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P.J. Jones

HI-FI
WORLD

Hi-Fi



WORLD

OCTOBER 1998 £2.30

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JAMO POWER

CS5 active
loudspeakers

BLACK BEAUTIES

Michell's new Orca
pre and Alecto power
amps

GOING GARRARD

Aphelion and
Classique Sounds
plinths for 401

DIY SUPPLEMENT

No 39
(Overseas inside)
free with this issue



COMPETITION

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AND A PHILIPS CDR 870 CD
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CLASSIFIED ADS 6 PAGES OF BARGAIN HI-FI

ISSN 0961-7663



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The Nautilus™ is an acoustic engineer's dream. Its radical cabinet technology and full-rail spiral baffle redefined the audio landscape. Usually, only B&W Nautilus™ Hi-Fi speakers sound like a recording. Its performance can only be achieved by an enclosed speaker system. It's what the best audiophiles money can buy.

B&W's Nautilus™ 801 fuses the innovative Nautilus™ tube technology with a series of industry firsts: Fixed Suspension Transducer™, Kevlar® drive units, Matrix® cabinet bracing and Flowport™ technology. The result is an unprecedented purity of sound. The reason EMI's Abbey Road studios, along with best in the recording industry, are now upgrading to the Nautilus™ 801. Listen and you'll see – at your nearest authorised Nautilus™ 800 Series dealer. For more info contact B&W: 01903 750 750 or visit our website <http://www.bwspeakers.com>

B&W

L I S T E N A N D Y O U ' L L S E E

World Radio History

One of the weird things about hi-fi, a little like the way Merlin (the magician in Arthurian legend) grew ever younger, is that the longer you listen to it, the more impressed you are by quality inexpensive components rather than those which cost mortgage money. There's no doubting a lot of high-end equipment with four and five-figure price tags outperforms the majority of more mortal electronics, but the prices involved give designers huge room for manoeuvre when it comes to vital points like audio-grade parts, oversize transformers and vibration-stifling casework.

It's a completely different world when costs fall to £1000 and below. Squeezing the maximum from every single penny of a comparatively limited design budget separates companies which have a genuine understanding of circuit construction and parts selection from those who merely follow where others have gone and fill their circuit boards with the cheapest capacitors and resistors they can find.

Examples? A friend who has accumulated a system worth around



JON MARKS

£20000 recently commented that, if he'd heard Audio Analogue's Puccini SE integrated before he started raiding his bank account, he would never have spent so much on hi-fi. The same goes for Creek's OBH-12 passive pre-amp, Denon's DVD-3000 DVD player, Tannoy's Mercury m2 loudspeakers, Atacama's SE24 stands, Pink Triangle's Tarantella turntable, DNM's Mica cartridge, Lehmann Audio's Black Cube phono stage - and the list goes on. Hi-fi doesn't have to be expensive to be very, very good indeed.

Unfortunately, because the cocktail of music and hi-fi can be so addictive, it's possible to lose sight of the wood for the trees and spend

as much on a system as you would on a car or an extension for a house. However esoteric the hi-fi, there's no getting away from the fact that what comes out of the 'speakers is but a shadow of the real thing, and a lifetime of live music is a wiser investment than money-no-object equipment.

In defence of non-budget gear, like the £5000 Accuphase DG-28 digital equaliser on page 13 this month, cutting-edge technology rarely comes cheap. Digital Signal Processing, as embodied in the DG-28 (and B&W's Listening Room Optimiser), requires a lot of computing power, but the Accuphase points to future developments in overcoming problems posed by the weakest link in any system - the listening room. And the past tells us the cost of computing power has a habit of dropping like a stone not long after its release.

What with a successor to CD slowly shaping up (whether it be DVD Audio or Super Audio CD) and the emergence of DSP, the evolution of hi-fi looks to be quickening after the doldrums of Compact Disc.

HOW WE TEST THE PRODUCTS

- *Hi-Fi World* has its own advanced test laboratory and acoustically treated listening room. No other hi-fi magazine has the benefit of such facilities.

- *Hi-Fi World* has a dedicated in-house team of experienced listeners, and uses selected freelance professionals. We review thoroughly by extensive auditioning, rather than by quick-fire group listening tests.

- *Hi-Fi World's* engineering team designs a wide range of products in-house. No other hi-fi magazine is so expert and dedicated.



WORLD VERDICT



OUTSTANDING - Superb sound, something we'd use ourselves.



GOOD - Has strong merit. Well worth an audition.



ADEQUATE - Mediocre in several areas. May be worth auditioning.



POOR - Seriously flawed. Not worth considering.

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A SERIES COMPACT - SOMETIMES SMALL IS BETTER.



When it comes to speaker design, bigger isn't necessarily better. In fact, the reverse can be true.

Two minutes of a favourite track through Celestion's remarkable A Series Compact will convince you once and for all.

The Compact delivers the same pure, natural sound quality for which the A Series is renowned. The same unerring accuracy, even with the most demanding material.

It's hardly surprising. The Compact uses essentially the same advanced componentry as the acclaimed A1, partnering Celestion's famously sweet-sounding 25mm titanium dome tweeter with a potent 100mm long throw bass driver.

The use of neodymium for the HF magnet allows their acoustic centres to be aligned closer together on the distinctive die-cast aluminium chassis - a configuration which markedly improves definition and stereo imaging. And as well as looking good, the neat, curved edge baffle virtually eliminates diffraction effects.

You hear the difference straight away. The sound is noticeably sweeter, fresher, more open. The clarity, simply astonishing - and the looks speak for themselves.

As the saying goes, size isn't everything. It's how you use it that counts.

Model featured above in Cherrywood finish



Rosewood



Black Ash

FOR DETAILS ON CELESTION A SERIES PLEASE CONTACT: CELESTION CONSUMER DIVISION, DEPT HF25, FREEPOST MA 1332, ECCLESTON ROAD, TQVIL, MAIDSTONE, KENT ME15 69R. TELEPHONE (01622) 687442. WEBSITE <http://www.celestion.com>

World Radio History

CELESTION

CYLINDRICAL CYCLONE

For the aesthetically-minded, Audio Workshop have created an eye-catching two-way floor stander called the Cyclone 34. Built from solid hardwoods, it boasts a tubular support which doubles as a reflex port to endow the 'speaker with a "full, natural sound".

The Cyclone moves air with a set of Morel drivers, the MW144 mid/bass and MDT 39 tweeter, with its 29mm soft



dome. Standing 90cms high, Audio Workshop's latest comes finished in light, medium or dark American Oak as well as Mahogany, Maple or Cherry for £1998.

The Audio Workshop
55 Bloomsbury Street,
London WC1B 3QE
Tel: 0171 631 0707

GOING FOR A SONG

Valve amplifiers from the California-based Canary Audio are now available in the UK through distributors Music

Connoisseurs. The range is based around the famous 6550, EL34 and 300B valves, and includes both pre and power amps.

The first of two pre-amps is the CA-601 single-box with its four line inputs and a frequency response of 22Hz to 31kHz. The

second is a dual-mono design (CA-801) whose power supply and amplifier circuitry sit in separate boxes to minimise interaction. The claimed frequency response is 10Hz to 64kHz.

Canary offer two monobloc power amps as well, the CA-303, whose four 300Bs in push-pull put out 24watts, and the CA-306, which uses 6550s



All of these Californians boast substantial metalwork (3/8in. anodised-aluminium faceplates, for instance) and include MIT capacitors, 2% metal-film resistors and very short runs of wiring. Prices for the pre-amps are £1595 for the CA-601 and £3750 for

the CA-801. The CA-303 monoblocs will set you back £3750, the CA-306 £5495, and the CA-301 £3055.

Music Connoisseurs,
Unit 7, Claremont
Buildings,
Old Casterbridge Road,
Bebington,
Wirral,
Merseyside L63 4JB
Tel: 0151 343 0007

TANNOY'S MERCURIAL ADDITIONS

Tannoy's Mercury m2 loudspeakers, which have been enjoying great success since their release, form the basis for Tannoy's new budget outing. The m2.5s, as they've been inventively called, benefit from a host of modifications over their cheaper stablemates. For a start, the mid/bass driver has been moved higher up the front baffle to bring its acoustic centre closer to that of the tweeter. The LF unit has been revamped with a lighter, two-layer voice coil to improve transient response too.

Then there are the alterations to

the crossover. The resistor in the m2 which brings tweeter output down level with the mid/bass's has been replaced with the Auto Transformer used in Tannoy's more expensive models for better tweeter control. Finally, the rear-firing port has been lengthened to tune the bass lower than the m2s'. The premium? Around £30 on the £140 m2s.



Tannoy
Rosehall Ind. Estate,
Coatbridge,
Strathclyde ML5 4TF
Tel: 01236 420199

*The alphabet according to
Musical Fidelity.*



X10D Class A
Tube Line Stage



X CANS Class A
Tube Headphone Amplifier



X DAC New Technology
HDCD DAC



XLP Low Noise
MC/MM Phone Stage



X PRE Class A
Tube Preamplifier



X PSU Add on Power Supply
for all X Series



X TONE
High Quality Tone Control

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15-17 OLYMPIC TRADING ESTATE,
FULTON ROAD, WEMBLEY, MIDDLESEX HA9 0TF.
TELEPHONE 0181 900 2866.

World Radio History



FLOATING THE ARK

Ark Loudspeakers' Model 1 stand mooter, which has been on the market for about a year, has now been joined by their new creation, The Ark. This three-way floor stander uses a single piece of 26mm veneered MDF to form the rounded back and straight sides. For maximum rigidity, the front baffle is a slab of 40mm-thick hardwood.

Instead of squeezing skimpy

crossover components together on a PCB, each of the three occupies its own board to reduce interference and 1kg of copper is used in the bass-network inductors! This means the 87dB-sensitive Arks can be tri-wired or tri-amped and fed up to 250watts. Unusually, the price of £2795 (for Ash, Cherry, Mahogany, Oak, Maple and Walnut finishes) includes terminated loudspeaker cable.

Ark Loudspeakers
112 Furlong Street,
Arnold,
Nottingham NG5 7BN
Tel: 0115 920 5611

MORPHY'S LAW

Morphy Richards have produced a new version of their solar-powered radio. Launched

in June at a price of £19.99, it improves on the previous model, the Green Machine, by having additional solar panels which, the company claim, will improve performance by increasing the battery recharge speed. In addition, it has a crank handle that operates a dynamo to recharge the battery or it can be run off the mains via an AC adaptor.



Morphy Richards, tel: 01709 585525

SHORT IS BEAUTIFUL

Mordant-Short have unveiled their first line of hi-fi 'speakers to feature moulded, elliptical polypropylene drive units. The MS800 series consists of the MS812, a two-way stand mooter, and two floor standers, the two-way MS814 and the three-way MS815.

MS claim the elliptical design offers reduced coloration and crisper dynamic response while also allowing the use of slim cabinets (for better imaging) without compromising bass. Taking care of the top end is Mordant-Short's own anodised gold-dome tweeter. All of the above gives these three 'speakers high sensitivities of 90dB or more.

The 800s can be had in Black Ash with Cherry front baffles and are priced at £200, £300 and £450 per pair respectively.

Mordant-Short
Unit A1,
Hazleton
Industrial Park,
Horndean,
Hampshire
PO8 9JU
Tel: 01705 498866



STRIKING A CHORD

A new digital-to-analogue convertor has just been developed by Chord Electronics. The DSC 900 joins the DSC 1100 and DSC 1500 in the company's digital line-up. It boasts two digital inputs, one BNC co-axial and one AES/EBU balanced XLR. A lot of effort was apparently put into decoupling digital and analogue sections, hence a 3mm steel plate separates the two. Through this pass the power supply and balanced analogue

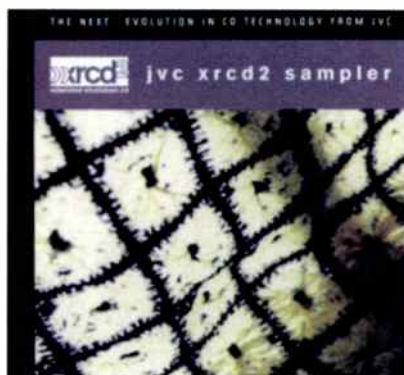
signals via nickel-plated brass pillars. The price is expected to be in the region of £1700, which makes it the least expensive convertor in the Chord range.

Chord Electronics
The Pumhouse, Bridge Court, Farleigh Lane,
East Farleigh, Kent ME16 9NB Tel: 01622 721444

THE NEXT REVOLUTION IN CD TECHNOLOGY IS UNDERWAY

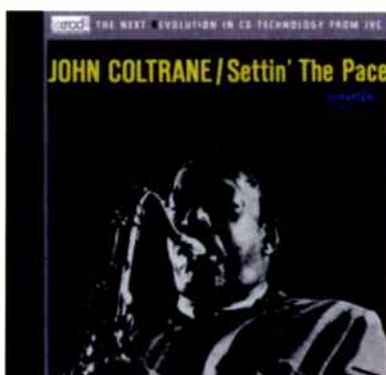


Since its introduction in 1996, JVC's **xrcd** has received a glowing "thumbs up" from audio critics and consumers alike. Now JVC's international team of producers and engineers has taken another giant step into the future of technology with the release of **xrcd²**. Using the new **DIGITAL K2 REGENERATING PROCESS** for both mastering and manufacturing, **xrcd²** boasts improved clocking accuracy and the total elimination of digital jitter. The resulting CD allows the listener to hear what the artists, producers and engineers intended... the sound of the original master tape. Experience the next [r]evolution in CD technology with these first three **xrcd²** releases:



XRCD² SAMPLER
JVCXR - 0201-2

This outstanding release, produced by Akira Taguchi, co-creator of the xrcd process, features tracks by five of JVC's critically acclaimed artists and includes the Bill Hollman Band's 1998 Grammy-award winning track "Straight, No Chaser"



JOHN COLTRANE
SETTIN' THE PACE
JVCXR-0202-2

****_ - DOWN BEAT
Recorded in 1958, this classic session features Coltrane backed by the stellar trio of Red Garland, Paul Chambers and Art Taylor. Among the tracks is a full force workout of Jackie McClean's intriguing "Little Melonae"



THE MODERN JAZZ
QUARTET CONCORDE
JVCXR-0203-2

***** Warmth, imagination compositional freshness and musical integrity" - DOWN BEAT
This album, the first featuring all four members of the "classic" quartet, is notable for its fugue-like title track, a relaxed "Softly, As in a Morning Sunrise" and Milt Jackson's "Ralph's New Blues".

XRCD² NEW RELEASES: DUE SEPTEMBER

JVCXR0204-2 Sarah Vaughan: Crazy and Mixed Up

JVCXR0205-2 Count Basie Meets Oscar Peterson: The Timekeepers

JVCXR0206-2 Tiger Okoshi: Color Of Soil

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POWER TO THE SPEAKERS

In 1977 Meridian burst onto the hi-fi scene with their M1 active loudspeaker. Since then they've continued to follow the active path with models like the M20 and M30.

They've now come up with a new two-way active design, the M33, whose price has yet to be finalised. Inside each cabinet hide two 55watt power amplifiers which take their signal from an electronic crossover that includes Meridian's Active Bass Alignment for extra bass extension.



The claimed in-room frequency response within 3dB stretches from 55Hz to over 20kHz. And rather than opting for MDF to form the enclosures, Meridian have chosen cast aluminium cabinets with steel back-plates.

Meridian
Stonehill,
Stukeley Meadows,
Huntingdon,
Camb. PE18 6ED
Tel: 01480 434334

GOLDEN RETRIEVER?

Orchid Precision Audio have upgraded their huge Natural Force valve power amplifier. It now has a 100% symmetrical audio path and incorporates KT90s as standard to produce 250watts per channel at 0.1% distortion.

To partner the Natural Force, Orchid developed a "fully-functional" valve pre-amp, which claims to be the first of its kind in the world. The Retriever features controls such as a parametric EQ, boost/cut control and Fletcher/Munson low-volume tonal correction which are seldom found together on

audiophile equipment. The modules, including a headphone amp, are available separately, while a complete Retriever is priced at £9500.

Orchid Precision Audio
Compton Court,
Long Compton,
Warwickshire CV36 5JW
Tel: 01608 684694

PROFESSIONALLY SPEAKING

Acoustic Energy recently launched their new AE-2 Pro monitors at Abbey Road. According to AE, after consultation with professional engineers, producers and musicians, certain vital performance criteria were laid down, including a natural, 'phase-accurate' bass, real treble clarity and freedom from harshness (a necessity for long mastering sessions).

The result was the £1700 Pros, three-way passives which leave the choice of amplification up to the studio (although part of the testing



involved driving a 1kwatt Yamaha amp flat out into the Pros). AE say the reliability of these monitors is underpinned by their customary metal-cone woofers which, if "operated normally", are "virtually indestructible".

Acoustic Energy
16 Bridge Road,
Cirencester,
Gloucestershire GL7 1NJ
Tel: 01285 654432

IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE

In four weeks' time, we hope to bring you the following audiophile contenders:

TANNOY R1 LOUDSPEAKERS

For £200, you can lay your ears on Tannoy's latest bi-wire stand mounter, the R1.

£350-£450 INTEGRATED AMP GROUP TEST

We line up five amplifier wannabes, including offerings from Creek, Myriad and Pioneer, to track down the best on a budget.

MAPLIN TWO-WAY ACTIVE CROSSOVER

We explain how to convert most two-way loudspeakers to active operation with this simple £30 device from Maplin.

MICROMEGA THE TUNER

Is it still worth investing in an analogue tuner as Digital Audio Broadcasting

comes ever nearer? Micromega's £700 The Tuner fights for the FM team.

KENWOOD HM-901 MICRO SEPARATES

No, we haven't sold our souls to the all-in-one system devil. Instead, we investigate space-saving separates, and 'speakers with horn-loaded ribbon tweeters, from Kenwood.

With our new range we admit we've cut

corners



D-M3 Super Micro RDS CD/Receiver

20 watts per channel. 4-mode preset EQ and Auto-Source select. Subwoofer output for extra bass. RDS tuner has Radio Text, 40 station pre-sets, auto tuning and a 24 hour timer/alarm. CD player is a high performance design featuring Denon's latest multi-bit technology.

Our corner cutting is purely in the interests of design.

We've given our new range of micro systems rounder, softer edges for a more sophisticated, more stylish appearance.

As you'd expect, Denon's superior performance and quality remain uncompromised.

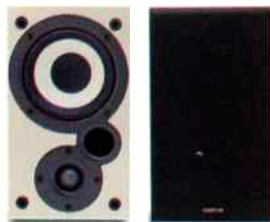
The full range includes a very compact CD Receiver and a CD Receiver with a 3 disc changer.

Options are a matching Cassette Deck and Mini-Disc Recorder.

High power British made speakers are also available.

For information on the full range and your nearest Denon dealer, call 01234 741200 or write to: Denon Freepost SL 781, Hayden House, Chiltern Hill, Chalfont St Peter, Gerrards Cross, Bucks. SL9 9BS.

<http://www.denon.co.jp>



SC-M5 Optional British Made Speakers

Designed especially for Denon's latest micro systems.



D-M5 Super Micro RDS CD/Receiver

As above but with the addition of a 3xCD changer and a power increase of 30 watts rms per channel. The 3 tray CD changer allows CDs to be changed individually even while one is playing.



Optional DRR-M10 Autoreverse cassette deck

Horizontal design to complement system. Delivers excellent performance and includes Dolby HX Pro B/C and CD synchronisation.



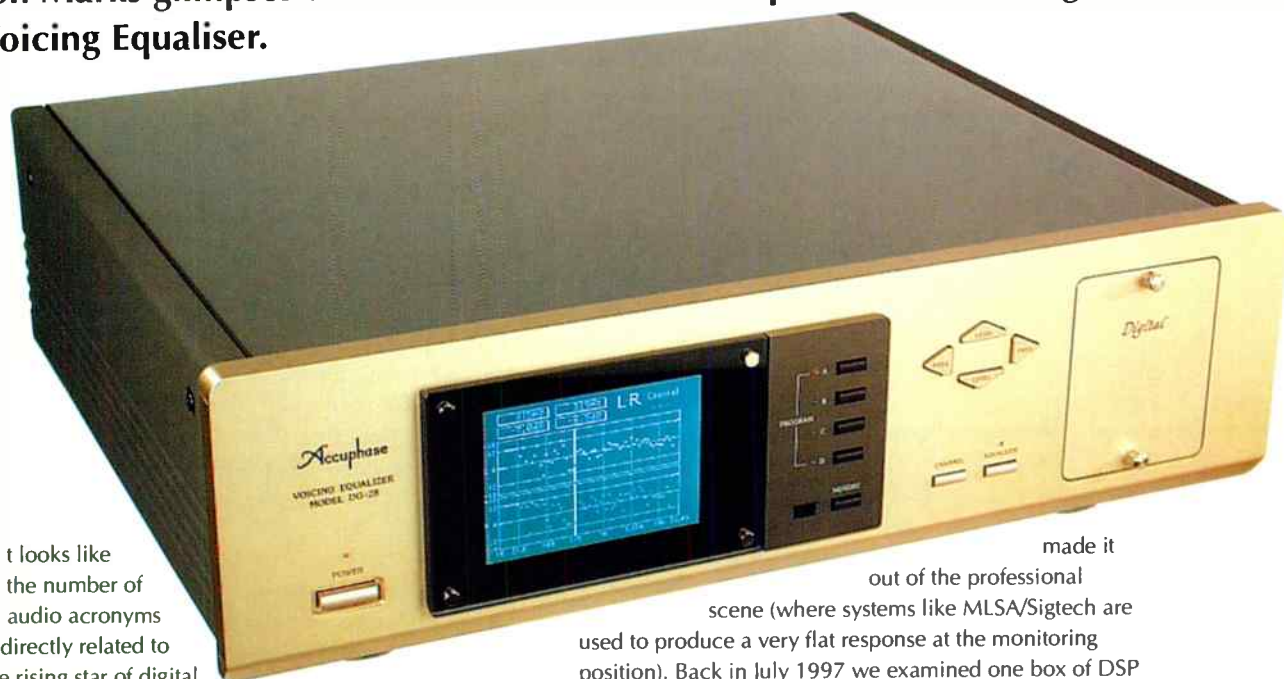
Optional DMD-M10 Mini-Disc Recorder

Looking to the future the DMD-M10 features comprehensive editing facilities including a new 'Pick Record' function.

The next generation from **DENON**

THE EQUALISER

Jon Marks glimpses the future of hi-fi with Accuphase's DG-28 Digital Voicing Equaliser.



It looks like the number of audio acronyms is directly related to the rising star of digital technology these days. It started out with CD, which letters happily trip off anyone's tongue, but is now moving on into the murkier linguistic waters of SACD (Super Audio Compact Disc) and DSD (Direct Stream Digital), as well as the further delights of DAD (Digital Audio Disc at 24/96). A whole host of minor cast members are waiting in the wings, but the real star of the binary show is DSP, or Digital Signal Processing, which is the heart that beats within Accuphase's £5000 DG-28 Digital Voicing Equaliser (or DVE, I suppose).

PROCESSING POWER

In the pre-digital days of pure analogue, the only processing available was ASP (or Analogue Signal Processing). As anyone who has ever owned a graphic equaliser will know, ASP isn't the most transparent form of signal manipulation; attempting to correct room problems or recording imbalances with 20 bands of cheap buffer op amps, capacitors and variable resistors tended to cause more harm than good, as any frequency-leveilling gains were outweighed by the habit of the electronic masses to remove most of the tonal colour, life and subtlety from music.

As the 1970s drew to a close, and a "word" could consist of numbers as well as letters, digital brought with it the promise of signal manipulation without damage. With the cost of computing power falling with every passing day now, it was only a matter of time before DSP

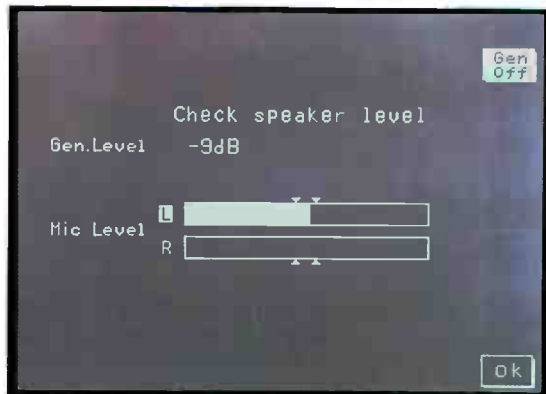
made it out of the professional scene (where systems like MLSA/Sigtech are used to produce a very flat response at the monitoring position). Back in July 1997 we examined one box of DSP tricks which showed just what the technology might achieve - B&W's John Bowers Listening Room Optimiser. The good news was that the LRO took less than 15 or 20 minutes of operation to make a very large improvement to sound quality. The bad news was that it was a prototype only, and B&W had (and still have) no plans to put it into production.

B&W might be one of the few companies to build a stand-alone DSP unit for home use, but they aren't the only ones. Now there's another option, the DG-28 from Accuphase, which fits snugly between transport and DAC.

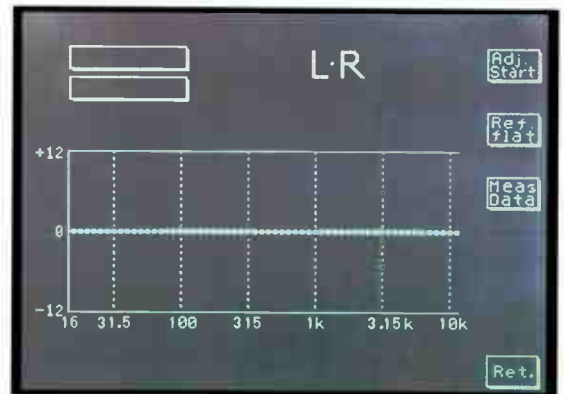
This high-end Japanese company has a reputation for bomb-proof construction, and you can see why in the 13kg DG-28. The front panel is a hefty slab of champagne-coloured aluminium which bears the unit's main interfaces with the outside world. To the left is a back-lit LCD screen which displays response and equalisation curves as well as the selected digital input. Centre-stage sit four buttons, one pair marked 'Frequency', the other 'Level', which allow you to change the DG-28's output when it's being used as an equaliser. To the right, hidden away most of the time behind a removable cover, is the 'Digital' section. Here you'll find the input and mode selector buttons (amongst others) and the XLR socket for the microphone supplied with the Accuphase.

If all the above is about as digestible as this

Left: Setting the correct output level for the warble tone generated by the DG-28.



Right: You can select a range of target responses for the DG-28 to achieve. This is the flat variant.



component's manual (no grin-inducing Japlish, only rather dry and uninformative prose), then a quick run-down of the DG-28's *raison d'être*s is called for.

GRAPHIC ILLUSTRATION

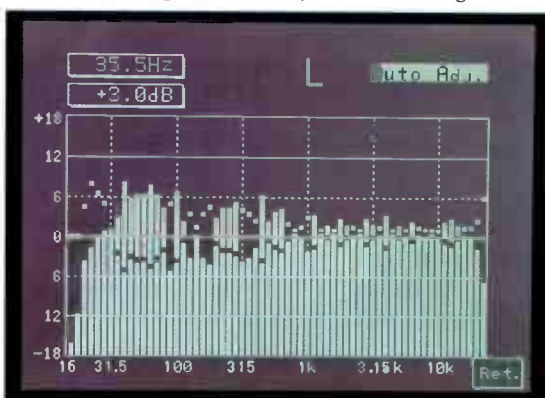
Another fascia button unmentioned thus far is marked 'Equaliser'. With its accompanying LED unlit, the DG-28's digital filter circuits are switched out of circuit. Light the LED and, with the Level and Frequency buttons, you can use the DG-28 as a graphic equaliser. Most analogue variants never got higher than 20 bands of equalisation per channel; the Accuphase has the option of 32 or 64 per channel (user-selectible), the centre frequencies of said bands stretching from 16Hz up to 22.4kHz.

Acting in this mode, the Accuphase is actually very simple to operate (from either the fascia or the neat little remote control). If your favourite loudspeakers are reticent across the midrange and push vocals to the rear of the sound stage, applying boost from about 500Hz to 2kHz, for instance, is simply a matter of scrolling left or right with the Frequency buttons to the relevant spot, and then hitting Level Up. This control works in 0.5dB steps up to a maximum boost of +12dB (its opposite being a maximum cut of -12dB).

When we tried this through the Jamo Concert 8s, you could hear the difference immediately. Vocals and guitar both moved forward in the sound stage, as indeed did everything else between 500Hz and 2kHz. A word of warning though - don't get over-enthusiastic below 60Hz or so, as applying 10dB of lift to a small stand mounter at 30Hz could be a recipe for catapulting cones across the room.

Equalisation of this sort is unlikely to be the sole reason for prising £5000 from your bank manager.

Left: The read-out here shows the combined response of the loudspeaker and room. The DG-28 then calculates an inverse filter from this.



Right: The final filter can be modified in Equaliser mode to further refine the overall response.

Elimination of room effects is, though.

RENEWING YOUR ROOM

Most audiophiles know only too well the overriding impact their listening room has on the sound of a hi-fi system. The commonest problem, judging from the numerous letters and e-mails we receive on the subject, is bass boom. One partial solution is to move 'speakers away from walls, but in a domestic situation this isn't particularly practical. There's also the 'bung approach', where a foam plug or what is known technically as a 'sock' is inserted into the port of a reflex-loaded loudspeaker to reduce the amount of bass it produces. But what can you do if your room is irregularly shaped, or if you don't want to lose an octave of bass? Cue DSP.

THE PROCESSING PROCESS

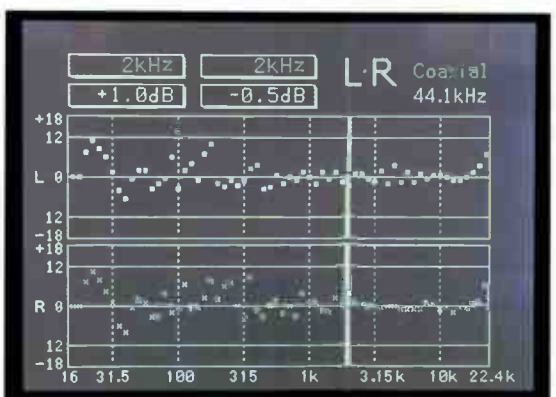
When it comes to room measurement and response optimisation, it's time to connect the DG-28's supplied microphone. This should be positioned at ear height at the listening position on a tripod (one for camera-mounting would be suitable).

THE FIRST STAGE

Pressing Mode moves you to the first stage, where the level of the warble tone generated by the DG-28 is set individually for each channel with the Level buttons. This tone is picked up by the microphone and fed into the filter circuitry, as was the case with the B&W.

THE SECOND STAGE

You can now choose between four pre-set responses (flat or -1dB, -2dB, or -3dB at 2kHz). A fifth screen allows you to enter a customised response, which the Accuphase will mimic as closely as possible. At this point, the manual comments, "If adjustment is performed so as to achieve





The rear panel has four bays to the left which can take additional modules (like analogue-to-digital converters). The other inputs and outputs each number one optical and one co-axial.

fully flat frequency response at the regular listening position, the audible result will be felt to be very bright". Through the Concert 8s, this turned out not to be the case, and roll-offs as dramatic as -3dB at 2kHz gave a tonal balance which was excessively warm.

THE THIRD STAGE

Adjustment begins next, as the DG-28 carries out three sweeps across the frequency spectrum for each channel and averages the results. This only lasts about six or seven minutes, and is followed by the DSP circuits calculating a digital filter which yields the chosen response (we stuck with fully flat for our listening).

ON THE HOT SPOT

So, switching the Accuphase in and out of circuit, it was time to assess the results. Given the improvements we'd had with the B&W, our hopes were high. With the Jamos in their normal reviewing positions, what we heard was a bit of an anticlimax. The DG-28 brought smoother treble, removed a hint of fizz from the midrange and evened out a number of small peaks in the bass, but the gap separating 'No Accuphase' from 'Full Accuphase' wasn't massive.

There was a rather simple explanation for this. As the DG-28 had shown with its measurement of the sound we were hearing at the listening position, our system's output

was flat +/-2dB from around 300Hz all the way up to 18kHz! The DG-28 was only really crunching numbers below 300Hz, and that was narrow-band correction dialing out some sharp peaks and dips, which have much less affect on the sound than broad humps or troughs.

The Jamos may have a commendably even response, but they're around four feet from the rear wall in our room. Most loudspeakers are more uneven and located far closer to a rear wall, so we wheeled in a pair of less well-mannered transducers and pushed them back up against the wall. One extra obstacle we added was unequal distance from side walls, which would alter the amount of reflected energy reaching the listening position and therefore the overall response.

Once the Accuphase had gone through its paces a second time, its benefits were more evident. Bass honk caused by wall proximity was brought under control, and the naturally forward and slightly harsh midrange of our second guinea pigs was tamed. Imaging was also better balanced between the two enclosures, although image precision itself remained unsharpened.

BOXES NO MORE

If you're lucky enough to have box loudspeakers with a fairly flat response in a room with enough space for their location not to be a problem, Accuphase's DG-28 wouldn't yield the best sonic return on £5000 lavished on your hi-fi. On the other hand, if you're a dedicated user of dipoles (from Magneplanar, Apogee, Quad and others, which can be very difficult to squeeze a balanced response from) and your room isn't ideal, it could be the solution to otherwise intractable problems.

THE WAY FORWARD

Along with the new digital formats, Digital Signal Processing holds out the promise of major advances in sound quality, as presaged by B&W's Listening Room Optimiser and, to a lesser extent, the DG-28.

The LRO's main distinguishing features are its ability to correct the phase anomalies created by passive loudspeaker crossovers and the psycho-acoustic research B&W have embedded in its ICs and patented. This is fiendishly difficult and very costly DSP though, which partly explains why the LRO remains a prototype and why such processing isn't part of the DG-28's arsenal. The Accuphase may not be a total DSP solution for all systems, but it's one of the very few components pointing the way to a technology which will certainly play a huge role in hi-fi to come.



Under the cover marked 'Digital' can be found controls for the LCD screen's contrast as well as microphone level and buttons for switching mode and equaliser bands (32 or 64).

Accuphase DG-28
£5000

R.T. Services
118 Mendip Heights,
Didcot,
Oxon. OX11 7TG
Tel: 01235 810455

WORLD VERDICT



If you love panel and electrostatic loudspeakers but your room doesn't, the DG-28 is well worth auditioning.

PLINTH CHARMING

Richard White takes a spin with specialist plinths from Classique Sounds and Aphelion for Garrard's 401 motor unit.



Aphelion's Architecture plinth isn't one of the most massive, but it has a style conspicuous by its absence amongst plinths for Garrards.

Like a voice from across the Styx, the Garrard 301 and 401 refuse to lie down and play dead. Many a feature article, many an attic trawl, all-too-many audio jumbles feature these venerated spinners as spoils from a raid on the Lost Ark, and prices have risen accordingly.

Unhappily, the condition of some of these has led to disappointment for the unwary; it matters not how good it was when new, 'worn out' is as terminal a condition for turntables as the dreaded 'beyond economic repair' is for cars. For those eager Garrardites who have managed to steer clear of such scrap, happy times beckon, with one or two caveats, the most important of which concerns plinths.

