

# hi-fi news

THE HOME OF REAL HI-FI

&amp; Record Review

## ULTIMATE HI-FI

2010 – the year's finest products &amp; vintage audio heroes



**VINYL ICON**  
**GUSTAV HOLST**  
 Out of this world: The Planets Suite

**'We originally  
 built 50 but  
 sold 30,000'**  
**Audio Milestone, p116**

### Also inside

- The Best Music of 2010
- Your Guide to buying Vintage
- Opinion: our columnists speak out
- Iconic kit: the A&R A60 integrated amplifier
- Hi-Fi @ Home: corner horns and the hi-fi museum



• **PLUS** 11 pages of music features • **SHOW BLOG** Hi-fi News reports from Hong Kong 2010  
 • **TURNTABLES** Amazon to Thorens • **DIGITAL PLAYERS** Cambridge to Simaudio Moon  
 • **AMPLIFIERS** Devialet D-Premier to Pass Labs • **LOUDSPEAKERS** B&W to Wilson Audio

UK £4.00 US \$9.99 Aus \$9.95



# MUSICAL FIDELITY

## PRIMO Pure Class A Tube Preamplifier

New from Musical Fidelity. 14 tubes. Triode. Class A.  
Fully balanced. Zero feedback. Mega technical performance.





# YEARBOOK/10



**ABOVE:** NAD's long-awaited M2 is the first all-digital Class D amplifier since the TACT Millennium of the mid-'90s. See p44



**ABOVE:** A vintage gem – the seminal Garrard 401 turntable, p66

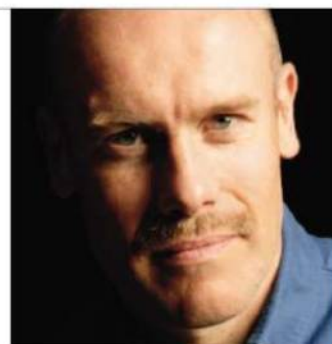


**VINYL:** Gustav Holst's *The Planets* is our first classical Vinyl Icon, p78

Christmas has come a little early this year as *Hi-Fi News & Record Review* celebrates the most memorable equipment and music from 2010. None of the 40-odd goodies reviewed in this special Yearbook issue is exactly a stocking-filler but it's certainly worth leaving your mag open at a choice page in case a particularly benevolent Santa should be watching in the run up to the festive season.

Of course, dreaming about that next upgrade is part and parcel of our shared passion. That and listening to fabulous music from hi-res analogue and digital sources while musing that the MP3-generation has simply no idea of what it's missing. Before I start sounding like an extra from the *Grumpy Old Men* TV series it's certainly worth remembering just how lucky we are. Audiophiles are uniquely positioned to spread the word about our transcendent involvement with the musical event – an experience made possible by high-end systems.

Every month, we feature an example of one reader's dream system in our Hi-Fi@Home series, but this special issue includes an equally special visit to John Howes' palatial residence – he of the bi-annual Audio Jumble and doyen of the vintage hi-fi scene. It'll come as little surprise



that John uses a pair of classic Voigt corner horns in his system, but while many of us retain a small collection of unused and treasured gear, he has a full-on vintage museum to hand! Turn to page 96 for a tour.

Those iconic turntables, valve amplifiers and speakers of hi-fi's infancy still resonate with us today, so while our Yearbook

## 'Hi-Fi News Yearbook – all that's great and good from 2010'

remains your one-stop reference for all that's great and good in 2010 we've also included full reports on some iconic separates of yesteryear.

Once again our lab tests are all conducted independently by way of verification, even for these veteran products. Not for us the simple expedient of printing the manufacturer's 'Technical Specs'. Expert advice for the seasoned enthusiast – you can bank on it with *Hi-Fi News*.

**PAUL MILLER EDITOR**

**HI-FI NEWS' EXPERT LINE UP: THE FINEST MINDS IN AUDIO JOURNALISM BRING THEIR EXPERIENCE TO BEAR ON ALL AREAS OF HI-FI & MUSIC**



**BARRY FOX**  
Investigative journalist supreme, Barry is the first with news of the latest developments in hi-fi and music technologies



**JOHN BAMFORD**  
JB brings huge industry experience, a penchant for massive speakers and a love of hi-res audio in all its diverse guises



**KEN KESSLER**  
is currently our Senior Contributing Editor and almost singularly responsible for the renaissance in valves and 'vintage hi-fi'



**KEITH HOWARD**  
has written about hi-fi for 30 years, and edited *Hi-Fi Answers* for nine. KH performs our speaker and headphone lab tests



**STEVE HARRIS**  
Former Editor of this very title from 1986 through to 2005. A lifetime in audio and a love of jazz makes Steve a goldmine



**JOHN HOWES**  
Foremost collector and archivist of vintage hi-fi, famous for the UK's bi-annual Audio Jumble, John shares his experience with *HFN*



**STEVE SUTHERLAND**  
Worked on *Melody Maker* and then edited *NME* from 1992-2000, the Britpop years. Steve brings a unique slant to our Vinyl Release pages



# IsoTek®

*The power to deliver 'clean' power*



**Aquarius replaced the companies GII Mini Sub and is the latest product in IsoTek's unique range of multi-award winning power conditioners that are designed and hand made in England using the finest materials and built to the highest of standards.**

Formed in July 2001 IsoTek's vision has been to create high-quality mains power conditioners that stretch beyond current conventions. Through careful market analysis and extensive research, IsoTek has been able to launch products that dramatically improve the performance of all components used within an audio or visual environment, a fact that has been proved by countless international reviews and over 25 audio awards.

*"IsoTek is the leader in mains conditioning products"*

HI-FI NEWS

*"IsoTek is the UK's biggest name in mains filtration"*

HI-FI CHOICE

*"Not all mains conditioners are created equal... IsoTek has built itself a reputation as a purveyor of mains conditioners that actually improve (as opposed to just alter) the sound"*

HI-FI WORLD

**For more information and to obtain your free IsoTek brochure please call:**

## 01276 501 392

info@soundfoundations.co.uk  
www.soundfoundations.co.uk www.isoteksystems.com

*"The whole auditioning process took about 30 seconds. Play a piece of music on GII Mini Sub. Play it again on Aquarius and wonder why you were so attached to the GII Mini Sub." "Very highly recommended"*

HI-FI PLUS. ISSUE 68.



SIRIUS



ACCESSORIES



ORION



VISION



SIGMAS



TITAN



# CONTENTS

## VINYL & RECORD REVIEWS

- 76 Vinyl Frontier**  
Chris Heard of Classic LPs brings you the best of the new re-issues and re-releases on premium vinyl
- 78 Vinyl Icon**  
Its suite sounds this month as Christopher Breunig brings you the story behind Holst's *The Planets*



- 85 Album Reviews**  
Our pick of the audiophile LP and digital releases, rock, jazz and classical albums of the year

## SOURCES: BEST OF 2010

- 14 Pro-Ject RPM 10.1 Evolution**  
Top value, vice-free deck and arm
- 15 Clearaudio Concept**  
Turntable package high on style
- 17 Oracle Delphi Mk VI**  
Revised classic deck makes its mark
- 18 Thorens TD 309**  
Radical turntable and a superb buy
- 20 Amazon 2/Mørch DP-6**  
Neutral deck with dual-pivot arm
- 21 Avid Acutus Reference SP**  
Avid deck proves high on detail
- 22 Ortofon Cadenza Blue**  
'Vital' sounds from mid-output MC
- 24 Sumiko Palo Santos Presentation**  
Thoroughbred pick-up from Japan
- 25 Soundsmith SG-200**  
Pricy but thrilling strain gauge
- 26 Avid Pulsare Phono**  
MM/MC phono preamp impresses
- 28 Icon Audio PS3**  
MM/MC phono preamp with valves
- 29 Lehmann Black Cube Decade**  
Dynamic, detailed phono preamp
- 31 Chapter Audio Sonnet-S**  
CD player with custom DSP
- 32 Simaudio Moon 750D**  
CD player has 32-bit DAC/digital-ins

- 34 Naim CDX2/DAC**  
First CD player/DAC two-box
- 35 Mark Levinson No512**  
Cracking stereo CD/SACD player
- 36 Marantz UD9004**  
Premium universal player is a winner
- 38 Cambridge Audio 650BD**  
Universal machine is high on value
- 39 Prism Sound Orpheus**  
DAC with S/PDIF, AES and Firewire

## AMPLIFIERS: BEST OF 2010

- 42 Devialet D-Premier**  
Once-in-a generation new-tech amp
- 43 Emillé Cha'am**  
Valve integrated with top-end sparkle
- 44 NAD M2**  
Revelatory Class D powerhouse
- 46 Quad II Classic Integrated**  
Silky sounds, and more power too
- 48 Micromega PA-20/PW-400**  
Pre/power offers sublime sounds
- 50 Luxman C-600f/M-600A**  
Two-box solid state excellence
- 52 Leema Pyxis/Hydra II**  
Pre/power from a Brit brand to watch
- 53 Pass Labs XA60.5**  
Mighty American mono power amp
- 55 Musical Fidelity Titan**  
It's hi-fi magic of the highest order

## LOUDSPEAKERS: BEST OF 2010

- 56 JBL Project K2 S9900**  
Floorstanders that major on realism
- 57 Lumen White Silver Flame**  
Ceramic drivers, a seamless sound
- 59 Wilson Audio Sophia 3**  
A favourite enjoys trickle-down tech
- 60 Green Mountain Audio Eos**  
Two-way standmount with a twist
- 63 B&W 805 Diamond**  
Added sparkle proves addictive
- 64 Monitor Audio PL200**  
Ribbons to be cheerful

## VINTAGE: BEST OF 2010

- 66 Garrard 401**  
Direct-drive deck shows its class
- 67 Leak Stereo 20**  
One of the ten best amps of the '50s
- 69 Radford STA 15 Series 3**  
Blurring the vintage/modern line
- 70 Lowther Acousta loudspeaker range**  
Celebrating the horns of plenty
- 60 Quad ESL (ESL-57)**  
Thrills from an iconic electrostatic

## VINTAGE

- 112 Buying Vintage**  
Your one-stop guide to digging out the best retro bargains
- 116 Audio Milestones**  
At first considered the poor man's Naim, the A&R A60 went on to sell tens of thousands of units...

## NEWS AND OPINION

- 06 News**  
If it's high-end 'n' happening it's here
- 08 Show Blog**  
Bob Hawkins flies to Hong Kong to report from the eagerly awaited 8th annual HK High-End AV show
- 102 Opinion**  
Comment from Paul Miller, Barry Fox, Barry Willis, Steve Harris and Christopher Breunig
- 110 Sound Off**  
Letters from this month's mailbox

## HI-FI PEOPLE

- 96 Hi-fi @ Home**  
It's an Aladdin's cave of all things vintage as John Howes invites you into his home and museum
- 138 Off The Leash**  
Ken Kessler on the highs of 2010



ABOVE: Audio Milestones, p116  
BELOW: Hi-Fi @ Home, p96





# Full Stream Ahead

NAIM AUDIO LAUNCHES STREAMING NETWORK MEDIA PLAYER



Naim Audio's first standalone streaming network player, the NDX, will go into production in late October and sell for just under £3000. Developed to offer audio performance comparable to an audiophile CD player, the NDX uses the UPnP (Universal Plug and Play) network protocol to stream compressed and uncompressed audio files at up to 24/192 from any UPnP server connected to the same ethernet network. Wi-Fi wireless connection is available 'as a convenience' but a wired connection is recommended. Three S/PDIF inputs are provided for other digital sources, and the NDX will also play audio files from a USB memory stick.

Drawing on technology originally developed for the Naim DAC, the NDX incorporates multiple regulated power supplies and galvanic isolation to minimise interaction of its digital and analogue circuits, and uses the same system of a buffer memory and switchable master clocks to remove incoming jitter. As usual with Naim, an upgrade path is available via the addition of an external power supply (XPS or 555PS) and/or the Naim DAC, which itself can be upgraded with an external PSU.

An extension of Naim's n-Stream app allows the NDX to be controlled via hand-held devices such as the Apple iPad or supplied remote handset. Naim has also developed its own UPnP server code for both the HDX and UnitiServe hard disk players, enabling them to serve files to the NDX.  
**Naim Audio, 01772 426600;**  
**www.naimaudio.com**

## Iconic Triodes

ICON AUDIO'S TRIODE POWER AMP IN REVAMP

The large RCA845 triode valve dates from the early 1930s and while Icon Audio's MB845 is rather newer, it has still earned itself a fearsome reputation among the cognoscenti. Announcing the £5000 MkII version of this push-pull triode amp, Icon Audio specifies that the MB845 is now 50% heftier thanks to its massive bespoke, hand-wound tertiary output transformers. A new improved choke regulated power supply is used and the driver stage has been upgraded to use a pair of 6SN7 valves. Separate 8ohm/4ohm speaker taps are included, the amp rated at 110W into both loads.

**Icon Audio, 0116 244 0593;**  
**www.iconaudio.com**



## Cabasse active

PACIFIC SEMI-ACTIVE FLOORSTANDERS



The Pacific 3 SA is the latest addition to the Artis range of high-end loudspeakers from Cabasse. This is the first tower-style loudspeaker from Cabasse to feature its BC17 coaxial drive unit, originally developed for the Riga. The combination of a doughnut-shaped midrange and dome treble unit handles an impressive 175Hz-20kHz, the bass augmented by a pair of 21cm inverted honeycomb 'domes' fashioned from an ultra-light and rigid Nomex material. Finished in a piano black or gloss pearl finish, the 1.29m tall cabinet has a curved front baffle and fluted side panels. Price is £11,000.  
**Cabasse Acoustic Center,**  
**+33 298 05 88 70;**  
**www.cabasse.com**

## HI-FI NEWS' NUGGETS

### STRIKING A KORD

Russ Andrews Accessories has upgraded the recently launched SuperKord Classic to Classic-SD II status. It has also introduced the SuperKord Reference-SD II (£950/1m) and SuperKord Signature-SD II (£1250/1m), with improved Sawyers Disc technology to enhance the RFI reducing properties of the woven cable. See [www.russandrews.com](http://www.russandrews.com)

### SOUNDFRAME

Monitor Audio has 'reworked the picture-speaker' concept with its on-wall SoundFrame loudspeakers which have a depth of just 3.5in. Two three-way models are available, each employing a 1in tweeter/4in midrange module and 6.5in C-CAM bass driver. Both the SoundFrame 1 and 2 are priced at £450 but differ in aspect ratio. See [www.monitoraudio.co.uk](http://www.monitoraudio.co.uk)



## What a Peach!

UK LAUNCH OF PEACHTREE AUDIO PRODUCTS FROM USA

For the enthusiast with a music collection stored on a PC, Mac or accessed from third party systems such as Sonos, Squeezebox or even iTunes, the £1100 Peachtree Audio Nova offers an 'all-in-one' DAC/amp solution. Rated at 80W, the integrated amplifier is driven via a valve preamp stage, itself fed from a combination

of three analogue, a USB and four coaxial/optical digital inputs. The onboard DAC is a top-notch ESS 9006 Sabre. For those consumers using a Sonos multiroom wireless music system, the Nova also has a slot to house a ZP90 zone player. **Computers Unlimited, 020 8358 9593 digitalhome@unlimited.com**



## JBL's Studio 1 Series

AFFORDABLE FLOORSTANDERS PUT ON THE STYLE



Seen and heard at this year's IFA Show in Berlin, JBL's new Studio 1 range of loudspeakers features the company's new signature design – the 'Dynamic Weave'. This four-strong series includes the JBL Studio 190 and Studio 180 floorstanding loudspeakers, the Studio 130 bookshelf loudspeaker and the Studio 120c centre-channel loudspeaker.

The three-and-a-half-way Studio 190 [shown left] features dual 165mm woofers and a 100mm midrange driver, all employing stiff 'PolyPlas' cones. The 25mm 'CMMD Lite' tweeter dome is loaded by a proprietary 'Bi-Radial' waveguide that promises 'exceptional clarity and realism with outstanding bass response'. And the price? Surprisingly affordable at just €400. The entire range is magnetically shielded for use alongside old-style CRT TVs and in a choice of silver-tinted black or cherry vinyl finishes. **JBL (Harman Consumer), 01707 278100 www.jbl.com**

## AKG and Quincy Jones

SIGNATURE SERIES REFERENCE CLASS HEADPHONES

Quincy Jones, the iconic music producer, has lent his signature to a new range of headphones from AKG, part of Harman International. The £70 Q350 in-ear 'phones are joined by the £140 Q460 foldable mini headphones with the Q701 premium headphones topping the bill. The 62ohm £450 Q701

is a semi-open back dynamic design featuring a flat-wire voice coil, high performance neodymium magnet system and two-layer diaphragm. As pictured, the Q701 comes in black, white or lime (Quincy Green) flavours. **AKG Acoustics, 01707 278100 www.akg.com**



## Olive serves it up

OLIVE OFFERS A NEW AND MORE AFFORDABLE MEDIA SERVER

At just £899, the new Olive 3HD wireless server boasts all the key features of the Olive 4HD at a fraction of the cost. The slimline case includes a 500GB hard drive and slot-loading disc drive, compatible with CD, DVD-ROM and DVD-RW media. The storage is sufficient for up to 1500 CDs or around

5000 uncompressed tracks while the onboard DAC will handle sample rates from 44.1kHz to 96kHz. The Olive 3HD includes stereo analogue and USB digital outputs with the option of a wireless network 802.11 USB dongle. **Olive, 01235 511166 www.henleydesigns.co.uk**



## Upcoming Events

IMPORTANT DATES FOR YOUR HI-FI DIARY

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <b>16-17 OCT</b> | Sound & Vision Manchester 2010<br><a href="http://www.manchestershow.co.uk">www.manchestershow.co.uk</a> |
| <b>22-24 OCT</b> | High End Swiss, Moevenpick Hotel, Zurich-Regensdorf  |
| <b>30-31 OCT</b> | The National Sound and Vision Show 2010, Crowne Plaza, Dublin, Ireland                                   |
| <b>06-09 JAN</b> | International CES 2011, Las Vegas, Nevada, USA<br><a href="http://www.cesweb.org">www.cesweb.org</a>     |



# Hong Kong Show 2010

Words & pictures: **Bob Hawkins**



With a modest entrance fee, detailed programme guide (in both English and Cantonese), a free hybrid stereo SACD for visitors and a venue spread over three levels, The Hong Kong High-End AV Show, held at the Conference & Exhibition Center in Wan Chai, never disappoints.

This year's show, the 8th, saw more than 9000 visitors on day one alone with a record 26,000 plus visitors attending all three days. Recession? What recession?

What arguably sets the Chinese audiophiles apart is their love of valves. It's a bit like the renaissance that happened to the UK motorbike industry in the '60s and '70 when Japanese mass production arrived. Many new products were on show, especially from the UK. Musical Fidelity, in particular, had one of the largest display of products ever seen here. Friendly people, dealers keen to please and a view from the centre over Hong Kong's Victoria Harbour all made for a great show.



Visitors flocked to the Audio Space exhibition. The Kowloon-based company specialises in vacuum tube amps and has won many awards over the years, particularly for its high-end Reference series of power amplifiers. [www.audiospace-hifi.com](http://www.audiospace-hifi.com).



Italian company Unison Research certainly knows how to produce beautiful audio – for both the eye and ear. The Unico Pre preamp features JFETs in the input stage, ECC82 double triodes in the gain stage, and offers inputs for CD, tuner, aux and tape monitor into balanced/SE connectors. Class A performance, the price is £2500. [www.unisonresearch.com](http://www.unisonresearch.com).



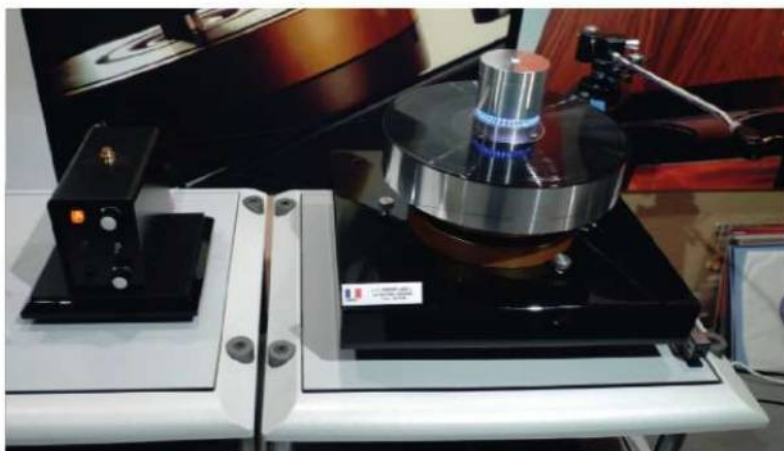
The result of three years' R&D, KEF launched the Concept Blade at CES in January creating a great deal of interest. Yet the speaker is not for sale. Rather, this is a one-off design to showcase KEF technologies, ie single apparent source, Uni-Q LCP driver array and force-cancelling bass drivers. Watch the video at [www.kef.com/gb/conceptblade](http://www.kef.com/gb/conceptblade).



## SHOWBLOG Sights and sounds from around the globe



Mission used the event to show off its M-isphere 2.0 speaker range which comprises the M-isphere and M-isphere Mini, both available in eight colours. Each table-top enclosure houses a single driver and is powered by a separate Class D amp module. [www.mission.co.uk](http://www.mission.co.uk).



The La Platine Verdier turntable always draws a crowd. Weighing in at 65kg – 16kg for the platter, which is suspended by opposing magnetic bearings – and featuring a heavy Lys electronic stroboscope and battery power supply, it's a work of art. Price is £11,000. [www.jcverdier.com](http://www.jcverdier.com).



Balanced Audio Technology from the USA showed its flagship Rex monoblock (Balanced-Tube). Weighing 45.5kg, the all-triode, zero-feedback design delivers a claimed 160W at less than 3% THD using 6C33C-B tubes. Cost is a mighty £36,000 a pair. Ouch! [www.balanced.com](http://www.balanced.com).



Staff of cabinet makers Woodmark Development Co await the crowd rush on day one. Using sustainable supplies imported from China, USA (walnut) and Indonesia (ebony) these unique made to order items cannot be found elsewhere in Asia. [gundamhost.com/woodmark](http://gundamhost.com/woodmark).



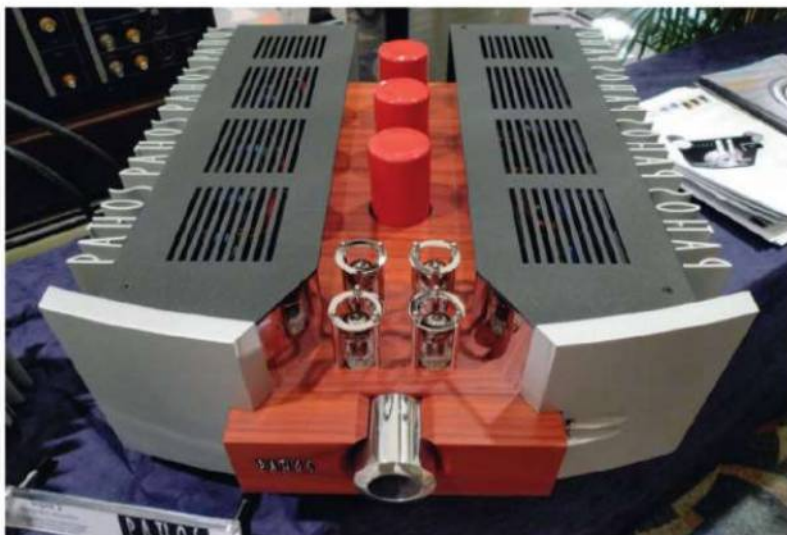
Diatonic Precision Audio, a new company launched in Hong Kong in 2009, made its first show appearance. The DPM-2v, one of four new products, is a high current vacuum tube preamp. It features twin 6922 tubes, a one-touch remote, and a 77-step volume control. Price is £1870. [www.dp-audio.net](http://www.dp-audio.net).



Constellation Audio (USA) showed its Altair range. The Pyxis system controller provides rotary volume/source control and a colour touch-screen display controlling gain, input naming etc. The pre- and power amp cost £35,100 and £89,560 respectively. [www.constellationaudio.com](http://www.constellationaudio.com).



## SHOWBLOG First sight of new products & technology



Another attractive Italian product, the Pathos Inpol2 Class A integrated is a balanced dual-mono design. Two Inpol circuits driven in opposite phase are said to provide low distortion without using feedback signals. Power is a claimed 45W per channel. Cost is £6970. [www.pathosacoustics.com](http://www.pathosacoustics.com).



Perhaps no show is complete without the spectacle of the La Sphere speakers from French company Cabasse. The coaxial design features four drive units aligned on a single axis with a processor feeding a stereo power amp for each drive unit. Price in Hong Kong dollars was 1,400,000HK\$, which is £115,000. [www.cabasse.com](http://www.cabasse.com).



This family of horn speakers is manufactured by Calix of Taiwan. From left to right are the iHorns idol, Alpha, Jr Speaker and Venus Phoenix Academy. The Jr speakers are very popular in China and even have an option of a lotus design on some of the range. [www.calix.com.tw](http://www.calix.com.tw).



Korean-based Soliton has produced what may be a world class cable product. Using pure copper and silver solids, the pins, spade lugs and cables are produced using an ultrasonic technique, with heat, in one continuous process. The pins and lugs are fused to cable of the same material, said to banish all impurities. [www.mc-lab.com](http://www.mc-lab.com).



The Kalista Reference-SE from Metronome Technologie is the brainchild of Dominique Giner and is an expression of what can be made without any technical constraints. Battery powered and with a modified Philips CDM 12 Pro 2 transport, some say it's the world's finest 16-bit/44.1kHz Red Book CD player. The sample pictured is the last in a limited run of 25. Cost is £54,365 plus DAC. [www.sensusaudio.com](http://www.sensusaudio.com).



## a class above

With the same innovations as KEF's revolutionary Concept Blade technology showcase, the all-new Q Series from KEF performs like speakers from a higher price class in terms of realism, musicality and off-axis dispersion.

### Q Series

#### All new Uni-Q array.

Sweet, spacious and true, wherever you sit

A large vented tweeter in the centre of the bass/midrange driver, with a 'tangerine' waveguide and unique Z-flex surround to combine unrivalled dispersion with generous travel for the aluminium MF/LF cone.

#### Advanced bass technologies.

Deeper, tighter and more accurate bass

Inside the fashionably rectilinear cabinets, the new bass driver combines a rigid superlight cone with a massive vented magnet assembly and an oversized voice coil for exceptional sensitivity and distortion-free power handling.

#### Total system design.

A holistic approach, with no compromises.

These advanced new drivers only need first order crossovers, maximising fluency and transparency, and KEF's legendary attention to detail extends from innovations for easier bi-wiring to environment-friendly finishes.



## SHOWBLOG First sight of new products & technology



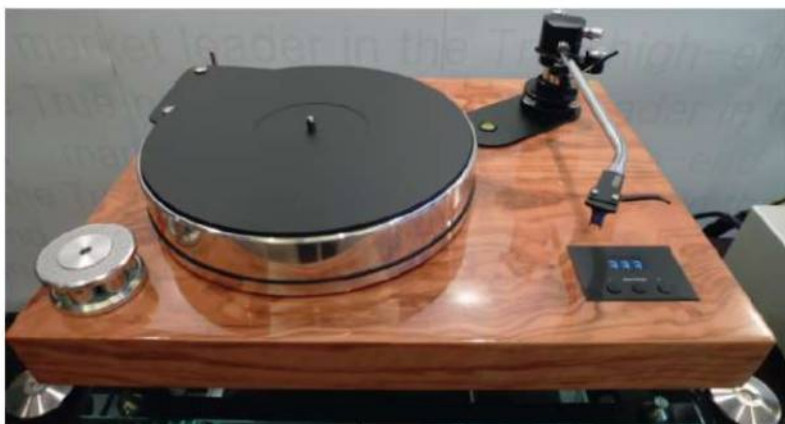
It was good to see Musical Fidelity's full range of products on display with the satin finished M6PRE and M6PRX combo taking centre stage. Features include balanced inputs, phono MM/MC, four line inputs and digital USB2 for the PRE. The PRX can be bi-amped. [www.musicalfidelity.com](http://www.musicalfidelity.com).



New to Hong Kong markets, the Dôme was certainly a surprise package. Made by respected French manufacturer Focal, for table, wall, bookshelf or ceiling mounting, the die-cast aluminium satellite and subwoofer speakers looked stunning. Ideal for audio or home theatre use (2.0, 2.1 or 5.1 channel configuration), power handling is said to be 25-100W. Price for the 2.1 system pictured was £1500. [www.focal-fr.com](http://www.focal-fr.com).



JE Audio of Hong Kong has won awards for both its linestage pre and power amps. Shown here is the VM60, a full dual-balanced monoblock with its power supply and output transformers occupying nearly half the top panel alongside four KT88s. Power output is a claimed 60W. [www.je-audio.com](http://www.je-audio.com).



Pro-ject had its pristine-looking Xtenion spinner on show complete with a 12in Ortofon RS-309D tonearm and built-in Speed Box. Price was HK\$49800 or £4085. The deck offers electronic speeds of 33.3, 45 and manual 78rpm. [www.project-audio.com](http://www.project-audio.com).



The Mong Kok district of Kowloon provides an Aladdin's cave of valves tucked away in back-street shops above the markets. Audiophiles here love them, seeking out tubes of all descriptions. Familiar brands such as Marconi, Osram and Mullard are available and there were plenty to choose from at the show, alongside brands from China of course. As can be seen from the picture, Gold Lion-branded KT88 tetrode vacuum tubes were extremely popular. A pack of four was selling for HK\$2200 (£180) at the Audio Space stand, though like everything in Hong Kong, price is negotiable!

# Next month

Ken Kessler reports from  
Top Audio Milan 2010



# FURUTECH

Pure Transmission Technology

*Refinement has a new name...  
Debuting Furutech's Top-of-the-Line Flux Cable Series*

## Flux Cable Series



Speakerflux



Lineflux (XLR)



Lineflux (RCA)



Powerflux-18UK

Furutech  $\alpha$  (Alpha) OCC Pure Transmission conductors terminated with beautifully-engineered high-performance rhodium-plated connectors. The substantially-built extremely nonresonant connector bodies are finished in layered carbon fiber and non-magnetic stainless steel providing improved mechanical damping for greater resolution, clarity, and powerful dynamics.



Jumperflux-S



Jumperflux-B



Flux-50 filter

## Furutech High End Performance Connectors

### FI-50 (R) Piezo Ceramic Series IEC Connectors



Carefully chosen and tested "active" materials mechanically and electrically damp Piezo connectors as they "interconvert" thermal, mechanical, and electrical energy for the finest Furutech Pure Transmission signal imaginable.



### FP-1363-S FP-1363-D

High End Performance BS-1363 wall sockets with Pure Copper conductors. Rhodium or Gold plated.



### FI-UK 1363 (R) FI-UK 1363 (G)

High End Performance UK mains plug, straight or angled.



### FI-8N (R) FI-8N (G)

High Performance C7 IEC connector Make a More Powerful Connection with Furutech!

*Make a More Powerful Connection with Furutech!*



### Sound Foundations

25 New Road, Blackwater  
Camberley, Surrey, GU17 9AY Great Britain  
Tel : +44(0) 1276 501 392  
info@soundfoundations.co.uk

Furutech Co., Ltd. Tokyo Japan

service@furutech.com www.furutech.com



hi-finews  
HIGHLY  
COMMENDED

AUDIO  
FILE

Manual, belt-driven turntable with 10in tonearm  
Made by: Pro-Ject Audio Systems  
Supplied by: Henley Designs  
Telephone: 01235 511166  
Web: www.project-audio.com; www.henleydesigns.co.uk



# Pro-Ject RPM 10.1 Evolution (£2000)

**T**he RPM 10.1 Evolution updates on the earlier '10 with a better tonearm and other refinements (for example, a thicker acrylic platter). It has a sleek, moulded appearance, and fine grey paint finish.

Its plinth is a sturdy carcass of MDF with a massive steel fabrication in the centre that supports the main bearing. Arc-shaped chambers in the MDF are filled with several kilos of loose 2mm diameter steel balls. The chassis sits on three adjustable

simple (two position) thread and weight adjustment.

Four counterweights are supplied, to cater for cartridges weighing from 4 to 14 grams. Having balanced out the arm and set the loose marker disc to zero, you wind the weight forward to dial the desired tracking force.

A supplied record weight helps the solidity and precision of the bass, and makes the whole sound a little tidier [see table, below right].



## NOT SO WILD

Listening started with the Ortofon Cadenza Blue, via the Moon LP5.3 phono stage. Oscar Peterson and trio in 'At Long Last Love' [MPS 68.073] seemed

to reveal the key virtues of the turntable: the sound was smooth and never raucous.

With the wild guitars of Eric Clapton's 'Motherless Children' [RSO 2479 118] there was a slight feeling that the guitars weren't quite wild enough, that the lid was being kept on... Carl Radle's bass line was clearly portrayed, and yet the rhythm seemed almost sedate,

rather than the headlong and exciting rush that it can be.

There were no complaints about the rhythm on Dire Straits' 'Sultans Of Swing' [Vertigo 9102 021], which showed that the Pro-Ject could give both clarity and control, as Knopfler's lead guitar had real power and magic, while his vocal enjoyed character and depth. The tight and mobile rhythm was immediately arresting.

Rickie Lee Jones [Warner Bros K56628] came over with fresh vitality, the deck getting out of the way to let the wise but still youthful-sounding singer tell her stories with a sweetly incisive vigour.

From the Ortofon we moved on to the Koetsu Black. This delivered a much more stirring rendition of 'Motherless Children'. Slide guitar was loud and brash, a big, tearing sound, while Clapton's vocal sounded almost majestic. Yet there was a sense of chasing detail that you couldn't quite catch.

On 'Easy Money', the Pro-ject was doing its best to control the cartridge's big bass sound but couldn't avoid a somewhat overblown effect. This pick-up gave a breathier, more dramatic presentation of Rickie Lee's vocal, while higher-pitched instruments like the celeste on this track became more prominent and tinkly.

## VERDICT

This is a well balanced, vice-free package, and very good value player, vindicating Pro-Ject's dedicated work on plinth materials to curb resonances. Ideally partnered with the 10cc Evolution arm, the combo's lean, deep bass quality allows the rhythmic drive of the music to come through, solid but not heavy-footed. ☺

**ABOVE:** The acrylic platter is supported on an MDF chassis with steel weighted substructure. The deck sits on an isolating 'Ground It' platform. The azimuth adjustable Evolution 10cc tonearm is one-piece carbon fibre. Four metal counterweights are supplied, each having Sorbothane cores

'The slide guitar was loud and brash, a big, tearing sound'

coned feet, resting in special cups set into the face of the 'Ground It' platform – meditate with a granular mineral filling.

Pro-Ject's tapered carbon-fibre 10in arm tube is made in one piece with an integral headshell, with azimuth adjustment at the rear and internal wiring running to phono socket connectors set below the plinth. Bias compensation is by

## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Turntable speed error at 33.33rpm	33.29rpm (-0.13%)
Time to audible stabilisation	5sec
Peak Wow/Flutter	0.01% / 0.02%
Rumble (silent groove, DIN B wtd)	-68.8dB / -69.5dB (w. clamp)
Rumble (through bearing, DIN B wtd)	-70.7dB
Hum & Noise (unwtd, rel. to 5cm/sec)	-53.2dB
Power Consumption	5W
Dimensions (WHD)	500x275x400mm





**AUDIO  
FILE**

All-in-one manual belt-drive turntable/arm/cartridge  
Made by: Clearaudio, Germany  
Supplied by: Audio Reference  
Telephone: 01252 702705  
Web: www.audioreference.co.uk; www.clearaudio.de



# Clearaudio Concept (£1100)

Clearaudio has always had affordable turntables for newcomers, but the company created something special with the Concept: it merits, straight out of the box, a gold star, an Oscar and a Michelin rating. Its special qualities are immediately apparent.

For decades, we've seen turntables that come pre-fitted with arm and cartridge, all adjustments set at the factory, requiring nothing more than plugging in. But the Concept applies high-end standards to entry level convenience and price, and done in such a way that you have to be churlish to look for compromises in the design.

**'The Concept could be as grungy as modern tastes demand'**

Indeed, the only way you can suggest that 'Clearaudio cut corners' is to point out that the chunky, acoustically-dead plinth's corners are rounded! It's a sandwich slab made from an unspecified inert material with a Medite-y feel, trimmed with a brushed aluminium frame, with no suspension. Rather, it rests on three height-adjustable pointy feet. Tweakers will welcome

this because it also encourages them to play with aftermarket feet!

Blissfully quiet, the Concept is belt-driven by a decoupled DC motor. Those with collections of 78s will appreciate that this is a three-speed deck able to accommodate this higher velocity. A composite 30mm black platter slides over the spindle with little resistance, the bearing itself described as 'a polished and tempered steel shaft in a sintered bronze bushing, running on a mirror of Teflon'.

Clearaudio's magnetically-suspended tonearm reminded us of the Well-Tempered, but there's no string holding it in place: two powerful magnets position it in a friction-free manner. Set screws allow you to play with the arm height and the cueing lever reach, while tracking force is applied with a conventional balance

weight. The supplied cartridge tracks at 2.4g. Overhang and azimuth are also easily adjusted. The only tricky bit is setting the anti-skating bias – by trimming the leads via a bolt from underneath.



## **PALPABLE IMPACT**

Creedence Clearwater Revival's penultimate studio LP, *Pendulum*, is an absolute treasure featuring

**ABOVE: Utter simplicity and completely intuitive operation, with a single rotary for on/off and (three-) speed selection. Styling is reminiscent of far costlier designs, such as those from Immedia in the USA. The arm is preset for the supplied cartridge and needs careful adjustment for others. Anti-skate adjustment is under the deck**

gems like 'Molina', 'Hey Tonight' and 'Have You Ever Seen The Rain', a showcase for one of rock's greatest voices – John Fogerty's. Lord knows why, but we weren't expecting the deck to reproduce sound with such mass or impact. The sheer power of 'Molina', one of Creedence's more hard-driving numbers, was palpable even through compact speakers, with fat, tactile, flowing bass. Better still was its *control* of the bass.

The true stereo version of the Dave Clark Five's 'Glad All Over', is powerful enough just for its bass and rhythm section, but it soars above the mean for its sax element. It begs to be played loudly, at stomping levels that presage Slade. The Concept kept it all together, almost matching our SME reference system, for detail, if not for absolute extension and transparency.

To prove to ourselves, if not to the world of Gallagher/Cobain wannabees, that such a refined beast as the Concept could, if pushed, be as grungy or raucous or sneering as modern tastes demand, we turned to the recent high-quality vinyl pressings of Nirvana's oeuvre.

The Concept found the hidden musical depths buried beneath the cacophonous *Sturm und Drang*. It revealed the layers of sound constituting what may be considered the evil twin to Phil Spector's 'Wall of Sound'. Instead of pile-driving excess, the sound acquired the 'majesty' its devotees attribute to it for political and philosophical reasons.

## **VERDICT**

This deck offers styling and finish worthy of a £2000 package, and an arm ideal for a cartridge upgrade. It's the most covetable bargain since NAD's C315BEE integrated. ☺

## **HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS**

Turntable speed error at 33.33rpm	33.18rpm (-0.45%)
Time to audible stabilisation	3sec
Peak Wow/Flutter	0.10% / 0.02%
Rumble (silent groove, DIN B wtd)	-67.0dB
Rumble (through bearing, DIN B wtd)	-68.4dB
Hum & Noise (unwtd, rel. to 5cm/sec)	-61.0dB
Power Consumption	1W
Dimensions (WHD)	420x140x350mm



# MUSICAL FIDELITY

## AMS CD CD/DAC

New from Musical Fidelity. Quad dual differential DACs. Balanced.  
Class A analogue stages. Mega technical performance.







AUDIO  
FILE

Two-speed turntable with electronic power supply  
Made by: Oracle Audio Technologies Inc, Canada  
Supplied by: Coherent Systems  
Telephone: 01684 593085  
Web: www.coherent-systems.co.uk; www.oracle-audio.com



# Oracle Delphi Mk VI (£9345)

**T**he first incarnation of the Oracle, looking not dissimilar to this latest Delphi Mk VI model, first went on sale in 1979.

Those familiar with Delphis will notice what look like additional stubby pillars of aluminium beside each suspension turret. These are in fact hollow 'pots' of silicone fluid, Oracle having designed a damping system it calls its Micro Vibration Stabiliser System.

Less obvious are the different supports beneath the acrylic base on which the deck sits. And the convex feet on the new Mk VI are now formed of Delrin rather than aluminium, which Oracle believes act as a mechanical filter that

'Without smear or bloom it bounced through the infectious riff...'

reduces high frequency energy entering the suspension system.

Other changes include a thicker aluminium subchassis, especially where a further piece of aluminium acts as a more effective tonearm counter-balance. The centre portion of the subchassis is now considerably larger, and the tonearm mounting ring support has been widened. The design of the

main bearing has been tweaked too, adopting a polyamide-imide (PAI) thrust plate. The low-voltage AC synchronous motor remains: it's a design dating back to 1996.

Our review sample came with the more costly Turbo supply option. Using an accompanying SME Series IV tonearm in matching silver finish, listening was mostly with an Ortofon Cadenza Blue MC into an RCM Audio phono stage.



## AIR AND SPACE

When you are playing a recording that does it justice the result is a vivid stereo image extending way behind the plane of the loudspeakers. Thanks to its 'legendary' sense of air and space it worked wonders with 'Nil Sen La' from *Clannad In Concert* [Shanachie]. With no tubbiness or overhang, the clean and tuneful double-bass was nicely focused,

the acoustic percussion sounding pristine and hanging in space as if suspended on wires.

We soon discovered it can dig deeply into claustrophobic, muddy-sounding recordings too. Vintage classics such as Stevie Wonder's *Talking Book* LP [Tamla Motown] may lack the HF sparkle of audiophile cuts but there's treasure in the groove, the Delphi Mk VI

bringing out immense detail as the 'biscuit tin' drums and fulsome bass lines were kept under strict control.

Similarly, while the title track on Johnny Guitar Watson's *A Real Mother* from 1977 [DJM Records] can so often sound bloated, soft and ill-defined, the Delphi Mk VI did what Delphis have done through the ages: without smear or bloom it bounced through the infectious riff, Watson's sublime guitar technique hovering high in the image while surrounded in studio reverb.

This latest Oracle model is always relaxing and pleasurable to live with, due to its sweet and unfatiguing upper midrange and a high frequency character that rarely hardens, other than when presented with the most strident or brash recordings. Miles Davis' searing trumpet and the challenging electronic 'treatments' on his 1986 *Tutu* album [Warner] were portrayed with a pleasing golden glow rather than sounding clinical and steely. Curiously the Oracle sounds 'snappy' and light on its feet while appearing simultaneously smooth, refined and gentle on the ear.

Regardless of recording quality the Oracle handles everything with equanimity, yet the Delphi does not deliver massive bass slam. For example, on 'Heartbeat' from *King Crimson's Beat* [EG Records] Tony Levin's pumping bass did seem to pump at a lower pressure, the low notes lacking the gravitas that many rock fans would desire.

## VERDICT

Beautiful to behold, the Delphi Mk VI is also deliciously tactile in use. If you value image specificity, refinement and a relaxed balance with air and space, this deck should be at the top of your list. ☺

**ABOVE:** Now in Mk VI incarnation, the Oracle Delphi has undergone revisions to its support system, subchassis, arm mount ring and main bearing – only the motor remains unchanged. It was fitted with an SME Series IV tonearm for our tests. PSU was the £750 Turbo. An acrylic dust cover costs a whopping £570 extra!

## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Turntable speed error at 33.33rpm	33.29rpm (-0.13%)
Time to audible stabilisation	4sec
Peak Wow/Flutter	0.05% / 0.03%
Rumble (silent groove, DIN B wtd)	-69.0dB
Rumble (through bearing, DIN B wtd)	-67.0dB
Hum & Noise (unwtd, rel. to 5cm/sec)	-64.1dB
Power Consumption	3W
Dimensions (WHD)	475x150x363mm





AUDIO  
FILE

Belt-driven turntable with electronic speed control  
Made by: Thorens Holding AG, Switzerland  
Supplied by: UKD  
Telephone: 01753 652669  
Web: www.thorens.com; www.ukd.co.uk



## Thorens TD 309 (£1250)

**A**t first glance, you might think that the TD 309 was designed just as an eye-catcher, but in reality it is easily the most radical and innovative turntable Thorens has produced since the company was revived around ten years ago by the dynamic Heinz Rohrer.

The TD 309 is a true suspended subchassis design, but the subchassis is actually the top plate of the deck. Suspension springs are hidden underneath, mounted at the corners of a moulded triangular support forming the primary chassis.

Coil springs were chosen for the TD 309 in order to get the resonant frequency down to a very few Hertz. One problem with these is that they can allow the subchassis to wobble sideways. Loudspeaker technology provided a solution here. Each spring's upper housing is collared

**“‘Lay Down Sally’  
rocked along, Clapton’s  
vocal solid and tangible’**

with a flexing membrane just like a voice-coil suspension.

The motor is mounted on the subchassis (in this case the main top plate) and decoupled by its special mounting, again using loudspeaker-type ‘spiders.’ Belt tension can be adjusted, after loosening a single retaining bolt, by turning the suspended motor unit in its eccentric mounting.

The motor is a modern DC type, powered via a carefully-designed electronic speed control circuit housed under the deck, with a 33.3/ off/45rpm switch accessible just under the front edge. Tiny screw adjusters are provided to allow fine pitch (speed) adjustment if needed.

The TD 309 has its own dedicated Thorens TP 92 arm, whose four bearings are ball-races sourced from Japan – a type used in measuring instruments.

Fixed into the neat but massive-enough bearing block is a straight aluminium arm tube. The single bolt headshell fixing resembles the type used by Clearaudio, but the idea originated with Thorens. The cartridge platform has a saddle-shaped top which sits snugly in the cut-away end of the tube. It cannot rotate but can be moved back and forth to change the arm overhang by 2.5mm. This makes it easy to set the alignment and keeps the cartridge on the axis of the arm.

### BOUNCY

To get you started,

the package includes a basic Audio Technica AT95B moving-magnet cartridge. And what we heard was a pleasant surprise. On Dave Brubeck’s ‘Blue Rondo À La Turk’ from *Time Out* [CBS, 1959] the piano was admittedly rather pinched, but it still had a rather admirable punchiness.

With Eric Clapton’s *Slowhand* [RSO] the Thorens seemed to dig

**ABOVE:** The suspended subchassis ‘309 deck (in red or black) offers easy setup and boasts an electronic speed controlled DC motor. A four-bearing dedicated arm is fitted, its aluminium tube featuring a small damping ring. Downforce is set by rotating the counterweight on the low-level threaded stub

out detail in a comprehensible way so that the songs made sense. The bass on ‘Lay Down Sally’ seemed full of bounce and well shaped, never becoming a muddy boom, as it can with this track.

Turning to a classical favourite, *Sir John Barbirolli Conducts English String Music* [EMI], we found a surprisingly good sense of depth and of the hall acoustic. What had seemed like a veiling, on the Clapton record for example, became an acceptable mistiness.

Changing to an Ortofon 2M Red the rather thinned piano sound in ‘Blue Rondo’ wasn’t exactly fleshed out, but it acquired more detail and plangency. Morello’s struck cymbal accents were now more striking, you might say, ringing out with bell-like clarity. Clapton’s ‘Wonderful Tonight’ sounded fuller and richer, with better detail. ‘Lay Down Sally’ rocked along, Clapton’s vocal now solid and tangible. With the Barbirolli record, the Ortofon gave a grander sense of scale and depth.

Substituting a Roksan Corus Silver, then Ortofon Cadenza Blue and Koetsu MCs, brought mostly progressive improvements. We felt that the Thorens really helped the Koetsu Black to do its thing: it could add an appealing romantic bloom, as on Brubeck’s ‘Strange Meadowlark’ from *Time Out*.

### VERDICT

This modern turntable improves on classic subchassis virtues, with low coloration, excellent imaging, great bass and fine rhythm. It makes a ‘starter’ cartridge sound better than it has any right to, and when you move on to a really good MM, it is absolutely outstanding. Despite its moderate price, it will embrace even exotic MCs too.

### HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Turntable speed error at 33.33rpm	33.04rpm (–0.89%)
Time to audible stabilisation	4sec
Peak Wow/Flutter	0.03% / 0.03%
Rumble (silent groove, DIN B wtd)	–66.2dB
Rumble (through bearing, DIN B wtd)	–67.5dB
Hum & Noise (unwtd, rel. to 5cm/sec)	–56.9dB
Power Consumption	2W
Dimensions (WHD)	470x125x430mm



“The Truth, nothing more,  
nothing less...”



**AVIDHIFI**

Each Avid product is born of a passion for real music. The visceral dynamic of a live performance captured in a moment on vinyl is a special treasure. One which requires a superlative hi-fi system to convey realistically.

Turntables, amplifiers and accessories from Avid are dedicated to reproducing this realism.

To experience the truly sublime, please contact an Avid dealer to arrange your private audition.

**AVID HIFI Ltd**, Unit 52, 137 North Gate, Alconbury Airfield, Huntingdon., Cambridgeshire.  
PE28 4WX, ENGLAND, Tel: +44 (0)1480 457300 Fax: +44 (0)1480 457057  
Website: [www.avidhifi.co.uk](http://www.avidhifi.co.uk), Email: [info@avidhifi.co.uk](mailto:info@avidhifi.co.uk)



**Analogue Seduction**, 4 Dragonfly Close, Hampton-Hargate, Peterborough, Tel: 01733 344768

**Progressive Audio**, 2 Maryland Court, Rainham, Kent, Tel: 01634 389004

**O'Brien Hi-fi**, 60 Durham Road, West Wimbledon, London Tel: 020 8946 1528

**Audio Workshop**, 31 Prince of Wales Road, Norwich, Tel: 01603 61852







AUDIO  
FILE

Manual, belt-driven turntable and dual-pivot tonearm  
Made by: Amazon, Germany  
Supplied by: Walrus Systems  
Telephone: 020 7724 7224  
Web: amazon-audio.de; www.moerch.dk



# Amazon2/ Mørch DP-6 (£3700)

**A**mazon designer Hartmut Janssen produced his first turntable in 1986, introducing the idea of a subchassis decoupled by low resilience polymer elements rather than metal springs. He also pioneered the use of a DC motor powered by a rechargeable battery.

Here, the built-in motor with its electronic speed control circuit, takes power more conventionally from a plug-top transformer. A small three-position switch gives 45rpm, off, and 33.3rpm, with tiny screws for fine speed adjustment.

All that can be seen of the motor from above is the single motor pulley. Drive from this to the platter is by 'a very thin string made from a duplex material'. This stretchy belt is

diffuser'. Bonded into the centre is the inverted main bearing sleeve, with a flat thrust plate of Teflon-type material inside the top. This transfers the weight of the platter to a captive 8mm ceramic ball.

Amazon has collaborated with Hans Henrik Mørch for many years now. With his 'double pivot' DP-6 the arm is mounted on a small precision ballrace for lateral movement, but movement in the vertical plane is catered for by a pair of points-and-cups, either side of the arm tube's centre line. Cartridge azimuth can be corrected if necessary by adjusting one of the two points. Fluid damping is provided. The DP-6 may look like a unipivot, but it doesn't wobble about like one!

A key feature is the provision of interchangeable arm wands, and with a set of four different sliding counterweights it is possible to match almost

any cartridge. The wand is secured by a knurled nut and the signal is conveyed by four spring-loaded contact pins. Mørch doesn't give you a conventional headshell, but provides a saddle piece which holds the cartridge on to the flattened front end of the arm and also forms a finger lift. Anti-skating or bias compensation is applied by a small clock spring, adjustable by a lever.

**ABOVE: This attractive combination features a heavy resonance free acrylic platter where the LP sits in a rebate; 33.3/45rpm drive is via a fine knotted thread. The double pivot Mørch tonearm is available with different 'wands' and counterweights for optimum cartridge matching**

## SILKY SMOOTH

With a heavy wand and the Kontrapunkt A on Eric Clapton's 'Motherless Children' [461 Ocean Boulevard, RSO] the bass was powerful, though it could have been a little cleaner, but there was a good feeling of energy, and the track moved along excitingly. Clapton's slide guitar had real body and the sheer wildness of the sound came over well. The busy drumming was effective.

With the direct-cut Harry James band on *The King James Version* [Sheffield Lab], the Amazon produced what we came to regard as a characteristically light and airy sound. Imaging was excellent in terms of width and more than moderately good in depth. Drums sounded fine, if not exactly gutsy, while the bass was tuneful but not especially weighty.

With Dire Straits and 'Sultans Of Swing' [Vertigo], once again the track boogied along nicely. The bass guitar here might have been slightly woolly around the edges, but despite this the overall effect was of a pleasant lightness of touch. Vocal and lead guitar seemed to have a naturally strong focus and commanded attention, and although there was no shortage of detail, the ear was not constantly being distracted by little nuances springing out of the mix.

## VERDICT

Notably neutral through mid and treble, the Amazon/Mørch gave an airy presentation that was easy on the ear, and the music always moved along well. The arm is idiosyncratic in design, but once set up it works nicely. Sonically and aesthetically pleasing, this is an attractive combination.

**'Vocal and lead guitar seemed to have a naturally strong focus'**

joined by a knot, rather than being 'endless', without audible ill-effects. But the Amazon 2 does take a fair while to get up to speed.

The 5kg 320mm translucent methacrylate platter has a rebated edge area forming a sort of LP safety shelf. A shallow centre recess accommodates the label, while a deep groove cut up into the underside forms a 'resonance

## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Turntable speed error at 33.33rpm	33.33rpm (+0.12%)
Time to audible stabilisation	20sec
Peak Wow/Flutter	0.06% / 0.03%
Rumble (silent groove, DIN B wtd)	-69.4dB (-71.6dB with clamp)
Rumble (through bearing, DIN B wtd)	-68.8dB
Hum & Noise (unwtd, rel. to 5cm/sec)	-55.6dB
Power Consumption	2W
Dimensions (WHD)	470x130x370mm





**AUDIO  
FILE**

Belt-driven turntable with electronic speed control  
Made by: Avid HiFi Ltd  
Supplied by: Avid HiFi Ltd  
Telephone: 01480 457300  
Web: www.avidhifi.co.uk



## Avid Acutus Reference SP (£12,000)

**D**uring the past year or so Avid has been introducing 'SP' upgrades across its entire range of turntables. What we have here is the latest incarnation of its flagship, the Acutus Reference SP.

'SP' indicates external power supply, providing electronic speed switching between 33.3 and 45rpm – in this instance a new 20kg design, the 'DSP Vari-Speed supply', featuring on-board digital signal processing to control frequency

*'Leading edges of notes were sharply delineated and squeaky clean'*

generation and fine-tuning of speeds. Also common to Avid's 'SP' decks is a twin belt drive system – fiddly to fit though – that claims to help control platter dynamics and stability under load.

The Acutus' AC synchronous motor is a custom-designed hand-built unit that Avid says is around ten times more powerful than the norm, housed in its own pod and

positioned just behind the front-left spring tower.

Recent enhancements to all Avid decks include the use of a 'dry' bearing that requires no maintenance. In the Acutus a stainless steel inverted bearing shaft is tipped with a single-point self-lubricating tungsten carbide ball that sits in a sapphire cup.

A record clamp is integral to the design. Playing records without it is not an option as the brass top section of the bearing housing sits proud of the platter's bonded polymer surface.

Our review sample was fitted with an SME Series V tonearm, to which we fitted Ortofon's Cadenza Blue MC.



### TIGHT FOCUS

The Acutus Reference's overall presentation appears tightly focused and controlled. Leading edges of notes, from the soft and delicate to the loudest, most explosive crescendos, were sharply delineated and squeaky clean. Jan Garbarek's 'Molde Canticle, Part 3' from *I Took Up The Runes*

[ECM] sounded bold and powerful while possessing a beguiling coherence and effortless, relaxed feel. The melodic lines delivered by bass maestro Eberhard Weber were uncommonly easy to follow, where on lesser record players the subtle touches and inflections in his playing become all too easily blurred by the over-prominent subsonic thumps of Manu Katche's kick drum. And although Garbarek's wailing soprano saxophone can often become jarring in digital ECM recordings such as this, the sound remained lucid, silky even.

And this is not because the deck sounds smooth and mellow. Far from it, as it displays plenty of attack and zest. Sounding fast and authoritative partnered with the SME tonearm, there was joyous alacrity to Sly 'n' Robbie's rhythm section on Joe Cocker's *Sheffield Steel* [Island], while his gruff vocal delivery stood out from the production with uncommonly fine diction and projection.

When listening to 'Couldn't Bear To Be Special' from Prefab Sprout's *Swoon* album [Kitchenware] the low frequency 'thunder' effects had the kind of control one usually associates with CD replay, without an ounce of spare flesh artificially colouring the sound. The Acutus Reference makes vinyl sound not only clean but articulate too.

### VERDICT

With its fabulous detail retrieval and focused sound, the Acutus Reference SP delivers a captivating performance. Its elaborate suspension system makes it immune to the vagaries of positioning. Beautifully made, compact, easy to set up and maintain... the only reason not to want it is the cost. ⚡

**ABOVE:** At this exalted price level, installation will probably be done by your dealer. But Avid provides clear DIY assembly instructions – plus allen key for suspension adjustments. The three towers are laterally damped with o-rings. Only fitting the drive belts required a modicum of dexterity

### HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Turntable speed error at 33.33rpm	33.35rpm (+0.04%, adjusted)
Time to audible stabilisation	4sec
Peak Wow/Flutter	0.04% / 0.02%
Rumble (silent groove, DIN B wtd)	-68.8dB
Rumble (through bearing, DIN B wtd)	-71.8dB
Hum & Noise (unwtd, rel. to 5cm/sec)	-58.3dB
Power Consumption	25W
Dimensions (WHD)	460x210x400mm





AUDIO  
FILE

Mid-output moving-coil pick-up cartridge  
Made by: Ortofon, Denmark  
Supplied by: Henley Designs  
Telephone: 01235 511 166  
Web: www.henleydesigns.co.uk; www.ortofon.com

# Ortofon Cadenza Blue (£1000)

In line with other Ortofon ranges, the Cadenzas are identified by colour. Gone are the Kontrapunkt's musical initials. But as before, the range caters for subtle differences in sonic taste as well as providing a sensible quality hierarchy.

Starting from the top, the Cadenza Black seems most closely related to the seminal MC Jubilee: both use a nude Shibata stylus mounted on a boron cantilever, and both are currently listed at £1500.

The Cadenza Bronze uses an Ortofon Replicant 100 stylus, with tip radii of 5 and 100µm and gives an extra long vertical line contact. Its coils are wound with Ortofon's Accurum wire, which is gold-plated '6-nines' copper.

