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"If you're in the market for a sub-£700 speaker package, then your search is over."

Trusted Reviews 'Editor's Choice', August 2014



"Fabulous clarity, definition and intelligibility. These speakers are remarkable performers."

Home Cinema Choice 'Best Buy', September 2012



"Has the best got better? Simply put, yes!"

What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision, October 2011



Winner 'Best traditional 5.1 speaker package up to £700'  
What Hi-Fi? Awards 2011, 2012 and 2013



# You're never so small that we can't see (or hear) you

A 32-inch TV was once considered ample for most front rooms, back when said TV was about 32 inches deep too. These days we (consumers) are all about Big Screen Action, and the nation's favourite TV screen is now more like 40 inches.

There's a place for 32-inch screens, though. A smaller front room, for example, or (equally likely) as a second screen in the bedroom, shed or what-have-you. So we've gone to our usual exhaustive lengths to bring you **the best 32in TVs you can buy (p34)**. Because even though your TV's small, it can still be perfectly formed.

And on the subject of second (and third and fourth) rooms, the test of **the most compact, highest-performing multi-room systems around (p70)** proves that not only does the future sound great, it's affordable. And nicely small too.



*Simon*  
Simon Lucas, Editor

## My products of the month



**BenQ W1070+**  
Group test p62  
Corking budget projector  
reacquaints the cat with  
the pigeons in fine style.



**Klipsch X11i**  
Round-up p68  
One of the few occasions  
when paying more to get  
less is a Good Thing.

# WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION

## Reviews you can trust

### Experience & heritage



We've been hard at work helping the world discover the best in hi-fi and home cinema for more than 37 years, and have getting on for 100 years of reviewing

experience under our collective belts - so you can count on our expert opinions.

### Dedicated test facilities



We test every product in the magazine or at *whathifi.com* against its peers in our bespoke £1m reviewing facilities. And we test every product as a team,

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MP3 player tests before the iPod even existed? High-def video before it even had a name? That was us. We keep you in touch with big stories and future trends.



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## NEXT MONTH

# WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2014



Awards 2014 issue on sale 14th October

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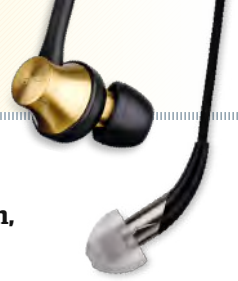
whf.cm/playlist2014



whathifi.com

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**Round-up Headphones**  
"If you're after an engaging, exciting listen, these fit the bill"



## Our products of the month



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First test p18  
"Balanced, revealing and musical - a rare example of wireless hi-fi speakers that don't compromise on quality"

Becky Roberts Staff writer



**Philips Fidelio M2BT**  
First test p11  
"Bluetooth headphones combining style, convenience and sound plucked straight from the top drawer"

Andy Madden Reviews editor



**Humax DTR-T2000**  
First test p10  
"Harder. Better. Faster. Stronger. Basically the kind of sequel we like"

Ced Yuen Staff writer



**Rega Elex-R**  
First test p23  
"A powerful, musical amplifier with a lovely phono stage that blows away the competition at this price"

Kashfia Kabir Multimedia journalist



**Yamaha YSP-2500**  
First test p14  
"Getting proper surround sound from a slim soundbar is no mean feat, but the YSP-2500 nails it."

Verity Burn Multimedia editor



**PMC Twenty 26 Temptation** p84  
"Top quality floorstanders that combine superb sound with a lovely easy-going nature"

Ketan Bbaradia Technical editor



**Supertest 32in Televisions**  
"Smart features, decent picture and ample connections for around £200? Yes please"

## What's in this issue...

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**34 Supertest: Televisions** TVs are getting cheaper and they're not skimping on their features either. We've gathered seven 32in sets in the £200-£460 price range to find that best budget buy.

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**60 Projectors** Prices of projectors are heading in one direction - and that's down. Your home cinema set-up just became less expensive thanks to these offerings from BenQ, Epson, InFocus and Optoma.



**Group Test**  
"When you're spending nearly £2000 on a pair of standmounters, you're well within your rights to expect a certain level of performance"

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Plus save up to 54% on the shop price of *What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision*

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**A glimpse into *What Hi-Fi?* past**  
We cast our minds back to Yamaha's first ever soundbar, the YSP-1



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"If you're thinking of building your first home-cinema system, this projector should be at the top of your shopping list"



**Group Test Multi-room systems**  
"Could this be the multi-room solution that hi-fi fans have been waiting for?"

**68 Headphones** A quality pair of in-ears can be hard to find. So we've looked far and wide for a pair we hope will become our best buds.

**70 Multi-room systems** The multi-room market has become fiercely competitive. We scrutinise six efforts all looking to make a big impression.

**84 Temptations** Featuring another peerless pair of floorstanders from PMC and a confident DAC/headphone amplifier combo from Benchmark.

**92 Playlist** Eva Green dominates the screen in *300: Rise of an Empire*, *Peaky Blinders* returns with Tom Hardy in tow and Leonard Cohen belies his age with his 13th studio album *Popular Problems*.



**Temptation**  
"It's a clean, precise presentation but avoids the clinical edge that often goes with such an outlook"

## New Buyer's Guide... two mags in one!

**Revamped hi-fi guide!**  
1500 products rated **p97**  
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...**  
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## 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	★☆☆☆☆

**WHAT HI-FI?**  
**SOUND AND VISION**  
**TEST WINNER**

If it's one of our winners, you know it's top quality

# Exclusive reviews of the latest kit

# FIRST TESTS

**MORE  
FIRST TESTS**



**Humax DTR-T2000**  
**£200 Page 10**  
Raises the game on last year's excellent Humax YouView PVR



**Pioneer SC-LX58**  
**£1400 Page 16**  
The successor to our 2013 Award-winner



**Philips Fidelio E5**  
**£600 Page 24**  
A 2.1 system that converts to a 4.1 surround set-up

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for even more  
product reviews!

**EXCLUSIVE**

## High-tech, high-performance... and high-quality movie sound

**B&W 683 Theatre | Speaker package | £2750**

**We think** Bowers & Wilkins' brand-new 600-series speakers are great. It was love at first sight with the stunning 685 S2 standmounters; we've waxed lyrical about the 683 S2 floorstanders. Will it be the same with the obligatory 5.1 speaker package?

This B&W 683 Theatre combo is, as its name suggests, built around the superb 683 S2 floorstanders. At £1150 a pair they're the unequivocal leaders of their class, delivering a combination of transparency, detail and dynamics currently unmatched.

The rest of the system uses speakers from the new range, too: the HTM61 S2 centre speaker (£550), 686 S2 rear standmounters (£350) and ASW610XP subwoofer (£700) complete the package.

### New technology

The new 600 series shares a lot of technology with B&W's pricier CM range, and it shows in the performance. The biggest change is in the use of the CM series' ring-reinforced decoupled tweeters.

It's a clever design. The thin 25mm aluminium dome tweeter is reinforced by a thicker outer metal ring (seen on the flagship CM10 loudspeaker), which ensures better damping. The assembly is further suspended (decoupled) in a gel ring to

minimise resonances from the mid- and bass-drivers. And then there's the Nautilus tube-loading arrangement, handed down from the iconic 800-series speakers...

It all aims to deliver more precision in the upper reaches of the frequency range - and it hits that target square-on.

The bass drivers in the 683 S2 floorstanders have also been reinforced with rings of aluminium (the stiffer

or white finishes. Gone are the days of wooden veneers, as the monochrome colours have by all accounts been more popular. The sub has a velvety, matte-vinyl wrap around it that feels nice to touch, although we found a slight tear in the material around the edges in our sample.

We like the clean, uncluttered look of the speakers, offset by the pop of yellow Kevlar. The cabinets are nicely built, with neat,

**Detail cuts through clearly thanks to revamped tweeters, but treble stops short of sharpness. And these speakers go loud: give them a chance and they'll really show off their dynamic ability**

construction reduces distortion), while B&W's distinctive bright yellow Kevlar-woven FST drivers handle the midrange frequencies on the front three speakers.

And we have to take our hats off to B&W for finally putting a protective grille around that delicate soft-dome tweeter, which can be so easily damaged by prodding fingers. It helps with sound dispersion, too.

The 683 Theatre is available in black ash

square edges - but we can't help feeling they look a little plain at this price, even though B&W has purposely opted for a simple, modest finish.

### A plethora of drivers

The ASW610XP subwoofer is a small but powerful beast, with 500W of amplification driving the 25cm cone. Line and speaker inputs, as well as multiple EQ settings, are present on the back panel. The speakers are all bi-wirable, and the 686 S2s include wall-mounting brackets on the back.

It's worth mentioning that the speakers in this system are a mix of two- and three-way driver configurations, with cones of different sizes. While the 25mm tweeter remains consistent, the midrange Kevlar drivers and bass cones differ from speaker to speaker. Some speakers - the 683 and 686 S2s - also feature a front-facing port that uses B&W's Flowport technology for cleaner bass performance. The mix of speakers might make practical sense, but before our first listen we can't help wondering if the differences will affect the package's integration too much.

So we fire up *Thor: The Dark World* and the 683 Theatre powers through the DTS-HD Master Audio soundtrack. It packs a good deal of punch, with crashes

### In detail...



### Inside the ASW610XP

The subwoofer's compact size means B&W has had to endow it with a lot of power - a whopping 500W - to squeeze out as much bass as possible.

There are speaker and line level inputs, and their corresponding volume controls, on the back panel. EQ presets are also available, so you can tell the ASW610XP whether it's been placed in a corner or given space away from a wall.

As much as we'd enjoy not having a massive black cube looming in our living room, we think a larger driver would've given it the thundering low-end oomph it needs to match a package of this calibre.

**Dynaudio's Xeo range  
continues to wow with  
this next-gen model**


Dynaudio Xeo 4, p18



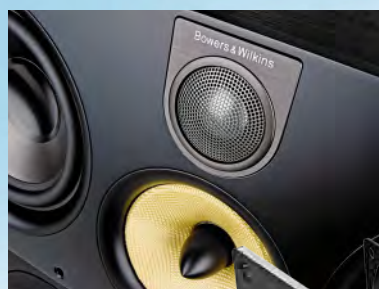
**USE IT WITH**

**Captain America  
The Winter Soldier - Blu-ray**

An exquisite political thriller that just happens to have superheroes in it. The Cap's second outing is grown-up, clever, and full of non-stop action and intrigue.

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

In detail...



The new tweeter

1 This tweeter grille serves two purposes: it protects the fragile metal dome, of course, but it also helps sound dispersion to make the speaker a little less fussy about positioning.

2

2 This compliant ring isolates the tweeter assembly from the vibrations caused by the mid/bass drivers. The result? Clearer, more detailed treble.

3 The metal dome and reinforcing ring add rigidity while improving damping. It's tech taken from B&W's upmarket CM range - and it really works.

4 B&W's traditional tapered tube is mounted behind the tweeter diaphragm. It absorbs the rearward-firing sound and aids sonic purity.



and explosions supplying a satisfying range of thumps and wallops. There's a pleasing sense of scale too, and we can credit the impressive 683 S2s for adding height to the wide soundfield.

Clarity and precision

Detail? There's bags of it - and it cuts through clearly thanks to the revamped tweeters. High frequencies have bite and sparkle, but stop short of coarseness.

The speakers confidently portray the shifts in atmosphere, too. We know the B&W speakers go loud, and they get the chance to really show off their dynamic ability when Thor's hammer gets smashy.

But we can't help feeling like there's something missing. It takes us a while to realise that, while we're having fun, the package hasn't blown us away. We thought it would. There's a sense that the sound should be grander - more powerful - and that effects-steering should be smoother.

Heftier sub-woofing, please

We want more depth and rumble to the bass, too. The ASW610XP is a talented sub on its own, but it can't quite keep up with the sheer muscle of the 683 S2s. The same goes for the centre speaker. Voices are richer, more nuanced and full of personality

when they're delivered from the 683s, but when the on-screen dialogue is happening bang in the middle, the centre channel isn't quite as insightful or layered as we'd like.

While the centre speaker and subwoofer are designed to work with the 683 S2s, the differences in driver size and configuration seems to affect integration across all the speakers in the package. Sound just isn't quite unified as it travels around the room.

The KEF R100 5.1 package is the B&W's direct rival. Instead of using different driver configurations, it uses identical speakers that use identical Uni-Q single drivers - and it comes out on top with a stunningly seamless and precise surround-sound performance. The KEF's subwoofer digs deeper and is more muscular too, giving greater authority and scale.

The bottom line

The B&W speaker package relies heavily on the merits of the 683 S2s - and rightly so, as they're easily the most overtly talented aspect of this 5.1 package. But they cast a shadow over the rest of the system, which is a shame as the 683 Theatre is a few tweaks away from being stunning. It's not quite the class-leading package that we were hoping for, but it's still definitely worth an audition.

SYSTEM BUILDER

Three partners that will help make sure you hear the B&Ws at their best...



Projector

Sony VPL-HW55ES £2800 ★★★★★

Stunning big-screen entertainer that's worth every penny of its premium price.



AV receiver

Pioneer SC-LX58 £1400 ★★★★★

Authoritative and muscular, yet subtle and agile, this new Pioneer is impressive.



Blu-ray player

Marantz UD7007 £500 ★★★★★

This Award-winning player delivers a great picture, but its bold sound is the highlight.

**Total build £7450**

TECH SPECS

**Speakers Dimensions (hwd) Centre:** 22 x 59 x 30cm; **Front:** 99 x 19 x 36cm; **Surround:** 31.5 x 16 x 23cm • **Rated power** 450W • **Bi-wirable** Yes • **Finishes** 2  
**Subwoofer Rated power** 500W • **Driver** 25cm, closed, forward-firing • **Dimensions (hwd)** 32.5 x 32.5 x 37.5cm • **Weight** 15.5kg

Rating ★★★★★☆

**FOR** Detailed, agile and clear; plenty of power; open soundfield; decent surround steering

**AGAINST** Rivals offer better integration and more immersive sound; bass lacks authority

**VERDICT** Talented and entertaining, but not quite the captivating experience we expected

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1 Heavens, that centre speaker is large. It takes two of us to get it out of the box. Also, be aware that you'll need a sizeable kit-rack to place it on.

2 We're surprised by how small the sub is. It's talented, but does seem rather petite in this heavy-weight package. It needs more low-end wallop, too.

3 The small rear units need to be placed on stands or wall-mounted. It might be more practical to peruse B&W's in-wall speaker range...

4 We're endlessly pleased that B&W has finally put a protective grille over the fragile tweeter. Now our children and cats can roam free.

5 We're having a great time with this punchy, spacious and detailed set-up, but it's not quite the fully rounded surround sound we were expecting.



# Bowers & Wilkins

## Designed for listening

The new CM Series loudspeakers are undoubtedly beautiful, capable of gracing any room with their clean lines and high-quality finishes. But as with all Bowers & Wilkins loudspeakers form must follow function, and thanks to our Decoupled Double Domes and tweeter-on-top technology you won't believe how beautiful your music can sound.

[bowers-wilkins.com](http://bowers-wilkins.com)



Decoupled Double Dome tweeter



Humax DTR-T2000 | YouView Box | £200

# The new Humax: harder, better, faster, stronger



This iteration of the Humax is smaller and made of metal

**Harder, better, faster, stronger** could summarise the Humax DTR-T2000. Rather than doing something entirely new, Humax has sprinkled tiny improvements all over its YouView box. After all, why throw out something that works? This year's DTR-T2000 is not very different from last year's Award-winning DTR-T1010, but it's certainly better.

For the uninitiated, YouView is like Freeview on steroids. It's a free service with access to more than 70 TV and radio channels, but that's where similarities end. There's all manner of web-based on tap, too.

## Playing catch-up

The box accesses your broadband to get content from the major catch-up services. These are integrated with the electronic programme guide (EPG), which allows you scroll back by seven days. Simply browse, pick something you missed, and the corresponding catch-up service will load.

*The Great British Bake-Off*, for instance, will bring up the BBC iPlayer app. There's also the ITV Player, 4oD and Demand 5. Other apps include Sky's Now TV (subscription film and TV streaming), Sky Store (pay-as-you-go films), Milkshake! (for kids), S4C (in Wales), STV (in Scotland), and UKTV (Dave, Really and Yesterday). It's fine if you don't want to play catch-up: scroll forward up to seven days, and set the box to record upcoming attractions.

The T2000 looks very similar to last years T1010, but there are a few changes. It's smaller. The power supply is now an



## USE IT WITH

### Now TV

Access to Sky Movies and Sports for those who just want to dip in now and again.

**Video quality depends on the strength and stability of your signal, but if you get good TV reception normally, you'll be fine. The tuners do a good job: standard and HD are detailed**

external block, keeping the device cooler, which means no noisy fan - and it's also primarily made of metal rather than plastic. Sadly there's no display to show info on what you're watching or recording. But you do get a flap hiding a USB port, which isn't for end-user use.

Instead you need to use the internal hard drive, with 500GB storage, which allows you to record around 300 hours in standard-def or 125 in HD. There's no 1TB model, but we wouldn't be surprised if that appeared. The back of the machine offers standard connections: aerial passthrough, HDMI out (plus scart and RCA just in case), digital optical out, another USB port and ethernet in. Wi-fi is still missing, though.

## Universal viewing

Set-up is easy. Plug in the bundled HDMI and LAN cables, add your own RF lead, and power it up. On-screen instructions take care of the rest.

We've always been fans of the YouView interface. It's neat and nice to look at, with a welcoming blue tint. Press the 'YouView' button on the well-designed remote and you're presented with settings, apps, recordings and search.

The search function is universal. Just type in the name of the programme you want and you'll be told the service that offers it. There's a good amount of info for programmes, and it's nice to see related broadcasts in case you need advice.

Start-up times vary because of the power-saving 'Eco Mode'. Have it set high and the box will go into a deep sleep on standby. Set it to low and it will spring to life in 10-15 seconds (slightly better than its

predecessor). There's little lag when it comes to flicking through menus. Button presses respond well.

Video quality depends on the strength and stability of your signal, but if you get good TV reception normally then you'll be fine. The tuners do a solid job: standard and HD pictures are clean and detailed, with decent motion-handling and sharply drawn edges. You can record one channel and watch another, or record two channels at once while you watch on-demand content.

On-demand quality is also dependant on connections, but whichever service we used pictures were clear and judder-free.

The Humax DTR-T2000 box is better than its predecessor in nearly every way. Things may have moved on in the last year, with many more TVs getting some catch-up features of their own, along with Facebook and Spotify. But when it comes to the pure simplicity of enhancing your TV-viewing experience for little outlay, there's nothing quite like YouView.

## Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Excellent catch-up offerings; easy to use; good picture quality; plenty of storage space

**AGAINST** Still no wi-fi provided

**VERDICT** Harder, better, faster, stronger: essentially, the kind of product evolution we like to see

## Also consider

**Humax DTR-T1010**  
**£190 ★★★★★**

The previous iteration isn't as good, but it's now available for a bit less if you look hard enough



A flap hides a USB port on the Humax DTR-T2000, which sadly isn't enabled



**Philips Fidelio M2BT | Bluetooth headphones | £250**

# Award-winning headphones get an upgrade

It's always exciting when a current Award winner gets a successor - even if that successor bears only minor changes. That's the case with the Philips Fidelio M2BTs, essentially the M1BTs (our current favourite Bluetooth headphones) with just the addition of NFC (for achieving a wireless connection with a mere tap of the headphones on a compatible source) and some cosmetic changes onboard.

The price remains the same at £250, and for that you get more of what we loved in the M1BTs: aptX Bluetooth, attractive and comfortable design, and built-in controls.

## Sound quality impresses

More importantly, the M1BTs' rich, balanced and musical sound remains intact. In fact, as switching between the old and new models proved, there are no notable differences between them.

Using an Apple iPad Mini 2 as our source we play Lorde's *Royals* via Bluetooth and the headphones are alive with detail. There's variation in drumbeats, transparency to vocals as they trail off and clear disparity between vocalists when the second comes into play. As with their predecessors, there's none of the harshness often prevalent in wireless sound.

Percussive clicks are distinct and snappy too, the headphones showing no signs of softness. Opting for a direct, upfront delivery, their punchy demeanour makes for a thrilling listen with any music.

We try to trip them up with Hijak Oscar's chaotic *God Knows* but they aren't fazed by the flurry of instruments and frenzied tempo. Instead, the M2BT's time well and deliver the sprightly track with enthusiasm.

## Quality build and design

The M2BTs swap their predecessors' navy-blue finish for black, and the original faux-leather outer headband for a ribbed woven fabric alternative. It keeps the original faux-leather underside as a soft cushioning for your head. You could see the cutback on leather as a downgrade, but the woven fabric is still a smart substitute.

Philips has replaced the faux-leather headband with a ribbed woven fabric



The memory-foam ear-pads are cosy, and apply enough pressure to clasp firmly on your head (although they can make your ears a little toasty a few albums in).

Compact cups - which house the 4cm drivers - make them perfect companions for the commute, and they fold flat for a snug fit inside the supplied carry pouch.

## Well integrated controls

Conveniently built into the right ear-cup, the controls are well integrated and intuitive. Simply hold down the crescent-shaped area to pair the headphones to any

## In detail



**Simple controls** Pairing, powering on/off or pausing/playing music is easy using the controls built into the right ear-cup

device, and to power on or off; press it once to play/pause. The only other control is a neat flick-switch - knock it up or down to change volume; press it once to skip a track and twice to skip backwards.

## Fine features

The M2BTs are equipped with two microphones - one for voice and another to measure external noise and adjust sound accordingly - so hands-free calling is a doddle. The in-line controls take care of all operations, so you can forget having to scramble for your phone to answer calls. Whether in an office or out on the street, voices pull through loud and clear.

Philips claims a 15 metre wireless range, which is particularly handy for indoor use, and ten hours playback or talk-time on a full charge. They last us a fair run over a few days before needing roughly three hours to replenish via the USB charging cable.

A supplied 1.2m audio cable grants the option for a direct connection, too - and brings a touch more clarity of sound with it.

Sticking to their predecessors' Award-winning formula, the M2BTs offer superb sound, convenience and design.

## Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Punchy, musical sound; plenty of detail; clear presentation; smart design

**AGAINST** Nothing

**VERDICT** Have all the selling points of the M1BTs, plus NFC. A does-it-all product every bit as good as its Award-winning predecessor

## System builder total build £570

### Tablet

**Apple iPad Mini with Retina Display £320**

A class-leading tablet with a great sound and plenty of storage.



### Streaming service

**Spotify Free** Download the free app (iOS and Android) and benefit from its exhaustive catalogue and good sound.



## Also consider

**Bose AE2W £200**

★★★★☆

Their open, detailed presentation is complemented by a light and comfortable build



Panasonic DMR-BWT740 | Blu-ray recorder | £455

# Multi-talented recorder does it all



**Complex remote**  
The button-heavy remote can be confusing, but use the 'Function Menu' to take you to the player's hub screen. From there you can navigate to live TV and recordings.

**For some reason**, Panasonic seems to be the only company bothering with Blu-ray recorders these days. It would be easy to get complacent in the face of absent competition, but the company keeps developing impressive new models.

And so we have the Panasonic DMR-BWT740, the firm's latest Blu-ray recorder. Well, calling it just a Blu-ray recorder is a little unfair. It's a multimedia beast, and does a lot more than the BD-R label implies.

## A multimedia beast

It's a PVR with a 1TB hard disk, on which you can record up to 684 hours of content. There are two tuners for Freeview HD, so you can watch one thing while recording another, or record two programmes at the same time. On top of this, you get web-based content too.

The box also handles 4K upscaling, multi-room streaming to portable devices in the home and Miracast for mobile streaming. Then there's DLNA certification, which means you can stream content from networked devices too. All that, and it plays and records to DVDs and Blu-rays.

## Sturdy build quality

With all those features, you might expect a slab the size of an old VCR. But it looks like a regular Blu-ray player – it's a sturdy metal box with a drop-down front panel.

Open this and you'll find the disc tray mechanism, a large display, basic controls, along with a USB port and SD card slot for adding your own content.

Around the back is a generous array of connections. There are RF in and out

sockets for TV pass-through, while video output is via HDMI. Audio output is more varied, coming in optical, coaxial and analogue stereo flavours.

A scart input lets you make analogue recordings from older devices, and another USB port means you can attach external hard drives. There's an ethernet socket and built-in wi-fi to complete the specification.

## Easy set-up

The set-up process is easy. It's just a matter of plugging in and following the on-screen prompts. You'll have a full list of channels, and internet connectivity, in no time.

**Recording to disc requires copying programmes from the hard disk. Unfortunately you can't record straight to a DVD or Blu-ray, but the quality of recordings is good**

Navigating with the remote is a bit trickier. If in doubt, use the Function Menu to take you to the equivalent of a TV's hub screen, where you choose between live TV and recordings, or go into settings.

Making recordings of live TV is easy. See something you like and hit record. Alternatively, there's a programme guide like you'd find on any TV, where you can set timers for upcoming shows. There's even an option to do that from your smartphone.

Recording to disc requires copying from the hard disk. Unfortunately you can't do it straight to DVD or Blu-ray.

**Despite its extensive tech specs, the player is a similar size to non-recording models**

**The drop-down flap at the front hides the disc tray, a USB port and an SD card slot**

For smart content, you get Panasonic's slightly dated Viera Connect. There's not much we'd download from the Market really: just Netflix, BBC iPlayer and YouTube. Netflix fans, though, will like the dedicated button for it on the remote.

For the most part, the interface is zippy and responsive. The machine will have a good think about the more intensive tasks (loading up the smart portal, for instance), but general flicking about is fine.

## Fine picture quality

As for video quality, we have no complaints. Blu-rays look sharp, detailed and clean. Colours are punchy yet convincing, and skin-tones are natural. And it's the same when watching Freeview HD. Standard-def content inevitably looks a little softer and grainier, but overall we're very pleased.

We're also equally pleased with the quality of video recorded from Freeview HD. Both hard disk and Blu-ray playback offer the same quality as live TV. Sound is typical Panasonic: clear, smooth and with generous weight.

For some, the Panasonic DMR-BWT740 will be a bit much. But if you find yourself looking at a standard Blu-ray player and sighing at its simplicity, then this might just be the answer. Its array of functions is mighty impressive, and we think it offers great value for the money.

## Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Excellent video quality; impressive tech specs; good build; reasonable price

**AGAINST** Number of features can be overwhelming; remote takes getting used to

**VERDICT** A multimedia beast and a must-buy if you want to record to Blu-ray or DVD disc

## Also consider

**Humax DTR-T2000-£200 ★★★★★**

Doesn't do nearly as much as the Panasonic, but it does have Youview and a 500GB hard drive.



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**Yamaha YSP-2500 | Soundbar | £800**

# Yamaha raises the 'bar to new heights

**Yamaha knows** a thing or two about surround sound. Its YSP range of soundbars has impressed us for years, being one of the few one-box solutions that comes close to giving a genuine 5.1 surround-sound experience. Its impressive sound-projection technology makes a return in the new YSP-2500 – a brilliantly designed soundbar, with wireless subwoofer, that's yours for £800.

The YSP-2500 takes over from 2012's Award-winning YSP-2200, and remains one of the best solutions for those who don't want the clutter of a traditional 5.1 speaker package and AV receiver.

### Premium look and feel

It's a sleek, slim bar, and the impeccable build and finish quality is worth every penny of its £800 asking price. Its array of 16 speakers is hidden under a grille, each driver powered by 2W of amplification. The display is bright and legible.

The wireless subwoofer is discreet and can be tucked away in a corner, but the soundbar itself needs to be placed directly ahead of or beneath your TV for the best results. Make sure there aren't any obstructions around the 'bar, too: any obstacles will affect its sound projection capabilities and spoil the surround effect.

The bar is low enough to be placed in front of most TVs without obstructing the screen. But in case it blocks the TV's remote sensor, don't panic – you can always use the YSP-2500's remote repeater.

### Delay, bounce and reflect

Yamaha's soundbar success lies in the way it uses delay control to direct sound-beams so that they bounce off the walls and reflect sound around the room, thus creating a virtual 5.1 surround field.

Its IntelliBeam function further optimises the sound to match your specific room, although you can manually adjust the level, distance, angle and more of each channel to your heart's content.

**The film's effects are placed with surprising accuracy, with footsteps, bullets and dialogue easy to track as they move around the screen**

### In detail

#### 1 Height adjustment

The Yamaha's feet are height adjustable so that you can raise or lower it to maximise sound integration with your screen.

#### 2 HDMI output

Three HDMI inputs is generous, but the HDMI output means you can view the Yamaha's detailed menus on your screen.

#### 3 Full support

The HDMI inputs support 3D, Dolby TrueHD, DTS-HD MA and 4K, so you can take full advantage of Blu-ray soundtracks.



Play *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*, and it's apparent why Yamaha has long been at the forefront of soundbar technology. The soundfield is expansive, open and really does emulate a 5.1 surround system as well as any soundbar can.

There's an impressive amount of apparent height as well (which makes giving the 'bar some space all the more important), especially when Falcon swoops over a skyscraper. The film's sound effects are placed with surprising accuracy – bullets, footsteps and dialogue are easy to track as they move around the screen. It's exciting, and fun to listen to. There's detail, power and punch in each effect.

It's not too shabby with music, either. Metallica's *S&M* concert DVD is enjoyably atmospheric and gets us rocking, although we'd switch to the YSP-2500's 'stereo' mode for tighter, more musical rhythms. The same goes for songs streamed over Bluetooth: the Yamaha is capable of solid vocals and melodic tunes, but it doesn't pretend to replace a dedicated hi-fi system.

There are plenty of tweaks tucked into the YSP-2500, each offering a different way to tweak or jazz up the sound quality. You get a choice of 'Beam' or 'Playback' modes, which adjust the speaker configuration to suit your source, while Yamaha's Cinema DSP modes have a fun selection of sound-effects to play around with.

### Neat handset

We have to applaud Yamaha for its well-designed remote handset and control app too. The remote has a premium feel, is just the right size and weight, and has logically placed buttons that are instinctive to use. All other manufacturers, take note.

And the Yamaha YSP-2500 has a generous spread of connections. There are three HDMI inputs, all of which support 3D, Dolby TrueHD and DTS-HD Master Audio, as well as being compatible with 4K/60p images. There's also an HDMI output. There are two optical and one coaxial inputs, along with a pair of RCA sockets and a 3.5mm headphone jack.

The YSP-2500's expansive soundfield, punch and scale are impressive, and it's the most appealing solution for those that want cinema-style sound without going the full hog with a 5.1 system.

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Exciting, expansive surround sound; good scale; plenty of punch; great build and design

**AGAINST** Needs sympathetic placement and room acoustics to get a convincing effect

**VERDICT** Yamaha's done it again – a superbly talented soundbar delivering captivating sound

### Needs to beat Focal Dimension £890 ★★★★★

We love the Focal's refinement and bass weight, but the Yamaha delivers better sound



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## SILVER SERIES

Pioneer SC-LX58 | AV receiver | £1400

# Reigning champion gets even better

Another year, another round of AV receivers, and like clockwork Pioneer has come up with the SC-LX58. It follows last year's SC-LX57, which was very successful.

The LX57 won our 2013 Award for £700-£1500 surround amps and is the benchmark against which we judge all similarly priced rivals. So is this heir apparent (£200 more expensive) a worthy successor, or merely a pretender?

We're going to go with 'worthy successor'. Pioneer has pulled out all the stops, building on everything we loved about the LX57. The LX58 is packed with features, and the sound is better than ever.

## Captain courageous

Our test disc is *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* on Blu-ray. It's a veritable assault-course, full of shattered glass, crunching

It's clear the SC-LX58 has plenty of power under the hood. We're very impressed with the scale of the soundstage, which is tall and wide enough to fill our largest testing room. We enjoyed Pioneer's weighty sound previously, but this time it feels more muscular. Gunshots command attention - they're punchy and authoritative.

It's not all about the muscle, of course. Despite being a powerhouse, the Pioneer is capable of musical nuance. We switch to a Blu-ray of Michael Jackson's *This Is It* and the amp succeeds in highlighting the subtleties of the evolving key changes of a practice session. The Pioneer also demonstrates a nicely balanced presentation, with a lively sense of rhythm. The bit where MJ finally gets round to doing *Thriller* is, frankly, thrilling.



The design of the SC-LX58 will not turn heads, but it is solid and well made

**Despite being a powerhouse, the SC-LX58 is capable of nuance too. We switch to a Blu-ray of Michael Jackson's *This Is It* and it highlights the evolving key changes of a practice session**

metal and armour-piercing bullets, topped with a caffeinated score. This DTS-HD Master Audio 7.1 soundtrack is a workout for any system, but the Pioneer SC-LX58 breezes through it. It delivers a thoroughly immersive sound, with surround effects steered throughout the room with agility and precision.

We've always been impressed with Pioneer's powers of resolution, and the detail definition here is exquisite. Everything that pings off Captain America's shield is clearly identified, and when he throws it at somebody's face there's weight. That detail extends throughout the frequency range. The low-end rumble of our hero's motorbike is properly expressed. Explosions are surrounded by reverberations and it's rare to find bass so deep and articulate. At the top end, it's nicely rounded. We had no complaints about last year's SC-LX57 treble performance, but now it seems to lack refinement next to the LX58.

There are plenty of surround modes with the SC-LX58 and it's worth playing with these to suit your taste and listening environment. But we prefer keeping it in Pure Direct mode for music, which yields the most convincing results.

But how about the rest? Take a glance at the exterior and the LX58 looks virtually identical to its predecessor.

## Heavy metal is the order

The design isn't going to turn heads. It's a heavy black or silver box, and built like a tank - mostly metal, with a flap at the front. It's well made: buttons are nice, the dials satisfying. And underneath, the LX58 is a 9.2-channel AV receiver with Class D amplification. It packs a powerful 190W-per-channel into 6ohms (claimed), and has an extensive list of connections.

There are eight HDMI 2.0 inputs and three outputs; 3D playback is supported, as is 4K 60p pass-through and upscaling. There is also an impressive array of

analogue connections, including a pair of dedicated subwoofer outputs featuring independent calibration.

## Well-connected and compatible

Digital connections include coaxial and optical inputs (two each). There are also two USB ports - one for powering products, the other for USB drives and Apple devices.

As for networking, there's an ethernet socket for wired internet, and there's a wireless LAN adapter in the box. Finally, the SC-LX58 has built-in aptX Bluetooth (and Apple owners will be pleased to find AirPlay compatibility, which can stream iTunes libraries).

You also have use of internet radio with vTuner, plus Spotify Connect and HTC Connect. DLNA means the amp can play content from compatible network devices.

Over a network or via USB, the amp can handle quite a few formats: AIFF, Apple Lossless, WAV, FLAC, MP3, WMA, AAC and DSD. It's also happy with high-res audio

## System builder Total build £7550

### Projector

**Sony VPL-HW55ES ★★★★★ £2800**

Has subtle and punchy picture quality with deep black levels and smooth motion. Engrossing.



### Blu-ray player

**Panasonic DMP-BDT700 ★★★★★ £500**

If you're looking for a premium Blu-ray player to match your impressive home cinema system, then this is the one.



### Stereo package

**KEF R100 5.1 ★★★★★ £2850**

With powerful dynamics, incredible detail and gorgeous looks, this KEF R100 5.1 is a deeply impressive speaker package.







### Evolution not revolution

The SC-LX58 might look almost identical to the LX57, but the remote control has been updated and is nice to use. There is also the useful iControlAV app to download too.

## In detail

### 1 Plenty of ports to dock in

There are 11 HDMI ports here, and eight of those are inputs. That's one less than the outgoing SC-LX57 had, but it's unlikely you'll be short. They're HDMI 2.0, too, with 4K/60p passthrough.

### 2 A stable wire

This amp doesn't have built-in wi-fi, but does come with a wireless LAN adapter in the box. That USB port can be used for power. We'd recommend sticking with a wired connection, which is more stable and reliable.



files (up to 24-bit/192kHz) as long as they are in AIFF, WAV or FLAC.

Last, but not least, is support for Dolby Atmos surround-sound tech that expands on current 5.1 and 7.1 set-ups. In cinemas that means up to 64 speakers, with some in the ceiling. For the home, Dolby's hardware partners will produce side speakers and speaker-top modules to emulate the sensation of overhead sound.

### Back to the feature

Sadly we've not yet been able to test this - the amp requires a software update,

automatic calibration accurate. Lastly, we should mention the updated remote, which is nicely laid out and not intimidating. We'd also suggest trying the new (and free) iControlAV5 app. Its slick, colourful interface makes operation easier and more intuitive than the standard remote.

To sum up, we love the Pioneer SC-LX58. What's not to like? Pioneer has taken last year's champ and made it even better. Admittedly it's not a massive leap over the SC-LX57, whose owners shouldn't feel the need to upgrade straight away. But if you're making the jump from an entry-level multichannel amp, prepare to be astonished. This is a terrific piece of kit.

expected before the year's end. We can't wait, but for now this is still an impressively equipped beast.

Installation is an easy process. Well, it is once you've plugged everything in. The MCACC Pro (Multi-Channel Acoustic Calibration) makes set-up a breeze. Hook up the bundled microphone and your system will blurt out a series of test tones so the amp to calculate the distance and size of the speakers it's driving.

This takes only a couple of minutes. It's worth going into the settings to fine-tune the adjustments, but we found the

## Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Superb detail; clear, precise sound; good dynamic range; large sense of scale; punchy and weighty; sheer number of features

**AGAINST** Less affordable than previously

**VERDICT** The best we've reviewed just got better. Another success story for Pioneer

## Also consider

**Pioneer SC-LX57**  
**£1200 ★★★★★**



Now beaten by its successor, but you might be able to get a good deal on this.

Dynaudio Xeo 4 | Wireless speakers | £1775

# Xeo sends out the right signal

When it comes to wireless speakers, sound quality is often traded off for convenience. Dynaudio is one of the few manufacturers to buck that trend, achieving great wireless sound in 2012 when it introduced its wireless hi-fi speaker range, Xeo.

Now that Xeo's successor, the solidly built Xeo 4 (also available in black), looks to take the range to new heights.

## Wide-ranging improvements

This latest model, which is joined in the range by the Xeo 6 floorstanders, brings upgraded amplification, improved digital signal processing, the all-important high-res audio support (up to 24-bit/96kHz) and a new EQ setting for speaker position. Multi-band technology also aims to deliver a more stable connection too.

So how do they work? The Xeo 4 active speakers have built-in amplifiers - one driving the tweeter and another the mid/bass driver. The supplied Xeo Hub wireless transmitter connects directly to the source and sends a wireless signal to the speakers to achieve playback. All you need to build a complete system is a pair of Xeo speakers and a source. That's the beauty of it.

The Xeo 4s have plenty more in their arsenal than just convenience and versatility, though. Like their predecessors, they sound fantastic. Effortlessly musical, these are hugely revealing and rhythmically adept speakers.

## Network access in no time

We hook the transmitter up to our Naim network player, and are up and running in seconds thanks to the speakers' automatic signal-detection. Jump straight in with a 24-bit/96kHz WAV file of Paul Simon's *Dazzling Blue* and the medley of instruments is delivered with precision and insight, each well imaged across a spacious soundstage. The rhythmic pattering of talking drums is spot-on, and well sustained as Simon's vocals step in.

Tonal balance holds the middle ground nicely, and there's no shortage of punch to make upbeat tracks like Drake's *Take Care* exciting. The song's thumping bassline has attack and tautness, while pounding piano attack has ample force behind it.



**Room to expand**  
 Splash out on a few pairs of Xeo 4s and you have a multi-room marvel. Whether in one room or several, multiple pairs can play from the same source or work in zones.

The City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra's *The Fellowship* from *The Lord Of The Rings* OST brings our test to a sweet end, only confirming the speakers' stunning detail and dynamics.

It may be a wireless set-up but, as usual, wires aren't out of the equation. Both speakers require external power (and thus two power-points within range). Source and Xeo Hub also require a wired connection.

The odd-looking attachment atop each cabinet has a basic dot-light display and tiny buttons to control power and volume. Ultimately, we'd like better integration.

This is a versatile system - almost any source can be hooked up to it, with as many as four able to connect at once. It has optical, coaxial and USB inputs, all of which support high-res audio files up to 24-bit/96kHz, plus stereo RCA and 3.5mm inputs.

The supplied remote control is slim and nice to use - it's surprisingly uncluttered, with a thoughtful button arrangement.

It's safe to say that Dynaudio's Xeo range continues to wow with this next-gen model. These speakers certainly aren't cheap, but they offer hassle-free set-up plus insightful and musical sound from almost any source.

## Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Revealing; tonally balanced delivery; upgrades available; high-res audio support; multi-room capability

**AGAINST** Display could be better integrated

**VERDICT** The Xeo 4s serve up great-quality, convenient, versatile wireless sound



The passport-sized (though taller) Xeo Hub can sit up to 50m from the speakers

## Also consider

**KEF LS50 speakers (£800) and Naim Nait 5si amp (£925): £1725**

★★★★★

You won't get the wireless convenience, but this combo has terrific insight and energy

## System builder Total build £3060

### Speaker stands

**Q Acoustics Concept 20**  
 ★★★★★ £200

Not only will they make the most of the Xeo 4's detail and rhythmic aptitude, their black or white glossy finish looks great.



### CD player

**Naim CD5si** ★★★★★ £995

This musical, dynamic player - a 2013 Product of the Year - will complement the Xeo 4's presentation nicely.



### Bluetooth DAC

**Arcam miniBlink** ★★★★★ £90

Plug this tiny device into the Xeo Hub and music from a tablet or smartphone can be streamed to the speakers over Bluetooth.



# QED Reference Optical Quartz

## Cables Matter No.8



### GLASSCORE TECHNOLOGY™

QED's new Glasscore™ technology uses techniques more usually found in transatlantic data transmission applications. Instead of the large single plastic fibre found in a typical optical cable, it employs 210 individual glass optical fibres (GOF), each thinner than a human hair. Because the fibres are so small, the different paths taken by the light rays are similar in length, virtually eliminating the timing error and introducing less distortion and jitter. This has the effect of increasing the bandwidth and accuracy of the data transmission.

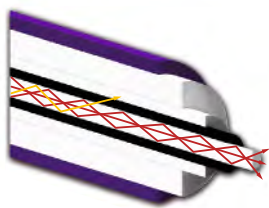
### ULTRA LOW JITTER / ULTRA LOW LOSS



QED have calculated that jitter (distortions caused by timing differences between the different light paths) in conventional optical cables could typically reach up to 145ps. In Reference Optical Quartz, these timing errors are virtually eliminated, introducing less distortion, jitter and ultra low loss (<0.03 dB/m).

### 12MHz BANDWIDTH

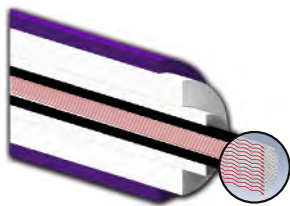
This vastly exceeds the demands for high definition multi-channel HD digital audio and 24/192 files. In contrast to conventional optical cables, the bandwidth is completely unaffected by bending the cable. Reference Optical Quartz gives over double the bandwidth of single acrylic glass fibres, which will reach only 5MHz to 6MHz with ten times the attenuation.



### CONVENTIONAL OPTICAL CABLE

A single acrylic fibre allows the light to take many different length paths along it.

Timing differences are introduced – accounting for typically up to 145ps of jitter.



### QED REFERENCE OPTICAL QUARTZ

210 Glasscore™ fibres, each thinner than a human hair, guide the light along much tighter paths, making the different modes much more uniform and displaying almost immeasurably low levels of jitter.

### The revolutionary QED Reference Optical Quartz digital audio interconnect made with real glass.

The Reference Optical Quartz cable is the first of its kind, consisting 210 separate boro-silicate glass fibres. When connecting DACs, TVs, CD players and Blu-Ray players to amplifiers or receivers, this QED Glasscore™ Technology enables double the bandwidth and only 1/10th of the attenuation of traditional acrylic fibres.

The result is without doubt one of the most innovative digital cable designs in QED's 40 year history.

To find out more about why cables matter, please visit our website.



The Sound of Science

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

Roberts Stream 93i | Internet radio and music player | £150

# Classic brand, super sound

The Stream 93i also comes with the usual alarm and sleep timer functions

We're impressed with the Roberts Stream 93i from the moment we open the box.

This unit is beautifully put together - a well-engineered product, with substantial weight to back up its desk/counter-top size. It's not the prettiest black box we've ever clapped eyes on, perhaps, but its face, with its clear screen and nicely weighted, tactile buttons, is certainly ready for business.

## Much more than a mere radio

The Stream 93i is, basically, an FM/DAB/internet radio that will also act as a music player, accessing your digital music over a local area network (LAN). You can do this via the wired ethernet socket or the built-in wi-fi. A USB port allows you to play music direct from a memory stick if you don't have LAN capabilities. The usual old-school socketry, in the form of a headphone socket and an auxiliary input, is at the rear.