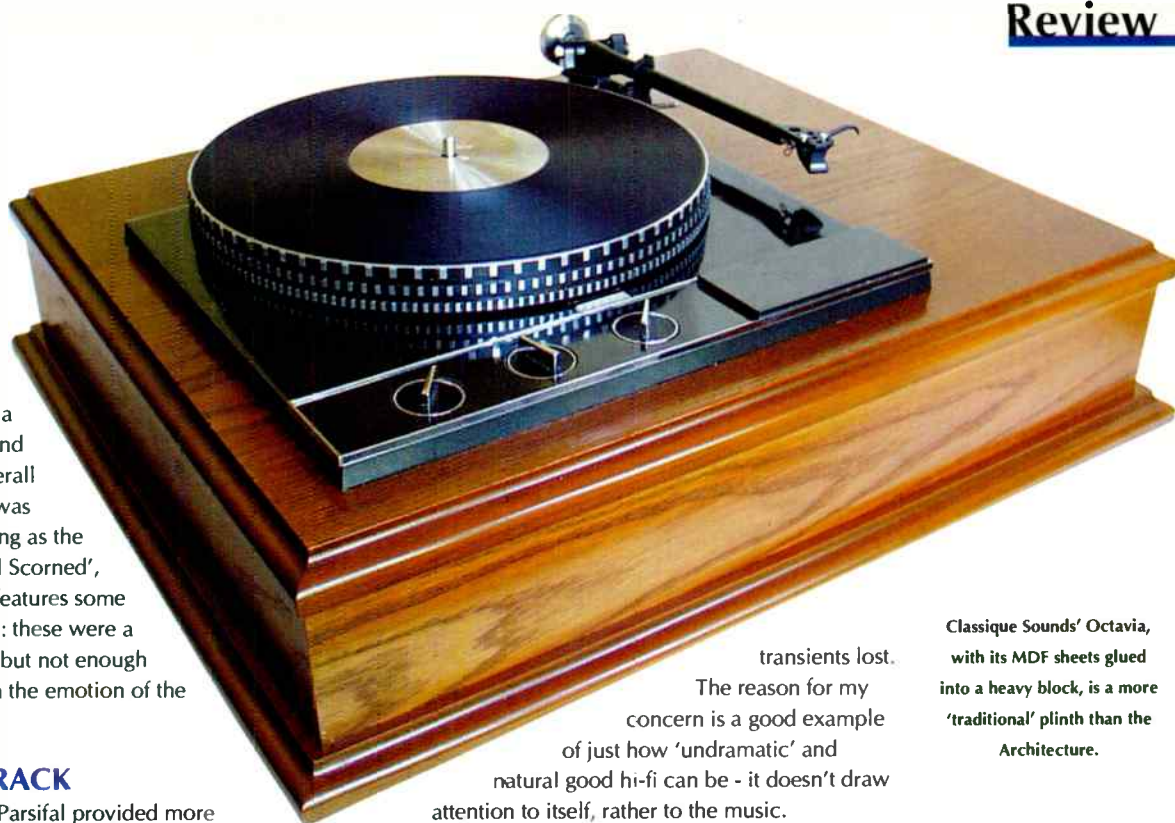
301s and 401s are noisy, unless housed properly. As a consequence, a cottage industry has grown up supplying plinths of various degrees of sophistication and mass. What most have in common is a desire to make a cumbersome chunk of audio history into an ornament for the happy home. As the nomenclature has changed over the years from 'gramophone' and 'motor unit' to 'turntable' or 'record-player', so the aesthetic appreciation has evolved from "Oo!" to "Ugh!" to "Aah!", and any self-respecting Garrard owner requires a plinth to ensure that the "Aah!" response (let alone any frequency response) is maximized. With this in mind we decided to

addition a couple of recent examples of the breed. To ensure an absolutely level playing field, we tested both plinths with the same motor unit, arm and cartridge: Garrard 401, Origin Live modified Rega RB300 and a Reson Mica Moving Magnet.

STYLE AND SUBSTANCE

First off the blocks is Aphelion's £200 Architecture, which has more than a dash of 'Things To Come' about it - the styling suggests a time when fridges looked like furniture. The Architecture is made from the customary inch-thick MDF, but the design philosophy is unusual. Where most plinth designers opt for the monolithic approach, Aphelion have used a system whereby the wood layers are sandwiched with an absorbent foam material to progressively de-couple the motor unit from the base. The detachable armboard (which will be flush-fitting on production samples) is carried on an independent stack at the side and is readily removable. Three models, all with similar construction, cover the Garrard 301 (Foundation), 401 (Architecture) and Thorens 124 (Lucerne).

Once everything had been bolted into place and the Reson carefully aligned, the Aphelion began to show what it was made of with Deivert and Bibb's Hello Stranger from Opus 3. This is an uncompromisingly acoustic record which, although it offers no dynamic extremes, has plenty of 'free air' to show up any of the



turntable noise and rumble which the plinth is supposed to be damping. The Architecture passed this test with ease, a creditable midrange giving a pleasant fullness to guitar and mandolin, although the overall sound lacked sparkle (this was due as much to the recording as the plinth, though). 'Buked and Scorned', one of the Bluesier tracks, features some emphatic slap/strum effects: these were a fraction slow dynamically, but not enough to detract significantly from the emotion of the music.

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

Decca's hallowed Best Of Parsifal provided more dynamic elbow-room and more opportunity to catch out a noisy plinth with cartridge mis-tracking. Transmitted motor vibrations can lead to tracking problems, because the stylus tip must continually reverse its lateral direction as it tracks the groove; an additional 'shove' by a coincident vibration will degrade the sound and cause groove damage in the long term.

As far as the Architecture was concerned, there were no serious grounds for complaint here with the Micra bloughing on through the glories of Christa Ludwig and Co with very little evidence of discomfort. The sharp, high-frequency spikes of the brass over a continuum of slow string chords were reproduced cleanly, albeit with an occasional touch of sizzle to show how close to the wind the needle was sailing.

Arturo Delmoni's well-modulated solo violin playing offers front ends a lot of opportunity for failure. Mis-tracked violin is one of hi-fi's nastier sounds, and to its credit the Aphelion gave the cartridge no grounds to loosen its grip on the groove, the inherent smoothness of the soloist's Bachian bowings untainted.

PIECES OF EIGHT

Next plinth on the bill was Classique Sounds' Octavia. Made to order from slabs of inch-thick MDF, Octavia can be had in the raw or cabinet-finished in any veneer of your choice. Certainly nothing has been left to chance as regards mass; although it's not in the Slate Audio weight range, prospective buyers should beware of hernia, otherwise they'll have their hands full in more ways than one. The top board is undrilled, so the choice of tone-arm fixing method lies with the user. One of the styling peculiarities of the Garrard 401 lies in the size of its chassis, which butts into the area where any sensible person would want to mount a 9in. arm. With a bit of applied fiddling and the odd curse though, we got our Rega fitted and Reson aligned.

With the return of Arturo Delmoni performing Bach's solo violin sonatas, I wondered whether things were a bit over-smooth, so I turned the wick up to check. No, everything was fine and dandy, with not an ounce of Arturo's creamy midrange or any of the essential bow-kick

transients lost. The reason for my concern is a good example of just how 'undramatic' and natural good hi-fi can be - it doesn't draw attention to itself, rather to the music.

Considering the enormous variety of dynamics and textures which have to be reproduced in Decca's Parsifal, the Octavia retained commendable control and dug deep for the accompanying 'cello and double-bass parts. Layered above was the full range of voices on this Wagnerian feast, the Germanic speech patterns retaining their expressive sibilance while the glories of full-blown operatic soprano floated out of the loudspeakers.

Turning back to Eric Bibb, I was once again surprised by the sonic differences which separate the Architecture and Octavia. The slap/strum guitar was kicked right into my lap this time, and the slight lack of presence noted with the Aphelion disappeared - the arrival of subtle finger-on-strings sounds meant a much more 'live' sensation to the performance.

A touch of the wild and wonderful was contributed by Santana's Abraxas. Its plethora of odd phase effects enabled me to be certain that what was weird stayed weird, and that the smoothness which was a notable feature of the Garrard/Octavia combination was not an unwanted extra overlying music.

CHALK AND CHEESE

Aphelion's Architecture does a fine job at an attractive price. With its Frank Lloyd Wright looks and the convenient armboard interchangeability, this may well be the goods for vinylphiles who care as much for style as outright sound. On the other hand, the use of non-rigid material between the MDF layers doesn't quite seem to hit the spot. The motor of a Garrard deck has considerable mass, and while 'the sandwich' does damp things fairly effectively, it allows through more vibration than is ideal, particularly if the motor unit happens to be well worn.

Classique's Octavia aims at preventing vibration in the first place, and does a good job of it. In fairness, this plinth is not only bigger and heavier than the Architecture, in its cabinet-finished form it is also dearer. Be that as it may, the Octavia is not unduly expensive and, coupled with a well-kept motor unit and suitable pick-up, would be a welcome, if weighty, companion on life's vinyl odyssey.

Classique Sounds' Octavia, with its MDF sheets glued into a heavy block, is a more 'traditional' plinth than the Architecture.

Aphelion Architecture
£200

Aphelion
19 Bern Links,
Briar Hill,
Northampton
NN4 8SS
Tel: 01604 760915

Classique Sounds
Octavia
£200 (plain MDF)
£299 (veneered)

Classique Sounds
61 Aylestone Drive
Aylestone, Leicester
LE2 8QE
Tel: 0116 233 5821

WORLD VERDICT



ARCHITECTURE
A fair price and distinctive styling make for a good buy.



OCTAVIA
A massive attack on vibration. Lets the Garrard's inherent quality show through.

the man behind TAG McLaren's explains what's

Q: why have TAG & McLaren, best known for their Formula One racing team and watches, bought Audiolab?

Dr Udo Zucker, Physicist and founder of TAG Electronic Systems Ltd.

Largely because of me. I have always loved music. I have my best ideas listening to music and could not live without it. For a long time, I've nurtured an ambition to push music reproduction to the absolute limit. I believe that in TAG McLaren Audio we will be able to do that.

Q: what do you think TAG McLaren can bring to the world of high quality music reproduction?

Dr Udo Zucker: Several things: Firstly, radical ideas and the resource to carry them out. TAG McLaren has over 100 engineers already working in one of the most demanding of all disciplines - developing specialist electronics for Formula 1 racing. Some of this experience is directly applicable to hi-fi equipment: we have world beating experience in digital circuitry design, use of quality materials and in handling complex sensor data signals in the cramped, high vibration and electrically noisy environment of a racing car. There is also a unique, TAG McLaren attitude that overrides all this resource and expertise. This attitude is focused on winning, it demands excellence and is obsessed by attention to detail.

Q: what are your aims and aspirations for TAG McLaren Audio?

Dr Udo Zucker: My goal for TAG McLaren Audio is a simple one: to build the world's best sound reproduction systems. I want to recreate, with absolute fidelity, the artists' performance in your own living room, so that when you close your eyes you can believe you are together in that room.

Q: how has TAG McLaren changed Audiolab?

Dr Udo Zucker: Let's not forget that Audiolab have been making outstanding high fidelity products for many years. In this way Audiolab complemented our own way of working. In fact, both teams of engineers already have the intuitive understanding of people that have been working together for years. When Audiolab and TAG McLaren's electronics division joined forces we became one of the most powerful companies involved in high end audio products.



WORLD LAUNCH AT 'HIFI SHOW 98', EXCELSIOR HOTEL, HEATHROW, SEPTEMBER 19-20
email: helpdesk@tagmclarenaudio.com freephone: 0800 7838007

electronics behind TAG McLaren Audio.

Q: did you change the electronics and appearance of the product?

Dr Udo Zucker: Yes. Most importantly, with our additional resources, Derek Scotland, co-founder of Audiolab, has achieved significant improvements in sound reproduction. Our attitude has been one of 'no compromise', whatever it takes to raise the standard to the level of a true TAG McLaren product. Furthermore, Peter Stevens, designer of the McLaren F1 road car, has made a big investment in design and superior materials to give these products a look for the new millennium.

Q: will you add to the product range in the future?

Dr Udo Zucker: The first fruits of our collaboration will be the new F3 series. This will be the ultimate Audiolab product, but for TAG McLaren Audio it will only be the beginning. We plan to follow the F3 with two further, more advanced and therefore expensive, complete systems: the F2 series and F1 series respectively. These systems will take TAG McLaren Audio into genuine high end products and to new heights in high-fidelity.

Q: what music system do you currently have at home?

Dr Udo Zucker: To be honest, I listen to a much more expensive Krell system at the moment but I can't wait to replace it with a better TAG McLaren F1 Audio system.

Q: and finally, what sort of music do you enjoy listening to?

Dr Udo Zucker: Ah, the question they always ask in the hi-fi stores. But I believe the question is irrelevant. Perfection is what I want, not a system that 'colours' sound. Purity, to my mind, is the most desirable quality reproduced sound can have. So it shouldn't matter what I listen to. In delivering our promise of "hi-performance, hi-fidelity" we will make this question irrelevant for good.

TAG McLaren
audio

hi-performance hi-fidelity

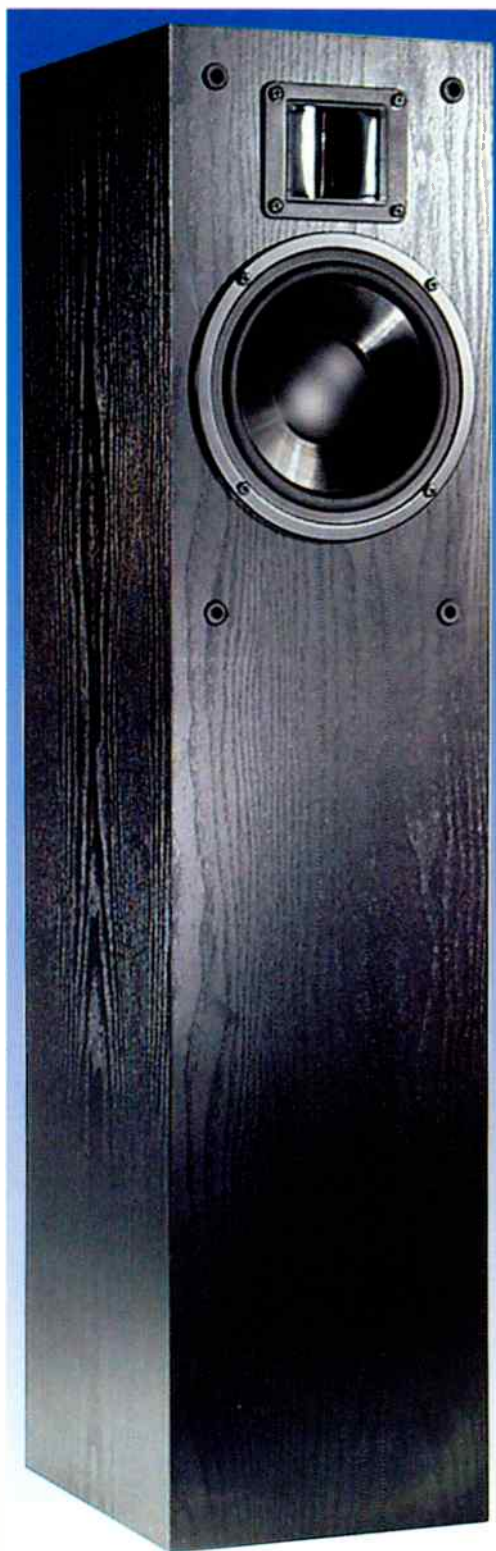
STAND TALL AND DELIVER

Simon Pope enjoys the company of Aura's LST-627M and Heybrook's Optima floor standers in his search for sub-£300 heavyweights.

As the old saying goes, "A journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step". The direction of that step for many first-time budget hi-fi buyers will be dictated by whether they decide to take the stand-mount or floor-stander route. With the latter you spare your wallet the pain of decent stands and (theoretically) get deeper bass; the former, better imaging and a better aesthetic match with the living room/bedroom/lavatory. Leaving the high road to bookshelf boxes, I took the low road with American Aura's LST-627M and home-grown Heybrook's Optimas.

STATING THE CASE

'LST-627M' might be instantly forgettable, but the Auras are more memorable than most 'speakers in the tweeter area. The company's own 'Line Source' unit is fitted to the LST-627M. This has a thin, flexible diaphragm driven by a voice coil and boasts a low moving mass (although not as low as a ribbon, where the signal flows through the diaphragm itself). The Aura's



woofer (supplied by Danish manufacturer Peerless) breaks fewer traditions with its 6.5in. diameter and polypropylene cone with concave dustcap.

The back of the cabinet houses the basic reflex port (no complex flares here) and a single pair of terminals, which came as a bit of a disappointment on £300 loudspeakers.

On the plus side, as Leo Lam found in his review of Aura's LSB-627M stand mounters in August, the Line Source tweeters are as refreshing sonically as they are visually, especially at the price. The third movement of Mahler's Seventh Symphony with its spiky orchestration and ghostly presence (in the recording by the Cleveland Orchestra under Pierre Boulez) was amazingly transparent through the Auras.

The woodwind section was convincingly natural, with oboes and Cor Anglais sounding appropriately 'reedy' and to the fore within the sound stage. Bass remained firm and solid without erring either to the dry or overenthusiastic. Control of this order meant the Auras pulled off the waltz-like swing of the double-basses and bassoons in a tight, rhythmic fashion which added genuine excitement to the music.

The LST-627Ms confirmed their credentials on Mahler's raspy, muted brass spatterings (which had bite without harshness) and pizzicato notes. One from the double-basses (marked extreme fortissimo) is plucked so hard the strings rebound onto the finger-board and came as quite a shock, even though I was expecting it!

Only in a bright system would the Auras be out of place. At times solo violin verged on the shrill, and although the overall balance was clean and vibrant with excellent sound staging and space between images, tonally it could have been richer and warmer.

Moving on to very different ground, Radiohead's 'Lucky' from OK Computer displayed the same sense of atmosphere as the Mahler. The drummer and his kit hogged the limelight thanks to the sheer presence and clarity on the ride cymbal which propelled the track along.

When the music became more complex at the soaring chorus, the Auras loosened their grip slightly, leaving Radiohead more cabinet-bound and treble coarser. The LST-627Ms had an easier time with the electronic Dance of DJ Cher's 'The Seraphim Odyssey' pounding hypnotically through their drivers. The tweeters relayed the clinical intricacies of the top-end superbly and persuaded my usually static feet into activity.

OPTIMALLY SPEAKING

Next to the Auras, Heybrook's Optimas are more typical of sub-£300, two-way floor standers. The 165mm doped-paper woofer marries up to a small 14mm polymer-dome tweeter with ferrofluid damping. In contrast to the Auras, the reflex port is front firing, which leaves the back panel bare apart from the bi-wiring terminals.

The sound of the rather staid looking Optimas is a world away from their styling. Paired up with the Audio Analogue Puccini integrated amp (non-SE version), the result was a remarkably polished and smooth rendition with images located within a very open sound stage. The bass these cabinets produced belied their size too, the ascending and descending double-bass runs on the Mahler possessing a rare speed and smack. This, coupled with the Heybrooks' warmth, makes for very involving listening indeed.

The Optimas had little trouble dealing with Classical whatever the instruments. The lower register of violins and violas was whipped-cream rich without compromising on detail or sounding thick and veiled (which is a real bonus at this price) and midrange woodwind glowed with a clarity enhanced by a freedom

from cabinet coloration.

These aren't loudspeakers to shun Pop in favour of Classical alone, though. Radiohead's OK Computer was as depressing as the performers and engineers had intended, Thom Yorke's plaintive vocals fully fleshed out above the powerful bass guitar. For all their low-end grunt, the Optimas never failed to treat treble cleanly and smoothly - there was barely a hint of sibilance on voices. Further evidence of the drivers' pedigree was the complex chorus, where a tangled mix of musical strands was skilfully teased apart by the Heybrooks.

Moving their cones to DJ Cher, the Optimas got into the mood with pumping, club-style bass and crisp treble. The adrenaline began to flow as it had done with the Auras, but

because basslines were slowed slightly by the Heybrooks this time round the experience wasn't quite as uplifting.

A MATTER OF TASTE

Aura's LST-627Ms are, like their small siblings, very competent loudspeakers. They have a taut, if slightly dry, bass and a treble whose speed and precision the competition can't match. Stir in musicality and excitement (especially on Dance music) and that's a recipe for success, but the crispness could dominate the sound in prolonged listening. Ironically, the tweeter is the Auras' weakness as well as their strength - its tendency to sibilance could be tiring, if you listen to a lot of bright Rock recordings.

Smoother, more relaxed performers are Heybrook's Optimas. They're happy on a varied musical diet which they never stifle with a boxy sound. They might not have the razor-sharp transient ability of their American counterparts here, but their involving, spacious character will keep you in front of your hi-fi for disc after disc.



Aura LST-627M

£299.95

Audio Partnership
Gallery Court,
Hankey Place,
London SE1 4BB
Tel: 0500 333500

Heybrook Optima

£259

Heybrook
Clemo Road,
Liskeard,
Cornwall
PL14 3NH
Tel: 01579 342866

WORLD VERDICT



AURA LST-627M

The Auras have a fast, detailed and energetic sound best matched by warm components.



HEYBROOK OPTIMA

Smooth and relaxed, the Heybrooks are entertaining all-rounders.

Measured Performance
see p111

THE BIGGEST CHANGE IN HI-FI THIS CENTURY



The Victory 6: a bass reflex, floorstanding loudspeaker featuring ferrofluid cooled titanium polycarbonate tweeter, specially coated cellulose mid/woofer, bi-wire terminals and spikes. Frequency response is a staggering 25Hz - 28kHz, sensitivity 91dB and power handling a mean 110 Watts RMS.

And all for...

£149



Change for the better: contact Henley Designs on 01491-834700 for stockists of the amazing Victory 6 loudspeaker.

World Radio History

CD-R BLANK PRICES IN A SPIN

Why do data CD-Recordable discs cost so much less than audio ones?
David Price investigates.



CD-R (Compact Disc-Recordable) has been with us for several years now, during which time it has become very popular in computing circles, offering as it does the facility to archive large quantities of data. The blank discs themselves have become very cheap to buy, and in bulk cost well under £1 each.

Duly, when Philips launched their first audio CD recorder earlier this year (the CDR 870), some thought it surprising that the new machines would not work with CD-R data discs. Why miss the opportunity to benefit from the discs' universal availability and very low prices, which are cheaper even than low-grade audio cassettes?

Instead, all Philips hi-fi CD recorders require the use of 'audio' CD-Rs - which despite being outwardly identical to data CD-Rs, can cost considerably more (Philips' own advertising specifies prices of between £3.50 and £11 for one audio CD-R blank). So why the huge difference? Philips' CDR 870 press release would seem to have the answer, stating that, "to comply with copyright legislation in various countries, the CDR 870 will only make recordings on discs bearing the 'audio' logo. These discs are subject to levies which are payable to the relevant copyright protection associations."

We contacted Philips to find out how much this copyright fee was. Considering the price differential between data and audio CD-Rs, we had anticipated it to be sizeable. The answer was not what we'd expected, a spokesperson for the company admitting that, "the UK does not have a levy system in place."

What then explains the price difference? Could it be that the discs themselves are different - audio CD-Rs being a kind of premium, low-error version and computer data CD-Rs a poor relation? Philips replied that, "the discs are different - both technically and they include SCMS.

Consequently they cost more to produce." In fact, most of the small cost of the Serial Copyright Management System is in the hardware rather than the discs themselves. This is then reflected in the machine's price.

Philips' advertising cautions, "make sure to buy audio CD-Rs, not the cheaper data variety - players like the CDR 880 will only record onto the audio variety." However, rumour has it that this is not strictly true. Philips CD recorders will in fact work with data CD-Rs if fooled into thinking they're using audio CD-Rs. This is simply a matter of inserting an audio CD-R, selecting Record mode and then gently pulling out the disc drawer. The audio CD-R is then swapped for a data CD-R, and the drawer manually closed. Providing Record mode isn't left while the discs are being swapped, the machine will then record onto the data disc just like an audio CD-R, which will then replay on any normal CD player, as we've found here at World Towers. Quite what affect this will have on the drawer and transport mechanism in the long-term is open to conjecture.

So where does this leave the inflated prices of audio CD-Rs? Philips' claim that they're technically different to data CD-Rs falls short of explaining the price gap between the two formats, while, in Britain at least, the copyright levy is currently a red herring.

In truth, high audio CD-R prices would appear to have more to do with marketing and dealer margins. Cynics would argue that Philips' distinction between audio and data discs is more about profit potential than issues of physical compatibility. Let's hope that blank audio-disc prices drop to data CD-R levels as soon as possible - there's no real reason for them not to, and lower prices can only assure the success of Philips' superb new CD recorders.

DVD IN JAPAN

David Price, our man in Japan, reports back on the progress of DVD machinery in the Far East.

DVD has got off to a slow start in Japan. Since its introduction nearly two years ago sales have been sluggish, not least because of the current economic recession. Nor has the format made the transition from the audio/visual world to hi-fi particularly successfully. Indeed, Japan's hi-fi press has been fairly muted on both DVD's 96kHz, 24-bit audio capability and the practice of using DVD players as high-quality replay devices for existing Compact Discs.

There are several reasons for this. The British press has been particularly interested in the way DVD machines play CDs because

Panasonic's top portable is the stunning DVD-P10.



high-end

CD players are so expensive here, and many regard the new DVD machines as a possible way around this; after all, why buy a top CD spinner when the latest DVD deck does things better for £700? In Japan, where prices are often half those of the UK, value for money is less of an issue. You can already buy an extremely capable CD player, such as Denon's DCD-S10 II (winner of a prestigious Stereo Sound magazine award) for around £800.

While 24/96 DVD audio has interested the hi-fi press, the lack of software has meant that most attention has instead gone to Japan's burgeoning number of audiophile CD titles, such as JVC's XRCDs and Blue Note's 2088 series. However, the past few months have seen the launch of some new, second-generation DVD



Victor's substantial XV-D2000 DVD player.

players which offer full 96kHz, 24-bit DACs. These have done much to stimulate interest in DVD as hi-fi, and several manufacturers - notably Pioneer - have introduced machines which successfully straddle the gulf between AV and high-end audio. Now, for the first time, every major Japanese manufacturer offers a DVD Audio-compatible player. Here's a look at what's available. . .

THE HARDWARE

Launched in January this year, Aiwa's XD-DV500 is a Midi-sized 20/96 design that retails for Y79800 (£350). Akai's full-size DV-P1000 is cheaper still at Y65000 (£285) and also comes with a 20-bit DAC. Ditto Denon's DVD-2000, the precursor of the DVD-3000 that we rate so highly, which retails for Y89000 (£390). Hitachi's DV-P1 is the second oldest DVD machine on sale in Japan, born in December 1996 and fitted with a 20-bit DAC for



Panasonic's tasty DVD-A450 with its wooden end cheeks.

Y83000 (£365).

JVC (known in Japan as Victor) offer two machines, of which the Y115000 (£500) XV-D2000 is the more expensive. With the company's respected K2 DAC running up to 20/96 resolution, separate video and audio

circuits and a low resonance 'Arkbase' chassis, it should prove a good performer. The cheaper XV-1000 seems more AV-oriented, with the lion's share of its Y93000 (£405) price tag going on features such as an elaborate graphical user interface.



Big is beautiful, as Pioneer prove with their DV-59.

Panasonic's new DVD-P10 has only just reached the shops, and is a true state-of-the-art design. The same size and weight as one of the first CD personals, this 910g portable packs in a 24/96 DAC, full CD compatibility and the option of 5.8cm a-Si TFT colour screen for video playback! It costs Y79000 (£345) with standard screen, or Y150000 (£655) when TFT equipped.

Panasonic's full-size, second-generation range was launched in Japan in November 1997, and comprises the DVD-A350 that so impressed us back in July for Y94000 (£410), the DVD-A450 for Y100000 (£435) and the Y110000 (£480) DVD-K500. The '450 is similar to the '350, but gets wooden side cheeks, a champagne-gold metal finish, 'Class AA' output stages and 'Virtual Battery Operation'. Meanwhile, the '500 comes with front-panel microphone inputs and level controls for home karaoke! All feature Matsushita's fine sounding 24/96 DAC. Finally, Panasonic have just announced a stripped-down budget design, the Y69000 (£300) DVD-A150.

The DVS-9 is Pioneer Electronic Corporation's latest DVD machine, a new high-ender which sports Hi-bit Legato Link Conversion S - a Digital Signal Processing DAC and digital filter arrangement which can also be found on their top CD and DAT machines. It gets the full battleship build treatment, with extensive internal copper plating and audiophile components accounting for its 15kg weight. At Y190000 (£830) it's the most expensive and most hi-fi orientated DVD deck on the market.

Also from Pioneer is the DV-505, launched in February 1998 in Japan for Y69000 (£300) and now available in the UK as well for £449.99. Although 'built to a price' and lacking a full 24-bit DAC, it's proved popular in Japan, possibly because it's the cheapest



Sony's petite DVP-M30.

player offering an unrestricted 96kHz output through its co-axial and optical digital outputs - rival machines downsample to 48kHz.

Pioneer also do two DVD/LD players, the Y128000

(£560) DVL-909 and the Y148000 (£645) DVL-K88, the latter being a Japan-only karaoke machine. Although a flop outside Japan, Laser Disc has been a modest success in its home market, where LDs cost little more than pre-recorded VHS videos. Lastly, Pioneer offer a cute little Mini-sized DVD player with a 20/96 Hi-bit Legato Link DAC for Y83000 (£365). Born November 1996, the DV-F21 is one of the oldest surviving DVD machines.

Sharp's DV-S100 is a 270mm Midi-sized unit retailing for Y75000 (£330) and features a 20-bit DAC.

Sony have four DVD machines on sale in Japan, only two of which are designed with DVD Audio in mind. The DVP-S3000 and DVP-S7000 at Y79000 (£345) and Y110000 (£480) respectively, lack high-bit DACs. By contrast, the DVP-S501D (on which the British market's DVP-S715 is based) and DVP-M30 offer the full 24/96



At the other end of Pioneer's size spectrum is the DV-F21.

Monty. These feature Sony's Dual Discrete Pick-ups, said to be fully CD-R compatible, and borrow some ideas from the company's CD player range, such as switchable digital filters and anti-resonance feet. Prices are Y88000 (£385) and Y66000 (£290) respectively.

Toshiba's Y75000 (£330) SD-2100 is a 370mm-wide machine that was launched in June 1997 and uses a 20-bit DAC. The Y77000 (£335) SD-3000 is a first-generation machine,



Toshiba's SD-P410G portable breaks out of the black-box mould.

launched back in November 1996 and features a 'meagre' 48kHz oversampling, 20-bit DAC. Should it encounter 24/96 PCM, it has to downsample.

The same company's Y89000 (£390) SDK-310 has a front panel festooned with microphone inputs for use as a home karaoke centre. Yet the most interesting player in Toshiba's range is the SD-P410G, a portable B5-sized design with a mini remote control. Weighing in at 1.1kg, it's impressively compact, albeit not quite as petite as Panasonic's DVD-P10. Y75000 (£330) buys you this dinky 20/96 machine.

Finally, the DVD-1000 is Yamaha's DVD contender in Japan at present, having been on the market for over a year. A sleek gunmetal silver affair, it comes with a 20-bit DAC for Y108000 (£470) ●

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ALECTRIFYING

Once cured of the hi-fi bug, Eric Braithwaite feels it bite again thanks to Michell's new Orca pre and Alecto power amps.



After years of being lectured about its evils, I can come out at last. Here, in a now terribly trendy part of London, there's a coffee-shop on nearly every corner and even one opposite my flat. Coffee is the new cocaine-addictive, brain-cell-destroying, health-ruining drug, but it's out in the open, being freely enjoyed by thousands. I love it.

Pity my other addiction, refuelled recently by Michell Engineering's Orca pre and new Alecto power amplifiers, is still a hole-in-the-corner affair. Where are the hi-fi shops crowded with the cuppies, 20-odd-year-olds in oval shades, designer trainers? Wouldn't it be great if hi-fi

with designer credentials rather than café latte (I mean, it's just milky coffee whichever way you stir it) became the new coffee the way football became the new fashion or, in fashion, brown became the new black? The Orca and its attendant power supply with their smoked acrylic, shaped stainless steel and aluminium are as elegant as an Alessi.

Both Orca and Alecto designs are new ground-up (from the ground up,

maybe we'd better say; blame the caffeine). And, as always, in style and especially quality of engineering, Michell's new components are the Blue Mountain of hi-fi. The knobs on the pre-amplifier - solid, beautifully balanced, fitting within a hair's breadth of the dark acrylic fascia - are as smooth as a finely-roasted, shiny Arabica bean. And the simple remote volume control is a small, round disc that fits comfortably into the palm. Made of machined aluminium it has exactly the sensuous feel and weight of a cricket ball. And yes, I asked: John Michell was a bowler . . . One way of telling quickly whether hi-fi is just good or superb might appear highly esoteric, but actually isn't. If you use vinyl the method is to listen to the sound of the groove - it should be completely separate from the music, like an unobtrusive solo instrument. To a lesser extent the trick will work with CDs where there is still residual tape noise or microphone hiss.

In other words, the Orca is extraordinarily quiet, in a way that usually only comes with battery power. That means a surprising amount of recorded ambience and detail come through, including some very low-level outside chatter on a

Nimbus CD (which escaped not only the engineers but me for several years) and a hall ambience on a Klemperer ASD LP that truly and naturally enveloped the orchestra.

More importantly, it also means very pure instrumental tone that made not only strings but all forms of brass a delight. Listening to the excellent Isis recording of Martin Souter showed the George IV harpsichord had every plucked string perfect, plus a clear sense of the room at Kew. The higher notes can sound jangly even on more than competent equipment, but not with the Orca. It didn't soften them, just gave each its perfect interval. The admirably spot-on timing of attack and decay became even clearer when the Alectos were wired into the system in place of a Quad 707.

The second sign of superior equipment is simply discovering that you play a great deal of music of practically every genre, and sit back and enjoy it. Here the Orca suffers a problem - or rather in my ears displays a virtue - that beset the Iso and Argo HR: second-rate recordings will, alas, stay resolutely second-rate.

Neither the Alecto nor the Orca, and especially not the Orca, will cover up the abominable compression and distortion as the bar-graph meter slips up to 0dB on so many current Rock recordings, like Morrissey's, for example. Well-produced CDs like KD Lang's Drag are not diminished; that's a spacious and well-equalised mix and the Michell equipment gave it studio control-room quality. Nor will either add another half-dozen kiloHertz to the top of some of the classic Columbias in dire need of it.

Normally, individual instruments had what could only be described as a 'luminescence' that hardly appears outside real life. Though the strings on the Rodrigo Concierto de Aranjuez were



detailed down to the warp of the cat-gut, the Orca didn't ameliorate their fierceness in the Philips San Antonio recording (but they weren't so shrill - ie, distorted - as to be painful).

The last time Richter's Bach organ recital on a Decca SXL was anywhere near that clean and detailed in its pipework - the sound of the bellows gently breathing in the background, too - was with Chord's SPM 600/CPA 2200 combination. The Alectos have a richer, rounder bass, albeit truer than their predecessors and better in timing. The Harbeth Compact 7s used with them display a minuscule failing: tenor voices have a 'BBC Radio chestiness' which the Alectos either revealed more obviously than usual or added to in a very slight degree.

Too many CDs and LPs fed the Orca and Alectos for me to go into each and every title, but they all had a genuinely high-end timbre on instruments, holographic and precise imagery and, especially on the part of the new Alectos, free and effortless dynamics. Seldom does a recording like Mingus' tortuous The Black Saint And The Sinner Lady attract a non-Jazz aficionado, but it fascinated one such visitor with its awesome grasp of the dynamics of tubas, trombones, muted trumpet, piano and delicate, spidery cymbal brushwork.



Gold-plated sockets with teflon insulating washers crowd the Orca's back panel.

Differences between old and new?

Well, the Orca is not only stunningly quieter than the Argo HR, it's even more finely detailed and it at last has a volume potentiometer from Panasonic which gains remote control and separate L/R balance for precise channel matching down to practically inaudible levels (and the promise it won't drift over time like the Argo's).

The new Alectos? Again, everything is that much cleaner, deeper (front-to-back, that is), tighter and faster than the original. A quick comparison of two of the recordings used on the originals shows what's what. Item 1 is the extraordinary 'surround-sound' effect of a Chapman Stick, which swings around the listeners' heads. On the new Alectos it described a smaller but utterly seamless circle; that's tighter control for you.

Item 2 is the even greater distance between the shaky background vocalist and the loudspeakers on Lou Reed's 'Power and Glory' from his Magic And Loss CD. Extreme resolution like this puts the Orca on a par with the Chord, and the Chord is one of the top two or three pre-amplifiers I've ever heard. The Orca, in short, is to the Argo and other pre-amplifiers what the Orbe is to a Gyrodec. It made my Gyrodec resolve things I only knew of from an Orbe before.

As you may have noticed, I took a twelve-month cure from the heroin of hi-fi. It's failed. Michell's new Orca and Alecto have re-addicted me. If that means I'm put down as a Kaffee-Klatsch Michell partisan, so be it. Just remember: like Mr Lloyd's original invention, some things re-appear better than ever.

Playing a role in the Orca's transparency is Panasonic's For Audio potentiometer.

- Michell Orca £1650
- Michell Alectos £1989

JA Michell Engineering
2 Theobald Street,
Borehamwood,
Herts. WD6 4SE
Tel: 0181 953 0771

WORLD VERDICT

ORCA
With its Panasonic pot, the Orca reaches new standards of transparency and involvement.

ALECTOS
The new Alectos are crisper, cleaner and more controlled than earlier incarnations.

