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JULY 2014

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And that’s not just because no-one could contact me or because I can’t remember any phone numbers. It was mostly because I had some headphones *but no music to play*. And my current telephone plays music far better than any iPod I’ve owned.

Which is why the test of **five outstanding Android smartphones (p62)** is so important. Not only do we all take our (metaphorical) life in our hand every time we reach for our

communication-device/gateway-to-all-knowledge, we reach for the best portable player we’ve ever had.



Simon
Simon Lucas, Editor

My products of the month



Sony KD-65X9005B

First Test p20

Such an amazing watch with native 4K material it makes me want to weep for the lack of content.

Chord Hugo

Group test p75

Sounds every bit as good as a pricey DAC should. Plus it has portholes and coloured lights.



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NEXT MONTH

SUPERTEST TELEVISIONS

The trickle of 2014 TVs is becoming a deluge



GROUP TESTS AV RECEIVERS

Latest big-brand £500-or-so machines

WIRELESS SPEAKERS

Six of the best (or, at least, the newest)

RACKS AND STANDS

You can’t just put it all on the floor, after all

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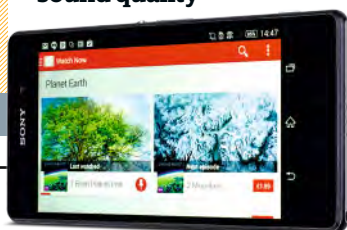


Group Test Stereo speakers
 "They offer pretty much everything we want from a floorstander: massive scale with plenty of power"



First tests
 "They are gorgeous headphones, with lavish attention to detail"

Group tests
 "This phone is a resounding success, with its impressive execution... and top sound quality"



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

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Group Test DACs
"There's a great sense of clarity and transparency and the unit sounds beautifully balanced"

Our ratings explained

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



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Exclusive reviews of the latest kit

FIRST TESTS

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FIRST TESTS**



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£1100 **Page 12**
A stunning pair of hi-fi headphones



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Yamaha RX-V377
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Budget AV receiver doesn't disappoint

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A subtler approach to colour reproduction has worked wonders for Samsung on this TV

EXCLUSIVE

A smooth curve and a polished presentation

Samsung UE65H8000 | LED/LCD TV | £3300

This is our first taster of Samsung's 2014 range of TVs, and we are mostly impressed. The upmarket H8000 series was announced at the Las Vegas Consumer Electronics Show in January, and we've been waiting impatiently for the first production samples. If this 65in set is representative of this range's talents (48in and 55in screens sizes are also available) then Samsung is on good form.

The big news is that the H8000 features a curved screen. Last year we reviewed a couple of curved TVs - one from Samsung and the other from LG - and both sported OLED panels. This year, Samsung's gone back to LCD panels (using edge-LEDs to supply the backlighting), and is not necessarily the worse for it.

We're still undecided about the merits of a curved panel. We can see the attraction for a single viewer who sits straight in front of the screen. Such a person will enjoy a more immersive picture that's as sharp and crisp at the edges as it is in the middle. And let's not underestimate the high-tech brownie points earned by owning something as different at this. Even so, if you buy one of these, be prepared to discuss the merits or otherwise of the curved screen with just about every visitor.

It's all about the angle

Are there any downsides to the curved screen? If you're viewing at an angle, the proportions of the image distort according to how far along the curve you look. This effect won't be massively off-putting to most people, but is acknowledged by the TV manufacturers enough for them to demonstrate at shows sets with bendable screens that adjust for curvature.

When you get past the curved shape, you're left

with a well-featured 65in Full HD set. Those expecting a 4K or OLED panel in such an upmarket set are in for a disappointment. It seems that production difficulties and the associated costs have forced Samsung to put OLED technology on the back burner for a while, at least for the mass market.

The omission of 4K is more of an issue for us. Admittedly the bandwagon of this higher-resolution technology has only just started rolling, and there's quite a way to go before we would consider 4K ability essential in every TV. But a high-end model such as this should be adequately future-proofed. We don't think the UE65H8000 is. Our view is cemented by the knowledge that the company has 65in 4K-capable models available at around £4000 while Sony has alternatives at around £3500 (see p20). We would expect these prices to drop over time too.

A master of the black arts

We start our viewing with a Blu-ray of *Jack Reacher*. This is a somewhat murky film with a touch of (intentional) grain to the image, and the H8000 copes well. Over recent years Samsung has shown itself to be a master of delivering deep blacks with its LCD sets and this TV is no different - it's properly dark, and more akin to what we're used to seeing with a good plasma panel.

More than that, this Samsung is capable of revealing fine detail in shadows, rather than lose it all in a uniform darkness as some rivals do. Try to catch it out with scenes that combine bright and dark elements in one frame and it responds well. There's enough punch in whites to satisfy, but

perhaps less than we're used to from the brand. It seems Samsung has taken a step back from its traditional full-throttle approach to delivering contrasts and colours, taking a more mature, subtler route.

The result is a natural presentation with a convincing colour palette. Difficult-to-render features such as skin tones are nicely handled, and even vivid-colour scenes from the London Olympics opening ceremony come through with plenty of sparkle. There's a lot of insight here, and a real sign of progress for Samsung.

Motion is well handled, even in busy scenes, and it's impressive how this set stays composed and avoids the overly processed feel some rivals still impart.

Things aren't quite flawless though. In very dark scenes there's some unevenness in the backlighting. It's not enough to spoil things, but it's worse than we've come to expect from Samsung. We hope this isn't a sign that the company is allowing build quality standards to drop.

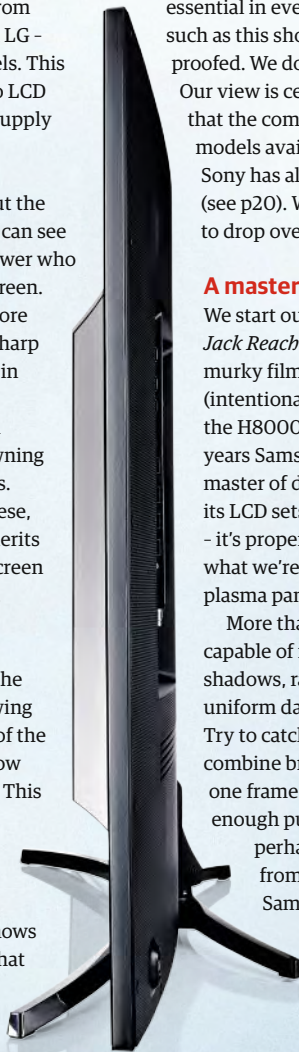
Quality in depth with 3D

The UE65H8000 comes with two pairs of active glasses. They are light and relatively comfortable. We load our current favourite 3D film, *Gravity*, and enjoy what we see. This TV is hugely accomplished when fed with properly produced 3D source material such as this. The image remains stable, only really showing signs of struggling in complex scenes such as the initial debris hit at the start of the film.

The depth of the image impresses us, and we like the nicely rounded way this set draws people and objects. It's a long way ahead of the layered 2D effect we still see from many alternatives.

It stays bright too, despite the usual dimming effect that 3D replay suffers from. The overall level of detail is impressive as is the TV's understated way of delivering it.

We move on to a DVD of *Stoker* and the UE65H8000 continues to please. The picture is surprisingly free of noise (considering the upscaling involved) and is crisply detailed. The set's well-balanced



When you fill it with
native 4K content, the
65in screen comes to life

Sony KD-65X9005B, p20

A single viewer who sits straight in
front of the screen will enjoy a more
immersive picture that's as sharp at
the edges as it is in the middle

colour palette remains unblemished, as does its confident way with motion. The large screen size puts something of a magnifying glass on the source material, so we certainly wouldn't want to view a standard definition image from very close up. But at normal viewing distances – just less than three metres for a 65in – it's fine.

Crisp detail and colour control

The UE65H8000 is equipped with both Freeview HD and Freesat tuners. These are good performers. The HD channels are crisply detailed with a good handle on contrast and colours. Picture noise is relatively low, too.

Standard-definition material shows the anticipated drop in quality. Detail is a little blurred and noise levels are higher. Still, the garish colours of daytime TV are kept in check and we're pleased with the level of picture stability on offer.



Pebble remote looks
good but we prefer
the more traditional
bundled alternative



Samsung has long been at the cutting edge as far as smart functionality is concerned. Perhaps surprisingly, the story this year is of refinement rather than any radical change. There are some minor tweaks to make accessibility of source material from the likes of smartphones and tablets just a bit easier, and some slight reorganisation of some apps. It's all still pretty slick and easy to use, though we do wonder whether this failure to take a big step forwards leaves a gap for rivals to fill.

Samsung has been terrific in equipping its sets with catch-up services (4oD, ITV player, Demand 5) and film apps (Netflix, Wuaki.tv), and for the most part it remains so. The lack of BBC iPlayer on our review sample is a bit of a shock, but we're told it should be coming soon. Let's hope so.

YouTube and web browsing are handled reasonably well, though browsing still isn't quite slick enough for our tastes. YouTube in particular is rendered well considering the low quality of some of the video streams.

We like the multiview feature. It allows the viewer to watch two sets of content at the same time. Useful

Samsung has made notable improvements in the sound quality of its TVs over the past few years and that continues with the UE65H8000. It uses downward-firing speakers for the left and right channels helped out by a subwoofer. There's 40W of power amplification driving the three channels.

The sound is perfectly listenable, although naturally you will get a significant improvement with a good soundbar or home cinema system. It has decent detail and refinement enough to not sound aggressive even at high volume.

Minimal and traditional

The UE65H8000 comes with two remote handsets. There's a well-laid out traditional wand with a full array of buttons, and a redesigned, more minimalist one. We like the look of this pebble remote, but it doesn't feel that classy in use. In the end we go back to the standard alternative, finding it more intuitive. Gesture control is still available, but we still haven't warmed to it.

The practice of evolution



It's not difficult to argue that, without 4K technology, the UE65H8000 will soon look dated. If it does, it won't be for want of new smart functionality.

Take a look around the back and you will find a space for what Samsung calls an Evolution Kit. This kit allows the processing and smart functionality of the set to be upgraded in years to come. The company has already started supplying suitable modules for older models (at around £200 a pop), so there's reason to be confident that this screen will benefit similarly when the time comes.

As you'd expect, there is no shortage of connections here. There are four HDMI's, three USBs and the ability to connect to your home network, both wired and wirelessly. We always recommend a wired hook-up because it's a more stable connection. Legacy analogue video inputs such as component, composite and Scart are also included.

The TV is easy to set-up. The menus are relatively unchanged from last year and are none the worse for that. They're laid out simply and for the most part are easy to

understand. It's worth playing around with the active contrast and motion modes, but by and large we tend to keep settings on low if we use them at all. And we don't need to do much tinkering to get a good picture – always a good sign.

Double up on content

We like the new multiview feature. It splits the screen to allow the viewer to watch two sets of content at the same time, so you can watch, say, a live football match while browsing the internet. Useful.

Less useful is Football Mode. No doubt trying to cash in on the World Cup starting in June, this does strange things to the picture – imagine the most hyped shop demo image you've ever seen – and unbalances the otherwise-acceptable sound.

A couple of years ago a Full HD 65in set costing just over £3000 would have been seen as a bargain. Today, we think it needs to have 4K ability to fully justify the price – even with great spec and arguably the most convincing colour palette Samsung has engineered to date. The UE65H8000 also has a curved screen of course, but while it's a great talking point we're not totally sold on that yet.

Make no mistake, the UE65H8000 is a truly accomplished performer. But in today's cut-throat market, sometimes even that isn't enough to earn a wholehearted recommendation.

TECH SPECS

Type LED/LCD • **Screen size** 65in • **Aspect ratio** 16:9 • **Resolution** 1920 x 1080 • **Full HD** Yes • **3D** Active shutter • **Tuners** Freeview HD, Freesat • **Inputs** 4 x HDMI, 3 x USB, Component, RGB Scart, Composite • **Outputs** Digital audio • **Dimensions** 89 x 145 x 31mm • **Weight** 27kg

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Lots of insight; natural colour balance; stable with motion; impressive contrast combined with solid, yet detailed, blacks

AGAINST Full HD only; expensive; screen curve may not suit all; slightly uneven backlighting

VERDICT This is a fine set but high price, combined with a lack of 4K, loses it a star



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

REVIEWER'S NOTES... 5 THINGS ABOUT THE SAMSUNG UE65H8000

- 1 It takes two of us to unpack the H8000 and we're impressed by its style. Thankfully Samsung has had a rethink on its stand designs too.
- 2 It's time to take a closer look at the build. It's good but perhaps lacks the slickness of finish we'd expect at this price. Connectivity is good though.
- 3 We start to optimise the picture and sound. Samsung's menus are logical for the most part and easy to follow. The screen looks great without much work.
- 4 The curved screen still doesn't convince us. It looks cool and would be a talking point with visitors, but it doesn't work well for a group of people in our room.
- 5 We like this set. It has beautifully balanced colours and one of the best active 3D images we've seen. Even the glasses are relatively comfortable.

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Sony HT-CT370 | Soundbar | £350

Soundbar is still a work in progress for Sony

Sony was late onto the soundbar scene, but has moved quickly. We weren't impressed by the first Sony bar we reviewed, the HT-ST3, earlier this year, so can it change our minds with the HT-CT370?

This model is based on the earlier HT-CT260 soundbar, but this time mounts a speaker diffuser on top of the drive units to help control sound dispersion. The subwoofer has also undergone tweaks to improve audio stability, and added an extra magnet for more powerful bass too.

First impressions are good. Available in black or silver, the HT-CT370 is a classy-

free iOS and Android SongPal control app come in handy here too.

We start our test with *Thor: The Dark World* (the HT-CT370 decodes Dolby TrueHD audio as well as DTS-HD Master Audio). There's tight integration between the soundbar and sub (the sub wirelessly and automatically connects to the main unit, so all it needs is plugging in to the mains). It isn't shy either: bass is impressively deep. If you want drama, the HT-CT370 offers plenty.

'Movie' mode delivers even more bass, but it's overkill. There are plenty of EQ

sound with more warmth, solidity and subtlety. When we spin *Toy Story 3*, the familiar voices are clear and direct, but lack warmth and weight behind them, as well as the subtlety needed to bring out their different nuances.

Thinness manifests itself

We play Jamiroquai's *Virtual Insanity* over Bluetooth and that thinness manifests itself again: cymbals are bright and the drums have a sharp edge. It's not offensive on the ear, but you want more from your music.

Sony's design and features lay a good foundation for a promising mid-price soundbar, but its performance lets the HT-CT370 down. An improvement on the previous Sony soundbar, then, but it still leaves us wanting more.

When we spin *Toy Story 3*, the familiar voices are clear and direct, but they lack warmth and weight, and the subtlety needed to bring out their different nuances

looking, compact soundbar. It's diamond-shaped in profile and has a silky cloth grille hiding its two 6cm drivers. A central LED text display is bold and easily readable. The unit lies almost flat (at just a 25-degree angle) though, so the upward-facing display can be difficult to read from afar at seated level.

The front-facing wireless sub, which also has a two-sided sloped frontage, is slim and tall - albeit deep - making it fairly easy to accommodate. We propped it up near our TV stand, although it lay happily horizontally underneath the TV too.

A good selection of connections

Set-up is easy. With 3.5mm, optical and three HDMI inputs, as well as an HDMI output, you're spoiled for choice with connections. Bluetooth with near-field connectivity (NFC) makes wireless streaming possible with the press of a button too. Buttons on top of the unit can initiate Bluetooth pairing, as well as flick between sources, power on/off and control volume.

You will probably want to use the supplied remote control, though. It's orderly, with a neat bottom section of buttons dedicated to Bluetooth controls. It can double as your TV controller as well, if you have a Sony set. Alternatively, Sony's

settings: 'Music' gives an even sound and adds body to the midrange, while 'Gaming' boosts treble. 'Night' flattens dynamics so you don't annoy the neighbours. 'P.Audio' (or 'Portable Audio') is our favourite, though, as it delivers the most convincing balance.

Sony incorporates its own 'surround' technology, designed to expand the soundfield. It works well enough, but it just doesn't have the room-filling ability of the similarly priced Yamaha YSP-1400. It also has a hard, thin delivery. A treble-edged sound may make action scenes intense and dramatic, but it isn't easy on the ears. We pine for a fuller

Rating ★★☆☆☆

FOR Compact system; good integration; deep bass with plenty of oomph; detailed

AGAINST Hard, thin presentation; lacks refinement and subtlety; dialogue struggles

VERDICT A step forward for Sony's soundbars, but not the huge stride we were hoping for

Also consider Yamaha YSP-1400 £400 ★★★★★

A big, enveloping sound with strong dynamics and good detail



A new angle

Sony claim its angular design of the HT-CT370 soundbar enhances sound dispersion, but it also means that the unit is only 5cm tall - so it shouldn't block the IR blaster on your television.



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Oppo PM-1 | Headphones | £1100

Oppo stuns with hi-fi cans

We must admit to being baffled by Oppo's product range. The company is best known for its high-end Blu-ray players, but then it joined the mobile phone market. And now we have the PM-1 planar magnetic headphones. If there's a market strategy, we can't tell what it is.

The PM-1s are high-end cans aimed at properly dedicated audiophiles, but can any pair of headphones justify spending over £1000? By the time we're done listening, our answer is an effusive 'yes'.

First, though, a word on planar magnetic technology. A planar magnetic driver has a diaphragm printed with a conductor and held between magnets. The magnetic field generated as the music signal passes through the conductor reacts to the field generated by the magnets, causing the diaphragm to move. The idea is to offer greater accuracy and minimise distortion.

Inside story

The PM-1's 395g weight and denim carry-pouch suggest Oppo really wants you to wear them outside. We're not entirely sure why. These cans are open-backed and unashamedly leaky. People can hear you, and you can hear them. It's the latter that concerns us the most: the sound is too good to be polluted by a bus.

The PM-1s are a just a lovely listen. Their demeanour is so smooth and welcoming that we could (and did) listen for hours. What strikes us immediately is the sense of scale. It's huge - spacious and airy. Music doesn't sound like it's stuck between your ears, but rather floating around your head with a satisfying, impressive dimensionality.

Tonally the sound is nicely balanced and there's also an extraordinary level of detail. Layer upon layer are revealed, and we hear new things we've never spotted before, even on some of our most beaten tracks.

The art of discernment

It's not hard to point out the differences between a CD of *The Dark Knight Rises* soundtrack and its 24-bit/192kHz counterpart. The latter clearly offers more detail, scale and emotional impact.

Use a low-quality recording and you will hear its shortcomings. But these headphones won't make a meal out of a recording's flaws. An MP3 of The Flaming Lips' *Race For The Prize* often sounds downright harsh, but not here.

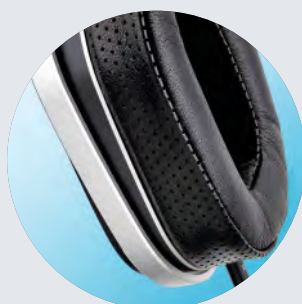
Don't take that to mean they're toothless, because they can pack one hell of a punch. It's rare to get bass this good on a pair of headphones.

It's taken a lot of restraint not to discuss the physical side of the PM-1s until this point in the review. They are gorgeous

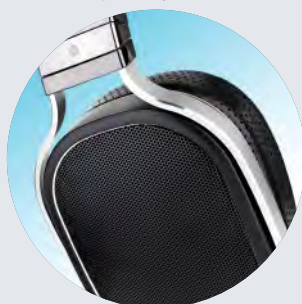
Immaculate build quality and stunning sound combine to justify that price tag



In detail



Comfort zone The removable earpads have holes for ventilation. The headphones' body is made primarily of aluminium.



Quality control The PM-1's earcups are swivelled 20,000 times to ensure their durability. The headband gets a similar workout.

headphones, lavished with attention to detail. Super-soft lambskin leather (or velour, if you prefer) covers the headband and removable ear pads. Build quality and comfort are exemplary.

We're still surprised Oppo has turned its hand to headphones - but the bigger surprise is just how great they sound. The PM-1s are a resounding success. Yes, £1100 is a lot to spend, but given the right partnering equipment - no smartphones, for heaven's sake - we think they're worth it.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Smooth, refined presentation; plenty of detail; massive scale; excellent bass; comfort; gorgeous build quality

AGAINST Some rivals have a touch more bite

VERDICT Oppo's first pair of headphones are a luxurious, resounding success

Also consider

Beyerdynamic T1 £880 ★★★★★

An older product with less refinement, but talented and more affordable.



Panasonic DMP-BDT260 | Blu-ray player | £120

Sight and sound in harmony



Return to right angles

Having experimented with angled side panels on some of its recent BD players, Panasonic here returns to a basic rectangular design. It's compact too, no bigger than a sheet of A4 paper.

The **DMP-BDT260** is our first look at Panasonic's 2014 Blu-ray player range. A middle-sitter in the six-strong line-up, it's sandwiched between the bottom-of-the-range DMP-BD81 (£80) and flagship DMP-BDT700 (£550).

Panasonic had an outstanding run with Blu-ray players last year, totting up its five-star credentials and establishing a rivalry with Sony. So will its new range keep up the good track record? If the BDT260 is anything to go by, the answer is 'yes'.

Far from lost in space

Put on *After Earth* and it's clear we have another sterling performer on our hands. In the very first scenes, pictures in space show impressive contrast: stars look bright against the deep black canvas, and big white spaceships look striking.

Motion is smooth and judder-free as spaceships cruise along, managing to remain stable during the jerky movements when the ship loses control.

Fine detail is the Pana's forte too, digging up texture in the characters' rubbery bodysuits and conveying subtleties in facial expressions. Rich and punchy colours are instantly arresting. Greens in the wildlife are lush and bloody carcasses are bright red. There's a tinge of oversaturation to the lustrous colour palette, but we like its ability to make content eye-catching.

Skin tones remain well-judged though, rendering natural complexions and realistic shadows on faces.

Clean cars and vibrant wizards

Switch Blu-ray discs to *Rush* and clean whites on the car's bodypaint offset oily blacks on tyres. There's good texture on the latter, and that sense of wear on the seatbelts shows it's really paying attention to detail.

Like the others in Panasonic's new range (bar the BD81), the BDT260 supports 3D. Load *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1* Blu-ray and it's every bit as impressive. The picture is pin-sharp and

On this evidence there's no sign of Panasonic letting its high standards slip

stable, while much of the detail and rich colour balance apparent in 2D content is present and correct.

Badly handled motion can be particularly uncomfortable in 3D, but this Panasonic takes erratic broomsticks dodging traffic and weaving in and out of one another in its stride.

Those who still have large DVD collections will be pleased: it does a fine job upscaling standard definition. With *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi*, there's radiant shine to C3-PO's gold metal body, and

BDT260. It's the bare minimum we expect for smart functionality these days, but it works well: loading content is fairly quick, and USB devices are recognized pronto.

The Panasonic interface is intuitive, and navigating menus is straightforward too. Getting from A to B can feel a bit long-winded, though, and requires some patience. The lack of a display is a niggle.

Panasonic doesn't offer a control app for this year's players, remaining reliant on a physical remote control. In keeping with its

Fine detail is the Panasonic's forte, digging up texture in the characters' rubbery bodysuits and conveying subtleties in facial expressions. Rich and punchy colours are instantly arresting

impressive punch to the brick-red landscape. Compared with our award-winning Sony BDP-S5100, motion is a little smoother and the picture less prone to noise.

Sonic solidity

Panasonic hasn't rested on its laurels where sound is concerned either. As with its picture, its sound revels in richness. There's decent weight behind voices and film tracks generally sound robust. When the iconic *Star Wars* theme tune plays atop the disc menu, it sounds big and authoritative.

As well as disc-playing, you get USB playback and DLNA for accessing files from a network or compatible storage device. You'll need an internet connection for the latter, which can be achieved wirelessly thanks to the BDT260's built-in wi-fi. A LAN socket provides wired access.

As far as files go, it supports a throng of formats including MKV, MP4, FLAC, AAC and WAV. You'll also find the commonplace YouTube, Facebook, Netflix and catch-up-on-demand apps pre-loaded on the

previous design, it's lovely to use: buttons are nicely spread and well positioned.

The BDT260 has been worth the wait. It may not be the most feature-packed player out there, but its picture and sound performance heartily make up for it. If this is indicative of the range, we can't wait to see what the rest of it has in store.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Sharp and detailed pictures; stutter-free motion; impressive upscaling; punchy, dynamic sound; compact build; neat, practical remote

AGAINST No display

VERDICT The BDT260 is an impressive new entry that flies the flag for great picture quality

Also consider

Sony BDP-S5100 ★★★★★

Our current Award-winner's sharp, detailed and punchy picture is the one to beat.



Quad 9AS | Active stereo speakers | £600

Smart active Quads show talent

Active speakers with a high-resolution DAC and versatile digital connections? The Quad 9AS speakers certainly piqued our interest.

Based on the mini-monitor design of the (now discontinued) 9L active speakers, the new Quad 9ASes house 100W of amplification and a DAC capable of playing audio files of up to 24-bit/192kHz. The active design means each speaker houses class AB amplifiers to power the drivers, hence the need for heat sinks at their base.

We start with the *Game of Thrones* soundtrack playing on our MacBook Pro (USB connection) and the Quad 9ASes soars with a clean and articulate sound. *The King's Arrival* is clear and playful, with each instrument easy to pick out in the huge and open soundfield. It's a big-scale sound, and can go loud without distortion.

Sparkle and flourish

There's space at the top end for the treble to sparkle and flourish, although it can sound hard-edged if pushed. While the 9ASes don't have too much low extension, the balance suits a desktop system nicely - they don't boom when a bassline kicks in. We'd avoid placing them too close to the wall, though, to keep that airy sound.

But for all the pristine-sounding talents, there's something lacking with the Quads. Voices are focused and expressive, but not enough to hold our attention. Switching to Daft Punk (24-bit/176.4kHz from our reference streamer via the Quad's coax input) highlights the 9ASes' lack of agility and rhythm. The beats of *Get Lucky* are a touch flat, and the track's sense of fun is diluted.

We play our desktop favourites, the Ruark MRIs in comparison and, while the petite speakers may not have the same insight as



Sensitive to the touch

The touch-sensitive control panel on the right speaker of the Quad 9AS is a neat touch. You simply tap on the input name to switch it on. Volume control is touch-operational too.

the Quads, they certainly are more fun to listen to (at half the price too).

The 9ASes have a smart finish, with an uncluttered fascia, so we keep the grilles off. The build is sturdy and compact, and feels premium. The relatively compact size of the 9ASes - they're smaller than most hi-fi standmounters - is akin to the Q Acoustics Q-BT3 and Dali Kubik Free speakers. Each speaker has a new 25mm fabric-dome tweeter, and a 10cm Kevlar cone mid/bass driver, and both channels have to be plugged to a power source. They're available in high-gloss white, black and ruby red, and there are optional feet to angle the speakers upwards.

Bass adjustment options

Quad provides a three-point bass equaliser to adjust the low extension depending on where you place the 9AS speakers, but we found the 'Boost' option boomy and overbearing in any position. Unsurprisingly, 'Flat' provides the most neutral response, but we prefer the 'Shelf' option for a leaner and snappier bass, especially when the 9ASes are placed on a desk. A compact remote with basic volume and input controls is included - it's simple to use, although we had to point the remote directly at the speaker for it to work; if you point from even a slight angle, it doesn't.

On the digital front, there are asynchronous USB, coaxial and optical

inputs, all of which support 24-bit/192kHz resolution - an ideal combination for those who have a streamer or a laptop full of music files.

There's no Bluetooth built in, so you will have to plug your iPod, smartphone or MP3 player in to the 3.5mm input. RCA inputs for analogue sources are on the back panel, while there's a subwoofer output to create a 2.1 system, which could make the 9ASes a decent soundbar alternative.

All in all, the Quad 9ASes have a good number of plus points, but we'd like better rhythm and a sense of fun from them. Bluetooth connection would be nice, too. They need to up their game a bit to better rivals at this price.

In detail

1 Single line-level socket

Quad supplies a decent-length cable to connect one speaker to the other.

2 Digital connections

With 24-bit/192kHz support across the USB, coaxial and optical connections, you can plug a range of sources into the 9AS speakers.

3 Bass EQ

The 'Flat' and 'Shelf' options offer the best balance, while the 'Boost' setting is too boomy for our taste.



Rating ★★★★★

FOR Clean and spacious sound; premium-feeling finish and build; versatile connections

AGAINST Could be a more entertaining listen; remote doesn't work at an angle; no Bluetooth

VERDICT Decent speakers but they need more punch and verve

Also consider Dali Kubik Free £645 ★★★★★

Detailed, dynamic sound with the added bonus of aptX Bluetooth built in





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Life's Good



Yamaha RX-V377 | AV receiver | £260

Still punching well above its weight class

The set-up
Yamaha's automatic calibration set-up is easy and makes sure the receiver is tuned to suit your speakers and room acoustics.