And, as a final flourish, the 93i also has Spotify Connect built in, so you can use your smartphone or tablet (via wi-fi) to remotely control your Spotify music. That's a pretty comprehensive list of features for your £150, and most certainly decent value for money.

Things really couldn't be much easier during set up - we can't imagine many people struggling. On plugging it into the mains and pushing the power button, a set-up wizard gets to work and pretty much holds your hand through the whole process of accessing your network, scanning the airwaves for signals, and generally getting you up and running with little fuss beyond just the odd twirl of a knob and a selective push or two.

If you do run into difficulties, there's a chunky manual to get you back on track.

## Sound lives up to the promise

Things go so well until now for the Stream 93i a stumble seems almost inevitable. But as soon as we start listening to the DAB radio, our worries fade. This radio sounds really good.

Roberts has managed to combine a clear midrange (important for every type of listening, but imperative for voice radio) with a bright - not sharp - treble and surprisingly powerful bass.

It's the bass that impresses most, especially when comparing the 93i with rivals. Precise low notes go properly deep for a relatively small box - the 'subwoofer' at the back of the unit is clearly not just for show. Normally when a small-ish unit has noticeably strong bass the other parts of the frequency range can suffer, to the detriment of the overall experience. With the 93i, however, everything blends to make a really enjoyable listen.



This Roberts is a really fine machine. It covers all bases for radio and adds useful features. And it sounds excellent

We start with internet radio. If you haven't yet had a dabble, we urge you to take the plunge. Many a happy hour can be spent roaming the dial and picking up stations from, literally, all over the world.

With myriad stations available, it's probably best to take advantage of the Roberts' presets. There are 40 available, so you'll be able to access your most listened-to stations quite quickly. Five are directly available via the buttons on the face; those five and the other 35 are also available via a menu accessed by the select control on the right - it's a twist and push system we find intuitive to use. The same system works for both FM and DAB, so you have 120 presets in total.

We find radio reception exemplary, though we prefer the internet for its options - podcasts, catchup and so on.



It might look like a credit-card style remote, but this is a solid-feeling handset

The music player uses UPnP, and it finds our Naim UnitiServe almost before we'd started looking for it. It won't play high-res files, but can handle MP3, WMA, AAC, FLAC and WAV. The sound matches the tuners' impressive standards.

Spotify Connect is a winner too. With your mobile device on the same network as the 93i, your Spotify playlists are accessible via the radio. The sound quality, however, while perfectly acceptable, isn't up to the radio performance.

This Roberts is a really fine machine. It covers all bases for radio and adds useful features in the form of the music player and Spotify Connect. Most important of all, it sounds excellent for a unit of this size, with a fast, well-rounded bass performance managing to enhance the rest of the frequency range rather than overpower it.



## Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Fine sound; simple to use; excellent versatility; Spotify Connect

**AGAINST** Some might want a Bluetooth connection - that apart, nothing

**VERDICT** A superb-sounding radio/music player with some genuinely useful extras

## Needs to beat

**Pure Evoke F4**  
£170 ★★★★★

Our Product of the Year for 2013 is a fine all-rounder, and it does have Bluetooth - but it offers Pure Connect rather than Spotify



# The Special One

Tannoy Revolution DC6T SE



Enhanced Dual Concentric™ drive unit with additional magnet providing improved sensitivity, crisper response, wider dynamic range and even faster transient attack than the standard DC6T. Now that really is special!

Special Edition graphic clearly indicating that the DC6T SE owner is a person of demanding and exclusive taste.

Improved bass driver with a twin-magnet motor system, providing exceptional low frequency control and accuracy.

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A very special and substantial plinth to improve stability, stereo focus and sound-staging.

Top-adjustable spikes and large locking wheel making set up especially easy.

btw ...the speaker is priced at £999 making it a bit of a special bargain.

Tannoy logo, indicating built by Tannoy and incorporating 85 years of loudspeaker engineering expertise. So clearly very special indeed.

Recognition for special performance -2012 & 2013 What Hi-Fi Award for Best floorstanding speaker.

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Oct. 2014

## GRADO

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

**Rega Elex-R | Stereo amplifier | £900**

# Elex-R goes straight to the heart

**For the record**

It's the fashion for integrated amplifiers to eschew a phono stage, but not this Rega. It's a talented circuit that shines with good turntables.



If you're on the lookout for an upmarket stereo amplifier you certainly shouldn't ignore Rega's Elex-R. It's good enough to shake up a market that's long been dominated by the likes of Cyrus, Roksan and Naim.

Think of this integrated as a more muscular Brio-R (£480) and you'll be pretty close to the mark. By using the much-admired Brio-R as a base and adding circuit elements from the unquestionably talented Elicit-R (£1600) into the mix, Rega has created one of the most talented sub-£1000 amplifiers we've heard.

**Of sound character**

Anyone familiar with Rega's current amplifier range will find the Elex-R's sonic character entirely familiar. It delivers a fast, agile sound that's as rhythmically surefooted as we've heard at this level. Play a piece of music like alt-J's *Breezblocks* and the Rega is right at home. It's happy to deliver that thickly layered bassline with power, and has no trouble rendering dynamic shifts or changes of pace with enthusiasm. There's an addictive sense of liveliness and energy, something most rivals tend to tone down in the search for greater refinement.

Tonally, the Rega edges towards leanness, though if partnered with care (avoiding sources and speakers that err too far towards brightness or harshness) all will be fine. We use a range of speakers from Dali's lively Zensor 3s and B&W's 685s right the way to PMC's mighty Twenty 26s and at no point does the Rega fail to shine.

Of course a power output of 72.5-watts per channel into 8ohms (Rega likes to be

**Switching to Tchaikovsky's *Marché Slave Op.31* shows that the Rega Elex-R can keep track of complex instrumental arrangements, delivering scale and authority when needed**

pretty specific, it seems) isn't enough to make the floor shake in really large rooms, but we think this amplifier is capable of decent levels in most set-ups.

Switching to Tchaikovsky's *Marché Slave Op.31* shows this amplifier can keep track of complex instrumental arrangements and can deliver scale with authority when required. We are pleased with the resolution on offer, and at no time is there a sense the Elex-R is overlooking subtleties for the benefit of the bigger picture. We notice, again, that this amplifier is terrific at communicating the drama of the music. It has us hooked from the first note, right through to the end of the piece. With hi-fi this good it's easy for listening sessions to extend well in to the night.

**Music is math**

Move away from sound and the Rega remains on sure ground (as long as all you want is a traditional stereo amplifier). There are no digital inputs, though we imagine Rega would direct you to its talented DAC for number-crunching duties. Instead you get a good quality MM phono stage, one talented enough to make the most of £1000 turntable packages like, say, Rega's own RP6. It's a relatively quiet circuit, one which keeps all the good sonic points we noted in the line-level stages.

There are four line-level inputs, one tape out and a single preamp output should you

**Build quality is what we expect from Rega: everything feels like it will last for years**

need to add a bit more muscle. That's probably enough for most purist stereo set-ups, though we would have liked a built-in headphone output.

Build quality is as solid as we expect from Rega. Casework is functional rather than luxurious but it's finished neatly. Everything feels like it will last for years. We're disappointed with the remote control though. It lacks the quality we expect at this price, though it works well enough.

The Elex-R is a fine achievement. It's the kind of product that gets straight to the heart of the music. It's up against the likes of Naim's Nait 5si, Cyrus's 6a and Roksan's Kandy K2, but the Rega has enough talent to shine even in such formidable company.

**Rating ★★★★★**

**FOR** Agile, articulate performer that gets to the heart of the music; fine rhythmic ability; good phono stage; solid build and good finish

**AGAINST** Remote handset should be classier

**VERDICT** Builds on the strengths of the excellent Brio-R. A terrifically musical amplifier

**Also consider**

**Naim Nait 5si**  
**£925** ★★★★★☆



Our current favourite amplifier at this price level is a superb performer but has plenty to fear from this new Rega.

**System builder total build £4095****CD player**

**Naim CD5si** ★★★★★ **£995**

Terrific CD player that's as musical as a thousand pounds can buy. The CD5si delivers plenty of dynamics and punch. Subtleties aren't forgotten either.

**Turntable**

**Rega RP6/Exact** ★★★★★ **£1000**

Our favourite £1000 record player has dominated this sector for years now. Few get close to topping its addictive musical delivery.

**Stereo speakers**

**ATC SCM 11** ★★★★★ **£1200**

Another terrific product from ATC. These speakers have the agility and transparency to make the most of the Rega's performance.



Philips Fidelio E5 | Home cinema system | £600

# When three become five

We like the idea of the Philips Fidelio E5. It's a 2.1 stereo set-up that can be transformed into a surround-sound system. How? By detaching the small, wireless speakers from the top of the main fronts and positioning them as rear speakers. The Philips E5 then cleverly switches into surround mode, and voila: you have a 5.1 home cinema system!

Except, of course, it's actually a 4.1 system, with the front speakers creating a virtual centre - a bit like the 'sweet spot' achieved by hi-fi stereo speakers. It's a stylish, fun idea, but does it work?

## Stylish presentation

It's a compact, gorgeous-looking system, the soft, grey cloth around the front speakers giving it a luxurious feel. A single cable connects the two speakers; it's long enough to place them on either side of a 50in TV. The slim subwoofer is similarly styled, with the wooden top capping off the modern look. The small 'rear' speakers break up the uniform look with a metal grille instead of the cloth finish, but they're light and sturdily built. They even have leather handles.

Detached, these speakers can last up to a claimed 10 hours on a single charge. Simply slot them back into place on top of the front speakers (they fit together neatly, if a little loosely) when you need to charge them up.

Unlike a traditional 5.1 system, there's no complicated set-up procedure with the Fidelio E5. It does, though, seem strange that there's no way to tell the Philips's processing exactly where we've placed the speakers, so it can optimise the sound quality according to the room environment.

## Facing the practicalities

While the design suggests positioning is flexible, in reality it's more complex. To keep the rears at ear-height, you'll need stands, and if you don't have enough space on your TV rack for the front speakers, you're looking at yet another pair of stands. Suddenly this system seems less straightforward than we initially thought.

We can't fault the finish on this speaker combination - it will sit pretty in any room



It doesn't want for connections, though. There are two HDMI inputs, a single HDMI output, single optical and coaxial inputs, and a 3.5mm jack for music players. You can also stream music over Bluetooth (aptX codec) and connect smart devices.

So how does it sound? Punchy, detailed, and easy-going - it's the Philips Fidelio sound that we're well acquainted with.

There's sparkle to the glass-shatters and explosions in *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*, without any hint of excess brightness. Punches have impact, dialogue is easy to follow, and there's a definite sense of surround sound. Flying bits of carnage zoom past you, although it's not as accurate or powerful as a dedicated surround sound package, or even a talented soundbar such as the Yamaha YSP-2500.

## Laid-back character

It's a clear sound that's easy to listen to. We like this laid-back character, but it does hold the E5 back from expertly delivering the more visceral scenes in a film. Tauter bass would give a more authoritative performance.

The lack of a dedicated centre channel is keenly felt when viewing dialogue-driven films such as *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. Voices hover in the middle, but it's not as solid and nuanced as it could be.

There's also the fact that the E5 is only capable of decoding Dolby Digital 5.1, DTS Digital surround and Pro Logic. That takes care of standard surround sound, but with no Dolby TrueHD or DTS-HD Master Audio support, you're missing out on the benefits of HD audio from Blu-ray discs.

The Philips Fidelio starts out as a great idea, but the novelty of the detachable speakers wears off when it comes to practical application. They're beautifully made and their laid-back presentation is easy to get along with, but the £600 price tag demands more, and we can think of packages that do a much better job at similar money - such as Tannoy's HTS-101 (£350) with a suitable amplifier.

## Rating ★★☆☆☆

**FOR** Easy-going, likeable sound; decent detail, punch and dynamics; great design and finish

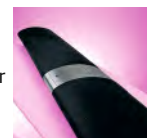
**AGAINST** Needs more attack, precision and subtlety; no centre channel; requires stands

**VERDICT** The E5 is a lovely idea, but there are limitations to its application and it's quite pricey

## Also consider

**Philips HTL9100**  
£600 ★★★★★

Our Award-winning soundbar pulls off the wireless design with a detailed soundstage.



The upper section of the speaker detaches (and reattaches) easily to create a 4.1 system





**Nokia Lumia 930 | Smartphone | From free**

# Nokia is back in the frame

**Nokia is in** transition. After four years of being the champion of Microsoft's Windows Phone operating system, Microsoft recently bought the hardware division of Nokia's business. But with its name emblazoned on its colourful back panel, the Lumia 930 is still very much a Nokia phone, and it could be the best Windows Phone yet.

In a market filled with increasingly slimmer phones, the Lumia 930 feels chunky. At 9.8mm thick it's added over a millimetre in bulk from the Lumia 925, and it's pretty heavy too. But in true Nokia style, the build quality is solid. The back panel is plastic but feels nice next to the metallic trim, which has well-placed buttons for volume, power and camera-shutter. Our sample is a striking lime green, but there's orange, black, or white as well.

The Lumia 930 is capable of wireless charging. It's nothing new, the LG G3 can do

The 5in 1080p OLED screen is a delight, with 441ppi that puts it up there as one of the sharpest screens on the market. This shows in its video performance, which is packed with fine detail that gives a tangible feeling of depth to images. Blacks are as deep and inky as we'd expect from an OLED display and whites punchy, with colours reproduced vividly and with strong contrast. They can verge on looking a little overdone at times, but it doesn't take away from a largely superb viewing experience.

## Music to go

Music performance isn't quite as strong, but it's still perfectly listenable on the go. It doesn't have the rhythmic drive of the Xperia Z2 or the iPhone 5s, but it's still punchy and engaging. It's a well-balanced presentation, with a deep bass, controlled treble and plenty of detail.

**The camera on the Lumia 930 is as good as you expect from a Nokia, with a 20-MP sensor, wide f/2.4 aperture and Carl Zeiss optics. Focus is rapid, while colour and picture are balanced**

the same, but the big difference is Nokia includes a wireless charging pad in the box. It's a nice touch.

The Lumia 930 packs Windows Phone 8.1, the most recent update to the operating system. It brings new features that feel somewhat borrowed from the likes of Android and iOS. The biggest, and handiest, addition is the swipe-down notification pane, which holds toggles for things like wi-fi and Bluetooth, plus details on missed calls, messages and emails. There's also a more customisable homescreen.

It looks as good as any Windows Phone, with live tiles constantly changing with information updates. But its biggest problem still remains its app selection.

## Play catch-up

Microsoft has managed to play catch-up to some degree and now most of the main apps you'd want - BBC iPlayer, Spotify and Netflix - are available, though some of them are lesser versions of those you can get on Android and iOS. BBC iPlayer doesn't allow downloads, for example, and Spotify isn't as functional as elsewhere.

Games suffer too, and if you're a *Candy Crush Saga* fan you'll have to go cold turkey if you want to go Windows Phone, not to mention deal with older versions of games that have been out on iOS and Android for months. That aside, the Lumia 930 is a lovely phone to use, and dips in and out of apps with all the speed you need.

Our biggest problem with the Lumia 930 is file compatibility - we are unable to load our collection of CD rips in WAV or FLAC.

The camera on the Lumia 930 is as good as you'd expect from a Nokia device, with a 20-MP sensor, wide f/2.4 aperture and Carl Zeiss optics. Focus is rapid, pictures are crisp and colours well balanced, and with a good handle on contrast for the most part. There's no HDR mode in the default camera app though, which can make snaps in direct sunlight a little washed out.

In low light we notice a bit of grain starting to creep in, but the dual flash can help with that, and there are plenty of manual options for white balance, shutter speed, ISO and exposure compensation if you want to fiddle around with the settings. Video is captured in 1080p with a range of shutter speeds, with four microphones



## USE IT WITH

### Sony MDR-EX650

Superb budget buds that will give your music-on-the-go an instant lift.



Our review sample is a bright green, while the alternatives are black, white, and orange

built in to help improve sound, while there is excellent image stabilisation too.

The Lumia 930 is easily the best Windows Phone we've seen, with a gorgeous screen, great camera and video performance that easily competes with the best Android phones out there.

However, we still want more from the apps side of things, and its file compatibility is restricted. That's still too much for us to consider it for the full five stars.

## Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Good build; great screen; strong video performance; wireless charging; great camera

**AGAINST** A little chunky; apps still need work; restricted file compatibility

**VERDICT** The best Windows Phone we've seen to date, but not quite the full monty

## Also consider

### LG G3 From free ★★★★★

One of our favourite phones of this year. Offers great design, 2K screen and high-res music support.





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October 2014

For more information on the new RUBICON series: [www.dali-rubicon.com](http://www.dali-rubicon.com)

**Denon Envaya DSB200 | Wireless speaker | £170**

# A weighty business

Solid construction, good ease of use and attractive design (it's also available in black)

**Thin treble and non-existent bass.** These are two criticisms that often come into play when assessing the merits of portable Bluetooth speakers. Well, the good news is that the Denon Envaya doesn't suffer from either of these problems.

In fact, you spend the first few minutes of life with the Envaya reeling from just how much bass it produces. Play Rudimental's *Waiting All Night* and bassheads will be pleased with the way the speaker powers through the song, bringing a solid sense of weight and depth to the pounding bassline. There's a good sense of scale and authority. The bad news is that these low frequencies have a tendency to sound overblown and overbearing. As well as becoming distracting over time, the amount of bass produced by the Denon upsets the balance of the speaker and robs the music of some of its clarity.

## In detail



**Clear controls** The aux selector, Bluetooth initiator, NFC sensor and volume buttons sit above an 'on' light around the Denon logo

On the plus side, highs sound anything but bright. They're actually smooth and rounded, which helps them gloss over the jagged edges of poorer-quality recordings. Even so, there's still enough life and vibrancy in the percussion and piano during Tom Odell's *Sirens* to spark your interest. But even here, the edges of bass notes tend to butt in when they're not needed. The more you listen, the more you think the Denon could show a little more care with delicate, demanding music.

It's a shame, because the Denon's an attractive design and a nice thing to use. Solidly built, the Envaya is available in black or white. The metal grille unclips, and you can switch the fabric cover beneath for one of four different colours that come with the speaker. We think charging £20 for an optional carry case is a little steep, though.

### Designed for (an easy) life

The Envaya isn't short of other useful design quirks and features. Squeeze the rear edge of the speaker and a kick-stand pops out. It's neatly integrated and the angle is such that it helps keep the speaker firmly planted.

A line-up of large, chunky buttons on top gives you all the basic controls - hold down the button with the Bluetooth symbol to start the pairing process or tap an NFC-enabled device onto the NFC logo on top of the speaker to speed things up. The Denon is aptX compatible too, so you can

### USE IT WITH

#### HTC One (M8)

The HTC's NFC connectivity means a quick tap on top of the Denon and you're ready to stream music using aptX Bluetooth.



take advantage of higher-quality Bluetooth streams from compatible smartphones such as the HTC One M8 and Samsung Galaxy S5.

### Charge in, charge out

A full charge takes around two and a half hours (there's a small indicator on top of the speaker) and this is good for around 10 hours of playback. If your smartphone's running low on juice you can use the USB socket on the side of the speaker to draw on the internal battery and help top it up.

Out of the box, the Denon really makes its mark: this is one of the most powerful-sounding portable speakers we've heard at the money. But we'd sacrifice some of that bass weight for a more balanced delivery.

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Meaty, powerful sound for a portable speaker; bass weight; rounded highs

**AGAINST** Overwhelming bass upsets the balance and clarity; carry case costs £20 extra

**VERDICT** A hefty, weighty sound, but that overcooked bass spoils the show

### Also consider UE Boom £160

★★★★★

This smart, cylindrical, wireless speaker doesn't have the weight and authority of the Denon but does boast precision and a fine sense of rhythm.





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mu-so

Go Deeper





Harman Kardon has gone wireless with its Solo headphones - launched at IFA 2014

## Future tech

# IFA 2014: All the news from Berlin

We report on the latest trends from Europe's biggest electronics show...



**B**erlin has once again been the European stage on which some of the world's leading hi-fi and home cinema brands have revealed their latest products and the trends out to grab our attention this autumn.

### The resolution will be televised

We start with the TV, which we saw last month was enjoying a renaissance amid a rise in online video streaming - and one of the driving forces is Ultra HD 4K.

While 4K TV may be going strong, the same cannot be said for plasma. It seems that now Korean giant LG is poised to join its rivals and call time on the technology.

And LG was behind one of the showstopping sets of IFA, partnering with Swarovski to unveil its curved 4K OLED TV complete with 460 crystals - and a 98in Ultra HD 8K set as well.

Not to be outdone by the firm it locked horns with at CES, Samsung introduced its bendable 105in curved

TV to wow visitors. And that's not to leave out the 4K TV ranges Toshiba, Panasonic, Loewe and Philips also announced, not to mention talk of Sony's 4K content.

### Hi-fi at home or on the go

Wireless audio has been firmly among the main AV trends this year, with new streaming solutions from a host of companies at IFA 2014. From Harman Kardon and Monster's first cracks at the multi-room market, through the Flexson digital VinylPlay turntable that can be used in tandem with Sonos, to the WiSound technology aiming to improve wireless-speaker sound quality, the variety of solutions on show looks really impressive.

But traditional hi-fi showed it's not about to be consigned to the cloud - and there's no finer example than the revival of the Technics brand, which showed some tasty new high-end kit.

Not only was there high-end product, but high-res too. Onkyo unveiled its first 24-bit/192kHz streaming CD player and Sony also reaffirmed its commitment to high-res audio with new products like the PHA-3AC headphone amplifier.



IFA saw Flexson target the "streaming generation" with the new "Sonos-ready" VinylPlay turntable

### The latest headphones...

In addition to the PHA-3AC, Sony had its new high-res headphones to announce - one of many new headphones to catch our eye, all of which look to produce even better sound at home or on the go.

Sennheiser added a new pair of buds, complete with an all-new acoustic design, to its Momentum in-ear range. It also launched its on-ear Urbanite and over-ear Urbanite XL models.

But Sennheiser wasn't alone in being busy on the headphones front. Philips has revamped its range with the Fidelio NC1s, X2s and M2BT Bluetooth cans - the latter looking to repeat the success of the 2013 Award-winning MIBTs

### Home cinema

The first home cinema kit ready to replay Dolby Atmos sound is already here, and Onkyo has confirmed its Atmos software will be enabled on 29th



Yamaha was one of the busiest AV firms at IFA 2014, this new AS-501 stereo amp among 15+ launches



## The trusty TV is enjoying a renaissance despite the rise of online video streaming services - and one of the driving forces behind this is Ultra High-Definition 4K

September via a firmware update. That update will also bring Spotify Connect to selected 2014 receivers, controllers and more besides.

Meanwhile, Yamaha has been hard at work to bring us an extensive list of new kit to whet the appetite; a trio of stereo amplifiers among 15 new products.

Elsewhere, JBL made its first move into soundbases with the Cinema Base and Samsung reimaged the soundbar with the curved HW-H7500/H7501.

### Smartphones and tablets

It has been a mere five months since the Xperia Z2 was launched, but Sony hasn't rested on its laurels. The Xperia Z3 has made its debut and pledges to offer the

"best of Sony" in a smartphone. With it, the Z3 Compact and Z3 Compact Tablet offering high-res audio and PS4 Remote Play, it doesn't seem too bold a claim.

Another highlight was the Unpacked 2 event held by Samsung, at which the Galaxy Note 4 and Galaxy Note Edge were revealed - its latest rivals to Apple's iPhone. And there were also new Lumia devices from Microsoft - its first since it bought Nokia, and aimed at the mid- to high-end market

If the sheer wealth of new products to break cover at IFA 2014 has whetted your AV appetite, check out [whathifi.com](http://whathifi.com) for hands-on reviews of the hottest debutants, as well as details on the other kit to catch our eye in Berlin.

### \* Sonos launches the Boost

If your Sonos network is in need of a helping hand, the Boost - a "super-charged" Bridge - can help improve wireless connectivity <http://whfcm/SonosBoost>



## Analysis

# IFA 2014 reveals an industry in good health



Content Editor Pete Hayman

**W**ireless audio and Ultra HD 4K TV - arguably the two most prominent buzz-terms of 2014. And likely to be two of the most important trends going forward into 2015 too. It's probably no surprise IFA 2014 has tapped into that particular zeitgeist when it comes to newly unveiled products.

### The 4K bandwagon rolls on...

We've often found ourselves contemplating just how significant Ultra HD 4K will be to the future of TV. But if IFA is our guide, the confidence the industry has in 4K is as strong as it has ever been. Manufacturers aplenty - from Sharp to Panasonic, Loewe to Samsung and LG - all introduced their latest UHD wares at the show.

With an increase in choice, manufacturers will surely get competitive on the pricing front and that means a lower outlay on your part. Native content might still be lagging behind a touch, but even in that arena we are seeing greater movement. And there seems to be so much confidence in 4K that LG is looking further ahead, judging by the 8K - yes, 8K - set it also had in Berlin.

### Multi-room mania

While there were plenty of new wireless speakers to, well, speak of at IFA, perhaps more significant is that LG, Harman Kardon and Monster have made the move into multi-room music for the first time.

Sonos has long been the dominant player in this area - since 2002, in fact - but this established sector is now expanding in terms of the players and choice available. Now it's about the features that stand the systems apart from their rivals - whether its the option of Bluetooth streaming alongside wi-fi; Harman Kardon's One Touch Follow Me Feature that moves music from one speaker to another as you move around the house; or support for high-resolution audio as with Bluesound and now LG's Music Flow system. The market is offering a raft of new capabilities to consider - a marked change from before when, if you wanted a multi-room system at home, there was probably one option to choose from.



Samsung M3 and JBL Charge 2 wireless speakers unveiled

## TOP 5 New launches

B&W speakers, LG multi-room system, Pioneer mini-system, Sony curved TV

## \* Pro-Ject MaiA

The MaiA is an integrated stereo amplifier with nine inputs including RCA phono, optical and USB Type B. It costs £400. <http://whfcm/MaiAAmp>



## 1 Pioneer micro-systems from £230

Pioneer has unveiled three new hi-fi micro-systems that incorporate a range of features including Bluetooth wireless streaming and network-enabled audio playback. The P2DAB comprises the SX-PO1 stereo receiver and N-PO1 network audio player. The SX-PO1 features FM and DAB+ tuners while the N-PO1 can stream music from PCs, Macs, NAS devices as well as other online services such as Spotify. Go to <http://whfcm/P2DAB> for details. The X-EM22 and X-EM21 CD micro-systems, meanwhile, feature FM radio tuners and a USB port. The X-EM22 also supports Bluetooth wireless streaming. For more information, head to <http://whfcm/PioneerXEM22>



# TOP 5 New launches



## 4 LG Music Flow from £50

The LG Music Flow multi-room system comprises three speakers, a soundbar, sub and a network bridge to connect them all together. Users control the system via a companion app for iOS and Android smartphones. The system fuses mesh network technology and dual-band wi-fi for "uninterrupted, crystal clear HD sound". The HS6 soundbar also features proprietary technology to enhance the surround-sound effect. Want to know more? Go to <http://whfcm/LGMusicFlow>



## 5 B&W CM S2 from £650

B&W has upgraded its CM range by installing a decoupled dome tweeter across the range. The CM10 S2 and CM6 S2 all feature "tweeter-on-top technology", which isolates the tweeter from the rest of the speaker to improve dispersion and resolution. Other changes include new capacitors, anti-resonance dust caps and "acoustically optimised" tweeter grilles. <http://whfcm/BWCMS2>

## 2 Sony Bravia S90 curved 4K TVs £tbc

Sony has followed the curved TV trend by unveiling its own 65in and 75in sets. Both feature 4K UHD resolutions and Sony's 4K X-Reality Pro engine. A 4.2 channel speaker system aims to improve TV sound. <http://whfcm/SonyS90>



## 3 Monitor Audio MA100 £550

Monitor Audio has paired its Airstream A100 amplifier with a pair of MASS 10 speakers to create the MA100 desktop streaming system. The A100 can support high-resolution audio and features stereo RCA and digital optical inputs. <http://whfcm/MA100System>





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32IN TELEVISIONS

# SUPERTEST

## Significant Other

With 32in TVs getting smarter all the time in both design and features, and with some models priced as low as £200, it might well be time to find just the right one for you...

**T**his time last year, a good 32in smart TV for £200 was unheard of. Now we have two in this test from price-competitive TV brands Polaroid and Finlux. Alongside them, five pricier models (ranging up to £460) from Panasonic, Philips, Samsung, Sony and Toshiba battle it out for a place in your living room, on your bedroom dresser or kitchen tabletop.

All have smart portals (with BBC iPlayer, Netflix and YouTube at their heart), digital Freeview HD tuners and wi-fi capability, while some feature fancy interfaces and additional catch-up, music and movie streaming services. One includes a smart remote; one supports 3D; one even has a built-in DVD player.

While features are fast developing, screen resolution seems to have back-pedalled from Full HD (1920 x 1080) to HD Ready (1366 x 768) this year. The lower-res screens dominate this test, with Full HD panels appearing on only the two more expensive models. But when we look at the overall package, which ones prove their worth? Read on to find out...

### What's on test

**Finlux**  
32H8075-T  
£200

**Panasonic**  
TX-32A5500B  
£300

**Philips**  
32PHT4509/12  
£280

**Polaroid**  
3-32-LED-14  
£200

**Samsung**  
UE32H6400  
£460

**Sony**  
KDL-32W706B  
£350

**Toshiba**  
32D3454DB  
£300



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



**Smart features, a decent picture, a slim, attractive design and ample connections all for just £200? Last year, that was a pipe dream**



**Finlux 32H8075-T**  
**£200** ★★★★★☆

**Smart features, a decent picture, a slim, attractive design and ample connections all for just £200? Yes please.** Last year, getting your hands on a smart TV for this giveaway price was merely a pipe dream.

Now Finlux - which made quite a name for itself last year with its bargain TV deals - has slashed £80 off the price of its 32in entry screen. On paper, the spec has suffered for it, the TV losing the Full HD resolution (1920 x 1080) of last year's models for an 'HD Ready' (1366 x 768) substitute. It doesn't wave goodbye to Blu-rays or HD channels though: the screen simply crams (or, technically speaking, downscales) the higher-resolution content into the lower-res panel. How does it do? In short, great.

It would be easy to pick faults with the Finlux's performance against the leading 32in models, but bearing in mind it's around half their price, it does well.

**Convincing colours**

Load mildly futuristic romance *Her* on Blu-ray and, as well as producing a startlingly crisp picture, the Finlux complements the film's aesthetic palette; the set's rich, vibrant hues make the most of the pops of colour that appear against the backdrop of a largely pale-toned New York. You don't get the depth or punch offered by the Sony or Philips, but colours are still convincing.

Contrast is just as striking, too, with blacks inky deep, and whites clean and pure, although reaching that result takes some picture tweaking.

Our only qualm is with the picture's insight. At a cursory glance, detail seems fine, but colours could do with a touch more refinement and subtlety. Motion can trigger flicker, too. Though infrequent, it's noticeable as the camera pans quickly down a tower block.



**Remote handset**

This remote - used across Finlux's 2014 range - measures over half the height of the TV itself! Netflix, YouTube and browser shortcuts are easy to spot though and the layout is easy enough to master.

Swap in *Dirty Harry* on DVD and the Finlux proves a good upscaler. Its well-defined image has precise lines and punchy colours, although background detail is sometimes lost in the shadows. Performance with broadcast TV, shows the same traits. The Finlux's sound is uninspiring, so you might find it pays to spend more for the better-sounding Panasonic TX-32AS500B (opposite).

Featuring three HDMI and two USB inputs, as well as other legacy inputs such as scart, the Finlux isn't stingy on connections. There's a LAN socket, too,

for a wired connection to a home network. To connect wirelessly, plug the supplied dongle into one of the screen's USB inputs. Just as with many of its pricier rivals you can connect a USB hard drive, pause live broadcasts, and record.

**Much appreciated**

We don't take smart features for granted at this price, so are grateful for the commonplace BBC iPlayer, Netflix and YouTube apps, as well as music-streaming service Deezer.

While the Finlux's familiar interface is basic, using it is a breeze. The go-to page for online services is comprehensible, grid-formatted and usefully keeps the TV viewing screen in a preview box above tabs for Facebook and Twitter.

While its shortcomings don't go unnoticed (the absence of a fifth star sees to that) there's no question of the Finlux's cracking value for money. Got a £200 budget? Go for it.

**Rating** ★★★★★☆

**FOR** Price; rich, vibrant colours; strong contrast; crisp picture; decent smarts for the price

**AGAINST** Lack of fine detail and subtlety; sound is on the thin side

**VERDICT** With a decent picture and smarts, this set is - in true Finlux form - cracking value

**Panasonic's TV Remote 2 app enables the use of Swipe & Share, which can beam a phone's pictures, videos and music to the big screen**



## Panasonic TX-32AS500B

**£300** ★★★★★☆

Our last issue witnessed the 42in from Panasonic's entry-ranging AS500B Series receive a respectable four stars, and now the range's baby TV steps up to the plate.

If wall-mounting this TV, bear in mind that the majority of connections - which comprise two HDMI, RGB scart and component/composite inputs, as well as analogue and optical outputs - are on the TV's back panel, with only a single USB input and headphone output on the easily accessible side panel.

You don't get the whole shebang of features found on Panasonic's bigger screens (after all, this model is quite far down the company's 2014 line-up), but its list is nothing to sneeze at.

### Apps aplenty

Connecting to a home network via a wired or wireless connection is an open door to the big three online apps (BBC iPlayer, Netflix, YouTube), as well as a prolific 'app market' where you'll find a host of add-on apps. What's more, Panasonic's TV Remote 2 app (see panel) enables the use of Swipe & Share, which can beam a smartphone's pictures, videos and music to the big screen. The physical remote is easy to get to grips with too.

Last but not least, Remote Sharing allows video memos and text messages to be sent from an Apple or Android smartphone to a compatible Viera TV.

We're big fans of Panasonic's My Home Screen portal. With a highly customizable home screen, moveable apps and everything logically boxed-out, it's both foolproof and fun.

For £300, it's not wholly surprising that resolution falls short of the Full HD figure. Its 1366 x 768 (or, in other words, 'HD ready') panel lies between high- and standard-definition, meaning the set has to downscale or upscale almost



### Panasonic Remote TV 2 app

For a mobile app, it's all there: a touchpad, shortcuts to individual apps, remote-control functions and keyboard. Response time is speedy too, though navigating the numerous pages can be long-winded.

everything it plays. But if it's done well, it shouldn't be an issue.

We test its downscaling ability first with *American Hustle* on Blu-ray and it has our attention from the outset. Its razor-sharp picture is packed with detail and punchy, vibrant colour. Slightly tempering down the exaggerated out-of-the-box colour palette using a THX Optimizer disc and changing colour temperature to 'cool' brings a more natural balance.

Yet even after toying with contrast and brightness, darker shades are often

blacked out; the Sony KDL-32W70B and Samsung UE32H6400 bring out colours more accurately and add a bit more subtlety and naturalness, too.

### The colour purple

As the TV upscales *The Grand Budapest Hotel* DVD, it makes the most of the film's colourful aesthetics - the purple of the lobby boy's coat looks deep and rich. The picture is both sharp and detailed too, and there's not so much of a motion blur as sleds pelt down the snowy hills. The Freeview tuner keeps up its end too.

The Pana's frame may be slim and lightweight, but sound doesn't give that away. In fact, we have few complaints. The Samsung has a richer delivery, but sound is generally weighty and clear.

The Panasonic does a lot - and does it well. It may not produce the most subtle or natural picture on the market, but for a price that doesn't cost the earth it's certainly worth a punt.

### Rating ★★★★★☆

**FOR** Crisp, detailed picture; punchy, vibrant palette; user-friendly interface; smart features

**AGAINST** Rivals are more subtle; dark shades of colour are often overdone

**VERDICT** A multi-talented set for the price, but its picture doesn't quite match the class leaders

Load up *Star Trek Into Darkness* on DVD and it seems that hardly any sharpness has been shed from the quality of the Blu-ray picture



## Philips 32PHT4509/12

£280 ★★★★★

Finally, a 2014 Philips TV that does standard-definition well! The company's Full HD line-up has struggled to win our good word when it comes to upscaling DVD-quality content, but this 32in LED from the 4000 Series bucks the trend.

Does that have something to do with its HD Ready-only panel (its 1366 x 768 resolution being much nearer to standard definition's than Full HD screens are)? Possibly. But while resolution may be lower than on some rivals, the set's wallet-friendly £280 gets you an awful lot when it comes to features and performance.

### Functionality over aesthetics

Design is not much of a talking point, mind. Its light, super-slim build is practical, yet very basic. The remote - in-line with the range - is cheap-looking, has rubbery buttons and a flat body that's not particularly nice to hold. The buttons are well spread out, though.

With essentials such as BBC iPlayer, Netflix, YouTube and Facebook joining Spotify, Blinkbox and more, the Philips certainly isn't shy on apps. Skype is also installed, though you'll need to purchase Philips' TV camera to benefit.

An internet connection is necessary and that's where an Ethernet cable comes in handy - the TV is only 'wi-fi ready' so Philips' USB Wireless Adapter

(£27) is essential to make going online a wire-free affair. The adapter will take up one of the TV's two USB slots, which accompany two HDMI, a scart and component inputs, as well as one digital and headphone output apiece.

The interface isn't flashy and customizable like some, but the screen-wide home menu does the trick.

Menus could be more user-friendly; it's often a long journey to get from A to



### Philips Remote App

With wireless functionality - via a USB adapter (sold separately) - the app can be used for general remote functions and home-network access. It's not as neat as the Sony's, but is handy for checking programmes.

Z. And be warned that the TV picture is completely replaced by the screen-hogging EPG when loaded.

Sci-fi drama *Transcendence* on Blu-ray reveals the TV's downscaler as capable. The sharp, clear picture is instantly watchable and detail is abundant. Properly adjusted, colours are punchy and full-bodied, the futuristic computer's flashy lights appearing accurately intense.

That said, the Philips lacks the subtlety of the best screens. The Sony KDL-32W706B burrows further into the film's picture, taking more care to

uncover the finer details and tonal variations of lab machinery.

Load up *Star Trek Into Darkness* on DVD and it seems only a little less sharp than the high-definition picture. Detail remains sky-high, and colours are true and deep. And as the camera jumps around to keep up with Spock and Khan's fight, the picture remains stable.

### Broadcast quality

The Freeview tuner keeps its end up, too. Flick between the standard and HD BBC Two channels as they air the European Athletics Championships and it's a punchy picture on both. It's not the subtlest, but enough detail shines through to keep you watching.

Apart from its shortage of subtlety and a few gripes with sound (it's a bit on the shrill side), the Philips has a lot going for it. For a mere £280, an insightful, refined picture and selection of smarts aren't qualities to be ignored.

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Sharp picture, bursting with detail; natural, punchy colours; impressive SD and HD scaling

**AGAINST** Design and remote are bland; need to buy a separate dongle for wi-fi; harsh sound

**VERDICT** Philips delivers another good, well priced TV with the accent on picture quality

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**Colours appear strong and punchy, as the reds of the drug cartel's jackets litter the screen. We're fans of the Polaroid's convincing delivery and even tone**



## **Polaroid 3-32-LED-14** **£200** ★★★★★☆

**Polaroid is quickly** becoming hot on our bargain TV brand list. After its dirt-cheap 42in 5-42-LED-14 flew out of a packed test with four stars, the instant-film camera company returns to repeat history with its 32in HD Ready set.

At a friendly £200 (Polaroid TVs are sold exclusively at ASDA supermarkets in the UK), it's easy to match up against the Finlux 32H8075-T (£200), and the similarities don't end with price.

### **Familiar and functional**

The gold-on-black horizontal strip menu we've seen on Finlux sets features here, in addition to a blue single-page portal where you can access the usual online services (BBC iPlayer, Netflix, YouTube), your social media (Facebook and Twitter) accounts; and an 'app market'.

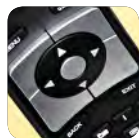
The no-nonsense interface gets the important things right: simplicity and ease of use. Tabs and apps are coherently spaced-out and clearly labelled.

A supplied USB dongle grants the Polaroid wi-fi, though a LAN input allows for a wired connection via an ethernet cable too. Three HDMI, two USB, a scart and PC inputs are also on board, as well as a coaxial output.

It's all very well being able to tick the boxes marked 'features' and 'interface', but picture performance needs to impress. And it does.

Load up the latest Jean-Claude Van Damme action thriller, *Enemies Closer*, on Blu-ray and the picture is crisp and clear as we enter the film's wooded setting. Cabin floorboards are sharply outlined, and details in the panels' varying patterns are laid bare.

Colours appear strong and punchy, too, as the greens of the forest and reds of the drug cartel's jackets litter the screen. Inevitably, hues aren't as deep or



### **Remote control**

The remote is a copy of the Finlux 32H8075-T's tall, chunky design (minus the brand logo, of course). It's on the large side but its layout is clear and the screen responds promptly to its commands.

rich as those produced on the best (and pricier) sets, but we're fans of the Polaroid's convincing delivery and even tone.

Fresh from the box, there's a slight issue with factory settings that cause unwanted glare on faces. Run the telly through a THX Optimiser test - fine-tuning brightness and contrast along the way - and that dies down nicely. As a result, contrast is good. Night-time backgrounds are appropriately pitch black while whites have pop, though nuances in shades can be soft-pedalled.

The Polaroid misses the Finlux's natural-looking picture warmth, so skin can look a little pale at times. We'd keep colour temperature to 'Normal'. Motion isn't an issue, mind: forest flights are two a penny in the film, and the set stays blur-free.

Switch to broadcast programming and the set's Freeview HD tuner livens up daytime TV with bright, vivid colours. There's a slightly overcooked delivery but the picture's punch, sharpness and detail make it a satisfying watch - even with standard-definition programmes. Sound is relatively thin and hard though.

### **Ask yourself, do you feel lucky?**

We still feel lucky to get 32in smart tellyes for just £200, but when they have a decent picture, the value factor really hits home. This Polaroid's sound and design are less inspiring than its picture, but it's certainly worth the boot-space among your weekly groceries.

### **Rating** ★★★★★☆

**FOR** Punchy colours; sharp, clear presentation; smarts for the price; easy-to-use interface

**AGAINST** Pale skin tones; lacklustre design

**VERDICT** Polaroid delivers another tempting package that offer a decent picture and a reasonable smart offering for a giveaway price



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There's no blip when it comes to upscaling. The Samsung does a great job with DVDs and the dip in quality from Blu-ray is barely noticeable



## Samsung UE32H6400

£460 ★★★★★

**Samsung is taking** the TV world by storm this year, one set at a time, and this 32in LED from the 6 Series is the latest screen to carry the torch.

The UE32H6400 has all the assets of its big brother (the UE40H6400): a natural, detailed picture, wealth of features and smooth interface – but in a smaller package. The only problem is price. At £460, it's the most expensive set of this size we've come across. You can pick up a 40in five-star set – Sony's KDL-40W605B, for example – for less. If your budget allows it, however, then this is the best performer of the lot.

### Hats off to HD capability

A generous three USB ports are included along with RGB scart, component and audio inputs, as well as optical and headphone outputs. It's one of the four HDMI inputs, however, we use to plug in our reference Panasonic Blu-ray player and view *Dallas Buyers Club*.

Unlike many (albeit cheaper) rivals at this size, the Samsung boasts a Full HD panel, meaning it doesn't have to downscale high-def content. So it should produce good results – and it does. Sharp and crisp, the folds in Matthew McConaughey's hospital bed pillow and the shading of his cowboy hat are apparent. Depth is good too, and though rich and concentrated, colours remain

natural and lifelike. Skin tones are both realistic and warm, while blacks are solid and whites punchy.

There's no blip when it comes to upscaling, either: the Samsung does a great job with DVDs. The dip in quality from Blu-ray is small in images in *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, while there's no dip in broadcast TV either.

Despite having to upscale more than the 'HD Ready' competition (Panasonic



### Samsung Smart Hub

The Smart Hub portal is where you'll find your apps, games, films and streaming services. 'On TV' allows you to browse genres, while 'S Recommendation' suggests programmes based on your viewing habits.

and Philips, for example) the picture is just as impressive and colours are striking. 3D is understandably rare at this level, so we're surprised to see it in the specs, but it is decent. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1* (on 3D Blu-ray) comes to life and the effect is smooth and stable. It doesn't suffer from the lack of brightness common in 3D.

The Samsung has a surprisingly rich, weighty sound – it sets the benchmark for a TV its size. Wind atop the high hills in *LOTR* has plenty of detail, for example, and the Samsung can go loud.