In these aspects it resembles the high-end Windfeld, named as tribute to Ortofon's former chief designer Per Windfeld, but has an aluminium cantilever instead of a boron rod.

The Cadenza Red is a direct replacement for the base model Kontrapunkt A, using a basic line-contact stylus with tip radii of 8 and 40µm on an aluminium cantilever, its specification virtually unchanged.

Similarly, the Cadenza Blue replaces the Kontrapunkt B,

**'The effect was dynamic and realistic, with a great sense of speed'**

retaining that beautiful thin ruby cantilever. The stylus, though, is a Fritz Gyger FG70, with minor/major radii of 5 and 70µm, instead of the FG80 with its major radius of 80µm.

## DEPTH AND WARMTH

But paper specifications don't reveal the effects of internal improvements in the new designs. We couldn't wait to hear how the

Cadenza Blue would actually sound, and got things started with Rob Wasserman's *Duets* [GRP] and 'Ballad Of The Runaway Horse'.

Here Jennifer Warnes' voice had both depth and warmth, great delicacy too, and this cartridge really seemed able to convey the endless subtleties of shading and nuance which the singer put into this performance.

Wasserman's bass seemed very well described, with the subtle feathery edges of the sound adding to its realism. The pizzicato effect, where he overdubs a second bass and makes it sound like a big mandolin, was arrestingly clear.

Although by now we were getting attuned to the Ortofon's abilities, the cartridge was still able to spring a pleasant surprise on *Dire Straits* [Vertigo]. On 'Sultans Of Swing' the Cadenza Blue seemed suddenly to bring more ambience and space into the sound: it really was like a breath of fresh air. We felt the Cadenza's bass was particularly impressive on this track too, the bass guitar alive and springy, clean and strong.

Listening to *The King James Version* [Sheffield Lab] we found that the brass was truly brassy, with excellent detail making it easy to pick out, for example, the trombone lines in the ensemble.

When drummer Les DeMerle really let rip on 'Cherokee', the

effect was dynamic and realistic, with great transient attack and a great sense of speed. Things really started and stopped properly, with a real thud to the tom-toms and a thoroughly convincing, singing cymbal sound with real presence.

With the 1967 recording of Mozart's Piano Concerto in C, K467, played by Daniel Barenboim with the ECO [EMI], the Ortofon's



**ABOVE:** In 1998 the flagship MC Jubilee introduced a strong metal body, based on an ideally-shaped moulded part. This was then applied to Ortofon's Kontrapunkt models. For the Cadenza series there have been changes to the pole pieces and coil-winding process, while the body's integrity is further improved

clarity and precision made for a very enjoyable listen. The clean and quick bass gave meaning to the sound of the double-basses and helped the recording sound rhythmically lightfooted. The piano had precision and subtlety, and seemed to exist in a real space.

## VERDICT

It looks as if Ortofon really has improved on its excellent Kontrapunkts. If you want something to make your system sound more cuddly and rounded, the Blue is not for you. But if you want a cartridge to give you detail, space, integrity and vitality, it will do just fine. Indeed, it'll be hard to beat at the price.

## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Generator type/weight	Moving-coil / 10.7g
Recommended tracking force	2.5g (2.2-2.7g)
Sensitivity/balance (re. 5cm/sec)	480µV / 0.5dB
Compliance (vertical/lateral)	11cu / 13.5cu
Vertical tracking angle	28 degrees
L/R Tracking ability	64µm / 62µm
L/R Distortion (-8dB, 20Hz-20kHz)	0.49-21% / 0.41-19%
Frequency resp. (20Hz-20kHz)	-0.75dB to +1.4dB
Stereo separation (1kHz / 20kHz)	30dB / 18dB



**marantz®**  
because music matters

## DON'T LOSE A NOTE OF THE ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK

The award winning **UD9004** Blu-Ray Player



Although you'll gain everything with performance, you will still lose some things with the Marantz UD9004 Blu-Ray Player. Like the need to buy a separate high end CD player, Super Audio CD Player and broadcast standard Blu-Ray. You will also lose the desire to watch films or listen to music on any other piece of equipment. You may even lose the desire to ever visit a cinema ever again. But you will definitely lose the feeling that you'd have seen and heard more detail if only you had a better player – because there simply isn't one.



[www.marantz.com](http://www.marantz.com)





AUDIO  
FILE

Low-output moving-coil cartridge with wooden body  
Made by: Sumiko, Japan  
Supplied by: Symmetry Systems  
Telephone: 01727 865488  
Web: www.sumikoaudio.net; info@symmetry-systems.co.uk



# Sumiko Palo Santos Presentation (£1995)

**S**umiko's Palo Santos Presentation is the top-of-the-line cartridge from the company that many credit with introducing moving-coils to the West. As such it has real pedigree. Although the 'recipe' for a good moving-coil is hardly a mystery – the world is awash with superb examples – there is an artistry that must surely have been mastered by a company with Sumiko's enviable know-how.

Taking its name from a type of Brazilian Rosewood, the Palo Santos Presentation features a new 'generator anchoring system'

**'The Sumiko Palo Santos maintains composure regardless of genre**

to improve rigidity and reduce resonance. Its body is shorter than its Pearwood sibling while, at the business end of the MC, Sumiko has equipped it with a long grain boron cantilever. Also part of the design is a new line contact stylus said to be the most expensive money can buy: a specially ground, Vital PH diamond. Compliance is low but this MC tracks like a lightweight MM.

And this is a cartridge designed for ideal set-up. It has parallel sides and a flat front with enough clearance to allow you to see the cantilever. The top plate is flat metal, so you can tighten it to your heart's content.

It was a breeze to fit to SME's Series V-12 on the 30/12 and the arm on Clearaudio's Concept. The 0.5mV output fed ample signal to the Audio Research PH5 phono stage at 100ohm, as well as NAD's PP-2, which is fixed at 100ohm.



## AN OPEN WINDOW

The Sumiko maintains composure regardless of genre. We played two LPs so opposed in attitude that they could have been different formats: recent 180g pressings of Humble Pie's *Smokin'*

and Peggy Lee's *I Like Men!*. The cartridge sailed from raucous boogie, with screeching lead vocals, to silky lounge music embracing one of the huskier, sexier female vocalists of the past century.

Such disparity, though, cannot reveal the signature sound of the cartridge because the two are so dissimilar. Humble Pie's recording is all about impact and mass and

attack; Lee's is about atmosphere and air and texture. Neither extreme fazes the Palo Santos.

In both cases, images were rock solid, ideally positioned, realistically scaled. Treble speed and precision were vivid with Humble Pie; conversely, the freedom of artifice via Ms Lee's session ensured that the perfection of Capitol's 1950s recording techniques maintained their elegance. This cartridge is an open window into what many regard as one of the finest-sounding recordings of all time.

The Palo Santos reminded us repeatedly of the original Koetsu Rosewood, in every area except for two. While warmer than recent modern cartridges, this MC is 'one click toward "warm", says Sumiko's John Hunter, who developed it. By this colloquial measure, a Rosewood is two or three 'clicks' warmer than the median. The difference is mostly audible on female voices and on acoustic instruments.

Scale defines the second variance. Early Koetsus always delivered a perfectly cavernous, wide and deep soundstage. The Sumiko favours width over depth, and one can might illustrate this with a home cinema analogy. If the Koetsu is widescreen of 1.85:1, but deeper; the Sumiko is 2.35:1.

## VERDICT

Those points aside, the Palo Santos is a true thoroughbred, a blissful mid-point between the modern and the classic. While the issue of price will antagonise many, that pales into insignificance when you hear the magic it can conjure. With tracking ability equal to pedigree MMs, the Sumiko delivers sweet treble and solid images. 🎧

**ABOVE:** The Sumiko's rectangular shape and good clearance means setup is easy – although no stylus guard is provided. A threaded metal top plate invites tight fixing to the tonearm headshell; and the colour coded pins are tapered for an easy fit

## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Generator type/weight	Moving-coil / 8.3g
Recommended tracking force	1.8-2.2mN (2.0mN)
Sensitivity/balance (re. 5cm/sec)	595µV / 0.45dB
Compliance (vertical/lateral)	8cu / 10cu
Vertical tracking angle	25 degrees
L/R Tracking ability	80µm / 80µm
L/R Distortion (-8dB, 20Hz-20kHz)	0.8-17% / 0.4-6.1%
L/R Frequency resp. (20Hz-20kHz)	-0.5 to +2.3dB / -0.8 to +4.6dB
Stereo separation (1kHz / 20kHz)	32dB / 20dB



AUDIO  
FILE

Strain gauge pick-up, active bridge and preamp  
 Made by: Soundsmith, USA  
 Supplied by: Artisan Audio  
 Telephone: 01494 858471  
 Web: www.sound-smith.com; www.artisanaudio.co.uk



# Soundsmith SG-200 (£5200)

There is something highly evocative about a cartridge that glows in the dark.

That's right: two blue LEDs at the front of the Soundsmith cartridge light up to confirm its operational status. You see, the Soundsmith is quite unlike any pick-up you're likely to have come across. It's neither MM nor MC, nor is it a powered cartridge (eg, Audio Note's IO Limited).

With the Soundsmith, stylus/cantilever movement deflects two minute silicon strain gauge elements. High-end? Oh yes, these hand built cartridges cost an absolute packet, this latest

'Oh yes, these hand built cartridges cost an absolute packet'

SG-200 version being Soundsmith's 'entry-level' model bereft of preamp features. Soundsmith prices relate to the partnering preamp that provides current to the cartridge and a line output to your system. Note that this is not a phono stage,

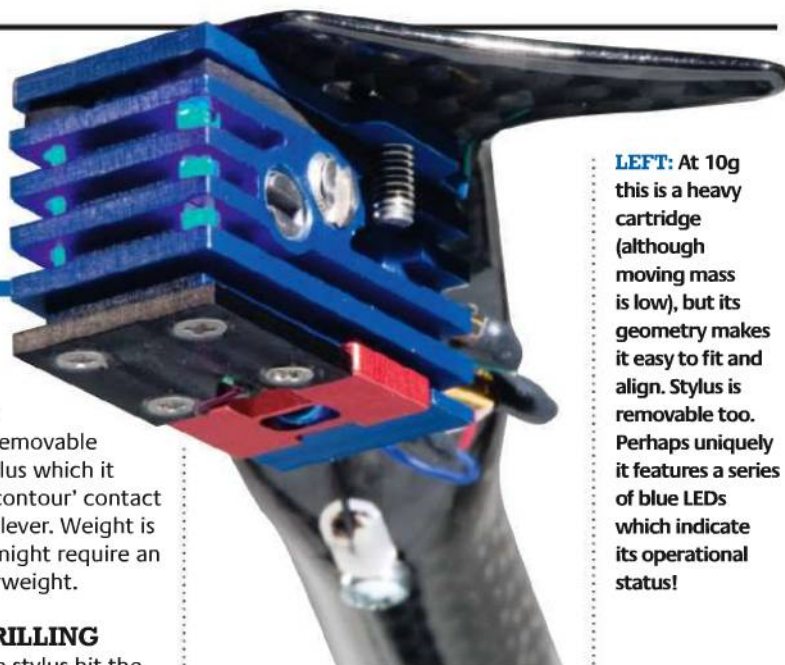
the cartridge having a natural 6dB/octave roll-off. The SG-200 is fitted with Soundsmith's removable top-of-the-range stylus which it calls its 'optimised contour' contact line, with ruby cantilever. Weight is nearly 10g, so you might require an extra heavy counterweight.



## PRETTY THRILLING

From the instant the stylus hit the LP there was an immediacy we thought reminiscent of 'positive scanning' Decca pick-ups. The speed and agility, especially in the way the Soundsmith delivers bass information, are nothing short of thrilling. And whereas Deccas have a tendency to edginess on 'hot' recordings, the Soundsmith never sounded anything other than liquid and refined.

The title track that opens Miles Davis' *Tutu* album [Warner 925 490-1] has a blistering, difficult-to-keep-couth sound that the Strain Gauge transducer delivered majestically, Marcus Miller's stark, steely bursts of electronic synth



**LEFT:** At 10g this is a heavy cartridge (although moving mass is low), but its geometry makes it easy to fit and align. Stylus is removable too. Perhaps uniquely it features a series of blue LEDs which indicate its operational status!

sounding all of a piece and layered within the image.

It was the manner in which the tonality and texture was so succinctly etched that emphasised the SG-200's ability to dig every little detail possible from the groove. Talk Talk's *The Colour Of Spring* [EMI] highlighted vividly this ability. The over-complex production on this disc seemed less 'problematic' than before. The Soundsmith cartridge gave playing long forgotten records a real feeling of occasion.

## VERDICT

Clearly the price ticket will preclude ownership for many audio enthusiasts. Nevertheless when you consider that you'll probably own it forever thanks to its replaceable stylus, all vinyl aficionados with high-end systems owe it to themselves to hear this thrilling and unusual cartridge. ⚡

**LEFT:** The basic 'entry' model preamp/supply is utilitarian, with just a pair of input and output sockets on RCAs. Power is via two 24V plug-top supplies



## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Generator type/weight	Strain gauge / 9.8g
Recommended tracking force	1.0-2.5mN (1.9mN)
Sensitivity/balance (re. 5cm/sec)	360mV / Adjustable
Compliance (vertical/lateral)	-cu / 10cu
Vertical tracking angle	26 degrees
L/R Tracking ability	50µm / 56µm
L/R Distortion (~8dB, 20Hz-20kHz)	1.9-17% / 0.35-16%
L/R Frequency resp. (20Hz-20kHz)	-2.0 to +5.8dB / -1.6 to +7.5dB
Stereo separation (1kHz / 20kHz)	30dB / 24dB




**AUDIO  
FILE**

MM/MC phono preamplifier with switchable gain and loading  
 Made by: Avid Hifi Ltd  
 Supplied by: Avid Hifi Ltd  
 Telephone: 01480 457300  
 Web: www.avidhifi.co.uk



## Avid Pulsare Phono (£3000)

**A**vid has already delved into electronics, and a phono stage was a logical next step. It's no surprise that – consistent with Avid's thinking – the new Pulsare Phono is provided with a massive separate power supply. Rated at 300VA, this comes in the same elegant casework as the Acutus Reference unit. But if the power supply box looks imposing,

*'Double bass sounded firm and rich yet still with a springy quality'*

Avid has outdone itself with the Pulsare Phono itself.

There can't be many phono stages with such complete front-panel facilities. Its first control is an input selector, provided because the Pulsare is designed with balanced circuitry throughout and offers balanced inputs on XLR sockets as well as the standard phono inputs. Most phono stages

provide gain switching for MM and MC cartridges. Avid goes one or two better than the usual 40/60dB settings, with gain settings of 40, 50, 60 and 70dB provided by a rotary control. These last three are intended to cater for MCs with nominal outputs of around 600µV-3mV, 250-750µV and 100-300µV.

Still more comprehensive is the nine-position load impedance selector. As well as the standard MM load setting of 47kohm, this gives options of 10, 30, 100, 500, 1k, 5k and 10kohm. A further rotary control allows you to add capacitance loading

for MM cartridges, typically used to tame the treble output. As well as the usual 100, 200 and 500pF, you get the more extreme options of 1.5, 10 and 20nF.



### EFFORTLESS DETAIL

We began with Joni Mitchell's *Blue* [Reprise]. On 'All I Want' there was a complete awareness of the guitars and voice, and even of the discreet

percussion, as individual sonic entities. It was as if you could now hear round them, so to speak, just as you would if a real instrument was playing in front of you. You were also made aware of the sheer craft and sophistication of the guitar accompaniment. You weren't just hearing chord changes, you could hear the way the instrument provided bass patterns, harmony and a counter melody too.

Listening to the Harry James direct cut, The King James Version [Sheffield Lab LAB-3], from the opening of 'Corner Pocket', the double bass sounded plump and firm, rich yet still with a springy quality, the ride cymbal realistically insistent. In the leader's trumpet solo here, you could feel the way he was shaping every note so expressively, and the same went for his beautifully relaxed playing on 'Lara's Theme' and 'More Splutie Please'. Here the brass really did sound brassy, yet without the strain so often heard on big-band records.

Turning to the classical old faithful, *English String Music* with the Sinfonia of London under Barbirolli [EMI], the Avid proved able to reveal the scale and depth of the venue, conveying the sharp attack with a winning combination of clarity and ambience. The recording could sound atmospheric, but never hazy, as the Avid just seemed to recover detail and ambient clues quite effortlessly.

### VERDICT

Scoring on build quality and facilities as well as excellent sonic performance, this is clearly one product that will outlast many other changes in a system. An impressive phono stage indeed. 🎧

**ABOVE:** The Pulsare two-box phono stage has a massive, separately cased 300VA power supply and its elegantly styled 290mm wide control unit caters for the widest possible cartridge matching requirements

### HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

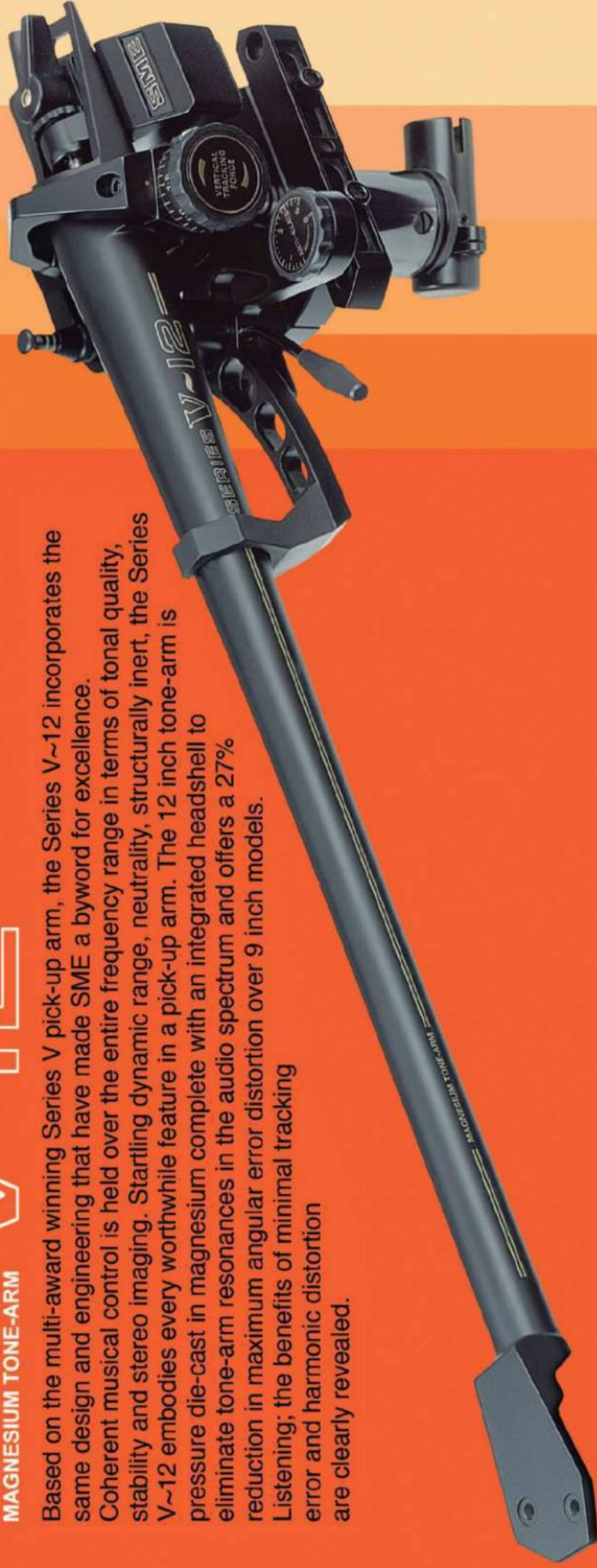
Input loading (MM & MC)	10ohm-47kohm / 100pF-1.5nF
Input sensitivity (MM/MC re. 0dBV)	9.3mV / 0.33-3.35mV
Input overload (MM/MC High)	185mV / 6.5mV
Maximum output (re. 1% THD)	19.5V
A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 5mV/500µV in)	83.8dB / 78.2dB
Frequency response (20Hz-20kHz)	-0.0dB to +0.46dB
Distortion (20Hz-20kHz, re. 0dBV)	0.00045-0.0026%
Power consumption	6W
Dimensions (WHD each)	290x100x240 (230)mm (PSU)



# SERIES V~12

MAGNESIUM TONE-ARM

Based on the multi-award winning Series V pick-up arm, the Series V~12 incorporates the same design and engineering that have made SME a byword for excellence. Coherent musical control is held over the entire frequency range in terms of tonal quality, stability and stereo imaging. Startling dynamic range, neutrality, structurally inert, the Series V~12 embodies every worthwhile feature in a pick-up arm. The 12 inch tone-arm is pressure die-cast in magnesium complete with an integrated headshell to eliminate tone-arm resonances in the audio spectrum and offers a 27% reduction in maximum angular error distortion over 9 inch models. Listening; the benefits of minimal tracking error and harmonic distortion are clearly revealed.



# SME

*“The best pick-up arm in the world”*



hi-fineWS  
OUTSTANDING  
PRODUCT

AUDIO  
FILE

MM/MC phono preamplifier with switchable gain and loading  
Made by: Icon Audio  
Supplied by: Icon Audio  
Telephone: 0116 2440593  
Web: www.iconaudio.co.uk



## Icon Audio PS3 (£1699)

For the Leicester-based company Icon Audio, the PS3 is a development prompted by its successful PS1 phono stage, now in MkII form. Both feature – as do its MP3 Mini Amp and HP8 headphone amp – the distinctive ‘peephole’ through which its complement of tubes may be glimpsed.

For the PS3 phono stage, designer David Shaw has specified no fewer than seven triode valves including ECC88s and one 6SN7 for the output. The separate power supply unit has another six (EZ80, ECC83 and 5687 types) used for voltage rectification and regulation.

*‘The Icon provided a relaxing and unrestrained picture’*

Underneath, the components are all wired point-to-point, avoiding the use of printed circuit boards.

On the front panel of the PS3 itself one rotary control is for volume and the other switches from MM to MC. Shaw personally prefers moving-coils, but you can buy the PS3 as an MM-only unit at £1299 – ours came fitted with the transformers which provide MC

sensitivity and add £200 to the price. Icon uses a high quality British custom wound toroidal transformer with mu-metal screening. Our sample also came with one of Icon’s special upgrade options, namely a set of Jensen capacitors, adding another £200 to bring the price to £1699 as quoted above.

Features include a mono/stereo switch and a ‘ground lift’ switch, used to minimise hum if the turntable wiring creates an unexpected ‘earth loop’.

### SPACE AND LIFE

For our test we used Ortofon’s Cadenza Blue [see p22] and Koetsu Black moving-coils, and began with the Harry James direct cut *The King James Version* [Sheffield Lab LP]. The Icon gave a sound with space and life in it, the positioning of instruments heard clearly.

James’ solo trumpet sound had a convincing bite to it, but it had plenty of body too.

Eric Clapton’s ‘Motherless Children’, from *461 Ocean Boulevard* [RSO], seemed to benefit from the Icon’s qualities of detail resolution and balance. You felt encouraged to listen into the mix, and at the bottom end, the bass guitar had weight and body so Carl

Radle’s playing sounded deliberate without becoming sluggish.

On to *Rickie Lee Jones* [Warner] and the ‘Easy Money’ track, where the Icon presented the vocals with a real focus, revealing the subtle nuances of the singer’s delivery and her breathing.

Sir John Barbirolli’s EMI disc of English string music [ASD 521] had a smooth and flowing quality, with a pleasing overall balance and a naturalness to the string sounds. Less forward and punchy than the Lector or Unison valve phono preamplifiers used for comparison [for more, including a detailed Lab Report, see our July ‘10 Group Test], the Icon provided a relaxing and unrestrained picture of the music.

With the Koetsu Black in place of the Ortofon, the Icon still displayed a smooth unruffled character, with attractive instrumental timbres. Bass was weighty but not unduly heavy or uncontrolled in nature.

On moving-magnet (Roksan Corus Silver) the Icon gave a really well-balanced, inviting and musical sound, with fine midrange clarity and satisfying weight to the bass. It was delicious with Dire Straits’ ‘Sultans Of Swing’!

### VERDICT

This robust-looking pairing is clearly aimed at the real valve enthusiast with its multiplicity of tubes. It offers low midrange distortion and respectable bass extension, catering for both moving-coil and moving-magnet cartridges (although as noted, there is a cheaper MM-only option). This was declared winner in our Group Test: ‘consistent, always very good, always musical, always inviting’. In fact a truly excellent all-rounder. ☺

**ABOVE:** Yes, you can look through the peepholes to see David Shaw’s choice of specified valves for both phono stage and PSU. The former has mono/stereo switching and a very useful volume control

### HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Input loading (MM/MC)	47kohm/100pF / 100ohm
Input sensitivity (MM/MC re. 0dBV)	2.96mV / 0.32mV
Input overload (MM/MC)	115mV / 13mV
Maximum output (re. 1% THD)	17.0V
A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 5mV/500µV in)	73.2dB / 73.2dB
Frequency response (20Hz-20kHz)	-0.26dB to -0.42dB
Distortion (20Hz-20kHz, re. 0dBV)	0.0085-0.11%
Power consumption	37W
Dimensions (WHD)	148x165x342mm (each)





AUDIO  
FILE

MM/MC Phono preamplifier with switchable gain and loading  
Made by: Lehmann Audio  
Supplied by: Henley Designs  
Telephone: 01235 511166  
Web: www.henleydesigns.co.uk; www.lehmannaudio.de



# Lehmann Black Cube Decade (£1350)

**W**e first reviewed this German two-box phono stage as part of a group test [see HFN Apr '10]. The Lehmann Black Cube Decade (available with silver fascia or black) sits between the company's Black Cube SE and reference Silver Cube phono stages.

It features Lehmann's flagship PWX II power supply (also available as an upgrade to other Lehmann audio products), its frontal aspect uniform with the phono stage itself except for a lack of any controls, and notably well-built. You can hide it away if you want, as the shielded



## LITHE AND KICKING

For our test we used Ortofon's Cadenza Blue moving-coil [see page 22] and for moving-magnet the Roksan Corus Silver. Starting with the Harry James big band – *The King James Version*, direct cut on Sheffield Lab – we found the bass subjectively less heavy than it had been with either the £800 Acoustic Signature or £899 Aqvox phono stages also to hand. Let's put it that way rather than saying the bass was 'lighter' because the Lehmann's balance seemed more correct, and the double-bass sound had a relatively lithe, unexaggerated quality that really helped the rhythmic flow.

Perhaps partly related to this, there was a pleasing open quality to the presentation as if the music was being allowed

to breathe a bit more. James's solo trumpet had a good feeling of tangible presence in front of his band, and drummer Les DeMerle's all-important cymbal sounds had life and realism, insistent but crisply heard, not splashy or over-prominent.

Moving on to 'Motherless Children' from Eric Clapton's *461 Ocean Boulevard* [RSO], the Lehmann seemed in general perhaps just a little dry, though it was admirably detailed. Its stereo imaging was impressive in terms

*'DeMerle's all-important cymbal sounds had life and realism'*

power cable that joins the boxes via Neutrik connectors is 2m long.

As for those controls, one of the three miniature toggles selects an optional low bass cut, -6dB per octave below 60Hz, which you can use to cut speaker-threatening subsonic frequencies arising from warped records, for example. The next selects MM or MC sensitivity while the third gives an extra 10dB of gain if needed. Underneath, an array of DIP switches provides 100ohm to 1kohm loading for MCs or added capacitance for MM.

of width and not without depth at the centre, but somehow did not reveal quite the coherence across the spread that we'd obtained from the Aqvox. On the other hand, the bass arguably seemed to benefit from a feeling of more precision.

When Red Callender kicked off 'Easy Money' [Rickie Lee Jones, Warner] his double-bass sounded clean and firm, plangent and well described, right down to the dodgy intonation on one note. Rickie Lee's voice was depicted characterfully, but with a presentation that seemed just very slightly recessed.

Switching over to the Roksan MM, we found the Lehmann impressive on the Harry James LP with an appealing sense of speed and snap that made you appreciate the precision, musicianship and swing of the brass players. The bass seemed to be tight and well-timed too, and in the 'Cherokee' drum solo there was a good sense of power and energy.

## VERDICT

The Black Cube Decade clearly has no difficulty in producing a well-detailed and convincingly dynamic sound. It offers a very high standard of finish and features. ⚡

**ABOVE:** The PWX II power unit, on the right, connects to the phono stage itself via a Neutrik locking 4-pin plug. A second power outlet is also provided

## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Input loading (MM/MC)	47kohm/100pF-1nF / 100-1kohm
Input sensitivity (MM/MC re. 0dBV)	17.2mV / 1.59mV
Input overload (MM/MC)	160mV / 15.0mV
Maximum output (re. 1% THD)	9.1V
A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 5mV/500µV in)	92.7dB / 76.8dB
Frequency response (20Hz-20kHz)	-0.87dB (-7.7dB) to +0.15dB
Distortion (20Hz-20kHz, re. 0dBV)	0.00045-0.0012%
Power consumption	12W
Dimensions (WHD)	110x44x280mm (each)



pass



## How Much Class A?

Our meters don't go to zero like other meters. They show the current draw of the amplifier's circuit, which has a fixed minimum known as the bias. When the meter isn't moving, you are in the Class A region. When the meter moves, you have moved into Class AB.

Class B circuits have no bias current, and they enjoy severe distortion due to the abrupt transition between the positive and negative halves of the output stage. Class A circuits run so much bias current that they have no transition, but they run hot as hell. Class AB amplifiers are a compromise, where a moderate bias current smoothes the transition, and they operate in Class A until the output current exceeds twice the bias current.

How much bias do you want? As much as you can get. The amplifier's distortion is inversely proportional to the bias current. Most Class AB amplifiers operate as Class A for a small fraction of a watt. At Pass Labs, the least of our amplifiers operates Class A to 15 watts, and our biggest amplifier peaks the 400 watts in Class A.

And that's why our meters don't go to zero.

If you would like to know more, Nelson has written a detailed article on the subject of bias at [www.passlabs.com](http://www.passlabs.com)






CD player with 28-bit DAC and digital inputs  
Made by: Chapter Electronics Ltd  
Supplied by: Chapter Electronics Ltd  
Telephone: 0208 1235533  
Web: www.chapterelectronics.co.uk



# Chapter Audio Sonnet-S (£6895)

**T**he Sonnet-S is perhaps better described as a flexible outboard DAC with a mechanism to support the 16-bit granddaddy of all 5in discs. It implements a version of the '32-bit' ESS Technology DAC we first saw in Simaudio's £7950 750D [see p32]. Styling is from the brute force school of audio engineering: its thick alloy casework loaded down even further by the huge 800VA toroid within.

Chapter has deployed a single '28-bit' ES9008 ESS chip, using its modulator and DAC sections but skipping the front-end for a digital filter of its own design. This features a cut-off directly at Fs/2 (that's

**'The novelty of a new converter technology also ripens the mix'**

22.05kHz for CD). Digital volume control is also executed in this filter stage and offers a full 132dB range in 0.5dB steps.

The Sonnet can be controlled by a Universal Electronics Nevo Q50SL learning remote – a £600 extra – but you can still navigate your way around the menu using its two illuminated spin-and-click controls. Unusual? Frankly yes, for

we've never encountered a player that requires you to pre-select CD de-emphasis before playing such a disc. Ordinarily a pre-emp flag is automatically detected by the CD player and the correction applied in the DAC. This is included in the ESS DAC but in the same DSP stage that Chapter has bypassed, hence the need for the manual 'fix'.

There are other features aimed at its four S/PDIF and single USB digital inputs. You can pre-select the incoming 'data word length' (16-bit, 20-bit or 24-bit) for example. Arguably its most obscure feature is the 'DAC Modulator Mode', adjustable between 6 and 8-bits. This represents a trade-off between the S/N achieved in the audioband against the level of unwanted ultrasonic noise.

Finally, there's a 'Quality' setting loosely associated with the source of the digital input. The various Low, Medium and

High Quality standards address the ESS chip, fine-tuning the selectivity of its phase-locked loop and ability to accommodate variations in the clock accuracy of the incoming data. High should be your default.



## QUITE EXCEPTIONAL

We listened to this player using its own volume control and via balanced TEO cables, through two

**ABOVE:** Track skip, volume control, bit depth, sample rate and other functions are all navigated using these two twist-and-push rotary controls. Takes a bit of getting used to... Internally, the PSU is larger than found in many power amps; DAC and clock are screened

channels of Krell's very capable S-1500 amplifier.

Philip Clemo's *The Rooms*, a haunting and fabulously poised mix of string quartet with sax, guitar, hammond organ and piano, succeeded in encapsulating the equally broad capabilities of the player itself. And this poise, this clear depiction of macro and micro dynamics, of deep solid bass and sweet but cleanly extended treble is shared by the Sonnet-S.

This is our kind of 'hi-fi': equipment that offers a tangible sense of performance in the void around the speakers. No strain, no exaggeration and no edgy emphasis to fool the unwary with a short burst of musical fireworks. This player is a stayer, its liquid smooth sound engineered to have you listening long into the wee small hours, night after night.

And what of high-res digital audio? Optimally configured, the sound of the Sonnet-as-DAC with a true 96kHz/24-bit recording like Claire Martin's *Too Darn Hot!* was quite exceptional – a tight drum sound, incisive piano and brassy percussion plus that breathy vocal presence, all laid onto a canvas of impenetrable black velvet.

Sure enough, we would have liked to have heard a little greater projection into the room, but the soundstage is not squashed, simply deeper than it is forward.

## VERDICT

Chapter is hedging its bets here by offering something closer to a CD-playing outboard DAC. The novelty of a new converter technology also ripens the mix, adding extra appeal and flexibility for the progressive audiophile. 🎧

## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Maximum Output Level (Balanced)	3.84Vrms at <0.5ohm
A-wtd S/N Ratio	115.0dB
Distortion (1kHz, 0dBFS/~30dBFS)	0.00015% / 0.0018%
Distortion & Noise (20kHz, 0dBFS)	0.0003%
Frequency resp. (20Hz-20kHz)	+0.0dB to -0.04dB
Digital jitter (CD/24-bit digital in)	126psec / 45psec
Resolution @ -100dB	±0.1dB
Power consumption	21W
Dimensions (WHD)	390x108x300mm





**AUDIO  
FILE**

CD player with 32-bit DAC and digital inputs  
Made by: Simaudio Ltd  
Supplied by: Renaissance Audio  
Telephone: 0131 555 3922  
Web: www.simaudio.com



# Simaudio Moon 750D (£7950)

**S**imaudio's flagship product encompasses both CD player and DAC, and is replete with digital outputs and inputs to service existing digital separates. Its solid construction is in the established US high-end tradition, using custom aluminium extrusions. It also has heatsinks.

Play and program functions will more normally be accessed via the chunky, metal-bodied remote which, however, lacks a track number keypad.

Inputs are AES/EBU via XLR, S/PDIF via phono, S/PDIF via Toslink and USB, for connection to a computer. Two digital outputs are also provided: AES/EBU via XLR and S/PDIF via phono. The fixed-level analogue output is either balanced or unbalanced and the back panel

Toslink inputs do too. The USB input is limited to 48kHz although it will replay 96kHz and 192kHz source files. Simaudio has also confirmed that it is only 16-bit capable. Via USB the display sometimes proved reluctant to acknowledge the change to a 44.1kHz file when the display was already reading 48kHz. [For a complete analysis of this product, see *HFN* Jul '10].

## A SMOOTH ACT

We began by listening to the 750D as a CD player, using its own disc mechanism. Searching for something that places a premium on rhythmic ability we chose Britten's *Variations On A Theme of Frank Bridge* [Decca], which positively bristles with youthful invention and bravado. 'March' is propelled forward by the frenetic bowing of the double-basses before the violins catch the mood. It's insistent, spiky and restless. The 750D sounded smooth and spatially expansive but

the overall result was arguably a little too refined.

Sensing that the 750D does its best work in other areas, we turned next to Kari Bremnes' 'Byssan Lull' from *Svarta Bjørn* [Kirkelig Kulturverksted]. The track opens with repeated bass taps – signifying knocking on a door, perhaps, or a heartbeat? – where the 750D was smooth as silk on Bremnes' voice and projected a large, airy soundstage.

'The 750D was smooth as silk on voice with a large, airy soundstage'

also houses an RS232 socket for installed system use, alongside remote control ins/outs.

While the 750D is compatible with bit depths and sampling rates up to 24-bit and 192kHz, Simaudio is lax in specifying the sampling rate and resolution capabilities of each digital input. According to the 750D's display, which shows input sampling rate, the former supports single-wire 192kHz, and Simaudio has confirmed that the AES/EBU and

We then tried the 750D as an outboard DAC, feeding it S/PDIF signals on coax from a Mac mini via an RME Fireface 800 FireWire interface, and via USB directly.

It's often the case that USB DAC interfaces disappoint, even within their sampling rate and bit-depth limitations. Comparing the 750D's USB link to coax S/PDIF using an EAC rip of an Arcadi Volodos Schubert programme [Sony], we preferred the S/PDIF sound but only marginally once a ~3dB difference in analogue output level had been corrected. The USB sound had weightier bass but the S/PDIF won out for having more pizzazz.

Next we compared the rip, played via S/PDIF, to the disc played in the 750D. The differences were not large but, as is often the case, the sound from CD was a little less well resolved, a little rougher at the edges. We preferred the rip.

And so to hi-res material from hard disk, beginning with 'I Had the Craziest Dream' from Jimmy Cobb's *In The Key Of Blue* [Chesky Records, 24/96 download]. This piece of meticulously crafted, easy-going, immaculately recorded jazz is something to sink gratefully into after a hard day. The 750D did well: it captured the music's infectious swing and the airy acoustic in which it was recorded, but there was a mild clouding of detail.

## VERDICT

This is a well built and engineered product that shines on the test bench yet it will appeal mainly to those who prefer a slightly distanced view of musical performance, where sweetness of sound is embraced at the cost of some insight. 📶

**ABOVE:** Push-buttons either side of the disc drawer and large-character display operate the usual standby, disc and programming controls, and select between inputs in DAC mode – although these will more normally be accessed via the chunky, sculpted metal-bodied remote control provided

## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Maximum Output Level (Balanced)	1.98Vrms / 97ohm
A-wtd S/N Ratio	109.0dB
Distortion (1kHz, 0dBfs/-30dBfs)	0.00005% / 0.0014%
Distortion & Noise (20kHz, 0dBfs)	0.0005%
Frequency resp. (20Hz-20kHz)	+0.0dB to -0.16dB
Digital jitter (CD/24-bit digital in)	120psec / <5psec
Resolution @ -100dB	±0.1dB
Power consumption	25W
Dimensions (WHD)	476x102x427mm



BETTER BY DESIGN!

**ATLAS** | Cables



[www.atlascables.com](http://www.atlascables.com)

Atlas (Scotland) Ltd., Units 1 & 2, Block 11, Glenfield Place,  
Glencairn Ind. Est., Kilmarnock, Scotland. KA1 4AZ.  
Tel: 44 (0) 1563 572666 | Freefone (UK only): 0800 731 1140





AUDIO  
FILE

CD player/outboard DAC combination  
Made by: Naim Audio Ltd  
Supplied by: Naim Audio  
Telephone: 01722 426600  
Web: www.naimaudio.com



# Naim CDX2/DAC

(£3390/£1995)

**N**aim held out against the outboard D-to-A converter longer than most but there's no evidence of its new DAC being behind the game as a result. Indeed, Naim has developed its own solution to the S/PDIF jitter issue, comprising a buffer memory and switchable fixed-frequency master oscillators which are alternated in order to match, on average, the input data rate. It has also deployed optical data couplers within to provide ground isolation and opted for 40-bit floating point processing rather than the more usual 32-bit to ensure sufficient accuracy with

of audio from a computer. A FireWire interface is eschewed too, so if you want to couple the DAC to a computer for hard disk replay it will need to have S/PDIF output.

This restricted range of digital interfaces apart, the Naim DAC appears much like any other outboard DAC. Four S/PDIF inputs are provided, via Toslink optical or coaxial inputs, and are selectable via front panel buttons. Remote control input and output sockets are also provided. Two of the coax digital inputs are on 75ohm BNC sockets, the other two on phonos.

There are, though, two slide switches on the rear panel that are out of the ordinary. The first selects whether the analogue signal appears on the DIN or phono output sockets; the second determines whether the audio

circuitry is connected to earth internally or via the components to which it is partnered. The choice can have a significant effect on sound quality, so do experiment.



## NEAR HI-RES...

Occasionally we turn up a CD that, somehow, we've simply never played. Which is precisely how we came to use Arcadi Volodos'

'The sound of the CDX2 alone was eclipsed by the addition of the DAC'

24-bit source material. Then there's the digital filter. Naim has chosen to use an IIR rather than FIR design because the reduced computational load was found to benefit the sound – even when the filters' amplitude and phase responses were identical.

Although the DAC has USB inputs front and rear, these are for the connection of a memory stick or iPod/iPhone, not for the streaming

performance of Schubert solo piano works [Sony SICC 70, Japanese import] as the first piece for formal comparison of the CDX2 and CDX2/DAC. The sound of the CDX2 alone was thoroughly eclipsed by the addition of the DAC. The CDX2 is a fine CD player, no question, but that's how it sounded: like a CD player. A little mechanical in its music making, a little hard on fortés, a little lacking in overall ease. With the DAC in circuit we could have been persuaded that we were listening to a hi-res recording.

From the sublime to the ridiculous? Free's 'I'll Be Creepin' from the *Molten Gold* anthology [Island CRNCD 2 518 456-2] – was certainly a contrast musically. Immediately noticeable was the flatter imaging of the CDX2, which gave relatively little sense either of overall depth or of space around individual elements in the mix.

With the DAC the sound was much more expansive, and not just spatially but dynamically and rhythmically too. You could really believe that this was close to the sound of the master tape.

True, this is no demonstration piece but how we wish that the still-wet-behind-the-ears younger us could have heard Free recordings reproduced like this while Paul Kossoff was still alive. We might have bought a selection of long wigs and all bunked off to a gig.

## VERDICT

It may have arrived late – but what an entrance. Constructed with Naim's traditional no-nonsense, robust simplicity, it offers spacious, dynamic yet insightful sound on its own, and really blossoms when used with an XPS external supply. Ⓜ

**ABOVE:** A front panel LED on the DAC indicates digital lock, while a second labelled 'hd' indicates that the input sampling rate is higher than 48kHz. The CDX2's curved disc drawer opens manually, by pulling on what looks like the rotary switch knob mounted on the far left of the fascia

## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Maximum Output Level/Impedance	2.28Vrms / 17ohm
A-wtd S/N Ratio	108.6dB
Distortion (1kHz, 0dBfs/-30dBfs)	0.00055% / 0.0040%
Distortion & Noise (20kHz, 0dBfs)	0.001%
Frequency response (20Hz-20kHz)	+0.0dB to -0.74dB
Digital jitter (48kHz/96kHz; 24-bit)	13psec / ~2psec
Resolution @ -100dB	±0.1dB
Power consumption	9W
Dimensions (WHD)	432x70x301mm






Stereo CD/SACD player  
Made by: Harman Specialty Group, USA  
Supplied by: CSE Ltd, UK  
Telephone: 0142 335 9054  
Web: www.marklevinson.com



# Mark Levinson No512 (£12,000)

Odd timing, you may think. As SACD and DVD-A celebrate – if that's the word – a decade of underachievement as CD's putative successor(s), Mark Levinson releases its first CD/SACD player. Not a universal player, note – the No512 has no truck with music on DVD-V or DVD-A, let alone BD – nor even one able to unlock the full potential of multichannel SACDs, since it is stereo only. With this limited remit, and at this price, the No512 had better be a stonker.

Aesthetically it gets off to just the right start. There's nothing flashy, nothing garish, nothing to titillate the nouveau riche here: just a simple but classy black anodised

'This may be as good as this 1970 recording is ever going to sound'

fascia with dimpled silver-grey push-buttons, a red dot-matrix display and a line of discreet red indicator LEDs beneath.

You'd expect a product of this class to offer both unbalanced and balanced outputs, which the No512 does. Moreover, it incorporates a volume control – analogue, not digital – which allows direct connection to a power amplifier if

desired. Fixed output voltage is also available, with selection of either mode via the remote control.

Alongside the balanced and unbalanced outputs to the rear (both digital and analogue) sits a connector zone labelled 'Control'. This comprises an IR input, trigger input and output, an RS-232 control port and ethernet port. These are provided for use within installed systems, the ethernet port offering control via ML's Net software.



## DIGGING DEEP

Starting with SACD, *Elton John* [Island B0003607-36] fared particularly well, the No512 mining fresh nuances while at the same time rendering the whole sound more spacious and more effortlessly natural. Indeed, this may well be as good as this 1970 analogue recording is ever going to sound.

PentaTone's Classics series provides a fascinating insight into what 1970s quadraphonics might have delivered had the technology existed to carry an accurate facsimile of the master tape into people's homes. Although the surround experience is beyond the No512's power to deliver, the stereo SACD layers make for fine listening too. Playing the first volume of Handel organ concertos

**ABOVE:** As usual, styling is clean, understated and classy, but the ergonomics would be better if the transport controls were of different sizes and supported by symbols. The most important LED indicator below the dot-matrix display is the one labelled 'volume fixed'. Only when this is extinguished is the on-board volume control active

under Jaap Schröder [PTC 5186 103], detail was exquisite. As for the overall sound this was effortlessly spacious and refined, in the way that turns short listening sessions into long ones.

Meanwhile, the SACD layer of Hilary Hahn's fine recording of Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending* [DG 474 8732] didn't disappoint either. As Hahn's violin swooped and soared above the sometimes sparse, sometimes lush orchestral accompaniment, it struck us how privileged we are as a generation to be able to experience reproduced sound of this quality, and how ironic it is that, afforded this unprecedented opportunity, the music buying public allowed SACD and DVD-A to wither on the vine.

Of course, we also took the opportunity with hybrid discs to switch to the CD layer and play plain vanilla CDs as well. No question, the No512 excels with the original optical disc medium too. Imaging is precise and rock-steady and, as it does with SACD, the ML is adept at revealing telling detail without sounding soulless in the way that CD easily can.

So, Mark Levinson's first SACD player may have been late arriving, but it delivers. Now, Harman, please can we have a surround version – before it's too late?

## VERDICT

Whereas lesser SACD players can be 'analogue' sounding to a fault, the No512 – on the better SACDs – strips away the softened, homogenised sound so often heard from DSD to reveal its true blend of subtle detail, spacious imaging and vivid tone colours. And it's cracking as a CD player. ☺

## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Maximum Output Level/Impedance	3.91Vrms / 10ohm
A-wtd S/N Ratio	112.6dB
Distortion (1kHz, 0dBfs/-30dBfs)	0.00095% / 0.0035%
Distortion (20kHz, 0dBfs)	0.00135%
Frequency resp. (20Hz-20kHz/100kHz)	+0.0 to -0.1dB/-16.5dB (CD/SACD)
Digital jitter (CD/SACD)	121psec / 37psec
Resolution @ -110dB (CD/SACD)	±0.8dB / ±0.1dB
Power consumption	33W / 19W (standby)
Dimensions (WHD)	442x116x448mm



hi-fi news  
EDITOR'S  
CHOICE

AUDIO  
FILE

Universal CD/SACD/DVD-A/BD player  
Made by: D&M Holdings Inc  
Supplied by: Marantz UK  
Telephone: 01753 680868  
Web: www.marantz.com



# Marantz UD9004 (£5000)

It's no coincidence that the second 'universal' CD/SACD/DVD-A/BD disc player on the market is from Marantz, the first hailing from Denon in the form of its revolutionary DVD-A1UD [HFN, Oct '09]. Both Denon and Marantz come under the umbrella of D&M Holdings and certain core technologies are shared. But the £5000 UD9004 is not simply one of Denon's £4500 DVD-A1UD players housed in black Marantz livery.

Like the DVD-A1UD, the UD9004 is compatible with DVD-Audio discs, dual-layer SACDs, standard and HDCD-encoded CDs plus high density DVD-A and Blu-ray media. Furthermore, SD cards, CD-R/RW or DVD±RW discs carrying DivX6, WMA, AAC and MP3 files are also

standard stereo (L/R) outputs, the centre and surround L/R outputs and the surround back L/R and sub outputs. A combination of Marantz's proprietary HDAM and SA2-series HDAM op-amps service the final analogue stages on each of these boards. The multichannel audio outputs are not an afterthought. Rather, they are the player's raison d'être, for any AV amplifier with 5.1 to 7.1 analogue inputs, regardless of vintage or HDMI compatibility, will witness a new lease of life hooked up to the universal UD9004.



## ARMED & DANGEROUS

Pink Floyd's multichannel re-release of *Dark Side...* on SACD [EMI 7243-582136-2] wound up just short of stun was overwhelming. As the

opening heartbeat began to pound in our ears we knew this was not a player for the lily-livered, a premonition fulfilled as the raw energy of 'Breathe' segued into

the tension of 'On the Run' and the rude jolt of the clocks that open the timeless classic that is, er, 'Time'.

We would also have dearly wished to witness Jerry Goldsmith conducting the LSO through his *Movie Medleys* at Abbey Road [SACD demo disc] but Marantz's player took us part way there at least. The strong bass register ensured the rumble of low winds, brass and

tympany brought both gravitas and urgency to the 'Star Trek' and 'Voyager' scores as the strings and horns soared into the room to palpable effect. Multichannel music players like the UD9004 were made for popular classics like this.

Not forgetting the original stereo CD format, Anekdoten's 2009 two-CD compilation *Chapters* [kscope115] still had a pulse thanks to the UD9004. This is a difficult album, emotionally intense and instrumentally dense. The UD9004 delivered this tight bundle of sound without its dark rhythm running roughshod over the vocal content.

And so to Blu-ray and Pat Metheny's *The Way Up – Live* [ERBRD5001]. The crispness of both visuals and sound illustrates beyond doubt what can be achieved with a full 24-bits of audio resolution. The disc offers 5.1 channel LPCM, Dolby and DTS-HD Master Audio encode options, the latter proving to be the most persuasive when decoded within the universal UD9004.

The fine detailing of guitar, keyboards and percussion was exquisite, the almost limitless sense of space an accurate reflection of the venue while the occasionally eerie ambience rendered our speakers invisible. It was immersive audio at its technical best.

## VERDICT

Does the UD9004 beat Denon's universal? Denon has the digital edge via HDMI while Marantz offers the warmer analogue sound. If you've already chosen a Marantz SACD or a Denon DVD player for your system then you'll already have a view on the outcome. So why not let brand loyalty dictate? Either way, you'll not be disappointed. ☺

**ABOVE:** The legend says 'Super Audio CD/Blu-ray disc player' but the UD9004 also handles CD/CD-R and CD-RW along with DVD±RW and, importantly, multichannel DVD-Audio media. The SD card reader (up to 8GB and hidden behind a drop-down flap on the fascia) will playback LPCM, AAC, WMA and MP3 audio files plus JPEG and DivX picture/video files

'The UD9004 is not simply a Denon DVD-A1UD housed in Marantz livery'

processed transparently. This player is fully compliant with BD Profile 2.0 so the SD card slot is also used to both route and replay downloaded bonus content.

The player's analogue output boasts a bespoke power supply with a screened toroidal transformer and custom electrolytics. Four separate PCBs are devoted to the balanced stereo outputs, the

## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Maximum Output Level (Balanced)	3.95Vrms
A-wtd S/N Ratio	112.6dB
Distortion (1kHz, 0dBfs/-30dBfs)	0.0004% / 0.0037%
Distortion & Noise (20kHz, 0dBfs)	0.0005%
Freq. resp. (CD, 20kHz/SACD, 100kHz)	+0.0dB to -2.75dB / <-27.5dB
Digital jitter (CD/SACD/24-bit BD)	1060psec/910psec/1060psec
Resolution @ -120dB (24-bit/48kHz)	±0.1dB
Power consumption	57W
Dimensions (WHD)	440x164x409mm



Come and join us in our 10th anniversary year on a voyage of discovery and visit our new website to learn more about our Reference and Hardback ranges.



Discover Couplet 400S

Discover Couplet 1000S

Discover Couplet 500M

## Hardback Series - Sonnet-S CD Player

The Sonnet-S is a 'state of the art' top-loading CD player and multi-input DAC in one. Featuring 32 bit processing and 48 bit filter accumulator, Chapter's own ultra low phase noise clock, and a class-leading >125dB dynamic range.

Discover Sonnet-S



## Hardback Series - Couplet 250S

The Couplet 250S is a 225 Watts into 8 Ohms power amplifier that features Chapter's analogue 'Class D' amplifier technology for a very low distortion performance. Powered by Chapters own 'Balanced Zero Ripple Power Supply' the Couplet 250S offers effortless performance.

Discover Couplet 250S



## Hardback Series - Preface-S

The Preface-S is a fully balanced, line level pre-amplifier with seven inputs (2 x balanced, 5 x single-ended). Using the finest part selection available; including Burr Brown op-amps, ultra low ESR Nichicon and Samwha electrolytic capacitors.

Discover Preface-S



## Hardback Series - Précis 250S

Taking the key components of both the Preface-S and the Couplet 250S, the Précis 250S is an integrated amplifier rated at 225 Watts per channel into 8 Ohms and 450 Watts per channel into 4 Ohms. The Précis 250S delivers unmatched deep bass with a deft and delicate touch.

Discover Précis 250S





hi-fine  
OUTSTANDING  
PRODUCT

AUDIO  
FILE

Universal CD/SACD/DVD-A/BD player  
Made by: Cambridge Audio Ltd  
Supplied by: The Audio Partnership PLC  
Telephone: 0845 900 1230  
Web: www.cambridgeaudio.com



# Cambridge Audio 650BD (£400)

**T**his new Cambridge disc player not only handles CD, DVD, DVD-A and SACD audio media but is also a fully paid-up Profile 2.0 Blu-ray player with just about the quickest BD loading times we've witnessed. In practice, the 650BD is compatible with commercial Blu-ray, DVD-V, DVD-A, SACD and CD (inc. HDCD) discs in addition to BD-R/RE, DVD±R/RW, CD-R/RW and Kodak Photo disc media.

Compatibility with every disc type (except HD-DVD) is reinforced by on-board decoding of Master Audio and High Resolution Audio tiers of DTS-HD along with Dolby TrueHD via its 7.1 analogue output channels. SACD's DSD code is also processed and/or routed via HDMI in the same transparent fashion as Dolby/DTS HD bitstreams. However, within the player, DSD

*'The percussive sequence dances like a swarm of fireflies'*

is downsampled to 88.2kHz LPCM before conversion to analogue audio – a 'corruption' of SACD's bitstream that's avoided in both of the two heavyweight universal players from Denon and Marantz.

Nevertheless, due deference to the audiophile is illustrated by Cambridge's 'Pure Audio' mode which defeats the player's internal video processing when playing back

audio media of any type. The new vacuum fluorescent display is also muted in Pure Audio mode, the blue window instantly reinstated at the touch of any button on the matching RC-650BD remote.

Previous Cambridge DVD/BD players have featured reasonably primitive on-screen setup menus, but the Azur 650BD offers an intuitive GUI that's firmly removed from the technological Stone Age.



## ASSURED INSIGHTS

It does not take long to appreciate that the Azur 650BD has been 'voiced' by audio- rather than out-and-out home cine-philes, such is its silky-smooth and insightfully detailed performance. This is no bad thing, for if a player can reproduce two- and multichannel music with convincing subtlety then you're almost guaranteed that the orchestral score and dialogue from modern movie BDs will be rendered with similar sensitivity, regardless of the intensity of any accompanying effects.

True to form, the Azur 650BD maintained the unusually delicate, almost piquant musical flavour of Disney's *Up* with the same assuredness that it delivered the action and effects that would come thick and fast throughout the latest 're-imagining' of the Star Trek saga. Sure enough there is not quite the wallop or sense of grand scale thrust into the room by the high-

**ABOVE:** An assemblage of logos pays witness to the 650BD's 'universality' since it encompasses every audio disc format except the defunct HD-DVD – even CD's HDCD variant is accommodated. Note the USB 2.0 port to the left of the display (duplicated at the rear of the unit)

end hierarchy of Marantz and Denon, but the 'smaller', more measured, more 'cautious' sound of the 650BD is still perfectly formed.

Never was this more obvious than with the high resolution 5.1 channel DTS-HD audio option from Deep Purple's *Live At Montreux 2006*. So often this difficult recording can sound ragged, lacking transparency or convincing bite, but the 650BD exerted its composing influence to great effect.

Another example of the 650BD's ability to craft a decent sense of acoustic is revealed by the Telarc SACD of Jennifer Higdon's *Cityscape – Concerto For Orchestra*. The percussive sequence dances like a swarm of fireflies in the gloom of the Atlanta hall, with bells, chimes and blocks also gently underscored by the orchestra – a fresh and flighty sound only grounded by the timpani which sounded just a little too fat through the 650BD.

Most revealing of our choices from two-channel CDs was Michael Hedges' *Live On The Double Planet* [Windham Hill], the resonant bass and biting edge of his guitar instantly recognisable even if the player still exercised its now familiar caution, suppressing the last hint of musical exuberance.

## VERDICT

You don't get the ultimate bottom-end punch or sense of scale rendered by some rivals, but for a tenth the price the 650BD provides a perfectly 'wholesome' and craftily-balanced alternative without serious flaw in any key area of performance. In this age of increasing belt-tightening, Cambridge is offering a couple of extra holes – so what are you waiting for? ☺

## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Maximum Output Level/Impedance	2.19Vrms / 315ohm
A-wtd S/N Ratio	103.5dB
Distortion (1kHz, 0dBfs/-30dBfs)	0.0036% / 0.0040%
Distortion & Noise (20kHz, 0dBfs)	0.0095%
Freq. resp. (CD, 20kHz/SACD, 40kHz)	+0.0dB to -0.22dB/-6.6dB
Digital jitter (CD/SACD/24-bit BD)	305psec/25psec/230psec
Resolution @ -120dB (24-bit/48kHz)	±0.1dB
Power consumption	15W
Dimensions (WHD)	430x85x312mm



AUDIO  
FILE

Outboard DAC with S/PDIF, AES and Firewire interfaces  
 Made by: Prism Media Products Ltd  
 Supplied by: Prism Media Products Ltd  
 Telephone: 01353 648888  
 Web: www.prismsound.com



## Prism Sound Orpheus (£3495)

If you agree that optical disc replay – whatever the colour of laser it uses – is yesterday's audio technology, there are numerous different ways to replay music from hard disk instead, some of which don't even involve having a PC in the room. But if you insist on being able to play both stereo and multichannel files in hi-res then the options begin to dry up.