Yamaha has a great track record with budget AV receivers, with last year's RX-V375 winning a Best Buy Award. So can the new Yamaha RX-V377 continue the success of its predecessor?

With 70W for each of the five channels (at six ohms), and 4K Ultra HD pass-through across its HDMI inputs, you'd be forgiven for thinking the RX-V377 is identical to its previous model - aside from being 10 quid more expensive. But the real difference lies (apart from a slight reordering of inputs and outputs) in its surround-sound performance. Powerful, punchy and full of detail, this RX-V377 lives up to expectations. Yamaha receivers usually excel at steering surround-sound effects across the room with precision and detail, and this receiver shows off these talents on both Blu-ray and DVD.

Play *Pacific Rim* Blu-ray and you're in a bubble of sound with such startlingly accurate and detailed placement that you're immediately sucked into the action. Integration between the speakers is seamless. It's weightier and more authoritative than the RX-V375 too, and it demands your attention, whatever the film.

In *Bruges* is a perfect case in point - the RX-V377 shows off its clarity and subtlety very well. This receiver comes with no fewer than 17 distinct DSP modes, and while they're fun to play around with

(Sci-Fi and Drama for movies are worth trying), we prefer the 'Straight' option.

AV receivers don't tend to be as skilled with music as with movies, and the RX-V377 is the same. However, its newfound authority gives music Blu-rays and songs played from an iPod a touch more confidence and punch than before. We're not surprised to see a few features sacrificed to keep the price in the budget category. There are no networking features on the RX-V377, meaning you can't stream wireless as there's no DLNA, AirPlay, wi-fi, or Bluetooth. Nor do you get internet radio.

Bluetooth wireless receiver

However, the RX-V377 does have built-in FM and AM tuners and there's also the option of plugging in a YBA-11 Bluetooth wireless receiver into the back panel. It will cost you around £50, but it will let you stream music from your smart device using Bluetooth.

Those with Apple devices can still play their digital tunes by plugging an iPod, iPhone or iPad into the front panel USB port (which handily also charges your device), while other music players can be plugged into the 3.5mm input. We do wish the speaker terminals were of a consistent type across the board - it's a mixture of spring clip terminals and banana plugs.

Sturdily built, relatively compact and available in black or silver, this receiver

The RX-V377 is sturdily built, relatively compact and available in black or silver

keeps things refreshingly simple. The display is large and the on-screen menu is basic but easy to use.

Yamaha's automatic calibration set-up is easy, and makes sure the receiver is tuned to suit your speakers and room acoustics. Its measurements are largely accurate, although we'd still manually check the speaker configurations (it kept registering our very large centre speaker as 'small').

Meanwhile, the remote control is a little cluttered, but once you get used to where the buttons are, it's intuitive to use.

The RX-V377 isn't revolutionary, yet Yamaha doesn't rest upon its laurels - this is a hugely capable budget receiver.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Powerful and punchy surround sound; Subtle dynamics; clear, precise placement

AGAINST Spring clips and banana plugs for speaker terminals; no network features

VERDICT Superb surround sound on a budget - a contender for a first home cinema system

Needs to beat

Yamaha RX-V375
£250 ★★★★★

Last year's model is still available - and at a hefty discount too.



System builder Total build £1550

Television

Sony KDL-50W829B
★★★★★ £900

Fine TV with really good picture, decent sound and pleasing feature count.



Set-top box

Sky+ HD 2TB
★★★★★ £250

Sky just keeps developing this box and the many services behind it.



Speaker package

Tannoy HTS-101
★★★★★ £400

Pair up the budget amp with an excellent, Award-winning 5.1 speaker package.





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Monitor Audio A100



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The AirPlay® enabled A100 is a next generation network-ready amplifier built for the way we play music today. It combines the latest wireless streaming technologies with finest audio system design, to bridge the divide between a world of digital music and your hi-fi speakers.

JBL Authentics L16 | Wireless speaker | £900

Elegant high-flyer falls a little flat



It's convincingly room-filling and stays well poised at higher volumes. There's oodles of detail to hand too. Thumping basslines can feel fat, though, and treble can stick out too

The wireless speaker market may be filled to the rafters, but there aren't many out there like the JBL Authentics L16.

An all-singing, all-dancing one-box system designed to cover all your entertainment needs - be it for music, TV or films - it's a multi-talented product. And at a lofty £900, a rather lone wolf in a pack of humbly priced speakers at the moment.

Jack of many trades

So what does it actually do? AirPlay ability lets you play music wirelessly from any Apple device, and DLNA compatibility digs up files over your home network. Bluetooth (aptX) is another way to go wireless, with NFC connecting your device with a mere tap on the speaker.

A 3.5mm jack provides direct connection to a device, as do a digital optical and a pair of analogue inputs. There's a phono stage to hook up a turntable. Two USB sockets allow for charging smartphones and tablets. Qi-enabled (wireless charging) devices can also be charged on the central pod.

If that's not enough, the L16 can double up as a soundbar. If you do plan to use it to boost your TV's sound, be aware that it's 29cm tall and 37cm deep, so slotting it under a telly might be tricky. It's heavy too - over 16kg. It's also gorgeous, complete with its walnut enclosure and striking retro grilles.

The L16 certainly goes the whole hog with connections, so it's a shame JBL doesn't supply any leads in the box. Having paid £900, we'd be miffed to have to fork out extra.

The L16 has a 25mm tweeter, 5cm pulp cone driver and 13cm woofer either side of the baffle. Each of the six drivers is powered by its own 50W amplifier. Underneath, two downfiring ports complement the drivers to help deliver more bass.

There's no remote. Sigh. Instead, the free downloadable JBL MusicFlow app lets you control volume, source and fiddle with EQ from your sofa.

The L16 also supports FLAC and WAV files up to 24-bit/96kHz.

The L16 is the first to feature Harman's Clari-Fi technology (named 'Signal Doctor') too. The company claims the software restores 90% of audio lost in digital compression by analyzing a track's audio signals and correcting waveform deficiencies. Translation: it should serve up more detail in lossy formats like MP3.

We see how it flies with an 128kbit/s MP3 of Michael Jackson's *Smooth Criminal* and, using the app to turn Signal Doctor on, we're pleased with the results. It benefits from the extra processing, demonstrating clearer bass and more prominent treble. Instruments

We can't fault the L16's sumptuous walnut-veneer finish and 'waffle' retro grille

have more space around them too. We'd keep that mode switched on.

If you're considering buying the L16, it will be for its big, open sound. It's convincingly room-filling and stays well poised at higher volumes. There's oodles of detail to hand too. Thumping basslines can feel fat, though, and treble can stick out too, so balance isn't its greatest asset.

Timing isn't up to speed and dynamics aren't as supple as we'd like either, making the most up-beat tunes feel static and messy. It fails to shake a leg with Quincy Jones's jolly *Blues In The Night* piece.

Though vocals are well focused, the Audio Pro Allroom Air One wireless speaker gave us more texture in Alison Krauss's sweet voice - and that's less than half the price.

Clarity with TV

Testing its TV-boosting qualities, we wire it to our reference Samsung TV via an optical cable. Flicking through daytime TV, newsreaders' voices come through clear with no lip-sync issues and sound effects on game shows are crisp - albeit a little bright.

The JBL Authentic L16 certainly sounds like a good idea. The problem is, £900 is a lot to fork out for any piece of hi-fi and the performance struggles to take the plaudits that compatibility and convenience do. It lacks the charisma, cohesiveness and balance we want from our music.

System builder Total build £1600

Turntable
Project Debut Carbon
★★★★★ £300

The Authentics L16 includes a phono stage for connecting a turntable. And this is a great buy.



Tablet
Apple iPad Air
★★★★★ £400

The JBL's AirPlay compatibility means you can play music wirelessly from Apple devices.



Rating ★★★★★

FOR Good range of inputs; gorgeous design and quality build; clear, big sound; USB charging

AGAINST Flat dynamics; timing issues; plump, overbearing bass; no cables supplied

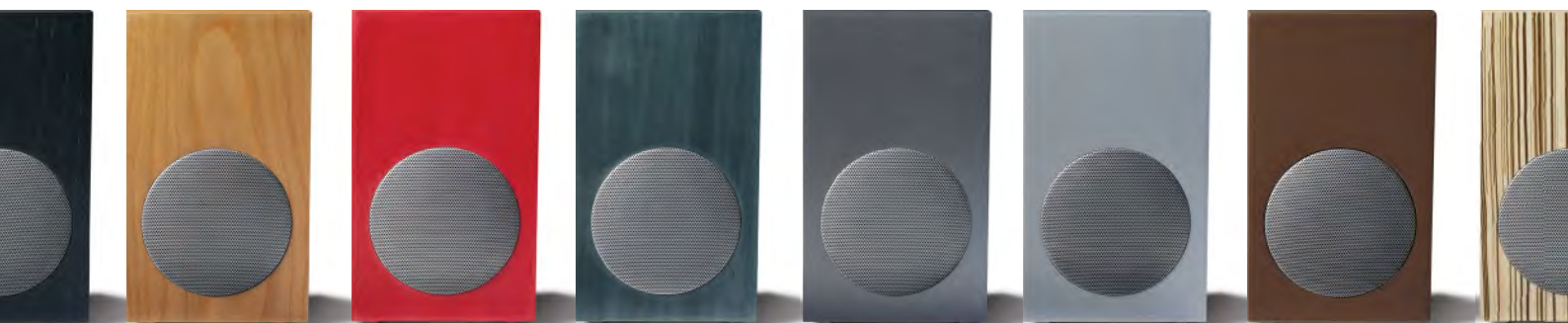
VERDICT A multi-talented speaker but one that needs better balance, timing and dynamics



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Sony KD-65X9005B | 65in Ultra HD 4K Television | £3600

4K Sony is a star with HD and above

Sony's X9 range combines 4K resolution, a wedge design and Magnetic Fluid Speakers, and comes in 79in, 65in and 55in screen sizes. The 65in KD-65X9005B is the first Ultra 4K TV we've seen from Sony this year.

It looks and feels every bit the premium set it aims to be. Build quality and finish are excellent, and the way the top curves over the edge is an elegant touch. There's also a Skype camera discreetly built in.

A fair amount of wedge

The wedge design helps lower the screen's centre of gravity, allowing Sony to use small metal feet as support instead of the usual screen-width stand. The feet can slot in to two positions - either at each end or nearer the middle - so it should fit most racks.

Ultra HD 4K resolution is the headline act here, and the 9005B is fitted with the latest specifications to support 4K content: HDMI 2.0 standard across all four HDMI inputs, and the HEVC/H.265 decoder that enables 4K content streamed from Netflix.

Native 4K content is still thin on the ground, so Sony has provided us with a server full of demo clips and trailers. And when you fill the full 3840 x 2160 panel with native 4K content the 65in Sony

While the Sony TV is capable of streaming Netflix's 4K content (limited to *House of Cards* series two at the moment, *Breaking Bad* soon), whether you'll be able to watch in 4K will depend on your broadband speed - Netflix recommends at least 15 to 20 Mbps to stream 4K resolution.

Our test room's network isn't that capable yet (an upgrade is coming soon), but Netflix automatically downsamples content if sufficient bandwidth isn't available, so we are able to watch a *House of Cards* episode at 1080p, instead of its full 4K resolution. It's an impressively detailed picture for the most part, but exhibits a degree of noise and blocking on occasion.

Most of us, of course, will be watching the usual Full HD films and TV shows, along with standard Freeview broadcasts.

The *Pacific Rim* Blu-ray gives the 9005B plenty of upscaling work. Director Guillermo del Toro throws every shade of colour in, with bursts of yellow, red and green punctuating the overall deep blue and black sets. The 65in screen does a great job of upscaling the 1080p picture to fill the 4K resolution, with only a tiny hint of graininess (which can be smoothed out to a certain degree using noise filters).

The amount of detail and clarity is brilliant of course, but it's the colour reproduction we're wowed by. The colours are accurate and punchy

screen comes to life. The amount of detail and clarity is brilliant of course, but it's the colour reproduction we're wowed by. From pencils to exotic landscapes, the colours are as accurate as they are punchy. There's a subtlety to each shade that's really impressive, allowing a natural and realistic colour palette that doesn't attempt to overdo red fruits or blue skies in any scene.

The rich colours and contrast don't fade when viewed slightly off-axis, either - though we would have liked a touch more depth and subtlety to the black reproduction.

The edge-lit LED backlighting is just a touch uneven on our review set. It's not strong enough to be distracting when watching films or clips on screen, but it's a little disappointing to see on a premium set.

The highlights of the Sony's 4K picture remain: a crisp, detailed picture with a skill for natural colours, especially skin tones. The colours retain their realistic palette while also delivering rich textures and plenty of excitement. Freeview HD channels have a similar character.

But it's not all good news. Motion isn't as convincing as we expected, and we set the Motionflow processing to Standard to iron out the instabilities, which adds a hint of unnatural crispness to the picture. We also have to tinker to try to get black levels as deep as possible without sacrificing brightness and punch in white areas.

While we're impressed with how Blu-ray content is upscaled, we can't say the same for DVDs. Even bearing in mind



that the TV is making up 95 per cent of the picture itself, *Inside Llewyn Davis* on DVD is fuzzy around the edges. There's a fair degree of noise to the picture and fine details appear blurred.

We play test favourite *Life Of Pi* to test the TV's active 3D tech, and are immediately impressed: the 3D is lovely to watch. You get totally drawn in to the film, with the ocean and endless horizon providing a gorgeous and dramatic 3D depth.

We have to hand it to Sony - the KD-65X9005B sounds great, rich, detailed

System builder total build £4300

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

You need a quality Blu-ray player to go with this TV; our Award-winning player delivers superb pictures for its price.



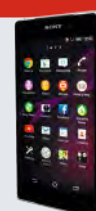
Video streaming service
Netflix
★★★★★ £6/month

Netflix is rolling out shows in 4K slowly but surely. Assuming that continues, £6 a month is a bargain.



Smartphone
Sony Xperia Z2
★★★★★ free with contract

You can film in 4K on this flagship smartphone. And then you can watch those 4K videos on this TV.





A weighty sound...

We're used to the modern 'flat-panel' screen being a fairly light affair - but this set, with its wedge design and impressive-sounding speakers, while not excessively heavy, is a two-man lift.

and open - we don't feel an immediate need for an extra sound system during testing.

You get two remote handsets with the 65X9005B: Sony's standard remote that's dead easy to use; and a new 'One-Flick' remote with a compact touchpad design.

Thorough and intuitive smarts

The new, mature design of Sony's smart TV portal is neatly laid out in the main categories of TV, Movie, Music and Apps. It's easy to flick through each panel, where you'll find all the relevant features and apps in each category.

Also new to Sony TVs this year is the Discover feature, which gives you quick access to all your favourite and most-used channels and services, and recommends related content. Elsewhere, the Social View button on both supplied remotes activates a scrolling Twitter feed at the bottom of the TV screen. You can select a trending topic or enter your own keyword.

It's a big set, but the moveable feet mean it should fit on most stands or tables

There's plenty we like about the Sony KD-65X9005B, from its stylish build to its intuitive smart features. We particularly love its natural and subtle hues of colour.

It's not quite the unequivocal success story we were expecting set, though. The uneven backlighting, limited black level and motion niggles, along with the not-so-great DVD upscaling quality, do start to add up.

This set is a stunner with 4K content, though. If you're determined to have the latest TV tech and want to be an early 4K adopter, this is a pretty good place to start.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Subtle, natural colours; superb 4K detail; sound; stylish finish; excellent build quality

AGAINST Standard def could be better; blacks could go deeper; motion could be more natural

VERDICT The Sony has its issues with upscaled content, but it's a gorgeous set and great in 4K

In detail



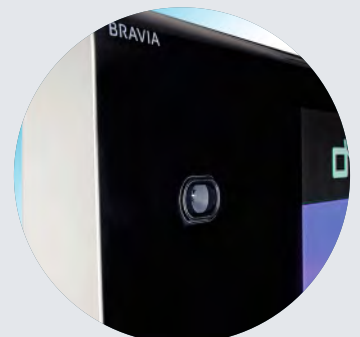
Speakers The wedge design means bigger speakers can be fitted - and it really pays dividends. This set sounds great



Inputs The inputs are hidden behind flaps at the rear. If you intend to wall mount, there's a separate unit, a 'port replicator', bundled in



Remote There's a fancy 'One Flick' handset included, but we'd stick with the more traditional, fuss-free unit



Camera The lens for the camera is discreetly built-in to the left-hand side of the TV, and can be used for Skype calls



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

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VIERA
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*Minimum 2MB broadband connection required. Some services indicated may require automatic software update. ITV Player unavailable in Scotland and N. Ireland. AX802 series upscales HD broadcasts and IP content to 4K.

Jabra Solemate Mini | Bluetooth speaker | £60

Solemate that's hard to fall in love with

The Jabra Solemate Mini gets its name for two reasons: one, it's the baby of the three-strong Solemate speaker family. Second, because of its grooved, trainer-inspired 'sole', which aims to prevent bass vibration from distorting its sound.

It's dinky, but don't let its size fool you, as it's a sturdy little thing - tough enough to survive a rough ride in a bag thanks to its rubber casing. It's dust- and water-resistant too, meaning it should handle all conditions.

There are three large buttons on the top face of the speaker for controlling pairing and volume, and along the right-hand side you find the microUSB charging port, 3.5mm input and power switch.

Turn it over

There's a near-field communication (NFC) spot on the left hand side for one-touch Bluetooth connectivity with compatible devices. If you turn it over you will find a handy storage spot for the included 3.5mm audio cable, snaked into its grooved base.

It connects via Bluetooth version 3.0 - not the up-to-date 4.0, mind, which would improve power efficiency - but the Jabra has an eight-hour battery life, which should be ample. Pairing is simple. If you're not able to use the NFC functionality, you can do it the old fashioned way by pressing the central button on the top of the device, which also doubles as a call/answer button when using the Mini as a speakerphone.

Be prepared though, for the Jabra comes with some rather loud, and cheesy, voice commands. Fortunately, you can turn these off by holding down the 'volume down' button while turning the Jabra on. Two drivers and a single bass radiator are in charge of the sound, and do a good job at squeezing a big sound out of a small unit.

If you push it to its top volume, you lose clarity and organisation for a very raw sound. Dynamically it becomes squashed and recordings sounds messy and

unrefined, so it's a much cleaner sound and more comfortable at mid-volume.

The Jabra tends to be bass forward, dishing out plenty of low-end punch with most recordings, which keeps the speaker from sounding thin or unsubstantial. The pounding drums in Florence and the Machine's *Dog Days are Over* hit with impressive weight for such a small speaker, but ultimately lack the refinement and control we'd like. There's a hint of radiator rattle too, most noticeable in quieter tracks.

DSP kicks in

Take your bass low, and the speaker's DSP (digital-signal processing) kicks in to stop the speaker distorting. Play Lil Wayne's *A Milli* and the rumbling deep bass notes heard on better speakers are almost lost. Bass fans will want to look elsewhere - perhaps to the Sony SRS-X3 (page 58).

The Jabra probably sits most comfortably in the midrange, so vocal-heavy music and acoustic tracks sound good. Tori Amos's *Trouble's Lament* sounds clean, well balanced and listenable, if dynamically flat.

Voice of concern

The Jabra Solemate Mini has some rather loud, and cheesy, voice commands. Luckily, you can turn these off by holding down the 'volume down' button when turning it on.



USE IT WITH

Sony Xperia Z2

Not only is the Xperia Z2 our new favourite Android phone, it also packs NFC for easy connectivity with the Solemate Mini.

Everything sounds as though it's at the same volume, with no real difference between loud and quiet sections of a track.

We do have to remember what sort of product we're dealing with here though, and at what price tag. For the money and its size, the Jabra does a decent job. It gives the much-pricier Jawbone Mini Jambox a run for its money in the performance stakes.

But we still can't help wanting more from it. Edge the volume over midway and things start to lose clarity and organisation. The Jabra's outright volume is impressive, but it never manages to shake the restrictions of its size, always sounding like a small speaker being forced to go loud.

Spend a bit more and you can get the JBL Flip 2 (page 57) or the larger (but still portable) Cambridge Audio Minx Go. Both are markedly better. If you are on a budget, though, the Jabra is worth a look, as long as you're happy to accept its restrictions.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Sturdy; goes loud; well-judged midrange

AGAINST Dynamics are restrained; lacks control; loses clarity at louder volumes

VERDICT A small speaker with big sound, it offers plenty of volume but leaves us wanting when it comes to sound quality

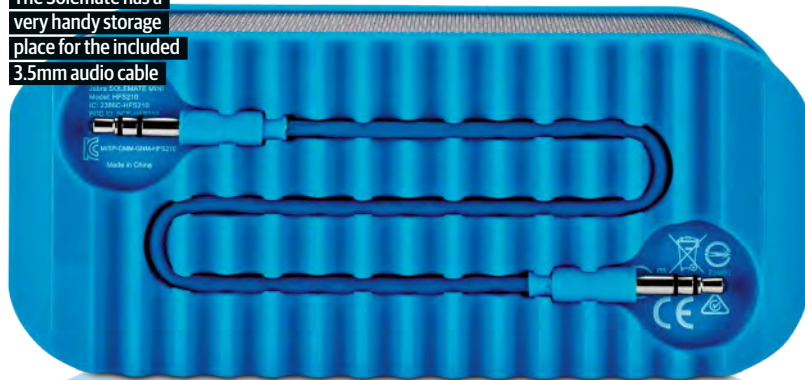
Also consider

JBL Flip 2 ★★★★★

Not without its faults, but if you're looking for a speaker in the ultra-portable category, this does a lot of things right.



The Solemate has a very handy storage place for the included 3.5mm audio cable



World Cup 2014

4K? Mobile? Online?

The World Cup in tech

England have their 23-man squad; we have many ways of following them. Here's how you can...

The World Cup – like the Olympic Games, it's a major sporting event that comes around only every four years. It's a big deal for fans – and a big deal for broadcast and technology firms involved in beaming the action into our living rooms. UK rights holders – the BBC, ITV and talkSPORT – have now confirmed their plans for the tournament, so it's just a matter of waiting for it all to kick off.

The World Cup is often the catalyst for new technology (see side panel). This promises to be the first 4K World Cup and the most mobile and on-demand ever, with one in four people expected to use smartphones and tablets to watch games. So, how can you enjoy it all?

On television

The World Cup is one of the spectacles reserved in the UK for broadcast on free-to-air channels, so TV duties are shared by BBC and ITV.

The duo have already agreed how to split the group games between them, with ITV showing the opening fixture between Brazil and Croatia on 12th June, and the BBC having England's first game against Italy on 16th June.

On radio

If you'd rather listen to the action, you can listen on BBC Radio and talkSPORT, the latter of which has signed up with SportsYapper, a social media app for fans to talk about all the latest news.

Online, on demand

The talkSPORT/SportsYapper partnership shows how this World Cup may well be the most interactive yet. The BBC and ITV are also priming their online services. You'll be able to catch up with all BBC content through

BBC iPlayer on a multitude of connected devices. And ITV promises the same, with a brand new website designed for mobile and tablet users featuring highlights, in-game clips and extra analysis.

4K forward?

You'll probably also want to know how the action will be delivered. So what of the latest in television technology?

Sony and FIFA will provide Ultra HD 4K TV coverage of three full fixtures including the final, plus the official film – but it's looking unlikely that there will be a UK broadcast partner, meaning it might be left to Japan to enjoy the first 4K games. We shall see.

UK broadcast rights holders



BBC Sport is planning extensive coverage from Brazil this summer, with 31 live matches on TV and over 160 hours of programming – and this will include match highlights and reruns on BBC One, Two and Three, as well as the three respective high-definition channels.

The BBC will also broadcast 24 days of live football on Radio 5 Live, while there will be full use of online platforms for computer, tablet, smartphone and game console viewing.



With 20 live games from the group stage and a further 14 from the knockout phases, **ITV Sport** will be screening its share of the games on ITV and ITV4 this summer.

And it's promising plenty more online, with *itv.com* set

to offer highlights packages of all 64 World Cup matches. In-game video clips, live stats, latest news and extra analysis will also be provided.



The third UK rights holder for the World Cup is **talkSPORT**. It will offer live coverage of every game on analogue radio (1089 or 1053MW), DAB radio, through its mobile app, on TV or via its website. There's also a Soundcloud page for catch up content.



* Denon Envaya speaker

Here's the new £170 Envaya wireless speaker from Denon, which boasts Bluetooth aptX
whfcm/Envaya



For more news, reviews and buying advice, visit whathifi.com

3D

4K, then, seems to be marching all the way to the final in the eyes of FIFA; but 3D, on the other hand, will be knocked out early, it seems. The BBC is taking a break from the third dimension, with FIFA itself casting further doubt on the format. As recently as March, FIFA had "yet to make a decision" on provision of 3D for the event - and that was with just three months to go.

All eyes on Brazil

In contrast with previous World Cups, 2014's technological advances may not be as freely

accessible as colour TV in 1970, for example. 3D has been left on the bench and 4K is yet to cut it at this level, but we still have high definition.

On the other hand, will this prove to be the World Cup where online shines? The BBC alone is providing 50 per cent more coverage than it did in 2010 and ITV has its dedicated website ready to go to keep you entertained throughout the tournament. While eyes focus on whether Ultra HD 4K comes to the party, it may be internet connections and data plans that shine through in 2014.

In contrast with previous World Cups, technological advances may not be as freely accessible as colour TV was in 1970, for example. 3D is on the bench and 4K is yet to cut it at international level

FIFA World Cup Broadcast milestones



1954 - The first televised World Cup

The fifth World Cup was also the first to be broadcast on UK TV. There was no ITV until 1955, so BBC went it alone in Switzerland and showed a number of games to audiences back home thanks to the new Eurovision network.



1970 - The first World Cup in colour

For the first time, Mexico 1970 offered viewers the chance to see the luxurious blue of Italy, the vibrant yellow of Brazil and the majesty of Bobby Moore's tackle on Pele, as colour TV finally came to football's biggest occasion.



2006 - The first high-def World Cup

The 2006 event can claim two firsts. ITV trialled HD coverage of the tournament for the first time, while it was also the first to be produced entirely in widescreen - both 16:9 and "postbox". That couldn't stop England going out on penalties again, however.

* Beyerdynamic T90 Jubilee

In celebration of its 90th anniversary, the German firm has launched special edition T90 Jubilee headphones
whf.cm/T90Headphones



1

1 Naim Muso £895

Naim has ventured into new territory with the Naim Muso, a wireless speaker/soundbar system. It features six 75W digital amps, driving six custom-designed Naim drivers. These are encased in an aluminium-covered MDF body. USB and 3.5mm connections are on board, with the USB able to charge a range of mobile devices. The Muso can be used individually or as part of a multi-room set-up and supports a range of high-quality files including FLAC, WAV and AIFF up to 24-bit/192kHz. Want to know more? Head to <http://whf.cm/NaimMuso>

TOP 5 New launches



2

2 Pioneer 2014 VSX AV Receivers from £200

Pioneer has announced five new VSX AV receivers. The £500 VSX-924 is a 7.2-channel amp; the rest will be 5.1, ranging from £200 to £350. All models will support 4K at 50/60fps video pass-through along with HDMI 2.0 compatibility. The VSX-924 can also upscale to 4K UHD. For more details, head online: <http://whf.cm/VSX2014>



3

3 B&O BeoVision Avant £5995

The BeoVision Avant is a 55in 4K UHD TV. It can be partnered with a range of optional motorised stands which allow the TV to rotate to adjust its viewing angle. It features dual TV tuners, USB recording, six HDMI inputs, wi-fi and smart TV services including BBC iPlayer and Spotify. A three-channel speaker system is built in, and up to eight additional speakers can be added wirelessly. <http://whf.cm/BeoVisionAvant>



5 Q Acoustics Media4 Soundbar £400

The M4 is a 2.1 stereo soundbar that delivers 100 watts of power. Four audio inputs include a digital optical, two stereo analogue and an aptX Bluetooth receiver. It uses twin BMR drivers in line with other Q Acoustics products. An infrared remote is supplied and the soundbar is wall mountable. <http://whf.cm/M4Soundbar>

4

4 John Lewis smart TVs from £1500

John Lewis has teamed up with LG to produce three new smart TVs. The new JL9000 range will be Full HD sets and come running LG's webOS smart TV platform. 49in, 55in and 60in models are available and they all come with a 2.1-channel soundbar built into the base. <http://whf.cm/JohnLewisTV>



Different Class



A lifetime of electronics design expertise has led to Arcam's finest ever amplifier, the new A49 integrated amplifier. Its ultra-refined class G topology represents the pinnacle of Arcam's engineering heritage and sets new standards of performance. An audition will confirm that power is nothing without control.

