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FEBRUARY 2003

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WORLD

**DIY SUPPLEMENT No. 71
INSIDE THIS ISSUE!**

& computer audio

PIONEERING SPIRIT



**DVD-A, SACD, DVD-V & CD! We review
Pioneer's new high tech DV-757Ai
universal player**

plus

- Satellite & subwoofer surround package group test
 - Naim 202/200 pre & power amps
 - Marantz DV-8300 universal DVD player
- NAD S500i CD player
- Revolver R33 speakers
- Pathos Logos integrated amp
- Linn Klimax Kontrol power amp
- DVD-A feature - part two

● Computer Audio World

- Creative Labs DAP Jukebox 2
- SONICblue Rio S35 digital audio player
- Syntrillium's Cool Edit Pro 2

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simon pope

A

s you may have gathered - even from the strategically cropped picture at the top of this page - I like my food. And when I get the opportunity, I

like to cook it as well as eat it! But ask any professional cook, and he'll tell you that you need a good oven and appropriate utensils to get the most from any

decent raw produce. There's no point in having a cupboard full of the freshest and finest ingredients and a single-ring gas camping stove to knock up haute cuisine. Sure, you'll be able to eat it, but it won't taste as good. I think you know where this is heading...

... Yes, to hi-fi, dear reader! After listening to the multichannel satellite and subwoofer packages in this issue's group test something was brought home to me that I'd expected for quite some time. To get the best from DVD-Audio and SACD (the fresh ingredients) you need the best equipment to get the best results (the variety of textures and flavours). It's possible we'll all be playing high resolution music in our homes at some time in the near future, but how many people will really be getting the best from it? Very few, I fear!

As DVD players become more commonplace in the home, so the more manufacturers will produce machines that will play DVD-A and SACD, in addition to providing video. Suddenly, high quality audio becomes a must-have feature for video and the three universal players we've reviewed in this issue make a powerful case for themselves.

This is good for those who want good sound quality. Whilst general home entertainment is undoubtedly where the serious money is at present, it just so happens that your basic A/V set up with a few grand invested in the right places can double up as an awesome music reproduction system - this was hitherto not the case.

The days of budget stereo could well be a thing of the past, judging by the current state of play. So integration is by no means bad for the audiophile in that it opens up new possibilities, but perhaps now more than ever you need to get the right tools for the job. Being a music lover and a gourmand was never a cheap hobby, after all.

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.



NICE PRICE - Represents excellent value for money.



EXCELLENT - Superb sound, among the best available.



VERY GOOD - Well worth a listen.



ADEQUATE - Room for improvement.



POOR - Seriously flawed. Forget it!

Half globes are added for those products that we feel are between categories

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HI-FI WORLD

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LONDON, NW6 5LF

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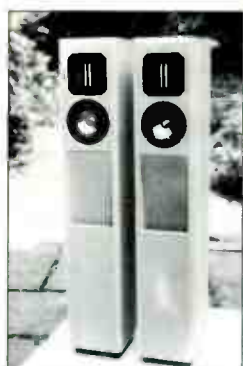
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competition

This month we have five pairs of superb Mordaunt Short MS914 floorstanders up for grabs.

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HORN OF PLENTY

In the wacky world of horn designs, few come close to the unusual appeal of the FH001 from newcomers, Ferguson Hill. Based in central London, this is their first product, with a CD player and integrated amplifier to follow.

In the Beauhorn B2 mould of the 'modern horn', the FH001 uses a 'full range' Lowther DX3 drive unit but quotes a frequency response of 150Hz-20kHz, meaning a sub bass unit is required for true full range



bandwidth. The single drive unit is mounted on a tubular metal frame, but most eye catching is a massive, elliptical, transparent plastic horn which spreads out from the Lowther unit to reach a height of 1.65 metres and width of 0.92 metres. With a quoted sensitivity of 98dB and an 8ohm load, the FH001, not surprisingly, doesn't come cheap. This mix of cutting edge design and old-school, traditional hi-fi will set you back £5,875 for the pair.



Ferguson Hill Studios
Tel: +44 (0)20 7284 0969

STYLISH NEW SPINNER FROM UNISON

This month sees the launch of Unison Research's first ever source component, the stylish Unico CD player. This smart looking silver disc spinner features, as you'd imagine from the valve amp specialists, a vacuum tube output stage, along with a 24/192 all-time high quality upsampling DAC and a brushless CD mechanism. Further features include an oversized programmable display window. The player comes supplied with a very smart and ergonomic 32 button, wood finished Unico system remote handset and there's also a choice of filter settings. The Unico CD player is priced in the UK at £1095.



UKD
Tel: +44 (0)1753 52669
www.ukd.co.uk

QUBIC CURRENT

Those owners of power hungry amplifiers who want clean, isolated mains could find an answer in the neat form of the new Qube from Isotek. This product is designed to supply the highest-end amps on the market and is available in three versions - 1kW, 2kW or 4kW output. Inside is a truly massive hand-wound EI isolation transformer with Faraday screens which is preceded with various parallel x and y class



filter capacitors. The outer casing is heavily constructed from non-magnetic metal and there is mechanical isolation and stability provided by three specialist feet from RDC. Weighing a hefty 34kilos, the Qube is priced at an equally heavy £2,250 for the 4kW version which lowers to £1,495 for 2kW and £1,195 for the 1kW version. All come with a lifetime guarantee.

Activ Distribution
Tel: +44 (0)1635 291357
www.activdistribution.com

BRONZED AND FIT

Monitor Audio have introduced their new Bronze Series of speakers to the market. There are four new generation models, the Bronze B1, B2, B4 and Centre. They feature



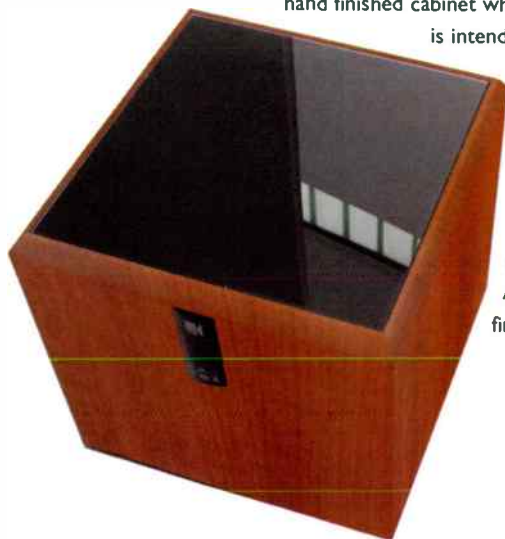
all-new enclosures constructed from 18mm MDF throughout, with a choice of Black Ash or Beech vinyl and are extensively braced for minimal resonance. All models are bi-wirable and also feature the company's new bass/mid drive unit. This uses a metal matrix polymer cone and an injection moulding process is employed to give differing thicknesses at critical points of the cone. The ceramic coated C-CAM tweeter has been improved since the previous range and now claims to have wider dispersion characteristics.

The two-way standmount B1 is priced at £150, the larger B2 is £200 and the floorstanding B4 is £350, with the new Centre model priced at £130.

Monitor Audio Ltd.
Tel: + 44 (0)1268 740580
www.monitoraudio.co.uk

KEF'S BACK TO BASS

KEF Audio have announced details of a new, top-range subwoofer. The PSW 4000 uses a 12" long throw drive unit in a downward firing, bass reflex configuration. The unit is housed in a hand finished cabinet which features a smoked-glass top. The sub is intended as a 'stand alone' unit for pairing with the new QX or top-range Reference series loudspeakers. Inside the cabinet is a 500W Class D amplifier, showing the PSW 4000 comes well equipped and should be no slouch. It also features radio remote control of output level, phase and the low pass filter controls. Available in a choice of three wood finishes, it is priced at £1,200.



KEF Audio Ltd.
Tel: + 44 (0)1622 672261
www.kef.com

next issue

Here's a selection of what we hope to bring you in the next issue:

MUSICAL FIDELITY TRI-VISTA SACD PLAYER

This is the new flagship digital disc player from Musical Fidelity. Will it impress us? Find out in four weeks time.

EXPOSURE 23 & 28 PRE & POWER AMPS

From the revamped Exposure come their new top range amplifier combination in the Classic Series.

QUAD 99 CD PLAYER

With the company firing on all cylinders, this latest much heralded CD spinner could be one of the best sounding on the market.

next issue

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STYLE TRIAL

With the growing popularity of multichannel DVD, big name loudspeaker manufacturers are trying to appeal to the domestically aware audiophile who wants surround-sound. We listen to four of the latest satellite and subwoofer surround 'speaker packages.



Tannoy FX5.1



Focal JM LAB SIB & CUB



Linn Classik



Mirage Omnisat SE

In an attempt to prove that surround-sound needn't be a hazardous mountain of boxes and wires, hi-fi manufacturers now offer compact satellite and subwoofer systems designed to blend into the home unobtrusively. Aesthetic discretion is the key word here but the real art of this approach is getting something that is small and discrete to sound good - alas, it's always been the way.

This problem grows with the emergence of high resolution formats such as DVD-A and SACD. How do we get to realise the quality

potential of these new audio formats from small, inexpensive wall or shelf mountable satellites and a subwoofer? Loudspeaker manufacturers have always struggled to get a big sound from a small box, so with the unobtrusively small speakers appropriate for these new formats they've well and truly got their work cut out.

By their nature DVD-A and SACD demand high quality loudspeakers to do justice to the detail, dynamics and breadth of frequency response inherent in the recording. In the past it's taken

'speaker packages in the region of £4,000-plus to give a realistic taster of the high res. banquet that awaits.

Here we've gathered together four satellite and subwoofer packages at different price points that attempt to fill the gap for both multichannel movie soundtracks and high resolution audio. From the likes of JM Lab, Linn, Mirage and Tannoy these set ups claim to be as effective with music as they are with movies. It's a tough task and they're facing a strong headwind. Turn the page to find out how they sail in these choppy waters...

TANNOY FX5.1

At just a tad under £600 the Tannoy FX5.1 system is the most affordable package in the test. It consists of five tiny (40 x 97 x 95mm) satellites and a powered 100watt subwoofer and comes complete with attachment brackets and screws, plus 25m bell-wire type cable.

Tannoy's Wideband™ technology has filtered down from their top spec models. This claims to extend the frequency response up to a quoted 78kHz - ideal, in theory, for DVD-A and SACD information. The satellites are shielded, so close placement to a TV is possible. They use a 75mm paper cone mid/bass driver which is coupled to a Wideband 19mm titanium dome high frequency unit. There are optional, matching stands or supplied wall brackets.

The subwoofer isn't the best built of the test but it's of decent dimensions with an internal 8" drive unit and a 100watt RMS amplifier. It possesses both high (speaker cable) or low (line level) inputs. Controls and functions are more basic than found elsewhere but just about make it flexible enough.

The FX5.1 satellites aren't as rough and ragged as you'd expect at the price, having a smooth, if slightly thin, response. Using just two satellites in stereo CD mode gave a forward and surprisingly full sound. With the Queens Of The Stoneage's 'Songs For The Deaf' the fast rhythms held up well and the overall sound



was nicely smooth without bordering on muffled. Vocals and other midrange information was good - they're not neutral or particularly 'hi-fi' but were still very enjoyable.

Problems came in the bass, though, which was a bit too plummy for my liking - it's not the leanest sound around. Consequently lower frequency information is lost in a kind of 'one note' bass response - especially with dance music or R 'n' B.

I moved on to multichannel high resolution audio with the help of Pioneer's DV-757 and Denon's AVR-3802 receiver. First on was a cracking classical disc of Dvorak's Ninth symphony on Teldec. The sound was pretty good - although subtle dynamics were lost. Tonally there was a nice balance and a good sense of spaciousness, thanks to the extended treble of the satellites. Upper strings,

although forward, weren't overtly scratchy or bright and woodwind was nice and airy.

With movies the sound was very good, the bumps and thumps in the fight scenes of 'Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon' were full and meaty, the sub being better suited to the lack of subtlety of a film soundtrack.

The FX5.1 has a balanced and extended sound from the satellites and a nice out of the box appeal. Where the system is let down, especially with subtle music, is with the subwoofer which can sound tubby and slow. This apart, though the system represents decent value for money.

Tannoy FX5.1 £599

Tannoy UK Ltd.
Tel: 01236 420199
www.tannoy.com

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

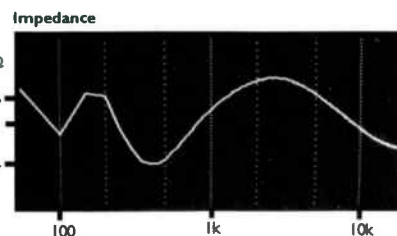
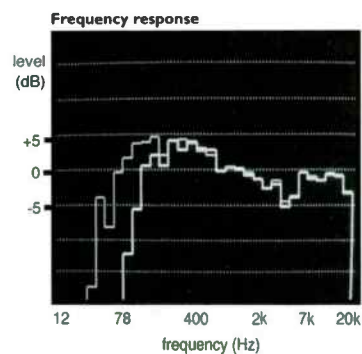
The tiny satellites within Tannoy's system have been neatly tailored to give reasonably even output right up to 20kHz. There's no peaking and the pink noise test signal sounded smooth and natural. Of all the satellites the miniature Tannoys had the smoothest measured frequency response by far. However, they barely make it down to 100Hz and output above this frequency - in the lower midband - peaks up, suggesting the boxes will sound tubby and likely coloured. Sensitivity was very low at 79dB but as a load the satellites should be easy enough.

The subwoofer only just makes it down to 40Hz (-6dB) and it's peaky. Used on the floor, against and

end wall should allow it to drive room modes however, bringing up output. The gain control was unusably coarse in adjustment; even with a high resolution real-time spectrum analyser I could barely get its settings right. In use I suspect few owners will get it accurately tuned.

The Tannoy system has been cleverly tailored to get the most from budget components. It should sound smoother and more detailed than the others, but with poorer bass and possibly more colouration.

NK



World Verdict

Good extended treble and a spacious sound are marred by the poor performance of the subwoofer. Otherwise it's good value for money.

FOCAL.JM LAB SIB & CUB

One of this company's strengths is the quality of its in-house designed and built drive units, although tests show nothing out of the ordinary in this case. The Sib satellites share a theme in many of the company's designs: their C-shaped baffles echo the 'FocusTime' technology found in the Electra and Utopia which claims to ensure complete "temporal coherence".

The Sib, like the rest of the group test candidates, can be positioned in a variety of locations. Like the rest of the company's designs it offers a high sensitivity (a quoted 90dB) and uses a 110mm synthetic cone mid/bass unit and a 19mm "metallised" plastic-dome tweeter (as opposed to the company's house-style inverted domes). Build quality is good for the money, with solid binding posts and a generally robust feel. There are lockable, dual-purpose support brackets which can act as a stand and - when flipped over - a wall mounting bracket. The drive units are magnetically shielded.

The Cub subwoofer is cube shaped and measures a compact 30cm in all directions. Again, it is well constructed and finished for the money. The drive unit is an 8" in-house design loaded by a laminar port tube which is flared at both ends. Inside the Cub is a 150W



amplifier with effective reproduction down to 35Hz. Connection is via 'speaker cable from the amplifier (high level) or low level line inputs.

The Sib/Cub pairing has an overall well balanced sound - one of the best in the test as far as comparison to a full range loudspeaker is concerned. This is due mainly to good integration and a well designed conventional two-way configuration of the Sibs. With two channel stereo in the shape of commercial rock/pop CDs the combination put up a good show, with a nice spread of sound and plenty of space, but there was a hard edge at times to the upper mid and treble that made vocals a tad sibilant. Bass was firm and deep, though, with discernable notes as opposed to mere noise.

With DVD-A and SACD programme the sound was quite well refined and a good amount of detail retrieved from the discs. The package

was best utilised here than in stereo (a common trait in all of the set ups) as the sound encompassed the room well and had a decent (but not superb) clarity.

With music, this set up wasn't the smoothest or warmest around but was still involving enough. However it worked well with movie soundtracks where a good dynamic range was displayed.

Overall for the money, the Sib and Cub combination isn't a bad buy but there's better to be found. It offers a good balance between detail and excitement and can go loud, but isn't necessarily a sound that will suit audiophiles as well as videophiles as it lacks warmth and low level detail.

Focal JM Lab Sib & Cub £859

Focal JM Lab UK Ltd.
Tel: +44 (0)121 616 5126
www.focaljmlab.com

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The small JM Lab satellites sounded fierce with a pink noise test signal and measurement showed why. They are peaky right across the audio band, with a strong treble rise at 16kHz. However, the flip side to this is that they do get right up to 16kHz before output rolls off, so will have more sparkle and detail than the 'speakers from Tannoy or Linn. However, treble quality is likely to be poor by hi-fi standards and this will be noticeable.

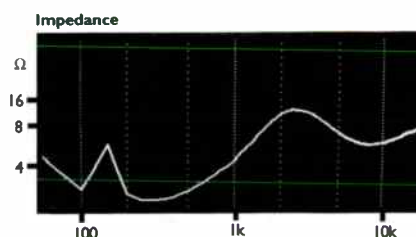
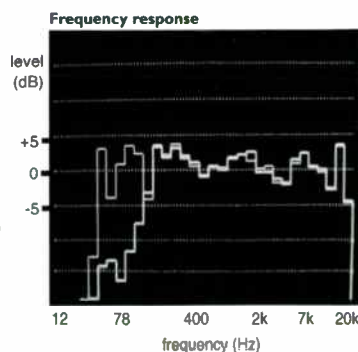
At the other end of the frequency spectrum the small satellites peak up at 125Hz before lower bass rolls away fast. They may well sound thrummy as a result. Sensitivity was good at 86dB sound

pressure level, but this was partly due to the fact that impedance plummets to an incredibly low 2.5ohms in the midband and bass. If volume is turned up, this may upset some amplifiers.

The subwoofer reaches down to 40Hz, like so many, before output rolls off. As with all these subwoofers the presence of internal amps ensures there's plenty of energy down to this frequency, so the combo will sound weighty enough.

The JM Lab system has bandwidth, but it will likely sound fierce and unrefined. Impedance is too low as well.

NK



World Verdict

Very well constructed, the Sib & Cub package is very versatile and good sounding but when it comes to ultimate refinement with music, doesn't quite cut it with its hard upper registers.

LINN CLASSIK SPEAKER PACKAGE

We have here yet another combination of names that could also be a range of office products from a certain home furnishing superstore. The Classic Speaker package consists of five Unik satellite units, an Afekt "bass reinforcement" speaker (that's "subwoofer" to you and I) and, should you wish, five Kollum stands for your Uniks to sit on!

The Unik is a 'full range' design that's compact and neat. The name may be akin to a certain furniture company's range but the product build isn't - they're as easy as pie to assemble. Get your Unik from its box, put together one of the simply constructed 'optional extra' Kollum stands (should you need them) and screw it on top - hey presto!

The Unik has a one-piece case and shouldn't fall apart in two days. It's not as well put together as JM Lab's Sibs, but it's solid enough nonetheless. They're a commendably simple design which makes placement easy, too. They can also be wall mounted (with the aid of a Linn 'Brakit' - seriously!) or even Blu tacked onto an appropriately located shelf.

Sometimes, the subwoofers supplied with packages leave a lot to be desired but the Afekt that's part of the Classik package isn't. It's a small but substantially built bass unit that has quite a bit in common with its larger Sizmik stablemate. This is the most comprehensive - and labour intensive - sub in the test when it comes to set up. It has a digital display



and three push buttons to execute all of the functions which involves a bit of trial and error for success.

Don't chuck out your Quads, but compared to many other similar products the Linn setup does impress. In bog standard two channel CD mode with Queens Of The Stoneage they gave a convincing, if not all encompassing, reading of discs. Bass weight was good and very fast and the Uniks don't suffer from eye gouging tinny treble. They are fairly heavily but nicely rolled off and 'even response' sounding with good vocal projection. This gives a very smooth and warm sound that whilst not the most detailed around is one of the easiest to live with. Integration between sub and sats (perhaps the most important factor in the test) was very good but you need to work on it to achieve this - be warned.

Again, the detail that could be achieved in Ravel's La Valse on a fine MDG DVD-A disc was missing somewhat but there was a good sense of space created and in surround-mode they produced an encompassing sound that made for very enjoyable listening.

With their roll-off, though, the Uniks can't really do full justice to the bandwidth of DVD-A. Having said this, the Poulenc Organ Concerto multichannel SACD disc sounded very good, with a fine sense of ambience and spatial depth. Tonal balance was good too, with a commendable, if not tip-top, relay of instrumental colour. Movie soundtracks didn't grab me by the collar but the Linn's managed to convey a full, bass tight sound nonetheless.

As you've probably gathered, the Classik package is smooth sounding and makes a refreshing change to preconceptions of what a system like this generally sounds like. The Afekt is a very tight sounding subwoofer that adds a certain speed and sparkle to the overall sound. It's a system that's easy to live with its smooth and easy going, yet punchy sound.

Linn Classik speaker package £1,320

Linn Products Ltd
Tel: +44 (0) 141 307 7777
www.linn.co.uk

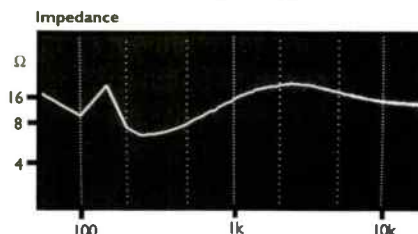
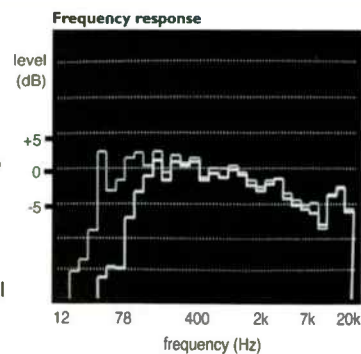
MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The small Unik has a soft, warm balance, obvious from the pink noise test signal. Its measured response shows this is caused by a distinct treble roll off, frequencies above 6kHz measuring -5dB down. However, at least the Unik is not ragged at high frequencies, a common problem in small full range loudspeakers.

Bass rolls off fairly early, measuring -3dB at 100Hz. Wall mounting will help but it lacks bass like all small 'speakers. Sensitivity was a very low 80dB, again like its rivals.

The Afekt can be integrated nicely. When correctly adjusted it extends response smoothly down to 40Hz. As output drops away below this frequency the Afekt really enables the small Unik to get down as far as a modest sized conventional loudspeaker. It isn't a true subwoofer, although on the floor and against a wall it will give very strong bass, no doubt.

This combo measures well enough and some may appreciate its apparent smoothness. **NK**



World Verdict

Not the last word in dynamics or detail but a smooth and open sound that's especially good with music. The Afekt is a good, tight subwoofer which adds speed to the sound.

MIRAGE OMNISAT SE

The Omnisats are strange beasts and unlike your average loudspeaker. They can be attached to the wall or planted atop of the matching stands via brackets supplied with each 'speaker. Unlike the Tannoy or Linn packages, no wiring is supplied but 'real' good quality binding posts are featured.

The omnipolar technology radiates the sound throughout the full 360 degrees, which is achieved by using two drive units - a midrange and a tweeter. The tweeter is mounted above the mid/bass unit and a reflector is offset and angled above the tweeter.

The OM-200 subwoofer that makes up the 'SE' version (there's another, cheaper version with a smaller subwoofer) weighs no less than 32kilos and is bi-polar, firing in opposite directions in a bass reflex design. This is by no means your bog standard sub/sat package inclusion. It's an attractive looking device, with three controls for gain, phase and a low pass filter, plus a switch for either music or movies (the latter being weightier and overall less subtle). The two drive units are 8" titanium-deposit polypropylene hybrids and use hefty 28oz magnets. Amplification is from a 200W mosfet class A/B design. Although available separately the OM-200 was designed to work especially with the Omnisats in mind.

By its nature, the Omnisat system is entirely different from anything else in the test. They are



impressively transparent, to an extent the other auditionees can only dream of. The sound is also big, very big - thanks to that very big subwoofer. It has to be used carefully, as by its sonic weight it can overwhelm but it does give amazing breadth and kick to the sound.

The Queens Of The Stoneage CD saw the omnisats giving a big and airy sound but compressed rock studio mixes - no matter how good - sounded muddled through these 'speakers with a swamped upper midrange (thanks to heavy guitar lines) which became ragged and hard edged. But the bass was superb!

Things were changed for the better with Ravel's orchestra piece, La Valse in DVD-A multichannel mode. Here the Omnisats could showed their strengths with a spacious and natural sound, one that rose impressively high into the room. This isn't imaging in the traditional sense of the word, but the sound was still spread impressively

throughout the stage - it's just that it's hard to tell where the stage actually is!

Integration was good, the sub carrying on naturally from where the Omnisats left off. Again, with the multichannel Poulenc SACD discs the sound was spacious but there were a few minor problems with producing natural timbres of instruments. The system could often sound edgy and synthetic. In movie mode the system gave a good account of itself, delivering deep bass and a big, if not an overtly dynamic sound.

The Omnisat system excels in transparency and overall spaciousness. However, it can at times sound ragged and incoherent, with an edgy upper frequency range.

Mirage Omnisat SE £1,595

API (UK) Ltd.

Tel: +44 (0)1787 249656

www.miragespeakers.com

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The large side-firing subwoofer of this system gives it a measurable advantage over the others. It gets down to 20Hz, a frequency low enough to give it the sort of floor shaking subsonics the others can't quite manage. With some peaking at 40Hz, bass from this system will likely sound big and gutsy.

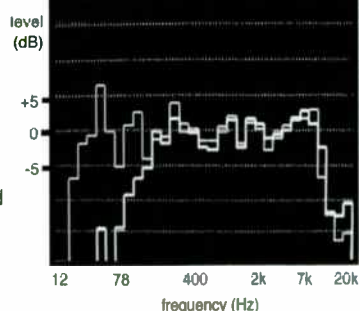
On their own the Mirage pod satellites get down to 140Hz or so before output rolls down fast, so they cannot be used solo if bass is wanted. Their output is peaky and a massive phase plate in front of the concentric tweeter predictably kills its output above 8kHz, not a subtle

piece of engineering. Sensitivity was low at 82dB for the satellite alone and impedance normal enough, making it a reasonable amplifier load.

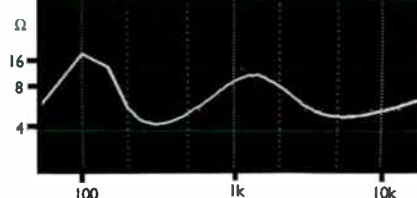
The Mirage system is peaky and crude, but it does have the advantage of producing deeper bass than the others - or most floostanders if it comes to that.

NK

Frequency response



Impedance



World Verdict

Impressively transparent and spacious with especially deep bass from the sub, but the sound is perhaps too quirky to consistently appeal.

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CONCLUSION

If one thing has been apparent in this test it's that to get the full potential of DVD-A and SACD multichannel music you really require top quality, high end loudspeakers for the job.

Whilst the systems in the test all played surround-sound in an involving and a satisfactory way none of them came close to reproducing DVD-A the way it can be produced. Although being touted as being acceptable for multichannel music, they are just that - acceptable, not superb.

It's the age old argument of size; products such as this, even the big sounding Mirage with the hefty subwoofer, are restricted by dimension and won't reproduce the scale and dynamics that are absolutely essential to deliver high resolution audio. It is, and will perhaps remain, essentially a high-end and therefore expensive area, where only the best (or nearly best) will do. This not only applies to 'speakers but to amplification and source as well.

That said, it was very interesting listening to the systems in this test

and they differed vastly. Firstly, none of them actually impressed enough for me to rush out to my local retailer. However, all of them had appealing traits of one kind or another and all of them easily fit unnoticed into a domestic environment.

These systems are really for those who must make some kind of sonic sacrifice for domestic harmony.

For best all round listening the Linn Classik system was perhaps best. Whilst the build of the Uniks doesn't really reflect their price, they produce a smooth and sophisticated sound. However, whilst very listenable and musical they work better as a two-channel sub/sat system as opposed to a wide bandwidth all encompassing surround package. The Linn Afekt subwoofer is a good one, with a lean and tight sound that adds oomph and speed to the package.

If you want more slam and excitement, then the well built JM Labs Sib & Cub could be your bet. Whilst they are upfront and immediate, though, they can also be

tonally unbalanced at times and could usefully integrate better. Bass is pretty good, though.

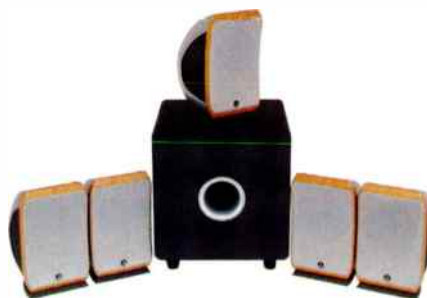
The Mirage Omnisats are a strange one - literally. Their looks are definitely an acquired taste, as is the sound. It's very open and transparent for such a product and the bass from that large sub is deep and powerful, but it's not always that well balanced and there is a fairly sharp rise in the upper mid and treble. Not subtle, but certainly exciting - and that transparency helps with DVD-A and SACD.

The Tannoys are, in a way, very good value. If the sub was technically more proficient it would be excellent value for money. The sats are open sounding and smooth and have excellent extension thanks to the Wideband tweeter.

Unfortunately though, none of the systems are truly audiophile in performance. For that you'll need to go bigger, better and more expensive. If space and style are a priority then getting a listen to any of these systems should influence your choice.



Tannoy FX5.1



Focal JM LAB SIB & CUB



Linn Classik



Mirage Omnisat SE

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WHAT THE WORLD IS WAITING FOR?



The latest generation universal player from Pioneer promises to take high resolution audio to the next level in terms of usability. Alan Sircom explains why.

Performance of Pioneer's new top DVD player, the DV-757Ai, has been significantly improved, our lab report shows. But this performance upgrade is accompanied by greatly improved functionality. Being the company's top multi-standard player, priced at £800, the 757Ai supports DVD-Video, DVD-Audio, Super Audio CD, CD and everything in between.

There have been many improvements to its predecessor, the 747, especially in the day-to-day operation of the player. The DV-757Ai sports the latest version of Pioneer's GUI on-screen set-up display. This makes configuring the player even easier than ever before and takes the need for technological knowledge out of the set up procedure.

What really pushes the DV-757Ai into the 'must have' camp is that little 'i' suffix at the end of the name. It is short for i-Link and the player features two tiny i-Link connections on the back panel. The i-Link system comes from PC technology (it is also known as FireWire and IEEE 1394 in

the computer trade) and is used to connect high-speed data transfer devices together. Most commonly, i-Link is seen between Digital Video camcorders and editing PC devices, or between high-quality, high capacity MP3 players and computers. It is a bidirectional, high-speed digital data transmission system that can retain the integrity of both data and security codes. So, i-Link can send DVD-Audio and SACD signals to a multi-channel processor in the digital domain, without undermining the watermarking or copy protection systems. Better still, because the link is bidirectional, it allows the player to sync-lock its datastream to the clock of the processor.

i-Link also means an external decoder can apply DSP parameters (such as speaker distance and bass management) to the digital sound before converting it into analogue.

And that's only the half of what i-Link can offer. It also allows transferal of 'metadata' between i-Link devices, so they can understand each other's parameters. This means, if you have a DV-757Ai connected to an amplifier, the amplifier will recognise the player, what kind of

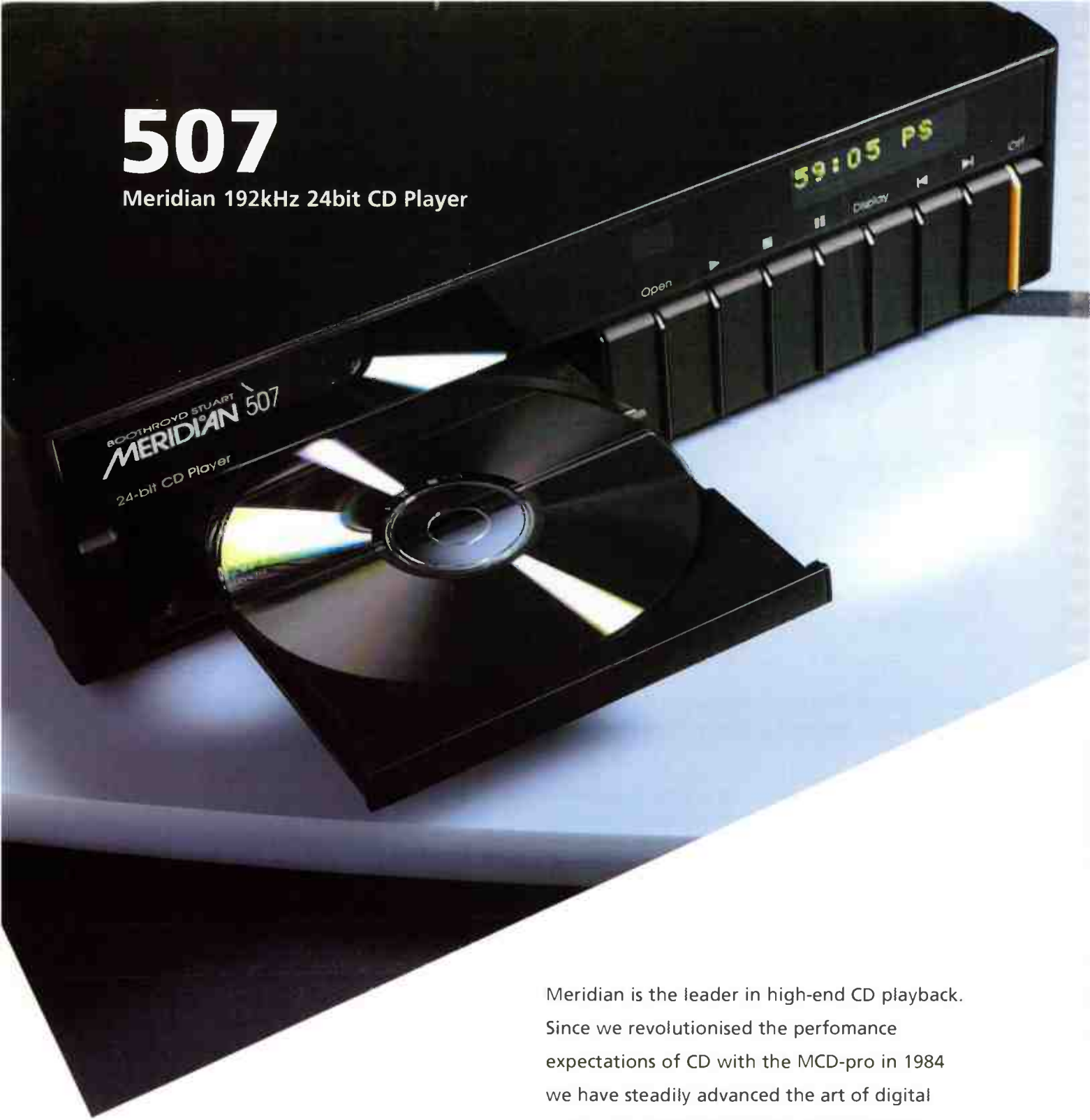
disc it is playing and any other information garnered from the internals of the player, using and displaying any relevant information accordingly.

In an all-too-brief listening session with the DV-757Ai wired to a Pioneer AX10i amplifier (existing AX10 owners will be able to upgrade to i-Link status soon), the difference between i-Link and conventional analogue outputs on a DVD-Audio disc was dramatic. Images are more focussed and precise, leading edges of percussion instruments have more attack, everything just sounds that bit more immediate and directed.

On this player DVD-Audio discs had a dynamic scale and separation that sets it apart from its peers. There's not that much more detail on offer, but it's all presented in a very well-balanced manner that shows off the quality of both the player and the format. DVD-Audio artistes like Linkin Park and Missy Elliot can push this new format into brightness all too easily, but with the DV-757Ai handling replay, the sound leaves the disc sounding evenly balanced.

507

Meridian 192kHz 24bit CD Player



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The New Meridian 507 CD Player features 192kHz 24-bit DACs for outstanding performance and the very latest laser assembly optimised for CD, CD-R, and CD-RW. It comes packed with the Meridian MSR System remote.

In SACD mode, I felt the player was slightly greyer and grainier than with DVD-Audio. Not so badly as to undermine the format, but by comparison to standalone SACD players. The machine still highlights what both stereo and multi-channel SACD has to offer the audiophile, but a good dedicated SACD/CD player still has the edge. Just.

CD performance follows along similar lines. The Pioneer makes a good attempt at playing CD, considering it can support all those other audio/video formats, but it isn't as temporally focussed or as natural sounding as a decent standalone CD player. It comes very close though; close enough for the casual user not

to complain about its sonic abilities. The vast soundstage of the live recordings on Rare on Air was slightly compressed and the machinegun pace of Eminem softened somewhat, but no other DVD player can do an intrinsically better job.

On DVD-Video, it simply excels. The picture is precise and flexible (thanks to plenty of picture-shaping modes) and the addition of NTSC Progressive Scan is a boon to those with modern plasma displays and projectors, although it's more than good enough with regular TV sets through its RGB-compatible Scart socket. Likewise, the sound – whether Dolby Digital or DTS,

through digital outputs or the built-in decoder – is big, bold and powerful when required, or subtle and articulate if the soundtrack calls for it.

The only downside to all this is there are not many i-Link compatible amplifiers available at present. But that will change, and the Pioneer will remain one of the most significant DVD product launches this year. Future proofed and highly recommended.

Pioneer DV-757Ai £799

Pioneer GB Ltd.
Tel: 01753 789789
www.pioneer.co.uk

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Having passed on its first generation universal-play technology to Marantz and Onkyo, among others, Pioneer has raised the bar with its 'second generation' DV-757Ai. This player represents a significant advance on the DV-747, not least with the change from Crystal to a combination of Burr-Brown's PCM1738 (front) and PCM1702 (centre, sub and rear) DACs. The A-wtd S/N ratio is now some 108dB and while midrange distortion is broadly unchanged at ~0.0009%, there's a worthwhile decrease in high frequency distortion to 0.002% (CD, 20kHz/0dBfs) and 0.009% at 40kHz with DVD-A.

The 40kHz plot not only demonstrates a marked improvement in dynamic range across the 20Hz-20kHz audioband but also reveals a substantial reduction (~40dB) in ultrasonic noise with DVD-A software. By way of comparison, this graph is reproduced with the same X/Y scaling as those for the Marantz and Onkyo players. It shows that while the Crystal DACs are responsible

for the wash of requantisation noise in the latter, there's simply no avoiding the noise that's part-and-parcel of the SACD encode process (bright blue trace).

Erasing this noise may serve to highlight numerous digital 'spikes' in the dark blue DVD-A trace, but do bear in mind this measurement spans a monumental 130dB range. It's the reduction in ultrasonic rubbish that will ensure the DV-757Ai is the more consistent performer with different amplifiers.

Low 290psec jitter (also reproduced on the same scale as both the Marantz and Onkyo plots) reinforces this model's top-flight performance. The 88dB stereo separation at 20kHz is some 15dB short of what is expected, low-level resolution was some 0.8dB adrift with CD at -90dBfs and the digital filter offers just 79dB of attenuation (100dB+ is commonplace), but these could hardly be described as weaknesses.

All this, plus an i-Link interface (Sony's trademarked version of IEEE

1394) to facilitate a direct digital link to Pioneer's forthcoming VSA-AX10i amplifier, and the DV-757Ai is clearly setting the pace for all others to follow. Quite simply, this player has no competition. **PM**

Frequency Response

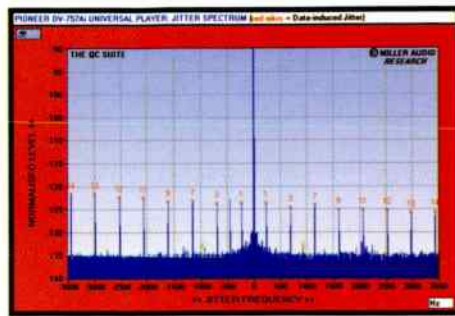
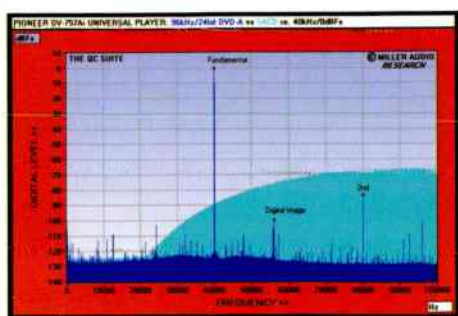
CD	-0.02dB (20Hz) to -0.08dB (20kHz)	
SACD	-0.02dB (20Hz) to -13.0dB (100kHz)	
DVD-A (192kHz)	-0.02dB (20Hz) to -0.3dB (80kHz)	

Distortion (CD)	Left	Right
-6dBfs	0.0009%	0.0008%
-30dBfs	0.0059%	0.0065%
-60dBfs	0.14%	0.17%
-90dBfs	3.0%	2.3%

Separation	Left	Right
1kHz	103dB	104dB
20kHz	88dB	90dB

Noise (IEC A)	Left	Right
	108.7dB	107.7dB

Output	Left	Right
	1.94V	1.93V



World Verdict
An undeniably impressive and important product. This universal player makes good work of everything and is highly recommended.