You can imagine, then, that our eyes lit up when someone first alerted us to the Prism Sound Orpheus. First point in its favour: Prism has an excellent reputation for its professional converters. Secondly, that's a volume control knob on the front panel – and not just a crude potentiometer. Indeed, it's a shaft encoder which controls volume in the digital domain.

Still, there are flies in the ointment when the Orpheus is used away from its intended studio environment. First: the Orpheus incorporates eight channels of input as well as eight channels of

other FireWire audio interfaces too. In the first place, many of today's computers don't incorporate a FireWire interface as standard, in which case one will have to be added. With a laptop this will usually be via an ExpressCard adaptor; in a desktop computer a PCI or PCIe expansion card can be used instead and is often cheaper.

Whichever type of adaptor is chosen, it should use a TI (Texas Instruments) FireWire chip since this is the one recommended by most audio interface manufacturers. Other chips may not work correctly.

Compare the Orpheus's price to that of many other FireWire audio interfaces and you'll see that it occupies the premium end of the market. The RME Fireface 800, with which we compared it, is similarly equipped but can be bought for less than a third of the price online. So the Orpheus needs to provide cut-above sound quality to match its cut-above entry fee – and this it most certainly does.



### A MIRACLE

We've liked Andrzej Panufnik's 1990 Violin Concerto ever since we heard it performed in the related concert, but

we've always found the recording [Conifer, now deleted] a little lacklustre. We doubt that anything short of a minor miracle could make it sound great, but the Orpheus did a fine job of removing some of the orchestral obfuscation in the first movement and shoring up the rhythmical drive of the third. And as for the hauntingly beautiful but restless second movement: we have

**ABOVE:** While the Orpheus has rather too many LED indicators for minimalist audiophile tastes, at least the bar-chart level meters – hopelessly vague in any case – can be disabled. Remove the rack-mount 'ears' and, unusually for this type of product, it looks at home in a domestic setting

never heard it imbued with such an unsettling undertone before.

Bombastic rock music fared well via the Orpheus too, and we don't mind admitting that we thoroughly enjoyed re-immersing ourselves in ELP's *Tarkus* epic and the relentless virtuosic invention that drives it.

'Stones Of Years' with its patiently constructed Hammond solo, 'Mass' with its wicked bass synth riff and the Bolero-like 'Aquatarkus' with its martial drumming underpinning and then overwhelming the machine-like synth sounds in either channel: a harmonically challenging ground on the left and increasingly frenetic improvisation on the right. All were rendered as well as we've ever heard them. Our only regret: that we could never make it sound like this in the early 1970s (but then what could you expect of a BSR McDonald MP60?). When the Orpheus returns home to Prism Sound HQ in Cambridgeshire, we will mourn its departure.

### VERDICT

The Prism Sound Orpheus makes a better job than most pro FireWire audio interfaces of blending into a home audio system. If you demand multichannel capability from hard disk at up to 24/192, this is the way to get it – and the Orpheus delivers sound quality to justify its price premium. In audiophile terms, it's great value for money.

**'In audiophile terms the Prism Sound Orpheus is great value for money'**

output, which most audiophiles won't need. Second: the outputs are on balanced 1/4in jacks – not exactly a common domestic audio connection standard. Taking an unbalanced output using a mono jack plug or adaptor is accommodated, though.

Third and more seriously: there are issues with FireWire connection, although to be fair these affect

### HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Maximum Output Level/Impedance	5.94Vrms / 50ohm
A-wtd S/N Ratio	105.3dB
Distortion (1kHz, 0dBFS/-30dBFS)	0.00016% / 0.00079%
Distortion (20kHz, 0dBFS)	0.0034%
Frequency response (20Hz-20kHz)	+0.0dB to -0.03dB (48kHz Fs)
Digital jitter (24-bit; 48kHz/96kHz)	61psec / 17psec
Resolution @ -100dB	±0.1dB
Power consumption	19W
Dimensions (WHD)	440x50x290mm





Jordan Acoustics

freephone:

**0800 121 4771 / 4772**

e-mail:

**ask@jordanacoustics.co.uk**

web:

**www.jordanacoustics.co.uk**



The Turntable & The Cartridge

**100<sup>th</sup>**  
*Anniversary*  
**DENON**  
since 1910



The Headphone



The Integrated Amplifier



The A/V Receiver



The Universal Player



The SACD/CD Player

## Limited Edition Anniversary Products

During this year Denon will celebrate its 100th anniversary. This is a monumental point in Denon's history and to celebrate, Denon have released a limited edition series of anniversary products.

Each model in the series is a **signature reference product of luxurious quality** and a true quest for perfection. Faithfully reproducing sound the way the original artist intended, the **limited edition anniversary models** are sure to become collectors items that will sell out very quickly.

- Limited Edition
- Products finished in a luxurious gloss finish
- 5-year warranty
- Certificate of Authenticity from the chief product designer
- Includes a beautiful Denon Brand Book

0% FINANCE OPTIONS\*  
**AVAILABLE**

**DENON**

Official Denon Dealers Legacy  
Association Member





Trinity

**As we approach the end of the first decade of the 21st century, Wilson Benesch continues to look ahead to bring something totally new to the market. To date they have collaborated with some of the finest scientists, engineers and artists in the world to advance the art of loudspeaker and analogue design.**

#### Trinity

It paints a sound scape of naturalness, transparency and all the integration that you would expect from a Wilson Benesch design. The Sphere is a key element in this story. The

gold and ceramic shell in the top of the alloy baffle is located adjacent to the main tweeter, ensuring the closest possible point source. A completely new super fast dynamic drive unit, the W.B. One, was developed for the Wide Bandwidth Collection.

#### Torus

Although the addition of **Torus** can be seen as the ultimate solution, the extended low frequency from the huge volume of air available to the W.B. One drive unit translates into a superb low frequency response.

**Trinity and Torus delivers music like very few other combinations can!**



Torus

Wilson benesch

0% FINANCE OPTIONS\*  
**AVAILABLE**





AUDIO  
FILE

Stereo integrated amplifier. Rated at 165-240W/8ohm  
Made by: Devialet SAS, Paris  
Supplied by: Absolute Sounds Ltd  
Telephone: 0208 971 3909  
Web: www.deviallet.com



# Devialet D-Premier (£12,000)

Once in a generation a company will emerge with a concept so original and innovative that it can re-define the expectations of a product genre. That company is Devialet of France and its product is the D-Premier integrated amplifier.

Offering direct S/PDIF, AES/EBU and even HDMI digital inputs alongside analogue line and MM/MC phono, it fuses the very best of digital and analogue engineering

*'The technology is breathtaking in its originality and scope'*

to yield a highly configurable yet supremely elegant solution.

The technology inside Devialet's mirrored alloy casework is breathtaking in its originality and scope. Its ADH (Analogue/Digital Hybrid) technology is an entirely proprietary regime that combines the services of a very low power analogue Class A amplifier with a very high power, truly digital Class D amplifier. Here's how it works: the analogue Class A amplifier is

directly coupled to the speaker and defines the full voltage swing available while the digital Class D amplifier provides 99% of the current required to maintain this voltage across the speaker load. The idea is not dissimilar to Quad's 'feedforward' Class A/B Current Dumping technique applied in its 405 power amplifier some 35 years earlier [*Wireless World*, Dec 1975].

The table-top remote is an RF device, capable of adjusting volume, input selection, bass roll-off (in 2.1 mode) and phase inversion without line-of-sight of the D-Premier. Spin the weighted RF wheel and the Premier's display registers the volume from -97dB all the way up to +30dB, the

peripheral clockface of dots turning red once the amp has reached its maximum output.



## TOTAL CONTROL

How to describe the performance of this astonishing amplifier? Imagine you are sitting in a concert hall. For a long moment the audience holds its collective breath for there is no lead-in groove, no tape noise or hiss of electronics to announce the first notes of the overture.

Then it comes. The striking crash of cymbal and deep resonant wave of the tympani strike your body. Heart roused from its lazy rhythm you know you are witnessing a visceral, palpably live performance. No hi-fi comes close, you think, no hi-fi can realise this spontaneous dynamic range, vivid colour and expression of real instruments throbbing before your eyes and ears.

**ABOVE:** The 6.9kg D-Premier is fashioned from a single alloy casting: 32mm thick, gently radiused, chromed and polished to a perfect mirror finish. The backlit top display changes orientation if the amp is moved from a flat to a vertical position. The porthole also houses a Wi-Fi antenna

Generally speaking we would agree, but the sound of the D-Premier fed from 24-bit digital files comes astonishingly close. We were transfixed by an NHK recording of the Saito Kinen Festival [Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, NSBS-13457]. Every performer in this substantial orchestra was revealed with the precision and clarity of a soloist. The wistful colour of cor anglais separated from the reedier oboe, the cello playfully mocking the grander double basses while horn, trumpet and trombone soared – metallic but richly coloured, never too cool or dispassionately brassy. And the whole? This was simply superb, so rounded and harmoniously balanced you felt compelled to reach out and embrace their ranks.

**BELOW LEFT:** Devialet's unique remote, in solid square form, is an RF device, capable of adjusting volume, input selection, bass roll-off and phase inversion

## VERDICT

This warrants 'Editor's choice' and 'Outstanding' badges! The precision of its performance may not supplant the kind of sound sought by tube-loving audiophiles, but for those running high resolution digital front-ends, the D-Premier is Hobson's binary choice. 🎧



## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Power output (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	165W / 330W
Dynamic power (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	165W / 330W / 650W / 325W
Output impedance (20Hz–20kHz)	0.005–0.006ohm
Frequency response (20Hz–20kHz)	–0.0dB to –2.9dB (see Lab p25)
Input sensitivity (for 0dBW/165W)	6.7mV / 86.2mV
A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 0dBW/165W)	91.3dB / 113.7dB
Distortion (20Hz–20kHz)	0.00075–0.0013%
Power consumption (Idle/Rated o/p)	27W/450W (5W Standby)
Dimensions (WHD)	400x44.5x400mm





AUDIO  
FILE

Valve stereo integrated amp. Rated at 70W/8ohm  
Made by: Emillé, Korea  
Supplied by: Angelsound Audio  
Telephone: 01923 352479  
Web: www.angelsoundaudio.co.uk; www.emillelabs.com



## Emillé Cha'am (£8450)

**H**ats off to the industrial designers at Emillé Labs. As with all this South Korean company's reassuringly expensive tube amplifiers, the Cha'am integrated is a masterpiece of industrial design and looks a million dollars. At 44kg it's a seriously hefty bit of kit, mainly due to its substantial transformers, and it has a no less large footprint.

As it offers remote control, one supposes it wouldn't be out of the question to sit it on the floor (an accessory plinth is available, albeit costly). The amp is a dual mono design with, per channel, a 6922/6DJ8 triode followed by a 6350 phase inverter and two 6350

Internal wiring is silver-plated, along with silver contact relays employed throughout. The motorised volume control is via a Japanese Alps 'Blue Velvet' potentiometer.

### FINE DETAIL

Via Aspara Acoustic's substantial HL1 horn speakers [*HFN* May '10] the Cha'am delivered a vibrant, engaging sound with a noticeably free-flowing quality that was highly musical. While the sound appeared effortless and relaxing, this was not achieved by delivering a soft, syrupy-smooth balance. In fact the sound was detailed and explicit, with plenty of high frequency sparkle that created a feeling of air and space, and there was a delightful three-dimensional quality to the soundstage with good recordings.

The string bass on Diana Krall's 'My Love Is' from

*Love Scenes* [Impulse] sounded rich and resonant, while the halo of reverberation around Diana's voice was highly resolved. The percussive clicks were crisp and fast, with a lightness of touch that helped deliver a bouncy, spirited presentation with vivid clarity.

The amp sounded mighty powerful too, delivering high sound pressure levels when the

**ABOVE:** While the amp's power on/off and source selection is manual, volume control is via a motorised potentiometer. Fascia power meters can be switched to operate as bias meters for each of the four 6550 output valves; recessed trim pots for bias adjustment are accessible using a small screwdriver

occasion demanded. Listening to the grandiose 'Waiting For The Big One' from a Japanese pressing of Peter Gabriel's eponymous first solo LP [Polystar/Charisma] the Cha'am produced a cavernous soundstage of aircraft hangar proportions, while guitarist Steve Hunter's get-down-and-dirty guitar chops possessed urgency and not a little anger. The sound was both resonant and explosive with headroom to spare, with tremendous presence and atmosphere and no sense of stridency despite the sharp clarity.

What the amplifier doesn't resolve so well, when your loudspeakers have the ability to plumb the very lowest registers, is bass texture and detail. This was noticeable with the DVD-Audio reissue of Foreigner's *Foreigner 4* album [Atlantic/Rhino] which contains a couple of 'almost unplugged' bonus tracks – modern studio recordings that are explosively dynamic. The Emillé once again sounded sparkingly open and fresh but when asked to deliver chunky blocks of powerful bass it lacked clarity and definition in the very low registers. Still satisfyingly weighty and powerful, it became a little sluggish and failed to articulate the true character and textural tones of the pumping bass lines in 'Juke Box Hero'.

### VERDICT

The Cha'am is undeniably expensive, but construction quality is exquisite, assuring pride of ownership. While it doesn't deliver the bass 'slam' that owners of large speaker systems might desire for listening to rock music, it nevertheless combines fine detail resolution with a delightful easy-on-the-ear quality. Ⓜ

'The Emillé once again sounded sparkingly open and fresh'

tubes for the driver stage. The output stage comprises a pair of 6500s while analogue meters and adjustment pots are provided for individual trimming of bias current.

Emillé Labs claims a wide frequency response thanks to its hand-crafted output transformers, while within its chassis you find gold-plated glass epoxy circuit boards with 2oz copper tracks.

### HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Power output (<2% THD, 8/4ohm)	60W / 58W
Dynamic power (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	120W / 105W / 205W / 405W
Output impedance (20Hz–20kHz)	8.7–7.5ohm (8ohm tap)
Frequency response (20Hz–100kHz)	–0.65 to –4.2dB (8ohm tap)
Input sensitivity (for 0dBW/70W)	32mV / 266mV (balanced in)
A-wtd S/N ratio (for 0dBW/70W)	80.7dB / 99.2dB
Distortion (20Hz–20kHz, 10W/8ohm)	2.25–0.61%
Power consumption (Idle/Rated o/p)	240W / 410W
Dimensions (WHD)	545x277x460mm





**AUDIO FILE**

Stereo integrated Class D amplifier. Rated at >250W/8ohm  
Made by: NAD Electronics International  
Supplied by: Armour Home Electronics  
Telephone: 01279 501111  
Web: www.nadelectronics.com; www.armourhome.co.uk



## NAD M2 (£5000)

Until recently, NAD was not a company likely to spring to mind for its cutting-edge technical innovation. But the M2 is very different. It is an end-to-end digital amplifier – the first new and wholly digital Class D design since the Tact Millennium was launched in 1998. Producing over 250W per channel, the M2 utilises DDFA (Direct Digital Feedback Amplifier) technology from Zetex Semiconductors. Here the audio signal is represented as a stream of pulses, their width or duration proportional to the amplitude. This very high frequency PWM stream is finally filtered to reveal the analogue music signal at the M2's output.

Externally, the M2 is weighty, solid and high-end looking with only

12V triggers and an IR remote connection. The two sets of 4mm banana plug binding posts are gold-plated with their fashionable clear-plastic bodies offering wings to aid wrenching home onto spades or bare wire. The front is no less well-appointed with an array of buttons for direct source select and menu access, and a large blue dimmable two-line display which shows input source, volume level and input signal sampling frequency.

The handset is very much 'old-skool' NAD-dull with chunky and translucent rubberised buttons that look like they should be back-lit but aren't. This and other minor operational gripes soon become a moot point, because the M2 is the most exciting integrated we have listened to by a country mile – frighteningly dynamic, immensely detailed, astoundingly neutral and graced with a musical articulation that compares favourably with pre/power combos

costing many times the asking price. Digital Class D amplification has come of age.



### A SOUND OF SILENCE

The first quality you hear of the M2 is its silence. Suddenly the recorded noise floor becomes prevalent, all those re-mastered '70s and '80s CDs showing their analogue heritage as clear as day. Even with

modern discs, little hiccups and artefacts of the recording process are laid bare to analyse, and ropy pressings are given no quarter at all. Of course, this accuracy is not achieved by a low noise floor alone and is testament to the M2's fabulous resolution of detail across the spectrum from its potent and expressive bass to its smoothly extended top end.

We ripped Eleanor McEvoy's *Yola* stereo SACD to a NAS Drive in 96/24 and delivered it via a quality PC soundcard as electrical S/PDIF to the M2 – where the signal is upsampled to 192kHz. But this digital faffery really did not seem to affect performance since the results were just spectacular.

The first keyboard notes of 'I Got You To See Me Through', emerged dramatically from the cavernous silence offering an immediate rush of hi-fi wow-factor dynamics. The opening drum of 'Isn't It Late' showed the M2's bass as incredibly tight and articulate. The bottom end had a rare, addictive combination of dryness, textural detail and sheer scale.

It urged you to dial in volume to really feel the transient attack, whereupon the M2 rewarded such behaviour with simply more of everything. The balance, scale and dynamics simply increased linearly without a hint of tonal change.

### VERDICT

A revelation in almost every audio respect: the M2's accuracy, dynamics, instrumental separation and detail resolution sets new standards at the price. Revealing epiphanal micro-detailing and recording rubbish in equal measure, it is as ruthless as it is stunning.

**ABOVE:** The selected input and (for digital sources) incoming sample rate is indicated on a bold display. The volume/setup control operates from -70dB to +10dB in 0.5dB steps. The menu offers a 0-to-9dB trim and selection of 48kHz-192kHz sampling rates for its analogue inputs. The M2 offers a 'digital impedance compensation filter' for treble response adjustments

'Scale, dynamics simply increase linearly without a hint of tonal change'

the unusual selection of terminals along the back to mark its unique design. On the analogue side there is just one pair of RCA stereo connections and one balanced XLR pair, both of which are immediately converted to PCM. Digital inputs include AES/EBU and five S/PDIF, two electrical and three optical.

The M2's back panel is equipped with an RS232 control port,

### HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Power output (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	300W / 400W
Dynamic power (<1% THD, 8/4/2ohm)	305W / 440W / 545W
Output impedance (20Hz-20kHz)	0.019-1.5ohm
Frequency response (20Hz-20kHz)	+0.0dB to -0.18dB (8ohm setting)
Input sensitivity (for 0dBW/225W)	93mV / 1430mV (0.0dB volume)
A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 0dBW/225W)	93.5dB / 117.0dB
Distortion (20Hz-20kHz, 10W/8ohm)	0.00072-0.088%
Power consumption (Idle/Rated o/p)	84W/640W (1W Standby)
Dimensions (WHD)	435x148x502mm





ELECTROCOMPANIET

*If music really matters™*



SOUND OF NORWAY

## The New Integrated Amplifier ECI-5 MK II

Our aim when designing the ECI-5 MK II was to make the sound more modern, enhancing the details and dynamics. Feedback from our listening team tell us that we have succeeded – “this amplifier sounds much larger than the size and the price tag”

Made in Norway

[www.electrocompaniet.no](http://www.electrocompaniet.no)





**AUDIO  
FILE**

Integrated valve amplifier. Rated at 25W  
Made by: Quad Electroacoustics Ltd  
Supplied by: Quad Electroacoustics Ltd  
Telephone: 01480 447700  
Web: www.quad-hifi.co.uk



## Quad II Classic Integrated (£4500)

Anyone familiar either with vintage Quads or recent models in the Classic range would tell you that they got it as 'right' as Fiat did with the new 500. The Quad II Classic Integrated is unmistakably 'Quad', its first integrated amp and one that seems to have grown organically.

It comes with three line inputs, full tape monitoring and a proper phono section offering switchable

speakers not normally attached to a mere £4500's worth of amplification: Wilson Sophia 2s. The system was up-and-running in ten minutes, exactly as Quad (and Tim) wanted. But we left it playing for an entire day before listening.



### POISE AND POWER

How on earth Tim de Paravicini has managed to voice this amplifier to deliver such silkiness we cannot imagine. But that quality, that poise, contradicts what will invariably turn out to be the Quad's biggest selling point as regards its performance: this

amp is so powerful that it almost counters its own delicacy and sophistication. It rocks, it glides, it shimmies, it pounds...

Does it not excite you to think that you can feed an amplifier, first, a CD of remastered Led Zeppelin, followed by an LP of vintage Streisand, then a glossy C&W epic from George Strait, and all will sound delightful? With vinyl it's

**ABOVE:** Apart from some solid-state circuitry in the MM/MC phono stage, for quietness this model is all-tube. Maintaining its purity, the Quad II Integrated uses four KT66s fed by four ECC88s and two ECC83s. It was designed, says de Paravicini, 'to kick arse'

both quiet and widely dynamic, and the Ortofon 2M Blue loved it. With Koetsu and Transfiguration moving-coils, the extreme treble was slightly soft though. The acoustic space of the Cowboy Junkies' *Trinity Sessions* was open and airy in a way we could not have anticipated.

Another quality manifested itself vividly while listening to a young Rod Stewart working his magic on 'Ol' Man River'. Voices can challenge a system the way a piano does: the textures, the tics, are paramount in recreating a convincing sonic experience. The Quad showcased his voice, including his odd bursts of falsetto, against the churning rhythm section of Mickey Waller and pre-Stones Ron Wood.

Our first taste of truly 'three-dimensional' sound involved the Byrds' *Ballad Of Easy Rider* LP. It was the track 'Armstrong, Aldrin and Collins' and the way the spacecraft launch appeared to rise above the speakers and through the ceiling that taught us in an instant about image height. Uncannily, the Quad does that with both vertical information and off-stage sounds, to the outside of the speakers. If peerless soundstage portrayal is among the Quad's most vivid qualities, it follows then that tonal balance must be close to spot-on as well. Here, too, the Quad proved itself again and again.

### VERDICT

If there is anything unexpected here, it's the palpable 'real-world' power. Tim de Paravicini squeezed out as much grunt as a brace of KT66s-per-side can deliver, without altering the warm, seductive character of a circuit nearly eligible for its bus pass. It's a triumph! 🎧

*'The Quad Integrated is so powerful it almost counters its own delicacy'*

MM and MC settings. Designer Tim de Paravicini has managed not only to fit all this into a compact, stylish package, he's also upped the power: 'The output valves are run more conservatively, yet it produces a genuine 25W/ch. It goes loud without going to pieces'.

Given that the amp oozed robustness, we had no qualms about connecting it to the sort of

### HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Power output (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	32W / 21W
Dynamic power (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	33W / 23W / 13W / 8W
Output impedance (20Hz-20kHz)	0.165-0.265ohm
Frequency response (20Hz-100kHz)	+0.04dB to -18.6dB
Input sensitivity (for 0dBW/25W)	54mV / 273mV
A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 0dBW/25W)	88.9dB / 102.8dB
Distortion (20Hz-20kHz, 10W)	0.023-0.30%
Power consumption (Idle/Rated o/p)	163W/175W
Dimensions (WHD)	310x200x380mm



Bowers & Wilkins

## The origin of true sound

**The all new 805 Diamond** When it comes to faithfully reproducing sound at high frequencies, no other material on earth matches diamond. But up until recently, diamond dome tweeters were reserved for our largest, most expensive reference speakers. No longer. The 805 Diamond is the first

of its kind: the only Bowers & Wilkins bookshelf speaker to incorporate true studio-grade technology in the form of a diamond tweeter. Now you can experience the thrill of true sound in places you never thought possible.

[www.bowers-wilkins.co.uk](http://www.bowers-wilkins.co.uk)





hi-fi news  
EDITOR'S  
CHOICE

AUDIO  
FILE

Pre/power amplifier. Rated at 200W/8ohm  
Made by: Micromega (Audis sarl)  
Supplied by: Absolute Sounds  
Telephone: 020 8971 3909  
Web: www.micromega-hifi.com



## Micromega PA-20/ PW-400 (£3288)

**M**icromega can offer you 13 models including a tuner, four integrated amps, three CD players, a streamer plus a turntable developed by Epure. Here we have the lone preamplifier and the more powerful of two stereo power amps at the top of the range. Despite their lofty position, together they cost only £3288. I can name a dozen different 1m interconnects that sell for more than that.

Wisely, Micromega saved a bundle by using the same housing for all the models, differing only in faceplates – and even those have been reduced to a minimum, eg, the preamp and all of the integrations are the same. It has opted for a sleek fascia with rounded edges and clearly legible, blue-lit displays on the right-hand halves of the panel, to the right of

headphones, driven with its own 2W amp, and direct input from an iPod. Meanwhile, the back offers inputs for tape, four analogue sources as well as a 47kohm MM phono input, and connections for a subwoofer, processor, pre-main-out and interfaces for multi-room installations. Best of all? Balanced main outputs via XLR to exploit the PW-400 at its best.

Fitted with superlative multi-way binding posts and both phono and XLR inputs at the back, and rated by Micromega at 400W/ch into 4ohm and half that into 8ohm, the PW-400 uses the efficiency of Class D to squeeze a seriously powerful amplifier into a tiny chassis.



### AN OLD FAVE...

First up was an old fave, the Lightning Seeds' *Cloudcuckooland*. Although the vocals are delicate

enough to play into the sparse-is-good theory that motivates hi-fi companies to demonstrate their equipment using ultra-lean recordings, the mixes include enough weird

synthetic instruments and snappy percussion to challenge the French duo. What will impress fans of anything even remotely technoid – dig out your old Kraftwerk vinyl for this – is the crispness and speed of upper frequency transients.

'I was reminded of the sound of the system in the SME Music Room'

the stepped volume rotary, with six smoothly-operating buttons below.

For the PA-20, the buttons operate (L-R) input select down, input select up, monitor, mute, headphone and standby. Also found on the front are 3.5mm sockets for

Well, someone clearly spent a lot of time voicing this pair because it consistently avoided anything that you'd call sibilant.

Similarly, with Julie London's close-mic'd vocals on *In Person At The Americana*, it was possible to hear all of the characteristics that made her voice so salaciously seductive, yet no hisses marred the experience. Benefiting even more from the silky top was the brass ensemble that backed her, and the audience applause that welcomed her. Nuances? She possessed a voice of multiple textures, often adding a slight warble to her always smoky delivery. Framing the brass section was a vast, wide and deep soundstage, probably inspired by Place Vendôme: large, yet elegant.

You leave the recording wishing you were there at the performance that night.

As a cold shower, I then turned to TEAC Esoteric's fabulous SACD of Falla's *The Three-Cornered Hat*, a new issue of the Suisse Romande/Ansermet Decca classic recorded in 1961. The opening timpani, the massed chorale, the castanets – I was reminded (and I say this with abject humility) of the sound of the SME Music Room's system with the late AR-A at the controls. The soundstage was of epic proportion, the dynamics unfettered and the tones neutral.

### VERDICT

This sublime combination blends up-to-the-minute ergonomics, total usability, truly sweet sound and blessedly sane prices, yet is still manufactured in Europe rather than Asia. Considering the total tariff, this could be the start of a new Anglo-French *contretemps*. 🎧

**ABOVE:** The PA-20 preamp's volume control offers independent line/headphone output and adjusts in larger or finer steps according to how fast you spin the dial. Volume, input selection, tape monitor and mute are also on the remote. The PW-400 employs analogue Class D amplification

### HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Power output (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	190W / 340W
Dynamic power (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	220W / 411W / 343W / 196W
Output impedance (20Hz–20kHz)	0.014–0.039ohm (PA-20; 24ohm)
Frequency response (20Hz–100kHz)	–0.0 to +0.13dB / –0.1 to –7.8dB
Input sensitivity (for 0dBW/200W)	270mV / 3890mV (balanced in)
A-wtd S/N ratio (pre/power)	97.5dB (0dBV) / 82.6dB (0dBW)
Distortion (20Hz–20kHz, pre/power)	0.0002–0.0007% / 0.009–0.01%
Power consumption (idle/Rated o/p)	28W/460W (PA-20; 9W)
Dimensions (WHD, pre/power)	430x70x300/430x70x300mm





**Belfast**  
6th - 7th November  
**2010**

tel. 0845 6436 299

e. [info@niaudioshow.com](mailto:info@niaudioshow.com)

*After 10 years The Northern Ireland Audio Show is back!*

Being held at the Stormont Hotel you will not only have access to free parking, easy transport links and cheap flights, but there are also exclusive discounted rates to stay at the hotel: [www.hastingshotels.com/stormont-hotel](http://www.hastingshotels.com/stormont-hotel), not to mention great food at very reasonable prices.

You could easily make a weekend of it and bring the family - there is lots to see in and around Belfast as well as at the show itself where you will hear and see products from some of the top manufacturers, distributors and dealers around!

<b>Amphion</b>	<b>Roksan</b>	<b>Black Ravioli</b>	<b>Firestone</b>
<b>Blue Horizon</b>	<b>Pure Sound</b>	<b>Triangle</b>	<b>Lars &amp; Ivan</b>
<b>Clearlight Audio</b>	<b>Musical Fidelity</b>	<b>Michelle Engineering</b>	<b>Tokoyo HiFi Racks</b>
<b>Furutech</b>	<b>Splendor Speakers</b>	<b>Trichord</b>	<b>Electrocompaniet</b>
<b>Hi Fi Tuning</b>	<b>Moon Electronics</b>	<b>Townshend</b>	<b>dCs</b>
<b>Iso Tek</b>	<b>Project Turntables</b>	<b>Cabasse</b>	<b>Leema</b>
<b>Marigo Audio</b>	<b>TCI</b>	<b>Focal</b>	<b>Symmetry</b>
<b>Walker Audio</b>	<b>Atlas Cables</b>	<b>KEF</b>	<b>SRM Turntables</b>
<b>Angelsounds</b>	<b>Audio Physics</b>	<b>Linn</b>	<b>Marantz</b>
<b>Audio Epilogue</b>	<b>Belles</b>	<b>Rega</b>	<b>Coda</b>
<b>Dali Speakers</b>	<b>Bel Canto</b>	<b>Panasonic</b>	

Don't miss out, visit [www.niaudioshow.com](http://www.niaudioshow.com) to find out more and book your tickets online. You will automatically be entered into the show free prize draws to win some fantastic prizes!



hi-fine  
EDITOR'S  
CHOICE

AUDIO  
FILE

Balanced preamp and stereo power amp. Rated at 30W Class A  
Made by: Luxman, Japan  
Supplied by: Select Audio  
Telephone: 01900 813064  
Web: www.luxman.co.jp; www.selectaudio.co.uk



## Luxman C-600f/ M-600A (£5995 each)

**W**ith the C-600f preamp and the M-600A stereo power amplifiers, Luxman has delivered its interpretation of current generation solid-state excellence. The power amp offers balanced or single-ended operation, the option of converting it into a bridged

The C-600f, meanwhile, can accept two balanced sources, five unbalanced, tape in/out via RCA phonos, and two sets of main outs, both available in balanced or unbalanced mode. Also included are on/off triggers, its own mains polarity tester and an earthing post.

Both units show clean faces to the world. The power amp has LEDs to indicate standby, balanced operation and bridged mode while lights glow from the sides of the square panel to indicate

power levels. The preamp's display is more conventional, with text readouts to indicate source, volume settings and other modes.



### A NEW EXPERIENCE

What always seems to separate the good from the great is the airiness on the right channel percussion during Jimi Hendrix's 'The Wind Cries Mary'. It's a silky wash that

favours tube playback. As open as you could want, the performance had a sense of space that – even though you know it's an artificial, studio-bound soundfield – rendered speakers invisible. And yet the open terrain, the spacious stage which seemed to have had its boundaries extended, was far from the system's greatest virtue. That it was, like all well-designed solid-state hardware of no evident compromise, ghostly silent, with those black velvet backgrounds against which to present the sounds, is almost a given. The Luxman combination did such a sterling job with transparency that we were able to discern layering even with mono recordings, like the take of 'Piggies' from The Beatles' *White Album*.

Vocals were an area where we expected negatives to emerge. Perhaps we'd experience a dearth of warmth, maybe a trace of sibilance. Nope – Alicia Keys' prodigious talents were amplified, her 'Ode To New York' possessing a poignancy that proved far more elusive in other systems. And while in no way detrimental to the overall performance, the experience was strengthened by a new intimacy. Which is, after all, what a good system should convey when intimacy is appropriate.

### VERDICT

You'd be hard-pressed to suggest that one unit here dominates the other in establishing the character of the performance. So, while both proved fascinating partnered with other makes, they deserve each other to deliver their best. And their best is a marriage of detail and warmth reminiscent of a Krell KSA-50. Truly delicious. 🍷

**ABOVE:** Amp LEDs indicate standby, balanced operation and bridged status; we don't recommend stacking due to Class-A heat generation, but the two look great this way!

'Their best is a marriage of detail and warmth... just like a Krell KSA-50'

monoblock of up to a specified 120W/8ohm, plus a couple of neat touches on the back. Like all new Lux products, an indicator tells you with the press of a button if your mains polarity is correct. Another rear panel delight is a quartet of the largest speaker terminals I've ever seen, a nod to those who like tight terminals, but with an aperture for banana plugs.

### HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Power output (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	115W / 200W
Dynamic power (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	120W / 225W / 380W / 590W
Output impedance (20Hz–20kHz)	0.030–0.075ohm
Freq. resp. (pre/power, 20Hz–100kHz)	+0.0 to –3.9dB / +0.0 to –3.1dB
Input sensitivity (pre/power)	267mV (0dBV) / 102mV (0dBW)
A-wtd S/N ratio (pre/power)	96.2dB (0dBV) / 83.9dB (0dBW)
Distortion (pre/power, 20Hz–20kHz)	0.002–0.008% / 0.0002–0.03%
Power consumption (Idle/Rated o/p)	265W / 315W (4W standby)
Dimensions (WHD, pre/power)	440x117x407 / 440x189x420mm



\*ON DEMONSTRATION

A y r e



V-5XE POWER AMPLIFIER \*



K-5XE<sup>MP</sup> PRE-AMPLIFIER \*



L-5XE POWER FILTER \*



## DX-5 UNIVERSAL A/V ENGINE \*

It plays back virtually all digital formats, both video and audio, and it also provides a connection to provide the full advantages of computer-based audio playback. Thanks to its advanced technological features the DX-5 will extract the full measure of performance from all digital video and audio formats like no other.



## QB-9 USB DAC \*

A simple USB connection engages the Asynchronous transfer mode ensuring accurately timed music with jitter levels over a hundred times lower than previous USB solutions. Perfectly proportioned, the QB-9 is destined to convert your computer into an uncompromised digital library of your favorite music.

Wadia



W381 MEDIA PLAYER \*



W171i TRANSPORT \*  
W151<sup>+</sup> AMPLIFIER/DAC \*



**MUSICARCH**

brighton | east sussex | DEMONSTRATIONS BY APPOINTMENT ONLY PLEASE

01273 607 983

discover@musicarch.co.uk  
www.musicarch.co.uk




**AUDIO  
FILE**

Solid state preamp and power amp. Rated at 148W/8ohm  
 Made by: Leema Acoustics  
 Supplied by: Leema Acoustics  
 Telephone: 01938 811900  
 Web: www.leema-acoustics.com



## Leema Pyxis/ Hydra II (£3995/£3495)

**T**he Pyxis is a sturdy, handsomely-styled preamp which, in the best modern fashion, can be used with all manner of amplifiers despite a plethora of Leema-only features. Pyxis provides both fully-balanced and single-ended analogue operation, with extensive custom-install/home cinema-friendly settings and sockets. Its price is further ameliorated by the inclusion of digital ins and outs, including USB and S/PDIF in both directions, so the Pyxis is able to accommodate all

input, separate record and monitor for each input, mono and phase inversion (blessedly available from the remote), EQ defeat, front panel 3.5mm headphone and MP3 sockets – nothing has been left out. It's a lot of kit for the money.

The Hydra II stereo power amp contains two massive toroidal transformers to power each channel, plus a third dedicated solely to the control circuitry. It's configured to operate as a stereo amplifier, a mono amplifier, or as a two-channel amplifier designated as left or right for bi-amping. It also offers throughput and slave set-ups for just about any multichannel or multi-room package.

Enabling all of this is

the company's 'Leema's Intelligent Protocol System' (aka LIPS).

Connected by a directional wire with colour-coded mini-jacks, the system allows greater control over partnered Leema components.



### POWER 'N' PUNCH

The remastered CD of the Rolling Stones' *Exile On Main Street* exhibited power and punch, with

no exacerbation of the material's inherent rawness. The silky twang of 'Sweet Virginia' sounded so valve-like that any preconceptions were eroded instantaneously: this pairing suffers nothing in the way of exaggerated solid-state-itis.

What some listeners might find captivating is the Leemas' ability to juggle bottom-octave textures, especially when Charlie Watts' drums were sounding (deliberately) papery and dry, while Bill Wyman's bass was loping along with almost alcoholic abandon.

Never did I feel robbed of any information, especially spatial clues. Equally, not once did I feel the cut of too much sibilance, nor a sensation of clinical sterility. When called upon to be nasty, as with the Stones, the Leemas could be as brutal as certain powerhouses at double the price. When asked to behave, with delicate material, out came their Sunday best. The units' handling of the sublime vocals on early-to-mid-period Doobie Brothers, from the recent MoFi reissues, came so close to my all-valve reference combination of Audio Research REF 5 and Quad II-eighty monoblocks that I had to struggle to pinpoint the differences.

### VERDICT

The sheer worthiness, competence, ergonomic intelligence and 'more-ish' sound this pair delivers could well catch those unfamiliar with Leema products unawares. Whether with silky Nat 'King' Cole recordings or Bad Company via CD, the performance was neutral and uncolored, yet as involving as a tube set-up. Leema's simply doing something so right. It just may be the UK brand to watch. ☺

**ABOVE:** If the Leemas appeal to the minimalist inside you then beware, the duo provides a cool light show when various operations are accessed. The volume setting is visible from across the room

'Leema's simply doing something so right. It may be the UK brand to watch'

of your digital sources and feed a computer for archiving.

For another £500, the Pyxis can be supplied with an onboard phono section (based on Leema's £3k Agena). Remote control, individually configurable inputs, selectable balanced or single-ended CD, AV Direct setting, tape and tuner inputs, individual adjustment of gain, bass and treble for each

### HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

<b>Power output</b> (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	175W / 390W
<b>Dynamic power</b> (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	215W / 400W / 670W / 51W
<b>Output impedance</b> (20Hz–20kHz)	0.041–0.11ohm
<b>Freq. resp.</b> (pre/power, 20Hz–100kHz)	–0.0 to +0.0dB / –0.1 to –2.15dB
<b>Input sensitivity</b> (pre/power)	98mV (0dBV) / 113mV (0dBW)
<b>A-wtd S/N ratio</b> (pre/power)	92.3dB (0dBV) / 82.2dB (0dBW)
<b>Distortion</b> (pre/power, 20Hz–20kHz)	0.0004–0.002% / 0.0005–0.02%
<b>Power consumption</b> (Idle/Rated o/p)	54W / 496W
<b>Dimensions</b> (WHD, pre/power)	440x110x330 / 440x110x330mm



AUDIO  
FILE

Mono power amplifiers. Rated at 60W/8ohm  
 Made by: Pass Laboratories  
 Supplied by: Select Audio  
 Telephone: 01900 813064  
 Web: www.passlabs.com



## Pass Labs XA60.5 (£9850 pair)

**B**ottom of the five-model XA.5 series of mono power amplifiers, all of them true Class A designs, the XA60.5 offers a rated output of 60W and, it's claimed, much higher current capability than previous XA models: to the tune of a five-fold improvement. So tough loudspeaker loads, of which there are still many, are grist to the XA.5 series' mill.

The traditional virtues of Class A promise compensation in the form of effortless detail and natural warmth of sound. You pay for this in your electricity bills. The XA60.5 is specified as drawing 225W from the

along either side and grab handles at the back to make lifting its 27.6kg a little easier. The amp has two pairs of output sockets to facilitate bi-wiring – but they are disposed to either side of the back panel, as if this were a stereo amplifier. Note – as the owner's manual warns – that the output is balanced, so the black terminal is not connected to earth. A separate earth terminal is provided if you need to hook up a powered subwoofer via its high-level inputs.

Nobody is going to buy this amplifier for its styling. They'll buy it for its sound, and that is something out of the ordinary.



### SUBTLE SOUND

This is an amp which melds transparency and tonal warmth, subtle insight and dynamic

weight with a facility that may well be unprecedented. Its sound is endlessly inviting but you never have the sense that it's pulling the wool over your eyes, that it is playing some euphonic trick of tonal balance or distortion. Actually it is resolutely neutral, and able to pick up, dust off and start all over again tracks you thought you knew intimately. But it delivers

that insight without ever sounding aggressive or sterile. In fact, the XA60.5 lives and breathes as few other amps manage.

The simple things in audio are sometimes the hardest, a good example being convincing reproduction of a single human voice. Playing Sara K's interpretation of Don McLean's 'Vincent' [Chesky JD 133] we were struck by the rare persuasiveness of the vocal: its natural warmth, its subtlety of inflection, its flow. Sara K's understated, world-weary performance never sounded a more valid alternative to McLean's towering original than it did via the Pass Labs XA60.5.

Time for something more complex, so on went Eric Clapton's 'Double Trouble' [Polydor 531 827-2]. Even before the song started we were thinking we'd never heard the audience conveyed so palpably before, and as we continued listening we realised we were hearing the track anew – that what, for example, had previously been just an on-beat cymbal was now an on-beat cymbal with a distinct character. Having listened to this track a hundred times before, it now seemed newly minted!

### VERDICT

Could anyone fail to be enthralled by the sound of the XA60.5? It's possible if you've become used to the glare of a lesser solid-state amplifier or the alluring sophistry of some valve amps. But if you haven't forgotten what music really sounds like, and you have source components and speakers able to do justice to the amp's capabilities, then hearing one could well be a life-changing experience. ☺

**ABOVE:** Shaped fascia of thick anodised aluminium makes an immediate visual impact. The side-mounted heatsinks are also noteworthy for their uptilted horizontal vanes. In use these get hot to the touch

'Could anyone fail to be enthralled by the sound of this power amplifier?'

wall socket but our mains monitor said 136W for one of the review pair and 150W for the other, for a mains voltage of 240Vrms. On this basis the XA60.5 won't remain in Class A up to voltage clipping into low impedances.

As far as aesthetics go, the XA60.5 is straight from the US muscle amp style book: chunky aluminium fascia, large heatsinks

### HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Power output (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	129W / 228W
Dynamic power (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	133W / 250W / 460W / 375W
Output impedance (20Hz–20kHz)	0.017–0.034ohm
Frequency response (20Hz–100kHz)	+0.0dB to –2.5dB
Input sensitivity (for 0dBW/60W)	134mV / 1037mV (balanced)
A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 0dBW/60W)	87.5dB / 105.3dB
Distortion (20Hz–20kHz)	0.0026–0.27%
Power consumption (Idle/Rated o/p)	150W/193W (15W standby)
Dimensions (WHD)	483x178x483mm



Somehow Coventry didn't seem such a bad place after all



 **Pro-Ject**  
AUDIO SYSTEMS  
Worth the odd sacrifice.

Distributed in the UK by: Henley Designs Ltd, 01235 511166  
[www.henleydesigns.co.uk](http://www.henleydesigns.co.uk), e-mail - [info@henleydesigns.co.uk](mailto:info@henleydesigns.co.uk)






Two-box power amplifier. Rated at 1000W/8ohm  
 Made by: Musical Fidelity Ltd  
 Supplied by: Musical Fidelity Ltd  
 Telephone: 0208 900 2866  
 Web: www.musicalfidelity.com



# Musical Fidelity Titan (£20,000)

**L**eadng from the top of this amplifier's trump card specification sheet is the £20,000 price tag, followed closely by the two-box design and claimed delivery of 1kW into an 8ohm load. Reading the spec-sheet alone does little to prepare you for the sheer size, weight and physical presence of the two-box Titan. It is massive, with a combined weight over 110kg, each unit boasting a footprint the size of a small chest of drawers.

Sitting side-by-side you have two enormous works of art in milled aluminium – low, wide and deep.

*'It immediately presented itself as nimble, incisive and with a sweet top end'*

Along with the fins that run the full length of all four cheeks, the styling aids cooling through a half dozen grilled ports in the top of each case.

The Titan is a pure dual-mono design in two cases, but rather than go down the route of two self-contained monoblocks, one of the Titan cases houses two discrete power supplies of epic proportion. The amplifier box is

about two-thirds the weight of the power supply and contains four power stages configured in discrete bridged pairs. It is equally extravagantly finished with balanced XLR and RCA inputs and dual locking speaker terminals that are beefy enough to tether a small ship. Everything is massive, solid and feels like it would last a lifetime of abuse, perhaps even two or three.



## SIMPLY HOOKED

Connected to a Sony SCD1 player via a balanced input we were hooked from the first notes. 'Blood Red River' from Beth Orton's *Central Reservation* CD was etched into the room with breathtaking clarity, neatly crafting the subtle string-bass lines in a way that few other amplifiers

manage. The Titan immediately presented itself as nimble, incisive and blessed with a top end of remarkable sweetness and resolution. Ms Orton's quite ragged vocal was portrayed as rich with emotion, caressing with an enticing and deeply sexual quality.

The pivotal moment in this relationship was playing Antimatter's recent live CD

**ABOVE:** The milled fascia features what must be the most understated power button in amplifier history. At only 4mm in diameter it unleashes the Titan's 1kW/channel into 8ohm or 2kW into 4ohm

*Live @ An Club.* This intense recording of acoustic guitar and Mike Moss' intriguing vocal has an amazing rawness and vitality that flies against the trend for dynamic compression on modern recordings. Playing this CD through the Titan was an instantaneous transportation to the time and place. We were there in the crowd.

Such is the Titan's lucidity and separation of instruments through the midband, we were overcome with a strange urge to reconnect and set-up a favourite hi-fi ornament, a 1988 vintage Michell Gyrodek. The black disc's charms and top-end dynamic were so well presented by the Titan we found ourselves scheduling vinyl evenings into the diary before the amp's inevitable return to MF.

Whitesnake's bluesy rifts on the live album of *In The Heart Of The City* were carved into the room with sweeping scale, the Titan neatly recreating all the atmosphere of a packed Hammersmith Odeon.

As the track played out on its epic solo, any diehard rock fan would have to sit on his hands not to pick up an air guitar and squeeze out those last few chords.

Never have we heard a traditional amp which does everything quite so well. From the tightest of bottom-end notes right up into its extended top-end.

## VERDICT

Sophisticated and technically accomplished, this amp has every right to revel in the cliché of being an open window on the music. Stunning midrange lucidity and a potent yet always sprightly balance make for wonderful musicality and hi-fi magic of the highest order. ☺

## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Power output (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	1050W / 1996W
Dynamic power (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	1060W / 2.1kW / 4.1kW / 5.9kW
Output impedance (20Hz–20kHz)	0.029–0.17ohm
Frequency response (20Hz–100kHz)	+0.0dB to –2.07dB
Input sensitivity (for 0dBW/1000W)	88mV / 2810mV (balanced)
A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 0dBW/1000W)	95.5dB / 125.5dB
Distortion (20Hz–20kHz, 10W/8ohm)	0.00046–0.0017%
Power consumption (Idle/Rated o/p)	110W/1600W (per channel)
Dimensions (WHD, amp/PSU)	483x185x635/615mm





AUDIO  
FILE

Augmented 2-way floorstanding loudspeaker  
Made by: JBL Inc/Harman International  
Supplied by: CSE Custom Install  
Telephone: 01423 359054  
Web: www.csecustom.com; www.jblsynthesis.com

# JBL Project K2 S9900 (£28,000)

JBL's 'Project' speakers come from parent company Harman International's high-performance AV (HPAV) division that showcases cutting-edge technology in specialised products.

The enclosure's 25mm-thick curved panels are formed using two decoupled layers of MDF, grooved to allow flexure and then locked into the desired radius with a backing material, the voids between the grooves filled with a foam and glue. Omnipresent is the company's 1500AL-1 woofer featuring an Alnico magnet and 380mm (15in) layered paper pulp matrix cone with Aquaplas damping and foamed rubber surround. The speaker's

*'A wooden stick striking a drum skin sounded uncannily realistic'*

'476Mg' 100mm (4in) diameter high-frequency compression driver employs a newly designed magnesium alloy diaphragm with diecast zinc phase plug, edge-wound aluminium voice coil and neodymium magnet assembly.

The speaker's primary crossover point is low at 900Hz (24dB/octave), the compression driver/horn working up to a claimed 22kHz. JBL calls the K2 an 'augmented 2-way' as an ultra high frequency compression driver is 'turned on' at 15kHz to cover a further two octaves. Mounted to a separate Sonoglas horn this '045Be-1' unit uses a 25mm beryllium diaphragm just 0.04mm thick, its aluminium ribbon voice coil wound without a former and attached directly to the diaphragm.

The supertweeter's tiny phasing plug assembly is made using stereo lithography techniques, while small changes to the surround shape and clamping have yielded a claimed

5dB of increased output above 30kHz compared with the '045Be' driver used in the previous K2. The enclosure has a 100mm diameter flared port with a tuning frequency of 34Hz that vents at the rear.



## TOTALLY FRESH

The K2s provided a level of transparency through the midrange and treble one might normally associate with a sweet-sounding electrostatic panel. They illuminated a recording's individual constituents, exposing the subtlest of details such as reverberation tails disappearing into silence.

Stereo imaging and the recreation of image depth was fantastic while the brilliance of the K2's high frequencies made the sound of a wooden stick striking a cymbal or drum skin uncannily realistic. The sound was brightly lit, yet the K2 pulled off the trick of being forgiving of harsh recordings yet never 'shouting'.

I wouldn't have thought it possible for a speaker to be so analytical while being so thoroughly musical in equal measure.

And while lovers of infrasonic bass might hanker after deeper low-end, there's no denying that 15in woofer packs a mighty punch, with dynamics that can make you wince.

## VERDICT

The sound the K2 S9900s produce is quite remarkable, combining revelatory analytical detail with a surprisingly forgiving nature. So while brightly-lit they remain easy on the ear, producing mellifluous and addictive music making. To hear them is to want them. 🎧

**ABOVE RIGHT:** Crossover at 900Hz blends the speaker's 15in bass driver with its horn-loaded 4in magnesium alloy compression driver



## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Sensitivity (SPL/1m/2.83Vrms - Mean/IEC/Music)	92.0dB/91.5dB/91.2dB
Impedance modulus min/max (20Hz-20kHz)	4.8ohm @ 20kHz 48.6ohm @ 58Hz
Impedance phase min/max (20Hz-20kHz)	-57° @ 66Hz 40° @ 49Hz
Pair matching (200Hz-20kHz)	±0.9dB
LF/HF extension (-6dB ref 200Hz/10kHz)	42Hz / >40kHz/>40kHz
THD 100Hz/1kHz/10kHz (for 90dB SPL/1m)	N/A (see above)
Dimensions (HWD)	1200x560x350mm



AUDIO  
FILE

Three-way floorstanding loudspeaker  
 Made by: Lumen White Research Group  
 Supplied by: Amplitune  
 Telephone: 07932 355276  
 Web: www.lumen-white.com



# Lumen White Silver Flame (£25,000)

**P**ure ceramic diaphragms are a rarity, yet all five drivers in this arresting-looking three-way design have white ceramic diaphragms in the form of everted (concave) domes. The attraction of a ceramic diaphragm material is that it can be lighter and stiffer than common metal equivalents, which promises higher bending wave velocity and hence higher breakup frequency for a given diaphragm size and shape.

The manufacturer of the Silver Flame's drivers (Thiel Accuton in Germany) also claims the material provides high internal damping, to help quell those diaphragm resonances when they occur.

The Silver Flame's most eye-catching feature is its large,

*'Symphonic Dances was rendered better than we've ever heard it before'*

curvaceous 'instrument grade' cabinet. All of 1.15m tall, it's heavy too at 52kg. A 'plywood compound construction' with no MDF content and no damping of the enclosed air, in horizontal cross-section it is almost teardrop-shaped, albeit truncated at the thin end to form a narrow rear panel and again at the thick end to form a flat front baffle. This should provide numerous benefits: increased side panel stiffness, suppression of internal air resonance modes and reduced diffraction effects from the front baffle edges.

Any chance of bi-wiring/amping or tri-wiring/amping the Silver Flame is removed by it having a single set of terminals, albeit classy WBT items. This is clearly a very deliberate choice by the Lumen White design team. By the way: although it is far from immediately obvious, the Silver Flame comes

**RIGHT** All five drive units have ceramic diaphragms grilles. The midrange driver is positioned at ear level, with tweeter above, to ensure time alignment

reflex-loaded in the bass, the port not being the familiar tube that exhausts the front or rear panel but two narrow slits in the sculpted rear of the cabinet.



## SIMPLY SEAMLESS

If we had to choose just one word to express what makes the Silver Flames special, it would be seamlessness. The 24/96 DVD version of Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances* [Classic Records DAD 1004] was rendered better than we have ever heard it before, combining riveting dynamic snap and punch with the delicate touch necessary to do full justice to the tone colours of the spot-lit woodwind.

They also did an unusually fine job of recreating the buzz of live performance that does more than compensate for the rough edges of 'Double Trouble' from Eric Clapton's *Just One Night* [Polydor 531 827-2].

In short, this is an unusually fine loudspeaker. As for value, I will just say this: were the asking price half the current figure I'd be cupping my hands round my mouth to shout to the audiophile world, 'This you have to hear'. As it is, the high cost of joining the Silver Flame owner's club tempers my enthusiasm a little.

## VERDICT

The unusual cabinet form here does a fine job of suppressing structural and enclosed air resonances, while the five ceramic-diaphragm drive units are seamlessly integrated to deliver high resolution, dynamic sound that always serves the music, whether large-scale or small-scale. A pricey, but classy product. 🎵



## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

<b>Sensitivity</b> (SPL/1m/2.83Vrms - Mean/IEC/Music)	91.5dB / 91.1dB / 91.2dB
<b>Impedance modulus min/max</b> (20Hz-20kHz)	3.6ohm @ 3.3kHz 17.2ohm @ 53Hz
<b>Impedance phase min/max</b> (20Hz-20kHz)	-56° @ 67Hz 35° @ 19.7kHz
<b>Pair matching</b> (300Hz-20kHz)	±1.1dB
<b>HF extension</b> (-6dB ref 10kHz)	39kHz / 39kHz
<b>THD 100Hz/1kHz/10kHz</b> (for 90dB SPL/1m)	0.4% / 0.1% / 0.1%
<b>Dimensions</b> (HWD)	1150x290x640mm



## The new Naga BPS battery powered phono pre-amplifier

**“We salute its profoundly elegant and homogeneous musicality, its compactness... that will appeal as much to audiophiles as to the professionals”.**

Laurent Thorin on the new Nagra MSA amplifier – Haute Fidélité, January 2010

The full review can be downloaded as a pdf on our website in the amplifiers section



BPS battery powered phono pre-amplifier

Background: comparison of size against VPS phono pre-amplifier

ACUSTICA APPLICATA

ACCUPHASE

AUDIO ANALOGUE

AUDIOPLAN

AVALON ACOUSTICS

AYRE ACOUSTICS

BENZ-MICRO

CARDAS

CONRAD-JOHNSON

DAVINCIAUDIO LABS

FUTUREGLASS

GAMUT

HRS

KARAN ACOUSTICS

LEBEN

LYRA

MAGNUM DYNALAB

MIT CABLES

NAGRA

NOTTINGHAM ANALOGUE

PAGODE

PEAK CONSULT

QUADRASPIRE

SILTECH

SME LIMITED

SPECTRAL AUDIO

STAX

SYSTEM AUDIO

TRANSFIGURATION

YPSILON

ZANDEN



DAC – 192/24 upsampling DAC



CDC CD player



MSA amplifier – 60wpc/8ohms



PL-L pre-amplifier

**We have the largest selection of Nagra products in the UK.**

For further info please visit our website: [www.audioconsultants.co.uk](http://www.audioconsultants.co.uk)

Demonstrations by appointment

Mondays to Saturdays 10am to 6pm. It is advisable to call us before visiting.

Part exchange welcome. Ex-demonstration and previously owned equipment listed on our website.



AUDIO  
FILE

Three-way floorstanding loudspeaker  
 Made by: Wilson Audio  
 Supplied by: Absolute Sounds  
 Telephone: 0208 971 3904  
 Web: www.wilsonaudio.com



# Wilson Audio Sophia 3 (£16,990)

**W**hile there's absolutely no such thing as a 'universal' component in the truest sense,

there are those which are generous with the way they interact with other items. WATT Puppies can be ornery. They can make mincemeat of amplifiers. Conversely, Sophias don't make such demands. We've even run 'em with a £700 Croft. But the Sophia Series 2 was due for a refresher. As Wilson sees it, the company has – since the '2 first appeared – moved ahead quite radically with its driver technology. Because Wilson is a firm believer in the trickle-down process, it was time for the Sophia 2 to share in the tweeter developed for the MAXX Series 3 and used in the Sasha W/P.

This 1in inverted titanium dome tweeter employs techniques conceived to reduce back-wave reflections that might propagate through the diaphragm, in turn adding noise and distortion.

When it comes to the midband, the Sophia 3 enjoys a simplified version of the driver found in the Alexandria X2 Series 2, MAXX and Sasha, closing the sonic gap between them. Meanwhile, a new

This provides the time alignment for the midband and treble – an obsession at Wilson.

## GENTLE GIANT

We are tempted to put the move from Sophia 2 to 3 on the same level as that of the last of the WATT Puppies to the Sasha W/P. The Sophia differs from its dearer siblings in terms of gentility, without giving many of their virtues.

As Keb' Mo' demonstrates, the Sophia 3 can retrieve detail with precision almost as 'macro' as the Sasha's, while the soundstage and all of its proportions are simply an exact scale replica of the huge floorstanders. Contrasting sounds further strengthened our belief that the Sophia remains peerless as an egalitarian design. On one hand were recordings from Rick Nelson. His voice, pleasant but never powerful, can be swamped by the backing band. The Sophia retained his presence front-and-centre, with absolutely complementary levels.

Utterly alien to this is Tom Waits' 2006 triple disc epic, *Orphans*. What Waits feeds us is an aural landscape somewhere between fin de siècle sleaze/romance and post-nuclear holocaust urban decay. In defiance of all that is logical, the genteel, even demure Sophia turns into a trollop. In fishnet stockings. This is what high-end audio is all about: a

listener's transcendent involvement with the musical event.

## VERDICT

Just as the Sasha shocked listeners in 2009, so does the third Sophia represent a disproportionate jump. The Sophia 2s remain magnificent, but the gains in bass authenticity and presence, the impact of the extreme treble and the coherence of the '3 are simply dazzling. It's a major coup indeed. 🎧

**'The Wilson Sophia 3 remains peerless as an egalitarian design'**

woofer sports a magnet structure twice the size of the Sophia 2's, retaining only its predecessor's voice coil and cone.

