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SMART LINKING

Pioneer VSX-AXS1 i.LINK receiver



MARCH 2004

CROFT TWINSTAR * PRO-JEKT PHONOBOX LE *
MARANTZ CD7300 / CREEK T50 * CES 2004 REPORT
*** MARANTZ PM17KI-M * SENNHEISER HD650**



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david price

Audio is now a multi-billion dollar business, and hi-fi a vast industry that spans every part of the globe from China to the Czech Republic. Nowhere was this more apparent than at January's Las Vegas Consumer Electronics Show, where no less than 129,000 people came from all around the world to see

what was hot. Glance the future on pages 38 to 41.

Pioneer is one of Japan's most respected hi-fi brands, although outside the land of the Rising Sun, many audiophiles fail to understand why this marque is special. From the PL12D turntable on, it has consistently come up with innovative, high tech products that raise the game - and its new VSX-AX5i is no exception. It's an AV receiver with a direct digital i.Link connection, and all the audio number crunching is done right next to the power amp stage for tremendously commanding surround sound. Read all about it on page 34.

Marantz was originally an American company, that was owned by Philips and is now Japanese - as such it is a truly international brand. We've been most impressed with its budget CD spinners over the years, and the new CD7300 is no exception - as you'll see on page 19. But overseas, it's more usually associated with higher end gear, such as the superb new PM-17 KI-M integrated amplifier reviewed on page 70.

Of course, Britain has no shortage of homegrown talent. For such a small island, we've an embarrassment of riches. This month we audition the new Creek CD50II CD player on page 19, and the matching T50 tuner on page 23. Croft's TwinStar power amplifier gets the thumbs up on page 50, as does Origin Live's stunning new Aurora Gold turntable on page 59. Factor in our supertest of loudspeakers on page 11 from Wharfedale, KEF, Mission, Epos and Monitor Audio, and *Hi-Fi World* is bursting with cool new bits of kit.

This month also sees a newly expanded *World Standards* and *World Classics* - listing all the best in new and historic hi-fi on page 91. And we'd also like to welcome LJK Setright, one of this country's leading writers, as a new columnist. You can read his views, which are as outspoken as they are erudite, on page 87.

David Price

how we test the products:

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

WORLD VERDICTS:

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

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

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HI-FI WORLD

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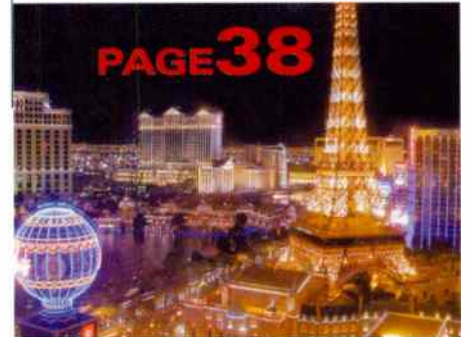
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visit our website for a comprehensive list of all the products we have reviewed over the past 11 years

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Kandy

**It's not all
black and white.**



Roksan, for those with a little more grey matter.

email:news@hi-fiworld.co.uk

news

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Sennheiser has released special editions of its popular PX100 and PX200 headphones, with styling cues taken from its seminal headphones of yore.

The £29.95 PX 100 Retro is an open design modelled on the company's seminal HD414 from the late nineteen sixties (which ran right through to the eighties), while the £39.95 PX200 Chrome closed back design adds chrome highlights to the capsule body, making for a very stylish looking pair of cans.

PX100



PX200



Both designs are ultra-light, with soft earpads and padded headbands. They fold up for transport, and come with a hard case including a cable reel. They're serious hi-fi performers, with neodymium iron magnets and low-mass diaphragms for low distortion and high resolution – Hi-Fi World rates them as the best performers in their price bracket. For more information, call 0800 652

5002 or click on www.sennheiser.co.uk

RIO'S BACK

Digital music lovers will remember the Diamond Multimedia Rio MP3 portable – launched in 1999, this was the first music player to use flash memory to play music on the move, and the subject of a failed lawsuit by the RIAA (Recording Industry Association of America) in a bid to outlaw MP3 music. The Rio then went through various guises (such as S3 and SonicBlue), only to disappear from the UK market. Well now the range is back on sale here via Amazon (www.amazon.co.uk), comprising the £279.99 Karma (a 20Gigabyte iPod-rival) and the £168.49 Nitrus (1.5GB pocketable device). Stateside, the Rio Karma has posed a serious threat to the iPod, thanks to its cigarette packet size, 20GB storage, USB 2.0 and superior feature count. It comes with a cradle with an Ethernet connection for use with wireless home networks, plus a line input for recording from a hi-fi system and Ogg Vorbis open source audio format support. For more information, click on

www.riovolution.com

KEEP MOVING

Grundig has a rather dashing new DAB (Digital Audio Broadcasting) portable in the shape of its new GDR300. Designed for use on the move, it features an internal aerial, headphone socket and six station pre-sets. A blue LCD screen displays information on radio programmes, artists and songs. Three AA batteries provide up to 16 hours of continuous listening, the manufacturer claims. It costs £119 from Dixons or Currys.



MEDIA MATTERS

Although the specialist hi-fi separates market is likely to remain largely untouched, computers are now seriously encroaching on music and video playback in the home. One very significant development is the recent introduction of Microsoft Media Center PCs to the UK. They run a special version of the Windows XP operating system that lets users control all their PC's entertainment features by remote control. So far, around fifteen manufacturers have models for the British market, all of which feature an analogue or digital TV tuner, PVR (personal video recorder) software, a digital music jukebox, DVD player and personal photo album. First to market was Evesham Technologies' with its Emedia Tower 2.8, featuring an Intel Pentium4 2.8GHz processor with HT Technology, 160GB hard disk, 512MB DDR RAM (PC2700), Sony DW-U14A Multi Format DVD writer and a ViewSonic 17" widescreen TFT, complete with a choice of analogue or digital TV card, for £1,800.

Interestingly however, Steve Jobs (CEO of Microsoft's arch rival Apple) recently stated that his company wasn't interested in producing these type of 'media center' products because he sees the market as being too small. He said that video recording is processor-intensive and is best left to a device that is not doing other things such as playing games or running spreadsheets – such as a personal computer. He's reported as saying that, "When I want to record The West Wing, I want to make damn sure it records The West Wing". This has met with no small degree of surprise, as Apple was expected to unveil a 'media center' type product to take on the new wave of Microsoft-based PCs next year. Many analysts believe that the next big thing in consumer electronics is the wireless home, and see Apple's operating system, running multi-roomed streamed audio and video, as ideal for this.



RICHER VISIONS

Videophiles on a budget may be interested to know that Richer Sounds are selling the Philips DVDR75 for just £199.95 – making it the cheapest DVD recorder on sale in the UK. For more information, click on

www.richersounds.com

MD GETS HI

CES also saw Sony announce Hi-MD, an evolution of its popular MiniDisc format into a versatile recording media that also delivers PC data such as images and text file recording capabilities, while maintaining playback compatibility with the current products and ensuring copyright security. Sony is bullish about its venerable MD format, which it says is now licensed by almost 80 hardware and media manufacturers, and claims cumulative MD media and hardware shipments of 1.1 billion and 80 million respectively (as of the end of fiscal year 2003). Hi-MD sees the company moving the format into the broadband era, with a versatile media capable of recording a variety of content, such as music and images, while maintaining its high quality sound. By formatting an existing MD into the Hi-MD format, its density can be increased to almost double the current maximum capacity (up to 300MB per 80-minute MD). In addition, a new 1GB Hi-MD disc has been developed, realizing a maximum recording time of 45 hours (using a 1GB Hi-MD at 48kbps). It uses a new ATRAC3plus audio compression technology, claimed to deliver high data compression while maintaining quality of sound, and also permits linear PCM recording for the first time, giving full CD-quality sound. The new range of Hi-MD WALKMAN products, including Sony's £300 MZ-NH1 (shown) launches in April. Sony also announced the impending arrival of its Connect music download service, expected around the same time and offering tracks for around 70p per download. For more details, click on www.sony-europe.com.



WEBWATCH

Here's something for serious students of nineteen seventies high end hi-fi. Right now this curiously entitled website is quite sparsely populated, but it still has a tantalising range of audio esoterica from the decade that taste forget, from Marantz's seminal TT1000 turntable to Sony's most expensive ever integrated amplifier, the TA8650...

www.thevintagehifi.co.uk

ALPHA MAIL

Hi-fi mail order specialist Russ Andrews Accessories has won two major mail-order home shopping industry awards. The company, famed for its audio, video and turntable accessories and Kimber Kable distribution, received an award for Best Catalogue Company and Best Transactional Website (with a turnover of up to £1.5m) at the European Catalogue and Mail Order awards in November. Competitors for the awards included Laura Ashley, dabs.com, Charles Tyrwhitt and RS components. Marketing Director Kirsteen Andrews said, "We're all absolutely delighted... We've only been selling from our website for six months so to have it judged 'Best Transactional Website' was a fantastic achievement. The team here put a great deal of work into ensuring that the website was clear and easy to use, we've had great

feedback from customers and this award is the icing on the cake." For more information, click on

www.russandrews.com





Q HERE

KEF Audio has released preliminary details of its forthcoming trio of new Q Series loudspeakers, to be introduced in early 2004. The KEF Q Series line-up now includes an entry-level bookshelf/stand mount – Q compact, alongside a mid-priced elegant floorstander, Q4 – and a modestly-priced AV dedicated centre channel speaker, the Q6c. These

additions to the Q Series, already famous as being one of KEF's most successful and popular ranges in recent years, brings the Q Series selection up to a total of nine offerings; all at affordable price points. Q4 sports a 130mm Uni-Q Driver

Array, elliptical cabinet design and magnetic shielding in a 3-way reflex floorstanding design, and comes in a choice of Black Ash, Dark Apple or Maple finishes for £399.99. Q compact (pictured) is a 2-way design featuring the same 130mm Uni-Q Driver Array for £199.99, and Q6c costs £149.99. For more information, call 01622 672261 or click on www.kef.com.

UNI TIME!

Linn's brand new UNIDISK SC player was unveiled at Las Vegas's CES show [see DP's Show Report on p38], said to "facilitate access to all the new high-definition music and movie formats and deliver superb high-quality multi-channel playback". Linn says the player automatically recognises and plays the disc in its optimum format, so CD, Super Audio CD, DVD-Video and DVD-Audio are handled independently with the precise decoding solution for which they were designed. It also offers digital decoding for secondary sources, allowing buyers to enjoy satellite television, console gaming or a secondary 2-channel audio sources in full 5.1 surround sound without the need for a separate system controller. It has a wide range of video outputs including progressive scan, component, S-Video and composite, plus phono and balanced analogue outputs plus S/PDIF and optical digital. Decode options include Dolby Digital, Dolby Pro Logic II, dts and AAC. The company also previewed its new four-strong range of ARTIKULAT loudspeakers, KINOS Multi-Channel AV System Controller, plus Enhanced Kontrol Platform (EKP) and VEKTO Network Translators for Linn KNEKT multi-room use. For more details, click on www.linn.co.uk.



MUVO-VER

Creative's new MuVo2 4GB personal digital audio player sports a 4GB Compact Flash Type II microdrive, USB 2.0 connectivity for fast downloads, MP3 and WMA audio playback for under £280. The company claims it bridges the gap between flash media-based players and personal jukeboxes, thanks to its combination of generous storage capacity (over 64 hours or 1,050 songs of MP3, or over 128 hours or 2,100 songs of WMA) and ultra-compact (65x65mm) dimensions. It also claims excellent measured performance, with a signal-to-noise ratio of 98dB. It comes with Creative MediaSource, multifunctional software for audio conversion, archiving and management via a PC.

MuVo2 also comes with a 4-band equaliser and a removable

lithium-ion battery that gives up to 14 hours continuous playback and can be recharged either via the USB connection or its power supply. For more information, click on

www.creative.com



DISC DEVELOPMENTS

Media watchers will doubtless be thrilled to know that there's yet another new optical disc standard on the horizon, the 30GB Ultra Density Optical disk. Mitsubishi Kagaku Media (MKM) has announced it has signed a contract with Plasmon PLC for the production and sales rights to its Ultra Density Optical (UDOTM) discs. Scheduled for shipment in the autumn of 2004, the discs will be sold under the MITSUBISHI brand in Japan and throughout the world under the VERBATIM brand. They were developed by Plasmon and use similar cartridges to 5.25-inch MO discs, but use blue lasers to give a recording capacity of 30GB, which is three times that of the highest capacity existing 5.25-inch MO discs (9.1GB). Hewlett-Packard and Plasmon have already announced the launch of drives and jukeboxes based on UDO technology. For details, point your browser at

www.verbatim-europe.com.

X MARKS THE SPOT

Sony's new PlayStation console is claimed to be more than just a games machine, but a fully featured home entertainment centre.

Originally on sale in Sony's native Japan on 13th December 2003, it comprises a PS2, hard disk drive, DVD recorder and TV tuner. Some features that had been previously specified have been removed from it, however, such as MP3 and DVD+RW support. It still offers the ability to record over 200 hours of TV on to its 160GB hard disk, plus 12-speed recording of TV programmes to DVD (meaning a hour long programme takes around five minutes to copy) and ATRAC

music file compatibility.

The PSX sells in Japan for about £420, with a deluxe version with a 250GB drive costing around £500. Expect it in the US and Europe 'sometime' in 2004...

next issue

April 2004 sees a wide range of products from all over the hi-fi world:

PROJECT RPM 9X

This heavily modded version of an old favourite turntable should put its rivals in a spin.

ROKSAN M SERIES INTEGRATED

After the Radius turntable, Roksan is on a roll. We hear this brand new £1,000 amplifier.

DECCA LONDON SUPER GOLD

We revisit this classic cartridge from the swinging sixties.

ANATEK AUDIO A50

The Class A amplifier that runs cold – surely not! But that's what they say...

CAMBRIDGE 640A AZUR

Can this new budget amp shine as brightly as the recent CD spinner did?

VIETA ELECTROSTATICS

Superb sonics meet stunning styling with these Italian panel loudspeakers.

next issue

CREATIVE LABS I-TRIGUE 3500 £149.99

Computer audio has spawned an entirely new breed of transducer, the 'multimedia loudspeaker'. Although most are simply cheap and nasty, there have also been some stunning examples, like TDK's S80. The 'sub and satellite' (i.e. 2.1) formula melds sound engineering principles and ('scuse the pun) 'out of the box' thinking. Over the past thirty or so years, audiophiles have been conditioned into assuming that massive, multi-driver loudspeakers (i.e. 2.0) are the only way to go. But 'sub and sat' systems have shown that there's more than one way of skinning the proverbial cat. Creative Labs' new I-Trigue L3500 uses tiny satellites, each with two front firing titanium 'microdrivers' plus a single side-mounted lateral firing transducer. Being active, they get their own amplification, while the single mono sub uses another power amplifier, effectively meaning they're bi-amplified. Round the back, the sub



sports RCA line in and stereo headphone connectors. There's even an illuminated remote control too, for volume, power and bass.

For a sub-£150 design, the kit sounds intriguingly good. It's big, fast and clean - very open with a detailed and lucid midband. Treble is smooth too, but not as extended as it could be - or so I thought until I remembered that I was listening to a £150 speaker (with amps built in)! Bass is large and punchy - giving far greater physicality than any small standmounter. It has speed and slam,

and integrates well with the satellites if you judiciously tune it. Ultimately, it's a little prone to 'one noting' and just a little boomy (thanks to the reflex port), but I'd defy any equivalently priced standmounter to match it. Best of all is the way the Creative Labs package can project out into a medium size room - soundstaging is sublime, and there's oodles of power from the sub to back it up. The result is a genuinely impressive bit of kit - even judged in so called 'serious' hi-fi terms.

www.europe.creative.com

PRO-JECT PHONOBOX LIMITED EDITION

To celebrate the sale of no less than 100,000 units, the normally rather dour looking Pro-ject Phonobox has had a makeover more dramatic than anything Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen could muster! The Limited Edition model you see here is gets lavish gold plating (yes, really) for its 30x112x115mm case, with silk-screened logos in black. Inside, the manufacturer says 'selected components of higher tolerances' have been used. Then there's the quaint wooden case, which is akin to something you'd expect a medal to come in, and even a small framed 'certificate' of authenticity signed by the hand of Pro-ject's president himself! All in all it's a very nice, albeit ridiculously over-the-top, package - available for a piffling £65. But hurry, as only 500 LE models are being made.

The Phonobox has both MM and MC inputs, accessible rather



inconveniently inside the case by moving jumpers, giving a claimed gain of 32 and 53dB respectively. With Goldring G1042 MM and Ortofon Kontrapunkt B MC cartridges, it was a cracker. It sounds far better than any of the other bargain basement phono stages I've heard, with a smooth and articulate sound - if just a little tonally dry. Of course, it's not

up to the £250 designs (Michell, Musical Fidelity, Creek et al), but isn't dramatically worse, either - whereas the other cheapies are. Musical, dynamic, engaging, decently detailed and surprisingly spacious - this has got to be the best value phono preamp on the market right now.

www.henleydesigns.co.uk

Floor-ed Genius?



Traditionally, one of the British hi-fi industry's most successful areas is that of loudspeakers, where we boast a wealth of big name brands. More recently, floorstanders have become all the rage, offering the promise of a fuller, wider bandwidth sound. Noel Keywood decided to round up the pick of the latest mid-price designs from Epos, KEF, Mission, Monitor Audio and Wharfedale...

The promise of a large floor-stander is a big sound, giving a performance to wow your friends and family. But it isn't that simple, as loudspeaker designers often have other ideas about what to do with all that extra box volume. In some cases, like the Epos M15.2 reviewed here (and the Mordaunt Short 914 we use as a reference), that extra space inside is filled with sand! Then there are all those bass drivers. Now we all like good low frequencies, but too much subsonic wallowing will give you a headache. Not all floorstanders are created equal therefore, so we decided to look at five modern examples to see precisely what they have to offer.

In the past, a big twelve inch bass unit was a clear declaration of intent - the good big ones of yore, like large Tannoys, moved lots of air and went genuinely low. But you'll not see many like this anymore, as 'twelve inchers' need big, wide cabinets, which means poor imaging. For precision you need a nice narrow cab with well rounded edges, which explains why all these contemporary designs are tall and slim.

Smaller bass drivers means less bass however, so to resolve the conflict between imaging and weight, smaller low frequency drivers are

stacked up in pairs, below a conventional bass/midrange unit with tweeter - a la Monitor Audio S8. You need cone area for gut-thumping bass, and this is one way of getting it. Using not one but two ported enclosures makes for an acoustically complex loudspeaker, capable of delivering real bass power in the home, but this in turn leaves room open for other weaknesses somewhere or other.

Buying loudspeakers solely on the basis of the number of drivers isn't necessarily a guarantee of quality, therefore - as always it ain't what you do, it's the way that you do it. To take the example of the MA S8, it still measures very well despite its obvious complexity, and is proof of designer Dean Hartley's audio engineering prowess. But those big multi-driver speakers from little known manufacturers selling at unfeasibly low prices don't give such happy results, nor do those 'studio monitors' selling from the back of a white van at petrol stations. So the message is - choose carefully and don't expect something for nothing!

Engineering quality isn't the only important factor, either. Remember that loudspeakers are designed by humans who make subjective decisions about what's likely to sell well. No two designers are going to

agree on much of this - at least, not the ones I have met. Our tests clearly show what sort of approach is being used, but only you can decide whether it is what you want. Another variable is your listening room. For example, MA's S8 really produces bass, but I suspect that in a square-ish, resonant room (let's say 12ft x 14ft) it will likely sound boomy, whereas in a larger room it be better damped, and balanced. For smaller rooms the Mission or Epos are likely to suit. They will not over-excite it and will work close to a rear wall.

Loudspeaker engineering now is an exact science in which computers play a large part. Modern designs from specialist manufacturers like these give a good performance that's fundamentally accurate. The variations that exist here are reflections more of the design approach used than problems of design. Our measurements and listening tests reveal just what it is these five floorstanders offer. At the end of the day whether they suit you will depend upon what you want from a speaker, and the room you put them in. If it's a big sound you want, in line with the speaker's presence in a room, then some of the models reviewed here are just the ticket...

EPOS M15.2 £699

VERDICT ●●●●

Fast, light, airy sound allied to a real 'joie de vivre' will win them friends, but not the most neutral or transparent at the price.

EPOS M15 £699
Epos Acoustics
T: +44 (0) 1442 260 146
www.epos-acoustics.com

Good news for Epos aficionados. The new version of the M15, the M15.2, is significantly less expensive. You get more 'speaker for less money; the new version is 50mm taller and it's possible to fill the bottom quarter with sand to give extra stability and resonance damping. These are fairly heavy as supplied (8kg before sand), so extra weight would give them a splendid advantage over smaller stand mounted models. Sand filling really does work too, dramatically improving bass quality and timing, as well as general cleanliness in the delivery of transients. As dried Silver Sand is very heavy though, it makes moving the 'speaker difficult.

The 150mm woofer features a new Epos die-cast chassis instead of the plastic chassis used in the earlier model. The tweeter is similar to that used in the M12.2, a 25mm aluminium dome with ferrofluid cooling and a neodymium magnet system. These 'speakers feature a metal grille which surprised me. If you hold one end and tap the other, it rings (at one octave below middle C). However, the grill is held in place by four lugs which should prevent them from adding their own contribution to the sound.

As usual, these come with spikes. They also come with discs about the size of a thick 10p coin. In the centre of one side, there is a very small dent and it is quite fun

getting the spikes to locate correctly in each of the four discs. These aren't mentioned in the otherwise excellent manual, but there's lots of commonsense advice about positioning, running in and recommended amplifier power, from 25 watts to 150 per channel. I was not convinced that a 25 watt per channel amp would get much from these speakers - twice that would be better!

Higher frequencies from the M15.2s are rather prominent, giving a forward presentation. Soprano voice could raise the hairs on the back of my neck in some recordings. The stereo image was mostly stable and there was a lovely 'airy' effect to the sound. Although the M15.2 is a little bright in character, it is not unpleasant or hard. Rather, this lightness has the effect of making bass seem reticent at a first listen. The M15.2s are vigorous, making music sound enthusiastic. Like all revealing loudspeakers though, they are not forgiving of poor recordings!

Low frequency performance from the M15.2s was not the strongest, lacking weight. What there was, was very clean and detailed, which explains the feeling of overall lightness. The manual suggests you place the speakers at 20cm from a rear wall. Further away will reduce the quantity of bass, but it will sound cleaner. Too close and any speaker will produce more bass, but it will be lumpy and boomy. I used them as



suggested, firing down a 24ft long room, but they remained lighter in delivery than the others in the group. These won't be the choice for those into heavy low frequencies, but in other respects they proved fairly impressive all-rounders.

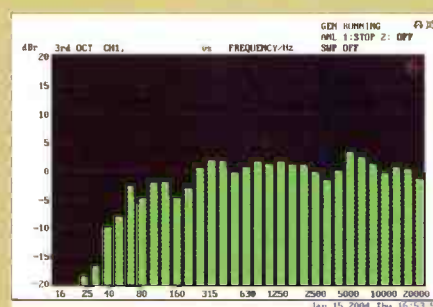
MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The tweeter of this two way has an inherently smooth response, our analysis shows. However, there were some variations in frequency response flatness around the crossover region, according to microphone vertical position, due to phase cancellation and addition. Integration was a bit variable and this may result in a slightly less cohesive presentation than is possible, with the tweeter making its presence more known. A few dB of lift in output around 5kHz will likely reinforce this effect, as well as adding a little sharpness to the sound at times, with music possessing treble energy.

Further down the frequency band output reaches smoothly down to 250Hz before starting to fall away slowly. There is some bass shelving that will make the Epos sound lighter and drier in bass output than most rivals, which veer in the other direction, i.e. bass lift. With output at 63Hz around -2dB down the fall isn't great, but it will be quiet. The port works around 20Hz and contributes little higher up, being sharply tuned. The M15.2 is probably best positioned close to a rear wall to counteract damped output, whereas it should sound tight and fast.

A high overall impedance of 80ohms and a port that

has little damping effect upon the drive unit's main resonance characterise the M15.2. The loudspeaker tends toward an infinite baffle in fact, and this ties in with its highly damped bass response. There's little resonance, apart from that around bass resonance, which with high impedance makes the Epos an easy load. It inevitably lacks sensitivity though, requiring a low 8dB form one watt, the lowest of the group alongside the Mission. It needs power, a minimum of 50watts ideally, to show off a fast, well damped sound which one with less bass and body than rivals. NK



KEF Q5 £599

The Q5 is described as a 'two and a half way' loudspeaker with a sound that matches its looks: "discrete and authoritative" according to KEF. The design is more sophisticated than the usual two-way, employing a coaxial Uni-Q driver with tweeter placed at the throat of the bass unit, reflex loaded by the front port seen beneath it. A coaxial tweeter gives great image focus, irrespective of listener position, an area where the Uni-Qs excel. Below the Uni-Q sits a supplementary bass driver, reflex loaded by a rear port. The rear panel is narrower than the front, the cabinet being remarkably similar in overall shape and size to the Wharfedale Evolution 20 in this group test.

I'm not sure that KEF's term 'discrete' best describes this loudspeaker, as the sound was big in character with full sounding bass. If the 'speakers are placed too close to the walls, bass will increase and a boom a little. That's what the supplied foam bungs are for - bung it in the holes and you lose this, making near-wall placement a viable option. A useful touch - and a tip for owners of all ported loudspeakers (if your box booms, then stuff something inside the port and it will stop!)

The Q5 struck me as a fine all round design - I was unable to trip it up with many different types of music. The delicacy at the start of

'Your Own Sweet Way' by the Notting Hillbillies was well reproduced, as was 'Dance The Night Away' by The Mavericks. But then, when that Mavericks song starts up it's feet-tapping good stuff. All the rock music I threw at the Q5s came out well and was enjoyable too. That slightly boomy bass helped give the sound punch under these circumstances, but it was not quite so accurate with classical music.

Listening to choirs and the very difficult female voice revealed a slight hardness with some CDs, but others were good. A good test of the low frequencies in my room is a CD of Hymns with the Huddersfield Choral Society. The first track contains powerful deep organ music and it was reproduced well. I like to stand some distance away during this track and the Q5s showed that they are capable of filling my long room very well. With the foam bungs bass did indeed reduce on tracks like this, and the sound also became tighter, albeit a little constricted after the open quality of bung-less operation (which is the inevitable trade-off).

'Loquebantur variis linguis' (Thomas Tallis) on the CD, 'Faire is the Heaven' was a very pleasant experience. The sopranos sang their way up to the higher registers without difficulty, something I found delightful. Treble was smooth and revealing, reproducing different notes in the higher registers differently.



There was some lack of sweetness however; whilst nothing seemed to be added to the sound, a little hardness tinged some tracks of a few CDs. A fine, large, expansive sounding design then, with just a touch of bass boom and upper mid hardness.

VERDICT ●●●●£

Large, powerful and expansive sound with fine imaging will impress, but a touch of upper mid hardness makes careful partnering essential.

KEF Q5 £599
 Kef Audio (UK)
 (C) + (0)1622 872281
 www.kef.com

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

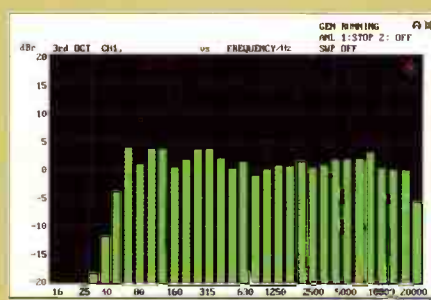
The Q5 has sustained output right down to 53Hz, rolling off slowly below 50Hz a long room. With overall bass level up to 300Hz or so boosted by many dB above midrange and treble the Q5 will sound both full and heavyweight. It will also have body to its sound. The rear port loading the lower bass unit peaks around 50Hz - quite highly tuned for a large floorstander. This will support low music fundamentals, adding weight to bass guitar and rock like. The front port is broad topped, reaching down to 30Hz, so it too provides substantial low frequency output from the Uni-Q driver. The lower bass unit in effect increases cone area and improves low frequency power handling, reducing distortion.

The Uni-Q coaxial midrange/treble unit extends up through the midrange smoothly, with lift in output around 7kHz. This will sharpen up the sound a little and may be heard as a hard edge at times with brightly balanced CDs. The tweeter maintains output right up to 10kHz before rolling down; there's no lack of upper treble.

At low frequencies the impedance characteristic of the Q5 was normal enough, with a resistive part below 10Hz measuring 4ohms, effectively the loudspeaker's DCR. There was a dip at 50Hz caused by the port then

the usual increase in Z due to voice coil inductance. However, at 50Hz impedance drops steeply to a few ohms, the Q5 becoming very reactive. This isn't the easiest load for an amplifier, but it was the most sensitive loudspeaker of the group, producing no less than 89dB from one watt, so it is not especially power hungry.

It will give a big sound with plenty of bass, excellent image focus and good detailing. Dynamics will be good, but timing well defined also. It measured well. NX



MISSION 782SE £899

VERDICT ●●●●●

Excellent all rounders with an extremely crisp and transparent sound, although need serious power amplification and careful positioning.

MISSION 782SE £899
Symplinnix Ltd
+44 (0)1480 423700
www.mission.co.uk

At 14kg weight and 19 litres effective volume, the Mission 782se is both small but surprisingly heavy, especially at the price point – it's the most expensive in the group. There's a built-in plinth which can be unscrewed and removed, but there is almost certainly no need to do this. As with the other speakers, a set of spikes is provided with adjustment to enable firm and level mounting.

These 'speakers are a three-way with reflex loaded bass unit, although from the pictures you would think they are two-way. The small bass/midrange unit you can see at the top of the cabinet is supplemented by a fill-in lower bass unit, situated at the side near the bottom of the cabinet. They can be positioned with the bass units facing in or out, Mission advise, according to taste. It's necessary to experiment because this will alter bass quality as well as sound stage width (they say). As with some of the others in this test, the recommended starting point distance from the rear walls is a close 20cms. The distance from each side wall is a recommended minimum of half a metre.

The tweeter is – unusually - below the midrange unit. I started listening in a somewhat laid back position to get my ears at the same height as the tweeter, but this

proved needless, as there was no difference when I sat up. This demonstrates superb integration of tweeter with the midrange unit, as with the other speakers it was necessary (and advised in one case) to have the ears at tweeter height.

Indeed, subjectively I found the 782se a very integrated sounding speaker. That word sums up the overall performance well. The biggest difference from the others (apart from the Epos) was low efficiency; it was necessary to increase the volume control noticeably to get the same sound level from the 782s. All the same, the overall sound was definitely 'big' in character, as big as the others in this test, even though the Missions have smaller cabinets. The quality of finish of these matched the Monitor Audio as being the best in the test.

The Missions were excellent at presenting ambience, sounding very clear and resonant. Their bass was good in quality, but by no means overwhelming in quantity – they're a little dry down in this department. In fact, they would appeal to those for whom the Monitor Audios are 'a little too much' in the bass area. The sound from mixed orchestral instruments blended beautifully and yet the 'speaker retained the ability to present each line clearly - a splendid achievement I felt. The long-delay echo from a low organ note, after it has stopped playing, was very clearly audible with the 782ses. They



had the best integration of the drive units of any in this test. All in all, a very upfront, crisp and transparent transducer.

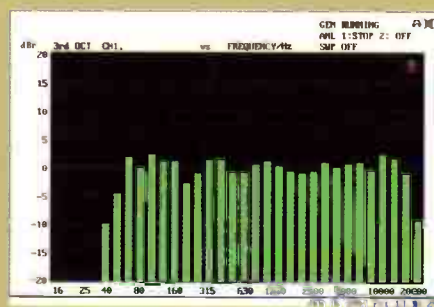
MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The 782se displays a flat response from 63Hz up to 18kHz, above which the tweeter starts to roll down. The tweeter has slowly rising output, peaking by around +2dB at 10kHz and this may add just a little sharpness at times. An even characteristic below this suggests the 782se will not sound bright. However, bass output is quite controlled: there's no plateau lift or peaking anywhere and whilst in the far field the floor mounted bass unit's contribution is in even balance with the rest of the spectrum I would still expect the 782se to sound dry and with less warmth and body than many of its rivals. But then, the impedance curve also suggests a highly damped and tight delivery. Full output is maintained down to 63Hz, below which low frequency output starts to roll down, reaching -4dB at 50Hz. Again this will make the Mission sound drier, tighter and faster than speakers like the Monitor Audio, but with less weight and body.

Mission hold the impedance of this loudspeaker fairly steady at around 6ohms and that is its nominal impedance. The lower side firing fill-in bass unit is reflex loaded but Mission have managed to suppress the usual twin impedance peaks of a reflex. Above 200Hz impedance rises as usual, due to voice coil inductance, then it falls above 3kHz where the

tweeter kicks in, descending to 6ohms. The oscillating nature of the impedance characteristic shows the loudspeaker is reactive, but not heavily so. As a food it is easy and it is likely to sound more even and better damped in its bass than rivals. Sensitivity was low at 83dB, the lowest of the group alongside the Epos, so the 782se needs power in excess of 90watts.

Measurement suggests a dry, fast and very tight sound from the 782se, likely a detailed one too. It is best used close to a rear wall too. The Mission is accurate but will need power to show its mettle. **NR**



MONITOR AUDIO SILVER S8 £799

With no less than four drive units, the S8 is in fact another 'two and a half way' design. The bottom two drivers are both bass units, with a bass/midrange unit above them and the tweeter up top. There are two ports, one for the pair of bass units and one for the bass/midrange unit. Each port has its own bung, so you can experiment with one, or the other, both, or neither! I found the 'speaker quite excellent with neither in place, but I can well imagine some people might want to include one of the bungs, especially if they find the bass too heavy, or need to place the speakers closer to the rear wall than the recommended minimum of 20cm.

The twin bass units give good cone area from a narrow cabinet. You get good bass power handling, plenty of slam, low distortion but also good imaging. Years ago, speakers were wide fronted and imaged poorly. They were intrusive too, of course, as people don't like wardrobes in their lounges nowadays! So it was interesting to hear what the S8s could do with such an arrangement. I'm a confessed lover of transmission line speakers and was very pleasantly surprised to hear how far down the Monitor Audios went, and how loud they could go without compromising bass quality. They didn't shout and they didn't honk - they were just

powerful and authoritative. I found treble was also splendid, very accurate yet without that layer of 'added sweetness and detail' you can get from a forward tweeter that's not strictly correct.

I played plenty of rock loud and felt sure the neighbours were up and dancing along. Well perhaps not, but the S8s seem exciting. At the same time they can also play organ music. Louis Vierne's 'Messe Solennelle', recorded at Lausanne Cathedral is quite stunning. The low notes really do go low and these speakers impressed me in sounding very close to my favourite IMF transmission lines (see this month's *Olde Worlde* on p130). Another good test is the March from Holst's First Suite. After a few descending notes the big drum is given a wonderful thwack. My Telarc recording gives a great idea of the size of the drum. Lesser speakers produce the sound of a smaller drum; the Monitor Audios produced the biggest drum of any speakers in this group.

Turning to more delicate choral music, it was immediately clear that the S8s are not just good players of hard rock and roll. Their excellent imaging and smooth tweeter revealed differences between choirs that few others can match. The two soprano lines of 'Loquebantur variis linguis' on Faire is the Heaven CD were clearly distinguished. The music was more than just 'nice'; it was well articulated. These speakers can



convey the more delicate qualities of a recording as well being heavyweights when required. A hugely impressive all round design at the price, and very hard to fault in any department.

VERDICT ●●●●● £

Truly powerful and engaging wideband performance with plenty of grip and detail make them our pick of the pack.

MONITOR AUDIO
SILVER S8 £799
Monitor Audio Ltd.
+44 (0) 1268 740 580
www.monitoraudio.co.uk

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

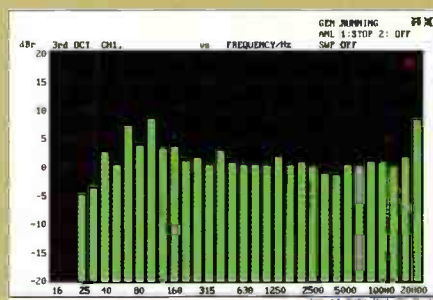
The upper bass/mid unit with parasitic cone is a loudspeaker in itself, its upper port being tuned to 40Hz or so. The two lower bass units work in parallel and share the cabinet's lower port, which exhausts onto the floor and is very broadly tuned, working from 125Hz right down to a low 25Hz. Forward bass output from the Silver 8 - unsurprisingly - is strong right down to 40Hz, only -4dB at 31Hz and little less at 25Hz. With bass level up to 160Hz or so lifted by 3dB-5dB above midband the Silver 8 really does have left. It will produce real bass power in a room and go very low too, down to seismic frequencies. In some rooms though the S8 could prove a little much: it veers toward bass heavy, hence the need for bungs.

Monitor Audio hasn't ignored the midband, which is super smooth our analysis above. Absence of small variations indicates lack of local cone resonances that produce colouration, so I would expect a smooth but clean sound. The only problem is a sudden and marked rise to resonance at 20kHz in the tweeter. This is too high up the audio band to be obvious for most of the time, but with programmes containing a lot of treble energy the tweeter may well sound sharp. The S8 is

going to sound vivid, without doubt.

The impedance curve was fairly normal, surprising considering the number of drivers and ports. Overall the speaker is an easy enough load of 60ohms impedance. With a healthy sensitivity of 88dB from one watt the S8 goes loud with little power.

Measurement shows this loudspeaker able to give a big sound with deep, powerful bass, good detail and extended treble. It measures very well all round but may put too much bass into resonant rooms. Impressive all the same. NK



VERDICT ●●●£

Impressively musical and punchy loudspeaker with just a touch of high frequency coarseness and boxiness; super value when partnered carefully.

WHARFEDALE PACIFIC
EVOLUTION 20 £450
Wharfedale International Ltd.
☎ +44 (0)1845 455 0011
www.wharfedale.co.uk

This handsome looking lower model in Wharfedale's budget-to-mid-price Evolution series comes with a separate platform bolted to the bottom of the 'speaker. Spikes are then bolted to the platform. This unusual cabinet design - very similar to the KEF - has a narrow rear with curved side walls. It's a construction that will certainly reduce panel resonances, but at the expense of internal volume. The bass unit is a 170mm cone type made of Kevlar, which is a very light and stiff material also found in body armour! The tweeter is located in its own isolated chamber and uses a 25mm textile dome.

Given the single small bass drive unit, I was surprised at the quantity of bass that emerged from the Wharfedales. Lack of internal resonances gave an initial impression that the bass was light, yet with further listening it was not. It was all there and in quantity and quality. The bottom octave was missing from those CDs that show off the bigger organs, for example, but then this is not a large loudspeaker. In terms of value for money, I felt the Evolution 20s did well in this area.

Wharfedale places the tweeter right at the top of the cabinet. Listening carefully, I found orchestral strings sounded a little boxy, lacking the airiness of some 'speakers in this group, like the Epos M15.2s for

example. However, the 20s could position a central image that was stable and well defined. In contrast to this strength the two different soprano lines in 'Loquebantur variis linguis' from Faire is the Heaven tended to merge into one, and I found it was not so easy to distinguish individual voices - as with some of the other speakers. The Wharfedales also lacked the warm balance and generally ambient feeling of speakers like the Q5 and S8. With soprano voice playing loud there was some detectable spitch, likely from some resonance in the tweeter.

Rock music came across as energetic and punchy. These CDs did not provoke that tweeter resonance at higher levels and the sound was very enjoyable; perhaps the speakers were showing up deficiencies in my recordings. Trying to sort this sort of thing out is difficult. Certainly, clarinet on 'Songs from the Exotic' sounded superb, with just the right amount of believable edge to it. Sometimes the clarinet can produce an almost perfect square wave, while as a comparison, the flute can at times produce an almost perfect sine wave. Both make good material for listening tests.

The opening intake of breath by Mariah Carey on the track 'Vanishing' came across as natural from the Evolution 20s. On one or two of the other models it was exaggerated, so on balance the



Wharfedales compared well. The song was exciting, leaving me sitting at the edge of my seat. The Evolution 20 is not a relaxing speaker, so much as an engaging, upfront and fun 'speaker that projects well.

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

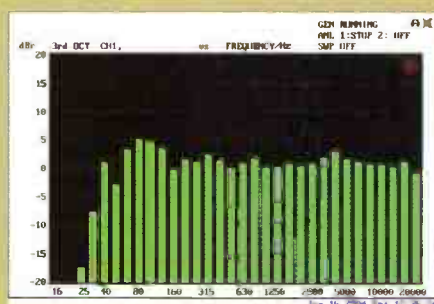
The frequency response of this conventional two-way reflex is strikingly smooth right across the audio band, staying within tight 3dB limits from 20kHz right down to 100Hz. Below this room effects make measurement less accurate, but the Evolution 20 still returns less variation than usual and reaches down to a low 40Hz before bass output starts to fall away. Even at 31Hz though this loudspeaker measures only -7dB down, so it will deliver low bass. Some overall lift at low frequencies should give the Evo a good but not excessive sense of bass power, and the evenness of output at low frequencies suggests a sound free from booriness.

The sheer smoothness of this loudspeaker's response curve suggests low colouration, with the exception of a 3dB peak at 4kHz that is likely to contribute a little obvious brightness to the sound.