Measured Performance see p111

“THE SOUND OF EXCELLENCE”

WHAT HI-FI?

“The Jamo boasts clarity to rival the very best, offering a wonderfully lucid touch with voices and small off-screen details that draw you effortlessly into the soundtrack. More impressive is the power that roars forth from explosions such as the one that concludes *Cutthroat Island*. There’s slam and punch before a low bass rumble finale, all conveyed with the minimum of treble harshness. The Concert Center may not be cheap, but makes movies so involving it’s worth every penny.”

Concert Center

WHAT HI-FI? First Test May 1997



HI-FI CHOICE

“This transparency makes the speaker sound more like a Quad Electrostatic than many a box, and equips it superbly to portray every nuance of complex musical mixes. To the unaccustomed listener this can be disconcerting, as both harmonious and deleterious recorded minutiae will be revealed for what they are.”

Concert 8

Alan Sircom

Hi-Fi Choice December 1996

HI-FI NEWS & RECORD REVIEW

“This is a speaker adept at pulling the music out from its hiding place, making everything clear, open and up-front, the stripped pine of the loudspeaker world; and it makes the normally forward and punchy B&W sound as though it has fallen asleep.”

Concert 8

Hi-Fi News and Record Review

August 1997

AWARDS



Concert 8
Highly Commended
“Best Stereo AV Speaker”
Home Entertainment
Awards '97



Concert 8
Nominated
“Best Loudspeaker
up to £2,000”
Hi-Fi News Awards '97



Concert 8
EISA European
Loudspeaker of the Year
'97-'98



Concert 8
Gramophone
Audio Choice '98 Award

Concert 11
Gramophone
Audio Choice '98 Award



“Had I reviewed the Concert 11s before the Concert 8s, I would have rated them as excellent all-round performers. I would also have been at a loss having to describe the Concert 8, which is currently one of the best two-way designs ever built, in my opinion. As it is, if you're after a capable floorstander, you'll be doing yourself a disservice if you don't audition the Concert 11s.”

Concert 11

Hi-Fi World December 1997



Home Entertainment

“In certain respects, the system is capable beyond what most people's dreams, or what many film soundtracks deserve, partly because it's ready to serve another master, namely high fidelity music reproduction.”

Concert 8/ Concert 11/ Concert Center

Surround Sound System

Home Entertainment September/
October 1997



WHAT HI-FI?

“Play a disc like Anne-Sophie Mutter's *Berlin Recital* and the Jamos deliver a wonderfully realistic picture of the violin, allowing you almost to feel the resonance of the soundbox and see the bite of the bow on the strings. The music simply flows forth, seemingly passing in the blink of an eye, so caught up in the performance do you become.”

Concert 8

WHAT HI-FI? First Test April 1997



Gramophone

“I was considerably impressed by the Concert 8, which has a seamless clarity rarely to the fore these days. It can exhibit natural dynamics and succeeded in making me jump a couple of times when a sudden transient occurred in the music, even though I had been expecting it.”

“For the classical listener, however, it can offer something that few other box loudspeakers can: that insight into the music that we all desire but all too rarely experience.”

Concert 8

Gramophone February 1997

WHAT HI-FI?

“Indeed, the term ‘non-coloration’ is apt for these speakers, because they add nothing to a system's sound that isn't already there. Their performance is clean and crisp, conveying everything - and we mean everything - a recording has to offer courtesy of their free-ranging clarity, dynamics and soundstaging. It's a breathtakingly involving view.”

Concert 11

WHAT HI-FI? First Test January 1998



“In summary, the Concert 8 is one of the most advanced loudspeaker designs on the market today”

“The '8s are a no-compromise, no-expense-spared credit to their designers. Jamo are now firmly in the super league and the competition had better beware!”

Concert 8

Hi-Fi World June 1997



Concert



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Over the past 30 years Jamo has established itself as the largest loudspeaker manufacturer in Europe producing over one million speakers every year. This has been achieved by a unique combination of technical excellence and the best in Scandinavian design.

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<http://www.jamo.co.uk>



PERFECTLY-CRAFTED PERFORMERS

Chris Beeching discovers Jamo make music easy-PC with their £200 active CS5s.

Computer peripherals have never been one of my favourite acquisitions, and active 'speakers to add even more noise to a PC's hum and whine seem almost to add insult to injury.

However, in the case of Jamo's latest loudspeakers, there was a number of pleasant surprises along the way which more than compensated for my initial lack of enthusiasm.

Jamo's CS5 system claims to be a "High Fidelity Multimedia PC" 'speaker. I have to say that with a little reservation about the "high fidelity" bit, that statement is somewhat short of the reality.

The largish box the Jamos arrived in was unusually hefty for transducers aimed at accompanying a computer. Pleasant surprise No1 was the pair of substantial enclosures inside. Heave the CS5s out of their tight polystyrene packing and you'll realise that these are serious contenders.

One of the pair is essentially a 'slave' - the other is fitted with the volume control, mains socket, phono inputs, electronic crossovers and four power amplifiers. There is, thoughtfully, a connection for a mono subwoofer complete with an upper frequency output of 180Hz, and a 'surround' option for connection to 'rear' 'speakers (which need to be active or run from a separate amp) with a 7kHz upper limit. Two adapter leads are also included for use with a variety of other sources.

The CS5s themselves are constructed from MDF and heavyweight chipboard, and are very well finished in a silver-grey and green. The fully-shielded drive units consist of a 5.25in. main driver and 1in. dome tweeter.

The idea of using my computer as a source didn't grab me, so I connected the Jamos straight to the output of my usual pre-amp and set them up as per the instruction book. (This, by the way, covers computers,

surround-sound installations, wall or stand mounting and a plethora of other possibilities.)

Having chosen stand mounting over bookshelf placement, I turned the CS5s on and sat back. Surprise No2 was the way they sounded. Jamo have obviously taken great care in the design of these 'speakers and their 20watt internal power amplifiers. I have to say that their performance utterly confounded me.

In hi-fi terms these actives offer an impressive presentation which, even after a number of days' continuous listening, still appealed. The same cannot be said for the majority of 'computer' 'speaker systems. In fact, the Jamos have become the 'office reference' as they provide a simple means of listening to music. Although they have frequency and dynamic limitations, and can start to sound rough around the edges as the volume levels rise, they're nonetheless very engaging, very musical and deal with all music types even-handedly.

As with many smaller 'speakers, where the upper bass tends to be one weak area, the CS5s suffered some thickening and chestiness here, most noticeable on male speech. Even when wall or shelf-mounted though, their bass extension was very good, seeming to dip lower than the quoted 50Hz. You could hear the benefits of an active crossover in the



open midrange, crisp imaging and airy treble too. The general balance was a little forward, but I suspect this is aimed at compensating for computer source limitations in the higher frequencies.

I can see the CS5s going down well particularly where students are concerned and space and cash are at a premium. I can't bring to mind another active which gets so close to high fidelity at anywhere near this price.

As a budget alternative to an amp, loudspeakers and their cabling, the Jamos (twinned with either a pre-amp like Musical Fidelity's X-Pre or just a CD player) have much to recommend them. Even their upper-bass chestiness and slightly restricted dynamics can't prevent them ranking as a bit of a bargain at £200.

Jamo CS5 £199.99

Jamo
5 Faraday Close,
Drayton Fields,
Daventry,
Northants. NN11 5RD
Tel: 01327 301300

WORLD VERDICT



In spite of some colorations, the Jamos are fine examples of active operation.

Measured Performance
see p111

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BLACK BEAUTY

Timothy Liu
does the time-warp with Lehmann Audio's
Black Cube Phono Stage and digs out his ageing vinyl.

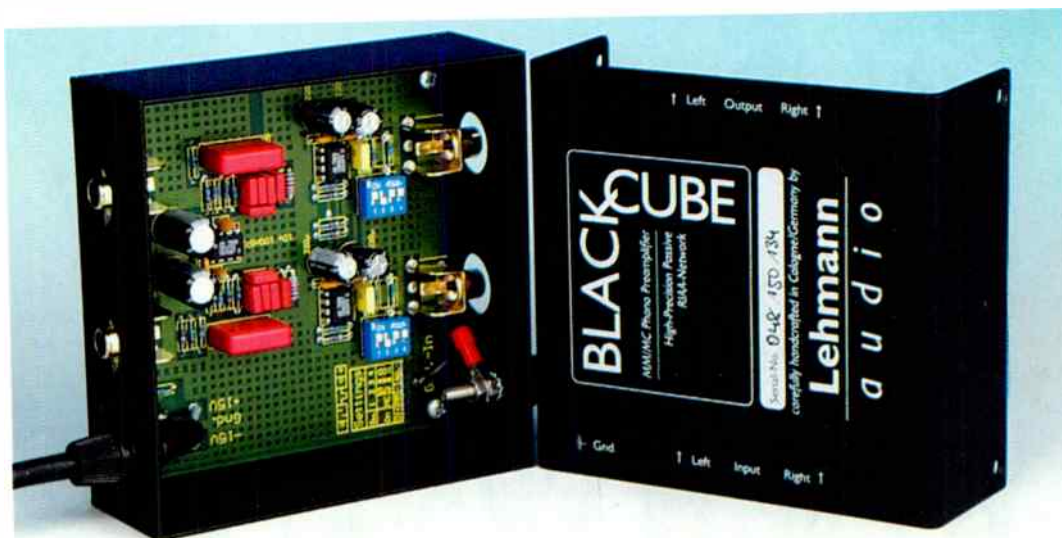
In the modern world, fads and fashions come and go. The same could be said of the Long-Playing record, whose days once looked distinctly numbered. Instead, the oldest of formats has surprised many by rising (albeit only slightly) from the digital flames which threatened to consign it to oblivion once and for all.

Lehmann Audio of Germany would rather you didn't abandon your vinyl to a car-boot sale. They have thrown down the gauntlet to the Compact Disc industry by producing the Black Cube phono stage to proclaim their undying love for the black disc.

If attraction is strictly a visual thing for you, then the Black Cube will certainly not set your pulse racing. A basic folded-steel case houses the electronics, fed from an external power supply. Don't be fooled by appearances though. Closer inspection inside reveals the Cube to measure up where it counts. Audiophile touches such as Wima foil capacitors, a screened power-supply lead and passive equalisation make you realise this is a Benz engine in Skoda bodywork.

The flexible Cube is compatible with most cartridges currently available. Input sensitivity is fixed at 250uV and capacitance at 220pF, values chosen to suit both Moving-Magnet and Moving-Coil cartridges. Loading is accomplished by configuring two DIP switches, impedance-matching (which is important for optimum sound quality with low noise) ranging from 80ohm to 47kohm.

Another useful suggestion contained in the manual advises soldering your tone-arm's lead-out wires directly to the Black Cube's input terminals, thereby leap-frogging the gold-plated phono



sockets to avoid signal degradation. This really makes sense when you consider the microscopic signal generated by Moving-Coil cartridges.

A small point worth mentioning is that the Black Cube requires a warm-up time of 10 days before it comes to the boil; in other words, it's best left on all the time. Once warmed through, it was slipped between a Basis Ovation turntable/Airtangent 10b tone-arm/Roksan Shiraz cartridge source and Audio Analogue's Puccini SE amplifier with Sonus Faber Minima Amator loudspeakers.

After the initial thud of the stylus touching down, what confronted me was a wall of black silence; the almost total lack of surface noise gave the impression of waiting for the curtains to rise and the performance to begin. Stevie Wonder's 'Do I Do' emerged from this inky black background complete with a broad palette of tonal colour and lightning fast percussion. Rhythmic, weighty bass with good extension further heightened the listening experience.

The Ramones maintained the pace with their 'I'm Against It'.

Instead of curling up in the nearest corner and wilting like so many audiophile products do when the Ramones appear, the Black Cube changed up into over-drive. High-octane guitar thrashing was handled effortlessly, with real speed and power. In the midst of this onslaught, rhythm guitars remained tonally distinct from one another, strummed strings portrayed with a subtlety I've not come across on sub-£1000 phono stages before.

Changing back down a gear to Rickie Lee Jones' 'Lucky Guy' demonstrated the chameleon-like nature of the Black Cube. Possessing virtually no character of its own, it could create a wholly convincing sound stage and 3-D imaging, while allowing Rickie Lee Jones' wide vocal range fluidity and lucidity without sibilance.

Lehmann Audio's Black Cube is a genuine audiophile achievement in terms of musicality and neutrality. I can't honestly think of anything near its £395 price tag which even gets within spitting distance. The Cube should keep those vinyl junkies out there misty-eyed and defiantly anti-digital for a very long time to come.

Lehmann Audio

Black Cube £395

R.T. Services

118 Mendip Heights,

Didcot,

Oxfordshire

Tel: 01235 810455

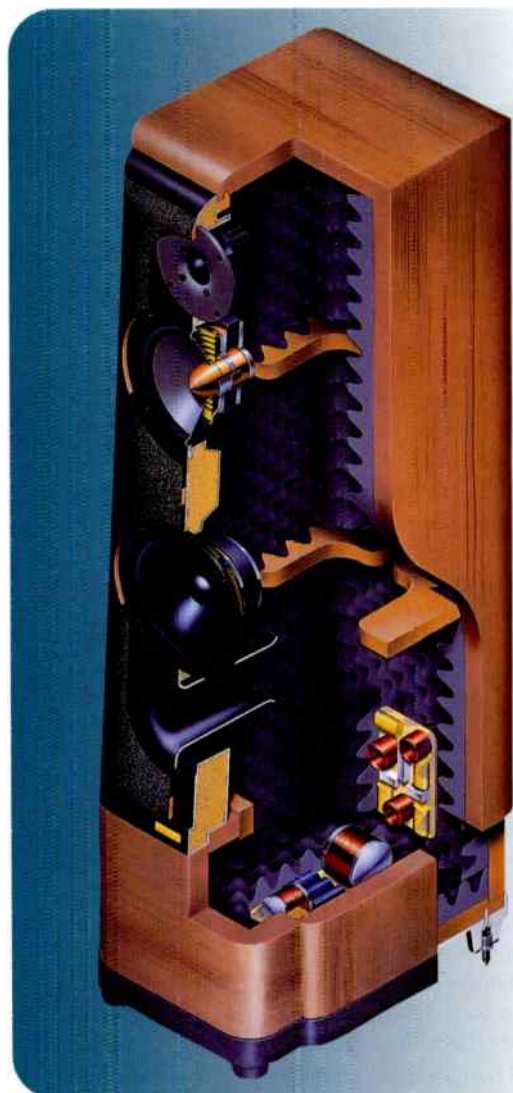
WORLD VERDICT



The Black Cube is capable of involvement, neutrality and insight normally the preserve of phono stages three to four times its price.

Measured Performance see p111

JAMO LOUDSPEAKERS AND PHILIPS CD RECORDER WORTH £2500 TO BE WON



Two lucky readers could soon be celebrating the arrival of Jamo's Concert 11 floor standers or a Philips CDR 870 CD recorder in their systems.

This month we are giving away two products which depressed us when they left after past reviews. Jamo are represented with a pair of their outstanding £2000 Concert 11 floor standers, bigger brothers to the stand mounted Concert 8 loudspeakers which we use here at World HQ. Philips' contribution is one of their £500 CDR 870 digital recorders, which will burn both CD-Recordable and CD-ReWritable discs. To get compilation-makers rolling, the CDR 870 is being supplied with nine blank CD-Rs and one blank CD-RW.

Jamo's great Danes use cutting-edge driver technology to lift their sound well above the masses'. The 6.5in. woofer has a magnesium frame to support its powerful magnet system and polypropylene diaphragm. Coupled with generous cabinet volume, it produces bass capable of reaching down to 40Hz.

The magnesium-coned unit which handles bass as well

as midrange in the Concert 8s is here employed purely to cover the midrange from 150Hz to 2.5kHz. Taking over at the top end is the same superb tweeter (with its Sonotex fabric dome and silver-wired voice coil) fitted to the Concert 8s.

The Concert 11s are equally at home in the fields of Classical, Rock or Jazz, creating a fast and transparent sound which certainly grabbed the attention of Douglas Floyd-Douglass who reviewed them back in the December '97 issue. On hearing Gorecki's Third Symphony through them, he enthused, "Listening to orchestral music on the Concert 11s is a revelation. . . Depth of bass was truly impressive, imparting a lovely warmth". And listening to Joni Mitchell he noted, "vocals are handled with aplomb by that superb midband driver".

The Concert 11s are unfussy when it comes to amplification as well as music. They are quite content to



be powered from either low-wattage valve gear or beefier solid-state equipment.

Philips' CDR 870 was one of the first sub-£1000 recorders of its kind aimed at domestic use. It allows you to make CD compilations of your favourite tracks on either CD-Rs, which can only be recorded onto once, or CD-RWs, which can be erased and recorded onto again just like cassettes. While CD-Rs will play back on standard players, whether home, portable or in-car, CD-RWs can only be played on compatible machinery.

The CDR 870 is a joy to use when recording. With digital signals, it's just a matter of selecting the appropriate input (optical or co-axial) then pressing Rec and Play. The player even includes a CD Sync Recording feature which automatically starts recording when the source begins to play.

Analogue recordings will have you reaching for the recording level as you would on an ordinary cassette deck to prevent digital overload, but there are no fiddly bias settings to worry about.

As a conventional playback machine the CDR 870 stands its ground well, Jon Marks commenting in his January 1998 review, "Bjork's idiosyncratic and expressive vocals hung clearly between the 'speakers, and there was sufficient texture and warmth to make for a compelling listen". In spite of the fact it's primarily intended as a digital recording device, the Philips is definitely up there with the best players at around the £300 mark.

To enter the race for this grand pair of bumper prizes, simply pick out the correct answers to the following questions and complete this month's Swinburnian rhyme in the most charming and original way. These can be sent in on the entry form (which may be photocopied) or written on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope. Please make sure your entry reaches the address below no later than October 6th.

Philips/Jamo Competition
Hi-Fi World Magazine,
 64 Castellain Road,
 Maida Vale,
 London W9 1EX

Don't forget to include your name, address and telephone number so that we can contact the winner promptly.

COMPETITION ENTRY QUESTIONS

1) The Jamo Concert 11s are what kind of design?

- A. Two-way B. Three-way C. Free-way D. No way

2) The Concert 11s' bass response goes down to what frequency?

- A. 40Hz B. 50Hz C. Love hertz D. Watford, Herts

3) What wiring do the Jamos' tweeters have?

- A. Copper B. Aluminium C. Silver D. Lead

4) What does CD-RW stand for?

- A. Compact Disc ReWashable B. Compatible Danish Recording Wrangles
 C. Compact Disc ReWritable D. Corporation Debates Reading/Writing

5) How much is the CDR 870 worth?

- A. £250 B. £800 C. £500 D. £1000

TIE-BREAKER (obligatory)

Complete the following in fewer than 30 words

Oh what a combination's here: convenience and sound;

A CD that's rewritable? Let joy and cheer abound!

And as for Jamo's Concerts, why they'll work with great aplomb

And power away to sound a pretty perfect private Prom. . .

COMPETITION WINNERS

The fortunate winner of our Crimson competition is J.M. Cameron of Ross-shire, who will be taking home Crimson Electric's CS610C pre-amp and CS630C monobloc power amps.

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TWO-TON PHONES

Why should loudspeaker lovers go the way of the headphone? Dominic Todd explains with the help of Sennheiser's HD 580 Precisions.

The average amount spent on a pair of headphones for domestic use seems to be between £30 and £70. So if you were to fork out £200 on a pair of cans, you'd expect to get something pretty special. To see if this kind of investment can pay real dividends, we put Sennheiser's recently improved HD 580 Precisions to the test.

Your extra money certainly buys you a very high standard of build quality and comfort. The Precisions' detachable, Kevlar-reinforced lead shows the attention to detail typical of the marque. My sole complaint related to the headband adjustment, which was rather stiff and awkward. Once fitted properly though, the HD 580s turned out to be comfortable for even the longest of listening sessions.

Hidden inside these phones' plastic earpieces are aluminium voice coils and neodymium-ferrous magnets, both of which are par for the price. Sennheiser would no doubt point towards the extensive computer and laser-interferometry research used in developing these headphones to justify the expense.

With the HD 580s plugged into my NAD Monitor pre-amp, first impressions were a little disappointing. On 'Spasm' by Dave's True Story, the overall balance was lightweight and marred by some splash in the treble. Vocals were certainly articulate, but a grey tonality sapped their realism. Imaging, however, was excellent - you could almost believe you were listening to a pair of electrostatics, such was the 'out of head' sound the Sennheisers created.

A more appropriate partner for the Precisions was Musical Fidelity's

valve X-Cans, with its open, smooth and weighty presentation. Clare Martin's vocals on 'Monk's New Tune' had greater presence and tonal colour than through the NAD. The detail and transparency were excellent too, conveying every subtle acoustic cue making up the live venue. Having said that, the double-bass remained stubbornly insubstantial, and percussion pieces could trip over their own complexity.

The more laid-back tempo of Portishead's 'It Could Be Sweet' posed the Sennheisers fewer problems, its lazy bassline strolling along below finely-etched vocals. Pushing voices out ahead of the rest of the mix was an occasional emphasis on sibilance too, which makes sympathetic cables and sources vital if you're going to get the even-handed best from the HD 580s.

Classical music in the form of Antonio de Almeida's La Giuditta crystallised the good and the bad in these phones. The Precisions lived up to their name by capturing the intimate, close-mic'd ambience perfectly - sound staging and detail were both class-leading. Each instrument had plenty of space to 'breathe', yet the piece as a whole maintained a sense of cohesion and direction.

On the downside, there was a distinct lack of 'body' and substance between the upper midrange and lower treble, a crucial frequency for the realistic portrayal of violins. This became especially obvious when comparing the Sennheisers to a pair of electrostatic phones which suffered no such weakness.

The HD 580 Precisions do display some of the strengths pricier



headphones have which cheaper alternatives lack - build quality and comfort are excellent. The sound staging and insight into the music are also a cut above the rest. But this last trait means the HD 580s can be so analytical and revealing that any recording or equipment deficit is ruthlessly exposed. The bass response isn't the most fluid either, and I have reservations over the reproduction of the upper midrange.

Partner the Precisions with a decent headphone amp and source, and you'll be treated to a true taste of the high-end - you won't find any loudspeakers for the same price which can get anywhere near the levels of transparency offered by these phones. Just beware incompatible component marriages - you might end up wondering where all that money went.

Sennheiser HD 580 Precision £199.95

Sennheiser
3 Century Point,
Halifax Road,
High Wycombe,
Bucks. HP12 3SL
Tel: 01494 551551

WORLD VERDICT



In the company of a smooth, warm system the HD 580s can shine.

Measured Performance see p111

Q. What have the BBC, The Royal Opera House, Dolby Laboratories, EMI and Abbey Road Studios have in common?

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from the best in Britain

A. They all rely on the supreme quality of Chord Electronics. World beating British amplification.

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◎ CHORD ◎

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Chord Electronics' stunning British amplification is now on permanent demonstration at Musical Images' award winning Covent Garden branch.

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At the turn of the millennium with 24/96 here, many audiophiles are thinking of buying their last CD player. Leo Lam suggests Creek's CD43.

If you're looking at a change of digital source, you'll realise that we're living in uncertain times. 24-bit 96kHz sampling hardware and software have already arrived (although in a very limited way as far as the discs are concerned), but with Super Audio CD on the horizon and the potential for a format war, should you hang on? After all, Compact Disc is still the world's music carrier. The choice boils down to investing in a 24/96 compatible DVD player or a well-developed CD player.

Creek's new £500 CD43 is one of the latter. This machine uses the fast and robust Sony CDM14 transport housed in a minimalist and typically Creek-style case - a black box with green print. The small, round buttons on the fascia take care of essential functions only; the rest, like random track selection and programming, can be accessed with the remote control. The display is a little ergonomically challenged - instead of using text, it relies on symbols whose significance isn't exactly intuitive. It was difficult to read in daylight or at an angle as well.

The CD43 pulls its socks up internally, where a Crystal Semiconductors 24-bit Delta-Sigma D/A convertor and 128-times oversampling filter do the number crunching. These are controlled by a precision crystal-oscillator clock circuit. The analogue filter stage, which has its own regulation, is based around two fairly standard Philips NE5532 op amps chosen for their high linearity. The Creek also sports a proper S/PDIF co-axial digital output.

There are some nice little touches within the circuitry. A tubular shield (a magnet wrapped around the wire) surrounds the interconnecting cable between circuit boards. Back on the exterior, spongy feet absorb a lot of unwanted vibration, thus reducing microphony within electronic components.

The Creek served alongside a Musical Fidelity

Nu-Vista pre and Assemblage's ST-40 valve power amp driving ProAc Studio 150 floor standers. Interconnect was Kimber's PBJ, and for comparison I wheeled in a modified Arcam Alpha One and my habitual Teac T1 transport and DAC-2 combination.

If you're in a position to purchase your last CD player without wanting to spend over £500, the CD43 has got to be in the running. It appealed so much mainly because of its understated musicality - it hid itself, and the normal digital nasties, away and let the music flow. In this respect it came perilously close to the Teac T1/DAC-2 (perilous for the Teac and Assemblage, that is) or Pink Triangle's Numeral.

Musicality needn't come at the expense of accuracy, which the CD43 amply demonstrated with its scale and dynamic range. The Creek's financial peers come up short in this area with the gentle compression they apply to signals, and fall short in subtlety too. Vocals were smooth and airy and so convincing I had a hard time separating this single box from the transport/DAC pair at roughly twice the price.

As the saying goes, there's no such thing as perfection though, and the CD43 was no exception with focus and control, where it struggled at times. But these problems are insignificant next to the purity and delicacy this player offers. Whatever the prevailing musical conditions, the Creek took everything in its stride.

If you listen to music instead of your hi-fi system, the Creek is likely to have you reaching for your wallet. It's emotionally satisfying yet accurate enough to fulfil any of the criteria which qualify a component for mandatory demonstration. Although you owe it to yourself to hear the current crop of DVD machinery, the CD43 shows the best budget non-24/96 players still have a few aces up their sleeves●

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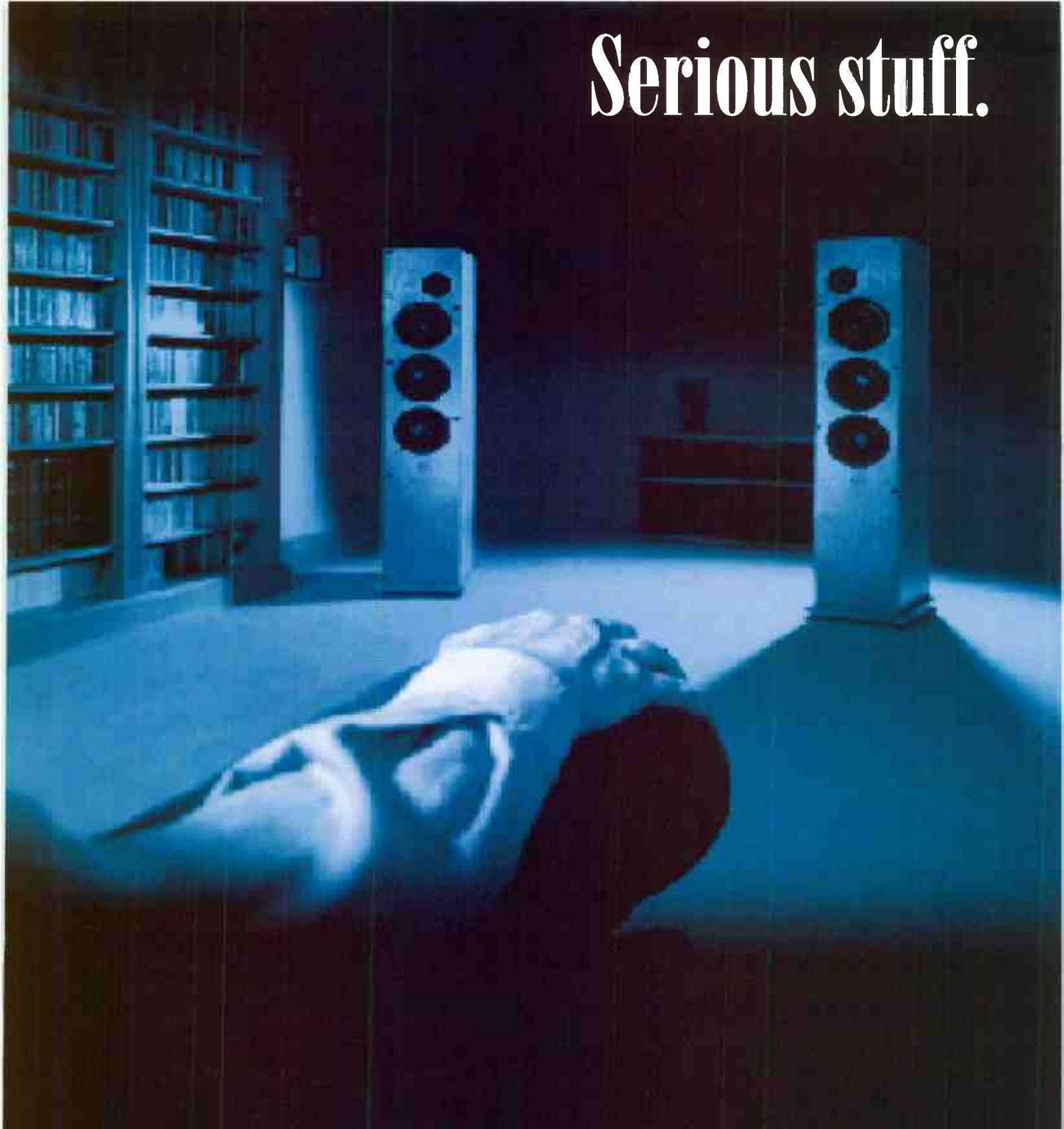


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Letter of the Month

The writer of the 'Letter of the Month' wins a free subscription to Hi-Fi World as well as a Top Prize every other month

A DAB HAND?

My query question relates to digital radio, aka Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB). There are adverts on television and on the radio, but where are the products? We have seen examples of DAB car radios, but is there a hi-fi offering? Do your sources in Cambridgeshire (home of Quad, Mission, etc) have anything to report? Will any DAB gear be appearing at the Heathrow show?

Alan Ralph
a.ralph@sdxbsl.co.uk

We last touched on Digital Audio

Broadcasting in January '97, when Noel Keywood suggested that manufacturers were slow to take to the new system. The only receiver at the time was an in-car device made by Grundig (at that time a part of Philips), who were closely connected with the EU Eureka 147 project which actually developed DAB. The Grundig DCR 1000 was intended for assessment purposes only, and even though it was 'priced' at £2700, it wasn't for sale!

The BBC has been at the forefront of publicity for DAB via radio and television ads, and has actually been test broadcasting in the London region since September 1995. Now approximately 60% of the UK population is covered by DAB transmissions. As Noel mentioned in his feature, the BBC hoped at the time for 40% of British households to own DAB receivers by the year 2006, which means that over five million sets would have to be sold in just over seven years from now. This looks like a mammoth task considering the almost complete lack of DAB equipment, and the price tags swinging from what little is available.

The one factor which could improve the situation might be the emergence of digital television, or Digital Video Broadcasting, which could give a boost to all things

digital. This is somewhat ironic given the way radio lost out to TV when it was first introduced.

The only DAB receivers which look likely to be generally available by the end of the year are in-car units produced either by companies such as Kenwood, Pioneer and Sony (who deal with a wide range of audio products), or in-car specialists like Blaupunkt.

No dedicated hi-fi tuners are available to audiophiles at the moment, although there is a BBC prototype on offer to the press. Manufacturers are unwilling to stick their necks out and release DAB hi-fi receivers until they know someone's ready to buy them, which leaves a Catch 22 situation - how can you buy something which hasn't been made yet? Further complicating matters is the fact that, according to a BBC spokesperson, the BBC and potential DAB receiver manufacturers have signed a "confidentiality agreement" to keep quiet whose products might be first to the shops.

Some UK and European companies are apparently planning to launch designs next year, when a greater area of the UK will be receiving broadcasts (and prototypes and review models could appear at future hi-fi shows and press launches). Sharp, for

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instance, told us that their domestic units may be on sale some time next year.

Japanese companies such as Denon have attended the relevant European conferences and marketing seminars held by the BBC. Their Japanese engineers came to England at least a year ago and were involved with the initial design process of DAB receivers, but Denon say they will probably be among the "second wave" of manufacturers to produce DAB hi-fi units.

The price of hi-fi receivers seems to be a subject on which many sources have conflicting views. A figure as low as £500-£600 has been mooted, but retail prices are



One of the few DAB units currently on sale is Kenwood's KRC-358DAB.

expected to be closer to £1000-£2000. This is obviously considerably more expensive than the majority of quality analogue tuners, and DAB does not automatically mean better sound quality - the age-old argument of compressed digital vs analogue

raises its head yet again.

DAB's signal, providing you're in an area with good reception, should cut out hiss and ghosting, but when we recently sampled an in-car unit connected to our reviewing system, we could only pick up enough signal to get the station name and no music, and this was in central London!

DAB is strictly a European affair at the moment. It was designed to overcome

the problems of FM transmission in mountainous regions, so it's very Euro-centric - neither Japan nor America plan to adopt the system. This limited market causes further reluctance on the part of some manufacturers to go into production. SP

LOSING TRACK

I have an LP12, Ittok and Audio Technica OC9 MC. Whilst playing certain LPs (like Bizet's Carmen) I get distortion on high frequencies, usually when female voices soar. Is this due to vinyl's own limitations? If CDs don't distort at such high frequencies this must surely be a point in their favour, especially on Classical records. Or is my cartridge not aligned properly?

John Ridolfo
Devon.

A lot of unquantified variables make this a very difficult question to answer. Ironically, female voices

have less high-frequency content than male, so it's not likely to be purely frequency-related. Although the fundamentals of the female voice are higher than the male (usually!) the higher harmonic content is less; this is why women's voices sound 'purer' than men's'.

So it's likely that sustained amplitude rather than frequency has done the damage. A high-level wave-form such as a solo female voice blasting away can give a stylus tip quite a job simply in terms of the amplitude to be reproduced.

It could be that the tracking weight on your OC9 is a little low.

When this is the case, the tip is liable to plough its own furrow and the finer points of the recording are simply bull-dozed out of the way. Otherwise, as you say, it could be misalignment. You can check this with a cartridge alignment gauge like the one below.

By the way, gauges which only align the cartridge at the outer grooves should be avoided - they can produce poor results on the inner grooves, where misalignment causes maximum wear and distortion. RMW

Once you've sorted out your cartridge, let it loose on an audiophile LP from Vivante.

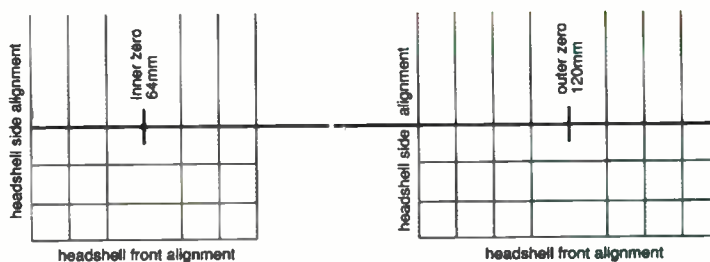


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Where headshell sides are not parallel to the axis of cartridge, align front of headshell against front alignment lines.

Use outer zero as a check of arm geometry. Ideally, with stylus on outer zero point headshell will be parallel with alignment lines here too.



For the most accurate cartridge set-up, you need a gauge like the one above which checks alignment on inner as well as outer grooves.

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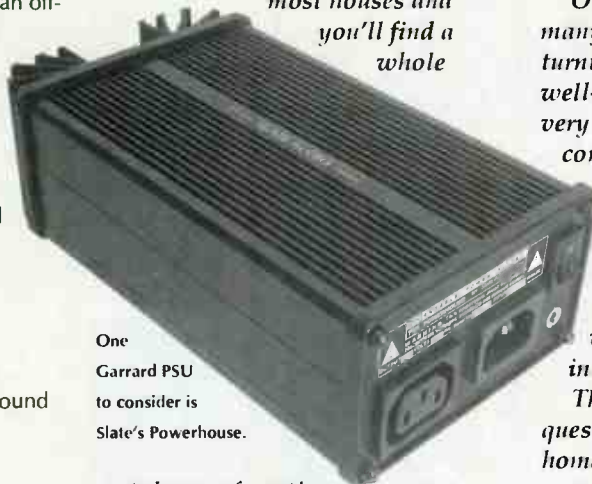
I have been thinking about adding an off-board power supply to my Garrard 401/Rega RB300/Goldring 1042 set-up. However, I was recently talking to a friend who is heavily into all things electrical and he says there is no way a separate power supply would make any real audible difference to the sound my turntable produces and that I'd be wasting my money.