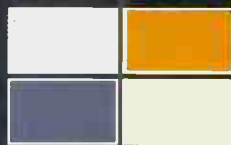
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REFLECTION OF THE TIMES



Whilst separates are undoubtedly the choice for the committed audiophile, they may want something a little more user friendly elsewhere in the house. HFW listens to the latest two-box system from the masters of the art, Denon.

Denon have long been making 'mini systems' that whilst previously may not have matched similarly priced separates, have succeeded in getting pretty damned close.

The new D-F101 system that we review here consists of a two-unit 'core system', the DRA-F101, a well equipped stereo receiver, and the DCD-F101 CD player. In addition, we also used the matching SC-M101 loudspeakers, co-designed with and manufactured by none other than Mission. As a bonus there's a choice of added 'extendables' to expand the set up. Both a matching MiniDisc separate and cassette deck are available as an extra recording media component.

All the components have a highly polished finish, are well built but still remain sleek and attractive. Most striking is the aluminium front plate with inlaid soft reflective glass display windows. The matching 'speakers have a Beech finish ideal for today's style conscious abodes. All components have the same dimensions for perfect matching.

The DRA-F101 receiver features an improved power supply and new

circuits and delivers 35watts per channel. There are a total of five inputs including two tape loops and 'speaker connection are via 'real' terminals that can accommodate 4mm banana type plugs for high quality cable connection. The tuner section has RDS capability with Radiotext, search, program type and Traffic Program ID and 40 presets can be programmed. Bass and treble controls are present in the amplifier section.

The other component in the core system, the CD player, is equally well equipped. It features a high performance 24bit/96kHz DAC, 8x oversampling digital filtering, optical digital output and the usual range of CD functions. There's also a daily alarm function and a full system remote that matches the sleek aesthetics of the set up.

Sound wise the D-F101 and 'speakers are a pretty impressive combination. With the Queens Of The Stoneage's 'Songs For The Deaf' on CD, the system gave a good, muscular and detailed performance. You get audiophile-like traits such as commendable neutrality and tonal balance that won't be found elsewhere. There's little bass boom or unnecessary bloom to the sound.


Vocals are clean and there's even sound staging to be had - although not to high-end extent!

Classical music also fared well. It's not what this system is geared up for but it had a fair crack at reproducing the vast soundscapes of Bruckner. Tonal balance was again good and the complex, thick layers of the orchestration were surprisingly well produced. The tuner section was thrown into action and gave a good account of itself (not surprising considering the company's history with budget radio) with a full and clear sound on BBC Radio 3 and 4.

Gripes? Well it isn't the last word in detail or sheer depth of sound and high frequency information such as violins can be a tad thin. Also, it won't perhaps perform as well as entry level products from the likes of NAD, but it's a more room friendly design. Here's the kind of product that will sit happily in a dedicated hi-fi listener's bedroom or study without the need to be covered over when mates pop 'round for a tinny!

Denon D-F101 £349.99

Denon
Tel: +44 (0)1234 741 200
www.denon.co.uk

World Verdict 
Knocks the competition sideways. A clean, focussed and neutral sound that belies the concept of the 'mini system'.

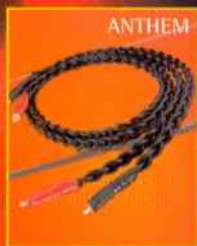
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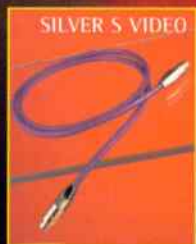
RUMOUR 4

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PERFECT HARMONY?



Like the Ebony and Ivory on Stevie Wonder's piano, you'll find DVD-Audio and SACD logos sitting together happily on the fascia of Onkyo's brand new DV-SP800 DVD 'universal' player. David Price listens in.

Before some of its rivals even had an audiophile DVD player, Pioneer came up with a dual format 'universal' DVD-Audio and SACD player last year. You could almost hear the grinding of corporate teeth across the entire Asia Pacific region.

It's a matter of some surprise, then, that the likes of Onkyo (and Marantz - see p38) have taken so long to catch up. Enter, finally, its DV-SP800 DVD-Audio and SACD player.

It packs a big punch for its £1,200 price tag. In addition to the aforementioned multi-format audio compatibility, there's full Lucasfilm THX-Ultra certification, a brace of Crystal multi-level delta-sigma 192kHz/24-bit audio DACs and Onkyo's Vector Linear Shaping Circuitry. Onboard DTS and Dolby Digital processing is provided, along with Onkyo's Direct-Digital Path switching to switch off that dreaded sound-destroying video circuitry. A welter of video goodies are also included, including progressive scan (via NTSC) and Analog Devices' 108MHz/12-bit Noise Shaped video DACs.

Weighing just 5kg, this player isn't built in the Japanese battleship

mould - frankly, with all this gadgetry and gizmology there's precious little funds available for massive power supplies and cases hewn from pure copper. The fact that in the States it retails for just \$1000 is further proof that this is a mass market design at heart, rather than a high-end audiophile product like, say, Marantz's SA-12. Still, it's a neat enough design, much like the aforementioned Pioneer in the look and feel of the brushed aluminium fascia. Inside, a high quality shielded cable feeds the rear panel digital output that can be run at 24bit, 96kHz resolution (although it won't run up to 192kHz or output DSD), Pioneer style.

Power it up and you're hit with a sea of blue light - as is Onkyo's current practice - contrasting with a nice, soothing, orange display. Usefully it can be dimmed down to invisibility, and when used in conjunction with the Video Off switch (which turns off all the televisual goings on), it makes a useful improvement to this player's sonic performance. Otherwise, this machine's facilities are pretty average, the ergonomics not ideal (another typically muddled Japanese fascia sadly) and the overall feel very average - it doesn't have the 'aura' of, say, a British made £1,000 hi-fi CD player.

Despite its THX Ultra Certification - which in truth isn't directly relevant to audiophile hi-fi anyway - it's not one of the sonic stars at the price. However, neither is this Onkyo particular poor at anything either. Essentially it's been pitched right down the middle of the road in a way only the Japanese can do - think 'Toyota Corolla' in a sober metallic blue, or suchlike.

Its CD performance is actually pretty good, to give it its due. Goldie's 'Timeless' sounded decently smooth and open, with a commendable amount of midband detailing and reasonable dynamics. Unlike the risible standards of some big name DVD players of late (playing CD, that is) the Onkyo proved perfectly able to make a nice noise with no sign that it was on the backfoot. Bass wasn't terribly strong, but had a reasonably warm and generous nature - pleasantly soft, you could say. Midband was even and open with a fairly clear window onto the soundstage, with wide (if not particularly strong or well defined) imaging. Only in the treble - as per the Pioneer DV747A - did this player sound a little shut in, with a conspicuous lack of energy or definition. Still, at least it wasn't harsh.

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World Radio History

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Moving to DVD-Audio was an ear opener. America's 'Ventura Highway' at 24/96 MLP was a good deal tighter and better defined than the 16/44 performance. As is so often the case with DVD-A, it erred on the forward side, although it most emphatically wasn't harsh in the way 'old skool' CD used to be. There's an upper midband clarity and smoothness that really lets you hear into the mix which Compact Disc tragically denies you. Bass was obviously tighter and better articulated with plenty more energy, midband had a far deeper, wider and more commanding soundstage that suddenly injected life into my system. Treble still sounded disappointingly digital however - it's not coarse by any means, it's just there's no real joy to be had from listening to it. It still seems to 'tinkle' rather than shimmer as it should.

SACD was probably this player's most musically convincing mode. The Rolling Stone's 'Jumping Jack Flash' was a great advertisement for the format. Jagger's voice, so often hard or nasal with CD, was surprisingly deep and natural (just like good vinyl, in fact), while the percussion (maracas, cymbals, etc) all sounded usefully close to real instruments - no digital approximations here. There was real timbre to the keyboards and wind instruments, and even a smidgen of tonal colour. Most importantly, the music became rather beguiling and rhythmically inviting - the song seeming to ebb quite naturally. On so many different players and in so many different systems, to my ears SACD comes out as a duller yet more 'organic' format, while DVD-A is more impressive yet less engaging. Let's not forget that it also plays movies quite

well too, so like the other 'universal' players emerging it really is a 'jack of all trades' which is no bad thing.

Overall, the Onkyo is a tough one, it doesn't really do anything better than the substantially cheaper Pioneer DV-747 does, while it feels fussier to use and less aesthetically appealing. Although by no means a bad performer with any of its three major audio formats, it's still less successful than Arcam's FMJ CD23T at 16/44 and Denon's DVD-3800 at DVD-A, both of which cost less. So purchasers should seek out this player for its universal nature above its sonics - if the former's most important to you, then by all means audition it.

Onkyo DV-SP800 £1200
 Onkyo UK
 Tel: +44 (0)1788 570111
www.onkyo.net

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

This is the fourth universal player to market and the second, after Marantz's DV8300 (also in this issue) to be based on Pioneer's first-generation DV-747 chassis. Onkyo's proprietary analogue filter (VLSC or Vector Linear Shaping Circuit) certainly has an impact on the player's response which features a +1dB boost at 20kHz with CD but remains flat with SACD and DVD-A software. SACD sources are rolled-off in a more gentle fashion than is usual, so the ultrasonic response is just -4.5dB at 80kHz and -9.2dB at 100kHz. Nevertheless, by comparing the 40kHz plots here and with the Marantz DV8300, it's also clear that Onkyo has engineered a 5dB 'reduction' in ultrasonic noise from its DV-SP800. As an indirect result, its response with 192kHz DVD-A software is fractionally 'less' extended than that of the Marantz

DV8300, falling to -2.5dB at 80kHz.

Ultrasonic distortion is also lower at just 0.005% re. 40kHz/0dBfs even though, at midrange frequencies, it's just a little higher at 0.0008%. The 40kHz plot also reveals a pair of sidebands at the base of the (dark blue) peak which are resolved in the jitter plot as supply-related distortions. The remaining, data-induced jitter peaks are indicated by red-coloured markers and contribute to a 1250psec total that's about double the value suffered by Pioneer's original DV-747.

Onkyo's overall S/N ratio is lower too at 102dB which represents some 17bits rather than the 24bit potential of its DACs. In practice, noise from subsequent analogue stages tends to limit the available range of the very best players to less than 120dB. Incidentally, some of the best

sounding CD players have a S/N of just 96dB...**PM**

Frequency Response

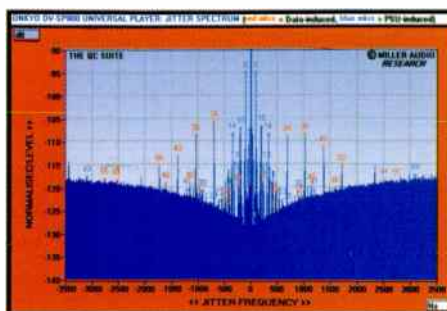
CD	-0.03dB (20Hz) to +1.0dB (20kHz)	
SACD	-0.03dB (20Hz) to -9.2dB (100kHz)	
DVD-A (192kHz)	-0.03dB (20Hz) to -2.5dB (80kHz)	

Distortion	Left	Right
-6dBfs	0.0008%	0.0008%
-30dBfs	0.0040%	0.0054%
-60dBfs	0.19%	0.18%
-90dBfs	4.3%	3.8%

Separation	Left	Right
1kHz	105dB	104dB
20kHz	104dB	103dB

Noise (IEC A)	Left	Right
	101.8dB	102.3dB

Output	Left	Right
	1.80V	1.81V



World Verdict
 Multi-format capability is most welcome, middling sonics, ergonomics and build aren't.

HI-FI WORLD'S GREAT COMPETITION GIVEAWAY

WIN ONE OF FIVE PAIRS OF MORDAUNT SHORT 914 FLOORSTANDING LOUDSPEAKERS IN THIS MONTHS SUPERB COMPETITION.

Mordaunt Short is an instantly recognisable name in the world of audio and their latest range of 'speakers have gained an enviable response from the industry and reviewers alike. And we have five pairs of their excellent 914 models to give away to five lucky readers!

Mordaunt Short was founded in 1967 by Norman Mordaunt and Rodney Short and three years later moved from London to Hampshire, where from its factory in Durnford Mill it produced the Festival, Carnival and Pageant models that helped the company gain the reputation it has now.

Throughout the eighties the company went on to introduce groundbreaking technology such as injection moulded baffles and surrounds. In 1987 the company was bought by the TGI group, which also had both Tannoy and Goodmans under its wing - it was at the time Europe's largest loudspeaker manufacturing group. This was soon followed, in 1990, by the Queen's

Award for Export Achievement after an export growth to around forty countries - it was throughout this decade that the company launched various award winning products. Despite this, TGI sold the company, which was acquired by Audio Partnership on New Year's Eve 1998.

Mordaunt Short now see the arrival of DVD and SACD as a significant step forward for consumer electronics and an aid to their growth. They recognised the opportunity early on and are now at the forefront of developing loudspeakers to reflect this market trend. They were the first company to introduce a THX Select loudspeaker package, the THX500, which was also the first set up to use two dipoles - "a declaration of intent" according to sales and marketing director, Paul Masson. The company also have a shared distribution with Marantz in countries, including the UK, in which they can develop their new products in the world market. They have a new research and development facility in West Sussex (formerly a Lotus factory) where designer Graeme Foy heads the team.

The excellent 914 floorstanders that we're giving away are part of the 900 series. They use a 165mm bass/mid unit along with the company's own 25mm aluminium dome tweeter. It's a modern and stylish design with a sound quality that defies its price tag, indeed David Price, in his Hi-Fi World review called the 914 "true budget esoterica". He



also noted that they are "musical to the core, more transparent than they've a right to be at the price, and yet impressively punchy and powerful too."

And you can get the chance to experience this by entering our competition where we have five pairs to give away! Simply answer the following questions correctly on a postcard and send it to the address at left by January 31st 2003. The first five correct answers out of the hat get the prizes. Good Luck!

Competition Questions

[1] Who founded Mordaunt Short?

- [a] Norman Mordaunt and Rodney Short
- [b] Norman Short and Rodney Mordaunt
- [c] Norman Foster and Rodney Bewes
- [d] Laurel and Hardy

[2] On which day did Audio Partnership acquire the company?

- [a] New Year's Eve 1987
- [b] New Year's Eve 1998
- [c] New Year's Day 1998
- [d] Pancake Day 2002

[3] Who heads the research and development team?

- [a] Graham Garden
- [b] Graeme Foy
- [c] Graham Souness
- [d] Golden Grahams

[4] Which company used the research and development premises before Mordaunt Short?

- [a] Jaguar
- [b] Aston Martin
- [c] Lotus
- [d] Trabant

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

CONGRATULATIONS

...to Mr. Ayaz Butt, of Yorkshire, the winner of our December competition.
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MUSICAL FIDELITY Tri-Vista Series

Designed to celebrate Musical Fidelity's twentieth anniversary, the new limited edition Tri-Vista series offers both audio excellence and value for money. The first products released



are the Tri-Vista 300 Integrated Amplifier and the Tri-Vista CD/SACD Player, with the Tri-Vista Pre and Power Amplifiers following in 2003. According to Musical Fidelity the Tri-Vista "Produces stupendous performance... No stone has been left unturned in our efforts to make the Tri-Vista series absolutely the best it can be in

circuitry and physical layout, build quality and aesthetics."



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World Radio History



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WHAT WE FIT ★★★★★ September 2002

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WHAT WE FIT ★★★★★ August 2002



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The Aegis Ones genes are clearly evident. The original's refinement and bass weight are preserved and backed up with better openness and more free-flowing dynamic ability. The old speakers would have delivered a cool and calm version of Pink's *Missundaztood* set - they'd be enjoyable, but would lack a little drive and excitement.

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WHAT WE FIT ★★★★★ July 2002



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B&W Bowers & Wilkins DM602S3 Speakers £299.95

Free Speaker Cable* worth £50 with **ALL** Speakers over £280

"But the B&W 602 S3 are our winners. They're big and not particularly beautiful, yet if it were our money they're what we would buy. No rival can match the wide ranging dynamics or low frequency performance of these not so compact standmounters. Add all-round sonic excellence and the choice is easy. Give them sufficient space to breathe, then sit back and enjoy the music." **WHAT HI-FI?** ★★★★★ Supertest Winner August 2002



Also Available (Pictured Right) B&W CDM NT Series • Prices start from £749.95

PURE DIGITAL DRX-701ES Digital Tuner £249.95

This new tuner from the recently renamed Pure is based on the 2001 Award-winning Videologic DRX-601ES, but under the lid is an all-new third-generation digital radio engine, in the form of Frontier Silicon's Chorus FS1010. Its biggest advantages are lower energy consumption and above all cost - it's the major reason why the DRX-701ES is £100 less than last year's model.

The tuner uses 24-bit/192kHz conversion with 4x upsampling and data interpolation, and is powered by a low-noise toroidal transformer - such attention to sonic detail pays off. Digital outputs are provided



Product of the year 2002
WHAT HI-FI? ★★★★★
 Hi-Fi & HOME CINEMA AWARDS
 CD PLAYERS
 £800-£1000

on electrical and optical feed, but most people will use the analogue out, and these sound very good indeed. As usual the tuner is subject to the signal quality off-air, but when it's fed from a high-quality outdoor aerial and a good signal it's capable of a crisp, powerful and detailed presentation. Even more populist music stations like Radio 6 benefit from the mix of a neutral balance and fine weight, while speech is also neutral and easy to follow... If you want a quality home tuner for digital radio, you need look no further." **WHAT HI-FI?** ★★★★★ October 2002



Also Available Denon TU260L/II • £99.95

pricing policy

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sale



Free Interconnect Cable* Worth £150
When Any Cyrus CD & Cyrus Amplifier Purchased Together



CD7Q CD Player £1149.95
8 Integrated Amplifier £799.95

Cyrus 7Q CD "How it compares directly (with the competition) is a matter for a group test, but I can tell you now that it'll be a close one, because the CD7Q is a fantastic CD Player, offering all you'd expect from a disc spinner at this price, and more. The CD7Q's a major upgrade from the class-leading CD7. Its weighty, detailed sound puts it at the pinnacle of CD players at this price." **WHAT HI-FI? ★★★★★ July 2002**



Cyrus 8 Amplifier The Cyrus 8 replaces the highly acclaimed Cyrus 7 amplifier. The 7 was described as "Fast and punchy with huge sackfuls of subtlety" by What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision in November 1999. The new 8 has been further refined and upgraded to include more power.



ROKSAN

Kandy KA1 MKIII Amplifier £544.95

"When we last reviewed Roksan's Kandy integrated amp in February it fought off serious competition to come top in a *Supertest*. This is its replacement, the MkIII. Internal changes include an updated power supply for the preamp section and identical mono modules for the left and right power amp sections. Roksan also claims 50 percent lower distortion on line-level inputs and a whopping 150 percent less on the phono input. The rated power output is an impressive 120 watts per channel into 8 ohms, and this amp has a confident, muscular way with music that bears this out. But don't be fooled into thinking this amp is raw but unrefined. With Van Morrison's *Down the Road* the Kandy has the guts to render the performance exciting and dynamic, but also the guile to deliver subtle details.



Free Interconnect Cable* Worth £100
When Any Roksan CD & Roksan Amplifier Purchased Together



The upgraded Kandy MkIII is an excellent amp, the MkII version was impressive, but MkIII is a stunner. It betters all the amps here in the timing department, and has a wonderfully robust character that works well with all types of music. It manages to retain the good points of the MkII while adding extra resolution and subtlety. All the amps here have a place in the market. It's just that at £550 the Kandy really does set the pace."



WHAT HI-FI? ★★★★★ October 2002

Free Speaker Cable* worth £50
with **ALL** Speakers over £280

QUAD

11L Speakers £379.95

"Quad is best known for its superlative electrostatic designs, which start at £3500. So any £379 pair of speakers that carries the company's name has to be going some to avoid tarnishing the family reputation. The first surprise is that the 11Ls come in real-wood veneers covered with piano-gloss lacquer. This type of finish is almost unheard of at the £1000 mark, let alone at this price. Has anything been sacrificed for such a luxury finish? Here's the second surprise, apparently not.

The final surprise? Well, saving the best for the last, the sound quality of the 11Ls is phenomenally good. These are small speakers at just 33cm tall, but the scale and authority of



Also Available
Mission 780 • £249.95

their performance is terrific. The laws of physics dictate bass extension limitations, but thanks to a clever dual rear firing port arrangement the 11Ls plumb the depths with the determination of a rottweiler, even when placed in free space.

If you're in the market for a pair of top quality standmounters these Quads are a must listen. Quite simply, they're good enough to scare the competition big time." **WHAT HI-FI? ★★★★★ August 2002**



Speaker Selection

Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo Three.....	£349.95
B&W CDM 1NT.....	£749.95
B&W CDM 7NT.....	£1249.95
B&W DM303.....	£179.95
B&W DM601 S3.....	£249.95
Cyrus CLS70 (Black).....	£799.95
KEF Q1.....	£249.95
KEF Q3.....	£399.95
Linn Katan (Maple).....	£634.95
Linn Ninka (Maple).....	£894.95
Mission 780.....	£249.95
Mission 782.....	£599.95
Mission m71i.....	£119.95
Monitor Audio Gold Reference 10.....	£799.95
Monitor Audio Gold Reference 20.....	£1499.95
Ruark Epilogue II.....	£344.95
Wharfedale 8 1.....	£99.95

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*From our selection available in-store - Not in conjunction with any other offer.

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MUSICAL FIDELITY A3.2 Series

A3.2 CD Player £999.95
A3.2 Amplifier £979.95

Replacing the **WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION** Award Winning A3 CD and Amplifier, the new A3.2 models have been further refined and re-styled. The A3.2 CD Player now incorporates the same DAC, filter assembly and control mechanism as the highly-acclaimed Nu-Vista CD Player. The A3.2 Amplifier draws on experience gained through the development of the Nu-Vista M3 amplifier and as such has inherited many of its qualities, producing a sense of ease and flexibility that is normally only associated with far more expensive designs.



Free Interconnect Cable* Worth £150

When Any Musical Fidelity CD & Musical Fidelity Amplifier Purchased together



MONITOR AUDIO Silver S6 Speakers £599.95

Free Speaker Cable* worth £70 with ALL Speakers over £500

British loudspeaker manufacturer Monitor Audio has introduced a replacement series for its acclaimed and award winning Silver Series speakers. "The aim has been to offer real advances in performance and value", says technical director Dean Hartley. "New models include the S1 and S2 standmounters, the S6, S8 and S10 floorstanders.

"With a close-miked track such as James Taylor's *Line 'Em Up* from SACD they really deliver the character of the singer's voice and they're just as expressive with the cultured rhythms of Groove Armada's latest outing, having just the right mix of rhythmic control and fluidity... But amazingly the best is yet to come: these are simply beautiful speakers for classical music, once a few days' thrashing has tamed their initial rawness. With the latest release of Holst's *The Planets* on DVD-Audio, they thunder out *Mars* with true conviction.



Also Available Gold Reference GR10 & GR20

These are rather magical speakers, with a poise and grace that belies their ability to turn on the power when required. Pair them with a good CD player and suitably accomplished amp, and you won't go far wrong."

★★★★★ October 2002

Pioneer

PDR609 CD-RW Recorder £199.95

"While it looks simple, the Pioneer has an impressive array of features, including the handy double-speed disc finalization and CD-Text compatibility. Internally, the PDR609 is a big step up from the Award-winning PDR-509 it replaced: the DAC is now a 24-bit/96kHz number, aided and abetted by Pioneer's Legato Link conversion technology, and it has 24-bit A-to-D conversion, which is ideal for copying your vinyl onto CD. If this is your plan, you'll appreciate that the Pioneer makes it easy to create first-rate copies from any source, helped by the manual recording-level controls. It was hard to tell our copy of Jim White's *No Such Place* from the original.



Also Available Marantz DR6000 CD Recorder • £299.95

While the Pioneer's replay quality can't match the Marantz, it costs £120 less, which would buy you a lot of blank discs. If you've already got a dedicated CD player, we'd go with this recorder."

★★★★★ August 2001

Recorder Selection

Marantz DR6000 CD-RW.....	£299.95
Sony MDS-JE770 MiniDisc.....	£219.95
Yamaha KX393 Cassette Deck.....	£109.95
Yamaha KX580SE Cassette Deck.....	£179.95
Yamaha CDR-HD1300 CD-RW.....	£549.95



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sale



Free Interconnect Cable* Worth £150
When TAG AV30R & TAG 100x5R Purchased Together

TAG McLaren



AV30R AV Processor £1799.95
100x5R Power Amplifier £2994.95

TAG McLaren's AV30R AV Processor is aimed at the home cinema enthusiast who is concerned with keeping up-to-date with the latest surround formats. When partnered with TAG's 100x5R Power Amplifier it makes an exceptional combination.

According to What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision magazine in their October 2002 issue: "In use, the AV30R, connected to TAG's 100x5R power amp, is superb. True, it can't quite match the clarity and power of the latest-specification TAG flagship, the AV32Rbp-192, but by any AV standard this is a very high-end piece of kit, with excellent impact and fine detail across a range of movie soundtracks from Once Upon A Time In America to the explosive actionfests. Channel steering is immaculate, and the sense of a soundfield wrapped around you - even in 5.1-channel mode - entrancing, with spine-tingling rear-channel effects. The fine Pro Logic II implementation serves music as well as it does non-discrete AV soundtracks, and with an SACD machine hooked up via the 5.1 channel inputs, the lack of coloration and sheer bass oomph is extraordinary." **★★★★★** October 2002



ACOUSTICS



Pro 50 Subwoofer (Black) £299.95
Pro 100 Subwoofer (Black) £599.95

MJ Acoustics is a new company based in Cambridgeshire. During the past year, they have received favourable reviews across their product range. The Pro 50 was awarded 'Best Buy' by What Hi-Fi Sound and Vision in their 2002 awards. "This is a black satin finished miniature sub that nevertheless packs in a 20cm long-throw driver and a 50w MOSFET amp designed for good power reserves even at high levels... And it sounds great whether with the floorshaking basslines of dance music, the slam of rock or an orchestral swell, when correctly set-up, the Pro 50 provides a subtle underpinning even of big loudspeakers. The bass it delivers is well extended and tightly controlled with both music and movies, giving a subjective impression of greater clarity across the frequency range, the added low-end complemented by better midband focus. It's truly thrilling stuff." **★★★★★ Awards 2002**

Claim £120 Off The Speakers* of your choice when purchased at the same time as the Linn Klassik Music System - Minimum Value £200

Claim £250 Off • The Speakers* of your choice when purchased at the same time as the Linn Klassik Movie System - Minimum Value £500



LINN
Linn Klassik
Music System £999.95

The Klassik Music System is an alternative to the sound and looks of mass market compact systems. Designed to be useful throughout the home, the Klassik is simple and stylish with all the advanced features needed to satisfy the most demanding hi-fi enthusiast or discriminating music lover.



"Since the Scottish company added a tuner to the amp/CD player, mouths have gaped even wider in appreciation. The addition of colour options panders to the public's taste for kit to match their interior design, but it doesn't just look lovely in the lounge: the Klassik sounds simply marvellous. Boasting fine impact and drive, it retains its grip even as it thumps out rock and dance tracks. Ask it to play quiet acoustic music and its smooth, liquid presentation impresses still further. The Klassik offers the performance you'd expect from high quality separates in one lovely package - this is a very superior product." **★★★★★ Awards 2001**

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- Maidstone** 96 Week Street **01622 686366** Open Sunday
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within the M25

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- Holborn** 144-148 Grays Inn Road **020 7837 7540**
- Kingston** 43 Fife Road **020 8547 0717** Open Sunday
- Southgate** 79-81 Chase Side **020 8886 2777** Open Sunday
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- Watford** 478 St Albans Road **01923 213533** Open Sunday



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who are sevenoaks?

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

Each Sevenoaks Sound & Vision outlet stocks a wide range of quality products, covering all categories of specialist home entertainment, from DVD Players to Widescreen Plasma Televisions and Projection Systems, all at highly competitive prices.

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staff wanted

We are currently recruiting staff at several locations. If you are enthusiastic, knowledgeable, have good customer service skills and would like a career within the audio/visual industry, call Janys Ness on 01732 466214 for more information.

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The Sevenoaks Sound & Vision website has news and information on the Sevenoaks group and its 48 outlets nationwide. The website is designed to provide you with answers to the questions you may have when buying new equipment.

There are regularly updated stock clearance lists with hundreds of products on offer and detailed pages to help you locate your nearest outlet.

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stock clearance

With 48 outlets nationwide, the Sevenoaks Sound & Vision group stock and display a wide range of products. As individual 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, listed by outlet, within the Sevenoaks Sound and Vision group.

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Spread the cost of buying. 0% finance option is available on the vast majority of products we stock. †Written details on request. Licensed credit brokers. Minimum balance £400. Subject to status.

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christmas opening

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Christmas Day • All Outlets Closed - Happy Christmas!

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Many of our stores will be open Sunday during December and January. Please contact your local outlet before travelling or visit our website for up-to-date information.



NEW MUSICA

For the audiophile, DVD-Audio is manna from heaven. Twenty years after the music industry brought us the sonically flawed CD, it has redeemed itself with an excellent 'advanced resolution' format – right? Wrong, says David Price in the second installment of our DVD-A feature..

For many audiophiles reared on top quality turntables, the 1990s were wilderness years. Having acquired a taste for music reproduced in the manner it was recorded, it came as no small disappointment to find that the format we were suddenly being asked to switch to – Compact Disc – was sonically inferior to what we'd become accustomed. We increasingly found ourselves unable to get what we wanted on our preferred format of vinyl, while being told by hardware and software manufacturers alike either that we should, or that we'd have to, move to CD because it was 'the future of recorded music'. As the nineties progressed it became ever harder to find new releases on vinyl, as CD increasingly became the only format around.

The announcement of DVD-Audio was a bolt from the blue. Just as many of us had given up hope of ever getting decent sound from CD, here was the promise of a format that addressed the fundamental flaw of our silver discs – its prehistoric 16bit, 44.1kHz PCM digital coding system. Reading the specs of the proposed new system, it seemed as if all our Christmases had come at once. Not only did it offer 24bit, 192kHz resolution in stereo, but a 5.1 surround mix in 24bit, 96kHz was provided too, in full uncompressed PCM using Meridian's Lossless Packing system.

The key problem that many had with CD sound arose from its 16/44 digital resolution which offered a frequency range that barely reached 20kHz. Vinyl, on the other hand, was capable of considerably higher, although at the time of CD's inception this wasn't thought



There are over 30 DVD-A players in the UK including the Marantz DV-12

significant, as it's generally agreed that human hearing only stretches to around 20kHz.

Subsequently however, many acousticians have come to believe that humans can 'feel', if not 'hear', well above this. As a result, the new DVD-Audio format was designed to go right up to 96kHz. More importantly however, is that the PCM digital coding system gets distinctly 'noisy' as it reaches the upper limits of its bandwidth – precisely where the ear is most sensitive with CD. By extending its frequency response right up to 96kHz, DVD-A gets ragged far out of the range of human perception, making for a cleaner and smoother sound.

All this looked like the stuff of audiophile dreams back in the late nineties – which is precisely what we were worried about. Here was a superb new format that hi-fi buffs would love, which almost invariably meant the commercial kiss of death. Frankly, when was the last time the music industry had given a stuff about sound? The only moment the subject crossed its corporate mind was at the time of CD's launch, when it was famously touted by Philips as

having "pure, perfect sound forever" – and we all new what a hollow ring that had.

MANNA FROM HEAVEN

Amazingly, DVD-Audio was launched. In addition to the aforementioned 'advanced resolution' digital audio tracks, the new discs boasted enhanced content such as interviews, behind-the-scenes studio footage, and music videos, as well as photo galleries, liner notes, lyrics and more. Fears of poor 'backwards compatibility' were assuaged by their 'universal' compatibility – DVD-A discs would play on all DVD machines (including the latest generation of games consoles like Sony's PS-2, GameCube and X-BOX). On standard DVD video machines they'd give Dolby AC3 quality, while DVD-Audio (or universal) players would give the full 24/192 smash. John Trickett, Chairman of the 5.1 Entertainment Group called it, "an amazing music experience... like having heard in black and white all of your life and now being able to have colour. Once you have heard it there's no going back."

The worries that the public



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L EXCESS?

wouldn't want yet another new audio format were tempered by the massive – and unexpected – success of DVD video. By the end of 2002, 70 million DVD players had already been sold, amounting to forty percent of homes in the United States. If the DVD drives built into PCs and game consoles are included then this number almost doubled! All this meant that the 'basics' were in place for the format to succeed – music buyers could play multichannel DVD-A discs on their existing kit and then upgrade to 'advanced resolution' machines at a later date to release the full potential of their software.

By the beginning of this year, the DVD-A programme was growing apace, with a surprisingly harmonious relationship between hardware and software manufacturers. With thirty DVD-A players on sale in the UK and forty in The States, casual observers could be forgiven for concluding that, seemingly for the first time in the history of recorded music, 'both sides' are working together to bring punters better sounding music. Over four hundred titles are now available world-wide from the likes of Silverline, Warner Music, EMI and Immurgent. John Trickett adds that, "don't be deceived by what you see today on the shelves – there is an avalanche about to happen."

HARD SELLING

There's no doubt, then, that DVD-A has an awful lot going for it in terms of technology and functionality. But for all its dazzling qualities, commercial success is still not assured. Formats like Digital Compact Cassette and MiniDisc have shown that people no longer buy into technologies that can't demonstrate obvious, everyday practical advantages over existing systems. The new format faces a welter of questions that its proponents must answer convincingly before it can succeed.

First, how will the ordinary buying public appreciate the difference between 'standard' DVD and DVD-Audio formats? As most punters have little idea about the sonic merits of DVD, how can they be expected to invest in DVD-A? Early adopters and audiophiles may be prepared to pay for 'advanced resolution' digital but getting High Street buyers to understand why they should is a challenge. Here, the fact that DVD-A shares the immensely popular DVD platform gives it a real fillip. Because every 'advanced resolution' disc features a multichannel mix encoded in either Dolby Digital or dts in addition to uncompressed PCM, every existing DVD machine can play the new discs, albeit not in the 'advanced resolution' quality. This – according to Meridian's Bob Stuart – gives buyers a "way in" to the format; they can buy the discs now, enjoy the multichannel mix and get the full benefit when they later invest in a DVD-A machine.

He adds that with the exception of "£100 players from Tesco's", the next generation of DVD spinners will all be DVD-Audio compatible anyway because, "the cost of adding DVD-A functionality to DVD video machines is really only the extra price of the sockets and DACs, so in the medium term this won't even be an issue". In a sense then, he believes DVD-A will catch on almost 'by osmosis' – simply because all players can play the new discs now and will have full DVD-A functionality soon, it will become the default music format. This makes sense, but remains to be seen.

Ironically, there's a sense that those pushing DVD-A are hiding their light under a bushel. Whilst audiophiles crave the format for its fine sonics, and as Bob Stuart points out, "some of the music labels are very keen about the sound – particularly the artists", this point doesn't seem to register with the general music buying public. "It is difficult. Let's face it – many people are satisfied with the sound of an MP3

file", agrees John Trickett. To wit, the multichannel aspect is really being pushed. "We all feel that the thing that would lure the market – especially the young – is surround sound", says Bob Stuart.

Another factor challenging DVD-A's future success is Super Audio Compact Disc. Whilst DVD-A titles are now being rolled out with aplomb, there's no denying the large number of titles available on SACD particularly coming from the Japanese market – and the clarity a focus of Sony's hardware marketing strategy. By contrast, Bob Stuart is not impressed with "the miserable job" originally made of launching DVD-A. Still, he rebuts SACD as a serious challenge to DVD-A, citing the latter's technical superiority (unlike SACD's DSD coding, DVD is "pure and uncompressed"), additional functionality and natural orientation towards multichannel.

Many of DVD-A's proponents appear to regard SACD as more about Sony and Philips' response to the expiry of CD patents. "At the risk of being somewhat cynical – has to consider the motivation. If I owned the patent on CD I would not be terribly enthusiastic about another format that has the potential to remove my income stream", says John Trickett.

THE BOTTOM LINE

If we are being conspiratorial however, there's plenty of evidence to suggest that the interest shown in DVD-Audio by the music industry is more about its own parlous state than the new format's intrinsic technical excellence. Global music sales are in deep decline, down from \$37 billion in 2000 to \$33.6 billion in 2001 [source: IFPI], but there's absolutely no evidence to suggest this is down to any lack of interest in music on the part of buyers. Rather, music consumption is actually up, with 6 billion tracks consumed per month in 1996 and 9.3 billion in 2001 [source: IFPI].

This is down to the combination of free internet music downloading and, more importantly, the proliferation of CD copying. The upshot is that global music piracy is now costing the music business \$1.9 billion. This is engendering a 'culture of free music' which is "terrifying" the industry, to use Bob Stuart's phrase. For example a recent survey for market research organisation Gartner G2 revealed that 88% of respondents said they believed it legal to make copies of CDs for personal backup use while 77% felt they should be able to copy a CD for personal use in another device. It is becoming ever harder, it seems, to

get music fans to pay for music.

What DVD-A brings to the party is robust copy protection. Bob Stuart intimates that two major music labels have professed a desire to "be out of CD within five years because they want better copy protection. After a couple of years of ludicrous attempts to copy-protect CD, the big guns are saying right now we want to go for this". Of course, DVD-A isn't impossible to pirate, but it's not ridiculously easy either, not least because MP3s don't come mixed in 5.1 channel surround.

For all its 'advanced resolution' multichannel sound, 'enhanced' content and universal compatibility,

DVD-A is being given the hard sell because of its robust copy protection. For a recording industry flailing in the face of MP3 and CD-R, DVD-Audio is the obvious way ahead. Compact Disc, thanks to its vast market penetration, low 'added value' and 'copy-friendly' nature, is something many industry figures would rather forget. It is DVD-A that they want to see succeed. As Naim Audio's Paul Stephenson succinctly puts it, "copyright issues are the big driver for the big guys, and the multichannel disc releases help this cause".

David Price talks to John Trickett, Chairman of the 5.1 Entertainment Group about selling DVD-Audio.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF DVD-A TO YOUR AVERAGE MUSIC BUYER?

An amazing music experience... DVD Audio works just like a CD – you put the disk into the machine and it plays. If you wish you can also switch on the TV and then get access to a host of bonus features including such things as an artist commentary, lyrics, behind the scenes/making of videos, never seen before photographs, bonus tracks, live performances, alternative mixes, charts, guitar tabs ... the sky's the limit.

WHO'S DRIVEN THE DEVELOPMENT OF DVD-A - ARTISTS, STUDIOS OR RECORD COMPANIES?

All of the above. DVD Audio was originally conceived as an extension of the DVD format in the planning stages back in 1995. At that time over 40 companies including the major hardware manufacturers, technology companies and record labels were involved in the process to develop something that would provide an experience that far surpassed anything that was then available. Today the level of co-operation between those involved is unprecedented – artists, labels, studios, manufacturers, pressing plants – you name it. Everyone feels



what is possible and are working together to make it a reality. From the perspective of the artist – I've been fortunate to be in the studio with a number of major artists as they heard 5.1 surround sound and DVD-A for the first time. Without exception they have had the same creative epiphany – this is the way that music should be heard. There are many artists today who are delivering 5.1 mixes to their labels at the same time as they provide stereo. Don't be deceived by what you see today on the shelves – there is an avalanche about to happen.

WHAT'S YOUR POSITION IN THE DVD-A vs. SACD DEBATE?

Both sound fantastic. Personally I find that SACD smoothes out a lot of the end ranges of the spectrum and it is somewhat like listening to music through rosy coloured glasses whereas I feel that DVD Audio does a better job in reproducing the pure

tonal quality of the original master tapes. In my opinion the sonic difference is largely immaterial to the average consumer. My company owns or has licensed over 300 albums (with many more coming in the next few months) all but a few of which we have the rights to release in both formats. We have chosen to focus exclusively on DVD Audio for a few simple reasons:

- [i] SACD requires that the consumer buy a new piece of hardware, DVD does not.
- [ii] The DVD format is a household name that is synonymous with better quality. DVD Audio is a natural extension of that brand identity.
- [iii] DVD Audio permits bonus features which adds to the experience of the consumer and gives them more of a reason to buy albums. SACD does not. At a fundamental level I see DVD Audio as being the mass market format of choice.

TWO OF



If it's a dual format DVD player you're after, Marantz's DV8300 DVD-A/SACD spinner fits the bill nicely, says Noel Keywood.

If the music industry is polarising into SACD and DVD-A high resolution formats, and you want something better than CD, then a dual-standard player like Marantz's DV8300 reviewed here is the way to go. The problem is price - the new DV8300 costs £1400, which is a lot of wonga for any silver disc spinner.

The Marantz plays both SACD and DVD-Audio discs. It also handles CD of course, including mini 8cm types which I tend to favour, as well as CD-R/RWs, video CDs, MP3 discs (ISO9060, but not VBR) and DVD-R/RW (but not DVD+R/RW).