The Evolution 20 has the impedance curve of a two-way reflex, the port being slightly offset downward in frequency from bass unit resonance, so damping is not optimal, shown by asymmetric peaking. The port frequency is 32Hz or so, the bass unit 70Hz. A DCR of 6ohms below 10Hz is matched by a dip to around 3ohms at 150Hz before the usual rise in impedance above 200Hz.

due to voice coil inductance. Where the tweeter comes in above 2kHz it falls again to reach 5ohms at 10kHz. So the Evolution 20 varies somewhat, representing a nominally 5ohm load, for the most part reactive. It's a fairly classic load, not easy for amplifiers but not too difficult either. With a nominal enough sensitivity of 86dB from one watt the Wharfedale will work with medium power amplifiers.

Measurement shows this is a nicely balanced loudspeaker that should sound clear and accurate although with a little brightness. It is a fine all-rounder, up with the best. NK



conclusion



These days, mid-price floor-standing loudspeakers such as these are aimed both as hi-fi and home cinema situations, and the manuals often referred to this. All manufacturers had other matching 'speakers in the range for multichannel use, with smaller designs for the rears and a single centre option. However in this test, we considered them specifically as stereo pairs - and all performed well in this area. The good news is that none were poor, as you'd expect from a crop of reputable manufacturers, but they all differed very noticeably in their sonic signatures.

First, the Epos M15.2s appeared to have some anomaly in the tweeter which gave them a very open and airy sound. Although not unpleasant, it wasn't strictly accurate, and was as though they were adding something to the sound that was not originally there. Dry recordings sounded quite nice, but those that were already quite ambient in nature sounded too bright. The lack of deep bass was surprising, but what there was, was very clean. They were a charismatic, if not entirely neutral design, that will win friends providing they're matched to smooth systems.

KEF's Q5s were fine loudspeakers, producing a big, punchy sound with rock music and quite a revealing one with classical, but they were a little hard at times. As such, these will also require sympathetic system matching, but correctly aspirated then they'll win friends for their upfront and expansive nature. Likewise, Wharfedale's Evolution 20s were also capable all round performers which excelled at nothing, but showed few obvious weaknesses save a tendency for roughness if pushed hard. My major quibble with these was the quality

control, which was less than perfect with the stands on this review pair - yet they're undeniably excellent value at around £450 a pair.

Although DP found the Mission 782ses a little upfront in his review about a year ago, here we found them smooth and even. In fact, they're almost the exact opposite of the Epos M15.2s, in that their sound showed fantastic integration of the drive units. A home cinema setup using the Missions would be awesome - but would need seriously powerful amplification, as the minimum recommended power of 50watts is probably not sufficient to drive them loud. Give the 782ses 100watts each and you could relax to a very open, transparent and clean sound.

The Monitor Audio S8s are only slightly less smooth, but their bass goes way down and comes close to transmission line designs in character. With a very capacious, full bodied and expansive nature, these are my overall choice amongst this group, but as always loudspeakers are very personal things. Our measurements quite clearly show the respective differences are not great, and all are basically well engineered. So it's very much down to personal taste - as

always - so I'd advise you to use this supertest to make your shortlist, and then grab your favourite discs and hot-foot it down to your friendly local dealer if at all possible. Big floorstanders can really shake a room and sound impressive in a way smaller stand-mounters cannot. They're great fun and real high fidelity - but you must choose with care.

SOUND EFFECTS:

The music used for these comparison tests included LPs, CDs and radio (live concerts where available). The following CDs were particularly useful: *Faire is the Heaven*. The Camtrige Singers, directed by John Rutter. Collegium Records COLCD 107 *Missa Corona Spinosa*. The Sixteen, directed by Harry Christophers. Hyperion CDA66360 *Tapestry*. Songs from the Exotic, music for voice, clarinet and piano. British Music Label BML 012 *Vierne, Alain and Langlais*. Messes pour Chœurs et deux Orgues. Erato 2292-45511-2 *Hymns*. Huddersfield Choral Society. EMI CDP 7462022 *Holst, Suite No 1*. Frederick Fennell with the Cleveland Symphonic Winds. Telarc CD-8C038 *Mariah Carey, Vanishing*. CBS 466815 2 *The Notting Hillbillies*. Missing... Presumed Having a Good Time. Vortigic 842 671-2 *The Mavericks*. Trampoline. MCA UMB-80456



LINN

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accurate *adj.* faithfully representing the truth; precise.



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Less and More



Despite the advent of MP3, AAC, SACD and DVD-A et al, there are still a lot of people who want plain, old, unreconstructed sixteen bit digital disc players – and the competition is fierce. Right now, we think Marantz's new CD7300 is one of the very best at its price, and are no less impressed with Creek's new CD50/II at over twice the money. But how do they compare? Is the law of diminishing returns still applicable to digital? Albert Lee pits the two against each other...

THE PLAYERS

At 5.7kg, the Marantz CD7300 has a very solid feel about it, considering the 440x89x317mm dimensions and modest £350 price. It's a beautifully clean design with an uncluttered visual appearance with the minimum of controls on the front panel. Unusually, for a domestic machine, the CD7300 sports a variable pitch control. Rear panel layout has had a lot of thought to produce a unit that looks and feels extremely functional – there's a pair of sockets for analogue output (2 volts RMS) a single socket for digital output, an optical output socket, and remote control input and output sockets. There is also a switch so one can switch between internal and external remote control sensors. The supplied remote control had enough controls to confuse me! It was poorly made

from impact moulded plastic and was small enough to be readily lost. Although it worked well and did seem to be strongly manufactured.

The CD7300 uses a Phillips VAM 2202 CD transport. Analogue and digital sections are separated from each other in an attempt to minimise pulsative noise levels. This machine uses high-density voltage amplifiers to achieve wide bandwidth along with good signal purity. Because of using this type of device, high signal processing speed is achieved. The digital to analogue converter chosen was a Cirrus Logic CS4396. Marantz have adopted a dual layer chassis to help damp out vibration which would interfere with the circuitry. Cleverly, this CD player is capable of reading CD-R/CD-RW discs even if they are unfinished. It will also recognise the MP3 format. Another feature is CD Text support (although this only occurs if the discs have this type of

display embedded on the disc).

Sharing its predecessor's (430x62x250mm) dimensions, the new £850 Creek CD50mk2 looks similar to the earlier CD50 but is actually a very different machine. It's well built alright, weighing in at a respectable 5kg, but still doesn't come close to the superbly finished Marantz which is amazingly well turned out at the price. The front panel is extremely well laid out with the emphasis on simplicity of operation. At the rear, the sockets are logically positioned with a pair of phono sockets for analogue output. Digital output is catered for by the use of a single phono socket (S/PDIF output) and a TOSLINK optical socket. There is a pair of further sockets to enable the CD50mk2 to be integrated into the Multi-Room system, although this option requires your dealer to upgrade the machine so it can be used in this way [see



Rear panel of Marantz CD7300.

box]. Mains power is delivered via an IEC socket rather than a captive cable. The supplied remote is easy to use and has a good range of operation, although like the Marantz is of relatively poor quality – and at this price there's less excuse. The CD50 mk2 has an audio output of 2 volts RMS.

The mk2 has a new transport due to the difficulty of obtaining a steady supply of player the earlier mechanisms – suppliers such as Philips seem to delete their mechs every ten minutes these days. This new one is a CD-ROM type, presumably because it can be replaced with virtually any ROM drive as and when supplies dry up! The circuitry is improved and with symmetrical layout and shorter signal paths, and a higher frequency clock oscillator is used that's synchronised with the micro controller and buffer

THE TEST

My listening room measures 28x19x14 feet, and is heavily furnished with loads of plants, books and thousands of records. Both of these machines were placed on isolated wall stands, with each support platforms levelled. They were connected to a passive pre-amplifier (of my own design) with 1.25m Musiflex cables terminated with Neutrik phono plugs. Inputs for both of the machines were identical in both impedance and capacitance. The power amplifiers were three Crown DC300As running in tri-amped configuration, driving passive ATC SCM35s. All this equipment was run for three days to achieve optimum performance. The CD players had discs in their drawers, set to repeat for the same time. The 240V mains electricity supply was checked for constant voltage, and the frequency of the supply was checked, and was stable at 50Hz. My system uses an isolated fuse box with screened cables to the dedicated sockets.

clock to minimise internal interference. There are two discrete transformers for the digital and the analogue power supplies. This feature, along with separate grounding, enables the player to

“ the Creek is altogether a better performer, as its price suggests - by comparison the Marantz actually sounds muddled

achieve much lower noise performance than the mk1. There are 12 regulated power supplies along with an entirely separate power supply for the CD drive mechanism. This machine will read all of the current Copy Code Protected compact discs. It is also an easy upgrade to modify the software to accommodate any changes in the coding in the future.

THE SONICS

First piece of music into the drawer was 'Boulevard' by St.Germain. It showed the Marantz CD7300 to be a most accomplished machine considering its relatively low position in life. There was a generally warm and full tonality, with a fine feeling of spatial resolution and an impressively

the difference between the ride and crash cymbals with ease. With many mid-price CD spinners, this disc sounds confused, probably because of the amount of information in the mix, but with the CD50mk2 the sound was extremely well presented. For example, 'Street Scene' saw the flautist was finely etched in space as if it had a life of its own. By

comparison, the Marantz had a drier bass, although moving up to the upper bass and low midband, the Marantz was slightly more fulsome. The treble to mid balance of both

machines was very well displayed. Given that low price, it's a warm and rich CD machine, whereas the Creek is altogether more neutral.

The next CD on was the violin concerto by Beethoven with Hilary Hahn playing the solo instrument. This amazing disc is available on Sony Classical SK 60584. The Marantz was put in service first. The sound was very restrained almost as if the engineer had put a limiter in the line between the mixing desk and the recording machine. A veil seemed to be apparent around the whole orchestra. Through the Creek, the music had obviously more life in it, and that veil had been lifted! The orchestra really pounded along, punctuating the solo parts with panache and subtlety. This disc moves

FUTURE PERFECT

The Creek CD50 mk2 has an RS232 bus system that allows remote control and serial connection of the player with next generation Creek equipment or proprietary room controllers. It works by plugging in the appropriate module into the motherboard and upgrading the software. The machine also permits soft upgrades; the buffer and microcontroller are both programmed by separate EPROMs that contain all the code. To upgrade this, Creek can supply a new EPROM that can be plugged into the motherboard to replace the existing one, and the player will 'boot load' the new software upon start-up. Methinks Creek want this to be the last CD player you ever need buy...

tight bass. Music was quite beguiling, although not the crispest, grippiest or best animated I've heard. Moving to the Creek CD50 mk2, and stereo image size was larger still in stature, with a truly 'walk around' soundstage. The beat structure of this music really chugs along with this new machine, basslines pushing along the song with aplomb. Detailing was excellent – along with percussion, hi-hats, rim shots, cymbal strikes and wood block shots, I was able to tell

me to tears and this time was no different. I am extremely familiar with most of Beethoven's work, and this performance is amongst his very best. The Creek replayed this work with just the right amount of passion and drive. This is most unusual as most recordings on both vinyl and compact disc tend to display the orchestra and the violin almost acerbically. As a live music devotee, I have found that violins do tend to screech and drift out of tune as they

are played.

However, it wasn't a simple and clear cut victory to the Creek, because Marantz has a facility on the CD7300 which lets the user switch the display off, and when I did this the sound improved remarkably. The CD7300 regained much of the width and depth of the orchestra, although the stereo image was still not as tall as the Creek, which sadly does not have this option (although I have no doubts that Mike will address this issue in the near future).

Jazz masterpieces are hard to find, but Miles Davis's 'Kind of Blue' is certainly one of them. This collection of music is still available on Columbia/ Legacy CK64935 and is a magnificent disc. 'So What' was cued up on the Marantz and the play button pressed, and the music of The Man poured into my living room with consummate ease. The instruments were all readily identifiable, but the Creek consistently bettered it in textural and timbral quality. The CD50/II had an obviously better grip of the recorded acoustic, being better able to differentiate the musicians and the instruments they were playing. My listening session went on into the night, and all sorts of music was played, with the same conclusions drawn every time.

THE VERDICT

The Marantz CD7300 is superbly capable at the price, and should do very well. It has an extremely open and competent sound, the type of which you couldn't really buy for this money. It has a wealth of useful facilities, and is beautifully finished given its relatively modest position in life. But the Creek is altogether a better performer, as its price suggests - by comparison the Marantz actually sounds muddled. It possesses the ability to describe the room in which the performance took place and the musical event itself. Dynamically, these players are much of a muchness, but the Creek gives the impression of being more

THE EDITOR SAYS:

Historically, both Marantz and Creek have had the best sounding CD spinners at their price points, and little has changed with the new generation machines you see here. The Marantz has got even smarter and more svelte looking than the already impressive CD6000 OSE it replaces, and offers an ever-so-slightly smoother and sweeter sound. It's ahead of the sort of thing Marantz were doing a decade ago, such as the CD52. The Creek is an obvious improvement on the very good (if not earth shattering) CD50 mk1 precursor. It's sweeter and richer than both its predecessor and rivals such as Cyrus's CD8 - which is a little too brightly lit for some tastes. It has a very organic and listenable sound, with few obvious weaknesses.

Only if you spend twice the price of the Creek will you get a comprehensively better sounding machine, although the likes of Meridian's 507 gives better ergonomics and a more 'designed' feel allied to a swidgeon more detail - although there's not much in it. As such, the gong goes to the Marantz for amazing value. Is the Creek worth the extra - yes, inasmuch as it's as good as all but the very top designs (now a diminishing breed) in most fields. The only downside is its rather prosaic styling and ergonomics - and I'm sure Mike Creek would respectfully point out that all the money's been spent on the insides and not the out. Once again, this test proves my message that serious CD players don't get better, they just get more affordable every year.

The Marantz CD7300 is superbly capable at the price, and should do very well... but the Creek is altogether a better performer, as its price suggests

articulate thanks to its better low level grip.

Impressive stuff from both these combatants, then. To put it in perspective, you'd struggle to find a DVD-A or SACD spinner under £2,000 that comes close to the Creek (on 16bit CD) - which suddenly makes ye olde Compact Disc look a surprisingly worthy format once again. Although the

Creek is undoubtedly worth the extra money over the Marantz - and it's very stiff competition for the best of the rest in the £800 price bracket - the Marantz really shines in value for money terms because it does much of what the Creek does at nearly a third of the price. A win-win situation then, with the value for money laurels going to the Marantz.

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Brilliant value for money thanks to superb build, a rich and finessed sound and a fine range of facilities.

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VERDICT ●●●●●

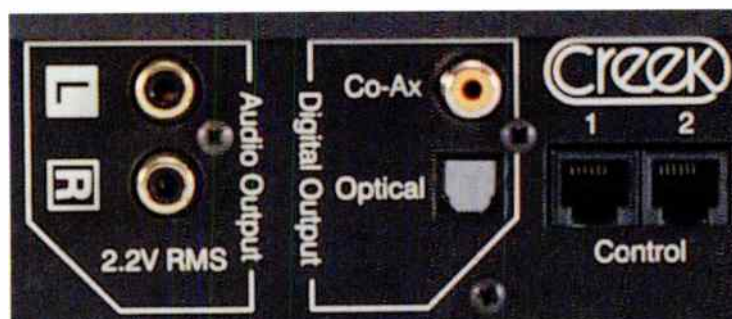
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Rear panel of Creek CD50II.

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Superbly Simple



Great tuners may be costly and complex, but L.J.K. Setright asserts that good tuners can be affordable and simple. He adduces the T50 Creek in evidence, and is supported by his cat

Anyone old enough to recall the Creek CAS3040 tuner, which made its first graceful curtsy to the world in 1985, will hardly feel the need to question the qualities of this new Creek tuner, the T50. There was another, the T40, in between, though I never heard it; nevertheless the general consensus is that, whatever else their virtues, what Creek do particularly well are tuners. It is rare for popular opinion to be well founded, let alone worthy of repetition, but this is one of those rare occasions: the T50 shows that the Creek reputation is thoroughly deserved.

Years ago I prepared a study of Technical Writing considered as a Fine Art – which, alas, it never is – and as one of the exemplary texts I chose a passage about the workings of radio contained in the user's guide to the 3040. It was a beautiful piece of work, as lucid in its language as in its explanations. Such foolproof explicitness could only be the work of one with a profound understanding of his subject: eventually I found out that it was written by Michael Creek himself. No wonder his tuner was so good.

I met him once, when I was

already the owner of a 3040 together with a couple of early Creek amplifiers, the 4040 and 4140 (I have all three still, and would not want to part with them); he struck me as an agreeably level-headed fellow, who saw real merit in the attainment of great ends by modest means. That, presumably, was why so many of us reckoned that the way through a hi-fi lover's life was to get over the cheap-and-cheerful starter package as quickly as possible and move on to the modestly-priced Creek equipment – and then to hang on to it resolutely, refusing to change

” nevertheless the general consensus is that, whatever else their virtues, what Creek do particularly well are tuners

it until one could afford and justify something really exquisite.

Today that same stage on the market-price ladder, somewhere below the middle, is still where Creek apparatus is to be found. If this new tuner is anything to go by,

then somewhere well above the qualitative middle is still where Creek stuff belongs. Today they offer two series of related products – the 50 range of integrated amplifiers and CD player, and the 53 series – and the £499 T50 tuner will work perfectly well with either, though it is styled to match the former. Those who realise the immense importance of a tuner as a source will find that it also works perfectly well with other equipment of far more formidable reputation.

In this instance I plugged it into the system where my Linn Kremlin usually functions. Careful reading of the instructions – not a patch on the immaculate booklet which accompanied the old 3040 – revealed that setting the device up would be simple, as so it proved. A choice of RDS or frequency displays, a range of brightnesses, a choice of FM/AM bands, a choice of tuning modes, all these may be sought with the aid of a few buttons on the front panel (or of the remote control which comes into its own when one has a

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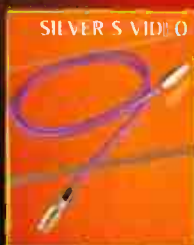
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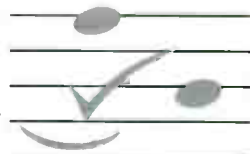
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CD: ACCUPHASE, AUDIO SYNTHESIS, Bel Canto, dCS (ELGAR, DELIUS PURCELL, VERDI), MERACUS, SUGDEN, WADIA. **VINYL:** BASIS, CLEARAUDIO, CROWN JEWEL, DNM, GRAHAM, THE GROOVE, LEHMANN, MICHELL, SUMIKO BLUE POINT SPECIAL, TRANSFIGURATION. **AMPLIFIERS:** ACCUPHASE, ADVANTAGE, BEL CANTO, CAT, DNM, GAMUT, HOVLAND, NAGRA, SONNETEER, SPECTRAL, SUGDEN. **LOUDSPEAKERS:** AUDIO PHYSIC, BKS, ETHOS, NEAT, TOTEM, VERITY AUDIO. **TUNERS:** MAGNUM DYNALAB. **CABLES:** ARGENTO, CHORD Co., DNM, NORDOST, SILTECH, VERTEXAQ, YAMAMURA CHURCHILL ETC. **SUPPORTS:** ARCICI, VEREXAQ, STANDS UNIQUE

The
Right
Note

Music in the Home



BATH

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The rear panel is as fuss-free as the front; basic antenna connections and audio outputs are what you get.

complete 50-series set), but there the resemblance to convention stops.

It is commonplace for synthesised tuners to offer buttons with which to tune-in stations or select presets. In contrast, the Creek has what I fondly remember from early Creeks, a rotary tuning knob of comfortable size and sensitivity – not a steplessly smooth rotation, as on the 3040, but with that delightful soft-ratchet feel which enthralled the fingertips on the early Creek amplifiers.

This knob is not a dangerous anachronism, but an intelligent solution to a control problem. It is not connected to some ghastly old dust-endangered variable capacitor, but to a digital encoder which enables it either to move the tuning through the scale or to find and select a preset frequency. It may not be truthful to describe such knob-use as instinctive, but it is unquestionably familiar, and it is singularly precise.

This imaginative refusal to accept the constraints of other designers' thinking extends, I understand, to the interior. High technology and studied simplicity have combined, say Creek, to reduce the component count to a level previously thought impossible. How high Surface Mount technology ranks today, or double-sided printed circuit boards plated through their holes, I cannot say. I do like the further idea of having all active devices controlled by a digital system which allows the design to be updated by changing the codes in its microcontroller. The settings are held in a non-volatile memory like that of a personal computer, incidentally allowing as many as 99 FM and 29 AM locations to be recalled.

Be all that as it may, the thing works well. My aerial antenna and its location are modest things, by no means extravagant, but the sensitivity and selectivity of Creek tuning proved admirable. Whenever I wanted to change to another station, it was a positive pleasure to turn that perpetually delightful knob, to

see and hear the desired programme caught and held. I could, I suppose, have made more use of the remote handset, but I only ever did so with reluctance – a reluctance so strong that it actually made me resent having bothered to put the batteries into the handset.

Yet all this is mere management. It is a means to an end, but it is not

everything is right; but after numerous experiences of listening to audio apparatus, and copious confusions in the sound of live performances in a baffling variety of venues, I have to admit that I do not know how perfect sound sounds. Neither, I believe, does – or can – anybody else. All right, maybe this Creek is not quite as good as the

Kremfin, but in the first place the difference is trifling, in the second place you cannot buy Kremfins any more, and in the third place you probably could not afford one anyway if you

are operating in Creek territory.

It is solely a matter for each individual customer to decide whether or not the styling of the T50 is to his taste. I do not much care for it, but that should matter only to me. Setting that purely personal consideration apart, I should say that if you seek a benchmark tuner I have just found one, and if you buy it, then – in the best of traditions – do not be parted from it.

“ The Setright cat, a hardened listener, jumped when the Ravel G major Piano Concerto began

the end in itself. In the end all that matters is how it sounded.

Flawless. Open, if that means anything. Dynamic? The Setright cat, a hardened listener, jumped when the Ravel G major Piano Concerto began. Maybe the performance of that queer little chap Leonard Bernstein, who was both pianist and director of the orchestra, had something to do with it; maybe it was the quality of the broadcast recording; but it was exactly the reaction that should be observed when that singular piece of music opens. It should be observed in all, not only in cats; but I knew what was coming, and therefore did not jump. The feline ear is good, its innocence unimpeachable, and its judgement therefore sound.

'Flawless' is a negative term: it indicates only that there is nothing wrong with the sound. 'Perfect' would be positive, announcing that

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Our analysis shows the T50 has a smooth audio response and this will impart an even tonal balance and a sense of naturalness to the sound. Distortion was reasonably low all round, full left and right showing some second harmonic only. There was a little more hiss than expected though: with a strong signal the best the T50 can manage is -67dB A weighted, quite a few dB below the norm of -71dB or so. A very slight hiss may just be audible during silences, mostly affecting Radio 3.

The T50 has plenty of output and quite good sensitivity too. It mutes at 22dBuV to eliminate hissy signals, but this also means weak signals cannot be received.

The T50 measures reasonably well. It will sound clean and smooth, which is important. There is a little hiss though NK

Frequency response	10Hz-14kHz
Stereo separation	34dB
Distortion (50% mod.)	0.12%
Hiss (CCIR)	-67dB
Signal for minimum hiss	(64dBuV)
800mV	
Output	0.82V
Sensitivity	
mono	22dBuV (xxmV)
stereo	36uV (xxmV)
signal strength meter:	none

The graph shows a frequency response plot with a flat line across the frequency range from 20 Hz to 20 kHz. The y-axis represents dB, ranging from -20 to 20. The x-axis represents frequency in kHz, with markers at 20, 50, 100, 150, 200, and 250. The plot is titled 'FFT CH1' and 'FREQ: 10.000 MHz'.

VERDICT ●●●●● £

Look no further; you are unlikely to fare better. The T50 should justify its presence in any system, Creek or otherwise.

T50 CREEK £499

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WIN PIONEER'S STUNNING *NS-DV990 STYLE SYSTEM* WORTH £800 IN THIS MONTH'S GREAT COMPETITION!



Here's a chance to win a 'lifestyle' system with a difference! Pioneer's NS-DV990 isn't just a pretty face, but a fully featured DVD-Audio and SACD compatible multichannel system complete with five state-of-the-art NXT flat panel loudspeakers. In Hi-Fi World's review last month, Patrick Cleasby said: "We have -R and -RW compatibility for both CD and DVD, we have MP3 CD and Video CD, we have DVD-Audio and SACD and we even have a medium wave and FM tuner. To go with all this we have an impressive array of set up and sound options, including the very useful Pro-logic II decoder. All formats of DVD-Video are catered for, and DTS CD works,

even for CD-R discs (if there are any quad conversion fiends out there).

The main event for our purposes is how the thing sounds, and having never experienced NXT speakers I didn't know what to expect. I have to say that I was very pleasantly surprised. With ZTT about to kick into a reissue frenzy this was an ideal opportunity to test my tolerance to the sound with the stunning new surround mix of Propaganda's 'A Secret Wish' SACD. Thankfully, for the benefit of the lifestyle purchasers who won't brave the set-up menus, the SACD playback default is now multi-channel rather than stereo. Even with such a pristine early digital recording the result was very listenable and highly enjoyable. The remastered CD version of Act's 'Laughter, Tears and Rage' was also rendered very well, with the punchy kick drum of the leading track 'Absolutely Immune' reproduced

with a well-focused tight efficiency, and some excellent stereo imaging.

Finally the inevitable Steely Dan DVD-Audio test revealed that these funny flat speaker things are more than capable of delivering the best that 24/192 PCM stereo has to offer. The 24/96 surround presentation was also very convincing. Excellent DTS performance was demonstrated by surviving the challenge of the blaring Danny Elfman title music on Tim Burton's 'Planet of the Apes' DVD-Video. Broadcast and DVD-Video Dolby Digital and the decoding of Pro-logic material were all equally satisfying."

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

Competition Questions

[1] Which of the following formats doesn't the Pioneer play?

- [a] MP3 CD
- [b] DVD-A
- [c] SACD
- [d] LP

[2] what type of loudspeakers are next?

- [a] flat panel
- [b] super-tweeter
- [c] subwoofer
- [d] multi-driver

[4] at what resolution was the Steely Dan PCM stereo mix?

- [a] 16/44
- [b] 16/48
- [c] 24/96
- [d] 24/192

[4] how did PC describe the NS-DV990's DTS performance?

- [a] sensational
- [b] fantastic
- [c] excellent
- [d] popstastic

March Competition
Hi-Fi World Magazine
Unit G4 Argo House
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Hi-Fi & Computer Audio World Competition rules and conditions of entry

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

CONGRATULATIONS

...to Miss J Blenden, of Ipswich Suffolk, the winner of our January 2004 competition. A Arcam FMJ A32 amplifier is on its way to you!

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For further information on this event, contact Richard at our Leeds store - 0113 245 2775.

Product NEWS



ARCAM INTRODUCES THE A90 INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

Following on from the highly successful A85, the A90 continues the long line of successful Arcam amplifier designs and represents a combination of technical excellence, flexibility, ease of use and superb sound quality that already looks like establishing classic status in the future.

Arcam has taken the core amplifier design of

the A85, including its menu-driven extended feature set, and increased the power output to 90 watts per channel using a higher capacity power supply. This opens up the sound significantly, increases precision in sound-staging and adds drive, depth, and control to the bass, leaving it ready to reproduce the latest high definition audio sources, such as DVD-Audio and SACD, to the highest standards. The large toroidal transformer and heavy-duty power supply ensure the amplifier has more than enough drive for a wide range of speakers.



YAMAHA RX-V1400RDS THX SELECT AV RECEIVER

A recent addition to Yamaha's range of acclaimed AV products is the THX select certified RX-V1400RDS receiver. Comprehensively equipped and effortlessly powerful, What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision magazine (Jan 04) described the sound quality as "sensational" and concludes the '1400RDS to be "One of the most significant receivers of recent months [and may] be the new class leader."



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

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KANDY KA1/III AMPLIFIER

QUAD

11L SPEAKERS

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Awarded five stars in a recent What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision group test, the Kandy KD1/III CD player was described as "offering a great array of talents - team it with its amp stablemate and you have something close to the ideal visual and sonic combination."

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SAVE £399

CYRUS CD8 CD PLAYER & 8 AMPLIFIER
MONITOR AUDIO SILVER S6 SPEAKERS

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The beautifully crafted Silver S6 speakers from British speaker specialists Monitor Audio complete the package.

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



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The DM31 was exemplary, as its three What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision Awards clearly show. The DM31 is even better, making a phenomenal value for money.

OPTIONAL RECORDERS: DENON MHD30 RECORDER • DENON CASSETTE DECK
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HI-FI SYSTEM 5

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MONITOR AUDIO

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

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WHO ARE SEVENOAKS?

Founded in 1972, Sevenoaks Sound & Vision is one of the largest and most successful hi-fi and home cinema retailers in the country.

Each Sevenoaks Sound & Vision store stocks a wide range of quality products, covering all categories of specialist home entertainment, from Hi-Fi separates and systems to DVD players, widescreen plasma televisions and projection systems, all at highly competitive prices.

Friendly staff are available in all stores to advise, demonstrate and guide you through the home entertainment jungle.

NEW STORES

We are pleased to announce both the new stores in Staines and Weybridge are now open. For more information visit our website.

CUSTOM INSTALLATION

Sevenoaks Sound & Vision's Custom Installation Service enables the integration of a home cinema or hi-fi system into your home as neatly and seamlessly as possible. All electronics can be hidden away, speakers discreetly mounted either in the wall or ceiling and the complete system operated via remote control.



Our installation experts are fully trained to the highest standards in all areas and provide a prompt, reliable and professional service. Whether you're looking for a multi-room system, a dedicated home cinema installation with a retractable screen and built-in speakers or an integrated control or lighting system, Sevenoaks Sound & Vision has a diverse range of products available to cater for all your requirements.

SEVENOAKS WEBSITE

The Sevenoaks Sound & Vision website has news and information on the Sevenoaks group and its stores.

There are regularly updated special offer and stock clearance lists with hundreds of products available and detailed pages to help you locate your nearest store. To find out more, click on www.sevenoakssoundandvision.co.uk

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Our comfortable demonstration rooms are among the finest in the country, many complying with full THX specifications.



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With 49 stores nationwide, the Sevenoaks Sound & Vision group stock and display a wide range of products. As models and product ranges are changed or superseded, the preceding models are made available at a reduced price, for clearance. Visit our Website for an up-to-date list of the clearance stock.

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Whilst we do not claim always to be the cheapest, we try to ensure our prices are highly competitive. Take into account the expert advice, unrivalled product selection, demonstration facilities and excellent pre, during and after sales service and the lower price might not look such good value.

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Smart Linking



Pioneer is surely Japan's most respected 'small' hi-fi brand. Although dramatically larger than British specialist makers, it's a veritable minnow compared to the likes of Matsushita and Sony. And when you're small, you've got to be ahead, which is why Pioneer has historically been first to market with new technologies from LaserDisc to DVD. With its I-Link direct digital connection, its new VSX-AX5i-s multichannel receiver is no exception, says Noel Keywood...

Home Theatre is not really complicated" Pioneer tells us in the handbook for this surround-sound receiver. It brought a wry smile to my face. The VSX-AX5i-s is one of today's more complex beasts, designed to get the most from DVD-A, SACD and of course, movies. Unlike most other receivers it accepts direct digital linking of the both DVD-A and SACD direct from a Pioneer I-link equipped player, and also has a natty and entertaining auto set-up mode to bring a smile to any technophile's face. At the end of the day, whilst there's lot in this machine, a fair bit is aimed at making set up and use reasonably easy. Complicated it certainly is, but whilst initially a bit daunting the complexity does have its uses.

With 120watts per channel minimum – more into most modern loudspeakers – the Pioneer is a ground shaker, because the rear panel carries outputs for no fewer than seven loudspeakers, putting more than 1000watts on tap! In practice little of this potential will likely be used in most homes, but it's there if you want it. Why seven

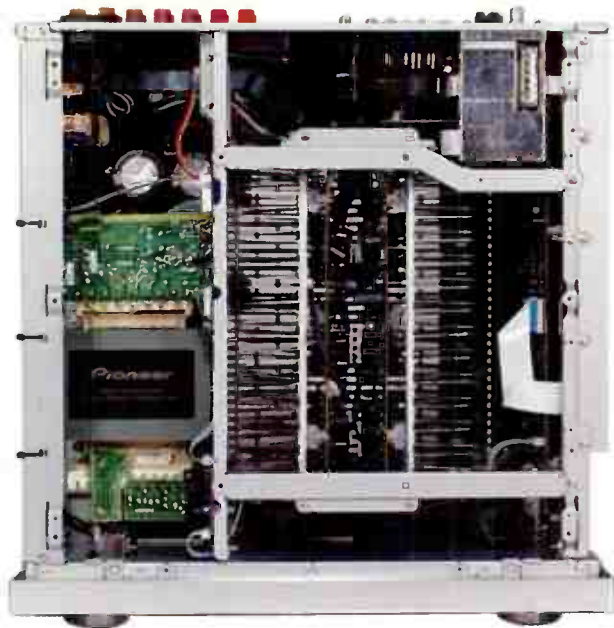
loudspeakers? In what is termed 7.1 surround-sound the usual 5.1 arrangement of three front loudspeakers and two at rear, known as Surround speakers, are supplemented by two extra Back speakers (left and right). Typically the Surround speakers move to either end of the settee in this arrangement, whilst the Back speakers go directly behind. Programme to the Back speakers is synthesised from movie 5.1 surround sound, Dolby or DTS, because discrete 7.1 recordings aren't commercially available. The question arises: what happens to a discrete 6.1 recording from Dolby Digital EX or DTS ES? The single rear channel here is represented by both Back loudspeakers. The high resolution signals of DVD-Audio and SACD are not synthesised either, only the low res., presumably to maintain fidelity.

Putting no fewer than four loudspeakers behind the listening position is perhaps a little excessive, but in the Home Theatre specs race 7.1 looks better than 6.1. I find 6.1 - which uses just one rear loudspeaker – gives dramatic results with a band like Insane Clown Posse and is well worth the effort. But loudspeakers

are like children: once you've got six a seventh is little extra effort, so they say in County Cork...

Needless to say the AX5, as I'll call it, is a weighty beast, but it's nicely finished. A door covers a lot of minor controls, leaving the volume control, input selector and a small array of buttons exposed. Pioneer cannot disguise its bulk, but then all A/V receivers are monsters. In the centre sits a large, pale blue dot matrix display that lets you know what's going on providing – as always - you understand the acronyms and symbols.

Pioneer has tried to push this machine ahead of the pack by equipping it with some advanced technology. It has a digital link to Pioneer's own players that carries high resolution audio from DVD-A and SACD, as well as Dolby Digital, DTS and standard PCM from CD. This eliminates the six analogue signal leads that usually connect player to receiver. It also allows full digital processing in the receiver to provide loudspeaker distance compensation (time delay). I've found in listening tests that with classical music in particular, where there is a



coherent sound field, the high resolution track on DVD-A is less believable spatially than the lower resolution. Dolby Digital version with time delay processing, so much so that at times I have decided I prefer the latter.

It isn't usually so obvious with Rock, where instruments have their own individual presence, often because they have been recorded that way, but the lovely sense of atmosphere often intrinsic with classical recordings is compromised by lack of time alignment and digital linking overcomes this drawback. Pioneer point out that the link is jitter free, which translates into a

cleaner, tighter sound. However, in use I reckon the greatest benefit to most folk is one of simplifying set up and use. I connected up a Pioneer DV-868Avi DVD/SACD player with just one FireWire link, carrying a small four-pin connectors either end. No other cables are needed for audio! Of course, you still need to connect up a TV to view the

wonderfully. Modern CDs often give almost discrete rear information, as do many television programmes that are almost certainly matrix encoded. The AV5 receiver plays stereo via Dolby ProLogic II by default so CDs play in surround-sound. Better still, the link into the receiver needs to be digital, to avoid D/A conversion out of the player and A/D conversion in the receiver (all surround sound receivers convert their analogue input to digital). This is what you get by default with I-link between player and receiver and the big Pioneer did a good job here. It comes prepared for this arrangement and it gives great results from CD played on a DVD player. An additional high quality CD player really isn't necessary in a system like this.

The AV5 isn't new though and already technology is moving on. Dolby have released Pro Logic IIX but the Pioneer uses its own

TURN ON, TUNE IN, DROP OUT

One of the greatest flourishes of this monster of technology is an auto-tune system that removes the need for manual adjustment. I was sceptical about this; measurement showed it gave accurate results – sort of. A small microphone that's supplied is placed in the listening position and connected to the receiver. It sends a series of test signals through each loudspeaker in turn to adjust sensitivity, time delay (loudspeaker distance compensation) and – most surprisingly – loudspeaker frequency response. This is a coarse equalisation system in the frequency domain but quite fine in amplitude, providing up to 6dB of adjustment in 0.5dB steps. The tune process is fast and the bursts of noise and peeps from the time align signals will bemuse anyone setting up the AV5. If you don't like the results or just want to it yourself the whole process can be carried out manually for each loudspeaker and the results stored in one of two memories. Measurement showed distances were accurate, but in my setup the system raised Centre speaker sensitivity 3dB and then used EQ to reduce band level by 3dB. It was getting into a knicker twist here, and some of the EQ settings looked a bit severe. Measurement showed they were in the right direction, but listening suggested the sound was coloured from individual loudspeakers. I cancelled all the auto-settings and used manual adjustment in the end.

PIONEERING SPIRIT

Since the 1950s, most Japanese household brand names have seen astonishing growth, and with an annual global turnover today of around \$6bn, Pioneer is no exception. It employs around 50,000 people in factories all over the globe. Yet the company has never been involved in TVs, VCRs, camcorders, computers, shipbuilding, motorbikes, air conditioning units or rice cookers – it is an audio specialist through and through - and about as close as a Nipponese CE company comes to a niche manufacturer. Indeed, with a huge R&D spend and leading edge skills, you could almost think of it as the Japanese equivalent to Lotus Cars.

receiver's setup menu and route video, through the usual on-board S-Video and Composite connectors. If your TV has Scart you will need a Scart to S-video cable or adaptor.

Running CD through Dolby ProLogic II is, surprisingly perhaps, one of the hidden and little discussed strengths of a home cinema system like this. Because stereo microphones actually take in ambient data (difference signals), within stereo lies surround-sound, believe it or not. It isn't a perfectly accurate representation of a real life sound field, but the processing Dolby ProLogic uses to extract this data is sufficiently powerful to give impressive results. Quite a few of my older CDs with complex mixes are unravelled by ProLogic, clarifying vocals

proprietary system for deriving a signal from stereo to feed the two back speakers in what is a 7.1 system, providing it is set to SB (Surround Back on). The usual Panorama, Dimension and Centre Width adjustments are available with ProLogic. With discrete 5.1 surround sound the Back signals are still synthesised, but with 6.1 both Rears carry the sixth discrete rear channel.

Since this is receiver it also has a VHF/FM tuner (with RDS) and even a Medium Wave section. The VHF





We're quite sad to notice

that a lot of our fellow retailers seem to have forsaken the ways of true two channel high fidelity and been seduced down the path of multi-channel surround sound systems. Sure, the films might be good, but the sonic merits of these digitally-processed many-speakered marvels can be summarised on the back of a postage stamp (not that we'll be seeing those for much longer the way things are going).

Meanwhile, truly decent sounding audiophile gear is blossoming, especially in the current climate of revival of the Vinyl LP.

We are your local...



Duevel speakers are winning more and more friends as customers realise how brilliant these difficult to ignore speakers are!



The Shanling CD player is a superb example of the quality coming out of China nowadays.



From our old friends, EAR, comes the beautiful 864 MM/MC phono preamp



Another Chinese line, Consonance looks set to sweep aside better known brands both in styling and sound.



Stax, legendary headphone manufacturers, present their valve driven Omega electrostatic 'phones



The Klimo Beltaine monoblocks, from Germany, with outboard power supplies are about as purist audiophile as it gets!



The UK's very own Papworth, with their bargain Class-A valve integrated.



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Benefits of dealing with Walrus (apart from the very best sounding gear) - We don't believe in "hard sell", you decide in your own time. In-house service on many items, sometimes while you wait. We understand audiophile equipment, especially vinyl playing and valve amps inside out, and have many years experience to draw on. Big accessory range. Interest Free Credit on many lines, subject to approval. And so on, and on ..



Aha! Bit misleading this one - The Sonneteer Byron CD - fabulous sound, and not a tube in sight!



The famous Musical Fidelity X-CAN valve headphone amp, now in v3 form.



...Turntable Specialist!

Do you ever get the nagging feeling that our adverts aren't entirely serious? Heaven forbid! Us, not serious? You cannot be serious (J. McEnroe). We are seriously serious guys. Serious about our shop, our products, our wine, and above all, our customers!

Walrus has never, ever, dreamt of being seduced by all this multi-channel nonsense, we prefer to leave that to others. Of course we like a good film as much as anyone, but we love realistically reproduced music much more. And as the ultimate, most engaging reproduction usually comes from vinyl sources amplified by a decent valve amp, this is what we unashamedly do. An ever increasing number of satisfied customers thankfully agree and tell us we are cutting edge in audio reproduction. Funny old world, eh?

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We can't bear the thought of a little leftover space in our ads. Every last tiny corner has to be filled right up with useful information to maximise our investment in this costly medium. So we fill it up, further and further, till almost all the white is gone.



VERDICT ●●●●●

Superbly specified bit of kit with a welter of facilities, oodles of power and fine sound – and via I-link it positively flies.