Can you give me some sound arguments that explain the process whereby power supply can affect sound quality?

S.R. Beetlestone
Leamington Spa.

In a perfect world, your friend would be absolutely right. But

measure the mains sinewave in most houses and you'll find a whole



One Garrard PSU to consider is Slate's Powerhouse.

catalogue of nasties ruining the sound of your system. Large spikes, Radio-Frequency Interference and voltage droops all have a pronounced affect on hi-fi in

its many forms.

Our experience, and that of many readers who have invested in turntable PSUs, confirms that the well-engineered ones can make a very big difference indeed. This comes as no shock when you realise that styli will pick out the tiniest contours in a groove and are incredibly sensitive to vibration, especially the sort transmitted via the motor and idler wheel into the Garrard's platter.

There's a simple answer to this question, though; arrange for a home demo of a couple of units and see what you think for yourselves. JM

Investigate the mysteries of hi-fi with a copy of John Linsley Hood's Audio Electronics.

EVERY WHICH WAY

I still enjoy vinyl on my Thorens TD160S with Alphason arm. I also have a Cyrus dAD3Q CD player, Cyrus 3i and XPA amplification and Mission 751 Freedom 'speakers. Over the years I have listened to many loudspeakers as well, but I still have a preference for those a relative had in the Seventies. They were the Sonab OA 1A omni-directionals.

We first heard them at the Harrogate Hi-Fi Show. They were so natural and life-like many people were amazed - you could sit next to one cabinet and still hear stereo! Unfortunately, I have never seen the Sonabs for sale second-hand (I would love a pair).

Why aren't omni-directional 'speakers more popular? What would a modern equivalent be, and how much should I start saving?

David Oxtoby
N.Yorkshire

Omni-directional loudspeakers have had quite a good run for their money over the years. In the days of mono, cabinet designers went to great lengths to get rid of the 'hole-in-the-wall' effect inherent in single-speaker set-ups. Voigt used reflecting horns, which tended to spread the sound, and Decca pointed the driver into a corner so that the

output 'splashed' back out into the room. Many authorities in those days also recommended corner positioning for best results.

Then along came stereo. Stereo reproduction attains the apparent spread of sound by a complex



Some of Sonab's 1970s omni-directional loudspeakers.

process, most of which takes place in the brain of the listener. There seems to have been some confusion in the Sixties and early Seventies with regard to 'helping' what is fundamentally a psycho-acoustic process by a centrally-placed 'speaker with combined left-and-right output to 'fill' in the middle of the stereo spread; optimising the position of the two main 'speakers does not seem to have been considered!

Coupled with these acrobatics,

the question of finding space for the extra 'speaker for stereo gave rise to experiments with column-type enclosures whose driver/s fired upwards onto reflectors. The simpler Sonabs are fairly representative of this type. Having drivers firing in all directions naturally gave a good spread of sound and therefore positioning for stereo-of-a-sort became uncritical simply because the ears' choice of information source became so wide. Coupled with this the Sonabs were 'Lifestyle Compatible' and (oh-so-sexy) Swedish to boot!

If we seem a smidge unenthusiastic it's because nowadays audiophiles who appreciate accurate sound staging and imaging position loudspeakers away from reflective surfaces. I can imagine in a very large room with a dead acoustic the Sonabs and others like them (eg, Goodmans Dimension 8, Wye Electronics 1300, Luxor 835, etc) would perform well, but there are better ways of cracking that particular nut. It is unnervingly easy for the ear to confuse omni-directional muddle with 'natural stereo spread'! RMW

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FOR THE RECORD

I have been longing for a replacement for the cassette, which should have remained a dictation medium. Anyway, I was musing on MiniDisc, weighing up the pros and cons of yet another medium, when I read your CD Revolution article in the January '98 edition. I had just uprated my ageing 486 computer with a new mother board and a P233 chip. The timing of your article could not have been better. I bought a Hewlett-Packard CD-R/CD-RW drive, which works perfectly, and the Adaptec software is a joy to use.

Nevertheless, there is a learning curve to making good recordings. The software puts a two-second silence between tracks, even if the original tracks flow uninterrupted. There is a way around this using the program Disc-at-Once, but some audio CD players cannot read recordings made in this manner.

I have two versions of the Adaptec software, which control the read speed at two different, set rates. The version bundled with the HP recorder reads audio at between double and triple speed, which produces error-free recordings. The Adaptec Deluxe version (which Hi-Fi World used) allows my drive to read at eight times normal speed and produces recordings with spits and pops, reminiscent of sticky fingers on vinyl!

And the recordings themselves? I have a Marantz CD-63mkII KI-S, Naim 42.5/140 amps and ProAc Tablette 'speakers. The

THE FIRST STEP

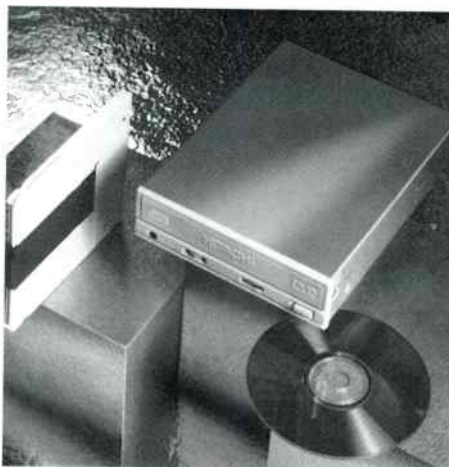
My seven-year-old Kenwood Midi is kaput. Where do I start - system or separates?

Andy McGowan
andy.mcgowan@dial.pipex.com

You'll be much better off going for separates, as long as you don't mind a mix of component styles after your Midi.

You don't mention how much money you've got to invest in a new set-up, but you can't go far

recordings sound clear, detailed and as close to the original as can be. The digital data stream is taken from CD drive to the hard disk and back to CD recorder. There



Re-recordable DVD-RAM will be on sale well before the end of 1998, but CD-R makes more sense as a computer-based digital recording format.

is an option to take data from reader to recorder, bypassing the hard disk, but this is more prone to corruption.

I have made a few recordings from vinyl, which sound good, especially considering the signal is processed by the ADC on my cheap PC soundcard.

I have used several different makes of CD-R blanks and found no audible differences between brands. I've now settled on mid-cost TDK Reflex blanks at about £1.20 each.

wrong with CD players like Cambridge's CD4SE (£200) or Kenwood's DP-3080/II (£180). Denon's PMA-250SE is as fine an integrated as any for about £160, and Tannoy's Mercury m1 (£120) and slightly bigger and bassier m2 (£140) loudspeakers can't be beaten at the price.

Atacama's SE24 'speaker stands (£70) would be the finishing touches. JM

Wire up your purchases with a set of DNM's loudspeaker cables.

I agree with your magazine - CD-R is the recording medium for the present. DVD may be with us now, but it will be some time before it comes of age.

Leonard
leonard@osirisfurniture.co.uk

As anyone who's bought a computer over the last five years or so will be aware, technology moves on incredibly quickly these days. DVD-RAM and its re-recordable blank discs will soon be in the shops (see last month's Trade Winds for more details of Hitachi's new DVD-RAM drive). As you say, though, it will be a while before disc and drive prices drop, so for the moment CD-R remains digital recording's strongest contender.

In addition, with most of the software out there in 44.1/16-bit form, what's the point in making digital recordings to a higher-spec disc, especially when DVD-RAM comes in a caddy which current DVD players won't accept? Only once DVD-RAM makes the transition from computer to audio, and 24/96 pre-recordeds are more widely available, might this format really take off. JM

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Tannoy's dinky Mercury m1 loudspeakers offer excellent value for money.

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SOURCE SUPERIORITY

My source is a £600 Arcam Alpha 6 CD player sitting ahead of a Sugden Optima 140 amp (£550) and £150 Mission 731LE 'speakers. I am looking for a logical upgrade to this system. I assume this means replacing the budget Missions. I thought I would try an outboard DAC first, however, as I know from experience the 731LEs are very revealing.

I rang a nearby dealer who recommended the DPA Little Bit III. I was a little disappointed to realise this was only £300, and I didn't expect much of an improvement over the already good sound of my Arcam. My doubts were quickly brushed aside by a very dynamic and powerful presentation.

This shocked me into thinking my Missions have a lot of potential left in them. My question to you then is, how far can I go with the source before I need to change the 'speakers - or amplifier for that matter? Believe me, I've learnt that the source is the most important part of the whole.

Chris George
chris.george@West-Norfolk.gov.uk

CORRUPTED BY POWER?

I've long heard how well the Jamo Concert 8 loudspeakers can sing. I would like to obtain a pair to hook up to my Musical Fidelity X-A200 monoblocs, which can supply 200watts into 8ohms. Can you tell me if the Concert 8s can cope with my power amps, as the maximum power rating for the Jamos is 150watts into 4ohms?

S.C. Lim
me0u6083@liverpool.ac.uk

You seem to be a little confused as to amplifier power ratings. The X-A200s quoted rating of 200watts into 8ohms means they will deliver a maximum of 200watts into 8ohms when required to do so, for example if you were attempting to drive extremely insensitive loudspeakers very loud in a large room. Otherwise, in an



Active loudspeakers like Harbeth's Xpression! DPM1 Pro-Actives easily outperform their passive counterparts.

What you'll often find when you already have a decent amplifier is that an upgrade to either source or loudspeakers will boost the system's performance. Driving £150 'speakers from a £600 CD player and £550 amp will certainly give the 731LEs a chance to shine, but they really are the weak link.

Sell your Missions and then track down a pair of the same company's 771 stand mounters at £170, which are far sweeter and

average 16ft. by 12ft. living room at normal listening levels, the X-A200s would be barely ticking over as the



Musical Fidelity's X-A200 monoblocs are smooth, assured power amps which would suit Jamo's Concert 8s perfectly.

Jamos would draw about three to five watts most of the time. Basically, a power amp like the X-A200 reaches its rated output only when required to do so by a

much more open. Alternatively, if your bank account can take the strain, there are KEF's Q35 floor standers at £350.

A more radical solution, which we espoused last month, would be to sell your Sugden, Missions and 'speaker cable and invest in a £200 Creek OBH-12 passive pre-amp and a pair of active 'speakers like Harbeth's Xpression! DPM1 Pro-Actives at £849.

You should be able to get about £400 for your old components, leaving you with a bill of around £650 if your existing interconnects are long enough to allow for

correct positioning of the active Harbeths. This is a hefty bill, but the results would be infinitely more transparent, weighty and musical than a new pair of passive loudspeakers at the same price. I suspect you might be very surprised by what your Arcam is capable of when accompanied by the Creek and Harbeths. JM

Whatever the system you settle on, try out a pair of The Chord Company's Siren interconnects.

particularly nasty loudspeaker load or high volumes.

The Jamos' power handling of 150watts means you shouldn't pump more than 150watts into their voice coils, as you might permanently damage them. However, this amount of power through the Concert 8s would produce painfully high volumes which would be dangerous to listen to without the protection of ear plugs.

Don't worry, the X-A200s work very well indeed with the Concert 8s, as we've found. We actually got the best sound though when we bi-amped the Jamos with two pairs of X-A200s! JM

Look behind the black metal box and into hi-fi's inner workings with a copy of John Linsley Hood's Audio Electronics.

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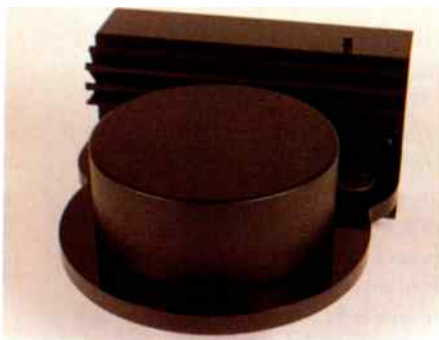
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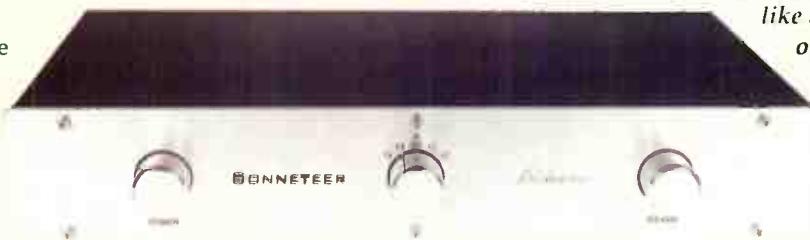
My system comprises a Linn LP12, Vallhalla PSU, Grace G707 tone-arm and an Ortofon MC15 Super 2 vinyl source. Naim amplification (NAC 32/NAP 120) drives Castle Harlech 'speakers through Cable Talk bi-wire 3.1. I use a Soundstyle stand and Chord Cobra 2 interconnects, and also have an Arcam Alpha 6 CD player.

I have recently upgraded my 'speakers, equipment stand and CD interconnect. The upgrades were carried out in stages, and both the new equipment stand (previously MFI) and 'speakers (previously Royd Sapphires) gave a noticeable improvement. There was more detail, definition and bass, plus a better midrange and treble. The only downside came with CD, the Cobra 2 cable seeming to change the Arcam's sound from smooth to harsh.

The dealer put this down to the upgrades exposing the shortcomings of the Arcam and recommended I look at upgrading this next. I am not so convinced, and wonder if you could give me your advice on any way of improving the sound of the Arcam, to give it some

'musicality' and smoothness?

Peter Brannigan
pbrann@globalnet.co.uk



Sonneteer's £900 Alabaster is a controlled but natural sounding integrated free from transistor 'grain'.

Yours is a classic system mismatch, I'm afraid. In a sense your dealer is right - the Arcam is out of its depth somewhat - but the real root of the problem is that you've balanced the system around your Linn, which in its current guise is a long way from being tonally neutral. The Grace arm is extremely soft and warm by modern standards; if you changed to an Akito 2, the Linn would also sound 'harsh' through your system. This is because you have a forward sounding pre/power and 'speakers. The system is fine with your warm

Linn, but with a neutral source it reveals its true, bright self.

There are several ways round the problem. You could replace your amp with a sweeter design like a Sonneteer Alabaster, or your could change your CD player for something silkier like a Mission dAD3Q. But first try some strategic tuning - place a set of FoculPods under the Arcam and get a length of LFD's Spirolink 3 interconnect. The former will bring more bass weight and musicality, the latter a smoother sound with yet more detail and ambience. I'd also recommend you change to Naim NAC-05 'speaker cable (Naim amps work best with Naim cable), and use the Harlechs with the grilles on. If these mods aren't enough, an intermediate step is a new DAC - specifically DPA's Little Bit III, which should improve on your Arcam's bass and warmth. DP

Make life easier for the signal from your MC with a bottle of DNM's Licon contact enhancer.

AMPLIFIER UPGRADE

My system is a Marantz PM-57 amplifier and CD-67SE CD player, Mordaunt-Short MS20i Pearl 'speakers on Atacama SE24 stands, and Ixos 604 Custom and Ixos 609 interconnects and bi-wire 'speaker cables respectively.

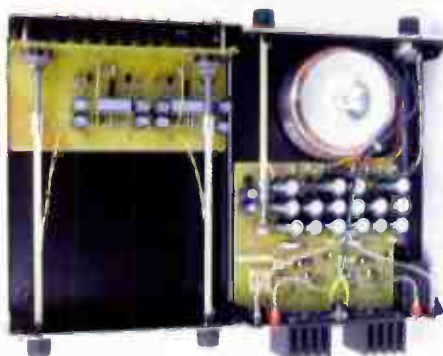
I've recently completed my set-up with a NAD 412 tuner. Generally, I'm happy with what I'm getting from the system. However, I have a few reservations which hopefully you can lay to rest.

First and foremost, is my current system well-balanced? My main concern is the amplifier. I suspect that it is limiting the abilities of my other components. I'm ready to upgrade it, but only if its replacement brings noticeable improvements. I'm eyeing the Marantz PM-66 KI-Signature and the Audiolab 8000LX. What do you think? Other recommendations would be very welcome.

The next problem is that the bass is, at times, not as tight as I would prefer. This only happens on music with heavy, extended bass. My room is rather small (3.5m. by 3.8m.) and the 'speakers are

placed about 20cms from the rear wall. Could this be the reason, as I believe the Pearls are very capable 'speakers and I thoroughly enjoy their presentation of most types of music?

Lee Koon Siong
koonsiong.lee@semagroup.com.sg



Rose's innovative two-box Scion integrated amplifier keeps the PSU in the power section's case, away from the sensitive pre-amp stages.

Your system seems pretty well put together, but I'd agree that the

amplifier is the obvious candidate for replacement. For around £500 I'd give both the Marantz and Audiolab a miss. Were it my money, I'd go for either the LFD Mistral Integrated, which has a beautifully sweet, beguiling sound, or the Rose Scion, which has loads of power and poise. Of the two, I'd probably pick the LFD, but seeing as you're suffering from loose bass, and the LFD's isn't famously tight, it would have to be the Scion.

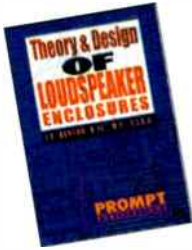
Try Sound-Bytes in your stands to tighten up the lows, as well as moving the MS20s out into the room. If all else fails, the old 'sock in the bass port' trick can work wonders. Or, if you're a perfectionist, an expertly-cut foam bung would be better still. You'll find your boom disappears and the upper bass becomes much more taut. DP

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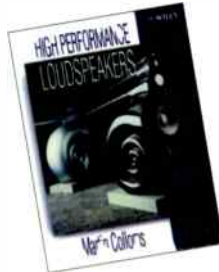
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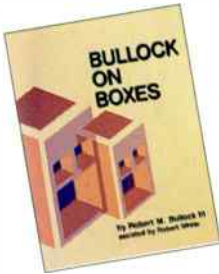


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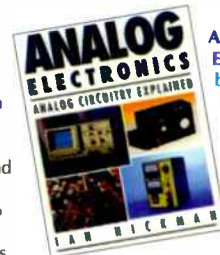
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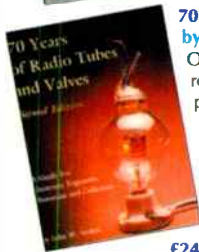
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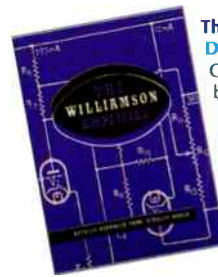
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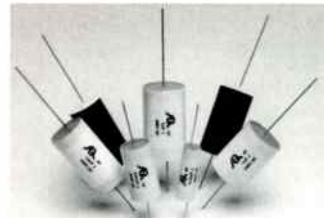
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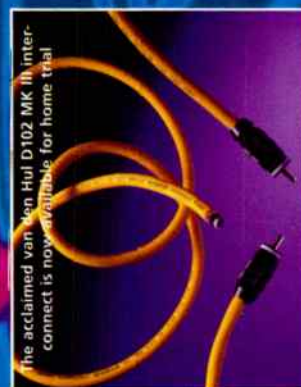
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It was when I plugged in a pair of gorgeous, old 6L6 valves and they went 'phut' within minutes that I realised we had a problem. My beloved 6L6 amplifier had just disposed of two classic Sylvania valves with peremptory ease; £50 had gone down the pan. In my mind I could see some old gaffer blowing dust from a pair he'd stored round about the time the last dinosaur went belly up. At the flick of a switch our amplifier would vaporise his treasure quicker than Enola Gay and with about as much compassion. I could see a problem on the horizon and was obliged to do something about it.

It was in DIY Supplement No18, banded to our November 1995 issue, that K6L6 first appeared. The idea was to offer a budget valve amplifier with plenty of power. To keep costs down we had to use inexpensive valves and a one-piece chassis of simpler construction than the welded, ground and coated affairs that grace our other amplifiers. Since this model was likely to be popular with first-time constructors, printed circuit boards were also going to be used to reduce wiring errors. It was a great concept, I

degree of Class A working, was increased.

I spent a lot of time honing a 'compound bias' scheme that usefully gave healthy output power, avoided the need for bias adjustment and demanded little power dissipation in the cathode resistors. As a result, small resistors that run cool could be used. These have the advantage of being more suitable for circuit-board mounting than large, ceramic types which stream heat.

To get high power output we had to use 450V-550V. Trouble is, this gets close to the rated maxima for some, but not all, 6L6s. This raises the issue of whether ratings for valves are meaningfully accurate, and I soon found that 6L6s vary enormously. Some were rated right on their limit while others were grossly underrated. So we had a 24watt anode dissipation 6L6, for example, whose anodes started to glow dull cherry-red in places at this power, meaning it needed to be run at no more than 20watts or so. Things were becoming complicated. We would have to catalogue the specifications of 6L6s to ensure the output power quoted could be achieved in practice.



Noel Keywood

valves are big and later ones small. Later designs also have higher performance.

Knowing this, guess which one of this group went 'phut' in our amp - the big Sylvania 6L6G, placed just left of centre. It is rated to take just 350V HT and I was applying 480V to it at the time. And which gave most power? Yes, the small, stubby one second in from the right, a 6L6WGB.

The Sylvania is rare and expensive, the WGB cheap, so it would seem we were in



thought, and our first prototypes worked perfectly, giving 36watts output, more than enough to give good volume levels with reasonably sensitive loudspeakers (87dB SPL upward).

You don't get something for nothing, however. Our inexpensive Edicron 6L6GT valves, seen in the original 1995 pictures, could only take so much in the way of standing current (degree of Class A working) and HT voltage before showing the strain. This wasn't too much of a problem, because they could be upgraded at little cost to a tougher 6L6 from Edicron, for a little more power and a little less distortion providing the standing current, or

I started phoning around for 6L6s and soon built up quite a collection, as you can see from the picture. This shows six very different looking 6L6s, but all are beam tetrodes based on the original American RCA design. In the centre sits a 6CA7 pentode which we used to overcome the problems of the 6L6.

So why do 6L6s vary to such an extent? Valves started out big, but as electronics grew, size became a problem. As I noted last month, America's first computer, ENIAC, used 19000 of them and weighed 30 tons! So the main development imperative was to reduce size and power consumption. As a generalisation, old

luck. But the valve at far right is a modern Chinese WGB and that went 'phut' too! Worse, people buy valves on appearance and there's plenty of talk about originals sounding best. This is where my innocent old gaffer scenario enters the picture; I started to imagine old classics giving up the ghost all over Britain, at which point I finally called a halt to developing K6L6.

Happily, its successor, the new KEL34, uses the beefiest pentodes I have ever seen. They are massively rated and turn out oodles of power. Now our amplifier produces 40watts with ease. So we got there in the end. My apologies for the three-year delay!

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SUPER CHARGER

Jon Marks enjoys the silence with Origin Live's battery-powered Oasis-S turntable.

The silver tide of Compact Disc which swept the globe in vinyl's wake was unleashed against a background of deathly quiet. For after years of swish, crackle and rumble obscuring the music in LP's grooves, the silence that digital brought with it seemed almost too good to be true. As silver discs multiplied and went forth, black ones disappeared or were turned into plant pots and ashtrays. One small band of dedicated enthusiasts refused to jump ship and leave HMS Vinyl to sink without a trace. They knew only the purest power could sweep all the unwanted noise out of a groove, so they charged their trusty turntables up on battery power.

ON ACID (AND LEAD)

Joining that slowly growing band (alongside long-term members Pink Triangle) is Origin Live with their new £2250 Oasis-S. Like PT, OL match their precision DC motor from Airpax to a battery PSU. Where the Anniversary's was ensconced in its own case though, the OL's 6V Yuasa lead/acid battery (which will keep

the platter turning for about 40 hours between charges) and accompanying circuitry sit just below the deck's wooden top-plate to the left-hand side of the curious unsprung assembly which isolates bearing, motor and arm from the outside world.

The heart of the Oasis-S is three pound coins. These aren't some Special Edition versions which have been silver-plated to boost their sound, they're what you'd expect to find in pockets and wallets anywhere in the UK. Apparently, they were selected because the metal they're made of sounds better than the sort of angle iron used in a lot of decks. Topping off these coins of the realm are three fibre washers, upon which sits the main beam the motor, bearing and arm-mount are bolted onto.

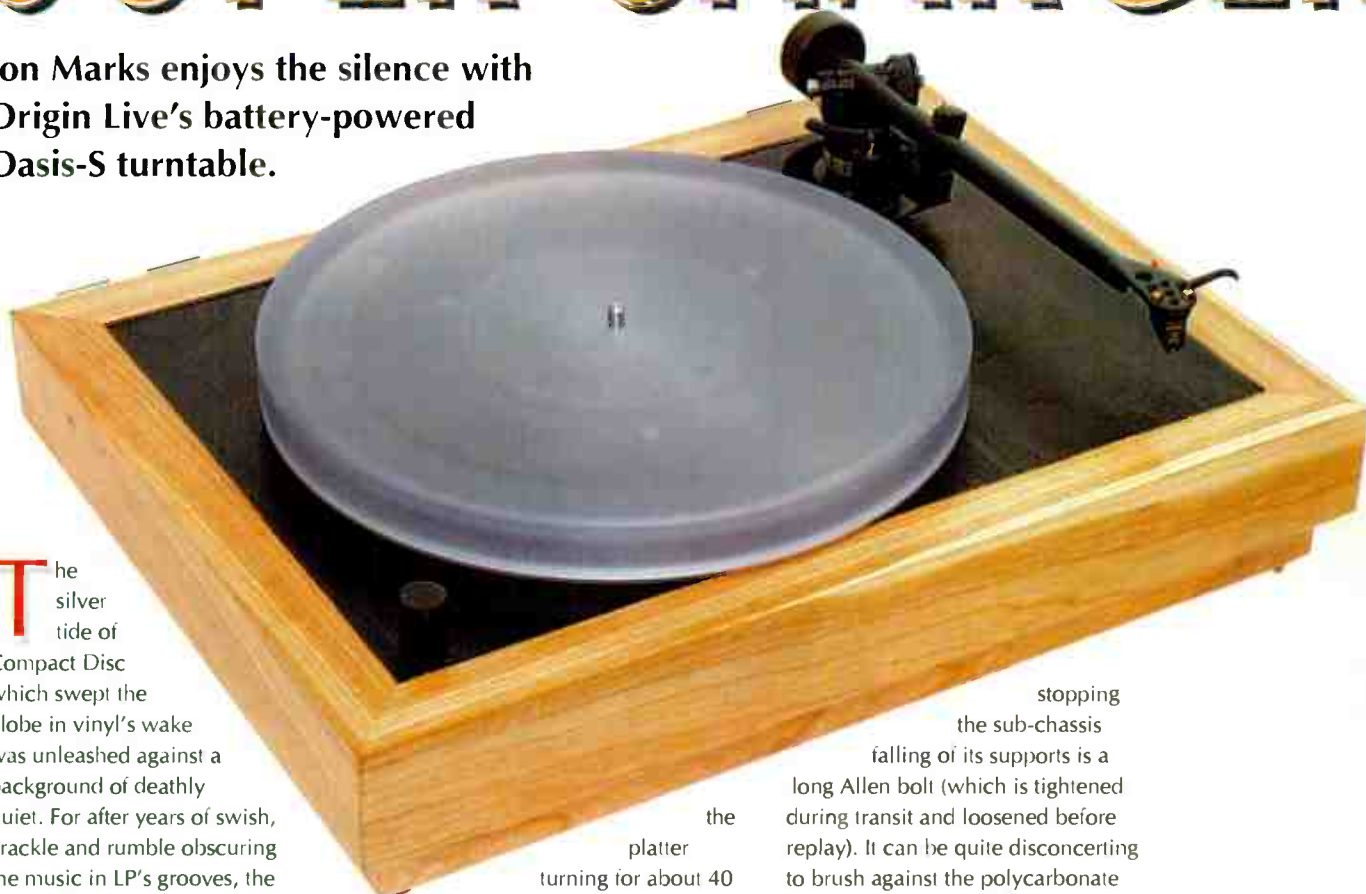
As you'll discover when you try setting up the Oasis-S, the only thing

stopping the sub-chassis falling of its supports is a long Allen bolt (which is tightened during transit and loosened before replay). It can be quite disconcerting to brush against the polycarbonate platter and have it shift dramatically instead of bouncing gently as it would if it were suspended. Still, a solid sub-chassis means there are no springs to drift off level with time.

SPIKED!

One of Origin's other preferred methods for reducing background noise is to fit three (three is obviously the lucky number of Mark Baker, the man behind OL) upward-facing spikes to decouple the platter from the sub-platter.

Compared to normally-sprung turntables, the Oasis-S is sensitive to the surface it's located on - you can't place it anywhere and expect it to deliver 100%. We settled on a Sound Organisation mini table below one of Audiophile Furniture's Base platforms. On the wrong foundation (ie, a plain slab of MDF on spikes or cones) bass is woolly and



CHESKY



Rebecca Pidgeon "Four Marys" (CD)

Acclaimed singer/actress Rebecca Pidgeon takes listeners on a musical journey back to her Scottish roots with traditional songs of love, infidelity, war and revenge. Her crystalline voice blends magically with Scottish music's top

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See Ms. Pidgeon in the new David Mamet film, "The Spanish Prisoner."

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Rebecca Pidgeon "The Raven" (CD)

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96kHz/24-bit recording.

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DVD...provides some of the nicest soundstage detail around." -- Audio



Livingston Taylor "Ink" (CD, 96/24 Super Audio DVD)

"...from the opening passage of

whistling to the end of

["Isn't She Lovely"]. Listen to

this recording and you are never going to be fully satisfied with CD again..."



Sara K. "Hobo" Sara K. "Hobo" (CD, 96/24 Super Audio DVD)

"Hobo" showcases this powerful singer-songwriter's hottest and hardest-hitting

album to date with gorgeous

96kHz/24-bit detail. Features a smoking

acoustic rendition of the Commodore's '70s smash, "Brick House," as well as Sara's beautifully composed and performed "Moving Big Picture."

"Sara's voice took on layer after layer of velvety, throaty texture. Sounds expanded in space...Acoustic guitars sprang to life..." -- Fi



Babatunde Olatunji "Love Drum Talk" (CD)

The Father of World music returns on this superb-sounding 1998 Grammy-Award nominee for Best

World Music Album.

Irresistible dance rhythms and beautiful ensemble singing show why Olatunji's music and spirit have been moving the soul since his landmark debut "Drums Of Passion."

"...I stand in awe of the recent Chesky Records release 'Love Drum Talk'...The sound quality is as staggering as the music." -- Fi



Paquito D'Rivera "Portraits of Cuba" (CD)

On this 1997 Grammy-Award winner for Best Latin Jazz Album, saxophonist and clarinetist Paquito

D'Rivera and a top-notch jazz

ensemble perform lush arrangements of classic, Cuban jazz songs. Very much in the spirit of Davis' and Evans' "Sketches of Spain," "Portraits" features "The 'I Love Lucy Theme" and "The Peanut Vendor."

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Dave's True Story "Sex Without Bodies" (CD)

This hot jazz/beatnik/ lounge group creates an arresting world of love, lust and

venetian blinds with sultry

vocals, ironic lyrics and jazzy chord progressions. Stir up those martinis!

"Like Cole Porter writing about phone sex, the Bay of Pigs and Jackie Collins" -- Time Out NY
 "Smoldering lounge grooves and cheeky Beatnik lyrics" -- Billboard.

96/24 Super Audio DVDs, due October: Rebecca Pidgeon - "Four Marys", Babatunde Olatunji - "Love Drum Talk", Jon Faddis "Remembrances" and Dave's True Story "Sex Without Bodies".

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World Radio History

lightweight, and the treble and midrange flat.

What else could we choose to arm the OL with than the company's own modified Rega RB300 (which comes with a sleeve to allow easy height adjustment on the S)? At the end of the Rega was an Ortofon MC 25 FL Moving-Coil cartridge. Downstream came a Sonic Frontiers Phono 1 phono stage, Michell's Orca pre-amp, a pair of Musical Fidelity X-A200 monoblocs and Jamo's Concert 8s. Cables were supplied by Roksan, Purist Audio Design and van den Hul.

HI-FI IS A PACKET OF CRISPS

What sways many listeners in favour of vinyl is the warmth it possesses when replayed on the majority of turntables. Compared to this round, rich prawn-cocktailesque acoustic flavour, the Oasis-S was more salt and vinegar. Its treble and midrange have a clean but bright and incisive character on vocals and strings; bass is dry and tangy, almost balsamic.

Prime example of this crisp balance was a copy of Skunk Anansie's *Stoosh*. This isn't the warmest of digital recordings anyway, but it actually has a fairly even tonal balance. Spinning on that polycarbonate platter (which rings in a manner eerily reminiscent of aluminium when struck, as does the steel sub-platter), it was as if the mastering engineer had reached for the equaliser and boosted frequencies above about 2kHz. This brought cymbals, sibilants and strings forward



a foot or so in the sound stage.

As is the case with loudspeakers like Jamo's Concert 8s though, brightness doesn't automatically equal harsh and spitty, as the Oasis-S has a purity and smoothness across the full span of octaves.

With some duller pressings, the OL's rise in response made a better sonic match. Eric Bibb and Bert Deivert's *Hello Stranger* LP from *Opus 3* has a 'recorded through a sock' quality to it which was perfectly counterbalanced by the Oasis-S. The spaciousness of the hall where the single pair of microphones was set up flowed effortlessly from the Jamos, filling out all round their cabinets in a way many noisier AC-powered alternatives would struggle to match.

That sense of a complete lack of strain continued with rhythms and melodies, the low-noise and minimal cogging of the Airpax DC motor

allowing music a natural fluidity, grace and foot-tappability still rare at £2000.

Moving up to 45rpm showed the dry bass also had great speed and control, the massive drum beats on Time Zone's *World Destruction* missing out on the slam a Garrard 401 is capable of, but making up for that in agility and tunefulness.

With all these bass pyrotechnics going off, many turntables give up the ghost in terms of midrange and treble delicacy, but the Oasis-S scored once more in this area. Triangles, harp, woodwind and strings on Britten's *Young Person's Guide To The Orchestra* were all portrayed against a near-silent background, each clearly separated from its companions.

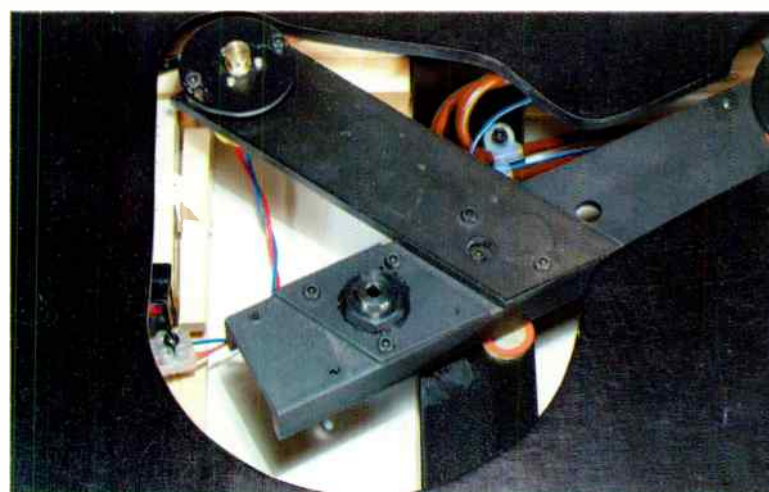
Reflecting its unsprung isolation, the Origin really does benefit from an appropriate base and careful dressing of the tone-arm lead outs. Ironically, the Achilles heel of OL's modified RB300 when bolted to the Oasis-S is the arm's thick cabling, which coarsens the midrange and blurs the bass, if it's draped over the top of a rack or platform. Propping up said leads to get them in the air cured the problem, although leaving the RB300's original skinny output wiring in place would be the best solution.

If you prefer to fit and forget hi-fi, and shell out on equipment which doubles as sculpture, it would be worth rounding up alternatives to the Origin Live (like the Gyrodec and QC supply). However, if you enjoy vinyl as a hands-on experience and don't mind spending some time on a deck's set-up, the Oasis-S will reward with a crisp, open presentation and great involvement through a warmish system.

Three spikes reduce the amount of motor noise which passes through the sub-platter before reaching the record.

