x44x44
Pioneer SC-LX86	1800	03.13/ST	★★★★★	Best Home Cinema amplifier £1500+, Awards 2012	9x190	8	3	●	●	19x44x414
Yamaha RX-A1020	1000	04.13/FT	★★★★★	Delivering excitement, detail and precision, this is a brilliantly capable all-rounder	7x110	8	2	●	●	18x43x43
Yamaha RX-A1030	1000	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Not without some niggles, this receiver delivers big-time power and muscle	7x110	8	2	●	●	18x43x43
Yamaha RX-A3030	2000	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	Best home cinema amplifier £1500+, Awards 2013	9x150	8	1	●	●	19x44x47
£2000 and above										
Anthem MRX 700	2100	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Fantastic-sounding and worthy of a serious audition	7x90	4	1	●	●	17x44x39
Arcam AVR750	4000	12.13/FT	★★★★★	It's not flawless, but this AV receiver is very good	7x100	7	2	●	●	17x43x43
Onkyo TX-NR1010	2000	12.12/FT	★★★★★	Power-packed heavyweight needs a touch more precision	7x200	9	2	●	●	20x44x59
Onkyo TX-NR3009	2000	04.12/GT	★★★★★	Produces seriously rewarding surround sound	9x200	8	2	●	●	34x61x60
Onkyo TX-NR3010	2000	03.13/ST	★★★★★	A solid performance but lacks the subtlety to cut it as a complete all-rounder	9x160	9	2	●	●	20x44x60
Yamaha RX-A3020	2000	03.13/ST	★★★★★	A shot across the bows of the class leaders	9x230	8	2	●	●	19x44x47



Subwoofers

- Sealed cabinet _____ Tends to produce the tightest bass but limits outright quantity
- Reflex port _____ A more common design that tends to deliver more bass
- Room equalisation _____ Evens out the sub's response to produce a more balanced sound

The shortlist



AWARD WINNER
Bowers & Wilkins ASW610



Bowers & Wilkins ASW610XP




AWARD WINNER
Velodyne SPL-1000 Ultra

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Power (w)	Driver (cm)	Passive radiator	Sealed	Ported	Drive unit orientation	Line inputs	Speaker ins	Line outputs	Speaker outs	Phase invert	Remote control	EQ	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	
Up to £500																			
B&WASW610	450	05.09/GT	★★★★★	Best subwoofer up to £700, Awards 2011				200	25	●	Forward	1	1	●	●	●	●	4	31x31x38
Klipsch SW-450	330	02.11/GT	★★★★★	Weighty and tight, but loses its way at times				200	25.4	●	Downward	2	2	●	●	●	●	1	43x36x50
Monitor Audio Vector VW-8	225	04.10/FT	★★★★★	Capable little sub for an entry-level system				100	20	●	Forward	2	0	●	●	●	●	2	32x28x28
RELAcoustics T-Zero	350	05.12/GT	★★★★★	Small and discreet, but limited by size				100	16.5	●	Downward	2	1	●	●	●	●	2	24x22x26
Tannoy TS2.10	430	03.12/FT	★★★★★	Small, but packs a ferocious punch				300	25	●	Forward	1	0	●	●	●	●	3	39x38x33
Velodyne EQ-Max 8	495	04.12/FT	★★★★★	Small, but punches well above its weight				180	20	●	Forward	2	2	●	●	●	●	1	37x33x38
Velodyne Impact-10	295	07.09/GT	★★★★★	This sizeable subwoofer needs to be more controlled				150	25	●	Forward	2	2	●	●	●	●	4	35x32x37
Velodyne Impact-12	365	05.09/GT	★★★★★	Fine sub, more of a movie than a music classic				165	30	●	Forward	2	1	●	●	●	●	1	39x66x45
Velodyne Impact-Mini	435	10.09/FT	★★★★★	Amazingly small sub with fine movie performance				180	16.5	●	Forward	2	2	●	●	●	●	1	25x25x30
W'fedale Powercube SPC-10	300	11.11/FT	★★★★★	Nearly a terrific subwoofer - but there are issues				215	25	●	Downward	1	1	●	●	●	●	8	38x35x31
£500-£1000																			
B&WASW610XP	700	07.09/FT	★★★★★	Ideal for big bass from a small box				500	25	●	Forward	2	1	●	●	●	●	4	32x32x37
Monitor Audio Apex AW-12	950	05.12/GT	★★★★★	Beautiful to look at, and punchy too				500	30.5	●	Forward	1	0	●	●	●	●	2	34x34x41
RELAcoustics T-7	650	02.12/FT	★★★★★	A compact sub with authority				200	20	●	Downward	2	1	●	●	●	●	2	30x35x33
Sonos Sub	600	08.12/FT	★★★★★	Sounds great. Makes sense with Sonos Play speakers				n/a	n/a	●	Inward	0	0	●	●	●	●	1	40x38x16
Tannoy TS2.12	549	05.12/GT	★★★★★	Attractively priced with decent sonics too				500	30.5	●	Forward	1	0	●	●	●	●	2	44x43x38
Velodyne EQ-Max 12	825	05.12/GT	★★★★★	Powerful and agile and supremely enjoyable				225	30.5	●	Forward	1	2	●	●	●	●	1	45x42x46
Yamaha NS-SW700	500	03.10/FT	★★★★★	Not the most accomplished, but very competent				300	25	●	Downward	4	2	●	●	●	●	2	45x41x41
£1000 and above																			
B&W PV1D	1200	05.12/GT	★★★★★	Delivers precision and agility in spades				400	20	●	Forward	1	0	●	●	●	●	2	34x27x36
Jamo D600	1300	05.12/GT	★★★★★	A brilliant sub that's worth the price				400	38	●	Forward	n/a	0	●	●	●	●	1	56x59x50
Paradigm Seismic 110	1250	10.10/FT	★★★★★	A subwoofer that's deeply impressive in every sense				850	25	●	Forward	2	0	●	●	●	●	1	34x30x32
Sunfire Subr. SRA2700EQ	2350	03.12/FT	★★★★★	It's not cheap, but it is impressive				2700	25x2	●	Forward	2	0	●	●	●	●	1	36x113x9
Velodyne SPL-1000 Ultra	1400	09.11/FT	★★★★★	Best subwoofer £700+, Awards 2011				1200	25	●	Forward	1	1	●	●	●	●	3	34x33x34
Wilson Benesch Torus	3000	02.07/GT	★★★★★	The most musical and insightful deep bass ever				200	36	●	Upward	4	1	●	●	●	●	2	45x90x30

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AM 8033 Cinema 235.40

AM2DC wins the Editors choice in The Absolute Sound Magazine.

Other Subwoofers Also Available:-

Gemini 10" 150W RMS £214.95 to £259.95
XXLS400 12" 400W RMS £424.95 to £479.95
Monolith-DF 12" 300W RMS £454.95 to £544.95

B.K. Electronics, Unit 1 Comet Way, Southend-On-Sea, Essex SS2 6TR Tel - 01702 527572 email :- sales@bkelec.com

Potentiometers From East Grinstead - UK MADE - Transformers From Harlow - UK MADE - Heatsinks From Wolverhampton

AWARDS

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I found it hard to grasp the lack of difference between the sound output of the mighty Monolith and that of my resident £2,500 REL.

Adam Rayner
Home Cinema Choice

Outstanding Value

Much more subwoofer for your money, just compare the specifications of the Monolith against any similar priced subwoofers.

Monolith Plus -DF (500W RMS - 1000W Peak) £549.95 to £639.95



HOME CINEMA
BEST BUY

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Peter Tyson's Massive WINTER SALE

AMAZING SAVINGS ACROSS MOST RANGES

Yamaha RX-V675



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Unit 6 Kingston Court,
Kingston Park, Newcastle, NE3 2FP
E: sales@petertyson.co.uk
Mon - Sat: 10am - 5:30pm



Surround speakers

Full size _____ Traditional cabinet design that's big but can deliver a great sound
Style _____ Compact speakers that make a lot of sense in smaller living spaces
Bipole/Dipole _____ Surround speaker designs that give a more cohesive soundfield

The shortlist



AWARD WINNER
Q Acoustics 2000i 5.1

Awards 2013: Best Traditional Pack up to £700



NEW ENTRY
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
Dali Zensor 15.1

Awards 2013: Best Style Pack £700-£1500



AWARD WINNER
Cambridge Audio Aero 5.1

Awards 2013: Best Traditional Pack £1500-£2500

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Front speaker (h/w/d, cm)	Center speaker (h/w/d, cm)	Rear speaker (h/w/d, cm)	Subwoofer (h/w/d, cm)	Finishes
Up to £500								
Boston Ac. Soundware XS SE	220	12.11/FT	★★★★★	Just as good as its predecessor: a must-hear	11x11x9	11x11x9	11x11x9	31x32x40 2
Canton Movie 130	450	05.12/FT	★★★★★	Likeable and listenable	12x9x10	9x19x10	12x9x10	41x24x42 3
Harman-Kardon HKTS20	450	09.11/GT	★★★★★	Neat, but a conservative listen	22x11x9	11x26x9	22x11x9	36x27x27 1
Jamo A101HCS5	230	11.11/FT	★★★★★	A great way to get started with home cinema	9x15x15	9x15x15	9x15x15	30x57x16 1
Jamo S426 HCS3	350	01.12/FT	★★★★★	A worthy home cinema solution	91x18x24	12x34x12	21x12x12	n/a 3
Teufel Motiv 3	460	06.10/GT	★★★★★	Another solid showing from this manufacturer	12x12x14	12x12x14	12x12x14	26x26x32 1
Teufel Theater 80	449	01.10/FT	★★★★★	Big sounds for not too much money	23x15x19	23x15x19	23x15x19	40x26x40 1
Wharfedale DX-1HCP	400	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★	Gets a lot right for this kind of money	19x12x12	12x29x12	19x12x12	34x29x32 2
£500-£1000								
Boston Ac. SoundWare S	510	02.12/FT	★★★★★	Dinky yet substantial-sounding	14x14x14	14x14x14	14x14x14	34x32x44 2
Cambridge Audio Minx S215	500	05.11/FT	★★★★★	Lots to admire here from very little	8x8x9	8x8x9	8x8x9	22x21x22 1
Dali Zensor 15.1	980	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	Best traditional package £700-£1500, Awards 2013. Product of the Year	27x16x22	16x44x29	27x16x22	31x29x31 3
Jamo A 200 HCS 5	640	01.13/FT	★★★★★	A gutsy and entertaining sound at this price	22x9x5	22x9x5	22x9x5	31x28x31 7
KEF KHT3005 HD2	900	03.12/FT	★★★★★	Great build with an expansive sound	25x13x15	13x25x15	25x13x15	38x37x18 1
KEF E305	900	11.13/ST	★★★★★	A room-filling system but there are more dynamic packages out there	26x14x16	16x22x15	26x14x16	32x43x27 2
Mission MX15.1	600	11.11/FT	★★★★★	Ideal for a medium sized room	28x17x26	15x42x19	28x17x26	30x30x33 4
Monitor Audio MASS	800	11.13/ST	★★★★★	Still an excellent system, it narrowly falls short of the best	22x13x13	13x22x13	22x13x13	42x38x38 1
Q Acoustics 2000i 5.1	625	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★	Best traditional package up to £700, Awards 2013	23x15x20	23x16x12	23x15x20	23x16x12 2
Q Acoustics Q7000	800	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Product of the year - Speaker packages, Awards 2011	24x10x16	12x21x16	24x10x16	37x51x22 2
Q Acoustics Q7000i	900	11.13/ST	★★★★★	Best style package £700-£1000, Awards 2013	24x10x16	12x20x16	24x10x16	32x46x20 2
Tannoy HTS-101	400	09.11/GT	★★★★★	Best style package up to £700, Awards 2013	16x11x14	11x25x17	16x11x14	42x28x37 1
Teufel Theater 200	799	04.10/FT	★★★★★	Big-screen soundtracks don't come bigger than this	44x20x29	25x44x27	23x16x12	60x38x49 1
Wharfedale 100-HCP	950	11.13/FT	★★★★★	A very good package, but could do with a better centre speaker	32x17x26	17x47x27	32x17x26	39x35x31 7

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SURROUND SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Front speaker (hwd, cm)	Center speaker (hwd, cm)	Rear speaker (hwd, cm)	Subwoofer (hwd, cm)	Finishes
£1000-£2000									
Acoustic Energy Neo V2 5.1	1200	12.10/GT	★★★★★	Plenty to enjoy if you have a large room	91x20x24	18x48x20	36x18x23	41x36x33	2
B&W 685 Theatre	1200	12.10/GT	★★★★★	Best traditional package £1000-£1500, Awards 2010	23x16x12	34x20x33	27x17x33	26x26x33	6
B&W MT-50	1100	11.13/ST	★★★★★	Best style package £1000-£1400, Awards 2013	25x11x16	25x11x16	25x11x16	26x26x33	2
B&W MT-60D	1950	05.12/GT	★★★★★	Best style package £1800+, Awards 2013	25x11x16	25x11x16	25x11x16	34x27x36	2
Cabasse Eole 3	1000	11.13/ST	★★★★★	A likable, big-sounding system that lacks a little authority	13x13x13	13x13x13	13x13x13	33x33x35	2
Cambridge Audio Aero 5.1	1950	10.13/FT	★★★★★	Best traditional package £1500-£2500, Awards 2013	98x24x34	15x43x21	18x46x15	34x33x36	2
Dali Fazon 1	1500	07.10/GT	★★★★★	Preferable in many ways to its pricier big brother	26x14x13	26x14x13	26x14x13	28x26x27	2
Dali Fazon 3 5.1	1699	05.12/GT	★★★★★	Best style package £1200-£2000, Awards 2011	26x14x14	14x26x14	26x14x14	23x16x12	2
Dali Zensor 5 5.1	1499	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★	Best traditional package £700-£1500, Awards 2012	84x16x27	16x44x28	97x16x23	34x37x38	2
Elipson Planet M 5.1	1300	03.13/FT	★★★★★	Enjoyable looks and sound, just lacking a smidge of detail	15x15x15	15x15x15	15x15x15	39x32x32	3
Focal Dome 5.1	1000	11.13/ST	★★★★★	It's not perfect but this Focal charms nonetheless	17x14x14	17x14x14	17x14x14	40x28x28	3
Jamo D500THX Select 2	1700	01.11/FT	★★★★★	Exceptional and unbeatable value too	26x45x13	26x45x13	26x45x13	42x40x42	2
KEF Q300 5.1	1880	10.11/GT	★★★★★	An admirable package for the purists	36x21x30	21x63x30	36x21x30	33x34x33	3
KEF T105	1200	04.11/GT	★★★★★	A stealthy package that looks the part	33x14x4	33x14x4	33x14x4	38x37x8	1
Klipsch Synergy B20/SW450	1050	09.11/FT	★★★★★	Avibrant and exciting 5.1 package	32x18x20	15x41x13	14x30x12	43x36x50	1
Monitor Audio Bronze BX2 5.1	1050	Aw.10/FT	★★★★★	Thrillingly fit for purpose	35x19x26	17x46x17	29x28x11	33x32x33	4
Monitor Audio Bronze BX5 5.1	1215	12.10/GT	★★★★★	Does a good job of filling a big room	85x17x25	17x46x17	29x28x11	33x32x33	2
Monitor Audio Radius R90HT1	1500	10.13/FT	★★★★★	Best style package £1400-£1800, Awards 2013	20x13x14	17x46x17	20x13x14	33x32x33	3
Quad L-lite Plus 5.1 package	1200	12.13/FT	★★★★★	A fine package that's up against some formidable rivals at this price	25x14x18	15x38x17	25x14x18	31x24x24	3
Tannoy Rev. Compact 5.1	1300	12.10/GT	★★★★★	Exceptional sound in the average living room	27x15x16	15x30x16	39x31x34	32x29x29	2
£2000 and above									
Acoustic Energy Active Pro 5.1	3035	08.10/FT	★★★★★	A stunning listen that's great value too	22x15x18	22x15x18	22x15x18	35x35x33	1
Acoustic Energy Radiance 5.1	3000	05.09/FT	★★★★★	This 5.1 package has plenty of appeal	92x23x30	19x45x30	32x19x25	41x36x33	2
B&W CM9 Theatre	4200	09.11/FT	★★★★★	Best traditional package £3500+, Awards 2013	102x32x37	22x59x28	34x20x28	32x32x32	2
B&W CT800 system	67950	11.08/GT	★★★★★	Expensive but it's the best we've heard	110x33x55	33x110x55	110x33x10	48x48x48	1
Cabasse MT-30 5.1	2100	03.10/GT	★★★★★	Looks more assertive than it is, but still likeable	x11x21	16x48x37	41x23x20	42x31x43	2
Dali Ikon 6 Mk2 5.1	2900	12.10/FT	★★★★★	Ideal for those with big listening areas to fill	103x19x35	15x57x25	38x27x15	48x41x46	3
Dali Lektor 5.1	2320	03.10/GT	★★★★★	Only just fails to get top marks against its rivals	106x25x37	17x60x18	31x17x22	36x31x40	2
Dali Mentor 5.1	5700	08.08/FT	★★★★★	Powerhouse of a system	103x20x39	20x89x29	32x16x24	37x33x33	2
KEFR100 5.1	2850	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	Best traditional package £2500-£3500, Awards 2013	28x18x29	17x53x31	28x18x29	37x33x35	4
M&K 950-Series	5445	04.10/FT	★★★★★	Exceptional system with thrilling sound	41x18x22	41x18x22	26x18x22	60x39x51	2
Monitor Audio Apex	2400	05.12/GT	★★★★★	Best style speaker package £2000+, Awards 2011	25x14x14	14x61x10	25x14x14	34x34x41	2
Monitor Audio PL200AV	11400	08.10/FT	★★★★★	Exceptional in every sense	100x25x28	22x58x29	37x34x36	45x48x47	3
Monitor Audio PL300 AV	13500	10.09/FT	★★★★★	One of the finest 5.1 speaker packages on the market	111x41x47	22x58x29	37x22x28	45x48x47	2
Mon. Audio Silver RX6 AV12	2200	10.11/GT	★★★★★	Best traditional package £1500-£2500, Awards 2011	85x19x25	19x50x20	30x12x25	34x34x41	6
Mordaunt-Short Aviano 5.1	2000	03.10/GT	★★★★★	Guaranteed to keep you on the edge of your seat	95x21x32	18x46x23	95x21x30	42x31x36	3
Mordaunt-Short Mezzo 5.1	2300	11.08/GT	★★★★★	Lots of attack, with little respite	100x22x28	18x49x22	35x22x28	32x34x35	2
Paradigm MilleniaOne	2500	12.12/FT	★★★★★	Smooth and detailed, but slightly lacking in attack	20x12x15	20x12x15	20x12x15	34x30x32	2
PMC DB1i 5.1	4675	12.09/FT	★★★★★	Small and sonically brilliant package	29x16x23	16x29x23	29x16x23	55x20x55	4
Tannoy Revolution Signature	2300	11.08/GT	★★★★★	As thrilling or as calming as you want it to be	85x17x18	17x45x18	27x17x18	37x34x34	2

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NAIM DAC V1 & NAP100


DAC-V1 is a small, compact asynchronous USB Digital to Analogue Converter with multiple S/PDIF inputs, precision volume control and headphone amplifier. When partnered with the NAP 100 power amplifier you create a compact two box system designed in such a way to provide true Naim audio sound quality from a Mac, PC or laptop via a USB connection. Audio file content at up to 24bit/384khz resolution can be accessed from a wide variety of audio playback applications.

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 - What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.
 WERE £149
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WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2011
 ★★★★★ JUNE 2011

£79.95

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CAMBRIDGE AUDIO DACMAGIC XS DAC
 "The DacMagic XS represents truly excellent value for money."
 - What Hi-Fi? S&V magazine.
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WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
 ★★★★★ DECEMBER 2013

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£149.95

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YAMAHA A5500 AMPLIFIER
 "Yamaha cracks the budget stereo amp nut: a stunningly capable product."
 - What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.
 WERE £249
 5 Year Supercare £19.95

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2010
 STEREO AMPLIFIERS
 BEST OVERALL PERFORMANCE
 YAMAHA A-5500

£199.95

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DALI ZENSOR 1 SPEAKERS (PAIR)
 "You really need to hear the Zensor 1s."
 - What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.
 5 Year Supercare just 10% of purchase price

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2011
 ★★★★★ AUGUST 2011

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TANNOY MERCURY V4 SPEAKERS (PAIR)
 "For a speaker of this type, and at this price, the Mercury V4s pretty much hit the bull's-eye."
 - What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.
 TSP £349
 5 Year Supercare £24.95

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2011
 STEREO SPEAKERS & SUBWOOFERS
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 TANNOY MERCURY V4

£249.95

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PROJECT DEBUT CARBON TURNTABLE
 "A fine-sounding package."
 - What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.
 5 Year Supercare just 10% of purchase price

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2012
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MARANTZ CD6005 CD PLAYER
 "A fantastic player and immense value for money."
 - What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.
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WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
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 BEST OVERALL PERFORMANCE
 MARANTZ CD6005

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ALSO AVAILABLE PM6005
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ARCAM IRDAC DAC
 "A hugely talented DAC with bags of sonic appeal."
 - What Hi-Fi? S&V magazine.
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WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
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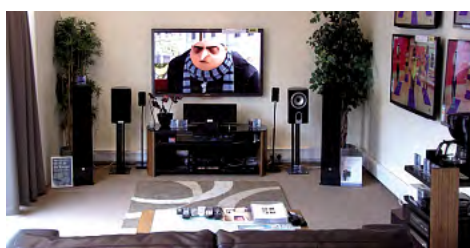
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 ★★★★★ September 2010
 SOLO NEO

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2014
 ★★★★★ JANUARY 2014
 ZENSOR 3

ARCAM SOLO NEO STREAMING MINI SYSTEM & DALI ZENSOR 3 SPEAKERS (PAIR)
 "The original Solo was good. The Solo Neo is even better, and that alone makes it a great buy."
 - What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine. A hugely acclaimed bit of kit, match the Solo Neo with the dynamic and detailed Zensor 3s, and you've got a winning combination.
 SYSTEM TSP £1299.90 | 5 Year Supercare £99.95

£999.95

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SPEAKERS ALSO AVAILABLE IN WALNUT

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 STEREO SPEAKERS
 BEST OVERALL PERFORMANCE
 Q ACOUSTICS 2050i

ARCAM FMJ A19 AMPLIFIER, FMJ CD17 CD PLAYER & Q ACOUSTICS 2050i SPEAKERS (PAIR, GRAPHITE)
 "A wonderfully talented amplifier" said What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision Magazine of the A19, while the 2050i are "great value for money...well worth a listen for the quality they deliver."
 SYSTEM TSP £1757.95 | 5 Year Supercare £129.95

£1299.95

DEAL

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 BEST OVERALL PERFORMANCE
 ARCAM FMJ A19

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TEAC CRH700DAB SILVER STREAMING MINI HI-FI SYSTEM

"There's loads of excitement and enthusiasm here."
- What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.

WERE £299
5 Year Supercare £24.95

£249.95

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Internet Radio Bluetooth WiFi AirPlay

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CAMBRIDGE AUDIO MINX Xi STREAMING MINI HI-FI SYSTEM

"We think Cambridge has done a terrific job with the Minx Xi." - What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.

WERE £599
5 Year Supercare £49.95

£499.95

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Bluetooth Internet Radio WiFi

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DENON DM39 SILVER MINI SYSTEM & TANNOY MERCURY V1 SPEAKERS (PAIR)

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5 Year Supercare £24.95

£249.95

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JUNE 2011
TANNOY V1
WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
SYSTEMS
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DENON-DM390AB

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- What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.
SYSTEM TSP £749.95 | 5 Year Supercare £57.95

£579.95

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PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
MARANTZ MELODY MEDIA M-CR60
WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2012
STEREO SPEAKER
MONITOR AUDIO BX200

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TANNOY MERCURY V7i	£549.95
DALI ZENSOR 1	£569.95

£579.95

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MARANTZ PM6005 AMPLIFIER, CD6005 CD PLAYER & Q ACOUSTICS 2020i SPEAKERS (PAIR)

"A fantastic player and immense value for money," said What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision magazine of the CD6005 while they went on to comment "the Q Acoustics 2020i are something of a star."
5 Year Supercare £69.95

£699.95

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CD PLAYERS
BEST HIGH-POWERED CD PLAYER
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STEREO SPEAKERS
BEST HIGH-POWERED CD PLAYER
Q ACOUSTICS 2020i

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SAVE £350

CYRUS 6 DAC, CYRUS CDT & TANNOY REVOLUTION DC6TSE SPEAKERS (PAIR)

Don't be fooled by their size - these Cyrus units offer spacious, detailed sound quality with astonishing levels of bass and depth, which is perfectly reproduced by these agile and dynamic floorstanders. SYSTEM TSP £2649.95 | 5 Year Supercare £229.95

£2299.95

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SALE

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
STEREO SPEAKERS
BEST HIGH-POWERED CD PLAYER
TANNOY REVOLUTION DC6TSE

SAVE £800

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO 851A AMPLIFIER, 851C CD PLAYER & TANNOY PRECISION 6.2 SPEAKERS (PAIR)

"For scale and power, not to mention build and style, the Azur 851A is hard to beat." remarked What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.
SYSTEM TSP £4298.90 | 5 Year Supercare £349.95

£3499.95

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Cambridge Audio Azur 851C + 851A

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SONOS

SAVE £20

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"Logitech's AirPlay-toting speaker dock sounds the business." - What Hi-Fi? S&V magazine.
WERE £99.95
5 Year Supercare £9.99

£79.95

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2012
BEST SPEAKER
AUGUST 2012

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
BEST AIRPLAY SPEAKER
JUNE 2013

SAVE £80

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO MINX AIR 200 WIRELESS SYSTEM
"A formidable option in this competitive market." - WHF? S&V magazine.
WERE £429.95
5 Year Supercare £34.99

£349.95

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
AUGUST 2013

Bluetooth
ALSO IN WHITE

WiFi
ALSO MINX AIR 100 ONLY £249.95

SAVE £200

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO STREAM MAGIC 6 NETWORK PLAYER
Boasting twin Wolfson Dacs and some of the most sophisticated processors available, the Stream Magic 6 is not just a versatile wireless music streamer - it's a premium grade music hub! Hitch it up to your home wi-fi and you're instantly connected to a veritable library of music services, or pop in the optional BT100 Bluetooth receiver and stream music straight from your smartphone or tablet - and all with audiophile levels of detail and precision! Small wonder then, that What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine were so impressed with the level of performance, saying that it "looks good, is easy to use, sounds great and has a list of uses longer than your arm: the Stream Magic 6 is an unequivocal success."
WERE £699.95 | 5 Year Supercare £49.95

£499.95

FREE APP FOR IPHONE/IPAD
ALSO IN SILVER

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
MUSIC STREAMERS
AUGUST 2013

WiFi
Internet Radio

Two Best-sellers Of Our Huge Dock & Headphone Range

HALF PRICE

AUDIO TECHNICA ATHES55 HEADPHONES
"Comfortable and great-sounding, you can't ask for more from portable on-ears." - What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.
WERE £99.95

£49.95

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2011
BEST HEADPHONE
SEPTEMBER 2011

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO MINX GO BLUETOOTH SPEAKER
"A terrific product for this money, with a sound that is a pleasure to listen to." - WHF? S&V magazine.
5 Year Supercare £9.99

£99.95

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
BEST PORTABLE SPEAKER
CAMBRIDGE AUDIO MINX GO

Bluetooth
DEMO IT TODAY!
ALSO IN WHITE

£499.95

WiFi
Internet Radio

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Jeff - National Installations Manager



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A small selection from our extensive range.

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED **DEAL**

Panasonic 32"

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013 TELEVISIONS PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

ALSO 39", 42" & 50"

PANASONIC TXL32E6B SMART LED TV

"A stunning screen that's lovely to use and a great price - a fantastic all-rounder." - WHF? S&V magazine.

FREE 5 Year TV Guarantee

CALL OR SEE WEB

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED **DEAL**

Panasonic 42"

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013 TELEVISIONS PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

ALSO 50"

PANASONIC TXP42GT60B 3D SMART PLASMA TV

"Images are bright, high-contrast and colourful." - WHF? S&V magazine.

FREE 5 Year TV Guarantee

CALL OR SEE WEB

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED **DEAL**

SONY 46"

ALSO 40" & 55"

SONY KDL46W905A 3D SMART LED TV

Sony's triluminos panel with 800Hz motion makes for a stunning, blur-free image, in 2D and 3D.