As you might expect from such an expensive machine, there is a Component Video output through three phono sockets, plus two Composite Video outputs, an S-Video and two Scarts, one with RGB. The machine can output either PAL or NTSC through its composite outputs, or both for dual system TVs. It also provides progressive scan via the component outputs as an option, and in fact some of the £1,400 asking price goes into advanced video processing, much of which is user adjustable through a Video Adjust setting. This is an eyeball roller - you can even reduce mosquito noise (MNR - Mosquito Noise Reduction - I kid you not!), most effective when watching David Attenborough I imagine! If video turns you on, this is the machine for you.

On the audio side, on-board decoding is provided for Dolby Surround Sound and dts, analogue being available from rear phono

sockets. As always, the player will mix down to stereo as an option. There are electrical and optical digital outputs, but note that all DVD-Audio and SACD is output only through the analogue outs. Via digital link DVD-Audio is downmixed to stereo and 24/192 is downmixed to 24/96.

Surround-sound 'speaker settings are comprehensive, with both 'speaker size and delay (i.e. distance from listener) adjustable over a wide range of 0.3m to 9m for the fronts, and -6m to +2m for the rears. Speakers cannot be individually adjusted, except the subwoofer, which can also be switched off. A test signal is provided to aid set-up, and that includes channel gain so that different power amps can be used for front and rear.

You don't have to worry about video quality with the DV8300 - it is superb. I use Scart/ RGB/ progressive for best quality, but even interlaced was fine, if not as silky smooth. Pressing the remote's Video Adjust button accesses all the picture adjustments whilst a disc is playing, so you can see changes immediately. Indeed the Marantz offers one of the best pictures I have seen to date, well ahead of Denon's highly rated DVD3800. In (don't laugh) Jimmy Neutron (which I am forced to watch a lot) colours were denser, with better contrast and seemingly more luminous than I have hitherto seen. Outdoor scenes in Dark Blue World looked natural and rich. Detail was superb, even in shadows. Of course, fine differences in video colour level settings affect our

perceptions of a picture, so I'll add the caveat that the Marantz was superb 'as set', but it is undoubtedly a fine video player in absolute terms.

Whilst in some ways the Marantz DV8300 was inferior in its handling of DVD-Audio to Denon's DVD3800, the situation isn't a simple one. The Denon was poor with CD, so poor that I chose not to use it as a CD player. Measurement shows the Marantz is far more linear in its replay section, born out by its decent CD sound which is clean but a little bright, well detailed and with nicely portrayed depth perspective. Bass was a little mellifluous perhaps, but entirely satisfactory all the same. Violins in both digital and analogue recordings of Wagner highlights came over as vibrant and well separated, but also smoothly too. Drums and bass in Angelique Kidjo's 'Agolo' had all the power you normally get from a decent player.

Denon's big machines have a 'rock solid' bass quality that eludes the Marantz, which simply didn't have the visceral punch of the drums on Toy Matinee's 'Turn it on Salvador' (DVD-A). Still, it wasn't so far behind as to be seriously wanting. Fleetwood Mac's Rumours (DVD-A) came over very well. This new transcription sounds a little bright but it still has the fulsome bass of the original - and the Marantz lost none of it, while also sounding pure across the top end.

SACDs were generally easier on the ear and more fluid than DVD-A discs, which is how the two formats generally pan out sonically. The

A KIND

Marantz changed nothing here, getting equally good results from both.

As the Denon's clarity and cleanliness faded in my memory, and the Marantz DV8300 very competently strode through just about every test I threw at it (including fine CD replay), I couldn't help but end up admiring it. This player does everything – and does it well. Both impressive and very relaxing to listen to, Marantz have used their considerable knowledge

and ability to ensure that the background weaknesses it has – see our Measured Performance – don't in practice make themselves much known. However, as Paul Miller makes quite clear in our Measured Performance, at least in audio terms, better is available for less elsewhere.

While I would rate this player comfortably above Denon's DVD3800 in terms of sound and video quality – making it well worth its price – it still faces stiff competition from the likes of

Pioneer's £500 cheaper DV-757Ai. It remains a great player though, one which I have been happy to use at length. To date I can only say this of a select few players – so many machines I've encountered seem to have near-fatal weaknesses in one area or another, but not so this Marantz. It might not be perfect, but it is very, very good.

Marantz DV8300 £1,400

www.marantz.co.uk

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

This is the second sample of Marantz's DV8300 that I have tested, and while their general specifications are similar, this second unit does suffer from a marked increase in supply-related noise and jitter. Jitter has increased from the ~680psec expected to ~2090psec while, even with A-weighting, the overall S/N ratio has fallen from 107dB to 103dB. These extra peaks are clearly visible in the jitter plot (picked-out by a wave of blue coloured markers) which, otherwise, is comparable to that from Onkyo's DV-SP800 (see page XX). This type of jitter will add more than a little warmth to the sound of the DV8300 but is just as likely to soften its bass and compromise the clarity of its imaging.

This noise is also visible as a 'clump' at the base of the 40kHz signal in the second graph (dark blue trace). Because the DV8300 uses Pioneer's first-generation DV-747 player as its foundation, it also shares

the same pattern of ultrasonic noise which, typically, is worse with SACD (bright blue trace) than DVD-A. Of course, SACD's increased noise does serve to camouflage any distortion harmonics of signals above 15kHz or so, although this amounts to just 0.0125% at 40kHz with DVD-A.

Through the midrange, distortion is as low as 0.0004% with all CD, SACD and DVD formats just as its low-level linearity holds true to +/-0.2dB (-90dBFs) and +/-1.9dB (-110dBFs). The increased SACD noise is at least partly explained by Marantz's gentler analogue filtering which leaves the <response> just -2.6dB at 60kHz, -7.6dB at 80kHz and -16dB at 100kHz. While this is more than 'flat' enough for human ears, the DVD-A response is, as expected, flatter still with a mere -1.7dB dip at 80kHz! In practice, while the DV8300 offers little advantage over Pioneer's original DV-747 the variation in performance between samples suggests it has not fully

settled into production. Will the real DV8300 please stand up?

PM

Frequency Response

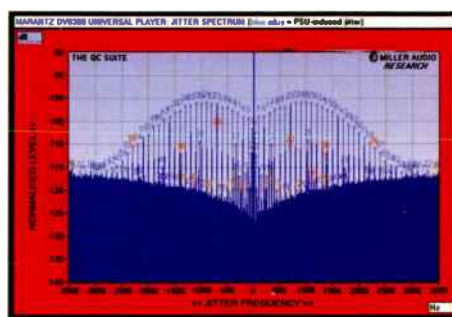
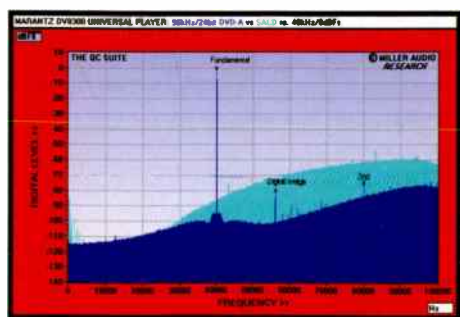
CD	-0.02dB (20Hz) to +0.06dB (20kHz)	
SACD	-0.02dB (20Hz) to -16.3dB (100kHz) 192k	
DVD-A	-0.02dB (20Hz) to -1.7dB (80kHz)	

Distortion	Left	Right
-6dBFs	0.0004%	0.0005%
-30dBFs	0.0054%	0.0057%
-60dBFs	0.18%	0.17%
-90dBFs	1.9%	1.8%

Separation		
1kHz	105dB	104dB
20kHz	107dB	108dB

Noise (IEC A)	103.1dB	102.9dB
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Output	2.00V	2.00V
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World Verdict

Fine audio and video quality plus 'universal' compatibility make this an excellent machine, but one which faces fierce competition nonetheless.

L A T I N



Pathos Acoustics have always had great taste when it comes to styling and the new Logos integrated from the Italian company is a real feast for the eyes. Will it feast the ears, though, asks Alan Sircom?

Pathos and Logos are two out of the three types of persuasion of classical rhetoric; just add 'ethos' to complete the set. Pathos is an appeal to emotion whereas Logos is an appeal to reason (and ethos is an appeal to the character of the person).

That seems to be about right; the company Pathos makes fantastic-looking products that appeal to the heart, while the £2,495 Logos integrated amplifier is a logical choice for many systems. Styling of the Logos makes you wonder if Frank Lloyd Wright ever died. It has the gorgeous lines of the Guggenheim Museum or Fallingwater, not the bluff square exterior of your average integrated amplifier. Some touches are pure Art Deco, especially the heatsinks that spell out the Pathos name; when the amp is picked up, these leave an almost-indelible reminder of the company name in your palms. Then add the curved light grey front, the twin tubes in a mirrored V sitting back from the wood centre panel with the name,

main knob and LED display. Short of a very select handful of other components of similarly elegant design, this will be the product to draw all the attention in any hi-fi system.

Beneath this stylish exterior is a hybrid design typical of the Pathos, er, ethos. It's a pre/power in a single chassis and a no-feedback design. The MOSFET based dual mono output stage is claimed to deliver a healthy 110Watts into eight Ohms, doubling perfectly into four Ohms to give 220Watts. The literature suggests that the output transformers are 'oversized'. After wrangling with this massive, sharp-edged beastie I wouldn't dispute this claim.

The preamplifier stage sits firmly in the Class A realm, using a tasty 100-step digital volume control which features a network of high-precision laser-trimmed resistors in place of the more commonplace potentiometer. Not only does this make for spot-on channel balance, it prevents tonal change through the sweep of the volume control. It also means the volume control operates at the merest twist of the knob -

which looks and feels very cool indeed.

It's the preamp section where the hybrid part of the amplifier lies. There are a pair of ECC 82 double triodes in fancy chrome protectors which drive the preamplifier stage in Class A. This section has a pair of balanced inputs, plus five conventional (i.e. unbalanced) inputs.

There's even a remote control hewn out of solid wood. It looks neat and elegant, but with no instructions at all, using it is down to guesswork and then memory.

This amplifier's hybrid sound is truly magical across mid and high frequencies, presented seemingly without favouritism but with an honest three-dimensional neutrality that forces the listener into a mixing-desk accurate soundstage. Better still, this amplifier sounds good while conveying a mass of detail. Few amplifiers get this much information from a source without sounding a bit stark, etched or somehow unappealing; most are amps you will respect rather than like. Then along comes the Logos and all bets are off. You get the information retrieval of a

SPIRIT

genuine detail-hound product, but that info is so damn musical that you just can't help listening to more.

As a hi-fi reviewer, this quality makes this a bit of a nemesis product – you sit down with your pad and try to jot down notes about the performance and end up listening to another disc, and another, and another... It manages to combine high-end sheen and oodles of grunt with a degree of happy listenability that often characterises good budget products. This delicate balance between the smooth tones and resolute solidity of high-end performance and the almost raw fun of cheaper gear comes across whatever is played through the Logos. However, anything with plenty of vocals – like the arch weirdness of *The Polyphonic Spree* – has a fantastic sense of layering and articulation that makes you hear every breath of the dozen or more white kaftan'd singers.

Bass is a slight issue, but only if you partner the Logos with true full-range speakers. Most hi-fi designs have strongly rolled off bass and the thickness of the Logo's bottom end enhances and complements that roll off, making speakers sound fuller, warmer and a bit more musical. Stick

a 'real' full-range speaker in the system and that full, warm and musical sound turns fat, syrupy and

ponderous, especially when played loud with something with a bit of bottom-end welly, such as Gorillaz vs Spacemonkez dubbed up remix album. This made me wish for a bit of lean in my musical bacon, as it sounds rather too packed with *The Full English* bloat. But, as this would mean partnering a two-and-a-half-grand amplifier with ten g's plus worth of loudspeaker system, most Logos users will never discover that chubbiness; instead, they will marvel at all that extra richness and tonality to the bottom end.

You cannot sum up a product like the Logos in one word, but there are words that keep re-emerging – and one of those is 'bouncy'. The bouncy sense of rhythm (even if that is produced by a slight thickening of the bottom end) gives even dense classical music the sort of groove Ry Cooder would be proud of. Yet, it



doesn't force a rhythmic structure on the music played, it merely digs out a beat no matter how camouflaged that beat may be. Such infectious beat structures are the stuff of dreams for most valve designs, but come as standard here.

If the Logos only sounded slightly as good as it looked, it would more than justify the price tag. However, sprinkle in that wonderful mid-band transparency, vocal articulation and natural imagery and the Logos starts to prove that beauty isn't only skin deep. Unless you have top-class full-range speakers, this is an elegant and highly recommended choice.

Pathos Logos £2,499

UKD

Tel: +44 (0)1753 652669

www.ukd.co.uk

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The Logos certainly has plenty of power, producing 128watts into 8ohms and 210watts into 4ohms. Power supply regulation was good and it will go loud. Measuring distortion, to see how it handled heavy current delivery into a low load showed, however, that at full gain the front-end triode valve produce quite a lot of hum and its harmonics on the output. Since this was gain dependent its audibility depends upon the gain of a preceding pre-amp and the setting of the Logos volume control, but all the same the amplifier should have been quieter. Input triodes only hum

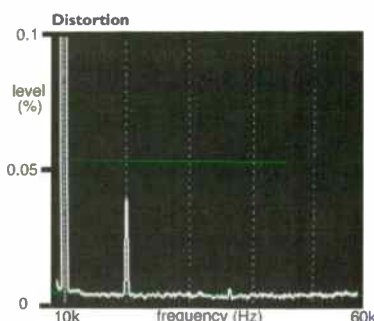
when the base used lacks critical screening or the heater is a.c.

This apart, there is a little distortion with extended harmonics at high output, but the amplifier is clean enough at low output. Bandwidth was an extended 150kHz with good low end extension down to 5Hz.

The Logos measured fairly well, with the exception of hum from the triodes. **NK**

Power 128watts
CD/tuner/aux.
Frequency response 6Hz-150kHz

Separation	90dB
Noise	-81 dB
Distortion	0.04%
Sensitivity	800mV
dc offset	2/5mV



World Verdict £

Stonking looking and highly detailed sounding, the Logos is a lot of amplifier for the money. High end at a sensible price.

TURN UP FOR THE BOOKS

The Revolver R33 is the first product from the new, re-vitalised company. Dominic Todd listens to this new two-way standmount.



Those with longer audio memories may well remember Revolver. Along with other smaller UK hi-fi companies they were a brand that went to the wall during the early 90s as turntable sales dramatically declined. However, just as many other names have been resurrected, so too has Revolver. The company behind the resurrection, The Acoustic Partnership, is based in Cornwall and includes amongst its crew an ex-Heybrook man, Mike Jewitt. It's therefore not that surprising to see a range of 'speakers as their first ven-

ture back into the hi-fi market.

The £500 R33 here faces extremely tough competition. There are literally dozens of 'speakers around this price point, and designs such as the Quad L Series have moved the game on in terms of what can be expected in both finish and sound quality.

Initially, the Revolvers came as something of a disappointment. After the beautifully veneered cabinets of

many rivals I find the laminate and grey cloth finish of the R33s rather cheap and impractical. Surely it wouldn't take long for that cloth to rip and stain in most households, especially those with curious cats! Personal issues of aesthetics aside, though, the R33s appear well made. The MDF cabinet is solid and internally braced. The hardwired crossover uses some decent quality components, although it's a shame that a higher grade of internal 'speaker cable couldn't have been used. The drive units are pretty much what you'd expect at this level: there's a custom designed glass fibre woofer, accompanied by an aluminium tweeter with ring magnet.

It's a competent design, yet one that boasts little to differentiate it from a proliferation of rivals.

As ever in high fidelity though, even the unlikeliest looking designs can spring a surprise when it comes to sound quality and I'm pleased to say that this was very much the case here. Tom Jones and The Stereophonics' 'Mama told me not to come', revealed a vibrant, upfront sound that appealed to me from the off. Much of its appeal lay in sheer transparency. Vocals were wonderfully open and projected well into the room, clear of the rest of the mix. Separation and sound staging were excellent, even for a design of this price range. There were times when I could easily believe it was a 'speaker of twice I was listening to, such was the R33's insight into the music.

Thankfully, their bass response had plenty of weight, otherwise the balance could have tipped just a little too much towards being forward. As it was, I found the balance ideal, at least for the average UK sized living room.

Excellent timing was a characteristic of Richard Thompson's 'Hand on me'. There was just enough bass to push the strong rhythm through, without it becoming bogged down and soggy, a problem with poorer floorstanders. In addition to the tight, focused bassline, my enjoyment was further enhanced by the texture and delay afforded to percussion. Thompson's vocals, too, benefited



from the R33's open and honest representation. With all these aspects combined I found a great sense of realism and very little to grouch about here.

Much the same was true with Classical music, in this case Chabrier's, orchestral piece, Espana. This is one of the most vibrant and dynamic Classical pieces I know, and it's to the R33's credit that they coped admirably with it. First of all the downside: There can be no doubt that a hefty floorstander would create a superior sense of scale and weight to the sound, yet in other respects the Revolver's passed with

flying colours. Their balance was dynamic and blissfully free of compression. They also managed the trick of sounding vibrant and exciting, without missing out subtler details. Amongst the almost uncontrolled outbursts from the brass sections, even the quietest chimes could still be heard. Yet, when a soloist should be heard above the orchestra, they were given the proper treatment. The closely recorded solo horn, playing during the middle of the piece, fairly leapt out from the 'speakers. I could of course argue that this wouldn't be the case at a live concert, yet it was clearly what the recording engineers had intended, and therefore true to the original recording. The R33s did more than simply stage the piece well, they made it involving and real. I've not heard brass timbre as good from a 'speaker of this price range for some time. It got just the right balance of power, richness and, well, brassy exuberance.

My one fear had been that the Revolvers might be a little too forward, and perhaps sibilant, with female vocalists. I needn't have worried as Dave's True Story's 'Daddy-O' proved. The vocals showed no hint of excess sibilance, despite being powerfully projected well into the room. There was also plenty of height given to the stage, and plenty of clues to the recording venue, given

the echo, decay and ambience. Finally, it was a real pleasure to hear the tenor and baritone saxophones sounding as though they were sparring with one another, such was their vivacity.

As you've probably gathered by now, I came to the conclusion that Revolver's R33s are sonically pretty special. Not surprisingly, they reminded me of the best characteristics of Heybrook 'speakers. In terms of transparency, separation and staging they are amongst the best in their class. Furthermore, they manage to achieve such insight without sounding anemic or at all harsh.

Whilst I wouldn't describe the R33s as being the most refined 'speaker on the market, you would have to have a pretty harsh system to be upset by the effect. Likewise, whilst the bass may not be quite as deep as some, I found it to be ample, yet cohesive and powerful enough to balance the forward mid-range. So, despite the dubious aesthetics, the R33s get my wholehearted recommendation. Just make sure that all cats are kept well away!

Revolver R33 £499

Acoustic Partnership
Tel: 087 0047 0047
www.revolveraudio.co.uk

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Although the Revolver R33 looks flat enough in terms of its frequency response, a close look shows that bass output is well damped and treble peaks above 12kHz. With no crossover dip to soften the sound, on balance this means the R33 will likely sound tight and bright. In particular, its well damped bass output suggests near-wall mounting.

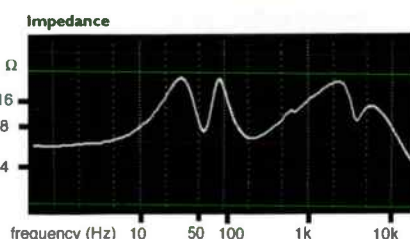
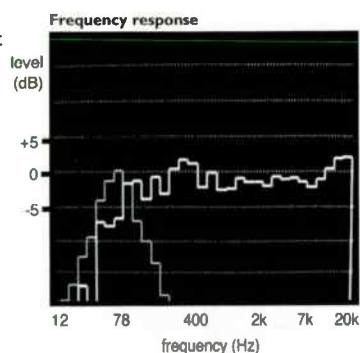
Like most reflex loudspeakers of reasonable dimension nowadays, the R33 gets down to 40Hz and measurement suggests it will produce healthy bass. It's no boom box though, in spite of a large rear port, which in fact keeps bass compression and distortion low. Small ports make for a choked sound at high bass levels. It looks like

the R33 has been engineered to sound fast and clean, but with bright recordings it may well sound sharp at times.

Voltage sensitivity was good at 86dB, especially since impedance was high at 9.5ohms. This is a good loudspeaker for 8ohm valve amps and an easy load for transistor amps. Impedance plummets above 6kHz and if this was corrected the tweeter would not peak so heavily.

Revolver's R33 is a neat enough design that will likely appeal to those who want a fast, controlled sound from a near-wall mounter.

NK



World Verdict 
Not the best finish for the money but with their transparency and tonal accuracy, the R33s are one of the best sounding in their class.

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letters & emails

Letter of the month

LEFT ON THE SHELF

When our first child became a toddler I hastily raised my stereo from its Sound Organisation rack on the floor to any old shelf or cupboard top available to keep it out of reach of inquisitive little hands. Speakers too went from dedicated stands to bookshelves. The turntable has always been on a Target wall shelf, which works fine but is of a rather industrial design. The imminent arrival of our second child has finally forced me to accept that this is going to be a permanent arrangement. So I've decided to put some shelves up.

The system consists of Roksan Xerxes, Meridian 200/203, Cyrus Two and a cheap radio. Speakers are Celestion DL4. I like my stereo - it sounded great on a dedicated rack, it still sounds remarkably good on top of a cupboard. So I don't want to change any of the bits - just give them the best chance I can. The question then is, what's going to do this on a budget of not very much?

A quick trawl of the web has yielded a grand total of zero dedicated wall shelves for hi-fi. I suspect this isn't really the case but it's not encouraging. Does anybody make such a product? If they do, I'll need at least two - one each for turntable and CD player - the radio and amp can fend for themselves to some extent.

My other option is a trip to the local DIY superstore. If I do go for ordinary shelving should it be a heavy (solid wood) shelf rigidly fixed to the wall or would a lightweight (MDF?) shelf on those plug-in bracket things be the way to go?

With no evidence to back it up whatsoever, my preference would be for the solid variety, coupled with a support for the turntable of the Mana type. Some years ago a dealer demonstrating a CD player put Sorbothane pads underneath - and transformed it. Are these still considered a good idea and can you still get them (cheaper than a Mana table!)?

Finally, what about the speakers? Are there any decent wall brackets available? The only things I've ever seen

advertised look ghastly - designed for use by the kind of people who like to keep one speaker behind the sofa and the other in the airing cupboard - nicely out of the way.

Regards
Guy Coulson

And pray what's wrong with one 'speaker behind the sofa and the other in the airing cupboard? I've known certain models to sound much better this way!

Onto the real subject, though. Yours is a very common case and one all us dads have to consider. We also have to consider that if we want excessive detail and pin-point precision sound, we aren't going to get it unless the garage is transformed into a 'no entry' listening room. Consequently it's quite hard to enjoy hi-fi when your children are in the early stage, unless you've a good pair of headphones.

There is just the design you are looking for, made especially for those in your position and it comes from none other than Mana Acoustics. The Sound Shelf (£275) is a dedicated shelf for use with either a turntable or a CD player, and it is solidly bolted into the wall. It can be upgraded to Reference Shelf status by adding a Mini Table (£175) for further isolation. It's not cheap but definitely effective.

Otherwise, look around for supports such as the RDC platform which can be placed under the turntable on a self. It is available from hififorsale.com in their accessories section.

For the rest of the system, the 'real world' solution is, for me, the following. I'd suggest placing your equipment on some fairly wide and solid shelves (solidly fixed and bracketed into the wall). These can be well out of reach from little inquisitive hands, and I suggest you use subtle looking and effective supports such as Ringmat's Feet at £75 for four (which fit under each 'foot' of a component) for a little fine tuning of the digital source - although they are a

tad pricy.

Where this type of support is less necessary is with amplifiers, where vibration has less impact compared to that of a disc spinning mechanism.

A cheaper option is available in the form of simple but effective RDC cones which slip under the component, spiky end down. These things do work and often to the extent of many 'dedicated' stands.

Equipment support is far less of a grey area when it comes to 'speakers, however. Very, very few loudspeakers will work effectively when mounted on wall brackets or in corners. There's always Mission's fs2 NXT panels, but whilst good enough, they are more a domestic compromise than an audiophile transducer.

Wall brackets for loudspeakers are, as you suggest, not really for the hi-fi fanatic and are essentially a sonic trade off for getting the things out of the way! If you have to use a wall bracket make sure that the 'speakers are placed low enough down the wall for optimum listening (tweeters ideally at ear level or just above) and away from any corners. Also, if the 'speakers are bass reflex designs, choose a model that is front ported so it won't boom when placed close to a rear wall. **SP**



A Sound Shelf from Mana could be the solution to your problem!

PERPLEXED OF PEACEHAVEN!

My mind is totally scrambled with well meaning but contradictory advice on how to improve my front end (my wife may have a few suggestions). It all goes to prove that "sound" is so subjective and producing it with a spinning disc through boxes of wires and transistors (or valves) has too many variables to ever find real common ground.

Not that I am unhappy with my current modest set of boxes - Systemdek II, Helios Scorpio tonearm, Sumiko Blue Point cartridge, EAR 834 phono stage, Rega Planet 2000 CD, Technics SUC1000 plus 2 X SEA1000 power amps and Mission 852 speakers. However, no thanks to your publication I find myself looking for improvement!

I spend a lot of time listening to vinyl so this is the area I am looking at initially. My first thought was to upgrade to a GyroDec SE with RB300 arm as I am sure the Systemdek is going to be off the pace these days. Having spoken to a 'no axe to grind' dealer from your classifieds, however, I was not convinced about the benefits. Whilst he agreed that the Gyro was a good deck, in his opinion it wasn't a huge hike in performance on what I already had and I could achieve as good, if not better, sound by changing the motor to an Origin Live DC and swapping the arm for one of their tweaked RB250s.

This was the start of my journey through a whole chunk of your classifieds bothering each dealer in turn for their views. I have to say that each and every one was both courteous and helpful, albeit often giving completely opposite advice. The trouble is I'm none the wiser, hence my letter..

On the GyroDec - dealer one said 'good deck but goes out of tune too easily and I'd be better off with a Nottingham Analogue Spacedek. Dealer two disagreed saying the Gyro once set up could be left without problem. Another dealer when asked about the Origin Live modified arms said he thought they were out performed by a standard RB300 they just gave a "different", not necessarily better, sound.

You can see my problem. All I hoped to find out really is how much I would need to spend and in what direction to hear a significant enhancement in reproduction? Is it still worth keeping the Systemdek and improve it in the areas mentioned or ditch it altogether in favour of, say, the Origin Live Ultra with their modded

RB250 despite the 'thumbs down' from dealer three (most other dealers sung it's praises).

I would value your unbiased opinion and don't delay, as I can already feel the urge to ring another poor dealer!

Dominic Taylor
East Sussex

Well, hi-fi is a subjective thing, and so who can tell whether those dealers' respective contributions were heart-felt or financially expedient?

Personally, I've heard all manner of stories about the Gyro - it goes out of tune, it sounds dead, etc. etc. - and all I can say is that if you set it up properly (not difficult, considering its three spring adjusters are outside, not inside, the 'plinth') then you'll be amazed. In fact, your problem will be saving up for a suitably superb tonearm and cartridge!

There's a knack to setting up a Gyro - as per any belt drive, suspended subchassis deck - but it's not rocket science and once mastered won't need to be repeated very often. Simply get the deck on a level surface so the height adjusters don't need to be set differently, twiddle the springs so the bounce is a healthy 'up and down' motion (and dress the arm cable likewise) and you're off. Also, make sure you've got the right arm base for your arm, not just your arm mounting, as the bases are mass - as well as geometrically - matched to the GyroDec's balanced subchassis.

If it were my money I would go for the Gyro without hesitation - the Systemdek is an old design from another era that although worthy is off the pace now. To this I'd fit a - you've guessed it - Origin Live modded RB250. The dealer who says it's different not better is obviously running a weird sounding system! Akin to fitting a new set of Koni shockers, springs and sticky tyres to your car, it tightens things up no end and really makes the whole experience so much more involving. It's also great value too!

This done, when your Sumiko gives up the ghost, go for a Dynavector DV20X-H high output moving coil cartridge. Your EAR 834 isn't a bad phono stage, but is veiled enough to keep you blissfully unaware of the BPS's harsh, strident tendencies. Upgrading your deck might throw these into sharper relief, so the DV20 should rebalance

things nicely and give the EAR a nice, big, fat signal to play with. **DP**

CUT IT OUT!

I have an ongoing problem with my system in that through various set ups (Cyrus based) it has continually cut out.

The current system consists of a Cyrus 7 amplifier with PSX, a DAD 3 CD player and bi-wired Mission 753 Freedom speakers. This year I replaced the Cyrus IIII with the Cyrus 7 which has helped but not altogether solved the problem. I normally play the amp between nine and ten o'clock and my musical taste includes Flaming Lips, Mercury Rev, Blue Oyster Cult and Sonic Youth.

The amp cuts out on some discs quite regularly. I warm the hi-fi up for a day prior to playing and do not think that there is a particular fault as the previous hi-fi, virtually the same set up, had the same problem. I am now wondering whether the problem may be with the size of the speakers and whether they take too much driving and whether the addition of a power amp will help.

I did hear some Totem speakers in a hi-fi shop with a Cyrus set up and they seemed to play louder than the Missions at a lower volume. Could it be efficiency related?

Dave
North Yorkshire

Hi Dave. The Cyrus 7, whilst clean and forward is no out and out powerhouse amp - there's only so much you can squeeze into a box that size! At 12 o'clock the Cyrus amps are on the edge and at maximum drive. They can take some stick but everything has a limit, unfortunately. Pumping Flaming Lips and Sonic Youth through the Cyrus 7 at ten o'clock will actually push it to the edge of performance with the 753s, which are a 'difficult' 5ohm load. This would have also applied with your older IIII.

There are a few options open to you here. One is to sell the Cyrus 7 but keep the PSX and upgrade to the new, more powerful (by 10WV) Cyrus 8. This should make a small, not significant, difference. Perhaps a better option is to go for a pair of 'speakers that are an easier load, or more upfront in performance. Anything from Triangle, for example, is very easy to drive and has a forward and exciting sonic stamp. Alternatively, listen to a pair of Mission 783s which have a big, bass-tight sound. They're not the easiest

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Paul Messenger Hi-Fi+

In fact, the sound had clearly the "Beauhorn" signature. True, the B2's are less sensitive than the Virtuosos, but the vivid, uncolored midrange that I so much liked on the Virtuosos was there, fully there.

Thorsten Loesch Enjoy the Music

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to drive but have a bigger sound than the 753s.

Lastly, presuming you'd like to stick with Cyrus, you could go for the Smartpower power amplifier, using the 7 as a preamp. Whilst the Smartpower quotes only 60W per channel, we measured up to 80W in our tests and two can be bridged in monoblock form for a (conservative) quoted 105W per channel and more clout and drive than the Cyrus 7 can deliver. **SP**

ESCAPE TO A WARMER CLIMATE

I need to warm up the sound of my hi-fi. I've currently got a Meridian 200 transport with Audio Alchemy DAC, Audiolab 8000A/8000P amplification with a REL Strata III subwoofer and Acoustic Energy AE1 speakers. These are bi-wired with QED profile 4x4. Whilst the sound is beautifully open and detailed, it can lack warmth when playing Rock music. I suspect this is down to the Audiolabs.

I've got around £2000 to spend on upgrading the amps. Do you have any recommendations? There's so many good pre/power combos out there, I don't really know where to start.

Rick Williams

The obvious answer is to get a valve amp like AudioNote's superb Oto SE (£1200), but the problem is that it will struggle to sound louder than your mobile phone through those AE1s! Your loudspeakers are an acquired taste, and having acquired it many years back I can see where you're coming from! You obviously like fast, tight, punchy sound, methinks. To wit, Naim's brand new entry-level pre-power should fit the bill nicely.

The NAC202/NAP200 (£1170/£1142) pre-power combo will sound dramatically different to your 'Audiodrabs' - feisty, muscular, grippy and involving in a way your 8000s could only dream of but with more, yes, warmth. Indeed, I feel that your system has been suffering from mismatched amplifiers - the 8000Ps are a mediocre design that is grey as a wet Wednesday afternoon and your AE1s will be communicating this relentlessly.

How can I mutter the Naim name and the word 'warmth' in the same sentence? Well, the latest generation of Naims are warmer (shall we say less cold?) than those of yore, and really are getting neutral. Certainly, they're far less grey and

foggy than your 8000Ps.

Alternatively, consider Musical Fidelity's A308 (£2000) integrated, which is a brilliantly clean and powerful amplifier that errs on a warmer side of neutral. I'm using this right now and am growing ever more impressed with it as time goes by - it's also brilliant with my metal-coned (as per your AE1s) Yamaha NS1000Ms, which are a real trial to drive (as per your AE1s)! By all means listen to this with your speakers, but be aware that any upgrade to your amps will reveal your Audio Alchemy DAC in all its (unlovely) glory. There's also the superb valve/hybrid Unison Research Unico DM power amp at £1,500 which delivers 150W per channel of smooth power. You could then hang fire until the matching preamp (UR's preamps are usually highly commendable) is available early next year. You might also like to upgrade your DAC to a Meridian 203 (£125 from the classifieds) as a quick fix, or better still go for a Meridian 507 (£1195) as that superb 'last' CD player before you go to DVD-A. This has warmth and opulence in spades, and would be a great match for the AE1s too. Good luck. **DP**

the CD.

I don't really want to replace the turntable yet, I've hardly used it (due to numerous house moves in the last twelve years it's never been set up permanently anywhere until now). I feel I have not heard what it's sonically capable of, given the limitations of components in the remainder of the current system. Besides, I cannot justify the considerable expenditure of replacing it with a state-of-the-art deck offering what could only be relatively modest improvements in sound.

The plan with the PT is to upgrade further over time. First of all, I am considering the Origin Live Counterweight modification on the Rega plus internal and external rewiring. And perhaps at a later date, the Origin Live DC motor replacement. Is this a sound idea (excuse the pun)?

For now though, the priorities are a new moving coil cartridge, a new amplifier with a good MC phono stage and new speakers. My budget is about £4000-£5000. I don't know where to start - help!

My music tastes now are acoustic, vocal, R & B/Latin/Jazz fusion, classical (especially solo guitar). Very loud



The 507 CD from Meridian would be an effective 'quick fix'

REMAIN IN THE PINK

My fifteen year old system needs its first major upgrade/replacement. It comprises Pink Triangle Export turntable recently "GTi" modified with new PSU/Rega RB300/AudioTechnica ATF5 cartridge, QED SA240 integrated amp Marantz CD65IIE CD player and Wharfedale S05.2 speakers on QED Tristands.

I am looking to optimise a vinyl-playing system first before dealing with

listening levels would not go down well with the neighbours so absolute amp power is not so important. What I want is an amp/speaker combination where I do not have to turn the volume up to hear good detail.

I always thought my current system's bass could be improved. I don't want extended bass if it is all woolly and uncontrolled; rather, firm, tight and rhythmic bass to coin a few phrases that hi-fi journals have been overzealous at using. Put short, from the whole system I want realistic (neutral not coloured), detailed sound balanced over

the entire sonic spectrum with good stereo focus. This could be a description of the ultimate in hi-fi terms but can I get a flavour of it with this budget?

On the amps, what do you think about the Croft Vitale pre-amplifier (has this even got a MC phono stage?) in combination with Croft power amps. Also, the Unison Research Unico or SR1 integrated, possibly the C5P/P30Ks pre/power combo (I am currently living in Milan so have a better opportunity to audition UR products).

For speakers, I fancy the Snell E.5 mk2 speakers based simply on descriptions of their bass control, plus having heard and loved the old type J11s. What others should I consider? And what about MC cartridges at or under the £500 mark?

Thanks in advance if you can help!

**Chris, Ex-Pat
Milan, Italy**

A pretty tall order, this. Firstly, I agree that you don't need to replace your PT - it's by far the strongest link in the system and capable of truly excellent sound even if it isn't the very best around these days. To wit, I'd agree that you should get your Rega OL modded, or if at all possible get a new OL Silver 250 (at around £600). To this, fit an Ortofon Kontrapunkt B which The Pope and I both agree is something deeply special. Others to audition are the Dynavector DV17D2 and the Lyra Lydian Beta - both are excellent coils so you're somewhat spoiled for choice. I can't tell you which one to buy - I'd say this is very much a matter of what speakers you end up with, so sort these first, then decide.

Next is an amplifier for around £2000-£3000. The Crofts won't give the firmness and control in the bass you strive for, although they are nicely transparent. The Unison Research valve amp combination you mention is a good package. The P30K gives out a healthy 30W of muscular valve power from four KT88 tubes and the preamp has a very decent switchable phono stage.

There's also the Argo/Alecto II Stereo full Class A pre-power combination (£1650/ £1950). If you're the kind of guy who knows what he likes and knows that it isn't Naim, then this is probably your dream pre-power. It's awesomely open, clean and clear yet has a valve-like liquidity and smoothness. This is all despite its use of transistors - but the upside is the brilliant bass grip and big, broad

shouldered speaker driving ability.

Also consider the Sugden Masterclass integrated, which at just over £3,000 gives you a taste of real high-end fluidity thanks to a pure Class A design. Again this amp isn't about power, but detail and refinement. At 30W, though, it ideally needs 'speakers that are an easy load.

Speakers? Well that's a tricky one, and genuinely hard to answer until you've decided on the components in your system higher up in the chain. If it was my money I wouldn't go near the Snells - I see what you're trying to achieve by suggesting them, but to my ears they're simply too coloured and compromised to be taken seriously. If you went with the valve option then maybe they'd be a more synergistic match but if you opt for the 70W RMS per channel Alecto Stereo, you'll have no such load limitations. Personally I'd be looking at a used pair of Magneplanar MGMC1s or Quad 988s, both of which would really benefit from your REL sub (I agree - ed!). **DP**



The ESL 988 and a Rel Sub are a marriage made in hi-fi heaven

NU-VISTA NEW SOUND?

I would like some advice on upgrade options. My current set-up is Sony X-33ES/ Cyrus DAD3Q.24 and Project Perspective/MC30 as sources, and a Musical Fidelity series II MVT pre and P270 power amps driving Dynaudio Audience 50 speakers. Despite an overall preference for the sound of the Cyrus I am considering selling it to raise money, and buy an MFA3 192 upsampling DAC, as I have been impressed by

this DAC and support the upsampling theory. The Sony would probably be relegated to a source in a second system and another older but higher end Sony, either a X-777ES or 333ES, bought cheaply to be used as a transport for the MF DAC.

I am extremely pleased with the MF amplifiers, and although the Audiences share my pleasure I feel the electronics would justify an upgrade to Contour series, either 1.1s or 1.3s as the room is quite small. The alternative is Acoustic Energy AE1s, which whilst being not as neutral or uncoloured as Dynaudio and with well-known shortcomings are still highly accomplished monitors, and would be configured optimally being driven by the P270 and on the rock-solid concrete stands I'm using.

I'm aware this is a classic combination. I would expect the Contours to be superior to AE1s, but also more expensive and much harder to find bearing in mind the constraints of only buying second-hand.

I would appreciate your comments and suggestions on these ideas, but would also like advice on preamps! The MVT is excellent and would take some beating, but following source and speaker upgrades would probably be the next area to change. It would be logical to stick with Musical Fidelity and not create a 'stir-fry' of brand names, and an obvious contender is the NuVista pre. This could improve into the system but as it is only available second-hand, auditioning is unlikely. However, bought for a bargain price it could be sold on easily without financial loss. It would also bring the benefit of remote control! Does it have an MC input? Would I need an external phono stage?

I hate bright sounding equipment that makes recordings sound brash and in many ways prefer the rich, warm sounds of valves. However, whilst owning an eclectic music collection, a love of dance music has made me shy from valve amps in the past. Despite this I am curious as to whether a valve pre-amp wouldn't combine with the P270 to offer the best of both worlds without too much compromise. Again, this is difficult territory to predict. I would value any opinions or recommendations.

**Many thanks
Oliver Wilkinsan**

Frankly, I'm not sure that the Sony transport/MF upsampling DAC would be dramatically better than the Cyrus DAD3Q.24, if at all. I simply don't believe you can make gold out of base metals, which is what all upsampling DACs (of whatever ori-

gin) attempt to do. Personally, I'd either stick with the Cyrus and buy a PSX-R, or - if you must get the MF A3192 - then I'd get my Sony CDP-X33ES Trichord Clock 3 modded first. The Sony isn't a bad machine, but as you correctly identify, the X77ES is a far better place from which to start.

Your DAC can only work as well as the transport that drives it, and the Sony, although a rather polite Bitstream design, has a stonking transport akin to that found in Sony's (£5000) CDP RI Reference. So this would be the one to go for, then a Clock 3, then the MF.

Given that you've PSX-R'd your Cyrus or got your Sony/MF combo sorted, you should next turn your attention to the preamplifier. The MVT is indeed a fine preamp, and you'll struggle to find a tube design that comprehensively outclasses it. If you wish to stick with tubes, then the World Audio Design modular preamp kit is a quality candidate, otherwise I'd probably go for an extremely open sounding transistor design such as Michell's Orca (with Delphini phono stage).

Another interesting alternative, bearing in mind your expressed preferences, is a second-hand Finestra preamp which is a classic late eighties design that offers all the grip of the Naim school with a good deal more tonal detailing. This would represent a better 'bargain buy' than the NuVista you mention (which, even secondhand, is expensive) and work brilliantly with your P270s.