Origin Live Oasis-S £2250

Origin Live 87 Chessel Crescent, Bitterne, Southampton SO19 4BT Tel: 01703 442183



Look under the sub-platter and you'll see the lead/acid battery (to the left), the DC motor, the main beam and one of the three pound coins with its fibre washer.

WORLD VERDICT

The Oasis-S is a cool, lean but very transparent performer thanks to battery power, but it's going up against strong competition.

Measured Performance see p111

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To top that, the basic £450 *PUCCINI* won the Hi-Fi Choice Best Buy for amplifiers in an up-to-£1000 group test (February '98). In their words: "This is a first-rate budget amplifier that looks and sounds like an altogether more costly model. Check it out."

The *BELLINI* preamp and *DONIZETTI* power amp fared equally well. Ken Kesler in Hi-Fi News (January '98) had this to say: "A new benchmark in the value for money stakes. They're so well-built and sound so damned good that you're gonna blink just like the characters in the VW Polo ads when I tell you the prices" ..*

And Hi-Fi World's Jon Marks (who knows a class act when he sees one) writes: "Their construction inside and out shows the almost obsessive lengths Audio Analogue will go to to get good sound and good looks..."

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*Bellini preamp £475, Donizetti power amp £575. Puccini S.E. £595





David Price

As everyone else and his dog in the world of hi-fi seems to have heard 96kHz 24-bit DVD Audio, I decided it was time for me to do the same. So, one sweltering day in July, I hot-footed it down to a friendly hi-fi megastore in Tokyo's Akihabara district, Japan's hi-fi Mecca and self-proclaimed 'Electric Town'. Having made it to the top floor I reclined in a demonstration-room chair and waited to be impressed. At last I too, like everyone else I speak to these days, could say, "I have heard the future of digital".

Going through my head as one of the few currently-available 24/96 discs was dotted into a Pioneer DVS-9 was the nightmare prospect that my precious collection of black plastic could finally be obsolete.

While I can't deny that I love the size, feel and (I'm sure I'll regret admitting this) smell of LP records, the main reason I've got a house full of the things is their sound. To my ears, with a decent turntable they walk all over Compact Disc. This is a view that, as the saying goes, I am unanimous in holding. I've had this since I first heard a Yamaha CDX-1 player back in 1984, and I don't wish to be disabused of it too quickly.

Indeed, I must admit to being almost 'scared' of hearing DVD Audio. The thought of some anonymous black box full of robot-stuffed circuit boards and heaps of op-amps usurping my beautiful turntable as a source was too horrible to contemplate. Waiting for the disc tray to close and the laser to lock on target seemed to take a nail-biting eternity.

Having been one of the first to hear Pink Triangle's Cardinal/Da Capo play HDCDs back in 1995, I had an inkling of

how high-resolution digital audio might sound. But I wasn't prepared for this. Sweet and detailed, the music (that's right, strange as it might sound, music from digital) flooded out of the big Celestion A3 floor standers. And as for those dynamics - instruments played quiet and then loud, loud and then quiet, just like a live concert - there wasn't even a hint of that squashed up, CD-esque compression here!

What I was hearing was seriously impressive. I sat transfixed, aghast at the digital delectations before me - that power, detail, air, space and imaging were definitely approaching high-end vinyl territory.

Then we went back to CD, in the shape of Pioneer's PD-T07HS - at Y220000 (£950), some Y30000 more expensive than the DVD player I'd just been listening to. It paled by comparison.

*"Now,
at 40 years of age,
perhaps life has
really only just begun
for the vinyl LP. . ."*

Back came the bright upper midrange, wooden, arrhythmic bass, tizzy treble and shut-in, shallow sound stage. This was hardly the stuff of digital dreams.

I returned to DVD and again the music flowed like wine. Interestingly, one of my suspicions had been that the new format would sound very 'showy' and artificial. This proved totally unfounded - thanks to a dynamic range dramatically superior to standard 16-bit, it was relaxed and unforced.

So, it's curtains for vinyl then? Well, I'm not so sure. Despite all the superlatives that have been heaped on 24-bit, 96kHz recently, it still didn't 'do the magic' for me in the same way as a decent turntable. Unfortunately, as my own system was many thousands of miles away back in Blighty, I was in no position to shoot home to make some quick comparisons. So instead, it was over to a friend's place on the other side of the city for a proper listen to a decent disc spinner.

Stuck somewhat unceremoniously on his floor was an Immedia turntable fitted with a Wheaton Triplanar tone-arm and Lyra Clavis moving coil. Together, this little lot cost megabucks - far more than the Pioneer DVD player - but I'd wanted a reference so wasn't complaining. With memories of all that digital power, space and transparency still vivid in my mind, I sat back and fatefully waited to be underwhelmed by this prehistoric technology.

From the moment the diamond hit the groove, I realised my records weren't about to be relegated to the attic. The turntable was sublime - no less powerful or dynamic than DVD Audio yet far more musically involving. Music lilted from the 'speakers, rich, resonant acoustic instruments played by real people - something even 24/96 can't do convincingly. Granted, the systems were

different so the comparison wasn't terribly objective, but I just couldn't help hearing more music from vinyl. By any standards DVD audio is a fine music carrier, but it's still recognisably digital in the sense that an original Beatles LP is dyed-in-the-wool analogue.

I have heard the future and it's good. I'm right behind DVD Audio, and if it's this capable now then its future looks assured. Yet I'm equally certain there's more to come, not least in the form of 24 bits at 192kHz sampling. Factor in some serious players from hi-fi manufacturers like Meridian and Pink Triangle with properly-engineered analogue output stages, and it will run vinyl very close indeed.

But I also believe there'll always be room for analogue, which continues to get better and better, and there's no theoretical ceiling to its development potential. Now, at 40 years of age, perhaps life has really only just begun for the vinyl LP. . . ●

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RUBY, RUBY BABY

The Ruby 2s are the jewel in JPW's loudspeaker crown. Timothy Liu signs up as an admirer.

When you're shopping for a pair of loudspeakers around the £500 mark, you can quite confidently say you're moving in the lower realms of the high-end market - the bog-standard vinyl-wrapped box with cheap drivers won't cut the mustard at this price. With so many near-identical two-way stand mounters at this level though, tracking down the ideal pair can involve a lot of foot work.

Which is why JPW have gone to great efforts visually and in the sound department to ensure their Ruby 2s stand out from the crowd.

Lifting the Rubies out of their box, I was greeted by two beautifully-veneered red mahogany cabinets with chamfered edges front and back. The theme of no-nonsense construction continues inside the enclosures with heavy-gauge copper wiring and custom-wound air-core inductors on the crossovers.

Removing the black grilles I discovered a 25mm ferrofluid-cooled metal-dome tweeter and an exotic 180mm red aluminium mid/bass unit. The cones for these are made to order for JPW by Associated Electronics in Sussex. Unlike many other metal diaphragms, the Rubies' are spun rather than pressed, which enables the thickness of the cone to be varied concentrically to help damp out any unwanted resonances.

Turn the 'speakers round and you'll see the four heavy-duty, gold-plated binding posts which enable bi-wiring. Above these is the small port which reflex-loads the mid/bass.

I spent three weeks with the Ruby 2s in a system where amplification was supplied by Jeff Rowland on the one hand, and the more modest but magnificent Audio Analogue Puccini SE integrated on

the other. These in turn partnered front ends such as a Basis turntable with an ageing Shiraz cartridge, a Wadia 6 CD player, and an antiquated but still lovable Marantz CD-94. Sonus Faber height-adjustable stands served as bases for the JPWs.

When Jeff met Ruby, Stan Getz's 'Always Trust Your Heart' showed all the hallmarks of transmission through a well-engineered monitor. The JPWs ranked high for their realism and three-dimensionality, both built on sharp imaging, open sound staging and subtle insight.

Tonally, the story wasn't quite as rosy. John Cougar Mellencamp's 'R.O.C.K. In The U.S.A.' had a cooler, leaner presentation, and although the bass had good slam and speed, it lacked warmth and extension. Tilting this balance further was a touch of sibilance on closely-mic'd recordings.

Time for a substitution - off went Rowland, replaced by Puccini. At the same time, I sidelined the Wadia in preference for the Marantz with its warm character. Now the system was pulling together as a team - the Rubies changed from analytical detail retrievers to music makers.

Just a few bars into K.D. Lang's 'Save Me' and the sound coming from the JPWs was more relaxed and vibrant. Bass warmed up and became more extended, allowing music to flow along in an involving



way absent before. The inherently detailed metal drivers had lost none of their lucidity, but the shift away from neutral ancillaries to more complementary equipment avoided an overly clinical, cerebral rendition.

The Ruby 2s need to be matched carefully to exploit their strengths rather than highlight their weaknesses. Sources and amplification should ideally be laid-back, full and well-rounded - Sugden's more powerful solid-state offerings and lush push-pull valve alternatives would fit the bill.

For their asking price of £395 (or £495 for special finishes), the Ruby 2s are a lot of loudspeaker for the money in terms of construction and audiophile parts. They may not have the smoothest treble or deepest bass, but careful matching can achieve sonic success.

JPW Ruby 2 £395

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WORLD VERDICT



Once allied to warm electronics, the Ruby 2s mix insight with involvement to good effect.

Measured Performance
see p111

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VINTAGE VIRTUES

by Haden Boardman

Depending on which story you believe, the 'modern' suspended turntable, the ancestor of so many decks (Linn LP12, Ariston RD11, Manticore, Fons, etc) was either the Thorens TD150 or the Acoustic Research XB. Both appeared at about the same time in the early 1960s, so it was a case of either parallel development or piracy. As no law suits went flying (although they surely would today) and I have no wish to upset the status quo, let's assume it was the former!

The AR deck is as rare as rocking-horse droppings in the UK and, frankly, the 1970s version we got over here is not as good as the Thorens nor anywhere near as tweakable. Its arm is very poor indeed, and the suspension is light and bouncy. Good in its day, it's now only a bargain at a car-boot sale if it's going for less than a tenner.

Much more common and better are the Thorens TD150/160 range. They remained in production from the early 1960s through to the 1990s, and are very underrated disc spinners. Common to all is an AC motor and metal sub-chassis and top-plate. The platter, sub-platter and main bearing were also reassuringly substantial.

Visually, the TD150 has it for me. The 'mini' LP12 look (just remember the LP12 was the copy, and not the '150) is just right. The later '160s may be heavier in plinth build, but they really don't look as handsome. Some TD160 variants are finished in typical Seventies plastic wrap, and the later Eighties versions come in real wood veneer, but this doesn't prevent them appearing a little clumsy by comparison.

The TD150 MkI is just as good as the MkII, except for the terrible arm which hamstring the deck's performance. The MkII's arm looks just as unappealing, but is actually better than a Rega RB300. When cash-strapped a few years ago, I popped an Ortofon MC 10 Super in a MkII and was staggered by what emerged from the groove. This partnership shouldn't have worked, but it did - with a vengeance. I had just parted with a monster high-end combo, costing many thousands of pounds, and here was this £50 turntable with a £60 cartridge that blew it away.

Sadly, the later TD160s suffered badly with useless arms too. There are some real horrors here, with strange plastic spacing devices instead of proper arm-height adjustment, and oh-so-flexible bearings. The last versions were available with a UK-fitted RB250, which was a fatal

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mistake - this arm does not work on these little decks. For similar reasons it failed to gel on the LP12.

Actually, one of the best options is to find an old Linn arm. The Basik LVVs and LVXs sound as if they were made to work hand-in-glove with the Thorens, and can be bought for as little as £50. One of the finest record players I heard was a Naim Aro/Koetsu cartridge on a tweaked TD150. Crazy combo, but it sang.

As far as tweaks go, they are many and varied. Simple stuff consists of throwing away the appalling platter mat and, on all TD150s and earlier TD160s, removing the crummy cardboard plinth base. This reaps massive rewards for very little outlay.

Another common modification is to fit Linn LP12 springs in the place of Thorens' own; the results can be mixed though, and you will have to know a friendly Linn dealer who will sell you the parts. Linn Valhalla power supply boards also boost the deck's sound massively, so while you are in the dealer's shop, see if they have any second-hand Valhallas lurking about. Chances are they will want lots of dosh for them, so you might find going through our Classifieds more cost-effective. Those seeking the highest order of upgrade should invest in something more specialised. One to try is Martin Bastin's PSU. It costs £400 and will drive any turntable AC motors, including those found on Garrards 401s and 301s. He can be contacted at 225 Tettenhall Road, Wolverhampton WV6 0DE.

The TD150 is somewhat more flexible as regards fitting new arms. The arm board style was copied by Linn, and its large dimensions make it simple to put on any reasonable arm (beware anything too heavy - stick with arms known to work well on the LP12). Technical And General (tel: 01892 654534) will supply ready-cut boards for a modest amount. It's not hard to cut your own either, as long as you have enough knowledge about arm length and correct alignment.

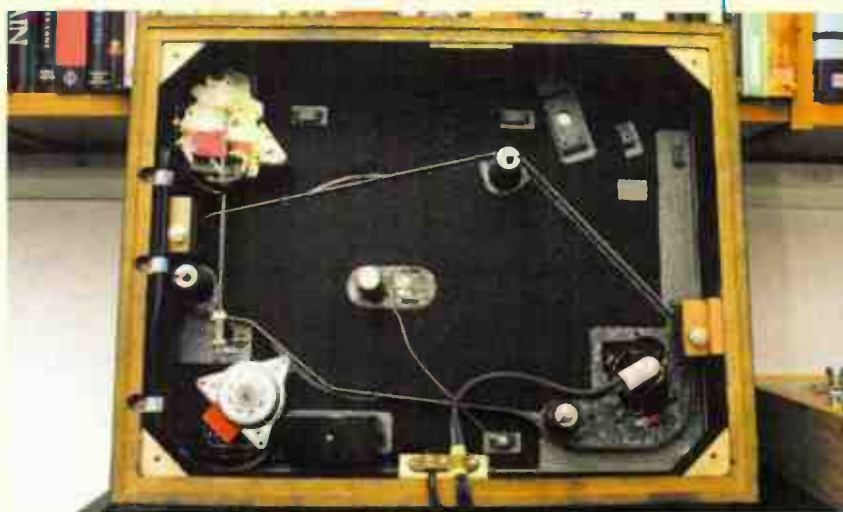
The deck shown in our photos reveals an upgraded plinth system fitted around a TD150. This particular example started life as a chassis model and was fitted into the ubiquitous 'radiogram' cabinet. Its original arm was removed, and a pilot light placed in the arm-lift control hole. It's an easy formula to copy, and the little '150 does benefit from a heavier plinth.

In some ways, this plinth was the major advantage of the '160 over the '150, especially the later units where heavy, high-density particle board was the chosen material. The other step forward was the quality of the main bearing.

The TD150s are physically smaller than the TD160s. However, extended listening reveals very little difference between the two models, with, if anything, the slightly lighter sound of the '150 pipping the '160 at the post. The difference is marginal, and depends a great deal on how the decks are set up.

Replacement belts are required about every three to five years depending on use. Again, it's down to your local Linn dealer for an LP12 belt! Make sure you fit the belt the right way round - get your dealer to point out the polished side.

These decks offer a great deal for very little. Some



friends of mine, who owned a Gyrodec, recently set up a TD160 as an interim measure while a new arm was fitted to the Michell. Result? The Thorens stayed and the Gyrodec was passed on - they really are that good. Don't bother with the lesser TD166, or even the TD147; stick with the '150 and '160.

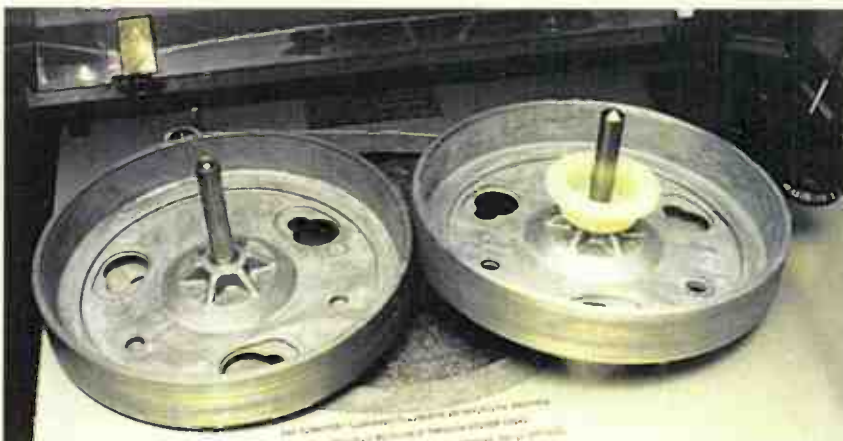
The underside and sub-chassis of this TD160 (above) benefit from large amounts of bituminous damping.

An early MkI or MkII TD150 will fetch anything between £50 and £75 in standard trim; a TD160 from



£50 for an early MkI, to £200 for a late 'S' deck. If you just want to 'plug and play', get either a MkII TD150 or a late spec. TD160. If you don't mind tinkering about and searching out a better arm, any variant will do. They offer sure-fire sound quality for pin money, and a lot of fun in the tweaking department●

Above: speed change on the Thorens is achieved with a stepped pulley and guide lever. Below: The bearing on the TD160 (right) is slightly larger than the TD150's.



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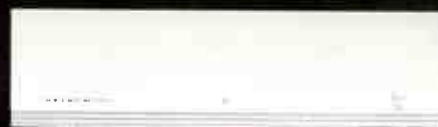
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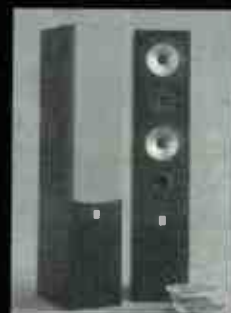


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Dominic Todd

As much as it pains me to admit it, sales of vinyl have been in decline over the last decade. Despite a resurgence several years ago due to the Dance and Rave culture, which encouraged mixing the music as

many people still think a CD player is going to give faultless service for year after year. Unfortunately, the plain fact of the matter is that it won't, lasers usually only lasting between two and eight years with average usage. Their replacement cost of anything between £60 and £160 makes changing a budget stylus every year or so look very reasonable.

Even so, despite similar running costs, CD remains a vastly more convenient medium than vinyl. But hang on a minute, what about sound quality? Surely when listening to music this is of crucial importance, and far more important than mere convenience? Despite the introduction of HDCD (High Definition Compatible Digital) CD players, equivalently-priced turntables still sound superior to their CD counterparts. A contentious point? Possibly, but I've heard many an ardent CD supporter agree as they point out that you simply can't

particular I remember a combination of the original Pioneer A-400 (£230 at the time) with a Kinshaw phono stage (£550) which proved so devastatingly effective with vinyl that I really couldn't think of any vinyl-compatible integrated amplifier which could compete at twice the price. And if that sounds like a typical case of journalistic hype (heaven forbid!), I should mention that it was an opinion also held by many others in the hi-fi industry (but not the press) at the time.

Seeing as the quality of a phono stage plays such a large part in the final reckoning of a turntable's sound quality, it comes as quite a shock to see how few designers take it seriously. Of those that even bother to fit one as standard in the first place (including some of the most prestigious manufacturers), many resort to the cheapest components - paying £1000 for an amplifier with a phono stage is no guarantee of sweet sounding LP reproduction.

I suspect that the manufacturers' view is that, for anyone serious about vinyl, there is always the option of an external equaliser. This is fine as far as it goes. Rotel can provide one such device for as little as £130 in their RQ-970BX. The main stumbling block is that, by and large, none but the most serious hi-fi addicts want yet another box and set of interconnects clogging up their racks. And why should they? We've seen in recent years the demise of budget DACs, as the standards of integrated machines have reached a level which makes them unnecessary. Now if manufacturers were to add phono stages of the quality of the Rotel RQ-970BX or Musical Fidelity X-LP to their amplifiers, it might make them £100 or so more expensive but the results would be far more impressive.

Of course, manufacturers will never do this as it would turn a £300 amplifier into a £400 one, leaving it at the mercy of higher-priced line-level-only competitors. In any case, the damage has already been done, and it would be a mistake to look back and think "what if. . ." But when pondering the demise of vinyl, do spare a thought for the fact that what happened wasn't entirely the format's own fault - integrated amps' phono stages weren't perhaps the best they could have been. But then I don't suppose this did the very same manufacturers' sales of CD players any harm!

"The difference a decent phono stage can make to an integrated amp's sound quality is astounding, although it's frequently dismissed as an irrelevance by the bulk of the hi-fi industry."

much as dancing to it, CD is the undisputed market leader. And it's not hard to see why that format also knocked Compact Cassette off its podium - dubious durability, slow access times and sound quality that was never intended to be of high fidelity in the first place have seen to the demise of cassette. It looks as though Minidisc will firmly drive home the final nail in cassette's coffin.

You might have thought that the arguments for buyers' preference of CD over vinyl would be similar. After all, the LP is undoubtedly less user-friendly, much bulkier, more scratch-prone and there are no in-car units (can you imagine the size a car's central console would have to be to accommodate one!) The players themselves also require care and attention, what with levelling, cartridge alignment, stylus replacement and so on.

Having said that, it's surprising how

buy a lot of recordings on vinyl.

These arguments have all been well documented, but what has received less attention is an area concerned with vinyl's demise in terms of sound quality, where the blame lies not at the door of the record industry but amplifier manufacturers.

The difference a decent phono stage can make to an integrated amp's sound quality is astounding, although it's frequently dismissed as an irrelevance by the bulk of the hi-fi industry. This is a point which has recently been brought home to me after testing a couple of highly capable phono stages at two price extremes (NAD's £40 PP1 and Anthem's £900 Pre 1P).

In the past I've found that a good phono stage at £300-£800 can make a far greater improvement to a given system than spending the equivalent amount on any other component. In

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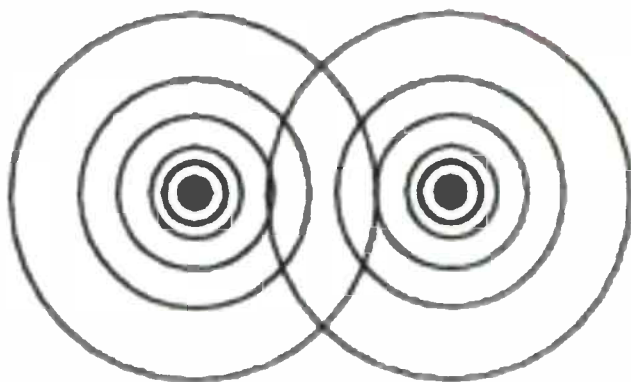
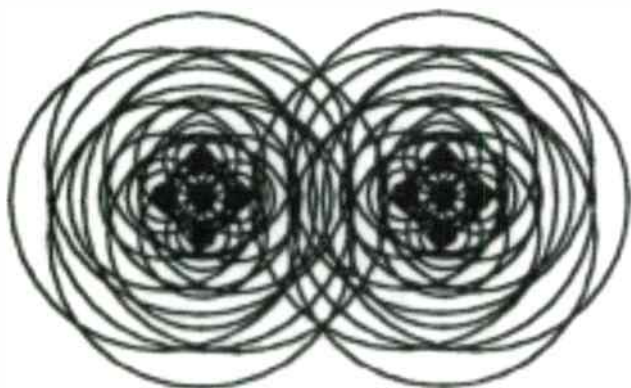
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THE ART OF CONDUCTING

Jon Marks interviews DNM's Denis Morecroft
in our continuing journey into cable technology.



Left: DNM's view of the magnetic field generated around a multi-strand cable. To the right, the same for solid-core.

Last month, Andrew Lord, QED's cable designer, revealed some of the secrets which go into successful cable construction. But as anyone who's tried to track down the right cables for their equipment knows, there's more than one way to go. So after the multi-strand methodology of QED, we examine the merits of solid-core with DNM's Denis Morecroft.

JM What factors do you consider in designing your cables?

DNM When design decisions are made they are invariably influenced by pre-conceived ideas as to the function of the item in question. Conclusions reached on cable parameters like skin effect, capacitance, resistance and inductance have all been based on assumptions about the required bandwidth and power transmission necessary for the highest possible fidelity. There is no evidence at all that these assumptions are valid for the best listening experience and most significantly, the blind pursuit of some of these specifications can seriously damage amplifier performance and the sound that can then be achieved in the home.

The fact that skin effect causes cable resistance to increase gradually at higher audio frequencies is thought to be a problem by some audio engineers. However, another interpretation can throw a completely different light on the problems, so that certain skin effect and

resistance characteristics become advantages rather than problems!

Even before the first DNM solid-core cables appeared in 1984, we were convinced that most sonic differences attributed to cables originated in the high-frequency interface between the amplifiers, cables and loads.

Engineers have been reluctant to admit to serious problems at very high frequencies. After all, such effects could never be heard directly (the frequencies involved extend into the Radio region between 50kHz and 10MHz), so it requires a twist of the imagination to see how such problems at RF could have any audible consequences.

Amplifiers are generally viewed as straightforward devices with every aspect of their performance under the control of the designer. In an ideal world this would be the case and indeed, in the future such design control may become available. Right now though, it's not like that at all. All real-world amplifiers are designed to handle audio frequencies, but they self-correct and therefore really operate at very high frequencies. Many high-frequency self-correcting (feedback) circuits operating together will inevitably produce lower-frequency audible effects through intermodulation. Any change (however slight) made to such a system will produce an audible change.

The real problem is that high-frequency control in audio amplifiers is not precise enough, and there are too

many external factors which can interfere with the internal operation of this delicately-balanced system. Cables connected to the amplifier input, output, ground and power supply all form part of a complex interaction. A change to the impedance of any one port in such a system will alter the way it works, so every time a cable is changed the amplifier sound will alter.

The problem is therefore complex, apparently hopelessly so. However, even without having to completely redesign the amplifier to tackle these difficulties at **source**, it is possible to arrange the cable parameters to isolate the amplifier from the outside world at frequencies that approach its correction frequency.

The typical correction frequency is in the MHz region, so a combination of high inductance, low capacitance and moderate resistance can help to improve the amplifier's overall performance.

When considering these factors it is vital to remember the intended application. For domestic audio the power levels are rarely high and this can be exploited to increase the system resolution, which has the interesting effect of enhancing perceived system power. At interconnect level the power is even lower, so cable parameters should ideally be scaled down to further improve resolution.

JM Which parameters (capacitance, resistance, inductance) do you think it's

most important to optimise?

DNM The three main cable parameters can be optimised for an audio feedback amplifier as follows:-

Capacitance presents a short circuit to the amplifier output at feedback correction frequencies and so should be minimised. The only reason for increasing capacitance might be to attempt to control cable impedance with a view to stopping RF reflections, but if it worsens amplifier performance it would be futile. Reducing the cable capacitance will generally increase its inductance.

Higher inductance will prevent the highest frequencies being transmitted at full level to the load, so inductance cannot be increased indefinitely. In reality, the limit is much higher than any conventional cables would reach over domestic distances. However, the amplifier really likes to see a load that increases with frequency, and this is dominant among the factors which increase sound quality,

Pure resistance causes loss of power transmission in a non-frequency-selective way. The only factor affecting frequency response is the speaker impedance curve, which will cause the cable's resistive loss to change with frequency.

As with inductance, amplifiers are content to drive resistive loads - from the amplifier's point of view, cable resistance is no bad thing. Any requirement for ultra-low cable resistance to allow the amplifier to damp unwanted loudspeaker cone movement amounts to bad loudspeaker design and cannot be condoned under any circumstances. Such a system would require a dedicated set of amplifier, cables and loudspeakers and would be difficult to optimise.

JM Do you think non-metallic conductors, such as the carbon fibres van den Hul use, have any advantages over more traditional materials?

DNM The carbon-based designs which I have tested to date have not shown specific advantages over well-designed metal cables, and as the material is inherently more resistive, there do not appear to be any real advantages worthy of future development.

JM Some of our readers have reported good results using co-axial cable between amp and loudspeakers. Do you think this

is a direction manufacturers might head in?

DNM Co-axial cables could be used to advantage with an amplifier purpose-designed to drive a medium-to-high capacitance, low-inductance load in an impedance-matched, RF-non-reflective situation. They would not make a good general-purpose solution though.

JM What do you see as the drawbacks of conventional thick, multi-strand cables when compared to the solid-core topology you prefer?

DNM Ultra-low-resistance multi-stranded cables are usually capacitive, which creates a low-resistance path into a short circuit at high frequencies, thus ensuring that the amplifier loses control of its own feedback circuit. Long before instability sets in, amplifier sound quality suffers badly.

The most important aspect of large-section multi-stranding is magnetic rather than diodic effects. It is impossible for any large-section cable to handle rapidly changing AC signal without generating eddy currents. This, more than any other effect, damages the delicate audio signal.

The modern preoccupation with cable resistance has resulted in some extraordinary design decisions in the world of audio cables. Cable diameters routinely reach 10mm-15mm and resistance is many times lower than necessary.

Ironically, these large-section cables are often terminated with relatively high-resistance 'pigtailed' and spade terminals, which offer poor connection quality in long-term use. The audio signal also runs through much smaller diameter conductors of various kinds at both ends of the heavy cable.

The amplifier-to-cable interface is usually thin cable or PCB track with perhaps 1/1000 of the area of the main cable. At the 'speaker end a poor quality link through a connector panel is perhaps followed by thinner cable inside the box. The crossover itself normally consists of relatively thin wire inductors followed by even thinner wire in the drivers' voice coils.

These 'weaknesses' left in the system are probably the only thing preventing a complete collapse in system performance. An amplifier connected directly to cable with 150sq mm cross section might well become completely unstable as the

circulating eddy currents (formed by transient signals in the cable) create transient capacitance of enormous magnitude in a completely non-signal-related way. A brief explanation on why this can happen is as follows.

In audio there is a tendency to ignore important effects which are well known and understood in other areas of engineering. One example of this comes under the general heading of 'magnetic effects'. A basic understanding of these in audio equipment results in design disciplines new to audio which affect all parts of the system, including cables.

The magnetic field generated around an audio cable is as complex as the current in the cable. When examining magnetic effects in audio, the rate of change of the signal is arguably the most important consideration, and by definition, rates of change are high and complex in music. The faster the rate of current change, the stronger the induced magnetic effects will be.

In addition to the desired signal current, another type of current can flow in a conductor. It is called eddy current. The best way to visualise it is to think of a rapidly flowing mass of water and recall the small swirls of current that are frequently seen in the main flow.

The causes of such swirls in the two different media are very different, but the end result is similar. In the world of electrical engineering, eddy currents are understood at least to the point where they can be exploited. For example, eddy currents drive the mechanism used in your domestic electricity meter, and large trucks crossing mountain passes are slowed by eddy-current braking systems to reduce wear on their normal brakes.

In the simplest terms, a large cross section of conductor material (a fat cable) will suffer from eddy current problems when handling audio signal. In fact, it is true to say that all cables generate some eddy currents, but they rapidly worsen as the cable cross section increases.

I mentioned the design disciplines resulting from awareness of magnetic effects. Imagine the implications for amplifier design, where there are so many areas in which magnetic interference can occur - for instance, power transistors tightly bolted to heavy aluminium heat sinks, heavy metal cases close to signal processing circuits, transformer effects on metal casework, etc. But all that is another story!

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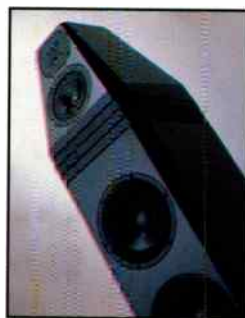
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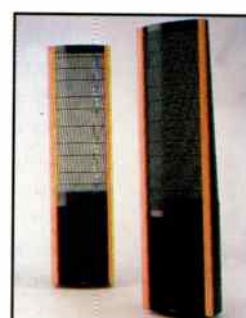
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ROCK & POP

by Jon Clarke & Stuart Lenz



THE SMASHING PUMPKINS
ADORE
CDHUT 51

The Pumpkins have always sounded like a low-budget slasher movie and dealt in schlock horror, but this time the censors have had their say. It seems nobody told Billy Corgan and his cronies that Bela Lugosi and all things Gothic lost their appeal around the time The Cure made *Love Cats* and *The Mission* landed in Leeds. But Pastiche is the new art and The Smashing Pumpkins milk it for every penny's worth.

Their last album, *Mellon Collie And The Infinite Sadness* (based almost entirely on personal encounters with drugs, death and separation) was a phenomenal success world-wide. A witches' brew of dramatic proportions, it appealed to the media and led to almost instant fame.

Adore is the crucial follow-up and is already on the way to scoring another commercial triumph, this time, however, for quite different reasons.

With caterwauling guitar replaced by penitent piano, and Corgan's usual growl calmed to a hush, Adore is the sound of a contrite band healing itself. With the last track, 'Blank Page', sounding irresistibly like John Lennon's

'Imagine', the transformation is complete. Indeed, but for one song, the semi-acoustic 'For Martha', guitars as we know them have been locked away in the store cabinet.

Adore succeeds with timeless melodies set to piano, as well as drum machines, symphonics, samples, synths and treated guitar. These computer-generated rhythms and subtle guitar figures are innovations for the band, but the strength of the resulting songs, particularly 'Daphne Descends', 'Crestfallen' and 'Pug', pays dividends.

The angst and brooding Gothic allure are still there, but this time they're in the background and don't bludgeon you. On the tender 'Once Upon A Time', for instance, Corgan sings to his recently-deceased mother over some delicate chiming. So yes, for the audience who prefer it dark, the sentiments of loss, death and alienation continue, but in a sedated form rather than a squall. The trio of ballads in the second half of Adore ('Annie-Dog', 'For Martha' and 'Blank Page') are signs also that Billy is showing himself to be a writer of some calibre.

The healing process sounds as if it's been influenced by the likes of Massive Attack and Radiohead in its stylish crafting and technological bent, soaring arrangements inspired more by the DJ and Techno culture than by the Sisters Of Mercy.

Thoroughly modern it may be, and a long way ahead of their 1993 break-through album *Siamese Twins*, but

Adore is by the same token decadent and preposterous, with an inability to pose any serious questions.

OK for some, The Smashing Pumpkins are Grunge gone Trip-Hop, Grunge gone Classical or simply Post-Grunge on Ice - nice trimmings, no substance. However you read them, the simple answer is that this uncohesive, dysfunctional band of Generation Xers may just have discovered how the Millennium will sound.



SIMPLE MINDS
NEAPOLIS
CHRYSLIS CDCHRDJS 001

Jim Kerr was once the epitome of cool, and his band Simple Minds stood at the cutting-edge of British Rock. These days, sadly his only link to current fashions is through ex-wife Patsy Kensit. It's fame by proxy for Jim in '98 and his new album does little to challenge that judgement.

In the late Eighties Simple Minds were stuck in the arena anthem rut and set to implode. While their last album, *Good News From The Next World*, managed to capture some of the spirit of their earlier *Sparkle In The Rain* period, it too got bogged down. Neapolis is equally regressive in trying boldly to resurrect the

futuristic sounds they produced in the early Eighties on albums like *Sons And Fascination* and *Sister Feelings Call*. Underpinned by heavy synth grooves and *Blade-Runner* visions, back then the music represented the starry heights of the band (unless, of course, it was the PVC trousers and the straight leather ties that did it for you).

The enduring slogan in *Blade Runner*, if you remember, was, "Do androids dream of electric sheep?" Sadly, Neapolis will only lull listeners into a dreamless sleep.

The tracks on this album earnestly display the familiar thicket of synthesisers, sequencers, drum machines, processor swirls and Jim Kerr's crooning. The hissing drums come straight from Gary Numan, the poppy rhythms from the *Human League*. The end product is inescapably early Eighties and Jim Kerr, Charlie Burchill and Derek Forbes - the nucleus of the original band - seem clearly haunted by the ghosts of the past. There is nothing here on a par with their best tracks, 'Theme For Great Cities' or 'Love Song'. Instead we have to suffer a succession of torpid tracks with grandiose names like 'Superman v. Supersoul' (!?)

The best track, 'Androgyny' (which brings up the rear) is almost an afterthought, as if the band had suddenly been reminded that they are capable of better but quickly refuted the idea.

Simple Minds once sang, "Don't You Forget About Me". These days they're tempting

ROCK & POP

fate, and it's not hard to imagine that the Frank-Bruno road to Pantoland is beckoning.



SLAYER
DIABOLUS IN MUSICA
COLUMBIA 01-491302-10

Slayer are one of those bands you can rely on for a good Thrash, one of the bands who, along with Pantera and Machinehead, trailed in the wake of stadium-bound Metallica and who have been forever vainly trying to achieve the same status.

