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Concept 20 - 'Product of the Year' 2013

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## Got a whole lot of money that's ready to burn...

The Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas was the usual festival of shiny new products, technological flights of fancy and - in the case of humble journalists - cattle-like herding from one over-subscribed press conference to the next. (Well worth it for the chance to see Michael Bay forget any grasp of language, mind you. <http://whf.cm/19QIwy2>)

Our **CES report (p22)** is comprehensive, but what's missing from our round-up is any kind of realistically priced TV - because there were none at the show. But that doesn't mean the affordable television doesn't exist. The proof is in our **sub-£500 TV group test (p65)**, where we find value-for-money that's off the scale.

And until 105in, 21:9 curved 4K TVs come down to less than £500, these excellent bargains will do.



*Simon*

Simon Lucas, Editor

### My products of the month

**Cyrus CDi**  
Group Test p45

The best CD player Cyrus has ever built - and, believe me, that's saying something





**Sony NWX-ZX1**  
First Test p6

It looks good, feels good and sounds great. I want one. Simple as that, really

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Group test **AV receivers**  
"It is nothing short of a powerhouse"

## Our products of the month



**QED uPlay Stream**  
First test p20

"A nifty performer that nails good-value music streaming"

Becky Roberts Staff writer



**GamuT M'InenT M3**  
Temptation p76

"Look past the silly name and you'll find one of the most insightful speakers below £10k"

Ketan Bharadia Technical editor



**Philips HTL5120**  
Supertest p36

"A budget soundbar that doesn't compromise on features or performance"

Andy Madden Reviews editor



**Monitor Audio Silver 6 AV12**  
First test p16

"Stunningly integrated and precise surround sound in a gorgeous package"

Kashfia Kabir Multimedia journalist



**Dali Kubik Free**  
First test p19

"It's pricey, but this premium Bluetooth speaker has the sound quality to match"

Verity Burns Multimedia editor



**Finlux 40F8073-T1**  
Group test p66

"A sharp and exciting picture with essential smarts, at a great price"

Ced Yuen Staff writer

## Supertest Soundbars

"There was a time when a decent soundbar would cost upwards of £500, but now you can get some strong performers for far less than that"



## What's in this issue...

**06 First tests** We tune in to Sony's high-resolution audio player, the NWZ-ZX1, and get familiar with Microsoft's new Surface 2 tablet - while Monitor Audio's Silver 6 surround package goes for gold and we listen to a superlative speaker from Dali.

**28 Supertest: Soundbars** Last month we looked at soundbases, this month it's the turn of soundbars. With prices starting at £150, we test the seven contenders looking to turbocharge your tinny TV.

**42 CD players** Thought CD players were done? Think again. We've brought together four units from the likes of Naim, Audiolab, Cyrus and Exposure - all for less than £1000 - to see who deserves that precious place in your hi-fi cabinet.

**52 Speaker cables** Wading through a sea of speaker cables but aren't sure which is best? We've run the rule over seven pairs so you don't have to.



**First tests**  
"If all your music is stored on a home computer, this could be the audio solution you're looking for"



**Insider CES/Bristol Show p22**  
Featuring a Las Vegas CES post-mortem as well as an in-depth look at what's in store at the Bristol Show.

**Subscriptions p82**  
**A free pair of SoundMagic E10s**  
Subscribe to the mag, online, or both and get a pair of headphones as well

**Round-up Speaker cables**  
"You won't need to worry about how it interacts with the rest of your kit"



**Group test CD players**  
"For £800, we still think you won't get anything better"

**55 Surround amplifiers** If you want to replicate the thrills and spills of the cinema, you need a capable AV amp. These £2000 heavy-hitters from Arcam, Pioneer and Yamaha are far more than that.

**65 Televisions** A good TV shouldn't cost the earth. And these four affordable TVs from Finlux, Panasonic, Samsung and Toshiba prove it.

**72 Temptations** Featuring the impressively refined Bricasti Design M1 stereo amp and the oddly monikered - but very talented - GamuT M'InenT M3.

**78 Playlist** We review racing biopic *Rush*, emerge unscathed from Mogwai's *Rave Tapes* and settle in for another season of *The Walking Dead* video game.



**Group test Televisions**  
"There's a stunning level of detail that gives a sense of depth to the picture on screen"

**Our ratings explained**

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

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



**Temptation**  
"It's an understated performer that never draws attention to itself"

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SOUND AND VISION  
**TEST WINNER**

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With new categories and key tech specs, we've made it even easier for you to pick the best kit for your cash

**Find out...**  
**How to set up your projector p94**  
**Jargon Buster: HD Audio p101**  
**Instant expert: hi-fi separates p123**



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# FIRST TESTS

**MORE  
FIRST TESTS**



**Microsoft Surface 2**  
£360 **Page 14**  
New iPad-botherer is an improvement on the original



**TEAC AI-501DA**  
£700 **Page 10**  
A new stereo amplifier/DAC from TEAC



**Q Acoustics Q-BT3**  
£350 **Page 21**  
Incredibly versatile wireless speakers

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**EXCLUSIVE**

## Sony's first premium high-res audio Walkman is a winner

**Sony NWZ-ZX1 | High-res audio player | £550**

**For many people**, smartphones are the default choice for portable music. They're convenient, after all, and not everyone wants to carry multiple devices. But some of us still want music to go on a dedicated device that puts audio above all else.

That's where the NWZ-ZX1 comes in. It is Sony's latest flagship Walkman, capable of playing high-res music as well as your standard CD-ripped tunes.

### Design and build to match the price

The ZX1 makes a hell of a first impression. It's a solid, weighty unit with a frame machined from a block of aluminium. The front is glass, the back is rubbery leatherette - which looks smart and helps grip. The design and build certainly matches the price tag.

It has an unusual shape - a thin slab for the most part, but with a prominent

port/USB output, and a 3.5mm headphone socket in a gleaming brass cylinder.

This cylinder is so big that it rises slightly above the face of the ZX1. It allows internal cabling to be a little thicker, theoretically improving sound quality. Sony says the large jack results in lower contact resistance.

Sony has recognised that touch-screens aren't everything, and to this end the ZX1 has physical buttons along its right edge. These are nice to use, and don't stand proud enough to catch on bits of clothing. No more turning on the screen to change tracks - you can do that in your pocket. This makes us very happy.

Overall, it's a striking design, and we really like it. Sony has clearly tried its best to make the ZX1 different from anything coming out of Cupertino. The device looks like it means business, and the build quality reassures us of that impression.

most people, but it would be good to have expandable memory. Sony says it is looking to introduce SD card slots elsewhere in the line up.

The 4in VGA screen has a resolution of 854 x 480 pixels. This is the same screen size as a 5th generation iPod Touch, but Apple's player has 1136 x 640 pixels. The Sony's picture has less detail and subtlety, even if it's more than good enough to navigate the device. In any case, the screen is too small for any serious viewing, and it's clear that music is the priority here.

### NFC for simple Bluetooth pairing

Turn the device over and you'll see a Walkman logo, which is actually a tiny speaker. It's clearly not designed for serious listening. Above that is a symbol denoting NFC (Near Field Communication), which can be used for easy Bluetooth pairing. Note that high-res performance is available only through a wired connection.

The ZX1 runs on Android 4.1 Jelly Bean. A proprietary Sony Walkman interface would have been more interesting, but at least this means we're on predictably safe ground - it's likely that you'll already know how to use it. (It means you can play Angry Birds too.) File transfer is a simple matter of dragging and dropping, without the need to faff about with a particular program.

The default Walkman app has a nice interface and quite a few equaliser modes to play with, but if you would rather use third-party software such as Poweramp, the Walkman's Google Play store access will see you right.

**Sony has realised that touch-screens aren't everything, and to this end the ZX1 has physical buttons along its right edge. No more turning on the screen to change tracks...**

derrière. This houses the amplifier block, and also makes the unit easier to handle. Sony has gone up against Apple's sleek and slim design philosophy, perfectly happy to feature hard edges and protrusions.

In line with this attitude, the bottom edge of the device seems proudly asymmetrical. There's a loop for lanyards (a big deal in Asia), a proprietary charge/data

You get 128GB of onboard storage - of which just under 115GB is free to use - and there is no expandable memory slot. We reckon you'll be able to fit about 60 high-res albums on there. We loaded up nine albums and it took up 17GB.

Serious users with libraries of exclusively high-res audio tracks will find this a bit tight. It's a decent amount of storage for

### Use it with

**Over ears**  
**B&W P7**

★★★★★ **£330**

The P7s aren't merely the pinnacle of B&W's fine headphone range, they are the height of headphone performance at this price.



**On ears**

**Philips Fidelio M1**

★★★★★ **£160**

Our best portable on-ears 2013 have a lovely, rounded presentation: vocals have room to breathe and stereo imaging is impressive.



**In ears**

**Beyerdynamic MMX 101 IE**

★★★★★ **£95**

Another pair of Award-winning headphones, and thoroughly superior-sounding buds with weight, detail and a really impressive delivery



There's a little speaker incorporated in that logo - but you'd be doing this player a disservice to use it very often

Rhythms are tight and fluid, which makes for an entertaining, foot-tapping listen

Dali Kubik Free, p19



### WHAT IT HAS TO BEAT...

**Apple iPod Touch | £330 |**

★★★★★

It has (at most) half the storage, and it doesn't sound nearly as good - but it is about £200 cheaper.



**In detail...**



**Attention to detail**

- 1** The thicker headphone jack supposedly improves sound quality.
- 2** NFC (Near Field Communication) gives you easy Bluetooth pairing, but you then lose the high-res element as that's via cable only.
- 3** Buttons! You can now change tracks in your pocket.

Audio compatibility is pretty good: MP3, WMA, ATRAC, ATRAC Advanced Lossless, WAV, AAC, HE-AAC, FLAC, Apple Lossless and AIFF formats are all supported. DSD files are not supported - you'd have to convert to Linear PCM first. This strikes us as a little odd, as Sony is the major force behind the format. Sony says the plan is to introduce DSD compatibility in later models. But for now you're out of luck.

Battery life will vary depending on the way you use the device, but Sony claims a music playback time of 32 hours. We managed to get three days out of it with moderate usage (music only, no wireless extravagance). Listening periodically

Tonally the sound is well balanced, but the articulate yet hard-hitting bass deserves a special mention.

We switched to WAV CD-rips of the same songs and noticed a minor dip in detail and subtlety, but not enough to dampen our enjoyment of the performance. These tracks benefit from the same polished, engaging presentation as their high-res FLAC counterparts.

Next we tried the same files on an iPod Touch, and it sounded brash compared with the ZX1. We've always raved about the Apple's performance, but the Sony is ahead at every turn, offering greater subtlety with better timing and greater dynamic range.

We really like the Sony NWZ-ZX1. It's a brilliant first attempt at a premium high-res audio player. Purely in terms of audio performance, it is the best portable music player we've reviewed. Still, its price tag is a little hard to justify when we consider its lack of expandable memory and DSD compatibility, and a mediocre screen. We look forward to seeing Sony address these issues. But in the mean time, Sony can be proud of itself.

*High-res tracks provided by HDTracks, launching in the UK in Q1 2014*

**The ZX1 is a properly talented performer, delivering a refined performance with plenty of subtlety. Details and textures are layered and well organised on a wide-open soundstage. You get a high level of precision and agility**

during a 10-hour flight knocked the battery down by 15 per cent.

We didn't waste any time in loading a selection of high-res tracks up to 24-bit/192kHz. The ZX1 is a properly talented performer, delivering a refined performance with plenty of subtlety. Details and textures are layered and well organised on a wide-open soundstage. You get a high level of precision and agility, with excellent timing and punchy dynamics.

The only issue we have is with the volume. It's loud enough for us listening in the office, but that ceiling could be a little higher.

There aren't any bundled earphones. All you get is a cable to connect to your computer, a case and a wedge of plastic in case you simply must have the player level on a tabletop. You wouldn't want to use this with cheap, bundled cans anyway - the ZX1 deserves proper listening.

**Rating ★★★★★☆**

**FOR** Seriously good sound with layers of detail; subtlety; great timing and strong dynamics; lovely design; buttons

**AGAINST** Pricy, considering no expandable memory or DSD; mediocre screen; no 'phones

**VERDICT** Sony has seriously impressed us with its first attempt at a premium high-res audio player

**TECH SPECS**

**Type** Media player • **Battery life** Audio 32, Video 5hrs • **Storage type** Flash • **Storage** 128GB • **Screen res** 854 x 480 • **Screen Size** 4in • **Voice recorder** Yes • **Formats** WAV, WMV, WMA Lossless, FLAC, Apple Lossless, MP4, MP3 • **USB** Yes • **Dimensions (hwd)** 123 x 61 x 16mm • **Weight** 139g

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- 1** Pick it up and it's hard not to be impressed. Build is excellent, its weight is satisfying and the feel of quality is tangible. Sony claims the slightly odd shape makes it easier to hold. We're inclined to agree.
- 2** The rest of the package is a little less impressive, but nice nonetheless. There's a slip case, a charge/data cable, and a thin slice of plastic in case you're keen to keep the unit level with the table.
- 3** Physical buttons! Now you can change tracks and control the volume without taking the player out of your pocket and turning the screen on. They're quality keys, too. What a happy development.
- 4** We're greeted by Android 4.1.1. Maybe a proprietary Sony software would have been nice, but this means there's no need to learn a new system from scratch. That screen could be a little sharper though.
- 5** Loading music is so easy! There's no need for any kind of program: just plug it into your computer, and drag and drop to your heart's content. Well, up to 128GB. Sony tells us it is doing SD cards in the future.

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TEAC AI-501DA | Stereo amplifier/DAC | £700

# More style than substance

It doesn't just look good; it's also well built. And that goes for the remote, too



We really like power meters. Which is why we were immediately attracted to the retro styling of the TEAC AI-501DA. An integrated stereo amplifier and DAC with high-resolution USB streaming, this device is compact and beautifully designed.

The twin VU meters are the highlight, with the amber backlight making things look even more striking, while the brushed metal chassis and weighty-but-smooth feel of the controls complete the effect.

It's a solidly built and sturdy cabinet, and the compact A4 size means it won't take up much space on your hi-fi kit rack. It also wouldn't look out of place (in silver or black) as part of a desktop system.

We can't help but want the TEAC amplifier to sound as good as it looks. And so we were sorely disappointed when the AI-501DA didn't deliver the exciting, involving performance we were expecting.

It's a clean sound that has good impact and a good sense of detail, but it doesn't have a great grasp of rhythm or fluid

dynamics. Play a 24-bit/44.1kHz file of *Blue Bleezin' Drunk* by The Unthanks via USB and while it does a lovely job of delivering the clear, haunting vocals, it's not the most involving or captivating performance. It isn't capable of reaching the dynamic lows and highs demanded by songs, and thus ends up sounding rather one-dimensional.

### A softer side

Switch to an analogue line level input and the TEAC's slight hard edge softens just a touch. The Rolling Stones's *Laugh, I Nearly Died* has a nice, steady pace, but it needs more weight, more punch and more insight. NAD's £400 D 3020 is more detailed in this respect.

While the TEAC amp delivers a decent amount of detail, it's only enough for casual, easy-going listening: it lays out all the main elements of a song, but can't quite dig deep enough to reveal the finer subtleties. As a result, some of the benefits of playing high-resolution audio are lost.

The TEAC amp does sound wincingly bright and hard straight out of the box. We'd recommend at least two days of running in. And try to pair it with a forgiving, smooth-sounding pair of speakers, such as the Q Acoustics Concept 20s.

A class D circuit and a 32-bit/192kHz BurrBrown DAC form the beating hearts of the AI-501DA, which is capable of streaming high-res audio files of up to 24-bit/192kHz via the USB and coaxial inputs.

There are two optical inputs on the back panel that support up to 24-bit/96kHz files. On the analogue side, there are two sets of line-level RCA inputs, plus a 6.3mm headphone port on the front panel.

### Playing it cool

The internal circuitry has been carefully designed to ensure minimal heat and noise. Sure enough, the amp runs cool even after playing for a couple of hours.

We have mixed feelings about the TEAC AI-501DA. We love the way it looks, but the sound quality just isn't good enough to justify the price. And when the NAD D 3020 performs better at nearly half the price, it's hard to recommend the TEAC.

## In detail

### 1 Analogue inputs

Because the line-level inputs bypass the TEAC's on-board DAC, they tend to result in a smoother sound than that from the USB connection.

### 2 High-res capability

The coaxial and USB inputs are the only two here that support the highest-resolution, 24-bit/192kHz files – good for serious digital audiophiles.

### 3 Stable connection

The two optical digital inputs only handle files up to 24-bit/96kHz, but they make for the most stable connection from a laptop.



## Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Stunning retro design; impeccable build; nice, clean sound; supports high-res audio

**AGAINST** Isn't as detailed, dynamic or exciting as rivals; can get muddled with complex rhythms

**VERDICT** The gorgeous retro design is hard to resist but, at this price, the TEAC fails to deliver

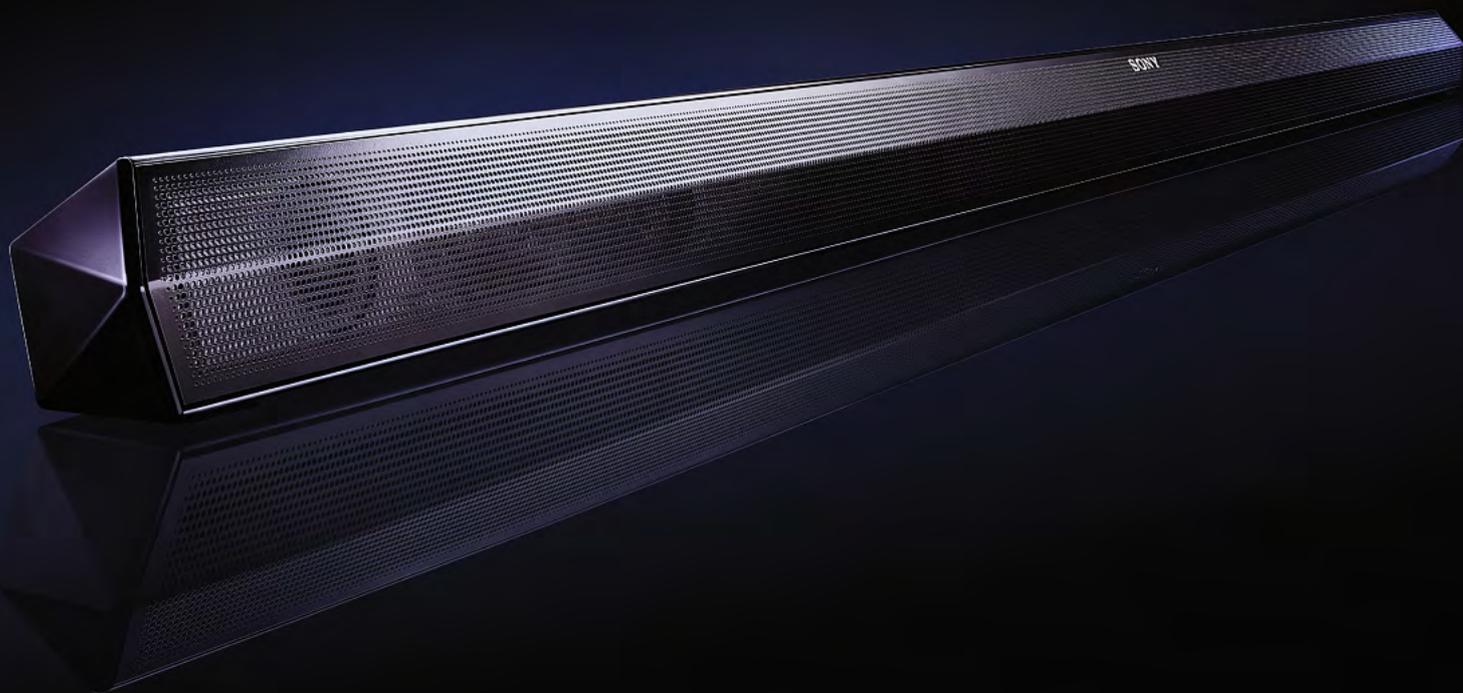
## Also consider

**NAD D 3020**  
£400 ★★★★★

At virtually half the price, this talented amp offers fluid dynamics and great agility.



**SONY**  
make.believe



## HT-ST3, the world's slimmest Bluetooth® Sound Bar\*

Immersive 4.1ch cinema sound from the ST3 Sound Bar at just 4cm high.  
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\*Specifications based on 40 x 32.5 x 900mm (HDW) and verified as of 26th July 2013. For more information: [www.sony.co.uk/ST3research](http://www.sony.co.uk/ST3research). 'Sony', 'make.believe' and their logos are trademarks or registered trademarks of Sony Corporation. Bluetooth and its logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Bluetooth SIG, Inc. All other logos and trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

Epson EH-TW9200W | Projector | £3000

# Rivals take gloss off Epson



The Epson is beautifully built, and has a plethora of connections for all your AV equipment

The newest addition to Epson's range is a highly capable Full HD and 3D LCD projector with wireless tricks up its sleeve.

Fire it up and the Epson EH-TW9200W bursts to life with a bright, colourful and enticing picture, while blacks have depth and texture. It handles shifting gradients in colours with a good deal of confidence.

There is a slight issue with motion, however, and we are quite surprised with the degree of motion instability on fast-moving scenes. There's scope to iron out some of these issues by turning on the Frame Interpolation and Super Resolution settings - but they add an artificial, processed feel to the picture.

Switch to more sedate scenes and the Epson is an assured and comfortable watch. As we keep viewing, though, we can't help but feel that, bright and colourful as it may be, it doesn't quite have the eye-popping 'wow' effect of previous Epsos. Or of the Award-winning Panasonic PT-AT6000E.

Highlights and bright areas on the Epson could be punchier and more intense. It needs a touch more sharpness to edges, too, and to deliver a better sense of depth.

We always set up our projectors using a THX Optimizer disc, but we find ourselves making a lot of post-THX tweaks. We triple-check that the focus is set perfectly to get the sharpest edges possible and we turn up the contrast and brightness to add more punch and pizzazz. This helps to inject more life into the picture, but we still aren't completely satisfied.

Watching 3D films, on the other hand, is a real highlight. The projector's confident handling of 3D, minimal motion issues and a seamless yet still dramatic depth of field makes for a visual treat. Play *Life of Pi* or *The Adventures of Tintin* (two of our favourite 3D films) and you'll be sucked into that extra layer of depth without feeling any eye strain, despite it being an active 3D unit.

### Extremely well connected

There are plenty of connections, especially when you factor in the multiple inputs on the WirelessHD transmitter box (see below). The projector has two HDMI inputs - component, composite and PC inputs are tucked away under a flap at the back.

### USE IT WITH

#### Marantz UD7007

With rich picture detail, and confident 3D and motion handling, this is the perfect partner for a top-of-the-range projector



And the build quality is impeccable. This is a large unit, but the smooth, curved edges stop it from looking too bulky. There are a few controls on the side of the projector, and zoom and focus controls inlaid on top. The lens cover automatically slides open when the projector is powered up.

The supplied remote control is also a standard Epson design: chunky with big, responsive buttons. Its orange backlight makes it a doddle to use in a dark room. The WirelessHD button is crucial for setting up the wireless connection to the transmitter box, and overall it's easy to use with the basic on-screen menus.

We can't help but feel a little disappointed by the EH-TW9200W. At this price our expectations are high, but it doesn't deliver the high standards set by the formidable Panasonic PT-AT6000E.

It's still a fine projector, beautifully built and impeccably finished - and its wireless feature and abundant connections all work in its favour. The picture quality, while it has its limitations in absolute detail and motion, remains bright and enjoyable. If you're a fan of 3D, this is a projector you should certainly audition.

### In detail



The WirelessHD transmitter has five HDMI inputs into which you can plug all your sources. It then feeds the signal wirelessly to the projector. It's effective, but take care with placement: it does need direct line of sight to maintain a steady connection.



Two pairs of comfortable 3D glasses are included with the projector. They can be charged by connecting to the transmitter box.

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Colourful picture; immersive with 3D; build; easy set-up; wireless feature is a bonus  
**AGAINST** Slight motion issues; outright insight and sense of depth isn't as captivating as some  
**VERDICT** Not the showstopper we had hoped for, but still an entertaining watch

### Also consider

**Panasonic PT-AT6000E £3000**

★★★★★

A breathtakingly subtle and immersive picture with a cinematic sense of scale and depth





## Hear the full spectrum

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

**Bowers & Wilkins**

Microsoft Surface 2 | Tablet | £360

# iPad chaser goes to work

The tablet designed to let you work as hard as you play is back for another round. The Surface 2 is Microsoft's second attempt to convince us that a tablet offering Microsoft Office, Outlook and access to Windows Store apps is worth the price of an iPad.

The original Surface RT failed to ignite our interest, but the second-generation design has come out all guns blazing. For starters, Microsoft has swapped out last year's 720p screen for a Full HD display, increased the tablet's power and improved battery life. It's a great start, but we hope there's more...

### If it ain't broke...

One aspect that stays largely the same as the previous device is the Surface's design. The '2' is built from the same good-looking magnesium alloy as its predecessor, has the same flawless finish and it feels very solid indeed, if not the easiest tablet to handle. It's thicker, taller and heavier than most, including the skinny iPad Air, and feels

keyboard option (£110) - it's backlit and has real, mechanical keys. The Touch Cover is just 2.75mm thick but with no depth to the 'keys', drumming on the pad can feel strangely unsatisfying.

### Useful improvements

Microsoft has added or improved a whole raft of thoughtful features and specs. The USB 3.0 port on the right hand edge of the tablet will prove very useful if you plan to ditch your laptop entirely.

The 3.5MP front-facing camera serves regular Skype callers well with light-adjusting tricks that make dark living rooms look brighter to the person you're talking to. There's a decent 5MP rear-facing camera too but we doubt you'll be taking many snaps with this 676g slab of Windows.

Speaking of Windows, Microsoft is sticking to its guns with the RT version of its latest operating system here. There's no access to full programs downloaded from the internet, such as the desktop version of



**The original Surface RT failed to ignite our interest, but the second-generation design has come out all guns blazing. Microsoft has swapped out last year's 720p screen for a Full HD display, increased power and improved battery life**

strange in portrait mode thanks to the 16:9 ratio of the 10.6in screen.

Still, this Surface sequel works much better when combined with one of the available snap-on keyboards. Here, there is a new kickstand built into the back of the tablet itself to prop it up for typing. This is an improvement but we still prefer the hinged dock of Asus' Transformer series.

Unless you're really looking to save millimetres, we'd choose the Type Cover

Spotify. Instead, there are pre-installed Microsoft programs including Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Outlook.

This is a bit of a shame and ultimately why the Surface 2 isn't as tempting as it first appears. The silver lining is the improved version of the OS in the form of Windows 8.1. This update keeps the split between the large touch-friendly Start tiles and the desktop mode used to run Office, but it adds better split-screen multi-tasking.

The new Surface boots quickly but, although basic operation is trouble-free, performance isn't perfect. It's frustrating that the Surface 2 can only run a limited number of apps simultaneously. Equally, 8.1 hasn't ironed out all the kinks - there are still two versions of the Internet Explorer web browser, for instance. If you're new to tablets, stick to iOS or Android as navigation can get confusing.

Video downloads and streaming are taken care of by Xbox Video and Netflix - available as a third-party app download from the Windows Store. Music options include Spotify, available on the Windows Store, and Microsoft's own Xbox Music.

### Still playing catch-app

The Windows app store is ticking along nicely but if the Apple alternative were to look back now, it would seem a mere speck on the horizon as Microsoft attempts to catch up. BBC iPlayer is still missing, and that's unforgivable on a tablet. Plus iPad owners are spoilt for choice when it comes to music, movie and photography apps. Surface 2 owners are not.

The Surface 2 has been treated to a Full HD screen, with a boost in colour reproduction, but the world has moved on.

## The competition

**Apple iPad Air**  
★★★★★



These are the tablet frontrunners the Surface 2 needs to beat. The iPad's ultra-high-resolution screen and superior sound quality still dominate, but the Samsung's Android OS is more inclusive. As our table shows, the '2' has its work cut out.

**Samsung Galaxy Note 10.1**  
★★★★☆



	Apple iPad Air	Microsoft Surface 2	Samsung Galaxy Note 10.1
Screen size	9.7in	10.6in	10.1in
Resolution	2048 x 1536	1920 x 1080	1280 x 800
Processor	Apple A7	Nvidia Tegra 4 1.7GHz quad core	1.4GHz quad core ARM A9
Storage	16/32/64/128GB	32/64GB (+microSD)	16/32GB
Battery life (video)	10 hours	10 hours	Unspecified
Weight	469g	676g	597g



It's a decent 10.6in screen with 16:9 movies filling it nicely, but a comparative viewing of Elysium in 1080p looks much crisper and more refined on the iPad.

**Sounds unremarkable**

It's very easy to get your own high-quality files onto the Surface 2, but once they're ready and you've plugged in some decent headphones, you'll find the music sounds somewhat pedestrian compared with playback on top rivals. For example, Daft Punk's *Derezzed* sounds clear, precise and expressive on the iPad yet boring and sonically squashed on the Surface 2.

Sparser tracks fare better, with vocals sounding listenable enough on Jonsi's *Go*,

**A built-in adjustable kickstand supports the 16:9 ratio, 10.6in screen**

but again the Surface 2 struggles to produce a sound that's as direct as elsewhere.

The predictably small stereo speakers are located at the top of each side, so you won't cover them up, and they sound decent. They also go very loud, but suffer a little distortion at higher volumes.

Full Windows 8.1 needs to be let loose on the Surface 2 to make it a real alternative to the attractiveness of iOS, Android and the Kindle Fire tablets. Until then, this is something of a poor relation to the iPad.

There's no doubt the Surface 2 is more geared to work-related use and if this is

**In detail**



The top-left-hand side of the '2' houses one of the two speakers, a 3.5mm socket and a discreet volume rocker switch...



...while the other side hosts the other speaker and a USB 3.0 socket for easy transfer of files and documents

what you want from a tablet, then it's a tidy option that offers decent entertainment features for playtime. But we're in the sound-and-vision business and, with only mediocre picture quality and disappointing sound, the Surface 2 can't tempt our wallet from our pocket.

**Rating ★★☆☆☆**

**FOR** Decent picture quality; comes with Microsoft Office pre-installed

**AGAINST** Disappointing sound quality; app store is limited; can be unwieldy

**VERDICT** A vast improvement on the original Surface, but its rivals have moved on

**Also consider**

**Apple iPad Air £400 ★★★★★**

Slim, gorgeous, and still the tablet to beat thanks to Apple's superior sound and vision tech.



**System builder Total build £770**

**Headphones Philips Fidelio M1BT ★★★★★ £240**

What better than the stylish Award-winning M1BTs to give your music files the best chance?



**Music streaming service Spotify ★★★★★ from £free**

Download it from the Windows Store. You can't run the full version, but the app will do just fine.



**Wireless speaker Logitech UE Boom ★★★★★ £170**

Superb sound from such a compact 'can'-shaped Bluetooth speaker.



Monitor Audio 6AV12 | 5.1 speaker package | £2875

# Superb AV package shines

Monitor Audio's 6AV12 is a wonderfully complete 5.1 speaker package. Its talents start with superb build quality extend to a wide range of finishes, and end with sound quality that will worry most rivals.

This package consists of a pair of Silver 6 floorstanders (£1000), Silver Centre (£375), FX surrounds (£500) and a W12 subwoofer (£1000). It's quite a hefty set-up but still, we're really impressed with how elegant this package looks.

## Uncluttered, clean lines

It's an impression helped by the clutter-free front panels on the front three speakers. These don't have any fixings for the grilles, and all the channels (bar the subwoofer) are free of visible mounting bolts when viewed from the front. The drive units are secured with a bolt arrangement through the back panel. This is neat, and it increases rigidity by using both the front and back panels to share the support of the drive units.

function that evens out its sound in the listening room. This feature works well in our test room.

The W12 offers three EQ modes - Music, Movie and Impact. In our large test room the 'Music' setting works best, giving an even but extended presentation that lacks little in terms of punch.

The complete Silver package is a deeply impressive performer. The use of common drive units means there's a consistency of sound as it passes between speakers. The tone and authority of these effects don't change as they pan, leading to convincing surround effect.



**Surround speakers**  
Try the dipole mode if the surrounds are to the side of your listening position, bipole if they're behind.

**Here the Silver's clarity comes to the fore, and the package's ability to keep control over a wide range of sound effects as well as the main vocal track impresses**

There's uniformity between the speakers, which all use the same type of tweeter - the latest development of Monitor Audio's long-running 25mm gold-coloured metal dome. And it sounds cleaner and more precise than ever.

The mid/bass drivers are 15cm units that use a similar ceramic-coated alloy as the tweeter for their cone material. Here it's strengthened by dimples, which help give greater rigidity without adding undue mass.

## Bipole or dipole rear speakers

We're big fans of Monitor Audio's FX surround speakers. Most manufacturers persist in using one of their conventional small standmounters for surround duties; Monitor Audio does it properly with dedicated design. These can be configured for either bipole or dipole operation with the flick of a switch on the back panel. If the speakers are mounted behind the listening position we think bipole works best but, as ever, there's no harm in experimenting.

The W12 subwoofer is a 34cm-sided cube. Inside there's a 500 watt Class D amplifier to power the front-firing 30cm ceramic-coated alloy driver. This sub uses a sealed enclosure, which in theory trades outright quantity of bass for improved precision and a greater flexibility of positioning. It is also equipped with a mic-operated auto set-up

Those dedicated FX surrounds help enormously. Their ability to disperse the surround channels sounds more widely than conventional designs is obvious, and this helps to fill in any gaps between the front and rear of the sound field.

## Take some care to system match

Tonally, things are nicely judged. This is a refined package, which should work well with a wide range of amplification - but note, it can be provoked to sounding a little harsh in the treble, so a little care in matching wouldn't go amiss. Equally, it's revealing - so you'll know about it if any part of your system isn't good enough.

Our review of the Silver 6s highlights their slightly clinical approach, and this set-up shares that presentation. For us it's less of an issue in a surround context, as movie soundtracks are constructed in a very different way to music.

Here the Silver's clarity comes to the fore, and the package's ability to keep control over a wide range of sound effects as well as the main vocal track impresses.

This film also highlights the quality of the Silver Centre, as it renders voices with impressive insight and precision. Position it close to the screen and its dispersion ensures that the sound 'locks on' to the action on the display.

## USE IT WITH

**Yamaha  
RX-A3030  
£2000**

This heavyweight home cinema amplifier delivers a huge, full bodied sound that will make the most of the Silver package's insight and authority



We're taken with the subwoofer too. It's not unduly large but delivers a powerful and punchy performance.

The package also works well with music. In stereo, the Silver 6s emerge as insightful, polished performers, though lacking small doses of finesse, natural warmth and exuberance. With a surround disc such as Michael Jackson's *This Is It*, it's the cohesion between the channels that comes to the fore, as well as the punch, authority and agility on offer.

Overall, this Silver 6AV12 is a hugely capable package. It's an appealing alternative to KEF's similarly priced and Award winning R100 5.1 set-up - and that makes it worth serious consideration.

## Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Well matched; seamless integration with the subwoofer; insight and precision; finish

**AGAINST** You'll need quite a lot of space; a little care in matching is required

**VERDICT** This is a top notch surround package for the money

## Needs to beat

**KEF R100 5.1  
£2850 ★★★★★**

Compact and beautifully made, for sound quality this package does it all





# Absolute Quality



**CX-A5000**  
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**MX-A5000**  
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HOME CINEMA AMPLIFIERS  
BEST HOME CINEMA AMP UP TO £350  
**YAMAHA RX-V375**

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**Dali Kubik Free | Wireless speaker | £625**

# Dali strikes gold in new area

**Stereo speakers and** speaker packages are Dali's forte, but a wireless, active Bluetooth speaker? This is new territory for the Danish company.

At £625, the Free doesn't exactly sit at the budget end of this market. But behind the wraparound cloth panel (you can choose from nine different colours) you quickly get an idea where the money's gone. Both the 13cm mid-bass wood fibre cone and 25mm softdome tweeter are Dali-designed, as is the 100W digital amplifier that powers the unit.

The Free also has a mate, the Kubik Xtra (see panel). If you want a pair of Kubiks (we

think this is the collective term), buying as a package will set you back £900. Or you can add an Xtra at a later date for £295.

AptX Bluetooth allows for high-quality wireless streaming, but the Dali also has a number of wired connections, most of which are behind a clip-in panel on the base of the speaker.

## Plenty of wired connections

These include an optical digital input for using the speaker with a TV and a micro USB socket for connecting to a computer (both digital inputs support up to 24-bit/96kHz sampling rates).

The sockets are a little close for comfort and it can get a little congested having different cables all plugged in at once. We're also disappointed with the fact Dali doesn't include an optical or USB cable.

The speaker comes with a small and pretty insubstantial remote which offers control over volume and input selection. Our sample didn't always want to respond to button presses at the first time of asking, especially when it came to altering volume. You'll also find power and volume controls on the side of the speaker, plus a 3.5mm auxiliary input for a smartphone or tablet.

Bluetooth pairing with an iPhone 5s takes us a matter of seconds, and we start with a stream of Oasis and *The Masterplan*. The song's stripped-back, bare intro sounds delicate and intimate. The Kubik Free picks out a superb level of detail. Noel's vocal sits neatly alongside the crystal-clear strumming of the acoustic guitar. Plectrum on string sounds precise and crisp, as do the strings when they come to life later on.

## Power and control at speed

Up the pace with Rudimental's *Waiting All Night* and the Dali shows great timing and rhythm. Solid, powerful drum and bass beats, full of weight and texture, balance well with detailed highs and a natural-sounding vocal. There's a tiny hint of sharpness in the treble which is most notable when listening over Bluetooth, but it isn't overly distracting.

**Mode indicator**

There's a row of symbols along the bottom edge of the speaker to show which input you're using – a white LED illuminates your choice.

## In detail



It's cosy under the speaker, with sockets close together. The optical and micro USB inputs can accept input signals up to 24-bit/96kHz



On the rear of the Kubik Free you'll find another USB socket, although this is just for charging, not playback

## Something Xtra

It's certainly worth considering the Kubik Xtra if you're looking for a desktop system for a PC or an alternative to your TV's speakers. Plug in the supplied umbilical cable and switch the Kubik Free to either left or right depending on its orientation. Play music through the pair and you get a more expansive sound and a much greater sense of scale, with more weight and drive.



## USE IT WITH

### HTC One

This musical smartphone packs aptX, so you get higher-quality sound when listening over Bluetooth



Rhythms are tight and fluid, which makes for an entertaining, foot-tapping listen. It's arguably a more mature and engaging speaker than the rival Bowers & Wilkins A7.

The guys at Dali have struck gold with the Kubik Free, and have used their speaker expertise to great effect. It's another five-star product to add to their collection.

## Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Entertaining sound; impressive bass weight; detail and dynamics; aptX Bluetooth

**AGAINST** Hint of sharpness over Bluetooth; cramped inputs; no optical or USB cables

**VERDICT** An enthusiastic-sounding, well-featured speaker – a real entertainer

## Also consider

### B&W A7 £700

★★★★★

The A7 features AirPlay and goes louder than the Dali, but the Kubik Free is a more refined listen.



QED uPlayStream | Musicstreamer | £150

# Budget streamer does a musical job

**Easy positioning**  
This is a small unit - it will fit in the palm of a hand - so you should have no problem secreting it away near your system.

There aren't many dedicated music streamers for £150 - the cheapest of last year's Award-winners was £400. So it's encouraging that QED is looking to hit the bull's-eye for good-value music streaming with the uPlay Stream.

The streamer works over wi-fi or ethernet to stream music from any DLNA network-attached storage device or mobile product such as a phone or tablet to your hi-fi system.

It supports all the common file formats, and copes with high-res files up to 24-bit/96kHz.

The rear is pretty bare, but then this is a device that can fit in the palm of your hand. The sole connection path to your hi-fi equipment is via its 3.5mm analogue output.

QED provides a suitable lead with a 3.5mm plug on one end and stereo RCAs on



You're restricted to just one 3.5mm output, but it will suit pretty much any system



**USE IT WITH**

**Rotel RA-04**

Offers a confident, solid and cohesive sound at a competitive price



the other. It is, though, just 65cm long, which could prove restrictive - but there shouldn't be a problem finding somewhere near your amp for the tiny QED to perch.

Wireless functionality means having an ethernet cable between streamer and router isn't necessary once set-up is achieved - but a wired connection should be more stable.

What you will need to have handy is the dedicated app (see below) where all controls can be found.

The uPlay Stream can also be used as a multi-room system. Buy up to eight of them to connect with hi-fi equipment in different rooms and they can all be controlled by one device, and renamed for easy identification.

And the unit's performance is enjoyable. A reasonable amount of vocal clarity is on offer, and the midrange is consistently smooth. We flick through a variety of tracks and generally it delivers a very listenable sound. Simon and Garfunkel's *The Boxer* is easy on the ear, while Alt-J's *Breezeblocks* is delivered with reasonable verve.

Its adoption of dynamics and pace is fair for the price too. You'd have to spend a great deal more for a more insightful and cohesive elocution.

The next cheapest hi-fi music streamer we like, the Pioneer N-50, costs £400 and has a more clean, controlled sound. Its punchy dynamics, enveloping soundstage

and grasp of detail generally makes for a more compelling listen. The N-50, though, is almost three times the price.

The uPlay Stream's sound is still more than satisfying for the money. Couple it with appropriate equipment such as the Yamaha S500 (£250) and Q Acoustics 2020i speakers (£165) and it will be a star component.

Once again, QED has proved that connecting you to your music - wires or no wires - doesn't have to break the bank.

If you can stretch to something like the aforementioned Pioneer N-50 or the Marantz NA7004 (£430), it may well be worth it for a steep climb in sound quality.

At the moment, though, there's nothing out there to master the middle ground between the two. So if you're after a cheap, straightforward way to stream a range of files through your home cinema or audio system without sacrificing too much sound quality, the uPlay Stream is a fine buy and could be one of your most useful purchases this year.

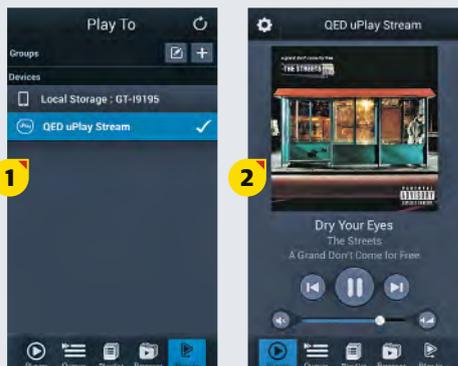
**Control app**

**1 Free download**

The free app is Android and Apple compatible, and can also be downloaded on a PC or Mac for streaming files from a computer.

**2 Usability**

Response time is quicker than some apps we've tested, and the most important controls are all in place. There are some useful functions to complement simple playback operations, but the overall user experience is nothing special, especially if you have a large library.



**Rating ★★★★★**

**FOR** Affordable; listenable sound; small; good compatibility; app; simple set-up; wireless

**AGAINST** App's user experience needs work; just the one connection

**VERDICT** Music streaming for less - this handy device boasts decent sound and good features

**Also consider**

**Pioneer N-50 £400 ★★★★★**

If your budget allows, this streaming superstar delivers a punchy, dynamic and entertaining sound



**Q Acoustics Q-BT3 | Wireless speakers | £350**

# Masterful jack of all trades

**We're not sure** quite where to place the Q Acoustics Q-BT3 speakers. Are they a soundbar replacement? Wireless speakers? An iPod dock alternative? Powered stereo speakers? Well, they're all these things, and more. One thing we are quite sure about them, though, is that we approve.

So, what are they? Basically, these are powered stereo speakers with a number of analogue and digital inputs plus aptX Bluetooth streaming. And because of that variety of input options, the Q-BT3s can be put to any number of uses.

## Plenty of connectivity options

The right-hand speaker houses the vital stuff: two 50W per channel power amplifiers, DAC, a Bluetooth receiver that will accept the higher-quality aptX codec and the connecting socketry. There's the power input, of course, a pair of phono sockets, a 3.5mm mini-jack and an optical digital input. There is also a subwoofer output, should more bass oomph be required. Finally, there is the pair of speaker cable binding posts, the link to the second, passive speaker.

Four metres of speaker cable is supplied, along with a two-metre phono lead and a two-metre 3.5mm cable, so all analogue connections are catered for. You'll have to supply your own digital cable though.

Getting things up and running is a smooth process. We put the pair on our test-room desk and connect them to a CD player to blow away any sonic cobwebs. Once we've given them a good weekend's running in, we get down to business.

## Nice soundstage and an easy listen

The first thing we notice is that we get a good, clear soundstage right from the off. There's no need to measure for speaker placement, no fiddling to get the sound into focus, we just plonk the Q-BT3s down where they look about right, and they are singing clear and true from the off.

This is a sound that's easy to enjoy - the speakers are marketed, in part, as an alternative to a soundbar, so an easygoing characteristic is a must. And, while they are a bit less straightforward than a soundbar, the sound these speakers make will knock any similarly priced bar's into a cocked hat.

Stereo imaging is precise, treble sings bright and true, and the midrange (so vital for TV and movie watching, of course) is clean. We feel there may have been some tweaking to provide a bit of extra richness to the midrange to give it a nice mellow tone conducive to long listening sessions.

The bass itself is quite quick and precise, although perhaps a little more rounded at the edges than from some bookshelf speakers at around the same price.

**This is a sound that's easy to enjoy. Stereo imaging is precise, treble sings true, and the midrange is clean**



## In detail



The top of the right-hand speaker has volume controls and a standby button. The light changes colour according to input used



The only obvious input missing is a USB port. Everything else is well covered with optical digital, stereo phono and 3.5mm inputs

The Q-BT3s come with three choices of finish: as well as red there's black or white

The sonic characteristics remain the same no matter the input. We turn to the Bluetooth setting, using our MacBook Pro as a source. Set-up is simple, the laptop finding the speakers within seconds.

There's a 'credit-card' remote which allows you to control volume and input, though the right speaker can detect when a Bluetooth signal is coming in automatically.

We imagine the Q-BT3s will go down very well with the student market. They make a great small system - just add a Bluetooth device and away you go.

But they'll work really well in many ways in the home. They're a little big for PC speakers, but if you've got the desk space, they would be great. Put them either side of a TV and you've got better sound than any equivalent soundbar, and they are a far better sonic bet than a normal iPod dock.

Few products are as versatile and easy to like as the Q-BT3s for the price.

## Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Great for long listening sessions; simple set-up; build; functions

**AGAINST** They sacrifice a little speed and pep in favour of an easy listen

**VERDICT** Proper hi-fi sound and a huge boost to TV, computer and streaming sound

## Also consider

**Ruark MR1**  
**£300 ★★★★★**

A better desktop option, perhaps, but not as versatile as the Q-BT3s



CES 2014

# TVs get flexible as high-end hi-fi rules

## 4K goes mainstream but high-res audio is MIA

### The International Consumer

Electronics Show remains the biggest show on earth for consumer tech, and manufacturers large and small gathered once more in Las Vegas at the start of the year to show off their new products.

The biggest manufacturers make the most noise, take up the most space, and grab the most headlines, and 2014 was no different. But there was still plenty of room for specialist hi-fi and AV products.

### Flexible friends

As ever, TVs dominated CES. The biggest surprise came in the form of flexible TVs. Screens that can bend at the touch of a button on your remote control took the curved-screen idea to the next level, with both LG and Samsung showing bendy tellys - though LG's 77in model was the only OLED.

Samsung attempted to steal back some of the attention by showcasing a monster 105in curved screen with a 21:9 aspect ratio, harking back to the old Philips 21:9 TVs. Real world it ain't, but there's no denying it was an impressive show of TV technology.

Talking of Philips, the brand (now owned by TP Vision) was present at CES and showing, albeit behind closed doors, the

company's first Android TVs. The TVs, due later this year, use a whole new interface to showcase the best of the Philips' Smart TV offerings with access to the Google Play store, and all the apps and games it brings.

4K TV was everywhere, with Panasonic, Samsung and Sony showcasing their new ranges for 2014, with Sony's flagship X95 Series and the Panasonic AX800 Series vying for attention with budget 4K TVs from the likes of Kogan and Polaroid. With Netflix and YouTube showcasing 4K video, the UHD bandwagon is gathering pace.

### High-res hi-fi

There was much talk from the Consumer Electronics Association about the presence of high-res audio at CES this year but in truth news was thin on the ground. HDTracks is promising to launch in the UK by April, while Astell & Kern added a new (*über*-expensive) high-res audio portable, the AK240.

Elsewhere, there were plenty of products to get excited about with, predictably for CES, plenty of high-end kit. The Meridian 25th Anniversary DSP speakers drew plenty

of admiring glances, as did Naim's monster Statement pre/power combo and the Tannoy Kingdom Royal Carbon Black speakers.

Monitor Audio's intriguing Airstream A100 streaming amplifier showcased a new direction for the British brand, the Chord Hugo amplifier and DAC hit the digital zeitgeist, while Focal made its first soundbase with the Dimension. For more on these products and much more from CES, head here: <http://whf.cm/CES2014news>.



As well as LG's 77in flexible TV and the Meridian DSP speakers, Martin Logan made waves with its curved Crescendo wireless speaker, and McIntosh showed a neat digital micro system

**\* Stars of CES 2014**  
Ten of the best products from the specialist hi-fi and home cinema companies at CES <http://whfcm/StarsCES2014>

**Stars of CES 2014**  
**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION**  
**WHATHIFI.COM**

**\* Best TVs of CES 2014**  
If you want to see all the most eye-catching TVs from CES, head to our TV round-up page [www.whfcm/CESbestTVs](http://www.whfcm/CESbestTVs)



## CES 2014 FACTS & FIGURES

Two million square feet of exhibit space

**More than 3200 exhibitors**

More than 150,000 consumer electronics industry professionals

**17,179 CES photos shared on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram**

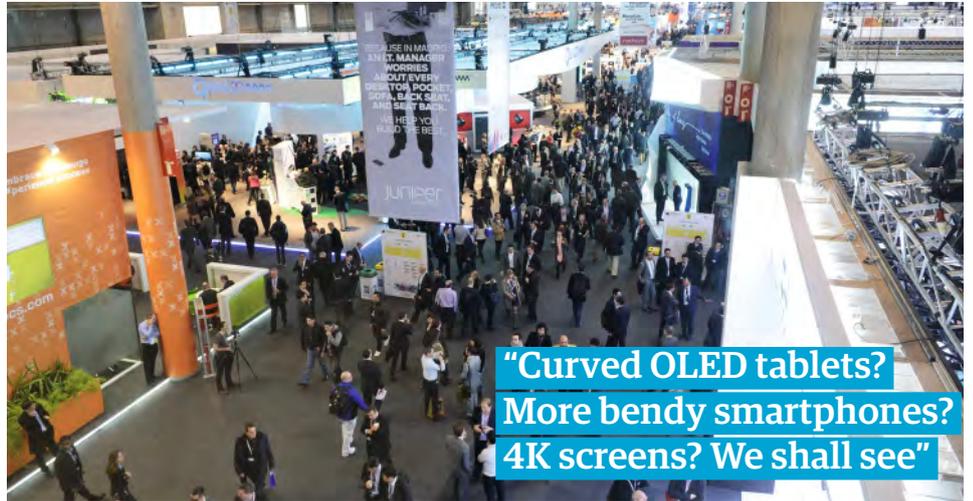
105 inches: the size of the 4K, 21:9 TV unveiled by Samsung

**Samsung, Sony and Android were the three most discussed brands on social media**

190,627 news articles written on CES 2014

**1: the number of times Michael Bay walked off the Samsung stage**

## Mobile World Congress 2014



**"Curved OLED tablets? More bendy smartphones? 4K screens? We shall see"**

**CES 2014** was all about 4K TV, high-end hi-fi and \$50,000 Monster music systems in Lamborghinis. But there's one category that, for once, doesn't get much attention: mobile devices. The reason? Mobile World Congress.

MWC takes place in Barcelona at the end of February and covers all things mobile - showcasing new smartphones, tablets and, now just as crucial, apps and software.

Last year's event didn't showcase quite the number of flagship devices we had hoped for. Instead, the "Big 5" chose to hold separate launch events for their flagship devices.

However, rumours have been flooding in suggesting we may actually see some premium

devices from the big manufacturers this year. Sony could showcase the new Xperia Z2, the third Xperia flagship in just 12 months. HTC, meanwhile, is expected to unveil the successor to the fantastic HTC One. Some analysts even think we could see the Samsung Galaxy S5, though that looks like a much longer shot.

Could we see the first curved OLED tablets? More bendy smartphones? 4K screens? How about more support for hi-res audio? We will once again be on the show floor to bring you all the latest news, videos and hands-on reviews. Head over to [whathifi.com/MWC](http://whathifi.com/MWC) for all the latest predictions, rumours and, once the show starts on 28th February, all the new devices.

## The highlights from MWC 2013



Some of the new devices on show last year: the shape-shifting Asus Padfone Infinity, the HTC One and the Xperia Tablet Z

## TOP 5 New launches...

B&W P5 Maserati headphones, new Rotel kit, Cyrus Bluetooth speaker



For more news, reviews and buying advice, visit [whathifi.com](http://whathifi.com)

\* **Rotel has just** launched its first-ever DAC, alongside a new stereo pre-amplifier and two power amps. The RDD-1580 DAC has a full suite of digital inputs and support for Bluetooth streaming. <http://whfcm/1gOPxPL>



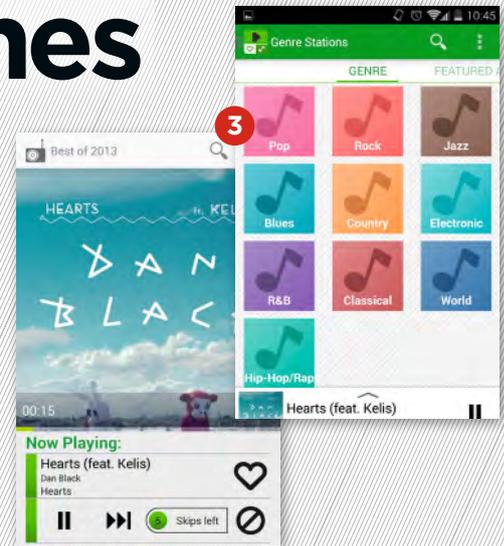
**1 LG Flex £690 sim-free**  
 We've known about the G Flex smartphone for some time now, but LG has recently confirmed it will be coming to UK shores. It features a curved screen that, LG claims, follows the curve of the human face. It features a 6in, 720p OLED screen, 2.26GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon 800 processor and a "self-healing" back cover. Want to know more? Head to <http://whfcm/GFlexOLED> for more information.

# TOP 5 New launches

**2 Cyrus Soundcan £80**  
 This portable Bluetooth speaker has been "tuned by the team behind the rest of [their] award-winning hi-fi products." It comes with a 10-hour battery life and a 10-metre Bluetooth range. It can even support hands-free voice calls. An auxiliary port has also been provided for connecting non-Bluetooth devices. At £80, it's definitely an intriguing proposition. <http://whfcm/CyrusSoundcan>



**3 Aupeo DTS surround-sound streaming £free-\$29.99/year**  
 Aupeo has announced plans to add multichannel audio support to its streaming service. A partnership with DTS-HD and Grammy award-winning producer Elliot Scheiner has allowed the company to enhance further what it already offers to automotive customers. The service will utilise a high-performance adaptive bit-rate profile of the DTS-HD format. It is expected to launch later this month. See <http://whfcm/AupeoDTS> for more.



**4 B&W P5 'Maserati Edition' Headphones £330**  
 The P5 Maserati Edition headphones use the same build and chassis as the standard P5s. However this pair comes in Maserati deep racing blue and are finished in fine-grain natural leather. And of course, the Maserati emblem adorns them too. They're available now for £330. <http://whfcm/P5Maserati>

**5 Denon DA-300USB DAC £330**  
 Denon has taken its first steps into the USB DAC market with the DA-300USB. It uses the same Advanced AL32 Processing and 32-bit, 192kHz conversion found in Denon's CD/SACD player. Users can play digital music files via a USB-B input with the unit able to process MP3, MP4, FLAC HD and DSD files. It will retail for £330 in February. <http://whfcm/DenonDAC>



# 50 YEARS IN THE MAKING

MAXELL HAS BEEN INNOVATING IN AUDIO FOR DECADES – AND ITS NEW PREMIUM EARPHONES LEAVE NO DOUBT: HERITAGE SPEAKS FOR ITSELF

**S**erious audio quality only comes from experience. The M by Maxell in-ear headphones draw on years of development expertise to combine bold design, comfort, precision engineering and high-end components. That's amazing sound whether commuting or relaxing...

## MXH-DD600S

If you crave full-bodied sound from your in-ear headphones, the MXH-DD600S deliver in spades. They overcome the limitations of standard earphone designs by using two independent dynamic drivers – one 6mm and one 8mm – to deliver clear treble and punchy bass, while their rigid and durable aluminium housing further assists sound quality.

There's an in-line microphone with call-answering for smartphones as well as a flat anti-tangle cable and four comfy antibacterial ear tips for the rough and tumble of travelling.

## MXH-DBA700S

Featuring advanced balanced armature tech alongside a dynamic driver arrangement, the MXH-DBA700S earphones offer truly stunning crisp treble alongside potent low frequencies. And the two don't tread on each other's feet, either – so you'll always experience your music the way the musicians intended. It's all housed in a sturdy, great-looking aluminium enclosure.

Make and take phone calls using the in-line mic on the stylish flat anti-tangle cable, and everything stows in the included travel pouch. They also come with a number of pairs of ear tips, so you can easily find the right fit.

## Innovation never stops

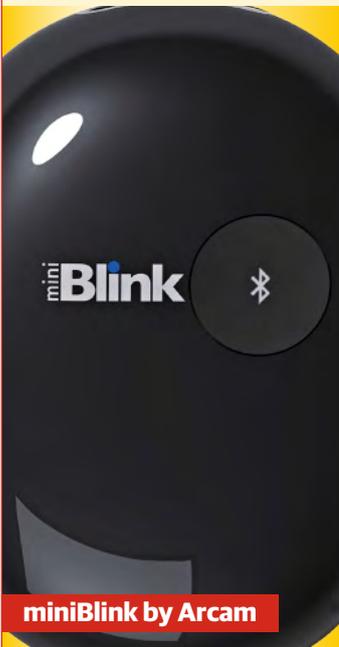
Advanced construction techniques, materials and acoustic engineering all combine in the new M by Maxell series for exquisite performance.



**Bristol Show**

# 2014 Bristol Show guide

This year's show features more than 160 brands giving you the chance to get your hands, eyes and ears on the latest and greatest AV kit



**miniBlink by Arcam**



**Chord Hugo**



**Cyrus Lyric 09**



**KEF Blade**



**Naim Statement**



**Neat Motive SX**



**Sony HAP - S1**



**Wilson Benesch Circle 25**

### \* Eclipse TD-M1

Eclipse's iconic Time Domain speakers have received the wireless treatment with the addition of AirPlay compatibility.



### \* Astell & Kern AK240

This portable music player plays high-res files and includes features not currently offered by any other high-res player.



**N**ow into its 27th year, the Bristol Sound and Vision Show continues to celebrate all the best hi-fi and home cinema kit currently available on the market. More than 160 brands have been confirmed as exhibitors at this year's show, bringing you all the products you've been reading about - and plenty of new ones that you'll be able to get your hands on.

### The details:

This year's Bristol Sound and Vision Show is taking place from Friday 21st to Sunday 23rd February at the Marriott City Centre Hotel on Lower Castle Street, Bristol.

If you're thinking of coming along, adult tickets are £10 on the day and senior citizens (over 65) and students are £7. Accompanied children under 16 are free. However, you can save 10 per cent on the price of a ticket by booking online in advance. Visit [www.bristolshow.co.uk](http://www.bristolshow.co.uk) for more information.

In the mean time, read on to find out more about some of the highlights lined up for you at the Bristol Sound and Vision Show 2014:

### Arcam

Bristol will be the setting for the "world public launch" of the new **miniBlink by Arcam**. This affordable High-Definition Bluetooth Micro-DAC is designed to let you stream music from a wide range of devices - without the need for a wi-fi network. It's the first in Arcam's new mini range of affordable micro-components.