ARCAM

www.arcam.co.uk

SMALL SIZE MASSIVE SOUND

And good looks. The UE Boom is exactly what you need for outdoor this summer – and we've got five you can win... It's time to make music social

The UE Boom is a marvellous thing: a tiny, wireless speaker system with immense performance. The clues are in the specifications: a pair of active 1.5W drivers and another two 2in passive radiators produce an amazing amount of volume. And the UE BOOM's 360° speaker design blasts bold, immersive sound in every direction. But don't just take our word for it...

When *whathifi.com* put the UE Boom through its paces, we dished out five stars – the maximum possible – and said it sounded great, engaging and refined, besides looking good. We also lauded the Boom's incredible battery life: at 15 hours there's enough to kick the party off with a bang and to carry on till the small hours.

Of course, a speaker that lives outside needs to be tough. In 2013 the Boom faced its toughest challenge yet: attached to a boom it floated into the stratosphere above US music festival Boonaroo – surviving the -30° temperatures. That skin does a job, protecting the Boom against splashes, stains and space. You won't worry when it's next to the cooler.

A2DP Bluetooth means you can play from virtually any modern phone, and accompanying iOS and Android apps give you even more control, allowing you to change the equaliser setting, monitor battery life and use the Boom as a musical alarm clock. You can even put together a pair of Booms, dedicating one for right-channel audio and one for left-channel audio. Clever, incredible-sounding... It just makes music social.



TOP THREE FEATURES

1

Massive
360° sound

2

Life, water and
stain resistant

3

Stereo feature
through great app



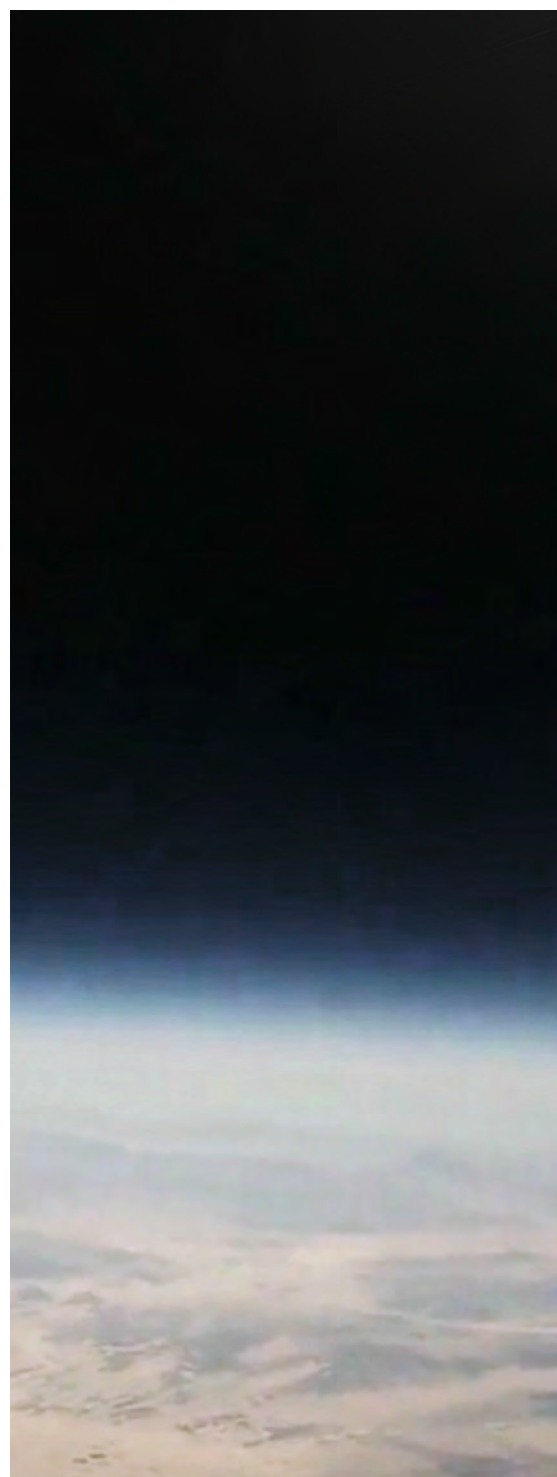
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SOCIAL AGAIN**
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360° WIRELESS SPEAKER

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WHY UE BOOM WORKS

50-FEET, 360° RANGE

The Boom's generous 50-foot wireless range means you can move about without breaking the tunes. That stellar sound quality and 360° speakers, means you can hear just how good it sounds – from anywhere.

HARD WEARING

The Boom's acoustic skin has a plasma coating, which means it resists staining, so it won't look battered the first time you take it camping. It also means it's water resistant, so it will survive liquid-based calamities better than most.

LONG-LIFE BATTERY

You don't always have the mains supply to fall back on: 15 hours of battery life means you'll get worn out long before the Boom chirps its last.

SOFTWARE JOY

Controlling UE Boom isn't just about playback: the official UE Boom smartphone app gives you more. Pair Booms for stereo, check battery life, change audio settings, use it as an alarm.

www.ultimateears.com



WIN! ONE OF FIVE UE BOOM SPEAKERS

Tempted? Of course you are. The UE Boom is available from selected electronics stores, but we've got five **limited edition** UE Boom speakers you can win, saving you a few pennies that can be well spent on summer camping accoutrements and nibbles. To enter visit whathifi.com/win and answer this question. Full terms apply, closes June 29th. Good luck, and happy listening.

What's the range of the UE Boom Bluetooth speaker?

- a) 18 inches
- b) 40 miles
- c) 50 feet

STEREO SPEAKERS £1000-£1400

SUPERTEST

GIANT SONIC STEPS



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

WHAT'S ON TEST

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Bowers & Wilkins 683 S2
£1150 page 33

ELAC FS 147
£1100 page 34

Mission SX 3
£1300 page 36

NEAT Motive SX2
£1395 page 37

Q Acoustics Concept 40
£1000 page 38

Tannoy Revolution DC6T SE
£1000 page 39

When it comes to speakers, sometimes you just want to go bigger, bolder and louder. We put seven magnificent contenders to the test... which will be the last pair standing?

Sometimes it's better to get floorstanding speakers instead of standmounting ones. You don't need to worry about stands, so they may offer better value - and they don't always take up any more space than standmounters. But the real reason is this: sometimes you just want to go bigger, bolder and louder. We've gathered seven sets of floorstanders, all costing between £1000 and £1400. At

this price, you are potentially getting the best of both worlds: you will get a significant hike in quality over budget alternatives, and sometimes you will get components that have filtered down from the high-end models. Our current champion, the two-time Award-winning Tannoy Revolution DC6T SEs will face six newcomers, including the latest from B&W and Q Acoustics. We can't wait to see what happens...



Join us on Spotify
[whf.cm/playlist2014](https://www.whif.com/playlist2014)

Listen to our favourite tracks every month!

Acoustic Energy 305 £1000



The Acoustic Energy 305s are the floorstanders in the company's midrange 3-Series that brought us the brilliant 301 standmounters, which we awarded five stars. Therefore we hoped for great things from their larger siblings but, sadly, bigger doesn't always mean better.

First impressions are good. We like the look of the AE 305s. The design is refreshing and more eye-catching than the typical square-edged cabinet, yet the minimalist approach is subtle enough not to look silly.

Build quality is impressive: solid and sturdy, with a high-gloss black or white finish that looks and feels every bit as premium as pricier speakers. The front has an angled baffle, free of holes thanks to the magnetic speaker grilles.

Easier positioning

There's a 28mm fabric-dome tweeter and three 11cm aluminium cones (one for midrange and two for bass). There's also a reflex port, slot-shaped to reduce air turbulence and front-firing for unfussy positioning. Around the back you will find a single pair of terminals, so there's no biwiring. Despite a

pleasing introduction, we find ourselves somewhat disappointed once we get down to business.

The 305s need better timing and greater dynamic punch. They don't hit quite when they should, nor as hard as they should. The result is a lack of enthusiasm, which undermines the entire performance. It's a shame, because the AE 305s have some very strong points and are agile. Whatever we throw at them, there is a precision to the way they start and stop, helping to give the sound clarity.

A well-organised soundstage

We like the amount of detail from the 305s: it means that instruments and vocals are textured and easily identified. They are also easily placed on the broad soundstage, which is well organised.

There's impressive control, even at higher volumes. Crank it up and the sound never becomes harsh. Tonally, it's a balanced performance, with no undue emphasis on any part of the frequency range. The bass should also be applauded for its depth: there's not too much of it,

but it's enough to have a decent stab at Nick Cave's *We No Who U R*. We're also impressed by the seamless integration between frequencies, as well as the sense of cohesion. However, we can't get past the restrained dynamics and timing. We keep wishing for a tighter sound.

Feet tapping

No matter what we listen to, the music never feels particularly engaging. The AE 305s never seem to try very hard at getting your feet tapping, and performers sound almost bored.

Ultimately, though, there's little you can do to change the overall performance of the AE 305s. They look lovely, but similar money can get you a more entertaining sound elsewhere.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Impressive precision; good integration; looks good; solid build and fine finish

AGAINST Don't convey the excitement in music particularly well

VERDICT Despite some strengths, the AE 305s are not entertaining enough



SPEAKER POSITIONING

The Acoustic Energy 305s like walls. To get the best out of them, place them about 30cm away from one. This firms up their performance a little. Ultimately though, there is not much you can do to solve their problems with dynamics and timing.



A PLINTH OR NOT?

The Bowers & Wilkins 683 S2 speakers certainly seem more stable with the supplied plinths attached to them. Having said that, they aren't prone to toppling without the plinths fitted – and we prefer the sound without.

Bowers & Wilkins 683 S2 £1150



We've always been fans of Bowers & Wilkins's 600 series. Our first experience of the new range was the B&W 685 S2 standmounters, which proved a big improvement on the originals, and they went on to win a group test. Next up are the 683 S2 floorstanders – are they as impressive? The answer is an emphatic yes. Our expectations have been exceeded. The new 683s are seriously capable, and some of the best floorstanders we've heard at this price.

Health and safety

But first, a few words on set-up. For health and safety regulations, B&W has supplied plinths to fit the bottom of the speakers for health and safety reasons, in case they topple. However, we think the speakers sound better with the plinths off. Timing is tighter and fine detail is more apparent.

We'd also recommend biwiring the speakers and standing them in generous space, with a little toeing in to solidify stereo imaging.

It may not come as a surprise that big speakers sound big. The 683 S2s are larger than many of their peers, but the

sense of scale is massive. The soundstage is wide and tall, and instruments are organised with plenty of room to breathe.

There's good clarity. The performance is sharp and precise, stopping and starting right on cue. This helps to create a very deliberate vibe: music is performed with confidence and verve – we'd go so far as to say panache.

Tonally they are well balanced and well integrated, but we should give a shout-out to the 683 S2s' impressive low end. It's 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 and controlled enough not to compromise the rest of the frequency range.

For the muscle on hand, there's a surprising level of nuance. The 683 S2s are big and bold. They grab your attention effortlessly and stir your feet, but also provide delicacy and subtlety. We're not entirely sure how B&W has managed to achieve this stunning performance, but it's surely due to careful engineering. There's a new

tweeter: an aluminium dome reinforced by an aluminium ring for rigidity. It is decoupled from the cabinet by a gel ring to minimise the impact of unwanted vibrations from the other drivers. It also has a protective grille (which doubles as a waveguide) these days, so it's slightly safer from wandering fingers.

A new spider

Elsewhere, the twin bass cones have also been reinforced with rings of aluminium, and the FST Kevlar midrange driver has a new spider.

The 683 S2s are tremendously talented speakers, all things considered. We're impressed by their power, scale and delicacy – they're wonderfully versatile performers.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Massive scale; plenty of power; plenty of nuance and delicacy

AGAINST They need a room with a bit of space to accommodate them

VERDICT A very strong and versatile performance; another winner for B&W

ELAC FS147 £1100



The ELAC FS 147s are the floorstanders in the company's Line 140 series, which sits somewhere in the middle of the range. They're siblings to the standmounting BS 142s, which we reviewed last month, judging them to be a touch unsubtle, but fun. It's clear these speakers come from the same family, because they have similar traits. The FS 147s are great for outright fun, even if they struggle with nuance.

The two 14cm mid/bass drivers feature what the company calls 'Al-sandwich' - 0.2mm of aluminium foil, glued to a pulp fibre cone to form a sandwich membrane, which is intended to reduce distortions.

Flared at both ends

Each speaker has two rear-firing reflex ports. These are flared at both ends to reduce noise from air turbulence. You get multiple foam bungs, so you can choose just how much you want to block up the ports, depending on where the speakers are positioned. There's also the JET tweeter, which is what ELAC calls its ribbon tweeters.

These speakers look quite nice from the sofa, but close up, less impressive (see roundel below). The build is solid enough, but we're not too sure about the finish. Most of the cabinet has a black ash finish, with its face made of glossy plastic.

When it comes to the FS 147s' sound, we already said these are a little unsubtle, but fun - and that's the key thing to know about these speakers.

A nice detailed top end

Tonally they have an even-handed approach, with no emphasis on any part of the frequency range. Rhythmic drive and dynamics are quite strong, and there's a liveliness to performance. The level of detail is good, particularly at the top end where the treble is clear and precise. We can't get away from 'unsubtle but fun', though.

Let's start with the fun. The FS 147s have a boundless enthusiasm that we find quite infectious. The sound is bold and energetic, charging along to whatever you play like an excitable puppy. They are definitely good for those who want a big sound for house parties.

For nuance, however, you may want to look elsewhere. The bass, for instance, feels oversimplified. If you're after layers and subtlety to your music, you will struggle to find them here. If you want speakers to pick up every strum or hi-hat, you will be slightly let down.

Sense of purpose

We said it before with the BS 142 standmounters, and we'll say it again with the FS 147s. These ELACs have a clear sense of purpose - and that's fun. The FS 147s certainly aren't for those who want to sit and analyse every part of a record. If you just want to be entertained, however, and you're not overly fussed about the details, these will serve you well.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Pleasing enthusiasm; clear and precise treble; crisp rhythmic ability

AGAINST Not very much in the way of detail and subtlety; build quality could be better

VERDICT A fun set of speakers if you're after outright entertainment over analysis



FIT AND FINISH

On our review sample, the top edge of this glossy baffle was sharp to the touch. On closer inspection, the glossy plastic is also prone to tiny scratches. It's not a big deal, but the ELAC FS 147s certainly don't have the premium feel of some of their rivals.

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Mission SX3 £1300



Take one look at the Mission SX3s' cabinet and it's clear a lot of thought has gone into the design. While some manufacturers (Acoustic Energy, for instance) go for the whole minimalist thing, there's a lot going on here.

For starters, they are beautifully put together. The black veneer on our review sample was applied with care and feels very professional. And then there are the curves. Lots of them, there essentially to reduce internal standing waves. We think it looks nice, lending the speakers a touch of elegance over their typically square-edged competitors.

Tweeter in the middle

At the front you find two 13cm aluminium cones for midrange and bass. Sitting between these is a 25mm titanium-dome tweeter. The back, meanwhile, features a reflex port and two pairs of speaker terminals.

Inside, interleaving layers of wood have been glued and pressed at high temperatures for 48 hours, and then left to cool naturally – a process that supposedly renders the cabinet acoustically inert.

Very fancy stuff, but unfortunately it doesn't prevent the Missions SX3s from giving an unexceptional performance. There's nothing disastrous, but equally there's nothing particularly great here.

Clear, detailed – but slack

It's a clear sound, with plenty of detail – as much as the Tannoy Revolution DC6T SEs or the Q Acoustics Concept 40s. Tonal balance is fine – you won't be preoccupied with any part of the frequency range.

But the sense of timing feels a bit slack, and there's no real sense of dynamism either. It doesn't help that integration is a little off – the bass feels a bit disjointed. Put these together and you don't really get much excitement.

We listen to Of Monsters And Men's *Dirty Paws*, and the opening guitar section feels ponderous, keeping up with the piece but never propelling it. What we really want is a bit of exuberance, but we never get it. The same track played through Bowers & Wilkins' 683 S2s or the NEAT Motive SX2s has a lot more va-va-voom.

It doesn't get much better as we crank it up. The sound hardens when

pushed, losing composure and getting a little coarse instead.

Mission says these speakers were designed to work well in a variety of placements. In practice we found them not too co-operative when given too much free space. They definitely prefer to be near, though not right up against, a wall, which helps firm up the performance to a degree.

We find ourselves frustrated with the SX3s. They're good-looking and well built, and we had high expectations after testing their standmount siblings (the four-star SX1s and 5-star SX2s). Sadly, the performance isn't up to that of the competition. These speakers meet the minimum standard we'd expect at this price, but the same money spent elsewhere can get you better sound.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Good amount of detail; elegant, well-made cabinets

AGAINST Needs stronger dynamics and better timing; short on excitement

VERDICT The Mission SX3s look good, but their performance is average



UNDER THE SKIN

It seems that the SX3's tweeter is mounted directly on the aluminium support baffle, but it isn't. The unit is decoupled from the rigid structure by a visco-elastic support to isolate it from the relatively high level of vibration generated by the two mid/bass drivers.



LIVING WITH IT

Unusually, the Motive's reflex port fires directly downwards and vents through the plinth. In theory this makes positioning more flexible. We find they like being about 30cm from a rear wall, but standing them in the open doesn't do much harm.

NEAT Motive SX2 £1395



We've got a thing for tiny speakers. It's partly because they look adorable, partly because they can be more practical - and also we marvel if they out-perform the big guns out there. In the case of the NEAT Motive SX2s, it's all of the above. They look great, they save space, and they're top performers at the price.

Admittedly there's not much in the way of perceived value - not when compared with the monolithic Bower & Wilkins 683 S2s - but these tiny titans have plenty going for them.

Laid-back approach

So what do we have here? Cabinets standing just 76cm high, leaning back on their plinth, not unlike the Tower of Pisa. There's a new tweeter: a 25mm inverted dome made of anodised aluminium (instead of the titanium on older models).

Internally, bracing and damping have been upgraded since the previous generation. There's also a separate enclosure for the tweeter unit, which aims to minimise interference.

Now, that leaning cabinet. It's not just a fashion statement. The idea is

that the shorter cabinets need to compensate, and tilting back allows them to fire up at your ears.

Build quality is very high. Our walnut cabinets are finished to a very professional standard (natural oak, black oak and satin white are also available).

When it comes to sound, we have to be realistic. At this size, the SX2s could never compete with the scale of large rivals such as the Q Acoustics Concept 40s. In absolute terms, the sound put out by the NEATs is not massive.

But it's big enough, and surprisingly so. Close your eyes and you can't tell the sound is coming from cabinets way short of one metre tall. Bigger rivals clearly sound bigger in bigger rooms, but use the SX2s in a small or medium-sized room and you're laughing.

The greatest strength of the SX2s is their liveliness. Punchy dynamics and precise timing work together to make the performance very expressive. The sense of enthusiasm is infectious.

These speakers want you to have a good time, and it didn't take long before we forgot about our analyses, merrily tapping our feet along to whole albums at a time.

Admittedly, the NEATs won't win at floorstander Top Trumps. The B&Ws offer more detail and subtlety, not to mention greater scale and deeper bass.

Winning personality

That said, you'd be having too much fun to care. What you get are hugely entertaining performers whose charming personality far outweighs any sense of a lack of analysis. These speakers won't blow the roof off, or flap your trousers or other such clichés, but they will bring a smile to your face.

We really like the NEAT Motive SX2s. They are great little speakers that get so much right we don't mind a few small imperfections. Sure, the B&W 683 S2s can shout louder, but get these into a smaller room and they rule supreme.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Strong dynamics; good timing; insightful presentation; small stature; good build

AGAINST Not the strongest in terms of outright scale or power

VERDICT If you don't have much space, these need to be on your shortlist

Q Acoustics Concept 40 £1000



Q Acoustics has done very well for itself in only eight years. It's taken on and often defeated larger, better-established brands. It's won so many of our Awards that we've lost count. Last year it even won our loudspeaker Product of the Year gong, thanks to the Concept 20 standmounters. Now we have the floorstander version. Can Q Acoustics keep up its run of success?

Growing in confidence

There's one issue here, and it's the price. Part of the reason the brand has done so well is that it has always offered top-quality products at low prices. However, these floorstanders cost just as much as the two-time Award-winning Tannoy Revolution DC6T SEs. Q Acoustics is clearly growing in confidence. Fortunately, that confidence is justified. The Concept 40s are stonkingly good.

The Concept 40s recycle much of what made the Concept 20s so successful. The key element is the cabinet, which uses a box-within-a-box design. Two thin layers of MDF are separated with Gelcore, an elastic compound that acts as a sort of sonic

moat and reduces cabinet resonance. This sandwich approach is used on each side of the cabinet, except the front and back. Both use thick MDF panels, but the front is further reinforced with a large aluminium plate. The soft-dome tweeter is decoupled from the front panel to reduce sound-degrading vibration from the other drivers.

As we've come to expect from Q Acoustics, build quality is exemplary. The high-gloss black or white finishes are flawless, and construction is solid. There are three feet on each speaker, which promises better stability than four. All of this pays off, because the sound is seriously impressive. The signature Q Acoustics sound is alive and well: a smooth and refined presentation that trades outright excitement for easy listening.

The great sense of scale from the Concept 20s makes a return. There's plenty of space, and the presentation is wonderfully airy. You can listen for hours on end.

There's enough punch to entertain: dynamics are strong, and the low end demonstrates enough agility to mean

business. It's an affable sound, but don't think there's no bite.

When it comes to energy, the Tannoy Revolution DC6T SEs offer more excitement and greater precision, but the Concept 40s rarely seem lacking. They could be accused of being a little polite, but it would be a mistake to assume they're too laid-back.

Well-behaved cabinet

Detail is good. The sound is clean, no doubt helped by that well-behaved cabinet. The B&W 683 S2s offer a greater sense of texture, but the Concept 40s offer greater integration between the frequencies, and greater overall consistency of sound.

Once again, Q Acoustics has delivered the goods.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Smooth, refined balance; consistency across frequency range; fine stereo imaging; impressive build

AGAINST May be a little smooth for some

VERDICT Build on the brand's strengths to deliver a wonderfully inviting sound



LIVING WITH IT

As we've come to expect from Q Acoustics, build quality is exemplary. The high-gloss black or white finishes are flawless and construction is solid. It's also worth noting the three feet on each speaker - which promises better stability than four.



CLEAN LINES

The speaker grille on the DC6T SE is magnetic and leaves no holes in the front, while the espresso finish contrasts nicely with silver-ring drivers. The custom plinths provide good stability, and we like that the feet are easily adjustable from above.

Tannoy Revolution DC6T SE £1000

★★★★☆

It's nice to be the champion, but that also means everyone wants a shot at you. The Tannoy Revolution DC6T SEs have been our Award-winners at this price for two years in a row. Once again, they've been hauled out to deal with younger, fresher opponents.

Do they have one more fight in them, or is it time to retire? It's somewhere inbetween. These are still impressive speakers that we'd heartily recommend, although they're no longer at the top of their game.

The 'SE' stands for 'Special Edition', which marks them out as the tweaked version of the original DC6Ts, which were Award-winners in their own right.

Not just a rebadge

But it's not just a rebadge with a new lick of paint: the SEs got a new stabilising plinth, revised motor system on the drivers, enhanced crossovers and extensive internal bracing. Changes that earned them superstardom.

We've always been keen on the way these speakers look, and they remain one of the most attractive floorstanders we've seen.

The trapezoidal cabinet, designed to reduce internal standing waves, is solidly put together. The labelling on the two pairs of speaker terminals is tricky to read, but that's a small niggle.

It's not just about the looks though: the design is also pretty clever, thanks to the 15cm Dual Concentric driver, which places the tweeter in the middle of the cone. The idea is to improve accuracy and time alignment. Elsewhere you will find a 15cm bass driver and a rear-firing reflex port.

Get the DC6T SEs firing and it's hard not to be impressed by their sound. Give them a little toe-in, and there's an impressive focus to the soundstage, with a precise placement to vocals and instruments. The sound is very clean. The frequency range is cohesive and nicely integrated. The low end is weighty but precise, and lively enough to provide immediacy.

Experiment with biwiring

You also get plenty of detail, and dynamics are strong. Mix in the keen timing and you have a performance that's exciting without being overly enthusiastic. Biwiring the speakers

gives you a more open and expansive sound, but that does come at the cost of a little cohesion.

In isolation, these Tannoys don't have a problem. But next to newcomers such as the Q Acoustics Concept 40s or the B&W 683 S2s the champs begin to show their age. They make the Tannoys seem a little forward and unsubtle by comparison.

Still skilled performers

The Awards we gave them show we really liked the DC6T SEs first time out - and we still do. These are skilled performers and nobody would regret taking them home. But their asking price must be a consideration now. For the same amount, you can get better sound these days.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Focused soundstage; high precision; good energy; fine integration and cohesion

AGAINST Newer rivals offer more detail, greater scale and refinement

VERDICT These two-time Award-winners are still good, but no longer top of their game

TEST VERDICT



THE WINNER

Bowers & Wilkins 683 S2

£1150 ★★★★★

B&W has worked out how to stay ahead in this game: take a great speaker, then make it even better. The resulting **B&W 683 S2** does more than enough to leave the others behind

All shapes, all sizes: this is the funnest kind of test. And the results are more varied than we expected. Sometimes it's hard to make recommendations because all the entries are so strong, but in this case there's a clear running order.

Firmly in first place are the freshly revamped Bowers & Wilkins 683s. They offer pretty much everything we want from a floorstander: massive scale with plenty of power, a real sense of drive but also enough nuance and delicacy to deal with subtler elements. So they require a bit of space but, for the money, they are deeply impressive.

A good Motive

Next up are the NEAT Motive SX2s. These lose out to the B&Ws because in absolute terms they're pricier and a little transparent. But they have real strength when it comes to dynamics and timing. Add that to a sense of refinement and you have a very fun, expressive pair of speakers. We also like

the smaller, space-saving stature and the flexibility of positioning. If you have a smaller listening room, these promise to put a smile on your face.

Q Acoustics' Concept 40s come next. We love their smooth and spacious presentation, which makes for endlessly easy listening. But there's plenty of detail and excitement too, and although they could still be a little too polite for some, we think these are generally strong and hugely likeable speakers.

Fourth place! Yes, the two-time Award-winning champions have been firmly knocked off their perch, and it is with a heavy heart that we take the fifth star from the Tannoy Revolution DC6T SEs. It's not that they do anything wrong, it's simply that they have now been overtaken by newer opponents that display stronger dynamics and greater refinement. They put up a good fight though, and we still heartily recommend them.

German brand ELAC comes next, offering a real sense of fun, which is

good for those just looking to be entertained. They're not very subtle, however, and we wouldn't recommend them for anyone looking for something remotely analytical.

Great expectations

The Acoustic Energy 305s were something of a disappointment because we expected good things after testing their talented standmounted counterparts. Sadly, they are let down by a lack of dynamic punch. There are a few things to like, such as the lovely aesthetics and a high level of sonic precision. But ultimately we weren't moved by their performance.

That leaves the Mission SX3s in last place. They deliver the minimum of what we'd expect for a pair of speakers over £1000. There's a good amount of detail, but beyond that the dynamics, timing and integration are average. Compared with the competition, the sound lacks the ability to truly engross and entertain.



Acoustic Energy 305

£1000 ★★★★★

Sensitivity 90dB/W/m • Finishes 2 •
Impedance 8 ohms • Max power
handling 200W • Biwireable No •
Dimensions (hwd) 90 x 19 x 30cm

Sound	■	■	■	■	■
Build	■	■	■	■	■
Compatibility	■	■	■	■	■



B&W 683 S2

£1150 ★★★★★

Sensitivity 89dB/W/m • Finishes 2 •
Impedance 8 ohms • Max power
handling 200W • Biwireable Yes •
Dimensions (hwd) 99 x 19 x 36cm

Sound	■	■	■	■	■
Build	■	■	■	■	■
Compatibility	■	■	■	■	■



ELAC FS 147

£1100 ★★★★★

Sensitivity 89dB/W/m • Finishes 1 •
Impedance 4 ohms • Max power
handling 180W • Biwireable No •
Dimensions (hwd) 95 x 22 x 30cm

Sound	■	■	■	■	■
Build	■	■	■	■	■
Compatibility	■	■	■	■	■



Mission SX3

£1300 ★★★★★

Sensitivity 86dB/W/m • Finishes 5 •
Impedance 8 ohms • Max power
handling 75W • Biwireable Yes •
Dimensions (hwd) 31 x 19 x 29cm

Sound	■	■	■	■	■
Build	■	■	■	■	■
Compatibility	■	■	■	■	■



NEAT Motive SX2

£1395 ★★★★★

Sensitivity 86dB/W/m • Finishes 4 •
Impedance 8 ohms • Max power
handling N/A • Biwireable No •
Dimensions (hwd) 77 x 16 x 20cm

Sound	■	■	■	■	■
Build	■	■	■	■	■
Compatibility	■	■	■	■	■



Q Acoustics Concept 40

£1000 ★★★★★

Sensitivity 90dB/W/m • Finishes 2 •
Impedance 6 ohms • Max power
handling 150W • Biwireable Yes •
Dimensions (hwd) 97 x 17 x 29cm

Sound	■	■	■	■	■
Build	■	■	■	■	■
Compatibility	■	■	■	■	■



Tannoy Revolution DC6T SE

£1000 ★★★★★

Sensitivity 90dB/W/m • Finishes 1 •
Impedance 8 ohms • Max power
handling 200W • Biwireable Yes •
Dimensions (hwd) 100 x 31 x 28cm

Sound	■	■	■	■	■
Build	■	■	■	■	■
Compatibility	■	■	■	■	■

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Positioning

Most of the floorstanders here have been designed to work best away from walls or corners, so choose carefully if you can't give them the space they may need.

