

WHAT HI-FI?★FI?

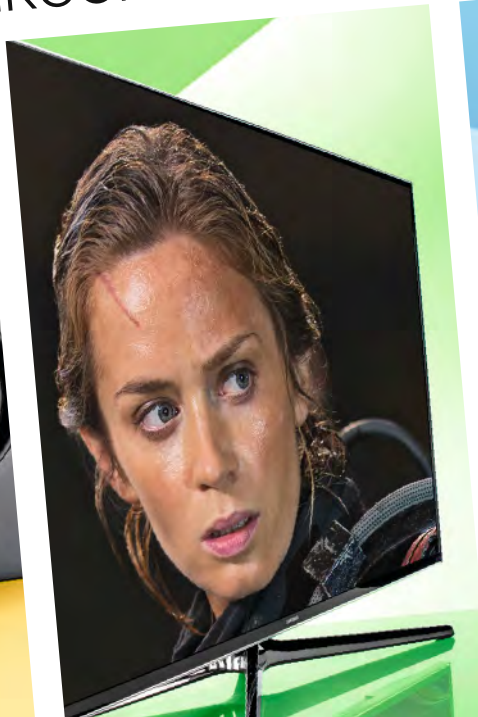
SOUND AND VISION

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24 Categories **99** Winners

AWARDS 2014

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"Nicely built and superb sounding, the 2020is remain unbeatable at this price"

What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision, April 2014



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

Home Cinema Choice 'Best Buy', September 2012



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

Trusted Reviews 'Editor's Choice', August 2014



Winner 'Best traditional 5.1 speaker package up to £700'

What Hi-Fi? Awards 2011, 2012 and 2013

It'll be a fight to the finish, let there be no doubt

Of course I can't really think of any workable alternatives, but sometimes democracy can really be obstructive. If this magazine were a dictatorship it wouldn't have taken half as long as ultimately was the case to decide on the 99 Award-winners we're revealing inside.

Some categories were straightforward and unanimous decisions, mind you. Our favourite **home cinema amplifier (p68)**, for instance – that Award was a done deal in next to no time. It was the same story when choosing **the best turntables around (p46)** – sorted in short order.

But I don't mind telling you the debate ran from 'heated' through 'vigorous' to 'barely civilised' when it came to contentious stuff like **DACs (p62)** and **stereo speakers (p49)**.

Still, at least this year we didn't have to go out into the car-park to settle it.



Simon
Simon Lucas, Editor

My product of the year

Sennheiser IE 800

In-ear headphones p59

Probably more expensive than Chanel No 5 if you're going by weight alone, but the IE 800s are simply the best in-ear headphones I have ever heard. Small is beautiful, yes, and less is more. At least it is with these Sennheisers.



WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION

Reviews you can trust

Experience & heritage



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"Articulate and agile, it's able to handle even the most complicated rhythms without ever sound flustered"

PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

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110 Readers' Award The votes are in and a winner has been chosen. The year's best product - as voted for by you

Our products of the year



Naim Mu-so
First test p18

"The closest a wireless speaker has come to sounding like true hi-fi. And it looks stunning"
Kashfia Kabir
Multimedia journalist



Spotify p96

"Spotify not only brings millions of tracks to your fingertips, but does so in a smart and user-friendly package"
Andy Madden
Reviews editor



Philips HTL5140
First test p12

"Brings a mighty sound to a modest budget... It's the boost your flatscreen's been longing for"
Becky Roberts
Staff writer



Samsung UE65HU7500
First test p37

"An excellent all rounder: this 4K TV is hard to beat"
Ced Yuen
Staff writer



Sony STR-DN1050
p68

"This amp offers an exhaustive list of features alongside show-stopping performance"
Verity Burns
Multimedia editor



Chord Hugo p64

"Class-leading sound wrapped in a compact case with aptX Bluetooth. What more could you ask for?"
Ketan Bharadia
Technical editor

THE NEWEST PRODUCTS
REVIEWED AND RATED

500 TEST VERDICTS BUYING GUIDE



Sony STR-DN1050 p68

"Its low end has neighbour-bothering weight, giving drive and drama to the on-screen action"



Apple iPhone 6 p22

"It's easily the best iPhone yet, but it's also one of the finest smartphones of 2014"

Canton DM 75 p20

"As its size might suggest, the sound is bigger and more open"



Beyerdynamic T51i p27

"There's remarkable clarity and bite at the top, but it's smooth enough to avoid hardness"

Chord Hugo p64

"The Hugo's desire for detail and natural tone really brings the vocal to the fore"



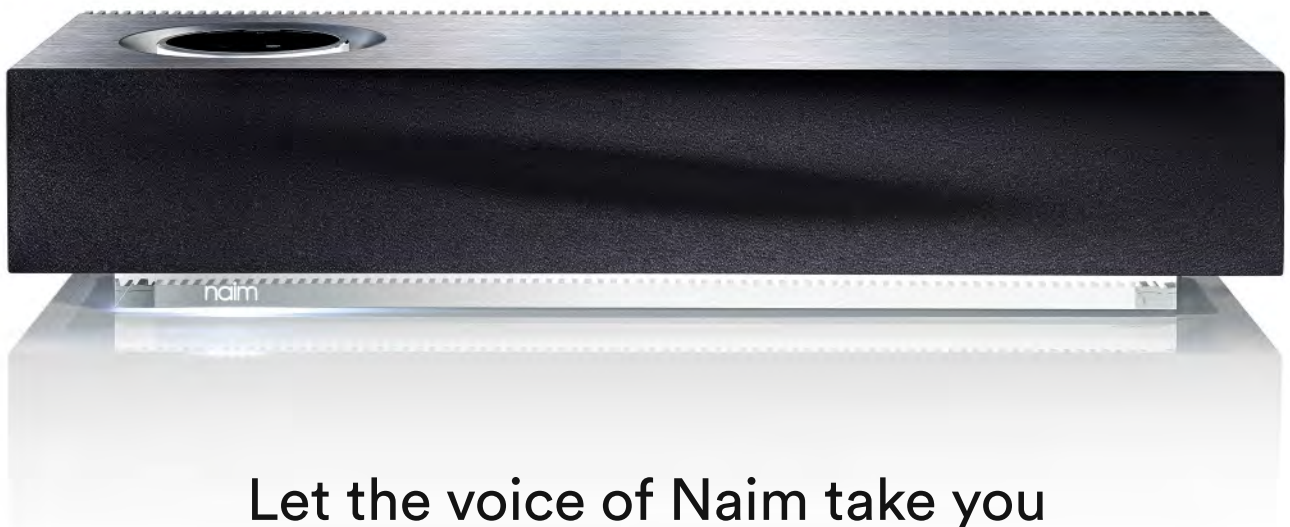
Our ratings explained

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
TEST WINNER

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

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

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



Let the voice of Naim take you inside the music

Mu-so is our first wireless music system. Finely tuned by our specialist engineers in England, its powerful digital brain delivers the most exceptional quality in sound, commanding 450 watts of power through six custom-designed speakers, to create an experience of music that has to be heard to be believed.

naimaudio.com

Features: Airplay, Bluetooth®/aptX®, Spotify Connect®, UPnP™ (access your stored music), Internet Radio, USB, Analogue and Digital inputs, Apple iOS and Android App for complete control.

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mu-so

Go Deeper



Exclusive reviews of the latest kit

FIRST TESTS

**MORE
FIRST TESTS**

EXCLUSIVE

Wharfedale finishes the job

Wharfedale Diamond 220 | Stereo speakers | £200

Want to know the best-sounding budget speakers on the market? Easy, it's Wharfedale's brand new Diamond 220s. They're the largest standmounter in the company's new entry-level Diamond 200 series, and we wouldn't be surprised if they turned out to be the pick of the bunch if history is anything to go by.

These are the replacement for the hugely talented 121s, but while they look quite similar there are some important changes. They're neatly finished for starters. This might sound like a small point, but it was the older speaker's big weakness.

Chipboard of the old block

At its heart, this shortcoming had as much to do with Wharfedale's ambition to make the 121s sonic class-leaders as it did with the factory's quality control. In a bid to improve performance, Wharfedale's engineers used cabinet walls made of a layered construction that mixed chipboard and MDF. It was felt that using MDF alone - as on most speakers - led to an undesirable level of cabinet coloration.

The chipboard side was on the outside in contact with the (rather thin) vinyl covering. The result? An uneven surface that made the speakers look poorly finished. It didn't help that the factory seemed to have a rather lax attitude to the neat application of the vinyl wrap, particularly at the cabinet corners. We also had issues with the front baffle which, once again, looked uneven in appearance.

Creating a splash instead of ripples

We're glad to report the Diamond 220s are much better in all respects. While still not the classiest speakers we've seen around this price (Q Acoustics and Monitor Audio set the standard), they're good enough to avoid criticism.

Wharfedale has kept the layered cabinet construction, though - in this case two thin layers of MDF sandwich the chipboard section - and glue the vinyl onto the smoother MDF surfaces. Goodbye ripples, hello better finish. Now that the finish issues are sorted, the advantages of these composite panels come to the fore. The combination of chipboard and MDF helps

to damp resonances, preventing the cabinet from contributing too much to the overall sound. Quite simply, you hear more of the drive units and less of the cabinet.

But there's more than just better finish involved in the move to the new model. There's a bigger magnet on the 13cm woven Kevlar mid/bass driver. This makes the speakers easier to drive and improves its responsiveness.

Slot right in

The unusual slot-loaded port arrangement first seen on the 100 series makes a reappearance here too, and it has been tweaked to reduce distortion. Such a design is claimed to be more efficient than a conventional port (see panel). The proof, as ever, is in the listening.

The tweeter remains unchanged. It still sits in a deeply dished waveguide, which helps efficiency (particularly through the crossover region). A ferrite magnet is used in the unit's motor system rather than the more usual neodymium: not only is Ferrite cheaper - always a consideration with products at this price level - but the engineers feel it produces a smoother sound too. Wharfedale has also tweaked the crossover to improve integration.

When it comes to sound quality the Diamond 220s needn't fear any rival. Give

Low-end theory

Wharfedale's engineers haven't taken the easy route with the Diamond 220's bass tuning. Instead of going down the usual route of rear- or front-firing reflex port, they've decided to fire the port downwards into a small air gap between base of the cabinet and the plinth below. This arrangement has been further refined from that seen on the earlier 121s.

Not only does this technique help with port efficiency and the reduction of chuffing noise, it makes the speaker less fussy about placement. Judging by the low-frequency output of the 220s this arrangement seems to work really well, giving low-end weight and authority.



Naim Mu-so
£895 **Page 18**

A wireless speaker that provides impressive hi-fi-quality sound



Apple iPhone 6
£540 **Page 22**

It's the one most of us, if not all of us, have been waiting for



Beyerdynamic T51i
£245 **Page 27**

Look no further if you have £250 to spend on a pair of headphones

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for even more
product reviews!



With the BDP-S5200
you really can't go
wrong for the money

Sony BDP-S5200, p24



For a full list of specifications and
other useful info visit whathifi.com



In detail...

1 Good-quality biwire terminals mean it is worth experimenting, as definition and openness can improve.

2 The 220's dome tweeter is surrounded by a deeply dished waveguide. This is claimed to improve integration and dispersion.

3 A pretty pattern on Kevlar mid/bass isn't just for show. It helps to control resonance and improve rigidity.

them a good, solid pair of stands such as Atacama Moseco 6s (£120) and they will sparkle. In our test room these speakers sound best when placed close to a rear wall. A little bit of toe-in towards the listening position helps to firm up the stereo image.

Miniature but meaty

Used this way these speakers deliver a surprisingly meaty bass that has far more power and punch than we'd expect from speakers that stand just 50cm high. That slot-loaded port arrangement really seems to work - low frequencies are agile and tuneful, making the distinctive bassline from Van Morrison's *Moondance* a pleasure. While there's a good amount of bass it's all in proportion, giving foundation to the rest of the frequency range without dominating.

Move up the frequency range and the good news continues. Morrison's vocals are expressive and packed with subtlety. The 220's high frequencies please too,

Move up the frequency range and the good news continues. Van Morrison's vocals are expressive and packed with subtlety. The Wharfedale 220's high frequencies please too

combining bite, insight and refinement superbly. These standmounters pile on the plus points when we switch to Holst's *Jupiter*. We're impressed by the speaker's balanced tonality and their ability to deliver larger-scale dynamic shifts with enthusiasm. There's scale here with a degree of authority and substance that no rival we've heard can better. Stereo imaging is good too, nicely projected and layered.

While these speakers aren't unduly fussy about partnering kit you'll only get out what you put in. They work well as an upgrade to the speakers that come with Denon's D-M39 micro but will only really start to shine when used with something like Marantz's PM6005 amplifier. How do they compare to the older 121s? The character is similar but the newer speakers are a little better in most respects.

These are the speakers we wanted Wharfedale to make all along - one of the best budget speakers around.

USE IT WITH

Atacama Moseco 6

Place the Wharfedale Diamond 220s on these stands and they will sparkle.

SYSTEM BUILDER

Three partners that will help make sure you hear the Wharfedales at their best...



CD player

Marantz CD6005 £280 ★★★★★

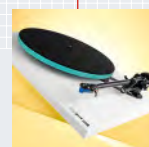
This is a terrific CD player for the money. The CD6005 has it all: refinement, detail and dynamics. Its build is quality, too.



Amplifier

Rega Brio-R £480 ★★★★★

Normally we'd recommend Marantz's PM6005. It's a terrific amp, but this little Rega gets so much more out of the Diamonds.



Turntable

Rega RP3/Elys 2 £550 ★★★★★

We could have gone for a budget alternative such as Pro-ject's Essential II, but the 220's transparency justify the extra spend.

Total build £1510

TECH SPECS

Dimensions (hwd, cm) 50 x 32 x 41 •
Floorstander No • **Sensitivity (db/w/m)** 86
Finishes 4 • **Impedance (ohms)** 8 •
Max power handling (watts) 100 •
Biwireable Yes •

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Wonderfully balanced and informative sound; expressive dynamics; fine integration; unfussy nature

AGAINST Nothing of note

VERDICT Now finish issues are sorted we're left with a terrific pair of speakers

REVIEWER'S NOTES... GETTING TO KNOW THE WHARFEDALE DIAMOND 220

1 The Wharfedale 220s still aren't the smartest speaker around but build and finish is now good enough to avoid any serious complaint.

2 We experiment with positioning and find the 220s sound best close to a rear wall, with a small degree of angle pointing at the main listening position.

3 Give the 220s a couple of days to run in and they continue to improve. We're struck by their well-judged tonal balance and bass authority.

4 We try a whole range of electronics from micro-systems up to our multi-thousand pound reference kit. The 220s sound stunning each time.

5 The listening room is packed with pricier alternatives, but it's a measure of the 220s talents that we feel no need to move to something better.

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Stuff
★★★★★

LG G3, Stuff.tv, 24th June 2014



Philips HTL5140 | Soundbar | £270

Philips brings on a sub to great effect

If we had one criticism of Philips' brilliant debut soundbar, the HTL5120, when we reviewed it earlier this year, it was its slightly screen-blocking height. There's no such problem with its brand new successor, the HTL5140. At only 5cm tall (a third shorter than its predecessor), it's one of the least obtrusive designs we've laid eyes on. And it has a subwoofer boosting its efforts.

As the rather compact square-shaped packaging suggests, the bar is made up of three individual parts: two detachable metal-mesh ends - each hiding four racetrack drivers and two 25mm mylar tweeters - and a central glossy black control panel, where you'll find simple touch functions and a clearly readable text display (which has three brightness options).

Piece it all together

Slot the parts into one another and, with a click, you have a slim, sturdy 105cm-wide bar that extends just beyond the width of a typical 42in telly. For best performance, the whole of the bar should lie flat, so make sure your stand is big enough.

The bar partners a wireless subwoofer - it has a side-firing 20cm driver and ups the total power to a claimed 320W. It might be another box to house, but its reasonably slender build makes it easy to tuck away.

We're fond of the HTL5140's sleek and functional design, which is only bettered by its wealth of connections. Far surpassing our expectations at this price, there's HDMI, optical, 3.5mm and USB inputs as well as Bluetooth (aptX) with the added convenience of one-touch NFC pairing.

An HDMI ARC output, too, means your external devices (Blu-ray players, set-top

boxes etc) can be connected directly into the bar, with only one HDMI cable running from the bar into your TV.

With a rounded back and rubber buttons, the remote resembles the handset Philips supplies with its TVs. It's better than most efforts we see, though a quick glance is often needed to avoid pressing the wrong side of the rocker buttons.

The remote opens doors to Virtual Surround Sound and umpteen other sound modes (including Night Mode, which flattens dynamics when the kids have gone to bed), and a button to match up sound to picture if it's out of sync.

Design and build win our good word, but it's the HTL5140's sound quality that rubber-stamps our appreciation. Balanced, dynamically expressive and well integrated, the HTL5140 takes this year's budget 'bars to new heights. During our test we compared this Philips with every new rival we could get our hands on, and it won out easily.

Direct comparison

For £270, you should expect a fair jump in quality from your TV speakers - after all, that's the point. We flick between the Philips and our reference 48in Samsung during *Transformers: Dark Of The Moon*, and find the Philips delivers far greater scale and dynamic build-up. There's more information where detail is concerned, and more density to the Decepticons' stomps as they trample through Manhattan. Through the TV, they sound small and light-footed.

The way this 'bar does voices is pleasing: Optimus Prime's carries weight and insight, and there's clear distinction between those speaking with and without helmets on.



Clearly laid out and comfortable to hold, the remote betters most such handsets



USE IT WITH

**Sony
KDL-
40W605B**

Our favourite TV of this size has a fine picture and decent features. Its sound lacks weight, so cue the Philips...

Of the seven sound modes on board, 'Auto' and 'Balanced' get our vote for the most even and subtle presentations.

Alongside an impressive midrange, highs and lows don't let the side down. As shards of glass fall down the glass-faced building in slow-mo, their tinkly sound effect is clear and defined. Down south, the sub brings enough beef: the clunking of metal as the Autobots twist in transformation is solid, and there's deep rumble when the rocket launches. That sub certainly earns its stripes.

Have sound, will travel

Gunshots are sharp and precisely mapped within the soundfield - as the flying Decepticons bolt corner-to-corner across the screen, there's an obvious diagonal dimension to the projection.

The 'Surround' mode effectively bolsters the soundfield, giving the sound of helicopter propellers wider swing, though dialogue is a little drowned out as a result.

Subtle too, the HTL5140 keeps track of the robots' faint mechanical clicks as they move their limbs in dialogue-driven scenes.

Our satisfaction isn't short-lived as we load up *Stone Roses: Made of Stone* on Blu-ray. The finale concert has detail and energy, the Philips showing a good grasp of rhythm and tempo in the bass guitar tab. The electric riffs have a sense of pizzazz, while vocals are solid yet articulate.

Philips' latest range of soundbars is off to a flying start with the HTL5140. The company has taken the HTL5120's successful sound recipe and packed it into a wonderfully slimline package that'll suit almost any set-up. If that's not deserving of five stars, we don't know what is.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Wonderfully balanced; precise and wide-open soundfield; well-integrated; unobtrusive design; ample connections

AGAINST No, can't think of anything

VERDICT Everything a budget soundbar should be: insightful, balanced and unobtrusive

Needs to beat

Cambridge Audio TV2 £200

This is a brilliant-sounding alternative to the Philips that's also very entertaining.



Near Field Communication

The provision of NFC means you can pair your smartphone with the Philips by tapping it to the 'bar's central control section. It's a rare feature on a soundbar - especially a budget model.

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



Decoupled Double Dome tweeter





Yamaha Soundstage

Plug and Play. Powerful, Precise Sound.

SRT-1000

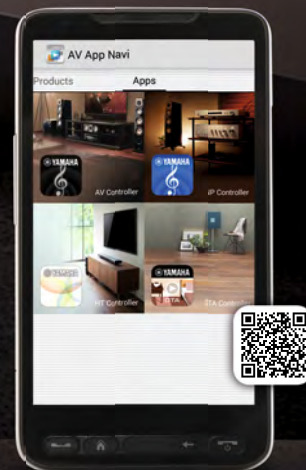
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Powered by music.

LG 65UB980V | 4K Television | £3800

Superb picture needs a final touch-up

The higher the resolution, the bigger you can go with your new screen – and with the advent of 4K comes a massive temptation in the form of this 65in LG.

And this is even bigger than most 65in TVs: 156cm wide to be precise. If you do have the space, the 65UB980V has a striking design, complete with a glowing LG logo plate along the bottom edge. But the real showiness begins when you turn the telly on: bright colours and cartoon graphics form a first-time set-up that's a pleasurable experience. By the end you will have tuned the aerial and/or satellite tuners, connected to the internet and installed the latest software – and you'll be right into LG's new webOS TV experience.

Deal the cards

The picture performance is good. Start with *House of Cards* from Netflix in 4K and you're wowed by how sharp and detailed the image is, from the time-lapsed cityscape intro sequence, to the furrows in Kevin Spacey's face. And while this is just a taste of how good 4K will be as Netflix upgrades its algorithms, it's already an image that thrills. Added sharpness introduces a level of three-dimensionality that makes actual 3D (which is also impressively handled by the LG) seem less relevant.

With still so little 4K content available, you'll be watching 1080p regularly and the LG does a good job of upscaling this to match its native 3840 x 2160 resolution, producing images that are clean and stable. Slow pans are handled very well when 'TruMotion' is set to 'Smooth', though it can get a little muddled by very fast action.

The bigger picture

Overall, though, it's a fine picture viewed in isolation, if not quite as good as the current best. Its contrast is narrower, colours a little more muted, edges a little softer and details less fine. Individually, these are not big problems, but added together and you've an image less striking than the Samsung UE65HU7500. The traits are the same with DVD and other standard-def sources, too.

Sound is very impressive. The LG houses Harman Kardon speakers that have weight and clarity, and while the virtual surround feature won't fool you it does fill the



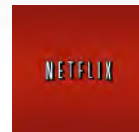
room fairly well. Picture and sound aside, webOS is a massive step forward: the coloured card system at the bottom of the screen is designed to equalise channels, apps and connected sources – taking you to content quickly. We like it a lot, but having lived with it a while, we discovered some niggles. The 'Today' menu is supposed to give a snapshot of what's available to watch right now – but it's not very well labelled.

Finger-clicking not so good

Highlighting one of them tells you only that it's 'Live', 'Catch-up' or 'Upcoming', so you have to actually click to get a title and synopsis. Not what you are after? Go back, highlight the next thing, click, back etc.

Our understanding when we saw webOS demoed was this feature would allow you to instantly find something to watch, even something unexpected. In its current form it doesn't do that. Catch-up programmes suggested come only from iPlayer – 4OD and ITV Player aren't yet available on webOS, but Demand 5 is, yet it still doesn't get a look in here. And what about using the TV shows available on Netflix or other TV on-demand apps? Doesn't happen.

We were shown a 'Movies' page when we first saw webOS demoed, too, and that was supposed to perform a similar function to 'Today', but it doesn't seem to exist on this UK version of the software so you have to delve into each of the movie on-demand apps individually (alongside Netflix, there's Amazon Instant Video, Blinkbox and



USE IT WITH Netflix

Still really the only way to get access to 4K content, the Netflix streaming service is a bargain at £5.99 per month.

Wuaki). There are plenty of menus labelled 'Recommended' in the webOS, but we don't see any real evidence of curation going on.

And the LG Store section? It's a page dominated by live TV recommendations (not actual 'recommendations') and catch-up TV programmes (all from iPlayer, none of which actually worked when clicked on). The whole system is a touch sluggish. It's nothing serious, but it undermines the brilliance of the pointer-like 'Magic Remote'. However, we suspect software updates will soon surface from LG.

There's a bigger problem for the LG 65UB980V though – the Samsung UE65HU7500, which provides an even punchier, more thrilling picture and currently costs around £300 less.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR webOS is the friendliest, most fun operating system yet; 4K looks great; solid, weighty sound; 'Magic Remote' is great

AGAINST Cumbersome; niggles with webOS

VERDICT A fine TV, but bettered by less-expensive rivals.

Also consider

Samsung UE65HU7500 £3500 ★★★★★

Surprisingly subtle styling masks a fabulously exciting picture performance. This is the 4K telly to beat at this size.

Like most high-end TVs, the 65UB980V has a very useful top-mounted camera



Cyrus Stream Xa | Musicstreamer | £1250

Cyrus hits the streaming spot once again

The **Cyrus Stream Xa** sits somewhere between the preamplifier-packed Stream XP2 and the X Signature network player in Cyrus's streaming line-up. It incorporates a 32-bit DAC alongside its streaming abilities.

In terms of design, it's as Cyrus as they come. The half-rack aluminium design looks pretty much identical to the rest of the range, with the green-hued LCD display and buttons along the front for controlling source and playback.

An easy upgrade path

As is also the Cyrus way, there's plenty of consideration for upgrades down the line too, including the ability to add an external DAC and power supply should you wish, plus connections for the MC Bus universal control system, allowing this to slip seamlessly into any existing Cyrus setup.

In terms of connections, you'll find six digital inputs (three coaxial, two optical and one USB) for connecting your whole setup. The USB is Apple-compatible should you wish to hook up an iDevice for playback. Internet radio is also on board, and provided by TuneIn Radio.

Set-up is easy enough - you use the front panel and the volume dial to get the Stream Xa onto your network. Then you have the option to keep controlling it from there, or to use the included n-remote or Cyrus's Cadence app (iOS and Android).

The n-remote pairs directly with the streamer, while the app will find any Cyrus equipment on your home network. The app works perfectly well for our needs of browsing and selecting inputs, though it's a nice touch for Cyrus to include an alternative in the box for those who prefer a dedicated device.

You can stream high-resolution recordings up to 24-bit/192kHz over your wi-fi network, but if you plan to be doing a lot of that we would definitely recommend a wired connection via ethernet for the



The Xa has all the main characteristics of the signature Cyrus sound - lively and engaging, with class-leading levels of detail. There's plenty of space across the frequency range

best, most stable performance. Streaming high-resolution files places a huge demand on your network, and we have had a few dropouts during testing when we go wireless.

When it comes to performance, the Xa has got all the main characteristics of the signature Cyrus sound - lively, engaging, with class-leading levels of detail.

An articulate and agile sound

Stream A Tribe Called Quest's *Buggin' Out* and the Cyrus Xa is only too happy to show off its rhythmic know-how, keeping a sense of organisation amid two opposing bassline patterns, stopping and starting notes accurately so they have the intended impact. Articulate and agile, it's able to handle even the most complicated rhythms without ever sounding flustered.

Detail levels are superb too, as a stream of *Starless* by The Unthanks proves. The Cyrus Xa conveys the layers to each



The n-remote works well - although we're as happy with the app on our smartphone

bow-stroke of the violin intro, and when the piano joins you can hear the texture and dynamics of every single note.

Vocals are focused and full of feeling, and there's plenty of space across the whole frequency range, making for a large sound in a wide soundfield.

Fast bass and an open treble

In terms of balance, it's largely neutral with a fast, well-controlled bass and an open treble that steers clear of hardness, even with more aggressive recordings.

That open treble really helps to inject a likeable liveliness to its character that keeps it enjoyable and entertaining for long listening sessions. Don't be surprised if you plan to listen to one song and end up listening to the whole album.

There's no doubt that paying more than £1250 for a streamer is a serious consideration, but if it's something that both your system and budget can afford, the versatile Cyrus Xa will show its worth with every single track.

In detail

1 Digital connections

You're unlikely to be lacking for inputs here - there are six all told.

2 Ethernet

If you're planning to stream high-resolution files, we would recommend hard-wiring the Xa for optimum performance.

3 Upgrading

Cyrus, as usual, offers a simple upgrade path with the Xa. This input is for the PSX-R, the outboard power supply.



Rating ★★★★★

FOR Lively and engaging character; superbly detailed; rhythmically adept; good connectivity; great remote

AGAINST Somewhat dated display

VERDICT A great addition to the Cyrus family

Also consider Cambridge Audio Stream Magic 6

★★★★★

It can't quite reach the same levels of detail, but it provides a really superb sound for the price.



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Silver 6 AV12. What Hi-Fi? March 2014

“Well matched; seamless
integration with the subwoofer;
insight and precision; finish”

Naim Mu-so | **Wireless speaker** | £895

This is wireless 'hi-fi' worthy of the Naim

The Naim Mu-so marks the first time the established hi-fi manufacturer has stepped into the wireless speaker market. At £895, this is an ambitious proposition, but one that has the full weight of Naim's long-standing hi-fi expertise behind it. Expertise is all very well, but does the Mu-so have the sonic ability to prove that wireless speakers can perform to hi-fi standards? With an impressive list of streaming features matched by an equally impressive design, it certainly starts off as a seriously tempting product.

A beautifully built unit

We'll admit we're utterly taken with the Mu-so's looks. It's a gorgeous design. The cabinet is made of MDF, and then wrapped in a layer of brushed aluminium. Not only does this give it the Mu-so its hefty, premium-quality feel, but it also improves the cabinet's damping. The aluminium heatsink spanning the length of the speaker looks distinctive, as does the mirrored base with the subtly glowing Naim badge. A discreet LED at the side aids network set-up.

The highlight, however, is that volume dial. Made of a solid ring of bead-blasted anodised aluminium, the circular, illuminated control is inspired by the flagship Naim Statement pre/power amplifier. We'll wager you'll spend more time physically changing the volume rather than using the remote or control app - the dial is a dream to use. It's weighted just right, moving smoothly as you turn it all the way up to 11. We like the illumination effect, too.

The dial also doubles up as the Mu-so's touchscreen interface. Tap the illuminated icons to pause or play a track, or spin the dial to select any of the three wired inputs or to switch between five preset radio stations (you can set presets using the app). The crisp display also indicates which streaming option you're currently using.



Even the aluminium heat sink at the rear of the Mu-so is turned into a feature



There's a claimed 450W of power coursing through the Mu-so's sonic veins. Six custom-designed drivers (two dome tweeters, two midrange and two 'racetrack' bass drivers) are hidden behind the grille, each powered by a 75W digital amplifier. The DSP technology - a high-performance 32-bit silicon chip - has been developed from Naim's work on Bentley's in-car audio systems. And finally, the bass reflex port is ribbed and flared to minimise distortion.

The unit comes with a standard black grille, but you can swap it for three other

colours - vibrant red, deep blue, burnt orange - for an extra £70 each.

There's little this Mu-so can't do. Naim has included nearly every streaming method into the mix, ensuring you can play songs from a wide variety of devices. There's aptX Bluetooth, AirPlay, UPnP, Spotify Connect and thousands of internet radio stations on board.

Extensive file compatibility

Physical inputs include a USB port (which charges and plays Apple devices as well as USB-stored music), an optical input (limited to 24-bit/96kHz) and a 3.5mm analogue input. There's also an ethernet port to go alongside the built-in wi-fi, hidden under the unit with the power socket to keep wires out of sight. Whether you've got an iOS or Android device, laptop or NAS box, this Naim can play it all.

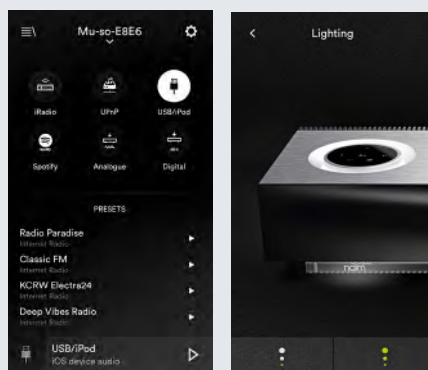
File compatibility is extensive as well. The Naim supports all popular audio formats, from low-res MP3s and Spotify streams to 24-bit/192kHz WAV, FLAC and AIFF files. You get full-fat high resolution through the wired ethernet connection, while going wireless limits it to 48kHz.

The neatly designed Mu-so app gives you full browsing control over your music collection across smart and NAS devices,

Take control with an app

Naim Mu-so app - iOS/Android - free

Naim's dedicated Mu-so app is a must download. Free for iOS and Android devices, it's useful for connecting the speaker to your home network. More importantly, it gives you playback control and full access to all the music stored on your connected devices. We like the neat, minimalist icons for selecting inputs (though we'd like to see one for Bluetooth), and operation is slick and intuitive. Additional features include two room-EQ settings to optimise the sound when the unit is placed near or away from walls, a loudness control, and light-dimming options. You can also pair units for a multi-room system. It's seamless to use on a smartphone or tablet, and we prefer it to the physical remote.





The USB port will charge and accept a signal from Apple devices

including selecting inputs and tweaking the speaker's EQ settings. It aids networking and multi-room set up, you can dim the unit's lights, access track info and pick from thousands of internet radio stations.

We prefer using the app to the supplied remote. While the remote is responsive and instinctive to use, the insubstantial plastic finish is at odds with the premium feel of the Mu-so itself. You're more likely to be using your smartphone and the app for playback control anyway, but we would have liked a classier design for the handset.

A case of substance with style

So far, so good. Now comes the make or break moment: does the Mu-so sound any good? In short, absolutely. Any 'style over substance' comments can be thrown out of the window. The power behind the Mu-so's sound is astonishing. It drives all songs with a sure-footed sense of rhythm, rich detail and lashings of deep, rumbling bass we've never heard from a wireless speaker before.

The scale of sound is huge. It easily fills our large listening room with its soaring dynamics, and the airy soundfield is as wide as it is tall and deep. Play Jim Croce's melodic *Time In A Bottle* and you'll be enveloped in a full-bodied sound that's enchanting to listen to. Internet radio stations sound robust, too.

The Mu-so charges through songs with boundless energy and enthusiasm. Notes stop and start with foot-tapping precision, instruments are accurately and cohesively laid out, and silences

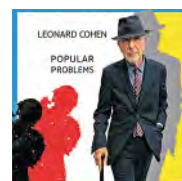
between notes have intensity. A demanding track such as *Time* from the *Inception* soundtrack shows off the Mu-so's dynamic prowess - the gradual build-up is palpably tense.

There's a stunning level of subtle detail. Feed it high-resolution tracks such as REM's *Losing My Religion* (24-bit/192kHz) and the Mu-so eagerly shows off the benefits of extra resolution. Every guitar strum is tangible, drums hit with satisfying impact and Michael Stipe's vocals are clear and intimate. High notes are crisp, open and have just the right amount of bite. There aren't any undue sharp edges to the Mu-so's sound, and taut basslines are controlled and full of texture.

Detailed and attacking

The Mu-so turns its subtle hand to CD-ripped files and Bluetooth-streamed songs too. The brooding, tense tone of The Dead Weather's *60 Feet Tall* (streamed over Bluetooth) is delivered with crisp detail and tight, attacking rhythm. Kate Bush's ethereal vocals in *Watching You Without Me* (16-bit/44.1kHz FLAC) are beautifully conveyed, with every intonation, plosive and emotion laid bare. The quirky musical arrangement makes musical sense, too.

The powerful sound is key to the Mu-so's performance. Our only niggle is that a slightly musclebound character rears its head when the volume is turned up. Detail and rhythm aren't sacrificed, but the sound does thicken up just a touch. There's no hint of hardness or brightness



USE IT WITH Popular Problems Leonard Cohen

A superb new album from the poet and musician now entering his ninth decade

In detail



The control dial is a spectacular success - so beautifully machined that we find ourselves using it more than the remote control

If you're into making more of a statement than the black front grille offers, there are three others to choose from (at £70 each)

at any point, though: this Naim speaker has strict control over its frequencies.

The Naim Mu-so is a seriously attractive product. Everything promised is delivered. This wireless speaker's performance lives up to the spec-sheet hype - it looks stunning, and that powerful and subtle sound is as close as we've heard to hi-fi from an all-in-one unit such as this. It's more than worthy of a front-and-centre position in your listening room.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Rich, powerful sound; huge sense of scale and soaring dynamics; finish and design; excellent features list; intuitive operation

AGAINST Sounds a touch thick at high volumes

VERDICT A hugely desirable wireless speaker with hi-fi aspirations, the Mu-so is stunning

Needs to beat

Dali Kubik Free £645

★★★★★

This compact speaker's enthusiastic and musical sound will garner many fans



Canton DM 75 | Soundbase | £450

Canton's DM gets bigger and bolder



If you fancied Canton's brilliant debut soundbase, the DM 50, but thought your large TV would dwarf the small black box, the DM 75 could be for you.

The big brother to the DM 50 has been sensibly designed with a larger chassis to accommodate bigger TVs. It promises more powerful sound through four (next to the DM 50's two) down-firing bass drivers.

Better for bigger TVs

The DM 50 is best suited to 40in or smaller tellies. This 73cm-wide 75 is less restricted and can cater for almost any size. TV weight won't be a deciding factor - Canton claims both models can take up to 40kg, which should allow you plenty of choice.

If you'd rather have the DM 75 as a soundbar in front of your TV, its 7cm height should sit nicely below most screens. It won't suit everyone, mind you: its build requires a pretty large tabletop or equipment rack to sit flat upon.

The modest textured-matt casing (available in black, silver or white) is smart and inconspicuous. A metal-meshed front grille hides two 5cm midrange drivers and two 25mm tweeters. Unless you peek underneath the unit, you won't see the four 10cm woofers.

A blue LED display shining through the grille's centre proves easily readable from a distance, and responsive to the remote.

Speaking of which, we're pleased Canton has kept the same remote control. Chunkier than the norm, it is nice to use, with clearly labelled buttons.

Tricky socket location

The DM 75's only lapse in design is the positioning of its sockets. Having to bend cables into the rear sockets proves tricky, especially if they're quite thick. Still, most people tend to do such things only once, so it's not too big a deal.

Connections themselves are fair, with one glaring omission. There are two digital (coaxial and optical) inputs with a pair of

System builder total £1340

TV

Samsung UE48H6400 £700

★★★★★

It's simply amazing how good a TV you can get for way less than £1000. This Samsung has a fine picture, and plenty of 'smarts'.



Blu-Ray

Panasonic DMP-BDT460 £190

★★★★★

A terrific Blu-ray player that will provide great images and sound.



This is a substantial unit, and won't be fazed by really very large televisions

Turning the DM 75 up to full whack more-than fills our test room, but it's never (volume aside) uncomfortable to listen to, thanks to its even-handed presentation.

Highs are clear and sharp and, even as the windows of an entire building shatter, balance is never broken - it's not often we get through a whole soundbar or -base test without wincing at least once.

The DM 75 is fast and attacking, too - made for action movies. There's a blistering sense of pace to the pulsating, beat-driven score, and startling pop to gunfire.

Just as impressive is dialogue delivery. It has solidity and expression, while Vin Diesel and Dwayne Johnson's deep voices have weight. The DM 75 has no problem picking out the soundtrack's finer detail either - the mechanical clicks of a spanner at work are present, but subtle, leaving dialogue to the fore.

Good with music too

We switch to music with a CD-quality file of Eminem's *Rhyme Or Reason* over Bluetooth from our Google Nexus 7. There's a good sense of balance and detail. As expected, clarity is compromised over wireless, but there's enough attack and expression elsewhere to enjoy its stereo delivery.

We said it would "take one hell of a soundbase to better the Canton DM 50." Canton has come up trumps with the DM 75. Clearer, bigger and more powerful sounding, it's surely worth the £50 price hike if you can justify it.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Open soundfield; balanced and insightful; weighty delivery; smart design; remote control

AGAINST No HDMI inputs; size won't be practical for all

VERDICT A bigger, better version of its fine sibling, the DM 75 is a good option for large TVs

As its size might suggest, the DM 75's sound is bigger and more open than the 50's. It spreads its wings to make the soundtrack soar. It's fast and attacking too - made for action movies

Also consider

Canton DM 50 £400 ★★★★★

Still a top product. If it suits your TV or budget better, well worth considering



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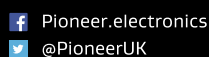


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Apple iPhone 6 | Smartphone | From £540

Slim 6 is fitter than ever

Apple's new iPhone 6 is bound to have its detractors. With specs that read like an Android phone of yesteryear - no full HD screen, no 20MP camera and no high-res music support - there's a lot to think you're missing out on.

Pick it up and use it, however, and you won't think that once. For everything it lacks in spec-list grunt, the iPhone 6 makes good with a performance and user experience that's hard to argue with. It's easily the best iPhone yet, and it's also one of the finest smartphones of 2014.

Doing the rounds

For the first time in four years the iPhone has had a significant makeover, ditching the squared edges and moving back to a more rounded design. Its smooth aluminium framework melts seamlessly into its newly sized screen (more on that later), curving around in a supremely tactile way.

Everything it lacks in spec-list grunt, the iPhone 6 makes up for with a performance and user experience that's hard to argue with. It's one of the finest smartphones of 2014

It feels surprisingly slim too, shaving off 0.7mm from its predecessor to get it down to 6.9mm thin - its tapered edges making it feel slimmer still. It's a masterclass in premium smartphone design, with the HTC One (M8) the only other handset we've seen that comes close.

The power button shifts to the right-hand side to make locking and unlocking the phone easier, but everything else remains much the same - the volume buttons and silent switch on the left, the headphone jack and speaker along the bottom.

While the rest of smartphone world has been pushing up screen sizes in recent years, Apple had remained resolute at the 4in mark since the launch of the iPhone 5, which was dwarfed by the likes of the LG G3 and Samsung Galaxy S5.

Bigger screen

The iPhone 6 sees a respectable screen boost, but at 4.7in it remains below the 5in mark. Of course its larger sibling, the 5.5in iPhone 6 Plus, answers the calls for a larger Apple handset. We think the size works well - including for video and gaming - and the increase is noticeable.

This year, Apple has finally gone Full HD, but only on the screen of the iPhone 6 Plus, leaving the iPhone 6 with a resolution of 1334 x 750 (up from 1136 x 640). The smaller model still fares well against its Full HD competition, offering a sharp image

with a rich yet natural colour palette, strong contrast, an outdoor-friendly brightness and a wide tonal spread.

Text looks sharp and is easy to read when browsing the internet using Safari, though some apps at the time of testing are yet to be optimised for the new resolution.

Apple's audio has always been one of our favourites on a smartphone, but with a few handsets offering high-resolution music in 2014, is that still the case? In short: absolutely. That rich, full-bodied character remains but with a touch more clarity, meaning it's more detailed and dynamic than ever. No, there's no high-res music support, but with a standard-resolution sound this good it's hard to be mad about that.

The iPhone is still bundled with Apple's Earpods and, though they're

better than the original white buds, we'd still recommend an upgrade to something like Sony MDR-EX650APs.

As we've come to expect from yearly iPhone updates, the iPhone 6 features a boosted processor in the shape of Apple's own A8 chip. Apple never confirms specifics, but it would appear that it's a dual-core chip supported by around 1GB RAM.

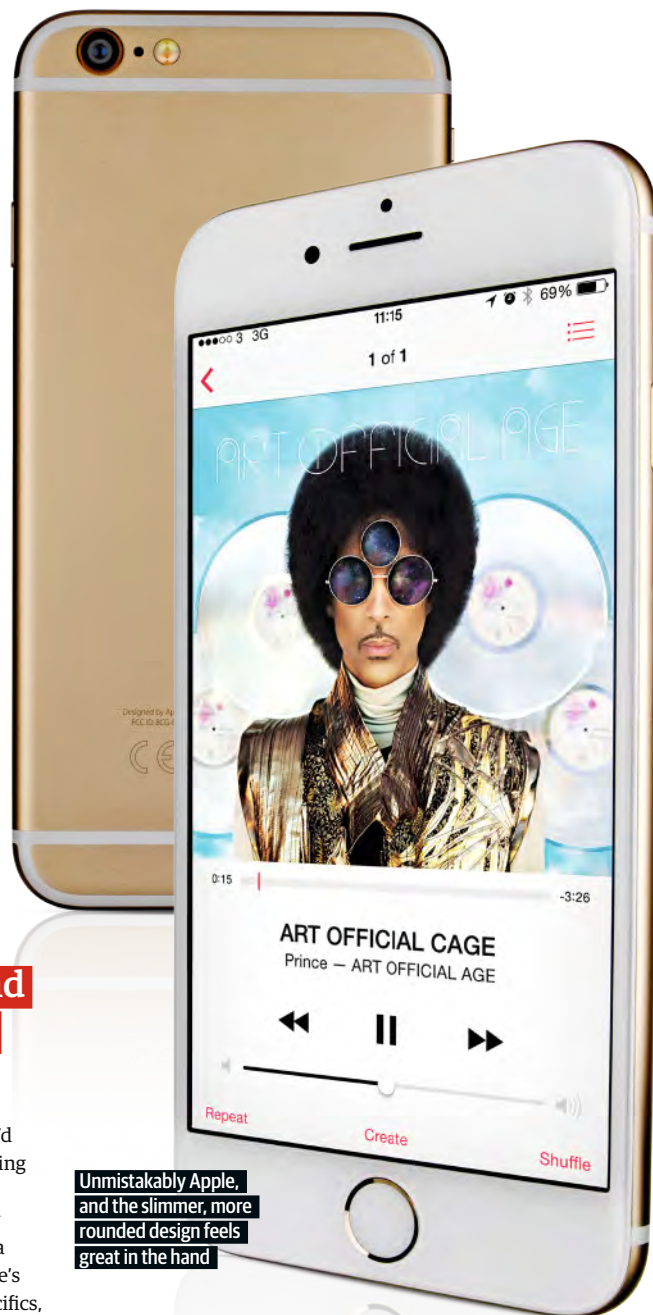
Bespoke processor

On paper, it might seem underpowered compared to some of Android's powerhouses, but in use it's up there with the best. Why? Because Apple designs its own chip for its own requirements, while many Android phones use jack-of-all-trades third-party chips. It's a hugely smooth, lag-free experience. Flicking between browser windows and different apps serves up no problems whatsoever.

The battery life on the iPhone 6 has been improved, if only rather humbly. We're seeing an extra few hours from heavy use compared with the iPhone 5. Lighter users will manage a full day without issue.

Storage options have had a tweak, the 6 offering 16GB, 64GB and the new 128GB, doing away with 32GB completely. The good news is the 64GB version is around the same price SIM-free as the 32GB iPhone 5s was previously.

The iPhone 6 comes with iOS 8 running out of the box, not looking a whole lot



Unmistakably Apple, and the slimmer, more rounded design feels great in the hand

different to iOS7 but bringing with it a number of usability tweaks, including the ability to change keyboards, to make the iPhone experience better than ever.

It's fair to say we're quite taken with the iPhone 6. While it might not break any new ground when it comes to specification, the evolution of its performance and user experience are hard to fault.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Premium design and superb finish; lively, audio performance; sharp, well balanced picture; strong graphics performance

AGAINST No expandable storage

VERDICT Apple has done it again - this iPhone takes the fight to its Android competitors

Also consider iPhone 5s

★★★★★

Last year's Award winner is still available, offering iOS 8 at a bargain price.



Yamaha A-S501 | Stereo amplifier | £360

Power and poise beautifully packaged

Back power

There isn't a Bluetooth receiver built into the A-S501 but you can get an outboard unit from Yamaha called the YBA-T1, which costs around £50. A USB connection (DC only) on the back of the amp supplies power.



Yamaha's new A-S501 is a beautifully built product. It's chunky, well finished and appealingly retro in appearance – hardly changed from its much-admired predecessor, the A-S500.

The new amplifier also feels solid, and the controls work with a crisp precision that little else can match at this price. We even like the remote handset: it's simple and nice to use. Unlike many rivals, the A-S501 gives the impression that it will last for years.

You'll find a useful range of features, too. There's a plentiful supply of line-level inputs (five in total), a moving magnet phono stage, headphone output and a pair of digital inputs. The addition of digital inputs is the big change from its predecessor. The A-S501 has both optical and coax connections, both capable of supporting 24-bit/192kHz music streams.

Deal me in

We would have liked to see a USB alternative, just to make connecting a computer easier, but it's no deal breaker. Yamaha sees this amplifier being used with a TV or Blu-ray player rather than a computer, if the information pack is anything to go by. The amplifier is stereo and doesn't decode Dolby Digital or DTS of course; the source will need to convert it to PCM before hand. It's got an adjustable loudness control too,

which is unusual. People's hearing shifts in its sensitivity of frequency extremes as volume levels change (and the tonal balance of a typical speaker changes with volume too). This loudness control is designed to compensate for those changes by readjusting the balance of bass and treble. It works, and is well worth a try.

Muscle in on the music

It's only when we get to sound quality that we become less than wholly positive about this amp. Our first impressions are good – this is more muscular sounding than its predecessor. Its presentation is robust and tonally more even. The old A-S500, for all its appeal, had a rather lean and bright balance. This new one is better balanced.

It goes decently loud too, as its power output of 85 watts per channel suggests. We try the A-S501 with a range of speakers starting with Wharfedale's Diamond 220s all the way up to our reference ATC SCM50 and it drives every one as well as we expect.

We start with Bob Marley's *Exodus* and are pleased with the detail this Yamaha uncovers. Its presentation is clean, with weight to the hard-charging bassline. Marley's vocals are expressive and we like the sense of space the Yamaha imparts. It's less successful at delivering the driving rhythm though, taking some of the

Yamaha's A-S501 is a beautifully built product: chunky, retro and well-finished

excitement out of the music. Move to something more complicated, *Danse Macabre* from Saint-Saëns, and the Yamaha delivers mixed results. There's good detail resolution and a fine sense of scale from the amplifier. However, the A-S501's composure falters a little when things get complicated. It starts to sound just a touch confused, losing track of subtle instrumental strands as the piece really gets going.

Overall, the Yamaha A-S501 is a capable amplifier. It's built very well and is packed with useful features. A more balanced sound is welcome, but compared with the best at the price it just falls short.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Excellent build and finish; good features list; spacious and detailed sound; power

AGAINST Lacks the composure and excitement of the best

VERDICT A pretty good amplifier, but it can't match some extremely formidable opposition

Also consider

Marantz PM6005

£300 ★★★★★

The amp to beat.

Matches the Yamaha in build, finish and features and delivers superior sound



System builder total build £1150

Speaker

Wharfedale Diamond 220
£200 ★★★★★

These new Diamonds are better finished than their predecessors and sound great.



CD player

Marantz CD6005 £280 ★★★★★

The CD6005 remains our favourite entry-level CD player – combining great build with class-leading performance.



Turntable

Pro-ject Essential II £210 ★★★★★

Pro-ject's Essential II is as basic as the name suggests but when it comes to sound we haven't heard better at the price.



Sony BDP-S5200 | Blu-ray player | £95

Maximum return on minimal outlay



This Sony is all about providing serious bang for just a few bucks. The BDP-S5200 looks small and unassuming – it's pretty much half the width of your average home cinema or hi-fi separate. We're thinking the lack of a display has contributed to the shrinkage and although we're all for small and compact, some may find the no-frills approach not quite as attractive.

The only sign the player is even on is a white glow indicating standby. Fire it up and you're whisked to the Sony home page in super-quick time. The player also wastes no time loading discs, something that a few rivals still struggle with, even if Blu-ray is hardly new technology these days.