FREE 5 Year TV Guarantee

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NEW PREMIUM TECH **DEAL**

SAMSUNG 55"

FREE 2x PAIR OF 3D GLASSES

ALSO 40" 46", 65" & 75"

SAMSUNG UE55F8000 3D SMART LED TV

"The best LED LCD television that we've ever tested when it comes to picture quality." - HDTVtest.co.uk

FREE 5 Year TV Guarantee

CALL OR SEE WEB

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED **DEAL**

Panasonic 55"

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013 TELEVISIONS PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

ALSO 50" & 65"

PANASONIC TXP55VT65B 3D SMART PLASMA TV

"A true triumph of engineering. Basically every single box is ticked by the VT65 series." - HDTVtest.co.uk.

FREE 5 Year TV Guarantee

CALL OR SEE WEB

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED **NEW!** **DEAL**

LG 55"

LG 55EA980W 3D SMART CURVED OLED TV

"Its world-class picture quality is a giant leap forward." - HDTVtest.co.uk.

FREE 5 Year TV Guarantee

CALL OR SEE WEB

The Next Generation - 4K has arrived!

NEW PREMIUM TECH **DEAL**

SAMSUNG 55" 4K ULTRAHD

SAMSUNG UE55F9000 4K ULTRA HD 3D SMART LED TV

With great 4K Ultra HD resolution plus unique precision black technology, this LED takes picture quality to a higher level.

FREE 5 Year TV Guarantee

CALL OR SEE WEB

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED **DEAL**

LG 55" 4K ULTRAHD

LG 55LA970W 4K ULTRA HD 3D SMART LED TV

LG's Nano LED backlight technology makes the most of the insane clarity of Ultra HD along with full 1080p passive 3D.

FREE 5 Year TV Guarantee

CLAIM A FREE LG G PAD 8.3 TABLET WORTH £260 WHEN YOU BUY THIS TV. (ENDS 31.1.13)

INCLUDES BUILT-IN MOTORIZED SOUNDBAR

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LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED **DEAL**

Panasonic 65" 4K ULTRAHD

PANASONIC TXL65WT600 4K ULTRA HD 3D SMART LED TV

Ultra HD performance meets HDMI 2.0 connectivity for a TV that's at the frontline of 4K viewing.

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Pop In For A Demo & Expert Advice On Projectors

A small selection from our extensive range.

Sharing your passion for movies

If you want to enjoy the true home cinema experience, a projector is the only way to go. It's not just movies that benefit; HD TV, sports and video games all look incredible at larger-than-life screen sizes. We offer screens and installation too, to make sure you're getting the absolute best performance with minimal fuss.

All of our demonstration rooms have projectors set up and ready to go, so come down and be amazed today!

Anca - Watford store

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED **DEAL**

BENQ W1070 3D PROJECTOR

"Picture that wouldn't look out of place on a projector costing twice as much." - trustedreviews.com

5 Year TV Guarantee just 10% of purchase price

WITH FREE PAIR OF 3D GLASSES WORTH £75

CALL OR SEE WEB

SAVE £100 **SALE**

OPTOMA HD25e 3D PROJECTOR

This is a top contender for the best projector in its class.

WERE £799.95

5 Year TV Guarantee £69.95

£699.95

SAVE £50 **SALE**

BENQ W1300 3D PROJECTOR

A compact, room-friendly sized projector with a performance that's better than you might expect.

WERE £849.95

5 Year TV Guarantee £79.95

£799.95

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED **DEAL**

EPSON EHTW6100W 3D PROJECTOR

"Throws out a clear, bright and vivid image." - What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.

5 Year TV Guarantee just 10% of purchase price

CALL OR SEE WEB

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED **DEAL**

PANASONIC PTAT6000 3D PROJECTOR

"Detailed, dynamic & confident." - What Hi-Fi? S&V magazine.

FREE 5 Year TV Guarantee

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CONTINUES!

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WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013 HOME CINEMA AMPLIFIERS BEST OVERALL SOUND AND PICTURE YAMAHA RXV375

3D READY

SALE



YAMAHA RXV375 AV RECEIVER

"If you want to get into home cinema, we highly recommend starting your system with this capable Yamaha RXV375 receiver." - WHF? S&V magazine.

WERE £249 | 5 Year Supercare £19.90

£199

SAVE £150

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013

3D READY

SALE



DENON AVR X2000 AV RECEIVER

4K ULTRA-HD UPSCALING Internet Radio AirPlay

"Brings Denon back to the AV receiver top table." - WHF? S&V magazine.

WERE £399 | 5 Year Supercare £24.95

£249.95

SAVE £170

Bluetooth 3D READY

DEAL



HARMAN KARDON AVR171 AV RECEIVER

Internet Radio AirPlay

"This lovely-looking receiver delivers a powerhouse performance with music and movies." - WHF? S&V magazine.

TSP £449.95 | 5 Year Supercare £27.95

£279.95

SAVE £100

Bluetooth 3D READY

SALE



ONKYO TXNR626 AV RECEIVER

4K ULTRA-HD UPSCALING Wi-Fi Built-in Spotify

With Bluetooth and Wi-Fi now built-in, the class-leading Onkyo TXNR626 is more impressive than ever.

WERE £399.95 | 5 Year Supercare £29.95

£299.95

SAVE £100

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013

3D READY

SALE



YAMAHA RXV675 AV RECEIVER

4K ULTRA-HD UPSCALING Internet Radio AirPlay

"You're encased in a bubble of accurately placed sound effects." - WHF? S&V magazine.

WERE £499.95 | 5 Year Supercare £39.95

£399.95

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013 PRODUCT OF THE YEAR BEST OVERALL SOUND AND PICTURE SONY STRD1040

3D READY

DEAL



SONY STRD1040 AV RECEIVER

4K ULTRA-HD UPSCALING Wi-Fi Built-in AirPlay

"Depth of detail, exciting and ample connectivity - this is a superstar in the making." - WHF? S&V magazine.

5 Year Supercare just 10% of purchase price

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WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013 BEST DVD PLAYER MARANTZ UD7007

SALE



MARANTZ UD7007 SMART 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

"A solidly made machine that performs to a very high standard." - WHF? S&V mag.

WERE £629 | 5 Year Supercare £54.90

£549

SAVE £730

CALL FOR INDIVIDUAL UNIT PRICES

DEAL



PIONEER SCLX57 AV RECEIVER, BDPLX55 BLU-RAY PLAYER & DALI ZENSOR 15.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision Magazine praised the SCLX57's "stunning levels of subtlety" and the Zensor 15.1 speaker package, saying "these are enthusiastic and engaging performers that make sure the listener has a good time."

SYSTEM TSP £2528.90 | 5 Year Supercare £179.95

WERE £2858.90 | 5 Year Supercare £179.95

£1799.95

SAVE £600

4K ULTRA-HD UPSCALING AirPlay

CALL FOR INDIVIDUAL UNIT PRICES

DEAL



YAMAHA RXA3030 AV RECEIVER & CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AERO 5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine praised the RXA3030's "warm and muscular presentation" and the Aero 5.1 speakers' "combination of cohesiveness, punch and articulation."

SYSTEM TSP £3599.90 | 5 Year Supercare £299.95

£2999.95

SAVE £200

Wi-Fi Built-in 4K ULTRA-HD UPSCALING RICHER SOUNDS EXCLUSIVE

SALE



CAMBRIDGE AUDIO 752BD SMART 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

"The 752BD takes some beating." - Hi-Fi News magazine.

WERE £799.95 | 5 Year Supercare £59.95

£599.95

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013 HOME CINEMA AMPLIFIERS BEST OVERALL SOUND AND PICTURE PIONEER SC-LX57

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013 PRODUCT OF THE YEAR BEST OVERALL SOUND AND PICTURE DALI ZENSOR 15.1

£1799.95

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013 HOME CINEMA AMPLIFIERS BEST OVERALL SOUND AND PICTURE YAMAHA RX-A3030

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013 SPEAKER PACKAGES BEST OVERALL SOUND AND PICTURE CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AERO 5.1

£2999.95

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WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
BEST DVD PLAYERS
SONY BDPS4100

DEAL

SONY BDPS4100
3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

"This budget player represents excellent value for money." - WHF? S&V mag.
5 Year Supercare just 10% of purchase price

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WiFi Ready

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED

ALSO AVAILABLE WITH MULTI-REGION DVD PLAYBACK ONLY £159.95

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
SONY BDPS790

DEAL

SONY BDPS790
3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

STOCKS ERRATIC

WiFi Built-in

4K ULTRAHD UPSCALING

"Great features and excellent picture performance." - WHF? S&V mag.
5 Year Supercare £14.95

£149.95

SAVE £30

ALSO AVAILABLE WITH MULTI-REGION DVD PLAYBACK ONLY £179.95

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
★★★★★
July 2012

SALE

PANASONIC DMPBDT500
3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

"Delivers a truly captivating performance."
- What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.
WERE £199.95
5 Year Supercare £16.95

£169.95

WiFi Built-in

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED

YAMAHA YAS101
SOUNDBAR

Simple to use and sounds fantastic – it's the full package.
5 Year Supercare just 10% of purchase price

CALL OR SEE WEB

SAVE £70

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
SOUNDBARS
BEST SOUNDBAR
LG NB4530

DEAL

LG NB4530
SOUNDBAR

"Looks the part and sounds great."
- What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.
TSP £349.95
5 Year Supercare £27.95

£279.95

SAVE £30

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2012
SYSTEM
YAMAHA YSP2200

SALE

YAMAHA YSP2200
SOUNDBAR

"A great home cinema solution."
- What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.
WERE £579.95
5 Year Supercare £54.95

£549.95

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
SPEAKER PACKAGES
BEST 5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE
TANNOY HTS101

DEAL

TANNOY HTS101
5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

"Simply in terms of scale, it's deeply impressive." - What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.
5 Year Supercare just 10% of purchase price

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LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
SPEAKER PACKAGES
BEST 5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE
Q ACOUSTICS Q7000i

DEAL

Q ACOUSTICS Q7000i
5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

"Organised and agile without ever sacrificing any bass punch."
- What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.
5 Year Supercare £89.95

£899.95

SAVE £100

ALSO AVAILABLE IN WALNUT

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
SPEAKER PACKAGES
BEST FLOORSTANDING SPEAKER PACKAGE
CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AERO 5.1

SALE

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AERO
5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE INC. FLOORSTANDING SPEAKERS

"Exciting, informative and seamless as we've heard for the money."
- What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.
WERE £1599.95 | 5 Year Supercare £149.95

£1499.95

We'll beat any genuine advertised price, voucher offer or system deal, online & in-store, by up to £100!

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PAY JULY 2014

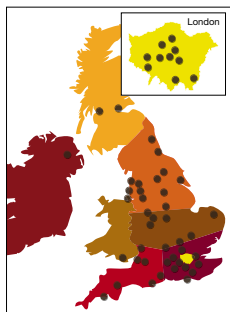
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53 stores nationwide with demo facilities

Bath 0333 900 0088	Cardiff 0333 900 0029	Guildford 0333 900 0050	NEW LOCATION - London Bridge 0333 900 0021	London Kingston 0333 900 0040	Milton Keynes 0333 900 0054	Prestwich 0333 900 0042	Stockport 0333 900 0022
Belfast 0333 900 0070	Cheltenham 0333 900 0057	Hanley 0333 900 0060	London Bromley 0333 900 0051	London Southgate 0333 900 0085	Newcastle 0333 900 0032	Reading 0333 900 0044	Tunbridge Wells 0333 900 0082
Birmingham 0333 900 0023	Chester 0333 900 0063	Hull 0333 900 0059	London Chelsea 0333 900 0027	Swiss Cottage 0333 900 0031	Norwich 0333 900 0046	Reigate 0333 900 0081	Watford 0333 900 0037
Bournemouth 0333 900 0058	Eton 0333 900 0087	Leeds 0333 900 0025	London Chiswick 0333 900 0055	London West End 0333 900 0028	Nottingham 0333 900 0035	Romford 0333 900 0041	Weybridge 0333 900 0083
Brighton 0333 900 0039	Edinburgh 0333 900 0026	Leicester 0333 900 0043	London City 0333 900 0045	Manchester 0333 900 0086	Oxford 0333 900 0052	Sheffield 0333 900 0034	York 0333 900 0084
Bristol 0333 900 0024	Exeter 0333 900 0061	Lichfield 0333 900 0089	London Croydon 0333 900 0033	Maidstone 0333 900 0062	Plymouth 0333 900 0047	Solihull 0333 900 0090	Customer Service 0333 900 0095
Cambridge 0333 900 0053	Glasgow 0333 900 0038	Liverpool 0333 900 0030		Middlesbrough 0333 900 0096	Preston 0333 900 0080	Southampton 0333 900 0036	

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WHFFEB14-01

£100 OFF

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Some of these offers are exclusive to WHF? S&V magazine readers. Please quote this ad when calling. While stocks last. Available from 6th January 2014 - 16th February 2014

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www.richersounds.com

03 NUMBERS ARE NOT PREMIUM RATE NUMBERS! 03 numbers connect you directly to the store you call and are charged at the same rate as you are charged for numbers starting 01 and 02. 03 numbers are included in all bundle rates for mobile phones and landlines.



CD players

Integrated _____ Has both a CD mechanism and digital-to-analogue conversion tech
Transport _____ Needs an outboard DAC but can deliver a higher standard of sound

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Integrated	Transport	Co-axial out	Optical out	XLR out	RCA out	Headphone out	Co-axial in	Optical in	AES/EBU in	USB in	Finishes	Dimensions (hwxd, cm)
Up to £500																	
Cambridge Audio Azur 351C	300	11.12/FT	★★★★★	A worthy rival to the Award-winning Marantz CD6004	●	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	9x43x31	
Cambridge Audio Azur 651C	450	03.12/FT	★★★★★	A spacious sounding disc spinner	●	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	9x43x31		
Marantz CD6004	300	01.12/ST	★★★★★	Best CD player up to £500, Awards 2012	●	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	2	11x44x34		
Marantz CD6005	350	10.13/FT	★★★★★	Best CD player up to £500, Awards 2013	●	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	11x44x34		
Sansui CDD-201V	200	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Sensibly priced, but not quite an all-rounder	●	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	7x43x28		
£500-£1000																	
Arcam FMJ CD17	650	06.12/ST	★★★★★	Basic on features, but capable enough	●	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	9x43x29		
Audiolab 8200CD	800	12.10/GT	★★★★★	Best CD player £500-£1000, Awards 2012	●	1	1	1	1	0	2	2	0	1	8x44x30		
Audiolab 8200CDQ	950	09.11/FT	★★★★★	Improves on the sky-high performance of the 8200CD	●	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	0	1	8x44x30		
NAD C 546BEE	500	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Talented but struggles against the more enjoyable budget Marantz	●	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	9x44x31		
Cyrus CD Transport	750	01.12/ST	★★★★★	An impressive and affordable CD transport	●	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	8x22x36		
Cyrus CD6 SE2	700	06.12/ST	★★★★★	Subtly upgraded, with worthwhile results	●	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	8x22x36	
Naim CD5si	1000	02.13/FT	★★★★★	Best CD player £500-£1500, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	●	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	7x43x30		
Pioneer PD-50	500	09.13/FT	★★★★★	Worth considering but this SACD player doesn't quite engage	●	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	13x44x33		
Rega Apollo-R	550	06.12/ST	★★★★★	Admirable, but lacks some cohesion	●	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	9x22x32		
Roksan Kandy K2	900	06.12/ST	★★★★★	Big and powerful, with an entertaining sound	●	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	10x43x38		
Yamaha CD-S2000	979	03.09/GT	★★★★★	A beautiful object that's involving to listen to	●	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	14x44x44		
£1000 and above																	
Audio Research CD5	5500	06.09/FT	★★★★★	Audio Research strikes gold again. The CD5 is a terrific player	●	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	13x48x31		
Burmester 069	35840	11.13/FT	★★★★★	Quite possibly the best CD player money can buy	●	2	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	16x45x34	
Cambridge Audio Azur 851C	1200	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	Impressive sonic presentation but a touch too clinical for our tastes	●	1	1	1	1	0	2	2	1	2	12x43x34		
Copland CDA 825	4298	05.13/FT	★★★★★	A hugely capable player with stunning sound quality	●	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	10x43x39		
Cyrus CD 8 SE2	1200	09.12/FT	★★★★★	Best CD player £1000-£1500, Awards 2012	●	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	8x22x36		
dCS Puccini	11300	02.11/FT	★★★★★	With the master clock it's an amazing combo	●	1	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	2	11x46x40		
Esoteric K-05	7495	01.14/FT	★★★★★	A great place to start... if you're looking for your final disc-player	●	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	13x45x36		
Leema Antila IIS Eco	2995	09.11/FT	★★★★★	The already good Antila goes up another level in performance	●	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	11x44x31		
Musical Fidelity M6CD	2100	08.13/FT	★★★★★	Its powerful, yet refined sound will appeal to many, a fine performer	●	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	2	13x44x39		
Naim CDS3/XPS2	9990	06.04/FT	★★★★★	Sell your car and treat your music collection to the best present ever	●	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	9x43x31		
Naim CD5 XS	1950	Aw.09/FT	★★★★★	It's an excellent CD player, but faces stiff competition	●	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	7x43x30		
Naim CD555/555PS	18345	10.09/FT	★★★★★	The CD555/555PS has a hefty price tag, but a classy performance	●	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	11x43x31		
Naim CDX2	3640	02.10/FT	★★★★★	The tweaked CDX2 remains a fine proposition	●	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	9x43x31		
Parasound Halo CD1	5000	07.13/FT	★★★★★	Not cheap but it's a fine CD player with an idiosyncratic design	●	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	11x44x35		
Primare CD32	2200	04.11/FT	★★★★★	It's massively detailed, but not as engaging as we'd like	●	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	11x43x38		
Rega Isis	5998	06.10/FT	★★★★★	A great first stab at tackling the high-end CD market	●	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	11x43x35		
Roksan Caspian M2 CD	1650	Aw.10/FT	★★★★★	Best CD player £1500+ Awards 2013	●	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	8x43x33		
T+A MP 3000 HV	7900	12.13/FT	★★★★★	A classy multi-source player that delivers high-quality sound	●	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	11x43x35		
Wadia S7i	14000	10.11/FT	★★★★★	An engineering sledgehammer	●	1	0	1	1	0	3	2	1	1	17x46x46		

System killers... CDs to test your kit



Emeli Sande Our Version of Events

Emeli Sande's debut album isn't particularly original, but Sande's confident vocals give this album some heft and dynamism.



Led Zeppelin Celebration Day

Celebration Day is a trip down memory lane with the group's signature sound revisited in this blazing callback to their glory days.



My Bloody Valentine Loveless

Produced over two years, *Loveless* is the kind of narcotic, aggressive recording that demands exemplary timing and focus from any system.



NAS Life is Good

A reflective, ambitious recording filled with old-skool beats, this effort from NAS might not be his most coherent, but it is a satisfying album.



DACs

Digital-to-analogue converters take a digital data stream from its source (such as a computer or CD transport) and turns it into an analogue signal that your amplifier can work with. These devices have become more popular in recent years due to the emergence of computer-based audio

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		USB in	Optical in	Co-axial in	AES EBU in	HDMI in	Wireless	Headphone out	RCA out	Balanced XLR out	Dimensions (hwfd, cm)
Up to £500														
Audioengine D1	150	05.12/FT	★★★★★	A DAC and headphone amp with a fine sound	1	1	0	0	1		1	1	0	3x9x10
Audioquest DragonFly	215	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Best DAC up to £300, Awards 2012	1	0	0	0	0		1	0	0	1x2x6
Arcam rDAC	300	10.10/FT	★★★★★	Best DAC £200-£400, Awards 2011	0	1	1	0	0		0	1	0	4x16x11
Arcam irDAC	400	11.13/FT	★★★★★	Best DAC £300-£500, Awards 2013, PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	0	2	2	0	0		0	1	0	4x12x19
Arcam irDAC Wireless	380	09.12/GT	★★★★★	No longer the default choice at the money, still very much a contender	1	1	1	0	0	●	0	1	0	4x16x11
Arcam rPAC	150	04.13/ST	★★★★★	More desirable alternatives, but the rPAC still has plenty of merit	1	0	0	0	0		1	1	0	3x10x6
Camb. Audio DacMagic 100	200	06.12/FT	★★★★★	An affordable, fine looking and listenable DAC	1	2	2	0	0		0	1	0	5x11x13
Camb. Audio DacMagic Plus	350	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Better sound and features than the original - but pricey	1	2	2	0	0		1	1	1	5x22x19
Camb. Audio DacMagic XS	100	12.13/FT	★★★★★	A superb buy for those on a tight budget	0	0	0	0	0		1	0	0	5x3x1
Furutech ADL GT 40	400	06.11/FT	★★★★★	Product of the Year - Cables & Accessories, Awards 2011	1	0	0	0	0		1	1	0	6x15x11
Firestone Spitfire	250	05.10/GT	★★★★★	If you don't need USB, then this is the pick of the DACs	0	1	1	0	0		0	1	0	5x8x11
HRT Headstreamer	145	02.12/FT	★★★★★	A neat headphone amp and DAC combination	1	0	0	0	0		1	0	0	3x6x7
HRT microStreamer	180	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Best DAC up to £300, Awards 2013	1	0	0	0	0		1	0	0	1x3x6
Meridian Director	450	11.13/GT	★★★★★	Packs a sonic punch but lacks the swagger found in others	1	1	1	0	0		0	1	0	3x14x8
Meridian Explorer DAC	250	07.13/GT	★★★★★	The Explorer's design and assured sonic performance makes it a top contender	1	0	0	0	0		1	0	0	2x3x10
Micromega MyDAC	260	04.13/ST	★★★★★	If you like your music to have an attacking edge, then this DAC's for you	1	0	0	0	0		1	0	0	2x3x10
Musical Fidelity V-90 DAC	200	12.13/FT	★★★★★	A well-featured DAC that's a little too relaxed in its sound	1	2	1	0	0		0	0	0	5x17x10
NAD DAC 1	295	01.12/ST	★★★★★	A good, though not exceptional, wireless DAC	1	0	0	0	0	●	0	1	0	4x14x7
NAD D 1050	400	11.13/GT	★★★★★	For those looking for a desktop DAC, the NAD D 1050 is a brilliant box of tricks	1	2	2	0	0		1	1	1	19x6x21
Pro-Ject DAC Box DS	299	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A solid performer but doesn't excel in any area	1	1	1	0	0		0	1	0	7x10x14
£500-£1000														
Audiolab M-DAC	600	08.13/GT	★★★★★	Best DAC £500-£700, Awards 2013	1	2	2	0	0		0	1	1	6x25x25
Chord Chordette QuteHD	990	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Best DAC £700-£1000, Awards 2013	1	1	1	0	0		0	1	0	7x16x4
Heed Audio Dactilus 3	515	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Excellent presentation let down by understated sound	1	1	1	0	0		0	1	0	7x10x25
Rega DAC	500	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Beefy build; natural, unforced, dynamic and detailed sound	1	2	2	0	0		0	1	0	8x22x27
Musical Fidelity M1SDAC	800	08.13/FT	★★★★★	An impressive spec list but performance is trumped by cheaper rivals	1	1	2	0	0		1	1	0	10x22x31
Parasound Zdac	500	11.13/GT	★★★★★	The Zdac produces a lively, likable sound	1	1	1	0	0		1	1	1	5x22x26
Sony UDA-1	500	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Not the most musically exciting DAC, but an excellent choice for desktop users	1	1	1	0	0		1	1	0	7x23x26
£1000 and above														
Antelope Zodiac Gold/Voltikus	3100	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Unique and appealing, it just misses out on a fifth star	1	2	2	0	0		2	1	1	11x17x19
Audio Research DAC 8	4698	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Pricey, but as organic-sounding as you can get	1	1	1	0	0		1	1	1	13x48x25
Arcam FMJ D33	2000	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A well-equipped DAC, but not the best in class	3	2	2	1	0		0	1	2	11x43x37
Burmester 113	2300	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Small and unassuming but packs a seriously exciting sound	1	1	1	0	0	●	0	1	1	6x20x17
Bryston BDA-1 DAC	2350	06.11/FT	★★★★★	A great sounding DAC with appealing build quality	1	2	4	1	0		0	1	1	4x48x29

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DACs

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DACs continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	USB in	Optical in	Co-axial in	AES EBU in	HDMI in	Wireless	Headphone out	RCA out	Balanced XLR out	Dimensions (hwd, cm)			
£1000 and above																
Chord QBD76 HDSB	4995	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A top-class, visually appealing DAC that delivers brilliant sound				2	2	2	2	0	1	1	6x34x15	
dCS Debussy	7930	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Worth every penny of its asking price				1	0	2	2	0	0	1	1	7x45x39
McIntosh D100	3000	06.13/GT	★★★★★	A solid and entertainer performer. Well featured, too				1	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	10x45x41
Musical Fidelity M6 DAC	2000	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A mighty performer but its price and competition rob it of a fifth star				1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	13x44x39
NAD M51	1500	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Best DAC £1200+, Awards 2012				1	1	1	1	2	0	1	0	8x44x30
Naim DAC	2150	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Flexible, fine sounding and future-proof. The Naim is some DAC				2	3	3	0	0	0	1	0	7x43x30
Naim DAC-V1	1250	08.13/GT	★★★★★	Best DAC £1000+, Awards 2013				1	2	3	0	0	1	1	1	9x21x32
T+A DAC 8	1250	09.13/FT	★★★★★	Beautifully engineered with a great sound to boot				1	1	4	1	0	1	1	1	9x27x27



Turntables

Turntable _____ The main part of the player that actually spins the record
Tonearm _____ The component that carries the cartridge across the record surface
Cartridge _____ Turns the information in the record groove into sound

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	33.33	45	78	Elec. speed change	Manual operation	Photo amp	Tonearm inc.	Cartridges inc.	USB port	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	
Up to £1000															
Edwards Audio TT1	380	11.11/FT	★★★★★	A tempting alternative to the class-leaders at this price				●	●	●	●	●	1	12x45x36	
Pro-Ject Essential II	200	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	Best turntable up to £400, Awards 2013				●	●	●	●	3	14x46x36		
Pro-Ject 2Xperience Basic +	600	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★	Fuss-free package with a strikingly clear sound				●	●	●	●	1	14x46x36		
Pro-Ject 2Xperience Classic	750	12.10/FT	★★★★★	A fine deck that's worth auditioning				●	●	●	●	3	16x46x36		
Pro-Ject Debut Carbon	300	09.12/FT	★★★★★	Best turntable up to £500, Awards 2012				●	●	●	●	7	12x42x32		



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TURNTABLES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		33.33	45	78	RPM	Elec. speed change	Manual operation	Phono amp	Tonearm inc.	Cartridges inc.	USB port	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Rega P3-24/Elys 2	508	11.07/GT	★★★★★	Best turntable up to £300-£600, Awards 2010	●	●			●	●	●	●			8	12x45x36
Rega RP1	225	Aw.10/FT	★★★★★	Best turntable up to £400, Awards 2011	●	●			●	●	●	●			3	12x45x36
Rega RP3/Elys2	550	10.11/FT	★★★★★	Best turntable £400-£800, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	●	●			●	●	●	●			3	10x45x36
TDK ETVT20102	350	01.12/FT	★★★★★	A neat solution to archive your vinyl	●	●			●	●	●	●			1	11x45x38
£1000 and above																
Clearaudio Emotion SE	2110	11.09/FT	★★★★★	For the money, this is an excellent performer	●	●			●	●	●	●			1	8x40x32
Clearaudio Performance SE	2660	08.12/FT	★★★★★	Quality engineering and top-class sound	●	●			●	●	●	●			2	13x42x33
Kuzma Stabi S/Stogi S	2940	04.10/FT	★★★★★	A worthy alternative to the Michell Orbe	●	●			●	●	●	●			1	14x40x30
Linn Majik LP12	2350	03.09/FT	★★★★★	The LP12 offers great value for money with no compromise	●	●			●	●	●	●			5	14x45x36
Michell Gyro SE/TecnoArm A	1478	09.08/FT	★★★★★	Packs a sublime punch – it makes listening a pleasure	●	●			●	●	●	●			1	19x41x53
Michell Orbe SE/Tecnoarm A	2675	01.09/FT	★★★★★	Don't buy anything without hearing this deck first	●	●			●	●	●	●			2	26x64x53
Origin Live Calypso package	2440	12.11/FT	★★★★★	Impressive package, but lacks some attention to detail	●	●			●	●	●	●			1	14x45x38
Pro-Ject 2Xperience X-Pack	1000	08.10/GT	★★★★★	Precision and integration to keep it among the top players	●	●			●	●	●	●			1	14x46x39
P'ject Xten./Ortof. RS-309D	4000	07.09/FT	★★★★★	Proves Pro-ject can compete at all price levels	●	●			●	●	●	●			4	25x55x45
Rega RP6/Exact	1000	11.12/FT	★★★★★	Best turntable £800+, Awards 2013	●	●			●	●	●	●			8	12x45x36
Roksan Radius 5.2	1375	Aw.09/FT	★★★★★	Best turntable £1200+, Awards 2010. Superb performance	●	●			●	●	●	●			8	15x45x37
Roksan Xerxes 20 Plus (Pack)	6275	10.08/FT	★★★★★	A truly exceptional turntable	●	●			●	●	●	●			3	12x45x37
Thorens TD160HD/TP250	1560	10.08/GT	★★★★★	One of the best at this price	●	●			●	●	●	●			1	18x43x34
Thorens TD309	1250	06.10/FT	★★★★★	The TD309 is a good deck, but it's no TD160HD on the cheap	●	●			●	●	●	●			2	13x47x43
Townshend Rock 7	1500	09.09/FT	★★★★★	It's got its quirks, but it's great value for the money	●	●			●	●	●	●			1	15x40x34