I agree with your prognosis on the Dynaudios, which I think are ultimately more self-effacing and transparent than the AE-1s, but also far harder to get to work at their best and - if we're honest here - a touch less involving. The Acoustic Energys are very much of the old, eighties school of un-reconstructed 'flat earth' loudspeaker design, where attack transients were everything and to hell with tonal accuracy, transparency, bass extension and the rest. The result is an incredibly interesting and involving listen that's not strictly accurate in the way the Dynaudios can at least claim to be. Given that you've got a decent front-end and amplifier driving them, I'd personally plump for the AE-1s, which are sort of 'Linn Kans on steroids', if you get my drift!

However, best get your front end and amplification sorted, then audition and decide. **DP**

TIME TO GO TUBULAR?

My system has been together now for around 5 years, and although I'm reasonably happy with it I feel a case of upgradeitis coming on, evident by the recent copies of Hi-Fi World lying about the place. Trouble is, I'm not sure where to start.

The system is built around a Gyrodeck turntable driven by a QC power supply, an RB300 tonearm rewired by Manticore and until recently a Denon 304 cartridge at the sharp end. This cartridge unfortunately suffered a demise due to the over enthusiastic administrations of an up and coming 3 year old DJ and has since been replaced by an Ortofon MC25 FL. The is fed through an ISO/Hera combination to Audio Analogue Bellini/Donizetti pre/power amps driving bi-wired B&W CDM1s mounted on Atacama sand filled stands. Although this is my main listening setup, a Micromega stage 6 CD player completes the hardware. Interconnects are Audioquest Quartz and speaker cable is QED 4x4.

If I'm correct the first area to look at are the speakers (and cable) and secondly the amplifiers, although I'm open to any suggestions, my budget is around £2000.

My shortlist of speakers include the Klipsch Hersey IIs, Elac 510s, or possibly Concert 8s, again I'm open to suggestions. However, maybe my amplifier preference will have a big bearing in speaker choice, as I would like to enter that strange world of the valve. My lis-

tening tastes are varied from rock to classic with no particular favourite. Your help would be greatly appreciated.

Jim Taylor, Tyne & Wear

Hi Jim. On the amplifier front I'd go for a cross between the sound of your present Audio Analogues and a fully blown tube amp. There so happens to be a product from Unison Research that could exactly fit your bill - the Unico integrated. This gives a big but valve-like sound thanks to its smooth yet powerful 80W per channel of valve/Mosfet hybrid power. The £750 line-only version can be upgraded to include a switchable MM/MC phono stage for just £50.

Now for 'speakers. The Klipsch and Jamo models are perhaps too 'quirky' for your requirements. The Unico integrated will go very well with the Elac 510 'speakers that you mention, which have good, tight bass and a beautifully sweet and detailed treble thanks to the folded ribbon tweeter. Keep your stands and you'll get a big, detailed and out of the box sound.

With the handful of dollars you have left invest in some cabling from the Chord Company. Their products have a transparent yet smooth sound which runs throughout the range, so whatever you can afford from them will improve on your current wiring.

DP



The Elac 510s are an ideal match for the Unico integrated.

HI, HO SILV



The latest NAD CD player to get the upgraded 'i' tag is their high-end Silverline Series S500i. Dominic Todd listens in.

I've always been a fan of the higher end NAD products. The Monitor Series cassette decks of the late eighties were good enough to wipe the smile off any rival's face, bar the top Nakamichis. Equally the 208 power amp of the nineties proved that one could have mega muscle with decent refinement, and at a reasonable price.

NAD's Silverline range isn't new, and neither is the S500i player, yet it's just received a few tweaks in the hope that it will keep the player amongst the best at the £1000 price mark. Those unfamiliar with the Silverline range would barely recognise the S500i as a NAD player. The solid, metal casing with ribbed extrusions is a world away from the company's more usual grey affairs. But, as NAD would be keen to point out, there's far more to this machine than mere appearance.

Whilst the Philips transport and Crystal 24 bit DAC aren't remarkable at this price point, NAD's attention to detail should set the S500i apart. The power supply stage uses an oversize toroidal with separate windings for digital and analogue stages. Component fans will also be pleased to see the liberal use of decent quality Elna capacitors in both the power supply and output

stages. The analogue stages are Class A biased, with a 5-pole, as opposed to the more usual 4-pole, filter being deployed. Even the PCB is of a decent quality, and is star-earthed to reduce noise. Finally, in addition to phono sockets, and in true high-end style, NAD offers XLR balanced outputs for both analogue and digital connections.

Although CD is facing the heat from DVD-A, there are still plenty of rivals worthy of note. The Arcam CD92T (£900), Cyrus CD7Q (£1150), Meridian's 507 (£1200) and Marantz's stalwart CD17 KI (£1200) all offer formidable competition.

The first disc to hit the tray was Rimsky-Korsakov's 'Festival at Baghdad' (which I'm sure was a different kind of place in those days!) played by the Kirov orchestra, conducted by Valery Gergiev. Whilst perhaps not being the most refined of renditions, it's one full of passion and colour, in true Russian style. The NAD more or less arose to the occasion. One could hear the individual strokes of violinist Sergei Levitin, and even the "cluck" sound as the fingers unstuck from the strings. It was also pleasing to find that, although refined, the violin still had decent texture and attack, and was far from sounding bland. Indeed, the piece as a whole was involving, with

excellent separation and a particularly fleet of foot timing. The sharp dynamic response was no doubt aided by very low levels of background noise, although I did feel that the overall effect was perhaps let down by a lack of real bass weight. Deep drum notes, for example, didn't quite have the authority within the piece that I'd have hoped for.

Similarly involving was Steely Dan's 'Jack of Speed'. This revolves around a tight, coherent brass section, which can sound hopelessly flaccid given the wrong equipment. Again the S500i remained musical and vibrant. The percussion had a fine depth and good timing, with a rhythmical nature that Naim would be proud of. It should also be noted that this was achieved without resorting to an overly forward balance that can become too intrusive. Again, I did just wish for a little more bass weight, but the broad sound staging and excellent separation went some way towards making up for this.

Another key feature of the S500i that I approved of is that it always appeared to know just which instrument was key. Before it had been the violin, this time it was Becker's guitar that captured the attention with a fine sense of realism.

VER LINING!

Turning to the less well recorded 'Well, well' by Nelly Furtado, showed that the NAD wasn't overly critical of less than perfect recordings. Yet again I found the bass line disappointingly thin, even compared to my elderly Cambridge CDM3/DAC3, although it maintained dynamic integrity by banishing any form of slop with each and every note. Furtado's vocals were well resolved and there was the same sense of attack and speedy, fat free, timing that the previous tracks had enjoyed. As before I also sensed that the S500i is the type of player whose transparency almost sneaks up on you, making you forget about the hi-fi and simply get on with enjoying the music.

Although equally transparent, there's no doubting that Jeff Healey's 'My Life Story' was just a little too polite. The vocals had a fine sense of

weight and conviction, yet the guitar didn't quite fizz as it should and the piece lacked a little grit. What the NAD did bring to the proceedings, though, was the ability to follow individual instruments amongst a broad and spacious sound stage. Also, despite an earthy bass response, such was the quality of the timing that it was easy to involve oneself in the music.

There's little doubt that the NAD S500i is a super player and worthy of serious consideration at this price range. However, the competition is very strong and what it does not do is comprehensively blitz the competition as its junior brother the C521i does. Even the mid-range C541i can claim a level of class superiority that the S500i simply can't replicate. The main reason for this, is that at this price point there are other machines that

simply punch harder, or offer an even more holographic insight into the music. In other respects the NAD does impress, as any £1000 player should do. There's consistently good timing, and a sense of attack that goes some way to making up for the lack of bass. Equally, vocal and instrumental timbre can't be faulted at this price range. The depth of quality also means that the NAD would stand many an upgrade in amp and 'speakers before the cracks began to show.

For those who find their system a little too bloated or synthetic, the S500i could be ideal, otherwise I'd strongly recommend listening to the NAD alongside the opposition before taking the plunge.

NAD S500i £1,195

Lenbrook UK Ltd.
Tel: +44 (0)1908 319360
www.lenbrook.co.uk



MEASURED PERFORMANCE

In line with its up-market status perhaps, NAD have given the Silverline S500i a flatter frequency response than their standard players. It's likely to lessen the warmth and apparent cohesiveness, bringing a more obviously concise presentation. The upper limit of 21.125kHz is as far as CD goes.

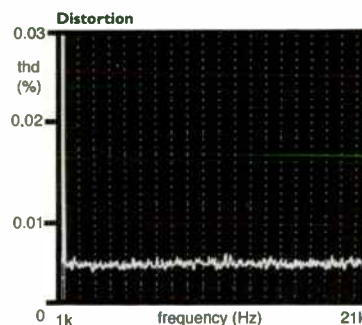
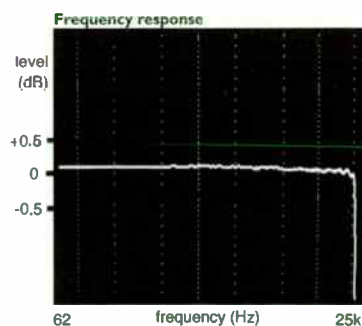
Linearity was good, if not quite up with the very best. Distortion at high levels was minimal. Down at -60dB it reached 0.4% where other players now reach 0.3% or lower. Similarly, at -90dB there was just a little more distortion than the best, but differences weren't so great. In spite of this I would expect the S500i to sound clean enough.

With output at a healthy 2.24V, good channel separation and low noise this CD player measures well enough in all areas, even though it

isn't up with the best. It is likely to sound fairly crisp, but should not offend. **NK**

Frequency response
4Hz - 21.125kHz

Distortion	left	right
-6dB	0.004	0.004
-30dB	0.006	0.006
-60dB	0.4	0.4
-90	29.6	30
Separation	left	right
1kHz	108	109
20kHz	106	107
Noise		-112dB
Dynamic range		110dB
Output		2.24V



World Verdict
The S500i easily holds its own amongst the strong competition with refinement and great transparency. Bass isn't as 'big' as with some rivals but the overall sound is of very high quality.

SOUNDS PERFECTION

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Most systems are spoilt by the preamp. Listeners do not realise how much information is being lost or corrupted by this under-rated item...

Preamps - is "good" enough?

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We offer some very good preamps: Balanced Audio Technology (eg the VK55SE), CAT SLI Ultimate, DNM, Hovland HP100 and Nagra.

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NAIM CHANGE



For the first time in the company's history, it has revamped its entire 'Classic' model range. The NAC202/NAP200 is Naim's most affordable 'grown up' pre-power combo - David Price listens in.

Changes are afoot in Salisbury. The company most famous for not following fashion and rarely replacing or relaunching a hi-fi product has just revamped its entire line-up. Coming from the company that has shocked the entire audiophile community with things like a simple casework change, the inclusion of remote volume control on a preamp or even the decision to make a Compact Disc player - for heaven's sake, then a wholesale range replacement is a big issue!

Were it any other company, the raft of revisions featured in these new products would barely cause a raised eyelid. But as we all know, Naim has done things differently from day one, resolutely sticking to its guns on issues like speaker cables and interconnects when practically every other company has gone the other way. Now - shock horror - we find the new NAC202 fitted with two pairs of RCA phono sockets. Think of it like this - if you were to warp back fifteen years and tell a Naim addict that his beloved brand would be making remote controlled

multichannel AV products with Digital Signal Processing and phono plugs round the back, they'd have laughed in your face!

With the new £1,170 NAC202, Naim says that all those years of research spent developing its flagship NAC 552 pre-amplifier have given it a wealth of experience which has been applied in this, the entry level preamp in the new 'Classic' range. New high quality star-earthed circuit boards, anti-vibration, resonance-controlling feet, carefully matched precision rotary potentiometers with precious metal wipers and intelligent



balance controls with high quality motorised potentiometers with intelligent circuitry to indicate the centre position, all figure in the preamp range. It can be powered either by a NAP150 or NAP200 power amp, or upgraded by adding an external Naim Hi-Cap or Super-Cap power supply for the analogue audio, or NAPSC for the digital control, circuits.

The days of a Naim fascia troubled only by a couple of potentiometers and a switch are long gone. The NAC202 features a silent microprocessor that sleeps during listening and controls all aspects of the amplifier, including the optical protection circuits that continuously monitor the power supplies, ensuring safe shut down in the event of a power cut. Its six inputs can be selected directly from either the front panel or the supplied NARCOM system remote. In addition to the usual DIN inputs, which the company famously prefers for their 'superior earthing and impedance matching', two inputs can be configured for use with the aforementioned RCA phono sockets. A dedicated unity-gain input is also provided for use with the Naim AV2 processor or similar.

At £1,142, the new NAP200 is the company's cheapest 'Classic' power amplifier. Again it follows wisdom accrued from the genesis of Naim's flagship NAP500 amplifier. A new circuit design with improved earthing arrangements is built on an anti-resonance main audio circuit

board. Anti-vibration feet serve to protect the sensitive internal components from vibration. The new 430VA toroidal transformer provides over 300VA of transient power, with separate windings for dedicated left and right channels, and rectified supplies with two smoothing capacitors per channel and a separate winding for a pre-amplifier power supply. The result is a claimed 70W RMS per channel into 8 ohms, and the claimed ability to drive a 2 ohm load for long periods of time.

In the flesh, I'd say the new 'Classic' series looks Naim's most successful to date. The styling isn't awkward or idiosyncratic, but elegant and fuss-free. Build is superlative - the NAP200 in particular is an incredibly heavy bit of kit, its chunky 432x314x87mm casing looking a million dollars. As usual, Naim electronics need a good burn in period and prefer to be left permanently powered up. For the purposes of the review, I hooked them up to my Michell Orbe/ OL Illustrious/ Ortofon Kontrapunkt B/ Michell Delphini front-end and Yamaha NS1000M loudspeakers via Naim NACA5 speaker cable.

SOUND QUALITY

First things first. If you have a penchant for single-ended triode valve amplifiers then may I politely suggest you turn the page? While Naim's amplifiers are smoother and sweeter than ever, they are not of the 'sepia tinged' school. If, however, you want a high quality £2,300

transistor amplifier, then I'd go as far as saying this is the best around right now. I found it particularly amenable to vinyl, where it really managed to get the music 'out there' into the room with tremendous verve. CD was a less happy experience however, not least because of the format's inherent upper-midband hardness that is not a synergistic mix for the Naim sound. Again, it's happier with SACD than DVD-Audio discs for these same reasons, although either 'advanced resolution' format is a quantum leap over Compact Disc.

I started with Freeez's 'Southern Freeze', a slice of beautiful Brit funk from 1980. The first few bars showed this combo to have incredible detail resolving capability, the Naims going deep into the wide, capacious soundstage. Bass was taut, with a particularly solid and powerful kick-drum sound. Although I've heard other amplifiers producing a fuller bass guitar sound - warmer with more presence - this combo nevertheless made it feel very real. Despite being a little lean, the way the notes stopped and started give the bassline a live feel that the likes of Musical Fidelity's equivalent priced A308 integrated lacked.

Interestingly, although bass was just a little lighter - you got the sense that the levels had been turned down by one (on a scale of eleven, Tap fans!) compared to the MF, it somehow seemed more muscular. I put this down to the Naim combo's ability to go loud when it counted.

Also remarkable was the sheer tunefulness of the NAC202/NAP200, its ease and fluidity made the song bounce along with aplomb.

Moving to the midband, and Lee Morgan's 'The Rajah' proved a delight. Stereo image location was excellent, the recorded acoustic (courtesy of the old Blue Note trick of one crossed pair of microphones) being faithfully recreated in terms of left to right and front to back dimensions. Here though, I have to confess I preferred the MF's softness and sweetness. The sound of the trumpet was a little 'forward' for my tastes, even if its every rhythmic inflection was superbly carried.

Up top this combo further impressed. Rush's 'Fly By Night' showed its superb air and space. Hi-hats had a metallic clang - as they should - but were never harsh or distorted. Instead, these amps provided a very vivid and lively picture of the track's high frequency content, which did no harm at all to the song's sense of air and ambience. Once again, the drummer's rhythmic and dynamic accents were superbly

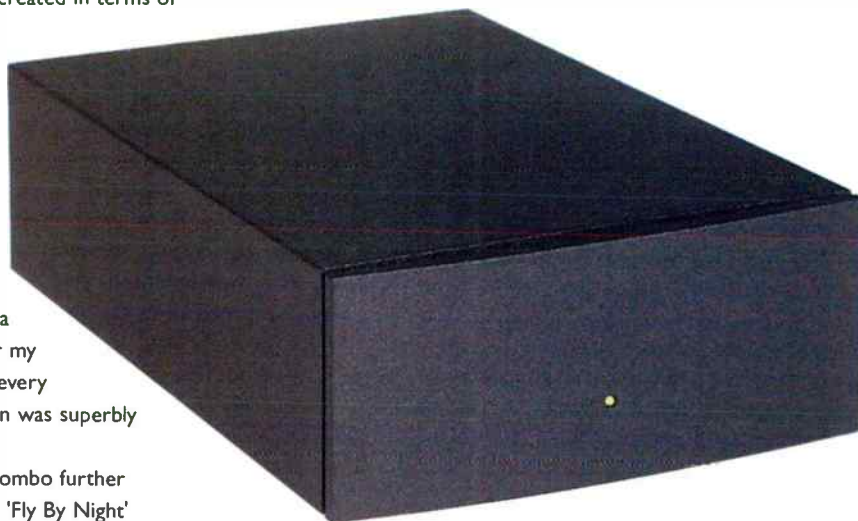
communicative, making for an electrifying sound on rock music.

Overall, the NAC202/NAP200 is a dazzlingly capable twosome at the price. It's not a case of simply saying 'great if you like the Naim sound'. I'd say that if you've decided valves aren't your bag, baby, then this combo is the one to have. Nothing else for the same money will punch

upgrade path, it really is churlish to complain. Although the Naim changes, some things stay the same.

Naim NAC202/NAP200 £2,312

Naim Audio Ltd.
Tel: +44 (0)1722 332266
www.naim-audio.com



The 202/200 combination benefits from the use of an external power supply

out vast amounts of power in such a musical and lively way. Brilliantly involving, tremendously capable in hi-fi terms (detail, soundstaging, etc.), beautifully built and endowed with Naim's superb aftersales support and

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

This sturdily built combination delivered 72W into 8ohms under test, a useful amount for most homes. Naims always perform well with low loads though and the NAP200 power amp was no exception, producing a healthy 110W under these conditions. As most bass units are, these days, 4ohms, this is the sort of power that is available in use with most loudspeakers.

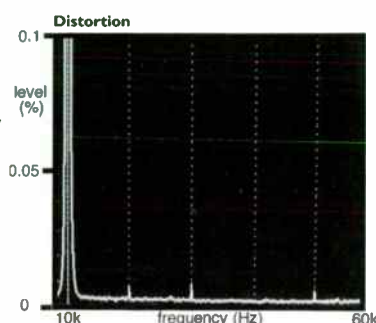
It was interesting to see that in the mid-band at least the NAP200 actually produced slightly less distortion into a 4ohm load than an 8ohm load, quite the reverse of normal. At high frequencies results into 4ohms were a little worse than 8ohms, but at 0.03% total harmonic

distortion worst case, delivering full output at 10kHz, the NAP200 managed well. It produces just small amounts of second and third harmonics at high frequencies, but second harmonic only in the mid-band and the spectral pattern held at all output levels.

Frequency response was band limited to 24kHz (-1dB) and sensitivity was very high at 80mV, two characteristics that distinguish Naim.

This combination measures very well in all areas. I'd expect and smooth, powerful and fairly atmospheric sound, much in the Naim tradition. **NK**

Power	72watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	10Hz-24kHz
Separation	62dB
Noise	-87dB
Distortion	0.01%
Sensitivity	80mV
dc offset	8/9mV



World Verdict £ 
Powerful, detailed and involving like no others at the price, Naim's new 'Classic' pre-power is a high end bargain.

ILLUSTRIO

David Price listens to what's claimed to be one of the most important new tonearms for a decade, Origin Live's Illustrious.

Any hi-fi manufacturer will tell you how great its products are. Some say it with a passion bordering on the psychotic, showing how completely blinkered they are to other companies' designs. Others say it with just the slightest hint of irony, as if to say "come on, we're not that bad really." Origin Live calls its new Illustrious, "unquestionably the best tonearm in the world by a staggering margin". This surprises me, because it hails from OL's Mark Baker, who is absolutely the last man on this planet prone to bouts of hyperbole or overstatement. If he's right, it could be one of this decade's most important products - to us analogue addicts, at least.

Mark is a very quiet man with patience, an enquiring mind and forensic attention to detail. These attributes, plus thousands of hours of listening time, enabled him to come up with a 'thesis' on what he regarded was wrong with the existing Rega design. First and foremost, he came up with the revelation that it was the cheaper RB250 and not the RB300 that was the better of the two

designs, thanks to the former's superior bearing housing and lack of sound degrading tracking weight spring. Next, he correctly identified the standard arm's slapdash counterweight mechanism as a terrible source of coloration. Finally, he came up with a better internal/external wiring combination, complete with a separate earth lead.

The result was an arm that came oh-so-close to being one of the world's best, at a ridiculously low price. For under £300 the OL modded RB250 was a giant killer in exactly the same sense that the original Rega RB300 was back in the early eighties - open, incisive, detailed, powerful, dynamic; it had it all. Now, for a pretty hefty £1570, his all-new Illustrious arm seeks to improve on this still further - hence Mark's claim that it comprehensively outclasses the best of the rest of the super-arm world.

DESIGN

Rather than doing anything too radical, Mark Baker followed an evolutionary path to achieve his avowed design aims. These include low resonance (for tonal accuracy), high rigidity in all planes (to render powerful dynamics), low friction (to aid tracking and subtle low level information retrieval), fast energy transmission (for timing and treble clarity) and medium mass (for compatibility with most modern cartridges). He stresses that he spent a "great deal" of time researching different types of metals for the armtube.

The result was a black anodised armtube profiled from a solid billet of a "certain type" of aerospace alloy, tapered and of large diameter for

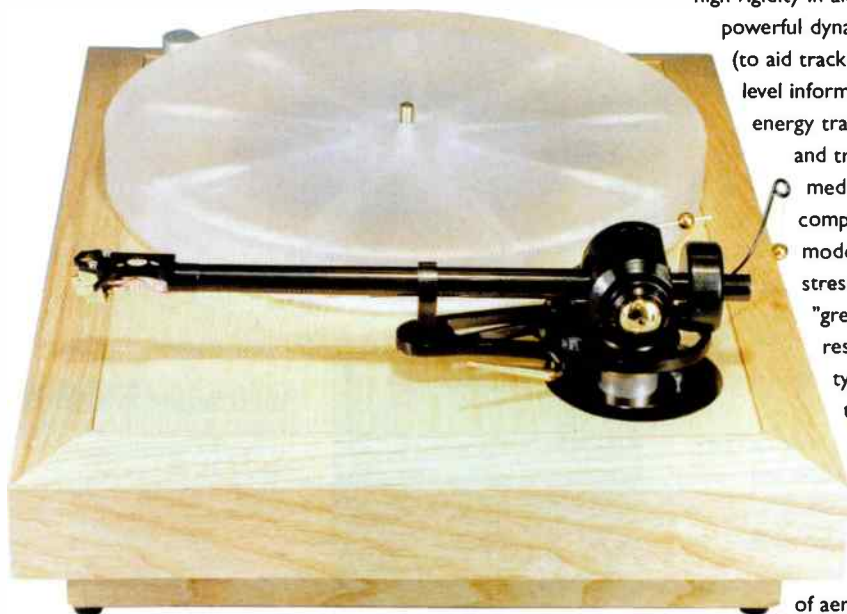
optimum torsional strength. At the end is a high strength, low mass sculpted headshell machined from a solid alloy block, that's decoupled and rigidly attached to the armtube. The geometry - unsurprisingly - is as the Rega RB300, meaning it will fit straight into any Rega mounting board or hole. However, this arm also boasts full VTA adjustment, so the days of cheap and nasty (and fiddly) spacers are over.

Headshell wiring is silver plated copper, insulated in robust PTFE, with gold plated copper beryllium cartridge tags. Inside the arm itself is a run of high grade Litz wire, said to be selected from hundreds tested. It terminates in high grade aluminium phono plugs, with over twice the conductivity of brass. Mark says this has a very audible effect on the sound. At the other end, the rear end stub and counterweight design is as OL's successful Rega 'structural modification'.

The bearing housing has been designed to offer high mass in the horizontal plane for cartridge stability, whilst maintaining low mass in the vertical plane for optimal tracking ability. The bearings themselves are said to be the most highly specified of the company's range, widely spaced outside the arm tube in the bespoke bearing house. The arm base is made from a "large number of specially selected materials" which OL is unwilling to divulge for obvious commercial reasons. It's interesting for its infinitely variable side bias adjustment and new VTA adjuster.

It's an impressively built device. A whole step up from the rebuilt Rega arms, it rather reminds me of the late lamented Zeta. It is not, however, finished as exquisitely as an SME IV or V. I have no reason to doubt that its internal engineering is no less exacting, yet it simply doesn't have that exquisite 'Swiss watch' feel that SME owners know and love. Slightly

REVIEW EQUIPMENT:
 Michell Orbe turntable,
 DC motor
 Ortofon Kontrapunkt B MC
 cartridge (1.7g)
 Michell Delphini phono stage
 Musical Fidelity A308
 integrated amplifier
 Yamaha NS1000M/Atacama
 B200 loudspeakers/stands.



US STUFF



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION:

Effective length : 240 mm
 Overhang : 17.24 mm
 Offset angle: 23 degrees
 Mounting distance: platter centre to arm hole centre: 223 mm
 Diameter of mounting hole: 24-25mm

disconcerting is the play in the bearing housing, but - sure enough - read the instructions and you find this is 'designed in' and nothing whatsoever to worry about. The instructions also lack SME-like clarity - a few photos wouldn't go amiss - but there's an impressive section on general tuning and tweaking of both the arm and cartridge, which is most welcome.

SOUND QUALITY

The Illustrious is an extremely big, powerful and confident performer, one which I'd describe in terms of being an amalgam of the best bits of both the Linn Ekos and SMEV. It offers 99% of the former's rhythmic and dynamic fluency with 101% of the latter's tonality and detail resolution. In short then, it's pretty awesome. Grace Jones' 'My Jamaican Guy' was a revelation - the midband had an incredible 'hear-through' quality, the OL placing instruments precisely in three dimensions and yet relaying masses of tonal and textural information. It's also beautifully subtle and organic - whereas SME's Series V sucks out all the music's emotion and Linn's Ekos fetishises it to the exclusion of all else, so the Illustrious treads an oh-so-clever path that lets the song's groove pour forth whilst not impeding the amazing flow of detail. To wit, Sly and Robbie's stunning percussion work was allowed to shine in all its glory - bass, snares, cymbals, kettle drums, maracas, triangles, tambourines etc. lilted out of the mix with both precision and ease.

Moving to ACT's 'Absolutely Immune', I was again stunned at this arm's combination of clarity and musicality. Its midband is so startlingly clear that the limitations of the LP's mastering (and indeed its 44.056kHz Sony PCM-F1 recorder) were obvious, and yet unlike the SME the OL didn't suffer 'analysis paralysis'. Rather, Claudia Brucken's icy voice was carried in all its Teutonic glory, right down to her smallest breathing motions. More impressively still was the way this arm hung her vocal in space so confidently, way out of the instrumental mix.

Bass was another revelation; deeper and more powerful than the Ekos, only the SME surpasses it for extension and even then, it loses much of the OL's articulation. Fast and extremely tuneful and yet disarmingly strong and muscular, this arm offers tremendous grip and dynamics. Indeed, it's so good in the latter respect that you realise how compressed rival arms are!

Moving up the frequency range, the Illustrious's treble proved damn-near unsurpassed. Just as its midband exhibited revelatory clarity and detail, so its high frequencies were beautifully open and flowing. Joan Armatrading's 'Me, Myself I' had an incredibly open, spacious and crisp hi-hat sound that made the Ekos sound fizzy and the Series V unincisive and matter-of-fact. Better still was the way the OL was supremely airy yet never once became bright or forward. Rather, from bottom to top, it sounded highly integrated, even and all of a

piece. This was even easier to discern on old, over-played discs such as my 'distressed' pressing of CSN&Y's 'Country Girl', where the OL arm threw out lots of previously unheard treble detailing that all my other arms had kept down in the 'mush' of the mix.

I could go on and on. To my ears and through my system, this is simply the best tonearm I've heard to date. It is both very transparent and extremely engaging - steadfastly refusing to forsake one characteristic for the other, it ends up doing them both together with hitherto unheard alacrity. The result is the famous 'new record collection syndrome' where you end up running through all your vinyl in a hurry, desperate to hear how every disc you own 'really' sounds. Although it's a good deal more expensive than an OL RB250, the extra expenditure is well worth it if you have the cash, and especially if you're running a decent cartridge. Indeed, it's so marked that I'd venture to suggest you'd even notice the difference if this was bolted to a Rega P3. My only gripe is the Illustrious's finish - it's extremely well made of course, but as I've said before, it simply doesn't feel like a million dollars a la SME. Not that you'll be wanting to look when there's some serious listening to be done, however.

Origin Live Illustrious £1570

Origin Live
 Tel: 02380 578877
www.originlive.com

World Verdict 
 Brilliantly detailed yet utterly musical, this arm is set to join the ranks of the all time greats. Wholeheartedly recommended!

KONTROL PANEL



After the launch of their high-end, slimline Klimax Twin, Linn have now introduced the matching high specification, advanced technology Klimax Kontrol preamplifier. Simon Pope gets out the manual. . .

The Linn sound has, traditionally, been categorised as rhythmically precise and accurate, sacrificing overall tonal colour for this end. At least, that's how some people have seen it. Things started to change with the introduction of the Genki/Kollektor/LK140/Ninka system of products which brought a touch of colour to the previously grey-tinged world of Linn. This sound was fuller and more rounded than before and, for me, ultimately more involving and musically satisfying.

At the top end - and I mean top end - of the Linn range came the awesomely constructed (and priced) £12,000 Sondek CD12. It was followed by the Klimax mono power amps and the Klimax twin stereo power amp. At £6,000 a pop these

amps were heavily priced - but they were also heavily built and had an unmistakably smooth and detailed 'high end' sound.

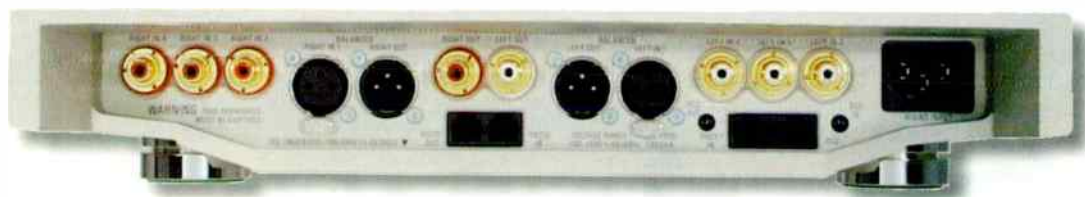
Now the latest product in the range has arrived, in the form of the Kontrol preamp, a full system can be constructed, which with the Komri loudspeakers, would set you back somewhere in the region of £60,000 or more. This isn't the 1970s/80s Linn of K9 cartridges and Kan 'speakers we once knew - this is Linn as an unashamedly high-end contender, and to a certain extent how the brand is now recognised in the US.

The Klimax Kontrol has the same impressively constructed casework as the Klimax power amps and CD12, a machined-from-solid "clamshell" chassis which has a mass akin to that of gold bullion, yet combined with slimline elegance. This

industrial standard casing mechanically and electrically screens a total of four circuit boards, each in an individual "perfectly still" compartment. The amp features the secret recipe Linn switch-mode power supply that provides so-called Silent Power and helps create the superb sound quality and domestically acceptable size of the matching Klimax power amps. The audio path is, like the rest of the range, kept as short as possible.

Where the fluorescent blue 'crescent' appears on the power amps, the Kontrol features a smallish (when compared to the competition, but large considering the size of the case!) but very clear blue dot-matrix display which can show a variety of things, from the 200 step volume calibration to the Linn logo.

It's here that some of the



wizardry inside becomes apparent. It has user configurable source inputs consisting of three line level stereo inputs, plus one balanced stereo input and one balanced stereo out. It's compatible with Linn's Knekt multi-room system and an optional Kontrol source expansion module is soon to be available for further input versatility. There are six function buttons on the fascia for both basic and advanced functions

The Kontrol comes with the heavyweight, top-end system remote supplied with the CD12. Twenty user configurable options are available to customise operation and you can personalise the inputs and choose what to display in the window during standby, including, should you wish, your dog's name or similar! Put simply, it's a very intelligent bit of kit that requires a read through of the manual before prodding any buttons.

Let's get the nasty business out of the way first. £6,000 for a preamp is a lot of money. Actually, £6,000 for anything is a lot of money but it all depends on your priorities. There are plenty of people out there willing to spend this kind of money (after all there are some that spend this alone on cable!) so there's no point in moaning about it. At the end of the day if you have the money for it - and many do - an item like this may be a 'must buy' purchase, a bit like a top BMW or Porsche.

I can tell you that the Kontrol is a joy to use both practically and sonically. For the review I lined it up with a matching Klimax Twin power amp and used a cheaper Meridian 557 as a non-stablemate comparison. Source was a Meridian 506.24 and a Sony 555ES CD/SACD player, 'speakers were, after a variety of 'running-in' variations, a pair of trusty

Quad ESL-988s and cabling was Chord's Anthem interconnects and Odyssey 'speaker wire.

Immediately the Kontrol has the unmistakable sheen of high-end audio electronics. By this, I mean super-clean, transparent and totally inoffensive but also smooth. Not smooth and sweet in the kind-of sugary Levinson way but warm without being synthetic. It's very impressive in the way it does what a good preamp should do, which is nothing, but you also know it's there sonically by its great detail.

Kicking off with the rollicking 'Songs For The Deaf' by Queens Of The Stoneage, the Kontrol partnered with the Klimax Twin gave a fast and very involving reading. This combination managed to dig very deep into the disc to retrieve some deliciously impressive detail in the layers of the mix - and in the instruments themselves. Vocals were clean as a whistle with a commendable 'flat' production, and they were well placed in the mix. Both drumming and bass playing were as solid as a rock, with fast transients and a full, yet lean sound, devoid from overhang.

Moving onto the Meridian power amp the effect of the preamp was still present but the sound had a slightly fuller and leaner quality - as is the nature of Meridian (admittedly one I quite like - not necessarily prefer - but like) even with this fairly neutral amp.

As host to rock recordings the Kontrol was well at home and a superb sounding option, as indeed it was with jazz from Miles Davis and Chet Baker, which sounded smooth and again superbly detailed.

With classical the overall sound was more suited to the genre than

I've found with previous Linn products. Poulenc's Organ Concerto on SACD had good space and ambience (not a traditional Linn trait) with perhaps just a tad less window like transparency and orchestral timbre than that found in quality single-ended valves - which, design wise, is as far away from this product as you can get anyway, so potential buyers should never choose between them! Having said this, the sound is by no means grey or lifeless - it's vibrant and dynamics are realistic.

Preamps aren't just volume controls, they really make a difference and can be the make or break of a potentially excellent system. Just compare the sound of the Kontrol to a Levinson, Meridian or even a £120 Creek passive preamp to find out how big the differences can be. The Kontrol has all the high-end appeal of a Meridian, Krell or Levinson, but a more punctuated and transparent sound than the former and a less hi-fi sound than the others - it could double up as an effective choice as a professional product (although I can't see studio owners shelling out full price!).

The Kontrol is damned expensive, make no mistake, but it's a great product, both in and out of a complete Linn system where it's simply effective yet a vitally important part of the sonic chain. High cost but undoubtedly high-end as well.

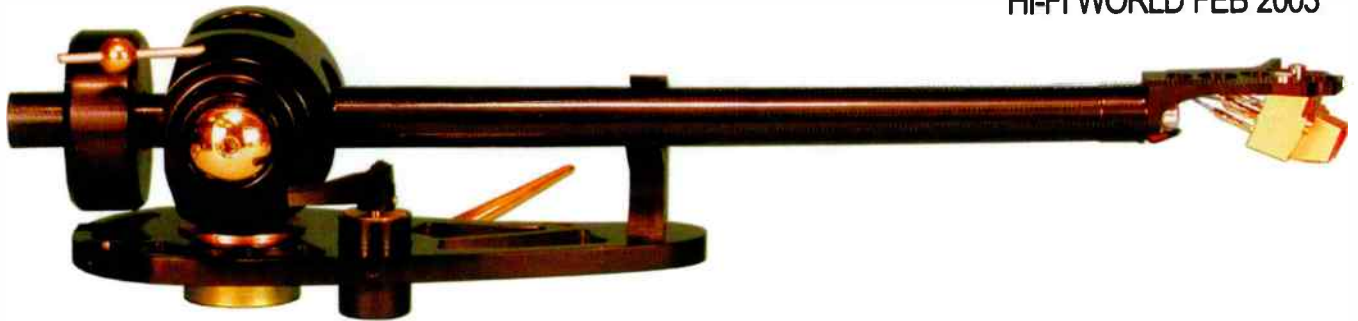
Linn Klimax Kontrol £6,000

Linn Products Ltd
Tel: +44 (0)141 307 7777,
www.linn.co.uk

World Verdict 
A very expensive preamp but highly effective and superbly designed. Build and facilities are faultless.

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HI-FI WORLD FEB 2003



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ROLL OVER, BEETHOVEN

From Vienna Acoustics comes their latest cutting edge design 'speakers. Alan Sircom encounters the eye-catching Schonberg.

Schonberg, the inventor of the twelve-tone scale and one of the founding fathers of modern classical music, would approve of putting his monika to this intriguing slice of transducer design from Austria. He wouldn't be alone, every speaker in the company's range is named after a famous Austrian or German composer; Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Webern and Berg. Unsurprisingly, the Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven are more classical wooden cabinet designs, whereas the more avant-garde 20th Century composers get a 21st Century silvery look.

And what a look it is! It's not for everyone – many people still like their speakers to look like big square wooden boxes – but those who want something elegant will love the sleek, shiny Schonberg. These tall, thin floorstanders are deceptively thin, thanks to a unique sandwich arrangement which looks more like the wing of a light aircraft than a loudspeaker.

A lot of smart touches went into the Schonberg design, touches that may not be immediately apparent. The tweeter sits in an alloy housing between the main cabinet and the curved rear panel, which cleverly isolates the 25mm silk dome tweeter from vibration within the main body of the speaker, without making it look too noticeable. Along the other side of the speaker, between the two alloy facings of the speaker is a kinky black rubberised cabinet with a pair of side-firing ports and – at the base of the speaker – a pair of speaker terminals. Vienna are not that impressed with bi-wiring, but it

would also be incredibly difficult to make bi-wire terminals that didn't prove to be some of the most fiddly around.

The main cabinet itself features a pair of 150mm drive units made specifically for Vienna Acoustic. They feature a material called XPP, a custom-specified polymer unique to Vienna and chosen for its light weight and excellent damping factor. The speaker is configured as a two-way design and has an extremely low crossover point, suggested to be around 100Hz, so the bass drivers do not impinge on the tweeter in the all-important midrange. This also makes the speaker easy to drive, with a quoted 91dB efficiency with a nominal impedance of four ohms.

Even the feet are custom designed for the task. The Schonberg sits on an alloy plate connected to a thick alloy 'X' base terminated by spikes. These help to lower the centre of gravity and stabilise the speaker far more than they really should be capable of. The tower is tall and thin and looks set to topple at a moment's notice; with the bracing in place, it barely moves.

This stand is removable for a reason; the speaker is a true multi-purpose affair, designed to work on a wall as much as in free space. One of the joys of the Schonberg speaker – aside from the distinctive elegance, that is – comes from that



comparative freedom from

room acoustic limitations. Most speakers with high-end aspirations make demands on the listener and their room, requiring the speaker to sit a metre or more from any kind of wall for the best sound. Not so the Schonberg; put it where you want, in free space, up against the wall, whatever, and the speaker will sound relatively unchanged. There is a slight thickening of the upper bass when butted up against a load-bearing wall and a slightly more open soundstage in total free space, but the differences are mild – consider it fine

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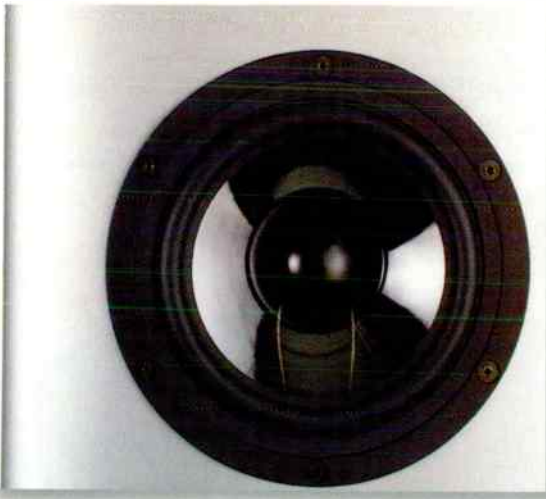
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gasping for air if played at volume. The Schonberg passed muster with pace to spare.