Netflix, YouTube and a web browser join a full set of catch-up services (BBC iPlayer, ITV Player, 4oD and 5 On Demand), as well as BFI Player, Spotify and Eurosport Player for streaming on a seamless, well thought-out interface.

A smart remote is supplied as a neat addition to the traditional one. The pebble-shaped tool sits comfortably in the hand and impresses with its accurate pointer and voice commands, but we find the standard controller (which can be set up as a universal remote for your other AV components) the better option.

Samsung's signature glossy-black bezel is here, while the company's trademark metal stand is good support; it extends front and back, though, so consider your table top dimensions.

The Samsung has everything, but price could be a sticking point. Yet this 32in is a class leader in picture and sound quality and if your budget suits, then it should be on your shopping list.

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Brims with subtlety; insightful and realistic colours; abundance of features; seamless interface; attractive design

**AGAINST** Price might be too high for some

**VERDICT** A near flawless, albeit pricey, TV that performs with distinction across the board

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*The Monuments Men*  
on Blu-ray it's clear  
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as its pricier siblings.  
The opening images  
are sharp and refined



## Sony KDL-32W706B

£350 ★★★★★

**Sony has found** it hard to secure a five-star verdict for its TVs in 2014; only the 40in KDL-40W605B managed it, and that was recently. Now this 32in looks to follow in its footsteps.

Unlike some of its lower-resolution rivals, this baby screen has a Full HD panel, and every bit of its 1920 x 1080-resolution panel shines.

Five minutes into star-studded war film *The Monuments Men* on Blu-ray it's clear the TV is just as skilled as its bigger, pricier sibling. Sharp, refined edges clearly define the opening images of opulent paintings and grand government buildings, and a rich, punchy colour palette produces solid reds in Nazi flags.

### Natural ingredients

Delivering naturalness is the Sony's real forte. Its even-handed tone accurately conveys the khaki colour of war attire, while skin tones bear realistic warmth. Its stark contrast is worth saluting too: the blackness of army truck tyres is arresting, and the snow-covered woods are Essex-smile white, without glossing over the subtle gradations of shade that define the mud footprints within them.

When it comes to detail, the Sony is all over it. The neat folds in military uniforms are full of intricate shading, and low-light conditions bring little deterioration of clarity.

As you might expect for £110 more, the Samsung UE32H6400 unveils the finer strokes of Bob Balaban's moustache a touch better. Its improvements are small though, and struggle to fully justify the Samsung's much higher price.

The Sony delivers with its standard-definition performance too. Whether it's broadcast channels or a *Die Hard 2* DVD, the picture bears impressive definition and neutral balance.



### Sony SideView app

The SideView app complements basic controls with a well developed EPG, direct shortcuts and a programme-record function. Colourful and easy to use, it's a worthy alternative to the traditional tool.

The Sony's sound is better than the usual flatscreen quality. It doesn't have quite the body or dynamic aptitude of the Samsung, but it's close. The set looks good, too. Its narrow, tapered bezel wears an elegant, sparkly metallic finish, although it's also available in black.

Connections are generous for the price. Consistent with models way up Sony's Full HD line-up, there are four HDMI's - one is an ARC channel - and two USB inputs, plus scart, component and audio phono inputs as well as an optical and headphone output.

The remote is the same ship-shape tool as used across the 2014 range and, though a Smart remote is nowhere to be seen here, Sony's brilliant TVSideView app (see panel) is compatible.

### Land of plenty

There's no shortage of online services on Sony's Entertainment Network (SEN). BBC iPlayer, Netflix, Amazon Instant Video, Demand5 and YouTube are the pick of a very broad bunch.

We're big fans of Sony's One-Flick Entertainment user interface, which we think betters last year's XrossMediaBar design. Its multi-page portal is intuitive and easily personalised.

This Sony is the full works: fine picture, eye-catching design and seamless interface. In absolute terms it might not have the most accomplished 32in picture money can buy - the Samsung sees to that - but a nice price puts it at the top of our wish-list.

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Natural, detailed picture; impressive contrast; punchy colours; attractive, easy-to-use interface; elegant design; detailed sound

**AGAINST** Nothing

**VERDICT** Impressing us across the board, this TV does more than enough to bag five stars

**We load *The Raid 2* on Blu-ray and the picture is crisp. Colours are balanced, albeit not as rich as some rivals**



## Toshiba 32D3454DB

**£300** ★★☆☆☆

**There's more than** one reason this Toshiba LED TV might catch your eye in the 32in crowd: it comes in white (available in black too), it has a built-in DVD player, and it costs £300.

Other features are decent for the price, too, with essential smarts like Netflix, YouTube, BBC iPlayer and a web browser accompanying extra apps like music-streaming service Deezer. Simply connect the telly to your home network over its integrated wi-fi - or directly via ethernet - and you're away.

It's well-equipped for external sources: two HDMI inputs, a scart and PC input, and a coaxial output in a small area on the back panel. USB, component and composite inputs are easily accessible on the unit's side. Underneath, a group of buttons for input, volume and channel prove handy.

### Not so hidden depth

The matte-white plastic bezel (curved at the corners) is eye-catching and a nice finish. It's not the skinniest TV, but the cumbersome, slot-loading DVD player justifies its 9cm depth. Despite its relatively bulky backside (some rivals are just half the depth), it sits securely on the supplied base.

The remote feels and looks a bit cheap, though, and its tall, thin body means you can't reach all the keys with

one grip. With a panel resolution of 1366 x 768, the Toshiba is 'only' HD ready (not Full HD like some of its pricier rivals). And though performance is good, price-matching rivals do better.

We load *The Raid 2* on Blu-ray and the picture is crisp. Colours are balanced, albeit not as rich as some rivals. In comparison with the rival Philips 32PHT4509, the Toshiba can't quite produce the same depth of colour when



### Toshiba's Home Cloud portal

The layout is comprehensive and apps are quick to load (which has not always been the case with Toshiba TVs). The remote is responsive, although there are no app shortcut buttons, which is not ideal.

the film's title splashes up against the red background. The punchiness of the white bold lettering is inferior as well.

The Toshiba struggles with subtlety, too: detail in our martial arts hero's cut, muddied face is marked, though scars are often overdone. Contrast is fair, though, while black depth is admirable and whites are convincing. Even in the breakneck fight scenes, the picture stays composed. Meanwhile, the Toshiba's upscaling of *Top Gear* in standard-def is perfectly watchable, if not the sharpest.

The integrated DVD player (which can

play CDs too) can be found on the right-hand side of the TV along with general playback buttons, though keys at the bottom of the remote are handier.

Play *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi* on DVD and its sharp, reasonably detailed picture is watchable. Colours are a bit overcooked, though. Switching back to our Panasonic DMP-BDT260 DVD player emphasises the Toshiba's weaknesses.

Sound is sufficiently detailed through the TV's twin 6W speakers, but can't disguise its brittle delivery. Dialogue on daytime TV is OK but when things get frantic, it's hard on the ears.

If convenience is key, and you're after a competitively priced one-box solution to save on an extra DVD player or Freeview box taking up space, then this Toshiba is a versatile option. But if you're willing to forgo this, there are better performers out there for the price. Or cheaper (for example, the Philips 32PHT4509). It's your call.

### Rating ★★☆☆☆

**FOR** Sharp, stable picture; attractive design and solid build; built-in DVD player; good price

**AGAINST** Lack of subtlety; detail is second-best to rivals; brittle sound

**VERDICT** A do-it-all TV that's let down by a so-so performance

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# TEST VERDICT

## THE WINNER

**Sony KDL-32W706B**

£350 ★★★★★



**Not for the first time, this contest quickly developed into a two-horse race between pedigree brands. Both runners revealed their fine breeding, but the superior value of the Sony KDL-32W706B secures the win**

**S**ony versus Samsung - that's where we find ourselves (once again) as we whittle our *Supertest* down to the best two. So far this year these two TV giants have mirrored a Harry Potter/Draco Malfoy rivalry, a McEnroe/Borg head-to-head.

A similar scenario defined the battle of the 40-42in screens fought in our last issue. That time, the Sony came out on top with price on its side. As if this test had been cut from the same cloth, the Sony's value clinches it again.

It has everything you need: a deeply rich, detailed picture with a treasure-trove of smarts, refined interface and solid sound. It even looks the part. For £350, we wouldn't think twice.

The only other Full HD set - and coincidentally the only other five-star model in this test - is the Samsung. Though ultimately we find its price a bit steep, it delivers the best picture of the lot, having a smidgen more insight and richness than the Sony, not to mention a jazzy interface, weighty sound and, uniquely, 3D support too. Got £460 lying around? Go on, treat yourself.

Heading to the opposite end of the price spectrum, our budget entries follow up the leading pair with a solid selection of four-star verdicts. Those looking for a cheap second (or even third or fourth) telly are in luck.

### Budget bargains

Confirming that Polaroid is in a groove, the 3-32-LED-14 is another success story for the company, its clear, punchy picture and essential smarts a no-brainer at the price.

Similarly, in fine Finlux fashion, the 32H8075-T gets our performance-per-pound bells ringing with a rich, well-defined presentation and easy-to-use interface. Forgive the thin sound delivery in each case, and both are good buys for a very reasonable £200.

Also nicely priced, the Panasonic and Philips offerings bask in four stars apiece too. Panasonic continues its consistent year with the TX-32AS500B. This screen's vivid hues are a pleasure (as is its user-friendly interface), but a lack of subtlety and accuracy with dark colours keeps it from shining above the rest.

And we're relieved to find the Philips screen competent with both high- and standard-definition content (we haven't been able to say that of all the company's sets this year).

The fact that buyers will need a separate USB adapter to secure a wireless internet connection is a bit stingy on Philips' part, but the telly's startlingly sharp, detailed picture and pleasing price make up for it.

### A built-in player - but not a winner

Finally we get to the Toshiba - the test's only three-star TV. Toshiba has had a tough year, its TVs' performance not quite up to that of the cut-throat competition. The company's bonus built-in DVD player stands it in good stead feature-wise, though a lack of picture subtlety and brittle sound secure its fate.

And there you have it - two great tellies, four good ones and one that doesn't quite cut it. There's plenty of talent here to bless multiple rooms of the house with a different screen, but if you've only got the space and budget for one, the Sony should be your prime pick.





**Finlux 32H8075-T**  
**£200** ★★★★★  
 Screen size 32in • Full HD No •  
 Tuners Freeview HD • Smart TV Yes •  
 HDMI in 3 • USB in 2 • 3D No •  
 Dimensions (hwd) 43 x 73 x 6cm •  
 Weight 7kg

Picture	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★



**Panasonic TX-32A5500B**  
**£300** ★★★★★  
 Screen size 32in • Full HD No •  
 Tuners Freeview HD • Smart TV Yes •  
 HDMI in 2 • USB in 1 • 3D No •  
 Dimensions (hwd) 47 x 73 x 7cm •  
 Weight 5.5kg

Picture	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★



**Philips 32PHT4509/12**  
**£280** ★★★★★  
 Screen size 32in • Full HD No •  
 Tuners Freeview HD • Smart TV Yes •  
 HDMI in 2 • USB in 2 • 3D No •  
 Dimensions (hwd) 42 x 72 x 6cm •  
 Weight 5.6kg

Picture	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★



**Polaroid 3-32-LED-14**  
**£200** ★★★★★  
 Screen size 32in • Full HD No •  
 Tuners Freeview HD • Smart TV Yes •  
 HDMI in 3 • USB in 2 • 3D No •  
 Dimensions (hwd) 44 x 74 x 10cm •  
 Weight 6.5kg

Picture	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★



**Samsung UE32H6400**  
**£460** ★★★★★  
 Screen size 32in • Full HD Yes •  
 Tuners Freeview HD • Smart TV Yes •  
 HDMI in 4 • USB in 3 • 3D Yes •  
 Dimensions (hwd) 43 x 73 x 6cm •  
 Weight 6.5kg

Picture	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★



**Sony KDL-32W706B**  
**£350** ★★★★★  
 Screen size 32in • Full HD Yes •  
 Tuners Freeview HD • Smart TV Yes •  
 HDMI in 4 • USB in 2 • 3D No •  
 Dimensions (hwd) 43 x 73 x 6cm •  
 Weight 8kg

Picture	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★



**Toshiba 32D3454DB**  
**£300** ★★★★★  
 Screen size 32in • Full HD No •  
 Tuners Freeview HD • Smart TV Yes •  
 HDMI in 2 • USB in 1 • 3D No •  
 Dimensions (hwd) 45 x 75 x 9cm •  
 Weight 9kg

Picture	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★

**ONLINE PERKS COME TO THE SMALL SCREEN**

Gone are the days when smart features were the exclusive preserve of upper-range, bigger-screen TVs. Now, online apps and services have found their way down to the relatively humble level of the 32in screen, and are at your fingertips as long as your TV is hooked up to the internet - either wirelessly or via an ethernet cable.

BBC iPlayer, Netflix and YouTube have become the largely ubiquitous 'Big Three' apps, and are the bare minimum you should expect to see on the smart portal. Most sets also feature news and weather apps, while others (usually pricier ones) go one better by including music-streaming services such as Deezer and Spotify. Those screens also tend to include other catch-up services (eg ITV Player, 4oD and Demand 5), and even catalogues that open doors to a host of downloadable apps.

**SYSTEM BUILDER**



**Blu-ray player**  
**Sony BDP-S4100**  
**£80** ★★★★★

A perfect partner for the Sony, this disc-spinner will bring extra punch to the picture and agility to the sound.



**Smartphone**  
**Sony Xperia Z2**  
 ★★★★★

Great picture, sound and interface, and the beautiful 5.2in screen is perfect for using with Sony's TVSideView app.



**Soundbase**  
**Cambridge Audio Mixx TV**  
**£200** ★★★★★

If you crave more weight and dynamics to your movies' sound, perch the Sony telly on top of this.

# Cyrus HD Music Streamers.



Stream X  
Signature

Stream Xa

Streamline

Stream XP

**CYRUS**  
ENGINEERED TO ENTERTAIN

The latest Cyrus streaming models are available as four perfectly focused variants. Each is a state of the art streamer at the very peak of what is possible in HD music streaming today.

Our flagship Stream XP combines a superb pre amp and DAC. Visit our website to learn about each of the four models and discover a wide range of streaming advice.



Stream XP2-Qx



Stream XP



Streamline



Stream Xa

# Why spend £2K?

Is it really worth splashing out a couple of grand on stereo speakers? It is when they are as good as these...

**T**his month we're looking at premium standmounters from some of the biggest manufacturers in the business. Nearly £2000 may seem a high price to pay for a relatively small box, but it really is a case of getting what you pay for. Superb build quality: check. Beautiful finishes: check. Sensational sound quality: check. We're pitching the Award-winning PMC Twenty 22s against the five-star Dali Rubicon 2s and brand-new, never-before-reviewed contenders from Bowers & Wilkins and Spondor. This test is definitely going to separate the men from the boys...

## What's on test

Bowers & Wilkins  
CM6 S2  
£1500

Dali  
Rubicon 2  
£1600


PMC  
Twenty 22  
£1970

Spondor  
D1  
£1795



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



# Bowers & Wilkins CM6 S2 £1500 ★★★★★☆

The Bowers & Wilkins CM range has a huge worldwide following, so the launch of the second generation of the range is big news - and the CM6 S2s are the first pair we've had the pleasure of listening to in our test rooms.

In hand, they're impressive. Ask someone to guess the most expensive model in this test and fingers are likely to point straight at the B&Ws. It's easy to see why. The glossy-black exterior oozes quality and contrasts well with the trademark woven kevlar mid/bass driver. The front of each speaker is very clean-cut with not a screw in sight. The specially designed stands feel suitably robust and match the speaker's premium finish (although they do cost an extra £300). Even the little Bowers & Wilkins badges look high quality.

## Tweet talk

The most obvious talking point, though, is the B&W tweeter, which sits in its own enclosure on top of the cabinet. This arrangement can already be found on its premium 800 Diamond series. B&W claims mounting it separately improves imaging and dispersion.

The entire assembly sits on a soft, gel-like material to isolate it from cabinet vibrations, while a super-thin aluminium ring reinforces the main

The glossy-black exterior of the B&W CM6 S2s oozes quality and contrasts well with the trademark woven kevlar mid/bass driver

tweeter diaphragm. B&W believes this extra stiffness delivers a cleaner sound.

alt-J's *Breezblocks* is a complex track, and the B&Ws do a great job of controlling and positioning all the different elements. They work well at higher volumes - the tune's quirky vocal sounds distinct, while the ding of the percussion sounds elevated and out in the open. The sound is projected so well that it's hard to locate the speaker cabinet when we have our eyes closed.

Low frequencies sound robust and solid. The speakers do a fine job of separating the individual notes during *Breezblock's* staggered bassline, giving each individual hit great impact. In fact, this level of bass definition makes the Dali Rubicon 2s sound a tad tubby.

Where the B&Ws don't quite convince is in the realm of dynamics. Yes, you can hear that authority and solidity, and they're more than capable of going loud (they actually perform better at higher volumes), but the way they deliver low-level dynamic shifts isn't quite as graceful as the best of their rivals.

Play something that requires a more careful and considered approach, such as Nick Cave's *Mermaids*, and the CM6s have the arrangement down to a tee - Cave takes centre stage and there's plenty of detail among guitars, percussion and backing vocals. But the B&Ws don't really get across the fluid, carefree nature of the track. You don't feel as involved or moved by the music as you do when listening to the PMC Twenty 22s or Dali Rubicon 2s.

The CM6 S2s are good speakers. Built to impress, they sound impressive on a number of levels. They just struggle to communicate dynamics and subtlety, preventing us falling for them entirely.

## Rating ★★★★★☆

**FOR** Great sense of spaciousness; open, clear treble; controlled bass; luxurious finish

**AGAINST** Lacking low-level dynamics; not the most communicative sound

**VERDICT** Produce a tightly controlled sound, but lack freedom of expression of class-leaders

Beneath their glossy exteriors, the CM6 S2s also feature a revised crossover with high-grade internal components





## Dali Rubicon 2 £1600 ★★★★★

**Dali doesn't seem** to know how to make an ugly speaker. The company's budget offerings always look and feel beautifully made, and at this price, the Rubicon 2s take things to another level. They may be one of the less expensive options, but they don't look it.

The Rubicon 2s are available in four finishes: high-gloss black, high-gloss white, Rosso or Walnut (pictured here). Each cabinet boasts a subtle curve both front and back, which adds to their elegant appearance. Like the B&W CM6 S2s, the Dalis feature a rear bass port but unlike them you will only find terminals for single-wire speaker cable. For those interested in the fine details, the Rubicon 2's driver configuration uses the same 29mm soft-dome tweeter found in the company's high-end Epicon range of speakers, twinned with a 16.5cm wood-fibre mid/bass driver.

### Play in their best position

Getting the Dalis into their best position requires a little care. Tightly hugging a rear wall, you will encourage boomy, ill-disciplined bass - give them around 30cm or more as a space and they will be fine. Excellent dispersion comes as part of the package, so parking them front-on to your listening position is fine.

The first thing to grab you about the

**The first thing to grab you about the Dalis is their dexterity and speed. There's an agility and nimbleness to the sound we like right away**

Dalis is their dexterity and speed. There's real agility and nimbleness to the sound which we like right away. The xx's *Chained* rolls along and the Dali's never skip a beat. There's urgency and subtlety in equal measure. The midrange sounds wonderfully rich and warm.

### Explosive performance

Vocals have a softness and smoothness that entices you to listen for longer. As the track switches between male and female leads, you can clearly hear the differences in level and dynamics. The Rubicons bring plenty of texture and insight.

Switch to some rough and ready rock courtesy of Metallica's *One* and the Dalis are more than happy to oblige. They conjure up a proper sensation of being in the heat of battle during the explosive intro to the epic song.

Gunfire and explosions all leave their mark on the soundstage, before the bass riff kicks in. Next comes the crashing and bashing of Lars Ulrich's drum kit. The Rubicon 2s knit the various

elements together, so as a whole, it all makes perfect sense.

Such is the fun factor offered by the Dalis, it's hard to lay too much criticism at their door. Lows sound tighter and better defined on the PMCs and B&Ws. The Dalis can sound a little bit tubby and imprecise in a direct comparison. We'd also suggest giving bright electronics a swerve - an amp with some weight will serve the Dalis better.

Overall, though, these Rubicon 2s are exciting and rewarding speakers with bags of charm. In our opinion, their likeable, enthusiastic delivery is enough to guarantee a serious audition at the very least.

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Agile, speedy delivery; textured, believable midrange; great build quality

**AGAINST** They don't enjoy being positioned up against a wall

**VERDICT** The Rubicon 2s' enthusiasm and joie de vivre really rubs off on you

The Rubicon 2 is available in four finishes: high-gloss black, high-gloss white, Rosso or Walnut



## PMC Twenty 22 £1970 ★★★★★

The **PMC Twenty 22s** are current Award-winners, and the three other speakers in this test are all relatively new to the scene - so it's time to see exactly what the PMCs are made of.

When it comes to writing a review we're always looking for an angle, and the PMCs provide us with one. Quite literally. As you can see from the photograph, there's a slight rearward slope on the cabinet's front and back panels. These not only give the speakers a distinctive look, but also help cabinet rigidity and reduce the build-up of internal standing waves.

As with the B&W CM6 S2s and Sendor D1s, PMC gives you the option of matching speaker stands. They're an extra £295 and they're also sloped to match the profile of the speakers. Place the 22s on normal upright stands and they tend to look awkward and out of place. Build quality is great, although the PMCs look a little functional when compared to the luxurious appearance of the other speakers in this test.

### Don't slope off

Besides sloping to attention instead of standing, the PMCs also stand out from the competition because they include a transmission line. There's a damped, internal folding path inside each

**There's detail and depth in the Twenty 22s, yet their lows are still agile enough to integrate well with an explicit and emotive midrange**

speaker, which takes the rearward output of the mid/bass driver and absorbs all but the lowest frequencies. These frequencies are then released through the rectangular grille at the front. They exit, and add to the forward output of the driver - PMC thinks this is the best way to get low-distortion bass.

### Explicit manner

And the 22s don't mess about - the amount of bass weight and power they produce is impressive. There's detail and depth, yet their lows are still agile enough to integrate well with a very explicit and emotive midrange. The sum of all these individually excellent parts is a really cohesive sound.

These PMC speakers do it all. They have the scale and power to do *Carmina Burana* justice, but they're able to do so while keeping an even and relatively neutral tonal stance. Individual instruments sound convincing and balanced.

Intimacy isn't an issue either, and music such as Sam Smith's acoustic

version of *Latch* is handled with a great amount of finesse. The Twenty 22s' sense of insight, low-level dynamics and ability to communicate and engage with the listener make them a real force to be reckoned with. Sam's vocal sounds expressive and forlorn, while the speakers also capture the delicacy of the piano, and sadness and vulnerability of the strings, as they ebb and flow in the background.

The PMCs are a finessed, exciting listen, impressive across multiple music genres. These are all the signs of a quality speaker and a reminder that the 22s won't be giving up their class-leading crown without a fight.

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Impressive authority and scale; superb dynamics; precise, engaging sound

**AGAINST** Some might prefer a richer sound

**VERDICT** Few rivals share the PMC's appetite for resolution, dynamics and agility - these are seriously impressive speakers

PMC provides the option of matching stands at a cost of £295, and they are also sloped to match the profile of the speakers





# Spendor D1 £1795 ★★★★★

**Spendor's D-Line** of speakers currently boasts a perfect record in *What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision*. The D7 is a five-star floorstander, and was the sole model in the range until the announcement of the pint-sized D1. Can these new Spondors extend the record?

Next to rivals, the Spondors give the impression of a featherweight boxer who took a wrong turn and stumbled into a heavyweight bout. The fit and finish of the D1 is superb, but the size difference is apparent. We wouldn't be surprised if you could fit both Spondors inside one PMC Twenty 22 cabinet.

## Blessing in the size

But size isn't everything, and their compact dimensions will be a blessing for those where space is at a premium. Being a sealed cabinet, they're also less fussy about positioning than the Dalis and B&Ws, although we'd still stop short of pushing them up against a rear wall.

Spendor gives you the option to buy its own speaker stands: £595 seems steep, but we couldn't find an alternative to allow the D1s to sound better. Spendor claims the novel tweeter design (which positions a very thin micro-foil in front of the dome) actually evens out the tweeter output over a wide frequency range, and helps to aid dispersion. And

**For all their precision, the Spondors don't really capture the essence of, say, *You Can Call Me Al*. It feels like you're not getting the full picture**

this is one of the areas where the D1s score highly. Highs sound open, crisp and immediate, and if definition and analysis are high on your list of priorities you won't be disappointed. Leading edges and lines of notes are well etched.

Lows don't sound especially weighty and nor do these D1s go as deep as some rivals. The small cabinet does have a large say in what goes on further down the frequency range and bassheads aren't going to be satisfied, but it isn't all bad news. Clear and clean bass is the order of the day here. Play Paul Simon's *You Can Call Me Al* and there's no sluggishness. It's taut and precise.

But for all this precision, the Spondors don't really capture the essence of the track. And we're not talking about the fact the Spondors don't go as loud as some rivals, nor is it purely down to a lack of bass weight. It's a deeper-rooted issue: it feels like you're not quite getting the full picture in terms of dynamics. There's a lack of excitement to the song, and before you know it the track passes you by. Switch to *Earth*, from the

*Gladiator* OST, and the sweeping mid and upper frequencies just don't have the impact as when heard through the likes of the PMC Twenty 22s. The shift in dynamics as the tune sways back and forth is more apparent elsewhere in this test. You can counter this to a degree by taking care over partnering: the solidity and weight of an amp like the Roksan Caspian M2 makes good sense. Partner this with the D1s and you inject more body. But they still aren't perfect.

The D1s are dainty and detailed speakers, but they're hampered by a lack of dynamics. Add in their relatively high price and we can't help but feel a little disappointed.

## Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Impressive detail; excellent definition of leading edges of notes; compact dimensions

**AGAINST** Limited dynamics; lack of weight and natural warmth; struggle to hold your interest

**VERDICT** For all the detail at the D1s disposal, they're found wanting in too many areas




You might find a cheaper alternative to Spendor's bespoke £595 stand, but we couldn't find one that made the D1s sound any better



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# TEST VERDICT



## THE WINNER

### PMC Twenty 22s

£1970 ★★★★★

The stakes were high in this toughly fought test, but the **PMC Twenty 22s** proved they're worth the extra money

**T**his test has been full of twists and turns but it's the wonderfully musical PMC Twenty 22s that emerge victorious.

When you're spending nearly £2000 on a pair of standmounters, you're well within your rights to expect a certain level of performance, and the Twenty 22s deliver on all fronts. They're the kind of speaker that makes you want to sit down and listen to a CD in its entirety. If a speaker keeps you coming back for more, then that's a foundation for a long listening relationship

The PMC's wonderful blend of detail, agility, and high/low-level dynamics serenade you in a way their closest rivals simply can't match. The Dali

Rubicon 2s should be thought of as free spirits of the speaker world. Their agile, nimble character encourages a fluid and richly textured sound. They're seriously entertaining and easy to listen to. A great alternative to the PMCs.

The B&W CM6 S2s arguably might sound more robust, and sure of themselves but they lack a little flexibility and subtlety. They don't sound quite as at ease as the PMCs. The Spondor D1s didn't really shine in the way we hoped for. Sure, they're small, discreet and will suit smaller spaces. They also produce a lot of detail. But in an attempt to squeeze out every last morsel of information, it seems the D1s have been stripped of natural warmth.

## SYSTEM BUILDER

Perfect partners for the  
PMC Twenty 22s



### Stereo amp

**Roksan Caspian M2 £1900 ★★★★★**

The Caspian M2 is an exceptional amp for the money. It's a big-hearted performer, capable of drama and subtlety.



### CD player

**Roksan Caspian M2 CD £1900 ★★★★★**

This is a top-class player, capable of fronting some pretty exotic systems. It's also the perfect partner for its amplifier sibling.



### Speaker stands

**PMCSTD Twenty-2122 £295 ★★★★★**

There's no rule says you have to go for PMC's stands, but they do work well with the 22s and they're also sloped to match the profile.

**Total build £6065**

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

## Facts & figures



**Bowers & Wilkins CM6 S2**  
£1500 ★★★★★☆

Sensitivity (db/w/m) 88 • Impedance (ohms) 8 • Max power handling 120W  
• Biwireable Yes • Finishes 3 • Dimensions (hwd) 40 x 20 x 30 • Weight (kg) 8.9



**Dali Rubicon 2**  
£1600 ★★★★★

Sensitivity (db/w/m) 87 • Impedance (ohms) 4 • Max power handling 150W  
• Biwireable No • Finishes 4 • Dimensions (hwd) 35 x 20 x 24 • Weight (kg) 8



**PMC Twenty 22**  
£1970 ★★★★★

Sensitivity (db/w/m) 90 • Impedance (ohms) 8 • Max power handling 150W  
• Biwireable Yes • Finishes 4 • Dimensions (hwd) 41 x 18 x 37cm • Weight (kg) 8



**Spondor D1**  
£1795 ★★★★★☆

Sensitivity (db/w/m) 85 • Impedance (ohms) 8 • Max power handling 125W  
• Biwireable No • Finishes 3 • Dimensions (hwd) 31 x 17 x 19cm • Weight (kg) 5.8



# MOVE WITH THE MUSIC

Why limit your music to one room? With LG's MUSIC flow Smart Hi-Fi Audio system you can play it everywhere in your house...

**W**ant to fill your home with music? You could put a stereo system in each room – but that's expensive and takes up space. The smart way is to opt for LG's Smart Hi-Fi Audio wireless multi-room speakers and stream music from your devices – all controlled via the free LG MUSIC flow Player app.

Not only that, they support high-res files – so, finally, you can free your high-quality library from your PC.

They're versatile, too: you can listen to the same song at the same time everywhere, or play different tracks in different rooms. Put two together and

they'll work in tandem to make a stereo set-up. You can even add them to an LG MUSIC flow HS6 soundbar and create a home-cinema system.

Set-up is simple. Just tap an NFC-compatible device against a MUSIC flow speaker to pair them... and, if you want, set them to sync via Wi-Fi when you get home to continue playing your favourite songs.

The system also lets you connect to streaming services including Spotify, Napster and TuneIn, and can even create playlists based on your mood.

MUSIC flow gives you all your music, wherever – and however – you want it.

**H7**

## PERFECT FOR HIGH-DEF POWER

This 70W speaker is great for larger rooms, or beefing up your LG home-cinema system when connected to the HS6 Soundbar. It supports HD audio, Bluetooth and a variety of streaming services, and can be controlled via the MUSIC flow Player app for Android, iOS and PC.

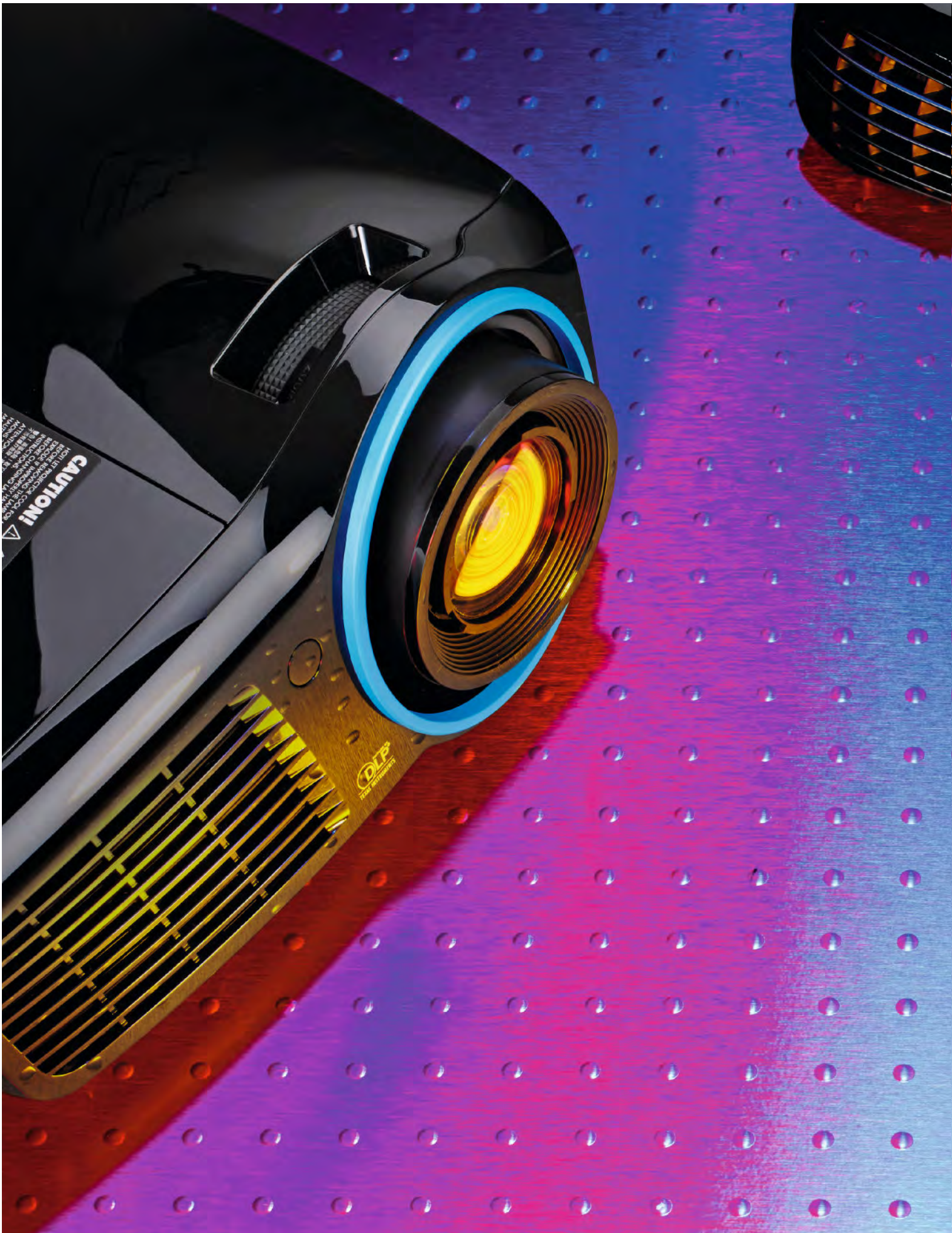


## H5 SMALL SIZE, BIG SOUND

With 40W on tap, the H5 speaker is ideal for the bedroom or kitchen. Use it on its own for room-filling sound, or connect two together and gain a stereo set-up. Like the H7, it supports high-quality lossless FLAC and WAV files, and lets you access a world's worth of music via streaming services.

## R1 EXPAND YOUR SYSTEM

The R1 Bridge connects to your internet router and connects to all your Smart Hi-Fi Audio speakers. It's compact, so won't clutter your room, has built-in Wi-Fi for seamless connectivity and establishes its own stable mesh network to keep your music flowing.





# CINEMA PARADISO

A big picture, top quality and affordability; until recently, two out of three was the best you could hope for. But now you can get all three. And it's heavenly

**A** couple of years ago, it would have been inconceivable to imagine a big-screen picture for anything less than four figures. Budding home cinema enthusiasts are in for a treat, then, as we've lined up a four-way test of entry-level projectors that cost about the same price as a five-star 48in smart TV.

BenQ, Epson, InFocus and Optoma have put their best budget projectors forward in a price range as modest as £650 to £700. But don't think these affordable projectors have scrimped on the latest technology: Full HD, active 3D, multiple HDMI inputs and, our personal favourite, backlit remotes are all present here.

Keen to start building your own personal home theatre? Keep reading to discover which projector gives you the best big picture on a budget.



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

## BENQ W1070+ £650



**If you're looking** for big-screen entertainment on a budget, then this BenQ should be your first port of call. A Full HD 3D projector that delivers an astonishingly good performance, it's an absolute bargain for its £650 price tag.

### Smooth but punchy

Play the *Pacific Rim* Blu-ray and the W1070+ delivers a richly detailed, silky smooth and wonderfully punchy picture. Its vibrant colour palette has no trouble tackling the film's myriad colours with aplomb. Vivid reds could do with a touch more subtlety and skin-tones could be shaded more realistically, but overall it's an enjoyable picture.

That picture is clear and crisply drawn too, with a good sense of depth to films. The W1070+ also manages to discern dark objects against shadowy backgrounds without compromising on fine detail.

It's also a smooth picture, with no hiccups in motion, whether it's Captain America dishing out justice with his speedy shield or the panning scenes across the railway station in *Hugo*.

Sound quality, too, is refreshingly good for a projector (see caption).

In 3D, the picture has a lovely sense of depth, and the W1070+ manages to deliver a stable and likeable image despite the inevitable dimming. The active-shutter glasses aren't included, and they're around £50 a pair.

Compared with rivals such as the Epson EH-TW5200, DVDs are entirely watchable on the W1070+. *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* is upscaled with minimum fuss, there's very little noise to deal with and a good helping of detail is left intact.

The W1070+ projector is light at 2.75kg, yet it's sturdily built as well. There are controls for zoom, focus and keystone, including a manual lens shift.

### Easy to set up, easy to operate

Setting up the projector is quick and painless (we used a THX Optimizer disc to get the picture perfectly tuned). The remote, which is responsive and easy to use, has a bright red backlight.

There's a good spread of connections on the BenQ for analogue and digital sources alike. Two HDMI inputs and a PC input share space with composite and component inputs. Two 3.5mm audio jacks are also available.

The W1070+ is also compatible with BenQ's new Wireless Full HD Kit (£250). It gives you an extra two HDMI inputs, but most importantly it negates the need to keep your projector close to the rest of your AV kit, as this 'hub' will transmit Full HD and 3D images to your projector.

The BenQ W1070+ is a big improvement upon its predecessor the W1070. Its subtle and punchy picture quality, complete with satisfyingly deep black levels and smooth motion, is utterly engrossing. We like its compact design, its upscaling talents and that surprisingly full-bodied sound quality too. And all that for just £650? If you're thinking of building your first home cinema system, this projector should be at the top of your shopping list.

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Clear, richly detailed picture; deep blacks; smooth motion; great price

**AGAINST** 3D glasses need to be bought separately; wireless kit adds £250

**VERDICT** A superb budget projector that delivers subtlety and excitement in spades

## EPSON EH-TW5200 £700



**The Epson EH-TW5200** replaces our favourite sub-£1000 projector from last year, the Award-winning EH-TW5910.

Looking at the specs, it doesn't feel like a step up: the new model's claimed contrast ratio is 15,000:1 (compared with the EH-TW5910's 20,000:1), while the rated brightness is 2000 lumens (down from the 5910's 2100 lumens).

The downgraded specs are explained by the price: the new machine is a whole lot cheaper at £700.

Firing up *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* on Blu-ray, we're met with a bright picture that digs up a great amount of detail for this price. The Cap's gritty new blue suit, and the steel-grey tones present throughout S.H.I.E.L.D.'s facilities, are delivered with the kind of realism the Marvel film is aiming for.

### Natural and believable

Colours are lively and dynamic, but stay firmly on the natural side. Skin-tones are fleshed out with believable shadows and realistic contours around the face, and deliver just the right amount of detail without needing to show every single hair follicle.

The Epson packs a punch with its highlights. Metal weapons glint dangerously, fluorescent lights are pleasingly bright and daylight scenes are appropriately sunny and warm. We just wish this same level of intensity were present in the Epson's black levels.

It's a crisp, subtle picture, although there are hints of noise creeping through. This is more apparent when the EH-TW5200 is upscaling content, with the usually-impressive DVD transfer of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* looks a touch grainier than usual. Motion, on the other hand, is smooth across all content.

We play *TT: Closer To The Edge* in 3D, and the motorbikes whizz down winding country roads with no stutter or judder. The sense of depth is exciting, and the picture retains a level of brightness and detail that rival projectors fail to match.

The EH-TW5200 has built-in speakers, but while voices are clear and easy to hear, there's more than a hint of the tinny sound you get from flatscreen TVs.

It's a compact and sleek design, with curved lines and an all-black finish that looks rather attractive. There are manual zoom, focus and keystone adjustments

on the unit itself, all of which are subtle enough to help you get the most accurate picture possible.

The included remote control is a good size - not too large, not too chunky - and, though not backlit, it's easy to use.

### Smartphone source

There are two HDMI inputs, one of which supports MHL (Mobile High-Definition Link) so you can feed videos from a compatible smartphone.

We're used to decent projectors costing £1000, so the fact that you can now get a bright, natural-toned, detailed picture for just £700 is an eye-opener for home cinema. It's not quite as impressive as the EH-TW5910, but then it's £200 cheaper. And a great place to start.

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Bright, punchy picture; crisp detail; rich, natural colours; 3D depth; stable motion; price

**AGAINST** Blacks could be darker; a little extra grain with DVD material

**VERDICT** It has its niggles, but this compact, punchy projector puts in a great showing

Projectors tend not to sound that great on their own. The BenQ defies that rule with a well-rounded, punchy and listenable sound. Its 10W 'resonant chamber' speaker delivers clear dialogue, while surround effects are fleshed out admirably.



Unlike the pricier projectors in Epson's range, the EH-TW5200 doesn't come with dedicated 3D glasses. You'll have to order the active-shutter specs separately (£70 per pair). They're a decent pair: light and comfortable to wear.

## INFOCUS IN8606HD £650



With its big picture, compact design and affordable price, the IN8606HD is worth considering if you're taking the first step towards a home cinema package.

With Full HD and 3D credentials, the InFocus delivers a large, bright picture. *Pirates Of The Caribbean: At World's End* on Blu-ray shows a good level of detail coupled to low levels of noise and decent contrast in scenes that combine bright and dark elements in a single frame. The colour balance is a touch understated but is none the worse for that, looking convincing with skin-tones.

### In-depth analysis

Black levels, on the other hand, are pleasingly dark. They may swallow up finer detail, but they give low-light scenes a nice sense of depth.

There's a hint of instability around moving objects, but not enough to annoy or distract you during a film, even in 3D. *Life Of Pi* looks relatively smooth and there's a pleasing sense of depth, even if the picture is dimmed. It's comfortable to watch.

The active-shutter 3D glasses, on the other hand, are chunky and grip just a

little too tightly for our liking. They don't come bundled either, and cost around £50. At least they stay on the head and have a comfortable nose bridge.

We wish the IN8606HD was more successful when it comes to upscaling DVDs. The picture looks a little patchy around the edges and lacks detail. We'd stick with Blu-rays.

### Boost that sound

The IN8606HD has built-in speakers, but don't expect fully-fledged surround sound. The sound is thin, and voices aren't fleshed out in the way that they are on the BenQ W1070+. A budget 5.1 speaker package should be on your shopping list if you want all the punch and pizzazz of a movie's soundtrack to come across as it should.

The build of the IN8606HD is solid and sturdy, yet it's also compact enough to position easily in your room. The all-black finish is broken only by a bright blue ring around the lens, giving it a distinctive look.

The InFocus comes equipped with a generous helping of connections. There are two HDMI inputs - handy if you want

to keep two different sources plugged in at all times, such as a Blu-ray player and a games console. Analogue sources are well catered for, with component, composite, S-Video and 3.5mm inputs neatly arranged on the back panel. You'll also find single 3.5mm jacks for audio input and output, and a PC input for connecting laptops.

There's plenty to like about the InFocus IN8606HD. The breadth of connectivity on offer is appreciated, as is the compact design. A better remote would help (see caption), as would more controls on the projector itself. This InFocus has just enough detail, punch and conviction in its colour palette to make it an enjoyable watch, but not quite enough to be class-leading.

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Decent detail; understated colour balance; deep blacks add punch; good build; great price

**AGAINST** DVD upscaling isn't the best; tough competition; flimsy remote

**VERDICT** The IN8606HD is a good performer but it's beaten by some excellent competition

## OPTOMA HD26 £650



Finding a Full HD projector for £650 is no mean feat. Finding a great projector for £650, however, is even trickier. The compact Optoma HD26 seems like a good bargain on paper - 1080p and 3D support, twin HDMI inputs, large picture - but some may not be enamoured with its limited connectivity (see caption) and less-than-subtle picture.

### Lavish, but garish too

Play *Thor: The Dark World* and the Optoma delivers a clean and lavish picture, but one in which the colours veer on the overblown side and blocks of colour have little shading or subtlety. The golden armour of the Asgardian army is richly detailed and inviting, but skin-tones could appear more natural.

Detail is dished out with little subtlety, and there isn't enough gradation in the contours of objects to give them realistic depth.

It's not the brightest picture, either, especially when compared with the Epson EH-TW5200 and BenQ W1070+. This helps black levels though, the dark cave scenes in *Thor* revelling in the appropriate level of gloom.

Highlights appear muted, a fact that robs the picture of punch and excitement. The metallic gleam of Formula 1 cars in *Rush* is dulled down, while sunlit scenes don't have the intense, warm brightness you'd expect. Motion isn't the smoothest either, with faint judders present around moving objects.