Radios

DAB _____ Digital radio signal that now offers coverage over most of the UK
 Internet _____ Allows you to listen to thousands of radio stations from around the world

The shortlist



AWARD WINNER
Pure Evoke D2

Awards 2013: Best Radio up to £100



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
Pure Evoke F4

Awards 2013: Best Radio £100-£200



AWARD WINNER
Geneva World Radio DAB+
 Awards 2012: Best Radio £200+

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		DAB	FM	MW	Internet	Battery	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Up to £100										
Aves Air	50	09.13/GT	★★★★★	A neat, lightweight radio that's fine for listening on the go	●	●			●	10x6x2
iLuv Vibro Classic II	50	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Up-to-date compatibility with Apple devices, but at an old-school price		●				7x23x8
Pure Digital Elan II	99	01.10/GT	★★★★★	Classy and natural - another joy from Pure	●	●			●	16x28x9
Pure Digital Move 2500	90	11.11/FT	★★★★★	A great performer in the right circumstances	●	●			●	10x6x1.5
Pure Digital Move 400D	90	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Perfect for on-the-go casual listening, but not as your main home radio	●	●			●	8.5x15x2.7
Pure Digital One Classic II	65	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★	An upgrade of an established favourite	●	●			●	15x21x7
Pure Evoke D2	85	09.13/GT	★★★★★	Best Radio up to £100, Awards 2013	●	●			●	15x21x7
Q2 Internet radio	90	03.11/FT	★★★★★	No-frills wi-fi radio that sounds great for its size	●	●		●	●	10x10x10
Roberts Duologic	75	01.10/GT	★★★★★	User friendly and sleek – with great sound	●	●			●	15x25x83
Roberts Expression	90	12.11/GT	★★★★★	Sweet sounds, and sophisticated retro looks	●	●			●	18x26x90
Sony XDR-S16	80	12.11/GT	★★★★★	An uncomplicatedly chunky listen	●	●				14x27x11
Tangent Trio DAB	90	01.11/GT	★★★★★	Fine value, smart-looking and future proof	●	●				17x33x20
View Quest WiFi200	80	01.11/FT	★★★★★	A handy, portable wi-fi internet radio				●	●	73x125x23

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RADIOs continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	DAB	FM	MW	Internet	Battery	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
£100 and above									
Geneva World Radio DAB+	270	09.13/GT	★★★★★	Best Radio £200+, Awards 2013				● ● ●	17x30x7
Magicbox Nocturne XP-2	170	12.10/GT	★★★★★	Much more of a saint than a sinner, so well worth considering				● ● ●	17x30x15
Philips Original Radio Mini	110	09.13/GT	★★★★★	Terrific sound and features makes this radio an appealing buy				● ●	25x12x12
Pure Digital Avanti Flow i'net	250	12.10/GT	★★★★★	A genuine alternative to a micro system				● ● ● ●	13x39x23
Pure Digital Evoke Flow	150	05.10/GT	★★★★★	Internet and DAB-capable radio that's a delight to use and listen to				● ● ● ●	18x21x11
Pure Digital Evoke-1S Marshall	120	01.11/FT	★★★★★	A quirky and appealing style classic				● ●	17x22x12
Pure Evoke F4	180	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	Best Radio £100-£200, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR				● ● ● ●	18x21x11
Pure Digital Oasis Flow	170	09.10/FT	★★★★★	Weatherproof, but its sound-per-pound ratio can be bettered				● ● ● ●	23x16x14
Pure Digital One Flow	100	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Best Internet Radio up to £150, Awards 2012				● ● ●	15x21x8
Pure Digital Sensia	250	01.10/FT	★★★★★	Plenty to offer: add to your shortlist of portable internet radios				● ● ●	17x28x18
Revo AXIS	200	12.10/GT	★★★★★	Product of the Year - Radios, Awards 2011				● ● ●	13x22x15
Revo AXIS XS	200	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Best Internet Radio £150+, Awards 2012				● ● ●	12.5x22x15
Revo AXIS X3	200	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Great radio and a nice little streamer				● ● ●	12.5x22x15
Revo Domino D3	170	05.10/GT	★★★★★	There's lots to like here, but sound is a bit bottom-heavy				● ● ●	14x22x13
Revo Heritage	230	03.10/FT	★★★★★	Beyond reproach on paper, but comes up a bit short with sound				● ● ●	18x26x10
Revo Pico RadioStation	170	12.10/FT	★★★★★	A fine little radio/streamer for bathroom and kitchen				● ● ● ●	17x11x11
Revo Pixis	100	09.13/GT	★★★★★	A decent rather than ground-breaking effort from Revo. Worth an audition				● ●	13x16x16
Roberts Revival Cath Kidston	200	01.11/GT	★★★★★	Cath Kidston's flower-power version of this fine sounding radio				● ●	23x16x12
Roberts Revival iStream	200	12.10/GT	★★★★★	Fifties style meets modern functionality				● ● ● ●	15x25x13
Roberts Stream 83i	150	05.10/GT	★★★★★	Good in most areas, but the 83i needs a more balanced sound				● ● ●	21x25x13
Ruark Audio R1 MkII	160	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Best DAB/FM radio, Awards 2012				● ●	18x13x14
Tangent Uno	100	01.09/GT	★★★★★	With a sound like this, it should be on your list				● ●	13x19x13
Tivoli Model 10+	160	09.13/GT	★★★★★	A good table-top offering at an affordable price				● ●	20x12x12
View Quest Retro 1	100	12.11/GT	★★★★★	A neat, talented portable radio that deserves an audition				● ● ●	16x28x9



Hi-fi speakers

- Standmounters** Usually smaller speakers that need to be put on a stand, not bookshelves
Floorstanders Larger speakers that tend to go louder and deeper than standmounters
Powered Have built-in amplifiers and need mains power to work

The shortlist



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
Q Acoustics Concept 20

Awards 2013: Best Stereo Speaker £200-£400



AWARD WINNER
KEF LS50

Awards 2013: Best Standmounter £400-£800



AWARD WINNER
PMC Twenty 22

Awards 2013: Best Standmounter £1500+

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Standmount	Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd, cm)		
Up to £200										
Acoustic Energy Compact 1	150	10.11/FT	★★★★★	Stylish looks meet grown-up performance				●	2	22x15x20
Audioengine P4	183	02.10/FT	★★★★★	Small in size, huge in sound: a must-audition pair				●	3	23x14x17
Cambridge Audio S30	120	07.07/FT	★★★★★	Has an air of quality that extends from its build to its sound				●	2	23x16x22
Mission MX1	150	06.11/GT	★★★★★	Best stereo speakers up to £150, Awards 2010. A real return to form from Mission				●	4	28x17x26
Q Acoustics 2010i	120	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Set the standard at this price and size level				●	4	23x20x15
Q Acoustics 2020i	165	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Best stereo speakers up to £200, Awards 2013				●	4	26x17x28
SoundScience Frankenspiel FS-1	130	07.12/ST	★★★★★	Best Budget desktop speakers, Awards 2011				●	1	9x9x9
SoundScience QSB	85	04.11/FT	★★★★★	Compact, clever and with a big detailed sound				●	1	85x85x85
£200-£500										
Acoustic Energy Neo One V2	210	08.11/GT	★★★★★	Real ability in most areas but they don't quite gel				●	2	36x18x23
Acoust. Energy Neo V2 Three	399	09.10/FT	★★★★★	Much to like, but not quite all-rounders				●	2	91x20x24

SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Standmount Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd,cm)
Acoustic Energy 301	425	06.13/GT	★★★★★	Very good speakers for the money, definitely worthy of consideration	●	2	30x19x25
Audioengine A5+	290	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Bigger, better and more flexible than the originals	●	3	27x18x20
Arcaydis DM1	299	10.10/GT	★★★★★	These brilliant DM1s will give every rival below £450 a fright	●	4	30x16x21
Bose Companion 20	200	05.13/GT	★★★★★	Solid, reliable speakers for buyers on a tight budget	●	1	22x9x12
Bose Computer Music Monitor	250	09.13/GT	★★★★★	Enjoyable sound for a speaker this small	●	2	12x7x12
Boston Acoustics A-25	200	08.11/GT	★★★★★	Classy and likeable speakers	●	3	27x18x23
Boston Acoustics A-26	260	01.12/ST	★★★★★	A beautifully accomplished standmounter	●	2	33x21x27
B&W 685	400	06.13/GT	★★★★★	Superb Award-winning speakers from B&W	●	4	34x20x33
B&W MM-1	399	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Still good, but there's better available	●	1	17x10x10
Cambridge Audio SLA-25	200	05.12/GT	★★★★★	Not at all bad, but some rivals are better	●	8	22x15x18
Cambridge Audio SX-60	200	09.13/FT	★★★★★	Impressive speakers but they could do with more refinement	●	2	34x20x27
Castle Knight 2	400	02.11/GT	★★★★★	Good, but not as adaptable as we'd like	●	8	38x20x34
Dali Lektor 1	250	10.09/GT	★★★★★	As musically enjoyable as you'll buy at this price	●	2	26x15x21
Dali Lektor 2	299	03.10/GT	★★★★★	Seriously entertaining speakers and simply stunning at this money	●	2	31x18x22
Dali Lektor 3	450	08.09/GT	★★★★★	Bigger isn't always better, as the Lektor 3s prove	●	2	39x20x26
Dali Zensor 1	200	08.11/GT	★★★★★	These brilliant budget standmounters demand a listen	●	2	27x16x22
Dali Zensor 3	300	01.14/FT	★★★★★	If it's entertainment you crave, then these standmounters deliver in spades	●	3	35x21x29
EB Acoustics EB1	470	08.09/GT	★★★★★	You'll have trouble faulting these nifty standmounters	●	2	31x17x27
Epos Epic 1	325	04.11/FT	★★★★★	Punchy and exciting but they can't deliver all-round ability	●	2	31x19x25
Focal Chorus 706V	390	03.11/FT	★★★★★	Thoroughly enjoyable but they may not cut it with dance music	●	3	39x22x29
Focal XS Book	300	07.12/GT	★★★★★	A potent-sounding speaker that brings hi-fi listening to your desktop	●	1	28x11x20
Focal XS Book Wireless	300	10.13/FT	★★★★★	Stacks of detail but not quite the measure of their rivals	●	1	28x11x20
KEF Q300	450	06.13/GT	★★★★★	Not quite at the top anymore, but still fine, engaging standmounters	●	3	36x21x30
Leema Xero	495	07.08/GT	★★★★★	Not a true all-rounder, but loaded with talent	●	5	25x25x16
Monitor Audio Bronze BX 1	200	05.11/FT	★★★★★	Stylish as you like, but not the complete article	●	4	26x17x18
Monitor Audio Bronze BX2	250	07.12/ST	★★★★★	Best stereo speakers £200-£350, Awards 2012	●	4	35x19x26
Monitor Audio Silver RX1	425	06.13/GT	★★★★★	Well-made and refined speakers, just lacking the flexibility of its rivals	●	6	31x19x24
Mordaunt-Short Aviano 1XR	250	01.12/ST	★★★★★	Still great, but the rivals have caught up	●	1	28x18x27
Mordaunt-Short Aviano 2	300	03.10/FT	★★★★★	Plenty of bang for your buck, and more besides	●	3	32x21x30
Mission MX2	200	08.11/GT	★★★★★	Dynamic enough but maybe too exciting	●	4	34x21x31
Mission MX3	350	11.11/GT	★★★★★	Peppy and communicative floorstanders	●	4	82x17x34
Q Acoustics Concept 20	350	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Best stereo speakers £200-£400, Awards 2013, PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	●	2	26x17x28
Q Acoustics 2050i	440	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Best floorstander £400-£800, Awards 2013	●	4	100x32x27
Quad 11L Classic	330	Aw.10/FT	★★★★★	Impressive standmounters but lack a touch of sparkle	●	4	31x19x24
Ruark Audio MR1	300	09.13/GT	★★★★★	Best desktop speakers, Awards 2013	●	3	17x13x14
Tangent Evo 5	200	05.09/FT	★★★★★	Considered, grown-up and a supremely easy listen	●	2	23x15x20
Tannoy Mercury V4	380	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Best floorstander £350-£700, Awards 2011	●	2	97x20x28
Tannoy Mercury V4i	400	01.14/FT	★★★★★	An exciting and punchy listen, but it comes with compromises	●	1	100x20x28
Tannoy Revolution DC4	380	06.13/GT	★★★★★	Well worth considering if your listening room isn't too big	●	2	27x15x16
Tannoy Revolution DC6	400	10.12/GT	★★★★★	Best standmounter £350-£700, Awards 2012	●	1	36.5x20x25
Teufel Ultima 60	368	12.09/FT	★★★★★	Bargain speakers with a big, bold sound that's engaging and exciting	●	1	103x21x32
Triangle Color	470	06.11/FT	★★★★★	Small, but perfectly formed	●	3	29x17x24
Wharfedale Diamond 121	230	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Fabulous sound. For insight and entertainment, the 121s needn't fear any rival	●	7	32x17x23



NEW Spendor D7

What do the experts say?

If you're after a great all-round, affordable, high end loudspeaker, here it is *Hi-Fi Choice Issue 370 2013*

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D7 has an unmistakable touch of magic. Easy to drive, genuinely efficient, undemanding of placement, fine stereo, extended powerful bass, upbeat and well-balanced, build and finish first rate. What more can one ask? *Hi-Fi Critic Sep 2013*



www.spendoraudio.com

SPENDOR

SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Standmount Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (hwxd,cm)
£500-£1500							
Acoustic Energy AE1 Classic	1000	07.11/GT	★★★★★	A classic yes, but not the best around	●	2	30x18x26
Acoustic Energy AE22 Active	899	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Talented active speakers not easily matched	●	1	25x35x30
Audio Pro LV2e	700	09.12/FT	★★★★★	Wireless desktop speakers with a hi-fi flourish		3	98x14x24
Audiovector Ki1 Super	800	04.12/GT	★★★★★	These pint-sized speakers lack far-reaching dynamics, but are easy to live with	●	5	98x14x24
Audiovector Ki3 Standard	1200	03.12/FT	★★★★★	Packed with resolution and speed	●	5	98x14x24
Arcadyis SM35C	850	08.09/FT	★★★★★	If you want a quality small standmounter, audition these	●	3	30x16x14
ATC SCM11	1200	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	Best standmounter £800-£1500, Awards 2013	●	2	38x21x25
AVI ADM9.1	1125	07.12/GT	★★★★★	A simple way to make the most of your music	●	5	30x20x26
B&W 684	700	12.09/GT	★★★★★	Still a fine product after all these years	●	4	91x20x30
B&W CM8	1250	08.11/FT	★★★★★	Stunning in some ways but not the last word in integration	●	4	96x25x30
B&W XT2	700	07.08/GT	★★★★★	Classy, sophisticated but the sound lacks bite	●	2	31x15x20
Cabasse Minorca MC40	720	02.11/FT	★★★★★	Ideal for those who like finger-snapping ability	●	2	40x23x28
Dali Ikon 6 MK2	1200	09.10/FT	★★★★★	Cleaner, clearer and more insightful than its forerunner	●	3	100x19x36
Dali Lektor 6	750	12.08/FT	★★★★★	Only the bass stops these good speakers becoming great	●	3	26x16x14
Dali Lektor 8	1200	04.10/FT	★★★★★	Likeable as long as you can live with the size and bass	●	2	106x27x37
Dali Mentor Menuet	900	07.12/ST	★★★★★	These Menuets are something of a gem	●	2	25x15x23
Dali Zensor 5	549	11.11/GT	★★★★★	Compact and affordable floorstanders	●	2	84x16x27
Dali Zensor 7	729	06.12/FT	★★★★★	Not flawless, but musical and enjoyable performers	●	3	98x21x31
Dynaudio DM 2/6	535	02.10/FT	★★★★★	Best stereo speakers £300-£600, Awards 2010. Just the right amount of sparkle at the top end	●	2	29x17x24
Dynaudio DM 2/7	600	08.09/GT	★★★★★	A seriously competitive speaker at this price point	●	1	36x22x27
Dynaudio DM3/7	1300	01.11/FT	★★★★★	Plenty of positives in this mid-range floorstander	●	2	96x20x27
Dynaudio Excite X14	945	12.13/ST	★★★★★	A crisp and clean sound is shortchanged by a lack of versatility	●		29x17x26
Dynaudio MC-15	780	09.08/GT	★★★★★	Well-executed active speakers	●	1	26x17x24
Dynaudio Xeo 3	1365	07.12/ST	★★★★★	Versatile wireless speakers	●	2	28x17x26
EB Acoustics EB2	669	09.10/GT	★★★★★	Remarkable performers that should worry the competition	●	2	45x23x30
Eclipse TD508 Mk3	960	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Not an all-rounder, but still a rather special speaker	●	3	29x18x27
Edwards Audio SP1	550	12.12/FT	★★★★★	Enjoyable performers but up against top-quality competition at this price level	●	4	31x17x25
Elac BS243	1050	07.11/GT	★★★★★	These standmounters crave excitement	●	5	29x17x22
Elipson Planet L	600	02.12/FT	★★★★★	Charming in many ways, with good transparency	●	3	40x42x43
Epos Epic 5	750	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Hugely likeable floorstanders with broad sonic appeal	●	2	92x21x32
Guru Junior	800	12.13/ST	★★★★★	A rather mundane appearance is excused by some very expressive sound	●	3	28x18x24
Focal Aria 906	760	12.13/ST	★★★★★	For scale, power and refinement, you won't find many better	●	2	30x30x28
JBL Studio 530	650	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Odd looking - but fun sounding and refined	●	1	47x21x22
KEF LS50	800	12.13/ST	★★★★★	Best standmounter £400-£800, Awards 2013	●	1	30x20x28
KEFR100	600	08.12/FT	★★★★★	These are extremely talented stand-mounters	●	4	28x18x29
KEFX300A	600	09.13/FT	★★★★★	A smooth, relaxed sound that lacks punch and dynamics	●	1	28x18x24
Kudos X2	1450	03.11/GT	★★★★★	These floorstanders have much to recommend them	●	6	78x17x21
Klipsch RB-81	540	08.09/GT	★★★★★	If you like to party hard, audition these Klipschs	●	2	48x24x31
Leema Xone	995	10.09/FT	★★★★★	In certain areas nothing else comes close at this pricepoint	●	6	85x14x21
MAD 1920	1350	09.12/FT	★★★★★	Impressive and powerful. although not as precise as its peers	●	5	28x19x23
Martin Logan Motion 15	795	12.13/ST	★★★★★	Needs a bit more authority but let loose in a smaller room they can really sing	●	2	29x13x24
Mission SX2	700	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Dependable and capable, the SX2s product an authoritative sound at a fine price	●	5	38x23x37

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SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Standmount Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (h/w/d,cm)
Monitor Audio Bronze BX5	500	07.13/GT	★★★★★			4	85x17x25
Monitor Audio Gold GX50	950	12.13/ST	★★★★★	●		5	30x17x26
Monitor Audio Silver 6	1000	12.13/FT	★★★★★			6	89x19x24
Monitor Audio Silver RX2	630	10.12/GT	★★★★★	●		6	37.5x23x30
Monitor Audio Silver RX6	800	12.09/GT	★★★★★	●		6	91x28x31
Monitor Audio Silver RX8	1050	06.10/FT	★★★★★	●		6	96x28x39
Monitor Audio SoundFrame 1	900	02.12/GT	★★★★★			2	54x39x9
Mordaunt-Short Aviano 6	600	01.10/FT	★★★★★	●		3	95x21x30
Mordaunt-Short Aviano 8	750	12.09/GT	★★★★★	●		3	95x21x32
Mordaunt-Short Mezzo 6	800	11.08/GT	★★★★★	●		2	100x22x28
Mordaunt-Short Mezzo 8	1000	03.09/FT	★★★★★	●		2	107x22x31
Mission MX-5	600	07.12/GT	★★★★★	●		4	100x25x39
Mission SX1	700	12.12/FT	★★★★★	●		5	31x19x29
Neat Iota	695	10.13/GT	★★★★★	●		5	13x20x17
Neat Motive 1	1350	02.09/GT	★★★★★	●		4	93x16x20
Neat Motive 2	945	07.12/GT	★★★★★	●		4	77x16x20
Neat Petite SX	1250	01.12/ST	★★★★★	●		6	31x20x18
PMC DB1i	1050	12.11/ST	★★★★★	●		4	29x16x23
PMC Twenty 21	1485	10.13/GT	★★★★★	●		4	33x15x28
Opera Mezza	850	04.13/GT	★★★★★	●		3	32x20x33
Quad 12L Classic	500	11.11/FT	★★★★★	●		4	34x21x28
Rega RS3	780	07.12/GT	★★★★★	●		3	80x22x25
Revolver Music 3	650	06.10/FT	★★★★★	●		4	39x21x28
Revolver Music 5	1300	02.10/FT	★★★★★	●		4	93x25x32
Ruark Acoustics Sabre III	899	06.09/GT	★★★★★	●		2	34x20x27
Roksan Kandy K2 TR-5	750	06.09/GT	★★★★★	●		1	37x19x28
Spendor S3/5R2	850	07.11/GT	★★★★★	●		4	31x17x18
Tangent Evo E45	650	12.09/GT	★★★★★	●		2	100x15x26
Tannoy Precision 6.1	900	04.13/GT	★★★★★	●		2	33x22x26
Tannoy Revolution DC6 SE	700	12.13/FT	★★★★★	●		1	37x20x24
Tannoy Revolution DC6T	799	07.12/GT	★★★★★	●		1	95x26x29
Tannoy Revolution DC6T SE	1000	09.12/FT	★★★★★			1	100x31x28
Tannoy Rev. Sig. DC4	600	07.12/GT	★★★★★	●		2	27x17x18
Totem Rainmaker	1095	06.10/FT	★★★★★	●		4	36x17x23
Triangle Color 123	600	08.12/FT	★★★★★			3	14x14x14
Triangle Comete Anniv.	950	12.10/FT	★★★★★	●		1	42x20x34
Vienna Ac. Haydn Grand	1000	10.10/FT	★★★★★	●		5	36x17x27
Wharfedale Denton	500	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	●		1	32x20x31
Wharfedale Diamond 155	500	07.13/GT	★★★★★	●		7	94x20x31

£1500 and above

Acoustic Energy Reference 1	1500	07.12/GT	★★★★★			1	31x19x28
ADAM Aud. Classic Compact 3	2800	06.10/GT	★★★★★	●		1	44x23x29
ADAM Audio Tensor Gamma	12500	05.09/FT	★★★★★	●		2	108x32x34



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SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Standmount Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd,cm)
£1500 and above							
Audiovector S1 Avantgarde	2950	03.10/FT	★★★★★	At their best these are stunning, but not for all tastes	●	5	37x19x28
Aurousal VS	1650	04.11/FT	★★★★★	When they're good, these Aurousal's are great	●	3	108x22x27
Analysis Audio Omega	14500	08.11/FT	★★★★★	These planar floorstanders are a sonic treat	●	1	168x61x6
ATCSM 100A	11615	04.11/FT	★★★★★	Massively talented and proportioned	●	4	107x40x56
Beauhorn Rhapsody B2	2750	10.07/FT	★★★★★	Outlandish shape but treat them right and you'll be deeply rewarded	●	98	120x34x75
B&O BeoLab 9	5060	05.07/FT	★★★★★	Work not just as style but in hi-fi terms too	●	4	78x40x430
B&O BeoLab 5	11000	10.08/FT	★★★★★	Active speakers with outlandish looks that sound fabulous	●	1	97x49x49
B&W 800 Diamond	18000	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Some of the best speakers money can buy	●	3	118x45x65
B&W 805 Diamond	3750	01.11/FT	★★★★★	Good, but easier to admire than really love	●	3	42x24x35
B&W PM1	1995	03.12/GT	★★★★★	Best standmounter £1500+, Awards 2011	●	1	33x19x30
Burmester B10	3220	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Well built, well refined and an engaging listen. We're in love	●	3	39x22x28
Dali Epicon 2	3750	01.13/FT	★★★★★	Reinforces Dali's reputation for making top-class speakers	●	3	39x21x37
Dali Epicon 8	11500	08.13/FT	★★★★★	Give them space and they'll deliver a muscular, enthusiastic sound	●	3	126x35x50
Dali Fazon F5	2700	12.11/FT	★★★★★	Stylish deliverers of audiophile sound	●	3	92x28x32
Dali Helicon 300 Mk2	2100	02.08/FT	★★★★★	Excellent midrange; woolly bass	●	2	44x21x40
Dali Mentor 6	2200	02.07/FT	★★★★★	Dynamic floorstanders that are really fast and agile	●	1	40x8x15
Dynaudio Confidence C1	5325	08.08/FT	★★★★★	Set up with care, the C1s are quite exceptional	●	4	45x20x43
Dynaudio Excite X32	1765	02.09/GT	★★★★★	These pack an eloquent, expansive sound	●	4	92x17x27
Dynaudio Focus 110A	1700	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Fun, flexible and hugely capable active speakers	●	6	31x17x32
Dynaudio Focus 160	1800	03.12/GT	★★★★★	Just do the job and don't intrude on the entertainment	●	6	35x20x29
Dynaudio Focus 220 Mk II	2630	10.09/FT	★★★★★	These Dynaudios are fine speakers; all they lack is a little star quality	●	4	98x21x30
Diapason Astera	6050	02.11/FT	★★★★★	Spellbinding performance with the right kind of music	●	1	38x26x44
Eclipse TD 510Z Mk2	3840	08.12/FT	★★★★★	Superb timing, detail and imaging	●	3	98x38x39
Eclipse TD 712z Mk2	6500	10.13/GT	★★★★★	They have a few compromises but their strengths can't be matched at any price	●	4	99x35x43
Focal Diabolo Utopia	7686	12.12/FT	★★★★★	When it comes to levels of insight, little at this price even comes close	●	Any	43x26x43
Focal SM9	4580	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Intended for professional use, the SM9s work brilliantly as home speakers	●	1	32x49x39
Focal Easya	1800	11.13/FT	★★★★★	Convenient and easy to use, these Focals are compromised by a relaxed delivery	●	2	90x17x24
Image Audio IA8	2000	02.12/GT	★★★★★	Deeply impressive wall-mounted alternatives to convention	●	1	59x48x10
Jamo R907	5500	04.09/FT	★★★★★	The innovative R907s are stunningly capable speakers	●	1	119x44x19
JBL Studio 580	1500	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Hugely capable floorstanders for the money	●	2	107x25x35
KEF Reference 207/2	12000	10.08/FT	★★★★★	Big, bold and stunningly built, they major on bass	●	4	123x40x69
Kudos Cardea C30	5650	07.10/FT	★★★★★	Ideal if musical enjoyment is your top priority	●	7	112x20x27
Linn Akubarik	15600	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Deeply impressive engineering but its presentation veers towards the clinical	●	200+	105x35x45
Monopulse 42A	2000	07.09/GT	★★★★★	Odd appearance apart, there's an awful lot to like about these Monopulses	●	10	108x23x25
Monitor Audio Gold GX200	2300	03.12/FT	★★★★★	Pretty looks and excellent refinement	●	2	90x17x30
Mon. Audio Platinum PL300	6000	10.08/FT	★★★★★	Its been a long time coming, and it is well worth the wait	●	3	111x41x47
Naim Ovator S-400	3650	03.13/GT	★★★★★	The most rounded Naim speaker we've heard	●	5	106x33x35
Neat Ultimatum XLS	4500	09.12/FT	★★★★★	An entertainer of the highest order if partnered with care	●	9	38x22x37
Opera Callas	2375	01.09/FT	★★★★★	Arguably the best standmounter at this price level	●	3	37x23x34
PMC Fact 3	4100	08.11/FT	★★★★★	Hugely capable but a touch overcontrolled	●	4	54x16x30
PMC Fact 8	4700	04.10/FT	★★★★★	These PMC floorstanders are quite simply magical - even at this price	●	4	103x15x38

What does a speaker crossover do?