It's a high-precision sound; you get the impression of a warts 'n' all exactness that makes lo-fi recordings like The Datsuns

intense an experience at times, pitching edgy recordings into the realm of the too bright and making brash sounds seem almost glassy. A good source and amplifier help keep the speaker in check, but as this speaker is designed to look elegant, it may feature in sparsely decorated rooms, and that is a combination that could make music more stark than stonky.

Except for occasional flashes of brilliance, 'Designer' speakers are often not worth the money. They may look fantastic, but often what makes them look good is what makes them unsuitable for good hi-fi use. Thankfully, the Schonberg is one of the exceptions, thanks to some well-engineered touches that back up the pretty looks. It almost makes a class of its own, sonically, having removed the wooden coloration of traditional boxes but retaining the dynamic drive of cones and domes. It may be a bit bright at times, but if you like a bit of excitement in your music, Schonberg's shiny charms may well seduce.

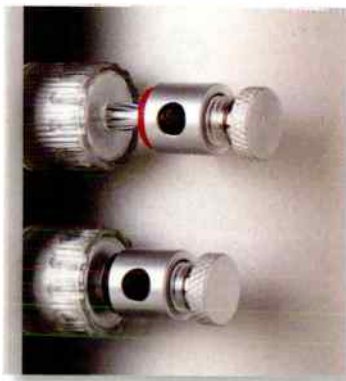
tuning the sound.

The cabinet is remarkably dead acoustically, leaving most of the sonic action in the hands of the drive units. Fortunately, they seem more than up to the task; creating a tight, detailed and ordered sound free from cabinet colorations and angry boomy resonances that beset many a traditional speaker design.

While the speaker is not the deepest, most bassy around, it delivers coherent bass at almost electrostatic speeds and this more than makes up for that last octave or so. Even the ultra-fast drumming of Billy Cobham soloing on the 'Spectrum' album stays coherent – this normally leaves most box speakers with a very sore port and

sound like a wall of noise. That said, every dynamic change, every note and every breath into the microphone is accurately presented.

This will leave many conventional speakers out in the cold, but the Schonberg is not without fault. That informative nature can be too



Vienna Acoustics Schonberg £1,500

Henley Designs
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MEASURED PERFORMANCE

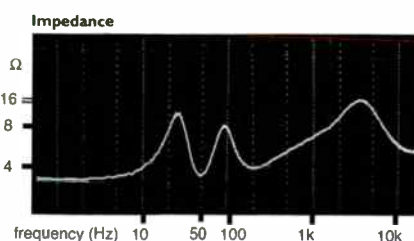
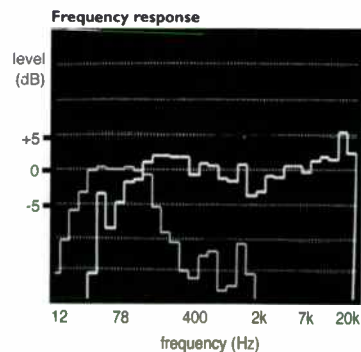
The Schonberg has some emphasis at both ends of the frequency spectrum, to give it both warmth and quite strong treble. A dip across the upper midband will recess voices a little and soften violins. This sort of response characteristic tends to make the treble unit sound a little divorced from the rest of the 'speaker and bright CDs may well seem a little overpowering in their treble.

Down at the other end of the frequency spectrum, bass output rolls down slowly in what is quite a well damped response, suited to near-wall use. With forward output reaching down to 40Hz and the ports extending down further the Schonberg should give a fair account

of itself at low frequencies.

With a sensitivity of 85dB SPL from one nominal watt of input a reasonable amount of power will be needed for decent volumes. Amplifiers of around 40W minimum will suit. Like most loudspeakers nowadays, this one uses a 4ohm bass unit and it will draw current, making it a reasonably demanding load, albeit one with little V/I phase shift to upset feedback.

The Sconberg is neatly engineered. It doesn't excel, but nor is it flawed. Conventional equivalents are generally more accurate and revealing nowadays however. **NK**



World Verdict 
Well engineered, exciting and stylish but can sound brash if partnered with the wrong equipment or recordings



**DEMONSTRATION ROOM AT 12A SPRING GARDENS, NEWPORT PAGNELL, MILTON KEYNES,
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KECL82 VALVE AMPLIFIER KIT

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 it's 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

£195



KIT6550 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT & KAT6550 VALVE POWER AMPLIFIER KIT

£595



**Kit6550
upgrade kit now
available £130**

£580



**KaT6550
upgrade kit now
available £120**

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".

Kel84 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT

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).



£278

2A3 PSE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT

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)



£550

DIY KITS IN THE WORLD

ALL NEW SERIES II MODULAR PRE-AMP KIT

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)	£195.00
Pre-amplifier (PRE-II)	£195.00
Phono Stage (PHONO-II)	£110.00
Moving coil step-up transformer	£77.00
Passive pre-amplifier (PAS-II)	£215.00



KAT34 VALVE POWER AMPLIFIER KIT & KIT34 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT

£480

NEW KITS

**£495
A pair**



**KaT34
upgrade kit now
available £120**

**KIT34
upgrade kit now
available £130**

KaT34 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 bring 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)

300B PSU MONOBLOC KIT

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.

**300B PSU
upgrade kit now
available £150**

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 £875.00 (UK price) excluding valves. Each monobloc weighs 23kgs., external dimensions with valves: 25cm(w) x 38cm(h) x 22cm(d) per monobloc.

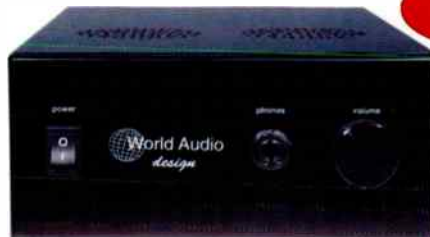
**£875
A pair**



HD83 VALVE HEADPHONE AMPLIFIER KIT

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.

£195





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4 x 0.22uF, 630V Jensen paper in oil

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4 x 35A Bridge Rectifier KBPC3502
4 x 4700uF, 16V

£135
£150



"KIT34 Upgrade Kit"

BARGAIN BASEMENT

E/I mains transformer 120 lam, Primary: 110/120/230/240Vac
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2A3 PSE chassis and base plate (without face plate), slight flaw on paint work, can hold 1 x 120 lam, 2 x 78 lam E/I transformer, 3 x octals and 4 x UX4s, hardwired. **Price - £50.00**

Kel84 chassis and base plate (Without face plate), slight flaw on paint work, can hold 1 x 78 lam, 2 x 29 lam E/I transformers and 6 x B9A.
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Mains transformers & Chokes

KIT6550/KAT6550 mains transformers
2 inch stack, 130mm(h)x120mm(w)x135mm(d) 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)x80mm(w)x95mm(d) drop through fitting with zinc cap. Secondaries: 0V-240V 300mA, 3.15V-0V-3.15V, 5.5A, suitable for 120/240V operation

KIT88/KAT88 mains toroidal transformer
120mm dia. x 60mm(h). Secondaries: 195V-0V-195V, 450mA/0V-27V, 100mA/3.15V-0V-3.15V, 9A, 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

KEL80 mains toroidal transformer (encapsulated)
130mm dia. x 65mm(h). Secondaries: 195V-0V, 195V, 390mA/0V-27V, 100mA/3.15V-0V-3.15V, 7.5A, 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

TRANS1 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)x35mm(d)x70mm(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.

Output transformers

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)x65mm(w)x76mm(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

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

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

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 .

Printed circuit boards

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).

Kel80 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).

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 KAT34 valve power amplifier kit (with valves)
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 KaT34 upgrade kit
 KiT34 valve integrated amplifier kit (with valves)
 KiT34 valve integrated amplifier kit (without valves)
 KiT 34 upgrade kit
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 HD83 mains toroidal transformer
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 KiT34 E/I choke
 KiT6550 E/I UL
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 PSU-II E/I choke
 KiT6550 E/I UL push pull output transformer (4 ohm? or 8ohm?)
 KiT34 E/I UL push pull output transformer (4ohm? or 8ohm?)
 Kel84 E/I push-pull output transformer (4 ohm? or 8ohm?)
 2A3 PSE parallel single ended output transformer
 HD83 E/I single ended output transformer
 Pre-II E/I driver transformer
 300B PSE E/I output transformer(4 ohm? or 8ohm?)
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 Kel34 Printed Circuit Board
 Kel80 Printed Circuit Board
 HD83 Printed Circuit Board
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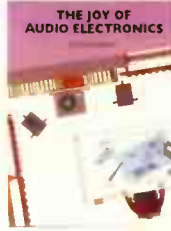
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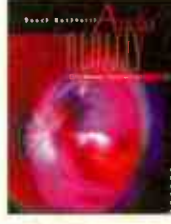
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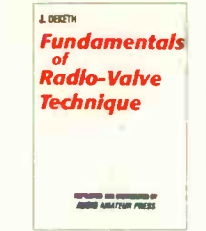
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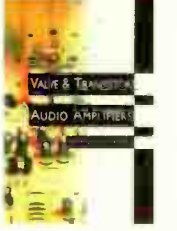
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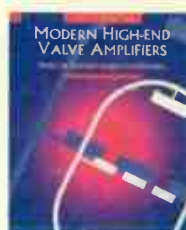
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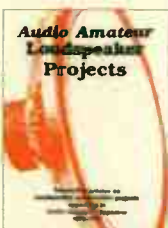


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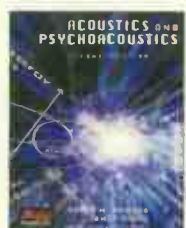
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classic cuts

A truly Classic 20th Century Symphony – Górecki's Third, is revisited by Andy Giles.

The first ever UK review of this recording of Henryk Górecki's Symphony No. 3, in 1993, described the work as 'one of the most important symphonies of the century.' I know, for I wrote it. A smart Press Officer at Elektra Nonesuch, aware that I wrote for Q Magazine, sent me an early copy, hoping to promote the piece to a wider audience with a review therein. Fortunately I was short of decent copy material at the time so I proposed to dash-off a couple of hundred words on this unusual offering (well, certainly for Q readers). In the event, I found it hard not to write two thousand words on it – I was entranced.

A few weeks later saw the recording smash not only into the top ten classical charts but also, incredibly for those days, ride high in the pop album charts. You couldn't switch on Classic FM without hearing it. Paul Gambaccini, I recall, went orgasmic at the very mention of its name. It has since become the biggest selling disc of music by a contemporary classical composer. For myself, I made hay whilst the sun shined and penned about five other reviews – all equally glowing – and sold them to other magazines and national newspapers. I even received a fax from Górecki, thanking me for my 'interest' in the work. But, what was then a minor music business phenomenon is now a legend. It really is that good.

Górecki's Symphony No 3 (Symphony of Sorrowful Songs, Opus 36, written in 1976) is a three-part threnody of painful beauty. Rarely does the voice of sorrow speak with such eloquence. Morbid? You bet, but it doesn't hurt to reflect from time to time on man's unutterable inhumanity to man. But where this symphony is morbid it does not descend to being maudlin. Where there is pathos there is no bathos. At times, particularly during the

lachrymose central section largo (tranquillissimo), visions of killing fields, concentration camps, mushroom clouds and children smeared with flaming napalm haunt the listener.

Yet, because it is so very gorgeous, in its hymn-like setting, Górecki's third symphony never fails to arouse the spirit of hope. The trailing, lustrous voice of Dawn Upshaw on this Nonesuch pressing inspires expectations of a better world – either here or elsewhere, it matters not. The deft orchestration and timing of David Zinman and the London Sinfonietta also serve to lift rather than deflate the spirit. The inner repose one derives from listening to this monumentally incisive work is one of peace over hostility and truth and beauty over falsehood and evil.

The Symphony was completed when Górecki's style was undergoing a fundamental change from modernist 20th century music, using a definite order of notes as a thematic basis for composition, to a more approachable style, fixed to more tonal traditions. He seemed, and this is a trite but understandable analogy, to have completed a reversal of, say, Schoenberg, and decided to lean towards the musical and accessible as oppose to the atonal and less appealing. Schoenberg did it the other way round, going 'bonkers' as has been described, after such gems as *Verklärte Nacht* and stretching tonality to its limits thereafter. The Symphony's simple trio of finely wrought elegiac movements (or 'songs') outline a keenly felt triptych of soul-laden laments for all the innocent victims of conflict – predominantly (as Górecki was Polish and knew much of the suffering of his people) of World War II. Comparisons with Schoenberg and the Austro-Germanic style are not altogether as ludicrous as once they might seem. Indeed there is almost a Brucknerian theme to the final glorious



movement. But all this serves only to elevate this most effortless symphony to that of the arcane and unfathomable. The work is undeniably well structured but is complex only in the sense that its thematic course remains unhindered by fanciful orchestral meanderings. It is all there, stark and yet wonderfully ethereal.

There are detractors to this symphony – as can be expected – and I regret that they are amongst those dinosaur diehards of the classical music cognoscenti that brought the more serious musical world into disrepute and made it intractable and unappealing to many. The banal descriptions of this work as 'film-music' or as a 'mawkish advertising theme tune' are as ridiculous in their pomposity as they are wholly incorrect.

This is a piece of music in a million. A piece to cherish, a piece to, above all, enjoy. Its appeal lies in its haunting beauty, never overstated and with its obvious melancholy held in check by its overriding sense of redemption, frail forgiveness and hope.

And if it fails to move you, then there is little hope for you, I'm afraid.

Symphony No 3 by Henryk Górecki,
with the London Sinfonietta under
David Zinman and Dawn Upshaw as
soprano is available on Elektra
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The surround-sound speakers we have tested this month say a lot about the upcoming DVD market and – possibly – the future of audio. As matters stand you'll doubtless be aware that stereo isn't so much dying a natural death as being killed off, in favour of surround-sound. Yet replacing a decent pair of inexpensive stereo speakers with an affordable surround package like the ones we have tested this month will destroy the sound quality of your system.

Am I arguing against surround-sound? No! At this very moment I am in the process of re-arranging my lounge in a fairly substantial way to do surround-sound properly – without the wires or the intrusion. It can be done. But this means getting the circular saw out, removing the furniture, ripping up the floorboards and what have you. Not everyone is into house surgery to accommodate their hi-fi, but less expensive and more convenient solutions will walk you backwards in terms of sound quality. Let me explain just what our package systems give you.

The cabinets of these loudspeakers have to be small, because there are so many to accommodate in a living room. The satellite units use cheap full range drive units. Some have separate tweeters, some have a parasitic centre dome/cone but under test I found all have a ragged frequency response inferior to any normal hi-fi loudspeaker. In other words, they will sound rough. The cone materials used will add coloration, as will the small, cheap plastic cabinets.

There are no engineering benefits to be had in a small loudspeaker other than good

dispersion. These systems are about convenience rather than sound quality. They are for the uncommitted user who wants surround-sound at minimum trouble and expense. The drawback is that their quality is so poor it wouldn't normally be considered hi-fi.

The economic argument looks no more convincing. If you were to

” SACD and DVD Audio offer even higher sound quality than DVD video.

buy three pairs of Mordaunt Short MS912s – an excellent hi-fi loudspeaker – they would cost you £600. Believe it or not, an MS912, like any small-ish modern loudspeaker, will get down to 40Hz like most of the subwoofers in budget surround-sound systems. With five MS912s you would have a superb hi-fi surround-sound 'speaker system for just £600.

This comparison simply makes the point that budget surround-sound systems represent very poor value. Of course, Mordaunt Short have proper centre 'speakers and complete cinema systems, as do Mission, et al, which incorporate real hi-fi loudspeakers. But even with a proper REL subwoofer at £300 or so, a brace of small high performance hi-fi loudspeakers will still not take you above £1000 – less than two of these packaged systems.

Home cinema in a box offers dismal sound quality, well below what would be considered hi-fi, for prices higher than a six channel hi-fi system – quite an amazing situation. This contradicts a basic tenet of both DVD and SACD to provide not only surround-sound, but sound quality at least as good as CD or better. DVD video discs have Dolby surround sound, dts or 24/96

digital, in respective quality order. The last of these, 24/96, is like CD (linear pulse code modulation or LPCM) but much better, with considerably less distortion on low level music signals and a bandwidth to 48kHz rather than CD's 21kHz brick wall limit.

What does it sound like? Hard, fast and very solid, as a generalisation. In one word: vivid. I generalise because in practice how any disc 'sounds' depends mostly upon recording quality, but traits are evident once you have listened to a good cross sample of recordings. What I would say though, is 24/96 is worth having; you not only get visceral punch to your dynamics, you also get extreme, or shall I say conspicuous clarity. Believe me, friends will walk in and go "wow!" – if you do it properly.

Of course, surround-sound through a poor set of 'speakers still gives you noises from every corner of the room and in most cases, if not all, it's more involving than stereo, in the sense that you are immersed in the sound field. But try to listen to an orchestra, or even violins on a Rock recording, and your ears will certainly protest using the 'speakers I tested this month.

SACD and DVD Audio offer even higher sound quality than DVD video. Our experiences to date at Hi-Fi World suggest you need a decent hi-fi system to clearly resolve the improvements these new high resolution digital systems offer. It seems a shame people should be drawn into using low grade surround-sound loudspeakers for the sake of convenience and domestic harmony, because it smothers much of what high resolution audio can do. Instead of going "wow" a word more likely to be used is "ouch". And that's not how it should be. ●

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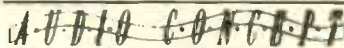
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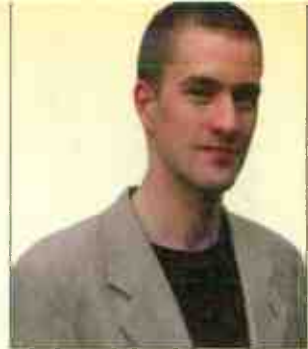
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Several months ago, I wrote about what I expected to be a DAB Christmas. Well with the Christmas season well under way now all the signs are that the public's response to Digital Radio has been even better than many had imagined. Although there is little choice in DAB tuners at present, the two budget models that made it in time for Christmas have sold exceptionally well. Both the Acoustic Solutions 120 and Cambridge Audio's DAB300 have been so popular there will be shortages over the season.

The problem has been that retailers have found it tricky to gauge demand. For one reason, the whole country has yet to get DAB coverage, and the other is that it's difficult to estimate just how many people will buy into the technology.

Although the DAB alliance had hoped that coverage would be around 75% by now, the deadline has been moved forward; the BBC still quote early 2004 for 85% coverage. More encouraging has been the recent launch of extra stations including another new BBC station, Radio 7.

I also hear that Ford is to be the first to fit DAB tuners to their range of cars, giving the format a potentially massive boost.

With the modest excitement generated by the format I decided to try the new technology for myself just before Christmas, with an early present of a Pure Evoke 1. Pure, formally VideoLogic, have been at the vanguard of digital tuner technology almost from the off. They were responsible for bringing the price down, and the £100 Evoke 1 is the cheapest model now on the market. Fair enough, it is a portable set, although it uses the same circuitry as many of the budget full size machines and has a stereo output to connect it

to a separates system. Living with the Evoke for a month or so has been something of a mixed experience. My first concern was reception, but according to the website, www.ukdigitalradio.com, typing in my postcode, I stood an "excellent chance" of a quality reception. The trouble is that on occasions the signal has been anything but. The instruction manual

Signs are that the response to Digital Radio has been even better than many had imagined.

rather coyly refers to a "burbling" sound that may occur with some stations. In practice this is actually a stuttering of sound, screeches, whistles and then the total death of the signal for seconds at a time, as the signal error meter shoots up the scale.

This is disappointing for a new technology that prides itself upon quality of reception. Well, there may not be much hiss, but when my old Sony portable occasionally broke up, switching the signal to mono was usually enough to cure the problem. With the Pure I now have to move the unit, which is mains only powered, around the room until the reception improves. The answer, of course, is to get a decent outdoor aerial fitted; yet I don't see why a portable being used in an area with an excellent chance of reception should really need one!

Yet, when the reception is OK the sound quality is generally good. The inbuilt 'speaker' is rather 'plummy' in tone and obviously short of power, yet when plugged through a separates system, the sound quality's not bad. I say 'not bad', because I still feel that an analogue tuner of the same price sounds better. A Cambridge T500 with a decent outdoor aerial outperforms its digital brother similarly equipped.

For any hi-fi fan this is a major handicap. Yes the Tag McLaren no doubt will sound very impressive, but I doubt if it will match the magic of a well set-up Naim NAT. Much of the problem is down to reduced data rate. In order to provide more stations the forum has reduced signal quality - a trade off that is available in digital. Now that all the digital tuners are equipped with a data rate meter, the listener can see just how good - or rather, poor - the quality of the transmitted signal is. The best data rate possible is 192kbps. This falls to a mere 48kbps with the financial station Bloomberg. This is set by the broadcaster and it comes as no surprise to find Radio 3 has the

highest quality signal as this has always been the case with their FM broadcasts. Most BBC stations use a 128kbps rate, although this does vary. Although broadcasters have always altered rates at different times of the day, now the listener can actually see exactly when the rate changes. It can actually be rather alarming to see the rate fall, especially if you were quite looking forward to the following program! The sound quality may not be discernably different through the Evoke's own 'speaker' but it's certainly noticeable through my separates system. In this respect then, the old bugbear of stations, such as Radio 1, being almost unlistenable on a decent separates system, because of compression, remains just as true with Digital Radio.

Despite its teething problems and less than brilliant sound quality I must admit to having become something of a convert to Digital Radio, however. There's no doubt that the choice of stations is excellent, and most of the time the quality is fine for speech, dramas, comedy and pop music. Given the choice of listening to the Proms on digital or analogue, though, I'd still plump for the latter. Here's hoping the reception improves in time for the summer! ●

MONITOR QUALITY

David Price goes back to the eighties with Monitor Audio's classic R352 loudspeaker.

The eighties was a 'troubled' decade for loudspeaker design. Although a number of 'milestone' products appeared - such as Celestion's SL6 and Acoustic Energy's AE-1, it's hard to argue these were completely successful designs in themselves. Rather, they proved more notable for what they subsequently made possible, rather than for what they actually did. The decade is best remembered as an important 'rite of passage' in loudspeaker design, sweeping a new broom through a sea of big, bloated multi-drive unit seventies speakers and installing the rigour of metal dome tweeters, minimalist crossovers and small, pert cabinets in their place.

All of which has absolutely nothing to do with the speaker you see before you. In a world moving inexorably towards stand-mounted mini-monitors sporting aluminium dome tweeters, Monitor Audio's R352 must have looked a complete anachronism upon its introduction back in 1984. Rather than being a 'brave new world' design, it was much more a case of 'traditional values in a modern setting'.

Intiguously, this loudspeaker was the brainchild of Robin Marshall, more famous for the brilliant work he went on to do with Epos and the ES14. He had

started his career at the BBC, entering directly from university as a mathematics and computer science graduate. There he'd got to work on a number of speakers, including the famous LS3/5A. Upon leaving, he hooked up with the retailer KJ Leisuresound, whose owner John Read gave him a job making loudspeakers, effectively starting the Audiomaster brand. His Beeb connections ensured that it won a license to manufacture the LS3/5A, causing the company to grow at an alarming rate. By 1981 the business imploded and it was then that Monitor Audio's Mo Iqbal offered him a job. The MA R352 and R252 were his first two designs, and the aluminium domed R852/MD, and R952/MD followed. After two years, Marshall finally left to set up Epos Acoustics and launch the famed ES-14.

He has described the MA R352 as a "mould-breaker", saying that when he looked around at what other people were doing, he thought it seemed pointless to "just make another clone". Indeed it is not - at 640x250x318mm it's a pretty big box and taller still on the custom MA stands, which are angled slightly up to improve dispersion. The cabinet is beautifully veneered - MA produced some spectacularly finished boxes through the eighties - and thick, strong and solid at 13kg apiece. Inside sit a 200mm plastiflex mid/bass unit and a 25mm soft dome tweeter, with a large bass port completing the front baffle layout.

Its driver compliment is remarkable for being entirely 'old school', albeit done to very high standards. The combination of relatively unsophisticated drive units and a large, bass reflex cabinet made for an excellent 91dB sensitivity and

a very benign nominal 8 ohm load. Compare that to the 85dB sensitivity of the then 'flavour of the month' Linn Kan (sealed box mini monitor) which retailed at a similar price to the R352's £350 and you can see how different it must have seemed!

One obvious result of all this sensitivity is brilliant transient performance, and this is where the Monitor Audio shines. Don't expect it to have the neutrality of a classic BBC design, or the clarity of an electrostatic - this is to miss the point. The R352 is all about giving a fast, involving and tuneful sound, and this is what it does - in spades. Moreover, whereas price rivals like the Kan were also very musically engaging but had precious little bass, the MA has loads of it. Interestingly though, it's not a seventies style fat, bloated low frequency performance. Rather, it's decently tight, taut, grippy and tuneful. However, you still get the distinct impression that this is a big, barrel-chested loudspeaker that's at home in something bigger than a box room.

This is the beauty of the R352 - it has that large, warm seventies sound that so many of us living with nineties speakers yearn for, yet it has a good deal of eighties-style speed and rhythm - the best of all worlds, in other words. The R352 was a popular product in the mid-eighties, but these days you see precious few around (either their owners are holding on to them, or they're downright ashamed of them)!

Prices range from around £90 for a tatty pair up to £200 for a mint set complete with the very desirable factory spiked stands. Either way, you're getting a lot of loudspeaker for your money - precisely why people bought them all those years ago.





In 2002, hi-fi had a most excellent year. It saw several strands coming together to mark a sea change in audio - namely 'advanced resolution digital', multichannel and high end analogue. It was probably one of the most important years hi-fi has had since the early eighties advent of Compact Disc. Last year's goings on strike right at the heart of the future of high fidelity.

Although DVD-Audio and SACD are technologically yesterday's news - the cutting edge is now hard disk and flash memory-based audio devices - 2002 was the year they became a commercial reality. Granted, they haven't yet reached ordinary homes, but there's no denying that these two audiophile digital formats (arguably the first ever) have made great strides in getting to shops.

This time last year, most hi-fi nuts had never seen a DVD-Audio disc but now there's over four hundred of the things on sale. Likewise, one year ago you could count the number of SACD players on the fingers of one hand - now, Philips sells a £200 DVD player with SACD built-in.

Until the advent of DVD-A and SACD, there was precious little justification for the purchase of a high quality multichannel sound system, as far as out-and-out audiophiles were concerned. 'Home theatre' buffs have been buying high end surround-sound systems for years now, but their sound was enough to get hi-fi nuts running for cover. The quality of even quite expensive 5.1 systems used to be shockingly bad. Reminiscent of the worst excesses of late seventies/early eighties Japanese

solid-state, they were harsh, thin and acerbic sounding in the extreme.

In 2002 however, we saw the meeting of high-end hi-fi and multichannel like never before. Products like Naim's AV2/NAPI50/NAPV 175 and Arcam's FMJ AV8/P7 gave lovers of real hi-fi the chance to get truly

Until the advent of DVD-A and SACD, there was precious little justification for the purchase of a high quality multichannel sound system, as far as out-and-out audiophiles were concerned.

superb surround sound. In an instant, systems like these can change from delivering impressive Dolby Digital 5.1 movie soundtracks to reproducing CDs and LPs in genuinely high fidelity. As well as all the power and push required for home cinema, they have the smoothness, subtlety, finesse, refinement and polish required for top drawer music reproduction. While audiophile purists may be alarmed by all the compromises involved - multi-speaker listening rooms, complex digital signal processing, tone controls and room equalisation - the results speak for themselves.

Although the aforementioned systems are expensive (at around £5,000 just for the 5.1 channel preamplifier/processor and power amplifier), it is products like these that I can see sparking a renaissance in high-end hi-fi. Just as back in the late seventies, many felt sufficiently enthralled by music to invest £3,000-plus in a Linn/Naim

tri-amp system, so I can see many spending £6,000-plus today on a decent 'advanced resolution' digital multichannel set-up. With plain old 16/44 however, the source quality was never good enough to warrant such high expenditure, but now the audio industry has something to shout about once more.

Amusingly, just as digital takes a giant leap forward and comes within shouting distance of its top analogue rivals, so analogue advances once more. For me personally, the best thing about 2002 was the arrival of Origin Live's Illustrious tonearm. Coupled to a new generation of DC motors on decks like Michell's seminal Orbe, this device is capable of absolutely stunning results. Its astounding resolution catapults it above its Linn, Naim and SME rivals to dramatic effect. The fact that the 'fab three' superarms have had virtually no development in the past fifteen years is something I for one cannot fathom, and the Illustrious comprehensively proves that there was - as I'd suspected - plenty of room for improvement.

The nineties saw real development in the fields of turntable power supplies, motors and suspension, as well as cartridge styli, cantilevers and coil technology. With the exception of Origin Live's simple but effective Rega tonearm modifications, very little has been done on the arm front however - until the Illustrious.

Ironically, all this work done on decks and pickups has meant that the first arm to comprehensively advance on the Linn, Naim and SME seems all the more stunning. A good year then, and here's hoping that twelve months from now, we get all of 2002's qualitative advances, but at a new, lower price! ●

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Supra cables hail from Sweden and specialise in a range of budget to midpriced 'speaker cable and interconnects. The new Dual interconnect is their latest entry level model and retails at the kind of price ideal for those wishing to upgrade from bog standard bell wire and the like. Aimed at both hi-fi and AV applications, the Dual is also available in packs of 5 or 6 pairs intended as a complete AV set.

The design principle behind the Dual is to offer high noise immunity as well as top musical performance. In an attempt to achieve these ends it's a 'figure-eight' design (two separate cables joined together) and is terminated with the company's RCA6 gold-plated, all metal constructed phono plugs.

Each channel uses two conductors, one of which is the 'send'; the other is for 'return'. A separate 100% coverage aluminium/poly foil screen is then used for earthing with a drain wire connected at the 'send' end, making the cable directional (a small arrowed yellow tag signals the directivity). The audio signal uses two conductors made from 19-strand, 0.127mm diameter Oxygen Free Copper inside a polyethylene isolation.

The Dual is finished in a kind of wishy-washy pale blue hue but thankfully it's shielded by whatever it's connected to!

Sound wise the Dual is, in the words of Sade, a smooth operator. Playing Miles Davis's seminal 'Kind Of Blue' on CD the opening of 'So What' had a fluid and almost velvety feel. As the drums and trumpet

kicked in, so the Dual showed that it has sweet and warm treble - a nice change from hard edged budget cable. However, whilst this creates a musical organic and wholesome sound, those that crave excessive air and detail may find it wanting. With studio rock recordings such as the Foo Fighters latest album, it served well, giving rough compressed guitar tracks a lyrical aspect and taking the edge off of the mid and high frequencies. Bass, whilst not the fastest I've heard, was nonetheless tuneful and pretty tight.

The Dual is a good bet for those with edgy components that need calming down or, alternatively, for those that like a laid back, long and enjoyable listening session. Recommended.

Glaive Audio
Tel: 01622 664 070
www.supracables.co.uk

KIMBER KABLE TONIK £45 PER 0.5M PAIR

Whilst the Tonik is very low priced for Kimber, you'll need to have slim components for using the starting price, as 0.5m doesn't get you very far if you favour 50kilo monoblocks (in which case you'd probably get something more expensive anyway). Having said this, the Tonik is available in longer lengths to order. The new Tonik replaces the PBJ as the company's entry level interconnect and uses the traditional Kimber tri-braid geometry and Varistrand™ "ultra-pure" copper conductors. There's also a special PE dielectric and the Tonik is available in both XLR or the company's Ultratike (sounds like a super-brat) RCA connectors.

When it comes to sound quality

you'd be hard pushed to find anything more neutral and transparent for this money - even at half a metre! The Tonik is refreshingly (get it?) open and airy and breathes life into equipment - it will give budget, midpriced or ageing components a real boost. 'Kind Of Blue' had plenty of insight and it was resplendent with detail - the old analogue tape hiss was realistically present, and brushes on the skin of the snare had a startling presence. Tonally the Tonik errs on the bright side but as long as your amps aren't equally crispy then you'll be alright. Such was the realism, at times the sax and trumpet was so forward in the mix that I felt the bell was poking through the Quad's grill.

With the Foo Fighters the Tonik was fast and furious and all the layers of the mix were laid bare. Guitars sounded lean and trim and the drum kit powered away nicely. Much in the style of the rest of the Kimber range the superb midrange and treble sometimes means that the bass could be a tad weightier but what's there is taut and powerful.

These are very fine interconnects for the money, giving a high-end appeal to budget hi-fi. You may find yourself listening to the electronics instead of the notes, though, but the Tonik gives a level of transparency hitherto unavailable at the price. Sit back and enjoy, preferably with a stiff gin!

Russ Andrews Accessories Ltd.
Tel. + 44 (0) 1539 825500
www.russandrews.com



World Verdict £

SUPRA DUAL
A good, musical cable that's fluid and warm but not the last word in detail or transparency. Hard to knock at the low price, though.

World Verdict £

KIMBER KABLE TONIK
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COPY PROTECTION VOX POP

US market analyst GartnerG2 has found that most consumers believe they have the right to copy their own music CDs, and copy-coded discs to come with mandatory warning labels. The study involved 1,005 adults and 1,009 teenagers being interviewed in the US. It found that most consumers believed that copy-protected CDs threatened their legal right to make personal-use copies of discs, causing its authors to conclude that copy-protected CDs without warning labels could have a negative impact on sales.

A statement released by GartnerG2's research



director, PJ McNealy says that, "Since it's clear consumers perceive they have the right to make some copies, the lack of labelling will only contribute to declining revenue for the music industry as those who are still buying CDs become frustrated. Consumers will balk if they bring home a CD and find it won't play on every CD player they own."

The survey found that 82% of respondents believe it is legal to make copies of CDs for personal backup, while 77% think they should be able to copy the CD for personal use in another device. 60% thought it was legal to make a copy for another member of the household. 74% thought the music industry should be required to label CDs that include copy protection.

CREATIVE - NOT 'ARF'!

'I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here' winner Tony Blackburn's new single, 'Oh Tony Blackburn', has been remixed using Creative Labs' SoundBlaster Live! Eschewing the studio for the soundcard, technology expert Eric Wiltsher was able to mix, balance, level and edit the track on his PC using his Sound Blaster. He's

reported to have said that, "Advances in technology have meant that I have finally been able to dump the mixing desk. Thanks to Creative, half a ton of metal and 24 faders have left the building and now everything is made on my PC! It's given me the edge to produce broadcast quality audio quickly and easily". Those wishing to purchase this seminal moment in pop history can e-mail tonyb@debbieflint.com.

SOUND BYTES

In tech news, Macrovision Corp. is acquiring both Midbar Technology Ltd. and the assets of TTR Technologies Inc., bringing together three top CD copy-protection technology developers in a concerted effort to enable acceptable consumer CD-burning and transfer of music files. Market research company Comscore reports that CD burning and file-sharing are impacting online music sales to the tune of a 25% online sales drop, or \$545 million for the first nine months of 2002 compared to the same time last year.

Universal Music Group has launched a digital download program offering over 43,000 tracks in Liquid Audio format. Burnable to CD and transferable to portable devices, they're available from Best Buy.com, BET.com, CircuitCity.com, FYE.com, MP3.com, RollingStone.com, Tower.com, and WindowsMedia.com.

Aimster has now been ordered by a US Federal judge to employ filtering technologies to block such swapping of unauthorised copyrighted content. This is the result of an

RIAA lawsuit against the service, now called Madster, over copyright infringement.

Listen.com's Rhapsody subscribers, who are already allowed to burn to CD tracks from Universal Music Group and Warner Music Group, can now burn tracks supplied via BMG Entertainment for 99 cents each. The just relaunched MP3.com site has 'digital music tutorials' for newcomers, increased coverage of digital hardware and software, expanded artist information, 40 channels of streamed radio from Radio Free Virgin, and a chart tracking its most popular downloads and streams.

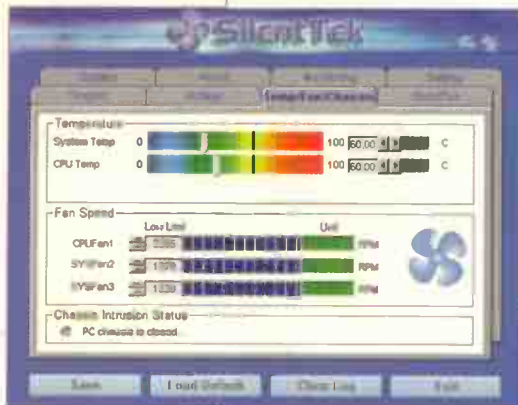


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Aopen has launched its new SilentTek 'silent PC technology' on its latest generation of motherboards. Its combined "Hardware-Status Monitoring",



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<http://english.aopen.com.tw/tech/techinside/SilentTek.htm>.

THE NXT STEP

The leading edge Japanese home computer market has seen the launch of NEC's VALUESTAR FS, an all-in-one PC combining LCD monitor and PC, featuring NXT's SoundVu technology. This follows the success of NEC's first SoundVu system, the VALUESTAR T, launched last month. It has been well received, winning the 'Best Desktop PC Award' at the World PC Expo in Japan last month. The new machine is being sold as a 'one-stop entertainment centre' combining traditional PC use with watching and recording TV programmes, as well as listening to music and watching DVDs.

By integrating the speaker into the screen, the SoundVu technology gives perfect synchronicity between sound and vision, as well removing the need for boxy loudspeakers which in turn saves living space (much prized in Japan) and adding to the home's interior design. For more details point your browser at

<http://2121.com/products/pc/2002/01/valuestarfs.html>



FEELING SCRATCHY?

Emission has released a series of six PCDJ music creation software titles comprising three DJ mixing titles (in home, club and professional grades) and three music creation titles (in rock, dance and hip hop producer variants). PCDJ is claimed to look and feel just like a dual deck CD player, but with many more options including Twin Virtual Mixing Desks, Beatmatch, Loop & Sample, Dual CD Playback, Visual Cue Points and Rip & Encode. Prices are as follows: PCDJ Home Edition (complete entry-level start-up) £19.99, PCDJ Club Edition (expanded version) £39.99, PCDJ Pro Edition (full edition for professional DJs) £79.99. PCDJ Rock Producer, Dance Producer and HipHop Producer all cost £39.99, and offer a real-time stereo sequencer, Audio Effects Unit, Melody & Drum Loop Creator, Integrated Sound Editor, Automatic Beat Slicing, 600MB Royalty Free Samples and MP3 & Skin Support. You can download PCDJ Free Edition at the Emission web site:

www.emissionuk.com



MP3 GOES MOTORING!

Dension's DMP3 is a £400 MP3-based hard drive unit that slots into your car dashboard and hooks up its existing hi-fi - either via the FM radio, auxiliary input or CD changer controls. Its vast 80GB storage capacity means tens of thousands of MP3 songs can be stored and accessed by easily managed playlists. Every time you want to add more music, the DMP3 can be unclipped from the dash and hooked up to a PC, either by the standard docking station or an optional (£49.99) USB 2 lead. Head units fitted to countless cars (from Audi to Volkswagen) will control it, but a small remote is supplied for those that don't. For more information, check out: www.In-CarMP3.com



COOLER STILL?

Syntrillium's Cool Edit Pro is, for many, the industry-standard digital audio editing package. Now, with Cool Edit Pro 2, it's been updated. David Price asks if it's improved a winning formula?

One of the best digital music editing packages has just been given a major revamp. Cool Edit Pro users include The Byrds' Roger McGuinn, the BBC and Abbey Road Studios, such is this software's respect throughout the audio industry. Essentially it's an audio recording application which lets you store music from an analogue or digital source (depending on your computer soundcard) on your PC and manipulate it in the digital domain using the program's powerful digital signal processing functions.

Such is its power that you can record, mix, and master up to 128 tracks of stereo audio (up from 64 in the original version). It comes complete with over 45 DSP effects, audio restoration, mastering and analysis tools. CEP2 also adds loop-based song creation and sequencing for musicians, and allows direct import of ACID file format songs (not just ACID loops, but actual .acd files.) It even has SMPTE/MTC master and slave, DirectX, MIDI and video support.

Of greatest interest to me is the software's wider compatibility - it talks to myriad file formats, including WAV, AIFF and all the other standard audio formats. A handy new bonus is its MP3 support, and Syntrillium hasn't done this by half. There's a full Fraunhofer MP3PRO codec bundled for the very best sound. Likewise, the new version supports even higher sampling rates, meaning it will record and playback (soundcard permitting)

in up to 32bit, 192kHz resolution. It will even upsample from 16/44 to 24/192, or downsample and dither - effectively offering 'Super Bit Mapping'!

The software is an easy install for all Windows 98, Windows Me, Windows 2000 and Windows XP PCs, taking less than 20MB of hard disk resources. The program auto configures itself to use your PC's soundcard as its recording and playback devices, but if you've got several soundcards fitted you can select your desired one by going into the OPTIONS/ SETTINGS menu. As before, wide bar-graph meters running all the way along the bottom of the screen are provided, but with a smoother, finer action.