The right connections

As you'd expect at this level, the Sony isn't overflowing with connections, but you're given all the basics you'd expect from a budget player. There's a single HDMI output, ethernet socket (although wi-fi is also built in) and a coaxial digital socket on the back, with a USB socket on the front for plugging in a memory stick.

Sony's AV remotes have all had a slight redesign this year – they're smaller and more streamlined, with fewer buttons. The S5200's remote feels lightweight and a little bit cheap, but it's still very effective. Once your thumb gets used to the positioning and shape of the main buttons, navigating doesn't prove difficult, even in the dark.



Gravity on Blu-ray is equally impressive in 2D or 3D, and the Sony does the transfer justice with a brilliant picture. The level of depth and sense of realism is wonderfully immersive. The Sony's picture doesn't feel fake or forced, even when all the debris comes flying from the screen towards your face. There's an excellent level of contrast as the black expanse of space is punctuated by stars, satellites and astronauts. Whites are punchy, but dark areas remain inky-black and the Sony still has enough in the tank to extract plenty of detail from the shadows. The Sony also has a firm hand on movement – when Sandra Bullock spins out of control during the movie's opening salvo, edges remain resolute and sharply drawn.

Solid building blocks

Upscaling a DVD to match a TV's 1080p resolution isn't an easy task, but the Sony puts in a serious shift, preventing *The Lego Movie* from looking soft or uninspiring, and instead allowing it to jump out of the screen with a really crisp, colourful palette.

There's a similar sense of punch and detail with music playback. You can hear it with the softer musical score from *Frozen*

The BDP-S5200 does not have a wealth of connections, but it does have the basics

or the more dramatic, traditional Hollywood soundtrack to *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*. The Sony delivers tunes with a real sense of fluidity and rhythm, but still hits hard enough to give more explosive, wilder soundtracks the sofa-shaking impact they deserve.

Changing your movie-playing source can be a simple, relatively inexpensive upgrade, and with the Sony BDP-S5200 you really can't go wrong for the money.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Excellent image quality; crisp, detailed and defined; agile, punchy sound

AGAINST Build quality mirrors price, no display

VERDICT If you want an affordable and quality Blu-ray player as your next purchase, then the Sony is a fine choice.

Also consider

Sony BDP-S7200 £230 ★★★★★

If you want a real jump in performance then stick with Sony, but go for the BDP-S7200. Picture quality is an improvement, and sound quality is outstanding for the money.

System builder total build £1145

Television

Sony KDL-40W605B
£450 ★★★★★

If you can't accommodate a giant TV screen, this Sony is more manageable.



Amplifier

Yamaha RX-V377 £250 ★★★★★

Yamaha knows how to make a decent home cinema amp, and the RX-V377 is another fine example.



Home cinema system

Tannoy HTS-101 £350 ★★★★★

Complete your entry-level home cinema system with this simple, yet extremely effective, set-up from Tannoy.





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WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
WHATHIFI.COM
★★★★★

October 2014

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Photographer: Andrew Rowat. Images not to scale.

Beyerdynamic T51i | On-ear headphones | £245

Welcome a remote cousin

It all started at the end of 2011. The Beyerdynamic T50ps came out, and we loved them. We loved them enough to give them an Award. Then Beyerdynamic launched the T51ps. Once more, our response was nothing short of effusive.

But we always had one minor misgiving. Although billed as the ideal headphones for portable use, they lacked an in-line microphone remote - putting them at a disadvantage for mobile phone users.

Thankfully, Beyerdynamic has fixed this issue. The T51is have a remote. The three buttons mean it is optimised for iOS, but the play/pause/call buttons will work on Android and Windows devices too. Controls are pleasant: good click; responsive.

Identikit improvement

As far as additions go, that's about it. We're told the T51is were based on the T51ps. Aside from the remote unit, it looks as though the two sets of headphones are virtually identical. And that's no bad thing.

They're easily among the best portable on-ear headphones we've heard at this price. As with their predecessors, there are no major flaws here, but significant positives. We'll start with detail. There is a lot of it. The T51is give an incredibly insightful performance, revealing the textures of instruments and nuances in vocals. Each frequency is beautifully judged. There's remarkable clarity and bite at the top, but it's smooth enough to avoid hardness. The midrange is eloquent and poised. Bass notes are substantial, but taut.

The Beyerdynamic T51is give an incredibly insightful performance, revealing the textures of instruments and nuances in vocals. Each frequency is beautifully judged

In rhythmic terms, the T51is possess timing of regimented precision. Leading and trailing edges of notes start and stop where they're meant to. It's never forced, nor overly analytical. Big dynamic variances are dispatched with enough confidence to ensure vivacity. Put it together and you have rounded, well-balanced cans that pay attention to detail, without forgetting how to have a bit of fun.

Light but impressively sturdy

On the physical side, these are superbly engineered. They're light, for starters. You wouldn't expect that from a mostly metal body. And it's sturdy metal too. These will take a lot of punishment and still come out singing. This lightness helps them sit comfortably on your head. As do earpads of

viscoelastic filling (read: super-soft memory-foam) and synthetic leather. We should mention the closed-back construction, which provides a few degrees of passive noise isolation. Along with the snug (but never squeazy) ear pads, this provides a neat way to separate oneself from the outside world. The T51is are great for commutes.

Check the industrial chic

The looks? Well, you might think different but we quite like the design. With a relatively skeletal body and a brushed-metal finish, we think the T51is look functionally elegant. Industrial chic, if you will. Then again some may prefer something shinier and more obviously luxurious. The Sennheiser Momentums, for



The three buttons on the remote means it is optimised for iOS, but the play/pause/call buttons will work on Android and Windows devices too

We like the
Beyerdynamic T51i's
skeletal body and
brushed-metal finish

example, would win in a beauty contest. But we think the Beyerdynamics are better performers, with greater detail and precision.

Look no further if you have up to £250 for a pair of on-ear headphones. Beyerdynamic is stronger than ever, and now there's a remote control. What more could you ask for?

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Astonishing insight; good balance; great build; good design; very comfortable; mic/remote unit

AGAINST Nothing at this price

VERDICT A most excellent pair of on-ear headphones. You must give these a listen.

Needs to beat

Sennheiser Momentum
£260 ★★★★★

Sound isn't as insightful, but still entertaining.



FULL SOUND

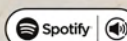
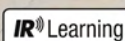
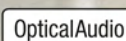
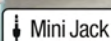
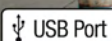
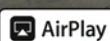
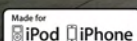
ALL-IN-ONE SOUNDBAR AND AUDIO SYSTEM

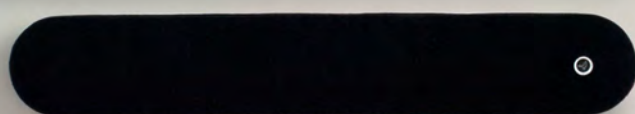
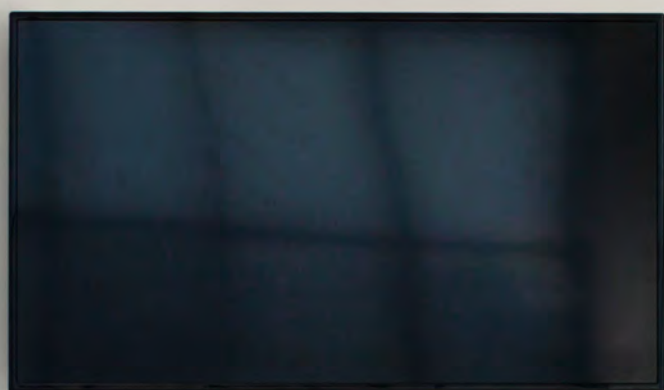
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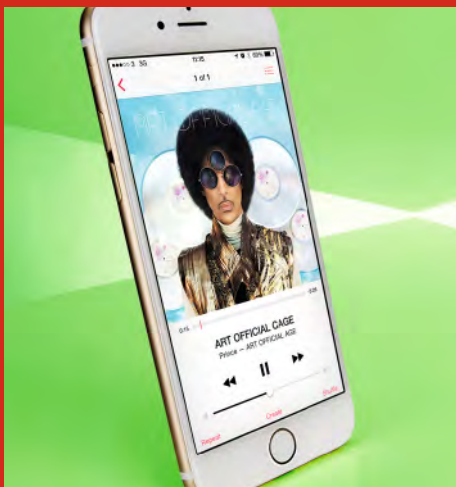
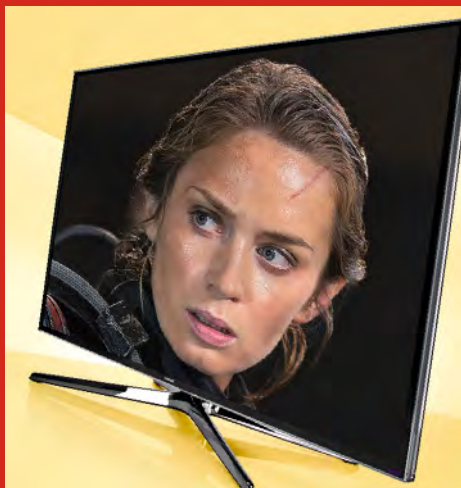
24 Categories **99** winners

AWARDS 2014

STREAMERS • TURNTABLES • TVs • TABLETS • SPEAKERS • HEADPHONES



It's the one night of the year *What Hi-Fi?* (as a brand) scrubs up, dresses up and invites the electronics and home entertainment industries out for a drink to explain exactly what it's been up to for the past 12 months. In all honesty, the past year has been much like all the others: we've been testing, comparing, evaluating and judging the most popular, most interesting and most exciting consumer electronics around. Over the next 80 pages we reveal the 99 products we think are the best you can currently buy - and you, lucky reader, don't even have to put on your best clothes to find out what they are.



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For a full list of specifications and other useful info visit whathifi.com

Helpful suggestions

The S Recommendation feature on the Samsung 'learns' your viewing preferences so it can offer programme suggestions

Televisions

Far from one small step, it's been one giant leap for TV-kind this past year. You want the moon? Today's best tellies suggest you can now have it

Best 46-52in TV

Samsung UE48H6400 £700

An oddly sized TV, from somewhere near the dead centre of its manufacturer's extensive model range, doesn't automatically strike us as a potential Product of the Year. A high-performance, smart-as-you-like TV that gets its already-enticing price cut by nearly a third almost immediately it goes on sale, on the other hand, does. The Samsung UE48H6400 is all of the above-mentioned things and, despite arriving in a year that's seen TV brands both big and small really up their game, it's one of the most obviously outstanding value-for-money propositions in this entire magazine.

Styling is of the 'decent but hardly heart-stopping' school, while specification (in terms of socketry, smart functionality, choice of remote controls, 3D functionality, you name it) is extensive. While most rivals tend to pick and choose from the range of catch-up services, this Samsung packs in the lot: BBC iPlayer, ITV Player, 4oD and Demand 5. And there's no arguing with that amount of screen for this amount of money.

Picture brilliance across the board

Aside from those attractions, the Samsung is the outstanding TV of the past 12 months for one, fairly straightforward, reason: the quality of image it delivers from any and all sources.

Offering a balanced, clean and brilliantly stable picture with the best - by which we mean high-def - sources, the Samsung's colour palette is convincing and its facility with skin-tones exemplary. This, plus great contrast and minimal picture noise, also helps make the Samsung's Active 3D reproduction enjoyable and low-fatigue. We just wish there were more than two pairs of 3D glasses in the box. Switch down the resolution levels to DVD or standard-def TV broadcasts and the UE48H6400 is pretty heroic: picture noise is controlled well and motion hardly suffers at all. Like the best sportspeople, the Samsung has an all-round game.

Add in passable sound (by no means a given on TVs of any price) together with a predictably slick and logical ergonomic user experience, and the Samsung UE48H6400 is nigh-on impossible to fault. Make sure you see it for yourself.





*The smart-as-you-like **Samsung UE48H6400** is simply one of the most obviously outstanding value-for-money propositions in this entire magazine*

Best 22-39in TV

Sony KDL-32W706B £350

There are many reasons this Sony is our Best Buy at this screen size, of course, but resolution is as good a place as any to start. Many manufacturers seem to think there's no need to fit a Full HD 1920 x 1080 resolution panel to a 32-in TV. Sony doesn't agree, and the benefits of its stance are obvious for all to see.

Natural balance

The Sony's a tremendously well-balanced watch. Colours are natural, whether they're skin-tones, brightly punchy primaries or subtly drab. Contrasts are strong too, and there's ample detail to the brightest white or inkiest black scenes.

Detail levels are good, and the benefits of a native Full HD panel become obvious when you study the Sony's confident and secure handling of on-screen motion.



Ergonomically, this is everything you expect from a Sony - especially the SideView app, which is a colourful, logical and useful feature - and it's built and styled to match. Connections are numerous, Sony's online Entertainment Network covers all the smart

That's Entertainment

As well as catch-up TV, Sony's Entertainment Network also has a hefty catalogue of rentable movies for £3.50-£4.50

content, catch-up TV, video on-demand and what-have-you in some style... even the sound is a cut above the usual flatscreen flatness.

2014 has been a weirdly hit-and-miss year for Sony TVs - there's been more variance across model ranges and screen sizes than we would expect. But with the KDL-32W706B (and the KDL-40W605B below) the company has comprehensively hit the bull's-eye. At £350 this Sony represents prodigious value for money, and for those who want a screen this size it's something of a no-brainer.

Ergonomically, the Sony KDL-32W706B is everything you expect from the marque, especially the SideView app, a colourful, logical, useful feature

Best 40-46in TV

Sony KDL-40W605B £450

The handsome, eminently affordable Sony KDL-40W605B emerged with five stars from its First Test in the August 2014 issue, and by the October issue had made off with a seven-way Supertest win too. So it's not the biggest surprise to see it grasp the accolade of the best 40-46in TV we've seen this year - although its £450 price-tag still has the capacity to make us double-take.

Detail under any circumstances

Subtle and punchy in equal measure, the Sony can offer detail in even the inkiest, most uniformly black scenes and variation in the most glaringly bright. The colour balance - rich and vivid, but unarguably natural too - is well judged, with skin-tones appearing especially convincing. Motion is dealt with confidently and edges are crisply drawn. What's more, all of

the above is equally true for upscaled content as it is for native 1080p stuff. Sound is nothing special - it's as thin as the TV itself, and as bright as the pictures it produces - but at this price we're not going to get sniffy about it.

At any money the 605's connectivity and ergonomics would be admirable, so at this pared-back price they're deeply impressive. Four HDMI's, a pair of USB's, integrated wi-fi and Freeview HD tuner take care of your inputs, with the network connection opening up Sony's excellent Music and Video Unlimited portal to Netflix, iPlayer, YouTube and dozens more. The remote control is brief and logical, the on-screen menus simple and thorough. And Sony's TV SideView control app is an object lesson in concise, neat and in-depth usability.



So it seems you can have it all. Performance, functionality, usability, looks and unarguable build quality in one great-value product. If this is the sort of screen-size you're interested in, you positively must give the Sony KDL-40W605B a viewing.

The colour balance on the Sony KDL-40W605B - rich and vivid, but unarguably natural too - is well judged, with skin-tones appearing especially convincing

MUSIC STREAMING MADE SIMPLE

‘An excellent sounding system’

What Hi-fi? Sound and Vision,
November 2014

‘Outstanding – amongst the best’

Hi-Fi World, October 2014

‘Rich and engaging sound’

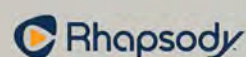
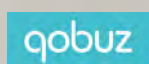
Hi-Fi Choice, July 2014



The Simple Audio Roomplayer+ is a high resolution music streamer. It transforms the way you listen to your own music at home with its unique multi-library, multi-user and multi-room features. Add music discovery into the mix and you'll love how simple it is to stream great sounding music from your favourite devices.

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The Special One

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Crossover especially re-engineered and optimised to the improved driver complement.

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

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

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

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STEREO SPEAKERS

BEST FLOORSTANDER £700-£1500

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Best 52-60in TV

Samsung UE55HU7500 £2200

Anyone with eyes to see wants to get in on the 4K ultra-high-def action, but sensible folk aren't about to pay through the nose for the privilege. And that's where the truly outstanding UE55HU7500 comes in.

At 55 inches it's big-but-not-too-big, and at £2200 it's even more affordable than it was when we gave it the full five stars in our September 2014 issue. But what sets it apart, and what set it up on its Awards pedestal, is its prodigious combination of picture quality, build quality, on-line functionality, design and

ergonomics. In every area the UE55HU7500 is right on the money.

The best treatment for the best material

This screen is at its best with 4K material, naturally, and with some native Netflix content streamed in the Samsung looks superb. Every important component of picture creation – colour, contrast, detail, edge definition, you name it – is beyond reproach. And with excellent motion-handling added to the equation, the UE55HU7500 is a staggeringly immersive watch.

4K TVs have plenty to do when it comes to upscaling Full HD or (heaven forbid) standard-def material, but the Samsung stays composed and convincing when it's dealing with the lower-res stuff. 1080p Blu-ray images are a match for the best native Full HD screens, and

even standard-definition TV broadcasts aren't the dog's dinner that the amount of scaling required might suggest.

As befits a TV at this sort of money, the UE55HU7500 is thoroughly specified. 3D (with a couple of pairs of active-shutter glasses thrown in), four HDMI's, 3 USB's and some legacy connections, a smooth five-page smart interface, satellite and Freeview HD tuners... everything you might require, basically.

Like most flatscreen TVs, regardless of price, the Samsung doesn't produce the most exciting or full-bodied sound you ever heard. But that's a problem that can be overcome; spending this sort of money on a state-of-the-art TV suggests/demands you spend again on some sound equipment (soundbar/soundbase/5.1 system) that will do justice to the pictures. And believe us, these pictures are worth that extra expense.

*Every important component of picture creation – colour, contrast, detail, edge definition, you name it – is beyond reproach on the **Samsung UE55HU7500***



Best 60in+ TV

Samsung UE65HU7500 £3500

What with the trend in TVs – especially cutting-edge, top-of-the-range TVs – being towards the massive, the first 2014 Samsung 4K UHD TV we tested this year was this one. Now, 65 inches is a big telly in anyone's language, and £3500 is a big price tag, but if it's big-screen, no-compromise, full-on 4K action you crave, then the UE65HU7500 is the TV for you.

More of the same

As the model number suggests, this is a bigger, pricier version of the screen we've just eulogised (above). So it will come as no surprise to find the UE65HU7500 is, on paper, pretty much identical to its littler sibling in all but screen-size. You have the same all-encompassing suite of socketry, multiple control options (remote, little remote, app), superbly wide-ranging smart interface and active 3D (including glasses). And,

of course, a similarly bravura performance when it comes to delivering detailed, subtle, vivid, utterly believable pictures.

One of the real pleasures of a 4K TV is how easily you can ignore your Mum's advice about sitting too close. Such is the sharpness, the smoothness, the prodigious detail of the images the Samsung delivers, all the advice regarding viewing distances (as they relate to Full HD TVs) goes out of the window. You can sit good and close to this 65in monster safe from eye-strain or fatigue for at least the first half of an HBO box set. And throughout, you can thrill to the amazing motion fidelity, tremendous colour balance and staggering amount of detail up there on the screen.

But what makes the Samsung much more than just a great 4K TV is the work it does when



dealing with high- and standard-definition resolutions. Full HD pictures via Blu-ray, 576p DVD images and even the real poverty-level stuff from standard-def TV broadcasts is sympathetically upscaled onto that huge panel. That's one of the reasons the UE65HU7500 is among the best TVs we've seen this year.

*What makes the **Samsung UE65HU7500** much more than just a great 4K TV is the work it does when dealing with high- and standard-definition resolutions*

Soundbars & soundbases

Flatscreen televisions rarely sound great, but the simple addition of a soundbar or soundbase is a great, fuss-free way to improve your audio



Best soundbar £300-£600

Q Acoustics Media 4 **£400**

When we first reviewed Q Acoustics' first soundbar in August, we'd have happily bet it would end up in the final showdown for an Award. Now here it is claiming a Product of the Year accolade.

It's little wonder: the QM4 (the company's official abbreviation) is a huge step up from conventional flatscreen sound - mirroring the insightful, full-bodied and even-handed character we've come to expect from the company's successful stereo speakers.

Play *Fast & Furious 6* and it conveys a real sense of excitement and drama as cars race and high-paced pursuits unfold with the storyline. There's no doubting the part the internal subwoofer plays; reinforcing roaring engines and earth-shattering explosions with admirable weight and control.

For the sake of clarity

Dialogue comes through with clarity and expression - and highs are never overbearing. Even as car windows shatter on impact, the sound stays poised and avoids coming across as harsh.

This Award was a close call between the QM4 and Yamaha YSP-1400. Although you get a greater sense of sound effects panning around you with the Yamaha, the QM4 delivers unmatched solidity and detail. Unlike

other soundbars at this price, the QM4 is missing any optional sound or surround modes, but we'll excuse that: we don't feel we're missing out with the one-sound suits-all setting. Suitable for 40in TVs and bigger, the QM4 looks reasonably compact from the front, but the trapezoidal cabinet actually extends back - around 14cm - to house a large elliptical subwoofer. Twin 65mm BMR drivers (Balanced Mode Radiators) are the final pieces in this 2.1 soundbar.

Input needed

The relatively simple, unfussy design is apparent in the features and functionality on offer, too. Although there's an optical input, a pair of analogue RCA inputs and a single 3.5mm socket, some of you may be disappointed by the absence of HDMI inputs.

You do get aptX Bluetooth support, though, as well as the convenience of near-field communication (NFC) pairing with your compatible smartphones and tablets.

When a manufacturer tries its hand at something different, the results could go either way. Thankfully for Q Acoustics, its unexpected entrance into the realm of soundbars has paid off - the QM4 is a leading light in its very impressive product range.

Best soundbar up to £300

Philips HTL5140 **£270**

Philips has taken the successful sound recipe of its brilliant one-box HTL5120 and turned it into a more practical slimline bar and wireless subwoofer. The result: an Award-winning budget soundbar.

Balanced, dynamic and well-integrated, the HTL5140 runs rings around its rivals.

Play *Jurassic Park* and you get a huge leap in quality from your TV speakers: the Philips not only delivers greater scale and dynamic build-up in the film track, but is an open book where detail is concerned. Dialogue carries weight and insight, while highs and lows don't

let the side down. The sharp sound of cracking dinosaur eggs is clear and defined, and the sub sinks its teeth into the footfall of the T-Rex.

Comes up smelling of Roses

There's a definite sense of dimension to the sound, too, as helicopters fly across the screen - an effect bolstered by activating the Philips's 'Virtual Surround Sound' mode.

The finale concert from *The Stone Roses: Made of Stone* DVD shows the Philips's grasp of rhythm and tempo. Electric riffs have gusto and vocals pull through with expression.

At only 5cm tall, the bar is one of the least obtrusive designs we've laid eyes on - there will be no screen-covering headaches when it's laid in front of your telly. The partnering wireless subwoofer has a slender build that's easy to hide away too.

The bar is made up of three individual parts: two detachable metal-mesh ends (each hiding four racetrack drivers and two 2.5cm mylar tweeters) and a central glossy-black control

*The **Philips HTL5140** has a sleek design and a wealth of connections: HDMI, optical, 3.5mm, USB, aptX Bluetooth, and the added convenience of NFC*

panel with simple touch functions and a bright text display. It's a sleek and functional design, helped by its wealth of connections around the back: HDMI, optical, 3.5mm and USB inputs, and aptX Bluetooth, with the added convenience of one-touch NFC pairing. An HDMI ARC output makes connecting your external devices (Blu-ray players, set-top boxes etc) directly to the bar possible too.

Crowd-pleaser

It's not always easy extracting the quality products from a crowded, budget-soundbar market, but the HTL5140 stands out above all others. For a (very reasonable) £270, you get a sleek, space-efficient and great-sounding solution for boosting your television's sound. And that can't be bad.



Best soundbar £600+

Yamaha YSP-2500 **£800**

After missing out on a soundbar Award last year, Yamaha returns to this page in style, proving once again that you don't need a bulky speaker package for surround sound.

The successor to the 2012 Award-winning YSP-2200, the YSP-2500 is a paragon of the company's successful sound projection technology - delivering a big 5.1 surround sound experience from just a slim bar and discreet wireless subwoofer.

Surrounded by magic

The magic lies in the way it uses delay control to direct sound beams from the bar's 16 speakers (each driven by 2-watts of amplification) to bounce off the walls and reflect sound around the room - thus creating an enveloping virtual 5.1 surround field. An IntelliBeam function further optimises sound to match your specific room (like auto-calibration on an AV receiver).

The result is staggering. Play *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* and its expansive soundfield mimics a 5.1 surround system. Spidey's web shooter pans around you convincingly, and there's a good sense of dimension to the sound as he

swings across the screen. For the ultimate surround sound experience, its '5beam' setting is the best of the playback and 'beam' modes.

There's more than enough detail to keep us engrossed with the action on screen too, and the film's sound effects are placed with startling

*The **Yamaha YSP-2500's** magic lies in the way it uses delay control to direct sound beams to bounce off the walls and reflect sound around the room*

accuracy and impact. Thanks to the Yamaha's expressive dynamics, the pounding track that scores the chase scene is full of tension.

The Focal Dimension (£890) was in the running for this Award after impressing with a slightly fuller midrange. But its bulkier build is less practical and it can't surround like the Yamaha YSP-2500.

For songs streamed over Bluetooth, we switch to the 'Stereo' mode for tighter, more musical rhythms. This is an open, authoritative delivery capable of solid vocals and melodic tunes.

Practical too, the bar sits low enough to be placed in front of most TVs without obstructing the screen, while the wireless sub can be tucked away in a corner. The bright display is clear, while the remote has a premium feel and layout. The Home Theatre Controller app (free on iOS and Android) is a superb substitute too.

The '2500 has plenty of connections as well: three HDMI, two optical and single coaxial inputs; a pair of RCA plugs and 3.5mm mini-jack.

If you don't want the clutter and complexity of a traditional 5.1 speaker package and AV receiver, the Yamaha YSP-2500 is the most appealing solution out there.



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Best soundbase up to £300

Cambridge Audio TV2 £200

Another Awards issue, another new product category. Soundbases essentially fight the same cause as soundbars: to boost the weedy sound of televisions. But unlike their TV-boosting sidekick, they have a more traditional chassis (or 'base', if you like) and are designed for you to place your TV on top of it.

The Cambridge Audio TV2 is the cheapest of our two new Best Buys and the successor to Cambridge Audio's much-loved Minx TV - which was en route to securing this spot before the TV2's recent arrival.

Packing a punch

Rich, dynamic and balanced, the TV2 doesn't just give you a leg up in volume. Coming from a typical telly's speaker, punching and bone-shattering sound effects in *The Raid 2* are thin and hollow. Out of the TV2, they sound dense

The Cambridge Audio TV2 is not just a leg up in volume. Effects in The Raid 2 are dense and defined, while dialogue pulls through with expression



and defined. The TV2 handles the oscillating dynamics of the film score too, and when the action is sidelined, dialogue is solid and expressive.

Of the four EQ settings, we like 'Music' best for its well-judged, even-handed delivery. Play music over Bluetooth (it supports aptX and has a 10m range) and its musical delivery has a good grasp of timing - obviously a wired connection brings improvements in clarity and balance.

While the TV2 should cater for most 40-odd inch TVs, you should check that your model is a suitable fit. The manual states it must have a base no wider than 55cm and no deeper than 30cm. And it should weigh no more than 30kg.

Conforming to the conventional rectangular body, the TV2 has a smart matt finish and cloth-grille front. An LED light shines through

clearly to indicate commands. Peeling away the removable front panel uncovers the two Balanced Mode Radiator speakers (the down-firing bass driver is located on the unit's underside), and a control panel for setting up the TV2 to learn your Sky remote controls.

Socket to them

The supplied remote is tall, curved and easy to hold, with clearly laid-out buttons. Get past the absence of an HDMI input, and the optical input, pair of analogue plugs and 3.5mm mini-jack make for a fairly good list of connections. The rear-facing sockets are easy to use, too.

The Cambridge Audio TV2 has all the criteria: full-bodied, insightful sound and a practical build. For £200, what more could you ask?

Best soundbase £300+

Canton DM 75 £450

When we reviewed the Canton DM 50 last year ("one of the best soundbases we've heard to date"), we said it would "take one hell of a soundbase" to better it. A year on, we have that soundbase: its big brother.

The DM 75 is a jumbo version of its smaller sibling, designed to accommodate the bigger TV sizes on the market and among the best 'bases' we've heard at any price point.

Power and precision

Aside from an extra dose of power and weight brought by two extra woofers in a bigger cabinet, everything we loved about the DM 50's performance is here: a rich, balanced delivery, dynamic aptitude and insightful expression.

Play *Jurassic Park* and it's clear that the DM 75 is made for action-packed movies. There's bass depth to dinosaur stomps, while Velociraptor's high-pitched screams are clear

and sharp, but never piercing. As the dramatic theme score culminates, the DM 75's big, dynamic presentation blows you away. Even when volume is turned up, an even presentation ensures it's never uncomfortable.

Dialogue delivery is just as impressive, pulling through with solidity and detail aplenty, and the texture of rain is easy to make out.

It's a similar story streaming music over aptX Bluetooth: balance and detail abound and,

The Canton DM 75 is clearly made for action-packed movies. Even when volume is turned up, its even presentation ensures it's never uncomfortable

although clarity is compromised over the wireless connection, there's still enough attack and expression to enjoy.

Cater for the masses

The DM 75 can cater for almost any telly you want to place on top of it - Canton claims its sturdy build can take up to 40kg - but does require a pretty large tabletop or equipment rack to sit flat upon. If you prefer positioning it more like a soundbar in front of your TV, its 7cm height should sit nicely below screen level.

Available in black, silver or white, its modest brushed-matt casing is smart. A metal-meshed front panel hides two 5cm midrange drivers and two 2.5cm tweeters - unless you peer underneath the unit, you won't see the four 10cm woofers. Connections are fair: two digital (coaxial and optical) join a pair of analogue inputs and a subwoofer output.

A blue LED display proves easily readable from a distance and helpfully responsive to the nice remote control.

A do-it-all product like the Canton DM 75 is hard to find - and even harder to pass up.



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Serious body armour

The 'FMJ' in the Arcam's name stands for Full Metal Jacket and refers to the amp's steel- and-aluminium casework

Best stereo amplifier £400-£800

Arcam FMJ A19 **£650**

Arcam wins the stereo amplifier Product of the Year title for the second year, and deservedly so. We haven't come across any alternative that betters this integrated's combination of build, features and sound quality.

The A19 is happy in a wide range of systems, getting more out of Wharfedale's £200 Diamond 220s than most people would believe possible, but also driving something more premium - say PMC's Twenty 22s - with considerable skill. This amp is impressively faithful to source components; the better they are the better it will sound.

Beefy delivery, inclusive attitude

Once it's up and running, the first thing you'll notice about this amplifier is its sonic scale - it fills up our largish main listening room with clean and open sound. This Arcam isn't fussy about musical genre either, sounding equally at home with the likes of Jay Z as it is playing a Mahler Symphony.

We love the A19's sense of control and its composure when pushed hard. This isn't the kind of product that grabs the attention on a short demo - it sounds smooth and pleasant rather than overtly exciting on

initial acquaintance. But give this Arcam a little time and you'll realise that it's a terrific all-rounder; it has punch, power and a wonderfully fluid way with dynamics that belies its 50 watts per channel power rating.

Listen to *15 Step* from Radiohead's *In Rainbows* set and the A19 takes it all in stride. This is a complex track layered with intricate rhythms and can easily sound messy if the system isn't talented enough. There's no such problem with the A19. It punches hard and with precision, delivering bass notes with real grip and power while ably rendering the complexity.

There's a lovely sense of refinement here and the kind of full-bodied tonal balance that will make the most of aggressive recordings and sources, while tempering the behaviour of bright-sounding speakers.

Move away from sound and this Arcam continues to impress. It's solid, well made and beautifully finished. There's a sensible range of inputs too, including a decent phono stage. We're equally taken with the headphone output, which mirrors the amplifier's excellent sound into speakers.

The Arcam A19 remains a top-class amplifier for the money, and fully deserves all the accolades it gets. Buy it with confidence.

Best stereo amplifier up to £400

Marantz PM6005 £300

Marantz is something of a master at producing class-leading budget kit and the PM6005 is further evidence of that talent. Along with its partnering CD player – the CD6005 – this amplifier sets the standard for entry-level hi-fi.

What makes it special? As with all our Award winners, it's a combination of factors that makes the PM6005 such a good buy. It's beautifully made for starters. Entry-level hi-fi doesn't have to feel cheap, and this amplifier is proof of that. The casework is nice and solid while the quality of finish wouldn't be embarrassed by comparison to kit that costs twice as much.

Equipped for the task

It's well equipped too, with a decent number of line-level inputs (four), tone controls, headphone output and a surprisingly capable phono stage. It's not a backward-looking design either, as the provision of optical and coaxial digital inputs shows. And the inclusion of a digital-to-analogue converter shows that Marantz has recognised the changing habits in how people listen to music. We do wish Marantz had gone just one step further, though, and included a USB input for a more straightforward connection to laptops. Still, the lack of such a connection is no deal-breaker.

Previous generations of Marantz's budget amplifiers sacrificed attack and timing precision for refinement. Not this one. It's still one of the most listenable amplifiers around – both revealing and forgiving – but it matches these qualities with a newly found rhythmic thrust no rival can better.

Play Michael Jackson's *Bad* on vinyl and the PM6005 marshals the intricate and complex arrangements into a cohesive, rhythmic performance of tight drumbeats and melodious harmonies. There's plenty of detail and it's well organised and layered. We're equally taken with the soundfield – spacious, nicely focused and stable, even when things become demanding.

The Marantz PM6005 marshals the intricate, complex arrangements into a cohesive performance of tight drumbeats and melodious harmonies



**Low cost,
high resolution**

The PM6005 might be a budget amp, but it's built-in DAC supports high-res audio files of up to 24-bit/192kHz

With The Dead

Weather's *Horehound* (both on CD and streamed from Spotify) the Marantz delivers an attitude-laden performance full of drama, the open top end managing to sound smooth without losing any bite. Basslines are deep and taut, string plucks are tactile.

There's plenty to sing about with this Marantz amp. The digital inputs broaden its appeal to a wider audience than previous incarnations and give it an edge over most traditional rivals, but it's that wonderfully lively and detailed sound quality that seals the deal. You'll love it.

Best stereo amplifier £800-£1500

Rega Elex-R £900



It takes a supremely talented amplifier to knock the terrific Naim Nait 5si off its perch, and that's what the Rega Elex-R is.

By using the much-admired Brio-R amp as a base and adding circuit elements from the unquestionably talented Elicit-R (£1600, see right) into the mix, Rega has created one of the most talented sub-£1000 amplifiers we've heard.

One of the family

Anyone familiar with Rega's current amplifier range will recognise the Elex-R's sonic character. It delivers a fast, agile sound that's as rhythmically surefooted as we've heard at this level. Play a piece of music such as 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 and changes of pace with enthusiasm. There's an addictive sense of liveliness and energy, something 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) all will be fine. We used a range of speakers from Dali's lively Zensor 3s and B&W's 685s right the

Play alt-J's Breezblocks and the Rega Elex-R is right at home. It has no trouble rendering dynamic shifts and changes of pace with enthusiasm

way to PMC's mighty Twenty 26s, and at no point did the Rega fail to shine.

Of course, a power output of around 70W-per-channel isn't enough to make the floor shake in really large rooms, but we think this Rega is capable of decent levels in most set-ups.

Switching to Tchaikovsky's *Marché Slave Op.31* shows that this amplifier can keep track of complex instrumental arrangements and deliver scale with authority. We're pleased with the resolution on offer too.

Traditional approach

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 think Rega would direct you to its talented DAC for number-crunching duties. Instead, you get a good-quality MM phono stage, one that's talented enough to make the most of £1000 turntable packages such as Rega's own RP6 (that's a surprise).

We ended our First Test of the Elex-R by suggesting rival products from class leaders such as Naim, Cyrus and Roksan would have plenty of worry about from this unassuming compact amplifier. It turns out we were right.

Best stereo amplifier £1500+

Rega Elicit-R £1600

Rega's Elicit-R is the best-value premium integrated amplifier we know. It takes the considerable strengths of the already impressive Elex-R and builds on them strongly, fully justifying the extra outlay.

As with all our Award winners, performance is excellent. The Elicit's most impressive talent is its rhythmic ability. It has an immensely surefooted way with musical timing that can't help but grab the listener's attention.

Complexity with cohesion

Play Kate Bush's *Watching You Without Me* and all the different instruments hit with impeccable precision - it's what keeps the complicated arrangement cohesive and musically interesting.

Keep listening and you'll find the Elicit-R manages to dig up incredible amounts of subtle detail - drums hit with realistic impact and tautness, while it handles Clint Mansell's delicate ambient soundtrack for *Moon* with pleasing cohesion. It's particularly talented with vocals - Kate Bush's voice sounds sensitive and ethereal, making it easy to engage with the music.

The most impressive talent here is rhythmical ability. The Rega Elicit-R has a hugely surefooted way with timing that can't help but grab the listener's attention

Dynamic expression is impressive too. A power output of 105W per channel may be par for the course at this level but the Elicit-R puts its watts to particularly good effect, delivering the huge dynamic swings of the *Inception* OST with real venom.

Some might find the Elicit-R to have a slight leanness to its overall sound, and a hint of brightness to the treble. One or two rivals certainly have a warmer and smoother balance - but provided care is taken with system matching this should never be an issue.

The payback for the slight lack of richness is a very revealing and transparent character. True, it won't hide flaws in recordings or partnering equipment but it will give a very clear insight into whatever you're listening to. If you want to hear everything on a recording we can't think of a rival that does it better.

Add solid build and a neat finish into the equation - along with a comprehensive, well-constructed remote control unit - and you have what we think is a truly top-class amplifier. If you have the budget for this level of amplification, we can't think of a better buy for the money.



Good stage management

Given the Elicit-R's all-round quality, it's no surprise to find that the built-in phono stage is detailed, agile and informative



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— Stereophile, Stephen Mejias, Mar. 2014

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Turntables



Records were once dusty relics of your Dad's generation, but vinyl's popularity has come full circle and we've got three decks to put you in a spin

Best turntable £400-£800

Rega RP3/Elys2 **£550**

The Rega RP3/Elys2 combination retains its Product of the Year title for the fourth consecutive year - and we can't think of another product that's managed that feat. It's a stunning achievement for what is, outwardly, a pretty unassuming product.

Rega has worked on the premise of 'if it isn't broken, don't fix it' for decades, and the company is not about to change its ways now. And why should it, when the results are this good? The RP3 is simply a refinement of what has gone before. The long-running RB300 arm design has been given a once-over and the plinth now includes extra structural reinforcement. But this remains a simple design, and is all the better for it.

The right support

All turntables need a decent, level support and here it's even more important; three hard, rubber feet will only go so far when it comes to isolation. It really needs a rigid, low-resonance platform to truly shine, and placed well away from the speakers is preferable. Get this aspect of set-up right and the RP3/Elys2 combination simply sings.

It has all the power and dynamic thrust to make the most of Bob Marley's *Exodus*, and the insight to differentiate musical strands even when things get demanding. There's composure, and ability to communicate the rhythmic flow and changes of pace as well. Subtlety is on offer here too, as John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* proves.

The heart of the matter

The Rega combination gets the tonality of instruments right and its presentation is impressive. Perhaps most importantly, this player seems to get straight to heart of the performance, delivering plenty of emotion.

It's possible to buy this turntable without a cartridge, but we recommend buying the package that includes Rega's excellent Elys2 moving-magnet cartridge. It adds around £75 to the cost - the price we've quoted - but the money is well spent. The cartridge comes pre-fitted, but its unusual three-bolt fixing means alignment is hard to get wrong.

This is a deck that has been decades in the making. It's time well spent by Rega and we wouldn't be amazed to see the RP3 here again next year.

Best turntable up to £400

Pro-ject Essential II **£210**

If the Rega RP3 winning the Product of the Year title again hasn't created a sense of *déjà vu*, then Pro-ject winning yet another Award at the entry level certainly will. Few companies have been as dominant in their category as much as Pro-ject down the years.

This is the second year the Essential II has won our budget Award, and rightly so. No rival has come close to bettering it as an overall package. As the name implies, the Essential II is pretty basic: there's no headline-grabbing material or technology here, just great build at a highly-competitive price. The inclusion of a pre-fitted Ortofon OM5e moving magnet cartridge in the price simply adds to the appeal.

Little wonders

With turntables, it's the little things that make big differences. Things like the quality of the

*The **Essential II** delivers The Sorcerer's Apprentice with a sound full of life and drama. There's plenty of detail and enough refinement here, too*

main bearing or those used in the arm make a huge impact. Those on the Essential II are as good as we've seen for the price. We've come across the Ortofon cartridge before - it's a good, solid performer. Let it run in a little and you'll get a nicely balanced performance.

Michael Jackson's *Bad* is an album that demands a crisp sense of rhythm and the Essential II is happy to oblige. There's plenty of drive and punch to the sound, which is underpinned by surprisingly articulate low frequencies.

Bare necessities

The Essential II hasn't got the analysis to strip bare a recording like this, but neither does anything else at this level. What it does is deliver the music in an exciting and entertaining way. It keeps us listening, wanting more, and that's what makes the Essential II special.

Move onto Paul Dukas's *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* and the Pro-ject delivers a sound full

of life and drama. There's plenty of detail, and enough refinement from that Ortofon cartridge to stop things getting edgy. We're pleased with the deck's scale and composure. These qualities aren't very common with this kind of product at this price level.

Budgeting for pleasure

The Pro-ject Essential II is the perfect budget deck. It's sensibly priced and well made, but most of all it sounds great. Sure, you can get better performance - but you'll have to spend a lot more to do so.



Best turntable £800+

Clearaudio Concept **£995**

We're happy to welcome Clearaudio's Concept back into the Awards fold. We can't think of the last time a previous winner came back to reclaim its crown.

It's not quite the same as the original though, despite the name remaining unchanged. Since 2011 Clearaudio has upgraded the arm significantly, with improved wiring and revised bearing assembly and metal work. The deck itself is mostly unchanged bar some tweaks to the feet. The big news is a hefty price drop that takes the Concept back below the £1000 price point. That's enough to steal the honours from the Rega RP6 and take over as our

strongest recommendation at this level. The Clearaudio's strengths are untouched by time: it remains the ideal one-stop solution for record replay in a market sector where most audiophiles think the way to optimise sound is mixing and matching.

*The **Clearaudio Concept's** strengths are untouched by time: it remains the ideal one-stop solution for record replay*

The Concept comes pre-assembled: the cartridge is mounted and even the arm counterweight is set. The latter would be a disaster with a conventional arm design, but in this case the Concept's unusual magnetic arm bearings float, so damage doesn't occur.

Easy to set up and easy to use - the Concept is a solid design, lacking any form of isolation. So, as with the Rega and Pro-ject, a level, low-resonance support is a must.

A special ownership experience

Beyond that, the solid design means minimal fiddling and the deck doesn't go out of tune during use. You get an electronic speed change too: 33⅓, 45, and 78rpm.

The Concept has a fast and agile sound that picks up subtleties with ease. It has strong dynamics and sonic precision, and is at home with all types of music, with a neutrality of character to fit most systems.

We're in favour of products that make the ownership experience special and this Clearaudio does just that. It's brilliantly made, combining simple lines with top-quality finish. Few rivals at this price look classier. But great build and a smart appearance aren't enough to win a Best Buy. The Concept wins because it sounds great.



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To cap it off

We're happy to see B&W has covered the fragile dome-tweeter with a protective grille mesh. It's intended to help with sound dispersion as well.

Best standmounter £400-£800

B&W 685 S2 **£500**

Bowers & Wilkins' revised 600 range has been a spectacular success. These 685 S2s take our overall Product of the Year title, and the floorstanding 683s (p52) have also won their class with ease. It's quite some achievement from the 685 S2s, especially when you consider how much we love last year's Best Buy at this price, KEF's marvellous LS50s.

So what makes these speakers so great? Well there's a fair bit of technical improvement over the original 600 range. The tweeter assembly, for example, is suspended in a ring of soft gel. This keeps it isolated from any cabinet vibrations caused by the midbass driver. This new 600 range marks the first time B&W has used such mechanical decoupling when mounting a tweeter inside the cabinet.

The 16.5cm mid/bass driver remains mostly the same. The bullet-shaped phase plug of the previous generation is replaced with a mushroom-shaped 'dust cap' derived from the high-end B&W PM1 speakers, which further damps the driver down at certain frequencies. The new shape, and foam material, also lessen unwanted resonance and aims for a smoother driver-response in the upper frequencies.

Technical tweakery is all very well - but how do they sound? In a word: brilliant. Right from the start, these B&W 685s burst to life with a powerful, clear and agile sound. These are hugely talented and enjoyable speakers, and a definite step up from their predecessors. The sense of scale is massive, especially coming from relatively compact standmounters. The soundstage is wide and deep, enveloping you in a richly detailed, subtly dynamic and cohesive performance whether you're playing Aerosmith, Lorde or a Hans Zimmer soundtrack.

Whole lotta bass

The deep and taut bass is particularly impressive. Play Led Zeppelin's *Whole Lotta Love* and the bass notes are so rich and muscular it's hard to believe they're coming from such a compact cabinet. These speakers can also go extremely loud with little obvious distortion, too.

The 685 S2s are hugely entertaining. They're the speakers we'd put on to get our friends into hi-fi and we can't think of a better reason to give the new B&W 685s our Product of the Year title.

Best stereo speakers up to £200

Wharfedale Diamond 220 £200

Looking for the most talented budget speakers on the market? Look no further. Wharfedale's Diamond 220s have managed to dislodge the excellent Q Acoustics 2020is in the process, which is no mean feat.

Wharfedale's engineers have used composite cabinet walls made with two thin MDF layers sandwiching a chipboard filling. It works really well, producing a sturdy cabinet that's controlled in terms of resonance. This means you'll hear far more of what the drive units are doing rather than the cabinet. And what does that mean for you, the listener? A clearer, more detailed sound.

Diamond designing

Changes from the last generation of Diamond standmounter include a bigger magnet on the 13cm woven-Kevlar mid/bass driver in an attempt to make the speakers a little easier to drive and improve responsiveness. The unusual slot-loaded port arrangement first seen on the 100 series makes a reappearance here too, and it has been tweaked to reduce distortion. It's claimed to be more efficient than a conventional port but, as always, the proof is in the listening.

The tweeter remains unchanged. It still sits in a deeply dished waveguide, which helps

efficiency, particularly through the crossover region.

When it comes to sound quality, the Diamond 220s are excellent. These speakers deliver a meaty bass with more power and punch than we expect from boxes that stand just 50cm high. Lows are also articulate, able to track fast-moving basslines with ease. Move up the frequency range and the good news continues. Midrange quality is terrific, pointing to quality drive units and a well-designed crossover network. Listen to Adele's 21 set and it's hard not to be taken in by the emotion in her delivery.



The Wharfedale Diamond 220s sound excellent. They deliver a surprisingly meaty bass with far more power than we expect from a 50cm box

Switching to Holst's *Jupiter*, we're impressed by the balanced tonality and the 220s' ability to deliver large-scale dynamic shifts with enthusiasm. Stereo imaging is good too.

Put it all together and you have a top-class pair of budget speakers. Well done Wharfedale.

Best stereo speakers £200-£400

Q Acoustics Concept 20 £350



20s' cabinet that marks them out as different. And special.

They use a box-within-a-box idea, where the inner and outer enclosures (both made of 10mm MDF panels) are separated by a compliant compound called Gelcore. This helps to damp any panel resonances, turning that unwanted energy into heat. No, the Concept 20s didn't get noticeably hotter after a long listening session, or at least not hot enough for us to notice. The idea behind the cabinet design is to silence the enclosure, leaving the sound coming from just the drive units.

The Q Acoustics Concept 20s' presentation is articulate and subtle, yet has punch and attack to satisfy, even when we listen to Dead Weather's 60 Feet Tall

It's amazing just how much difference this makes. Placed on their stands (£200 but well worth it), positioned clear of the back wall and angled in slightly towards the listener, these speakers sing. Such is their clarity throughout the frequency range and dynamic verve that we are repeatedly drawn into listening to complete albums rather than just short sections of songs as is usual during our testing process.

Plenty of character

The Concept 20s sound all-of-a-piece, seamless in fact, and have a consistency of character from the deepest bass upwards that's rarely heard at this or any price.

The presentation is articulate and subtle, yet has the punch and attack to satisfy, even when we listen to the likes of The Dead Weather's *60 Feet Tall*. There's a measured hand when it comes to rhythms, but changes in pace and the under-laying momentum of the music is easily heard.

It's the transparency that impresses most, though. The result is a high level of precision, excellent definition and the ability to play complex music without a loss of organisation.

These Q Acoustics are great speakers and give plenty of more expensive rivals food for thought.

Last year's Product of the Year remain our favourite speakers at this price. All the qualities we so admired last time around haven't been diminished in the past 12 months. The Q Acoustics Concept 20s remain very fine speakers for the money.

Mind you, they might not appear so on first look. The drive units, after all, owe much to their budget sibling 2020is. No, it's the Concept



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Best standmounter £800-£1500

ATC SCM11 £1200

ATC's SCM11s have made this category their own down the years. Few products have dominated their price point so completely. If rivals hoped ATC was going to slip up with a range revamp, they've been sorely disappointed. The new generation SCM11s continue where their predecessors left off - and have taken performance levels to a new level.

There have been some notable changes: while the mid/bass driver remains unchanged, it's now housed in a smarter, curved cabinet and partnered to a new in-house tweeter design.

The new tweeter really is a big deal. Most companies the size of ATC buy drive units from large OEM drive unit suppliers and simply integrate them into their speakers. Never a company to take the easy route, ATC has spent years developing this 25mm soft dome and manufactures it itself. One listen proves its worth.

The SCM11s' sound is remarkably clean and more transparent than ever. Combine that with a high level of detail and you get superb insight into recordings such as Van Morrison's *Moondance*. Vocals are given air and plenty of emotion. The song's distinctive walking bassline is rendered with tautness and enthusiasm, while dynamic shifts are delivered in a pleasingly expressive way.

In keeping with ATC tradition, these SCM11s are a sealed-box design. That means the low frequencies aren't delivered in quite the generous quantities of some ported rivals. What you do get is impressive bass texture, tonality and detail. We reckon a slight hit in outright quantity is worth it for the excellent control on hand. In fact, the whole frequency range is superbly controlled. Nothing we do can wrong-foot these speakers, which remain composed no matter how hard we push. We go from Atoms for Peace to Massive Attack, via a spot of Eminem: at every turn the ATCs demonstrate an extraordinary level of precision.