It's one of the inescapable laws of physics - and of hi-fi design - that a loudspeaker containing only one drive unit won't be able to reproduce the entire frequency spectrum as deftly as one with multiple drivers.

Tweeters and mid/bass drivers are designed to handle different parts of the frequency range with the minimum of distortion and the maximum finesse.

However, sending the full frequency range to both of these drivers will stop them working at their best or even cause damage, so a crossover circuit is used to split the incoming signal into frequency bands optimised for the

different drivers. There are two crossover types: passive and active. Passive ones, used in most domestic speakers, are unpowered and deal with speaker-level signals that amps deliver from their speaker outputs. Because the current they have to deal with is so high, they use robust (and so less precise) components. This can lead to a loss of detail and transparency.

Active designs are powered, and route a low-voltage line-level signal to the drivers' individual power amps. There's less power loss, although they can add noise. But the smaller power-handling needs let them use more precise parts, which gives more control over the sound.



Q Acoustics 2050i, £440

SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Standmount Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd,cm)
PMCPB1i	5850	09.09/GT	★★★★★	Simply excellent speakers: big, bold and accomplished	●		1	108x20x40
PMCTwenty 22	1970	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Best standmounter £1500+, Awards 2013	●		4	41x18x37
PMCTwenty 23	2300	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Best floorstander £1500+, Awards 2013	●		4	92x15x33
PMCWafer 2	2295	02.12/GT	★★★★★	A real achievement for those after proper hi-fi			2	57x35x10
ProAc Response D18	2145	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Best floorstander £1500+, Awards 2011	●		6	93x19x27
ProAc Response D28	3250	07.07/FT	★★★★★	Another excellent pair of floorstanders from ProAc	●		6	108x20x29
ProAc Response D40/R	6125	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Articulate and dynamic, a top-class pair of floorstanders	●		6	120x21x34
ProAc Studio 140 Mk2	1650	12.10/FT	★★★★★	An entertaining and dynamic performer	●		4	104x19x28
Quad ESL-2812	6500	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Won't be to everyone's tastes but these electrostatic speakers truly excel	●		1	107x69x38
Quad ESL 2905	6000	01.07/FT	★★★★★	A truly world-class speaker	●		1	143x70x39
Tannoy Definition DC10T	5250	10.13/GT	★★★★★	While the DC10Ts aren't the most refined speakers out there, they're easy to love	●		3	113x34x32
Tannoy Precision 6.2	1700	10.13/GT	★★★★★	A beautifully balanced and hugely listenable pair of standmounters	●		3	100x31x28
Sonus F. Cremona Auditor M	2690	06.08/FT	★★★★★	One of the best standmounts money can buy	●		2	35x20x37
Sonus F. Liuto Monitor Wood	1649	01.10/FT	★★★★★	These are classy and natural standmounters	●		2	35x19x34
SP Acoustics SP1 Signature	14950	01.11/FT	★★★★★	Able to challenge the very best at this exalted level	●	Any		106x35x46
Spendor A5	1695	03.11/GT	★★★★★	The most accomplished speakers for this money	●		4	79x17x25
Spendor D7	3500	10.13/GT	★★★★★	The finest Spendors in years	●		6	95x20x32
Tannoy Definition DC8	2500	03.12/GT	★★★★★	Capable of seriously controlled sound	●		3	47x27x26
Totem Mani-2 Signature	4600	12.10/FT	★★★★★	When it comes to outright enjoyment we can't think of any rival speakers we prefer for this money	●		4	42x21x31
Triangle Magellan Cello SW2	6699	05.10/FT	★★★★★	A speaker dedicated to actually enjoying music	●		2	114x42x37
Vivid Audio V1.5	5250	11.09/FT	★★★★★	They might look odd, but these are a must hear	●		5	113x26x24
Wharfedale Jade-5	1650	01.12/ST	★★★★★	Floorstanders that pack immense power and poise	●		3	106x25x40
Wilson Audio Duette	11000	10.08/FT	★★★★★	One of the best pairs of speakers we've ever heard	●	Any		47x23x35
Wilson Audio Sophia 3	16500	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Expensive, but they deliver a stunning sound full of detail, dynamics and drive	●		7	105x35x48
Wilson Benesch A.C.T	8800	08.07/FT	★★★★★	Good looking, solid and superb sounding floorstanders	●		1	108x23x37
Wilson Benesch Trinity	4700	03.08/FT	★★★★★	An awful lot of technology and ability for the money	●		4	108x24x30



0800 014 7430

TANNOY Precision 6.4
"I have never heard any speakers that image better..." Sound & Vision US

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Yamaha RXV475: £299.00
was £349.00 save £50.00

Yamaha RXV775: £549.00
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SAVE £100

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Denon DBT1713

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SAVE: £190.99

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SAVE £190



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Yamaha YSP1400

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SAVE £40



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SAVE £105

RRP: £199.95
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SAVE £80



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WHAT HI-FI? BEST BUY AWARDS 2013
★★★★★
AUGUST 2011



RRP: £499.00
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"The first thing to hit you is the bass. There's a decent sense of weight and impressive depth, and it sounds tight and sharply defined too"
What HiFi? October 2013

Recertified Wireless Music System with Apple Airplay
B&W A5

WHAT HI-FI? BEST BUY AWARDS 2013
★★★★★
AUGUST 2013

WHAT HI-FI? BEST BUY AWARDS 2013
★★★★★
MARCH 2013

RRP: £399.00
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SAVE £100



Recertified Wireless Music System with Apple Airplay
B&W A7

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DECEMBER 2012

RRP: £699.00
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Recertified Mobile HiFi Headphones
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BLACK ONLY



Recertified Headphones
B&W P3

WHAT HI-FI? BEST BUY AWARDS 2013
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RRP: £169.00
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DAB/FM Radio with Bluetooth
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SAVE £40



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Revo K2

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NOVEMBER 2013

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Marantz MCR510 Melody

RRP: £249.00
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Denon DM39DAB

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NOVEMBER 2012

Headphones

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RRP: £249.95
SAVE: £126.95
£124.00



WHAT HI-FI? BEST BUY AWARDS 2013
★★★★★
MAY 2012

Noise Cancelling Portable Headphones
Goldring NS1000 Expedition

RRP: £139.95
SAVE: £70.00

£69.95

SAVE £70





Stereo amplifiers

Integrated _____ These amplifiers combine a preamp and power section in one box
Power output _____ A higher number usually means louder, depending on speakers
Digital inputs _____ Some amplifiers now have a DAC built in, which could be useful

The shortlist



AWARD WINNER

NAD D 3020

“If the D 3020 represents the future of hi-fi, count us in.”



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

Arcam FMJ A19

“It won’t break the bank but it will immediately improve a budget hi-fi set-up.”



AWARD WINNER

Naim Nait 5i

“Nothing short of a gem for this end of the market.”

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Power (w)	DAC	Line level in	MM phono in	MC phono in	USB in	Tape loops	Preamp out	Speakers out	Tone controls	Headphone out	Remote control	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Up to £1000																	
Audiolab 8200A	750	05.13/ST	★★★★★	Capable, but lacks some subtlety	60	6	0	0	3	●	1	●	●	●	2	7.5x45x34	
Arcam FMJ A18	500	06.12/ST	★★★★★	Comfortable, with impressive detail and agility	50	6	1	0	2	●	1	●	●	●	1	8.5x43x33	
Arcam FMJ A19	650	05.13/ST	★★★★★	Best Stereo amp £500-£800, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	50	6	1	0	1	●	2	●	●	●	1	9x43x28	
Cambridge Audio Azur 350A	250	01.12/ST	★★★★★	A budget amp with a decent grasp of timing	45	●	6	0	0	1	2	●	●	●	2	9x43x34	
Cambridge Audio Azur 351A	300	11.12/FT	★★★★★	Worth considering if you prefer an energetic approach	45	●	5	0	0	●	1	2	●	●	2	9x43x34	
Cambridge Audio Azur 651A	450	03.12/FT	★★★★★	Meaty and powerful, but not the most refined	75	●	5	0	0	1	●	2	●	●	1	12x43x35	
Cambridge Audio Topaz SR10	230	06.10/FT	★★★★★	This affordable stereo receiver has plenty to offer	85	5	1	0	1	2	●	●	●	1	11x43x34		
Cyrus 6a	700	06.12/ST	★★★★★	Best stereo amp £600-£1000, Awards 2012	40	6	0	0	0	●	2	●	●	2	7x22x36		
Cyrus 6XP	925	09.09/FT	★★★★★	Stereo amplifier Product of the Year, Awards 2010	40	6	0	0	1	●	2	●	●	2	7x22x36		
Denon PMA-710	350	07.10/GT	★★★★★	The most enjoyable Denon amp we've heard in ages	50	5	1	0	2	●	2	●	●	2	12x43x21		
Denon PMA-720AE	350	02.13/GT	★★★★★	Entertaining and capable, but sonically stubborn	50	4	1	0	1	●	1	●	●	2	12x43x31		
Icon Audio Stereo 25	500	01.09/FT	★★★★★	The Stereo 25 is superbly made for the money	30	3	0	0	0	1				1	22x32x31		
Marantz PM-KI Pearl Lite	900	12.10/FT	★★★★★	Decent performance at an affordable price	70	3	1	0	2	●	2	●	●	2	13x44x38		
Marantz PM6004	310	01.12/ST	★★★★★	Product of the Year - Stereo amplifiers, Awards 2011	45	5	1	0	1	2	●	●	●	2	11x44x37		
NAD C316BEE	260	01.12/ST	★★★★★	A decent listen that's overshadowed by rivals	40	5	0	0	1	1	●	●	●	2	8x44x29		
NAD C326BEE	300	07.10/GT	★★★★★	A really musical amplifier to grace any budget system	50	7	0	0	2	1	●	●	●	1	10x44x29		
NAD C356BEE	600	10.10/FT	★★★★★	A party animal of an amplifier	80	7	0	0	2	2	●	●	●	1	13x44x34		
NAD C356BEE DAC	695	01.12/FT	★★★★★	A good amplifier with a great DAC	80	●	8	0	0	2	2	●	●	1	13x44x34		
NAD D 3020	400	11.13/FT	★★★★★	Best stereo amp up to £500, Awards 2013	30	2	0	0	●	0	1	●	●	1	19x6x22		
NAD D 7050	800	12.13/FT	★★★★★	Admirable, but not quite the measure of its cheaper rivals	50	●	0	0	0	●	1	●	●	1	24x7x27		
Naim Nait 5i	875	05.13/ST	★★★★★	A strong all-round performer	50	4	0	0	1	1				1	7x44x31		
Naim Nait 5si	925	11.13/FT	★★★★★	Best stereo amp £800-£1500, Awards 2013	60	3	0	0	1	1	●	●	●	1	7x43x31		
Onix A-25	775	05.13/ST	★★★★★	A good choice for those who value finesse over muscle	30	3	0	0	0	●	1			1	9x21x36		
Onkyo A-9030	300	12.12/FT	★★★★★	Proof that Onkyo knows how to build good stereo gear	65	4	1	0	1	2	●	●	2	14x44x33			
Onkyo A-9050	350	02.13/GT	★★★★★	Lean presentation, but there's plenty to like	75	5	1	0	1	●	1	●	●	2	14x44x33		
Peachtree iDecco	999	01.11/FT	★★★★★	Ideal for a digital based set-up	40	1	0	0	●	1	1	●	●	1	13x38x29		
Pro-ject Stereo Box S	200	11.11/FT	★★★★★	A small amp that's worth investigation	40	2	0	0	0	1				2	4x10x10		
Pioneer A-A6	350	03.08/FT	★★★★★	Among the most fluent amps under £500	45	3	1	0	●	1	1	●	●	2	10x42x36		
Pioneer A-70	800	05.13/ST	★★★★★	Excels in many areas, falls short of class-leading	90	3	1	1	●	1	2	●	●	2	14x44x36		
Rega Brio-R	480	06.12/ST	★★★★★	Best stereo amp £400-£600, Awards 2012	50	4	1	0	1	1			2	8x22x31			
Roksan Kandy K2	795	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Best stereo amp £700-£1000, Awards 2011	125	5	1	0	1	●	1	●	●	3	10x43x38		
Rotel RA-10	350	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	Best Stereo amp Up To £400, Awards 2012	40	4	1	0	1	1	2	●	●	2	7x43x34		
Rotel RA-12	600	05.13/ST	★★★★★	Well priced, appealing amp, just lacks a little expression	60	●	4	1	0	1	1	●	●	2	14x44x36		
Wadia 151 PowerDAC Mini	999	02.12/FT	★★★★★	A compact digital amp with plenty of appeal	25	●	0	0	0	0	1			1	7x20x20		
Yamaha A-S300	195	04.11/FT	★★★★★	Solid performer but you can get better for a little more money	60	6	1	0	1	1	●	●	2	15x44x39			
Yamaha A-S500	330	Aw.10/FT	★★★★★	Best stereo amplifier up to £500, Awards 2010.	85	3	1	0	2	2	●	●	2	15x44x39			

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AMPLIFIERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Power(w)	DAC	Line level in	MM phono in	MC phono in	USB in	Tape loops	Preamp out	Speaker out	Tone controls	Headphone out	Remote control	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
£1000 and above																	
Audio Analogue Class A Int. SE	9190	06.11/FT	★★★★★	A fantastic, and sonically rounded performer	50	5	0	0	1	1	●	1	33x45x41				
ATCSIA 2-150	2379	02.10/GT	★★★★★	One of the best amplifiers at this price level	150	4	0	0	1	●	1	●	●	1	14x44x35		
Bryston B60R	2600	07.09/FT	★★★★★	The Bryston B60R may be unassuming, but has quality	60	4	0	0	1	1	●	●	2	5x43x28			
Cambridge Audio Azur 851A	1200	12.12/GT	★★★★★	For scale, power, build and style, this is hard to beat	120	8	0	0	1	●	2	●	●	2	12x43x39		
Chord Elec. Cyan Click HP	4215	07.10/FT	★★★★★	Stylish, and astonishingly well built too	100	2	0	0	●	0	1	●	2	6x34x15			
Creek Evolution 5350	1025	06.10/FT	★★★★★	There's lots to like here, but better available elsewhere	120	5	1	0	0	●	2	●	●	1	9x43x34		
Cyrus 6XPD	1250	01.12/ST	★★★★★	A sturdy DAC-toting amp that's a cracker	40	●	6	0	0	●	1	●	2	7x22x36			
Cyrus 8a	1200	12.12/FT	★★★★★	Everything we've come to expect and love about Cyrus	70	5	0	0	1	●	2	●	●	2	7x22x36		
Cyrus 8 DAC	1400	07.12/FT	★★★★★	Meticulous and engaging amp and DAC combo	70	●	6	0	0	●	0	2	●	●	2	7x22x36	
Cyrus 8 XPd	1500	07.09/FT	★★★★★	Sets a sky-high standard at the price point	70	5	0	0	●	1	●	1	●	●	2	7x22x36	
Cyrus 8XP	1250	11.09/GT	★★★★★	The Cyrus 8XP misses nothing out in sonic thrills	70	6	0	0	1	●	1	●	●	2	7x22x36		
Cyrus DACXP Signature	2750	11.13/FT	★★★★★	With the Signature upgrade, the DACXP remains a fine product	70	2	0	0	1	●	1	●	●	2	7x22x36		
Dartzeel CTH-8550	16858	05.10/FT	★★★★★	Well engineered - but with a colossal price tag	200	7	0	0	1	●	1	●	2	17x44x34			
Denon PMA-2010AE	1700	02.10/FT	★★★★★	Listen to this amp in full flow and it's a monster	80	4	1	1	2	●	2	●	●	1	18x43x44		
Devialet D-Premier	11450	08.12/GT	★★★★★	A fresh look at amp design	240	2	1	1	1	●	1	●	●	3	4x40x40		
EAR Yoshino V12	7000	07.13/FT	★★★★★	This terrific integrated amp needn't fear any rival at this price	50	5	0	0	1	1	1	1	14x42x14				
Heed Audio Obelisk i	1300	06.12/GT	★★★★★	Best stereo amp £1000-£1500, Awards 2012	35	5	1	0	0	●	1	●	2	9x22x36			
Karan Acoustics KA1180Mk2	5995	09.13/FT	★★★★★	One of the finest amps we've heard	180	4	0	0	1	1	1	●	2	9x50x34			
Lavardin IS Reference	2950	01.10/FT	★★★★★	Amazing: its rivals sound mechanical in comparison	30	4	0	0	1	1	1	1	8.5x43x35				
Leema Tucana Mk II	3595	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Best stereo amplifier £2000+, Awards 2010.	148	7	0	0	1	●	1	●	●	2	10x43x36		
Leema Elements	1395	12.12/GT	★★★★★	Solid choice, wide connection range and optional DAC	56	●	3	0	0	●	0	●	1	●	●	2	9x22x28
Myriad MXI2080	1000	08.08/FT	★★★★★	Assiduous, precise presentation	80	6	1	1	1	●	1	●	●	1	9x44x38		
NAD C 390DD	2250	12.12/FT	★★★★★	Novel thinking delivers an alternative to the favourites	150	1	0	0	●	0	●	2	●	●	1	13x43x39	
Naim Nait 5XS	1500	01.12/ST	★★★★★	Still a top class premium amplifier	60	3	0	0	2	●	1	●	1	7x43x30			



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"Best Wireless Speaker £150-£300" What HiFi Awards 2013

AMPLIFIERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Power (w)	DAC	Line level in	MM phono in	MC phono in	USB in	Tape loops	Preamp out	Speaker out	Tone controls	Headphone out	Remote control	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
£1000 and above																	
Naim Nait XS 2	1595	10.13/GT	★★★★★	An improvement on the Nait XS, even if it sacrifices a little detail	70	5	1	0		1	●	1	●	●	1		7x43x30
Naim Supernait 2	2750	12.13/FT	★★★★★	Even at this price, the Supernait 2 is a fantastic buy	80	5	0	0		1	●	1	●	●	1		9x64x31
Pathos Ethos	3800	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Mixes style and substance better than any rival	100	7	0	0	●	0	●	1		●	1		15x43x49
Pathos InpolRemix	3800	01.12/FT	★★★★★	Not cheap or powerful - just brilliant	10	1	0	0		0	●	1		●	2		18x33x29
Pathos Logos	3650	09.08/FT	★★★★★	An inspirational amp: wonderful with all music	110	6	0	0		1		2		●	1		15x48x22
Plinius Hautonga	4455	07.11/FT	★★★★★	A powerhouse of an integrated amplifier	200	5	1	1		2	●	1		●	2		12x45x50
Plinius Hiato	6759	08.09/FT	★★★★★	If you're after a top class amplifier the Hiato is for you	300	5	0	0		1	●	1		●	2		17x45x45
Quad II Classic Integrated	4500	04.10/FT	★★★★★	A fine integrated amplifier with a hefty price tag	25	3	1	1		1		1					1 20x31x38
Rega Osiris	5998	06.10/FT	★★★★★	A fine amp that makes sense partnering its Isis sibling	162	6	0	0		1		1		●	1		12x44x35
Rega Elicit-R	1600	10.13/GT	★★★★★	This is truly a fantastic amplifier	105	5	1	0		1	●	1		●	1		8x43x34
Roksan Caspian M2	1695	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Best stereo amplifier £1500+, Awards 2013	85	5	0	0		1	●	1		●	2		8x43x33
Synthesis Shine	2449	07.10/FT	★★★★★	This valve design needs sensitive speakers to fly	40	5	0	0		1		1		●	4		16x32x22
T+A PA 3000 HV	9900	11.13/FT	★★★★★	A truly impressive piece of kit despite its polite disposition	300	6	0	0		0		1		●	●	1	17x46x46
Unison Research Preludio	2295	02.10/GT	★★★★★	Rubs shoulders with the very best at this price	14	4	0	0		1		1					1 20x40x38
Unison Research S6	2995	05.11/FT	★★★★★	In the right system, the S6 is truly magical	33	5	0	0		1		1		●	2		21x35x49
Unison Research S9	6995	02.10/FT	★★★★★	We can't help but love this quirky valve amplifier	35	4	0	0		0		1		●	1		25x41x57
Unison Research Simply Italy	1495	09.12/FT	★★★★★	A well-engineered valve amplifier at a sensible price	12	5	0	0		1		1		●	2		26x19x35



Preamps

Preamps are also known as control units. On a most basic level, they perform two functions: source selection and volume control. Most powered preamps also amplify the signal slightly in order to make matching to a power amplifier easier. Some include phono stages.

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Line level in	MM phono in	MC phono in	Tape loops	Preamp out	Balanced out	Headphone out	Tone controls	Remote control	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Up to £5000													
Audio Research LS17	3399	01.09/FT	★★★★★	This top quality product should serve you for decades	7	0	0	1	●	●		●	14x48x31
Audionet Pre 1 G3	3525	01.10/FT	★★★★★	As revealing as amplifiers get for the money	5	0	0	1	●	●	●	●	7x43x31
ATC CA-2	1058	12.09/FT	★★★★★	A matchless preamp when paired with the P1 power amp	5	0	0	1	●	●	●	●	9x44x32
Cyrus DACXP+	2550	04.11/FT	★★★★★	Massive ability in a small box	2	0	0	1	●	●		●	7x22x36
Cyrus Pre XP d	1300	02.10/GT	★★★★★	Works wonders when coupled with the matching 8 power amp	6	0	0	0	●	●		●	7x22x36
Heed Audio Obelisk pre/px	2230	04.13/FT	★★★★★	A superb-sounding preamp, but Heed needs to make it feel more luxurious	5	0	0	1	●			●	9x22x33
Lavardin C62	3471	12.10/FT	★★★★★	Belongs near the top of any shortlist	6	0	0	1	●			●	9x43x31
Leema Pyxis	3995	11.11/FT	★★★★★	Aversatile, enjoyable preamp	5	1	1	1	●	●	●	●	11x44x31
Linn Akurate Kontrol	4200	09.11/FT	★★★★★	Part of the Linn Akurate system - and truly awesome	4	1	1	1	●	●	●	●	9x38x38
NAD C165BEE	650	08.10/FT	★★★★★	A brute of a preamp	4	1	1	0	●	●		●	8x44x29
Naim NAC 152 XS	975	02.10/GT	★★★★★	It's good, but could do better with dynamics	5	0	0	0	●			●	7x43x30
Quad Elite Pre	850	11.10/FT	★★★★★	Doesn't blow us away, but it's still worth consideration	6	1	1	1	●		●	●	7x32x31
Quad QC-twenty four	1000	06.13/FT	★★★★★	Pleasant listen but works best with Quad's valve power amps	5	0	0	2	●			●	9x30x22
Rotel RC-1580	995	03.10/FT	★★★★★	A likeable, fully featured performer that delivers much for the money	5	1	1	2	●	●	●	●	10x43x34
Townshend Allegri	1895	08.12/GT	★★★★★	Basic features, but terrific sound	6	0	0	0	●			●	5x13x31

£5000 and above

Audio Research LS27	6500	03.13/FT	★★★★★	A fine preamp but struggles to shine in comparison to the Reference 75	6	0	0	1	●	●		●	13x48x34
Aesthetix Calypso Signature	6400	03.11/FT	★★★★★	One of the finest preamps on the market today	5	0	0	1	●	●		●	11x46x45
Bryston BP26DA	5050	08.06/FT	★★★★★	A must-hear preamp. Lacks style but built to last	5	0	0	1	●	●	●	●	6x49x28
Burmester 808 MK5	22242	02.13/FT	★★★★★	A beautifully constructed, highly versatile preamp for serious devotees	Opt	Opt	Opt	Opt	●	●		●	95x48x33
Chord Electronics CPA 8000	25500	01.13/FT	★★★★★	A magnificent preamp, but not quite the masterpiece its price demands	8	0	0	2	●	●	●	●	31x42x36
Chord Electronics Indigo	8670	11.09/FT	★★★★★	A far sighted design mixing useful features with great sound	6	0	0	0	●	●	●	●	36x42x9
Krell Phantom II	12000	11.12/FT	★★★★★	A hugely capable preamp that is able to dig deeply into any recording	8	0	0	1	●	●		●	10x44x46
McIntosh C2500	7495	01.14/FT	★★★★★	A refined and entertaining preamp that needs a little care in partnering	8	1	1	1	●	●	●	●	19x44x46
Naim NAC252/Supercap	9070	11.08/FT	★★★★★	Makes a magical combination with the NAP250 power amp	6	0	0	0	●			●	9x43x31
Plinius Tautoro	6325	09.08/FT	★★★★★	A mighty amplifier in every sense of the word	4	1	1	1	●	●	●	●	16x45x48

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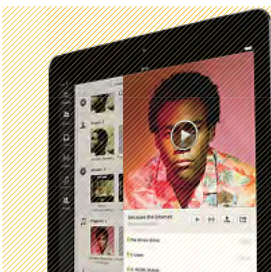
Power amps

These are effectively the powerhouse of the system. They deliver the high currents necessary to make a loudspeaker work. They can be configured as a stereo unit, or monoblocs, where the circuitry for each channel is housed separately. Don't judge a power amp by its output level.

Our recommendations

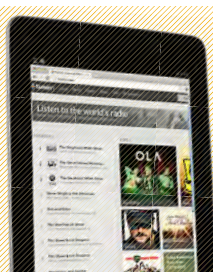
Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Type	Power (w)	Phono in	XLR in	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	Weight (kg)	
Up to £5000										
Audiolab 8200MB	1900	01.12/FT	★★★★★	Hefty, but a bit of a blunt instrument	Mono	250	1	1	15x22x38	9
Audionet Amp 1 V2	4850	01.10/FT	★★★★★	As revealing as amplifiers get for this kind of money	Stereo	200	1	1	18x43x32	28
ATC P1	1566	12.09/FT	★★★★★	A matchless power amp when paired with the CA-2 preamp	Stereo	150	1	1	14x44x35	26
Bryston 2B SST	2925	08.06/FT	★★★★★	Big, strong and very powerful	Stereo	100	1	0	49x13x41	14
Chord Electronics Maxx	990	05.11/FT	★★★★★	This could be a sign of hi-fi to come	Stereo	20	1	0	7x16x4	0.4
Chord Electronics SPM 1050	3990	10.07/FT	★★★★★	Very fast and punchy, exciting and stable sound	Stereo	200	2	2	13x42x36	15
Croft Polestar 1	800	06.07/FT	★★★★★	Great buy if you want sound quality not quantity	Stereo	25	1	0	11x22x33	6
Cyrus 8 Power	850	02.10/GT	★★★★★	Performs with panache, we'd spend our cash here	Stereo	60	3	0	7x22x36	5
Cyrus Mono X300	2500	04.11/FT	★★★★★	Exceptionally fluid and agile. Recommended	Stereo	235	1	1	7x22x36	7
Cyrus Mono X300 Signature	2750	10.13/FT	★★★★★	A deceptively compact monobloc that surpasses the Mono X300	Mono	225	1	1	8x22x37	6.5
Heed Audio Obelisks	1350	04.13/FT	★★★★★	Engaging and a pleasure to listen to, even if it's not the classiest in terms of finish	Stereo	50	1	0	9x22x33	6
Leema Hydra II	3595	11.11/FT	★★★★★	A top class power amplifier for the money	Stereo	160	1	1	11x44x31	33
NAD C275BEE	820	08.10/FT	★★★★★	A great power amp, best matched with the C165BEE preamp	Stereo	150	1	0	13x44x35	15
Naim NAP 155 XS	1115	02.10/GT	★★★★★	It's a good performer, but not the last word in dynamics	Stereo	60	0	0	7x43x30	7.5
Naim NAP 250	3050	11.08/FT	★★★★★	Paired with the NAC252 preamp it's magical	Stereo	80	0	0	9x43x32	16
Plinius P10	3390	09.07/FT	★★★★★	Makes a terrific amp when partnered with the Plinius M8 preamp	Stereo	200	2	1	12x45x40	14
Quad Elite Stereo	700	11.10/FT	★★★★★	The Elite power amp paired with the Elite Pre is well worth consideration	Stereo	80	1	0	7x32x31	6.25
Quad QSP	1200	07.12/FT	★★★★★	Needs to be auditioned - a confident listen	Stereo	140	2	0	15x33x27	14
Rotel RB-1582	1095	03.10/FT	★★★★★	Great when paired with the RC-1580 preamp	Stereo	200	1	0	14x43x41	33
£5000 and above										
Aesthetix Atlas	7600	08.08/FT	★★★★★	Sophisticated brute - pair with the Aesthetix Calypso	Stereo	200	2	2	19x45x46	33
Audio Research Reference 75	8495	03.13/FT	★★★★★	A fabulous power amp, match it with care and you'll have sonic magic	Stereo	75	0	1	22x48x50	21
Audio Research VS115	5395	02.09/FT	★★★★★	Ignore the looks and enjoy the sound	Stereo	120	1	1	20x45x21	29
Burmester 911 Mk3	32800	08.12/GT	★★★★★	Awesome price, awesome bit of kit	Stereo	535	0	1	22x48x48	31
Chord SPM 14000 MkII	24480	01.13/FT	★★★★★	An awe-inspiring monobloc, yet not quite as sonically rounded as we'd like	Mono	700	1	1	31x48x69	75
Krell Evolution 402e	18500	11.12/FT	★★★★★	The Evolution 402e is world-class. It isn't cheap, but quality such as this never is	Stereo	400	1	1	25x44x56	61
Lavardin AP150	7686	12.10/FT	★★★★★	For sound quality and musical enjoyment, the C62 with the AP150 is hard to beat	Stereo	50	1	0	14x43x31	12
Marantz MA-9S2	5000	02.08/FT	★★★★★	Right up there with the very best power amplifiers	Mono	300	2	1	45x46x20	37
Plinius SA-REF	12650	09.08/FT	★★★★★	As enticing an amplifier as you can get	Stereo	300	1	1	28x51x54	57
Quad II eighty	6000	06.13/FT	★★★★★	A capable monobloc amp that should be considered	Mono	80	1	0	21x43x18	57

4 ways to get music online



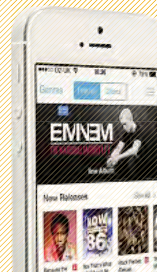
Subscribe

Services such as Spotify and Rdio offer millions of tracks for about £5 and £10 per month. You don't own the music outright, but you do get to stream and sync it to your mobile device depending on your subscription level. It's a great way to discover new music without committing to buying it.