System

Before you buy make sure you listen to your chosen speakers - if possible at home - hooked up to the kit you intend to partner them with. A bright-sounding amp or ill-matched CD player can stymie the best speakers.

Time

Remember that speakers need time to bed in. Sometimes they won't reach their best until they've clocked a good few days'-worth of playing time.

SYSTEM BUILDER



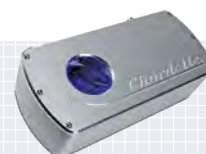
Stereo amplifier
Roksan Caspian M2 amp
£1800 ★★★★★

Drama and subtlety in bucket loads from our current favourite amp over £1500.



CD player
Roksan Caspian M2 CD
£1800 ★★★★★

In our opinion, the M2 CD is quite simply the finest player near this price.



DAC
Chord QuteHD
£990 ★★★★★

Terrific dynamic expression and rhythmic precision.

PROJECTION PERFECTION

An incredible summer of sport, new blockbusters and next-gen games consoles – BenQ has a tempting proposal to upsize your entertainment...

Answer this one fast: what's the best way to enjoy the cup final? Your favourite film? The finale of your current favourite TV show? There are plenty of good answers but odds are "massive screen" will figure. A big screen makes a huge difference but there's a limit to how big you can go when it comes to installing a TV.

For truly crowd-capturing visuals, a projector is the answer. **BenQ's W1500** is a home-entertainment powerhouse that will change your living room forever.

The W1500 is wireless, so as long as you can get a power cable to it, it doesn't need to be in the same room as the video-streaming device. Think warm nights in the garden, something sizzling on a grill and drinks in a cooler. The walls of your house have never been so useful.

What's so good about projectors, then?

Scale. The W1500 can produce an image ranging from 40in diagonally to a whopping 300in on any flat surface. And the W1500 can be close: it creates a Full HD, 84in image from just two metres.

What about colour?

The W1500 has a spectacular contrast ratio of 10,000:1 and an enormous colour gamut, which means properly green pitches and blue skies. It is also bright – you won't have to tape your curtains shut to view it.

Sounds like a lot of cables.

Along with its pair of HDMI inputs, the W1500 comes with a wireless dongle. Plug the dongle into a compatible source and enjoy smooth, Full HD playback.



SHORT THROW SPECIALIST:
84IN PICTURE FROM 2M AWAY



FULL HD:
1080P PLAYBACK

WIRELESS HDMI:
NO MORE TRAILING CABLES

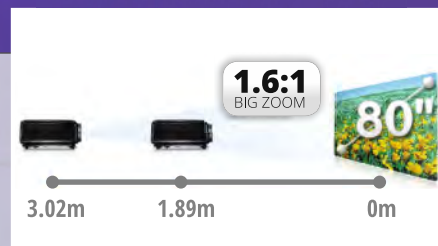


BIG SCREEN BEAUTY: KEY FEATURES



FULL HD DISPLAY

Proper, 1080p playback means the W1500 will do justice to whatever video you feed into it.



SHORT THROW DISTANCE

This is how far a projector has to be from the screen. The W1500 produces an 80in picture at a distance of just 1.89m. A small front room is no problem.



WIRELESS VIDEO

This is a home-entertainment purchase that doesn't produce wires! The W1500's 5GHz wireless networking means Full HD, cable-free.

BenQ
WWW.BENQ.CO.UK

A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

A TV in 2014 is far more than a mere screen. It's a portal to all manner of smart offerings

WHAT'S ON TEST

1. **Philips 55PFS6609**
£1200 p46

2. **Finlux 55F9076-T**
£900 p45

3. **Samsung UE48H6400**
£700 p47

4. **Sony KDL-50W829B**
£900 p48



The first TVs of 2014 are here, and they are bigger, smarter and better than ever before. We've got 48in to 55in screen sizes in our test, bringing your favourite TV shows, Blu-ray films and sports tournaments to a big screen at a great price.

The playing field has never been more level, with all four Full HD TVs here kitted out with the latest on-demand services, 3D tech and networking smarts to give you the most immersive and exciting TV-watching experience in the comfort of your own home.

While their sizes may be comparable, the prices of these TVs range from £700 to £1200. So is it worth paying the extra?

As always, it's quality and value for money that matter most to us, and we have some strong competition on show. Three big hitters - Samsung, Sony and Philips - go up against Finlux, a relatively new kid on the block, but one that's impressed us with recent offerings.



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





1SERIES

Acoustic Energy have always been associated with audio excellence. Since the original AE-1 monitor speaker was launched in 1988, their products have represented the best audio performance and product reliability available for the price. These principles continue with the new **1-Series**. Consisting of a floor-standing speaker with angled front, compact book-shelf speakers, a centre speaker and a powered subwoofer. The **1-Series** from Acoustic Energy offers unrivalled performance at a price you would not believe.

Stunning Hi-Fi speakers from £199.00



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FINLUX 55F9076-T

£900 ★★★★★

Finlux was last year's underdog story. Its unassuming sets impressed us as great screens for great prices, and we had high hopes for this new Finlux 55F9076-T. It's already had a price cut from £1200 to £900, so it's certainly aiming to play the value card.

One look at the 9076-T and it seems Finlux wants to up its game with a sleek, smart finish. The bezel surrounding the 55in LED-backlight LCD screen is sliver-thin, and the curved metal stand with its 'chrome' finish is smart. It looks really good out of its box.

The set wobbles a bit on its stand, but it's well-built otherwise – just make sure the curved stand will fit your TV rack.

The 9076-T has the essential apps such as BBC iPlayer, Netflix and YouTube, and a couple of surprises in Blinkbox and TuneIn Radio. You will also find Twitter, Facebook and Skype here (you'll need to buy an extra camera for Skype though).

Around the back there are four HDMI inputs and two USB ports (one of which supports HDD recording), and analogue connections such as component, composite and scart inputs. A digital optical output is present, as is a Freeview HD tuner. You can connect to your home network using the ethernet port, although Finlux does include a

As the title suggests, *Thor 2: The Dark World*, demands a set with strong insight, but the Finlux robs the picture of punch and excitement

separate wi-fi dongle for wireless. The set is DLNA-compatible, too, which means you can stream content from any compatible devices (laptop, NAS device, smartphones) to the screen.

A decent performer off-air

Clear and bright with decent detail, the 9076-T performs fairly well with broadcast TV. Daytime shows such as *This Morning* benefit from its clean and stark whites. But the blacks are not as deep as they should be, which can be seen with Blu-ray Marvel films. As the title suggests, *Thor 2: The Dark World* demands a set with strong insight, but the Finlux's relatively poor blacks rob the picture of punch and excitement.

Setting the backlight level to medium drives the blacks deeper, although you will be sacrificing some brightness and anyone sitting at an angle to the TV may find the colours and blacks fading somewhat too. Play the 3D Blu-ray of *Life of Pi* and the Finlux's passive-3D performance has decent depth and is gentle on the eyes.

A (generous) eight pairs of passive glasses are included too.

Voices and dialogue are fine, as the 9076-T pushes the midrange forward, but it's not as solid as we'd like, and leaves the rest of the sound feeling thin.

We have to take issue with the new remote control. Last year, Finlux's remotes were simple and easy to use with a flat design. This year it's chosen a concave design and our fingers slip off the domed 'OK' button.

We're a bit disappointed with this TV. Those issues with black depth, a lack of crisp detail and the remote were at odds with its original £1200 price. They are at odds with its £900 price too, sadly.



Our fingers keep slipping off the domed 'OK' button

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Bright and clear picture; punchy whites; passive 3D is gentle; smart-looking set

AGAINST Dark scenes need more depth and subtlety; remote is frustrating to use

VERDICT A good-looking set, but it doesn't deliver a competitive performance



PHILIPS 55PFS6609

£1200 ★★★★★

If you've converted your film collection to Blu-ray and have eyes only for Full HD content, then this Philips 55PFS6609 is well worth an audition.

The 55in LED-backlit LCD screen with Full HD 3D and smart features is the first Philips TV we've seen this year, and it shines with high-definition content. Play the Blu-ray of *Iron Man 3* or watch Formula One HD, and you will find crisp lines, punchy colours, and enough detail to keep you hooked.

Pleasing depth

The Philips's picture has a glossy look with stark highlights, deep blacks, and stable motion-handling to keep action scenes in check. This translates to 3D films, too, with *The Adventures of Tintin* conveyed with pleasing depth. The two pairs of supplied active-3D glasses could be more comfortable, though.

The colour palette is vivid, although the reds aren't quite as vibrant as on the Samsung UE48H6400. The Philips is much happier with greens and blues, which have a rich and detailed balance, although we think dark scenes could have more insight. The picture could also be cleaner. We set the noise-reduction setting to medium to soften any graininess in HD and standard-definition pictures - *Stoker's* natural

This 55in screen shines with high-definition content. You'll find crisp lines, punchy colours and enough close detail to keep you hooked

palette is bereft of subtlety on DVD, and shadows lack the definition to convey space between characters and rooms. Flick to any standard-def broadcast channel and fuzzy edges, lack of truly deep blacks, and softness all disappoint.

Our favourite feature is the 6609's Ambilight: a series of LEDs on either side of the TV change colour in response to the picture, so adding to the perceived depth of field. It's effective. The TV's build quality is sturdy, although the swivel stand could look a bit smarter.

Even with Philips's Ambi-woox sound technology (a special driver aims to boost midrange and bass) on board, the 6609 sounds muddled. Voices are muffled and hollow, and turning up the volume gives the sound a bright edge.

The essential apps are here, alongside Philips's own Cloud TV which gives access to TV channels from the internet. The Social TV option activates a sidebar for Facebook and Twitter feeds, and you can also access content in cloud storage. The interface and menus aren't very responsive, but our major gripe is with

the sluggish remote control. The cheap plastic build does it no favours either.

You get four HDMI inputs, all of which support ARC (Audio Return Channel). There are also two USB ports, and an optical audio output. You can connect to your network using ethernet, or the built-in wi-fi. There's also component and phono inputs, and two tuners: one for Freeview HD and one for satellite channels (which isn't Freesat compliant).

We have mixed emotions about the 6609. It doesn't handle standard-def content particularly well and it's sluggish to use. On the other hand, it looks great with anything in HD. Is that enough to splash out £1200 on? We're not quite sure.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Excellent with high-def content; bright and crisply detailed; Ambilight is a bonus

AGAINST Rivals are more detailed and have better colour balance; remote isn't great

VERDICT Dazzles with HD content, but rivals offer better overall performance



The cheap build of the remote control does it no favours



SAMSUNG UE48H6400

£700 ★★★★★

Have you come across a 48in LED/LCD screen before? We certainly haven't. The Samsung UE48H6400 is the first of this new screen size, and we like it. A lot.

Sharp, clear and full of subtle detail that's impressive at this mid-range price, the 6400 hooked us when we turned it on. At £700 (down from £1000), this could be the best TV deal we've seen this year, what with its smart build and numerous features.

Screen feels right

High-definition pictures burst with clarity and crispness, and the screen has a beautifully judged colour palette, full of depth, subtlety and punch. Black areas are deep, yet still have subtle detail. We barely feel the need to tweak the picture settings, either, as the screen feels pretty right, straight out of the box.

The 6400 is adept at rendering reds, which are vibrant and subtle. Skin tones look natural, making rivals like the Sony KDL-50W829B and Philips 55PFS6609 look unconvincing in comparison. The 6400 is one of the cleanest pictures we've seen this year for both Full HD and DVD. The upscaling is good, with plenty of detail, despite the lower resolution. Its smooth motion and strong contrast translates well on 3D films, too. The 3D depth in the Blu-ray of *Life of Pi* is



Samsung's new pebble remote is a bit fiddly, we'll stay standard...

High-definition pictures burst with clarity and crispness, and the screen has a beautifully judged colour palette, full of depth and punch

immersive, and crystal-clear detail makes it compelling (Samsung includes two pairs of active glasses). The sound has a rounded quality to it, with none of the tinniness usually found in flatscreens. It's not quite the effect of a home cinema system, so a soundbar, such as the Award-winning Philips HTL5120 (£250), would work well here.

Samsung's smart TV portal remains largely unchanged, which is no bad thing. There are tweaks across the interface, but the speediness remains the same. You get a wealth of catch-up services (ITV Player, 4oD, Demand 5) as well as Netflix, BFI Player, Vimeo and YouTube. Curiously, BBC iPlayer is still missing, but we are assured it's only an update away. TuneIn and vTuner internet radio are also available, alongside the usual social network apps.

Samsung's Football Mode differs from Sony's by offering to record football highlights based on crowd noise. The setting, however, is garish in both picture and sound, so we would steer clear of activating it. Samsung's standard

remote makes navigation second nature, but we're less enthused with the new pebble-shaped smart touch remote. The touchpad is too small, while the pointer needs a steady hand. And we still don't enjoy voice interaction.

The 6400 has a decent array of connections on the back, with four HDMI inputs and three USB ports. You also get an input each for component, composite and scart, and an optical audio output. For internet, you can go wired or wireless, and a Freeview HD tuner takes care of your broadcast TV.

Is this 48in Samsung screen one of the best TV deals of the year so far? We certainly think so.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Brilliant picture quality; sharp, subtle detail; great selection of on-demand services; smart interface; easy to use

AGAINST Smart remote isn't as intuitive

VERDICT Punchy, subtle and exciting, this Samsung TV is fantastic at the price



SONY KDL-50W829B

£900 ★★★★★☆

The Sony KDL-50W829B was the first 2014 TV we laid eyes on, and the natural detail and colours on its Full HD screen impressed us right away. It's a good-looking set, too, with a barely there bezel making it look surprisingly small for a 50in screen – and at just £900, too.

But we've seen other TVs since, and this Sony TV has stiff competition. Its skill with natural hues and detail makes easy work of the many shades of brown and the bleak, blue-tinged wintry setting of *Inside Llewyn Davis*. There's insight in the shadows, while the whites are clean and stark next to deep blacks.

Crisp and punchy

Switch to *Pacific Rim* on Blu-ray and the Sony screen looks crisp and punchy. It's a bright and involving picture, with no hint of the viewing-angle issues that plagued last year's Sony sets. 3D films (the Sony is an active set) retain all the screen's characteristics and the sense of depth is immersive, although there are some instances of motion instability.

The 829B is a talented upscaler, as confident with DVD and standard-def pictures as with Blu-rays. It's a relatively noise-free picture too, and Freeview channels are bright and detailed. However, the Sony's picture looks slightly subdued next to the new



We're pleased to find Sony's remote is still intuitive to use

The 829B is a talented upscaler, as confident with DVD and standard-def pictures as it is with Blu-rays. It's relatively noise-free too

Samsung UE48H6400 – the Samsung's 48in screen is just that bit sharper around the edges, and more proficient when it comes to rendering vivid reds and skin tones. The Sony fares pretty well with sound: voices are clear, direct and easy to follow, while there's no thinness or bright edges. It's not the most dynamic or weighty sound we've heard, but it doesn't grate either.

Sony's smart interface is one of the best we've seen, with the panels for music, movies and TV laid out neatly. Sony's own Video and Music Unlimited apps take centre stage, while Netflix and Amazon Instant are there with YouTube and NPR Radio apps. You also get BBC iPlayer and Demand 5.

Sony's Football Mode is a smooth motion-processing option that gives a wide spread of sound and is nowhere as overblown or garish as Samsung's version. Social networking is improved on this year's TVs with Social View, which activates a scrolling Twitter feed.

Meanwhile, there are four HDMI inputs for your sources. You can also

stream HD from an Android device using the MHL (Mobile High-link Definition) connection, while ARC support lets you feed TV sound to a soundbar. The 829B also has a Freeview HD tuner and a satellite tuner, and an ethernet port for connecting to your home network.

Sony's remote remains intuitive and easy to use. You can get an optional 'One-Flick' touchpad remote, but its cheap-feeling frame and clumsy gestures aren't a patch on the standard handset.

Overall, the 829B is no longer at the top of the pile with its most talented rivals offering better performance – but we're still fond of it, and it remains a pretty compelling watch.

Rating ★★★★★☆

FOR Bright and exciting picture; good with HD and SD; smart interface; good remote

AGAINST The very best rivals offer crisper detail; reds could be more vivid

VERDICT It may have lost a star, but this 50in Sony is still worth an audition

The Special One

Tannoy Revolution DC6T SE



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

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

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

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

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

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.

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

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SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2012

STEREO SPEAKERS

BEST FLOORSTANDER £700-£1500

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**Some portable speakers are small.
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TEST VERDICT**THE WINNER****Samsung UE48H6400****£700 ★★★★★**

The **Samsung UE48H6400 TV** has the smallest screen, but it stands head and shoulders above the competition

Last year, 42in screen sizes were all the rage. But this year we're going bigger - as the first crop of 2014 TVs prove that big-screen entertainment is the way forward. And with on-demand apps, catch-up services and social networking seen as standard now on any self-respecting Full HD TV, the focus falls on one significant factor. Picture quality.

The four sets we have on test here couldn't be more different when it comes to picture. The Samsung UE48H6400 stands head and shoulders above the rest with a superbly detailed and natural performance, and for a great price. Its subtlety with colours betters even the Sony - which until now was the most natural-looking screen. Both TVs offer a smart experience, though, with speedy and stylish

interfaces making them a joy to use. The Philips 55PFS6609, meanwhile, is not as intuitive - We'd like a much smoother user experience and better upscaling for £1200. The Philips's saving grace is its high-definition performance. The 55in screen bursts into life with sharp and punchy detail that makes watching Blu-ray films a real treat.

The 55in screen from Finlux, however, isn't quite up to standard. Even with a £300 price cut, the £900 55F9076-T isn't the usual bargain we've come to expect from Finlux, no matter how smart the set looks.

Without doubt, the best TV performer of the year so far is Samsung's 48in screen. For £700, it's great value, and it will deliver a superb all-round performance in your home.

SYSTEM BUILDER

Three perfect partners for you to bring out the best in your Samsung UE48H6400



Soundbar
Philips HTL5120
£250 ★★★★★

This excellent soundbar will boost the TV sound with greater detail and agility. Has a good sense of scale and plenty of oomph.



Video streaming service
Netflix

£6.99/month ★★★★★

Even with the £1 increase, Netflix is the best streaming service, offering hundreds of TV shows and films for TVs and smart devices.



Set-top box
Sky+ HD 2TB
£250 ★★★★★

With its wealth of HD channels, huge storage space and great user experience, this premium Sky box is a must-have for TV fans.

Total build £1200



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

Facts & figures

Finlux 55F9076-T
£900 ★★★★★

Type LCD/LED • Full HD Yes • 3D Yes (passive) • Tuners Freeview HD • HDMI in 4 • USB in 2 • Smart TV Yes • Dimensions (hwd) 71 x 123 x 4cm



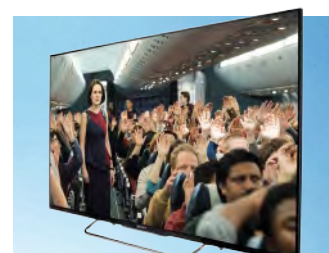
Philips 55PFS6609
£1200 ★★★★★

Type LCD/LED • Full HD Yes • 3D Yes (active) • Tuners Freeview HD, satellite • HDMI in 4 • USB in 2 • Smart TV Yes • Dimensions (hwd) 71.5 x 123 x 5cm



Samsung UE48H6400
£700 ★★★★★

Type LCD/LED • Full HD Yes • 3D Yes (active) • Tuners Freeview HD • HDMI in 4 • USB in 3 • Smart TV Yes • Dimensions (hwd) 63 x 109 x 5cm



Sony KDL-50W829B
£900 ★★★★★

Type LCD/LED • Full HD Yes • 3D Yes (active) • Tuners Freeview HD, satellite • HDMI in 4 • USB in 2 • Smart TV Yes • Dimensions (hwd) 66 x 112 x 6cm

Xpression Carbon

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March 2014



February 2014



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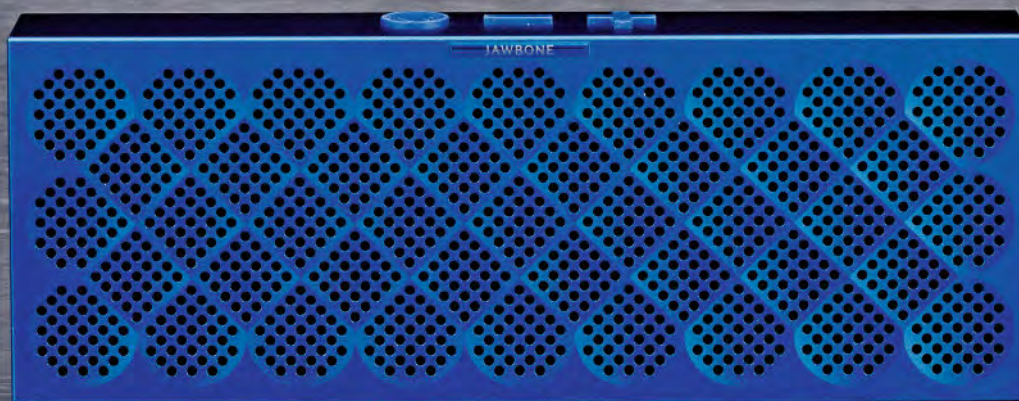


Pro-Ject
AUDIO SYSTEMS

* Bordeaux finish shown

Unplugged

We'll help you mobilise the sounds of the summer, with our test of three new wireless speakers



Jawbone Mini Jambox
£120 page 56



JBL Flip 2
£100 page 57



Sony SRS-X3
£130 page 58

With another British summer almost upon us, it's the perfect time for us to pretend that our BBQs, festivals and other outdoor pursuits won't be rained off in spectacular style. And with that optimism intact, we thought it timely to test out three of the newest portable Bluetooth speakers on the market, each costing between £100 to £130, and small enough to carry with you.



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



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The Jambox is slim and light enough to slip into your pocket, and its build quality is second-to-none



Jawbone Mini Jambox £120

★★★★☆

The Jawbone Mini Jambox makes quite a first impression. Slim and light enough to slip in your pocket, its build quality is second-to-none, with a body largely made of aluminium.

It's colourful too, available in nine finishes with several front grille patterns to choose from. It's this grille design that takes up the entire Mini front panel, with large, stylised volume and play/pause controls along the top edge. Smaller power and pairing buttons, plus a 3.5mm input and microUSB port, are found along the right-hand side, leaving the other edges clean. At just 38mm thick, there are two small drivers and a passive bass radiator squeezed into its slim frame – a standard setup in portable speakers these days.

It's good to see the most up-to-date Bluetooth version 4.0 is on board, and pairing is easy – you hold down the pairing button to make the Mini Jambox visible and then select it on your chosen device in the usual way. There's no near-field communication (NFC) to speed up this procedure, though.

We play Iggy Azalea's *Fancy* and the synthesised bassline intro lacks the depth and impact heard on the Sony SRS-X3. There's not a lot of bass punch here to speak of, though it stays free of obvious distortion at most volumes. The Jambox has a mid/treble-heavy character, which is no good thing: it's a hard, thin sound, making the speaker an uncomfortable and tiring listen for any duration. Vocals have a harshness, sounding muffled and closed in, amid a congested presentation.

Dynamically flat

This affects the timing of tracks too, which feel dynamically flat and unexciting, lacking the get-up-and-go of the JBL Flip 2. There's not much volume to play with either – fair enough, considering the Jambox's size – and it doesn't give any sense of oomph. This becomes more of a problem when you take it outside (likely to be the main use) – it sounds insubstantial with no walls to reinforce its sound. Push it to its maximum volume, and there's enough

distortion in the midrange to make you want to turn it down again.

There are a few interesting features here: the recently-added Multi Play, which lets you pair two Mini Jamboxes to play music in unison or as left and right speakers. There's also a free-to-download app, allowing you to turn your playlists from the likes of iTunes, Deezer, Spotify and Rdio into one mega playlist. The Jambox also offers a pretty impressive 10-hour (quoted) battery life.

The Jambox's fate is sealed by its price. At £120 you feel like you're paying a premium for the stylish looks, rather than its sound quality. There is better out there for similar money.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Great design; good battery life; handy app

AGAINST Hard sound; lacks scale; poorly organised; dynamically flat; no NFC; pricey

VERDICT A super-stylish speaker that needs to do much more in the performance department to impress

The Jambox has a mid/treble-heavy character, which is no good thing: it's a hard, thin sound, making it an uncomfortable and tiring listen for any duration of time

The Flip 2 can be used in either the horizontal or vertical position - we found vertical the best



JBL Flip 2 £100

★★★★☆

We loved the original JBL Flip, praising it as 'a sensational blend of portability and performance'. A year on and a number of improvements later, we're pleased to say we're suitably impressed the second time around.

Keeping the same cylindrical design as its predecessor, the Flip takes its name from its ability to be used in either vertical or horizontal positions. It's worth seeing which works best for you, but we found it to be more engaging placed vertically. This also gives you easier access to the controls, which sit rather awkwardly out of sight on the left-hand-side when horizontal.

The controls have been subtly tweaked too, so they no longer stand proud of the Flip's design, but are built into it instead. You see nothing but icons on the surface, but find a satisfying click when you press them. Other tweaks to its design include a standard microUSB charging port in place of the proprietary one previously, and the addition of near-field communication (NFC) for quick Bluetooth pairing. As before, it comes with a carry case to protect it

while on the move. Behind the Flip 2's grille sit dual 40mm drivers, driven by 6W amplifiers, and a bass port, which produce quite a performance for a portable. Its strength lies in the midrange, with voices pushed forward, creating a clear presentation that lends itself well to vocal-heavy tracks such as Prince's funk-driven tune *The Breakdown*.

On its feet

The Flip 2 has a great sense of rhythm too, and is quick enough on its feet to handle all the attitude of Daft Punk's *Lose Yourself to Dance*. It's an exciting listen. We would like more weight in the low end though, which feels a little restrained with bass-heavy tracks.

The treble can also sound pushed at times - particularly at higher volumes. The Flip 2 can go impressively loud but, as with many speakers of this type, that doesn't mean it should.

We'd recommend keeping it a few notches under the max if you want to keep things comfortable. Luckily, when outside, this flaw is less noticeable, with its presentation more evenly balanced.

The prominent midrange actually lends itself to outdoors, as vocals and melody are clearly heard no matter the surrounding noise, while its exciting character is not lost either.

Our only other gripe is with the Flip 2's battery life: at five hours, it falls short of the competition and while it's fine for a day in the garden, for a weekend's camping it could be troublesome.

The JBL Flip 2 has made some positive improvements to its predecessor, but it's still not perfect.

To earn five stars, it needs more substantial bass kick and, of course, there's the significant problem with its battery life. A highly praised four stars it is, then, for the JBL Flip 2.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Exciting presentation; easy operation; well designed; goes loud; good level of detail

AGAINST Sound could be weightier; treble is harsh at mid-high volume; battery life an issue

VERDICT Good performer for the money, but isn't a fully rounded package

The Flip 2's strength lies in the midrange, with voices pushed forward, creating clear presentation that lends itself well to vocal-heavy tracks like Prince's *The Breakdown*

What you sacrifice in bag
real estate you will gain
in performance with the
big-sounding Sony SRS-X3



Sony SRS-X3 £130

★★★★☆

If you're an audio purist, you might want to look away now. Like your music big and bassy? Then the Sony SRS-X3 could be the portable speaker for you.

Sony's SRS-X3 flaunts more bassy punch than most speakers of its size should be allowed to, but the difference is, it does it with aplomb. The SRS-X3 handles even the deepest basslines well.

Connectivity is via the slightly outdated Bluetooth 2.1, but there is near-field communication (NFC) on board for quicker, easier pairing with compatible devices. Play Drake's *Worst Behaviour* and the weighty low-end cuts through the mix with satisfying impact, sounding warm and controlled. It's impressive, if not sonically pure.