Upscaled content, such as material on DVD, takes an even greater hit, with the half-processed, blocky and noisy picture of *Stoker* proving difficult to watch. We're not expecting the most insightful and lifelike picture at this budget price, but we're still a little disappointed.

On a positive note, the Optoma's built-in speakers have a rich, weighty way with voices. It's easy to follow dialogue, and voices don't sound as tinny as they do on many rivals.

### Comfortable 3D experience

Films in 3D are surprisingly easy on the eye with the HD26, even with active-shutter glasses on. There's a decent level of depth, albeit not too dramatic. As expected the picture is a little dark though. Thankfully, the motion issues don't worsen during fast-moving action

scenes, such as in the Isle of Man TT race documentary *Closer To The Edge*.

The 3D glasses are light, but they don't grip securely. You'll have to purchase them (£80 per pair) and an RF emitter (£10) separately too.

Zoom, keystone correction and controls all feature on the projector itself and you can adjust the focus of the lens manually. The remote has a blindingly bright blue backlight, which is great for using in a dark cinema room (but may leave you with sunspots in your eyes).

If the HD26 was notably cheaper than its rivals we would forgive its shortcomings. But there are price rivals out there, and many offer superior performance. We know you'll find a better entry-level alternative elsewhere.


### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Clear picture; rich colours; deep blacks; compact and light design; backlit remote

**AGAINST** Rivals offer more detail and nuance; slight motion issues; picture could be brighter

**VERDICT** It has its moments, but the Optoma isn't strong enough to match its best price rivals





The remote for the InFocus is the flimsy credit-card type and fiddly to use. It's far too small and impractical, especially in the dark. Don't let your sofa eat it though - apart from manual zoom and focus, there are no other controls on the projector itself.

You only get two HDMI inputs on the HD26 - good news if you only have digital sources and want to keep things tidy, bad news if your sources are analogue. MHL support means you can stream HD videos though, and there is a 3.5mm audio output.



# WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION

# iPAD EDITION

November issue available on iTunes now

# TEST VERDICT



## THE WINNER

**BenQ W1070+**  
£650 ★★★★★

The ability to offer such a high level of performance at such a low price makes the **BenQ W1070+** a very special projector

**T**he **BenQ W1070+** proves you don't have to break the bank to build a home cinema system. At just £650, it's a ridiculously good projector. It's got spades of detail, rich yet subtle colours, and black levels that are gloriously deep and inky. Super-clean upscaling is a bonus, as is its surprisingly decent sound quality.

The Epson EH-TW5200 came so close to taking the crown. Its crisply drawn picture, natural colour tone and excellent detail retrieval make it stand out from the pack, and it's a smart looking projector, too. But it doesn't quite deliver the velvety deep black levels that the BenQ can, and its picture is a little noisier.

The InFocus IN8606HD isn't too far off in terms of performance. It's perfectly watchable, and dishes out convincing blacks. A brighter, sharper and more detailed picture would see it gaining that fifth star, and we'd like a better remote control design, too.

### A noticeable difference

Then there's the Optoma HD26, whose overblown colours just couldn't match the standard set by its rivals. It's a decent effort in many ways, but roundly outclassed in this company.

We don't expect top performance at this price, but the BenQ W1070+ shows you can balance picture quality and price in a deeply effective way.

## SYSTEM BUILDER

Hook these three up to the BenQ and you'll have a home cinema set-up to be proud of



### Blu-ray player

**Sony BDP-S7200** £220 ★★★★★

Sony's latest Blu-ray player will bring your film collection alive with crisp, punchy detail and smooth motion. Excellent smart features, too.



### AV receiver

**Yamaha RX-V377** £260 ★★★★★

Power, scale and fun on a budget, this entry-level AV receiver is the ideal machine to drive your home cinema's sound.



### Speaker package

**Q Acoustics Q2000i5.1** £625 ★★★★★

For a great surround-sound experience to match the BenQ's picture, this Award-winning package ticks all the style and substance boxes.

**Total build** £1755

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

## Facts & figures



**BenQ W1070+**  
£650 ★★★★★

Type DLP • 3D Active • Claimed contrast ratio 10,000:1 • Rated brightness 2200 lumens • Fan noise 31dB • Inputs 2 x HDMI; composite; component; PC; 3.5mm • Dimensions (hwd) 10 x 31 x 24cm • Weight 2.75kg



**Epson EH-TW5200** -  
£700 ★★★★★

Type LCD • 3D Active • Claimed contrast ratio 15,000:1 • Rated brightness 2000 lumens • Rated fan noise 37dB • Inputs 2 x HDMI; composite; PC • Dimensions (hwd) 11 x 30 x 25cm • Weight 3kg



**InFocus IN8606HD** -  
£650 ★★★★★

Type DLP • 3D Active • Contrast ratio 10,000:1 • Rated brightness 2500 lumens • Fan noise 33dB • Inputs 2 x HDMI; component; composite; PC; S-Video; 3.5mm • Dimensions (hwd) 26 x 29 x 12cm • Weight 3kg



**Optoma HD26**  
£650 ★★★☆☆

Type DLP • 3D Active • Claimed contrast ratio 25,000:1 • Rated brightness 3200 lumens • Rated fan noise 28dB • Inputs 2 x HDMI • Dimensions (hwd) 11 x 32 x 22cm • Weight 2.5kg



# Buds for every budget

Not all in-ear headphones are equal – and prices can be misleading. Here we sift the wheat from the chaff across the price spectrum

**1**  
**Beyerdynamic DX160 iE**  
 £86 ★★★★★☆

**We expect great** things from Beyerdynamic – the company has won countless Awards from us.

There's plenty of detail and texture to instruments and vocals alike. The presentation is smooth too; a boon for long-term listening.

Tonal balance leans slightly towards the low end for a full, weighty sound. It never gets too much though, and the midrange and treble are never threatened.

The only issue here is the competition, namely the (cheaper) Sony MDR-EX650APs. They don't have the Beyerdynamics' weight, but are more agile and punchy.

These buds are well made and come with a flat cable, which helps minimise tangles. There's no in-line remote, but a split in the cable lets you to add the bundled Y-shaped splitter, so someone else can plug in and share your tunes.

We really like the DX 160 iEs – but that competition is rather fierce.

**2**  
**Klipsch X11i**  
 £200 ★★★★★★

**It's always tough** to follow up a hit, but Klipsch has managed it nicely. The banana-shaped X11is, with their comfy silicon tips, are the successors to the Award-winning X10is. Are they any good? Oh yes. Very, very good.

We're amazed by their powers of resolution. The level of insight is seriously impressive and there's plenty of detail and texture.

Tonally, there's a good balance: the strong, well-defined bass doesn't overpower the expressive midrange or crisp treble. It's a punchy performance, yet smooth enough for long-term listens.

The cable is lined with Kevlar, the stuff they put in body armour. While the X11is probably won't stop bullets, they can take being stuffed into pockets. And the square cable is genuinely tangle-resistant.

Great sound and great design: if you're serious about portables these in-ears need to be on your shortlist.

**3**  
**Lindy Cromo IEM-75**  
 £70 ★★★★★☆

**If you're after** decent performance for your money, you'll get that with these Lindys. The sound is nice and solid, with a good sense of clarity and heft behind it. These buds are also efficient, evidenced by their extra loudness over some rivals.

The biggest problem here is the competition. Sony's MDR-EX650AS, which cost less, outperform the Lindys in almost every way.

What we're really lacking here is detail. The Lindys don't astonish with textures, and without the finer subtleties the performance is less refined than we'd like.

Then there's the matter of entertainment. These buds are fine if you're after an easy listen, but if you want your temples to pound to the noise of Infected Mushroom, you'll have to look elsewhere.

Build quality is good, and as for design, the flying-saucer look is likely to split opinion. Decent, yes, but these won't blow you away.



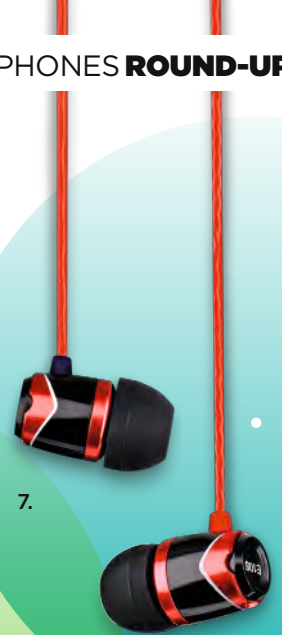
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7.



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4

### NAD Viso HP20

£130 ★★★★★

**When we get** kit from NAD, we tend to expect large boxes, so it's a bit of a surprise to find headphones.

These are aluminium bullets - solid and substantial. They do stick out of your ears quite a bit, though.

By contrast, the inline remote feels a little delicate. We do, though, like the flat cable, which promises to fight tangles.

The sound is lovely. It's delicate and refined, and very detailed. There's a good amount of weight to the delivery: substantial but not overbearing, so if you're a bass head, you may want to look elsewhere. The soundstage is open and there's a good sense of scale.

If there's a problem it's that the timing could be a bit tighter. As it stands, the performance is an easy listen, but not particularly punchy or authoritative.

These are good, but they need a little more sparkle if they want to justify that fifth star.

5

### Samsung Level In

£130 ★★★☆☆

**Mention headphones and** it's unlikely the name Samsung will come up. On this showing, that's unlikely to change anytime soon.

These buds look good but feel very plasticky. You do, though, get a flat cable (for tangle resistance), a three-button microphone/remote unit and a selection of ear tips. We like the memory foam ones.

The first thing we notice is the hardness of the sound. It's a bright, harsh treble that has you thinking about the volume switch. The similarly priced NAD Viso HP20s offer much more texture, subtlety and refinement.

Bass has clearly been a priority but although there's a place for bass-centric headphones, it's not that well-defined here. The Level Ins also lack the dynamics and snappy timing to really entertain.

If they were half the price, we might consider the Level Ins - but at £130, we really can't.

6

### Sony MDR EX650AP

£60 ★★★★★

**Well, these are** unusual. We don't tend to see brass in our kit. But considering brass has been used to make musical instruments for centuries, it makes sense to use it.

The design and build is lovely. If the gold colour is too bling for you, you can opt for the silvery-grey version. By current in-ear standards these are not small, but they are very comfortable to wear.

The sound is just as pleasant. Vocals are engaging and focused, yet given space to breathe. The soundstage is open, expansive and expertly organised, creating an overall presentation that's fabulously immersive.

Drums are precise and snappy, with a firm low end that never drowns out the rest of the range. Tonal balance is beautifully judged, and there's plenty of detail and attack. If you're after an engaging, exciting listen, these fit the bill. At this price, they're hard to fault.

7

### Soundmagic E10S

£40 ★★★★★

**We've got to** hand it to the folks at Soundmagic: they don't rest on their laurels. Even after winning three Awards in a row, the E10 in-ear headphones keep receiving upgrades. Now we're getting the E10S (the S is for smartphone).

Driver placement and venting have been adjusted to improve sound and there's a neat inline remote (but no volume control), as well as a cable switch to ensure compatibility with various devices.

The performance is better than ever. It's an even subtler, smoother sound than before. Bass weight is nicely judged (making for a tight, fast, agile sound) treble sparkles and the vocals are clear and nuanced. You get a lovely, airy presentation and plenty of detail.

These buds punch well above their weight. If you want to upgrade your smartphone or music player's bundled buds, look no further. Soundmagic indeed.

# Hear,

# there and

# everywhere

Sonos has long ruled the multi-room systems roost, but other brands are looking to make an impression now. Is there room for them all?

## What's on test

**Bluesound**  
from £400, p72

**Panasonic ALL Series**  
from £500, p73

**Pure Jongo**  
from £80, p75

**Samsung Shape Audio System**  
from £200, p77

**Simple Audio Roomplayer+**  
from £600, p78

**Sonos System**  
from £170, p79

**O**nce a sector dominated by a single brand, multi-room audio is booming this year, attracting attention from big brands and new names alike. Samsung and Panasonic used CES to announce their respective systems, while high-resolution audio across the home has finally become a reality with efforts from new company Bluesound and Simple Audio's Roomplayer+.

Throw in an updated Jongo range from Pure, and multi-room king Sonos might just have a serious challenge to its position in the market for the very first time. We've decided it's the right time to put them all into a *Group Test*, to have it out once and for all. We're looking at systems as a whole here, rather than individual performance, so read on to find out where your multi-room money is best spent.



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



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# Bluesound

from £400

1

With its five-star *First Test* still fresh in our minds (October 2014), we have high hopes for the high-res capable Bluesound. Could this be the multi-room solution that hi-fi fans have been waiting for?

The Bluesound range is aimed at those who value audio performance above all else, but who also want a good user experience.

## Blue for go

After getting each component out of the box and powering it up, the first thing to do is get them onto your home network. The quick-start guide walks you through this, with the LED on the top-mounted mute button glowing solid blue once it's successfully connected.

You will need to repeat the process for each component - there's no quick pairing method between speakers at the moment, but it doesn't take long. Unlike Simple Audio's or Samsung's set-ups, there's no requirement to hardwire any part of your Bluesound set-up (except for the Vault, if you have one) in order to go multi-room. However, if you stream lots of high-res audio we'd recommend the more stable hardwired connection.

## Applying the system

There's a free iOS and Android app to control each product in the range. As long as your mobile device is on the same network as your Bluesound players, the app will automatically show them as available for streaming music and allow you to group them together.

It will also help you pull in music from NAS drives on the same network, as well



2

as access some of the most popular streaming services (including Spotify, Rdio, Deezer, Qobuz and TuneIn Radio). Bluesound picks out our NAS easily, and displays its contents and artwork under the 'local library' tab on the app. We have some indexing issues with some of our WAV files, but that's a common problem we've stumbled across in similar systems. We'd recommend saving your music as FLAC files if you want to ensure the most accurate indexing.

## Use your index finger

A wired connection will index around 1000 songs per minute - wireless will take a little longer depending on your connection but, once done the first time, re-indexing is much quicker.

Listening to the Pulse, it is one of the most 'hi-fi'-sounding speakers of its type we've ever heard. It offers up a considerable amount of detail and there's a spaciousness to its presentation that we aren't used to from a one-box design. It's powerful too, making Sonos's Play:5 sound weedy in comparison.

Stream a 24-bit/96kHz resolution file of Fleetwood Mac's *Dreams* and the Pulse shows it's no slouch, with the rich

**1** The Bluesound Node (£400) is unamplified so that it can be hooked up to an existing hi-fi or AV system.

**2** Bluesound Pulse (£600) is one of the most 'hi-fi'-sounding speakers of its type we've ever heard.

bassline proving to be as agile as it is weighty - the rhythmic drum intro punches with precision and impact.

The Pownode, paired with a pair of Q Acoustics 2020i speakers, is for obvious reasons capable of a bigger soundfield and better stereo separation. But otherwise it demonstrates the same attention to detail and dynamic wherewithal as the Pulse. They're both exciting and engaging to listen to, and they don't lose their enthusiasm when we move to lower resolutions and start streaming via Spotify at 320kbps.

Bluesound is one of the most musical multi-room systems we have heard. Its high-resolution capability is its strength, of course, but just as importantly it's easy to set up and use. Multi-room audio has never sounded so good.

## Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Capable of 24-bit/192kHz; highly musical; punchy bass; nice midrange; great control app

**AGAINST** Slightly cheap-feeling construction on some components

**VERDICT** Hi-fi quality sound with mainstream convenience. Multi-room's never been so good

## The Bluesound range

**Node £400** A high-res wireless music streamer that connects to your wireless network and existing hi-fi or AV system. Like all Bluesound components it can handle 24-bit /192kHz music files.

**Pownode £600** A standalone, stereo streaming music player with built-in digital amp and speakers. Already the recipient of a five-star *First Test* in our October 2014 issue.

**Vault £900** High-res music server and CD ripper with 1TB hard drive and a proprietary BluOS file management system that's compatible with Apple Macs and PCs. Matches the Node.

**Pulse £600** Another all-in-one music streaming system but with a more conventional aesthetic design than the Pownode. Some might prefer its plainer looks (see image top).

**Duo £600** This is a 2.1 wireless stereo speaker system with a built-in digital amplifier. For those who want a simple stereo set-up with extra bass, hence the addition of a subwoofer..



# Panasonic

## ALL Series

from £500

We can't quite put our finger on why, but we're a little uninspired by the design of Panasonic's ALL Series. The finish is nice enough, with a solid build and metal grille, but it doesn't have the appeal of some of its competitors.

Unfortunately, the same can be said for its audio performance too.

The range is made up of three parts: the ALL3 and ALL8 speakers, and the ALLIC adapter, for connecting to an existing hi-fi system. Set-up is simple. The Panasonic Music Streaming app walks you through getting each one onto your network. You'll have to do so for each speaker, so it's not quite as slick as Sonos, Samsung and Pure.

### Single source problem

Adding music is easy - the app picked up both NAS drives on our network without issue, and you have the option to play music directly from your device. Spotify Connect is supported in the UK and is the only service available at the time of testing. The Panasonic Music Streaming app isn't as intuitive as some we've used, and it needed quite a while to work our way around it. Instead of choosing the speaker you want to stream to or control, you choose the source you want to play from, and then the speaker. It feels strange, but something you get used to.

Another quirk in the app is that while we could build playlists (from a single source only) we couldn't find any way of saving them for playing back later.

### Pick up and go

Similar to Pure, Panasonic's multi-room system doesn't require any hardwiring to the router, so it's just a case of plug-and-play. It has chosen to go with Qualcomm's open source AllPlay multi-room platform rather than produce its own, meaning that you can control other AllPlay devices alongside your Panasonic kit. There's not a whole host of other manufacturers on board right now, but it's a relatively new platform we would expect to see grow. The Panasonic speakers lack the



excitement that we hear from systems by Sonos or Samsung. It has a rather laid-back character that can struggle with more upbeat music. Play alt-J's *Breezblocks* and the Panasonic also sounds rather closed in, with a muddy midrange lacking clarity, particularly in the vocals. The treble is a touch unrefined too, with a hard leading edge on some notes that can tip into harshness, particularly at high volume.

Largely though, it's a perfectly listenable character that's pretty neutral in its tonal balance. Bass is never boomy or overdone, and the speakers are flexible with placement too, which is handy for those short on space.

The smaller ALL3 can be used in both

**1** The two speaker units (ALL3 and ALL8) share a common character, but as you might expect the bigger unit is more suited to a larger room.

**2** Add the ALLIC module into your existing hi-fi system and it can form part of your multi-room system.

vertical and horizontal positions and, as always, it's worth experimenting, especially if you intend to use it in the kitchen or bedroom. With both speakers, it's worth trying out the various sound profile positions - unlike the Samsung, we're not largely taken by one over the other, so choose whichever suits best.

### Stereo no-go

The ALL3 can't be made into a stereo pair just yet, although Panasonic hinted it might be coming soon. As an option that many of its competitors offer, functionality like this needs to be integrated much quicker.

Right now, Panasonic's ALL Series just doesn't feel like quite the polished offering that some of its competitors provide, both in range and performance. It's not even competitively priced, so it's hard to know why you would choose it in its current form.

We're intrigued to see how Qualcomm's AllPlay multi-room platform plays out, as it could be something really worth having as more brands sign up. But until then this multi-room system must try harder if it's going to make an impression in such a competitive market.

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Tonally neutral; flexible with placement; bass is well handled

**AGAINST** A little too laid-back in character; lacks clarity; unrefined treble; app needs work

**VERDICT** Pana's system feels vulnerable in a market filled with much better competition

### The system in full

**ALL3 £230** With its 40W output the ALL3 is aimed at smaller rooms, and the unit has the versatility to be placed horizontally or vertically.

**ALL8 £300** Offering 80W of power from two tweeters and two bass drivers, the ALL8 is the most powerful offering in the ALL Series.

**ALLIC £200** If you have an existing system you want to make part of your Panasonic multi-room setup, the ALLIC will do just that. It packs a 24-bit/192kHz DAC and connects to your kit via conventional RCA phono sockets.

# cocktail Audio X30

Store all your CDs, Vinyl & Cassettes in one smart box

- Music server
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- Network streamer
- No need for a computer
- Control with mobile devices
- 5" colour display
- Web app for organising your music
- Add album artwork
- Burr-Brown DAC PCM1792a
- High capacity storage options
- High resolution recording 24bit/192kHz
- Internet radio\* with programme recording



\*Wi-Fi dongle optional

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# Pure

## Jongo

### from £80

Pure's Jongo multi-room system was among the first to take on Sonos, but at a more affordable price.

Now in its second year, the Jongo has grown up a little, losing the colourful grilles for a simpler, more understated design and, with a major audio update, it's now arguably at its best thus far. Following the set-up instructions with each Jongo speaker is easy: you need one master speaker on your wi-fi network first (using a set-up page) and the remainder can be added by holding down a button for a few seconds. This is Sonos levels of simplicity, and we're impressed.

#### Family pack

The Jongo family is reasonably well stocked, offering four sizes of speaker, one of which is portable. Best of all are the prices. A recent price cut means it's £80 for the smallest T2 speaker, going up to £180 for the T6, so a two-room set-up can cost as little as £160.

Speaker control is via the Pure Connect app, which is also the home for Pure's own streaming service. You're not obliged to use the service, but it does

#### What it comes with...

**T2 £80** - The smallest speaker, offering 20W of power and the ability to pair with a second T2 for stereo sound.

**T4 £130** - Offering 50W of power and about the size of a shoebox, this works well for most spaces and can also be paired for a stereo performance.

**T6 £180** - The biggest speaker of the family, and one capable of delivering 100W of room-filling power.

**S3 £120** - A portable speaker with 360-degree sound from five speakers and a 10-hour battery life.

**A2 £50** - An adapter for attaching to your existing stereo to make it wi-fi capable, and part of the Jongo family.



stand in the way of control just a little if you're not a paid-up subscriber.

If you're considering buying into the Jongo system, it's worth giving the one-month trial a go - we find the store well stocked and it offers a more seamless experience with Jongo than other streaming services. Within the Pure Connect app you'll be able to control your speakers - edit their names, control grouping, tweak EQ settings, volume and so on.

As for music control, you'll only be able to stream music either via Pure Connect (subscription required) or content stored locally on your device or home network.

#### Finding another stream

If you want to use another streaming service (such as Spotify), you have to turn on the Bluetooth Caskeid setting within the app - a feature that allows for multi-speaker streaming over Bluetooth.

This means selecting the speakers you want to use within Pure's app, heading to your phone's Bluetooth pairing menu and selecting any one of the Jongo speakers showing. They will then push the music to any of the other speakers you selected automatically.

It's not as straightforward as streaming over wi-fi from Pure's app (you must move back and forth between your streaming app and Pure's to control your speakers, for example), plus you can't choose to stream different music to different speakers. It's limiting when compared to rival systems. We're also unsure how this would work in a large house, considering the range limitations of Bluetooth.

**1** Whichever speaker you choose from, the Pure Jongo is capable of a big sound, with the T6 the ideal choice for bringing your music to larger rooms.

**2** If you do plump for the Jongo system, it would be a good move to give the Pure Connect one-month trial a go. The store is well stocked and it offers a better user experience on the Jongo than other streaming services.

Streaming Ella Eyre's *If I Go* from Pure Connect shows the Jongo system is not short on big, powerful sound. No matter which speaker you choose, they're capable of a sound that outstretches their physical size, with the T6 fitting the bill for filling the bigger rooms.

We reach for the EQ settings with most of the speakers to take the bass down a notch or two - there's a little more refinement needed here, and bass can sound heavy-handed. The low-end has a weighty punch to it, which can work well with some music, but more delicate tunes need a softer approach.

There's a decent level of detail here, but it's not the last word in clarity, (particularly in the midrange, which doesn't sound as clear and open as the Samsung system). Treble, for the most part, stays on the right side of bright, which gives the Pure an up-front character. Push the volume and it can start to sound harsh, though. Overall, the sound is energetic and listenable with everything we throw at it, from John Legend to Metallica.

Pure has hit the spot with the Jongo system. It can't match Sonos and Samsung for out-and-out sound quality, but its price means multi-room is an option for more people than ever before.

#### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Well built; easy set-up; big, enthusiastic sound; weighty low end; good price

**AGAINST** Bass can be overpowering; multi-room from third party apps is limited

**VERDICT** Not the ultimate in sound quality, but Jongo wins us over with peppy character

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# Samsung

## Shape Audio System

from £200

**Samsung has proved** time and again it can make a success of almost any product it turns its hand to. With the launch of the Shape Audio System, it can now add multi-room audio to that list.

At the moment, the system is a reasonably humble one: the Shape M5 and M7 speakers, and the HW-750 soundbar. But Samsung has already announced the smaller M3 speaker, and we expect more will be on the way soon.

### Package deal

The Samsung system is very attractive in its looks and as an overall package. It's priced just below its Sonos equivalents, at £230 for the M5 and £330 for the M7, and arguably offers more features: Bluetooth with NFC connectivity (a one-to-one connection only), and DLNA certification on top of wi-fi playback.

Some 2013-onwards Samsung TVs are compatible for wireless sound playback via Samsung's TV SoundConnect feature, and you can also set up a surround-sound system using two speakers and a soundbar, à la Sonos.

For multi-room, you must purchase Samsung's wireless Hub (£50), which

### What it comprises

**M5 £230** - The M5 is the smaller of the two speakers currently available (although will soon sit in the middle of the system, with the announcement of the M3). It has a two-way design with twin tweeters and a woofer.

**M7 £330** - A true three-way speaker for more power, the M7 packs twin tweeters with an improved cone design, a mid-range driver and a woofer.

**HW-750** - This soundbar can be used solo as part of a multi-room system, or can be paired with two speakers to create a surround-sound system. Using Samsung's TV SoundConnect, it will connect wirelessly to newer Samsung TVs.



needs to be hardwired to your router via ethernet. Once this is hooked up, it's a case of pressing the 'speaker add' button and switching on your speakers to register them onto your network.

The Samsung multi-room app helps walk you through this, and is also the place you will control your music and speakers, choosing to control them independently or with others.

### Need to go native

The streaming services supported in the UK are: Rdio, Deezer, Spotify (via Spotify Connect), Napster, 8Tracks and TuneIn Radio, all of which (bar Spotify) are controlled by the Samsung app. You will also be able to plug in sources like NAS drives on the same home network, as well as playback music stored on your device. Playlists can be built within the app from the latter only; you'll need to prepare any streaming-service playlists natively for the Samsung multi-room.

The speakers feel solid and well built. The triangular design is stylish and understated. We found standing them up helps improve bass evenness, while also helping to disperse sound. File compatibility is extensive: MP3, WAV, WMA, AAC, AIFF, ALAC and FLAC (up to 16-bit/44.1kHz). High-res music is supported too - the speakers are able to offer playback of 24-bit/96kHz tracks and downscale anything above that.

The five-star M5 remains our favourite of the two speakers, with a much better balance across the frequency range. Both

**1** Controls are minimal and touch-sensitive: there are icons for source, a volume dial and a mute button, but we never used them in testing as everything is easily controlled from your device.

**2** It's worth experimenting with speaker position: they can be placed vertically, using the included stand, or set flat.

offer a rich, full-bodied presentation, but the bass on the M7 tips too much onto the tubby side for our tastes. If you want a big, powerful sound, though, the M7 delivers, and the M5 does a good job for its size too. There's a bit more agility in the M5 over its bigger sibling, and there's a fun, energetic character to both of them. They jump into life when we stream Ella Eyre's *If I Go*. The midrange is a strong point, sounding clear and open where rivals like the Panasonic ALL Series can sound closed in. We still think the M5 pips the M7 when it comes to out-and-out detail, though.

It's a shame Samsung hasn't been able to create a consistent sound across the speaker range. But with the Shape Audio System it has come close to providing Sonos with one of its first serious competitors in years. With extensive functionality, a well-designed app and easy set-up, all it needs is a 'family sound' and a few more speaker options.

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Big sound; decent amount of detail; good control app; well featured; clear mid-range

**AGAINST** Lacks a universal 'family sound'; bass tubby and unrefined, particularly in M7

**VERDICT** One to watch in multi-room, Samsung's first effort is not bad at all

# Simple Audio

## Roomplayer+

from £600

It's been two years since we last saw the Simple Audio Roomplayer. In that time, it's added a '+' to its name, introduced support for high-resolution music up to 24-bit/192kHz (up from 24-bit/96kHz) and brought in the direct NAS-drive support its predecessor was lacking.

Not that you can tell by looking at it - its design has stayed largely unchanged, remaining a sturdy, yet elegant combination of aluminium and tempered glass. It's a rather different proposition from the all-in-one multi-room speaker designs offered by the likes of Pure and Samsung, and you'll have to add in your own speakers for the system to work. We used a pair of Q Acoustics 2020is.

### Adding the Amp

The Roomplayer+ with Amp (£700) is the unit we've tested. It contains a Class D amplifier and a claimed 2 x 50W output. There is also the option for the Roomplayer+ without amp (£600) that connects to an existing system.

On the back of the unit you'll find speaker outs, line-level inputs and outputs, a subwoofer out and both optical and coaxial outs. There are also ethernet and USB ports. Tucked low on the front are two 3.5mm sockets, one for headphones and one for connecting a phone or tablet.

You'll need to provide your own speaker cables, but in the box you'll find phono-to-phono, phono-to-3.5mm, 3.5mm-to-3.5mm and ethernet cables, which should cover any other connections you need to make.

### The mains thing

Simple Audio uses a system called Powerline, built into each of its units. This uses the regular mains power supply to deliver data to speakers in place of regular wi-fi. Simple Audio says this can offer data rates of up to 200Mbps, ensuring high-resolution music is played back without issue.

To get the Roomplayer+ system online, you'll need to hardwire your master unit to your router, or opt for a Roomplayer Bridge if this isn't possible.



Pairing between the Bridge and the Roomplayer(s) requires a simple series of button-pushes - we were up and running within a few minutes.

You will need to download a desktop app for your PC or Mac to finish the set-up though, which seems somewhat long-winded considering most of the Roomplayer+'s rivals offer set-up through a tablet or smartphone app.

Here it will let you set up all your music shares from local network sources such as iTunes libraries and NAS drives. You will also be able to plug in your information for the numerous streaming services it offers, which include Deezer, Qobuz, WiMP and TuneIn Radio - but not Spotify. If you're happy using the desktop we'd recommend sticking with it, as controlling the service from a mobile device is currently rather limited.

### In profile

One nice feature of the Simple Audio Roomplayer+ is the ability to create user profiles, so different people can add their own music libraries.

When it comes to performance, the Roomplayer+ benefits from its ability to play high-res music, and a 24-bit/96kHz download of Dire Straits' *Walk Of Life* is delivered with notably more detail than its non-high-res competitors.

The chords in the uptempo keyboard melody are layered and three-dimensional, and there's a precise handle on rhythm and timing that ensures everything is well organised.

The bass is punchy and well controlled, and the treble is clear and open, producing a clean, balanced sound that works well with all genres of music.

**1** Most of the connections are round the back, but there are also two 3.5mm sockets tucked under the main front panel.

**2** If you're not connecting to an existing system, as well as speakers you'll need the Amp unit, which adds £100 to the price.

You get a wonderful feeling of space from the wide soundstage too, which fills our listening room with ease.

Despite this, there's something about the Roomplayer+ that doesn't quite hold our attention. Even though there's more detail here than with many competitors, it lacks the ability to uncover the textures, dynamics and nuances that make a piece of music truly engaging.

### Almost there

Play a 24-bit/192kHz copy of Hans Zimmer's *Gotham's Reckoning* and it falls short of delivering the edge and urgency of rival system Bluesound, for example, lacking that last layer of expression and fine detail that really draws us in.

And herein lies the Roomplayer+'s biggest problem - it faces excellent competition, at £100 cheaper, in the Bluesound Powermode. And that's not a saving to be sniffed at.

But with good speaker pairing, the Roomplayer+ is still an excellent-sounding system that's very much worth an audition. However, to score the full five it needs to put a touch more thought into its audio, not to mention get its mobile and tablet apps working properly across the board for the full experience.

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Powerful delivery; precise sound; clean and clear; good level of detail; taut bass

**AGAINST** Lacks engagement; expensive

**VERDICT** A crucial update to the original Roomplayer, and a worthy contender, but it faces cheaper, more impressive competitors

# Sonos

## System

from £170

For years, Sonos has been synonymous with the concept of multi-room audio, so much so it's almost hard to know which came first. At the very least, Sonos spotted a trend long before its competitors - at most, it's responsible for making the market what it is today.

Sonos as a system has two big things going for it - breadth of choice and simplicity of use. In the time its rivals have needed to play catch-up, it's been able to launch a whole family of products and get onside with a long list of streaming services, not to mention really nail the usability side of it all too.

### Simple set-up

Of all the systems we've tested, the Sonos system is one of the easiest to set up. You'll need the Sonos app for your iOS or Android device, or alternatively you can download a desktop application for Mac or PC, all of which will walk you through the process step by step.

Until recently, users were required to hardwire their first Sonos player directly to their router if possible, or use the Sonos Bridge (£32). While this is still recommended for the most robust connection, an update now allows users to skip this step as long as their wireless network is strong enough to reach the room(s) containing the speaker(s).

We use a Bridge set-up to be sure of the most robust connection, and it takes seconds. The Sonos app is a large part of the system's charm. As well as walking you through set-up, it is where all of the



control for your system will take place, enabling you to easily see and control what music is playing where.

One big gap in Sonos' offering is its lack of support for high-res audio, and with systems from Bluesound, Simple Audio and LG now offering just that, it's a shame Sonos hasn't followed suit. Still, it supports all the main file formats, including MP3, WMA, FLAC (up to 16-bit/44.1kHz), WAV, AAC and AIFF.

### Flexibility and continuity

When it comes to performance, each member of the Sonos family offers the same entertaining character, giving a wholly universal sound no matter which speakers you own.

While it can't compete with the detail heard in high-res systems, it's able to dig out a decent amount of insight from our Spotify stream of Ten Walls' *Walking With Elephants*. It's an enthusiastic and engaging listen, yet one that keeps a firm hand on the bouncing bassline.

Play something softer, like Bon Iver's *Skinny Love*, and the vocals are focused

**1 Play:1.** This is the first rung on the Sonos speaker ladder. If you're connecting via the Bridge unit, press a two-key combination on the Play:1 to link up.

**2 Play:3.** The next step up. As you expand your system, the Sonos app lets you select what music plays where.

**3 Play:5.** This is the most powerful of the trio. All the speakers have individual EQ settings, plus a 'loudness' switch.

and believable while the banjo-strumming is packed with texture. There's a believable amount of depth and space to the presentation too, not to mention a good sense of scale and a rich, well balanced delivery.

When it comes to general usability, it's hard to find fault. There's no delay when skipping tracks or source, and the whole experience is well integrated.

Sonos provides a fantastic ecosystem within which to build your multi-room set-up. Reasonably priced, effortlessly stylish and with a plethora of options to expand your system as you go, Sonos is still one of multi-room's class acts.

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Breadth of range; ease of set-up and use; flexibility; rich, full-bodied sound

**AGAINST** No high-res support

**VERDICT** There's a reason Sonos is so dominant in this sector - if you don't mind about high-res support, it's hard to fault

### Meet the Sonos family

**Play:1 £170** The baby of the bunch, which can be paired with another Play:1 for stereo sound, or with the Playbar for a surround-sound set-up.

**Play:3 £260** Can be used like

the Play:1, but has the flexibility to be placed horizontally or upright.

**Play:5 £350** The biggest all-in-one speaker, it's stereo with five drivers.

**Connect £280** Hook up the Connect to an existing hi-fi system to make it into a Sonos component.

**Connect: Amp £400** Just add speakers! 55W/channel.

**PlayBar £600** A soundbar that acts just like any other Sonos speaker when it's not on TV duty. Can be made into a surround sound system by adding a pair of Play:1s or Play:3s. Or both.

**Sub £600** If you want to add some more weight to your system's low-end, the Sonos Sub integrates perfectly with your speakers or PlayBar and is completely wireless. Can be placed upright or lie flat.

# TEST VERDICT

## THE WINNER

**Bluesound**

From £400 ★★★★★



There's a new champ in the wireless multi-room market – **Bluesound** combines high-resolution audio and ease of use in one impressive system

**T**his is the first time we've ever undertaken a test of multi-room systems, and the results are very interesting indeed.

In the end, the battle for the win came down to a veteran and a newbie, and it was high-res support that swung it. Bluesound's sound quality simply can't be ignored, and while it is a fair bit pricier than Sonos, we'd argue it offers quality worth paying for.

Sonos remains a safe bet in the mainstream multi-room market, but if you want real hi-fi sound from your multi-room system, Bluesound is for you. The Sonos still deserves five stars, but it now needs high-res support.

### Simplicity is the key

Another mainstream brand breaking into the multi-room market this year is Samsung, and it's certainly showing some promise as one to watch. Offering Sonos-levels of simplicity, the speakers are packed with functionality too, but

just fall short when it comes to out-and-out refinement and a homogenous family sound.

Aboard the four star bandwagon is the high-res capable Simple Audio Roomplayer+, which put in a strong performance but fell short when compared to the Bluesound's superior sound and greater affordability.

### Multi-room on a budget

If you're keen to start a multi-room system but don't want to spend too much, Pure has a fun and affordable take on multi-room that's welcome in the market. We really like its nice range of speaker options and upfront, full-bodied sound. We'd like more clarity, though, and greater flexibility with other streaming services for full marks though.

Panasonic's ALL Series came in at the bottom of our six, dropping points for its uninspiring sound and limited functionality compared to its rivals.

**The Sonos still deserves five stars, but if you want real hi-fi sound from your multi-room system, Bluesound is for you**

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

### Wireless vs wired

Connecting a multi-room system to your existing wi-fi network might sound like the simplest option, but it won't give the most robust connection. If you can wire part of your system directly to your broadband router, you should.

### High-resolution audio

Some of the systems here, such as Bluesound and Simple Audio, will handle high-res files. Others, such as Sonos, won't. Decide if that's important to you before you buy.

### Powerline transmission

The Simple Audio system uses the mains electricity cables in your home to transmit sound from one room to the next. Powerline tech can handle data rates of up to 200Mbps, ideal for high-res audio.

### Streaming services

If you're a regular Spotify user, pick a system that can handle it.





**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
**TEST WINNER**

**Bluesound**

**From £400 ★★★★★**

**Wi-fi** Yes  
**Ethernet** Yes  
**Power (Powernode)** 80W  
**USB** Yes  
**Internet streaming** Yes  
**Audio formats** FLAC, WAV, AIFF, AAC, WMA, MP3, OGG, WMA Lossless, ALAC  
**High-res audio** Yes, up to 24-bit/192kHz  
**Dimensions, hwd (Powernode)** 17.6 x 25 x 20cm **Weight** 1.9kg



**Panasonic ALL Series**

**From £500 ★★★★★**

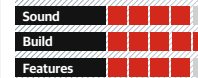
**Wi-fi** Yes  
**Ethernet** No  
**Bluetooth** No  
**NFC** No  
**USB** No  
**Internet streaming** Yes  
**Power (ALL 8)** 80W  
**High-res audio** No  
**Dimensions, hwd (ALL 8)** 22 x 37 x 14cm  
**Weight** 4.2kg



**Pure Jongo**

**From £80 ★★★★★**

**Wi-fi** Yes  
**Ethernet** No  
**Bluetooth** Yes  
**USB** Yes  
**Power (S3)** 20W, **(T4)** 50W, **(T6)** 100W  
**Internet streaming** Yes  
**Audio formats** MP3, WMA, AAC, MP2  
**High-res audio** No  
**Dimensions, hwd (S3)** 14 x 13.5 x 14cm  
**Weight** 1.25kg



**Samsung Shape**

**From £200 ★★★★★**

**Wi-fi** Yes  
**Ethernet (Hub)** Yes  
**Bluetooth** Yes  
**DLNA** Yes  
**NFC** Yes  
**Audio formats** MP3, WAV, WMA, AAC, AIFF, ALAC and FLAC  
**High-res audio** Yes, up to 24-bit/96kHz  
**Dimensions, hwd (M5)** 11 x 34 x 17cm  
**Weight (M5)** 2.3kg



**Simple Audio**

**From £600 ★★★★★**

**Wi-fi** No  
**Ethernet** Yes  
**Powerline transmission** Yes  
**Power** 2 x 50W  
**USB** Yes  
**Audio formats** MP3, AAC, ALAC, FLAC, AIFF, WAV  
**High-res audio** Yes, up to 24-bit/192kHz  
**Dimensions, hwd** 5 x 20 x 20cm  
**Weight** 1.2kg



**Sonos**

**From £170 ★★★★★**

**Wi-fi** Yes  
**Ethernet** Yes  
**Internet streaming** Yes  
**Audio formats** MP3, WMA, AAC, AAC+, Ogg Vorbis, Audible 4, ALAC, FLAC, WAV, AIFF, OGG, APE  
**High-res audio** No  
**Dimensions, hwd (Play:3)** 13 x 27 x 16cm  
**Weight** 2.3g



# DON'T JUST LISTEN TO IT. EXPERIENCE IT.

The top-of-the-range Pioneer SC-LX88 AV receiver bristles with tech so your movies are seen and heard exactly as they were meant to be

**W**atching a film should be an immersive experience. For a couple of hours, you can uncouple yourself from the outside world, suspend your disbelief and simply let yourself be entertained.

It's a big responsibility for product designers – which is why the experts at Pioneer have poured every ounce of their knowledge, technical experience and love of all things audio-visual into the range-topping SC-LX88 AV receiver.

Inside, the Direct Energy HD (High fidelity class-D) amplifier powers the show. And what a show it is: a massive 260W for each of the nine surround-sound channels; Dolby Atmos

compatibility for the most immersive sound you've ever heard; stunning quality and improved bass thanks to MCACC Pro calibration, independent dual subwoofer pre-outs and SABRE<sup>32</sup> Ultra DACs; high-res audio; 4K/60p/4:4:4 video signal capability; network audio...

There's something for pure audio too in the high-quality SABRE DAC stage. The SC-LX88 supports DSD, WAV, FLAC, AIFF and ALAC high-res stereo files, as well as multichannel FLAC, WAV 5.0 and 5.1-channel 24-bit/96kHz content.

It all comes together to bring to your living room the kind of cinema sound you'd only expect in... well, the cinema. The SC-LX88 is, quite simply, a triumph.



## TOTALLY IMMERSIVE

The SC-LX88 is upgradeable to Dolby Atmos spec. Never heard of Atmos? You're in for a treat: it allows for overhead speakers in addition to a standard surround set-up – so you get height elements and object-oriented sound for an amazing three-dimensional experience. It means when something passes overhead in the film, it does the same in your cinema room.



## PIONEER'S THREE-STEP TECHNOLOGY FOR REPRODUCING STUDIO MASTER SOUND

### STEP 1

### SUPERIOR DESIGN TECHNOLOGY

How the Direct Energy HD amplifier's highly efficient multi-channel output far surpasses the limits of analogue sound

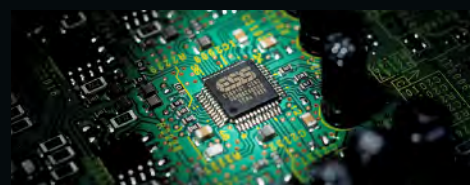
#### DIRECT ENERGY HD AMPLIFIER

The Direct Energy HD amplifier has further evolved to meet the needs of the latest HD content. It allows for high-power simultaneous multi-channel drive for huge dynamic punch. The Direct Power FET is directly connected to the circuit board, which maximises audio performance by reducing noise and improved switching. It's perfect for digital music.



#### SABRE<sup>32</sup> DAC ■ ESS SABRE<sup>32</sup> ULTRA DAC

The highly acclaimed 192 kHz/32-bit ESS SABRE<sup>32</sup> Ultra DAC (ES9016S) delivers exceptional sound with ultra-low distortion and a high signal-to-noise ratio. It offers jitter-free performance for an astounding performance that's packed with rich, deep bass. If you want to exploit the full potential of the Direct Energy HD amplifier, this is the way to do it.





**STEP 2**

**IDEAL REPRODUCTION ENVIRONMENT**

Pioneer has developed advanced sound-field correction technology that reproduces sound as true to the original as possible



**MCACC PRO ROOM TUNING**

With the latest MCACC Pro room calibration technology, the Pioneer SC-LX88 compensates for the speakers' size and distance from each other and the listener – as well as levels, tones and any phase differences. This allows it to take great advantage of Dolby Atmos by placing object effects incredibly accurately.



**STEP 3**

**SOUND TUNING**

Professional sound tuning by London's AIR Studios means the maestro's message comes across loud and clear



**AIR STUDIOS SOUND TUNING**

Pioneer has collaborated with AIR Studios in London on numerous occasions. Applying the studio's monitoring methods to the SC-LX88 pays dividends when it comes to conveying emotion and excitement in home-theatre sound. So much so, in fact, that the SC-LX88 has attained AIR Studios Monitor certification.