And it's not simply the drivers that ring in the changes. The crossover has been completely reworked, benefiting from Wilson's sophisticated computer modelling, while the enclosure – made of its 'X-material' – has been re-shaped, with special attention paid to the slope of the upper baffle.



**ABOVE:** Behind the grille sits a 10in aluminium cone woofer, 7in cellulose/paper pulp mid and 1in titanium dome tweeter

## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

<b>Sensitivity</b> (SPL/1m/2.83Vrms – Mean/IEC/Music)	87.8dB/87.2dB/86.8dB
<b>Impedance modulus min/max</b> (20Hz–20kHz)	3.0ohm @ 108Hz 12.8ohm @ 20kHz
<b>Impedance phase min/max</b> (20Hz–20kHz)	–47° @ 52Hz 31° @ 491Hz
<b>Pair matching</b> (300Hz–20kHz)	±0.9dB
<b>LF/HF extension</b> (–6dB ref 200Hz/10kHz)	33Hz / 24.5kHz/24.6kHz
<b>THD 100Hz/1kHz/10kHz</b> (for 90dB SPL/1m)	0.2% / 2.5% / 0.1%
<b>Dimensions</b> (HWD)	1045x346x481mm



hi-fi news  
EDITOR'S  
CHOICE

AUDIO  
FILE

Two-way compact reflex-loaded loudspeaker  
Made by: Green Mountain Audio Inc  
Supplied by: Artisan Audio  
Telephone: 01494 858471  
Web: www.greenmountainaudio.com

# Green Mountain Audio Eos (£4400)

It's a heartening change to review a speaker that eschews not only the conventional box cabinet but also the materials from which it is traditionally constructed, and the predictable – and oh so dull – wood veneer finish.

Green Mountain Audio launched the Eos and Eos HD in 2008, the HD being a 'breathed on' version with enhanced crossover and Marigo Labs' CopperMatrix internal wiring.

What both models share is a moulded Q-Stone cabinet of marble-loaded resin, a first-order and hence linear-phase crossover with Zobel network compensation of driver inductance, and a unique tweeter arrangement whereby the entire tweeter module atop the cabinet can be slid back and forth

balance. There's a lack of midrange warmth here, although curiously it's more apparent on some programme material than others.

## PURE BLEND

For instance, I didn't feel that Ella Fitzgerald's masterly 'Reach For Tomorrow' [Verve 839 838-2] – a track that's very sensitive to a speaker's ability to reveal vocal nuance – was tonally cool or upper-mid forward, but other items clearly were. One such was Diana Krall's 'Narrow Daylight' (24/96 version from Dual Disc, Verve 0602498648247), where both the vocal and acoustic guitar break had a little more edge to them than they should.

This is certainly not a speaker you'd want to hitch up to an amplifier or source that's prone to harshness.

What you gain from this acceptance of the Eos's sometimes forward nature is a really quite special blend of insight, spaciousness and sheer persuasiveness on material to which it's well suited. To label this as a speaker best adapted to small musical forces would be to do it an injustice, but there's no question that it excels on simply accompanied vocals, small jazz ensembles, chamber music, etc. Particularly vocals.

With the tweeter optimally positioned, the Eos's ability to transport the singer to the listening room was simply uncanny. The sound was pretty good even with the tweeter off its sweet spot, but with correct tweeter alignment the sheer resolution of vocal nuance and inflection came as something of

'The sheer resolution of vocal nuance came as something of a shock'

in a groove in order to time-align it accurately with the 170mm Aura Sound bass-mid driver. The tweeter is a soft dome unit from SEAS that lacks the ultrasonic resonance of metal dome designs but provides useful output to beyond 30kHz.

The traditional knuckle-rap test confirms the inertness of the moulded Eos cabinet – each weighs a little over 20kg – and it's there to be valued in this speaker's unusual lack of the false lower-midrange bloom that we're habituated to hearing from conventional slab-faced box cabinets. Once it's removed, you wonder how you ever lived with such a colouration.


This is one contributor to the Eos's outstandingly open, clean sound. Another, I'm sure, is the first-order crossover. It has to be said, though, that the Eos's rare clarity is also in part due to a less than scrupulously neutral tonal



**ABOVE:** Both drive units are covered by a thin foam 'grille' which is pushed into a circular groove within the cabinet moulding. A metal trim ring is then added to disguise the groove

a shock. In particular, we've never heard Kurt Elling's voice on 'Goin' Back to Joe's' [Naim CD080] more realistically rendered.

## VERDICT

Not everyone will like the Eos. Its lack of bass clout will put off some, and its upper-midrange forwardness others. But if your signal sources and amplifiers are free of hardness, and particularly if your preference is for smaller musical forces and especially the human voice, this novel, thoughtful speaker has a lot to commend it. As an alternative to the usual veneered wooden box, it's a breath of fresh air. And it comes with a lifetime guarantee to boot. 

## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Sensitivity (SPL/1m/2.83Vrms – Mean/IEC/Music)	92.4dB/92.4dB/92.6dB
Impedance modulus min/max (20Hz–20kHz)	4.2ohm @ 242Hz 17.9ohm @ 38Hz
Impedance phase min/max (20Hz–20kHz)	–44° @ 130Hz 45° @ 28Hz
Pair matching (200Hz–20kHz)	±1.0dB
LF/HF extension (–6dB ref 200Hz/10kHz)	81Hz / >40kHz/36.8kHz
THD 100Hz/1kHz/10kHz (for 90dB SPL/1m)	1.8% / 0.4% / 0.4%
Dimensions (HWD)	505x224x321mm



# THE EVENT THAT'S CREATED BY MUSIC LOVERS FOR MUSIC LOVERS



## DAY Audio Event

**12th** FRIDAY  
**13th** SATURDAY  
**14th** SUNDAY  
**NOVEMBER**  
**2010**

Best Western Moat House Hotel, Sindlesham,  
Reading. Just off J10 M4.



- Held in the beautiful 'Best Western Moat House Hotel'. On-site parking available.
  - Three day event.
  - More products, more rooms and this year get ready for a full AV room for all you movie buff's.
  - Ben from Ben's Records will also be attending again with his wonderful Vinyl selection for you to purchase.
  - Experts will be on hand, which includes representatives from our fellow Distributors and Manufacturers.
  - Bigger, better and independent.
- Look out for more details on our web sites below.**

**Guildford  
Audio**

t. 01483 537 577  
m. 07979 515 577  
e. sales@guildfordaudio.co.uk  
w. www.guildfordaudio.co.uk

**The Audio**

**Warehouse**

t. 01483 537 577  
m. 07810 546 103  
e. john@theaudiowarehouse.co.uk  
w. www.theaudiowarehouse.co.uk





TELEPHONE  
**01865 790 879**

FAX  
**01865 791 665**

E-MAIL  
**info@oxfordaudio.co.uk**

WEB SITE  
**www.oxfordaudio.co.uk**

#### BUSINESS HOURS

**10am to 6pm  
Monday to Friday**

**10am to 5pm  
Saturday**

**Closed Sunday &  
Bank Holidays**

#### ADDRESS

**Cantay House  
Park End Street  
Oxford  
OX1 1JD**



**Follow  
@oxfordaudio  
on Twitter**

## Hi Fi - Home Cinema - Custom Install

Audio Research, Copland, Crystal Cables, darTZeel, Jadis, Koetsu, Krell,  
Martin Logan, Micromega, Prima Luna, Sonus faber, Theta, Wilson Audio



not sure

**which one  
best describes  
how you feel  
about your  
system?**



not happy

**'not sure'  
'not happy'  
'very unhappy  
or 'happy but...'**



very unhappy

**Why not talk to us  
to see how we can  
help and to find  
out more about the  
collection of brands  
that we specialise  
in. And why not ask  
about our popular  
BUY Now PAY  
Later scheme?\***



happy but...

**We'll soon have  
you feeling 'really  
happy' with your  
system again.**

**\*Buy the product of your dreams from  
Oxford Audio and pay nothing for 12 months\*\***

**\*\*Subject to status/conditions.**



## The NEW ETHOS from Martin Logan

The NEW ETHOS from Martin Logan is an advanced combination of sonic technologies establishing an unprecedented new direction for audiophile design. Descended from Martin Logan's renowned CLX™ loudspeaker, the NEW ETHOS features advanced XStat™ electrostatic technology and a proprietary Vojtko™ crossover topology delivering the highest sonic standards of efficiency and precision. Call Oxford Audio to find out more.



## A NEW breed of amplifier

The NEW Audio Research DSI200 and DS450 are part of the Definition Series. This series showcases new and innovative technology to create products that not only sound wonderfully superior to others, but are more efficient and green too, earning an ENERGY STAR certification. It means far less heat wastage and less electricity consumption, without sacrificing dynamic power and amazing musical performance. The future looks very bright for Audio Research and its many customers. Call Oxford Audio to find out more.

**Please visit [www.oxfordaudio.co.uk](http://www.oxfordaudio.co.uk) to see our complete list of pre-owned items**



AUDIO  
FILETwo-way standmount loudspeaker  
Made by: B&W Group Ltd  
Supplied by: B&W Group Ltd  
Telephone: 01903 221800  
Web: www.bowers-wilkins.co.uk

# B&W 805 Diamond (£3750)



As soon as B&W introduced diamond tweeters to some of its 800 series speakers in 2005, people began asking for a diamond tweeter to be fitted to the smallest model in the range, the 805. Well, the wait is over – the official 805 Diamond is here – though its price has more than doubled over the old 805S.

The good news is that this isn't a mere swap job: B&W has taken the opportunity to re-engineer the 805 thoroughly. For instance, the input terminals are more than chrome plated, with metal 'nuts' replacing the previous plastic items. In fact the terminals are now made of oxygen-free copper while the terminal 'buckets' on the inside are now crimped rather than soldered to the crossover connecting wires.

As before, that crossover is as simple as they come, comprising an air-cored series inductor to the bass-mid unit and new Mundorf silver/gold/oil capacitor in series with the tweeter. While this electrical network gives first-order crossover slopes, the overall acoustic slopes are steeper because of inherent driver roll-offs.

Changes have also been made to the drivers themselves. As well as the new diamond dome, the

The motor system remains the same but the driver has a new chassis and there has been a small retuning of the bass alignment.



## SOFTLY, SOFTLY...

The 805S was never a tonally neutral speaker, and the Diamond is no different. The scooped out upper midrange and lower treble response results in great image depth but it also softens the sound. However, sympathetically partnered with a dynamic amp the 805 Diamond does an unusually fine job of delivering beguiling liquidity of sound on, say, male and female vocals without sounding too sugar-coated.

For instance, it revelled in Radaka Toneff and Steve Dogbrogosz's 'The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress' [Odin NJ 4028-2].

But what about rock? The 805 Diamond is not a natural partner for rock music, any more than the 805S was. Free's 'I'll Be Creepin' [Island CRNCD 2 518 456-2] was just too stodgy with a little too much, albeit clean, bass and not enough presence band snap to build a worm hole back to four decades ago.

Point it at an atmospheric orchestral piece like Hilary Hahn's reading of Vaughan Williams' 'Lark Ascending' [DG 00289 474 8732] and the

B&W is in its element. Hahn's violin tone was silken and the big, elegiac orchestral accompaniment soared like the violin.

Smaller classical forces fared well too, like Quatuor Ebène's much-lauded disc of French string quartets by Ravel, Debussy and Fauré [Virgin Classics 50999 519045 2 4]. This recording can sound a bit glutinous but the 805

**ABOVE:** At first glance the 805 Diamond looks much like its predecessor except for a few cosmetic differences – but the engineering changes beneath add up to a significant redesign

Diamonds did a fine job of cutting through to natural instrumental timbres, revealing the instruments separated in a believable acoustic.

## VERDICT

At the price there are many fine floorstanders offering greater perceived value and, at their best, a more neutral tonal balance better suited to a broad range of musical styles. But the 805 Diamond has a beguiling sound that, on the right material, is tough to resist. What it does well it does very well indeed.

*'Violin tone was silken and the big, elegiac orchestral accompaniment soared'*

tweeter gets a revised surround, selected by listening, a new quad-magnet neodymium-iron-boron motor system designed to enhance sensitivity, and a redesigned housing. The bass-mid unit has a new GRP (glassfibre) voice coil former, revised suspension (the spider material and profile have both been changed) and a new surround material.

## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Sensitivity (SPL/1m/2.83Vrms – Mean/IEC/Music)	89.0dB/88.1dB/87.5dB
Impedance modulus min/max (20Hz–20kHz)	4.4ohms @ 200Hz 49.8ohm @ 33Hz
Impedance phase min/max (20Hz–20kHz)	–60° @ 98Hz 63° @ 29Hz
Pair matching (200Hz–20kHz)	±0.7dB
LF/HF extension (–6dB ref 200Hz/10kHz)	45Hz / >40kHz/ 22.5kHz
THD 100Hz/1kHz/10kHz (for 90dB SPL/1m)	0.8% / 0.4% / <0.1%
Dimensions (HWD)	418x238x352mm





AUDIO  
FILE

Three-way, four-driver floorstanding loudspeaker  
Made by: Monitor Audio  
Supplied by: Monitor Audio  
Telephone: 01268 740580  
Web: www.monitoraudio.co.uk

# Monitor Audio PL200 (£4750)

If the Platinum Series was designed to enhance Monitor Audio's 'street cred' among audio purists in the 21st century, it certainly hit the mark, the compact PL100 standmount and floorstanding PL300 having garnered numerous awards and accolades around the world.

In photographs the '200 might look identical to the PL300 but sit them side by side and immediately you'll notice that it is unquestionably better suited to cramped living spaces, being 155mm slimmer, 85mm shallower and standing 115mm shorter at 998mm (39in) in height.

The ribbon tweeter employed is formed of a material that Monitor Audio calls C-CAM: Ceramic-Coated Aluminium/Magnesium, the company claiming an output approaching as high as 100kHz. The ribbon was developed to work in a two-way speaker so it had to be able to operate from 2.5kHz. It's protected by using an 18dB per octave high pass filter while its deliberately short length and horn profile are aimed at ameliorating

**'Listen to audiophile recordings and the PL200s spring into life'**

the issue of the narrow dispersion common to ribbon transducers – especially long ribbons.

Meanwhile, the bass and midrange drivers are a new in-house development intended to increase cone rigidity while maintaining low mass, so that the cone can work as a piston throughout its operating bandwidth. Similar in design philosophy to Leak's 'sandwich' cone of yesteryear, it comprises a core of an ultra-light honeycomb fibre material called Nomex (originally developed by Dupont)

bonded between two ultra-thin, 40µm, layers of C-CAM alloy.



## PLEASINGLY PUNCHY

Compared with the bigger PL300, the PL200 appears to sacrifice very little in terms of subjective bass extension and 'wallop', sounding as fast and pleasingly punchy in the lower registers as its elder brother. Listen to audiophile recordings, however, and the PL200s spring into life. Opus 3 Records' beautiful analogue recording of *The Omnibus Wind Ensemble's Music* by Frank Zappa [CD 19423, a hybrid SACD] sounded natural and holographic, with the bassoons, clarinets and horns recreated in space in a most delicious fashion.

It's the ribbon tweeter that makes the PL200 stand out from the crowd. Treble detail is fabulous, the speaker sounding clear, open and brightly lit, while lacking the fizz and harsh 'glare' that is common to most speakers that err towards the brighter side of the tonal spectrum.

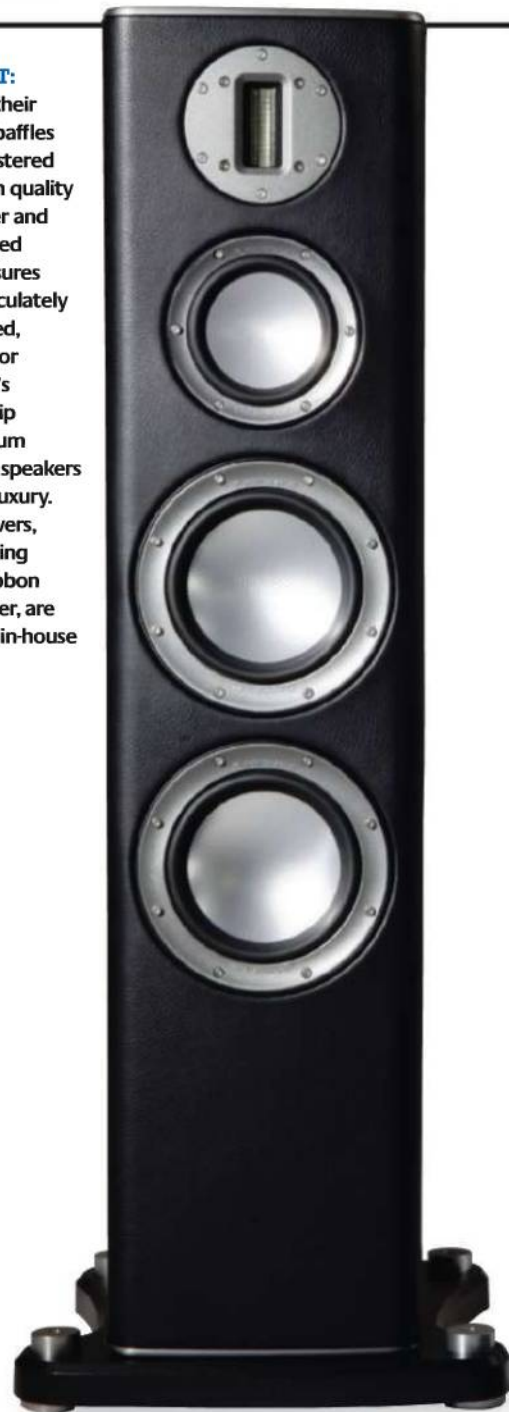
On 'Still... You Turn Me On' – with Greg Lake's vocal just in tune – the Monitor Audio PL200s proved highly revealing of the recording's innate high quality. Elsewhere, sustained bass notes from Emerson's Moog synthesizer and Carl Palmer's rabid assault on his massive drum kit were simply taken in their stride.

## VERDICT

Unashamedly luxurious with a high price to match, the PL200 nevertheless represents fine value given the immaculate finish and attention to detail. While it won't fill a barn of a room with high SPLs, for those smaller than, say, 20ft by 16ft, it's probably as good a monitor as such a room can sensibly accommodate. It delivers explicit, full-range sound in abundance and thus comes heartily commended. 🎧

## RIGHT:

With their front baffles upholstered in high quality leather and sculpted enclosures immaculately finished, Monitor Audio's flagship Platinum Series speakers ooze luxury. All drivers, including the ribbon tweeter, are made in-house



## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Sensitivity (SPL/1m/2.83Vrms – Mean/IEC/Music)	90.3dB / 89.0dB / 88.9dB
Impedance modulus min/max (20Hz–20kHz)	3.8ohm @ 138Hz 15.0ohm @ 26Hz
Impedance phase min/max (20Hz–20kHz)	–41° @ 80Hz 35° @ 20Hz
Pair matching (200Hz–20kHz)	±0.6dB
LF/HF extension (–6dB ref 200Hz/10kHz)	47Hz / >40kHz / >40kHz
THD 100Hz/1kHz/10kHz (for 90dB SPL/1m)	1.0% / 0.2% / 0.2%
Dimensions (HWD)	998x255x285mm





# audio-T

While many of our competitors have chosen to focus on home cinema and TV, at Audio T we've never lost sight of our roots... set down in 2 channel over 44 years ago. We sell home cinema, of course, but we also have a range of 2 channel brands that is second to none, with streaming products from Naim, Arcam, Olive and Sonos.

All our stores have knowledgeable staff and a comfortable demonstration room. We can deliver and install systems for you and we are always happy to live up to our Price Promise.

So if you love music and want a system that will make you listen to more, you know where to come.

#### Brighton

01273 609431

#### Bristol

01179 264975

#### Cheltenham

01242 583960

#### Epsom

01372 748888

#### Oxford

01865 765961

#### Reading

0118 958 5463

#### Southampton

023 8025 2827

#### Tunbridge Wells

01892 525666

The stores below operate in association with

**SEVENOAKS**  
SOUND & VISION

#### Basingstoke

01256 324311

#### Blackpool

01253 300599

#### Bolton

01204 395789

#### Brentwood

01277 264730

#### Camberley

01276 685597

#### Cardiff

029 20228565

#### Enfield

020 8367 3132

#### Lancaster

01524 39657

#### Manchester

0161 839 8869

#### Portsmouth

023 9266 3604

#### Preston

01772 883958

#### Swansea

01792 474608

#### Swindon

01793 538222

#### Warrington

01925 632179

#### Worcester

01905 619059



## FREE GUIDE

Click on the website below to order our FREE GUIDE **Sound & Vision at Home**

Learn about the brands we sell, why we sell them and how to make up your ideal system

## Buy Now, Pay in 12 Months Time\*

**On all our favourite brands:** Arcam, Audiolab, B&W, Bose, Briston, Castle, Chord Electronics, Cyrus, Denon, Dynaudio, Dali, Electrocompaniet, Epson, Focal, Humax, JVC, KEF, Kudos, Linn, Marantz, Michell, Monitor Audio, NAD, Naim, Olive, Onkyo, Optoma, Panasonic, Philips, Pioneer, PMC, ProAc, Project, Pure Sound, Quad, Rega, REL, Roksan, Rotel, Samsung, Sonos, Sony, Spendor, Sugden, Tannoy, Totem, Vienna, Vita, Wharfedale and Yamaha.

\*Subject to status. Ask instore for details. Not all brands are available in every shop so please check our website before travelling.

**www.audio-t.co.uk**





# Garrard 401

The history of Garrard as a manufacturer can be traced back to World War One, when the famous jewellers to royalty wished to do 'their bit' for the wartime effort, ultimately setting up an ammunitions company. After hostilities ceased, the family was left with a small manufacturing plant in Swindon, which switched to the manufacture of wind-up motors for gramophones. From Tommy gun to turntables, one might say...

Skip forward to 1952 and Garrard launched the predecessor to the 401 – the 301. The 301 was the first 'transcription quality' turntable launched in the UK to feature all three speeds plus a pitch

shape' changes to the platter (some early 401s have a 'flat' 301 platter, like our sample) and the fitting of an upmarket neon strobe lamp.

Idle drive has been blamed in some circles for rumble and killing the sonics of these decks. While no drive system is perfect, in my experience this design bests many modern 'slippy' belt-drive systems.

If the 401 has an Achilles' heel it's the plinth. Most turntables are supplied complete, and whatever you may think about coloured-sounding wooden boxes or sub-chassis sonics, it does make life simpler! But if you seek the ultimate in performance, attention to the quality and construction of the plinth used is paramount.

**ABOVE:** The Garrard 401 first appeared in 1964. Here it's mounted in an SME 2000 plinth – a popular combination. Note that this deck sports the flat Garrard 301-style platter

'The sound of the 401 can leave many other designs standing'

control. Common to both the 301 and the 401 is a superb die-cast chassis and platter, massive motor, a quality idler drive and superbly engineered main bearing.

The 401 was launched in 1964, and was more a cosmetic upgrade than anything else with a re-styling from the pen of industrial designer Eric Marshall. But there were mechanical upgrades, including a stronger eddy current brake, the relocation of the mains power switch to below the chassis, 'dish



## SHEER POWER

For the purposes of the review, a simple wall-mounted open plinth was used. This was made from two layers of 24mm-thick strips of walnut,

measuring 68x48cm (wd). The plinth was cut for a 12in arm, and both SME 3012 and Ikeda 407 arms were used with a mix of Ortofon SPU MC and Nagoka MP30 MM cartridges. For comparison, I used a similarly mounted Technics SP10/II.

Over the years I have spent time with a large number of modern high-end turntables. Yet I still come back to the superiority of this class of deck, whether it be direct or idler drive. From the minute the needle hits the groove there is a quality

to the sound that can leave many other designs standing.

The first thing of note is the pitch and timing. It almost sounds as if these decks run fast; they do not of course, but neither do they smear dynamics in the way some enthusiasts report of more 'up-to-date' belt-drive decks. Then there's the clarity in the bass. A strong chassis also helps in the bass department.

With such sturdy foundations to the sound, the Garrard is able to dig out a truly amazing performance. Classic vinyl tracks, such as Massive Attack's 'Unfinished Symphony', took on an amazing persona, while a spin of some mid-'60s Stravinsky on Decca SKL amazed with its sheer power and flow.

On more subtle material the low levels of background noise were truly appreciated, but it was hard not to return to the more gutsy material. A very early 1958 DG stereo recording of Bach organ was immense, as was some more up to date pop stuff.

On audiophile-recorded direct masters and assorted Sheffield Labs material (we're talking Kodo drums here) the sound was cavernous. What stands out with the Garrard is what it does not add. The heavy solid chassis keeps everything clean, taking away the minimum, and adding very little.

## VERDICT

Demand for 401s has gone through the roof. Some 15 years ago you could find 401s for 'sane' money. Today expect to pay between £250 and £700 for a good clean chassis and much more for a decent plinth. Nevertheless, with a little work (on the plinth!) you'll have one of the finest turntables out there. 🎧

## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Turntable speed error at 33.33rpm	33.28rpm (-0.17%)
Time to audible stabilisation	2sec
Peak Wow/Flutter	0.03% / 0.07%
Rumble (silent groove, DIN B wtd)	-67.0dB
Rumble (through bearing, DIN B wtd)	-67.6dB
Hum & Noise (unwtd, rel. to 5cm/sec)	-55.0dB
Power Consumption	14W
Dimensions (WHD)	580x230x470mm





# Leak Stereo 20

**W**ith the introduction of stereo LPs in 1958, Leak wasted no time in bringing stereo equipment to market. The first public demonstration of the Stereo 20 amp and matching preamp took place in April 1958 at the Audio Fair in London. This must have been quite a coup for Leak as most rival manufacturers at the show were demonstrating mono equipment.

The price of the Stereo 20 was 29 Guineas with its partnering Point One stereo preamp costing 20

*'The Leak Stereo 20 is one of the ten best amplifiers of the 1950s'*

Guineas. When you consider that a single TL12 Plus mono amplifier retailed at 18 Guineas, the stereo version was a bargain!

The very first Stereo 20s manufactured came finished in Champagne Gold, which soon changed to a Gold Bronze. Later in 1964 the paintwork was changed to a dark metallic grey.

The early Champagne Gold versions are few and far between. We have only seen three examples in the wild in over 40 years!

Circuit-wise, the Stereo 20 is similar to its earlier mono brother the TL12 Plus, having identical output stages. In the Stereo 20 the EF86 and ECC81 used in the earlier stages of the TL12 Plus were replaced by two ECC83 double triodes. Meanwhile, the HT supply to both channels is fed from a single GZ34 rectifier with simple resistor/capacitor smoothing.

One safety feature incorporated is the use of a 100ohm/1W resistor that overheats and de-solders itself from the circuit board when overloaded. This is a simple, utilitarian, but effective, method of protecting the power supply when excessive current is drawn.

In 1961 the output transformer specifications were changed from having 49% to 25% ultra linear screen tapings.



## LOVE AT FIRST LISTEN

A friend was dumping a 110V 'export' package at such a low price that I told him I'd take a look at it. His Point One bore a gorgeous solid brass fascia, with the finest pots I've ever swivelled, and the '20 wore the rare baseplate. I figured I'd have 'em even if only as cool-looking paperweights. They sat for years before I fired them up, after

they were overhauled by legendary valve amp restorer Mike Poynter, who used to run a repair and service company called Station Sounds.

Instead of the dull Britamp I was expecting, Leak's reputation having suffered since its demise, I heard the sort of performance that seduces you instantly, an effect like the first time you laid eyes on Halle Berry or tasted a glass of Solaia. Every one of you knows what I mean, each of you having experienced a gut response to a component, an intuitive reaction that needed no verbiage, no justification, no explanation. It just sounded right in every way.

Although the preamp, like most vintage control units, shows its age with noise, the amplifier was and is quiet, clean, open and transparent. It is fast enough to keep up with lightning-quick banjo-picking behind Alison Krauss, smooth enough to de-burr even the screeching-est of fiddling. What's more, despite appearing during stereo's earliest days, it 'gets' 3D.

For my money, the Leak Stereo 20 is one of the ten best amplifiers of the 1950s, with only its power rating allowing it to be bettered by some of its contemporaries, and its soft bass sounding alien to modern ears. Other than those two clues, no-one would ever guess in a blind test that it pre-dates this century.

## VERDICT

A session with the Leak Stereo 20 cannot fail to impress upon you that it is, perhaps unjustly, overshadowed by the less-commanding Quad II. It sings, it soars and it sounds – unlike the 'II – decidedly 'modern'. It may have been born in 1958, but hot damn, it's still rocking in 2010. 🎧

**ABOVE:** Three ECC83s in the line amp and a pair of EL84s in each output stage – our Stereo 20 also has new input phonos and 4mm outlets. The amplifier's styling was from the pen of Lonsdale-Hands, a celebrated English designer born in 1931

## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

<b>Power output</b> (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	14W / 12W
<b>Dynamic power</b> (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	14W / 12W / 8.6W / 5.3W
<b>Output impedance</b> (20Hz–20kHz)	0.45–0.68ohm
<b>Frequency response</b> (20Hz–100kHz)	–0.1dB to –5.4dB
<b>Input sensitivity</b> (for 0dBW/10W)	35mV / 113mV
<b>A-wtd S/N ratio</b> (re. 0dBW/10W)	82.3dB / 100.8dB
<b>Distortion</b> (20Hz–20kHz, 5W)	0.052–0.75%
<b>Power consumption</b> (Idle/Rated o/p)	103W/108W
<b>Dimensions</b> (WHD)	270x175x333mm



INTRODUCING:

# OLIVE O3HD

SOUNDS GREAT.  
COSTS LESS.

olive®  
SAVE THE SOUND



The Olive O3HD Music Server is the most affordable way to turn your stereo into a digital HD Music System.

ONLY  
£899

#### Super Simple

It's easy to set up and use. Simply connect it to your stereo system, and start enjoying amazing sound. No PC required. No hassle. And the color touch screen navigation makes it a delight to use. Have fun.

#### Music Storage

Keep all your music in one place. The Olive O3HD stores up to 1,500 CDs or 5,000 HD tracks.

#### HD Sound Quality

Enjoy your music in HD sound. The Olive O3HD stores and plays uncompressed files which deliver far greater sound quality than MP3 files. So, get ready for the convenience of a digital solution – without compromising the music experience.

Distributed in the UK by;  
Henley Designs  
[www.henleydesigns.co.uk](http://www.henleydesigns.co.uk)  
01235 511166







# Radford STA 15 Series 3

**R**adford Electronics was set up in Bristol by Arthur Radford back in 1959. In some ways Radford was a late starter in the world of high fidelity, especially compared to Peter Walker of Quad or Harold Leak, and the electronics reflect this. Indeed, Radford's designs are often described as being the most 'modern' of vintage amplifiers.

It was the Series Two amplifiers, soon changed to Series Three, that put Radford's designs on the map,

*'The midrange here is simply delicious... it's smooth and liquid...'*

the Series 3 range comprising two monoblocks – the MA 15 and MA 25 – plus two stereo versions, the STA 15 and STA 25. The matching SC 22 preamplifier was available for £32 10s. Common to most vintage amplifier sets, this unit 'scavenged' power from the power amplifiers, but Radford also offered a self-powered version for an extra £5.

Specification-wise Arthur Radford made no outlandish claims for the

Series 3. Input sensitivity is a rated 0.5V for full output. However, what is striking is Radford's interest in the amplifier's 'rise time' and square wave response – something that was pretty unique at the time.

Technically the amplifiers employ a variant of the classic Philips/Mullard '5-20' circuit with the first stage utilising a high gain EF86 pentode valve. In the case of the Radford circuit, a 6U8 (ECF82) dual tube triode/pentode valve is used as a phase-splitter to drive the push-pull EL34 pentode output stage. The output transformers use 'ultra linear' connections.

The difference between the 15 and the 25 models come down to power supply and output valve bias arrangements. On the MA and STA 15, high tension power supply rectification is provided by a GZ34 rectifier, providing around 330V high tension. Output valves on the 15s are automatically biased via cathode resistors; on the 25 the output stage is operated in fixed bias with a negative grid voltage applied to the output valve, which must be adjusted to suit the output

valves with the aid of test points located on the amplifiers chassis (2.0V across the test point to chassis earth).

## MAGICAL MIDBAND

Bass-wise, we felt the Radford to lack a little accuracy, the tones of the double bass and Hammond organ footwork on Jimmy Smith's *The Cat* CD becoming subtly blended, making it difficult to separate them completely in the mix. Similarly, the limited sound pressure level down low meant Alison Balsom's trumpet recording of Mozart's *Rondo alla Turca* soon ran the amp out of steam.

However, the midrange is simply delicious. Smooth and liquid, it boasts a freedom from harshness and compression that stands out even by valve amplifier standards. A vinyl cut of Grace Jones' 'Slave To The Rhythm' was truly infectious, Trevor Horn's immaculate production being revealed cleanly and clearly. Switching to digital and some recordings from Ella Fitzgerald and Dinah Washington, the magnificent midband was further underlined. There is something unique about it; one might even describe it as 3D-sounding.

## VERDICT

Already well established as a true classic, the STA 15 III really does bridge and blur the vintage/modern line. Given that this is a 45-year-old amplifier, it sounds remarkably fresh, modern and sophisticated and clearly lives up to the hype of being one of the best of the British vintage brigade. With its liquid midband, reliability and sturdy build – even by 2010 standards – it's hard not to be impressed. 

**ABOVE: Modern in both looks and sound, the Radford's roots can be traced back to the 1950s. Valves used here are an EF86, 6U8, and a pair of EL34s. Chrome carry handles were a popular and very useful feature**

## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Power output (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	21W / 21W
Dynamic power (<2% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	20W / 19W / 20W / 17W
Output impedance (20Hz–20kHz)	0.195–0.65ohm
Frequency response (20Hz–100kHz)	–0.3dB to –10.6dB
Input sensitivity (for 0dBW/15W)	108mV / 430mV
A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 0dBW/15W)	85.3dB / 97.1dB
Distortion (20Hz–20kHz, 5W)	0.014–0.45%
Power consumption (Idle/Rated o/p)	180W/185W
Dimensions (WHD)	368x216x273mm





# Lowther Acousta loudspeakers

**H**orn loading of its drive units has been a mainstay of Lowther's designs from the very earliest days. In the post war years, with raw materials limited, it must have been difficult making larger speaker cabinets. So it was that the TP1 and Acousta models were introduced. Unveiled in the 1950s, these measured 34x18x17in (hwd) and were available in either vertical or horizontal mountings. The horizontal version came with 12in legs and is rare to find nowadays.

In 1958 the Acousta cabinet was offered in DIY kit form for £14.14s.0d. If you wanted a factory built cabinet only, this would have cost you £18.18s.0d – or £37.18s.0d complete with a PM6A drive unit. The Acousta plans could also be purchased separately for 2/6d (12½p today).

The Acousta had several advantages over most of the competition at the time: moderate size, good value for money, a high quality sound and high efficiency. In the late 1950s, the cabinet depth was reduced by 2in to 15in by redesigning the bass horn, which enhanced the speaker's looks.

The Acousta Twin was introduced in 1959 alongside the standard

27x15x13in (hwd) and the PM7A drive unit. In the early 1970s the Super Acousta was launched, with two forward-facing drive units instead of one, while in 1972 came the Auditorium Acousta. This model utilised two drive units, one firing into the corner and one towards the listener.

The Acousta 124, produced in 1981, was the last of the Acousta range made by Lowther. It also had two forward-firing drive units.

Over the years birch plywood, chipboard, blockboard and other materials have been used in the cabinet construction. To our ears the earlier birch plywood cabinets sound the best.

## BIG PICTURE

Sit in front of a pair of Acoustas and you hear a massive, panoramic soundstage, as if the designer of the late, lamented Cinerama projection system laid out its dimensions. Image height is recreated with

such lifelike scale that it's almost independent of the room. Within all of this audio real estate are precisely located instruments, which suggests point source/

dual-concentric dispersion – nearly always the preferred method for imaging fanatics.

Little Brother Montgomery's solo barrelhouse piano and rich voice, following the juggernaut impact of an orchestral soundtrack, reaffirmed our belief that the Acousta is the kindred spirit of the Decca cartridge in every way. The tinkle of the piano, that scintillating treble and




**ABOVE:** Shown here are the Mini Acousta, which appeared in 1966, and the the Standard Acousta, one of the first models to be unveiled when the series was introduced in the 1950s

the sound of the hammers, shimmers in so

Decca-like a manner that even CDs enjoy a hint of sparkle rather than any 'digital' brittleness.

If there is any downside it's the bass, which we can only describe as 'lumpy' and 'papery'. For listeners fixated on the lower registers the two-driver or larger models may sound freer and more flowing.

## VERDICT

For all of the myriad paths that one can follow Lowther-wise we've yet to hear a Lowther-driver'd speaker that didn't possess in some measure the main reasons for buying into the genre: thrilling, involving, wildly dynamic sound. The Acousta is simply one of the safest bets... unless, that is, you're handy with a coping saw. 

'Image height has such life-like scale it's almost independent of the room'

Acousta, and measured 44in high by 18in square. The Lowther Corner Acousta enclosure soon joined the family, measuring 32x18x9½in (hwd). Designed to stand facing into a corner of the room, the mid and treble frequencies were reflected back into the room to give a very spacious sound.

In 1966 two new models emerged: the Mini Acousta at

## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

<b>Sensitivity</b> (SPL/1m/2.83Vrms – Mean/IEC/Music)	101.9/101.7/102.7dB
<b>Impedance modulus min/max</b> (20Hz–20kHz)	5.0ohm @ 646Hz 29.6ohm @ 20Hz
<b>Impedance phase min/max</b> (20Hz–20kHz)	–43° @ 26Hz 44° @ 19.7kHz
<b>Pair matching</b> (200Hz–20kHz)	±7.7dB
<b>LF/HF extension</b> (–6dB ref 200Hz/10kHz)	– / 12.8kHz/19.4kHz
<b>THD 100Hz/1kHz/10kHz</b> (for 90dB SPL/1m)	– / 1.0% / 0.2%
<b>Dimensions</b> (HWD)	856x463x363mm



# Guaranteed!

**New for Old**



Acoustic transparency is what makes KEF Reference speakers special. Our guaranteed trade-in deal sounds even better.

**People who know sound know that KEF loudspeakers stand for engineering integrity, design innovation and phenomenal acoustic transparency.**

Each KEF loudspeaker is created with the same passion for acoustic excellence whatever the budget, so which ever you choose you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you're experiencing the full richness, emotion and depth that the original artist intended.

Until December 31st Unilet are making it easier than ever to trade up to a pair of KEF Reference speakers. We'll give you up to £2800 when you trade in your old KEF Reference speakers against the new 207/2 high gloss finish. We've got great trade-in deals on other models too. Take a look at the panel below.

It's just one of the many ways in which Unilet can help you get hold of seriously good hi-fi. Just call us and tell us what you have to trade.

At Unilet you'll find all the top brands. And you can audition them in one of our demonstration suites, discuss trade-ins and pick up the latest news on the market while you're here.

For over 40 years Unilet has been the place where the specialist manufacturers have been coming to show their latest developments, so if you want to experience the latest models you know where to come for the best deals.

#### Other great brands we stock

Acoustic Energy | Arcam | Audiolab | B&W | Bryston | Chord Electronics | Chord Cable | Cyrus | Denon | Dynaudio | Dynavector | Esoteric | Heed | KEF | Leema | Lehmann | Marantz | Meridian | Michell | Mission | Mordaunt Short | Musical Fidelity | Onkyo | Ortofon | Panasonic | Pioneer | Plinius | PMC | Primare | ProAc | Pro-ject | Quad | REL | Roksan | Rotel | SME | Sonos | Spondor | Stax | Tannoy | TEAC | Wilson Benesch | Wharfedale | Yamaha - **Cables, Home Installation, Vinyl Records, Bespoke Aerial, Satellite & Freesat Installations**

New Model	Price	PX any KEF Ref. Speakers	PX any other Speakers
KEF Reference 201/2 High Gloss Finish	£3499	£700	£530
KEF Reference 203/2 High Gloss Finish	£5999	£1200	£900
KEF Reference 205/2 High Gloss Finish	£7999	£1600	£1200
KEF Reference 207/2 High Gloss Finish	£13999	£2800	£2100

This offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other manufacturer or dealer promotion. Offer closes 31st December 2010

Great deals on satin finish models too – check the website.

See full details of this offer and trade-in deals on other manufacturers' products on our website [www.unilet.net](http://www.unilet.net)

See what  
you can save







# Quad ESL (ESL-57)

In 1955 *Wireless World* published articles by Quad's Peter Walker on the practical and theoretical aspects of making a full range electrostatic speaker. That year, he demonstrated two different prototypes developing one for the first public demonstration at the 1956 Audio Fair. Due credit must be given

'Stacked pairs brought gains in bass extension and soundstaging'

to Walker for the huge amount of pioneering work involved and the brave decision to make it a commercial product.

When first introduced, a single ESL would have set you back £52, yet demand was far greater than supply. The speaker (later dubbed the ESL-57) weighed in

at around 16kg and measured 800x875x267mm (hwd). Frequency response was a claimed 45Hz-18kHz while dispersion was said to be approximately 70° in the horizontal plane and 15° in the vertical. Mains consumption was given at 6W.

As constructed, the ELS was a doublet source, the diaphragm radiating from both faces (at least at LF). Frequency response curves in free air conditions show the it to have a figure-of-eight polar characteristic at low frequencies and cardioid at

high frequencies.

Quad recommended that the speaker should not be positioned closer than 2ft to any parallel wall or 3ft from any corner. Stacked pairs brought gains in bass extension and soundstaging. The late Alastair Robertson-Aikman, MD of SME, had these in his legendary music room.

**ABOVE:** The ESL came with bronze or black grilles (vulnerable to damage), although Philips and DG recording engineers in the '70s had stand mount silver finish ESL-57s for monitoring. One mod was voltage protection while some enthusiasts also tried removing the felt pads behind the bass/treble units

In the 1960s, the Braun LE1 was made under licence from Quad in Germany. Several different dedicated stands and subwoofers have been marketed over the years with promises to enhance sound quality. Between 1957 and 1985, no fewer than 54,000 ESLs were sold worldwide.

## IN THE HOT SPOT

While delightful and satisfying off-axis, the ESL really does define 'hot seat' in all its restrictive glory. A stereo pair will fill a room, but the ideal spot for stereo is a narrow slice at the point of an almost-equilateral triangle. There are concerns too that prevent the ESL from being a viable speaker for those used to the robustness of recent designs.

They don't go loud enough or deep enough for modern tastes, and they're fragile both physically and in terms of voltage input.

Still, if you can live with the need for mains charging, positioning away from the walls and bass extension that may seem 'quaint', rewards are seamlessness, coherence, neutrality, transparency and scale that many speakers may emulate, but not offer all in the same package. You get an LS3/5A's imaging and midband, the imaging of a Wilson, an Apogee's top-to-bottom consistency and the silkiness of a Sonus faber.

## VERDICT

The ESL can still thrill with a sound that's open, airy, effortless and to many ears so downright addictive that good clean examples are highly sought after. Chances are that at some point servicing or repair will be required, and the costs now are not for the fainthearted. ⚡

## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Sensitivity (SPL/1m/2.83Vrms - Mean/IEC/Music)	88.4/86.0/84.8dB
Impedance modulus min/max (20Hz-20kHz)	1.6ohm @ 20kHz 19.7ohm @ 239Hz
Impedance phase min/max (20Hz-20kHz)	-55° @ 10kHz 77° @ 59Hz
Pair matching (200Hz-20kHz)	±5.0dB
LF/HF extension (-6dB ref 200Hz/10kHz)	- / 26.6kHz/>40kHz
THD 100Hz/1kHz/10kHz (for 90dB SPL/1m)	- / 0.1% / <0.1%
Dimensions (HWD)	780x880x300mm



# Guaranteed!

**New for Old**



Classique 2805 Speakers



QUAD ESL 2905 Black Speakers

**Up to £1400 px  
Indulge yourself!**

## Get the low-down on Quad's best-ever ESLs and a great trade-in deal too.

### Quad ESLs – electrostatic loudspeakers need no introduction.

Over the years they have become firmly established as the best example of speakers based on differently-charged electrodes acting on an ultra-thin coated membrane. The latest 2805 and 2905 models are the most dynamic and powerful ESLs yet, particularly in their handling of low-down bass sounds. The 2905 has been described by one American reviewer as 'the finest speaker on the planet'.

Now, the finest speaker on the planet needn't cost you the Earth. We'll give you up to £1400 guaranteed trade-in against your current Quads. Don't have any Quads? Don't worry, we'll still give you £1050 against any other pair of speakers you bring in, just see the panel below for details.

That's just one of the ways in which we can help you find and afford the hi-fi you want.

You'll find more of the top-performing speakers, turntables, amps, CD players and AV equipment at Unilet than just about anywhere else. You can audition them in one of our demonstration suites, discuss trade-ins and pick up the latest news on the market while you're here.

For over 40 years Unilet has been the place where the specialist manufacturers have been coming to show their latest developments, so if you want to experience the latest models you know where to come for the best deals.

### Other great brands we stock

Acoustic Energy | Arcam | Audiolab | B&W | Bryston | Chord Electronics | Chord Cable | Cyrus | Denon | Dynaudio | Dynavector | Esoteric | Heed | KEF | Leema | Lehmann | Marantz | Meridian | Michell | Mission | Mordaunt Short | Musical Fidelity | Onkyo | Ortofon | Panasonic | Pioneer | Plinius | PMC | Primare | ProAc | Pro-ject | Quad | REL | Roksan | Rotel | SME | Sonos | Spondor | Stax | Tannoy | TEAC | Wilson Benesch | Wharfedale | Yamaha - **Cables, Home Installation, Vinyl Records, Bespoke Aerial, Satellite & Freesat Installations**

New Model	Price	PX any QUAD ESL Speakers	PX any Speakers
QUAD ESL 2805 Black Speakers	£5500	£1100	£825
QUAD ESL 2905 Black Speakers	£7000	£1400	£1050

New Model	Price	PX any QUAD ESL Speakers	PX any Speakers
2805 Classique	£6000	£1200	£900
2905 Classique	£7500	£1500	£1125

This offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other manufacturer or dealer promotion. Offer closes 31st December 2010

See full details of this offer and trade-in deals on other manufacturers' products on our website [www.unilet.net](http://www.unilet.net)

See what  
you can save







LOUDSPEAKERS



AMPLIFICATION



DIGITAL

audioemotion

Music is our Passion

[www.audioemotion.co.uk](http://www.audioemotion.co.uk)

t 01333 425 999

# REDEFINING THE STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE.

## Verity FINN Loudspeaker

The marriage of Finn's driver quality, advanced cabinet construction, and exceptional industrial design and fit-and-finish truly embody the true essence of Verity Audio high-end perfection.

*"The Finn has some irresistible charms that offer a great many musical rewards."*

Absolute Sound, Mar 2010

➔ FROM £4795



## QUAD ESL-2905 Electrostatic Full Range Loudspeaker

The Quad ESL technology is unique in its clarity of sound, lack of distortion, lack of interference and continuity of response. These speakers are the absolute pinnacle of that technology. Engineered without compromise, they are destined to become modern classics.

➔ FROM £5500\*  
\* price for QUAD 2805

## 30 DAY MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

# LEGEND.



WHAT HI-FI?  
SOUND AND VISION  
★★★★★

*"Superbly cohesive from top to bottom, plus breathtaking insight and real detail, make this one of the world's very best loudspeakers."*

Noel Keywood, **HiFi World** (ESL-2905)

# QUAD

*the closest approach to the original sound.*





ATC active loudspeakers are used by the biggest names in the music business and by the most discerning of music lovers worldwide.



# GET ACTIVE.

Arguably the most musical and involving listening experience you will ever have.

## ATC SCM-50 SL Active

*"Instruments leap from the speakers unfettered by background noise... allows you to hear more details, more nuances... the frequency range was obviously very fast and responsive... the speakers completely disappear sonically. Would I buy them myself? The answer is yes."*

James L. Darby, *Stereomojo*



FROM £4267\*

\* price for SCM20A SL PRO

# COMPACT MASTERPIECE.

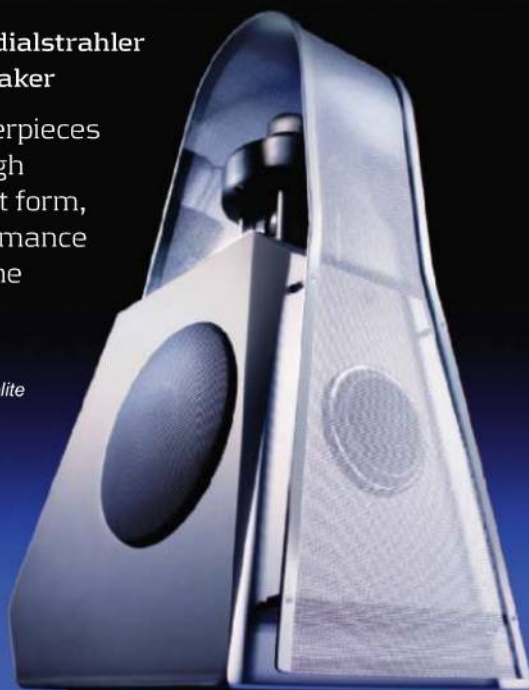
## MBL 121 Compact Radialstrahler Full Range Pulsar Speaker

These compact masterpieces offer revolutionary high technology in compact form, whilst acoustic performance puts it very much in the top league.

*"The MBL 121 is one of the truly elite and exotic speakers in the world. Of that there is no doubt."*

*Audiophile*, April 2008

→ FROM £10,100



## MBL 7008 Integrated Amplifier

This new masterpiece fulfils the wishes of all music lovers who want a compact and elegant audio reproduction system without any compromise in sound quality.

*"The 7008, like a classic Porsche, loves to propel forward, with a rhythmic flow founded on a deep and taut bass foundation."*

*The Stereo Times*, Nelson Brill



FROM £6500



# Vinyl Frontier

BEHIND THE MUSIC WITH HI-FI NEWS & RECORD REVIEW

An update on our May '10 Vinyl Icon, *Gaucho*; Ella at Carnegie Hall; a string of Diana Krall LPs; and Gershwin in the hands of Brian Wilson: **Chris Heard** tells all

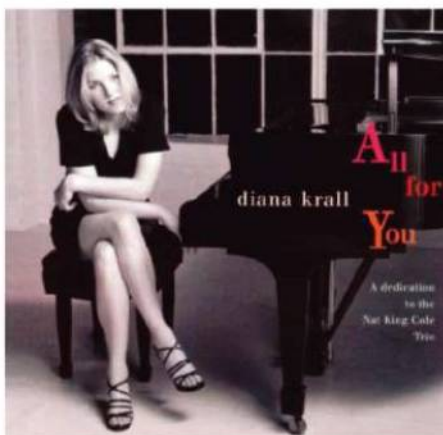
**B**rian Wilson, George and Ira Gershwin and Walt Disney – it's an unlikely collaboration perhaps, but one that has produced a tantalising limited edition 180g vinyl release from the genius behind Pet Sounds, 'Good Vibrations' and 'Heroes And Villains'.

Wilson has plundered the Gershwin brothers' estimable songbook for the patchy but pleasing *Brian Wilson Reimagines Gershwin*. The Disney connection? It's out on Walt Disney Records. But there's nothing Mickey Mouse about Wilson's interpretations of Gershwin standards such as 'Summertime', 'It Ain't Necessarily So', 'They Can't Take That Away From Me', 'Someone To Watch Over Me' and the spectacular 'Rhapsody In Blue'.

Not content with reworking a dozen all-American classics, Wilson was given unprecedented access to the Gershwin archive and has added his own magic to two rare unfinished compositions, 'The Like In I Love You' and 'Nothing But Love'.

An inherent poetry exists in the idea of America's greatest living popular composer/arranger taking on his spiritual forefathers' musical canon. In retrospect it seems brilliantly obvious, but it must have been a happy day in the Disney boardroom when the earnest Wilson and his legal team signed up to the deal.

Early US reviews of the album were lukewarm, but Wilson has been characteristically effusive about the project, stating: 'Along with Irving Berlin,



➔ All for us... a host of Diana Krall reissues on the American ORG label

Gershwin basically invented the popular song, but he did something more. He had a gift for melody that nobody has ever equalled yet his music is timeless and always accessible'.

Whether you will like it may depend to a degree on your expectations of the 68-year-old Wilson, a living legend but – let's not forget – a mortal being after all. It's been 45 years since he sat down at his piano to craft 'God Only Knows', and despite his being eulogised by new generations on the back of the stunning Pet Sounds/Smile concerts, latter-day works such as 2008's *That Lucky Old Sun* were never going to set the world on fire.

Like his contemporary Paul McCartney, however, Wilson remains curious and energised in a recording studio, and while this album may not be in the Ella Fitzgerald class of Gershwin songbook interpretation, there are moments when the California harmonies and polished orchestration hit the spot and recall Wilson at his spine-tingling best.

## ELLA'S SONGBOOK STROLL

Talking of Ella, it would be criminal to pass by the opportunity of flagging up a new audiophile release on Pure Pleasure Records. *Newport Jazz Festival Live At Carnegie Hall* is a double album recorded in July 1973 and originally produced for Columbia by John Hammond and Teo Macero and engineered by Stan Tonkel.

Given that all this took place almost 40 years into her career, the First Lady Of Song was still in decent voice, some years yet

## CHRIS HEARD

Chris Heard is co-owner of Classic LPs, one of the UK's biggest in-stock retailers of vinyl re-issues and new releases. With his wife Rachel, he also runs Three Black Feathers Records, the UK's newest audiophile vinyl label. See [www.classiclp.co.uk](http://www.classiclp.co.uk) and [www.threeblackfeathers.co.uk](http://www.threeblackfeathers.co.uk) for more information on the online store and the label.



before the inevitable decline (she would go on to win another six Grammys).

The concert reunited Ella with members of the Chick Webb Band from her earliest 1930s sides, as well as pianist Ellis Larkins of *Pure Ella* vintage (1950), and here the seasoned players (Roy Eldridge and Eddie 'Lockjaw' Davis among them) stroll through the US songbook – 'Stardust', 'I Can't Get Started', 'Nice Work If You Can Get It', 'Round Midnight'.

In the second half, following a heartfelt tribute from Carmen McRae, our heroine teams up with the Tommy Flanagan Quartet featuring Joe Pass for a rollicking 50 minutes of scatting and hitting the high notes on a string of Cole Porter/Duke Ellington standards, including a spirited 'Miss Otis Regrets' and a memorable 'These Foolish Things'. She also shows a contemporary political savvy with a cover of Marvin Gaye's right-on polemic 'What's Going On'. All in all, it's a joyous journey.

## HOW DOES SHE FIND TIME?

They don't make 'em like Ella Fitzgerald any more. But if they did, they would probably be called 'Diana Krall', arguably the closest modern-day equivalent we have with Ella's unerring ability to interpret a smoky torch ballad. Among the hordes of you who worship at the altar of recorded sound on high-grade vinyl, Krall sits right at the head of a rarefied cache of female singers that includes Jennifer Warnes, Rickie Lee Jones, Norah Jones, Madeleine Peyroux and Julie London. Some of Krall's best-sounding LPs are to be found on the US-based Original Recording Group (ORG) label, home to superb 180g high-end double albums such as *Live In Paris*, *Look Of Love*, *Love Scenes*, *All For You* and *When I Look In Your Eyes*, all of which are on the horizon at the time of going to press. Quite how she finds time to make all these records while being the full-time Mrs Elvis Costello and mother to young twins is a mystery...

Other audiophile beauties emanating from the ORG stable include Rickie Lee Jones' *Pop Pop*, *Ella Fitzgerald Sings The*



➔ Ella in 1968 – her 1973 Newport performance is out on Pure Pleasure





➔ *Gaucho*, our May Vinyl Icon, is on Universal's Back to Black imprint

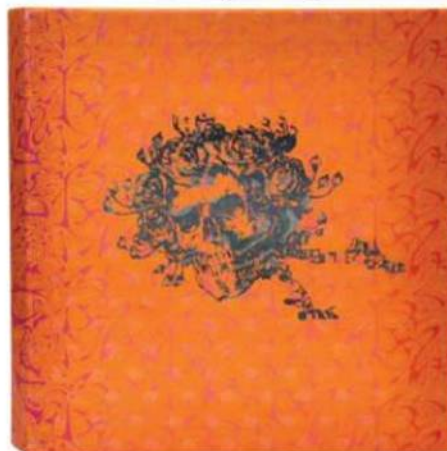
*Rodgers And Hart Songbook Volume 1*, *Wild Things Run Fast* by Joni Mitchell, and some tasty jazz from the likes of John Coltrane, Johnny Hartman, Stan Getz, Oscar Peterson, Chet Baker and Ben Webster. ORG's records don't come cheap – but the listening experience is worth it.

### IRRESISTIBLE BREW

*Bitches Brew* was the Miles Davis record that caused a quiet revolution, blurring the boundaries between jazz and rock, and pretty much inventing the 'fusion' genre in the process, with its experimental use of electronic instruments (as first touted on its predecessor *In A Silent Way*).

Davis used two bassists, three drummers, three electric piano players and a percussionist all playing at the same time, placing rhythmic innovation at the heart of the album. Special effects such as tape loops, reverb chambers and echo added to the groundbreaking nature of the work, which featured future leading lights of the fusion scene including Wayne Shorter, Chick Corea, John McLaughlin, Joe Zawinul and Lenny White.

If all you know of Miles Davis is *Kind Of Blue* or *Sketches Of Spain*, you might find *Bitches Brew*'s 1970 studio meanderings a tad tough to stomach, but anyone curious about the genesis of prog. jazz would be rewarded by seeking it out. The



➔ Classic 1967-1970 Grateful Dead on this five-LP box from US label Rhino

## Brian Wilson Reimagines Gershwin



album is now out again in a deluxe box set from Sony featuring a double 180g vinyl LP, three CDs, a DVD and irresistible supporting material.

### STEELY AND SMOULDERING

Steely Dan albums pressed on vinyl never hang around for long, so limited edition reissues from their peerless catalogue are always welcome. Universal's specialist vinyl imprint, Back To Black, had a brace of Dan beauties up for grabs in its September releases, specifically the majestic *Gaucho* – a recent HFN Vinyl Icon – and *Aja*, a staple of any discerning audiophile's collection.

All of Walter Becker and Donald Fagen's vintage long-players have stood up well, such was the quality of the analogue recording, classy production values and top-drawer musicianship they employed; but given a choice we would plump for 1977's *Aja*, home to 'Peg', 'Deacon Blues', 'Josie', 'Home At Last' and other gems of smouldering understatement.

Back To Black LPs are apparently all remastered from analogue sources; and with a retail tag shy of £20, you get a fair amount of fidelity for your buck – including a download voucher with each pressing.