Switch to something heavier, and the brooding bass guitar in Staind's *Fade* is delivered with depth and confidence. There's real scale to the presentation too.

This is partly due to the two passive radiators inside the SRS-X3, one at the front, one at the back (most competitors have only one), which support two full-range drivers, driven by a 10W amplifier. Sony's 'Sound Mode' also

bucks the trend by offering EQ settings and does a good job at widening the soundstage further still, introducing some space to the presentation.

The SRS-X3's bassy punch does come with flaws: the weight of the low end means the midrange takes a back seat, and vocals feel lost during bassy sections. This means a slight lack of clarity when compared to the midrange-forward JBL Flip 2.

Power and punch

Many of the SRS-X3's weaknesses are balanced out when outdoors. The weight in the bass gives it power and punch without overpowering the rest of the frequency range. It sounds very impressive, dealing with acoustic music as well as synth-heavy dance tracks, and creating a smooth, well-rounded presentation. You could listen for hours on end. It goes loud too, and does a reasonable job at keeping things in control. We would recommend not maxing out the volume if you want your music to stay distortion-free, however.

Its seven-hour quoted battery life is about average for these speakers, particularly with its power. You will get longer out of the Jawbone Mini Jambox, but less sonic substance.

In terms of portability, the SRS-X3 is no match for the skinny Jawbone Mini Jambox, but you will still be able to carry it around, and it's well made to boot. What you sacrifice in bag real estate you will certainly earn back in performance.

The Sony SRS-X3 is the priciest speaker on test, and with the £100 JBL Flip 2 snapping at its heels, it doesn't quite do enough to earn a fifth star. But it's a hugely confident performer that certainly deserves consideration when buying any product in this category.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Big, weighty sound; wide soundstage; well made; goes loud; good outdoors

AGAINST Bass bias won't be for everyone; midrange clarity could be better; pricey

VERDICT Big, bassy and beautiful, but its tonal balance won't be for everyone.

Sony's SRS-X3 flaunts more bassy punch than most speakers of its size should be allowed to. But it does so with aplomb. It handles even the deepest basslines well



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TEST VERDICT**THE WINNER**

JBL Flip 2
£100 ★★★★★

There are no five stars handed out as each contender has its own particular flaws, but the **JBL Flip 2** has the edge, thanks to its level of organisation and lighter price-tag

The portable wireless speaker category is a tricky one - it's never easy finding that happy medium between size and sound.

Among the three on test we find two that come close, but fall just short of the five-star honour we're used to bestowing on our test favourites.

It's not often we have a test winner that isn't five stars, but in this case it feels justified. Both the Sony SRS-X3 and the JBL Flip 2 put forward formidable, if not faultless, performances for their size. In the end, we decided the presentation of the JBL Flip 2 had the edge over the Sony SRS-X3, offering that extra level of organisation, detail and clarity that the Sony just fell short on. The SRS-X3, on the other hand, has stacks of scale, weight and power that is missing from

the JBL, making it an immediately impressive listen. While we'd have liked it to be a little lighter on its feet to bring more excitement to its character, its smooth, easy-to-listen-to performance made it a gem to use at length.

When it really came down to it, the extra cost of the Sony and the Flip 2's better level of organisation gave JBL the win - although its lack of bass and unimpressive battery life are enough to stop it achieving five stars.

That leaves the Jawbone Mini Jambox here. To give it its due, it's significantly smaller than its testmates - a super-slim speaker that puts style first.

Unfortunately that means a smaller, poorer sound, lacking the weight, power and dynamics of both the Sony and JBL.

SYSTEM BUILDER

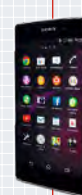
Three partners that will help make sure you hear the JBL Flip 2 at its best



Streaming service
Spotify

£9.99 per month ★★★★★

A music on-the-go must have, offering more than 20 million tracks and stacks of features.



Smartphone
Sony Z2 Xperia

Free on contract ★★★★★

One of our favourite smartphones, and it is a great source for music.

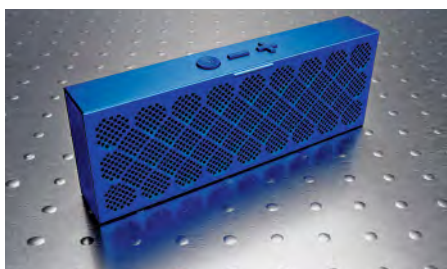


Tablet
Google Nexus 7
£200 ★★★★★

Our favourite small tablet is a great performer, with a great screen and pleasing sound.

Total build £300

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

Facts & figures

Jawbone Mini Jambox
£120 ★★☆☆☆

Dimensions (hwd) 5.8 x 15 x 2.5cm • **Finishes** 9
• **Battery life** 10 hours • **NFC** no • **3.5mm input** yes •
• **Microphone** yes



JBL Flip 2
£100 ★★★★★

Dimensions (hwd) 6.5 x 16 x 16cm • **Finishes** 5
• **Battery life** 5 hours • **NFC** yes • **3.5mm input** yes •
• **Microphone** yes



Sony SRS-X3
£130 ★★★★★

Dimensions (hwd) 7 x 19 x 7cm • **Finishes** 3 •
• **Battery life** 7 hours • **NFC** yes • **3.5mm input** yes •
• **Microphone** yes

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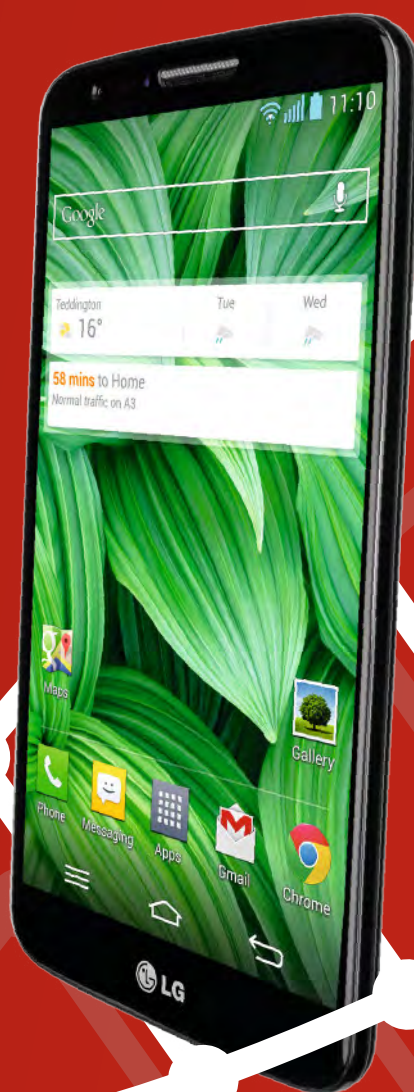
First they made calls. Then they got smart. Now they are woven into the very fabric of our lives. In the land of the smartphone, the king is an Android, so we set out to answer the ultimate question: which of these is the best?



For more news, reviews and buying advice, visit whathifi.com



SONY XPERIA Z2
P68



LG G2 P66



Listen to our favourite tracks every month!



SAMSUNG GALAXY S5 P67



HTC ONE (M8) P65



GOOGLE NEXUS 5 P64

Let's park the iPhone for a minute - it's Android time. This operating system is used by the majority of smartphone owners worldwide and run by dozens of key mobile manufacturers. It's fair to say Android now rules the mobile world.

There are around one billion (and counting) Android-powered devices in existence today and, with tons of smartphones launched every year, competition never lets up.

2014 looks like being no different, with new flagships from HTC, Sony and Samsung looking to leapfrog their predecessors and oust rivals with enhanced specs and first-rate features.

Among these you'll find Android's latest KitKat 4.4 software, improved

performance speeds, cutting-edge designs - some with waterproof and dustproof builds - camera quality to rival your compact, and even 4K filming (yes, Ultra HD may not be in screens just yet, but it has found its way into smartphones nonetheless).

We've already encountered all three of those new-generation handsets in our *First Tests* and praised each of them: the HTC for its gorgeous design, Sony for superb sound and Samsung for its dazzling screen. But how do these newcomers compete with existing Google and LG flagships? We're putting the five fingers through the daily grind to find out, so if you are looking for an upgrade and wondering which one to have in your hand, read on.



It's 8.6mm thick, but you wouldn't tell by holding it. Despite matching the HTC's 5in screen, it feels dinky and light compared with most rivals

Warmth, refinement and resolution: that's the 445ppi screen



Rounded edges and a rubber backing make the '5' great to hold

GOOGLE NEXUS 5

£275 - free on contract

★★★★☆

The Google Nexus 5 could be the best value-for-money smartphone out there. If you're after a feature-packed phone for half the price of the Apple, HTC, Samsung and Sony flagships, then buying Google's latest handset is a no-brainer.

You might expect the design of a handset priced at less than £300 to cut corners. Not here: the Nexus 5 is a nice slab of engineering. Its polycarbonate shell has a matte-black (white, or bright red are also available) rubber back panel, curved edges and is smooth to touch.

It's 8.6mm thick: though you wouldn't tell by holding it. Despite matching the HTC One M8's 5in screen, it feels dinky and light compared with most rivals.

Vanilla treat

We've always been fans of vanilla Android and the untouched operating system on the Nexus 5 is a treat to use. Running the latest Android KitKat 4.4, its interface is clean, intuitive and fast. Icons are big, functionality smooth.

The 5's 1920 x 1080 Full HD screen is still up-to-date and with 445ppi, has the edge over most rivals in resolution.

Sharp, clean lines and well-judged colours with natural hues make for a

warm and refined display, but it isn't as eye-catching as the LG G2 or Sony Xperia Z2. Contrast lags behind them too.

Pics that pull their punches

The same can be said of the Nexus 5's camera performance. Pictures are clean and produce natural, realistic colours, but photos aren't as striking as those produced by the LG G2 and photo effects are on the skimpy side too. A 1.3-megapixel front-facing camera just about suffices for shameless selfies.

Move on to sound and the Nexus 5 is also trumped by its rivals, despite a decent performance - music is clear, detailed and balanced, but Sony, Apple and HTC do it better.

Under the hood the Nexus 5 impresses. Its 2.2GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon 800 chip is no longer headline spec, but it's still a powerful machine, handling multiple apps instantaneously and zipping through data-heavy web pages quickly.

Its 2300mAh battery might not be as good as the G2's massive 3000mAh one, but it does the job. With 20 per cent juice remaining after 16 hours of play - which included location services and

wi-fi powered on and the downloading of a movie - we didn't feel shortchanged. A wireless charger is included.

The Nexus 5's sealed body means you can't house a replacement battery, nor a memory card - Nexus phones have never had gateways to expand storage and this is no different. 16GB or 32GB options onboard should cater for a mass of media, though.

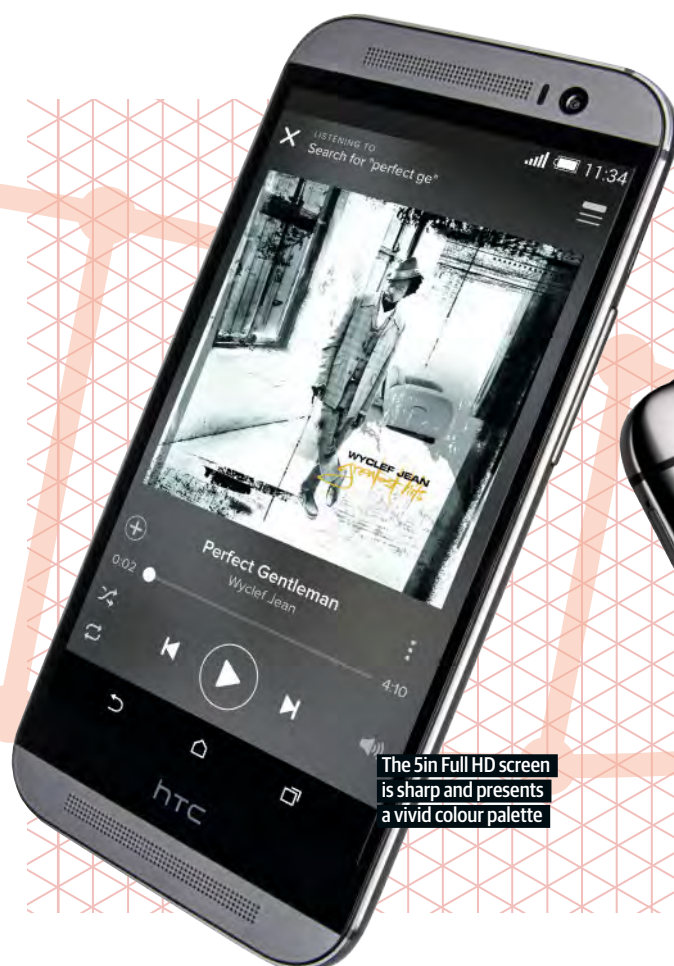
The Nexus 5 finally bows down to more advanced rivals after a lengthy stint as one of our favourite smartphones. It's no surprise: 2014's newcomers have been mightily impressive so far, upping the game in both specs and design (discounting the Samsung S5 on the latter). Google needs a new champion to regain that fifth star. Did anyone say Nexus 6?

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Price; powerful performer; ergonomic design; Google smarts; intuitive interface

AGAINST Sound and camera quality lag behind that of most rivals

VERDICT A decent all-rounder that remains a steal, but now left behind by new arrivals



The 5in Full HD screen is sharp and presents a vivid colour palette



Build quality is good and the aluminium body a thing of beauty

HTC ONE (M8)

£525 – free on contract

★★★★★

We tip our hat to HTC. Producing a successor to last year's best-reviewed phone, the HTC One, must have been a daunting task – but they've nailed it.

The HTC One (M8) is as impressive as its predecessor and has us using words like 'gorgeous' and 'stunning' from the off.

Beautiful to (be)hold

Pick it up and it's a thing of beauty. Made with 90 per cent metal, the M8's body is a single piece of aluminium with a shiny back panel and Gorilla-glass screen. We're fans of the brushed metal – it puts Samsung's plastic shells to shame.

At 160g the M8 is lighter than the Sony Xperia Z2, but no featherweight compared with the LG G2 or Samsung S5. Curvy corners and tapered edges make it nice to hold and the build is solid.

The One M8 has bettered the One with a 5in Full HD screen. With 441 pixels per inch, its display is sharp, has a vivid colour palette, oily blacks and brilliant whites. Samsung's S5 is even blacker and Sony's Xperia Z2 has more detail, but the M8 still has the wow factor.

Performance-wise, it's impressive: with 2GB RAM, its 2.3GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon 801 processor gets through

web pages quickly and juggles numerous apps without a glitch. During our test, nothing slowed it down.

As is to be expected, such efficiency takes its toll on the 2600mAh battery. The M8 hasn't the stamina of its rivals and will need recharging overnight, but it will last a full day of busy usage.

There's little pre-loaded bloatware, and apps bunched together in folders make for an uncluttered menu. Our only snag is that motion is a bit abrupt: a little extra smoothness wouldn't go amiss.

Alongside various shortcut actions, HTC introduces a new 'Bundle' feature – a single tile that draws together information on a specific topic. A built-in IR blaster means the M8 can be used as your TV remote control too.

Pixel-packing camera

The M8 keeps the One's 4.1 Ultrapixels – bigger than megapixels and supposed to catch more light – and there's a new twin-tone flash, which aims to produce purer colours and natural skin tones.

A standard five-megapixel front-facing camera is joined by two rear cameras – HTC calls it the 'duo camera', which allows you to bring blurry objects into

focus – or vice versa – even after you've taken a photo. Very clever.

In standard mode photos come out nice and bright, with the deep blacks and milky whites among the best, but colours are often a little over-saturated.

HTC's BoomSound speakers have had their chambers redesigned for better stereo separation and a boost in volume. If you listen to your phone through its own speakers, this is the best-sounding device here – although that is, admittedly, faint praise. A BoomSound setting adds weight to lower frequencies.

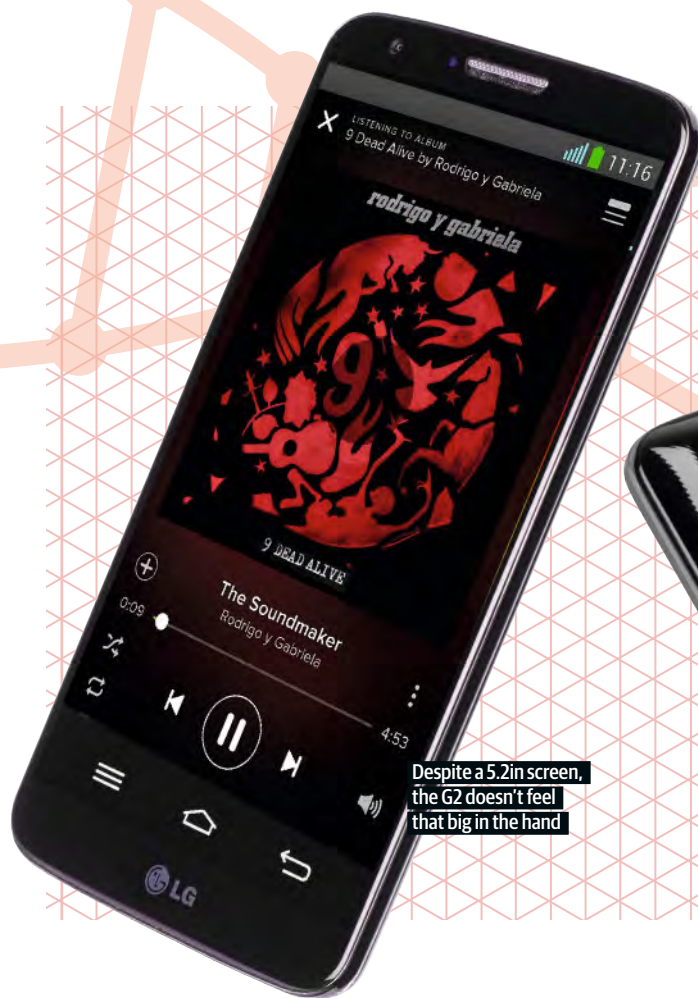
HTC has taken something great and made it even better. The One (M8) eclipses its predecessor, tidying up a few niggles and improving on an already superb phone. This is easily one of the best Android phones money can buy.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Stunning design; sharp, vivid screen; intuitive interface; clear, enthusiastic sound

AGAINST Low-light camera performance tends to be unreliable

VERDICT Building on an already great phone, the One (M8) impresses on almost every level



The Full HD screen is as beautiful as ever, with bright, radiant colours, sharp lines and impressive contrast. Wide viewing angles are well catered-for too



Despite a 5.2in screen, the G2 doesn't feel that big in the hand

Power, volume and camera controls are sited on the back

LG G2

£290 - free on contract

★★★★☆

On release, the LG G2 wowed us with its gorgeous display, lightning-fast performance, great camera and remarkable specification - it was the first smartphone with high-res audio support.

The new kids on the block may have toppled it now, but don't dismiss it - it's one of the oldest handsets in this test, but you wouldn't think it from the spec sheet.

Visual treats

The 5.2in Full HD screen remains as beautiful as ever, with bright, radiant colours, sharp lines and impressive contrast. The IPS (in-plane switching) display means wide viewing angles are well catered-for too. The G2 screen was a favourite of ours for a long time, although the subtler colours and deeper blacks of the HTC One (M8) trump it now.

Despite the decent-sized screen, the phone isn't that big. It's still one of the most ergonomic we've come across, with slim bezels and a smooth, curvaceous back that's great to hold. Its one-piece polycarbonate shell is 9.1mm thick - a smidgeon thicker than Samsung's S5 and Sony's Xperia Z2 - but it's not restrictive.

For a button-free frontage, LG has put power and volume buttons (which

double up as memo and camera shortcuts) on the back of the handset. Positioned where your fingers naturally rest, they are surprisingly intuitive to use once you're used to it.

There are features aplenty here, but some of them seem a little futile: Audio Zooming lets you pinpoint subjects for sound during video capture. Similarly, Zoom to Track magnifies an object and tracks it throughout.

The download for the latest 4.4 KitKat OS is imminent, but for now it runs off the 4.2.2 Jelly Bean OS. As a result, icons are big, menus are clean and orderly, and functionality is smooth. Qualcomm's Snapdragon 800 2.2GHz quad-core processor performs well, and the swiping of menus is responsive.

Healthy amounts of juice

The G2 has plenty of power. The 3000mAh battery copes fine with the wi-fi always on, running apps and browsing. For a full charge, the G2 takes little more than an hour.

Moving on to media, play a 24-bit/96kHz FLAC of Kate Bush's *Snowflake* through AKG's K451 headphones (£50) and oodles of detail comes through. But

compared with HTC's One (M8) and Sony's Xperia Z2, the music feels lifeless.

When we make calls they come through loud and clear at both ends, and there is no miscommunication, even in the midst of busy traffic.

Its 13-megapixel camera has an LED flash, nine-point focusing and optical image stabilization, as well as a bundle of effects to play with. Photos are sharp, detailed and textured, and brightness is good - even if the G2's camera is arguably no longer ahead of the pack.

Full HD video records at 60fps and the results are good in our test - clear, fairly detailed and good with motion.

Newer rivals may better its specs and performance now, but that doesn't make the G2 a has-been. LG's flagship phone remains a worthy contender.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Vivid, bright screen; intuitive, user-friendly interface; well built; speedy and smooth to use; textured, well-balanced pictures

AGAINST Unconvincing music performance

VERDICT A good all-rounder that still gives newer rivals a run for their money



Samsung has gone for a less-is-more approach - goodbye gimmicky icons and excessive bloatware, hello manageable menus and uniform graphics



You can now unlock the screen with a swipe of your finger

Rivals are making the S5's chrome-effect plastic finish look poor

SAMSUNG GALAXY S5

£490 – free on contract

★★★★☆

Samsung's S5 will probably be one of this year's best-selling smartphones; the S3 is the world's most popular handset, the S4 proved a worthy successor, and this latest flagship phone has a stack of new and improved features.

Yet overall it's a mixed bag – impressive and disappointing at the same time.

Plastic: fantastic?

First, the design leaves us underwhelmed. Samsung is still pushing the plastic – with chrome-look-frame – and it now looks second-rate alongside rivals.

The new model is large, yet we never need two hands to operate it and a diagonal thumb-swipe across the screen should be easy enough for most users.

The S5 is thicker and heavier than the S4 – albeit by only 0.2mm and 15g, and its 8.1mm depth and 145g weight is still thinner and lighter than the Sony Xperia Z2 and HTC One (M8). Just like the Sony, the S5 is dustproof and waterproof in up to one metre of water.

The S5's Super AMOLED Full HD display is up there with the best. Vibrant and punchy, colours have plenty of life and lines are sharp. It's the best contrast we've seen on a phone – even if it doesn't

have the subtlety, detail or colour accuracy of the Sony Xperia Z2 or HTC One (M8). There are display-mode options if you want to tweak the look.

Samsung has gone for a less-is-more approach – goodbye gimmicky icons and excessive bloatware, hello manageable menus and uniform graphics. And the S5 zips through operations with its speedy 2.5GHz Snapdragon 801 processor.

There's 2GB RAM of memory, and 16GB or 32GB internal storage options – plus a microSD card slot. The 2800mAh battery gives us 16 hours of constant use.

Samsung's new CSI-style finger scanner means you can unlock your home screen with a swipe of your digit. In day-to-day use it's volatile to say the least. We reached maximum failed attempts on a number of occasions, then had to enter a password anyway. Hmm.

The 16-megapixel rear camera produces bright, punchy and attention-grabbing photos, with luscious greens and rosy reds. We'd prefer truer images at times, but it works well in poor light.

The S5 doesn't disappoint when it comes to camera effects: for budding photographers, HDR (high dynamic range) creates lighter pictures in dimly

lit conditions, while Selective Focus zooms in on objects within 50cm.

Sound hasn't seen much of an improvement over the S4. There is no high-res audio, although it adds FLAC and WAV support to the stock formats. The sound is balanced and fairly detailed, but it fails to inspire. It just doesn't convey rhythms with much vigour, and dynamics sound lazy.

Smart in so many ways

This is a decent phone: we like its smart interface, dazzling screen and speedy, stutter-free performance. Then there is its water-resistant body.

Samsung has clearly chosen evolution over revolution here, but uninspiring design and feeble sound are nevertheless significant faults in our book.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Back-to-basics interface is clean and simple; vivid screen; dust- and water-resistant body; bright, luscious photos

AGAINST Uninspiring design; lacklustre sound

VERDICT An improvement on the S4, but not radical enough



This is the best-sounding Android phone we've heard. Clear, open and spacious, the Z2 has plenty of detail. And it times well too

The screen is easy to use in the wet and the body is waterproof



It might be bigger than most rivals, but it's slim and narrow too

SONY XPERIA Z2

£540 - free on contract

★★★★★

Sony obviously couldn't wait to unveil its Xperia Z2 - it comes just months after the launch of the Z1 - but it's easy to see why. This phone is a resounding success, with its impressive execution, refined, punchy screen and top-quality sound.

The Z2 is a block of beauty. Its glass front and back panels, and aluminium frame, put the Samsung S5's plastic casing to shame, and its rectangular, narrow build is unusual. Although it's not as universally friendly to hold as its curvier rivals, we get used to it quickly.

The Z2 is bigger and heavier than most rivals and feels as solid as a high-end phone should. There are a few minor design issues: the reflective quality of the glass gives off a glare, and we found it difficult to distinguish between up and down operations on the volume rocker.

Not slippery when wet

This phone is more than well built - it can be dropped in 1.5m of water for up to 30 minutes. And not only does it survive a run in the rain, but the bright, punchy screen - Full HD, 5.2in, 1920 x 1080 pixels - is also easy to use when wet. The Z2 also has improved viewing angles and motion that is commendably lag-free.

This is the best-sounding Android phone we've heard. Clear, open and spacious, the Z2 has plenty of detail. Play Eminem's *Rhyme Or Reason* through AKG's K451 headphones and vocals have insight and expression. It times well too.

Noises off

The Z2 has noise-cancelling technology, which works with music replay. This is claimed to block 98 per cent of ambient noise. You'll need the company's noise-cancelling MDR-NC31EM headphones to benefit though. They come bundled from most retailers, and reduce background noise significantly.

Call settings are worthwhile too. We found voices clear in normal use, but turning on Noise Suppression and Speaker Voice Enhancement brought enhancements in clarity.

Photos have plenty of detail and warmth. Superior Auto mode is the default setting but we'd stick to manual mode, where photos are sharp, textured and balanced. The 8x digital zoom keeps remarkable detail and clarity too.

When it comes to photo and video effects, the Z2 has plenty, including Augmented Reality, which adds

animated effects to photos, and Timeshift Burst, which captures 61 frames in just two seconds. A headlining Z2 feature is 4K filming - though the display won't do the 3840 x 2160 resolution justice (you will need a 4K telly for that), playback still looks impressively detailed and rich. The downside? Clips eat up storage and the phone heats up noticeably.

The Z2 runs multiple apps and browsers with ease. The 3200mAh cell - which gives a day and a half of heavy usage - ensures good usability.

The Z2 is one of the best phones money can buy. Is it the best Android? Possibly. With that bigger screen, improved performance, enhanced camera, excellent stereo sound and noise-cancelling, it's outstanding.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Stunning screen; fine build and design; unmatched sound; bright, accurate camera

AGAINST Volume rocker is a bit fiddly; ergonomics won't be to everyone's taste

VERDICT The one to beat, doing everything right and excelling in the sound department

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TEST VERDICT**THE WINNER**

Sony Xperia Z2
£540 - free on contract

★★★★★



With such a bun-fight in the smartphone market, a win in a test of the newest Android devices is a big deal. The chic **Sony Xperia Z2** seals it with great sound and a fine screen

If anything can change an iOS fan's mind, it's the Sony Xperia Z2. With its smart, robust design, superb screen and unmatched sound, it's a brilliant follow-up to its already spectacular predecessor, the Z1, and the clear winner of this test. The only downside is the large, block-like shape of the phone, which may not suit all hand sizes.

It isn't a walkover, mind. The HTC One (M8) makes a great first impression with its lovely design. It's not all style and no substance, either - the M8 is a dream to use, and impresses with its clean, smart interface and quick performance. The M8's sound and camera are both impressive too.

The highly anticipated Samsung S5 is not much of a departure from the S-range we've seen to date, but there's nothing wrong with that. It does a lot of things right, including an unfussy, back-to-basics interface and a dazzling screen. Substandard design and uninspiring sound means it doesn't get that fifth star though.

Six months has passed since Google and LG released their flagship phones, and both remain decent devices: the Nexus 5 for its attractive price and snappy performance, the G2 for its ergonomic design and beautiful screen. But when their performance and specs are compared with the newcomers, they both lose a star.