Recording and editing is pretty much as before, which means extremely easy and straightforward - simply a case of locating the start and stop points of the recording you wish to cut, paste or delete. You can use the ZOOM IN and ZOOM OUT buttons to display your edit. Vast digital signal processing is then available, including noise reduction, click and pop elimination, clip restoration, compression, convolution, delay, sustain, echo, chorus, expanding, FFT, distortion, normalisation, phasing, vocoding, sample rate conversion, time stretching, tempo compression, parametric equalisation and DC bias



adjustment, multi-band equalisation and powerful filtering.

Once you're done, you can save it to disk or - new for CEP2 - burn it to CD directly. This feature is brilliantly easy to use, and powerful too, but does require downloading the free Downloadable Disk-At-Once CD Burning Plug-in from the website first.

Overall, the package feels slicker and more elegant than the original, and adds some very useful features. It remains incredibly stable and impressively fast, however, the very qualities that have endeared it to so many users in the past. The extra functionality hasn't compromised its ease of use, either - if anything it's improved it because the program feels far more 'all of a piece', more coherent and convincing. Once again then, Syntrillium's premium package gets a hearty thumbs up - with its high UK retail price the only disappointing factor.

Syntrillium Cool Edit PRO 2
£249.00
www.syntrillium.com

THE SECOND COMING

After launching what was effectively the world's first hard-disk based digital audio player back in 2000, Creative Labs has a new 'DAP Jukebox' for our delectation, cunningly entitled the Jukebox 2. David Price takes it out on the road.

How times fly! This time two years ago I was over in Japan, waxing lyrical about something I was immensely impressed with - Creative Labs' DAP Jukebox. Its amazing claim to fame was that it was the world's first-to-market hard drive-based digital audio player. By using the (then still fairly new-fangled) MP3 format, it could store thousands of hours of music on its internal hard drive. It was a classic case of yours truly marvelling at the miracle of modern technology. Although I admitted it had a few faults, the concept totally knocked me out. I was smitten.

Things have changed since then. The idea of a dinky device that holds vast amounts of music and plays it back with fairly high fidelity has become pretty much routine. A number of such devices have appeared on the market from a range of hitherto unknown manufacturers such as Archos, while one unlikely name has moved in and completely transformed the landscape - Apple. The iPod is - to my mind - the most brilliant example of the breed. Its ergonomics, software, sound quality, visual design and build is superb - and now, surprise, surprise, it's available for PCs too.

Much has happened in the intervening two years, then. Having invented the breed, Creative Labs reappear on the 'MP3 jukebox' scene almost as an interloper. No longer acknowledged masters of the art, their new Jukebox 2 faces dramatically tougher competition - forget who invented this market segment;

anyone who can take on Apple and win has got to have something special up their sleeves. The question is: has Creative Labs?

To be fair, the Jukebox is appreciably cheaper than the iPod. Although the latter has had its price cut, the Creative Labs unit is still almost half price at £199. Considering that it was launched at £249 just a few months back, and that the original DAP Jukebox cost £349, that's a lot of product for your pound. Factor in the myriad improvements that Creative has made over the original and it scores highly on the value front before you even pull it out of the box.

The unit itself has a 10GB hard drive built in, which is appreciably faster and quieter than the original machine. This translates to being able to store around 5,000 songs in WMA format (333 hours), or up to 2,500 songs in MP3 at 128kbps (166 hours), or around 300 songs in uncompressed 16bit, 44.1kHz PCM digital audio (30 hours). Other improvements include a new USB 2.0 connector which permits obviously faster transfers from computer to Jukebox 2 than was possible with USB 1.1 - although this older format is available if your PC lacks the new type. I have to say that FireWire wouldn't have gone amiss, but the designers have obviously taken the view that it's simply not 'universal'



enough yet, I guess? The latest type of lithium-ion rechargeable battery is supplied, giving up to sixteen hours of playback.

The unit itself is noticeably smaller and lighter than the original DAP at 123x130x32mm and 249 grams, although in homage (!) to the first of the breed it retains the 'Discman' shaped case. I had questions about this two years ago, and have to reiterate them here. Why isn't it square like the iPod? It simply doesn't fall 'to hand' easily, and the buttons aren't labelled in English (only graphical legends) making it baffling to use.

It's quite well made. Although the case is moulded plastic, it's good quality stuff and doesn't feel flimsy in the least. Once again though, a sleeve of Perspex (a la iPod) would work much better, and wouldn't present the possibility of that nice silver paint wearing off six months down the road. Round the back is a 5V DC in (for the supplied AC adapter/charger) and the USB socket, while the 3.5mm stereo headphone jack sits to its right - shame there's no direct analogue line out, or digital for that matter.



with the Jukebox 2, the package includes a cheap set of headphones (as usual, buy a pair of Sennheisers!), the USB 2.0 connecting cable, power adapter, installation CD,

Quick Start guide and Lion Battery.

Creative Labs has always had more than a passing interest in sound quality, as the fine standards set by the original DAP Jukebox showed. This time, the company claims that careful attention to detail at the design state has resulted in a signal-to-noise ratio of up to 98dB, a channel separation figure of 74dB, a frequency response of 20Hz - 20kHz and total harmonic distortion of less than 0.1%. Hooked up to my main reference system, driving Yamaha NS1000M loudspeakers, the unit certainly impressed.

As ever, sound quality with MP3 files depends on the codec used, but a Fraunhofer encoded 192kbps file of AC/DC's 'Highway to Hell' proved most impressive. Bass was powerful and well articulated with no sense of anaemia found in many MP3 portables, midband crisp and clean and treble smooth and even. Stereo imaging was bold, pushing vocals way ahead of the plane of the loudspeakers, and falling back way behind. Cueing up an uncompressed WAV file of The Dandy Warhols 'Bohemian Like You' revealed the Jukebox 2 to be easily the sonic equal of, say, a high end Sony Discman and comfortably superior to lesser examples of the breed.

All in all, this is a deeply impressive product considering its £199 retail price. My main criticism is of its ergonomics and case design, which simply don't make as much sense as Apple's iPod. I guess this

CREATIVE PLAYCENTER

Interestingly, the original PlayCenter was a kind of precursor to Windows Media Player, integrating powerful playlisting, file transfer (to and from the portable player) and PC music playing. Such is the quality of Windows Media Player now, this latest version looks a little cheap and nasty by comparison. The main navigation is pretty much identical to the Microsoft player, with left mounted buttons for PC MUSIC LIBRARY (which tells you all the music you've got on your hard drive), AUDIO CD (which lets you play or rip music tracks from a CD in your CD-ROM drive), MY COMPUTER (which is a kind of Windows Explorer-style file browser) and NOMAD JUKEBOX (which tells you what's on the Jukebox 2 - the 'Nomad' bit is a reference to Creative's digital audio player not available in the UK!).

The software doesn't look especially good, but works seamlessly. Two TRANSFER tabs between the main left file window and the smaller right hand PC MUSIC LIBRARY window let you punt tracks to and from the Jukebox 2 with heady abandon - it's fast and self-managing (if you want, it will pop up a dialogue box telling you what it's doing with the TRANSFER QUEUE). Creative's EAX signal processing, with 4-band equalisation is also included, along with the very useful Smart Volume Management system which effectively 'normalises' volume levels across tracks. Overall then, this is a very worthwhile piece of software. It's bullet-proof in everyday operation and really makes the Jukebox 2's file transfer activities a breeze to handle - it's just a shame it doesn't look better on the screen.

isn't entirely fair, as Apple is the prime exponent of this art and charges its customers for the privilege. Sonically however, it's up there with more expensive designs, and really very good for its modest retail price - don't forget, the very first 32MB Rio barely cost any less!

Creative Labs Jukebox 2 £199.99

Creative Labs
Tel: + 44 (0)1245 265265
www.creativelabs.co.uk

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Windows® 98/98SE/Me/2000/XP (USB 2.0 may require host driver from USB2.0 card or mother board vendor), Intel® Pentium® II 233MHz or AMD K6®-2 266MHz (Pentium III 450MHz or higher recommended for MP3 encoding), SVGA graphics adapter (256 colour, 800x600), 64MB RAM (128MB recommended), Sound Blaster® AudigyT, ExtigyT or Live!T for EAX® enhanced MP3 encoding, CD-ROM driver with digital audio extraction support, USB port, 30MB free hard drive space (more for audio content storage)

The original DAP Jukebox's display, menu and PC interface is retained, albeit with a few tweaks to bring it up to date. Power it up and you're presented with a green backlit window of 132x64 pixel resolution. The characters are very small, meaning it can cram in six lines of text. Pressing the right hand button underneath it lets you search for the track you want to play by album, title, genre etc. You then scroll up and down with the tiny 'thumbwheel' on the right hand edge of the player and push it in to select. It works well enough, but frankly is a league or three beneath the iPod's user interface. A larger display, clearer text and a huge central thumbwheel means you'll not find yourself flapping around in the wrong submenu for very long with the Apple - shame you can't say the same about this! Along

World Verdict £

Superb sound allied to an ultra competitive price compensates for its fussy ergonomics and control layout.

BLUE VELVET

David Price looks at the most polished SONICblue Rio so far, the S35 portable digital audio player.

Three years ago, Diamond Multimedia - the company that is now SONICblue (after previously being called 'S3') - was the word upon everyone's lips. The company was at the centre of a much-publicised legal battle with the Recording Industry Association of America, which slapped a court injunction on Diamond to restrain sale, contending that the 'Rio' (and all other devices of its type) was an illegal copying device. To cut a long story short, Diamond argued that it was merely a playback device (essentially it was just flash memory with a digital-to-audio converter), and therefore exempt. After weeks of wrangling, it won.

It's important to recognise how important this all seemed at the time. The Rio was not the world's first MP3 player - it's generally agreed that South Korean company Saehan has that particular accolade - but was the first to make it to the shops en-masse, thanks in no small part to the company's pioneering legal struggles in the US. The original PMP300, launched Spring 1999, became quite an icon - much in the same way as the original Sony Walkman (called the 'Stowaway') - and will doubtless soon attain cult status along with brick-sized Nokia mobile phones and Sinclair ZX Spectrums!

After cleaning up in what was a very highly charged market with the PMP500 (still a nice player today), the company renamed itself S3 and introduced the Rio 600, 800 and 900 in 2000. These were extremely competent designs, so much so that they were a little lacking in character. Nor were they the height of fashion either, as the likes of Sony and Samsung moved in with far trendier looking designs. SONICblue has now completely revamped the range with its new S10, S30, S35 and S50. The previous models' awkward 'memory backpack' modules have gone, to be replaced by MMC memory expansion slots, offering up to 256MB of storage. The S30 you see here comes with a perfectly adequate 64MB.

In marked contrast to many of the latest crop of portable digital audio players, which are made from brittle, featherweight plastic that feels like it won't last a week on the road, the tiny (64mm diameter) S30 feels rugged to the touch. At the centre is a brilliant, fine-pitch backlit LC display - beautifully crisp and clear and bristling with information (artist name, song title, playing time, etc.). As per the last Rio range it plays both MP3 and WMA files - disappointingly there's still no AAC or MP3 Pro support, although SONICblue says it's "upgradeable to future audio formats". Built in is an FM stereo tuner and a clock/ stopwatch.

The package contains the player itself, a pair of mediocre in-ear phones (as usual, get a pair of Sennheiser MX500s), a carrying case with belt clip, an adjustable armband, a battery, USB cable and a disc containing Rio Music Manager software for both the PC and Mac. A 'getting started guide' completes the package.

Rio Music Manager is excellent. It's an improved version of the code offered with the previous generation of Rios, which was already serious stuff. Its easy-to-use interface allows

quick transfers of MP3 and WMA files from PCs or Macs via USB. RealOne (PC) and iTunes (Mac) software is also included - all I can say is that, as for the latter, it's at moments like this that I wish I'd bought a Mac!

Out and about the Rio feels great, whether you choose to use the armband or simply put it in your pocket. It's durable, and all the facilities (clock, equaliser, etc.) are easy to get to without fumbling through menus and submenus, etc. One AAA battery provides a claimed fifteen hours of battery life, but my review sample was closer to ten. NiMH rechargeable batteries can be fitted if desired, but aren't standard.

The USB connection is a joy - the Rio 500 was the first to pioneer this, and the S30's implementation feels smoother and faster still. This diminutive heart-shaped gadget with its well designed display and buttons is a true pleasure to carry around.

The Rio S30 sounds genuinely impressive - up there with the best digital audio players I've heard (such as the old Rio 800 and the Philips Rush SA126). It's on the analytical side - clinical even - but there's a wealth of midband detail, nice crisp treble and a taut, firm bass response. Stereo imaging is well defined, and the images project out into space well at high bitrates, when feeding a serious hi-fi system via its 6.3mm headphone jack at maximum output. The only downside is that the Rio is just a little too 'digital' sounding compared to the warm, lush, big hearted character of the aforementioned Philips.

Overall, it's an excellent product - a true fourth generation design with all its concomitant refinements and strengths. There's very little to criticise at the price, something you can't say of most digital audio portables even now.

SONICblue Rio S30 £160
www.riohome.com



World Verdict
Excellent ergonomics, superb feature count, fine build and clean sound make this the class of the field at the price.

welcome to world favourites

Here's a list of products that are a good buy. We've tried to cater for a range of tastes, identifying strong products in every area. We're agnostic so you'll find a wide range of products, from valve pre-amps through to MiniDisc players. Products marked * are recently out of production but make a good second-hand buy.

Prices shown are those at the time of the review



Sonic Frontiers Transport Cutting edge design and technology.

COMPACT DISC

ARCAM FMJ CD23 £1100

This British-built player is extremely versatile. Controlled and detailed with a musical insight that few match. (Jul 2000)

CAMBRIDGE CD4SE* £200

A touch soft in the treble but outstanding in every other respect. (Feb 98)

KENWOOD DP-3080/11* £180

Has great clarity and presence for the price. Not as naturally expressive as the CD4SE though. (Feb 98)

LINN KARIK III* £1775

Under rated and overlooked, the final Karik was a gem. Superb transport gives a brilliantly tight, grippy dynamic sound, albeit tonally rather dry.

MARANTZ CD-17 KI-S £1100

The Marantz excels in all areas. Without doubt this is one of the most involving CD players on the planet. Build quality is also exemplary. (Sep 97)

MARANTZ CD-63 MKII KI-S* £400

Similar to the CD-63SE but more powerful bass and an all-round smoother sound. The famous KI tweaks pay off again. Whether or not it is still pre-eminent against the vastly improved competition is a matter of opinion.

MERIDIAN 506 20-BIT* £1100

Very detailed and revealing player. More cerebral than visceral sounding, however. (May 95)

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-RAY £800

Commonsense sturdy CD player of exceptional ability. Clear and detailed with high quality internal processing system. The X-Ray is inclined to show up poor recordings, but it's only doing its job! (Feb 99)

NAD S500 £1000

This dynamic top of the range Silverline spinner delights with any type of music. Exciting, sophisticated sounding and highly recommended. (Jun 2000)

ROKSAN CASPIAN £895

The Caspian has a smooth, slightly bright sound with some of the clearest treble in the business. Very engaging, dynamic character. (Aug 97)

ROTEL RCD 951 £300

HDCD capability at a midrange price. Plain Jane looks but solid construction. There is some higher than average measured distortion which may take the edge off this otherwise tempting product. (Aug 99)

COMPACT DISC TRANSPORTS

SONIC FRONTIERS TRANSPORT £6999

Cutting-edge design and technology combine to make this one very desirable product. The only problem is the fantasy hi-fi price. (Sep 98)

TEAC P-30 £2500

Cheap it isn't, but then it sounds like a million digital dollars. Nothing short of superb. (Jun 97)

TEAC VRDS-TI £600

Excellent mid-price silver disc spinner with a powerful, expansive and warm sound. Easily beats most sub-£1000 designs. A good choice for the budget conscious who want the best. (Feb 95)

DACs

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO DACMAGIC 3* £99

Superb value for money with extensive facilities and solid, detailed sonics. Upgrades any sub-£300 player.

DCS ELGAR £8500

Future-proof converter which will handle 24/96 and 24/192. Extremely open and natural performer. (Nov 97)

DPA LITTLE BIT 3* £299

A taste of the high end on a budget. Rich, clean, punchy sound transforms budget CD players.

MIDIMAN FLYING COW £299

Excellent as a DAC and doubles as an ADC for archiving to CDR. (Jun 98) Great value, as is junior version Flying Calf at £109. (Feb 99)

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-DAC* £300

A bargain for normal CDs and even better with HDCDs. (Nov 97)

SONIC FRONTIERS PROCESSOR 3 £6999

Quality never comes cheap! This DAC oozes class and when matched with the Transport 3 is certainly up with the best. (Sep 98)

TURNTABLES

LINN SONDEK LP12 BASIK £1100

Off the pace these days in many respects but still an extremely sweet and engaging listen with a quintessentially analogue sound.

MICHELL GYRODEC SE £775

Exquisitely built, infinitely upgradeable deck that gives true high end sound at mid-fi prices.

MICHELL ORBE £2000

Fantastically capable all rounder with commanding, powerful, detailed sound that gets the best from almost any arm and cartridge. Supreme build, brilliant value. (Apr 95)

ORIGIN LIVE STANDARD (KIT) £145

Good in standard form with AC motor; frighteningly good with a DC motor and battery PSU.

PINK TRIANGLE TARANTELLA £680

Not only does the Tarantella have more style than a catwalk full of models, it also combines PT's usual clarity with real authority. (Oct 97)

PRO-JECT DEBUT £110

Straight out of the box and onto the shelf! Nothing short of a bargain. Vinyl's never had it so good, so cheaply!

REGA PLANAR 2 £214

Brilliant starter deck with extremely polished manner. Better built £274 Planar 3 is a great all-in-one package that eats mid-price CD players for breakfast.

ROKSAN XERXES X £1295

DSU or XPS 3.5 power supply £150/170 extra. Excellent pitch stability from a new Swiss motor and outboard power supply. Very tight bass, fine dynamics and revealing clarity. (Jan 97)

SYSTEMDEK IIX900*/RB250 £330

A fine all-rounder and easy to upgrade too. More depth and breadth than Rega Planar 3. (Sep 94)

VESTAX BDT-2000 £225

A stylish looking deck with infinitely variable speed 16-90 rpm, DC belt drive and built-in MM phono stage. Good value, with plenty of chassis room for alternative arms, if required. (Sep 99)

TO NEARMS

HADCOCK 242 SE £649

Latest of a long line of unipivot arms. Added mass makes the 242 suitable for both low compliance MCs and straw-in-the-wind high compliance types. Revised geometry and chromium plating completes a first-class job. (Jun 2000)

NAIM ARO* £975

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

REGA RB300 £180

Some may prefer the simpler RB250 at £130. Detailed, tight, rhythmic sound but tonally rather grey and cold-sounding. Still excellent value, though.



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Prices shown are those at the time of the review



Pro-ject Phono Box. Provides an inexpensive introduction to all that vinyl has to offer.

- SME 3009SII £309**
Once state of the art, but no longer. Weak at frequency extremes and detail, but its legendary serviceability makes it a cult in Japan. Can be picked up for peanuts second-hand. (Jan 93)
- SME 309 £689**
A down-market version of the IV and V with aluminium armtube and detachable headshell. Tight, neutral sound with good tonality, but lacks the IV's pace and precision. Like the older SME 3009 series, this arm is also available in 10" and 12" versions. (Jan 93)

CARTRIDGES

- AUDIO TECHNICA AT-110E £30**
Great starter cartridge that's refined, detailed and musical beyond its price. Best value MM under £50
- GOLDRING 1012GX £74**
An accomplished MM with a solid bass, slightly forward midband and clean transients. Very reasonable price for such an able performer. (Jul 93)
- DNM MICA £185**
Beters Goldring's 1042 and costs only £135 on trade-in. An assured and transparent MM. (Feb 98)
- DYNAVECTOR DV20X-H £299**
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.

MUSIC MAKER £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. (Feb 99)

ORTOFON MC 7500 £2000
Conclusive proof that there's hope for the world. It's a long time ago now but this high-priced favourite still earns its niche - CD lovers would die if they heard it. (May 94)

ORTOFON MC 15 SUPER II £140
Not quite as good as the dearer Supremes but the Super II is a splendid introduction to the joys of moving-coil cartridges.

GOLDRING 1042 £130
One of the best Moving Magnet cartridges going, with beautiful treble and muscular bass. New low price makes it a bargain.

ORTOFON ROHMANN £1000
In a way it's MC 2000 meets MC 7500 with great tonal strengths and a dynamo sound. (Apr 96)

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS

- AUDIO ANALOGUE PUCCINI SE £595**
This superbly-built Italian integrated has a lucidity and control which leaves others nowhere. Sound stage a wow. (Dec 97)
- AUDIOLAB 8000a * £495**
Well rounded integrated with smooth and detailed sound plus a huge feature count. Great build makes later versions a top used buy.
- DENON PMA-250SE £160**
It might not have bags of grunt but the Denon can sound exceedingly natural and open. (Feb 97)
- McINTOSH MA6800* £3735**
The MA6800 not so much plays music as takes control of it, with effortless bass drive. (Sep 95)
- MISSION CYRUS 2 * £299**
Classic eighties minimalism combines arresting styling with clean, open, lively sound. Further upgradable with PSX power supply.

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-CANS2 £160
Warm, sumptuous, sweet sound h/phone amp. gives startling results with a decent set of headphones.

NAIM NAIT 3 * £575
Superb rhythms and dynamics make for great music making, but tonally monochromatic. Super optional phono stage makes it ideal for vinyl junkies.

ROKSAN CASPIAN £695
Smooth, warm integrated with remote control that works happily into most 'speakers. (Dec 97)

SONNETEER ALABASTER £995
Builds on the strengths of the Campion with ample control, colour and drive. (Oct 97)

PHONO STAGES

- CREEK OBH-8 SE £180**
Punchy, rhythmic character with oodles of detail makes this a great budget audiophile product.
- LFD MISTRAL PHONO STAGE * £300**
The Mistral has a warmth and involvement that make many pricier stages sound overpriced.

MICHELL DELPHINI MONOBLOCS £1995
Analogue tour-de-force gives supremely clean, detailed and finely resolved sound with breathtaking dynamics. Great value, even at this price.

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-LP £125
One of the famous MF X series. Full marks throughout for clarity and detail. Switchable between MM and MC. Indestructible build! (May 99)

PRO-JECT PHONO BOX £39
Not the last word in many respects but a thoroughly honest piece of work. Inexpensive introduction to all that vinyl has to offer. MM and MC provision plus choice of two impedances.

ROKSAN ARTAXERXES X £950
With the Atessa PSU the Artaxerxes X MM/MC stage still shines. Great stage depth, neutrality and tonal colour. (Oct 97)

Billy Vee
SOUND SYSTEMS

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SONNETEER SEDLEY £399
Combines transparency and fine dynamics with excellent rhythmic ability. (May 98)

PRE-AMPLIFIERS

AMC 1100 £150
Suffers from un-defeatable tone controls but an extremely good value piece of kit. Partners the similarly budget level AMC 2200 power amplifier, also at £150. Comfortable beginners' choice. (Mar 99)

AUDIO ANALOGUE BELLINI £475
Showcases AA's characteristic mix of clarity and musicality and blasts the competition. (Apr 98)

CHORD CPA1800 £1800
Clarity, insight and control are second to none - an addictive mixture. (Mar 98)

CROFT VITALE £350
A modestly priced valve pre-amp with exceptionally transparent performance. MM phono stage plus three line stages are standard. Volume controls are separate for each channel, thus giving balance adjustment. A remarkable item in all respects. (Feb 2000)

XTC PRE-1 * £1000
Almost valve-like in its smoothness, the line-level Pre-1 is warm and seductively clear. (Nov 96)

POWER AMPLIFIERS

ARCAM 9 * £400
With 70W on tap, the 9P will drive most loudspeakers with a spacious and detailed sound. Good bass welly too. (Dec 96)

CHORD SPM400 £1400
There's a sense of effortless power to the Chord that gives music real scale and presence. (Mar 98)

MARANTZ MODEL 9 * £8000
Authentic reproduction monoblocs still more than cut the sonic mustard. Highly expensive and highly sought after. (Mar 97)

MICHELL ALECTO £1989
Crisp, clean and beautifully controlled with gorgeous styling. Partnered with the £1650 Orca this is a superb winning combo. (Oct 98)

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-A200£1000/pair
200W of high-end monobloc power in a grooved tube. (Aug 98)

NAIM NAP180 £1060
Partnered with a NAC82, this has classic Naim control, and a superbly rhythmic presentation.

TUNERS

CAMBRIDGE T500 £180
An extremely engaging tuner with a performance at odds with its low price. Not exactly a Troughline, but you may not notice... (Feb 99)

CREEK T43 £399
Excellent detail, separation and dynamics. A great little tuner and unbeatable at this price. (May 98)

MARANTZ ST17 £600
A positive dreadnought of a tuner. Sweet and refined but with a heavy punch when needed. A tuner of this quality demands a decent aerial. (Jul 99)

MISSION CYRUS FM7* £300
Clear and lucid sound puts it up with the best. Superb build too. (Apr 94)

NAIM NAT03 £595
The NAT03's warm, atmospheric sound is further proof of Naim's proficiency with tuners. (Sep 93)

SONY ST-SA3ES* £250
Beguiling RDS tuner for the sonically discerning. Good ergonomics and sensitive too. (Apr 97)

CASSETTE DECKS

AIWA AD-S750* £200
Sonically a very decent machine at the price. Comes fitted with Dolby B, C and the dead handy Dolby S. (Apr 96)

AIWA AD-S950* £300
A stable transport, superb head and Dolby S make the AD-S950 an excellent all-rounder. (Feb 95)

KENWOOD KX-3080* £160
A simple deck, but excellent-quality head and transport give top quality sound. (Oct 96)

PIONEER CT-S740S £430
A great piece of engineering from Pioneer, with first-rate sound. (Jun 96)

YAMAHA KX-580SE* £250
The 'SE' tag is more than a marketing gimmick. Sound is solid and clear with Dolby S. (Sep 97)

LOUDSPEAKERS



Kef Cresta I loudspeakers
A very musical sound

CASTLE EDEN £469
Impressively vice-free 'speakers that offer great transparency and involvement. One of a select band that simply makes music regardless. (Mar 97)

EPOS ES12 * £495
Strong, punchy bass is allied to finely detailed, articulate midrange and sparkling treble. (Oct 96)

KEF CRESTA I £100
Delightfully sophisticated presentation for the price. Won't blow the roof off, but will deliver a very musical sound. (April 2000)

KLIPSCH HERESY II £1100
An outstanding high sensitivity loudspeaker with midrange and treble horns coupled with infinite baffle 12" bass driver. Effortless, fast and accurate. (May 99)

MISSION 752 * £495
Cracking mid-price mini towers combined HDA drive units and metal dome tweeters with surprisingly warm results. Benign load characteristics makes them great for valves.

MISSION 771 £170
Characteristically fast, punchy Mission sound from the Aerogel mid/bass and silk-dome tweeter. (Jul 98)

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- NA CDX Player (£2470) £1729
- NAP 250 Power Amplifier (£1910) £1339
- NA CDS/2 Player (£4165) £3099
- NAP 500 Power Amplifier (£10995) £7995

We have a few new units available at 15% off list price - please call for details



Featured
NAC 82 Preamp
one only available

Was (2500) Offer price £1795

Job Opportunity

We have a vacancy for a young enthusiastic 18 - 20 year old sales and customer service person. Experience not necessary but good communication skills. would be an advantage. Above average income potential. Please write to Ian Anderson sending your C.V to the address above.

QUAD ESL 63 * £3450
A reference against which all other loudspeakers are judged, the '63s have superb imaging and genuine transparency.

TANNOY AMS8 * £2700
Bold sounding pro active monitor with solid bass, clear midrange and delicious treble. (Aug 96)

TANNOY MERCURY m2 * £140
A true audiophile bargain which embarrasses many more expensive boxes. Never mind the price, let your ears decide. (May 97)

MINIDISC PLAYERS

KENWOOD DM-9090 £500
One of the best MD players yet. ATRAC 4.5 gives clean and very musical recordings from this Kenwood. (Jan 98)

SONY MDS-JB930Q £250
Great mid-price machine that adds better build and facilities to the '530's already excellent sonics.

SONY MDS-JA50ES * £1300
This Sony can put the wind up Nakamichi cassette decks when used with better blank MDs. (Apr 98)

SONY MDS-JE55ES
MiniDisc recorder £520
The best sounding MD deck made so far, thanks to awesome build and heroic ATRAC-DSP Type R coding.

SONY MDS-JE510 £300
An impressive sound and unmatched convenience make this MiniDisc player an excellent buy.



Pioneer DVD-717. A well built and solid performer.

DIGITAL RECORDERS

ALESIS MASTERDISK £1400
A groundbreaking hard disc recorder with a built-in CD drive. An amazing bit of kit, and a glimpse of the future. (July 2000)

KENWOOD DMF-9020 £500
An excellent tool for home recording, combines convenience, superb sound and a fair price. (Aug 99)

MARANTZ DR-17 £1100
Probably the best sounding CD recoder on the market. Built like a brick out house with a true audiophile sound. HDCD compatible. (July 2000)

PHILIPS CDR-765 £360
One of the first twin deck recorders/players that boasts high speed dub facility. Playback could be warmer, but still a bargain (Oct 99)

PIONEER PDR-555RW £480
Excellent mid-priced CD recorder that both plays and records with equal panache. (Oct 99)

SONY TCD-8 DATMAN * £599
Super clean and detailed sound makes this an amazing portable. Not as robust as it should be though.

DVD PLAYERS

DENON DVD-5000 £1600
Monster build, as you'd expect at this price. Facilites and gadgets galore and drop-dead high end looks. A very smooth and sophisticated sound, although not as good as similarly-priced CD players. (Mar 99)

PIONEER DV-717 £700
Well built and a solid performer, with a 'true' 24/96 digital output. Facilities in abundance and a controlled, exciting way with CD replay. Shame it lacks a Dolby Digital decoder! (Sep 99)

SONY DVP-5725 £490
One of the best buys in the DVD market. Available in a dodgy white case, but the facilities and performance more than make up for this. Excellent with both music and visuals, and a whole host of up to the minute facilities to keep you occupied. (Mar 2000)

HEADPHONES

JECKLIN FLOAT MODEL TWO £99
Wonderful panel-like and open sound from these esoteric-looking headclamps. Do not wear in public unless you like being made a fool of!

SENNHEISER HD-490 £50
Good value cans with an exciting and bassy sound. Everything one should look for in headphones at a sensible price.

INTERCONNECTS



Nordost Blue Heaven
A simple and effective upgrade

CHORD COMPANY CHAMELEON 2 £90/m
One of our favourite favourites, the Chameleons are musical performers with a smooth yet open sound.

DNM RESON £40/m
Neutral and transparent, and a steal at forty quid!

NORDOST BLUE HEAVEN £150/m
Some of the fastest and most transparent cable around. A simple and effective upgrade.

VAN DEN HUL ULTIMATE THE FIRST £260/0.6m
Carbon interconnects that help you forget the electronics and concentrate on the music. Miraculous transparency.

LOUDSPEAKER CABLE

CHORD COMPANY RUMOUR £9.95/m
The Rumour is our reference at the price. Tight and tuneful bass mixed with air and space results in a cracking cable for the money.

DNM RESON £6.95/m
This cable has a transparency of sound that's rarely heard at the price. Excellent value for money.

NORDOST BLUE HEAVEN £375/3m pair
This isn't cheap, but it sounds absolutely fab. An open and spacious sound that simply carries music.

Billy Vee
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Arcam DV88 DVD Player (1Yr G/tee)	(999.00)	£599.00	Lexicon MC1 Processor (2Yr G/tee)	(5500.00)	£3795.00
Arcam FMJ A22 Dave Amplifier (1Yr G/tee)	(1849.00)	£999.00	Naim CDX CD Player (2Yr G/tee)	(2470.00)	£1729.00
Arcam FMJ P25 3 Ch P/Amp (1Yr G/tee)	(999.00)	£599.00	Naim CDS/2 Player (2Yr G/tee)	(6256.00)	£4595.00
Linn Classik K CD system (2Yr G/tee)	(999.00)	£749.00	Naim 102 Preamplifier (2Yr/Gtee)	(1210.00)	£859.00
Linn Karik/2 CD PlayerS/H (1Yr G/tee)	(new 1850.00)	£649.00	Naim 72 Preamplifier (2Yr G/tee)	(767.00)	£429.00
Linn Kan 4 Speakers (2Yr G/tee)	(325.00)	£229.00	Naim NAP 180 Power Amp (2Yr G/tee)	(1220.00)	£899.00
Linn Keosa Speakers (2Yr G/tee)	(495.00)	£279.00	Naim NAP 250 Power Amp S/H (1Yr G/tee) (1805.00)		£995.00
Linn Kaim Line Preamp (1Yr G/tee) 50%	(1400.00)	£799.00	Naim NAP 250 Power Amp (2Yr G/tee)	(1805.00)	£1339.00
Linn 5103 DTS System Controller (2Yr G/tee)	(3250.00)	£2200.00	Naim Intro Spkrs - Beech (1Yr G/tee)	(790.00)	£549.00
Linn LP12/Lingo/Akito S/H (1Yr G/tee)	(2250.00)	£1095.00	Naim NAP500 Power Amp (2Yr G/tee)	(10995.00)	£7995.00
Linn Keilidh Blk S/H (1Yr G/tee)	(775.00)	£385.00	Rotel RV 985 DVD Player (2Yr G/tee) 50%	(625.00)	£279.00
Linn Sizmik Sub Woofer (2Yr G/tee)	(995.00)	£749.00	TAG DV32R DVD Player (2Yr/Gtee)	(3995.00)	£2995.00
Linn Keltik Speakers Wal (2Yr G/tee) 50%	(6000.00)	£2595.00	Yamaha AX620 AV Amplifier (2Yr/Gtee)	(399.00)	£279.00

welcome to world favourites

CASSETTE

NAKAMICHI DR-2
A great machine with Nakamichi's legendary heads. The lowest cost 'true' Nakamichi at the time, retailing for £600.

NAKAMICHI CR-7
The last of the great ones, and definitely the best Nakamichi ever (yes, better than a Dragon)

YAMAHA TC-800G
Early classic in serious cassette. Its ski-slope looks got it a cult following once it had ceased to be simply ugly.

CD PLAYERS

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

PIONEER PD-91
Built-to-last player with easy upgrade routes for modifiers. Not knockout as it stands but get one cheap and have a go!

CAMBRIDGE CDI
The first two box player with weighted mechanics and even an optional Dropout/error counter. Radical and effective at the time - a classic.

AMPLIFIERS

LEAK POINT ONE, TL12 & TL10
Ancestors of hi-fi, consequently expensive nowadays. As with all vintage valve stuff, overhauling is de rigueur before use, using original parts if possible.

LEAK PRE-AMPS
Line of 'good for their time' pre-amps. Use of EF86 pentode valve for high gain rules out ultra performance. Not the highest-fi.

LEAK STEREO 20
Excellent workaday classic valve amp. In good order the 20 will not disgrace itself. Various upgrades are available from specialist repairers.

LEAK TL12+
Plentiful monobloc equivalent of Stereo 20. Reasonably inexpensive and a tweakers' dream. Genuine valve hi-fi on a budget.

NAD 3020
You can't argue with success! NAD's budget transistor integrated gave thousands their first taste of hi-fi and remains great value.

QUAD 33/303 PRE/POWER
Great style and construction, also bullet proof. Warm and wooly sound, but easy going. A good introduction to early transistor audio classics.



Garrard 401
A legendary turntable.

QUAD 22/II PRE/POWER
One of the all-time classic valve amplifiers. Unusual circuit but it works beautifully. 22 pre-amp not up to today's standards.

SUGDEN A21
Seventies transistor integrated has an eminently likeable smoothness and musicality. Limited inputs via DIN sockets.

TECHNICS SE-A5 Mk2
Nice transformer and electronics, shame about the casework. With tweaking, this 150watter can sound sweet.

LOUDSPEAKERS

KLIPSCHORN
Not exactly plentiful or cheap but a splendid beast. For efficiency they have seldom been equalled. Space hungry!

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	Ex.Demo/Mint	£ 250	£ 90
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MONDIAL: #MAGIC BOX Improves your Picture! NEW		£ 99	£ 49
RENAISSANCE AUDIO CABLES: Many 1/2 Price	Ex.Demo/Mint	£ Call	£ Call
ACURUS			
A250: # 250W Stereo Amplifier (Black)	Ex.Demo/Mint	£1400	£ 750
A200X3: #3-Channel (3x200w) Power Amp. (Black)	Ex.Demo/Mint	£1600	£ 850
AERIAL ACOUSTICS (see pictures below)			
Model 5: Bookshelf Monitors-Pair (Maple) Including Special Stands	Ex.Demo/Mint	£2900	£1495
Model 7B: # Floorstanding Speakers-Pair (Cherry) Plus Special Plinths	Ex.Demo/Mint	£5000	£2500

	Ex.Demo/Mint	£1175	£ 595
AVM			
V2: # Remote PreAmplifier (Black)	Ex.Demo/Mint	£1975	£995pr
M2: # Mono Power Amplifiers - Pair (Black)	Ex.Demo/Mint		
CAIRN / EZO			
4808: # 70W Integrated Amplifier-Remote (Silver)	Ex.Demo/Mint	£ 650	£ 325
ARIA: #40W Integrated Amplifier - Remote (Silver)	Ex.Demo/Mint	£ 450	£ 225
NANDA Face Nord: #Preamp/ifier. 2 Analog Chan. Dual Mono. 3 Transformers, Bal In/Outputs (Silver)	Ex.Demo/Mint	£1000	£ 499

RETAIL SALE

CHORD (see pictures below)

RETAIL SALE

CPA3200E: Preamp/ifier + Legs (Silver/Gold Badge)	Ex.Demo/Mint	£4887	£ POA
DAC64: D to A Converter (Silver/Gold Badge)	Ex.Demo/Mint	£1900	£ 1350

OTHER CHORD PRODUCTS AVAILABLE - PLEASE CALL FOR MORE INFO



ENLIGHTENED AUDIO DESIGNS

RF DEMODULATOR: # (Black)	Ex.Demo/Mint	£ 600	£ 199
MIRAGE - Just a few of the AWARDS won - bottom centre			
M1si: #Reference Bipolar Loudspeakers (Piano Black)	S/Hand/Mint	£6000	£1995
M3si: #Bipolar Floorstand Speakers (Piano Black)	S/Hand/Mint	£3400	£1395
MC-si: #Magnetically Shielded Centre Speaker (Piano Black)	S/Hand/Mint	£ 600	£ 275
BPS-400: #400W Active Bipolar Subwoofer (Piano Black)	Ex.Demo/Mint	£1300	£ 695

PIEGA (P Series - see picture top right of advertisement)

S3: Satellites with Wall Brackets, Pair (Aluminium)	Ex.Demo/Mint	£ 499	£ 250
S4: Floorstanding Speakers - Pair (Aluminium)	Ex.Demo/Mint	£1095	£ 550
S4C: Centre Speaker (Aluminium)	Ex.Demo/Mint	£ 440	£ 220
P4L: # Floorstanding Speakers - Pair (Aluminium)	Ex.Demo/Mint	£1695	£ 850
P4C: # Centre Speaker (Aluminium)	Ex.Demo/Mint	£ 840	£ 430

**** AWARD WINNERS / 5 STAR BEST BUYS !!!!!**
Email for picture of unit/item



LEAK SANDWICH

Rather warm sounding big infinite baffle but cheap with it. With a reasonably powerful amp can sound quite satisfying.

LOWTHER PM6A

High quality full-range driver; still manufactured. High sensitivity, as fitted to many classic horn designs.

MAGNEPLANAR SMGa

Touch dry in the bass but a technological loudspeaker with genuinely musical abilities.

MISSION 770

Father of the 77 range which continues to this day. Well mannered with a warm sound and a kind load to amplifiers.

QUAD ESL57

Unrivalled. Properly serviced there is nothing like them. Their natural presentation may make them caviar to the general.

YAMAHA NS1000M

Hi-tech favourites of the Japanese and Americans. Viewed more warily in the UK but can give excellent results.

TANNOY GRF & AUTOGRAPH

Folded horn monsters which certainly sound good if you have the space. For Tannoy vintage see HFW November 1998.

WHARFEDALE SUPER 8 RS DD

Ideal experimenters' driver. High sensitivity ~14,000 Gauss magnet and extended frequency range. Inexpensive too!

TANNOY YORK, LANCASTER

Many similar models of infinite baffle or reflex design. Not the last word in tautness but the drivers work well in modern cabinets.

VINYL

ACOS LUSTRE

Very honest piece of kit, well made and easily adjusted. Vinyl beginners could do very much worse.

ALPHASON HRI005

First class arm, up to present-day standards. Buy carefully, though, as there's no service available now.

ARISTON RDI I

A one-time king of turntables very similar to the Linn LP12. Now deposed but worth a look at the right price.

LINN AXIS

Uncomplicated, lower-price version of the famous Sondek. Less expensive than some of its stablemates.

GARRARD 301 & 401

Legendary turntables, once fairly plentiful. Excellent back-up available; many different custom plinths available. High quality.

GOLDRING Lenco 88 & 99

Great deck for the kitchen table enthusiast. Garrard fans won't look at 'em but cheap and capable. Servicing available.