Get it free

Don't discount internet radio as a source of great material. Not only is it free, some of the stations are so focused that, if you have a fetish for polka music, say, you'll be catered for without having to trawl the likes of Spotify. Also, remember that you can get oodles of material from BBC iPlayer's radio section.



Buy it outright

If you stop paying for a subscription, you lose your tunes. The next best thing? Head over to iTunes, Amazon or even Sky or Tesco and you'll get to keep the material you download. No CDs, sure, but you can always back them up. Make sure to check the quality, though - low bitrate files do your ears no favours.



Go high-res

If we were going to level criticisms at any of the services mentioned so far, it'd be in terms of audio quality which doesn't quite cut it. If you're willing to pay a bit more, B&W's Society of Sound and Linn Records offer high-resolution downloads of some established (and some quirky) acts and performances.

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iPod docks

Docks with power _____ These are ready-made systems for your iPod; usually include speakers

Docks without power _____ These integrate an iPod into an existing system as a line level source

The shortlist



Bowers & Wilkins Zeppelin Air

“The Zeppelin Air sounds great, it has better features and sound quality is a step ahead of the original.”



AWARD WINNER

Epoz Aktimate Micro

“If you want a pair of speakers to sit either side of your laptop, these are a brilliant performance-per-pound option.”



JBL OnBeat Venue LT

“The JBL Venue LT dock delivers an exciting all-round performance and currently sets the bar at its position in the market.”

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	AirPlay	Bluetooth	Docktype	Aux	Power(w)	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Up to £500									
Audyssey South of Market	350	04.11/FT	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	n/a	23x13x28
Arcam rCube	350	04.12/ST	★★★★★			iOS	●	90	20x20x20
Bose SoundDock II	250	09.10/GT	★★★★★			iOS	●	n/a	17x30x17
B&W Z2	330	10.13/ST	★★★★★			iOS	●	40	18x32x10
Epoz Aktimate Micro	260	09.13/GT	★★★★★			iOS	●	40	24x15x20
Epoz AktiMate Mini	350	07.12/GT	★★★★★			iOS	●	40	30x19x21
Epoz AktiMate Mini+	360	08.13/FT	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	40	30x19x21
Gear4 AirZone Series 1	200	04.12/ST	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	n/a	18x33x19
JBL OnBeat Venue LT	200	03.13/FT	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	30	13x42x14
Klipsch iGroove HG WWI	110	04.12/ST	★★★★★			iOS	●	30	14x40x16
KitSound Boom Dock	100	12.10/FT	★★★★★			iOS		60	15x42x28
Logitech S715i	80	04.12/ST	★★★★★			iOS	●	20	6x39x13
Logitech UE Air Speaker	300	06.12/FT	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	n/a	17x53x15
Marantz Consolette	700	05.13/FT	★★★★★		●	iOS		150	26x54x21
Orbitsound T12v3	299	12.11/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	180	10x61x11
Philips Fidelio Primo DS9	300	09.11/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	50	18x51x21
Philips Fidelio Primo DS9010	400	08.11/GT	★★★★★			iOS	●	100	21x56x23
Pure Digital Contour	200	04.11/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	40	23x37x18
Pure Digital Contour 100Di	100	04.12/ST	★★★★★			iOS	●	20	18x31x15
Pure Digital Contour 200i Air	200	09.12/FT	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	36	23x37x18
Revo K2	300	02.12/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	40	33x11x11
Ruark Audio R2i	280	09.09/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	20	12x34x18.5
TEAC SR-80iDAB	150	10.11/FT	★★★★★			iOS		20	18x39x21
£500 and above									
B&O BeoSound 8	895	03.11/FT	★★★★★			iOS		n/a	24x66x16
Bose SoundDock 10	699	08.11/GT	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	n/a	22x43x24
B&W Zeppelin Air	500	12.11/ST	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	150	17x54x21
Geneva Lab Model L	1000	08.09/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	100	29x45x37
Geneva Lab Model M	550	04.12/ST	★★★★★			iOS	●	50	20x37x25
Geneva Lab Model XL	1500	10.09/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	600	79x55x37
JBL OnBeat Xtreme	500	04.12/ST	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	120	23x44x24
Loewe AirSpeaker	500	01.13/FT	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	4x20	13x24x24
Philips Fidelio SS DS9800	700	05.12/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	100	22x27x9
Pro-Ject DBS1	500	06.11/FT	★★★★★			iOS		n/a	4x10x11
Samsung DA-E750	600	10.12/FT	★★★★★		●	iOS/Android	●	100	15x45x24

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Hi-Fi+, Issue 96 (UK)

"A very engaging DAC, it has the fleetness of foot that serves the spirit of the music"
Hi-Fi Choice, Jan '13 (UK)

I was carried away by the music – which, really, is all you can ask for"
Hi-Fi World, Mar '13 (UK)

"The MyDAC comes highly recommended"
AVForums, May '13 (UK)

"A fast-paced and exciting performance"
What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision, Apr '13 (UK)

"Very highly recommended"
Audio Creative, Jan '13 (Netherlands)

"The Micromega MyDAC is an instant audiophile classic"
C-Net, Mar '13 (USA)

"An exceptional product and unbeatable value for money"
AVCesar.com, May '13 (France)

"MyDAC comes close to digital audio sources at 20 times the price"
Audiofil, Mar '13 (Croatia)

"Magic box!"
La République du Son, Apr '13 (France)

"A stunning bargain"
The Absolute Sound, Jul '12 (USA)

"The MyDAC is a revelation"
Reclaisason, Apr '13 (France)



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Wireless speakers

Bluetooth _____ Universal wireless system that's incorporated into most sources
AirPlay _____ Apple's proprietary wireless system; works over your home network

The shortlist



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

Cambridge Audio Minx Go

"The Minx Go is a terrific product for the money. As a way of filling a small or medium-sized room with your music at a quality that belies its size and price, it's a winner."



AWARD WINNER

Denon Cocoon Stream DSD-501

"The DSD-501 is a superb wireless speaker whose impressive feature count is matched by its equally polished sound quality. A worthy Award winner."



AWARD WINNER

Audio Pro Allroom Air One

"If you're looking for the convenience of a wireless speaker in a premium package, then the Audio Pro has to be considered the very best in this price range."

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	AirPlay	Bluetooth	Aux	Charging	Battery	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	
Up to £800										
Audio Pro Allroom Air One	500	08.13/FT	★★★★★	Best wireless speaker £400+, Awards 2013			●	●	●	20x31x19
Bayan Audio SoundBook	150	01.14/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		9x16x4	
Bose SoundLink Mini	170	01.14/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		5x18x6	
B&W A5	400	08.13/GT	★★★★★		●	●			18x30x20	
B&W A7	700	12.12/FT	★★★★★		●	●			22x36x16	
Bose SoundLink Air	300	12.12/GT	★★★★★		●	●			17x31x10	
Braven 625s	150	10.12/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●		6.5x5x16	
Cambridge Audio Minx Air 100	330	10.13/ST	★★★★★		●	●	●		18x35x12	
Cambridge Audio Minx Air 200	430	08.13/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		45x22x17	
Cambridge Audio Minx Go	100	08.13/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	23x24x6	
Denon Cocoon Stream DSD-501	250	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	Best wireless speaker £150-£300, Awards 2013			●	●	●	24x45x17
Geneva Model S Wireless DAB+	330	10.13/ST	★★★★★	Best wireless speaker £300-£400, Awards 2013			●	●	●	15x14x18
Harman/Kardon Go+Play	280	05.13/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●		24x50x23	
Jawbone Big Jambox	260	09.12/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●		9x26x8	
iLuv MobiOut	70	05.13/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		0x0x0	
JBL Charge	120	01.14/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		18x7x7	
JBL Flip	100	05.13/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		0x0x0	
JBL OnBeat Rumble	260	10.13/ST	★★★★★		●	●	●		17x45x22	
Libratone Zipp	370	10.13/ST	★★★★★		●	●			26x12x12	
Libratone Loop	400	12.13/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●		33x33x8	
Loewe AirSpeaker	500	03.13/GT	★★★★★		●	●			24x13x24	
Logitech UE Boombox	200	12.12/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		16x39x8	
Logitech UE Mobile Boombox	75	05.13/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		6x7x11	
Monitor Audio Airstream WS100	250	09.13/GT	★★★★★			●			13x12x12	
Panasonic SC-NA10	130	01.14/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		10x20x3	
Philips Fidelio P9	240	03.13/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●		12x29x5	
Pioneer XW-SMA4	350	12.12/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		21x36x17	
Pure Jongo S3	170	06.13/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●		13x13x14	
Roth OLI POWA-5	250	04.13/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●		27x18x21	
Sonos Play:1	170	01.14/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●		16x12x12	
Sony RDP-XA700	285	03.13/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		18x40x16	
Ultimate Ears Boom	170	01.14/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		16x6.5x6.5	
Sony SRS-BTM8	85	05.13/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		19x25x9	

"It's hard to believe the Monitor Audio WS100s cost just £250. Perched on a desktop or shelf, they can fire out seriously good sound"

March 2013



Headphones

Ear tips _____ Most in-ears come with these. Experiment with sizes to get the best fit
In-line remote _____ Mostly for Apple devices, but Android-friendly units are growing. Handy...

The shortlist



AWARD WINNER
SoundMAGIC E10



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
AKG K451



AWARD WINNER
Sennheiser Momentum

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	In-ear	On-ear	Type	Noise cancelling	Wireless	Weight (g)
Up to £70									
AKG K451	50	10.12/GT	★★★★★ Best portable on-ears up to £100, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	●		Closed			120
Audio Technica ATH-CK550	49	09.11/ST	★★★★★ Smooth and weighty with lashings of detail	●		Closed			8
Audio Technica ATH-CK551	45	08.12/GT	★★★★★ Big on bass, these cans are no shrinking violets	●		Closed			6
Audio Technica ATH-T400	50	11.10/FT	★★★★★ Nicely balanced pair that just lack the wow factor of the class leaders	●		Closed			260
Apple EarPods	25	01.13/FT	★★★★★ A big upgrade of Apple's original earbuds, but there are better rivals	●		Open			10
Beyerdynamic DTX101IE	65	01.12/GT	★★★★★ Best in-ears £40-£80, Awards 2013	●		Closed			11
Beyerdynamic DTX71IE	54	09.11/ST	★★★★★ Detailed and with supreme tone control	●		Closed			11
dBLogic EP-100	25	08.12/GT	★★★★★ A dramatic, enjoyable musical performance	●		Closed			117
Digital Silence DS-321D	60	09.11/ST	★★★★★ Admirable noise-cancelling buds	●		Closed	●		11
Etymotic Research MCS	57	01.12/GT	★★★★★ A likeable sound for the money	●		Closed	●		17
Grado iGrado	49	09.11/ST	★★★★★ Fabulous iPod upgrade: these are unbeatable at the price	●		Open			85
Jays a-Jays Four	50	12.11/FT	★★★★★ The Jays combine looks and performance to alluring effect	●		Closed			14
Jays t-Jays Two	67	09.11/ST	★★★★★ A sure-fire winner for those who like their bass	●		Closed			8
Ministry of Sound MOS003	30	12.11/GT	★★★★★ Tidy, well balanced and nicely made	●		Closed			15
Mix-Style inner headphones	30	08.12/GT	★★★★★ Punchy, controlled and balanced	●		Closed			13.5
Panasonic RP-HTX7	35	09.11/ST	★★★★★ Best portable on-ears up to £50, Awards 2012	●		Closed			153
Philips CitiScape Downtown	55	10.12/ST	★★★★★ Fun, stylish and great to use on an everyday basis	●		Closed	●		174
RHA MA-350	30	12.11/GT	★★★★★ Nicely made from quality materials, with impressive sound to match	●		Closed	●		48
Sennheiser CX 300-II	30	09.10/GT	★★★★★ Best in-ear headphones up to £50, Awards 2010	●		Closed			4
Sennheiser CX281	35	12.11/GT	★★★★★ Enjoyable enough, but a touch quiet	●		Closed			16
Sennheiser CX495	35	08.12/GT	★★★★★ A brilliant upgrade bargain	●		Closed			4
Sennheiser HD 202	26	02.11/FT	★★★★★ Great sound for the money and a bargain buy	●		Closed			130
Sennheiser HD 218	40	11.09/FT	★★★★★ For closed-back cans, the Sennheisers are very good – but not the best	●		Closed			224
Sennheiser MM 70i	50	09.11/ST	★★★★★ Nice features for the money	●		Closed	●		12
Sennheiser PX100-II	40	11.10/FT	★★★★★ An improvement over the previous model, very good open-backed cans	●		Open			80



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HEADPHONES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	In-ear On-ear	Type	Noise cancelling Wireless	Weight(g)
Up to £70							
Skullcandy Full Metal Jacket	65	07.10/FT	★★★★★	An extremely likeable pair of in-ear 'phones	●	Closed	13
Slick Distributions SD50	30	10.12/ST	★★★★★	Features and price make it easy to forgive minor sonic flaws	●	Closed	71
SoundMagic E10	35	10.12/ST	★★★★★	Best in-ears up to £40, Awards 2013	●	Closed	11
SoundMagic PL30	30	01.10/GT	★★★★★	Great headphones that are held back by better value rivals	●	Closed	10
SoundMagic PL50	50	02.10/FT	★★★★★	Comfy and smooth-sounding; great all-rounders	●	Closed	8
Sony MDR-570LP	30	08.10/GT	★★★★★	Comfortable, all-round, on-ear headphones	●	Closed	110
Sony MDR-AS40EX	24	03.09/GT	★★★★★	Sporty headphones that sound weighty and clear	●	Closed	6
Sony MDR-EX500LP	45	09.10/GT	★★★★★	Display good solidity and weight – well worth an audition	●	Closed	7
Vivanco Airc. Studio Monitors	50	12.10/GT	★★★★★	Capable - but should be approached with caution	●	Closed	n/a
£70 and above							
AKG K3003i	1000	04.12/FT	★★★★★	The best, and priciest, in-ears we've seen	●	Closed	10
AKG K370	73	12.10/GT	★★★★★	Impressive for the money	●	Closed	4
AKG K450/HA450	180	09.11/ST	★★★★★	Product of the Year Headphones, Awards 2011	●	Closed	120
AKG K545	210	12.13/FT	★★★★★	Built to last but lacks refinement and likeability	●	Closed	280
AKG K550	200	02.12/ST	★★★★★	Best home on-ear headphones £150+, Awards 2013	●	Closed	305
AKG K551	230	02.13/GT	★★★★★	Smashing all-rounders that really sing	●	Closed	305
AKG Q701	340	09.11/ST	★★★★★	A great, solid sounding set of cans	●	Open	236
AKG Q460	140	02.11/GT	★★★★★	More pros than cons, but still not complete	●	Closed	120
Altec Lansing Backbeat 906	90	10.09/GT	★★★★★	Dynamic and clear, the Backbeat 906s are a real find	●	Closed	35
Audio Technica ATH-A500	140	02.10/GT	★★★★★	If you're after closed-back cans, give these a try	●	Closed	290
Audio Technica ATH-ANC1	80	06.10/FT	★★★★★	Their portability and noise-cancelling makes them a viable buy	●	Closed	100
Audio Technica ATH-CKX9IS	75	01.14/GT	★★★★★	Easy on the ears and very comfortable, but they need a bit more refinement to be great	●	Closed	10
Audio Technica ATH-ES55	90	09.11/GT	★★★★★	Best portable on-ear headphone up to £100, Awards 2010	●	Closed	120

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HEADPHONES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	In-ear	On-ear	Type	Noise cancelling	Wireless	Weight (g)
Audio Technica ATH-ES7	140	02.11/GT	★★★★★ Appearance apart, there's an awful lot to like here	●		Closed			160
Audio Technica ATH-ES88	230	02.12/FT	★★★★★ Appealingly eccentric cans	●		Closed			130
Audio Technica ATH-EW9	159	10.07/FT	★★★★★ Featherlight phones are awesomely detailed	●		Closed			33
Audio Technica ATH-M50	130	02.13/GT	★★★★★ Immersive and refined: a great effort	●		Closed			284
Audio Technica ATH-W1000	650	09.11/ST	★★★★★ Expensive, but offer magnificent hi-fi sound	●		Closed			350
Audio Technica ATH-W1000X	650	07.10/FT	★★★★★ Best home on-ear headphones £500-£800, Awards 2010	●		Closed			350
Audio Technica ATH-WS55i	89	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★ An excellent pair of on-ears for the bass-loving iPhone-owner	●		Closed			165
Beyerdynamic Custom One Pro	170	10.13/GT	★★★★★ Accomplished and easy to listen to. We like them	●		Closed			290
Beyerdynamic DT880	200	06.09/GT	★★★★★ Comfortable and the sound is impressive	●		Open	●	●	340
Beyerdynamic DTX80	80	12.10/GT	★★★★★ Best in-ear headphones £50-£100, Awards 2010	●		Closed			12
Beyerdynamic MMX 101iE	95	01.14/GT	★★★★★ Best in-ears £80-£150, Awards 2013	●		Closed	●		11
Beyerdynamic T1	880	11.10/FT	★★★★★ Best home on-ear headphones £800+, Awards 2010	●		Closed			350
Beyerdynamic T50P	230	02.12/ST	★★★★★ Best portable on-ears £200+, Awards 2012	●		Closed			174
Beyerdynamic T51P	250	11.13/GT	★★★★★ A fine replacement for the T50ps, superbly entertaining	●		Closed			174
Beyerdynamic T70	456	11.11/FT	★★★★★ Undeniably capable, but don't quite feel worth the money	●		Closed			330
Blackbox M10	90	12.10/FT	★★★★★ Good noise-cancellers, but sonically slack	●		Open	●		180
Blackbox M10-RB	99	04.12/GT	★★★★★ Impressive, capable and clear-sounding	●		Closed	●		180
Blackbox i10	80	12.10/GT	★★★★★ A great set of noise-cancellers, with a good sound to boot	●		Closed	●		25
Bose MIE2i	120	09.11/ST	★★★★★ A perfect headphone meets microphone solution	●		Closed			19
Bose QuietComfort 15	280	04.12/GT	★★★★★ Best noise-cancelling headphones, Awards 2013	●		Closed	●		227
B&W P3	170	08.12/FT	★★★★★ Stylish and sonically talented on-ear headphones	●		Closed			130
B&W P5	250	11.13/GT	★★★★★ They look fantastic and sound just as good	●		Closed			195
B&W P7	330	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★ Best portable on-ears, Awards 2013	●		Closed			290
Denon AH-D600	200	11.13/GT	★★★★★ Open and spacious. A crisper presentation would make this a five-star product	●		Closed			365
Etymotic Research HF2	180	08.09/FT	★★★★★ The same money buys punchier cans, but not ones that fit as well	●		Closed	●		26

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WIREWORLD LUNA 7

PRICES FROM 1 1.5 2

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QED PERFORMANCE SUBWOOFER

PRICES FROM 3 6 10

£39.95

SEEN CHEAPER? CALL US

QED SILVER ANN. XT

PRICE PER METRE

£6.50

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AUDIOQUEST TOWER J2J / J2P

PRICES FROM 0.6 1 1.5 2 3 10 15 20

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HEADPHONES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	In-ear	On-ear	Type	Noise-cancelling	Wireless	Weight (g)
£70 and above									
Etymotic Research HF3	134	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●		Closed	●		11
Focal Spirit One	200	04.12/FT	★★★★★	●		Closed			225
German Maestro GMP 8.35 D	150	10.12/ST	★★★★★	●		Closed			220
Goldring NS-1000	100	03.10/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed	●		183
Grado GR10	399	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●		Closed			9
Grado GR8	300	04.10/GT	★★★★★	●		Open	●		9
Grado GS1000i	1000	10.09/GT	★★★★★	●		Open			312
Grado PS1000	1700	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●		Open			500
Grado SR325is	300	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●		Open			330
Grado SR60i	80	02.10/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			125
Grado SR80i	100	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●		Open			200
Grado iGi	90	01.12/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			12
Harman/Kardon CL	170	09.12/FT	★★★★★	●		Closed			195
Jamo IN40i	90	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●		Closed			11
Jamo wEAR IN20m	70	06.11/FT	★★★★★	●		Closed			13
KEF M200	150	10.13/FT	★★★★★	●		Closed			12
KEF M500	250	11.13/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			208
Klipsch Image One	140	05.11/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			138
Klipsch Image X7i	170	04.13/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			16
Klipsch Image X10i	219	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●		Closed			320
Klipsch Mode M40	290	02.13/FT	★★★★★	●		Closed	●		356
Klipsch S4i	90	12.09/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			12
Klipsch S5i	120	05.11/FT	★★★★★	●		Closed			12
Logitech UE 9000	300	03.13/GT	★★★★★			Closed	●	●	378
Lindy Premium Headphones	75	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●		Closed			225
Martin Logan Mikros 70	150	04.13/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			13
Monster Beats by Dr Dre	280	03.10/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed	●		260
Monster Beats by Dre iBeats	80	03.11/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			n/a
Monster Beats Pro by Dre	350	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●		Closed			299
Monster Gratitude	199	08.12/FT	★★★★★	●		Open			453
NAD Viso HP50	250	11.13/GT	★★★★★	●		Open			453
Nocs NS400 Titanium	80	01.12/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			12
Onkyo ES-HF300	180	10.13/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			240
Panasonic RP-HC101	82	04.12/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed	●		79
Parrot Zik	300	07.13/FT	★★★★★	●		Closed	●	●	352
Phonak Audeo PFE 022	80	03.11/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed	●	●	14
Phiaton MS300	150	02.12/ST	★★★★★	●		Closed			140
Philips Fidelio L1	230	05.12/FT	★★★★★	●		Closed			272
Philips Fidelio M1	125	10.13/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed	●		166
Philips Fidelio M1BT	250	Aw.13/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed	●	●	500
Philips Fidelio S1	70	01.14/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			14
Philips Fidelio X1	270	01.13/FT	★★★★★	●		Open			430
PSB M4U1	219	11.13/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			340
PSB M4U2	300	10.12/ST	★★★★★	●		Closed	●		362
Sennheiser CX880i	90	01.12/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			11
Sennheiser HD 380 Pro	110	02.10/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			220
Sennheiser HD25-1 II Adidas	190	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●		Closed			140
Sennheiser HD 598	190	02.12/ST	★★★★★	●		Open			270
Sennheiser HD 800	1000	10.09/GT	★★★★★	●		Open			350
Sennheiser IE 8i	260	03.11/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			18
Sennheiser IE 80	270	02.11/FT	★★★★★	●		Closed			5
Sennheiser IE 800	600	09.13/FT	★★★★★	●		Closed	●		8
Sennheiser MM 200	99	10.09/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed	●	●	28
Sennheiser MM 400-X	150	10.12/ST	★★★★★	●		Closed	●	●	105
Sennheiser MM 70s	70	01.14/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			13
Sennheiser Momentum	260	11.13/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed	●		190
Sennheiser Momentum On-ears	170	10.13/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			160
Sennheiser PXC 310 BT	190	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●		Closed	●	●	105
Sennheiser PXC310	200	02.11/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed	●		115
Sennheiser RS 160	115	05.10/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed	●		226

HEADPHONES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		In-ear	On-ear	Type	Noise cancelling	Wireless	Weight (g)
Sennheiser RS 180	185	05.10/GT	★★★★★	These comfortable, wireless headphones justify their premium price	●		Open		●	204
Sennheiser RS 220	350	10.12/ST	★★★★★	A very neat wireless solution with great sound quality		●	Open		●	329
Sennheiser X 320	70	10.12/ST	★★★★★	The best Xbox gaming headphones we've heard so far	●		Closed			280
Shure SE215	100	09.11/ST	★★★★★	Affordably opulent buds	●		Closed	●		30
Shure SE310	120	05.09/GT	★★★★★	Detail and clarity is first class	●		Closed			7
Shure SE425	200	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Best in-ears £150-£300, Awards 2013	●		Closed			32
Shure SE535	450	09.11/ST	★★★★★	Still good but no longer the best	●		Closed	●		272
Shure SRH1840	500	06.12/FT	★★★★★	Not cheap, but worth every penny	●		Open			268
Sony MDR-1R	210	02.13/GT	★★★★★	Detailed and airy, but need more kick	●		Closed			240
Sony MDR-Z1000P5	385	09.11/ST	★★★★★	Impressive sounding cans - with good flexibility	●		Closed			270
Sony XBA-2iP	130	11.12/FT	★★★★★	Best in-ears £120-£200, Awards 2012	●		Closed			6
Sony XBA-3iP	225	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	Best in-ears £200+, Awards 2012	●		Closed	●		7
Sony XBA-4iP	275	10.12/ST	★★★★★	The best Sony headphones we've heard in years	●		Closed	●		8
SoundMagic HP100	150	02.12/FT	★★★★★	Sparkling detail, spacious character	●		Closed			228
TDK ST700	150	01.12/FT	★★★★★	Tonally balanced and solidly musical	●		Closed			205
thinksound ts02+mic	90	02.13/FT	★★★★★	Eco-friendly buds provide a clear sound and a clearer conscience	●		Closed			10
Ultrason HFI-580	125	11.10/GT	★★★★★	Not class-leading, but still worthy of consideration	●		Closed			285
Ultrason HFI-780	160	02.12/ST	★★★★★	Big and bold, and offer excitement in spades	●		Open			285
Ultimate Ears Super Fi 5vi	110	12.09/GT	★★★★★	These in-ears are, in a word, brilliant	●		Closed			14
V-modu Crossfade M-80	160	10.12/ST	★★★★★	Good-looking and great fun, with lots of bass	●		Closed			200
V-modu Remix Remote	70	12.10/GT	★★★★★	Smooth and enjoyable sounding buds	●		Closed			17

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February 2012

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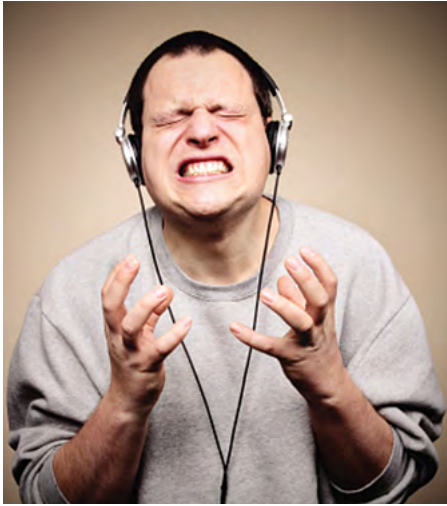
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Style OVER substance?