That precision extends to the focused stereo image as we switch to *Jupiter* from Holst's *The Planets* suite. These ATCs make it easy to place parts of the orchestra on the wide soundstage.

The trait we like the most about the original SCM11s - their natural, balanced sound - is here, too. Whatever we feed the speakers, the sound comes out uncoloured and uncorrupted. That makes them hugely versatile, and an easy listen.

The SCM11s continue to set the standards at this price. Given a suitably talented system they bring music to life in a way no rival can match.



*The **ATC SCM11's** new tweeter really is a big deal. ATC has spent years developing this new 25mm soft dome and they produce it, too. One listen proves its worth*

Best standmounter £1500+

PMC Twenty 22 £1970



*The **PMC Twenty 22s** do it all. They have the scale and power to do justice to Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture in full flow, and deliver Bon Iver's music with finesse too*

PMC Twenty 22s hold onto their Best Buy title for yet another year - the third in succession, which is impressive. It takes an especially talented product to achieve this, but as our *Group Test* of premium standmounters in the November 2014 issue shows, there still isn't an alternative that delivers a better all-round sonic performance.

There's plenty to admire technically. The tweeter, a 27mm Sonolex dome, is designed to deliver high levels of detail with wide dispersion; the paper-coned mid/bass driver (PMC likes paper's light weight, rigidity and resonance behaviour) is specifically designed for use with a transmission line.

The inclusion of a transmission line makes PMC speakers different from most rivals. The idea is that the rearward output of the mid/bass driver is forced through an internal folded path and exits through the rectangular grille at the front of the speakers. This path is lined with specially chosen damping material that absorbs all but the lowest frequencies in the sound. As these very low frequencies exit the transmission line, they augment the forward output of the driver.

PMC thinks this is the best way to get high-quality, low-distortion bass.

The cabinet remains a sturdy affair. Its sloped-back appearance may look a little odd at first (and necessitates the use of dedicated stands to look balanced) but it gives a good foundation for the drive units to work from.

Stand and deliver

These Twenty 22 standmounters are immensely fast and precise. Their detail levels are excellent, and they deliver the sound with breathtaking agility. You can add wide dispersion and a focused soundstage to the list of plus points.

Tonally, the speakers sound even and immensely taut. Some may prefer a more relaxing presentation, but it would be very hard to find such leading-edge definition and speed any other way.

These PMC speakers do it all. They have the scale and power to do justice to Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* in full flow and the tonal balance to render individual instruments convincingly. They'll also deliver intimate music such as Bon Iver's *Michicant* with a pleasing amount of finesse. The 22s' detail resolution and way with low-level dynamics is as good as anything we've heard at this price.

Best floorstander up to £600

Q Acoustics 2050i **£460**

The Q Acoustics 2050i floorstanders won their first Award in 2012. Two years on, our opinion hasn't changed: we still think they're superb.

Let's start with the design. At 100x27x32cm, they're on the chunky side for floorstanders at this level. But bigger doesn't mean boxier - their combination of straight and rounded edges has a more elegant feel than fully rectangular rivals.

They're built really well - nice and solid with the kind of finish that wouldn't disgrace a product at twice the price. Hidden speaker connections - tucked under the integrated steel plinth - keep cables tidy. This leaves the back clean of clutter, aside from a flared reflex port large enough to lose a pet hamster in.

Smooth and full-bodied

The driver complement looks formidable: there are two 16.5cm midrange/bass drivers

Biwiring the Q Acoustics 2050is gives a little more detail, with greater articulation and power, while angling them in slightly helps tighten the stereo image

accompanying a 25mm soft-dome tweeter. The tweeter is compliantly mounted to minimise distortion caused by vibrations generated by the twin mid/bass units. Such touches demonstrate an impressive attention to detail.

In use, the 2050is perform very much like other Q Acoustics speakers we've heard. Sound is full-bodied and smooth, and more forgiving to recordings of lower quality. There's a good amount of detail at the top end, while vocals are clear and engaging. Move down the frequency and there's plenty of punch, as we'd expect from speakers of this size. Lows are nicely controlled: put on Red Hot Chili Peppers' *Give It Away* and the funky bassline is taut and precise.

Biwiring the 2050is will give you a little more detail, with greater articulation and power, while angling them in slightly will help tighten the stereo image. And make sure to keep them away from walls in order to keep that bass controlled. These speakers also fill a large room with ease - they have great dynamic ability, there's heft and the stereo imaging is good. They even stay composed when things get loud.

There's no shortage of affordable floorstanders but there is a shortage of quality options. Except for the 2050is that is, with a build, finish and sound no rival can better.



Best floorstander £600-£1200

B&W 683 S2 **£1150**



We're really taken with Bowers & Wilkins' new 600 range. These floorstanders are just as impressive as the smaller 685 S2s and it's hardly surprising to say these speakers sound big - physically the 683 S2s are larger than many of their peers. But the sense of scale they produce is massive. The soundstage is wide and tall, and instruments have room to breathe.

Of course, the electronic partners have to be talented: we'd be looking at Cyrus's CDi CD player and Arcam's A19 amplifier to even begin to show what these speakers can really do.

Making the right overtures

And what the 683 S2s can do is deliver superb clarity. They reveal plenty of detail and deliver it in an organised and stable way. Play Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* and they respond with enthusiasm, thumping out huge dynamic swings yet still keeping a track on low-level instrumental strands. Their presentation is sharp and precise. Tonally, they're well balanced and well integrated, with an impressive low end that is deep and authoritative enough to make you briefly wonder if there's a subwoofer hidden somewhere.

And yet nothing gets drowned out by the bass. This is the kind of low-end heft we like:

powerful, but nuanced enough not to compromise the rest of the frequency range.

There's a surprising level of finesse here, too - the 683 S2s can sound as refined as P.G. Wodehouse's Jeeves. We're not entirely sure just how B&W has managed to achieve this, but it's surely down to clever engineering.

There's a new tweeter: an aluminium dome reinforced by an aluminium ring for rigidity. It sits in its own gel-filled cavity, to minimise the impact of unwanted vibrations from the other drivers. It also has a protective grille (and waveguide) these days, so it's slightly safer from fingers. Elsewhere, the twin bass cones have been reinforced with aluminium rings, and the FST Kevlar midrange driver has a new spider.

We're very impressed by the mix of power, scale and delicacy on offer from the 683 S2s. If you have the space, you won't be disappointed.

We should really mention the B&W 683 S2s' impressive low end. Deep and authoritative, it's enough to make you wonder if a subwoofer is hidden somewhere

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Best floorstander £1200+

Spendor A6R £2500

It's easy to be unimpressed by the Spendor A6R. They cost quite a lot of money and look fairly ordinary in a neat kind of way. Yet in some ways these speakers are extraordinary.

They're an update on a previous favourite, the A6 - but there are big changes, including a new mid/bass drive unit and a re-engineered crossover. You'd never know it to look at them though, as they keep the same compact, understated design as their predecessors.

Charm offensive

Characteristically, there's a lot of the A6 charm in these new speakers. The excellent musicality is still there, and the A6Rs show a keen interest in making any music you throw at them feel right at home.

This is down to a superb performance across the frequency range, showcasing a deep and

punchy low end alongside an expressive midrange and a detailed, refined treble. Each feels like a well-judged part of a whole, slotting together perfectly to produce a well balanced, coherent listen.

Detail levels are second-to-none and there is layer upon layer of fine detail to grasp. Notes have depth and dimension, oft-lost nuances are picked up in all their glory and vocals are conveyed with all their reality and emotion.

Dynamically, the A6 was never a slouch, but the A6Rs show another level of dynamic attack that outshines even last year's Award-winning PMC Twenty 23s. It keeps a strong grip on bouncing basslines, with a low end that's both punchy and agile enough to keep up with other energy found in the frequency range.

As a rather upfront pair of speakers, they do require some consideration when it comes to pairing them. The treble stays just on the right side of bright and aggressive when we test them but, matched with an amp of similar character, could tip the scale into hardness - something worth considering should you be looking at building a system around them. But get it right and these are as talented a pair of speakers as we've heard for the price. The A6Rs truly are a stunning achievement.

*The **Spendor A6R** shows a level of dynamic attack that outshines even last year's Award-winning PMC Twenty 23. It keeps a strong grip on bouncing basslines*

Best desktop speaker

Ruark MR1s £300

Ruark's MR1s hold on to our best desktop speaker Award for the second year running. That's quite some achievement considering just how competitive this sector has become.

These impress straight out of the box. They look smart dressed in a walnut veneer (black- or white-lacquer finishes are also available) and it's obvious a great deal of care has gone into getting the details of the finish just so.

While not as compact as some rivals, at 17cm tall they're still a comfortable size to fit on most desks - and we rate them enough to move a few things around, just to make sure they fit.

Rolling not fumbling

It's worth the effort because these sound lovely. Play Adele's *Rolling In The Deep* and it's hard not to be impressed by the MR1's expressive midrange and their ability to latch onto a rhythm track with determination. There's warmth and texture to voices and a level of subtlety that immediately sets these speakers apart from the rest of the desktop crowd.

Detail is abundant, and even when you give the Ruarks something a little meatier to chew over, such as Massive Attack's *Angel*, they don't misstep once, keeping organised and in control throughout. Bass is solid and digs pretty

deep too. Just as importantly, it's tuneful and articulate.

These Ruarks shine dynamically. They do a great job of letting the horns in Justin Timberlake's *Take Back the Night* create the impact intended, while keeping a toe-tapping hold on the catchy instrumentation.

Overall, the MR1s are a really musical listen, portraying the full extension of every note from the low-end all the way up through the treble, so you feel you're getting every bit of what a piece of music has to offer. Switch to aptX Bluetooth from a MacBook Pro and there's a slight drop in sound quality compared with the wired connection, but not enough to spoil enjoyment.

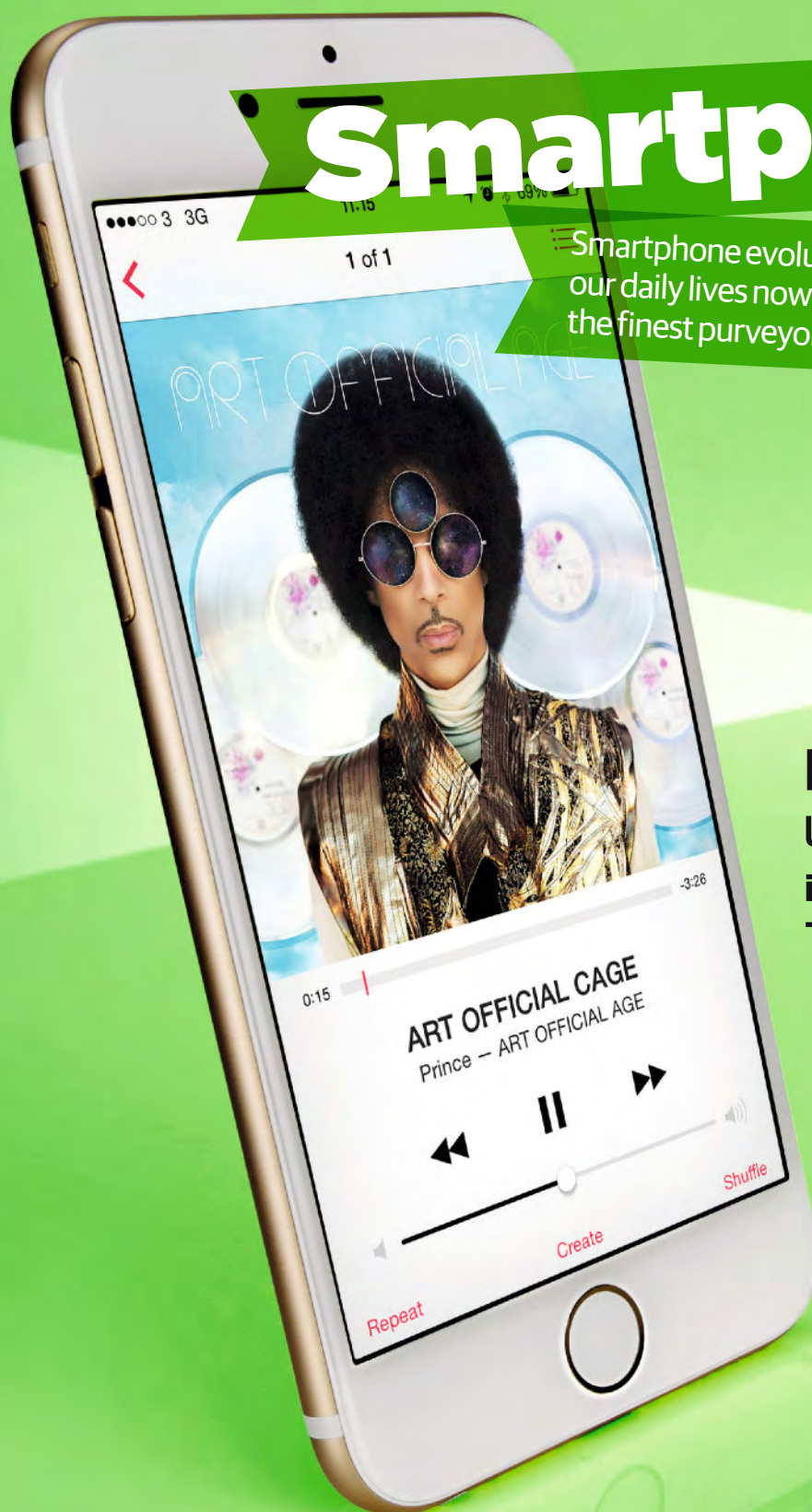
Take a bit of care with placement and you'll be rewarded. The MR1s like to be placed near a back wall if you want a fuller bass, and we'd try to avoid any clutter directly in front of them. Then the MR1s are hard to fault.



*The **Ruark MR1s** are a really musical listen, portraying the full extension of every note from the low-end up through the treble, so you feel you're getting everything*

Smartphones

Smartphone evolution means they are integral to our daily lives now and we have chosen two of the finest purveyors of the power in our pockets



Best smartphone under 5in

iPhone 6 from £540 SIM free

There was a time when Apple's iPhone commanded the smartphone marketplace. Talk of 'iPhone killers' was rife, but largely unsubstantiated, leaving the Apple handset without any real concerns about the competition for a number of years.

Of course, that is far from the case in today's market, with some seriously good handsets coming from all sides to challenge Apple - and with impressive specs as well.

2K screens, 20-megapixel+ cameras, high-res music support and octo-core processors are just some of the buzzwords we've heard from this year's big launches. The iPhone 6 has none of those, so why are we giving it the Product of the Year gong?

Impeccable performer

For everything it lacks in spec-list grunt, the iPhone 6 makes up for with a performance and user experience that's very hard to argue with. Quite simply, compare it with its Android competition in the key areas of video and music, and it comes out on top.

With its new 4.7in screen and increased resolution of 1334 x 750, the iPhone has never looked better.

It might not be full HD but it's as crisp and sharp as they come, with edges accurately drawn and fine detail picked out well.

*For everything it lacks in spec-list grunt, the **Apple iPhone 6** makes up for with a performance and user experience that's very hard to argue with*

Best smartphone 5in+

Sony Xperia Z3 £530 SIM free

It can be a little hard keeping up with Sony's smartphone line-up. It's been less than two years since the first Xperia Z handset launched, and already we've arrived at the fourth iteration - the Xperia Z3. The good news is this version finally feels like the Xperia handset we've really been waiting for, bringing together a superb performance with a truly stylish design.

The first thing to notice is that the rather harsh, angular edges of its predecessors are gone, replaced by a more curved design which makes it easier and more comfortable to hold.

The colour of the edges match the phone now too, making it look more premium, while its ports and buttons have also seen some tweaking to fall in line with this softer approach.

Attention seeker

We love the new look, which finally feels like it matches the attention to detail Sony places in other parts of the phone.

Its 5.2in full HD screen remains the same size as in the Z2, which feels like a good choice, and it packs much of Sony's TV technology into its display. The result is a wonderfully sharp and accurate picture, which excels with fine detail. Colours are rich and punchy, if on the more vibrant side of neutral, and motion is well handled once a few settings are slightly tweaked.

When it comes to music, the Xperia Z3 has followed in the footsteps of the rest of the company by adding in high-resolution music playback to its offering.

We still lean towards standard-res as the main benchmark for quality though, and the Z3 wins out here as well. It's a leaner presentation than the iPhone,

but it's just as engaging, with strong dynamics and plenty of detail to go at.

When it comes to high-res playback, it's the best, most entertaining performance we've heard on a smartphone yet - with the added detail, subtlety and transparency you'd expect from better resolution music combined with excellent timing and precision.

Content contentment

The Xperia Z3's on-board storage helps you make the most of this, with 32GB as standard, expandable via microSD card - making it a lot cheaper to be a content hoarder than, say, on the Apple iPhone.

Despite all of this, one of the Z3's biggest achievements is its battery life, which is nothing short of excellent. You will easily manage an entire day and then some with reasonably heavy use, which is no mean feat by current standards.

If you're looking for the best Android phone of 2014, this is most certainly it, and while it misses out on our Product of the Year gong this year, with Sony now apparently in its stride, we can't wait to see what they do next.

Colours are on the cool side of neutral, but look believable rather than washed out, and contrast is strong, with deep detailed blacks offset by strong, controlled whites.

We've always loved the way the iPhone sounds, and the iPhone 6 is the best-sounding yet. The rich, full-bodied character that makes it so listenable remains, but with a touch more clarity compared to the iPhone 5S, meaning it's more detailed and dynamic than ever.

No, there's no high-res music support here, but with a standard resolution sound this good it's hard to be disappointed, particularly when this is the level the majority of people will be listening at.

Win by design

Add to that a brand new design that's impossibly slim and more desirable than ever, a faster processor complete with updated graphics for console-style gaming on the go, and the well-considered usability tweaks introduced with iOS 8, and we don't think there's a more deserving winner of our smartphone Product of the Year.

The iPhone 6 is going to have its detractors, but our guess is, they haven't even tried it. We can't recommend strongly enough that they do so.

The Sony Xperia Z3's biggest achievement has to be its battery life, which is nothing short of excellent and will easily manage an entire day and then some



In-ear headphones

The market for these little marvels has exploded of late, so don't settle for those bundled buds – you can do much better, regardless of budget



Extras and bonus features

As well as sounding great, the Sonys come with an inline mic remote, carrying pouch and cord length adjuster.

Best in-ears £50-£150

Sony MDR-EX650AP £60

If you think it's not really possible to achieve any kind of real sound quality for such a reasonable sum of money, have a listen to these Sony buds, then re-evaluate.

It starts with the design, which is rather lovely. Considering brass has been used to make musical instruments for centuries, it's surprising it rarely features in the construction of hi-fi components. But here, both the internal sound path and the enclosure itself are constructed using trombone material. These buds are solid, and comfortable to wear.

Journey into space

The sound is just as pleasant. Vocals are engaging and focused, but given plenty of space. Listen to something floaty (Arcade Fire comes to mind) and it will sound suitably ethereal. Instruments are placed expertly on the expansive sound field. The overall presentation is fabulously expressive.

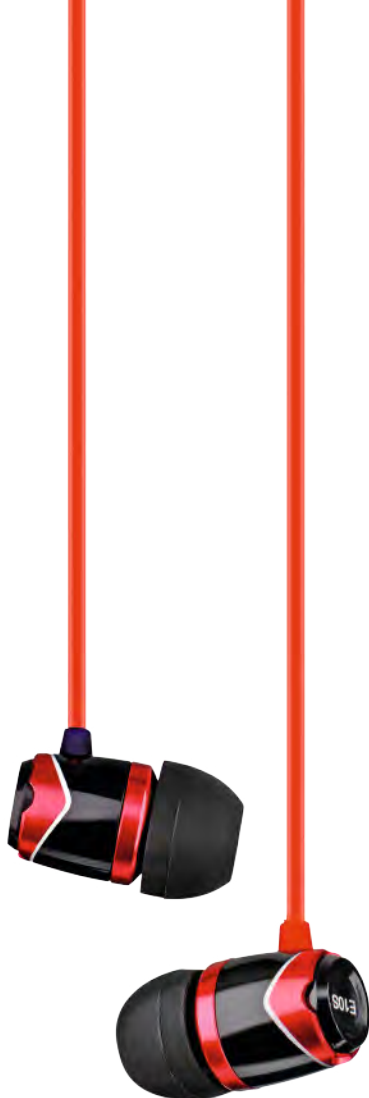
Go for a bit of punch (and you can't punch much more than Daft Punk) and these buds prove to be enthusiastic purveyors of pop beats, too. Drums are precise and snappy. There's a delicate sparkle at the top end and a weighty bassline in the basement, which underpins everything but never drowns out the rest of the range. There's also no shortage of nuanced detail, capable of stripping back layers of a song without revelling in flaws.

All that, and there's even an inline mic remote. Pretty, great-sounding, and practical to boot, these Sony buds are mighty impressive.

*The **Sony MDR-EX650AP** buds are enthusiastic purveyors of pop beats. There's a delicate sparkle at the top end and a weighty bassline in the basement*

Best in-ears up to £50

SoundMagic E10S **£40**



Over the past few years our regard for SoundMagic has developed into a deep admiration. The original E10 headphones came out of nowhere to dominate the budget in-ear domain for three years in a row.

Despite the success, SoundMagic hasn't rested on its laurels. The E10s keep receiving little tweaks. There have been subtle improvements in sound, and more obvious overhauls such as new cabling. Now we have the E10S.

The S is for 'smartphone'. The most obvious change is the inclusion of an inline mic remote for pause and playback.

There's also a clever little switch in the plug that guarantees button compatibility regardless of the operating system on your smartphone. It's SoundMagic's way of dealing with different manufacturers, whose phones don't always play nicely with your buttons.

*Improved sound and extra features: if you're looking to upgrade from your portable's bundled buds, the **SoundMagic E10s** are where you should start*

Internally, driver placement and venting have been adjusted to improve sound. This tweak has also been applied to the standard E10 model, which remains available for a fiver less. That's good for those who don't need buttons.

Elsewhere, it's business as usual, including the same cable, twisted for toughness and glossy to prevent snagging in pockets. They're the same well-made metal buds too, which, as well as looking smart, feel a good deal more luxurious than their price might suggest.

The internal tweaks work, because the audio performance is better than ever. It's a more refined sound, offering more smoothness and subtlety at the top end.

Agility, sparkle and space

Bass weight is nicely judged, making for a tight, agile sound. The treble sparkles, and vocals are clear and nuanced. You get a lovely, airy presentation with a good sense of space, and plenty of detail too.

It's quite hard to improve on an Award-winning recipe, but SoundMagic has done just that. Improved sound, same good engineering and extra features too: if you're looking to upgrade from your portable device's bundled buds, this is where you should start.

Best in-ears £150-£300

Shure SE425 **£200**

When we think of the Shure SE425s, quite a few superlatives come to mind. But we're tight on space, so we'll settle for five: fun; absorbing; classy; polished; captivating.

It's all in the detail, literally and figuratively. Get some music going and it's as if the SE425s disappear, leaving you with just the sound they're producing. It would be a shameful understatement to call them immersive. The level of finesse on offer here is astonishing. You'll hear things you never thought were there, even on recordings you thought you knew inside out.

For those about to rock

There's an abundance of energy. Put on a bit of AC/DC and the SE425s prove they're more than capable of handling punchy rock and tight rhythms. Guitar-picking is especially evident and sharp-edged, yet the sound never tips over into brashness.

The midrange is as solid as you like. That vein of detail continues right down the frequency range. Vocals are placed to the fore, yet they never clash with various other elements in the same frequency range. There's plenty of nuance too, and it's not hard to tell who's had a few too many cigarettes.

Descend to the frequency depths and there's a good amount of thud. It's helped by the sense of isolation, which aids the low-frequency extension. The SE425s really do block out almost everything around you, locking the music inside your head.

The design is a bit unusual: it's the in-ear monitor configuration favoured by pros, where the cable passes up your back and splits behind your head. They pass over the top of your ears, secured in place with a cable slider and wire inserts that mould to the shape of your lugs.

The enclosures are detachable, so worn-out cables can be replaced for less than the price of a new set of earphones. The enclosures also swivel on the ends of the cables, making them easier to fit and more comfortable to wear.

It's safe to say we think the Shure SE425s are great. If you can get over the less-than-conventional styling and get them into your ears (easier than you might think), you'll never look back. These are the finest in-ears at this price we've heard in ages, and that's why they deserve an Award for the second year running.

Apples are not the only fruit

There are versions of the SE425s offering three-button remotes for Apple, or one button for everything else.

*Vocals are placed to the fore with the **Shure SE425s** yet they never clash with various other elements in the same frequency range. There's plenty of nuance, too*





Best in-ears £300+

Sennheiser IE 800 £600

Expensive in-ear headphones tend to have a tough time convincing people of their worth. It's all about perceived value – they're only tiny little things, but you want how much?

Yes, the IE 800s are eye-wateringly expensive, but they also sound astonishingly good. Once you've had a listen to these buds, the scope of their abilities becomes apparent.

No matter what you throw at them, the Sennheisers remain entirely unfazed. Their authority and control are unquestionable. Low-frequency stuff is delivered with speed, definition and superb tonal variation.

Midrange communication and articulation is among the best we've heard from in-ears. Then there's that crisp attack at the top, along with a fanatical level of attention on the beginning and decay of notes. Dynamic headroom is considerable, refinement and timing are

absolutely first-rate, while stereo focus and soundstaging are entirely lucid.

Such is the Sennheisers' manoeuvrability, eloquence and integration that the interplay between the musicians is not only apparent but obvious. Where sheer musicality is concerned, the IE 800s make a pretty much watertight case for themselves.

If you're spending this much, you'll want some fancy tech to justify it – and the IE 800s don't disappoint. The extra-wideband transducers promise distortion-free sound even at near-dangerous volume levels. Harmonic distortion levels are so low as to be apparently non-existent.

Small, but technically accomplished

Ceramic housings and dampened two-chamber absorbers also let you know that these small, unassuming-looking earbuds mean business.

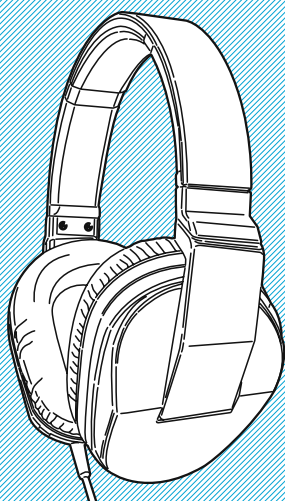
While there isn't much space to express the idea of premium materials, or painstaking construction, the Sennheisers' single-piece ceramic enclosures feel solid, and the stout cable resists tangling and transmitting noise.

If you can justify the cost, we think you'd be hard-pressed to find a more accomplished set of headphones at anywhere near this price.

*Yes, the **Sennheiser IE 800s** are eye-wateringly expensive, but they also sound astonishingly good.*

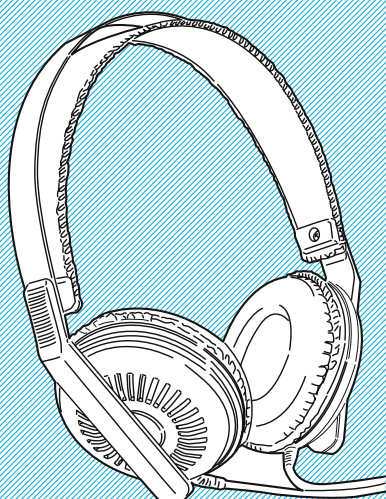
Once you've listened, the scope of their abilities becomes apparent

Baby boomers The case for in-ears



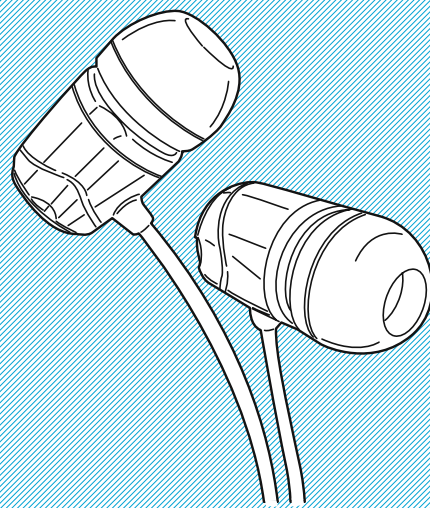
OVER-EAR

The most traditional hi-fi headphone design (also called circumaural), these cup your ears completely, usually with semi-airtight earcups. You'll notice cans of this type used as monitors in recording studios: depending on the type of design they use they can be extremely effective at cutting out the noise of the outside world.



ON-EAR

Supra-aural or on-ear designs tend to be smaller and lighter than circumaural models. They sit on your ears rather than over them, usually pressing on to them as well. Some listeners find them lighter and easier to wear for extended listening than over-ear models, but their design necessarily means they tend to allow in more sounds from outside.



IN-EAR

Gone are the days when everyone else has to hear your music. In-ear buds are a great way to isolate yourself in sound. Nowadays, in-ears usually come with rubber tips, which provide a good seal and help the music travel only down your ear canals. There are many designs out there and a better fit means better sound, so experiment with tip sizes.

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Streamline



Stream Xa



Living with it

The DragonFly has only a 3.5mm headphone output - and that's it. Volume is controlled via the computer.

DACs

So much of our music is now stored in the digital domain that it's never been more important to get a decent digital-to-analogue converter

Best DAC up to £300

AudioQuest DragonFly v1.2 £130

The original DragonFly created a huge buzz (pardon the pun) when it launched back in 2012. AudioQuest managed to take a DAC and headphone amp, two traditional hi-fi components, and serve them up in a great-sounding consumer-friendly package. The DAC even won a Product of the Year award for its troubles.

Fast-forward a couple of years and history is repeating itself - the DragonFly is back, new and improved. Despite 'v1.2' being significantly cheaper than the original, inside there have been changes to the signal path between the DAC chip and analogue output. The internal power supply has also been tweaked.

We've always been fans of the design. The logo lights up in different colours to indicate the sampling rate of the file being played: green is 44.1kHz, blue is 48kHz, amber is 88.2kHz and magenta is 96kHz.

It's the DragonFly - but better

Play a couple of tracks and we soon hear that the open, spacious, detailed sound of the original DragonFly is still there, but the new version sounds even cleaner and clearer. There's even greater dynamic thrust. *Imagine the Fire*, from *The Dark Knight Rises* OST, is a brooding blockbuster of a track - pacy, powerful and dynamic. And the DragonFly easily communicates all these facets to the listener. Whether it's a WAV version or a relatively low bitrate file via Spotify, the sense of drama, rising intensity and the explosive nature of the track are all expressed perfectly.

The DragonFly's ability to follow a track's rhythm and timing are superb. Duke Dumont's *I Got U* is a feel-good dance tune and the DAC matches it with a fine sense of enthusiasm and an equally upbeat tempo.

The emergence of the DragonFly led to a steady stream of impressive rivals from the likes of Fiio and Cambridge Audio - but it's the DragonFly v1.2 that takes the Product of the Year laurels.

Best DAC £300-£500

Arcam irDAC £400

Product of the Year in 2013, the Arcam irDAC has to settle for a Best Buy Award this year. But that doesn't mean its sound quality is any less spellbinding - this is still a fantastic piece of kit for the money.

Fire it up and you'll find the Arcam's ability to stay true to the rhythm of a track is what makes it stand out from many of its peers. From simple hip-hop to complex jazz and classical pieces, the Arcam has the speed and agility to communicate pace and momentum superbly.

Plenty of connecting options

It helps that Arcam has equipped the irDAC with technology and design cues derived from the company's high-end FMJ D33 DAC. Beneath the well-damped aluminium casework you'll find much to admire in the high-quality output stage, advanced eight-stage power supply and high-grade Burr-Brown DAC.

The irDAC offers plenty of connections. The twin optical inputs (which support material up to 24-bit/96kHz) and the twin coaxial digital inputs (which can handle 24-bit/192kHz files) mean the Arcam can take feeds from multiple sources such as CD players, streamers, TVs and games consoles too. So, far from it being confined to your hi-fi kit rack, it can help to



improve the sound from your other home entertainment kit too. One of the two USB inputs is dedicated for Apple devices so the unit can also make the most of digital files stored on a smartphone or tablet.

The Arcam irDAC sounds big, bold, detailed and cohesive - and it absolutely sings, doing a grand job of joining strings, piano and bass, flowing them together

The irDAC sounds big, bold, detailed and cohesive - and it absolutely sings. Play Kanye West's *Gone* and the irDAC manages the ebb and flow of the track superbly. It does a grand job of joining the strings, piano and bass, flowing them together. It all comes together beautifully, producing a fluid, entertaining and expertly organised product that really engages.

The Arcam is never less than entertaining. The way it encourages you to keep listening is a rare talent, and one we are more than happy to confirm with a Best Buy Award.

Best DAC £500-£700

Audiolab M-DAC £600

The M-DAC has won so many Awards (2014 makes it four in as many years) it's starting to feel like a piece of the furniture. In fact, you'll often see reviewers fighting over who gets to use it as their desktop DAC in the office.

It's understandable, really. The M-DAC is a classy-looking unit, and it doesn't put style over function either. Alongside the single USB socket are two coaxial and two optical inputs, while you can choose from optical, coaxial, RCA and balanced XLR outputs.

Having so many onboard connections would be rendered moot, of course, if the M-DAC wasn't so easy to use. Thankfully it's a joy, with a large display that helps you see exactly what you're doing with your music. There's a

remote control to switch between inputs, and the M-DAC's display shows the bit depth and sampling rate of the input signal. We can just

The Audiolab M-DAC is unfazed by data-heavy files. Tracks are full of detail and rhythmic agility, so every element fits together in a solid sound field

about forgive the fact that only the coaxial input can be used for 24-bit/192kHz files. What really matters is how your music sounds, and on that front the M-DAC is stunning.

Consistently good across the board

The Audiolab is unfazed by data-heavy files. Tracks are full of detail and rhythmic agility and organised so that every element fits together while also being individually identifiable in the solid soundfield. Even your Spotify streams will sound better through the M-DAC, as a play of Kings of Leon's *Don't Matter* proves, emerging as it does with punchy, powerful drum thwacks, edgy, pristine guitar riffs and an expressive vocal.

We knew four years ago, when we reviewed it for the very first time, that the M-DAC was a bit of a steal, and nothing we've heard at this money since has made us change our mind.



Filter settings

The different settings alter the sound subtly. We like 'optimal transient XD' best. It gives best fluidity and dynamic thrust.

Best DAC £700-£1000

Chord Chordette QuteEX £990

Let's start with the bad news. Chord has replaced last year's Award-winner at this price, the Chordette QuteHD. The good news is its successor keeps everything we love, adds extra functionality and sounds even better. Basically, Chord picks up where it left off with a Best Buy Award. Not that you'd think the Chordette QuteEX was necessarily a brand-new model - it looks pretty much identical to its predecessor, apart from the identifying sticker.

Both the Chord's chipset and motherboard have been upgraded. This means the 'EX' can handle 384kHz sampling rates and DSD 128 over its asynchronous USB socket, as well as files of more conventional resolution. In keeping with the rest of the company's DAC range, the Chord doesn't use an off-the-shelf DAC chip - instead it uses a bespoke, programmable circuit which is tailored to suit its needs.

The lights reveal all

The QuteEX puts on something of a light show - peer through the window on the top and you'll see the inside change colour depending on the sample rate being played through the coaxial, optical or USB inputs. There are no front panel buttons or display - inputs are auto-sensed and the DAC switches accordingly.



Taking control

There are no controls on the Chord's case. Signals are sensed by the unit and the QuteEX changes inputs accordingly.

The QuteEX sounds more organised and more detailed than its now-defunct sibling. The DAC displays great confidence and composure with simple and complex arrangements. There's a great deal of resolution and texture to Bruce

Springsteen's *Heaven's Wall* in 24-bit/88kHz form. Instruments sound natural and believable, as does Bruce's rough-around-the-edges vocal.

Time, from the *Inception* soundtrack, is more of a test of the Chord's ability to handle complex bass arrangements. It shows no signs of weakness. The DAC gives plenty of weight, digs deep, defines edges with skill and manages to give every last ounce of information. And the Chord still shows enough delicacy to handle the solemn piano notes at the end of the track.

This is a step up from the Arcam irDAC and you have to spend half as much again to better it. That makes the QuteEX quite something.

The Chord QuteEX displays great confidence and composure with arrangements. Instruments sound natural and believable. It shows no signs of weakness

Best DAC £1000+

Chord Hugo £1400

Just when you thought it couldn't get any better for Chord following the exploits of the Chordette QuteEX, the British company finds itself the recipient of its second Award in a page.

The Hugo's sound quality justifies the jump in price, and it also comes packed with a whole host of useful features. In fact, we're still scratching our heads over quite how Chord has managed to build such a smartly

finished, feature-packed device at the money without sacrificing sound quality. Just to clarify, this is a bona fide digital pre-amplifier with DAC, optical and coaxial inputs, two USB sockets, an analogue output, three (yes, three) headphone outputs and - last but not least - aptX Bluetooth connectivity.

Take it wherever you go

And it's portable! That's right - Chord has even found room inside that petite aluminium casework for built-in rechargeable batteries. A two-hour charge should be good enough for 12 hours' use. It's really going above and beyond the call of duty for a product of its type, and should be applauded.

But, as we say, Chord hasn't taken its eye off the ball in the slightest with regards sound quality. The Hugo is as happy and communicative with a 320kbps Spotify stream as it feeding off the meaty resolution of a DSD music file. Start with a basic Bluetooth stream of Aretha Franklin's *I Say A Little Prayer* and the Chord transports you directly to the recording studio. The Hugo's desire for detail and

Start with a basic stream of Aretha Franklin's I Say A Little Prayer and the Chord Hugo transports you directly to the recording studio

natural tone really brings the vocal to the fore. Piano and guitar sound realistic and pure, brought to life with amazing dynamics. It all blends together to really deliver the soulful feel of the track.

Change tack slightly, with Emeli Sandé's *Heaven*, and the Hugo goes with the flow. Highs sound airy and lively, but there's still decent weight and solidity too. The Chord gets the balance of subtlety during the verses and drive during the chorus spot on. The beat really takes hold thanks to the Hugo's ability to lock onto rhythms and organise them.

The Chord Hugo's neutral, even-handed approach to music is as evident whether you're using it as a DAC or headphone amp - it's a device of many talents and plenty of charm. And that's easily enough to convince us it deserves a Best Buy Award.



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Blu-ray players

Blu-ray players are superb all-rounders. You'll struggle to beat their picture quality, they're great DVD players, and they sound excellent too



Living with it

Most Blu-ray players also have plenty of smart capabilities, offering the likes of BBC iPlayer, Netflix, Spotify and more.

Best Blu-ray player £150-£300

Sony BDP-S7200 £220

History has a habit of repeating itself, and although the model has changed from last year the result is the same. A Sony Blu-ray player once again finds itself winning our Product of the Year Award.

The S7200 sits at the top of Sony's current range of Blu-ray players and features picture-processing technologies you won't find on any other Sony machine, as well as a number of audio components specific to this model. Sony has focused on squeezing out all the performance it can at the price.

The Sony's star actually shines brightest when it comes to sound quality: it's entertaining, exciting and musical, impressing us when it comes to Blu-ray discs, DVDs and CDs. The S7200 shows great enthusiasm and timing whether you're watching the Blu-ray of U2's *360° at the Rose Bowl* or using the player to stream 24-bit/192kHz WAV files off a NAS drive. The Sony handles music with a level of finesse you don't normally hear at this price.

And the S7200 also excels visually. Watch the Blu-ray of *Muppets Most Wanted* and the Sony picks out all the fine detail on Kermit and the fur on Fozzie Bear. It's a stunning picture that really draws the viewer in with an impressive sense of depth and realism. The player is able to contrast between both the subtle and the bold hues of the main characters, while edges are sharply drawn and movement remains stable.

Switch to a DVD of *Lincoln* and the Sony rises to the challenge of upscaling the content to 1080p resolution, relaying solid blacks and fine insight in the shadows.

4K upscaling is included, as is a decent level of smart functionality (even if you have to forgo ITV Player and 4OD). Sony's Entertainment Network acts as your one-stop-shop for music and video on-demand.

We're quite taken with the minimalist design, not least because it fits in so nicely with Sony's home cinema amplifiers, including the outstanding STR-DN1050 (see page 68-69). Now that would make for quite the home cinema coupling.

There's no doubt in our minds: if you want the best pound-for-pound Blu-ray player currently on the market, you need the Sony BDP-S7200.

The Sony BDP-S7200 handles music with a level of finesse you don't normally hear at this price. And it also excels visually, with its stunning picture providing an impressive sense of depth and realism

Best Blu-ray player up to £150

Sony BDP-S5200 £95

The **BDP-S5200** is all about providing serious bang for just a handful of bucks.

It looks small and unassuming - it's pretty much half the width of your average home cinema separate. Turn the machine on and you're whisked to the Sony's home page in super-quick time - and the player wastes no time loading discs.

The 5200 isn't overflowing with connections, but you're given all the basics you could want from a budget player, including an HDMI output and built-in wi-fi.



An excellent, natural-looking picture

Gravity on Blu-ray is equally impressive in 2D or 3D, and the Sony does both justice with a brilliant picture. The depth and sense of realism is wonderfully immersive. The Sony's picture doesn't feel fake or forced even when all the space debris comes flying out of the screen towards your face. There's an excellent level of contrast as the black expanse of space is punctuated by stars, satellites and astronauts. Whites are punchy, but dark areas remain inky black and the Sony still has enough in the tank to extract plenty of detail from the shadows. The Sony also has a firm hand on all the

movement - when Sandra Bullock spins out of control during the opening salvo, edges remain resolute and sharply drawn.

Upscaling a DVD to match a TV's 1080p resolution is no easy task, but the Sony puts in a

The Sony BDP-S5200 doesn't feel forced. There's an excellent level of contrast - whites are punchy, dark areas remain inky black but with plenty of detail

shift, preventing *The Lego Movie* from looking soft and instead allowing it to jump out of the screen with a crisp, colourful palette.

There's a similar sense of punch and detail with music. You can hear it with the softer musical score from *Frozen* or the more 'Hollywood' soundtrack to *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*. The Sony delivers tunes with a real sense of fluidity and rhythm, but hits hard enough to give more explosive soundtracks the sofa-shaking impact they deserve.

If you're looking to upgrade from a traditional DVD player to something more capable, the BDP-S5200 is a bona fide bargain.

Best Blu-ray player £300+

Panasonic DMP-BDT700 £500

We're used to seeing Panasonic Blu-ray players battling it out at the budget end of the market, but can't remember seeing a £500 machine from the company. It's a bold move, especially when you've got serious rivals like the multiple Award-winning Marantz UD7007 to contend with. But this gamble has paid off handsomely.

The picture is fantastic. Playing *The Lego Movie* we're captivated by the punchy hues, the intense black levels, the bright whites and incredible level of detail. Colours are beautifully balanced and the Panasonic's excellent contrast makes for a bold and riveting picture.

Switch to *The Adventures of Tintin* (in both 2D and 3D) and the Panasonic shows off its smooth

handling of motion. It doesn't put a foot out of place during the exhilarating chase through the streets of Baghar. It may be an animated film, but the textures of jumpers, metal pipes, Snowy's fur and the sea are tangible - the subtlety the Panasonic describes is astounding.

The Panasonic DMP-BDT700's picture is fantastic. We're captivated by the intense black levels, bright whites and incredible level of detail

The sense of depth is excellent, and it's a crisper, smoother and cleaner picture than any budget alternatives we've seen. Even upscaling old-school DVDs brings great results.

A powerful, precise sound

Movie soundtracks are clear and detailed. Hans Zimmer's soundtrack for *Rush* is relayed with power, scale and precision. There's a real zip to the Panasonic's sound.

The unit is sleek and the brushed aluminium adds class. The loading tray is hidden underneath a magnetic flap, which leaves the fascia uncluttered when not in use. The remote control is nice, with buttons and shortcuts logically laid out. It's backlit too - living with the BDT700 is a fuss-free and rewarding experience.

It's also well-connected, boasting twin

4K/60p-compatible HDMI outputs. You can even use the player with older surround amps lacking HDMI sockets thanks to the 7.1 multi-channel analogue output.

Add to the mix a decent suite of smart features and high-res audio music playback, and you've got a seriously potent package. Plug in the BDT700, hit play and see for yourself.



Home cinema amplifiers



If you are after power, precision and purity of sound while watching movies or listening to music at home, then these amps are ideal

Best home cinema amplifier £350-£700

Sony STR-DN1050 **£500**

If **there's one** habit you don't want to kick, it's winning – and Sony finds itself in the enviable position of producing the Product of the Year in this category for the second year running.

This time it's all down to the stunning STR-DN1050 – an amplifier with skills that makes a mockery of the very reasonable price tag.

What makes Sony's achievement all the more impressive is the competition it has fought off. At this level, we are spoiled for choice: Onkyo, Denon, Pioneer and Yamaha. They all competed with the Sony in a recent *Group Test* but fell short, leaving the STR-DN1050 in pole position.

Box of delights

The Sony is pleasing from the moment you take it out of the box. The auto-calibration experience is a swift and pleasant one. The menu system has been slightly tweaked for 2014 and it's equally enjoyable, offering bold, easy-to-navigate menus, while the new-look remote is superb in its simplicity. Functionality such as aptX Bluetooth, high-resolution music playback, six HDMI inputs and 4K upscaling are all

welcome, as are Spotify Connect and AirPlay. And all this is before you even get to the sound quality.

Play *300: Rise of an Empire* and you discover the Sony's a big-sounding, muscular amp that makes you sit up and pay attention.

Articulate heavyweight

Its low end has neighbour-bothering weight, giving drive and drama to the on-screen action. This is nicely balanced by an articulate, spacious midrange and clear treble that come together to produce a cohesive sound in a wide soundfield. Add in excellent dynamics and pin-sharp precision, and the result is a thoroughly engaging and exciting listen even at low volumes.

The STR-DN1050 also performs well with dialogue and more subtle sound effects, proving to be the one of the most detailed amps we've ever tested at this price. Voices are crisp and textured, clarity is second-to-none and sound placement is spot on.

We didn't think it possible, but Sony has managed raise its game, and the bar, with the STR-DN1050: an outstanding Product of the Year.

Best home cinema amplifier up to £350

Yamaha RX-V377 £250

Yamaha's budget home cinema amps have dominated this price point in recent years – and 2014 is no different. If you're new to the idea of surround sound and want a solid foundation for a system, look no further than the RX-V377.

Compared to home cinema amps further up the price scale, you miss out on a few niceties such as 4K upscaling, AirPlay and internet radio streaming – but you do get Yamaha's automatic speaker calibration technology to help with set-up. There's also 4K Ultra HD pass-through and four HDMI inputs.

Down to the wireless

There's the option to go wireless with Yamaha's YBA-11 Bluetooth receiver for an additional £50, while those with an iDevice can always play straight through the front-panel USB port (which can also be used to charge).

The Yamaha RX-V377 grabs your attention, whatever the film. Only Lovers Left Alive is a great example – it switches easily from crashes and bangs to dialogue



However, sound quality is the key when it comes to home cinema amps: powerful, punchy and full of detail, the RX-V377 exceeds our expectations. Yamaha receivers usually excel at steering surround-sound effects across the room with precision and detail – and this receiver does so on both Blu-ray and DVD.

Play the DTS-HD Master Audio soundtrack of *Robocop*, and you're placed in a bubble of sound with such startlingly accurate and detailed placement that you're immediately sucked into the action. Effects panning between speakers is

seamless. It's weightier and more authoritative than anything we've heard at this price. The Yamaha grabs your attention in a good way, whatever the film. *Only Lovers Left Alive* is a great example – it switches easily from crashes and bangs to an atmospheric feel, where dialogue is prominent. When subtlety is required, the Yamaha delivers.

Even when you use the Yamaha as purely a stereo amp, its confidence and punch come to the fore – cementing its position as our number-one recommendation at this price point.

Best home cinema amplifier £700+

Pioneer SC-LX58 £1400

Historically, Pioneer's strike rate for its premium surround-sound amplifiers isn't too shabby: you have to go back to 2009 to find a non-Pioneer winner at this price point. So it's no surprise to see this year's SC-LX58 model earn a Best Buy Award.

At this level, sound quality goes up a notch when compared with our Sony Product of the Year. *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* is a veritable assault course: shattered glass everywhere, crunching metal, and armour-piercing bullets, topped with a caffeinated score. The soundtrack is a workout for any system and the Pioneer breezes through it,

delivering a thoroughly immersive sound through your room with agility and accuracy.

The detail definition is exquisite. Everything that pings off Captain America's shield is clearly identified, and when he throws the disc at somebody's face there's weight behind it. This

The Pioneer SC-LX58 is capable of musical nuance, as well as muscle, doing a beautiful job rendering the intro of Where The Streets Have No Name

detail extends throughout the frequency range, too: bass is deep and articulate, while the top end is nicely rounded and refined.

It's not all about muscle, of course. The Pioneer is capable of musical nuance as well. Move on to a Blu-ray of *U2: 360°* and the amp does a beautiful job rendering the emotive intro of *Where The Streets Have No Name*; Edge's guitar has a sense of fluidity and rhythm.

Heavy metal sounds

The design isn't going to turn heads – it's a heavy, black or silver metal box, and built like a tank. There are eight HDMI inputs and three outputs; 3D playback is supported, as is 4K 60p pass-through and upscaling. The SC-LX58 has built-in aptX Bluetooth, while there's built-in AirPlay compatibility too. You also have internet radio, plus Spotify Connect.

If you want to use the Pioneer as a music streamer it has WAV, FLAC, Apple Lossless and high-res support (including files up to 24-bit/192kHz), while there's support for Dolby Atmos surround-sound tech.

If you're looking to make the move from an entry-level home cinema system to something more mature, powerful and refined, then the Pioneer SC-LX58 is more than qualified.



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SOME PRODUCTS ARE IMPRESSIVE FROM
THE MOMENT THEY'RE POWERED UP.

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Speaker packages

From full-fat 5.1 systems to space-saving style combos, there's a quality surround sound speaker set that'll suit your budget



Up against the wall

The Dali standmounts sound best when pointed straight ahead and set fairly close to a wall - ideal for smaller rooms

Best traditional package £700-£1500

Dali Zensor 15.1 £980

It takes something very special to win an Award for a second year, but something exceptional to pick up Product of the Year again too. That coup belongs to the Dalis. You could argue that it's because the high fliers in the speaker package categories remain unchanged from last year, but that seems rather dismissive when you remind yourself of the Dali's make-up: two pairs of the brilliant Zensor 1 standmounts, an expressive Vokal centre speaker and an authoritative yet articulate E-9F subwoofer.