HADCOCK 228

Recently out-classed by Hadcock's updated 228 Special Edition but a proper hi-fi arm for all that. Makers still service.

MICHELL FOCUS ONE

20 years and still going strong. Early runner in the 'modern' turntable cycle with a first class arm. Factory servicing available.

SHURE M75

Recent line-contact improvements have left the M75 behind but the wide range of needles make it a handy tool.

SME 3009 IIS

Everlasting classic tone-arm. Spares permanently available from SME. No longer the last word but peanuts second-hand.

THORENS TD124

Best classic deck ever? Judging by the prices they fetch it's possible - 78rpm too!

THORENS TD150

Mid-price deck with a keen following. No real difficulty with servicing - novices may find the suspension system unnerving.

TRIO L-07D

Knockout heavyweight from 1980 with stainless bearing and 11lb platter! Not a give-away and beware! - spares scarce.

LEAK TROUGHLINE (ORIGINAL)

Interesting ornament but no longer hi-fi. Limited coverage of 88MHz to 100MHz only.

LEAK TROUGHLINE II & III MONO

Arguably the best-sounding tuners ever. Adaptation for stereo easy via phono multiplex socket.

LEAK TROUGHLINE III STEREO

Excellent tuner with indifferent stereo decoding circuit. Best when adapted to use modern outboard decoder.

MARANTZ ST-8

Possibly the ultimate Tardis console, including an oscilloscope for checking the strength of signal. Expensive even now.



Leak Troughline II Mono
Arguably the best sounding tuner ever

beyer-dynamic



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CARTRIDGE SELECTION	STYLUS	REPLACEMENT STYLUS
<p>Goldring</p> <p>100F £76 £62 GEX £52</p> <p>107Z GEX £95 £76 GEX £67</p> <p>100Z GEX £124 £100 GEX £86</p> <p>104Z £143 £114 GEX £100</p> <p>Eriska LX/H £133 £109 GEX</p> <p>Elite £232 £190 GEX</p> <p>GEX - Exchange price for a Goldring Any make/model of cartridge accepted</p> <p>Audio Technica</p> <p>AT 222 £23 £15</p> <p>AT 110 E £28 £16</p> <p>AT OC 9 ML £330 £280 EX</p> <p>Denon</p> <p>DL 110 £79</p> <p>DL 160 £95</p> <p>Grado</p> <p>Prestige Black £40 £27</p> <p>Prestige Gold £110 £73</p> <p>Ortofon</p> <p>510 Mk II £34 £22</p> <p>MC 15 Super II £130 £110 EX</p> <p>MC 25 FL £227 £193 EX</p> <p>MC 10 Supreme £304 £258 EX</p> <p>MC 20 Supreme £382 £323 EX</p> <p>MC 30 Supreme £452 £385 EX</p> <p>Kontrapunkt B £643 £548 EX</p> <p>Rohmann £837 £742 EX</p> <p>Shure</p> <p>M 97 XE £98 £58</p> <p>V 15 V XMR £304 £204</p> <p>Sutro</p> <p>Blue Point Special £265 £237 EX</p> <p>EX - Exchange price for MC from above companies</p>	<p>Shure Quality Diamond Stylus</p> <p>ADC XLM III £38.00</p> <p>Alar AN 5, AN 60 £33.00</p> <p>AN 2, AN 70 £34.00</p> <p>Dual DN 145 E, DN 165 E £78.00</p> <p>Goldring G800 £34.00</p> <p>JVC DT 55, DT 60 £12.00</p> <p>National EPS 24 GS, P 30 D, P 33 D £70.00</p> <p>Ortofon FF 15 E II, VMS 20 E II, OM 20 £18.00</p> <p>Pioneer PN 210, PN 220, PN 240 £32.00</p> <p>Shure N 75 C, SC 35 C £13.00</p> <p>N 75 ED T2, N 75 EJ T2 £16.00</p> <p>N 95 ED, N 95 EJ, N 75 3 (78) £16.00</p> <p>VN 35 E £16.00</p> <p>N 95 HE, N 97 HE, VN 35 HE £28.00</p> <p>Sony ND 142 G, ND 155 G, CN234 £12.00</p> <p>ND 143 G, ND 150 G, ND 200 G £14.00</p> <p>*** Over 500 Styli Types Stocked ***</p>	<p>HEADPHONE SELECTION</p> <p>GRADD</p> <p>Prestige Series</p> <p>SR-60 £85</p> <p>SR-80 £104</p> <p>SR-125 £152</p> <p>SR-225 £199</p> <p>SR-325 £294</p> <p>Reference Series</p> <p>RS- £641</p> <p>RS-2 (new) £495</p>

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- Rockport
- Roksan
- Rotel
- Ruark
- Seleco
- SME
- Straight Wire
- Sugden
- Tara Labs
- Teac
- Totem
- Transfiguration
- Trichord
- Trilogy
- Van den Hul
- VPI
- Wilson Audio
- Wilson Research
- YBA

Quarterly Sale items

	Our Price	Original Retail Price
Kenwood L1000C pre L1000M Power Amp	£2,500.00	£2,500.00
Exposur VII pre + XII psu	£595.00	£1,200.00
Harmon Kardon AVPI	£175.00	£ -
Dynalab SDA 2.8 Pre	£195.00	£600.00
Magnum Dynalab P 200 Pre	£695.00	£1,900.00
Trilogy 901 Pre	£395.00	£995.00
Quad FM4 Tuner	£225.00	£450.00
dpa Enlightenment DAC	£395.00	£ -

New this month

FEATURED SYSTEM OF THE MONTH		
Gamut D200 "new"	£On Dem	£3,250.00
JM Lab Micro Utopia + Std Blk	new	£3,899.00
CAT SLI (Black)	£2,595.00	£4,995.00
Audio Aero 32/192 Capitele CD	£On Dem	£4,500.00

POWER AMPLIFIERS

Krell FPB 2000	£3,995.00	£8,000.00
Roksan M1.5 Monoblocks	£2,495.00	£4,600.00
Chord SPM 1200E (Integra)	£4,495.00	£6,000.00
Chord SPM 1203 (3 Channel)	£4,195.00	£5,500.00

PRE AMPLIFIERS

Roksan 2.5 Pre + 1.5 psu	£1,095.00	£2,000.00
Chord DSC 1600E (dac/pre)	£4,750.00	£6,500.00

LOUDSPEAKERS

Audio Physic Caldera	£4,995.00	£10,000.00
Aerial Acoustic SV12 Sub Woofer, Maple	£2,995.00	£5,200.00
JM Lab Mini Utopia + Stand, Red Cherry	£2,995.00	£5,400.00

CD PLAYERS & DACS

Pink Triangle Da Capo 24 bit	£795.00	£1,800.00
Ortofon Rohman "new"	£850.00	£1,050.00

Power amplifiers

Krell FPB 600	£6,995.00	£12,998.00
Meridian 558 (5-channel)	£1,995.00	£3,500.00
Plinius SA 102 "new"	£On Dem	£3,750.00
Audio Research D200	£1,795.00	£3,400.00
Musical Fidelity P180	£450.00	£900.00
Musical Fidelity CRPS	£495.00	£900.00
Vincent T.A.C SV 236 Integrated	£On Dem	£1,495.00
Bryston 4 BSST	£On Dem	£2,350.00
Michaelson Audio Odysseus	£695.00	£1,500.00
Idis Defy 7 mk III	£2,750.00	£6,000.00
Mark Levinson No 27	£2,495.00	£6,000.00
Linn Treble Active Card	£69.00	£120.00
Linn Bass Active Card	£69.00	£120.00
Audio Research VT150se Monoblocks	£7,995.00	£16,800.00
Cello Duette 350	£4,995.00	£10,000.00
Trilogy 948	£995.00	£2,000.00
Gamut D200 "new"	£On Dem	£3,250.00
Primare A20 Integrated	£395.00	£750.00
Musical Fidelity F15	£1,395.00	£2,500.00
Audio Innovations S1000 mk III monos	£1,395.00	£3,000.00
Krell Kav 500i	£3,495.00	£5,498.00
Krell FPB250M	£6,450.00	£10,000.00
Krell MDA 300	£4,995.00	£12,000.00
Cary SLA 70 mk II Silver	£1,295.00	£2,250.00
Boulder 500 AE	£3,495.00	£5,500.00
Acuphase E203 Integrated Amp	£795.00	£ -
Krell FPB 300	£5,995.00	£9,990.00
Linn Klassik CD Amp silver	£895.00	£1,030.00
Boulder 1060 Power "new"	£On Dem	£16,500.00
Primare 30.1 mk II Integrated	£1,350.00	£1,500.00
Krell 250 A/3 3 Channel amp	£2,995.00	£4,698.00
YBA Passion Stereo "new"	£3,995.00	£5,995.00
Sunfire 300 Power Amp	£995.00	£2,400.00
Plinius 250 mk IV "new"	£On Dem	£6,350.00
Cary 805 C Monoblocks "new"	£On Dem	£8,250.00

AV components

AV COMPONENTS		
Lexicon DC2	£1,995.00	£3,500.00
SIM 2 HT 300	£7,500.00	£9,000.00
Primare P30 Processor	£1,295.00	£2,000.00
Linn Klassik DVD	£On Dem	£2,000.00
Audio Refinement Pre 5 "new"	£On Dem	£895.00
Lexicon MCI "new"	£3,500.00	£5,500.00
Lexicon MCI2 / MCI2B	£On Dem	£8100.00/£8900.00

TELEVISIONS & DVD PLAYERS BY LOEWE

Loewe Xemix DVD "new"	£On Dem	£495.00
Loewe Aconda	£POA	
Loewe Planus + Std	£POA	
Loewe Xelos + Std	£POA	
Loewe L2A Active Speakers	£POA	

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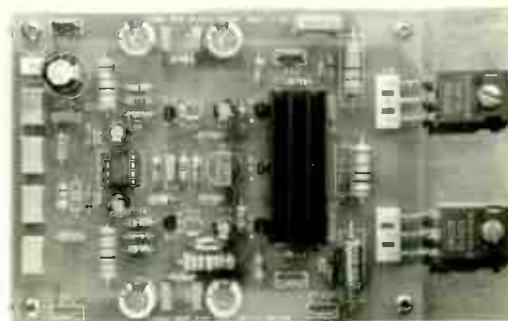
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diy news

MOTH TO A FLAME

The website www.mothaudio.com belongs not to Moth of U.K. audio but an American company that details numerous esoteric valve amplifiers which have a particular retro look about them - it's equipment that wouldn't look out of place in Captain Nemo's submarine. All items are fully built and look totally individual. They have a 300B single-ended stereo integrated, giving 10watts aside, a single-ended using a 45 valve giving a gentle 2watts, also a 2A3 integrated giving 3watts. And a couple of passive pre-amplifiers.

An amplifier that you will see in their special offers section is the M304TL, a 35watt single-ended amplifier that uses the colossal 304TL. Also they have a barmy novelty item called the Nitelite that you can buy for \$595.00. Basically, it is an elaborate box that holds a 15e radar tube with a huge dial on the front panel that varies



Nitelite



M304TL amplifier

its light intensity.

With all these single-ended designs you need a high sensitivity speaker and lo and behold they have just the one, the Cicada, that has a sensitivity of 94dB, using a full frequency range driver of their design. The built speaker is only \$595.00 and they sell the drivers at only \$89.00 a piece.

You will find the items that Moth sell are actually very reasonably priced and definitely worth a look.

www.mothaudio.com

FULL OF ESTONIAN PROMISE

'Audio from Estonia', as it says on the site. Here's a well structured site that details a huge range of speakers from hi-end hi-fi to surround-sound. The drivers are their own brand and definitely look the part. The company also make and sell transformers, chokes and power supplies. What interested us was their excellent documentation for a six-strong range of kit speakers, with full box plans, crossover diagrams and even explanations of where to put the wadding.

www.aalder.se



Orpheus Loudspeaker

SOLDERING ON

For those of you who only buy the best in tools then may we point out Weller's WSL precision soldering station. This beauty can warm up from 50 degrees centigrade to 350 degrees in 7 seconds flat, plus an automatic temperature set back facility that reduces the tip temperature to 150 degree after 20 minutes of no use to prolong tip life. Temperature is set by means of up and down push buttons and a 3 digit LED display. Excellent for those who like to experiment in different melting point solders. The new device is available from Rapid Electronics, price £199.50 excluding VAT, code number 85-5150P.



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RESPECT THE AUTHORITY

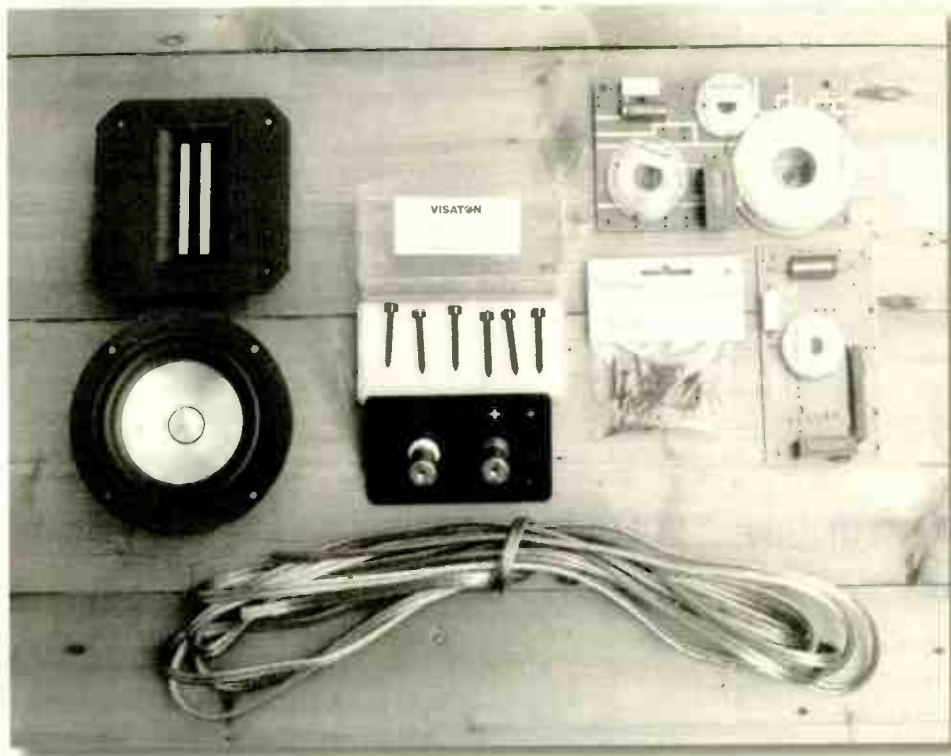
Another American site - these guys love their hifi. This site represents Samaghi Acoustics who make speaker kits that specialise in upward firing driver arrangements. Also, detailed are Black Dahlia Acoustics, who also do speaker kits. One took my interest immediately, the Basszilla kit. Available in two versions, both feature a 15 inch bass unit. The more expensive one uses the Lowther DX4 full range driver and sells for \$2700.00. all in, whilst the cheaper version uses Fostex FE208 and sells for \$1000.00. Both version boast 97-98dB sensitivity so are excellent for the single-ended valve user.

<http://store.hifiauthority.com>



The Bass Zilla

BUILDING STONES

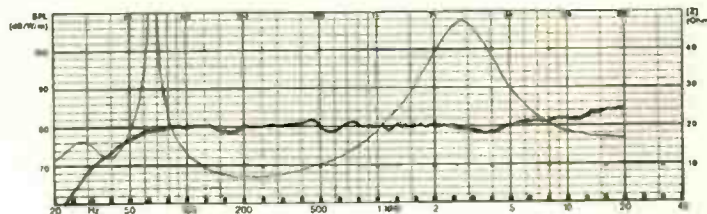


Ever fancied building your own ribbon tweeter loudspeaker? Clive Meakins assembles the Visaton Topas – a Gem from Wilmslow Audio.

Visaton are a German speaker technology company that offers a huge range of drive units and complete speaker designs. Their products are now available in the UK from Wilmslow Audio. You can buy drive units with pre-assembled crossovers and Wilmslow Audio are starting to produce Visaton-designed cabinets. This provides a very quick and easy way to build a pair of speakers without needing special tools or skills. The first full kit available from Wilmslow Audio is the Visaton Topas, featured here.

Unlike so many "generic" speakers on the market today, the Topas features high quality drive units that suggest it will have an interesting, high quality sound. The drive unit and crossover kit costs £646.25, the cabinet kit is £150 extra

at a good price. The Topas is a small floorstanding speaker that is designed to be on the borderline between vented bass and transmission-line. It certainly possesses a small footprint. Just 165mm wide, 225mm deep and standing 900mm tall or a touch more with spikes. The front edges of the cabinet have a chamfer to aid soundstaging. The speakers are ported at the front, offering the likelihood they'll work close to a



A graph of the frequency response and impedance curves of the Topas

and you need another £10 for a floor spike kit. You're not going down this route to build an economy speaker, instead you're after something special

wall. By the way, do use spikes; the speakers won't be stable without them.

Visaton claim a frequency range



The Visaton TI 100 bass/mid driver is a titanium cone design

from 35Hz to 40kHz. From their graphs it would seem they are an easy 8 ohm load, indeed their impedance looks to be considerably greater than 8 ohms most of the time. The only downside is desperately low efficiency, just 80db for 1W at 1m. Peak power handling is given as 60W so already we can deduce that the Topas is not meant for producing headbanging sound levels.

The drivers used are a bass/mid with titanium cone, accompanied by a ribbon tweeter. The TI 100 bass/mid is a 10cm / 4 inch, magnetically shielded, 8 ohm unit with a hefty double magnet. The MHT 12 is an 8 ohm ribbon tweeter that has a range that runs from 3,000Hz to 40,000Hz. Visaton have a long history with ribbon tweeters. Several speakers have been developed with them in the past: some were successful whilst others struggled with the integration of ribbon and cone sound. It would be interesting to hear what the Topas could do.

The MHT 12 tweeter uses a very thin diaphragm giving a low mass to move around. With both drivers being 8 ohms we end up with a true 8 ohm speaker, unlike many speakers today that mix 4 and 8 ohm drivers.

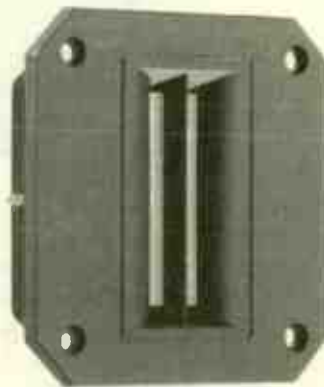
MADE OF STONE

Time to get to work. Before gluing the cabinets it is advisable to test that the panels all fit well. At this point you need to attach the two crossover boards to the rear panel, as access will be difficult later. Also, all the internal wiring needs to be

prepared and soldered to the boards as well as tied temporarily across the binding post aperture.

I borrowed some woodworking clamps to hold the cabinets while the glue dried. You can bind the cabinets together with masking tape instead, but clamps are better. Just ensure you don't over tighten the clamps or you'll squeeze all the glue out of the joints. I suppose I'm too generous with glue, the supplied amount was only enough for one cabinet but I made sure I had some spare before I started. To run out with a half assembled cabinet would not be a good idea.

To assemble you build up the cabinet while it's lying on its front. Fitting the angled port requires at least three hands but otherwise all is straightforward. You must then leave the cabinets to dry for 24 hours. When dry I spent a few minutes with



The MHT 12 ribbon tweeter makes the Topas not your average kit loudspeaker

a detail sander cleaning up the joints, getting them smooth. Wilmslow did such a good job of cutting the panels, there was actually very little to do.

I then fitted the spikes. This meant drilling holes in the bases and hammering in threaded collets. Be careful not to drill too deeply - one of my holes went right through the 18mm MDF! I packed the back of the hole and sealed it with glue to ensure it didn't cause an air leak.

Nearly there now. Just drill pilot holes for the binding post plate and then screw it down. Next, stuff the supplied lambs wool evenly into the

cabinet and then prepare to mount the drive units. Again, drill pilot holes before finally screwing in the drive units.

Take care to ensure the drive units have an even gap around them, they look better this way. Also, be sure not to slip with the screwdriver - they are expensive units! I try to be very careful when building kits and test where I can do so; I used a full range car speaker to check bass and treble were output as expected from the crossover boards.

Lastly I soldered the internal wire to the drive units. It's very much up to you how you finish the speakers. Suggestions include veneering, staining/spray varnishing or take them to your local car repair centre and have them sprayed any colour you want!

LOOKING GOOD

For a kit, the speakers do look very good indeed. They should be highly acceptable in most domestic situations. The titanium bass/mid is especially attractive. I found the speakers needed a couple of weeks to loosen up and open up fully. The change wasn't night and day but it happened, mostly increasing the level of bass output.

First of all I used the speakers in my usual free-space position: bass was somewhat curtailed. Then I tried them close the rear wall and the missing bass arrived. They worked well just a couple of inches from the rear wall, though for the best balance I ended up with them around 8 inches from the rear wall.

These 'speakers are clearly quite forgiving about placement. Where they work best will depend on your room and how much bass you like. Just don't expect the Topas to work 100cm into a room without a subwoofer. The quality of the bass you get is slightly dry and very textured. You don't get lots of bass bloom with overhang, but instead you get detail. As you would expect from a 4 inch titanium driver, the Topas bass will not pin you to the wall. It's much more subtle than that, but I am quite prepared to believe they do go down to the specified 35Hz.

Vocals project well into the room, especially considering the closeness of the cabinets to the rear wall. There's bags of treble detail but,

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 Keci82 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.

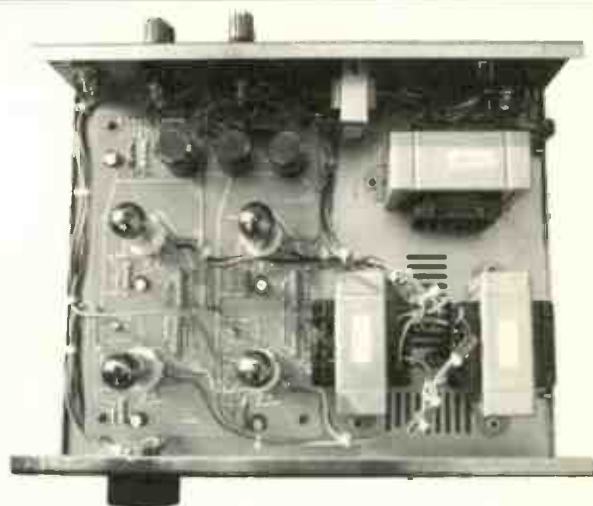
We chose the ECL82, a triode/output pentode. This tube is readily available and has a good sound. In push-pull mode it delivers 8Watts. Realistically you need a speaker of around 89dB or above. This is possible at a budget price - try the smaller Triangle models, or a Tannoy mX3 or even one of the older 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 Keci82 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 Keci82 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-by-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 Keci82 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

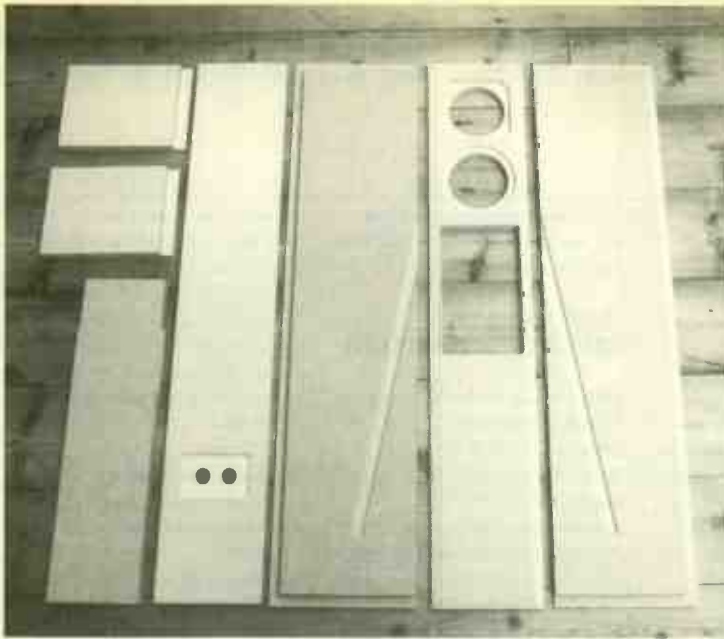
Frequency response	+/-3dB 15Hz - 75kHz
power output	8 watts into an 8 ohm load
sensitivity	850mV (suitable for CD)
hum	0.5mV

**The Keci82 amplifier kit is available from World Audio Design
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The MDF cabinets for the Topas come flatpacked and are easy to assemble

that's not to say the speakers are bright. Treble sparkles in a way that few other speakers achieve, pretty much at any price thanks to that ribbon.

Overall I would say the sound of the Topas is detailed but not over analytical. It is tight, clear, clean, fast and provides plenty of "air". Integration between the drivers is excellent; they complement each other very well. The sound is very different to the Adire Audio HE10.1 that I reviewed recently. The HE10.1 is very much more "muscular", providing more wallop in general. The Topas are about subtlety and finesse with treble that not only sparkles beautifully but is so incredibly refined.

I drove the Topas with solid-state and valve amps from a Meridian 588 CD player. For solid-state I used a Michell Orca/Alecto monoblock combination. Though these 128W amps are overkill for the speakers, they worked very well indeed. The Michell Alecto stereo amp would be more in keeping with this speaker. I would imagine that some of the several quality 50W / 60W integrated amps on the market would also be a good match for the Topas. I tried a couple of cable set ups: Nordost Red Dawn interconnects with Blue Heaven speaker cable and then Chord Company Chorus / Odyssey. The Nordost accentuated detail whereas Chord gave a fuller bass. I'd say both makes matched the speakers well, the differences were very clear to

hear as the speakers are revealing. Personal preference will determine how you want to tune the Topas sound.

You would expect the soundstage of such a narrow speaker to be good and the Topas did not disappoint. Along with tremendous ambience there is a very spacious sense of atmosphere. Instruments are placed beautifully between the speakers, there is little sound that is perceived to come directly from the drivers.

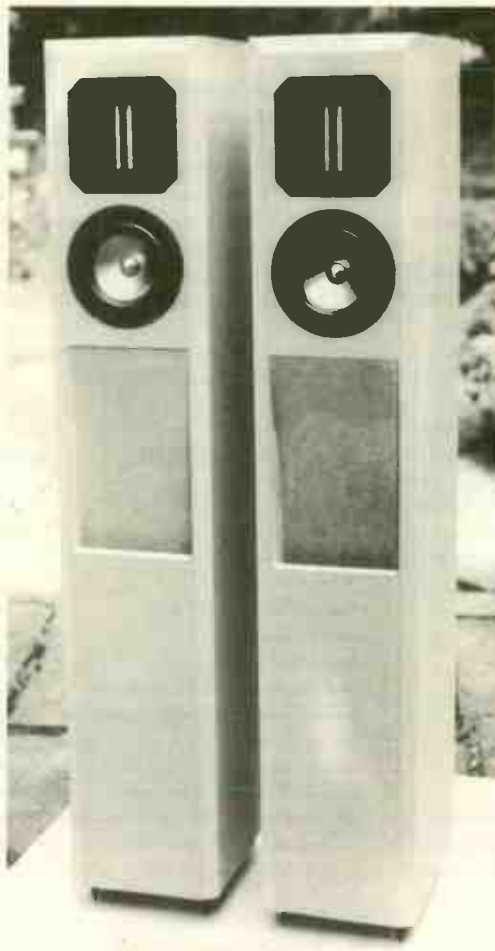
I originally had no intention of driving 80dB efficiency speakers with a 9W single-ended triode but curiosity got the better of me. It's quite well understood that a 9W SET sounds more like 20W or 30W of solid-state. Perhaps I shouldn't have been surprised. The Transcendent Sound Grounded Grid preamp with DIY Hi-Fi Supply Billie 300B SET monoblocks proved to work rather well the Topas speakers. The speakers proved their ease of drive with no signs of the Billies being uncomfortable at any frequency. For many prospective purchasers of the Topas this

combination is not quite as mad as it first seems. A 20W 300B PSE would also be an interesting option and, of course, bigger valve push-pull amps of around 40-50W would be a great match.

So who is the Topas likely to suit? These are not middle-of-the-road speakers that try to appeal the mass market. Some people will prefer non-Topas attributes such as lots of bass and high volume. If this is the case then the Topas are not for you. The archetypal British living room is likely to be ideal. You will need to be able to cope with a little DIY. As long as you can manage a little soldering you should be fine. You will want clarity, subtlety, fabulous refinement coupled with an "airy" sound plus a very classy looking speaker. Placement near a wall is likely to be necessary. If you value what the Topas do so very well here is a gem.

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THE VINYL WORD

If you're running a vinyl source, it's essential that your arm and cartridge are properly set up, but the process can be hit and miss without knowledgeable help. Neville Roberts checks out a handy accessory that could be just the job.

In order to get the best from your investment in a turntable, arm and cartridge combination, it is vital that the system is correctly set up. Unfortunately, it can be a time-consuming process to do properly and, in my experience, not all Hi-Fi shops can be relied upon to do this satisfactorily. It also requires a test record of some sort and to the best of my knowledge, the only one available until recently was the trusty HFS75 Hi-Fi Sound Test Record - and the '75' in the title give a clue as to when it was produced!

Unfortunately, my copy of that record has endured a variety of lathes over the years in my quest for true Hi-Fi sound. Some of the more extreme tracks have the scars of earlier cartridge mistracking. I was therefore delighted to learn of a new record produced and manufactured in Germany and available in the UK from Roksan.

The record is made by a company called Image Hi-Fi and has the modest title of "Vinyl Essentials - The Ultimate Pickup Test Record". It costs £35 - not cheap, but when this is set against the cost of your system, it is a small price to pay to get the best from your vinyl investments. As a further incentive for purchase, it has a highly jocular bilingual cartoon on the back which will doubtless give some light relief during the many hours of tweaking!

The record itself is stated as having six tracks on Side 1, although Track 6 (the Tonearm and Cartridge Resonance Test) is repeated as a seventh track for no explained reason.

Side 2 contains two tracks; both are a repeat of Side 1, Track 2, the Tracking Ability Test. The reason for this, according to the sleeve notes, is that these extreme tests can cause the vinyl to be heated to several hundred degrees centigrade at certain points while being tracked by the stylus and therefore these tracks should be played in sequence to allow for the necessary cooling time and thus reduce record wear.

Lest you should feel cheated by having spent so much money on what is essentially a single sided LP, I should mention that, judging from the sheer weight of the record, it is made of very high quality vinyl. In fact, they state that it is 100% virgin 180g vinyl and manufactured to the

closest cutting tolerances possible. Who am I to argue with that?

IT'S A SET UP

Enough of the record itself, how does one go about setting up a cartridge and arm combination and how does this record help with the process? Well, the first two tracks are the obligatory channel identifi-



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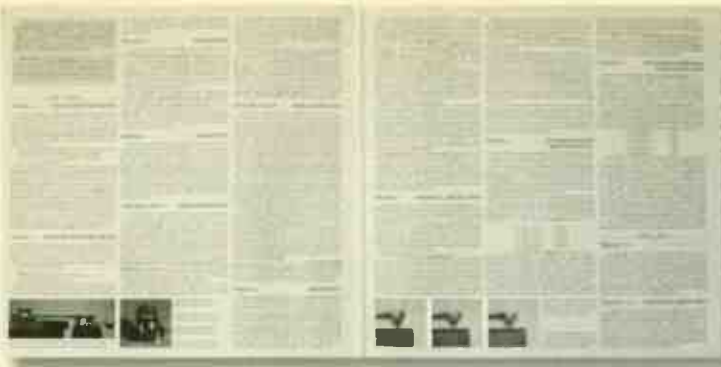


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The inside cover showing the detailed instructions

cation and phase tests with the help of some pink noise. This is fairly self-explanatory, except to say that you should ensure that your phasing and channels are consistent throughout your system. If, for example, you have the left and right channel connections to your cartridge and also the connections from your pre-amp to your power amp swapped over, your record deck will sound fine, but your CD player won't!

Having confirmed a well-defined central image with the in-phase pink noise tests, we move on to a rather clever method of checking the crosstalk between the channels. On Track 3, a burst of pink noise is recorded on the left channel only alternating with a low-level reference burst of pink noise at -25dB recorded on the right channel only. By muting your left channel (unplugging the left channel to your pre-amp or using your balance control) you hear on the right channel only the crosstalk from the left channel alternating with the reference burst. If they are both at the same volume, then your crosstalk is -25dB - simple! The test is repeated with -30dB and -35dB reference bursts. Track 4 repeats the test for the right-to-left crosstalk measurement - remember to mute

the right channel this time.

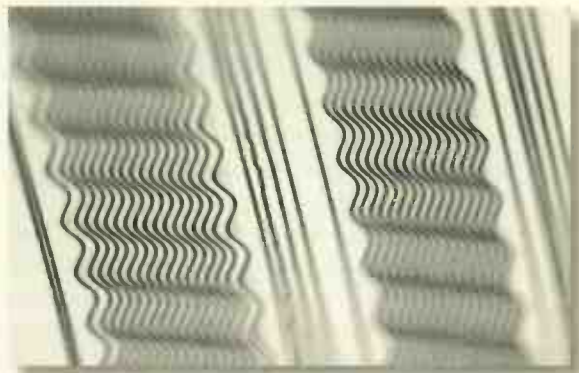
The point of all this is that if there is a significant difference in crosstalk between the left and right channels, it indicates that your cartridge is probably misaligned vertically. Viewed from the front, your stylus should be exactly perpendicular to the surface of the record. If your arm has an adjustment to rotate the headshell to achieve this, all well and good. If, however, your headshell is fixed, instead of using a Mole wrench on your cartridge, you can use thin shims of paper or washers between the cartridge and the headshell to achieve the desired effect.

Next comes the test that strikes fear into all cartridge manufacturers - the Tracking Ability Test. This is simply a tone recorded with increasing amplitude ranging from a 40microns peak-to-peak sinusoid cut in the vinyl to 100microns, in 10micron steps. When the cartridge starts to mistrack, a very clear buzzing is heard. This is an extreme test for your system and it is repeated twice

on side two for the reasons previously mentioned.

I noted that the frequency chosen for the tracking test is 315Hz and I wondered why they have chosen that particular frequency. However, if you look at the photograph I took of the record surface, you can see that this frequency allows successive grooves to nestle with the previous grooves on the record given the huge displacements (yes, I know there is only 1 groove on a side of a record, but ...!). Incidentally, between the bursts of 315Hz, there is an announcement in German and English to inform you of the amplitude in microns.

The Tracking Ability Test can assist in setting the tracking weight but this should be within the range



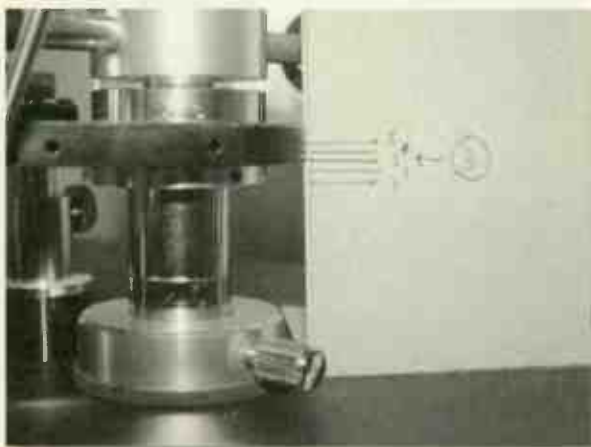
The Tracking Ability Test grooves

recommended by the manufacturer of your cartridge. Too low a tracking weight will result in poor tracking and do more harm to your records than erring on the high side, but don't overdo it.

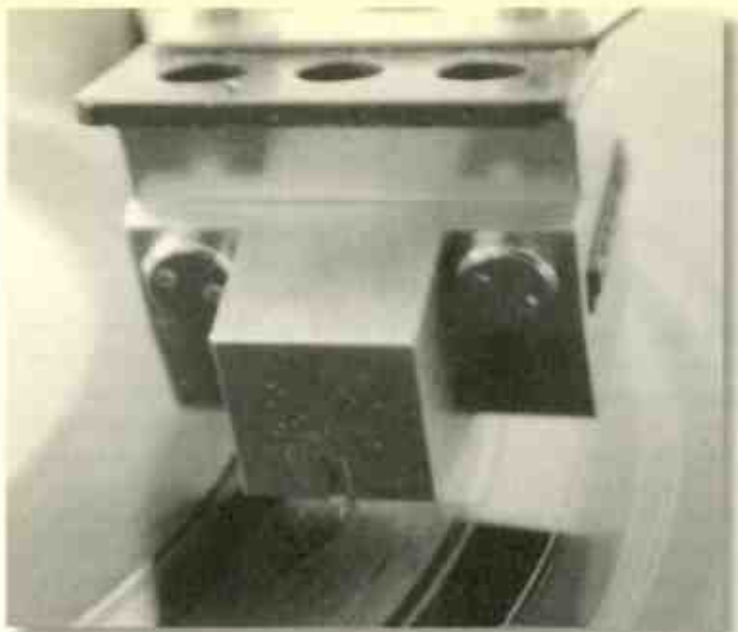
Tracking ability isn't everything and will very much depend on your tone arm and cartridge combination. The Tonearm-Cartridge Resonance Test to be discussed later will indicate how well your arm matches your chosen cartridge.

THE RAKE'S PROGRESS

There is no test on the record for setting the Vertical Tracking Angle (VTA), which sets the Stylus Rake Angle (SRA) of the cartridge. The VTA is the angle of the cantilever to the record surface (usually around 20 degrees), which in itself is not that critical. However, the SRA, which is the angle of the stylus in the groove, is very critical and has a major impact on sound quality. The VTA will vary depending on the tracking



Adjusting the VTA



Steady arm above resonance

weight so it is important to set this before attempting to adjust VTA. Once you have set tracking weight, the VTA is adjusted by altering the height of the arm and the correct point is best determined by ear. A good starting point is to set the arm height so that the arm is parallel to the record when it is playing and to choose a well-known record with some bass and either a solo violin or a female vocalist. If the arm is too high (VTA too great), the sound will be harsh and thin with poor imaging. If set too low, the sound will be dull with 'boomy' bass, lacking detail and again with poor imaging. The correct point is unmistakable where the instruments and vocals snap into focus and everything sounds clear. A simple gauge can be made using a piece of card temporarily fixed to the turntable to help adjust the height and note the position where the VTA is correct.

Last, but not least, is the Tonearm-Cartridge Resonance Test. Every combination of arm and cartridge has a natural resonant frequency, which should be about 10Hz. If it is much higher than this, it will intrude into the low frequencies of the recording, such as low organ notes. If much lower, resonance will be at warp frequency, producing strong cone flap.

Before embarking on the test itself, a word on matching cartridges to arms. One of the physical properties of an arm is its effective mass, which is the mass of the arm as seen by the cartridge. Cartridges

have a property called compliance that, in simple terms, is the ability of the stylus to 'comply' with the groove and is measured in terms of the distance the stylus is displaced for a given force (either i/mN or cm/dyne). That doesn't mean to say that low compliance is bad and high compliance is good. It means that, generally speaking, a low compliance cartridge matches well with a high effective mass arm, and vice versa. It is this combination of effective mass and compliance that results in a particular resonant frequency and also has an impact of the tracking ability.

So, back to the test. Track 6 consists of an audible tone that is modulated with a sub-audible low frequency - the frequency that is

being tested. If the arm is not resonating, the tone will sound constant. At resonance, the tone 'warbles' and the arm and cartridge can actually be seen to vibrate, which is quite an amazing sight! The track has six tests ranging from 16Hz down to 6Hz and a sequence of introductory short or long 'beeps' tell you which frequency is being tested.

If this test reveals a problem, you could try adjusting the damping of the arm (if possible) or fitting a lighter or heavier headshell.

The alternative is, of course, to change the arm or cartridge. Indeed, a friend of mine, who has a Roksan XerxesX, Artemiz arm and Lyra Clavis DC cartridge, was unable to identify a frequency at which the arm did not vibrate. We decided this might be the root cause for the overly powerful low bass his system puts out with the dance/trance music he listens to. He is now thinking of replacing the Lyra with a Roksan Shiraz, which he assumes will be a good match.

My verdict? A test record is an essential tool to ensure the proper setting up of a record deck and this offering from Roksan utilises some very clever techniques and is clearly made to very high standards. You can obtain a copy directly from the company.