Diabolus In Musica is this LA band's seventh studio album and their first for eight years and shows no signs of a musical softening; hell, even Metallica have mellowed a little and reinvented themselves so completely that Marianne Faithful duetted with them. Not so Slayer, who still glory in lyrics as startling as, "Initiate blood purge coalition in massacre" ('Bitter Peace') and these are just the opening lines of a song that goes into murderous overdrive.

1986's blockbusting Reign In Blood said it all. It was a statement of vile fury, driven with a nose-bleed velocity beyond any band that preceded them. But that was then; now Diabolus In Musica is merely par for the course,

remixing the ingredients of a decade ago - song titles like 'Scrum', 'Overt Enemy' and 'Perversions Of Pain' just don't inspire as they once did.

As walls of sound go, Diabolus is unremitting and could drop Godzilla at 20 paces. A solid headcrush, and we wouldn't have expected different.



DEF SQUAD
EL NIÑO
DEF JAM 558343-2

The new dream team on the block is, if you haven't heard, Def Squad, the wild bunch which is EPMD legend Erick Sermon, Redman and Keith Murray. El Niño ('the kid' for those who never got as far a GCSE Spanish) is, I suppose, the mark of an album that returns Hip-Hop to its halcyon youth.

Every MC these days is back on the Old-Skool trail, and Def Squad are right up there with the others. Their world-wide smash remake of 'Rapper's Delight', (the Sugarhill Gang song) proved the incentive to record El Niño, although the group have been collaborating in various guises since Sermon first parted company with Parrish Smith.

This LP oozes a classic and authentic ghetto vibe from

start to finish, but then again these are true Rap scholars. Erick Sermon was the man behind classics like LL Cool J's '4,3,2,1' and Method Man's 'How High' can never be diverted from the master plan.

El Niño starts with a weak skit ('Shower'), which involves a dose of slap, tickle and post-coital homicide, but very shortly fulfils the promise of these mic wreckers. From 'Check N' Me Out' with its pummelling bassline to the deranged 'The Game' and the lyrical joust of 'Rhymin' Wit' Biz', El Niño flows with a vengeance. 'Ya'll Niggas Ain't Ready' is excellent and then they throw in 'Def Squad Delite', the revamp of the Sugarhill Gang classic, to keep customers fully satisfied.

For all the threadbare 'legendary' samples Def Squad use, there still remains an unhealthy interest in uzis, unfaithful girlfriends, bitches and muthaf*****s, which is childish and tedious from such able Rappers. Apart from that though, Def Squad do no wrong.



BLONDIE
ATOMIC BLONDIE
EMI 7243 4 94996 2 1

Time was when Debbie Harry was Queen, before her place

was usurped by up-start Madonna. Chronologically speaking, the coordination of their respective rise and fall was impeccable. However, in presidential terms, Debbie Harry is, and always will be, Pop's First Blonde.

Blondie were among the first of the American new-wave bands spawned by NYC's CBGB club. Less arty than Talking Heads or Television, less Rock 'n' Roll than the Ramones, Blondie were a more successful hybrid of them all.

Surprisingly given this backdrop, Punk's down-beat themes were never fully explored by Blondie. Rather, the overarching desire of the band was to blur genres and create high-class entertainment. The early singles 'Rip Her To Shreds' and 'X-Offender' were never the X-rated S&M enticements they seemed. They bore a far closer resemblance to Robbie Williams, all self-mocking and fun.

Atomic Blondie sure enough covers all the styles, helped immeasurably by the limited lifespan of the group itself. The early days were typified as much by conventional Rock 'n' Roll as by a taste for Sixties Phil Spector and Shangri-La 'girl meets boy' narratives. 'X-Offender' and '(I'm Always Touched By Your) Presence, Dear' are as emotive as, say, the Ramones' equally derivative 'Baby I Love You'.

By 1978, Blondie's style had crossed over to more mainstream Power Pop and Disco, their Parallel Lines album perhaps the summit of their achievement. The tracks around this time are irresistible and read like an inventory of

ROCK & POP

RECORD OF THE MONTH



BEASTIE BOYS
HELLO NASTY
CAPITOL 7243 4 95723 2 4

It's rare to hear lines as good as, "I don't mean to brag, I don't mean to boast, but I'm intercontinental when I eat French toast", but that's the beauty of the Beastie Boys. Tongue-in-cheek, funky and still damn cool, the former brats of Rap keep 'em coming 10 years on.

Music is a contrary beast, and while bands like Duran Duran and Simple Minds look as dated today as Dralon drapes, the Beastie Boys have managed to stay up with the times. It's been four years since the US trio's last (and wicked) outing, *Ill Communication*, and by rights fashion should have dictated their demise. But a band who spent their formative teen years in NYC at Hip-Hop all-nighters and

hard-core Punk shows at CBGBs were never just going to roll over and die.

So it's hello again Ad-rock, Mike D and MCA, the Brooklyn miscreants who almost got banned from Britain years ago when they tried to erect a 30ft. hydraulic penis at the back of their live shows. It's hiya to the sleazeball homeboys who fought for your right to party, and it's yo to the grebos who spent their spare time skateboarding and taking drugs.

Having lived and recorded in Los Angeles and NYC over the last three years and worked on various solo projects - including a clothing business - the boys seem to have nurtured the 22 tracks on *Hello Nasty* mainly in Manhattan, their current home of choice.

Reassuringly, *Hello Nasty* finds the Beasties on song. The opener, 'Super Disco Breakin', despite plundering Gary Numan's 'Are Friends Electric', finds them back on familiar Old-Skool territory, right down to the dated Breakdance beat. That's how they mean to start, and that's how things stay, even if they do branch off into the realms of Easy Listening, Dub and

Electronica at times.

Of course, the appeal lies in the Beasties' inimitable style, and once again we are served up a delicious plate of all things weird and wacky, stuff that made the boys famous with *Licensed To Ill*: silly lyrics, infantile 'Rock the mic' routines, fits of braggadocio, boombastic drum-machine beats and odd-ball samples.

The temptation, however, to include live instrumentation (which featured in 1992's *Check Your Head* and the Byzantine word-plays evident on 1989's massively-underrated *Paul's Boutique*) have been resisted. That's not to say there's no invention - there's plenty, even though it's usually confined to the cut-and-paste variety. 'The Move' is a prime example; looped breakbeats, scratching and samples from a Spanish Pop song - the surefire wit is a guaranteed winner. Similarly, you'll find generous helpings of Electro Funk, cheesy vocoders and strings (on 'Intergalactic'), mutant Jazz (on 'Can't, Won't, Don't Stop'), distorted vocals, and even steel drums (on the brilliant 'Body Movin').

Then there are the forays

away from Rap. The loungy, Latin 'Song For The Man' and Santana-like 'Song For Junior' have an intriguing, wilfully Psychedelic character. But it's the collaborations which really shine. Lee 'Scratch' Perry's impressive free-flowing rhymes, chatting about money and Jesus among other things before checking his hosts as *The Beastly Brothers*, is superb.

Also recruited to the fold is Mixmaster Mike, the alien-obsessed DJ of the obscure *Invisibl Skratch Piklz*, who comes armed with over 300 scratches to add to the skills displayed on *Three MCs And One DJ*.

This is all good stuff, and as long as those Beastly Boys can be restrained from delivering soul-searching solo efforts, then so much the better; Ad-rock's 'Instant Death' for one is dreadful and almost lives up to its name.

Hello Nasty finds the Beasties in generous and resurgent form, despite having disappeared for four years. They might not have grown up, but in this case that is all the better. "Mom said rock it to the break of dawn," and we will respectfully oblige them.

Pop's treasures - 'Hanging On The Telephone', 'Atomic', 'Heart Of Glass' and 'Rapture' (best remembered for one of the first ever Rap sequences). Sexy and invigorating stuff, with nary an empty dancefloor around. But then again, if 'Call Me' made a gigolo out of Richard Gere, then that's good

enough for me.

It peters out badly after this point, unfortunately. 'War Child' and 'The Island Of Lost Souls' two singles from their last album, *The Hunter*, sadly meander in and out like bad hosts boring their guests stupid. Indeed, by late 1982 the party had been gracefully

but appropriately brought to an end.

To the uninitiated, this is one of the Best Of's you really will find difficult to better. Only the most contrary teenager would disagree that Blondie do indeed dump from a great height on bands like Kenickie, Sleeper or Garbage.

And as for Transvision Vamp, those interminable late-Eighties Blondie copyists. . .

Sometimes you've got to come back to what you know, and sinking into the clear, unmuddied waters of Blondie makes total sense. That's Blondie: faded but forever radiating.

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Ketan Bharadia and Jon Marks (Hi-Fi World, Jan. 1998)

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DANCE & AMBIENT

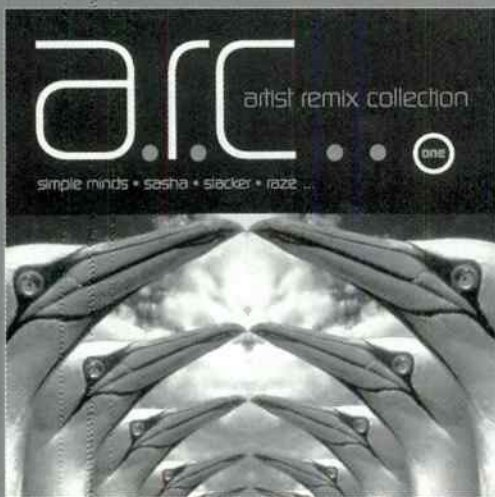
by Sara Davis

RECORD OF THE MONTH

VARIOUS
A.R.C.
PLATIPUS

Thanks to a long line of corking Techno tunes that err to the Trancy side of life, most people will be very familiar with the Platipus boys, Union Jack, Pob and The Art Of Trance being the best known. Between them they've been building and breaking their meaty bass riffs for yonks, and although the results are always high-end classy tunes you can't go wrong with, most big fans are wondering where the label is heading.

With A.R.C. it looks like we'll have to wait and see, as the majority of



this album consists of remixes like

Clanger's version of dancefloor classic 'Strata', and Pob's take on Slacker's 'Scared'. Neither exactly break the Platipus mould and Clanger's reworking in particular seems samey and less infectious than the original, even though it is more polished.

This said, there are two very good reasons to poach a copy of this album. One is Union Jack's Trance remix of Simple Minds' 'Waterfront' for kooky novelty value, and the other is Pob's reworking of an unreleased Raze number, 'Break For Love', which blends the crucial Platipus ingredients into a saucy House tune with progressive Techno beats.



THE CORRIDOR
SERIOUS EARTH
RECON RECORDS

Collaborators Chris Barter (New Ground) and Andrew Phillips (Recon/Mortal) are well-recognised for their experimental Ambient vibe, and have worked on a number of similar projects that you may have come across on the Conemelt and Spiky labels. If this is what you're into, then you can't go wrong here - Serious Earth provides gentle, laid-back washes of rising Ambient layers spiced with splatters of plink-plonk melody.

The press people say this slice of Ambient Electronica is, "perfect for post-club crash", but they're talking about a Sunday lunch-time stage of chillin' out - you know, dregs of the party, pillow and duvet time. Not only is Serious Earth so slowed down it's going backwards, but most of the tracks are six or seven-minute epics that take at least half that time to get going.

There are Trancy elements to a few of the tracks. 'Skin' opens with an Ambient 'lost in a dark cave' atmosphere but builds into a stampeding, beat-orientated pounder. 'The Quickening' (last track on the disc) takes similar haunting elements and slaps a monster mish-mash of thrashy bits on top. Where chill-outs are concerned, this final track should kick in just as everyone's falling asleep, so 10 out of 10 for entertainment value.



FESTIVAL
FESTIVAL RESURRECTION
DISKO B

When all the technology has been exploited and all the combinations of different sounds that can be layered over a choice of rhythms have been mixed and matched, what do you do? You call in Techno old-timer Heinrich Tillack and you introduce him to a musically-twisted and disturbed label like Disko B. Before you know it, you've got a monster creation which takes production back to basics for a whole new experimental

tack that does away with rhythm altogether.

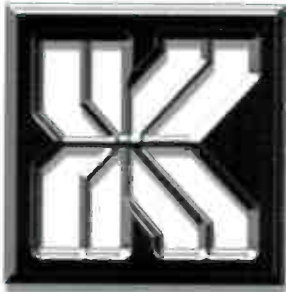
'Festival Resurrection (intro)' lays down the concept in the clearest, most minimal form - ie driving, disjointed beats that follow no pattern of logic. But don't be put off - other tracks like 'That Was Then But This Is Now' show how, with a bit of tempo and a funky sample, the idea can work. As the title suggests, this could be the shape of things to come. 'Days And Nights' is another case in point; it takes that 'needle jumping' effect and makes it tuneful.

It's going to be interesting to see what the audience reaction on the dancefloor to this one will be. Most will probably pull faces at each other and exchange those "DJ's losing it" looks, whilst the rare breed of dancers who got da real moves will just lap up the challenge●

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Home Entertainment - Richard Black - March 1996 issue



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JAZZ

by Ian Nicolson



Antonio Forcione & Sabina Sciubba

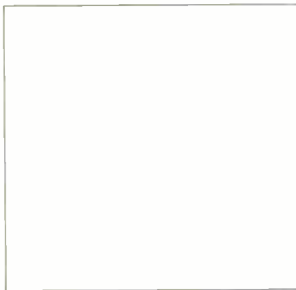
ANTONIO FORCIONE/SABINA SCIUBBA
MEET ME IN LONDON
NAIM NAIMCD021

The latest from the acoustic-guitar maestro is already a firm favourite on Jazz FM, where his 1996 *Dedicato* set spent several months on the station's charts. This time Forcione has teamed up with German-born 20-something vocalist Sciubba. Between them, they sprinkle a shimmer of fairy dust over an eclectic selection, ranging from Al Jarreau's stirring 'Could You Believe' to Paul Desmond's 'Take Five', a brave and successful version of Stevie Wonder's 'Visions' and several Latin-flavoured originals.

Born in Italy in 1960, since signing to Naim Audio's in-house label Forcione has made it his mission to capture on disc the sheer vitality of his live performances. The warmth and purity of the recording (engineered by Peter Williams) and the dynamic range preserved in the mix do his sparkling tone full justice, without overshadowing the up-and-coming Sciubba, who depped at Ronnie's in June

and won a bunch of new friends.

Sciubba's Pop-influenced and sultry vocal colours have made a world of difference to Forcione's always-attractive playing. This might just be the start of something big.



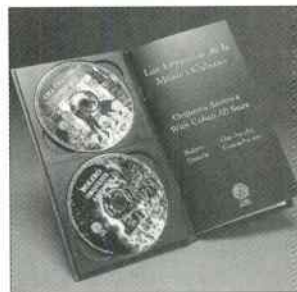
ACOUSTIC ALCHEMY
POSITIVE THINKING
GRP 99072

These early 1998 recordings proved to be the very last from much-missed British composer Nick Webb and his fellow-Alchemists, guitarists Greg Carmichael and John Parsons. Without the Penguin Cafe Orchestra's elliptical Classical Jazz, and Acoustic Alchemy's beguiling synthesis of Folk, Jazz and Classical (underpinning melodies tough enough to dodge being tagged 'chocolate-box'), it's been a bad couple of years for fans of new musical hybrids.

Webb lost his struggle against pancreatic cancer in February this year, but in the 11 years and 10 albums since he formed the Alchemy with Carmichael, the band have sold close to a million records around the world. If you

haven't heard them strum their stuff before then, sadly, this is your last chance.

Positive Thinking is a delicate, illuminating and quietly uplifting tribute which deserves wider exposure. It's also nice to think that a composer whose muse worked in such a lyrical, gentle way has bequeathed us a last, rather lovely memorial.



ORQUESTRA AMERICA
THE LEGENDS OF CUBAN MUSIC
TUMI MUSIC TMG BOX I

You get box sets with everything these days, and most of them just seem to have been designed to please dusty-eared archivists with rampant completist's syndrome. However, this superb collection is designed to capture - before they fade away forever - the creators of a style that swept the world around the Second World War. Putting this line-up together is a little like making a couple of calls and being able to record Glenn Miller's original band today.

Latin music specialists Tumi have assembled the very

best of 'roots' Cuban musicians (backed by the Forties-formed Orquestra) to revive ace Cuban rhythms the bolero, cha-cha-cha, danzon and guaracha. Major stars like Celina Gonzalez, Chucho Valdez and Felix Reina join the current generation of Orquestra America players - no Cuban chickens themselves - to recreate the sound of the hottest dancefloors ever, the Forties Havana ballrooms. If you enjoyed World Circuit's recent releases centred on the equally legendary octogenarian pianist Ruben Gonzalez, you'll enjoy these 49 tracks as well.

But don't expect slick, Big-Band sophistication. Cuban music has always revolved around natural feel and call-and-response playing from musicians who watch the crowd to spot what works best. Tumi's mixture of cost-effective recording and the band's decades of familiarity with the base rhythms lets a single flute sound like a wind section, and a couple of fiddles outline string lines with confidence.

Divided by rhythms, individual discs act as primers for a style, each with its history and character comprehensively annotated in the accompanying 20-page booklet. And unlike so much modern Salsoul-derived Latin music, this is music for lovers as well as dancers - sultry, romantic and seductive.

JAZZ

by Simon Hopkins

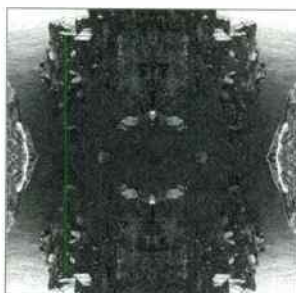


PLURAMON
RENDER BANDITS
MILLE PLATEAUX MP51

Pluramon is the latest project given birth by eccentric German Ambient composer and soundscaper Marcus Schmickler, who's created a lush tapestry of highly filmic music from fragments of sampled sound and the contributions of the musicians who have joined him on this particular journey: tape-op Frank Demerit, Jochen Rueckert (who is helpfully credited on baguettes), Anouk Azar on glockenspiel, Steve Bohn on, er, pedals, and drummer Jaki Liebezeit.

Now Liebezeit is, of course, quite rightly a legend. His contribution to music since his days with Can has been immense, his combination of organic Swing and metronomic time-keeping giving essential pointers to our own times of machine-made rhythms. He certainly elevates Render Bandits from finely-crafted Ambience to some of the most superb post-Can, groove-based collage-music I've heard in a long, long time. Compare Talk Talk, ORang,

The Necks and, of course, Can. Easily one of the albums of the year.



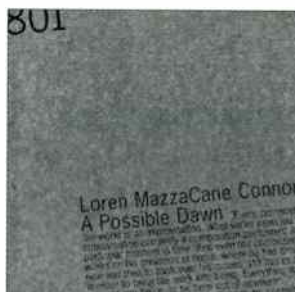
DEREK AND THE RUINS
TOHJINBO
PARATACTILE PLEI 101-2

Derek And The Ruins, just for the record, are British improvising guitarist Derek Bailey and Japanese neo-Prog duo Ruins. As far as this writer knows, they've recorded together once before as D&TR, on the rather wonderful Saisoro. This album was recorded last year in London, while they were here to play a gig at the Purcell Rooms.

That gig was an extraordinary night. Ruins - drummer and singer Yoshida Tatsuya and (at the time, though the line-up has changed since, apparently) bassist Sasaki Hisashi - played a set on their own, the highlight of which was a hilarious, inspired three-minute Prog-Rock medley.

The set they performed with Bailey, however, went for the jugular, with Bailey on ferocious (and loud!) form; one sad individual walked out after two songs, yelling abuse at the

stage! So Tohjinbo is as ballsy as you'd expect. On their own, Ruins already make their own world, a world fashioned by virtuosically-inclined Japanese King Crimson and Magma fans, a world (like Magma's) with its own language of heart-stopping weirdo rhythms and white-noise psych-outs. When Bailey joins them, they defer to the older man, dropping their more rhythmic, riffing style for something altogether more fractured, more elastic: energy music through and through.



LOREN MAZZACANE
CONNORS
A POSSIBLE DAWN
HATNOIR 801

Loren Mazzacane Connors is, without doubt, one of the most consistently interesting guitarists on the planet; he is also one of the most perplexing. A tiny resume of his life and career does nothing to prepare one for his music.

Born in 1949 into a musical family, as a child he played violin, trombone and bass before settling on the guitar. He performed on the underground scene in the Sixties as Guitar Roberts. He

has been effectively 'rediscovered' in the Nineties as part of the burgeoning Post-Rock scene, his music bearing superficial similarities to the lo-fi experimentalism and psychedelia of, among others, Bardo Pond, the Dead C, Roy Montgomery, Windy and Carl, Gate and so on. Yet his artistic intention has remained the same throughout this period: to unite the pained and painful intimacy of rural Blues with the open-endedness of improvisation and the energy of psychedelic Rock.

Previous recordings have seen him both solo and in the company of such out-Rock luminaries as Keiji Haino. The solo work's special hallmarks have been intimacy, introspection and reserve, with single Blues lines decontextualized and often slowed down to the point of near-stasis.

The music on A Possible Dawn is, again, minimal, but rather different in tone, with long, sustained, distorted and echoing guitar drones replacing the more front-room sound of previous records. The mood is exemplified by the marathon 33minute-plus group guitar improvisation 'MMC/M/M Trio' with Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore and one-time Fred Frith collaborator Jean-Marc Montero. This piece alone is worth the price of the CD and is as out-there a piece of Psych-Impro as any you'll hear this year ●

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CLASSICAL

by Peter Herring

France take on Brazil once more, with the winning score in this encounter coming from Darius Milhaud, and there's a virtuoso performance on the Naim label that's nothing short of diabolical.



DARIUS MILHAUD
Music for piano duet: Scaramouche, Op165b/Kentuckiana, Op287, et al
Stephen Coombs, Artur Pizarro, pianos
 HYPERION CDA67014
 (DDD/62.20)

Darius Milhaud defies easy categorization. Born in 1892 in Aix-en-Provence, his musical education at the Paris Conservatoire followed strictly conventional lines, Paul Dukas and Charles-Marie Widor being among his tutors. He went on to become a member, along with the likes of Poulenc and Honegger, of the group of composers known as Les Six. They adopted as their spiritual leader the arch-eccentric Eric Satie, and some of Satie's sense of the absurd appears to have rubbed off on Milhaud. His musical sensibilities, however, were predominantly conditioned by a mixture of Latin and Mediterranean cultures, and Milhaud was not alone among French musicians in developing a profound aversion to all things German, principally Wagner.

If there was a moment when Milhaud saw his musical light, so to speak, then it came in 1917 in Rio de Janeiro, where he was working at the French embassy. The impact of Brazilian, and of South American music in general, was immediate and shaped the remainder of what was to prove a long and fertile creative life.

One early product of exposure to Brazilian popular music was *Le Boeuf Sur Le Toit* (The Ox On The Roof), in which Milhaud transcribed tangos, sambas and other dance rhythms, linking them with an irrepressibly cheerful theme of his own, rondo-fashion. The composer described the piece as a cinema fantasie (he believed it would make an ideal accompaniment to a Chaplin film) but the nearest it came to visual realisation was through a choreographic scenario devised by Jean Cocteau, which was set in an American bar during the Prohibition period.

Le Boeuf Sur Le Toit exists in several versions, including that for piano duet, played here with panache and evident good humour by Stephen Coombs and the Portuguese pianist Artur Pizarro.

Following his sojourn in Brazil, Milhaud visited the United States and there enjoyed another revelation - Jazz as played in the clubs of Harlem in New York. Again, he readily absorbed the idiom, as he did the Creole, Latin-

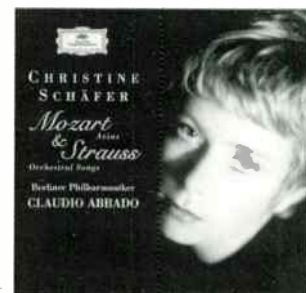
American and negro traditions of Louisiana which he encountered while visiting New Orleans.

This heady and eclectic musical brew was deftly put to use in the delightful *Carnaval à la Nouvelle-Orléans*, while Milhaud found further inspiration elsewhere among the southern states. The wickedly tongue-in-cheek *Kentuckiana* is described as a "divertissement on 20 Kentucky airs for two pianos" but sounds for all the world like a pair of decidedly inebriated bar-room barnstormers somewhat out of sync as they rattle off a sequence of Bluegrass favourites! This, one suspects, is exactly the effect Milhaud was seeking, and Messrs Coombs and Pizarro convey it to giddy perfection. They are equally engaging in the other pieces here, including the suite of dances *La Libertadora*, which was an offshoot of Milhaud's opera *Bolivar*, itself based on the life of the eponymous South American revolutionary leader.

By 20th-century standards, Milhaud was an extraordinarily prolific composer (443 works with opus numbers alone), and his keen musical intelligence and broad appreciation enabled him to work with confidence and facility in just about any genre he chose. He wrote with great speed, and the unevenness of his inspiration is undeniable: he did not inherit the rigorous self-criticism of his tutor, Paul

Dukas.

Alongside the music of other cultures, Milhaud was also attracted by the technical possibilities of music, most significantly the device of bi or poly-tonality, where two or more different keys are used simultaneously. It has the potential to be purely cacophonous, but it is a measure of the playing here that the effect merely contributes to the entertainment. Milhaud never intended this music to be taken too seriously, and that is how it comes across in the hands of Stephen Coombs and Artur Pizarro. They have been well recorded, too, (interestingly playing Bosendorfer pianos) in the mellow acoustic of London's Henry Wood Hall.



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CLASSICAL

soprano; Maria João Pires, piano; Kay Johannsen, organ; Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra; conductor, Claudio Abbado
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON
457 582-2 (DDD/65.10)

Christine Schäfer's debut recording for Deutsche Grammophon confirms this young German soprano as one of the outstanding voices of her generation. As she has proved in concert, most notably in the title role in Alban Berg's *Lulu*, her tone is particularly suited to 20th-century repertoire, but also has what it takes to succeed in Baroque and Classical. A combination of Mozart arias and of orchestral songs by Richard Strauss provides the perfect showcase for her considerable talents.

Though a century and more separates the working lives of Mozart and Strauss, much unites them. One of the strongest of those ties was an ability to write supremely well for the soprano voice, in Strauss's case specifically that of Pauline de Ahna, who was to become his wife. Mozart, too, was enchanted by a highly-gifted singer, Aloysia Weber and, although his amorous approaches were not reciprocated, he still produced a string of wonderful arias for her to perform.

The considerable technical demands of these pieces suggest that Aloysia Weber must have had a formidable vocal technique and range, and 200 years on, that also proves true of Christine Schäfer, who scales the stratospheric heights of *Vorrei Spiegarmi*, *Oh Dio* and *Mia*

Speranza Adorata with style and assurance. She is equally poised in the ravishing motet *Exsultate, Jubilate*, which Mozart wrote for the celebrated Italian male soprano Venanzio Rauzzini.

In the five orchestral songs by Richard Strauss, Christine Schäfer finds a pleasing balance between creaminess and clarity. Each one is warmly characterised without the voice becoming over-opulent, and even the most familiar of the group, *Morgen!*, emerges with unexpected freshness. The genuine emotion evident in these interpretations prompts the hope that Christine Schäfer will go on to record the greatest of all Strauss cycles, the valedictory *Four Last Songs*, ideally also with Claudio Abbado who, with his Berlin orchestra, proves such a sympathetic and stylish accompanist here. The recording, made in DG's tried and trusted acoustic of Berlin's *Jesus Christus Kirche*, has a pleasing airiness and achieves an admirable balance and focus.



GIUSEPPE TARTINI
Sonata in G minor
(The Devil's Trill)

JEAN-MARIE LECLAIR
Sonata in C minor (Le Tombeau)/Sonata in D major

ANTONIO VIVALDI
(arr. Ottorino Respighi) Sonata in D major, Op2 No 11

CHRISTOPH GLUCK
(TRANSCRIBED FRITZ KREISLER)
Melodie from Orfeo Ed Euridice
Yuval Yaron, violin;
Jeremy Denk, piano
NAIM CD018 (DDD/48.22)

Marrying fabulous technique to refined musical sensibilities, the Israel-born violinist Yuval Yaron performs an imaginative selection of mainly Baroque pieces in this recital for the Naim label. The most famous work, and the one from which the recording takes its title, is Giuseppe Tartini's *Sonata in G minor*, the so-called *Devil's Trill* sonata.

The story goes that Tartini dreamt of the Devil playing the piece at the foot of his bed, the experience becoming especially nightmarish as Old Nick fiddled his diabolical way through the eerie trill which distinguishes the sonata's last movement. The work was only published after Tartini's death, earning its notoriety in the hands of another virtuoso, Nicolo Paganini, who spiced up his performances of the sonata by wearing a swirling black cloak.

Its satanic associations aside, the sonata is a scintillating example of the work of one of the leading virtuosos from the 'golden age' of Italian string music. Italy was a magnet for musicians from all over Europe during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries. The Frenchman, Jean-Marie

Leclair, arrived there as a dancer and ballet master and returned to Paris as a celebrated violinist, becoming an important figure in the development of sonata form and making a central contribution to the literature and technique of the violin.

Yuval Yaron plays two of Leclair's finest pieces, the sonata in D major which became a favourite of Joachim, the dedicatee of Brahms's *Violin Concerto*, and one in C minor, the sixth of Leclair's *Troisième Livre de Sonates* of 1733.

The work owes its nickname of *Le Tombeau* (The Tomb) to its minor-key gravity and to its drum-like rumbles in the left-hand accompaniment, sounding for all the world like a passing cortege. The sonata ends on a brighter note with a jig-like *allegro*, which Yaron dashes off with terrific *élan*.

Yaron concludes with two transcriptions, one by Ottorino Respighi of a lively sonata from Vivaldi's *Opus 2* set, and an arrangement by Fritz Kreisler of a lovely melody from Gluck's *Orfeo Ed Euridice*. He plays the latter quite beautifully, but without a hint of *schmaltz*, and this is characteristic of the recital: a strong musical personality at work, one always at the service of the music.

Both Yaron, and his excellent accompanist Jeremy Denk, have been cleanly and crisply recorded in the Auer Hall of Indiana University in Bloomington (where Yaron is professor of violin). Lovers of violin pyrotechnics will enjoy every minute of this recital. It's a pity, though, that there are under 50 of those minutes.

CLASSICAL

RECORD OF THE MONTH



Concerto for Violin and Orchestra (L'arbre des Songes)/Timbres, Espace, Mouvement (La Nuit Etoilée)/Mystère de L'instant Isabelle van Keulen, violin; Matthias Würsch, cymbalum; Bamberg Symphony Orchestra; conductor, Marc Soustrot
KOCH SCHWANN 3-6491-2 (DDD/62.31)

The music of Henri Dutilleux, who was born in Angers in 1916, shares many characteristics with the work of his fellow Frenchman Maurice Ravel. Though working in a quite different musical language, Dutilleux is the clear inheritor of those qualities of refinement, precision and clarity of utterance which underpin Ravel's entire output. Equally importantly, he possesses the same sure feel for orchestral colour. While the three works making up this collection reflect that innate craftsmanship, they also reveal a lyrical, even romantic side to Dutilleux's strikingly individual yet undeniably accessible idiom.

After he had won France's top prize for

composition, the Prix de Reine, in 1938, the outbreak of war promptly put Dutilleux's further progress on hold. Discharged from the army in 1944, first and foremost he had to earn a living. With career opportunities limited in post-war France, he undertook just about anything that was going, from teaching harmony to arranging music for nightclubs. After a spell as chorus master with the Paris Opera, Dutilleux took up a position with Radio France, and this enticed a long association with ORTF, the Orchestra of French Radio and Television.

Dutilleux first came to prominence as a composer with his First Symphony of 1951, a piece unashamedly influenced by both Ravel and his contemporary, Albert Roussel, but nonetheless displaying evidence of an evolving, independent, intuitive style. Dutilleux was forced to combine teaching and composing until 1971, after which time he was finally free to devote his time entirely to the latter. All three works here are from after that date.

It was Dutilleux's erstwhile employer, Radio France, who in the mid-Eighties commissioned a violin concerto from him, with the American virtuoso Isaac Stern as the dedicatee. The result, however, while demanding, much of the soloist was no bravura showpiece. Instead, in a carefully considered structure, Dutilleux made violin and orchestra interdependent, the solo

instrument by turns dazzling and ragurous but never entirely freed from its formal confines. The shape of the concerto led the composer to subtitle it *L'arbre des Songes* (The Tree of Dreams); it unfolds, he explained, "rather like a tree with branches endlessly dividing up and constantly being renewed".

The concerto is a captivating piece, its taut, economical structure the "branches" of the tree blossoming with warmly expressive detail, a host of instruments supplying discreet but delightful touches of colour. The soloist, Isabelle van Keulen, made her reputation as a chamber musician, yet proves an eloquent, sensitive interpreter, every ounce a match for the venerable Isaac Stern who made the first recording of the work for CBS in 1987. She receives superb accompaniment from the Bamberg orchestra, directed with great authority by Marc Soustrot.

Timbres, Espace, Mouvement, a commission from the National Symphony Orchestra of Washington first performed by them under the baton of Mstislav Rostropovich in 1978, began life as a two-movement work inspired by - but in no sense depicting - Van Gogh's *La Nuit Etoilée* (Starry Night). Since its original conception, however, Dutilleux has added a third section, an "interlude", to effect a seamless link between the two main parts, and it is this augmented version which has been recorded here.

In this work, space is as vital as structure, the composer specifying the precise spatial relationships between the instrumental blocks, and with the resulting interplay of contrasting instrumental colours admirably realised in the recording.

The most recent composition, *Mystère de L'instant* from 1989, finds Dutilleux becoming, if anything, more succinct and direct in expressing his seemingly limitless wealth of ideas. Here, those ideas are distilled into a sequence of 10 minutes, none longer than two and a half minutes (the longest section, incidentally, consists of a series of "Mystèrephases" on the surname of the work's dedicatee, the Swiss conductor and philanthropist Paul Sacher).

Scored for strings and percussion, with several startling interjections from the cymbalum, *Mystère de L'instant* seems to strive to encapsulate that elusive "moment of inspiration" only for each new idea to fade enigmatically or disappear altogether. It perhaps sums up the essence of Dutilleux's music; the constant evolution, the imaginative processes harnessed to a finely-chiselled technique, and that indefinable, unpredictable magic required to fuse those elements. There is a sense of that magic at work in this immaculately produced recording, as good an introduction to the world of Henri Dutilleux as you're likely to come across.