PIONEER VSX-AX5i-S £1,199
 Pioneer GB
 ☎ +44 (0)1753 789789
 www.pioneer.co.uk

THE EDITOR SAYS:

Last month we found Pioneer's £800 DV868Avi to be one of the very best DVD-universal players in the sub £1,000 class – just losing on points against Denon's (£500) DV-2200 simply because the latter was cheaper. However, there was a proviso – the Pioneer had I-Link, and if this was important to you, we said, it takes the lead. The new VSX-AX5i-s shows why. Plug one into the other and the first thing you notice is that you don't have Spaghetti Junction in your listening room. Then you get to play with all the clever DSP stuff without losing a smidgeon of sound quality. Then you realise how much better it sounds. A-Bing this combo without and then with the direct digital link is like night and day. The analogue connection sounds woolly, imprecise, a touch course, loose, untidy, whereas switch to digital and all of a sudden it's tight, focussed, articulate and engaging – showing the AX5's internal converters to be a whole class above the already respectable ones in the 868. If you're thinking of buying either of these, then it makes total sense to buy both – they're excellent on their lonesome ownsome, but together they're greater even than the sum of the parts.

section measured well and gives a forward sound with plenty of projection. There are tone controls and loudspeaker impedance setting (6ohm or 8ohm). Finally, Pioneer includes a phono stage so you can even matrix decode old 1978 quadrasonic CBS SQ and Sansui QS discs using ProLogic – although it's nowhere near the quality of a decent offboard item such as Musical Fidelity's XLPsv3. The phono section is MM only and like all analogue inputs it feeds into an A/D convertor for processing purposes unless a Direct function is switched in. In

beautifully cohesive sense of atmosphere pervaded this track, putting instruments into a plausible environment within which I was immersed. It was subtle yet enjoyable, and quite different from the norm. The Pioneer system springs some gentle surprises like this; it has been finely worked in many areas and springs some fascinating surprises. Used to others of the breed I always expected it to sound more incisive. Instead it consistently made itself less intrusive, pushing out performances graced with smoothness, delicacy, fine

SPECIFICATIONS:

- POWER:** 7x100W (claimed – see measured performance)
- DECODERS:** Dolby ProLogic II, Dolby Digital EX 6.1, DTS ES 6.1, THX
- SIZE:** 42x18.8x464mm
- WEIGHT:** 18.3kg

conjunction with digital linking, Pioneer's auto-tune system [see box] makes for a highly tuned surround-sound system able to cope with all the latest DVDs – video and audio, and SACDs, providing you use a Pioneer I-link DVD player of course. It also plays CD well and can even replay my video DVD-RVs shot with a Panasonic NV-GS70, which lays down a stereo 16/48 soundtrack.

SOUND QUALITY

Digital linking brought a smooth but easy clarity to performances from the DV868Avi player. The Pioneer sounds smooth and even a little lush at times, yet devoid of grain and background coarseness - that gentle haze that can cloud a performance when conventionally connected. Barb Jung's vocals were almost creamy smooth, but percussion finely detailed and very precisely etched with Steve Miller's The Joker on SACD. Here was easy listening imbued with a deep sense of clarity and precision.

It was the Insane Clown Posse's 'Get Ya Wicked On' that showed just how this receiver resolves things. I normally listen to the dramatic 6.1 DTS ES mix but the 5.1 DVD Audio mix through this set up was incredibly smooth but vividly clear, with pile driving dynamics. The sudden tempo changes were heart stopping and the stabbing, sneering lyrics (don't take them seriously; the Insane Clown Posse claim to be Christians!) had more menace than a room full of Johnny Rottens. This was real performance, which is what this band are about.

That the loudspeakers were correctly timed was apparent with B.B. King's 'Help The Poor'; a

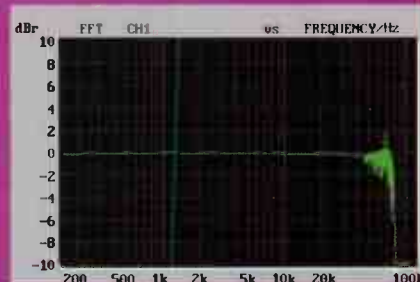
detailed and superb timing. Toy Matinee's 'Things She Said' was again less hard etched than I'm used to but delightfully clear and engaging, with vocals and effects springing at me from all round. This receiver's resolution separates out the various parts of a mix and delivers them with unmuddled freedom.

VERDICT

Not complicated eh? This receiver is massively complicated but I have to admit that once you've got it up and running it's easy to use. And the way it delivers CD, SACD and DVD-A in full surround-sound with no button pressing from just one digital link, is a real delight. It's big, it's expensive and its complex, but the VSX-AX5i-s delivers a beautifully wrought performance from DVD-A, SACD and CD too. It's the best of the breed at the moment, the one to beat when it comes to getting real fidelity from today's high resolution discs.

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Like rivals, this big receiver is powerful, producing 120watts into 8ohms and 210watts into 4ohms, so it will go very loud. The normal stereo inputs (line, CD, etc) run through an A/D with a brickwall filter at 22kHz, as usual, to enable digital signal processing. The Direct inputs run from 6Hz-70kHz (-1dB). Distortion levels were low, our analysis shows, even at high frequencies, suggesting a sound free from edginess.	Power	120watts
Using I-link the onboard D/As handling DVD-A gave a frequency response that reached 70kHz (-1dB) with 192kHz sampled data and a lower 30kHz with SACD. I-Link showed difficulties with low frequency SACD signals from the test disc, hence the 20Hz lower limit.	CD/tuner/aux.	
The VHF tuner measured well in all important areas, as expected. A small peak of +0.7dB at 8kHz will give just a little presence to the sound.	Frequency response	12Hz-22kHz
The Pioneer receiver measured well in every respect, although SACD doesn't have to bandwidth possible from a good SACD player.	Separation	98dB
	Noise	-106dB
	Distortion	0.007%
	Sensitivity	470mV
	dc offset	14/16mV
	SACD	
	Frequency response	20Hz-30kHz
	DVD-A	
	Frequency response	5Hz-70kHz
	Tuner	
	Frequency response	8Hz-16kHz
	Stereo separation	48dB
	Distortion (50% mod.)	0.22%
	Hiss (CCIR)	-72dB



VIVA LAS VEGAS!

Early January in Las Vegas saw the **2004 International Consumer Electronics Show**. Spanning 1.38 million net square feet, it brought together over 129,000 of the world's IT professionals, over 2,400 exhibiting companies and 18,000 international travellers from 110 countries - and *Hi-Fi World's* intrepid ed David Price was one of them. Here's what he saw:

Esoteric isn't a widely known name in the UK, but in cash-rich Las Vegas, TEAC's ultra-high end brand looked well at home. There's a sizeable band of Japanese audiophiles who reckon this company makes the very best digital transports money can buy, with its seminal P0 being a future classic. At CES, the U-XI Universal Player and G-0s Master Clock Generator were wowing digiphiles - fingers crossed that one



Think of this as 'the Italian Cyrus', Audio Analog UK PR guy Simon Pope (who he?) told me... and you can see what the old devil means. Superb build, right cabinetry and audiophile componentry in half-width boxes - what a great idea. Being America of course the Primo system was rather overlooked, but I can see going down a storm next month at the more spatially disadvantaged Bristol Show...

day, TEAC UK will see its way to bringing them our way.



McIntosh is one of the US's most widely respected brands - for several decades, it has been making its own very distinctive tube, and latterly transistor, amplifiers. Famously, it winds its own output transformers - which it even uses in its solid-state power amplifiers. The result is an extremely clean, sweet and stable sound from both tube (such as the MC2102) and transistor (like the MC602) amplifiers. Many US high end audio supremos, such as Monster Cable's CEO Noel Lee, swear by them.



After months of heady anticipation, it's official - ELAC has a new 600 range, with some component and cabinet tweaks, plus a light reworking of the superb JET tweeter, making for an even more impressive sound. The 603 shown here looks a peach, and should give the British something to worry about when it arrives in Blighty in a couple of months time...



April Audio is a small Seoul-based specialist manufacturer with a range of slightly offbeat but inspired products. At around \$5,000 per piece, the Eximus series offers Japanese flagship levels of build and finish at under half the price, while the Stello

range is superb sounding, cleverly conceived and affordable even for UK audiophiles. My 'product of the show' was the DP200 DAC preamplifier (shown) - a modular design with headphone amp, DAC, phono stage and A-D convertor onboard. Watch out for a full review soon.





Celebrating its twenty fifth anniversary, this US company single-handedly put interconnects on the global audio map. Now it's branching out into electronics and car kit. A new range of power amplifiers, power conditioners and line-array loudspeakers look set for success, while Lamborghini owners – and any other motorheads – now have option of rewiring their autos with **Monster** cables – which is bound to add weight, but hey, you can always leave your spare at home, can't you?



Big isn't just beautiful in the United States of America, it's practically compulsory. The result is a wealth of 'dimensionally



audacious' products for the surprise and delight of CES show goers. **Krell** is one of the US's most famous names, and it was here with a vengeance with some tasty but tragically unaffordable stuff **Bryston's SST** is a mouth-watering five channel power amp that makes a Humvee look flimsily built. Then there's **DynAudio Confidence C4** – not quite small enough for your average UK living room – and **Legacy Audio's Helix**, with a madcap price tag of \$22,000 per pair. Meanwhile, you'd need twenty times that much to afford a house big enough to house this **Ultra** horn loudspeaker...



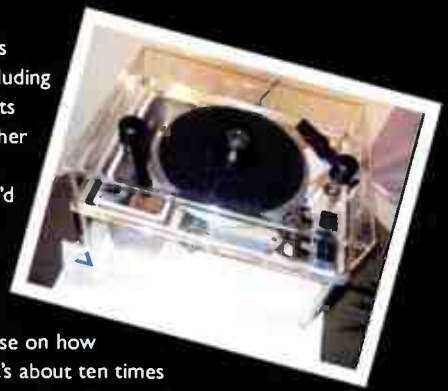
Despite all the fuss about MP3, mini iPods, Hi-MD, HDMI, plasma screens, and wireless networking going on in the more densely populated parts of the show, tubes (or 'toobs' as the Yanks are wont to say) were still much in evidence. This

Antique Sound Lab Hurricane integrated was a stunning bit of kit, as was the **Foggate** multichannel tube preamplifier and processor (yes, really!) – and the (ahem) esoterically entitled **Von Gaylord** power amp, complete with liquid cooling...





Ever-prolific **Clearaudio** was showing its latest wares, including a new composite base for its existing decks, and the rather spiffing Matrix record cleaning machine. As you'd expect from this German high end brand, it was a sea of lavish Perspex and



aluminium. I couldn't help but muse on how unusual it is to see a disc washing device that's about ten times prettier than your average \$5,000 turntable... Just a shame about the \$3,000 price tag.



The **Wharfedale** boys haven't been sitting on their hands of late – no sooner had they launched the rather impressive Opus 3 at the Heathrow show in November than out comes the Diamond 9.1. Selling for £180 per pair, they're not direct replacements for the 8.1, but still offer superb value with their die cast drive units, carbon fibre cones and sculpted cabinetry – even the finishes are great. Look out for them in the UK in late April.

With so many people and such vast size, this show even had its own TV station!



Arcam was one of several British exhibitors showing tasty new wares, not least of which was the P1 monoblock power amp (selling for around £1,000 apiece) – using similar circuit topology to the P7 but with beefier bits inside, it should be a cracker. Also, the new AVR300 AV receiver promises excellent sound per pound for those seeking hi-fi and home theatre in one box.

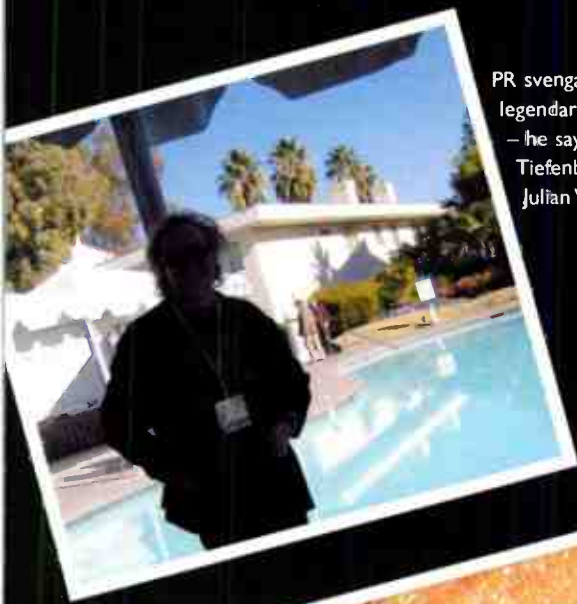


Glamour professional - being Vegas, there was no small number of attractions...



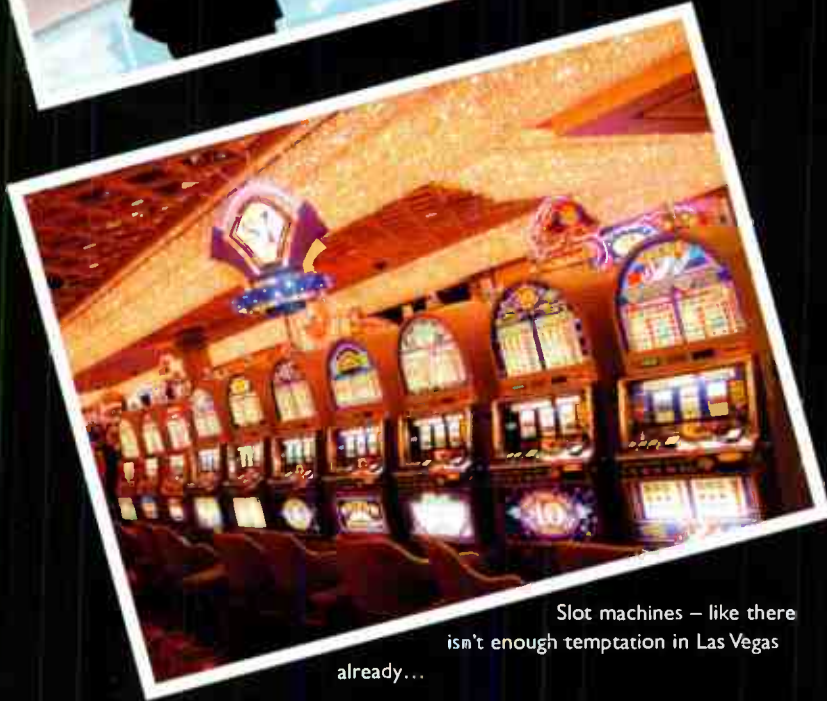
Now Hear This debuted a new range of unusual yet interesting loudspeakers at CES, which look set to impress fans of the marque and newcomers alike. And the company got an additional fillip when it entered CES 2004's 'Battle of the Bands' – and won! Almost everyone in the company is a very useful musician – even more so than the Gibson guitar company, who the NHT boys beat to walk away with the silver...





PR svengali Andy Giles and the legendary hotel pool into which – he says – Linn's Ivor Tiefenbrun pushed Naim's Julian Vereker

Today Santana, tomorrow Celine Dion – big name gigs are all part of the scene



Slot machines – like there isn't enough temptation in Las Vegas already...



Clockwise from top: Hi-fi was a major attraction of CES, but take a walk down Las Vegas Boulevard South and the talk on the streets was of "the gadget show", where plasma screens reigned supreme.



MEANWHILE...

The first couple of days at CES were abuzz at what had happened just down the road in San Francisco at the MacWorld Expo, where **Apple** today had just introduced the **iPod mini**, the smallest portable music player ever to hold up to 1,000 CD-quality songs. Encased in an ultra-portable, lightweight anodised aluminium body (in a choice of gold, pink, blue or green), it boasts the same award-winning user interface as the original iPod and works effortlessly with Apple's

iTunes Music Store. Said to be smaller than most mobile phones, it weighs only 3.6 ounces and includes FireWire and USB 2.0 connectors. iPod mini for Mac and Windows will be available in the US in February for a suggested retail price of \$249 – UK prices are to be confirmed. Click on www.apple.com for details.



And finally, the Ed gets away from it all in Red Rock Canyon, en route to a famous local "historic" ranch house – which turned out to be built in 1948. Doh!

mail

Visit our website at www.hi-fiworld.co.uk or send your emails to letters@hi-fiworld.co.uk. Letter of the month wins a pair of Precious Metals Interconnects and one years FREE subscription to HI-FI World.



Letter of the Month

COPY CAT CONTROVERSY

I want to warn all CD buyers reading your great magazine, before you buy any CD branded with a 'Copy Controlled' system, try to play it in your CD player.

The other day I bought the B.R.M.C album, 'Take them on your own', released by Virgin/EMI and branded "Copy Controlled", and it doesn't play properly in my Sony D-EJ725 CD Walkman. The CD skips after nine seconds played, on every song on the CD - very annoying! I've tried to get the CD replaced, but the store clerk refuses to replace it due to the explanation that it plays fine in their CD player! They even tried to persuade me that my CD player was broken! Yeah sure, but how come it plays the 1,000-plus other CDs in my collection? Virgin/EMI and other record companies are trying to sell us some silver discs which look like CDs and are supposed to play in CD players, but they are not CDs.

Although I have been living abroad for the last seven years, I am Serbian, and saw piracy flourishing in Yugoslavia between 1997 and 2002, but I restrained myself from buying pirate CDs due to their low quality. I was even trying to explain to my fellow Serbians that it was wrong to copy and sell CDs. But major record companies are now pushing us towards piracy. I thought they are supposed to attract more customers; obviously I'm wrong. Pity - imagine how many artists and performers will be denied their income due to their record companies' experimentation with copy protection systems, thus offending us long-time album buyers and their best customers. So maybe I'll have to take the plunge myself (and buy a good turntable/arm/cartridge, phono pre-amp, Apogee AD converters, Pentium IV PC, CD burner, loads of vinyl records and blank CD-Rs)? Then I'll definitely become the most popular cat in town! At least the artists and performers will get some income from the vinyl I purchase. If this is the way, then okay, I'll even learn how to do the re-mastering in WaveLab or CoolEdit Pro!

Igor Gligorov
Cyprus

Igor - I applaud the accuracy of your summary of the situation, and commend your reluctance to go to the pirates - I wish more consumers would see sense and do the same, if only on the quality grounds you describe. There's no doubt that what you have there is not a CD, and you have every right to be justifiably aggrieved. There are even some in the record industry who view such attempts to restrict our 'fair use' of the music we have purchased as pointless, as they give every attempt to develop a new hoop for us to jump through to their teenage kids for testing, and find the new measure cracked within 15 minutes. If the industry gets its way, this phase should not last long, as we are 'encouraged' towards SACD use, which has the perceived benefit to them of a thus-far uncracked encryption system. However, it cannot be long until the hybrid CD layers of these discs start bearing the same weak protection measures, thus continuing to annoy Walkman/cari/iPod users. There are a few strategies you can employ:

[1] Find the place on the web where similarly annoyed fans of the band will have ganged together and whinged, (cf. Massive Attack), and hopefully you will glean an EMI address to which you can send your 12cm slice of polycarbonate scrap

and get a real CD back by return. A good starting point is www.fedge.net/emi. Of course, any views expressed on this website are not necessarily endorsed by this magazine!

[2] Subscribe to the popular view that "we're smarter than they are" and work out how to transmogrify the real audio data on your junk disc into properly open CD data. This is usually not that hard, and if I may be permitted to put my Mac evangelist hat on again briefly, I was recently overjoyed to discover that an EMI Copy Controlled disc (Skin's really- quite-good 'Fleshwounds' album) which had stubbornly refused to cough up its real data to the AAC encoding of 4.0.1 iTunes on a G4 Tower with a Pioneer DVR-103 Superdrive, miraculously behaved impeccably when asked to do the same on a G5 with a DVR-106, using iTunes 4.1. Far be it from me to speculate whether this is configuration chance or Apple design...

[3] Remember that some protection schemes can be defeated by the simple expedient of holding the shift key down when you insert the disc in a PC or otherwise turning off Autorun - and you can then clone the disc to a nice usable CD-R version - strictly for your own personal use, of course!

PC



A BIT MORE SAMPLING

One thing I wanted to ask you... if my understanding is right, do you believe dynamic range (i.e. the number of bits) is more important than high sampling frequencies? The reason I'm asking this is that I've read your answer to one of your readers, and my opinion differs because, if we take the recording side for consideration, you must have a very sharp filter for anti-aliasing, and unfortunately this filter affects sound quality. Do you remember the Sony PCM-F1? I have modified the filter to get better sound quality! So even with 96 or 192kHz sampling frequencies, you still need a good filter. Unfortunately, the present system filters are not too good. In fact, I've personally tried increasing sampling frequency even above 500kHz, so that the filter requirements for the audio band become quite simple and thus less audible. In other words, unless the sampling frequency is beyond 500kHz, I would say the PCM system has a problem!

Ken Ishiwata
Belgium

Hi Ken - I think so too. Rob Watts of DPA told me he thinks that 384kHz is the lowest he'd recommend for audio use. But I think that bit-depth is just as important. If you have 24bits, you're guaranteed to have a 'future proof' system that will give superb resolution (one day). Obviously, many of the 24bit convertors around now struggle to give even 20bits in real terms, but if the space for the code is there on the disc it can always be used properly later. But I agree that the brickwall filter is the curse of PCM, and it really shows. DSD doesn't have this problem (but it struggles to get the equivalent of even 16bit resolution at 80-90kHz), so its problem is not the noisy artefacts of the brickwall filtering, but lack of resolution. Maybe this is why SACD sounds sweeter? We're finding it to be consistently more euphonic, despite its theoretically lower resolution - presumably because of the filter issue? Wow - what does 500/16 digital sound like on your PCM-F1? **DP**

As trustworthy test discs appear for both DVD-A (from Rohde & Schwarz) and SACD (from Philips) we are starting to see just how good - or not - both systems really are, and how they compare. SACD produces a lot of unwanted noise outside the audio band, above 20kHz. Up to now this has attracted criticism, as this noise swamps any low level music harmonics that exist

above 20kHz, defeating the purpose of having wide bandwidth in the first place. One reviewer told me confidently this noise gives SACD its characteristically smooth sound. I'm not so sure.

In its favour, SACD currently has lower distortion within the audio band than DVD-A and superb dynamic range, our measurements show. It may well be that this is what we hear, but it is difficult to be certain. At present a lot of SACD and DVD-A discs carry transcriptions from analogue tape or low bandwidth 24bit/48kHz digital material in a re-issue cycle much the same as that which characterised CD in its infancy, so it is difficult to be certain which technology - PCM or DSD - is best. At present I feel 24bit resolution is more important than extended bandwidth, but true wide-bandwidth digital recordings have yet to become available. Only when recordings are made using wide bandwidth A/D convertors will we truly be able to tell what these new formats are fully capable of.

NK



Lasers - may the life be with you!

LASER LIFE

I read your letter from Jack Hobbs (January 2004 issue) with interest. As an early adopter of CD (1983) the subject of laser life was of great interest, given the price of CD players and spares back then. In the long defunct 'Hi-Fi For Pleasure' magazine around 1984 there was information to the effect that given normal use the laser should last about 10,000 hours, but that with a temperature increase of ten degrees the life was halved. Anyway, I rearranged my setup to move the CD player away from the radiator and amplifier heat, and I can assure Mr. Hobbs that my various CD players through the years have all run for many thousands of hours of use, and none have been replaced because of breakdown, only upgrading.

Pete Lanning

Pete - although I adopted a couple of years later than you, by 1990 I was actually stricken with the very 5 year problem the salesman mentioned in Jack's letter was warning about. My much-loved Yamaha CD-X2 just packed up completely. However, as well as heavy student use it had also been gigged very hard as one of a pair in an early CD-only DJ set-up of mine, so I had to forgive it. The Marantz CD50 I replaced it with was sold to me in Laskys and is still going strong after nearly fourteen years. My first DVD Player, a Toshiba 3107B, is starting to show signs of temperament having just passed the magic five years mark. All suffered heavy use, so the fairly non-scientific conclusion of this little waffle would have to be if in doubt, buy Marantz!

PC

My twenty year old Marantz CD73 has just given up the ghost, but it's the analogue audio output which has gone down on one channel and not the laser, so I can echo Patrick's comment. As a serious student of 'classic' CD spinners (and the owner

of countless examples of assorted 1984-era machines), I have to say I've had several Sony CDP-101s fail on me due to laser mistracking, but no Philips-based designs. And as for my Meridian MCD Pro (a heavily breathed on 1983 Philips CD100), it tracks some discs better than modern machines, and even plays CD-Rs without complaint - howzat?

DP

FIXING THE WIFE ACCEPTANCE FACTOR

I have a Croft Micro II Special preamplifier which I am looking to upgrade. My reason for this decision is the lack of remote and the dual volume controls - my wife hates these quirks and therefore chooses not to use 'our' system, which consists of pre amp,

Musical Fidelity XA-50s into a pair of Royd Minstrels (single wired); upfront is an MF E60 CD and Townshend Avalon/Alphason Opal/Linn K9. I like the sound of my vinyl set up but need the convenience of a modern pre. Vinyl is my main source, but I do feel I need some extra speed and bass from rock tracks, particularly when using CD as source. Female vocals are generally a delight but occasionally suffer sibilance on vinyl. Do you have any suggestions that would retain the current line up as much as possible?

Peter Christie.

Hi Peter – I'd go for the Sugden HeadMaster – it's a line level preamplifier with full remote control, and a very clean and open sound with just a faint tinge of sweetness. You could also use the Croft as a fine phono stage. Sorted! **DP**

The K9 is a modded Audio Technica AT110E and none too clever in my view. This is the source of vinyl sibilance. Look to Ortofon 530/40 (www.henleydesign.co.uk) or Shure M97Xe

(www.shuredistribution.co.uk) for better tracking and smoother treble, or our usual fave, the Goldring 1042.

NK

DAC'S FOR THE MEMORIES

My CD replay system consists of Pink Triangle Cardinal transport and Da Capo DAC. These are excellent products and have served me well over the last few years. However, recently they have developed a fault - mostly in the DAC but I feel that there is a problem with the transport too. If I do have to replace these items what would you recommend as replacements – my budget is up to £2,000. I have an Audiolab 8000Q as pre- and Quad 707 as power, all cabled by Nordost Blue Heaven and bi-wired Solar Wind feeding Ruark Equinox speakers, and stands by Target. I have listened to various set-ups over the last few weeks but I have not found anything I like as much as the PTs.

David Hale

Agreed – I know the Cardinal/Da Capo well and it's one of the very best sounding two box CD spinners I've ever heard – but I wouldn't recommend it simply on the grounds that its reliability is questionable. As such, I'd advise Marantz's SA-1711 (£1,400) digital disc spinner. This is as close as you'll get to the PT's warm and sweet and beguiling CD sound (complete with very generous bass), with the added bonus of excellent SACD. It should, as with all Marantz products, prove reliable and is

superbly built. Its main drawback, the lack of DVD-A playback, isn't really relevant to you, so I'd say it's ideal. After this, you'd do worse than to replace your Audiolab 8000Q preamp with Sugden's HeadMaster (£599) – I've used this with a Quad 909 with excellent results, and it should prove far sweeter than your clinical Audiolab. **DP**



A reader writes in with a KI query, and the man himself replies...

CIAO JOHN!

I am an Italian regular reader of Hi-Fi World and long time high fidelity enthusiast. I just read your article regarding the sad news of the death of Mr John Michell and I felt forced to drop you these few lines.

I am the proud owner of four of his masterpieces - the Transcription Hydraulic, the Prisma, the GyroDec and the Orbe - and I contacted him several times in the past in order to get his help and advice on getting some spare parts for the old turntables and to know how to set them up properly. Before the days of e-mail, I phoned the Michell factory and much to my surprise I was transferred directly to him and had the great honour to talk to him: he spent a lot of time talking with me (he was patient and kind enough to speak slowly, allowing me to understand his explanations and suggestions).

Last time I had the opportunity to speak to him he was suggesting that I get the last upgrade (VCIDC) for my Orbe, spending a lot of his time explaining to me why, in a quite technical but always understandable way and when I put in my order for this upgrade he sent me a very long e-mail with all his instructions on how to install this upgrade and optimise my Orbe properly. I too will miss his kindness and dedication.

**Andrea Bianco
Genova**

Couldn't agree more, Andrea. I can still 'hear' John describing to me in his lovingly long-winded way what he'd done to TecnoArm (a) (i.e. shot blasting and drilling the arm tube) and why he'd done it, with rather oblique reference to Jim Clark's Formula One driving style and classic Lotus rear suspension systems. Fascinating stuff, but he had a knack of phoning me up two minutes before our editorial deadline! **DP**

CATCHING THE BUZZ

I recently purchased an MVL A2+ amplifier from a reputable hi-fi store. It was actually their display model so I got it at a very good price due to an intermittent fault (mains transformer buzzing). This can be quite intrusive at times and although I find the overall performance excellent, I can't help but feel that the fault may be compromising the performance of what I regard to be a very good system comprising Meridian 206 CD player and Ruark Talisman Speakers. There was no instruction manual and I was wondering whether one of these might be available? Any help regarding the fault on the amp, or any suggestions would be greatly appreciated. The hi-fi shop said that they have had it in their workshop and they cannot actually identify the problem but I'm sure that it can be rectified.

Mark Wood

I can't give you a definitive verdict on why your mains transformer is buzzing, but suffice to say that I've had several bits of kit in the past – Sony, funnily enough – with the same fault and assuming it's not a loud noise and not emitting smoke or sparks, it's unlikely to affect the sound of the system. You could always damp the case with sorbothane sheets to reduce the noise, or hide the amp away somewhere where it's hard to hear the buzz. **DP**

Chances are the core laminations are producing the buzz and need better clamping. If possible, tighten up the clamp screws, and also try the transformer mounting screws. The amp must be disconnected from the mains of course. **NK**

JUMPER LEAD?

Could you please help? I have a Pink Triangle Da Capo, which I purchased second-hand. The module inside has 24-20 printed on, is this 20 or 24 bit? Also do you know what the jumper settings should be? As you know, Pink Triangle are no longer trading so information is hard to find.

Andy Peacock.

If any readers have access to manuals for either the aforementioned MVL A2+ amplifier or PT Da Capo, let us know and we'll put everyone in touch with one another. **DP**

ASK KEN!

I'm interested to hear what anybody out there thinks of the Marantz 6000 KI Signature CD player. Mine gives fabulous detail, but even after a year of playing in, the sound is thin and light. More annoyingly, all male vocals sound an octave higher, and robbed of their bass weight. All music lacks weight and emotion. Bruce Springsteen sounds more like Beryl Springsteen! I think the CD player is great for classical and female vocals, but inadequate for everything else. This seems to contradict your review which says the KI Signature is the best in the price range, and also warm and rich sounding... I've got some improvement from upgrading the mains cable, but in frustration now listen to my 15 year old Marantz CD52II, which was always very rich and bassy. I've also tried an Arcam CD 72, which was very rich, but lacked the detail and definition of the KI. Any ideas? My system is: Marantz CD6000 KI Signature with Russ Andrews powercord, Chord Chorus interconnect, Marantz 8200 amplifier, Cyrus solid copper cable, JPW Millennium 510 speakers.

Ben Howk
Coventry

(...and Ken Ishiwata replies...)
Yes, I can imagine your situation, Ben. It's several things all together. First of all, the CD6000 KI has a very tight bottom end, and this means you don't necessarily get a 'rich' sound, especially if - as I guess - the room acoustics aren't helping. And the cables you're using aren't right either - all solid core copper wires tend to give the impression of being fast, but are actually harsh and often thin. And then there are the loudspeakers... Between you and me, I get the impression that you bought all those things from Richer Sounds in one fell swoop, hoping they would work together, but unfortunately in this case the combination is wrong. What I can suggest is the following: use the PM8200 in Class A mode only, try cheap soft copper cable for both speaker connections and interconnects and move around the loudspeakers in the room to find your most preferred balance. **KI**

You seem to find all the "softer" sounding players better balanced, leading me to conclude that it is the tightness of the CD6000 KI's bass that is making it sound "light". In my

experience it is dry but fast and punchy; it also goes deep. You do, however, need loudspeakers that can reveal these properties, hence Ken's views, with which I agree. However, I worry slightly about whether your player is working properly - always a possibility. If large differences remain borrow a replacement if possible.

NK



1980 A&R A60 – did things really get better?

WORLD'S IMPROVING, BUT HI-FI IS NOT...

Having previously written to you to tell you how poor I considered your magazine to be, I think it's only fair to drop you a line now that things are improving. In particular I like the ever-expanding sections on audio classics, and computer audio. Furthermore, Hi-Fi World now seems to be a fuller and fatter read - you now seem to have far more editorial content than of yore. Even the reviewing seems better - although you will always struggle to demonstrate editorial independence whilst you keep championing poorly engineered stuff like Origin Live...

But now to my real reason for writing: I have lately been querying the genuine magnitude of year-on-year improvement to the standard of music reproduction. I am sure that value-for-money - especially in budget components - is reaching new heights all the time. However, I seriously doubt that the state of the art is moving forward much at all. The truth is that the finest power-amp available to me (given my limited funds) is a Leak Stereo 20. Quad ESL57s are still nearly unmatched for ultimate fidelity and Yamaha NS1000's still kick like a mule. A good turntable in 1980 remains a competitive performer even now. And a good multi-bit CD player from the late 80s seems to have musical qualities largely the equal of the current crop of spinners - though possibly with rather different presentation.

It seems to me that every month I read reviews claiming that some or other new component sets new standards. Yet if this were genuinely true, the cumulative improvement over a

number of years should make any old component sound quite out-of-touch. Yet this is quite obviously not true. I have recently listened to a number of twenty year-old components, all of them 'real world' or even economy items, and none of them sounded hideously poorer than contemporary equivalents; all of them still played music; some were remarkably beguiling.

My first ever hi-fi purchase was a 20W bottom-of-the-range Harman Kardon tuner-amplifier back in 1978. In 1984, with an intermittent fault appearing on the tuner, I sold it on to a friend cheaply as an amplifier. He is still using it, and the tuner fault promptly disappeared never to return! I embarked on a series of dubious upgrades, many of which failed to deliver the hoped-for satisfaction. Listening to the Harman Kardon, it still sounds fresh, lively and sweet. I'm sure I've had far worse along the way.

My suggestion, to help reviews to carry a measure of perspective, is to always include a suitable old-timer in your group tests. This 'ringer' should be a widely known and respected component of appropriate value. I think many of your readers would be fascinated to read how amps like the A&R A60 or the Pioneer A400 stack up against the new competition. Solid multi-bit Marantz CD players like the CD50 would make a telling reference to modern players. The classic BBC designs are the obvious reference for box style speakers. I'm not sure many manufacturers would like it, but this would give an un-matched idea of the level of progress we have made in twenty years of trying.

Anon

Well, thanks for that rather backhanded compliment, sir, I'll take it in the spirit which I assume it's meant, which is good! Can't agree with your prognosis on Origin Live - I think Mark Baker's products are some of the most lovingly and intricately designed on the market, so I'll leave you to your prejudices on that point. But the reason I'm

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printing your letter is that I wholeheartedly agree with your latter point – things cannot, as the song goes, only get better, but they can only get cheaper. There's no doubt that hi-fi is stunning value for money now, but it's simply wrong to say it's in any way better.

Take the aforementioned Arcam (nee A&R) A60. In 1980, this cost just under £200, which in today's money isn't far off £1,000. Arcam's newest FMJ A33 costs just a little more, and offers dramatically – mind bogglingly – better functionality. In terms of features, ergonomics and connectivity it's light years ahead and boasts things that we could only dream of twenty five years ago – some folk would have given their houses for that natty alphanumeric dot matrix display! Does it sound any better? Err... not really. It certainly has better power and current driving ability (quite markedly so), but the A60 was a consummately smooth and clean device, with a nicely musical nature - and in this respect the FMJ is no better. And this is no disrespect to Arcam, as I think that – in a bid to provide remote volume control and multiple facilities - many manufacturers have actually got worse in the sonics department!

We at Hi-Fi World have always (rather trenchantly) been of the opinion that while there's some stunning new stuff around, the classics can often teach the new boys a thing or three. I think we've been far more emphatic about this than our rival magazines, and it's interesting to see some coming around to our way of thinking. I hope you liked our digital recorder review, with the twenty year old Nakamichi ZX9 cassette deck emerging as the winner – we had fun, hope you did too. Thanks for reading our (apparently) improved magazine! **DP**

Amplifier design has changed very little over the last 20-30 years. Component quality has improved though, largely due to improved materials and manufacturing techniques used by component suppliers. Much of what I hear is attributable more to this than anything else I believe. I know the A60 and feel things have moved on sonically, if not by a large amount.

Tuners are generally more balanced in their sound these days, but nothing will ever match a Leak Troughline in good condition. But then, it uses very few components and needs a good outdoor aerial, unlike all modern tuners, so we are not comparing like with like here.

Conventional modern loudspeakers are appreciably better in my view, especially in imaging and fundamental accuracy. But a box speaker could never match a good electrostatic in many important areas, especially not a Quad ESL57. Again though we would not be comparing like with like and I really can't see what use it would be to readers to constantly make this point. We do regularly wheel out good old 'uns and like to remind people, as well as ourselves, that some classics remain great. However, while specific old products – often expensive in their time – might shine, a lot are tat. In my 30 years of reviewing overall standards have risen appreciably, whilst prices have fallen. **NK**



Reader Neville Cohen has warm memories of 211s.

THOSE WERE THE DAYS MY FRIENDS

Although I can't claim to be a real old-timer at 73, nevertheless my eyes glazed over when I read about 211 valves in your November issue! As a teenager just getting into a hobby that we called 'electronics' rather than 'radio', I helped a cousin build a 'big' amplifier to drive the cutting head for a direct-to-disk recorder in the early 1950s. Occupying most of a 6'x19" ex-PMG rack, its most obvious feature was a pair of 211s on right-angle sockets, so they were outside the front panels. High tension was, as I recall, about 1000V DC, produced by a pair of 866A mercury-arc rectifiers. The bright-emitter filaments needed 10v@10 amps, and you could just about read a book by them. Driving them was, again going on memory, 105D triodes.

Anyway, what prompted me to write to you is your description of these brutes from the Jurassic age. Our 211s had metal plates, which glowed dully

under full bore. A later version was the 211E, and then we obtained the graphite-plate equivalents called 242s, so obviously these are what now pass for 211s. This sort of gear was not available on the Australian market in those days, but we had a friend with Western Electric whose job was pulling out old gear from movie houses to update the sound systems, and he was always able to see that bits and pieces came our way. Everything was £10 (about 3 weeks wages for me!), be it a pair of 211s with magnal bases, HT transformer, matching filament transformers (all these were monsters, about 5" x 5" x 10"), silver-wound Output transformers (round, about 8" diameter), or 18" electrodynamic loudspeakers. All wiring was done using a 150W soldering iron. Them were the days! Anyway, the whole of the November issue was great.

**Neville Cohen
Australia**

If anything valves (tubes) are enjoying a worldwide renaissance, driven by demand that is largely channelling through the internet it seems to me. If you want to see more on all this I suggest a visit to the Western Electric website (www.western-electric.com) where they catalogue the re-opening of the US manufacturing plant, as well as its history, complete with photo history. As for the 211 and its big brother the 845, they give the best sonics I've ever heard from an amplifier. Trouble is, once you have heard these things you realise how depressingly limited modern solid-state jobbies are. A few hours of pleasure can result in a lifetime of disappointment! **NK**

SUPERANNATED SUGDEN

Having used a Sugden A48Mk2 amplifier to drive Rogers LS3/5A loudspeakers for longer than I care to remember, I've decided that the time has come to have my Sugden overhauled or replaced. Would any of the amplifiers featured in the Hi-Fi World September 2002 supertest perform as well or better with LS3/5As as a refurbished Sugden A48 Mk2?

**John Anderson
London**

I wouldn't bet on it! Sugden amplifiers are amongst the best and since you've been using your system for a long time any change will likely come as a shock, not necessarily for the better. Try and get some comparisons before making any decisions. You will hear differences; for example the Myriad has fantastic bass drive and will likely outgun the

A48 in this area, but whether you will prefer it in other areas I doubt. It really is a matter of taste. I would be more inclined to use the A48 MkII with a pair of modern Mission bookshelf loudspeakers like the 780SEs or suchlike, since I don't feel the LS3/Sas are quite up to the pace these days. **NK**

SR-222 MKII. The SR-838's arm is, however, much better. The bearings still do not have the slightest hint of play in them after 24 years and operate as smoothly as they did when new. The headshell is also a more rigid affair than that fitted to the budget deck. It has a 20 pole, 30 slot DC brushless type direct drive motor with quartz servo

perfection, yet making stuff we could all afford. I think the SR222/II (see Feb 2004's *Olde Worlde*) has been unfairly overlooked, and really rate Sansui electronics too. **DP**

IT SAYS HERE...

Car magazines are great for getting useful information and narrowing down the field when buying a new motor but you wouldn't dream of handing over the cash without a test drive. It's obviously the same with hi-fi kit, and you can spend just as much if you've got deep enough pockets! In the last eighteen months I have had two differing experiences that prove this point. I have been a keen reader of *Hi-Fi World* for some years now and when considering an upgrade I use your pages to shortlist kit to audition. Twelve months ago I decided it was time to consider replacing my faithful Rega 2 with a major upgrade. After a lot of thought and careful reading of your pages I decided on the Michell GyroDec SE (rave reviews), Linn LP12 (always gets a good word) and the Clearaudio Champion Level 2 (although the Champion hadn't been reviewed by yourselves at Level 2 you did give the basic level turntable a reasonable thumbs up).