“ Quite remarkably, many people today and probably a majority of teens and late teens, are listening to a considerably lower quality level of music than their peers back in the 1970’s ”

Have advances in technology driven the desire for convenience and quantity at the expense of quality?

Listening to Music – the Benefits

There have been many studies carried out over the years that have shown remarkable benefits for mankind through listening to music. It is an activity that is intrinsic to all cultures and is one of the few that involves using the whole brain. Listening to music is now often used for various therapeutic purposes because it is believed to improve memory and intelligence, improve physical development and coordination, reduce stress and blood pressure, and even reduce levels of pain.

However, music can also be irritating if it's too loud or distorted, or if it distracts from other activities we are involved in. Most of the studies have been carried out using a reasonably good quality of musical reproduction. Quite remarkably, many people today and probably a majority of teens and late teens, are listening to a considerably lower quality level of music than their peers back in the 1970's. Back then a basic hi-fi system, often consisting of just a turntable, amplifier and a pair of speakers, was a 'must have'. Students going off to university would make it a priority to set themselves up with a decent hi-fi system – and the quality was, in retrospect, surprisingly good.



Quality vs Quantity

How different it is today where advances in technology have driven the desire for convenience and quantity at the considerable expense of quality. For many young people especially, the iPod, MP3 player or mobile telephone, connected to a pair of in-ear headphones, is their primary source of listening to music. The problem with this is that low-grade reproduced music is not going to deliver any significant beneficial outcomes for the listener. Probably the opposite will be true.

Low-grade music in this context is the result of two main factors, a) the delivery system (the hardware) and b) the source material (the 'music'). Although the amplification section of the mobile device is a technological wonder, it's not hi-fi! Nor are in-ear headphones. They can't hold a candle to the stereo-typical system from the 1970's. As far as the source material is concerned, it's being over-generous to call it music if it's a typical MP3 or AAC (the iTunes default format) download. These are both highly compressed formats with the most popular download speed of 128 kbps being about one-eleventh the size of a full resolution CD track (1411 kbps), so the quality is inevitably far inferior. Information is irretrievably lost and the full dynamic range is lacking. Using an iPod while jogging does not really raise a quality issue but playing low-resolution tracks through, for example, an iPod docking station that feeds into a decent hi-fi system, is a disaster area. It is very poor quality made louder and this even affects the type of music listened to. For example, most classical recordings downloaded as an MP3 or AAC file are a complete waste of time because there is so much information

missing, all the complexities of the music are lost, and the recordings are reduced to just the essence of a tune.

Future of Recorded Music

If convenience has trumped quality for many people, we must ask what the future prospects are of maintaining high quality music recordings. Fortunately audiophiles, or hi-fi connoisseurs, or perhaps most accurately described, music lovers, continue to drive the demand for quality because there are some wonderful hi-end systems available and being sold today. Another important reason for hope within the mass-market is that there is no longer any over-riding reason for MP3 and AAC to have such a following. These formats were designed to overcome very slow download speeds pre-broadband and expensive memory capacity. These are not significant factors for most people now. Even iPods, if loaded with full resolution tracks, can deliver acceptable results through a good system. The trade-off is a smaller selection of stored music. Full resolution audio streaming, as well as CD quality downloads, are already available and will become the norm as the wider public becomes aware of the tremendous quality benefit.



Audiophiles and Hi-Fi Connoisseurs

Hi-fi connoisseurs and audiophiles are very important to the music industry. By their nature, they are generally avid music lovers who enhance their enjoyment through listening to music at its very best quality level, which means playing great recordings through hi-end hi-fi to achieve the most outstanding results. Without them, the main driver for quality would probably be removed from the music industry.



Specialist Dealers

Specialist hi-fi retailers also come into this category because it's their interest that has driven them into their particular business. These specialist retailers also perform another very important function because, without them, hi-fi manufacturers would have to rely on the internet and hi-fi magazine reviewers to try and assess the relative merits of different brands for potential customers – a notoriously unreliable decision making process. Specialist hi-fi retailers are constantly being offered new products for assessment and potential stocking and, as it is also their hobby as well as their livelihood, they are greatly interested in achieving the best performance and seeking out the most outstanding combinations. More than that though is their relationship with audiophiles and hi-fi connoisseurs for, if they are to stay in business, they must satisfy the most discerning customers in the industry. The reality is that audiophiles and specialist hi-fi retailers (and the ones listed on this page represent the UK's finest) are essential to each other.

Specialist dealers know how to choose the products that combine as a superb system and how to get the best out of it

by expert installation in the home. They also appreciate how exciting and involving music can be and how it can deliver a powerful emotional experience. If there's a price premium over an internet purchase by choosing a specialist dealer, it's probably a small one, but it's unquestionably worth the difference.

Listed below is our selection of THE BEST HI-FI DEALERS IN THE UK.

They have been chosen because they are known to do an excellent job in guiding customers towards hi-fi that will give years of musical enjoyment and total satisfaction.

Our Top 20 UK Hi-Fi Dealers

SOUTH

Ashford, Kent
SOUNDCRAFT HI-FI
 40 High Street.
 t: 01233 624441
 www.soundcraft-hifi.com

Chelmsford
RAYLEIGH HI-FI SOUND & VISION
 216 Moulsham Street.
 t: 01245 265245
 www.rayleighhifi.com

Kingston-upon-Thames
INFIDELITY
 9 High Street,
 Hampton Wick.
 t: 020 8943 3530
 www.infidelity.co.uk

Maidenhead
AUDIO VENUE
 36 Queen Street.
 t: 01628 633995
 www.audiovenue.com

Norwich
MARTINS HI-FI
 85-91 Ber Street.
 t: 01603 627134
 www.martinhifi.co.uk

Rayleigh
RAYLEIGH HI-FI
 44a High Street.
 t: 01268 779762
 www.rayleighhifi.com

Southend-on-Sea
RAYLEIGH HI-FI SOUND & VISION
 132/4 London Road.
 t: 01702 435255
 www.rayleighhifi.com

LONDON

Ealing
AUDIO VENUE
 27 Bond Street.
 t: 020 8567 8703
 www.audiovenue.com

N1
GRAHAMS HI-FI
 190a New North Road.
 t: 020 7226 5500
 www.grahams.co.uk

SW11
ORANGES & LEMONS
 61/63 Webbs Road.
 t: 020 7924 2043
 www.oandlhifi.co.uk

SOUTH WEST
Bath
AUDIENCE
 14 Broad Street.
 t: 01225 333310
 www.audience.org.uk

Exeter
GULLIFORD HI-FI
 97 Sidwell Street.
 t: 01392 491194
 www.gullifordhifi.co.uk

MIDLANDS
Banbury
OVERTURE
 3 Church Lane.
 t: 01295 272158
 www.overture.co.uk

Birmingham
MUSIC MATTERS
 363 Hagley Road,
 Edgbaston.
 t: 0121 429 2811
 www.musicmatters.co.uk

Coventry
FRANK HARVEY
 163 Spon Street.
 t: 024 7652 5200
 www.frankharvey.co.uk

Leicester
CYMBIOSIS
 6 Hotel Street.
 t: 0116 262 3754
 www.cymbiosis.com

Nottingham
CASTLE SOUND & VISION
 48/50 Maid Marian Way.
 t: 0115 9584404
 www.castlesoundvision.com

NORTH
Cheadle
THE AUDIO WORKS
 14 Stockport Road.
 t: 0161 428 7887
 www.theaudioworks.co.uk

Chester
ACOUSTICA
 17 Hoole Road.
 t: 01244 344227
 www.acoustica.co.uk

Gateshead
LINTONE AUDIO
 7-11 Park Lane.
 t: 0191 477 4167
 www.lintone.co.uk

Hull
THE AUDIO ROOM
 Savile Street, Hull
 t: 01482 891375
 www.theaudiroom.co.uk

York
SOUND ORGANISATION
 2 Gillygate.
 t: 01904 627108
 www.soundorg.co.uk

WALES
Monmouth
CERITECH AUDIO
 5 Monnow Bridge.
 t: 01600 716362
 www.ceritech-audio.co.uk

These specialist dealers have been selected because they are known to do an excellent job in guiding customers towards hi-fi that will give years of musical enjoyment and total satisfaction.



STAR QUALITIES

VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
SERVICE	★★★★★
FACILITIES	★★★★★
VERDICT	★★★★★



Stereo systems

This category includes a wide range of products including all-in-one packages where the speakers are part of the system, through to micro systems where the electronics are housed separately from the speakers. A streaming option is available on many newer systems.

The shortlist



AWARD WINNER

Denon D-M39DAB

"The D-M39DAB is a doddle to use, and offers an impressive overall sound – once again, Denon's micro system is the one to beat."



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

Marantz M-CR610

"The latest Melody is an affordable, good-looking box that does pretty much everything, bar Bluetooth streaming. And it does it well."



AWARD WINNER

Sonos

"It's not cheap, but you get what you pay for. Easy to set up, it sounds great and works brilliantly."

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		CD	Streaming	Internet Radio	DAB	FM	Analogue inputs	Digital inputs	Headphone out
Up to £500												
Denon CEOL Piccolo	260	03.13/FT	★★★★★	No matter what the source, the CEOL Piccolo will play all your music in superb style		●	●			●	●	●
Denon D-M39DAB	310	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Best music system up to £400, Awards 2013	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Onkyo CR-N755	300	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	Best networked micro system, Awards 2012	●	●	●	●		●	●	●
Panasonic SC-HC55DB	240	11.11/FT	★★★★★	Great specs and a great sound too	●	●		●	●	●		●
Panasonic SC-PMX9DB	450	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Well-featured but its laid-back sound makes it a solid buy	●	●		●	●	●		●
Pioneer X-HM70	350	03.12/GT	★★★★★	Not flawless, but gets much right	●		●	●	●	●		●
Pioneer X-SMCS-K	300	02.12/FT	★★★★★	An excellent jack of all trades	●	●			●	●		●
Sony CMT-G1BiP	400	12.11/FT	★★★★★	Capable and fun to listen to	●			●	●	●		●
TEACCR-H258i	230	08.10/GT	★★★★★	Big in heart and low in price	●			●	●	●		●
Teufel Impaq 40	299	08.10/GT	★★★★★	No frills but near-faultless sound for the money	●				●	●		●
Yamaha MCR-140	275	09.10/FT	★★★★★	Large portfolio of functions and it sounds good	●	●		●	●	●		●
Yamaha MCR-232	300	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Harsh treble docks it a star but it's an impressively compact micro system	●			●	●	●		●
Yamaha MCR-550	280	03.11/FT	★★★★★	Ditch the speakers, the CD/receiver is top-notch	●			●	●	●		●
Yamaha MCR-555	380	10.11/GT	★★★★★	Vastly improved over the original	●			●	●	●		●
£500 and above												
Aura Note Premier	1500	05.10/FT	★★★★★	A fine sounding all in one system	●	●				●	●	●
Arcam Solo Neo	1350	09.10/FT	★★★★★	Extra functionality over the original Solo - great buy	●	●	●	●	●	●		●
Camb. A. Sonata DR30/CD30	550	10.09/FT	★★★★★	Decent, but the performance doesn't hit the heights	●	●		●	●			●
Cabasse Stream3	850	07.13/FT	★★★★★	Hardware is great but the app needs developing	●	●	●			●	●	
Consonance F. City - Ping	1495	08.08/FT	★★★★★	Delightful CD receiver in one box	●	●			●			
Lyngdorf Digital 2.2 System	12350	05.10/FT	★★★★★	Not without its flaws, but a system worth a look	●	●				●	●	
Linn Majik DSM	2965	02.13/FT	★★★★★	A thoughtfully designed system and a pleasure to use	●	●	●			●	●	●
Marantz M-CR610	500	11.13/FT	★★★★★	Best music system £400-£800, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	●		●	●	●	●	●	●
Naim Uniti	2670	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Best Network Music Player £1500+, Awards 2010	●	●	●	●	●	●		●
Naim UnitiQute	1600	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Systems Product of the Year, Awards 2010	●	●	●	●	●	●		●
Pioneer P1DAB	550	07.13/FT	★★★★★	Great sound for a sensible price	●	●		●	●	●		●
Ruark Audio R4i	599	07.11/FT	★★★★★	Best all-in-one music system, Awards 2012	●	●		●	●	●		●
Sony CMT-G2BNiP	500	04.12/FT	★★★★★	A solid performer in every respect	●	●	●	●	●	●		●
TEACCR-H700DAB	550	10.11/GT	★★★★★	Great - but not a total all-rounder	●	●	●	●	●	●		●

"The Panasonic SC-PMX9DB is a well-featured system that falls short only when it comes to performance-per-pound"

December 2013

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Surround systems

This category includes a wide variety of systems. Most include a disc drive and now tend to feature video and music streaming capabilities. The speakers supplied tend to either be small satellite designs, or towers that usually provide greater scale and sonic authority.

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Blu-ray	3D Blu-ray	DVD	Streaming	Optical in	HDMI in	Channels
Up to £500										
LG HX906PA	425	07.11/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		1	2 5.1
Panasonic SC-BTT460	350	06.13/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●		1	0 5.1
Philips HTS5563	400	08.12/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		1	2 5.1
Pioneer BCS-SC626	400	01.12/GT	★★★★★		●	●			2	2 2.1
Q Acoustics Q-TV2	330	11.09/FT	★★★★★						1	0 2.1
Samsung HT-E5530	450	08.12/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		1	2 5.1
Sony BDV-E380	400	07.11/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		1	2 5.1
Sony BDV-N590	400	09.12/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●		1	2 5.1
£500-£1000										
Harman-Kardon BDS-570	750	04.12/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●		2	3 5.1
LG BH8220B	600	08.12/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		1	2 5.1
LG BH9520TW	600	11.12/FT	★★★★★		●	●			1	2 9.1
Panasonic SC-BFT800	600	10.11/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		1	0 2.1
Panasonic SC-BT735	600	08.10/GT	★★★★★		●	●			2	0 5.1
Panasonic SC-BTT590	500	08.12/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		1	2 5.1
Sony BDV-N7100W	600	09.13/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	1	2 5.1
£1000 and above										
Harman-Kardon BDS 477	1100	01.13/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●		0	3 2.1
Harman-Kardon BDS-800	1300	05.11/FT	★★★★★		●	●			1	0 5.1
Meridian G95	3995	12.07/GT	★★★★★			●			2	0 5.1



Soundbars

One-box speaker systems that include amplification, and are a great alternative to a full-on home cinema package if you don't have much space. Few soundbars include a Blu-ray player as standard.

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Disc drive	Smart	Ext. subwoofer	HDMI in	Optical in	Co-axial in	RCA in	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Up to £1500											
Bowers & Wilkins Panorama 2	1650	09.13/GT	★★★★★		●	3	1	0			13x110x18
Canton DM 90.2	1100	09.13/GT	★★★★★		●	0	2	2			15x90x30
Harman/Kardon SB30	800	07.12/FT	★★★★★		●	0	1	1	●		10x116x8
JBL Cinema SB200	250	01.12/GT	★★★★★			0	1	0			12x90x10
JBL Cinema SB400	450	06.13/GT	★★★★★		●	3	1	0			10x110x6
LG NB3520A	250	01.13/GT	★★★★★		●	0	2	0			8x100x5
LG NB4530A	300	06.13/GT	★★★★★		●	1	1	0			8x104x4
Monitor Audio ASB-2	1000	11.13/FT	★★★★★		●	3	1	1	●		101x19x17
Orbitsound M9	300	06.13/GT	★★★★★		●	0	1	0			9x30x10
Philips HTL9100	600	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★		●	2	1	1			7x103x16
Samsung HW-E551	400	10.12/FT	★★★★★		●	2	1	0			104x5x5
Samsung HT-E8200	500	11.12/FT	★★★★★		●	2	1	0			10x104x13
Sonos Playbar	600	05.13/FT	★★★★★		●	0	1	0			9x90x14
Yamaha YAS-201	350	06.13/GT	★★★★★		●	3	2	1			14x43x35
Yamaha YSP-2200	800	10.11/GT	★★★★★		●	3	2	1			9x89x12
Yamaha YSP-5100	1300	10.10/FT	★★★★★			4	2	1	●		21x120x9



Media servers

These have hard drives built in. Go for the largest storage possible as that leaves room for the future expansion of your music and video library.

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Hard drive capacity	HDMI out	Optical out	Coaxial out	HDMI in	Optical in	Co-axial in	USB in	Wireless	Resolution (bit/kHz)	Video
Up to £2000														
Lacie Lacinema Classic HD	190	04.10/GT	★★★★★	As good as Apple TV, this needs to be auditioned	1TB	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	24/92	●
Microsoft Xbox 360 (250GB)	200	01.11/FT	★★★★★	Now an appealing media hub as well	250GB	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	16/48	●
Netgear EVA9000	190	04.10/GT	★★★★★	Needs better sound and Apple TV-like usability	500GB	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	24/92	●
Olive 4HD	2150	02.10/FT	★★★★★	This is 21st-century hi-fi at its best	2TB	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	24/192	●
Olive O3HD	900	12.10/FT	★★★★★	A great music server that's nearly excellent	500GB	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	24/192	●
Raumfeld 3Raumfeld	1680	Aw.10/FT	★★★★★	A fabulous product to make Sonos sweat	160GB	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	24/96	●



Media streamers

These access the music or video files you have stored on your network. Check for file compatibility and decent control apps that improve usability.

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	HDMI out	Optical out	Co-axial out	HDMI in	Optical in	Co-axial in	USB in	Wireless	Resolution (bit/kHz)	Video	
Up to £500														
Apple TV	100	06.12/GT	★★★★★	A limited but likeable streamer from Apple	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	●	16/48	●
Asus O!Play HD2	110	01.11/FT	★★★★★	A flexible streamer improved by a hard disk	1	1	1	0	0	0	3	●	20/48	●
Cambridge Audio NP30	430	05.12/ST	★★★★★	Still worthy, but there's better around	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	●	24/96	●
Denon DNP-720AE	250	02.12/GT	★★★★★	A bargain for its features	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	●	24/192	●
LG ST600	130	07.11/GT	★★★★★	With more apps it could be a class king	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	●	20/48	●
Marantz NA7004	430	05.12/ST	★★★★★	Unique, flexible and packed with dynamics	0	1	1	0	1	1	2	●	24/96	●
Netgear NeoTV 550	150	07.11/GT	★★★★★	Decent enough if you know what you're doing	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	●	24/192	●
Now TV	10	10.13/FT	★★★★★	Oodles of free and premium content makes this a great upgrade for a 'dumb' TV	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	●	16/48	●
Popcorn PopBox 3D	140	10.11/FT	★★★★★	A Swiss Army Knife of streaming	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	●	16/48	●
Pinnacle ShowCenter 250	170	03.08/FT	★★★★★	Connects PC to system, wireless HD issues	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	●	16/48	●
Pure Jonga T2	130	11.13/FT	★★★★★	Cheaper than Sonos but comes with a few niggles	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	●	16/48	●
Roku 2 XS	100	06.12/GT	★★★★★	A family friendly streamer	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	●	16/48	●
Sonos Play 3	259	12.11/ST	★★★★★	A cracking little performer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	●	16/44.1	●
Sonos Play 5	349	12.11/ST	★★★★★	An ideal one-box network player	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	●	16/44.1	●
Sony NSZ-GS7	180	11.12/FT	★★★★★	Good first Google TV device but needs more apps	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	●	24/48	●
Sony SMP-N100	120	07.11/GT	★★★★★	A fine mixture of paid-for and catch-up content	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	●	24/96	●
Sony SMP-N200	100	06.12/GT	★★★★★	A competent and easy to use device	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	●	24/192	●
ViewSonic VMP72	117	04.10/GT	★★★★★	A decent streamer at a good price	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	●	24/96	●

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65 Castle Street, High Wycombe, Bucks.

STREAMERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		HDMI out	Optical out	Coaxial out	HDMI in	Optical in	Co-axial in	USB in	Wireless	Resolution (bit/kitz)	Video
£500-£1000														
Cambridge Audio MinnXi	600	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Easy to use, well built and sounds great. A terrific streamer	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	●	24/96	
Camb. Audio Stream Magic 6	700	08.12/FT	★★★★★	Best streamer £600-£1000, Awards 2013	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	●	24/96	
Olive O2M	700	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Affordable, but a bit too refined for our tastes	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	●	24/96z	
Pioneer N-50	400	05.12/ST	★★★★★	Best streamer up to £600, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	●	24/192	
Rotel RT-09	650	04.11/FT	★★★★★	Does a lot but not all of it to the standard we'd like	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	●	24/192	
£1000 and above														
Bryston BDP-1	2350	06.11/FT	★★★★★	A true hi-fi media player	0	1	1	0	1	0	3	●	24/192	
Cyrus Lyric 09	3000	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Controversial looks aside, the Lyric is a really strong sonic performer	0	0	0	0	2	2	3	●	24/192	
Cyrus Stream XP	2000	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Best streamer £1000-£2500, Awards 2011	0	0	1	0	2	3	1	●	24/192	
Cyrus Streamline	1600	08.11/GT	★★★★★	Best streaming system up to £2000, Awards 2011	0	0	1	0	2	3	1	●	24/192	
Cyrus Stream XP2-Qx	2300	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	Best streaming system £2000+, Awards 2013	0	0	1	0	2	3	1	●	24/192	
Linn Kiko	2500	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Best music system £1500+, Awards 2013	1	0	0	4	1	0	0	●	24/192	
Linn Majik DS-I	2500	02.10/FT	★★★★★	Gives a glimpse of the music-streaming future	1	1	1	4	1	1	0	●	24/192	
Naim NAC-N 172 XS	1650	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	Best streamer £1000-£2000, Awards 2013	0	2	0	0	2	2	1	●	24/192	
Naim ND5 XS	1950	01.12/ST	★★★★★	A thrillingly musical music streamer	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	●	24/192	
Naim NDS/555PS	12620	12.12/FT	★★★★★	Engaging sound, bags of detail and many features	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	●	24/192	
Naim NDX	2995	07.11/FT	★★★★★	Best streamer £2500+, Awards 2011	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	●	24/192	
Naim Uniti	2670	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Best streaming system £2000+, Awards 2011	0	0	0	0	3	2	1	●	24/192	
Naim Uniti 2	2795	11.12/FT	★★★★★	Uniti continues to lead the market at this price	0	0	0	0	3	2	1	●	24/192	
Naim UnitiLite	1650	12.12/FT	★★★★★	UnitiLite hits the streaming sweet spot	0	0	0	0	3	2	1	●	24/192	
Naim UnitiQute	1600	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Systems Product of the Year, Awards 2010	0	0	1	0	2	2	1	●	24/192	
Naim UnitiQute 2	1150	09.13/FT	★★★★★	Best music system £800-£1500, Awards 2013	0	0	1	0	2	2	1	●	32/192	
T+AMP 1260R	2700	12.10/FT	★★★★★	Amazing – this is proper high-end hi-fi	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	●	24/192	
Yamaha NP-S2000	1400	01.12/ST	★★★★★	Network streamer – a solid piece of hi-fi hardware	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	●	24/96	

What you need to know: PS4 streaming

Sony has positioned its new PlayStation 4 as a gaming console, but underneath its hood lies a wealth of multimedia streaming possibilities.

First up are Sony's own apps, Music Unlimited and Video Unlimited. Given a new lick of paint for the console's launch, both apps have been designed to be much faster than previous versions. This, combined with a cleaner, slicker interface, reflects Sony's attempt at a less cluttered, more user friendly experience on its devices.

Music Unlimited works in a similar way to Rdio and Spotify. Features include the ability to build your own playlists and share music across several devices, with every track available to stream in high quality. You can also play music in the background while you play your games. Nifty.

Video Unlimited offers a selection of 200,000 films and TV shows from major, and minor, American film studios. The service employs the use of Dynamic Adaptive Streaming over HTTP (DASH to you and me), which is said to be able to deliver content instantaneously, removing stability and buffering issues and delivering a smoother streaming performance.

Even though the PlayStation 4 doesn't quite meet the quantity of entertainment apps on offer on Microsoft's Xbox One, it does offer the usual streaming culprits such as BBC iPlayer, LoveFilm and Netflix. Much like the Xbox, we'd expect more apps to be arriving in future updates.



Sharing

Twitch and UStream are live video streaming sites that have been built in to the PS4. Tap the Share button on the Dualshock 4 controller (right) and head towards the 'Broadcast gameplay' option and you'll have the choice of the above sites to live-stream your gaming fails to.

As well as the above, video clips can be shared to Facebook (and screenshots to Twitter), although YouTube sharing has not yet been enabled on the console.





Set-top boxes

Freeview Large choice of digital TV channels via a rooftop aerial
Freesat Much like Freeview, but takes signal from a satellite dish
Subscription Services from Sky and Virgin give a vast array of premium content

The shortlist



AWARD WINNER

Humax DTR-T1010 (500GB)



AWARD WINNER

Humax HDR-T1000S (500GB)



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

Sky+ HD 2TB

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Freeview	Freesat	Sky	Virgin	YouView	Tuners	Hard drive capacity (GB)	HDMI out	Smart
Up to £500													
Equinix TiZi	150	03.11/FT	★★★★★	Wi-fi Freeview for your iPad, iPhone or iPod Touch	●					1	n/a	0	
Humax DTR-T1000	230	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Best Digital HD recorder, Awards 2012					●	2	500	1	
Humax DTR-T1010 (500GB)	230	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	Best Freeview HD recorder, Awards 2013					●	2	500	1	
Humax Foxsat HDR	300	04.10/GT	★★★★★	If you're looking to try Freesat, this is the way we'd do it		●				2	320	1	
Humax HD-FOXT2	100	07.10/GT	★★★★★	Best Freeview HD receiver, Awards 2011	●					1	n/a	1	
Humax HDR-1000S (500GB)	220	01.13/FT	★★★★★	Best Freesat recorder, Awards 2013		●				2	500	1	
Icecrypt T2400 (2TB)	330	01.12/FT	★★★★★	Loads of storage, but could do with more features	●					2	2TB	1	
Panasonic DMR-PWT500	350	01.12/FT	★★★★★	PVR box meets Blu-ray player	●					2	320	1	●

Picking the right box



Sky+HD 2TB
£250

Humax DTR-T1000
£280

Confused by the various options in the set-top market? Not sure on how to decide which one is better? Here are a few tips on the things to consider when looking for the set-top box that's perfect for you.

Tuners

If you plan on watching one channel while recording another, make sure your receiver has more than one tuner. Three tuners mean you can record two channels, so you don't have to miss out on your favourite programmes.

Content

If you're not sure which set-top box/service you want, then content is a good yardstick to measure by. BBC iPlayer and a fair few of its ilk are available on most service providers but other programmes and channels could be exclusive to just one.

HDD

Looking to record? You'll need a big enough hard drive to store your TV shows. The bigger the better. 500GB will give you 125 hours of HD viewing or two weeks of standard-def content. Some receivers now ship with a huge 1TB of onboard storage.

On the go

With service providers rolling out mobile apps, watching TV with a remote control is a thing of the past. Browsing what's on, managing your recorded content and deleting remotely when you're out and about is a handy trick. TV is now mobile.

Multi-room

Tired of someone else hogging the TV? Add an extra box and turn your set-up into a multi-room affair. Monthly fees apply but marry that with all the content on offer and you'll have a firm idea of which set-top box you should get.