Together they run like clockwork. Well made, consistently matched and easy to accommodate, the Zensor 1 package offers the whole works without having to spend an arm and a leg. The Vokal is a little chunky at 44cm wide and 29cm deep, so make sure your TV rack can house it. These speakers can be wall mounted, lending them a flexibility many rivals lack.

The 34cm-cubed sub is helpfully unfussy when it comes to placement in the room thanks to its floor-facing port. While it has a front-firing 23cm aluminium drive unit, the rest of the channels use the same 25mm soft-dome tweeter and 13cm wood-fibre mid/bass driver for a uniform presentation. It pays off - we admire the consistency in character

between the front channels - the soundfield stays close-knit as sound effects pass across all three units.

The exquisite talents of the Zensor 1s are clear from the off: fluid and dynamic with splendid attention to detail, they make for an exciting listen as we delve into the action-packed *Robocop* reboot. There's plenty of pop to gunfire as our hero carries out his training regime, and the beautifully integrated subwoofer is as fast as it is precise.

A clear message from the centre ground

The centre speaker keeps its side of the bargain too, impressing with its insightful and delicate delivery of dialogue.

Swap discs to Kanye West's *Yeezus* album and the Zensor 1's refined yet exciting presentation reminds us why they've been so successful in the market. Their stereo delivery is balanced and detailed, enthusiastic and engaging - and that's about as much as we can ask for on music replay.

Whether it's with music or movies, the Zensor 15.1 produces a stunning sound. That's £1000 well spent, we say.

Best traditional package up to £700

Q Acoustics 2000i 5.1 **£650**

Another year goes by and this package remains untouched. We simply can't find a rival (trust us, we've looked) that even comes close to the Q Acoustics' performance-per-pound offering - despite its £25 hike in price since last year.

The marvel comes from two pairs of the much-loved 2010i standmounts making up the front left and right channels and back surrounds, an expressive 2000Ci centre speaker and a powerful 2070Si subwoofer.

A pretty face, and more besides

It's a neat bundle: the glossy white (or black) tapered cabinets set the bar high for design and finish at this price. Their compact, unfussy build wins points for practicality, too - the 2010i are happy sitting close to a wall if space is tight, making them ideal for smaller rooms, while the slim subwoofer can be easily tucked out of sight. The centre is a little bulkier than ideal, mind.

If speaker stands are impractical for your set-up (or budget), all the speakers here - with the exception of the subwoofer - can be wall-mounted. Handy indeed.

Typically for Q Acoustic speakers, the terminals can be found on the cabinet base, so - once the fiddly procedure of connecting cables is out of the way - the result is trim and tidy.

But it's in the sonic department that the package really shines. Delivering an easy-going yet detailed sound that strikes the right balance between smoothness and attack, every speaker plays its part to deliver a thrilling movie experience: the 2010i's presentation is cohesive, dynamic and detailed, and the sub digs deep but stays in control. The Centre speaker gives dialogue real expression and solidity.

As we spin *The Amazing Spiderman 2*, there's good tonal consistency between swinging effects as Spidey web-shoots his way through New York, and a wide and



Delivering an easy-going yet detailed sound, every speaker in the Q Acoustics 2000i 5.1 package plays its part to deliver a thrilling movie experience

consuming soundfield. We simply don't expect the scale this system can deliver for this money.

Stereo delivery is similarly impressive, the front pair of satellites proving rhythmically sound, while basslines are controlled but authoritative. Vocals are crystal clear, and there's a good sense of stage imagery when we play live recordings.

It might be a tad pricier than last year, but the 2000i 5.1 is still remarkably good value.

Best traditional package £1500-£2500

Cambridge Audio Aero 5.1 **£1500**

It's a pleasure to have these speakers back out in the open - not least because they've shed £150 in the last year.

The neat and robust Aero 5.1 package - consisting of a pair of Aero 6 floorstanders, an Aero 5 centre speaker, a pair of Aero 3 bipole

surrounds and a relatively compact Aero 9 subwoofer - sees off rivals for another year and remains a high-flier in the sub-£2000 market.

Following suit with the company's history of technology-packed products, the talking point of this Aero range is its BMR (Balanced Mode Radiator) drivers. These cover a much wider frequency range than a conventional driver (250Hz to 22kHz, to be precise) and move the crossover point into a region where our ears are far less sensitive to the distortions that are inevitable in any frequency handover. The result? A cleaner, more direct sound, and wide dispersion even at the very high frequencies.

Left and right in unison

The company has continued to incorporate the technology into many of its products of late, and we can see why. Here, the presence of the 4.6cm drivers in the front channels ensures they work in unison for a cohesive presentation.

Load up *Star Trek Into Darkness* and that tight co-operation is apparent as the *USS Enterprise* blasts left-to-right.

Producing a stunningly direct sound that excels in focus and clarity, this

system makes more conventional rivals sound a little soft and blurred in comparison. Its delivery shows no shortage of punch or attack as grenades are launched, and there's plenty to praise where detail and dynamics are concerned.

It only takes one on-screen explosion to appreciate the exceptional power and grunt from the sub's forward-facing 25cm driver.

It's not long before we're engrossed in the action - and that's in part thanks to the surrounds. Its their bipole design - which means they fire sound both forward and backward to make the soundfield more 'wrap around' - that make the experience totally immersive.

Though the package's slightly lean disposition gives it an agile quality, it makes system pairing crucial. Stay away from bright or aggressive electronics and you'll have a sound to marvel at.

Producing a stunningly direct sound that excels in focus and clarity, the Cambridge Audio Aero 5.1 makes rivals sound a little blurred in comparison



Best traditional package £2500+

KEF R100 5.1 **£2850**

Despite some fierce rivalry from the brilliant Monitor Audio Silver 6AV12 this year, this elegant KEF combination takes the cake yet again, even in the face of the R100 standmounts (of which two pairs make up this package's corners) dropping their fifth star earlier this year.



Slipping from a five- to a four-star rating in the mid-range speaker market doesn't change the fact that, in a surround system, they work terrifically. In fact, their partnership with the R200 centre speaker and R400b subwoofer is a match made in heaven.

KEF's Uni-Q drivers are at the heart of these exquisitely built speakers and comprise a 25mm aluminium dome tweeter - with a 'tangerine' wave guide for improved rigidity - at the centre of a 13cm aluminum alloy mid/bass driver. The configuration is designed to deliver consistent dispersion, and help with driver integration too.

It certainly pays off - integration between treble and midrange is seamless, to the point that listeners will struggle to distinguish between the two drivers on each speaker. That cohesiveness is true of the front three channels, too: the consistency of their tonal character

*Integration between treble and midrange is seamless, but it's the scale of the **KEF R100 5.1** that impresses most - especially given the package's compact size*

means that sound remains the same as it moves between the channels. As they should.

But it's the scale of the system that impresses most - especially considering the package's compact size. The wide-open soundstage conveys the sense of the roaring crowd in *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire* superbly.

Clarity and detail

Refreshingly crisp and clear, the speakers handle the immediacy of Katniss' shooting arrows with precision. There's no shortage of detail in battle scenes, and the room-filling dynamics work wonders with the film's melodramatic soundtrack. The centre speaker ties it all together nicely, conveying impressive authority and expression with voices, while the powerful and agile sub does its bit too.

As crowd-pleasing with music as it is with movies, the KEF's stereo performance has all the balance and refinement, subtlety and rhythmic flair to make you fall in love with your favourite albums all over again.

Whether its finished in high-gloss piano white or black, rosewood or walnut veneer, the KEF is a born entertainer, and brings proper cinema surround sound to your home. You just have to supply the popcorn.

Best style package up to £700

Tannoy HTS-101 **£350**

Sometimes the very best products can only get better by lowering their asking price - and that's the case with the Tannoy. The package has dominated this category for the last three years, and 2014 is no different.

If you're toying with the idea of buying a soundbar or soundbase over a speaker package because space or budget (or both) is tight, the Tannoy could well swing your decision the other way. Compact and affordable, the HTS-101 proves you don't have to go big, or dig deep into your wallet, to get a first-rate sound from your movie collection.

Enduring looks

You don't even have to compromise on build and looks. It may have been knocking around for a few years, but the glossy finish of its straight-edged wooden cabinets is still tasteful by today's standards.

Beneath the grille of each of the four tiny satellites are a 19mm titanium-dome tweeter and a 7.5cm paper mid/bass driver, while the slightly larger centre channel doubles up on the bigger driver. The equally space-efficient sub is blessed with 100W of power and a 20cm driver.

Load up *Pacific Rim* and the exhilaratingly action-packed film basks in the Tannoy's

impressive scale and detail. The gapless soundfield has a good sense of depth and breadth, and the breathing space between each sound effect makes for an effortless listen. Even during the rather dense *Kaiju* battle, tracking crossfire across the channels is easy work.

Constructive dialogue

While the satellites' subtle dynamic shifts are a highlight, the centre proves just as accomplished in the dialogue-driven scenes.

Tonally, it's nicely pitched just on the exciting side of neutral, with crisp and attacking highs complemented by a brisk and textured bass. The top end can be pronounced though, so a little care with matching wouldn't go amiss.

Nine Simone's *My Baby Just Cares For Me* is good for showing up timing and detail blips, but the Tannoys show no such shortcomings.

*Compact and affordable, the **Tannoy HTS-101** proves you don't have to go big, or dig deep into your wallet, to get a first-rate sound from your movie collection*

Instead, piano rhythms are spot-on, and you'll be taken aback by the texture of Simone's vocals.

In short, the HTS-101 is every bit as good as we remember. If you're after an open, exciting and full-scale sound from a discreet and shiny set-up, the Tannoy is yours for the taking. Still dead set on that soundbar?



Best style package £700-£1000

Q Acoustics Q7000i £900

If anything supports the notion that size doesn't matter, it's this hugely impressive 5.1 package - which you might remember seeing in this very spot in last year's Awards issue.

From just five small pill-shaped satellites and an accompanying subwoofer, you get an impressive sense of scale and a wide-open delivery of sound that far belies the physical proportions of this talented package.

Fine tonal character

But, of course, products can't win an award on size and scale alone. Thankfully, the Q7000i's performance offers the whole shebang. Walking a fine balance between smoothness and excitement, its tonal character is easy and enjoyable to listen to. Jump to the chase scene finale in *Fast & Furious 6* and the busy soundfield is clear and alive with detail.

Gun-shots fire from one car window to another with precision and accuracy, ricocheting convincingly around the channels without any gaps or lapses in concentration. Despite the picture being jam-packed with breakneck action, sound never feels lagging or missing information.

You get a reassuring thud from the bass, too, as cars hurtle into buildings. It's packed with

texture and manages to stay organised and agile without sacrificing any bass punch. This package keeps its composure at higher volumes too, and can flaunt its dynamic expression even at quieter levels.

Give *John Legend: Live At The House Of Blues* a whirl and the package thrives on the raw and atmospheric nature of a live recording. Spirited and insightful, the system's rendering allows you to really feel the passion in Legend's vocals.

Perfect if you're short on space or want a discreet set-up, the matt-finished package

Although you get an impressive sense of scale, products can't win an award on size and scale alone. Thankfully, the Q Acoustics Q7000i offers the whole shebang



Out of sight, out of mind

The sub's terminals, and volume and crossover controls, are all tucked behind a side panel, making for a neat installation

(available in black or white) will slip into the shadows of the rest of your system nicely - or (bar the subwoofer) take up a patch on the wall if you choose. The satellites hide two 7.5cm long-throw mid/bass drivers that surround a 25mm ring-radiator tweeter, while the active sub packs a 20cm woofer.

"We wouldn't be surprised to see it back here in 2014" were our concluding words of the Q7000i last year, and (unsurprisingly then) here it is. Having taken the crown from the original Q7000 package last year, it remains at the top of the game in the cut-throat sub-£1000 market. Can it do the triple come 2015?

Best style package £1000-£1400

Bowers & Wilkins MT-50 £1100

The **M-1 satellites** are a real standout in the speaker package universe - they make up the lion's share of not one but two multi-award-winning B&W speaker packages (the other is on the opposite page).

And well they might - married with the ASW608 subwoofer, as here, they make a particularly good team. We haven't come across anything even remotely as competitive in the £1000-ish price band.

Though we prefer the bottom-end clout of B&W's pricier flagship sub, featured in the MT-60D package, we like the ASW608's agility and pace. It provides loads of detail and just enough kick without overloading the room. What's more, its modest size makes it incredibly easy to house.

Ample placement options

The unfussy M-1s are designed to work best when close, or even stuck, to a wall, so finding a home for them will be no trouble.

Put the bundle to work with a demanding Hans Zimmer track (this time the *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides* Blu-ray comes off the shelf) and that familiar orchestral score has plenty of dynamic might. It serves up stacks of drama at the track's climax, and shows no aversion to being pushed in the louder moments.

You may think it a Herculean task for such a diminutive package to fill a room, but the scope of the soundfield is startling. Always authoritative, it never makes the soundtrack seem restricted.

Take to the waters as the swashbuckling action ensues on the *Black Pearl*, and you're met with open, sparkling highs as swords clash in intense grapples. Attack and detail are here in spades, while thrashing waves carry weight and texture.

The verbal sparring between the pirates is projected with superb focus, carrying enough clarity and definition to reveal the nuances in each of their throaty 'ooh arrs'.

The good news continues with music performance. The MT-50 revels in the far-flung punch of Eminem's *Bad Guy*, while rendering all the deftness of the quirky bass tab. And let's not forget its expressive midrange - there's ferocity in those aggressive vocals.

Factor in its unique, versatile design to its all-round superb performance, and the MT-50 is one to be reckoned with.

You may think it a Herculean task for such a diminutive package to fill a room, but the scope of the Bowers & Wilkins MT-50's soundfield is startling



Best style package £1400-£1800

Monitor Audio Radius R90HT1 **£1500**

Monitor Audio may now have an upgraded version of this package - the newer Radius R90HT12 brings in the company's more advanced W12 subwoofer and carries a £2000 price tag - but thankfully this original R90HT1 is still around.

Remaining a juicy filling between the two lower- and higher-priced B&W award-winners, the R90HT1 is ideal for those yearning for a discreet set-up.

At home in your room

Its two pairs of Radius 90 standmounts should blend in with most living rooms, whether they're on dedicated stands or wall-mounted (specific brackets and stands are available at extra cost), and the Radius 200 centre channel is compact enough for most equipment racks. Even the cubic Radius 390 subwoofer looks

stealthy enough not to intrude too much.

The surround speakers all use drivers made from Monitor Audio's ceramic-coated Aluminium/Magnesium (C-CAM) alloy, which has since reappeared in the company's newer Silver AV612 package. Monitor Audio claims the cone boasts low levels of distortion thanks to its longer excursion.

The sub has a 25cm C-CAM driver augmented by a passive radiator, and of its three sound settings ('Music', 'Impact' and 'Movie'), 'Music' gets our vote for its fine balance of solidity and punch. The Radius 390 displays a potent combination of precision and weight, staying taut and controlled when the plane crashes in the very silly action-fest *Enemies Closer*.

Of course, the surrounds have a huge hand in this package's success, and integrate seamlessly with the sub. The surround field is like an



airtight unit, with effects flowing smoothly and consistently between each channel. And as gunfire pours into the surrounds, they tear through with punch and precision.

Give the Radius a few days' workout before undertaking any serious movie-watching and the top end will lose its out-of-the-box brightness, making way for crisp and detailed highs. To boot, the centre channel delivers clear and communicative voices.

Overall, you have a package that blends nicely. With price, performance and practicality on its side, the Radius ticks all the boxes.

The surround field on the Monitor Audio Radius R90HT1 is like an airtight unit, with effects flowing smoothly and consistently between each channel

Best style package £1800+

Bowers & Wilkins MT-60D **£1950**

While the M-1 satellites are the pinnacles of the B&W MT-50 package, their accompanying PV 1D subwoofer is the real jewel in the MT-60D's crown. And that's not just down to its cool spherical casing. Featuring opposing drive units, clever digital signal processing and EQ presets, it's exactly what we want underpinning the brilliant satellites.

Real depth and high-tech

Taut, controlled and full of impact, that sub goes gut-stirringly deep as it swallows up the thud of Thor's Lightning Strike hammer in *Thor: The Dark World*. It's a perfect match for the M-1s, which use a tweeter that borrows technology from the company's high-end Nautilus speakers and a mid/bass driver that adopts a similar design to the brilliant PM1 standmounts. It's

impressive tech spec, and central to the dynamic and detailed craft of these speakers.

As the momentous score bellows out of the corners, the M-1s burst into life with staggering dynamics and drive. The soundfield is spacious and clean, the satellites steering effects confidently around the room, while the centre speaker does a fine job of caressing Chris Hemsworth's deep, burly voice with favourable weight and solidity.

Even after a sufficient run-in, those highs can sound a touch excitable at bigger volumes so something like the even, refined (not to mention current Award-winning) Pioneer SC-LX58 amp (£1400) would fit well here.

Controlled and full of impact, the sub in the Bowers & Wilkins MT-60D goes gut-stirringly deep as it swallows up the thud of Thor's Lightning Strike hammer

The satellites and sub work together in harmony for a presentation that's balanced, precise and squeaky-clean, not just with movies but music too. Loading up Drake's *Nothing Was The Same* album throws it into a 2.1 configuration, and the delivery is music to our ears. Reinforcing the package's enthusiasm and composure, it drops the artist's charismatic beats and melodies with insight and inflection.

To top it all off, every part of this uniquely designed package looks stunning in either its matte-black or all-white finish, and it's easy to accommodate as well.

It's little surprise this talented all-rounder celebrates its third win in a row at this price, and we have no doubt about its worth as a Best Buy. The MT-60D once again sets the bar for high-end style packages.





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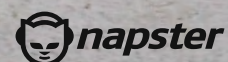
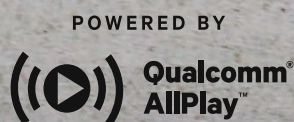
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Projectors

TV screen sizes are getting bigger, it's true - but for the ultimate in big-screen home cinema thrills you just can't beat a projector



Throw ratio

Make sure your projector will fit your room: its throw ratio will determine how far back from your screen the projector needs to be.

Best projector £1500-£2500

Epson EH-TW7200 £1900

Epson is no stranger to the coveted Product of the Year gong. Last year's entry was a shoo-in, and the new EH-TW7200 takes its step into the spotlight with an astonishingly assured and captivating picture.

What strikes us most about the EH-TW7200 is just how effortless it is. From its picture performance and ease of use to its swift set up and superb construction - everything about this projector screams quality.

A clean, bright, detailed picture

Captain America: The Winter Soldier is fast becoming one of our favourite test Blu-rays, not least because it marries a natural palette with brilliantly choreographed action sequences. It shows off the Epson's talents perfectly. The picture is clean, bright, and has sky-high levels of subtle detail. It's a masterfully balanced picture, one that fleshes out realistic skin tones as confidently as it brings out the bright blues and reds of our hero's uniform. Whites punch clear and stark, black levels reach stunning depths without compromising on finer details. With a claimed contrast ratio of 120,000:1 and 2000 lumens bright, it's no wonder this LCD projector has such an exciting and punchy picture. Motion is as smooth as it can be.

This kind of quality isn't reserved just for Blu-rays. DVDs look fresh and detail-laden even with the drop in resolution. And the heart-lurching scenes in *Gravity* are dramatic and engrossing in 3D. The screen stays bright even after we put on the supplied pair of active-shutter glasses.

Beautifully made and very well connected

The Epson's hefty chassis could easily look cumbersome and ungainly, but the curved design and smooth, uncluttered white finish looks rather elegant. It's beautifully made, and controls are neatly hidden away under flaps. It's well connected too, with twin HDMI, PC, component and composite inputs, and the supplied backlit remote is intuitive to use.

The inclusion of vertical and horizontal lens-shift wheels makes positioning flexible and speedy. A quick twiddle with the manual zoom and focus controls, and the picture is sharp and centred in no time. Like we said: effortless.

We expect a lot from a £1900 projector, and the EH-TW7200 delivers. It's a brilliant, fuss-free performer. Add a worthy source, AV amplifier and speaker package and you have one classy home-cinema system.

Best projector up to £1500

BenQ W1400 **£1000**

Two years ago, BenQ dominated the budget projector category. With last year's winning Epson EH-TW5910 now out of the way (it's been discontinued), BenQ makes its comeback with this great-value offering.

It's had to leap over its younger sibling - the admittedly more budget W1070+, fresh from a *Group Test* win - to get here. The W1070+ is an achievement for just £650, but the W1400 gives a more mature and balanced take on the exuberant colour presentation.

Rich hues and plenty of detail

Showing the Blu-ray of *Life of Pi* the stunning landscapes are delivered with rich hues and lots of detail. There's convincing texture to Pi's sun-baked skin, the tiger's CGI fur and the silky waters of the ocean. The warm, sunlit scenes shine bright and clear, although the BenQ's

The BenQ W1400 brings texture to Pi's sun-baked skin. The warm sunlit scenes shine bright and clear, and black levels plunge deep with plenty to see in shadows



Set-up

Try to get your projector as square-on to the screen as possible. Any use of keystone adjustment and the like will affect the picture.

colour palette tips towards a richer presentation than is totally natural. It's not too overblown, though, and W1400 delivers this lively quality alongside subtle shading and good skin-tones. Black levels plunge deep, with plenty to see in shadows. Not bad for £1000.

Inevitably, there's a drop in sharpness and subtlety when we switch to DVD. That steady balance between exciting and natural colour is still present, though.

There's a good sense of depth and punch to 3D films, despite the inevitable darkening. A pair of active-shutter glasses is supplied - they are light and not too tiring on the eyes. Our only real gripe is that we're not entirely convinced by

the W1400's handling of motion - slow pans across the screen look a little shaky. But since we find this true in pretty much every rival, we'll write it off as a minor niggle.

Elsewhere, the W1400's compact build, backlit remote and multiple connections make it a doddle to use. A vertical lens shift further speeds up the set up process. There are even surprisingly listenable built-in speakers (but we'd urge you to get a 5.1 speaker package).

If you've been thinking about taking those first steps towards your own home cinema, this projector is a great place to start. It won't cost you a fortune, and you'll be the envy of your friends with such riveting big-screen performance.

Best projector £2000+

Sony VPL-HW55ES **£2800**

We like symmetry, we like unfussy machines. We also like expensive projectors that perform so superbly they blow the competition away.

The Panasonic PT-AT6000E has won this Award for the past two years, and we've previously said, "there still isn't anything on the market that can beat this projector."

Well, now there is. Everything the Panasonic does, this astonishing Sony does it better. Design? It's pleasingly symmetrical, and has a clean, glossy finish topping off the superb build quality. Use? Connections are simple (one component and two HDMI inputs tucked away at the side); the remote and menus are slick and intuitive. Set up is smoothly done, albeit with a slightly stubborn lens-shift wheel.

Get totally immersed in your movie

That's forgiven the second we start to watch the Sony's picture. Wow! Just wow. There aren't many times in our day-to-day reviewing that we get absorbed in a movie without nitpicking at the picture quality, but this Sony nails it. It's a stunningly natural, detailed and immensely enjoyable picture. Objects are crisply defined without looking overly sharp; it's very bright, even with (active) 3D films. Highlights shine, and inky black levels are intense yet textured.



The colour palette is expertly judged, taking on a remarkably realistic tone while still packing lots of punch. The subtleties in shading and gradations give that much more depth to any film we're watching, whether it's the bright, colourful world of *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* or the bleak,

The Sony VPL-HW55ES provides an immensely enjoyable picture. Inky black levels are intense yet textured and the colour palette is expertly judged

dusty tones of *Peaky Blinders* on Blu-ray. Skin tones are among the most realistic we've seen.

And motion handling is good too. The Sony handles slow pans and speedy action scenes with such confidence and grace we have no issues when watching *Gravity* in 3D.

We know £2800 is a lot to pay for a projector, but the VPL-HW55ES is worth every penny. Its performance is genuinely cinematic, and the premium construction makes it a desirable object. When our only niggle is a lens shift that could operate more smoothly, well, we know we're on to a winner.

If you're looking for a top-class premium projector, look no further than this Sony.

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Tablets

Best tablet over 8in

Apple iPad Air from £400

Apple lost out to Google in last year's tablet Product of the Year Award, but then it launched the iPad Air - the most desirable tablet to come out of Cupertino to date.

Build quality is impeccable. No tablet on the market can match the way the iPad Air feels in the hand - its unibody aluminium construction looks and feels as premium as ever. But it's the reduction of thickness and weight that makes the biggest difference in use. It's managed to shave 2mm from its chassis and nearly 200g in bulk, compared to its predecessor, making the iPad Air easier to hold in one hand.

Vision of beauty

The iPad Air offers the same 2048 x 1536 resolution display as before - retaining its punchy, sharp, clean image and adding a little more brightness to whites (though blacks remain detailed and inky deep) and a touch more crispness. This improved image processing is thanks to the boosted 64-bit A7 processor and its M7 co-processor (which deals with motion-related data collection, leaving the A7 to deal with bigger jobs).

This also ensures a faster, slicker user experience than before, and while some of its competitors may match it in speed, iOS remains the best for tablet-specific apps - a factor that cannot be underestimated.

The sound quality of Apple's phones and tablets always impress us, and the iPad Air is no different, with its exciting, refined character.

Sound, just like the picture performance, is crisper on the Air than with previous versions - with a clean, open and precise character that its competitors can't come close to. Voices are wonderfully



expressive too, and there's an improved sense of space. There might be tablets out there capable of playing higher resolution file formats, but none manage such a cohesive and listenable character as that found on the iPad Air.

The 10in-tablet arena isn't as crowded as it used to be, with many manufacturers focusing their attentions on the smaller end of the market. But despite some good competition from manufacturers such as Samsung and Sony this year, we haven't been able to find the same balance of performance, functionality and pure usability anywhere else. The Nexus 7 still offers superb value for money, but this year it's been bested.

Best tablet up to 8in

Google Nexus 7 from £200

Tidy looker

With a 7in screen, the Nexus 7 is one of the smaller screens on the market now, but its 1900 x 1200 resolution makes it a versatile performer.



No one had really taken the smaller tablet category seriously until Google produced the Nexus 7 in 2012. Apple followed shortly afterwards, with its 8in iPad Mini, and now everyone is at it: LG, Samsung and Amazon.

None, however, has been able to match the Nexus 7's excellent performance-per-pound ratio. Though we've seen advances in screen technology in 2014, with resolutions and pixels-per-inch increasing, the Nexus 7 remains very competitive. It still looks remarkably sharp, with a beautifully balanced colour palette that is never short of punch. It's not flustered by motion either, and its strong handle of contrast makes for strikingly bright whites against deep, but detailed, blacks.

Music performance is equally strong. It's enjoyable to listen to and, if you're without headphones, its stereo speakers produce a relatively rich, full-bodied sound too. This is all backed up by a quad-core processor that keeps things running smoothly, not to mention the purest version of Android (fully updatable to the most recent version, Kitkat 4.4.4); our favourite way to experience Google's operating system.

However, the knockout punch to win this Award is the Nexus 7's price: you can now get the 32GB version for around £200, making it half the price of a comparable iPad Mini with Retina.

Wireless speakers

We want our music to be mobile these days. Here's an impressive bunch of Award winners that will shift your ideas of 'high-fidelity' for any location



App to it

The neatly-designed Mu-so app gives you full control over your music across smartphones and NAS devices, as well as the speaker's settings.

Best wireless speaker £750+

Naim Mu-so £895

This is as close to hi-fi as a wireless speaker has ever been. The Naim Mu-so establishes a convincing template of how premium wireless speakers should be. It looks stunning. The wooden cabinet is wrapped in a layer of aluminium, giving it a premium, hefty feel. The aluminium heatsink spanning the length of the unit is distinctive, and overall the finish is exquisite. The highlight, of course, is that gorgeous volume dial, which doubles up as the unit's interface. We can't stop tapping at the classy, illuminated touchscreen, nor can we stop turning the smooth and perfectly weighted volume dial - it's a tempting bit of kit.

Stream on

Naim has thrown every method of streaming into the Mu-so, covering all OS platforms and devices: aptX Bluetooth, AirPlay, UPnP, ethernet and wi-fi connections, Spotify Connect and thousands of internet radio stations. Physical connections include 3.5mm and optical inputs, and a USB port that plays and charges Apple devices. File compatibility is extensive as well, from low-res Spotify streams to 24-bit/192kHz WAV,

FLAC and AIFF files. Soundwise, the sheer power - all 450W of it - pulsing through songs is incredible. It drives the huge-scale presentation with a confidence, ease and skill we wouldn't have thought possible from a wireless speaker. There's an astonishing depth of detail. Subtleties in the harmonics and textures of instruments are laid bare, basslines are taut and punchy, and highs have plenty of bite without ever sounding aggressively sharp. Attack and delicacy go hand-in-hand here.

The Mu-so's full-bodied and weighty sound lends authority and enthusiasm to all files played through it. While it flourishes with hi-res tracks, it doesn't shy away from tackling MP3s with just as much enthusiasm. Instruments are arranged accurately in a spacious soundstage, and notes start and stop with unerring precision. Voices in particular benefit from Naim's talent with midrange fidelity - every attitude, emotion and intonation is subtly revealed.

The Naim Mu-so came with high expectations, and it passes with flying colours. Its design and performance prove worthy of its premium billing, and offer a pointer into the possibilities of the wireless speaker.

Best wireless speaker up to £150

Cambridge Audio Go **£120**

In a market saturated with budget Bluetooth speakers, the Cambridge Audio Go stands head-and-shoulders above the competition. The company's propensity for turning out talented portable speakers continues with the updated Go - it's a stellar performer at such an attractive price.

It's £20 pricier than last year's model (the Minx Go, which won Product of the Year), but it comes with a host of added features. The new Go has the higher-quality aptX codec for Bluetooth streaming, near-field communication (NFC) pairing, and it will charge your smartphone via the USB port (without needing to be plugged into the mains). The cabinet has been given a polish, too, with dedicated buttons for the inputs and satin finishes in black or white. The steadying foot has been done away with - the Go stands up on its own. Build quality is solid, yet it's still small and light enough to carry in a large handbag.

Upwardly mobile

And this portable compact speaker is likely to become quite the jet-setter: its powerful lithium-ion battery lasts for an impressive 18 hours of playback. It's a good thing, too, as once you start streaming songs over Bluetooth you'll

never want to stop. The sound is upbeat, punchy, and full of admirable detail. The bold dynamics seem to defy its petite dimensions, and there's plenty to admire in the rich, full-bodied delivery. Rhythm changes are superbly handled, timing is spot-on, and it never runs out of energy. It sounds weighty, too.

Digging the bass

The basslines in SBTRKT's *Wildfire* dig deep enough for a cabinet of this size, while the treble stays clear of any brittleness. Lesser speakers would stumble clumsily or inflict



sharp edges on to the listener, but the Go soldiers on and keeps its composure intact. Voices are packed with character - it's not afraid to tackle the more subtle tones of Nina Simone or Tom Waits.

Go for gold

Most importantly, the Go is just so much fun to listen to. Few wireless speakers offer such a winning combination of build, portability and performance.

Its closest rival is the rugged and funky Ultimate Ears Boom, but the Go's battery lasts longer, it sounds better and it's cheaper, too. Which settles it rather easily: the Go is our runaway winner in this category.

The Cambridge Audio Go is £20 pricier than last year's model but it comes with a host of added features. The cabinet has been given a nice polish too

Best wireless speaker £150-£300

Monitor Audio Airstream S200 **£200**



The Monitor Audio Airstream S200 can go loud without sounding laboured. Drums hit with impact, basslines are taut and vocals sound natural

The Monitor Audio Airstream S200 has gone from First Test to Award-winner in the blink of an eye. We're floored by the scale of its talent: from the array of streaming options to its excellent sound quality, it's a very tempting product.

Let's talk about that spacious and subtle sound first: the open presentation, the clear and confident delivery, the punchy rhythm - it's impressive stuff from a speaker of its size and price. The Monitor Audio is lively and eager to please, which is exactly the kind of approach you want if your music library is made up of streamed files of all kinds of resolution.

Equal to the task

Feed it CD-ripped WAV files from your computer and it'll soar happily, digging up rich detail with a sense of fun. But it doesn't discriminate against lower-resolution files. Spotify-streamed tracks from your smartphone are handled with just as much deftness, and the S200 takes it upon itself to deliver the most engaging and entertaining sound it can muster.

We like how the S200 can go loud without sounding laboured. Drums hit with satisfying impact, and the basslines are taut and punchy. There are no sharp edges - it's all smooth sailing at the top end. Vocals sound natural and solid.

It's a more powerful performance than its obvious price-rival, the Samsung M5, which (despite its recent *Group Test* win) is easily beaten by the subtler, more musical Monitor Audio speaker.

An impressive features set is yet another reason why this wireless speaker caught our attention. There's little this S200 can't do. aptX Bluetooth comes as standard, but it also throws in AirPlay, DLNA and Monitor Audio's own Airstream Direct connection into the mix. iOS devices can also be plugged into the USB port for playback and charging. Whether you want to stream from a PC, NAS device, Mac or Android, the options are there.

If you prefer hardwiring your music players, the 3.5mm input will serve you well. The tall speaker is shaped a bit like a wonky skyscraper, but there's a premium feel to the elegant finish, and the slim stature will make it easy to fit anywhere in the house. Multi-purpose buttons at the side help speed along AirPlay and wi-fi set up, and the clearly-positioned LED handily changes colour depending on the selected input.

Put it all together and we're stunned that the S200 offers so much in such an affordable package. It's remarkably good for just £200, and simply blows away the competition.

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Best wireless speaker £300-£500

Geneva Model S Wireless DAB+ £330

A year ago we were expressing our surprise - and delight - at hearing hi-fi-standard music from this little wireless speaker. Time hasn't abated our love for this gorgeous Geneva system, nor has its performance faltered in light of newer, cheaper rivals.

It's a simple system: Bluetooth for streaming, 3.5mm for wired connection. While we have yet to enjoy the delights of DAB+ in our corner of

the world, DAB and FM tuners cover all your radio-listening needs. We needn't have worried if better-specced speakers would usurp the Geneva's place in our Awards issue: there's simply nothing at this price to challenge the Model S's sonic ability.

Classy Model

We're impressed how remarkably clear, musical and agile the Model S sounds: alt-J's ethereal-yet-funky tracks are delivered with layers of detail, and the fluid, melodic dynamics are conveyed effortlessly. Instruments stop and start with precision, and there's

subtlety to the harmonics of piano notes and guitar strums. Despite its diminutive size, it packs quite a punch. Basslines go low and drums have impact.

There's an understated power that drives the Geneva's rhythmic delivery, which means you get a captivating sound whether you're playing Kate Bush or Megadeth.

Silences have depth, and there's space enough in the open soundfield for complex recordings to breathe. Voices are nuanced, with emotion and attitude coming

to the fore. Part of why we're so smitten with the Model S is that it works as a bedside speaker too. It remains an interesting listen even at lower night-time volumes, and there's an alarm clock that can be programmed to wake you up to the sound of your favourite radio station. DAB stations sound crisper and punchier than FM, but overall the quality is pleasant as long as you get decent reception.

The speaker itself is a thing of beauty. The minimalist design and piano-gloss finish (in black, red or white) are impeccable, lending a premium feel. We're fond of the glowing touch-sensitive controls on the top - they respond instantly. Move up the price scale and you'll find the premium products Naim Mu-so and Dali Kubik Free taking wireless speakers closer to the 'hi-fi' category. But for half their price, this Geneva speaker is a fantastic option.



The Geneva Model S Wireless DAB+ can work as a bedside speaker. It remains an interesting listen even at lower volumes and there's an alarm clock built in

Best wireless speaker £500-£750

Dali Kubik Free £645

A richly detailed and fluid performance wrapped up in a luxurious cloth finish - we're huge fans of the Dali Kubik Free.

It may be costly, but Dali's expertise in traditional hi-fi speakers has found its way here. The compact build is sturdy, the finish classy, and we like the row of tiny symbols and LEDs along the bottom edge that indicate which input is in use. It's an elegant design.

Musically, it's an absolute treat. Songs are delivered with an enthusiasm. The rhythm is taut, upbeat and has a tireless drive that doesn't let up no matter how hard the Kubik is driven. Notes stop and start with precision. Drums hit with power, and a full-bodied sound accentuates the clear and sparkling high notes.

Voice of reason

It's particularly subtle and delicate with vocals. There's so much feeling and expression in Birdy's breathy vocals, while Eminem's raps are delivered unflinchingly. There's warmth to the clean sound, and Kubik's ability to dig up a tremendous amount of detail means your attention will be fully engaged.

Optical and micro-USB inputs - both support 24-bit/96kHz files - are neatly hidden underneath the base of the speaker. There's a

handy USB port for charging your smart devices, while a 3.5mm input opens up compatibility with a variety of music players. Bluetooth is of the aptX variety. A credit-card style remote is supplied, but you're more likely to use your smartphone's intuitive controls for playback and volume changing.

The Kubik's party trick comes in the flavour of a second, extra unit, named the Kubik Xtra. Link them up to create a stereo system, which you can then use as desktop or TV speakers. The Xtra module costs £295, but it does add weight and a wider stereo image.

On its own, though, the Kubik Free is an immensely entertaining listen. It's talented enough for involved listening sessions, and fun enough to provide the soundtrack for a house party. It's seen off fierce competition from price-rival and well-featured Sony SRS-X9. The

If you want a compact wireless speaker that combines luxury and convenience with a sound that does justice to its hi-fi roots, the Dali Kubik Free is the one



Sony has its highlights, but the Dali is a more desirable object (the Sony's finish feels a little cheap) and delivers a more engaging and subtle performance, especially with voices/vocals.

If you want a compact wireless speaker that combines luxury and convenience with a sound quality that does justice to its hi-fi roots, the Dali Kubik Free is the one you're looking for. A worthy Award-winner.

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On-ear headphones

Wired or wireless, kept at home or taken out with you – the variety of today's 'on-ears' offers you more quality options than ever

Sound with added colour

If you're not entirely taken with the yellow finish on the cup and headband, you can have red, teal or black instead

Best portable on-ears up to £100

AKG Y50 £80

AKG has had a good run when it comes to our Awards. For three years in a row the company has had at least one winner. And in each of those three years, one of those products has managed to get Product of the Year. Now, make it four.

The AKG Y50s were only introduced in August, but they've not taken long to win our admiration. They're a radical departure from what we've come to expect from AKG. The branding is bold, with the logo so large it doesn't entirely fit on the colourful (or black) backgrounds. This is the Y-series, a 'lifestyle' range aimed at attracting a younger crowd.

It's a creative design, but it's not just a gimmick. These headphones are exceptionally well made. The aluminium ear cups, each housing a 40mm driver, offer a smooth glossy feel and fine cosmetic detail. The headband of wafer-thin stainless steel looks delicate, but it is durable enough to survive being yanked out of your pocket, manbag or handbag.

Speaking of which, portability is not an issue. They're larger than the AKG K451s (2013's Product of the Year), but the folding mechanism is neat: they fold flat and collapse inwards to fit into the supplied pouch.

But while it's a surprise in the design department, there's nothing unexpected about the sound. While the appearance might not be typical for AKG, the performance is. It's certainly not a case of style over substance.

Punch plus precision equals fun

Play something with a bit of bounce (anything from Pharrel Williams, then) and the Y50s will revel in it. Their timing and rhythmic precision is impressive, and the far-reaching dynamic punch helps to make for an entertaining listen.

There's a lovely sense of space, too – more than you might expect from small, closed-back cans – and it's filled well with a balanced, insightful sound. Clap beats, vocals and cymbals are all clearly presented. There's an extra gesture towards the low end, but this is no bad thing. A nice bonus is the silence provided by the leather earpads, which are great at blocking out other people's racket. Perfect for a commute, then.

Don't let the funky, cheerful design fool you: when it comes to sound quality, the AKY Y50s are perfectly serious, and seriously good.



Best portable on-ears £100-£200

Philips Fidelio M1MKII £180

A winner, improved. Last year, the Philips Fidelio M1s won this Award. But Philips didn't want to rest. Now we have the follow up, the M1MKIIs.

The new design boasts a lighter voice coil, extended high frequencies and more accurately tuned bass. It works, because the sound is a step up from what won our hearts and ears last year.

There is an abundance of detail, only now it is accompanied by a larger sense of space, with

more precision and greater clarity. The sound is never clinical, though. It's a fun listen. The bass is as weighty as ever, but it's now better defined.

Aesthetically, there's little change; the MKII is a light yet sturdy body of, mostly, metal and leather. The earpads of memory-foam sit snugly on the ears, gripping but never squeezing while providing a good deal of passive noise isolation.

If you're looking for a pair of portable headphones under £200, you've found them.

Best portable on-ears £200+

Beyerdynamic T51i £245

We've always been wary of inline mic remotes. It's true that they're terribly useful if you've got a portable music player, but often they cost more and make the headphones sound worse.

Full credit Beyerdynamic, then, for adding one to its T51p without upping the price or spoiling the sound quality. Armed with this new remote, and now called T51i, these are our new favourite portable on-ears because now they're practical as well as nicely designed and great-sounding.

Sonically, they're beautiful. It's an insightful performance, capable of revealing the textures of instruments and the nuances in strands of accompanying vocals. The top offers clarity and bite, but it's smooth enough to avoid hardness. The midrange is eloquent and poised, while bass notes are substantial and taut. Timing is a matter of regimented precision. Top it off with big dynamics and plenty of confidence, and you have a ruddy good listen on the go.



Best home on-ears up to £150

AKG K550 £100

A massive bargain. That's what these closed-back headphones are. 'Bargain' because this time last year they cost £200. Now, thanks to a price war, they're widely available for £100. 'Massive' because these are big in every way. The large earpieces feature 50mm drivers, the headband is broad, and the cable is long.

But they're surprisingly light. And also very comfortable. Unless you have the lugs of a small elephant, these are an over-ear design, yet the

sound pumped out is airy and spacious in a way that's beyond most closed-back designs.

Sweetly communicative, the K550s handle tempos in a natural manner. It's a dynamic listen as they punch into (and out of) low frequencies with precision, and they're as at home with lush, analogue sounds and hard-hitting electronica alike.

These were a hugely capable pair at £200, but at £100 they'll be hard to beat.

Best home on-ears £150-£300

Grado SR325e £300

As headphones go, these aren't that big. But we've put them in the 'home on-ears' category because that's where you'll use them unless you're determined to start fights on a bus.

The thing is, they leak a lot of sound. Anyone anywhere near you would be able to hear every single note. Why is this a good thing? Because closed-back designs create internal reflections, enclosure vibrations and standing waves - all of which are detrimental to sound quality.

The looks or leaking won't be for everyone, but there's no doubt about their structural integrity and the on-ear foam pads are comfortable.

They are stonkingly good performers. It's a clear, weighty musical sound. Listen to anything from Michael Jackson and the Grados lap up the rhythmic energy. Layers of tracks are distinct and well organised, and all musical styles are treated with equal respect. Just wait until you're home before you break out the *Mamma Mia*.





Best home on-ears £300+

Shure SRH1540 **£470**

We've long been acquainted with Shure's great-sounding, comfortable headphones, but these really are something.

By Jove, they are comfy. The super-soft earpads are covered in Alcantara, which can also be found on Formula One car seats. It's about as close as you'll get to a bear hug for your ears.

The large oval earcups are less than ideal as travelling companions, but weight - at a surprisingly light 286g - is not a problem.

It only takes a moment to appreciate the dynamic, exquisitely detailed sound on offer here. It's a broad sonic presentation with a wide spread. They're as easy on the ears as they are on the ear lobes, with a balanced presentation.

Play anything upbeat and they're fanatical. Bass lines are distinct. The headphones' fast, nimble manner makes a meal of the subtlest of rhythmic shifts. Factor in the seamless fluidity and it's a performance that's hard to match.

The meteoric rise of the smartphone means that most people now have a portable jukebox. But having to run a cable leaves you open to tricky issues of entanglement and cable noise. This is where a good pair of Bluetooth headphones come in. Or, in this case, an excellent pair of Bluetooth headphones.

All the controls are built into the exterior of the right ear pad, where you can pause, play, power on and off, pair, skip tracks and change

volume. This year Philips has added NFC so you can pair by tapping a compatible phone.

It's in sound quality where the M2BTs really excel. They're obviously cut from the same cloth as the non-Bluetooth version as they produce a punchy, rich, full-bodied sound.

There's plenty of detail throughout the frequency range, and vocals sound focused and emotive. They're really entertaining. If you want to cut loose, you can't go wrong here.



Best wireless on-ears

Philips Fidelio M2BT **£250**



Best noise-cancelling on-ears

Bose QuietComfort 25 **£270**

It's not often a product hogs an Award for four years in a row. That's the case with the Bose QuietComfort 15s, parked right here from 2010 to 2013. It would take a lot to dethrone such a Colossus, so around of applause, please, for the Bose QuietComfort 25, successor and superior in every way: design, aesthetics, performance.

'Quiet' is right, the QC25s at times giving the impression of actively pushing silence into your ears. The idle hum of office air conditioning is

easily eliminated. Take these on a commute and they will soon become your new best friend. They're comfortable too, as the name suggests. Performance is stronger than ever. There's a good deal of detail, with plenty of nuance in guitar-picking and vocals. It's a clear, balanced and insightful sound too, but fun with it.

Quiet, comfortable and great-sounding - factor in the shiny new looks and you have something very special indeed.

On-ears - home and away

Stay at home headphones

Some of the bigger cans here are clearly designed for home use - they're just too big to be used on your commute.

Traditionally more truly hi-fi, they can immerse you in music, - and keep your tunes to yourself.



Out and about

A lot of on-ear headphones, though, are designed to be taken out and about - many of them are foldable for easy stowage. They aren't as discreet as in-ear models, but some find them more comfortable and even better-sounding. It's worth experimenting to find which type you prefer.

Multi-room systems

Hi-fi lovers finally got what they've long wished for in 2014: multi-room systems that are easy to use, versatile, and most importantly, sound great



Best multi-room system £500+ Bluesound from **£1200**

Open access

Bluesound will play high-res tracks and music from a host of streaming services. It will scan and index contents of network drives and connect to Spotify, Rdio et al.

High-resolution music has seen a surge of support in 2014 and, after years of asking for it, the hi-fi community finally got what it wanted: a musically talented multi-room system capable of 24-bit/192kHz music playback. The best of these comes from a new company called Bluesound.

While the name might not be familiar, the people behind it are: it's home to many of the same designers and engineers who pioneered respected hi-fi brand NAD in the 70s. With its tag line of "Hi-fi for the wireless generation", it's answered the call for high-quality multi-room.

Take five

Bluesound has launched five products that cover most situations. The Node is a simple music streamer, attaching to an existing amp and speaker set-up to make it wireless and multi-room ready. The Pownode is similar, but features a built-in amp so you just need speakers, while the

Pulse is Bluesound's "one box" integrated speaker solution. Add to that the music-streaming, CD-ripping, 1TB-packing Bluesound Vault and the Duo 2.1 speaker package, and you've got high-resolution music throughout the home. There's even a USB port on the back of all of its components, meaning you can add a USB key filled with music for playback from any speaker in the house, or a Bluetooth dongle to further stretch the Bluesound's capabilities.

It's a hugely versatile system and one of the most musical multi-room systems we've heard, with an open, spacious presentation and plenty of detail. Everything you throw at this system sounds entertaining. What tops off the experience is its pure usability. Whether you're using the desktop app, or you're on your tablet or smartphone, it's simple to use.

It's not cheap (we've listed two Pulse modules - the lowest cost 'out of the box' multi-room solution), but one listen will have you hooked.

Best multi-room system up to £500

Sonos from **£340**

For years Sonos has been synonymous with multi-room audio and dominated the market. And despite a number of capable competitors trying their hand at toppling them this year, this doesn't look set to change any time soon.

A big reason for this is the breadth of products Sonos has to offer - and the addition of the Play:1 to the family late last year only bolsters that.

Have an existing set-up that you want to go wireless with? The Sonos Connect will do that for you. Only got speakers? Try the Connect: Amp. The family of Play:5, Play:3 and the new Play:1 has the integrated speaker market covered at various sizes, while the Playbar and Sub brings all of Sonos's multi-room smarts to your home cinema set-up. No other system on the market can match it.

App side of performance

Of course all this wouldn't mean much if the user experience wasn't up to scratch, but Sonos has that right too. Of all the systems we've tested, Sonos is the easiest to set up, and when it comes to usability it remains one of the most intuitive, too.

The Sonos app sits at the heart of the system, and is a large part of its charm. With the app, you can easily control all of the speakers in your house, search music on network drives and

choose from the widest choice of streaming services on any multi-room system - giving you access to all your music in one place.

You're also able to build playlists directly within Sonos, and from multiple sources as well. So if you want tracks from Spotify, Qobuz and Deezer to play nice with tracks from your NAS drive, you can do so.

From a performance perspective, the Sonos system continues to impress. Each member of the Sonos family packs the same entertaining, enthusiastic character, so you get a wholly universal sound, no matter which parts of the system you own.

Across the spectrum

It might not offer high-res support like some other systems, but what it does deliver is an insightful and full-bodied sound that works across all genres. It's well balanced, offering a solid, but controlled, bass with a treble that never sounds hard or harsh.

Vocals are expressive and focused. Rhythms have precision, and the soundstage is wide and open - all coming together to provide a thoroughly engaging listen that you'll never tire of.

Best of all, with the addition of the Play:1 speaker, a Sonos multi-room system is cheaper and more accessible than ever. The price listed here is the lowest combined price of two speakers (well it would hardly be a multi-room system with one, would it?), meaning you could get started for under £350 with two of the £170 Play:1s.

If high-res music is not a consideration for you, Sonos's ecosystem is hard to fault, and it remains one of our favourite ways to transform your system into a multi-room experience.

*The **Sonos** app sits at the heart of the system. You can control all of the speakers, search music on network drives, and access a wide range of streaming services*

*The **Bluesound** is hugely versatile and one of the most musical systems we've heard, with an open, spacious presentation and plenty of detail*



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Streamers

The streamer is an integral part of the music lovers' consciousness now. Find out how we made up our minds on the Award winners



Best streamer £600-£1000

Cambridge Audio Stream Magic 6 v2 **£700**

After a successful number of years for the first version of this streamer, Cambridge Audio has released an update - introducing new functionality that helps this versatile unit regain Product of the Year status.

A lot of things about it remain the same, and that's no bad thing. It's still an accomplished network player, capable of handling most popular file formats (AAC, WAV, FLAC, MP3) up to 24-bit/192kHz, and it can still be used as a DAC and digital pre-amp, bringing its influence upon a whole system's-worth of kit thanks to its plethora of digital inputs.

It looks almost exactly the same too, and its sound is as excellent as ever, offering a confident performance, no matter the genre or file size.