Other highlights in the latest batch of reissues include southern rock legends Lynyrd Skynyrd's *Second Helping*, *Catch A Fire* by Bob Marley and the Wailers, 10cc's *The Original Soundtrack* (featuring the

➔ Gershwin classics, reimagined by Brian Wilson, you'll find on Walt Disney Records as a limited 180g release

anthemic 'I'm Not In Love') and Toots and the Maytals' stomper *Funky Kingston*.

### HEADS UP

Deadhead audiophiles will be in seventh heaven with the forthcoming release of *Grateful Dead: The Warner Bros Studio Albums*, a five-LP box set from Rhino featuring the band's classic 1967-70 repertoire: *Workingman's Dead*, *American*

*Beauty*, *The Grateful Dead*, *Anthem Of The Sun* and *Aoxomoxoa*. Lacquers have been cut from the original analogue masters at Bernie Grundman Mastering and pressed on 180g LPs at RTI. It has

all the makings of a collector's dream item, and you can be reasonably sure that the Dead will never have sounded so... alive.

### STRUTTING CROWES

Finally, a word in praise of two Black Crowes LPs arriving from the US on Plain Recordings: the band's 1990 debut *Shake Your Money Maker*, and *Amorica* from 1994, two albums which bookended their breakthrough success *Southern Harmony*. If, like us, you prefer your rock 'n' roll down and dirty, bluesy and soulful, then this gently strutting pair of 180g reissues may well be for you. Come on, let's boogie! ☺

'Krall sits right at the head of a rarefied cache of female singers'





## Boult and Holst's *The Planets*...

It was Sir Adrian Boult who first caused Holst's *Planets* 'to shine' although the composer made the first two recordings. The work would become a showpiece for conductors and recording engineers alike, from the 78rpm era right up to today's added 'new planets'

Words: **Christopher Breunig**

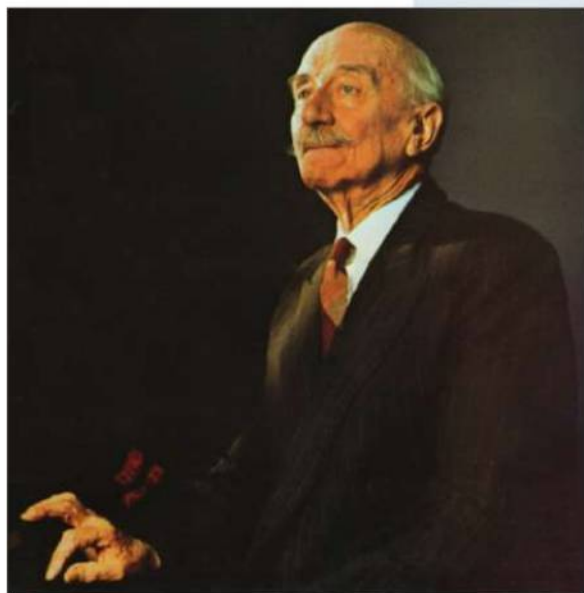


In 1916 the British composer (though the name suggests otherwise) Gustav Holst was completing the orchestration of a Suite of seven movements representing the characters of the then known planets: Mars 'Bringer of War', Venus 'Bringer of Peace', Mercury 'the Winged Messenger', Saturn 'Bringer of Old Age', Uranus 'the Magician' and Neptune 'the Mystic'. Holst had a keen interest in astrology. He was not to know the popularity his score would soon have, let alone that it would present a continuing challenge to the virtuoso conductor and the full skills of the recording engineer.

## STUDIO SECRETS

One little trick that became common in recording studios was, where 'Neptune' ends with its fading chorus of women's voices, rather than using console sliders producers would ask them to walk silently offstage. In fact Holst himself would have the singers pass offstage through a closing door so his audiences could never detect the moment of true silence.

When her father's 1926 78rpm recording was mastered for LP Imogen Holst noted the abruptness of that ending, where newer technology could have addressed the limitations of primitive electrical engineering, but only (she argued) at the expense of authenticity.



At the KEF sponsored EMI sessions in 1979, with (l-r) producer Christopher Bishop, Sir Adrian Boult and balance engineer Christopher Parker

Sir Adrian Boult, who premiered *The Planets* in 1918

The first performance before an invited audience, at Queen's Hall London in September 1918, was financed by Holst's friend Balfour Gardiner. It was conducted after less than two hours' rehearsal time by the 29-year-old Adrian Boult – he was already making a name for himself and Holst's music was not unknown to him. However, Albert Coates gave the public premiere, two years later.

## BOULT AND THE BBC

In 1931 Sir John Reith appointed Boult to the recently formed BBC Symphony Orchestra. Reith had been advised that the players responded better to Boult than anyone else. You can see online the programmes undertaken by the BBC SO and the extent of Boult's response to new and unfamiliar works (eg, Mahler's Third Symphony in 1947, its first UK hearing, which has now been issued on Testament SBT2 1422). The wartime bombing meant that they moved to Bedford, and there Boult's first recording of *The Planets* was made, with Walter Legge producing. There would be four successors.

Now that we can browse all the BBC Promenade Concert programmes in the online archive, it's fascinating to discover that between 1921 and 1923 Holst himself was persuaded to conduct just excerpts from *The Planets* (although Imogen said this grated with him, especially the notion of

any 'happy ending'). This was with the New Queen's Hall Orchestra: 'Mars', 'Saturn', 'Jupiter' (1921/2), then just the first four movements, in 1932. The sequence 'Mercury', 'Saturn', 'Jupiter' was favoured by Henry Wood, Malcolm Sargent and, in 1942, given by Boult too.

The first complete broadcast Prom performance with women's voices was in Sargent's 1951 season; he seems to have alternated *The Perfect Fool* and *The Planets*, and his readings still resonate with me, especially the menace of 'Mars'. I also like his early stereo remake for EMI with the BBC SO [ASD269].

Of course, the score was not simply the prerogative of English conductors. On records you also

find artists who worked largely in the States: Stokowski, Ormandy, Steinberg, Susskind, Mehta; musicians who often came to perform here: Karajan, Haitink, Maazel,

Bernard Herrmann, André Previn; and Americans like Bernstein, John Williams and Levine.

## KEF SPONSORED

Sir Adrian's fifth LP recording, issued to mark his 90th birthday, and made with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Geoffrey Mitchell Choir, was sponsored by KEF, whose MD Raymond Cooke was a great music lover. The rear of the gatefold sleeve suggests *The Planets* as 'a hi-fi test piece *par excellence*'. Inside, Sir Adrian recalls the feverish activity

'Holst was persuaded to conduct just excerpts'



## VINYL ICONS

### OTHER LP VERSIONS

There's one landmark recording (if that's the word) of *The Planets*, and that is the 1961 Decca version recorded with the Vienna Philharmonic under Herbert von Karajan. Karajan's forays into British music were few and far between (he infuriated Walton by not undertaking *Belshazzar's Feast*, although a few years ago an Italian radio tape of the First Symphony, heavily cut, appeared on EMI 5 85869 2). But this audiophile LP has yet to be surpassed for orchestral performance – alas, Speakers Corner opted for the inferior Los Angeles/ Zubin Mehta Decca (1971).

1974 brought the inevitable Phase-4 recording: Herrmann and the LPO [PFS4184]. Mobile Fidelity reissued Sir Georg Solti's Decca also with the LPO [SET628] as MFQR 1-510; it was engineered in Feb '78 at Kingsway Hall by the legendary Kenneth Wilkinson.

The first quadraphonic LP version came from Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic [CBS MQ 31125, 1974]; claimed to be a 'Sonic Space Spectacular' it was let down by the imported Columbia pressings. Four-channel needs were better served by the LSO/Previn [EMI Q4 ASD 3002] produced, like the Boult, in 1974 by the Christopher Bishop/Christopher Parker duo, so frequently praised in our old 'Quality Monitor' features.

Sir Neville Marriner's first venture into large-scale orchestral music, guest conducting the Amsterdam Concertgebouw [Philips 9500 425; 1978], was criticised for his slow and unconvincing speeds in Holst's first four movements.

Karajan's 1981 Berlin remake for DG [2532 019] was one of the first batch of the company's digital LP recordings: our reviewer noted the horrid electronic organ glissando in 'Uranus' and writer David Praker found himself disgustedly throwing the pressings away like frisbies!

Quite why both the *Gramophone* and *Penguin* Guides urge you to buy as first choice the 1987 Decca digital version by Charles Dutoit and the Montréal SO [417 553-1] escapes me. It won an engineering award for Paul Myers and John Dunkerley, but Dutoit was never an inspiring conductor and hardly the hoped-for Ansermet replacement.



LPs of  
*The Planets* by  
(clockwise)  
Herbert von  
Karajan,  
André Previn,  
Leonard  
Bernstein  
and  
Sir Georg Solti

of that 1918 concert, attended by 'half the musicians in London – even Sir Henry Wood turned up'. Holst had inscribed Boult's personal score 'This copy is the property of Adrian Boult who first caused *The Planets* to shine in public, and thereby earned the gratitude of... Gustav Holst'.

The venues for this recording were both Abbey Road Studio No 1 ('Venus', 'Mercury', 'Jupiter') and Kingsway Hall ('Mars', 'Saturn', 'Uranus' and 'Neptune') in four sessions held between May 12th and July 31st. It was rumoured that a parallel digital recording exists which was never issued – but frankly,

*'I don't think I have altered much over the years'*

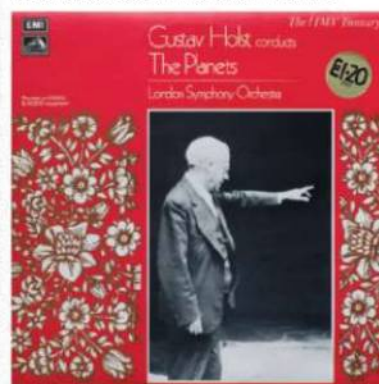
who cares? As to relative timings, the one barely significant difference is between the 1978 'Uranus' and its 1945 counterpart: some +43s.

With the 78 medium, side-lengths often prompted faster tempi, and in any case Sir Adrian claimed his tempi were essentially what he had first heard at Holst's home in 1916, in a piano duet version

by two of Holst's St Paul's students (where he was then teaching) that seemed to meet with his approval. In Boult's words: 'I don't think I have altered much over the years'.

### SHARP TONGUED

What kind of man was Sir Adrian? In a way, that military moustache says it all; and notwithstanding the reticence of his own 1973



Gustav Holst, who thanked Adrian Boult by way of an inscription in his score

Holst's 78rpm recording with the LSO, which was made in 1926, was transferred to a 12in LP by HMV in 1972 [HLM 7014]





# Summer Sale Preview!

Preview online now at [www.russandrews.com/sale](http://www.russandrews.com/sale)  
or call us to place your order

**plus 10% OFF**  
Many more Russ Andrews and  
Kimber cables and accessories.



**OVER  
1/3 OFF  
0.5m**

**OVER  
1/3 OFF**

Kimber Timbre™ interconnect 0.5m pair  
**Was £129 SAVE £49  
Now ONLY £80**



**25%  
OFF**

**25% OFF**

Kimber HD-09 HDMI cable 1m  
**Was £75.95 SAVE £18.99  
Now ONLY £56.96**

**10% OFF**

Crystal-24  
speaker cable  
plus  
**FREE DCT**  
and **FREE upgrade**  
to WBT bananas  
**Was £878.10  
SAVE £282.30  
Now £595.80**



**25% OFF**

Clarity Mains™  
mains conditioner

**Was £112 SAVE £28  
Now ONLY £84**



**WHAT HI-FI?**  
★★★★★  
May 09  
Ultimate Guide  
to Systems

**WHAT HI-FI?**  
★★★★★  
AWARDS 2004  
BEST MAINS LEAD  
UNDER £100  
Russ Andrews Classic  
PowerKord

**WHAT HI-FI?**  
★★★★★  
May '04  
BEST  
1/2 Price

Sept '01

**1/2 Price**

6 way Silencer Block  
with 1m Classic  
PowerKord™



**Was £366.95  
Now ONLY  
£183.47**

Visit [www.russandrews.com/sale](http://www.russandrews.com/sale)  
or call UK Local Rate **0845 3451550**

**Request a SALE  
CATALOGUE...**

60 Day Home Trial • Free Delivery • Upgrade Scheme • Lifetime Guarantee

Russ Andrews Accessories Ltd, 2b Moreland Court, Westmorland Business Park,  
Shap Road, Kendal, LA9 6NS, UK.  
Tel: +44 (0)1539 797300  
Email: [info@russandrews.com](mailto:info@russandrews.com)

Exclusive UK Retailer for

**KIMBER KABLE**

*Russ Andrews®*  
Solutions for better music & movies



**Inspire Hi-Fi**

**Leading the Turntable Pack**



**eclipse®**  
TURNTABLE

"It's about enjoyment and emotion rolled  
into one, a rare combination at any price."  
Adam Smith from Hi-Fi World



**Apollo**  
TURNTABLE

"This is one seriously poised, confident  
and discriminating turntable."  
Review from Hi-Fi World



**the magic of the studio recording in your listening room.**

listen to vinyl playback as you've never heard it before with the award winning and  
highly acclaimed Eclipse SE and Apollo turntables. Cutting edge British engineering  
delivering outstanding sound at a price that will astound.



**Inspire Hi-Fi**

Tel: 01246 827272 / 568770 Mobile: 07932 367555

[WWW.INSPIREHIFI.CO.UK](http://WWW.INSPIREHIFI.CO.UK)

**DEMO AVAILABLE**  
Part exchange possible

Buy the most talked about turntable direct from the UK manufacturer with no retail mark up!





# 5

## Year warranty

All Roksan electronics and turntables sold through authorised dealers are covered by a free 5 year parts and labour warranty.



M2 series  
now released

# Roksan

Distributed in the UK by;

**Henley Designs**

[www.henleydesigns.co.uk](http://www.henleydesigns.co.uk),  
[sales@henleydesigns.co.uk](mailto:sales@henleydesigns.co.uk), 01235 511166





➔ Sir Adrian Boult, who began his conducting career as a student at Oxford in 1908

memoir *My Own Trumpet*, he had a reputation for a sharp tongue when his players were lazy or inattentive.

A short-lived sampler LP [EMI SEOM 15] had a Boult rehearsal extract and an appraisal by Christopher Bishop, his EMI producer from 1967, who wrote of his ear for balance and his swift working ability in the studio.

### AN EXTRA PLANET

One decent legacy of Kent Nagano's tenure of the Hallé Orchestra (his ambitions allegedly nearly bankrupted them...) was to commission from Colin Matthews a variant ending to *The Planets* with 'Pluto – The Renewer', although in 2006 scientists downgraded its planet status to 'dwarf'. Thus, although Pluto *had* been discovered before the composer's death in 1934, Holst was right after all!

Nagano's successor Sir Mark Elder made the first recording, and this was one of Hyperion's occasional SACD releases. It was engineered at Bridgewater Hall by Tony Faulkner early in 2001. To hear the full Holst ending involved pre-programming the disc [(SA)CDA 67270] and I never knew why on the discrete multichannel layer two complete alternate versions were not included, given SACD's potential for longer playing times.

Hyperion has now discontinued SACD production/pressing, but the CD remains of course.

Sir Simon Rattle's 2006 Berlin remake also has the Matthews extra ('Pluto' was dedicated to the memory of Holst's daughter); his two-CD set includes four specially commissioned 'asteroid' works [EMI 3 59382-2; video trailer at <http://ecards.emiclassics.co.uk/planets>]. Naxos has a budget disc, 8.555776, by RSNO/David Lloyd Jones. 📺



### THE FIRST RECORDING

During the Second World War, the BBC Symphony Orchestra was relocated to Bedford and a handful of recordings were made with their then principal conductor. The orchestra was assembled at the Bedford Corn Exchange between the 2nd and 5th of January 1945 for Sir Adrian Boult's first *Planets*. The 78rpm set was produced by Walter Legge – later to become a legendary figure at EMI – as HMV DB 6227-33. The engineer responsible was Arthur Clarke (*not* of science fiction fame!). It is currently in the Beulah CD catalogue coupled with earlier Boult recordings of Walton's *Coronation March Crown Imperial* and the *Thomas Tallis Fantasia* by Vaughan Williams [2PD12].

### THEN THE LPO

In 1953 – by which time Sir Adrian had moved to the London Philharmonic – he made an LP recording of *The Planets* for the small company Nixa (which in 1953 was bought by Pye). Although the chorus was listed as that of the LPO, and the chorus master Frederick Jackson was credited, the orchestra itself was named (for contract reasons) as 'Philharmonic Promenade Orchestra'. The original *Gramophone* reviewer noted a wiriness in the strings and

some poor choral intonation in the fadeout of 'Neptune'.

What's interesting here is that, apparently, a stereo tape was made although only the mono LP [NLP903] was issued in the UK in June 1954. That source had deteriorated by the time Pye made its 1970s reissues (Marble Arch/Pye Golden Hour) so electronic-stereo transfers were made. This prompted a claim by devotee Edward Johnson that Stokowski's 1959 *Planets* [Capitol] produced in Los Angeles was the 'first stereo version'. Pye's genuine stereo tape was briefly available in the States on Sonotape.

### ON TO VIENNA

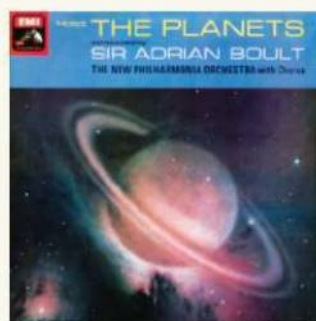
In 1956, Sir Adrian was heavily involved in Walthamstow sessions with the LPO for the American company Westminster [see reviews in *HFN* Oct '10, p82]. Curiously



though, he went off to Vienna for a 1959 version with the Vienna State Opera Orchestra & Chorus, issued here as Whitehall WHS20033 (a budget label) and also later by World Record Club [T 254]. CD transfers were issued by MCA then in 2001 by DG, having acquired rights to the Westminster catalogue [471 240-2].

### THE MODERN REMAKES

At last back with EMI, Boult was invited to return to Holst's score, this time with the New Philharmonia Orchestra and Ambrosian Singers, Peter Andry producing and with Christopher Parker as engineer. This highly successful disc [ASD 2301, later



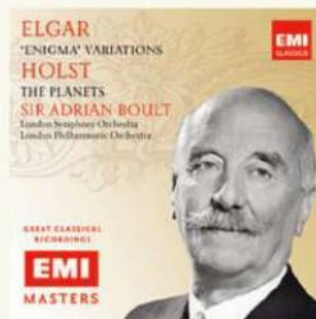
ESD7135], notably spacious in 'Venus', was first issued in 1967.

With EMI, Sir Adrian enjoyed something of an 'Indian Summer' in the studios with the three principal London orchestras – plenty of Elgar, the Brahms symphonies, a fascinating Mozart *Jupiter* Symphony now on a Medici Masters CD coupled with Beethoven's 'Pastoral' Symphony, Wagner excerpts, and then before retirement (1981) the final *Planets* featured in these pages. At the time of writing these are on two

alternative CDs, both with Elgar's *Enigma Variations*: 5677482 in EMI's 'Great Recordings of the Century' series or 6317832, a September 2010 re-release.

Sir Adrian Boult's last recording was of music by Parry (no longer current), his last public performance Elgar's *The Sanguine Fan*, given at the London Coliseum (both during 1978).

It's a pity that Testament, which has a modest but admirable catalogue of heavy vinyl LP reissues principally drawn from EMI's (downloadable as a PDF: [www.testament.co.uk](http://www.testament.co.uk)) did not include this disc. Similarly, there was no Mobile Fidelity half-speed transfer – as there was for Boult's Elgar programme, *Falstaff*, *The Sanguine Fan* and the Bach *Fantasia and Fugue* transcription.





**emillé**  
*Just for your musical bliss*

*Ara*



Stereo Integrated Amplifier  
Remote control  
Analog & digital inputs  
Hand-wound output transformers

Distributed in the UK by Angelsound Audio  
[www.angelsoundaudio.co.uk](http://www.angelsoundaudio.co.uk)  
Tel: 01923 352479

[www.emillelabs.com](http://www.emillelabs.com)

44 HIGH STREET  
ETON  
BERKSHIRE SL4 6BL

01753 631000  
[www.studioav.co.uk](http://www.studioav.co.uk)  
[sales@studioav.co.uk](mailto:sales@studioav.co.uk)

**studio**



**mark  
levinson**

studioAV is proud to offer some of the finest audio equipment available in the UK, with products from dCS, Focal, Mark Levinson and Revel. We also specialise in analogue audio, using equipment from Linn, VTL, Clearaudio and others.

## Music that stirs the soul

All of these products are available for demonstration in our listening rooms in historic and picturesque Eton, together with a vast array of others from Naim, Linn, Vienna Acoustics, Totem, Benz Micro, Nordost, Dynavector...

We regularly hold themed events and new product launches, details of which can be found on our website, where you can enjoy the very latest and best products in some of the best surroundings the industry can offer.

An experience to warm the heart this winter, with music to stir the soul.

**FOCAL**

**dCS**  
ONLY THE MUSIC







COMPACT DISC

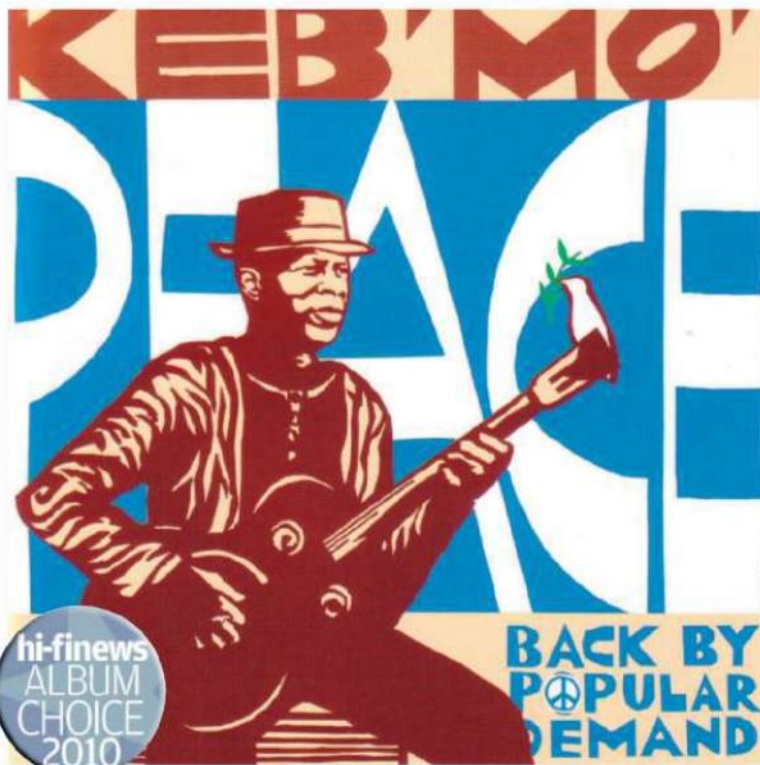
SUPRAUDIO

DVD

BLU-RAY

VINYL

DOWNLOAD



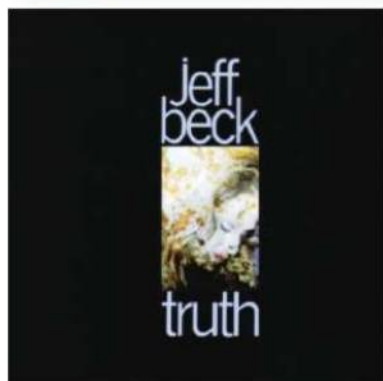
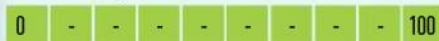
### KEB' MO'

Peace... Back By Popular Demand

Pure Pleasure PPAN92687 (180g vinyl)

It never occurred to me that one day I would own an LP of the CD I've been boring you with for six years, especially as it was probably a digital original. Regardless of its birth conditions, the album suits analogue because it's just so damned rich: perfectly-recorded piano, fluid guitar, Dobro and bass, and Keb' Mo's textured vocals. For a 'covers album' à la Bowie's *Pin-Ups*, the bluesman chose nine peace'n'love classics, mainly from the 1960s, like 'Get Together', 'Imagine' and 'For What It's Worth' – as relevant in 2010/11 as when the songs were new. So good is the transfer that it now serves as my favourite 'demo disc' for two formats. One of the nicest records you'll ever hear, sonically and spiritually. **KK**

Sound Quality: 95%



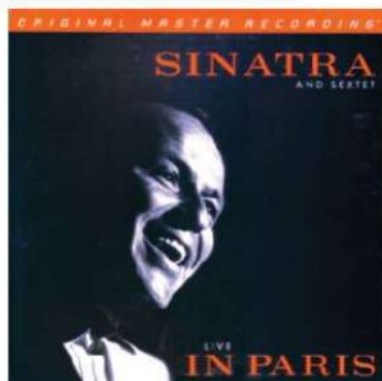
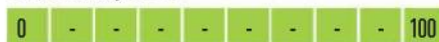
### JEFF BECK

Truth

Sundazed LP5310 (180g vinyl)

Praising a mono LP when the stereo is so mind-blowing might puzzle you, but Sundazed freshly pressed the ultra-rare mono mix because the sound is punchier, bolder and – yes – heavier than the stereo. This even more impressive edition of a classic, with Rod Stewart's finest early vocals, will anger those who believe, with much justification, that *Truth* was unjustly overshadowed by the debut LP of another Yardbird: Jimmy Page with Led Zep. Every track, even 'Ol' Man River', is a powerhouse, but it's 'I Ain't Superstitious' that ensures this LP will forever remain amongst the top 'heavy' LPs of all time. Play alongside Led Zep's first, to hear the truth. **KK**

Sound Quality: 93%



### FRANK SINATRA AND SEXTET

Live In Paris

Mobile Fidelity MFSL 2-312 (two discs, 180g vinyl)

If anyone ever doubts the genius of Sinatra, this set is an argument-ender like no other. He charms the audience of the Paris Olympia, backed by a sextet made up of studio maestri, working with him through 26 standards – all of which he makes his own. He turned to Gershwin, Porter, Harburg, Lerner & Loewe, Arlen, Mercer, Rodgers & Hart, Hammerstein and others of celestial calibre, for 'I've Got You Under My Skin', 'April In Paris', 'Come Fly With Me', 'One For My Baby' – not a single song drops below the rank of masterpiece. And oh, does he swing! Dating from '62, it's Frank at one of his peaks. Savour it like no other live album you'll ever own. **KK**

Sound Quality: 93%



### HOWARD TATE

Howard Tate Direct-To-Disc

APO Records AAP0 009 D2D LP (180g vinyl)

Part of APO's astonishing direct-to-disc series, and for me the culmination of a decade-long plea for this label to record my hero. I must also declare personal involvement: I wrote the liner notes, explaining how it came about. Chad Kassem's efforts resulted in a delicious live R&B session which justifies my nagging. Tate reaches down to the soles of his shoes to deliver exquisite takes of two trademark songs from his classic Verve LP, 'Look At Granny Run Run' and 'Ain't Nobody Home', plus four others. The band is note-perfect for the session, the sound bordering on the cavernous. Best of all, 40+ years after his monumental debut, the voice is intact. **KK**

Sound Quality: 95%







COMPACT DISC



SUPRAAUDIO



DVD



BLU-RAY



VINYL



DOWNLOAD



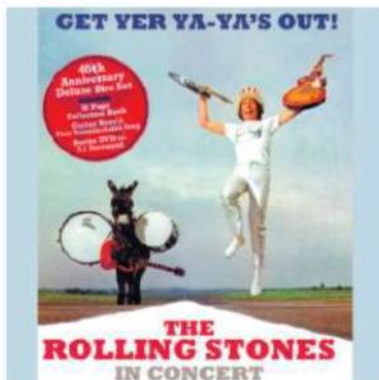
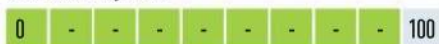
## TOM PETTY

The Live Anthology

Reprise 517462-2 (five CDs, two DVDs, one Blu-ray, one LP)

Nine discs in four formats: this 12x12in box would seem an act of conceit if it weren't so damned good. Petty has the spirit of rock 'n' roll in every molecule of his body: he was the youngest Traveling Wilbury, yet never seemed to lack the stature of the legends he accompanied. The CDs cover 1978-2007, with a music-only Blu-ray containing the 62 tracks from the CDs in 96/24 PCM stereo and DTS; two DVDs contain a 1978 concert and a documentary from the Wildflowers tour, while the LP is the 'official' live bootleg from 1976. The memorabilia-filled package is amazing. Alternatively, a four-CD music-only set with 48 tracks is also available for under £20. *KK*

Sound Quality: 88%



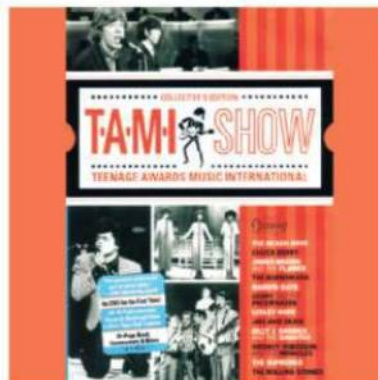
## THE ROLLING STONES

Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out!

ABKCO 02392 (three CDs and one DVD)

This lavish release warrants pride of place not just because *Ya-Ya's* is one of the finest live albums ever: added to the original's ten tracks are another five songs on a second CD, a third CD containing the BB King and Ike & Tina Turner sets, and a bonus DVD running to almost half an hour that gives you live footage of the bonus tracks (with a choice of stereo or 5.1 surround), plus documentaries. The sound is uniformly excellent, the bonus material as good as the original LP's content, and it remains one of the best-ever snapshots of this still-touring band in its 'first' prime, circa 1969. Icing on the cake? A lavish 58-page hardback with the full story. *KK*

Sound Quality: 88%



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

The TAMI Show

Shout Factory SF11742 (Region 1 DVD)

A multi-artist concert from 1964, this is the most important 'rockumentary' of the era, filmed in Electronovision – an early high-def video camera delivering 1000-1100 lines at 25fps. In the top five of any rock-flick list and seen only in fragments for 46 years, it's now available in 16:9 black & white, with a mono soundtrack. What you get are (take a deep breath...) magical performances from The Barbarians, The Beach Boys, Chuck Berry, James Brown & The Famous Flames, Marvin Gaye, Gerry & The Pacemakers, Lesley Gore, Jan and Dean, Billy J Kramer & The Dakotas, Smokey Robinson & The Miracles, The Rolling Stones and The Supremes. Try topping *that*. *KK*

Sound Quality: 95%



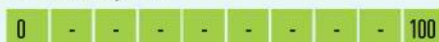
## NAT 'KING' COLE

Love Is The Thing

Analogue Productions CAPP 824 SA (SACD)

Arguably the finest album of standards NKC ever delivered – the opener is 'When I Fall In Love', for goodness sake – this stunner sounds so good that Analogue Productions has released it on both 2x45rpm vinyl and SACD. But not just *any* SACD: its layers are set up so you can enjoy it in mono, stereo, three-channel and in 5.1 surround. However you choose to play it, the sound is so silky and natural that you'll use this as a demo disc. Of course, this is first and foremost about the music, and Cole rarely sounded better, with the signature vocal textures and perfect phrasing suggesting that, yes, he probably was the greatest vocalist of the 20th Century. As for this album's track selections, call it 'utterly perfect'. *KK*

Sound Quality: 95%





# SUGDEN AUDIO

Masterclass Series Class A



## Rescuing music from technology

Designed and manufactured in England. Exported the world over.

[www.sugdenaudio.com](http://www.sugdenaudio.com) T: 01924 404088

# STAX

WHILE OTHERS MAKE HEADPHONES, STAX MAKE SPEAKERS  
FOR THE EARS - HENCE THE TERM STAX EARSPEAKERS.

The **SR-507** is **STAX's** newest Earspeaker product and the new flagship model of the world famous **lambda series**, which was first introduced more than 30 years ago. With the **NEW 507**, **STAX** has introduced their first **10-click slider mechanism**, which allows for height adjustment of the earpads to suit every head.

With a **NEW** electrostatic sound element, **NEW** low-capacitance wide hybrid cable and genuine leather earpads, hours of comfortable listening to your favourite music are sure to ensue.



 symmetry

For details on the full range of STAX Earspeakers and matching Energizers,  
please contact Symmetry or your nearest specialist Dealer.

T 01727 865488

E [info@symmetry-systems.co.uk](mailto:info@symmetry-systems.co.uk)

W [www.symmetry-systems.co.uk](http://www.symmetry-systems.co.uk)





COMPACT DISC



SUPRAUDIO



DVD



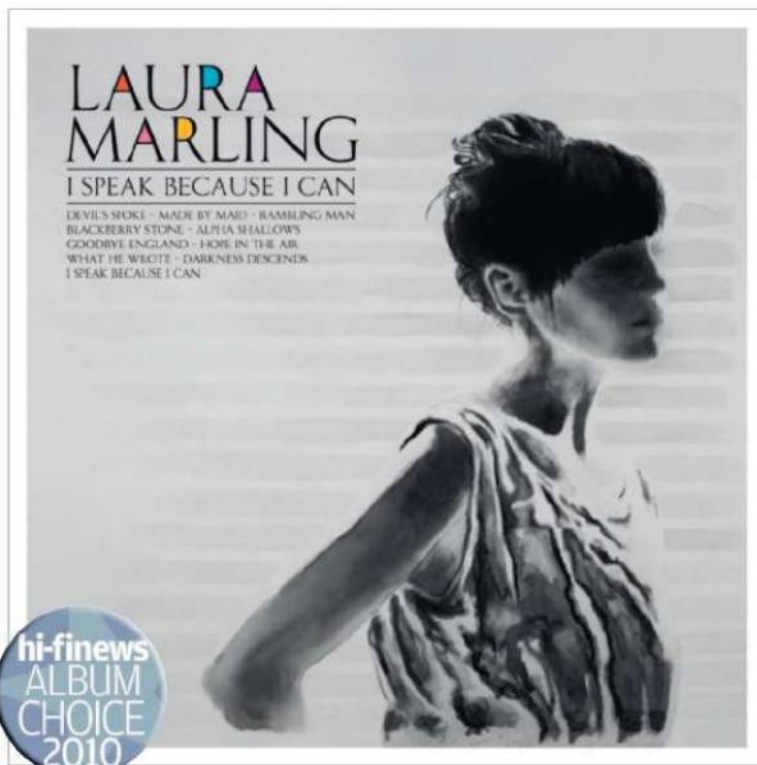
BLU-RAY



VINYL



DOWNLOAD



### LAURA MARLING

*I Speak Because I Can*

Virgin CDVX3075 (CD or CD/DVD Special Edition)

As I've said before, women are tending to write better songs than men these days. Marling, currently the UK's most compelling young songwriter, faced tough competition here because Oregon-based songstress Laura Veirs and Vermont's all-female trio Mountain Man also released exquisitely emotional and stimulating CDs. Marling pipped them by a short nose, though, because this more than fulfils the promise of her splendid debut, from the folksy firestorm of the opening 'Devil's Spoke' to the angry dissonances of the title track which closes the set. Encouragingly, this debuted at No.4 in the chart and her acclaimed Glastonbury performance brought a stack of new admirers, so her future looks good. *JBk*

Sound Quality: 92%



### DELTA SPIRIT

*History From Below*

Decca 6190982

In a world where country-rock usually means processed Nashville schmaltz, this spirited, soulful Americana quintet from San Diego stand out from the pack by miles. Delta Spirit rejoice in a belter of a vocalist in former busker Matthew Vasquez, the whole band is tight as all get out and their songs positively demand that you sing along. The icing on the cake is their ingenious use of unconventional instrumentation, including everything from trash can lids to hypnotic drones and quirky choirs. Delta Spirit will delight devotees of alt-country legends The Jayhawks, but those who prefer the more experimental tendencies of Wilco will also find much to savour. *JBk*

Sound Quality: 90%



### LIGHTS

*The Listening*

Sire 9362 49765 2

This Canadian electro-pop tunesmith, better known to her mum as Valerie Anne Poxleitner, perches delightfully somewhere between the shameless but immaculately-crafted pop of Hilary Duff and the more cerebral delights of Imogen Heap. Apart from delivering memorably melody-rich tunes like 'Saviour' and 'The Listening', her synth structures are gorgeous, and her voice has hints of Kate Bush that make even her use of auto-tuned vocals acceptable. What I enjoy most about *The Listening* is its fresh innocence and disarming electro-pop simplicity, evoking the spirit of the early Depeche Mode and Human League albums back in the late '70s and early '80s. *JBk*

Sound Quality: 88%



### VAMPIRE WEEKEND

*Contra*

XL Recordings XLLP429

I was stunned when *Contra* debuted at No.1 in the US chart. Their first album, wonderful though it was, stalled at No.17, and I hadn't dared hope they'd fare much better with this one. Maybe the American music-buying public isn't as dumb as I usually assume but, whatever the reason, for once a genuinely great young group has been rewarded with chart success. Aside from singer Ezra Koenig's exquisite voice and fascinating lyrics, I'm a sucker for their astonishingly exotic musical arrangements. Consider the Chopinesque keyboard in 'Taxi Cab', the ripply mandolin sound on the breakneck 'Cousins' and the distorted trumpet-like flourish in 'Run'. Brilliant. *JBk*

Sound Quality: 90%







"It never fails to make music an enjoyable and rewarding experience"  
Ed Seley - HiFi Choice

A10 - line integrated amplifier



"It sounds so - o - o good"  
Ken Kessler - HiFi News

2A3 - line integrated amplifier



"It is a product that is very right, one that draws you into the music. It easily outguns all competition and is a no-brainer in my view"  
Noel Keywood - HiFi World

P10 - phono stage



"I have no hesitation in elevating the L300 to the most select list in hi-fi. The list of musically great line stages. Listen and enjoy. It's hard not to!"  
Roy Gregory - HiFi Plus

L300 - line level pre-amp

*pure sound*

info@puresound.info [www.puresound.info](http://www.puresound.info) +44 (0) 1822 612449



Inspire Hi-Fi

**vivid kit**

for Linn LP12 Turntables



A Fresh Look  
A Fresh Sound

*The Result is Spectacular...*

- Full kit includes: plinth, armboard, Hercules PSU, subchassis, acrí matt, base
- Plinths in: maple, cherry, oak. Others also available
- Full kit £650. Free rebuild available
- Sub chassis and arm board only for £239
- Cutting edge engineering to improve all LP12s
- Demo Suite just 1 min from M1 Junction 29a



Inspire Hi-Fi

Tel: 01246 827272 / 568770 Mobile: 07932 367555

[WWW.INSPIREHIFI.CO.UK](http://WWW.INSPIREHIFI.CO.UK)



Official UK Distributor for:

- **argentum acoustics**
- **qsonix\***
- **sutherland**
- **wadia**
- **xlo electric**

\*in association with Absolute Sounds - [www.absolutesounds.com](http://www.absolutesounds.com)

The Musical Design Company

t. **01992 573 030**

[www.mdc-hifi.co.uk](http://www.mdc-hifi.co.uk)

[enquiries@mdc-hifi.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@mdc-hifi.co.uk)

FOLLOW US ON:



facebook



twitter



## Wadia

Now past its twentieth year, Wadia continues to re-define the limits of digital music playback in the pursuit of musical enlightenment.

If you want to hear the very best, you owe it to yourself to hear a Wadia.



## Wadia 1 Series

W151: a sophisticated combination of high performance DAC, robust amplifier, and plenty of inputs for today's digital sources.

W170i/W171i: transform your iPod into a powerful Media Server with Wadia's award-winning docks.



## Qsonix\* (new)

The NEW high performance Q2 series systems now features state-of-the-art Wadia Digital Audio Technology at their very heart. With unparalleled performance, there is no finer or easier way to manage and listen to your digital music collection.

\*in association with Absolute Sounds  
- [www.absolutesounds.com](http://www.absolutesounds.com)

**Wadia**

**qsonix**

*World-class digital replay made simple*





COMPACT DISC



SUPRAUDIO



DVD



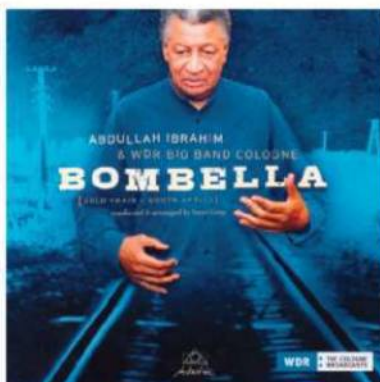
BLU-RAY



VINYL



DOWNLOAD



### ABDULLAH IBRAHIM Bombella

Intuition INT 3430 2

The great musicians of the Westdeutscher Rundfunk big band are used to working with jazz stars, but this was special. Ibrahim seems to have just walked naturally into the settings provided by arranger Steve Gray, who sadly passed away not long after conducting these sessions. First stealing in quietly behind him on the lyrical 'Song For Sathima', the WDR band rocks joyfully through 'Mandela' without his help. Then soloist and orchestra blend stunningly on 'Meditation.' Ibrahim is still a piano master who can play one little chord and make you think of Ellington. And when he strips it all down to a few notes, he's giving you the essence of a whole life. *SH*

Sound Quality: 90%

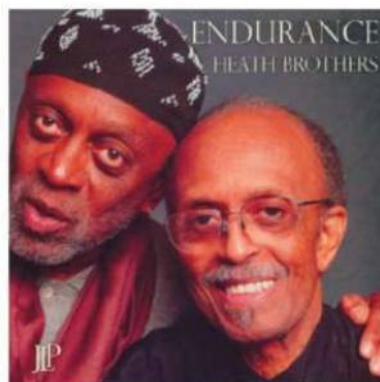


### KEITH JARRETT/CHARLIE HADEN Jasmine

ECM 2733485

An instant audiophile classic. Pianist and bassist hadn't worked together since the end of Jarrett's American Quartet in 1976, but after meeting in 2007 during the making of a film about Haden, they spent four days recording in Jarrett's home studio. 'It has a very dry sound and we didn't want to have the recording sound like anything but what we were hearing while we played. So it is direct and straightforward,' writes Jarrett. And it is. A far cry from the glossy, groomed perfection of so many ECM issues, it is intimate, immediate and communicative. 'I hope many of you can hear this on a good system,' Jarrett adds. It really deserves to be heard that way. *SH*

Sound Quality: 90%



### HEATH BROTHERS Endurance

Jazz Legacy Productions JLP0901004

Setting high standards, the classy JLP label has its rising talents but lives up to its 'Legacy' name by capturing veteran jazz stars. Just released is a CD from the Warriors septet, including stalwarts like George Cables and Eddie Henderson. Before that, though, came this delightful CD. Naturally, saxophonist Jimmy and drummer Albert 'Tootie' Heath dedicated *Endurance* to the memory of the eldest brother Percy Heath, the long-serving MJQ bass player, who passed away in 2007. It features their current working group, with Jeb Patton, piano, and David Wong, bass. This is faultless, mature, calm-centred playing from musicians who have really seen it all. *SH*

Sound Quality: 85%



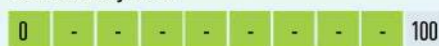
### THE MANHATTAN TRANSFER

The Chick Corea Songbook

Four Quarters FQT-CD-1819

It's a sobering thought that in re-casting Corea's work of 30 years ago, The Manhattan Transfer of today looks back as far in time as its first early-1970s incarnation did when reviving songs of the Swing Era. But this late-2009 album has nothing to do with nostalgia. Corea himself plays on the jolly, almost-singalong opener 'Free Samba', written for the group. After that we hear a string of Corea-penned classics mainly from the 1970s, starting with 'Spain', building to an amazing, high-energy rework of 'Armando's Rhumba' with fine lyrics. Sonically, unsurprisingly, there's an intense, worked-on kind of layered studio sound rather than any wide open spaces, but musically, it's a *tour de force* of exultant virtuosity. *SH*

Sound Quality: 90%





# audioutopia

by **amplitune**



[www.amplitune.co.uk](http://www.amplitune.co.uk)



**Synergy AV**  
audio visual solutions

Reference  
**rega**  
dealers

*huge range of loan stock available for home trial*

Tel:  
01260 280017  
Email:  
[mail@synergyav.co.uk](mailto:mail@synergyav.co.uk)  
Web:  
[www.synergyav.co.uk](http://www.synergyav.co.uk)  
Open:  
9:00 to 5:30 Mon - Sat  
Address:  
12a West Street  
Congleton  
Cheshire  
CW12 1JR



MICHELL ENGINEERING

**AE**  
ACUSTIC ENERGY

**A**

kudos

MAGNEFAN  
INCORPORATED

**PIEGA**  
SWITZERLAND

**naim**  
world class sound...

**MA**

MONITOR AUDIO

**ARCAM**



INNOVATION/CONCEPT/EMOTION SE



**AUDIO REFERENCE**

SUPPLIERS OF FINE AUDIO EQUIPMENT

**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2009

PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
TURNTABLES  
CLEARAUDIO CONCEPT

**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
★★★★★



2.



3.

1. INNOVATION: Hi-Fi News: Highly Commended (Sept 2009)
2. CONCEPT: What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision: ★★★★★ (Sept 2009)  
What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision: Product of the Year (Turntables) 2009
3. EMOTION SE: What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision: ★★★★★ (Nov 2009)

[www.audioreference.co.uk](http://www.audioreference.co.uk) [info@audioreference.co.uk](mailto:info@audioreference.co.uk) 0 1 2 5 2 7 0 2 7 0 5





COMPACT DISC



SUPRAUDIO



DVD



BLU-RAY



VINYL



DOWNLOAD



## BEETHOVEN

Sonatas for piano and violin  
Isabelle Faust/Alexander Melnikov

Harmonia Mundi HMC 90205.27 (four CDs+DVD)

**A toss-up:** Melnikov in the Shostakovich *Preludes & Fugues* – reviewed in August – or here in partnership with the always stimulating Faust? A DVD layer backing CD4, which has just the ‘Kreutzer’ Sonata, gives a good indication of the relaxed atmosphere at the Teldex Studio in which this cycle was recorded. Faust’s movements reminded me somewhat of Gidon Kremer, whose Beethoven cycle with Argerich [DG] is comparably fine, although Faust is more inclined to allow the pianist to lead (as these sonatas were envisaged). I remain particularly struck by their eloquence in the last sonata, Op.96, which Beethoven constructed with the most basic of musical elements. **CB**

Sound Quality: 93%



## CHOPIN

20 Nocturnes  
Nelson Freire

Decca 478 2182 (two discs)

Could the Chopin bicentenary year yield anything finer, I asked in July? Well, my personal choice would be the eccentric Friedrich Gulda's compilation prepared for DG by his son [477 8724], but that's hardly a general recommendation! Freire's complete Nocturnes, from The Friary Liverpool, certainly supersedes his earlier selection recorded for Warner, now on 'Apex'. And although, in August, I admired Yundi's elegance in a better sounding EMI set, Freire brings greater maturity and expressive variety to them. With him, the spirit of the dance is rarely far away, even when the mood is melancholic. **CB**

Sound Quality: 90%



## SHOSTAKOVICH

Symphony 8  
RLPO/Vasily Petrenko

Naxos 8.572392

Another difficult choice: Andris Nelsons on Orfeo (three reviews this year) or Vasily Petrenko, doing impressive work at Birmingham and Liverpool respectively? Petrenko, who chose Shostakovich's Eighth for his San Francisco SO debut this April, is recording all the symphonies for Naxos. He obviously has the skill of gearing a complete performance to a climactic point – in this case the ambiguous final coda. Antiphonal exchanges in the second scherzo are rhythmically precise and the various solos throughout have real quality. Richard Whitehouse's exemplary note for this budget CD is ideal for newcomers. **CB**

Sound Quality: 90%



## SIBELIUS/PROKOFIEV

Violin Concerto; Humoresques/Violin Concerto 1  
Vilde Frang, WDR Orchestra/Thomas Søndergård

EMI 6 84413 2

GINETTE NEVEU, Camilla Wicks, Miriam Fried, Kyung-Wha Chung and now Norwegian violinist Vilde Frang: all were first heard in the Sibelius Concerto. Yet listen to Heifetz on RCA and you'd think the work ought to be a male preserve! Twenty-two when she made these recordings with the admirable Thomas Søndergård (no mention of him in the booklet note, alas), Frang brings a uniquely imaginative deployment of timing, dynamics and tone colour to both concertos. Her Prokofiev has the freshness of Chung's with LSO/Previn, but if anything it's the three neglected *Humoresques* (Nos.1, 2 and 5) that will delight most. **CB**

Sound Quality: 90%





Sevenoaks Sound & Vision and Audio T are in the process of merging their respective businesses and will become one of the largest independent hi-fi and home cinema chains in the UK with over 50 stores nationwide

**SEVENOAKS**  
SOUND & VISION

**audio T**

## this month's OFFERS

PRICES CORRECT AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS. PLEASE SEE WEBSITE, WHICH IS FREQUENTLY UPDATED, FOR THE VERY BEST DEALS AND OUR CURRENT PRICING

### ★★★★★ SYSTEM OFFER



**SAVE £400**

**CYRUS  
CD6SE & 6XP  
MONITOR  
AUDIO  
RX6 SPEAKERS  
£2199**

**PACKAGE  
OFFER**

### ★★★★★ SYSTEM OFFER

**MARANTZ  
CD6003 & PM6003  
WHARFEDALE  
DIAMOND 10.1 SPEAKERS**

**PACKAGE  
OFFER £599**



**OR WITH  
MONITOR AUDIO  
BRONZE BX2 SPEAKERS  
PACKAGE  
OFFER £699**

**SAVE £1586**

### ★★★★★ SYSTEM OFFER

**LEEMA  
ANTILA II  
TUCANA II  
SPENDOR  
A6 SPEAKERS  
£6999**

**PACKAGE  
OFFER**



### ★★★★★ SYSTEM OFFER



**LESS THAN  
HALF PRICE!**

**ARCAM  
SOLO FM  
MUSIC SYSTEM  
£649**

FM ONLY - NO DAB TUNER

### ★★★★★ PRE/POWER OFFER

**ROKSAN  
CASPIAN  
M SERIES-1  
PRE/POWER  
£1399**



**LESS THAN  
HALF PRICE!**

## NEW

## PEACHTREE AUDIO

**Decco 2 £849**  
**iDecco £999**  
**Nova £1099**

Designed as the centre of your digital music system – Peachtree amplifiers are like 4 products in 1. A high quality 24/96 DAC, Valve Pre-Amp, Powerful Amplifier and Class A headphone amplifier, all in one box. The Nova, which is exclusive to Sevenoaks and Audio T, even features an expansion slot which makes it the perfect partner for Sonos.



## SEVENOAKS STORES

**ABERDEEN**  
01224 252797  
**BRIGHTON HOVE**  
01273 733338  
**BRISTOL**  
0117 974 3727  
**BROMLEY**  
020 8290 1988  
**CAMBRIDGE**  
01223 304770

**CHELSEA**  
020 7352 9466  
**CHELTENHAM**  
01242 241171  
**EPSOM**  
01372 720720  
**EXETER**  
01392 218895  
**GLASGOW**  
0141 332 9655

**GUILDFORD**  
01483 536666  
**HOLBORN**  
020 7837 7540  
**KINGSTON**  
020 8547 0717  
**LEEDS WETHERBY**  
01937 586886  
**LINCOLN**  
01522 527397

**LOUGHTON**  
020 8532 0770  
**MAIDSTONE**  
01622 686366  
**NORWICH**  
01603 767605  
**NOTTINGHAM**  
0115 911 2121  
**OXFORD**  
01865 241773

**PLYMOUTH**  
01752 226011  
**POOLE**  
01202 671677  
**READING**  
0118 959 7768  
**SEVENOAKS**  
01732 459555  
**SHEFFIELD**  
0114 255 5861

**SOUTHAMPTON**  
023 8033 7770  
**TUNBRIDGE WELLS**  
01892 531543  
**WATFORD**  
01923 213533  
**NEW WEYBRIDGE**  
01932 840859  
**WITHAM ESSEX**  
01376 501733

**YEOVIL**  
01935 700078  
**IRELAND DUBLIN**  
01 275 1100  
Pricing in Ireland may vary from the UK

**OPENING SOON**  
SUBJECT TO LEGAL COMPLETION  
• BEDFORD

## AUDIO T STORES

**BASINGSTOKE**  
01256 324311  
**BLACKPOOL**  
01253 300599

**BOLTON**  
01204 395789  
**BRENTWOOD**  
01277 264730

**CAMBERLEY**  
01276 685597  
**CARDIFF**  
029 2022 8565

**ENFIELD**  
020 8367 3132  
**LANCASTER**  
01524 39657

**MANCHESTER**  
0161 839 8869  
**PORTSMOUTH**  
023 9266 3604

**PRESTON**  
01772 883958  
**SWANSEA**  
01792 474608

**SWINDON**  
01793 538222  
**WARRINGTON**  
01925 632179

**WORCESTER**  
01905 619059

Please Note: Audio T stores that are not listed above carry an alternative product range, predominantly 2-channel, and have their own dedicated website and advertising. Until the merger is complete, which will take a few months, Sevenoaks Sound & Vision and Audio T will remain separate legal entities. Some brands/products are not available at all stores. Special/added value offers are not in conjunction with any other offer (NICWADO). Advert valid until 11/11/2010, E&OE

# SO MUCH MORE AT WWW.SSAV.COM

FOR END OF LINE AND EX-DISPLAY BARGAINS GO TO [WWW.SSAVCLEARANCE.COM](http://WWW.SSAVCLEARANCE.COM)



# Perfect partners

## HI-FI SEPARATES



### CYRUS

Cyrus' award-winning CD Xt SE and DAC X have been upgraded with a + suffix. In a recent review, this combination when used with 2 x PSX-R power supplies, received the prestigious 'Editor's Choice' award by Hi-Fi Choice magazine.

The XP amplifiers are based on the circuitry of the top of the range DAC XP+. The entry-level 6XP includes 6 line level inputs along with a zone 2 feature while the 8XP d combines the XP series pre-amplifier with a newly revised power amp, and contains an onboard DAC for digital sources.



CDX t SE+

CD6 SE

DAC XP+

6XP / 8XP

8XPd

PRE XP

X POWER

PSX-R

### LEEMA ACOUSTICS

The Stream III CD player features an all-new slot loading transport controlled by Leema's own custom firmware providing secure and reliable disc handling and the best retrieval of digital information this is coupled with the new Leema Quad DAC is a refinement of Leema's own highly successful MD2 Multi-DAC giving a shorter signal path and even better performance. The Stream III features a USB digital output enabling bit-perfect digital archiving.



Many ideas that were pioneered in the award-winning, state-of-the-art, Tucana II, are incorporated in the Pulse III to produce an amplifier with incredible detail and resolution, vanishingly low noise and distortion, and that always communicates with an infectious musicality.

### PULSE III

ANTILA II

TUCANA II

### ARCAFMJ

Combining sleek design, flexible connectivity and sound quality far beyond that of budget separates.



CD17

CD37

A18

A28

A38

### AUDIOLAB

Audiolab's new 8200CD is a fully-featured integrated DAC and CD transport of advanced specification, and impeccable performance. Featuring a number of digital inputs, it is the most flexible integrated DAC / CD on the market.



8200CD

8200A

8200CDQ

8200P

### ROKSAN KANDY K2

Roksan replaces its hugely successful Kandy series with the K2 amplifier and matching CD player.



K2 CD

K2 AMP

CASPIAN M2

### MARANTZ

CD6003  
PM6003

This award-winning CD and amplifier continues the Marantz tradition of building products that represent outstanding value.



CD5004

PM5004

SA-KI PEARL

PM-KI PEARL

### ROTEL 06 SE SERIES

The 06 SE series includes four new components and updated versions of the classic CD player and 3 stereo amplifiers.



RCD-06SE

RA-04SE

RA-05SE

RA-06SE

## TURNTABLES

### PROJECT

The Essential is a new, 2 speed, entry-level turntable. It comes fitted with an Ortofon OMB 3E cartridge, dust cover, is easy to set-up and sounds great.

### ESSENTIAL



GENIE 3  
DEBUT III  
XPRESSION III

## HI-FI SPEAKERS

### MONITOR AUDIO PLATINUM • SILVER RX • NEW BRONZE BX

**Platinum** - This series has been expertly crafted to draw a rich natural radiance from the most demanding music, reproducing the power and scale of dramatic passages with breathtaking fidelity.



**Silver RX** - Available in a choice of real wood veneers and high-gloss piano finishes, Silver RX uses techniques and materials from the Platinum and Gold ranges for outstanding performance.



**Bronze BX** This exciting new range consists of seven models that build on the strengths of the award-winning BR Series.

### VIENNA ACOUSTICS CONCERT GRAND



### KEF NEW Q SERIES

**Concert Grand**  
As with all models in the Grand™ range, the composer name is selected based on the scale, complexity and power of performance for which they are best known. Featured here are the Beethoven 'Concert' and 'Baby' Grand.



**Q Series**  
Experiencing the new Q Series is like hearing a system costing many times more.  
• All new Uni-Q array  
• Advanced bass technologies  
• Total system design  
Pictured Q100 & Q500

### B&W CM SERIES • 600

**CM Series** from Bowers & Wilkins has long been a favourite among its discerning customers. Offering a combination of high performance and exquisite styling at a very affordable price.



**600** - This, the fourth generation of the 600 Series, features improved drive units, minimalist crossovers and a whole new design.

### SPENDOR A-LINE

**A-Line** - A5 and A6 speakers are compact, high performance, floor standing speakers. They utilize drive units and other design innovations developed for Spendor's flagship ST & SA1 speakers.



PLEASE NOTE: SOME BRANDS/PRODUCTS ARE NOT AVAILABLE AT ALL STORES. SPECIAL/ADDED VALUE OFFERS ARE NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER (NICWAOO)



## HI-FI SYSTEMS AND MUSIC SERVERS

### PEACHTREE AUDIO NOVA

Combining a world class 80wpc integrated amplifier and DAC - Nova is an ideal choice if you're looking to improve computer-based or streaming audio to a "high-end" performance level.



NEW

EXCLUSIVE!

### ARCAM rCUBE

The new Arcam rCube is a high fidelity audio system that combines flexibility, portability and compatibility with the very latest audio sources in a single, beautiful package.



NEW

### rDAC

Offering supreme audio and build quality, the new rDAC is an ideal upgrade for conventional sources and network audio products alike.



NEW

### ARCAM

### SOLO NEO

Arcam's new Solo Neo combines superb music performance and network audio capabilities allowing it to play stored music in a multitude of formats, along with its internal CD player and radio tuner.



HI-FI CHOICE

### SONOS

### ZP120 / ZP90 / CR200

This multi-room digital music system lets you play your favourite tunes all over the house and control them from the palm of your hand. You can even play different songs in different rooms.