SET-TOP BOXES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Freeview	Freesat	Sky	Virgin	YouView	Tuners	Hard drive capacity (GB)	HDMI out	Smart
Philips DTR-5520	150	07.10/GT	★★★★★	Fine in its own right, but there's better out there	●				2	n/a	1	
Philips HDT8520	270	09.10/GT	★★★★★	Excellent Freeview HD+ box	●				2	500	1	
Sagem DTR94250S	250	04.10/GT	★★★★★	A capable if unspectacular buy		●			2	250	1	●
Samsung BD-D8500	450	05.11/FT	★★★★★	Freeview meets Blu-ray in this handily sized box	●				2	500	1	●
Samsung STB-E7500	270	09.12/FT	★★★★★	One of the best, most flexible, Freeview HD TV recorders	●				2	500	1	●
Sky + HD 1TB	249	Aw.12/GT	★★★★★	Product of the year, Set-top boxes, Awards 2012		●			2	1TB	1	
Sky + HD 2TB	250	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	Best subscription service, Awards 2013, PRODUCT OF THE YEAR		●			2	1TB	1	
Sony SVR-HDT1000	300	12.11/GT	★★★★★	One to appeal to the 'bigger is better' crowd	●				2	1TB	1	
TechniSat HDFS	180	04.10/FT	★★★★★	A superb solution for its price		●			1	n/a	1	
TVonics DTR-HD500	280	12.10/FT	★★★★★	A clever and well-presented PVR	●				2	500	1	
Virgin Media Samsung V+	99	07.09/FT	★★★★★	An alternative to Sky HD, but still less high-def content			●		3	320	1	●
Virgin Media TiVo	200	06.11/FT	★★★★★	Best cable recorder, Awards 2011			●		3	1TB	1	●



Music/video players

A category of products that has been put under increasing pressure by the rise of the ubiquitous smartphone. At the most basic level it will be a standard music player that can be use in the gym. Higher-end machines will add video, internet browsing and apps as well.

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Screen size (in)	Resolution	Storage (GB)	Web browsing	Dimensions (hwd, mm)
Up to £500								
Apple iPod Classic 160GB	229	09.09/FT	★★★★★	2.5	320x240	160		60x100x14
Apple iPod Nano 16GB (2012)	130	01.13/FT	★★★★★	2.5	240x240	16		77x40x5
Apple iPod Shuffle 2GB	40	12.11/GT	★★★★★	n/a	n/a	2		30x30x10
Apple iPod Touch 64GB (2012)	330	12.12/FT	★★★★★	4	1136x640	64	●	123x59x6
Archos 5 Internet Tablet	280	03.10/GT	★★★★★	4.8	800x480	32	●	80x130x13
Cowon X7	200	02.11/FT	★★★★★	4.3	480x272	120	●	127x79x15
Cowon Z2	200	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	3.7	800x480	16	●	116x63x12
Creative Zen Style M100 4GB	35	12.11/GT	★★★★★	1.45	128x128	4		55x44x13
Philips GoGear Muse	140	04.10/GT	★★★★★	3	400x240	16	●	55x110x9
SanDisk Sansa Clip+ 8GB	40	12.11/GT	★★★★★	1	96x96	8		60x40x20
Sony NWZ-F805 16GB	200	01.13/FT	★★★★★	3.5	800x400	16	●	115x57x9

Xbox One: the future of streaming?

With Sony focusing on games, Microsoft's intent from the start has been on dominating the living room

Streaming Partners

Its lineup of streaming partners is larger than the PS4's with Machinima, TED and Now TV joining Netflix, LoveFilm, 4oD et al. There's no sign of BBC iPlayer on the platform, but as it's on the Xbox 360 we wouldn't expect it to be held up for too long...

Xbox Music and Video

Instead Microsoft look to be pushing its users towards its own apps in the form of Xbox Music and Xbox Video. Both services seem to be well stocked with content, with the latest films and TV shows available to rent or buy.

DLNA Streaming

Unlike the PlayStation 4 the Xbox One has included DLNA functionality from the off. Despite that, it is restricted in terms of how it's implemented, with only devices that meet Microsoft's 'Play To' standard able to work with the console.

SkyDrive

An extra feature for users who have Microsoft's cloud storage service SkyDrive on their consoles. Most video and music formats can be stored in the cloud and played through Xbox Music and Xbox Video.



Gameplay streaming

It's in the gameplay streaming arena where the Xbox One falters slightly compared with the PS4. Twitch gameplay streaming was due to launch with the console, but has now been pushed back to early 2014. Its internal DVR - Upload Studio - captures five minutes of footage and lets you edit content (add voiceovers, picture-in-picture commentary etc) before sending it to your friends via SkyDrive, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and so on. To do that, however, you'll need an Xbox Live Gold subscription.



Tablets

Android Offers great flexibility and innovation
Apple iOS Fantastic ease of use; massive choice of quality apps
Windows New kid on the block. Watch this space

The shortlist



Apple iPad Air



Apple iPad Mini Retina



Google Nexus 7

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	OS	NFC	3G	Screen size (in)	Resolution	Storage (GB)	Dimensions (h/w/d, mm)
Up to £600										
Amazon Kindle Fire HD 16GB	160	04.13/GT	★★★★★	A great option for those looking for a user-friendly tablet	Android	●	7	1280x800	16/32	193x137x10
Amazon Kindle Fire HDX 7	200	01.14/FT	★★★★★	An excellent tablet but Android fans might find it a little restrictive	Android	●	7	1920x1200	16/32/64	186x128x9
Asus VivoTab ME400	400	04.13/GT	★★★★★	A convincing rival to the Microsoft Surface in the Windows 8 space	Windows	●	10.1	1366x768	32/64	263x171x10
Apple iPad 2 16GB Wi-Fi	400	09.11/GT	★★★★★	Best tablet, Awards 2011	iOS	●	9.7	1024x768	16/32	241x186x9
Apple iPad Mini 64GB Wi-Fi	430	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Apple hits the bullseye. Again	iOS	●	7.9	1024x768	16/32/64	200x135x7
Apple iPad Mini/Retina display	320	01.14/ST	★★★★★	An absolutely superb tablet that shows its rivals how it's done	iOS 7	●	7.9	2048x1536	16/32/64	200x135x7
Apple iPad 4 16GB Wi-Fi	400	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Best tablet over 8in, Awards 2013	iOS	●	9.7	2048x1536	16/32/64	240x190x9
Apple iPad Air	400	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Refined and improved, the iPad Air is a stunning piece of technology	iOS 7	●	9.7	2048x1536	16/32/64	240x170x8
Asus Eee Pad Transformer	380	09.11/GT	★★★★★	A competitive tablet with a keyboard dock	Android	●	10.1	1280x800	16/32	271x177x13
Asus Eee Pad Transformer Prime	500	07.12/FT	★★★★★	A slim and smart tablet that we love	Android	●	10.1	1280x800	16/32	181x263x8
Asus Transformer Pad Infinity	600	04.13/GT	★★★★★	A very capable iPad alternative and one of the best android tablets	Android	●	10.1	1900x1200	32/64	263x181x9
BlackBerry PlayBook 16GB	400	09.11/GT	★★★★★	There's plenty on offer here, but lacks apps	QNX	●	7	1024x600	16/32/64	130x194x10
Dell XPS 10 32GB	340	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Not perfect but an appealing alternative to the usual suspects	Windows RT	●	10.1	1366x768	32/64	270x180x10
Google Nexus 7	160	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Best tablet up to £300, Awards 2012. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	Android	●●	7	1280x800	16/32	199x120x11
Google Nexus 7 (2013)	200	01.14/ST	★★★★★	Best tablet up to 8in, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	Android	●●	7	1920x1200	16/32	200x114x9
Google Nexus 10	319	01.13/FT	★★★★★	Great performance and price: a real iPad-botherer	Android	●	10	2560x1060	16/32	264x178x9
LG G Pad	260	01.14/ST	★★★★★	Looks the part but struggles against its price rivals	Android	●	8.3	1920x1200	16	216x127x8
Kobo Arc 16GB	160	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Not for music buffs but a great budget option nonetheless	Android	●	7	1280x800	32	190x120x10
Motorola Xoom	480	09.11/GT	★★★★★	A worthy adversary to the vaunted iPad	Android	●	10.1	1280x800	32	249x168x13
Samsung Galaxy Tab 2 7.0	160	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Find it for the right price and it's a capable all-rounder	Android	●	7	1024x600	8/16	190x120x10
Sony Xperia Tablet S	330	04.13/FT	★★★★★	Plenty of potential, but there are niggles	Android	●	9.4	1280x800	16/32	240x170x10
Sony Xperia Tablet Z	399	06.13/FT	★★★★★	Sony fans will love it, but there are tablets out there for less money	Android	●	10.1	1920x1200	16/32	172x266x69
Tesco Hudl	120	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Not flawless, but this is a superb budget tablet from Tesco	Android	●	7	1440x900	16	192x129x10

The PlayStation App: what you need to know

There are two components to the PlayStation 4's second screen experience. The first is the Playstation App which extends the console experience (for free) to Android and iOS devices. With the Playstation App you can send messages to other users, or people who have a PS4, PS3 and PS Vita.

The app offers a smaller version of the PS4 interface, through which you can buy games and then have them downloaded to the main console when you are away from home.

You can manage your own profile, view your friends' activity, receive notifications from your friends and keep up-to-date with the latest news on the PlayStation Network as well.

Tap the 'Connect to PS4' icon and you can enable the second screen option for games such as PS4 exclusive *Knack* or the upcoming *Watch_Dogs*, which displays extra information and useful tips should you need them.

The second component of the second screen experience is the Playstation Vita. It offers the same functionality as the app, but it also comes with the incentive of Remote Play.

Remote Play allows anyone with a Vita to stream PS4 titles to the handheld's 5in OLED screen via a wi-fi connection. A neat extra if you're looking to play games like *Killzone: Shadow Fall* or *Assassin's Creed 4: Black Flag* away from the console.





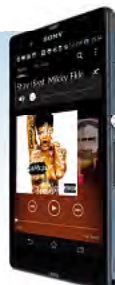
Smartphones

- Android** _____ Offers great flexibility and innovation
- Apple iOS** _____ Fantastic ease of use; massive choice of quality apps
- Windows** _____ New kid on the block. Watch this space

The shortlist



Apple iPhone 5S



Sony Xperia Z



HTC One

Also consider

Product	Tested	Verdict	OS	NFC	4G	Screen size (in)	Resolution	Storage (GB)	Dimensions (hwd, mm)
Apple iPhone 4S	07.12/ST	★★★★★	Former reigning smartphone, now replaced but still good	iOS		3.5	960x640	16/32/64	115x59x9
Apple iPhone 5S	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	Best smartphone, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	iOS	●	4.0	1136x640	16/32/64	124x59x8
Google Nexus 4	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A top performer and a brilliant realisation of Android power	Android		4.7	1280x768	8/16	134x69x9
Google Nexus 5	01.14/FT	★★★★★	A powerhouse of a phone in every respect	Android		4.95	1920x1080	16/32	138x69x9
HTC One	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Sets the bar high for smartphones in 2013	Android	●	4.7	1080x1920	32	137x68x9
HTC One X+	01.13/ST	★★★★★	Well worth considering: good for music and a joy to use	Android		4.7	1280x720	32/64	134x70x9
HTC One XL	03.13/ST	★★★★★	Great for mobile media fans but its poor battery life just takes the edge off it	Android	●	4.7	1280x720	32	135x70x9
HTC 8S	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Capable and fun, if feature-light	Windows	●	4.7	800x480	4	121x63x10
LG Optimus 4X HD	01.13/ST	★★★★★	Not outstanding, but a worthy alternative to the best	Android		4.7	1280x720	16	132x68x9
LG Optimus L5 II	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Not a thrilling phone but the user experience is good	Android		4.0	800x433	4	118x62x9
LG G2	12.13/FT	★★★★★	Unbridled power and thoughtful design: a fantastic phone	Android	● ●	5.2	1920x1080	16/32	139x71x9
Nokia Lumia 920	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A promising start for Nokia's flagship	Windows	●	4.5	1280x768	32	130x71x11
Nokia Lumia 925	09.13/FT	★★★★★	The best Windows Phone yet	Windows	●	4.5	1280x768	16/32	129x71x9
Samsung Galaxy Nexus	07.12/ST	★★★★★	Great in many ways but pipped by rivals for audio	Android		4.65	1280x720	16/32	136x68x9
Samsung Galaxy Note	07.12/ST	★★★★★	A hybrid between a smart phone and a tablet	Android		5.29	1280x800	16/32	147x83x10
Samsung Galaxy Note II	01.13/ST	★★★★★	Massive screen, massive battery, very tempting	Android		5.55	1280x720	16/32/64	151x81x9
Samsung Galaxy S II	01.12/GT	★★★★★	Still great but topped by the new kids on the block	Android		4.3	800x480	16/32/64	125x66x8
Samsung Galaxy S III	08.12/FT	★★★★★	Best smartphone, Awards 2012	Android		4.8	1280x720	16/32	137x71x9
Samsung Galaxy S4	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Better than its predecessor but not as good as its rivals	Android	●	5.0	1920x1080	16/32/64	137706x8
Sony Ericsson Xperia Arc S	01.12/GT	★★★★★	An excellent addition to the market	Android		4.2	854x480	1	125x63x9
Sony Xperia S	07.12/ST	★★★★★	A real rival to the iPhone	Android		4.3	1280x720	32	128x64x11
Sony Xperia T	01.13/ST	★★★★★	A strong all-rounder for music and movie lovers	Android		4.55	1280x720	16	129x67x9
Sony Xperia Z	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A triumph for Sony – one capable of taking the fight to Google	Android	●	5	1920x1080	16	139x71x8

Xbox One SmartGlass: what you need to know

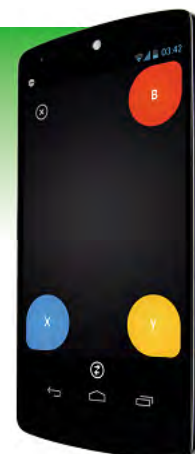
In comparison to Sony, Microsoft has taken a slightly different tack with regards to its Xbox One SmartGlass app.

Built from the ground up for the Xbox One (there's also an app for the Xbox 360), SmartGlass is a free companion app that's available on Windows 8, Windows Phone, Android and iOS.

Being a companion app, playing full retail games on your portable device is off the table. Instead, the app adds to the overall experience with several games - *Dead Rising 3*, *Ryse* and the forthcoming *Project Spark* - all SmartGlass enabled. This allows for interaction with the game even when you're not playing.

The app comes with several other features including the Xbox One's new matchmaking system - SmartMatch - which pairs you with players of similar skill and reputation for a better gaming experience. On other occasions it can follow your progress in real-time, offering useful tips and help when you need it.

Elsewhere the app can act as your dashboard when you're out and about, with the ability to send messages to friends, view profiles and watch any video clips you've uploaded to Xbox Live. In addition to that, when watching a TV show or film, the app can serve up extra details on the programme with behind the scenes access, commentary and interactive guides available to view.





HDMI cables

Digital cables that carry both picture and sound. These carry control signals as well, so they can integrate the operation of components in your system.

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Length as tested (m)	HDMI type
Up to £80					
Audioquest Pearl	23	06.11/FT	★★★★★	Best HDMI cable, Awards 2012	1 1.4
Cambridge Audio 500 (5m)	69	06.10/GT	★★★★★	A perfectly acceptable cable for the money	5 1.3a
Chord Company Supershield	50	10.10/GT	★★★★★	Still a class-leading cable, but now it's 1.4 too	1 1.3
Clearer Aud C-line HDMI (2m)	60	08.07/FT	★★★★★	Will improve even 1080p pictures, helping stability. Well worth the money	1 2
Kimber Kable HD-09	73	03.09/GT	★★★★★	Picture quality is up with the best and it creates a wide sound field	2 1.3
Philex Thor Flat HDMI	40	10.09/GT	★★★★★	A gutsy, well built HDMI cable.	1 1.3
Philex Thor HDMI/DVI kit	60	09.06/FT	★★★★★	A very decent cable for not much cash - you can't really go wrong	5 1.3
QED HDMI-P	50	11.08/FT	★★★★★	This award winning cable just got better	1 1.3
QED Performance HDMI	70	03.09/GT	★★★★★	Capable performer - finely balanced sound and a wonderfully rendered picture	3 1.3
QED Performance HDMI-e	35	03.11/FT	★★★★★	Perfectly good cable that just falls down in its pricing	1 1.4
QED Perf. HDMI-e S/speed	60	11.10/FT	★★★★★	Communicates a superb and natural colour balance and virtually noise-free images	2 1.4
QED Profile HDMI	25	01.12/FT	★★★★★	Now with 1.4 status, this is still a worthy cable	1 1.4
QED Qunex HDMI-P (5M)	75	09.08/GT	★★★★★	Fantastic picture quality mated with a dynamic and powerful sound	5 1.3
ThatCable HDMI	5	10.09/FT	★★★★★	Brilliant way to spend a fiver - will give rivals up to £20 something to think about	1.5 1.3
ThatCable HDMI (5m)	10	06.10/GT	★★★★★	A no-brainer for those on a tight budget	5 1.3a
Vivanco Prowire	45	10.10/GT	★★★★★	A fine cable that's worth seeking out	1.5 1.3
Vivanco Sound and Image	30	11.09/GT	★★★★★	A respectable upgrade, it provides greater fidelity in sound and vision over budget cables	2 1.3

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CABLES & ACCESSORIES
BEST HDMI CABLE
AUDIOQUEST PEARL



AudioQuest Pearl HDMI Cable

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2013
ACCESSORIES
BEST AUDIO REFERENCE
ATLAS ELEMENT INTEGRA



Atlas Element Integra Audio Cable

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2012
CABLES & ACCESSORIES
BEST OPTICAL DIGITAL CABLE
QED PERFORMANCE GRAPHITE



QED Performance Optical Cable

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2013
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
ACCESSORIES
AUDIOQUEST FLX-SLiP 14/4



AudioQuest FLX-SLiP 14/4 Cable

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2012
CABLES & ACCESSORIES
BEST USB CABLE
SUPRA USB 2.0



Supra USB 2.0 Cable

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HDMI CABLES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Length as tested (m)	HDMI type
£80 and above					
Wireworld Chroma (Miami)	60	10.09/GT	★★★★★	Highly competent, although lacking in low-frequency heft	1 1.3
Wireworld Chroma 6	60	Aw.10/FT	★★★★★	Best HDMI cable £50+, Awards 2010. Great upgrade cable for higher-end systems	1 1.4
Wireworld Island 6	46	10.10/GT	★★★★★	Packs a firm punch and strong dynamics	1.4 2.0
Audioquest Cinnamon	80	01.11/FT	★★★★★	A top-notch HDMI that's a credit to any system	2 1.4
Audioquest Forest	80	06.10/GT	★★★★★	A true and worthy rival to Chord's Supershield	5 1.4
Audioquest HDMI-1	180	09.08/GT	★★★★★	This stylish cable offers a solid, cohesive image with good sound	3 1.3
Audioquest HDMI-X	95	03.09/GT	★★★★★	A real entertainer – chunky bass and images are well defined	3 1.3
Atlas HDMI	160	07.07/GT	★★★★★	Upgraded version of the existing Atlas HDMI - delivers good detail and contrast	7 1.3
Black Rhodium Coral HDMI	100	10.06/FT	★★★★★	Worthy of serious consideration - pictures are highly detailed, colours convincing	4 1.3
Chord Company Active	115	10.09/GT	★★★★★	Muscular-sounding and excellent in every regard	1.5 1.3
Chord Co. Active Silver + HDMI	95	01.11/FT	★★★★★	An impressive successor to the old Active cable	1 1.4
Chord Co. Supershield (5m)	90	06.10/GT	★★★★★	A punchy award winner that defies its low price tag	5 1.3a
Ecosse Picture Perfect Ultra	110	09.08/GT	★★★★★	This Ecosse gives a punchy, powerful performance with great detail levels	5 1.3
Ecosse Picture Perfect Ultra +	169	09.08/GT	★★★★★	With its punchy, powerful and composed production, this cable oozes dynamics	5 1.3
QED Qunex HDMI-P (7m)	85	07.07/GT	★★★★★	Stunning value, offering a cracking picture, and great for budget set ups	7 1.0
QED Reference	125	06.10/GT	★★★★★	An assured, but expensive, performer	5 1.3a
QED Signature HDMI	150	10.09/GT	★★★★★	It's competent and classy, and looks good too	1 1.3
Supra HF100 HDMI (8m)	112	08.06/GT	★★★★★	Not just pretty but it delivers impressive performance over eight metres	8 1.0
van den Hul Flat 180	90	10.09/GT	★★★★★	Typical van den Hul quality from a hinged cable that doesn't fall out of its socket	2 1.3b
van den Hul Flat HDMI (3m)	105	03.09/GT	★★★★★	One of the best HDMI cables we've ever heard	3 1.3
van den Hul Ultimate	300	10.08/FT	★★★★★	It's pricey, but has good performance	1 1.3
Vivanco SHQ Ultra	80	06.10/FT	★★★★★	It's an enjoyable watch, although there's some reservation	1.2 1.4
Wireworld Chroma 5 HDMI (7m)	109	07.07/GT	★★★★★	Flexible cable that delivers pictures as good as any HDMI cable at this price	7 1.0

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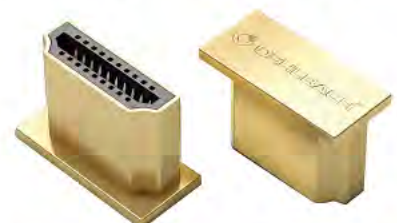
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Digital interconnects

USB	An increasingly common way to connect your computer to your hi-fi
Optical	Digital cable that uses light to transmit sound between components
Coaxial	Sends audio via an electrical signal between your hi-fi and AV kit

The shortlist



AWARD WINNER

QED Performance Graphite

Awards 2012: Best Optical Digital Cable
 “The sound through this cable is incredibly detailed and startlingly clear. There’s a good grasp of dynamics, too.”



AWARD WINNER

QED Performance

Awards 2012: Best Coaxial Digital Cable
 “QED is good at conveying subtleties. There’s a good sense of energy too, with plenty of attack.”



AWARD WINNER

Supra USB 2.0

Awards 2012: Best USB Cable
 “It helps deliver impeccable timing and plenty of energy, both of which translate into a tangible sense of fun.”

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Type	Length tested (m)
Up to £50						
Audioquest Forest USB 1.5	25	11.10/FT	★★★★★	Got a budget laptop and a budget DAC? This cable is ideal for connecting them	USB	1.5
Audioquest VDM-1	43	09.08/GT	★★★★★	This interconnect helps deliver a pleasing, refined sound	Co-axial	1
Atlas Fibre Optic	32	06.09/GT	★★★★★	Fine, substantial, budget cable choice	Optical	1
Ecosse The Producer	15	09.08/GT	★★★★★	A fine budget offering - with punch	Co-axial	0.8
Profigold PRO12102	30	03.11/FT	★★★★★	Simple upgrade to the iPod/iPhone-to-USB cable - music sounds cleaner and clearer	USB	2
QED Performance Coaxial	30	10.08/GT	★★★★★	Best coaxial digital cable, Awards 2012	Co-axial	1
QED Performance Graphite	40	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Best optical digital cable, Awards 2012	Optical	1
Supra USB 2.0	29	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Best USB cable, Awards 2012	USB	1
True Colours Industries Coral	35	06.09/GT	★★★★★	Best digital interconnect, Awards 2010. Excellent optical lead	Optical	1
Vivanco SHQ1112D	40	09.09/GT	★★★★★	At this comfortable price, this Vivanco's rather tempting	Co-axial	1.2
Wireworld Nova 6	40	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Like an up-and-coming band: unrefined but likeable and energetic	Optical	1
Wireworld Ultraviolet 5	40	04.07/GT	★★★★★	Carries portentous weight but the presentation is ill-defined and ill-disciplined	Co-axial	1
£50 and above						
Audioquest Cinnamon	60	11.12/FT	★★★★★	Like a fine paintbrush: controlled and delicate but lacking the big, broad strokes of a roller	USB	1.5
Atlas Equator Optical	50	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Worth checking out, but not for the basshunters	Optical	1
Chord Company Optichord	51	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Confident, competent and extremely likeable. Highly recommended	Optical	1
Chord Company Prodac	80	09.09/GT	★★★★★	It'll help your system deliver drive, but it's just pipped on price	Co-axial	1
Chord Co. Prodac Pro Digital	70	05.11/FT	★★★★★	Even better following an upgrade to its plugs	Co-axial	1
Clearer Audio Copper-line 75	97	Aw.08/FT	★★★★★	This is another fine cable from the Copper-line stable. It's well worth a listen	Co-axial	1
Clearer Aud. Silverline Optimus	185	09.09/GT	★★★★★	The sheer brilliance of this cable makes it stand out	Co-axial	0.5
Ecosse The Director SE	89	09.09/GT	★★★★★	Spacious sounding and great with higher frequencies	Co-axial	1
Furutech Formula 2	55	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★	Best USB cable, Awards 2011	USB	1.2
Imp Audio Silver Knight Exec	120	03.08/FT	★★★★★	This is a beefy, breezy cable with plenty of composure but it's far from cheap	Co-axial	1
Kimber USB	52	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Worth an audition if you're after something laid-back	USB	1
QED Qunex 75 Signature	80	09.09/FT	★★★★★	Beautifully made, but not quite as thrilling as we'd like	Co-axial	1
QED U Play (Bluetooth)	65	05.10/FT	★★★★★	It's small, cheap, and does an efficient job	Bluetooth	10
Vertere Pulse D-Fi	70	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	A must-audition if you can stretch your budget	USB	1
Wireworld Ultraviolet 5 USB	50	08.09/FT	★★★★★	Best USB cable, Awards 2010. If you use digital kit, this needs to be on your audition list	USB	2

“If you want to experiment with getting yet more performance from your USB DAC, try hooking up the Furutech Formula 2. At £55, it seems a luxury, but if you're serious about digital sound, then you owe it to your ears to at least have a trial listen”

Awards 2011



Analogue interconnects

These carry audio signal from source to amplifier, or between pre-amplifier and power amplifier. Some use a shielding construction to reduce external electrical interference.