### Chord Electronics

The new **Hugo** is described by Chord Electronics as a landmark product. It's the world's first reference portable DAC/headphone amp and, with five digital inputs, it promises to offer advanced connectivity and "uncompromising" file playback capability.

### Cyrus

The new **Lyric Series** is a range of all-in-one hi-fi systems and sees Cyrus take a new direction in both look and features. We've already had a chance to get our hands on the Lyric 09 here at *What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision* and it impressed us - both in terms of style and performance. But you can decide for yourself at this year's show by visiting the Cyrus stand.

### KEF

After five years of exhaustive testing, expert analysis and detailed experimenting, KEF looks set to wow the crowds with its innovative new **Blade** hi-fi speaker. KEF says you will not hear a more exact sound thanks to this high-end analogue listening experience.

### Naim

After dazzling the Las Vegas crowds at CES 2014, Naim's **Statement** is coming to the UK show. The Statement NAC S1 preamplifier and NAP S1 mono power amplifiers make a powerful combination, with 746W - or one horsepower - delivered into 8 ohms by each power amp. Make sure you hear the Statement in action!

### Neat Acoustics

After a revamp of the Motive loudspeaker range, Neat Acoustics is coming to Bristol with the new **Motive SX** models. It's the first time UK show-goers will be able to hear them in action.

### Sony

Sony returns to the Bristol Show with its full range of new high-res audio products, like the **HAP-S1** and **HAP-ZIES systems**. They synch to your home PC to let you play back your music, while backing up your collection to a 500GB (HAP-S1) or 1TB (HAP-ZIES) internal hard drive.

### Wilson Benesch

To mark its 25th anniversary, Wilson Benesch is showcasing its new **Circle 25** turntable in Bristol. The Circle 25 comes as a package that includes the Circle 25 Turntable and the A.C.T.05 Tonearm. Pricing is yet to be confirmed, but you'll be able to place your order at the show.

For more news, reviews and buying advice, visit [whathifi.com](http://whathifi.com)



## WHF? at Bristol

If you have any hi-fi and home cinema questions that you'd like to ask the *What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision* team, we'll be at the Bristol Sound and Vision Show once again this year and will be more than happy to help you. From deciding which headphones best match your lifestyle to which speakers will optimise your system at home, we'll be there to help as best we can.

### Demo

Our team will also be demonstrating some of the latest and best hi-fi and home cinema equipment in the comfort of our dedicated testing area every half-hour or so. We can be found on **Stand Bristol 3** on the **Ground Floor** - do drop by and say hello!

## SOUND & VISION THE BRISTOL SHOW

- |                         |                              |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Acoustic Energy         | Henley Designs               |
| Air Audio               | High Resolution Technologies |
| Alpha Design Labs (ADL) | IAG                          |
| Anthem                  | JansZen                      |
| Apollo                  | JL Audio                     |
| Arcam                   | JVC                          |
| Armour Home Electronics | KEF                          |
| Astell & Kern           | Kudos Audio                  |
| Atacama Audio           | Libratone                    |
| Atlas Cables            | Magneplanar                  |
| Audeze                  | MCRU                         |
| Audio Note              | Ming Da Valve Audio UK       |
| Audioquest              | Monitor Audio                |
| Audio Technica          | Music Fidelity               |
| Audiolab                | Naim Audio                   |
| Audiovector             | Neat Acoustics               |
| Aurum Electronics       | Optoma                       |
| Bedini                  | Paradigm                     |
| Blue Horizon            | Pioneer                      |
| Bowers and Wilkins      | PMC                          |
| Box-design              | Primare                      |
| Cabasse                 | ProAc                        |
| Canor Audio             | Q Acoustics                  |
| Canton                  | Quad                         |
| Chisto                  | Quadral                      |
| Chord Electronics       | Quboz                        |
| Clearlight Audio        | Rega                         |
| Cocktail Audio          | Rohde & Schwarz              |
| Colab Audio             | Roksan                       |
| Computer Audio Design   | Screen Innovations           |
| Cyrus                   | Simple Audio                 |
| Dali                    | Sonic Design                 |
| Devialet                | Sony                         |
| Dynaudio                | Supra Cables                 |
| Eclipse                 | Tannoy                       |
| Elac                    | Tibo Limited                 |
| Epson                   | Timestep                     |
| Exasound                | Townshend Audio              |
| Exposure                | True Colours Industries      |
| Flexson                 | UKD                          |
| Flamingo Audio          | Usher Audio                  |
| Focal                   | Vertere                      |
| Furutech                | Wharfedale                   |
| GoldenEar               | Wilson Benesch               |
| Graham Audio            | Yamaha                       |

... and more!

SOUNDBARS £150-£250

# SUPERTEST

Listen to your TV. Now listen to one of these.

# Sold

Once you hear the difference a soundbar can make to your TV viewing pleasure, you'll wonder how you managed without one

**T**he flatter the TV, the worse its sound gets. It's not a rule, but it's an unhappy observation. There's not much to do about it but cram some speakers into a bar and stick it in front of the telly as a sort of aural cavalry. There was a time when a decent soundbar would cost upwards of £500, but now you can get some very strong performers for less than that. We've rounded up seven soundbars from £150-£250 and made them fight it out. Some of them have a lot of inputs, some have Bluetooth, and one even has NFC. Step this way, and find an affordable way of salvaging your telly's mediocre sound.



For more news, reviews and buying advice, visit [whathifi.com](http://whathifi.com)



**TESTED**

**Boston Acoustics TVEe 26**

**JBL Cinema SB200**

**LG NB3530A**

**Panasonic SC-HTB20**

**Philips HTL5120**

**Sandstrøm S42SWLH13**

**Toshiba SBX4250**



# Boston Acoustics TVee 26 £180



It's no great looker, but the TVee 26 is at least discreet - and the sound it produces is much better than that of most TVs

**We can't help** pointing out the mundane appearance of the Boston Acoustics TVee 26. It's a black box with another black box as a companion. Take the package home and it might look as if your living room is being censored.

Still, this approach will suit those looking for something understated. After all, you may not always want your kit to catch your attention.

The TVee 26 is smaller than the average soundbar - no wider than a 40in TV. And a height of 8cm means it's unlikely to block off a set's infrared receiver. That small stature, though, means it has to use an external subwoofer to boost bass.

## Wireless subwoofer connection

While most soundbar subwoofers we've seen are tall, slim and rectangular, Boston Acoustics has gone for the upturned-bucket approach. We're not convinced it's any less discreet. It is wireless, however, which makes it easier to position (or hide).

The bottom-right of the soundbar's front panel has a handful of touch controls. Around the back are two 3.5mm analogue inputs and one digital optical input. But that's your lot: no HDMI and no Bluetooth.

At this point we notice there's another reason for the soundbar's small size: the mains block is external. We're not so



The 'credit card' remote control handset is functional, but a touch flimsy

keen on adding another brick to the back of our system. Other luxuries include a card-type remote control that would fit in a Christmas cracker.

So it's a humdrum design, but does the sound balance things out a bit? To a degree, yes it does. Once the soundbar and subwoofer shake hands wirelessly (it's automatic), there's a good level of

and solid, and voices are handled nicely. Bass is deep and fairly articulate.

The top end demonstrates a trace of hardness, however, which doesn't quite disappear over a weekend of running in. We could also do with slightly stronger dynamics. Explosions in *Man of Steel* (of which there are many) don't quite grab your attention as much as they should.

**It's a fairly balanced sound with no part of the frequency range hogging your attention, and we're happy with the clear and solid midrange**

integration. Unless you specifically listen out for it, you're unlikely to hear two components working separately.

The sound is smaller than with many of the others in this test, but that's to be expected given the size of the bar. It's certainly no match for the room-filling sound of the Philips or JBL here.

That said, it sounds wider than most flat-screen TVs we've heard - and is capable of getting much louder without distorting. The virtual surround mode is decent: it spreads the sound out well without trading off too much subtlety.

Elsewhere, it's a fairly balanced presentation with no part of the frequency range hogging your attention. We're happy with the midrange: it's clear

and solid, and voices are handled nicely, however. Watch Jeremy Kyle and there's plenty of bite to all the bickering therein.

The TVee 26 is a mixed bag, then, sounding better than it looks. It's not a room-shaking experience, but if you want something to support normal TV-viewing, this will do nicely.

## Rating ★★☆☆☆

**FOR** Clear midrange; decent integration; small enough to fit any room

**AGAINST** Small sound; not very dynamic; unremarkable design

**VERDICT** A decent effort from Boston Acoustics, but it's nothing remarkable

# JBL Cinema SB200 £200



## Watch this space

You will want to consider putting this on a shelf under your TV or mounting it on your wall - it's probably too big to sit sensibly in front of your TV. Blame the built-in subwoofer.



Don't let its relative age put you off - the Cinema SB200 is more than capable of holding its own against most rivals

We reviewed the JBL Cinema SB200 a year ago, and it impressed enough for us to award it a good four-star rating. A year is a long time in consumer electronics, though - and now that it's had a £50 price drop we thought we'd see how it fares against more recent competition. As it turns out, it does rather well.

The sound it produces isn't the best at this price, but it's still an admirable performance. What is immediately apparent is the sheer size of the sound. It's effortlessly big - you certainly won't need to worry about filling the room with sound effects.

You'll have to give the unit a good night or two of running-in to rein in the treble a little, and to improve the level of organisation. Even with a good few hours under its belt, however, the sound could be a touch cleaner.

### Good timing and nice cohesion

This slight flaw, though, is offset by the soundbar's enthusiasm and competence. The timing is good, the dynamic range is wide, and there's a nice sense of cohesion. What you get, then, is a lively sound with plenty of energy.

Tonally, it's a balanced performance. Dialogue is solid and direct. The low end is deep - just on the right side of boomy - and JBL gets away with not going for an external subwoofer.



The credit card remote is basic, but the soundbar will learn controls from your TV's remote too

For the tinkerer, there are options. 'Bass Boost' mode does as the name suggests, but a little too heavy-handedly. 'Display Surround' is JBL's virtual surround effort. It opens the soundstage well enough, but this makes the midrange and dialogue feel somewhat isolated.

Time to talk aesthetics - and this soundbar is chunky. That's usually the

as a multifunctional audio hub, unlike, say, the Philips HTL5120.

Control is easy enough. The top of the bar has big, clicky buttons that glow when pressed, which is a nice touch. The remote control is a nicely styled but puny card-type unit. Thankfully the SB200 can learn the volume and mute commands from your regular TV remote.

**The timing is good, the dynamic range is wide, and there's a nice sense of cohesion. What you get, then, is a lively sound with plenty of energy**

case when manufacturers go for 'built-in subwoofers'. The size means positioning may be an issue - ours blocked the infrared receiver on the telly we chose for the day. We settled on putting it on the shelf under our TV, but wallmounting is also an option.

Build quality is good. The body is mostly hard plastic, with a cloth grille at the front protecting the drivers. There are two 25mm dome tweeters and two 9cm drivers with dual ports.

It's a streamlined offering when it comes to connections. You get one digital optical and one 3.5mm analogue input. There's no HDMI socket, and the only other connection is Bluetooth. This soundbar is clearly not intended for use

The JBL Cinema SB200 is a very good soundbar. Now that it's more affordable than before, we're tempted to give it that fifth star. But we have to consider rivals, and similar money buys you better sound with greater connectivity - and a proper remote control. Therefore, this JBL retains its strong four-star rating.

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Punchy, explosive sound; good balance; good energy; direct dialogue

**AGAINST** Could do with more precision and purity; limited connectivity

**VERDICT** A very good way to boost your TV sound, complete with Bluetooth streaming

# LG NB3530A £190

★★★★☆

## Hidden potential

This is the only soundbar in the test to feature playback from a USB stick, via a port hidden at the front. Compatible file formats include MP3 and WMA.



The subwoofer that goes with the soundbar connects wirelessly, which makes placement – and hiding – of the unit a lot easier

**The LG NB3530A finds** itself in an unfortunate position. The last two LG soundbars we've seen earned five-star ratings. One of them, the Award-winning NB4530A, is the big brother to today's candidate. No pressure...

The glossy black casework is a good start. And while some manufacturers prefer to hide the drivers behind cloth or metal grilles, LG has chosen to flaunt its assets. Put it next to more subdued rivals such as the Boston Acoustics TVue 26 and the LG looks positively striking.

## Nicely flexible with positioning

It also benefits from a slim body, thanks to its partnering wireless subwoofer, and this allows for flexibility in positioning. We found it low enough not to obstruct our TV's infrared receiver, so there may be no need for wall-mounting or spare shelves. And set-up is easy. As long as you have the soundbar and subwoofer plugged in within a reasonable distance, they will pair up automatically.

There's a line of touch controls on the face of the main unit. These sit above a small display, used for basic information such as the selected input. It's basic, but appreciated nonetheless. Below this is a USB port for playing MP3 and WMA files from memory sticks.

A peek at the back shows a basic three inputs: one 3.5mm and two digital



It's nice to have a 'proper' remote control and this one does a good job, with plenty of options

optical. That's all the hard wiring you'll get. Wirelessly, there's Bluetooth and Sound Sync, a feature that lets you beam sound from an LG TV.

We're happy with the remote control. This is a big deal considering the number of soundbars shipping with flimsy credit-card jobs. Here you get a proper handset. Aside from volume controls,

Downsides: it's a little thinner than we'd like and the bass feels a touch tubby. Watch anything with gunshots and there's not as much impact as there might be. It's not a big issue, however – there's decent weight to the midrange, and speech is solid.

There's a good offering of sound effect modes too: Bass Boost, Clear Voice, Game,

**This is an agile performer, keeping up with rapid *Sherlock* rants as well as with John Frusciante's riffs. It's an engaging listen**

you can also mess with woofer levels and lip synchronisation. Lovely.

And the LG NB3530A is a very good soundbar, although not quite at the top of the class. There's good integration between bar and sub, and you never feel as if you're listening to two distinct entities.

The sense of scale is decent. The sound pumped out is easily bigger than that of the average flat screen, but it's not as wide as that of the JBL Cinema SB200 or Philips HTL5120.

The unit's greatest strength lies in its direct presentation. This is an agile performer, keeping up with rapid *Sherlock* rants as well as with John Frusciante's riffs. It makes for an engaging listen.

Night, Upscaler, Loudness, Natural and 3D Surround. It's worth playing around, but we don't feel they add much.

The LG NB3530A does the job, and does it well. It looks great, sounds very good and there are some nice features. There are strong rivals, however, and this LG can't quite stand out from the pack.

**Rating** ★★★★★

**FOR** Direct, agile sound with decent integration and scale; a proper remote control

**AGAINST** Sounds a little thinner than we'd like

**VERDICT** Another admirable and attractive soundbar from LG, only pipped to that fifth star by fierce competition

# CONVERT ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY



## DAC-V1 Digital to Analogue Converter



Using our unique digital signal processing technology the DAC-V1 can transform your computer into a high-resolution music hub. It can also unleash the sound of digital sources like your TV, games console, and hard disk player/server too. Listen directly through headphones or add our matching NAP 100 power amplifier and speakers to create a compact, high-end hi-fi system.

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# Panasonic SC-HTB20 £165



## Soundbar in disguise

The soundbar is actually three pieces: two speakers and a bridge between them. Take out the middle section and you can attach feet to each speaker, allowing them to stand.



The split bar option to create a 2.1 system is a neat idea - it's just a shame the unit's sound can't live up to that potential

The Panasonic SC-HTB20 is not a product we can recommend. We make certain allowances when it comes to budget soundbars, but still we find ourselves disappointed.

We'll get the worst part out of the way: the performance. It's a smaller, boxier sound than we'd expect from a £165 soundbar. The sense of scale barely exceeds that of the 50in LED TV we've chosen for the day. If you're looking to fill the room with explosive sound, this is not the soundbar you're looking for.

### Unwieldy, flabby bass

Tonally, things don't get much better. There's plenty of bass on hand, but it's unwieldy. Doughy and disjointed, there's little definition and even less conviction as it thumps along to what should be a taut, exciting rendition of *Mombasa* from the *Inception* soundtrack.

As we move up towards upper midrange/lower treble (there's little between this and the bottom) the sound is hard. There's detail there, but it's sharp - like an over-etched picture.

It doesn't help that dynamics sound limited. Gunfire is rarely explosive, voices rarely expressive. We boost the volume to nudge a bit of excitement out of it, only for the sound to harden up and get shouty.

It's possible to adjust the tone on the little credit-card-type remote control,



You can adjust the tone controls with the remote control, but it's all so counterintuitive, you might not bother

but this doesn't take us much nearer to a sound that we'd be happy to live with. This process is made more frustrating by one of the most convoluted blinking-light systems we've seen.

Try to adjust the subwoofer level, for example, and combinations of one or two lights will blink to indicate the current status. The blinking lights

processing and connections (HDMI in, two optical digital in, HDMI out).

The idea isn't without its problems. The drivers have to be very small to fit into a super-slim, transforming design - which puts limitations on midrange reproduction. The wiring restricts the positioning of both soundbar and sub. And that wire is conspicuous in white.

**This soundbar is a shape-shifter with two configurations: it can be a single bar, or split in half to stand vertically on either side of the TV**

combo system is key to changing sound modes or audio outputs, and requires repeated examinations of the instruction manual. Simple tasks are turned into frustrating chores. The decision to use these lights instead of a proper, simple display is a baffling one.

It's a shame, because there are good ideas here. This is a slick-looking device. The soundbar is a shape-shifter with two configurations. It can be a single bar with a stand in the middle, or split in half to stand vertically on either side of your TV like a traditional 2.1 system.

This is made possible by putting the drivers at the extremities of the soundbar, emptying out the middle, and letting a wired subwoofer handle all

Despite the novel shape-shifting design, we're not convinced the Panasonic SC-HTB20 does much to enhance your viewing - which is surely the whole point of considering a soundbar in the first place. Given the strength of similarly priced rivals, we would give this one a miss.

### Rating ★★☆☆☆

**FOR** Transformer, soundbar in disguise

**AGAINST** Poor sound; poor user interface; wired subwoofer

**VERDICT** This is a poor implementation of rather a neat split-speaker concept - with poor sound to boot. Disappointing



“Get up and drive your funky soul!”

James Brown

# The heart and soul of music

Precision; a new luxury loudspeaker range from Tannoy, built to deliver music as it was meant to be heard. With audiophile features such as double-magnet drivers, hand-built crossovers and mass-load cabinet tuning, Precision has music at its heart and soul. Across two stunning floorstanding models, a compact stand-mount and matching centre channel speaker, Precision delivers breath-taking detail and musical dynamics. Built around a brand new 6 inch (150 mm) version of Tannoy's world renowned Dual Concentric™ driver, the contemporary cabinets boast premium fit and finish in a choice of colours. Powerful, passionate and incredibly precise, Precision gets to the heart and soul of music like no other speaker in its class.

 **TANNOY**®

[tannoy.com](http://tannoy.com)



October 2013 - Precision 6.2



Precision 6.2



Precision 6.4



Precision 6.2 / 6.1 / 6C /  
TS2.12 system



Precision 6.2 / 6.1 / 6C /  
TS2.12 system

# Philips HTL5120 £250



## All-round awesome

Philips hasn't chosen between great sound quality and features. Its performance is by far the best here, it's got more connections than most and its remote is lovely.



It's similar in appearance to the 9100, but the 5120 can't perform the more expensive unit's detachable-speaker party trick. It sounds great, though

**Philips won a** Product of the Year Award from us with its HTL9100. Here is its simpler, more affordable sibling. And, despite our high expectations, the HTL5120 does not disappoint.

If you're prepared to spend £250 on a soundbar, this is the jackpot. It's a significant improvement over the tinny, boxy sound you get from the average flat screen, effortlessly conveying a sense of scale, with a soundstage that is wide and spacious.

### A big noise, but subtle too

Load up a big, loud film and you'll have no problem filling the room with sound. We put on a Blu-ray of *Rush*, and there's a good amount of detail, with plenty of texture afforded to the rumbling engines and shifting gears of F1 cars.

It's not all about the noisy moments, of course, so we switch to TV for a bit of *Countdown*. Speech is convincing and nicely enunciated, and there's enough subtlety to pick out the sound of a pen scraping against a board.

We're also impressed by the tonal balance. The top end is well defined, but never harsh or sharp. The built-in drivers put out surprisingly hefty bass. It's full-bodied and rich, but taut and restrained enough not to overwhelm.

We turn to music and put the volume up. The Philips maintains its composure,



The remote control is small, but far more substantial than the all-too-often-seen credit-card style units

never getting shouty or hardening up. It should be comfortable with anything you care to subject it to.

There's a virtual surround option - this widens the soundstage a little, but trades a degree of subtlety. The sense of timing is good, and there's a nice level of energy.

The HTL5120 is a simpler device than its big brother, the HTL9100, so its sides

There's a 3.5mm auxiliary in and a set of analogue audio inputs too. You also get one HDMI out. As if all that wasn't generous enough, the HTL5120 also handles Bluetooth. A proper display would have been nice, but now we're nitpicking - the blinking LEDs are fine.

Philips, it seems, is on a roll - at least when it comes to soundbars. We had a

**We're impressed by the tonal balance. The top end is well defined, but never harsh or sharp. It's rich but restrained enough not to overwhelm**

don't jettison for surround-sound purposes. There's no external subwoofer - this is an all-in-one device, and a rather large one at that. At 15cm high, it's big enough to obscure the bottom of some TVs, so it may have to be placed on a shelf under the screen, or wall-mounted.

Build quality is high - and this extends to the remote control, which is refreshingly chunky compared with the pathetic little 'card' remotes we see so often. It's a proper, fat remote with big, clear buttons, including some for tone controls.

When it comes to connections, we're very impressed. You get a handful of digital inputs, including one each of optical and coaxial, as well as two HDMI.

few concerns about this being an oversimplified version of its pricier sibling, but those were unfounded. The HTL5120 is a class-leader at this level. Whether you want a multi-input hub or a simple tool to boost the sound of your TV, this is an excellent soundbar. We highly recommend it.

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Excellent sound; plenty of connections; lovely remote control

**AGAINST** It's a bit big; would benefit from a proper display

**VERDICT** If you're willing to spend £250 to boost your TV sound, look no further

# Sandstrøm S42SWLH13 £150



Quite how Scandinavian this Curry's/PC World own-brand is we're not sure - but it looks and sounds good, and is well put together

**You may not** have heard of Sandstrøm before. Supposedly pronounced 'sand-streum', it is a recent brand belonging to the Dixons retail group, sold exclusively through Currys and PC World. The brand appears to aim at Scandinavian-inspired design and any sense of exoticism that might evoke.

The snappily named S42SWLH13 (we can't help but think that something like 'Stång' would sound better) is the first system we've received from the brand. We're not sure quite how Scandinavian the design is, but it sure looks lovely.

We're used to blocky behemoths of soundbars that at best look acceptable. This one, on the other hand, looks nice enough that we might actually want to show it off.

## Looks good, sounds decent

The bar is sleek, tapering gently from its centre with barely a right angle in sight. Its drivers are on full display, with silver rings contrasting nicely with the glossy black bodywork.

The whole thing sits atop a silver stand, which can be removed should you prefer to wall-mount the unit. Even the wireless external subwoofer and hand-sized remote control unit have nicely smoothed edges.

It's a strong first impression, then. And we're even more impressed when we



The handset is a nice, solid unit that does the job well - and it's well finished to boot

peek behind the unit to find a veritable smorgasbord of connections. We would expect a £150 soundbar to have three inputs at most. Not here.

There are six hard-wire inputs: analogue stereo, 3.5mm, optical and coaxial digital and two HDMI. You even get an HDMI output. There's also Bluetooth streaming for wireless music

**The Sandstrøm is decent: tonally balanced enough to allow detail at the top end, solidity in the midrange and authority at the bottom**

and - the cherry on top - near-field communication (NFC) for easy pairing.

The only issue here is that the connectors all point down, which makes plugging in more than a little fiddly if your cables aren't particularly flexible. To assist with this, an L-shaped HDMI connector is included in the box.

When we get things up and running, the Sandstrøm's performance is decent for the money. It's tonally balanced enough to allow detail at the top, solidity in the midrange and authority at the bottom. Speech is prominent and well-defined, and the integration between soundbar and subwoofer is decent.

The bad news: the treble is a little hard, provoked without great difficulty

by clashing swords or shattering glass; the bass could do with more definition; the sense of scale isn't the greatest we've heard - although it's definitely wider than the sound of your telly.

Overall, though, we're fairly satisfied with the sound this unit produces. It's not a class-leading performance, but it's certainly capable enough for the

money, as long as you don't expect cinema-quality sound.

Our first experience with a Sandstrøm system is a happy one. Any flaws are outweighed by plenty of advantages. Cheap, cheerful, stylish and seriously well connected, the S42SWLH13 offers very good value for money.

## Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Prominent speech; good integration; authority; nice design; wealth of connections

**AGAINST** Slightly hard treble; tubby bass

**VERDICT** This is a great-looking soundbar with plenty of connections and - most importantly - a decent sonic performance

# Toshiba SBX4250 £205



## Deceptive display

Don't be fooled by that large rectangle in the middle of the soundbar. The display is nowhere near as big. See the bit that says 'line-in'? That's all you get.



The Toshiba's solid looks and excellent choice of connections are let down a little by average sound for the money

**This is the** first time we've had a soundbar from Toshiba in our test rooms. And it's a solid effort, combining average sound and design with excellent connectivity. For the price, however, we're not entirely blown away.

It looks nice enough, if a bit generic. We doubt many will remember this design, but it's not as bland as the Boston Acoustic TVee 26, say. And despite its hard edges and boxy outline, it's not a very large unit. It will happily sit directly in front of most TVs without blocking the screen.

There are hints of design flourishes: silver-trimmed drivers peek out from behind the black mesh at the front. A large rectangle in the centre implies a sizeable display, but the actual display (somewhere behind this sheet of plastic) is smaller than an average USB stick, with barely enough space to show what input you've selected.

## A good choice of connections

It's unremarkable at the front, then, but thankfully the back of the Toshiba makes up for this. The SBX4250 is one of the better-equipped budget soundbars.

There's one each of analogue stereo and 3.5mm inputs, and two each of optical digital and HDMI inputs. There's also an HDMI output, as well as Bluetooth for wireless music streaming.



You can use the handset to adjust treble, bass levels and the subwoofer volume

Elsewhere, we are glad to see Toshiba has made an effort with a proper chunky remote control handset instead of the typical card-like variety. The unit is easy to use with a neat layout and large, clearly labelled buttons. We particularly like having the ability to fine tune the treble and bass levels, and the subwoofer volume via the handset.

struggling to convey the sense of power and the kind of kick we're looking for. Move up the frequency range and the sound gets a bit thick and closed in. This isn't helped by an unruly treble. It's not over the top, but there is a definite hint of brightness.

The Toshiba SBX4250 is a decent enough package, then - but we don't find

**We like the Toshiba's clarity. Mix in the good level of detail and there is ample texture and definition to effects. Dialogue is sharp**

When it comes to sound, the Toshiba SBX4250 is adequate. Much like its design, there's nothing special but it will get the job done if that job is to sound better than your flat-screen TV.

The sense of scale is pretty good, but we wouldn't recommend it for anything like a house party. The sound gets wider still if you trade in a bit of detail and turn on the virtual surround mode - indeed, it's fairly effective at spreading sound.

We also like its clarity. Mix in a good level of detail and there is ample texture and definition to effects. Dialogue is sharp, but it feels a little insubstantial and is in need of more body.

It lacks firm support from the low end, which feels flabby and lightweight,

ourselves particularly excited by it. Despite its good selection of connections, the sound and looks are average at best. And then there's the price tag: £200 is a lot of money to spend on something that struggles to thrill. At this price, we would suggest looking elsewhere.

## Rating ★★☆☆☆

**FOR** Wide sound; decent detail and clarity; six inputs

**AGAINST** Flabby bass lacks power; hint of brightness; hollow dialogue

**VERDICT** Average sound, average looks. The same money can buy better.

# QED Reference Audio 40

## Cables Matter No.6



### Analoc™ locking RCA Plugs

The new gold plated QED analoc™ plug is a low eddy current design, featuring small high purity copper conductors in place of the usual, large volume brass body, found in ordinary high quality plugs. This cuts down or eliminates the tendency for the changing magnetic field in the conductor to induce eddy currents, which can affect the micro timing of the audio signal.

### Foamed Polyethylene Dielectric

Foamed polyethylene is a low constant dielectric and has been used to cut down on the amount of audio signal energy lost due to cable capacitance.



### Complementary Conductor Technology™

This innovation utilises two silver plated OFC conductors of different diameters to carry the same audio signal. This has the effect of providing an alternative path for high frequency audio components, which might otherwise become 'time smeared' in a single audio pathway.

## The NEW QED Reference Audio 40

**The revolutionary QED Reference Audio 40 analogue audio interconnect celebrates QED's 40 years at the forefront of British designed audio cables.**

The Reference Audio 40 cable is a truly unique design concept from QED's labs. The cordage is designed primarily for low capacitance. This has been identified by QED as one factor which leads to a hi-fidelity experience and making for a 'tight sound' which retains the rhythm of the original piece.

Added to this we have also introduced our Complementary Conductor Technology™ for high frequency detail and our Analoc Technology™ to maximise signal integrity.

The result is without doubt the most innovative design ever seen in QED's 40 year history.

To find out more about why cables matter, please visit our website. [www.qed.co.uk](http://www.qed.co.uk)

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**In 1973 Bob Abraham and Ian Vine founded QED Audio Products and changed the way people think about hi-fi cables. By the time QED 79 strand speaker cable was launched in 1978, it wasn't looked upon as 'just another speaker cable' but was instead regarded as a serious hi-fi component.**



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# TEST VERDICT

## THE WINNER

Philips HTL5120

£250 ★★★★★



This wasn't much of a contest really. The **Philips HTL5120** is clearly the best soundbar here: it's got power and subtlety in spades – and it looks great too

**P**icking the winner was easy. The order of the runners-up proved a little more problematic. With the soundbar market being still quite new, there is scope for very different units. More than a couple of systems have caught our eye in this test, then, but there's a clear winner.

The Philips HTL5120 is the only soundbar to leave this test with the full five stars, and it now sets the standard at this price. We weren't surprised: its sound was clearly the most competent.

### A bar of both power and subtlety...

The scale and power of the sound impressed us the most. That a budget soundbar could so easily fill one of our rooms with explosive sound effects was a pleasant surprise – but happily it's also very subtle. The performance alone is worth the five stars, but the rating is cemented in place by Philips offering six inputs.

Next up we have a trio of four-star products, each with a different approach. The JBL Cinema SB200 has gone for the 'single massive bar' design,

gunning only for sonic superiority. LG offers a more slender design with the NB3530A, balancing its attention between its performance and a handful of features. Sandstrøm went scatter-gun with the S42SWLH13, trying to be the most beautiful and most well-equipped while still keeping sound quality competitive.

JBL edges ahead with a sound that comes closest to the Philips. We like scale, we like power, but JBL impresses with its energy. It is followed by the LG, which offers an agile, direct sound.

Special mention must go to Sandstrøm, though. Not only does it match the Philips offering of six inputs plus Bluetooth, it trumps it with NFC.

Now we enter the realm of mediocrity, where we find the Boston Acoustics TVee26 and Toshiba SBX4250. Both soundbars have uninspired designs, although the Boston Acoustics manages to edge ahead when it comes to being utterly forgettable. The Boston Acoustics performs better than the Toshiba, with a more even tonal balance and a clearer

midrange. Toshiba's trump card is its collection of six inputs and decent-sized remote control. In the end, the Boston comes out on top: we wouldn't pay more for the Toshiba's connections when its sound is inferior.

### ...and one with neither

In last place is the Panasonic SC-HTB20. We're really surprised by just how poorly it performs, especially given our experience with some of the company's home-cinema-in-a-box systems. We like the concept of a soundbar that can be split in half for a 2.1 configuration, but the implementation is poor.

It is the only soundbar in this test to have a wired subwoofer, which made the form factor decidedly messy. This wasn't mitigated by the sound quality, which was disappointing – we're amazed to say it, but it barely offers any improvement over a TV's sound.

Factor on top of all that an unnecessarily complicated blinking-lights interface and it becomes clear that Panasonic needs to go back to the drawing board.



**Boston Acoustics TVee 26**  
**£180 ★★☆☆☆**  
 • **Inputs** Optical digital, 3.5mm stereo jack x2 • **Outputs** None  
 • **Bluetooth** No • **Wireless subwoofer** Yes • **Dimensions (soundbar, hwd)** 9 x 80 x 74cm • **Dimensions (subwoofer, hwd)** 24 x 27 x 28cm

Sound	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Features	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Build	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■



**JBL Cinema SB200**  
**£200 ★★★★★**  
 • **Inputs** Optical digital, 3.5mm stereo jack • **Outputs** None • **Bluetooth** Yes  
 • **Wireless subwoofer** No • **Dimensions (soundbar, hwd)** 12 x 90 x 10cm

Sound	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Features	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Build	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■



**LG NB3530A**  
**£190 ★★★★★**  
 • **Inputs** Optical digital x2, 3.5mm stereo jack, USB • **Outputs** None • **Bluetooth** Yes • **Wireless subwoofer** Yes • **Dimensions (soundbar, hwd)** 7 x 95 x 5cm • **Dimensions (subwoofer, hwd)** 39 x 20 x 30cm

Sound	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Features	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Build	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■



**Panasonic SC-HTB20**  
**£165 ★★☆☆☆**  
 • **Inputs** optical digital x2, HDMI • **Outputs** HDMI • **Bluetooth** No • **Wireless subwoofer** No  
 • **Dimensions (soundbar, hwd)** 5 x 76 x 6cm • **Dimensions (subwoofer, hwd)** 41 x 18 x 31cm

Sound	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Features	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Build	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■



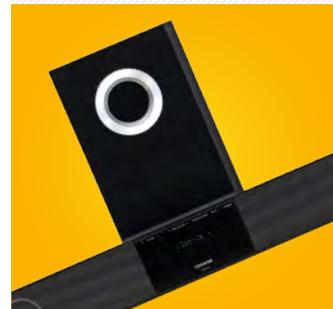
**Philips HTL5120**  
**£250 ★★★★★**  
**Inputs** Optical digital, coaxial digital, analogue stereo, 3.5mm stereo jack, HDMI x2 • **Outputs** HDMI (ARC) • **Bluetooth** Yes • **Wireless subwoofer** No • **Dimensions (soundbar, hwd)** 16 x 101 x 8cm

Sound	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Features	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Build	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■



**Sandström S42SWLH13**  
**£150 ★★★★★**  
**Inputs** Optical digital, coaxial digital, analogue stereo, 3.5mm stereo jack, HDMI x2 • **Outputs:** HDMI • **Bluetooth** Yes (NFC) • **Wireless subwoofer** Yes • **Dimensions (soundbar, hwd)** 12 x 90 x 5cm • **Dimensions (subwoofer, hwd)** 35 x 18 x 31cm

Sound	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Features	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Build	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■



**Toshiba SBX4250**  
**£205 ★★☆☆☆**  
 • **Inputs** Optical digital x2, analogue stereo, 3.5mm stereo jack, HDMI x2 • **Outputs** HDMI (ARC) • **Bluetooth** Yes • **Wireless subwoofer** Yes • **Dimensions (soundbar, hwd)** 9 x 94 x 6cm • **Dimensions (subwoofer, hwd)** 35 x 19 x 33cm

Sound	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Features	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Build	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

**Do you have enough space for a sub as well as the soundbar?**  
 You'll need the subwoofer as close as possible to the soundbar, otherwise sound integration may be a problem and they'll come across like two distinct entities.

**Table top or wall-mounted?**  
 Some of these soundbars are flat and slim, but others aren't, and may block off your TV's infrared receiver. Consider a shelf under the telly, or invest in a power drill.

**What kit do you have?**  
 Check the connections. Some bars need you to plug everything into your TV, then connect that to your soundbar. But you may prefer to use the soundbar directly.

**SYSTEM BUILDER**



**Television**  
**Panasonic TX-P42GT60B**  
**£1000 ★★★★★**  
 A wonderful plasma - and our Product of the Year for 2013.



**Blu-ray player**  
**Sony BDP-S4100**  
**£80 ★★★★★**  
 It's amazing the picture and sound quality you can get for less than £100.



**Digital TV box**  
**Humax DTR-T1010 (500GB)**  
**£250 ★★★★★**  
 If you want an easy way to watch on-demand TV, check out this fine box.





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# You've been buying CDs for 30 years. **These are the players you've been waiting for**

Rather than fading in the face of newer tech, CD players have gone from strength to strength. And this quartet proves it

**D**espite the arrival of higher-than-CD-quality formats and more innovative ways to play and store our music, the modest CD player lives on. And lives on well. In fact, early models are still being revamped and competition is as strong as ever, as this test proves.

We've pitched four players at a touch under £1000 against each other to see which most deserves a shelf in your system - because, though the CD player still has a lot of legs, at this stage it really is survival of the fittest.

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*Listen to our favourite tracks every month!*

## FILTER OPTIONS

Having an accessible DAC is one thing, but the 8200CD also has seven digital filter options. Do your own listening tests with these, but it didn't take us long to settle on 'Optimal Transient XD' as our favourite because of its power and cohesiveness. 'Sharp Rolloff' sounded distinctly flat.



Smart, understated fascia hides a player of rare distinction - a versatile one, too

# Audiolab 8200CD £800



**It's no secret** that we love the 8200CD. Since we first encountered the player in 2010, it's won multiple awards and, until last year, was Product of the Year three times in a row. There's no doubt that it's one of the best CD players we've tested under £1000 thanks to its effortless sonic character and musicality.

Helpfully, it's more than just a CD player. Audiolab actually describes it as a 'high-quality DAC + CD' device. Marry this formula with a plethora of digital inputs and outputs (coaxial, optical and USB) and you've got a player that will deal with pretty much everything you throw at it. And deal with it well.

**1 Analogue outputs**  
Unlike any of its rivals in this test, the Audiolab has both balanced XLR and single-ended options

**2 Digital inputs**  
The 8200CD is the only player here with digital inputs, which means you can use it with digital sources such as a laptop or music streamer

### Hi-res compatible

All inputs can cope with 24-bit/96kHz sources and, when we plug the player into our computer, a CD rip of Lana Del Ray's *Born To Die* sounds noticeably precise and articulate. A good buy, then, for someone who complements their CD collection with a vast computer library.

We remember what is arguably the 8200CD's primary purpose, though, and load up some CDs, hoping for similarly impressive quality.

### Grace under pressure

We jump straight in with *The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King* soundtrack and the varied compositions sound fluid, neat and organised, with a tangible sense of drama. Even in the most elaborate and chaotic sections, the 8200CD remains poised and never succumbs to sounding erratic or artificially atmospheric. Yet it does overlook strands of finer detail in the music that the Cyrus CDi brings to light, and vocals are conveyed with slightly less expression in comparison.

We slip into a more islanded affair with *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* OST and are met with measured dynamics and a neutrally toned, pure sound. The player reveals the subtlety inherent in the quieter mandolin instrumentals and gives a deserved energy to the busier, more concentrated string orchestrations in *After The Dance*. It's these traits that help make up its wonderfully exciting musicality.

It doesn't quite have the audacity of the pricier Naim CD5si - nor is it quite so lucid - and its less get-up-and-go attitude is something we find ourselves conscious of during a listen of Wyclef Jean's upbeat *Perfect Gentleman*.

The 8200CD can be set up to deliver a variable output, meaning you can connect it directly to a power amp and eliminate the need for a pre-amp.

Before being knocked off the top spot by the Naim CD5si last summer, the 8200CD outshone all other players in - and in some cases, above - its price range. And it remains a superb player. For £800, we still think you won't get anything better. But there are now more capable players, including the Naim and Cyrus in this test that, if you can live with fewer features and stretch your budget a little, you'll enjoy more.

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Clean, neutral sound; exciting performer; abundance of useful features; fine build; price

**AGAINST** Not as dynamically precise or as driving as some competitors

**VERDICT** Sure to win favour with discerning folk who use a computer library as well as CDs



Another pristine pressing from the Cyrus mould, but this one moves up a gear



## Cyrus CDi £975

★★★★★

**Cyrus hasn't put** a foot wrong with its CD players for as long as we can remember. It'd be fair to say that its track record has been phenomenal. So it's not surprising that the CDi - the successor to the 6SE and 8SE - is another gleaming example of Cyrus treading the right path.

### 1 Comms link

Cyrus designs its components to link together. A single button-press, for example, will power up a complete system

### 2 PSX-R upgrade

The Cyrus PSX-R is an outboard power supply that plugs into the CDi and shares the workload with the internal power supply, improving the sound's scale and authority

### No idle promise

In fact, Cyrus says this is its best-sounding CD player yet. And, as much as we've loved the company's previous models, we're more than happy to back that claim. Even after a very short listen, we are convinced of the scale of Cyrus's achievement here.

We play Hans Zimmer's *Dream Is Collapsing* from the *Inception* soundtrack and right away the CDi displays the articulate and nimble presentation that we would expect from a more expensive player.

It offers buckets of detail: the finer flurries of quieter instruments surface while the more intense parts of the score soar into a dramatic climax. Each layer of the music is precisely unpeeled, and each instrument coherently placed.

But the rhythmic talent here is what really raises our eyebrows. Pace and momentum is exercised with articulation and vibrancy. We find ourselves more entertained by the Cyrus's dynamic agility and class-leading insight than by the Naim CD5si, our Product of the Year 2013 (even if we'd still perhaps pick the Naim for the silkier presentation).

### Nimble, yet weighty

Though fast and fluid, the sound is weightier than any of the company's previous models. Even when we switch to Timbaland's *Morning After Dark* - which has a fleshy, hard sound, heaps of deep bass and thumping beats - the CDi doesn't bat an eyelid.

We generally like the Cyrus's solid build, fuss-free design and simple, easy-to-read black-on-green display - though the latter now looks outdated and could do with a rethink.

In earlier SE models, we found the cheap-looking plastic remote a

noteworthy negative, so we're rather pleased that the new one is more in keeping with rival players' handsets, boasting a plush and organised set of backlit buttons. The CD transport, however, is a little noisy when loading a disc, though silent during playback.

Round the back are two pairs of analogue outputs and standard digital optical and coaxial outputs. An upgrade can be achieved by connecting to the company's PSX-R external power supply (£500) for more power, clarity and detail. But we're certain you'll be happy with the CDi alone for a long time to come.

We're hugely impressed with the CDi and we're confident you won't find a more entertaining, more revealing player until you near the £1500 mark. It seems that the Naim CD5si may have finally found a cause for concern.

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Dynamic expression; rhythmic ability; entertaining listen; hugely detailed; upgrade path; worthwhile remote handset

**AGAINST** Dated display; noisy when loading

**VERDICT** A five-star Cyrus player is no surprise, but this one takes things to a new level



It still looks the part, but the Exposure's sound is shown up by more modern rivals



# Exposure 2010S2 £830

★★★★☆

It's been eight years since we last reviewed this CD player. Since then only the name has been changed to bring it in line with the partnering S2 amplifier. Back in yesteryear, we awarded the then-£600 CD player top marks for its elite build and engaging sound.

It's no longer a forerunner in terms of build quality, but the silver aluminium casing (also available in black) is smart, and a clean front panel is complemented by an easily readable electric-blue-on-black display.

Coaxial and optical digital outputs accompany a pair of analogue outs in a gesture to modernity – which is more than we can say for the severely outdated remote. It feels cheap to use and it took us a while to navigate around the crowded cluster of untidy, same-sized buttons. The CD tray mechanism is a bit flimsy too and sounds a bit primitive when loading a disc.

What we admired about the original version was its 'exhilarating sound' and

'exciting dynamics'. To this day, the S2 is certainly not shy. We are instantly grabbed by its energetic, forward manner. If you like an exciting slant to your music, this might well win you over.

Otherwise, by today's high standards, its full-of-beans line of attack can make it quite hard to listen to more aggressive recordings. Heavy electric guitar riffs sound messy and brittle in Dry The River's *Chambers And Valves*. Even in Kate Bush's *Running Up That Hill*, we hear an artifice that clouds the song's haunting atmosphere. We just wish the machine would reveal a more sensitive side.

### Vocal clarity

Vocals do, however, come through clear during our test – even if they feel a little raspy and don't reveal all of the varied tones in Bush's *song*.

Timing used to be considered a strength of this player. Now, its energetic approach seems to distort rhythm and pace. The Audiolab 8200CD is more rhythmically well-adjusted, and there is a lot more of an association between the beat and the rest of the music to drive it along.

A criticism of the original 2010S was its over-enthusiastic treble, a trait today revealed by the brash and ill-defined sound of the cymbals in Red Hot Chili Peppers' *The Zephyr Song*. Travelling down to the other end of the spectrum we find the bass suffers from thinness and a lack of resolution too.

### Exuberance – at a cost

Still, though it's not an all-rounder, the Exposure's volatile sound provides one of the most exuberant listens we've heard in a long while. But know that the 2010S2 forsakes smoothness, cohesion and dynamic attention in return.

Time has taken its toll on Exposure's entry-level player. We still like its giddy character, but it falls short against more advanced competition that has greater definition and more all-round talent.

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Vigorous listen; clear midrange; smart finish; easy-to-read display

**AGAINST** Can sound aggressive; loose timing; thin bass; brash treble; dated remote

**VERDICT** As exciting and flamboyant as it is, the 2010S2 can't match its 2014 competition

### 1 Build quality

This player seemed well put together eight years ago when we last tested it, but now feels a bit agricultural. The clunky drawer mechanism doesn't help this impression

### 2 Analogue outputs

Unlike all the other players here, the 2010S2 has only one pair of single-ended analogue outputs, but that should be enough for most users



CLASSY LOOKS; BALANCED SOUND;  
EXCELLENT INTEGRATION; CONTROLLED  
BASS; CLEAR DIALOGUE.

WHAT HI-FI? OCTOBER 2013



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Though spartan in terms of features, this Naim has a superbly rich, animated sound



**THE 'S' FACTOR**  
 Most of the Naim design trademarks we know and love have been carried over from the CD5i, but the 's' brings upgraded digital-to-analogue circuitry, better analogue filtering, a more stable clock and a longer-lasting transport mechanism for its manual swing-drawer arrangement.

# Naim CD5si £995



**Naim may be** racking up brownie points with its ever-expanding range of outstanding music streamers, but it hasn't forgotten about the modest CD player. Which is just as well, because its range of players is really good. The CD5si, though, is an exceptional example of Naim combining superb sound with great value for money - its Product of the Year 2013 status can vouch for that.

**No laurel-resting**

An enhanced version of the CD5i (see roundel), the 5si is cased in the company's standard black finish and simple design. It's like tacking an 'S' tile onto a high-scoring word in Scrabble to get a slightly higher score, and we admire Naim for seeking improvements to what is already a class product.

What we are less taken with are the features on this player - because, quite simply, there aren't many. The absence of digital outputs is fairly typical of

Naim, but no trace of an upgrade path seems out of character. For the competition and (usually) for Naim, upgrades are the norm.

Nevertheless, this is one of the best players we've heard under the £1000 mark and has been a favourite of ours since it took the crown from long-reigning champ the Audiolab 8200CD last year. The CD5si bends over backwards to deliver an exuberant and enjoyable performance, and it was its enthusiasm and concrete drive that we took to instantly. In terms of musicality and cohesion, it's spot on.

**A new challenge**

Now, though, there's the Cyrus CDi for the Naim to think about. We put the two head-to-head with *The Steward Of Gondor* from *The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King* soundtrack and the Naim delivers, as always, a hearty performance. Detailed and confident with dynamics, it embraces the quieter parts of the piece gracefully before

climbing to the crescendo with explosive intensity. If anything expresses the music's scale convincingly, it's the CD5si.

The Cyrus, however, proves a touch more insightful and precise. It also has a greater reach than the Naim in terms of absolute clarity and expression.

That said, the Naim is a highly capable performer with enough punch, power and grasp of rhythm to transform your music collection. Its rich tonal balance promises a solid, full-bodied performance for almost anything you play through it. So, if you value animation and energy over absolute insight and detail, this is the piece of kit for you.

The CD5si isn't easily ruffled by rivals. It's a truly terrific player. It could probably take some tips from the Cyrus CDi, but both score points in their own ways. In reality, the two are fairly evenly matched. Which one, if any, you decide to buy really depends on which specific qualities suit you and your system.

**Rating ★★★★★**

**FOR** Dynamic, enthusiastic delivery; confident handling of rhythms; musically spot-on

**AGAINST** No digital outputs; no upgrade path

**VERDICT** The CD5si remains a superstar and, though the Cyrus presents a new challenge, it's comfortably one of the best on the £1000 shelf

**1 No upgrade path**  
 Here's where we'd expect to see digital outputs and, in a Naim product, an input for a separate power supply, but the CD5si has neither

**2 DIN output**  
 Naim has long been an advocate of the DIN connection, believing it sounds better than the more-commonly used RCA plug





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**TEST VERDICT****THE WINNER****Cyrus CDi**

£975 ★★★★★



In a quartet of this quality, winning was never going to be easy, but by building on a matchless pedigree to produce an all-time-high for the brand, the **Cyrus CDi** manages it

**W**e're bowled over. We thought it would be a long time before our Product of the Year 2013, the Naim CD5si, was knocked off the top spot in its price category. What is less surprising, though, is who has taken the crown.

Yet again, Cyrus has done what it does so well: produce a piece of simply great-sounding kit. It was a tough home straight between these two in the final stage of our test, but the CDi had the better sprint finish, ousting the Naim with greater insight, even more detail and even stronger dynamics.

When a company claims to have produced its best CD player ever, it's often marketing bluster. Not here. The Cyrus CDi is a hotshot and you'll have to spend nearly twice as much to find better - we think the obvious next step is the Roksan Caspian M2 (£1800).

It wasn't always just a two-horse race though. The fact that the test is only two stars shy of a full house shows that it has more than just a pair of extremely talented players. The Audiolab 8200CD delivers a clean, organised sound and its digital aptitude alone stands it apart from the rest. It trips slightly on finer detail and dynamism, though for the £800 price you won't find a disc-spinner with a higher skill-set.

Coming in at a respectable fourth is the long-lived Exposure. While we're sure there are people out there who will take to its boisterous sound, it's not quite the gifted all-rounder that merits a place on the podium.

All in all, what we have here is a trio of excellent players that will make you glad you hung onto your Bananarama albums. *And* that will give them that extra 'oomph' they may need.

**SYSTEM BUILDER**

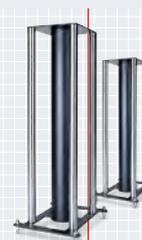
Three partners that will help make sure you hear the Cyrus CDi at its best

**Amplifier****Cyrus 8A** £1250 ★★★★★

As well as being the perfect visual partner for the CDi, the 8A has the detail, power and control to make it a natural sonic twin

**Stereo speakers****ATC SCM11** £1200 ★★★★★

Unfailing precision to complement the CDi's clarity, plus a wide-open soundstage

**Speaker stands****Custom Design FS104 Signature** £200

★★★★★

Pop these beautifully built stands underneath the ATCs and all the punch, precision and power of this system will shine through

**Total build** **£3625**

For a full list of specifications and other useful info visit [whathifi.com](http://whathifi.com)

**Facts & figures****Audiolab 8200CD**  
£800 ★★★★★

**DAC** Yes • **Multidisc** No • **Outputs** Coaxial digital, optical digital, XLR, RCA  
**Inputs** 2 x coaxial digital, 2 x optical digital, USB • **CD Text** yes • **Finishes** 2  
**Dimensions (hwd)** 8 x 44 x 30cm

**Cyrus CDi**  
£975 ★★★★★

**DAC** No • **Multidisc** No • **Outputs** Coaxial digital, optical digital, RCA •  
**CD Text** No • **Finishes** 2 •  
**Dimensions (hwd)** 7 x 22 x 35cm

**Exposure 2010S2**  
£830 ★★★☆☆

**DAC** No • **Multidisc** No • **Outputs** Coaxial digital, optical digital, RCA •  
**CD Text** Yes • **Finishes** 2 •  
**Dimensions (hwd)** 9 x 44 x 30cm

**Naim CD5si**  
£995 ★★★★★

**DAC** No • **Multidisc** No • **Outputs** RCA, DIN • **CD Text** No • **Memory** Yes •  
**Display off** Yes • **Finishes** 1 •  
**Dimensions (hwd)** 7 x 43 x 30cm

# Let the music flow

Take time to find the ideal speaker cable



1

## Atlas Equator 2.0

£6/m ★★★★★

**The first thing** that hits you about the Equator 2.0 (besides its tactile and silky-smooth outer jacket) is the way it allows an impressive sense of weight and power to music. If it was a physique, we're talking the broad-shouldered body-builder type. Play some hip-hop or dance such as Daft Punk's *Contact* and the Atlas allows the music to fly, making its presence felt but not completely dominating proceedings. The cable actually promotes an extremely clear and unadulterated sound, which doesn't hold back on detail either.

### A slight reticence

The only area where the Atlas really falls down is that, over the long-term, you realise it doesn't make for the most exuberant or inviting of listens. There's a nagging feeling that the cable is holding back a little - auditioned next to the QED Ruby Anniversary Evolution or Wireworld Luna 7, our reference setup sounds a touch flat and uninvolved.



2

## Audioquest G4

£4.50/m ★★★★★

**The G4 speaker** cable shares some DNA with AudioQuest's Award-winning FLX-SLiP 14/4 speaker cable (£6/m) - but its name is less of a mouthful. Without getting too technical, the G4 uses the same conductor material but doesn't use the twisted geometry, hence the four individual strands. This makes it slimmer and so more suitable for running under a carpet.

### A fine sense of agility

Sonically, the G4 allows a similar presentation to that of its bigger brother. This means our system paints a great outline for music. Edges are sharply drawn and there's a fine sense of agility and direction to music. It's exciting and articulate, make no mistake.

Where you lose out is when it comes to weight and solidity of sound. With the G4 our kit can't quite give music enough drive and conviction where the deepest notes demand it. Spend a bit more and you'll get greater weight and reinforcement.



3

## The Chord Company Sarsen

£8/m ★★★★★

**On a first** look, you'd be forgiven for assuming the Sarsen costs significantly less than the asking price. It doesn't appear the sturdiest or most robust of designs and, in hand, it doesn't feel much better. In fact it feels quite flimsy and insubstantial. On the plus side, the thin, flexible design means it can reach parts of installations and systems some thicker cables can't.

### An easy-to-listen-to sound

The cable gets off to a decent start, our system giving a sense of fluidity to Drake's *Hold On We're Going Home*. The track slides along effortlessly, the Sarsen promoting a sound that's easy to get on with. Vocals sound refined and natural.

There could be more in terms of outright authority, though, and things could be a little more direct and heavyweight with the way it handles music. Tracks lack an ounce of drive when heard through the Sarsen. This cable can be bettered by a number of rivals for less money.



4

## Ecosse CS2.4

£9/m ★★★★★

**Plug in the** Ecosse and you're drawn in by a tight, punchy presentation. Daft Punk's *Lose Yourself To Dance* sounds agile and light-footed, and you certainly can't criticise this cable for a lack of drive. There's a good level of detail on display, while Pharrell's vocal sounds focused and expressive and there's more than enough weight and solidity in the bass.

### A touch lacking in refinement

But the longer you listen, the more aware you become of a lack of sophistication. Highs in particular don't sound as cultured or refined as they should - there's a slight hint of fizz which takes away from the enjoyment. The Ecosse doesn't allow rhythms and emotions to translate as easily as they do through the likes of the Van den Hul Clearwater.

At half the money the Ecosse would be good value, but there's just too much good competition fighting it out at this money to convince us it's worth the extra.



Listen to our favourite tracks every month!



5

**QED Ruby Anniversary Evolution**  
£6/m ★★★★★

No cable round-up would be complete without an entry from QED. And the Ruby Anniversary Evolution is yet another we'd be glad to recommend to those seeking an affordable upgrade.

**Just sit back and listen**

Play Kings of Leon's *Wait For Me* and the QED encourages loads of detail across the board. Musical elements are nicely held together and presented in a manner in which the listener can just sit back and soak them all up. Vocals sound fluid and organic, and the cable helps your system convey emotion and dynamism nicely.

If your system's stuck in a lull and needs an injection of enthusiasm and excitement, the Ruby Anniversary Evolution will deliver. We'd just be a little wary of using this cable with bright-sounding electronics and speakers - you could emphasise harshness that's already present. Otherwise, it's a great alternative to the AudioQuest FLX-SLiP 14/4.



6

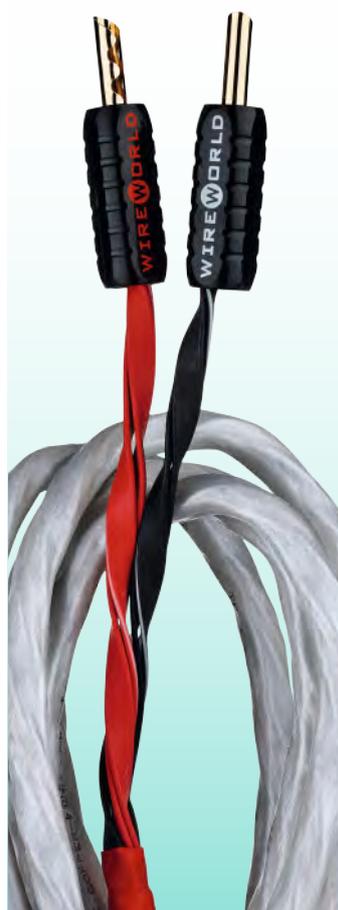
**Van den Hul The Clearwater**  
£10/m ★★★★★

**The jacket covering** The Clearwater speaker cable has an almost jelly-like consistency, which makes the cable extremely pliable - it's one to consider for installations. And the dinky plugs fitted to the end of the Van den Hul add to the cable's neat presentation and appeal.

**Fine balance and cohesion**

The appeal goes up a couple of notches thanks to a balanced and involving sound. Play Drake's *Started From The Bottom* and the cable helps to reveal great power and depth from bass notes and crisp, far-reaching highs. And it's all done without sacrificing anything in the way of cohesion and integration.

There's an impressive level of detail, dynamic clout and clarity, but it also allows your system's sense of refinement and finesse to shine through. Natural-sounding vocals and plenty of layering and texture to instruments really give tracks the ability to communicate effortlessly with the listener.



7

**Wireworld Luna 7**  
£6.50/m ★★★★★

**The Luna 7** used to be £9/m but has recently had a price drop. And that has done nothing but enhance our admiration for this fine cable.

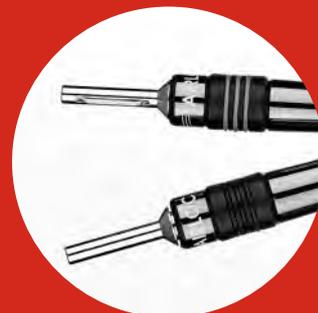
**Keen and ready to please**

From the moment you plug it into your system, the Luna 7 allows a keen and ready-to-please presentation. It isn't over-zealous or too forceful in its approach, though. Play Guns N' Roses *You Could Be Mine* and the system pours a bucketload of excitement on the listener with the crashing drum kicks, frenzied guitar play and wailing vocal. But it does so without making music sound unwieldy or reckless.

It conveys the eagerness and punch of the QED Ruby Anniversary Evolution but with a touch of added tact and guile.

The all-round ability of the Luna 7 means it should sit well with a very wide range of systems - you won't need to worry about how it interacts with the rest of your kit.

## Top Tips



### Termination

The price we've listed is for cable off a reel - chances are you'll want it terminated, but that will add to the final cost. It does make connecting easier, though, and also reduces oxidation of the cable, so we'd recommend it.



### Direction

This is a controversial subject, but we believe it can make a difference. If there are no obvious markings or arrows, look for writing and make sure it reads in the same direction of music flow i.e. from amp to speakers. Try it...

### Length

When you're measuring up for new speaker cable, ideally you should use the same length for both left and right speakers. We'd also recommend you try to keep the lengths as short as possible for best results.

For a full list of specifications and other useful info visit [whatifhi.com](http://whatifhi.com)



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**T**hinking of spending £2000+ on an AV amp? Then you'll want it to be as serious about transforming your home cinema as you are. Here are three premium contenders that really mean business.