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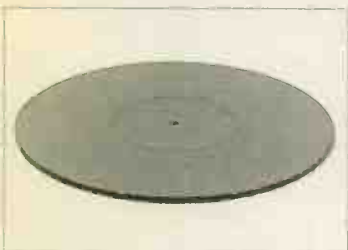
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TEAC P-500/D-500 transport & dacl	200	550	MUSICAL FIDELITY A1000 two box inte-		950
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AUDIONOTE CD2	1000	600	MUSICAL FIDELITY SYNTHESIS integrated	150	
MISSION DAC7	300	100	QUAD 34 pre amp. GREY		200
ROKSAN DPI TRANSPORT	500	200	QUAD 44/405 MK1 old colour		320
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BEARD P100 MKIII line level integrated					
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BEARD P500A valve pre with phono	450				
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Rohr RC 470 Bk Pre Amp New	179	129
Rohr RC2 995 Bk Cassette CD Player	399	299
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1 Roksan D20 CD Player	1999	1699
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STOP PRESS

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Equivalent New Price	Sale Price
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Papworth Audio M100 valve monobloc power amps (mint/as new) s/h	3800.00 2000.00
Chameleon Ruby power amp. (2 x 700 watts) (vgc) s/h	1200.00 449.95
Quad 33/303 pre/power (gc) s/h	400.00 229.95
Quad 304 power amp (mint/as new) s/h	388.00 229.95
Quad 34 pre amp (grey) (vgc) s/h	388.00 199.95
Quad 34 pre amp (brown) (vgc) s/h	897.00 469.95
Quad 66 pre amp/remote commander (vgc) s/h	690.00 349.95
Quad 606i power amp (2 in stock) (gc) s/h	149.95 199.95
Quad 405i power amp (int. (mint/as new) s/h	435.00 269.95
Minshaw Overture int. (mint/as new) s/h	149.95 149.95
Mission Cyrus I (original) int. (gc) s/h	230.00 149.95
NAD 304 int. (gc) s/h	- 89.95
NAD 7030i int. (gc) s/h	- 49.95
NAD 7030 (big ugly tuner/amp) (fc)	500.00 349.95
Technics SUV 900D remote pre/power (mint/as new) s/h	500.00 349.95
Technics SUV 450 2 x 60watts int. (vgc) s/h	- 119.95
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Denon PMA 250 III (vgc) s/h	180.00 109.95
Creek CAS 4040 int. (gc) s/h	- 89.95
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Rotel RX 850 AL tuner amp (gc) s/h	350.00 249.95
Rotel RC 960B/RB 960 BX pre/power 2 x 60w (mint) s/h	250.00 169.95
Letek int. (huge JD's monster with HH/MC phono) (gc) s/h loads	- 199.95
Marm MAC 62 pre amp (vgc) s/h	- 199.95
Rega Elcirt 2 x 70watts int. (mint/as new) s/h	730.00 529.95
Meridian 101 pre amp (gc) s/h	- 79.95
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Kenwood DP 3080R remote int. (vgc)	250.00 169.95
Luxman LV 104II hybrid valve/solid state int. (vgc)	500.00 349.95
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Lin LP12 (Afro)/Yahalla/Ekos 1 arm/ K18II cartridge (mint) s/h	1250.00
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Dual CS 505II (rare rosewood model) c/w VMS 20EII (mint) s/h	220.00 89.95
Dual CS 505 N (Audiophile) c/w cartridge (vgc) s/h	230.00 99.95
Dual CS 430 c/w cartridge (gc) s/h	150.00 139.95
Thorens TD 166 II cart. (vgc) s/h	- 139.95
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Rega II / RB 250 / Bias (vgc) s/h	150.00 149.95
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Pioneer PL L1000 (huge parallel tracker) (gc) s/h	- 159.95

Equivalent New Price

A selection of our ever changing offers for sale (all fully guaranteed)

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AVJ S2000 pp mm/mc phono stage (vgc) s/h	89.95
Audio Technica mc step up transformer (vgc) s/h	25.00
Zeta Super-arm / Cardas wired (vgc) s/h loads	395.00
Rega RB 300 arm (mint/boxed) stainless steel counterweight s/h	174.00
Rega RB 250/300 alloy arm board with V.I.A. adjustment s/h	40.00
Linx K 18 mm cart. (boxed) (vgc) s/h	200.00 79.95
Notes Analogue Tracer II mm cartridge (very light use) (mint) s/h	310.00 169.95
Russ Andrews Torbyte tri-stand (for LP12 etc) (vgc) s/h	200.00 89.95
Hi-Fi News walnut II (walnut/mo for turnables) (vgc)	65.00 49.95

Equivalent New Price

Equivalent New Price	Sale Price
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Technics RS-B305 B/C etc (vgc) s/h	- 99.95
Musical Fidelity Electra E 500 digital tuner (mint) s/h	300.00 179.95
Leak Troughline II FM tuner (no decoder but mint cosmetics) s/h	- 60.00
Sony ST SR 3ES RDS digital tuner	250.00 169.95
Sony ST S 770 ES digital FM/AM tuner (mint/as new) s/h	- 199.95
Technics ST GT 550L RDS digital tuner (mint/as new) s/h	180.00 129.95
Technics ST 450L 3 band digital tuner (vgc) s/h	- 59.95
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Pioneer PD-106 (mint) s/h	130.00+ 99.95
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Technics SL PS50 remote (vgc) s/h	- 129.95
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Kenwood DP 3060 remote (gc) s/h	200.00 119.95
Mission PCMH remote (mint) s/h	500.00 199.95
Mission DAC-5 DAC (mint) s/h	300.00 89.95
Microomega CD3 I transport (mint) s/h	1350.00 695.00
Musical Fidelity X Art DAC (new)	- 130.00
Musical Fidelity X 100 (missing linc) line buffer (new)	- 120.00
Musical Fidelity X 100 (mint/as new) s/h	120.00 89.95
Musical Fidelity X PSU (ex demo) (mint)	130.00 109.95

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Mordani-Short Decoder One (Dolby Pro-Logic processor) (mint) s/h	400.00 149.95
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DL 110	£70 £55 EX	JVC OT 55, DT 60 £9
DL 304	£190 £160 EX	National EPS 24 CS, P 30 D, P 33 D £9
Goldring		Ortofon FF 15 E II, VMS 20 E II, OM 20 £13.50
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1022 GX	£94 £62	Pioneer PN 210, PN 220, PN 240 £9
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http://www.mantra-audio.co.uk		SR-325 £270
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JD29	Luiz Bonfá "Non Stop Brazil"
JD28	Ana Carama "Rio After Dark"
JD89	Cephas & Wiggins "Bluesman"
JD139	David Chesky "The Fantasies For Solo Piano"
JD145	Paquito D'Riviera "Portraits Of Cuba"
JD164	Dave's True Story "Sex Without Bodies"
JD1	Johnny Frigo & BJ Pizzarelli "Live From Studio A NYC"
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JD103	Tom Harrell "Upswing"
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GAMMA ACOUSTICS

"This amplifier possessed a seductive vitality, a marvellous sense of communication with the heart of the music. Vocals were most communicative, subtle dynamic contrasts were portrayed very well, and the music bounced along with a fine sense of rhythm. This amplifier was seriously transparent, showing great clarity, fine stereo depth and very fine presentation of space and ambience in the sound stage."

"It sounded quick, direct, uncomplicated, with an ability to resolve subtle textures in instrumental scoring. Taken overall, the sound quality score (on my usual subjective listening test scale) was an impressive 23 points.

Martin Colloms

HI FI NEWS / RR March 97

The Rhythm presentation as a whole could be described as clean and powerful, in an appealing natural way..."Whether it was the string quartets of Ravel or Debussy, Alanis Morissette or Joni Mitchell being fed into the Rhythm, what emerged always impressed with its natural, easy power and control. For those in search of an alternative to the 300B, one which couples the organic feel of valve amplification with a rather un-valve-like ear-opening bass extension and control, the rhythm is definitely worth audition."

Jon Marks

HiFi World July 1996

WORLD VERDICT Partnered with sensible speakers of good bass depth, the Rhythm is capable of impressive performance.

WHAT HI*FI? says

sound	★★★★★
facilities	★★★★★
build	★★★★★
verdict	★★★★★

Dan Houston

WHAT HI*FI May 1997

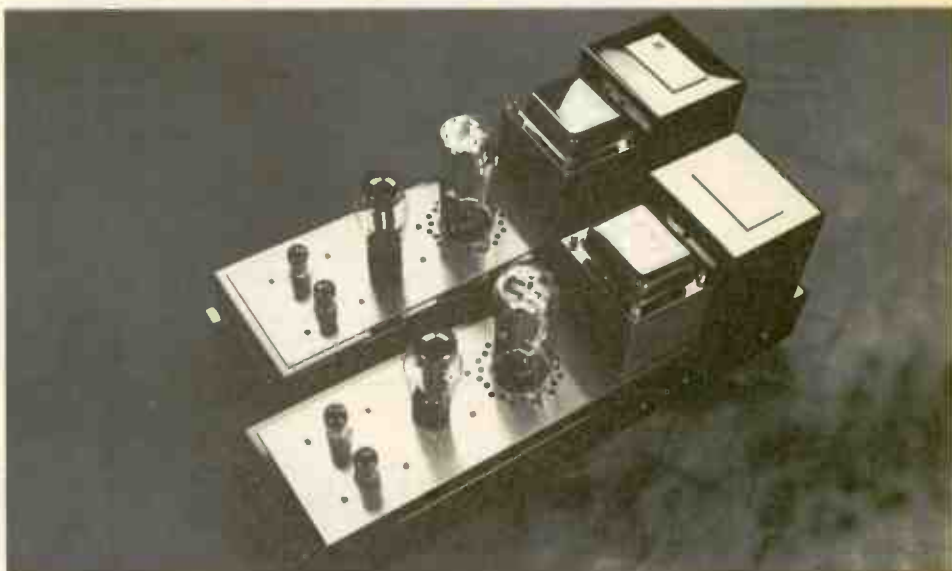
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AEON MK1 MONOBLOCKS 20 Watt S.E. Si construction marked - to clear BARGAIN!	£4999	£1999
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PROGRESSIVE AUDIO



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Denon 6600 - A Mono Blocks (S/H)		Sale	£595
Conrad Johnson PV-10A - Phono with SE upgrade		Sale	£1250
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Chord 1200B Power Amp (S/H)		Sale	£1950
Mirage M3/SI Speakers (S/H)		Sale	£1950
Pink Triangle Literal CD Player (EX/DEM)		Sale	£1795
Audionote OTO SE line only (S/H)		Sale	£800
Audio Alchemy DAC 1.2	(£595)	Sale	£375
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Parasound P/LD 2000 Preamp	(£1495)	Sale	£1095
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Alon 1 Loudspeakers (oak)	(£1616)	Sale	£1200
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Beyer 531 Headphones	(£120)	Sale	£85
Stax SR-84 Electret Headphones	(£259)	Sale	£195
Qestar QA2 Active Speakers/Stands/3M Kimer 4TC	£300 the lot		
Trichord Pulsar 1 DAC	(s/h)	£825	
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Proac Studio 100 loudspeakers (cherry) 3 weeks old		£550	
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SD Acoustics Alexandra stands for above	(new)	£220	

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New in This Month

	Choice Price	Original Retail Price
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Conrad Johnson PV12 (mm/mc)	£1995.00	£ 2590.00
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MEASURED PERFORMANCE

AMPLIFIERS

MICHELL ORCA/ALECTO AMPLIFIERS

These are wide-bandwidth, high-power monoblocs capable of producing 128watts into 8ohms and no less than 196watts into 4ohms. That's plenty enough to get high levels from loudspeakers able to accept such power and deliver it. The Alectos handle low loads well too, with some small rise in distortion to 0.028% from the 0.005% achieved into 8ohms.

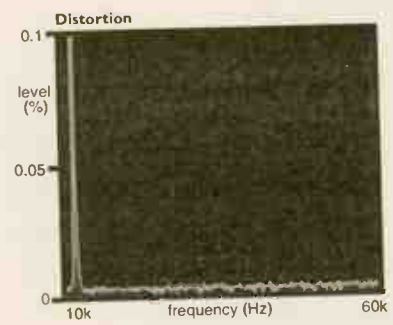
Not that distortion is a problem with these monoblocs. It measured a minimal 0.005% at all frequencies and output levels - an impressive result. It is unusual for an amplifier

to measure well at full output at 10kHz but the Alectos were just as good here as lower down the frequency scale. Our analysis shows little sign of any harmonics at 10kHz, 1watt output.

Input sensitivity was very high at 125mV for full output, through the Orca pre-amplifier. That's enough to work with the lowest output sources, mostly from yesteryear.

Much as before, these Michell amplifiers measure very well in all areas. NK

Power	128watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	8Hz-110kHz



Separation	72dB
Noise	-102dB
Distortion	0.005%
Sensitivity	125mV
Overload	>3V
DC offset	16mV

CD PLAYER

CREEK CD 43

The Creek refused to reproduce short-term impulses for our frequency-response analysis, so we used a sweep tone instead to measure frequency response. This gives the same amplitude resolution, if not the same frequency-scale resolution.

If this failing has any consequence at all on the sound, it would be to soften and possibly warm the presentation. Otherwise, frequency response was very flat, with just a small -0.3dB loss at 16kHz, seen at far right in our analysis.

Distortion was very low on both channels, measuring 0.02% at -30dB. Our analysis shows this is simply a summation of noise, not distortion harmonics, seen as spikes. The Creek was linear at low levels too, one reason for its high dynamic range figure.

The CD 43 measured well in all areas. It's inability to reproduce an impulse is rare among players, however, but the impact of this can only be judged through listening tests. NK

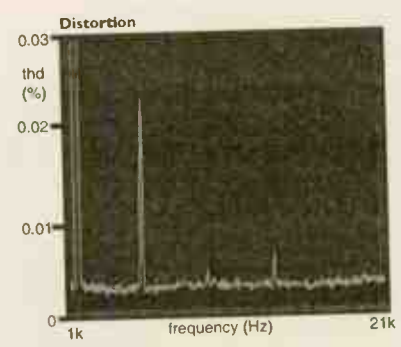
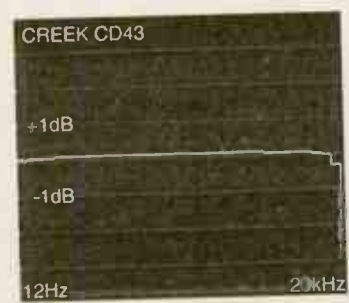
Frequency response	4Hz-20kHz
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Distortion (%)	left	right
-6dB	0.005	0.005
-30dB	0.018	0.02
-60dB	0.39	0.5
-90dB	29.6	28

Separation (dB)	left	right
1kHz	100	102
20kHz	76	79

Noise	-106dB
with emphasis	-106dB

Dynamic range	110dB
Output	2.2V





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PHONO STAGE

LEHMANN AUDIO BLACK CUBE

The Lehmann Black Box was quiet on MM, and good on MC, but not exceptional. It was around 5dB hissier than the quietest MC pre-amps, from the likes of Linn for example, but it will still do a reasonably good job on low-output MCs.

There was a useful gain of x1000 available on MC, and x100 on MM, both about what is needed.

Frequency response on MM and MC was identical, unlike some Japanese amplifiers. Not unsurprisingly an IEC subsonic warp

filter has been fitted and this rolls off bass below 40Hz. Invariably, this produces a bass-light sound. There was also a slight lift in treble, +0.5dB at 20kHz. This is likely to add a little brightness and detail.

Overload ceilings were as expected, being a function of gain and maximum output swing between the op amp power supply lines. At least Lehmann managed a decent 9V output swing, the least I would expect. This resulted in normal 9mV (MC) and 90mV input overload values.

This pre-amp measures well but will have a brightish sound and may

well be a little light in the bass. NK

Disc MM	
Frequency response	40Hz-52kHz
Separation	51dB
Gain	x100
Noise	0.25uV
Distortion	0.003%
Overload	90mV/9V

Disc MC	
Frequency response	40Hz-52kHz
Separation	48dB
Gain	x1000
Noise	0.07uV
Distortion	0.003%
Overload	9mV/9V

LOUDSPEAKERS

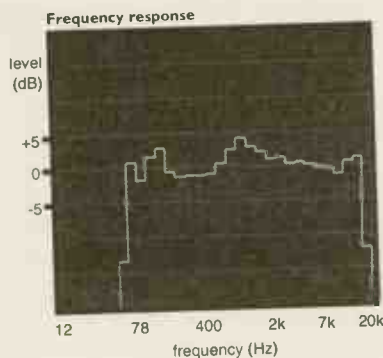
JAMO CS5

The small drive units of this active loudspeaker integrate well, giving a comparatively smooth upper midrange over a wide band of frequencies. Our measured response, shown here, held well when listening on tweeter axis, above it or below it, like any well-designed miniature loudspeaker.

There is, however, a peculiar peak at 1.25kHz that will improve vocal intelligibility, may help

projection, but could also give a 'thin' sound. There are some bass peaks too, common in small 'speakers where, to get any bass at all, the woofer must be allowed to resonate in a relatively controlled fashion compared with the sort of behaviour expected from a large cabinet.

The Jamos will sound clear, detailed and possibly precise. They may also sound thin, perhaps sharp and a bit boomy in the bass. NK

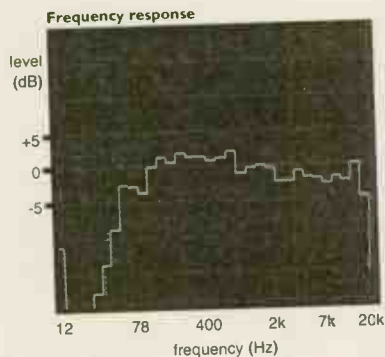


HEYBROOK OPTIMA

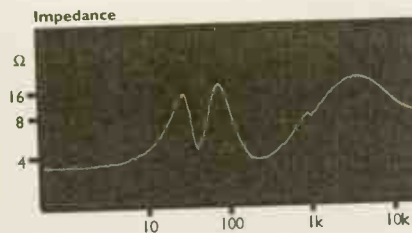
Tests showed the Optima was very sensitive, producing 90dB from 2.8V of input (one nominal watt). At 5.7ohms overall impedance (with minima at 4ohms) this really is a 4ohm loudspeaker and some of its sensitivity is due to the extra current draw of a low load working with a constant-current source (solid-state amplifier) rather than high energy conversion efficiency.

The Optima will take a little more driving than 8ohm loudspeakers, and as a result may well highlight sonic differences between different amplifiers.

Overall tonal balance shows a



slow tilt down as frequency rises. A small amount of plateau bass boost will add body to the sound, plus some warmth, generally a good thing. With flat bass output down to



63Hz, below which the port takes over, the Optima goes as low as most rivals. With little sign of bass peaking I would expect a well-controlled performance in the lower octave.

The Optima is well engineered, but drive amplifier choice is likely to be important. NK

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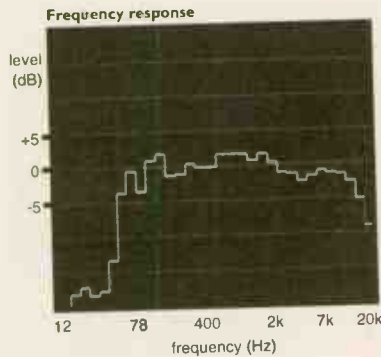
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JPW RUBY 2

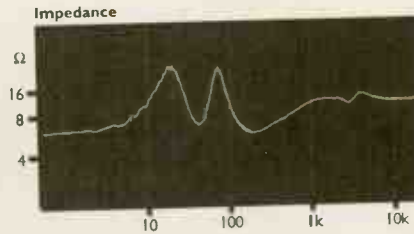
With a raised midband and smoothly falling treble, the Ruby 2 will have fine vocal clarity and projection, plus smooth treble. The drivers were well integrated, absence of a crossover suck-out ensuring good detailing.

Bass output falls away slowly, suggesting a well-damped alignment that may sound best with the 'speakers close to a rear wall and given some power. There's little sign of bass peaking and the boominess that arises from it.

JPW have engineered in an unusually flat impedance curve,



except for the usual twin peaks of reflex loading. Since it sits almost exactly at 8ohms the Ruby 2 represents a near-ideal load in some senses. It certainly suits valve amps.



which must be load matched. It will give solid-state amps an easy time too. The only disappointment is a mediocre sensitivity of 86dB from a nominal watt (2.8V) of input.

The Ruby 2 has been neatly engineered and should offer a tidy, smooth sound. NK

Dynamics

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
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COMPACT DISC PLAYERS

QUAD 67 SECOND-HAND
One of Quad's best products for a long time, the '67 is warmer and smoother than most, yet is highly musical and revealing.

KENWOOD DP-3080/II £180
Has great clarity and presence for the price. Not quite as naturally expressive as the CD4SE though.

CAMBRIDGE CD4SE £200
A touch soft in the treble but outstanding in every other respect.

ARCAM ALPHA 7 £330
This British-built player is extremely good value. Up-front, punchy nature suits Techno and Rock.

MARANTZ CD-63MKII KI-S £400
Similar to the CD-63SE but more powerful bass and an all-round smoother sound.

PHILIPS CDR 870 RECORDER £500
Replay quality is on a par with £250 machines but analogue and digital recordings on CD-R and CD-RW are outstanding.

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

MERIDIAN 506 20-BIT £1100
Very detailed and revealing player. More cerebral than visceral though.

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

DENON DCD-S10 £1300
A warm, atmospheric and smooth performer that never fails to involve.

PINK TRIANGLE LITAURAL £2100
Possesses the same lush tonal colour as the Da Capo but is far superior in every other way.

MCINTOSH CDM7009 £2635
A thoroughly inspiring machine. One of the most musical CD players around; sweet, open and detailed.

COMPACT DISC TRANSPORTS

TEAC VDRS-T1 £550
Not as substantially built as its chunky looks suggest, the T1 is nevertheless a good entry-level transport with a warm, expansive sound.

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

CD CONVERTORS

MIDIMAN FLYING CALF £130
Great-value DAC which has a superbly smooth and fluid presentation.

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-DAC £300
A bargain for normal CDs and even better with HDCDs.

ASSEMBLAGE DAC-2 £400 (KIT)
Takes little building to produce a clean, clear sound. HDCD filter included.

MARSTON SILHOUETTE £795
With Crystal Semiconductors' 18-bit DAC the Marston produces clean-cut images and a transparent sound stage. Very rhythmic too.

PINK TRIANGLE DA CAPO £1450+
Offers a choice of filter modules. The Da Capo is good in many respects, but can sound a touch polite on Rock and is showing its age.

DPA 1024 £6000
Proof positive that today's CDs needn't sound CD-like! Uses an in-house discrete convertor, and DPA haven't skimmed on the build either!

DCS ELGAR £8500
Future-proof convertor which will handle 24/96 and 24/192 in addition to CD. Extremely open and natural performer that sets the digital benchmark.

TURNTABLES

GARRARD 301/401 second-hand
In a decent plinth with an arm of SME 309 calibre, the 301 is capable of a highly authoritative sound with surprisingly solid, expressive bass. Very musical, but treble isn't up to modern standards. Slightly easier to service than the later 401 but otherwise similar.

THORENS TD124 second-hand
One of Thorens' best turntables. Needs a modern plinth to give its best. Duly installed, it's good enough to face off the Garrards, swapping some of its bass power for a more delicate, incisive treble.

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

SYSTEMDEK IIX900/RB250 £330
A fine all-rounder and easy to upgrade too. Has more depth and breadth than Rega Planar 3.

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

VPI HW19 JUNIOR/RB300 £599
With its control and grip on music the Junior never fails to engage. Set-up is a piece of cake and there's a whole range of upgrades on offer too.

MICHELL GYRODEC £875
Stunning looks, build and fine sound. Standard PSU has detailed, architectural, if undynamic sound. With QC PSU, scale and insight excel.

PRO-JECT 6.1SA £999
The Pro-ject places the listener in the best seat in the control room. Outrageous dynamics and a punchy, seriously deep bass. Comes with Sumiko arm and Ortofon MC 30 Supreme.

ROKSAN XERXES X £1295
DSU or XPS 3.5 power supply £150/170 extra. Excellent pitch stability from a new Swiss motor and outboard power supply. Very tight bass, fine dynamics and revealing clarity.

MICHELL ORBE £1995
The Darth Vader of analogue, the Orbe builds on the strengths of the Gyrodec. An ultra-tunable, expansive sound.

SME MODEL 20 £3400
Including the excellent SME V tone-arm, the Model 20 is one of the last great turntables, unless you've got £11000 for the Model 30, that is.

TONE-ARMS

LINN ITOK second-hand
This early heavyweight arm benefits from fine engineering. Good dynamics and grip.

REGA RB300 £180
Supremely capable at the price, but not quite humankind's salvation. Some may prefer the simpler RB250 at £130. Detailed, tight, rhythmic sound but tonally rather grey and cold-sounding.

SME 3009SII £309
This Paleolithic device is no longer state-of-the-art with frequency extremes or detail, but its legendary serviceability makes it a cult in Japan. Can be picked up for peanuts second-hand.

SME 309 £689
A down-market version of the IV and V with aluminium armtube and detachable headshell. Tight, neutral sound with good tonality, but lacks the IV's pace and precision.

World favourites guide

SME V £1460
A masterpiece of precision engineering with a cohesive, ultra-transparent sound.

CARTRIDGES

GOLDRING 1012GX £74
An accomplished MM with a solid bass, slightly forward midband and clean transients.

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

DNM MICA £185
Better than Goldring's 1042 and costs only £135 on trade-in. A very assured and transparent MM.

ORTOFON SUPREMES £299-£549
The MC 10, MC 20 and MC 30 Supremes all offer superb sound and value for money, with a rich, smooth and musical performance.

ORTOFON MC 2000 £799
We came across this in an SME IV on a Garrard 401; it gave one of the best results we've heard.

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

LYRA LYDIAN £649
A truly musical, sophisticated device that makes most other MCs sound frigid.

VAN DEN HUL MC-10 £840
Fluid bass, finely-etched treble and highly tuneful in-between. The MC-10 is honey, pure and simple.

ORTOFON MC 7500 £2000
Conclusive proof that there's hope for the world. CD lovers would die if they heard it.

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS

MISSION CYRUS I/II S/H
Both versions give a detailed, articulate and dynamic sound.

DENON PMA-250SE £160
It might not have bags of grunt but the Denon can sound very natural and open.

ROTEL RA-970BX £250
With its smooth and powerful sound, the Rotel sings a seductive song with all types of music.

PIONEER A-300R PRECISION £399
This is the A-300 tweaked. Rhythm and detail are first-class and the phono stage isn't far behind.

AUDIO ANALOGUE PUCCINI SE £595
This superbly-built Italian integrated has a lucidity and control which leave the competition at up to £1000 standing. Sound stage depth is unequalled.

SUGDEN A21A £640
Class A transistor amp. Rich, crisp, deep, tight sound and it images well too. Wonderful.

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

SONETEER ALABASTER £995
Builds on the strengths of the Campion with ample control, colour and drive.

UNISON SIMPLY 2 £995
This single-ended valve amplifier is smooth, sweet and open. An extremely musical performer.

UNISON SIMPLY 4 £1495
Sonically similar to the Simply 2, but with more power and control.

MCINTOSH MA6800 £3735
The MA6800 not so much plays music as takes control of it, with effortless bass drive.

PHONO STAGES

QED DISCSAVER £35
A true bargain that offers a cohesive, musical sound but avoid using it in thin sounding systems.

NAD PP1 £39.99
An unassuming little box that nevertheless gets on with it. Comes complete with wall-plug power supply. No provision for battery power.

ROTEL RQ-970BX £130
Superb-value entry-level phono stage with audiophile quality components and clear sound.

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

MICHELL ISO/HERA £530
Open, spacious and 3-D sound. Not for fans of warmth though.

AUDIO INNOVATIONS P2 £749
Fantastic bass and super insight make this one of the best phono stages around. One for vinyl lovers.

ROKSAN ARTAXERXES X £950
With the Attesa PSU the Artaxerxes X MM/MC stage still shines. Its fortes are great stage depth, neutrality and tonal colour. Musical too.

PRE-AMPLIFIERS

CREEK OBH-12 PASSIVE £200
If you're not driving long cables, the remote-control Creek is a star.

AUDIO ANALOGUE BELLINI £475
Showcases AA's characteristic mix of clarity, detail and musicality and stomps on the competition.

XTC PRE-1 £1000
Almost valve-like in its smoothness, the line-level Pre-1 is warm and seductively clear.

CHORD CPA1800 £1800
Clarity, insight and control are second to none - an addictive mixture.

MARANTZ MODEL 7 PRE-AMP £3500
A Sixties reissue, the Marantz pre-amp still sounds superb. Has a great phono stage.

POWER AMPLIFIERS

QUAD II second-hand
Classic valve monobloc with many thousands still in use. Archetypal warm, smooth valve sound.

LEAK STEREO 20 second-hand
The Stereo 20 can sound impressively up-to-date, although power and detail are ultimately limited. The TL10, TL12 and TL12+ are also worthy contenders but all have very high sensitivity (125mV for full output) so beware of overloading.

ARCAM ALPHA 9 £400
With 70watts on tap, the 9P will drive most loudspeakers with a spacious and detailed sound. Good bass welly too.

MISSION CYRUS POWER £450
This power amplifier is a real honey. Rich and smooth, but with a firm grip.

SUGDEN AU41P £530
Extremely competitive at the price with 100W of unusually smooth, full-bodied sound.

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-A200 £1000/PAIR
200watts of high-end monobloc power in a grooved tube.

NAIM NAP180 £1060
Partnered with a NAC82, this has classic Naim control, and a superbly rhythmic presentation.

MICHELL ALECTO STEREO £1300
A refined transistor amp with valve-like transparency and a full, warm, easy-going sound. The £1800 Alecto monoblocs have rare lucidity and three-dimensional realism.

World favourites guide

CHORD SPM400	£1400	YAMAHA KX-580SE	£250	HARBETH HL-P3ES	£799
There's a sense of effortless power to the Chord that gives music real scale and presence.		The 'Special Edition' tag is more than a marketing gimmick. Sound is solid and clear with Dolby S.		A fine example of good loudspeaker engineering. The top of the mini-monitor league.	
CHORD SPM1200	£2995	AIWA AD-S950	£300	HARBETH HL-K6	£1049
Like the SPM400 but loads more power on tap. Will drive just about anything.		A stable transport, superb head and Dolby S make the AD-S950 an excellent all-rounder.		Clean, musical and classy - Harbeth have done themselves proud again.	
XTC POW-1	£2000	PIONEER CT-S740S	£430	KEF REFERENCE SERIES ONE	£995
As smooth and composed as the Pre-1, the POW-1 has bags of power and refinement.		A great piece of engineering from Pioneer, with first-rate sound on playback and recording.		The KEFs combine pin-point imagery and detail with a smooth, polite balance. Good, agile bass.	
MARANTZ MODEL 9	£8000	NAKAMICHI DR2	second-hand	JAMO CONCERT 8	£1500
Authentic reproduction monoblocs still more than cut the sonic mustard.		Tragically discontinued, the DR2 pushes recordings to the limit, remaining unflustered at all times.		With their inch-thick cabinets and fabulous drive units, the Concert 8s are the most transparent stand mounters around.	
TUNERS					
LEAK TROUGHLINE	second-hand	NAKAMICHI DR1	second-hand	EPOS ES25	£1505
Our favourite way of listening to the wireless. A deliciously mellifluous sound will have you junking your transistor radio in seconds.		Better still than the DR2, with manual head-azimuth adjustment to boot.		Epos' best. Combines near-uncoloured tonality with characteristic fireworks in the rhythm department. Superb by any other name.	
NAD 412	£190	NAKAMICHI CR7	second-hand	TANNOY AMS8	£2700
The 412 is remarkably musical and natural sounding. Rich sound and full bass are rarities.		Kills all other tape deck and stamps on the graves.		Bold sounding professional active monitor with solid bass, clear midrange and delicious treble.	
LOUDSPEAKERS					
SONY ST-SA3ES	£250	TANNOY MERCURY M2	£140	QUAD ESL 63	£3450
Beguiling RDS tuner for sonically discerning button-lovers. Good ergonomics and sensitive too.		A true audiophile bargain which embarrasses many more expensive boxes.		A reference against which all other loudspeakers are judged, the '63s have superb imaging and genuine transparency.	
MISSION CYRUS FM7	£300	KEF Q15	£199	KEF REFERENCE SERIES FOUR	£3299
Clear and lucid sound puts it up with the best. Superb build too.		These stand mounters offer impressive bass and excellent clarity but need a powerful amplifier to perform at their considerable best.		Superb bass and near-electrostatic sound staging make these involving loudspeakers a reference for others. Need a strong amplifier though.	
ROTEL RT-990BX	£500	MISSION 771	£170	JBL S2600	£3500
High-quality Michi-based tuner with a sophisticated, forward sound with great imaging.		Characteristically fast, punchy Mission sound from the Aerogel mid/bass and silk-dome tweeter.		Smooth, detailed and spacious with great dynamics and fine imaging. Capable of producing a superb performance when used in a big room.	
NAIM NAT03	£595	B&W DM 602	£300	TANNOY WESTMINSTER ROYAL	£14920
The NAT03's warm, atmospheric sound is further proof of Naim's proficiency with tuners.		Deep, strong bass, pure, projected and uncoloured midrange. Treble quality is a little metallic, but imaging is precise. A lively, enjoyable sound.		An incredibly dynamic, detailed full-range horn design with a rich sound. Its high sensitivity predisposes it to valve amplification.	
FANFARE FT-1	£1295	REL Q-BASS	£350	MINIDISC PLAYERS	
In its native US the FT-1 is no mere tuner but a 'broadcast monitor', a task at which it acquits itself well, with a clear and powerful sound.		Few subwoofers match the Q-Bass at the price. The tuning controls can be a bit of a fiddle, but once set up the rest is pleasure.		SONY MDS-JE510	£300
NAIM NAT01	£1380	CASTLE EDEN	£469	An impressive sound and unmatched convenience make this MiniDisc player an excellent buy.	
This is the best solid-state tuner available bar none. For better radio, go and live in the studio.		EPOS ES12	£495	KENWOOD DM-9090	£500
CASSETTE DECKS					
KENWOOD KX-3080	£160	REL STRATA	£500	SONY MDS-JA50ES	
A simple deck, but excellent-quality head and transport give an unusually high level of sound.		The Strata subwoofer is not a toy. It offers superb, true hi-fi bass depth and power, and opens up sound stage depth in particular.		£1300	
AIWA AD-S750	£200	The Sony can put the wind up Nakamichi cassette decks when used with better blank MDs.		The Sony can put the wind up Nakamichi cassette decks when used with better blank MDs.	
Sonically a very decent machine. Comes fitted with Dolby B, C and S.					

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Basis Gold Vacuum + Air Tangent 2B	£12,990	£7998
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JVC QL-70 Direct Drive/Rega RB300		£150
Linn LP12 Valhalla Zeta Koetsu Bk	£2500	£998
Linn LP12 (Afr) Zeta		£795
Linn LP12 (Bk) Ekos/Lingo	£3500	£1798
Linn LP12 Basic/LVX/A&R	£1400	£595
Linn LP12 Basic Plus	£1400	£595
Linn Arkiv 1 Cartridge	£900	£408
Lyra Pamasus		£POA
Manticore Mantra / Magician + MBP6 pwr sup / Ort MC3000		£998
Mantra + Magician, AT OCS & PSU		£748
Michell Gyro + SME 309 Denon 304 and Gyropower supply	£1995	£1298
Naim Aro	£1070	£785
Naim MC Board for 92 Pre	£80	£58
Oracle Delphi/Dynavector DVXX1 /Koetsu		£1498
Oracle Delphi II/Linn Ittok LVII		£1395
Ortofon T-300 Transformer	£900	£495
Pink Triangle Export (Ex/dem)	£900	£597
Revolver / Helios Scorpion / P77		£249
Roksan Xerxes/RB250/Rega Cart	£1000	£495
Thorens TD160 Super/SME 3009		£175

AMPLIFIERS - SOLID STATE

Alchemist Maxim Intgtd	£319	£195
Audiolah 8000Q (Ex Dem)	£1100	£725
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DPA DSP200 Line Pre (Ex Dem)	£499	£397

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Exposure 15 (Intgrtd)	£799	£535
Exposure XVIII (Power)		£POA
Exposure XXI (Pre)		£POA
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Heybrook Integra (Integrated!)	£555	£250
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Krell KSA100S (Ex Dem)	£5843	£3497
Krell KSA200B	£5500	£2758
Krell KSA250	£7500	£3298
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Quad 44 Pre-amp		£265
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Quad 405 Mk II Power-amp		£240
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Mission 754F (Ex Dem)	£1498	£997
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Monitor Audio R852 (Teak)		£248
Musical Fidelity MC2		£150
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Note: All 'previous' prices as shown are either the former manufacturers' list prices when new; prices customers paid for their equipment (received) at the time of purchase; or the estimated price of comparable equipment/models at today's value.