Anyway, I loaded up the car with my Nait 3 and Rega Ela speakers and went a listening. Both the Linn and the Clearaudio were very pleasing. Very well made, musical, detailed and neutral in tone, and just the job for long periods of listening. But shock horror, the Gyro SE to my ears was awful! Yes, I wouldn't give house room to the turntable that was rated as just about everyone's best buy. The sound was just too lush, bass heavy and generally over the top for my taste. (Is it heresy to say this?). I suppose it could have been badly set up, or the wrong cartridge combination (Goldring), but really I don't think it was just me. Anyway the wife loved the looks of the Champion so that's the one I bought (top hint - if the wife likes it, buy it quick!) and I have been very happy with the results. It is fitted with a RB250 from the Planar 2 but after the full OL makeover and a Dynavector 10X4 cartridge - a great sound, very involving. I love it!

The other part of my story could not be more different. A few months prior to buying the turntable I auditioned the Naim CD5 and the Densen CD player against my ten year old Arcam Delta 70.3, fully expecting to part with my £1100 that day. After all my player was ten years old and surely things had moved on in leaps and bounds? Both the Naim and the Densen had a slight edge over the Arcam in some areas but generally there was not

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New Web Changes: [Mr Flux on this Site and Announcement](#)

11/11/03 a new link for <http://www.classicsansui.com> (for Special parts), and AE-111 Page update.

04/2003 Added AE-992 inside photos, courtesy of Mr. Aaron Leubke

04/2003 Added the additional "Mr Sansui" Page for Special users who e-mailed me photos since April. Updated AE-111 photos.

Please go to [Site Update History](#) for the history before 04/2003

The Best of Sansui - Bulletin Board

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Check out www.sansui.us for lots of classic kit.

MORE SANSUI STUFF

As a former proud owner of a Sansui SR-222 MK II turntable, I am in agreement with the comments from Mr van Baren and David Price ("Going Dutch #2", Letters January 2004 Issue). It's nice to hear this forgotten budget classic mentioned in the hi-fi press again after all these years. I bought mine in 1979 and used it for the next five years with an Ortofon VMS20EII, Sansui AU-217 II amp (superior in every way, I believe, to the now more famous NAD 3020 of the same era) and Acoustic Research AR 25 'speakers. The warm and smooth yet punchy sound this set-up made was, although not strictly neutral, absolutely captivating with the sort of music I listened to at that time. The SR-222 MK II gained much better aesthetics compared to the original version, boasting a high gloss jet black piano-like finish. It looked a million dollars yet cost only £70. The Pioneer PL-12D and the Trio KD-1033 looked ugly and dated in comparison. Its main weakness was the arm which, on my example at least, had far too much play in the bearings which I believe robbed the sound of some precision.

As much as I welcome renewed interest in this budget classic, I think it would be unfair to a once great hi-fi company to remember only their budget decks. I recently acquired a beautiful and very rare Sansui SR-838 high-end turntable. Its plinth is constructed from 1.5 inch thick chipboard and has the same gorgeous glossy black finish as the

control and a heavy (1.7kg) alloy platter. Sansui claimed a wow and flutter figure of 0.025% (WRMS) for it in their sales literature. The whole package weighs in at a hefty 12.8kg.

So, how does it sound? Well, I have fitted a new Ortofon 520 II cartridge and I have used it with Sansui AU-719 and AU-919 integrated amps of the same era and also a Naim Nait 3 and I prefer its sound overall to my Linn Axis/LVXI Ortofon 530 II. It has better bass extension and definition and more refinement while still being able to compete with the Linn in other areas. I am delighted with the performance of this turntable, especially as I paid only £64 for it - what a bargain! So how about an *Olde Worlde* on the superb and innovative Sansui AU-919 amplifier? It cost £480 new in 1979 and was possibly the greatest Japanese super-integrated of the 1970's with world-beating slew rate and rise time specs and lovely sound. Just one more thing, the www.classicsansui.com website is no longer in existence. Instead take a look at www.sansui.us, a site run by US-based Japanese Sansui enthusiast Isao Asakura.

**Gordon Hamilton
Durham**

Glad to hear of your experiences with classic Sansui stuff, Gordon. I have to say I have a real soft spot for this now-defunct Japanese brand - like Pioneer they were a small, hi-fi-only specialist really striving for

much to chose between them so there was no way I was going to spend that sort of money on so small an improvement in sound. It was quite a surprise. Anyway I decided there and then that I would stick with the 70.3 until it gave up the ghost and only then would I upgrade. So when I read your review of the Tri-Vista DAC the very last thing on my mind was a CD upgrade. Your praise was so warm for this machine however that I decided it wouldn't hurt to have a listen. So again I loaded up the car and trundled off to Zouch Audio for a long afternoon's audition. Guess what? You were right on this one! The Tri-Vista opened up the sound to a wonderful degree while at the same time smoothing out the rough edges that were apparent with the 70.3 when used alone. The Tri-Vista's feet are now glowing a nice shade of blue whilst attached to the Arcam on my hi-fi rack!

So the moral of my tale - read the mags but always have a really good listen before you buy. You might be surprised - for better or for worse. Your ears are unique and the sound that you find appealing may be totally different to what turns the reviewers on.

**Dave
Leicester**

Oh well, can't say I'd agree with your prognosis on the GyroDec, Dave. If the Michell sounded 'lusher' than the Linn LP12 then something was amiss with the Gyro set up, because that's not usually the way things shake out! (It's far tauter and better defined, making the Linn sound vague and ponderous.) The Michell is easy to set up reasonably well, but tricky to set up properly - lots of spring twiddling and spirit level wielding is involved - so methinks your dem deck wasn't properly fettled. Still, I'm glad you're happy with the Clearaudio - and it's a superb deck without a doubt.

The Arcam anecdote tallies with my own experience completely - it was an excellent bit of kit, and a new £1,000 CD spinner would struggle to better it comprehensively. Fortunately, the MF TriVista 21 is one of the few specialist aftermarket DAC upgrades available, and as you've seen, does the job with aplomb. The message is - as ever - use magazines to see which kit to audition, then let your own ears do the listening! **DP**

TWO SUBJECTS, IF I MAY...

First, with reference to your editorial in the February 2004 Issue, I agree wholeheartedly with your comments about vinyl replay but would add dynamic range to the attributes you list.

This morning I was sad to see Hugh Bean's obituary in the Telegraph and was prompted to play his recording (Boult/New Philharmonia - EMI ASD 2329) of Vaughan Williams's "The Lark Ascending". The piece goes from very quiet to really rather loud and does, I think, cover a realistic dynamic. My vinyl system copes with no effort, whereas the equivalent CD (Trichord Revelation, which is certainly not harsh or bright) seems compressed and simply does not carry the ambient information which the LP includes without apparent effort. I hasten to add that the medium is at fault here. The record playing system is Michell GyroDec SE with Orbe platter and the new HR PSU, Hadcock GH242 SE/Incognito (I know it is a unipivot but the combination does work) and refurbished (by Len Gregory) Ortofon MC3000 II playing through a Tom Evans Microgroove + to an Audio Analogue Bellini preamplifier.

Second, with reference to Steve F's letter ("Chasing Rainbows") in the same issue, I also couldn't agree more! I have a Magnum Dynalab FT101A, fed by a Ron Smith Galaxie 17 and am well aware that DAB comes nowhere this, even on BBC R3 which I listen to mostly. Last night (New Year's Day) I listened to Yasmin Levy (spare no effort to hear this wonderful singer) on R3's World Music Day/Live at Lock 17, and yesterday morning to the New Year's Day Concert from Vienna. Despite the restricted bandwidth I cannot imagine that electric sound comes any better than this. Vinyl can come close. Try The Dave Brubeck Quartet at Carnegie Hall (Columbia Stereo C2S-826). It is already apparent that the DAB tuner is a dead duck as far as hi-fi separates are concerned, and that Government policy (quantity before quality) has already marginalised DAB into portables and car radio, which may be a good thing as it could delay the analogue switch off.

Bob Parsons

Hmm... I'm not sure if the proliferation of DAB into portables and cars will actually delay the dreaded switch off - if anything I would have thought it would accelerate it, as HM Government is of course obsessed with quantitative (rather than qualitative) measurements (the price of everything and the value of nothing, as someone once said!). But I couldn't agree more with your sentiments on both analogue disc and radio. I know I sound like a 'stuck record', but vinyl is our highest resolution music carrier, and I still haven't heard better - despite last month's 'advanced resolution digital fest'! As for FM, well your Magnum Dynalab is a stunning radio and it

should trounce even the very best Digital Radio tuner (Arcam's DT81?) at its highest permissible bitrate. Thanks for your support. **DP**

THEN AND NOW

My system consists of a Marantz CD50SE CD player, Myst TMA3 amplifier and homemade speakers using Kef Uni-Q units. The Marantz and Myst were well thought of when they were designed in the 1980s (indeed, I seem to remember Noel Keywood saying some nice things about the Myst...) but I assume that technology has moved on since then - more on the CD side of things than the amplifier I should imagine and I've no idea how they would compare to modern equipment. I'd very much appreciate any advice that you can give me about upgrading. **Howard Clarke.**

Interestingly, CD technology hasn't actually moved on that much since your late eighties Marantz CD50SE. True, it used the last of the Philips TDA1541 16bit, 4 times oversampling DACs, and was replaced by the CD53SE in 1991, which was a Bitstream design that offered more smoothness. But this was arguably at the expense of musicality, so it's very much a case of swings and roundabouts. These days, most Compact Disc spinners use 24/96 or 24/192 DACs as a matter of course, but this is more about low cost than high quality - the extra resolution they're capable of is wasted as CD is limited to 16/44 resolution. The CD50SE sounds a little spikier compared to the Marantz's CD7200 (its contemporary replacement), with a brightly lit upper midband and a slight lack of focus, but it's not a vast, swingeing, massive difference, as ad copywriters and some hi-fi hacks would have you believe. If you're into upgrading your system, you first need to identify what you'd like more (or less) of - rather than just thinking your system 'must be a bit past it, I suppose'. In absolute terms, I'd say it was quite musical and dynamic (thanks to the Myst), but with a relatively thin tonality (thanks to the Myst), with poor low level detailing (thanks to the Marantz). To upgrade it appreciably, you'd have to spend lots of money. I'd say a Musical Fidelity Tri Vista 21 DAC (£1,200) would be a great buy, giving you depth and breadth and warmth in equal measures. It's a lot to spend, but your amplifier is still very capable given a synergistically matched source - and the Marantz/MF combo is precisely this. **DP**

Hero or Zero?



After years of producing high quality output transformerless valve amplifiers, Glenn Croft has turned his hand to a zero feedback hybrid design. Haden Boardman listens to Croft's new Twin Star power amplifier.

From deepest darkest Birmingham hails Glenn Croft. He is something of an audio maverick, and about as 'anti commercial' as you can get. Never ask for sales brochures - they do not exist! For the past twenty years or thereabouts, Glenn has hand-crafted his wares, manufacturing some of the most exquisite sounding valve gear from the Micro series, through a range of output transformerless valve power amplifiers, to conventional 'E1' and 'C core' transformer designs with complex regulated power supplies.

Although Glenn never went down the Single Ended Triode route, he has stuck fairly closely to his valve roots. But - shock horror - what is this? Not a new valve amp, but a hybrid design using 'Transvalve' circuit topology, to give the official title. Two octal based dual triodes drive the four MOSFET output devices, and, erm, that is it! I have seldom seen such a simple circuit, no feedback, two power supplies (separate left and right power supplies for the output stage) and nothing but a handful of very high quality passive components.

The valve and MOSFET sections have their own individual power supply transformers, the valve circuits utilising a conventional E1

type, with the output stage using a toroidal type. A small circuit board holds a relay circuit to mute the output while the two valves catch up with the MOSFETS on switch-on. The power supply is located towards the front of the chassis, no regulators are present on this model; simplicity, coupled with high quality components is the order of the day here. Internal build is to Croft's usual standard with neat assemblies. Mains input is via IEC, gold phono sockets for input, and gold 5 way binding posts for speaker terminals. Output power is a quoted 45W into 8 ohms - see our measurements.

Croft offers three additional upgrade to the cooking £1750 Twin Star, ranging from £2,500 up to a whopping £4,000, via £3,500. The extra money buys you superior components, faster MOSFETS, bigger stabilised power supplies, and a 'super reg' 6C33 triode regulator on the two twin signal triodes of the top model. For the past few years most Croft products have been delivered in a large standard black case, but various levels of knob and fascia trim can be specified to buyers' tastes. Paint was far better than Croft products from yore, with a good quality black crackle finish resting nicely with the sweet little power indicator, an illuminated Croft logo. Is this Glenn paying homage to

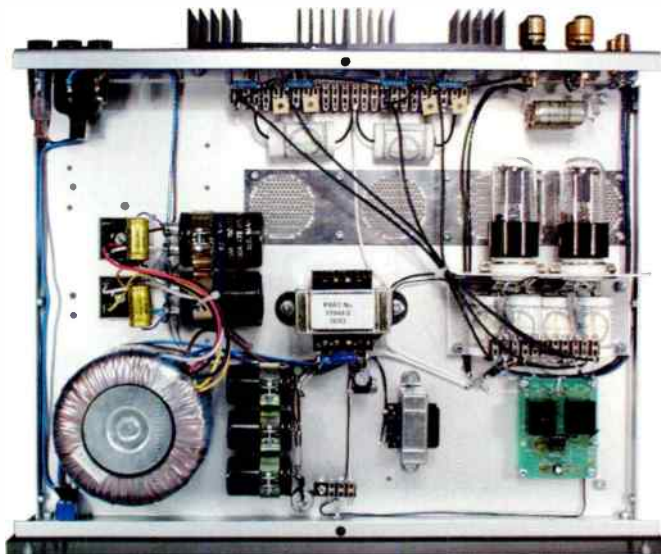
the old QUAD and Leak valve preamps?

SOUND QUALITY

From the moment it was turned on, it was clear this amplifier sounds superb. Hybrid designs usually leave me cold. They're either too warm in the bass and with no real control, or uninvolved (i.e. the worst of both worlds), but the Twin Star is neither. Fast, delicate, powerful (within its remit), it gave better clarity than I have heard from any Croft power amp to date, and most rivals for that matter.

Starting with Jimmy Smith, the Croft was fast and dynamic. Willie Nelson's 'Stardust' on SACD (a glorious 1970s recording, produced by no less than Booker T. Jones) had oodles of definition and detail - again the Twin Star proved addictive. Nora Jones on CD was sweet light and open. On the more demanding vocals of Dinah Washington, the Croft turned in a knock-out performance, with great midband transparency.

Essentially an open, and clean yet lucid and engaging performer, it was able to do both the valve and transistor tricks with equal aplomb. The result that it's a flexible machine, happy playing anything from Cafe Del Mar through to classical jazz and even heavy rock. It gives a surprisingly open and uncluttered



acoustic, with decent depth perspective and strong imaging, that lets the music flood out in a deliciously natural and organic way.

However, put against traditional transistor fare, it proved ever-so-slightly veiled on some tracks, the last gasps of atmosphere and breath being held back. Could the MOSFET output devices be responsible - remember this amp has no feedback? Still, this is merely in comparison to other designs which can't match the Croft's talents in the musicality stakes. Compared to the (admittedly cheaper) Quad 909, Ry Cooder and VM Bhatt's 'A Meeting by the River' did soften the upper treble somewhat, losing that last nth degree of incision and atmosphere.

Of greater concern with the review unit was the level of mechanical hum emitted from the casework. In my quiet listening room it was clearly audible, and a product of this class and calibre should really be a little quieter than this. The best fix I could find was to mount it on some isolation feet and stick it on the floor. To be fair, suppliers Eminent Audio seem to think mine is a rogue example, but if this does not prove to be the case then Croft should either redesign the metal work, or fit better mains transformers.

This power amplifier was more than sensitive enough to run with a passive preamplifier, and with all the room in the case, perhaps Croft could turn it in to a line level integrated? Indeed, inserting a Vitale preamp into the chain confirmed the passive route to be the best with digital-only sources - the Vitale colouring the sound. Hooked up to my

trusty Garrard 401 (with Audio Technica arm, Denon DL103 and Denon MC step up tranny), the combo sounded great - vinyl clearly suiting the Croft. It sounded both open and revealing, without a single hard edge to be heard. Sweet!

Obviously, the Twin Star makes no claims to be a muscle amp. Compared to the Quad 909, for example, it is obviously down on motive force, and has a looser and less imposing bottom end. It had

enough drive not to get at all upset with a pair of large Dynaudio speakers, but had the finesse to work well in to a high efficiency design. The amp worked successfully with a large selection of ancillary equipment; every time offering a great performance. While it doesn't do as well as the Quad on large scale dynamics, it's so much better on 'microdynamics' - it can get loud and quiet seemingly without effort, able to follow the flow of the music with great lucidity. By contrast, the Quad sounds stilted, despite its extra power.

Past Croft power amplifiers have left me underwhelmed. A couple of the OTL variants have been okay, but on the whole I found them too soft and lacking any kind of serious drive. Not so the Twin Star - it has neither a traditional valve or transistor sound, preferring the neutral route. With a good amount of power, an open and even sound and yet most of the traditional valve attributes of musicality and cohesion, it's an impressive bit of kit. At £1,750 it is no bargain, but really can do things than most other rivals can't. An interesting, charismatic and able product that's well worth seeking out.

VERDICT ●●●●

With a taste of the best of both tube and transistor, this is a truly endearing power amplifier.

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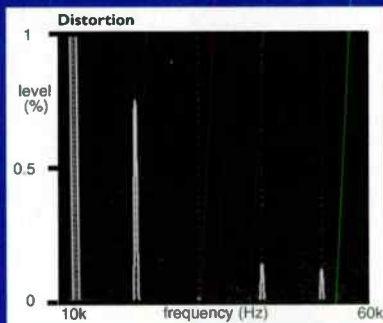
MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The Twinstar power amplifier inhabits a different world to most amplifiers. It produces a lot of distortion, at all frequencies and output levels - no less than 0.7%. With around 0.1% being the limit of audibility the Twinstar breaches this limit by some margin, so its distortion will be audible. With an 8ohm load second harmonic dominated, but there was a lot of third too at higher levels. With a 4ohm load distortion rose to 1.6%, with clearly evident waveform triangulation from third harmonic. Although distortion levels were fairly constant, suggesting low or perhaps negligible feedback, the spectrum analyser clearly showed upper harmonics. I would expect some sharpness or incision from third harmonic, plus some edginess from upper harmonics.

The Twinstar's appeal will be mainly subjective. Listen to it carefully against other amplifiers, using material

you know. This amplifier does not measure well. NK

Power	45watts
Frequency response	5Hz-60kHz
Separation	82dB
Noise	-110dB
Distortion	0.7%
Sensitivity	560mV





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The Bamford Files

David Price talks to John Bamford, Pioneer Great Britain's Product Manager, about matters multichannel and hi-fi in both Britain and Japan...

DP: HOW DID YOU GET INTO HI-FI?

JB: I was born in 1956, and was a young teenager in the early seventies when I visited a hi-fi shop in Preston, Lancashire. It was a special demonstration weekend of a "new, revolutionary B&O hi-fi system" It was quadrasonic, and blew me away! My father's battered old radiogram wasn't even stereo, although I was listening to my early Genesis and Led Zep albums on a mate's stereogram. And I had a rich friend, of whom we were all extremely jealous, who had a tasty Goldring Lenco/ Quad/ Leak stereo system in his palatial bedroom. It's ironic that it was a B&O quadrasonic dem that infected me with the hi-fi bug....!

WHY DID YOU JOIN PIONEER?

The British specialist hi-fi industry is a master of propaganda. As an eighties hi-fi journalist I'd been led to believe - as are many audiophiles today - that the Japanese companies were cheats and blaggards who only manufactured 'mass-market junk' and didn't care about good sound. Yet when I met Pioneer's design engineers I discovered that the majority of them were vinyl enthusiasts, and was flabbergasted to see how passionate they were about high fidelity sound, and attention to fine detail - not simply circuit design, with things such as vibration and temperature analysis on components!

Obviously I'd visited many small, 'specialist' companies during my

journalistic days, but I discovered that these Pioneer guys were working on a higher level entirely. Plus, of course, they had R&D facilities beyond one's wildest dreams. I realised I'd been fed a line for a decade that it was only 'specialist' manufacturers who knew what they were doing, and I could see that these Japanese guys' only crime was that they tried to make many of their products affordable for as many people as possible.

"Would you like to join Pioneer?", I was asked eighteen months later. You betcha! While nobody was talking about higher capacity optical discs back in 1991, Pioneer had ambitious plans to introduce an improved transport mechanism for affordable CD players, were developing improved digital recording systems with 96kHz sampling to 'prove' that CD wasn't 'perfect' and were investing heavily in proprietary silicon to incorporate Wadia-style monotonic digital filters to £300 CD players! Pioneer's digital engineers were in complete agreement with many audiophiles that accuracy in the time domain was more critical to musicality and stereo focus than precise frequency response, something that some high-end brands are talking about today as if they've just discovered the concept...

HOW DO YOU VIEW THE UK HI-FI SCENE?

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WHAT HI-FI?
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hugely appreciated by specialist hi-fi dealers. But apart from this, the UK hi-fi scene is all but defunct. This saddens me, of course... in hi-fi specifically, many of the British brands aren't British-owned today anyway! Products here are manufactured in small quantities, making them necessarily expensive as there are no economies of scale. And like the marketing of designer clothes or high-end jewellery, these products are limited in their distribution to just a few shops, with a set retail price so that they are never available to consumers at a discount price. I'm not decrying this entirely as it is fundamental to the survival of small, independent hi-fi retailers. (Just look how the big supermarkets and out-of-town retail parks which sell products at low prices have destroyed local high streets.) But what's unhealthy about it is that it propagates 'hi-fi snobbery' and xenophobia, which saddens me immensely.

WHY HAS DVD-A HAD A LUKEWARM RECEPTION HERE?

A few guys working on today's hi-fi magazines! Trouble is, audio enthusiasts read these opinions - that DVD-A and SACD are nothing to get excited about - and so they carry on with what they've got in blissful ignorance. The most serious audiophiles have never been satisfied by CD, of course. One meets these guys at hi-fi shows, guys who are still collecting vinyl. If they've read in magazines that CD is "still where it's at", remain disenfranchised and don't go to a hi-fi store to check it out. And even if they did go to a specialist dealer, what could he demonstrate to them - a new Musical Fidelity CD player, the latest Naim power supply upgrade? Where would an audiophile go to get a serious demonstration of high resolution digital audio? And multi-channel audio? The best dems are from dealers specialising in top-quality home cinema. But audiophiles aren't interested, and home cinema dealers aren't interested in audio for audio's sake - what a dichotomy! One of today's greatest ironies is that home cinema enthusiasts who own the latest DVD players and top-flight multi channel systems have got systems that are capable of better audio reproduction than the majority of CD systems resident in

the homes of people who consider themselves audiophiles!

Home cinema enthusiasts are blown away when they try a DVD-A disc. Same goes for anybody who is not an audiophile with the associated baggage. When I demonstrate DVD-A to people, and explain that many hi-fi magazines are pooh-pooing it, they look at me as if I'm pulling their legs.

Regarding DVD-A versus SACD,

” **One of today's greatest ironies is that home cinema enthusiasts who own the latest top-flight multi channel systems have got systems that are capable of better audio reproduction than the majority of CD systems resident in the homes of people who consider themselves audiophiles!**

my personal opinion is that DVD-A is by far the more desirable format. If I want a fabulous hi-res recording of my favourite band, what would I prefer - a disc that simply contains the music, or a disc that contains the music plus an electronic version of the album jacket that I can view on my TV screen, plus a couple of videos of my favourite band on the end of the disc, too. Still, it's looking increasingly likely that DVD-A and SACD are going to run side by side, so we've decided that what the world needs are universal players that simply play everything. We can do this at Pioneer - we're doing it right now - because we're small and apolitical, with no financial interests in any particular record companies.

DO YOU THINK DVD-A WILL CATCH ON?

I get to meet many London-based record company executives, and not one of them has ever said to me, "Our company has no intention whatsoever of making SACDs or DVD-As". What would you suppose? That record companies believe that the twenty year old CD has got another twenty years to go? Trouble is, we all live such fast-paced lives today. Our most recent experience

is the birth of DVD video, which has caught on with consumers like wildfire and is already in 25 percent of homes in the US, and in 15 percent of UK households too. Now we've got DVD-A and SACD formats to replace music CDs, and if they don't become a way of life in an instant the press declares them a flop! CDs took many years to catch on, and I've no doubt that the migration from CD to DVD (and SACD) will take equally as long. It takes years for record companies to build up catalogues. What makes it all painless, of course, is that the new home entertainment products all play existing CDs anyway.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

A hi-fi system is just a 'dumb terminal' that replays the 'packaged media' that's on sale in music stores. We've had 78s, microgroove LPs and singles, pre-recorded cassette tapes and CDs. History proves that you can only have a new format for packaged media once every generation. Now

we've got DVDs and SACDs which will have to exist for at least twenty years. So the challenge for audio designers will be to improve electronics and loudspeakers in order to exploit the full potential of the higher bandwidth and vastly improved dynamic range afforded by these new carriers. Future state-of-the-art systems will of course be multi-channel, without doubt a new paradigm in audio.

Some people won't bother of course, just as some people today don't bother to invest in a reasonable quality stereo system. But audiophiles will endeavour to accommodate multiple speakers in their rooms if they possibly can. Many commentators ridicule multi-channel music today, but I concur with Bob Stuart of Meridian who has said that today's hi-fi buffs have to 'unlearn' listening in stereo. I've been through that learning curve myself during the past 18 months, together with many colleagues at work who were equally sceptical that multi-channel was worth having. Once you've lived with it there's no going back - a terrifying thought for today's enthusiasts who'd like to believe they've got the best hi-fi that money can buy!



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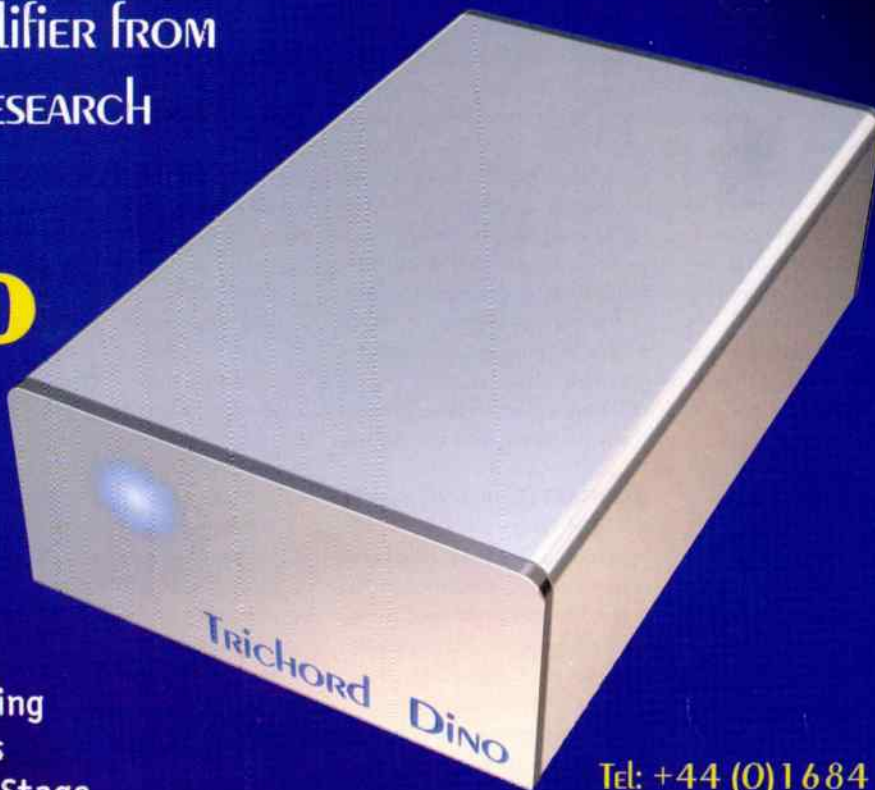
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Uber Alles?

Sennheiser's brand new HD 650 is its flagship dynamic headphone, claimed to be the best the legendary German company has ever done. Can fan David Price tunes in...

The princely sum of £299.95 buys you Sennheiser's best ever dynamic headphones – allegedly. Being a long-term follower of the marque, I was intrigued. I bought my first pair of HD400s in 1980 with the proceeds from my after-school car washing business, and upgraded through the range to the HD600s, which I used with the original Musical Fidelity X-CANS as my sole music transducers when I last lived in Japan a few years back. So I'm pretty well versed in this company's products, and was fascinated to try the HD650s.

My problem with the HD600s is their analytical nature, something that rather comes with the territory with this brand. Although in many ways an extremely capable can with tremendous resolving power, there's a certain mechanical feel to them. This is precisely what Sennheiser have set out to eliminate with the '650, thanks to the millions of Euros spent in R&D. The company has taken new technology developed for its £1,000 MKH40 broadcast microphone to reduce distortion and deliver unprecedented clarity, while the sound balance is said to be based on the £10,000 Sennheiser Orpheus.

They feel exquisite. At 260g they're quite substantial, but are superbly finished – I'd say they're the best I've ever encountered – with damped fibre frames, black stainless steel grilles and a high-quality titanium-silver finish. Inside, each side sports Sennheiser's patented Duofol transducers with two Mylar films per side to make one rigid diaphragm, with specially developed acoustic silk for precise, uniform damping. The coils themselves are ultra-light Aluminium (Copper Clad Alloy Wire), with Neodymium Iron magnets in a sophisticated magnet/diaphragm design for controlled long excursions with very low distortion. Three metres of connecting cable is used, which is detachable, made from highly conductive OFC copper for

maximum signal transmission and Kevlar-reinforced for strength. Sennheiser says this gives very low handling noise (i.e. sensitivity to structure-borne sound). The result is that the capsules are made to the finest tolerances (within ± 1 dB), and used in hand-picked pairs. Sennheiser claims a frequency response of 16-30,000 Hz (± 1 dB), and quoted impedance is 300 ohms.

All this would be of dubious use if it was painful to wear – I still remember the coiled cable of Beyer's DT990 causing me considerable amounts of grief as it constantly tugged at one side of my head! Fortunately the HD650s are about as comfortable as big hi-fi headphones can be. The elliptical design sits easily on the ears with the soft padding excerpting 2.5N of contact pressure – not as sylph-like as Sennheiser's £29.95 PX-100s (which I wore for 10 hours back on the plane from Las Vegas recently), but not bad at all!

Sonically, they're better than the HD600 by no small amount. Interestingly, they actually sound quite soft at first – which the '600s do not – and seem to open up and get more expressive as the listening continues. Daft Punk's 'All Around the World' showed their wonderfully musical nature. Bass was slightly stronger and fuller than the HD600s, but emphatically more fluid and articulate. Midband was obviously smoother and more subtle, with better low level detailing and a greater sense of atmosphere (the HD600s sound like they have 'brickwall filter' which lops off all low level signals, by comparison). Again though, it was a softer tone, allied to



greater expression that impressed me. This made for a more emotional listen on jazz recordings such as Herbie Hancock's 'The Prisoner' – it was more beguiling and seductive, rather than being just plain 'impressive' as the HD600s are. Another boon was the treble, which was by no means as perfunctory as the HD600s. Again, it's more atmospheric, 'spacey', lucid and ever so slightly sweeter.

I have a feeling that no Sennheiser headphone will ever be rich, creamy and euphonic – just in the same way that a new Mercedes Benz lacks the 'big time sensuality' of a classic Jaguar – but the HD650s are a brilliantly judged do-it-all solution to the modern headphone problematic. Essentially, they're just comfortable and neutral – precisely how it should be. I also love the fact that – given a decent headphone amp like a Musical Fidelity X-CANS v3 – they give you insight that you'd have to pay literally thousands to get from loudspeakers (think: Martin Logan Clarity, Quad 988). Excellent.

VERDICT ●●●●●

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Canary Audio 601 pre-amp - as new - dem use only - fabulous	£2500	£3200
ATC 50A loudspeakers - walnut - scuffed cabinets otherwise perfect - bargain	£2000	£5500
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Audio Innovations 1st Audio - 8 Watt 2A3 4pin - collector's item - joy	£900	
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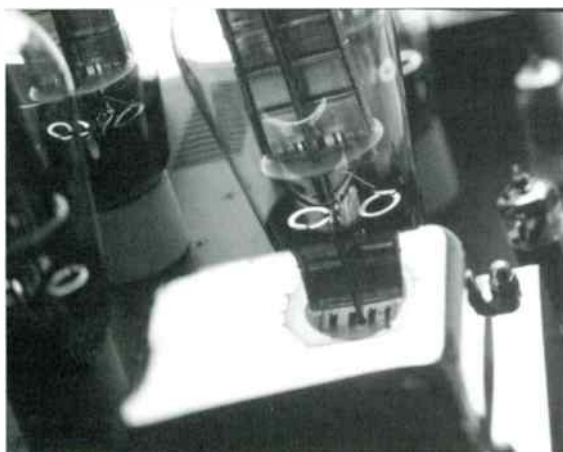
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The Sun Rising



Albert Lee basks in the reflected glow of Origin Live's brand new Aurora Gold turntable, complete with Origin Live OL1 pick up arm...

What is a record player supposed to do? This may seem like an extremely basic question, but you will be surprised to hear that many audiophiles have been either misled or simply do not understand the subject. Therefore, we will start with this premise:

A turntable has a difficult job to do. The music is contained within a piece of vinyl with a helical groove cut into it. The equipment (cartridge and pickup arm) has to trace this groove without distorting the signal, leaving the groove (mistracking) or damaging the vinyl in any way. The record deck also has to withstand outside interference such as airborne, structure borne vibration and radio frequency interference. It also has the distinctly difficult task of using our poor mains system at any time of the day or night. (Night time is probably the best time to listen to our systems, due to the 230-volt supply being less corrupted by mains borne interference, while the ambient noise level is considerably lower.) Yet the most difficult job is to

turn at the selected speed with absolutely no fluctuation at all – a tricky task for the design engineer as there are many varying conditions. In addition, with DC motors the designer has to compensate for stylus drag, as this adversely affects the speed, in addition to back EMF from the motor. The DC power supply for the motor has to be designed to operate with a poor mains supply and a good 240-volt supply as well!

Origin Live is one of a select few manufacturers that understands this problematic mire. It is possibly one of the finest design engineering companies (for turntables and pickup arms) in this country. Mark Baker's team is such that each engineering problem is thoroughly thought about before any action is taken. This type of design team is unusual (in the UK) for its prowess in a range of extremely fine products. Each one of Origin Lives products are extremely well built and finished. And in addition to the quality of build and finish are the very well written and well-laid out user manuals. After all, what good is

it to build the best equipment available if the customer is unable to assemble and run it?

TECHNICAL OVERVIEW

The Origin Live Aurora Gold has an innovative semi-suspended subchassis design using one spring on the right hand side of the subchassis under the levelling device. This is to obviate any form of external vibration reaching the replay platform, and is achieved by building the turntable in separate sections. The benefit of this approach is that it precludes the wow that most other belt driven suspended subchassis turntables suffer from. The DC motor is isolated from the turntable, in that it does not couple with the chassis mechanically or electrically, rather the motor stands freely on the turntable support. The whole lot weighs in at a very respectable 10 kilograms, and measures 410mm wide, 410mm deep, and 145mm high. Note that this figure includes an OLI pick up arm.

The bottom section of the turntable is fashioned from a circular, flat section piece of alloy and is fitted with three conical rubber feet. On to

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SEE PAGE 124 FOR FURTHER DETAILS



this is placed the main bearing support complete with pick up arm mounting plate. This is isolated from the plinth (bottom section) by the sprung suspension components. Unusually, this component has a damping pad attached, which must not be removed, or replaced otherwise severe audio degradation will result. This pad controls the mechanical resonance of the pick up arm board and the main bearing support. At this time the motor should be placed as the, extremely well written, instruction manual suggests.

The DC motor is an "ironless" design - Mark uses this type of motor to obviate the phenomenon known as cogging and to reduce back EMF (which is difficult to control, electronically, as the type of compensation is constantly changing as the vinyl is being played). The DC motor is controlled by a load compensating power supply. The Standard PSU supplied with the Gold is the Ultra Power supply, which has a blue light emitting diode as the mains indicator and has a three way rotary switch on the front panel. First position is, turntable stop, second is 33.33RPM and the final position is 45RPM. Underneath is an access hole to enable the user to set the platter speed accurately. Speed setting must be done with a record being played, to allow for stylus drag. The standard transformer is a 9 volt 1 amp 'wall wart', although the optional £175 upgrade is a great deal larger.

Sub-platter material is fashioned from an accurately machined slab of Acrylic material. The main bearing is manufactured from extremely high-

grade steel and is machined to a very tight tolerance. Lubrication is taken care of by the (sparing use of) supplied Arctic military specified oil. The platter is profiled to enable vinyl to sit on it correctly and to make the task of removing a record very easy. Platter material is high grade acrylic and has been machined really well. Drive is taken from the motor to the platter via a ground, flat section, rubber belt.

Setting the turntable up was a relatively simple task. It is best achieved by siting the turntable on the record deck support, as it is difficult to move the turntable once the motor is put into position. However, I will add that the pick up arm should be placed on the run out of a record to level the turntable as the centre of gravity is altered with the arm in this position.

THE LISTENING

Ry Cooder's 'Bop Till You Drop' was first on the Aurora Gold, and I have to say that the sound was glorious - with a wide, extremely deep and very tall stereo image pouring out of the monitors. I was completely taken by surprise. all of the instruments were clearly etched in space and I could almost 'see' the musicians! The rhythm section was clearly driving the band along, with the perspective lucidly displayed.

James Brown's 'Get Up Offa That Thing' was next on the platter, with no less amazing results. Bass lines were clearly discernible - Bootsy Collins certainly plays like a man possessed and he puts some very subtle phrasing into his work, which I had never heard before until

trying the Aurora.

Bass from this record deck is full, without being overblown, with the bass to midrange balance being extremely smooth, and the midrange to treble transition one of the smoothest I have ever heard. Unlike Linn's LPI2, for example, it's a very even sounding device.

The aural perspective is very natural, in that the musicians seem to be placed at one point in the image, but as they play they move in front of the microphones - best evinced by listening to Carmen by Bizet. The Deutsch Grammophon issue was a magnificent portrayal of opera at its finest. Again, the stereo image was one of the best displays of the mix engineer's craft.

Throughout this recording, the stylus was able to track the music with absolute security. As the soprano solo part started, the singer seemed to be floating to the left of

REFERENCE SYSTEM:

- CROWN DC300A power amplifiers (three in a tri-amp configuration)**
- ATC SCM35 floorstanding passive loudspeakers**
- Custom built passive preamplifier**
- Ortofon MC25FL moving coil cartridge**
- OL RB250 pickup arm**
- Trichord Dino phonostage**
- Connectronics Musiflex cables**
- Custom built loudspeaker cables for the tri-amp rig**
- Complete isolated mains supply through its own fuse box with MK socketry**

AURORA
Aurora
 II Roman Mythology
 The goddess of the dawn.
 (Late - Aurora)

centre in the image and her voice was one of the most breath-taking it has been my privilege to listen to!

At this point in the review, I introduced the larger transformer in the listening chain and this produced no small improvement. The image seemed to expand in all dimensions, with a larger punch at the upper bass to lower midrange. Kick drum was certainly felt in my chest and I could tell the difference between ride and crash cymbals! The stereo reproduction was a lot smoother, not to the point of becoming mushy - the sound seemed just right.

I then substituted another component - the OLI standard arm

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Sam Tellig – Stereophile, Nov 2003



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VERDICT ●●●●●

Another exquisitely engineered turntable from Origin Live, with superlative sound to match.

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was replaced with a completely rewired OLI arm. The difference between this arm and a standard unit is quite impressive, and this arm and turntable combination made my jaw drop in amazement. Again the image became obviously clearer - it was very good before, but with the higher specified arm, it was exemplary. I listened for a further day until I was so tired (emotionally and physically) I had to get some sleep. I went to sleep with an enormous smile on my face with Supertramp's 'Crime of the Century' ringing in my ears.

CONCLUSION

This is one of the few turntables I could listen to for days at a time with no hint of listening fatigue. It possesses the ability to present the

THE EDITOR SAYS:

OL1 was obviously most enjoyed by this, the latest mid-price design from Origin Live, and justifiably so. It's just a little more expensive than Mitchell's GyroDec, which I use as a reference, and differs quite a bit in presentation. Just as Origin Live's illustrious freedom is altogether warmer (or to be more accurate, less cold) and more organic than SME's Series IV, so the Aurora turntable is a less mechanical and clinical listen than the Gyro. It has a very neutral, transparent and open sound that's sweet and cohesive, whereas its Mitchell rival is more explicitly detailed, architectural and incisive. Both decks are tremendously capable, but if you're into vinyl for that sweetly musical sound that so many associate with it then this is the one. If you're more into picking out every last ounce of detail in a more obviously analytical way, then look to the likes of Mitchell and Clearaudio. DP

music as it was recorded. It produces an extremely wide deep stereo image into which is placed all of the musical clues. Pace is second to none along with precision and an extremely believable sound stage. Even with the least expensive pick up arm, this turntable projects an image that at times is frighteningly realistic. Acoustic guitar and solo violin are

PRICING

Origin Live Aurora Gold turntable	£1,470
Upgrade transformer	£175
(less £15 if purchased with deck) OL1	£124
OL1 rewired	£359

reproduced precisely in the position they were recorded or mixed at. The Aurora Gold's neutrality shows the difference between pick up arms with ease. (More on this subject next month.) Disc surface noise is almost inaudible, and this combined with the turntable's neutrality strengthened the illusion that Ry Cooder was really in my living room. Even with a mid-price pickup cartridge, the strengths of this combination are easily apparent. The highest complement I can give is that I enjoyed the music. Overall, an extremely fine piece of engineering with factory support of the highest order. I can recommend this record deck with complete confidence.