Changing the game

Before we get into that though, it's worth considering what has changed. Native 24-bit/192kHz playback is now capable over wi-fi as well as via USB thanks to a more powerful streaming module. And a lot of work has been done, to great effect, to improve and simplify the user interface and control apps. This new processor architecture also means browsing menus are

much faster than on its predecessor, plus Spotify Connect has now been added to make this streamer more flexible and versatile than ever.

Soundwise, it's a very similar character to before - powerful, with a strong rhythmic drive and a boundless enthusiasm for any music you throw at it.

Play a 16-bit/44.1kHz file of Kanye West's *Send It Up* and the Cambridge Audio shows good control over the shrill synth note, never sounding pushed or hard. Vocals are expressive, and the bass tight and agile.

Captivating detail

Detail levels are certainly impressive, even on 320kbps streams from Spotify, where it still offers a decent level of insight without uncovering the fragility of weaker recordings. Dynamically it's superb too, demonstrating admirable precision with the way it deals with loud and soft, and the starting and stopping of notes.

Above all, it's as captivating as ever, and its new functionality makes it a better proposition than ever before. Back on the top and rightfully so - the Stream Magic 6 v2 is an easy choice for Product of the Year.

Best streamer up to £600

Bluesound Node £400

The entry-level streaming category has found a new star in the Bluesound Node. As the most affordable component of the company's excellent multi-room system, it's no wonder it caught our eye when in our testing rooms.

It's a music streamer but not as we know it – shunning the standard black box look for a glossy cubed design instead. Just like all of the Bluesound range, it doesn't have to be used in a multi-room set up, though that added

functionality is always nice to have for the future, even if you don't have the need for it now.

Spec and span

Specs are kept relatively simple. It will hook up to your amp via its analogue outs, or there's a single optical out instead, with a USB port for connecting USB keys and an optional Bluetooth dongle for further increasing its functionality.

It's capable of playing uncompressed FLAC and WAV files up to 24-bit/192kHz, as well as other popular audio formats: MP3, AIFF, AAC and WMA. It also has the option for streaming directly from Spotify, Rdio, Deezer, Qobuz and TuneIn Radio. Connection to the home network can be wired or wi-fi.

Through its tablet, smartphone or desktop app, the Bluesound Node will discover any music stored both on your network and locally, indexing it quickly and simply for easy playback. It'll also offer you the option to create and save playlists from across multiple sources, which is a nice touch.

Best of all though, is the way the Node sounds. It's a rich and full-bodied character, which is well

balanced and full of enthusiasm. Bass response is full and punchy, with detailed, focused midrange and controlled treble all working together to ensure nothing is ever overbearing, nor laid back.

It's rhythmically adept too, and hangs together beautifully, offering space and separation to instruments and vocals.

Ready for resolution

This is the case no matter what resolution of music you throw at it. Of course high-res content offers more transparency and detail, but the Node's fun, entertaining way with music doesn't change when you drop down to a 320kbps stream from Spotify, for example.

In fact, it's hard not to be entertained by the Bluesound Node – an endlessly entertaining box of tricks at a superb price.

The Bluesound Node will discover music on your network and locally, indexing it quickly for playback. You can also create playlists across multiple sources



Best streamer £1000-£1500

Cyrus Stream Xa £1250

The Cyrus Stream Xa uPnP network player is one of Cyrus's more straightforward streamers, doing away with any pre-amp functionality to focus purely on streaming music.

On board there is a 32-bit DAC, capable of streaming 24-bit/192kHz high-res recordings, alongside networking capabilities. This streamer features six digital inputs to ensure its influence can be felt across your whole system.

Bus down the line

As with all Cyrus kit, there's room for upgrades down the line too, including the ability to add an external DAC and power supply should you wish, plus connections

The Cyrus Stream Xa is a Cyrus product through and through. It's got all the main characteristics of the signature Cyrus sound, with class-leading levels of detail

for the MC Bus control system, allowing this to slip seamlessly into an existing Cyrus system.

Set-up is simple and quickly done via the front panel, the Xa picking up our networked drives without issue. For controlling music, there's the included 'n-remote' and Cyrus's Cadence app for Android and iOS, which is well worth a look following its most recent update this summer.

Mark of Cyrus

The Cyrus Xa is a Cyrus product through and through, and we're not just

talking about its half-width aluminium design.

It's got all the main characteristics of the signature Cyrus sound – superbly organised, with class-leading levels of detail and a hugely musical tone.

Stars into space

Stream The Unthanks' *Starless* and the instruments in the introduction are reproduced with real subtlety and insight, while the vocals sound beautifully textured and three-dimensional. There's plenty of space awarded to the presentation throughout the frequency range for that matter, with all elements working together cohesively to form a sound to make the Cyrus family proud.

It's as precise as it is agile, as detailed as it is dynamic. While its bass punches low and controlled, its treble is allowed the space to soar high without restriction, steering clear of hardness even with aggressive recordings.

This helps to inject a likeable liveliness to its character, one that hooks you in and keeps you listening album after album.

There's no doubt that paying over £1000 for a streamer is a serious consideration, but one listen to this and you will hear where every penny is going.



Best streamer £1500+

Cyrus Stream XP2-Qx **£2010**

As the old saying goes, if it ain't broke, don't fix it - and seeing the Cyrus Stream XP2-Qx here for the third-year-running, certainly suggests that the adage is true.

Cyrus's flagship streamer and pre-amp is a powerhouse of high-tech specifications, with its top-of-the-range Qx DAC module on board, supported by a superbly specified power supply and internal circuitry.

The right input

There's a wealth of auxiliary input options to go at, so you can connect all manner of kit (including tablets and smartphones), and it supports file playback all the way up to 24-bit/192kHz, with almost any file format you can throw at it.

At this price, the XP2-Qx needs to prove its worth though, and it does so without hesitation. Once on our network, it finds our high-res-packing NAS drive quickly, and we stream Hans Zimmer's brooding *Gotham's Reckoning*.

The XP2-Qx immediately demonstrates its superior rhythmic ability, with a fast, agile character that never loses its footing or sounds unsure of itself.

Instead it powers forwards with confidence, showing off its dynamic wherewithal

throughout, steadily building the tension and releasing it as the music moves through its dramatic peaks and troughs.

There's plenty of room at the top end for the treble to reach a natural high without ever sounding strained, while the powerful bass is as agile as it is strong - offering punch and solidity when it matters.

There's a really high level of clarity here too, meaning detail retrieval is outstanding across the frequency range, with each instrument finding its own space within the open and transparent soundstage. We could listen to it for hours.

Remote backup

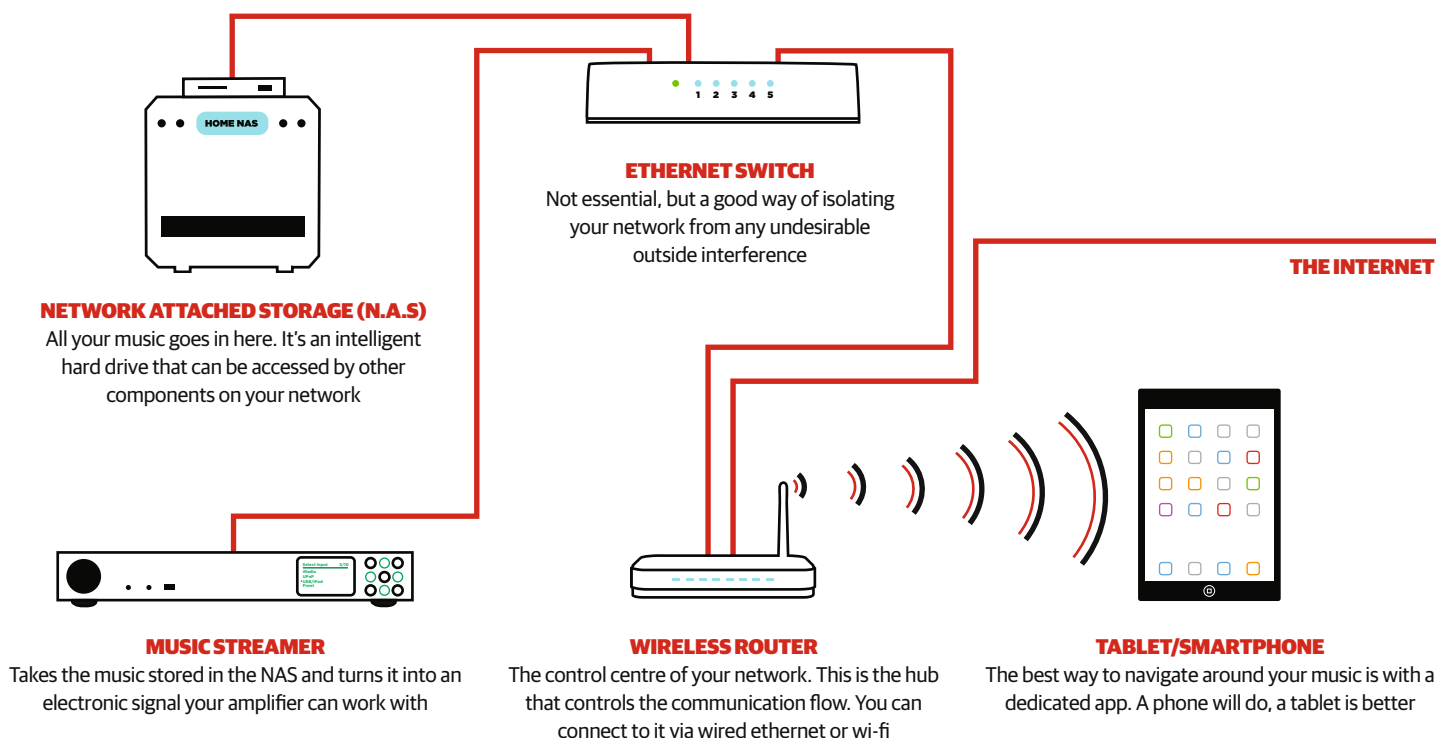
For control, you can use Cyrus's much-improved Cadence app or the included 'n-remote', either of which make browsing, playback and source selection a bit more convenient than using the unit's front panel.



It's the sound quality that really shines here though - and the XP2-Qx continues to provide the best on the market at this price. If you've got this kind of budget to play with for a music streamer, we can't recommend this addition to your system enough.

The Cyrus Stream XP2-Qx needs to prove its worth at this price, and does so without hesitation, with its rhythmic ability and fast, agile character

Streaming system set-up



Streaming services

Best music-streaming service **Spotify from free**

Music streaming has become a way of life for many consumers. The number of services has grown exponentially over the past few years, offering access to libraries of varying size and quality, from the 72kbps of Rara up to CD-quality streaming from French start-up Qobuz.

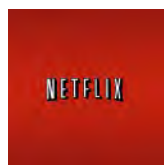
But it's hard to look past Spotify for the complete all-round experience. It manages to balance performance and features with a huge catalogue of music. It has the widest platform support of all its rivals. Android, iOS, Windows Phone, BlackBerry and even Symbian have apps, while Spotify also features on Virgin TiVo boxes, Sonos speakers and a growing number of home cinema and hi-fi products.

The service keeps its catalogue up to date too, updating its page of new releases daily. Its influence in the industry has won it exclusives from the likes of Led Zeppelin and Metallica, with very few gaps of note elsewhere - a fact that wins it major brownie points.

Premium subscribers paying £10 per month get the all-you-can-eat experience and 320kbps playback. Then there's 160kbps as the free bitrate and a 96kbps option for mobile users wanting to limit data use. The top bitrate offers great levels of detail and a well-balanced sound.

Spotify is arguably the company that kicked off the music streaming revolution, and it's still blazing a trail six years after launch. More than 40 million active users says everything.

Best video-subscription service **Netflix from £6/month**



If you want to be universally loved, you have to be universal - and, to put it bluntly, Netflix is everywhere. TVs, tablets and even games consoles, all are inroads for one of the most satisfying video streaming services out there.

£6 per month gets you unlimited access to films and TV shows, and you can stream to two devices at the same time. If you want to use up to four, the price goes up to £9. It's simple - a lot less confusing than the likes of Amazon Prime Instant Video.

Netflix doesn't only supply big-hitting TV series such as *24* and *The Killing*, it has also started making them. Exclusive content such as *House Of Cards* and *Orange Is The New Black* are both Netflix Original programmes. Then there is the film catalogue - although you don't get all the latest releases (Amazon has an advantage here).

Picture quality to match

Netflix is also at the cutting edge of picture quality, with *House Of Cards* and *Breaking Bad* available in glorious 4K. If you've got a compatible TV, and broadband around 15mbps, you're in for a visual treat. Netflix's standard 1080p streaming (called 'Super HD') gives really impressive results too, and so does the 5.1 surround sound.

Across every device we've tested, the interface is simple, attractive and practical. This really is one of the most complete and smartly executed services out there, and a must for any TV-addict.

Best video-on-demand service **Google Play price varies**



If it's the very latest titles you want, but would rather dip in and out than pay a subscription, then

Google Play is well worth investigating. Unlike alternatives such as Apple's iTunes Store, it's open to supporting devices from outside its immediate ecosystem, making it more accessible. Google's library isn't far off what Apple's iTunes Store offers - the video quality is just as good and titles are marginally more affordable.

Viewing flexibility

Purchases are kept in your account 'for ever', while rentals expire in 30 days (or 48 hours once you start watching). There's a five-device download limit, while rentals are restricted to one. Video resolution is up to 1080p, and audio up to 5.1 surround sound. (Quite a large chunk of the content is in stereo, so there's a little room for improvement in this area.) If you want to access Google Play on a TV, you can connect your phone or tablet to the TV, or use Google's Chromecast streaming stick (£35). Content can be downloaded for offline viewing on Android devices, and there's still scope to watch your purchases on Apple devices using the relevant Google app. On each platform, it's easy to find your way around the neatly organised catalogue too.

Well-equipped and effectively organised, Google Play is a legitimate alternative to buying Blu-rays and DVDs. In fact, it ticks pretty much all the boxes that a video-on-demand service should.



What's special about the 7000i Series?

The answer is clearly 'Sound Quality'

Unlike its many 'Style' competitors, 7000i speakers reproduce music just as perfectly as they convey the full scale of home cinema soundtracks. This proves the overall quality of the design. Good loudspeakers accurately reproduce whatever sound is played through them. If a style speaker is incapable of accurately reproducing high quality music, then its design is fundamentally flawed. These flaws, although initially less obvious, become increasingly audible to listeners trying to enjoy and 'experience' movie soundtracks.



"it's one of the very best"
"deeply impressive"

Home Cinema Choice 'Recommended', April 2014



"a stunning package"

What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision, 2013

www.Qacoustics.co.uk



Eminently compatible

As well as supporting high-res, the Minx plays all manner of file formats, including FLAC, WAV, MP3 and Apple Lossless



Systems

All-in-one streamers, micro systems and ready-made home cinema set-ups – we've listened to them all and singled out five leading performers

Best music system £400-£800

Cambridge Audio Minx Xi **£600**

Fancy a streaming system, but not sure if you're ready to dish out the cash for a class-leading Naim or Cyrus? This excellent Cambridge Audio Minx Xi is just the solution for you. It's an impressive package, offering myriad streaming features and the kind of insightful yet musical performance that's difficult to achieve for £600.

Width, height and depth

Down to business, and the Minx charges through alt-J's dreamy dub-pop tunes with a lively, sure-footed sense of rhythm. Instruments are easily identifiable and placed inside an airy soundstage that's as wide as it is tall and deep. Dynamic upheavals are handled with ease. There are no hard edges, and plenty of dynamic headroom.

The subtle harmonics and vocals inflections in *Fitzpleasure* are beautifully conveyed. There's texture to the synthesised strums, while the ethereal sound is weighted and cohesively organised. The song flows so smoothly that you barely notice just how deep and taut the bassline is nor how crisp the sound is. The Minx Xi makes it all sound effortless.

High-resolution audio files are supported up to 24-bit/96kHz. We would have preferred an upper limit of 192kHz, but it's not a deal breaker.

The Minx Xi is kitted out with a good spread of digital and analogue connections, including three USB ports. Supplied dongles give the unit aptX Bluetooth and wi-fi abilities. One of the biggest attractions of this Cambridge Audio system is that it gives you thousands of internet radio stations at your fingertips thanks to the preloaded BBC iPlayer, Rhapsody and Pandora services. Spotify playlists can be streamed from your smart device, while connected laptops and NAS devices can be played using wired or wireless methods.

This is an attractive piece of kit, too. The petite size will fit into most spaces, and we're quite taken with the sleek, glossy finish and sharply legible display.

What we love most about the Minx Xi is its ability to balance stunning levels of insight with an easy-going approach to music. Its willingness to get along with a variety of speakers comes a close second. Awarding it a Product of the Year gong was an easy decision. It's a fantastic system.

Best music system up to £400

Denon D-M39DAB **£310**

In a time when the wireless speakers market is exploding, the micro-system could easily be written off as obsolete.

But time and again – three years in a row now – the excellent D-M39DAB proves the micro system is still relevant, still appealing, and a great-sounding machine for the money.

The key component is the CD player. Despite the rising tide of audio files and streaming services, let's not pretend we still don't own a stack of CDs that are begging to be played. And you'll want to play them through this.

It's a wonderfully musical presentation. There's a sweet and engaging way to the Denon, which zings through songs with lively, agile timing and layers of subtle detail. Its midrange fidelity in particular is commendable.

Capable when challenged

It doesn't balk at fast, attacking tunes (Eminem's *The Way I Am*) or at far-reaching dynamics (Hans Zimmer's *Time*), and there's a good sense of scale, with instruments placed in a spacious soundfield. It never sounds overly bright, either.

You won't get any networking or Bluetooth features with the Denon, but an Apple-approved USB port in front lets you play songs and streaming services from your iPod, iPhone and iPad, and other music players can go through the 3.5mm jack.

While songs played through USB aren't quite as detailed and transparent as on CD, the Denon still treats them with respect. WAV files offer more insight than Spotify streams, but the Denon imprints its musicality over any song, regardless of file type or resolution. The DAB and FM tuners sound solid and clear, with higher-quality stations getting the upper hand.

You can buy the unit on its own and add your own speakers, but we love the system as a whole. It's a steal for £310, and no other micro-system – at any price – comes close to the Denon's value for money.



*It's a wonderfully musical presentation. There's a sweet and engaging way with the **Denon D-M39DAB**, which zings through songs with lively, agile timing*

Best music system £800-£1500

Naim UnitiQute 2 **£1195**

The UnitiQute 2 is a tiny powerhouse of a system. Its half-width design, streaming prowess and sonic ability won us over last year, and there's still no rival to its claim as the music streaming system of choice at this price.

Even by today's standards, the Naim UnitiQute 2 has a modern look about it. The impeccable finish, the uncluttered fascia, the high-contrast OLED display – it all combines to produce a very smart-looking machine.

Underneath the neat chassis lie the twin beating hearts of the UnitiQute 2: a 30W-per-channel amplifier derived from the superb Nait 5i, and a 24-bit/192kHz Burr Brown DAC that handles music in all popular file formats, including WAV, FLAC, ALAC, MP3 and Windows Media files.

Options galore

The unit is DLNA certified, too, so you can easily stream music stored on a PC, Mac or NAS device either wirelessly or via ethernet. Connectivity is exhaustive, including five digital inputs that can handle hi-res audio, a pair of RCA inputs, a 3.5mm/optical hybrid, and a USB port for plugging in iPods. DAB+, DAB and FM tuners, and the excellent vTuner internet radio service are also provided.

Its looks belie the sheer power, scale and insight it can achieve. The UQ2 is astonishingly transparent and revealing – sometimes unforgivingly so – and delivers an open and weighted sound. Whether you're playing Shostakovich, Shakira or The Smashing Pumpkins, the stop and start of notes are dealt with unerring precision, the rhythm is fast and nimble, and detail retrieval is nothing short of exceptional.

Voices are loaded with character. Subtle intonations are laid bare, while emotion and attitude are delivered unflinchingly. Instruments are accurately placed, and songs of all resolutions are marshalled with exquisite control and cohesion.



*Its looks belie the sheer power, scale and insight it can achieve. **The Naim UnitiQute 2** is astonishingly revealing and delivers an open, weighted sound*

It's an enthralling listen, with songs sweeping around a vast, airy soundstage with effortless dynamic reach. The system can go extremely loud without faltering or sounding laboured when driven hard. Basslines are satisfying deep, taut and laden with texture, while the treble reaches sweet, clear highs.

There are few rivals that can compete against such an accomplished system, so if you've got the budget for it, the Naim UQ2 is worth consideration. Add a pair of great speakers, and you've got a mighty powerful music system.

Best music system £1500+

Cyrus Lyric 09 £3000

Allowing for analogue

Despite the Lyric's flair for digital, analogue connections aren't forgotten, with a stereo input and output included.

The **Cyrus Lyric 09** made quite the splash when we first reviewed it. Its looks – a far cry from the aluminium half-width chassis that has remained a design staple for the marque since 1984 – are, well, different. The angular shape, the glowing CD slot, and the touchscreen display all mark this out as something unusual.

The looks here might divide opinion, but it's admirable to see a company take a risk and try something different. On the performance side, Cyrus has remained true to its heritage. A stunningly precise, enthusiastic and agile sound bursts from the Lyric 09. It's the sound we all know and love from Cyrus, with added muscle.

High-quality treatment for all

There's a fabulous amount of detail on board. Feed it hi-res audio and the Lyric lavishes you with the extra resolution – it's an extremely confident and subtle player. It's not a sonic snob, either. The Cyrus delivers Spotify streams with as much diligence as it would a 24-bit/192kHz FLAC file, managing to pick out subtle edges of notes, with a clean and precise sound that is usually unheard over Bluetooth.

From the *Inception* soundtrack to Adele's ballads, the Lyric shows off its remarkable dynamic reach. The sense of scale is awe-

inspiring and it handles sudden shifts from loud to quiet with ease and authority. It sounds utterly gorgeous.

As befits its price tag, the Lyric is laden with extensive features. A built-in 24-bit/192kHz DAC can be accessed by the USB, coaxial and optical inputs. The Lyric supports a large variety of

*A stunningly precise, enthusiastic and agile sound bursts from the **Cyrus Lyric 09**. It's the sound we all know and love from Cyrus, but with added muscle*

Best cinema system

Sony BDV-N5200W £500

You may not think £500 is enough to build up a home cinema system from scratch, but you haven't reckoned with Sony. The BDV-N5200W is a fantastic all-in-one system that has more goodies than a Christmas stocking.

Including a Blu-ray player, multichannel amplifier, five speakers, a wireless subwoofer and all the latest smart features you can think of, this neat and stylish package is your ticket to bringing the cinema to your home without breaking the bank.

Play the Blu-ray of *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* and the DTS-HD Master Audio soundtrack zings across the 5.1 channel system with a remarkable amount of precision and authority. The sound is crystal clear, and oozes subtle detail. There's plenty of excitement as special effects – Spidey's web-slinging across Midtown skyscrapers, Electro's crackling electricity – are steered across the five speakers with lively timing. It's a captivating listen.

Always engaging

Dynamics are free to soar in an open and wide soundfield, and it's a testament to the Sony's sonic skill that it all sounds interesting even at low volumes. Part of this is because dialogue is fiercely crisp and expressive – you'll never get

bored watching films with this Sony system. Explosions are packed with punch and attack, and the talented subwoofer sets the weighty, rumbling foundation.

We know how good Sony Blu-ray players can be, and this one does its lineage proud by delivering a beautifully punchy, clean and richly detailed picture. Colours are vibrant while maintaining a natural tone, and motion is stable.

Wired and wireless connections open up a world of on-demand video and music streaming from smart apps such as BBCiPlayer, Netflix, Demand 5 and Amazon Instant. Bluetooth, NFC and DLNA certification mean that you can stream music from laptops, smartphones and NAS devices

*There's plenty of excitement with the **Sony BDV-N5200W** as special effects are steered across the five speakers with lively timing. It's a captivating listen*



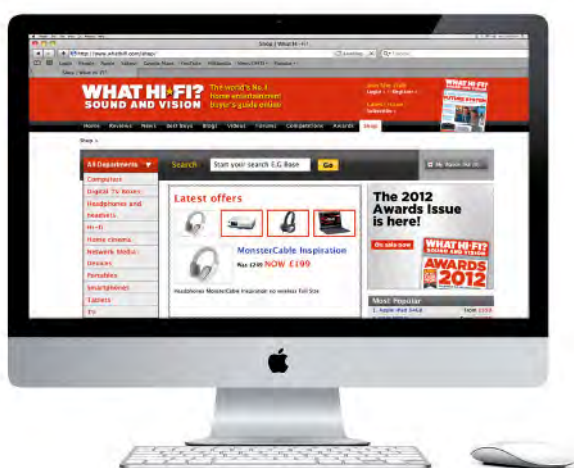
over your home network. Connections are plentiful, and the Sony also supports the rarer DSD and SACD formats alongside the more regular 3D Blu-rays, DVDs and CDs.

You'll need a dedicated hi-fi system for seriously cohesive and musical results, but streamed tracks and music Blu-rays still sound enveloping and powerfully cinematic.

We can't think of a tidier system. The Sony does it all, and does it so brilliantly and effortlessly that we're eager to fork out £500.

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THE ONLY THING TO EXPECT IS EXCELLENCE



Featured: HD 800 headphones (main)
and HDVD 800 headphone amplifier (below)



Sound can't be sold to you in a catalogue, or explained in a sentence – it's something you have to experience. Which is why you'll only be able to find our most exclusive headphones at Club Orpheus retailers.

And the specialists you'll find there are as obsessed with quality as you are; their knowledge, experience, first-class service and the exclusive products they give you access to have all been designed for one reason – to find you the sound you've been searching for.

We promise an experience you won't forget.

To find out more about Club Orpheus please contact our Club Orpheus Member, Stone Audio.



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SENNHEISER
The Pursuit of Perfect Sound



**Bluetooth
at its best**

Many portable devices, such as the Samsung Galaxy S5 and HTC One (M8), now also support the superior aptX Bluetooth

Accessories

They might seem to be incidental players in any musical performance, but these sonic extras can make all the difference to your system's sound

Best Bluetooth receiver

Arcam miniBlink **£90**

For a wallet-friendly £90, this aptX-supporting Bluetooth receiver makes the idea of a wireless set-up all the more tempting.

The small, compact unit is shaped like a well-polished pebble, featuring only a round Bluetooth button (press and hold for easy pairing) and single 3.5mm output. Though the device's limited connections may seem a little mean to those expecting digital outputs to feed into an amplifier or external DAC, performance through the supplied 3.5mm-to-RCA phono cable is surprisingly good.

Unusually smooth

Where some Bluetooth receivers sound prickly and bright, the miniBlink has a smooth, insightful and rhythmical temperament. It's impressive that Arcam has managed to squeeze such a sense of refinement and quality from a device like this.

The 'Blink doesn't leave much to the imagination, faithfully laying bare the percussive and vocal details in *The Knife's Pass This On*. There's texture and variation to steel drums - a decent amount of reverb is clear too - and vocals quiver, while musical oddities abound.

You get a real feel for dynamic shifts within music: huge leaps from quiet moments to more outlandish sections are explicitly done, and music sounds all the more exciting for it.

This sound quality doesn't come easy to products like this, which makes the miniBlink's abilities all the more special.

*Where some Bluetooth receivers sound prickly and bright, the **Arcam miniBlink** has a smooth, insightful and rhythmical temperament*

Best speaker cable

QED XT40 £10/m

QED's newest cable may seem quite expensive when you consider last year's Award-winning AudioQuest cable was £6/m, but we think it's worth every penny. Streets ahead of the competition for solidity and expression, the XT40 makes the AudioQuest sound a little insubstantial in comparison.

Our reference system sounds transparent and beautifully balanced - treble notes are clear but never teeter on brightness, and bass has depth and control. Thanks to the XT40 cable, these traits are preserved. The cable's basic look doesn't reflect the price, but performance more than surpasses it. Go on, treat yourself.



Best analogue interconnect

Atlas Element Integra £45/m

After taking the crown from Chord last year, the Atlas Element Integra proves it's still well ahead of the competition.

A nicely made cable with sturdy plastic plugs, it slips nicely into our reference system to facilitate a well balanced and rhythmic performance. The system's presentation has

plenty of detail and there's equilibrium across the frequencies; vocals have a nice parity between solidity and transparency. It's a musical sound, too, showing impeccable timing with Wyclef Jean's *80 Bars*. The soundstage is pleasingly wide and there's good dynamic range. The Integra isn't cheap, but it's worth it.



Best phono stage

Rega Fono MM Mk2 £200

Rega continues its dominance over this category for the third year running. Last year's Award-winner remains an affordable go-to product for vinyl lovers thanks to its big, authoritative and punchy sound.

A wide-open soundstage gets the best from sparse, vocal-driven recordings, and its

dynamically fluid and rhythmic quality breathes life into upbeat tracks.

Midrange is convincing, while clear-cut highs and bottom-end grunt have distinct presence too.

Hook up this excellent Rega and enjoy the reward of hearing your vinyl at its best.



Best equipment rack

Atacama Evoque Eco 60-40 £450

It wins kudos on design alone - the 40mm bamboo shelves and glossy-black legs provide a striking and handsome look - but the latest rack from Atacama is not just a pretty unit.

It helps provide great performance, too: the Eco allows our Cyrus CDi/ Roksan Caspian M2 reference system to sound solid, expressive,

highly entertaining and full of attack. Basslines are punchy, high notes are clear and open, and vocals are delivered with subtlety.

It's customizable, too. You can add extra shelves for £150 each and choose from natural, medium or dark finishes. It's available with various leg lengths too.



Best speaker stand

Atacama Moseco 6 £120

Atacama does the double. Knocking the three-time winner Custom Design FS104 Signatures off top spot, the Moseco 6s help our system sound rich, musical and dynamic.

Our reference ATC SCM 11 standmounts blossom with punch, detail and rhythm. There's texture in basslines, twang in guitars, and

insightful, if slightly forward, vocals. This kind of performance normally costs a sight more than the £120 these Atacamas will set you back.

The two metal poles and substantial bamboo base that make up each stand make for smart and sturdy support, with darker finishes and colours available for a small premium.





Making the best better

Adding Cyrus's outboard PSX-R power supply is worth doing, as it improves just about every aspect of the CDi's sound

CD players

Two enduring greats plus a return to the top for a legendary disc-spinning marque – the choice of premium hardware for CD lovers is as good as ever

Best CD player £500-£1500

Cyrus CDi **£1050**

For years **Cyrus** seemed like a permanent fixture in our CD player Awards, yet in 2013 it missed out altogether thanks to the brilliance of Naim's CD5si. The company's answer was the introduction of the CDi, and what a response it has turned out to be.

The CDi replaces both the CD6 SE2 and CD8 SE2 players, falling between them in price but eclipsing both in performance. As is usual with Cyrus's products you'd never guess from the outside that this was a new model. The casework retains the company's classic half-width design, leaving the CDi looking like any of its slot-loading predecessors.

But take a look inside and it is clear much has changed. Cyrus has continued to develop its in-house transport mechanism and the software behind it. The company is particularly proud of the transport's ability to read the data off the disc correctly the first time rather than relying on error correction to fill in the gaps.

The CDi's other technical highlight is an upgraded DAC section that now uses a new 32-bit design. The aim, as always, is to improve resolution and dynamics while keeping noise and distortion as low as possible.

Around the back of the player are two pairs of single-ended analogue outputs and the traditional digital duo of optical and coaxial. There's also a connection for the £500 outboard PSX-R power supply (see roundel).

In true Cyrus tradition this player puts detail resolution, agility and dynamic expression above all else. We certainly haven't come across a more insightful performer below the £1500 mark.

Speed, punch and resolution

Take a listen to Stravinsky's *The Rite Of Spring* and the CDi puts on an exhilarating show. The music's savage dynamics are delivered with breathtaking speed and punch, and the level of resolution is top-class. We know few players, even at double this price, that deliver as much in the way of detail and precision. There's class-leading composure too, with the player keeping a firm hold of low-level instruments even when the piece becomes demanding. This stability is deeply impressive.

Cyrus players have tended to edge towards leanness in their tonal balance, and the CDi still shows a little of that trait. Avoid overly bright or aggressive partnering kit and the player's innate refinement is enough to avoid any issues.

We ended our *First Test* of the CDi by suggesting that Naim's CD5si had plenty to fear. With hindsight it really did. The CDi is the best player we have heard anywhere near this price this year – and for that it grabs the Product of the Year title for 2014.

Best CD player under £500

Marantz CD6005 **£280**

Marantz has made something of a habit of winning our budget CD player award. This is the second time the CD6005 has won this category, and that accolade follows years of domination by its predecessors. A £70 price drop from last year doesn't hurt its case either.

An aura of class

As with all of Marantz's best budget offerings, the CD6005 is a superbly judged product. It's beautifully built for starters; there's a solidity and aura of class around this player that no rival we've come across can better. It comes down to sturdy casework, lovely finish and a slick precision to the way the controls work. Even the remote control is classier than the norm at this level. All this would count for nothing if the player didn't perform but, of course, it does - rather well.

The CD6005's sonic presentation marries refinement and drama superbly. There's an element of deliberate smoothing of rough edges here, which makes a lot of sense in this part of the market. Many budget amplifiers and speakers are prone to aggression and hardness, particularly in the treble, so the Marantz's tailored balance helps counter that.



However, this civility doesn't go too far. Any recording that should excite still does, and that quality is vital.

The CD6005 is a design with plenty of sonic stretch, which is good news for those who love

The Marantz CD6005 is a player that will continue to shine long after you've upgraded the rest of your system. It's a pleasure to use and even better to listen to

to upgrade. As you'd expect, it will shine with similarly priced partnering equipment. The company's PM6005 is the obvious amplification partner and we like what Dali's lively Zensor 3s do at the end of this pairing.

But move up to the realms of Arcam's A19 with B&W's 685S 2s, and the Marantz CD player is more than up to taking the extra scrutiny. In such a set-up this player sounds right at home.

This is a player that will continue to shine long after you've upgraded the rest of your system. It's a pleasure to use and even better to listen to. If you're looking for the best budget CD player on the market, look no further.

Best CD player £1500+

Roksan Caspian M2 **£1900**

You'd think we'd get bored of recommending the Caspian M2 CD player by now. This is the fifth consecutive year this masterful player has won our premium CD-player category, which is a stupendous achievement.

That's five years in which none of the competition has managed to come up with a similarly priced player that we prefer. Some have more features, but, when it comes to all-round talent, nothing has come close to worrying the Caspian.

This Roksan doesn't feature digital inputs nor does it stream music from an iDevice as the Marantz CD6005 does. What it does do, however, is play CDs brilliantly.

The Caspian M2 has a smoother and richer balance than the norm, but uses that to deliver one of the most engaging performances we've heard anywhere near this price.

There's plenty of detail here, and enough transparency to reveal every single flaw in a

It takes a gifted product to win one of our Awards just once. To win it five consecutive years means the Roksan Caspian M2 is truly exceptional

recording. It never overstates shortcomings though, preferring instead to concentrate on the positives.

As with all our Award-winners the real achievement here is balance. Despite its forgiving nature, this isn't a machine to short-change in other areas.

A master of all trades

It has the dynamic reach to truly thrill with something as forceful as Tchaikovsky's *Marché Slave Op.31*, yet it still has the finesse and midrange expressiveness to make the most of Leonard Cohen's *I'm Your Man* set - an impressively wide spread of talents. You can add strong rhythmic ability and stable sound-staging to this player's list of talents too.

Build quality is everything we'd expect at this level - solid, well finished and damped - and the controls work with positive precision.

It takes a gifted product to win one of our Awards just once. To win it five consecutive years means the Caspian M2 is exceptional. Buy with confidence.



Keep it in the family

The M2's easy-going nature extends to partnering kit, but one obvious choice is the matching Caspian M2 amplifier

Radios



You can't stop the humble radio - advances in design, features and sound quality are as rapid here as anywhere else in the hi-fi arena

Expanding functionality

Today's 'simple' radios are aping the features of larger kit, with many offering LAN streaming, Spotify Connect and more

Best radio £100-£200

Roberts Stream 93i **£150**

The **Roberts Stream 93i** is beautifully put together - a well-engineered product, with substantial weight to back up its desk/counter-top size.

And you certainly get your money's worth. This is 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. And, in a final impressive 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.

Set-up is simple - a 'wizard' holds your hand through the whole process of accessing your network, scanning the airwaves for signals and generally getting you up and running.

Sound that lives up to the promise

And we're very happy to report that all our good impressions and the comprehensive specification are backed up by an extremely impressive performance. This radio sounds really good.

Roberts has managed to combine a clear midrange (imperative for voice radio) with bright - not sharp - treble, and surprisingly powerful bass. It's the bass that impresses most, with precise low notes going surprisingly deep for such a relatively small box. Often when a smallish unit has strong bass, other parts of the frequency range can suffer, but with the 93i everything blends to make for a really enjoyable listen.

Radio reception, whether via the internet, DAB or FM is exemplary. The music player uses UPnP, and it found 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 though, while acceptable, can't match 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.

Best Buy up to £100

Pure Evoke D2 £85

This bargain of a radio won our 'Up to £100' Best Buy gong last year, and it has retained its place at the top for 2014. It's no great surprise, when you consider the quality you're getting.

The D2 is a nicely put-together unit. The tuners are effective, finding most stations without fuss and then sticking to them with a cast-iron grasp. There are 20 presets available, 10 each for FM and DAB. Three are easily accessible via the buttons numbered one to three alongside the display; the other seven once you have pressed the '4+' button and then chosen via the select knob. That's a little unusual, perhaps, but it's perfectly intuitive once you get used to it - and it keeps fascia clutter down.

As well as the radio tuners, the Evoke D2 has an auxiliary input to accommodate an external source, plus an alarm with a variety of functions

and a sleep timer. For what it's worth, we think it looks good too.

The Evoke D2 sounds excellent for a sub-£100 radio. It's incredibly detailed, excelling with voices and allowing rich mid-tones to come to the fore. It doesn't overdo it though, and maintains a natural balance across the frequency range. Bass is fast and taut without being overbearing or too prominent, and higher notes ring clear without ever becoming brassy at higher volumes.

On which note, it must be said that this radio doesn't go quite as loud as some rivals. It's perfectly fine for normal listening in the bedroom or kitchen, but don't expect it to fill a large, busy room with sound.



whether over FM, DAB or via the aux input. Add the Pure's value and ample feature count, and it does more than enough to retain its place as our budget radio Best Buy.

*The **Pure Evoke D2** sounds excellent for a sub-£100 radio. It's incredibly detailed, excelling with voices and allowing rich mid-tones to come to the fore*

Increasing portability

We would seriously consider investing in a ChargePak - Pure's rechargeable battery pack - as well (another £28). That would make the radio really portable for alfresco listening.

The Evoke D2 sounds balanced and easy to listen to across a wide range of programming,

Best Buy £200+

Revo SuperConnect £250

TVs have evolved in the past decade or two into smarter, more complex machines - and the same can be said for the radio.

Take the Revo SuperConnect. Not content with the standard issue FM and DAB, the Revo has lots of extra features and functionality.

Hook it up to your home network (via wi-fi) and you can access the varied world of internet radio. DLNA certification means the radio can also access music stored on a Mac, PC or NAS

(Network Attached Storage) device over your network. And tunes stored on a smartphone or tablet can be played via Bluetooth (aptX Bluetooth is supported).

There's more: the Revo is one of the first radios to offer Spotify Connect, so if you have a Premium subscription you can control and play tracks from your account.

We're fans of the Revo's modern-with-a-dash-of-retro looks. The 2.7in OLED display and aluminium front panel contrast nicely with the cabinet's walnut veneer.

The display shows menus and track information. The Revo makes good use of screen space, showing relevant info for radio stations and songs (including bitrate and music format).

Control is via a small joystick - it takes a little while to get used to, but the radio is quick to respond and it makes light work of the set-up menus.

Supplementing the joystick controller is the remote control. This isn't the usual credit card-sized handset - it's pretty big, and great to use.

*The **Revo SuperConnect** is one of the first radios to offer Spotify Connect, so if you have a Premium subscription you can play tracks from your account*

Behind the grille, you can just about make out the Revo's single 3.5in BMR (Balanced Mode Radiator) driver, powered by a 15W amp.

On paper, that doesn't seem like a recipe for power, but this radio kicks out an impressively weighty sound. There's no trace of harshness or brightness, and you will hear good-quality sound no matter the source. The way the SuperConnect handles voices, in particular, lends itself well to dialogue-heavy radio and podcasts.

Rich pickings

Bass sounds richer and fuller than we've heard from rivals - and if it's too full for your taste, you can turn it down easily using the tone settings.

Not many radios we review manage to impress on so many fronts. Design, ease of use and sound quality - the Revo has it all. Super by name, super by nature - and a clear Best Buy.



Set-top boxes



They don't just multiply your viewing options - they mean you need never miss a programme again. One box, many tricks

Best subscription service

Sky+ HD 2TB £250

The right application

The Sky+ app for Android and iOS makes it easy to view, record, and schedule. As a remote app, it's legible and good-looking

Sky hasn't changed much over the past year, but that's no bad thing, because it's a service we know and love. From apps, to content, to the box itself, the Sky service is better than ever, and still pips rivals in our affections, thanks to a wealth of content - including HD - and a class-leading user experience.

The latest box comes with built-in wi-fi, making it easier to access Sky's on-demand TV content and catch-up TV services such as BBC iPlayer. Naturally, we'd go for the top-spec, 2TB model, which is ideal for stockpiling TV programmes and films for a rainy day.

The unit itself costs £250, but you can get it from £150 if you add a channel pack. The storage is divided: 400GB is for On Demand content and operating system, but 1.5TB is entirely yours to fill with whatever you want to record.

All the space you need

What's 1.5TB in recording terms? Well, only 350 hours of HD content, or 1180 hours in standard definition. The days of deleting content to make space aren't quite over, but consider them significantly delayed. Go ahead and download that TV box set.

The On Demand (formerly Anytime) service has a fresh interface, dividing a plethora of HD and SD programming into tabs of content. Showcase takes you straight to the latest shows and films, plucked from both the TV Guide and Sky Store downloads. You'll also find a Catch Up section that's as comprehensive as any. It includes BBC iPlayer, ITV Player, 4oD, Demand 5 as well as a heap of on-demand content from Sky's own channels and others.

As ever, the box delivers excellent picture and sound quality. The 1080i HD pictures are crisp and vibrant, while standard-definition content is clean and stable. Compatible broadcasts are accompanied by decent 5.1 surround sound, which can be delivered over HDMI - no need to faff about with digital optical cables.

Sky's latest doesn't need to change: it's marvellous just as it is. And that's why it deserves yet another Award.

Best PVR

Humax DTR-T2000 £230

Sometimes, someone will throw out something perfectly good in the name of change and progress. That's not always a good thing. That's why we're quite glad Humax hasn't done that.

The company has gone for a liberal sprinkling of improvements, rather than a total overhaul. This year's DTR-T2000 is not a massive departure from last year's Award-winning DTR-T1010, but it's certainly better.

The obvious stuff starts with the design. It's smaller. The power supply is now an external block, keeping the device cooler - which means no noisy fan. It's also a stronger box, made primarily of metal rather than plastic.

Less self-evident are the improvements to operation. Button presses are a lot more responsive, so the overall experience feels faster. No longer do you have to press keys in frustration and wait as the system catches up. Menus are much zippier too, with lag dramatically reduced.

If it ain't broke...

That, though, is where the key differences end. Not that this matters, because last year's offering was a corker, and that remains the case here. If you want Youview, this is how you should get it.



Youview is like Freeview on steroids. It's a free service that gives you access to more than 70 TV and radio channels, which you can pause, rewind and record using the 500GB of storage.

There's also all manner of web-based fun. The box uses your broadband to get content from the major catch-up services. These are integrated with the electronic guide, which lets

you scroll back by seven days. Browse, pick something you missed, and the appropriate catch-up service will load.

The main catch-up services are present: BBC iPlayer, iTV Player, 4 on Demand and Demand 5. There's also Sky's Now TV, Sky Store, Milkshake! (for kids), S4C (in Wales), STV (in Scotland) and UKTV (content from Dave, Really and Yesterday).

Standard and HD picture quality are both great: pictures are clean and detailed, with decent motion handling and sharply drawn edges. Twin tuners means you can record one channel and watch another at the same time, or record two channels together. Once you taste the magic of Youview, you'll never turn back. This box, better than ever, is the way to go.

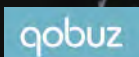
The Humax DTR-T2000 uses broadband to access the catch-up services. These are integrated with the electronic guide, which lets you scroll back by seven days

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*Wi-Fi dongle optional

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Readers' Award

Musical, transparent and capable of deep, agile bass, it's little wonder the KEF LS50s have retained their title among our readers



Readers' Award 2014

Shortlist

AVI DM5

B&W CM10

Chord Hugo

Devialet 200

KEF LS50

LG 55EA980V

MyAV app

Naim Supernait 2

Q Acoustics Concept 40

KEF LS50 **£800**

Once again we asked you to vote for your Product of the Year. Following the nominations on the *whathifi.com* forums, we ended up with a shortlist of nine, from speakers, to TVs to streamers. These were then put to the vote on *whathifi.com* and the KEF LS50 speakers won out.

The eagle-eyed among you will notice this is the second year in a row these KEF speakers have taken the prize, emphasising their enduring popularity. We can't disagree: the LS50s were our favourite standmounter between £400 and £800 in the 2013 Awards, and won the overall speakers Product of the Year accolade when they were released in 2012.

Created to celebrate 50 years of KEF, the speakers are proving well worthy of the accolade, and were only pipped to another stereo speaker Award this year by the excellent-value B&W 685 S2s. Musical, transparent and capable of deep, agile bass, it's little wonder you chose them again.

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Sennheiser CX300-II

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BUYER'S GUIDE

NEW

All our new **Award winners** are listed in these pages, so you've got no excuse not to get a top shortlist for your new purchase.

Buying a new telly? Do yourself and your screen a favour by **calibrating your TV** properly. Fear not: we'll show you how



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 whatifit.com

All the latest kit, all the latest ratings...

Welcome to the **UK's best guide** to TVs, hi-fi, home cinema and mobile, with star ratings for more than **1500 products**. Where other magazines rely on isolated

writers reviewing in a range of locations, our star ratings are decided by an **expert team** of reviewers working together, in a **state-of-the-art testing facility**.

Within this guide you'll find all our favourite **four- and five-star** products - including **Award-winners** - to help you pick the best kit for your budget.



Kobina Monney, Buyer's Guide Editor

Exciting new additions...



Philips Fidelio M2BT

"Sticking to their predecessors' Award-winning formula, the M2BTs offer superb sound, convenience and design" p161



Rega Elex-R

"The Elex-R is a fine achievement. It's the kind of product that gets straight to the heart of the music" p152

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Your essential system set-ups

BEST BUYS

GET THE
BEST KIT
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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.

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.



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.



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.



PANASONIC DMP-BDT700
★★★★★
£500

A superb Blu-ray player with 4K/60fps capability and 4K Chroma upscaling. A star.



PIONEER SL-LX58
★★★★★
£1400

Mature, powerful, refined - 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.



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.



SPENDOR A6R
★★★★★
£2500

Attacking, detailed and balanced, these floorstanders demonstrate a winning way with dynamics.

Complete your home cinema system

SET-TOP BOXES

Sky+HD 2TB
£250

Humax HDR-1000S (500GB) £220

Humax DTR-T1010
£230

PROJECTORS

BenQ W1400
£1000

Epson EH-TW7200 £1900

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

STYLE SPEAKERS

Tannoy HTS-101
£350

Q Acoustics Q7000i
£900

B&W MT-60D
£1950

SOUNDBARS

Philips HTL5140
£270

Q Acoustics Media 4
£400

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£800

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£190

Atacama Evoque
Eco 60-40 £460

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£200

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One £125

Logitech Harmony
1000 £280

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£200

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Revo SuperConnect
£250

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£60

AKG Y50
£80

Grado SR80i
£135

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Denon D-M39DAB
£310

Marantz M-CR610
£500

Naim UnitiQute 2
£1150

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QED XT40
£10/m

Atlas Elements
Integra £45

Supra USB 2.0
£30

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NOVEMBER 2014

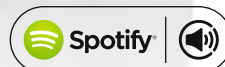
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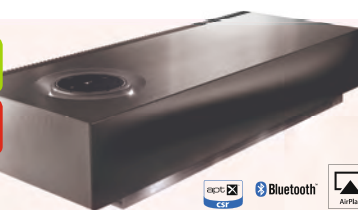
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Combines NAD's most advanced digital platform, Direct Digital technology with Apple AirPlay® Wi-Fi streaming to create the ultimate plug 'n play solution for wireless music.

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All-in-one system featuring a 30W amplifier, FM/DAB/Internet radio and wired and wireless connections to play network digital audio. UnitiQute 2 can play USB-stored music files of up to 32bit/192kHz resolution.

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dlna
AirPlay

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2013

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PIONEER • N-50 • MUSIC STREAMER

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SILVER

Hi-Res
AUDIO

Hi-Res
AUDIO



SONY • HAP-S1 HI-RES AUDIO PLAYER SYSTEM

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BEST ENTRY-LEVEL PRO-JECT TURNTABLE

£209
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PRO-JECT • ESSENTIAL II • TURNTABLE

Entry-level "plug'n'play" two speed turntable with single piece aluminium tonearm and pre-fitted Ortofon OM5e cartridge.



£298
OR LESS

REGA • RP1 PERFORMANCE PACK • TURNTABLE

This upgraded version of the award-winning RP1 includes a Bias 2 cartridge, upgraded belt, 100% wool mat and RP101 tonearm.



NEW

£575
OR LESS

PRO-JECT • 1 XPRESSION CARBON • TURNTABLE

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ARCAM • FMJ A19 • AMPLIFIER

Arcam's award-winning A19 integrated amplifier delivers 50W per channel and includes seven analogue inputs along with a MM phono input.



£399
OR LESS

aptX CSF Bluetooth

WHAT Hi-Fi? AWARDS 2013
BEST DIGITAL AMPLIFIER

NAD • D 3020 AMPLIFIER / DAC

Features digital and analogue inputs plus the convenience of wireless streaming with its Bluetooth capability.



£399
OR LESS

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BEST ANALOGUE DAC

ARCAM • irDAC • DAC

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NEW

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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.



£249
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£249
OR LESS

NAD • C 516BEE / C 316BEE • CD / AMPLIFIER

Received an outstanding product award from Hi-Fi News magazine who described the C 316BEE as an "absolute barn-stormer of an amplifier". The C 516BEE is the perfect partner.



£599
OR LESS

WHAT Hi-Fi? AWARDS 2013
BEST ANALOGUE DAC

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.



ESSAV .COM

ESSAV .COM

WHAT Hi-Fi? AWARDS 2013
BEST CD PLAYER

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.