S5

BR100

### OLIVE

### 4HD

### NEW 3HD

Access all your digitized music from one centralized library. Everything from 24-bit HD files to 16-bit converted CDs will be at your fingertips. Convenient storage, easy touchscreen access and the ability to play it all in any room of your home.



NEW

HI-FI CHOICE

## BLU-RAY PLAYERS

### SONY

Sony's new range includes the 2D BDP-S370 and 3D ready BDP-S470 and BDP-S570.



BDP-S370

BDP-S570

### PANASONIC

Panasonic complements its range with the new DMP-BDT-100 3D player



DMP-BD85

DMP-BDT100

DMP-BDT300

### PIONEER

Get the most out of your movie experience with Pioneer's new BDP-330 and BDP-LX53.



BDP-330

BDP-LX53

## HOME CINEMA AMPLIFIERS AND RECEIVERS

### DENON

Denon's range of A/V receivers bring out the full performance of HD audio and HD video.



AVR-1911

AVR-3311

AVR-2311

AVR-4311

### ONKYO

Featuring the latest HDMI 1.4 inputs for simple hook-up of all your high-def sources. These receivers also bring compatibility with the new 3D video format.



TX-SR608

TX-NR808

TX-NR708

TX-NR1008

### YAMAHA

Experience the full potential of HD audio and video with Yamaha's A/V amplifiers and receivers. Includes the new 3D compatible RX-V567.



RX-V667

RX-V1067

RX-V767

RX-V3067

## HOME CINEMA SPEAKER PACKAGES

### B&W

#### MINI THEATRE

These award-winning packages combine style with excellent sound.



MT-25

MT-30

### Q ACOUSTICS

#### 2000 CINEMA PACK

Smart styling complements the Q Acoustics' award-winning performance.



### KEF

#### T SERIES

Enjoy serious hi-fi sound with KEF's ultra-slim T Series speakers. Featuring a new low profile woofer and vented tweeter for clear midrange and sparkling detail.



T105

T205

T305

ADVERT VALID UNTIL 11/11/2010, E&OE

this month's

# OFFERS

CLAIM

20% OFF

The RRP of the Speakers of your choice when purchased together with ANY Hi-Fi Amplifier or A/V Receiver

Maximum RRP of Speakers £1000. Most, but not all, brands included

### ARCAM

#### SOLO NEO SYSTEM

CLAIM FREE ARCAM iRDOCK WORTH £150

£1349

CLAIM FREE

### ROKSAN

#### CASPIAN M1 PRE & PAIR MONO POWER AMPS

LAST FEW!

£2299

LESS THAN

HALF PRICE

### LEEMA ACOUSTICS

#### STREAM II CD PLAYER [SILVER]

£679

SAVE

£620

### TEAC

#### CRH2581 SYSTEM

INCLUDES DS20 IPOD DOCK WORTH £40

£219

SAVE

£71

HALF PRICE!

### PIONEER

#### BDP-LX52

#### BLU-RAY DISC PLAYER

£275

SAVE £215

### REL

#### R205

#### SUBWOOFER

#### PIANO BLACK

RRP £749 SAVE £325

PIANO BLACK



£495

### ARCAM

#### SOLO MINI SYSTEM

£649

SAVE

£116

### SONOS

#### BUZ250 BUNDLE

£SSAV.com

SAVE

£££

### MONITOR AUDIO

#### BRONZE BR1 SPEAKERS

£129

SAVE

£50

### ARCAM

#### BDP100 BLU-RAY PLAYER

#### AVR500 A/V RECEIVER

£2999

SAVE

£556



### DENON & MONITOR AUDIO

#### D-M38 SYSTEM

#### BR1 SPEAKERS

£299

SAVE

£110

### MARANTZ

#### M-CR502 SYSTEM [EX-SPEAKERS]

£329

SAVE

£70

PLEASE NOTE: PRICING IN IRELAND MAY VARY FROM THE UK



You might expect the home of one of the UK's premier vintage enthusiasts to be chock-full of choice iconic kit yet John Howes' listening room is best described as minimalist, with modern sources driving two Voigt horns. So just where is he hiding the rest of his gear? **Steve Harris** takes you there...

There's hardly a need for the usual introduction here. If you haven't met John Howes at one of his Audiojumble events, you will know him through his writing on vintage hi-fi. Along with a seemingly limitless knowledge of old audio of all makes, John has a consuming interest in the great pioneer of hi-fi in Britain, Paul Voigt. He has assembled a vast collection of products and artefacts for the Lowther Voigt Museum. Back at home, he listens to his own Howes valve amplifiers driving a beautiful pair of Voigt corner horns.

But John is far too gentlemanly to blow his own, er, horn. So we thought it was about time we coaxed him into telling the story of what's been a lifelong passion.

## RADIO DAYS

'My dad had worked in the radio trade all his life,' John explains, 'but it was in 1953, the Coronation year, that he started his own business. That was the year TV really took off.

'As a youngster, I used to work at the shop Saturdays, repairing irons and fires, small electrical bits and bobs. It was OK, and I got pocket money for doing it, but I never thought I would go into the trade.

'Instead, I went to college to train as a draughtsman. But about halfway through the course, I just

knew that it wasn't for me. So one day I said to dad, "You're not going to like this, but this isn't what I really want to do. Do you think I could come into the shop?"

'As it turned out, he was delighted! And looking back on it, I've got a lot of respect for him, because he had never pushed me to go into the business.

'So I trained to be a TV engineer. This was 1967, and the early days of colour. I went to college one day a week, doing the City & Guilds colour TV course, which was serious stuff then, it was cutting-edge!

'Colour was a big step. And I enjoyed that period, because you really had street cred. If you went into a house with your toolbox, people would tell the kids to be quiet or move them out. You were a bit like a doctor.

'They were good days, the early valve TV era. I saw the end of black and white, and I saw the early colour sets come in. Of course, slowly but surely, we got into transistors.

'I kept going until about five years ago. My dad died over 20 years ago now, so there was a period when my brother and sister got into it too and we worked as a family.

'By then the trade had altered out of all recognition. We got into chips and the throwaway board era, and I didn't like it, quite honestly.



'As a boy, I'd made up valve amps with my dad, he'd shown me how to do it. Looking back on it now, that was a pivotal moment, the first thing you build! If I'd built a radio first, perhaps I'd have been mad on radio. But I was always into amplifiers, and so I got into hi-fi.

## FIRST SERIOUS SYSTEM

'What I would call my first serious system – and you're going to laugh at this – was a Leak Stereo 30, a Leak Troughline tuner in its wooden case, and a pair of Leak Sandwich speakers. Frightening really, but when the transition to transistors came, you went with it. The record deck was a Thorens TD150.

'From then on, I was in the wilderness really, trying all sorts of things. You see, I was spoilt too, because often we would trade stuff

RIGHT: Vinyl source is an SME Model 20/2 turntable, SME V arm and Koetsu Urushi cartridge. To the right are the Lector CDP7TL top-loading CD player and Lector's The Phono Amp System valve phono stage







### MUSIC ROOM

In John's through lounge/diner, only the left-hand Corner Horn has a corner to work into. Though the room is bright and reverberant, this is less problematic than you'd expect, thanks to the way the Voigt horns drive the room, and their naturally rolled-off top end. All in all it's a very engaging sound.



'To actually make something! It's a hell of a kick, isn't it, to get something to work and play music! That's what I've always loved doing'

in at the shop, so we always had gear coming in. I had a Garrard 301 quite early on.

'I had Quad electrostatics, and I thought they were wonderful at the time. But they're not easy to live with, in terms of positioning, and as I was living with my parents, that was a problem, really.

'To be truthful I can't remember all the bits and pieces I had after that. But in the late '70s, when there was a bit of a valve revival, it was like a breath of fresh air. I started making valve amps again, Williamsons and so on. And I'd always had a soft spot for the Leaks and Quads.

'I think it's sad in a way, a lot of kids today don't get the hands-on thing, like the old Meccano and stuff like that. But to actually make something! It's a hell of a kick, isn't it, to get something to work and play music! I suppose really that's what I've always loved doing. And I always loved the old stuff, and I've kept archives of all the old leaflets.

### THE VOIGT THING...

'But what really changed my life in the 1980s was the Voigt thing. I'd heard about the Voigt speakers but I'd never seen them, never heard them. Then I got to hear of this chap

who lived in Exeter. His name was John Wilkinson. He'd been into hi-fi all his life, I was told, and he had Voigts. I went to see him. I walked in and saw he had four Voigt Domestic Corner Horns, one in each corner, in a quasi-quadraphonic setup.

'It just blew me away. I'd never heard anything like it. From then on, I had to have a Voigt. I got one, and then another one.

'Being a collector, in my blood I suppose, I never stopped. The more you delve into a subject, the more you find it interesting. After a time, people knew I was madly fanatical about it, and then I'd find a drive

ABOVE: Voigt Corner Horn speakers are driven by John's own single-ended triode amps, via Western Electric speaker cable. A transformer provides a balanced mains supply into a Schuko distribution block

INSET: John with a Voigt 4ft horn



unit, or an odd thing here or an odd thing there. And I've been very lucky, because over the years I've made some amazing contacts. It's been a learning thing. I'm still learning.

## THE VOIGT SOUND

'Paul Voigt was such a clever man. I put him up there with Alan Blumlein, he was at that level. He did an awful lot for hi-fi in the early days. When you think of the period that he was in, it's just amazing. So I've been a Voigt addict and follower ever since.

'At home, I have changed my speakers several times, and I've gone away from Voigts. I had a pair of Carfrae horns for about four years, and they were very nice, but they took the room over.

'And when you hear what the Voigts can do, I've got to say that they're pretty well up there, still in the top league. They are just so natural in the way they present the sound to you. It's different, as you know, from most other speakers.

'I'm using the Voigt field-coil drive units. Voigt made them in various different voltages, and even did them down to 6 and 12V for cinemas, to run on batteries. The

**RIGHT:** Voigt Domestic corner horn speaker, and (far right) with drive unit pulled out of position to show the field-coil magnet system

**BELOW LEFT:** Close-up on the Lector CD and phono stage, with their external power supplies on the bottom shelf. In between is a Pioneer BDP-LX52 Blu-ray player

**BELOW RIGHT:** One of John's 'Howes' single-ended PX4 triode amplifiers



most popular one, as far as I can find out, was the 400V model, but he did a 200V one, which mine are.

'Lowther kindly made me some new cones for these, and I think they sound wonderful. There's something about the field-coil units. The bass goes lower, and it's tighter. Out of all the drivers I've ever tried in them, these eclipse everything else.'

## BACK TO VINYL...

Like many people, John went into CD and only later came back to vinyl.

'One day, somebody told me they were selling a Linn Sondek. I said I wouldn't mind trying it. It had an Ittok arm and a Koetsu Black. I put it on and it blew me out of the room! I thought, this is something special.

'So that got me back into vinyl.

You can have good records and bad records, but when you've got a good record and it's good vinyl, it still trumps everything.'

After a memorable visit to the SME factory, John moved on to the SME Model 20/2.

'I think they are just great, I can't say enough about it! After that I thought, "I'm blooming well going to have an SME!" I went a bit mad and bought it, and the Koetsu Urushi cartridge to go with it.

'The Lector phono stage is the icing on the cake. I'd had the Lector CD player for probably three years. Before that I had a Shanling.

'The preamplifier is the Music First, which is very neutral. I don't need a high-gain preamp, it's very low-noise, and for me it just does what it should do. And I've got the Blu-ray player, really for the music. I'm not a surround-sound freak. None of us are into films, really. For me, good two-channel is fine. And the Voigts do give you a something like a 3D image!'

## FIRST AUDIOJUMBLES

While John was building up the collection which is now housed in the Lowther Voigt museum, he was also becoming well known in vintage and DIY circles as the organiser of the Audiojumble.

'I can't say that I started the idea because I didn't. There used to be Audiojumbles held at the Mahatma Gandhi Hall, near the Post Office Tower. At least, they were called Audiojumbles, but they had bicycles there as well!

'This was the late 1970s, the early days of the vintage scene. I used to go there and wheel and deal. Seeing the Quads and Leaks there, I just loved it. But the man who organised it was getting on in years, and sadly he died of cancer. And there was no-one to take it on.

'And then, in 1992, I was going to vintage wireless meetings at the Victoria Hall in Southborough, an olde-worlde Victorian Theatre.

One day, I just thought to myself that I could do an Audiojumble there. I thought there'd be enough mad people about, like me. ☺

*'The preamp is the Music First; it just does what it should do...'*





## Cycling Weekly

UK's biggest selling Cycling magazine is the best source of breaking international and UK news, race reportage, reliable fitness advice, trustworthy product reviews and inspirational features for British cyclists.

[www.cyclingweekly.co.uk](http://www.cyclingweekly.co.uk)



## Cycle Sport

For fans of professional road racing. With the most in-depth interviews, knowledgeable feature-writing and the best photography cover the road racing scene

On sale every month



## Cycling Active

The all new cycling magazine for today's bike rider. From complete beginner to expert we aim to inform and entertain with a mix of bike and tech reviews, commuting and health and fitness advice, how-to guides routes to ride and what's on info.



# Britain's **BEST** Cycling Magazine's



## Cycling Weekly Health & Fitness

A must have guide for riders of all levels to help with riding goals for each season of the year.

On sale quarter monthly



## Tour

The unofficial user-friendly guide to the Tour de France.

On sale annually



## Mountain Bike Rider

Just get out and ride! Britain's best mountain bike magazine full of ride guides, buyer's guides, tests and practical workshop advice

[www.mbr.co.uk](http://www.mbr.co.uk)

Available at all good newsagents  
Or online at [www.cyclingweekly.co.uk/shop](http://www.cyclingweekly.co.uk/shop)





'So I advertised it, and I think the first one we did, we probably only had around 15 or 20 stalls. But everybody enjoyed it.

'Eventually, we outgrew the hall. We got to a position where the hall was full, the stage was full. There were almighty problems at the side with people bringing stuff in. By that time we were up to 40 or 50 stalls. We had to either pack it in or find another venue.

## PERFECT ANGEL

'We looked all over the place. But the Tonbridge Angel Centre ticked all the boxes, really. I remember going over there, and the guy who showed me round said "Well, we've got this hall, the Medway Hall." And that was about the same size as the Victoria Hall. So I told him, not really. So he said, "Well, we've got the Sports Hall, but it's quite big!"

'And of course when we went into the Sports Hall, I thought, we'll never fill this! He said, "We can put a net up halfway down, and section it off." But I thought, that's going to look really naff. So I said, "No, we'll



go for it! We'll have to spread the stalls out a bit."

'From those days, it's grown every year. After a few more years we needed the other hall as well, and now we're up to 150 stalls.

'We know we're all a bit mad. But if you're keen on something, you'll go to the top of Mount Everest to get it. And people do. We have a guy from France who comes every year and has a stall with his wife. We've had Dutchmen, Germans, we've even had a guy from Japan with a stall.

'We used to do one a year, and it would always be in February. The Vintage Wireless Society used to have two fairs in Birmingham every year, but because one of those was dropping off in popularity,

they got back to doing only one, in May. So I asked them if they'd mind me doing another Audiojumble in Tonbridge. And we slotted another one in October. So now it's February and October every year.

'It's a family thing. My wife Brenda does the catering with some friends. My eldest son Richard is on the stall with me, he's very into vintage. My other son Michael and daughter Catherine aren't into it all really, but they come along and they are at the door. I'm very lucky,

ABOVE: The Lowther Voigt Museum (see text)

LEFT: Original Voigt field-coil drive unit and behind it the Lowther PM1

BELOW: Lowther MC pick-up







HI-FI @ HOME

two MCU Mk II mono preamps, and a B5F mono PX25 amplifier. In the cabinet on the shelf are three LL10 mono amplifiers and one LL15 MK1 mono amplifier. In the bottom of the cabinet are B5F, A10F, LL16 and LL26 amplifiers.

Of course, the collection also includes many different Voigt enclosures and drive units, as well as his microphones and pick-ups.

There are even some of Voigt's original workshop

drawings. You can find out more at [www.lowthervoigtmuseum.com](http://www.lowthervoigtmuseum.com).

And John still enjoys building amplifiers...

'If you remember, I did a few pairs of modified Quad amps. *Hi-Fi News* even reviewed a pair [Aug '09]. That put me on the map a bit, dare I say!

'But let's face it, to actually manufacture valve amps at the prices you see with the Chinese stuff, you can't get near it really. I have sold some, believe me, but it's never going to be a big market. And I couldn't handle it if it was.

'As for the little PX4 amp, I've sold about 20 pairs of those now. It's a very small market, for people that are into horns. At the end of the day, it's horses for courses. We all like different things, different sounds, it's a very personal thing.

'Horns, to me, give an effortless sound. It doesn't have to be loud to be impressive. It suits me, and most people like the sound of them. But we're all on a journey, aren't we?'

**TOP RIGHT:**  
Note the Lowther Hegeman 'Reproducer' (front left of picture)

**TOP LEFT:**  
Paul Voigt's original diaries from the 1920s

**ABOVE:** The American McMurdo-Silver radio set from 1937

**BELOW LEFT:**  
Voigt's pickup arm and MC head from 1940. The post-War Lowther pickup seen next to it used a Voigt MC

**RIGHT:** John Howes with an original Voigt 4ft traxtrix horn. The painted example (seen above and left) is a rarity as it is fitted with a bass chamber

because it is a team effort. I couldn't do it on my own.'

### TO THE MUSEUM...

We could have happily spent all day listening at John's home. But now it was time to move on and pay a visit to the Lowther Voigt Museum, where John has assembled the fruits of 30 years of audio collecting.

As well as the Lowther Voigt items, the museum houses John's radio sets. Our photographer picked out just one, the magnificent American 20-valve McMurdo-Silver Masterpiece V of 1937. Push-pull 6L6s in the output stage drive a Jensen 18in field-coil driver weighing 31kg and two Jensen field-coil tweeters.

That Voigt 4ft traxtrix horn with painted flare is a very rare version

with bass chamber, and the only one John knows to exist. Voigt's original price lists offered 'special versions' of his traxtrix horns and this appears to be one of them.

Then there are several shelves of Lowther equipment. On the top shelf are Lowther's first combined AM/FM tuner; a TV sound tuner (UHF) and two tape recorder preamps. On the second and third shelves are several Lowther FM and AM tuners. On the fourth shelf is a pre-war tone correction unit, more AM tuners and the SCU Mk I preamp on top of an IA20 integrated solid-state stereo amp, two Lowther-Murray transistor preamps.

On top of the glass cabinet is a TP10 mono amp, BT3 tone correction unit, No 2 mono preamp on top of MCU Mk V mono preamp,

'As for my little PX4 amp, I've now sold about 20 pairs of those'







## Paul Miller Editor

Technician and writer on all things audio for over 25 years, Paul Miller took over the editor's chair in 2006. He invented the QC Suite, used across the audio industry

# 2010 – an audio odyssey

The economy might have gone to the woofers but not all is doom and gloom in the land of audio. **Paul Miller** looks back at a year when high-end hi-fi flourished in the face of fiscal adversity

**M**usic has never sounded sweeter than in 2010. As the year draws to a close I find myself looking back on some truly memorable products – fabulous turntables like the Avid Acutus Reference SP [p21] and Project RPM10.1 Evolution [p14] along with the all-singing and dancing digital front end from Marantz, the UD9004 [p36]. Naturally, all these products were launched exclusively in your favourite hi-fi magazine!

The UD9004 was not the first universal BD player to be introduced but, where cost is no object, it remains my favourite. And not only for its versatility, for this flagship Marantz player offers state-of-the-art sound in two- and multichannel guises from every current 5in disc format. Of course, where cost really is an object then you're unlikely to go wrong with the 650BD from Cambridge Audio [p38]. Couple this to its giant-killing DacMagic outboard converter and you've a two-box combo that is knocking very firmly on the door of the best the high-end has to offer. Minus one nought from a typical retail price, I might add.

### LANGUAGE OF MUSIC

We've also heard some fabulous speakers this year even if they've not 'spoken' with entirely the same accent. The expansive, liquid midrange of the JBL Project K2 9900 [p56] is as unforgettable as the more uniformly communicative Sophia 3s from Wilson Audio [p59]. Either would grace the most sophisticated of systems, but I'll wager they would be very different systems indeed.

2010 was also the year when Class D amplification finally came of age. We had been waiting for NAD's digital Class D M2



**ABOVE:** The Editor's 'Product of the Year' – the D-Premier amplifier from Devialet, France

amplifier [p44] ever since I had reported on developments from Zetex Semiconductors in 2009, then in the process of licencing its DDFA technology. While the M2 turned out to be the most triumphant execution of

end-to-end Class D digital amplification since the Tact Millennium, in the event its launch was rather overshadowed by the entirely unexpected release of Devialet's D-Premier [p42].

*'The D-Premier's  
sublimely musical  
quality remains a  
daily revelation'*

Reviewed exclusively in *Hi-Fi News*, the D-Premier has gone on to take the audiophile world by storm, picking up rave reviews across the continent and even winning the 2010-11 EISA Award for High-End Audio [*HFN*, Oct '10].

I'll never forget hearing the D-Premier amplifier for the first time and, ten months later, its utterly transparent and sublimely musical quality remains a daily revelation. I've never heard my B&W 802s sound quite so expansive, articulate and integrated while also appearing not to exist in the room. It's a good trick.

Which begs the question of all loudspeaker reviews – just how much is the reported sound of the speaker actually the sound of the speaker and amplifier in interaction? This is not a new observation but it's one we tend to overlook until faced with a new amplifier that makes every speaker sound, well, ostensibly closer to its full potential. Colourful speakers – no names, no law suits – tend to sound less colored with the D-Premier at their heels. And that's a good thing, for it has the capacity to enlarge our envelope of high-end audio.

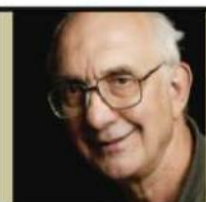
### PASSION FOR PERFORMANCE

In any event, it's important to recognise that our shared passion convenes under a very broad church. For every enthusiast that would never trade a valve for a transistor there will be another that chooses to stream hi-res digital audio over a network in place of spinning a re-issued 180g vinyl LP. There will be some that embrace all technologies, some that worship on the margins. But we are audiophiles all. And as we approach 2011 you can be assured the doors to *Hi-Fi News* will remain open and welcoming to every enthusiast that holds to the faith. ☺



**ABOVE:** Inside the D-Premier with HDMI in/out [bottom right] and compact PSU [top left]





## Barry Fox Technology journalist

Barry Fox trained in electronics with the RAF and worked as a patent agent, but he gave that up to enter journalism. He is one of the world's top technology writers

# Notes from a radio head

It was FM's reprieve and the fortunes of DAB that dominated the past 12 months for **Barry Fox**. Here he looks at one of the major obstacles to DAB adoption and a possible, if not perfect, solution

**F**or me, 2010 will go down as the year when FM radio got its reprieve from 2015 shutdown – not because there is anything inherently wrong with DAB, but because the trade bodies pushing DAB have repeatedly shot off their own feet and the new minister in charge, Ed Vaizey, is the first to check for himself what axe-grinders tell him.

I have been a DAB supporter since the BBC took the brave decision in 1995 to broadcast a regular DAB service to a couple of dozen prototype receivers, and so encourage chip-makers to develop the chips needed for mass production of receivers. With a strong signal and decent data rate, DAB is a great way to get more choice. I listen to DAB in a car but have had to bust a gut to do so – the main reason why I have known in my bones that the 2015 date was a fantasy.

### SMALL BEER

Consider the facts that Digital Radio UK, its predecessor the Digital Radio Development Bureau, and the consultant advisers behind the Digital Economy Act have been ducking.

DAB may be biggish in Britain but it is small beer, or no beer at all, in most major car markets round the world. That's why, after 15 years of UK DAB, many cars and vans are still sold without a DAB option and without an aerial that will allow a dashboard DAB radio retrofit. Often the factory-fitted aerial has an active amplifier that very efficiently blocks out DAB frequencies.

To retrofit a DAB dashboard radio involves dropping the roof, replacing the roof aerial and cutting into wiring. This invalidates whole car warranties because

**RIGHT: Pure's £100 Highway brings DAB to cars fitted with an analogue-only radio. Tune your car radio to the FM frequency shown on the Highway's display for a wireless connection, though hardware connection via a line socket – if available – gives better results**



modern cars are computers on wheels. I have fitted DAB radios to several cars and had to unfix them before car services or repairs. No wonder it is now very hard to find a dashboard DAB radio in Halfords.

There are currently around 33 million vehicles driving around without DAB, and because many people like to keep their cars for a while, there will still be some

20 million no-DAB vehicles by 2015.

Around 20% of radio listening is in-car, and much of that is prime time so worth more in advertising.

In-car traffic data, for example, for sat navs, relies on FM – from the Classic FM Traffic Message Channel. Analogue switch off will stop TMC hardware working.

The only DAB retrofit option that avoids modifying the car's electrics is Pure's Highway, which uses a jack cable or FM re-broadcast connection at very low power to an existing dashboard radio.

With its neat little active stick-on windscreen aerial (powered by 3V from the radio) the Highway is an excellent DAB receiver. If the analogue dash radio has a line-in audio socket, direct connection is easy – albeit cluttering the car with

another wire. But if there is no wired link then its over-air FM connection is very flaky. This is no fault of Pure. The local transmit power is limited by law to 50nW. Spare FM frequencies change round the country and are at the mercy of pirate broadcasters, apparently without fear of police action from regulator Ofcom.

Trying to retune both the Highway FM transmitter and the dashboard FM receiver into free spaces, while driving, would be horribly dangerous. In urban areas there is no free space whatsoever between legitimate stations and pirates.

Any attempt at creating a nationwide free frequency for DAB re-broadcast would just provide a nice clear channel for the pirates.

### MINISTER OF SOUND

I have encountered new minister Ed Vaizey on several occasions, and suggested he try for himself retrofitting DAB to an existing car. The last time I met Vaizey he told me he was paying Halfords £100 to have a Highway fitted. If his dash radio has a line socket he will get DAB, but will have to remember to take everything out of the car or risk losing it through broken windows.

If he has to rely on FM connection he will learn first hand what some of us have been trying to tell the deaf DAB trade bodies for donkeys' years. ☹

'There will still be some 20m no-DAB vehicles by 2015, yet around 20% of radio listening is in-car'



*"Hipness is not a state of mind, its a fact of life"*  
**Cannonball Adderley**



# *Fidelity* with SOUL

## **Chord Indigo Plus Digital**

Whilst most hi-fi and home cinema enthusiasts are happy to accept the influence that interconnects and speaker cable can have on the performance of a system, many people struggle to accept that a digital cable can be equally influential.

The common reaction is that since the cable is only carrying a digital signal, the design and quality of materials used in the cable will have far less influence. Listening tests however, show this is not necessarily the case. Repeated listening tests using high quality digital to analogue converters and home cinema receivers have shown that digital cables can and do have an effect on the sound quality of the system in which they are used. Digital cables are capable of affecting levels of detail, dynamics, sound staging and the rhythmic and tonal characteristics of a system.

The improvements that the Indigo Plus Digital can bring to a system should not be dismissed lightly.

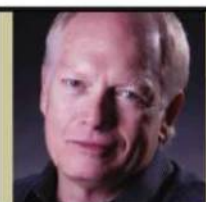


THE  
**CHORD**<sup>™</sup>  
COMPANY

[www.chord.co.uk](http://www.chord.co.uk)

Get advice on all aspects of hi-fi and home cinema from the Cable Doctor and sign-up for our newsletter, keeping you in touch with the latest product development news, exclusive competitions and technical tips





## Barry Willis

Journalist for top American audio-video publications

While his main interest is high-end audio, Barry Willis also writes about the culinary industry, visual art and theatre for a huge variety of US newspapers and magazines

# New adventures in sound...

When it comes to technological innovation the past decade may have belonged to video, but did 2010 see it reach a plateau? And where does this all leave audio? Don't despair, says **Barry Willis**

**T**he past decade was an almost unimaginable great leap forward for video technology. We went from small-screen analogue TVs and big bulky dim projectors to sleek high-resolution flatpanels and compact high-brightness projectors. In 2010 Blu-ray went mainstream, on-demand HD video streaming became a reality, and 3D entered consumers' homes.

This seemingly endless series of technological wonders has entered its plateau phase, characterised by incremental improvements and declining prices. Another sustained surge of video advancement seems unlikely at this point. But what of audio?

## HEY, WHAT'S NEW?

Walking around at any audio show, as I did at the end of July, is an exercise in nostalgia and ennui. Look, another triode amplifier... Oh, someone else has rediscovered vinyl. With the exception of music servers and the occasional flat-panel display, an audio show in 2010 looks much like one in 2000. And sounds like one, too.

While products have certainly become more reliable – thanks primarily to improved parts quality – there's been scant advancement in the field. In many ways the typical audio experience has declined. Having swallowed whole the propaganda of a certain Silicon Valley company, many music fans have never heard a good audio system. Many believe that MP3 is state-of-the-art.

Yet there are pockets of development with hope for even the most disenchanted of audiophiles. For example, Class D amplification has gone

'Class D has gone from a cool but rough-sounding solution to high-end'

from a cool-running but rough-sounding automotive solution to true high-end refinement. Companies such as Bel Canto make affordable and diminutive but lovely-to-the-ear and pleasing-to-the-eye Class D amplifiers that compete with the best regardless of cost.

At the extremely affordable end of the marketplace spectrum, Wyred4Sound amplifiers offer dynamics and bottom-end slam that simply shame traditional designs. Employing ICE power modules and similar core technologies, both Bel Canto and Wyred should be applauded not merely for their energy-saving efforts but for continuing to work at the forefront of electro-acoustical science, making

reproduced music more lifelike.

If only more loudspeaker companies would do the same. Most assemble their products using traditional drivers supplied by a handful of manufacturers. In classic me-too fashion, loudspeaker makers stick to the tried-and-true regarding cabinet

designs, crossover networks and driver arrays. Despite the advertising hype, there's not much original thinking in the speaker business – unless you count companies such as Emerald Physic, who accept driver misbehaviour as a fact of life and apply massive doses of DSP as a corrective measure. Its model 2.3 (report forthcoming) is an outrageous bargain.

## BIGGEST BREAKTHROUGH

There's still a screaming need for a fundamental re-examination of transducers. Luckily, at least one company doing this – Nashville, Tennessee's High Emotion Audio – has achieved fruition after 15 years of R&D.

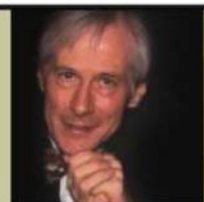
There are rumours of other companies making similar scientific inquiries into the nature of electro-mechanical sound reproduction, but HEA gets my vote for 2010's biggest breakthrough.

Alas, my HEA evaluation system disappeared within a week. A recording engineer friend came by for a test listen; three minutes into a Rachmaninoff piano concerto he pronounced it 'better than being there' [see *HFN* Oct '10] and bought the system out from under me! ☹



**ABOVE:** A pair of Emerald Physic loudspeakers on dem at the Raindrop Audio listening room in Singapore (see [www.raindropaudio.com](http://www.raindropaudio.com)); DSP processing allows for room acoustics correction





## Christopher Breunig Music Journalist

Christopher Breunig trained as an architect but became won over by music and collecting classical recordings. He was *Hi-Fi News*' Music Editor from 1986-2000

# And it's all for free...

The past 12 months saw **Christopher Breunig** finding more and more music on the internet. He's even downloaded FLAC files and burned them to CDs for listening through his Quad ESLs!

Dipping into YouTube is like having an open box of chocolates: try one and an irresistibly tempting selection of alternatives just sits there. The website is a fantastic source for music-lovers – not for its singing dogs or piano-playing cats, but as a repository of great musicians, playing or speaking.

Click on to Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, for example, and the links to one interpreter after another is like having a masterclass on how differently the theme may be conceived. And if you think nothing either Jessye Norman or Herbert von Karajan could do would move you, then try their Wagner 'Liebestod' from the 1987 Salzburg documentary, which exemplifies performance synergy and is profoundly touching – the sound-only CD [DG 423 613-2] makes a poor substitute.

Then there's Mitsuko Uchida talking last year to the Berlin Philharmonic horn player Sarah Willis about how Schumann encoded his Piano Concerto with motifs in adoration of his wife Clara: I'd not heard of that before.

### PAY TO VIEW

The Berlin Philharmonic, of course, has its concerts online. The notion that you would pay money to sit at home in front of a screen to hear live performances would have shocked music-lovers pre-1990, used to tuning to the BBC for its nightly Proms and recitals. However, you can also see free extracts – not just with Rattle but guest conductors as different as Trevor Pinnock and Semyon Bychkov – or view more by registering email details, etc. Its website has just been updated. With the Amsterdam Concertgebouw [<http://kco.radio4.nl/>], several complete symphony downloads are free in exchange for registration.

The BPO site had the 2010 Oxford Sheldonian concert which so electrified the critics – and was sold out on day



ABOVE: Mitsuko Uchida in insightful conversation at the Berliner Philharmoniker website

one – with Barenboim in Wagner, Elgar and Brahms. However, for something more tangible, that programme has just come out on DVD [EuroArts 2058068].

### COME INTO MY PARLOUR

Many of us will have disposed of LPs only to regret it later. Last month, quite by chance, I came across 'The Music Parlour' where

mostly old, out of copyright material has been transferred to files for FLAC download – entirely free, no registration, etc. I was especially pleased to reacquire myself with the Stravinsky *Soldier's Tale*, with actors and a

1955 Glyndebourne ensemble under John Pritchard: an HMV original. I also copied to CD some of Karl Münchinger's Stuttgart Bach (mono) and, more importantly, the world premiere of Vaughan Williams's Ninth Symphony, under Sir Malcolm Sargent. The quality is good. What The Music Parlour offers is limited to music never reissued digitally. Of late, works by Roberto Gerhard

have been added. There's also a historic archive transferred from 78s.

If, like me, you think iTunes tries to take over your life, may I recommend to Mac users two simple, related inexpensive programs: Switch for download/listen and ExpressBurn for CD burning – I much prefer this and sitting in front of my ESL 57s to listening at the computer.

What is also useful with the internet is that you can find footage of young artists new to the UK: my Yearbook album choice, Vilde Frang, for instance; or the intriguing pianist

## 'The intriguing Valentina Lisitsa, a sort of Ukrainian Gwynnie Paltrow'

Valentina Lisitsa – a sort of Ukrainian Gwynnie Paltrow, with an astonishing technique and no lack of musicianship. There's ample material to view on her own website. No less controversial is the ebullient Yuja Wang, signed to DG in lieu of Lang Lang and Yundi Li. Her Prokofiev Third with Abbado (Lucerne 2010) is on both YouTube and a EuroArts DVD. ☺



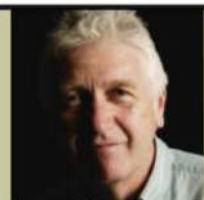
# ...a string quartet

***CHILL** out with LAT  
International  
deep cryo  
treated  
cables*

- IC-300 Signature analog interconnect
- DI-30 Signature digital interconnect
- SS1000 MKII speaker cable
- AC-2 power cord







## Steve Harris Contributing Editor

Steve Harris edited Hi-Fi News between 1986 and 2005. He loves jazz, blues music, vinyl and vintage hi-fi and anything that makes good music come to life

# A new year's resolution

Hi-rez downloads, two legends of jazz lost, while YouTube comes to the rescue with some classic Charlie Parker performances to re-live. **Steve Harris** offers his personal take on the past 12 months

In 2010, that long-promised Nirvana of hi-rez digital downloads came close enough to look like more than a mirage. Hi-rez offerings are still a tiny oasis in the MP3 desert. But if that doesn't worry you, there's more music to choose from than ever before. One site I keep returning to is Wolfgang's Vault, which offers rock and jazz concert recordings ([www.wolfgangsvault.com](http://www.wolfgangsvault.com)). Wolfgang's starting point was the legacy of recordings and memorabilia left by the late rock promoter Bill Graham (real name Wolfgang Grajonca). By early 2010, Wolfgang's was offering sets from the Newport Jazz Festival archive.

## LOST BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Later in 2010, the jazz world lost two great links with its heritage on the same day, the 14th of August. One of them was the singer, songwriter and actress Abbey Lincoln, who passed away at the age of 80. Back in 1956, she made a stunning appearance in the movie *The Girl Can't Help It*, wearing the red dress that had been occupied by Marilyn Monroe in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*.

But Lincoln refused to be packaged as just a piece of sepia glamour. By 1960 she was deeply involved in the

Civil Rights movement. Wolfgang's Vault can give you the Max Roach Quartet with Abbey Lincoln performing *We Insist: Freedom Now Suite* at the 1964 Newport festival. Prices are \$6.98 for an MP3 download, \$8.98 for the FLAC version.

You can hear the original 1960 studio recording of the suite, and Lincoln's 1961 album *Straight Ahead*, on remastered vinyl issues by Pure Pleasure [[www.purepleasurerecords.com](http://www.purepleasurerecords.com)].

On the 14th of August also, the great jazz photographer Herman Leonard passed away, at 87. He had started photographing jazz musicians in 1947, when the established doyen of jazz photographers was William Gottlieb. But it was Herman Leonard who really got as close as he could to the be-boppers in the small clubs. His intense black and white images seem to bottle up the essence of being there on 52nd Street, at the moment in history when that was the place to be.

After this, Blue Note's co-founder and photographer Francis Wolff's black-and-white pictures, with designer Reid Miles's colour graphics, made jazz album sleeves into an art form with a formula that's still imitated today.

Following the doldrums of the rock-dominated 1970s, interest in jazz picked up again in the 1980s. This enabled Clint Eastwood to fulfil a long-cherished project by directing the 1988 movie *Bird*, a biopic tribute to Charlie Parker, who had died in 1955. The soundtrack music was created by combining Parker's original alto sax solos from live recordings with newly-recorded trumpet, piano, bass and drums.

Even given the superb musicianship of the players, this approach was hardly likely to create anything of value. But the film did encourage a spate of re-releases of the proper stuff. *Bird Lives: The Complete Dial*



ABOVE: *The Original Bird*; sleeve photograph by Herman Leonard, who died in August

*Masters* [NME/Spotlite JU-6-7333] was a wonderful double LP of all Parker's issued recordings for the Dial label, from 1946-1947. Meanwhile, *The Original Bird* [BMG ZL71854] drew on the body of work

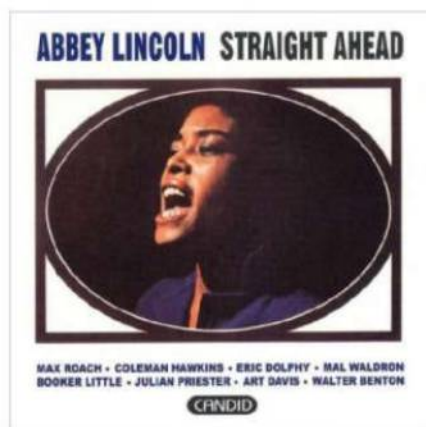
Parker recorded in the 1940s, for the Savoy label, with some live tracks thrown in. Like the NME/Spotlite double, it carried the stamp of authenticity in the form of an arresting

Herman Leonard photograph. Later, the trickle of reissues became a flood.

## LOW REZ BUT REAL

If you want to see as well as hear, you may actually be content to watch Forest Whitaker miming to that faked-up Hollywood soundtrack in *Bird*. But you can now stream the 1987 made-for-TV documentary *Celebrating Bird: The Triumph Of Charlie Parker* from [video.google.com](http://video.google.com). Or, thanks to YouTube, watch a couple of all-too-short Parker performances. They're hardly hi-rez. They are black-and-white. But, like Herman Leonard's pictures, they are real. ☺

'In 2010, the jazz world lost two great links with its heritage on the same day'



ABOVE: On 180g vinyl, *Straight Ahead* costs £24.80 from [www.purepleasurerecords.com](http://www.purepleasurerecords.com)



# WELCOME TO THE NORTH EAST

ANATEK RESEARCH  
APOLLO  
ATACAMA  
AV INTERNATIONAL  
CHORD COMPANY  
CHORD ELECTRONICS  
CLEARAUDIO  
DYNAVECTOR  
EAR YOSHINO  
GOLDRING  
GRAHAM ENGINEERING  
GRAHAM SLEE  
G F HADCOCK  
ISOTEK  
KOETSU  
KUDOS AUDIO  
MARTIN LOGAN  
LYRA  
MAGNEPLANAR  
MELODY  
MICHELL ENGINEERING  
MONITOR AUDIO



NAD  
NAIM AUDIO  
NORDOST  
NOTTINGHAM ANALOGUE  
OPERA  
ORTOFON  
PATHOS ACOUSTICS  
PROJECT  
PS AUDIO  
PURESOUND  
REGA  
REVOLVER  
ROKSAN  
SME  
STAX  
SUGDEN AUDIO  
TEAC ESOTERIC  
TRANSFIGURATION  
TRICHORD RESEARCH  
UNISON RESEARCH  
USHER AUDIO  
VAN DEN HUL

**HIFISOUND, Castlegate mill, Quayside, Stockton on Tees. 01642 267012**

## T U R N T A B L E W O R L D

**THE UK'S PREMIER VINYL RELATED RESOURCE WILL BE AVAILABLE SOON ONLINE!**

If you need us sooner, please call 0845 6019390 or email [news@turntableworld.co.uk](mailto:news@turntableworld.co.uk)

**[www.2ndhandhifi.co.uk](http://www.2ndhandhifi.co.uk) ...what are you up for?**



**tel: 0845 6019390**

### Analogue

Acos Lustre, excellent Japanese tonearm.....	149
Ariston RD80 Superior, Mission 774, vgc.....	279
Benz Micro Glider, excellent low hours.....	399
Cardas Neutral Reference Tonearm Cable, weeks old.....	299
Clearaudio Unify tonearm, brand new.....	999
Decent Audio Wallshelf, used.....	149
Garrard 301, good cosmetics, full working order.....	799
Linn LP12, Funk Vector, Naim Aro, superb.....	1999
Linn LP12, Ekos in black ash.....	1299
Linn LP12 Rosewood, Cirkus, Lingo, Iltok, boxed.....	1499
Linn Ekos 2, excellent with T cable.....	999
Linn Linto, excellent condition, boxed.....	599
Michell Hydraulic Reference, SME 3009, new id.....	749
Michell Gyro SE, excellent boxed with HR supply.....	899
Monitor Audio MA500 Direct Drive, excellent.....	249
Pink Triangle PT Too, Linn Ekos, offboard p/s excellent.....	1999
Project RPM10, speedbox, nr mint boxed.....	999
Project X Pack, very low hours nr mint boxed.....	499
Rega P3, in green.....	279
Rega P1, ex demo.....	149
Rega Planar 2 c/w RB250 and Super Bias, excellent.....	149
Rega RB250 with stubmod.....	119
Roksan Reference PSU in black, ex demo.....	Call
Roksan TMS1 & DSU superb boxed, recent TM service.....	1749
Roksan Xerxes, XPS2, Tabrizi excellent.....	599
SME 3009/2, excellent.....	179
Systemdek IX, c/w Systemdek arm, vgc.....	149
Thorens TD125, excellent original box/packing.....	299
Tom Evans The Groove, excellent.....	1099
VPI Super Scoutmaster, SDS, Clamps, Feet etc superb.....	2749
Wilson Benesch Act 1 Tonearm, nr mint superb.....	799

### Radios/Recorders

Arcam FMU26DAB, excellent boxed.....	249
Arcam DT91 FM/DAB, excellent boxed.....	249
Nakamichi ZX1000L, just serviced, vgc.....	Call
Quad FM3, vgc.....	99
Quad FM4, vgc.....	179
Quad FM66, excellent.....	299

### Amplifiers

Audio Innovations S700, excellent boxed.....	499
Arcam A28, nr mint boxed in black REDUCED.....	449
Arcam A38, nr mint boxed in black REDUCED.....	649
Audio Synthesis Flame T, excellent boxed remote.....	499
Audiolab 8000P, UK version.....	299
Audio Research SP11mk2, 2009 AS service.....	2499
Audio Research LS15, excellent boxed.....	1299
Audio Research LS26, as new boxed.....	Call
Audio Zone Amp 2 Monoblocks.....	799
Bryston B60R integrated, nr mint boxed.....	999
Conrad Johnson MV60SE Power nr mint boxed.....	1499
CR Developments Calypso, vgc boxed.....	699
Esoteric AI10, built in DAC and phono, excellent.....	1199
Krell KAV300, vgc classic integrated c/w remote.....	999
Krell Evolution 600 Monoblocks.....	Call
Levinson No27 Power amp, vgc.....	1499
Lyngdorf TDAI2200 with Roomperfect and DAC.....	2999
Marantz SM17 Power, excellent boxed.....	299
Melody 101 pre and Matching Monos, ex demo.....	Call
Melody 2A3 Integrated, ex demo.....	Call
Melody 300b Integrated, excellent boxed.....	799
Musical Fidelity A3CR, vgc remote.....	349
NAIM NAC122/150, excellent boxed.....	599
NAIM NAIT XS, excellent boxed.....	849
NAIM 250, boxed, recased to olive & serviced in 2000.....	799
NAIM NAPV145, excellent.....	999
NAIM NAP250.2, excellent boxed.....	1749
NAIM NAC82, napsc, excellent boxed.....	999
NAIM NAC52, excellent boxed.....	1999
NAIM NAC202, excellent boxed.....	799
NAIM NAC282, excellent boxed.....	1399
Prima Luna Prologue one, excellent boxed.....	799
PS Audio Trio P200, excellent boxed with remote.....	399
Rega Brio 3, excellent boxed.....	199
Rega Cursa, excellent.....	149
Roksan Caspian M Series Integrated ex demo.....	799
Roksan Caspian M Series Integrated ex demo.....	599
Roksan Kandy K2 integrated ex demo.....	599
Rotel RA04 and RA05, both as new boxed.....	Call
Tag McLaren 60ir, nr mint boxed.....	399
Unison Research Uno Hybrid Integrated, due in.....	Call

### Digital

Arcam CD17, nr mint boxed.....	349
Arcam CD33T, as new boxed.....	399
Arcam CD37, excellent boxed.....	799
Audio Research CD3Mk2, excellent boxed remote.....	1799
Cambridge Audio 640v2, excellent boxed.....	799
Consonance CD2.2 24bit, excellent boxed.....	599
Copland CD822, excellent boxed.....	649
Cyrus PSXR, excellent smooth black boxed.....	249
Cyrus CD6SE, excellent silver boxed.....	449
Cyrus CD8SE, excellent boxed, due in.....	599
Cyrus CDXTSE, nr mint in brushed black, boxed.....	499
Cyrus DACX, excellent brushed black boxed.....	599
Densen B410, as new boxed.....	599
Esoteric DV60, mint boxed, SAVE £2000.....	2499
Esoteric P05/D05, as new ex demo.....	Call
Linn Numerik, vgc.....	299
Marantz 8003, excellent boxed, Due in.....	449
Marantz SA15, excellent boxed.....	499
Marantz CD17K1, excellent boxed.....	399
Marantz CD12/DA12 excellent with tabletop remote.....	1199
Micromega CD10, nr mint boxed new model.....	599
Micromega CD30, nr mint boxed new model.....	1199
Naim CD3, excellent boxed.....	499
Naim CD5, excellent boxed.....	349
Naim CDS/CDPS, nr mint boxed.....	999
Naim CDX2, excellent boxed with remote.....	1399
PS Audio Digilink DAC, as new ex demo.....	Call
Rotel RCD05, as new boxed.....	299
Sugden CD21SE, ex demo nr mint boxed.....	999
Sugden CDMaster Biju CD player, as new boxed.....	599
TEAC P700/D700 excellent boxed 1/2 size pair.....	749

### AV/Accessories/Cables

Chord Epic Speaker cables, factory terminated pair.....	Call
Isotek and LAT extension blocks.....	Call
NAIM XPS2, nr mint boxed later version.....	1749
NAIM Supercap in Olive, new Burndy.....	1749
Onkyo 507, 607 & 807, as new ex demo boxed.....	Call
PS Audio Quintessence, as new boxed.....	499

### Loudspeakers

Art Stiletto, mint 2 months old.....	599
B&W DM70 excellent for year, full working order.....	999
Castle Conway 3, excellent boxed.....	299
Definitive Technology Mythos 2, pair, bargain!.....	399
Kudos C10, early bi-wire pair in Rosenut.....	1299
Linn Ninka, excellent boxed.....	449
Magneplanar MG1.6, ex review.....	1499
Martin Logan Purity, ex demo, for details.....	1999
Martin Logan Odyssey, excellent boxed.....	2999
Monitor Audio GSW12 Gold series Subwoofer, excellent.....	699
Monitor Audio MA1800 Gold, large floorstander, bargain.....	349
Monitor Audio Platinum 300, excellent crated.....	3499
PMC FB11 in Walnut, as new boxed.....	1499
PMC Fact 8 in Tiger Ebony, excellent boxed.....	3249
Proac Tablette Ref 8 Signature in Ebony, mint boxed.....	799
Rega RS1, mint boxed.....	699
Rega RS1, in cherry boxed.....	249
Revel Performa F32, excellent boxed, serious value!.....	1399
Spendor S3/5se, excellent boxed.....	549
Totem Model One Signature, excellent boxed.....	949
Totem Arro with 'beaks'.....	599
Trail CS7.2, large floorstander £13k new... BARGAIN!.....	2999
Usher Mini Dancer 2, ex demo, nr mint.....	Call
Usher Be718 Standmount, excellent boxed.....	849
Wharfedale Diamond Home cinema pack, ex demo.....	Call
Wharfedale Active Diamond 7.1s - rare boxed!.....	119
Yamaha NS1000M, black ash, original grills.....	749

### Special System Deals

Audio Analogue Crescendo Amp & CD, ex demo.....	799
Esoteric SA10 & A110 combo, as new.....	2249
Micromega CD10 & IA60, both as new.....	999
Micromega CD30 & IA180 both as new.....	1999
Onkyo A733/C733 Amp and CD ex display.....	599
Shining MC30, as new boxed.....	499

**Tuesday to Saturday 10 til 5, tel 01642 267012 or email [news@2ndhandhifi.co.uk](mailto:news@2ndhandhifi.co.uk)**



## YOUR VIEWS

# Sound Off!

Correspondents express their own opinions, not those of *Hi-Fi News*. We reserve the right to edit letters for publication. Correspondents using e-mail are asked to give their full postal address (which won't be published). Letters seeking advice will be answered in print on our Sound Off pages, but due to time constraints we regret we're unable to answer questions on buying items of hi-fi or any other hi-fi queries by telephone, post or via e-mail.

## POINTS ON PICK-UPS VINTAGE COLLECTION CONTAINS SOME PEARLS

It was interesting to read the *Hi-Fi@Home* feature on Lawrie in the November issue in which he recounts his journey through the hi-fi maze and his early years with a 78 record player using steel needles, and Mullard electronics.

He mentioned that his first 'proper' deck used a Collaro TX-88 cartridge, which was top of the range. Well, I still have one! Though it's labelled a Ronette TX-88 [pictured below]. It cost me £2.6.8d in 1960, and was used in a Garrard AT6 semi-automatic turntable. When stereo became a possibility for me, like Lawrie I also upgraded to a Decca Deram. Soon after I upgraded again to a Connoisseur SCU1 stereo cartridge, buying a phono preamp to move to moving-magnet varieties just before then.

I also still have a Garrard stylus pressure gauge (SPG3) from the same era – purchased by me in 1962. Maybe Lawrie had one too! I also still have an ADC XLM moving-magnet cartridge from 1973. I remember my next upgrade from that being to the ADC 10E Mk II, which had an amazing sound. I can only describe it as 'effervescent' – though both the XLM and 10E had a recommended playing weight of 0.4 to 1g. And it tracked

well at 0.5g – but you didn't dare walk across the room while playing an LP!

*John Winterbottom, via e-mail*

Haden Boardman replies: A small haul of stereo ceramic cartridges recently came my way, including both a Connoisseur SCU-1 and a Decca Deram. Both were in good condition and gave surprisingly reasonable, if rather coloured, results. I was interested to see whether the high output of these devices, used with a custom-built preamplifier, could rival the performance of modern MM pick-up cartridges. In all honesty, it simply did not!

As for the TX-88, this is certainly a punchy-sounding model and great for late 78s, although I feel the Collaro Studio O to be a tad better. Amazingly, ceramic cartridges were still being supplied on low-end audio equipment well into the 1980s.

The Garrard SPG3 gauge is surprisingly common, but sadly not of much use or value as it is hopelessly inaccurate. On the other hand, your ADC XLM & 10E are underrated pearls. Both need ultra low mass arms, such as ADC's own LMF 1 and 2, (which as far as I am aware, are the world's first carbon fibre tone arms). Both are super items. [Haden Boardman and Ken Kessler bring you their guide to buying vintage on p112.]



ABOVE: John's Collaro (Ronette) TX-88 cartridge and Garrard SPG3 stylus gauge

## Swede sounds

STREAMING JAZZ AND A PLEA FOR INTERNET RADIO COLUMN



As a jazz listener I'd like to draw the attention of Barry Fox, and all my fellow *Hi-Fi News* readers, to the Swedish Radio Program 2's internet 30-day archive ([www.sr.se/p2](http://www.sr.se/p2)). By the way, it doesn't matter if you don't understand Swedish! This leads me to a suggestion: could you not dedicate a column to internet radio? After all, these days it's another source and it would be great to read contributors' thoughts on recommended set-ups along with user tips. You need an internet connection of course, but what then? A PC sound card, possibly a special one, or an internet radio tuner (models from Linn and Restek spring to mind, though the latter is still in the pipeline). And what about using a separate DAC?

Then there's satellite radio... Restek produces a high-end and expensive satellite tuner, apparently still so sought after in Germany that it is rumoured to be one of the reasons the company is delaying the release of its internet tuner.

One final note to Barry. Several decades ago I requested some information from the service manager at Philips in Denmark. When I wasn't provided with the information I referred him to a column written by you. His reply was that he was better informed by what you had written in your column than by Philips HQ!

*Henning Transgaard, via e-mail*

Barry Fox replies: It's nice to get kind words once in a while – see my next column [Dec '10 issue] about what happened when I tried to warn 'brown goods' electronics dealers about the threat of Amazon, and for my pains was savaged in a rambling public rant from their trade body, Retra.

I will certainly try the Swedish station and can, if necessary, ask a friend who worked for years as a musician in Sweden for some help with translation. You ask what internet radios I have. I mostly rely on Roberts and Pure standalones, which I find very convenient to use, sometimes with an analogue connection to add some meat to the sound. I'll be looking at aspects of this, and the way hardware companies are now hoping to control content with internet radio and TV 'portals', in a future column.



## A dearth of downloads

RETAILERS NEED TO OFFER MORE HI-REZ FILES

Thanks for your continued focus on music servers, hard disk-based players and the streaming of high-rez files among the fine vinyl and vintage content. However, the big problem to my mind is the sheer paucity of hi-rez/lossless files available to download.

Hi-rez technology is great if you want to archive music from LP and CD collections you already own. If you want to buy music in WAV or FLAC formats then your problems begin. As for individual tracks or, heaven forbid, singles (not everyone is happy with the 80% to 20% filler-versus-killer ratio on most albums) forget it.

The big retailers of downloads seem unwilling to countenance the distribution of hi-rez files, appearing happy to take the profits from mid-fi 320kbps MP3 files. Yes, I know there are the redoubtable exceptions of Linn and one or two others but they are niche and the mainstream market is ignored.

One exception is Domino Records, where at the online checkout you are offered a full fat



ABOVE: Find indie label Domino at [www.digital.dominorecordco.com](http://www.digital.dominorecordco.com)

WAV version of your chosen song as opposed to MP3 for a mere 29p 'Wave delivery surcharge'.

So come on music retailers, give us something to fill up the terabyte hard drives of our shiny new music servers, please!

Paul Norman, via e-mail

HFN replies: Could 2010 have proved a turning point for hi-rez downloads? See Steve Harris's column, p108.

## 'Beachcombing' for LP bargains

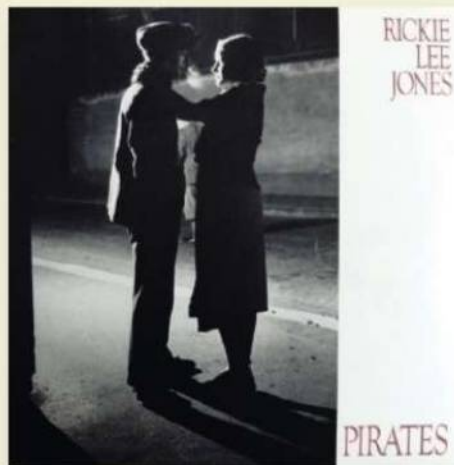
UNWANTED VINYL CAN MEAN GLITTERING FINDS FOR THOSE PREPARED TO DIG A LITTLE

I subscribe to *HFN* because you have 'Record Review' in your title. This tells me that the magazine is not just about the equipment featured but music too. I also enjoy features such as 'Hi-Fi@Home' as these make things all the more human and real. Please continue with them.

I am writing to share with readers some of the joys of being a lover of vinyl – especially those of us freshly 50-years young, who grew up during some very exciting epochs in the history of music. I am, of course, referring to the '60s to '80s. This love started as a child with me joining parents dreamily stretched out on the carpet listening to Elvis 45s on a fold-open Phillips record player.

It was thus with heartfelt sadness that I read Ken Kessler's 'chill down the spine', 'free vinyl, anyone?' column in the September issue. To think that LPs would end up in landfill because they take up too much room is a clear indication of a largely nihilistic society!

A small upside to this reality though, is that vinyl lovers prepared to 'comb the beaches' of charity and secondhand shops or car boot sales, with no particular find in mind, can unexpectedly come across real treasures. I have found gems in mint condition, such as Pat Metheny's *80/81* [ECM] for £8 and Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* by no less than Neville Marriner of the famed Academy of St-Martins-In-The-Fields [Decca's Argo Label] for £1.99 at Oxfam. Also, for less than £2, *Belo Horizonte* by a young John McLaughlin, in near mint condition (both the record and artist!). Then, amongst some miscellaneous stuff at



ABOVE: *Pirates* – a landmark recording saved from becoming landfill, and all for just £2.99

Oxfam in Farnham, the sublime *Pirates* by Ricky Lee Jones, for £2.99. To think that anyone would have been deprived of the bass opening to 'Woody And Dutch On The Slow Train To Peking' and the divine, operatic 'Traces Of The Western Slope' because this landmark recording on vinyl ended up as landfill, makes me shiver with anger! I guess I should understand the 'business and market demand realities' behind all this, but the romantic in me sees the world differently.

Obviously there is a lot of dirty, scratched and largely forgotten stuff out there too, but a diligent vinyl lover with patience and passion, will be rewarded. To the few good shops that still make an effort to source and stock secondhand vinyl in an ordered manner, I salute you.