# The world's most desirable kit

# TEMPTATIONS

## “Few have delivered music in such a likeable way”

### ■ **PMC Twenty 26** Floorstanders

■ **£5750** ★★★★★

**W**e're big fans of PMC's Twenty range. The two middle models in the series, the 22 standmounter (£1970) and 23 floorstander (£2300) have been regular Award-winners in recent years and are in with a decent shout of repeating the feat yet again this time round.

The newly introduced 26 sits well above those two in price and, we're glad to report, in performance too. Like the rest of the range these floorstanders look a little odd when you first see them due to that sloping cabinet. The slope isn't just there to grab your attention either, it's claimed to make the cabinet more rigid and reduce the build-up of internal standing waves.

This is the first three-way Twenty model. A standard Twenty series tweeter handles the highs - it's a drive unit co-engineered with the highly respected OEM manufacturer SEAS. It uses a 27mm soft dome made of a fabric called Sonolex. The tweeter's grille doesn't just protect the driver from prying fingers, it also helps sound dispersion giving a wider, smoother off-axis response.

#### Star driver

The dome midrange driver is the star here. It's a 5cm coated linen design that builds on the units PMC has long used in its more upmarket offerings. This dome covers a wide frequency range, from 3.8kHz right the way down to 380Hz, meaning the all-important midrange area - where our hearing is at its most sensitive - is covered by just one driver. This approach moves the phase issues and other shortcomings innate in any crossover network to frequencies where such flaws are less critical.

**The dome midrange driver is the star here. It's a 5cm coated, linen design. Building on the units PMC has long used in its more upmarket offerings, it covers a wide frequency range**

A hefty 18cm driver - designed specifically for this speaker - delivers bass frequencies. It uses a stiff, damped natural fibre (otherwise known as treated paper) cone with rigid cast alloy chassis and a vented magnet assembly. Together these things help with detail, dynamics and power handling.

The output from this bass driver is augmented by PMC's trademark transmission line system (see panel on p86). The company has been honing this kind of bass tuning system for years and gained considerable success, delivering deep, clean low frequencies from smaller cabinets than you might expect.

#### Three-way harmony

A three-way design has innate advantages. Each drive unit can be optimized for the frequency band it works in, which should lead to a more revealing sound. Power handling is improved over two-way alternatives too, but the addition of an extra crossover - between midrange and bass - makes it harder to achieve a truly seamless balance throughout the frequency range. Rhythmic precision tends to suffer too. Still, with PMC's experience you'd hope these difficulties would be overcome.

Build quality is as good as we'd hope for. The 26's cabinet is solid and smartly finished. There's a choice of four finishes - the Amarone of our review sample

along with oak, walnut or diamond black. The finish is smart regardless of option chosen.

A sizeable plinth has to be attached to the base of the cabinet with some sturdy-looking Allen bolts. Unusually the plinth is separated from the main cabinet with hybrid cork/rubber spacers, which provide a degree of decoupling. The company claims improved bass definition and greater high frequency focus compared to the conventional solid approach, which rings true in use. Be careful not to do up the plinth bolts too tightly otherwise the decoupling effect is reduced - aim for fairly tight rather than lock-down rigid.

#### Sing from the source

Any speaker at this kind of level needs great electronics to sing, and the Twenty 26 is no different. We used our reference system of Clearaudio Innovation Wood-based record playing package, Naim NDS/555PS streamer and Bryston BP26/4B SST2 pre/power amplification. In this system the Twenty 26s shine.

Some products take a while to get under your skin, but not these. We like them straight away. They're beautifully balanced, from a tonality that's as even as you like to a combination of attack and refinement that's class leading.

Play a piece of music like Lorde's *Royals* and it's hard not to be impressed

#### TECH SPECS

Sensitivity (db/w/m) 86  
Impedance (ohms) 8  
Max power handling (watts) 300  
Biwireable Yes  
Finishes 4  
Dimensions (hwd cm) 109 x 19 x 44



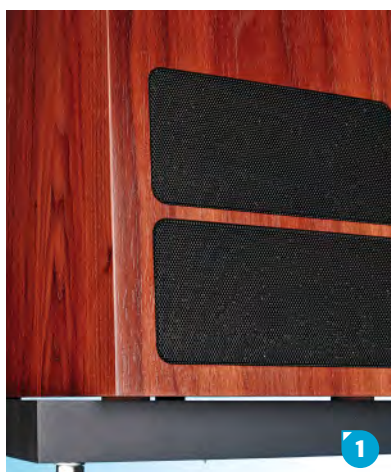
**'Any speaker at this type of level  
needs great electronics to truly sing,  
and the Twenty 26 is no different'**  
See overleaf for more detail...

with the 26s' low-end power and precision. There's a fine sense of weight here, yet these speakers have no trouble defining the texture and reverb of the bass notes too.

Lorde's vocals are rendered superbly. There's a massive amount of detail through the midrange and a lovely display of low-level dynamics that help make the most of her distinctive, engaging vocal delivery.

Move onto something more dramatic, such as Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, and these PMCs continue to impress. Here their dynamic reach stands out, as does the way they maintain composure when the piece becomes complicated.

**Some products take a while to get under your skin, but not the PMC Twenty 26. They're beautifully balanced speakers**



## In detail

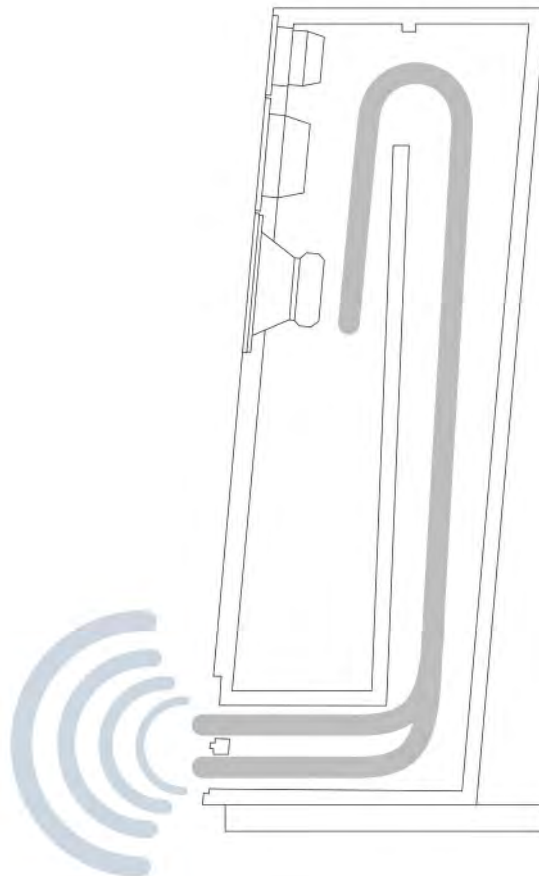
### Peter Thomas – owner and chief designer



**We think that transmission line bass loading technology is the best way of achieving high**

levels of musicality; a natural sound with deep, clear bass and from a far more compact cabinet than other designs allow. The transmission line is a difficult design to get right and it is far more costly to produce – but the payback is the sound quality.

Transmission lines work in a very different way to sealed or bass reflex designs. In our Advanced Transmission Line (ATL) the bass driver is placed at one end of a long tunnel, which is heavily damped with up to five different formulas and profiles of acoustically absorbent foams, to absorb all the upper bass inside the cabinet. The result is extremely low-distortion bass with no unwanted harmonics. The lowest frequencies emerge from the vent at the end of the line, which effectively acts as a second driver, giving deeper bass. The bass output of the ATL is consistent regardless of listening level, meaning it's perfectly clear, even at the lowest level. Great for late night listening!



The 26s' even tonality helps instruments sound convincing and the floorstander's carefully honed dispersion characteristics mean wide, expansive stereo imaging without too much effort. The stereo image is well projected and far more detached from the speaker enclosures than it normally would be for such sizable cabinets. That quality points to a well-behaved cabinet structure that doesn't impart too much of itself onto the music.

### Time to shine

Perhaps most impressive of all is the way PMC has managed to engineer such a seamless sound from the three-way design. The drive units really seem to work as one, delivering a consistent character from the lowest bass notes upwards. We're happy with the agility of these floorstanders too. Despite delivering a sound of pleasing weight and authority they never sound slow or unresponsive. These are lively, entertaining speakers that are refined

enough to allow you to enjoy poor recordings yet transparent enough to allow the best material to shine.

We come back to that word balance. While we've heard even more revealing high-end floorstanders (including those from PMCs more upmarket Fact range), very few have delivered music in such a likeable way. This is an all-round package that's very hard to pick holes in.

**Consider if** – You want an informative but unfussy high-end floorstander

**Highlight** – We love the Twenty 26s' sonic balance. Few rivals can match it

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Insightful yet refined balance; unfussy, musical nature; strong dynamics and impressive detail resolution; build and finish

**AGAINST** Nothing at this price

**VERDICT** Yet another top-class speaker from the Twenty range. PMC has done it again

**1** The exit of the transmission line is at the base of the front panel

**2** The speakers can be tri-wired and it is worth experimenting to get the best out of them

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## “There's a lovely sense of fluidity and body”

■ **Benchmark DAC2 HGC** DAC/Headphone amplifier

£1750 ★★★★★☆

**B**enchmark has real confidence in the DAC2 HGC's electrical design. How do we know? Why else would the company fill a third of the 67-page manual with performance graphs and specifications?

While all this information is nice to have (and shows Benchmark's design thoroughness), it doesn't give any indication as to whether the DAC2 HGC is a good listen. Happily, it is.

### The meat of the matter

What do you get for your £1750? You get a high-grade digital-to-analogue converter that uses four Sabre 32-bit D/A converters per channel for PCM duties. It'll accept 24-bit/192kHz signals through USB and coax dropping to a 96kHz sampling rate limit for the optical input.

The quad D/A chip arrangement is mirrored for DSD data streams, which means the DAC2 HGC doesn't need to convert DSD files into PCM before the number crunching begins, which will please purists.

Take a look at the DAC2's crowded back panel and you'll also find analogue users are well catered for. There's a pair of stereo inputs and a trio of outputs including a balanced option.

Usually digital-based products such as the DAC2 convert analogue signals into the digital domain for processing purposes. But Benchmark has, once again, chosen the purist route of keeping analogue signals unconverted all the way through.

The front panel is a riot of LEDs. These indicate the input selected as well as the signal's word length and sampling rate. We would have preferred a clearer, neater display, but the lights do their job.

The DAC2's overall build is good, though the simple bent-metal folded chassis and exposed bolts and screws give it a cottage-industry feel.

You'll also find a pair of 6.3mm headphone outputs, and for once we can't really notice any degradation of performance when both outputs are in use. It's a sign that the headphone amplifier section is well designed.

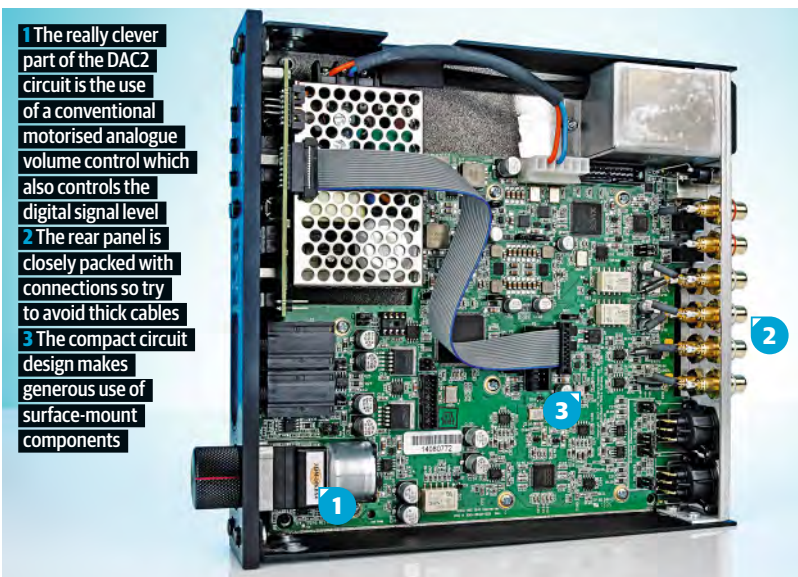
A unit like this demands good quality sources - we use our reference Naim NDS/555PS streamer; and Macbook

packed with a range of material from 192kbps files of Eminem's *Encore* set through to Beethoven's *Piano Concertos* (Nos. 3, 4 and 5) in 24-bit/192kHz.

Headphone choice is equally important. The bulk of the test involved AKG's superb K812s and Grado's PS500s.

This Benchmark is a fine performer. The first quality that grabs our attention is its tonal balance. It gives each part of the frequency spectrum just the right amount of emphasis, helping to make voices and instruments more

**The first quality that grabs our attention is its tonal balance. It gives each part of the frequency spectrum just the right emphasis, helping to make voices and instruments more convincing**







### John Siau DAC2 HGC designer



The DAC2 HGC has a unique volume-control system designed to achieve outstanding performance with both digital and analogue inputs. HGC is short for 'Hybrid Gain Control' - the volume potentiometer controls the analogue inputs

in the analogue domain, and the digital inputs in the digital domain. The DAC2 is also unique: it reduces the digital signal by 3.5dB before it enters the digital filters to stop inter-sample clipping - high-level peaks causing filter overloads.

The LED display is initially baffling but we were won over by the remote's clarity and neatness

convincing, particularly when allied to such a high level of resolution. If you're the kind of listener that likes to analyse recordings, the Benchmark is for you.

It's a clean, precise presentation but avoids the clinical edge that often goes along with such an outlook. The DAC is transparent enough to reveal flaws in a recording but refined enough to stop this being an issue. Eminem's *No Love* is about as harsh as recordings get, but the Benchmark keeps it listenable.

#### Equal rights for all

From Michael Jackson's *Thriller* (24-bit/176.4kHz) to Stevie Wonder's *Innervisions* on DSD, we never once feel the Benchmark gives preferential treatment to a specific file type.

One of the biggest surprises is just how good this digital preamp sounds

#### TECH SPECS

**Integrated No**  
**DAC Yes**  
**Inputs** 2 x coaxial, 2 x optical, 2 x RCA  
**Outputs** 2 x RCA, 2 x headphone, XLR  
**Remote control Yes**  
**Finishes 2**  
**Dimensions (hwd)** 5 x 20 x 21cm

with analogue sources. Using the Naim's outputs we hear all the good qualities evident through the digital inputs plus a lovely sense of fluidity and body.

Flaws? Perhaps that's too strong a word, but there are areas where we feel rival designs such as Chord's Hugo do better. We think the Benchmark could do with a stronger sense of drive to better convey the ebb and flow of recordings.

While the DAC2 HGC has a superb headphone output we are less pleased with how it sounds when used as a preamp in our main reference system. The good points are still present but coupled with a thinner, less substantial sound than we want.

Overall the Benchmark DAC2 HGC is a talented product. It's a fabulous headphone amplifier, great DAC and a pretty decent preamp. If your preference

is analysis we doubt you'll find better for the money. But if you want something that will make you want to dance along too, there are cheaper contenders that will serve you better.

**Consider if** you need a versatile hub with the emphasis on headphone quality  
**Highlight** The headphone amplification circuitry - wonderfully clean and precise

#### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Clean, precise sound; impressive detail; good feature set; excellent headphone amp

**AGAINST** Sound could be more exciting; not best as a preamp; has tough competition

**VERDICT** This is a hugely capable product but it's up against some formidable competition

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# PLAY LIST

The movies, music and games to test your system



## 300: Rise Of An Empire

Blu-ray  
Out 29th September

★★★★☆



### Bonus content

- The 300 Effect
- Real Leaders & Legends
- Women Warriors
- Savage Warships
- Becoming a Warrior

Duration 102m

Audio English: DTS-HD  
Master Audio 7.1

Picture 2.40:1, 1080p



## Putting the butch in butchery

**Men in underwear.** Hacking and slashing. And because these are Classical times, everybody has capes. Super-slow-motion makes a meal of flesh (glistening), blood (splattering) and fabric (billowing).

In 2007, the first adaptation of Frank Miller's historically liberal graphic novel struck a chord. Suddenly, toga parties made a comeback. Rugby teams the world over began trading *300* quotes over European stag nights.

Everyone likes a good underdog story, and the idea of three hundred (unfeasibly hard) men holding off a million certainly ticked that box. Then there was the rampant homoeroticism and stylised presentation, which made it equally hilarious and epic.

*300: Rise Of An Empire* tries, and partially succeeds, to replicate the same formula. Textbook sequel syndrome. But curiously, this isn't really a sequel. It's

context for the events of the first *300*. Or rather, an excuse to show all the fights that take place before, during and after.

That, and the introduction of Eva Green, is how we make do without Gerard Butler's shouting. She plays the villain who sparks the entire Persian invasion of Greece, and is a more-than-worthy centre of attention for the film's brisk 102 minutes.

### Bland of make-believe

It's not enough, however. Even Green's relentless smouldering can't cover up the Greek army's utter lack of personality.

There's no real reason to root for those who are clearly supposed to be the good guys. And so the fights become boring in no time, even if they are delightfully ridiculous.

At least there are a few naval battles. These are an unexpected and very welcome treat. There's

actually some strategy involved, which offers a much-needed change of pace. They're tense and spectacular, and it's a shame there aren't more of them.

As with the first *300*, the film has a very specific, very stylised look. Colours are desaturated, and more often than not the backgrounds are CGI.

But there are many chances to test black levels, and the super-slow-mo carnage is a great challenge for your system's motion-handling capabilities.

The DTS-HD Master Audio 7.1 soundtrack is a delight. The many effects are weighty and aggressive, speech is clear, and Junkie XL's score is appropriately anarchic.

Fans of the first film will find enough to enjoy here. But nobody should be under any illusion that *300: Rise Of An Empire* is anything but a load of rubbish. Delightful, utterly insane rubbish.

## Spotify highlights [Join us on Spotify whf.cm/playlist2014](http://whf.cm/playlist2014)



**Jóhann Jóhannsson: Payphone** Jóhannsson's soundtrack to 2014's *McNick* is the best thing about the film by quite some margin.

**Common: Speak My Piece** Eight writers are credited with authorship of *Speak My Piece* (although Notorious B.I.G. of course contributed from beyond the grave).

**Caribou: Can't Do Without You** New album *Our Love*, the follow-up to 2010's sublime *Swim*, is due on October 7th. If this is representative, we will be pleased to the nth degree.

**Emil Richards: Happy Together** It's not enough to be a demon percussion player, is it? You have to take power-pop classics and weird-time-signature the heck out of them.

# Music

GAMES, MOVIES  
& FORTHCOMING  
RELEASES  
p94



### Download, CD, vinyl



#### alt-J *All This Is Yours* Out now

★★★★☆

Two years on from Mercury Prize-winning debut *An Awesome Wave*, alt-J are back. Short on bass players (Gwil Sainsbury left in January this year), long as you like on strong, confident songs, and suffering quite badly from Dodgy Second-Album Cover Art Syndrome.

The history of pop is littered with acts who, having scored big with the debut album they'd spent their whole lives writing, stiffed terminally with the follow-up they had 10 weeks to write and record. But alt-J are made of stern stuff - *All This Is Yours* shows

artistic growth, unarguable maturity and greater ambition without losing sight of what made *An Awesome Wave* such a fierce proposition in the first place. *All This Is Yours* is stuffed to bursting-point with the sort of hooky, folktronica-inflected power-pop tunes that will see it high in the 2014 Albums of the Year lists.

#### Demanding stuff

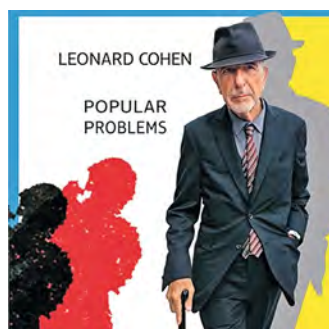
Treading an assured path between high-minded IQ-pop (the cyclical *Arrival In Nara*, *Nara* and *Leaving Nara*) and the transparently lascivious (*Every Other Freckle*, *Left Hand Free*, *Warm Foothills* and the Miley Cyrus-sampling *Hunger Of The Pine*), *All This Is Yours* is a bit of a handful for your system. It's an extremely dense recording in places, portentous horn stabs grinding against minor-key synth beds and wordless, open-throated choirs. Stereo focus and separation are key, then, as is tonal variation enough to make sense of the diverse instrumental palate.

#### Specifications

**Duration** 51m 27s

**Standout track** *Warm Foothills* Sweetly intense, helped out by Conor Oberst, Lianne La Havas and more.

### Download, CD, vinyl



#### LEONARD COHEN *Popular Problems* Out now

★★★★★

Leonard Cohen - songwriter, musician, novelist, poet, monk, lover and defraudee - marked his 80th birthday on 21st September with this, the 13th studio album of a career that's well into its sixth decade.

*Popular Problems* comprises nine songs of tastefully arranged, quietly intense complexity. Tempos top out at 'stately' (the dignified chick-a-boom of *Did I Ever Love You*). Instrumentation is lushly organic, built around organ, pianos electric and analogue, electric or stand-up bass, with occasional string- or

horn-stabs for texture and punctuation. The female chorus that's served to lighten the shadows of Cohen's deep, dark vocal ever since his 80s renaissance (*Various Positions* from 1984 and 1988's *I'm Your Man*) is in place. And throughout, Cohen delivers couplets and rhymes ("my mother says I'm chosen. My father says I'm not") that are so far beyond your standard pop-music fare it's almost funny.

#### A particular kind of ability

The demands *Popular Problems* places on your system aren't the most wide-ranging, but they are stern. Cohen's voice is a subterranean rumble alive with the texture of the years, and it's stage-front ahead of a band that needs all a set-up's powers of integration and textural resolution to fully communicate its Steely Dan-levels of fully accomplished musicianship. Plus it needs to swing, albeit as gently as befits a recording of this gravitas.

#### Specifications

**Duration** 35m 55s

**Standout track** *Almost Like The Blues* "...there's torture, and there's killing, and there's all my bad reviews..."

### Listen to it this way

#### The system

**Rega RP3/ELYS 2 £550** ★★★★★

Even-handed in presentation, sturdy in build and effortlessly musical

**Arcam FMJ A19 £650** ★★★★★

Capable of being Clark Kent or Superman depending on your musical preferences

**B&W 685 S2 £500** ★★★★★

May not (in fact, don't) look it, but the 685 S2s sound absolutely every penny's-worth



Shop around - all this is (or at least could be) yours for under £1700

### Listen to it this way

#### The system

**Naim CD5si £995** ★★★★★

A lot of money for 'just' a CD player, but the Naim is an utterly thrilling performer

**Naim Nait 5si £925** ★★★★★

Not an Award-winner by accident, the 5si is talented beyond its price

**B&W 683 S2 £1150** ★★★★★

If you've got the room, the 683 S2s have got the performance



The only Popular Problem you'll have with this system is ensuring you can afford it



## Movie shorts

### Pompeii

In which Jon Snow tries to do *Gladiator* and Jack Bauer is an evil senator, and everybody dies in a fiery inferno. This is really, truly awful.

### The Two Faces Of January

A tour guide is caught up in the business of mysterious sightseers in Greece. It's a delightful mix of 1960s glamour and murderous thrills.

### Goldfinger

It's 50 years old. And to celebrate, the Blu-ray is being re-released in a gorgeous gold steelbook. It's the same picture and extras, however.

### The Cabinet Of Dr Caligari

One of the first ever horror films is patched up with lost footage and remastered in 4K. It's still properly unsettling. Not bad for a 94-year-old.

## On-screen

### System tester



### Only Lovers Left Alive Blu-ray Out now

★★★★★

Vampires have had a rough ride in recent years. Once figures of mystery and fright, they've fallen from (dis) grace. And all the recent teen/sexy nonsense makes it worse.

Enter Jim Jarmusch, fiercely independent and not remotely interested in trends. He's going to do vampires his way, and to hell with you if you don't like it. But we do. We really do.

It's unclear if the story concerns *the Adam and Eve*, but they've been around forever. Adam wants to be left alone with his music. Eve likes to travel and read. They maintain a long-distance relationship while trying to avoid being noticed. What else do you do if you're immortal?

It's a mature approach to lore: moody, contemplative, but not without quirks - entirely compatible with Tom Hiddleston and Tilda Swinton's understated turns. Vampires haven't felt so fresh (or fun) in decades. This is how you rescue a genre.



### Watch it this way

#### The system

**BenQ W1070+**

£640 ★★★★★

Superb new projector is a bargain

**Sony BDP-S7200**

£220 ★★★★★

Absolutely brilliant value from Sony

**Yamaha YSP-1400**

£400 ★★★★★

Use it under or behind your screen

**AKG Y50**

£80 ★★★★★

If you need to keep the noise down

## Games

### Infamous: First Light

PS4 Out now

★★★★☆



It looks like DLC, but this spin-off from *Infamous: Second Son*, released a few months ago, can be downloaded and played whether you have the original game or not. It's big in size, but suffers the same problem of monotony; loose combat and an open world that feels lifeless. Sure is pretty, though.

### Madden NFL 15

PS3, PS4, Xbox One, Xbox 360 Out now

★★★★☆



Another year, another Madden American football game, but this feels like the first one that's properly next-gen. It looks amazing, recommended plays make it easier to, um, play, and the defensive game is far more robust than it used to be. The pre-match analysis is brilliantly televisual now, too.

### MetriCo

PS Vita Out now

★★★★★



Charts and diagrams don't sound like the most appealing theme for a game, but in *MetriCo* they're the basis for a brilliant puzzle platformer. Obstacles react to you in different ways, and as you progress you unlock more advanced controls. Before long you're twirling your Vita around like a lunatic.

### The Walking Dead Season 2

PS3, Xbox 360, PC, iPad, iPhone, Mac

★★★★☆



It's a bit flabbier than the first season, but season 2 of Telltale's *The Walking Dead* point-and-click adventure game (split into five £3.99 parts or available complete for £10.49) is still imaginative and brutal, with the threat heightened by the fact that you're now playing the part of a child in a zombie apocalypse.

## What we are waiting for...

**Movies (Blu-ray) *Edge Of Tomorrow*** (13th October) Tom Cruise does *Groundhog Day* in space. It's your chance to see him die many, many times. Also stars Emily Blunt.

**Movies (Blu-ray) *Godzilla*** (27th October) The King of Monsters finally gets a proper stomp into Hollywood. The story is thinner than a Japanese door but the fights are suitably epic.

**Music (Download, CD, vinyl) *Foo Fighters - Sonic Highways*** (10th November) Dave Grohl has directed some TV shows for HBO. This may or may not be the soundtrack.

**Music (Download, CD, vinyl) *Bob Dylan - The Basement Tapes Complete*** (Bootleg series vol. 11) (3rd November) Fact is, you just can't have enough Dylan. True.

## October in Hi-Def

### The best on the box



**Cillian Murphy is joined by Tom Hardy as a rival gangster. Expect sharp suits and a soundtrack with Jack White and Nick Cave**

**Boardwalk Empire**  
**Sky Atlantic HD - 13th September/Saturdays, 9pm**  
Get those three-piece wool suits, flapper dresses, fedoras and glittery headpieces out - it's time to say farewell to Enoch 'Nucky' Thompson and his merry band of gangsters on *Boardwalk Empire*.

We jump seven years in this fifth and final series, leaving behind the glitz and glamour of the roaring 20s and plunging deep into the Great Depression. With a Democrat president about to enter office and the alcohol ban soon to be repealed, things aren't looking good for Republican Nucky's political hold.

**American Horror Story: Freak Show**  
**Fox HD - 21st October, 10pm**  
The horror anthology series continues with a fresh new set of twisted, bizarre storylines and characters for its fourth series,

titled *Freak Show*. Set in the small town of Jupiter, Florida in 1952, the show follows one of the last remaining 'freak show' troupes of the American carnival tradition, complete with bearded lady, conjoined twins, three-legged contortionist and the world's smallest woman (actual Guinness record-holder Jyoti Amge).

The members are struggling to survive against waning demand for such acts, and also because they're being tormented by evil forces. Michael Chiklis joins the usual cast of matriarchs, and there's also a character called 'Twisty the clown-killer', which is our new favourite phrase.

**The Strain**  
**Watch HD - 17th September/Wednesdays, 10pm**  
When a rapid-response team from the Centre for Controlled Disease is sent to investigate the entirely mysterious death of 206

passengers on a plane, the last thing they were expecting was an outbreak of infectious vampirism.

These vampires aren't pretty-faced brooding teen-romancers. They're creatures of nightmare, with dislocated jaws, sickly pale skin and parasitic tendencies.

Adapted from the horror novels by Chuck Hogan and Guillermo del Toro (of *Pan's Labyrinth*, *Hellboy* and *Pacific Rim* fame), this is a fast-paced, gory thriller whose strength lies in del Toro's talent for building a layered, believable world.

**Doctor Who**  
**BBC One HD - Saturdays, 7.30pm**

We're loving Peter Capaldi's grumpy, irreverent 12th Doctor, who seems content to let Clara (whose character has finally been fleshed out with a winning temperament) handle the main grunt work of saving the day amid the pair's various crises.

Unlike past companions, Clara seems less reliant on the Doctor than the Doctor is on her (she's his "carer - she cares so that I don't have to"). We've got the wonderfully titled episode *Mummy On The Orient Express* awaiting us, in which the Time Lord takes up a job as caretaker of Coal Hill School.

**Peaky Blinders**  
**BBC Two HD - October**

Post-war Birmingham's premiere crime family is back, bringing its violent-yet-stylish world back to our screens with smoky bars, razor-edged caps and more charisma than should be decent.

If the likes of Cillian Murphy and Helen McCrory weren't enough, the period drama has Tom Hardy joining its ranks as the leader of a rival gang. Expect sharp suits, stunning cinematography and an anachronistic soundtrack blessed with Jack White and Nick Cave.

# WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?

Around the world, the illegal wildlife trade is responsible for the slaughter of thousands of animals each year, pushing some of our most loved species to the brink of extinction. We are not asking for your money. We are asking you to simply choose a side: the world's critically endangered species, or the criminals who kill them for money. Add your voice to the cause and help put the killing to an end.



united  
for  
**wildlife**

#WhoseSideAreYouOn

[unitedforwildlife.org](http://unitedforwildlife.org)



The No.1 source of clear, expert and independent advice

# BUYER'S GUIDE

NEW

Looking for some new **in-ear headphones** for your smartphone or music player? We've tested some of the best.

And if you're thinking of buying a **new TV** we can help you decide which is the optimum screen size for your home.



QR (quick response) codes

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 [whatifi.com](http://whatifi.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...



#### Focal Dimension

"Focal's Dimension soundbar delivers the goods in spectacular style"



#### Bluesound Powernode

"The Powernode is a superb way for hi-fi fans and audiophiles to get their high-res kicks"

### Inside

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# Your essential system set-ups

# BEST BUYS

GET THE  
BEST KIT  
FOR YOUR  
BUDGET

## Home Cinema 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-V377**  
★★★★★

**£260**  
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



**SONY KDL-40W605**  
★★★★★

**£450**  
If you're after a great all-rounder in both picture quality and smart features, this TV is it. Splendid.

TOTAL  
£1430

### CD PLAYERS



**MARANTZ CD6005**  
★★★★★

**£350**  
This incredibly musical player offers detail in spades, not to mention a great way with dynamics.

### AMPLIFIERS



**MARANTZ PM6005**  
★★★★★

**£300**  
A return to form by Marantz in this market, and a fine match for its CD-player sibling.

### SPEAKERS



**DALI ZENSOR 3**  
★★★★★

**£300**  
An entertaining and easy listen - an airy, spacious sound with lots of detail, punch and tonal balance.

TOTAL  
£950



**SONY BDP-S7200**  
★★★★★

**£250**  
Sony's new Blu-ray offering is a really remarkable achievement. It has huge ability with images and sound.



**SONY STR-DN1050**  
★★★★★

**£500**  
Incredible value, this home-cinema powerhouse has pretty much all the features and ability you could hope for.



**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.



**SAMSUNG UE48H64800**  
★★★★★

**£700**  
A whole lot of screen for your money - and this is a superb performer as well. A bargain.

TOTAL  
£2430



**NAIM CD5si**  
★★★★★

**£1000**  
Exceptional player, combining superb sound with great value for money. An Award winner.



**NAIM NAIT 5si**  
★★★★★

**£925**  
The perfect partner for its matching CD player, this amp just as good value. And great sounding.



**NEAT SX2**  
★★★★★

**£1395**  
A nicely refined, dynamically strong, beautifully musical presentation from diminutive, well-made floorstanders.

TOTAL  
£3320



**PANASONIC DMP-BDT700**  
★★★★★

**£500**  
A superb Blu-ray player with 4K/60fps capability and 4K Chroma upscaling. A star.



**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.



**SONY VPL-HW55ES**  
★★★★★

**£2800**  
Superb in 2D, this projector also excels at 3D. Edges are sharp, pictures have depth and stability.

TOTAL  
£8150



**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 great partner for the M2 CD player. This amp is dynamic, detailed and entertaining.



**SPENDORA 6R**  
★★★★★

**£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

### PROJECTORS

**Epson EH-TW5910** £900  
**Epson EH-TW4400** £2000  
**Sony VPL-HW55ES** £2800

### COMPACT SPKRS

**Tannoy HTS101** £400  
**Q Acoustics Q7000i** £900  
**B&W MT60D** £1950

### SUBWOOFERS

**B&W ASW610** £400  
**B&W ASW610XP** £700  
**Velodyne SPL-1000 Ultra** £1400

### FULL-SIZE SPKRS

**Q Acoustics 2000i 5.1 Pack** £625  
**Dali Zensor 15.1** £980  
**B&W CM9 Theatre** £4200

### SOUNDBARS

**Philips HTL5120** £250  
**Philips HTL9100** £600  
**Monitor Audio ASB-2** £1000

### SUPPORTS

**Target CL430** £190  
**Atacama Evoque Eco 60-40** £460  
**Atacama Moseco 6** £200  
**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

### TABLETS

**Google Nexus 7** £200 (16GB)  
**Google Nexus 10** £390 (32GB)  
**Apple iPad Air** £480 (32GB)

### RADIOS

**Pure Evoke F4** £170  
**Geneva WorldRadio DAB+** £270  
**Arcam T32** £480

### HEADPHONES

**AKG K451** £180  
**Grado SR80i** £135  
**Beyerdynamic MMX101** £100

### MICRO SYSTEMS

**Denon D-M39DAB** £310  
**Marantz M-CR610** £500  
**Naim UnitiQute 2** £1150

### AUDIO CABLES

**Audioquest FLX-SLIP 14/4** £5.80/m  
**Atlas Elements Integra** £45  
**Supra USB 2.0** £30



**BLUESOUND IS A 24-BIT NATIVE, PURE DIGITAL WIRELESS STREAMING MUSIC SYSTEM.**

Even 16-bit CDs have only about half of the audio spectrum that the master recording holds and that's a whole lot more than MP3s have left in them. With more than a decade of compressed audio piping through earbud headphones and cheap dock players, the time has come. The portable players we all love have created a new way of listening to music, but there hasn't really been much there to hear. Until now. Enter true 24-bit HD digital audio.

FOR THE LATEST PRICES AND OFFERS VISIT [WWW.SSAV.COM](http://WWW.SSAV.COM) OR CONTACT YOUR LOCAL STORE

**NEW**  
**£229 OR LESS**



Bluetooth

BLACK OR WHITE

**SAMSUNG • M5 • WIRELESS SPEAKER SYSTEM**  
Introducing the new Samsung M5 Wireless Speaker that lets you integrate music around how you live. Its never been easier to immerse yourself in your favourite sounds.

**NEW**  
**£895**



Bluetooth

**NAIM • MU-S0 • WIRELESS MUSIC SYSTEM**  
Combines Naim's expertise in streaming, amplification and loudspeaker technology. Mu-so is the stage your music deserves, bringing you closer to the songs that inspire your life.

**£169.99 OR LESS**  
**SAVE £160**



AirPlay

BLACK OR WHITE

**B&W • Z2 • WIRELESS MUSIC SYSTEM WITH DOCK**  
The best of all worlds - amazing sound, wireless streaming with AirPlay, a Lightning connector for docking the latest generation of iPhones and iPods and a design that fits almost anywhere.

**£799 OR LESS**



Spotify, aptX, Bluetooth, AirPlay

**NAID • 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.

**£1999**  
**SAVE £484**



**NAIM • UNITILITE • ALL-IN-ONE NETWORK SYSTEM**  
**FOCAL • ARIA 906 SPEAKERS (WALNUT)**  
UnitiLite takes the feature set of the award-winning Naim Uniti, including high-resolution music streaming (up to 32bit 192kHz), CD playback, internet radio and iPod / iPhone / MP3 playback and distils it into an elegant, sleek enclosure. Add a pair of Focal Aria 906 speakers and create an accessible all-in-one system that can put music at the centre of your life.

Focal Aria 906 available in Gloss Black for an additional £100

Naim UnitiLite available excluding speakers £1725

**NEW**  
**£399 OR LESS**



dlna, AirPlay

BLACK OR WHITE

**MONITOR AUDIO • AIRSTREAM A100 NETWORK AMPLIFIER / DAC**  
The AirStream A100 blends true audiophile sound quality with 21st century technology and style. Whatever source you choose, it will render the sound with astonishing scale, detail and drama.

**£SSAV.COM**



**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.

**NEW**  
**£799 OR LESS**



BLACK OR SILVER

**SONY • HAP-S1 HI-RES AUDIO PLAYER SYSTEM**  
Take your music enjoyment to new heights with Sony's new HAP-S1 500GB Hi-Res audio system with 2x40W analogue amplifier, easy music file transfer and smartphone browsing.

PLEASE NOTE: SOME BRANDS/PRODUCTS ARE NOT AVAILABLE AT ALL STORES. SPECIAL/ADDED VALUE OFFERS ARE NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER (NICWAOO). ADVERT VALID UNTIL 17/10/2014. E&OE



WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2013

£209 OR LESS

**PRO-JECT • ESSENTIAL II • TURNTABLE**

Entry-level "plug'n'play" two speed turntable with single piece aluminium tonearm and pre-fitted Ortofon OM5e cartridge.

£299 OR LESS



**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.



NEW £799 OR LESS

NEW £1499 OR LESS

**ARCAM • FMJ CDS27 / FMJ A39 • CD / AMPLIFIER**

Introducing Arcam's audiophile Class G integrated amplifier and SACD/CD player with Network streaming up to 192/24 for class leading sound quality.

£399 OR LESS

aptX CSF Bluetooth

WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2013

**NAD • D 3020 AMPLIFIER / DAC**

Features digital and analogue inputs plus the convenience of wireless streaming with its Bluetooth capability.



£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.



£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.

£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 is an "absolute barn-stormer of an amplifier". The C 516BEE is the perfect partner.



£1249 OR LESS

SAVE £50!

**ROKSAN • KANDY K2 • CD / AMPLIFIER**

The K2 CD, sets a new standard for true hi-end entry level CD replay and is the perfect match for the K2 amplifier. Available in Silver or Black.

£599 OR LESS



WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2013

**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.

£1295



WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2013

**NAIM • DAC-V1 • DAC / HEADPHONE AMP**

The DAC-V1 from Naim is an asynchronous USB digital to analogue converter with multiple digital S/PDIF inputs, precision volume control and a high-quality headphone amplifier.

Only available from our stores in Holborn, Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells.



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WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2013

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**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.

£1899 OR LESS

£1899 OR LESS

**ROKSAN • CASPIAN M2 • CD / AMPLIFIER**

The M2 amp boasts 85wpc and five line inputs while the matching CD features a 24-bit DAC plus dedicated power supplies for the outputs.



£599 OR LESS

£499 OR LESS

**ROTEL • RA-12 / RCD-12 • AMPLIFIER / DAC / CD**

Amplifier with DAC that supports iPod USB and Bluetooth audio streaming. Includes four analogue line-level inputs and a phono input. The RCD-12 CD player is an ideal partner.

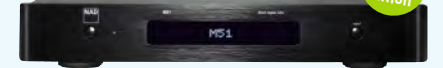
£399 OR LESS



**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.

£1499 OR LESS



NEW BLACK FINISH

**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 £699 OR LESS

Hi-Res AUDIO

AirPlay

aptX CSF Bluetooth

**SONY • MAP-S1 • MULTI AUDIO PLAYER SYSTEM**

It's all right here - a powerful 2x50W amplifier, tuner and CD player integrated in an elegant compact unit. Just add speakers and you are ready for an incredible Hi-Resolution Audio experience.

ESSAV .COM



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.

ESSAV .COM



WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2013

**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.



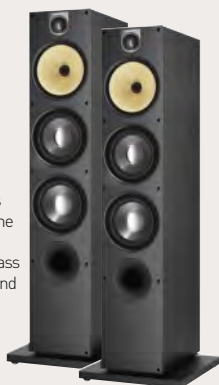
**BOWERS & WILKINS • CM6 S2**  
The CM6 S2 is the first standmount in the CM Series to benefit from tweeter-on-top technology with its Decoupled Double Dome tweeter. The speaker also features a 165mm bass/midrange driver. The overall result is superb imaging and spaciousness not usually found in a standmount speaker.

**NEW** £1499 OR LESS Price excludes stands

**BOWERS & WILKINS 683 S2**

The versatile 683 S2 is ideal for stereo and home theatre use. Its performance is enhanced with the addition of a Decoupled Double Dome tweeter along with new bass driver construction techniques and an FST Kevlar midrange driver.

**NEW** £1149 OR LESS



**Q ACOUSTICS 2020i**

This award-winning bookshelf speaker exudes quality, delivering extended bass, an open mid-range, astonishing transient response and exceptional high frequency clarity.

£169.95 OR LESS  
WHLAW DR FTZ  
WHAT Hi-Fi? 2013  
AWARDS 2013  
BEST SPEAKER  
UNDER £200

STANDARD FINISHES: GLOSS FINISHES: £219.95



**PMC • TWENTY23**  
The first and overwhelming impression of the Twenty23 is an open, engaging and communicative speaker. Its size defies 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

**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.

£999 OR LESS



**PSB IMAGINE MINI (WALNUT)**

Meet the newest and smallest member of the ultra-stylish Imagine Series. The deceptively small Imagine Mini makes a big impact on an already impressive range of award-winning speakers.

£399 OR LESS SAVE £200 LIMITED STOCK

CLAIM FREE PSB PFS-27 SPEAKER STANDS WORTH £199



**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



**Q ACOUSTICS • CONCEPT 40**  
The Q Acoustic Concept 40 floorstanding speakers are the latest addition to the award-winning Concept range and deliver unparalleled sonic performance at its price.

**NEW** £999.95 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

**SONOS THE WIRELESS Hi-Fi SYSTEM**

The Sonos Wireless HiFi 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.



SSAV.COM

**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.



£329 OR LESS

WHAT Hi-Fi? 2013 AWARDS 2013 BEST HEADPHONE UNDER £500

**DENON • HEOS WIRELESS MULTI-ROOM MUSIC SYSTEM**

HEOS by Denon is a Wireless Multi-Room Sound System comprising a family of great-sounding music players for your whole home. There is a free app to control them from your iOS or Android phone or tablet. You can enjoy your favourite streaming music services, internet radio or your own music collection and set-up is a breeze.



Stream from your favourite online music services  
Spotify DEEZER  
napster tunein

NEW

SSAV.COM

**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.



£229 OR LESS

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**Real Stores**

Sevenoaks Sound & Vision have 27 stores nationwide with plans to open more during 2014. 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 (NICWAOO).

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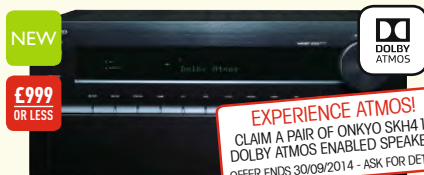
**SEVENOAKS**  
SOUND & VISION



£2199 OR LESS

### ARCAM • FMJ AVR450 • 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 AVR380 & AVR750



NEW

£999 OR LESS



### ONKYO • TX-NR838 • AV RECEIVER

New 7.2-channel Network receiver supporting Dolby Atmos® upgradability, multidimensional sound plus Ultra HD streaming. Also Available: ONKYO TX-NR636 & TX-NR3030

EXPERIENCE ATMOS!  
CLAIM A PAIR OF ONKYO SKH410  
DOLBY ATMOS ENABLED SPEAKERS  
OFFER ENDS 30/09/2014 - ASK FOR DETAILS



NEW

£999 OR LESS

### NAD • T 758 • AV RECEIVER

AV receiver featuring NAD's Modular Design Construction for future upgrades along with exceptional sound quality. Also Available: NAD T 748 & T 787



NEW

£1399 OR LESS



### PIONEER • SC-LX58 • AV RECEIVER

New 9.2-channel Network receiver with with Class D Amplification, Wi-Fi, AirPlay DLNA, Bluetooth and Dolby Atmos® upgradability. Also Available: PIONEER VSX-924 & SC-LX88



NEW

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### SONY • STR-DN1050 • AV RECEIVER

7.1-channel AV receiver with Bluetooth and NFC compatibility, for instant wireless playback from any compatible device. Also Available: DENON AVR-X2100W & AVR-X4100W



NEW

£1999 OR LESS



### YAMAHA • RX-A3040 • AV RECEIVER

New AV receiver with built-in Wi-Fi, 11.2 channel expandability, highest grade construction and Dolby Atmos® upgradability. Also Available: YAMAHA RX-V677 & RX-A1040

### CANTON • DM 50 • SOUNDBASE

The Canton DM 50 sets a new standard for TV sound. Intended to be positioned under a TV's pedestal stand, the DM 50 creates a convincing, room filling sound.