# Serious cinema

No nonsense. No compromises. These are the performance heavyweights of AV amplification, and they mean to bring you the best home-cinema experience money can buy

## WHAT'S ON TEST?

Arcam FMJ AVR450 £2200

Pioneer SC-LX87 £2000

Yamaha RX-A3030 £2000



In contrast to its rivals, the tasteful, politely restrained appearance of this Arcam mirrors the way in which it processes sound

## In detail



### Remote app ★★★★★

Functional is probably the best way to describe the ArcamRemote, an iPad-only app that controls Arcam's current range of AV receivers. Similarly frills-free as the AVR450's on-screen menus, there are four panels that can be expanded for further tweaking, covering surround modes, picture, tone control and system information.

### Simple to find your way around

Its simplistic approach does make it easy to navigate and it's responsive too, with the receiver responding to commands from the iPad without delay. An Android version wouldn't go amiss though, and we'd like the iOS version to work on all devices - there's a lot of info for a small screen, but its big icons make it doable.



### Round the back

**1 Power boost** Both the Arcam's rivals pack more amplification, so if you want to give it a shot of power, you can use these pre-amp outputs to wire in a separate amp. **2 7.1 only** The Arcam is a 7.1-channel amp rather than 9.2, so won't support front-height with front-wide speakers. **3 Radio Gaga** There's no AM radio tuner here - hopefully FM and DAB options are enough to fill the void.

# Arcam FMJ AVR450 £2200

★★★★☆

**Arcam stepped into** this test with quite a fight on its hands, squaring up to both a well-deserving Award winner and recently tested five-star supremo. It was never going to be an easy ride.

The FMJ AVR450 comes at a premium too, topping the price bracket on test at around £200 more expensive than its testmates. Unlike its peers, though, this is not the flagship amp in its range, falling second in line to the £4000 AVR750.

As such, it can look a little under-specified on paper in comparison. It's a 7.1 channel amp, rather than the 9.2 channels we're more used to seeing at this price, with a relatively low claimed 110W of power per channel into eight ohms. The Yamaha RX-A3030, by contrast, boasts around 150W.

That drop in power is noticeable too - the AVR450 sounds smaller than both the Yamaha and Pioneer, with a much less expansive soundfield that doesn't come close to bothering its competition. It's far from small, but then it's up against a pair of powerhouses - and we know the character we'd pick.

For example, give it an explosion-heavy scene to chew on and while blasts sound solid, punchy and precise, they don't have the same muscle behind them that's found in its competitors. Bass is taut and controlled but not as weighty as we'd like, which results in a loss of impact and excitement when it comes to the big action scenes.

## Detail in the midrange

Where its strengths do lie, though, are in its open, airy treble and well balanced midrange. Vocals sound crisp and delicate, and have a wonderful handle on subtlety and transparency that means even the finest detail isn't ever overlooked.

But there's energy here too, and although some attack is slightly lacking lower down the frequency range, it surfaces in the midrange and treble. It helps the musical soundtrack of *Man Of Steel* to build momentum, tension and contemplation at various points in the movie - you don't always need big explosions to create an impact.

It's a fast mover, and is able to keep up with sudden shifts in dynamics admirably. The spread of sound

between speakers is good, if not quite as cohesive as the competition. In the *Man Of Steel* scene when Clark is overwhelmed by his senses, the different sounds whizzing around the room aren't quite as precise or as seamless in their movement as on the Pioneer, for example.

## Musical pedigree

With its roots in audio, Arcam prides itself on its AV receivers feeling just as at home with stereo music as they do with surround soundtracks. We'll always prefer even a budget stereo amp when it comes to out and out musical performance, but the AVR450 is an enjoyable listen. It has a fluid yet precise character, times well, and does a good job of organising and making sense of even complex rhythms. We'd just like that little bit more detail,

**Its strengths lie in its open, airy treble and well balanced midrange. Vocals sound crisp and delicate, and have a wonderful handle on subtlety and transparency that means even the finest detail isn't ever overlooked**

transparency and subtlety that this AV receiver can't quite reach.

Connectivity is a mixed bag. A perfectly acceptable, though not overly generous, seven HDMI inputs are found around the back - all capable of 3D and 4K upscaling - alongside two HDMI outputs. Seven analogue ins are supported by three component inputs and four composites, while digital connections are covered by four coaxial ins and two opticals. There's also an aux-in on the front panel, alongside a 3.5mm headphone jack. You'll also find a whole set of pre-amp outs and an FM/DAB radio aerial input.

## Streaming limitations

It's much less accommodating for digital music. This is a purist amp - don't expect Bluetooth, Spotify Connect (or any built-in streaming services for that matter), front-mounted USBs or any MHL port.

It is DLNA 1.5 certified, so will stream from compatible networked devices in that respect, but that's your lot.

At this price, and given the competition, these missing features feel more like stubbornness on Arcam's part than anything else. Buyers are coming to expect these things from the hub of their entertainment system.

The AVR450 is similarly purist in its DSP options too, which don't stretch much beyond the standard Dolby and DTS sound modes. While these are probably all you need, if you're a fan of the Yamaha 'more is more' philosophy, you might find yourself left wanting here.

It certainly looks the part of a £2000 amp though, feeling reassuringly hefty. The look is neatly minimalist while, in contrast, the remote is pretty flashy - and backlit to make it easy to use in the dark.

Set-up is relatively easy. The on-screen menus don't have some of the design flourishes that you'll see

elsewhere, but the simplistic layout makes sense and is easy to navigate.

We feel quite torn over the FMJ AVR450. There's plenty to like here, and heard in isolation we'd struggle to see anyone being disappointed with it. But compare it to the competition and it is instantly outclassed in size, power and specification. Arcam's resistance to digital music in its specs sheet is notable too - we'd have liked to have seen support for streaming services.

If ultimate power isn't top of your wishlist in a home cinema amp and streaming features aren't essential, then Arcam's purer, more delicate way of doing things could just win you over.

## Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Delicate, likeable character; detailed, weighty midrange; musical; dynamically strong

**AGAINST** Modest soundfield; limited streaming; bass lacks impact of rivals; 7.1 only

**VERDICT** A great amp with some notable musical skills, but the competition shows it up



As well as delivering powerfully realised effects with pinpoint precision and clarity, this Pioneer is also stacked with features

## In detail



### Remote app ★★★★★

One thing you couldn't accuse the iControl AV2013 of being is simplistic. This beautifully designed app, free on iOS and Android, doesn't just look great, it's also stacked with extensive functionality too.

Simply flick between the app's panels to choose your input, tweak sound settings, browse networked music and select different DSP modes.

### Looking the part

It looks slick too, with animations used to present some menus in a new and original way. You can even get a graphical impression of how many speakers are connected and what listening position they are calibrated for, to check in one glance it's all set up correctly. Simply put, try this app and you'll never pick up the remote again.



### Round the back

**1 Connect all your kit** There are HDMI's a-plenty here – nine in and three out – so you can hook up all your kit without worry. **2 Networking options** An ethernet port is included for wired networking, though you do get a wi-fi adapter in the box should you prefer. **3 Plenty of space** These well-spaced speaker terminals help make setting up your 9.2-channel system a breeze.

# Pioneer SC-LX87 £2000



**It takes quite** an amp to worry an Award-winner, but the Pioneer SC-LX87 squares up to the Yamaha RX-A3030 with heap of well-placed confidence.

Building on its 2012 Award-winning predecessor, the SC-LX86, it sits at the top of Pioneer's 2014 AV receiver range and is every bit the flagship home cinema amp, with stacks of features, great connectivity and, above all, a staggeringly impressive performance.

There's a lot of power behind this amp, a claimed 220W per channel (into six ohms) in fact, giving it the ability to pump scale and authority into any film soundtrack. Put on a Blu-ray of *Man Of Steel* and as Clark goes to help the men in the burning rig to safety, there's real force and weight behind every explosion, with falling debris rushing past your ears from the front speakers to the surround backs seamlessly.

## Expansive soundfield

This is helped by a large, open soundfield. Though perhaps just pipped by the Yamaha on sheer size, it will still make anything you're watching sound immediately open, airy and impressive.

As the rescue helicopter swoops away from the falling rig, seemingly flying straight over your head from the front left to the back right speaker and beyond, it's clear that one of this amp's strengths lies not just in its precision of effects placement but also in its ability to move them around the room, both convincingly and at speed.

Sound moves between the speakers with agility and confidence, and is so accurate and natural-sounding that you feel completely immersed in the action. Don't be surprised if you actually flinch to dodge a piece of falling metal.

Dynamically it holds its own impressively, with the ability to build tension up to a powerful crescendo as well as scale it right back down again. Dialogue is clear and direct, with voices sounding full of depth, texture and emotion. Even the subtlest of verbal nuances is delivered with clarity.

It has a touch more tonal neutrality than its Yamaha competition, and loses the bright edge of its predecessor to offer a well-rounded, even-handed

approach to the frequency range. While the bass is powerful, it remains tight and controlled and is never the centre of attention, and it's supported by a solid, well-judged midrange and a treble that stays just on the right side of brightness without ever sounding harsh.

It'll be down to personal preference as to what kind of balance you prefer your kit to have - if anything we'd say the Pioneer's more analytical handle on things is a little less immersive and the likes of fight scenes could feel a touch more exciting via the Yamaha.

The Pioneer's precise manner with movies bodes well for its way with music though, which, although no match for a dedicated stereo amp, is musical, cohesive and detailed.

Its even balance means it has a good way with most types of music, though - like most AV amps - it doesn't quite

**As the helicopter swoops away, seemingly flying straight over your head from the front left to the back right speaker and beyond, it's clear that one of this amp's strengths lies in its ability to move effects around the room convincingly**

have the agility to master the more complex jazz rhythms and in-depth orchestral pieces as convincingly as it does punchy pop tracks.

As well as CD playback, there is a wealth of streaming tech on board, as befits a flagship receiver. AirPlay is there for wireless playback from Apple devices, with the lesser-known HTC Connect offering wireless streaming from some HTC smartphones. Other compatible Android tablets and smartphones can stream via DLNA, as can networked computers.

## Generous compatibility

Android devices can also be hooked up to the front-mounted Mobile High-Definition Link HDMI input (one of nine HDMI ins - there are a healthy three outputs) to play music, as well as 1080p video and surround sound.

Spotify Connect is present and correct, allowing Premium users to play music and playlists (from a device playing Spotify on the same network), directly through the amp itself. Finally,

a USB port on the receiver's front panel will both play back from and charge iOS devices, while also supporting file formats including AIFF, WAV, FLAC, Apple Lossless and DSD via USB stick.

There's even an asynchronous Type-B USB input around the back, which allows you to use the Pioneer's built-in DAC instead of your computer's.

## Wi-fi if you want it

Wi-fi isn't built in, but you do get the AS-WL300 wireless converter included in the box. Set up is a bit of a faff unless you have a WPS-packing router though, and, where possible, we'd opt for a wired network connection for its stability.

Bluetooth is available too via the separately sold AS-BT200, though, with the plethora of other wireless playback options available, it's hard to see why you'd need to fork out the extra for it.

You'll also find a pair each of coaxial and optical inputs, and analogue fans will be happy with a full complement of stereo inputs, four composite inputs, three component and a set of multichannel inputs too.

The Pioneer SC-LX87 is a simply wonderful bit of kit that would make any home cinema set-up sing. It can occasionally be a little on the analytical side when we'd rather it came out all guns blazing, but its powerful, precise and punchy character is endlessly enjoyable, and can be found across all inputs. Add to this a solid design and a wealth of features, and you've got a stunning receiver that's hard not to love.

## Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Superb precision; great detail; seriously powerful; balanced sound; well featured

**AGAINST** Analytical balance can limit excitement in more upbeat scenes

**VERDICT** A superbly specified amp with a stunning performance. A must-audition



Even at this end of the market, the Yamaha's blend of rich, effortless power and detailed subtlety is rare. It deserves to be heard

## In detail



### Remote app ★★★★★

The Yamaha AV Controller app is arguably the easiest way to navigate the various settings of the RX-A3030, offering a much more visual, more intuitive experience than using the remote itself.

Compatible with iOS and Android, the app is well laid out and easy to use, with colourful icons to help illustrate the various inputs and sound programs.

### Getting the basics right

More advanced settings, such as controlling zones, switching DSP modes and tweaking EQ settings, can all be done within the app. But most importantly, it gets the basics right too, with playback, input selection and volume controls all quick to respond.



### Round the back

**1 Dual aspect** With two HDMI outputs, you can have both a TV and projector connected at the same time. **2 Custom set-up** These RS-232 and trigger inputs allow the RX-A3030 to be used in custom set-ups. **3 Old school** Legacy inputs are being dropped from a lot of receivers, but this includes 6 S-Video inputs

# Yamaha RX-A3030 £2000

★★★★★

**There's an awful** lot to love about the Yamaha RX-A3030 - it is our current Award-winner at this price after all. It won that accolade for one very simple reason: slot this 9.2-channel amp into your home cinema set-up and it will transform your movie watching from impressive to truly cinematic.

It is nothing short of a powerhouse, offering scale that stretches the soundfield far beyond the walls of our sizeable listening room, which it easily engulfs in showstopping sound.

Combine that with powerful yet agile dynamics and excellent detail retrieval, and this muscular presentation is far from all grunt and no feeling. It's got a welcoming warmth and richness to its tone that makes it endlessly listenable.

Feed the RX-A3030 any action movie - like the 7.1-channel DTS-HD Master Audio-packing *Man Of Steel* - and you'll see what we mean.

As Zod's spacecraft hones in on Jor-El and Lara's home, you feel the rumble of its approach, their path as they fly over your head and the power behind each one of their blasts to Jor-El's door.

## Depth, texture and weight

As Jor-El straps into his armour, every piece of metal clunks into place with a satisfying sense of depth and texture. The fight that proceeds shows off the breadth of the RX-A3030's abilities. Each punch lands with a solid, weighty thump, while the clashes of metal and zap of Jor-El's gun resonate sweetly without a hint of harshness.

But it's not all about the big action moments - the RX-A3030 knows how to do quiet as well. After the big orchestral build up to the launch of Cal's ship to Earth, Zod turns to Jor-El in a fit of rage and stabs him. The violins fade and silence descends on the scene. It's a dramatic moment that the Yamaha handles beautifully, keeping the intensity high until the thud of Jor-El hitting the floor cuts through the silence with authority.

It is fair to say those in the tonal neutrality camp may find the Yamaha's do-it-all approach a little heavy-handed. While it's easy to be impressed by its rumbling low frequency response, a slightly-less-rich bass might have delivered a more precise impact. It's

a minor niggle though, and the fun and powerful overall tone is bound to win over the majority.

Dialogue is crisp, clear and packed with emotion. Lara's indignant response to Zod as she lies over Jor-El's body is laced with venom, and you feel every last drop of it.

## Pick your mix

As is the norm with Yamaha AV receivers, there's a host of surround sound programs to play with - 23 in fact. From the music halls of Vienna, Munich and Amsterdam to the more generic sci-fi, adventure, drama and sports modes, each of these settings will tweak your EQ settings to best suit what you're watching.

The full auto set-up on the Yamaha takes a while, but is arguably among the most thorough on test. We found

**This is nothing short of a powerhouse, offering scale that stretches the soundfield far beyond the walls of our sizeable listening room, which it engulfs in sound. It will transform your movies from seriously impressive to truly cinematic**

the results to be largely accurate too, but it's always worth going in manually to check it's got it right first time.

As with any home cinema amplifier, the strengths the RX-A3030 has with movies don't quite translate into music and, although there's plenty of punch, you'll want a stereo amp for the most adept handling of stereo sound.

Listen to a live music Blu-ray though, such as Beyonce's *I Am... Yours*, and once again the Yamaha comes into its own, placing instruments carefully and doing well to recreate the 360-degree experience of being at a concert.

As far as streaming and network features go, the RX-A3030 is packed with the options you'd expect of an amp at this price. Wi-fi and Bluetooth aren't available out of the box though, and you'll need to add the YWA-10 wi-fi adapter at £80 and the £50 YBA-11 Bluetooth adapter to be wire-free.

Once on a network, you'll find AirPlay on board for easy wireless playback from Apple devices, and it's also DLNA 1.5 certified for streaming

content from compatible kit, such as laptops, tablets and NAS drives on the same network.

Streaming services on board include Napster and internet radio service vTuner, while Spotify Connect is now available via a firmware update.

The front-mounted USB port will work with, and charge, iOS devices, while also being able to handle FLAC and WAV files up to 24-bit/192kHz, stored on USB sticks. You won't struggle for connections round the back either, with two HDMI ARC outputs and a generous eight HDMI inputs, all of which offer 4K passthrough and upscaling capabilities.

Other digital connections include four optical and three coaxial inputs, while older AV kit isn't forgotten either, with five composite inputs, four component and S-Video inputs and 10

analogue inputs to choose from. All of this comes together to offer a well-featured AV receiver with a powerhouse performance that's hard to fault.

## Bringing the screen to life

The RX-A3030 offers a powerful and immersive home cinema experience which manages to balance scale and authority with subtlety and agility. While some might want a tauter balance, we love the Yamaha's ability to make even the oldest film feel new and exciting again. That's the sign of a truly great AV receiver, and of a well-deserving Award-winner showing no sign of losing its shine.

## Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Huge-sounding; expansive soundfield; fine detail; dynamically strong; agility; warm, rich tone; well featured; great design and build

**AGAINST** Bass could be tauter

**VERDICT** A powerhouse of an amp that will transform your home cinema set-up

Stunningly simple **Breathtakingly brilliant**



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**TEST VERDICT****THE WINNER****Yamaha RX-A3030****£2000 ★★★★★**

Power, space, warmth, richness and detail – plus gallons of excitement: the **Yamaha RX-V375** has them all. And more

**W**e always knew this premium amp showdown was going to be quite a test for the Arcam, and we were right. Against the flagship powerhouse amplifiers from Yamaha and Pioneer, it felt immediately like the lower-specced little brother of the test – both on paper and in performance.

While it offers plenty of detail, precision and musical prowess, its soundfield sounds so much smaller and less accomplished than that of its competition, and it falls short on the impact you need for those big action scenes. It's only 7.1 too, and we prefer the flexibility a 9.2-channel amp affords your set-up, particularly at this price.

In the end it was very much the Yamaha and Pioneer show, and where one left us wanting, the other piped up with the answer. It really was a closely

**The Arcam performed well, but in the end it was all about the Yamaha and Pioneer**

fought battle, and while we make our argument for the Yamaha's victory, it's well worth an audition of both to decide where your allegiance lies.

These two receivers are similarly brilliantly specified – both well-built 9.2-channel amps, with extensive connectivity, stacks of streaming options and superb control apps.

Pioneer's SC-LX87 is more precise and analytically balanced than the Yamaha though, while the Yamaha has a slightly bigger soundfield and a richer, smoother presentation. It just pips the Pioneer for excitement too, but its fuller, richer way with the low end of the spectrum means the Pioneer can be that bit more agile.

For us, it came down to which one we could imagine listening to over long periods, and that had us nodding to the endlessly enjoyable Yamaha RX-A3030.

**SYSTEM BUILDER**

This Yamaha needs some heavyweight partnering kit of quality. Here it is

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

This superb player justifies its price tag, performing to a hugely high standard across the board

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

With the power and scale that the RX-A3030 is capable of, this B&W package is a great match. Better warn the neighbours now...

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

If you have cash to splash on a projector, make sure it's this one. It's the holder of our Best Projector over £2000 Award

**Total build £9900**

For a full list of specifications and other useful info visit [whatifit.com](http://whatifit.com)

**Facts & figures****Arcam FMJ AVR450**  
**£2200 ★★★★★**

**Power** • 110W/c • **Surround modes** Dolby TrueHD, DTS MA • **Audio ins/outs** 7 x HDMI, 4 x coaxial, 2 x optical, USB/2 x HDMI • **Video ins/outs** 7 x HDMI, 3 x c'ponent, 4 x c'posite, USB, Ethernet/2 x HDMI, 3 x component, 4 x composite • **Dimensions (hwd)** 17 x 43 x 42cm

**Pioneer SC-LX87**  
**£2000 ★★★★★**

**Power** • 220W/c • **Surround modes** Dolby TrueHD, DTS MA • **Audio ins/outs** 9 x HDMI, 2 x coaxial, 2 x optical, USB, Ethernet/3 x HDMI • **Video ins/outs** 9 x HDMI, 3 x c'ponent, 4 x c'posite/3 x HDMI, 2 x c'ponent, 2 x c'posite • **Dimensions (hwd)** 19 x 44 x 44cm

**Yamaha RX-A3030**  
**£2000 ★★★★★**

**Power** • 150W/c • **Surround modes** Dolby TrueHD, DTS MA • **Audio ins/outs** 8 x HDMI, 3 x coaxial, 4 x optical, USB/2 x HDMI, optical • **Video ins/outs** 8 x HDMI, 4 x c'ponent, 5 x c'posite, USB, Ethernet/2 x HDMI, 1 x c'ponent, c'posite • **Dimensions (hwd)** 19 x 44 x 47cm

# Air Powered Performance



Sound-tuned by the illustrious Air Studios, the SC-LX87 brings studio quality sound and the pinnacle of performance with effortless Class D amplification.



Enjoy app control with iControlAV2013, 4K Ultra HD pass-through and upscaling, high resolution audio via USB-DAC, USB and network connection. Multi-zone capabilities also extend entertainment throughout the home.

**Pioneer**

[www.pioneer.co.uk](http://www.pioneer.co.uk)



40in-50in big-brand bargain sets

# HOW MUCH?

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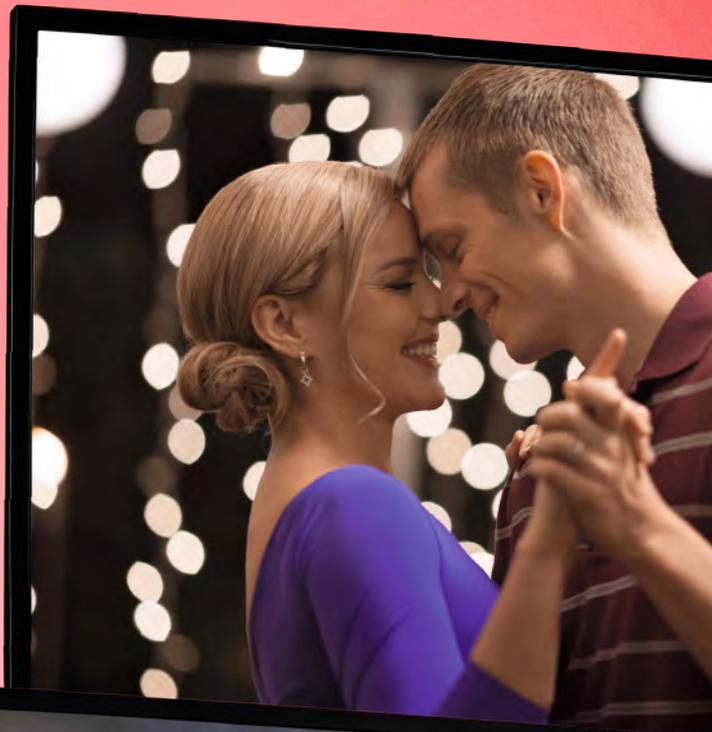
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1

# Finlux 40F8073-T

£330 ★★★★★

**Finlux is fast** becoming the go-to brand if you're after a decent TV at a proper budget price. The 40F8073-T is another success story for the marque: just £330 buys you a fine Full HD 40in screen with smart features that include Netflix and BBC iPlayer.

This is the part where we tell you what the problem is. But honestly? There isn't one. Even the admittedly poor sound quality doesn't deter us from appreciating how good a TV this is.

We play *The Wolverine* on Blu-ray and are immediately hooked by the crisp and detailed picture. The sharp edges of metal are clearly defined without looking overdone, and the textures of clothes, wood and water look refreshingly natural. This is a very talented screen. The Finlux is particularly adept at delivering deep black levels, although we wish the overall picture were a touch brighter.

## Balance across the spectrum

There's a nicely judged colour balance that handles CGI effects and natural scenery alike with deftness, although

a touch more subtlety in shading would work wonders with big blocks of colour.

Switch to streaming or standard definition broadcast, and the Finlux's clear and crisp picture holds up. There's the inevitable dip in resolution, and a hint of noise in large blocks of colours, but ultimately the Finlux delivers a confident and enjoyable picture.

## Deal with the sound separately

While we've long stopped expecting a well-rounded, detailed and solid sound from TVs, the Finlux's 16W stereo speakers sound particularly weak and shrill. Still, we wouldn't let that deter you from considering the 40F8073-T though. A budget soundbar or soundbase, such as the £200 Cambridge Audio Minx TV, will easily give the required boost.

If you think this Finlux would be light on features, think again. Netflix, BBC iPlayer, YouTube and TuneIn radio - it has the essentials for catching up with the latest TV shows and videos.

It may not have the in-depth smart content and slick interface as rivals such as Samsung's impressive SmartHub, but

**Make sure** you adjust the picture settings and run a THX Optimizer video test to get the most accurate picture

**Avoid** using the wi-fi dongle if you can - the wired connection is more stable

**Highlight** Netflix and sharp HD picture for just £330? Sold

the Finlux is simple and easy to use. The buttons on the remote need some decoding, but once you're used to them they're a breeze to use. Speedy response is a bonus, as is a web browser.

A stable, wired connection via the LAN port is our preferred method of network connection, but a wi-fi dongle is also included.

We don't know why we still get surprised when Finlux delivers such an invitingly sharp and detailed picture at a great price. It's racked up a great record with recent TVs, and the 40F8073-T adds to its repertoire. Sure, it has some issues with brightness and sound quality, but they're issues we can easily forgive. Go on Finlux, keep surprising us.

## Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Crisp edges; impressive detail and clarity; balanced colour palette; good smart apps; price

**AGAINST** Slight brightness issues; poor sound quality

**VERDICT** A sharp, exciting picture with the essential smarts - and at a terrific price

2

# Panasonic TX-P50X60B

£430 ★★★★★☆

**A 50in Panasonic** Freeview HD plasma screen for £430? That's too good a deal to ignore. So what's the catch? Well, it's not Full HD. And it doesn't have any smart features. But don't dismiss this screen on spec alone. The TX-P50X60B sits at the lower range of Panasonic's 2013 TV line-up, so it's not surprising that frills have been trimmed. After all, 50 inches is a considerable amount of screen estate, and its HD Ready status means it will still accept 1080p images.

## Contrast and richness

The pros include deep and velvety black levels with bursts of punchy and vibrant white. While this isn't the clearest or sharpest picture here, the strong and exciting contrast will draw you in, and the vivid, rich colours (if somewhat overblown even when adjusted) are pleasing to the eye.

This Panasonic has to either upscale (in the case of standard definition content) or downscale (with Freeview HD channels and Blu-ray discs) to fit the image to the screen's native 1024 x 768 resolution. That's a lot of processing

going on inside the panel, and this does take a toll on the final picture. Images are never as sharp or subtle as we'd like, but this is still a good effort.

The TX-P50X60B's lack of Full HD resolution, however, is plain to see. We're not expecting the talents of a top-range plasma here, but the edges of objects are rather fuzzy compared with rival budget sets such as the Finlux 40F8073-T above. It also isn't quite able to deliver the subtlest gradations of shading.

This is not the slimmest of slim TVs, but the sturdy and slightly heftier build is reassuringly stable. The TV's sound is strong, although it still takes the treble-heavy, sharp approach. We'd recommend investing in a budget soundbar or soundbase.

## Frugal connectivity

Connections are limited to two HDMI inputs (one of which supports Audio Return Channel), and one USB port (for playing stored media files). The Freeview HD tuner input shares space on the back with single component and composite inputs and an optical output.

**Make sure** you use it with some network-attached kit, such as a smart Blu-ray player or games console

**Avoid** this screen if you absolutely must own a Full HD TV. This one is HD Ready only.

**Highlight** A decent 50in TV for under £450 is a very attractive proposition

We're not expecting a wealth of connections on a budget TV, but the Panasonic feels particularly limited in this respect. Particularly considering the Finlux 40F8073-T, at £330, offers three HDMI inputs and two USB ports.

The absence of any network capability leaves us somewhat bereft, but you can, of course, easily gain smart features and on-demand services via a Blu-ray player.

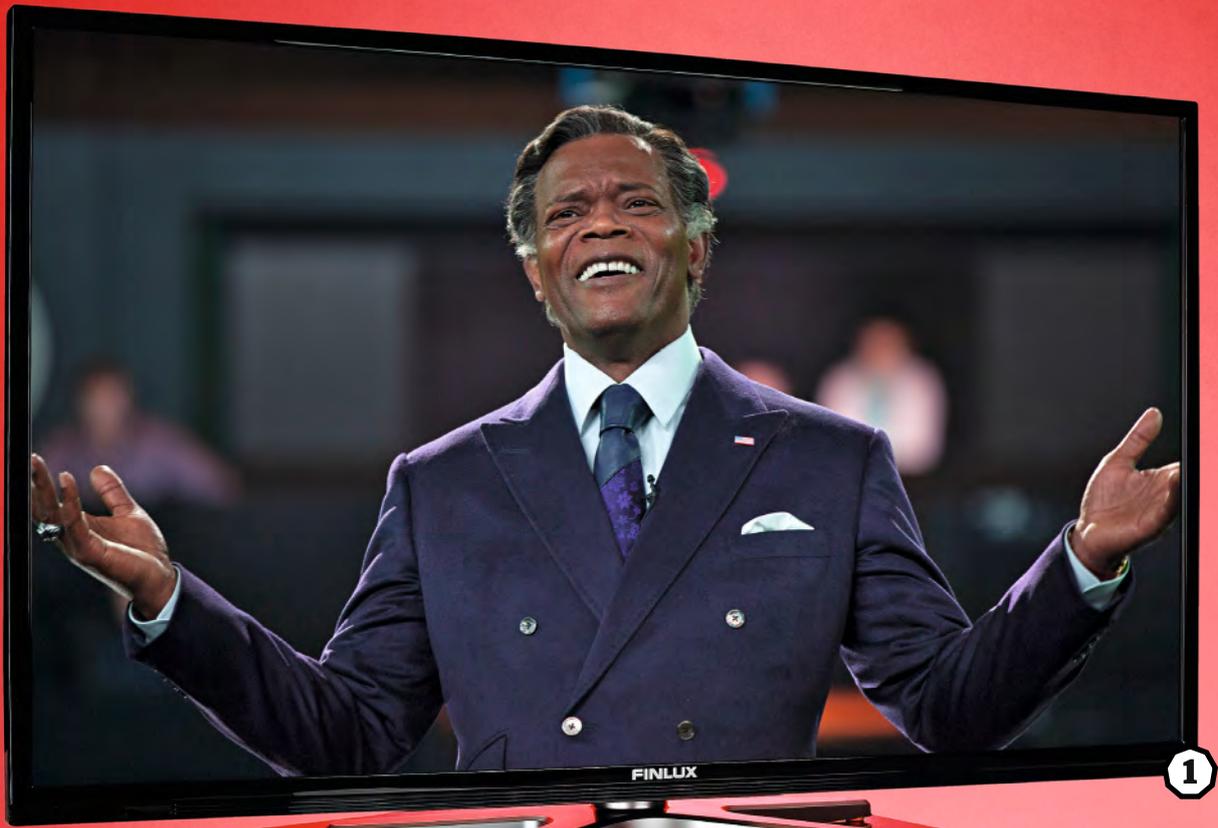
There are a lot of compromises with this Panasonic TV, but what it does offer is admirable. A 50in screen for £430 is the highlight, while the plasma's talents with deep blacks and contrast are always enjoyable. It may not be Full HD, but it has a vivid and colourful presentation to keep you interested.

## Rating ★★★★★☆

**FOR** Deep blacks; rich colour palette; striking contrast; easy to use; large screen; price

**AGAINST** Needs crisper edges; not Full HD; rivals are sharper and subtler; no smart features

**VERDICT** The large screen and punchy picture are rare at this price, but we miss Full HD



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3

## Samsung UE40F6400

£480 ★★★★★

**All the UK's catch-up TV services?** Exciting and immersive picture? Costs less than £500? Yes, please. The Samsung UE40F6400 has it all.

With a Full HD screen, active 3D, all the advantages of Samsung's excellent SmartHub, multiple HDMI connections, two remote controls and even voice control, this mid-range TV is one hell of a deal, especially since it used to be £800.

### Detailed realism

It's an attention-grabbing picture. There's a stunning level of detail that gives a sense of depth to the picture on screen, and subtleties in shading leave objects looking tangible and realistic. The vivid colours are just shy of looking overblown, lending a natural tone to the palette without sacrificing its intensity.

The Samsung is as confident displaying 1080p Blu-ray films as it is with upscaling standard-definition broadcast, and the picture is smooth and noise-free.

Even when adjusted, skin tones look more flushed than would be completely natural, but that's being super-picky. You can always tweak the tone and colour

levels - just take care not to sap away too much of the dynamic picture.

With active 3D and two pairs of active-shutter glasses included, you certainly get your money's-worth. The bright and punchy picture works well with 3D films, with test favourite *The Adventures Of Tintin* looking as exciting and enjoyable as ever.

This Samsung is also one of the few flatscreen TVs that can muster up a well-rounded, listenable quality of sound.

Samsung's winning feature is its superb smart TV content, especially the full selection of UK catch-up TV services. BBC iPlayer, ITV Player, 4oD and Demand 5 - essential for avid TV viewers. Movies-on-demand services are thin on the ground with only Netflix available, but there's always the YouTube app.

### Attractive, intuitive interface

Along with all the other trappings of a smart TV platform (Twitter, media player, Skype) the five-panel SmartHub is a stylish and sleek interface. Scrolling through the categories is swift, while the TV's programme guide is also easy to use.

**Make sure**, once again, that you tune the picture settings with a THX Optimizer disc. It'll make all the difference

**Avoid** using the voice control feature - it's unintuitive and has limited scope

**Highlight** The full list of the UK's catch-up TV services means you'll never have to miss a show

Samsung includes two remote controls with the UE40F6400: one standard button remote, and the Smart Touch remote. Both are responsive and instinctive to use. The Smart Touch is essential for the set's voice control but, while we appreciate this feature, it's a bit of a hit-and-miss affair.

There are four HDMI inputs on the back panel for plugging in your sources, along with three USB ports and a selection of analogue inputs.

With everything the UE40F6400 has to offer at this knockdown price, it's hard to resist. Not only does it come with bells and whistles galore, it also delivers the goods on picture quality. Should this Samsung be on your list? Absolutely.

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Stunning detail; punchy colours; superb range of catch-up services; slick interface; price

**AGAINST** Slight red tint to picture; motion flickers with 3D; voice control is still ineffective

**VERDICT** This stunning, feature-laden Samsung is one of the best TV bargains we've seen

4

## Toshiba 40L6353

£400 ★★★★★☆

**The Toshiba 40L6353** has plenty of things going for it: a bright and vivid HD picture, Netflix, four HDMI inputs, two USB ports and a £400 price.

Bright, punchy and relatively sharp, this screen delivers a strong performance with Freeview HD channels and Blu-ray films. Even if it isn't the last word in subtlety, motion or balanced colours, it displays an enjoyable picture overall.

Play *The Wolverine* and the Blu-ray transfer is full of bright, natural scenes that the Toshiba delivers with aplomb.

White levels and highlights are vivid, although there's a yellow-green tint that affects the colour balance and prevents the screen from delivering pure whites. Turning up the backlight contrast does add more punch though.

### In-your-face colours

The colour palette can look a touch overblown next to the likes of the Finlux 40F8073-T and Samsung UE40F6400. Toning the saturation level down helps, although green foliage never quite manages to get the weatherworn look and remain vivid.

There are motion issues when the action gets heavy, but the blurring isn't strong enough to hamper enjoyment too much. We'd set the noise reduction setting on 'Low' to smooth out some speckling present in blocks of colour.

### Stick to HD content

Watching standard-def channels, it's clear the 40L6353's upscaler isn't as talented, even allowing for the inevitable drop in picture quality. Old episodes of *Top Gear* look particularly sallow and focus takes a dive, too. We'd stick with HD content on this TV.

One word of advice: if you do take the plunge with this TV, we would urge you to pair it with a soundbar or soundbase, because its own sound quality is poor.

We were pleasantly surprised to see Toshiba's 2013 Cloud TV platform on the 40L6353. Not only does it offer the now-standard services of BBC iPlayer and YouTube, it has a couple more video on-demand services up its sleeve: Netflix is the big one, while Vimeo and Blinkbox are welcome additions. The TV's network features operate via wired

**Make sure** you invest in a soundbar or soundbase as the sound quality is pretty hollow

**Avoid** this TV if you like your electronics to work smoothly and swiftly

**Highlight** Good selection of streaming services and decent HD picture for the price

and wireless connection, but we found the wired version by far the more stable connection. It's not the sleekest of layouts compared with Panasonic's My Home Screen or Samsung's SmartHub, but at this price we won't grumble.

What we will grumble about, though, is how frustratingly slow and clunky the Toshiba is to use. The menus are slow to load and scrolling through the programme guide can be a bit of a slog.

If you can live with the clunky interface, this affordable Toshiba TV is worth an audition on the strength of its HD picture quality. Overall, it lacks the finer visual subtleties of pricier sets, but there's a good amount of detail to keep you interested.

### Rating ★★★★★☆

**FOR** Bright, punchy picture; bold colours; detailed HD picture; good streaming services

**AGAINST** Indifferent in standard definition; colours could be more natural; slow interface

**VERDICT** Overlook some usability issues, and the Toshiba's a good option if you stick with HD



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**TEST VERDICT****THE WINNER**

**Samsung UE40F6400**  
£480 ★★★★★

**W**hen we were putting together this 'what's-the-best-big-TV-you-can-get-for-under-£500?' group test, we were prepared to make more than a couple of compromises. But we soon realised we'd underestimated just what you can get for your money these days. All these TVs come with a Freeview HD tuner, and three out of four have Netflix and BBC iPlayer as standard apps.

The Samsung UE40F6400 is easily the most attractive set of the lot. Yes, it is the most expensive, but the feature level (smart apps, 3D, two remotes), and picture quality justify the price. The inclusion of all the UK's catch-up TV services is a big draw, but that stunning picture - bright, punchy and subtle - is what clinches it for Samsung.

The Finlux came so close, though: a wonderfully crisp and detailed screen, essential smart apps, and a user-friendly interface - all for only £330. It just isn't as bright and punchy as the Samsung.

You'd think Panasonic would get the short end of the stick here. It's the only non-Full HD set in the test, and it has no smart features. But it is a 50-incher, and that's a remarkably large TV for under £500. And its picture is good.

It would be unfair to say the Toshiba brings up the rear, as it's on the same rating as the Panasonic. Its picture is crisper and more detailed, but there's no hiding how clunky and slow it is to use.

The Finlux comes in at a bargain price, but the Samsung gets the nod for its terrific picture and impressively comprehensive feature list.

**SYSTEM BUILDER**

These three are all worthy partners for the Samsung, and together they create an affordable system of audio-visual excellence

**BLU-RAY PLAYER**

**Sony BDP-S4100 £80 ★★★★★**  
Budget, but brilliant. Packed with smart features, this remarkable player offers a bright, crisp and punchy picture.

**SOUNDBASE**

**Cambridge Audio Minx TV £200 ★★★★★**  
This soundbase delivers oomph, pizzazz and a great deal of subtlety - a superb boost to the Samsung's sound. Excellent value, too.

**SET-TOP BOX**

**Sky HD+2TB £250 ★★★★★**  
A never-ending list of HD channels, plenty of on-demand services and huge storage space means you'll never run out of things to watch.

**Total build £1010**

For a full list of specifications and other useful info visit [whathifi.com](http://whathifi.com)

**Facts & figures**

**Finlux 40F8073-T**  
£330 ★★★★★

Type LCD/LED • Resolution 1920 x 1080 • Full HD Yes • 3D No • Tuners Freeview HD • HDMI in 3 • USB in 2 • Networking Yes • Smart TV Yes • Dimensions (hwd) 55 x 93 x 4cm



**Panasonic TX-P50X60B**  
£430 ★★★★★☆

Type Plasma • Resolution 1024 x 768 • Full HD No • 3D No • Tuners Freeview HD • HDMI in 2 • USB in 1 • Networking No • Smart TV No • Dimensions (hwd) 72 x 118 x 8cm



**Samsung UE40F6400**  
£480 ★★★★★

Type LCD/LED • Resolution 1920 x 1080 • Full HD Yes • 3D Yes (active) • Tuners Freeview HD • HDMI in 4 • USB in 3 • Networking Yes • Smart TV Yes • Dimensions (hwd) 54 x 93 x 5cm



**Toshiba 40L6353**  
£400 ★★★★★☆

Type LCD/LED • Resolution 1920 x 1080 • Full HD Yes • 3D No • Tuners Freeview HD • HDMI in 4 • USB in 2 • Networking Yes • Smart TV Yes • Dimensions (hwd) 54 x 92 x 7cm

# The world's most desirable kit

# TEMPTATIONS

## “It's an understated but deeply impressive unit”

### ■ Bricasti Design M1 DAC

■ £7000 ★★★★★

**W**hat is Bricasti Design? It's a small, Massachusetts-based electronics company specialising in high-end digital products. The company makes just four products: two reverb processors for studio use, an exotic remote control and the M1 digital-to-analogue converter we have on test here.

While the firm doesn't have much heritage to brag about - it's only been around since 2004 - the people who

£400. It's nicely made and features an external receiver, but it should be part of the deal at this price.

Around the back it's fairly standard-going for a high-end DAC. There's a choice of four inputs - USB, coax, optical and AES/EBU - with all bar the optical able to lock onto music streams up to 24-bit/192kHz. There are also balanced XLR and single-ended RCA outputs too.

The M1 has a variable output, so can be connected directly to a power

**The quality of fit and finish is excellent. All the casework edges line up just so, and the controls feel slick and precise - no mean feat for a small company with accordingly limited resources**

founded the company certainly do, having worked for high-end giants such as Lexicon and Mark Levinson.

The M1 exhibits the same aura of quality as many of the classic products from those illustrious brands. It's a pretty functional-looking unit, but the quality of the fit and finish is excellent. All the casework edges line up just so, and the controls feel slick and precise - no mean feat for a small company with accordingly limited resources.

#### Simplicity itself

First off, we like the simple, large display. It's easy to read at a distance, even in a bright room. The M1's control layout is also simple, but adjusting basic functions such as changing source or filter settings isn't quite as intuitive as it should be. It's easy enough to learn over time though.

We're less forgiving of the remote-control kit being a cost option at a hefty

amplifier or active stereo speakers.

Taking a dedicated stand-alone preamp out of the equation gives a shorter, less complex signal path, which promises greater transparency and detail.

Admirably, Bricasti is committed to developing the M1 throughout its life. The DAC now has a USB input when earlier versions didn't, and it can accept native DSD music streams too. (DSD is the digital format SACD is based on.)

Take a look inside and it's clear that the engineers have been obsessive. This is a true dual-mono design where the left and right channels are separated out to prevent any interaction. The separation goes as far as having dedicated DAC circuits per channel and individual power supplies.

If you like to tweak you're in for a treat here: the M1 has no fewer than 14 digital filter settings. There are two broad categories: 'Linear Phase' and 'Minimum



Slatted, heat-releasing grilles cover each of the M1's three main sections and allow a glimpse inside

#### TECH SPECS

**Type** DAC  
**Inputs** 2 x coaxial, optical digital, USB, AES/EBU  
**Outputs** XLR, RCA  
**Remote control** Yes (£400 extra)  
**Dimensions (hwd)** 6 x 43 x 30cm

Phase'. Linear-phase filters are the more common type of filter used in digital equipment. They handle the frequency range evenly, having minimal time differences between bass and treble. To do this there has to be an inherent amount of delay in certain parts of the frequency spectrum, leading to a certain amount of rippling in the output before the leading edge of notes. This rippling lasts for mere milliseconds, but many people are sensitive to it.

#### The absolute Minimum

Minimum-phase filters have a different trade-off. They allow a small amount of time shift across the frequency range and suffer from more rippling *after* the leading edge of notes. The advantage is that there's no sound before the leading edge, so the edge is better represented. People also seem less sensitive to the rippling after notes than before them.

Take a look inside and it's clear that the engineers have been obsessive  
See overleaf for more detail...

M1's singlemindedly functional design is complemented by a genuinely quality feel

### Behind the music Brian Zolner Co-founder of Bricasti



**"One key problem** we wanted to address with the M1 was the elimination of jitter. One popular way is the use of an external clock, but in absolute terms that's not the best way to deliver low jitter. Knowing the side effects of cables and connectors, we wondered why you would send a signal over a metre of cable (and through connectors) to the converter. That just reintroduces jitter.

To solve this, we used a Direct Digital Synthesis clock - a near-perfect clock that's just 2mm from the converter - mounted to our solid aluminum chassis for excellent thermal stability. No cables or connectors, exact trace length and controlled impedance. And just six picoseconds of analogue audio jitter."



# TEMPTATIONS

Bricasti Design M1

## In detail

**1 Power supply** The M1 has a full dual-mono design, which means it goes as far as having dedicated DAC circuits for each channel and individual power supplies.

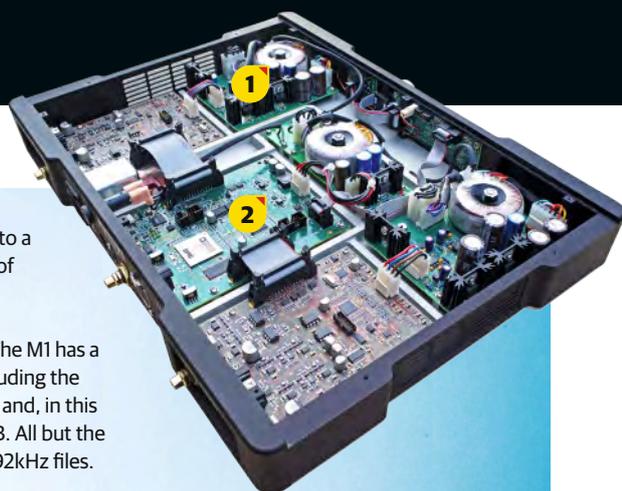
**2 Digital processor** A central circuit board handles the digital processing and input

switching, as well as the DSD manipulation. This central board has its own power supply, too.

**3 Analogue outputs** As is usual with high-end electronics, there's a choice of a balanced XLR and single-ended outputs. The M1 also has a variable output so you

can connect directly to a power amp or a pair of active speakers.

**4 Digital inputs** The M1 has a good range, including the rarely seen AES/EBU and, in this new incarnation, USB. All but the optical take 24-bit/192kHz files.



We spent a fair few hours going through the filter options and formed a distinct preference for the 'Minimum Phase' settings. They sound more natural and fluid in our system.

The six options of Minimum Phase offer various degrees of high-frequency roll-off. The choice among these is more a matter of taste and depends largely on source material. It's worth taking the effort to get it right though, because once it's optimised the M1 delivers a truly world-class performance. In our experience only dCS's Debussy (£7930) and possibly Chord's QBD76 HDSD (£4995) belong in the same league.

### Files of every kind

Our main sources are Naim's NDS/555PS streamer and an Apple MacBook. We use a range of files from highly compressed 192kbps tracks to full-fat 24-bit/192KHz material. We try a range of DSD files too. The rest of the system is our usual reference set-up of Bryston BP26/4BSST2 pre/power amplifier and ATC SCM 50 speakers.

How does the Bricasti sound? We start off with a DSD and Stevie Wonder's superb *Innervisions*. We're really impressed by what we hear. The M1 is an understated performer, one that doesn't

necessarily scream for attention. What it does instead is deliver a rich tapestry of detail that weaves and blends seamlessly throughout the frequency range to create a wholly convincing presentation.

Nothing stands out, but there's heaps of rhythmic coherence and dynamic punch. *Higher Ground* is something of a rhythmic juggernaut and the M1 delivers every bit of that energy with conviction and precision. Look past the power and you'll notice finesse is in plentiful supply too in the pleasing way the DAC delivers Wonder's distinctive vocals and the texture of the instrumentation.

Move on to Kate Bush's *50 Words For Snow* set, playing the track *Snowflake* (24-bit/96kHz) and the Bricasti continues to shine. Here it shows plenty of refinement and a lightness of touch that works superbly with this slow-burner of a track. The music is low-key, building intensity through a repetitive rhythmic beat, and the M1 has more than enough dynamic talent to convey this properly. Bush's vocals are clearly etched yet wonderfully full-bodied. Despite all the insight on offer the Bricasti never sounds overly clinical or analytical. The detail is there if you want to hear it, but the spotlight is always on the whole and the music's message.

**Balance without compromise: the M1 blends deep insight with fine musicality**

The story is similar with CD rips from The Police and Tchaikovsky. There's plenty of resolution, yet the musical message shines through clearly. The *1812 Overture* reveals an impressive way with dynamic extremes, and an inviting ability to render a large soundstage with sharply focused instrumentation.

Switching to low-bitrate files - a 256kbps version of Eminem's *Bad Guy* - we found the Bricasti's honesty continues to shine through. While showing the recording for the limited-quality file it is, the M1 stopped short of tearing it apart; the music stayed entertaining (if you like Eminem, that is).

The M1 is consistent between inputs too, and any differences are more likely to be down to the different sources used.

The Bricasti's M1 is a thoroughly impressive unit. It's an understated performer but a deeply talented one. If you have the system and budget to do it justice, we think you'll be impressed.

**Consider if** you want one of the finest outboard DACs money can buy  
**Highlight** The extent of the M1's sonic transparency is deeply impressive

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Insightful presentation; fine drive and dynamics; great stereo imaging; excellent build  
**AGAINST** Too many filter options; remote costs another £400

**VERDICT** Not so very far from the last word in external digital-to-analogue converters

**Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture reveals an impressive way with dynamic extremes, and an inviting ability to render a large soundstage with sharply focused instrumentation**

# GO ANALOGUE!



## Pro-Ject Essential II

*"A great budget buy, and a simple way to add vinyl playback to your hi-fi."*

*- What Hi-Fi? Awards, 2013*



## Pro-Ject Debut Carbon

*"The Debut has been a recommendable proposition for well over a decade. This new version keeps it as appealing as ever."*

*- What Hi-Fi? Awards, 2012*

Available in the UK through Henley Designs Ltd.

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# TEMPTATIONS

GarnuT M'inenT M3



## Behind the music Lars Goller Designer



**The tweeter wave guide:** The small half-roll fabric diaphragms are very hard and so have no break-up issues inside the audible frequency band. The result is a very smooth, transparent and dynamic character. The central wave guide fills the void inside the diaphragms.

**The woofer sliced cone:** A cone designed from one piece of material will have a resonance pattern determined by its material and geometry. Resonances are unwanted as they mask and colour audio signals. Dividing the cone into separate segments and controlling any resonances by adding damping compound into the slices minimises unwanted distortions.

Beautifully machined terminals are typical of the quality finish. Experiment with biwiring



Ring-radiator tweeter design includes a cone-shaped waveguide to improve dispersion



# “Everything shouts top-quality craftsmanship”

■ **GamuT M'inent M3** Stereo speakers

■ **£5140 (plus £1230 for stands)** ★★★★★

**N**ever heard of GamuT? We wouldn't blame you. This Danish hi-fi specialist has never shouted very loudly about its products, which is a shame when they're as good as the M'inent M3.

It took us more than a few seconds to work out that 'M'inent' is pronounced 'Eminent'. The name is not the only unusual thing about these GamuTs, either. Our review samples came with their dedicated stands attached - at the additional cost of an eye-watering £1230. There's no simple way to separate the speakers and the stands so we couldn't listen to alternative supports. Even so, it's best to consider this as a complete package, and in any case that way they perform the way GamuT intends.

## Engineering idiosyncrasies

On the surface these monitors seem to have a fairly conventional two-way design, but look closer and you'll find lots of clever engineering. That distinctively shaped MDF cabinet is designed to reduce the build-up of internal standing waves and is braced to be rigid enough to give the drive units a solid foundation. Both virtues help improve clarity and dynamics.

Move onto the drive units and you'll find the wood-fibre cone in the 18cm mid/bass driver has been sliced and coated with damping material to control its behaviour and reduce distortion. The 38mm tweeter is similarly unusual - it's a ring radiator with a cone-shaped waveguide to help control dispersion.

GamuT's engineers didn't stop there; they have paid an obsessive amount of attention to the crossover design, right down to using in-house internal cables.

Great engineering doesn't count for a lot if build isn't right, and we're pleased to report GamuT hasn't let us down; the M3s are beautifully made.

Our review samples are covered in a lovely high-gloss finish called Lava Red Burl. It's the priciest option, taking the M3's up to £7630, but pick more basic alternatives such as Satin Black, Walnut or Figured Maple and the price drops to the £5140 we've listed. Fit and finish are first-class (as we would expect) and everything speaks of top-quality machining and craftsmanship.

Is this attention to detail reflected in the sound? Yes, it is. The M'inent M3s are terrifically well balanced, sonically. Provided you accept that no 40cm tall standmounter with a solitary 18cm mid/bass is ever going to produce enough bass to rattle your furniture, there's little to criticise here and much to admire.

Tonally, they're spot on. The balance between frequencies is brilliantly judged, from the relatively authoritative and nicely extended bass right through to the wonderfully subtle, textured highs. Cymbals, in a recording such as Dave Brubeck's *Take Five*, sparkle and are delivered with plenty of bite without sounding unduly harsh or aggressive.

## Blending in

The two drive units really do blend seamlessly, rendering a pleasingly solid midrange that brims with delicacy. Nina Simone's vocal from the haunting *Strange Fruit* comes through with a full dose of emotion, with the M3s balancing muscle and finesse with great skill.

If you want the most convincing stereo imaging you'll have to work at it. We ended up with the speakers wider

apart than normal, but angled in strongly. A good amount of distance from side and rear walls is an advantage, too. Get it right and you'll end up with a wonderfully layered sound stage; we found it impossible to pinpoint the speakers' position with our eyes closed. You can add a strong dynamic performance to the list of plus points, because these monitors cope with both large scale and small variations in level and intensity brilliantly.

Rhythmic ability is good too. Rivals such as Totem's Mani-2s are more enthusiastic when it comes to charging along to the likes of Kanye West's *Power*, but the GamuTs retain an ample sense of excitement. These are entertaining speakers as well as being informative.

If you aren't lucky enough to have a listening room the size of a cavern, something like GamuT's M3 could well be ideal. Yes, they're expensive, particularly with those dedicated stands, but if you have an appropriately talented system they can sound like heaven.

**Consider if** - You value insight and articulation ahead of seismic bass

**Highlight** It's got to be the M3's sonic balance. These are great all-rounders

## TECH SPECS

**Type** Standmounter  
**Sensitivity** 88db/w/m  
**Max power handling** 400W  
**Biwireable** Yes  
**Finishes** 10  
**Dimensions (hwd)** 40 x 23 x 46cm

## Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Seamless integration; beautifully balanced presentation; superb detail resolution; expressive dynamics; excellent build and finish

**AGAINST** Dedicated stands are expensive

**VERDICT** These are some of the best standmounters we've heard. If your system is good enough, they deserve to be considered

# PLAY LIST

The movies, music and games to test your system

Out this month...



**Rush** succeeds in capturing a golden age of Formula 1 racing with all its colour and gleeful irresponsibility

## Spirited drama on and off the F1 track

**Rush**  
Blu-Ray  
Out Now

★★★★★



### Extra Features

- Deleted scenes
- The real story of *Rush*
- *Race for the Chequered Flag: The Making of Rush*

**Duration** 123m  
**Audio** English: DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1  
**Picture** 2.40:1, 1080p



**Speed fans, rejoice.** Not your thing? Well, rejoice anyway. You're in for a ride, regardless of your knowledge of motor racing.

Petrolheads will certainly be pleased. *Rush* is a sincere and mostly accurate celebration of motor racing as it was in the 1970s.

But more importantly, it's a slick, finely crafted drama and a tale of intense rivalry. It's a good script from Peter Morgan (*The Queen, Frost/Nixon*) who has a knack for developing strong, clashing characters.

The relationship between F1 legends James Hunt and Niki Lauda is tense, dynamic and at times very funny. This is bolstered by top acting from Chris Hemsworth and Daniel Brühl, whose turns are convincing and sympathetic.

For a racing picture, there's not actually that much track time. It's probably a good thing, given the repetitive nature of the sport.

The big hand of Hollywood is most apparent on the asphalt. The action favours close-ups and fancy editing over longer, more realistic takes. Nonetheless, it's capably done: these scenes are energetic and neatly framed, and succeed in conveying a sense of exhilaration.

### Track time and personal lives

The problem is that between track time and personal lives, there's not much space for anything else - leading to a few liberties.

Relationships are simplified. The female parts are sidelined, and the animosity between Hunt and Lauda feels exaggerated. Their well-documented friendship away from the track is glossed over, emerging at the end almost like an afterthought.

Then there are occasional mistakes: the Nürburgring being nicknamed 'The Graveyard' may drive fact-checkers round the bend.

But it's not a documentary, and *Rush* succeeds in capturing the golden age of F1 racing with all its colour and gleeful irresponsibility.

It also succeeds in giving your system a thorough workout. As you might expect from a movie about motor racing in the '70s, there are plenty of bright colours, which provide a great test of your screen's vibrancy.

The sound is tremendous in DTS HD Master Audio 5.1. Zooming cars make for a good test of effects steering. The sound of engines, pistons and gears is faithfully reproduced, and you can't ask for much more than a kinetic soundtrack from Hans Zimmer.

If you're after the best and most accurate film about F1 racing, you're better off with 2010's *Senna*. What *Rush* offers is an effective drama with the right spirit, even if it doesn't have all the facts. Go on - take it for a spin.

## Spotify highlights [Join us on Spotify whf.com/playlist2014](http://whf.com/playlist2014)



**Oasis: Slide Away** New to Spotify, the Oasis catalogue starts strongly and tails off quickly and decisively. Let's all remember them this way.

**William Onyeabor: Body and Soul** Outstanding Nigerian psychedelia from a flour-mill entrepreneur who's refused to discuss his music since becoming Born Again in 1985. Yeah.

**Rotary Connection: Want You To Know** Fundamentally a secular gospel nursery rhyme from the band that made Minnie Riperton a star. Call-and-response-tastic.

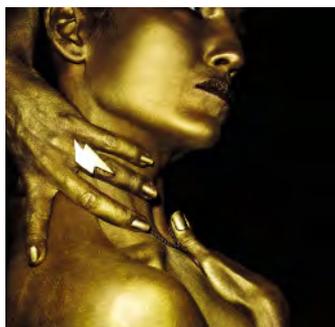
**Burial: Hiders** For an artist that's so much associated with the urban, Burial is capable of wide-open, sweepingly emotional articulation. Never so much as here, mind you.

# Music

GAMES, MOVIES  
& FORTHCOMING  
RELEASES  
p80



## Download, CD, vinyl



### JOAN AS POLICE WOMAN *The Classic*

Out 10th March

★★★★☆

What's not to like about Joan Wasser? She writes a strongly melodic song; she knows her way around a warm, earthy, Muscle Shoals-esque arrangement; she chooses her collaborators judiciously; she can balance sincerity and irony like an expert; she has absolutely impeccable taste in trousers.

Now four albums into a career that stubbornly refuses to engage with the true mainstream despite every other song sounding like an FM radio staple-in-waiting, the niche carved by Joan As Police Woman is richly

rewarding. *The Classic* sticks broadly to the established JAPW template of lushly analogue, Stax-y sounds, but here the palette is broadened out in all directions to include doo-wop-and-beatboxing (the title track), barely controlled feedback crescendos (*Good Together*) and even a bit of ill-advised reggae (*Ask Me*).

### At heart, it's soul

Despite the stylistic window-dressing, though, at its heart *The Classic* is a blue-eyed soul album, with voice and Fender Rhodes sharing equal billing. The production is widescreen and reasonably glossy, so *The Classic* sets a number of challenges to your system. Does it establish a credible stereo soundstage, and can it position instruments on there securely? Does it communicate in spades through the midrange, extracting the last iota of detail from a close-miked vocal? Does it have unquestionable control of dynamics and low-frequency attack? It does? Well then dive right in.

### Specifications

**Duration** 52m 47s

**Standout track** *Get Direct* What's the word for a song that's sophisticated, hooky and really randy all at once?

## Download, CD, vinyl



### MOGWAI *Rave Tapes*

Out now

★★★★☆

There has always been a bit more to Mogwai than to most of their nominal post-rock contemporaries. Mastering and rejecting the 'quiet-loud-quiet' dynamic early on, embracing featureless ambient soundscape flatlands as readily as clattering electronic uproar, combining studiously methodical arrangements with episodes of chaotic 'entire band pushed down some stairs' cacophony... for a band regularly accused of lacking personality, there's really no mistaking Mogwai when you hear them.