Conrad Bester, via e-mail

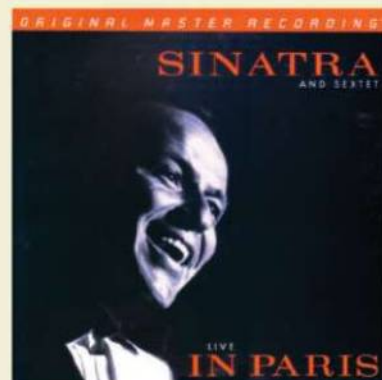
## Overpriced and over here?

MEANWHILE, THE PRICE OF NEW US VINYL DRIVES THIS READER MAD...

I share Ken Kessler's anger at the way we in the UK are ripped off compared to the USA. (I often agree with Ken – must be a generation thing, scary!) Following his review of Frank Sinatra's *Live In Paris* in the June issue I found the disc at Amazon. Vinyl is £61.32, CD is £51.02.

At Mobile Fidelity's website ([www.mofi.com](http://www.mofi.com)) the vinyl version is listed as costing \$39.99. That's £26.14 at the current \$/£ exchange rate! I then tried US audio dealer musicdirect.com and was also presented with the price of \$39.99. I shall be visiting California later this year and will be placing my order then!

Stuart Turner, via e-mail





## INVESTIGATION

YOUR ONE-STOP GUIDE TO THE BEST IN RETRO KIT

# Buying vintage...

Goodmans to Garrard, Lowther to Leak... there's some sensational vintage kit out there just waiting to be discovered once you know where to look and how to sort the bargains from the bygones. **Ken Kessler** and **Haden Boardman** share their advice

**B**uying secondhand has no stigma whatsoever during the current financial downturn. It's an ideal way to save money, and nothing depreciates like audio equipment. Conversely, the term 'secondhand' will not even be in your vocabulary if you're an anachrophile like me, someone who simply loves 'old stuff'. Whether it's vintage cars, old fountain pens, used vinyl or anything else that qualifies as 'collectable', the basic guidelines on acquiring such objects are fairly constant.

Indeed, they're based on such logical and obvious tenets as 'the Law of Supply and Demand' and 'Condition Is Everything', as well as fundamental common sense, that you might wonder why articles such as this are necessary. The reality is that every field has its special concerns. Judging whether or not a used book is in decent nick is far easier than assessing a case of 30-year-old Bordeaux.

### A SPECIAL CASE...

Audio equipment differs from all others because buying vintage hi-fi is the most obscure, least visible of all the collecting themes one



**ABOVE:** Perils or pearls? Enthusiasts hot on the trail at the Tonbridge Audiojumble, held twice a year – see [www.audiojumble.co.uk](http://www.audiojumble.co.uk)

**BELOW:** One of audio's true rarities – a Tannoy Hi-Gain integrated amplifier



can name. Even beer mat and matchbook collectors are more highly organised, with clubs and magazine support and buying networks. Unlike cars, watches, art, fountain pens, comic books, vintage clothing, jewellery and the like, we do not have the benefit of major auction houses who sort the wheat from the chaff, who authenticate the provenance of an item, who attest to condition. Few are the specialist retail shops that deal solely in vintage audio gear. We don't even have arbitrary price scales.

With such a lack of precedents, with no status quo, everything from what you should pay for something to where you should buy it, vintage hi-fi is a greyer area than in any other field of collecting.

Aside from a general consensus as to what are the most desirable products to seek out – the litany of classics that runs Quad ESLs/Garrard

301s/LS35As/Radford electronics/McIntosh valves/Thorens 124/SME arms/anything Nagra, etc, etc – buying vintage audio gear is an amorphous concept.

### WHAT TO BUY

If there's a single problem which plagues the vintage audio scene, it's the focus on the aforementioned

handful of classics. But this works to your advantage if you can force yourself to think laterally. However diffuse the world of

**'A canny collector can create a killer system with limited funds'**

vintage hi-fi, items like Marantz 10B tuners, mint Thorens TD 124s, 15ohm LS3/5As, Radford STA25s, Nagra IV open-reel portables, SME 3012 tonearms, Audio Research D79 power amps and the like fetch high prices on a global level.

Factor in the most fastidious and hungry of collectors – Japanese and now Korean enthusiasts – and the bidding for a mint, boxed, original





McIntosh MC275 can reach eye-watering levels.

What continues to baffle me is the way that those seeking out superior vintage kit tend to ignore the bargains that stare them in the face. While, admittedly, such icons as the Quad '57' ESL or the Radford MA-15 monoblock have no serious equivalents the world is awash with under-appreciated audio masterpieces. Recent jumbles have turned up an ADC record deck for £60, an ERA turntable for £50, Acoustic Research AR4xas and a McIntosh valve receiver and Tannoy Berkeleys and a JBE turntable and other Grade-A performers for absurdly low prices.

By all means, set your sights on a pair of Marantz Model 8B amps or Stax ELS F-81 electrostatics, an original Koetsu Rosewood or an Empire Troubadour turntable. But be prepared to dig deep into your funds. Conversely, the canny collector who is not bound by famous names or specific models can create a killer system with

**ABOVE:** The 1990s gold reissue of the Quad II power amplifier – one of our cover stars this month. Used earlier original examples can be had for under £100

**RIGHT:** Tubes a crowd – hundreds of boxed valves at bargain prices from all the pedigree brands, plus off-the-wall names too

**BELOW:** An oldie but still a goodie – Denon DA-305 tonearm sits atop a Denon DP-3000 two-speed servo-controlled direct-drive turntable from 1972



limited funds, if prepared to think outside of the box. How I wish I had bought that JBE...

## HOW MUCH TO PAY

Websites like eBay and AudiogoN ride to the rescue because they give you an idea of what the going rate might be for the products that you're seeking. Unlike the consensus in prices in the more established fields – there's remarkable consistency in pricing when you're buying a mint original copy of The Beatles' *Please Please Me* in mono, or a 1958 Rolex Explorer – there are few guidelines for vintage audio.

Yes, there exists a handful of products with remarkable consistency in the secondhand hi-fi market in the UK, especially LS3/5As, SME tonearms, Quad ESLs and Radford amplifiers, and on occasion, you might get lucky and

find something sensational in a boot fair. But the bottom line is always the same: something is only worth what a person is willing to pay.

## WHERE TO BUY

Unsurprisingly, the internet may be the best thing ever to happen to vintage hi-fi enthusiasts. If you've fully grasped the ways to minimise risks buying on-line, especially those of transferring funds, and you're not averse to a bit of a gamble – a photo and a few hundred words from the vendor can only reassure you up to a point – then the available riches are virtually limitless.

To test my theory, I went to the admittedly US-centric AudiogoN while writing this and put in long-dead or obscure names. Phase Linear? Four models under \$400. SAE? Six for under \$500. Even 'Apogee' yielded a half-dozen items. ☺





## INVESTIGATION

Ditto for eBay, which is global. Just on the UK site, 'Lowther' turned up 242 items, Leak was good for 37 and even McIntosh yielded 18. But I am of a suspicious, insecure mien, and I absolutely, positively insist on seeing and examining the actual item I am about to purchase, with the sole exception of objects such as new books and CDs, where there's virtually no potential for error.

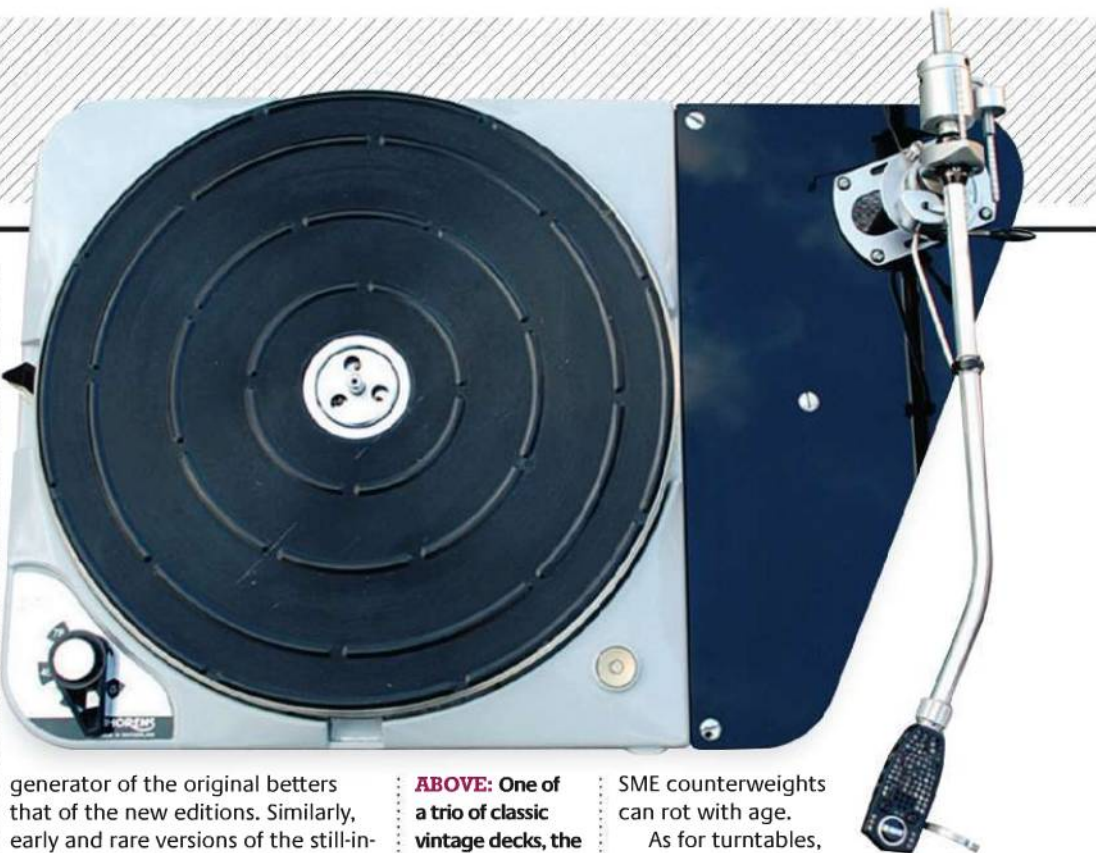
My favourite means of acquiring old gear remains vintage audio jumble sales, like those held twice yearly in Tonbridge [see [www.audiojumble.co.uk](http://www.audiojumble.co.uk)], but these are only of use to locals.

The greatest source of remarkable bargain finds are non-specialised sales. Junk shops, pawn shops, boot fairs and jumble sales. A couple of years ago, a friend of mine found a pair of Tannoy Monitors with 10in 'Red' coaxial drivers for £60, in a junk shop, next to an old fridge or cooker. The same chap found a virtually unused top-of-the-line Sony cassette deck, originally costing £1000-plus, for £10 at an antiques 'estate' sale.

Examples like these should be all the encouragement you need to appreciate the following tenet of audio acquisition: you never know where the next unrecognised treasure might turn up. You just have to look.

### HADEN'S ADVICE...

Secondhand pick-ups and cartridges can be dodgy items. However, a vintage Ortofon SPU can sell for a higher price than a new one. Why? Because some say the low output



generator of the original betters that of the new editions. Similarly, early and rare versions of the still-in-production Denon DL103 that are working and have a stylus in good condition, will fetch two to three times the price of the new item – regardless of how little life it may

have left. And the same holds true for the classic Decca FFSS pick-ups. There's a school of thought in Japan that these cartridges are

the only way to play back early Decca stereo records

Tonearms that match high mass, low compliance vintage cartridges are even more sought after. Rare Ortofon arms attract serious attention as do the classic SME arms, especially the very earliest so-called 'prototype' Mk I arm, which is worth even more in 12in guise. Even SME SII, 3009 and 3012 fetch solid prices. However, condition here is key, and the rubber bushes on the

**ABOVE:** One of a trio of classic vintage decks, the Thorens TD 124, here equipped with an SME Series II arm

**BELOW LEFT:** Another vintage deck to look out for – the Garrard 301. This virtually mint example comes with an SME 3009 arm. Bomb proof!

**BELOW:** Original ad for Ortofon's SPU/T and SPU/GT cartridges. Vintage examples can sell for more than newer editions as some enthusiasts believe the low output generator to be superior

SME counterweights can rot with age.

As for turntables, the classic Garrard 301 and 401 outsold the vast majority of other transcription decks of the era. Along with the Swiss-made Thorens TD 124, these are *the* vintage decks to look out for. Most parts for the Garrards are available, from repro knobs and new idler wheels, with a full service available from specialists such as Martin Bastin and Loricraft Audio, plus plenty of others. Thorens bits can be a bit harder to track down. All of these deck are almost bomb proof in build and reliability.

### TUNING IN...

When it comes to vintage FM tuners there is only one Brit tuner of merit: the Leak Troughline. The Mk I boasts striking looks (though only covers to 100MHz) while the Mk II is amazingly reliable, helped by a low HT voltage of 150V. They are easy to service and possess a sweet sound.

The primitive transistorised stereo decoder fitted to later versions aids saleability, but in truth sounds disappointing. The Quad FMIISD has a better transistor decoder, but its overall FM performance is inferior to that of the Leak models.

The Marantz 10B is regarded as the 'ultimate' all-tube tuner. An American import, unless a sample you are looking at has had an expensive service, it's not likely to sound all that good in my opinion.

The later Sequerra Model One blows it out of the water as 'Best Tuner On The Planet' (though if we're talking imports, the American Fisher & Scott FM tuners leave *any* British FM tuner for dead).





**When you understand the SEQUERRA you will appreciate why "the ultimate tuner" doesn't quite describe it.**




**Model One**  
The Sequerra Model One is a high-quality tuner that has been praised by audiophiles for its exceptional sound quality and build. It features a wooden cabinet and a digital display, making it a true classic in the world of vintage audio.

**Model Two**  
The Sequerra Model Two is another high-quality tuner, similar to the Model One but with some differences in its internal components and features. It also features a wooden cabinet and a digital display.

**Model Three**  
The Sequerra Model Three is a third high-quality tuner in the Sequerra range, offering a slightly different sound profile and build quality compared to the other models.


**FULL RANGE SINGLE UNIT HIGH FIDELITY LOUSPEAKERS**



**AXIOM 80** 16 inch - 6 watt - 15 ohm

This speaker is a high-quality full-range single unit speaker, designed for use in a variety of audio systems. It features a large horn and a tweeter, providing a wide range of sound reproduction.

**RECOMMENDED DIMENSIONS FOR Axiom 80**



Valve open-reel tape recorders cost an absolute fortune when new, and for the hardcore enthusiast, nothing commands more respect than one of these machines. Few stereo pre-recordings exist in the UK but some American pre-recorded tapes can be purchased via a well known internet auction site.

Sadly, most of these tapes are beginning to fall apart. Add to this the fact that it is near impossible to service most machines (worn heads) and the whole pursuit is not for the faint of heart – despite the stunning sound quality that can be achieved. Still, if you're determined, the best machines are from the well known Revox G36 series.

### TOP TUBE AMPS

Valve amplifiers are a much safer bet. With the exception of transformers, most passive components and tubes are still fairly easy to obtain. Some vintage amps can be purchased for under a hundred quid, with Quad II power amps being a great buy.

New repro versions have actually helped keep the price of these down. However, the six-pin 'Jones' input connector on the original can prove a faff (available online from Mouser Electronics) as can the 1.4V input sensitivity.

The Leak Point One range is well established. Early KT66 TL12.1 or



TL25A models fetch prices but most are falling apart with age and, of course, all the collectors want them in completely original condition. Best value are the EL84-based TL12+ and Stereo 20. In standard form, the Stereo 20 sounds better.

Both suffer from far too much gain, but the TL12+ is worse. With a few modifications both these amplifiers can sound stunning.

The larger TL25+ and TL50+ sound worse, the '25 having the same output transformer 'iron' as the smaller '12. The Stereo 50 and 60 are powerful enough, but mushy and worse than the smaller Leaks.

Any vintage monoblock or stereo chassis will fetch high prices, and most do leave for dead the vast majority of new Chinese stuff. Servicing is a requirement. These things can self destruct!

### AND SPEAKERS?

Some vintage speakers you'd have a job to give away. Others have a pedigree. A decade ago I foolishly let slip from my hands a pair of full range Goodman Axiom 80s. Today they'd cost well in excess of £2000 a pair! Tannoy Lancaster cabinets fitted with 12in or 15in Monitor Golds can still be bought for sensible

**ABOVE: Best tuner on the planet? Keep those eyes peeled for the Sequerra Model One**

**ABOVE RIGHT: Ad for Goodman Axiom 80 – expect to pay in excess of £2000 for a good clean pair**

**ABOVE LEFT: Think you're hard enough? Nothing commands more respect than a man with a well maintained, fully functioning valve open-reel tape deck. Start with a Revox G36 Series**

**BELOW LEFT: Leak Stereo 20 – in standard form better than the rest of the range**

**BELOW: Lowther Mini Acousta and Standard Acousta (HB's favourite) with grille in place**

money, as can the very sweet IILZ. The earlier silver chassis, and the cambric surround-based 'Reds' make the Goodmans units look like bargains. They are sublime speakers and, no offence to Tannoy, offer better sound than the newer TW (tulip waveguide) chassis. Combine these with the rare Guy R Fountain rear-folded horn or the even rarer Autograph version, and it's time to remortgage the house!

Old Lowther speakers can be unreliable, but are still serviceable and available new from the factory in Kent. Most of the horn cabinets are coloured-sounding. My favourite remains the classic Acousta with a single PM7A. Quad Electrostatics are simply stunning, but with age all parts can, and will, go wrong. A full service can cost £1000 and upwards. Still, sonically it's worth it.

If you are lucky enough to find an item at a car boot sale or flea market, get it professionally checked out. Never risk yourself or the equipment by plugging it straight into the mains.

When buying over the internet, try not to get carried away! Even so, well bought vintage audio can offer real sonic steals. ☺





A60 • AMPLIFIER • A&R • UK

# A&R A60



Admired not just for its sound, A&R's A60 amp also rang the changes with its sleek casework. And then there was the price... At first considered 'the poor man's Naim' it went on to sell tens of thousands of units. **Ken Kessler** talks to president John Dawson

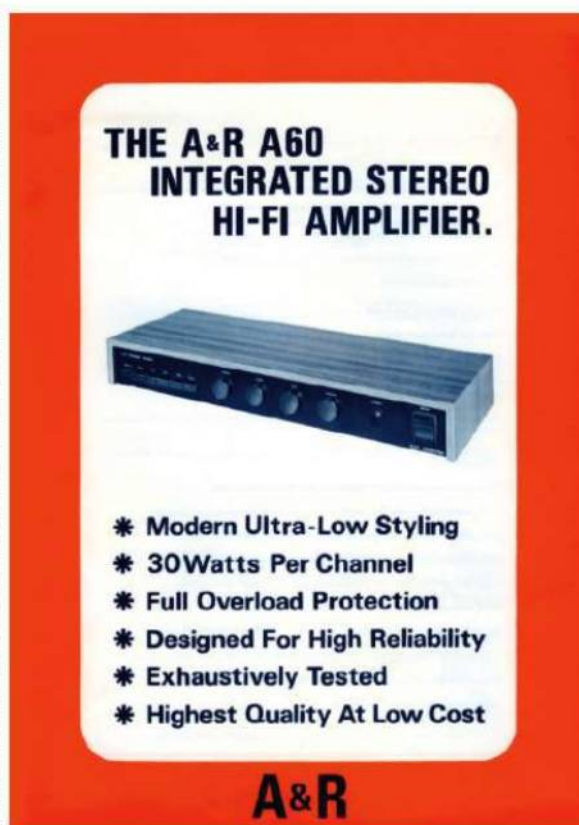
**A**lthough Linn and Naim created and then dominated the subjective scene which flourished in the UK in the 1970s, the two companies were accompanied by a host of fellow travellers. Whether by design or by accident, a cluster of makes basked in the glow of that mighty duopoly. All had to be less expensive than Linn and Naim in their respective categories, to qualify. Among them were a few that survived the era, establishing their own, independent personae by virtue of inherent qualities.

While they may not have needed the tacit patronage of the two kings, nor the patronising approval of the coven of retailers that embodied 'flat-earthness', their paths to success were certainly made smoother by the association.

## POOR MAN'S NAIM...

Most are now history, but two stand proud as having transcended their roles as *nach schleppers*. (Look it up...) Rega is the most obvious to have benefited, for it was the 'poor man's Linn', and it remains the default turntable purchase. But A&R – now Arcam – was the other: 'the poor man's Naim.' What A&R produced that stands proud from that decade of garbage masquerading as decent gear is the sublime A60 integrated amplifier.

John Dawson, co-founder and now president of the firm, recalls that, 'Before I started A&R Cambridge, I was a student at Enfield Grammar School studying sciences. There I built my first amplifier – mono, not stereo! – for use with the school projector, for the film club. My dad had a Williamson amplifier [see *HFN* Jan



**ABOVE:** Sales brochure for the A60 amp from the mid 1970s

**BELOW RIGHT:** Original A60 with its tape monitoring and mono switches, headphone socket that could mute the loudspeakers if required, and red LED on/off indicator next to the power switch

'10] which he built by himself, and which I still have in the loft. It was a wonderful thing! Mine wasn't as good, but I thought it was better.

'Somewhat to my surprise, I got into Cambridge University and I studied natural sciences. I joined something called the Cambridge Tape Recording Society, which was the hi-fi club, and I ended up running it. We had lectures three or four times a term from industry people. I met reviewer Angus McKenzie and I got to know Spencer Hughes of Spondor – I remember buying loudspeakers from him and selling them to all of my friends, running it from my front room. And I started

building more amplifiers in my student room, before I graduated.

'Once I graduated, they asked me to stay on to do a doctorate, which was a mistake in the sense that the subject bored me; I much preferred electronics. I did three years' research on a PhD studying superconducting materials, mostly metallurgy, but I decided I wanted to move on by then.

'In the meantime, I was selling calculators around the university and all sorts of stuff. I starting building power amplifier modules in reasonable numbers; they went into discotheques for my friends. And *that* power amp module actually became the basis of the A60 integrated. This was in the period 1970-1975.'

## MODULAR THINKING

Dawson started Amplification & Recording, 'because it was what I and my friend Chris Evans did. We met through the Tape Recording Society, he was a couple of years behind me. Between us, we designed the A60. My father lent me a couple of hundred pounds, the calculators made a few grand and my wife Jackie became gainfully employed for three years before joining us, so was bringing in money.





'The A60 was our first hi-fi product. Basically, we had A&R and we built these little modules, and we were doing amps for recording and live music. We could do folk music levels, not much more because we didn't have the power output.

'I didn't so much consider myself an audiophile as being very interested in sound reproduction. I can remember the turntables we had, Goldring's and Garrard's. We met Bob Stuart at the Tape Recording Society and I can remember sitting with Bob, who would go on to found Meridian, listening to a Lecson amplifier through a Garrard Zero 100, which must have done no good at all for the resolution of the system. But at the time none of us knew much better.'

## MID-FI REVOLUTION

Young and naïve they may have been, but Dawson agrees, 'It was a very fertile time,' and an ideal time to be involved in audio. Linn and Naim, and associated brands like Rega and Nitech, were just about to revolutionise the mid-fi sector. Being British, A&R was in the right place, at the right time, to surf into audio history on a wave of xenophobia. Less controversial but no less influential was a brand that proceeded and influenced A&R: Cambridge Audio, whose P40 of 1969 was one of the first amplifiers to be presented in a low profile case. This was a design element that would become one of the A&R A60's defining features. Dawson is quick to credit Cambridge for the 'slimline' look. 'It was very neat, very stylish.'

Applying it to the A60 wasn't a mere aesthetic consideration.

## Advert - 1967 News - January 1968 A sound sensation

**Small Amplifier**  
The A60 is a small, portable, and easy to use amplifier. It is designed for use with a variety of speakers and can be used for both music and speech. The A60 is a very versatile and useful amplifier. It is a very good value for money and is a very good choice for anyone who wants a small, portable, and easy to use amplifier.



'We wanted something small and compact and in the end we actually built it to the size the board would fit once we decided the design. I have this photo of the original circuit board - the photographer liked it so much he gave it to us. It shows you the principle on how we did everything. Basically, apart from the transformer and the headphone socket, there are no

wires, which was very important at the time. It had six push buttons and four rotaries, and everything was on the circuit board, which came through

the front and didn't have to be anchored. The knobs were made as simply as possible, from turned rods, and then painted around the corner at Pye Unicams. The finish was an early form of powder coating. We didn't anodise them in the early days, and of course, they went all sorts of strange colours.'

A&R enclosed the chassis with a wooden sleeve. 'It was fairly

inexpensive, and you could easily change the finish. It was Roy Gandy's [of Rega] suggestion to have a black one, a little later. We painted all the marked ones black and charged a bit more for it,' he laughs.

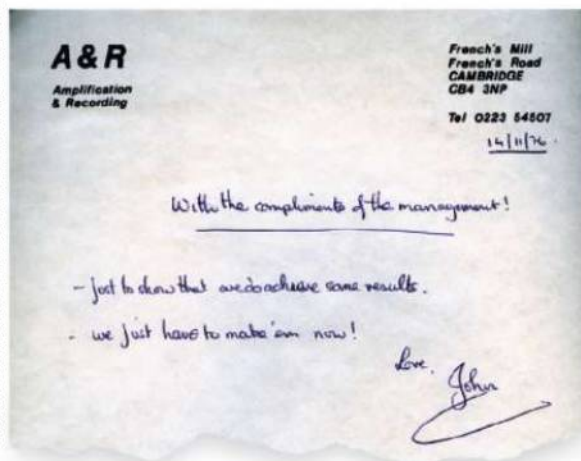
'At the very beginning of A&R and on the back of buying a mixer from Allen & Heath, they hired us for some design work. Early diagnostic hearing aids with lots of fancy multiple filters, a rowing timer for one of the rowing clubs... we were designing all of these things, and we said to ourselves, "Why don't we design something (the A60 amplifier), take it into production and show that we can do it?" We thought this would be good for our custom design business, to show potential clients we had the production skills as well as the design skills for the job.'

## FIRST FIFTY

'It was September 1976 when it launched. We shipped 50 up to around Christmas, into the trade, because by then John Greenbank [of Tangent fame] had seen it and said, "You should sell it to Graham's and the others." He did some introductions and we did the rounds, and it was quite funny. ☺

**LEFT:** Advert from *Hi-Fi News* January 1969 for the Cambridge Audio P40, one of the first amplifiers to be presented in a low profile case - a look that inspired the slimline casing of the A60

**BELOW:** 'We just have to make 'em now.' Letter from 1976 signed by John Dawson that accompanied one of the first 50 units to be built for friends. And make 'em he did...





## AUDIO MILESTONES

Graham's said, "We'll have one, and one for back-up." So I told him where we got the parts, and said, "Here's a parts list if you want one, so that if we go broke tomorrow, you can get the spares."

### MORE TRANSISTORS...

Some of the parts besides the cosmetic components were proprietary. 'The transformer was custom-made, the switches were custom-made, but you could, of course, get them made. But otherwise, it was largely made of standard parts – what we'd cottoned onto technically in the design of the product was that transistors then cost 10 pence if you bought 500 or 1000. Five or ten years before, they were a pound or a dollar!

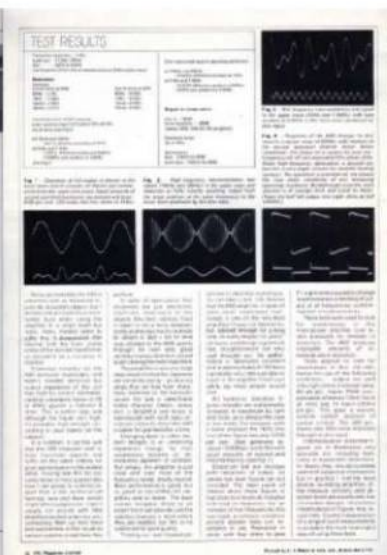
'The Japanese were still in this '60s mind-set, and their attitude was to use one transistor and make it do as much as possible. There were all sorts of compromises to all sorts of areas of performance.

'We knew that we could put two or even three transistors in that gain block and get much better performance. And we did have primitive distortion analysers and waveform analysers to know what was going on, so we knew enough to measure this stuff competently. At the time, it was clearly better: lower

**RIGHT: 'No crossover distortion...' – the review from *Practical Hi-Fi* of May 1977 that garnered interest from the high street dealers**

**BELOW RIGHT: The first A60 brochure listing the technical features new owners could look forward to**

**BELOW: 1st November 1985 and former Foreign Secretary Francis Pym (right) joins John Dawson (centre) as he holds the 25,000th A60 amplifier to come off the production line. They are joined by Peter Cowley, then owner of the second A60 amp ever to be made (serial no 0002)**



distortion, greater dynamics, lower noise – all the things you're asking for in good hi-fi. And we followed that rule. It wasn't groundbreaking, but it was logical. There was a new, young group of designers that didn't have that set of preconceptions.'

### MADE IN BRITAIN

By the time the A&R A60 made its first appearance in the *Hi-Fi Yearbook 1978*, the price had gone up to £115 plus VAT from its launch price of £99.50 plus 12% VAT. The competition was varied, Dawson recalling that, 'Armstrong was on the way out, Quad didn't have integrated amps, but you could still buy Leak components.'

Cambridge's P40, by the mid-1970s, had metamorphosed into the P80 at 2x80W, only 10W more per channel than the A60, but its price was a heady £165 plus VAT. A Sugden A48 was only £3 less than the Cambridge – again, price advantage to A&R.

Then, as now, the Asian champions from the likes of Sansui or Trio ruled the market, and they ran the gamut of prices from amazingly cheap to surprisingly dear, but Britishness played its part. By 1977-78, the screaming jingoism of 'Buy British' dominated the audio sector, so the A&R A60 had three things going for it: price, sound quality and nationality. Its specification cemented in the

consumer's mind what an entry-level integrated amp should be.

Actually, 'entry-level' isn't quite accurate, because the price equates to around £830 in today's money, and there were plenty of less-expensive rivals available. But 'Made in Cambridge' imparted its own aura of credibility, and, with the full force of the British press behind it, the A60 couldn't fail. It became the politically-correct, default choice

for anyone who couldn't quite stretch to Naim.

What you got was impressive enough. In a svelte enclosure of 450x240x60mm (wdh) and

weighing only 4.5kg was housed an amplifier for which A&R boasted a litany of virtues. Its aforementioned

**'The price of the A60 equates to around £830 in today's money'**





**Cables**

Acoustic ART  
Acoustic Systems  
Analysis Plus  
Argento Audio  
Artisan Silver Cables  
Audience  
Chord Company  
Ecosse  
Furutech  
Nordost Corporation  
MIT Industries  
Quantum QRT  
Revelation Audio Labs  
Stereolab  
Synergistic Research  
Townshend Audio  
van den Hul  
Vovox  
Wyrewizard

**Power Conditioning**

Audience adeptResponse  
Isotek  
Kemp Elektronik  
Quantum QRT  
QBase

CableSpike  
Cable Tower  
Telos

**Enhancement CDs**

Room Treatment  
Acoustic Art  
Room Tuning Resonators

**Hi-Fi**

Ayra Speakers  
Bel Canto  
STAX headphones  
Townshend Audio

XLR cables  
Sub woofer cables  
Chord ipod cables  
iPod cables  
DIN cables  
Mains & Power cables  
Jumpers  
Firewire

Cables for dCS systems  
Chord cables for Naim

HDMI  
Digital cables  
Optical cables  
S video  
Component cables



On demonstration

# Raidho Acoustics



C2

The Raidho Loudspeakers employ the very finest components, including Ceramic drivers which are hand built in house. The Raidho ribbon tweeter is unique and was the very starting point of the company. The new Raidho speakers utilize the very finest filters and crossover components in a topology unique to Raidho.

**hi-fi+**



How many evolutionary steps does it take to make a revolution? The Raidho magnet system consists of 2 rows on neodymium magnets placed in a push pull configuration. Loudspeaker technology has moved very little in the past 50 years, with small improvement in real terms, taking a long time to realize. But now a systematic reappraisal of fundamental principals has changed the rules. Designer Michael Boerresen has created a new standard when it comes to delivering the life and drama captured in a recording.

Evolutionary ? Yes  
Revolutionary ? Absolutely

The C2 is an agile conjuror of a speaker, able to keep all the balls in the air at the same time. It is often an education to live with and I can do nothing but thoroughly recommend it.. Chris Thomas Hi-fi Plus issue 73



C1

**hi-fi+**

Product of the year 2008

Please visit the High End Cable website for call for more information. C1.0 was Hi-fi plus Product of the year 2008. **We offer fabulous trade in deals, up to 40% when we take in your old speakers in part exchange. So your old speakers could be worth more than you think. Call Dave today on 01775**



Overall, very impressive. Robert Townsend -- Stereophile Jan 08

Audience have been producing High End Cables for sometime now culminating in the new Au24e. Top systems need the best and with Audience there are none to surpass them at their price points. 1m pair Au24e RCA interconnects cost just £729.00 with the matching 3m pair of speaker cables just £1,559.00. Very affordable excellence.

If your budget can not stretch to the Au24e then the Maestro might fit the bill at £259.00 for the interconnects and £670.00 for a 3m pair of speaker cables.

Please visit the website for the full range of Audience Hi-fi products including their excellent power conditioners and power cords.





## AUDIO MILESTONES

six buttons, four rotaries and a rocker switch accessed all of its capabilities, while the back sported DIN sockets for all inputs and outputs, the speakers changing to binding posts in 1978. Here are just some of the features which A&R listed in the very first brochure: very low internally generated noise levels; very low hum levels, due to the use of a toroidal mains transformer; very high overload margins on all inputs and no extraneous thumps or other noises in the loudspeakers when switching on or off or when operating the controls.

### NOT MADE IN JAPAN

Although flexible and capable, it struck users as minimalist when sited next to, say, an amplifier from Pioneer or Sony. It simply looked correct in the language of the day, and it wasn't Japanese – a now-embarrassing aspect of the hi-fi community's

behaviour back then, straight out of *Life On Mars*. But when asked how A&R Cambridge became part of the 'Flat Earth Society', Dawson smiles and replies in a flash, 'If you couldn't afford a Naim, you bought an A&R.'

Was there ever a sense that you were part of a clique? 'Not at the beginning – there might have been later. Through the dealers, we got a sense of it. Here's how it worked: We built this amplifier from one circuit board for better or for worse. Graham's was the first account. Here

was Michael Lewin, I went to them very openly and said we were going to sell these to our friends, showed them what it did, played it, and they said, "Mmm, quite good but not as good as a Naim."

Dawson pointed out that Naim was at least three times as expensive, didn't have (at the time) an integrated, and that Grams could have the circuit diagrams in case A&R went out of business. He stressed that, 'There was nothing top-secret about it, just that it was good engineering, and so forth. It was Nigel Rowell at Audio T who said something along the lines of, "It's pretty good actually, but get some good reviews and we'll think about stocking it." We sold it to Jeffries, and the regulars on

that circuit, the Establishment. But from my point of view, we never felt completely in the clique. I'd always felt a little bit uncomfortable in

**"We thought we'd sell 50. Ten years later, we had sold just under 30,000"**

that respect around Ivor [Teifenbrun of Linn] and Julian [Verker of Naim].

'So we built this 50 – anodised panels, very nice ones – between September and December 1976, and we slowly sold them, mostly to the trade. We originally thought we'd sell them for a hundred quid to our friends, but now we had to sell them with a trade margin, and it probably cost £50 to build, so the margins were *completely* wrong.

'But we learned very quickly, and within two years, it was up

### A&R A60 TIMELINE

- 1972 Company name Amplification & Recording Cambridge first used
- 1975 A60 project commences
- 1976 (September) Launch of the first 50 units to friends and trade
- 1977 A&R A60 launched at £99
- 1978 (August) Screw-type speaker terminals replace DIN outputs, while circuit updated to handle more difficult loads. Phono sensitivity increased and design altered to allow use of plug-in modules for cartridge matching. Technically known as the A60E. Price (inc VAT) raised to £157.50 in teak or walnut
- 1978 Matching T21 tuner unveiled
- 1982 Units from serial number 13250 feature a completely revised preamp circuit based on a new IC for more accurate RIAA equalisation. This revision also allowed fitting of a plug-in board for MC pick-ups
- 1985/6 A60 ends production

**BELOW LEFT:** Original owner's handbook from 1982, the year which saw the A60's preamp circuit revised

**BELOW:** (From Arcam's archive) the production line at the Cambridge factory – heatsinks and transistors were not flow soldered on to the A60 circuit board but added later

to £150. It was starting to make money, and we weren't doing much export. Ironically, it wasn't an editor that approached A&R for a review sample, but an ad sales representative who saw the unit when he was actually touting for "a quarter-page ad." He said that his editor would be interested in the A60. The resultant review in *Practical Hi-Fi* was written from what was only the second or third unit, certainly from one of the first ten, with no extra testing.

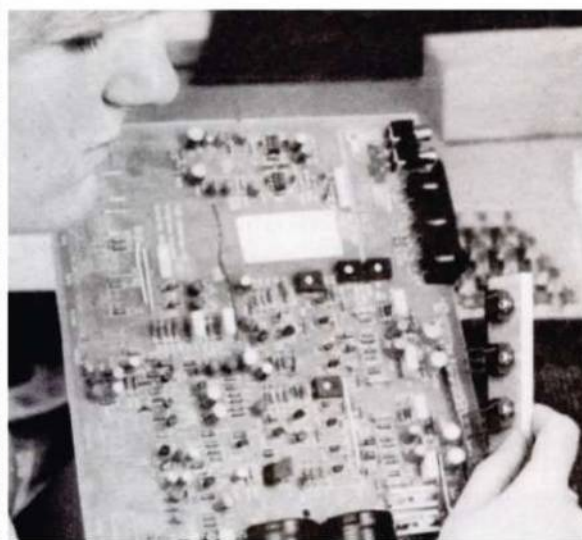
### 'HERE'S YOUR REVIEW...'

'The review took seven months to come through, but when it did, it was right at the time of the Penta Hi-Fi Show. So when Rowell walked into the room, I said, "Here's your review, mate." We got it printed the morning of the show.'

Dawson showed *HFN/RR* a reprint, still pleased that the report shows 'no crossover distortion' – wonderful stuff for an amplifier that isn't Class A operation, but AB.

'It had everything you need,' says Dawson. 'I did my market research. Chris [Evans] takes a lot of responsibility for the design – the board layout and all of the preamp – and I take responsibility for the power amp side.'

'We thought we would sell 50 to our friends. By the time we ended the line, around 10 years later, we had sold just under 30,000, plus 2,000 built under license in New Zealand. So approximately 32,000 were sold. 65 or 70% of them were sold in the UK. And we can still fix nearly all of them.' ☺





FREE DELIVERY



*Kronos*  
AUDIO VISUAL

[WWW.KRONOSAV.COM](http://WWW.KRONOSAV.COM)

BUY NOW PAY LATER & 0% INTEREST FREE AVAILABLE ANYWHERE IN THE UK



**0% INTEREST FREE**  
**ONLINE APPLICATION**  
**HASSLE FREE : INSTANT ANSWER**



## YES! I would like to subscribe to hi-fi news & Record Review

- ☐ 6 monthly Direct Debit, UK only, pay only £16.99 every 6 months saving 34% off the full price of £26.00
- ☐ 2 year subscription (24 issues), pay only £59.99, save 42%
- ☐ 1 year subscription (12 issues), pay only £34.99, save 32%

For overseas prices please see the price grid opposite.

Postal Region: \_\_\_\_\_ Price £/\$/€: \_\_\_\_\_

### Your Details

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss: \_\_\_\_\_ Forename: \_\_\_\_\_

Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like to receive emails from hi-fi news & Record Review and IPC containing news, special offers, product and service information and, occasionally, take part in our magazine research via email, please include your email below.

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Post/Zipcode: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Tel No: (inc. country & area code)

If you would like to receive messages from hi-fi news & Record Review and IPC containing news, special offers, product and service information and, occasionally, take part in our magazine research via your mobile, please include your mobile phone number below.

Mobile No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Year of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

### I would like to send a gift to:

Please also fill out 'Your Details' above. To give more than one subscription, please supply address details on a separate sheet.

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss: \_\_\_\_\_ Forename: \_\_\_\_\_

Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Post/Zipcode: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Tel No: (inc. country & area code)

If the person receiving the subscription for is under 18, please add their year of birth here:

Year of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

### Choose from 3 easy ways to pay:

1. Pay £16.99 every 6 months by Direct Debit (Complete the Direct Debit form below)
2. I enclose a cheque/International money order made payable to IPC Media Ltd., for the amount of £/\$/€ \_\_\_\_\_
3. Please debit £/\$/€ \_\_\_\_\_ from my:
  - ☐ Visa ☐ Visa Debit ☐ MasterCard ☐ Amex ☐ Maestro (UK only)

Card No: \_\_\_\_\_ (Maestro only)

Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Issue No./Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(I am over 18)

### Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit

For office use only. Originator's reference - 764 221

A/C No \_\_\_\_\_



Name of Bank: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Account Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Sort Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Account No: \_\_\_\_\_

Please pay IPC Media Ltd. Direct Debits from the account detailed on this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with IPC Media Ltd. and if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank or Building Society.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(I am over 18)

Offer only open to new subscribers. Final closing date for all orders is 1st February 2011. Orders purchased as a gift before the 9th December 2010 will start with the February 2011 issue published in January. All weekly titles will begin with the first available issue in January. All gift orders purchased after this date will begin with the first available issue. Orders purchased for yourself will start with the next available issue - please allow up to six weeks for delivery, eight weeks for overseas orders. All prices are discounted from the full subscription rate advertised in each title, include P&P and are correct at time of going to press. Credit/debit card charges will be taken in sterling. The 6-monthly offer is only available in the UK by Direct Debit. If the magazine ordered changes frequency per annum, we will honour the number of issues paid for, not the term of the subscription. For enquiries and overseas rates call +44 (0)330 3330 233, or email: [ipcsubs@quadrantsubs.co.uk](mailto:ipcsubs@quadrantsubs.co.uk). hi-fi news & Record Review, published by IPC Media Ltd (IPC), will collect your personal information to process your order, hi-fi news & Record Review and IPC would like to contact you by post or telephone to promote and ask your opinion on our magazines and services. Please tick here if you prefer not to hear from us ☐. IPC may occasionally pass your details to carefully selected organisations so that they can contact you by telephone or post with regards to promoting and researching their products and services. Please tick here if you prefer not to be contacted ☐. IPC would like to email you with offers from carefully selected organisations and brands, promoting and researching their products and services, if you want to receive these messages please tick here ☐. **PRIZE DRAW:** Travelbag, the tailor-made travel specialists, are giving you the chance to win one of three 5 star breaks for two adults to New York, flying with Virgin Atlantic for three nights, worth £2,000! A full list of the prize draw terms and conditions is available at [www.magazinesdirect.com/prizedrawnewyork](http://www.magazinesdirect.com/prizedrawnewyork). Entrants must be over 18. No purchase necessary. Please tick here to enter prize draw only ☐. The prize draw closes on 1st February 2011.

CODE: AFTW

# Give more Save more

Great savings when you buy two or more subscriptions.

Many more top titles to choose from.



Offer only available online or by phone.

- ❄ A subscription makes a thoughtful and lasting gift – there's a magazine for everyone!
- ❄ Why not treat yourself?
- ❄ Convenient delivery to you or your recipient
- ❄ Free gift card with every gift subscription received before 9th December\*

**Plus – WIN one of three holidays to New York with Travelbag, worth £2,000!**

**TRAVELBAG.co.uk**

Prize draw closes 1st February 2011. You will automatically be entered into the prize draw on purchasing a subscription. For more information about this fantastic prize and for terms and conditions please visit [www.magazinesdirect.com/prizedrawnewyork](http://www.magazinesdirect.com/prizedrawnewyork) and for more information about Travelbag please visit [www.travelbag.co.uk](http://www.travelbag.co.uk)



### SPECIAL OVERSEAS RATES

Postal Region	1 YEAR You Save	YOU PAY
Europe	25%	£81.60
USA	25%	\$109.80
Rest of World	25%	£68.60

### OVERSEAS ORDERS:

Please complete the coupon opposite and send to:  
IPC Media Ltd., PO Box 272,  
Haywards Heath, WEST SUSSEX,  
RH16 3FS, UK  
(Please affix the correct postage)

## 3 EASY WAYS TO ORDER

**POST:**

**complete the coupon opposite and send to:**  
**UK ONLY: IPC Media Ltd., FREEPOST SEA 4394,**  
**Haywards Heath, WEST SUSSEX, RH16 3BR**  
(NO STAMP NEEDED)

\*If you supply an email address your order will be acknowledged by email and you will be given the option to request a gift card electronically or by post. If you do not supply an email address you will automatically be sent a postal gift card.





**2** ONLINE:  
[www.magazinesdirect.com/ittt](http://www.magazinesdirect.com/ittt)

**3** PHONE:  
**0844 848 0848**  
**Overseas: +44 (0)330 3330 233**  
Please have your payment details ready when you call.  
QUOTE CODE: AFWT Lines open 7 days a week, 8am to 9pm (UK time).

THE DIRECT DEBIT GUARANTEE: ● This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits ● If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit IPC Media Ltd. will notify you 10 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request IPC Media Ltd. to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request. ● If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit, by IPC Media Ltd. or your bank or building society you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society - If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when IPC Media Ltd. asks you to. ● You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.



# 'For those who still believe in progress'

Once in a while, perhaps just once in a lifetime, something comes along to break the rules and shatter our conception of what is possible.



*Leaders in the worlds finest high-fidelity*

26 New Cavendish Street | London W1G 8TY T: 020 7486 8262/3 | E: [info@kjwestone.com](mailto:info@kjwestone.com)



## DEVIALET D-PREMIER

Once in a while, perhaps just once in a lifetime, something comes along to break the rules and shatter our conception of what is possible. Enter the Devialet D-Premier from Paris. This chic design, standing less than two inches high and weighing in at under 7kg, is a veritable powerhouse of purity, delicacy and dynamics that can drive virtually any loudspeaker to its maximum performance. With a combination of Class A output and huge current delivery from eight current dumping amplifiers, the revolutionary D-Premier integrates pre-and power amplification plus a world-class DAC and phono stage in a single unit that boasts the finest set of measurements ever achieved. Prepare to be shocked from the outset.



## METRONOME TECHNOLOGIE T3A-SIGNATURE

With performance and elegance in mind, this slim French beauty is an ideal CD drive unit to compliment the Devialet's superb onboard DAC. Metronome Technologie are famous for their Kalista range of CD turntables, whose extravagant engineering beauty is matched only by their extraordinary performance. This most affordable Metronome T3A-Signature is a superb top-loading transport which will take your CD collection to a new and unforgettable level of musical interpretation when partnered with the Devialet. Together they represent a unique combination of sheer brilliance and minimalism. This surely is excellence for the 21st Century...



## SONUS FABER GUARNERI MEMENTO

It is amusing that Italians can be so animated when they talk to each other, yet their second language, that of style, is often conveyed with deceptive understatement. However when Italians design style into what tradition determines to be a box, Sonus Faber produce *mobiletto acoustica*.

The Guarneri Memento Homage is fine furniture and a statement of acoustic art that compliments the outstanding demands of the French T3A and D-Premier. All three performing together they are beautiful objects of aesthetic and aural desire..Progress indeed.

*The Path to musical excellence*

Somerset | T: 01460 54322 | M: 07860 351113 | E: [brianriv@mac.com](mailto:brianriv@mac.com)

THE  
PINEWOOD  
MUSIC  
COMPANY  
SOMERSET



It's a breeze to buy high-end gear at [www.coolgales.com](http://www.coolgales.com).



**Clearaudio Innovation Wood**  
turntable, £6250

With mag bearing, speed control. "A superb way of playing vinyl that never draws attention to itself." (*Hi-Fi World*) **ON DEM**



**Transfiguration Orpheus L**  
cartridge, £3400

New 1 Ohm internal impedance version. "Totally natural rendition of music." (*Hi-Fi News*) **ON DEM**



**Graham Phantom II**  
tonearm, £3550

Interchangeable armtubes. "A masterpiece of craftsmanship and design savvy." (*The Absolute Sound*) **ON DEM**



**Scheu Laufwerk 2** turntable, £4350

Massive 80 mm platter, Papst motor. "Reference quality...reference quality looks." (*TNTAudio.com*) **ON DEM**



**Zyx R-100 Fuji**  
cartridge, £1450

High-purity crystal copper coils. Supremely lucid, precise, transparent.



**SME V** tonearm, £2180

The all-time classic. "Perhaps the last great flowering of the tonearm designer's art." (*Hi-Fi News*) **ON DEM**



**Michell Gyro SE** turntable, £1135

The classic John Michell design. "Should appeal to anyone looking for a high-end deck." (*Hi-Fi News*)



**Lyra Delos** cartridge, £895

Replaces Argo i. A new standard for mid-range low-output moving coils. **ON DEM**



**Clearaudio Unify** tonearm, £1360

Phenomenal unipivot, available in carbon-fibre and wood versions, 9, 10, 12, and 14 inch lengths.



**Pro-Ject Xpression III** turntable, £435

Gloss black base, acrylic platter. "Better imaging, better ambience and dynamics." (*Hi-Fi News*)



**Sumiko Blue Point Special EVO III**  
cartridge, £239

A favourite high-output moving coil. "A big helping of moving-coil goodness." (*The Absolute Sound*)



**Thomas Schick** tonearm, £995

"The question is no longer *Will this stand alongside my other, more expensive tonearms?* but, rather, *Do I really need more than this?*" (*Stereophile*) **ON DEM**

Plus other turntables from  
Acoustic Solid  
Clearaudio  
Michell  
Pro-Ject  
Roksan  
Scheu  
SME  
VPI

Plus other cartridges from  
Audio-Technica  
Brinkmann  
Cartridge Man  
Clearaudio  
Denon  
Goldring  
Grado  
Lyra  
Ortofon  
Sumiko  
Transfiguration  
Zyx

Plus other tonearms from  
Clearaudio  
Haddock  
Michell  
Ortofon  
Pro-Ject  
Roksan  
Scheu  
SME  
VPI

Cool Gales, hi-fi made easy. Give us a click. Give us a call.



# ≈ COOL GALES



**Keith Monks Omni Mk VII** record cleaning machine, £3295

Cleans all size records. "If you're looking for the best, well, here it is." (*Stereophile*)



**Aesthetix Rhea** phono stage, £3900

Ten valve design. "A sense of palpability and immediacy that recalls the magic of live music." (*The Absolute Sound*) **ON DEM**



**Eclipse TD-712z Mk II** speakers, £5295

Now available in piano black. "More life-like and cohesive than just about anything you can buy." (*What Hi-Fi?*) **ON DEM**



**Loricraft PRC3** record cleaning machine, £1395

The standard for serious vinylphiles. "Even brand new, sealed records benefit." (*PositiveFeedback.com*)



**Leema Acoustics Agena** phono stage, £2995

Reference unit with two inputs, fully adjustable. Integral DAC with USB port. **ON DEM**



**Esoteric X-05** SACD/CD player, £4495

Awesome one-box unit. "There aren't enough superlatives to describe this machine." (*The Absolute Sound*) **ON DEM**



**VPI 16.5** record cleaning machine, £575

Our most popular budget unit. "An essential component." (*Hi-Fi+*)



**Whest PS.30RDT** phono stage, £2799

Dual transformer, dual mono. "A brilliant all round design." (*Hi-Fi World*) **ON DEM**



**Stax SR-007 II SE Omega System** headphones and amp, £3195

Hand-selected valves. "If I have to go through life with only one of the Stax amps, give me the tubed SRM-007t." (*Stereophile*) **ON DEM**



**Record Research Lab** record cleaning fluids, £19.95

The gold standard for use with record cleaning machines. Always in stock.



**Pro-Ject Tube Box II** phono stage, £310

Great valve unit. Budget version of acclaimed Pro-Ject Tube Box SE.



**Nordost Red Dawn** cabling, from £275

Superb price/performance. "Cleanest, quickest and most natural wires I've yet to hear." (*SoundStage.com*)

Plus other analogue care products from

L'Art du Son  
Clearaudio  
Goldring  
Keith Monks  
Last  
Loricraft  
Lyra  
Milty  
Moth  
Onzow Zerodust  
Ortofon  
Roksan  
Scheu  
Sumiko  
VPI

Plus other phono stages from

Aesthetix  
Clearaudio  
Esoteric  
Graham Slee  
Leema Acoustics  
Lehmann  
Lyra  
Pro-Ject  
Thomas Mayer  
Whest

Plus great audio gear from a huge, and ever growing range of manufacturers. Visit our website for **reviews**, **brochure downloads**, and details of our **30-day money-back guarantee**.

[www.coolgales.com](http://www.coolgales.com)

0800 043 6710

The Victoria School House ≈ Bath



\*10% commision on final sale value



# MusicMatters



**We offer custom installation of complete systems integrating hi-fi, home cinema, multi-room and lighting. Home trials are available for many products**

Our extensive range of products includes

- Arcam • Apollo • Anthony Gallo • Atacama
- Atlas • Base • Bowers & Wilkins
- Nautilus Diamond available at Edgbaston, Solihull and Stratford
- Chord Company • Chord Electronics
- Cyrus • Denon • Dynaudio • Dynavector
- Epos • Grado • Infocus • KEF
- LAMM • Marantz • Meridian • Michell
- Mission • MJ Acoustics • Monitor Audio
- Musical Fidelity • NAD • Naim • Nordost
- Ortofon • Panasonic • Pioneer • PMC
- Project • Pure • QED • Quad • Rega • REL
- Rotel • Sennheiser • Sim2 • SME
- Sonus Faber • Tascam • Spendor • Teac
- Wharfedale • Wilson Benesch • Yamaha

OPEN TUES - SAT 10.00 - 5.30  
LATE NIGHT AT BIRMINGHAM AND  
SOLIHULL WEDNESDAY UNTIL 6.30PM

Interest free credit on selected items • 0% APR  
Written details on request • Licensed credit broker



[www.musicmatters.co.uk](http://www.musicmatters.co.uk)

**EDGBASTON**  
363 Hagley Road,  
Birmingham B17 8DL  
0121 429 2811

**SOLIHULL**  
93-95 Hobs Moat Road  
West Midlands B92 8JL  
0121 742 0254

**STOURBRIDGE**  
9 Market Street  
West Midlands DY8 1AB  
01384 444184

**SUTTON COLDFIELD**  
10 Boldmere Road  
West Midlands B73 5TD  
0121 354 2311

**HATCH END**  
344 Uxbridge Road  
Pinner, Middlesex HA5 4HR  
020 8420 1925

**DARLINGTON**  
17 Coniscliffe Road  
County Durham DL3 7EE  
01325 481418



## New Stores Now Open

**10A Chapel Street**  
Stratford-Upon-Avon  
Warwickshire CV37 6EP  
01789 414 533

**23A Regent Street**  
Leamington Spa  
Warwickshire CV32 5EJ  
01926 888 644

**114 Wolverhampton**  
Road, Stafford,  
ST17 4BN  
01785 258216

## 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ per cent off all our vinyl LPs!

**Save £££s on 2,000 audiophile reissues & new releases**

We are holding a two-day record mega-sale to mark the date of the National Audio Show next weekend. Get A THIRD OFF our entire stocks of brand new vinyl titles, including several hundred high-end audiophile LPs. Plus, get a FREE high-quality record cleaning cloth with each purchase. Take advantage of this spectacular offer without having to leave the comfort of your armchair! Or make a weekend of it and come and visit us for a cup of tea and a browse at your leisure - our warehouse in the beautiful Malvern Hills will be open for business throughout the weekend of September 25-26.