SYSTEM BUILDER

Three sonic partners that will help make sure you hear the Sony Xperia Z2 at its best

**Headphones**

AKG K451 £50 ★★★★★

Our Award-winning on-ears have impressive detail, scale and dynamic ability

**Audio streaming service**

Spotify £from free ★★★★★

With a vast catalogue and decent sound, this is a wonderfully complete streaming service

**Wireless speakers**

Ruark Audio MR1 £300 ★★★★★

These talented aptX Bluetooth speakers are powerful, detailed and great with rhythms

Total build from £350



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

Facts & figures**Google Nexus 5**

£275 (or FOC) ★★★★★

Screen size 5in • **Resolution/ppi** 1920 x 1080/445 • **OS** KitKat 4.4 • **Processor** 2.2GHz quadcore • **RAM** 2GB • **Camera** 1.3mp/8mp • **Battery** 2300mAh • **Capacity** 16/32GB **SD** No • **Dimensions (hwd)** 138 x 70 x 9mm • **Weight** 130g

**HTC One (M8)**

£525 (or FOC) ★★★★★

Screen size 5in • **Resolution/ppi** 1920 x 1080/441 • **OS** KitKat 4.4 • **Processor** 2.3GHz quadcore • **RAM** 2GB • **Camera** 5mp/4.1ultrapixels • **Battery** 2600mAh • **Capacity** 16GB **SD** Yes • **Dimensions (hwd)** 146 x 71 x 9mm • **Weight** 160g

**LG G2**

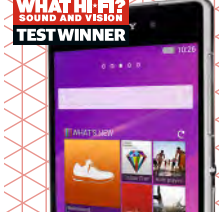
£290 (or FOC) ★★★★★

Screen size 5.2in • **Resolution/ppi** 1920 x 1080/424 • **OS** JellyBean 4.2.2 • **Processor** 2.2GHz quadcore • **RAM** 2GB • **Camera** 2.1mp/13mp • **Battery** 3000mAh • **Capacity** 16/32GB **SD** No • **Dimensions (hwd)** 139 x 71 x 9mm • **Weight** 143g

**Samsung Galaxy S5**

£490 (or FOC) ★★★★★

Screen size 5.1in • **Resolution/ppi** 1920 x 1080/432 • **OS** KitKat 4.4 • **Processor** 2.5GHz quadcore • **RAM** 2GB • **Camera** 2mp/16mp • **Battery** 2800mAh • **Capacity** 16/32GB **SD** Yes • **Dimensions (hwd)** 142 x 73 x 8mm • **Weight** 145g

**Sony Xperia Z2**

£540 (or FOC) ★★★★★

Screen size 5.2in • **Resolution/ppi** 1920 x 1080/424 • **OS** KitKat 4.4 • **Processor** 2.3GHz quadcore • **RAM** 3GB • **Camera** 2.2mp/21mp • **Battery** 3200mAh • **Capacity** 16GB **SD** Yes • **Dimensions (hwd)** 147 x 73 x 8mm • **Weight** 163g



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SuperDAC

When you're spending £1000-plus on a DAC it's not unreasonable to expect superb sound – but these digital wonders offer far more than that

Now that the computer is, for an increasing number of us, the main repository for our music files, a digital-to-analogue converter is becoming a vital piece of a modern hi-fi system. When you get to the £1000 pricepoint, though, you're buying more than simply a DAC. These four fine offerings also serve as terrific preamplifiers and headphone amplifiers – this is hi-fi equipment for the 21st Century.



ON TEST

Cambridge Audio Azur 851D
£1000 page 75

Chord Hugo
£1400 page 75

Fostex HP-A8
£1150 page 77

Naim DAC-V1
£1250 page 77



The 851D's USB socket can be switched between USB Audio Profile 1.0 and Profile 2.0. The former limits the input to 24-bit/96kHz sample rates, while the latter extends this to 24-bit/192kHz. We found the best results using Profile 2.0



The Hugo window glows different colours for different sample rates. It accepts up to 32-bit/384kHz through one of its USB inputs, while the other is limited to 16-bit/48kHz. Coaxial keeps the rate of 24-bit/384kHz, while optical reduces this to 24-bit/192kHz.

Cambridge Audio Azur 851D £1000



If you're looking for a full-width digital preamplifier, then you've come to the right place. While others in this test have smaller footprints and look more at home on a desktop, the 851D has the presence (and dimensions) to take a spot in a more traditional system.

It's built in to one of the company's beautifully finished full-size 8-series cases, and features a clear, backlit display and an extensive range of features. We're even fans of the supplied remote: it's quality. Easy to use, it can be used to control other Cambridge kit and makes a mockery of the wand (we use the term loosely) supplied with the Fostex.

Ticks most of the boxes

You can't play DSD (Direct Stream Digital) files through the Cambridge, but apart from that the 851D ticks most of the boxes. It will play 24-bit/192kHz files through all inputs: coaxial, optical, USB and AES/EBU. The supplied Bluetooth dongle is aptX compatible, which opens up the DAC for use with smartphones and tablets. Like all the products in this test, the 851D also includes a headphone output and has the option to be used as

a digital preamplifier - the variable output can be connected directly into a power amp or active speakers for those who want a purer digital system.

The Azur 851D makes a good impression from the start. Play John Williams's *Theme From Jurassic Park* and there's decent detail plus an even tone to the track. There's good precision and solidity within the soundstage. It's wide, deep and the various sections of the orchestra are layered nicely. Stable imaging keeps all these various elements in check.

The Cambridge offers a range of digital filters to choose from, some of which make subtle changes to the sound. We preferred the 'Minimum' filter, as it sounded more organic and fluid in our reference Bryston/Naim set-up. We suggest you experiment to see which filter works best for you.

Even listening to Tom Odell's *Another Love* through Bluetooth - once you accept the inevitable drop-off in terms of resolution and insight - the Cambridge still sounds the part. The piano sounds solid and focused with a decent smattering of detail.

Change to a CD-quality rip of Louis Armstrong's *We Have All The Time In The World*, though, and a few chinks appear in the 851D's armour. There's detail and agility, but the DAC is less successful at communicating the nuances of the music - the emotive strings or Armstrong's timeless, expressive vocal.

Unnatural hardness

The Cambridge doesn't sound quite as expressive or sophisticated as the top machines in its class. There's even a slight hint of brightness and unnatural hardness on the edge of some of those notes. But the 851D is a fine machine, and even if it isn't the last word in entertainment or emotion, it's still well worth giving an audition.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Robust build; strong features count including aptX Bluetooth; balanced sound

AGAINST Lacks expression and subtlety when compared to very best

VERDICT Solid performer for the money, even if it can't scale the heights of the class leaders

Chord Hugo £1400



The first time we reviewed the Hugo, in our May issue, we were delighted yet dismayed. The sound quality was stunning, but a couple of serious (and very basic) design flaws left us tearing our hair out. The result was a four-star rating when it could easily have been a five. But now the Hugo is back, and it's good to see Chord has addressed the issues. The line-level single-ended outputs now have a larger cutout in the casework, meaning interconnects with chunky plugs can fit without issue.

The narrow gap around the coaxial digital input remains, but at least you now get an adapter supplied in the box.

Cocktail sticks

And the power switch, which was originally so recessed you needed cocktail sticks to reach it, now sticks out further from the casework.

Now that there are no distractions, you can concentrate on the Hugo's sheer brilliance. We're still scratching our heads over how Chord has managed to build such a smartly finished, feature-packed device without sacrificing any sound quality. Just to clarify, this is a

bona fide digital preamp with DAC, internal volume control, optical and coaxial inputs, two USB sockets, an analogue output, three (yes, three) headphone outputs and, last but not least, aptX Bluetooth connectivity.

A rechargeable battery too

And it's portable! That's right, Chord has even found enough 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 even with the exhaustive feature set, Chord hasn't taken its eye off the ball with regards sound quality. Hugo's as happy and communicative with a 320kbps Spotify stream as it is feeding off the meaty resolution of a DSD music file. Start with a basic Bluetooth stream of *Me And My Shadow* by Frank Sinatra and Sammy Davis Jr., and the Chord transports you straight to the smoky clubs of 1960s Las Vegas. The Chord's desire for detail and natural tone really brings the vocals to the fore. Trumpets

and drums sound realistic and pure. They're brought to life with amazing dynamics and really drive home the swing and sway of the tune.

Speed up the tempo with Sam Smith's *Money On My Mind*, and the Hugo's happy to go with the flow. The sprightly drums keep the track light on its feet but there's still weight and solidity too. The Hugo gets the balance of drive and restraint spot on. Each click and clap is defined suitably. The beat really takes hold thanks to the Chord's ability to lock onto rhythms, and organise them.

The Chord's neutral, even-handed approach to music is as evident whether you're using it as a DAC or headphone amp - the Hugo is a device of many talents and plenty of charm.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Fantastic detail resolution and dynamics; Bluetooth connectivity; portable design

AGAINST Design quirks can frustrate

VERDICT The Hugo delivers superb sound quality in an unbelievably small and versatile package



During playback through the coaxial or optical inputs you can switch between using the HP-A8's internal clock or the one inside your source. We found using the Fostex clock seems to add extra solidity and body to the sound.



To make sure the Naim's getting the right data from a computer source, there's a bitperfect test routine built in, and Naim offers a sequence of files for download to allow the DAC to check the accuracy of the data transmission.

Fostex HP-A8 £1150

★★★★☆

Fostex isn't a brand that springs to mind when you think of DACs or digital preamplifiers. But the company isn't exactly alien to audio. Fostex was, indeed still is, a key player in professional recording equipment. But in recent years its portfolio has broadened to include active speakers and headphones.

Reading the specifications for the HP-A8, it seems Fostex has been doing its homework. On paper, there's nothing that puts it at a serious disadvantage against rival machines. There's 24-bit/192kHz support across all digital inputs: USB, two optical and one coaxial digital, all of which live on the back of the unit.

SD card slot

One thing we weren't expecting to see is an SD card slot. This isn't a feature we see regularly – it's actually something we're more used to on a TV – but it does allow you to fill a high-capacity card with high-res, DSD music files and play them back through the Fostex. Another way of enjoying DSD files off your computer is by installing the latest

version of the Fostex Audio Player (downloadable from its site) for a Mac or PC (provided you're running a compatible operating system). It's a simple, stripped piece of playback software that does exactly what it says: you add high-res music to a playlist and take it from there. Twin outputs on the front of the HP-A8 allow you to connect different pairs of headphones. The adjustable gain adds flexibility and compatibility with different types of cans. Being picky, it would be good to see Bluetooth, but it isn't a deal-breaker.

Build quality is okay, but it can't match rivals such as the Cambridge 851D. The switches and dials on the front feel a bit cheap, and although the display is legible enough it isn't a patch on the green-and-black OLED on the Naim DAC-V1. Play a DSD file of Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On* and the Fostex starts well. Vocals and instruments sound silky smooth, rich and refined. There's a good level of detail and the controlled, even tonal balance means you can just sit back and enjoy this timeless classic.

Spend more time with the Fostex though, and you discover the DAC never

really gets out of first gear. Instead of sounding punchy and playful, the HP-A8 is too polite and it doesn't make for particularly memorable listening.

Play the *Superman* theme by the City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra and the Fostex sounds more reserved than rousing. While leading rivals inspire you to reach for your top button and run to the nearest phone booth, the Fostex barely raises an eyelid. Strings and wind instruments, while perfectly palatable, don't have the dynamics to excite.

We don't want to be too down on the Fostex, though. It has sonic limitations, but it never really offends. And with a few tweaks here and there, there's nothing to say Fostex can't go on to make great strides in this market.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Decent features; DSD compatible; own music playback software

AGAINST No wireless connectivity; average finish; music lacks dynamics and detail

VERDICT The A8 is a passable piece of kit with some neat flourishes, but it fails to really inspire

Naim DAC-V1 £1250

★★★★★

In this line-up, the V1's distinctive green and black styling and shoebox design make it immediately recognisable as a Naim product. The aluminium shell, OLED display, soft-touch buttons and tactile volume control all enhance the fit and finish. The plastic remote control lets the side down slightly, but we've seen worse at this price range.

Like the other products on test, part of the Naim's digital DNA is the asynchronous USB port, for connecting directly to a laptop. Likewise, it also acts as a preamplifier, with coaxial, optical and BNC inputs for hooking up sources.

Futureproofing

These can handle music up to 24-bit/192kHz, while the USB port is capable of 24-bit/384kHz. Music at this ultra-high resolution isn't yet widely available but, while there's an element of futureproofing here, some may find the current lack of DSD support a little disappointing. Naim isn't afraid to update its products if there's enough demand for a particular feature though, so never say never...

But we won't linger too long on this minor quibble, especially when the Naim

sounds as exceptional as it does. The V1 has the ability to sound driven, focused and dramatic when required, but also boasts the flexibility to shift down through the gears for greater subtlety and finesse with more delicate tracks.

Play Elton John's *Rocket Man* through the coaxial input and the Naim peels back layer after layer of detail. There's a real sense of rhythm and fluidity to the easy-going piano play.

The lazy bass guitar bobs along in the background and each note is delivered with laser-guided precision. You never feel disconnected or indifferent about the track, which is always a sign of quality kit.

Move over to the unit's asynchronous USB input and Kanye West's *Black Skinhead* injects a change of pace and drive, which the V1 wastes no time communicating. The Naim now shows us the more powerful, robust side to its character. The track's hefty, almost tribal drumbeat is hammered home with interest, as is the aggression in West's voice. There's a great feeling of space, married to top-drawer dynamics, both of which ramp up the entertainment factor.

And the good times continue when we switch to using the Naim as a headphone amp. Through a decent pair of cans, the V1 maintains its sense of focus and direction. The Naim still manages to deliver a relatively lowly 256kbps iTunes version of Adele's *Skyfall* with gusto, delivering verses with delicacy and the chorus with a fantastic sense of drama.

Revisiting the unit

As you can probably tell, our opinion on the DAC-V1 hasn't really changed since we handed out its Award. Revisiting the unit just reinforces how talented it still is, but there's still some stern opposition, particularly from the talented Chord Hugo. Turn the page for our verdict...

Rating ★★★★★


FOR Classy build; superb sound; supports high sample rates; excellent headphone amp

AGAINST Doesn't work with DSD files

VERDICT The V1's all-round ability makes it a great buy – we'd say this is arguably Naim's best-value DAC yet

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TEST VERDICT**THE WINNER****Chord Hugo****£1400 ★★★★★**

It's the only recently tweaked **Chord Hugo** that shines brightest in our DACs test. Once you hear its excellent detail and dynamics, there's really no going back

Like a beacon of sonic brilliance, it's the revised Chord Hugo that grabs all the headlines with an impressive test win.

Once you hear the Hugo, there's no going back. Track after track the Chord impresses, excelling in ways that rivals at this price simply cannot match. It's rare to come across a product offering so much on every level.

The Award-winning Naim sounds very good, but even the V1 has to hold its hands up in recognition of the Chord's uncanny attention to detail and sublime dynamic skills.

Having said that, fans of the Naim sound will have a lot of joy: there's a great sense of clarity and transparency, and it sounds beautifully balanced.

On paper, the 851D talks the right language. And upon viewing, the Cambridge has the appearance, build quality and features that should really make it a genuine contender. But when it comes down to sound quality, it just struggles to summon the charisma and character needed to strike up a relationship with the listener.

Fine-tune the Fostex

The Fostex needs more fine-tuning, but it feels as if there's some good potential there to be worked on. There's a decent sense of weight and solidity to the sound - but there's just no spark to make it stand out. And after all, we listen to music to be entertained, not just to pass the time.

SYSTEM BUILDER

Three partners that will help make sure you hear the **CHORD HUGO** at its best



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Headphones
Bowers & Wilkins P7
£330 ★★★★★

The P7s are B&W's biggest and most expensive headphones to date, and they kick out a detailed, full-scale sound



Smartphone
Sony Z2 ★★★★★
AptX Bluetooth, a great-sounding phone and a portable source

Total build £2880

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

Facts & figures

Cambridge Audio 851D
£1000 ★★★★★

Inputs USB, optical digital, coaxial digital, BNC, AES/EBU • **Outputs** RCA, XLR, headphone • **Wireless** aptX Bluetooth • **Dimensions** 12 x 43 x 36cm



Chord Hugo
£1400 ★★★★★

Inputs USB x2, coaxial digital, optical digital • **Outputs** RCA, headphones x3 • **Wireless** aptX Bluetooth • **Dimensions (hwd)** 2 x 13 x 10cm



Fostex HP-A8
£1150 ★★★★★

Inputs USB, optical digital x2, coaxial digital, RCA • **Outputs** RCA, optical digital, headphone x2 • **Wireless** No • **Dimensions (hwd)** 8 x 21 x 31cm



Naim DAC-V1
£1250 ★★★★★

Inputs USB, optical digital x2, coaxial digital x2, BNC • **Outputs** RCA, DIN, headphone • **Wireless** No • **Dimensions (hwd)** 9 x 21 x 32cm

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Embarrassing Bodies: Live from the Clinic

A new live series showcasing medical disasters as Dr. Christian Jossan and Dr. Owen Harper...

52 mins left (SUB) (SD) (40) NO. 561872

All channels

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next

102

now

20:00 Rick Stein's Spain

21:00 Never Mind the Buzzcocks

103

now

20:00 Lewis

21:00 ITV News at Ten and News

104

now

20:00 Embarrassing Bodies: Live

21:00 24 Hours in AI

105

now

20:00 Submarine School

21:00 NDS

tv guide

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Fri 29 Jul 18:00

P Q R S T

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The Middle East

Sat 30 Jul 19:00

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Panasonic model shown: VIERA TX-65AX802B

Panasonic VIERA

For more information on the Viera Series please visit panasonic.co.uk

THE ULTIMATE VIEWING EXPERIENCE

Amazing TV spectacles require an amazing TV. That's why Panasonic has produced the AX802 Series of VIERA displays...

What's the most important thing in a TV? Its design? Its connections? How the speakers sound? All these are crucial... but the one thing that really sets a great screen apart is its picture. That's why Panasonic's award-winning LCD and plasma teams have produced the VIERA AX802 range of 4K TVs.

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incredibly immersive detail and depth, and amazing subtlety. Games, sports and blockbusters have never looked better.

Every blade of grass, every bead of sweat and every face in the crowd: VIERA TVs pick out the kind of detail other TVs can only dream of. And with Freetime tech on board, which provides catch-up content from all the major players – plus recommendations from the my Stream service and access to NETFLIX – you need never miss another moment. It's TV like you've never experienced it before.

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If you've just installed a Panasonic AX802 in your living room, you'll want to show it off. But just inviting people over to gawp isn't enough: it's time to learn how to keep them coming back again and again. Head to the website for all you need to turn your living room into the ultimate entertaining space.

Now your perfect telly's installed, and your front room full of friends, spice up your ultimate viewing experience with the perfect special guest. Take the test at www.ultimateviewingexperience.com/twingman to see who should fill that space on your sofa, whether it's Eric Cantona, Hugh Jackman... or Delia Smith.

PANASONIC VIERA WITH



Banish your set-top box to the cupboard (and free up an HDMI port into the bargain). The AX802 range of VIERA TVs comes with Freetime – a catch-up service that hosts content from BBC iPlayer and BBC Sport, ITV Player, 4oD and Demand 5. Just hook the TV up to your home network and you're away.



And because the TVs have twin HD tuners, you can record one channel on to a connected USB drive while you watch another. Or watch a recording while you record something else. Or even send a channel to your connected smartphone or tablet anywhere in the world.

The world's most desirable kit

TEMPTATIONS

“A turntable that garners admiration over time”

■ **Kronos** Turntable

■ **£30,000** ★★★★★☆

Can any piece of hi-fi ever justify costing £30,000? We're not so sure. But if the price isn't an issue, and you're really serious about vinyl replay, this Kronos turntable is as good a starting point as any.

As we'd expect, there's serious engineering involved here, and a few ideas that, while not unique, are uncommon. The twin-platter arrangement gets top billing here.

Why use two platters when everyone else thinks one is enough? Well, if you have a suspended turntable design (such as this one) there's a tendency for the sub-chassis - the bit that supports the platter and arm - to try to turn in the



The second identical platter spinning in the opposite direction is said to cancel out any unsteady equilibrium

TECH SPECS

Type Turntable
Speeds (rpm) - 33½
Yes 45 Yes 78 No
Phono amp No
Manual operation
Yes Semi-automatic
operation No
Tonearm included
No Cartridge
included No
Finishes 1
Dimensions (hwd)
28 x 56 x 36cm
Belt drive Yes
Direct drive No
USB port No
Suspension Yes

Why use two platters when everyone else thinks one is enough? Kronos claim the additional platter balances out any unwanted movement in the sub-chassis, resulting in a more controlled and precise sound

direction of the spinning platter. Think of a bucket full of water being stirred slowly by a spoon. Given enough time all the water will spin along with the stirring motion. Of course the sub-chassis never actually spins because it's held by the suspension, but what does happen is an unsteady equilibrium that (Kronos says) affects the deck's ability to produce the finest of details.

Improves resolution

The addition of a second identical platter spinning in the opposite direction is said to cancel out this movement, and so improves resolution. We disabled the drive to the second platter - in other words, took the belts off - and the deck certainly sounded messier and less

insightful. So the twin-platter system obviously works. But there are obvious downsides to this arrangement beyond the additional expense and mechanical complexity. By adding a second platter, and a motor to drive it, there is an issue with greater mechanical noise in the turntable structure - never a good thing. Kronos has tried to minimise this with the use of high-quality DC motors and a well-engineered main-bearing design.

The spinning speed of both platters is controlled electronically by using optical sensors that read the markers imprinted on the edge of the platters. The individual speed read-outs are on a large digital display at the front of the deck.

Aside from the drive system, Kronos has taken care with the turntable

structure. Its top plate, sub-chassis and base all use a layered construction of metal and high-density wood. This delivers a rigid but well-damped structure, which is suspended with Viton/silicon (posh rubber) O-rings.

Overall build is as solid as you'd hope, and there's no denying the impressively high quality of the engineering involved in the mechanical components. The Kronos is not beyond criticism though, and we'd like to see better attention to detail, particularly in its finish.

For example, the central wooden layers of the top plate and sub-chassis aren't machined to perfection, and in some areas we could feel what we think is glue residue on the outer, visible edge. It needs to be better. Clearaudio has



- 1 Suspension is made up of four rubber O-rings per tower
- 2 The Kronos comes supplied with a record clamp and sounds better for it
- 3 Buy the dedicated stand and the power supply comes built-in



TEMPTATIONS

Kronos

decks that have a similar layered construction and does a notably better job in terms of finish. Kronos needs to pay much more attention here.

Seriously hefty

The turntable weighs in at a seriously hefty 41kg, and that's before the arm and cartridge are added. If you have the space, the solidly made dedicated support table - add another £10k - performs well, but the deck shouldn't have any issue being used with another support as long as it is large, rigid and structurally well behaved.

There's enough flexibility in the Kronos's design to accommodate most suitably talented tone arms. Our review sample came equipped with the highly rated Graham Phantom II arm (£3995) and Lyra Skala cartridge (£2895), to good effect.

Set-up is pretty straightforward, but given the price level we would expect the dealer to optimise the deck on site. It's pretty simple to use: on/off and the speed change are

Playing a complex piece of music such as Radiohead's *15 Step*, the Kronos takes it all in stride. We're taken with its level of clarity and overall musical cohesiveness

controlled by a couple of touch-sensitive switches on the base. These aren't particularly responsive and there's a knack to using them. Initially, we got pretty frustrated with the lack of response, but familiarity meant such issues faded.

The price, understandably, leads to the expectation that the Kronos wows from the off. It doesn't. This is a deck we took some time to warm to. It has a

The solidly made, dedicated support table will cost you another £10k

These Swiss-made DC motors supply the drive to each of the platters

measured, understated approach that garners admiration over time.

Playing a complex piece of music such as Radiohead's *15 Step*, the Kronos takes it all in stride. We're taken with the level of clarity, and the deck's way of delivering each sound with precision without losing sight of the musical whole. Most turntables tend to turn this into a bit of a mess, making a lot of the sounds feel like random events, but that isn't the case here. The Kronos is cohesive, organised and fully in charge. It's mighty impressive in this regard.

Dynamics - both large- and small-scale - are beautifully defined and

convincingly fluid. There's plenty of punch to the distinctive bassline of *15 Step*, and the deck has no trouble communicating the drive and pacing of the piece.

A switch to our reference Clearaudio Innovation Wood - a mere snip at around a quarter of the price - shows that there's greater exuberance in the piece than the Kronos reveals, but it's at the expense of resolution and precision. For the first time ever we find our reference turntable a little unruly and lacking fine detail. It's quite eye opening.

Something grander

Move on to something grander, such as Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*, and the Kronos responds with a huge sound stage that's impressively wide and surprisingly deep. There's a pleasing sense of space to the recording and a wonderful stability to instruments as the music grows in intensity. The tonality of the arm and cartridge chosen is spot on, and overall they make really good partners for the turntable.

We're also taken by the authority of the complete package and the power it delivers during crescendos in the music. There's little feeling of holding back, and it makes for an engaging experience.

Hear the Kronos in a suitably talented system and there's no denying it's a hugely capable product. That price puts it beyond the means of most people, but it does show the sonic heights a humble record can reach. The Kronos isn't perfect; no product, no matter how expensive, is. But it is an incredibly tempting piece of kit nonetheless.

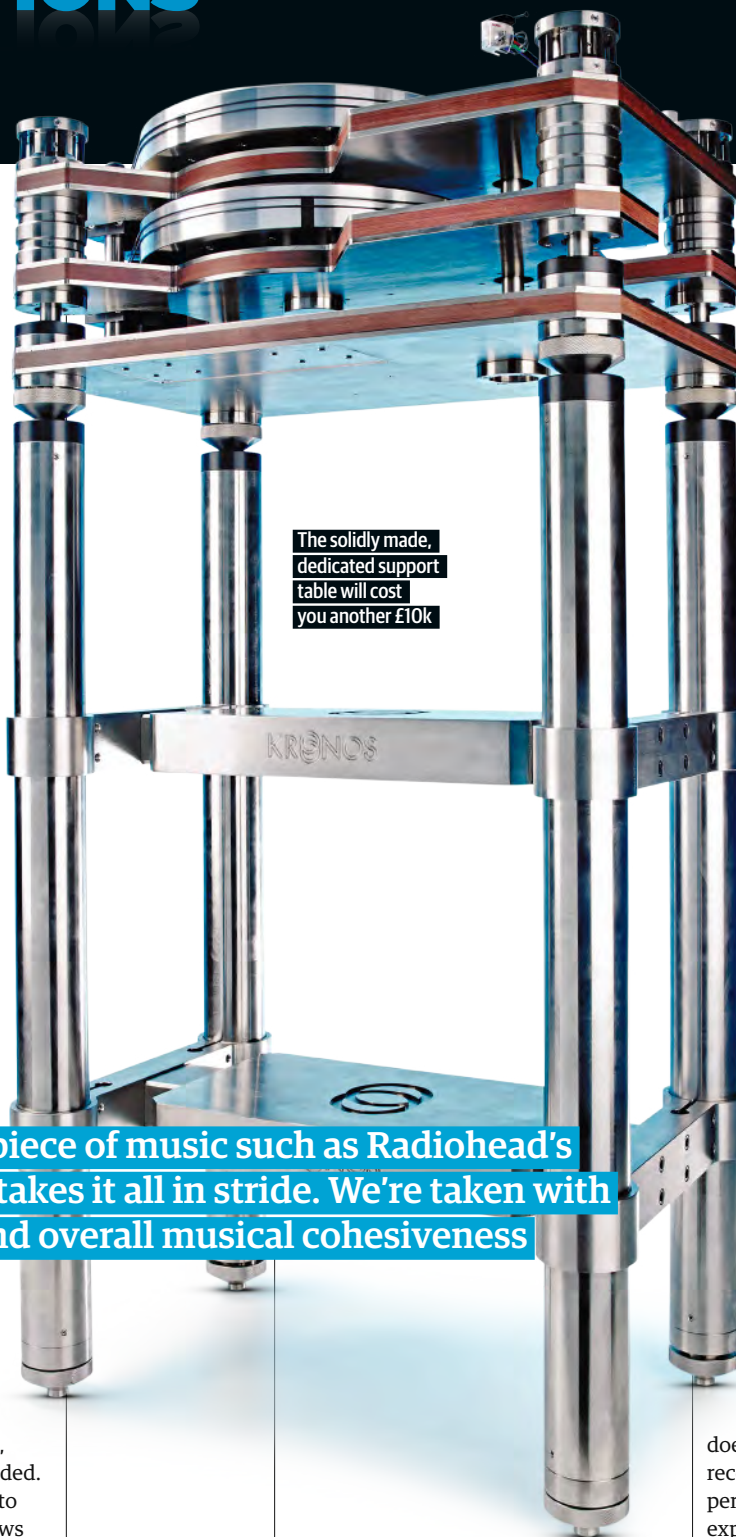
Consider if Money is no object, and you want analysis and insight over exuberance in music replay
Highlight Sound quality

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Stunning level of insight into recordings; as controlled and precise a turntable as we've heard; impressive engineering; imposing build

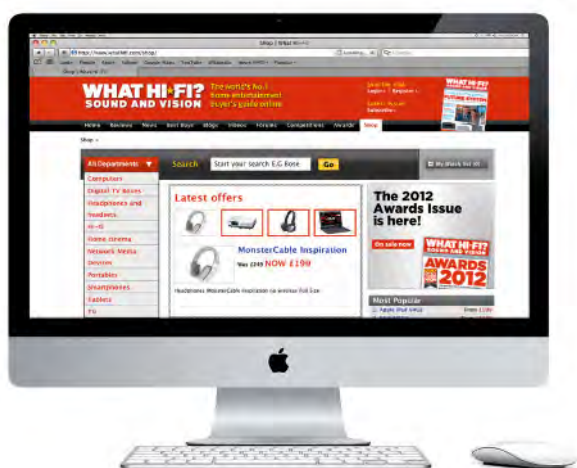
AGAINST The finish must be better

VERDICT If you want the finest turntable money can buy, this should be on your list



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**Oh ... I Wasn't
Supposed To
Eat Them For
Lunch?**



Meaner, smoother, more
dynamic, and not hungry ...
at least for a little while.