*Rave Tapes* (the band's eighth studio album since 1997's *Mogwai Young Team*) simply serves to illustrate the point - while erstwhile contemporaries like Tortoise have toiled in ever-decreasing circles, prisoners of their own rules and language, Mogwai have struck out in search of territories as-yet unconquered. These days Mogwai seem to have more in common (in terms of attitude and ambition, at least) with the likes of Aphex Twin than any post-rock guitar-botherers.

### Texture and variation

With texture, not to mention instrumental and tonal variation, to spare, as well as skyscraping dynamics and promiscuous levels of detail to be uncovered, *Rave Tapes* will have inferior systems in a lather. Those that can cope with the album's uncompromising demands, however, will uncover the powerfully defined structures submerged beneath the distortion and clamour.

### Specifications

**Duration** 49m 10s

**Standout track** *Simon Ferocious*. A two-for-one pun on Sid Vicious and Freddie Mercury. Also a *tune*.

## Listen to it this way

### The system

**Cyrus CDi £975** ★★★★★

There's a bit more space on p45 to explain just what a barnstormer this CD player is

**Cyrus 8XPd £1500** ★★★★★

Another Cyrus component that proves size is far from everything...

**Spendor A6R £2500** ★★★★★

Everything the electronics have to give the Spendors are able to deliver, intact and in full



Expressive, controlled  
and communicative -  
and so perfect for Joan

## Listen to it this way

### The system

**Marantz M-CR610 £500** ★★★★★

You don't get to be *What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision* Product of the Year by accident

**Q Acoustics Concept 20 £350** ★★★★★

Quite an achievement at the price and a beautifully balanced accompaniment to the Marantz

**Apple iPad Air £400** ★★★★★

If you're going to stream content across your network, stream it from some sexy technology



A system able to reveal  
all the album's texture  
and tonal variation



## Movie shorts

### The Call

Halle Berry stars as a 911 operator who takes her job very personally and goes up against a serial killer. We can't wait for the BBC remake.

### The Frozen Ground

Another tale of kidnap, this time with Nicolas Cage shouting a lot in Alaska and John Cusack being creepy. Apparently it's a true story.

### Force of Execution

Ving Rhames has a power struggle with a less-fighty Steven Seagal and his assassin friend. It's good if you like bad movies.

### Filth

Adaptation of Irvine Welsh's book, which means alcohol, drugs, sexual abuse, cross-dressing and hallucinations. There are issues.

## On-screen

### System tester



### Computer Chess Blu-ray Out now

★★★★☆

With all this modern technology, we can become a bit jaded. But there was a time when machines had most of us baffled, and this seemingly straightforward mumblecore effort takes us back to that time.

It is 1980, and a geeky computer convention is taking place at a hotel. Participants try to come up with the ultimate chess program, with the goal of some day defeating a human.

Also at the hotel is an encounter therapy group for open-minded couples. And a lot of cats. Paths cross and it gets properly weird. Along there way there is plenty of time for nostalgia and phobia: computers gradually shift from incomprehensible tools to boxes with minds of their own.

Boldly mundane at the start, *Computer Chess* soon gets quirky, ultimately descending (ascending?) to David Lynch levels of freakiness.

There's not much to test your picture and sound, but it might shake your sanity a little.




**Watch it this way**

<p><b>The system</b>  <b>Samsung UE40F6400</b>  <b>£500</b> ★★★★★                  A deal, a steal, an authentic bargain</p> <p><b>Sony BDP-S4100</b>  <b>£80</b> ★★★★★                  A deal, a steal etc... See above</p>	<p><b>Cambridge Audio Minx TV</b>  <b>£200</b> ★★★★★                  Park the TV here and bask in the sound</p> <p><b>HTC One</b>                  ★★★★★                  Stream via Bluetooth to the Minx TV</p>
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## Games

### The Banner Saga Mac/PC Out now

★★★★☆



20,042 people backed *The Banner Saga* to the tune of \$723,886, proving there really is an appetite for old-school tactical RPGs looking like 1950s Disney. It's beautiful and bleak, with seemingly sensible decisions still sometimes resulting in tragedy for your tribe. If enough buy it there will be sequels.

### Don't Starve PS4/Mac/PC Out now

★★★★☆



The gothically cartoon graphics are cute, but the world of *Don't Starve* is harsh. Pretty much anything can kill you, including berries, making the task of simply surviving a tall order. Last a while and you can research tools and build a camp, but die and it's all gone. As we said: harsh.

### Max: The Curse of Brotherhood XBox One Out now

★★★★☆



The setup is pure *Labyrinth*, with Max diving into a fantasy land to rescue the little brother he wished was gone. But instead of David Bowie's hypnotic tights it's got cartoon platforming and a pen that can create objects to solve puzzles. It's fun, but limited – but then it will set you back only £12.

### The Walking Dead: All That Remains iOS/Android/PS3/X360/Mac/PC Out now

★★★★☆



The first episode of series two of Telltale's episodic game based on *The Walking Dead*, and you're now playing as Clementine, the young girl you protected through series 1. She's tougher now, but still too weak for the zombie-infested world, and it's a tough ride that you and she have to survive.

## What we are waiting for...

### Movies (Cinema)

**The Lego Movie** (14 February)  
Lego deserves all the attention it can get, and right now, there's nothing we're anticipating more eagerly.

### Movies (Blu-ray)

**Escape Plan** (17 March)  
Stallone and Schwarzenegger do their own *Prison Break* with lines such as 'you hit like a vegetarian'.

### Music (Download, CD, vinyl) Drive-

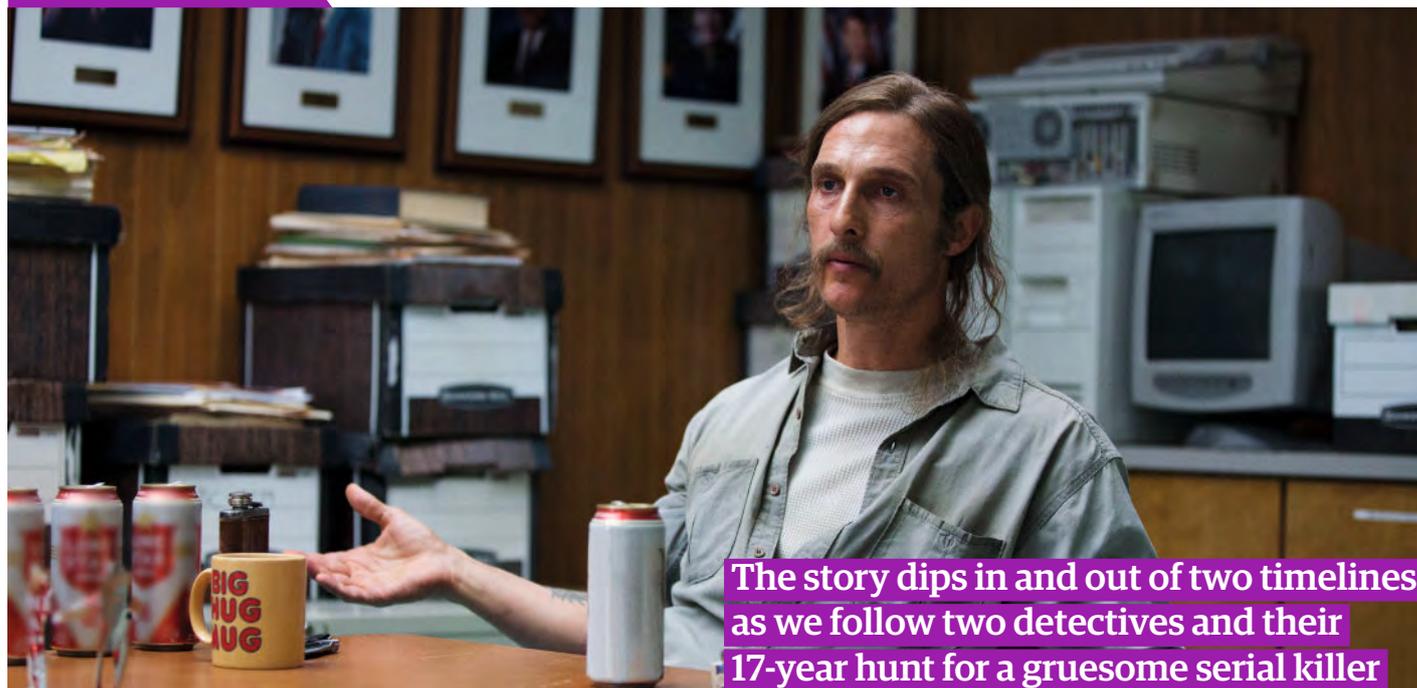
**By Truckers - English Oceans** (3rd March)  
With any luck the Truckers will continue their love affair with the great white soul sound.

### Music (Download, CD) Johnny

**Cash - Out Among The Stars** (24th March)  
The early '80s weren't kind to The Man In Black, but unheard tracks always intrigue.

## February in Hi-Def

### The best on the box



The story dips in and out of two timelines as we follow two detectives and their 17-year hunt for a gruesome serial killer

### Drama

#### House of Cards Netflix - available from 14th February

"For those of us climbing to the top of the food chain, there can be no mercy."

A deliciously immoral tale of finely woven revenge and dizzying heights of corruption - this is a political thriller like no other. The highly praised Netflix-commissioned series is back for a second series, with Kevin Spacey's calculating and scheming Frank Underwood on his way to the Vice Presidency.

But his plotting, back-stabbing and murdering to get to a position of power is being questioned by those close to him. For someone who upholds absolute trust and loyalty, will another betrayal be the undoing of Underwood? Or will he play another winning hand?

### Fleming

#### Sky Atlantic HD - February

The man who created James Bond had a few things in common with his fictional 007 agent. Playboy, gambler, spy - writer Ian Fleming's own adventurous journey from roguish playboy to naval intelligence officer could fill a book or two. In this stylish four-part drama, we delve into Fleming's life and career in London during the Second World War, and his passionate love affair with future wife Anne O'Neill. Starring Dominic Cooper, Lara Pulver and Anna Chancellor.

### Elementary

#### Sky Living HD - Tuesdays, 9pm

The New York-based Holmes and Watson return to our screens after a mid-season hiatus. Sherlock's unorthodox methods of investigation and his disregard for state laws put his career as an NYPD consultant in danger,

especially after his behaviour on a case leads to a colleague getting shot. But the highlight of the latter half of series two is the return of Jamie Moriarty. The criminal mastermind (and Sherlock's only love) is called in to consult when a young girl gets kidnapped, but her presence opens up old wounds for everyone involved.

### True Detective

#### Sky Atlantic HD - Saturdays, 9pm

This slow-burning, intricately layered and character-led HBO drama has our interest piqued.

Set against the sprawling, coastal plain of South Louisiana, the story dips in and out of two timelines (1995 and 2012), as we follow two detectives and their 17-year long hunt for a gruesome serial killer. Woody Harrelson and Matthew McCounaghey as the main leads is the biggest draw here: it's their conflicting personalities, their narrative, and

their now-fractured relationship that drives this eight-part series. We can't wait to get stuck in.

### BAFTA Awards

#### BBC One HD - Sunday 16th February

The British Academy of Film and Television Awards has always been an enjoyable and dazzling shindig, and a usually more discerning awards show than its American counterparts.

Film stars from across the globe will flock to London's Royal Opera House in their best frocks, each hoping to be the owner of a shiny new trophy. It'll be a tight race for best film this year, with Steve McQueen's critically acclaimed *12 Years A Slave*, stunning space film *Gravity* and the star-studded *American Hustle* leading the nominations. Sadly, this year's event won't be broadcast live, so we'll have to try our best to avoid spoilers on Twitter.

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# BUYER'S GUIDE

**NEW**

There's nothing quite like a **projector** for getting a full home cinema experience. We give tips and hints on setting yours up.

Confused by the new HD audio formats? Our **Jargon Buster** explains just what it all means and why you should investigate.



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For full reviews, get a barcode scanner app on your smartphone. Scan these little squares and they'll take you to the relevant section on [whatifit.com](http://whatifit.com)

## All the latest kit, all the latest ratings...

Welcome to the **UK's best guide** to TVs, hi-fi, home cinema and mobile, with star ratings for more than **1500 products**. Where other magazines rely on isolated

writers reviewing in a range of locations, our star ratings are decided by an **expert team** of reviewers working together, in a **state-of-the-art testing facility**.

Within this guide you'll find all our favourite **four- and five-star** products - including **Award-winners** - to help you pick the best kit for your budget.



Kobina Monney, Buyer's Guide Editor

### Exciting new additions...



**Cyrus CDI**

"The CDI is an exceptional player that's as insightful as it is entertaining"

**p108**



**Canton DM 50**

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

**p137**



**Sony HAP-Z1ES**

"The HAP-Z1ES is a great blend of traditional and the modern"

**p139**

### Inside

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# Your essential system set-ups

# BEST BUYS

GET THE  
BEST KIT  
FOR YOUR  
BUDGET

## Home Cinema Systems

## Hi-Fi Systems

### BLU-RAY PLAYERS



**SONY BDP-S4100**  
★★★★★

**£95**

Simply astonishing performance and pictures for less than £100. Smart functionality too: you can't go wrong...

### RECEIVERS



**YAMAHA RX-V375**  
★★★★★

**£250**

This is the perfect entry-level option for those upgrading to five-channel sound on a budget. It's a brilliant buy.

### SPEAKERS



**Q ACOUSTICS 2000i 5.1 PACK**  
★★★★★

**£625**

Our 2013 Award winner produces sound with impressive scale for movies and music.

### DISPLAYS



**PANASONIC TX-L32E6B**  
★★★★★

**£380**

If you're after a great all-rounder in both picture quality and smart features, this TV is it. Splendid.

TOTAL  
£1350

### CD PLAYERS



**MARANTZ CD6005**  
★★★★★

**£350**

This incredibly musical player offers great detail in spades, not to mention a great way with dynamics.

### AMPLIFIERS



**ROTEL RA-10**  
★★★★★

**£350**

Our 2012 stereo amp Product of the Year has a level of control and poise above and beyond what we'd expect at the price.

### SPEAKERS



**Q ACOUSTICS 2020i**  
★★★★★

**£165**

Refined, exciting and detailed - the 2020is deliver an endlessly listenable performance.

TOTAL  
£865



**SONY BDP-S790**  
★★★★★

**£200**

What a bargain! Not only is this a superb 2D and 3D Blu-ray player, it is also the first to upscale to 4K ultra high definition.



**SONY STR-DN1040**  
★★★★★

**£500**

Punch, detail and power combine in this great receiver - and it's good with stereo music, too.



**DALI ZENSOR 15.1**  
★★★★★

**£980**

This package is as entertaining as it is insightful, delivering all the drama and punch we could hope for. Superb.



**PANASONIC TX-P42GT60**  
★★★★★

**£1000**

Truly deep blacks, beautiful colours and winning smart features - this TV is a tough act to beat.

TOTAL  
£2680



**AUDIOLAB 8200CD**  
★★★★★

**£800**

This player, with its stunning sound, great DAC and digital inputs, is a big achievement.



**ARCAMA19**  
★★★★★

**£650**

A refined amp with full-bodied tonal balance, this is a deeply impressive piece of hi-fi for the money.



**TANNOY DC6T SE**  
★★★★★

**£1000**

Purposeful looks mate with a solid sound to produce a pair of exciting, agile and nuanced floorstanders.

TOTAL  
£2450



**MARANTZ UD7007**  
★★★★★

**£700**

This universal player is fantastic with Blu-rays, CDs and even SACD and DVD-A formats.



**YAMAHA RX-A3030**  
★★★★★

**£2000**

As muscular as it is detailed, this amp will make you feel as if you're sitting in a large cinema hall.



**KEF R100 5.1**  
★★★★★

**£2850**

Best Buy for 2013, the R100 5.1 is simply superb with demanding film soundtracks - and is great in stereo too.



**PANASONIC PT-AT6000E**  
★★★★★

**£3000**

Superb in 2D, this projector also excels at 3D. Edges are sharp, pictures have depth and stability.

TOTAL  
£8550



**ROKSAN CASPIAN M2 CD PLAYER**  
★★★★★

**£1800**

Combines bite, refinement and rhythm better than anything else we've heard at this price.



**ROKSAN CASPIAN M2 AMPLIFIER**  
★★★★★

**£1800**

The perfect partner for the M2 CD player. This amp is dynamic, detailed and entertaining.



**SPENDORA6R**  
★★★★★

**£2500**

Attacking, detailed and balanced, these floorstanders demonstrate a winning way with dynamics.

TOTAL  
£6100

## Complete your home cinema system

### SET-TOP BOXES

Sky+HD 2TB £250  
Humax HDR-1000S (500GB) £220  
Humax DTR-T1010 £230

### COMPACT SPKRS

Tannoy HTS101 £400  
Q Acoustics Q7000i £900  
B&W MT60D £1950

### FULL-SIZE SPKRS

Q Acoustics 2000i 5.1 Pack £625  
DALI Zensor 15.1 £980  
B&W CM9 Theatre £4200

### SUPPORTS

Target CL430 £190  
Atacama Eris Eco £460  
Custom Design FS 104 Signature £200

### PROJECTORS

Epson EH-TW5910 £900  
Epson EH-TW4400 £2000  
Panasonic PT-AT6000E £3000

### SUBWOOFERS

B&W ASW610 £400  
B&W ASW610XP £700  
Velodyne SPL-1000 Ultra £1400

### SOUNDBARS

LG NB4530A £300  
Philips HTL 9100 £600  
Monitor Audio ASB-2 £1000

### REMOTE CONTROLS

One For All Zapper £10  
Logitech Harmony One £125  
Logitech Harmony 1000 £280

## Grow your hi-fi system

### TURNTABLES

Pro-Ject Essential II £200  
Rega RP3/Elys2 £550  
Rega RP6/Exact £1000

### RADIOS

Pure Evoke F4 £170  
Geneva WorldRadio DAB+ £270  
Arcam T32 £480

### MICRO SYSTEMS

Denon D-M39DAB £310  
Marantz M-CR610 £500  
Naim UnitiQute 2 £1150

### TABLETS

Google Nexus 7 £200 (16GB)  
Google Nexus 10 £390 (32GB)  
Apple iPad Air £480 (32GB)

### HEADPHONES

AKG K451 £170  
Grado SR80i £135  
Beyerdynamic MMX10i £100

### AUDIO CABLES

Audioquest FLX-SLIP 14/4 £5.80/m  
Atlas Elements Integra £45  
Supra USB 2.0 £30



# D 3020 HYBRID DIGITAL AMPLIFIER

Takes the original NAD concept straight to the 21st century using the latest high speed digital technology. The award-winning D 3020 DAC/Amplifier includes coaxial and optical digital inputs along with an analogue input. It's asynchronous USB input ensures the lowest possible jitter from notoriously unstable computer audio outputs along with support for 24/96 HD studio master music files.

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Easy to set up and simple to use. Stream music wirelessly from your iPod, iPhone or iPad. Adding further Wireless Music Systems is easy too, allowing music to be taken from room-to-room.

NEW

£249 OR LESS



**DENON • COCOON STREAM DSD-501 WIRELESS MUSIC SYSTEM**  
Wireless speaker system combining excellent sound quality with an impressive feature count including AirPlay®, Internet radio and streaming from any network-attached hard-drive.



£499 OR LESS



**NAD • VISO 1A+ • WIRELESS MUSIC SYSTEM**  
Streaming system with both AirPlay® and Bluetooth. Ideal for wirelessly playing music from your iPod, iPhone, iPad or any Bluetooth or AirPlay enabled smartphone, tablet or laptop.

£2099 OR LESS



**CYRUS • STREAM XP2 Qx • MUSIC STREAMER**  
Award-winning, high quality audiophile music streamer with incorporated DAC and pre-amplifier. This flagship streamer allows you to enjoy high quality music with no hassle. Stream XP2 Qx will make your system come alive!

NEW

£799 OR LESS



**SONY • HAP-S1 HDD AUDIO PLAYER SYSTEM**  
Take your music enjoyment to new heights with Sony's new HAP-S1 500GB HDD audio system with 2x40W analogue amplifier, easy music file transfer and smartphone browsing.

£1999 OR LESS



**NAD • M50 • DIGITAL MUSIC PLAYER**  
If you love digital music, the M50 will become the heart of your collection, managing and controlling all your music and eliminating the need for a computer. Decodes all the popular formats including Linear PCM up to 24-bit/192kHz and FLAC.

£2795



**NAIM • UNITI 2 ALL-IN-ONE NETWORK SYSTEM**  
Combines an integrated amplifier, CD player, DAB/FM tuner, internet radio, iPod dock, digital-to-analogue converter and high-resolution 24bit/192kHz capable network stream player.

£1150



**NAIM • UNITIQUTE 2 ALL-IN-ONE STREAMING SYSTEM**  
All-in-one system featuring a 30W amplifier, FM/DAB/Internet radio and wired and wireless connections to play network digital audio. UnitiQute 2 can play USB-stored music files of up to 32bit/192kHz resolution.

£399 OR LESS



**PIONEER • N-50 • MUSIC STREAMER**  
Award-winning audiophile Network player supporting AirPlay® and DLNA wireless technologies, allowing you to stream music wirelessly from your iTunes libraries or iOS devices. When connected to your home network, you can also enjoy a wide variety of online music services remotely.

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**NAD • C 556 • TURNTABLE**

Time to enjoy vinyl collections with extraordinary quality! With a minimalist design, the C 556 turntable offers accurate reproduction by using performance-focused parts and components that put music first.



NEW

£575 OR LESS

**PRO-JECT • 1 XPRESSION CARBON • TURNTABLE**

With its Carbon armtube and supplied Ortofon 2m Silver cartridge, the 1 Xpression Carbon sets new standards in its price range.



£649 OR LESS

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£649 OR LESS

**ARCAM • FMJ CD17 / A19 • CD / AMPLIFIER**

Arcam's A19 integrated amplifier delivers 50W per channel and includes 7 analogue inputs, a MM phono input and is the perfect partner for the CD17 CD player.



£799 OR LESS

£749 OR LESS

**AUDIOLAB • 8200CD / 8200A • CD / AMPLIFIER**

The award-winning 8200CD features a wealth of digital inputs that will keep it playing all your music regardless of how it may be stored.



NEW

£399 OR LESS

WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2013

**ARCAM • irDAC • DAC**

Designed to be the heart of a digital system. Includes asynchronous USB and a direct iPod input to optimise sound quality. All inputs can be controlled through an IR remote that will also control iPods, iPhones, PC and Mac computers.



NEW

£975 OR LESS

£1499 OR LESS

**CYRUS • CD i / 8 DAC • CD PLAYER / AMPLIFIER / DAC**

With its 2 x 70 W power output and extended range of digital inputs, the 8 DAC amplifier is a great partner for the new CD i CD player.



NEW

ESSAV .COM

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NEW

ESSAV .COM

**MARANTZ • CD6005 / PM6005 • CD / AMPLIFIER**

Replacing the 6004 models, the 6005 amp gains digital inputs using the same 24-bit/192kHz DAC as the CD player which now features enhanced USB playback and improved performance.



£599 OR LESS

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**AUDIOLAB • M-DAC • DAC / PREAMP**

Award-winning DAC featuring a USB input with asynchronous data processing along with two coaxial and optical digital inputs. High-res 24-bit/192kHz music files can be played via its coaxial input.



£249 OR LESS

£249 OR LESS

**NAD • C 516BEE / C 316BEE • CD / AMPLIFIER**

Received an outstanding product award from Hi-Fi News magazine who described the C 316BEE as an "absolute barn-stormer of an amplifier". The C 516BEE is the perfect partner.



£349 OR LESS

£499 OR LESS

**ROTEL • RA-10 / RCD-12 • AMPLIFIER / CD**

Award-winning amplifier from Rotel. Delivers 40 Watts per channel and includes four line level inputs and a phono input. Ideal partner for the RCD-12 CD player.



£179 OR LESS

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**HRT • MICRO STREAMER • DAC**

Small enough to fit in the palm of your hand and light enough to carry in a shirt pocket, the microStream is a USB connected and powered, ultra high-performance external sound card for computers, tablets, smart-phones or any compliant host powered loudspeakers.



£799 OR LESS

apt-X CSF Bluetooth

AirPlay

**NAD • D 7050 • NETWORK AMPLIFIER / DAC**

Combines NAD's most advanced digital platform, Direct Digital technology with Apple AirPlay Wi-Fi streaming to create the ultimate plug'n play solution for wireless music.



NEW

£895 OR LESS

apt-X CSF Bluetooth

**ROKSAN • KANDY K2 BT • AMPLIFIER**

Sets new benchmark for performance and is even more powerful than its award-winning predecessor. Features apt-X for direct streaming via connection to any bluetooth-enabled device.



£399 OR LESS

**NAD • D 1050 DAC / HEADPHONE AMP**

The best way to add Computer Audio and HD Digital to your hi-fi system. In fact, all digital sources will get a boost when the D 1050 takes over for the inferior digital circuitry found in everything from Blu-ray, DVD and CD players, to music streamers and set-top boxes.



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WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2013

**DENON • D-M39DAB • CD / DAB SYSTEM**

This micro component system gives you clean dramatic sound, and more life to iPod and iPhone music libraries via its digital USB input. Includes DAB/DAB+/FM tuner.



NEW

ESSAV .COM

WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2013

AirPlay

**MARANTZ • M-CR610 • CD / DAB / NETWORK SYSTEM**

Enjoy great sounding music from diverse sources, including Internet radio, music-streaming services, mobile devices, TV and other digital audio sources.



£1499 OR LESS

**NAD • M51 • DAC**

This award-winning DAC / pre-amp features optical, coaxial, USB and HDMI inputs, all of which can handle files up to 24-bit/192kHz. The M51 will truly transform any system.



NEW

£399 OR LESS

AirPlay

**YAMAHA • CRX-N560D • CD / DAB / NETWORK SYSTEM**

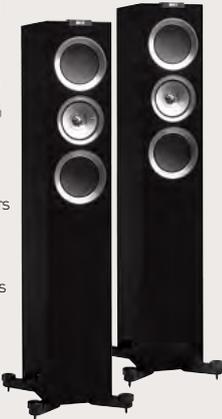
This Hi-Fi system, with a CD player, DAB/DAB+ tuner for digital broadcasts and Network compatibility with AirPlay, combines elegant design with high quality sound.



### BOWERS & WILKINS • CM10

Introducing the CM10, a new flagship for the CM series that combines technologies from the Reference ranges with innovative new construction techniques. The result is simply spectacular.

**NEW** £2999 OR LESS



### KEF • R500

The smallest of the floorstanders in the R Series. Uses the latest generation Uni-Q driver array and two 5.25-inch aluminium bass drivers. Its slim proportions and sleek contemporary looks make it perfectly suited for any interior.

£1499 OR LESS



### KEF • LS50

An innovative concept derived from the legendary LS3/5a. Rarely the case in such a compact design, the LS50 monitor delivers a rich, multi-dimensional 'soundstage experience' that is out of all proportion to its size.

£799 OR LESS



**TANNOY • REVOLUTION DC6T SE**  
Award-winning compact, floorstanding speakers featuring Tannoy's unique Dual Concentric™ drive unit along with trapezoidal cabinets. Exclusively finished in luxury Espresso colour real wood veneer.

£999 OR LESS

### MONITOR AUDIO SILVER 6

2.5 way speaker system combining excellent dynamics with a naturally rhythmic sonic character and tight, controlled bass. The Silver 6 is an outstanding communicator of music and film audio.

**NEW** £999 OR LESS



**PSB IMAGINE MINI**  
Compact speakers with startlingly big and commanding sound. WALNUT FINISH

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**Q ACOUSTICS • CONCEPT 20**  
A truly remarkable new speaker which delivers a level of sonic performance previously only available to audiophiles able to invest in high-end models.

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### PMC • TWENTY-23

An open, engaging and communicative loudspeaker that defies its size both the depth of bass and scale of presentation by taking any music or film material in its stride. The sound is vivid and dynamic and delivered with authoritative bass.



£2300 OR LESS



### PMC • TWENTY-22

An astonishingly natural balance and high dynamic capability are the hallmarks of this speaker. It creates a precise sound stage and profound bass performance from its compact cabinet.

£1970 OR LESS

## SONOS THE WIRELESS Hi-Fi SYSTEM

The Sonos Wireless Hi-Fi System delivers all the music on earth, in every room, with deep, richly textured sound. Sonos is the only system that combines Hi-Fi sound with high-performance wireless. Plus it's simple to set-up, control and expand so you can easily fill your home with music.

ESSAV.COM



**qobuz**  
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Bluetooth



**NEW**

£299 OR LESS

**RUARK AUDIO • MR1 • BLUETOOTH SPEAKER SYSTEM**  
Standing just 17cm tall, the MR1 speakers feature 20W of Class A-B amplification, a 75mm mid/bass unit and 20mm tweeter in each enclosure. The handcrafted cabinets are finished in a choice of rich walnut veneer, soft white or soft black lacquer.

### BOWERS & WILKINS P7 HEADPHONES

With P7, everything is designed to allow you to lose yourself in music. Bass is tight, vocals are precisely defined, and there's a wonderful sense of space, balance and clarity across the whole frequency range. P7's cable comes with a remote/microphone attachment, so it works seamlessly with your iPhone.



**NEW**

£329 OR LESS

WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2013

### NAD VISO HP50 HEADPHONES

Designed for long-wearing comfort and listening with ultra-soft noise-isolating earpads. The convenient three-button Apple remote offers full control of all Apple music and call functionality right at your fingertips, plus voice control with Siri-compatible devices.



**NEW**

£249 OR LESS

### SENNHEISER MOMENTUM HEADPHONES

Closed circumaural headphone design using high-performance neodymium magnets for extraordinarily rich and detailed stereo sound. For excellent connectivity, the headphones are fitted with a 3.5 mm stereo jack and with nominal impedance reduced for mobile players.



£259 OR LESS

WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2013

FOR THE LATEST PRICES AND OFFERS VISIT [WWW.SSAV.COM](http://WWW.SSAV.COM) OR CONTACT YOUR LOCAL STORE

## Real Stores

Sevenoaks Sound & Vision have 26 stores nationwide with plans to open more during 2013. Each carries the best in home cinema and Hi-Fi equipment on display, ready for you to watch, listen to and compare in our dedicated demonstration rooms.

## Real Products

A wide selection of products from the world's leading manufacturers is in stock and available for you to take home. We also offer a delivery and installation service as well as a convenient on-line click and reserve option for many of our products.

## Real People

Our staff are friendly, knowledgeable and passionate about music and film and the equipment needed to get the most out of your collection. They will be delighted to assist you in making the right selection to ensure you enjoy your system for years to come.

## Real Value

Fantastic value for money is our aim. Although we remain independent, you will be pleasantly surprised just how competitive we can be - with the added benefit of seeing, hearing and touching the product before you buy, and someone to help if things go wrong.

Please Note: Some brands/products are not available at all stores. Special/added value offers are not in conjunction with any other offer (NICWA00).

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**SEVENOAKS**  
SOUND & VISION



NEW

£1499 OR LESS

**ARCAM • FMJ AVR380 • AV RECEIVER**  
7.1-channel AV receiver combines 4K "Ultra HD" upscaling and 3D video capability with Arcam's legendary sound quality. Also Available: ARCAM FMJ AVR450 & AVR750



ESSAV.COM

**PIONEER • VSX-528 • AV RECEIVER**  
Features high-resolution music file playback, 4K Ultra HD Pass Through, AirPlay, vTuner Internet Radio and DLNA support. Also Available: PIONEER VSX-923



ESSAV.COM

**DENON • AVR-X3000 • AV RECEIVER**  
7.1-channel receiver featuring support for Apple AirPlay, DLNA 1.5 compatibility and online music services such as Spotify. Also Available: DENON AVR-X2000 & AVR-X4000



NEW

ESSAV.COM

WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2013  
BEST AV RECEIVER  
SOUND CHINA AWARDS  
POWERED BY LISTEN

**PIONEER • SC-LX57 • AV RECEIVER**  
Brings studio quality sound to your living room. This receiver allows you to experience films exactly as the creators intended. Also Available: PIONEER SC-LX87



ESSAV.COM

**YAMAHA • RX-V675 • AV RECEIVER**  
New highly capable and versatile 7.2-channel Network AV receiver with multi-zone compatibility. Also Available: YAMAHA RX-V375 & RX-V475



NEW

£1999 OR LESS

WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2013  
BEST AV RECEIVER  
SOUND CHINA AWARDS  
YAMAHA AWARDS

**YAMAHA • RX-A3030 • AV RECEIVER**  
AV Receiver with 11.2 Channel expandability and CINEMA DSP HD3 for the ultimate in surround sound performance. Also Available: YAMAHA RX-A1030



WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2013  
BEST SOUND BAR

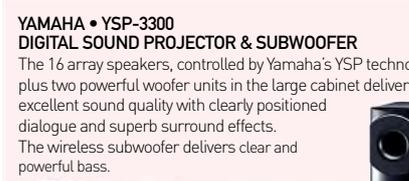
£599 OR LESS

**SONOS • PLAYBAR  
SOUNDBAR & WIRELESS SPEAKER**  
This plug-and-play unit incorporates 9 integrated amplified speakers. Simply connect it to your TV with the supplied optical cable to deliver an epic home cinema sound in your own living room. PLAYBAR can also expand your existing Sonos system.



£1649 OR LESS

**B&W • PANORAMA 2 • SOUNDBAR**  
Panorama 2 adds a new dimension to home entertainment, bringing truly immersive high quality sound to your TV from a single, discreet speaker. Bowers & Wilkins experience in developing technologies for the world's most advanced home theatre speakers ensures Panorama 2 sounds amazing.



NEW

ESSAV.COM

**YAMAHA • YSP-3300  
DIGITAL SOUND PROJECTOR & SUBWOOFER**  
The 16 array speakers, controlled by Yamaha's YSP technology, plus two powerful woofer units in the large cabinet deliver excellent sound quality with clearly positioned dialogue and superb surround effects. The wireless subwoofer delivers clear and powerful bass.



**KEF • V720W  
SOUNDBAR & SUBWOOFER**  
Superbly engineered and incorporating KEF's latest audio technologies, the V720W offers the acoustic integrity of a conventional hi-fi speaker system without the clutter or complexity that they can entail.

NEW £799 OR LESS



WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2013  
BEST SOUNDBAR

NEW £999 OR LESS

**MONITOR AUDIO • ASB-2 • SOUNDBAR**  
If ever there was a complete home entertainment audio system built for today's media delivery, then the ASB-2 is it. The miraculously compact ASB-2 soundbar combines a high performance active audio system with the very latest wireless streaming technologies.



NEW

£399 OR LESS

**YAMAHA • YSP-1400  
DIGITAL SOUND PROJECTOR**  
The Yamaha YSP-1400 soundbar reproduces presence-rich sound over a wide area. Supporting both Bluetooth and a dedicated app for smartphone control, this new-generation soundbar increases enjoyment and convenience.

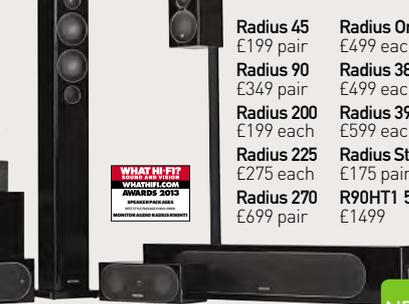


WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2013  
SPEAKER PACKAGE  
BEST 5.1 SYSTEM

£2849 OR LESS

**KEF • R100 5.1  
SPEAKER PACKAGE**  
Award-winning 5.1 package comprising four R100 speakers, an R200C centre speaker and R400B active subwoofer. Great for both home cinema and music.

**MONITOR AUDIO  
RADIUS SERIES**  
Radius series blend of great sound and space-efficient design has been further refined to include all new metal drivers and new models fashioned for the demands today's style conscious audio fans.



WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2013  
SPEAKER PACKAGE  
BEST 5.1 SYSTEM

Radius 45 £199 pair  
Radius 90 £349 pair  
Radius 200 £199 each  
Radius 225 £275 each  
Radius 270 £699 pair  
Radius One £499 each  
Radius 380 £499 each  
Radius 390 £599 each  
Radius Stand £175 pair  
R90HT1 5.1 £1499

NEW



**KEF • E305 • SPEAKER PACKAGE**  
Inspired by KEF's multiple award-winning 'egg' design, the new E Series packs uniquely advanced technologies in highly distinctive satellite speakers and a powered subwoofer.

£899 OR LESS



WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2013  
SPEAKER PACKAGE  
BEST 5.1 SYSTEM

£1089 OR LESS

**B&W • MT-50 • SPEAKER PACKAGE**  
This system swaps the PV1D for the compact but punchy ASW608 Subwoofer. Available in a matt black and white finishes.



WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2013  
SPEAKER PACKAGE  
BEST 5.1 SYSTEM

**Q ACOUSTICS • Q7000i  
SPEAKER PACKAGE**  
Stylish 5.1 speaker package that delivers dynamic sound for movies, but with the ability to play music. Comprises four satellites, a centre speaker plus an active subwoofer in classic black or white matt finishes with a gloss trim.

NEW

£900 OR LESS



# UHD TV

Ultra High Definition 4K

## SAMSUNG

NEW F9000 SERIES • 4K ULTRA HD TV

The Samsung F9000 brings stunning 4K Ultra HD to features like voice recognition, gesture control and face recognition. As well as upscaling your content to four times the resolution of Full HD, this TV shapes itself around your needs with S Recommendation technology.

55 65



TO THE POWER OF **4K**  
ULTRA HD TV

**FREE  
FIVE YEAR  
WARRANTY  
ON ALL 4K TVs**

## Panasonic

NEW WT600 • 4K ULTRA HD TV

Introducing the new Panasonic TX-L65WT600 65" 4K 3D LED TV (Ultra HD) equipped to deliver the mind-blowing picture quality of 4K on an impressive 65" screen.

TV's newest innovation is its most beautiful yet. With 3840 x 2160 resolution, 4K display fits four times as many pixels into the screen than even Full HD, meaning you see more of the ultra-fine detail and making the world you look at inside the screen appear as real as the one outside your window.

With greater detail, depth and sharpness than full HD, you'll feel the power of 4K, and see just what you've been missing.

65

## SONY 4K

NEW X9 SERIES • 4K ULTRA HD TV

Picture quality that must be seen to be believed. With a screen resolution of 3840 x 2160 – that's 8 million pixels – 4K technology offers four times the detail of Full HD. Take a movie you've seen hundreds of times and you'll see things that you couldn't before, from an individual leaf on a distant tree to a tear drop in the heroine's eye.

55 65



PANASONIC • VT65 SERIES • 3D PLASMA TV

50 55 65



SONY • W905 SERIES • 3D LED TV

40 46 55



SAMSUNG • F8000 SERIES • 3D LED TV

40 46 55 65 75



MARANTZ • UD7007 • UNIVERSAL DISC PLAYER

Enjoy exceptional sound and picture quality from many formats including SACD, DVD-Audio, 3D Blu-ray and your home network.

Also Available: ARCAM FMJ BDP300



PIONEER • BDP-450 • 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

Brings Blu-ray, DVD, 3D playback and the most advanced networking features to home entertainment, this player even upgrades DVD video to near HD.

Also Available: PIONEER BDP-LX55



SONY • BDP-S790 • 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

Give your movie collection the red carpet treatment with this award-winning player with advanced networking features, superior audio performance and support for SACD.

Also Available: SONY BDP-S4100

FOR THE LATEST PRICES AND OFFERS VISIT [WWW.SSAV.COM](http://WWW.SSAV.COM) OR CONTACT YOUR LOCAL STORE

### Stores Nationwide

We have a national network of stores and a hard-won reputation for outstanding customer service.

### Website

Visit our new website for a streamlined on-line experience with a better defined product section, more product choices and an improved search engine.

\*THESE STORES ARE FRANCHISED AND OPERATE UNDER A LICENCE AGREEMENT TO SEVENOAKS SOUND & VISION

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Cambridge • 01223 304770  
Chelsea • 020 7352 9466  
Cheltenham • 01242 241171  
Chorleywood • 0845 5046364  
Epsom • 01372 720720

Exeter • 01392 218895  
Guildford 01483 536666  
Holborn • 020 7837 7540  
Kingston • 020 8547 0717  
Leeds (Wetherby) 01937 586886  
Loughton • 020 8532 0770  
Maidstone 01622 686366  
Norwich • 01603 767605  
Oxford 01865 241773

Reading • 0118 959 7768  
Sevenoaks 01732 459555  
Sheffield • 0114 255 5861  
Southampton • 023 8033 7770  
Tunbridge Wells 01892 531543  
Weybridge 01932 840859  
Witham (Essex) 01376 501733  
Yeovil • 01935 700078

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**SEVENOAKS**  
SOUND & VISION



## LCD, LED & plasma TVs

**LCD** Once only in smaller screens; now the most common type of panel  
**LED** This refers to the kind of backlighting used on an LCD panel  
**Plasma** The rival to LCD, now usually only seen on larger screens

### The shortlist



**AWARD WINNER**

#### Hannspree SL22DMBB

"It may be light on features, but it excels in performance. If you want a small, no-frills TV, this Hannspree is an excellent choice."



**PRODUCT OF THE YEAR**

#### Panasonic TX-P42GT60B

"Panasonic may be vague on the future of plasma, but if this TV is anything to go by, the tech has never been better."



**AWARD WINNER**

#### Samsung PS51F5500

"A superb all-rounder with a fantastic picture and a strong feature set. At this price you won't find a better 50in set."

### Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Type	Size (in)	Resolution	Smart	Active 3D	Passive 3D	Freeview	FreeSat	HDMI	Dimensions (WxD, cm)
<b>Up to £500</b>														
Alba AMKDVD22W	130	11.13/GT	★★★★★	A capable set but there are better options for broadcast TV	LED	22	1920x1080						1	38x52x17
Celcus LCD40S913FHD	250	02.13/ST	★★★★★	Big screen on a budget: a real supermarket special	LED	40	1920x1080						3	97x22x66
Finlux 26F7030	240	12.12/GT	★★★★★	A very fine and flexible passive 3D 26in screen	LED	26	1920x1080						2	29x65x45
Finlux 32F8030-T	280	02.13/ST	★★★★★	Great picture and the latest online features: bargain	LED	32	1920x1080						4	49x78x4
Finlux 32F7020-T	280	09.13/ST	★★★★★	Patchy 3D but still worth a look for budget buyers	LED	32	1920x1080						4	48x77x4
<b>Hannspree SL22DMBB</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>01.14/GT</b>	<b>★★★★★</b>	<b>Best 22in TV, Awards 2013</b>	<b>LCD</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>1920x1080</b>						<b>1</b>	<b>53x39x17</b>
Hannspree AD32UMMB	220	02.13/ST	★★★★★	A solid option set for mainly watching TV	LED	32	1366x768						3	44x73x7
Kogan LULED24DVDYA	134	02.13/ST	★★★★★	This versatile little set is fine value for money	LED	24	1920x1080						2	38x58x5
Kogan KULED22XXXYA	110	11.13/GT	★★★★★	Cheap and cheerful and all the better for it	LCD	22	1920x1080						2	39x54x17
Linsar 22LED906T	230	12.12/GT	★★★★★	A great 22in set with a DVD player and Freeview HD	LED	22	1920x1080						2	38x53x4
LG 32LS5600	299	02.13/ST	★★★★★	This budget TV gets the basics right	LED	32	1920x1080						3	46x75x36
LG 50PA650T	499	01.13/GT	★★★★★	Good picture and price, but we'd like more detail	Plasma	50	1920x1080						3	70x117x5
LG 32LN575V	400	09.13/ST	★★★★★	A decent looking TV with credible smart and streaming features	LED	32	1920x1080						3	45x74x8
Panasonic TX-L24X5B	260	12.12/GT	★★★★★	Smooth and accomplished picture with so-so colours	LED	24	1920x1080						2	37x57x5
Panasonic TX-L24X6B	300	11.13/GT	★★★★★	If you can stretch your budget then this TV offers great value for money	LED	24	1366x768						2	42x58x17
Panasonic TX-L32E5B	400	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Great value if you're not fussy about 3D	LED	32	1920x1080						4	47x76x5
<b>Panasonic TX-L32E6B</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>01.14/GT</b>	<b>★★★★★</b>	<b>Best 32in TV, Awards 2013</b>	<b>LED</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>1920x1080</b>						<b>3</b>	<b>43x72x5</b>
Panasonic TX-P50X50B	453	01.13/GT	★★★★★	Hard to beat on performance per pound	Plasma	50	1024x768						2	72x118x8
Philips 22PFL3517T/12	270	12.12/GT	★★★★★	An accomplished set with Freeview HD and YouTube	LED	22	1920x1080						3	32x51x5
Philips 32PFL4258T	480	09.13/ST	★★★★★	A talented TV with excellent picture quality	LED	32	1920x1080						3	45x74x2
Samsung UE32E5500	400	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Exciting, but the same money could buy better	LED	32	1920x1080						3	45x74x5
Sony KDL-26EX553	400	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Capable enough for a kitchen or child's bedroom	LED	26	1366x768						2	41x64x6
Sony KDL-32W653A	430	09.13/ST	★★★★★	Its picture lacks subtlety but this Sony is still a worthwhile option	LED	32	1920x1080						2	44x73x7
Technika 22-212i	168	02.13/ST	★★★★★	Great value, with plenty of features	LED	22	1366x768						2	37x54x1
Toshiba 23RL933B	230	12.12/GT	★★★★★	Feature-packed but needs slightly better colour	LED	23	1920x1080						3	34x55x5
Toshiba 40TL868	480	03.12/GT	★★★★★	Formidable value meets good performance	LED	40	1920x1080						4	63x92x24
Toshiba 32L6353	450	09.13/FT	★★★★★	A decent TV for the money but response times can be sluggish	LED	32	1920x1080						4	44x76x7
<b>£500-£2000</b>														
LG 32LM620T	550	11.12/GT	★★★★★	A good effort with tough competition	LED	32	1920x1080						4	47x75x4
LG 42LM660T	750	10.12/ST	★★★★★	Good screen, good price, tough competition	LED	42	1920x1080						4	57x95x3
Panasonic TX-L32ET5B	530	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Price drop pushes this firmly into five-star territory	LED	32	1920x1080						4	47x76x5
Panasonic TX-L42ET50B	900	10.12/ST	★★★★★	Good effort, great images, beaten by direct rivals	LED	42	1920x1080						4	60x99x4
Panasonic TX-L42FT60B	1100	08.13/ST	★★★★★	Likeable TV with a fine picture and great features	LED	42	1920x1080						3	56x96x4
Philips 42PFL6008	1000	08.13/ST	★★★★★	Impressive picture with comfortable 3D – a strong contender	LED	42	1920x1080						4	56x95x3
Samsung PS51E550	850	09.12/GT	★★★★★	A pedigree 50in plasma at a steal of a price	Plasma	51	1920x1080						3	72x120x6
Samsung UE32E56800	700	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Great, feature-packed TV but with tough competition	LED	32	1920x1080						3	45x75x5
Samsung UE40E56800	950	07.12/FT	★★★★★	Good spec and looks, but the backlight isn't great	LED	40	1920x1080						3	67x92x33

TELEVISIONS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Type	Size (in)	Resolution	Smart	Active 3D	Passive 3D	Freeview	Freesat	HDMI	Dimensions (hwxd, cm)
Samsung UE40F6500	900	08.13/ST	★★★★★	Not a class leader but offers a lot for your money	LED	40	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	3	91x60x27
Samsung UE32F6400	500	09.13/ST	★★★★★	Some niggles but a desirable set with excellent catch-up TV features	LED	32	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	4	44x74x5
Sony KDL-32HX753	580	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Best 32in TV, Awards 2012	LED	32	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	4	47x76x6
Sony KDL-40HX723	650	03.12/GT	★★★★★	A super smart TV that's full of frills	LED	40	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	4	59x94x4
Toshiba 42VL963	750	10.12/ST	★★★★★	Good set, with lots of features, at a reasonable price	LED	42	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	4	58x100x3
Finlux 47S9100-T	800	06.13/GT	★★★★★	Good picture, decent 3D and a low price. Worth a look	LED	47	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	4	67x112x4
LG 47LM670T	1350	05.12/FT	★★★★★	Great spec, great looks, great performance	LED	47	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	4	63x106x3
LG 47LM860V	1600	08.12/ST	★★★★★	Lots to like: top-notch HD pics and easy-going 3D	LED	47	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	4	63x106x3
LG 55LM760T	1700	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Scores on value and features. A solid all-rounder	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	4	72x123x34
Panasonic TX-P42GT50B	1200	10.12/GT	★★★★★	This sensational all-rounder remains a favourite	Plasma	42	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	4	60x99x5
Panasonic TX-P42GT60B	1000	01.14/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best 40-46in TV, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR</b>	Plasma	42	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	3	60x99x5
Panasonic TX-L47ET50B	1300	08.12/ST	★★★★★	This set gets plenty more right than it gets wrong	LED	47	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	4	66x110x4
Panasonic TX-L47DT65B	1600	06.13/GT	★★★★★	User-friendly set with clean, detailed images. A stunner	LED	47	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	3	63x107x4
Panasonic TX-L50ET60B	1300	05.13/FT	★★★★★	Solid telly but could perform better	LCD	50	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	3	66x112x4
Panasonic TX-L50E6B	850	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Fine picture quality but there are TVs that give more for less	LCD	50	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	3	71x112x27
Panasonic TX-P50GT60B	1200	01.14/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best premium 47-52in TV, Awards 2013</b>	Plasma	50	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	3	70x117x5
Panasonic TX-P50VT50B	1900	07.12/FT	★★★★★	Stellar performance in every area from this Plasma	Plasma	50	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	4	70x117x5
Philips 46PFL8007	1700	12.12/FT	★★★★★	A strong start for Philips' new range	LED	46	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	5	67x104x21
Philips 47PFL6008	1200	06.13/GT	★★★★★	A few niggles but forgivable thanks to its brilliant picture quality	LED	47	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	3	63x106x3
Philips 55PFL6007T	1500	01.13/FT	★★★★★	This should be on anyone's big-screen shortlist	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	4	74x124x3
Samsung PS51F5500	680	01.14/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best budget 47-52in TV, Awards 2013</b>	Plasma	51	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	3	71x112x27
Samsung PS51E8000	1700	06.12/FT	★★★★★	A big-screen plasma that should be tried out	Plasma	51	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	3	71x119x5
Samsung PS51F8500	1900	07.13/FT	★★★★★	A top-class plasma screen	Plasma	51	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	4	74x119x6
Samsung UE40ES7000	1300	11.12/FT	★★★★★	A great TV with dazzling looks and performance	LED	40	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	3	55x91x38
Samsung UE40ES8000	1450	10.12/ST	★★★★★	Impressive features and HD picture, but pricey	LED	40	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	3	54x91x3
Samsung UE46ES6800	1150	08.12/ST	★★★★★	A fine performer – but with strong competition	LED	46	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	3	64x107x5



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Samsung **UHD TV**  
Ultra High Definition 4K

The new Samsung UHD TV has arrived  
Discover True Detail



UHD TV F9000

Other brands available include: Bowers & Wilkins MONITOR AUDIO YAMAHA

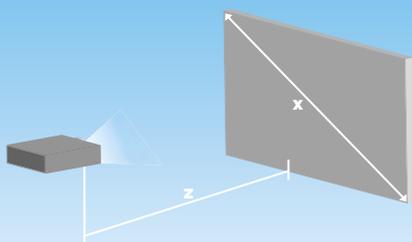
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## TELEVISIONS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Type	Size (in)	Resolution	Smart	Active 3D	Passive 3D	Freeview	Freesat	HDMI	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
<b>£500-£2000</b>													
Samsung UE40F7000	1200	08.13/ST	★★★★★	A lovely TV with a great picture and a wealth of smart features	LED	40	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	90x58x24
Samsung UE46F7000	1600	06.13/GT	★★★★★	Great picture coupled with smart features make it one to watch	LED	46	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	59x104x3
Sony KDL-40HX853	1000	10.12/ST	★★★★★	Best 40-42in TV, Awards 2012. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	LED	40	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	57x94x4
Sony KDL-46HX753	1150	08.12/ST	★★★★★	A must-see TV: superb performer for the price	LED	46	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	65x108x5
Sony KDL-46HX853	1250	08.12/ST	★★★★★	Best 46-47in TV, Awards 2012	LED	46	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	64x108x3
Sony KDL-55HX853	1440	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Best 55in TV, Awards 2012	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	77x129x3
Sony KDL-42W805A	1000	08.13/ST	★★★★★	A great-looking TV with many strengths	LED	42	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	58x97x6
Sony KDL-46W905	1550	09.13/FT	★★★★★	A very capable TV with stunning detail but the picture lacks vibrancy	LCD	46	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	65x105x30
<b>Up to £8000</b>													
Bang & Olufsen BeoVision 11	5250	01.14/GT	★★★★★	A truly luxurious TV that delivers a great performance too	LCD	40	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	6	89x96x6
LG 47LM960V	2000	08.12/ST	★★★★★	An accomplished, covetable TV – but pricey	LED	47	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	61x105x4
LG 55LA860W	2300	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Close but no cigar. A good TV but the competition is strong	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	72x123x4
LG 55LM960V	3300	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Impressive, but let down by price and sound	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	77x122x4
LG 55LM980W	8000	01.14/FT	★★★★★	A great first OLED effort from LG	OLED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	80x123x19
LG 65LM960W	5500	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Fantastic to look at, but lacks the detail of depth of rivals	LED	65	3840x2160	●	●	●	●	3	84x143x41
LG 84LM960V	22500	02.13/FT	★★★★★	Stunning with Ultra High Def, but ordinary elsewhere	LED	84	3840x2160	●	●	●	●	4	102x190x4
Panasonic TX-L47WT50B	2000	08.13/ST	★★★★★	Stylish, with real areas of expertise	LED	47	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	63x107x3
Panasonic TX-P55VT65B	2000	01.14/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best 55in+ TV, Awards 2013</b>	Plasma	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	77x132x5
Panasonic TX-L55WT65B	2470	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A good performer but there are more capable sets	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	72x123x3
Panasonic TX-P60ZT65B	3850	08.13/GT	★★★★★	An accomplished set, but not the best TV pound-for-pound	Plasma	60	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	83x140x5
Panasonic TX-P65ST50B	2500	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Best 60in+ TV, Awards 2012	Plasma	65	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	89x151x5
Panasonic TX-P65WT600	5500	12.13/GT	★★★★★	A capable set that handles 4K footage very well	LED	65	3840x2160	●	●	●	●	4	86x147x6
Philips 46PFL9706	2300	05.12/GT	★★★★★	A great flatscreen from Philips	LED	46	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	66x108x4
Philips 50PFL7956T	2000	09.12/GT	★★★★★	The best 21:9 set we've seen: brilliant for films	LED	50	2560x1080	●	●	●	●	4	58x124x3
Philips 55PFL8008	2500	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A great TV from Philips	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	72x124x3
Philips 65PFL9708	4500	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Smart features aren't as good we'd like but this is still a strong 4K set	LED	65	3840x2160	●	●	●	●	5	84x146x4
Samsung KE55S9C	7000	01.14/GT	★★★★★	An excellent first step for large screen OLED TVs	OLED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	78x142x14
Samsung UE46ES8000	2000	05.12/GT	★★★★★	A benchmark set for 2012	LED	46	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	61x104x3
Samsung UE55ES8000	2500	09.12/GT	★★★★★	A towering bruiser, with an added control twist	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	78x136x38
Samsung UE55F8000	2500	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Can't keep up with the very best. Still a smart, user-friendly set	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	71x122x4
Samsung UE65F9000	5000	01.14/GT	★★★★★	A talented set with few weaknesses to speak of	LED	65	3840x2160	●	●	●	●	4	84x146x4
Samsung PS64E8000	3000	09.12/GT	★★★★★	This is as smart as smart TV gets	Plasma	64	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	88x149x5
Sony KDL-55W905A	2400	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A great-looking TV but a few issues knock it down a star	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	72x124x6
Sony KD-65X9005A	5000	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Good looks and great sound but needs 4K material to shine	LED	65	3840x2160	●	●	●	●	4	90x168x10
Toshiba 55ZL2	7000	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Struggles at this price level. But it's the future	LED	55	3840x2160	●	●	●	●	4	79x125x4

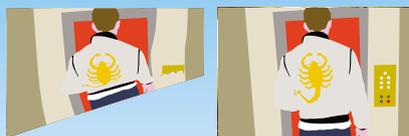
## How to... set up your projector



## Check the projector's throw ratio

Some projectors must be placed quite some way from your screen or wall in order to display a picture of any size. To check your intended purchase, work out the diameter of the image you want to display (X, above), then multiply that figure by the lowest number quoted in the throw ratio of our Buyer's Guide (p96).

This will give you the minimum distance (Z, above), that you can consider using for your projector.



## Keystone correction

Ensure your projector is perfectly aligned so it produces a rectangular image, square-on to the screen. If the image is still 'out' you might need to alter either the vertical or horizontal 'keystone' mode to realign the image (see above). Avoid this if you can.

## Get a decent screen

A white wall simply won't do, so invest in a purpose-built electric or manual model, depending on your budget.



## Picture set-up

Try using the THX optimiser procedure included on a variety of Blu-rays such as *Avatar*, *Wall-E* and all the *Star Wars* Blu-rays. This useful tool will allow you to tinker with your projector's picture settings and optimise its performance.

## Use a dark room

Nothing to do with photography: simply, we mean eliminate all possible light pollution in your room, from both windows and artificial lighting. If the room's too light it could affect picture performance.



## Blu-ray players

- Smart ability** \_\_\_\_\_ Extends the viewing choice beyond discs with apps like BBC iPlayer  
**Multichannel out** \_\_\_\_\_ Analogue outputs that feed high quality sound to a non-HDMI receiver  
**Twin HDMI outputs** \_\_\_\_\_ These are used if you have two displays, say a projector and a TV

### The shortlist



**PRODUCT OF THE YEAR**  
**Sony BDP-S790**



**AWARD WINNER**  
**Marantz UD7007**



**AWARD WINNER**  
**Sony BDP-S4100**

### Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	HDMI out	Optical out	Co-axial out	Multichannel out	Dimensions (wxd,cm)
<b>Up to £500</b>								
LG BP420	160	06.12/ST	★★★★★	1	1	0	No	4x43x19
Panasonic DMP-BBT01	279	08.12/FT	★★★★★	1	1	0	No	2.7x18x18
Panasonic DMP-BDT220	155	06.12/GT	★★★★★	1	1	0	No	4x43x18
Panasonic DMP-BDT230	160	07.13/GT	★★★★★	1	1	0	No	4x43x18
Panasonic DMP-BDT330	200	09.13/GT	★★★★★	2	1	0	No	4x43x18
Panasonic DMP-BDT320	220	05.12/FT	★★★★★	1	1	0	No	3x43x18
Panasonic DMP-BDT500	300	07.12/FT	★★★★★	2	1	1	8ch	6x43x24

Take your music enjoyment to new heights with High Resolution Audio



**SONY**  
 make.believe

### HAP-S1 HDD AUDIO PLAYER SYSTEM £799

- Hear pure, unadulterated High-Resolution (Hi-Res) Audio - Take your listening beyond CD quality playing High-Resolution Audio files
- Compressed music, at high resolution - With DSEE you can play compressed digital music files and still enjoy your favourite songs just as they were recorded
- Transfer files with ease - Copy music files to the hard drive over Wi-Fi, and when you add new music files to your PC they'll get copied automatically
- Take control of your music collection - Easily browse your music at speed using the front-panel LCD or use the dedicated smartphone app as a remote control
- Storage for your entire music collection - The HAP-S1 has a huge 500GB hard drive, so you can store a large amount of hi-res and compressed music files
- Compatible with a range of file types - Play Hi-Res Audio from a variety of compressed and non-compressed formats including FLAC, WAV, AIFF, DSD (DFF) and DSD (DSF)



Sony HAP-S1 500GB HDD audio system with 2x40W analogue amplifier, easy music file transfer & smartphone browsing



Sony HAP-Z1ES 1TB HDD audio player with high-quality DAC easy music file transfer and DSEE + DSD re-mastering engine

**NEW**

### HAP-Z1ES HDD AUDIO PLAYER £1999

Similar in concept to the HAP-S1 but with additional features that make this ES product the highest quality audio player Sony has ever made. The HAP-Z1ES has a built-in 1TB hard drive (expandable via a USB socket on the back).