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B & O	AV 5	Television, CD and Radio - Green	X	1	£4,650.00	£3,650.00
B & O	Beolab 6000	Active Loudspeakers	X	1	£1,550.00	£1,350.00
B & O	Cx 50	Aluminium Bookshelf Speakers	X		£325.00	£250.00
Cambridge Audio	Dac Magic 2	Digital to Analogue Converter	S	1	£150.00	£95.00
Cannon	SB20	Subwoofer	S	1		£100.00
Callite	Severn II	Loudspeaker Of The Year 1997-Mahogany	N	1	£580.00	£500.00
Celestion	A 1	Loudspeakers with Stands Black	X	1	£1,100.00	£700.00
Celestion	A 2	Floor Standing Loudspeakers	X	1	£1,500.00	£1,250.00
Celestion	A 3	Floor Standing Loudspeakers	X	1	£2,400.00	£1,900.00
Kef	Q 35	Floor Standing Loudspeakers	N	1	£350.00	£275.00
Kef	Q 55	Floor Standing Loudspeakers	N	1	£500.00	£400.00
Meridian	551	Amplifier	X	1	£795.00	£550.00
Meridian	566	Digital to Analogue converter	X	1	£1,095.00	£850.00
Meridian	565	Dolby Digital, 7.1 DTS, THX Processor	X	1	£2,850.00	£2,000.00
Mendian	562 V	Digital Controller	X	1	£395.00	£190.00
Mission	750 SE	Loudspeakers Special Edition	X	1	£250.00	£100.00
Mission	73C	Centre Speaker	X	1	£150.00	£100.00
Mission	735	Large Floor Standing Speakers	N	1	£650.00	£400.00
Mission	7341	Large Floorstanding Speaker	N	1	£499.00	£275.00
Nad	910	Surround Sound Processor	S	1	£400.00	£125.00
Quad	77 Preamp	Pre-amplifier	N	2	£850.00	£550.00
Quad	77 Amplifier	Integrated Amplifier	X	1	£700.00	£475.00
Quad	77 Cd	Cd Player	X	1	£700.00	£475.00
Quad	77 Tuner	Tuner	X	1	£600.00	£475.00
Quad	10 L	Loudspeakers	X	1	£600.00	£375.00
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Target	MB3W 165	Wide modular equipment rack	X	1	£200.00	£140.00
Yamaha	DDP 2	Dolby Digital Processor	X	1	£350.00	£250.00
Yamaha	APD 1	RF Demodulator	X	1	£100.00	£70.00
Yamaha	DSPA 1092	Dolby Digital Prologic Amplifier	X	1	£1,600.00	£900.00
Yamaha	DSPA 3090	Dolby Digital Prologic Amplifier	X	1	£1,600.00	£900.00
Yamaha	DSPA 990	Prologic Amplifier	N	2	£300.00	£375.00
Yamaha	DSPA 590	1996 Pro-logic Amplifier of the year	X	1	£350.00	£175.00
Yamaha	DSPA 592	Pro-logic Dolby Digital Upgradable	X	1	£330.00	£290.00
Yamaha	DSPA 492	Pro-logic Amplifier	X	2	£250.00	£190.00
Yamaha	DSPE 492	Pro-logic Amplifier	X	2	£250.00	£190.00
Yamaha	DSPE 200	Pro Logic Processor	X	1	£250.00	£150.00
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MAGGIES' RETURN

Don Marks waxes lyrical over Magneplanar's popular SMGa panel loudspeakers.

Like politics, loudspeakers tend to polarise followers. Most people are members of the box camp, but many other transducer technologies each have their own adherents. Some of the most vociferous support electrostatics, but here is another way to skin the lightweight, flat-diaphragm cat-panel loudspeakers. One of the best known examples of this approach is Magneplanar's SMGa.

First introduced almost a decade ago (and updated to 'b' and then 'c' suffix versions), the SMGas sold for about £650 a pair. Resembling the doors off a small wardrobe, these Magneplanars use two 0.0005in.-thick Mylar sheets with grids of aluminium wire (working against a perforated steel sheet carrying permanent bar magnets) bonded to them to shift air. A single-wire, first-order crossover (consisting of a capacitor and inductor) links the large mid/bass and smaller treble drivers.

Apart from the fact that they looked like upright tabletops on cheap, bent-steel feet and ideally needed a lot of space to breathe freely (as do all dipoles), the common perception of Maggies as current-hungry meant many British buyers were wary of these American imports. However, while the feet really don't do the SMGas any favours stability and rigidity-wise, if they're properly set-up they can work surprisingly well in small rooms on the end of sub-megawatt amplification.

One very effective system we found them working in had the 'speakers' positioned just a foot or so from the rear wall in a room 14ft. on a side and powered by an Orelle 50watt direct-coupled transistor amplifier. Another candidate which suits the SMGas is the little Cyrus 1 integrated, which squeezes a mere 25watts out of its power supply but sounds much more powerful than that might suggest.

What makes these combinations work is the high quoted 90dB sensitivity and very, very even 40hm impedance, which

only deviates from a straight line above the crossover point. Where low-current amps do run into difficulty, though, is in controlling the bass panel at higher volumes when there's a lot going on in the bottom couple of octaves. Stick to typical living-room levels and you're assured a refreshing change from the box loudspeaker sound though.

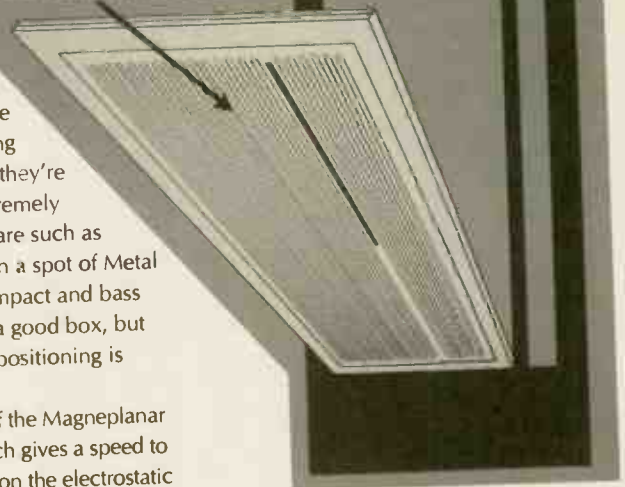
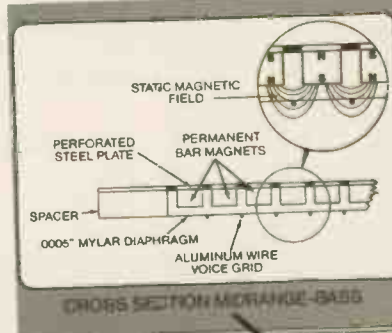
You can hear the absence of an enclosure in the SMGas' clarity and lack of the assorted honks and quacks which plague box designs. They have a tonal purity which no cone-and-dome confections under about £1500 get anywhere near. Ply them with a string quartet, for instance, and they're capable of producing extremely life-like results. Heavier fare such as Dance, Ambient and even a spot of Metal may not have quite the impact and bass punch it enjoys through a good box, but it's not far behind, if the positioning is right.

One of the strengths of the Magneplanar panel is its lightness, which gives a speed to dynamics which borders on the electrostatic (without the need for dangerous polarising voltages or step-up transformers, along with the attendant costs).

I've lived with a second-hand pair of SMGas (which were purchased for £300) for a while now, and I have to say they've made a convert of me in spite of their foibles, which include a rather dry bass. Mind you, hooked up to Musical Fidelity's X-A200 monoblocs with their grip and control, this wouldn't be a stumbling block unless Dub Reggae was your main genre. Slightly larger-than-life imaging is another acquired taste, although once

again, careful placement goes a long way to sorting things out here.

A few tweaks worth trying are removing the 'sock' which covers the wooden frame, and turning the 'speakers' around so their input terminals face



forward. The driver panels are mounted on the back of the frame, and rumour has it that this causes treble diffraction and slightly diffuse imaging, which a 180degree spin apparently cures.

If head-banging to Metallica at 120dB is not your cup of tea, then the SMGas have a lot to offer for very little outlay. The sound from these Maggies, a used Cyrus 1 (about £100) and a Pioneer DV-505 DVD player (£450) will get you closer to the high-end than almost anything else for similar money●



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ALPHASON HR 100 MCS tonearm cost £550 accept £295. Proac Super tower speakers, walnut, mint condition, cost £1200 new accept £595. Wanted: Zeta tone arm/Lyra Clavis cartridge. Tel: 01634 387686 (Oct/1)

WANTED: AKAI GX-4000 DB reel to reel tape deck with Dolby B noise reduction system in good condition or for spares willing to pay up to £200. Tel: 01925 822897 (Oct/1)

QUAD ELS 63 Electrostatic speaker brown, serial number 1060. One only hence £150 ono. Tel: 01654 712105 after 6pm (Mid Wales) (Oct)

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MUSICAL FIDELITY E10 integrated amplifier 40 watt, phono, headphone, magnetic, as brand new boxed £180. Also Rotel 855 CD player perfect condition unmarked £120. Tel: 01932 820677 (Oct/1)

CELLO (MARK LEVINSON) Etude Passive pre-amplifier (the best) mint, boxed £425. Avondale power amplifier, 150w per channel, superb £325, B&W Matrix 805 (walnut) & stands, mint, boxed £625, Arcam BB500 & 250 transport, mint, boxed £675. Genuine reluctant sale, sensible offers considered. Tel: 0961 368323 day / 01942 201031 eves (Nov/1)

MARANTZ CD 63SE £120. Cables: Nordost Blue Heaven £80, Puresonic Silver Plated £10, CAD Argent £35. CAD Ordovicion digital £12. Cambridge Audio Digital £10. Tel: 01293 786453 (Oct/1)

AUDIO SYNTHESIS Passion 8M remote controlled multiple input passive preamp £950 ono; Concordant Exquisite valve preamp with phono £750 ono; Art Audio Tempo Monoblocks £1150 ono. Tel 01235 850393 eves & w.e. (Oct/1)

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RADFORD CONTROL unit SC2 £20. Leak TL/12 plus amp & varioscope III £75. Leak Troughline 3 stereo tuner £75. Leak stereofetic FM tuner £25. Leak Sterio 30 amp. £25. Tel: 01424 813119 (Oct/1)

CYRUS DAD 3 CD player, never used, still under guarantee, boxed, £500. Tel: Phil 0116 2849634 (Oct/1)

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QUAD 33 £50. Kef Kube 104/2 type 5P 2089 £30. Wilmslow mini-monitors (LS 3/5A) with sub-bass £120. Tel: 01295 780363 (Oct)

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KEF REFERENCE Model Four - Classic Rosewood £2690, Meridian 565 DTS 7.1 & 519 RF Demodulator £2490, Meridian 500 transport & 566 20bit DAC £1490, Meridian 557 power amp £990, Pioneer CLD-909 £700, Pioneer SDM 1407 & cabinet £2990 all have boxes, manuals etc no canvassers. Tel: 0973 899651 (mobile) / 01622 844556 (home) (Oct/1)

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T.C.S. The Complete Statement Integrated Amplifier	2640	1300
T.I.S. The Integrated Statement Integrated Amplifier	1600	800
T.T.S. The Transparent Statement CD Player	3700	1800
T.E.S. The Emotive Statement CD Player	2120	1000

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6 Watermill Industrial Estate
Aspenden Road
Buntingford
Herts
SG9 9JS

web www.nva.dircon.co.uk
e.mail nva@dircon.co.uk
tel 01763 272707
fax 01763 271594

HI-FI HOME CINEMA

It has been clear for some time now, from the phone calls we get that there is an increasing interest in home cinema and as we always aim to provide what customers want, have been in the process of incorporating a video projector/screen setup in our demonstration room. The building work which has been going on for some months now has helped, as we have been forced to empty the room, so we could start again. (We still have products we are happy to sell off as mentioned in Feb, so do ring!). It has all taken longer than expected, so our apologies if we have let anyone down, but we are up and running with a SELECO SVP350, which produces a superb picture for £3700. As with all CRT projectors it is large compared to an LCD projector but we find LCD's have too many problems, and are only worth considering if one really can't find space for a CRT unit. With the arrival of digital television and hence 16/9 widescreen images, we feel that TV's are just not big enough for watching films and a projector/screen setup is the thing. TV programmes look excellent as well, and the 350 has TV Tuner and teletext built in. So if you want to see this in our domestic surroundings do give us a ring as there aren't many around in the south west.

V'audio Hi-Fi Consultants
36 Druid Hill, Stoke Bishop, Bristol BS9 1EJ
Tel / Fax: 0117 968 6005

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AUDIO INNOVATIONS S800 valve preamp and M.C. transformer £350, AR legend turntable, Linn Basik Plus, Excellant £130, Mission Cyrus 2 £130. Kenwood Pro-Logic receiver with JPW speakers and cable £200. Tel: 01325 264420. (Oct/1)

QUAD ESL63s, teak and brown finish, serviced by Quad, immaculate condition, £1395ono. Tel: 0181 444 4902 (N.London) (Oct/1)

TRANSMISSION LINE speakers. Bailey design, Kef units. Size 35 x 16 x 18 inches. Pair £85. Buyer collects. Tel: 01483 222666 (Guildford) (Oct/1)

MERIDIAN 207 preamp transport and 203 DAC. Includes optimal phono MC/MM board and MSR. £650. Theta TLC Jitterbuster with DA interconnect £150. All boxed with instructions 0121 788 0175 (Birmingham) (Oct)

MISSION 765 floor standers (walnut) £400 (£700). 737 with stands £160. Cyrus 2 PSX MkII black £300. Pioneer PD 5703 CDDAC Magic I £190. Apollo 5-tier rack £65. All mint. Tel: 01253 827576 (Blackpool) (Oct/1)

QUAD 22/2 X 11 AMPS GECS £490. FM TUNER £50. LW/MW/SW Tuner £25. Unused GEC KT66 £12. Mullard EF86 £7 ECC83 £6.50. Tel: 01494 712282 (eves) (High Wycombe) (Oct)

CROFT CHARISMA pre-amp upgraded by GT Audio, still under guarantee, chrome front. £500 for quick sale. No offers please. Rega Planar 3 with RB300 arm £100. Tel: 0181 203 2120 (Oct/1)

LINN: MIMIK CD. Majik-1 control amplifier. Keilidh speakers and Linn cable. Hardly used, absolutely mint condition £1300. Tel: 01977 793142 (Oct/1)

SONDEK (BLACK) Ittok/IT18 £550. Naim components, 62/90 amps, £395, NAT 03 tuner £395, flat cap power supply, £250. Linn Kan II (black) with stands, £195. All boxed, mint condition. Tel: 01708 23545 (Oct/1)

ARCAM DELTA components. 250 transport £420. 100 cassette deck £495. Black Box 3 £100. Naim 150 tuner £100. DAC-in-a-Box £100. Audio Technica ATH 70 Electret headphones £35 - all boxed. Mint. Tel: 01708 551492 (Oct/1)

CONRAD JOHNSON PV10AL preamp 6 months old. £550 ono (£1000). Beard P100 MkII power amp. recently serviced by Bill Beard. Complete new set of Golden Dragon valves (KT88 retro) an excellent example. Includes box and full service manuals. £550 ono. Buy both and get a new pair of Van Den Hul The Second interconnects free. Worth £260. Tel: 01227 371796 (Nov/1)

LUMLEY LM2MKII floorstanding speakers. Highest quality drivers. Ribbon tweeters. Big, effortless, detailed sound. £2800 new, accept £895. Naim CDS. Tremendous sound quality. Excellent condition £1995. Can demonstrate and deliver. Tel: 01625 432889 (Oct/1)

LOWTHER BICOR 2000 double horn loaded speakers two PM7 speakers in each one in front one in back only had six weeks use, still boxed. Would cost £2000 today bargain £550 ono Tel: 01446 735768 (Oct/1)

ARCAM ALPHA One CD player with remote £120. Arcam Alpha Five amplifier £100. Both in good condition and with instructions. Tel: 01332 665658 (Oct)

LINN KABERS, black ash, latest tweeters, totally immaculate & as new. Packaging & instructions incl. £950 ono. Tel: 01633 423043 (S.Wales) (Oct/1)

ARCAM ALPHA 6 CD, £200 (£600), MF x-ACT DAC £75 (£130) both mint and boxed. Also, Audioquest Video Z digital interconnect £10 (£40), 2* 14 feet of NAIM NACAS £20. Tel: 0191 374 5563 work/0191 373 1062 Home (Oct)

NAKAMICHI DR3 less than 20 hours use boxed, mint £195. Wanted Linn Troika for rebuild, Linn Kremlin Klout & Linn Kelekt RCU x 2. Cash waiting. Tel: Terry 01702 545622 after 6pm (Oct/1)

LEAK 'TROUGHLINE 3' classic stereo valve tuner; restored and serviced by Haden Boardman; excellent condition; £135. DPA 'The Power' mains filter; excellent condition; £55. Tel: 01978 750151 (Oct/1)

MARANTZ CD10. Mint condition, boxed with manuals and remote control £480 ono. B&W floor standing speakers DM.7. Mk.2 £240 ono. Tel: Lawrence 01273 605310 (Brighton) (Oct/1)

AUDIO ANALOGUE Puccini SE: 1 month use (bought April '98). Receipt, guarantee, boxed. Perfect condition. £395 (was £595). Come on folks, it's a bargain! Tel: 0181 691 0098 (Oct/1)

QUAD 66 pre-amp and remote, manual and boxed, 20 months old vgc £420. Tel: 01903 247779 (Sussex) (Oct/1)

MAGNARPLANAR MG1.4 speakers. Oatmeal grilles with American walnut side cheeks. Excellent condition with boxes and manual. Bargain at £450. Tel: eves. 01793 771286 (Swindon area) (Oct/1)

MUSICAL FIDELITY A1001 integrated amp. As new condition, boxed with manual £1500. Tel: 0181 4521452 (eves. & w/e) (Oct/1)

QUAD 34 control unit, Quad 405 power amp, Quad FM4 tuner, Castle Severn speakers, Sony CD player 502ES, all with boxes and manuals. £1300. Tel: 01622 832356 (Kent) (Nov)

JAMO CONCERT 8 loudspeakers. Only a few months old - superb condition and sound. £775 ono. Tel: Miles 01604 770350 or 0421 995054 (Oct/1)

REVOX PR99 MKIII, PR 99 MKI AND PR99 (replay only). Three in excellent condition for £1400. Studer A62 and B62, excellent, both for £500. Revox G36, excellent condition, £520. Tel: Dublin 4977643 (eves) (Oct/1)

MERIDIAN 101 preamp £50 ono. Tel: 01732 461358 (Oct/1)

LEAK TROUGHLINE tuner, Leak Stereo upgraded. New valves selected versions throughout, all electrolytics renewed, better coaxial cable and converted to phono sockets. £100, including carriage to you. Ring 01823 334275 (evenings) (Oct/1)

AUDIO RESEARCH SPI4, black, £1150. Micromega solo CD player (thick perspex lid) (£1500) £525. Meridian 207 CD/pre-amp, 203 DAC, 209 remote, £425. Acoustat Full Range electrostatic, (£2000) £425. Tel: 01604 584630 (Oct/1)

BANG & OLUFSEN music centre 5500 hi-fi for L.P. records, cassettes, radio, master control panel. 2 Beovox loudspeakers. Serviced, perfect condition £450. With table/cabinet £30. Tel: 0118 9883912 (Oct/1)

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WANTED: TANDBERG
tuner/amp, Model TR2075 MkII.
Tel: 0113 2483656. (Oct(I))

NAIM NAP 140 power
amplifier, new style, modified
and improved by Avondale
Audio £350 ono. Tel: 01925
727243 eves & w/ends (Oct(I))

JAMO CONCERT 8
loudspeakers, mahogany,
absolutely mint condition,
boxed, with owners manual,
£875, (re-advertised due to
time waster), would consider
p/x with Sonus Faber Minuette
(or Minima). Tel: 01843 589554
(Oct(I))

MIDIMAN 'FLYING CALF'
professional 20 bit DAC/
external power supply, new,
boxed, £100. DBS7 speaker kit,
to include veneered wood,
new, boxed, £250. Tel: 01246
237100 after 6pm (Oct(I))

PAIR LOWTHER PM6A drive
units, immaculate cond, £225
ono. Beam-Echo Avantic SPA-
II integrated valve amp £250.
Also pair PM6C drivers (need
re-coning) £80. Tel: Jon 0181
904 8023 eves and w/end (NW
London) (Oct(I))

PIONEER ELITE DVL-90
DVD/LD/CD player. As new
only 3 months old. (List £1450)
£950; PIONEER CLD 2950 with
AC-3/digital audio output/tray
illumination £275. LDs most
AC-3 eg Broken Arrow, HEAT,
Patton, Toy Story and Star
Wars trilogy - boxed set. Tel:
01945 463077 (Oct(I))

LINN LP12 walnut Lingo Ittock
LVII MC cartridge, £750 ono.
Naim 32.55 pre-amplifier, £175.
Naim 110 power amp £255.
A&R 185 speakers Linn Kan
stands, £200. Target four tier
rack £50. Tel: 0171 737 5284
(Oct(I))

MARANTZ CD17, little used,
mint condition £450, Sugden
SDA-I DAC mint condition
£350. Tel: 0141 429 7510
(Glasgow) (Oct(I))

TOWNSHEND
GLASTONBURY 11 £650
WOW DNM 2 pre &
Electrocompaniet Classic
power WOW Parasound 2200
power & 1500 pre £1000
WOW Robertson £250.
Others: Beard P100 MKII valve
Nobis Proteus Valve pre
WOW Want intergrated open
valve. Tel: 01626 774246
(Oct(I))

EPOS ES22 light cherry, boxed,
excellent condition £800 ono.
Tel: 01327 263494 (Oct(I))

MICHELL GYRODEC
bronze/gold, Gyropower-QC,
RB300/ MC10 Super & LVX
£845 ono. Bryston 4B-NRB
poweramp 250+ watts per
channel. Krell like sound &
solidity £745 ono. Both boxed
& perfect. Can demonstrate.
Tel: 01234 713199
(Beds/Bucks). No timewasters!
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PIONEER CT-S740S cassette
deck £200. Review Hi-Fi World
1996. 20 hours use. Arcam
Delta 250 CD transport £450.
Systemdek III turntable /
Mission 774 arm / Supex MC
cartridge, £200. Tel: 01323
767479 (Eastbourne) (Oct(I))

QUAD ESL63, latest spec,
£1500. Naim SBLs, latest spec
£1100. Revox B77 MK2,
immaculate, loadsatapes, £600.
LP12/Ekos/Lingo/Cirkus, £1350
will split. Teac T1 Deltac Little
Bit Three £575. Tel: 01952
502097 (Telford) (Oct(I))

CHARTWELL LS3/5As with
custom-made heavyweight
stands £175. A&R P77 cartridge
(stylus 1 month old) £25.
Brilliant with Kans, LS3/5As,
Tablettes etc. Tel: 0114 272
9967 (Sheffield) (Oct(I))

ARCAM ALPHA 7 CD player
18 months old, boxed, remote,
manual £200. Ixos 104
interconnect £10. DNM Reson
interconnect £20. 2 x 6m Naim
NACA4 speaker cable
terminated £30. Tel: 01733
810516 (Oct(I))

LINN LP12 complete with
Lingo, Ekos and low mileage
Troika £1100. Also Naim NAC
72 with Moving Coil and CD
boards. Excellent condition
owned from new, £375. Tel:
John 01736 757721 (Oct(I))

ARCAM ALPHA 7 integrated
box manuals the lot, mint
condition £170 also Thorens
TD125II with SME 3009II arm
incl. box £100. Tel: 01732
453190 (Kent) (Oct(I))

CHORD I200b £1650. ATC20
towers, walnut, guaranteed
£1050 (£2700). VDH
Revelation 2m set, £250 (£600).
Silver Sounds 8 gauge, 1.7m
biwire, £175 (£600). Trichord
interconnect 0.5m £40 (£100).
Tel: 0131 5567545
s.hussain@ed.sac.ac.uk. (Oct(I))

EAR 509II 100 watt monoblocs
£1400 (£3500), Theta Data
Basic transport £900 (£2400),
Audio Synthesis Dax Ultra
analogue balanced/SE £750
(£2700). Tel: 0181 8886902
answerphone, e-mail:
spulmanjones@lbs.ac.uk (Oct(I))

KEF 104/2 £595, Naim 42.5/140
(mint) £495, Audiolab 8000 c/p
£745, Linn Kaber (black, mint)
£745, Arcam Alpha 6 CD and
6+ amp (r/c and boxed) £545
(may split), Cyrus 3 and PSXR
£545. Tel: 01132 824428
(Leeds) (Oct(I))

COMPLETE SYSTEM: Thorens
TD160 MKII turntable. A&R
Cambridge A60 amplifier.
Marantz CD-65 II. Sansui TU-
S33L tuner. Sansui D-390R
tape. Pair Rogers Compact 50w
speakers, plus stands. £450. Tel:
01892 618352 (Tunbridge
Wells) (Oct(I))

ART AUDIO TEMPOS Class A
triode monoblocks 30 watts
£950 (£2600 new). Valves 8 KT
90's El Yugoslavia unused £20
each. Valves 300B Golden
Dragon 50 hours use £30 each.
Valves 8 6L6 WGC Sovtek 50
hours use £5 each. Tel: 0181
993 2006 (Christos) (Oct(I))

PINK TRIANGLE PT00
turntable (external power
supply) - excellent condition -
two arm boards - £290. Tel:
Derek 01297 489877 (Dorset)
(Oct(I))

MERIDIAN D600 digital active
speaker system, rosewood,
remote, immaculate (2995)
£1350. Lexicon CP3 plus THX
digital surround processor/pre-
amplifier, still boxed (3325)
£1350. Sony SDP-EP9ES digital
surround processor AC-3, still
boxed (599) £350. postage
possible. Tel: 01704 833601
(Oct(I))

ARCAM ALPHA 8 CD £200
(£450). Pioneer 405R amp £75
(£250). Jamo Concert 11
floorstanders cherry
£1200 (£2000). Acoustic Energy
109 floorstanders rosewood
£150 (£350). Audioquest
Quartz interconnect £60
(£130). All mint. Boxed. Less
than one year old. Upgrading.
Tel: Bill (day) 01865 792020
(evening) 01993 851508 mobile
0468 660697 (Oxford) (Oct(I))

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO CDI
£400, Discmagic £100.
Kenwood DP7090 CD player
£200. Pink Triangle PIP preamp
£350. Gamma Space (Reference
III power supply) £1000.
Celestion 7000 ribbon speakers
£250. Gamma Epoch speakers
(£1500) £250. Helios Sirius II
95dB speakers (£2395) £400.
Tel: 0181 672 4319 (Oct(I))

CONRAD-JOHNSON Line
preamp PF-1L. Twin pre-outs,
cost £1600, £850 ono. Chord
SPM1200 power amp, 250
watts channel, balanced,
unbalanced inputs. Cost £3300,
£1550 ono. Tel: 01634 365 153
(Kent) (Oct)

AUDIO RESEARCH LS7 valve
pre amplifier - superb sounding
- A classic. Excellent condition.
Boxed with manual £950 ono.
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AUDIO RESEARCH D200 amp
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AUDIONOTE ANE/S-E L/speakers (rosewood) F. veneer
ARCAM Delta Black Box II Dac
AUDIONOTE M2 Line Pre-amp
CLEARAUDIO Ineder Cartridge
MONITOR AUDIO Studio 30 Speakers (Rosewood) Mint
MUSICAL FIDELITY MVX Pre-amp
JVC 7050 Power Amp Power amp
LUXMAN MQ3600 K188 Stereo Power amp
SPECTRAL REFERENCE Phono Cartridge UNUSED
LUXMAN 5710 Tuner
LUXMAN M2000 amp

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B&W 801 Series II's
BOULDER 250 AE Power Amp MINT
B&W 801 Series II's (With STANDS)
THIEL 1.5 Speakers EX DEM
AUDIO RESEARCH 5Mtr Litz line speaker cable EX DEM (£945)
AUDIO INNOVATIONS 1000 Pre-amp
AUDIO INNOVATIONS First audio (with Border patrol psu)
MARK LEVINSON 332 Power amp
MARK LEVINSON 380s pre-amp EX DEM
MARK LEVINSON 35 Dac EX DEM
MARK LEVINSON M11 Pre-amp with phono
MARK LEVINSON 28 Pre-amp
MILLER & KREISAL MX100 Subwoofer EX CON
MERIDIAN 606 Dac
MERIDIAN Stage 6 Cd Transport
MERIDIAN 263 Dac
MISSION 782 Loudspeakers with stands
VP119 MK3 (dark oak)/Air Tangent/Koetsu Black
PRIMARE 201 Pre-amp with 202 monoblocks
SILTECH 24 Pair of Inter 0.6m terminated Audio clips
SPENDOR BC 100 (inc dedicated stands) MINT/BOXED
FORSELL Cartridge
KOETSU Black MC Cart (Upgraded to hi-spec by Sugano)
KEF 101 MK II Speakers (rosewood) MINT/BOXED
OPA Pre/Power amps (with all connect cables)
KRELL KSA808 Power Amplifier
KRELL KRS Reference Six Box Pre-amp

KEF 104 Loudspeakers
DENON DBS-610 Stereo Cassette Deck
DENON TU-260/260L Stereo Tuner
THETA T1C Jitter Buster (£200 new)
ORACLE Premier Mk III 7table with psu
REVOX B77 Tape Recorder Excellent condition
REVOX PR99 MK3 Tape Deck
REVOX B2155 Cassette Deck
REVOX H6 Tuner
HELIUS Aerius Tonearm MINT
VOYD 7table/SME V & Clearaudio Delta Cart
VOYD 7table (upgraded psu & mtr) / Helius orion
VOYD Standard turntable MINT
VOYD Reference turntable
ORTOFON MC 20 Cartridge (unused) Boxed
MARK LEVINSON 29 Power amp EX CONDITION
MARK LEVINSON 25S Phone Stage & PSU
SME V Gold Plated arm
HELIUS Silver Wired Tonearm
DENON PDA 4400A Monoblocks EX CON

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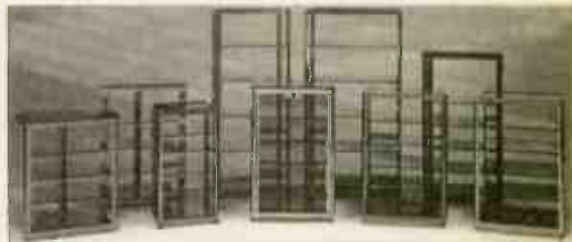
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QUAD 34 pre-amp £80. Tel: 01892 544681 (eve) 0171 465 027 (day) (Oct/1)

INN LP12, Ittok, Troika, Naim NAC 52, 6 x 135s, crossover, soboriks £10950. Lexicon CPI processor £595, 4 x Deva 600 power amps £595 each. Nakamichi 1000 ZXL £1495. Naim Naxo 2/4 crossover & hi-cap (new styles) £595. All in excellent condition. Tel: 0385 560669 (Manchester) (Oct/1)

TANNOY III LZ speakers. Dual-concentric. Good condition. £295. B&W DM14, light ash, matching stands. Excellent condition. Upgrade forces sale £150 ono. Radio Designers Handbook, 4th edition, original £45. Tel: 01892 662967 (Oct/1)

MONITOR AUDIO Studio 20SE loudspeakers. What Hi-Fi 5 star and reference system, multi-award winner. Genuine reason for sale. Absolutely immaculate, boxed (new £2500) £1550. Delivery and demonstration can be arranged. Tel: 01924 870606. (Nov/1)

MUSICAL FIDELITY A1000 £800, Arcam BB50 DAC Delta 250 transport £450. Kef Q90 Uni-Q speakers (750) £350 ono. Sansui AU 707DR amplifier (1500) £500 ono (monster) 22kg, mint. Nakamichi BX2 needs attention £50. Wanted: Technics SLP2000 CD player and ST GT 650L tuner or ST GT 550L. Tel: 0121 783 3928 (Oct/1)

LINN LP 12, black, Aro arm, Toika, PSU, Target 2 tier stand £1050. Naim NAC72 £400. Sony CDPI01 and CDPI02 £75 each. Meridian 105 monoblocks £300. Tel: 01243 262235 (Oct)

KRELL KST100 power amp, 100 watts Class A per channel, balanced and unbalanced inputs. Cost £3200, boxed as new, £1350 ono. Tel: 01634 365 153 (Kent) (Oct/1)

LOUDSPEAKERS
CELESTION SL700 matched pair including dedicated matching bolt on stands, stunning high end, bi-wirable stand mouncers in granite grey (mint) (£1500+ new) £750 ono. Tel: 01590 642737 (Hants) 0467 887028 (mobile) (Oct/1)

NAIM NAC 82 pre-amp mint, boxed, as new £1400. Creek CD06 CD player, boxed, mint (new £600) £250 ono. DPA enlightenment transport and DAC, mint cond. need cash hence £750 (both). Quad 77 carbon finish amp boxed, mint, £380. Roksan Xerxes Artmize Shiraz, black ash, boxed. excellent cond. £750 ono. Tel: Jules 01792 280 061 (Oct/1)

WANTED. B&W DM70 improved loudspeakers with curved 702 electrostatic units (or Sony SS 7000 electrostatics). Any condition or parts or spares considered Tel: 01703 732 024 or 01373 822 767 (Oct/1)

NAKAMICHI BX300/BX202 £300 each ono. Nakamichi CASE pre-amplifier £200. Power/amp NAD 902, new £150 ono.. Russian valve amp, new £400 Luxman receiver £150..Luxman T12 tuner £300. Thorens I25 £100. JBL 4410 £400. Tel: 01494 721 274 (Amersham, Bucks) (Oct)

WANTED. QUAD 67 CD.
Tel: 01452 523 077 or 0385 381 699 (Oct/1)

NAIM NAT-02 Tuner. New style, little used and in excellent condition. Boxed £550. Tel: 01746 766 236 (Oct/1)

NAIM SBL Latest drive units, Mana stands and 2x7m cable £975. Naim Nait 3 & Chord interconnect £350. Rega Ela and 2x5m cable £300. Tel: 01273 326 556 (Oct/1)

CASTLE HARLECH Speakers, cherry, 3 months old, cost £875 new. Offers around half price?. Tel: 0121 455 7375 (Birmingham) (Oct/1)

MUSICAL FIDELITY A1000. 50w Class A amplifier £950. Living Voice Auditorium loudspeakers £850. Monarchy 22B 20bit DAC £450. Pair 6m Metors silver coated loudspeaker cable £85. Tel: 0161 291 9331 (Oct/1)

KRELL FPB 300 Power amp £7500 (£9500) Krell KRC3 Mk2 preamp £2500 (£3250). Both units 3 months old, boxed, mint with full 5 year warranty. No dreamers please. Tel: 0141 248 2948 (Oct/1)

SUGDEN OPTIMA CD Player £300. Ruthwell passive/active preamp £250. TDL Studio 0.5 loudspeakers £200. Various classical CDs (2-10 shift worker) Tel: 01254 606 272 (Oct/1)

LEAK TL12 (2 pairs) £550 per pair or £1000 the lot. Leak Stereo 20 (x3) from £225. Garrard 401/SME 3012 £350. Cambridge Audio R50 mint, offers. Wharfedale Airedale corner units £220. Lockwood LE1 cabs £40. Stentorian corner units £300. Tel: 07970 416197 (Oct/1)

LINN LP12 + Cirkus + Lingo + Ekos Mk2 + Benz Micro Ruby open cartridge (new £1600) + Mana two level table £1800. Sony Professional Walkman WMD6C + Naim power supply £175 (new over £450) All the equipment new and little used. Tel: 0181 670 6411 (Oct/1)

MERIDIAN 562V with 516 mm phono £525; 563 DAC (20-bit upgrade to 566) £525; 506 Mk2 CD £495; 518 audio processor £575; MSR £40; boxed, immaculate. Tel: 01380 859526 email: neil@kjaerlig.force9.co.uk (Oct/1)

ROKSAN XERXES, walnut, XPSIII/DSU, Tabriz-Zi £550. Meridian 506 CD player, 2 years old, £525. Naim mm boards, suit 62 preamp £30. All in very good condition with boxes. Tel: Richard 07970 862 187 (W.London) (Oct/1)

LINN KABERS, best spec (Granite stands, Ku-stone lined, creamic tweeter, etc) £875 (new £2000). NVA A80 monoblocks £675 (£1650). NVA P80 pre-amp, £175 (£450). CableTalk Broadcast 2 £60 (£110). Chord Flatline 4.5m £55 (£110). Tel: day 0370 893531, eve 0118 9412221 (Berks.). (Oct/1)

NAIM S.B.L. speakers, black ash, mint condition. These superb speakers can be demonstrated in a 52/135's system. £850 ono Tel: 01443 405347 (Oct/1)

MICROMEGA STAGE 5 (£600), Naim NAC 92 new style (£330) NAP 90 old style (£150) TDL RTL2 (£130). All mint boxed. Tel: Naheed 0973 451164 / 01268 406071 (day) (Oct/1)

MERIDIAN 500/566, £1450. Meridian 502/557, £1695. Linn Keilidhs, plinths, LK400 £495. Cyrus Isoplat, £17. Sondek armboard for RB300, £7. Audio Technica ATH9000 Electret headphones, their best, £145. Tel: 01793 526796 (Oct/1)

KEF REFERENCE 105/3 black loudspeakers vgc. Little used, been in storage. Cost new £2200, asking £800. Audiolab 8000T tuner vgc asking for £400. Tel: 0115 9223677 anytime (Oct/1)

Audio Innovations 800 Anniversary amplifier. Boxed with certificate, just serviced, mint condition £700 ono, Pioneer PDI CD 9 months old, remote, as new £75 Tel: Jonathon 01608 811908 eves. (Oct/1)

PAIR OF GALE AS 401 speakers, boxed, £200. Chord Chameleon interconnect leads, unused, boxed, £40 (cost £85). Tel: 01606 554272 (Cheshire) (Oct)

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