NEW

£1249
OR LESS

NEW

£1249
OR LESS

ROKSAN • K3 • CD / AMPLIFIER

New integrated amplifier with aptX Bluetooth, a phono input plus five additional line inputs for other sources. The K3 CD player is the perfect match for the K3 amplifier. Three finish options available.



£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.



£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.



£1899
OR LESS

£1899
OR LESS

WHAT Hi-Fi? AWARDS 2013
BEST CD PLAYER

WHAT Hi-Fi? AWARDS 2013
BEST CD PLAYER

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.



£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

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
BEST DAB PLAYER

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
BEST DAB PLAYER

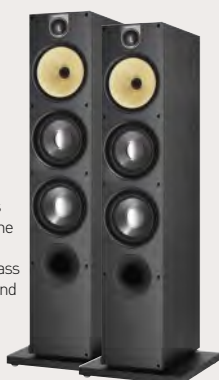
MARANTZ • M-CR610 • CD / DAB / NETWORK SYSTEM

Enjoy great sounding music from diverse sources, including Internet radio, music-streaming services, mobile devices, TV and other digital audio sources.



BOWERS & WILKINS • 685 S2
At home on a stand, wall or bookshelf, the versatile 685 S2 is ideal for stereo and home theatre uses in most rooms. And performance is enhanced with the addition of a Decoupled Double Dome tweeter.

NEW £499
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



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
WHAT IF? AWARDS 2013
BEST SMALL SPEAKER



PMC • TWENTY-22

An astonishingly natural balance and high dynamic capability are the hallmarks of this speaker. It creates a precise sound stage and profound bass performance from its compact cabinet.

£1970
OR LESS
WHAT IF? AWARDS 2013
BEST SMALL SPEAKER

Price excludes stands

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 OR CHERRY)

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.

£499 **SAVE £100** **LIMITED STOCK**

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PSB PFS-27
SPEAKER STANDS
WORTH £199



Q ACOUSTICS • CONCEPT 20

A truly remarkable award-winning speaker which delivers a level of sonic performance previously only available to audiophiles able to invest in high-end models.

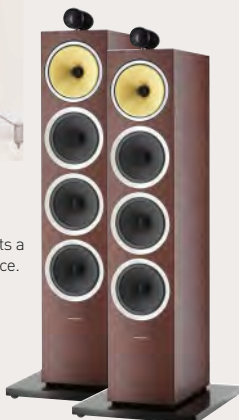
£349.95
OR LESS
WHAT IF? AWARDS 2013
BEST SMALL SPEAKER

Price excludes stands

BOWERS & WILKINS CM10 S2

The flagship floorstanding speaker of the CM Series sets a new standard for performance. It combines technologies taken from across B&W's ranges. The result simply sounds and looks beautiful.

NEW £2999
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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
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BEST SMALL SPEAKER

STANDARD FINISHES: £219.95
GLOSS FINISHES: £219.95



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.

One year of music included.
Buy any Sonos player and claim 365 days of Deezer Premium+ worth over £100



£550
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WHAT IF? AWARDS 2013
BEST WIRELESS SPEAKER

B&W • P7 HEADPHONES



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GRADO • SR325e HEADPHONES



NEW £299
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DENON • HEOS WIRELESS MULTI-ROOM MUSIC SYSTEM

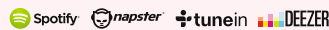
HEOS by Denon is a Wireless Multi-Room Sound System comprising a family of great-sounding music players for your whole home. There is a free app to control them from your iOS or Android phone or tablet. You can enjoy your favourite streaming music services, internet radio or your own music collection and set-up is a breeze.



90 DAYS TO BE AMAZED

- 90 Days Risk Free Trial
- 20% Off For Your Second Heos Purchase
- Try Spotify Premium - 60 Day Free Trial

NEW **£550**
OR LESS



NAD • VISO HP50 HEADPHONES



£229
OR LESS

SENNHEISER MOMENTUM HEADPHONES



£199.95
OR LESS

WHAT IF? AWARDS 2013
BEST HEADPHONE

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Real Stores

Sevenoaks Sound & Vision have 26 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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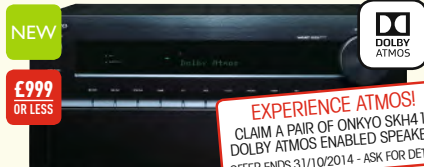
SEVENOAKS
SOUND & VISION



£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



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CLAIM A PAIR OF ONKYO SK-H410
DOLBY ATMOS ENABLED SPEAKERS
OFFER ENDS 31/10/2014 - ASK FOR DETAILS

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



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

£479
OR LESS

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

£550
OR LESS

YAMAHA • RX-V377 • AV RECEIVER

The new Yamaha RX-V377 offers 4K Ultra HD pass-through and is sure to provide great sounding home cinema.
Also Available: YAMAHA RX-V477



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



NEW

£399
OR LESS



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

£399.95
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

£499
OR LESS



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.



NEW

£799
OR LESS



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.



£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

£1499
OR LESS



YAMAHA • YSP-1400 DIGITAL SOUND PROJECTOR

The Yamaha YSP-1400 soundbar reproduces presence-rich sound over a wide area. Supporting both Bluetooth and a dedicated app for smartphone control, this new-generation soundbar increases enjoyment and convenience.



£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.



£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.



£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.



£1939
OR LESS

B&W • MT-60D • SPEAKER PACKAGE

Speaker package combining M-1 speakers with the stunning power and control of a PV1D 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



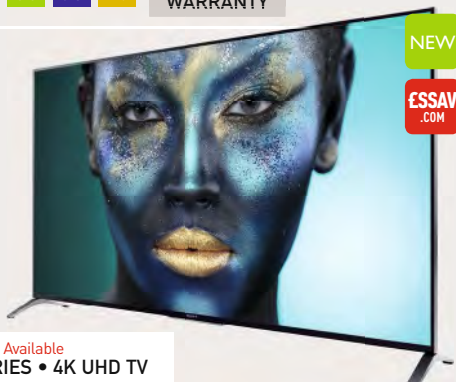
SONY 4K

X8 SERIES • 4K UHD TV

The new Sony X8 series 4K UHD LED TV boasts four times more detail than Full HD, 4K gives stunningly natural images, not pixels. Dramatically higher image quality means that you can sit closer to the screen, filling more of your field of view until the screen disappears and you are enjoying an at-the-movies experience.

49 55 65 FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY

Also Available
SONY X9 SERIES • 4K UHD TV



SONY

S90 SERIES • CURVED 4K UHD TV

The new S90 is Sony's first ever range of curved TVs. Available in two screen sizes: 65in and 75in, the S90 series boasts 4K Ultra HD resolution. Features and specifications include Sony's 4K X-Reality PRO picture engine, Triluminos colour technology, Motionflow XR800Hz, edge-lit LED backlighting, active 3D and a detachable Skype camera.

Sound is provided by Sony's new 4.2-channel multi-angle live speaker system which allows for "expansive, uncompromised 360-degree surround sound". Other features include Sony's Social Viewing for watching with friends over Skype, Live Football Mode, One-touch mirroring and Photo share.

FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY 4K 65 75



SONY • W7 SERIES • FULL HD TV

32 42 FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY



PANASONIC • AX802 SERIES • 4K UHD TV

50 58 65 FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY



SAMSUNG • HU7500 SERIES • 4K UHD TV

48 55 65 75 FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY



ARCAM • FMJ UDP411 • 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

With more than ten years of digital video experience, not to mention global recognition of its efforts, Arcam is proud to announce the arrival of its newest disc player, the UDP411. 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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SOUND & VISION



LCD, LED & plasma TVs

LCD	Once only in smaller screens; now the most common type of panel
LED	This refers to the kind of backlighting used on an LCD panel
Plasma	The rival to LCD, now usually only seen on larger screens

The shortlist



AWARD WINNER

Sony KDL-32W706B

Awards 2014: Best 32in TV

"It may not be quite the most accomplished picture out there, but a tempting price puts it right at the top of our wishlist."



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

Samsung UE48H6400

Awards 2014: Best 47-52in TV

"It's a subtler, more controlled and balanced picture, and we think that the TV giant has got its approach just right this year."



AWARD WINNER

Samsung UE55HU7500

Awards 2014: Best 52-60in TV

"It looks great across all resolutions and it has plenty of good features. If you're looking to get a 4K TV right now, look no further."

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Type	Size (in)	Resolution	Smart	Active 3D	Passive 3D	Freeview	FreeSat	HDMI	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Up to £500														
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 32H8075-T	200	11.14/ST	★★★★★	Decent picture and smart features – cracking value for the price	LED	32	1366x768	●					3	43x73x6
Finlux 40F8073-T	330	03.14/GT	★★★★★	ATV with a sharp, exciting picture at a terrific price	LED	40	1920x1080	●					3	55x93x4
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-32AS500B	300	11.14/ST	★★★★★	A multi-talented set but its picture could do with some more subtlety	LED	32	1366x768	●					2	47x73x7
Panasonic TX-L32E6B	380	01.14/GT	★★★★★	Quite simply one of the best 32in TVs we've tested	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
Philips 32PHT4509/12	280	11.14/ST	★★★★★	Insightful, refined and available at a good price. Worth a look	LED	32	1366x768	●					2	42x72x6
Polaroid 3-32-LED-14	200	11.14/ST	★★★★★	Another tempting package from Polaroid	LED	32	1366x768	●					3	44x74x10
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 UE32H6400	460	11.14/ST	★★★★★	Near flawless. Pricey, but comes with a bundle of features	LED	32	1920x1080	●					4	43x73x6
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-32W706B	350	11.14/ST	★★★★★	Best 32in TV, Awards 2014	LED	32	1920x1080	●					4	43x73x6
Sony KDL-40W605B	450	10.14/ST	★★★★★	Best 40-46in TV, Awards 2014	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
£500-£2000														
Finlux 42FME2425-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

TELEVISIONS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Type	Size (in)	Resolution	Smart	Active 3D	Passive 3D	Freeview	Freesat	HDMI	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
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
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
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	★★★★★	Best budget 47-52in TV, Awards 2013	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

WHAT HI·FI?
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NOVEMBER 2014

HIGH RES AUDIO

BLUESOUND
HiFi for a wireless generation



The new multi-room wireless streaming system from Bluesound offers high-resolution 24-bit playback. There are five components in the Bluesound range, available in gloss black or gloss white, which can be controlled using iOS or Android apps on a smartphone or tablet. Prices start from £399.

NODE Hi-Res Wireless Music Streamer
POWERNODE Hi-Res Wireless Music Streamer / Amplifier
VAULT Hi-Res Music Server / CD Ripper
PULSE Hi-Res Wireless Speaker System
DUO 2.1 Speaker System

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Other brands available include: SONOS Bowers & Wilkins SAMSUNG

SOME BRANDS ARE NOT AVAILABLE AT ALL STORES

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TELEVISIONS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Type	Size (in)	Resolution	Smart	Active 3D	Passive 3D	Freeview	FreeSat	HDMI	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
£500-£2000													
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	★★★★★	Best 47-52in TV, Awards 2014. Product of the Year	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	★★★★★	Best 40-42in TV, Awards 2012.	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-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 as we'd like but this is still a strong 4K set	LED	65	3840x2160	●	●	●	●	5	84x146x4
Samsung KE55S9C	7000	01.14/GT	★★★★★	An excellent first step for large screen OLED TVs	OLED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	78x142x14
Samsung 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	★★★★★	Best 52-60in TV, Awards 2014	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	3500	08.14/FT	★★★★★	Best 60in+ TV, Awards 2014	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 upscaled content but it looks great with 4K	LED	65	3840x2160	●	●	●	●	4	88x172x10

5 ways to... calibrate your TV



1 First things first Make sure all cables and connections are secure, that your room's lighting is as it will be when you normally watch TV, and that the screen's been powered up for at least half an hour.

2 Dig out a disc If you've bought DVDs in the past few years you'll almost certainly be in possession of an Optimiser menu. Check www.thx.com for a full list of title that include THX menus.

3 Wield those remotes You'll need your disc player's remote control to navigate the Optimiser, and your TV's handset to make adjustments to your screen's contrast,

colour, brightness and sharpness. Use the Optimiser movie clip to finesse motion processing too – it's an easy one to overlook.

4 Spend a bit more £5 or so put the way of www.thx.com buys you a pair of blue-lensed glasses, which you'll need to adjust your screen's tint (colour temperature).

5 Spend a lot more The Imaging Science Foundation trains TV dealers to calibrate TV to professional standards, and for the not-inconsiderable sum of £250 they'll visit your home and make sure you're getting the very best from your TV. If fine-tuning is your thing, it doesn't get better than this.



Blu-ray players

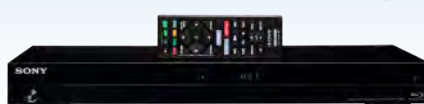
Smart ability _____ Extends the viewing choice beyond discs with apps like BBC iPlayer
Multichannel out _____ Analogue outputs that feed high quality sound to a non-HDMI receiver
Twin HDMI outputs _____ These are used if you have two displays, say a projector and a TV

The shortlist



AWARD WINNER
Sony BDP-S5200

Awards 2014: Best Blu-ray player up to £150
 "With the BDP-S5200, you can't go wrong for the money."



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
Sony BDP-S7200

Awards 2014: Best Blu-ray player £150-£300
 "There's no shortage of Blu-ray players out there, but the BDP-S7200 stands out."



AWARD WINNER
Panasonic DMP-BDT700

Awards 2014: Best Blu-ray player £300+
 "The BDT700 proves itself worthy, both in its class-leading technology and picture."

Also consider

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		HDMI out	Optical out	Co-axial out	Multichannel out	Dimensions (hwd,cm)
Up to £500									
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

SONY



STR-DN1050

7.2-CHANNEL AV RECEIVER • £479

Take your home entertainment experience to exciting new levels with the STR-DN1050. For an immersive viewing experience there's 4K upscaling and pass-through, while High-Resolution Audio brings the experience of live music to your living room. It's simple to stream the latest tunes thanks to a variety of online music services.

Features Bluetooth, DLNA and AirPlay capabilities along with Spotify Connect functionality and a number of music services built into the amp, including TuneIn Radio, Deezer and Sony Music Unlimited



Take your music enjoyment to new heights with High Resolution Audio



Available in Silver or Black

HAP-S1

HI-RES AUDIO PLAYER SYSTEM • £799



- Take your listening beyond CD quality playing High-Resolution Audio files
- With DSEE you can enjoy compressed music at high resolution
- Copy music files to the hard drive over Wi-Fi. New music files added to your PC will get copied automatically
- Easily browse your music using the front-panel LCD or use the dedicated smartphone app as a remote control
- The HAP-S1 has a huge 500GB hard drive, so you can store a large amount of hi-res and compressed music files
- Play Hi-Res Audio from a variety of compressed and non-compressed formats including FLAC, WAV, AIFF, DSD (DFF) and DSD (DSF)

ADVERT VALID UNTIL 19/11/2014. E&OE

Other brands available include: Bowers & Wilkins MONITOR AUDIO PMC

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BLU-RAY PLAYERS continued

BLU-RAY PLAYERS continued					HDMI out	Optical out	Co-axial out	Multichannel out	Dimensions (hwd,cm)
Product	£	Tested	Verdict						
Up to £500									
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
Panasonic DMP-BWT740	455	11.14/FT	★★★★★	Mightily impressive, this Blu-ray spinner is a multimedia beast	2	1	1	No	6x43x24
Philips BDP3380	80	01.14/GT	★★★★★	A very good performer that lacks some smart features	1	0	1	No	4x41x21
Pioneer BDP-160	120	01.14/GT	★★★★★	This entry-level unit is pretty spartan, but it delivers an impressive performance	2	0	1	No	6x44x25
Pioneer BDP-450	225	01.12/FT	★★★★★	This budget deck is a real rival for the top performers	1	0	1	No	9x44x25
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	★★★★★	Best Blu-ray player up to £100, Awards 2013	1	0	1	No	4x36x20
Sony BDP-S5100	140	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Best Blu-ray player £100-£150, Awards 2013	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-S5200	95	Aw.14/FT	★★★★★	Best Blu-ray player up to £150, Awards 2014	1	0	1	No	4x27x20
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	230	09.14/FT	★★★★★	Best Blu-ray player £150-£300, Awards 2014. Product of the Year	1	0	1	No	5x43x21
Sony BDP-S790	200	09.13/GT	★★★★★	Best Blu-ray player £150-£300, Awards 2013.	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	★★★★★	Best Blu-ray player £300+, Awards 2014	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	★★★★★	Best Blu-ray player £300+, Awards 2013	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)
Up to £1000													
BenQ W1070+	650	11.14/GT	★★★★★	For a first home cinema, this would be a great projector	DLP	1.15-1.5	1920x1080	2200	2	0	1	1	10x31x24 2.75
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-TW5200	700	11.14/GT	★★★★★	For £700 it's an impressive projector with a few niggles	DLP	1.22-1.47:1	1920x1080	2000	2	0	1	0	10.5x30x25 3
Epson EH-TW5910	900	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Best projector up to £1000, Awards 2013	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
InFocus IN8606HD	650	11.14/GT	★★★★★	Good detail and punch, but rivals have the edge over it	DLP	1.22-1.47:1	1920x1080	2000	2	0	1	1	26x28.5x12 3
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
£1000-£3000													
BenQ W1400	1000	Aw.14/FT	★★★★★	Best projector up to £1500, Awards 2014	DLP	1.07-1.71	1920x1080	2200	2	0	1	1	12x34x28 4
Epson EH-TW6100W	1600	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	Best projector £1000-£2000, Awards 2013	LCD	1.32-2.15:1	1920x1080	2300	2	0	1	1	14x42x37 6
Epson EH-TW7200	1900	Aw.14/FT	★★★★★	Best projector £1500-£2000, Awards 2014. Product of the Year	LCD	1.34-2.87:1	1920x1080	2000	2	0	1	1	16x47x40 8
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	0.321	1280x800	500	3	0	1	0	15x34x29 5
Sony VPL-HW55ES	2800	04.14/GT	★★★★★	Best projector £2000+, Awards 2014	SKRD	n/a	1920x1080	1700	2	0	0	1	18x41x46 9.6
£3000 and above													
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-LIA	n/a	1920x1080	1300	2	0	1	1	18x46x47 15
Panasonic PT-AT6000E	3000	04.14/GT	★★★★★	Best projector £2000+, Awards 2013	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



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



AWARD WINNER
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."



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
Sony STR-DN1050

"Following the success of the STR-DN1040 was never going to be an easy task, but Sony has undoubtedly managed it."



AWARD WINNER
Pioneer SC-LX58

"If you're making the jump from an entry-level multichannel amp, prepare to be amazed. This is a terrific piece of kit."

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Channels (power/w)	HDMI in	HDMI out	Networking	3D pass through	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Up to £300									
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	★★★★★	Best home cinema amplifier up to £350, Awards 2013	5x100	4	1	●	15x44x32
Yamaha RX-V377	250	07.14/FT	★★★★★	Best home cinema amplifier up to £350, Awards 2014	5x70	4	1	●	15x44x32
£300-£500									
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
£500-£1000									
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	●	17x44x33
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-DN1040	500	08.13/GT	★★★★★	Best home cinema amplifier £350-£700, Awards 2013.	7x100	8	2	●	16x43x32
Sony STR-DN1050	500	09.14/GT	★★★★★	Best home cinema amplifier £350-£700, Awards 2014. Product of the Year	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-V675	500	08.13/GT	★★★★★	A powerful and thrilling amplifier for the money	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
£1000-£2000									
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	★★★★★	Best home cinema amplifier £700-£1500, Awards 2013	9x190	9	3	●	19x44x44
Pioneer SC-LX58	1400	11.14/FT	★★★★★	Best home cinema amplifier £700-£1500, Awards 2014	9x190	8	3	●	19x44x44
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 & AMPLIFIERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Channels / power (w)	HDMI in	HDMI out	Networking	3D passthrough	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
£2000 and above									
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	★★★★★	Best home cinema amplifier £1500+, Awards 2013	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



Bowers & Wilkins ASW610



Bowers & Wilkins ASW610XP



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)
Up to £500																		
B&W ASW610	450	05.09/GT	★★★★★	Best subwoofer up to £700, Awards 2011	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
£500-£1000																		
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
£1000 and above																		
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	★★★★★	Best subwoofer £700+, Awards 2011	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

Peter Tyson

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Surround speakers

Full size _____ Traditional cabinet design that's big but can deliver a great sound
 Style _____ Compact speakers that make a lot of sense in smaller living spaces
 Bipole/Dipole _____ Surround speaker designs that give a more cohesive soundfield

The shortlist



AWARD WINNER
Q Acoustics 2000i 5.1

Awards 2014: Best Traditional Pack up to £700



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

Dali Zensor 15.1

Awards 2014: Best Traditional Pack £700-£1500



AWARD WINNER

Monitor Audio Radius R90HT1

Awards 2014: Best Style package £1400-£1800

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Front speaker (hwd, cm)	Center speaker (hwd, cm)	Rear speaker (hwd, cm)	Subwoofer (hwd, cm)	Finishes
Up to £500								
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 S426 HCS3	350	01.12/FT	★★★★★	A worthy home cinema solution	91x18x24	12x34x12	21x12x12	n/a 3
Tannoy HTS-101	400	09.11/GT	★★★★★	Best style package up to £700, Awards 2014	16x11x14	11x25x17	16x11x14	42x28x37 1
Wharfedale DX-1HCP	400	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★	Gets a lot right for this kind of money	19x12x12	12x29x12	19x12x12	34x29x32 2
£500-£1000								
Boston Ac. SoundWare S	510	02.12/FT	★★★★★	Dinky yet substantial-sounding	14x14x14	14x14x14	14x14x14	34x32x44 2
Dali Zensor 1 5.1	980	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	Best traditional package £700-£1500, Awards 2014. Product of the Year	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	32x34x27 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	★★★★★	Best traditional package up to £700, Awards 2014	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	★★★★★	Best style package £700-£1000, Awards 2014	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
£1000-£2000								
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



Spendor D7 Technology or Music?

Spendor'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. Spendör D7's set the standard for speakers at this price.

What Hi-Fi Oct 2013

Let the technology work - Hear the music

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SURROUND SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Frontspeaker (hwd, cm)	Center speaker (hwd, cm)	Rear speaker (hwd, cm)	Subwoofer (hwd, cm)	Finishes
B&W MT-50	1100	11.13/ST	★★★★★	Best style package £1000-£1400, Awards 2014	25x11x16	25x11x16	25x11x16	26x26x33	2
B&W MT-60D	1950	05.12/GT	★★★★★	Best style package £1800+, Awards 2014	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	1650	10.13/FT	★★★★★	Best traditional package £1500-£2500, Awards 2014	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/GT	★★★★★	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
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	★★★★★	Best style package £1400-£1800, Awards 2014	20x13x14	17x46x17	20x13x14	33x32x33	3
Quad L-lite Plus 5.1 package	1200	12.13/FT	★★★★★	A fine package that's up against some formidable rivals at this price	25x14x18	15x38x17	25x14x18	31x24x24	3
Tannoy Rev. Compact 5.1	1300	12.10/GT	★★★★★	Exceptional sound in the average living room	27x15x16	15x30x16	39x31x34	32x29x29	2
£2000 and above									
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 683 Theatre	2750	11.14/GT	★★★★★	A talented and entertaining speaker package that doesn't quite captivate	99x19x36	22x59x30	31.5x16x23	33x33x38	2
B&W CM9 Theatre	4200	09.11/FT	★★★★★	Best traditional package £3500+, Awards 2013	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
KEFR100 5.1	2850	06.14/GT	★★★★★	Best traditional package £2500-£3500, Awards 2014	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
PMC DB1i 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

Setting up your subwoofer

Positioning counts

Place your sub where you usually sit, connect it, and then disconnect your speakers (at the amp end). Play music with good bass and then walk around the room, listening to the low frequencies. You'll hear lifts in several places,

caused by the interaction of the bass notes and your room's acoustics. These are 'nodes' and your sub will go in one of these locations.

Less can mean more

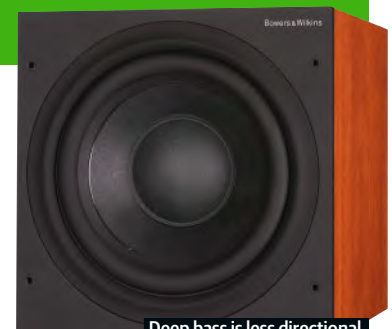
Don't turn the volume up too much on your sub, it's a common failing we hear.

Bass should underpin your sound and contribute where appropriate – but not dominate.

Let music help you

The best way to set your sub levels is to play a piece of stereo music that you're familiar with: turn the subwoofer's

volume level up until you can just hear the bass starting to dominate a little too much – and then drop the volume back a tad. It's not a completely scientific method, but it does work and will help in finding the best way to integrate your sub.



Deep bass is less directional than treble or mid-range, so you can put your sub almost anywhere

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What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.
5 Year Supercare £32.50

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– What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.
5 Year Supercare £39.90

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DENON DCD720, PMA720 & CAMBRIDGE AUDIO SX50 (PAIR)
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 £509.95 | 5 Year Supercare £39.95

£399.95

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED

DALI IKON 1 MK2 SPEAKERS (PAIR)
"You really must audition these."
– What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.
5 Year Supercare £52.95

£529.95

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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.

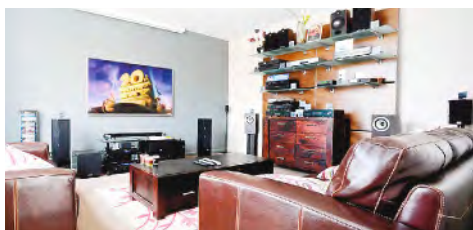
SYSTEM TSP £749.95 | 5 Year Supercare £59.95

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– What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.
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ROKSAN K3 CD & K3 AMP
Hot off the press, Roksan's brand new K3 components are sure to please even the most discerning audiophile listener. Fully equipped with Bluetooth for easy pairing and available in 3 opulent finishes, the K3 range is a delight for the ears and the eyes. Detailed, crisp and expansive, the sound quality of these stunning separates deserves an audition.
5 Year Supercare Only £125 each

£1250 each

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PIONEER X-SMC11 MINI SYSTEM INC SPEAKERS (PAIR)

With an Apple Lightning dock, CD, DAB tuner and USB, the sleek Pioneer XSMC11DAB packs it in!

TSP £179.95 | 5 Year Supercare only 10% Of Purchase Price

VIP CLUB PRICE

REGULAR PRICE £149.95

£129.95

DAB+ Made for iPhone

SAVE £200

CAMBRIDGE ONE & MINX XL MINI SYSTEM INC SPEAKERS (PAIR)

With all you might need in one, stylish box, the Cambridge Audio ONE gives you quality sound without the bulk!

Usually £549.90
5 Year Supercare Only £34.95

FREE pair of MINX XL speakers worth £200

£349.95

ALSO AVAILABLE IN WHITE

SAVE £200

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO MINX Xi STREAMING MINI HI-FI SYSTEM

"A terrific streaming system." – What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.

Usually £599.95
5 Year Supercare Only £39.95

£399.95

ALSO AVAILABLE IN WHITE

WiFi Internet Radio Bluetooth

SAVE £80

DENON DM39 BLACK & TANNOY MERCURY V1 (PAIR)

Denon have always delivered quality mini systems, and the DM39 continues that tradition. We've paired the DM39 with the fantastic Tannoy V1 speakers, for superb sound quality.

TSP £329.95 | 5 Year Supercare £24.95

£249.95

DAB+ Made for iPhone

Call for individual unit prices

SAVE £100

MARANTZ MCR510 STREAMING MINI SYSTEM & DALI ZENSOR 1 SPEAKERS (PAIR)

Stream all the music from the internet and listen in style with this superb Marantz/DALI combination. Sweet and crisp with bags of low-end punch, this system has plenty to recommend it.

SYSTEM TSP £449.95 | 5 Year Supercare £34.95

£349.95

Call for individual unit prices

SPEAKERS ALSO AVAILABLE IN WALNUT & WHITE

Internet Radio WiFi AirPlay

SAVE £150

MARANTZ MCR610 MELODY MEDIA & MONITOR AUDIO BRONZE BX2 (PAIR)

It's no surprise these two award winners sound stunning paired up together: a real winning combination.

SYSTEM TSP £699.95 | 5 Year Supercare Only 10% Of Purchase Price

REGULAR PRICE £579.95

VIP CLUB PRICE £549.95

£549.95

Call for individual unit prices

SPEAKERS ALSO AVAILABLE IN OAK & WALNUT

Internet Radio WiFi AirPlay

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LAST FEW

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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).

SYSTEM TSP £2649.95 | 5 Year Supercare £199.95

£1999.95

Call for individual unit prices

SPEAKERS ALSO AVAILABLE IN WALNUT

Hi-Fi Choice

SAVE £400

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO 851A AMPLIFIER, 851C CD PLAYER & AEROMAX 6 SPEAKERS (PAIR)

"This refined and revealing pairing delivers a dynamic, clean and engaging result with pretty much anything you care to play."

– Hi-Fi Choice magazine (851A & 851C).

SYSTEM TSP £3399.95 | 5 Year Supercare Only £299.95

£2999.95

Call for individual unit prices

SPEAKERS ALSO AVAILABLE IN WHITE

ARCAM audiolab audioquest

Cambridge Audio CYYRUS

DALI DYNAUDIO FOCAL THE SPIRIT OF SOUND

GRADO KEF marantz

MISSION QED MUSICAL FIDELITY

MONITOR AUDIO ROKSAN

Pioneer Pro-Ject

SENNHEISER SHURE

SONY TANNOY YAMAHA

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SONOS

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
SYSTEMS BEST MULTI-ROOM SYSTEM SONOS

Best Buy
Which?
Sound Bars September 2013

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Samsung offer an impressive range of wireless multi-room speakers to accompany the modern lifestyle. From compact solutions to soundbars and even TV streaming, the Smart just got smarter.

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
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- What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
HEADPHONES BEST OVERALL SOUND QUALITY SENNHEISER MOMENTUM

£199.95

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED

GRADO SR325E HEADPHONES
"The musical, detailed sound of the Grados makes them a truly top buy."
- What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.

£299.95

SAVE £40

SHURE SRH1540 HEADPHONES
"It's hard to imagine anyone having something bad to say about these."
- digitaltrends.com
TSP £469.95

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2014
★★★★★ OCTOBER 2014

£429.95

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED

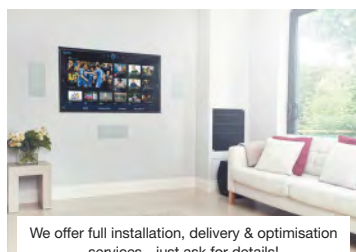
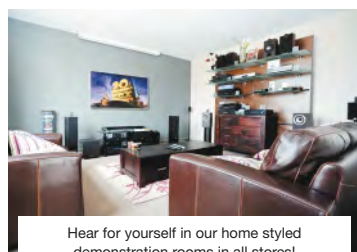
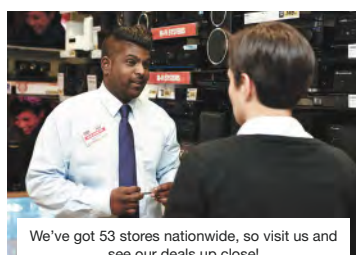
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TEST WINNER
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NOVEMBER 2014

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Freeview HD
ALSO 39", 42"
& 47"

SONY BRAVIA KDL32W706B
32" LED SMART TV
"Impressing us across the board,
more than enough to bag five stars."
- What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.

TSP £419

£349



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PANASONIC VIERA TX42A650B
42" 3D SMART LED TV
"Picture quality is outstanding"
- Customer review from richersounds.com.

TSP £599.95

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SAMSUNG UE48H6400
48" 3D SMART LED TV
"Stands head and shoulders above
the competition."
- What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
★★★★★
AUGUST 2014

WiFi
DUAL
CORE
QUAD
CORE
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& 55"

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SONY BRAVIA KD49X850B
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"Excellent levels of detail" - Customer
review from richersounds.com.

TSP £1599

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WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
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SEPTEMBER 2014

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CORE
Freeview HD
freesat HD
ALSO 65", 75"
& 85"

SAMSUNG UE55HU7500
55" CURVED 4K ULTRA HD 3D
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"Top marks for another outstanding all-rounder from
Samsung... The picture has plenty of detail and a real sense
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has plenty of good features. If you're looking to get a 4K TV
right now, look no further."
- What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.

£2199



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QUAD
CORE
Freeview HD
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Offering both 4K Ultra HD and a curved
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Smart TV

PANASONIC VIERA TX55AX902
55" 4K ULTRA HD
3D SMART LED TV
Cutting edge technology that delivers
incredible image quality.

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WiFi
DUAL
CORE
QUAD
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Freeview HD
freesat HD
CURVED
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SAMSUNG UE78HU8500
78" 4K ULTRA HD 3D
SMART LED TV
"Highly detailed, providing an
immersive yet natural sense of
sharpness." - HDTVtest.co.uk.

£6499

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Our extensive range will suit all
tastes and budgets.

Sharing your passion for movies

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BENQ W1070+
3D PROJECTOR
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SOUND AND VISION
PROJECTORS
AWARDS 2013
★★★★★
FULL 1080p HD
READY
REGULAR PRICE

PANASONIC PTAT6000
3D PROJECTOR
"Detailed, dynamic & confident."
- What Hi-Fi? S&V magazine.

TSP £2999.95

£2299.95
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**LOWEST
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GUARANTEED**

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5 YEAR
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SONY VPLHW55
3D SXRD PROJECTOR
"Nothing short of stunning."
- What Hi-Fi? S&V magazine.

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
★★★★★
APRIL 2014
FULL 1080p HD
READY

£2799.95



**NEW
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**FREE
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GUARANTEE**

SONY VPLVW300ES
3D SXRD PROJECTOR
4K ULTRA HD
"It blew our... socks off."
- trustedreviews.com.

£5849.95

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VIP CLUB PRICE £179.95

PIONEER VSX329 AV RECEIVER
 All the features you need, plus Pioneer's legendary sound quality.
 TSP £249.95 | 5 Year Supercare Only 10% of Purchase Price

SAVE £200

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION TEST WINNER ★★★★★ JULY 2014

YAMAHA RXV377 AV RECEIVER
 "Superb surround sound on a budget."
 – What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision mag.
 5 Year Supercare £23.90

£239

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ALSO AVAILABLE VSX824 ONLY £299.95

PIONEER VSX924 AV RECEIVER
 Fantastic streaming capabilities paired with Pioneer's sweet, detailed sound.
 TSP £499 | 5 Year Supercare £44.90

£449

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DOLBY ATMOS UPGRADABLE

FREE Atmos speakers worth £130
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ONKYO TXNR636 AV RECEIVER
 "Gaming and movies are such a pleasure."
 – customer review on richersounds.com.
 5 Year Supercare £49.95

£499.95

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ALSO AVAILABLE STRDN850 ONLY £399.95

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION ★★★★★ SEPTEMBER 2014

SONY STRDN1050 AV RECEIVER
 "A seriously good amp that balances muscle and subtlety" – What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.
 5 Year Supercare £47.90

£479

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION ★★★★★ SEPTEMBER 2014

YAMAHA RXV677 AV RECEIVER
 "An endlessly entertaining receiver that's full of character." – What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.
 5 Year Supercare £55.90

£559

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VIP CLUB PRICE £699.95

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ALSO RXA1040 ONLY £999.95

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WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013 ★★★★★ NOVEMBER 2014
 PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
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FREE Atmos speakers worth £130
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DOLBY ATMOS UPGRADABLE

ONKYO TXNR838 AV RECEIVER & DALI ZENSOR 15.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE
 Thanks to improvements in audio fidelity, the TXNR838 is a great partner to the hi-fi sound of the DALIs. What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine described the Zensors as "enthusiastic and engaging performers that make sure the listener has a good time."
 TSP £1978.95 | 5 Year Supercare Only 10% Of Purchase Price

REGULAR PRICE **£1699.95**
VIP CLUB PRICE £1599.95

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WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013 ★★★★★ NOVEMBER 2014
 SPEAKER PACKAGE
 CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AERO 5.1

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION ★★★★★ NOVEMBER 2014

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Upgrade to SCLX88 for only £500 more.

PIONEER BDPLX58 BLU-RAY PLAYER & SCLX58 AV RECEIVER & CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AERO 5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE
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PANASONIC DMPBDT700
SMART 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

"As talented with sound as it is with picture"
- What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.

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WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
★★★★★
AUGUST 2014

WiFi 4K ULTRA HD UPSCALING

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ALSO WITH MULTI-REGION DVD PLAYBACK £234.95

SONY BDP57200
SMART 4K 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

"Serves up a classy picture and stunning sound."
- What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.

5 Year Supercare £21.49

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
★★★★★
SEPTEMBER 2014

DUAL CORE WiFi 4K ULTRA HD UPSCALING

SAVE £100



PANASONIC DMRBW740
SMART 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

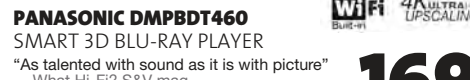
"A multimedia beast and a must-buy if you want to record to Blu-ray or DVD disc."
- What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.

TSP £550 | 5 Year Supercare £44.90

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
★★★★★
NOVEMBER 2014

WiFi 4K ULTRA HD UPSCALING

SAVE £150



YAMAHA YSP1400
SOUNDBAR

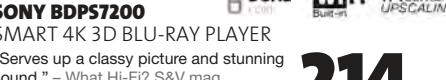
"Big, enveloping sound"
- What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.

TSP £399.95
5 Year Supercare Only 10% Of Purchase Price

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
★★★★★
MAY 2014

Bluetooth

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED



CANTON DM50
SOUNDBASE

"With gorgeous sound and looks, this Canton is an immensely satisfying improvement to TV sound."
- What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.

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WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
★★★★★
FEBRUARY 2014

Bluetooth

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED



YAMAHA YSP2500
SOUNDBAR

"Looks amazing, and features wireless subwoofer and bluetooth connectivity."
- customer review on richersounds.com.

5 Year Supercare £79.90

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
★★★★★
NOVEMBER 2014

Bluetooth

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED



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

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
★★★★★
MAY 2014

Bluetooth

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED



Q ACOUSTICS Q70001
5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

"If you have £900 to spend on a small style-speaker package, spend it here."
- What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.

5 Year Supercare £89.90

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
★★★★★
MAY 2014

Bluetooth

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED



CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AERO
5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

5 Year Supercare Only 10% Of Purchase Price

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
★★★★★
MAY 2014

Bluetooth

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED



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

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
★★★★★
MAY 2014

Bluetooth

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED



Q ACOUSTICS Q70001
5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

"If you have £900 to spend on a small style-speaker package, spend it here."
- What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.

5 Year Supercare £89.90

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
★★★★★
MAY 2014

Bluetooth

SAVE £100



CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AERO
5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

5 Year Supercare Only 10% Of Purchase Price

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
★★★★★
MAY 2014

Bluetooth

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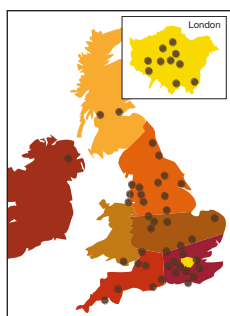
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Birmingham 0333 900 0023	Chester 0333 900 0063	Hull 0333 900 0059	London Chelsea 0333 900 0027	Swiss Cottage 0333 900 0031	Norwich 0333 900 0046	Reigate 0333 900 0081	Watford 0333 900 0037
Bournemouth 0333 900 0058	Eton 0333 900 0087	Leeds 0333 900 0025	London Chiswick 0333 900 0055	London West End 0333 900 0028	Nottingham 0333 900 0035	Romford 0333 900 0041	Weybridge 0333 900 0083
Brighton 0333 900 0039	Edinburgh 0333 900 0026	Leicester 0333 900 0043	London City 0333 900 0045	Manchester 0333 900 0086	Oxford 0333 900 0052	Sheffield 0333 900 0034	York 0333 900 0084
Bristol 0333 900 0024	Exeter 0333 900 0061	Lichfield 0333 900 0089	London Croydon 0333 900 0033	Maidstone 0333 900 0062	Plymouth 0333 900 0047	Solihull 0333 900 0090	Customer Service 0333 900 0095
Cambridge 0333 900 0053	Glasgow 0333 900 0038	Liverpool 0333 900 0030		Middlesbrough 0333 900 0096	Preston 0333 900 0080	Southampton 0333 900 0036	

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CD players

Integrated _____ Has both a CD mechanism and digital-to-analogue conversion tech
Transport _____ Needs an outboard DAC but can deliver a higher standard of sound

The shortlist



AWARD WINNER
Marantz CD6005

Awards 2014: Best CD Player up to £500



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
Cyrus CDi

Awards 2014: Best CD Player £500-£1500



AWARD WINNER
Roksan Caspian M2 CD

Awards 2014: Best CD Player £1500+

Also consider

Also consider					Integrated Transport	Co-axial out	Optical out	XLR out	Headphone out	Co-axial in	Optical in	AES/EBU in	USB in	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	
Product	£	Tested	Verdict													
Up to £500																
Cambridge Audio Azur 351C	300	11.12/FT	★★★★★	A worthy rival to the Award-winning Marantz CD6004	●	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	9x43x31	
Cambridge Audio Azur 651C	450	03.12/FT	★★★★★	A spacious sounding disc spinner	●	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	9x43x31	
Marantz CD6004	300	01.12/ST	★★★★★	Best CD player up to £500, Awards 2012	●	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	2	11x44x34	
Marantz CD6005	350	10.13/FT	★★★★★	Best CD player up to £500, Awards 2014	●	1	1	0	1	1	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	2	7x43x28	
£500-£1000																
Arcam FMJ CD17	650	06.12/ST	★★★★★	Basic on features, but capable enough	●	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	9x43x29	
Audiolab 8200CD	800	03.14/GT	★★★★★	Best CD player £500-£1000, Awards 2012	●	1	1	1	1	0	2	2	0	1	8x44x30	
Audiolab 8200CDQ	950	09.11/FT	★★★★★	Improves on the sky-high performance of the 8200CD	●	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	0	1	8x44x30	
NAD C 546BEE	500	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Talented but struggles against the more enjoyable budget Marantz	●	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	9x44x31	
Cyrus CD Transport	750	01.12/ST	★★★★★	An impressive and affordable CD transport	●	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	8x22x36	
Cyrus CD6 SE2	700	06.12/ST	★★★★★	Subtly upgraded, with worthwhile results	●	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	8x22x36	
Naim CD5si	995	10.14/GT	★★★★★	Best CD player £500-£1500, Awards 2013	●	0	0	0	1	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	2	13x44x33	
Rega Apollo-R	550	06.12/ST	★★★★★	Admirable, but lacks some cohesion	●	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	9x22x32	
Roksan Kandy K2	900	06.12/ST	★★★★★	Big and powerful, with an entertaining sound	●	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	10x43x38	
Yamaha CD-S2000	979	03.09/GT	★★★★★	A beautiful object that's involving to listen to	●	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	14x44x44	
£1000 and above																
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	1	10x43x39	
Cyrus CD 8 SE2	1200	09.12/FT	★★★★★	Best CD player £1000-£1500, Awards 2012	●	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	8x22x36	
Cyrus CDi	1050	03.14/GT	★★★★★	Best CD player £500-£1500, Awards 2014. Product of the Year	●	1	1	0	1	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	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	1	7x43x30	
Naim CD555/555PS	18345	10.09/FT	★★★★★	The CD555/555PS has a hefty price tag, but a classy performance	●	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	11x43x31	
Naim CDX2	3640	02.10/FT	★★★★★	The tweaked CDX2 remains a fine proposition	●	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	9x43x31	
Parasound Halo CD1	5000	07.13/FT	★★★★★	Not cheap but it's a fine CD player with an idiosyncratic design	●	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	11x44x35	
Primare CD32	2200	04.11/FT	★★★★★	It's massively detailed, but not as engaging as we'd like	●	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	11x43x38	
Roksan Caspian M2 CD	1695	Aw.10/FT	★★★★★	Best CD player £1500+ Awards 2014	●	1	1	1	1	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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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

The shortlist



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

Audioquest DragonFly v1.2

Awards 2014: Best DAC up to £300



AWARD WINNER

Arcam irDAC

Awards 2014: Best DAC £300-£500



AWARD WINNER

Chord Hugo

Awards 2014: Best DAC £1000+

Also consider

Also consider					USB in	Optical in	Co-axial in	AES EBU in	HDMI in	Wireless	Headphone out	RCA out	Balanced XLR out	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Product	£	Tested	Verdict											
Up to £500														
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	★★★★★	Best DAC £300-£500, Awards 2014	0	2	2	0	0		0	1	0	4x12x19
Arcam irDAC Wireless	380	09.12/GT	★★★★★	No longer the default choice at the money, still very much a contender	1	1	1	0	0	●	0	1	0	4x16x11
Arcam miniBlink	90	05.14/GT	★★★★★	Best Bluetooth receiver, Awards 2014. Accessories Product of the Year	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		1	1	0	3x10x6
Audioengine D1	150	05.12/FT	★★★★★	A DAC and headphone amp with a fine sound	1	1	0	0	1		1	1	0	3x9x10
Audioquest DragonFly	215	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Best DAC up to £300, Awards 2012	1	0	0	0	0		1	0	0	6x2x1
Audioquest DragonFly v1.2	130	02.14/GT	★★★★★	Best DAC up to £300, Awards 2014. Product of the Year	1	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
Benchmark DAC HGC	1750	11.14/FT	★★★★★	A hugely capable DAC but there are cheaper contenders out there	1	2	2	0	0		1	2	1	5x20x21
Camb. Audio DacMagic 100	200	06.12/FT	★★★★★	An affordable, fine looking and listenable DAC	1	2	2	0	0		0	1	0	5x11x13
Camb. Audio DacMagic Plus	350	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Better sound and features than the original - but pricey	1	2	2	0	0		1	1	1	5x22x19
Camb. Audio DacMagic XS	100	02.14/GT	★★★★★	Drops down a star but still a delightful little device	0	0	0	0	0		1	0	0	5x3x1
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		1	1	0	6x17x18
Furutech ADL GT40	400	06.11/FT	★★★★★	Cables & Accessories, Awards 2011. Product of the Year	1	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		1	0	0	3x6x7
HRT microStreamer	180	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Best DAC up to £300, Awards 2013	1	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		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	1	0	3x14x8
Meridian Explorer DAC	250	07.13/GT	★★★★★	The Explorer's design and assured sonic performance makes it a top contender	1	0	0	0	0		1	0	0	2x3x10
Micromega MyDAC	260	04.13/ST	★★★★★	If you like your music to have an attacking edge, then this DAC's for you	1	0	0	0	0		1	0	0	2x3x10
Musical Fidelity V-90 DAC	200	12.13/FT	★★★★★	A well-featured DAC that's a little too relaxed in its sound	1	2	1	0	0		0	0	0	5x17x10
NAD DAC 1	295	01.12/ST	★★★★★	A good, though not exceptional, wireless DAC	1	0	0	0	0	●	0	1	0	4x14x7
NAD D 1050	400	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		1	1	1	19x6x21
Pro-Ject DAC Box DS	299	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A solid performer but doesn't excel in any area	1	1	1	0	0		0	1	0	7x10x14
£500-£1000														
Audiolab M-DAC	600	08.13/GT	★★★★★	Best DAC £500-£700, Awards 2014	1	2	2	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	★★★★★	Best DAC £700-£1000, Awards 2013	1	1	1	0	0		0	1	0	7x16x4
Chord Electronics Qute Ex	990	Aw.14/FT	★★★★★	Best DAC £700-£1000, Awards 2014	1	1	1	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	1	0	8x22x27
Musical Fidelity M1SDAC	800	08.13/FT	★★★★★	An impressive spec list but performance is trumped by cheaper rivals	1	1	2	0	0		1	1	0	10x22x31
Parasound Zdac	500	11.13/GT	★★★★★	The Zdac produces a lively, likable sound	1	1	1	0	0		1	1	1	5x22x26
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		1	1	0	7x23x26
£1000 and above														
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	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		2	1	1	11x17x19

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)
£1000 and above													
Audio Research DAC 8	4698	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Pricey, but as organic-sounding as you can get	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	13x48x25
Arcam FMJ D33	2000	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A well-equipped DAC, but not the best in class	3	2	2	1	0	0	1	2	11x43x37
Bricasti Design M1 DAC	7000	03.14/FT	★★★★★	An understated but deeply talented performer. Thoroughly impressive	1	1	2	1	1	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	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 HDSD	4995	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A top-class, visually appealing DAC that delivers brilliant sound	2	2	2	2	0	0	1	1	6x34x15
Chord Hugo	1400	07.14/GT	★★★★★	Best DAC £1000+, Awards 2014	2	1	1	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	1	1	7x45x39
McIntosh D100	3000	06.13/GT	★★★★★	A solid and entertainer performer. Well featured, too	1	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	10x45x41
Musical Fidelity M6 DAC	2000	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A mighty performer but its price and competition rob it of a fifth star	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	13x44x39
NAD M51	1500	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Best DAC £1200+, Awards 2012	1	1	1	1	2	0	1	0	8x44x30
Naim DAC	2150	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Flexible, fine sounding and future-proof. The Naim is some DAC	2	3	3	0	0	0	1	0	7x43x30
Naim DAC-V1	1250	07.14/GT	★★★★★	Best DAC £1000+, Awards 2013	1	2	3	0	0	1	1	1	9x21x32
T+A DAC 8	1250	09.13/FT	★★★★★	Beautifully engineered with a great sound to boot	1	1	4	1	0	1	1	1	9x27x27



Turntables

Turntable The main part of the player that actually spins the record
Tonearm The component that carries the cartridge across the record surface
Cartridge Turns the information in the record groove into sound

The shortlist


AWARD WINNER
Pro-Ject Essential II

Awards 2014: Best Turntable up to £400


PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
Rega RP3/Elys2

Awards 2014: Best Turntable £400-£800


AWARD WINNER
Clearaudio Concept

Awards 2014: Best Turntable £800+

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)
Up to £1000														
Audio Technica AT-LP1240USB	500	10.14/GT	★★★★★	A competent turntable than could do with more subtlety sound-wise	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1	16x45x35
Edwards Audio TT1	380	11.11/FT	★★★★★	A tempting alternative to the class-leaders at this price	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1	12x45x36
Pro-Ject Elemental	150	04.14/FT	★★★★★	A top-class budget deck from Pro-Ject	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	3	9x43x30
Pro-Ject Essential II	210	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	Best turntable up to £400, Awards 2014	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	3	14x46x36

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TURNTABLES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	33.33 — 45 78 RPM	Elec. speed change	Manual operation	Phono amp	Tonearm inc.	Cartridges inc.	USB port	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Pro-Ject 2-Xperience Basic +	600	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★								1	14x46x36
Pro-Ject 2Xperience Classic	750	12.10/FT	★★★★★								3	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

£1000 and above

Clearaudio Concept	1000	Aw.14/FT	★★★★★	Best turntable £800+, Awards 2014							1	14x42x35
Clearaudio Emotion SE	2110	11.09/FT	★★★★★	For the money, this is an excellent performer							1	8x40x32
Clearaudio Ovation/Tali. V2 Gold	5995	04.14/FT	★★★★★	Beautifully made and a pleasure to use. A fantastic performer							4	14x42x35
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	26x64x53
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	★★★★★	Best turntable £800+, Awards 2013							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

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	DAB	FM	MW	Internet	Battery	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Up to £100									
Aves Air	50	09.13/GT	★★★★★						10x6x2
iLuv Vibro Classic II	50	11.12/GT	★★★★★						7x2x8
Pure Digital Elan II	99	01.10/GT	★★★★★						16x28x9
Pure Digital Move 2500	90	11.11/FT	★★★★★						10x6x1.5
Pure Digital Move 400D	90	11.12/GT	★★★★★						8.5x15x2.7

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Other screen sizes: 48, 65, 75 & 85 Inch

Samsung
UE55HU7500
55" 4K UHD SMART LED TV

The Samsung UE55HU7500 55inch 4K UHD LED TV offers four times more detail than FHD, brighter and richer colours and the ability to let you enjoy all your favourite live TV shows and Blu-ray discs clearer than ever before. The UE55HU7500 is the must-have TV for your living room.