- Includes Sony's unique 'DSD Re-mastering Engine' which upscales MP3, AAC and WMV files into DSD files resulting in stunning Hi-Res Audio quality
- High quality digital-to-analogue converter with FIR filter to reduce high frequency noise in DSD signals
- Sony ES product with FB chassis which offers both high-precision mounting of parts and high rigidity for improved performance



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Other brands available include: Bowers & Wilkins MONITOR AUDIO PMC

SOME BRANDS ARE NOT AVAILABLE AT ALL STORES

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## BLU-RAY PLAYERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	HDMI out	Optical out	Co-axial out	Multichannel out	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	
<b>Up to £500</b>									
Philips BDP3380	80	01.14/GT	★★★★★	Avery good performer that lacks some smart features	1	0	1	No	4x41x21
Pioneer BDP-160	120	01.14/GT	★★★★★	This entry-level unit is pretty spartan, but it delivers an impressive performance	2	0	1	No	6x44x25
Pioneer BDP-450	225	01.12/FT	★★★★★	This budget deck is a real rival for the top performers	1	0	1	No	9x44x25
Pioneer BDP-LX55	350	03.12/ST	★★★★★	Essentially, you can't go wrong with this disc spinner	2	1	0	8ch	9x43x25
Samsung-BD-F6500	130	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Competitive but not the best in class	1	0	1	7ch	4x43x18
Sony BDP-S4100	80	01.14/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best Blu-ray player up to £100, Awards 2013</b>	1	0	1	No	4x36x20
Sony BDP-S5100	140	07.13/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best Blu-ray player £100-£150, Awards 2013</b>	1	0	1	No	4x36x20
Sony BDP-S390	90	11.12/FT	★★★★★	Best Blu-ray player up to £100, Awards 2012	1	0	1	No	4x20x23
Sony BDP-S490	110	12.12/FT	★★★★★	An excellent budget Blu-ray player that also does 3D	1	0	1	No	4x43x20
Sony BDP-S790	200	09.13/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best Blu-ray player £150-£300, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR</b>	2	1	1	No	4x43x19
Sony PlayStation 3 (2012)	250	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	Super slim PS3 feels less special, but it's still multi-talented	1	1	0	No	6x29x23
Sony PlayStation 4	349	02.14/FT	★★★★★	A great gaming machine that's less spectacular when it comes to home entertainment	1	1	0	No	19x3x3
Xbox One	430	01.14/FT	★★★★★	As ambitious a game console as there has ever been, but yet to fulfil its potential	1	1	0	No	8x33x27
<b>£500 and above</b>									
Cambridge Audio Azur 651BD	500	04.12/GT	★★★★★	Avery talented Blu-ray player	2	1	1	8ch	9x43x31
Cambridge Audio Azur 751BD	800	08.11/GT	★★★★★	Ideal for those who want more than a budget player	2	1	1	8ch	9x43x31
Cambridge Audio Azur 752BD	800	04.13/FT	★★★★★	Features and functions combine in fine style, but audio performance could be a little better	2	1	1	8ch	9x43x31
Denon DBP-2012UD	500	04.12/GT	★★★★★	A price cut makes this disc spinner even more appealing	1	0	1	8ch	11x43x32
Marantz UD7006	550	04.12/GT	★★★★★	Asplendid master of all trades	1	0	1	8ch	11x44x33
Marantz UD7007	700	12.12/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best Blu-ray player £300+, Awards 2013</b>	1	1	1	No	11x44x31
Marantz UD8004	2449	03.10/FT	★★★★★	A brilliant player – if you want one box to do it all	1	1	1	8ch	12x44x39
Onkyo BD-SP809	500	04.12/GT	★★★★★	A fine choice, but not an all-rounder	2	1	1	No	10x43x31
Oppo BDP-93EU	500	04.12/GT	★★★★★	Perfect for the midrange Blu-ray player market	2	1	1	8ch	8x43x31



## Projectors

- Screens** Buy one of these. A painted white wall is simply not good enough
- Noise** Fan noise can be a major issue if you sit close your projector
- Lamp life** Projector bulbs have limited lifespans and need to be changed regularly

## Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Type	Throw Ratio	Resolution	Rated Brightness (Lumens)	HDMI in	DVI in	PC in	Component in	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	Weight (kg)
<b>Up to £1000</b>													
BenQ W1060	700	11.12/FT	★★★★★	Solid effort for a budget projector	DLP	1.59-1.9	1920x1080	2000	2	1	1	15x33x25	3.6
BenQ W1200	1100	04.12/ST	★★★★★	Best projector up to £1500, Awards 2012	DLP	1.44-2.11	1920x1080	1800	2	0	1	14x34x26	3.6
BenQ W1080ST	850	12.13/GT	★★★★★	A good fit for small-scale home cinema entertainment	DLP	0.69-0.83	1920x1080	2000	2	0	1	10x31x24	2.85
Epson EH-TW5900	950	04.12/GT	★★★★★	Sturdy and impressively spec'd	LCD	1.32-2.15:1	1920x1080	2000	2	0	1	14x42x37	6
Epson EH-TW5910	900	12.13/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best projector up to £1000, Awards 2013. Product of the Year</b>	LCD	1.32-2.15	1920x1080	2100	2	0	1	14x42x37	6
InFocus IN3118HD	990	05.13/GT	★★★★★	A few niggles but a bright and capable projector	DLP	1.6-1.92	1920x1080	3600	2	0	1	10x34x25	3.7
Optoma HD23	800	04.12/GT	★★★★★	Affordable, but not the last word in performance	DLP	1.5-1.8:1	1920x1080	2500	2	0	1	10x32x33	2.9
Optoma HD25	800	05.13/GT	★★★★★	Plenty of features for a budget level projector	DLP	1.5-1.8	1920x1080	2000	2	0	2	12x38x31	4.5
<b>£1000-£3000</b>													
Epson EH-TW6100W	1600	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best projector £1000-£2000, Awards 2013</b>	LCD	1.32-2.15:1	1920x1080	2300	2	0	1	14x42x37	6
InFocus Screen Play 8604	2500	10.11/FT	★★★★★	A fine projector in many regards	DLP	1.54-1.93:1	1920x1080	1700	3	0	1	18x43x34	8.6
Optoma HD83	2400	02.12/FT	★★★★★	Healthily priced, with a solid performance	DLP	1.45x2.28	1920x1080	1600	2	0	0	19x49x37	8.4
<b>£3000 and above</b>													
Epson EH-TW9000W	3200	06.12/FT	★★★★★	If you need wireless HDMI, buy this Epson	LCD	1.34-2.87	1920x1080	2400	2	0	1	16x47x40	8.5
JVC DLA-X35BE	3000	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Good but not great, this JVC appeals if you like bright pictures	D-ILA	n/a	1920x1080	1300	2	0	1	18x46x47	15
Panasonic PT-AT6000E	3000	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best projector £2000+, Awards 2013</b>	LCD	1.18-2.36	1920x1080	2400	3	0	1	15x47x36	8.7
Runco LightStyle LS-5	7500	01.11/FT	★★★★★	Glorious performance at a high price	DLP	1.85-2.40	1920x1080	754	2	0	1	20x45x53	10
SIM2 C3X Lumis 3D-S	30000	11.11/FT	★★★★★	The best 3D projector we've ever seen	DLP	1.82-2.48:1	1920x1080	3000	2	0	0	46x21x46	11
Sony VPL-HW30ES	3000	02.12/GT	★★★★★	Very capable, but there's better for the money	SXRD	1.47-2.18	1920x1080	1300	2	0	1	18x41x46	10
Sony VPL-HW50ES	3000	12.12/FT	★★★★★	Shows why home cinema can't be beaten	SXRD	1.64-2.37	1920x1080	1700	2	0	0	18x41x46	9.6
Sony VPL-VW95ES	5000	01.12/FT	★★★★★	By class standards, it's one of the best projectors around	SXRD	1.37-2.19:1	1920x1080	1000	2	0	1	18x47x48	11



## AV receivers & amplifiers

Up to £500 \_\_\_\_\_ Well-equipped and deliver convincing surround sound  
 £500-£1000 \_\_\_\_\_ There are gains in features, build quality and sonic performance  
 £1000+ \_\_\_\_\_ Real powerhouses that pack loads of features and cinema-style sound

### The shortlist



**AWARD WINNER**  
**Yamaha RX-V375**



**PRODUCT OF THE YEAR**  
**Sony STR-DN1040**



**AWARD WINNER**  
**Pioneer SC-LX57**

### Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Channels /power (w)	HDMI in	HDMI out	Networking	3D passthrough	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
<b>Up to £300</b>										
Pioneer VSX-528	285	02.14/GT	★★★★★	A well-equipped budget amp with good surround sound capabilities	5x130	6	1	●	●	17x44x33
Sony STR-DH820	230	04.13/GT	★★★★★	A capable, if not faultless, option for those looking for a sub-£250 7.1 channel amp	7x115	4	1	●	●	16x43x32
Yamaha RX-V373	250	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	Best home cinema amplifier up to £350, Awards 2012	5x100	4	1	●	●	15x44x32
Yamaha RX-V375	250	02.14/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best home cinema amplifier up to £350, Awards 2013</b>	5x100	4	1	●	●	15x44x32
<b>£300-£500</b>										
Harman Kardon AVR-171	450	10.13/FT	★★★★★	Could be subtler but delivers a powerhouse performance	7x100	6	2	●	●	12x44x30
Onkyo TX-NR515	450	11.12/GT	★★★★★	The amplifier to beat in 2012, now beaten	7x130	8	2	●	●	17x44x33
Sony STR-DH840	350	02.14/GT	★★★★★	A talented, energetic amp that delivers plenty of precision and attack	7x150	6	1	●	●	16x43x33
Sony STR-DN1030	470	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Gives the best (at this price) a run for their money	7x120	5	1	●	●	17x43x33
Sony STR-DN1040	500	08.13/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best home cinema amplifier £350-£700, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR</b>	7x100	8	2	●	●	16x43x32
Yamaha RX-V675	500	08.13/GT	★★★★★	A powerful and thrilling amplifier for the money	7x150	6	1	●	●	17x44x36
<b>£500-£1000</b>										
Denon AVR-2113	550	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Solid, likeable option for both novices and enthusiasts	7x125	6	1	●	●	17x44x33
Denon AVR-X2000	500	08.13/GT	★★★★★	Marks a fine return to form for Denon	7x150	7	1	●	●	17x43x33
Denon AVR-X4000	900	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Decent if you're looking for a sub-£1000 AV receiver	7x125	7	3	●	●	17x43x38
Harman-Kardon AVR-365	800	03.12/ST	★★★★★	Great looks, but lacks some precision	7x110	6	1	●	●	17x44x39
Pioneer VSX-923	450	08.13/GT	★★★★★	Needs more heft but it's still a confident and compelling amp	7x150	8	2	●	●	17x44x36
Yamaha RX-V673	500	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Best home cinema amplifier £350-£700, Awards 2012.	7x150	6	1	●	●	17x44x36
Onkyo TX-NR626	500	08.13/GT	★★★★★	Well-featured but not as compelling or as immersive as rival products	7x160	6	2	●	●	17x44x33
<b>£1000-£2000</b>										
Denon AVR-4520	1970	03.13/ST	★★★★★	An enjoyable, easygoing sound, pipped only in terms of absolute excitement	9x150	7	2	●	●	20x43x42
Onkyo TX-NR818	1000	09.12/FT	★★★★★	Impressive AV amp with features aplenty	7x180	8	2	●	●	34x59x55
Pioneer SC-LX56	1300	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	Best home cinema amplifier £700-£1500, Awards 2012	9x170	8	2	●	●	19x44x44
Pioneer SC-LX57	1200	12.13/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best home cinema amplifier £700-£1500, Awards 2013</b>	9x190	9	3	●	●	19x44x44
Pioneer SC-LX86	1800	03.13/ST	★★★★★	Best Home Cinema amplifier £1500+, Awards 2012	9x190	8	3	●	●	19x44x414
Yamaha RX-A1020	1000	04.13/FT	★★★★★	Delivering excitement, detail and precision, this is a brilliantly capable all-rounder	7x110	8	2	●	●	18x43x43
Yamaha RX-A1030	1000	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Not without some niggles, this receiver delivers big-time power and muscle	7x110	8	2	●	●	18x43x43
Yamaha RX-A3030	2000	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best home cinema amplifier £1500+, Awards 2013</b>	9x150	8	1	●	●	19x44x47
<b>£2000 and above</b>										
Anthem MRX 700	2100	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Fantastic-sounding and worthy of a serious audition	7x90	4	1	●	●	17x44x39
Arcam AVR750	4000	12.13/FT	★★★★★	It's not flawless, but this AV receiver is very good	7x100	7	2	●	●	17x43x43
Onkyo TX-NR1010	2000	12.12/FT	★★★★★	Power-packed heavyweight needs a touch more precision	7x200	9	2	●	●	20x44x59
Onkyo TX-NR3009	2000	04.12/GT	★★★★★	Produces seriously rewarding surround sound	9x200	8	2	●	●	34x61x60
Onkyo TX-NR3010	2000	03.13/ST	★★★★★	A solid performance but lacks the subtlety to cut it as a complete all-rounder	9x160	9	2	●	●	20x44x60
Yamaha RX-A3020	2000	03.13/ST	★★★★★	A shot across the bows of the class leaders	9x230	8	2	●	●	19x44x47
Pioneer SC-LX87	2000	02.14/FT	★★★★★	Pioneer strikes gold again with this feature-laden powerhouse	9x220	9	3	●	●	19x44x44



## Subwoofers

**Sealed cabinet** \_\_\_\_\_ Tends to produce the tightest bass but limits outright quantity  
**Reflex port** \_\_\_\_\_ A more common design that tends to deliver more bass  
**Room equalisation** \_\_\_\_\_ Evens out the sub's response to produce a more balanced sound

### Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Power (w)	Driver (cm)	Passive radiator	Sealed	Ported	Drive unit orientation	Line inputs	Speaker ins	Line outputs	Speaker outs	Phase invert	Remote control	EQ	Finishes	Dimensions (lwd, cm)
<b>Up to £500</b>																		
<b>B&amp;W ASW610</b>	450	05.09/GT	★★★★★ <b>Best subwoofer up to £700, Awards 2011</b>	200	25	●	●	●	Forward	1	1	●	●	●	●	●	4	31x31x38
Klipsch SW-450	330	02.11/GT	★★★★★ Weighty and tight, but loses its way at times	200	25.4	●	●	●	Downward	2	2	●	●	●	●	●	1	43x36x50
Monitor Audio Vector VW-8	225	04.10/FT	★★★★★ Capable little sub for an entry-level system	100	20	●	●	●	Forward	2	0	●	●	●	●	●	2	32x28x28
REL Acoustics T-Zero	350	05.12/GT	★★★★★ Small and discreet, but limited by size	100	16.5	●	●	●	Downward	2	1	●	●	●	●	●	2	24x22x26
Tannoy TS2.10	430	03.12/FT	★★★★★ Small, but packs a ferocious punch	300	25	●	●	●	Forward	1	0	●	●	●	●	●	3	39x38x33
Velodyne EQ-Max 8	495	04.12/FT	★★★★★ Small, but punches well above its weight	180	20	●	●	●	Forward	2	2	●	●	●	●	●	1	37x33x38
Velodyne Impact-10	295	07.09/GT	★★★★★ This sizeable subwoofer needs to be more controlled	150	25	●	●	●	Forward	2	2	●	●	●	●	●	4	35x32x37
Velodyne Impact-12	365	05.09/GT	★★★★★ Fine sub, more of a movie than a music classic	165	30	●	●	●	Forward	2	1	●	●	●	●	●	1	39x66x45
Velodyne Impact-Mini	435	10.09/FT	★★★★★ Amazingly small sub with fine movie performance	180	16.5	●	●	●	Forward	2	2	●	●	●	●	●	1	25x25x30
Wharfedale Powercube SPC-10	300	11.11/FT	★★★★★ Nearly a terrific subwoofer - but there are issues	215	25	●	●	●	Downward	1	1	●	●	●	●	●	8	38x35x31
<b>£500-£1000</b>																		
B&W ASW610XP	700	07.09/FT	★★★★★ Ideal for big bass from a small box	500	25	●	●	●	Forward	2	1	●	●	●	●	●	4	32x32x37
Monitor Audio Apex AW-12	950	05.12/GT	★★★★★ Beautiful to look at, and punchy too	500	30.5	●	●	●	Forward	1	0	●	●	●	●	●	2	34x34x41
REL Acoustics T-7	650	02.12/FT	★★★★★ A compact sub with authority	200	20	●	●	●	Downward	2	1	●	●	●	●	●	2	30x35x33
Sonos Sub	600	08.12/FT	★★★★★ Sounds great. Makes sense with Sonos Play speakers	n/a	n/a	●	●	●	Inward	0	0	●	●	●	●	●	1	40x38x16
Tannoy TS2.12	549	05.12/GT	★★★★★ Attractively priced with decent sonics too	500	30.5	●	●	●	Forward	1	0	●	●	●	●	●	2	44x43x38
Velodyne EQ-Max 12	825	05.12/GT	★★★★★ Powerful and agile and supremely enjoyable	225	30.5	●	●	●	Forward	1	2	●	●	●	●	●	1	45x42x46
Yamaha NS-SW700	500	03.10/FT	★★★★★ Not the most accomplished, but very competent	300	25	●	●	●	Downward	4	2	●	●	●	●	●	2	45x41x41
<b>£1000 and above</b>																		
B&W PV1D	1200	05.12/GT	★★★★★ Delivers precision and agility in spades	400	20	●	●	●	Forward	1	0	●	●	●	●	●	2	34x27x36
Jamo D600	1300	05.12/GT	★★★★★ A brilliant sub that's worth the price	400	38	●	●	●	Forward	n/a	0	●	●	●	●	●	1	56x59x50
Paradigm Seismic 110	1250	10.10/FT	★★★★★ A subwoofer that's deeply impressive in every sense	850	25	●	●	●	Forward	2	0	●	●	●	●	●	1	34x30x32
Sunfire Subr. SRA2700EQ	2350	03.12/FT	★★★★★ It's not cheap, but it is impressive	2700	25x2	●	●	●	Forward	2	0	●	●	●	●	●	1	36x113x9
Velodyne SPL-1000 Ultra	1400	09.11/FT	★★★★★ <b>Best subwoofer £700+, Awards 2011</b>	1200	25	●	●	●	Forward	1	1	●	●	●	●	●	3	34x33x34
Wilson Benesch Torus	3000	02.07/GT	★★★★★ The most musical and insightful deep bass ever	200	36	●	●	●	Upward	4	1	●	●	●	●	●	2	45x90x30

## Need to know: subwoofers

### The controls: gain, phase and crossover

These controls are at the heart of an active subwoofer. The gain control adjusts the level and the crossover allows you to control the upper frequency at which the subwoofer stops working, allowing for smooth integration with the main pair of speakers. Set the upper limit of the sub so it just overlaps with the lower frequency on your main speakers. Lastly, phase allows you to alter the sound of the sub to compensate for its position in the room.

### The inputs: hooking it up

Low-level inputs allow connection to the dedicated subwoofer output of an AV receiver, but can also be used with the preouts of an integrated amplifier. You can also connect a subwoofer in parallel with a power amp in a pre/power set-up. The high-level input allows the sub to be connected in parallel with your main speakers.

### The driver: shifting air

The design of a subwoofer drive unit is critical: the driver must have plenty of back and forth movement, or excursion, to deliver really powerful low frequencies, but it must also only move straight in and out – a bit like a piston would – and must start and stop rapidly as the music demands, otherwise the bass will sound woolly. This places a lot of emphasis on the design of the suspension – it's not just a matter of cramming in the biggest driver you can!

### The enclosure: keeping it rigid

The design of subwoofers varies; some models use a downward-firing drive unit, (see right), while others have drivers firing forwards or to the side. Some even use two drivers, firing in opposite directions. Other variables include the use of ports to boost the bass, or, as here, a sealed-box design, generally giving tighter, faster bass.



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## Surround speakers

**Full size** \_\_\_\_\_ Traditional cabinet design that's big but can deliver a great sound  
**Style** \_\_\_\_\_ Compact speakers that make a lot of sense in smaller living spaces  
**Bipole/Dipole** \_\_\_\_\_ Surround speaker designs that give a more cohesive soundfield

### The shortlist



**AWARD WINNER**  
**Q Acoustics 2000i 5.1**

Awards 2013: Best Traditional Pack up to £700



**PRODUCT OF THE YEAR**  
**Dali Zensor 15.1**

Awards 2013: Best Style Pack £700-£1500



**AWARD WINNER**  
**Cambridge Audio Aero 5.1**

Awards 2013: Best Traditional Pack £1500-£2500

### Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Front speaker (hwd, cm)	Center speaker (hwd, cm)	Rear speaker (hwd, cm)	Subwoofer (hwd, cm)	Finishes
<b>Up to £500</b>								
Boston Ac. Soundware XS SE	220	12.11/FT	★★★★★	Just as good as its predecessor: a must-hear	11x11x9	11x11x9	11x11x9	31x28x40 2
Canton Movie 130	450	05.12/FT	★★★★★	Likeable and listenable	12x9x10	9x19x10	12x9x10	41x24x42 3
Harman-Kardon HKTS20	450	09.11/GT	★★★★★	Neat, but a conservative listen	22x11x9	11x26x9	22x11x9	36x27x27 1
Jamo A101HCS5	230	11.11/FT	★★★★★	A great way to get started with home cinema	9x15x15	9x15x15	9x15x15	30x57x16 1
Jamo S426 HCS3	350	01.12/FT	★★★★★	A worthy home cinema solution	91x18x24	12x34x12	21x12x12	n/a 3
Teufel Motiv 3	460	06.10/GT	★★★★★	Another solid showing from this manufacturer	12x12x14	12x12x14	12x12x14	26x26x32 1
Teufel Theater 80	449	01.10/FT	★★★★★	Big sounds for not too much money	23x15x19	23x15x19	23x15x19	40x26x40 1
Wharfedale DX-1HCP	400	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★	Gets a lot right for this kind of money	19x12x12	12x29x12	19x12x12	34x29x32 2
<b>£500-£1000</b>								
Boston Ac. SoundWare S	510	02.12/FT	★★★★★	Dinky yet substantial-sounding	14x14x14	14x14x14	14x14x14	34x32x44 2
Cambridge Audio Minx S215	500	05.11/FT	★★★★★	Lots to admire here from very little	8x8x9	8x8x9	8x8x9	22x21x22 1
Dali Zensor 1 5.1	980	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best traditional package £700-£1500, Awards 2013. Product of the Year</b>	27x16x22	16x44x29	27x16x22	31x29x31 3
Jamo A 200 HCS 5	640	01.13/FT	★★★★★	A gutsy and entertaining sound at this price	22x9x5	22x9x5	22x9x5	31x28x31 7
KEF KHT3005 HD2	900	03.12/FT	★★★★★	Great build with an expansive sound	25x13x15	13x25x15	25x13x15	38x37x18 1
KEF E305	900	11.13/ST	★★★★★	A room-filling system but there are more dynamic packages out there	26x14x16	16x22x15	26x14x16	32x43x27 2
Mission MX15.1	600	11.11/FT	★★★★★	Ideal for a medium sized room	28x17x26	15x42x19	28x17x26	30x30x33 4
Monitor Audio MASS	800	11.13/ST	★★★★★	Still an excellent system, it narrowly falls short of the best	22x13x13	13x22x13	22x13x13	42x38x38 1
Q Acoustics 2000i 5.1	625	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best traditional package up to £700, Awards 2013</b>	23x15x20	23x16x12	23x15x20	23x16x12 2
Q Acoustics Q7000	800	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Product of the year - Speaker packages, Awards 2011	24x10x16	12x21x16	24x10x16	37x51x22 2
Q Acoustics Q7000i	900	11.13/ST	★★★★★	<b>Best style package £700-£1000, Awards 2013</b>	24x10x16	12x20x16	24x10x16	32x46x20 2
Tannoy HTS-101	400	09.11/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best style package up to £700, Awards 2013</b>	16x11x14	11x25x17	16x11x14	42x28x37 1
Teufel Theater 200	799	04.10/FT	★★★★★	Big-screen soundtracks don't come bigger than this	44x20x29	25x44x27	23x16x12	60x38x49 1
Wharfedale 100-HCP	950	11.13/FT	★★★★★	A very good package, but could do with a better centre speaker	32x17x26	17x47x27	32x17x26	39x35x31 7
<b>£1000-£2000</b>								
Acoustic Energy Neo V2 5.1	1200	12.10/GT	★★★★★	Plenty to enjoy if you have a large room	91x20x24	18x48x20	36x18x23	41x36x33 2
B&W 685 Theatre	1200	12.10/GT	★★★★★	Best traditional package £1000-£1500, Awards 2010	23x16x12	34x20x33	27x17x33	26x26x33 6
B&W MT-50	1100	11.13/ST	★★★★★	<b>Best style package £1000-£1400, Awards 2013</b>	25x11x16	25x11x16	25x11x16	26x26x33 2
B&W MT-60D	1950	05.12/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best style package £1800+, Awards 2013</b>	25x11x16	25x11x16	25x11x16	34x27x36 2
Cabasse Eole 3	1000	11.13/ST	★★★★★	A likable, big-sounding system that lacks a little authority	13x13x13	13x13x13	13x13x13	33x33x35 2
Cambridge Audio Aero 5.1	1950	10.13/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best traditional package £1500-£2500, Awards 2013</b>	98x24x34	15x43x21	18x46x15	34x33x36 2
Dali Fazon 1	1500	07.10/GT	★★★★★	Preferable in many ways to its pricier big brother	26x14x13	26x14x13	26x14x13	28x26x27 2
Dali Fazon 3 5.1	1699	05.12/FT	★★★★★	Best style package £1200-£2000, Awards 2011	26x14x14	14x26x14	26x14x14	23x16x12 2
Dali Zensor 5 5.1	1499	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★	Best traditional package £700-£1500, Awards 2012	84x16x27	16x44x28	97x16x23	34x37x38 2
Elipson Planet M 5.1	1300	03.13/FT	★★★★★	Enjoyable looks and sound, just lacking a smidge of detail	15x15x15	15x15x15	15x15x15	39x32x32 3
Focal Dome 5.1	1000	11.13/ST	★★★★★	It's not perfect but this Focal charms nonetheless	17x14x14	17x14x14	17x14x14	40x28x28 3
Jamo D500 THX Select 2	1700	01.11/FT	★★★★★	Exceptional and unbeatable value too	26x45x13	26x45x13	26x45x13	42x40x42 2
KEF Q300 5.1	1880	10.11/GT	★★★★★	An admirable package for the purists	36x21x30	21x63x30	36x21x30	33x34x33 3
KEF T105	1200	04.11/GT	★★★★★	A stealthy package that looks the part	33x14x4	33x14x4	33x14x4	38x37x8 1
Klipsch Synergy B20/SW450	1050	09.11/FT	★★★★★	Avibrant and exciting 5.1 package	32x18x20	15x41x13	14x30x12	43x36x50 1

## SURROUND SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Front speaker (hwd, cm)	Center speaker (hwd, cm)	Rear speaker (hwd, cm)	Subwoofer (hwd, cm)	Finishes
Monitor Audio Bronze BX2 5.1	1050	Aw.10/FT	★★★★★	Thrillingly fit for purpose	35x19x26	17x46x17	29x28x11	33x32x33	4
Monitor Audio Bronze BX5 5.1	1215	12.10/GT	★★★★★	Does a good job of filling a big room	85x17x25	17x46x17	29x28x11	33x32x33	2
Monitor Audio Radius R90HT1	1500	10.13/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best style package £1400-£1800, Awards 2013</b>	20x13x14	17x46x17	20x13x14	33x32x33	3
Quad L-lite Plus 5.1 package	1200	12.13/FT	★★★★★	A fine package that's up against some formidable rivals at this price	25x14x18	15x38x17	25x14x18	31x24x24	3
Tannoy Rev. Compact 5.1	1300	12.10/GT	★★★★★	Exceptional sound in the average living room	27x15x16	15x30x16	39x31x34	32x29x29	2
<b>£2000 and above</b>									
Acoustic Energy Active Pro 5.1	3035	08.10/FT	★★★★★	A stunning listen that's great value too	22x15x18	22x15x18	22x15x18	35x35x33	1
Acoustic Energy Radiance 5.1	3000	05.09/FT	★★★★★	This 5.1 package has plenty of appeal	92x23x30	19x45x30	32x19x25	41x36x33	2
B&W CM9 Theatre	4200	09.11/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best traditional package £3500+, Awards 2013</b>	102x32x37	22x59x28	34x20x28	32x32x32	2
B&W CT800 system	67950	11.08/GT	★★★★★	Expensive but it's the best we've heard	110x33x55	33x110x55	110x33x10	48x48x48	1
Cabasse MT-30 5.1	2100	03.10/GT	★★★★★	Looks more assertive than it is, but still likeable	x11x21	16x48x37	41x23x20	42x31x43	2
Dali Ikon 6 Mk2 5.1	2900	12.10/FT	★★★★★	Ideal for those with big listening areas to fill	103x19x35	15x57x25	38x27x15	48x41x46	3
Dali Lektor 5.1	2320	03.10/GT	★★★★★	Only just fails to get top marks against its rivals	106x25x37	17x60x18	31x17x22	36x31x40	2
Dali Mentor 5.1	5700	08.08/FT	★★★★★	Powerhouse of a system	103x20x39	20x89x29	32x16x24	37x33x33	2
KEFR100 5.1	2850	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best traditional package £2500-£3500, Awards 2013</b>	28x18x29	17x53x31	28x18x29	37x33x35	4
M&K 950-Series	5445	04.10/FT	★★★★★	Exceptional system with thrilling sound	41x18x22	41x18x22	26x18x22	60x39x51	2
Monitor Audio Apex	2400	05.12/GT	★★★★★	Best style speaker package £2000+, Awards 2011	25x14x14	14x61x10	25x14x14	34x34x41	2
Monitor Audio PL200AV	11400	08.10/FT	★★★★★	Exceptional in every sense	100x25x28	22x58x29	37x34x36	45x48x47	3
Monitor Audio PL300 AV	13500	10.09/FT	★★★★★	One of the finest 5.1 speaker packages on the market	111x41x47	22x58x29	37x22x28	45x48x47	2
Mon. Audio Silver RX6 AV12	2200	10.11/GT	★★★★★	Best traditional package £1500-£2500, Awards 2011	85x19x25	19x50x20	30x12x25	34x34x41	6
Mordaunt-Short Aviano 5.1	2000	03.10/GT	★★★★★	Guaranteed to keep you on the edge of your seat	95x21x32	18x46x23	95x21x30	42x31x36	3
Mordaunt-Short Mezzo 5.1	2300	11.08/GT	★★★★★	Lots of attack, with little respite	100x22x28	18x49x22	35x22x28	32x34x35	2
Paradigm MilleniaOne	2500	12.12/FT	★★★★★	Smooth and detailed, but slightly lacking in attack	20x12x15	20x12x15	20x12x15	34x30x32	2
PMC DB1i 5.1	4675	12.09/FT	★★★★★	Small and sonically brilliant package	29x16x23	16x29x23	29x16x23	55x20x55	4
Tannoy Revolution Signature	2300	11.08/GT	★★★★★	As thrilling or as calming as you want it to be	85x17x18	17x45x18	27x17x18	37x34x34	2

## Jargon Buster: HD Audio

## The science behind home cinema sound

## What's HD Audio?

HD Audio describes the high quality surround sound options offered on Blu-ray discs. Film studios use several different methods but they all amount to the same thing: better home cinema sound.

## How much better?

Tons. Every facet of home cinema sound, from dynamic range to realism, benefits. A significant difference between DVD and Blu-ray is the approach taken to mastering audio for the disc. Because of the relatively low storage capacity of DVD, data is not really compressed – more discarded – during the encoding process. With Blu-ray's HD audio codecs, the encoding process leaves the audio intact.

## So it's identical to the original?

Yep. Hollywood's master-quality movie sounds are engineered as uncompressed 24-bit/48kHz PCM audio (better than CD). Compression isn't desirable but, in some cases, it's a necessary compromise enforced by the need to cram surround sound on to a film reel or, most recently, DVD.

However, Blu-ray has up to 50GB of capacity, and with so much storage space it can incorporate a 7.1 channel 24-bit/48kHz

PCM soundtrack, while a single-layer 25GB disc has enough room – just – for a 5.1 track in uncompressed PCM.

## So why doesn't every disc have PCM?

It takes up a relatively large proportion of the disc, especially on 25GB releases.

To create room for the film, extras, soundtrack options (foreign languages, commentaries and the like), film studios have adopted two approaches. A few opt to downconvert 24-bit PCM into a 16-bit/48kHz version. However, this is increasingly rare, thanks to the capability of two 'lossless packaging' systems: DTS-HD Master Audio or Dolby TrueHD.

## What's 'lossless packaging'?

Both these systems work rather like zip files in computing – they repackage 24-bit/48kHz PCM soundtrack into less space. All that's required is some way of unzipping the data to recover the PCM audio, which can be done inside your Blu-ray player, or most AV amps. The result is that a 24-bit/48kHz PCM original packaged using Dolby TrueHD uses about half the disc space of uncompressed audio. In theory, it'll still be bit-for-bit identical to the 24-bit/48kHz PCM master, too. That's certainly what Dolby and DTS assert.

## Uncompressed PCM

**Pros** Can offer fantastic sound, as on *3:10 To Yuma* (left). There's no data 'unzipping' to deal with, so older Blu-ray players and AV amps can cope, too.

**Cons** It takes up a lot of space: the 7.1 score on *Yuma* needs over 8GB.



## Dolby TrueHD

**Pros** Offers terrific sound quality, but takes up far less space on the disc than PCM. The TrueHD score on *The Dark Knight* (left) is one of the very finest available.

**Cons** Only that, in theory, its 18Mbps data rate makes it inferior to DTS-HD MA.



## DTS-HD Master Audio

**Pros** The most widely used lossless codec on Blu-ray, and capable of sounding wonderful, as discs such as *Avatar* (left) readily demonstrate.

**Cons** Some swear that it sounds better than Dolby TrueHD: we're not so sure.



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"For a speaker of this type, and at this price, the Mercury V4s pretty much hit the bull's-eye."  
- What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.  
TSP £349.95  
5 Year Supercare £24.95

**£249.95**

**LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED**



**PROJECT DEBUT CARBON TURNTABLE**  
"A fine-sounding package."  
- What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.  
5 Year Supercare just 10% of purchase price

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**MARANTZ CD6005 CD PLAYER**  
"A fantastic player and immense value for money."  
- What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.  
5 Year Supercare just 10% of purchase price

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**ARCAM IRDAC DAC**  
"A hugely talented DAC with bags of sonic appeal."  
- What Hi-Fi? S&V magazine.  
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## Premium Hi-Fi Separates & Systems

When was the last time that music made your heart beat faster? All of our stores stock premium audio - visit us to hear why top-brand audio equipment is a must for music-lovers.



### Demo Rooms

"If you've never seen or heard how top-notch components can enhance your favourite music, films and TV, pop in to your local store and prepare to be blown away! Don't forget we're open for demonstrations from 8am-8pm, by appointment."



Mark - Milton Keynes store  
Check the last page of this ad for more info

**LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED**



**ARCAM FMJ A19 AMPLIFIER**  
"With the A19, it's clear that its strength lies in its competence. Each musical element is delivered with a remarkable amount of composure and stability."  
- What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.  
5 Year Supercare £64.95

**£649.95**

**LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED**



**ROKSAN KANDY K2 AMPLIFIER**  
"The combination of ample dynamic shove and crisply attentive timing allows the music full expression across the frequency range."  
- What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.  
5 Year Supercare £82.50

**£825**

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013**  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
ARCAM FMJ A19

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2011**  
STEREO AMPLIFIER  
ROKSAN KANDY K2

**ALSO AVAILABLE K2 CD PLAYER ONLY £825**

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**YAMAHA CRX550 SILVER MINI SYSTEM**

Gutsy, agile sound-staging meets a superb variety of music sources.  
5 Year Supercare just 10% of purchase price

**CALL OR SEE WEB**

iPod Not Included! **DAB+** **ALSO AVAILABLE IN BLACK**

**LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED**

**TEAC CRH700DAB BLACK STREAMING MINI HI-FI SYSTEM**

"There's loads of excitement and enthusiasm here."  
- What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.  
5 Year Supercare £299.95

**£299.95**

Internet Radio **WiFi Built-in** **AirPlay**

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**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION WHATHIFI.COM JANUARY 2014**

**CAMBRIDGE AUDIO MINX Xi STREAMING MINI HI-FI SYSTEM**

"We think Cambridge has done a terrific job with the Minx Xi." - What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.  
5 Year Supercare £499.95

**ALSO AVAILABLE IN WHITE** **Bluetooth**

**£499.95**

Internet Radio **WiFi Built-in**

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**DENON DM39 SILVER MINI SYSTEM & DALI ZENSOR 1 SPEAKERS (PAIR)**

These detailed, dynamic speakers are perfectly suited to complement the layers of detail offered by the Denon.  
5 Year Supercare £299.95

**CALL FOR INDIVIDUAL UNIT PRICES**

**£299.95**

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION WHATHIFI.COM AUGUST 2011 ZENSOR 1**

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION WHATHIFI.COM AWARDS 2013 SYSTEMS BEST HIGH-FIDELITY SYSTEM DENON-DM390AB**

**SAVE £170**

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION WHATHIFI.COM AWARDS 2013 PRODUCT OF THE YEAR 2013 MARANTZ MELODY MEDIA M-CR610**

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION WHATHIFI.COM AWARDS 2012 BEST SOUND SYSTEM MARANTZ MCR610**

**CALL FOR INDIVIDUAL UNIT PRICES**

**ALSO AVAILABLE MCR510**

**WiFi Built-in** **AirPlay**

**MARANTZ MCR610 MINI SYSTEM & MONITOR AUDIO BX2 SPEAKERS (PAIR)**

"The BX2s are quite an achievement and some of the most engaging speakers you can buy at this money."  
- What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.  
SYSTEM TSP £749.95 | 5 Year Supercare £579.95

**ALSO WITH ALTERNATIVE SPEAKERS (PAIR):**

Q ACOUSTICS 2010i	£539.95
TANNOY MERCURY VII	£549.95
DALI ZENSOR 1	£569.95

**£579.95**

**SAVE £200**

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION WHATHIFI.COM AWARDS 2013 CD PLAYERS BEST CD PLAYER OF 2013 MARANTZ CD6005**

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION WHATHIFI.COM AWARDS 2013 STEREO SPEAKERS BEST STEREO SPEAKER OF 2013 Q ACOUSTICS 2020i**

**CALL FOR INDIVIDUAL UNIT PRICES**

**£699.95**

**MARANTZ PM6005 AMPLIFIER, CD6005 CD PLAYER & Q ACOUSTICS 2020i SPEAKERS (PAIR)**

"A fantastic player and immense value for money," said What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision magazine of the CD6005 while they went on to comment "the Q Acoustics 2020is are something of a star."  
SYSTEM TSP £899.95 | 5 Year Supercare £699.95

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**£699.95**

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A brilliant hi-fi can instantly transform your room into a rock venue, jazz club or concert hall.  
Why not visit one of our stores to hear how good your music could sound?

**SAVE £350**

**CALL FOR INDIVIDUAL UNIT PRICES**

**CYRUS 6 DAC AMPLIFIER, CDT CD TRANSPORT & FOCAL CHORUS 705 WALNUT SPEAKERS (PAIR)**

Don't be fooled by their size - these Cyrus units offer spacious, detailed sound quality with astonishing levels of bass and depth, which is perfectly reproduced by these agile and dynamic speakers.  
SYSTEM TSP £2048.85 | 5 Year Supercare £1699.95

**£1699.95**

**SAVE £800**

**CALL FOR INDIVIDUAL UNIT PRICES**

**SPEAKERS ALSO AVAILABLE IN WALNUT**

**851s ALSO AVAILABLE IN SILVER**

**CAMBRIDGE AUDIO 851A AMPLIFIER, 851C CD PLAYER & TANNOY PRECISION 6.2 SPEAKERS (PAIR)**

"For scale and power, not to mention build and style, the Azur 851A is hard to beat." remarked What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.  
SYSTEM TSP £4298.90 | 5 Year Supercare £3499.95

**£3499.95**

**EISA AWARD BEST PRODUCT 2012-2013 TWO-CHANNEL SYSTEM Cambridge Audio Azur 851C & 851A**

**WE SUPPLY:**

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**LG MISSION MORDAUNT-SHORT**

**MUSICAL FIDELITY MONITOR AUDIO design for sound**

**Pro-Ject ONKYO ORBITSOUND**

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**ROKSAN SAMSUNG SONY**

**TANNOY Wharfedale YAMAHA**

# richer SOUNDS

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Stream all the music on earth in every room

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PLAY:1, PLAY:3 & PLAY:5 ALSO AVAILABLE IN WHITE

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**We are the streaming experts!**

My colleagues and I are here to talk you through our entire wireless streaming range, from hi-fi components with wi-fi, Bluetooth streaming or AirPlay to docks and network drives.



Marco - Chiswick store

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Call for our unbeatable prices!



**SONOS**

**LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED**

**LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED**

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2012

**LOGITECH UE AIR SPEAKER DOCK**  
"Logitech's AirPlay-toting speaker dock sounds the business." - What Hi-Fi? S&V magazine.  
5 Year Supercare £9.99

**£99.95**

**LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED**

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013

**Bluetooth**

ALSO IN WHITE

ALSO MINX AIR 100 ONLY £249.95

**CAMBRIDGE AUDIO MINX AIR 200 WIRELESS SYSTEM**  
"A formidable option in this competitive market." - WHF? S&V magazine.  
5 Year Supercare £34.95

**£349.95**

**LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED**

FREE APP FOR IPHONE/IPAD ALSO IN SILVER

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013

**CAMBRIDGE AUDIO STREAM MAGIC 6 NETWORK PLAYER**

Boasting twin Wolfson DACs and some of the most sophisticated processors available, the Stream Magic 6 is not just a versatile wireless music streamer - it's a premium grade music hub! Hitch it up to your home wi-fi and you're instantly connected to a veritable library of music services, or pop in the optional BT100 Bluetooth receiver and stream music straight from your smartphone or tablet - and all with audiophile levels of detail and precision! Small wonder then, that What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine were so impressed with the level of performance, saying that it "looks good, is easy to use, sounds great and has a list of uses longer than your arm: the Stream Magic 6 is an unequivocal success."  
5 Year Supercare £69.95

**£699.95**

## Two Best-sellers Of Our Huge Dock & Headphone Range

**LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED**

**CAMBRIDGE AUDIO MINX GO BLUETOOTH SPEAKER**  
"A terrific product for this money, with a sound that is a pleasure to listen to." - WHF? S&V magazine.  
5 Year Supercare £9.99

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013

**Bluetooth**

DEMO IT TODAY!

ALSO IN WHITE

**£99.95**

**SAVE £30**

**AKG K550 HEADPHONES**  
"Rousingly musical headphones with no obvious deficiencies." - What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.  
TSP £149.95

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013

**£119.95**

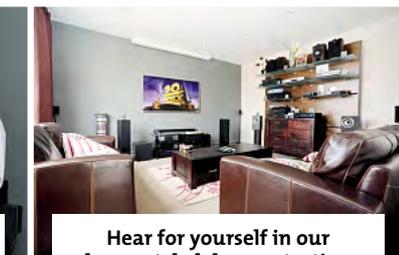
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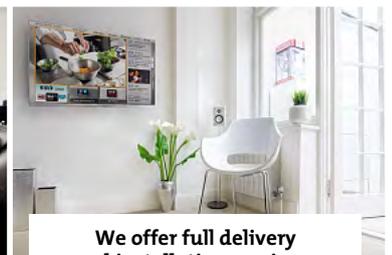
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Jeff - National Installations Manager



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**Panasonic 32"**

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013  
TELEVISIONS  
ALSO 39", 42" & 50"

**PANASONIC TXL32E6B SMART LED TV**

"A stunning screen that's lovely to use and a great price - a fantastic all-rounder." - WHF? S&V magazine.

FREE 5 Year TV Guarantee

**£369.95**

Freeview HD, WiFi Built-in, DUAL CORE, freesat HD

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**Panasonic 42"**

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TELEVISIONS  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
ALSO 50"

**PANASONIC TXP42GT60B 3D SMART PLASMA TV**

"Images are bright, high-contrast and colourful." - WHF? S&V magazine.

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WiFi Built-in, Freeview HD, DUAL CORE, freesat HD

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**SONY 46"**

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**SONY KDL46W905A 3D SMART LED TV**

Sony's triluminos panel with 800Hz motion makes for a stunning, blur-free image, in 2D and 3D.

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**SAMSUNG 55"**

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**SAMSUNG UE55F8000 3D SMART LED TV**

"The best LED LCD television that we've ever tested when it comes to picture quality." - HDTVtest.co.uk

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WiFi Built-in, Freeview HD, QUAD CORE, freesat HD

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WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013  
TELEVISIONS  
ALSO 50" & 65"

**PANASONIC TXP55VT65B 3D SMART PLASMA TV**

"A true triumph... Basically every single box is ticked by the VT65 series." - HDTVtest.co.uk.

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**£1999.95**

WiFi Built-in, Freeview HD, DUAL CORE, freesat HD

**LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED**

**LG 55"**

OLED, WiFi Built-in, DUAL CORE

**LG 55EA980W 3D SMART CURVED OLED TV**

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Freeview HD

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**LG 55LA970W 4K ULTRA HD 3D SMART LED TV**

4K Ultra HD and Nano LED backlighting make for a truly stunning viewing experience!

FREE 5 Year TV Guarantee

**£2999.95**

Freeview HD, WiFi Built-in, DUAL CORE, INCLUDES BUILT-IN MOTORIZED SOUNDBAR

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**SAMSUNG 55" 4K ULTRA HD**

ALSO 65"

**SAMSUNG UE55F9000 4K ULTRA HD 3D SMART LED TV**

An Ultra-HD powerhouse with super-fast Smart processors - everything a home cinema fan needs!

FREE 5 Year TV Guarantee

**£3299.95**

WiFi Built-in, Freeview HD, QUAD CORE, freesat HD

**LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED**

**Panasonic 65" 4K ULTRA HD**

ALSO 65"

**PANASONIC TXL65WT600 4K ULTRA HD 3D SMART LED TV**

Ultra HD performance meets HDMI 2.0 connectivity for a TV that's at the frontline of 4K viewing.

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Freeview HD, WiFi Built-in, DUAL CORE, freesat HD

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## Pop In For A Demo & Expert Advice On Projectors

A small selection from our extensive range.

**Sharing your passion for movies**

If you want to enjoy the true home cinema experience, a projector is the only way to go. It's not just movies that benefit; HD TV, sports and video games all look incredible at larger-than-life screen sizes. We offer screens and installation too, to make sure you're getting the absolute best performance with minimal fuss.

All of our demonstration rooms have projectors set up and ready to go, so come down and be amazed today!

Anca - Watford store

**LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED**

**BENQ W1070 3D PROJECTOR**

"Picture that wouldn't look out of place on a projector costing twice as much." - trustedreviews.com

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FULL 1080p HD READY, WITH FREE PAIR OF 3D GLASSES WORTH £75

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**OPTOMA HD25E 3D PROJECTOR**

This is a top contender for the best projector in its class.

5 Year TV Guarantee just 10% of purchase price

**CALL OR SEE WEB**

FULL 1080p HD READY

**SAVE £50**

**BENQ W1300 3D PROJECTOR**

"Offers big pictures and lots of features for surprisingly little cash." - trustedreviews.com

TSP £849.95

5 Year TV Guarantee £79.95

**£799.95**

FULL 1080p HD READY

**LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED**

**EPSON EHTW6100W 3D PROJECTOR**

"Throws out a clear, bright and vivid image." - What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.

5 Year TV Guarantee just 10% of purchase price

**CALL OR SEE WEB**

FULL 1080p HD READY, WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013 PROJECTORS

**LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED**

**PANASONIC PTAT6000 3D PROJECTOR**

"Detailed, dynamic & confident." - What Hi-Fi? S&V magazine.

FREE 5 Year TV Guarantee

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FULL 1080p HD READY, WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013 PROJECTORS

# richerSOUNDS

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## Unbeatable Prices on AV Receivers

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### PIONEER VSX323 AV RECEIVER

Power aplenty, plus forward-thinking 4K compatibility make this a budget bargain.

5 Year Supercare £14.95

**£149.95**

**SAVE £50**

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013**  
HOME CINEMA AMPLIFIERS  
YAMAHA RXV375



**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013**  
SPEAKER PACKAGES  
BEST HOME CINEMA SYSTEM  
TANNOY HTS101



### YAMAHA RXV375 AV RECEIVER & TANNOY HTS101 5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

"If you want to get into home cinema, we highly recommend starting your system with this capable Yamaha RXV375 receiver." said WHF? S&V magazine while they also said of the HTS101, "Simply in terms of scale, it's deeply impressive."

SYSTEM TSP £549.90  
5 Year Supercare £49.95

**£499.95**



### ONKYO TXNR626 AV RECEIVER

With Bluetooth and wi-fi now built in, the class-leading Onkyo TXNR626 is more impressive than ever.

TSP £399.95 | 5 Year Supercare £29.95

**£299.95**

**SAVE £300**

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013**  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
HOME CINEMA AMPLIFIERS  
SONY STRD1040



**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2012**  
SPEAKER PACKAGES  
BEST HOME CINEMA SYSTEM  
MONITOR AUDIO MASS



### SONY STRD1040 AV RECEIVER & MONITOR AUDIO MASS 5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

"Depth of detail, exciting and ample connectivity - this is a superstar in the making." said WHF? S&V magazine while they also said of the Monitor Audio Mass, "For such petite speakers, we were blown away by the big and confident output of sound."

SYSTEM TSP £1199.90  
5 Year Supercare £89.95

**£899.95**

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Packed with features, the Onkyo sounds as powerful as it looks!

TSP £999.95 | 5 Year Supercare £64.95

**£649.95**

**SAVE £430**

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013**  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
HOME CINEMA AMPLIFIERS  
PIONEER SCLX57



CALL FOR INDIVIDUAL UNIT PRICES

### PIONEER SCLX57 AV RECEIVER, BDPLX55 BLU-RAY PLAYER & DALI ZENSOR 15.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision Magazine praised the SCLX57's "stunning levels of subtlety" and the Zensor 15.1 speaker package, saying "these are enthusiastic and engaging performers that make sure the listener has a good time."

SYSTEM TSP £2229.85 | 5 Year Supercare £179.95

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013**  
HOME CINEMA AMPLIFIERS  
PIONEER SCLX57

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013**  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
SPEAKER PACKAGES  
DALI ZENSOR 15.1

**£1799.95**

**SAVE £600**

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013**  
SPEAKER PACKAGES  
BEST HOME CINEMA SYSTEM  
YAMAHA RXA3030



CALL FOR INDIVIDUAL UNIT PRICES

### YAMAHA RXA3030 AV RECEIVER & CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AERO 5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine praised the RXA3030's "warm and muscular presentation" and the Aero 5.1 speakers' "combination of cohesiveness, punch and articulation."

USUALLY £3599.90 | 5 Year Supercare £299.95

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013**  
HOME CINEMA AMPLIFIERS  
YAMAHA RXA3030

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013**  
SPEAKER PACKAGES  
BEST HOME CINEMA SYSTEM  
CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AERO 5.1

**£2999.95**



### CAMBRIDGE AUDIO 752BD SMART 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

"The 752BD takes some beating." - Hi-Fi News magazine.

TSP £799.95 | 5 Year Supercare £69.95

**£699.95**

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A small selection from our extensive range.

**LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED**

ALSO AVAILABLE WITH MULTI-REGION DVD PLAYBACK

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013**  
BLU-RAY PLAYERS  
BEST ALL-ROUND PLAYER OF 2013  
SONY BDPS4100



**SONY BDPS4100**  
3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

"This budget player represents excellent value for money." - WHF? S&V mag.  
5 Year Supercare just 10% of purchase price

**CALL OR SEE WEB**

WiFi Ready

**LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED**

INCLUDES WEB APPS

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013**  
★★★★★  
July 2013



**PANASONIC DMPBDT230**  
3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

"Critics will have a hard time finding fault with the picture quality."  
- What Hi-Fi? S&V magazine.  
5 Year Supercare £9.99

**£99.95**

WiFi Built-in 4K ULTRAHD UPSCALING

**SAVE £30**

ALSO AVAILABLE WITH MULTI-REGION DVD PLAYBACK ONLY £179.95

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2012**  
★★★★★  
July 2012



**PANASONIC DMPBDT500**  
3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

"Delivers a truly captivating performance."  
- What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.  
TSP £199.95  
5 Year Supercare £16.95

**£169.95**

WiFi Built-in

**LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED**

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2014**  
★★★★★  
February 2014



**CAMBRIDGE AUDIO MINX TV**  
SOUND PLINTH

"A superb way of taking TV sound to the next level." - WHF? S&V magazine.  
5 Year Supercare £19.95

**£199.95**

Bluetooth

**SAVE £30**

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013**  
★★★★★  
BEST SOUNDBAR OF 2013  
LG NB4530



**LG NB4530**  
SOUNDBAR

"Looks the part and sounds great."  
- What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.  
TSP £299.95  
5 Year Supercare £26.95

**£269.95**

**LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED**

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2012**  
★★★★★  
SOUNDBAR SYSTEMS  
YAMAHA YSP-2200



**YAMAHA YSP2200**  
SOUNDBAR

"A great home cinema solution."  
- What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.  
5 Year Supercare just 10% of purchase price

**CALL OR SEE WEB**

**LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED**

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013**  
SPEAKER PACKAGES  
BEST FLOORSTANDING SYSTEM  
TANNOY HTS101



**TANNOY HTS101**  
5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

"Simply in terms of scale, it's deeply impressive." - What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.  
5 Year Supercare just 10% of purchase price

**CALL OR SEE WEB**

**LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED**

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013**  
SPEAKER PACKAGES  
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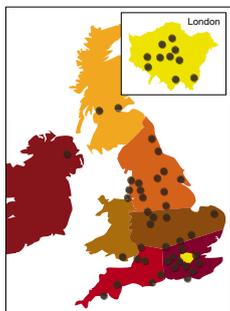
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## CD players

**Integrated** \_\_\_\_\_ Has both a CD mechanism and digital-to-analogue conversion tech  
**Transport** \_\_\_\_\_ Needs an outboard DAC but can deliver a higher standard of sound

### The shortlist



**AWARD WINNER**  
**Marantz CD6005**

Awards 2013: Best CD Player up to £500



**PRODUCT OF THE YEAR**  
**Naim CD5si**

Awards 2013: Best CD Player £500-£1500



**AWARD WINNER**  
**Roksan Caspian M2 CD**

Awards 2013: Best CD Player £1500+

### Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Integrated Transport	Co-axial out	Optical out	XLR out	RCA out	Headphone out	Co-axial in	Optical in	AES/EBU in	USB in	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
<b>Up to £500</b>															
Cambridge Audio Azur 351C	300	11.12/FT	★★★★★	A worthy rival to the Award-winning Marantz CD6004	●	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	9x43x31
Cambridge Audio Azur 651C	450	03.12/FT	★★★★★	A spacious sounding disc spinner	●	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	9x43x31
Marantz CD6004	300	01.12/ST	★★★★★	Best CD player up to £500, Awards 2012	●	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	2	11x44x34
<b>Marantz CD6005</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>10.13/FT</b>	<b>★★★★★</b>	<b>Best CD player up to £500, Awards 2013</b>	●	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>11x44x34</b>
Sansui CDD-201V	200	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Sensibly priced, but not quite an all-rounder	●	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	7x43x28
<b>£500-£1000</b>															
Arcam FMJ CD17	650	06.12/ST	★★★★★	Basic on features, but capable enough	●	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	9x43x29
Audiolab 8200CD	800	12.10/GT	★★★★★	Best CD player £500-£1000, Awards 2012	●	1	1	1	1	0	2	2	0	1	8x44x30
Audiolab 8200CDQ	950	09.11/FT	★★★★★	Improves on the sky-high performance of the 8200CD	●	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	0	1	8x44x30
NAD C 546BEE	500	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Talented but struggles against the more enjoyable budget Marantz	●	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	9x44x31
Cyrus CDi	975	02.14/FT	★★★★★	Arguably the best, most insightful integrated player Cyrus has ever made	●	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	7x22x36
Cyrus CD Transport	750	01.12/ST	★★★★★	An impressive and affordable CD transport	●	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	8x22x36
Cyrus CD6 SE2	700	06.12/ST	★★★★★	Subtly upgraded, with worthwhile results	●	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	8x22x36
<b>Naim CD5si</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>02.13/FT</b>	<b>★★★★★</b>	<b>Best CD player £500-£1500, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR</b>	●	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7x43x30</b>
Pioneer PD-50	500	09.13/FT	★★★★★	Worth considering but this SACD player doesn't quite engage	●	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	13x44x33
Rega Apollo-R	550	06.12/ST	★★★★★	Admirable, but lacks some cohesion	●	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	9x22x32
Roksan Kandy K2	900	06.12/ST	★★★★★	Big and powerful, with an entertaining sound	●	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	10x43x38
Yamaha CD-S2000	979	03.09/GT	★★★★★	A beautiful object that's involving to listen to	●	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	14x44x44
<b>£1000 and above</b>															
Audio Research CD5	5500	06.09/FT	★★★★★	Audio Research strikes gold again. The CD5 is a terrific player	●	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	13x48x31
Burmester 069	35840	11.13/FT	★★★★★	Quite possibly the best CD player money can buy	●	2	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	16x45x34
Cambridge Audio Azur 851C	1200	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	Impressive sonic presentation but a touch too clinical for our tastes	●	1	1	1	1	0	2	2	1	1	12x43x34
Copland CDA825	4298	05.13/FT	★★★★★	A hugely capable player with stunning sound quality	●	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	10x43x39
Cyrus CD 8 SE2	1200	09.12/FT	★★★★★	Best CD player £1000-£1500, Awards 2012	●	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	8x22x36
dCS Puccini	11300	02.11/FT	★★★★★	With the master clock it's an amazing combo	●	1	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	2	11x46x40
Esoteric K-05	7495	01.14/FT	★★★★★	A great place to start... if you're looking for your final disc-player	●	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	13x45x36
Leema Antila IIS Eco	2995	09.11/FT	★★★★★	The already good Antila goes up another level in performance	●	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	11x44x31
Musical Fidelity M6CD	2100	08.13/FT	★★★★★	Its powerful, yet refined sound will appeal to many, a fine performer	●	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	13x44x39
Naim CDS3/XPS2	9990	06.04/FT	★★★★★	Sell your car and treat your music collection to the best present ever	●	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	9x43x31
Naim CD5 XS	1950	Aw.09/FT	★★★★★	It's an excellent CD player, but faces stiff competition	●	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	7x43x30
Naim CD555/555PS	18345	10.09/FT	★★★★★	The CD555/555PS has a hefty price tag, but a classy performance	●	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	11x43x31
Naim CDX2	3640	02.10/FT	★★★★★	The tweaked CDX2 remains a fine proposition	●	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	9x43x31
Parasound Halo CD1	5000	07.13/FT	★★★★★	Not cheap but it's a fine CD player with an idiosyncratic design	●	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	11x44x35
Primare CD32	2200	04.11/FT	★★★★★	It's massively detailed, but not as engaging as we'd like	●	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	11x43x38
Rega Isis	5998	06.10/FT	★★★★★	A great first stab at tackling the high-end CD market	●	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	10x43x35
<b>Roksan Caspian M2 CD</b>	<b>1650</b>	<b>Aw.10/FT</b>	<b>★★★★★</b>	<b>Best CD player £1500+ Awards 2013</b>	●	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8x43x33</b>
T+A MP 3000 HV	7900	12.13/FT	★★★★★	A classy multi-source player that delivers high-quality sound	●	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	11x43x35
Wadia S7i	14000	10.11/FT	★★★★★	An engineering sledgehammer	●	1	0	1	1	0	3	2	1	1	17x46x46



# DACS

Digital-to-analogue converters take a digital data stream from its source (such as a computer or CD transport) and turns it into an analogue signal that your amplifier can work with. These devices have become more popular in recent years due to the emergence of computer-based audio

## Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		USB in	Optical in	Co-axial in	AES EBU in	HDMI in	Wireless	Headphone out	RCA out	Balanced XLR out	Dimensions (hwfd, cm)
<b>Up to £500</b>														
Audioengine D1	150	05.12/FT	★★★★★	A DAC and headphone amp with a fine sound	1	1	0	0	1		1	1	0	3x9x10
Audioquest DragonFly	215	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Best DAC up to £300, Awards 2012	1	0	0	0	0		1	0	0	6x2x1
Audioquest DragonFly v1.2	130	02.14/GT	★★★★★	Outrageously good sound quality at an aggressive price	1	0	0	0	0		1	0	0	6x2x1
Arcam irDAC	400	11.13/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best DAC £300-£500, Awards 2013, PRODUCT OF THE YEAR</b>	0	2	2	0	0		0	1	0	4x12x19
Arcam irDAC Wireless	380	09.12/GT	★★★★★	No longer the default choice at the money, still very much a contender	1	1	1	0	0	●	0	1	0	4x16x11
Arcam rPAC	150	04.13/ST	★★★★★	More desirable alternatives, but the rPAC still has plenty of merit	1	0	0	0	0		1	1	0	3x10x6
Camb. Audio DacMagic 100	200	06.12/FT	★★★★★	An affordable, fine looking and listenable DAC	1	2	2	0	0		0	1	0	5x11x13
Camb. Audio DacMagic Plus	350	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Better sound and features than the original - but pricey	1	2	2	0	0		1	1	1	5x22x19
Camb. Audio DacMagic XS	100	02.14/GT	★★★★★	Drops down a star but still a delightful little device	0	0	0	0	0		1	0	0	5x3x1
Furutech ADL GT 40	400	06.11/FT	★★★★★	Product of the Year - Cables & Accessories, Awards 2011	1	0	0	0	0		1	1	0	6x15x11
Firestone Spitfire	250	05.10/GT	★★★★★	If you don't need USB, then this is the pick of the DACs	0	1	1	0	0		0	1	0	5x8x11
HRT Headstreamer	145	02.12/FT	★★★★★	A neat headphone amp and DAC combination	1	0	0	0	0		1	0	0	3x6x7
HRT microStreamer	180	07.13/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best DAC up to £300, Awards 2013</b>	1	0	0	0	0		1	0	0	1x3x6
Meridian Director	450	11.13/GT	★★★★★	Packs a sonic punch but lacks the swagger found in others	1	1	1	0	0		0	1	0	3x14x8
Meridian Explorer DAC	250	07.13/GT	★★★★★	The Explorer's design and assured sonic performance makes it a top contender	1	0	0	0	0		1	0	0	2x3x10
Micromega MyDAC	260	04.13/ST	★★★★★	If you like your music to have an attacking edge, then this DAC's for you	1	0	0	0	0		1	0	0	2x3x10
Musical Fidelity V-90 DAC	200	12.13/FT	★★★★★	A well-featured DAC that's a little too relaxed in its sound	1	2	1	0	0		0	0	0	5x17x10
NAD DAC 1	295	01.12/ST	★★★★★	A good, though not exceptional, wireless DAC	1	0	0	0	0	●	0	1	0	4x14x7
NAD D 1050	400	11.13/GT	★★★★★	For those looking for a desktop DAC, the NAD D 1050 is a brilliant box of tricks	1	2	2	0	0		1	1	1	19x6x21
Pro-ject DAC Box DS	299	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A solid performer but doesn't excel in any area	1	1	1	0	0		0	1	0	7x10x14
<b>£500-£1000</b>														
Audiolab M-DAC	600	08.13/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best DAC £500-£700, Awards 2013</b>	1	2	2	0	0		0	1	1	6x25x25
Chord Chordette QuteHD	990	07.13/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best DAC £700-£1000, Awards 2013</b>	1	1	1	0	0		0	1	0	7x16x4
Heed Audio Dactilus 3	515	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Excellent presentation let down by understated sound	1	1	1	0	0		0	1	0	7x10x25
Rega DAC	500	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Beefy build; natural, unforced, dynamic and detailed sound	1	2	2	0	0		0	1	0	8x22x27
Musical Fidelity M1SDAC	800	08.13/FT	★★★★★	An impressive spec list but performance is trumped by cheaper rivals	1	1	2	0	0		1	1	0	10x22x31
Parasound Zdac	500	11.13/GT	★★★★★	The Zdac produces a lively, likable sound	1	1	1	0	0		1	1	1	5x22x26
Sony UDA-1	500	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Not the most musically exciting DAC, but an excellent choice for desktop users	1	1	1	0	0		1	1	0	7x23x26
<b>£1000 and above</b>														
Antelope Zodiac Gold/Voltikus	3100	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Unique and appealing, it just misses out on a fifth star	1	2	2	0	0		2	1	1	11x17x19
Audio Research DAC 8	4698	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Pricey, but as organic-sounding as you can get	1	1	1	0	0		1	1	1	13x48x25
Arcam FMJ D33	2000	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A well-equipped DAC, but not the best in class	3	2	2	1	0		0	1	2	11x43x37
Burmester 113	2300	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Small and unassuming but packs a seriously exciting sound	1	1	1	0	0	●	0	1	1	6x20x17
Bryston BDA-1 DAC	2350	06.11/FT	★★★★★	A great sounding DAC with appealing build quality	1	2	4	1	0		0	1	1	4x48x29

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## DACs continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	USB in	Optical in	Co-axial in	AES EBU in	HDMI in	Wireless	Headphone out	RCA out	Balanced XLR out	Dimensions (hwd, cm)			
<b>£1000 and above</b>																
Chord QBD76 HDSB	4995	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A top-class, visually appealing DAC that delivers brilliant sound				2	2	2	2	0	1	1	6x34x15	
dCS Debussy	7930	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Worth every penny of its asking price				1	0	2	2	0	0	1	1	7x45x39
McIntosh D100	3000	06.13/GT	★★★★★	A solid and entertainer performer. Well featured, too				1	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	10x45x41
Musical Fidelity M6 DAC	2000	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A mighty performer but its price and competition rob it of a fifth star				1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	13x44x39
NAD M51	1500	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Best DAC £1200+, Awards 2012				1	1	1	1	2	0	1	0	8x44x30
Naim DAC	2150	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Flexible, fine sounding and future-proof. The Naim is some DAC				2	3	3	0	0	0	1	0	7x43x30
Naim DAC-V1	1250	08.13/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best DAC £1000+, Awards 2013</b>				1	2	3	0	0	1	1	1	9x21x32
T+A DAC 8	1250	09.13/FT	★★★★★	Beautifully engineered with a great sound to boot				1	1	4	1	0	1	1	1	9x27x27



## Turntables

**Turntable** \_\_\_\_\_ The main part of the player that actually spins the record  
**Tonearm** \_\_\_\_\_ The component that carries the cartridge across the record surface  
**Cartridge** \_\_\_\_\_ Turns the information in the record groove into sound

## Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	33.33	45	78	—	RPM	Elec. speed change	Manual operation	Phono amp	Tonearm inc.	Cartridges inc.	USB port	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	
<b>Up to £1000</b>																	
Edwards Audio TT1	380	11.11/FT	★★★★★	Attempting alternative to the class-leaders at this price				●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1	12x45x36
Pro-Ject Essential II	200	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best turntable up to £400, Awards 2013</b>				●	●	●	●	●	●	●	3	14x46x36	
Pro-Ject 2Xperience Basic+	600	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★	Fuss-free package with a strikingly clear sound				●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1	14x46x36	
Pro-Ject 2Xperience Classic	750	12.10/FT	★★★★★	A fine deck that's worth auditioning				●	●	●	●	●	●	●	3	16x46x36	
Pro-Ject Debut Carbon	300	09.12/FT	★★★★★	Best turntable up to £500, Awards 2012				●	●	●	●	●	●	7	12x42x32		



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## TURNTABLES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	33-33 — 45 78 RPM	Elec. speed change	Manual operation	Phono amp	Tonearm Inc.	Cartridges Inc.	USB port	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Rega P3-24/Elys 2	508	11.07/GT	★★★★★	● ●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	8 12x45x36
Rega RP1	225	Aw.10/FT	★★★★★	● ●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	3 12x45x36
Rega RP3/Elys2	550	10.11/FT	★★★★★	● ●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	3 10x45x36
TDK ETVT20102	350	01.12/FT	★★★★★	● ●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1 11x45x38
<b>£1000 and above</b>												
Clearaudio Emotion SE	2110	11.09/FT	★★★★★	● ●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1 8x40x32
Clearaudio Performance SE	2660	08.12/FT	★★★★★	● ●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2 13x42x33
Kuzma Stabi S/Stogi S	2940	04.10/FT	★★★★★	● ●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1 14x40x30
Linn Majik LP12	2350	03.09/FT	★★★★★	● ●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	5 14x45x36
Michell Gyro SE/TecnoArm A	1478	09.08/FT	★★★★★	● ●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1 19x41x53
Michell Orbe SE/Tecnoarm A	2675	01.09/FT	★★★★★	● ●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2 26x64x53
Origin Live Calypso package	2440	12.11/FT	★★★★★	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	1 14x45x38
Pro-Ject 2 Xperience X-Pack	1000	08.10/GT	★★★★★	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	1 14x46x39
P'ject Xten./Ortof. RS-309D	4000	07.09/FT	★★★★★	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	4 25x55x45
Rega RP6/Exact	1000	11.12/FT	★★★★★	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	8 12x45x36
Roksan Radius 5.2	1375	Aw.09/FT	★★★★★	● ●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	8 15x45x37
Roksan Xerxes 20 Plus (Pack)	6275	10.08/FT	★★★★★	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	3 12x45x37
Thorens TD160HD/TP250	1560	10.08/GT	★★★★★	● ●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1 18x43x34
Thorens TD309	1250	06.10/FT	★★★★★	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	2 13x47x43
Townshend Rock 7	1500	09.09/FT	★★★★★	● ●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1 15x40x34



## Radios

DAB \_\_\_\_\_ Digital radio signal that now offers coverage over most of the UK  
 Internet \_\_\_\_\_ Allows you to listen to thousands of radio stations from around the world

## Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	DAB	FM	MW	Internet	Battery	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
<b>Up to £100</b>									
Aves Air	50	09.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	10x6x2
iLuv Vibro Classic II	50	11.12/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	7x23x8
Pure Digital Elan II	99	01.10/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	16x28x9
Pure Digital Move 2500	90	11.11/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	10x6x1.5
Pure Digital Move 400D	90	11.12/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	8.5x15x2.7
Pure Digital One Classic II	65	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	15x21x7
Pure Evoke D2	85	09.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	15x21x7
Q2 Internet radio	90	03.11/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	10x10x10
Roberts Duologic	75	01.10/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	15x25x83
Roberts Expression	90	12.11/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	18x26x90
Sony XDR-S16	80	12.11/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	14x27x11
Tangent Trio DAB	90	01.11/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	17x33x20
View Quest WiFi200	80	01.11/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	73x125x23
<b>£100 and above</b>									
Geneva World Radio DAB+	270	09.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	17x30x7
Magicbox Nocturne XP-2	170	12.10/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	17x30x15
Philips Original Radio Mini	110	09.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	25x12x12
Pure Digital Avanti Flow i'net	250	12.10/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	13x39x23
Pure Digital Evoke Flow	150	05.10/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	18x21x11
Pure Digital Evoke-15 Marshall	120	01.11/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	17x22x12
Pure Evoke F4	180	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	18x21x11
Pure Digital Oasis Flow	170	09.10/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	23x16x14
Pure Digital One Flow	100	11.12/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	15x21x8
Pure Digital Sensia	250	01.10/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	17x28x18
Revo AXIS	200	12.10/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	13x22x15

## RADIOs continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	DAB	FM	MW	Internet	Battery	Dimensions (hwd,cm)
<b>£100 and above</b>									
Revo AXIS XS	200	11.12/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	12.5x22x15
Revo AXIS X3	200	01.14/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	12.5x22x15
Revo Domino D3	170	05.10/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	14x22x13
Revo Heritage	230	03.10/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	18x26x10
Revo Pico RadioStation	170	12.10/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	17x11x11
Revo Pixis	100	09.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	13x16x16
Roberts Revival Cath Kidston	200	01.11/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	23x16x12
Roberts Revival iStream	200	12.10/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	15x25x13
Roberts Stream 83i	150	05.10/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	21x25x13
Ruark Audio R1 MkII	160	11.12/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	18x13x14
Tangent Uno	100	01.09/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	13x19x13
Tivoli Alberg+	200	02.14/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	11x19x11
Tivoli Model 10+	160	09.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	20x12x12
View Quest Retro 1	100	12.11/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	16x28x9



## Hi-fi speakers

**Standmounters** Usually smaller speakers that need to be put on a stand, not bookshelves  
**Floorstanders** Larger speakers that tend to go louder and deeper than standmounters  
**Powered** Have built-in amplifiers and need mains power to work

## The shortlist



## Q Acoustics Concept 20

Awards 2013: Best Stereo Speaker £200-£400  
 “The Concept 20s really are an incredible achievement and a very bold move from the chaps at Q Acoustics.”



## KEF LS50

Awards 2013: Best Standmounter £400-£800  
 “The first thing that strikes you is the depth and power of the bass, which is a surprise given the compact size of the speakers.”



## PMC Twenty 22

Awards 2013: Best Standmounter £1500+  
 “These PMCs have the scale and power to deliver rousing classical renditions and the finesse to handle more intimate recordings.”

## Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Standmount	Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd,cm)
<b>Up to £200</b>								
Acoustic Energy Compact 1	150	10.11/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	2	22x18x20
Audioengine P4	183	02.10/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	3	23x14x17
Cambridge Audio S30	120	07.07/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	2	23x16x22
Mission MX1	150	06.11/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	4	28x17x26
Q Acoustics 2010i	120	07.12/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	4	23x20x15
Q Acoustics 2020i	165	10.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	4	26x17x28
SoundScience Frankenspiel FS-1	130	07.12/ST	★★★★★	●	●	●	1	9x9x9
SoundScience QSB	85	04.11/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	1	85x85x85
<b>£200-£500</b>								
Acoustic Energy Neo One V2	210	08.11/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	2	36x18x23
Acoust. Energy Neo V2 Three	399	09.10/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	2	91x20x24
Acoustic Energy 301	425	06.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	2	30x19x25
Audioengine A5+	290	07.12/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	3	27x18x20
Arcaydis DM1	299	10.10/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	4	30x16x21
Bose Companion 20	200	05.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	1	22x9x12
Bose Computer MusicMonitor	250	09.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	2	12x7x12
Boston Acoustics A-25	200	08.11/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	3	27x18x23

## SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Standmount Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd,cm)
Boston Acoustics A-26	260	01.12/ST	★★★★★	A beautifully accomplished standmounter	●		2	33x21x27
B&W 685	400	06.13/GT	★★★★★	Superb Award-winning speakers from B&W	●		4	34x20x33
B&W MM-1	399	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Still good, but there's better available		●	1	17x10x10
Cambridge Audio SLA-25	200	05.12/GT	★★★★★	Not at all bad, but some rivals are better		●	8	22x15x18
Cambridge Audio SX-60	200	09.13/FT	★★★★★	Impressive speakers but they could do with more refinement	●		2	34x20x27
Castle Knight 2	400	02.11/GT	★★★★★	Good, but not as adaptable as we'd like	●		8	38x20x34
Dali Lektor 1	250	10.09/GT	★★★★★	As musically enjoyable as you'll buy at this price	●		2	26x15x21
Dali Lektor 2	299	03.10/GT	★★★★★	Seriously entertaining speakers and simply stunning at this money	●		2	31x18x22
Dali Lektor 3	450	08.09/GT	★★★★★	Bigger isn't always better, as the Lektor 3s prove	●		2	39x20x26
Dali Zensor 1	200	08.11/GT	★★★★★	These brilliant budget standmounters demand a listen	●		2	27x16x22
Dali Zensor 3	300	01.14/FT	★★★★★	If it's entertainment you crave, then these standmounters deliver in spades	●		3	35x21x29
EB Acoustics EB1	470	08.09/GT	★★★★★	You'll have trouble faulting these nifty standmounters	●		2	31x17x27
Epos Epic 1	325	04.11/FT	★★★★★	Punchy and exciting but they can't deliver all-round ability	●		2	31x19x25
Focal Chorus 706V	390	03.11/FT	★★★★★	Thoroughly enjoyable but they may not cut it with dance music	●		3	39x22x29
Focal XS Book	300	07.12/GT	★★★★★	A potent-sounding speaker that brings hi-fi listening to your desktop		●	1	28x11x20
Focal XS Book Wireless	300	10.13/FT	★★★★★	Stacks of detail but not quite the measure of their rivals		●	1	28x11x20
KEF Q300	450	06.13/GT	★★★★★	Not quite at the top anymore, but still fine, engaging standmounters	●		3	36x21x30
Leema Xero	495	07.08/GT	★★★★★	Not a true all-rounder, but loaded with talent	●		5	25x25x16
Monitor Audio Bronze BX 1	200	05.11/FT	★★★★★	Stylish as you like, but not the complete article	●		4	26x17x18
Monitor Audio Bronze BX2	250	07.12/ST	★★★★★	Best stereo speakers £200-£350, Awards 2012	●		4	33x19x26
Monitor Audio Silver RX1	425	06.13/GT	★★★★★	Well-made and refined speakers, just lacking the flexibility of its rivals	●		6	31x19x24
Mordaunt-Short Aviano 1XR	250	01.12/ST	★★★★★	Still great, but the rivals have caught up	●		1	28x18x27
Mordaunt-Short Aviano 2	300	03.10/FT	★★★★★	Plenty of bang for your buck, and more besides	●		3	32x21x30
Mission MX2	200	08.11/GT	★★★★★	Dynamic enough but maybe too exciting	●		4	34x21x31
Mission MX3	350	11.11/GT	★★★★★	Peppy and communicative floorstanders	●		4	82x17x34
Q Acoustics Concept 20	350	10.13/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best stereo speakers £200-£400, Awards 2013, PRODUCT OF THE YEAR</b>	●		2	26x17x28
Q Acoustics 2050i	440	07.13/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best floorstander £400-£800, Awards 2013</b>	●		4	100x32x27
Quad 11L Classic	330	Aw.10/FT	★★★★★	Impressive standmounters but lack a touch of sparkle	●		4	31x19x24
Ruark Audio MR1	300	09.13/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best desktop speakers, Awards 2013</b>	●		3	17x13x14
Tangent Evo 5	200	05.09/FT	★★★★★	Considered, grown-up and a supremely easy listen	●		2	23x15x20
Tannoy Mercury V4	380	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Best floorstander £350-£700, Awards 2011	●		2	97x20x28
Tannoy Mercury V4i	400	01.14/FT	★★★★★	An exciting and punchy listen, but it comes with compromises	●		1	100x20x28
Tannoy Revolution DC4	380	06.13/GT	★★★★★	Well worth considering if your listening room isn't too big	●		2	27x15x16
Tannoy Revolution DC6	400	10.12/GT	★★★★★	Best standmounter £350-£700, Awards 2012	●		1	36.5x20x25
Teufel Ultima 60	368	12.09/FT	★★★★★	Bargain speakers with a big, bold sound that's engaging and exciting	●		1	103x21x32
Triangle Color	470	06.11/FT	★★★★★	Small, but perfectly formed	●		3	29x17x24
Wharfedale Diamond 121	230	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Fabulous sound. For insight and entertainment, the 121s needn't fear any rival	●		7	32x17x23

## £500-£1500

Acoustic Energy AE1 Classic	1000	07.11/GT	★★★★★	A classic yes, but not the best around	●		2	30x18x26
Acoustic Energy AE22 Active	899	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Talented active speakers not easily matched	●		1	25x35x30
Audio Pro LV2e	700	09.12/FT	★★★★★	Wireless desktop speakers with a hi-fi flourish			3	98x14x24
Audiovector Ki1 Super	800	04.12/GT	★★★★★	These pint-sized speakers lack far-reaching dynamics, but are easy to live with		●	5	98x14x24
Audiovector Ki3 Standard	1200	03.12/FT	★★★★★	Packed with resolution and speed		●	5	98x14x24



## NEW Spendor D7

### What do the experts say?

If you're after a great all-round, affordable, high end loudspeaker, here it is *Hi-Fi Choice* Issue 370 2013

We can't help but marvel at the sound from Spendor D7s. Spendor D7s set the standard for speakers at this price. *What Hi-Fi* Oct 2013

D7 has an unmistakable touch of magic. Easy to drive, genuinely efficient, undemanding of placement, fine stereo, extended powerful bass, upbeat and well-balanced, build and finish first rate. What more can one ask? *Hi-Fi Critic* Sep 2013



www.spendoraudio.com

**SPENDOR**

## SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Standmount Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd,cm)
<b>£500-£1500</b>							
Arcadyis SM35C	850	08.09/FT	★★★★★	If you want a quality small standmounter, audition these	●	3	30x16x14
ATCSM11	1200	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best standmounter £800-£1500, Awards 2013</b>	●	2	38x21x25
AVIADM9.1	1125	07.12/GT	★★★★★	A simple way to make the most of your music	●	5	30x20x26
B&W 684	700	12.09/GT	★★★★★	Still a fine product after all these years	●	4	91x20x30
B&W CM8	1250	08.11/FT	★★★★★	Stunning in some ways but not the last word in integration	●	4	96x25x30
B&W XT2	700	07.08/GT	★★★★★	Classy, sophisticated but the sound lacks bite	●	2	31x15x20
Cabasse Minorca MC40	720	02.11/FT	★★★★★	Ideal for those who like finger-snapping ability	●	2	40x23x28
Dali Ikon 6 MK2	1200	09.10/FT	★★★★★	Cleaner, clearer and more insightful than its forerunner	●	3	100x19x36
Dali Lektor 6	750	12.08/FT	★★★★★	Only the bass stops these good speakers becoming great	●	3	26x16x14
Dali Lektor 8	1200	04.10/FT	★★★★★	Likeable as long as you can live with the size and bass	●	2	106x27x37
Dali Mentor Menuet	900	07.12/ST	★★★★★	These Menuets are something of a gem	●	2	25x15x23
Dali Zensor 5	549	11.11/GT	★★★★★	Compact and affordable floorstanders	●	2	84x16x27
Dali Zensor 7	729	06.12/FT	★★★★★	Not flawless, but musical and enjoyable performers	●	3	98x21x31
Dynaudio DM 2/6	535	02.10/FT	★★★★★	Best stereo speakers £300-£600, Awards 2010. Just the right amount of sparkle at the top end	●	2	29x17x24
Dynaudio DM 2/7	600	08.09/GT	★★★★★	A seriously competitive speaker at this price point	●	1	36x22x27
Dynaudio DM3/7	1300	01.11/FT	★★★★★	Plenty of positives in this mid-range floorstander	●	2	96x20x27
Dynaudio Excite X14	945	12.13/ST	★★★★★	A crisp and clean sound is shortchanged by a lack of versatility	●		29x17x26
Dynaudio MC-15	780	09.08/GT	★★★★★	Well-executed active speakers	●	1	26x17x24
Dynaudio Xeo 3	1365	07.12/ST	★★★★★	Versatile wireless speakers	●	2	28x17x26
EB Acoustics EB2	669	09.10/GT	★★★★★	Remarkable performers that should worry the competition	●	2	45x23x30
Eclipse TD508 Mk3	960	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Not an all-rounder, but still a rather special speaker	●	3	29x18x27
Edwards Audio SP1	550	12.12/FT	★★★★★	Enjoyable performers but up against top-quality competition at this price level	●	4	31x17x25
Elac BS243	1050	07.11/GT	★★★★★	These standmounters crave excitement	●	5	29x17x22
Elipson Planet L	600	02.12/FT	★★★★★	Charming in many ways, with good transparency	●	3	40x42x43
Epos Epic 5	750	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Hugely likeable floorstanders with broad sonic appeal	●	2	92x21x32
Guru Junior	800	12.13/ST	★★★★★	A rather mundane appearance is excused by some very expressive sound	●	3	28x18x24
Focal Aria 906	760	12.13/ST	★★★★★	For scale, power and refinement, you won't find many better	●	2	30x30x28
JBL Studio 530	650	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Odd looking - but fun sounding and refined	●	1	47x21x22
KEF LS50	800	12.13/ST	★★★★★	<b>Best standmounter £400-£800, Awards 2013</b>	●	1	30x20x28
KEFR100	600	08.12/FT	★★★★★	These are extremely talented stand-mounters	●	4	28x18x29
KEFX300A	600	09.13/FT	★★★★★	A smooth, relaxed sound that lacks punch and dynamics	●	1	28x18x24
Kudos X2	1450	03.11/GT	★★★★★	These floorstanders have much to recommend them	●	6	78x17x21
Klipsch RB-81	540	08.09/GT	★★★★★	If you like to party hard, audition these Klipschs	●	2	48x24x31
Leema Xone	995	10.09/FT	★★★★★	In certain areas nothing else comes close at this pricepoint	●	6	85x14x21
MAD 1920	1350	09.12/FT	★★★★★	Impressive and powerful. Although not as precise as its peers	●	5	28x19x23
Martin Logan Motion 15	795	12.13/ST	★★★★★	Needs a bit more authority but let loose in a smaller room they can really sing	●	2	29x13x24
Mission SX2	700	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Dependable and capable, the SX2s product an authoritative sound at a fine price	●	5	38x23x37
Monitor Audio Bronze BX5	500	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Fine, refined speakers but outclassed by stronger newcomers	●	4	85x17x25
Monitor Audio Gold GX50	950	12.13/ST	★★★★★	Still good and still great looking, but loses out to rivals in terms of musical engagement	●	5	30x17x26
Monitor Audio Silver 6	1000	12.13/FT	★★★★★	The Silver 6s reveal plenty of detail, but there are better all-rounders out there	●	6	89x19x24

"The fact is, there's no real chink in the Mission SX2's armour"

April 2013

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**SPEAKERS continued**

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Standmount Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (h/w/d,cm)
Monitor Audio Silver RX2	630	10.12/GT	★★★★★	A lot of speaker and a lot of sound	●	6	37.5x23x30
Monitor Audio Silver RX6	800	12.09/GT	★★★★★	A sensational product from Monitor Audio – detailed, dynamic and very attractive, too	●	6	91x28x31
Monitor Audio Silver RX8	1050	06.10/FT	★★★★★	If you're addicted to bass, these floostanders will suit you	●	6	96x28x39
Monitor Audio SoundFrame 1	900	02.12/GT	★★★★★	An impressive alternative to conventional speakers		2	54x39x9
Mordaunt-Short Aviano 6	600	01.10/FT	★★★★★	A fine all-rounder, with power and bass in spades, and plenty more besides	●	3	95x21x30
Mordaunt-Short Aviano 8	750	12.09/GT	★★★★★	Great speakers for sure, but too controlled	●	3	95x21x32
Mordaunt-Short Mezzo 6	800	11.08/GT	★★★★★	Possibly the best in their class	●	2	100x22x28
Mordaunt-Short Mezzo 8	1000	03.09/FT	★★★★★	Not the best all-rounders in the Mezzo range, but still very likeable	●	2	107x22x31
Mission MX-5	600	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Physically and sonically impressive	●	4	100x25x39
Mission SX1	700	12.12/FT	★★★★★	Almost mission accomplished. Hugely capable but not as entertaining as the class leaders	●	5	31x19x29
Neat Iota	695	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Attractive but with a hefty sound too	●	5	13x20x17
Neat Motive 1	1350	02.09/GT	★★★★★	Charming unique speakers - they lean backwards	●	4	93x16x20
Neat Motive 2	945	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Cohesive, authoritative and downright exciting	●	4	77x16x20
Neat Petite SX	1250	01.12/ST	★★★★★	Small and perfectly formed standmounters	●	6	31x20x18
PMC DB1i	1050	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Superbly detailed and rewarding small speakers	●	4	29x16x23
PMCTwenty 21	1485	10.13/GT	★★★★★	If you're looking for a top-class pair of standmounters, these are well worth a listen	●	4	33x15x28
Opera Mezza	850	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Suave-looking and good-sounding, but these don't possess the sonic assertiveness of some	●	3	32x20x33
Quad 12L Classic	500	11.11/FT	★★★★★	There's plenty to admire here	●	4	34x21x28
Rega RS3	780	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Floorstanders that are effortless with dynamics	●	3	80x22x25
Revolver Music 3	650	06.10/FT	★★★★★	Big, bold looks disguise an easy-going character	●	4	39x21x28
Revolver Music 5	1300	02.10/FT	★★★★★	Fine all-rounders with the power to fill larger rooms	●	4	93x25x32
Ruark Acoustics Sabre III	899	06.09/GT	★★★★★	Communicate music so well they demand to be auditioned	●	2	34x20x27
Roksan Kandy K2 TR-5	750	06.09/GT	★★★★★	Stunning speakers that deserve to be labelled as contenders for class-leading status	●	1	37x19x28
Spendor S3/5R2	850	07.11/GT	★★★★★	A little less than the sum of their parts	●	4	31x17x18
Tangent Evo E45	650	12.09/GT	★★★★★	For those who like an exciting and exuberant listen	●	2	100x15x26
Tannoy Precision 6.1	900	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Rhythmic, detailed speakers but a lack of solidity leaves them sounding unbalanced	●	2	33x22x26
Tannoy Revolution DC6 SE	700	12.13/FT	★★★★★	Responsive with a good sense of cohesion. Could do with a little more spark	●	1	37x20x24
Tannoy Revolution DC6T	799	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Best floorstander £700-£1500, Awards 2011	●	1	95x26x29
Tannoy Revolution DC6TSE	1000	09.12/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best floorstander £800-£1500, Awards 2013</b>	●	1	100x31x28
Tannoy Rev. Sig. DC4	600	07.12/GT	★★★★★	DC4s are still appealing across the board	●	2	27x17x18
Totem Rainmaker	1095	06.10/FT	★★★★★	Hugely musical, and a pleasure to listen to	●	4	36x17x23
Triangle Color 123	600	08.12/FT	★★★★★	A brilliant desktop speaker package		3	14x14x14
Triangle Comete Anniv.	950	12.10/FT	★★★★★	Ideal for injecting energy into your music	●	1	42x20x34
Vienna Ac. Haydn Grand	1000	10.10/FT	★★★★★	Beautifully built, they pack a sweet sonic punch that's focused and purposeful	●	5	36x17x27
Wharfedale Denton	500	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	Relaxed yet engaging sound has a lot of appeal	●	1	32x20x31
Wharfedale Diamond 155	500	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Class leaders when it comes to sound, but let down by average build quality	●	7	94x20x31

**£1500 and above**

Acoustic Energy Reference 1	1500	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Terrific all-rounders for the money	●	1	31x19x28
ADAM Aud. Classic Compact 3	2800	06.10/GT	★★★★★	For those who like their music ear-poppingly loud	●	1	44x23x29
ADAM Audio Tensor Gamma	12500	05.09/FT	★★★★★	Quite possibly the best speakers we've seen in a decade	●	2	108x32x34

**"We feel that the PMC Twenty 21s are one of the best speakers at their price level"**

October 2013

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**NAIM DAC V1 & NAP100**



DAC-V1 is a small, compact asynchronous USB Digital to Analogue Converter with multiple S/PDIF inputs, precision volume control and headphone amplifier. When partnered with the NAP 100 power amplifier you create a compact two box system designed in such a way to provide true Naim audio sound quality from a Mac, PC or laptop via a USB connection. Audio file content at up to 24bit/384khz resolution can be accessed from a wide variety of audio playback applications.

DAC-V1 transforms a computer from an audio source to a genuine high quality music hub. Highly versatile, you can also integrate with a traditional hi-fi system or use with any two-channel digital audio source such as a games console or satellite receiver via one of the five S/PDIF digital inputs. Furthermore, simply add the Naim UnitiServe hard-disk music server to create a compact, high quality music system.



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NAIM DAC-V1

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JVC

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CCS serious about sound

Some of the many brands available

Pioneer

## SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Standmount Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd,cm)
<b>£1500 and above</b>							
Audiovector S1 Avantgarde	2950	03.10/FT	★★★★★	At their best these are stunning, but not for all tastes	●	5	37x19x28
Aurousal VS	1650	04.11/FT	★★★★★	When they're good, these Aurosal's are great	●	3	108x22x27
Analysis Audio Omega	14500	08.11/FT	★★★★★	These planar floorstanders are a sonic treat	●	1	168x61x6
ATCSM 100A	11615	04.11/FT	★★★★★	Massively talented and proportioned	●	4	107x40x56
Beauhorn Rhapsody B2	2750	10.07/FT	★★★★★	Outlandish shape but treat them right and you'll be deeply rewarded	●	98	120x34x75
B&O BeoLab 9	5060	05.07/FT	★★★★★	Work not just as style but in hi-fi terms too	●	4	78x40x430
B&O BeoLab 5	11000	10.08/FT	★★★★★	Active speakers with outlandish looks that sound fabulous	●	1	97x49x49
B&W 800 Diamond	18000	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Some of the best speakers money can buy	●	3	118x45x65
B&W 805 Diamond	3750	01.11/FT	★★★★★	Good, but easier to admire than really love	●	3	42x24x35
B&W PM1	1995	03.12/GT	★★★★★	Best standmounter £1500+, Awards 2011	●	1	33x19x30
Burmester B10	3220	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Well built, well refined and an engaging listen. We're in love	●	3	39x22x28
Dali Epicon 2	3750	01.13/FT	★★★★★	Reinforces Dali's reputation for making top-class speakers	●	3	39x21x37
Dali Epicon 8	11500	08.13/FT	★★★★★	Give them space and they'll deliver a muscular, enthusiastic sound	●	3	126x35x50
Dali Fazon F5	2700	12.11/FT	★★★★★	Stylish deliverers of audiophile sound	●	3	92x28x32
Dali Helicon 300 Mk2	2100	02.08/FT	★★★★★	Excellent midrange; woolly bass	●	2	44x21x40
Dali Mentor 6	2200	02.07/FT	★★★★★	Dynamic floorstanders that are really fast and agile	●	1	40x8x15
Dynaudio Confidence C1	5325	08.08/FT	★★★★★	Set up with care, the C1s are quite exceptional	●	4	45x20x43
Dynaudio Excite X32	1765	02.09/GT	★★★★★	These pack an eloquent, expansive sound	●	4	92x17x27
Dynaudio Focus 110A	1700	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Fun, flexible and hugely capable active speakers	●	6	31x17x32
Dynaudio Focus 160	1800	03.12/GT	★★★★★	Just do the job and don't intrude on the entertainment	●	6	35x20x29
Dynaudio Focus 220 Mk II	2630	10.09/FT	★★★★★	These Dynaudios are fine speakers; all they lack is a little star quality	●	4	98x21x30
Diapason Astera	6050	02.11/FT	★★★★★	Spellbinding performance with the right kind of music	●	1	38x26x44
Eclipse TD 510Z Mk2	3840	08.12/FT	★★★★★	Superb timing, detail and imaging	●	3	98x38x39
Eclipse TD 712z Mk2	6500	10.13/GT	★★★★★	They have a few compromises but their strengths can't be matched at any price	●	4	99x35x43
Focal Diablo Utopia	7686	12.12/FT	★★★★★	When it comes to levels of insight, little at this price even comes close	●	Any	43x26x43



0800 014 7430

## TANNOY Precision 6.4

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that image better..." Sound & Vision US



## REGA RP8 Turntable

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## SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Standmount Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd,cm)
Focal SM9	4580	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Intended for professional use, the SM9s work brilliantly as home speakers	●	1	32x49x39
Focal Easya	1800	11.13/FT	★★★★★	Convenient and easy to use, these Focals are compromised by a relaxed delivery	●	2	90x17x24
Image Audio IA8	2000	02.12/GT	★★★★★	Deeply impressive wall-mounted alternatives to convention		1	59x48x10
Jamo R907	5500	04.09/FT	★★★★★	The innovative R907s are stunningly capable speakers	●	1	119x44x19
JBL Studio 580	1500	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Hugely capable floorstanders for the money	●	2	107x25x35
KEF Reference 207/2	12000	10.08/FT	★★★★★	Big, bold and stunningly built, they major on bass	●	4	123x40x69
Kudos Cardea C30	5650	07.10/FT	★★★★★	Ideal if musical enjoyment is your top priority	●	7	112x20x27
Linn Akubarik	15600	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Deeply impressive engineering but its presentation veers towards the clinical	●	200+	105x35x45
Monopulse 42A	2000	07.09/GT	★★★★★	Odd appearance apart, there's an awful lot to like about these Monopulses	●	10	108x23x25
Monitor Audio Gold GX200	2300	03.12/FT	★★★★★	Pretty looks and excellent refinement	●	2	90x17x30
Mon. Audio Platinum PL300	6000	03.08/FT	★★★★★	Its been a long time coming, and it is well worth the wait	●	3	111x41x47
Naim Ovator S-400	3650	10.13/GT	★★★★★	The most rounded Naim speaker we've heard	●	5	106x33x35
Neat Ultimatum XLS	4500	09.12/FT	★★★★★	An entertainer of the highest order if partnered with care	●	9	38x22x37
Opera Callas	2375	01.09/FT	★★★★★	Arguably the best standmounter at this price level	●	3	37x23x34
PMC Fact 3	4100	08.11/FT	★★★★★	Hugely capable but a touch overcontrolled	●	4	54x16x30
PMC Fact 8	4700	04.10/FT	★★★★★	These PMC floorstanders are quite simply magical - even at this price	●	4	103x15x38
PMCPB1i	5850	09.09/GT	★★★★★	Simply excellent speakers: big, bold and accomplished	●	1	108x20x40
PMCTwenty 22	1970	07.12/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best standmounter £1500+, Awards 2013</b>	●	4	41x18x37
PMCTwenty 23	2300	02.14/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best floorstander £1500+, Awards 2013</b>	●	4	92x15x33
PMCWafer 2	2295	02.12/GT	★★★★★	A real achievement for those after proper hi-fi		2	57x35x10
ProAc Response D18	2145	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Best floorstander £1500+, Awards 2011	●	6	93x19x27
ProAc Response D28	3250	07.07/FT	★★★★★	Another excellent pair of floorstanders from ProAc	●	6	108x20x29
ProAc Response D40/R	6125	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Articulate and dynamic, a top-class pair of floorstanders	●	6	120x21x34
ProAc Studio 140 Mk2	1650	12.10/FT	★★★★★	An entertaining and dynamic performer	●	4	104x19x28
Quad ESL-2812	6500	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Won't be to everyone's tastes but these electrostatic speakers truly excel	●	1	107x69x38
Quad ESL 2905	6000	01.07/FT	★★★★★	A truly world-class speaker	●	1	143x70x39
Tannoy Definition DC10T	5250	10.13/GT	★★★★★	While the DC10Ts aren't the most refined speakers out there, they're easy to love	●	3	113x34x32
Tannoy Precision 6.2	1700	10.13/GT	★★★★★	A beautifully balanced and hugely listenable pair of standmounters	●	3	100x31x28
Sonus F. Cremona Auditor M	2690	06.08/FT	★★★★★	One of the best standmounts money can buy	●	2	35x20x37
Sonus F. Liuto Monitor Wood	1649	01.10/FT	★★★★★	These are classy and natural standmounters	●	2	35x19x34
SP Acoustics SP1 Signature	14950	01.11/FT	★★★★★	Able to challenge the very best at this exalted level	●	Any	106x35x46
Spendor A5	1695	03.11/GT	★★★★★	The most accomplished speakers for this money	●	4	79x17x25
Spendor A6R	2500	02.14/GT	★★★★★	An outstanding pair of speakers that do very little wrong	●	5	87.5x19x28
Spendor D7	3500	10.13/GT	★★★★★	The finest Spendors in years	●	6	95x20x32
Tannoy Definition DC8	2500	03.12/GT	★★★★★	Capable of seriously controlled sound	●	3	47x27x26
Tannoy Precision 6.4	2200	02.14/GT	★★★★★	If bass is important to you, then these speakers are worth an audition	●	3	105x31x35
Totem Mani-2 Signature	4600	12.10/FT	★★★★★	When it comes to outright enjoyment we can't think of any rival speakers we prefer for this money	●	4	42x21x31
Triangle Magellan Cello SW2	6699	05.10/FT	★★★★★	A speaker dedicated to actually enjoying music	●	2	114x42x37
Vivid Audio V1.5	5250	11.09/FT	★★★★★	They might look odd, but these are a must hear	●	5	113x26x24
Wharfedale Jade-5	1650	01.12/ST	★★★★★	Floorstanders that pack immense power and poise	●	3	106x25x40
Wilson Audio Duette	11000	10.08/FT	★★★★★	One of the best pairs of speakers we've ever heard	●	Any	47x23x35
Wilson Audio Sophia 3	16500	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Expensive, but they deliver a stunning sound full of detail, dynamics and drive	●	7	105x35x48
Wilson Benesch A.C.T	8800	08.07/FT	★★★★★	Good looking, solid and superb sounding floorstanders	●	1	108x23x37
Wilson Benesch Trinity	4700	03.08/FT	★★★★★	An awful lot of technology and ability for the money	●	4	108x24x30

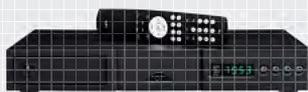
## SYSTEM BUILDER

Perfect partners for the Guru Junior speakers



**Stereo amplifier**  
Naim Nait 5si  
£925 ★★★★★

This stereo amp sounds clearer and cleaner than its predecessor with real muscle behind its performance.



**CD player**  
Naim CD5si  
£1000 ★★★★★

Despite a lack of digital outputs, the CD5si holds its own against competitors. An excellent system.



**Speakers**  
Guru Junior  
£800 ★★★★★

The Guru Juniors are excellent at handling dynamics, with a clear and candid presentation to boot.

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**Roth DBT001**

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SAVE: £200.99

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SAVE £20



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**Sennheiser RS110 II**

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**£44.95**

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SAVE £45



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■ Gloss White Only

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SAVE: £400.05

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Floorstanding Speakers  
**Castle Knight 3**

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**£300.00**

SAVE £300

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### Clearance Home Cinema

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SAVE £200



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**Marantz UD5007**

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SAVE: £150.00

**£349.00**

SAVE £150



Networked 3D Ready Blu-Ray Player  
**Marantz UD7007**

RRP: £999.00  
SAVE: £500.00

**£499.00**

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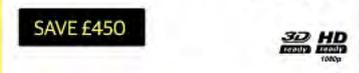


Networked 3D Ready Blu-Ray Player  
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SAVE £450



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What HiFi? September 2013

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## Stereo amplifiers

**Integrated** \_\_\_\_\_ These amplifiers combine a preamp and power section in one box  
**Power output** \_\_\_\_\_ A higher number usually means louder, depending on speakers  
**Digital inputs** \_\_\_\_\_ Some amplifiers now have a DAC built in, which could be useful

### The shortlist



**AWARD WINNER**

**NAD D 3020**

“If the D 3020 represents the future of hi-fi, count us in.”



**PRODUCT OF THE YEAR**

**Arcam FMJ A19**

“It won’t break the bank but it will immediately improve a budget hi-fi set-up.”



**AWARD WINNER**

**Naim Nait 5i**

“Nothing short of a gem for this end of the market.”

### Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Power (w)	DAC	Line level in	MM phono in	MC phono in	USB in	Tape loops	Preamp out	Speakers out	Tone controls	Headphone out	Remote control	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
<b>Up to £1000</b>																	
Audiolab 8200A	750	05.13/ST	★★★★★	Capable, but lacks some subtlety	60	6	0	0	3	●	1	●	●	●	2	7.5x45x34	
Arcam FMJ A18	500	06.12/ST	★★★★★	Comfortable, with impressive detail and agility	50	6	1	0	2	●	1	●	●	●	1	8.5x43x33	
Arcam FMJ A19	650	05.13/ST	★★★★★	<b>Best Stereo amp £500-£800, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR</b>	50	6	1	0	1	●	2	●	●	●	1	9x43x28	
Cambridge Audio Azur 350A	250	01.12/ST	★★★★★	A budget amp with a decent grasp of timing	45	●	6	0	0	1	2	●	●	●	2	9x43x34	
Cambridge Audio Azur 351A	300	11.12/FT	★★★★★	Worth considering if you prefer an energetic approach	45	●	5	0	0	●	1	2	●	●	2	9x43x34	
Cambridge Audio Azur 651A	450	03.12/FT	★★★★★	Meaty and powerful, but not the most refined	75	●	5	0	0	1	●	2	●	●	1	12x43x35	
Cambridge Audio Topaz SR10	230	06.10/FT	★★★★★	This affordable stereo receiver has plenty to offer	85	5	1	0	1	2	●	●	●	●	1	11x43x34	
Cyrus 6a	700	06.12/ST	★★★★★	Best stereo amp £600-£1000, Awards 2012	40	6	0	0	0	●	2	●	●	●	2	7x22x36	
Cyrus 6XP	925	09.09/FT	★★★★★	Stereo amplifier Product of the Year, Awards 2010	40	6	0	0	1	●	2	●	●	●	2	7x22x36	
Denon PMA-710	350	07.10/GT	★★★★★	The most enjoyable Denon amp we've heard in ages	50	5	1	0	2	●	2	●	●	●	2	12x43x21	
Denon PMA-720AE	350	02.13/GT	★★★★★	Entertaining and capable, but sonically stubborn	50	4	1	0	1	●	1	●	●	●	2	12x43x31	
Icon Audio Stereo 25	500	01.09/FT	★★★★★	The Stereo 25 is superbly made for the money	30	3	0	0	0	1					1	22x32x31	
Marantz PM-KI Pearl Lite	900	12.10/FT	★★★★★	Decent performance at an affordable price	70	3	1	0	2	●	2	●	●	●	2	13x44x38	
Marantz PM6004	310	01.12/ST	★★★★★	Product of the Year - Stereo amplifiers, Awards 2011	45	5	1	0	1	2	●	●	●	●	2	11x44x37	
NAD C316BEE	260	01.12/ST	★★★★★	A decent listen that's overshadowed by rivals	40	5	0	0	1	1	●	●	●	●	2	8x44x29	
NAD C326BEE	300	07.10/GT	★★★★★	A really musical amplifier to grace any budget system	50	7	0	0	2	1	●	●	●	●	1	10x44x29	
NAD C356BEE	600	10.10/FT	★★★★★	A party animal of an amplifier	80	7	0	0	2	●	2	●	●	●	1	13x44x34	
NAD C356BEE DAC	695	01.12/FT	★★★★★	A good amplifier with a great DAC	80	●	8	0	0	●	2	●	2	●	●	1	13x44x34
NAD D 3020	400	11.13/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best stereo amp up to £500, Awards 2013</b>	30	2	0	0	●	0	1	●	●	●	1	19x6x22	
NAD D 7050	800	12.13/FT	★★★★★	Admirable, but not quite the measure of its cheaper rivals	50	●	0	0	0	●	0	1	●	●	1	24x7x27	
Naim Nait 5i	875	05.13/ST	★★★★★	A strong all-round performer	50	4	0	0	1	1				●	1	7x44x31	
Naim Nait 5si	925	11.13/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best stereo amp £800-£1500, Awards 2013</b>	60	3	0	0	1	1	●	●	●	●	1	7x43x31	
Onix A-25	775	05.13/ST	★★★★★	A good choice for those who value finesse over muscle	30	3	0	0	0	●	1			●	1	9x21x36	
Onkyo A-9030	300	12.12/FT	★★★★★	Proof that Onkyo knows how to build good stereo gear	65	4	1	0	1	2		●	●	●	2	14x44x33	
Onkyo A-9050	350	02.13/GT	★★★★★	Lean presentation, but there's plenty to like	75	5	1	0	1	●	1	●	●	●	2	14x44x33	
Peachtree iDecco	999	01.11/FT	★★★★★	Ideal for a digital based set-up	40	1	0	0	●	1	●	1	●	●	1	13x38x29	
Pro-ject Stereo Box S	200	11.11/FT	★★★★★	A small amp that's worth investigation	40	2	0	0	0	1				●	2	4x10x10	
Pioneer A-A6	350	03.08/FT	★★★★★	Among the most fluent amps under £500	45	3	1	0	●	1	1	●	●	●	2	10x42x36	
Pioneer A-70	800	05.13/ST	★★★★★	Excels in many areas, falls short of class-leading	90	3	1	1	●	1	●	2	●	●	2	14x44x36	
Rega Brio-R	480	06.12/ST	★★★★★	Best stereo amp £400-£600, Awards 2012	50	4	1	0	1	1				●	2	8x22x31	
Roksan Kandy K2	795	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Best stereo amp £700-£1000, Awards 2011	125	5	1	0	1	●	1	●	●	●	3	10x43x38	
Rotel RA-10	350	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	Best Stereo amp Up To £400, Awards 2012	40	4	1	0	1	1	●	2	●	●	2	7x43x34	
Rotel RA-12	600	05.13/ST	★★★★★	Well priced, appealing amp, just lacks a little expression	60	●	4	1	0	1	●	1	●	●	2	14x44x36	
Wadia 151 PowerDAC Mini	999	02.12/FT	★★★★★	A compact digital amp with plenty of appeal	25	●	0	0	0	●	0	1			●	1	7x20x20
Yamaha A-S300	195	04.11/FT	★★★★★	Solid performer but you can get better for a little more money	60	6	1	0	1	1	●	●	●	●	2	15x44x39	
Yamaha A-S500	330	Aw.10/FT	★★★★★	Best stereo amplifier up to £500, Awards 2010.	85	3	1	0	2	2	●	●	●	●	2	15x44x39	

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**AMPLIFIERS continued**

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Power(w)	DAC	Line level in	MM phono in	MC phono in	USB in	Tape loops	Preamp out	Speaker out	Tone controls	Headphone out	Remote control	Finishes	Dimensions (h/w/d, cm)
<b>£1000 and above</b>																	
Audio Analogue Class A Int. SE	9190	06.11/FT	★★★★★	A fantastic, and sonically rounded performer	50	5	0	0	1	1	●	1	●	1	33x45x41		
ATCSIA 2-150	2379	02.10/GT	★★★★★	One of the best amplifiers at this price level	150	4	0	0	1	●	1	●	●	1	14x44x35		
Bryston B60R	2600	07.09/FT	★★★★★	The Bryston B60R may be unassuming, but has quality	60	4	0	0	1	1	●	●	●	2	5x43x28		
Cambridge Audio Azur 851A	1200	12.12/GT	★★★★★	For scale, power, build and style, this is hard to beat	120	8	0	0	1	●	2	●	●	2	12x43x39		
Chord Elec. Cyan Click HP	4215	07.10/FT	★★★★★	Stylish, and astonishingly well built too	100	2	0	0	●	0	1	●	●	2	6x34x15		
Creek Evolution 5350	1025	06.10/FT	★★★★★	There's lots to like here, but better available elsewhere	120	5	1	0	0	●	2	●	●	1	9x43x34		
Cyrus 6XPD	1250	01.12/ST	★★★★★	A sturdy DAC-toting amp that's a cracker	40	●	6	0	0	●	1	●	2	●	2	7x22x36	
Cyrus 8a	1200	12.12/FT	★★★★★	Everything we've come to expect and love about Cyrus	70	5	0	0	1	●	2	●	●	2	7x22x36		
Cyrus 8 DAC	1400	07.12/FT	★★★★★	Meticulous and engaging amp and DAC combo	70	●	6	0	0	●	0	2	●	●	2	7x22x36	
Cyrus 8 XpD	1500	07.09/FT	★★★★★	Sets a sky-high standard at the price point	70	5	0	0	●	1	●	1	●	●	2	7x22x36	
Cyrus 8XP	1250	11.09/GT	★★★★★	The Cyrus 8XP misses nothing out in sonic thrills	70	6	0	0	1	●	1	●	●	2	7x22x36		
Cyrus DACXP Signature	2750	11.13/FT	★★★★★	With the Signature upgrade, the DACXP remains a fine product	70	2	0	0	1	●	1	●	●	2	7x22x36		
Dartzeel CTH-8550	16858	05.10/FT	★★★★★	Well engineered - but with a colossal price tag	200	7	0	0	1	●	1	●	●	2	17x44x34		
Denon PMA-2010AE	1700	02.10/FT	★★★★★	Listen to this amp in full flow and it's a monster	80	4	1	1	2	●	2	●	●	1	18x43x44		
Devialet 110	4490	02.14/FT	★★★★★	An exceptional all-rounder	110	●	1	1	0	●	0	1	●	1	4x38x38		
Devialet D-Premier	11450	08.12/GT	★★★★★	A fresh look at amp design	240	2	1	1	1	●	1	●	●	3	4x40x40		
EAR Yoshino V12	7000	07.13/FT	★★★★★	This terrific integrated amp needn't fear any rival at this price	50	5	0	0	1	1	1	●	1	14x42x14			
Heed Audio Obeliski	1300	06.12/GT	★★★★★	Best stereo amp £1000-£1500, Awards 2012	35	5	1	0	0	●	1	●	2	9x22x36			
Karan Acoustics KA1180Mk2	5995	09.13/FT	★★★★★	One of the finest amps we've heard	180	4	0	0	1	1	1	●	2	9x50x34			
Lavardin IS Reference	2950	01.10/FT	★★★★★	Amazing: its rivals sound mechanical in comparison	30	4	0	0	1	1	1	●	1	8.5x43x35			
Leema Tucana Mk II	3595	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Best stereo amplifier £2000+, Awards 2010.	148	7	0	0	1	●	1	●	●	2	10x43x36		
Leema Elements	1395	12.12/GT	★★★★★	Solid choice, wide connection range and optional DAC	56	●	3	0	0	●	0	1	●	2	9x22x28		
Myriad MXI2080	1000	08.08/FT	★★★★★	Assiduous, precise presentation	80	6	1	1	1	●	1	●	1	9x44x38			
NAD C390DD	2250	12.12/FT	★★★★★	Novel thinking delivers an alternative to the favourites	150	1	0	0	●	0	2	●	●	1	13x43x39		
Naim Nait 5XS	1500	01.12/ST	★★★★★	Still a top class premium amplifier	60	3	0	0	2	●	1	●	1	7x43x30			

**"The Rega Elicit-R really is a fantastic amp"**

October 2013

**The Amplifier: Heart Of Your System**

**Your amplifier is the engine of your system: it accepts the signal from a source (CD player, record player, streamer, whatever) and boosts it to a level sufficient to drive speakers.**

**Additionally, it allows you to regulate the volume you listen at. When several sources are connected, you will, of course, want to switch between them - an amp will let you do that.**

**Influencing the sound**  
Some amps incorporate tone controls, allowing you to influence the sound you hear. Audio purists frown on such interference, but for many listeners it's a must-have option.

Opinion is similarly divided on the subject of remote controls: the circuitry needed by the remote might impact on the amplifier's sound, but you can't deny that controlling the volume from your sofa is a convenient bonus.

**With great power...**  
How powerful an amplifier do you need? While it is true that more watts will give greater authority and the ability to drive a range of speakers, don't attach too much importance to the figure.

Modern speakers are very efficient, so it's better to have a quality amp with a modest output than a brute that's more about lights, knobs and facilities than good sound.



## AMPLIFIERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Power (w)	DAC	Line level in	MM phono in	MC phono in	USB in	Tape loops	Preamp out	Speaker out	Tone controls	Headphone out	Remote control	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
<b>£1000 and above</b>																	
Naim Nait XS 2	1595	10.13/GT	★★★★★	An improvement on the Nait XS, even if it sacrifices a little detail	70	5	1	0		1	●	1	●	●	1		7x43x30
Naim Supernait 2	2750	12.13/FT	★★★★★	Even at this price, the Supernait 2 is a fantastic buy	80	5	0	0		1	●	1	●	●	1		9x64x31
Pathos Ethos	3800	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Mixes style and substance better than any rival	100	7	0	0	●	0	●	1		●	1		15x43x49
Pathos InpolRemix	3800	01.12/FT	★★★★★	Not cheap or powerful - just brilliant	10	1	0	0		0	●	1		●	2		18x33x29
Pathos Logos	3650	09.08/FT	★★★★★	An inspirational amp: wonderful with all music	110	6	0	0		1		2		●	1		15x48x22
Plinius Hautonga	4455	07.11/FT	★★★★★	A powerhouse of an integrated amplifier	200	5	1	1		2	●	1		●	2		12x45x50
Plinius Hiato	6759	08.09/FT	★★★★★	If you're after a top class amplifier the Hiato is for you	300	5	0	0		1	●	1		●	2		17x45x45
Quad II Classic Integrated	4500	04.10/FT	★★★★★	A fine integrated amplifier with a hefty price tag	25	3	1	1		1	1			1			20x31x38
Rega Osiris	5998	06.10/FT	★★★★★	A fine amp that makes sense partnering its Isis sibling	162	6	0	0		1	1			●	1		12x44x35
Rega Elicit-R	1600	10.13/GT	★★★★★	This is truly a fantastic amplifier	105	5	1	0		1	●	1		●	1		8x43x34
Roksan Caspian M2	1695	10.13/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best stereo amplifier £1500+, Awards 2013</b>	85	5	0	0		1	●	1		●	2		8x43x33
Synthesis Shine	2449	07.10/FT	★★★★★	This valve design needs sensitive speakers to fly	40	5	0	0		1	1			●	4		16x32x22
T+A PA 3000 HV	9900	11.13/FT	★★★★★	A truly impressive piece of kit despite its polite disposition	300	6	0	0		0	1		●	●	1		17x46x46
Unison Research Preludio	2295	02.10/GT	★★★★★	Rubs shoulders with the very best at this price	14	4	0	0		1	1			1			20x40x38
Unison Research S6	2995	05.11/FT	★★★★★	In the right system, the S6 is truly magical	33	5	0	0		1	1			●	2		21x35x49
Unison Research S9	6995	02.10/FT	★★★★★	We can't help but love this quirky valve amplifier	35	4	0	0		0	1			●	1		25x41x57
Unison Research Simply Italy	1495	09.12/FT	★★★★★	A well-engineered valve amplifier at a sensible price	12	5	0	0		1	1			●	2		26x19x35



## Preamps

Preamps are also known as control units. On a most basic level, they perform two functions: source selection and volume control. Most powered preamps also amplify the signal slightly in order to make matching to a power amplifier easier. Some include phono stages.

## Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Line level in	MM phono in	MC phono in	Tape loops	Preamp out	Balanced out	Headphone out	Tone controls	Remote control	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
<b>Up to £5000</b>													
Audio Research LS17	3399	01.09/FT	★★★★★	This top quality product should serve you for decades	7	0	0	1	●	●		●	14x48x31
Audionet Pre 1 G3	3525	01.10/FT	★★★★★	As revealing as amplifiers get for the money	5	0	0	1	●	●	●	●	7x43x31
ATC CA-2	1058	12.09/FT	★★★★★	A matchless preamp when paired with the P1 power amp	5	0	0	1	●	●	●	●	9x44x32
Cyrus DACXP+	2550	04.11/FT	★★★★★	Massive ability in a small box	2	0	0	1	●	●		●	7x22x36
Cyrus Pre XP d	1300	02.10/GT	★★★★★	Works wonders when coupled with the matching 8 power amp	6	0	0	0	●	●		●	7x22x36
Heed Audio Obelisk pre/px	2230	04.13/FT	★★★★★	A superb-sounding preamp, but Heed needs to make it feel more luxurious	5	0	0	1	●			●	9x22x33
Lavardin C62	3471	12.10/FT	★★★★★	Belongs near the top of any shortlist	6	0	0	1	●			●	9x43x31
Leema Pyxis	3995	11.11/FT	★★★★★	Aversatile, enjoyable preamp	5	1	1	1	●	●	●	●	11x44x31
Linn Akurate Kontrol	4200	09.11/FT	★★★★★	Part of the Linn Akurate system - and truly awesome	4	1	1	1	●	●	●	●	9x38x38
NAD C165BEE	650	08.10/FT	★★★★★	A brute of a preamp	4	1	1	0	●	●		●	8x44x29
Naim NAC 152 XS	975	02.10/GT	★★★★★	It's good, but could do better with dynamics	5	0	0	0	●			●	7x43x30
Quad Elite Pre	850	11.10/FT	★★★★★	Doesn't blow us away, but it's still worth consideration	6	1	1	1	●		●	●	7x32x31
Quad QC-twenty four	1000	06.13/FT	★★★★★	Pleasant listen but works best with Quad's valve power amps	5	0	0	2	●			●	9x30x22
Rotel RC-1580	995	03.10/FT	★★★★★	A likeable, fully featured performer that delivers much for the money	5	1	1	2	●	●	●	●	10x43x34
Townshend Allegri	1895	08.12/GT	★★★★★	Basic features, but terrific sound	6	0	0	0	●			●	5x13x31
<b>£5000 and above</b>													
Audio Research LS27	6500	03.13/FT	★★★★★	A fine preamp but struggles to shine in comparison to the Reference 75	6	0	0	1	●	●		●	13x48x34
Aesthetix Calypso Signature	6400	03.11/FT	★★★★★	One of the finest preamps on the market today	5	0	0	1	●	●		●	11x46x45
Bryston BP26DA	5050	08.06/FT	★★★★★	A must-hear preamp. Lacks style but built to last	5	0	0	1	●	●	●	●	6x49x28
Burmester 808 MK5	22242	02.13/FT	★★★★★	A beautifully constructed, highly versatile preamp for serious devotees	Opt	Opt	Opt	Opt	●	●		●	95x48x33
Chord Electronics CPA 8000	25500	01.13/FT	★★★★★	A magnificent preamp, but not quite the masterpiece its price demands	8	0	0	2	●	●	●	●	31x42x36
Chord Electronics Indigo	8670	11.09/FT	★★★★★	A far sighted design mixing useful features with great sound	6	0	0	0	●	●	●	●	36x42x9
Krell Phantom II	12000	11.12/FT	★★★★★	A hugely capable preamp that is able to dig deeply into any recording	8	0	0	1	●	●		●	10x44x46
McIntosh C2500	7495	01.14/FT	★★★★★	A refined and entertaining preamp that needs a little care in partnering	8	1	1	1	●	●	●	●	19x44x46
Naim NAC252/Supercap	9070	11.08/FT	★★★★★	Makes a magical combination with the NAP250 power amp	6	0	0	0	●			●	9x43x31
Plinius Tautoro	6325	09.08/FT	★★★★★	A mighty amplifier in every sense of the word	4	1	1	1	●	●	●	●	16x45x48

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## Power amps

These are effectively the powerhouse of the system. They deliver the high currents necessary to make a loudspeaker work. They can be configured as a stereo unit, or monoblocs, where the circuitry for each channel is housed separately. Don't judge a power amp by its output level.

### Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Type	Power (w)	Phono in	XLR in	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	Weight (kg)	
<b>Up to £5000</b>										
Audiolab 8200MB	1900	01.12/FT	★★★★★	Hefty, but a bit of a blunt instrument	Mono	250	1	1	15x22x38	9
Audionet Amp 1 V2	4850	01.10/FT	★★★★★	As revealing as amplifiers get for this kind of money	Stereo	200	1	1	18x43x32	28
ATC P1	1566	12.09/FT	★★★★★	A matchless power amp when paired with the CA-2 preamp	Stereo	150	1	1	14x44x35	26
Bryston 2B SST	2925	08.06/FT	★★★★★	Big, strong and very powerful	Stereo	100	1	0	49x13x41	14
Chord Electronics Maxx	990	05.11/FT	★★★★★	This could be a sign of hi-fi to come	Stereo	20	1	0	7x16x4	0.4
Chord Electronics SPM 1050	3990	10.07/FT	★★★★★	Very fast and punchy, exciting and stable sound	Stereo	200	2	2	13x42x36	15
Croft Polestar 1	800	06.07/FT	★★★★★	Great buy if you want sound quality not quantity	Stereo	25	1	0	11x22x33	6
Cyrus 8 Power	850	02.10/GT	★★★★★	Performs with panache, we'd spend our cash here	Stereo	60	3	0	7x22x36	5
Cyrus Mono X300	2500	04.11/FT	★★★★★	Exceptionally fluid and agile. Recommended	Stereo	235	1	1	7x22x36	7
Cyrus Mono X300 Signature	2750	10.13/FT	★★★★★	A deceptively compact monobloc that surpasses the Mono X300	Mono	225	1	1	8x22x37	6.5
Heed Audio Obelisks	1350	04.13/FT	★★★★★	Engaging and a pleasure to listen to, even if it's not the classiest in terms of finish	Stereo	50	1	0	9x22x33	6
Leema Hydra II	3595	11.11/FT	★★★★★	A top class power amplifier for the money	Stereo	160	1	1	11x44x31	33
NAD C275BEE	820	08.10/FT	★★★★★	A great power amp, best matched with the C165BEE preamp	Stereo	150	1	0	13x44x35	15
Naim NAP 155 XS	1115	02.10/GT	★★★★★	It's a good performer, but not the last word in dynamics	Stereo	60	0	0	7x43x30	7.5
Naim NAP 250	3050	11.08/FT	★★★★★	Paired with the NAC252 preamp it's magical	Stereo	80	0	0	9x43x32	16
Plinius P10	3390	09.07/FT	★★★★★	Makes a terrific amp when partnered with the Plinius M8 preamp	Stereo	200	2	1	12x45x40	14
Quad Elite Stereo	700	11.10/FT	★★★★★	The Elite power amp paired with the Elite Pre is well worth consideration	Stereo	80	1	0	7x32x31	6.25
Quad QSP	1200	07.12/FT	★★★★★	Needs to be auditioned - a confident listen	Stereo	140	2	0	15x33x27	14
Rotel RB-1582	1095	03.10/FT	★★★★★	Great when paired with the RC-1580 preamp	Stereo	200	1	0	14x43x41	33
<b>£5000 and above</b>										
Aesthetix Atlas	7600	08.08/FT	★★★★★	Sophisticated brute - pair with the Aesthetix Calypso	Stereo	200	2	2	19x45x46	33
Audio Research Reference 75	8495	03.13/FT	★★★★★	A fabulous power amp, match it with care and you'll have sonic magic	Stereo	75	0	1	22x48x50	21
Audio Research VS115	5395	02.09/FT	★★★★★	Ignore the looks and enjoy the sound	Stereo	120	1	1	20x45x21	29
Burmester 911 Mk3	32800	08.12/GT	★★★★★	Awesome price, awesome bit of kit	Stereo	535	0	1	22x48x48	31
Chord SPM 14000 MkII	24480	01.13/FT	★★★★★	An awe-inspiring monobloc, yet not quite as sonically rounded as we'd like	Mono	700	1	1	31x48x69	75
Krell Evolution 402e	18500	11.12/FT	★★★★★	The Evolution 402e is world-class. It isn't cheap, but quality such as this never is	Stereo	400	1	1	25x44x56	61
Lavardin AP150	7686	12.10/FT	★★★★★	For sound quality and musical enjoyment, the C62 with the AP150 is hard to beat	Stereo	50	1	0	14x43x31	12
Marantz MA-9S2	5000	02.08/FT	★★★★★	Right up there with the very best power amplifiers	Mono	300	2	1	45x46x20	37
Plinius SA-REF	12650	09.08/FT	★★★★★	As enticing an amplifier as you can get	Stereo	300	1	1	28x51x54	57
Quad II eighty	6000	06.13/FT	★★★★★	A capable monobloc amp that should be considered	Mono	80	1	0	21x43x18	57

## Instant expert... hi-fi separates

1.

### Why matching pairs are a winning combination

We advocate separates over all-in-one systems. Sound-wise, separates tend to perform better, but when buying we still suggest you demo the same maker's matching amp and CD player. The kit usually shares the same design team and will sonically complement each other: if you like the sound of the amp, you'll probably enjoy the CD player, too.

3.

### Position before you listen - and don't stack it, rack it

You've bought your shiny new system. But you're not going to stack your new amp, CD spinner and turntable on that rickety table, are you? And don't even think of putting the kit on the floor. To sound it's best, hi-fi kit needs a dust-free, level and secure base. Invest pounds in a dedicated rack, and the sonic (and visual) rewards justify the outlay.

2.

### Listen to your favourite music, not the dealer's

Hi-fi dealers should have a decent CD and vinyl collection for demo purposes, but we suggest you take your own. Take tunes you know so you can concentrate on how the kit is performing, rather than on the new music. And don't just take your 'good'-sounding CDs. If you listen to lots of compressed pop, take it and hear exactly how it sounds.

4.

### Give your amplifier room to breathe

Well done for buying that nice equipment rack, but before you undo all your good work, make sure you give your stereo amplifier room to breathe. These machines get hot, and the chassis vents shouldn't be covered up. The top shelf of your rack is ideal, but if you also own a top-loading CD player and/or turntable you'll need clearance for all.

5.

### Keep on running, keep on improving

Hi-fi units are also (sort of) like Spanish footballers. No, not constantly feigning a blown fuse, but happiest playing in the heat. New kit can take weeks to reach optimum levels. Once run-in - unless you have an environmental conscience - we suggest you leave your kit on. Otherwise, give it around half-an-hour to warm up before you hit play.

### Denon DF109 DAB Mini System

This DAB stereo receiver and CD player system delivers clean and pure sound. Available in silver or black. Great value on it's own or choose one of our amazing speaker and cable package deals shown here.

**System Price £249**



#### DEAL 1



**Add Boston Acoustics A25 Speakers and 4m Audioquest G2 Speaker Cable**

**Package Price £359**

#### DEAL 2



**Add Audio BX2 Speakers and 4m Audioquest G2 Speaker Cable**

**Package Price £399**

#### DEAL 3



**Add Dali Zensor 3 Speakers and 4m Audioquest G2 Speaker Cable**

**Package Price £439**

### Denon AVR-X4000 AV Receiver

If you're looking for a premium AV amplifier, this should really be on your short-list. Amazing value on it's own or why not choose one of the package deals shown here.

Available in silver or black.



**System Price £649**

#### DEAL 1



**AVR-X4000 & the Denon DBT3313 Universal Blu-Ray Player**

**Package Price £1149**

# FREE NEXT DAY DELIVERY

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## Yamaha R-N500 Network Amplifier

Includes the ToP-ART design features for the very best sound quality. Available in silver or black. Superb on it's own or select a complete system with speakers and cable in the fantastic package deals shown here.



System Price **£449**

### DEAL 1



Add **Boston Acoustics A25 Speakers** and 4m Audioquest G2 Speaker Cable

Package Price **£499**

### DEAL 2



Add **Dali Zensor 3 Speakers** and 4m Audioquest G2 Speaker Cable

Package Price **£579**

### DEAL 3



Add **Monitor Audio BX5 Speakers** and 4m Audioquest G2 Speaker Cable

Package Price **£799**

### DEAL 2



**AVR-X4000 & the Boston Acoustics Soundware XS SE 5.1 Speakers**

Package Price **£899**

### DEAL 3



**AVR-X4000 & Monitor Audio MASS 5.1 Speaker Pack**

Package Price **£1379**

### PLUS

Why not add a **Pro-Ject Essential Turntable** to any of the package deals shown here for **only an extra £139!**



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## iPod docks

**Docks with power** \_\_\_\_\_ These are ready-made systems for your iPod; usually include speakers

**Docks without power** \_\_\_\_\_ These integrate an iPod into an existing system as a line level source

### The shortlist



#### Bowers & Wilkins Zeppelin Air

“The Zeppelin Air sounds great, it has better features and sound quality is a step ahead of the original.”



**AWARD WINNER**

#### Epoz Aktimate Micro

“If you want a pair of speakers to sit either side of your laptop, these are a brilliant performance-per-pound option.”



#### JBL OnBeat Venue LT

“The JBL Venue LT dock delivers an exciting all-round performance and currently sets the bar at its position in the market.”

### Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	AirPlay	Bluetooth	Docktype	Aux	Power(w)	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
<b>Up to £500</b>									
Audyssey South of Market	350	04.11/FT	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	n/a	23x13x28
Arcam rCube	350	04.12/ST	★★★★★			iOS	●	90	20x20x20
Bose SoundDock II	250	09.10/GT	★★★★★			iOS	●	n/a	17x30x17
B&W Z2	330	10.13/ST	★★★★★			iOS	●	40	18x32x10
Epoz Aktimate Micro	260	09.13/GT	★★★★★			iOS	●	40	24x15x20
Epoz AktiMate Mini	350	07.12/GT	★★★★★			iOS	●	40	30x19x21
Epoz AktiMate Mini+	360	08.13/FT	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	40	30x19x21
Gear4 AirZone Series 1	200	04.12/ST	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	n/a	18x33x19
JBL OnBeat Venue LT	200	03.13/FT	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	30	13x42x14
Klipsch iGroove HG WWI	110	04.12/ST	★★★★★			iOS	●	30	14x40x16
KitSound Boom Dock	100	12.10/FT	★★★★★			iOS		60	15x42x28
Logitech S715i	80	04.12/ST	★★★★★			iOS	●	20	6x39x13
Logitech UE Air Speaker	300	06.12/FT	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	n/a	17x53x15
Marantz Consolette	700	05.13/FT	★★★★★		●	iOS		150	26x54x21
Orbitsound T12v3	299	12.11/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	180	10x61x11
Philips Fidelio Primo DS9	300	09.11/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	50	18x51x21
Philips Fidelio Primo DS9010	400	08.11/GT	★★★★★			iOS	●	100	21x56x23
Pure Digital Contour	200	04.11/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	40	23x37x18
Pure Digital Contour 100Di	100	04.12/ST	★★★★★			iOS	●	20	18x31x15
Pure Digital Contour 200i Air	200	09.12/FT	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	36	23x37x18
Revo K2	300	02.12/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	40	33x11x11
Ruark Audio R2i	280	09.09/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	20	12x34x18.5
TEAC SR-80iDAB	150	10.11/FT	★★★★★			iOS		20	18x39x21
<b>£500 and above</b>									
B&O BeoSound 8	895	03.11/FT	★★★★★			iOS		n/a	24x66x16
Bose SoundDock 10	699	08.11/GT	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	n/a	22x43x24
B&W Zeppelin Air	500	12.11/ST	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	150	17x54x21
Geneva Lab Model L	1000	08.09/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	100	29x45x37
Geneva Lab Model M	550	04.12/ST	★★★★★			iOS	●	50	20x37x25
Geneva Lab Model XL	1500	10.09/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	600	79x55x37
JBL OnBeat Xtreme	500	04.12/ST	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	120	23x44x24
Loewe AirSpeaker	500	01.13/FT	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	4x20	13x24x24
Philips Fidelio SS DS9800	700	05.12/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	100	22x27x9
Pro-Ject DBS1	500	06.11/FT	★★★★★			iOS		n/a	4x10x11
Samsung DA-E750	600	10.12/FT	★★★★★		●	iOS/Android	●	100	15x45x24

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Hi-Fi+, Issue 96 (UK)

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Hi-Fi Choice, Jan '13 (UK)

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Hi-Fi World, Mar '13 (UK)

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AVForums, May '13 (UK)

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What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision, Apr '13 (UK)

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C-Net, Mar '13 (USA)

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AVCesar.com, May '13 (France)

"MyDAC comes close to digital audio sources at 20 times the price"  
Audiofil, Mar '13 (Croatia)

"Magic box!"  
La République du Son, Apr '13 (France)

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## Wireless speakers

**Bluetooth** \_\_\_\_\_ Universal wireless system that's incorporated into most sources  
**AirPlay** \_\_\_\_\_ Apple's proprietary wireless system; works over your home network

### The shortlist



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

#### Cambridge Audio Minx Go

"The Minx Go is a terrific product for the money. As a way of filling a small or medium-sized room with your music at a quality that belies its size and price, it's a winner."



AWARD WINNER

#### Denon Cocoon Stream DSD-501

"The DSD-501 is a superb wireless speaker whose impressive feature count is matched by its equally polished sound quality. A worthy Award winner."



AWARD WINNER

#### Audio Pro Allroom Air One

"If you're looking for the convenience of a wireless speaker in a premium package, then the Audio Pro has to be considered the very best in this price range."

### Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	AirPlay	Bluetooth	Aux	Charging	Battery	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	
<b>Up to £800</b>										
Audio Pro Allroom Air One	500	08.13/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best wireless speaker £400+, Awards 2013</b>			●	●	●	20x31x19
Bayan Audio SoundBook	150	01.14/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	9x16x4	
Bose SoundLink Mini	170	01.14/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	5x18x6	
B&WA5	400	08.13/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	18x30x20	
B&WA7	700	12.12/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	22x36x16	
Bose SoundLink Air	300	12.12/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	17x31x10	
Braven 625s	150	10.12/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	6.5x5x16	
Cambridge Audio Minx Air 100	330	10.13/ST	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	18x35x12	
Cambridge Audio Minx Air 200	430	08.13/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	45x22x17	
Cambridge Audio Minx Go	100	08.13/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	23x24x6	
Denon Cocoon Stream DSD-501	250	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best wireless speaker £150-£300, Awards 2013</b>			●	●	●	24x45x17
Geneva Model S Wireless DAB+	330	10.13/ST	★★★★★	<b>Best wireless speaker £300-£400, Awards 2013</b>			●	●	●	15x14x18
Harman/Kardon Go+Play	280	05.13/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	24x50x23	
Jawbone Big Jambox	260	09.12/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	9x26x8	
iLuv MobiOut	70	05.13/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	0x0x0	
JBL Charge	120	01.14/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	18x7x7	
JBL Flip	100	05.13/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	0x0x0	
JBL OnBeat Rumble	260	10.13/ST	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	17x45x22	
Libratone Zipp	370	10.13/ST	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	26x12x12	
Libratone Loop	400	12.13/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	33x33x8	
Loewe AirSpeaker	500	03.13/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	24x13x24	
Logitech UE Boombox	200	12.12/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	16x39x8	
Logitech UE Mobile Boombox	75	05.13/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	6x7x11	
Monitor Audio Airstream WS100	250	09.13/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	13x12x12	
Panasonic SC-NA10	130	01.14/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	10x20x3	
Philips Fidelio P9	240	03.13/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	12x29x5	
Pioneer XW-SMA4	350	12.12/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	21x36x17	
Pure Jongo S3	170	06.13/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	13x13x14	
Roth OLI POWA-5	250	04.13/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	27x18x21	
Sonos Play:1	170	01.14/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	16x12x12	
Sony RDP-XA700	285	03.13/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	18x40x16	
Ultimate Ears Boom	170	01.14/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	16x6.5x6.5	
Sony SRS-BTM8	85	05.13/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	19x25x9	

**"Libratone has hit the jackpot with the Zipp. Catering to both Android and Apple users is a smart move. It looks gorgeous, it's versatile and it sounds lovely"**

October 2013



# Headphones

**Ear tips** \_\_\_\_\_ Most in-ears come with these. Experiment with sizes to get the best fit  
**In-line remote** \_\_\_\_\_ Mostly for Apple devices, but Android-friendly units are growing. Handy...

## The shortlist



**AWARD WINNER**  
**SoundMAGIC E10**



**PRODUCT OF THE YEAR**  
**AKG K451**



**AWARD WINNER**  
**Sennheiser Momentum**

## Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	In-ear	On-ear	Type	Noise cancelling	Wireless	Weight (g)
<b>Up to £70</b>									
AKG K451	50	10.12/GT	★★★★★ <b>Best portable on-ears up to £100, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR</b>	●		Closed			120
Audio Technica ATH-CK550	49	09.11/ST	★★★★★ Smooth and weighty with lashings of detail	●		Closed			8
Audio Technica ATH-CK551	45	08.12/GT	★★★★★ Big on bass, these cans are no shrinking violets	●		Closed			6
Audio Technica ATH-T400	50	11.10/FT	★★★★★ Nicely balanced pair that just lack the wow factor of the class leaders	●		Closed			260
Apple EarPods	25	01.13/FT	★★★★★ A big upgrade of Apple's original earbuds, but there are better rivals	●		Open			10
Beyerdynamic DTX101IE	65	01.12/GT	★★★★★ <b>Best in-ears £40-£80, Awards 2013</b>	●		Closed			11
Beyerdynamic DTX71IE	54	09.11/ST	★★★★★ Detailed and with supreme tone control	●		Closed			11
dBLogic EP-100	25	08.12/GT	★★★★★ A dramatic, enjoyable musical performance	●		Closed			117
Digital Silence DS-321D	60	09.11/ST	★★★★★ Admirable noise-cancelling buds	●		Closed	●		11
Etymotic Research MCS	57	01.12/GT	★★★★★ A likeable sound for the money	●		Closed	●		17
Grado iGrado	49	09.11/ST	★★★★★ Fabulous iPod upgrade: these are unbeatable at the price	●		Open			85
Jays a-Jays Four	50	12.11/FT	★★★★★ The Jays combine looks and performance to alluring effect	●		Closed			14
Jays t-Jays Two	67	09.11/ST	★★★★★ A sure-fire winner for those who like their bass	●		Closed			8
Ministry of Sound MOS003	30	12.11/GT	★★★★★ Tidy, well balanced and nicely made	●		Closed			15
Mix-Style inner headphones	30	08.12/GT	★★★★★ Punchy, controlled and balanced	●		Closed			13.5
Panasonic RP-HTX7	35	09.11/ST	★★★★★ Best portable on-ears up to £50, Awards 2012	●		Closed			153
Philips CitiScape Downtown	55	10.12/ST	★★★★★ Fun, stylish and great to use on an everyday basis	●		Closed	●		174
RHA MA-350	30	12.11/GT	★★★★★ Nicely made from quality materials, with impressive sound to match	●		Closed	●		48
Sennheiser CX 300-II	30	09.10/GT	★★★★★ Best in-ear headphones up to £50, Awards 2010	●		Closed			4
Sennheiser CX281	35	12.11/GT	★★★★★ Enjoyable enough, but a touch quiet	●		Closed			16
Sennheiser CX495	35	08.12/GT	★★★★★ A brilliant upgrade bargain	●		Closed			4
Sennheiser HD 202	26	02.11/FT	★★★★★ Great sound for the money and a bargain buy	●		Closed			130
Sennheiser HD 218	40	11.09/FT	★★★★★ For closed-back cans, the Sennheisers are very good – but not the best	●		Closed			224
Sennheiser MM 70i	50	09.11/ST	★★★★★ Nice features for the money	●		Closed	●		12
Sennheiser PX100-II	40	11.10/FT	★★★★★ An improvement over the previous model, very good open-backed cans	●		Open			80



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HEADPHONES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	In-ear On-ear	Type	Noise cancelling Wireless	Weight(g)
<b>Up to £70</b>							
Skullcandy Full Metal Jacket	65	07.10/FT	★★★★★	An extremely likeable pair of in-ear 'phones	●	Closed	13
Slick Distributions SD50	30	10.12/ST	★★★★★	Features and price make it easy to forgive minor sonic flaws	●	Closed	71
SoundMagic E10	35	10.12/ST	★★★★★	<b>Best in-ears up to £40, Awards 2013</b>	●	Closed	11
SoundMagic PL30	30	01.10/GT	★★★★★	Great headphones that are held back by better value rivals	●	Closed	10
SoundMagic PL50	50	02.10/FT	★★★★★	Comfy and smooth-sounding; great all-rounders	●	Closed	8
Sony MDR-570LP	30	08.10/GT	★★★★★	Comfortable, all-round, on-ear headphones	●	Closed	110
Sony MDR-AS40EX	24	03.09/GT	★★★★★	Sporty headphones that sound weighty and clear	●	Closed	6
Sony MDR-EX500LP	45	09.10/GT	★★★★★	Display good solidity and weight – well worth an audition	●	Closed	7
Vivanco Airc. Studio Monitors	50	12.10/GT	★★★★★	Capable - but should be approached with caution	●	Closed	n/a
<b>£70 and above</b>							
AKG K3003i	1000	04.12/FT	★★★★★	The best, and priciest, in-ears we've seen	●	Closed	10
AKG K370	73	12.10/GT	★★★★★	Impressive for the money	●	Closed	4
AKG K450/HA450	180	09.11/ST	★★★★★	Product of the Year Headphones, Awards 2011	●	Closed	120
AKG K545	210	12.13/FT	★★★★★	Built to last but lacks refinement and likeability	●	Closed	280
AKG K550	200	02.12/ST	★★★★★	<b>Best home on-ear headphones £150+, Awards 2013</b>	●	Closed	305
AKG K551	230	02.13/GT	★★★★★	Smashing all-rounders that really sing	●	Closed	305
AKG K845BT	250	02.14/GT	★★★★★	If you like your music clear and uncoloured, then these AKGs are definitely worth a listen	●	Closed	292
AKG Q701	340	09.11/ST	★★★★★	A great, solid sounding set of cans	●	Open	236
AKG Q460	140	02.11/GT	★★★★★	More pros than cons, but still not complete	●	Closed	120
Audeze LCD-3	1725	02.14/GT	★★★★★	Very expensive, but there's little to complain about here. Even with that price	●	Open	548
Audio Technica ATH-A500	140	02.10/GT	★★★★★	If you're after closed-back cans, give these a try	●	Closed	290
Audio Technica ATH-ANC1	80	06.10/FT	★★★★★	Their portability and noise-cancelling makes them a viable buy	●	Closed	100
Audio Technica ATH-CX91S	75	01.14/GT	★★★★★	Easy on the ears and very comfortable, but they need a bit more refinement to be great	●	Closed	10
Audio Technica ATH-ES55	90	09.11/GT	★★★★★	Best portable on-ear headphone up to £100, Awards 2010	●	Closed	120

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HEADPHONES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	In-ear	On-ear	Type	Noise cancelling	Wireless	Weight (g)
Audio Technica ATH-ES7	140	02.11/GT	★★★★★ Appearance apart, there's an awful lot to like here	●		Closed			160
Audio Technica ATH-ES88	230	02.12/FT	★★★★★ Appealingly eccentric cans	●		Closed			130
Audio Technica ATH-EW9	159	10.07/FT	★★★★★ Featherlight phones are awesomely detailed	●		Closed			33
Audio Technica ATH-M50	130	02.13/GT	★★★★★ Immersive and refined: a great effort	●		Closed			284
Audio Technica ATH-W1000	650	09.11/ST	★★★★★ Expensive, but offer magnificent hi-fi sound	●		Closed			350
Audio Technica ATH-W1000X	650	07.10/FT	★★★★★ Best home on-ear headphones £500-£800, Awards 2010	●		Closed			350
Audio Technica ATH-WS55i	89	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★ An excellent pair of on-ears for the bass-loving iPhone-owner	●		Closed			165
Beyerdynamic Custom One Pro	170	10.13/GT	★★★★★ Accomplished and easy to listen to. We like them	●		Closed			290
Beyerdynamic DT880	200	06.09/GT	★★★★★ Comfortable and the sound is impressive	●		Open	● ●		340
Beyerdynamic DTX80	80	12.10/GT	★★★★★ Best in-ear headphones £50-£100, Awards 2010	●		Closed			12
Beyerdynamic MMX 101iE	95	01.14/GT	★★★★★ <b>Best in-ears £80-£150, Awards 2013</b>	●		Closed	●		11
Beyerdynamic T1	880	11.10/FT	★★★★★ Best home on-ear headphones £800+, Awards 2010	●		Closed			350
Beyerdynamic T50P	230	02.12/ST	★★★★★ Best portable on-ears £200+, Awards 2012	●		Closed			174
Beyerdynamic T51P	250	11.13/GT	★★★★★ A fine replacement for the T50ps, superbly entertaining	●		Closed			174
Beyerdynamic T70	456	11.11/FT	★★★★★ Undeniably capable, but don't quite feel worth the money	●		Closed			330
Blackbox M10	90	12.10/FT	★★★★★ Good noise-cancellers, but sonically slack	●		Open	●		180
Blackbox M10-RB	99	04.12/GT	★★★★★ Impressive, capable and clear-sounding	●		Closed	●		180
Blackbox i10	80	12.10/GT	★★★★★ A great set of noise-cancellers, with a good sound to boot	●		Closed	●		25
Bose AE2w	200	02.14/GT	★★★★★ No aptX Bluetooth onboard, but still a very listenable pair of cans	●		Closed	●		150
Bose MIE2i	120	09.11/ST	★★★★★ A perfect headphone meets microphone solution	●		Closed			19
Bose QuietComfort 15	280	04.12/GT	★★★★★ <b>Best noise-cancelling headphones, Awards 2013</b>	●		Closed	●		227
B&W P3	170	08.12/FT	★★★★★ Stylish and sonically talented on-ear headphones	●		Closed			130
B&W P5	250	11.13/GT	★★★★★ They look fantastic and sound just as good	●		Closed			195
B&W P7	330	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★ <b>Best portable on-ears, Awards 2013</b>	●		Closed			290
Denon AH-D600	200	11.13/GT	★★★★★ Open and spacious. A crisper presentation would make this a five-star product	●		Closed			365
Etymotic Research HF2	180	08.09/FT	★★★★★ The same money buys punchier cans, but not ones that fit as well	●		Closed	●		26

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## HEADPHONES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	In-ear	On-ear	Type	Noise-cancelling	Wireless	Weight (g)
<b>£70 and above</b>									
Etymotic Research HF3	134	09.11/ST	★★★★★	Serious hi-fi quality in a stylish little package	●	Closed	●		11
Focal Spirit One	200	04.12/FT	★★★★★	Refined enough, but not the most exciting	●	Closed			225
German Maestro GMP 8.35 D	150	10.12/ST	★★★★★	Virtually indestructible sonic goodness	●	Closed			220
Goldring NS-1000	100	03.10/GT	★★★★★	Sweet, powerful sounding noise-cancellers	●	Closed	●		183
Grado GR10	399	09.11/ST	★★★★★	Stunningly insightful and expressive	●	Closed			9
Grado GR8	300	04.10/GT	★★★★★	Precisely detailed and balanced, but they lack a certain richness	●	Open	●		9
Grado GS1000i	1000	10.09/GT	★★★★★	For sheer, sonic pleasure these cans are stunning	●	Open			312
Grado PS1000	1700	09.11/ST	★★★★★	Undoubtedly one of the finest headphones money can buy	●	Open			500
Grado SR325is	300	09.11/ST	★★★★★	Best home on-ear headphones £150+ Awards 2011	●	Open			330
Grado SR60i	80	02.10/GT	★★★★★	Hugely accomplished and built to last too	●	Closed			125
Grado SR80i	100	09.11/ST	★★★★★	<b>Best home on-ear headphones up to £150, Awards 2013</b>	●	Open			200
Grado iGi	90	01.12/GT	★★★★★	Classy and compact buds	●	Closed			12
Harman/Kardon CL	170	09.12/FT	★★★★★	An impressive headphone debut for Harman/Kardon	●	Closed			195
Jamo IN40i	90	09.11/ST	★★★★★	Chunky and enjoyable buds	●	Closed			11
Jamo wEAR IN20m	70	06.11/FT	★★★★★	These quiet Jamos aren't without charm	●	Closed			13
KEF M200	150	10.13/FT	★★★★★	They don't quite set the market alight, but they are worth an audition	●	Closed			12
KEF M500	250	11.13/GT	★★★★★	A smooth and refined effort from KEF. Needs a touch more excitement	●	Closed			208
Klipsch Image One	140	05.11/GT	★★★★★	Perfect for those who enjoy a lot of bass	●	Closed			138
Klipsch Image X7i	170	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Klipsch has gone for energy and warmth with the X7is, and it's an addictive combo	●	Closed			16
Klipsch Image X10i	219	09.11/ST	★★★★★	Best in-ears £140+, Awards 2011	●	Closed			320
Klipsch Mode M40	290	02.13/FT	★★★★★	Klipsch's first noise-cancelling headphones are excellent performers	●	Closed	●		356
Klipsch S4i	90	12.09/GT	★★★★★	These Klipschs are great all-rounders, with an exciting edge	●	Closed			12
Klipsch S5i	120	05.11/FT	★★★★★	In-ear buds that strain at the leash	●	Closed			12
Logitech UE 9000	300	03.13/GT	★★★★★	Could be more refined, but make up for this with bundles of energy		Closed	●	●	378
Lindy Premium Headphones	75	09.11/ST	★★★★★	Ideal for those unwilling to break the £100 barrier	●	Closed			225
Martin Logan Mikros 70	150	04.13/GT	★★★★★	If you like your music to be presented with a matter-of-fact approach, these are just the job	●	Closed			13
Monster Beats by Dr Dre	280	03.10/GT	★★★★★	Noise-cancelling cans that are seriously good	●	Closed	●		260
Monster Beats by Dre iBeats	80	03.11/GT	★★★★★	For smooth, bassy sounds they're ace	●	Closed			n/a
Monster Beats Pro by Dre	350	09.11/ST	★★★★★	Brilliant at what they do well	●	Closed			299
Monster Gratitude	199	08.12/FT	★★★★★	Celebrity hook-up cans sound good for the money	●	Open			453
NAD Viso HP50	250	11.13/GT	★★★★★	A promising pair of cans from NAD, but the design lets them down	●	Open			453
Nocs NS400 Titanium	80	01.12/GT	★★★★★	Still great, but there's better for the money	●	Closed			12
Onkyo ES-HF300	180	10.13/GT	★★★★★	A pleasant listen, laid-back and amiable	●	Closed			240
Panasonic RP-HC101	82	04.12/GT	★★★★★	Nice enough sound but average noise cancelling	●	Closed	●		79
Parrot Zik	300	07.13/FT	★★★★★	High-tech headphones that deliver a good performance	●	Closed	●	●	352
Phonak Audeo PFE 022	80	03.11/GT	★★★★★	Pacey, detailed, insightful and recommended	●	Closed	●		14
Phiaton MS300	150	02.12/ST	★★★★★	These over ears deserve careful consideration	●	Closed			140
Philips Fidelio L1	230	05.12/FT	★★★★★	Easy going and comfortable	●	Closed			272
Philips Fidelio M1	125	10.13/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best portable on-ears £100-£200, Awards 2013</b>	●	Closed	●		166
Philips Fidelio M1BT	250	02.14/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best wireless headphones, Awards 2013</b>	●	Closed	●		500
Philips Fidelio S1	70	01.14/GT	★★★★★	Smart and non-invasive earphones. We quite like them	●	Closed			14
Philips Fidelio X1	270	01.13/FT	★★★★★	Another great set of headphones from Philips	●	Open			430
PSB M4U1	219	11.13/GT	★★★★★	Better than the M4U2? Close but no cigar	●	Closed			340
PSB M4U2	300	10.12/ST	★★★★★	PSB's first headphones are truly brilliant. Hear them now!	●	Closed	●		362
Sennheiser CX880i	90	01.12/GT	★★★★★	Great sounding in-ears, although there's a hard edge	●	Closed			11
Sennheiser HD 380 Pro	110	02.10/GT	★★★★★	Still seriously good headphones, but rivals have caught up	●	Closed			220
Sennheiser HD25-1 II Adidas	190	09.11/ST	★★★★★	Stylishly excellent all-rounders	●	Closed			140
Sennheiser HD 598	190	02.12/ST	★★★★★	Too well-mannered for our tastes	●	Open			270
Sennheiser HD 800	1000	10.09/GT	★★★★★	They offer much, but close rivals pip them to the post	●	Open			350
Sennheiser IE 8i	260	03.11/GT	★★★★★	Enjoyable enough, but need a better tonal balance	●	Closed			18
Sennheiser IE 80	270	02.11/FT	★★★★★	Expensive, but a truly quality option	●	Closed			5
Sennheiser IE 800	600	09.13/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best in-ears £300+, Awards 2013</b>	●	Closed			8
Sennheiser MM 200	99	10.09/GT	★★★★★	In terms of detail, clarity and musicality you could do a lot worse	●	Closed	●		28
Sennheiser MM 400-X	150	10.12/ST	★★★★★	Best wireless headphones, Awards 2012	●	Closed	●		105
Sennheiser MM 70s	70	01.14/GT	★★★★★	An unassuming pair of earphones that are never less than engaging	●	Closed			13
Sennheiser Momentum	260	11.13/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best portable on-ears £200-300, Awards 2013</b>	●	Closed			190
Sennheiser Momentum On-ears	170	10.13/GT	★★★★★	A comfortable pair of cans, just lacking a little presence in the mid-range	●	Closed			160
Sennheiser PXC 310 BT	190	09.11/ST	★★★★★	Best Bluetooth headphones, Awards 2011	●	Closed	●	●	105
Sennheiser PXC310	200	02.11/GT	★★★★★	Perfect for a walk on the mild side	●	Closed	●		115
Sennheiser RS 160	115	05.10/GT	★★★★★	An exciting, affordable option but tiring over longer periods	●	Closed	●		226

**HEADPHONES continued**

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	In-ear On-ear	Type	Noise cancelling	Wireless	Weight (g)
Sennheiser RS 180	185	05.10/GT	★★★★★	●	Open	●	●	204
Sennheiser RS 220	350	10.12/ST	★★★★★	●	Open	●	●	329
Sennheiser X 320	70	10.12/ST	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	●	280
Shure SE215	100	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	●	30
Shure SE310	120	05.09/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	●	7
Shure SE425	200	04.13/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	●	32
Shure SE535	450	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	●	272
Shure SRH1840	500	06.12/FT	★★★★★	●	Open	●	●	268
Sony MDR-1R	210	02.13/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	●	240
Sony MDR-Z1000P5	385	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	●	270
Sony XBA-2iP	130	11.12/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	●	6
Sony XBA-3iP	225	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	●	7
Sony XBA-4iP	275	10.12/ST	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	●	8
SoundMagic HP100	150	02.12/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	●	228
TDK ST700	150	01.12/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	●	205
thinksound ts02+mic	90	02.13/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	●	10
Ultrason HFI-580	125	11.10/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	●	285
Ultrason HFI-780	160	02.12/ST	★★★★★	●	Open	●	●	285
Ultimate Ears Super Fi 5vi	110	12.09/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	●	14
V-modu Crossfade M-80	160	10.12/ST	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	●	200
V-modu Remix Remote	70	12.10/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	●	17

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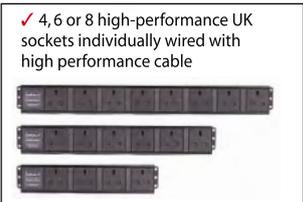
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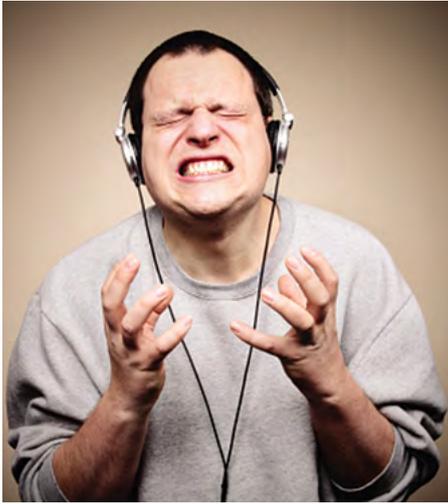
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# Style OVER substance?

“ Quite remarkably, many people today and probably a majority of teens and late teens, are listening to a considerably lower quality level of music than their peers back in the 1970’s ”

**Have advances in technology driven the desire for convenience and quantity at the expense of quality?**

## Listening to Music – the Benefits

There have been many studies carried out over the years that have shown remarkable benefits for mankind through listening to music. It is an activity that is intrinsic to all cultures and is one of the few that involves using the whole brain. Listening to music is now often used for various therapeutic purposes because it is believed to improve memory and intelligence, improve physical development and coordination, reduce stress and blood pressure, and even reduce levels of pain.

However, music can also be irritating if it's too loud or distorted, or if it distracts from other activities we are involved in. Most of the studies have been carried out using a reasonably good quality of musical reproduction. Quite remarkably, many people today and probably a majority of teens and late teens, are listening to a considerably lower quality level of music than their peers back in the 1970's. Back then a basic hi-fi system, often consisting of just a turntable, amplifier and a pair of speakers, was a 'must have'. Students going off to university would make it a priority to set themselves up with a decent hi-fi system – and the quality was, in retrospect, surprisingly good.



## Quality vs Quantity

How different it is today where advances in technology have driven the desire for convenience and quantity at the considerable expense of quality. For many young people especially, the iPod, MP3 player or mobile telephone, connected to a pair of in-ear headphones, is their primary source of listening to music. The problem with this is that low-grade reproduced music is not going to deliver any significant beneficial outcomes for the listener. Probably the opposite will be true.

Low-grade music in this context is the result of two main factors, a) the delivery system (the hardware) and b) the source material (the 'music'). Although the amplification section of the mobile device is a technological wonder, it's not hi-fi! Nor are in-ear headphones. They can't hold a candle to the stereo-typical system from the 1970's. As far as the source material is concerned, it's being over-generous to call it music if it's a typical MP3 or AAC (the iTunes default format) download. These are both highly compressed formats with the most popular download speed of 128 kbps being about one-eleventh the size of a full resolution CD track (1411 kbps), so the quality is inevitably far inferior. Information is irretrievably lost and the full dynamic range is lacking. Using an iPod while jogging does not really raise a quality issue but playing low-resolution tracks through, for example, an iPod docking station that feeds into a decent hi-fi system, is a disaster area. It is very poor quality made louder and this even affects the type of music listened to. For example, most classical recordings downloaded as an MP3 or AAC file are a complete waste of time because there is so much information

missing, all the complexities of the music are lost, and the recordings are reduced to just the essence of a tune.

## Future of Recorded Music

If convenience has trumped quality for many people, we must ask what the future prospects are of maintaining high quality music recordings. Fortunately audiophiles, or hi-fi connoisseurs, or perhaps most accurately described, music lovers, continue to drive the demand for quality because there are some wonderful hi-end systems available and being sold today. Another important reason for hope within the mass-market is that there is no longer any over-riding reason for MP3 and AAC to have such a following. These formats were designed to overcome very slow download speeds pre-broadband and expensive memory capacity. These are not significant factors for most people now. Even iPods, if loaded with full resolution tracks, can deliver acceptable results through a good system. The trade-off is a smaller selection of stored music. Full resolution audio streaming, as well as CD quality downloads, are already available and will become the norm as the wider public becomes aware of the tremendous quality benefit.



## Audiophiles and Hi-Fi Connoisseurs

Hi-fi connoisseurs and audiophiles are very important to the music industry. By their nature, they are generally avid music lovers who enhance their enjoyment through listening to music at its very best quality level, which means playing great recordings through hi-end hi-fi to achieve the most outstanding results. Without them, the main driver for quality would probably be removed from the music industry.



## Specialist Dealers

Specialist hi-fi retailers also come into this category because it's their interest that has driven them into their particular business. These specialist retailers also perform another very important function because, without them, hi-fi manufacturers would have to rely on the internet and hi-fi magazine reviewers to try and assess the relative merits of different brands for potential customers – a notoriously unreliable decision making process. Specialist hi-fi retailers are constantly being offered new products for assessment and potential stocking and, as it is also their hobby as well as their livelihood, they are greatly interested in achieving the best performance and seeking out the most outstanding combinations. More than that though is their relationship with audiophiles and hi-fi connoisseurs for, if they are to stay in business, they must satisfy the most discerning customers in the industry. The reality is that audiophiles and specialist hi-fi retailers (and the ones listed on this page represent the UK's finest) are essential to each other.

Specialist dealers know how to choose the products that combine as a superb system and how to get the best out of it

by expert installation in the home. They also appreciate how exciting and involving music can be and how it can deliver a powerful emotional experience. If there's a price premium over an internet purchase by choosing a specialist dealer, it's probably a small one, but it's unquestionably worth the difference.

## Listed below is our selection of THE BEST HI-FI DEALERS IN THE UK.

They have been chosen because they are known to do an excellent job in guiding customers towards hi-fi that will give years of musical enjoyment and total satisfaction.

## Our Top 20 UK Hi-Fi Dealers

### SOUTH

**Ashford, Kent**  
**SOUNDCRAFT HI-FI**  
 40 High Street.  
 t: 01233 624441  
[www.soundcrafthifi.com](http://www.soundcrafthifi.com)

**Chelmsford**  
**RAYLEIGH HI-FI SOUND & VISION**  
 216 Moulsham Street.  
 t: 01245 265245  
[www.rayleighhifi.com](http://www.rayleighhifi.com)

**Kingston-upon-Thames**  
**INFIDELITY**  
 9 High Street,  
 Hampton Wick.  
 t: 020 8943 3530  
[www.infidelity.co.uk](http://www.infidelity.co.uk)

**Maidenhead**  
**AUDIO VENUE**  
 36 Queen Street.  
 t: 01628 633995  
[www.audiovenue.com](http://www.audiovenue.com)

**Norwich**  
**MARTINS HI-FI**  
 85-91 Ber Street.  
 t: 01603 627134  
[www.martinhifi.co.uk](http://www.martinhifi.co.uk)

**Rayleigh**  
**RAYLEIGH HI-FI**  
 44a High Street.  
 t: 01268 779762  
[www.rayleighhifi.com](http://www.rayleighhifi.com)

**Southend-on-Sea**  
**RAYLEIGH HI-FI SOUND & VISION**  
 132/4 London Road.  
 t: 01702 435255  
[www.rayleighhifi.com](http://www.rayleighhifi.com)

### LONDON

**Ealing**  
**AUDIO VENUE**  
 27 Bond Street.  
 t: 020 8567 8703  
[www.audiovenue.com](http://www.audiovenue.com)

**N1**  
**GRAHAMS HI-FI**  
 190a New North Road.  
 t: 020 7226 5500  
[www.grahams.co.uk](http://www.grahams.co.uk)

**SW11**  
**ORANGES & LEMONS**  
 61/63 Webbs Road.  
 t: 020 7924 2043  
[www.oandlhifi.co.uk](http://www.oandlhifi.co.uk)

**SOUTH WEST**  
**Bath**  
**AUDIENCE**  
 14 Broad Street.  
 t: 01225 333310  
[www.audience.org.uk](http://www.audience.org.uk)

**Exeter**  
**GULLIFORD HI-FI**  
 97 Sidwell Street.  
 t: 01392 491194  
[www.gullifordhifi.co.uk](http://www.gullifordhifi.co.uk)

**MIDLANDS**  
**Banbury**  
**OVERTURE**  
 3 Church Lane.  
 t: 01295 272158  
[www.overture.co.uk](http://www.overture.co.uk)

**Birmingham**  
**MUSIC MATTERS**  
 363 Hagley Road,  
 Edgbaston.  
 t: 0121 429 2811  
[www.musicmatters.co.uk](http://www.musicmatters.co.uk)

**Coventry**  
**FRANK HARVEY**  
 163 Spon Street.  
 t: 024 7652 5200  
[www.frankharvey.co.uk](http://www.frankharvey.co.uk)

**Leicester**  
**CYMBIOSIS**  
 6 Hotel Street.  
 t: 0116 262 3754  
[www.cymbiosis.com](http://www.cymbiosis.com)

**Nottingham**  
**CASTLE SOUND & VISION**  
 48/50 Maid Marian Way.  
 t: 0115 9584404  
[www.castlesoundvision.com](http://www.castlesoundvision.com)

**NORTH**  
**Cheadle**  
**THE AUDIO WORKS**  
 14 Stockport Road.  
 t: 0161 428 7887  
[www.theaudioworks.co.uk](http://www.theaudioworks.co.uk)

**Chester**  
**ACOUSTICA**  
 17 Hoole Road.  
 t: 01244 344227  
[www.acoustica.co.uk](http://www.acoustica.co.uk)

**Gateshead**  
**LINTONE AUDIO**  
 7-11 Park Lane.  
 t: 0191 477 4167  
[www.lintone.co.uk](http://www.lintone.co.uk)

**Hull**  
**THE AUDIO ROOM**  
 Savile Street, Hull  
 t: 01482 891375  
[www.theaudiroom.co.uk](http://www.theaudiroom.co.uk)

**York**  
**SOUND ORGANISATION**  
 2 Gillygate.  
 t: 01904 627108  
[www.soundorg.co.uk](http://www.soundorg.co.uk)

**WALES**  
**Monmouth**  
**CERITECH AUDIO**  
 5 Monnow Bridge.  
 t: 01600 716362  
[www.ceritech-audio.co.uk](http://www.ceritech-audio.co.uk)

These specialist dealers have been selected because they are known to do an excellent job in guiding customers towards hi-fi that will give years of musical enjoyment and total satisfaction.



## STAR QUALITIES

VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
SERVICE	★★★★★
FACILITIES	★★★★★
VERDICT	★★★★★



## Stereo systems

This category includes a wide range of products including all-in-one packages where the speakers are part of the system, through to micro systems where the electronics are housed separately from the speakers. A streaming option is available on many newer systems.

### Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		CD	Streaming	Internet Radio	DAB	FM	Analogue inputs	Digital inputs	Headphone out
<b>Up to £500</b>												
Denon CEOL Piccolo	260	03.13/FT	★★★★★	No matter what the source, the CEOL Piccolo will play all your music in superb style	●	●				●	●	●
Denon CEOL RCD-N8	350	02.14/FT	★★★★★	An attractive option if you're looking for a compact system that does a bit of everything	●	●	●			●	●	●
Denon D-M39DAB	310	12.13/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best music system up to £400, Awards 2013</b>	●	●		●		●	●	●
Onkyo CR-N755	300	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	Best networked micro system, Awards 2012	●	●	●	●		●	●	●
Panasonic SC-HC55DB	240	11.11/FT	★★★★★	Great specs and a great sound too	●	●		●		●	●	●
Panasonic SC-PMX9DB	450	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Well-featured but its laid-back sound makes it a solid buy	●	●		●		●	●	●
Pioneer X-HM70	350	03.12/GT	★★★★★	Not flawless, but gets much right	●		●	●	●	●	●	●
Pioneer X-SMC5-K	300	02.12/FT	★★★★★	An excellent jack of all trades	●	●				●	●	●
Sony CMT-G1BIP	400	12.11/FT	★★★★★	Capable and fun to listen to	●			●	●	●	●	●
TEAC CR-H258i	230	08.10/GT	★★★★★	Big in heart and low in price	●			●	●	●	●	●
Teufel Impaq 40	299	08.10/GT	★★★★★	No frills but near-faultless sound for the money	●					●	●	●
Yamaha MCR-140	275	09.10/FT	★★★★★	Large portfolio of functions and it sounds good	●	●		●		●	●	●
Yamaha MCR-232	300	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Harsh treble docks it a star but it's an impressively compact micro system	●			●	●	●	●	●
Yamaha MCR-550	280	03.11/FT	★★★★★	Ditch the speakers, the CD/receiver is top-notch	●			●	●	●	●	●
Yamaha MCR-555	380	10.11/GT	★★★★★	Vastly improved over the original	●			●	●	●	●	●

### £500 and above

Aura Note Premier	1500	05.10/FT	★★★★★	A fine sounding all in one system	●	●				●	●	●
Arcam Solo Neo	1350	09.10/FT	★★★★★	Extra functionality over the original Solo - great buy	●	●	●	●		●	●	●
Camb. A. Sonata DR30/CD30	550	10.09/FT	★★★★★	Decent, but the performance doesn't hit the heights	●	●		●		●	●	●
Cabasse Stream3	850	07.13/FT	★★★★★	Hardware is great but the app needs developing	●	●	●			●	●	●
Consonance F. City - Ping	1495	08.08/FT	★★★★★	Delightful CD receiver in one box	●	●				●	●	●
Lyngdorf Digital 2.2 System	12350	05.10/FT	★★★★★	Not without its flaws, but a system worth a look	●	●				●	●	●
Linn Majik DSM	2965	02.13/FT	★★★★★	A thoughtfully designed system and a pleasure to use	●	●	●			●	●	●
Marantz M-CR610	500	11.13/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best music system £400-£800, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR</b>	●		●	●	●	●	●	●
Naim Uniti	2670	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Best Network Music Player £1500+, Awards 2010	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Naim UnitiQute	1600	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Systems Product of the Year, Awards 2010	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Pioneer P1DAB	550	07.13/FT	★★★★★	Great sound for a sensible price	●			●	●	●	●	●
Ruark Audio R4i	599	07.11/FT	★★★★★	Best all-in-one music system, Awards 2012	●	●		●		●	●	●
Sony CMT-G2BNiP	500	04.12/FT	★★★★★	A solid performer in every respect	●	●	●	●		●	●	●
TEAC CR-H700DAB	550	10.11/GT	★★★★★	Great - but not a total all-rounder	●	●	●	●		●	●	●



## Surround systems

This category includes a wide variety of systems. Most include a disc drive and now tend to feature video and music streaming capabilities. The speakers supplied tend to either be small satellite designs, or towers that usually provide greater scale and sonic authority.

### Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Blu-ray	3D Blu-ray	DVD	Streaming	Optical in	HDMI in	Channels
<b>Up to £500</b>											
LG HX906PA	425	07.11/GT	★★★★★	Talented enough to warrant an audition	●	●	●				1 2 5.1
Panasonic SC-BTT460	350	06.13/FT	★★★★★	No HDMI inputs but still a cracking system	●	●	●				1 0 5.1
Philips HTS5563	400	08.12/GT	★★★★★	A super budget solution	●	●	●				1 2 5.1
Pioneer BCS-SC626	400	01.12/GT	★★★★★	Great features, with tough competition	●		●				2 2 2.1
Q Acoustics Q-TV2	330	11.09/FT	★★★★★	A great way of boosting poor sound on your TV							1 0 2.1
Samsung HT-E5530	450	08.12/GT	★★★★★	Plenty of bang for your bucks	●	●	●				1 2 5.1
Sony BDV-E380	400	07.11/GT	★★★★★	A fine system for the money	●	●	●				1 2 5.1
Sony BDV-N590	400	09.12/FT	★★★★★	Best cinema system, Awards 2012	●	●	●				1 2 5.1

**SURROUND SYSTEMS continued**

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Blu-ray	3D Blu-ray	DVD	Streaming	Optical in	HDMI in	Channels
<b>£500-£1000</b>										
Harman-Kardon BDS-570	750	04.12/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●		2	3	5.1
LG BH8220B	600	08.12/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●		1	2	5.1
LG BH9520TW	600	11.12/FT	★★★★★	●	●			1	2	9.1
Panasonic SC-BFT800	600	10.11/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●		1	0	2.1
Panasonic SC-BT735	600	08.10/GT	★★★★★	●	●			2	0	5.1
Panasonic SC-BT590	500	08.12/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●		1	2	5.1
Sony BDV-N7100W	600	09.13/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	1	2	5.1
<b>£1000 and above</b>										
Harman-Kardon BDS 477	1100	01.13/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●		0	3	2.1
Harman-Kardon BDS-800	1300	05.11/FT	★★★★★	●	●			1	0	5.1
Meridian G95	3995	12.07/GT	★★★★★			●		2	0	5.1



**Soundbars**

One-box speaker systems that include amplification, and are a great alternative to a full-on home cinema package if you don't have much space. Few soundbars include a Blu-ray player as standard.

**The shortlist**



**AWARD WINNER**  
**LG NB4530A**

“The LG NB4530A looks the part and sounds great. The expert execution makes it a must audition.”



**PRODUCT OF THE YEAR**  
**Philips HTL9100**

“It sounds great, it's versatile, the wireless feature works well and we think the surround-on-demand option is a really neat idea.”



**AWARD WINNER**

**Monitor Audio ASB-2**

“Yes, £1000 is expensive for a soundbar but, if your budget can stretch this far, then the ASB-2 is an excellent investment.”

**Also consider**

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Discrive Smart	Ext. subwoofer	HDMI in	Optical in	Co-axial in	RCA in	Dimensions (WxD, cm)
<b>Up to £1500</b>										
Bowers & Wilkins Panorama 2	1650	09.13/GT	★★★★★	●	3	1	0			13x110x18
Cambridge Audio MinxTV	200	02.14/FT	★★★★★			0	1	0		8x43x38
Canton DM 50	400	02.14/FT	★★★★★			0	1	1		6.5x54.5x30
Canton DM 90.2	1100	09.13/GT	★★★★★	●	0	2	2			15x90x30
Harman/Kardon SB30	800	07.12/FT	★★★★★	●	0	1	1	●		10x116x8
JBL Cinema SB200	250	01.12/GT	★★★★★			0	1	0		12x90x10
JBL Cinema SB400	450	06.13/ST	★★★★★	●	3	1	0			10x110x6
LG NB3520A	250	01.13/GT	★★★★★	●	0	2	0			8x100x5
LG NB4530A	300	06.13/ST	★★★★★	●	1	1	0			8x104x4
Maxwell MXSP-SB3000	220	02.14/FT	★★★★★			3	1	1		8x94x39
Monitor Audio ASB-2	1000	11.13/FT	★★★★★	●		3	1	1	●	101x19x17
Orbitsound M9	300	06.13/ST	★★★★★	●	0	1	0			9x30x10
Philips HTL9100	600	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	●	2	1	1			7x103x16
Samsung HW-E551	400	10.12/FT	★★★★★	●	2	1	0			10x45x5
Samsung HT-E8200	500	11.12/FT	★★★★★	●	2	1	0			10x104x13
Sonos Playbar	600	05.13/FT	★★★★★		●	0	1	0		9x90x14
Yamaha YAS-201	350	06.13/ST	★★★★★	●	3	2	1			14x43x35
Yamaha YSP-2200	800	10.11/GT	★★★★★	●	3	2	1			9x89x12
Yamaha YSP-5100	1300	10.10/FT	★★★★★		4	2	1	●		21x120x9



## Media servers

These have hard drives built in. Go for the largest storage possible as that leaves room for the future expansion of your music and video library.

### Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Hard drive capacity	HDMI out	Optical out	Coaxial out	HDMI in	Optical in	Co-axial in	USB in	Wireless	Resolution (bit/kHz)	Video
<b>Up to £2000</b>														
Lacie Lacinema Classic HD	190	04.10/GT	★★★★★	As good as Apple TV, this needs to be auditioned	1TB	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	24/92	●
Microsoft Xbox 360 (250GB)	200	01.11/FT	★★★★★	Now an appealing media hub as well	250GB	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	16/48	●
Netgear EVA9000	190	04.10/GT	★★★★★	Needs better sound and Apple TV-like usability	500GB	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	24/92	●
Olive 4HD	2150	02.10/FT	★★★★★	This is 21st-century hi-fi at its best	2TB	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	24/192	●
Olive O3HD	900	12.10/FT	★★★★★	A great music server that's nearly excellent	500GB	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	24/192	●
Raumfeld 3Raumfeld	1680	Aw.10/FT	★★★★★	A fabulous product to make Sonos sweat	160GB	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	24/96	●



## Media streamers

These access the music or video files you have stored on your network. Check for file compatibility and decent control apps that improve usability.

### Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	HDMI out	Optical out	Co-axial out	HDMI in	Optical in	Co-axial in	USB in	Wireless	Resolution (bit/kHz)	Video	
<b>Up to £500</b>														
Apple TV	100	06.12/GT	★★★★★	A limited but likeable streamer from Apple	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	●	16/48	●
Asus O!Play HD2	110	01.11/FT	★★★★★	A flexible streamer improved by a hard disk	1	1	1	0	0	0	3	●	20/48	●
Cambridge Audio NP30	430	05.12/ST	★★★★★	Still worthy, but there's better around	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	●	24/96	●
Denon DNP-720AE	250	02.12/GT	★★★★★	A bargain for its features	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	●	24/192	●
LG ST600	130	07.11/GT	★★★★★	With more apps it could be a class king	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	●	20/48	●
Marantz NA7004	430	05.12/ST	★★★★★	Unique, flexible and packed with dynamics	0	1	1	0	1	1	2	●	24/96	●
Netgear NeoTV 550	150	07.11/GT	★★★★★	Decent enough if you know what you're doing	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	●	24/192	●
Now TV	10	10.13/FT	★★★★★	Oodles of free and premium content makes this a great upgrade for a 'dumb' TV	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	●	16/48	●
Popcorn PopBox 3D	140	10.11/FT	★★★★★	A Swiss Army Knife of streaming	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	●	16/48	●
Pinnacle ShowCenter 250	170	03.08/FT	★★★★★	Connects PC to system, wireless HD issues	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	●	16/48	●
Pure Jonga T2	130	11.13/FT	★★★★★	Cheaper than Sonos but comes with a few niggles	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	●	16/48	●
Roku 2 XS	100	06.12/GT	★★★★★	A family friendly streamer	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	●	16/48	●
Sonos Play 3	259	12.11/ST	★★★★★	A cracking little performer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	●	16/44.1	●
Sonos Play 5	349	12.11/ST	★★★★★	An ideal one-box network player	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	●	16/44.1	●
Sony NSZ-GS7	180	11.12/FT	★★★★★	Good first Google TV device but needs more apps	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	●	24/48	●
Sony SMP-N100	120	07.11/GT	★★★★★	A fine mixture of paid-for and catch-up content	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	●	24/96	●
Sony SMP-N200	100	06.12/GT	★★★★★	A competent and easy to use device	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	●	24/192	●
ViewSonic VMP72	117	04.10/GT	★★★★★	A decent streamer at a good price	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	●	24/96	●

## The 800 DIAMOND speakers from Bowers & Wilkins

Sound that will leave you speechless.