**DEMONSTRATION ROOM AT 12A SPRING GARDENS, NEWPORT PAGNELL, MILTON KEYNES,
BUCKS MK16 0EE BY APPOINTMENT ONLY - CALL FOR DETAILS ON 01908 218836**

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

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

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



390mm(w) x 330mm(d) x 190mm(h) with valves or 220mm(h) with cage. Simon Pope says - "If you favour attack and rhythmic grip, together with a smoothness of sound that's incredibly easy to live with, the Kit6550 could well be the kit amp for you. The 6550 is one for those who like a valve sound married to the attack and clout of a good quality solid state design".

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

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

**KEL84 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT****£298**

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

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

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The PRE-II is a valve pre-amplifier with six inputs, tape monitor and two sets of output sockets. It utilises a high quality line driver transformer and x5 gain. The PHONO-II is a dedicated valve phono stage that incorporates a step-up transformer for MC users. Finally, PSU-II is a power supply unit that feeds both the PRE-II and PHONO-II.

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



SERIES II MODULAR PRE-AMP KIT



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



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

KAT34 VALVE POWER AMPLIFIER KIT

£480

KIT34 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT

£515

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

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



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

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

The 300B PP kit has been created for those who prefer a bit more dynamics and drive to their valve sound. With a pair of 300Bs in push-pull configuration providing 26 watts output,

these beauties will drive most modern loudspeakers to perfection. Andy Grove's design is totally feedbackless, using a 6AU6 pentode as the input valve and a 5687 as the phase splitter, the power supply uses

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

300B PSE MONOBLOC KIT

£895

300B PP MONOBLOC KIT NEW

£895

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



HD83 VALVE HEADPHONE AMPLIFIER KIT

£195

DEMONSTRATION ROOM AT 12A SPRING GARDENS, NEWPORT PAGNELL, MILTON KEYNES,
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KIT6550/KAT6550 mains transformers

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

KEL84 mains transformer

1.5 inch stack, 90mm(h)x 80mm(w)x 95mm(d)
drop through fitting with zinc cap. Secondaries:
0V-240V 300mA, 3.15V-0V-3.15V, 5.5A, suitable for
120/240V operation

KIT34/KAT34/KIT6550/KAT6550 choke

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

300B PSE mains E/I transformer

130mm(h) x 95mm(w) x 115mm(d).
drop through fitting with zinc cap.
Secondaries: 380V-0V-380V, 180mA/150-0V-150V,
25mA/0V-5V, 1.2A/0V-5V, 1.2A/0V-5V,3A/3.15V-0V-
3.15V,0.4A suitable for 120/240V operation

HD83 mains toroidal transformer

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

PSU-II mains toroidal transformer

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

TRANSI mains toroidal transformer

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

KEL84 E/I choke

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

PSU-II E/I

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

KIT34/KAT34 mains transformer

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

2A3 PSE mains transformer:

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

KECL82 mains transformer:

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

MAINS TRANSFORMERS & CHOKES

KIT6550/KAT6550 E/I 16% TAPPED UL

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

KEL84 E/I Ultra Linear push-pull output transformer

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

KIT88/KAT88 E/I push-pull output transformer

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

Pre-II E/I driver transformer

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

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

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

HD83 E/I single ended output transformer

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

300B PSE E/I parallel single ended output transformer

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

2A3 PSE E/I output transformer:

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

KECL82 PP output transformer

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

300B PP E/I push-pull output transformers

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

PRINTED CIRCUIT BOARDS

adB-KECL82 Printed Circuit Board 200mm(w) x 140mm(l) x 1.6mm(d).
Kel84 Printed Circuit Board 280mm(w) x 135mm(l) x 1.6mm(d).
KIT88/KAT88 Printed Circuit Board 140mm(w) x 310mm(l) x 2.4mm(d).
Kel34 Printed Circuit Board 140mm(w) x 310mm(l) x 2.4mm(d).
HD83 Printed Circuit Board (a pair) 120mm(w) x 215mm(l) x 2.4mm(d).
HD83 Printed Circuit Board 140mm(w) x 160mm(l) x 1.6mm(d).
PSU-II Printed Circuit Board 105mm(w) x 130mm(l) x 1.6mm(d).
PRE-II Printed Circuit Board 105mm(w) x 130mm(l) x 1.6mm(d).
PHONO-II Printed Circuit Board 105mm(w) x 130mm(l) x 1.6mm(d).

OUTPUT TRANSFORMERS

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

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



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AMPLIFIER KITS DESCRIPTION	ORDER NO.	QTY	UK (inc vat & carriage)	OVERSEAS (exc. vat & carriage)
Kec182 (8 ohm)	Kec182 (with valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£195.00	£170.00
2A3PSE with valves (4ohm or 8ohm, pls specify)	2A3 PSE (with valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£570.00	£485.00
2A3PSE without valves (4ohm or 8ohm, pls specify)	2A3 PSE (without valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£470.00	£400.00
KaT6550 with valves (4ohm or 8ohm, pls specify)	KaT6550 (with valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£580.00	£495.00
KaT6550 without valves (4ohm or 8ohm, pls specify)	KaT6550 (without valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£450.00	£380.00
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KaT34 with valves (4ohm or 8ohm, pls specify)	KAT34(with valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£480.00	£410.00
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KIT34 with valves (4ohm or 8ohm, pls specify)	KIT34 (with valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£515.00	£440.00
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Kel84 with valves (8 ohm)	Kel84 (with valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£298.00	£255.00
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Step ups transformers for MC use with PHONOII	MC - step up (pair)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£80.00	£68.00
HD83 with valves	HD83 (with valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£195.00	£167.00
300BPSE with valves (4ohm or 8ohm, pls specify)	300B PSE (with valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£1197.00	£1020.00
300BPSE without valves (4ohm or 8ohm, pls specify)	300B PSE (no valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£895.00	£765.00
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300BPP without valves (6 ohm)	300B PP (no valves)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£895.00	£765.00
300BPP conversion pack	300B PP (conversion pack)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£250.00	£215.00

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kel84 mains transformer	Kel84 - mains T	<input type="checkbox"/>	£60.00	£47.00
HD83 mains transformer	HD83 - mains T	<input type="checkbox"/>	£40.00	£34.00
PSUII mains transformer	PSU-II - mains T	<input type="checkbox"/>	£40.00	£34.00
300B mains transformer	300B - mains T (each)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£115.00	£98.00
34/6550 choke	KIT34 - choke	<input type="checkbox"/>	£40.00	£34.00
kel84 choke	Kel84 - choke	<input type="checkbox"/>	£20.00	£17.00
300B choke	300B choke	<input type="checkbox"/>	£40.00	£34.00
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PSUII choke	PSU-choke	<input type="checkbox"/>	£20.00	£17.00
6550 output transformer (4ohm or 8ohm)	6550 - O/P T (pair)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£130.00	£112.00
34 output transformer (4ohm or 8ohm)	34 - O/P T (pair)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£130.00	£112.00
kel84 output (8 ohm)	Kel84 - O/P T (pair)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£90.00	£78.00
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300BPP output transformer (6ohm)	300B PP - O/P T (each)	<input type="checkbox"/>	£110.00	£94.00
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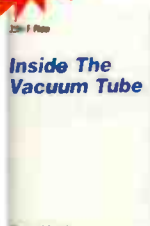


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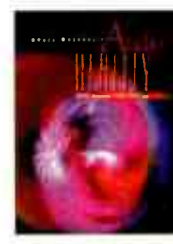
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M POWER



The Marantz story is nothing if not labyrinthine - from the company's beginnings as the brainchild of a New York-based graphic designer to manufacturing in Japan, then ownership by Philips and subsequent independence and partnership with Denon, if there was ever an international marque, this is it. Still, many associate it with Japan, because of the work of its charismatic 'brand ambassador' Ken Ishiwata, who has leant his name to many Marantz products, the latest of which is the PM17 II KI Modified amplifier. David Price listens in...

I first realised Ken Ishiwata was the world's tweakiest person when he and I were sitting in a bar in a hotel on the south coast of Spain a few years back. I'd just bought a Nokia 8810, which at the time was the world's newest and smallest mobile phone. I was proud as punch that I'd managed to procure one of these state-of-the-art communications devices, and gleefully showed it to Ken - who promptly pulled out his own 8810 from his designer jacket and said the two magic words for which - to me - he is now synonymous, "special modification".

Ken, you see, had spent no small amount of time developing his phone. At the time, the model had barely reached the general public, and the standard version was amazing enough. But the 'Nokia 8810 Ken Ishiwata Signature' was cooler still. Instead of the standard issue (and rather nice) metallic blue

faceplate, his phone came in a shade of champagne gold identical to the amplifier you see before you. And then, as soon as he switched it on, it lit up in a sea of blue - rather than standard green. He'd had it resprayed, and pulled out every one of the 19 or so miniature green LEDs and soldered in blue ones... That, to me, says everything about this man.

And when Ken isn't doing a spot of development work on Finland's finest, he can be seen playing with hi-fi - much in the same way that you and I do. To wit, the case is unscrewed, the soldering iron plugged in, and the fun begins! Unlike oh-so-many senior audio industry folk, this guy loves getting his fingers dirty listening to music, substituting componentry, and listening to music again. In fact, save the odd speech, promo event or personal appearance, it's what he spends his life doing. And just in case you

wondered, he's got an amazing system - all of which is a "special modification", either by himself or the original designer. He's the kind of guy that doesn't have just any Koetsu cartridge, but one personally fettled by 'Mr Sugano' himself.

Which brings us to the PM17 II KI M. At £1,500 it's a curious contradiction. Is there really any need for an integrated amplifier at this price anymore? Frankly, you're firmly in budget pre-power territory here (entry level Naim, Orelle, etc) so the case needs to be made for any integrated. You'd have thought the foil to this sort of specialist pre-power would be oodles of power and a welter of facilities - Arcam's FMJ A32 being the perfect example, yet the lower powered, relatively Spartan Marantz rather awkwardly falls between the two stalls - in this respect it doesn't know whether it's Arthur or Martha...

The basic PM17 is essentially a

latter day Audiolab 8000a – a slim line integrated amplifier with a good (but not excessive) smattering of facilities, all of which are useful in the real world but aren't going to win prizes for frivolity. In this form, it's a capable sounding amplifier – one that you or I would not be afraid of using on a day-to-day basis. Ultimately though, it has a slightly brightly lit midband and a tendency to sound

the shortest possible signal paths with symmetric circuitry.

This is all bolted on to the original PM17, which is pleasingly appointed with volume, balance, treble and bass controls, along with switches for loudness, source direct, speaker A/B, plus a record out selector and full tape monitoring and the now famous temperature gauge [see box], plus a 6.3mm headphone

(claimed, into 8 ohms), whereas no self respecting integrated costing above £150 has less these days. To me it betokens a certain purposefulness – because, as every good 'minimalist' eighties-style audiophile know – less is more. To wit, I hooked up the PM17 KI M to my reference Yamaha NS1000M loudspeakers, which are not as forgiving as many. The surprising thing is that, fed by a Michell Orbe/OL Illustrious/Ortofon Kontrapunkt B, the Marantz made some seriously nice noises indeed – after the temperature gauge had got to the 'hot' zone, of course...

As the measurements suggest, this is no powerhouse in the mould of Musical Fidelity's A308. It won't cause a sudden pressure drop behind your bass ports upon injudicious application of the 'loud pedal'. Rather, it offers a decent amount of power delivered with no small degree of commitment. The NS1000Ms were not in the least bit critical of the Marantz. It showed itself to be a couth and well rounded bit of kit, with a respectably warm and smooth balance right across the frequency band. There was little in the way of upper midband brightness that some cheaper Marantz transistor amps have been known to display in the past. In absolute terms, treble wasn't the most finessed or atmospheric I've heard, but it was perfectly presentable. The midband had a fine degree of depth, detailing and dimensionality (more of which later), and the bass was strong and tuneful, if a little soft around the edges. Overall though, by the standards of its price point, it was a big thumbs up.

Simply Red's 'Say You Love Me All Around the World' via CD wasn't terribly pleasant, but this is a poor



'clangy' with CD (thanks to the format's innate upper-mid forwardness). Still, there's more right than wrong with the PM17 – and it's a very worthwhile multi-purpose bit of kit. Put it next to anything 'serious' in the £1000 plus 'audiophile' end of the market, however, and it's wanting. So it was only a matter of time before the PM17 got the Ishiwata treatment...

A wide bandwidth power supply was substituted, with a special Marantz Super Ring Toroidal Power transformer with massive energy reserves. New Gold Tune main capacitors were used, with black film anodised heat sinks for improved heat dissipation, and new tuned HDAMs (Hyper Dynamic Amplifier Modules – which is Marantz-speak for top quality op-amps) were used in the preamp and the left and right channel power amp output stages. Current feedback amplification is used for both pre and power stages, with Linear Drive Power Supply. Specialised componentry are claimed to increase bandwidth substantially. Big, chunky WBT speaker binding posts are fitted, along with an anti-resonant, copper plated, solid metal chassis with shielding for reduced electro-magnetic radiation. Oxygen free copper wiring is used, run along

output. Around the back, there are seven audio inputs, including a phono input with MM and MC compatibility, pre-out/main socketry (via RCA phonos) and the aforementioned WBT speaker terminals and an IEC AC input socket. The amplifier itself measures a medium sized 458x110x429mm, and 16kg.

SOUND QUALITY

The strange thing is that it is capable of mustering a mere 60W RMS

THE TEMPERATURE GAUGE

This amplifier has a temperature gauge. It could have been a useful fitment, because we all occasionally run our systems at high levels and it's nice to know when things are about to go up in smoke.

Unfortunately though, this is about as useful as the oil pressure gauges fitted to late model Jaguar XJS cars. (Jaguar got complaints that the gauges were showing 'low oil pressure' when the engine was hot and the car was idling - just, indeed, as they should – so it substituted a switch in place of the oil pressure sensor so that it either read '5'psi or '70' – depending on whether there was oil pressure or not.) Not very informative - and precisely how the PM17's gauge works – it's either hot or it's not. Ken, we demand a proper gauge on the PM17 III!

THE PHONO STAGE

Another nice bonus on the PM17 II KI M is its phono stage. A dual level MM/MC affair (with switchable input sensitivity of 2.5mV or 230uV), it offers a really rather pleasant and decorous sound – until you plug in something like a Trichord Delphini NC that is, which shows it up to be vague, leaden and two dimensional. Oh well. Still, as a get-you-going facility, it's excellent – just don't expect it to replace a serious off board phono preamplifier.

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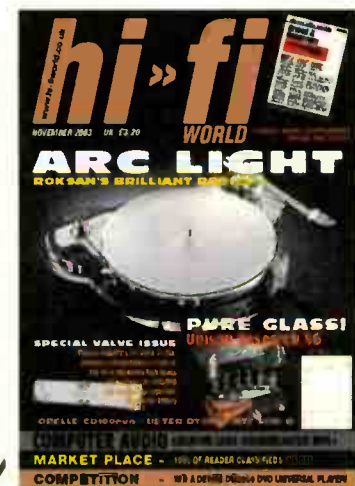
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recording. Still, the Marantz concentrated on the positives, and chose not to ruthlessly deconstruct the song – preferring to let the tune issue forth. There was a lot of detailing, and the overall impression was a very clean and open performer with no small amount of grip. Compared to Arcam's (admittedly cheaper) FMJ A32, it was more musically engaging and more tonally convincing. Moving to 4 hero's 'Escape That', and the amplifier assumed a dimensionality that was a joy to behold. There really is a high degree of midband detailing there that, given the right source material, comes flooding out of the PM17. It showed itself quite a commanding performer, with great speed and dexterity with the sinewy rhythms coming from the drums and double bass. All the same, it was more than happy with the warm, raspy tones emanating from the brass, and deliciously rich grain of the female singer's voice. I was impressed.

Moving to vinyl (with the Trichord Delphini going into a line input), and the higher resolution possible with this source was explicitly showcased. Kate Bush's 'Moving' gave the amp added depth and image projection, the soundstage expanding to a most amazing size. Some instruments in the mix jumped right across and out of the NS1000Ms, while others hung broodingly at the back. Kate's voice was beautifully rendered, with no sign of edge or stress. Given a top notch source, it was obvious the PM17 could really deliver the goods. Indeed, I'd say that it wasn't far behind Musical Fidelity's excellent A308 in its articulation and ahead in the width of its tonal palette – by contrast, the latter could sound slightly grey. The MF hits back with massive power and scale, but is nearly £1,000 more expensive.

Switching to my DG pressing of Beethoven's 'Pastoral Symphony' (Karajan) and the Marantz again showed its true colours. It's an open and even machine with depth perspective and image articulation. Rhythms and dynamics are very good – although it doesn't start-stop as fast as even a basic Naim pre-power

combination, it really is very agile and musical. It's deceptively so, in fact, as its bass isn't razor sharp – which on lesser amps portends a vague and woolly midband. The Marantz, however, suffers no such failing – indeed its crisp and supple midband is its best attribute. The result is an amplifier that's actually quite laid-back and relaxing to listen to at a superficial level, but that's doing everything right in musical terms all the same. This amp can follow a tune as well as any integrated I know, and tell you an awful lot about what's on the recording, yet it's never unrelentingly 'in your face' – in some respects, quite like a good valve amp, then!

After much experimentation, my hunch is that this is a sublime power amplifier struggling to get out. The preamp section seems to soften and flatten things ever-so slightly, whereas the power amp – if directly aspirated – is about as good as you'll get at or anywhere near the price. In this respect, it's very similar to Marantz's

separate SM17 power amplifier (at around £700). In fact, the more the preamp is allowed to intrude [see 'The Phono Stage'], the less able the whole thing sounds. But don't let me make you think it's a bad bit of kit – far from it if you get a great source going into the PM17 II KI M. It will sound soft and inoffensive with a poor one, but fed with some real red meat it starts to move towards 'superfi' standards, with a tremendously sweet and open sound allied to a fine tonal palette – rare enough with any transistor amplifier at any price.

As such, I'd heartily recommend this product. It's interesting inasmuch as it tries to be all things to all men and actually succeeds. It drives tricky speakers to highish levels without complaint, and does it well enough to make you enjoy the experience – yet it's packed with useful 'real world' facilities, and is nicely styled (and beautifully finished) to boot. Mr Ishiwata – the Modfather, we salute you!

VERDICT ●●●●

A consummately accomplished integrated amplifier with a delightfully smooth and even, yet musical sound. Sensible real world facilities and superb build complete the fine package.

MARANTZ PM-17MKII KI MODIFIED £1,500
 Marantz UK
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 www.marantz.com

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The PM-17 mkII is powerful, if not a powerhouse. Delivering 78watts into 8ohms and 132watts into 4ohms it has enough to handle most loudspeakers, in small to medium sized rooms. This looks like a wideband MOSFET amp, with feedback, since distortion was minimal at all output levels and frequencies. It is unusual for an amplifier to produce almost no high frequency distortion (0.003% second harmonic only), as this one did. Such a design would have wide closed loop bandwidth and the PM-17 does, reaching 160kHz (-1dB). Sensitivity was high for the type, measuring 236mV.

There is a phono stage, switchable for MM or MC. This measured normally enough, with good bandwidth, no warp filter for good bass, and healthy overload margin. Marantz use a normal x10 gain increase for MC. Noise levels were low, but some slight hiss may be heard with low output MCs all the same.

The PM-17 mkII should sound smooth and open. It measures very well in all areas. NK

Power	78watts
CD/TUNER/AUX	
Frequency response	6Hz-160kHz
Separation	80dB
Distortion	0.003%

Noise	105dB
Sensitivity	236mV
DISC MM	
Frequency response	106Hz-114kHz
Separation	61dB
Distortion	0.0034%
Noise	87dB
Sensitivity	2.8mV
Overload	160mV
DISC MC	
Frequency response	18Hz-40kHz
Separation	56dB
Distortion	0.0034%
Noise	61dB
Sensitivity	0.28mV
Overload	16mV



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Great Audition

Patrick Cleasby is most impressed by the latest edition of Syntrillium's Cool Edit Pro hard disk recording software – now known as Adobe Audition.

Hard disk recording is now almost ubiquitous in the professional arena. (Those with Luddite tendencies like the White Stripes tend to seek out a purely analogue alternative, only to see the results of their endeavours turned into glorious 16bit as an end product!) Going back 12 years or so, before the onset of 32bit Windows systems, the roots of HD technology were sewn in products which are still going strong such as Sadie, Protools, Sonic and Logic. For those of you who have ever been confused by the DAW TLA, the term Digital Audio Workstation is used to cover all the varieties of this type of software.

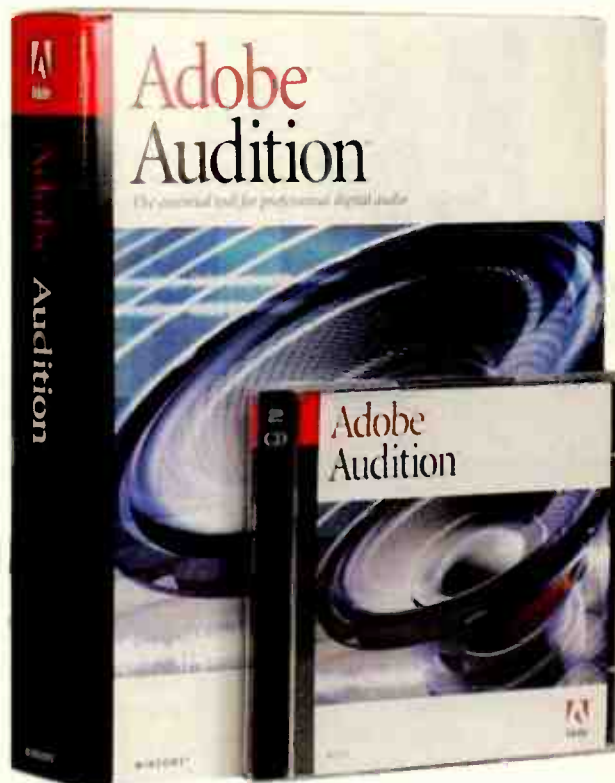
The introduction of Windows 95 and its successors gradually brought home to Joe Public and lesser professional mortals, who couldn't get into the frequently expensive and proprietary-interfaced big boys' toys, that the humble PC could be turned into an extremely powerful digital recording tool. (Of course Mac owners had known this for years by then and had laughed at the feeble attempts of Windows 3.1 to provide a stable, integrated audio environment). Gradually, through programs such as Sound Forge, Cool Edit Pro and Wavelab they were shown that the underlying Windows support for audio could now be corralled into a reliable engine for recording.

Of course all of this ingenuity does not come particularly cheap, and the prices of these products, being in the £200-£300 range, mean that you have to be a fairly serious hobbyist to use these tools at home - all of these programs, (and their Mac equivalents such as TC Spark and Bias Peak), could best be described as semi-professional products, or, in that horrible coinage,

'pro-sumer'. Another term which is used to cover this level of the market is 'project studio'. But it is at this level that software developments enable processes previously only available to clever rich people in London to be brought to everybody else.

At first sophisticated CD mastering began to be added, and then powerful restoration tools such as noise reduction and click removers became available - firstly as chargeable, clogged add-ons, but then integrated into the packages. From origins as stereo editors, some began to add multi-track functionality, although not always simultaneous multi-track recording ability. The last bastion to be breached in the mid-market area was serious thought being given to the fact that most audio facilities are having to get into the brave new world of video and surround, whether they want to or not. In many ways the model for this approach would be Steinberg's pricier Nuendo system which has been used on many DVD-A projects.

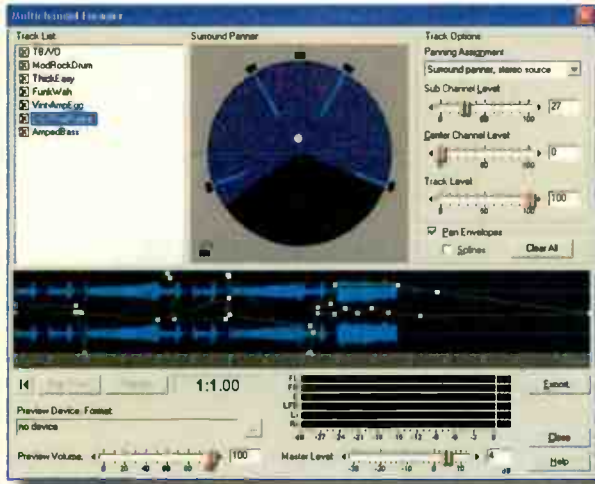
It is at this point that Adobe come in. Already a market leader in the lower end DV editing market on the PC with Premiere, and dominant in video effects and image manipulation with Aftereffects and Photoshop respectively, on both PC and Mac, they obviously spotted the need for an advanced audio post-production tool to complement these products in the Professional Video Collection and so, in the middle of last year, they acquired Syntrillium, the company which developed Cool Edit Pro. A few months later released Adobe Audition 1.0 which is essentially an



Adobe badged version of the final Syntrillium CEP release, 2.1, with a few bells and whistles added. On its own Audition can be found for around the £220 mark, or if you want all the products mentioned above plus Adobe's new DVD authoring solution, you can turn yourself into a PC video production house for not much over a grand! Anyone who has purchased Cool Edit Pro 2.1 should be able to upgrade to Audition for free.

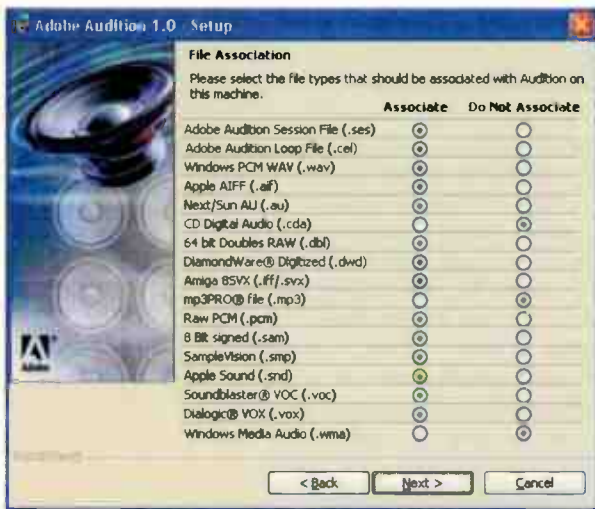
That would be a worthwhile upgrade to make - if only to play with the most intriguing aspect of this version for the audiophile or musician - the ability to record, mix and master (if only to Windows Media Audio 9 for the moment!) for surround. In last month's iTunes feature we mentioned that we would be covering fair-use means of archiving and compressing high-res formats for computer use, and although that full feature will appear in another issue, here we have the ideal solution, (on the PC side of the fence), for the sophisticated enthusiast looking to build his digital recording chops with an affordable but serious tool. With an appropriate

multi-channel professional soundcard you can assign, say, four channels to record simultaneously, so anyone looking to transfer old quad recordings to digital could thus import them in sync and then use the in-built noise and click removing tools of Audition to spruce up those old classics.



With its graphical surround pan view and pan envelopes the Multichannel Encoder is surprisingly sophisticated.

As car surround begins to take hold, careful types might want to use copy discs in the car, transfer SACD mixes to a DVD-type system, or even listen to their own surround compositions! Of course if surround WMA 9 takes hold the answer may all be in this box, but all of this is now possible for a few hundred pounds anyway, as the ability to export your surround mix as 6 mono wave files means that it can be fed into a third party encoder such as Minnetonka's Surcode for making DTS CDs. For the seriously affluent (if you require an MLP license to do



If you already have favourite file associations for certain file types, Audition installation gives you the choice of whether to associate it with them. Look at all those ones you've never heard of!

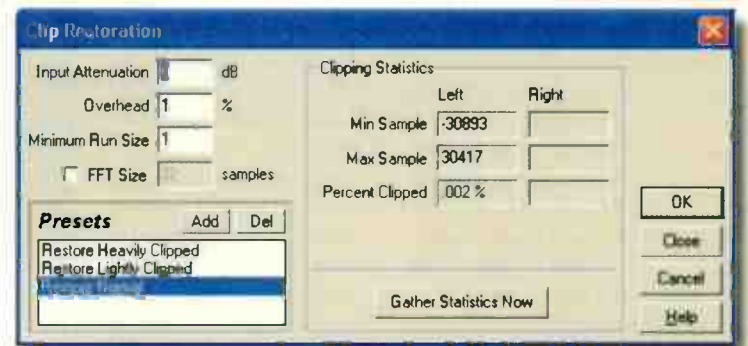
be £2,500 please – ker-ching!), Minnetonka's Discwelder Chrome semi-professional DVD-Audio encoding and authoring tool means you can make your own DVD-As!

Of course it's not all about recording - you may wish to further edit an existing archive of digital music files, and Audition supports a far wider range of obscure formats than most people are ever likely to need. Products such as Audition are often employed either in video work, where sometimes not enough care is given to audio recording, or as a restoration tool in audio facilities, and its full range of filters, effects, sweeteners and corrective measures includes a tool to repair digital clipping, which I'm sure many restoration engineers would have found to be a boon on past projects.

For the creative types Audition comes with a supplementary "Loopology" disc which contains a barrage of samples and loops, so you don't even have to record multitracks to get to grips with the

600MHz Pentium III Dell laptop with 128MB RAM and reformat its confused Millennium installation as Windows XP Pro (ugh!). So we are talking about a spec which is not far removed from the minimum required, but at least we had an ideal tidy environment. The underlying support was left as per the XP 2002 install, which means DirectX at 8.1 and WMP at version 8 too. For the tryout we were in stereo only mode, using a 16 bit Edirol UA-1D USB interface for I/O.

Installation, as you would expect from a software giant like Adobe, was relatively painless, although surprisingly I did get a hangup at the "removing temporary files" stage at the end of the job. Killing the process seemed to leave a working installation, but to make sure (and to make sure I wasn't just being impatient) I uninstalled and reinstalled again. Things went smoothly the second time. Audition loads for the first time with a short multitrack Adobe sting, and it was



Built-in clip restoration means badly recorded work does not have to be a headache!

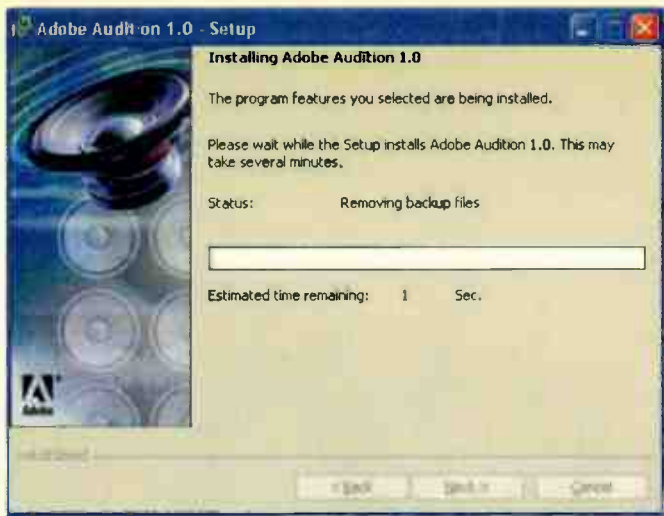
layering approach. This model is becoming very common in products targeted on the video world as in professional projects it is primarily intended as a simple means for video editors to build soundtracks.

However if you are more interested in this aspect of the software from a home recording point of view and are prepared to contemplate a Mac approach, you should really hang fire until we've evaluated Apple's amazing new GarageBand application, which brings the loops and samples approach within reach at an incredibly low price point.

Audition has a daunting array of facilities (and a dauntingly thick, though very readable manual), and to get to grips with it fully would require several weeks of study and on-the-job experience, but for the purposes of a quick run through of the software, this particular Mac-head had to take a four year old

the fact that this was taking forever on my dodgy Millennium set up which made me reinstall. On XP it took a more reasonable 30 seconds, and my antiquated machine was quite capable of playing the seven tracks out.

If you already have a requirement for a product such as Audition it is likely that you have tried its competitors, and your preferences are often dictated by what you are used to, but if you are starting off, or contemplating a change of DAW, the acid test is always whether you are comfortable with the layout and appearance of the interface, and happy with its ease of use and navigation. If you have the slightest grounding in digital audio concepts and recording you can't beat the intuitive "try using it and see if you can make it work" approach, and Audition scored very highly on this measure. Within seconds of the



Don't get impatient with this window when installing. It can take some time to clear.

program being installed I was merrily recording 16/48 PCM digitally out of my Sky+ box. All that was necessary was a switch from that initial multitrack session view to an edit session view using the F12 key and we are back in stereo editor territory. Windows and Audition had recognised my USB interface with no

menu options are available for those who don't like keyboard shortcuts.

Personally I had no trouble at all adjusting to using Audition, coming from a background of the Apple alternatives. The only real negative point is that in common with many of its competitors at a similar price point, and particularly



For those more used to stereo editors the F12 key takes you from the multitrack session view to the edit session view.

problem and without the need for any drivers. If stereo recording is all you need it really is as simple as plugging everything in and pressing record.

Once you have conquered that step the next natural one is to experiment with how the waveform editing works. Positioning and horizontal zooming will be very familiar to any Final Cut Pro users as it employs the same expand or compress the horizontal zoom button method. Buttons are available for vertical zoom. Standard Control C/X/V, copy cut and paste commands work as expected for chopping up waves, and the usual buttons and

to engineers used to higher end DAWs, the crossfade operation can seem a bit clunky and simplistic, but this is a very minor niggle.

As I've said, software at this level is not cheap, but Adobe Audition has to be given a value rating, as it currently sells at a price which is at least £60 cheaper than its Mac and PC completion, with a spec which is at least the equal of any of them. With the development and marketing muscle of Adobe behind it there is also a fair chance that this is the right mast to nail your colours to for the future – as its integration with the elements of Adobe's Professional Video Collection gets tighter the most likely future developments must be Dolby Digital and DTS encoding. MLP may still be some way off!

VERDICT ●●●●£

Version 1.0 is only the start as increasing convergence between audio, video and surround will drive further enhancements in these areas in future. The competition must be rushing to catch up.

ADOBE AUITION £220
www.adobe.com



The colourful Audition multitrack session window.

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:

- Windows; 400 MHz processor (2 GHz or faster processor recommended)
- Microsoft® Windows® 98 Second Edition, Windows Millennium Edition, Windows 2000, or Windows XP Professional or Home Edition
- 64 MB RAM (512 MB or more recommended)
- 55 MB of available hard disk space (500 MB recommended for installing optional audio clips)
- 800 x 600 color display (1,024 x 768 display recommended)
- Stereo sound card (multi-track sound card recommended)
- CD-ROM drive
- Speakers or headphones recommended
- Microphone (optional)
- Additional requirements for the Multi-channel Encoder:
- For multi-channel WMA import: Windows XP
- For surround preview: Microsoft DirectX 8.0 and a multi-channel sound card and DirectSound driver



ART OF NOISE *DAFT* (HYBRID SACD: STEREO AND MULTI-CHANNEL DSD)

This month's review slate is novel for a couple of reasons. Firstly, it's exclusively SACD, as DVD-A seems to be on holiday (hopefully not permanently) once again. Warners may still be pushing titles back awaiting Dual Disc, or other moves may be afoot, but in the meantime the new year brings many interesting SACDs, in this case examples 2, 3 and 4 from ZTT, and a debut brace of recent albums from Echo.

Secondly, for once we are not in entirely legacy territory. This pair of ZTT reissues may be albums from nearly twenty years ago, but at least we're not back in the seventies again! There is something very special about the whole ZTT ethos, from the cohesive packaging style which was originally driven by Paul Morley, to the pioneering innovations they made in the now ubiquitous practices of sampling and remixing.

Frankie and Propaganda may have been the prominent face of Trevor Horn's approach, but the engine room and lab bench of all his digital cleverness was the Art Of Noise project. In collaboration with Morley, ace arranger Anne Dudley and studio clever clogs JJ Jeczalik and Gary Langan, Horn built a body of Fairlight future music based on

samples, cut-ups and loops which has frequently been dipped into by the likes of the Prodigy for further recycling.

'Daft' was originally a CD compilation of the ZTT years (Dudley and Jeczalik continued in more commercial vein on China records), and has been given the SARM West surround treatment under the supervision of Horn. The result is as spellbinding a listen as sitting down in front of the 'Who's afraid of...' album was twenty years ago. The ZTT reunion album 'Reconstructed' is also highly recommended in its 5.1 DSD guise.

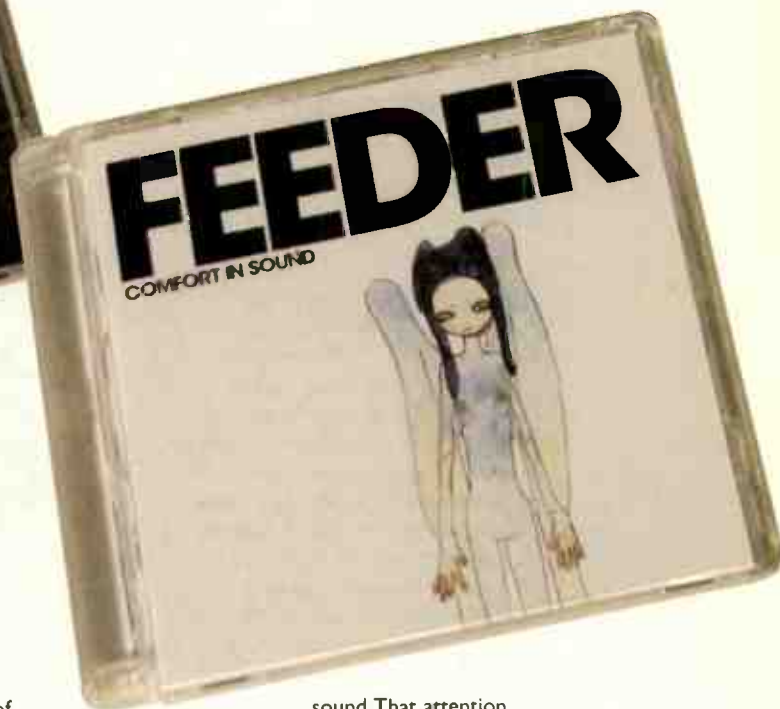
PROPAGANDA *A SECRET WISH* (HYBRID SACD: STEREO AND MULTI-CHANNEL DSD)

In common with 'Daft', in a move which may perturb some lovers of this seminal album, the PCM and DSD stereo tracks here are not simply new transfers of the original master, but new remixes. This is apparent from the off, as the opening, "All that we see or seem..." statement has a completely different reverb characteristic to the original, even in stereo. Personally, although I was initially wary I do not find the results too bothersome, and the approach is so much in keeping with the ZTT ethos that we cannot really complain, although I would normally

consider the unforced absence of the original stereo version to be a heinous crime.

Indeed this is the third distinct configuration of this album, (not counting the album of remixes "Wishful Thinking"), as the original CD added the B Side 'Frozen Faces' to the LP tracklist and buggedger about with the track sequencing around 'Dr. Mabuse' at the end of the album to the consternation of many. Thankfully this new sequencing is almost perfect, retaining the extra track and restoring the end sequence as it does. Strangely, 'Dream Within A Dream' loses a minute compared to its CD version!

Much as with the other ZTT SACDs we get a fascinating new surround imagining of the album and the use of the surrounds for zigzagging synth parts perfectly suits the modernist approach of the music which still sounds as fresh and new as it did in 1985. Claudia Brucken's gorgeously rich alto enchants more than ever in this mix, and the pumping Teutonic beats and basslines are supremely powerful. Anyone who demeans early 16 bit digital recording really needs to listen to this perfect example of the art, now preserved in DSD form with a pristine mastering by Simon Heyworth, who also polished the two Art Of Noise discs.



MOLOKO STATUES (HYBRID SACD: STEREO AND MULTI-CHANNEL DSD)

Moving on to the Echo label's inaugural forays into the high resolution surround world, we have the inestimable pleasure of two bang-up-to-date UK chart acts delivering great examples of the genre. Both of these albums from last year have been given the remix and remaster treatment using exclusively UK talent, as have the ZTT discs, and they all prove that we really know what we're doing over here!

As usual, this endeavour has been made possible by SACD creator sponsorship, although in this case by Phillips rather than Sony. They are now dropping out of such activity to get behind hybrid SACD replication, although Sony may continue with some high profile artists. Anyway, enough politics, what about the music? I can't claim to be a Moloko devotee, although they seem to have that inexorable knack of dropping one solid gold classic onto each album, giving you that nagging "I should buy one of those" feeling. Well here is candidate number four, and very fine it is too.

Anyone who caught the BBC's Glastonbury coverage this year may have happened upon the extraordinary sight of Roisin Murphy's legs waving in the air as she stuck the top half of her body into the back of Eddie Stevens' Hammond, and that

and the Roisin "Two Pints" Murphy cover of this disc epitomise the hedonistic good-time vibe that the band summon up.

The surround mix only emphasises this energetic approach. (There are no 5.1 specific credits on the sleeve but like the original album the mix and mastering were done by Metropolis men Matt Lawrence and Tony Cousins respectively). If you're a fan of the band or just want a party-on surround experience you can't really fail with this one. Fun, funky and in your face musically and sonically.