NEW

£399 OR LESS



### Q ACOUSTICS • MEDIA 4 • SOUNDBAR

The new Q Acoustics Media 4 is a high performance Soundbar designed to deliver high fidelity reproduction of music, and high quality audio from a TV or set top box, tablets and smartphones.



NEW

£399.95 OR LESS



£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.



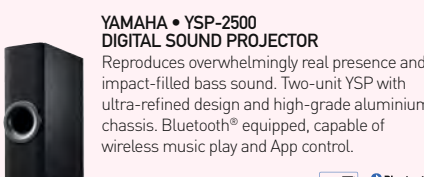
NEW

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### YAMAHA • SRT-1000 • SOUNDBASE

Enjoy richly realistic and powerful sound just by placing it under your TV! Surround sound system featuring Digital Sound Projector technology. Supports Bluetooth® and a dedicated app for smartphone control.



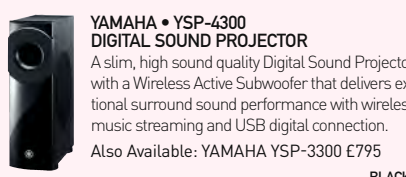
### YAMAHA • YSP-2500 DIGITAL SOUND PROJECTOR

Reproduces overwhelmingly real presence and impact-filled bass sound. Two-unit YSP with ultra-refined design and high-grade aluminium chassis. Bluetooth® equipped, capable of wireless music play and App control.



NEW

£799 OR LESS



### YAMAHA • YSP-4300 DIGITAL SOUND PROJECTOR

A slim, high sound quality Digital Sound Projector with a Wireless Active Subwoofer that delivers exceptional surround sound performance with wireless music streaming and USB digital connection.

Also Available: YAMAHA YSP-3300 £795

BLACK OR SILVER

£989 OR LESS

SAVE £310



WHAT IS IT?  
SPEAKER PACKAGE  
WHAT IS IT FOR?  
AVR/RS 2013  
SPEAKER PACKAGE  
SPEAKER PACKAGE

£899.95 OR LESS

### Q ACOUSTICS • Q7000i • SPEAKER PACKAGE

Stylish 5.1 package that delivers dynamic sound for movies, but with the ability to play music. Classic black or white matt finishes.



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WHAT IS IT FOR?  
AVR/RS 2013  
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SPEAKER PACKAGE

£2849 OR LESS

### KEF • R100 5.1 • SPEAKER PACKAGE

Comprises four R100 speakers, an R200C centre speaker and R400B active subwoofer. Great for both home cinema and music.



WHAT IS IT?  
SPEAKER PACKAGE  
WHAT IS IT FOR?  
AVR/RS 2013  
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SPEAKER PACKAGE

£1499 OR LESS

### MONITOR AUDIO • RADIUS R90HT1 • SPEAKER PACKAGE

Award-winning speaker package comprising four Radius 90 satellites, Radius 200 centre speaker and Radius 390 subwoofer.



WHAT IS IT?  
SPEAKER PACKAGE  
WHAT IS IT FOR?  
AVR/RS 2013  
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SPEAKER PACKAGE

£1939 OR LESS

### B&W • MT-60D • SPEAKER PACKAGE

Speaker package combining M-1 speakers with the stunning power and control of a PVID subwoofer. Available in a matt black or white.



### REL • S2 SUBWOOFER

Fast, tuneful, fun and exceptionally dynamic, the REL S2 permits those with limited space or compact speakers to enjoy the benefits of Serie S performance.

NEW

£999 OR LESS



NEW

£2799 OR LESS

### SONY • VPL-HW55ES • SXRD PROJECTOR

A fantastic option for movie lovers who want an incredible cinematic experience at home, far beyond the reach of TV.

# Samsung UHD TV Curved

Ultra High Definition 4K



## SAMSUNG

HU8500 SERIES • CURVED 4K UHD TV

Introducing a breakthrough in TV viewing that will change the way you watch TV forever – the Samsung HU8500 Curved UHD. Wider viewing angles, pure and accurate colour reproduction and a sense of depth never experienced before are only possible on a curved Samsung screen, specifically shaped for UHD viewing at its very best.

55 65 78 FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY



## SONY 4K

X9 SERIES • 4K UHD 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 79 FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY

Also Available  
SONY X8 SERIES • 4K UHD TV



4K ULTRA HD TV  
Sony KD-65X9005B  
The Best European 4K Ultra HD TV 2014-2015

## Panasonic

AX802 SERIES • 4K UHD TV

A high-end model that combines 4K picture quality with high-level innovative functions in a stylish design.

The use of the 3840 x 2180 4K panel produces high-definition picture quality. The newly developed high-brightness, high-color-space panel and 4K Remaster Engine provides a higher dimension of 4K picture quality.

As with the other models in the new VIERA range, you get Freetime built in. This allows you to get the advantages of roll back TV (for the past seven days) and easy access to all major catch up services directly from the Freetime programme guide including BBC iPlayer, ITV Player, 4oD and Demand 5.

FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY 50 58 65



SONY • W8 SERIES • FULL HD TV

42 50 55 FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY



PANASONIC • AS802 SERIES • FULL HD TV

47 55 60 FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY



SAMSUNG • HU7500 SERIES • 4K UHD TV

48 55 65 75 FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY



ARCAM • FMJ BDP300 • 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

Arcam's BDP300 Blu-ray player delivers outstanding sound quality with audio CDs along with excellent movie performance from either 2D or 3D films.

Also Available: MARANTZ UD7007



PANASONIC • DMP-BDT700 • 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

New top of the range model boasting up to 4K 60p output, HDMI 2.0 support, 7.1-channel analogue audio output, along with ground-breaking 4K Direct Chroma up-scaling.

Also Available: PANASONIC DMP-BDT260 & DMP-BDT460



SONY • BDP-S7200 • 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

The new Sony BDP-S7200 3D Blu-ray Player with 4K upscaling and powerful smart features – it will be the centre piece of your home entertainment system.

Also Available: SONY BDP-S5200 & BDP-S6200

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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



#### Sony KDL-32W706B

"It may not be quite the most accomplished picture out there, but a tempting price puts it right at the top of our wishlist."



#### Samsung UE48H6400

"It's a subtler, more controlled and balanced picture, and we think that the TV giant has got its approach just right this year."



#### Samsung UE65HU7500

"We're impressed by the 4K Samsung. It's got plenty of nice features, including a neat new interface. It's an attractive looking 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 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
Finlux 40F8073-T	330	03.14/GT	★★★★★	ATV with a sharp, exciting picture at a terrific price	LED	40	1920x1080						3	55x93x4
Hannspree SL22DMMB	135	01.14/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best 22in TV, Awards 2013</b>	LCD	22	1920x1080						1	53x39x17
Kogan LULED24DVDYA	134	02.13/ST	★★★★★	This versatile little set is fine value for money	LED	24	1920x1080						2	38x58x5
Kogan KULED22XXXVA	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-42AS500B	450	10.14/ST	★★★★★	A user-friendly TV that's a little lacking in black levels but is worth a look	LED	42	1920x1080						2	57x96x7
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-L32E6B	380	01.14/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best 32in TV, Awards 2013</b>	LED	32	1920x1080						3	43x72x5
Panasonic TX-P50X50B	453	01.13/GT	★★★★★	Hard to beat on performance per pound	Plasma	50	1024x768						2	72x118x8
Panasonic TX-P50X60B	430	03.14/GT	★★★★★	Compromised, but this Plasma is an admirable effort nonetheless	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
Polaroid 5-42-LED-14	370	10.14/ST	★★★★★	A surprising performer that stands up to more established brands	LED	42	1920x1080						3	56x96x6
Samsung UE40F6400	480	03.14/GT	★★★★★	A stunning, feature-laden TV from Samsung. Recommended	LED	40	1920x1080						4	54x93x5
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
Sony KDL-40W605B	450	10.14/ST	★★★★★	A great set that impresses in almost every way	LED	40	1920x1080						4	55x93x9
Technika 22-212i	168	02.13/ST	★★★★★	Great value, with plenty of features	LED	22	1366x768						2	37x54x1
Toshiba 32L6353	450	09.13/FT	★★★★★	A decent TV for the money but response times can be sluggish	LED	32	1920x1080						4	44x76x7
Toshiba 40L6353	400	03.14/GT	★★★★★	Clunky interface aside, this is a decent TV with a great HD picture	LED	40	1920x1080						4	54x92x27
Toshiba 40L6453DB	430	10.14/GT	★★★★★	Rivals are slicker, but this Toshiba has an attractive picture	LED	42	1920x1080						4	57x96x9
<b>£500-£2000</b>														
Finlux 42FME242S-T	500	10.14/ST	★★★★★	Sharp picture, decent detail and smart features. Finlux is back on form	LED	42	1920x1080						2	56x96x6
Finlux 47S9100-T	800	06.13/GT	★★★★★	Good picture, decent 3D and a low price. Worth a look	LED	47	1920x1080						4	67x112x4
LG 42LB700V	550	10.14/ST	★★★★★	A fine set, with WebOS being the main attraction here	LED	42	1920x1080						3	56x95x6
LG 47LB730V	1000	08.14/ST	★★★★★	Solid sound, premium build and a good picture. A fine effort from LG	LED	47	1920x1080						3	62x106x55
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



TELEVISIONS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Type	Size (in)	Resolution	Smart	Active 3D	Passive 3D	Freeview	Freesat	HDMI	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Panasonic TX-P42GT60B	1000	01.14/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best 40-46in TV, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR</b>	Plasma	42	1920x1080	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	3	60x99x5
Panasonic TX-P42GT50B	1200	10.12/GT	★★★★★	This sensational all-rounder remains a favourite	Plasma	42	1920x1080	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	4	60x99x5
Panasonic TX-L47AS650B	800	08.14/ST	★★★★★	A talented set, but other TVs have the edge in terms of value	LED	47	1920x1080	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	3	63x107x5
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
Philips 42PFL6008	1000	08.13/ST	★★★★★	Impressive picture with comfortable 3D – a strong contender	LED	42	1920x1080	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	4	56x95x3
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
Philips 55PFS6609	1200	07.14/GT	★★★★★	Dazzling with HD content, but rivals offer better overall performance	LED	55	1920x1080	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	4	72x123x4
Philips 48PFS57093	750	08.14/ST	★★★★★	Excels in many areas but its SD performance is an area of concern	LED	48	1920x1080	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	4	62x108x6
Samsung PS51E550	850	09.12/GT	★★★★★	A pedigree 50in plasma at a steal of a price	Plasma	51	1920x1080	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	3	72x120x6
Samsung PS51E8000	1700	06.12/FT	★★★★★	A big-screen plasma that should be tried out	Plasma	51	1920x1080	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	3	71x119x5
Samsung PS51F5500	680	01.14/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best budget 47-52in TV, Awards 2013</b>	Plasma	51	1920x1080	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	3	71x112x27
Samsung PS51F8500	1900	07.13/FT	★★★★★	A top-class plasma screen	Plasma	51	1920x1080	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	3	74x119x6
Samsung UE40ES6800	950	07.12/FT	★★★★★	Good spec and looks, but the backlight isn't great	LED	40	1920x1080	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	3	67x92x33
Samsung UE32F6400	500	09.13/ST	★★★★★	Some niggles but a desirable set with excellent catch-up TV features	LED	32	1920x1080	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	4	44x74x5
Samsung UE40F6500	900	08.13/ST	★★★★★	Not a class leader but offers a lot for your money	LED	40	1920x1080	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	3	91x60x27
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
Samsung UE40H6400	550	10.14/GT	★★★★★	An engrossing TV with plenty of smarts and a cracking picture	LED	42	1920x1080	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	4	54x92x5
Samsung UE48H6400	700	08.14/ST	★★★★★	For £700 this is one of the best TV deals of the year so far	LED	48	1920x1080	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	4	63x109x5
Samsung UE48HU7500	1600	10.14/FT	★★★★★	Some minor flaws aside, this is a great smaller-sized 4K set	LED	48	3840x2160	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	4	62x107x36
Sony KDL-40HX853	1000	10.12/ST	★★★★★	<b>Best 40-42in TV, Awards 2012. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR</b>	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-42W705B	530	08.14/FT	★★★★★	A promising start for Sony's Full HD range. A consistent performer	LED	42	1920x1080	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	4	56x96x6
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
Sony KDL-48W605B	700	08.14/ST	★★★★★	A competitive performer with good picture quality	LCD	48	1920x1080	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	4	68x108x9
Sony KDL-50W829B	900	07.14/GT	★★★★★	Loses a star but this TV is still worth an audition	LED	50	1920x1080	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	4	66x112x6
Sony KDL-55W955B	1600	05.14/FT	★★★★★	A good TV but we expect more from a flagship set	LED	55	1920x1080	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	4	79x124x9

£2000 and above

Bang & Olufsen BeoVision 11	5250	01.14/GT	★★★★★	A truly luxurious TV that delivers a great performance too	LCD	40	1920x1080	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	6	89x96x6
LG 55LA860W	2300	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Close but no cigar. A good TV but the competition is strong	LED	55	1920x1080	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	4	72x123x4
LG 55EA980W	8000	01.14/FT	★★★★★	A great first OLED effort from LG	OLED	55	1920x1080	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	4	80x123x19
LG 55UB950V	2300	09.14/GT	★★★★★	Not without its flaws, but this TV is good to look at, great to use	LED	55	3840x2160	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	4	123x78x24
LG 65LA970W	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	08.12/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-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 KE5559C	7000	01.14/GT	★★★★★	An excellent first step for large screen OLED TVs	OLED	55	1920x1080	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	4	78x142x14
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 UE55HU7500	2300	09.14/GT	★★★★★	Impressive. Another outstanding all-rounder from Samsung	LED	55	3840x2160	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	4	75x123x27
Samsung UE65F9000	5000	01.14/GT	★★★★★	A talented set with few weaknesses to speak of	LED	65	3840x2160	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	4	84x146x4
Samsung UE65H8000	3300	07.14/FT	★★★★★	A fine set, but high price and lack of 4K knock it down a star	LED	65	1920x1080	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	4	89x145x31
Samsung UE65HU7500	3600	08.14/FT	★★★★★	Whether it's 4K, HD or SD, this TV will gobble it up	LED	65	3840x2160	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	4	88x145x30
Sony KD-55X8505B	2100	09.14/GT	★★★★★	An attractive TV with a good set of features	LED	55	3840x2160	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	4	79x123x29
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
Sony KD-65X9005B	3600	07.14/FT	★★★★★	This Sony set has issues with upscale content but it looks great with 4K	LED	65	3840x2160	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	● ●	4	88x172x10



## 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



#### Panasonic DMP-BDT460

“The ‘460 really excels where it matters: it’s equally talented with picture and sound.”



#### Marantz UD7007

“This is a solidly made machine that performs to a very high standard. If you have the right system, it’s a terrific buy.”



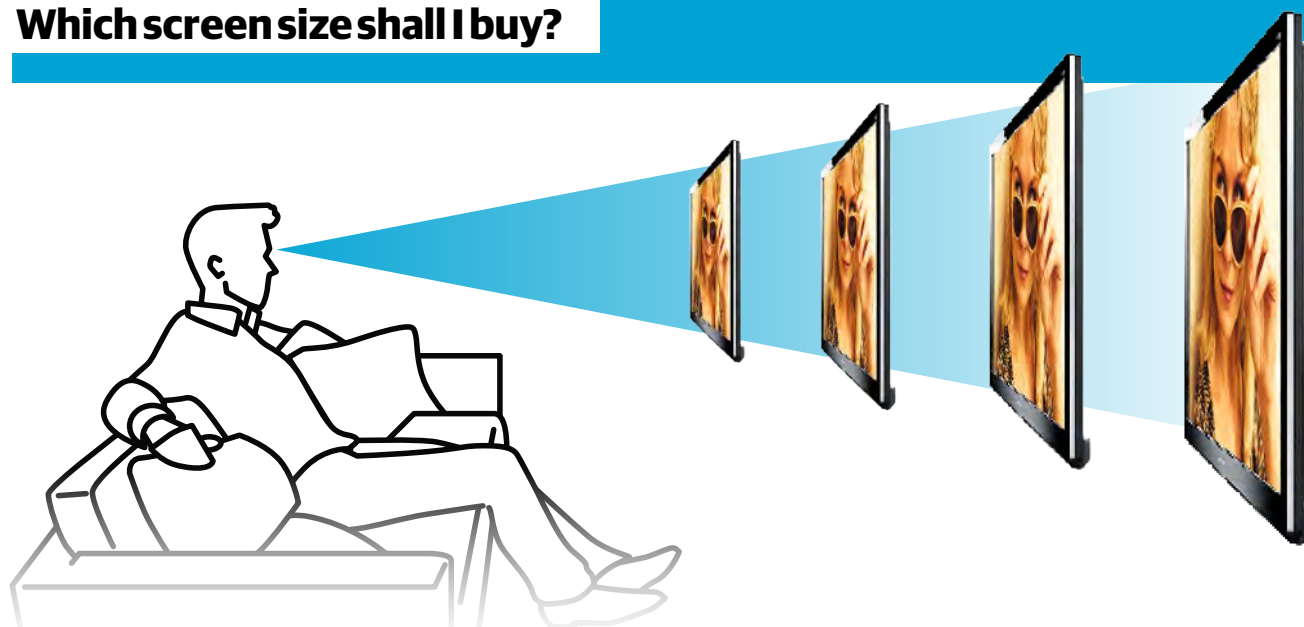
#### Sony BDP-S7200

“There’s no shortage of Blu-ray players out there, but the BDP-S7200 stands out.”

### Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	HDMI out	Optical out	Co-axial out	Multichannel out	Dimensions (hwd,cm)	
<b>Up to £500</b>									
LG BP740	200	08.14/GT	★★★★★	Much improved, but needs to better its sound and video performance to match the best	1	1	0	No	4x43x21
Panasonic DMP-BDT230	160	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Great picture and fine sound	1	1	0	No	4x43x18
Panasonic DMP-BDT260	120	07.14/FT	★★★★★	An impressive new entry with great picture quality	1	0	0	No	4x31x18
Panasonic DMP-BDT330	200	09.13/GT	★★★★★	Lacks in the smart app area but performance elsewhere is terrific	2	1	0	No	4x43x18
Panasonic DMP-BDT320	220	05.12/FT	★★★★★	A superb Blu-ray spinner from Panasonic	1	1	0	No	3x43x18
Panasonic DMP-BDT460	190	08.14/GT	★★★★★	Talented with sound as it is with picture, this is a Blu-ray player to be reckoned with	2	1	0	No	4x42x18
Philips BDP3380	80	01.14/GT	★★★★★	A very good performer that lacks some smart features	1	0	1	No	4x41x21

## Which screen size shall I buy?



### Your viewing distance

#### 1.3m to the TV

##### Buy a 32in Screen

When you’re sitting this close to your telly, a 32in TV is optimal. If you watch a lot of high-def Blu-ray and TV, though, you should consider buying a 37in set.

#### 1.6m to the TV

##### Buy a 40in Screen

You can afford to go up to a 42in set if you’re sitting here. Economies of scale mean that 40- and 42in TVs are cheaper than an equivalent 37in.

#### 1.8m to the TV

##### Buy a 46in Screen

Now you’re talking. If you can get your sofa this far away from the screen, a 46 or 48in TV is just the ticket, particularly with HD images. And that’s a big telly.

#### 2.1m to the TV

##### Buy a 50in Screen

... or a 52, or even a 55. It’ll look pretty huge for the first few days, but you’ll quickly get used to – and come to really appreciate – the extra screen size.

## BLU-RAY PLAYERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		HDMI out	Optical out	Co-axial out	Multichannel out	Dimensions (hwd,cm)
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-S490	110	12.12/FT	★★★★★	An excellent budget Blu-ray player that also does 3D	1	0	1	No	4x43x20
Sony BDP-S6200	180	08.14/GT	★★★★★	Plenty of smart features, sharp images and well-rendered 3D. A talented disc spinner	1	0	1	No	4x36x20
Sony BDP-S7200	220	09.14/FT	★★★★★	A classy performer that serves up great picture in either 2D or 3D	1	0	1	No	5x43x21
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

## £500 and above

Panasonic DMP-BDT700	500	10.14/FT	★★★★★	The best premium Blu-ray player we've tested all year	2	1	1	7ch	7x45x26
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
Marantz UD7007	500	12.12/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best Blu-ray player £300+, Awards 2013</b>	1	1	1	No	11x44x31
Onkyo BD-SP809	500	04.12/GT	★★★★★	A fine choice, but not an all-rounder	2	1	1	No	10x43x31



## 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 to 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	1	15x33x25	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	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	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	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	0	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	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	2	12x38x31	4.5
<b>£1000-£3000</b>														
BenQ W1200	1100	04.12/ST	★★★★★	Best projector up to £1500, Awards 2012	DLP	1.44-2.1:1	1920x1080	1800	2	0	1	1	14x34x26	3.6
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	1	14x42x37	6
Optoma HD83	2400	02.12/FT	★★★★★	Healthily priced, with a solid performance	DLP	1.45x2.28	1920x1080	1600	2	0	0	1	19x49x37	8.4
Philips Screeneo HDP1590TV	1500	05.14/FT	★★★★★	A great idea that's executed well, but not perfectly	DLP	0.32:1	1280x800	500	3	0	1	0	15x34x29	5
Sony VPL-HW55ES	2800	04.14/GT	★★★★★	An impressively capable projector	SKRD	n/a	1920x1080	1700	2	0	0	1	18x41x46	9.6
<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	1	16x47x40	8.5
Epson EH-TW9200W	3000	04.14/GT	★★★★★	A fine projector, but not the showstopper we expected	LCD	1.34-2.87:1	1920x1080	2400	6	0	0	1	14x47x40	9
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	1	18x46x47	15
Panasonic PT-AT6000E	3000	04.14/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best projector £2000+, Awards 2013</b>	LCD	1.18-2.36	1920x1080	2400	3	0	1	1	15x47x36	8.7
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	1	46x21x46	11
Sony VPL-HW30ES	3000	02.12/GT	★★★★★	Very capable, but there's better for the money	SKRD	1.47-2.18	1920x1080	1300	2	0	1	1	18x41x46	10
Sony VPL-HW50ES	3000	12.12/FT	★★★★★	Shows why home cinema can't be beaten	SKRD	1.64-2.37	1920x1080	1700	2	0	0	1	18x41x46	9.6
Sony VPL-VW500ES	8500	04.14/FT	★★★★★	Stunningly good with 4K content but pricey nonetheless	SKRD	1.64-2.37	1920x1080	1700	2	0	0	1	18x41x46	9.6
Sony VPL-VW95ES	5000	01.12/FT	★★★★★	By class standards, it's one of the best projectors around	SKRD	1.38-2.83	4096x2160	1700	2	0	0	0	20x50x46	14

**"For small-scale home-cinema entertainment, the BenQ W1080ST projector is definitely worth a look"**

December 2013



## AV receivers & amplifiers

**Up to £500** Well-equipped and delivers 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



#### Yamaha RX-V377

"If this is your first step towards a home cinema system, then the Yamaha RX-V377 is a great place to start."



#### Sony STR-DN1050

"Following the success of the STR-DN1040 was never going to be an easy task, but Sony has undoubtedly managed it."



#### Pioneer SC-LX57

"Outshining its predecessor in every way, the impressive SC-LX57 once again sets the bar for home cinema amplifiers at this price."

### 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-V375	250	02.14/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best home cinema amplifier up to £350, Awards 2013</b>	5x100	4	1	●	●	15x44x32
Yamaha RX-V377	260	07.14/FT	★★★★★	Superb surround sound on a budget	5x70	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
Pioneer VSX-923	450	08.13/GT	★★★★★	Needs more heft but it's still a confident and compelling amp	7x150	8	2	●	●	17x44x36
Sony STR-DN840	350	02.14/GT	★★★★★	A talented, energetic amp that delivers plenty of precision and attack	7x150	6	1	●	●	16x43x33
Sony STR-DN850	400	08.14/FT	★★★★★	An impressive all-rounder at a great price	7x150	5	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-X2100W	500	09.14/GT	★★★★★	A strong contender but competition at this price is fierce	7x150	8	2	●	●	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
Onkyo TX-NR626	500	08.13/GT	★★★★★	Well-featured but not as compelling or as immersive as rival products	7x160	6	2	●	●	17x44x33
Pioneer VSX-924	500	09.14/GT	★★★★★	Another good effort but rivals offer more excitement	7x150	7	2	●	●	17x44x36
Sony STR-DN1050	500	09.14/GT	★★★★★	Stacks of features and an excellent performance at a great price	7x165	6	3	●	●	17x43x33
Yamaha RX-S600	500	05.14/FT	★★★★★	A small, excellent amp that delivers great sound and good features	5x90	5	1	●	●	17x43x33
Yamaha RX-V673	500	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Best home cinema amplifier £350-£700, Awards 2012.	7x150	6	1	●	●	17x44x36
Yamaha RX-V677	560	09.14/GT	★★★★★	A fun receiver that's not the most balanced, but is endlessly entertaining	7x150	6	1	●	●	17x43x36
<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
Onkyo TX-NR838	1000	10.14/FT	★★★★★	A commendable amplifier with a huge number of features	7x180	7	1	●	●	34x58x51
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

## AV RECEIVERS &amp; AMPLIFIERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Channels / power (w)	HDMI in	HDMI out	Networking	3D pass-through	Dimensions (hwd, cm)		
<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 FMJ AVR450	2200	03.14/GT	★★★★★	There's plenty to like with this receiver, but its rivals better it				7x110	7	2	17x43x42
Arcam AVR750	4000	12.13/FT	★★★★★	It's not flawless, but this AV receiver is very good				7x100	7	2	17x43x43
Pioneer SC-LX87	2000	03.14/GT	★★★★★	Pioneer strikes gold again with this feature-laden powerhouse				9x220	9	3	19x44x44
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
Yamaha RX-A3030	2000	03.14/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best home cinema amplifier £1500+, Awards 2013</b>				9x150	8	1	19x44x47



## 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 subwoofer's response to produce a more balanced sound

## The shortlist



**AWARD WINNER**  
Bowers & Wilkins ASW610



Bowers & Wilkins ASW610XP



**AWARD WINNER**  
Velodyne SPL-1000 Ultra

## Also consider

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 (hwd, cm)	
<b>Up to £500</b>																			
B&W ASW610	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
W'fedale 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



## 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



**Q Acoustics 2000i 5.1**

Awards 2013: Best Traditional Pack up to £700



**Dali Zensor 15.1**

Awards 2013: Best Style Pack £700-£1500



**Cambridge Audio Aero 5.1**

Awards 2013: Best Traditional Pack £1500-£2500

### Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Front speaker (h/w/d, cm)	Center speaker (h/w/d, cm)	Rear speaker (h/w/d, cm)	Subwoofer (h/w/d, 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
Tannoy HTS-101	400	09.11/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best style package up to £700, Awards 2013</b>	16x11x14	11x25x17	16x11x14	42x28x37 1
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
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-ite 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 3-Series 5.1	2425	06.14/GT	★★★★★	Build, looks and performance combine for an attractive speaker package	90x19x30	19x45x26	30x19x25	36x36x36	2
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 5 MK2	2500	06.14/GT	★★★★★	An exciting speaker package that will thrill film and music fans	81x15x28	15x57x26	38x27x15	45x41x46	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
KEF R100 5.1	2850	06.14/GT	★★★★★	<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
Monitor Audio Silver 6 AV12	2875	06.14/GT	★★★★★	A hugely capable surround package. Worthy of serious consideration	94x35x20	19x50x24	25x31x12	23x16x14	6
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
PMCD B1i 5.1	4675	12.09/FT	★★★★★	Small and sonically brilliant package	29x16x23	16x29x23	29x16x23	55x20x55	4
Tannoy Revolution SE AV	2400	06.14/GT	★★★★★	Despite a few issues with the centre and sub, this is an exciting package	95x20x25	15x31x16	37x20x25	44x43x37	1
Tannoy Revolution Signature	2300	11.08/GT	★★★★★	As thrilling or as calming as you want it to be	85x17x18	17x45x18	27x17x18	37x34x34	2

## What you need to know... AV receivers

Speaker packages can only do so much on their own. Connect a multichannel receiver and give your home cinema a boost

## How does it work?

Surround speaker packages require amplification from a multichannel amp or receiver. A Blu-ray player feeds a digital stream to the receiver, which decodes this into up to eight channels, amplifies the signals and powers the surround-sound speakers. A good way to think of an AV receiver is as the engine that drives your home cinema system.

## What will I love?

Watching films with the audio in surround sound is an entirely different experience from regular stereo. Your films, Blu-ray in particular, will take on a new lease of life – there's a reason why it's called 'home cinema'. If you want to make a splash, invest in the Award-winning Q Acoustics 2000i 5.1 package (below) for large scale and dynamics.

## What else to look out for?

Does it have all the decoding modes you'll need – Dolby, DTS and all their latest HD variants (Dolby TrueHD, DTS HD)? Does it have the inputs and outputs to suit the rest of your system, and is auto set-up essential for you? Read the specs and choose carefully. A good receiver to compare against would be Sony's STR-DN1050, which is a great performer.

## What will I hate?

A multichannel receiver won't be as good with music as a dedicated stereo amp at the same price. If your surround system is doubling up as a stereo setup for music, the sound is going to be compromised, no matter how good the speakers on the front left/right channels. As always, figure out what you want before putting your hard-earned cash down.

The Q Acoustics 2000i 5.1 is a confident, affordable set-up with a good sense of timing and rhythm



Like the '1040 before it, the Sony '1050 is a very able performer with music and movies





## 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



#### Marantz CD6005

Awards 2013: Best CD Player up to £500  
 “Marantz has played it a little safe but when you’ve nailed this corner of the market, you don’t need to do much else. The best has just been made better. Again.”



#### Naim CD5si

Awards 2013: Best CD Player £500-£1500  
 “In performance terms the CD5si can hold its own against tough competition from Audiolab and Cyrus. It’s been a long time since anything has managed that.”



#### Roksan Caspian M2 CD

Awards 2013: Best CD Player £1500+  
 “Factor in the Caspian M2’s brilliant timing, wonderfully layered and subtle midrange, and you have a top-class player capable of fronting some pretty exotic systems.”

### Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Integrated	Transport	Co-axial out	Optical out	XLR out	RCA out	Headphone out	Co-axial 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	0	2	9x43x31
Cambridge Audio Azur 651C	450	03.12/FT	★★★★★	A spacious sounding disc spinner	●	1	1	0	1	0	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	0	2	11x44x34
<b>Marantz CD6005</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>10.13/FT</b>	<b>★★★★★</b>	<b>Best CD player up to £500, Awards 2013</b>	●	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	11x44x34
Sansui CDD-201V	200	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Sensibly priced, but not quite an all-rounder	●	1	1	0	1	0	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	0	2	9x43x29
Audiolab 8200CD	800	03.14/GT	★★★★★	Best CD player £500-£1000, Awards 2012	●	1	1	1	1	0	2	2	0	1	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	2	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	1	9x44x31
Cyrus CD Transport	750	01.12/ST	★★★★★	An impressive and affordable CD transport	●	1	1	0	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	0	1	8x22x36
<b>Naim CD5si</b>	<b>995</b>	<b>10.14/GT</b>	<b>★★★★★</b>	<b>Best CD player £500-£1500, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR</b>	●	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	7x43x30
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	0	2	13x44x33
Rega Apollo-R	550	06.12/ST	★★★★★	Admirable, but lacks some cohesion	●	1	1	0	1	0	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	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	0	2	14x44x44
<b>£1000 and above</b>																
Audio Research CD6	8050	08.14/FT	★★★★★	In the market for a top-class CD player? This could be the one	●	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	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	1	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	2	12x43x34
Copland CDA 825	4298	05.13/FT	★★★★★	A hugely capable player with stunning sound quality	●	1	0	1	1	0	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	0	2	8x22x36
Cyrus CDi	1050	03.14/GT	★★★★★	Arguably the best, most insightful integrated player Cyrus has ever made	●	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	7x22x36
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	2	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	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	2	13x44x39
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	0	1	7x43x30
Naim CD555/555PS	18345	10.09/FT	★★★★★	The CD555/555PS has a hefty price tag, but a class performance	●	0	0	0	1	0	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	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	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	0	2	11x43x38
<b>Roksan Caspian M2 CD</b>	<b>1650</b>	<b>Aw.10/FT</b>	<b>★★★★★</b>	<b>Best CD player £1500+ Awards 2013</b>	●	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	8x43x33
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	0	11x43x35
Yamaha CD-S3000	3500	10.14/GT	★★★★★	An understated player that lets the music take centre stage	●	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	14x44x44



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WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2010  
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VIP CLUB PRICE\* **£199.95**

**HALF PRICE\***



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WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2012  
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VIP CLUB PRICE\* **£249.95**

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WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2014  
AUGUST 2014  
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Denon's crisp, articulate hi-fi separates are complimented by the warm yet detailed sound of Cambridge Audio's SX50s. Perfect for all types of music, this system represents fantastic value for money. Quite simply, a phenomenal audio system for a minimal outlay - this is a stunning starter system!  
SYSTEM TSP £529.95 | 5 Year Supercare £39.95

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5 Year Supercare £52.95

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2014  
MAY 2014

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**MARANTZ PM6005, CD6005 & Q ACOUSTICS 2020i (PAIR)**  
"Superb sound quality on a budget for your analogue and digital music," commented What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine of the PM6005, while they said of the CD6005, "A fantastic player and immense value for money." The Q Acoustics 2020is and the CD6005 were What Hi-Fi award winners in 2013.  
SYSTEM TSP £749.95 | 5 Year Supercare £59.95

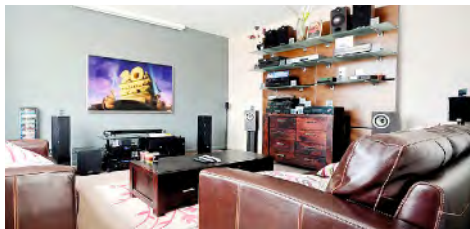
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\*Our VIP Club is completely FREE for ALL customers. Sign up in-store or online in seconds with just an email address.

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5 Year Supercare £64.90

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PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
ARCAM FMJ A19

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**CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AZUR 851D DIGITAL PREAMP/DAC**  
More than just a DAC, the Cambridge Audio 851D is a digital pre-amplifier that's at the heart of your digital system.  
5 Year Supercare £99.99

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013  
BEST STREAMING  
CAMBRIDGE AUDIO STREAM MAGIC 6

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**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2014**  
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JANUARY 2014

**CAMBRIDGE AUDIO MINX Xi STREAMING MINI HI-FI SYSTEM**  
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SYSTEMS  
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DENON-MS248

**DENON DM39 SILVER MINI SYSTEM & DALI ZENSOR 1 (PAIR)**  
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**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013**  
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PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
BEST VALUE FOR MONEY  
MARANTZ MELODY MEDIA M-CR610

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2012**  
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BEST VALUE FOR MONEY  
MONITOR AUDIO BRONZE BX2

**MARANTZ MCR610 MELODY MEDIA & MONITOR AUDIO BRONZE BX2 (PAIR)**  
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"The best all-rounder we've heard below the grand mark - this Kandy really is sweet."  
– What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine (K2 amplifier).  
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– Hi-Fi Choice magazine (851A & 851C).  
SYSTEM TSP £3399.95 | 5 Year Supercare Only £299.95

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- digitaltrends.com

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**DUAL**

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**QUAD**

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 ★★★★★  
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**£479**

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"An impressive new entry that flies the flag for great picture quality." – What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.  
5 Year Supercare £9.99

WiFi Built-in  
**£89**



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WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013  
★★★★★  
OCTOBER 2014

#### SONY BDPS7200 SMART 4K 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

"Serves up a classy picture and stunning sound." – What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.  
5 Year Supercare £21.90

DUAL LIGHT WiFi 4K ULTRA HD UPSCALING  
**£219**



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WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013  
★★★★★  
OCTOBER 2014

#### PANASONIC DMPBDT700 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

This highest quality picture, sound, connectivity and style.  
5 Year Supercare £49.90

WiFi 4K ULTRA HD UPSCALING  
**£499**



#### YAMAHA YHTS401 SOUNDBAR

Amazing sound for this money.

TSP £349.95  
5 Year Supercare Only 10% Of Purchase Price

REGULAR PRICE **£249.95**  
VIP CLUB PRICE\* **£229.95**



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★★★★★  
FEBRUARY 2014

#### CANTON DM50 SOUNDBAR

"With gorgeous sound and looks, this Canton is an immensely satisfying improvement to TV sound." – WHF? Sound & Vision mag.  
5 Year Supercare Only £39.90

Bluetooth  
**£399**



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#### YAMAHA YSP2500 SOUNDBAR

"Looks amazing, and features wireless subwoofer and bluetooth connectivity." – customer review on richersounds.com  
5 Year Supercare £79.90

Bluetooth  
**£799**



#### TANNOY HTS101 5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

"Simply in terms of scale, it's deeply impressive." – What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.  
5 Year Supercare Only 10% Of Purchase Price

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WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013  
SPEAKER PACKAGES  
BEST IN-BRAND VALUE  
Q ACOUSTICS Q7000i

#### Q ACOUSTICS Q7000i 5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

A significant upgrade over the 2011 Award winners, these Q Acoustics demand a listen.  
5 Year Supercare £89.90

**£899**



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#### CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AERO 5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

5 Year Supercare Only 10% Of Purchase Price

VIP CLUB PRICE\*

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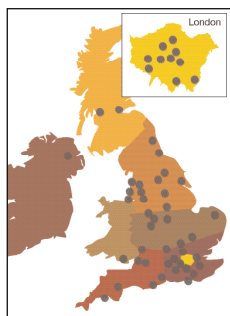
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## DACs

Digital-to-analogue converters take a digital data stream from their 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 (hwd, cm)
<b>Up to £500</b>														
Arcam airDAC	400	06.14/GT	★★★★★	Not as good as the irDAC but delivers good sound on a budget	0	1	1	0	0	●	0	1	0	4x19x12
Arcam irDAC	400	11.13/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best DAC £300-£500, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR</b>	0	2	2	0	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 miniBlink	90	05.14/GT	★★★★★	A compact DAC that makes a huge impression. Bluetooth sounds brilliant	0	0	0	10	0	●	0	1	0	2.5x3x4
Arcam rPAC	150	04.13/ST	★★★★★	More desirable alternatives, but the rPAC still has plenty of merit	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	3x10x6
Audioengine D1	150	05.12/FT	★★★★★	A DAC and headphone amp with a fine sound	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	3x9x10
Audioquest DragonFly	215	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Best DAC up to £300, Awards 2012	1	0	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	0	1	0	0	6x2x1
Belkin Song Stream BT HD	50	05.14/GT	★★★★★	A solid performer for the price	0	0	0	0	0	●	0	1	0	n/a
Camb. Audio DacMagic 100	200	06.12/FT	★★★★★	An affordable, fine looking and listenable DAC	1	2	2	0	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	0	1	1	0	5x22x19
Camb. Audio DacMagic XS	100	02.14/GT	★★★★★	Drops down a star but still a delightful little device	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	5x3x1
Crystal Acoustics BluDAC	60	05.14/GT	★★★★★	Doesn't quite have the finesse of others but this is still a real entertainer	0	0	0	0	0	●	0	1	0	6.5x7.5x2
Denon DA-300USB	330	06.14/GT	★★★★★	Soft bass detracts from what is otherwise a great first DAC from Denon	1	2	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	6x17x18
Furutech ADL GT 40	400	06.11/FT	★★★★★	Product of the Year - Cables & Accessories, Awards 2011	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	6x15x11
Focal Universal Wireless Receiv.	85	05.14/GT	★★★★★	A very talented performer that comes with a few quirks	0	0	0	0	0	●	0	1	0	n/a
HRT Headstreamer	145	02.12/FT	★★★★★	A neat headphone amp and DAC combination	1	0	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	0	1	0	0	1x3x6
LH Labs Geek Out	200	09.14/FT	★★★★★	A clever little device that's a solid performer	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1.3x3.5x6.7
Meridian Director	450	11.13/GT	★★★★★	Packs a sonic punch but lacks the swagger found in others	1	1	1	0	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	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	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	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	06.14/GT	★★★★★	For those looking for a desktop DAC, the NAD D 1050 is a brilliant box of tricks	1	2	2	0	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	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	0	1	1	6x25x25
Cambridge Audio Azur 851D	1000	07.14/GT	★★★★★	A fine DAC, even if it can't scale the heights of the class leaders	1	4	3	1	0	●	1	0	1	12x43x36
Chord Chordette QuteHD	990	07.13/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best DAC £700-£1000, Awards 2013</b>	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	7x16x4
Rega DAC	500	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Beefy build; natural, unforced, dynamic and detailed sound	1	2	2	0	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	0	1	1	0	10x22x31
Parasound Zdac	500	11.13/GT	★★★★★	The Zdac produces a lively, likable sound	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	5x22x26
Rotel RDD-1580	600	05.14/FT	★★★★★	Plenty to be impressed with, but the poor quality of its USB input holds it back	1	2	2	0	0	●	0	1	1	5.5x43x32
Sony UDA-1	500	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Not the most musically exciting DAC, but an excellent choice for desktop users	1	2	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	7x23x26
<b>£1000 and above</b>														
Aesthetix Romulus	6500	06.14/GT	★★★★★	A fine performer that draws in the listener with a smooth and elegant sound	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	11x46x45
Antelope Zodiac Gold/Voltikus	3100	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Unique and appealing, it just misses out on a fifth star	1	2	2	0	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	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	0	1	2	11x43x37
Bricasti Design M1 DAC	7000	03.14/FT	★★★★★	An understated but deeply talented performer. Thoroughly impressive	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	1	1	6x43x30
Bryston BDA-1 DAC	2350	06.11/FT	★★★★★	A great sounding DAC with appealing build quality	1	2	4	1	0	0	0	1	1	4x48x29
Burmester 113	2300	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Small and unassuming but packs a seriously exciting sound	1	1	1	0	0	●	0	1	1	6x20x17
Chord QBD76 HDS	4995	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A top-class, visually appealing DAC that delivers brilliant sound	2	2	2	2	0	0	0	1	1	6x34x15
Chord Hugo	1400	07.14/GT	★★★★★	Superb sound quality in an unbelievably small and versatile package	2	1	1	0	0	0	3	1	0	2x13x10
dCS Debussy	7930	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Worth every penny of its asking price	1	0	2	2	0	0	0	1	1	7x45x39
McIntosh D100	3000	06.13/GT	★★★★★	A solid and entertainer performer. Well featured, too	1	2	2	0	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	0	1	1	13x44x39
NAD M51	1500	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Best DAC £1200+, Awards 2012	1	1	1	1	2	0	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	0	1	0	7x43x30



**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)
Naim DAC-V1	1250	07.14/GT	★★★★★	1	2	3	0	0	0	1	1	1	9x21x32
T+A DAC 8	1250	09.13/FT	★★★★★	1	1	4	1	0	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

**The shortlist**



**Pro-Ject Essential II**

Awards 2012: Best Turntable up to £500  
 “We think this is one of Pro-Ject’s finest achievements and more than deserving of Best Buy status.”



**Rega RP3/Elys2**

Awards 2013: Best Turntable £400-£800  
 “This is the kind of product that concentrates the listener’s attention on music and nothing else.”



**Rega RP6/Exact**

Awards 2013: Best Turntable £800+  
 “We’ve heard rivals deliver similar amounts of insight but none that do it in such an attractive manner, or at this price.”