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RADIOs continued

The shortlist



Pure Evoke D2

Awards 2014: Best Radio up to £100



Roberts Stream 93i

Awards 2014: Best Radio £100-£200



Revo Superconnect

Awards 2014: Best Radio £200+

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	DAB	FM	MW	Internet	Battery	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Up to £100									
Pure Digital One Classic II	65	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★						15x21x7
Pure Evoke D2	85	09.13/GT	★★★★★						15x21x7
Q2 Internet radio	90	03.11/FT	★★★★★						10x10x10
Roberts Duologic	75	01.10/GT	★★★★★						15x25x83
View Quest Wifi200	80	01.11/FT	★★★★★						73x125x23
£100 and above									
Geneva World Radio DAB+	270	09.13/GT	★★★★★						17x30x7
Philips Original Radio Mini	110	09.13/GT	★★★★★						25x12x12
Pure Evoke D4 with Bluetooth	150	08.14/FT	★★★★★						18x22x12
Pure Digital Evoke Flow	150	05.10/GT	★★★★★						18x21x11
Pure Digital Evoke-1S Marshall	120	01.11/FT	★★★★★						17x22x12
Pure Evoke F4	180	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★						18x21x11
Pure Digital Oasis Flow	170	09.10/FT	★★★★★						23x16x14
Pure Digital One Flow	100	11.12/GT	★★★★★						15x21x8
Pure Digital Sensia	250	01.10/FT	★★★★★						17x28x18
Revo AXIS XS	200	11.12/GT	★★★★★						12.5x22x15
Revo AXIS X3	200	01.14/FT	★★★★★						12.5x22x15
Revo Domino D3	170	05.10/GT	★★★★★						14x22x13
Revo Heritage	230	03.10/FT	★★★★★						18x26x10
Revo Pixis	100	09.13/GT	★★★★★						13x16x16
Revo SuperConnect	250	09.14/FT	★★★★★						18x27x12
Roberts Revival Cath Kidston	200	01.11/GT	★★★★★						23x16x12
Roberts Stream 83i	150	05.10/GT	★★★★★						21x25x13
Roberts Stream 93i	150	11.14/FT	★★★★★						21x24x13
Ruark Audio R1 MkII	160	11.12/GT	★★★★★						18x13x14
Tivoli Alberg+	200	02.14/FT	★★★★★						11x19x11
Tivoli Model 10+	160	09.13/GT	★★★★★						20x12x12
View Quest Retro 1	100	12.11/GT	★★★★★						16x28x9

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NATURAL SOUND AV RECEIVER RX-V377

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RX-V3040Yamaha
RX-V377
5.1 CHANNEL AV RECEIVER

Highly-acclaimed AV receiver with 70W for each of its five channels, 4K Ultra HD pass through across its HDMI inputs and Yamaha's easy automatic calibration set-up, which makes sure the sound is tuned to suit your room acoustics. The new RX-V377 provides great sounding home cinema.

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Hi-fispeakers

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



AWARD WINNER

Wharfedale Diamond 220

Awards 2014: Best Stereo Speaker up to £200
 “If you’re looking for the finest budget speaker around the Diamond 220s are a great place to start.”



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

B&W 685 S2

Awards 2014: Best Standmounter £400-£800
 “They’re the speakers we’d put on to get our friends into hi-fi, and we can’t think of a better reason to recommend the new B&W 685s.”



AWARD WINNER

ATC SCM 11

Awards 2014: Best Standmounter up to £1200+
 “The new SCM 11s are a drastic improvement over an already talented performance, and they have the good looks to match.”

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Standmount Floorstander Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Up to £200						
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
Q Acoustics 2020i	170	04.14/ST	★★★★★	Best stereo speakers up to £200, Awards 2013	●	4 26x17x28
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 85x85x85
£200-£500						
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
Arcaydis DM1	299	10.10/GT	★★★★★	These brilliant DM1s will give every rival below £450 a fright	●	4 30x16x21
Bose Companion 20	200	05.13/GT	★★★★★	Solid, reliable speakers for buyers on a tight budget	●	1 22x9x12
Bose Computer Music Monitor	250	09.13/GT	★★★★★	Enjoyable sound for a speaker this small	●	2 12x7x12
Boston Acoustics A-25	200	08.11/GT	★★★★★	Classy and likeable speakers	●	3 27x18x23
Boston Acoustics A-26	260	01.12/ST	★★★★★	A beautifully accomplished standmounter	●	2 33x21x27
B&W 685	400	06.13/GT	★★★★★	Great Award-winning speakers from B&W. Just edged out by newer rivals	●	4 34x20x33
B&W MM-1	399	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Still good, but there's better available	●	1 17x10x10



£479
OR LESS

Sony STR-DN1050 7.1 CHANNEL AV RECEIVER

The new flagship Sony STR-DN1050 AV Receiver has built-in Bluetooth and NFC, so you can wirelessly stream music from any Smartphone. Plus this AV Receiver can now play back uncompressed high-resolution audio files via USB or DLNA.

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SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Standmount Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd,cm)
£200-£500							
Cambridge Audio SLA-25	200	05.12/GT	★★★★★	Not at all bad, but some rivals are better	●	8	22x15x18
Cambridge Audio SX-60	200	09.13/FT	★★★★★	Impressive speakers but they could do with more refinement	●	2	34x20x27
Castle Knight 2	400	02.11/GT	★★★★★	Good, but not as adaptable as we'd like	●	8	38x20x34
Dali Lektor 1	250	10.09/GT	★★★★★	As musically enjoyable as you'll buy at this price	●	2	26x15x21
Dali Lektor 2	299	03.10/GT	★★★★★	Seriously entertaining speakers and simply stunning at this money	●	2	31x18x22
Dali Lektor 3	450	08.09/GT	★★★★★	Bigger isn't always better, as the Lektor 3s prove	●	2	39x20x26
Dali Zensor 1	200	04.14/ST	★★★★★	These brilliant budget standmounters demand a listen	●	2	27x16x22
Dali Zensor 3	300	10.14/GT	★★★★★	If it's entertainment you crave, then these standmounters deliver in spades	●	3	35x21x29
EB Acoustics EB1	470	08.09/GT	★★★★★	You'll have trouble faulting these nifty standmounters	●	2	31x17x27
Epos Epic 1	325	04.11/FT	★★★★★	Punchy and exciting but they can't deliver all-round ability	●	2	31x19x25
Focal Chorus 706V	390	03.11/FT	★★★★★	Thoroughly enjoyable but they may not cut it with dance music	●	3	39x22x29
Focal XS Book	300	07.12/GT	★★★★★	A potent-sounding speaker that brings hi-fi listening to your desktop	●	1	28x11x20
Focal XS Book Wireless	300	10.13/FT	★★★★★	Stacks of detail but not quite the measure of their rivals	●	1	28x11x20
KEF Q300	450	06.13/GT	★★★★★	Not quite at the top anymore, but still fine, engaging standmounters	●	3	36x21x30
Leema Xero	495	07.08/GT	★★★★★	Not a true all-rounder, but loaded with talent	●	5	25x25x16
Monitor Audio Bronze BX 1	200	05.11/FT	★★★★★	Stylish as you like, but not the complete article	●	4	26x17x18
Monitor Audio Bronze BX2	250	07.12/ST	★★★★★	Best stereo speakers £200-£350, Awards 2012	●	4	35x19x26
Monitor Audio Silver RX1	425	06.13/GT	★★★★★	Well-made and refined speakers, just lacking the flexibility of its rivals	●	6	31x19x24
Mordaunt-Short Aviano 1XR	250	01.12/ST	★★★★★	Still great, but the rivals have caught up	●	1	28x18x27
Mordaunt-Short Aviano 2	300	03.10/FT	★★★★★	Plenty of bang for your buck, and more besides	●	3	32x21x30
Mission MX2	200	08.11/GT	★★★★★	Dynamic enough but maybe too exciting	●	4	34x21x31
Mission MX3	350	11.11/GT	★★★★★	Peppy and communicative floorstanders	●	4	82x17x34
Pioneer S-CN301-LR	200	04.14/ST	★★★★★	Polished, insightful and appealing	●	1	23x14x22
Q Acoustics Concept 20	350	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Best stereo speakers £200-£400, Awards 2014	●	2	26x17x28
Q Acoustics Q-BT3	350	06.14/ST	★★★★★	There are few products as versatile and as easy to like as the Q-BT3s at this price	●	4	31x19x24
Q Acoustics 2050i	460	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Best floorstander up to £600, Awards 2014	●	4	100x32x27
Quad 11L Classic	330	Aw.10/FT	★★★★★	Impressive standmounters but lack a touch of sparkle	●	4	31x19x24
Ruark Audio MR1	300	06.14/ST	★★★★★	Best desktop speakers, Awards 2014	●	3	17x13x14
Tangent Evo 5	200	05.09/FT	★★★★★	Considered, grown-up and a supremely easy listen	●	2	23x15x20
Tannoy Mercury V1i	150	04.14/ST	★★★★★	A stylish, self-assured pair of speakers that are well worth auditioning	●	2	30x17x26
Tannoy Mercury V4	380	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Best floorstander £350-£700, Awards 2011	●	2	97x20x28
Tannoy Mercury V4i	400	01.14/FT	★★★★★	An exciting and punchy listen, but it comes with compromises	●	1	100x20x28
Tannoy Revolution DC4	380	06.13/GT	★★★★★	Well worth considering if your listening room isn't too big	●	2	27x15x16
Tannoy Revolution DC6	400	10.12/GT	★★★★★	Best standmounter £350-£700, Awards 2012	●	1	36.5x20x25
Teufel Ultima 60	368	12.09/FT	★★★★★	Bargain speakers with a big, bold sound that's engaging and exciting	●	1	103x21x32
Triangle Color	470	06.11/FT	★★★★★	Small, but perfectly formed	●	3	29x17x24
Wharfedale Diamond 121	230	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Fabulous sound. For insight and entertainment, the 121s needn't fear any rival	●	7	32x17x23
Wharfedale Diamond 220	200	Aw.14/FT	★★★★★	Best stereo speakers up to £200, Awards 2014	●	4	50x32x41
£500-£1500							
Acoustic Energy AE1 Classic	1000	07.11/GT	★★★★★	A classic yes, but not the best around	●	2	30x18x26
Acoustic Energy AE22 Active	899	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Talented active speakers not easily matched	●	1	25x35x30
Audio Pro LV2e	700	09.12/FT	★★★★★	Wireless desktop speakers with a hi-fi flourish	●	3	98x14x24



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YSP-1400

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superbly talented soundbar
delivering captivating sound"

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YSP-2500
SOUNDBAR

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The new Yamaha YSP-2500 Digital Sound Projector reproduces overwhelmingly real presence and impact-filled bass sound. It has an ultra-refined design and high-grade aluminium chassis and is Bluetooth equipped, capable of wireless music play and App control.

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SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Standmount Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd,cm)
Audiovector Ki1 Super	800	04.12/GT	★★★★★	These pint-sized speakers lack far-reaching dynamics, but are easy to live with	●		5	98x14x24
Audiovector Ki3 Standard	1200	03.12/FT	★★★★★	Packed with resolution and speed	●		5	98x14x24
ATCSM11	1200	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	Best standmounter up to £1200, Awards 2014	●		2	38x21x25
AVIADM9.1	1125	07.12/GT	★★★★★	A simple way to make the most of your music	●		5	30x20x26
B&W 683 S2	1150	10.14/GT	★★★★★	Best floorstander £600-£1200, Awards 2014	●		2	99x19x36
B&W 685 S2	500	10.14/GT	★★★★★	Best standmounter £400-£800, Awards 2014. Product of the Year	●		2	35x19x32
B&W CM8	1250	08.11/FT	★★★★★	Stunning in some ways but not the last word in integration	●		4	96x25x30
Cabasse Minorca MC40	720	02.11/FT	★★★★★	Ideal for those who like finger-snapping ability	●		2	40x23x28
Cambridge Audio Aeromax 6	900	10.14/FT	★★★★★	Lots of potential with these speakers, however they struggle in a few areas	●		2	98x24x34
Dali Ikon 1 MK2	530	05.14/GT	★★★★★	Huge sound and good timing, these Dalis are heartily recommended	●		3	33x15x26
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	40x42x43
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	★★★★★	Best standmounter £400-£800, Awards 2013	●		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

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Intended to be positioned under a TV's pedestal stand or discreetly on a shelf below a wall-mounted flatscreen, the DM 50 uses an array of front firing drive units to create a convincing, room filling surround sound. Bass notes are taken care of by the DM 50's downward firing sub woofer, giving a simple but highly effective surround sound effect without the need for installing rear speakers.

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SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Standmount Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (WxDxH, cm)
£500-£1500							
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 floostanders will suit you	●	6	96x28x39
Monitor Audio SoundFrame 1	900	02.12/GT	★★★★★	An impressive alternative to conventional speakers		2	54x39x9
Mordaunt-Short Aviano 6	600	01.10/FT	★★★★★	A fine all-rounder, with power and bass in spades, and plenty more besides	●	3	95x21x30
Mordaunt-Short Aviano 8	750	12.09/GT	★★★★★	Great speakers for sure, but too controlled	●	3	95x21x32
Mordaunt-Short Mezzo 8	1000	03.09/FT	★★★★★	Not the best all-rounders in the Mezzo range, but still very likeable	●	2	107x22x31
Mission MX-5	600	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Physically and sonically impressive	●	4	100x25x39
Mission SX1	700	12.12/FT	★★★★★	Almost mission accomplished. Hugely capable but not as entertaining as the class leaders	●	5	31x19x29
Neat Iota	695	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Attractive but with a hefty sound too	●	5	13x20x17
Neat Motive 1	1350	02.09/GT	★★★★★	Charming unique speakers - they lean backwards	●	4	93x16x20
Neat Motive 2	945	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Cohesive, authoritative and downright exciting	●	4	77x16x20
Neat 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	★★★★★	Best floorstander £800-£1500, Awards 2013	●	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



£1399
OR LESS

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Pioneer SC-LX58 9.2 CHANNEL AV RECEIVER

Enjoy your music and movies with maximum impact. This AV receiver is driven by powerful Class D amplification and produces up to 240 watts output per channel. Additionally, it integrates the SABRE32 Ultra DAC, which is adopted to deliver exceptional sound, offering jitter-free, high quality audio.

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NOVEMBER 2014

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SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Standmount Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd,cm)
£1500 and above							
Acoustic Energy Reference 1	1500	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Terrific all-rounders for the money	●	1	31x19x28
ADAM Aud. Classic Compact 3	2800	06.10/GT	★★★★★	For those who like their music ear-poppingly loud	●	1	44x23x29
ADAM Audio Tensor Gamma	12500	05.09/FT	★★★★★	Quite possibly the best speakers we've seen in a decade	●	2	108x32x34
Audiovector S1 Avantgarde	2950	03.10/FT	★★★★★	At their best these are stunning, but not for all tastes	●	5	37x19x28
Auroral VS	1650	04.11/FT	★★★★★	When they're good, these Auroral'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 CM6 S2	1500	11.14/GT	★★★★★	Good speakers but they lack the freedom of expression that we'd expect	●	3	40x20x30
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	11.14/GT	★★★★★	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
Dynaudio Xeo 4	1775	11.14/FT	★★★★★	The Xeo 4s serve great-quality, convenient, versatile wireless sound	●	2	28x17x25
Diapason Astera	6050	02.11/FT	★★★★★	Spellbinding performance with the right kind of music	●	1	38x26x44
Eclipse TD 510Z Mk2	3840	08.12/FT	★★★★★	Superb timing, detail and imaging	●	3	98x38x39
Eclipse TD 712z Mk2	6500	10.13/GT	★★★★★	They have a few compromises but their strengths can't be matched at any price	●	4	99x35x43
Focal Diabolo 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 Easys	1800	11.13/FT	★★★★★	Convenient and easy to use, these Focals are compromised by a relaxed delivery	●	2	90x17x24
GamuT M'inenT M3	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

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D 3020
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By adapting to today's media sources and using state-of-the-art digital technology for the new world of digital music, the D 3020 puts a completely modern spin on an old icon. The D 3020 offers inputs for your computer and other digital and analogue sources plus the convenience of wireless streaming with its Bluetooth capability.

SEVENoaks
SOUND & VISION

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.soundcraftthifi.com

Chelmsford

RAYLEIGH HI-FI SOUND & VISION
216 Moulsham Street.
t: 01245 265245
www.rayleighhifi.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.rayleighhifi.com

Southend-on-Sea

RAYLEIGH HI-FI SOUND & VISION
132/4 London Road.
t: 01702 435255
www.rayleighhifi.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.oandlhifi.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.gullifordhifi.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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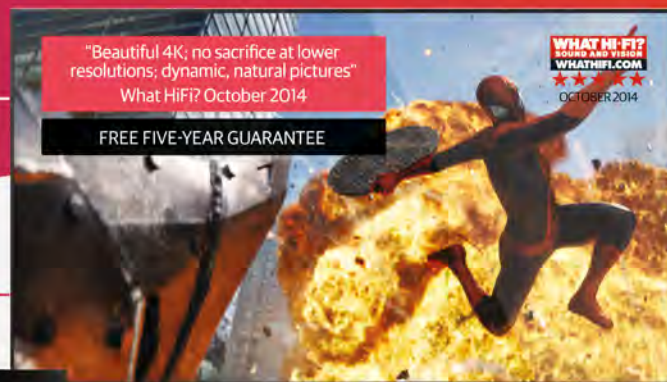
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★★★★★
OCTOBER 2014

Networked 4K Upscaling Blu-Ray/DVD Player
Sony BDP57200

RRP: £249.95
SAVE: £30.00

£219.95

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OCTOBER 2014



Networked 4K Upscaling
Blu-Ray/DVD Player
Panasonic DMPBDT460

RRP: £199.00
SAVE: £30.00

£169.00



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WHATIFI.COM
JULY 2014

Home Cinema Separates

7.2 Channel Networked
Home Cinema Receiver
Sony STRDN1050

WHAT HI-FI?
TEST WINNER
★★★★★
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SEPTEMBER 2014

RRP: £499.00
SAVE: £20.00

£479.00

"A thoroughly engaging
and exciting listen"
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September 2014



7.2 Channel Networked
Home Cinema Receiver
Yamaha RXV677

OUR PRICE:
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Soundbase
Canton DM50

OUR PRICE:
£399.00

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WHATIFI.COM
SEPTEMBER 2014



Soundbar

Soundbar and Wireless Speaker
Sonos Playbar

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★★★★★
WHATIFI.COM
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"This is a massive improvement over even the
most impressive-sounding flatscreen TV"
What HiFi? Awards 2013



OUR PRICE:
£599.00

Headphones

Noise Cancelling
Portable Headphones
Goldring NS1000
Expedition

WHAT HI-FI?
TEST WINNER
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WHATIFI.COM
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RRP: £139.95
SAVE: £70.00

£69.95

"Clean, crisp and open sound"
What HiFi? October 2012



Headphones
Grado SR325E

WHAT HI-FI?
TEST WINNER
★★★★★
WHATIFI.COM
SEPTEMBER 2014

"A truly top buy"
What HiFi? September 2014

OUR PRICE:
£299.95



Headphones
AKG Y50

WHAT HI-FI?
TEST WINNER
★★★★★
WHATIFI.COM
SEPTEMBER 2014

OUR PRICE:
£79.99

"Rhythmic, clear and detailed"
What HiFi? October 2014



Headphones
AKG K451

WHAT HI-FI?
TEST WINNER
★★★★★
WHATIFI.COM
OCTOBER 2012

RRP: £129.95
SAVE: £80.00

£49.95

"Headphone Product of the Year"
What HiFi? Awards 2013



Speakers

Bookshelf Speakers
B&W 685 S2

WHAT Hi-Fi? TEST WINNER
★★★★★
MAY 2014

OUR PRICE:
£499.00

"Punchy, refined and entertaining sound" What Hi-Fi? May 2014



HiFi Speakers
KEF LS50

WHAT Hi-Fi? TEST WINNER
★★★★★
OCTOBER 2013

OUR PRICE:
£799.00

"Best Standmount Stereo Speakers £400-£800" What Hi-Fi? Awards 2013



Bookshelf Speakers
Q Acoustics Concept 20

WHAT Hi-Fi? TEST WINNER
★★★★★
OCTOBER 2013

OUR PRICE:
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HiFi Separates

Amplifier
Arcam A19

OUR PRICE:
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"Stereo Amplifier Product of the Year" What Hi-Fi? Awards 2013



WHAT Hi-Fi? TEST WINNER
★★★★★
MAY 2014

Stereo Amplifier
Marantz PM6005

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WHAT Hi-Fi? TEST WINNER
★★★★★
MAY 2014

Digital to Analogue Converter
Arcam IrDAC

OUR PRICE:
£399.00



WHAT Hi-Fi? TEST WINNER
★★★★★
OCTOBER 2013

CD Player
Marantz CD6005

CALL OR CHECK ONLINE FOR LATEST PRICE



WHAT Hi-Fi? TEST WINNER
★★★★★
SEPTEMBER 2013

Turntable
Project Essential II

OUR PRICE:
£209.00



WHAT Hi-Fi? TEST WINNER
★★★★★
OCTOBER 2013

Bluetooth Digital to Analogue Converter
MiniBlink by Arcam

OUR PRICE:
£90.00

"The Arcam sounds buttery smooth and doesn't sacrifice detail or lose any of its cutting edge" What Hi-Fi? April 2014



WHAT Hi-Fi? TEST WINNER
★★★★★
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Leeds* 105 Vicar Lane 0113 244 9075
Lincoln 271a High Street 01522 520265
London* 2-4 Camden High Street 0161 835 1156
Manchester 54 Bridge Street 0161 835 1156
Nottingham* 15 Market Street 0115 941 2137
Stockport 68-70 Lower Hillgate 0161 4299080

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Monitor Audio Airstream S300

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"Big, exciting sound; superb clarity; stacks of detail; dynamic and entertaining" What Hi-Fi? July 2014

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Wireless Speaker with Airplay
Audio Pro Allroom Air One

RRP: £499.00
SAVE: £200.00

OUR PRICE:
£299.00

"Best Wireless Speaker £400+" What Hi-Fi? Awards 2013



WHAT Hi-Fi? TEST WINNER
★★★★★
JULY 2014

Internet/DAB/FM/Bluetooth Radio
Pure Evoke F4

OUR PRICE:
£177.28



WHAT Hi-Fi? TEST WINNER
★★★★★
OCTOBER 2013

WiFi/DAB/DAB+/FM Internet Radio
Revo SuperConnect

Spotify

OUR PRICE:
£249.95



WHAT Hi-Fi? TEST WINNER
★★★★★
SEPTEMBER 2014

HiFi Systems

CD/DAB/DAB+/FM/USB Micro System
Denon DM39DAB

RRP: £249.99
SAVE: £74.99

OUR PRICE:
£175.00



WHAT Hi-Fi? TEST WINNER
★★★★★
NOVEMBER 2013

Multi-purpose Mini System
Marantz Melody Media MCR610

CD-audio, FM, DAB and HD music files
Built-in WiFi

"System Product of the Year" What Hi-Fi? Awards 2013

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WHAT Hi-Fi? TEST WINNER
★★★★★
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SPEAKERS continued

SPEAKERScontinued					Standmount	Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd,cm)
Product	£	Tested	Verdict						
£1500 and above									
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	
PMCFact 3	4100	08.11/FT	★★★★★	Hugely caxpable but a touch overcontrolled	●		4	54x16x30	
PMCFact 8	4700	04.10/FT	★★★★★	These PMC floorstanders are quite simply magical - even at this price	●		4	103x15x38	
PMCPB1i	5850	09.09/GT	★★★★★	Simply excellent speakers: big, bold and accomplished	●		1	108x20x40	
PMCTwenty 22	1970	11.14/GT	★★★★★	Best standmounter £1200+, Awards 2014	●		4	41x18x37	
PMCTwenty 23	2300	02.14/GT	★★★★★	Best floorstander £1500+, Awards 2013	●		4	92x15x33	
PMCTwenty 26	5750	11.14/FT	★★★★★	Yet another top-class speaker from PMC's Twenty range	●		4	109x19x44	
PMCWafer 2	2295	02.12/GT	★★★★★	A real achievement for those after proper hi-fi			2	57x35x10	
ProAc Response D18	2145	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Best floorstander £1500+, Awards 2011	●		6	93x19x27	
ProAc Response D28	3250	07.07/FT	★★★★★	Another excellent pair of floorstanders from ProAc	●		6	108x20x29	
ProAc Response 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	
ProAcStudio 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	★★★★★	Best floorstander £1200+, Awards 2014	●		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 Duetta	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	

Theshortlist



AWARD WINNER

Q Acoustics 2050i

Awards 2014: Best floorstander up to £600
 "These 2050is are an enjoyable pair of speakers and, at this price are a bargain."



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

B&W 683 S2

Awards 2014: Best floorstander £600-£1200
 "We're impressed by their power, scale and delicacy - they're wonderfully versatile performers."



AWARD WINNER

Spendor A6R

Awards 2014: Best Floorstander £1200+
 "A fantastic pair of speakers that manage to do so much right and very little wrong."

"The Totem Element Embers are wonderfully talented speakers. If you've got a system that makes the most of their dynamics and timing while being refined enough to underplay weaker areas, we think you'll love them"

May 2014



Stereo amplifiers

Integrated These amplifiers combine a preamp and power section in one box
Power output A higher number usually means louder, depending on speakers
Digital inputs Some amplifiers now have a DAC built in, which could be useful

The shortlist



AWARD WINNER
Marantz PM6005

Awards 2014: Best Stereo amp up to £300



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
Arcam FMJ A19

Awards 2014: Best Stereo amp £500-£800



AWARD WINNER
Rega Elex-R

Awards 2014: Best Stereo amp £800-£1500

Also consider

Also consider

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)
Up to £1000																	
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	★★★★★	Best Stereo amp £500-£800, Awards 2014. Product of the Year	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
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	★★★★★	Stereo amplifiers, Awards 2011. Product of the Year	45		5	1	0	1	2	●	●	●	2		11x44x37
Marantz PM6005	300	05.14/GT	★★★★★	Best stereo amp up to £500, Awards 2014	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	★★★★★	Best stereo amp up to £500, Awards 2013	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	★★★★★	Best stereo amp £800-£1500, Awards 2013	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



Spendor A6R

Setting the standard

An outstanding pair of speakers that deliver detail and dynamic punch in spades
What Hi-Fi Feb 2014

One of the very best mid-price floorstanders around
Hi-Fi Choice Feb 2014

Let the technology work - Hear the music

WHAT HI-FI?
 SOUND AND VISION
 TEST WINNER
 February 2014

WHAT HI-FI?
 SOUND AND VISION
 ★★★★★

Hi-Fi Choice
 ★★★★★

SPENDOR

www.spendoraudio.com

AMPLIFIERS continued

AMPLIFIERS continued					Power (w)	DAC	Line level in	MM phono in	MC phono in	USB in	Tape loops	Preamp out	Speaker outs	Tone controls	Headphone out	Remote control	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Product	£	Tested	Verdict															
Up to £1000																		
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	
Rega Elex-R	900	11.14/FT	★★★★★	Best stereo amp £800-£1500, Awards 2014	72	4	1	0		1	●	1			●	1	8x43x32	
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	
Yamaha A-S501	360	Aw.14/FT	★★★★★	Solid performer but you can get better for a little more money	60	6	1	0		1	1	●	●	●	●	2	15x44x39	
£1000 and above																		
Audio Analogue Class A Int. SE	9190	06.11/FT	★★★★★	A fantastic, and sonically rounded performer	50	5	0	0		1	1			●	1	33x45x41		
ATC SIA 2-150	2379	02.10/GT	★★★★★	One of the best amplifiers at this price level	150	4	0	0		1	●	1		●	●	1	14x44x35	
Bryston B60R	2600	07.09/FT	★★★★★	The Bryston B60R may be unassuming, but has quality	60	4	0	0		1	1		●	●	2	5x43x28		
Cambridge Audio Azur 851A	1200	12.12/GT	★★★★★	For scale, power, build and style, this is hard to beat	120	8	0	0		1	●	2	●	●	●	2	12x43x39	
Chord Elec. Cyan Click HP	4215	07.10/FT	★★★★★	Stylish, and astonishingly well built too	100	2	0	0	●	0	1				●	2	6x34x15	
Creek Evolution 5350	1025	06.10/FT	★★★★★	There's lots to like here, but better available elsewhere	120	5	1	0		0	●	2		●	●	1	9x43x34	
Cyrus 6XPD	1250	01.12/ST	★★★★★	A sturdy DAC-toting amp that's a cracker	40	●	6	0	0	●	1	●	2		●	●	2	7x22x36
Cyrus 8a	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	14x42x14	
Heed Audio Obelisk si	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				●	2	9x50x34	
Lavardin IS Reference	2950	01.10/FT	★★★★★	Amazing: its rivals sound mechanical in comparison	30	4	0	0		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	
Myryad MXI2080	1000	08.08/FT	★★★★★	Assiduous, precise presentation	80	6	1	1		1	●	1		●	●	1	9x44x38	
NAD C 390DD	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	
Pathos InpolRemix	3800	01.12/FT	★★★★★	Not cheap or powerful - just brilliant	10	1	0	0		0	●	1			●	2	18x33x29	
Pathos Logos Mk II	3950	10.14/FT	★★★★★	Mixes fine aesthetics with a great sound for a terrific amp	110	●	5	0	0	●	1	●	1		●	1	17x42x43	
Plinius Hautonga	4455	07.11/FT	★★★★★	A powerhouse of an integrated amplifier	200	5	1	1		2	●	1			●	2	12x45x50	
Plinius Hiato	6759	08.09/FT	★★★★★	If you're after a top class amplifier the Hiato is for you	300	5	0	0		1	●	1			●	2	17x45x45	
Quad II Classic Integrated	4500	04.10/FT	★★★★★	A fine integrated amplifier with a hefty price tag	25	3	1	1		1	1					1	20x31x38	
Rega Osiris	5998	06.10/FT	★★★★★	A fine amp that makes sense partnering its Isis sibling	162	6	0	0		1	1				●	1	12x44x35	
Rega Elicit-R	1600	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Best stereo amplifier £1500+, Awards 2014	105	5	1	0		1	●	1			●	1	8x43x34	
Roksan Caspian M2	1695	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Best stereo amplifier £1500+, Awards 2013	85	5	0	0		1	●	1			●	2	8x43x33	
Sony TA-A1ES	2000	04.14/FT	★★★★★	Not quite a flawless effort but talented enough in key areas	80	5	1	1		0	1		●	●	1	13x43x42		
Synthesis Shine	2449	07.10/FT	★★★★★	This valve design needs sensitive speakers to fly	40	5	0	0		1	1				●	4	16x32x22	
T+A PA 3000 HV	9900	11.13/FT	★★★★★	A truly impressive piece of kit despite its polite disposition	300	6	0	0		0	1		●	●	1	17x46x46		
Unison Research Preludio	2295	02.10/GT	★★★★★	Rubs shoulders with the very best at this price	14	4	0	0		1	1					1	20x40x38	
Unison Research S6	2995	05.11/FT	★★★★★	In the right system, the S6 is truly magical	33	5	0	0		1	1				●	2	21x35x49	
Unison Research S9	6995	02.10/FT	★★★★★	We can't help but love this quirky valve amplifier	35	4	0	0		0	1				●	1	25x41x57	
Unison Research Simply Italy	1495	09.12/FT	★★★★★	A well-engineered valve amplifier at a sensible price	12	5	0	0		1	1				●	2	26x19x35	
Unison Research Triode 25	2350	08.14/FT	★★★★★	An absolutely superb amplifier from Unison Research	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)
Up to £5000													
Audio Research LS17	3399	01.09/FT	★★★★★	This top quality product should serve you for decades	7	0	0	1	●	●	●	●	14x48x31
Audionet Pre 1 G3	3525	01.10/FT	★★★★★	As revealing as amplifiers get for the money	5	0	0	1	●	●	●	●	7x43x31
ATC CA-2	1058	12.09/FT	★★★★★	A matchless preamp when paired with the P1 power amp	5	0	0	1	●	●	●	●	9x44x32
Cyrus DACXP+	2550	04.11/FT	★★★★★	Massive ability in a small box	2	0	0	1	●	●	●	●	7x22x36
Cyrus Pre XP d	1300	02.10/GT	★★★★★	Works wonders when coupled with the matching 8 power amp	6	0	0	0	●	●	●	●	7x22x36
Heed Audio Obelisk pre/px	2230	04.13/FT	★★★★★	A superb-sounding preamp, but Heed needs to make it feel more luxurious	5	0	0	1	●	●	●	●	9x22x33
Lavardin C62	3471	12.10/FT	★★★★★	Belongs near the top of any shortlist	6	0	0	1	●	●	●	●	9x43x31
Leema Pyxis	3995	11.11/FT	★★★★★	A versatile, enjoyable preamp	5	1	1	1	●	●	●	●	11x44x31
Linn Akurate Kontrol	4200	09.11/FT	★★★★★	Part of the Linn Akurate system - and truly awesome	4	1	1	1	●	●	●	●	9x38x38
NAD C165BEE	650	08.10/FT	★★★★★	A brute of a preamp	4	1	1	0	●	●	●	●	8x44x29
Naim NAC 152 XS	975	02.10/GT	★★★★★	It's good, but could do better with dynamics	5	0	0	0	●	●	●	●	7x43x30
Quad Elite Pre	850	11.10/FT	★★★★★	Doesn't blow us away, but it's still worth consideration	6	1	1	1	●	●	●	●	7x32x31
Quad QC-twenty four	1000	06.13/FT	★★★★★	Pleasant listen but works best with Quad's valve power amps	5	0	0	2	●	●	●	●	9x30x22
Rotel RC-1580	995	03.10/FT	★★★★★	A likeable, fully featured performer that delivers much for the money	5	1	1	2	●	●	●	●	10x43x34
Townshend Allegri	1895	08.12/GT	★★★★★	Basic features, but terrific sound	6	0	0	0	●	●	●	●	5x13x31

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PREAMPS continued

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)
£5000 and above													
Audio Research LS27	6500	03.13/FT	★★★★★	A fine preamp but struggles to shine in comparison to the Reference 75	6	0	0	1	●	●		●	13x48x34
Aesthetix Calypso Signature	6400	03.11/FT	★★★★★	One of the finest preamps on the market today	5	0	0	1	●	●		●	11x46x45
Bryston BP26DA	5050	08.06/FT	★★★★★	A must-hear preamp. Lacks style but built to last	5	0	0	1	●	●	●	●	6x49x28
Burmester 808 MK5	22242	02.13/FT	★★★★★	A beautifully constructed, highly versatile preamp for serious devotees	Opt	Opt	Opt	Opt	●	●		●	95x48x33
Chord Electronics CPA 8000	25500	01.13/FT	★★★★★	A magnificent preamp, but not quite the masterpiece its price demands	8	0	0	2	●	●	●	●	31x42x36
Chord Electronics Indigo	8670	11.09/FT	★★★★★	A far sighted design mixing useful features with great sound	6	0	0	0	●	●	●	●	36x42x9
Krell Phantom II	12000	11.12/FT	★★★★★	A hugely capable preamp that is able to dig deeply into any recording	8	0	0	1	●	●		●	10x44x46
McIntosh C2500	7495	01.14/FT	★★★★★	A refined and entertaining preamp that needs a little care in partnering	8	1	1	1	●	●	●	●	19x44x46
Naim NAC252/Supercap	9070	11.08/FT	★★★★★	Makes a magical combination with the NAP250 power amp	6	0	0	0	●			●	9x43x31
Plinius Tauto	6325	09.08/FT	★★★★★	A mighty amplifier in every sense of the word	4	1	1	1	●	●	●	●	16x45x48

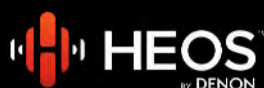


Power amps

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

Our recommendations					Type	Power (w)	Phono in	XLR in	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	Weight (kg)
Product	£	Tested	Verdict							
Up to £5000										
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	18x44x32	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 Obelisk 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



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POWER AMPS continued

POWERAMPScontinued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Type	Power (w)	Phono in	XLR in	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	Weight (kg)
£5000 and above										
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



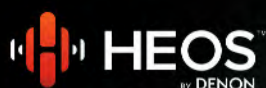
iPod docks

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

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	AirPlay	Bluetooth	Dock type	Aux	Power (w)	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Up to £500									
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
Epox Aktimate Micro	260	09.13/GT	★★★★★			iOS	●	40	24x15x20
Epox AktiMate Mini	350	07.12/GT	★★★★★			iOS	●	40	30x19x21
Epox 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 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



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iPOD DOCKS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	AirPlay	Bluetooth	Dock type	Aux	Power (w)	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
£500 and above									
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
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
Samsung DA-E750	600	10.12/FT	★★★★★	●	●	iOS/Android	●	100	15x45x24



Wireless speakers

Bluetooth _____ Universal wireless system that's incorporated into most sources
AirPlay _____ Apple's accepted wireless system; works over your home network

The shortlist



AWARD WINNER

Monitor Audio Airstream S200

Awards 2014: Best Wireless speaker £150-£300



AWARD WINNER

Dali Kubik Free

Awards 2014: Best Wireless speaker £500-£750



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

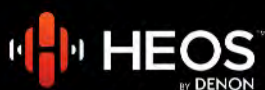
Naim Mu-so

Awards 2014: Best Wireless speaker 750+

Also consider

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	AirPlay	Bluetooth	Aux	Charging Battery	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Up to £1000								
Audio Pro Allroom Air One	400	08.14/GT	★★★★★	Best wireless speaker £400+, Awards 2013				20x31x19
Bayan Audio SoundBook	150	01.14/GT	★★★★★	A nice-looking portable speaker with some clever design touches				9x16x4
Bose SoundLink Mini	170	01.14/GT	★★★★★	A no-frills approach reaps dividends in the SoundLink's sonic performance				5x18x6
Bluesound multi-room system	n/a	11.14/GT	★★★★★	Best multi-room system £500+, Awards 2014. Product of the Year				n/a
B&W A5	400	08.13/GT	★★★★★	Not the loudest but delivers a potent, punchy sound				18x30x20
B&W A7	700	12.12/FT	★★★★★	If you use AirPlay, the A7 demands your attention				22x36x16
Bose SoundLink Air	300	12.12/GT	★★★★★	Not the last word in power or dynamics, but a tidy little package				17x31x10
Cabasse Stream 1	500	08.14/GT	★★★★★	Mediocre software lets this very enjoyable speaker down				14x46x33
Cambridge Audio Bluetone 100	200	10.14/GT	★★★★★	A bold, engaging performance from a speaker that lacks a little clarity				118x35x12
Cambridge Audio Minx Air 100	330	10.13/ST	★★★★★	A worthy option but it can't match the best when it comes to sound				18x35x12
Cambridge Audio Minx Air 200	430	08.13/GT	★★★★★	Majors in excitement, detail and power – a real entertainer				45x22x17



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WIRELESS SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		AirPlay	Bluetooth	Aux	Charging	Battery	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Cambridge Audio Go	120	Aw.14/FT	★★★★★	Best wireless speaker up to £150, Awards 2014	●	●	●	●	●	24x12x6
Cambridge Audio Minx Go	100	08.13/FT	★★★★★	Best wireless speaker up to £150, Awards 2013	●	●	●	●	●	23x24x6
Dali Kubik Free	645	03.14/FT	★★★★★	Best wireless speaker £500-£750, Awards 2014	●	●	●	●	●	31x15x15
Denon Envaya DSB200	170	11.14/FT	★★★★★	Overcooked bass aside, this is one of most powerful sounding portable speakers we've heard	●	●	●	●	●	14x26x5
Eclipse TD-M1	1000	08.14/FT	★★★★★	Great stereo imaging, but we'd like more refinement to go with it	●	●	●	●	●	24x16x22
Geneva Model M Wireless	500	08.14/GT	★★★★★	If you're after Bluetooth and radio features, then this would be a good choice	●	●	●	●	●	22x30x18
Geneva Model S Wireless DAB+	330	10.13/ST	★★★★★	Best wireless speaker £300-£500, Awards 2014	●	●	●	●	●	15x14x18
Harman/Kardon Go+Play	280	05.13/FT	★★★★★	These wireless active speakers deliver good sound	●	●	●	●	●	24x50x23
Jawbone Big Jambox	260	09.12/FT	★★★★★	Great for bass and sound, lacks a little finesse though	●	●	●	●	●	9x26x8
iLuv MobiOut	70	05.13/GT	★★★★★	A small unit that boasts a likable sound	●	●	●	●	●	0x0x0
JBL Charge	120	01.14/GT	★★★★★	A punchy and energetic sound is let down by some coarse and harsh treble	●	●	●	●	●	18x7x7
JBL Flip	100	05.13/GT	★★★★★	A great value bluetooth speaker	●	●	●	●	●	0x0x0
JBL Flip 2	100	07.14/GT	★★★★★	Good performer for the money, but has issues with volume and battery life	●	●	●	●	●	6.5x16x16
JBL OnBeat Rumble	230	10.14/GT	★★★★★	A chunky, fun unit that's starting to sound a little unrefined against more recent competition	●	●	●	●	●	17x45x22
Libratone Zipp	370	10.13/ST	★★★★★	Stylish, portable and fully-featured. Libratone hits the jackpot with the Zipp	●	●	●	●	●	26x12x12
Libratone Loop	400	08.14/GT	★★★★★	An enjoyable-sounding speaker with some unique looks	●	●	●	●	●	33x33x8
Loewe AirSpeaker	500	03.13/GT	★★★★★	Fussy set up issues aside, this is one incredibly capable speaker	●	●	●	●	●	24x13x24
Logitech UE Boombox	200	12.12/GT	★★★★★	It's not faultless, but for the money it's difficult to argue with this	●	●	●	●	●	16x39x8
Logitech UE Mobile Boombox	75	05.13/GT	★★★★★	Limited functionality but a good choice for portable users	●	●	●	●	●	6x7x11
Monitor Audio Airstream S200	200	Aw.14/FT	★★★★★	Best wireless speaker £150-£300, Awards 2014	●	●	●	●	●	27x12x14
Monitor Audio Airstream S300	250	10.14/GT	★★★★★	It only supports iOS devices but this speaker sounds fantastic	●	●	●	●	●	15x47x15
Monitor Audio Airstream WS100	250	09.13/GT	★★★★★	Cracking speakers. A desktop force to be reckoned with	●	●	●	●	●	13x12x12
Naim Mu-so	895	Aw.14/FT	★★★★★	Best wireless speaker £750+, Awards 2014. Product of the Year	●	●	●	●	●	12x63x26
NAD Viso 1 AP	500	08.14/GT	★★★★★	A strong, rounded package that thoroughly deserves your attention	●	●	●	●	●	26x48x30
Panasonic SC-NA10	130	01.14/GT	★★★★★	A speaker that oozes class and subtlety. Watch out for the cabinet vibrations, though	●	●	●	●	●	10x20x3
Philips Fidelio E2	300	06.14/ST	★★★★★	Classy, versatile speakers but you'll need some room to accommodate them	●	●	●	●	●	30.5x16x16
Philips Fidelio P9	240	03.13/FT	★★★★★	Hard to find fault with this Bluetooth speaker	●	●	●	●	●	12x29x5
Pioneer XW-SMA4	350	12.12/GT	★★★★★	Bags of features, solid build and smart design – just watch that bass	●	●	●	●	●	21x36x17
Pure Jongo S3	170	06.13/FT	★★★★★	Great sound and easy portability make this a real gem	●	●	●	●	●	13x13x14
Pure Jongo S3 (pair)	340	06.14/ST	★★★★★	A tad disappointing as a pair; rivals offer a more insightful performance	●	●	●	●	●	13x13x14
Pure Jongo System	n/a	11.14/GT	★★★★★	Not the ultimate word in sound quality, but it wins us over with its peppy character	●	●	●	●	●	n/a
Roth Oli POWA-5	250	06.14/ST	★★★★★	Updated and better than before but rivals still have in edge in terms of sound	●	●	●	●	●	27x18x21
Samsung M5	230	10.14/FT	★★★★★	A talented speaker with a clean, open and fun sound	●	●	●	●	●	14 x34x17
Samsung M7	330	09.14/FT	★★★★★	Overly fussy in terms of setting up, the M7 is a comfortable performer nonetheless	●	●	●	●	●	14 x40x19
Samsung Shape Audio System	n/a	11.14/GT	★★★★★	Lacks a consistent sound across the range but a good first effort nonetheless	●	●	●	●	●	n/a
Simple Audio Roomplayer+	n/a	11.14/GT	★★★★★	A worthy contender but there are cheaper, more impressive options out there	●	●	●	●	●	n/a
Sonos Play:1	170	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Another strong addition to the Award-winning Sonos multi-room family	●	●	●	●	●	16 x12x12
Sonos System	n/a	11.14/GT	★★★★★	Best multi-room system £500+, Awards 2014	●	●	●	●	●	n/a
Sony RDP-XA700	285	03.13/GT	★★★★★	With a bit more definition and a bit less bass this could have been the speaker for us	●	●	●	●	●	18 x40x16
Sony SRS-X3	130	07.14/GT	★★★★★	A hugely confident performer but its tonal balance won't be for everyone	●	●	●	●	●	7x19x7
Sony SRS-X9	600	06.14/FT	★★★★★	A do-it-all speaker with superb sound quality	●	●	●	●	●	13x43x13
Sony SRS-BTM8	85	05.13/GT	★★★★★	Classy, cleverly designed speaker that can handle large volumes.	●	●	●	●	●	19x25x9
Tangent Classic	400	08.14/GT	★★★★★	A speaker with a big sound and plenty of bass	●	●	●	●	●	23x60x32
Ultimate Ears Boom	170	01.14/GT	★★★★★	Loads of fun to listen to, the Boom is exciting, attractive and packed with features to boot	●	●	●	●	●	16 x6.5 x6.5



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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



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
AKG Y50

Awards 2014: Best Portable on-ears up to £100
 "Excelling in sound and style, the Y50s are a promising start for AKG's latest range."



AWARD WINNER
Philips M1MKII

Awards 2014: Best Portable on-ears £100-£200
 "If you have just under £200 to spend on a pair of portable on-ear headphones, this is a most worthy candidate."



AWARD WINNER
Beyerdynamic T51i

Awards 2014: Best Portable on-ears £200-£300
 "They're easily some of the best portable on-ear headphones we've heard at this price."