DragonFly v1.2 £129

*"The new version of the DragonFly costs a third less than the
original model, yet it sounds even better. It seems, for now,
that there's no competing with that combination."*

- What Hi Fi? Sound & Vision, February 2014

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audioquest.

Triangle's trademark
horn-loaded dome
tweeters help to
improve sensitivity

Behind the music Marc Le Bihan Founder



The Signature Series is the most recent result of Triangle's ongoing commitment to improvement.

We are one of the very few speaker manufacturers to develop our own drivers, and our approach is different to most. Not simply because we want to be different but because this is the way for us to reach our sonic goals.

We are consistently refining the things that make Triangle unique and we can only do that if we control the development of the essential parts of the speaker, namely the drive units. The Signature has used the 'trickle-down' effect from our flagship range, the Magellan. That is manufactured at our factory north-east of Paris in order to keep full control of every detail.

The joy of the music

We think we have achieved a great result. It represents the joy and communication of music, which is our ultimate goal and what we are renowned for. The Signature sound is open, fast and dynamic. It is easy to drive, which means it brings dynamics at low volume – something many of our users appreciate.

Many speakers play well when pushed, but most people listen to music at moderate volume most of the time. The Signature series manages to convey every detail, even at low levels.

“Performance well beyond what we would expect”

■ Triangle Signature Delta Stereo speakers

■ **£4900** ★★★★★

We've always had a soft spot for Triangle's speakers. This French company may not always turn out the best-balanced products, but it invariably comes up with speakers that entertain, and for us that's priceless.

Triangle has always prioritised excitement over refinement and tonal purity. Move towards the upper end of the company's output and the trade-off become less marked. And that's the case with the Signature Deltas.

The Signature Deltas are certainly not cheap, but they offer a level of performance well beyond what we would expect from their price tag. We've heard speakers that sound a whole lot worse and cost a whole lot more.

In terms of engineering there's little here to surprise anyone familiar with the brand. The Signature Delta is a three-way design that uses twin 18.5cm glassfibre bass drivers, while for the midrange Triangle sticks to a damped paper cone, pointing towards the material's balance between rigidity, low weight and decent internal damping as justification.

The drive-unit array is completed by one of Triangle's trademark horn-loaded aluminium dome tweeters. The idea is to improve sensitivity - something Triangle is big on - while keeping distortion low.

Well made and elegant

Build quality is good. The cabinet is made of seven thin layers of high-density fibreboard, curved to produce what we think is quite an elegant shape. It's finished in one of three high-gloss options: the mahogany of our review sample looks good but there are white and black alternatives too.

The front-firing port is made of plastic (not unusual) but looks a little cheap, while the spiking arrangement isn't quite as rigid as we'd like.

The Signature Delta's rated sensitivity is impressively high at 92dB/W/m. We certainly got very high levels from our resident Bryston BP26/4BSST2 pre/power combination without pushing too hard. Such high sensitivity means that you should get good volume levels from relatively low-power amplifiers too.

Entertainment comes first

Start listening and it's clear that the Signature Deltas are entertainers of the highest order. We start off with Hans Zimmer's *Mombasa* (from the *Inception* soundtrack) and are stunned with the Delta's dynamics. These floorstanders punch hard and don't hold back. Yet, when necessary, they go quiet easily too.

Tonally, things are mostly balanced, but we've heard more even-handed speakers at this level. Still, they're refined enough for all their good qualities to shine through. We love Triangle's direct, hard-hitting approach to music replay. It's in stark contrast to some of the more traditional alternatives, which tend to put refinement and tonal purity first.

Stereo imaging is good rather than great - not as expansive as we've heard, but reasonably precise. We positioned the speakers well away from all walls, fairly wide apart with a small degree of toe-in. They have a fairly narrow listening sweet spot - something to bear in mind if you tend to do serious listening with other people.

We turn the volume up - all in the interest of science, you understand - and are impressed by the way these speakers

TECH SPECS

Type Floorstander

Sensitivity 92dB/W/m

Impedance 8 ohms

Max power 120W

Birirable Yes

Finishes 3

Dimensions (hwd)

123 x 37 x 39cm

retain composure. The sound doesn't harden up or get aggressive at the top end. These Triangles are articulate and agile, tracking fast-moving basslines with ease. Each low-frequency transient is delivered with exceptional punch.

While the tweeter isn't the sweetest around - certainly compared with the Diamond alternative of B&W - it's fast, insightful and well integrated.

Triangle speakers usually excel at rhythms and these floorstanders are no exception. They're happy to charge along with the likes of Kanye West's *Yeezus*, pounding out the beats with conviction and communicating changes of pace with breathtaking ease.

Add this terrific timing ability to strong dynamics and impressive resolution, and you have speakers that can stand toe-to-toe with the very best of the opposition. Triangle may not be the first name that comes to mind when thinking about five-grand floorstanders, but on this evidence it should be.

Consider if you value dynamics and enthusiasm above refinement

Highlight It's got to be the Signature Delta's infectious enthusiasm

Rating ★★★★★

FOR An entertaining and enthusiastic sound; strong dynamics; excellent bass; terrific timing

AGAINST Some rivals are more refined; some cosmetic aspects can be improved

VERDICT If you value excitement and entertainment, these Triangles should be at the top of your shortlist



PLAY LIST

The movies, music and games to test your system

Out this month...



Bold Robo reboot is a bit by the book

RoboCop
Blu-ray
Out 9th June

★★★★☆



Blu-ray extras

- Deleted Scenes
- Omnicorp product announcements
- Featurettes:
The Illusion Of Free Will
To Serve And Protect
The Robocop Suit

Duration 118m

Audio English: DTS-HD



Remaking or 'rebooting' a cult classic tends to lead to no end of trouble - but *RoboCop* isn't the train wreck it could so easily have been.

That's not to say it's a patch on the original - let's get that straight from the off. This is inferior in nearly every way. But it does have some merits, and doesn't deserve to be dismissed too quickly.

The premise is mostly the same. A policeman ('Cop') is severely injured in the line of duty, and then made into a machine ('Robo') by an evil organisation.

It's a chance to bash the corporate world. In 1987, it was done with panache: lashings of biting satire on top of the so-nasty-it's-funny sort of childish ultraviolence.

That's largely been replaced with a straight-up political angle. Hey, drones are topical, let's mention those! Without the humour, it's less effective.

Where this version succeeds is in its boldness. It doesn't slavishly repeat the original. There are a few references for the scrutinising fans, but for better or worse this mostly charts its own course.

Alex Murphy is no longer a machine slowly regaining his humanity: he is now man coping with robotic bits.

This allows for elements of body horror, which are effective. It also raises questions about the ethics of man-machine integration.

All a bit one-dimensional

Sadly, that's all undermined by one-dimensional characters with very little to do. Grieving wife, check. Leather-clad mobsters, check. At least Gary Oldman has a decent role as a conflicted scientist reluctantly following corporate bosses, while Samuel L Jackson is shoutier than ever as a militant TV show host.

It doesn't help that the action is uninspired. RoboCop never does anything particularly smart or cool. Instead, the film periodically becomes a bland videogame with an uncharismatic Iron Man clone.

Thankfully, it sounds thrilling. RoboCop's mechanical footsteps are wonderfully bass-heavy, and bound to annoy your neighbours in DTS HD Master Audio 5.1. The Zimmer-lite soundtrack is easily forgotten, but it does have a pounding enthusiasm - and Basil Poledouris's original main theme is kept intact. It looks good too, with a surprising amount of colour in what could have been very grey.

Ultimately, this *RoboCop* is occasionally fun (if rarely memorable) as long as you approach it with an open mind. It's certainly a lot more enjoyable than *RoboCop 2* or *3*. We wouldn't buy that for a dollar - but we might stream it on Netflix.

Spotify highlights [Join us on Spotify whf.cm/playlist2014](https://whf.cm/playlist2014)



Ten Walls: Walking With Elephants On the basis that even the most elegant deep house banger can only be improved by syncopated elephant noises.

Grace Jones: Me! I Disconnect From You Left off the *Nightclubbing* LP at the time, this cool Tubeway Army cover finds Grace playing the androgyny card for all she's worth.

Bon Iver: Skinny Love "...in the morning I'll be with you, but it will be a different kind. I'll be holding all the tickets, and you'll be owning all the fines..."

La Caution: Thé à la Menthe You don't need to be an expert in early-21st century French hip-hop to be familiar with this. You need to have seen *Ocean's Twelve* though.

Music

GAMES, MOVIES
& FORTHCOMING
RELEASES
p90



Download, CD, vinyl



FIRST AID KIT Stay Gold

Out 10th June

★★★★☆

Deities have acolytes everywhere, of course, but nonetheless there's still something vaguely extraordinary about two Swedish sisters so sincerely and effectively channelling the melodies of Jimmy Webb, the harmonies of The Carter Family and occasionally flashing the attitude of Johnny Cash.

For their third album, First Aid Kit (Klara and Johanna Söderberg) have polished their Nashville touchstones on the tunes and played up their Agnetha/Anni-Frid vibe on the cover. Opener (and first single) *My Silver*

Lining comprehensively establishes the *Stay Gold* manifesto: widescreen strings, relentless and touch-tight harmonies, gentle-but-insistently shuffling tempo and medium-sized melodic hook.

A tasteful peak of intensity

Admittedly there's little in the way of dynamic variation here. Instead *Stay Gold* establishes a tasteful peak of intensity at the outset and seldom gets much quieter or louder – and certainly not without plenty of advance warning.

It's a sweet-sounding recording though, and is heard to best advantage on a set-up that's sympathetic to the warm, complex tonality of fiddles, picked steel-string acoustic and pedal steel guitars. On *Master Pretender*, *The Bell*, *Fleeting One* and the title track in particular, the emphasis on the midrange, and the amount of nuance and detail therein, really separates a great system from a good one.

Specifications

Duration 38m 10s

Standout track *A Long Time Ago* Sincere, bravely heartbroken... the album summed up in 3m 59s

Download, CD, vinyl



LITTLE DRAGON Nabuma Rubberband

Out now

★★★★☆

Four albums in seven years ain't bad going in this day and age. And given that each Little Dragon release since 2007's eponymous debut has been an improvement on (if far from a radical departure from) the last, it seems there are still some bands with the work ethic *and* the quality control well under control.

The Little Dragon signature sound – streamlined and wide-open, often with a skeletal demo-like spaciousness and always with a crystalline vocal cradled carefully away from the drone and clatter – is

strongly to the fore. But, and perhaps for the first time, there's a unity and coherence to the eleven-and-a-bit tracks here that makes *Nabuma Rubberband* a more self-possessed album than any of those that preceded it.

A good system tester

In terms of pushing your system into breaking sweat, *Nabuma Rubberband* has plenty to recommend it. First single *Klapp Klapp*, along with *Pretty Girls*, *Paris* and, especially, *Killing Me* all have the sort of hyper-extended low-end presence, grindingly analogue midrange texture and liberal application of Syndrum that makes organisation, stereo focus and transient detail retrieval absolutely paramount. Punch is nothing without control, of course, and unless it has the ability to start and stop on the proverbial, your set-up is going to struggle. If it can, though, here's a recording of rare authority and unshowy power.

Specifications

Duration 39m 55s

Standout track *Pink Cloud* Wherein vocalist Yukimi Nagano adds a little Chaka Khan falsetto to winning effect.

Listen to it this way

The system

Rega RP6/Exact £1000 ★★★★★

An Award-winning, well-engineered and great-sounding turntable

Arcam A19 £650 ★★★★★

Detailed, even-handed and with a phono stage good enough to do the Rega justice

B&W 683 S2 £1150 ★★★★★

The B&W range is revitalised and how (you can find out how on p31)



Superior, subtle sound
for a sweet-sounding
First Aid Kit recording

Listen to it this way

The system

Apple MacBook Air £750

Drama-free, bomb-proof and a vault-like way to store your digital music

NAD D 1050 £400 ★★★★★

Great looks, superb connectivity and, crucially, absolutely tremendous d-to-a ability

Quad 9AS £600 ★★★★★

The review on page 14 gives all the reasons these will suit the chilly Little Dragon vibe perfectly



A thoroughly modern
set-up for Little
Dragon's fourth album



Movie shorts

True Detective (season one)

The episodic tale of murder and mayhem spanning 17 years. Some parts are a bit gruesome, but stick with it and it's utterly compelling.

Dallas Buyers Club

A homophobic with AIDS tries to find a cure while slowly getting less homophobic. Matthew McConaughey is brilliant in this.

Cuban Fury

A Nick Frost-Chris O'Dowd rom-com-dance-flick. It's endearing, but predictable and low on laughs. A bit more fury would be nice.

Inside Llewyn Davis

A hugely unlikeable musician goes on a luckless musical odyssey. It's as earnest as anything by the Coens, but not as quirky. Cool cat, though.

On-screen

System tester



Non-Stop Blu-ray Out now

★★★★☆

After his rebranding as an ass-kicking, name-taking sexagenarian, Liam Neeson has been asked to do his thing in plenty of B-movies, and now he's doing it on a plane. We were almost hoping to see a load of snakes.

Neeson plays an alcoholic air marshal on a long-haul flight. He receives threats by text message: somebody will die every 20 minutes unless \$150 million is paid.

It's an excuse for Neeson to abuse his fellow passengers, which soon leads him to be suspected as the terrorist.

Initially, it's fairly smart. Neeson's detective work is as subtle as the fasten-seatbelt light. Tension is maintained as passengers drop off in mysterious ways and the terrorist is clearly in control. The Sherlock-style on-screen text taunting is effective, if overused.

It does have a daft ending, where Neeson defies the laws of physics to save the day. Oh, and Julianne Moore is pointless in it.

Watch it this way



The system

Panasonic DMP-BDT260

£120 ★★★★★

Fine new Blu-ray player from Panasonic

Yamaha RX-V377

£260 ★★★★★

An excellent new budget AV amp

Q Acoustics 2000i

£600 ★★★★★

Great for multichannel and stereo

Samsung UE48H6400

£700 ★★★★★

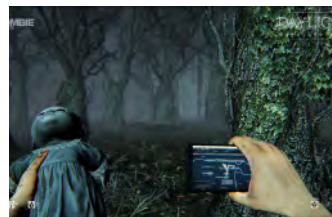
Terrific value and a very fine television

Games

Daylight

PS4/PC Out now

★★★★☆



It's got more clichés than Alan Hansen, but this first-person horror game does what it sets out to do: scare the heck out of you. You're in an abandoned mental asylum full of nasties and have only a smartphone to light your way. Sound and level design are knicker-wettingly brilliant. Not bad for £11.99.

Hitman GO

iOS Out now

★★★★★



This is not the game *Hitman* fans were expecting, but the portable debut of everyone's favourite baldy assassin is brilliant. It's a puzzle game in which you move a space at a time, trying to get behind your adversaries to knock them out. Beautiful, addictive, tricky – just don't fall into the money-for-tips trap.

The Amazing Spider-Man 2

Xbox One/PS4/Xbox 360/PS3/PC/Wii U Out now

★★★★☆

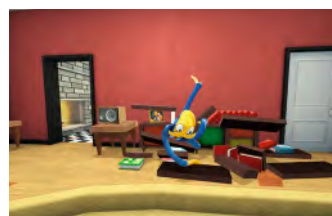


The last *Spider-Man* game was a bit rubbish. This *Spider-Man* game is a whole landfill. Graphics are terrible, gameplay is repetitive, and general swinging and fighting is riddled with fiddly frustration. It's not even got much to do with the film of the same name. Avoid at all cost.

Octodad: Deadliest Catch

PS4 Out now

★★★★★



Somehow no-one has noticed that Octodad is an actual octopus, which is how he's ended up with a wife and kids. You must continue the charade by performing a variety of everyday tasks without drawing too much attention – tricky when each limb requires individual operation. Ridiculous, if shortlived fun.

What we are waiting for...

Movies (Blu-ray) Her (23rd June) Spike Jonze directs this tale of a man in love with a computer operating system. It's effectively strange, especially when things get intimate.

Movies (Cinema) Transformers: Age of Extinction (18th July) Gone are some of the most annoying people ever to grace the silver screen. Optimus Prime rides a robo-dinosaur.

Music (Download, CD, vinyl) Archie Bronson Outfit - Wild Crush (26th May) ...and on top of everything, the vinyl's been mastered at half-speed for 'maximum aural pleasure'.

Music (Download, CD, vinyl) Clap Your Hands Say Yeah - Only Run (2 June) The prospect of more swirling, gurning, whining indie-pop-with-pretensions is exciting us.

June in Hi-Def

The best on the box



There are some even more nightmarish murders, but the terror still lies with the power Hannibal is comfortably wielding over his acquaintances

Comedy

Episodes

BBC Two HD - Wednesdays, 10pm

The return of the comedy where Matt LeBlanc plays a fictional (we hope) version of himself. He's hoping to reignite his post-*Friends* career by signing up for Beverley (Tamsin Greig) and Sean's (Stephen Mangan) new sitcom. But the couple's ambitions and LeBlanc's hopes for stardom are hampered by stalkers, ex-wives, megalomaniac network execs and broken hearts. In this third series, Beverly and Sean attempt to make amends, while LeBlanc wants his character killed off so he can follow a more exciting career path.

Orange is the New Black Netflix - 6th June, 12am

"This is, like, next level crazy." This addictive Netflix original series, about the inmates of an all-woman's prison, is back. Based on

a true story, this US comedy drama tells the tale of a socialite who gets put away for a crime committed a decade ago. Piper Chapman (Taylor Schilling) gets major culture shock as she deals with the hierarchies and social norms of prison life, making friends and enemies at each turn. It's been a year since series one's cliffhanger finale, and we can't wait to go on another binge.

Drama

Hannibal

Sky Living HD - Tuesdays, 10pm

The gripping psychological thriller tightens its hold on viewers as the Chesapeake Ripper adds a core member of the FBI's Behavioural Science Unit to his tally. Eddie Izzard reprises his role as Dr Abel Gideon to assess Will's claims about the Ripper's true identity, but ends up implanting a more grisly idea in his asylum inmate's

head. Creator Bryan Fuller cooks up even more nightmarish instances of murder, but the terror still lies with the power Hannibal is comfortably wielding over his acquaintances.

Music

Download Festival

Sky Arts 1 HD - 21st June, 9pm

The headline act is none other than rock legends Aerosmith, with lead vocalist Steven Tyler and guitarist Joe Perry no doubt taking the stage by storm with their greatest hits. And that's not all. Remember Linkin Park? They'll be performing their breakthrough album *Hybrid Theory* (released in 2000) in its entirety. As for the rest, you've got Avenged Sevenfold, The Offspring, Bad Religion, Fall Out Boy and Steel Panther belting out rock anthems that'll give your hi-fi and home cinema systems one hell of a workout.

Sport

2014 FIFA World Cup

BBC HD, ITV HD - from 12th June

With one eye on the progress of Roy Hodgson's youthful team and the other on Sony's and FIFA's commitment to film three matches (including the final) in Ultra HD 4K, the *What Hi-Fi?* office is abuzz with excitement for a fantastic summer of sport and tech.

2014 F1 Championship

BBC One HD and Sky Sports F1 HD - 8th and 22nd June

Now who would have predicted this start to the 2014 season: Lewis Hamilton winning four of the first five races, and Sebastian Vettel outraced by his rookie Australian teammate? For those claiming F1 got boring and predictable, tune in this season - we doubt you'll be disappointed. The Canadian GP is always a corker, and we then head to Austria after a decade's absence.

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BUYER'S GUIDE

NEW

Ever felt the need to **boost your TV's sound**? You're not alone - so don't miss our tips on soundplates, soundbars and more

Our look at Neil Young's new hi-resolution music **PonoPlayer** and all the facts you need to know about it



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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...



HTC One (M8)

"The HTC One (M8) is a resounding success, building on one of the best phones of last year and making it better."

p149



Sony SRS-X9

"A do-it-all speaker that puts superb sound quality at the top of its list of priorities"

p143

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Simply astonishing performance and pictures for less than £100. Smart functionality too: you can't go wrong...

RECEIVERS



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★★★★★
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Q ACOUSTICS 2000i 5.1 PACK
★★★★★
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Our 2013 Award winner produces sound with impressive scale for movies and music.

DISPLAYS



PANASONIC TX-L32E6B
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CD PLAYERS



MARANTZ CD6005
★★★★★
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AMPLIFIERS



MARANTZ PM6005
★★★★★
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A return to form by Marantz in this market, and a fine match for its CD-player sibling.

SPEAKERS



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DALI ZENSOR 15.1
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SAMSUNG UE48H64800
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NAIM CD5si
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Exceptional player, combining superb sound with great value for money. An Award winner.



NAIM NAIT 5si
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MARANTZ UD7007
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£700

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YAMAHA RX-A3030
★★★★★
£2000

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£2850

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SONY VPL-HW55ES
★★★★★
£2800

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ROKSAN CASPIAN M2 CD PLAYER
★★★★★
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★★★★★
£1800

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Q Acoustics Q7000i
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B&W ASW610XP
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Velodyne SPL-1000 Ultra
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B&W CM9 Theatre
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Philips HTL9100
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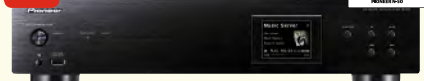


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BEST CD PLAYER
MARANTZ CD6005

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BEST CD PLAYER
ROKSAN CASPIAN M2

WHAT Hi-Fi? AWARDS 2013
BEST CD PLAYER
ROKSAN CASPIAN M2

ROKSAN • CASPIAN M2 • CD / AMPLIFIER

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DENON D-M39DAB

DENON • D-M39DAB • CD / DAB SYSTEM

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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.

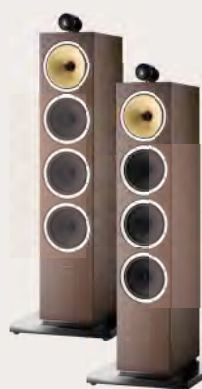


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OR LESS

SONOS THE WIRELESS HI-FI SYSTEM

The Sonos Wireless Hi-Fi System delivers all the music on earth, in every room, with deep, richly textured sound. Sonos is the only system that combines Hi-Fi sound with high-performance wireless. Plus it's simple to set-up, control and expand so you can easily fill your home with music.

£550
OR LESS



6 MONTHS OF GOOGLE MUSIC FREE
WHEN YOU BUY A SONOS
PLAY:1, PLAY:3 OR PLAY:5
VALID UNTIL 05/07/14
Google play

BOWERS & WILKINS P7 HEADPHONES

With P7, everything is designed to allow you to lose yourself in music. Bass is tight, vocals are precisely defined, and there's a wonderful sense of space, balance and clarity across the whole frequency range. P7's cable comes with a remote/microphone attachment, so it works seamlessly with your iPhone.

£329
OR LESS



£299
OR LESS

RUARK AUDIO • MR1 • BLUETOOTH SPEAKER SYSTEM
Standing just 17cm tall, the MR1 speakers feature 20W of Class A-B amplification, a 75mm mid/bass unit and 20mm tweeter in each enclosure. The handcrafted cabinets are finished in a choice of rich walnut veneer, soft white or soft black lacquer.

Q ACOUSTICS BT3 WIRELESS SPEAKERS

The Q Media BT3 consists of just two bookshelf speakers, no separate amplifier is required. You stream your music wirelessly to the BT3 via Bluetooth and high quality aptX.



£349
OR LESS

NAD VISO HP50 HEADPHONES

Designed for long-wearing comfort and listening with ultra-soft noise-isolating earpads. The convenient three-button Apple remote offers full control of all Apple music and call functionality right at your fingertips, plus voice control with Siri-compatible devices.

£249
OR LESS



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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).

ADVERT VALID UNTIL 02/07/2014. E&OE

SEVENOAKS
SOUND & VISION



£2199
OR LESS

SAVE £450
WHEN YOU TRADE-IN
A QUALIFYING ARCAM
AV PRODUCT

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 AVR360 & AVR750



NEW

£599
OR LESS

NAD • T 748V2 • AV RECEIVER

The remarkable 7.1 channel NAD T 748V2 is an ideal choice for the most advanced home cinema and multi-room systems. Also Available: NAD T 758 & T 787



SSAV
.COM

WHAT HI-FI?
AWARDS 2013
BEST AV RECEIVER
UNDER £1000

PIONEER • SC-LX57 • AV RECEIVER

Brings studio quality sound to your living room. This receiver allows you to experience films exactly as the creators intended. Also Available: PIONEER SC-LX87



NEW

£499
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-X3000



NEW

£559
OR LESS

YAMAHA • RX-V677 • AV RECEIVER

New highly capable and versatile 7.2-channel Network AV receiver with AirPlay and Spotify Connect. Also Available: YAMAHA RX-V377 & RX-V477



£1999
OR LESS

WHAT HI-FI?
AWARDS 2013
BEST AV RECEIVER
UNDER £2000

YAMAHA • RX-A3030 • AV RECEIVER

AV Receiver with 11.2 Channel expandability and CINEMA DSP HD3 for the ultimate in surround sound performance. Also Available: YAMAHA RX-A1030



£599
OR LESS

SONOS • PLAYBAR SOUNDBAR & WIRELESS SPEAKER

This plug-and-play unit incorporates 9 integrated amplified speakers. Simply connect it to your TV with the supplied optical cable to deliver an epic home cinema sound in your own living room. PLAYBAR can also expand your existing Sonos system.



£1649
OR LESS

B&W • PANORAMA 2 • SOUNDBAR

Panorama 2 adds a new dimension to home entertainment, bringing truly immersive high quality sound to your TV from a single, discreet speaker. Bowers & Wilkins experience in developing technologies for the world's most advanced home theatre speakers ensures Panorama 2 sounds amazing.



£999
OR LESS

WHAT HI-FI?
AWARDS 2013
BEST SOUNDBAR

MONITOR AUDIO • ASB-2 • SOUNDBAR

If ever there was a complete home entertainment audio system built for today's media delivery, then the ASB-2 is it. The miraculously compact ASB-2 soundbar combines a high performance active audio system with the very latest wireless streaming technologies.

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.



£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
OR LESS

DENON • DHT-T100 • SOUNDBASE

The Denon DHT-T100 is an under TV Soundbase that dramatically improves your TV watching experience. Simply connect the all-in-one system to your television and enjoy powerful, dynamic audio from your favourite TV shows, movies, games and music.



£229
OR LESS



WHAT HI-FI?
AWARDS 2013
BEST 5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

£900
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.



WHAT HI-FI?
AWARDS 2013
BEST 5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

£1499
OR LESS

MONITOR AUDIO • RADIUS R90HT1 • SPEAKER PACKAGE

Award-winning speaker package comprising four Radius 90 satellites, Radius 200 centre speaker and Radius 390 subwoofer.



WHAT HI-FI?
AWARDS 2013
BEST 5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

£2849
OR LESS

KEF • R100 5.1 • SPEAKER PACKAGE

Comprises four R100 speakers, an R200C centre speaker and R400B active subwoofer. Great for both home cinema and music.



WHAT HI-FI?
AWARDS 2013
BEST 5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

£1939
OR LESS

B&W • MT-60D • SPEAKER PACKAGE

Speaker package combining M-1 speakers with the stunning power and control of a PV1D subwoofer. Available in a matt black or white.



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.



4K
e-shift3

NEW

£4999
OR LESS

JVC • DLA-X500R • 4K D-ILA PROJECTOR

4K Projector with a high contrast ratio achieved by adopting an optical engine with new wire grid and 6th generation D-ILA device.