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		RCA phono 3.5mm-to-RCA XLR (balanced)	Length tested (m)
Up to £50						
Atlas Element Integra (1m)	45	11.13/GT	★★★★★	Best analogue interconnect, Awards 2013	●	1
Belkin Mini-Stereo Cable	13	12.08/GT	★★★★★	Cheap MP3 cable with reasonably exciting sound		1.8
Chord Company Crimson	38	02.09/GT	★★★★★	A superb all-rounder that'll work wonders in a sub-£1000 system	●	1
Chord Company CrimsonPlus	45	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Fantastic control, expression and detail resolution	●	1
Chord Company CrimsonPlus	40	06.11/GT	★★★★★	Best analogue interconnect, Awards 2011	●	1
Clear. Aud. C-line Alpha One	30	12.11/FT	★★★★★	A bargain interconnect that should be on your shortlist	●	1
Ecosse Conductor CA1.2	49	06.11/GT	★★★★★	Excellent with detail - a good all-rounder	●	1
Ecosse The Composer	37	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Lacks excitement, but a lovely design with warm and punchy sounds	●	0.8
Griffin Aux Audio Cable 3011	15	12.08/GT	★★★★★	Last-generation iPhone compatible 3.5 plugs		1.8
Ixos XHA516-100 (1m)	40	09.07/FT	★★★★★	Refined - if you're after a gentle, mature sound they are fine	●	1
Merlin Mozart	40	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Open and exuberant, if lacking in warmth	●	1
Profigold PROI3301	17	12.08/GT	★★★★★	Excellent 3.5mm - 3.5mm cable		1
QED Audio 1	25	09.07/GT	★★★★★	Good value, but struggles with challenging tracks	●	1
QED Performance Audio 2	40	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Agile, fun and nuanced: would do well in pretty much any system	●	1
QED Profile	18	06.11/GT	★★★★★	At the top of the first upgrade tree	●	1
Wireworld Luna	37	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Excellent with subtlety and dynamics: should be on any interconnect shortlist	●	1
Wireworld Luna 6	36	12.09/GT	★★★★★	Looks strange, but delivers a great refined sound	●	1
£50 and above						
Atlas Equator Integra	75	02.12/FT	★★★★★	A recommended second-upgrade cable	●	1
Black Rhodium Harmony	60	08.08/GT	★★★★★	It offers power and detail, but we found the top-end just a bit too harsh	●	1
Black Rhodium Prelude	80	09.07/FT	★★★★★	Very good cable - sound is crisp and detailed, but still with lovely, chunky bass	●	1
Brilliance Synergy	83	10.06/FT	★★★★★	Best stereo interconnect, Awards 2006. Sensible price	●	1
Chord Company CobraPlus	66	10.10/FT	★★★★★	The perfect tonic for a dull system	●	1
Chord Company iChord	50	12.08/GT	★★★★★	Expensive, but definitely worth it		1
Chord Crimson Vee3	50	11.13/GT	★★★★★	A nice, easy-going cable that's a little too restrained		1
Clear. Aud.C-line Alpha	85	09.08/FT	★★★★★	Entry-level - solid construction and a smooth sound. Not for sonic thrill seekers	●	1.8
DNM Reson TBB100	85	09.07/GT	★★★★★	'Bullet' plugs and solid-core conductors really work. Ideal for pricier systems	●	1
Furutech Alpha Line-1	80	03.11/FT	★★★★★	A cable for owners of midrange systems to get very excited by - very good indeed	●	1
Ixos Xen HXA-716	80	08.08/GT	★★★★★	It's pedestrian to a point, but does a good job with unearthing detail	●	1
Merlin Bach Mk.IV	70	06.11/GT	★★★★★	This new version needs a touch of flair	●	1
QED J2P	50	12.09/FT	★★★★★	Fast and agile 3.5mm-RCA cable	●	1.5
QED Reference Audio J2P	50	12.09/FT	★★★★★	Clean sounding and packed with detail	●	1.5
Russ Andrews GQ-24 UltPlate	73	12.08/GT	★★★★★	Best iPod cable, Awards 2010. Punchy cable for iPod or iPhone owners		1
van den Hul The Name	60	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Energy and fun trump ultimate precision	●	0.8
Atlas Mavros	750	08.08/FT	★★★★★	Provided you have an appropriate system you'll find these cables work a treat	●	1
Chord Co. Chameleon Plus	125	11.11/FT	★★★★★	New plugs make these even more essential	●	1
Chord Company Indigo Plus	995	05.09/FT	★★★★★	It's genius in an interconnect - but you need the right system	●	1
Clearer Audio Copperline	135	05.07/FT	★★★★★	Produces a fast, well separated sound, with plenty of detail and dynamics	●	1
DNM Interconnect-HTFN	300	06.11/GT	★★★★★	A hugely capable - but expensive - cable	●	1
Ecosse Maestro MA2	177	05.08/FT	★★★★★	The Maestro MA2 may be getting on years, but it remains appealing	●	0.8
Ecosse Nu Diva	140	09.05/FT	★★★★★	Not cheap, but they will take your listening experience to a new level	●	0.8
Ecosse The Baton Mk II	104	08.08/GT	★★★★★	Although there's much to admire, the Baton Mk II can struggle to gel sounds	●	0.8
Ecosse The Symphony	225	03.05/FT	★★★★★	Authoritative and detailed, a real all-rounder, but it is 10 percent too pricey	●	0.8
QED Signature Audio S	190	09.09/FT	★★★★★	QED's new flagship interconnect offers great dynamics and punch	●	1
QED Signature Audio XT	150	03.09/FT	★★★★★	Another fine interconnect from QED, but it remains a few short steps off class-leading status	●	1
Russ Andrews Crystal CU	184	08.08/GT	★★★★★	This is a first-rate cable that can handle any sounds	●	1
van den Hul The Wave	100	01.09/FT	★★★★★	The Wave has a formidable array of talents and is one of the best cables at this kind of money	●	1
van den Hul The Well	100	06.11/GT	★★★★★	An ideal booster for thin sounding kit	●	1
Wireworld Oasis 6	130	06.11/GT	★★★★★	A truly splendid cable for kit worth £800-£1000	●	1

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Mains products

IEC _____ Usually a three-pin connector used in most hi-fi (and kettles)
Figure of 8 _____ Small, two-pin connector. Tends to be used on lower-priced products
Blocks and conditioners _____ Multi-plug units, some of which attempt to filter noise out of the mains

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Cable Block Conditioner Figure of 8 (2-pin) IEC (3-pin) Number of sockets
Up to £100				
Chord Company SuperScreen	65	05.09/GT	★★★★★	● ● n/a
Clear.Aud.C-Line Alpha One	25	11.10/FT	★★★★★	● ● n/a
Clear.Aud.C-L Alpha P/HUB	90	04.11/FT	★★★★★	● ● ● 6
Ecosse Big Orange MK2+	60	04.10/FT	★★★★★	● ● n/a
Ecosse The Big Orange GR8	60	01.11/GT	★★★★★	● ● n/a
Lindy 6-way	40	12.08/FT	★★★★★	● ● ● 6
Merlin Tarantula Figure '8'	40	01.11/GT	★★★★★	● ● n/a
Merlin Tarantula MK6	40	11.10/FT	★★★★★	● ● n/a
Russ Andrews Powerkord-8	75	01.11/GT	★★★★★	● ● n/a
Tacima CS929	40	08.06/FT	★★★★★	● ● ● 6
£100 and above				
Audioquest NRG 1.5	100	01.11/GT	★★★★★	● ● n/a
Atlas Eos	147	05.09/GT	★★★★★	● ● n/a
Clearer Audio Silver-line	150	07.06/FT	★★★★★	● ● n/a
Furutech G-320AG	165	02.11/GT	★★★★★	● ● n/a
Russ Andrews Powerlink	112	02.09/FT	★★★★★	● ● 4
R Andrews Ref P/Kord W350i	232	05.09/GT	★★★★★	● ● n/a
R Andrews Sig P/Kord W350i	275	11.06/GT	★★★★★	● ● n/a
Russ Andrews X2	200	11.11/FT	★★★★★	● ● ● 2
Supra MD-06	150	07.08/FT	★★★★★	● ● 6
van den Hul M/Server Hybrid	150	05.09/GT	★★★★★	● ● n/a
Wireworld Stratus 52	100	08.10/FT	★★★★★	● ● n/a



Speaker cables

These carry the audio signal from your amplifier to your speakers. Bi-wiring uses two runs of cables per speaker and can lead to improvements in the speakers' performance.

The shortlist



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

Audioquest FLX/SLiP 14/4

Awards 2012: Best Speaker Cable

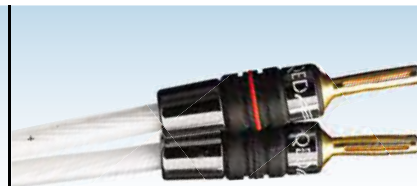
It all knits together perfectly. Nothing is stifled: it's open, clear and effortless, with tremendous dynamic ability for the money."



Talk Electronics Talk 3

£4/m

"This cable performs admirably with detail, dynamics and subtlety, while there's a lovely expressive midrange and firm bass too."



QED Revelation

£15/m

"If your system is good enough to make proper use of a cable like this, you won't be disappointed."

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Biwire
Up to £10/m				
Audioquest FLX-SLiP 14/4	5.80	11.13/GT	★★★★★	Best Speaker Cable, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
Audioquest X2	5	07.11/GT	★★★★★	A perfectly smooth and even-handed sounding performer
Atlas Element	3	11.09/FT	★★★★★	A fine budget upgrade, but you don't have to spend too much more to do quite a bit better
Atlas Equator 2.0 OFC	6	10.12/GT	★★★★★	Natural, even-handed and with good dynamic ability. A must-hear
Atlas Equator Mk II	8	04.10/GT	★★★★★	It's smooth and refined - it just needs a touch of verve

SPEAKER CABLES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	
Chord Co. Carnival Silv. Screen	6	10.12/GT	★★★★★	Slightly overtaken by newer rivals, but still a mighty fine choice
Chord Company Leyline	2	07.11/GT	★★★★★	A cracker of a budget cable
Cl. Audio C-line Alpha Shield	5	10.12/GT	★★★★★	Restrained dynamics hold this otherwise good cable back from the full five stars
Ecosse CS 2.3	5	10.12/GT	★★★★★	Balanced, nuanced and an easy listen, but a little subdued
Ecosse CS 2.4	8	07.11/GT	★★★★★	Detailed, but could be too bright for some
Ecosse CS 4.2	3	02.12/FT	★★★★★	A decent cable that needs a touch more punch
QED Ruby Anniversary	6	10.12/GT	★★★★★	Rich and detailed but lacking in rhythm and dynamics
QED Ruby Anniversary Evolution	6	11.13/GT	★★★★★	Rich, detailed, energetic and clean. A great cable
QED Silver Anniversary XT	5	07.08/GT	★★★★★	Our budget cable Best Buy for three years on the trot
QED X-TC	4	09.10/FT	★★★★★	A great budget cable that's able to hold its own
QED XT Evolution	6	10.09/FT	★★★★★	QED is now a twin threat in the sub-£10/m speaker cable market
Russ Andrews Kimber 4PR	7	07.08/GT	★★★★★	A powerful sounding cable - although lacking in refinement
Talk Electronics Talk 3	4	07.11/GT	★★★★★	An essential first cable upgrade
Wireworld The Stream 16/2	5	10.12/GT	★★★★★	Still a cracking cable, but losing out to better competition
Wireworld Stream 7	6	11.13/GT	★★★★★	If you're a fan of detail then you should definitely consider the Stream 7

Biwire

Speaker cables

£10/m and above

Atlas Hyper 2.0	15	07.08/GT	★★★★★	If your system warrants this kind of cable, you won't be disappointed
Atlas Mavros (5m)	2290	08.08/FT	★★★★★	Pair with an extravagant system and get excellent performance
Chord Company Signature	125	01.07/GT	★★★★★	One of the most effective upgrades you will ever hear if you own expensive kit
Ecosse MS2.4	50	01.08/FT	★★★★★	A massively detailed cable that reveals subtleties with refinement
Ecosse Reference MS-2.3	25	10.06/GT	★★★★★	This is a supremely well-balanced cable that does most things very well
Kimber 4VS	12	04.10/GT	★★★★★	An accomplished performer with an expressive sound
QED Revelation	15	04.10/GT	★★★★★	A fine cable that should be on your audition list
QED Silver Anniv. XT Biwire	10	10.06/GT	★★★★★	A clear class-leader with exceptional sonic transparency on display
van den Hul CS122	17	04.10/GT	★★★★★	Still great with subtleties, but rivals have caught up

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July 2008



QED Silver Anniversary XT

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Atlas Equator 2.0 Speaker Cable

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SOUND AND VISION
★★★★★
July 2008



Atlas Hyper 2.0 Speaker Cable

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Speaker stands

Many stands are hollow and can be filled with sand or other similar heavy materials. This is to increase mass and dampening and the sonic benefit is tighter bass – although too much of it can be counter-productive and end up deadening the sound.

The shortlist



Quadrapire QV60
£250



AWARD WINNER
Custom Design FS104 Signature
Awards 2013: Best Speaker Stands



Partington Super Dreadnaught
£180

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	Fillable	Finishes
Up to £5000						
Apollo A3/6	80	07.10/GT	★★★★★	Spacious and well-focused fillable stands	60x23x26	● 2
Atacama HMS2	200	07.09/FT	★★★★★	Retain detail and cohesion with these solid stands	60x31x31	● 1
Atacama Nexus 6	70	12.00/FT	★★★★★	Still performing well after eight years	60x25x30	● 1
Custom rc60 Deluxe	125	10.07/FT	★★★★★	This bespoke service has made a fine pair stands	60x20x25	5
Custom Design FS104 Sig.	200	09.11/GT	★★★★★	Best speaker stands, Awards 2013	62x16x18	● 4
Custom Design RS300	90	03.07/GT	★★★★★	Minimal design, a thoroughly appealing listen	61x22x26	● 2
Custom Design RS302	120	11.06/FT	★★★★★	Plenty of detail & clarity especially with vocals	61x22x26	● 3
Hi Fi Racks Podium T5 IV	150	09.11/GT	★★★★★	Ideal for those with forward sounding speakers	50x24x30	2
Kudos S50	200	09.11/GT	★★★★★	Highly recommended and agile stands	62x18x20	1
Mission Stance	100	07.09/FT	★★★★★	Will do a fine job with £200-£400 speakers	58x21x28	● 3
Partington ANSA 60	150	09.11/GT	★★★★★	They remain fine stands - but no longer outstanding value	60x23x28	● 1
Part. D'nought Broadside	300	08.08/FT	★★★★★	Deliver wide ranging improvements to sound	60x23x28	1
Partington Heavi	399	03.07/FT	★★★★★	If you demand the best, buy these	60x30x21	1
Part. Super Dreadnaught	180	03.07/GT	★★★★★	Best £100+ speaker stands in Awards 2007	60x16x17	● 1
Partington Trophy	130	07.06/GT	★★★★★	Hefty, glossy and suitable for all speakers	61x17x17	● 2
Quadrapire QV60	250	07.10/GT	★★★★★	Unusual to look at, but brilliant to hear	58x30x30	4
Russ Andrews Torlyte	336	03.07/GT	★★★★★	Good-looking wood stands that are a real find	50x16x18	1
Soundstyle XS122	105	07.06/GT	★★★★★	Beautifully finished and reveal a spacious sound	57x25x30	● 2
Soundstyle Z2	70	11.08/FT	★★★★★	Best sub-£100 speaker stand in Awards 2007	57x17x23	● 2



AV & hi-fi racks

Many racks are built to be expanded. Several manufacturers offer you a number of shelving options for ready-made products, but what if you want to get more kit in a few years? We like having the option to build upwards at a later date.

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Modular Shelves	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	Finishes
Up to £500						
Alphason Finewood 1100	300	03.13/FT	★★★★★	Looks great and provides sturdy support for your kit	3 51x110x45	1
Alphason ST560/3	260	06.10/GT	★★★★★	A well isolated modular design that does much right	● 4 65x56x59	2
Atacama Equinox	339	11.09/GT	★★★★★	Still a good rack, but newer rivals offer more	● 2-5 Variablex60x55	3
Atacama Equinox AVI	380	05.07/FT	★★★★★	Neat solution to mount a TV above AV electronics	2 110x106x60	3
Atac Equinox Hi-Fi Celeb LE	499	11.09/GT	★★★★★	Its stylish and more than capable, but lacks some grip	● 4 Variablex60x55	1
Atacama Eris Eco 5.0	460	04.12/FT	★★★★★	Best equipment support, Awards 2013	● 4 70x59x56	4
Audiophile Base Stratabase	360	01.08/FT	★★★★★	It isn't cheap but justifies the cost	● 1 0.4x43x36	2
Blok Stax 300	180	06.10/GT	★★★★★	A solidly constructed rack with a matching sound	3 51x58x40	2
Custom Design Concept AV	350	04.07/GT	★★★★★	Looks and sounds excellent, plus four colour options	3 60x101x40	4
Custom Design Icon Sig.	330	10.06/FT	★★★★★	A great rack for an upgrade to tame unruly systems	4 42x75x66	11

RACKS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Modular Shelves	Dimensions (h/w/d, cm)	Finishes
Custom Design Milan 4	470	11.09/GT	★★★★★	Small and well made, but lacks subtlety	● 4	59x57x40	5
Custom Design Milan LCD3	350	09.08/FT	★★★★★	A stylish addition to Custom Design's catalogue	● 3	42x77x40	4
Custom Design Tokyo Hi-Fi 4	430	08.11/GT	★★★★★	A lightweight rack with immense potential	● 4	64x58x40	3
Hi Fi Racks Podium	460	08.11/GT	★★★★★	Best equipment support, Awards 2011	● 3	62x60x40	1
Hi Fi Racks Podium Slimline	350	03.13/FT	★★★★★	A simple rack design with pretty decent results	4	Variablex55x40	1
Icon Audio Aero	299	05.09/GT	★★★★★	An ideal rack for those who like a lighter listen	4	76x68x50	1
Off the Wall Profile	329	06.10/GT	★★★★★	Retro styling that's great for the money	● 3	48x90x57	4
Quadraspire Q4evo	380	11.09/GT	★★★★★	A solid, cohesive and supremely affordable rack	4	Variablex59x39.5	8
Sonorous PL2200	280	09.08/FT	★★★★★	Classy looks and features	2	82x95x44	6
Stands Unique Sound Support	330	08.11/GT	★★★★★	An agile sounding rack with a good feel for subtlety	4	57x72x42	1
Target CL470	299	06.10/GT	★★★★★	For pure performance, this is a winner at this price	4	82x50x55	2
Techlink Ovid	200	04.07/GT	★★★★★	Perfect for a minimalist system in a trendy flat	3	32x95x40	4

£500-£1000

Atacama Elite Eco 12.0	500	03.13/FT	★★★★★	Offers solid performance and flexibility	● 5	Variablex115x32	1
BDI Valera 9724	500	03.13/FT	★★★★★	Complicated to assemble but the results make it worthwhile	3	54x112x52	3
Blok Pro Stax 500	500	08.11/GT	★★★★★	A behemoth that helps create a big, stable sound	5	108x67.5x53	5
Hi Fi Racks Akorner XL	930	09.12/FT	★★★★★	A corner-friendly alternative to the Podium	● 3	45x110x40	6
Optimum Avion 8925	999	06.10/GT	★★★★★	Heavyweight, but likeable and good with sonics	3	57x127x56	3
Quadraspire Q4 Bamboo	500	03.13/FT	★★★★★	An all round performer. Easy to set up and excellent results	● 4	Variablex59x40	1
Quadraspire QAVM (Oak)	540	04.07/GT	★★★★★	Solid and rigid, delivers a fine performance	● 3	50x109x50	8
Quadraspire QAVX	560	12.07/FT	★★★★★	Supports a great big telly and expansive system	● 2	Variablex163x52	8
Quadraspire Sunoko Vent T	800	11.09/GT	★★★★★	A first-rate rack, that highlights subtleties	● 4	Variablex59x47	6
Stands Unique Soundtower 10	533	05.09/GT	★★★★★	Beautifully made with a very capable performance	5	81x72x42	5

£1000 and more

Alphason Mode	1699	06.10/GT	★★★★★	Massively expensive, but supremely capable as well	3	60x150x57	4
Audiophile Base StarBase	1180	12.06/GT	★★★★★	Exceptional, spectacular results with high end hi-fi	● 3	65x59x52	3
Hi Fi Racks Podium XL	1050	06.10/GT	★★★★★	A great performer: plenty of weight and dynamics	● 3	53x140x40	1
Spectral Closed CL1050	1100	07.07/FT	★★★★★	Fantastic build and style, plus numerous options	2	31x101x53	17
Spectral Closed CL1552	1800	07.07/GT	★★★★★	Awesome style and decent abilities - a great rack	6	VariablexVariablex53	16



Headphone amps

The headphone outputs on most products are usually afterthoughts and have had little care taken in trying to make them sound good. A dedicated headphone amp is a must if you want the best headphone sound.

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Line level In Outputs
Up to £1000					
Beyerdynamic A1	975	11.10/FT	★★★★★	Best headphone amplifier £500+, Awards 2010. A formidable combo when partnered with T1 headphones	2 1
Chord Electronics Toucan	800	10.10/FT	★★★★★	A headphone amp with built in DAC that's worth a punt	2 2
Creek OBH-21SE	280	04.09/GT	★★★★★	Perfectly pleasant but it could do with more bite	2 2
Edwards Audio HA1	280	09.12/FT	★★★★★	Packs a punch but not that refined	2 1
Fiio E7	65	03.11/FT	★★★★★	One of the most cost-effective ways to improve headphone sound from a computer	1 2
Graham Slee Voyager	180	02.09/FT	★★★★★	It might not be the most practical headphone amp ever, but it's packed with potential	1 2
Lehmann Black Cube Linear	750	07.09/FT	★★★★★	Deeply impressive device given the right system	1 1
Lehmann Rhineland	400	04.09/GT	★★★★★	Best headphone amplifier £300-£500, Awards 2010. Its user-friendly sound makes this a very wise buy	2 2
Musical Fidelity V-CAN II	120	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Does enough right to be worth serious consideration	1 3
Pathos Aurium	850	08.13/FT	★★★★★	This amplifier is a top class choice	4 2

"Where the Graham Slee Voyager really shines as a concept is as an accessory to items such as laptops and well, pretty much anything else with a headphone socket"

February 2009



Phono amps

Dedicated units tend to sound better than the circuits integrated into amplifiers. Higher priced options usually allow for electrical optimisation for your cartridge, thus producing better results.

The shortlist



AWARD WINNER

Rega Fono MM MK2

Awards 2013: Best Phono stage

"Others may deliver a little more detail, but the weight and scale here justifies the extra outlay. A splendid amp."



AWARD WINNER

Leema Elements

Awards 2011: Best Phono stage

"We rate the Elements very highly and can't think of a better alternative at this price. Buy with confidence."



Graham Slee Gram Amp 2 Communicator

£150

"Fast, organised and dynamic. It's low on frills but high on quality. The aptly named Communicator comes highly recommended."

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	MM	MC	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Up to £2000							
Cambridge Audio 651P	120	06.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	1	2.5x8x11
Creek Audio OBH-15	240	02.09/GT	★★★★★	●	●	1	6x10x15
Graham Slee Gr-Amp 2 Comm.	160	06.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	1	7x10x25
Leema Elements	495	03.10/FT	★★★★★	●	●	2	5x11x10
Lehmann Black Cube	325	02.09/GT	★★★★★	●	●	1	5x11x11
Plinius Koru	2325	04.09/FT	★★★★★	●	●	2	9x45x40
Pro-Ject Phono Box S	120	06.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	2	7x10x14
Pro-Ject Tubebox SE	350	02.09/GT	★★★★★	●	●	2	7x10x14
Musical Fidelity V-LPS II	160	06.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	1	5x11x11
Rega Fono Mini A2D	85	03.12/FT	★★★★★	●	●	1	6x18x25
Rega Fono MM MK2	200	06.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	2	7x43x33



Cartridges

Moving magnet (MM) These produce a higher output, giving your phono stage an easier time

Moving coil (MC) Can produce more detail, but is more demanding of your phono stage

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	MM/MC	Tracking weight (g)
Up to £500					
Clearaudio Aurum Beta Mk II	360	04.11/GT	★★★★★	MM	2.2
Goldring 2100	92	05.10/GT	★★★★★	MM	1.7
Goldring 2500	224	03.09/GT	★★★★★	MM	1.7
Grado Prestige Silver	115	05.10/GT	★★★★★	MM	1.5
Nagaoka MP110	89	05.10/GT	★★★★★	MM	1.8
Nagaoka MP300	500	04.11/GT	★★★★★	MM	1.5
Ortofon 2M Black	460	04.11/GT	★★★★★	MM	1.5
Ortofon 2M Bronze	275	03.09/GT	★★★★★	MM	1.5
Ortofon 2M Red	80	05.10/GT	★★★★★	MM	1.8
Rega Exact	195	03.09/GT	★★★★★	MM	1.75
Roksan Corus Silver	400	01.11/FT	★★★★★	MM	1.9

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↓ AGAINST Nothing of Note – What Hi Fi October 2009.

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'They may pass the style test but it's the sound that impresses more.' – Hi Fi World Jan 2012

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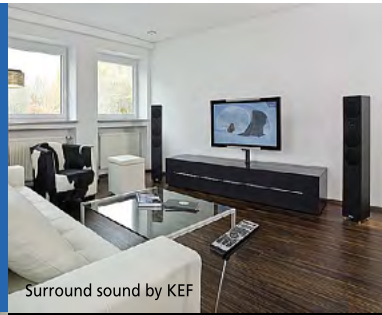
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Home cinema system by Monitor Audio

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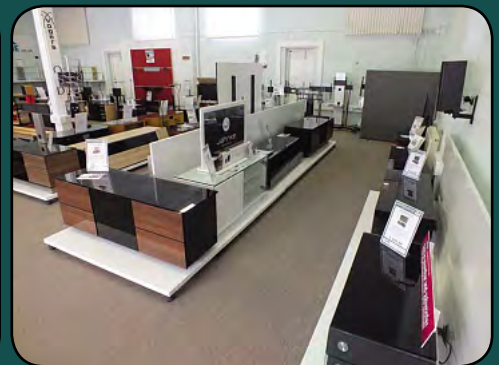
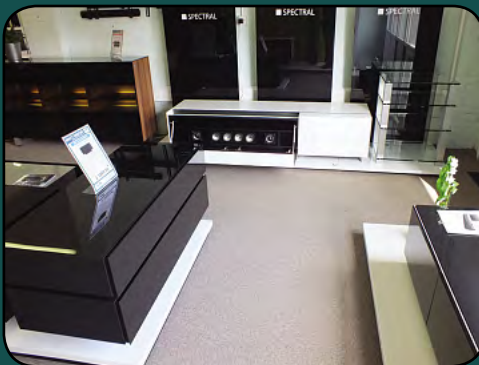
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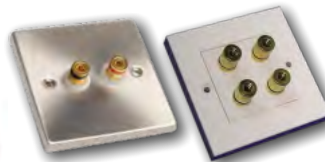
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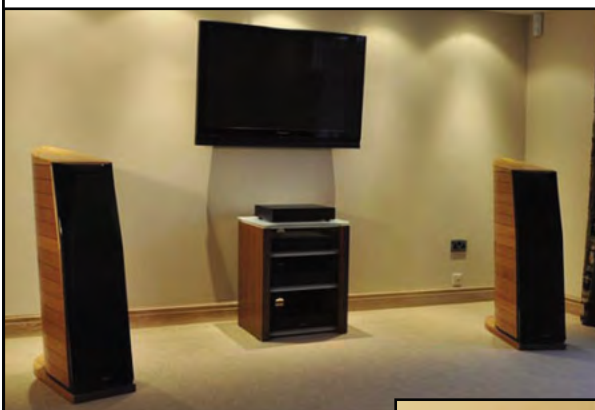
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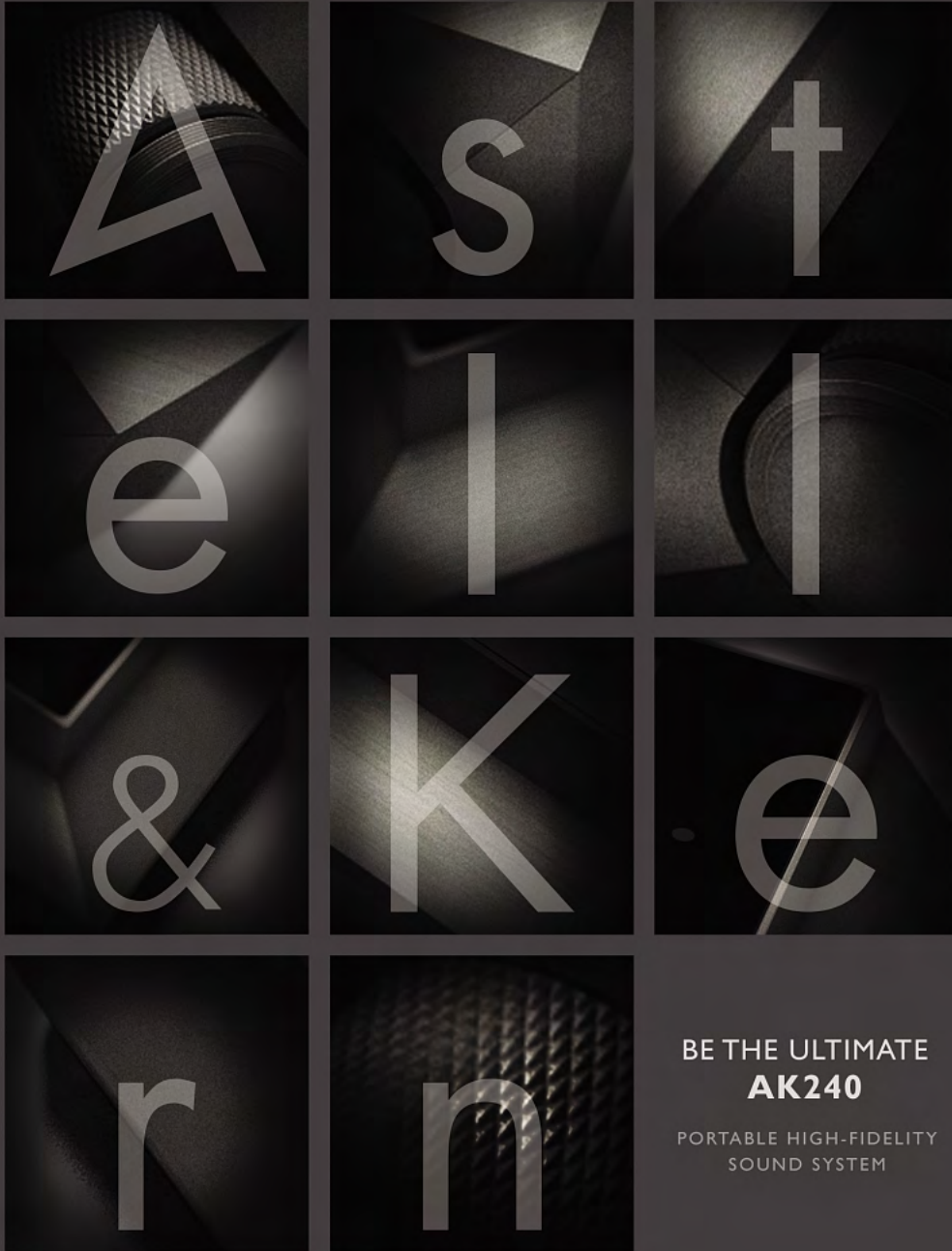
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