FEEDER COMFORT IN SOUND (HYBRID SACD: STEREO AND MULTI-CHANNEL DSD)

It's now two years since Feeder drummer Jon Lee tragically took his own life, and 'Comfort In Sound' is their first album since his untimely demise. It is a tribute to his memory that ex-Skunk Anansie drummer Mark Richardson ably steps in to help Grant Nicholas and Taka Hirose in making this is a hugely successful platinum album just like its predecessor Echo Park, assisted by sublimely punchy chart singles like 'Just The Way I'm Feeling', 'Forget About Tomorrow' and 'Come Back Around'.

Like all good modern rock bands Feeder knows the value of a well-engineered, tight, closely considered

sound. That attention to sonic detail has led to a slightly different treatment of the transfer to DSD (by an unaccredited Simon Heyworth), as so much sweat was put into getting the stereo CD master right that the option to retain Bob Ludwig's work for the stereo SACD layer was employed, meaning that the 16bit master was put through a process called DSD Create on the Sony Sonoma workstation. This is an ideal chance to test Simon Heyworth's assertion that the very act of transferring to DSD brings more realism, and although there is a slight impression of a more controlled bottom end, in this case tests proved inconclusive.

This whole album exhibits the muscularity and multiple guitars approach of the singles. A subtle surround treatment by the (again unaccredited) Strongroom surround mixer Mike Nielsen places some of those guitars around the room, but the overall "wall of guitars" feel is retained, although sometimes you are placed within a ring of bricks rather than staring at the wall. It's a shame that Echo have no plans at present to extend their SACD catalogue without funding, as it would be good to see some more Feeder and Moloko, although personally I'd be hoping for them to do some wigout surround Julian Cope! Unlikely, methinks...

TEARS FOR FEARS *The Hurting* 1983

With Gary Jules' maudlin version of 'Mad World' still haunting the UK charts, it seems appropriate to revisit the classic album which spawned the original Tears For Fears single - itself a Top 3 hit back in 1982. Predictably Universal Music have responded to the track's renewed success by relaunching the ten year old 'Tears Roll Down' compilation, and in a somewhat unlikely twist (the pair spent the early 90s bitching about each other in song), Roland Orzabal and Curt Smith have spent the last couple of years working up a new album, and are preparing to launch themselves back into the pop world having signed with Arista.

The fact that the band's name, early philosophy and first couple of albums were rooted in their study of Arthur Janov and primal scream therapy has been endlessly reshaped, so you don't need to hear it from me, except for the fact that it is these preoccupations which give this album its thematic strength. We are in fairly sophomoric, or sixth form poetry, territory here and as the duo have since confessed, it may be that you have to have first heard this album as a morose teenager to really appreciate it - but the success of the reimagined 'Mad World' proves that there is an enduring strength to the songwriting here.

There are three more very strong singles on this album, 'Suffer The Children', 'Pale Shelter', and 'Change', and the rest of the material is equally powerful, both in the feelings it is attempting to relate, and in its arrangement and sonic presentation. This is not the music of primitive programming for its own sake, but the result of two musicians freed from the constraints of a limited conventional band format (their previous group being the



dodgy ska outfit Graduate) to experiment with the possibilities of the (then) new technology. In fact, listening to the album now what strikes you is that the interest in the music derives from the fact that the robotic beats are not predominantly programmed, but are actually excellent sideman Manny Elias' live pounding, and it is his quirky fills which make this feel like a rock rather than a techno pop album.

Curt Smith's bass playing and sound is taut and effective throughout, and the other aspect of the live instrumentation which makes this feel like modern music is Roland Orzabal's wrestle with how to make his guitar playing as non-conventional as possible. In an International Musician and Recording World article at the time of release, Roland was quoted as saying that conventional rhythm guitar playing was dead, and that, "unless you're David Byrne you just shouldn't bloody do it!" He wasn't right (try telling it to Keef or Bonehead!), but the result of his striving is some great new approaches to rock song arrangement.

The main spectre here, other than the new wave and post punk

influences which would inevitably have been floating around at the time, is that of Peter Gabriel. The original version of 'Suffer The Children' was put together with David Lord, producer of Peter Gabriel 4, and the album is redolent of many Gabriel textures throughout, from Prophet synths to gated snares - particularly on the 'none-more-Intruder' track 'The Prisoner'. In fact Gabriel often name-checked them too around the same time, and they all had an enduring love for The Blue Nile, who will inevitably feature in this column in the near future.

The Hurting was reissued as a remastered-with-extra-tracks CD five years ago. Original producer Chris Hughes worked on the new master and the results are quite pleasing, although if the multi-track and stereo tapes are in good condition this is exactly the type of material which would make a great hybrid multi-channel SACD. Hopefully the renewed interest in the band may spur Universal to revisit the catalogue, although this excellent album would almost certainly be third in the queue after its two enormously successful follow-ups. **PATRICK CLEASBY**



noel keyword

Product measurement has always been a part of the review process at Hi-Fi World, and as the years slide by, audio equipment has got steadily more sophisticated. So I recently decided it was time to get a more advanced audio analyser to keep up, especially for DVD-A and SACD. It was time to find something able to do the job, then take a deep breath and write a cheque large enough for a good new car. Ouch!

It's important that Hi-Fi World can produce accurate and reliable reports for readers, as well as maintain the trust of manufacturers. Subjective only reviewing isn't an option; even now, when it is easier than ever to design a high quality product, there are a lot of duffers around and we must be able to spot them. It takes the certainty of measurement to do this. All the same, for an apparently objective activity, measurement can be controversial. It's been subject to quite a lot of argument over the years.

Manufacturers certainly value accurate measurements, and fear inept ones. This is where the subject starts to get complicated and at times fraught. The late Raymond Cooke of KEF famously railed against journalists making measurements using "an Avo with a bent needle". The point being, inaccurate measurements can be more dangerous than no measurements, which is true. It's a dangerous business. One poor soul measured frequency response with a weighting filter inadvertently switched in – an easy mistake to make. Worse, he then declared the product seriously flawed in print, which carries many serious implications, without stopping to check. From the manufacturer's perspective this sort of thing is a

nightmare; it is for the publisher of the magazine too. Which is why there are few technical reviewers and those that do exist are experienced and well known by the manufacturers.

There's a two way street here. As critical as Raymond Cooke could be, for example, he and KEF at the same time illuminated the subject of

” The bottom line here is measurement matters; it highlights problems and helps eliminate them

loudspeaker measurement, something I valued. Manufacturers need to measure their products so they've got an interest in the subject and there's quite a lot of discussion at times between reviewer and manufacturer. Both need to get it right – and that's still not always easy. The bottom line here is measurement matters; it highlights problems and helps eliminate them. This is another reason Hi-Fi World must keep abreast of what is happening.

Purely subjective reports are easy and quick to make. When the product being reviewed is complex and technically sophisticated, like today's DVD-A/SACD players and surround-sound receivers, manufacturers like to let a magazine capable of measurement review the product first and then ensure the technical report is read by anyone else passing subsequent judgement. Some of the tests we run, especially on SACD and DVD-A players, are now so difficult to perform and need such esoteric equipment that few magazines in the world can match what we do. This makes the results difficult to dispute. Our new Rohde

& Schwarz UPL analyser can resolve down to 0.0002% using some natty techniques, plus a special ultra low distortion source. It means we can verify manufacturer's claims no matter how extreme.

Specialist high-end equipment varies more in performance than Japanese mass market consumer kit. Companies like Panasonic, Sony, Pioneer, Denon and Marantz get it very right 99% of the time. What John Bamford says in this issue about Pioneer and the UK specialist market is correct; the big Japanese companies have dedicated and knowledgeable engineers, they have access to excellent design facilities, high quality

advanced silicon chips and low cost, high volume manufacturing. They don't usually make serious mistakes. With high-end hi-fi the situation is different. A small but significant proportion of specialist high-end designs are based upon the convictions of their designers. A good example of this is the low-feedback or zero-feedback amplifier. Convinced that feedback is a bad thing there are a steady stream of designers around the world producing amplifiers with little of it, or none at all. The results can be painful.

For some strange reason – economic I suspect – advanced test equipment for audio is rare and becoming rarer. After looking at what was available from all around the world we eventually bought a Rohde & Schwarz audio analyser from Germany. It was the only unit accompanied by software able to tackle DVD-A. So as these new formats develop Hi-Fi World will be able to assess how good they really are – instead of guessing! The ability to measure is as important now as it was back in 1991 and Hi-Fi World remains ahead now as it was then. ●

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David Price



Touching down at the immaculately turned out Las Vegas Airport, you step outside to a sea of gleaming limousines and shining taxi cabs. Then, you ride down Las Vegas Boulevard South to the hotel, where you begin to get a funny feeling of abject unreality, because (aside from the obligatory casinos and slot machine arcades) there are no shops at all – just massive, glitzy, multi-billion dollar hotel developments.

Importantly, each hotel is themed – be it The Aladdin (ancient Arabia), or Caesar's Palace (erm, Rome) to Paris (go figure!). And as soon as you step inside, you realise that – aside from the small matter of a thousand or so guest rooms, massive conference spaces, ballrooms and entertainment areas – your hotel is actually a vast, sprawling shopping mall with a theme to which the hotel's name cunningly alludes. To wit, The Aladdin has labyrinthine passages full of shops – selling useless knick-knacks and designer label clothing in equal measure. Whether it's a signed copy of Led Zep IV or a flying dinosaur with 'real' flapping wings – you'll find it here. The Paris, meanwhile, is full of Brasseries and Left Bank-style cafes.

The best bit is that the mall ceilings, which stand some 30m high, are uplit in blue and painted with clouds for that authentic outside feeling. And true to recent American metropolitan tradition, it is here 'outside' that the smokers are required to sit – providing of course that's allowed at all. In Aladdin, I smelled not one Camel cigarette, while in Paris there wasn't so much as a Gitanes or Gaulouises fag end in

sight. Hey – it's all fume-extracted, dehumidified and air-conditioned for your pleasure.

It's at times like this that one starts to muse on matters existential. Now I have to say that I'm not unused to travelling, having

It's at times like this that one starts to muse on matters existential...

lived in the 'Mad Max' future-scape that is Tokyo for a good few years and even in old British colonial Hong Kong. But Las Vegas blew my mind for its audacious unreality. Go to the 'real outside' and stroll down The Strip, and you walk past a life size model of 'La Tour Eiffel' (seemingly made of fibre glass), a 'hooker' steps out of a limo in front of you and massive fountains push jets of water hundreds of feet high.

Is it any coincidence, then, that CES – the world's biggest consumer electronics show – is held in such a deeply wishful and ridiculous contrivance? This, some might say, is pretty much the essence of the concept of consumer electronics too.

Let's not forget that CE is where science and shopping meet. It's the art of the possible and the probable – the place where massive multinational corporations translate vast amounts of non-specific digital technology into devices that they hope the public might just want to buy – assuming their PR and marketing men are capable of explaining what they do and why anybody might want them.

It's an amazing spectacle, and one that for my money is even more

audacious than the city of Las Vegas itself, for this place is merely about recreating other places and times in a blatantly lumpen and easily palatable way. Consumer electronics has no such cultural referents. We all know what ancient Rome was like – hell, we've seen Spartacus! – but do we really know why we want a Microsoft Media Center PC? That's why all the CE industry and much of the world's media is there – with its glad rags on – in a desperate bid to show the world why they should buy

someone's personal visions of tomorrow.

Where does that leave hi-fi? Well, despite a profusion of wireless devices, plasma screens and LCD TVs, there was actually some worthwhile stuff to see – but not enough. Hi-fi is of course a very small and specialist niche of consumer electronics, with an incredibly rarefied customer demographic. (In global terms, many CE geeks have a vague notion of why they want a Creative Labs Nomad Zen Media Center, whereas fewer understand why they should buy the new two thousand buck Arcam AVR300 AV receiver over a Sony at a quarter of the price. And frankly, Bill Gates keynote speech on the former was more newsworthy than John Dawson's personal endorsement of the latter in the Arcam room...)

So, selling hi-fi – convincing casual consumer electronics customers why it's worth paying more for 'specialist' audio equipment – is not easy. The froth of CES is all very well, but it's better suited to marketing driven multi-billion dollar CE brands, whereas the real-world hustle and bustle of the forthcoming Bristol show is the place for real hi-fi. See you there soon!

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It looks set right



How does it look to you? Not long ago I was asked to comment on hi-fi style. There must have been some mistake. Hi-fi has no style, and never had any. In any domestic environment above the level of the rank and messy bed-sitter, hi-fi equipment has always played the rôle of the aesthetic sore thumb.

Perhaps my questioner meant to ask about styling. There has, after all, been plenty of that. The function of styling is either to identify a product as in accord with current fashion (therefore something upon which money has recently been spent, to distinguish the purchaser from those who maintain elderly equipment), or alternatively to identify the product as something entirely independent of fashion and wholly dependent on good looks, which generally means that how it sounds is of quite secondary importance.

There is a sad fatalism among those who accept how hi-fi stuff looks. 'Music,' you can imagine them saying, 'is something of supreme importance to me, and I could not exist without this apparatus which reproduces it so superbly. How does it look to you?'

Then there are those whose very retinas rebel at the sight of all those rectangular boxes, and who conscientiously seek some artistic rendition of potentially convincing future hi-fi strident in its imitation of current modern architecture. After a proud display of the structures gracing their rooms, they end by asking lamely 'How does it sound to you?'

For fully forty years hi-fi has been an eyesore. In the early days, when there was not yet a lot of it about, serious enthusiasts apparently assumed that each item of equipment should look as though it had been

meant to hang in a steel rack festooned with cables in some dreadfully purposeful laboratory where work took priority over tidiness. The result was all those rectilinear black boxes with oversized faceplates bearing chromed handles with which to lift them out of their racks – and never mind the irrelevance of their being meant to lie horizontally, with those

Where tranny amplifiers look crude, there are several valve amplifiers that look merely clumsy

grabhandled sharp-edged slabs of metal facing out into the room.

In the very early days it was also felt that there was some sort of associative merit in each faceplate bearing one or two meters as well as a row or two of toggle switches numerous enough to fill the fascia of a primitive Ferrari. Hi-fi brought, and maybe was supposed to bring, the impression of investigative electronic evolution into the drawing-room, which may have massaged the ego of the man of the house but did nothing for the equanimity of the ladies.

Their sensibilities can have been but little assuaged by the pretended civilising influences of the early 1980s, when fronts were cleaned up a bit and space made for some supposedly decorative script. Too often it was that machine-generated pseudo-copperplate limply identified by Americans as conveying 'class' – something that Americans do not understand and are constitutionally forbidden to endorse. Most of these scripts had some virtue as emetics, but it was surprising how many manufacturers felt tempted to plaster text all over their faceplates as though to admit that if they did not

tell you what each thing was you would never know.

Things improved in the following decade; maybe the ladies were making their views heard. Faceplates were blended into the contours (if that be not too strong a word for something still essentially a box) of the bodies, and in 1986 Linn contrived to offer us a pre-amp without knobs on.

Loudspeakers remained a problem, still trying to make an engineering virtue out of acoustic necessity. Any manufacturer offering a shape that was not rectangular was shouted down and if possible put out of business as a danger to the community. There were only two choices. One was

of finish, which might be wood, veneer, or even paper. The other was whether to have the instrument frankly display all its orifices, or whether to conceal them beneath the decent obscurity of black plastics-foam grilles.

Things have improved in the last decade. Where tranny amplifiers look crude, there are several valve amplifiers that look merely clumsy. There are speakers which surprise by being wedge-shaped or round-headed, some which wear silly hats, and some which must be dreadful dust-gatherers. There have even been a few manufacturers prepared to offer their products in a range of colours (as well as black), but I have yet to see any installation in which all these colours have been chosen as a means of coding the numerous boxes' several functions, or even just to relieve the monotony.

Alarming, the industry now seems to have run out of ideas. I detect a return to the laboratory-style slab of aluminium – but today with a brushed finish, as though lines were now inescapable on what had been the smooth face of twenty years ago. Hi-fi must be growing old.

meet your maker

A reference guide to Britain's manufacturers and distributors

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dominic todd



By mid-2003, Apple's iPod had passed the point of becoming merely a hugely successful product, and become a category-defining one. Such products give a nascent technology sector a profile and focus that may not have existed beforehand. Despite the fuss about Diamond Multimedia's Rio just a few years earlier, the latest iPod is the ultimate expression of the breed of digital audio portables, the 'wow' product that finally catapulted the format away from the computer geek market and into the mainstream.

Of course we've seen this many times before. The Sony MDS-JE500 was really the key to the success of MiniDisc. This model, in particular, launched the format in the UK and proved the final nail in the coffin to the then rival of DCC. Likewise the DAB format has a great deal to thank the Pure Evoke-1 for, for creating such an interest.

This month, however, it's not MiniDisc or MP3 to which I'm going to turn my attention towards, but CDR, and the single product that really did make the format viable outside of a computer based component. In the early 1990's CDR hardly even existed. If my memory serves me right I believe that the closest we ever saw of a domestic model was a Micromega costing several thousand pounds. If this wasn't enough to put the average punter off then the cost of the blank discs certainly was. I well remember at the retail store I worked at during the time the ripple of excitement caused by a customer special ordering 20 blank Maxell CDR discs. The total cost came to a staggering £319.80! These were write once only discs whose individual £15.99 price tag would now read something like 79p. Who says the good old days

were always so good!

Although the cost of CDR came down gradually during the 1990s, it wasn't until 1997 when, MiniDisc incidentally was riding higher than ever, that the format really caught on. In 1996 Pioneer was the first to introduce a machine below the £1,000 price point with the well reviewed PDR-05. However, although

” This was truly the machine that brought CDR to the masses; well if not quite the masses then at least to thousands of grateful audiophiles.

cheaper than ever before CDR still wasn't what you might call affordable, especially in comparison to MiniDisc. In the summer of the following year they topped this with the £700 PDR-04. This model was received with much praise and excitement, yet just a couple of months later it was to have all its thunder stolen by the category defining Philips CDR-870. At £500 this was truly the machine that brought CDR to the masses; well if not quite the masses then at least to thousands of grateful audiophiles. It wasn't long, of course, before frantic discounting saw the price quickly fall to below £400 and then £350.

Coincidentally the prices of blank discs were finally beginning to make sense although still some way off today's bargain prices. It was their very cost or, to be more precise, the price difference between these discs and computer audio ones, that led many to find another useful feature of the CDR-870 - it was possible to get the 870 to record onto computer discs with a bit of tweaking with a bent paper clip! This

proved a bit of a warranty nightmare for some dealers, as machines slowly had enough of this jiggery pokery and simply packed up, yet disc prices fell enough in the meantime for the problem not to persist.

Interestingly Philips also designed their follow up model, the CDR-880, not to offer this user tweak. As with other pioneering Philips models the CDR-870 also suffered from a few glitches that were ironed out with 880. Perhaps anyone who latter bought an ill-fated DVDR880/890 should have been made aware of this! Still, no one can knock Philips for being so bold in dramatically raising the profile of domestic CDR and, more latterly, DVDR. The CDR-880 went on to spurn a few clone models including my own much loved Traxdata CDR900.

At the time Marantz were closely affiliated with Philips and there were the inevitable high end off shoots. Anyone now looking for the definitive domestic CDR could probably do far worse than the Marantz DR6000. Yet despite it's initial popularity the format has never really taken off. Let's face it, there wasn't ever a great choice of machines. It was pretty much down to Philips and Pioneer, whose PDR609 (reviewed in January's group test) is probably the mass market machine of choice now. Yamaha and a couple of others flitted with the idea of CDR but never really made a range of it. These days it's just left to Philips to soldier on with the CDR600 and twin CDR796 and even these are in danger of imminent death. Perhaps it's still a little too early to write the epitaph for CDR yet there are products out there which really haven't made it easy for the format of late. One such product is the Apple iPod. There, I've said it again. ●

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world classics

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

DIGITAL

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO CD11986 [£1500]
Inspired Stan Curtis redesign of Philips CD104, complete with switchable digital filter. Lean but tight and musical performer.

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

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

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

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



MERIDIAN MCD 1984 [£6000]
The first British 'audiophile' machine was a sweeter, more detailed Philips CD100. 14x4 never sounded so good, until the MCD Pro arrived a year later.



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

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

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

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

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



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

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

COMPACT DISC TRANSPORTS

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

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

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

DACs

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

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

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

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

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

TURNTABLES

PIONEER PL12D [1973] £36
The beginning of the end for the British turntable industry. When vinyl was the leading source, this bought new standards of noise performance and stability to the class, plus a low friction S-shaped tonearm. Later PL112D was off the pace compared to rivals



ARISTON RDI1S 1972 [£94]
Modern evolution of Thorens' original belt drive paradigm, Scotland's original super-deck was warm and musical, albeit soft. Still capable of fine results today.

DUAL CS505 1982 [£75]
Simple high quality engineering and a respectable low mass tonearm made for a brilliant budget buy. Polished, smooth and slightly bland sound.

GOLDRING LENCO 88/89 1963 [£15.65]
Simple, well engineered middleweight with soft, sweet sound and reasonable tonearms. Good spares and servicing support even today from specialists.

LINN AXIS 1987 [£253]
Simplified cut-price version of the Sondek complete with LVX arm. Elegant and decently performing mid-price package. Later version with Akito tonearm better.

LINN SONDEK LP12 1973 [£86]
For many, the Brit superdeck; constant mods meant that early ones sound warmer and more lyrical than modern versions. Beguilingly musical but now off the pace.



TECHNICS SP10 1973 [£400]
Seminal Japanese engineering. Sonics depend on plinths, but a well mounted SP10/II will give any modern a hard time, especially in respect of bass power and midband accuracy.

MARANTZ TT1000 1978 [£ N/A]
Beautiful seventies high end belt drive with sweet and clean sound. Rare in Europe, but big in Japan.



MICHELL GYRODEC 1981 [£599]
Thanks to its stunning visuals, this bold design wasn't accorded the respect it deserved until recently. Early examples sound cold and mechanical, but now right on the pace. Clean, solid and architectural sound.

REGA PLANAR 3 1978 [£79]
Brilliantly simple but clean and musical performer, complete with Acos-derived S-shape tonearm. 1983 saw the arrival of the RB300, which added detail at the expense of warmth. Superb budget buy.

GARRARD 301/401 1953 [£19]
Heavy metal - tremendously strong and articulate with only a veiled treble to let it down. In many respects, better than the seventies 'superdecks' that succeeded it.



ROKSAN XERXES 1984 [£550]
Supposedly the first to 'better' the LPI2. Super tight and clean sound, with excellent transients. Less musical than the Sondek, but more neutral. Sagging plinth top-plates make them a dubious used buy.

THORENS TD124 1959 [£ N/A]
The template for virtually every 1970s 'superdeck', this iconic design was the only real competition for Garrard's 301. It was sweeter and more lyrical, yet lighter and less impactful in the bass.

TOWNSHEND ROCK 1979 [£ N/A]
The product of academic research by the Cranfield Institute, this novel machine has an extremely clean and fluid sound. Substantially modified through the years, and capable of superb results even today.

TRIO LO-7D 1978 [£600]
The best 'all-in-one' turntable package ever made, Trio/Kenwood threw their 'engineering best practice' book at this one with startling results. Clean, powerful and three-dimensional sound, ultimately limited by the tonearm.

TO NEARMS

ACOS LUSTRE GST-1 1975 [£46]
The archetypal S-shaped seventies arm; good, propulsive and involving sound in its day, but ragged and undynamic now.

AUDIO TECHNICA AT 1120 1978 [£75]
Fine finish can't compensate for this ultra low mass arm's limited sonics - a good starter arm if you've only got a few quid to spend.

ALPHASON HRI00S 1981 [£150]
First class arm, practically up to present-day standards. Buy carefully, though, as there is no service available now. Totally under priced when new, exceptional.

SME 3009 1959 [£18]
Once state of the art, but long since bettered. Musical enough, but weak at frequency extremes and veiled in the midband. Legendary serviceability has made it a cult, used prices unjustifiably high.

GRACE G707 1974 [£58]
This early Japanese example of the tonearm art has a smooth, lyrical sound. Imported by Linn, fitted to early LPI2s. Sonically way off the pace now, though.

SME SERIES III 1979 [£113]
Clever variable mass design complete with Titanium Nitride tube tried to be all things to all men, and failed. Charming nonetheless, with a warm and inoffensive sound.

HADCOCK GH228 1976 [£46]
Evergreen unipivot with lovely sweet, fluid sound - although bass and dynamics are limited. Excellent service backup.

LINN ITTOK LVII 1978 [£253]
Arguably the first 'superarm'; Japanese design to Linn specs made for a muscular, rhythmic sound with real dynamics. Now off the pace, but the final LVIII version worth seeking out.

REGA RB300 1983 [£88]
Inspired budget esoterica. Detailed, tight, neutral sound but tonally grey sounding in absolute terms. Responds well to tweaking, and its cheaper RB250 brother better still.



NAIMARO 1986 [£875]
Truly endearing and charismatic performer - wonderfully engaging mid-band makes up for softened frequency extremes.



TECHNICS EPA-501 1979 [£ N/A]
Popular partner for late seventies Technics motor units. Nice build and Titanium Nitride tube can't compensate for middling sound.

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS/COMBOS

DELTEC 1987 [£1900]
Fast, dry and with excellent transients, this first DPA integrated is the real deal for eightles obsessives. Ridiculously punchy 80W per channel from a tiny, half-size box. Radical, cool and more than a little strange.

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EXPOSURE VII/VIII 1985 [£625]
 Seminal mid-eighties Exposure pre-power, offering most of what rival Naim amps did with just that little bit extra smoothness and sweetness. Still, it's by no means 'sweet' by today's standards, being lean, punchy, musical. It's also possessed of that quintessentially eighties look – frumpy black steel boxes with rough silk screened logos!

ROGERS A75 1978 [£220]
 The prototypical Audiolab 8000a – lots of sensible facilities, a goodly power output and nice sound in one box. The later A75I and A100 versions offered improved sonics and were seriously sweet and open to listen to.

SUGDEN CS1/PS1 1976 [£130]
 Soft sounding early Sugden combo with a plethora of facilities and filters, complete with seventies-tastic DIN socketry. A sweet and endearing performer as you'd expect, but lacking in power and poor load driving ability, so partner carefully.

VTL MINIMAL/50W MONOBLOCK 1985 [£1,300]
 Vacuum Tube Logic was one of the Europe's biggest tube names in the eighties, and it shows. Rugged, professional build and finish allied to a lively and punchy sound (albeit with limited power) make them an excellent used buy.

A&R A60 1977 [£115]
 Sweet and musical feature-packed integrated; the Audiolab 8000A used its blueprint to great effect.



AUDIOLAB 8000A 1985 [£495]
 Smooth integrated with clean MM/MC phono stage and huge feature count. Extremely reliable, too. Post '93 versions a top used buy.

CREEK CAS4040 1983 [£150]
 More musical than any budget amp before it; CAS4140 loses tone controls, gains grip.

MCINTOSH MA6800 1995 [£3735]
 Effortlessly sweet, strong and powerful with seminal styling to match.

MISSION CYRUS 2 1984 [£299]
 Classic eighties minimalism combines arresting styling with clean, open, lively sound. Further upgradeable with PSX power supply.

MUSICAL FIDELITY A1 1985 [£350]
 Beguiling Class A integrated with exquisite styling. Questionable reliability.

MYST TMA3 1983 [£300]
 Madcap eighties minimalism, but a strong and tight performer all the same.

NAIM NAIT 1984 [£350]
 Superb rhythms and dynamics make it truly musical, but tonally monochromatic. Fine phono stage, very low power.

NAD 3020 1979 [£69]
 Brilliantly smooth, sweet and punchy at the price and even has a better phono stage than you'd expect. The archetypal budget super-amp.



ROGERS CADET III 1965 [£34]
 Sweet sounding valve integrated, uses ECL86 output valves, even has a half useable phono stage, sweet, warm a good introduction to valves

ROTEL RA-820BX 1983 [£139]
 Lively and clean budget integrated that arguably started the move to minimalism.

SUGDEN A21 1969 [£ N/A]
 Class A transistor integrated with an eminently likeable smoothness and musicality. Limited inputs via DIN sockets.

PREAMPLIFIERS

AUDIOLAB 8000C 1991 [£499]
 Tonally grey but fine phono input and great facilities make it an excellent general purpose tool.

AUDIO RESEARCH SP-81982 [£1,400]
 Beautifully designed and built high end tube preamplifier with deliciously sweet and smooth sound. Not the last word in incision or grip, but that didn't matter to those who aspired to it.

CONRAD JOHNSON MOTIV MC-8 1986 [£2,500]
 Minimalist FET-based preamplifier from the Yank valve specialists is brilliantly neutral and smooth with a sry, light balance in the mould of Sugden high end stuff. Something of a curio, but worthwhile nonetheless.

CROFT MICRO 1986 [£150]
 Budget valve pre-amp with exceptionally transparent performance.

LEAK POINT ONE STEREO 1958 [£ N/A]
 Good for their time, but way off the pace these days. Use of EF86 pentode valve for high gain rules out ultra performance. Not the highest-fit!

LINN LK-1 1986 [£499]
 A brave attempt by the Glasgow boys to bring remote controlled user-friendliness to hair-shirt audiophile hi-fi. Didn't quite work, but not half bad for under £100.

NAIM NAC32.5 1978 [£ N/A]
 The Salisbury company came of age with this, their classic high end pre. Brilliantly fast and incisive sound that's a joy with vinyl but a tad forward for digital.

LECSO AC-1 1973 [£ N/A]
 Amazing styling courtesy of Allan Boothroyd can't disguise its rather cloudy sound, but a design classic nonetheless.



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Arcam CD82T CD Player (2Yr G/tee)	(599.00)	£499.00	Naim NAC 202* Preamp (2Yr /Gtee)	(1375.00)	£995.00
Arcam A85* Amp inc Phono- Blk (2Yr G/tee) . .	(909.00)	£649.00	Naim NAC 252* Preamp (2Yr /Gtee)	(3995.00)	£2995.00
Arcam DV88 Plus* DVD Player - (2Yr /Gtee) . .	(999.00)	£699.00	Naim NAP 200 Power Amp (2Yr /Gtee)	(1345.00)	£985.00
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B&W 601/3* Speakers (2Yr G/tee)	(249.00)	£199.00	Naim Supercap* Power supply (2Yr G/tee) . .	(2695.00)	£2095.00
Linn Klimax* Twin Power Amplifier (2Yr G/tee) .	(6000.00)	£4295.00	Naim Credo Speakers (2Yr G/tee)	(1350.00)	£595.00
Linn Trikan Centre Spkr - maple (2Yr /Gtee) . .	(549.00)	£349.00	Naim SL2 Speakers - Maple (2Yr G/tee) . . .	(4995.00)	£3795.00
Linn Ninka Speakers - Blk (2Yr G/tee)	(1145.00)	£695.00	Revox E642 42" Plasma/Tuner (1Yr /Gtee) . .	(7499.00)	£2799.00
Linn Esppek Speakers - maple (2Yr G/tee) . . .	(2800.00)	£1795.00	Spendor S3 Speakers - Maple (2Yr G/tee) . .	(599.00)	£449.00
Linn Sizmik Active Sub - Cherry (2Yr /Gtee) . .	(995.00)	£645.00	SpendorS6 Speakers - Maple (2Yr G/tee) . .	(1299.00)	£899.00
Mission M5c* Centre Spkr - Beech (1Yr /Gtee) .	(199.00)	£99.00	SpendorS8 Speakers - Cherry (2Yr G/tee) . .	(1699.00)	£1185.00

QUAD 22 1958 [£25]
The partner to the much vaunted Quad II monoblocs - cloudy and vague sound means it's for anacrophiles only.

QUAD 33 1968 [£43]
Better than the 22, but Quad's first tranny pre isn't outstanding. Responds well to tweaking/ rebuilding though...

POWER AMPLIFIERS

LEAK STEREO 20 1958 [£31]
Excellent workaday classic valve amplifier with decent power and drive. Surprisingly modern sounding if rebuilt sympathetically. Irrepressibly musical and fluid.



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



LEACSON API 1973 [£ N/A]
Madcap cylindrical styling alluded to its 'tower of power' pretensions, but it wasn't. Poor build, but decently clean sounding when working.

MARANTZ MODEL 9 1997 [£8000]
Authentic reproduction monoblocs still more than cut the sonic mustard. Highly expensive and highly sought after.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



PHONO STAGES

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

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

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

TUNERS

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

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

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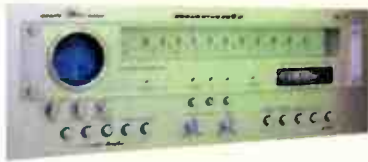
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Arcam A85 Amplifier (1Yr G/tee)(799.00)	£549.00	Naim CDS 2 Head Unit (1Yr G/tee)(4165.00)	£2795.00
Arcam Alpha 7 Tuner (6Mth G/tee)(279.00)	£139.00	Naim PSX Power Supply-CDX (1Yr G/tee) . .(2100.00)	£1395.00
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MARANTZ ST-8 1978 [£353]
Marantz's finest radio moment. Warm, organic sound plus an oscilloscope for checking the signal strength and multipath.



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

ROGERS T75 1977 [£125]
Superb mid-price British audiophile design, complete with understated black fascia. Fine sound in the true Rogers mould - smooth and sweet with fine dimensionality.

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

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

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

ANALOGUE RECORDERS

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

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



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

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



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

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



DIGITAL RECORDERS

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



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



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

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

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

LOUDSPEAKERS

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

BBC LS3/5A 1972 [£88]
Extremely low colouration design is amazing in some respects - articulation, stage depth, clarity - and useless in others (both frequency extremes). Came in wide variety of guises from various manufacturers building it under licence. Partner with Rogers AB1 subwoofers for an extra two octaves of bass!



CELESTION SL6 1984 [£350]
Smallish two way design complete with aluminium dome tweeter and plastic mid-bass unit set the blueprint for nineteen eighties loudspeakers. Very open and clean sounding, albeit course at high frequencies and limp in the bass. Speakers would never be the same again...



LOWTHER PM6A 1957 [£18 EACH]
This seminal full-range driver is still manufactured. High sensitivity, as fitted to many classic horn designs.

TANNOY WESTMINSTER 1985 [£4500]

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

JR 149 1977 [£120]

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

**SPENDOR BCI 1976 [£240]**

Celestion HF1300 tweeter meets bespoke Spondor Bextrene mid-bass unit – and the result is a beautifully warm yet well focussed sound. A little bass bloom necessitates careful low-stand mounting, but these prove that the seventies did have some fine designs after all!

MISSION 770 1980 [£375]

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

**QUAD ESL57 EACH 1956 [£45]**

Wonderfully open and neutral sound puts box loudspeakers to shame. Properly serviced they give superb midband performance, although frequency extremes less impressive. Ideally, use in stacked pairs or with sub-woofers and supertweeters.

**MAGNEPLANAR SMGA198X [£800]**

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

MISSION X-SPACE 1999 [£499]

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

YAMAHA NS1000 1977 [£532]

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

**MISSION 752 1995 [£495]**

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

LEAK SANDWICH 1961 [£39 EACH]

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

**HEYBROOK HBI 1982 [£130]**

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

KEF R105 1977 [£785]

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

QUAD ESL63 1980 [£1200]

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

**IMF TLS80 1976 [£550]**

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

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TURNTABLES

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

TO NEARMS

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

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

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

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

ORIGIN LIVE SILVER 2502001 £625
This fully developed and expertly fettled Rega boasts a superbly even, transparent and tuneful sound. Gives away only a small degree of finesse and dimensionality to top arms.

ORIGIN LIVE ILLUSTRIOUS 2002 £1570
A modern superarm with battleship build. Extremely strong, even and open sound in the mould of the late, lamented Zeta, plus fine tonal colouring. Exquisite.



REGA RB250 1984 £112
Sold through Moth Marketing, this is capable far beyond its price point, with a tight, lean and detailed sound. Responds brilliantly to Origin Live counterweight modification, and well to rewiring.

SME 309 1989 £767
Entry level SME complete with cost-cut aluminium armtube and detachable headshell. Tight, neutral sound with good tonality, but lacks the IV's pace and precision.

SME SERIES IV 1988 £1127
Offers nine tenths of the SMEV's magic at just over half price. Exquisitely built and finished, and a design classic. Faces stiff competition these days, but lovely nevertheless.

SME SERIES V 1987 £1614
The so-called Best Pickup Arm in the World isn't, but comes close. Vice-like bass with incredible weight, ultra clear midband and treble. Does everything except beguile the listener.

CARTRIDGES

AUDIO TECHNICA AT-110 1984 £29
Great starter cartridge that's refined, detailed and musical beyond its price.

DYNAVECTOR DV10X5 2003 £250
A distant descendent of the classic Ultimo 10X, this has warmth and sweetness in spades, allied to a punchy bass. Beats G1042 comfortably.

DYNAVECTOR DV20X-H2003 £395
The best modern budget MC combines deliciously sweet sound with fantastic get-up-and-go. High output version works a treat with valve phono stages too.

GOLDRING G1042 1994 £135
One of the best MMs going, with sweet and extended treble and punchy, muscular bass.

LYRIA LYDIAN BETA 1998 £600
An altogether more beguiling listen than the MC30S, although not quite as incisive. Superb all rounder, nonetheless.

LYRA PARNASSUS DCT 1997 £1895
Jonathan Carr's masterpiece is a brilliantly lyrical and fluid performer, with a deliciously sweet tone and immense subtlety and polish.

ORTOFON MC25FL 1994 £285
Strong budget MC with a cleaner and more detailed sound than the Dynavector; more sterile and less emotive, however.

ORTOFON MC30 SUPR'1 1995 £550
Beautifully clean and detailed device with real finesse, albeit a tad mechanical sounding.

ORTOFON KONTRA' B 1999 £720
Surprisingly articulate performer by Ortofon standards. All the brand's usual polish and detail allied to real vim. Loves making music!



MUSIC MAKER 1999 £575

When mated with a good quality arm, this hand finished high-output pick-up gives an ear-boggling account of itself. Very high compliance ensures maximum information retrieval. An absolute (grain orientated) gem.

SHURE V15XMR 1994 £350

The most musical MM yet made – brilliantly dynamic and punchy in the classic Shure mould, yet refined and tidy too.

SUMIKO BPS 1995 £250

Charismatic performer with rhythm aplenty, but in other respects way off the pace – lacks smoothness and sophistication of the DV10X5.

ARCAM DIVA CD82T 2002 £600

Oodles of finesse, but not the most gripping performer at the price. A fine all rounder in the classic Arcam mould.

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO DVD57 2003 £200

Crisp, lively DVD-A sound makes this superb value for money, but 16bit playback is way behind similarly priced CD spinners.

CREEK CD5011 2004 £699

Extensive revisions make this an altogether more beguiling machine, and one of the best at its price. Extremely musical sound that's surprisingly upfront for a Creek design. Excellent mid-price purchase, with only its Marantz rival to challenge it.

CYRUS CD8 2003 £1000

Highly incisive, engaging, grippy and dynamic sound, but needs careful matching to smooth ancillaries. Optional PSX-R adds bass and dimensionality.

DENON DVD-A1 2002 £2500

Middling CD performance, but a genuinely strong DVD-A sound with masses of space and detail. Excellent pictures, too!

**LINN GENKI 1999 £995**

Undeniably fast, lithe, musical and fun - but some won't take to its dry, wry character. Works best in all-Linn systems, where it really rises to the challenge!

LINN IKEMI 1999 £1950

Has the brilliant focus and clarity of the previous Karik III with a dose more tonal richness and polish. More grip and poise than most at any price - still superb!

MARANTZ CD6000KI 2001 £500

Brilliantly warm and voluptuous sound will endear it to vinylphiles and tube lovers alike. Musical, colourful, polished and powerful like none others at or near its price.

MARANTZ CD17 II 2002 £800

Of-often-overlooked middleweight boasts a truly beguiling sound with lots of tonal flavour. Sits awkwardly between the £600 and £1000 price points, where some brilliant value buys reside, though.

NAD C5411 2002 £330

Highly musical and articulate budget machine in the classic NAD mould. Second only to Cambridge's CD500SE in the value stakes.

NAIM CDS 2001 £1195

Taut and grippy like no others at the price, but lacks the warmth of the Marantz CD6000KI at half the price. To wit, it's a very focussed product, best used in Naim systems.

MERIDIAN 507 2003 £1195

Quintessentially Meridian mid-price machine; smooth, warm, expansive and seductively musical. The best all rounder at this competitive price point.

**NAIM CDX2-XPS2 2003 £4950**

A fine high end machine, but add an XPS2 and it becomes one of the most characteristically engaging 16bit machines we've ever heard. Plays music with such passion!

NAIM CDS3 2003 £7050

The most polished Naim CD to date; tremendously capable and musical, but lacks the Rotweiler quality of the cheaper CDX2-XPS2.

ARCAM FMJ CD33T 2003 £1,300

Superbly detailed midband allied to excellent bass extension makes this a powerfully musical machine in the best traditions of Arcam CD spinners. Nothing to criticise at the price, everything to recommend it!

**PHILIPS DVD963SA 2003 £400**

Creamy CD sound allied to superb SACD and DVD video playback makes this brilliant value for money.

REGA PLANET 2002 £498

Rhythmic and beguiling performer, although lacks the warmth of tone needed to better its Marantz rival. Superb ergonomics and design, nonetheless.

REGA JUPITER 2002 £1000

A Planet on steroids, this machine adds depth and breadth to its baby brothers already impressive sound. Good, but facing stiff competition.