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	In-ear	On-ear	Type	Noise cancelling	Wireless	Weight (g)
Up to £70									
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	★★★★★	Best portable on-ears up to £100, Awards 2013	●	Closed			120
Audio Technica ATH-CK550	49	09.11/ST	★★★★★	Smooth and weighty with lashings of detail	●	Closed			8
Audio Technica ATH-CKS55i	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	★★★★★	Best in-ears £40-£80, Awards 2013	●	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

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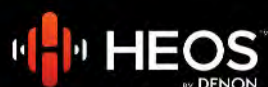
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HEADPHONES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		In-ear On-ear	Type	Noise cancelling Wireless	Weight (g)
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	★★★★★	Best in-ears up to £40, Awards 2013	●	Closed		11
SoundMagic E10S	40	11.14/GT	★★★★★	Best in-ears up to £50, Awards 2014	●	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	11.14/GT	★★★★★	Best in-ears £50-£100, Awards 2014. Product of the Year	●	Closed		9
Vivanco Airc. Studio Monitors	50	12.10/GT	★★★★★	Capable - but should be approached with caution	●	Closed		n/a

£70 and above

AKG K3003i	1000	04.12/FT	★★★★★	The best, and priciest, in-ears we've seen	●	Closed		10
AKG K370	73	12.10/GT	★★★★★	Impressive for the money	●	Closed		4
AKG K450/HA450	180	09.11/ST	★★★★★	Headphones, Awards 2011. Products of the Year	●	Closed		120
AKG K545	210	12.13/FT	★★★★★	Built to last but lacks refinement and likeability	●	Closed		280
AKG K550	99	02.12/ST	★★★★★	Best home on-ears up to £150, Awards 2014	●	Closed		305
AKG K551	230	02.13/GT	★★★★★	Smashing all-rounders that really sing	●	Closed		305
AKG K812	1100	10.14/FT	★★★★★	It needs a top-class system to shine but these cans sound heavenly. Highly recommended	●	Open		390
AKG K845BT	250	02.14/GT	★★★★★	If you like your music clear and uncoloured, then these AKGs are definitely worth a listen	●	Closed	●	292
AKG Q701	250	09.14/ST	★★★★★	A great, solid sounding set of cans. Comfy, too	●	Open		235
AKG Q460	140	02.11/GT	★★★★★	More pros than cons, but still not complete	●	Closed		120
AKG Y50	80	09.14/FT	★★★★★	Best portable on-ears up to £100, Awards 2014. Product of the Year	●	Closed		190
Audeze LCD-3	1725	02.14/GT	★★★★★	Very expensive, but there's little to complain about here. Even with that price	●	Open		548
Audio Technica ATH-A500	140	02.10/GT	★★★★★	If you're after closed-back cans, give these a try	●	Closed		290
Audio Technica ATH-AD700X	190	04.14/GT	★★★★★	Huge headphones that offer an airy, open sound	●	Open		265
Audio Technica ATH-A900X LTD	390	09.14/ST	★★★★★	Remarkably clear and spacious sounding pair of headphones	●	Open		340
Audio Technica ATH-ANC1	80	06.10/FT	★★★★★	Their portability and noise-cancelling makes them a viable buy	●	Closed	●	100
Audio Technica ATH-CKX9iS	75	01.14/GT	★★★★★	Easy on the ears and very comfortable, but they need a bit more refinement to be great	●	Closed		10
Audio Technica ATH-ES55	90	09.11/GT	★★★★★	Best portable on-ear headphone up to £100, Awards 2010	●	Closed		120
Audio Technica ATH-ES7	140	02.11/GT	★★★★★	Appearance apart, there's an awful lot to like here	●	Closed		160
Audio Technica ATH-ES88	230	02.12/FT	★★★★★	Appealingly eccentric cans	●	Closed		130
Audio Technica ATH-EW9	159	10.07/FT	★★★★★	Featherlight phones are awesomely detailed	●	Closed		33
Audio Technica ATH-M50	130	02.13/GT	★★★★★	Immersive and refined: a great effort	●	Closed		284
Audio Technica ATH-W1000	650	09.11/ST	★★★★★	Expensive, but offer magnificent hi-fi sound	●	Closed		350
Audio Technica ATH-W1000X	650	07.10/FT	★★★★★	Best home on-ear headphones £500-£800, Awards 2010	●	Closed		350
Audio Technica ATH-WS55i	89	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★	An excellent pair of on-ears for the bass-loving iPhone-owner	●	Closed		165
Beyerdynamic DTX102iE	75	08.14/FT	★★★★★	There's little to fault with a pair of in-ears that demand to be listened to	●	Closed		11
Beyerdynamic DX160 iE	86	11.14/GT	★★★★★	A strong performer from Beyerdynamic with a smooth, weighty sound	●	Closed		32



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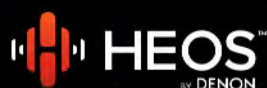
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HEADPHONES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	In-ear	On-ear	Type	Noise cancelling	Wireless	Weight (g)
£70 and above									
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 T51i	245	Aw.14/FT	★★★★★	●	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
Bose QuietComfort 25	270	Aw.14/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●			198
B&W P3	170	08.12/GT	★★★★★	●	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
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




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HEADPHONES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		In-ear	On-ear	Type	Noise cancelling	Wireless	Weight (g)
Klipsch Image X10i	219	09.11/ST	★★★★★	Best in-ears £140+, Awards 2011	●		Closed			320
Klipsch Mode M40	290	02.13/FT	★★★★★	Klipsch's first noise-cancelling headphones are excellent performers		●	Closed	●		356
Klipsch S4i	90	12.09/GT	★★★★★	These Klipschs are great all-rounders, with an exciting edge	●		Closed			12
Klipsch X11i	200	11.14/GT	★★★★★	If you are serious about portables then these in-ears need to be on your shortlist	●		Closed			10
Logitech UE 9000	300	03.13/GT	★★★★★	Could be more refined, but make up for this with bundles of energy			Closed	●	●	378
Lindy Premium Headphones	75	09.11/ST	★★★★★	Ideal for those unwilling to break the £100 barrier		●	Closed			225
Martin Logan Mikros 70	150	04.13/GT	★★★★★	If you like your music to be presented with a matter-of-fact approach, these are just the job	●		Closed			13
Monster Beats by Dre iBeats	80	03.11/GT	★★★★★	For smooth, bassy sounds they're ace	●		Closed			n/a
Monster Beats Pro by Dre	350	09.11/ST	★★★★★	Brilliant at what they do well		●	Closed			299
NAD Viso HP50	250	11.13/GT	★★★★★	A promising pair of cans from NAD, but the design lets them down		●	Open			453
NAD Viso HP20	130	11.14/GT	★★★★★	Timing could be tighter but these in-ears are an easy listen	●		Closed			n/a
Nocs NS400 Titanium	80	01.12/GT	★★★★★	Still great, but there's better for the money	●		Closed			12
Onkyo ES-HF300	180	10.13/GT	★★★★★	A pleasant listen, laid-back and amiable		●	Closed			240
Oppo PM-1	1100	07.14/FT	★★★★★	Oppo's first pair of headphones are a resounding success		●	Open			395
Panasonic RP-HC101	82	04.12/GT	★★★★★	Nice enough sound but average noise cancelling		●	Closed	●		79
Parrot Zik	300	07.13/FT	★★★★★	High-tech headphones that deliver a good performance		●	Closed	●	●	352
Phonak Audeo PFE 022	80	03.11/GT	★★★★★	Pacey, detailed, insightful and recommended	●		Closed		●	14
Phiaton MS300	150	02.12/ST	★★★★★	These over ears deserve careful consideration		●	Closed			140
Philips Fidelio L1	230	05.12/FT	★★★★★	Easy going and comfortable		●	Closed			272
Philips Fidelio M1	125	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Best portable on-ears £100-£200, Awards 2013		●	Closed			166
Philips Fidelio M1MKII	180	Aw.14/FT	★★★★★	Best portable on-ears £100-£200, Awards 2014		●	Closed			166
Philips Fidelio M1BT	250	02.14/GT	★★★★★	Best wireless headphones, Awards 2013		●	Closed		●	500
Philips Fidelio M2BT	250	11.14/FT	★★★★★	Best wireless headphones, Awards 2014		●	Closed		●	190
Philips Fidelio S1	70	01.14/GT	★★★★★	Smart and non-invasive earphones. We quite like them	●		Closed			14
Philips Fidelio X1	200	04.14/GT	★★★★★	Another great set of headphones from Philips		●	Open			430
PSB M4U1	219	11.13/GT	★★★★★	Better than the M4U2? Close but no cigar		●	Closed			340
PSB M4U2	300	10.12/ST	★★★★★	PSB's first headphones are truly brilliant. Hear them now!		●	Closed	●		362
Sennheiser CX880i	90	01.12/GT	★★★★★	Great sounding in-ears, although there's a hard edge	●		Closed			11
Sennheiser HD 380 Pro	110	02.10/GT	★★★★★	Still seriously good headphones, but rivals have caught up		●	Closed			220
Sennheiser HD25-1 II Adidas	190	09.11/ST	★★★★★	Stylishly excellent all-rounders		●	Closed			140
Sennheiser HD 558	130	04.14/GT	★★★★★	Other headphones are more skilled but these cans have a silky smooth sound		●	Open			260
Sennheiser HD 598	190	02.12/ST	★★★★★	Too well-mannered for our tastes		●	Open			270
Sennheiser IE 8i	260	03.11/GT	★★★★★	Enjoyable enough, but need a better tonal balance		●	Closed			18
Sennheiser IE 80	270	02.11/FT	★★★★★	Expensive, but a truly quality option	●		Closed			5
Sennheiser IE 800	600	09.13/FT	★★★★★	Best in-ears £300+, Awards 2014		●	Closed			8
Sennheiser MM 400-X	150	10.12/ST	★★★★★	Best wireless headphones, Awards 2012		●	Closed		●	105
Sennheiser MM 70s	70	01.14/GT	★★★★★	An unassuming pair of earphones that are never less than engaging		●	Closed			13
Sennheiser Momentum	260	11.13/GT	★★★★★	Best portable on-ears £200-300, Awards 2013		●	Closed			190
Sennheiser Momentum On-ears	170	10.13/GT	★★★★★	A comfortable pair of cans, just lacking a little presence in the mid-range		●	Closed			160
Sennheiser PXC 310 BT	190	09.11/ST	★★★★★	Best Bluetooth headphones, Awards 2011		●	Closed	●	●	105
Sennheiser PXC310	200	02.11/GT	★★★★★	Perfect for a walk on the mild side		●	Closed	●		115
Sennheiser RS 160	115	05.10/GT	★★★★★	An exciting, affordable option but tiring over longer periods		●	Closed		●	226
Sennheiser RS 180	185	05.10/GT	★★★★★	These comfortable, wireless headphones justify their premium price		●	Open		●	204
Sennheiser RS 220	350	10.12/ST	★★★★★	A very neat wireless solution with great sound quality		●	Open		●	329

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HEADPHONES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	In-ear	On-ear	Type	Noise cancelling	Wireless	Weight (g)
£70 and above									
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	430	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
TDK ST700	150	01.12/FT	★★★★★			●	Closed		205
thinksound ts02+mic	90	02.13/FT	★★★★★			●	Closed		10
Ultrasone HFI-580	125	11.10/GT	★★★★★			●	Closed		285
Ultrasone HFI-780	160	02.09/GT	★★★★★			●	Open		285
Ultimate Ears Super Fi 5vi	110	12.02/GT	★★★★★			●	Closed		14
V-moda Crossfade M-80	160	10.12/ST	★★★★★			●	Closed		200
V-moda Remix Remote	70	12.10/GT	★★★★★			●	Closed		17



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
Up to £500											
Denon CEOL Piccolo	260	03.13/FT	★★★★★		●	●			●	●	●
Denon CEOL RCD-N8	350	02.14/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●		●	●	●
Denon D-M39DAB	310	12.13/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Onkyo CR-N755	300	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Panasonic SC-PMX9DB	450	12.13/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Pioneer X-HM70	350	03.12/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Pioneer X-SMC5-K	300	02.12/FT	★★★★★		●	●			●	●	●
Sony CMT-G1BiP	400	12.11/FT	★★★★★		●		●	●	●	●	●
Yamaha MCR-232	300	12.13/GT	★★★★★		●		●	●	●	●	●
Yamaha MCR-555	380	10.11/GT	★★★★★		●		●	●	●	●	●
£500 and above											
Aura Note Premier	1500	05.10/FT	★★★★★		●	●			●	●	●
Arcam Solo Neo	1350	09.10/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Cabasse Stream3	850	07.13/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●		●	●	●
Cambridge Audio Minx Xi	600	01.14/FT	★★★★★		●	●				●	●
Cyrus Lyric 09	3000	01.14/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	●	●	●
HRT Stage	1200	08.14/FT	★★★★★							●	
Lyngdorf Digital 2.2 System	12350	05.10/FT	★★★★★		●	●				●	●
Linn Majik DSM	2965	02.13/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●		●	●	●
Marantz M-CR610	435	11.13/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Naim Uniti	2670	12.11/ST	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Naim UnitiQute	1600	12.11/ST	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Pioneer P1DAB	550	07.13/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Ruark Audio R4i	599	07.11/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●			●
Sony CMT-G2BNiP	500	04.12/FT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	●	●	●
TEAC CR-H700DAB	550	10.11/GT	★★★★★		●	●	●	●	●	●	●



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
Up to £500										
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-N590	400	09.12/FT	★★★★★	Best cinema system, Awards 2012	●	●	●	1	2	5.1
£500-£1000										
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-BTT590	500	08.12/GT	★★★★★	An excellent all-in-one Blu-ray system	●	●	●	1	2	5.1
Sony BDV-N7100W	600	09.13/FT	★★★★★	Best cinema system, Awards 2013	●	●	●	1	2	5.1
Sony BDV-N5200W	500	Aw.14/FT	★★★★★	Best cinema system, Awards 2014	●	●	●	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



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.

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Disc drive	Smart	Ext. subwoofer	HDMI in	Optical in	Co-axial in	RCA in	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Up to £2000											
Bowers & Wilkins Panorama 2	1650	09.13/GT	★★★★★	An improvement on the original	●	3	1	0			13x110x18
Cambridge Audio Minx TV	200	02.14/ST	★★★★★	A soundbase that delivers an exciting sound at a great price		0	1	0			8x43x38
Cambridge Audio TV2	200	Aw.14/FT	★★★★★	Best soundbase up to £300, Awards 2014		0	1	0	●		12x53x33
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 75	450	Aw.14/FT	★★★★★	Best soundbase £300+, Awards 2014		0	1	1	●		7x73x32
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
LG NB4530A	300	06.13/ST	★★★★★	Best soundbar up to £400, Awards 2013	●	1	1	0			8x104x4
Maxell MXSP-SB3000	220	02.14/ST	★★★★★	An enjoyable performer with some impressive features		3	1	1			8x94x39
Monitor Audio ASB-2	800	11.13/FT	★★★★★	Best soundbar £800+, Awards 2013	●	3	1	1	●		101x19x17
Orbitsound M9	300	06.13/ST	★★★★★	Given its size, the M9 is an impressive performer	●	0	1	0			9x30x10
Philips HTLS120	250	03.14/ST	★★★★★	A stonking soundbar for only £250		2	1	0			154x1010x81
Philips HTLS140	270	Aw.14/FT	★★★★★	Best soundbar up to £300, Awards 2014	●	1	1	0			5x105x7
Philips HTL9100	600	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	Best soundbar £400-£800, Awards 2013	●	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	★★★★★	Best soundbar £300-£600, Awards 2014. Product of the Year		0	1	0	●		11x14x100
Sandström S42SWLH13	150	03.14/ST	★★★★★	A great-looking soundbar with plenty of connections	●	2	1	0			113x900x48
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

SOUNDBARS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Disc drive	Smart	Ext. subwoofer	HDMI in	Optical in	Co-axial in	RCA in	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Up to £2000											
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
Yamaha YSP-2500	800	11.14/FT	★★★★★	Best soundbar £600+, Awards 2014	●	1	2	1	●		7x94x14



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
Up to £3000														
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 03HD	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
Up to £500													
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	●
Bluesound Powermode	430	10.14/FT	★★★★★	A superb way for hi-fi fans and audiophiles to get their high-res kicks	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24/192	●
Bluesound Node	400	Aw.14/FT	★★★★★	Best streamer up to £600, Awards 2014	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	24/192	●
Cambridge Audio NP30	430	05.12/ST	★★★★★	Still worthy, but there's better around	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	24/96	●
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	●

Wake up to streaming!



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STREAMERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		HDMI out	Optical out	Coaxial out	HDMI in	Optical in	Coaxial in	USB in	Wireless	Resolution (bit/kHz)	Video
Popcorn PopBox 3D	140	10.11/FT	★★★★★	A Swiss Army Knife of streaming	1	1	0	0	0	0	2		16/48	●
Pure Jongo 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	●

£500-£1000

Camb. Audio Stream Magic 6	700	08.12/FT	★★★★★	Best streamer £600-£1000, Awards 2013	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	●	24/96	
Camb. Audio Stream Magic 6 V2	700	Aw.14/FT	★★★★★	Best streamer £600-£1000, Awards 2014. Product of the Year	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	★★★★★	Best streamer up to £600, Awards 2013	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	

£1000 and above

Bryston BDP-1	2350	06.11/FT	★★★★★	A true hi-fi media player	0	1	1	0	1	0	3		24/192	
Cyrus Stream Xa	1250	Aw.14/FT	★★★★★	Best streamer £1000 - £1500, Awards 2014	0	0	1	0	2	3	1	●	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	★★★★★	Best streaming system £1500+, Awards 2014	0	0	1	0	2	3	1	●	24/192	
Linn Kiko	2500	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Best music system £1500+, Awards 2013	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	★★★★★	Best streamer £1000-£2000, Awards 2013	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, Awards 2010. Product of the Year	0	0	1	0	2	2	1	●	24/192	
Naim UnitiQute 2	1195	09.13/FT	★★★★★	Best music system £800-£1500, Awards 2014	0	0	1	0	2	2	1	●	32/192	
Pixel Magic Lumin	5000	02.14/FT	★★★★★	A fine player that leads the field in terms of file compatibility	1	0	1	0	0	0	2		24/192	
Sony HAP-Z1ES	2000	02.14/FT	★★★★★	A smartly designed, superb-sounding piece of hi-fi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	●	24/192	
T+A MP 1260R	2700	12.10/FT	★★★★★	Amazing – this is proper high-end hi-fi	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	●	24/192	



Set-top boxes

Freeview Large choice of digital TV channels via a rooftop aerial
Freesat Much like Freeview, but takes signal from a satellite dish
Subscription Services from Sky and Virgin give a vast array of premium content

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Freeview	Freesat	Sky	Virgin	YouView	Turners	Hard drive capacity (GB)	HDMI out	Smart
Up to £500													
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	
Humax DTR-T2000	200	11.14/FT	★★★★★	Best Freeview HD recorder, Awards 2014	●					2	500	1	●
Humax DTR-T1010 (500GB)	230	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	Best Freeview HD recorder, Awards 2013						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	
Humax HDR-1000S (500GB)	220	01.13/FT	★★★★★	Best Freesat recorder, Awards 2013		●				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	

SET-TOP BOXES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Freeview	FreeSat	Sky	Virgin	YouView	Tuners	Hard drive capacity (Gb)	HDMI out	Smart
Up to £500												
Sagem DTR94250S	250	04.10/GT	★★★★★						2	250	1	
Samsung BD-D8500	450	05.11/FT	★★★★★						2	500	1	
Samsung STB-E7500	270	09.12/FT	★★★★★						2	500	1	
Sky+ HD 1TB	249	Aw.12/GT	★★★★★						2	1TB	1	
Sky+ HD 2TB	250	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★						2	1TB	1	
Sony SVR-HDT1000	300	12.11/GT	★★★★★						2	1TB	1	
TechniSat HDFS	180	04.10/FT	★★★★★						1	n/a	1	
TVonics DTR-HD500	280	12.10/FT	★★★★★						2	500	1	
Virgin Media Samsung V+	99	07.09/FT	★★★★★						3	320	1	
Virgin Media TiVo	200	06.11/FT	★★★★★						3	1TB	1	



Portable music players

A category of products that has been put under increasing pressure by the rise of the ubiquitous smartphone. At the most basic level it will be a standard music player that can be used in the gym. Higher-end machines will add video, internet browsing and apps as well.

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Screen size (in)	Resolution	Storage (GB)	Web browsing	Dimensions (hwd, mm)
Up to £1000								
Astell & Kern AK100 MkII	700	04.14/GT	★★★★★	2.5	320x240	32		79x59x15
Apple iPod Nano 16GB (2012)	130	01.13/FT	★★★★★	2.5	240x240	16		77x40x5
Apple iPod Shuffle 2GB	40	12.11/GT	★★★★★	n/a	n/a	2		30x30x10
Apple iPod Touch 64GB (2012)	330	12.12/FT	★★★★★	4	1136x640	64		123x59x6
Cowon X7	200	02.11/FT	★★★★★	4.3	480x272	120		127x79x15
Cowon Z2	200	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	3.7	800x480	16		116x63x12
FiiO X5	290	08.14/GT	★★★★★	2.4	400x360	n/a		114x68x16
iBasso DX50	200	08.14/GT	★★★★★	1	96x96	8		60x40x20
SanDisk Sansa Clip+ 8GB	40	12.11/GT	★★★★★	2.4	320x240	8		10x64x17
Sony NWZ-F805 16GB	200	01.13/FT	★★★★★	3.5	800x400	16		115x57x9
Sony NWZ-F886	200	08.14/GT	★★★★★	4	854x480	32		116x59x8
Sony NWZ-ZX1	550	04.14/GT	★★★★★	4	854x480	128		123x61x16



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

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	OS	NFC	3G	Screen size (in)	Resolution	Storage (GB)	Dimensions (hwd, mm)
Up to £600										
Amazon Kindle Fire HD 16GB	160	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Android			7	1280x800	16/32	193x137x10
Amazon Kindle Fire HDX 7	200	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Android			7	1920x1200	16/32/64	186x128x9
Asus VivoTab ME400	400	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Windows 8			10.1	1366x768	32/64	263x171x10
Apple iPad Mini 64GB Wi-Fi	430	04.13/GT	★★★★★	iOS			7.9	1024x768	16/32/64	200x135x7
Apple iPad Mini/Retina display	320	01.14/ST	★★★★★	iOS			7.9	2048x1536	16/32/64	200x135x7
Apple iPad 4 16GB Wi-Fi	400	04.13/GT	★★★★★	iOS			9.7	2048x1536	16/32/64	240x190x9
Apple iPad Air	400	01.14/FT	★★★★★	iOS			9.7	2048x1536	16/32/64	240x170x8
Asus Eee Pad Transformer	380	09.11/GT	★★★★★	Android			10.1	1280x800	16/32	271x177x13
Asus Eee Pad Transformer Prime	500	07.12/FT	★★★★★	Android			10.1	1280x800	16/32	181x263x8
Asus Transformer Pad Infinity	600	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Android			10.1	1900x1200	32/64	263x181x9
BlackBerry PlayBook 16GB	400	09.11/GT	★★★★★	QNX			7	1024x600	16/32/64	130x194x10
Dell XPS 10 32GB	340	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Windows RT			10.1	1366x768	32/64	270x180x10
Google Nexus 7	160	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Android			7	1280x800	16/32	199x120x11
Google Nexus 7 (2013)	200	10.14/GT	★★★★★	Android			7	1920x1200	16/32	200x114x9

TABLETS continued

TABLETScontinued											
Product	£	Tested	Verdict		OS	NFC	3G	Screen size (in)	Resolution	Storage (GB)	Dimensions (hwd, mm)
Google Nexus 10	319	01.13/FT	★★★★★	Great performance and price: a real iPad-botherer	Android	●	10	2560x1060	16/32	264x178x9	
LG G Pad	260	01.14/ST	★★★★★	Looks the part but struggles against its price rivals	Android	●	8.3	1920x1200	16	216x127x8	
Kobo Arc 16GB	160	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Not for music buffs but a great budget option nonetheless	Android		7	1280x800	16/32	190x120x10	
Samsung Galaxy Note 10.1	450	02.14/FT	★★★★★	A great screen that's let down by a cluttered interface	Android	●	10.1	2500x1600	16/32/64	171x243x8	
Samsung Galaxy Tab 2 7.0	160	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Find it for the right price and it's a capable all-rounder	Android	●	7	1024x600	8/16	190x120x10	
Samsung Galaxy Tab S	320	10.14/GT	★★★★★	The best tablet we've tested from Samsung so far	Android	●	8.4	2560x1600	16/32	213x126x7	
Sony Xperia Tablet S	330	04.13/FT	★★★★★	Plenty of potential, but there are niggles	Android	●	9.4	1280x800	16/32	240x170x10	
Sony Xperia Tablet Z	399	06.13/FT	★★★★★	Sony fans will love it, but there are tablets out there for less money	Android	●	10.1	1920x1200	16/32	172x266x69	
Sony Xperia Tablet Z2	400	08.14/FT	★★★★★	Another solid effort, but doesn't do quite enough against the iPad	Android	●	10.1	1920x1200	16/32	172x266x64	
Tesco Hudl	120	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Not flawless, but this is a superb budget tablet from Tesco	Android		7	1440x900	16	192x129x10	



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

Our recommendations

Our recommendations									
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	★★★★★	Best smartphone, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	iOS	●	4.0	1136x640	16/32/64	124x59x8
Apple iPhone 6	Aw.14/FT	★★★★★	Best phone up to 5in, Awards 2014. Product of the Year	iOS	● ●	4.7	1334x750	16/32/128	138x67x7
Apple iPhone 6 Plus	Aw.14/FT	★★★★★	Former reigning smartphone, now replaced but still good	iOS		3.5	960x640	16/32/64	115x59x9
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 930	11.14/FT	★★★★★	We'd like more apps but this is (again) the best Windows effort we've seen	Windows	● ●	5	1920x1080	32	137x71x10
Nokia Lumia 1520	05.14/ST	★★★★★	Apps still disappoint but this is the best Windows Phone yet	Windows	● ●	6	1920x1080	32	163x85x9
Opportunity N1	05.14/ST	★★★★★	Quirky and flexible, this is a great effort from a promising brand	Android	● ●	5.9	1920x1080	16/32	171x83x9

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SMARTPHONES continued

Product	Tested	Verdict	OS	NFC	4G	Screen size (in)	Resolution	Storage (GB)	Dimensions (hwd, mm)
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
Sony Xperia Z3	Aw.14/FT	★★★★★	Best phone 5in+, Awards 2014	Android	● ● ●	5.2	1920x1080	16	146x72x7



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
Up to £80					
Audioquest Pearl	23	06.11/FT	★★★★★	Best HDMI cable, Awards 2012	1 1.4
Cambridge Audio 500 (5m)	69	06.10/GT	★★★★★	A perfectly acceptable cable for the money	5 1.3a
Chord Company Supershield	50	10.10/GT	★★★★★	Still a class-leading cable, but now it's 1.4 too	1 1.3
Clearer Aud C-line HDMI (2m)	60	08.07/FT	★★★★★	Will improve even 1080p pictures, helping stability. Well worth the money	1 2
Kimber Kable HD-09	73	03.09/GT	★★★★★	Picture quality is up with the best and it creates a wide sound field	2 1.3
Philex Thor Flat HDMI	40	10.09/GT	★★★★★	A gutsy, well built HDMI cable.	1 1.3
Philex Thor HDMI/DVI kit	60	09.06/FT	★★★★★	A very decent cable for not much cash - you can't really go wrong	5 1.3
QED HDMI-P	50	11.08/FT	★★★★★	This award winning cable just got better	1 1.3
QED Performance HDMI	70	03.09/GT	★★★★★	Capable performer – finely balanced sound and a wonderfully rendered picture	3 1.3
QED Performance HDMI-e	35	03.11/FT	★★★★★	Perfectly good cable that just falls down in its pricing	1 1.4
QED Perf. HDMI-e S/speed	60	11.10/FT	★★★★★	Communicates a superb and natural colour balance and virtually noise-free images	2 1.4
QED Profile HDMI	25	01.12/FT	★★★★★	Now with 1.4 status, this is still a worthy cable	1 1.4
QED Qunex HDMI-P (5M)	75	09.08/GT	★★★★★	Fantastic picture quality mated with a dynamic and powerful sound	5 1.3
ThatCable HDMI	5	10.09/FT	★★★★★	Brilliant way to spend a fiver - will give rivals up to £20 something to think about	1.5 1.3



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HF 6	6	557mm
HF 8	8	670mm

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Audioquest Pearl HDMI Cable
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SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2012

CABLES & ACCESSORIES
BEST ANALOGUE INTERCONNECT
ATLAS ELEMENT INTEGRA



Atlas Element Audio Cable
Prices From £37.00

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2012

CABLES & ACCESSORIES
BEST OPTICAL DIGITAL CABLE
QED PERFORMANCE GRAPHITE



QED Performance Optical
Prices From £39.95



AudioQuest Dragonfly V1.2
Price £129.00

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2012

CABLES & ACCESSORIES
BEST COAXIAL DIGITAL CABLE
QED PERFORMANCE



QED Performance Digital
Prices From £39.95

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2012

PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
CABLES & ACCESSORIES
AUDIOQUEST FLX-SLiP 14/4



AudioQuest FLX-SLiP Cable
Price £5.80 per metre

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SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2012

CABLES & ACCESSORIES
BEST USB CABLE
SUPRA USB 2.0



Supra USB 2.0 Cable
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WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2010

CABLES
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MERLIN TARANTULA MK6



Merlin Tarantula MK6 Cable
Prices From £50.00



QED Reference Audio Cable
Prices From £41.99



QED Reference Evolution
Prices From £57.99



Atlas Mavros Optical Cable
Prices From £115.00



Wireworld Luna 7 Audio Cable
Price £34.15

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HDMI CABLES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Length as tested (m)	HDMI type
Up to £80					
ThatCable HDMI (5m)	10	06.10/GT	★★★★★	5	1.3a
Vivanco Prowire	45	10.10/GT	★★★★★	1.5	1.3
Vivanco Sound and Image	30	11.09/GT	★★★★★	2	1.3
Wireworld Chroma (Miami)	60	10.09/GT	★★★★★	1	1.3
Wireworld Chroma 6	60	Aw.10/FT	★★★★★	1	1.4
Wireworld Island 6	46	10.10/GT	★★★★★	1.4	2.0
£80 and above					
Audioquest Cinnamon	80	01.11/FT	★★★★★	2	1.4
Audioquest Forest	80	06.10/GT	★★★★★	5	1.4
Audioquest HDMI-1	180	09.08/GT	★★★★★	3	1.3
Audioquest HDMI-X	95	03.09/GT	★★★★★	3	1.3
Atlas HDMI	160	07.07/GT	★★★★★	7	1.3
Black Rhodium Coral HDMI	100	10.06/FT	★★★★★	4	1.3
Chord Company Active	115	10.09/GT	★★★★★	1.5	1.3
Chord Co. Active Silver + HDMI	95	01.11/FT	★★★★★	1	1.4
Chord Co. Supershield (5m)	90	06.10/GT	★★★★★	5	1.3a
Ecosse Picture Perfect Ultra	110	09.08/GT	★★★★★	5	1.3
Ecosse Picture Perfect Ultra +	169	09.08/GT	★★★★★	5	1.3
QED Qunex HDMI-P (7m)	85	07.07/GT	★★★★★	7	1.0
QED Reference	125	06.10/GT	★★★★★	5	1.3a
QED Signature HDMI	150	10.09/GT	★★★★★	1	1.3
Supra HF100 HDMI (8m)	112	08.06/GT	★★★★★	8	1.0
van den Hul Flat 180	90	10.09/GT	★★★★★	2	1.3b
van den Hul Flat HDMI (3m)	105	03.09/GT	★★★★★	3	1.3
van den Hul Ultimate	300	10.08/FT	★★★★★	1	1.3
Vivanco SHQ Ultra	80	06.10/FT	★★★★★	1.2	1.4
Wireworld Chroma 5 HDMI (7m)	109	07.07/GT	★★★★★	7	1.0



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)
Up to £50					
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

Jargon Buster



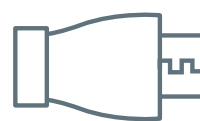
Coaxial

One of two types of digital audio connector. Offers slightly better performance than optical.



Component

Superior to scart, S-video or composite, carries video from a source to a display on three leads.



HDMI

A high-quality digital connection that carries images from DVD/Blu-ray players to displays.



AWARD WINNING SPEAKER CABLES

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
★★★★★
July 2008



QED Silver Anniversary XT
Price £6.95 per metre

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
★★★★★
October 2012



Atlas Equator 2.0
Price £6.00 per metre

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
★★★★★
March 2014



Van Den Hul The Clearwater
Price £9.00 per metre

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
★★★★★
March 2014



Wireworld Luna 7
Price £6.50 per metre

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
★★★★★
April 2007



Chord Reference Signature
Price £200.00 per metre

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2012
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
CABLES & ACCESSORIES
AUDIOQUEST FLX-SLiP 1414



AudioQuest FLX-SLiP Cable
Price £5.80 per metre

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
★★★★★
July 2008



Atlas Hyper 2.0
Price £20.00 per metre

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
★★★★★
Jan 2008



Ecosse MS2.4
Price £58.50 per metre

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DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Type	Length tested (m)
£50 and above					
Audioquest Cinnamon	60	11.12/FT	★★★★★	Like a fine paintbrush: controlled and delicate but lacking the big, broad strokes of a roller	USB 1.5
Atlas Equator Optical	50	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Worth checking out, but not for the basshunters	Optical 1
Chord Company Optichord	51	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Confident, competent and extremely likeable. Highly recommended	Optical 1
Chord Co. Prodac Pro Digital	70	05.11/FT	★★★★★	Even better following an upgrade to its plugs	Co-axial 1
Clearer Audio Copper-line 75	97	Aw.08/FT	★★★★★	This is another fine cable from the Copper-line stable. It's well worth a listen	Co-axial 1
Clearer Aud. Silverline Optimus	185	09.09/GT	★★★★★	The sheer brilliance of this cable makes it stand out	Co-axial 0.5
Ecosse The Director SE	89	09.09/GT	★★★★★	Spacious sounding and great with higher frequencies	Co-axial 1
Furutech Formula 2	55	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★	Best USB cable, Awards 2011	USB 1.2
Kimber USB	52	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Worth an audition if you're after something laid-back	USB 1
QED Qunex 75 Signature	80	09.09/FT	★★★★★	Beautifully made, but not quite as thrilling as we'd like	Co-axial 1
QED U Play (Bluetooth)	65	05.10/FT	★★★★★	It's small, cheap, and does an efficient job	Bluetooth 10
Vertere Pulse D-Fi	70	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	A must-audition if you can stretch your budget	USB 1
Wireworld Ultraviolet 5 USB	50	08.09/FT	★★★★★	Best USB cable, Awards 2010. If you use digital kit, this needs to be on your audition list	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)
Up to £50					
Atlas Element Integra (1m)	45	11.13/GT	★★★★★	Best analogue interconnect, Awards 2014	● 1
Black Rhodium Twist	36	06.14/GT	★★★★★	We wouldn't recommend this cable for bright-sounding systems but it's a decent option for the money	● 1
Clear. Aud. C-line Alpha One	30	12.11/FT	★★★★★	A bargain interconnect that should be on your shortlist	● 1
Ecosse Conductor CA1.2	49	06.11/GT	★★★★★	Excellent with detail - a good all-rounder	● 1
Ecosse The Composer	37	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Lacks excitement, but a lovely design with warm and punchy sounds	● 0.8
Merlin Mozart	40	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Open and exuberant, if lacking in warmth	● 1
QED Performance Audio 2	40	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Agile, fun and nuanced: would do well in pretty much any system	● 1
QED Profile	18	06.11/GT	★★★★★	At the top of the first upgrade tree	● ● 1
Wireworld Luna	37	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Excellent with subtlety and dynamics: should be on any interconnect shortlist	● 1
Wireworld Luna 6	36	12.09/GT	★★★★★	Looks strange, but delivers a great refined sound	● 1
Wireworld Luna 7	40	06.14/GT	★★★★★	Delivers a confident and likable sound. A great option at this price	● 1
£50 and above					
Atlas Equator Integra	75	02.12/FT	★★★★★	A recommended second-upgrade cable	● ● 1
AudioQuest Red River	85	06.14/GT	★★★★★	What it lacks in smoothness and subtlety, it makes up for in scale and dynamics	● 1
Chord Co. Chameleon Plus	125	11.11/FT	★★★★★	New plugs make these even more essential	● 1
Chord Company Cobra VEE 3	95	06.14/GT	★★★★★	Clear and detailed, this cable brings a very driven and focused feel to music	● 1
Chord Company Indigo Plus	995	05.09/FT	★★★★★	It's genius in an interconnect - but you need the right system	● 1
Chord Crimson Vee3	50	11.13/GT	★★★★★	A nice, easy-going cable that's a little too restrained	● 1
Ecosse The Baton Mk II	104	08.08/GT	★★★★★	Although there's much to admire, the Baton Mk II can struggle to gel sounds	● ● 0.8
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

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Mains products

IEC _____ Usually a three-pin connector used in most hi-fi (and kettles)
 Figure of 8 _____ Small, two-pin connector. Tends to be used on lower-priced products
 Blocks and conditioners _____ Multi-plug units, some of which attempt to filter noise out of the mains

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Cable	Block	Conditioner	Figure of 8 (2-pin)	IEC (3-pin)	Number of sockets
Up to £100									
Clear. Aud. C-Line Alpha One	25	11.10/FT	★★★★★						n/a
Clear. Aud. C-L Alpha P/HUB	90	04.11/FT	★★★★★						6
Ecosse Big Orange MK2+	60	04.10/FT	★★★★★						n/a
Lindy 6-way	40	12.08/FT	★★★★★						6
Merlin Tarantula Figure '8'	40	01.11/GT	★★★★★						n/a
Merlin Tarantula MK6	40	11.10/FT	★★★★★						n/a
Russ Andrews Powerkord-8	75	01.11/GT	★★★★★						n/a
Tacima CS929	40	08.06/FT	★★★★★						6
£100 and above									
Audioquest NRG 1.5	100	01.11/GT	★★★★★						n/a
Atlas Eos	147	05.09/GT	★★★★★						n/a
Clearer Audio Silver-line	150	07.06/FT	★★★★★						n/a
Furutech G-320AG	165	02.11/GT	★★★★★						n/a
R Andrews Ref P/Kord W350i	232	05.09/GT	★★★★★						n/a
Russ Andrews X2	200	11.11/FT	★★★★★						2
Supra MD-06	150	07.08/FT	★★★★★						6
van den Hul M/Server Hybrid	150	05.09/GT	★★★★★						n/a
Wireworld Stratus 52	100	08.10/FT	★★★★★						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	
Up to £10/m				
Audioquest FLX-SLiP 14/4	5.80	11.13/GT	★★★★★	Best Speaker Cable, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
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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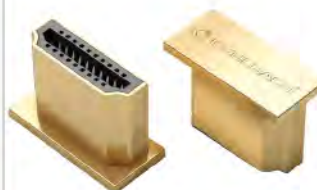
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SPEAKER CABLES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Biwire
£10/m and above				
Atlas Hyper 2.0	15	07.08/GT	★★★★★	If your system warrants this kind of cable, you won't be disappointed
Atlas Mavros (5m)	2290	08.08/FT	★★★★★	Pair with an extravagant system and get excellent performance
Chord Company Signature	125	01.07/GT	★★★★★	One of the most effective upgrades you will ever hear if you own expensive kit
Ecosse MS2.4	50	01.08/FT	★★★★★	A massively detailed cable that reveals subtleties with refinement
Kimber 4VS	12	04.10/GT	★★★★★	An accomplished performer with an expressive sound
QED XT40	10	Aw.14/FT	★★★★★	Best speaker cable, Awards 2014, Product of the Year
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 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 (hwd, cm)	Fillable	Finishes
Up to £5000						
Atacama Duo 6	65	02.13/GT	★★★★★	A very likable pair of speaker stands	60x31x31	● 1
Atacama Nexus 6	200	12.00/FT	★★★★★	Still fine performers despite their age	60x25x30	● 1
Atacama Moseco 6	120	09.14/GT	★★★★★	Best speaker stands, Awards 2014	60x24x28	● 4
Custom rc60 Deluxe	125	10.07/FT	★★★★★	This bespoke service has made a fine pair stands	60x20x25	5
Custom Design FS103	160	09.14/GT	★★★★★	A good pair of stands but rivals offer better overall performance	61x22x26	● 4
Custom Design FS104 Signature	200	09.11/GT	★★★★★	Best speaker stands, Awards 2013	62x16x18	● 4
Custom Design RS300	90	03.07/GT	★★★★★	Minimal design, a thoroughly appealing listen	61x22x26	● 2
Custom Design RS302	120	11.06/FT	★★★★★	Plenty of detail & clarity especially with vocals	61x22x26	● 3
Hi Fi Racks Podium T5 IV	150	09.11/GT	★★★★★	Ideal for those with forward sounding speakers	50x24x30	2
Hi Fi Racks Podium Slimline	120	09.14/GT	★★★★★	A comfortable listening experience that's marred by some less than appealing fuzziness	60x15x21	5
Mission Stance	100	07.09/FT	★★★★★	Will do a fine job with £200-£400 speakers	58x21x28	● 3
Partington ANSA 60	150	09.11/GT	★★★★★	They remain fine stands - but no longer outstanding value	60x23x28	● 1
Part. D'nought Broadside	300	08.08/FT	★★★★★	Deliver wide ranging improvements to sound	60x23x28	1
Partington Heavi	399	03.07/FT	★★★★★	If you demand the best, buy these	60x30x21	1
Part. Super Dreadnought	180	03.07/GT	★★★★★	Best £100+ speaker stands in Awards 2007	60x16x17	● 1
Q Acoustics 20 speaker stands	200	09.14/GT	★★★★★	Clever construction and great performance makes these stands ideal support for all types of speakers	66.5x39x24	2
Soundstyle Z2	70	11.08/FT	★★★★★	Best sub-£100 speaker stand in Awards 2007	57x17x23	● 2



AV & hi-fi racks

Many racks are built to be expanded. Several manufacturers offer you a number of shelving options for ready-made products, but what if you want to get more kit in a few years? We like having the option to build upwards at a later date.

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Modular Shelves	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	Finishes
Up to £500						
Alphason Finewood 1100	300	03.13/FT	★★★★★	Looks great and provides sturdy support for your kit	3 51x110x45	1
Alphason ST560/3	260	06.10/GT	★★★★★	A well isolated modular design that does much right	● 4 65x56x59	2
Atacama Equinox AVI	380	05.07/FT	★★★★★	Neat solution to mount a TV above AV electronics	2 110x106x60	3
Atacama Equinox	339	11.09/GT	★★★★★	Still a good rack, but newer rivals offer more	● 2-5 Variablex60x55	3
Atacama Evoque Eco 60-40	450	09.14/GT	★★★★★	Best equipment support, Awards 2014	● 3 Variablex60x40	3
Atacama Eris Eco 5.0	460	04.12/FT	★★★★★	Best equipment support, Awards 2013	● 4 70x59x56	4
Audiophile Base Stratabase	360	01.08/FT	★★★★★	It isn't cheap but justifies the cost	● 1 0.4x43x36	2
Custom Design Concept AV	350	04.07/GT	★★★★★	Looks and sounds excellent, plus four colour options	3 60x101x40	4
Custom Design Icon Sig.	330	10.06/FT	★★★★★	A great rack for an upgrade to tame unruly systems	4 42x75x66	11
Custom Design Milan 4	470	11.09/GT	★★★★★	Small and well made, but lacks subtlety	● 4 59x57x40	5

RACKS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Modular Shelves	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	Finishes
Up to £500						
Custom Design Milan LCD3	350	09.08/FT	★★★★★	● 3	42x77x40	4
Custom Design Tokyo Hi-Fi 4	430	08.11/GT	★★★★★	● 4	64x58x40	3
Hi Fi Racks Podium	460	08.11/GT	★★★★★	● 3	62x60x40	1
HiFi Racks Podium SL Ak. XL	260	09.14/GT	★★★★★	● 3	Variablex79.5x40	5
Hi Fi Racks Podium Slimline	350	03.13/FT	★★★★★	4	Variablex55x40	1
Quadraspire Q4evo	380	11.09/GT	★★★★★	4	Variablex59x39.5	8
Sonorous PL2200	280	09.08/FT	★★★★★	2	82x95x44	6
Target CL470	299	06.10/GT	★★★★★	4	82x50x55	2
Techlink Ovid	200	04.07/GT	★★★★★	3	32x95x40	4
£500-£1000						
Atacama Elite Eco 12.0	500	03.13/FT	★★★★★	● 5	Variablex115x32	1
BDI Valera 9724	500	03.13/FT	★★★★★	3	54x112x52	3
Hi Fi Racks Akorner XL	930	09.12/FT	★★★★★	● 3	45x110x40	6
Optimum Avion 8925	999	06.10/GT	★★★★★	3	57x127x56	3
Quadraspire Q4 Bamboo	500	03.13/FT	★★★★★	● 4	Variablex59x40	1
Quadraspire QAVM (Oak)	540	04.07/GT	★★★★★	● 3	50x109x50	8
Quadraspire QAVX	560	12.07/FT	★★★★★	● 2	Variablex163x52	8
Quadraspire Sunoko Vent T	800	11.09/GT	★★★★★	● 4	Variablex59x47	6
£1000 and more						
Audiophile Base StarBase	1180	12.06/GT	★★★★★	● 3	65x59x52	3
Hi Fi Racks Podium XL	1050	06.10/GT	★★★★★	● 3	53x140x40	1
Spectral Closed CL1050	1100	07.07/FT	★★★★★	2	31x101x53	17
Spectral Closed CL1552	1800	07.07/GT	★★★★★	6	VariablexVariablex53	16

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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

Our recommendations					Line level Inputs	Line level Outputs
Product	£	Tested	Verdict			
Up to £1500						
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)
Up to £3000						
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	7x43x33



Cartridges

Moving magnet (MM) These produce a higher output, giving your phono stage an easier time
Moving coil (MC) Can produce more detail, but is more demanding of your phono stage

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	MM/MC	Tracking weight (g)
Up to £500					
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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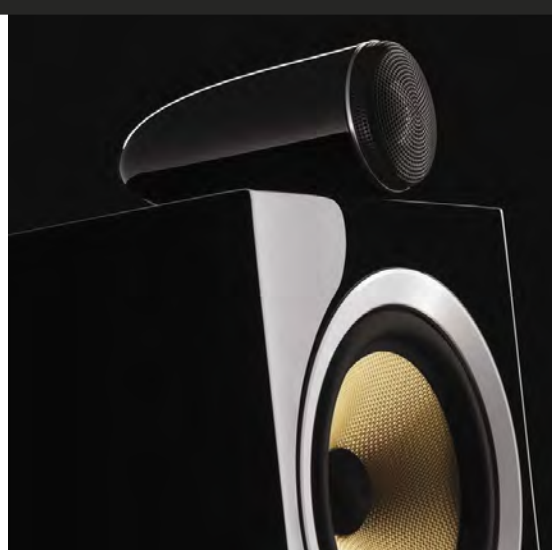
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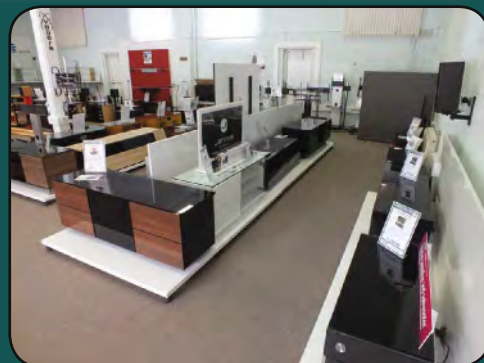
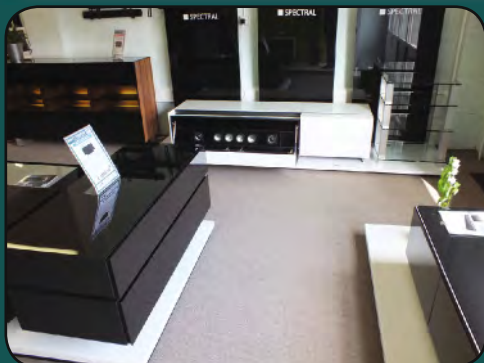


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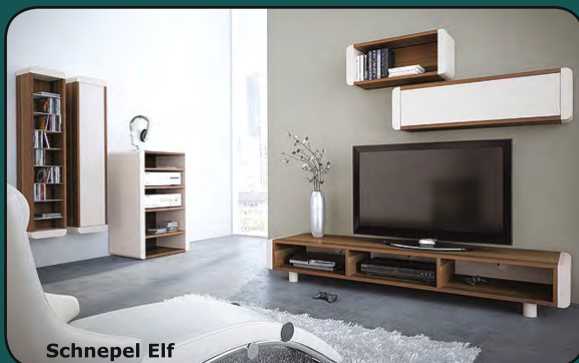
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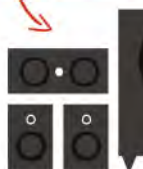


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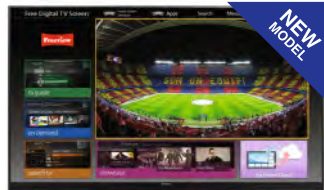


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Size 400D x 460H x 400W

The award winning XXLS400

The exceptional XXLS400 is our highly acclaimed subwoofer now well established amongst both audiophiles and home cinema lovers. Incorporating an extremely high quality and well regarded Peerless XXLS12 drive unit and a whopping 400W RMS (800W Peak) amplifier, all fitted into a sealed enclosure. This is an extremely high quality subwoofer which is reflected in it's weight of 31kg Prices from £424.95 to £519.95 - Size 400D x 460H x 400W

The highly regarded XLS200

Although the XLS200 is one of our smallest subwoofers the size belies it's capabilities, in fact a Swedish Hi-Fi magazine described it as a wolf in sheep's clothing. The reason for this is the Peerless XLS10 drive unit has an exceptionally long throw which is coupled to a 275W RMS (550W Peak) amplifier. The XLS200 is not just about power, the XLS10 drive unit is critically damped and produces very tight and fast bass and will subtly underpin most loudspeaker in a Hi-Fi setup, and of course having that power will also suit home cinema systems. Size 340D x 353H x 390W

Price Range £314.95 to 379.95

Our lowest cost subwoofer the Gemini

The Gemini may be our lowest priced subwoofer but it's still packed with all the usual input connectivity but it also features twin displays. Powered by a 150W RMS (300W Peak) amplifier and sporting a 10" drive unit this entry level subwoofer offers power and performance well above its price point.

From £214.95 to £259.95 Size 340D x 353H x 390W

The awesome Monolith and Monolith Plus

With the Monolith and Monolith Plus we are now talking bass, most of our subwoofers are compared with models that cost twice as much as other high end subwoofers. However the Monolith has been compared with a subwoofer 5 times the price. Both versions of the Monolith incorporate our specially designed and built B.LAT amplifiers and state of the art 12" drive units.

As with all our subwoofers the Monolith has high and low level inputs which have independent volume controls, adjustable phase and frequency controls.

The standard Monolith is rated at 300W RMS (600W Peak) whilst the Monolith Plus is rated at 500W RMS (1000W Peak) - Size 420D x 604H x 540W

Monolith price ranges £449.95 to £544.95 - Monolith Plus price ranges £544.95 to £639.95

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Or if you prefer talking to a human please telephone our sales hotline on 01702 527572**

The Anti-Mode room equalisation Gizmo, suitable for use with any subwoofer

A typical listening room resonates in low frequencies. It will cause even the best subwoofer to not sound good. Frequencies that are below the resonances can not be distinguished. The problem is the most severe when a subwoofer is placed close the wall or to the corner of the room. Anti-Mode™ technology eliminates the resonances of the speaker and the room by equalizing both the amplitude and the time domain responses by using very accurate digital signal processing filter structures and anti-phasing technology. In this way, the listener can hear the frequencies down to the specified cut-off frequency of the subwoofer. Also the transient response is improved drastically in the process, making bass sound faster and more controlled. Anti-Mode™ 8033 is very simple to use. It is completely automatic, making frequency sweeps to the desired calibration point (or multiple points) and measuring the combined transfer function of the subwoofer-room

Anti-Mode Cinema



Room equalisation for one or more subwoofers that share the same signal. Ideal for use with AV and Hi-Fi - mono RCA input to mono RCA output
Priced at £235.40 inc. carriage

Anti-Mode SII



Room equalisation for one or more subwoofers that share the same signal. Ideal for use with AV and Hi-Fi - Stereo RCA inputs to mono output
Priced at £304.95 inc. carriage

Anti-Mode Dual Core



The all singing all dancing Swiss army knife of digital electronics. Full range room equalisation with many input output configurations - far too many function to explain in such a short advert
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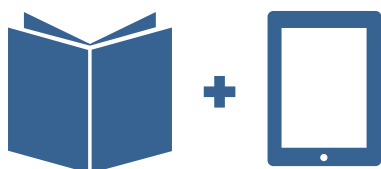
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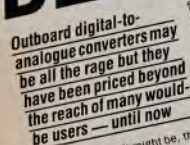
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DAC to the start



Unusually, the Black Box had two outputs - one at CD-player level, the other padded down to about half that to avoid overloading the amplifier input stages of the day.

As different as the iRDAC looks to that original Black Box, they still share a common purpose: that's to get the best sound from a digital source at a sensible price. Things change, but not so much at Arcam, it seems.

It's still a black box, perhaps, but this Arcam will accept signals from a large number of sources



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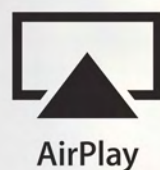


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