### Classic LPs

E-mail or call us for details

[info@classiclp.co.uk](mailto:info@classiclp.co.uk) 01684 899 457

[www.classiclp.co.uk](http://www.classiclp.co.uk)

*House of Linn • Quadraspire • Focal Grande Utopia EM • Keith Monks*



[www.brianandtrevors.com](http://www.brianandtrevors.com)  
[info@brianandtrevors.com](mailto:info@brianandtrevors.com)





# HEATHCOTE AUDIO: TEL: 07860 511111 - [www.heathcoteaudio.co.uk](http://www.heathcoteaudio.co.uk) **DESPERATELY SEEKING HI-FI!! WE STILL VERY! URGENTLY!! REQUIRE EQUIPMENT PHONE GEORGE** **MAJORITY OF LIST BELOW ARE ONE OWNER ITEMS**

## VALVE AMPS

AUDIOQUEST CONQUEROR 300B SE POWER AMP	MINT	£1295
SHANLING MC-30 DELIGHTFUL ALL IN ONE	MINT/BOXED	£495
PAPWORTH 200M SPECIAL ORDER KT-90 MONO'S (6 MONTHS)	AS NEW/BOXED	£3795
AUDIO RESEARCH CLASSIC 60 SERVICED VALVE/EXCLT/BOXED		£1295
DK DESIGN VS.1 SIGNATURE MKIII INTEGRATED (HYBRID)/DEM/BOXED		£2450
VTL ULTRA LINEAR 75/75 STEREO POWER AMP (KT90)	VGC	£875
BALANCED AUDIO TECH. BAT VK-60	EXCLT/BOXED	RING
ROGUE AUDIO 88 POWER AMP	EXCLT	£795
MUSIC FIRST SILVER PRE AMP (E3K7)	EX.DEM.	RING
ROGUE AUDIO 66 MAGNUM REMOTE PREAMP	MINT/BOXED	£795
ANTIQUE SOUND LABS AQ1000DT TWIN 845 MONOBLOCKS (E5000)		£2750
EX DEM		£2750
ANTIQUE SOUND LABS LU1 PRE AMP/HEADPHONE AMP/MINT/BOXED		£295
UNISON RESEARCH FEATHER PRE/35 POWER EXCLT/BOXED		£1395

## VINYL

LINN LP12 CIRKUS VALLHALLA 1 OWNER	MINT/BOXED	£795
MICHELLE TECHNOWEIGHT	BOXED	£49
MUSICAL FIDELITY XLPS	EXCLT	£175
SME 20/A SME V	EXCLT	£4750
NOTT'S ANALOGUE MENTOR/EMINENT TECHNOLOGY		
MKII AIR BEARING TONE ARM/SUMIKO BPS	VGC	£2750
AUDIO NEMESIS PHONO STAGE	GC/BOXED	£575
MCCORMACK MINI PHONO DRIVE (MM/MC E6007)	EX DEM	£349
PROJECT PHONO BOX	EXCLT	£49
ANTIQUE SOUND LABS MINI PHONO 2 BOX	VGC	£295
SUMIKO BLUE POINT SPECIAL EVO 3 LOW HOURS	DUE IN	TBA

## SOLID STATE

PIONEER A-09 28KG CLASS A INTEGRATED		
ONE OWNER VERY RARE SUPERB!! (4K)	MINT/BOXED	£2250
MERIDIAN 200 SERIES MONOBLOCKS	DUE	£450
MUSICAL FIDELITY XAS5 MONOBLOCKS	DUE	£395
DPA 50S PRE & POWER AMPS	VGC	£995
KRELL KAV 300R RARE TUNER AMP (E3950)	MINT/BOXED	£1395
MAGNUM DYNALAB MD-208 TUNER AMP	EXCLT/BOXED	£1595
MCCORMACK DNA-125 AMP	MINT/BOXED	£1250
MUSIC FIRST SILVER PRE SPECIAL ORDER		
2 VOLUME POTS 2 BALANCED OUTS (ELOTS!!!)	EXCLT	£2450
LYNX STRATOS PRE AMP & 2 MONOBLOCKS	MINT/BOXED	£995
ALCHEMIST APD-15 MKII INTEGRATED PHONO	EXCLT	£595
ALCHEMIST FORSETTI 2 BOX PRE RCA/XLR	MINT/BOXED	£595
MUSIC FIRST SILVER PRE AMP (E3K7)	DEM	£2050
YAMAHA CX2 PRE/MIX POWER AMP & CDX993 CD	EXCLT	£995
EXPOSURE 18 STEREO POWER AMP	EXCLT/BOXED	£695
ARCAM SOLO	MINT/BOXED	£649
NAKAMICHI AMPLIFIER-2 REM. INTEGRATED	EXCLT	£249

DENON AVC A11 SR AV AMP (CHAMPAYNE GOLD)	EXCLT/BOXED	£895
ULTRA RARE NAKAMICHI 620 POWER AMP	BOXED	£575
DK DESIGN VS.1 SIGNATURE MKIII INTEGRATED	DEM/BOXED	£2450
PASS LABS ALEPH P PRE AMP	EXCLT	£1150
H-CAT 12-B PRE WITH WTC CONTROL (E2800)	DEM	£1750
H-CAT P-12A PRE AMP (E2500?)	DEM	£1250
ADVANTAGE 200 INTEGRATED AMP	EXCLT/BOXED	£795

## LOUDSPEAKERS

JAMO CONCERT 8 ONE OWNER	MINT	£795
JAMO CONCERT 11 ONE OWNER	BOXED	£1295
BOLZANO VILLETTRI BV 3003 AND BV SUB	FABULOUS!	£3450
AURUM CANTUS LEISURE 3SE	MINT/BOXED	£695
AURUM CANTUS LEISURE 2SE (RARE MAPLE)	NEW/BOXED	£495
AURUM CANTUS VOLLA (RETAIL £2500)	EX.DEM.	£1495
THEIL CS 1.5	MINT BOXED	£1250
HYPERION HPS 938W GORGEOUS BIRDS EYE MAPLE/MINT/BOXED		£2995
PODIUM ONE (HUGE PANELS E6000?)	MINT/BOXED	£2895
EGGLESTONWORKS ROSA	EXCLT	£2750
MARTIN LOGAN CLARITY	EXCLT	£1495
REFERENCE 3A VEENA (SUPERB £3000)	NEW/DIS	£1995
MARTEN MILES II CHERRY (8k+ NEW)	EXCLT	£3750
FAB AUDIO MODEL-ONE (RETAIL £7500)	EX.DEM.	£4750
MIRAGE M1si BIPOLAR GIANTS (E6500)	EXCLT	£1995
AURUM CANTUS V3M GLOSS BLACK (E1700)	EX.DIS	£1350
AURUM CANTUS MUSIC GODDESS E2500	NEW	£1795
CELESTION A-3	EXCLT/BOXED	£1150
CELESTION A-2 SANTOS R/WOOD (E15/1600?)	BRAND NEW	£995

## TRANSPORTS/CD/DACS

MARANTZ CD-17 KI GIGNATURE	MINT/BOXED	£695
McINTOSH MCD-201 6 MONTHS USE	DUE IN	£1895
KRELL KAV 250 CD PLAYER	MINT/BOXED	£995
PERP TECH P1A 24/96 DSP UPSAMPLING ENGINE/BRAND NEW		£795
PEPTEUAL TECH P-3A MODWRIGHT SIG II	BRAND NEW	£795
MODRIGHT SIG 2 MODULAR PSU	BRAND NEW	£599
V.T.L. MODIFIED MARANTZ SA7001 (SUPERB £1300)/BRAND NEW		£795
DENON 3910 UNIVERSAL PLAYER	MINT/BOXED	£395
NAIM CD5X CD PLAYER	MINT/BOXED	£795
AUDIO ALCHEMY DDE V3 & PSU 3 (LAST ONE £900)/NEW OLD STOCK		£425
MERIDIAN 200 TRANSPORT	MINT/BOXED	£399
CHORD 1500E DAC/DIGITAL PRE AMP (E6800)	MINT/BOXED	£2750
THETA DSP/PRO GEN III XLR/RCA OUT	MINT/BOXED	£795
THETA DATA UNIVERSAL CD/D PLAYER (RARE!)/EXCLT/BOXED		£395
THETA PRO GEN III DAC GLASS & BALANCED OPTION/EXCLT/BOXED		£795
TRICHORD DIGITAL TUNTABLE	EXCLT	£495
THETA CARMEN CD/DVD TRANSPORT	MINT/BOXED	£1250
THETA DATA II TRANSPORT (SILVER) AES/RCA ETC/MINT/BOXED		£750

## TUNER/TAPE/MISC

MARANTZ ST-17 TUNER	EXCLT/BOXED	£395
KRELL KAV 300R RARE TUNER AMP	MINT/BOXED	£1295
MAGNUM DYNALAB MD-208 TUNER AMP	EXCLT/BOXED	£1595
ARCAM SOLO	MINT/BOXED	£649
TECHNICS GT-550 RDS TUNER	EXCLT	£99
TECHNICS BX RS501 TAPE DECK	EXCLT	£149
DENON TU 1800 DAB TUNER	EXCLT	£149
AVI REF.7 BAND TUNER	EXCLT/BOXED	£375
MUSICAL FIDELITY X10D (ROUND ONE)	EXCLT	£125

## INTERCONNECT CABLE

TRANSPARENT MUSIC LINK PLUS 1M RCA	MINT/BOXED	£225
BLACK RHODIUM ORATORIO 1 METRE XLR	DEM	£295
LFD SPIROLINK 4 FOOT PAIR	AS NEW	£149
VERTEX AQ SILVER SOLFONN 1 METRE XLR	EXCLT	£595
INCA DESIGN 1 METRE	TBA	
STRATOS 1 METRE	TBA	
DPA SLINK 1 METRE BALANCED	VGC	£149
ATLAS ELECTRA 2 METRE BALANCED	BOXED/AS NEW	£375
XLO PRO 1METRE AND 0.5 M ETRE RCA (SIX OFF)	EACH	95/85
BLACK RHODIUM SYMPHONY 1 METRE RCA	NEW	£50

## LOUDSPEAKER CABLE

TRANSPARENT MUSIC WAVE ULTRA 8FT PAIR WBT PLUG/EXCLT		£995
ECOSSE MS2.3 5 METRE TERMINATED PAIR	EXCLT	£199
NORDOST RED DAWN 4 METRE BI WIRE REV2 (AS NEW)/BOXED		£450
KIMBER APR 2.5 METRE TERMINATED PAIR	EXCLT	£75
NIRVANA SL-3 2.3 METRE PAIR	DEM/BOXED	£450
MIT MH-750 2.5 METRE PAIR BI-WIRE	VGC	£595
RAPPORT (USHER) 5 METRE PAIR	EX.DEM.	£299
XLO SIGNATURE 2 TYPE 5.2 4FT PAIR	DEM	£495
QED GENESIS SILVER SPIRAL 3 METRE PAIR	EXCLT/BOXED	£249
XLO REF.2.5 METRE PAIR	EXCLT	£325
MIT MH-750 BI WIRE 3 METRE PAIR	EXCLT	£695
PS AUDIO X-STREAM 3 METRE PAIR (VERY HEAVY!)	EXCLT	£500
DIAMOND HI SILVER 3 METRE PAIR WBT PLUGS	EX.DEM.	£595

## STANDS

ACOUSTIC ENERGY AE-2 LEAD FILLED STANDS	EXCLT	£395
SOUNDSTYLE LOUDSPEAKER STANDS	NOS	£50
PIRATE STANDS FOR SNELL K ETC	EXCLT	£225
HUYGENS STANDS FOR SNELL K ETC	EXCLT	£225
PARTINGTON STANDS (HEAVY)	VGC	£149

**MOST MAJOR CREDIT/DEBIT CARDS ACCEPTED**

## Premier Audio

Wakefield 01924 255045  
07970541239

We are now demonstrating in the following areas:  
 Manchester - Cleveland - Cumbria - Lincolnshire -  
 Humberside - Yorkshire - Lancashire - Birmingham -  
 Nottingham - Durham - Leeds - Sheffield

A small selection below of our current line up

Oracle

Opera Loudspeakers

Stax

Avid Turntables

Ayre

Analysis Plus

Grand Prix Audio

H-Cat

Opera Tablets

Unison Research

Belcanto

Stereovox

Consonance

Pathos

Reimyo CD Transport & DAC

Audio Synthesis

PS Audio

Genesis Loudspeakers

A good range of used & ex dem always available at affordable prices

For latest deals & info [www.premier-audio.net](http://www.premier-audio.net)

## Analogue Seduction where music is our passion



Analogue Seduction are dedicated towards two channel Hi-Fi, specialising in vinyl replay.

As well as our on-line shop we have dedicated demonstration retail facilities based in Peterborough, Cambridgeshire and we can offer our customers home demonstrations.

We stock the finest in amplification, analogue, digital replay and speakers. We also specialise in a cable termination and cable burn in service.

Please visit our website [www.analogueseduction.net](http://www.analogueseduction.net) to browse or purchase products that are not easily available elsewhere.

**New vinyl records now stocked**

**Tel: +44 (0)1733 344768**



# audioplan



**"Vorsprung durch audioplan technik"**

"Audio progress through Audioplan technology advances"

"They totally won me over..." Chris Thomas HiFi+  
 "Audioplan's have few musical peers..." Roy Gregory HiFi+  
 "Amazing... 95% sonic rating" Stereo Magazine

**Uncommonly refined**

Exclusive distribution  
 ikon audio consultants .com info@ikonaudioconsultants.com  
 Tel: +44 7956 476299



# DEFINITIVE AUDIO

Sale of part exchanged and ex-dem items

ITEM DESCRIPTION	SALE	NEW
Accoustic Arts Transport Drive 1 mk2 & DAC mk4.	£4000	--
Jeff Rowland Coherence 2 Pre amplifier with Cadence phono stage. In original flight case.	£6000	--
Naim CD player NA CDX 2. Boxed as new.	£1400	--
Octave Audio 'Grand Renaissance.' Publicity/display pair - unused and kept in storage for 12 years. Premium Pippy Oak veneers. This precision-engineered, craftsman built replica of the famous Tannoy Autograph can be fitted with 15" Tannoy Monitor Gold drivers. Produced for the Japanese market this model currently retails 'unloaded' (ie. excluding drive units) for £29,000. For sale at £21,000. One pair only.	£21000	£29000
Mundorf Supreme Silver / Gold. Unused. NB. All prices per pair.	Per pair.	--
0.33 uF 800v x 4	£36	--
1.5 uF 800v x 2	£54	--
2.2 uF 800v x 4	£62	--
3.3 uF 800v x 2	£78	--
4.7 uF 800v x 2	£98	--
5.6 uF 800v x 4	£108	--
10.0 uF 800v x 8	£166	--
AmpOhm Capacitors. Unused. NB. All prices per pair.	Per pair.	--
5.0 uF 630v Paper in Oil / Tin Foil x 2	£60	--
5.0 uF 630v Paper in Oil / Aluminium Foil x 2	£60	--
5.0 uF 630v Paper in Wax / Aluminium Foil x 2	£60	--
5.0 uF 630v Polyester in Oil / Aluminium Foil x 2	£60	--
1.5 uF 630v Polyester in Oil / Aluminium Foil x 2	£60	--
1.5 uF 630v Paper in Oil / Tin Foil x 2	£60	--
1.5 uF 630v Paper in Wax / Aluminium Foil x 2	£60	--
1.5 uF 630v Paper in Oil / Aluminium Foil x 2	£60	--
Jensen Paper in Oil caps - unused. NB. All prices per pair.	Per pair.	--
5 uF 200v x 2	£60	--
20 uF 100v x 2	£120	--
Jensen Copper Air-Core Foil / Paper Inductors. Unused. NB. All prices per pair.	Per pair.	--
.3 mH x 4	£200	--
0.9 mH x 2	£100	--
1.0 mH x 2	£100	--
1.8 mH x 2	£120	--
2.5 mH x 2	£140	--
Art Audio Diavolo Monoblocs	£3750	--
Linn Sondek. 20 years old. Excellent condition. Plays very smoothly.	£375	--
Cardas Golden Cross interconnect. 1.5m.	£400	--
Cardas Golden Cross interconnect. 1m	£300	--
Cardas Golden Cross a/c. 1.5m (2 pcs)	£175 each	--
Supra Lo-Rad 2.5 a/c with Furutech plugs. 3.5m (2 pcs)	£125 each	--
Linn Linto phono stage inc' Linn silver interconnect. 5yrs old. Boxed & immaculate.	£600	--
Horning Zeus floorstanders. Cherry. Nice condition. Original packaging. VPI SSM turntable (3 yrs) inc: JMW9 tone arm, SDS electronic PSU, HRX pneumatic feet, Extra counter weight, High grade record clamp & LFD silver ref arm lead. Very tidy package, all boxed.	£900	£2000
Brinkman Integrated amplifier. Vollverstärker. Box. Remote control. Very tidy.	£2900	£5910
47 Labs Flatfish MK II CD player with Dumpty power supply. Tidy.	£2800	--
47 Labs Progression DAC with Dumpty power supply. Tidy.	£2000	--
Wilson Benesch Circle with .5 Carbon fibre unipivot arm.. Boxed.	£1900	--
Origin Live Sovereign MKII. 2 YR old. SPOTLESS.	£1125	£1845
Origin Live Conqueror MKIII. Current spec'. Kondo silver internal wire. Ultraline external arm wire. Shiny & spotless. Howard Hughes clean.	£2500	£4500
Rega RB300 with Kondo silver internal wire.	£1650	£3250
Revolver Turntable. c.1985 c/w OEM tonearm minus counterweight.	£450	--
Living Voice MC 20/80 ohm step up transformer in smart wooden plinth. Excellent.	£150	--
EAR 859 power amplifier (from kit). Functional looking single-ended power amplifier. No box.	£400	£800
Kondo 5-way active x-over. Made by Mr Kondo for in-house horn speaker development. Very rare, maybe unique. Invaluable asset for a man with too many amps and a 5-way horn.	£750	--
Fidelity Research MC201 cartridge. Fully rebuilt by V.den Hul.	£5000	--
New cantilever and tip.	£500	--
CEC DA 1N. DAC with BNC Superlink, USB, AES/EBU inputs. Balanced / SE outputs. Sept. '09.	£2000	£4200
CEC Tube 53. Very cute and super-neat 5881 integrated. 16 watts. Sweet, refined and detailed sound.	£1500	£2350
Sugden Masterclass Stereo Power Amplifier. Titanium fascia. c.5 years old. Good condition.	£1750	£3675
Electrofluidics 20/20 speaker cable. 5 metre single set. New, unused. Very fine sound.	£300	£500
Living Voice flat copper ribbon speaker cable. 5 metre set. Excellent sound.	£500	£1000
PM Components VP-110S. EL34 integrated - rare unit. Very tidy condition.	£400	--
Vitavox RH330 4-cell mid range horn.	£400 pair	--Vita-
RH330 4-cell mid range horn.	£400 pair	--

T. +44 (0) 115 973 3222 E. shout@definitiveaudio.co.uk

www.definitiveaudio.co.uk



atc  
 arcam  
 dynavector  
 epos  
 eposn



lyra  
 naim audio  
 neat acoustics  
 nottingham  
 ortofon



pmc (including fact)  
 stax  
 sumiko  
 trichord  
 well tempered



hi-fi for grown-ups

ipswich (01473) 655171  
 www.signals.uk.com



**Q: Where can I discover the finest Audio products for the home?**  
**A: At Audio Destination!**

### Where Music Matters



Brand images shown:  
 1. Totem - 2. Lyndorf - 3. Clearaudio

Run by husband and wife team: Mike & Caroline Rogers - Audio Destination is not your typical HI-FI Specialist.

Audio Destination brings together a range of only the finest audio products and places them in comfortable and relaxed surroundings, where you can take your time to audition and find the right product or systems to suit your exact requirements.

- Open Tuesday - Saturday (9am - 5pm)
- Two demonstration suites
- Large selection of famous brands
- Home demonstration
- Long-term customer support & care
- Easy Parking
- Free advice & consultation
- Out of office appointments
- Home installation

We look forward to seeing you

Stockists of:

Analysis Plus • Audio Analogue • Audioquest • Ayre • Bel Canto  
 Black Ravioli • Clearaudio • Electrocompaniet • Focal JM Lab  
 Grand Prix Audio • Heed • Isotek • Leema Acoustics • Lyndorf  
 Moon • Plinius • Primare • Project • Tellurium Q  
 TEAC Esoteric • Totem Acoustics and many more...

**Audio Destination**

WHERE MUSIC MATTERS

Call +44 (0)1684 243 584 • [www.audiodeestination.co.uk](http://www.audiodeestination.co.uk)  
 Audio Destination, Suite 7a Market Walk, Tiverton, Devon, EX11 8BL  
 Open Tue - Sat: 9am - 5pm • e-mail: [info@audiodeestination.co.uk](mailto:info@audiodeestination.co.uk)



### CHOKING

#### THE SOPRANO WITH YOUR CABLES?

Careless cable choices can strangle your excellent system. The Cable Company database, based on feedback from thousands of US home cable trials, can tell you what cables will work best in your system.

- **FREE SHIPPING** on purchases over \$100.
- 60 brands, 238 cable products.
- **FREE** of all US taxes.



**COMPONENTS  
 ACCESSORIES  
 TUBES**

Call, write, fax or email for details and free consultation  
 (215) 862-4870 • fax (215) 862-4871

Visit our website at:  
<http://www.fatwyr.com>  
 email: [fatwyr@fatwyr.com](mailto:fatwyr@fatwyr.com)

**THE  
 CABLE  
 COMPANY**

125 Union Square, New Hope PA 18938 USA  
 ALL MAJOR CREDIT CARDS

## Heatherdale audio limited

Worthing, West Sussex BN14 7SU  
 Quality pre-owned equipment available  
 Main Dealer for: Tannoy Prestige, Thiel,  
 Esoteric, Audio Note, Ayre, Mark Levinson,  
 Revel and much more.  
 Distributor for Wavac Audio Lab products  
 Part exchange welcome. Demonstrations in a  
 dedicated listening room by appointment.

### SPEAKERS

Thiel .5 (point five) speakers, boxed ..... £595  
 Hanson Elixir speakers in black gloss, as new, manual/  
 crates/spikes. (£14,850) offered for..... £7,995  
 Tannoy Stirling speakers, ex demo..... £2250

### PRE-AMPS

Ayre KX-R pre amp..... £7450  
 Audio Note M1 RIAA phono stage, MINT..... £795  
 Audio Note M1-Line pre amp..... £350  
 Audio Note M ONE-R remote controlled pre amp... £495  
 Audio Note M Zero-R remote controlled pre amp... £395  
 Audio Note M Zero pre amp..... £295  
 Boulder MS11 phono stage with power supply..... £995  
 Luxman C-03 pre amp, boxed VGC..... £325  
 TRI HD-84 headphone amp with volume control, ex  
 review sample (£1150) as new, only..... £675

### AMPLIFIERS

Wavac MD-805 monoblocks 55wpc, SET's AS NEW (UK  
 retail £16500) only ..... £7995  
 Audio Note P Zero monoblocks..... £495  
 Ayre MX-R monoblocks..... £7950  
 Ayre P-5X phono stage..... £1195  
 Audio Note P1 power amp..... £795  
 Lindley Tyson (Quad 22 mods) KT88 valve monoblocks,  
 very very rare offered for..... £3,250  
 CD Developments "KALYPSO" integrated amplifier,  
 superb/boxed..... £395

### CD PLAYERS & TRANSPORTS

TRI CD player (new) "Made in Japan" ..... £1895  
 CEC TL-1N CD transport, as new..... £6450  
 CEC DA-1N, AS NEW, cost new £4,200. Offered for  
 only ..... £2,500  
 Mark Levinson ML 31.5 Reference CD transport (original  
 NOT upgraded ML-31)..... £3495  
 Esoteric P-03 CD transport with D-03 DAC MINT.. £10,950  
 Audio Note CD-2.1x CD player..... £595  
 Audio Note CD 3.1x CD player..... £795

### MISCELLANEOUS

Winds O1 stylist gauge..... New £495  
 MIT Shotgun S2 15' speaker cable..... £795  
 MIT Shotgun S2 balanced interconnects 1 metre pair £295  
 Ayre Signature 1.5 metre power cord..... £440  
 1 metre pair Madrigal CZ Gel balanced interconnect.  
 Mint/Boxed (cost new £449)..... £195  
 2 metre pair Madrigal (Mark Levinson) Balanced inter-  
 connect, MINT/BOXED (£695) Only..... £295  
 Finite Elemente HD02 three level equipment rack,  
 MINT..... £2450

### TURNTABLES, CARTRIDGES & TONEARMS

Blue Pearl turntable with Graham Phantom arm ... £9995  
 Simon York Zarathustra turntable with PSU, fitted Gra-  
 ham 1.5 arm, black/gold on slate base with glass hinged  
 cover..... £3,250  
 Shun Mook (small) record clamp, boxed/papers..... £495  
 Miyajima Kotetu mono cartridge, NEW, retail £355,  
 only..... £265  
 Yamamoto Mono cartridge, NEW (£1023)  
 offered for..... £749

Selection of brand new discounted cartridges

All major credit cards accepted.

Telephone:

01903 261213

Mobile: 07860 660001

Web Site:

[www.hifi-stereo.com](http://www.hifi-stereo.com)

Email:

[heatherdale@hifi-stereo.com](mailto:heatherdale@hifi-stereo.com)

### DRIVERS:

- ATC
- AUDAX
- ETON
- FOSTEX
- LPG ➤ MAX FIDELITY
- MOREL ➤ PEERLESS
- SCAN-SPEAK ➤ SEAS
- SILVER FLUTE
- VIFA ➤ VISATON
- VOLT

SOLE CAPACITORS AND  
 INDUCTORS - USED BY THE  
 MOST DISCRIMINATING  
 LOUDSPEAKER  
 MANUFACTURERS.

### HARDWARE

### HOW TO BOOKS

Contact us for the  
 free Solen CDROM  
 Catalog.

**FREE!**



**SOLE**  
 4470 Avenue Thibault  
 St-Hubert, QC, J3Y 7T9 Canada  
 Tel: 450.656.2759  
 Fax: 450.443.4949  
 Email: [solen@solen.ca](mailto:solen@solen.ca)  
 Web: [www.solen.ca](http://www.solen.ca)

MADISOUND PROVIDES SPEAKER  
 BUILDERS WITH THE HIGHEST QUALITY  
 PARTS AND ADVICE.

LA PASSION DU HAUT-PARLER  
**AUDAX** **seas**

**S** Solen Inductors  
**S** Solen Fast Caps

**GOERIZ**

**Skaaning Loudspeakers** **FOSTEX**

**DEFLEX ACOUSTIC PANELS**

**AURA** **morel**

**vifa** **Peerless**

**NÖRDOST** **LPG**

**keiga** **ETON**

**scan-speak**

MADISOUND SPEAKER COMPONENTS, INC.  
 8608 UNIVERSITY GREEN  
 P.O. BOX 44283  
 MADISON, WI 53744-4283 U.S.A.  
 TEL: 608-831-3433 FAX: 608-831-3771  
 e-mail: [info@madisound.com](mailto:info@madisound.com)  
 Web Page: <http://www.madisound.com>



## Analogue Seduction

*where music is our passion*



Analogue Seduction are dedicated towards two channel Hi-Fi, specialising in vinyl replay.

As well as our on-line shop we have dedicated demonstration retail facilities based in Peterborough, Cambridgeshire and we can offer our customers home demonstrations.

We stock the finest in amplification, analogue, digital replay and speakers. We also specialise in a cable termination and cable burn in service.

Please visit our website [www.analogueseduction.net](http://www.analogueseduction.net) to browse or purchase products that are not easily available elsewhere.

**New vinyl records now stocked**

**Tel: +44 (0)1733 344768**

### TRANSMISSION LINE KITS FROM IPL ACOUSTICS



The IPL range now includes five superb bi-wired Transmission lines using top quality drive units and components to achieve sound quality and bass extension equivalent to speakers costing in the range of £800 to £1000. The plus kits include all that is required apart from the woodwork, but plain or veneered MDF cabinet kits are available. Please see website or catalogue for full details.

KIT	SPEAKER UNIT	CAB SIZE mm	PLUS KIT	P&P
M3tl	5" TPL Metal, Ribbon Treble	810 x 191 x 261	£236.00	£10.50
M1tl	5" TPL Metal, Ribbon Treble	853 x 191 x 261	£258.00	£10.50
S2tl	6.5" TPL Metal, Ribbon Treble	903 x 230 x 310	£259.00	£11.00
S4tl	8" Kevlar, Ribbon Treble	960 x 275 x 400	£385.00	£12.00
S5tl	10" bass, 5" mid, Ribbon Treble	1080 x 320 x 400	£483.83	£13.00

Send cheque (or postal order) made payable to Mr I P Leslie at IPL Acoustics, Chelsea Villa, Torrs Park, Ilracombe, Devon EX34 8AY, tel 01271 867439. Alternatively visit our website at [www.iplacoustics.co.uk](http://www.iplacoustics.co.uk) or send a 50p S.A.E. for catalogue detailing Transmission Lines, Hi-Fi and AV kits, including Active Subwoofers, drive units, Silver PTFE cables, and Quality Accessories.

# hi-finews

**TO ADVERTISE HERE  
PLEASE CONTACT  
ZOE WESTON  
0208 726 8324**

### DNM Stereo/Bi-Wire Solid Core Speaker Cable

The most accurate speaker cable you can buy. With defined resistance, low capacitance, balanced inductance and increased power rating, the design optimises the power amplifier's load. This stereo/bi-wire cable is designed to suit medium sensitivity speakers and longer cable runs, yet it still gives incredible resolution.

### DNM Stereo Solid Core Interconnect Cable

The designed magnetic characteristics give absolute clarity and tonal accuracy, the cable parameters are precisely set to improve the sound quality of any amplifier connected to it. The semi-transparent ribbon contains four conductors, enabling connection of a stereo source using only one cable.

### DNM High Frequency Termination Network

An important new DNM product, the high frequency termination network (HFTN) significantly improves the performance of all DNM cables. HFTNs remove radio frequency resonances that interact with the amplifier's feedback, damaging the sound quality. Really improves digital sources.

<http://www.dnm.co.uk/> phone DNM Design: +44 (0)1480 457989 email: [sales@dnm.co.uk](mailto:sales@dnm.co.uk)



Is this your problem?



loud too loud way too loud

It's a common problem. The usable range of the volume control is all down at the bottom end and fine control at low listening levels is either difficult or impossible. The noise floor may be audible, too. There is a simple and effective solution - the Rothwell In-Line Attenuators. They can be used with pre/power or integrated amps to cure the problem of excess gain and bring sonic benefits with even the most expensive equipment.

£39/pair - post free  
01204 366133

[www.rothwellaudioproducts.co.uk](http://www.rothwellaudioproducts.co.uk)

Here's your  
answer



"this accessory  
is heartily  
recommended"  
Gramophone

## IAN HARRISON HIFI

HIFI AT DISCOUNT PRICES. FREE NATIONWIDE DELIVERY

**SALE - TEL: 01283 702875**

### SPECIALIST SUPPLIER OF TURNTABLES, TONEARMS, CARTRIDGES AND PHONO STAGES

INCLUDING: MICHELL, CLEARAUDIO, THORENS, SME, REGA, MOTH, HADCOCK, WHEAT AUDIO, GRAHAM SLEE, LEHMANN AUDIO, PRO-JEKT, TRICHORD, HEED, GOLDRING, GRADO, ORTOFON, DENON, KOETSU, SUMIKO, CARTRIDGE MAN, ZYX, TRANSGURATION, BENZ MICRO, AUDIO TECHNICA, TOM EVANS, REGA, ICON AUDIO, LONDON (DECCA)

CLEARAUDIO SYMPHONY	£650
CLEARAUDIO CONCERTO	£1100
TRANSGURATION AXIA	£850
TRANSGURATION PHOENIX	£1300
TRANSGURATION ORPHEUS	£2350
DENON DL304	£290
DENON AHD7000	£700
EAR-YOSHINO	£POA
AUDIO TECHNICA ATOC9MLIII	£390
AUDIO TECHNICA ATF7	£269
AUDIO TECHNICA ATF3MKIII	£169
MICHELL ENGINEERING	£POA
HARBETH SPEAKERS	£POA
WHEAT PS30RDT	£POA
ORTOFON CADENZA BLUE	£POA

PLEASE PHONE TO CONFIRM PRICE & AVAILABILITY PRIOR TO ORDERING. ALL GOODS ARE BRAND NEW & BOXED WITH FULL U.K. GUARANTEES. NO EX-DEM OR EX-DISPLAY GOODS. NO GREY IMPORTS. GOODS ARE NOT SUPPLIED ON APPROVAL. SORRY NO GENERAL CATALOGUES. PLEASE PHONE OR WRITE FOR SPECIFIC REVIEWS, BROCHURES OR PRICES.

ESTABLISHED 1986.

MAIL ORDER ONLY FROM: IAN HARRISON, 7 MILL HILL, REPTON, DERBY, DE65 6GQ  
TEL: 01283 702875 9am-9pm INCLUDING SUNDAYS.



# THE PLACE TO BUY & SELL AUDIO EQUIPMENT & ACCESSORIES NOW FREE

## ACCESSORIES

**ORIGINAL** Pi Foundation Stands circa 1990, 18" high, top plate 7½" square, sand and shot filled, brass topped floor spikes, Good condition £150 buyer collects Tel: Ian on 07789 712775 (Hampshire) [LW]

## 2. AMPS

**ART** Audio Maestro valve monoblocs 50WPC & valve VP1 preamp, vgc, serviced recently and new valves, original cost £9500, sell for £2500, can demo Tel: 01476 579201 (Grantham, Lincs) [LW]

**SPECTRAL** Audio DMA 150 MK2 power amp, excellent condition, stunning sound, manual, box £3650 ono Tel: 01159 126424 (Notts) [LW]

**EAR** 534 power amp £2000 o.n.o, Ear 864 pre amp £1000 o.n.o both items in pristine condition Tel: 01592 891252 (Fife) email [allison@audio321.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:allison@audio321.fsnet.co.uk) [LW]

**SANSUI** amp AU-X510 £85, 50w per channel, offers Tel: 020 8950 0658 / email: [michael.stewart5@ntlworld.com](mailto:michael.stewart5@ntlworld.com) (S. Herts) [LW]

**TWO** Musical Fidelity X10Ds and one X-PSU, cylindrical models, both X10D's are boxed as new, one has NOS Mullards fitted, X-PSU is as new, no box, all leads £100 each Tel: 07876 705266 (West Yorks) [LW]

**NAGRA** PL-P tube preamplifier in superb condition, beautiful sound, boxed with manuals, can dem £3800 ono, Audiovalve (baby) Balburs monoblocks power amps, 80 wpc, recently fully revalved with Watford Valves G.E/II Tesla tubes bringing even more power and control, in great condition, come in crates with manual, can dem £1800 ono Tel: Harry 07904 813796 email: [harpas@hotmail.com](mailto:harpas@hotmail.com) [LW]

**AUDIO** Research LS2b preamplifier, original box/paperwork £780 (£3000) Tel: 07973 220663 (Leics) [LW]

**WORLD** Audio 6550 power amp, World Audio Klippi pre MC MM £350 each Tel: 01733 708725 [LW]

**PRIMARE** A30.1 integrated amplifier. 100w per channel, XLR and RCA, with remote, original box, manual; classy looks, excellent condition, £550. Tel. 01670 514119 (North East) [LW]

**ARCAM** Alpha 9 power amplifier 9P in very good condition, full working order £250, Maplin amplifier boards, 50w/8R, 70w/4R, four available, good for making up an active system etc, £25 each, AvonMusic prototype power supply for Class A power amplifiers, for the John Linsley Hood Class A amp 1996, built to supply 2 amps (stereo) at dual rail of +/- 22v (NL) as per JLH 1996. Will also power single rail amps as per earlier JLH 1969, or any low power Class A amps with similar supply rail requirements, this power supply features Capacitance Multiplier filters for ultra low noise levels, as opposed to very large caps and or chokes £225 Tel: 020 7499 8729 [LW]

**MUSICAL** Fidelity P180 (Mosfet) power amp, with choke regulated power supply, condition is as new and was one of Hi-Fi World's favourites powerful and refined £525 Tel: 07972 341692 / 01424 446282 [LW]

**ORIGINAL** Naim Nac 82/180p, owners manual and sales brochure as new £7, Naim power lead £7 Tel: 01766 781211 [LW]

**PASS** Labs Aleph Ono, MC/MM step up (£4k) £1250 email: [booning4@hotmail.com](mailto:booning4@hotmail.com) [LW]

**EAR** 534 power amp £2000 ono, Ear 864 pre-amp £1000 ono, both items in pristine condition, email: [allison@audio321.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:allison@audio321.fsnet.co.uk) Tel: 01592 891252 [LW]

**MUSICAL** Fidelity EI00 integrated amp finished in beautiful piano black, excellent condition, digital and phono outputs £250, Unison Research S6 valve integrated amp, mint condition, excellent reviews, beautiful build quality and lovely sound £750 Tel: Tony 02380 224003 (Southampton) [LW]

**MOON** P8-RS pre-amp and W8-RS power-amp, true high-end only 8 months old with boxes/remote £18k ono, unemployment forces reluctant sale Tel: Nigel on 07950 699128 or [nigelhorwood@yahoo.com](mailto:nigelhorwood@yahoo.com) [LW]

**LYNGDORF** TDAI 2200 digital amplifier with room correction microphone analogue inputs £3000 Tact 2175 semi digital amplifier £600 both amps 220 watts and excellent condition Tel: 01670 517620 [WM]

**TACT/LYNGDORF** SDA1 2175 integrated amplifier, superb quality and build, 200w per channel, silver, mint and

boxed (£1895) £795 Tel: 07776 143890 (Southampton) [MW]

## 3. CABLES

**RUSS** Andrews excellent Crystal 24 speaker cables (2.5) pair, upgraded with WBT banana plugs and DCT treated, under one and a half years old and in as new condition £490 (r.r.p £878.10) Tel: 020 8372 8376 (London) [LW]

**NORDOST** Flatline Blue Heaven speaker cables, stereo pairs 1 x 4.5m and 1 x 2.5m, cost £1030 and £630 respectively, unused/new, offers invited e-mail: [deregle1@aol.com](mailto:deregle1@aol.com) or Tel: 01945 463077 [LW]

**KIMBER** 8TC 2.5 banana £160, Kimber 4TC 2.5 bare wire £90 Tel: 01733 708725 [LW]

**VDH** D102 Mk3 RCA to XLR special £90, Crystal Cable Picolo RCA 0.5m £75 Tel: 01766 781211 [WM]

**NORDOST** SPM Ref interconnect, bal, 1m, as new in box £395 email: [booning4@hotmail.com](mailto:booning4@hotmail.com) [WM]

**ARTISAN** Silver Dream, XLR neutrals 1m, hardly used £120, Crystal Cable piccolo 50cm £65, Audio Selection flexible 80cm £15, AH! AS Direkt KB8, Eichmans 80cm £50, AH! LS Direkt KB8 speaker cable banana to spades with jumpers, 2 x 4m £100, Russ Andrews Yello power 1m 10 £15, One Thing power 1m 50 £15, negotiate on p+p Tel: Mike on 01582 867139 [WM]

**CHORD** Anthem ½m pair, phono cables £45 Tel: 07776 143890 (Southampton) [MW]

## 4. CD/DVD PLAYERS

**MUSICAL** Fidelity A1 CD pro player, two years old, mint, boxed, Philips Pro 2 mechanism 24-bit 192k DAC, top loader £650 Tel: Ian on 07789 712775 (Hampshire) [LW]

**CYRUS** CDXT SE transport player, black, boxed, as new, can demo £500 ono Tel: 07787 540082 / 02476 667877 [WM]

**ROKSAN** Caspian M Series 1 CD player, black, as new (few hours of running in only) original box & packaging with manufacturers warranty £850 ono Tel: 01525 854225 (eve) 01582 886276 (day) [WM]

## 5. DACS

**THETA** Pearl transport and Probasic 3a Dac £1250 (£4750) Tel: 07973 220663 (Leics) [LW]

**NAIM** Dac as new, changing direction of audio forces sale of this great unit £1600, collect/deliver to be discussed Tel: Alan on 07736 773830 (Yorks) [LW]

## 7. SPEAKERS

**WILSON** Watt/Puppy version

8 approx 2 years old in perfect mint condition physically & sonically wonderful with original crates manuals accessories etc choice of grilles, one owner, little use in top high end system, sensible offers please Tel: 07813 661682 [LB]

**WILMSLOW** Audio hand-built large floor standing classique loudspeakers, 910mm tall x 260mm wide x 300mm deep, to large after all my efforts for my room, as new £600, buyer will have to collect, 40kgs in weight Tel: Vic on 01372 456196 anytime [X] put in until cancelled

**LINN** Espek loudspeakers, boxed & near mint condition, maple finish, £850 ono (originally £2500) Aktiv cards also available Tel: 07813 960156 / e-mail: [ob.mm@virgin.net](mailto:ob.mm@virgin.net) [JB]

**LINN** Keildh loudspeakers, boxed, mint, rosenut finish £350 ono, Ku-Stone stands also available Tel: 07813 960156 / e-mail: [ob.mm@virgin.net](mailto:ob.mm@virgin.net) [JB]

**AVI** ADM9 loudspeakers (active, with built in power amps), boxed, as new, in gloss white finish £595 ono. Tel: 07813 960156 / e-mail: [ob.mm@virgin.net](mailto:ob.mm@virgin.net) [JB]

**QUAD** ESL 989 serviced by Quad in January 2007, black cloth £1750 Tel: 020 8688 6397 (Croydon) [LW]

**REVEL** F32 floorstanders, maple veneer, unmarked, original packaging £1500 (West Sussex) Tel: 01243 582411 [LW]

**MJ** Acoustics Ref 1 Subwoofer, 10" downward firing driver, D.A.M.P amplifier technology, Hi/low inputs, variable crossover with digital readout, expensive option finish in red cherry, mint multi award winning sub, cost £800, sale £400 Tel: 07876 705266 (West Yorks) [LW]

**SONUS** Faber Elector Amator II with ironwood stands, beautiful sound but cabinets have a few chips and scratches £1350 ono, can dem, boxed with manual Tel: Harry 07904 813796 email: [harpas@hotmail.com](mailto:harpas@hotmail.com) [LW]

**PAIR** of SEAS 25F-EWRX H274 8ohms speakers, these high quality drivers are in good condition, the surrounds/cone are ok, the only point to note is that one of the tags on one driver is short/broken off, this can easily be fixed/replaced by a competent person £100 Tel: 020 7499 8729 [LW]

**PROAC** Response two point five floorstanders in original boxes great sounding cost £2700, but some cosmetic damage hence £300 secures, collect only Tel: 07710 397866 or email [lovell.g@o2.co.uk](mailto:lovell.g@o2.co.uk) [LW]

**B&W** 800 Matrix series one speakers, excellent condition, with Krell bass align filters, leads etc (£14k) £1950 email: [booning4@hotmail.com](mailto:booning4@hotmail.com) [WM]

**AURUM** Cantus Leisure 5 speakers,



Please email your entries to: [carole\\_molloy@ipcmedia.com](mailto:carole_molloy@ipcmedia.com).  
Call our reader ad dept on 020 8726 8321. **Fax:** 020 8726 8399.



# DEALER DIRECTORY

High-end hi-fi retailers and other specialist services including components, kits and restoration available in your area

## Berkshire

**Audio Components**  
Specialists in  
loudspeaker components,  
design & restoration  
Tel: 0118 989 0151  
www.audio-components.co.uk

**Garrard**  
Loricraft Garrard Turntables,  
Record Cleaning Machines & Power Supplies.  
www.garrard501.com  
Contact: terry@garrard501.com  
jane@garrard501.com  
Telephone: 01488 72267

Benz Micro  
Clearaudio  
Dynavector  
Focal  
Focal Utopia  
Linn  
Linn LP12 Specialist  
Lyra  
Mark Levinson Reference  
Naim  
Revel  
Totem  
Transfiguration  
Vienna Acoustics  
**studio AV**  
01753 631000  
www.studioav.co.uk  
sales@studioav.co.uk  
44 High Street, Eton, Berkshire, SL4 6BL

## Bristol

**V' audio**  
Vinyl by SME, AVID, Origin Live, Graham Slee, Project etc.  
Speakers/Amps by AVI, Electrocompaniet, Opera, Triangle etc.  
Projectors by Sim2, JVC, Mitsubishi, Infocus etc.  
Honest advice and home demonstrations a speciality  
HIFI Consultants 36 Druid Hill, Stoke, Bishop, Bristol BS9 1EJ  
Tel/Fax: 0117 968 6005  
Email: icvhifi@yahoo.co.uk

## Buckinghamshire

**HAZLEMERE AUDIO**  
High Wycombe  
Specialising in some of the world's  
finest products and celebrating our  
21st anniversary.  
  
By appointment only  
01494 562610  
info@hazlemereaudio.co.uk  
GRAHAM SLEE - ORACLE - ORPHEUS SPECTRAL  
SME - STAX - USHER - NU FORCE HADCOCK  
ACOUSTIC SOLID - NAGRA - BELLES  
PEAK CONSULT - TRILOGY - BRINKMAN  
ART SPEAKERS AND MORE...

## Cheshire

**Doug Brady Hi-Fi**  
Open Mon/Sat 10.30 - 6.00  
Sales & Servicing -  
including record decks  
& loudspeakers  
dbrady8833@aol.com  
01925 828009  
s/h & ex.dom sales list on website  
www.dougbradyhifi.com  
Kingsway North, Warrington, WA1 3NU

**DOOLEYS**  
AUDIO | VISUAL  
106 MILL STREET  
MACCLESFIELD  
CHESHIRE  
SK11 6NR  
01625 264666  
sales@dooleys-hifi.co.uk  
www.dooleys-hifi.co.uk

## Devon

**tavistock audio**  
— love your music —  
• Wilson Benesch •  
• Michell Engineering •  
• Dynaudio • Grado •  
• Naim • Usher •  
• The Chord Company •  
• Kudos • Quadraspire •  
• Audiovector •  
• Leema Acoustic •  
18 Market Street Tavistock  
Devon PL19 0DE  
01822 618 940  
info@tavistockaudio.co.uk www.tavistockaudio.co.uk

## London

**GRAHAMS**  
"One of the five best hi-fi  
shops in the world"  
ARENA Magazine  
Grahams Hi-Fi  
Canonbury Yard  
190a New North Road  
London N1 7BS

**LOCKWOOD AUDIO**  
ALL  
TANNOY  
spares and repairs including obsolete models  
28 RYEFIELD CRESCENT  
NORTHWOOD, HA6 1LT, UK  
Phone: +44(0)1923 829444 Fax: +44(0)1923 829448  
www.lockwoodaudio.co.uk  
email: nigel@lockwoodaudio.co.uk

**Oranges & Lemons**  
www.orangesandlemons.info  
Audio-Visual  
Multi-Room  
Hi-Fi  
  
020 7924 2040  
61-63 Webbs Road London SW11

**Front End Problems**  
then contact  
"The Cartridge Man"  
It doesn't have to cost an arm and a leg to get  
the best - HiFi News awards 2005. "BEST  
CARTRIDGE UNDER £1000! Agents for  
Croft, Moth, Hadcock, E.A.R. and others.  
'CARTRIDGE MAN STYLUS GAUGES  
NOW AVAILABLE! Plus cartridge  
re-tipping service  
Web Site: www.thecartridgeman.com  
Email: thecartridgeman@btinternet.com  
020 8688 6565

## Midlands (W.)

The Midlands Premier Sound & Vision Academy  
**SOUND ACADEMY**  
Custom Install & Selected Audio  
  
• Excellent product range • Demonstration rooms  
• Friendly knowledgeable staff with over 28 years experience  
Visit our NEW WEBSITE at  
www.soundacademy.co.uk  
for further information • sales@soundacademy.co.uk  
152a High Street Blisworth Walsall WS3 3JT West Midlands  
01922 493499

**sound cinergy**  
www.soundcinergy.co.uk  
Exposure, Focal, Linn, Marantz,  
Michell, Monitor Audio, Okki Nokki, Onkyo,  
Orfon, Project, Rel, Roksan, Trichord  
37 High Street, Aldridge 01922 457926

## Monmouthshire

**hi-finews**  
TO ADVERTISE HERE  
PLEASE CONTACT  
ZOE WESTON  
ON 0208 726 8324

## Norfolk

**BASICALLY SOUND AND VISION**  
Norfolk's Audio and Visual  
Systems Specialist  
Call 01362 820800  
Visit our showroom at:  
Calveley Court, Southburgh Road,  
Raymerston, Norfolk NR9 4QD  
e: enquiries@basicallysound.co.uk  
www.basicallysound.co.uk

## Somerset

**Alternative AUDIO**  
01984 624242  
peter@alternativeaudio.co.uk  
www.alternativeaudio.co.uk  
Taunton, Somerset

## Suffolk

atc  
dynavector  
epson  
focal  
hutter  
isoblu  
kudos  
lyra  
naim audio  
neat acoustics  
nottingham  
pmc  
rega  
well tempered  
more...  
**signals**  
hi-fi for grown-ups  
Ipswich (01473) 655171  
email: end@signals.uk.com  
www.signals.uk.com

## Hi-Fi Wanted

We source  
Hi-Fi from all over  
the UK and can  
arrange collection.  
Best cash prices paid  
01986 895 929  
or email  
nick@emporiumhifi.demon.co.uk



# DEALER DIRECTORY

High-end hi-fi retailers and other specialist services including components, kits and restoration available in your area

## Surrey

**Stockists of:**  
• Arcam • B&W • Focal  
• Linn • Naim • PMC  
• Rega • Rotel and MORE

**Infidelity**  
INDECENTLY GOOD HI-FI

9 High Street, Hampton Wick,  
Kingston upon Thames,  
Surrey KT1 4DA

Tel: 020 8943 3530  
Open: Tues - Sat 10am - 6pm  
[www.infidelity.co.uk](http://www.infidelity.co.uk)



## West Sussex

Do you want to own some of the  
world's finest audio equipment?



**Stockists of:**

• Audio Physic • Aura • Astin Trew  
• Ayon • Belles • Cabasse • Coda  
• Electrocompaniet • Hifi Racks  
• Music Tools • Oracle • Stello  
• Vivid Audio

We supply First Class Sound Systems  
Rock Solid Sound Systems  
The Old Barn, Billingshurst  
West Sussex RH14 9DE  
W: [www.rocksolidsounds.co.uk](http://www.rocksolidsounds.co.uk)  
E: [info@rocksolidsounds.co.uk](mailto:info@rocksolidsounds.co.uk)  
T: 01403 782221 M: 07950 274224

## Wiltshire

### Working Wireless

High Quality transformer rewinds for Hi-Fi  
and radio equipment.

Quad, Leak, Radford etc.

30 Yrs experience in repair and restoration  
of valve audio and radio equipment.

Specialist designs undertaken

Phone Mike on 01380 860787

with your requirements

## Wales

### Acton Gate Audio

4 Ruabon Road, Wrexham, LL13 7PB

01978 364 500

[www.acton-gate-audio.co.uk](http://www.acton-gate-audio.co.uk)

Stockists of Arcam, Quad, Michell, Roksan,  
Onkyo, Denon, Yamaha and many more!

## hi-finews

TO ADVERTISE HERE PLEASE CONTACT

ZOE WESTON

ON

020 8726 8324

# HifiAccessoriesclub.com

*Not just for the little things...*

HiFi Accessories Club

[www.hifiaccessoriesclub.com](http://www.hifiaccessoriesclub.com) | Email: [sales@hifiaccessoriesclub.com](mailto:sales@hifiaccessoriesclub.com)

10 Dane Lane, Wilstead, Bedford MK45 3HT

Telephone: +44 (0) 1234 741152 | Fax: +44 (0) 1234 742028

## HOW TO CONTACT US...

# hi-fi news

  
& Record Review


When you have finished with  
this magazine please recycle it.

### Editorial Team

**Editor** • Paul Miller  
**Production Editor** • Patrick Fraser  
**Art Editor** • Sheradon Dublin  
**Sub-Editor** • Christopher Breunig  
**Editorial Assistant** • Liz Spence  
**Consultant Tech Ed** • Keith Howard

### Photographic Team

Mike Prior, Anthony Butler,  
Clare Collins, Andrew Sydenham

### Management Team

**Group Magazine Editor** •  
Garry Coward-Williams  
**Publisher** • Richard Marcroft  
**General Manager** • Charlie Meredith  
**Managing Director** • Paul Williams

### Advertisement Team

**Group Ad Manager**  
Susan Bann • 0208 726 8412  
[susan\\_bann@ipcmedia.com](mailto:susan_bann@ipcmedia.com)  
**Sales Executive**  
Daniel Birchmore • 0208 726 8317  
[daniel\\_birchmore@ipcmedia.com](mailto:daniel_birchmore@ipcmedia.com)  
**Telephone Sales Executive**  
Zoë Weston • 0208 726 8324  
[zoe\\_weston@ipcmedia.com](mailto:zoe_weston@ipcmedia.com)  
**The Market (Reader Ads)**  
Carole Molloy • 0208 726 8321  
[carole\\_molloy@ipcmedia.com](mailto:carole_molloy@ipcmedia.com)  
**Group Production Manager**  
Vicky Geary • 0208 726 8339  
[vicky\\_geary@ipcmedia.com](mailto:vicky_geary@ipcmedia.com)  
**Production Assistant**  
George Kesta • 020 8726 8213  
[george\\_kest@ipcmedia.com](mailto:george_kest@ipcmedia.com)

### Key Contributors

**Classical** • Christopher Breunig  
**Jazz** • Steve Harris  
**Rock** • Johnny Black & Ken Kessler  
**Hi-fi** • Steve Harris, Ken Kessler,  
Christopher Breunig, Barry Fox,  
Keith Howard, John Bamford, Richard  
Stevenson, Barry Willis, Jim Lesurf

### We Live At...

Our editorial, advertisement and  
publishing offices are at:

Hi-Fi News, IPC Inspire, Leon House,  
233 High Street,  
Croydon, Surrey,  
CR9 1HZ, England.  
Tel • 020 8726 8311  
Fax • 020 8726 8397  
e-mail • [hi-finews@ipcmedia.com](mailto:hi-finews@ipcmedia.com)

Hi-Fi News magazine incorporates: Stereo, Tape & Tape Recorders,  
Audio News, Record News, Audio Record Review, The Gramophone Record,  
Which CD? and Music Business. Hi-Fi News is a  
member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC)  
and of EISA ([www.eisa-awards.org](http://www.eisa-awards.org))



Hi-Fi News is published on the first Friday of the  
month preceding the cover date by IPC Inspire, part of the IPC Media Group.  
It costs £4.00 per issue (£51.35 for 12 months) in the UK; £107.47 in  
Europe; \$144.63 in North America; £90.41 for the rest of the world. Rates  
are for annual delivery. See subscriptions order form on page 70 or call  
0845 476 7778 for the latest special offers.

Copyright: IPC Media, 2010, all rights reserved. Reproduction in whole  
or in part is forbidden without permission in writing of the publishers.  
Distributed by Marketforce (UK) Ltd, The Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark  
Street, London SE1 0SU. Tel: 020 7633 3333. Typeset by CTT, London E17.  
Printed in England by Southampton, Unit 17-19, Upon Ind. Estate, Poole,  
Dorset BH16 6BN. ISSN 1472-2569.

**IPC INSPIRE**  
FOCUS

A part of IPC Media, a Time Warner Company



## LAST WORD

# OFF THE LEASH!

KEN KESSLER TELLS IT LIKE IT IS...

A year of challenges, a year of extremes... but 2010 has had high points too, says **Ken Kessler**



**T**here's no getting away from the fact that 2010 was – fiscally speaking – a miserable year, but it had an upside, and that was the continued appearance of remarkable products. Quite who's buying them remains a mystery, but the choice of high-end components has never been more tempting.

There was no bigger news in the high-end than the Devialet digital integrated amplifier [HFN Apr '10]. While not the first component to boast full digital integration – TACT and others preceded it – the Devialet introduced a new form that made it a stand-out. A flat case you can even hang on the wall? In my opinion, they out-B&O'd B&O, even to the coolness of the remote control. It seems a painless, one-stop solution for a high-end system, accommodating all manner of sources, without antagonising wives or interior designers. And it sounds wonderful.

### ITALIAN STALLION

Sonus Faber unveiled La Fenice (renamed Epoca due to a conflict with another speaker brand), its most ambitious model ever. The speaker sounded superb in an unfamiliar room with unfamiliar components, and with the most horrible selection of demo tracks ever mustered. But listening through all that, one could hear a speaker to rank with the greats. By summer 2011, a baby sister at half

its £140,000 price will appear – still scarily expensive, but boding well for even less costly models.

Meanwhile, 2010 saw the return of Croft [HFN Sept '10], truly the closest this industry has come to producing its own 'guerrilla' manufacturer. Croft is virtually a one-man operation, but Glenn is simply being true to his original calling: manufacturing great-sounding equipment devoid of frills, in order to keep prices low. Gone are outrageous

OTLs, extreme casework, huge price tags.

If there's an analogy, Croft is the IKEA of hi-fi – minimalist and functional. Only teensy.

And Croft is probably more indicative of the real world than

most: prices have plummeted to account for the forthcoming cut-backs, so entry-level performance is now bordering on the spectacular. Pro-Ject's budget turntable sales continued to grow, and its Box range has emerged as a canny solution to both price and space constraints. Musical Fidelity announced a new series in the spirit of its original X range (though not in cylindrical cases) and even Blu-ray players have dropped below £99. I'm still dazzled by the region-free player I picked up at Aldi...

As indicative of the new austerity as the UK-made Croft and the European Pro-Ject components are the latest-generation Chinese-made amplifiers. Quality as of

2010 increased so dramatically that owners of the amazing new Quad II Classic Integrated [HFN Jan '10] and the current ESLs have been known to shake their heads in disbelief, upon realising that the build quality of the current models is probably better than anything that ever came out of Huntingdon. And PrimaLuna? I've been using a Prologue integrated amplifier for years without a hitch, so the decision in 2010 to rename the range as 'Prologue Original', with 'Prologue Classic' to follow, is no mere marketing conceit. The brand has earned audiophile respect.

There were surprises all over the place. SME launched a new turntable, darTZeel brought out a monoblock with a £150k per pair price tag, Luxman delivered new models that should restore the brand to its former glory, Clearaudio's Concept provided killer analogue playback at around £1000, the Audio Research Anniversary preamplifier shot to the top of my 'wants list' and Wilson Audio managed to improve the already exceptional Sophia 2. The flow of new vinyl gave us pressings of such sublime quality that some were deemed to be superior to the originals, and the quality of downloads continued to improve, for those willing to pay for and give hard drive space to FLAC and other formats.

### A CALL TO ARMS...

What I regard as my high-point of the year, however, is not a product *per se*, but the mainstream coverage given to record producer and Chairman of Interscope Geffen A&M Records, Jimmy Iovine, upon pronouncing that 'sound has been degraded because of the digital revolution, really to point of no return.'

He has been preaching this on CNBC, in newspapers, on-line. It is a call to arms from someone with far greater clout, influence and impact than any individual audiophile. The fact that he was promoting his own brand of headphones is irrelevant: he made the public take notice of the negative effects of digital compression technologies on sound quality. And if that's what it takes to save this passion of ours, then all of us should be grateful. Even if he only woke up and convinced one lone listener. ☺

**Dec 12<sup>th</sup> NOV**  
issue on sale

### ON TEST:

- Group Test: £1000 silver-disc players
- Pass Labs INT-30A Class A amplifier
- dCS Debussy USB DAC
- Electrocompaniet ECI 5 mkII integrated
- Trilogy 907 phono stage

### PLUS:

- Investigation: The LP and anti-piracy
- Vintage Review: Goodmans Maxamp 30
- Vinyl Frontier: Latest LP releases
- Audio Milestones: McIntosh MC275
- Vinyl Icon: Frampton Comes Alive





## AMR 777 SERIES

1. AMR Compact Disk Processor CD-777 2. AMR Pre-Main Amplifier AM-777 3. AMR Phono Stage PH-77



2. AM-777S



3. PH-777



Abbaddon Music Research

"Analogue, Musicality, Realism"



1. CD-777B



# A timeless musical experience



REFERENCE 5  
Vacuum Tube Line-stage Preamplifier

■ It is the best  
**valve preamplifier**  
I've ever used. ■

Ken Kessler | Hi-Fi News | Jan 2010



REFERENCE CD8  
Compact Disc Player

■ Quite possibly  
the best all-round  
**single box CD**  
**player** I've heard. ■

Roy Gregory | Hi-Fi+ | Issue 64



REFERENCE PHONO 2  
Vacuum Tube Phono Preamplifier

■ The most  
**persuasively**  
**lifelike** phonostage  
I've heard. ■

Jonathan Valin | The Absolute Sound | Jan 2010

Over 40 years Audio Research has established a new syntax of emotional, evocative sound. Motivated by the uncompromising pursuit of the ultimate musical experience, Audio Research has created a succession of products that have each gained iconic status. Built by hand with the end user always in mind, Audio Research components combine innovation with longevity – all units being repairable to original performance standards, no matter how old.

The Audio Research collection encompasses both valve and solid-state technology, delivering some of the most critically acclaimed CD players and amplifiers yet devised. The three components featured above – the latest additions to the world-famous Reference line – have already received the rapturous reception one expects of this prestigious marque.

Like all true musical legends, Audio Research creates timeless classics; whichever component you choose, you'll find it's the ultimate sound investment. For details of the full range and your nearest dealer, contact Absolute Sounds.

**audio research**  
HIGH DEFINITION®

**absolute sounds ltd**  
58 Durham Road, London SW20 0TW  
T: +44 (0)20 89 71 39 09 F: +44 (0)20 88 79 79 62  
[www.absolutesounds.com](http://www.absolutesounds.com) [info@absolutesounds.com](mailto:info@absolutesounds.com)