DENON DV-2900 2003 £850

Superbly designed and built do-it-all player that delivers fine sound and great vision. Sonically class of the sub-£1000 DVD universal field, but the i-Link and HDMI direct digital capability of arch rival Pioneer DV-868AVI may swing some towards the latter, and its DV-2200 baby brother is even better value, though.

**CAMBRIDGE AUDIO 640C 2003 £250**

Tremendously well-rounded yet engaging sound makes this the best budget silver disc spinner by far. Build quality is excellent at the price, and the styling bang up to the minute. Blistering value for money.

CREEK CD5011 2004 £699

Extensive revisions make this an altogether more beguiling machine, and one of the best at its price. Extremely musical sound that's surprisingly upfront for a Creek design. Excellent mid-price purchase, with only its Marantz rival to challenge it.

DENON DVD-2200 2003 £499

Superb do it all mid-price player; fine DVD-A and SACD sound allied to excellent video performance will be all many could ever want. Ultimately it's a little bright and mechanical sounding, but you have to go into high end territory to truly better it. Stunning value.

MARANTZ SA-17S1 2003 £1400

Brilliant CD playback comes close to the best at any price, while SACD performance is almost as convincing - superbly warm and three dimensional nature makes listening a joy. However, the lack of DVD-Audio decoding and poor feature count makes it look middling value compared to some of the universal players here.

**ORELLE CD100EVO 2003 £1,200**

Extremely engaging and musical sound, but maybe a tad too bracing for some tastes. Superb aesthetics complete an attractive package.

MUSICAL FIDELITY TRI-VISTA21 DAC 2003 £1,200

Superbly neutral and expansive sound makes this offboard digital-to-analogue converter an excellent upgrade to any mid-price CD player - fed by a decent transport, few 16bit players at any price come close.

**PANASONIC DVD-S75 2002 £120**

Real ability and fine measured performance for an unbelievably low price. Impressive in its own way, if not truly audiophile. If you just want a cheap DVD spinner with DVD-Audio as a bolt-on goodie, this is the one.

PIONEER DV-868AVI 2003 £799

Pioneer's most accomplished mid-price machine to date, this boasts full DVD-A/SACD playback, a welter of facilities and the all-important HDMI video and i-Link audio digital outputs, making it nigh-on future-proof. Factor in fine - if not outstanding - sound and superb pictures and it's practically impossible to fault.

SONY SCD-XB790 2003 £250

Quite unlike any other budget Sony CD spinner we've heard, here's a very 'analogue' sounding machine that's smooth and warm and even. Factor in fine SACD playback and this machine is a brilliant budget buy - unless you want DVD-Audio that is, which it lacks.



APPLE IPOD 40GB £399

Genre-defining best of breed, thanks to supreme ergonomics and build allied to fine sound.

PIONEER PDR-609 2001 £200

Brilliant value CD recorder that makes excellent recordings from its digital inputs. Half decent digital converters, too.

PHILIPS DVDR880 2003 £370

Poor CD audio playback, but makes great DVD video recordings and boasts fine ergonomics. Top AV value.

SONY RCD-W3 2002 £250

Usual superb Sony ergonomics make for non-nonsense budget buy. Fine direct digital copies, but analogue input poor. Middling sonics, but there's a digital output!

YAMAHA CDR-HD1300E2002 £600

HD means MD-style ease of editing, but compromises recording quality ever-so slightly. Add decent CD replay and it's a fine all rounder nonetheless - top value.

**ONKYO MB-S1 2001 £1100**

An interesting machine complete with MP3 functionality, but high price, fussy ergonomics and over-smooth sound make it mediocre value against the Yamaha.

CREEK OBH-21SE 2003 £250

Musically enjoyable yet highly refined for the price - a superb buy. Gives the Dino a real hard time.

EAR 834P 1993 £400

Classic tube design with a deliciously warm and expansive sound - shame about the loose bass and veiled treble!

LINN LINTO 2000 £900

A musical and incisive performer, with more speed than the Delphini at the expense of detail and tonal colour.

QED DISCSAVER 1995 £35

Rhythmic, bouncy sound via battery, although it's bright and forward. Great value, but £100 more on the X-LP is well worth it!

TRICHORD DINO 2002 £299

Great all rounder with switchable MM/MC. Fast, fluid and smooth like no others at the price.

TRICHORD DELPHINI 2003 £995

The very latest 'Never Connected' variant is easily the best, bringing velvety smoothness to an already refined and engaging performer. Neutral to a fault - some will mourn the passing of the charismatic ISO.

MUSICAL FIDELITY XLPSV3 2003 £249

Fine all rounder at the price, which a satisfyingly full bodied sound that's smoother than the Creek but a tad less engaging. Only Trichord's Dino, with its easy upgradability for just £50, reflects badly on this fine bit of kit.

PROJECT PHONOBOX LE2004 £99

Great little box that improves on most bundled phono stages found in budget integrated amplifiers, adding detail and definition and a measure of smoothness too. If £100 is all you're prepared to spend, then do it happily on this, but you'll get obviously better results from the £250 brigade.

ARCAM DIVA A65 PLUS 2002 £370

Classic budget Arcam fare - decently sweet and open with sensible facilities and plenty of power.

**ARCAM FMJ A32 2001 £1150**

For those who value serious power and labyrinthine facilities over outright clarity or grip. A very impressive all rounder with an unusually muscular power amp at this price.

AUDIO ANALOGUE PUCINNI 1999 £495

Brilliant value mid-pricer is a real step up from budget designs. Smooth, fluid, natural sound with adequate power and no nasties. Fine phono stage too!

AUDIO NOTE OTO SE 2000 £1199

This baby tuber is beautifully sweet and creamy, but lacks solid-state's clarity, detail and incision. Low, low power means speaker choice critical.

AUDIO NOTE SORO SE 2000 £1699

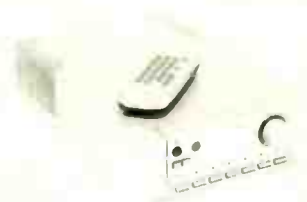
Wonderfully out-of-the-box sounding tube middleweight is all about sweetness and fluidity. Limited power and loose bass, but little the worse for it.

CYRUS 6 2003 £600

Cracking do-it-all mid price design, bringing svelte sound, good connectivity and upgradeability and stunning style and build.

CYRUS 8 2003 £800

Unusually warm and lyrical for a solid-stater, with decent power and punch. PSX-R adds dynamics, detail and dimensionality.

**MERIDIAN 551 1994 £895**

Evergreen middleweight is a serious performer even now. Tonally a tad dry, it's still very smooth and svelte with bags of power, detail and grip. Class act.

MUSICAL FIDELITY A308 2002 £2400

Impressive monster integrated. Vast power delivered with clarity, even-handedness and finesse. Musical, with real tonal colour. Separate pre-power version better still, but less good value.

NAIM NAIT 5 2001 £845

A fast and thrilling listen, thanks to taut and articulate bass and midband. Surprisingly polished for a budget Naim amp, both sonically and ergonomically.

**NAD C320 2002 £220**

Not the giant killer that the 3020 once was, but a very strong budget design. A great starting point; forms a fine system with NAD's partnering C541i CD player.

SUGDEN A21A 1993 £1020

The most musical amplifier at the price, bar none. Delicious Class A sound is smooth, sweet and wonderfully transparent with true tonal colour. Low power, so match carefully.

SUGDEN HEADMASTER 2003 £600

Unusual combined preamplifier and headphone amplifier, this boasts a surprisingly smooth and open sound which suffers only when compared to preamps at twice the price.

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-CANS V3 2003 £249

Mr Michaelson's best headphone amplifier to date, with an extremely open and explicitly detailed sound plus serious bass wallop and the ability to drive any phones to very high levels. Errs towards brightness with some headphones, so match carefully and use smooth cables.

CREEK OBH-12 2000 £220

Brilliant value budget passive, giving little away in sonics to far more expensive designs. Connectivity and build aren't great, but what do you expect at this price?

**MF AUDIO PASSIVE PRE 2003 £1010**

Novel and effective pre with switchable gain via a transformer, and balanced operation. Open and incisive sound, yet makes most active rivals sound edgy by comparison.

NAIM NAC112 2002 £660

Affordable admission ticket to the Salisbury high end experience. Detailed and dynamic, if tonally rather lacklustre.

LINN LK140 2000 £800

Dry and grey sounding, but decently dynamic and musically engaging all the same. A worthy worker in a budget Linn system.

MUSICAL FIDELITY A308 CR 2003 £2400

Superb transistor behemoth, worth partnering with any high end CD player or preamp. Oodles of grunt served up with poise and purpose.

**MARANTZ SM-17 2001 £700**

Useful budget power amp with plenty of clean transistor power. Not the most transparent, but sweet and clean all the same. Fine build completes a great value package.

NAIM NAP150 2002 £795

Driven by a decent source and a NAC112, this gives highly enjoyable results - providing you like the Naim sound! Taut, fast and feisty despite its relative lack of power.

QUAD 909 2001 £900

The latest current-dumper has a smooth and expansive character with enough wallop to drive most loads. Not the most musical, but super value all the same. Lovely build, finish and Quad's legendary service are nice.

CROFT TWIN STAR 2003 £1750

With a taste of the best of both tube and transistor, this latest update of the Croft classic is a truly endearing experience.

**GRAAF GM20 OTL 2003 £3,300**

Awesome output transformer-less valve power amp gives dazzling speed and incision, with an ethereal soundstaging and delicious filigree detail. Tremendous punch belies its humble 20W power rating. Factor in one of the most exquisite finishes this side of an Aston Martin and it's very hard to say no...

SUGDEN MUSICMASTER 2003 £1,300

Quintessential Class A Sugden sound is not warm as many expect, but extremely neutral and open with real tonal colour. By comparison, tubes sound bloated and standard solid-state hazy and brittle. Superb when partnered with efficient loudspeakers like Revolver R45s, but many will find it underpowered.

**AUDIO RESEARCH VSI55 2003 £2,895**

The Naim NAP250's tubular alter ego; oodles of power allied to a strong bass and smooth open midband makes this a brilliant all round amplifier. Lacks the subtlety and finesse of the low powered single-ended brigade but makes up for it with sheer brio.

CREEK A50IR 2004 £550

Consummately smooth yet engaging sound makes it a serious player at the price, but don't expect Creek's traditional sumptuousness. Fine value nonetheless.

MARANTZ PM-17MKII

KI MODIFIED 2004 £1,500
Gloriously offbeat do-it-all design with a truly warm, smooth and three dimensional sound. Think of this as a latter-day Audiolab 8000a - with a good deal more colour and finesse - and you'll have its measure. Lowish power output at the price, but fine real world speaker driving ability.

MONRIO MC207 2003 £1,100

Powerful, muscular sound allied to real finesse makes this unusual integrated an essential audition at the price.

ORELLE SA100EVO 2003 £1,200

Fine build, exquisite design and a wonderfully lucid sound make this an essential audition at the price.

UNISON RESEARCH S6 2002 £1,625

Tremendously musical and lithe sound with real finesse and subtlety too. Very slightly upper mid forward encourages careful partnering with ancillaries (Revolver R45s are ideal), but overall fantastic value for money.

DENON AVR-2803 2003 £650

Superb mid-price 7.1 channel extravaganza with nearly all the decoding power you'll ever need. Powerful, open and clean sound (at the price) makes it capable with music, and superb on movies. Fine ergonomics and great build makes this receiver hard to beat as an all-rounder.

**NAIM AV2/NAP 150/NAPV 175 2002 £4,190**

Brilliant audiophile multichannel pre-power amplifier combo; not as good with music as a two-channel Naim set-up at the same price, obviously, but surprisingly close. Elegant control layout plus a strong, clean and brilliantly engaging sound make this a serious crossover product. Ultimately lacks power compared to similarly priced Arcam gear, but is more musically involving.

PIONEER VSA-AX51 2004 £1,000

The ability to hook up to Pioneer's DV-868i via i-Link (nee FireWire) means that this multichannel AV amplifier can do all the digital conversion onboard makes the a very special product, which when used with the aforementioned DVD spinner sounds better even than the sum of its parts.

**B&W CDM1 NT 2002 £750**

Fine clarity and imaging allied to pleasing warmth and great rhythmic cohesion make these standmounters an essential audition.

CASTLE CONWAY 3 2003 £930

Superbly smooth and crisp performers, with a big hearted musical sound. Ultimately coloured though, with a slow, plummy bass.

CYRUS CLS70 2001 £800

Charismatic performer with a fast, tight and open midband, but lacks cohesion and scale..

EPOS ELS-3 2003 £200

Plenty of brio and a decent degree of refinement makes this budget baby a fine value contender.

**KEF Q1 2003 £250**

Highly polished and articulate standmounters at the price, but demand good ancillaries for best results.

KLIPSCH HERESY II 1997 £1100

An outstanding high sensitivity loudspeaker with midrange and treble horns coupled with infinite baffle 12" bass driver. Effortless, fast and accurate.

LINN NINKA 2001 £995

Major on rhythms and dynamics, making them an involving listen. Reasonably refined, too - but tonally disappointing.

MISSION 782SE 2003 £900

Bright and tight design capable of brilliant speed and grip, at the expense of warmth. Demands high quality, high powered ancillaries.

MONITOR AUDIO B4 2003 £350

An unusually smooth and lucid performer at the price, and its 3-way design means it drives rooms well. Fine engineering, but build and finish so-so.

MORDAUNT SHORT 9142002 £300

Warm, detailed and articulate performer, but a touch loose in the bass and veiled up top. Fine partner for budget valve amps.

NAIM ALLAE 2002 £1990

Taut and grippy like few others, this speaker majors on transient speed. Surprisingly smooth for a Naim box, with nicely etched treble. As always, tonally dry.

TDK S-80 2002 £90

Ingenious NXT multimedia sub/sat system has a wonderfully even and open sound - like baby electrostatics.

**QUAD ESL-988 2001 £3400**

Wonderfully neutral and self-effacing with sublime imaging and projection. Treble lacks extension, bass lacks weight - although the pricier 989 answers the latter resoundingly.

W'DALE DIAMOND 8.1 2001 £120

Still the best baby budget standmounters around. Tight and grippy thanks to Kevlar drivers, but invariably limited in the frequency extremes.

**PERIGEE FK-1L 2002 £5000**

Charismatic Aussie ribbon design with deliciously open mid and treble, allied to fine bass weight. The right room and ancillaries essential. Engaging, musical and powerful sound. Superb.

TANNOY EYRIS DC1 2003 £699

The combination of dual concentric treble/midband drivers plus supertweeters make for a very spacious and expansive sounding loudspeaker, albeit one that's a little bright and loose in the bass. An excellent mid-price design well worth auditioning.

REVOLVER R45 2003 £899

Wonderfully easy to drive floorstanders that are a dreamboat for tube amplifiers, and great for party-minded transistor users too. Great attack transients, fluid and musical bass and midband and couth treble make them fine all-rounders.

MONITOR AUDIO GR60 2002 £2,295

In some ways, these come close to Yamaha's legendary NS1000Ms, thanks to their tremendous clarity, great transients and 'full-fat' wide bandwidth performance. Bright and clean, but never fatiguing or uncouth. A truly accomplished all rounder that gives a real taste of 'super-fi' at a reasonably affordable price.

MARTIN LOGAN CLARITY 2003 £2,895

Supremely transparent and open with brilliant depth perspective and image projection. The midband is up there with the very best at any price, while the bass and treble integrate well but don't especially shine. Dynamically limited, with middling bass punch, but that's not the point – that deliciously fluid and intricate midband wins great respect.

TOWNSHEND MAXIMUM 2003 £800

Another brilliant niche product from Max, these ribbon aspirated supertweeters add space and atmosphere to any good high end loudspeaker, and more surprisingly perhaps make things more fluid and musical too. Superb affordable esoterica.

JECKLIN FLOAT TWO 1998 £99

Wonderful panel-like sound from these esoteric-looking headclamps.

SENNHEISER HD-590 1998 £199

The company's best real-world cans to date. Open and smooth with plenty of detail. Brightly lit midband makes them an ideal partner for a valve headphone amp.

**SENNHEISER MX-500** 1999 £19

Our unqualified recommendation for those seeking a serious sounding pair of in-ear phones. Smooth, detailed and musical.

SENNHEISER PX-100 2002 £29

Cracking pair of lightweight open back cans ideal for personals, but good enough for real hi-fi use. Superb build allied to a smooth and engaging performance make them the spiritual successor to the HD400s.

CHORD CO. CHAMELEON 2 £90/M

One of our favourites, these are musical performers with a smooth yet open sound.

**DNM RESON** £40/M

Neutral and transparent - a steal!

NORDOST BLUE HEAVEN £150/M

Some of the fastest and most transparent cable around.

VDH ULTIMATE THE FIRST £260/0.6M

Carbon interconnects that help you forget the electronics and concentrate on the music. Miraculous transparency. Tight and tuneful bass mixed with air and space results in a cracking cable for the money.

WIREWORLD OASIS 5 2003 £99/M

Excellent mid-price design with a very neutral, silky and self-effacing sound. Superb value for money.

TCI CONSTRICTOR**13A-6 BLOCK** 2003 £120

Top quality 'affordable' mains outlet block, with fine build and good sonics. Well worth the extra over standard high street specials, which sound coarse and two-dimensional by comparison.

CLEARAUDIO REFERENCE 1996**£4,070**

Fine bass articulation and power allied a stunningly open and atmospheric midband and beautifully etched treble makes this one of the very best sounding turntables at any price. Michell's Orbe offers marginally more impactful bass, but can't touch that amazing mid. Exquisite.

GOLDRING GR-1 2004 £140

Essentially a Rega P2 built down to very low price and bundled with a decent Goldring MM, this is cracking value for money. Head and shoulders above its immediate rivals, it offers a surprisingly musical and detailed sound that will stun those new to vinyl – which is precisely what it was designed to do.

ORIGIN LIVE AURORA**GOLD** 2004 £1,470

Seminal 'entry level high end' deck showing Mark Baker's characteristically obsessive attention to detail. The result is an extremely wide open and natural sounding machine that lacks the Michell GyroDec's slightly 'mechanical' nature – along with some of its scale and accuracy. Ideal for those seeking that classically beguiling vinyl sound.

ROKSAN RADIUS 5 2003 £750

Fantastic value allied to intelligent, interesting and 'out of the box' design makes for a wonderful entry-level superdeck. Open and musical sound is more inviting than Michell TecnoDec rival, and the bundled Nima Unipivot arm is a superstar.

**THORENS TD190** 2003 £290

Ease of set up and use, allied to fully automatic operation mean that, although hardly the last word in performance, this deck is most certainly a model of convenience.

ARCAM T61 2002 £250

This sleek looking and refined sounding FM/AM tuner isn't the last word in musical involvement, but is fine value, nonetheless.

ARCAM DT81 2003 £650

A fine radio, hampered only by its seriously compromised DAB medium. Probably the best DAB tuner ever, but one for Digital Radio enthusiasts only...

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO**DAB300** 2003 £150

Fine ergonomics allied to great ease of use and respectable DAB sound makes this superb value.

CYRUS FM X £500

Great for Cyrus users, but its dry and precise sound can't match the best of the rest at the price. Worthy, nonetheless.

DENON TU-260L MK II 1998 £130

If you want the best FM sound at the lowest possible price, then this ancient tuner remains peerless after all these years. There are better analogue designs around, but are either near-impossible to find or are now long-deleted.

MYRYAD MT 100 1999 £600

One of hi-fi's nice surprises, this is a beautifully designed and built bit of kit with a deliciously sweet and svelte sound which really does justify its high price.

NAD S400 2003 £600

Highly accomplished specialist high end analogue tuner with a deliciously open and lucid sound, but it can't quite match the Myryad all the same.

PRIMARE T21 2002 £600

Seriously accomplished design with mature sonics, great styling and fine build.

**PURE DIGITAL DRX-702ES** 2003 £249

Great with Digital Radio, but thin a tad sounding on FM at times. It's a top hybrid, nonetheless...

DENON D-M31 2003 £250

Excellent CD receiver package with surprising sonics and a brilliant tuner as a bonus, although its amplifier section doesn't quite match the Onkyo. Optional speakers are mediocre.

LINN CLASSIK MOVIE SYSTEM DI 2002 £2,995

Superb ergonomics and performance from this one-box beauty, but it's just a tad expensive and in value for money terms, compares poorly to the original Classik Music System.

**ONKYO CS-210** 2003 £300

Superb value thanks to excellent sound, great build and ease of use, but the bundled 'speakers' rather let the side down.

PIONEER NS-DV990 2003 £799.95

Whiz-bang technology fest with DVD universal playback, discrete display and NXT flat panel speakers. Superb for the spare room or study – truly intelligent and elegant design – but don't expect it to match the sonics of AV separates.

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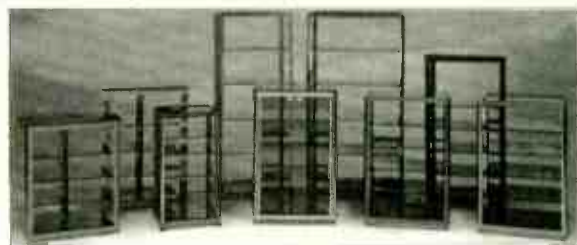
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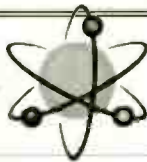
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 - EAR 834L Valve Line Stage £325
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 - Naim 250 Power Amp serviced £650
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 - Phase Linear 360W American 70's monster £295
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 - Originaline classic turntable acrylic platter £395
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 - Arcam Alpha 6 new £600 £195
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Atlas P.S./HR 1005-MCS	£2000	£995
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DUAL CS 505 Silver	£150	£88
DUAL CS503-1 Concept	£180	£88
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GARRARD Zero 100SB + Shure 93E		£98
GOLDRING LENCO GL85 white	£175	£75
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LINN LP12 (Black) LVX/K9	£1500	£575
LINN LP12 Rosewood/Akita	£750	£894
LINN LP12 Lingo / Ekos / Archive	£3500	£1998
LINN LP12 Afr/SME3009III	£1250	£595
LINN Axis / Akita / K9	£795	£445
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LORIAN Transformer	£700	£356
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MICHELL ISO Phono Stage Ex-dem	£895	£646
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UNISON Phono 1 + PSU	£850	£478
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ARCAM Diva 72	£400	£275
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AUDIO MECHA

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MERIDIAN 207 CD/Pre	£700	£299
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KRELL KAV250P Pre Amp £2398	£1597	PATHOS Twin Towers XD £3250	£2596	WILSON BENESCH Act-1 XD £6999	£4499
KRELL KSL Pre Amp £2345	£1037	PATHOS Lagos XD £2750	£2296	WILSON BENESCH Act-2 XD £8999	£5999
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 AUDIO RESEARCH SP-14 PRE C/W PHONO STAGE (£4000)
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 CONRAD JOHNSON PREMIER 14 REMOTE CONTROL PRE AMP
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SOLID STATE

LAVARDIN II (RETAIL £3500)
 KRELL FPB 600 STEREO AMP
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 MARK LEVINSON NO 27 POWER AMP
 MUSICAL FIDELITY P-270 POWER AMP
 TOCA SECA 20 WATT CLASS A AMP MARBLE FRONT VERY RARE / GOOD
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 AUDIO INV1000 SILVER WIRED PASSIVE PRE
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CD

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 KRELL MD-1 TRANSPORT & SBP-64X TWO BOX DAC
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 DPA T-1 TRANSPORT-PDM-1 MK 3 TWO BOX DAC (BOTH DELTRAN)
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 THETA PEARL TRANSPORT
 AUDIO SYNTHESIS TRANSEND TRANSPORT COAX AES/EBU AT & T
 MARANTZ CDA-94 TRANSPORT (AUDIO SYN. MOD. AT&T/COAX)
 ORELLE CD10T TRANSPORT SILVER WIRED
 THETA DS PRO GEN III (AT&T, COAX ETC.) WAS £6000 APPROX
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 THETA DS PRO GEN 1
 THETA DS PRO PROGENY-A DAC
 THETA DS PRO BASIC-11 DAC
 AUDIONOTE DAC-1X SIGNATURE
 MONRIQ 188 DAC & SEPERATE PSU.
 PINK TRIANGLE ORDINAL DAC
 NAIM CD-1 (HAD NEW LASER MECH)
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VINYL

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SOUNDSTYLE ST-105/ SILVER/BLACK EX DIS/BOXED NEW £275
 SOUNDSTYLE XS 105 5 SHELF BLACK OR SILVER (£340) EX DIS. £195
 SOUNDSTYLE XS 105 5 SHELF CANCELLED ORDER 2 OFF BRAND NEW BOXED £225
 SOUNDSTYLE XS 100 4 SHELF CANCELLED ORDER 2 OFF BRAND NEW BOXED £195
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 TARGET 24 INCH STANDS MINT £75
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BLACK RHODIUM S-130X2 BI-WIRE LOUDSPEAKER CABLE BRAND NEW LTD QUANTITY £10 PER METRE
BLACK RHODIUM S-300 BI WIRE LOUDSPEAKER CABLE BRAND NEW LTD QUANTITY £25 PER METRE

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CABLES

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 TARA LABS PRIME 1800 18 FEET PAIR BI-WIRE AS NEW BOXED ETC £750
 MIT MH-750 8 FT PAIR £650
 NIRVANA AUDIO SL-SERIES 2.3 METRE PAIR EX DEM. FACTORY TERMINATED £525
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 OED GENESIS SILVER SPIRAL 4 X 1.5 METRE TERMINATED £175
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 CARDAS HEXLINK 2 METRE PAIR (FACTORY TERMINATED) £275
 AUDIONOTE AN-SP 2 METRE PAIR (FACTORY TERMINATED) £375
 AUDIONOTE AN-L 4 METRE PAIR (FACTORY TERMINATED) £225
 VANDEN HUL MC CS 122 2 X 3 METRE PAIR AS NEW £125
 AUDIOQUEST CRYSTAL HYPERLITZ 2 METRE BI-WIRE TERMINATED £75

INTERCONNECT

HARMONIC TECH MAGIC LINK ONE 1 METRE EX DEM £650
 SILVER ARROW 1 METRE BALANCED XLR EX DEM/AS NEW £550
 XLO SIG 5 PIN DIN TO PHONO'S 2 OFF EACH £100
 XLO 3 METRE PAIR (PHONO) EX DEM £225
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 FURAKAWA 3 METRE BALANCED XLR £300
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 BLACK RHODIUM SYMPHONY 1 METRE (SEVERAL) CANCELLED ORDER BRAND NEW PACKAGED £65
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 AUDIOQUEST TURQUOISE 2 METRE PAIR EACH £35
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 NORDOST BLUE ANGEL 1.0 METRE 5 PIN DIN TO PHONO'S £50
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Fitted with IEC (Martin Kayser) and MK Tough plug Cable can be supplied fitted to our all steel 4, 6 and 8 way distribution blocks. We can rewire the distribution blocks with Eupen cable as an extra cost option. Refer to our web site for details.

AUDUSA - OOM Silverlink OCC balanced speaker cable - stranded, silver on OFHC plus three strands of OCC (Ohno Continuous Casting - single crystal copper) for improved bass performance. Mylar infill and with designed in protection against RF and EMI. conductor of 3mm diameter (approx 8 gauge). Cable Overall Dimension: 14.72 mm.

GNLM 05/2.5 (CSA2.5)

£48 for 1.0m, £58 for 1.5m, £68 for 2.0m. Off the reel £30 for 1st meter, £20 per m thereafter.

Eupen GNLM 05/2.5 (CSA 2.5) shown with Marincos IEC 320 will be fitted at extra cost.

GNLM 05/04

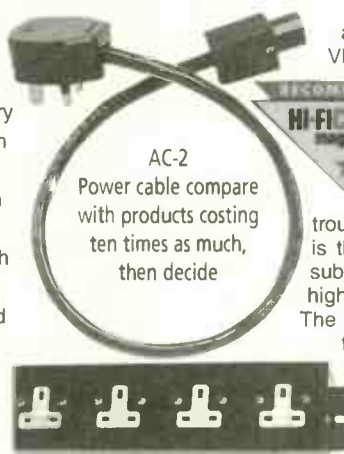
£58 for 1.0m, £72 for 1.5m, £86 for 2.0m. Also available of the reel.

Both GNLM cables are available for export.

SILVER SILVER - upgrade the cable with silver plated contacts on IEC and and MK plug for £6. AUDUSA - Eupen and LAT AC-2 mains cable available with 16 amp IEC (for certain models of amps by Krell, MF, Levinson etc), Marincos/Wattgate IEC 320, Figure of eight, Bulgin, Hubble, European Schuko, French, Australian, Swiss, Danish, Neutrik and other plugs see our web site for IEC's, MK plugs RCA and Banana connectors with silver plate contacts and other audio and ac mains connectors

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We have developed a cabling (weaving) pattern along with an unusual shielding/filtering system that gets rid of the garbage that contaminates your components. The difference you hear with our cord is astounding. Our power cord takes advantage of silver in its design through use of our proprietary Silverfuse conductors. The conductors are 10 gauge and with PTFE; the best insulation available. Fitted as standard with IEC / MK Toughplug. . 60cm £62, 90cm £75, 1.2m £88, 1.5m £101, 1.8m £112 etc Other lengths available and off the reel. **4,6 and 8 way all steel mains distribution blocks fitted with UK, Schuko or USA sockets.** CE tested & approved mains distribution units manufactured of heavy gauge steel, finished in black and fitted with high quality 13amp sockets. It has no filters, circuit breakers, surge protection, transformers, resistors, capacitors, LED's, on/off switches, chokes, regulators, just fitted with 1m of AC-2 mains cable. From £166 for 4 way, £198, 6 way, £229 for 8 way.



SILVERFUSE

is a near alloy of silver and copper. IT IS NOT SILVER PLATED OR SILVER CLAD. Plating (or clad, which is the same thing as plating) causes a dioding effect when signal is passed through resulting in brightness and distortion. The Silverfuse process starts with seven nines OFHC copper wire with a diameter that is slightly larger than the required size. It is then pulled through a trough of molten silver. The wire with a silver deposit, is then forced through a compacting die where it is subject to tremendous pressure. The silver and the high purity copper are fused together into a near alloy. The compacting fusion also reduces the wire diameter to the desired size. No dioding subsequently occurs with this process. The result provides for the benefits of silver; which are excellent definition and clarity, with the high purity copper benefits of warmth and mellowness.

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- Pair Leak TL12 + valve amps Grey. Rebuilt by me. £ 599 Crimson Electrick 510/520 pre/power amplifier.Boxd. £ 249
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- NVA A80 mono power amplifiers X 2. Good cond. 799 NVA A60 stereo power amplifier. Good condition. £ 295
- Musical Fidelity Pre-8 pre-amplifier. Mint. Boxed £ 150 Arcam Alpha 3 amplifier. Mint.Boxed/ Instructions £ 100
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- Transcriptors Hydraulic reference/Decca arm.Mint£ POA Garrard 301/401 chassis in various condition from £ 125

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- Luxman D107U VALVE Compact disc player with remote and booklet. Extremely rare and in good condition. £ Ring
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Mark Levinson No 360s x-demo	7495	4995
Musical Fidelity Pre 24 CP Player S/H	2000	1199
Sony SCD1 SACD /CD Player S/H	4000	1699
Teac VRDS T1 Transport S/H	599	325
Theta Carmen CD/DVD Transport S/H	3499	1995
Theta Data Basic Transport S/H	2397	995
Theta Generation V Balanced S/H	6290	2999

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Lehmann Audio Black Cube SE New& Boxed	650	449
McCormack Phono Stage New and Boxed	650	399
Ortofon Kontrapunkt b MC Cartridge x-demo	699	375
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Roksan Artexerxes X MC/MM Phono Stage S/H	450	299
Roksan Cognoscenti Xerxes Piano lacquer /Tabrizi /Corus Black S/H	2700	799
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MISSION 780 - ROSEWOOD	£300.00	£219.00	D
MISSION 783 - BEECH (Good condition)	£1,000.00	£599.00	D
MISSION 78 AS Active sub (new)	£700.00	£450.00	D
MISSION 773 E (new)	£399.00	£199.00	D
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NAKAMICH MB10 5-disc multi CD	£500.00	£200.00	D
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AVANTGARDE UNO Horn loudspeaker £3500. Musical Fidelity Tri-Vista SACD Super Audio CD player, mint, boxed, £3000. Tel: 020 8531 5979 or 07903 265205 (Mar/I)

KIMBER SELECT 1011 interconnect cables. 2 pairs £200 each (£367). 1 Russ Andrews Purifier Block, 8 outlets RA Powercord £300 (£500). Tel: 01604 410726 (Northampton) (Mar/I)

QUAD 988 CEVintage, finish, purchased August 2003, with extended warranty. £2500 (£3750). TacT M2150 digital amp, purchased September 2003, £2300 (£3800). Cardas Golden Cross 0.5m with Eichmann Bullets £300. Tel: 0131 225 9002, Email: S.Hussain@ed.sac.ac.uk (Mar/I)

SNELL J2 speakers (walnut) on 'Pirates' stands. Recent new AudioNote silver drivers - nice! £475. Musical Fidelity X-Dac (HDCD) as new, boxed £150. Both ono. Tel: 07941 923 881 anytime (Sussex coast) (Mar/I)

CASTLE HARLECH floor-standers with plinths, yew finish, mint condition and boxed, £620 ono. Audioquest Indigo+ speaker cable 2x 3.5 metres, offers. Tel: 01858 462 061 or 525 463 evenings (Market Harborough) (Mar/I)

KRELL KRC3 pre-amp mint £1495. Theta Carmen CD/DVD transport mint £1395. Sonus Faber Signums mint £695. Teac VRDS7 fully Trichord modded £295. Tel: 0121 744 9733, mobile 0775 996 9324 (Mar/I)

COPLAND SYSTEM, CDA266 HDCD CD player, Copland CSA28 amp special order black with Russ Andrews PowerChords, boxed as new with remote control. Cost £3000, sell £1400 ono. Tel: 01224 596 076 (Mar/I)

NAIM AUDIO system. Pre-amp, NAC82 monoblock, NAPI35 x2 Super Hi-Cap, speakers Dynaudio Contour 3.0, all boxed and mint condition, reasonable offers. Tel: 01293 886 832, mobile 07977 115 446 (Mar/I)

LPI2 (BLACK ASH), Ittok LVII, K9 £450 ono. Naim NAP140 £200 ono. Naim NAC 62N £225 ono. All boxed, good condition. Tel: 07931 142 693 (Mar/I)

PAIR QUAD ESLs on matching Gradient subwoofers. Excellent condition, magnificent sound, £2500 ono. Tel: 01227 752 438, Email: BriKelsey@aol.com (Mar/I)

TDL's RTL4's speakers, boxed, manuals, rewired, excellent condition £205 ono. Buyer collects. Pioneer F-91 tuner, boxed vgc £210 ono. Tel: 01934 813 666 after 6pm or Email: jpmc@supanet.com (South Bristol) (Mar/I)

JBL Ti5000 speakers, 3 years old, black, perfect condition £1800 (£4000). Tel: 07773 788 317 (Mar/I)

C.R. DEVELOPMENTS Romulus integrated valve amplifier, 30w per channel, s/steel/black/gold (£1300) £600. Meridian 506 24bit CD player £600. Spondor Prelude speakers £80. Tel: 01205 750 314 (Mar/I)

PRIMARE PHONO Stage pre-amp, Model R-20, vgc, £250. Tel: 01224 483 642 evenings or Email: barmonte@aol.com (Mar/I)

IPLS3TL TRANSMISSION Line loudspeakers. Built from kit (mahogany). Details of model on IPL website. Good condition, excellent sound, £160 ono. Contact Gary 0141 942 9240 or 07789 527 028 or Email: mrwilson24_7@hotmail.com (Mar/I)

LINN SYSTEM for sale. Ikemi, Kudos, Kolektor, two LK140, Aktiv Ninkas. Mint condition. Black. Original packaging etc. £2800. Tel: 07941 175 025 6-7pm only or Email: linnsale@hotmail.com (Kent) (Mar/I)

J R 149 BI-WIRED Speakers £100. Tandberg Series 15 machine £50. Aiwa P22 power amp £25. Crimson 610 pre amp £25. Tascam M106 mixing desk £100. Chilton M12-4 mixing desk £100. Revox G36 £200. Revox A77 £200. Yamaha KX380 cassette deck £30. Aiwa AD F360 cassette deck £25. Marantz CD75 player £45. JVC DD66 3-head cassette deck £45. 7 inch tapes £3. 10 inch NAB tapes £5. Revox NAB hub adaptors £25 pair. Revox A77 acrylic cover £35. Tel: 07710 828286 anytime (Mar/I)

MERIDIAN M60C centre speaker. Black, perfect condition, boxed, two years old. £500. Meridian S41 ProLogic pre-amplifier, £200. Tel: 07976 350 204 (Cardiff) (Mar/I)

MUSICAL FIDELITY F22 valve pre-amplifier, lovely sound, as new, mint brushed aluminium fascia, £550. Tel: 01424 431 536 (Mar/I)

TLC MAESTRO 70S stand-mount speakers. 8 ohm 50watt bi-wireable. Solid cabinets in excellent condition and very musical. Two years old. Paid £300 will accept £200. Tel: 0113 273 3744 (Leeds) (Mar/I)

NAIM SBLs, black, boxed, current spec, immaculate, £900. Cyrus tuner, remote, alloy case, £100. Mission PCM 7000 CD, remote, £100. Thorens 160s, Linn LVV, P77, £170. All boxed, will demonstrate. Tel: 01722 334 694 (Mar/I)

LOWTHER FIDELIO speakers, gloss black finish, fitted with PM5A drive units in perfect condition, £1200. Tel: 01293 824 667 after 6pm or Email: JLC@beeb.net (Mar/I)

OFFERS INVITED. Homebound American selling two superb matched James Lansing 2-way speaker systems. Attractive pine finished JBL bass reflex enclosures. Inches 24x19x16 ono. Other components available. Tel: 020 8406 1666 (Mar/I)

MERIDIAN 551 integrated amplifier, Meridian 506 CD player. £650 the pair. Mission 732 speakers, as new condition £65. Tel: 07778 895 257 or 01252 332 097 (Hampshire) (Mar/I)

CASTLE SEVERN 2SE in cherry veneer plus speaker cables £295. Little used as brand new, sale due to new room furniture and decor. No offers. Tel: Tony 020 8743 5690 (Mar/I)

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What Hi-Fi? gave this modification 5/5

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Designed as a drop in replacement for almost all turntables, the OL upgrade DC motor kit offers vast improvements to all versions of Linn, as well as: Rega, Systemdeck, Roksan, Rock, Oracle, Michelle, VPI, Clearaudio, Accoustic Signature, etc. The kit consists of a high grade DC motor, aluminium electronic control box and offboard power supply. All this provides an extremely cost effective route to truly high-end audio and is significantly superior in performance to PS upgrades at three times the price.