Hear the incredible precision and clarity of diamond tweeters, just a single element of the ultimate in British loudspeaker technology.

Visit the Sound Gallery store today to discover just how delightful music can be.



THE SOUND GALLERY

01494 531682 www.soundgallery.co.uk  
65 Castle Street, High Wycombe, Bucks.

**STREAMERS continued**

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		HDMI out	Optical out	Coaxial out	HDMI in	Optical in	Co-axial in	USB in	Wireless	Resolution (bit/kitz)	Video
<b>£500-£1000</b>														
Cambridge Audio Minxi	600	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Easy to use, well built and sounds great. A terrific streamer	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	●	24/96	
Camb. Audio Stream Magic 6	700	08.12/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best streamer £600-£1000, Awards 2013</b>	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	●	24/96	
Olive O2M	700	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Affordable, but a bit too refined for our tastes	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	●	24/96	
Pioneer N-50	400	05.12/ST	★★★★★	<b>Best streamer up to £600, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR</b>	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	●	24/192	
Rotel RT-09	650	04.11/FT	★★★★★	Does a lot but not all of it to the standard we'd like	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	●	24/192	
<b>£1000 and above</b>														
Bryston BDP-1	2350	06.11/FT	★★★★★	A true hi-fi media player	0	1	1	0	1	0	3	●	24/192	
Cyrus Lyric 09	3000	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Controversial looks aside, the Lyric is a really strong sonic performer	0	0	0	0	2	2	3	●	24/192	
Cyrus Stream XP	2000	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Best streamer £1000-£2500, Awards 2011	0	0	1	0	2	3	1	●	24/192	
Cyrus Streamline	1600	08.11/GT	★★★★★	Best streaming system up to £2000, Awards 2011	0	0	1	0	2	3	1	●	24/192	
Cyrus Stream XP2-Qx	2300	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best streaming system £2000+, Awards 2013</b>	0	0	1	0	2	3	1	●	24/192	
Linn Kiko	2500	10.12/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best music system £1500+, Awards 2013</b>	1	0	0	4	1	0	0	●	24/192	
Linn Majik DS-I	2500	02.10/FT	★★★★★	Gives a glimpse of the music-streaming future	1	1	1	4	1	1	0	●	24/192	
Naim NAC-N 172 XS	1650	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best streamer £1000-£2000, Awards 2013</b>	0	2	0	0	2	2	1	●	24/192	
Naim ND5 XS	1950	01.12/ST	★★★★★	A thrillingly musical music streamer	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	●	24/192	
Naim NDS/555PS	12620	12.12/FT	★★★★★	Engaging sound, bags of detail and many features	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	●	24/192	
Naim NDX	2995	07.11/FT	★★★★★	Best streamer £2500+, Awards 2011	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	●	24/192	
Naim Uniti	2670	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Best streaming system £2000+, Awards 2011	0	0	0	0	3	2	1	●	24/192	
Naim Uniti 2	2795	11.12/FT	★★★★★	Uniti continues to lead the market at this price	0	0	0	0	3	2	1	●	24/192	
Naim UnitiLite	1650	12.12/FT	★★★★★	UnitiLite hits the streaming sweet spot	0	0	0	0	3	2	1	●	24/192	
Naim UnitiQute	1600	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Systems Product of the Year, Awards 2010	0	0	1	0	2	2	1	●	24/192	
Naim UnitiQute 2	1150	09.13/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best music system £800-£1500, Awards 2013</b>	0	0	1	0	2	2	1	●	32/192	
Pixel Magic Lumin	5000	02.14/FT	★★★★★	A fine player that leads the field in terms of file compatibility	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	●	24/192	
Sony HAP-Z1ES	2000	02.14/FT	★★★★★	A smartly designed, superb-sounding piece of hi-fi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	●	24/192	
T+A MP 1260R	2700	12.10/FT	★★★★★	Amazing – this is proper high-end hi-fi	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	●	24/192	
Yamaha NP-S2000	1400	01.12/ST	★★★★★	Network streamer – a solid piece of hi-fi hardware	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	●	24/96	

**Get more from your TV**



**Facebook**

Check your status any time and keep up with the latest events. We'd expect these types of features to become even more popular over time.



**Twitter**

Sporting events come into their own when you can keep up a live Twitter chat during the game – and smart TVs let you do that without booting up the laptop.



**Skype**

Some smart TVs support a clip-on HD camera, so you can make video calls through Skype. Make sure your TV is compatible before you buy, though.



**Gaming**

If you like the odd spot of gaming but don't want a console, some TVs offer built-in titles. They're not PS4 standard, but they do look great and play very well.



**Picasa/flickr**

TVs (smart or 'dumb') can show pics stored on your USB sticks, but internet capable tellies will let you log in to your online photo albums and use your TV as a colossal digital picture frame.



**Movie Streaming**

Still behind Netflix in terms of available content, LoveFilm's library is nevertheless growing with each month.



**Catch-Up TV**

If you've missed your favourite TV programme, you can find it on one of the many catch-up services, including BBC iPlayer, 4oD, ITV Player and YouTube.



**USB-Based Recording**

Some TVs will have USB recording. Simply connect a USB hard-drive and you have a PVR. Pause and rewind live telly, schedule recordings and more.



**Network Sharing**

If you have a library of video and audio content on a network-attached storage device, you can stream it to your set – wirelessly, in some cases.



**Bluetooth**

Turn your Bluetooth phone into a portable wireless media streamer and send photos, music and even video to your smart TV. You can even use some phones as an IR blaster.



## Set-top boxes

**Freeview** Large choice of digital TV channels via a rooftop aerial  
**Freesat** Much like Freeview, but takes signal from a satellite dish  
**Subscription** Services from Sky and Virgin give a vast array of premium content

### The shortlist



AWARD WINNER

**Humax DTR-T1010 (500GB)**



AWARD WINNER

**Humax HDR-T1000S (500GB)**



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

**Sky+ HD 2TB**

### Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Freeview	Freesat	Sky	Virgin	YouView	Tuners	Hard drive capacity (GB)	HDMI out	Smart
<b>Up to £500</b>													
EquinuxTiZi	150	03.11/FT	★★★★★	Wi-fi Freeview for your iPad, iPhone or iPod Touch	●					1	n/a	0	
Humax DTR-T1000	230	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Best Digital HD recorder, Awards 2012					●	2	500	1	
Humax DTR-T1010 (500GB)	230	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best Freeview HD recorder, Awards 2013</b>					●	2	500	1	
Humax Foxsat HDR	300	04.10/GT	★★★★★	If you're looking to try Freesat, this is the way we'd do it		●				2	320	1	
Humax HD-FOXT2	100	07.10/GT	★★★★★	Best Freeview HD receiver, Awards 2011	●					1	n/a	1	
Humax HDR-1000S (500GB)	220	01.13/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best Freesat recorder, Awards 2013</b>		●				2	500	1	
Icecrypt T2400 (2TB)	330	01.12/FT	★★★★★	Loads of storage, but could do with more features	●					2	2TB	1	
Panasonic DMR-PWT500	350	01.12/FT	★★★★★	PVR box meets Blu-ray player	●					2	320	1	●
Philips DTR-5520	150	07.10/GT	★★★★★	Fine in its own right, but there's better out there	●					2	n/a	1	
Philips HDT8520	270	09.10/GT	★★★★★	Excellent Freeview HD+ box	●					2	500	1	
Sagem DTR94250S	250	04.10/GT	★★★★★	A capable if unspectacular buy		●				2	250	1	●
Samsung BD-D8500	450	05.11/FT	★★★★★	Freeview meets Blu-ray in this handily sized box	●					2	500	1	●
Samsung STB-E7500	270	09.12/FT	★★★★★	One of the best, most flexible, Freeview HD TV recorders	●					2	500	1	●
Sky+ HD 1TB	249	Aw.12/GT	★★★★★	Product of the year, Set-top boxes, Awards 2012			●			2	1TB	1	
Sky+ HD 2TB	250	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best subscription service, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR</b>			●			2	1TB	1	
Sony SVR-HDT1000	300	12.11/GT	★★★★★	One to appeal to the 'bigger is better' crowd	●					2	1TB	1	
TechniSat HDFS	180	04.10/FT	★★★★★	A superb solution for its price		●				1	n/a	1	
TVonics DTR-HD500	280	12.10/FT	★★★★★	A clever and well-presented PVR	●					2	500	1	
Virgin Media Samsung V+	99	07.09/FT	★★★★★	An alternative to Sky HD, but still less high-def content				●		3	320	1	●
Virgin Media TiVo	200	06.11/FT	★★★★★	Best cable recorder, Awards 2011				●		3	1TB	1	●



## Music/video players

A category of products that has been put under increasing pressure by the rise of the ubiquitous smartphone. At the most basic level it will be a standard music player that can be used in the gym. Higher-end machines will add video, internet browsing and apps as well.

### Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Screen size (in)	Resolution	Storage (GB)	Web browsing	Dimensions (hwd, mm)
<b>Up to £500</b>									
Apple iPod Classic 160GB	229	09.09/FT	★★★★★	Carry your entire music collection, uncompressed	2.5	320x240	160		60x100x14
Apple iPod Nano 16GB (2012)	130	01.13/FT	★★★★★	A simple, attractive, music-playing wonder	2.5	240x240	16		77x40x5
Apple iPod Shuffle 2GB	40	12.11/GT	★★★★★	Simple and brilliantly effective	n/a	n/a	2		30x30x10
Apple iPod Touch 64GB (2012)	330	12.12/FT	★★★★★	Best iPod Touch so far, but it's fast becoming niche	4	1136x640	64	●	123x59x6
Archos 5 Internet Tablet	280	03.10/GT	★★★★★	A desirable media player with the occasional flaw	4.8	800x480	32	●	80x130x13
Cowon X7	200	02.11/FT	★★★★★	A genuine rival to the monopoly of Apple	4.3	480x272	120	●	127x79x15
Cowon Z2	200	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	A great music player with good sound and flexible storage	3.7	800x480	16	●	116x63x12
Creative Zen Style M100 4GB	35	12.11/GT	★★★★★	An ultra-portable player with punch	1.45	128x128	4		55x44x13
SanDisk Sansa Clip+ 8GB	40	12.11/GT	★★★★★	A worthy Apple alternative	1	96x96	8		60x40x20
Sony NWZ-F805 16GB	200	01.13/FT	★★★★★	This multimedia Walkman is a fine choice	3.5	800x400	16	●	115x57x9

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PORTABLES - THEY ARE ALL AT BRISTOL  
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- ▶ **ARCAM** launches FMJ A49 integrated amplifier and AV950 pre-amp processor
- ▶ **NAIM**'s no compromise flagship Statement amplifier launched at CES will have its first public outing at the show
- ▶ **OPTOMA** will unveil its new full HD 3D projector that harnesses ground-breaking LED technology
- ▶ **REGA** introducing the RP10 turntable for 2014
- ▶ Surround Yourself with the Extreme Sound of the E Series - **KEF**'s new home theatre speaker system

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- ▶ Hear the world's first reference portable DAC/head amp from **CHORD ELECTRONICS!**
- ▶ **PIONEER** is back in 2014 - demonstrating how connected audio can transform your home
- ▶ A long awaited new model from **PMC** will be unveiled at the Show
- ▶ **LIBRATONE** launches the 'Loop' - wall-mountable, wireless and stylish, it is their most versatile speaker for home audio entertainment yet
- ▶ **WILSON BENESCH** Celebrates its 25th (Silver) Anniversary with the new Square Series II Flagship, the 'Square Five' & Anniversary Edition 'Full Circle 25'

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**BY CAR:** From the M4 take J19 (M32 - Bristol). Follow signs for City Centre and RAC signs to the Show. For those using satellite navigation systems the hotel post code is BS1 3AD. Easy local parking in Cabot Circus car park and Broadmead and Bond Street NCPs.

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**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION



## Tablets

- Android** Offers great flexibility and innovation
- Apple iOS** Fantastic ease of use; massive choice of quality apps
- Windows** New kid on the block. Watch this space

### The shortlist



Apple iPad Air



Apple iPad Mini Retina



Google Nexus 7

### Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	OS	NFC	3G	Screen size (in)	Resolution	Storage (GB)	Dimensions (h/w/d, mm)
<b>Up to £600</b>										
Amazon Kindle Fire HD 16GB	160	04.13/GT	★★★★★	A great option for those looking for a user-friendly tablet	Android	●	7	1280x800	16/32	193x137x10
Amazon Kindle Fire HDX 7	200	01.14/FT	★★★★★	An excellent tablet but Android fans might find it a little restrictive	Android	●	7	1920x1200	16/32/64	186x128x9
Asus VivoTab ME400	400	04.13/GT	★★★★★	A convincing rival to the Microsoft Surface in the Windows 8 space	Windows 8	●	10.1	1366x768	32/64	263x171x10
Apple iPad 2 16GB Wi-Fi	400	09.11/GT	★★★★★	Best tablet, Awards 2011	iOS	●	9.7	1024x768	16/32	241x186x9
Apple iPad Mini 64GB Wi-Fi	430	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Apple hits the bullseye. Again	iOS	●	7.9	1024x768	16/32/64	200x135x7
Apple iPad Mini/Retina display	320	01.14/ST	★★★★★	An absolutely superb tablet that shows its rivals how it's done	iOS 7	●	7.9	2048x1536	16/32/64	200x135x7
Apple iPad 4 16GB Wi-Fi	400	04.13/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best tablet over 8in, Awards 2013</b>	iOS	●	9.7	2048x1536	16/32/64	240x190x9
Apple iPad Air	400	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Refined and improved, the iPad Air is a stunning piece of technology	iOS 7	●	9.7	2048x1536	16/32/64	240x170x8
Asus Eee Pad Transformer	380	09.11/GT	★★★★★	A competitive tablet with a keyboard dock	Android	●	10.1	1280x800	16/32	271x177x13
Asus Eee Pad Transformer Prime	500	07.12/FT	★★★★★	A slim and smart tablet that we love	Android	●	10.1	1280x800	16/32	181x263x8
Asus Transformer Pad Infinity	600	04.13/GT	★★★★★	A very capable iPad alternative and one of the best android tablets	Android	●	10.1	1900x1200	32/64	263x181x9
BlackBerry PlayBook 16GB	400	09.11/GT	★★★★★	There's plenty on offer here, but lacks apps	QNX	●	7	1024x600	16/32/64	130x194x10
Dell XPS 10 32GB	340	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Not perfect but an appealing alternative to the usual suspects	Windows RT	●	10.1	1366x768	32/64	270x180x10
Google Nexus 7	160	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Best tablet up to £300, Awards 2012. <b>PRODUCT OF THE YEAR</b>	Android	●●	7	1280x800	16/32	199x120x11
Google Nexus 7 (2013)	200	01.14/ST	★★★★★	<b>Best tablet up to 8in, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR</b>	Android	●●	7	1920x1200	16/32	200x114x9
Google Nexus 10	319	01.13/FT	★★★★★	Great performance and price: a real iPad-botherer	Android	●	10	2560x1060	16/32	264x178x9
LG Pad	260	01.14/ST	★★★★★	Looks the part but struggles against its price rivals	Android	●	8.3	1280x1200	16	216x127x8
Kobo Arc 16GB	160	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Not for music buffs but a great budget option nonetheless	Android	●	7	1280x800	16/32	190x120x10
Motorola Xoom	480	09.11/GT	★★★★★	A worthy adversary to the vaunted iPad	Android	●	10.1	1280x800	32	249x168x13
Samsung Galaxy Note 10.1	450	02.14/FT	★★★★★	A great screen that's let down by a cluttered interface	Android	●	10.1	2500x1600	16/32/64	171x243x8
Samsung Galaxy Tab 2 7.0	160	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Find it for the right price and it's a capable all-rounder	Android	●	7	1024x600	8/16	190x120x10
Sony Xperia Tablet S	330	04.13/FT	★★★★★	Plenty of potential, but there are niggles	Android	●	9.4	1280x800	16/32	240x170x10
Sony Xperia Tablet Z	399	06.13/FT	★★★★★	Sony fans will love it, but there are tablets out there for less money	Android	●	10.1	1920x1200	16/32	172x266x69
Tesco Hudl	120	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Not flawless, but this is a superb budget tablet from Tesco	Android	●	7	1440x900	16	192x129x10

## Things to consider: tablets



### Camera

Most tablet cameras are decent, but they won't be able to beat a dedicated camera in terms of picture quality. Think long and hard if you're looking to capture footage as quality can be inconsistent.



### Apps

iOS is the king of apps, but Android is hard on its heels and Windows is catching up. If apps are your thing then your choice may come down to which ones are available on each platform, rather than quantity.



### Keypad

Want to increase productivity? On-screen keypads are a mixed bag, but some have optional (and expensive) physical keyboards. Keep that in mind if you're looking to do some work on the go.



### Ecosystem

iOS, Android and Windows 8. Each one is better (or worse) than the other, in some way. Apple has the apps, while Android is customisable and Windows offers a lot in terms of functionality.



# Smartphones

- Android** \_\_\_\_\_ Offers great flexibility and innovation
- Apple iOS** \_\_\_\_\_ Fantastic ease of use; massive choice of quality apps
- Windows** \_\_\_\_\_ New kid on the block. Watch this space

## The shortlist



## Also consider

Product	Tested	Verdict	OS	NFC	4G	Screen size (in)	Resolution	Storage (GB)	Dimensions (hwd, mm)
Apple iPhone 4S	07.12/ST	★★★★★	iOS			3.5	960x640	16/32/64	115x59x9
Apple iPhone 5S	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	iOS	●	●	4.0	1136x640	16/32/64	124x59x8
Google Nexus 4	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Android			4.7	1280x768	8/16	134x69x9
Google Nexus 5	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Android			4.95	1920x1080	16/32	138x69x9
HTC One	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Android	●		4.7	1080x1920	32	137x68x9
HTC One X+	01.13/ST	★★★★★	Android			4.7	1280x720	32/64	134x70x9
HTC One XL	03.13/FT	★★★★★	Android	●		4.7	1280x720	32	135x70x9
HTC 8S	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Windows	●		4.7	800x480	4	121x63x10
LG Optimus 4X HD	01.13/ST	★★★★★	Android			4.7	1280x720	16	132x68x9
LG Optimus L5 II	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Android			4.0	800x433	4	118x62x9
LG G2	12.13/FT	★★★★★	Android	●	●	5.2	1920x1080	16/32	139x71x9
Nokia Lumia 920	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Windows	●		4.5	1280x768	32	130x71x11
Nokia Lumia 925	09.13/FT	★★★★★	Windows	●		4.5	1280x768	16/32	129x71x9
Samsung Galaxy Nexus	07.12/ST	★★★★★	Android			4.65	1280x720	16/32	136x68x9
Samsung Galaxy Note	07.12/ST	★★★★★	Android			5.29	1280x800	16/32	147x83x10
Samsung Galaxy Note II	01.13/ST	★★★★★	Android			5.55	1280x720	16/32/64	151x81x9
Samsung Galaxy S II	01.12/GT	★★★★★	Android			4.3	800x480	16/32/64	125x66x8
Samsung Galaxy S III	08.12/FT	★★★★★	Android			4.8	1280x720	16/32	137x71x9
Samsung Galaxy S4	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Android	●		5.0	1920x1080	16/32/64	137x70x8
Sony Ericsson Xperia Arc S	01.12/GT	★★★★★	Android			4.2	854x480	1	125x63x9
Sony Xperia S	07.12/ST	★★★★★	Android			4.3	1280x720	32	128x64x11
Sony Xperia T	01.13/ST	★★★★★	Android			4.55	1280x720	16	129x67x9
Sony Xperia Z	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Android	●		5	1920x1080	16	139x71x8

## Consider these

Wired cans sound better, but wireless is catching up. Here are the best on offer



### Logitech UE 9000 £300

Solid build and effective noise-cancelling features make the UE 9000 a fine proposition. The wireless connection is a tad unrefined but the energy produced is excellent. Good for six hours' use.



### Parrot Zik £300

Stylish and advanced, the Zik features the 2.1A2DP variant of Bluetooth which doesn't quite match aptX. Still, with NFC on board and a detailed sound to boot, the Zik should be on your list.



### Philips Fidelio M1BT £250

Our 2013 Award-winners boast aptX compatibility and easy-to-use controls. It's in the sound where they really shine, showing off an excellent turn of pace with bags of detail. Good for 10 hours' use.



### Sennheiser MM 400-X £150

A compact, portable design and low(ish) price make these cans quite enticing. Vocals have plenty of detail and directness, and with aptX along for the ride too, these are some capable headphones.



## HDMI cables

Digital cables that carry both picture and sound. These carry control signals as well, so they can integrate the operation of components in your system.

### Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Length as tested (m)	HDMI type
<b>Up to £80</b>					
Audioquest Pearl	23	06.11/FT	★★★★★ Best HDMI cable, Awards 2012	1	1.4
Cambridge Audio 500 (5m)	69	06.10/GT	★★★★★ A perfectly acceptable cable for the money	5	1.3a
Chord Company Supershield	50	10.10/GT	★★★★★ Still a class-leading cable, but now it's 1.4 too	1	1.3
Clearer Aud C-line HDMI (2m)	60	08.07/FT	★★★★★ Will improve even 1080p pictures, helping stability. Well worth the money	1	2
Kimber Kable HD-09	73	03.09/GT	★★★★★ Picture quality is up with the best and it creates a wide sound field	2	1.3
Philex Thor Flat HDMI	40	10.09/GT	★★★★★ A gutsy, well built HDMI cable.	1	1.3
Philex Thor HDMI/DVI kit	60	09.06/FT	★★★★★ A very decent cable for not much cash - you can't really go wrong	5	1.3
QED HDMI-P	50	11.08/FT	★★★★★ This award winning cable just got better	1	1.3
QED Performance HDMI	70	03.09/GT	★★★★★ Capable performer - finely balanced sound and a wonderfully rendered picture	3	1.3
QED Performance HDMI-e	35	03.11/FT	★★★★★ Perfectly good cable that just falls down in its pricing	1	1.4
QED Perf. HDMI-e S/speed	60	11.10/FT	★★★★★ Communicates a superb and natural colour balance and virtually noise-free images	2	1.4
QED Profile HDMI	25	01.12/FT	★★★★★ Now with 1.4 status, this is still a worthy cable	1	1.4
QED Qunex HDMI-P (5M)	75	09.08/GT	★★★★★ Fantastic picture quality mated with a dynamic and powerful sound	5	1.3
ThatCable HDMI	5	10.09/FT	★★★★★ Brilliant way to spend a fiver - will give rivals up to £20 something to think about	1.5	1.3
ThatCable HDMI (5m)	10	06.10/GT	★★★★★ A no-brainer for those on a tight budget	5	1.3a
Vivanco Prowire	45	10.10/GT	★★★★★ A fine cable that's worth seeking out	1.5	1.3
Vivanco Sound and Image	30	11.09/GT	★★★★★ A respectable upgrade, it provides greater fidelity in sound and vision over budget cables	2	1.3

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AudioQuest FLX-SLIP 14/4 Cable



QED Performance Digital Cable



Supra USB 2.0 Cable



Merlin Tarantula MK6 Mains Cable

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## HDMI CABLES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Length as tested (m)	HDMI type
<b>£80 and above</b>					
Wireworld Chroma (Miami)	60	10.09/GT	★★★★★	Highly competent, although lacking in low-frequency heft	1 1.3
Wireworld Chroma 6	60	Aw.10/FT	★★★★★	Best HDMI cable £50+, Awards 2010. Great upgrade cable for higher-end systems	1 1.4
Wireworld Island 6	46	10.10/GT	★★★★★	Packs a firm punch and strong dynamics	1.4 2.0
Audioquest Cinnamon	80	01.11/FT	★★★★★	A top-notch HDMI that's a credit to any system	2 1.4
Audioquest Forest	80	06.10/GT	★★★★★	A true and worthy rival to Chord's Supershield	5 1.4
Audioquest HDMI-1	180	09.08/GT	★★★★★	This stylish cable offers a solid, cohesive image with good sound	3 1.3
Audioquest HDMI-X	95	03.09/GT	★★★★★	A real entertainer – chunky bass and images are well defined	3 1.3
Atlas HDMI	160	07.07/GT	★★★★★	Upgraded version of the existing Atlas HDMI - delivers good detail and contrast	7 1.3
Black Rhodium Coral HDMI	100	10.06/FT	★★★★★	Worthy of serious consideration - pictures are highly detailed, colours convincing	4 1.3
Chord Company Active	115	10.09/GT	★★★★★	Muscular-sounding and excellent in every regard	1.5 1.3
Chord Co. Active Silver + HDMI	95	01.11/FT	★★★★★	An impressive successor to the old Active cable	1 1.4
Chord Co. Supershield (5m)	90	06.10/GT	★★★★★	A punchy award winner that defies its low price tag	5 1.3a
Ecosse Picture Perfect Ultra	110	09.08/GT	★★★★★	This Ecosse gives a punchy, powerful performance with great detail levels	5 1.3
Ecosse Picture Perfect Ultra +	169	09.08/GT	★★★★★	With its punchy, powerful and composed production, this cable oozes dynamics	5 1.3
QED Qunex HDMI-P (7m)	85	07.07/GT	★★★★★	Stunning value, offering a cracking picture, and great for budget set ups	7 1.0
QED Reference	125	06.10/GT	★★★★★	An assured, but expensive, performer	5 1.3a
QED Signature HDMI	150	10.09/GT	★★★★★	It's competent and classy, and looks good too	1 1.3
Supra HF100 HDMI (8m)	112	08.06/GT	★★★★★	Not just pretty but it delivers impressive performance over eight metres	8 1.0
van den Hul Flat 180	90	10.09/GT	★★★★★	Typical van den Hul quality from a hinged cable that doesn't fall out of its socket	2 1.3b
van den Hul Flat HDMI (3m)	105	03.09/GT	★★★★★	One of the best HDMI cables we've ever heard	3 1.3
van den Hul Ultimate	300	10.08/FT	★★★★★	It's pricey, but has good performance	1 1.3
Vivanco SHQ Ultra	80	06.10/FT	★★★★★	It's an enjoyable watch, although there's some reservation	1.2 1.4
Wireworld Chroma 5 HDMI (7m)	109	07.07/GT	★★★★★	Flexible cable that delivers pictures as good as any HDMI cable at this price	7 1.0

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Wireworld Chroma 7 HDMI Cable



QED Reference Optical Quartz



Oehlbach XXL i-Connect IP-5/U



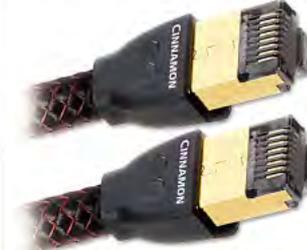
QED Signature Audio 40 Cable



AudioQuest Irish Red Sub Cable



Wireworld Oasis 7 Audio Cable



AudioQuest Cinnamon RJ/E Cable



Wireworld Ultraviolet 7 USB Cable

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## Digital interconnects

USB	An increasingly common way to connect your computer to your hi-fi
Optical	Digital cable that uses light to transmit sound between components
Coaxial	Sends audio via an electrical signal between your hi-fi and AV kit

### The shortlist



**AWARD WINNER**

#### QED Performance Graphite

Awards 2012: Best Optical Digital Cable  
 “The sound through this cable is incredibly detailed and startlingly clear. There’s a good grasp of dynamics, too.”



**AWARD WINNER**

#### QED Performance

Awards 2012: Best Coaxial Digital Cable  
 “QED is good at conveying subtleties. There’s a good sense of energy too, with plenty of attack.”



**AWARD WINNER**

#### Supra USB 2.0

Awards 2012: Best USB Cable  
 “It helps deliver impeccable timing and plenty of energy, both of which translate into a tangible sense of fun.”

### Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Type	Length tested (m)
<b>Up to £50</b>					
Audioquest Forest USB 1.5	25	11.10/FT	★★★★★	USB	1.5
Audioquest VDM-1	43	09.08/GT	★★★★★	Co-axial	1
Atlas Fibre Optic	32	06.09/GT	★★★★★	Optical	1
Ecosse The Producer	15	09.08/GT	★★★★★	Co-axial	0.8
Profigold PROI2102	30	03.11/FT	★★★★★	USB	2
QED Performance Coaxial	30	10.08/GT	★★★★★	Co-axial	1
QED Performance Graphite	40	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Optical	1
Supra USB 2.0	29	11.12/GT	★★★★★	USB	1
True Colours Industries Coral	35	06.09/GT	★★★★★	Optical	1
Vivanco SHQ1112D	40	09.09/GT	★★★★★	Co-axial	1.2
Wireworld Nova 6	40	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Optical	1
Wireworld Ultraviolet 5	40	04.07/GT	★★★★★	Co-axial	1
<b>£50 and above</b>					
Audioquest Cinnamon	60	11.12/FT	★★★★★	USB	1.5
Atlas Equator Optical	50	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Optical	1
Chord Company Optichord	51	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Optical	1
Chord Company Prodac	80	09.09/GT	★★★★★	Co-axial	1
Chord Co. Prodac Pro Digital	70	05.11/FT	★★★★★	Co-axial	1
Clearer Audio Copper-line 75	97	Aw.08/FT	★★★★★	Co-axial	1
Clearer Aud. Silverline Optimus	185	09.09/GT	★★★★★	Co-axial	0.5
Ecosse The Director SE	89	09.09/GT	★★★★★	Co-axial	1
Furutech Formula 2	55	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★	USB	1.2
Imp Audio Silver Knight Exec	120	03.08/FT	★★★★★	Co-axial	1
Kimber USB	52	11.12/GT	★★★★★	USB	1
QED Qunex 75 Signature	80	09.09/FT	★★★★★	Co-axial	1
QED U Play (Bluetooth)	65	05.10/FT	★★★★★	Bluetooth	10
Vertere Pulse D-Fi	70	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	USB	1
Wireworld Ultraviolet 5 USB	50	08.09/FT	★★★★★	USB	2

**“Already a class-leading design - the TCL Coral won its Group Test back in October 2008 - this unassuming interconnect is astonishingly good value for money... it’s a true all-rounder - and a worthy winner”**

June 2009



## Analogue interconnects

These carry audio signal from source to amplifier, or between pre-amplifier and power amplifier. Some use a shielding construction to reduce external electrical interference.

### Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		RCA phono 3.5mm-to-RCA XLR (balanced)	Length tested (m)
<b>Up to £50</b>						
Atlas Element Integra (1m)	45	11.13/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best analogue interconnect, Awards 2013</b>	●	1
Belkin Mini-Stereo Cable	13	12.08/GT	★★★★★	Cheap MP3 cable with reasonably exciting sound		1.8
Chord Company Crimson	38	02.09/GT	★★★★★	A superb all-rounder that'll work wonders in a sub-£1000 system	●	1
Chord Company CrimsonPlus	45	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Fantastic control, expression and detail resolution	●	1
Chord Company CrimsonPlus	40	06.11/GT	★★★★★	Best analogue interconnect, Awards 2011	●	1
Clear. Aud. C-line Alpha One	30	12.11/FT	★★★★★	A bargain interconnect that should be on your shortlist	●	1
Ecosse Conductor CA1.2	49	06.11/GT	★★★★★	Excellent with detail - a good all-rounder	●	1
Ecosse The Composer	37	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Lacks excitement, but a lovely design with warm and punchy sounds	●	0.8
Griffin Aux Audio Cable 3011	15	12.08/GT	★★★★★	Last-generation iPhone compatible 3.5 plugs		1.8
Ixos XHA516-100 (1m)	40	09.07/FT	★★★★★	Refined - if you're after a gentle, mature sound they are fine	●	1
Merlin Mozart	40	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Open and exuberant, if lacking in warmth	●	1
Profigold PROI3301	17	12.08/GT	★★★★★	Excellent 3.5mm - 3.5mm cable		1
QED Audio 1	25	09.07/GT	★★★★★	Good value, but struggles with challenging tracks	●	1
QED Performance Audio 2	40	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Agile, fun and nuanced: would do well in pretty much any system	●	1
QED Profile	18	06.11/GT	★★★★★	At the top of the first upgrade tree	●	1
Wireworld Luna	37	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Excellent with subtlety and dynamics: should be on any interconnect shortlist	●	1
Wireworld Luna 6	36	12.09/GT	★★★★★	Looks strange, but delivers a great refined sound	●	1
<b>£50 and above</b>						
Atlas Equator Integra	75	02.12/FT	★★★★★	A recommended second-upgrade cable	●	1
Black Rhodium Harmony	60	08.08/GT	★★★★★	It offers power and detail, but we found the top-end just a bit too harsh	●	1
Black Rhodium Prelude	80	09.07/FT	★★★★★	Very good cable - sound is crisp and detailed, but still with lovely, chunky bass	●	1
Brilliance Synergy	83	10.06/FT	★★★★★	Best stereo interconnect, Awards 2006. Sensible price	●	1
Chord Company CobraPlus	66	10.10/FT	★★★★★	The perfect tonic for a dull system	●	1
Chord Company iChord	50	12.08/GT	★★★★★	Expensive, but definitely worth it		1
Chord Crimson Vee3	50	11.13/GT	★★★★★	A nice, easy-going cable that's a little too restrained		1
Clear. Aud.C-line Alpha	85	09.08/FT	★★★★★	Entry-level - solid construction and a smooth sound. Not for sonic thrill seekers	●	1.8
DNM Reson TBB100	85	09.07/GT	★★★★★	'Bullet' plugs and solid-core conductors really work. Ideal for pricier systems	●	1
Furtech Alpha Line-1	80	03.11/FT	★★★★★	A cable for owners of midrange systems to get very excited by - very good indeed	●	1
Ixos Xen HXA-716	80	08.08/GT	★★★★★	It's pedestrian to a point, but does a good job with unearthing detail	●	1
Merlin Bach Mk.IV	70	06.11/GT	★★★★★	This new version needs a touch of flair	●	1
QED J2P	50	12.09/FT	★★★★★	Fast and agile 3.5mm-RCA cable	●	1.5
QED Reference Audio J2P	50	12.09/FT	★★★★★	Clean sounding and packed with detail	●	1.5
Russ Andrews GQ-24 UltPlate	73	12.08/GT	★★★★★	Best iPod cable, Awards 2010. Punchy cable for iPod or iPhone owners		1
van den Hul The Name	60	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Energy and fun trump ultimate precision	●	0.8
Atlas Mavros	750	08.08/FT	★★★★★	Provided you have an appropriate system you'll find these cables work a treat	●	1
Chord Co. Chameleon Plus	125	11.11/FT	★★★★★	New plugs make these even more essential	●	1
Chord Company Indigo Plus	995	05.09/FT	★★★★★	It's genius in an interconnect - but you need the right system	●	1
Clearer Audio Copperline	135	05.07/FT	★★★★★	Produces a fast, well separated sound, with plenty of detail and dynamics	●	1
DNM Interconnect-HTFN	300	06.11/GT	★★★★★	A hugely capable - but expensive - cable	●	1
Ecosse Maestro MA2	177	05.08/FT	★★★★★	The Maestro MA2 may be getting on years, but it remains appealing	●	0.8
Ecosse Nu Diva	140	09.05/FT	★★★★★	Not cheap, but they will take your listening experience to a new level	●	0.8
Ecosse The Baton Mk II	104	08.08/GT	★★★★★	Although there's much to admire, the Baton Mk II can struggle to gel sounds	●	0.8
Ecosse The Symphony	225	03.05/FT	★★★★★	Authoritative and detailed, a real all-rounder, but it is 10 percent too pricey	●	0.8
QED Signature Audio S	190	09.09/FT	★★★★★	QED's new flagship interconnect offers great dynamics and punch	●	1
QED Signature Audio XT	150	03.09/FT	★★★★★	Another fine interconnect from QED, but it remains a few short steps off class-leading status	●	1
Russ Andrews Crystal CU	184	08.08/GT	★★★★★	This is a first-rate cable that can handle any sounds	●	1
van den Hul The Wave	100	01.09/FT	★★★★★	The Wave has a formidable array of talents and is one of the best cables at this kind of money	●	1
van den Hul The Well	100	06.11/GT	★★★★★	An ideal booster for thin sounding kit	●	1
Wireworld Oasis 6	130	06.11/GT	★★★★★	A truly splendid cable for kit worth £800-£1000	●	1

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## Mains products

**IEC** \_\_\_\_\_ Usually a three-pin connector used in most hi-fi (and kettles)  
**Figure of 8** \_\_\_\_\_ Small, two-pin connector. Tends to be used on lower-priced products  
**Blocks and conditioners** \_\_\_\_\_ Multi-plug units, some of which attempt to filter noise out of the mains

### Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Cable Block Conditioner Figure of 8 (2-pin) IEC (3-pin) Number of sockets
<b>Up to £100</b>				
Chord Company SuperScreen	65	05.09/GT	★★★★★ Gives your system superior solidity	● ● n/a
Clear.Aud.C-Line Alpha One	25	11.10/FT	★★★★★ A fine first stage mains cable upgrade	● ● n/a
Clear.Aud.C-L Alpha P/HUB	90	04.11/FT	★★★★★ Makes a noticeable difference, but not the last word in cohesion	● ● ● 6
Ecosse Big Orange MK2+	60	04.10/FT	★★★★★ Provides worthwhile gains in performance – and plenty of them	● ● n/a
Ecosse The Big Orange GR8	60	01.11/GT	★★★★★ Every bit as worthy as the standard three-pin version	● ● n/a
Lindy 6-way	40	12.08/FT	★★★★★ For just £40, this conditioner is a bona fide system booster	● ● ● 6
Merlin Tarantula Figure '8'	40	01.11/GT	★★★★★ Incredible bang for your buck from Merlin	● ● n/a
Merlin Tarantula MK6	40	11.10/FT	★★★★★ Best mains cable, Awards 2010. A good tweak for a hi-fi or AV system	● ● n/a
Russ Andrews Powerkord-8	75	01.11/GT	★★★★★ An ideal choice for a simple upgrade	● ● n/a
Tacima CS929	40	08.06/FT	★★★★★ Explicitly illustrates the gains a modest outlay can achieve	● ● ● 6
<b>£100 and above</b>				
Audioquest NRG 1.5	100	01.11/GT	★★★★★ A lively and precise cable that does much right	● ● n/a
Atlas Eos	147	05.09/GT	★★★★★ Well-balanced, delivering impressive depth and scale	● ● n/a
Clearer Audio Silver-line	150	07.06/FT	★★★★★ Capable of truly astonishing improvements	● ● n/a
Furutech G-320AG	165	02.11/GT	★★★★★ A pricy but worthwhile addition to your set-up	● ● n/a
Russ Andrews Powerlink	112	02.09/FT	★★★★★ A roaring success in many ways	● ● 4
R Andrews Ref P/Kord W350i	232	05.09/GT	★★★★★ If you have components costing £2000 upwards, consider this cable	● ● n/a
R Andrews Sig P/Kord W350i	275	11.06/GT	★★★★★ Top mains cable that will really get a system purring	● ● n/a
Russ Andrews X2	200	11.11/FT	★★★★★ Effective but suffers from a lack of sockets	● ● ● 2
Supra MD-06	150	07.08/FT	★★★★★ It adds clarity, but some might not like the leaner sound	● ● 6
van den Hul M/Server Hybrid	150	05.09/GT	★★★★★ Not boring or dull, but it's just too relaxed and safe sounding	● ● n/a
Wireworld Stratus 52	100	08.10/FT	★★★★★ One of the best mains cables for this money	● ● n/a



## Speaker cables

These carry the audio signal from your amplifier to your speakers. Bi-wiring uses two runs of cables per speaker and can lead to improvements in the speakers' performance.

### The shortlist



**PRODUCT OF THE YEAR**  
**Audioquest FLX/SLiP 14/4**

Awards 2012: Best Speaker Cable

It all knits together perfectly. Nothing is stifled: it's open, clear and effortless, with tremendous dynamic ability for the money."



**Talk Electronics Talk 3**  
 £4/m

"This cable performs admirably with detail, dynamics and subtlety, while there's a lovely expressive midrange and firm bass too."



**QED Revelation**  
 £15/m

"If your system is good enough to make proper use of a cable like this, you won't be disappointed."

### Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Biwire
<b>Up to £10/m</b>				
Audioquest FLX-SLiP 14/4	5.80	11.13/GT	★★★★★ <b>Best Speaker Cable, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR</b>	
Audioquest X2	5	07.11/GT	★★★★★ A perfectly smooth and even-handed sounding performer	
Atlas Element	3	11.09/FT	★★★★★ A fine budget upgrade, but you don't have to spend too much more to do quite a bit better	
Atlas Equator 2.0 OFC	6	10.12/GT	★★★★★ Natural, even-handed and with good dynamic ability. A must-hear	
Atlas Equator Mk II	8	04.10/GT	★★★★★ It's smooth and refined - it just needs a touch of verve	

## SPEAKER CABLES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	
Chord Co. Carnival Silv. Screen	6	10.12/GT	★★★★★	Slightly overtaken by newer rivals, but still a mighty fine choice
Chord Company Leyline	2	07.11/GT	★★★★★	A cracker of a budget cable
Cl. Audio C-line Alpha Shield	5	10.12/GT	★★★★★	Restrained dynamics hold this otherwise good cable back from the full five stars
Ecosse CS 2.3	5	10.12/GT	★★★★★	Balanced, nuanced and an easy listen, but a little subdued
Ecosse CS 2.4	8	07.11/GT	★★★★★	Detailed, but could be too bright for some
Ecosse CS 4.2	3	02.12/FT	★★★★★	A decent cable that needs a touch more punch
QED Ruby Anniversary	6	10.12/GT	★★★★★	Rich and detailed but lacking in rhythm and dynamics
QED Ruby Anniversary Evolution	6	11.13/GT	★★★★★	Rich, detailed, energetic and clean. A great cable
QED Silver Anniversary XT	5	07.08/GT	★★★★★	Our budget cable Best Buy for three years on the trot
QED X-TC	4	09.10/FT	★★★★★	A great budget cable that's able to hold its own
QED XT Evolution	6	10.09/FT	★★★★★	QED is now a twin threat in the sub-£10/m speaker cable market
Russ Andrews Kimber 4PR	7	07.08/GT	★★★★★	A powerful sounding cable - although lacking in refinement
Talk Electronics Talk 3	4	07.11/GT	★★★★★	An essential first cable upgrade
Wireworld The Stream 16/2	5	10.12/GT	★★★★★	Still a cracking cable, but losing out to better competition
Wireworld Stream 7	6	11.13/GT	★★★★★	If you're a fan of detail then you should definitely consider the Stream 7

## £10/m and above

Atlas Hyper 2.0	15	07.08/GT	★★★★★	If your system warrants this kind of cable, you won't be disappointed
Atlas Mavros (5m)	2290	08.08/FT	★★★★★	Pair with an extravagant system and get excellent performance
Chord Company Signature	125	01.07/GT	★★★★★	One of the most effective upgrades you will ever hear if you own expensive kit
Ecosse MS2.4	50	01.08/FT	★★★★★	A massively detailed cable that reveals subtleties with refinement
Ecosse Reference MS-2.3	25	10.06/GT	★★★★★	This is a supremely well-balanced cable that does most things very well
Kimber 4VS	12	04.10/GT	★★★★★	An accomplished performer with an expressive sound
QED Revelation	15	04.10/GT	★★★★★	A fine cable that should be on your audition list
QED Silver Anniv. XT Biwire	10	10.06/GT	★★★★★	A clear class-leader with exceptional sonic transparency on display
van den Hul CS122	17	04.10/GT	★★★★★	Still great with subtleties, but rivals have caught up

Biwire

Speaker cables

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WHAT HI-FI?  
SOUND AND VISION  
★★★★★  
July 2008



QED Silver Anniversary XT

WHAT HI-FI?  
SOUND AND VISION  
★★★★★  
October 2012



Atlas Equator 2.0 Speaker Cable

WHAT HI-FI?  
SOUND AND VISION  
★★★★★  
July 2008



Atlas Hyper 2.0 Speaker Cable

WHAT HI-FI?  
SOUND AND VISION  
WHATIFI.COM  
AWARDS 2013  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
AUDIOQUEST FLX-SLIP 14/4



AudioQuest FLX-SLIP 14/4 Cable

WHAT HI-FI?  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2011  
CABLES & ACCESSORIES  
BEST SPEAKER CABLE  
THE CHORD COMPANY  
CARNIVAL SILVERSCREEN



Chord Carnival Silverscreen



Tellurium Q Black Speaker Cable

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## Speaker stands

Many stands are hollow and can be filled with sand or other similar heavy materials. This is to increase mass and dampening and the sonic benefit is tighter bass – although too much of it can be counter-productive and end up deadening the sound.

### The shortlist



**Quadrapire QV60**  
£250



**AWARD WINNER**  
**Custom Design FS104 Signature**  
Awards 2013: Best Speaker Stands



**Partington Super Dreadnaught**  
£180

### Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	Fillable	Finishes
<b>Up to £5000</b>						
Apollo A3/6	80	07.10/GT	★★★★★	Spacious and well-focused fillable stands	60x23x26	● 2
Atacama HMS2	200	07.09/FT	★★★★★	Retain detail and cohesion with these solid stands	60x31x31	● 1
Atacama Nexus 6	70	12.00/FT	★★★★★	Still performing well after eight years	60x25x30	● 1
Custom rc60 Deluxe	125	10.07/FT	★★★★★	This bespoke service has made a fine pair stands	60x20x25	5
Custom Design FS104 Sig.	200	09.11/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best speaker stands, Awards 2013</b>	62x16x18	● 4
Custom Design RS300	90	03.07/GT	★★★★★	Minimal design, a thoroughly appealing listen	61x22x26	● 2
Custom Design RS302	120	11.06/FT	★★★★★	Plenty of detail & clarity especially with vocals	61x22x26	● 3
Hi Fi Racks Podium T5 IV	150	09.11/GT	★★★★★	Ideal for those with forward sounding speakers	50x24x30	2
Kudos S50	200	09.11/GT	★★★★★	Highly recommended and agile stands	62x18x20	1
Mission Stance	100	07.09/FT	★★★★★	Will do a fine job with £200-£400 speakers	58x21x28	● 3
Partington ANSA 60	150	09.11/GT	★★★★★	They remain fine stands - but no longer outstanding value	60x23x28	● 1
Part. D'nought Broadside	300	08.08/FT	★★★★★	Deliver wide ranging improvements to sound	60x23x28	1
Partington Heavi	399	03.07/FT	★★★★★	If you demand the best, buy these	60x30x21	1
Part. Super Dreadnaught	180	03.07/GT	★★★★★	Best £100+ speaker stands in Awards 2007	60x16x17	● 1
Partington Trophy	130	07.06/GT	★★★★★	Hefty, glossy and suitable for all speakers	61x17x17	● 2
Quadrapire QV60	250	07.10/GT	★★★★★	Unusual to look at, but brilliant to hear	58x30x30	4
Russ Andrews Torlyte	336	03.07/GT	★★★★★	Good-looking wood stands that are a real find	50x16x18	1
Soundstyle XS122	105	07.06/GT	★★★★★	Beautifully finished and reveal a spacious sound	57x25x30	● 2
Soundstyle Z2	70	11.08/FT	★★★★★	Best sub-£100 speaker stand in Awards 2007	57x17x23	● 2



## AV & hi-fi racks

Many racks are built to be expanded. Several manufacturers offer you a number of shelving options for ready-made products, but what if you want to get more kit in a few years? We like having the option to build upwards at a later date.

### Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Modular Shelves	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	Finishes
<b>Up to £500</b>						
Alphason Finewood 1100	300	03.13/FT	★★★★★	Looks great and provides sturdy support for your kit	3 51x110x45	1
Alphason ST560/3	260	06.10/GT	★★★★★	A well isolated modular design that does much right	● 4 65x56x59	2
Atacama Equinox	339	11.09/GT	★★★★★	Still a good rack, but newer rivals offer more	● 2-5 Variablex60x55	3
Atacama Equinox AVI	380	05.07/FT	★★★★★	Neat solution to mount a TV above AV electronics	2 110x106x60	3
Atac Equinox Hi-Fi Celeb LE	499	11.09/GT	★★★★★	Its stylish and more than capable, but lacks some grip	● 4 Variablex60x55	1
Atacama Eris Eco 5.0	460	04.12/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best equipment support, Awards 2013</b>	● 4 70x59x56	4
Audiophile Base Stratabase	360	01.08/FT	★★★★★	It isn't cheap but justifies the cost	● 1 0.4x43x36	2
Blok Stax 300	180	06.10/GT	★★★★★	A solidly constructed rack with a matching sound	3 51x58x40	2
Custom Design Concept AV	350	04.07/GT	★★★★★	Looks and sounds excellent, plus four colour options	3 60x101x40	4
Custom Design Icon Sig.	330	10.06/FT	★★★★★	A great rack for an upgrade to tame unruly systems	4 42x75x66	11

## RACKS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Modular Shelves	Dimensions (h/w/d, cm)	Finishes
Custom Design Milan 4	470	11.09/GT	★★★★★	Small and well made, but lacks subtlety	● 4	59x57x40	5
Custom Design Milan LCD3	350	09.08/FT	★★★★★	A stylish addition to Custom Design's catalogue	● 3	42x77x40	4
Custom Design Tokyo Hi-Fi 4	430	08.11/GT	★★★★★	A lightweight rack with immense potential	● 4	64x58x40	3
Hi Fi Racks Podium	460	08.11/GT	★★★★★	Best equipment support, Awards 2011	● 3	62x60x40	1
Hi Fi Racks Podium Slimline	350	03.13/FT	★★★★★	A simple rack design with pretty decent results	4	Variablex55x40	1
Icon Audio Aero	299	05.09/GT	★★★★★	An ideal rack for those who like a lighter listen	4	76x68x50	1
Off the Wall Profile	329	06.10/GT	★★★★★	Retro styling that's great for the money	● 3	48x90x57	4
Quadraspire Q4evo	380	11.09/GT	★★★★★	A solid, cohesive and supremely affordable rack	4	Variablex59x39.5	8
Sonorous PL2200	280	09.08/FT	★★★★★	Classy looks and features	2	82x95x44	6
Stands Unique Sound Support	330	08.11/GT	★★★★★	An agile sounding rack with a good feel for subtlety	4	57x72x42	1
Target CL470	299	06.10/GT	★★★★★	For pure performance, this is a winner at this price	4	82x50x55	2
Techlink Ovid	200	04.07/GT	★★★★★	Perfect for a minimalist system in a trendy flat	3	32x95x40	4

## £500-£1000

Atacama Elite Eco 12.0	500	03.13/FT	★★★★★	Offers solid performance and flexibility	● 5	Variablex115x32	1
BDI Valera 9724	500	03.13/FT	★★★★★	Complicated to assemble but the results make it worthwhile	3	54x112x52	3
Blok Pro Stax 500	500	08.11/GT	★★★★★	A behemoth that helps create a big, stable sound	5	108x67.5x53	5
Hi Fi Racks Akorner XL	930	09.12/FT	★★★★★	A corner-friendly alternative to the Podium	● 3	45x110x40	6
Optimum Avion 8925	999	06.10/GT	★★★★★	Heavyweight, but likeable and good with sonics	3	57x127x56	3
Quadraspire Q4 Bamboo	500	03.13/FT	★★★★★	An all round performer. Easy to set up and excellent results	● 4	Variablex59x40	1
Quadraspire QAVM (Oak)	540	04.07/GT	★★★★★	Solid and rigid, delivers a fine performance	● 3	50x109x50	8
Quadraspire QAVX	560	12.07/FT	★★★★★	Supports a great big telly and expansive system	● 2	Variablex163x52	8
Quadraspire Sunoko Vent T	800	11.09/GT	★★★★★	A first-rate rack, that highlights subtleties	● 4	Variablex59x47	6
Stands Unique Soundtower 10	533	05.09/GT	★★★★★	Beautifully made with a very capable performance	5	81x72x42	5

## £1000 and more

Alphason Mode	1699	06.10/GT	★★★★★	Massively expensive, but supremely capable as well	3	60x150x57	4
Audiophile Base StarBase	1180	12.06/GT	★★★★★	Exceptional, spectacular results with high end hi-fi	● 3	65x59x52	3
Hi Fi Racks Podium XL	1050	06.10/GT	★★★★★	A great performer: plenty of weight and dynamics	● 3	53x140x40	1
Spectral Closed CL1050	1100	07.07/FT	★★★★★	Fantastic build and style, plus numerous options	2	31x101x53	17
Spectral Closed CL1552	1800	07.07/GT	★★★★★	Awesome style and decent abilities - a great rack	6	VariablexVariablex53	16



## Headphone amps

The headphone outputs on most products are usually afterthoughts and have had little care taken in trying to make them sound good. A dedicated headphone amp is a must if you want the best headphone sound.

## Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Line level In Outputs
<b>Up to £1500</b>					
Beyerdynamic A1	975	11.10/FT	★★★★★	Best headphone amplifier £500+, Awards 2010. A formidable combo when partnered with T1 headphones	2 1
Chord Electronics Toucan	800	10.10/FT	★★★★★	A headphone amp with built in DAC that's worth a punt	2 2
Creek OBH-21SE	280	04.09/GT	★★★★★	Perfectly pleasant but it could do with more bite	2 2
Edwards Audio HA1	280	09.12/FT	★★★★★	Packs a punch but not that refined	2 1
FiiO E7	65	03.11/FT	★★★★★	One of the most cost-effective ways to improve headphone sound from a computer	1 2
Graham Slee Voyager	180	02.09/FT	★★★★★	It might not be the most practical headphone amp ever, but it's packed with potential	1 2
Lehmann Black Cube Linear	750	07.09/FT	★★★★★	Deeply impressive device given the right system	1 1
Lehmann Rhineland	400	04.09/GT	★★★★★	Best headphone amplifier £300-£500, Awards 2010. Its user-friendly sound makes this a very wise buy	2 2
Meridian Prime	1200	02.14/FT	★★★★★	A top-class headphone amp and a talented preamp to boot	2 4
Musical Fidelity V-CAN II	120	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Does enough right to be worth serious consideration	1 3
Pathos Aurium	850	08.13/FT	★★★★★	This amplifier is a top class choice	4 2

**"The Chord Electronics Toucan is a tiny, two-in-one triumph - we can't wait to test the rest of the range"**

October 2010



## Phono amps

Dedicated units tend to sound better than the circuits integrated into amplifiers. Higher priced options usually allow for electrical optimisation for your cartridge, thus producing better results.

### The shortlist



**AWARD WINNER**

#### Rega Fono MM MK2

Awards 2013: Best Phono stage

"Others may deliver a little more detail, but the weight and scale here justifies the extra outlay. A splendid amp."



**AWARD WINNER**

#### Leema Elements

Awards 2011: Best Phono stage

"We rate the Elements very highly and can't think of a better alternative at this price. Buy with confidence."



#### Graham Slee Gram Amp 2 Communicator

£150

"Fast, organised and dynamic. It's low on frills but high on quality. The aptly named Communicator comes highly recommended."

### Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	MM	MC	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
<b>Up to £2000</b>							
Cambridge Audio 651P	120	06.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	1	2.5x8x11
Creek Audio OBH-15	240	02.09/GT	★★★★★	●	●	1	6x10x15
Graham Slee Gr-Amp 2 Comm.	160	06.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	1	7x10x25
Leema Elements	495	03.10/FT	★★★★★	●	●	2	5x11x10
Lehmann Black Cube	325	02.09/GT	★★★★★	●	●	1	5x11x11
Plinius Koru	2325	04.09/FT	★★★★★	●	●	2	9x45x40
Pro-Ject Phono Box S	120	06.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	2	7x10x14
Pro-Ject Tubebox SE	350	02.09/GT	★★★★★	●	●	2	7x10x14
Musical Fidelity V-LPS II	160	06.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	1	5x11x11
Rega Fono Mini A2D	85	03.12/FT	★★★★★	●	●	1	6x18x25
Rega Fono MM MK2	200	06.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	2	7x43x33



## Cartridges

**Moving magnet (MM)** These produce a higher output, giving your phono stage an easier time

**Moving coil (MC)** Can produce more detail, but is more demanding of your phono stage

### Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	MM/MC	Tracking weight (g)
<b>Up to £500</b>					
Clearaudio Aurum Beta Mk II	360	04.11/GT	★★★★★	MM	2.2
Goldring 2100	92	05.10/GT	★★★★★	MM	1.7
Goldring 2500	224	03.09/GT	★★★★★	MM	1.7
Grado Prestige Silver	115	05.10/GT	★★★★★	MM	1.5
Nagaoka MP110	89	05.10/GT	★★★★★	MM	1.8
Nagaoka MP300	500	04.11/GT	★★★★★	MM	1.5
Ortofon 2M Black	460	04.11/GT	★★★★★	MM	1.5
Ortofon 2M Bronze	275	03.09/GT	★★★★★	MM	1.5
Ortofon 2M Red	80	05.10/GT	★★★★★	MM	1.8
Rega Exact	195	03.09/GT	★★★★★	MM	1.75
Roksan Corus Silver	400	01.11/FT	★★★★★	MM	1.9

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**↓ AGAINST** Nothing of Note – What Hi Fi October 2009.

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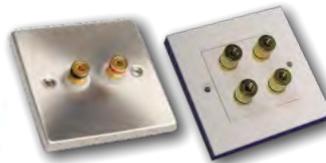
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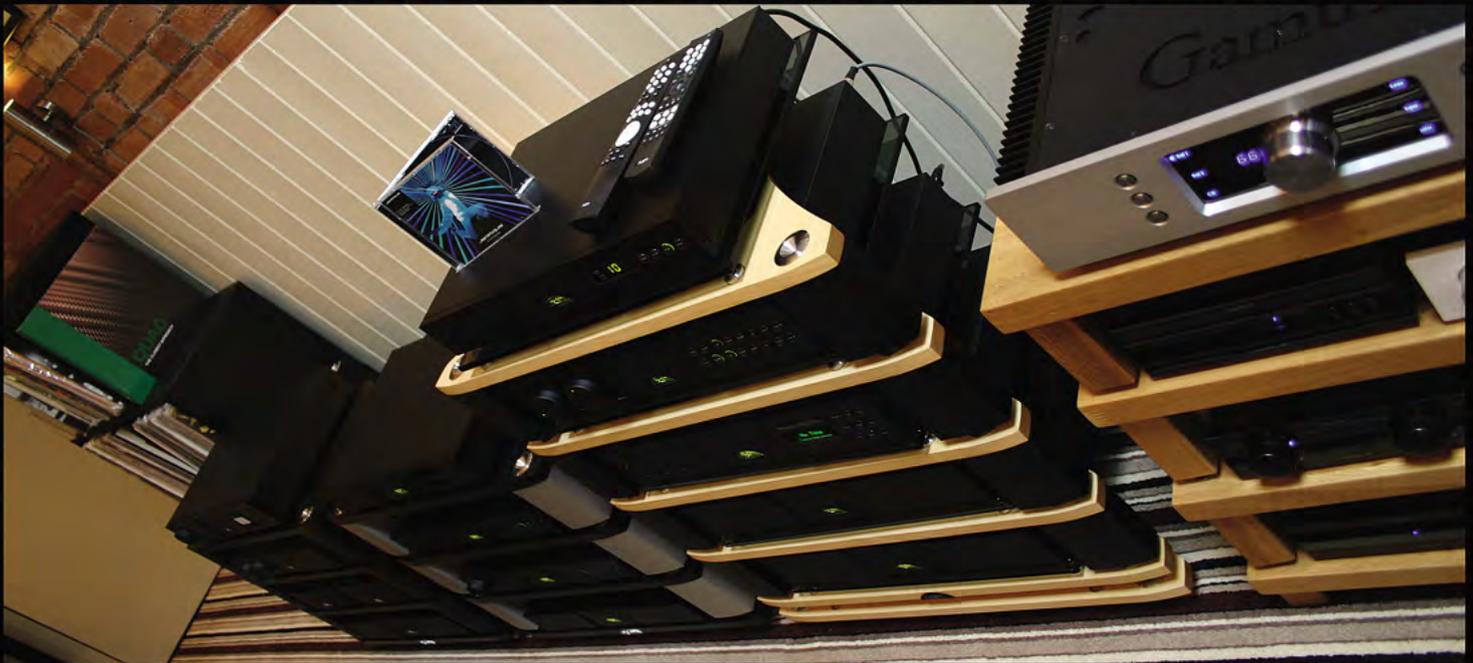
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