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Arm vibrating at resonance

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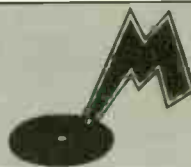
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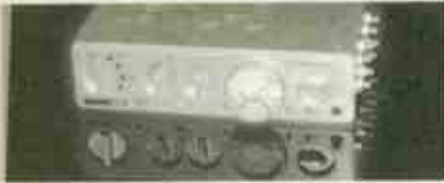
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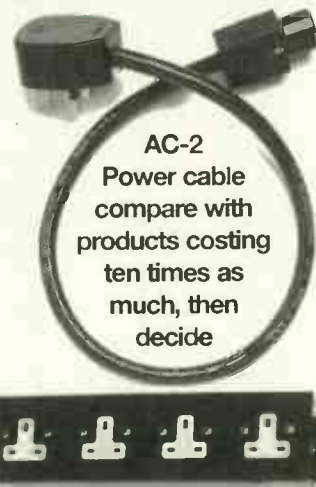


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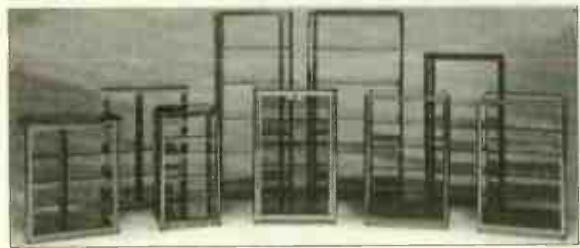
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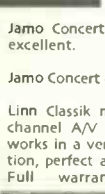
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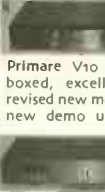
ATC A7 Tower loudspeakers. Rosewood veneer, no marks other than some minor chips to the (black painted) bases. S/H, boxed. Originally £1200. **£495**



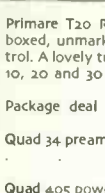
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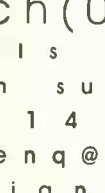
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Hi-Fi Consultants

TURNTABLES

In the October issue I referred to eagerly awaited items such as the new AVI Integrated and Pro-Nine Plus speakers, but as happens with new products the amp is still not quite ready and I will probably wait evaluating the Pro-Nine Plus until I get the new amp. Having just acquired an SME 10A turntable, and having found that the new Infinity Prelude MTS speakers (see Oct) sound particularly good with vinyl, I have spent time playing this turntable, an old VPI TNT, an Audiomeca J1 with SL5 arm, an old Oracle, and plan to dig out one of the original Pink Triangle's. The trouble always with turntables, now we have become accustomed to CD etc, is the time it all takes, especially as the eyes and hands aren't as good as they were!. Invariably they have different arms and cartridges and comparisons are difficult. They all should sound good however. I am playing them through the Trichord Dino Phono Stage, AVI pre-amp & ESLAB Digital poweramp which suits the Preludes very well.

The Preludes are very open and detailed but never get hard when driven. Looking forward to the new 350 watt Esrab amp, which although more powerful than the Preludes need, being efficient, will no doubt change the balance. Will keep you up to date.

Just in however is the VPI Scout turntable, which at £1250 complete with superb unipivot arm, makes it an excellent bargain. Superb open sound!

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Special Internet offer see page 130 for details

MUSICAL FIDELITY M3 Nu Vista integrated amplifier £2250 ono. Thiel CS3.6 loudspeakers, world class leading speakers (£5495) absolute bargain at £2495. Tel: 01508 499586 evenings or leave message by day (Feb/I)

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LINN LK100s x2 £275. Onkyo K611 cassette deck £125. Hardly used, QED Silver Anniversary speaker cable (1) 4 metre pair Airloc plugs £30 (2) 4 metre pair bi-wired Airloc plugs £50. Tel: 07889 840724 (Bromey, Kent) (Feb/I)

WANTED: STAX SR-Lambda professional headphones (year 1982) must be in excellent/mint condition (unmarked and not damaged). Will pay £400 for mint condition headphones. Tel: 01865 378578 (evenings) or Email: fiskalan@hotmail.com (Mar/I)

DENON GOLD SD10 II battle-ship high end CD player, smooth and dynamic, mint condition, boxed, 12 months guarantee £375 (£1300). New. Tel: 01308 868 044 (Feb/I)

QUAD ESL63 electrostatic loudspeakers + stands (£1100). Quad 606 power amplifier (£400). Meridian 207CDPro player + phono pre-amp option +209 remote (£430). Also Quad ESL57 electrostatics (£350). Tel: 07855 254158 or Email: IPS@PATENWork.com (Feb/I)

FOR SALE Audio Analogue Puccini SE integrated silver fronted non remote £300 ono. Baby forces sale. Tel: Dave 01483 487647 (Surrey) (Feb/I)

LINN SONDEK LP12 turntable with plinth, tinted perspex cover, Linn Ittok LVII pick-up arm, Valhalla upgrade, new cartridge, plus Skyline platform. Very good condition £750. Tel: 023 92 838 500 or Email: youngh22@hotmail.com (Portsmouth) (Feb/I)

MARK LEVINSON No. 360S & 334 £7300 No. 39 £2500 also CZ GEL interconnects. PMC IB1 speakers and stands £2000. Tel: Jon 07956 922061 or E-mail: Jonathan.Page@t-mobile.co.uk (Feb/I)

KRELL KSA 150 Class A 150-220 watts into 8ohms, RCA and balance inputs. Add another KSA-150 and have MDA-300. Very clean, manual, £2250. XLO Type 6 speaker cables, 8ft bi-wire, excellent condition £375. Tel: 07919 211 332 or Email: peterroy@btconnect.com (Feb/I)

KRELL FPB600 £4795 (£13,500), B&W Nautilus 801, red cherry, £4750 (£8500), Audioquest Caldera 8ft bi-wire speaker cable (£895) £465, Audioquest Midnight+ 10ft spades £150 (£450). All reasonable offers considered. Tel: 07767 478 056 or Email: andrew.lucas@cwt-uk.com (Feb/I)

LINN KELTIK speakers in cherrywood finish, latest spec, boxed, £3000. Linn Klimax Twin, 6 months old, boxed, £3600. Linn Kremlin tuner, with manuals, SMPS Model, £995. Linn Klimax Crossovers, £3600. Tel: 01582 456 137 (Feb/I)

ORBE-SE DC Motor, RB300 £1600. Garrard 401, SME 3009, SME plinth, spotless, £375, Thorens TD125, plinth, £225. Grace G-707-II, new! £275. Thorens TD166 BC, RB300 Incognito, £375. Thorens TD124, exceptional condition £500. Feb: 0117 955 6555 or 07979 514 450 (Feb/I)

LOWTHER LOWTHER Acousta Twin Cabinets wanted. Made 1960's. Also wanted: PM7A, PM2A drive units, any condition, working drawings, Twin feet, drive unit mounting screws. Tel: Jeff 020 8220 0380 (Essex) (Feb)

INTERCONNECTS DIGITAL Speaker cable and mains leads from Transparent, Yamamura, Art, Silver Sound, Nordost, Shunyata, Synergistic Research, Kondo, Precious Metals. All top quality items. Tel: Porteous 01923 826 830 or Email: derek.achelis@btinternet.com (Feb/I)

KRELL KMA 200 Monoblocks. Excellent condition, few in the UK. Massive heavy amps difficult to lift one. Very clear and transparent without being clinical. Drive any load. Tel: 01803 214 200 (Mar/I)

QUAD 33, 303, FM3 £200. Wanted: Quad 405-2 modules to convert standard 405 amp. Quad M.C. input module Type C for 44 preamp. Also required Denon DL103 cartridges. Tel: Mike 01758 613 790 (Feb/I)

MERIDIAN 557 power amp, 200 wpc, under warranty until October 2004, £1100. Chord CPA 3200 preamp, £1950. Chord SPM 1200B power amp, 250 wpc, £1950. Tel: 01993 883 523 (Feb/I)

TAG McLAREN PPA20 phono pre-amp, black, mint, £900 ono. Tel: 01242 675 719 (Cheltenham) (Feb/I)

MUSICAL FIDELITY A324 Upsampling Dac £525. Tuners: Arcam Diva T61 Silver £160. Videologic DRX-601ES DAB £150. Mana Glass Frame £60. MIT Digital Reference Cable £90. Tel: (daytime) 020 8871 5089 or Email: fotos@btinternet.com (Feb)

LEAK POINT One Stereo pre amp, Leak Stereo 20 amplifier, Leak Troughline 3 tuner. All in good working order, £400. Tel: 01691 679 248 (Feb/I)

NAKAMICHI CR4 Tape deck, hardly used, mint, includes DM10 head demagnetiser, £390 ono. Denon 1500II CD £90 ono. Tel: 0781 329 7022 (Maidstone, Kent) (Feb/I)

MARK LEVINSON No.36 Dac £1400 (£4000). Martin Logan Quest loudspeakers £1400 (£5300). Both Stereophile A rated. Boxes, manuals, mint, perfect. Tel: Bill 01993 851 508 (Feb/I)

RARE OPPORTUNITY, pair of Lowther Audio Vector's PM4 and PM2 Hifferic speech coils Anico magnets. Good condition, offers over £1700. Garrard 301, new plinth, SME II £500. Tel: 01446 418 207 (Feb/I)

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PATHOS TWIN Towers, pure Class A hybrid integrated amplifier with remote control, mint £2250 (£3250). Quad IIL speakers, maple, £290. Tel: 01202 767 873 (Feb/I)

LINN LP12 Lingo Cirkus Nirvana mods. AT/1010 arm, AT MM cartridge, immaculate £700. Cable Talk 3.1 bi-wire 2x 3.4m £15. Can dem. Tel: 01909 470 192 or Email: rayspink@supanet.com (Feb/I)

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ARAGON 4004 £695. Ion monoblocks £595. DPA Pre/Pwr £695. Little Bit Two £125. Audio Note Mo Pre £250. Mo Remote £295. Exposure IV £595. Ojan 3X (rosewood) £595. Unison 4 £695. Pathos One (£695 (new)). DNM Pre(2) £595. Tel: 07966 267 404 or Email: coom@btinternet.com (Feb(I))

DNM PRE £795. Exposure pre £595. Edens £275. Cairn pre/mono's £895. Croft pre £295. Sugden AU51 £795. Roksan Atessa II (3 box) £895. Counterpoint SA12 £595. Tel: 07966 267 404 or Email: coom@btinternet.com (Feb(I))

MERIDIAN 561M processor, latest spec, 558 five channel poweramp and 506.24 CD player. Cost £8285, will sell for £5425, or will split separately. Mint condition. Tel: 01483 890 561 (Feb(I))

FOR THE Collector:
Ferrograph Logic 7 tape recorder with manual. Little use since service by Ferrograph in 1997, £380. 70's style Sony ST 5066 tuner £30. NAD 7125 receiver (mid 80's) £40. Dual 504-4 turntable with Audio-Technica cartridge £40. All above excellent. Tel: 029 20 617 767 (Feb(I))

PINK TRIANGLE LPT1 turntable with Helios Aureus arm, Glanz arm, 20E cartridge, £200. Pair B&W DM601 Series I speakers, £100. Tel: 01908 501 937 (Feb(I))

TWO VALVE Amplifiers. One 15 watt the other 20 watt. Built using separate circuit boards, both built on chassis constructed from 3mm aluminium with flat black finish, £200, £300. Tel: 01708 749 280 (Feb(I))

LOWTHER HORN speakers 33 x 39 x 69 cm. 17.5 kg. Walnut veneer, 30 years old. Offers in the region of £450. Tel: 020 8460 0871 or Email: djeebles@btinternet.com (Feb(I))

MAINS BLOCK. Russ Andrews 8 way. Black metal case with 3ft high current Powerkord. Mint. £100. Tel: 01752 773369 (Feb(I))

AUDIONOTE OTO SE with Border Patrol PSU. As new condition. Danish Audio Connect volume, Black Gates and many other internal upgrades. Mullard valves plus other spares. £1000. Tel: Colin 020 8607 7677 anytime or Email: colin.clark@equant.com (Feb(I))

LINN LP12 Aro Troika Lingo rosewood very rare beautiful woodwork fully boxed collectors item £2000. Tel: 07973 405916 or Email: adam.stanhope@btinternet.com (Feb(I))

ROGUE AUDIO 88 Magnum power amp. 60wpc ultralinear 40wpc Triode switchable. Fabulous sound solid build black £1250. AVI pre stereo power £750. Niam 42.5 140 £300. Wanted: Lescon AP3 Tel: 01226 710605 or 07779 274655 (Feb(I))

B & W NAUTILUS 805 Signature/H.N.E. stands £2200. A.T.C. SIA2-150 integrated amp, new £2375, asking £1450. JPS NC2 speaker cable 8 foot pair, new £1900, asking £900. Tel: 01296 437314 (Aylesbury, Bucks) (Feb(I))

WANTED: AUDIOLAB 8000T FM/AM tuner black must be in perfect working order and vgc Tel: Pete 0115 975 4070 (Feb(I))

SUGDEN SIGNATURE 41 remote line pre-amp with 100 watt AU41 power £550. Tannoy Mercury M3 floorstanders £100. Tel: 01733 810516 (Peterborough) (Feb(I))

MUSICAL FIDELITY 3D Nu-Vista CD player. Why settle for second-hand? Consider mine – late serial number, everything absolutely mint, just a few hours use and boxed virtually since new. Musical heaven. Very reluctant sale due to house purchase. £2500. Tel: 01480 463102 or Email: brian@flatman.vispa.com (Feb(I))

QUICKSILVER VALVE monoblocks superb condition genuine hi-end sound many spare matched valves £650. Meridian 203 DAC £180. Tel: 01432 275203 Ray Thompson please do not phone. (Feb(I))

KRELL 300i integrated amp. Hardly used, as new. Boxed. Great sound £1590 (£2660). Tel: 01895 623020 day or eve (London/Middx) (Feb(I))

NAKAMICHI CR7 excellent condition, just serviced, boxed with manual and remote, stunning sound for analogue fans, possibly the best cassette deck in the world. £800. Tel: 07973 405916 or Email: adam.stanhope@btinternet.com (Feb(I))

WADIA 861 built in digital pre amp upgrading to 270 271X transport and DAC 8000 new bargain for quick sale £4750 ono. Tel: 07929 063676 anytime (Feb(I))

MARK LEVINSON 334 as new £3950 (£6000). Sonus Faber Guarneris, as new, £3500 (£5300). Sensible offers considered. With crates, documents. Tel: 01273 464449 or Email: sales@sprays.co.uk (Mar(I))

ARCAM A85 amplifier mint £500. Tel: 01925 852316 (Warrington) (Feb)

SPENDOR SP2/3 loudspeakers in black with stands and oak cones. Good condition. £525 ono. Tel: Martin 01268 764542 evening, 01702 373514 days (Essex) (Feb(I))

COLLECTOR HAVING big clearout – 5 shelves of good quality books on electronics, audio, hi-fi etcetera. Other subjects available. Email for price lists peterm@beeb.net or phone 01483 428906 (Feb(I))

LEAK STEREO 60 wanted and American Stereo Varislope II will consider faulty or incomplete – but transformers must be good cash waiting W.H.Y. Tel: Gary 01484 328296 (W.Yorkshire) (Feb(I))

SPENDOR SPI speakers teak finish deflex upgrade matching stands boxed mint (£1300) accept £300. Tel: 0114 250 8035 (Feb(I))

ORIGIN LIVE Silver 250 ton-earm. An audiophile bargain! Cost £600 will accept £370. Tel: 01296 623573 (Feb(I))

GARRARD 401 transcription turntable £150. Tel: 01702 520015 or Email: michaelturbin@lineone.net (Feb(I))

DENON AV.DSP surround sound amplifier 70w front 70w centre 20w rear. Inputs for phono CD tape tuner VCR etc. vgc £145 ono. Pair Revolver miniature speakers £50. Tel: 0121 472 8746 (Birmingham) (Feb(I))

MICHELL ALECTO stereo power amplifier superb condition high end sound boxed £700 ono. Audio Analogue Bellini pre amp mint boxed £275. Email: jijaames@aol.com or phone 01283 533458 after 5pm (Feb(I))

LOWTHER PM6's 100 watt 8 ohm in Acousta enclosures, walnut, perfect, £150 pair, also KEF C80's walnut enclosures, boxes, perfect, £100 pair Tel: 01226 753796 (South Yorks) (Feb(I))

C.R. DEVELOPMENTS Romulus valve amplifier 30w. CH finished in S/S and black (£1299) £650. I.P.L. A2 Mk4 HDA floorstanding speakers finished in mahogany veneer. £100. Tel: 01205 750314 (Feb(I))

KLIPSCH HERESY II with plinths 96dB horns £650. Audio Analogue Puccini SE immaculate £300. Alchemist Axiom amp £100. Rega Planar 2 'S' arm £90. Denon TU 260L tuner £60. Tel: 01827 261082 (Tamworth) (Feb(I))

NAIM CDS II £3600 Naim 135 monoblocks £1600. MIT MH750 high resolution interface speaker cable £950. Tel: 01462 483646 (Herts) (Feb(I))

QUAD 33/303 amplifier pre-amp recently serviced by Quad. Excellent condition £200. Tel: 01404 850689 (East Devon) (Feb(I))

MARANTZ CD 63 KI Sig mint £150. Sony TAE 9000 ES pre-amp processor Dolby digital DTS Sharc DSP 24-bit 96kHz compatible mint (new £1300) £300. Tel: 07754 976443 or Email: mgurry@ntlworld.co.uk (Feb(I))

Upgrade Your Turntable



"It's value is nothing short of tremendous"

Listener Magazine

"The single most important upgrade you can ever make to any record deck concerns the motor drive....Nothing can compare you for the shock of going DC, in a word, Gobsmacking"

Common Ground Magazine

"...if you are thinking of upgrading your system.....the Origin Live DC-motor kit should be high on your list for consideration" TNT Audio

Whatever your current turntable, the results in upgrading to the Origin Live DC motor and power supply are simply astounding. Designed as a drop in replacement for almost all turntables, the Origin Live upgrade kit offers vast improvements to all versions of Linn turntables, as well as Ariston, Rega, Systemdeck, Roksan, Rock, Oracle, Thorens, Well Tempered etc. With only a 12 Volt power supply and a full set of illustrated instructions our upgrade is both easy and safe to install. The upgrade is also offered with a full money back guarantee if you are not satisfied. The kit consisting of a high grade dc motor, soldered regulator board and power supply is only £262. This provides an extremely cost effective route to truly high end audio and is significantly superior in performance to other power supply upgrades costing 4 times the price. A larger purpose built transformer is also available as an optional extra at £175.

Turbocharging your Rega arm

"Nothing less than total dynamite" Hi-Fi World



If you are the proud owner of any rega tonerarm, you are now in the enviable position to transform it's performance into the league of super arms with modifications offered by Origin Live - the Origin live structural modification at £75 will enable your Rega to perform at a level exceeding that of arms costing over £1200. High performance rewiring with high grade litz cable is also offered at an additional £70 and external rewiring is £70 this further increases the performance.

"I have to say the Rega modifications turn this humble arm into a real Giant killer. Gone is the rather grey, sterile sound of the cooking Rega. Instead, tonal colour is fresh, dynamics have great speed and impact, and the sound stage is huge."

Hi-Fi World, Nov 97 (structural modification on RB250)

What Hi-Fi? gave this modification 5/5

Structural Modification - £75

Internal Rewiring - £70

External Rewiring - £70

For arm modifications we normally return your arm in 2 - 3 days.

Origin Live Ultra Turntables Build & setup in an hour



Modern



Classic

"...this Vinyl front end had my jaw heading towards the floor with the solidity and transparency of the music it was making...with all these goodies in place the Standard would give turntables at the £1200 -1400 mark a hard time..."

"...Overall a deeply impressive deck.....brilliant value for money ...component quality is superb and the build process is a doddle."

Hi-Fi World

"the best sounding deck here (group comparison test of 8 leading turntables)...sounds fantastic."

What Hi-Fi?

"One of the most enjoyable and musically involving turntables I have ever heard ...Regardless of make or reputation"

Audiophile

Now you can own a professionally built, high performance turntable at a fraction of the normal cost. Origin Live turntable kits are supplied in 3 different specifications:

1. A standard kit of parts to enable you to build your own plinth at **£282**
2. The complete standard kit offered with a non-suspended pre-drilled & finished plinth at **£349**
3. The complete ultra kit comes in two options. The Ultra Kit Classic offering a truly high end suspended sub-chassis turntable with beautifully finished solid wood plinth. The Ultra Kit modern offers the performance of the Ultra Kit Classic combined with the modern day skeletal styling of our sensational resolution turntable. Both options available at **£538.00**

All kits are supplied with well illustrated instructions and are easier to assemble than many of today's pre-built turntables.

FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE WEBSITE OR CONTACT

Origin Live, Unit 5, 362b Spring Road, Sholing, Southampton, SO19 2PB, U.K.

Tel: 023 80578877 / 80363249 Fax: 02380 578877 e-mail: originlive@originlive.com

<http://www.originlive.com>

World Radio History

MUSICAL FIDELITY P270 power amp immaculate condition £390. No offers. Roksan Xerxes turntable SME cut. Immaculate £200. No offers. Tel: Matt 07775 560357 Email: ahankinson@clara.net (Feb/1)

ORTOFON MC25FL cartridge, never been used, £200. Lehman Black Cube phono stage, still sealed, never been used, £240. Obviously both mint, boxed, instructions. Tel: 01597 860 166 (Feb/1)

WANTED: CREEK OBH-12 preamp. Tel: 01323 737 850 (Sussex) (Feb)

LINN BASIK turntable. Linn LK5 MM cartridge. Spare stylus. Dedicated audiophile stand. As new. little used. Retro reviewed HFW October 02. £290 ono. Buyer collects. Tel: 01376 328 502 (Essex) (Feb)

NAIM 32.5 preamp with 72 boards, serviced by Naim, £250. Wanted: Old style Naim HiCap. Tel: 01302 865 282 (Feb/1)

NAIM HICAP, new style, boxed, £400. Possible P/X Naim 02 tuner. Tel: Richard 01795 842 392 (Kent) (Feb/1)

QUAD ESL63 Electrostatic loudspeakers, recently serviced, excellent condition, £1100. Albarry 408 SII monolocks, vgc, £350. Tel: 01406 364 935 (Feb/1)

WANTED: NAKAMICHI PS-100 10volt power supply for use with Nakamichi MX-100 Microphone Mixer. Tel: Duncan 01733 266 566 (Peterborough) (Feb/1)

AUDIO AERO Capitole MkII CD player. 32bit/192 kHz. Built in valve pre-stage, hence can drive a power amp directly. Cost new £4500, asking £3200. Tel: 01296 437 314 (Aylesbury, Bucks) (Feb/1)

NAIM. TWO 250's - serviced Naim, £500 each. NAP 180 £500. NAC72 £375. HiCap £375. Rogers Studio One's £150. Quad 33,303,FM3 £300. Hi-Fi World Active Dipole Subs for ESL-63's £250. Tel: 01202 752 787 (Feb/1)

EPOS ES14, mint, boxed, plus stands £280. Audio Synthesis Passion passive preamp, mint £395. Nytech CA252, tatty £50. Tel: 0208 986 1762 (evenings) (Feb/1)

MONITOR AUDIO MA R352 Loudspeakers & Factory Stands, Robin Marshall Design, £175. Aiwa XD-S1100 Dat Recorder, High End, £245. Aurex Microsystem, Pre, Power & Tuner, superb quality, £295. Pioneer PL640 Quartz Direct Drive Turntable, fully automatic, £15. All boxed, mint. carriage arranged. 07870 657173 or hifi@spacer.net (Feb/1)

APOLLO ARIA Interchangeable hi-fi unit. 9 glass shelves (2 sizes), black supports. CD/Record storage. Immaculate condition. Buyer collects. Tel: 07720 402 426 after 5.30pm (Feb/1)

ROKSAN OJAN speakers, black, excellent condition. Can demonstrate £350 ono. Tel: 01970 632847 (day) 01970 871143 (evening) (Feb/1)

MUSICAL FIDELITY M3 Nu Vista integrated amplifier £2250 ono. Thiel CS3.6 loudspeakers, world class leading speakers (£5495) absolute bargain at £2495. Tel: 01508 499586 evenings or leave message by day (Feb/1)

MEADOWLARK SHEARWATER Transmission line speakers colour cherry £1100 ono (£2700 new). Quad 36 amp £120. Yamaha Theatre processor DSP 590 £150. Stax SR5 electrostatic Ear speakers £100. All immaculate. Tel: 01634 724081 (Feb)

LINN LK100s x2 £275. Onkyo K611 cassette deck £125. Hardly used, QED Silver Anniversary speaker cable (1) 4 metre pair Airloc plugs £30 (2) 4 metre pair bi-wired Airloc plugs £50. Tel: 07889 840724 (Bromey, Kent) (Feb/1)

WANTED: STAX SR-Lambda professional headphones (year 1982) must be in excellent/mint condition (unmarked and not damaged). Will pay £400 for mint condition headphones. Tel: 01865 378578 (evenings) or Email: fiskalan@hotmail.com (Mar/1)

DENON GOLD SD10 II battle-ship high end CD player, smooth and dynamic, mint condition, boxed, 12 months guarantee £375 (£1300). New. Tel: 01308 868 044 (Feb/1)

QUAD ESL63 electrostatic loudspeakers + stands (£1100). Quad 606 power amplifier (£400). Meridian 207CDPro player + phono pre-amp option +209 remote (£430). Also Quad ESL57 electrostatics (£350). Tel: 07855 254158 or Email: IPS@PATENWorks.com (Feb/1)

FOR SALE Audio Analogue Puccini SE integrated silver fronted non remote £300 ono. Baby forces sale. Tel: Dave 01483 487647 (Surrey) (Feb/1)

LINN SONDEK LP12 turntable with plinth, tinted perspex cover, Linn Ittok LVII pick-up arm, Valhalla upgrade, new cartridge, plus Skyline platform. Very good condition £750. Tel: 023 92 838 500 or Email: youngh22@hotmail.com (Portsmouth) (Feb/1)

MARK LEVINSON No. 360S & 334 £7300 No. 39 £2500 also CZ-GEL interconnects. PMC IBI speakers and stands £2000. Tel: Jon 07956 922061 or E-mail: Jonathan.Page@t-mobile.co.uk (Feb/1)

KRELL KSA 150 Class A 150-220 watts into 8ohms, RCA and balance inputs. Add another KSA-150 and have MDA-300. Very clean, manual, £2250. XLO Type 6 speaker cables, 8ft bi-wire, excellent condition £375. Tel: 07919 211 332 or Email: peterroy@btconnect.com (Feb/1)

KRELL FPB600 £4795 (£13,500), B&W Nautilus 801, red cherry, £4750 (£8500), Audioquest Caldera 8ft bi-wire speaker cable (£895) £465. Audioquest Midnight+ 10ft spades £150 (£450). All reasonable offers considered. Tel: 07767 478 056 or Email: andrew.lucas@cwt-uk.com (Feb/1)

ARCAM A85 amplifier mint £500. Tel: 01925 852316 (Warrington) (Feb)

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!

"The first impression to hit the listener is one of huge scale and sweeping vistas. The LWO's disappear and the soundstage is filled to the brim."
 "I've just gotta brand it a hit" Ken Kessler

Hi-Fi News, Dec. 2000



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LONDON: Walrus Systems Ltd. 020 7724 7224
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Special Internet offer see page 130 for details

PMC FBI cherry veneer late 2001, totally immaculate. ono (£1500) £990. Quad II L's Original Maple finish, sealed box, cancelled order (£380) £340. Krell KAV 300i Amp, absolutely mint condition, as new. (£2300) £1300 Telephone Jules on 01792 280061. Email: info@sounddrjuleshifi.co.uk Web: www.sounddrjuleshifi.co.uk (Feb/I)

AUDIO RESEARCH Classic 150 Mono Blocks, black, excellent condition, new valves, boxed, (£12000) £3600. Bose 901 Ltd Edition, light oak, boxed, mint, inc active x over and stands, £1800 £750. AudioTechnica OC9 cartridge brand new £270. Telephone Jules on 01792 280061. Email: info@sounddrjuleshifi.co.uk Web: www.sounddrjuleshifi.co.uk (Feb/I)

PROAC RESPONSE ONE SC, cherry wood, 14 mths old, mint, c/w four pillar Target R4 speaker stands, £875. Kimber Select Digital KS 2020 high performance 0.75 metre interconnect (£546.00) £390. Telephone Jules 01792 280061. Email: info@sounddrjuleshifi.co.uk Web: www.sounddrjuleshifi.co.uk (Feb/I)

KRELL KRC-2 pre-amp, as new £1650. Meridian 500 transport, immaculate, 2 years old, boxed, manual, everything as new, (£1400) £750. Infinity Renaissance 80 floorstander's, oak, £550. Telephone Jules on 01792 280061. Email: sales@sounddrjuleshifi.co.uk Web: www.sounddrjuleshifi.co.uk (Feb/I)

NAIM NAC 32.5 pre, with phono stage, mint condition £275. Audio Note AN-SPX Level 5 speakers, brand new (£6000 new) £3700. Rotel RT 830 AL tuner, analogue £60. Telephone Jules on 01792 280061. Email: info@sounddrjuleshifi.co.uk Web: www.sounddrjuleshifi.co.uk (Feb/I)

REPAIR, RESTORATION, modification, custom design and construction of audio equipment. Theo Argiriadis BSc Hons. Phone 020 8881 1623 Mon-Fri 9.30am to 5.30am. Website: www.tube-electronics.com (Feb/I)

VINTAGE WIRELESS COMPANY LONDON Website: www.vintagewirelesslondon.co.uk Buy-Sell-Exchange. Vintage wireless and classical audio. Repairs, spares, restoration, modification to all valve equipment. Quad II, Leaks etc, shipped worldwide, best prices, call us at 17 Bell Street, London, NW1 5BY. Tel: 020 7258 3448 Fax 020 7258 3449 Email: vwirelesslondon@aol.com (Oct/I)

AMAZING CABLES! Unlock your system's full potential. Handbuilt silver interconnects from £85, solid silver speaker cables from £220, £5 p & p. Fantastic performance, money back guarantee. Details: 0115 982 5772 after 7pm or Email: bob@skydivers.co.uk (Mar/I)

AUDIOPUBLIC, 78 Otley Road, Headingley, Leeds, 0113 217 7294. Yorkshire's newest Hi-Fi retailer, representing Naim, Rega, Creek, Totem, Quadraspire, Dynavector, Roksan, Teac and more. Used LP12's, Lingo's, Linto's stocked. Call for advice. Tel: 0113 217 7294 (Feb/I)

FARADAY CONCRETE Cabinet loudspeakers, 'a sonic revelation', What Hi-Fi? Our unique low density formulation and design really does produce the ultimate in audio transparency. DIY options available. Tel: 01603 762967 www.faradaysound.co.uk (Feb/I)

EX DEMONSTRATION Klipsch speaker systems, KSB 2.1 £200, KG 3.5 £350, KG 4.5 £450, KG 5.5 £550. Heresy £650, all tested. Tel: Midland Radio Supplies on 0121 430 7817 or Email: guyholdsworth@onetel.net.uk (Mar/I)

GARRARD? THORENS? Answer Aphelion! Solid hardwood or laminated MDF plinth's. Three models for all motor units. From £200. Also our vinyl storage system format. Prices from £26. All on permanent demonstration. Call 01604 409 300 (Apr/I)

HERTFORDSHIRE/NORTH LONDON Audio/Record Fair. Sunday 13th April 2003. 11.00 to 4.00. At Cuffley Hall, Maynard Place, Cuffley, Herts. 5 minutes from M25 Junction 25. Tel: 07944 909 209 for details (Feb/I)

AUDIO COMPUTER valve output or Midiman Audiophile soundcard, rack sized, black, silver, looks like Hi-Fi also PC. Replay/Record, CD, LP, MP3, Wav., Radio. P4, AMDxp from £999. Tel: 01460 65988 or Email: info@silentaudio.co.uk (Mar/I)

TELEFUNKEN MISA with two spare head blocks, 7.5, 15 ips, with deluxe trolley and service manual, NAB adaptors, £750. Studer A80 VU, Mk2 RC, 7.5, 15 ips, with service manual and NAB adaptors £850. Tel: 01246 275 479 or Email: j.i.tipping@amserve.net (Feb/I)

MAF AUDIO. Bryston 4 B ST 250wpc power amp £1100. Bryston BP25 pre amp remote/c £950. Mirage OM9 speakers in cherry £800. Mirage AVS sat system inc sub £400. Mirage frx5 floor standing in cherry £200. Mirage Omnisat system inc sub £1000. Mirage MBS sats with stands £125. NAD T760 AV amplifier £295. Tel: 01283 538 882 (Feb/I)

WORTHING AUDIO True Sound Series Crossoverless monitors 96dB efficiency, single 8" driver, perfect for low powered tube (S.E.T.) and solid state. Audio Note Anvx silver interconnect .75mtr £500. Amphion Argon loudspeakers £599. Musica Collins loudspeakers by Bernard Thiel & Partners (German) £1000. Tel: Worthing Audio 01903 212 133 or 07900 918 882 (Feb/I)

KORA VALVE Amplifiers on permanent dem. Also Silver Arrow 4N-Pure flat silver foil air interconnects and speaker cables with Bucchino phono plugs. Tel: Worthing Audio 01903 212 133 or 07900 918 882 (Feb/I)

WOODLAND ELECTRONICS. Website: www.woodlandelectronics.co.uk. Tel/Fax: 0207 349 9675 - 0795 860 7613. High-end audio equipments, Home cinema, components, cables & connectors, lighting, surveillance equipments, plus mega more items. (Feb/I)

NAIM SPECIALIST has the following equipment for sale: CDS II + XPS - £4495. NAC 52 + PSU - £3995. NAT 02 - £850. Credo Speakers - £895. All first class condition + 6 month money back guarantee. Call Tom Tom Audio on 07971 202742 or Email: tunes@tomtomaudio.com (Feb/I)

KRELL KAV-300i integrated amp, Krell KAV-300cd CD player, Martin Logan Aeries i speakers, Transparent Musicwave plus speaker cable £4995, or call for individual component prices. Demo available + full 6 month money back guarantee. Call Tom Tom Audio on 07971 202742 or Email: tunes@tomtomaudio.com (Feb/I)

LAURI-VOLPI loudspeaker stand interfaces. Hi-Fi Choice favourably reviewed in instant upgrades 12/02. Handmade by Lauri-Volpi, the interfaces effectively convert vibrational energy into heat energy. Priced @ £12 inc P&P. Tel: 0113 252 2820 or Email: laurivolpi56@hotmail.com (Feb/I)

VINTAGE WIRELESS COMPANY LONDON Website: www.vintagewirelesslondon.co.uk Buy-Sell-Exchange. Vintage wireless and classical audio. Repairs, spares, restoration, modification to all valve equipment. Quad II, Leaks etc, shipped worldwide, best prices, call us at 17 Bell Street, London, NW1 5BY. Tel: 020 7258 3448 Fax 020 7258 3449 Email: vwirelesslondon@aol.com (Oct/I)

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MARCH 2003 ISSUE - WEDNESDAY 8TH JANUARY 2003
 APRIL 2003 ISSUE - TUESDAY 5TH FEBRUARY 2003



UNISON RESEARCH UNICO

The new Unico integrated amplifier from Unison Research has an impeccable pedigree. Triode valves give natural purity of sound and effortless listening pleasure. With styling of understated elegance and 80 watts of power, Unico offers an unbeatable package. As top reviewer Ken Kessler put it (Hi Fi News, July 2002): "No integrated I've used in recent memory delivers so much at this price". Unico has the look, build quality and sound of pure luxury - at a real world price. Supplied complete with radiowave remote control. The matching Unico CD-Player is now available, with 24-bit/192k upsampling, valve output stage and a sound which will convince you that CD replay has finally come of age.

*Unico Remote (line) £775, (line + phono) £825. Unico CD-player £1095

TRIANGLE *Loudspeakers that love music*

Five stars for sound and five stars for value. Triangle are regular winners of top accolades from the world's most prestigious reviewers. As What Hi Fi recently put it "Rarely have we come across loudspeakers that are so lively and communicative....they turn in a sparkling performance that makes others seem bland in comparison". Listen for yourself. You'll be amazed.



Zerius 202

*£705/pair

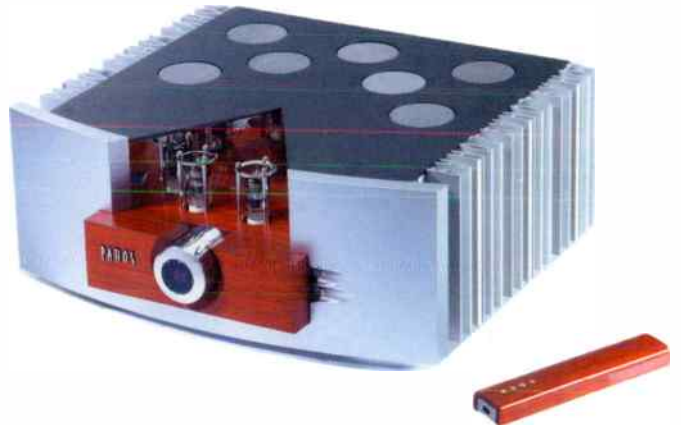
OPERA SP2

Beautiful to behold and a delight to listen to. Opera loudspeakers are the genuine article. The solid hardwood 'boat-tailed' cabinet allows the SP2's top quality drive units to produce a lovely, natural sound. Italian craftsmanship, advanced acoustic technology and the very finest materials make SP2 the perfect choice for the discerning music lover.



* Opera SP2 (mahogany), £1350/pair. Other solid hardwood finishes available.

PATHOS ACOUSTICS *The Unorthodox Approach*



After almost two years of design and perfection, the stunning new Logos integrated amplifier is finally here. For the lucky few who will own one, it has been worth the wait. Logos is an object of rare *bellezza* - a swan in a world of ugly ducklings. A future classic. Hi Fi News were deeply impressed and summed up their review thus: "If you're considering an integrated amp up to £4000, listen to the Logos after everything else. Then spend the £1500 you saved on a decent wristwatch worthy of a Logos owner".

*Pathos Acoustics Logos, 110 Watts/channel. £2495

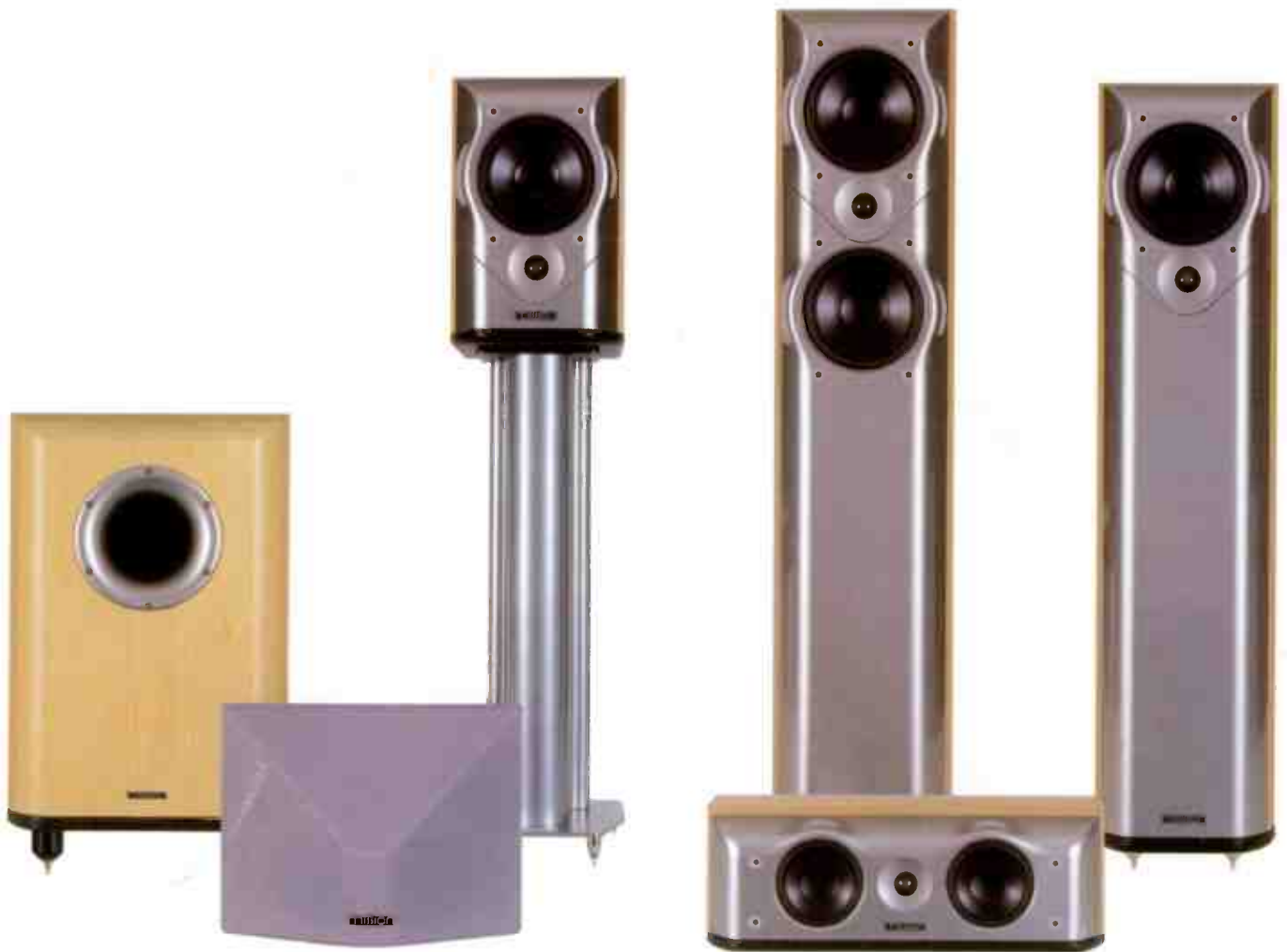
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