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CAMBRIDGE R40 loudspeakers, 2 pairs, £200/£250. Revox A77 2 track £125. Cambridge T55 tuner £50. Nakamichi 480 cassette £100. A&R A60 amp £50. All vgc, need space. Tel: 01442 389 952 or Email: mbond@makethedifference.net (Mar/I)

LEAK TL12+ amps, refurbished pair, excellent valve sound £475 ono. Helius Chameleon speakers HC1000 walnut finish including dedicated stands £275 ono. Tel: 01304 823 121 ask for Roger. Email: rog.rem@btinternet.com (Mar/I)

SNELL A LOUDSPEAKERS, sensational sound quality (£5000) £1250 ono. Pioneer 565 CD player, Trichord modified, Clock 4 superb sound, giveaway £500. Miller Kreisel MX125 MkII subwoofer (£1500) £850 ono. Money back guarantee. Tel: Allan 0117 952 1341 (Bristol). (Mar/I)

MAGNUM AMPLIFICATION, P200 preamp, moving coil phono stage, four line inputs, CD monitor, separate power supply (£2400) £950 ono. A200 stereo power amplifier, 300 w.p.c. outperforms Krell (£2400) £950 ono. Money back guarantee. Tel: Allan 0117 952 1341 (Bristol) (Mar/I)

LINN KAIRN phono £425. Linn LK-85 £350. NAD 3020B amp £65. Rotel RT-830L tuner £75. Rogers DB-101 speakers (opal finish) £110. Linn interconnects (x3) £25 each. Tel: 01226 211 740 evenings (Mar)

QUAD 33 pre-amp, mint and boxed. Quad 303 power-amp, excellent condition including leads £250. Tel: 020 8783 1250 or Email: anthonymurphy@blueyonder.co.uk (Mar/I)

4 GOOD USED GEC clear glass KT66 £150. 3 Good used Mullard GZ32 £30. 3 good used EF86 (Z729) £20. GKD Huntingdon cabinet £10. Garrard 4HF turntable/arm £50. Wharfedale Isodynamic headphones £20. Leak TL10 with pre-amp £250. Pair Super 8RS/DD in LNB cabinets £75. Axiom 10 £25. Tel: 0773 309 7673 or Email: nnh@dnu.ac.uk (Mar/I)

QUAD ILL speakers, piano black, little used, boxed, mint (£379) £299. Could deliver E. Midlands. Tel: 0115 960 3934 (Mar/I)

QUAD ESL988 electrostatic speakers, as new £2200 ono. Buyer collects. Tel: 01522 720 389 or Email: nuline.ellis@tiscalic.co.uk (Mar/I)

AUDIO RESEARCH CD2, boxed, manuals, factory condition, superb sound, upgrading, £2250 ono. Tel: Keith 07811 272 378 or 07793 388 397 day or evenings (Black)(£3495) (Mar/I)

QUAD ESL63, brown with wood trims and stands. Mint condition £950 ono. Thorens TD150 base, cover, Thorens arm £85. Wanted: Rogers Master Mk One pre-amp. Tel: 07976 904 381 (Mar/I)

MERIDIAN 206B CD player £325. Exposure XX integrated amplifier £250. Rotel RQ970BX MM-MC phono amplifier £45. All items mint condition and boxed. Tel: 01483 855 603 (Mar/I)

MISSION 752 speakers, high gloss black ash finish, mint £235 ono. Origin Live DC turntable motor with custom power supply and oversize transformer £150. Tel: 01244 660 946 (Chester) (Mar/I)

HI-FI SYSTEM, Naim Audio NAC 82 preamplifier, Naim Audio input boards, Naim Audio HiCap power supply, Naim Audio NAP180 power amplifier, Naim Audio CD1 CD player, Naim Audio SBL loudspeakers, Naim Audio Paxo passive crossover for above, Yamaha DSP E800 processor. (current valuation £4450 ono) Tel: 020 8300 3265 (Mar/I)

KLIPSCHORN CORNER speakers, superb, awesome (£6200) £3000. 1980's B&O system, tuner/amp, cassette deck, record deck, fourway speakers, £200. Bargain. Croft Duo mono preamplifier, recent service £200. Tel: 01202 388 688 or Email: terrymason.innerpeace@cwcrv.net (Mar/I)

MONITOR AUDIO Studio 20 SE speakers, piano black gloss finish, superb condition £850 (£2500) Tel: 07815 153 172 or Email: stephenadolphus@yahoo.com (Mar/I)

RGD 1046, GEL050 EL34 monoblocks. Leak ST60. Troughline, Rogers Cadet2. Quad 33/303, FM3/AM3. Thorens TD124/2 JR149 NOS valves wanted Pye HF25, PF91, Radford MA15/3, vgc, will sway above equipment. Tel: 01842 812 895 (Mar/I)

LINN KABER Floor standing speakers, Linn Klassik CD-amp, Linn LK85 power amp (two). All immaculate Quad tri-wired speaker cables included. Tel: 0151 709 4540 (h), 0151 709 7706 (office) £1600. (May/I)

JBL T15000 speakers, 3 years old, black, perfect condition £1800 (£4000). Tel: 07773 788 317 (Mar/I)

AUDIOLAB 8000A late model, vgc, £200. Rotel RCD991 AE, excellent £250. Meridian 207 DAC, vgc, £150. MF X-Act DAC, vgc, £80. Tel: 07887 527 397 (Staffs) (Mar/I)

KIMBER SELECT 1011 interconnect cables. 2 pairs £200 each (£367). 1 Russ Andrews Purifier Block, 8 outlets RA Powercord £300 (£500). Tel: 01604 410726 (Northampton) (Mar/I)

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PRIMARE PHONO Stage pre-amp, Model R-20, vgc, £250. Tel: 01224 483 642 evenings or Email: barmonte@aol.com (Mar/I)

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Sony STRD8940 silver £225	Audiolab 8000 CD £395	Proac Super Tablette £195
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Exposure VII Pre and VII power amp £375	Pioneer PD5802 £95	Linn Keidh(passive) £495
Musical Fidelity XA1 £295	Rolsan DT1 DAC £175	Mission 783 Hint £495
Arcam Alpha 9 Power Amp £295	Rolsan DP1 Transport £375	Acoustic Energy AE1 £225
Meridian 101 pre/power £225	NiD CS41 as new £225	Ref RDM3 Cherry £795
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Naim NAC32 with SNAPs £325	Audiolab 8000T £395	CASSETTES
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Cyrus 5 Bosed as new £375	Arcam FMJDT26 DAB tuner £395	Akai GR52 £85
Arcam Alpha 5+ Integrated £175	Quad FM4 early £175	Tascam 238 reel to reel £245
Pioneer A400K integrated £125	Myryad MT100 £275	Denon DHD1000 Mini Disk £135
Meridian 551 Integrated £495	Cyrus FM7.5 Tuner £295	EQS
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AVI PRE-AMP, stereo power £475. Trichord Genesis CD £275. Teac VDRS10SE £300. Primare A20II integrated £300. Wanted: Lescon Cylinder power, Pioneer SA9900 amp, Target R1-R2 speaker stands. Tel: 01226 710 605 or 0777 927 4655 (Feb/I)

CD TEAC VDRS transport TDI DAC boxed £600 ovno. May split. Tel: Mark 020 8547 2397 or 01959 572030 (Feb/I)

EXPOSURE POWER Supply V1, dual pre-amp V11, power-amp V111 £675. Michell Focus One deck £475. Nakamichi BX2 tape deck £160. Linn Sara speakers with metal stands £325. Lowther Classic speakers - offers. Tel: 01202 512 915 (Bournemouth) (Feb/I)

AVANTGARDE UNO Horn loudspeaker £3500. Musical Fidelity Tri-Vista SACD Super Audio CD player, mint, boxed, £3000. Tel: 020 8531 5979 or 07903 265205 (Mar/I)

MARANTZ 6000 KI Sig (350), hardwired Kimber Powercord, Schottky rectification (200), Clock 4/ N/C power supply (380), Trichord digital output board (390), Audiocom regulators, Blackgate/Oscon decoupling caps etc (290) £1050. Tel: 0151 608 4481 (Wirral) (Feb/I)

PERPETUAL TECHNOLOGIES P-1A Correction Engine. Perpetual Technologies P-3A DAC, Monolithic power supply for the above items. All boxed with operating instructions. £1200. Tel: 01525 861 346 (Beds) (Feb/I)

AUDIO PHYSIC Avanti III speakers, cherrywood, boxed, mint condition, as new. Stereophile Class A product. Less than half price. £3300. Tel: 020 8363 4963 or 0797 312 8355 (North London) (Feb/I)

MERIDIAN 500 TRANSPORT £550 includes FREE Deltec DAC. Musical Fidelity StudioT power amp £100. Audio Technica ATH-WV10VTG headphones £150. MF X-Cans Mk1 £80. No Offers. Tel: 020 8249 8877 (Feb/I)

WADIA 301 CD player, little used and as new with box and manual. £2450 (£3650). Tel: 01202 767 873 (Dorset) (Feb/I)

KRELL KRS-1A pre amplifiers, 4 aluminium blocks, cost £10,000, £3500. Reevox Agora-B active loudspeakers 200W, £1000. Apogee Scintilla ribbon active speakers 200W, £1000. Marantz MA-22 mono amplifiers, 4 off, £1000. Marantz CD 23 DAF, £2000. Tel: 020 8459 7539 (Feb/I)

LOWTHER ACOUSTAS, new foams £295. Wharfedale E70's, rosewood £150. Wharfedale E30's £30. Wharfedale Dovedale III £100. Celestion Ditton 44's £100. Leak Stereo 20 £225. Pioneer TX 7500 tuner £50. Tel: 01744 755 434 (Feb/I)

KEF Q80 speakers (black) £150. Pioneer PD75 Reference CD player £200. Audiolab 8000A amplifier £200. Mission 754F speakers £600. 2x 5m Cabletalk 3.1 bi-wire £25. Tel: 01407 762 863 (Feb/I)

NAIM HI-FI System Sale, CD2 CD player, NAC 82 pre-amp, Hi-Cap power supply, NAP 250 power amp, SBL loudspeakers (cherry), QLN Projekt equipment rack (cherry). Complete system purchased new from Grahams HI-FI in December 1997. Mint condition, very low usage, boxed with manuals. Sell complete for £5900. Tel: Mark 01708 224 319 (Essex) or 07813 332301 (mobile) (Feb/I)

WANTED: CROFT Micro II special pre-amp or similar. Tel: evenings 01292 269 477 (Feb/I)

TONENARM SAEC WE308L, boxed, unused £700 (£2200). Aurios Isolation Bearings, new, boxed £90 (£201). C9 Carver Sonic Hologram Generator, offers, includes manual. Tel: Wayne 029 20 369 052 or Email: llyndes@hotmail.com (Feb/I)

MERIDIAN 508 24 bit CD player £850. Townsend Rock turntable, Mk2, Excalibur arm, Merlin power supply, plinth and lid. Needs some attention. £150 the lot. Tel: 01895 421850 or 0771 8765 988 or Email: bmphook@aol.com (Feb/I)

JR 149 SPEAKERS. Original condition. No repairs, mods or damage. Owned from new. Wooden teak tops. New foam fitted and in good working order, £270 ono. Tel: 01455 613 248 (Feb/I)

LUMLEY MONITOR Reg 2 Signatures on M.A.F. stands, £1200. Orchid Orchaidis dual monoblock RC750A Class A amp, 350 watts per channel, power and finesse, £2100. New £5500. Tel: 01530 272 801 (Feb/I)

SONY TAP 9000ES multi channel pre amplifier in gold, boxed and in exceptional condition, £400. Tel: 0151 425 4142 (Feb/I)

CABLES, 2m KIMBER 4TC and 8TC £200 (£390). 6m Chord Flatline biwire gold £110 (£225). 2x 1m Chord Solid interconnects £50 each. Excellent condition. Tel: 0151 425 4142 (Feb/I)

EPOS M15 speakers, light cherry, as new £595. Linn Sondek LPI2 Valhalla Itok LVII, good condition £495. Sumiko Blue Point special MC cartridge, very low use £180. All boxed. Tel: 01484 307 096 (Feb/I)

MUSICAL FIDELITY A3CR pre-amp, cossetted, perfect condition, boxed, £280. Sony JA30ES MiniDisc player, mint, £90. Tel: 01752 773 369 (Feb/I)

PINK TRIANGLE Da Capo + D.C. £1400 ono. Philips CD 850, Trichord Clock 3 £120. Buyer collects, cash only, will demo, all mint. Tel: 0115 927 1273 after 5pm (Feb)

SHANLING CDT100 valve CD player, rave reviews, 12 months old, mint £1195. Sonus Faber Grand Piano-Home floorstanding speakers, piano-black, mint £1195. Wanted: Burmester amplifiers + Oracle Delphi turntable. Tel: 01604 584 630 or 07808 096684 (Northampton) (Feb/I)

UNISON RESEARCH Simply Four T amplifier, rare triode version, boxed with instructions, superb £1050. AR Legend turntable £120. Rotel RCD 865 £100. Target 4 tier rack £80. Tel: 01977 732 606 (Yorkshire) (Feb/I)

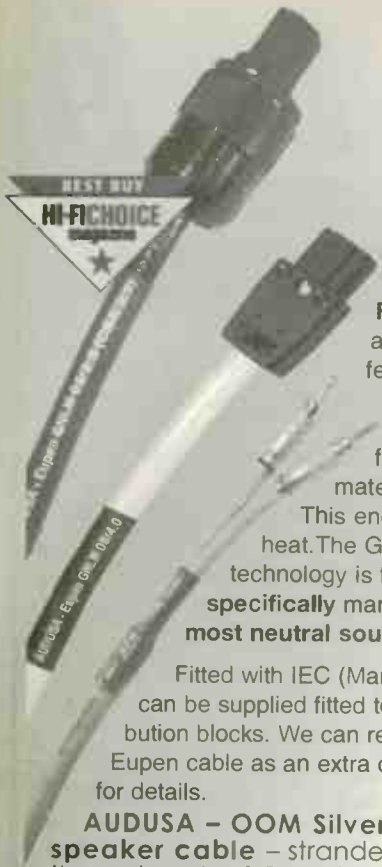
REVOX G36 tape recorder, 2 track, perfect condition, excellent sound, very clean £199. Tel: 01933 678 251 (Feb/I)

MERIDIAN 557 power amp £850. Counterpoint SA12 tube mosfet power amp £250. Linn LK1 plus Dirac phono stage not working otherwise ok £150. Tel: 01296 747 176 or 07855 899 478 (Feb/I)

THORENS TD125 Mk2, SME3009, Shure V15, Thorens plinth, includes manuals £200. Tel: 0141 942 0133 (Feb/I)

QUAD CD-P Player cost £1000, £550 ono new boxed. ATCSCM12 speakers, one year old, boxed £550 ono. Quad 11L speakers £250. Quad ESL 57 electrostatic speakers, good condition £250. Tel: 020 7282 8996 or 020 7282 8830 (Feb/I)

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GNLM 05/04 and GNLM 05/2.5 (CSA 2.5) Cable with FERRITE TECHNOLOGY - A polymer material mixed with a considerable quantity of homogeneously fine high quality ferrite powder is extruded around the copper conductors. As a ferromagnetic material, it will go through hysteresis loops whenever it is under influence of an alternating magnetic field. Consecutively magnetizing and demagnetizing the material will cause considerable losses of high frequency energy.

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Fitted with IEC (Martin Kayser) and MK Tough plug Cable can be supplied fitted to our all steel 4, 6 and 8 way distribution blocks. We can rewire the distribution blocks with Eupen cable as an extra cost option. Refer to our web site for details.

AUDUSA - OOM Silverlink OCC balanced speaker cable - stranded, silver on OFHC plus three strands of OCC (Ohno Continuous Casting - single crystal copper) for improved bass performance. Mylar infill and with designed in protection against RF and EMI. conductor of 3mm diameter (approx 8 gauge). Cable Overall Dimension: 14.72 mm.

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£48 for 1.0m, £58 for 1.5m, £68 for 2.0m. Off the reel £30 for 1st meter, £20 per m thereafter.

Eupen GNLM 05/2.5 (CSA 2.5) shown with Marincos IEC 320 will be fitted at extra cost.

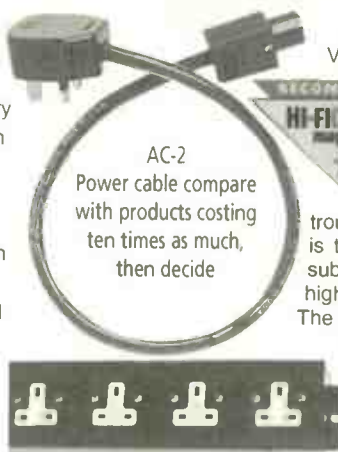
GNLM 05/04
£58 for 1.0m, £72 for 1.5m, £86 for 2.0m. Also available of the reel.

Both GNLM cables are available for export.

SILVER SILVER - upgrade the cable with silver plated contacts on IEC and MK plug for £6. AUDUSA - Eupen and LAT AC-2 mains cable available with 16 amp IEC (for certain models of amps by Krell, MF, Levinson etc), Marincos/Wattgate IEC 320, Figure of eight, Bulgins, Hubble, European Schuko, French, Australian, Swiss, Danish, Neutrik and other plugs see our web site for IEC's, MK plugs RCA and Banana connectors with silver plate contacts and other audio and ac mains connectors

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AC-2
Power cable compare with products costing ten times as much, then decide

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NAD SILVERLINE S400 stereo tuner, amazing quality, absolutely immaculate, remote, boxed (£600) £300. Nakamichi DR10 cassette deck, unused, boxed (£800) £300. Money back guarantee. Tel: Allan 0117 952 1341 (Bristol) (Feb/1)

PROAC RESPONSE D15 loudspeakers, mahogany, three months old, absolutely immaculate, boxed (£2000+) £1100. MK 125 II subwoofer 2 x 12" drivers, 2 x 100 W amps (£1500) £850. Money back guarantee. Tel: Allan 0117 952 1341 (Bristol) (Feb/1)

SONY SCD XA333ES CD/SACD player, excellent transport, only six months old, still under warranty, gold colour, remote, boxed (£1500) £800 ovno. Money back guarantee. Tel: Allan 0117 952 1341 (Bristol) (Feb/1)

MARTIN LOGAN SL3 electrostatic/hybrid loudspeakers. Arguably best model ever produced, absolutely immaculate, upgraded mains leads, spiked (£4000) £1950. Money back if not completely amazed! Tel: Allan 0117 952 1341 (Bristol) (Feb/1)

SONY SCD1 Flagship CD/SACD player, incredible build quality. Absolutely immaculate, unbelievably heavy - 30kg! - remote, boxed, serious offers around £2000. Originally £5000. Money back guarantee. Tel: Allan 0117 952 1341 (Bristol) (Feb/1)

ROKSAN KANDY MkII amp and CD player. 5 months old both mint condition £750 the pair or £395 each. Tel: Dave 07729 600 847 (Littlehampton, W.Sussex) (Feb/1)

RUARK EPILOGUE speakers plus stands, still boxed £200. Tel: 01204 392 890 (Feb/1)

MUSICAL FIDELITY A3 amplifier, immaculate, boxed, remote, instructions, light use, £375. Myst G-Ohm amplifier, brushed gold finish, rare £100. Griffin Phoenix speakers, rosewood, vgc £45. Tel: 01922 865 414 (Feb/1)

NAIM AUDIO amplifier NAC72 and NAP140 with phono boards £750. Excellent condition. Tel: 07734 246 502 (day), 020 8519 3032 (evening) or Email: juinchin@yahoo.co.uk (Feb/1)

B+O COLLECTABLE System. Beogram 1202 turntable, Beomaster 1100 receiver, Beovox S25 speakers. Back from B+O service. Offers. Tel: 01666 840 085 (Feb/1)

DALI ROYAL Menuet II boxed immaculate £199. (£399). Dali SC5 centre £75 (£150). ATC SCM10 walnut £275 some marks. NAD T770 boxed, immaculate (£699) £150. Two pairs Menuets available. Tel: 020 237 4475 (Feb/1)

MCINTOSH MA6400 as new with box and manual £1400. DNM Series 2 pre-amp £350. Tel: 01189 617 375 or Email: claes.larsson@ntlworld.com (Berkshire) (Feb/1)

HORNING ZEUS hybrid horn speakers, maple, original condition, 18 months old £1095. EAR 859 single ended valve amp, excellent condition, boxed £995. Sony SCD777ES SACD player, mint, boxed, champagne £995. Tel: 01978 780 580 or Email: robert@robertbaker.org.uk (Feb/1)

PMC DB1 speakers, cherry finish (555) £355. Castle Isis standmount speakers £100. NAD 3130 amplifier £55. Tel: 01295 275 983 (Banbury) (Feb/1)

LEAK DELTA 30 £50. Leak 2020 speakers £40. Leak Stereo 30/Stereofetic/teak sleeve £100. Leak Stereo 70 £70. Leak Troughline3 mono tuner £75. Leak Troughline3 stereo tuner £100. Armstrong 425 tuner/amp £25. Goldring 88 turntable £100. Ditton 44 speakers £120. Ditton 25 speakers £150. Tel: 07733 097 673 or Email: nnh@dmu.ac.uk (Leicester) (Feb/1)

LINN KANS original late Mk1 with Linn logo, solid wood cabinets vgc, sonically perfect. Linn Mk2 Kan stands £250. Happy to demonstrate. Tel: 01484 841 482 (West Yorkshire) (Feb/1)

QUAD II Monoblocks, Garrard 301, SME 3009, Thorens TD124-II, Yamaha NS 1000M, Quad ESL57, Black Oracle Dephi-I, Thorens RB250, Michell Mycro RB300, Quad 405-2, Koetsu Black retipped, unused SME 3012-R. Tel: 0117955 6555 or 07979 514 450 (Feb/1)

CHARTWELL LS3/5a's including stands £250. M.F. XLP £125. Cambridge power amps £75 each. Denon TU260 £65. Tel: Tim 020 8249 3856 evenings or Email: stocker10b@hotmail.com (Feb/1)

WANTED: ASSEMBLAGE (Sonic Frontiers) DAC 3.1 and D2D-I sample rate converter. Must be in mint or good condition. Tel: Phil 01942 216 967 (Feb/1)

REVOX A77's, B77's and other Revox - NAB hub adaptors - various condition but cosmetic perfection. Some workshop and owners/handbook original - photocopy - offers invited. Ring for details 07710 828286 (Brighton) (Feb)

WANTED: CROFT Micro II special pre-amp or similar. Tel: evenings 01292 269 477 (Feb/1)

AUDIO RESEARCH PH3SE phono stage. 6 months old, perfect, boxed £1450 ono (£2800). Siltech SG180 silver speaker cables 2.00m, WBT spades perfect £950 (£2700). Siltech classic SQ110 0.5m XLR-XLR £300 (£750) never used. Tel: 01925 656 990 (eves) (Feb/1)

CONCORDANT EXEMPLAR Power amp 100W/C (transistor) & Lumley VTP1000 line pre-amp, £600 the pair, may split. Both in excellent condition & boxed. 01275 853926 (Bristol) (Feb/1)

AUDIC RESEARCH D115 £1000. Audio Research LS2 £750. Marantz CD94 + CDA94 (DAC) £650. Audio Innovations S700 £600. QED Profile 4x4 5m (bi-wire) £50. Tel: 0870 853 3011 (day) or 01264 771675 (eve) (Feb/1)

AVI PRE-AMP, stereo power £475. Trichord Genesis CD £275. Teac VDRS10SE £300. Primare A20II integrated £300. Wanted: Lescon Cylinder power, Pioneer SA9900 amp, Target R1-R2 speaker stands. Tel: 01226 710 605 or 0777 927 4655 (Feb/1)

CD TEAC VDRS transport TDI DAC boxed £600 ovno. May split. Tel: Mark 020 8547 2397 or 01959 572030 (Feb/1)

EXPOSURE POWER Supply VI, dual pre-amp VI I, power-amp VI I I £675. Michell Focus One deck £475. Nakamichi BX2 tape deck £160. Linn Sara speakers with metal stands £325. Lowther Classic speakers - offers. Tel: 01202 512 915 (Bournemouth) (Feb/1)

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September 2003

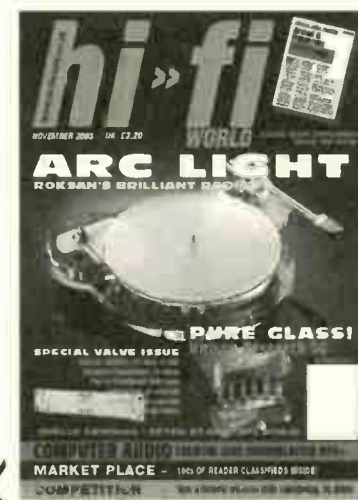
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AUDIO RESEARCH M300 Mono Blocks MkII status (£12000) £3400. Tom Evans the Groove, phono stage, 2yrs, (£1800) £1200. **BASIS DEBUT** Gold Standard Turntable, inc custom dust cover, (£8,500) £3490. **Koetsu Red Signature ***, 20hrs, (£2200) £1250. All mint, boxed. Telephone Jules on 01792 280061, Email: info@sounddrjuleshifi.co.uk Web: www.sounddrjuleshifi.co.uk (Mar/1)

TRANSPARENT ULTRA Bi Wire 12ft, WBT Bananas (£3440) £1700. Siltec Arm cable, Icheman bullets RCA's 1.5mts (£400) £250. Siltec 1.0 mtr RCA-RCA (£300) £170. **Sonus Faber Extrema's** on dedicated stands (£7800) £3200 All mint, boxed. Telephone Jules on 01792 280061, Email: info@sounddrjuleshifi.co.uk Web: www.sounddrjuleshifi.co.uk (Mar/1)

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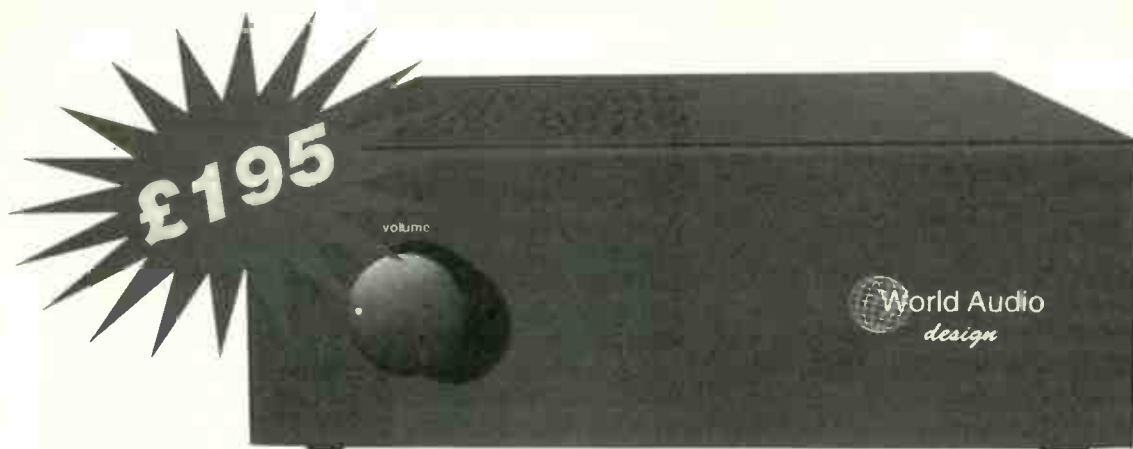
WANTED: DAMAGED or non-functioning Krell power amplifiers. Telephone Nick Sheldon, 07947 245 651 or Email: nick_sheldon@yahoo.com Cash waiting, will collect. (Mar/1)

NEW VALVE Amps; powers £260; matching preamp £190; other valve related goodies at www.audioclassics.co.uk or telephone 01942 257525 for more information. Dealer enquiries welcome. (Feb/1)

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EX DEMONSTRATION KLIPSCH speaker systems, Klipschorns (£6200) £3250. **La Scalas** (£2850) £1750. **Heresys** (£1100) £700. **KG5.5** (£1000) £600. **KG4.5** (£800) £500. **KG3.5** (£650) £400. Tel: Midland Radio Supplies 0121 430 7817 or evenings 0121 705 1060 (Mar/1)

BARGAIN BULBS



If you've always thought of valve amps as temperamental and expensive beasts, think again. World Audio Design's latest kit is designed with the budget conscious beginner in mind.

The Kec182 was created from a brief that demanded simplicity, ease of build and a super low cost. In order to achieve a reasonable power output we went for a push-pull amplifier.

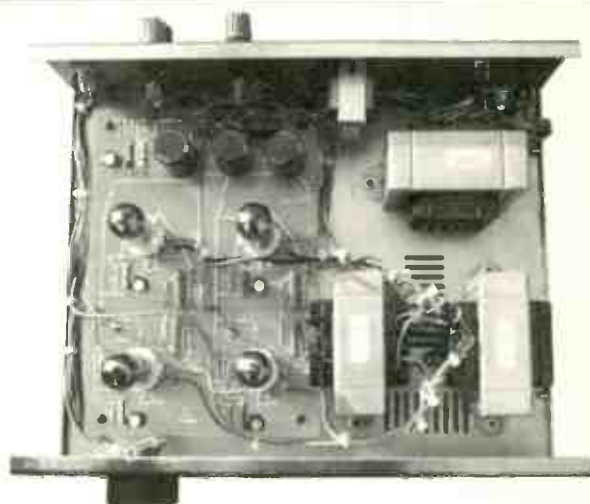
We chose the ECL82, a triode/output pentode. This tube is readily available and has a good sound. In push-pull mode it delivers 8Watts. Realistically you need a speaker of around 89dB or above. This is possible at a budget price - try the smaller Triangle models, or a Tannoy mX3 or even one of the older Missions like the 773e, or if you like building your own speakers, try the Adire Audio HE10.1, as reviewed in HFW October 2002 issue.

You will see that the front has only a volume control, and it is fed by one pair of phono sockets. A selector and tape/source switch were not used in this amplifier as they are tricky to wire up, and the aim was to make it easy to build. In fact, in many ways the Kec182 would be great powering a second system, using a CD player as a source, and will definitely give you a taster of what valves can offer. Measuring 30cm wide, 23.5cm deep and 11cm height with feet, it is entirely self-enclosed. The valves are visible through the four upper circular vent holes (one directly above each valve). We have kept the look simple with the minimalist front panel holding the volume potentiometer. The two-part chassis is constructed from 1.6mm mild steel with a durable black powder-coat finish. The whole unit is very sturdy, weighing in at 9kgs.

The signal input is in the form of a pair of gold plated RCA phono sockets that sit at the rear of the chassis. The speaker sockets accept 4mm banana plugs as well as bare wire. The mains switch is positioned at the rear of the amplifier, on the right hand corner for easy access. Mains power is received via an IEC lead. The Kec182 is based on a printed circuit board (PCB). The PCB is easy to follow with all component names, locations and orientations shown clearly. The amplifier requires no set up, you just turn it on. The kit will come with comprehensive instructions taking you through the build step-b-step.

SOUND QUALITY BY SIMON POPE

Purity is the key to this amplifier's design and sound. Because there's very little to get in the way of the signal what you get is an exceptionally sweet and simple sound that also has a superbly wholesome roundness to it. A high quality recording of Mahler's Das Lied Von Der Erde on Reference Recordings showed that the Kec182 faithfully reproduced all the depth and space of a full symphonic orchestra without any problems. Violins were smooth and sweet, as was percussion (which virtually sparkled) and the woodwind section was especially impressive, with a spacious and airy sound.



A run through Miles Davis's Kind Of Blue saw the little integrated delivering a detailed and precise sound that highlighted the warmth of Coltrane's tenor sax and the rich, deep sound of the upright bass. Rock and Pop records such as Radiohead's 'Lucky' demonstrated that the valves inside the amp, whilst small, are quite robust sounding, with commendable clout and bass depth for a humble budget 8W valve amp. This is a great introduction to the sonic art of the valve amp and a big upgrade for anybody with a mid-price solid-state amp that wishes to swap over to something more musically engaging, for a price that's virtually as cheap as chips!

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Frequency response	+/-3dB 15Hz - 75kHz
power output	8 watts into an 8 ohm load
sensitivity	850mV (suitable for CD)
hum	0.5mV

**The Kec182 amplifier kit is available from World Audio Design
Tel/fax: 00 44 (0) 1908 218836 or order on-line at
www.worldaudiodesign.co.uk**

**Kec182 amplifier kit (UK price) £195.00
(inc. vat & carriage)**

**Kec182 amplifier kit (EU price) £195.00
(inc. vat, exc. carriage)**

**Kec182 amplifier kit (Overseas price) £170.00
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GUIDELINES FOR BUYING AND SELLING SECOND-HAND EQUIPMENT

FOR THE BUYER

1. Not everyone is honest - Buyer Beware!
2. **Don't send cash!**
3. Accept no verbal guarantees.
4. Have you heard the item or something similar? If not, why do you want it?
5. Don't pretend to have knowledge - it's your fingers that will get burnt!
6. Is it working? If not, why not?
7. Has it been modified and, if so, have notes been kept?
8. Was it any good in the first place?
9. **Don't send cash!**
10. If you are in the slightest doubt, arrange an audition (see point 5). If it's too far, wait for another time.
11. Either buy it or don't: vendors are excusably impatient with 'consultation' exercises.
12. **Don't send cash!**

FOR THE SELLER

1. Not everyone is honest - Seller Beware!
2. Make no verbal guarantees.
3. Even 'nearly new' is still second-hand. If the manufacturer's guarantee is no longer in force, your price should reflect this.
4. There is very little intrinsic value in second-hand hi-fi; it's only worth what someone will pay for it.
5. The best guide to pricing is last month's Classifieds: that a 'classic' was worth £xxx a year or two ago is no guide. Values fall as well as rise.
6. Amateur second-hand dealing is not a big money game: you win some, you lose some.
7. Be prompt with despatch. If in doubt about buyer's bona-fides, either wash out the deal or send C.O.D.
8. There will always be time-wasters; be tolerant within reason!

DEADLINE FOR APRIL 2004 ISSUE IS 5TH FEBRUARY 2004
APRIL 2004 ISSUE ON SALE 27TH FEBRUARY 2004

DEADLINE FOR MAY 2004 ISSUE IS 4TH MARCH 2004
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The most important and expensive components of a valve amplifier are valves and transformers. £200 or £500 for a pair of huge "push pull" output transformers produces good bass + lots of "inter leaved" windings for better high frequency and "stability". Huge £150 mains transformers gives a less "processed" sound. Selected "matched" set of valves cost £50 or £160. If we could achieve the same quality of sound with £10 volume control , £10 wires , £10 capacitor , we could have saved a lot of money !!!

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 APRIL 2004 ISSUE - 5TH FEBRUARY 2004
 MAY 2004 ISSUE - 4TH MARCH 2004

Transmission

David Price remembers one of the most arresting loudspeakers of the nineteen seventies, IMF's transmission-line TLS80...

The general consensus is that the nineteen seventies was not a great time for loudspeakers, particularly if you were an audiophile who, like me, came of age in the eighties. The decade's high-end loudspeakers were seen as behemoths, often ridiculously large, needlessly complex and unfeasibly inefficient – like those American 'gas guzzler' cars of the same era.

In a sense it's a fair critique. After all, the fifties and sixties produced some seminal designs whereas the decade that followed spawned loudspeakers that complicated the breed, but didn't necessarily advance it. (Quite how phase incoherent multi-drive unit arrays in big wooden boxes, complete with over-the-top multi-element crossovers that sapped vast amounts power were supposed to improve on the likes of the ESL57 is anybody's guess...)

Still, despite a mess of monster transducers that did little more than melt the output transistors of middling Japanese power amplifiers, there were a select few stunning designs, from Yamaha's NS1000M and Linn's Isobarik DMS to IMF's TLS80.

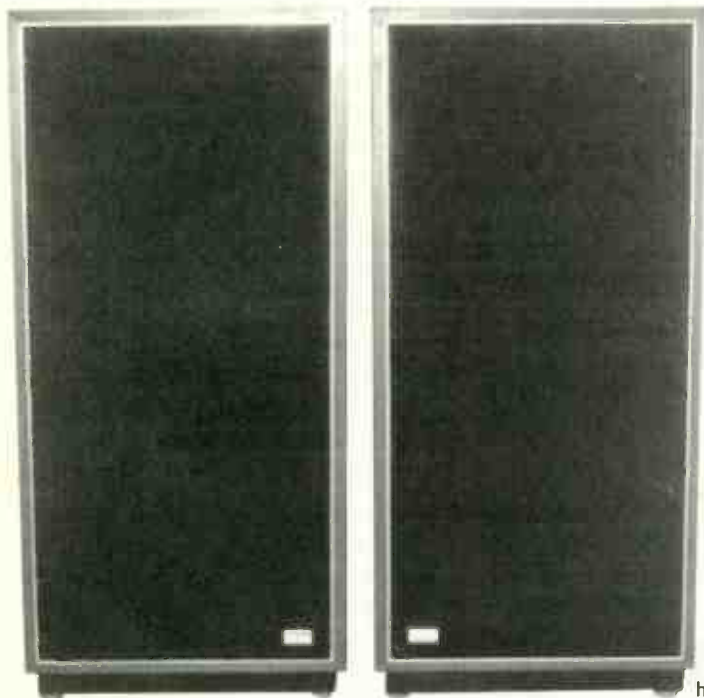
And if ever there was a quintessentially nineteen seventies loudspeaker, the TLS80 is it! A mirror-imaged, four-way Transmission Line loaded floorstanding design of vast size and weight with the (then) obligatory array of KEF and Celestion drivers, it's one of the most startling reminders of that decade's loudspeaker thinking. Standing (appropriately enough, in 'old money') 38" high, 16" deep and 18" wide, it sported the legendary KEF B139 flat (11" x 8" polystyrene) 'woofer' and B110a (6" Bextrene plastic) midrange driver, plus Celestion's famous HF1300 (1" cloth dome) tweeter and HF2000 (3/4" chemical dome) 'supertweeter'. The multi-element crossover carved the music up into three frequencies, 375Hz, 3.5kHz and 13kHz, giving a claimed frequency response of "20Hz to beyond audibility", with a claimed efficiency figure of 96dB for 40watts (!), and a matching impedance of 4-8ohms and an amplifier power requirement of 40-80watts.

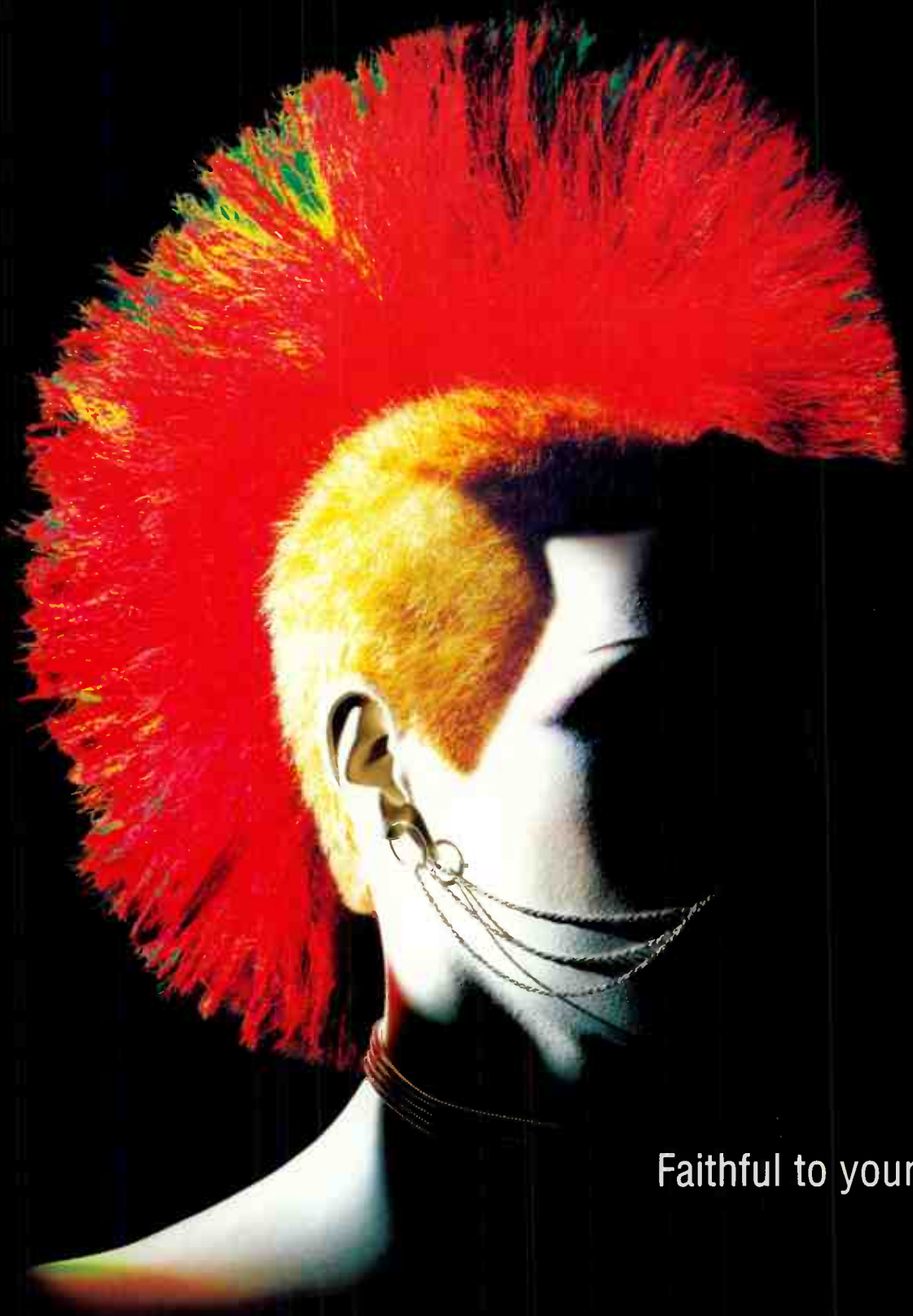
As per all transmission loaded loudspeakers, the rear of the IMF TLS80's KEF B139 bass driver was exhausted into a tapered and filtered passageway, giving bass right down to frequencies where it was felt more than heard. The B110a midrange driver was located within its own short line preventing intermodulation from return waves reflecting from the back of the cabinet. The combination of both a Celestion tweeter and supertweeter was used to provide adequate power handling and extended response beyond the limits human hearing – this approach was very much in vogue during the mid-nineteen seventies, but curiously went out of fashion in the nineteen eighties; it's only now that we're reappraising the benefits of supertweeters. The TLS80 was fitted with a 3-position 'perspective' control; in the normal "0" position the mean hemispherical response was

nominally flat, while the "-" position pulled back the midband and the "+" position boasted the midband and high frequency response slightly.

The result was (and is) a real, true, 'full bandwidth' audio experience. Anyone used to today's breed of nineties-style two-way slimline floorstander will be amazed at the sheer motive force these loudspeakers possess. That's thanks to both the great KEF B139 (also seen on Linn's Isobarik, for example) bass unit and the clever transmission line design – plus the Celestion supertweeter which, legend has it, could reach all the way up to forty thousand cycles per second! Essentially, the TLS80s carry all of the audio signal, from bottom to top, with amazing evenness and smoothness. By contrast, many modern designs sound like they're squeezing the music out of a small upstairs window. Driven by a high power transistor amplifier (such as Musical Fidelity's A308), the results are startling. There's tremendous scale, clarity, depth perspective and good old unreconstructed wallop. Cue up something like Pink Floyd's 'Dark Side of the Moon' and you get a vast, widescreen performance – not dissimilar to what you'd expect in a studio.

The downsides? Well, they're not the fastest loudspeakers on the block, and while they sound very clear and open, they're just a little tardy with attack transients. Bass is very strong and full, but not the most agile or supple – this predisposes them to classical music, where there isn't constant and repetitive bass modulation. They also need serious amounts of transistor power to get the best from them – something that's most do-able now than twenty five years back. Unless you're talking at least 80W per channel, preferably from something with Naim-like bass grip (i.e. a NAP250, NAP135 or NAP500!), they'll sound quite 'sat upon' and 'compressed'. Match properly and for under £500 for a perfectly preserved pair you'll have a serious sonic experience.





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