**Also consider**

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	33.33 RPM	45 RPM	78 RPM	Elec. speed change	Manual operation	Phono amp	Tonearm inc.	Cartridges inc.	USB port	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
<b>Up to £1000</b>														
Audio Technica AT-LP1240USB	500	10.14/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1	16x45x35
Edwards Audio TT1	380	11.11/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1	12x45x36
Pro-Ject Elemental	150	04.14/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	3	9x43x30
Pro-Ject Essential II	200	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	3	14x46x36
Pro-Ject 2-Xperience Basic+	600	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1	14x46x36
Pro-Ject 2-Xperience Classic	750	12.10/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1	16x46x36
Pro-Ject Debut Carbon	300	10.14/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	7	12x42x32
Rega RP1	225	Aw.10/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	3	12x45x36
Rega RP1 Performance Pack	300	10.14/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	4	12x45x36
Rega RP3/Elys2	550	10.14/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	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 Ovation/Tali. V2 Gold	5995	04.14/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	4	14x42x35

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## TURNTABLES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	RPM		Elec. speed change	Manual operation	Phono amp	Tonearm Inc.	Cartridges Inc.	USB port	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
				33.33	45								
<b>£1000 and above</b>													
Clearaudio Performance SE	2660	08.12/FT	★★★★★	Quality engineering and top-class sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2	13x42x33
Kronos Turntable	30000	07.14/FT	★★★★★	Not perfect, but an incredibly tempting piece of kit nonetheless	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1	28x56x36
Kuzma Stabi S/Stogi S	2940	04.10/FT	★★★★★	A worthy alternative to the Michell Orbe	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1	14x40x30
Linn Majik LP12	2350	03.09/FT	★★★★★	The LP12 offers great value for money with no compromise	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	5	14x45x36
Michell Gyro. SE/TecnoArm A	1478	09.08/FT	★★★★★	Packs a sublime punch – it makes listening a pleasure	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1	19x41x53
Michell Orbe SE/Tecnoarm A	2675	01.09/FT	★★★★★	Don't buy anything without hearing this deck first	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2	26x46x53
Origin Live Calypso package	2440	12.11/FT	★★★★★	Impressive package, but lacks some attention to detail	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1	14x45x38
Pro-ject 2 Xperience X-Pack	1000	08.10/GT	★★★★★	Precision and integration to keep it among the top players	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1	14x46x39
P'ject Xten./Ortof. RS-309D	4000	07.09/FT	★★★★★	Proves Pro-ject can compete at all price levels	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	4	25x55x45
Rega RP6/Exact	1000	11.12/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best turntable £800+, Awards 2013</b>	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	8	12x45x36
Roksan Radius 5.2	1375	Aw.09/FT	★★★★★	Best turntable £1200+, Awards 2010. Superb performance	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	8	15x45x37
Roksan Xerxes 20 Plus (Pack)	6275	10.08/FT	★★★★★	A truly exceptional turntable	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	3	12x45x37
Thorens TD160HD/TP250	1560	10.08/GT	★★★★★	One of the best at this price	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1	18x43x34
Thorens TD309	1250	06.10/FT	★★★★★	The TD309 is a good deck, but it's no TD160HD on the cheap	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2	13x47x43
Townshend Rock 7	1500	09.09/FT	★★★★★	It's got its quirks, but it's great value for the money	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1	15x40x34



## Radios

DAB

Digital radio signal that now offers coverage across most of the UK

Internet

Allows you to listen to thousands of radio stations from around the world

## Theshortlist



Pure Evoke D2

Awards 2013: Best Radio up to £100



Pure Evoke F4

Awards 2013: Best Radio £100-£200



Revo Superconnect

£250

## Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	DAB	FM	MW	Internet	Battery	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
<b>Up to £100</b>									
Aves Air	50	09.13/GT	★★★★★	A neat, lightweight radio that's fine for listening on the go	●	●	●	●	10x6x2
iLuv Vibro Classic II	50	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Up-to-date compatibility with Apple devices, but at an old-school price	●	●	●	●	7x23x8
Pure Digital Elan II	99	01.10/GT	★★★★★	Classy and natural - another joy from Pure	●	●	●	●	16x28x9
Pure Digital Move 2500	90	11.11/FT	★★★★★	A great performer in the right circumstances	●	●	●	●	10x6x1.5
Pure Digital Move 400D	90	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Perfect for on-the-go casual listening, but not as your main home radio	●	●	●	●	8.5x15x2.7
Pure Digital One Classic II	65	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★	An upgrade of an established favourite	●	●	●	●	15x21x7
Pure Evoke D2	85	09.13/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best Radio up to £100, Awards 2013</b>	●	●	●	●	15x21x7
Q2 Internet radio	90	03.11/FT	★★★★★	No-frills wi-fi radio that sounds great for its size	●	●	●	●	10x10x10
Roberts Duologic	75	01.10/GT	★★★★★	User friendly and sleek – with great sound	●	●	●	●	15x25x83
Sony XDR-S16	80	12.11/GT	★★★★★	An uncomplicatedly chunky listen	●	●	●	●	14x27x11
Tangent Trio DAB	90	01.11/GT	★★★★★	Fine value, smart-looking and future proof	●	●	●	●	17x33x20
View Quest WiFi200	80	01.11/FT	★★★★★	A handy, portable wi-fi internet radio	●	●	●	●	73x125x23
<b>£100 and above</b>									
Geneva World Radio DAB+	270	09.13/GT	★★★★★	<b>Best Radio £200+, Awards 2013</b>	●	●	●	●	17x30x7
Magicbox Nocturne XP-2	170	12.10/GT	★★★★★	Much more of a saint than a sinner, so well worth considering	●	●	●	●	17x30x15
Philips Original Radio Mini	110	09.13/GT	★★★★★	Terrific sound and features makes this radio an appealing buy	●	●	●	●	25x12x12
Pure Digital Avanti Flow i'net	250	12.10/GT	★★★★★	A genuine alternative to a micro system	●	●	●	●	13x39x23
Pure Evoke D4 with Bluetooth	150	08.14/FT	★★★★★	A decent radio that doesn't sound as good as some of its stablemates	●	●	●	●	18x22x12
Pure Digital Evoke Flow	150	05.10/GT	★★★★★	Internet and DAB-capable radio that's a delight to use and listen to	●	●	●	●	18x21x11
Pure Digital Evoke-1S Marshall	120	01.11/FT	★★★★★	A quirky and appealing style classic	●	●	●	●	17x22x12

**RADIOs continued**

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	DAB	FM	MW	Internet	Battery	Dimensions (h/w/d, cm)
<b>Pure Evoke F4</b>	180	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★ <b>Best Radio £100-£200, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR</b>	●	●	●	●	●	18x21x11
Pure Digital Oasis Flow	170	09.10/FT	★★★★☆ Weatherproof, but its sound-per-pound ratio can be bettered	●	●	●	●	●	23x16x14
Pure Digital One Flow	100	11.12/GT	★★★★★ Best Internet Radio up to £150, Awards 2012	●	●	●	●	●	15x21x8
Pure Digital Sensia	250	01.10/FT	★★★★☆ Plenty to offer: add to your shortlist of portable internet radios	●	●	●	●	●	17x28x18
Revo AXiS	200	12.10/GT	★★★★★ Product of the Year - Radios, Awards 2011	●	●	●	●	●	13x22x15
Revo AXiS XS	200	11.12/GT	★★★★★ Best Internet Radio £150+, Awards 2012	●	●	●	●	●	12.5x22x15
Revo AXiS X3	200	01.14/FT	★★★★★ Great radio and a nice little streamer	●	●	●	●	●	12.5x22x15
Revo Domino D3	170	05.10/GT	★★★★☆ There's lots to like here, but sound is a bit bottom-heavy	●	●	●	●	●	14x22x13
Revo Heritage	230	03.10/FT	★★★★☆ Beyond reproach on paper, but comes up a bit short with sound	●	●	●	●	●	18x26x10
Revo Pico RadioStation	170	12.10/FT	★★★★★ A fine little radio/streamer for bathroom and kitchen	●	●	●	●	●	17x11x11
Revo Pixis	100	09.13/GT	★★★★☆ A decent rather than ground-breaking effort from Revo. Worth an audition	●	●	●	●	●	13x16x16
Revo SuperConnect	250	09.14/FT	★★★★★ A feature-packed, attractive radio that impresses on many fronts	●	●	●	●	●	18x27x12
Roberts Revival Cath Kidston	200	01.11/GT	★★★★☆ Cath Kidston's flower-power version of this fine sounding radio	●	●	●	●	●	23x16x12
Roberts Stream 83i	150	05.10/GT	★★★★☆ Good in most areas, but the 83i needs a more balanced sound	●	●	●	●	●	21x25x13
Ruark Audio R1 MkII	160	11.12/GT	★★★★★ Best DAB/FM radio, Awards 2012	●	●	●	●	●	18x13x14
Tangent Uno	100	01.09/GT	★★★★★ With a sound like this, it should be on your list	●	●	●	●	●	13x19x13
Tivoli Albergo+	200	02.14/FT	★★★★☆ On the expensive side, but a neat unit nonetheless	●	●	●	●	●	11x19x11
Tivoli Model 10+	160	09.13/GT	★★★★☆ A good table-top offering at an affordable price	●	●	●	●	●	20x12x12
View Quest Retro 1	100	12.11/GT	★★★★★ A neat, talented portable radio that deserves an audition	●	●	●	●	●	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 team 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 (h/w/d, cm)
<b>Up to £200</b>								
Acoustic Energy Compact 1	150	10.11/FT	★★★★☆ Stylish looks meet grown-up performance	●	●	2	22x15x20	
Audioengine P4	183	02.10/FT	★★★★☆ Small in size, huge in sound: a must-audition pair	●	●	3	23x14x17	
Cambridge Audio SX-50	130	04.14/ST	★★★★☆ Full of zip and gusto, the SX-50s are excellent value for money	●	●	2	23x16x24	
Mission MX1	150	06.11/GT	★★★★★ Best stereo speakers up to £150, Awards 2010. A real return to form from Mission	●	●	4	28x17x26	
Q Acoustics 2010i	120	07.12/GT	★★★★★ Set the standard at this price and size level	●	●	4	23x20x15	
<b>Q Acoustics 2020i</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>04.14/ST</b>	<b>★★★★★ Best stereo speakers up to £200, Awards 2013</b>	●	●	<b>4</b>	<b>26x17x28</b>	
SoundScience Frankenspiel FS-1	130	07.12/ST	★★★★★ Best Budget desktop speakers, Awards 2011	●	●	1	9x9x9	
SoundScience QSB	85	04.11/FT	★★★★★ Compact, clever and with a big detailed sound	●	●	1	8.5x8.5x8.5	
<b>£200-£500</b>								
Acoustic Energy Neo One V2	210	08.11/GT	★★★★☆ Real ability in most areas but they don't quite gel	●	●	2	36x18x23	
Acoust. Energy Neo V2 Three	399	09.10/FT	★★★★☆ Much to like, but not quite all-rounders	●	●	2	91x20x24	
Acoustic Energy 301	425	06.13/GT	★★★★★ Very good speakers for the money, definitely worthy of consideration	●	●	2	30x19x25	
Audioengine A5+	290	07.12/GT	★★★★★ Bigger, better and more flexible than the originals	●	●	3	27x18x20	
Audio Pro Addon T8	250	06.14/ST	★★★★☆ Punchy and energetic, these beautifully built speakers aren't perfect but they are enjoyable	●	●	2	16x10x14	

## SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Standmount Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (h/w/d,cm)
<b>£200-£500</b>							
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
Boston Acoustics A-26	260	01.12/ST	★★★★★	●		2	33x21x27
B&W 685	400	06.13/GT	★★★★★	●		4	34x20x33
B&W MM-1	399	07.12/GT	★★★★★		●	1	17x10x10
Cambridge Audio SLA-25	200	05.12/GT	★★★★★		●	8	22x15x18
Cambridge Audio SX-60	200	09.13/FT	★★★★★	●		2	34x20x27
Castle Knight 2	400	02.11/GT	★★★★★	●		8	38x20x34
Dali Lektor 1	250	10.09/GT	★★★★★	●		2	26x15x21
Dali Lektor 2	299	03.10/GT	★★★★★	●		2	31x18x22
Dali Lektor 3	450	08.09/GT	★★★★★	●		2	39x20x26
Dali Zensor 1	200	04.14/ST	★★★★★	●		2	27x16x22
Dali Zensor 3	300	10.14/GT	★★★★★	●		3	35x21x29
EB Acoustics EB1	470	08.09/GT	★★★★★	●		2	31x17x27
Epos Epic 1	325	04.11/FT	★★★★★	●		2	31x19x25
Focal Chorus 706V	390	03.11/FT	★★★★★	●		3	39x22x29
Focal XS Book	300	07.12/GT	★★★★★		●	1	28x11x20
Focal XS Book Wireless	300	10.13/FT	★★★★★		●	1	28x11x20
KEF Q300	450	06.13/GT	★★★★★	●		3	36x21x30
Leema Xero	495	07.08/GT	★★★★★	●		5	25x25x16
Monitor Audio Bronze BX 1	200	05.11/FT	★★★★★	●		4	26x17x18
Monitor Audio Bronze BX2	250	07.12/ST	★★★★★	●		4	35x19x26
Monitor Audio Silver RX1	425	06.13/GT	★★★★★	●		6	31x19x24
Mordaunt-Short Aviano 1XR	250	01.12/ST	★★★★★	●		1	28x18x27
Mordaunt-Short Aviano 2	300	03.10/FT	★★★★★	●		3	32x21x30
Mission MX2	200	08.11/GT	★★★★★	●		4	34x21x31
Mission MX3	350	11.11/GT	★★★★★		●	4	82x17x34
Pioneer S-CN301-LR	200	04.14/ST	★★★★★	●		1	23x14x22
Q Acoustics Concept 20	350	10.13/GT	★★★★★	●		2	26x17x28
Q Acoustics Q-BT3	350	06.14/ST	★★★★★	●		4	31x19x24
Q Acoustics 2050i	440	07.13/GT	★★★★★		●	4	100x32x27
Quad 11L Classic	330	Aw.10/FT	★★★★★	●		4	31x19x24
Ruark Audio MR1	300	06.14/ST	★★★★★		●	3	17x13x14
Tangent Evo 5	200	05.09/FT	★★★★★	●		2	23x15x20
Tannoy Mercury V1i	150	04.14/ST	★★★★★	●		2	30x17x26
Tannoy Mercury V4	380	07.12/GT	★★★★★		●	2	97x20x28
Tannoy Mercury V4i	400	01.14/FT	★★★★★		●	1	100x20x28
Tannoy Revolution DC4	380	06.13/GT	★★★★★	●		2	27x15x16
Tannoy Revolution DC6	400	10.12/GT	★★★★★	●		1	36.5x20x25
Teufel Ultima 60	368	12.09/FT	★★★★★		●	1	103x21x32
Triangle Color	470	06.11/FT	★★★★★	●		3	29x17x24
Wharfedale Diamond 121	230	10.13/GT	★★★★★	●		7	32x17x23
<b>£500-£1500</b>							
Acoustic Energy AE1 Classic	1000	07.11/GT	★★★★★	●		2	30x18x26
Acoustic Energy AE22 Active	899	07.12/GT	★★★★★	●		1	25x35x30
Audio Pro LV2e	700	09.12/FT	★★★★★			3	98x14x24
Audiovector Ki1 Super	800	04.12/GT	★★★★★		●	5	98x14x24
Audiovector Ki3 Standard	1200	03.12/FT	★★★★★		●	5	98x14x24
Arcaydis SM35C	850	08.09/FT	★★★★★	●		3	30x16x14
ATC SCM11	1200	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	●		2	38x21x25
AVI ADM9.1	1125	07.12/GT	★★★★★	●		5	30x20x26
B&W 683 S2	1150	10.14/GT	★★★★★		●	2	99x19x36
B&W 685 S2	500	10.14/GT	★★★★★	●		2	35x19x32
B&W CM8	1250	08.11/FT	★★★★★		●	4	96x25x30
Cabasse Minorca MC40	720	02.11/FT	★★★★★	●		2	40x23x28
Cambridge Audio Aeromax 6	900	10.14/FT	★★★★★		●	2	98x24x34
Dali Ikon 1 MK2	530	05.14/GT	★★★★★	●		3	33x15x26

## SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Standmount Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd,cm)
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
Elac BS 142	600	05.14/GT	★★★★★	An organic sounding and entertaining pair of speakers that are fun to listen to	●	1	26x16x26
Elac FS 147	1100	07.14/AT	★★★★★	A fun set of speakers if you're after entertainment over analysis	●	1	95x22x30
Elipson Planet L	600	02.12/FT	★★★★★	Charming in many ways, with good transparency	●	3	40x24x43
Epos Epic 5	750	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Hugely likeable floorstanders with broad sonic appeal	●	2	92x21x32
Epoz AktiMate Blue	600	09.14/FT	★★★★★	Position them well and you'll be rewarded with a lovely, engaging sound	●	3	32x21x31
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
KEF R100	600	05.14/GT	★★★★★	Still great but now surpassed by newer rivals	●	4	28x18x29
KEF X300A	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
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 1	500	05.14/FT	★★★★★	A bit fussy when it comes to positioning, the Silver 1s still ooze quality	●	6	31x19x26
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
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 floorstanders 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



## Sendor D7 Technology or Music?

Sendor's approach is the most radical I've seen, going where no hi-fi manufacturer has gone before. D7 is extremely capable and very neutral indeed, but most importantly it puts the music first.

*Hi-Fi + Dec 2013*

However it's been achieved, we can't help but marvel at the sound from the D7's. Sendor D7's set the standard for speakers at this price.

*What Hi-Fi Oct 2013*

Let the technology work - Hear the music

WHAT HI-FI?  
SOUND AND VISION  
★★★★★

hi-fi+

HI-FI Choice  
★★★★★

HI-FI WORLD  
★★★★★ OUTSTANDING

www.sendoraudio.com

**SENDOR**

## SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Standmount Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (wxdxcm)
<b>£500-£1500</b>							
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 Motive SX2	1395	07.14/ST	★★★★★	Great little speakers with only a few small imperfections	●	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
PMC Twenty 21	1485	10.13/GT	★★★★★	If you're looking for a top-class pair of standmounters, these are well worth a listen	●	4	33x15x28
PSB Imagine Mini	600	05.14/GT	★★★★★	Tiny speakers with a surprising amount of heft. Good for a smaller room	●	5	23x14x21
Opera Mezza	850	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Suave-looking and good-sounding, but these don't possess the sonic assertiveness of some	●	3	32x20x33
Q Acoustics Concept 40	1000	07.14/ST	★★★★★	A refined and easy-going pair of speakers. They deserve serious consideration	●	2	97x17x29
Quad 9AS	600	07.14/FT	★★★★★	A decent pair of speakers but they need more punch and verve	●	3	30x15x21.5
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 Music5	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	07.14/ST	★★★★★	<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
<b>£1500 and above</b>							
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
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 Aurousal's are great	●	3	108x22x27
Analysis Audio Omega	14500	08.11/FT	★★★★★	These planar floorstanders are a sonic treat	●	1	168x61x6
ATC SCM 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 BeoLab5	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
Dali Rubicon 2	1600	10.14/FT	★★★★★	A great pair of standmounters that deliver an expressive and enthusiastic sound	●	4	35x20x34
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

## SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Standmount Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd,cm)
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
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
GamuT M'inenTM3	5140	03.14/FT	★★★★★	These are some of the best standmounters we've ever heard	●		10	40x23x46
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
PMC PB1i	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
PMC Wafer 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 D30R	4750	09.14/FT	★★★★★	Superb all-rounders	●		6	104x22x31
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
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 Precision 6.2	1700	10.13/GT	★★★★★	A beautifully balanced and hugely listenable pair of standmounters	●		3	100x31x28
Tannoy Precision 6.4	2200	02.14/GT	★★★★★	If bass is important to you, then these speakers are worth an audition	●		3	105x31x35
Tannoy Definition DC8	2500	03.12/GT	★★★★★	Capable of seriously controlled sound	●		3	47x27x26
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
Totem Element Ember	3995	05.14/FT	★★★★★	If you're looking for entertainment, we can't think of a better alternative	●		2	36x11x25
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
Triangle Signature Delta	4900	07.14/FT	★★★★★	If you value excitement and entertainment, put these speakers at the top of your shortlist	●		3	123x37x39
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

"We've become used to Spendor speakers being carefully developed, but the Spendor D7s take that attention to detail to another level. Spendor has a rich history of making terrific speakers. You can count the D7s among them"

May 2013

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# The end for MP3?

**If you own a half decent hi-fi system, using 'FLAC' instead of 'MP3' files could be music to everyone's ears**

For those of us that consider themselves a music lover, albeit to different degrees, we are part of a very fortunate generation. We now have access to an ever-growing wealth of recorded music of extraordinary range and depth, effectively accumulated over the last 60 years. With the introduction of the microgroove LP record in the early 1950's, playback quality took a quantum leap forward and this also coincided with a far higher standard of recording techniques. Although further improvements have been made over the years, this was a watershed time that first introduced hi-fi as a reality.

## Listening to music has many benefits

Hi-Fi is, of course, a means to an end – the reproduction of music. Many studies over the years have shown remarkable benefits for mankind through listening to music. Making music is intrinsic to all cultures and music is often used for various therapeutic purposes because it involves using the whole brain. It is believed to improve memory and intelligence, improve physical development and coordination, reduce stress and blood pressure, and even reduce levels of pain.

We now have literally millions of recorded music tracks available to us in all genres and many different formats. One trend over recent years, however, has been to deliberately downgrade the quality in order to offer quantity. The main culprits have been MP3 and AAC formats which were designed as a low cost form of delivery when download speeds were slow and computer chip memory was expensive. Neither now applies and both formats should be consigned to history

along with 78 rpm records and the 8-track cartridge. Unfortunately, such is the current market penetration of MP3 and AAC formats that many people today are listening to a considerably lower quality of music reproduction than their peers back in the 1970's.

*Bach - my favourite!*



## Quality vs quantity

Let us explain. The maximum resolution from MP3 and AAC file formats, which are both highly compressed, is 320 kbps (kilobytes per second) which compares with CD quality of 1411 kbps. This means the resolution quality is less than a quarter of that provided by a standard CD. However, most MP3 or AAC files are downloaded over the internet and the most used download resolution is 128 kbps, which is around one-eleventh of CD quality. This should ring alarm bells. If you are only playing back these tracks on an iPod or mobile phone with a pair of earbuds, the quality may be irrelevant to

you. But if these tracks are your primary source of music, perhaps with an iPod dock into a decent hi-fi system, you are only making a very poor quality sound louder. Information is irretrievably lost and the full dynamic range is lacking. The quality will be very poor in contrast with a full resolution version even if you are completely unaware of the loss you are inflicting upon yourself. This can even affect the type of music listened to as most classical recordings downloaded as an MP3 or AAC file will have so much information missing, and all the complexities of the music lost, with the end result that the recording is reduced to just the essence of a tune.

## What is the future of recorded music?

There are now positive signs for the future of recorded music. Audiophiles, or hi-fi connoisseurs, have been very important to the music industry as they are generally avid music lovers who aim to maximise their enjoyment by listening to music at its best quality level, which means the play-back of great recordings through hi-end hi-fi to achieve the most outstanding results. Without them, a main driver for quality would probably be removed from the music industry. They have always sought out quality but there is now an increasing awareness among the wider public of the serious deficiencies of the highly compressed formats. Full resolution audio streaming, as well as CD quality downloads, are already available and will surely become the eventual norm with this greater awareness of the tremendous quality benefit. Consumers will vote through their purchases and will seek out higher resolution recordings. Look at Qobuz for a new high-profile entry into this field who offer CD quality (16 bit/44.1 kHz FLAC) streaming for over 15 million tracks.



## The benefits of using a specialist dealer

Specialist hi-fi dealers are also a significant driver for maintaining high quality in the music industry. Hi-end hi-fi very soon exposes poor quality recordings and specialist hi-fi dealers are constantly assessing the relative merits of different brands from manufacturers for potential stocking. With specialist hi-fi dealers, achieving the best system performance and seeking out the most outstanding combinations is almost invariably both their hobby and their livelihood. Without them, hi-fi manufacturers and potential customers would have to rely on the opinion of magazine reviewers to assess levels of performance – a notoriously unreliable decision making process. For specialist hi-fi dealers, their relationship with audiophiles and hi-fi connoisseurs is also crucial to them 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.

“ ... there is now an increasing awareness among the wider public of the serious deficiencies of the highly compressed formats. Full resolution audio streaming, as well as CD quality downloads, are already available and will surely become the eventual norm. ”

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.soundcraftifi.com

#### Chelmsford

**RAYLEIGH HI-FI SOUND & VISION**  
216 Moulsham Street.  
t: 01245 265245  
www.rayleighifi.com

#### Kingston-upon-Thames

**INFIDELITY**  
9 High Street,  
Hampton Wick.  
t: 020 8943 3530  
www.infidelity.co.uk

#### Maidenhead

**AUDIO VENUE**  
36 Queen Street.  
t: 01628 633995  
www.audiovenue.com

#### Norwich

**MARTINS HI-FI**  
85-91 Ber Street.  
t: 01603 627134  
www.martinshifi.co.uk

#### Rayleigh

**RAYLEIGH HI-FI**  
44a High Street.  
t: 01268 779762  
www.rayleighifi.com

#### Southend-on-Sea

**RAYLEIGH HI-FI SOUND & VISION**  
132/4 London Road.  
t: 01702 435255  
www.rayleighifi.com

### LONDON

#### Ealing

**AUDIO VENUE**  
27 Bond Street.  
t: 020 8567 8703  
www.audiovenue.com

### N1

**GRAHAMS HI-FI**  
190a New North Road.  
t: 020 7226 5500  
www.grahams.co.uk

### SW11

**ORANGES & LEMONS**  
61/63 Webbs Road.  
t: 020 7924 2043  
www.oandlhiifi.co.uk

### SOUTH WEST

#### Bath

**AUDIENCE**  
14 Broad Street.  
t: 01225 333310  
www.audience.org.uk

#### Exeter

**GULLIFORD HI-FI**  
97 Sidwell Street.  
t: 01392 491194  
www.gullifordhiifi.co.uk

### MIDLANDS

#### Banbury

**OVERTURE**  
3 Church Lane.  
t: 01295 272158  
www.overture.co.uk

#### Coventry

**FRANK HARVEY**  
163 Spon Street.  
t: 024 7652 5200  
www.frankharvey.co.uk

#### Leicester

**CYMBIOSIS**  
6 Hotel Street.  
t: 0116 262 3754  
www.cymbiosis.com

#### Nottingham

**CASTLE SOUND & VISION**  
48/50 Maid Marian Way.  
t: 0115 9584404  
www.castlesoundvision.com

### NORTH

#### Chester

**ACOUSTICA**  
17 Hoole Road.  
t: 01244 344227  
www.acoustica.co.uk

#### Gateshead

**LINTONE AUDIO**  
7-11 Park Lane.  
t: 0191 477 4167  
www.lintone.co.uk

#### Hull

**THE AUDIO ROOM**  
Savile Street, Hull  
t: 01482 891375  
www.theaudiroom.co.uk

#### York

**SOUND ORGANISATION**  
2 Gillygate.  
t: 01904 627108  
www.soundorg.co.uk

### WALES

#### Monmouth

**CERITECH AUDIO**  
5 Monnow Bridge.  
t: 01600 716362  
www.ceritech-audio.co.uk



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### STAR QUALITIES

VALUE FOR MONEY ..... ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
SERVICE ..... ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
FACILITIES ..... ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
VERDICT ..... ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



## 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



#### Monitor Audio A100

"It's a brave product that performs well and can be used in situations where conventional alternatives wouldn't even get a look-in."



#### Arcam FMJ A19

"The A19 is quietly confident of its ability to deliver a transparent and faithful sound – and its staggeringly open sound is wonderful to hear at this price."



#### Naim Nait 5i

"The 5i strikes the balance between full-fat, full-strength harmonic intensity and tonal lucidity with admirable skill"

### Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Power (w)	DAC	Line level in	M/M phono in	M/C phono in	USB in	Tape loops	Preamp out	Speaker outs	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	10.14/GT	★★★★★	<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	800	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	
Marantz PM6005	300	05.14/GT	★★★★★	A shot across the bow to Marantz's rivals. An excellent system	45	5	1	0	1	2	●	●	●	●	2	11x44x37	
Monitor Audio Airstream A100	400	08.14/FT	★★★★★	Insightful and composed, this is a worthy rival to the NAD D 3020	50	●	1	0	0	0	1			●	2	5x37x21	
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	10.14/GT	★★★★★	<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	10.14/GT	★★★★★	<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	
Roksan Kandy K2 BT	895	05.14/FT	★★★★★	Full of power and punch but some heart and soul is missing	140	5	1	0	1	●	1	●	●	●	2	11x43x38	
Rotel RA-10	350	05.14/GT	★★★★★	Sounds good, but rivals offer more insight and better digital features	40	4	1	0	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	

**AMPLIFIERS continued**

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Power (w)	DAC	Line level in	MM phono in	MC phono in	USB in	Tape loops	Preamplifier	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	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	7x22x36			
Cyrus 8a	1350	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	3000	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	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	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	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			
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	9x43x31			
Pathos Ethos	3800	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Mixes style and substance better than any rival	100	7	0	0	●	0	1	●	1	15x43x49			

**How to buy a CD player**

**There's still plenty of mileage left in good old compact disc as your primary music source. Here are a few tips on buying the right player and getting the most from it**



**BALANCED XLR**

**THE BASICS**

CD players are pretty simple things. They'll respond well to decent equipment support and like to be placed on a level surface. The vast majority have digital outputs, so if you want to upgrade their performance (particularly applicable to an older player) an outboard DAC is an option.

amplifier produces a soft, smooth sound. The one will simply cancel out the benefits of the other.

**HOW TO AUDITION**

Take along a variety of discs to the dealer demo. Choose music that you know well and be sure that your test selection covers a wide variety of music. It's important that the player copes with everything you throw at it. If you have a lot of CD-Rs, make sure they work - there can be incompatibilities between recorders and players, particularly with discs recorded on PC drives. Also, have a listen to how noisy the transport mechanism is; some are loud enough to spoil quiet music.



**DIGITAL INPUTS**

There's occasionally a choice of analogue outputs. Standard RCAs are the norm, but some players - mostly at the higher end of the market - have a balanced XLR option. This can often sound better. Ensure your amplifier can accept a balanced signal before you buy, though.

**DIGITAL INPUTS**

In a world where the 5in silver disc is no longer the only major digital music source around, there's more than a little advantage in accommodating other formats. We've seen a growing trend towards CD players with digital inputs.



**INSTANT UPGRADES**

**SYSTEM MATCHING**

The arrival of CDs took compatibility issues (for the most part) out of system matching, in an electrical sense at least. Turntables, or cartridges, need a lot of pampering if they're to give their optimum performance. CD players are far less fussy.

That doesn't mean you shouldn't take care which amplifier and speakers you use in terms of sonic character, though. Every bit of a system should pull in the same direction if you want optimal results. A fast, dynamic CD player is wasted if the partnering

## 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)
Pathos InpolRemix	3800	01.12/FT	★★★★★	10		1	0	0		0	●	1		●	2		18x33x29
Pathos Logos	3650	09.08/FT	★★★★★	110		6	0	0		1	2			●	1		15x48x22
Pathos Logos Mk II	3950	10.14/FT	★★★★★	110	●	5	0	0	●	1	●	1		●	1		17x42x43
Plinius Hautonga	4455	07.11/FT	★★★★★	200		5	1	1		2	●	1		●	2		12x45x50
Plinius Hiato	6759	08.09/FT	★★★★★	300		5	0	0		1	●	1		●	2		17x45x45
Quad II Classic Integrated	4500	04.10/FT	★★★★★	25		3	1	1		1	1			1			20x31x38
Rega Osiris	5998	06.10/FT	★★★★★	162		6	0	0		1	1			●	1		12x44x35
Rega Elicit-R	1600	10.13/GT	★★★★★	105		5	1	0		1	●	1		●	1		8x43x34
Roksan Caspian M2	1695	10.13/GT	★★★★★	85		5	0	0		1	●	1		●	2		8x43x33
Sony TA-A1ES	2000	04.14/FT	★★★★★	80		5	1	1		0	1			●	1		13x43x42
Synthesis Shine	2449	07.10/FT	★★★★★	40		5	0	0		1	1			●	4		16x32x22
T+A PA 3000 HV	9900	11.13/FT	★★★★★	300		6	0	0		0	1			●	1		17x46x46
Unison Research Preludio	2295	02.10/GT	★★★★★	14		4	0	0		1	1			1			20x40x38
Unison Research S6	2995	05.11/FT	★★★★★	33		5	0	0		1	1			●	2		21x35x49
Unison Research S9	6995	02.10/FT	★★★★★	35		4	0	0		0	1			●	1		25x41x57
Unison Research Simply Italy	1495	09.12/FT	★★★★★	12		5	0	0		1	1			●	2		26x19x35
Unison Research Triode 25	2350	08.14/FT	★★★★★	45		5	0	0	Opt	1	1			●	1		20x30x45



## 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	★★★★★	7	0	0	1	●	●			●	14x48x31
Audionet Pre 1 G3	3525	01.10/FT	★★★★★	5	0	0	1	●	●	●		●	7x43x31
ATC CA-2	1058	12.09/FT	★★★★★	5	0	0	1	●	●	●		●	9x44x32
Cyrus DACXP+	2550	04.11/FT	★★★★★	2	0	0	1	●	●			●	7x22x36
Cyrus Pre Xp d	1300	02.10/GT	★★★★★	6	0	0	0	●	●			●	7x22x36
Heed Audio Obelisk pre/px	2230	04.13/FT	★★★★★	5	0	0	1	●				●	9x22x33
Lavardin C62	3471	12.10/FT	★★★★★	6	0	0	1	●					9x43x31
Leema Pyxis	3995	11.11/FT	★★★★★	5	1	1	1	●	●	●	●	●	11x44x31
Linn Akurate Kontrol	4200	09.11/FT	★★★★★	4	1	1	1	●	●	●	●	●	9x38x38
NAD C165BEE	650	08.10/FT	★★★★★	4	1	1	0	●	●			●	8x44x29
<b>Up to £5000</b>													
Naim NAC152XS	975	02.10/GT	★★★★★	5	0	0	0	●				●	7x43x30
Quad Elite Pre	850	11.10/FT	★★★★★	6	1	1	1	●			●	●	7x32x31
Quad QC-twenty four	1000	06.13/FT	★★★★★	5	0	0	2	●					9x30x22
Rotel RC-1580	995	03.10/FT	★★★★★	5	1	1	2	●		●	●	●	10x43x34
Townshend Allegri	1895	08.12/GT	★★★★★	6	0	0	0	●					5x13x31
<b>£5000 and above</b>													
Audio Research LS27	6500	03.13/FT	★★★★★	6	0	0	1	●	●			●	13x48x34
Aesthetix Calypso Signature	6400	03.11/FT	★★★★★	5	0	0	1	●	●			●	11x46x45
Bryston BP26DA	5050	08.06/FT	★★★★★	5	0	0	1	●	●	●		●	6x49x28
Burmester 808 MK5	22242	02.13/FT	★★★★★	Opt	Opt	Opt	Opt	●	●	●		●	95x48x33
Chord Electronics CPA8000	25500	01.13/FT	★★★★★	8	0	0	2	●	●	●	●	●	31x42x36
Chord Electronics Indigo	8670	11.09/FT	★★★★★	6	0	0	0	●	●	●	●	●	36x42x9
Krell Phantom II	12000	11.12/FT	★★★★★	8	0	0	1	●	●			●	10x44x46
McIntosh C2500	7495	01.14/FT	★★★★★	8	1	1	1	●	●	●	●	●	19x44x46
Naim NAC252/Supercap	9070	11.08/FT	★★★★★	6	0	0	0	●				●	9x43x31
Plinius Tauto	6325	09.08/FT	★★★★★	4	1	1	1	●	●	●		●	16x45x48

Subscriptions 0844 848 8813 email: [whathifi@servicehelpline.co.uk](mailto:whathifi@servicehelpline.co.uk)



## 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 ps	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

## Inside your kit... what does a preamp do?



The Heed Obelisk pre/px/ps is a three-box combination merging a power amp, preamp and power supply

First things first, what is a preamp? It's an electrical device that takes an existing signal and prepares it for further amplification before passing it on to the main amplifier.

All one-box amps have preamplifier sections and they have two main jobs: to select the source, and to control the volume. Sounds easy, no?

It's so easy that it's perfectly possible to make a simple stereo preamp with an appropriate volume control and selector switch. It could work well too, because most stereo sources have an output that's too high to feed directly into a power amplifier, and needs to be turned down.

Such a device is usually called a passive preamp, and can produce excellent results if care is taken with system matching.

But that's not the only kind of preamp available. Most preamps we come across are of the active variety. That means they are powered (usually by the mains) and are actually capable of making a signal louder if needed.

### Active versus passive

There are certain advantages with active designs. For one thing, they are far less system-fussy than their passive relatives, and are better able (in an electrical sense) to drive a power amplifier.

Also, if you play records, components such as phono stages - once an intricate part of all pre-amplifiers - need powered circuitry to increase the delicate signal from a cartridge hundreds of times to make it usable.

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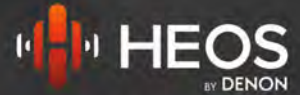
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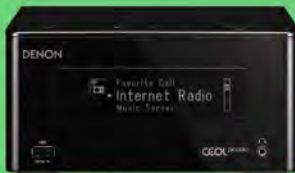


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## Headphones

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"Clean, crisp and open sound" What HiFi? October 2012



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## iPod docks

**Docks with power** \_\_\_\_\_ These are ready-made systems for your iPod and 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.”



#### 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 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
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
Marantz Consolette	700	05.13/FT	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	150	26x54x21
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

To subscribe call 0844 848 8813 or email: [whathifi@servicehelpline.co.uk](mailto:whathifi@servicehelpline.co.uk)





## Wireless speakers

**Bluetooth** \_\_\_\_\_ Universal wireless system that's incorporated into most sources  
**AirPlay** \_\_\_\_\_ Apple's accepted wireless system; works over your home network

### Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	AirPlay	Bluetooth	Aux	Charging	Battery	Dimensions (lwd, cm)	
<b>Up to £1000</b>										
<b>Audio Pro Allroom Air One</b>	400	08.14/GT	★★★★★	<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	
Blusound Povernode	600	10.14/GT	★★★★★				●	●	18x25x20	
B&W A5	400	08.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●				18x30x20	
B&W A7	700	12.12/FT	★★★★★	●	●				22x36x16	
Bose SoundLink Air	300	12.12/GT	★★★★★	●	●				17x31x10	
Cabasse Stream 1	500	08.14/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		14x46x33	
Cambridge Audio Bluetone 100	200	10.14/GT	★★★★★		●	●			118x35x12	
Cambridge Audio Minx Air 100	330	10.13/ST	★★★★★		●	●			18x35x12	
Cambridge Audio Minx Air 200	430	08.13/GT	★★★★★		●	●			45x22x17	
<b>Cambridge Audio Minx Go</b>	100	08.13/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best wireless speaker up to £150, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR</b>				●	●	23x24x6
Dali Kubik Free	625	03.14/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●		31x15x15	
<b>Denon Cocoon Stream DSD-501</b>	250	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best wireless speaker £150-£300, Awards 2013</b>				●	●	24x45x17
Eclipse TD-M1	1000	08.14/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●			24x16x22	
Geneva Model M Wireless	500	08.14/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		22x30x18	
<b>Geneva Model S Wireless DAB+</b>	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 Flip 2	100	07.14/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		6.5x16x16	
JBL OnBeat Rumble	230	10.14/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		17x45x22	
Libratone Zipp	370	10.13/ST	★★★★★	●	●	●			26x12x12	
Libratone Loop	400	08.14/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●			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 S300	250	10.14/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●			15x47x15	
Monitor Audio Airstream WS100	250	09.13/GT	★★★★★		●	●			13x12x12	
NAD Viso 1 AP	500	08.14/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●		26x48x30	
Panasonic SC-NA10	130	01.14/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		10x20x3	
Philips Fidelio E2	300	06.14/ST	★★★★★		●	●			30.5x16x16	
Philips Fidelio P9	240	03.13/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●		12x29x5	
Pioneer XW-SMA4	350	12.12/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●		21x36x17	
Pure Jongo S3	170	06.13/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●		13x13x14	
Pure Jongo S3 (pair)	340	06.14/ST	★★★★★		●	●	●		13x13x14	
Roth Oli POWA-5	250	06.14/ST	★★★★★		●	●	●		27x18x21	
Samsung M5	230	10.14/FT	★★★★★		●	●			14x34x17	
Samsung M7	330	09.14/FT	★★★★★		●	●			14x40x19	
Sonos Play:1	170	01.14/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●		16x12x12	
Sony RDP-XA700	285	03.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●			18x40x16	
Sony SRS-X3	130	07.14/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		7x19x7	
Sony SRS-X9	600	06.14/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●			13x43x13	
Sony SRS-BTM8	85	05.13/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		19x25x9	
Tangent Classic	400	08.14/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		23x60x32	
Ultimate Ears Boom	170	01.14/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●		16x6.5x6.5	

**"There are few AirPlay docks at this price that can challenge the A5 in design and performance - B&W has another superstar on its hands"**

March 2013



## Headphones

**Ear tips** \_\_\_\_\_ Most in-ears come with these. Experiment with size to get the best fit  
**In-line remote** \_\_\_\_\_ Mostly for Apple devices, but Android-friendly units are increasing. Handy...

### The shortlist



**SoundMAGIC E10**

“These are exceptional in-ears for the money, and the new affordable choice for those looking to upgrade those bundled buds.”



**Sony MDR-EX650AP**

“They’ll happily turn their hand to just about anything, effortlessly finding that balance between the details and the overall flow”



**Klipsch X11i**

“Great sound and great design. If you’re serious about portable, these in-ears need to be on your shortlist.”

### Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	In-ear	On-ear	Type	Noise cancelling	Wireless	Weight (g)
<b>Up to £70</b>									
AKG K323XSi	50	08.14/FT	★★★★★	As good as you can reasonably expect at this price range	●	Closed			n/a
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-CK555i	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 MC5	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
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/GT	★★★★★	<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
Sony MDR-EX650AP	60	09.14/FT	★★★★★	The EX650s are everything we would expect from a pair of in-earphones	●	Closed			9
Vivanco Airc. Studio Monitors	50	12.10/GT	★★★★★	Capable - but should be approached with caution	●	Closed			n/a

Subscriptions 0844 848 8813 email: [whathifi@servicehelpline.co.uk](mailto:whathifi@servicehelpline.co.uk)

## HEADPHONES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	In-ear On-ear	Type	Noise cancelling	Wireless	Weight (g)
<b>£70 and above</b>								
AKG K3003i	1000	04.12/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed			10
AKG K370	73	12.10/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed			4
AKG K450/HA450	180	09.11/ST	★★★★★		Closed			120
AKG K545	210	12.13/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed			280
AKG K550	200	02.12/ST	★★★★★	●	Closed			305
AKG K551	230	02.13/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed			305
AKG K812	1100	10.14/FT	★★★★★	●	Open			390
AKG K845BT	250	02.14/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●		292
AKG Q701	250	09.14/ST	★★★★★	●	Open			235
AKG Q460	140	02.11/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed			120
AKG Y50	80	09.14/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed			190
Audeze LCD-3	1725	02.14/GT	★★★★★	●	Open			548
Audio Technica ATH-A500	140	02.10/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed			290
Audio Technica ATH-AD700X	190	04.14/GT	★★★★★	●	Open			265
Audio Technica ATH-A900X LTD	390	09.14/ST	★★★★★	●	Open			340
Audio Technica ATH-ANC1	80	06.10/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●		100
Audio Technica ATH-CKX9iS	75	01.14/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed			10
Audio Technica ATH-ES55	90	09.11/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed			120
Audio Technica ATH-ES7	140	02.11/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed			160
Audio Technica ATH-ES88	230	02.12/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed			130
Audio Technica ATH-EW9	159	10.07/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed			33
Audio Technica ATH-M50	130	02.13/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed			284
Audio Technica ATH-W1000	650	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●	Closed			350
Audio Technica ATH-W1000X	650	07.10/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed			350
Audio Technica ATH-WS55i	89	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed			165
Beyerdynamic DTX102iE	75	08.14/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed			11
Beyerdynamic Custom One Pro	170	10.13/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed			290
Beyerdynamic DT880	200	06.09/GT	★★★★★	●	Open	●		340
Beyerdynamic DT990 Premium	290	09.14/ST	★★★★★	●	Open			290
Beyerdynamic DTX80	80	12.10/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed			12
Beyerdynamic MMX 101iE	95	01.14/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●		11
Beyerdynamic T1	880	11.10/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed			350
Beyerdynamic T50P	230	02.12/ST	★★★★★	●	Closed			174
Beyerdynamic T51P	250	11.13/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed			174
Beyerdynamic T70	456	11.11/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed			330
Blackbox M10	90	12.10/FT	★★★★★	●	Open	●		180
Blackbox M10-RB	99	04.12/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●		180
Blackbox i10	80	12.10/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●		25
Bose AE2w	200	02.14/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●		150
Bose MIE2i	120	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●	Closed			19
Bose QuietComfort 15	280	04.12/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●		227
B&W P3	170	08.12/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed			130
B&W P5	250	11.13/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed			195
B&W P7	330	09.14/ST	★★★★★	●	Closed			290
Denon AH-D600	200	11.13/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed			365
Etymotic Research HF2	180	08.09/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●		26
Etymotic Research HF3	134	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●	Closed	●		11
Focal Spirit Classic	250	09.14/ST	★★★★★	●	Closed			310
Focal Spirit One	200	04.12/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed			225
German Maestro GMP 8.35 D	150	10.12/ST	★★★★★	●	Closed			220
Goldring NS-1000	100	03.10/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●		183

**"We're delighted to see AKG continue its inspiring form with its wireless range, and if you can see past K845BT's size and less-than-perfect functionality, then these are some of the best cans of their kind to carry around"**

March 2014

## HEADPHONES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	In-ear	On-ear	Type	Noise cancelling	Wireless	Weight (g)
<b>£70 and above</b>									
Grado GR10	399	09.11/ST	★★★★★			Closed			9
Grado GR8	300	04.10/GT	★★★★★			Open			9
Grado GS1000i	1000	10.09/GT	★★★★★			Open			312
Grado PS1000	1700	09.11/ST	★★★★★			Open			500
Grado SR325e	300	09.14/ST	★★★★★			Open			330
Grado SR325is	300	09.11/ST	★★★★★			Open			330
Grado SR60i	80	02.10/GT	★★★★★			Closed			125
Grado SR80i	100	04.14/GT	★★★★★			Open			200
Grado iGi	90	01.12/GT	★★★★★			Closed			12
Harman/Kardon CL	170	09.12/FT	★★★★★			Closed			195
Jamo IN40i	90	09.11/ST	★★★★★			Closed			11
Jamo wEAR IN20m	70	06.11/FT	★★★★★			Closed			13
KEF M200	150	10.13/FT	★★★★★			Closed			12
KEF M500	250	11.13/GT	★★★★★			Closed			208
Klipsch Image One	140	05.11/GT	★★★★★			Closed			138
Klipsch Image X7i	170	04.13/GT	★★★★★			Closed			16
Klipsch Image X10i	219	09.11/ST	★★★★★			Closed			320
Klipsch Mode M40	290	02.13/FT	★★★★★			Closed			356
Klipsch S4i	90	12.09/GT	★★★★★			Closed			12
Klipsch S5i	120	05.11/FT	★★★★★			Closed			12
Logitech UE 9000	300	03.13/GT	★★★★★			Closed			378
Lindy Premium Headphones	75	09.11/ST	★★★★★			Closed			225
Martin Logan Mikros 70	150	04.13/GT	★★★★★			Closed			13
Monster Beats by Dr Dre	280	03.10/GT	★★★★★			Closed			260
Monster Beats by Dre iBeats	80	03.11/GT	★★★★★			Closed			n/a
Monster Beats Pro by Dre	350	09.11/ST	★★★★★			Closed			299
Monster Gratitude	199	08.12/FT	★★★★★			Open			453
NAD Viso HP50	250	11.13/GT	★★★★★			Open			453
Nocs NS400 Titanium	80	01.12/GT	★★★★★			Closed			12
Onkyo ES-HF300	180	10.13/GT	★★★★★			Closed			240
Oppo PM-1	1100	07.14/FT	★★★★★			Open			395
Panasonic RP-HC101	82	04.12/GT	★★★★★			Closed			79
Parrot Zik	300	07.13/FT	★★★★★			Closed			352
Phonak Audeo PFE 022	80	03.11/GT	★★★★★			Closed			14
Phiaton MS300	150	02.12/ST	★★★★★			Closed			140
Philips Fidelio L1	230	05.12/FT	★★★★★			Closed			272
Philips Fidelio M1	125	10.13/GT	★★★★★			Closed			166
Philips Fidelio M1BT	250	02.14/GT	★★★★★			Closed			500
Philips Fidelio S1	70	01.14/GT	★★★★★			Closed			14
Philips Fidelio X1	200	04.14/GT	★★★★★			Open			430
PSB M4U1	219	11.13/GT	★★★★★			Closed			340
PSB M4U2	300	10.12/ST	★★★★★			Closed			362
Sennheiser CX880i	90	01.12/GT	★★★★★			Closed			11

## More of our favourites



**AKG Y50**  
£80

"Unlike the K451's direct, forthright approach, these 'phones have an open and spacious soundstage. And they fill it well."



**Sennheiser Momentum**  
£260

"They certainly aren't the cheapest, but their refreshingly balanced sound and great design makes them worth every penny."



**Shure SRH1540**  
£470

"Looking for a great sound that you can enjoy in pampering comfort all day long? Give these a go. You know you want to."

## HEADPHONES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	In-ear On-ear	Type	Noise cancelling	Wireless	Weight (g)
Sennheiser HD 380 Pro	110	02.10/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed			220
Sennheiser HD25-1 II Adidas	190	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●	Closed			140
Sennheiser HD 558	130	04.14/GT	★★★★★	●	Open			260
Sennheiser HD 598	190	02.12/ST	★★★★★	●	Open			270
Sennheiser HD 800	1000	10.09/GT	★★★★★	●	Open			350
Sennheiser IE 8i	260	03.11/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed			18
Sennheiser IE 80	270	02.11/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed			5
Sennheiser IE 800	600	09.13/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed			8
Sennheiser MM 200	99	10.09/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●		28
Sennheiser MM 400-X	150	10.12/ST	★★★★★	●	Closed		●	105
Sennheiser MM 70s	70	01.14/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed			13
Sennheiser Momentum	260	11.13/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed			190
Sennheiser Momentum On-ears	170	10.13/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed			160
Sennheiser PXC 310 BT	190	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	●	105
Sennheiser PXC310	200	02.11/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●		115
Sennheiser RS 160	115	05.10/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed		●	226
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 SE846	950	06.14/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed			36
Shure SRH1540	470	10.14/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed			286
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
TDKST700	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-moda Crossfade M-80	160	10.12/ST	★★★★★	●	Closed			200
V-moda Remix Remote	70	12.10/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed			17

"The Grado SR325es are the company's third-generation headphones: their musical, detailed sound makes them a truly excellent buy"

September 2014

"a discernible improvement in overall clarity... The PowerBar™ is an excellent quality product"

Hi-Fi Choice, May 2014

The start of the Russ Andrews range of mains extensions, PowerBar™ features 4, 6 or 8 high-quality, positive-grip and individually wired sockets along with the option of SuperClamp™ surge protection - a "no-brainer" according to Hi-Fi Choice.

And all from just £89!



May '14

Enhanced with NEW Super Burn-in Lite process



Robust extruded aluminium casework

Optional SuperClamp helps to protect your system from mains spikes and surges



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## 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-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	●			●		●	●	●
Yamaha MCR-232	300	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Harsh treble docks it a star but it's an impressively compact micro system	●			●		●	●	●
Yamaha MCR-555	380	10.11/GT	★★★★★	Vastly improved over the original	●			●		●	●	●
<b>£500 and above</b>												
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	●	●				●		
HRT Stage	1200	08.14/FT	★★★★★	Limited inputs and a low-rent feel, but judged on sound alone and it's fantastic							●	
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	435	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/FT	★★★★★	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
<b>£500-£1000</b>											
Harman-Kardon BDS-570	750	04.12/FT	★★★★★	Compact and ultimately convenient	●	●	●		2	3	5.1
LG BH8220B	600	08.12/GT	★★★★★	A bit pricey, but a good performer	●	●	●		1	2	5.1
LG BH9520TW	600	11.12/FT	★★★★★	Packed with features but a little pricey	●		●		1	2	9.1
Panasonic SC-BFT800	600	10.11/GT	★★★★★	A neat and well-priced all-in-one option	●	●	●		1	0	2.1

**SURROUND SYSTEMS continued**

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Blu-ray	3D Blu-ray	DVD	Streaming	Optical in	HDMI in	Channels
Panasonic SC-BT735	600	08.10/GT	★★★★★	Good Blu-ray system but lacks polish	●	●	●	●	2	0	5.1
Panasonic SC-BT590	500	08.12/GT	★★★★★	An excellent all-in-one Blu-ray system	●	●	●	●	1	2	5.1
<b>Sony BDV-N7100W</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>09.13/FT</b>	<b>★★★★★</b>	<b>Best cinema system, Awards 2013</b>	●	●	●	●	1	2	5.1

**£1000 and above**

Harman-Kardon BDS 477	1100	01.13/FT	★★★★★	A jack of all trades that's pretty good	●	●	●	●	0	3	2.1
Harman-Kardon BDS-800	1300	05.11/FT	★★★★★	A simple, compact and effective system	●	●	●	●	1	0	5.1
Meridian G95	3995	12.07/GT	★★★★★	Top performer with sound and vision	●	●	●	●	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**



**Yamaha YSP-1400**

**Philips HTL9100**

**Monitor Audio ASB-2**

**Also consider**

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Disc Drive	Smart	Ext. subwoofer	HDMI in	Optical in	Co-axial in	RCA in	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
<b>Up to £2000</b>												
Bowers & Wilkins Panorama 2	1650	09.13/GT	★★★★★	An improvement on the original	●	3	1	0	●	●	●	13x110x18
Cambridge Audio MinxTV	200	02.14/ST	★★★★★	A soundbase that delivers an exciting sound at a great price	●	0	1	0	●	●	●	8x43x38
Canton DM 50	400	09.14/GT	★★★★★	With gorgeous sound and looks, the DM 50 justifies its price	●	0	1	1	●	●	●	6.5x54.5x30
Canton DM 90.2	1100	09.13/GT	★★★★★	Thunderous sound but needs a bit more refinement	●	0	2	2	●	●	●	15x90x30
Focal Dimension	890	10.14/FT	★★★★★	A bold move that pays off handsomely. Spectacular	●	1	1	0	●	●	●	12x116x12
Harman/Kardon SB30	800	07.12/FT	★★★★★	A good alternative to a full-on home cinema system	●	0	1	1	●	●	●	10x116x8
JBL Cinema SB200	200	03.14/ST	★★★★★	A very good single-bar solution to boost your TV sound	●	0	1	0	●	●	●	12x90x10
JBL Cinema SB400	450	06.13/ST	★★★★★	A good-looking, capable alternative to TV speakers	●	3	1	0	●	●	●	10x110x6
LG NB3520A	250	01.13/GT	★★★★★	Impressive quality and authority for a soundbar	●	0	2	0	●	●	●	8x100x5
LG NB3530A	190	03.14/ST	★★★★★	An admirable and attractive soundbar from LG, but it's up against fierce competition	●	0	2	0	●	●	●	71x950x50
<b>LG NB4530A</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>06.13/ST</b>	<b>★★★★★</b>	<b>Best soundbar up to £400, Awards 2013</b>	●	1	1	0	●	●	●	8x104x4
Maxell MXSP-SB3000	220	02.14/ST	★★★★★	An enjoyable performer with some impressive features	●	3	1	1	●	●	●	8x94x39
<b>Monitor Audio ASB-2</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>11.13/FT</b>	<b>★★★★★</b>	<b>Best soundbar £800+, Awards 2013</b>	●	3	1	1	●	●	●	101x19x17
Orbitsound M9	300	06.13/ST	★★★★★	Given its size, the M9 is an impressive performer	●	0	1	0	●	●	●	9x30x10
Philips HTL5120	250	03.14/ST	★★★★★	A stonking soundbar for only £250	●	2	1	0	●	●	●	154x1010x81
<b>Philips HTL9100</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>Aw.13/FT</b>	<b>★★★★★</b>	<b>Best soundbar £400-£800, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR</b>	●	2	1	1	●	●	●	7x103x16
Pioneer SBXN700	350	05.14/GT	★★★★★	A talented subwoofer with an exhaustive feature set	●	●	0	2	0	●	●	9x90x12
Q Acoustics Media 4	400	08.14/FT	★★★★★	Sensibly priced and sounds fantastic. We like this soundbar a lot	●	0	1	0	●	●	●	11x14x100
Sandström S42SWLH13	150	03.14/ST	★★★★★	A great-looking soundbar with plenty of connections	●	2	1	0	●	●	●	113x900x48
Samsung HW-E551	400	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Decent sound in a versatile package	●	2	1	0	●	●	●	104x5x5
Samsung HT-E8200	500	11.12/FT	★★★★★	If it's convenience you crave, this is pretty alluring	●	●	2	1	0	●	●	10x104x13
Sonos Playbar	600	05.13/FT	★★★★★	An impressive soundbar that produces fantastic surround sound	●	0	1	0	●	●	●	9x90x14
Sony HT-XT1	300	09.14/GT	★★★★★	Packs a punch but rivals are more insightful	●	3	1	0	●	●	●	7x72x31
Tannoy BaseStation One	350	09.14/GT	★★★★★	Tannoy's first soundbase may not be a class-leader, but it has a great sound	●	1	0	●	●	●	●	12x64x36
Yamaha YAS-201	350	06.13/ST	★★★★★	A very good soundbar but not worthy of being a class-leader	●	3	2	1	●	●	●	14x43x35
Yamaha YSP-1400	400	05.14/GT	★★★★★	Brings big sound to a smaller budget	●	0	1	1	●	●	●	10x100x13
Yamaha YSP-2200	800	10.11/GT	★★★★★	Best soundbar, Awards 2012	●	3	2	1	●	●	●	9x89x12

Subscriptions 0844 848 8813 email: [whathifi@servicehelpline.co.uk](mailto:whathifi@servicehelpline.co.uk)



## Media servers

These have hard drives built in. Go for the largest storage possible as that leaves room for 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 £3000</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	●
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	●
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	●
QED uPlay Stream	150	03.14/FT	★★★★★	A handy device that boasts decent sound and good features	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	●	24/196	●
Roku 2 XS	100	06.12/GT	★★★★★	A family friendly streamer	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	●	16/48	●
Roku Streaming Stick	50	10.14/FT	★★★★★	Performs a very specific task and does it brilliantly	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	●	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	●

Wake up to streaming!

**THE SOUND GALLERY**

The New World of Audio  
The Sound Gallery has the finest range of British music streamers, designed to produce beautiful sound in your home!

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/kit)	Video
<b>£500-£1000</b>													
Cambridge Audio MinnXi	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	2010	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+AMP 1260R	2700	12.10/FT	★★★★★	Amazing – this is proper high-end hi-fi	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	●	24/192

**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, Amazon Prime'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

<b>Freeview</b>	Large choice of digital TV channels via a rooftop aerial
<b>Freesat</b>	Much like Freeview, but takes signal from a satellite dish
<b>Subscription</b>	Services from Sky and Virgin give a vast array of premium content

### The shortlist



**Humax DTR-T1010 (500GB)**



**Humax HDR-1000S (500GB)**



**Sky+ HD 2TB**

### Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Freeview	Freesat	Sky	Virgin	YouView	Turners	Hard drive capacity (GB)	HDMI out	Smart	
<b>Up to £500</b>														
Equinix TiZi	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		
<b>Humax DTR-T1010 (500GB)</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>Aw.13/FT</b>	<b>★★★★★</b>	<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-FOX T2	100	07.10/GT	★★★★★	Best Freeview HD receiver, Awards 2011	●					1	n/a	1		
<b>Humax HDR-1000S (500GB)</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>01.13/FT</b>	<b>★★★★★</b>	<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		
<b>Sky+ HD 2TB</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>Aw.13/FT</b>	<b>★★★★★</b>	<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	●	

## Catch-up TV: video streaming



### Netflix - *Utopia - Series One*

Series two recently finished its run but if you've got into *Utopia* (or been completely oblivious), then the first season is now streaming on Netflix. With a premise centred on a graphic novel that's said to predict a series of disasters, it falls into the hand of one group of teenagers but the sinister group called The Network has its eyes on it. A bizarre and original TV show.



### Amazon Prime - *Top of the Lake*

This high-class BBC production stars a number of US, British and Antipodean stars (including *Mad Men*'s Elizabeth Moss) in this one-off series that sees Moss's inexperienced detective take on a case about a 12-year old pregnant girl who goes missing. A slow burning and haunting story about the depths of obsession. And the New Zealand locales look terrific in HD.



### Now TV - *Lost*

Ten years after its debut, *Lost* still divides audiences, especially with *that* ending. However, that doesn't mean that what came before should be dismissed. A true titan amongst modern TV shows, it can legitimately claim to have had a huge influence on the medium, and several of the stories - including the discovery of the Others - still retain their impact.



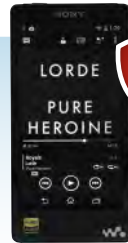
## Music/video players

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 use in the gym. Higher-end machines will add video, internet browsing and apps as well.

### The shortlist



Apple iPod Touch 64GB



Sony NWZ-F886



Sony NWZ-ZX1

### Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Screen size (in)	Resolution	Storage (GB)	Web browsing	Dimensions (h/w/d, mm)
<b>Up to £1000</b>								
Astell & Kern AK100 MkII	700	04.14/GT	★★★★★	A few design issues mar a very talented performer	2.5	320x240	32	79x59x15
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
FiiO X5	290	08.14/GT	★★★★★	A bulky design gives way to a strong, if not outstanding music player	2.4	400x360	n/a	114x68x16
iBasso DX50	200	08.14/GT	★★★★★	Enjoyable and affordable. However it's not the last word in sound quality	1	96x96	8	60x40x20
SanDisk Sansa Clip+ 8GB	40	12.11/GT	★★★★★	A worthy Apple alternative	2.4	320x240	8	10x64x17
Sony NWZ-F805 16GB	200	01.13/FT	★★★★★	This multimedia Walkman is a fine choice	3.5	800x400	16	115x57x9
Sony NWZ-F886	240	08.14/GT	★★★★★	An intuitive interface, good sound and battery make for a well-realised music player	4	854x480	32	116x59x8
Sony NWZ-ZX1	550	04.14/GT	★★★★★	A seriously impressive first attempt at a premium high-res audio player	4	854x480	128	123x61x16

## Picking the right... in-earphones

You've spent a fair bit on your high-res music player, here's a selection of in-ears to go with it



### Soundmagic E10S

Up to £50

The E10S are an updated version of the Award-winning in-ears. Tweaks have been made to the sound, giving the bass a tad more agility with the treble and mid-range sounding well-judged. If you can't justify spending too much on headphones, these might just be the ticket.



### Bose MIE2i

£100-£150

A word of warning, if you're out and about people will be able to hear your music when you have the MIE2is on. Sitting on the ear-canal rather than inside the ear, they will leak a little noise, but they'll also attack with pace and detail leaving you in no doubt as to the quality they offer.



### Sony MDR-EX650AP

£50-£100

With striking looks, the EX650APs present an attractive soundstage with an excellent sense of timing and detail, allowing tracks to ebb and flow naturally with nary a hint of any recording flaws. Perfect for your high-res tracks.



### Shure SE425

£150+

Last year's Award-winners in the £150-£300 category, the SE425s are a fun and energetic proposition that offer a level of detail that's compelling and immersive. If your priority is listening to music in all its glory, these are a cracking pair of in-ears.



## 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 (hwd, mm)
<b>Up to £600</b>										
Amazon Kindle Fire HD 16GB	160	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Android	●	7	1280x800	16/32	193x137x10	A great option for those looking for a user-friendly tablet
Amazon Kindle Fire HDX 7	200	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Android	●	7	1920x1200	16/32/64	186x128x9	An excellent tablet but Android fans might find it a little restrictive
Asus VivoTab ME400	400	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Windows 8	●	10.1	1366x768	32/64	263x171x10	A convincing rival to the Microsoft Surface in the Windows 8 space
Apple iPad Mini 64GB Wi-Fi	430	04.13/GT	★★★★★	iOS	●	7.9	1024x768	16/32/64	200x135x7	Apple hits the bullseye. Again
Apple iPad Mini/Retina display	320	01.14/ST	★★★★★	iOS 7	●	7.9	2048x1536	16/32/64	200x135x7	An absolutely superb tablet that shows its rivals how it's done
Apple iPad 4 16GB Wi-Fi	400	04.13/GT	★★★★★	iOS	●	9.7	2048x1536	16/32/64	240x190x9	<b>Best tablet over 8in, Awards 2013</b>
Apple iPad Air	400	01.14/FT	★★★★★	iOS 7	●	9.7	2048x1536	16/32/64	240x170x8	Refined and improved, the iPad Air is a stunning piece of technology
Asus Eee Pad Transformer	380	09.11/GT	★★★★★	Android	●	10.1	1280x800	16/32	271x177x13	A competitive tablet with a keyboard dock
Asus Eee Pad Transformer Prime	500	07.12/FT	★★★★★	Android	●	10.1	1280x800	16/32	181x263x8	Aslim and smart tablet that we love
Asus Transformer Pad Infinity	600	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Android	●	10.1	1900x1200	32/64	263x181x9	A very capable iPad alternative and one of the best android tablets
BlackBerry PlayBook 16GB	400	09.11/GT	★★★★★	QNX	●	7	1024x600	16/32/64	130x194x10	There's plenty on offer here, but lacks apps
Dell XPS 10 32GB	340	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Windows RT	●	10.1	1366x768	32/64	270x180x10	Not perfect but an appealing alternative to the usual suspects
Google Nexus 7	160	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Android	●	7	1280x800	16/32	199x120x11	Best tablet up to £300, Awards 2012. <b>PRODUCT OF THE YEAR</b>
Google Nexus 7 (2013)	200	10.14/GT	★★★★★	Android	●	7	1920x1200	16/32	200x114x9	<b>Best tablet up to 8in, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR</b>
Google Nexus 10	319	01.13/FT	★★★★★	Android	●	10	2560x1060	16/32	264x178x9	Great performance and price: a real iPad-botherer
LG G Pad	260	01.14/ST	★★★★★	Android	●	8.3	1920x1200	16	216x127x8	Looks the part but struggles against its price rivals
Kobo Arc 16GB	160	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Android	●	7	1280x800	16/32	190x120x10	Not for music buffs but a great budget option nonetheless
Samsung Galaxy Note 10.1	450	02.14/FT	★★★★★	Android	●	10.1	2500x1600	16/32/64	171x243x8	A great screen that's let down by a cluttered interface
Samsung Galaxy Tab 2 7.0	160	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Android	●	7	1024x600	8/16	190x120x10	Find it for the right price and it's a capable all-rounder
Samsung Galaxy Tab S	320	10.14/GT	★★★★★	Android	●	8.4	2560x1600	16/32	213x126x7	The best tablet we've tested from Samsung so far
Sony Xperia Tablet S	330	04.13/FT	★★★★★	Android	●	9.4	1280x800	16/32	240x170x10	Plenty of potential, but there are niggles
Sony Xperia Tablet Z	399	06.13/FT	★★★★★	Android	●	10.1	1920x1200	16/32	172x266x69	Sony fans will love it, but there are tablets out there for less money
Sony Xperia Tablet Z2	400	08.14/FT	★★★★★	Android	●	10.1	1920x1200	16/32	172x266x64	Another solid effort, but doesn't do quite enough against the iPad
Tesco Hudl	120	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Android	●	7	1440x900	16	192x129x10	Not flawless, but this is a superb budget tablet from Tesco

## Killer Apps



### Marvel Unlimited

With over 50 years worth of history, fans of Marvel comics can access a huge library (15,000 titles), from old classics to recent hits, for a monthly fee or to buy outright. Excelsior!



### OneDrive

If you want a service to store your work online then OneDrive is a decent bet. With a generous starting allocation (15GB), it's easy to sync and access your work across a range of devices.



### Audible

With a huge library of titles, and a range of authors, celebrities and well known voices taking the time to tell stories in their own words, Audible is great for those who want to give their hands a rest.



### Fresh Paint

Fresh Paint lets you indulge your creative side by providing the tools to paint whatever comes to mind. Best of all, it's free. There aren't a lot of essential Windows apps, but this may rank as one.



# 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



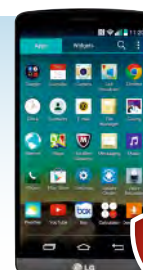
**Apple iPhone 5S**

“Finding a smartphone that innovates while still getting all the basics right isn’t always as easy as you’d expect, but the iPhone 5s has nailed it.”



**Sony Xperia Z2**

“The Z2 is one of the best phones money can buy. Is it the best Android can offer? Possibly. The Xperia Z2 is the one to beat, doing everything right. It’s magnificent.”



**LG G3**

“There’s no denying its high-res capabilities, mixed in with a stunning video performance, great design and superb user experience make the LG G3 a very tempting choice.”

## Also consider

Product	Tested	Verdict	OS	NFC	4G	Screen size (in)	Resolution	Storage (GB)	Dimensions (hwd, mm)
Apple iPhone 4S	07.12/ST	★★★★★	Former reigning smartphone, now replaced but still good	iOS	●	3.5	960x640	16/32/64	115x59x9
Apple iPhone 5S	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	<b>Best smartphone, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR</b>	iOS	●	4.0	1136x640	16/32/64	124x59x8
Google Nexus 4	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A top performer and a brilliant realisation of Android power	Android	●	4.7	1280x768	8/16	134x69x9
Google Nexus 5	07.14/GT	★★★★★	A decent all-rounder but new rivals have bettered it	Android	●	4.95	1920x1080	16/32	138x69x9
HTC One	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Sets the bar high for smartphones in 2013	Android	●	4.7	1080x1920	32	137x68x9
HTC One (M8)	07.14/GT	★★★★★	Improves considerably on its predecessor. Does very little wrong	Android	●	5	1920x1080	32	146x71x9
HTC One Max	05.14/ST	★★★★★	A fine performer but could make better use of its bigger screen	Android	●	5.9	1920x1080	16/32	165x82x10
HTC One X+	01.13/ST	★★★★★	Well worth considering: good for music and a joy to use	Android	●	4.7	1280x720	32/64	134x70x9
HTC One XL	03.13/FT	★★★★★	Great for mobile media fans but its poor battery life just takes the edge off it	Android	●	4.7	1280x720	32	135x70x9
HTC 8S	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Capable and fun, if feature-light	Windows	●	4.7	800x480	4	121x63x10
LG Optimus 4X HD	01.13/ST	★★★★★	Not outstanding, but a worthy alternative to the best	Android	●	4.7	1280x720	16	132x68x9
LG Optimus L5 II	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Not a thrilling phone but the user experience is good	Android	●	4.0	800x433	4	118x62x9
LG G2	07.14/GT	★★★★★	A little outdated but still a worthy contender	Android	●	5.2	1920x1080	16/32	139x71x9
LG G3	09.14/FT	★★★★★	Has everything we liked about the G2 and then some	Android	●	5.5	1440x2560	16/32	146x75x9
LG G Flex	05.14/FT	★★★★★	All the pros of the G2, but with a low-res screen	Android	●	6	1280x720	32	161x82x8
Nokia Lumia 920	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A promising start for Nokia’s flagship	Windows	●	4.5	1280x768	32	130x71x11
Nokia Lumia 925	09.13/FT	★★★★★	The best Windows Phone yet	Windows	●	4.5	1280x768	16/32	129x71x9
Nokia Lumia 1520	05.14/ST	★★★★★	Apps still disappoint but this is the best Windows Phone yet	Windows	●	6	1920x1080	32	163x85x9
Oppo N1	05.14/ST	★★★★★	Quirky and flexible, this is a great effort from a promising brand	Android	●	5.9	1920x1080	16/32	171x83x9
Samsung Galaxy Nexus	07.12/ST	★★★★★	Great in many ways but pipped by rivals for audio	Android	●	4.65	1280x720	16/32	136x68x9
Samsung Galaxy Note	07.12/ST	★★★★★	A hybrid between a smart phone and a tablet	Android	●	5.29	1280x800	16/32	147x83x10
Samsung Galaxy Note II	01.13/ST	★★★★★	Massive screen, massive battery, very tempting	Android	●	5.55	1280x720	16/32/64	151x81x9
Samsung Galaxy Note III	05.14/ST	★★★★★	The original phablet, updated and still the best	Android	●	5.7	1920x1080	32	151x80x8
Samsung Galaxy S II	01.12/GT	★★★★★	Still great but upped by the new kids on the block	Android	●	4.3	800x480	16/32/64	125x66x8
Samsung Galaxy S III	08.12/FT	★★★★★	Best smartphone, Awards 2012	Android	●	4.8	1280x720	16/32	137x71x9
Samsung Galaxy S4	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Better than its predecessor but not as good as its rivals	Android	●	5.0	1920x1080	16/32/64	137x70x8
Samsung Galaxy S5	07.14/GT	★★★★★	An improvement on the S4, but not radical enough	Android	●	5.1	1920x1080	16/32	142x73x8
Sony Ericsson Xperia Arc S	01.12/GT	★★★★★	An excellent addition to the market	Android	●	4.2	854x480	1	125x63x9
Sony Xperia S	07.12/ST	★★★★★	A real rival to the iPhone	Android	●	4.3	1280x720	32	128x64x11
Sony Xperia T	01.13/ST	★★★★★	A strong all-rounder for music and movie lovers	Android	●	4.55	1280x720	16	129x67x9
Sony Xperia Z	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A triumph for Sony – one capable of taking the fight to Google	Android	●	5	1920x1080	16	139x71x8
Sony Xperia Z1	03.14/FT	★★★★★	Sony fans will love it, a speedy, sleek and impressive smartphone	Android	●	5	1920x1080	16	144x74x9
Sony Xperia Z2	07.14/GT	★★★★★	The phone to beat in 2014. Outstanding	Android	●	5.2	1920x1080	16	147x73x8

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## 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 Qunex 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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AWARDS 2012

CABLES & ACCESSORIES  
BEST HDMI CABLE  
AUDIOQUEST PEARL



AudioQuest Pearl HDMI Cable

WHAT HI-FI?  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2013

ACCESSORIES  
BEST ANALOGUE INTERCONNECT  
ATLAS ELEMENT INTEGRA



Atlas Element Integra Audio Cable

WHAT HI-FI?  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2012

CABLES & ACCESSORIES  
BEST OPTICAL DIGITAL CABLE  
QED PERFORMANCE GRAPHITE



QED Performance Optical Cable



AudioQuest DragonFly V1.2

WHAT HI-FI?  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2013

PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
ACCESSORIES  
AUDIOQUEST FLX-SLIP 14/4



AudioQuest FLX-SLIP 14/4 Cable

WHAT HI-FI?  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2012

CABLES & ACCESSORIES  
BEST DIGITAL DIGITAL CABLE  
QED PERFORMANCE



QED Performance Digital Cable

WHAT HI-FI?  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2012

CABLES & ACCESSORIES  
BEST USB 2.0 CABLE  
SUPRA USB 2.0



Supra USB 2.0 Cable

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**HDMI CABLES continued**

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Length as tested (m)	HDMI type
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
<b>£80 and above</b>					
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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Chord Active V2 HDMI Cable



QED Reference Optical Quartz



Wireworld Starlight 7 USB Cable



QED Reference Audio 40 Cable



AudioQuest Cinnamon USB to Lightning Cable



Atlas Hyper Integra Audio Cable



AudioQuest Cinnamon RJ/E Cable



Tellurium Q Ultra Blue Speaker 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

### Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Type	Length tested (m)
<b>Up to £50</b>					
Audioquest Forest USB 1.5	25	11.10/FT	★★★★★	USB	1.5
Atlas Fibre Optic	32	06.09/GT	★★★★★	Optical	1
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
Wireworld Nova 6	40	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Optical	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 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
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



## 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	★★★★★	●			1
Black Rhodium Twist	36	06.14/GT	★★★★★	●			1
Clear. Aud. C-line Alpha One	30	12.11/FT	★★★★★	●			1
Ecosse Conductor CA1.2	49	06.11/GT	★★★★★	●			1
Ecosse The Composer	37	09.12/GT	★★★★★	●			0.8
Merlin Mozart	40	09.12/GT	★★★★★	●			1
QED Performance Audio 2	40	09.12/GT	★★★★★	●			1
QED Profile	18	06.11/GT	★★★★★	●	●		1
Wireworld Luna	37	09.12/GT	★★★★★	●			1
Wireworld Luna 6	36	12.09/GT	★★★★★	●			1
Wireworld Luna 7	40	06.14/GT	★★★★★	●			1
<b>£50 and above</b>							
Atlas Equator Integra	75	02.12/FT	★★★★★	●	●		1
AudioQuest Red River	85	06.14/GT	★★★★★	●			1
Chord Co. Chameleon Plus	125	11.11/FT	★★★★★	●			1
Chord Company Cobra VEE 3	95	06.14/GT	★★★★★	●			1
Chord Company Indigo Plus	995	05.09/FT	★★★★★	●			1



**ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS continued**

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		RCA phono 3.5mm-to-RCA XLR (balanced)	Length tested (m)
Chord Crimson Vee3	50	11.13/GT	★★★★★	A nice, easy-going cable that's a little too restrained		1
Ecosse The Baton MkII	104	08.08/GT	★★★★★	Although there's much to admire, the Baton MkII can struggle to gel sounds	●	0.8
Furutech Alpha Line-1	80	03.11/FT	★★★★★	A cable for owners of midrange systems to get very excited by - very good indeed	●	1
QED J2P	50	12.09/FT	★★★★★	Fast and agile 3.5mm-RCA cable	●	1.5
QED Reference Audio 40	85	06.14/GT	★★★★★	Reassuring build quality from a cable that brings fantastic depth and dimension	●	1
QED Reference Audio J2P	50	12.09/FT	★★★★★	Clean sounding and packed with detail	●	1.5
QED Signature Audio S	190	09.09/FT	★★★★★	QED's new flagship interconnect offers great dynamics and punch	●	1
van den Hul The Bay C5	85	06.14/GT	★★★★★	For bright-sounding systems The Bay could be the antidote	●	1
van den Hul The Name	60	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Energy and fun trump ultimate precision	●	0.8
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



**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>								
Clear. Aud. C-Line Alpha One	25	11.10/FT	★★★★★	A fine first stage mains cable upgrade	●			n/a
Clear.Aud.C-LAlpha 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
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
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

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## 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.

### Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict
<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 G4	4.50	03.14/GT	★★★★★ Loses out when it comes to the weight and solidity of its sound. Exciting and articulate nonetheless
Audioquest X2	5	07.11/GT	★★★★★ A perfectly smooth and even-handed sounding performer
Atlas Equator 2.0 OFC	6	03.14/GT	★★★★★ Allows for an impressive sense of weight and power, but doesn't quite match its rivals
Chord Co. Carnival Silv. Screen	6	10.12/GT	★★★★★ Slightly overtaken by newer rivals, but still a mighty fine choice
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 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	03.14/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
Talk Electronics Talk 3	4	07.11/GT	★★★★★ An essential first cable upgrade
Wireworld Luna 7	6.50	03.14/GT	★★★★★ The all-round ability of this cable means it should sit well with a wide range of systems
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

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QED Silver Anniversary XT

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March 2014



Wireworld Luna 7 Speaker Cable

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Van Den Hul The Clearwater

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Atlas Hyper 2.0 Speaker Cable

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QED Ruby Anniversary Evolution

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## SPEAKER CABLES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Biwire
<b>£10/m and above</b>				
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
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
van den Hul The Clearwater	10	03.14/GT	★★★★★	A cable with an impressive level of detail and clarity



## 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.

## Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Dimensions (fwd, cm)	Fillable	Finishes
<b>Up to £5000</b>						
Atacama Duo 6	65	02.13/GT	★★★★★	60x31x31	●	1
Atacama Nexus 6	200	12.00/FT	★★★★★	60x25x30	●	1
Atacama Moseco 6	120	09.14/GT	★★★★★	60x24x28	●	4
Custom rc60 Deluxe	125	10.07/FT	★★★★★	60x20x25		5
Custom Design FS103	160	09.14/GT	★★★★★	61x22x26	●	4
Custom Design FS104 Sig.	200	09.11/GT	★★★★★	62x16x18	●	4
Custom Design RS300	90	03.07/GT	★★★★★	61x22x26	●	2
Custom Design RS302	120	11.06/FT	★★★★★	61x22x26	●	3
Hi Fi Racks Podium T5 IV	150	09.11/GT	★★★★★	50x24x30		2
Hi Fi Racks Podium Slimline	120	09.14/GT	★★★★★	60x15x21		5
Mission Stance	100	07.09/FT	★★★★★	58x21x28	●	3
Partington ANSA 60	150	09.11/GT	★★★★★	60x23x28	●	1
Part. D'nought Broadside	300	08.08/FT	★★★★★	60x23x28		1
Partington Heavi	399	03.07/FT	★★★★★	60x30x21		1
Part. Super Dreadnought	180	03.07/GT	★★★★★	60x16x17	●	1
Q Acoustics 20 speaker stands	200	09.14/GT	★★★★★	66.5x39x24		2
Soundstyle Z2	70	11.08/FT	★★★★★	57x17x23	●	2



## AV &amp; 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 (fwd, cm)	Finishes
<b>Up to £500</b>						
Alphason Finewood 1100	300	03.13/FT	★★★★★	3	51x110x45	1
Alphason ST560/3	260	06.10/GT	★★★★★	● 4	65x56x59	2
Atacama Equinox AVI	380	05.07/FT	★★★★★	2	110x106x60	3
Atacama Equinox	339	11.09/GT	★★★★★	● 2-5	Variablex60x55	3
Atacama Evoque Eco 60-40	450	09.14/GT	★★★★★	● 3	Variablex60x40	3
Atacama Eris Eco 5.0	460	04.12/FT	★★★★★	● 4	70x59x56	4
Audiophile Base Stratbase	360	01.08/FT	★★★★★	● 1	0.4x43x36	2
Custom Design Concept AV	350	04.07/GT	★★★★★	3	60x101x40	4
Custom Design Icon Sig.	330	10.06/FT	★★★★★	4	42x75x66	11
Custom Design Milan 4	470	11.09/GT	★★★★★	● 4	59x57x40	5

## RACKS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Modular Shelves	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	Finishes
<b>Up to £500</b>							
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
HiFi Racks Podium SL Ak. XL	260	09.14/GT	★★★★★	Easy to build and a very good deal for the good price	● 3	Variablex79.5x40	5
Hi Fi Racks Podium Slimline	350	03.13/FT	★★★★★	A simple rack design with pretty decent results	4	Variablex55x40	1
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
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
<b>£500-£1000</b>							
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
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
<b>£1000 and more</b>							
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

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## Accessories

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## What the team say

*"A good kit-rack is a must-have - and not only does the Atacama perform brilliantly, it's modular and it looks good too"*



## 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
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



## 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.

### Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	MM	MC	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
<b>Up to £3000</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
Pro-Ject Phono Box S	120	06.13/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	7x4x33



## 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>					
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
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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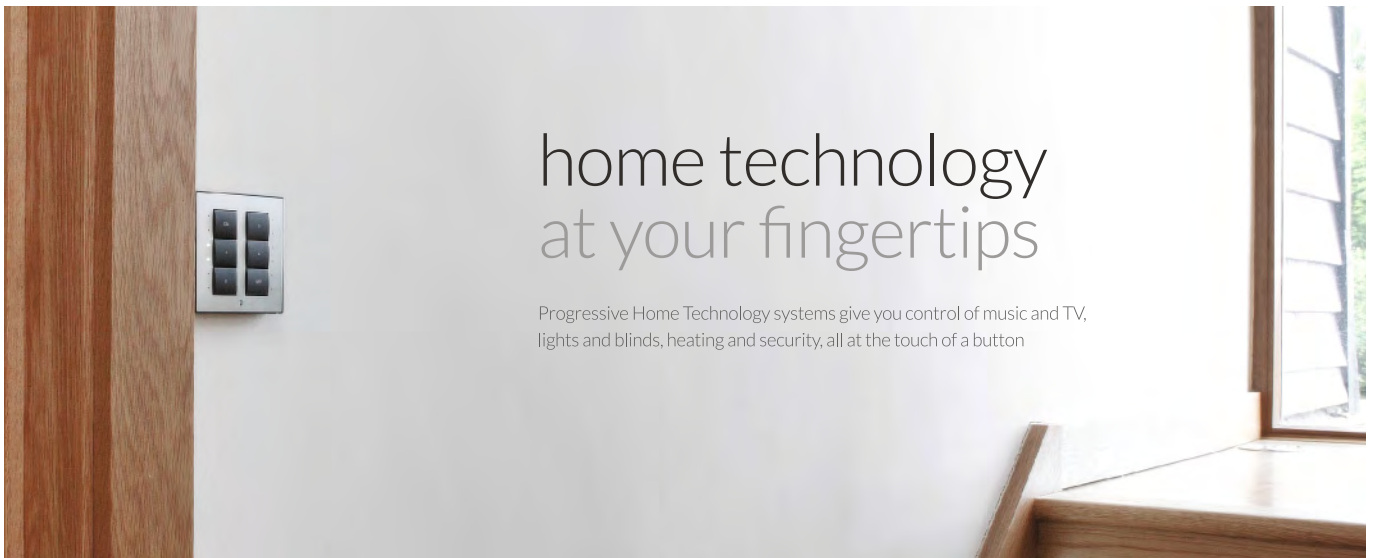
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RX-A1040** NEW  
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SOUND AND STYLE  
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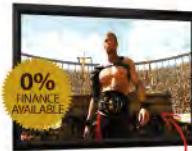
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**PURE PERFORMANCE  
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**BEST FOR  
BUDGET**

## 5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGES

OUR TOP-SELLING SURROUND SOUND PACKAGES

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# THAT WAS THEN

## Yamaha YSP-1 **First sighting of the soundbar**

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# First Tests

BRITAIN'S HOTTEST NEW KIT REVIEWED & RATED

## YSP-1 rewrites surround rules

We've seen effective surround systems using two or three speakers before, but this uses only one

**Yamaha YSP-1**  
HOME CINEMA SYSTEM  
**£800**

**FOR**  
Surround sound without all the boxes; ease of use; neat design

**AGAINST**  
Performance is highly dependent on the shape of listening room; it doesn't like to play loudly; needs a subwoofer

**VERDICT**  
The Yamaha YSP-1 is a great idea, making it possible to get surround sound without the usual clutter



PICTURE A TYPICAL surround sound system in operation



Under the grille, you see the astonishingly large array of drive units (42 in all), which provides the firepower for the YSP-1's technology

So, how does Yamaha get surround sound without a surround speaker package? Well, that's the clever bit. The company uses digital signal processing to adjust the delays on its speaker array. This way the output of the YSP-1 can be focused into sound beams, each of which represents a channel of your multichannel soundtrack. These beams can be adjusted for angle and bounce off the side and back walls to give a proper multichannel soundfield. There are various beam configurations available, including 'wide' and 'narrow'. Watch the spider scene from the second *Harry Potter* adventure and the soundfield is convincing enough to have you looking over your shoulder to make sure Yamaha hasn't sneaked in a pair of dedicated surrounds just to fool you. Dynamics are good and detail levels satisfy, too. Unlike most surround systems, this Yamaha times well, which means that music DVDs – for example, Jamaica's *Thank You, Live or Peter* – sound great. The YSP-1 isn't perfect, but the heavy curtains or lots of other sound-absorbing material around the room, a convincing surround sound effect is harder to achieve. Stereo performance impresses for timing, but there isn't the insight or refinement to challenge music systems and high volume levels aren't on the menu, either. Pushed, this Yamaha quickly sounds thin and aggressive.

**W**e loved the idea of Yamaha's YSP-1 from the moment we heard about it. To get proper surround sound from a neat, single speaker is the ideal for many people, and the YSP-1 came close to doing just that.

Even by today's standards it's a sophisticated design. It used a multi-driver arrangement and some mighty clever processing to deliver beams of sound around the room. These beams are discrete channels of sound and are aimed so that when they reflect off a side or rear wall they appear to be located in exactly the same place as a dedicated speaker would produce. Clever stuff indeed, and it works well, provided your room is appropriately shaped and has suitable reflecting

surfaces. The multi-driver means 40 small units are augmented by two bass drivers. Each drive unit has a dedicated amplifier; 20-watt modules drive each of the larger bass units while the 40 smaller drivers make do with two watts of power each. It's a complex and expensive arrangement. But, as far as surrounding the listener with sound, it does a better job than any alternative soundbar configuration we've heard.

The latest generation of Yamaha's soundbars (as typified by the YSP-2500 tested in *First Tests* this month, p14) has evolved the original concept. Set-up is easier than ever and the addition of a dedicated subwoofer gives the overall sound an authority the original barely hinted at. Yet at heart the YSP concept remains startlingly unchanged. We still think it's a great concept.

**The Yamaha YSP-1 was a sophisticated design, which remains to this day in the YSP-2500 (shown below without subwoofer)**



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