Samsung UHD TV Curved

Ultra High Definition 4K



NEW

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



NEW

CLAIM UP TO
£300
CASHBACK
Offer valid until 16/07/14

Panasonic

AX800 SERIES • 4K UHD TV

A high-end model that combines 4K picture quality with high-level innovative functions in a stylish design.

The use of the 3840 x 2160 4K panel produces high-definition picture quality. The newly developed high-brightness, high-color-space panel and 4K Remaster Engine provides a higher dimension of 4K picture quality.

As with the other models in the new VIERA range, you get Freetime built in. This allows you to get the advantages of roll back TV (for the past seven days) and easy access to all major catch up services directly from the Freetime programme guide including BBC iPlayer, ITV Player, 4oD and Demand 5.

free time FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY 50 58 65

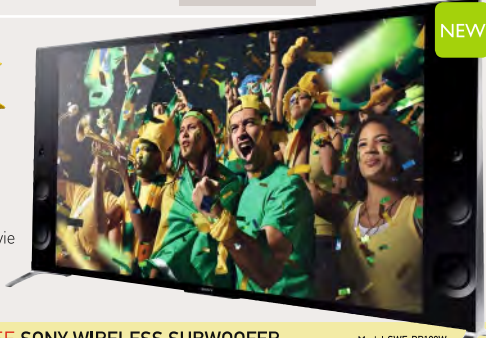


OFFICIAL TV OF THE 2014 FIFA WORLD CUP™

X9000B SERIES • 4K UHD TV

Picture quality that must be seen to be believed. With a screen resolution of 3840 x 2160 – that's 8 million pixels – 4K technology offers four times the detail of Full HD. Take a movie you've seen hundreds of times and you'll see things that you couldn't before, from an individual leaf on a distant tree to a tear drop in the heroine's eye.

55 65 79 FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY



NEW

FREE SONY WIRELESS SUBWOOFER WORTH £249 + 1 IN 5 CHANCE TO WIN A PS4

Model: SWF-BR100W Offer valid until 13/07/14



NEW

FREE SONY SOUNDBAR WORTH £119 + 1 IN 5 CHANCE TO WIN A PS4

Model: HT-CT4001. Offer valid until 13/07/14.

SONY • W8 SERIES • FULL HD TV

42 50 55 FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY



NEW

CLAIM UP TO
£200
CASHBACK
Offer valid until 16/07/14

PANASONIC • AS740 SERIES • FULL HD TV

42 47 55 FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY



NEW

SAMSUNG • H7000 SERIES • FULL HD TV

40 46 55 60 FREE 5 YEAR WARRANTY



SAVE £400
WHEN YOU TRADE-IN
ANY DISC PLAYER

£999
OR LESS

ARCAM • FMJ BDP300 • 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

Arcam's BDP300 Blu-ray player delivers outstanding sound quality with audio CDs along with excellent movie performance from either 2D or 3D films.

Also Available: MARANTZ UD7007



NEW

£549
OR LESS

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



NEW

£249
OR LESS

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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Consumer Electronics
Award Winner 2014

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Leeds (Wetherby) 01937 586886
Loughton • 020 8532 0770
Maidstone 01622 686366
Norwich • 01603 767605

Oxford 01865 241773
Reading • 0118 959 7768
Sevenoaks 01732 459555
Sheffield • 0114 255 5861
Southampton • 023 8033 7770
Tunbridge Wells 01892 531543
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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

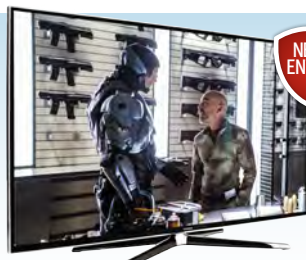
The shortlist



AWARD WINNER

Hannspree SL22DMBB

"It may be light on features, but it excels in performance. If you want a small, no-frills TV, this Hannspree is an excellent choice."



NEW ENTRY

Samsung UE48H6400

"It's a subtler, more controlled and balanced picture, and we think that the TV giant has got its approach just right this year."



NEW ENTRY

Sony KD-65X9005B

"If you're determined to have the latest TV tech and want to be an early 4K adopter, this Sony KD-65X9005B is an obvious choice."

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Type	Size (in)	Resolution	Smart	Active 3D	Passive 3D	Freeview	FreeSat	HDMI	Dimensions (WxHxD, 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 26F7030	240	12.12/GT	★★★★★	A very fine and flexible passive 3D 26in screen	LED	26	1920x1080					2	29x65x45
Finlux 32F8030-T	280	02.13/ST	★★★★★	Great picture and the latest online features: bargain	LED	32	1920x1080					4	49x78x4
Finlux 32F7020-T	280	09.13/ST	★★★★★	Patchy 3D but still worth a look for budget buyers	LED	32	1920x1080					4	48x77x4
Finlux 40F8073-T	330	03.14/GT	★★★★★	ATV with a sharp, exciting picture at a terrific price	LED	40	1920x1080					3	55x93x4
Hannspree SL22DMBB	135	01.14/GT	★★★★★	Best 22in TV, Awards 2013	LCD	22	1920x1080					1	53x39x17
Hannspree AD32UMMB	220	02.13/ST	★★★★★	A solid option set for mainly watching TV	LED	32	1366x768					3	44x73x7
Kogan LULED24DVDA	134	02.13/ST	★★★★★	This versatile little set is fine value for money	LED	24	1920x1080					2	38x58x5
Kogan KULED22XXXYA	110	11.13/GT	★★★★★	Cheap and cheerful and all the better for it	LCD	22	1920x1080					2	39x54x17
Linsar 22LED906T	230	12.12/GT	★★★★★	A great 22in set with a DVD player and Freeview HD	LED	22	1920x1080					2	38x53x4
LG 32LS5600	299	02.13/ST	★★★★★	This budget TV gets the basics right	LED	32	1920x1080					3	46x75x36
LG 50PA650T	499	01.13/GT	★★★★★	Good picture and price, but we'd like more detail	Plasma	50	1920x1080					3	70x117x5
LG 32LN575V	400	09.13/ST	★★★★★	A decent looking TV with credible smart and streaming features	LED	32	1920x1080					3	45x74x8
Panasonic TX-L24X5B	260	12.12/GT	★★★★★	Smooth and accomplished picture with so-so colours	LED	24	1920x1080					2	37x57x5
Panasonic TX-L24X6B	300	11.13/GT	★★★★★	If you can stretch your budget then this TV offers great value for money	LED	24	1366x768					2	42x58x17
Panasonic TX-L32E5B	400	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Great value if you're not fussy about 3D	LED	32	1920x1080					4	47x76x5
Panasonic TX-L32E6B	380	01.14/GT	★★★★★	Best 32in TV, Awards 2013	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
Samsung UE32E55500	400	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Exciting, but the same money could buy better	LED	32	1920x1080					3	45x74x5
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
Technika 22-212i	168	02.13/ST	★★★★★	Great value, with plenty of features	LED	22	1366x768					2	37x54x1
Toshiba 23RL933B	230	12.12/GT	★★★★★	Feature-packed but needs slightly better colour	LED	23	1920x1080					3	34x55x5
Toshiba 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 40TL868	480	03.12/GT	★★★★★	Formidable value meets good performance	LED	40	1920x1080					4	63x92x24
£500-£2000													
Finlux 47S9100-T	800	06.13/GT	★★★★★	Good picture, decent 3D and a low price. Worth a look	LED	47	1920x1080					4	67x112x4
LG 32LM620T	550	11.12/GT	★★★★★	A good effort with tough competition	LED	32	1920x1080					4	47x75x4
LG 42LM660T	750	10.12/ST	★★★★★	Good screen, good price, tough competition	LED	42	1920x1080					4	57x95x3
LG 47LM670T	1350	05.12/FT	★★★★★	Great spec, great looks, great performance	LED	47	1920x1080					4	63x106x3
LG 47LM860V	1600	08.12/ST	★★★★★	Lots to like: top-notch HD pics and easy-going 3D	LED	47	1920x1080					4	63x106x3

TELEVISIONS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Type	Size (in)	Resolution	Smart	Active 3D	Passive 3D	Freeview	Freesat	HDMI	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
LG 55LM760T	1700	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Scores on value and features. A solid all-rounder	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	4	72x123x34
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-P42GT60B	1000	01.14/GT	★★★★★	Best 40-46in TV, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	Plasma	42	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	3	60x99x5
Panasonic TX-P42GT50B	1200	10.12/GT	★★★★★	This sensational all-rounder remains a favourite	Plasma	42	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	4	60x99x5
Panasonic TX-L47ET50B	1300	08.12/ST	★★★★★	This set gets plenty more right than it gets wrong	LED	47	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	4	66x110x4
Panasonic TX-L47DT65B	1600	06.13/GT	★★★★★	User-friendly set with clean, detailed images. A stunner	LED	47	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	3	63x107x4
Panasonic TX-L50ET60B	1300	05.13/FT	★★★★★	Solid telly but could perform better	LCD	50	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	3	66x112x4
Panasonic TX-L50E6B	850	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Fine picture quality but there are TVs that give more for less	LCD	50	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	3	71x112x27
Panasonic TX-P50GT60B	1200	01.14/GT	★★★★★	Best premium 47-52in TV, Awards 2013	Plasma	50	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	3	70x117x5
Panasonic TX-P50VT50B	1900	07.12/FT	★★★★★	Stellar performance in every area from this Plasma	Plasma	50	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	4	70x117x5
Philips 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
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	●	●	●	●	●	4	74x119x6
Samsung UE32ES6800	700	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Great, feature-packed TV but with tough competition	LED	32	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	3	45x75x5
Samsung UE40ES6800	950	07.12/FT	★★★★★	Good spec and looks, but the backlight isn't great	LED	40	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	3	67x92x33
Samsung UE40ES7000	1300	11.12/FT	★★★★★	A great TV with dazzling looks and performance	LED	40	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	3	55x91x38
Samsung UE40ES8000	1450	10.12/ST	★★★★★	Impressive features and HD picture, but pricey	LED	40	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	3	54x91x3
Samsung UE46ES6800	1150	08.12/ST	★★★★★	A fine performer – but with strong competition	LED	46	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	3	64x107x5
Samsung UE32F6400	500	09.13/ST	★★★★★	Some niggles but a desirable set with excellent catch-up TV features	LED	32	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	●	4	44x74x5

Panasonic

VIERA NEW AX800 SERIES

Supreme 4K
Picture Quality
and Full Network
Connectivity

A high-end model that combines 4K picture quality with high-level innovative functions in a stylish design.

The first TV with Freetime built in

Roll Back TV and Access Major On Demand Services.

With the new VIERA range you get Freetime built in, so you can get the advantages of roll back TV along with access to all the major On Demand services including BBC iPlayer, ITV Player, 4oD and Demand 5.



CLAIM UP TO
£300
CASHBACK

Offer valid until 16/07/14

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TX-50AX802 £2099

CLAIM £100 CASHBACK

58"

TX-58AX802 £2799

CLAIM £200 CASHBACK

65"

TX-65AX802 £3799

CLAIM £300 CASHBACK

FREE 5 YEAR
WARRANTY

4K
ULTRA HD TV

free time

4K Ultra HD

Ultra-High Definition Provides Highly Realistic Images.

The use of the 3840 x 2160 4K panel produces high definition picture quality. Also, the newly developed high-brightness, high-color-space panel and 4K Remaster Engine provides a higher dimension of 4K picture quality.

Web Browser

Seamless, Automatic Content Recommendations.

The browser supports HTML5 pages, so you can browse the internet much like you do with a PC. Unlike a PC, though, the large screen allows the whole family or a group of friends to comfortably view a wide variety of content.

Other brands available include: DENON Pioneer YAMAHA

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SOUND & VISION

TELEVISIONS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Type	Size (in)	Resolution	Smart	Active 3D	Passive 3D	Freeview	FreeSat	HDMI	Dimensions (wxd, cm)
£500-£2000													
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
Sony KDL-32HX753	580	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Best 32in TV, Awards 2012	LED	32	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	47x76x6
Sony KDL-40HX723	650	03.12/GT	★★★★★	A super smart TV that's full of frills	LED	40	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	59x94x4
Sony KDL-40HX853	1000	10.12/ST	★★★★★	Best 40-42in TV, Awards 2012. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	LED	40	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	57x94x4
Sony KDL-46HX753	1150	08.12/ST	★★★★★	A must-see TV: superb performer for the price	LED	46	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	65x108x5
Sony KDL-46HX853	1250	08.12/ST	★★★★★	Best 46-47in TV, Awards 2012	LED	46	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	64x108x3
Sony KDL-55HX853	1440	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Best 55in TV, Awards 2012	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	77x129x3
Sony KDL-42W805A	1000	08.13/ST	★★★★★	A great-looking TV with many strengths	LED	42	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	58x97x6
Sony KDL-46W905	1550	09.13/FT	★★★★★	A very capable TV with stunning detail but the picture lacks vibrancy	LCD	46	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	65x105x30
Sony KDL-50W829B	900	03.14/FT	★★★★★	Sony returns to form with a highly desirable TV. Excellent	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
Toshiba 42VL963	750	10.12/ST	★★★★★	Good set, with lots of features, at a reasonable price	LED	42	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	58x100x3
£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 47LM960V	2000	08.12/ST	★★★★★	An accomplished, covetable TV – but pricey	LED	47	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	61x105x4
LG 55LA860W	2300	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Close but no cigar. A good TV but the competition is strong	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	72x123x4
LG 55LM960V	3300	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Impressive, but let down by price and sound	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	77x122x4
LG 55EA980W	8000	01.14/FT	★★★★★	A great first OLED effort from LG	OLED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	80x123x19
LG 65LM960W	5500	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Fantastic to look at, but lacks the detail of depth of rivals	LED	65	3840x2160	●	●	●	●	3	84x143x41
LG 84LM960V	22500	02.13/FT	★★★★★	Stunning with Ultra High Def, but ordinary elsewhere	LED	84	3840x2160	●	●	●	●	4	102x190x4
Panasonic TX-L47WT50B	2000	08.12/ST	★★★★★	Stylish, with real areas of expertise	LED	47	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	63x107x3
Panasonic TX-P55VT65B	2000	01.14/GT	★★★★★	Best 55in+ TV, Awards 2013	Plasma	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	77x132x5
Panasonic TX-L55WT65B	2470	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A good performer but there are more capable sets	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	72x123x3
Panasonic TX-P60ZT65B	3850	08.13/GT	★★★★★	An accomplished set, but not the best TV pound-for-pound	Plasma	60	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	83x140x5
Panasonic TX-P65ST50B	2500	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Best 60in+ TV, Awards 2012	Plasma	65	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	89x151x5
Panasonic TX-P65WT600	5500	12.13/GT	★★★★★	A capable set that handles 4K footage very well	LED	65	3840x2160	●	●	●	●	4	86x147x6
Philips 46PFL9706	2300	05.12/GT	★★★★★	A great flatscreen from Philips	LED	46	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	66x108x4
Philips 50PFL7956T	2000	09.12/GT	★★★★★	The best 21:9 set we've seen: brilliant for films	LED	50	2560x1080	●	●	●	●	4	58x124x3
Philips 55PFL8008	2500	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A great TV from Philips	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	72x124x3
Philips 65PFL9708	4500	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Smart features aren't as good we'd like but this is still a strong 4K set	LED	65	3840x2160	●	●	●	●	5	84x146x4
Samsung KE55S9C	7000	01.14/GT	★★★★★	An excellent first step for large screen OLED TVs	OLED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	78x142x14
Samsung UE46E8000	2000	05.12/GT	★★★★★	A benchmark set for 2012	LED	46	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	61x104x3
Samsung UE55E8000	2500	09.12/GT	★★★★★	A towering bruiser, with an added control twist	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	78x136x38
Samsung UE55F8000	2500	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Can't keep up with the very best. Still a smart, user-friendly set	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	71x122x4
Samsung UE65F9000	5000	01.14/GT	★★★★★	A talented set with few weaknesses to speak of	LED	65	3840x2160	●	●	●	●	4	84x146x4
Samsung PS64E8000	3000	09.12/GT	★★★★★	This is as smart as smart TV gets	Plasma	64	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	3	88x149x5
Sony KDL-55W905A	2400	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A great-looking TV but a few issues knock it down a star	LED	55	1920x1080	●	●	●	●	4	72x124x6
Sony KDL-65X9005A	5000	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Good looks and great sound but needs 4K material to shine	LED	65	3840x2160	●	●	●	●	4	90x168x10
Toshiba 55ZL2	7000	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Struggles at this price level. But it's the future	LED	55	3840x2160	●	●	●	●	4	79x125x4

Jargon Buster: TV tech



LCD with LED backlight

LCD (Liquid Crystal Display) sets are the most common type of TV. They use a backlight that shines through the coloured pixels to send the image into the room. On the best sets, standards get close to good Plasma televisions. LCD sets tend to be slim and light, making them better for wall-mounting.



OLED

Despite being a new piece of technology, OLED has come a long way in the last few years. It uses a layer of organic molecules that emit light when a current is passed through them – and because it requires so little electricity and circuitry, the panels are incredibly thin and are often used for the screens seen in curved TVs.



Plasma

Plasma displays don't have a backlight; instead each pixel emits its own light. In the past, this has given Plasmas a contrast advantage, since when a pixel is turned off, it's completely black. With Panasonic leaving the Plasma market it looks like a fading technology, but if done well can still deliver great results.



Blu-ray players

Smart ability _____ Extends the viewing choice beyond discs with apps like BBC iPlayer
Multichannel out _____ Analogue outputs that feed high quality sound to a non-HDMI receiver
Twin HDMI outputs _____ These are used if you have two displays, say a projector and a TV

The shortlist



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
Sony BDP-S790



AWARD WINNER
Marantz UD7007



AWARD WINNER
Sony BDP-S4100

Also consider

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	HDMI out	Optical out	Co-axial out	Multichannel out	Dimensions (hwd,cm)	
Up to £500									
LG BP420	160	06.12/ST	★★★★★	An enjoyable and vibrant performance	1	1	0	No	4x4.3x19
Panasonic DMP-BDT220	155	06.12/GT	★★★★★	Best Blu-ray player £100-175, Awards 2012	1	1	0	No	4x4.3x18
Panasonic DMP-BDT230	160	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Great picture and fine sound	1	1	0	No	4x4.3x18
Panasonic DMP-BDT330	200	09.13/GT	★★★★★	Lacks in the smart app area but performance elsewhere is terrific	2	1	0	No	4x4.3x18
Panasonic DMP-BDT320	220	05.12/FT	★★★★★	A superb Blu-ray spinner from Panasonic	1	1	0	No	3x4.3x18
Philips BDP3380	80	01.14/GT	★★★★★	A very good performer that lacks some smart features	1	0	1	No	4x4.1x21
Pioneer BDP-160	120	01.14/GT	★★★★★	This entry-level unit is pretty spartan, but it delivers an impressive performance	2	0	1	No	6x4.4x25

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BLU-RAY PLAYERS continued

BLU-RAY PLAYERScontinued					HDMI out	Optical out	Co-axial out	Multichannel out	Dimensions (hwd,cm)
Product	£	Tested	Verdict						
Up to £500									
Pioneer BDP-450	225	01.12/FT	★★★★★	This budget deck is a real rival for the top performers	1	0	1	No	9x44x25
Pioneer BDP-LX55	350	03.12/ST	★★★★★	Essentially, you can't go wrong with this disc spinner	2	1	0	8ch	9x43x25
Samsung BD-F6500	130	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Competitive but not the best in class	1	0	1	7ch	4x43x18
Sony BDP-S4100	80	01.14/GT	★★★★★	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-S790	200	09.13/GT	★★★★★	Best Blu-ray player £150-£300, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	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									
Cambridge Audio Azur 752BD	800	04.13/FT	★★★★★	Features and functions combine in fine style, but audio performance could be a little better	2	1	1	8ch	9x43x31
Denon DBP-2012UD	500	04.12/GT	★★★★★	A price cut makes this disc spinner even more appealing	1	0	1	8ch	11x43x32
Marantz UD7006	550	04.12/GT	★★★★★	A splendid master of all trades	1	0	1	8ch	11x44x33
Marantz UD7007	700	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
Oppo BDP-93EU	500	04.12/GT	★★★★★	Perfect for the midrange Blu-ray player market	2	1	1	8ch	8x43x31



Projectors

Screens Buy one of these. A painted white wall is simply not good enough
Noise Fan noise can be a major issue if you sit close to your projector
Lamp life Projector bulbs have limited lifespans and need to be changed regularly

Our recommendations

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 W1060	700	11.12/FT	★★★★★	Solid effort for a budget projector	DLP	1.59-1.9	1920x1080	2000	2	1	1	1	15x33x25	3.6
BenQ W1080ST	850	12.13/GT	★★★★★	A good fit for small-scale home cinema entertainment	DLP	0.69-0.83	1920x1080	2000	2	0	1	1	10x31x24	2.85
Epson EH-TW5900	950	04.12/GT	★★★★★	Sturdy and impressively spec'd	LCD	1.32-2.15:1	1920x1080	2000	2	0	1	1	14x42x37	6
Epson EH-TW5910	900	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Best projector up to £1000, Awards 2013. Product of the Year	LCD	1.32-2.15	1920x1080	2100	2	0	1	1	14x42x37	6
InFocus IN3118HD	990	05.13/GT	★★★★★	A few niggles but a bright and capable projector	DLP	1.6-1.92	1920x1080	3600	2	0	1	0	10x34x25	3.7
Optoma HD23	800	04.12/GT	★★★★★	Affordable, but not the last word in performance	DLP	1.5-1.8:1	1920x1080	2500	2	0	1	1	10x32x33	2.9
Optoma HD25	800	05.13/GT	★★★★★	Plenty of features for a budget level projector	DLP	1.5-1.8	1920x1080	2000	2	0	2	2	12x38x31	4.5
£1000-£3000														
BenQ W1200	1100	04.12/ST	★★★★★	Best projector up to £1500, Awards 2012	DLP	1.44-2.1:1	1920x1080	1800	2	0	1	1	14x34x26	3.6
Epson EH-TW6100W	1600	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	Best projector £1000-£2000, Awards 2013	LCD	1.32-2.15:1	1920x1080	2300	2	0	1	1	14x42x37	6
Optoma HD83	2400	02.12/FT	★★★★★	Healthily priced, with a solid performance	DLP	1.45x2.28	1920x1080	1600	2	0	0	1	19x49x37	8.4



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PROJECTORS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Type	Throw Ratio	Resolution	Rated Brightness (Lumens)	HDMI in	DVI in	PC in	Component in	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	Weight (kg)
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	15x4x29	5
Sony VPL-HW55ES	2800	04.14/GT	★★★★★	An impressively capable projector	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-ILA	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



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-DN1040

"Insightful and dynamic, exciting and punchy, this talented AV receiver will charm its way into your home cinema room."



AWARD WINNER

Pioneer SC-LX57

"Outshining its predecessor in every way, the impressive SC-LX57 once again sets the bar for home cinema amplifiers at this price."

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Channels /power (w)	HDMI in	HDMI out	Networking	3D passthrough	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
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-V373	250	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	Best home cinema amplifier up to £350, Awards 2012	5x100	4	1	●	●	15x44x32
Yamaha RX-V375	250	02.14/GT	★★★★★	Best home cinema amplifier up to £350, Awards 2013	5x100	4	1	●	●	15x44x32

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AV RECEIVERS & AMPLIFIERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Channels /power (w)	HDMI in	HDMI out	Networking	3D passthrough	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
£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
Sony STR-DH840	350	02.14/GT	★★★★★	A talented, energetic amp that delivers plenty of precision and attack	7x150	6	1	●	16x43x33
Sony STR-DN1030	470	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Gives the best (at this price) a run for their money	7x120	5	1	●	17x43x33
Sony STR-DN1040	500	08.13/GT	★★★★★	Best home cinema amplifier £350-£700, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	7x100	8	2	●	16x43x32
Yamaha RX-V675	500	08.13/GT	★★★★★	A powerful and thrilling amplifier for the money	7x150	6	1	●	17x44x36
£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	●	17x43x33
Denon AVR-X4000	900	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Decent if you're looking for a sub-£1000 AV receiver	7x125	7	3	●	17x43x38
Harman-Kardon AVR-365	800	03.12/ST	★★★★★	Great looks, but lacks some precision	7x110	6	1	●	17x44x39
Pioneer VSX-923	450	08.13/GT	★★★★★	Needs more heft but it's still a confident and compelling amp	7x150	8	2	●	17x44x36
Yamaha RX-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
Onkyo TX-NR626	500	08.13/GT	★★★★★	Well-featured but not as compelling or as immersive as rival products	7x160	6	2	●	17x44x33
£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
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-LX86	1800	03.13/ST	★★★★★	Best Home Cinema amplifier £1500+, Awards 2012	9x190	8	3	●	19x44x414
Yamaha RX-A1020	1000	04.13/FT	★★★★★	Delivering excitement, detail and precision, this is a brilliantly capable all-rounder	7x110	8	2	●	18x43x43
Yamaha RX-A1030	1000	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Not without some niggles, this receiver delivers big-time power and muscle	7x110	8	2	●	18x43x43
£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

Our recommendations

Our recommendations					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)
Product	£	Tested	Verdict																
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



WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION

iPAD EDITION

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SUBWOOFERS continued

SUBWOOFERScontinued					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)
Product	£	Tested	Verdict																
£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	



Surround speakers

Full size Traditional cabinet design that's big but can deliver a great sound
 Style Compact speakers that make a lot of sense in smaller living spaces
 Bipole/Dipole Surround speaker designs that give a more cohesive soundfield

The shortlist

AWARD WINNER
Q Acoustics 2000i 5.1

Awards 2013: Best Traditional Pack up to £700

PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
Dali Zensor 15.1

Awards 2013: Best Style Pack £700-£1500

AWARD WINNER
Cambridge Audio Aero 5.1

Awards 2013: Best Traditional Pack £1500-£2500

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Front speaker (hwd, cm)	Center speaker (hwd, cm)	Rear speaker (hwd, cm)	Subwoofer (hwd, cm)	Finishes
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 A101HCS5	230	11.11/FT	★★★★★	A great way to get started with home cinema	9x15x15	9x15x15	9x15x15	30x57x16 1
Jamo S426 HCS3	350	01.12/FT	★★★★★	A worthy home cinema solution	91x18x24	12x34x12	21x12x12	n/a 3
Teufel Motiv 3	460	06.10/GT	★★★★★	Another solid showing from this manufacturer	12x12x14	12x12x14	12x12x14	26x26x32 1
Teufel Theater 80	449	01.10/FT	★★★★★	Big sounds for not too much money	23x15x19	23x15x19	23x15x19	40x26x40 1
Wharfedale DX-1HCP	400	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★	Gets a lot right for this kind of money	19x12x12	12x29x12	19x12x12	34x29x32 2
£500-£1000								
Boston Ac. SoundWare S	510	02.12/FT	★★★★★	Dinky yet substantial-sounding	14x14x14	14x14x14	14x14x14	34x32x44 2
Cambridge Audio Minx S215	500	05.11/FT	★★★★★	Lots to admire here from very little	8x8x9	8x8x9	8x8x9	22x21x22 1
Dali Zensor 15.1	980	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	Best traditional package £700-£1500, Awards 2013. Product of the Year	27x16x22	16x44x29	27x16x22	31x29x31 3
Jamo A200 HCS5	640	01.13/FT	★★★★★	Agutsy and entertaining sound at this price	22x9x5	22x9x5	22x9x5	31x28x31 7
KEF KHT3005 HD2	900	03.12/FT	★★★★★	Great build with an expansive sound	25x13x15	13x25x15	25x13x15	38x37x18 1
KEF E305	900	11.13/ST	★★★★★	A room-filling system but there are more dynamic packages out there	26x14x16	16x22x15	26x14x16	32x43x27 2
Mission MX15.1	600	11.11/FT	★★★★★	Ideal for a medium sized room	28x17x26	15x42x19	28x17x26	30x30x33 4
Monitor Audio MASS	800	11.13/ST	★★★★★	Still an excellent system, it narrowly falls short of the best	22x13x13	13x22x13	22x13x13	42x38x38 1
Q Acoustics 2000i 5.1	625	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★	Best traditional package up to £700, Awards 2013	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 2013	24x10x16	12x20x16	24x10x16	32x46x20 2

SURROUND SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Front speaker (hwd, cm)	Center speaker (hwd, cm)	Rear speaker (hwd, cm)	Subwoofer (hwd, cm)	Finishes
Tannoy HTS-101	400	09.11/GT	★★★★★	Best style package up to £700, Awards 2013	16x11x14	11x25x17	16x11x14	42x28x37	1
Teufel Theater 200	799	04.10/FT	★★★★★	Big-screen soundtracks don't come bigger than this	44x20x29	25x44x27	23x16x12	60x38x49	1
Wharfedale 100-HCP	950	11.13/FT	★★★★★	A very good package, but could do with a better centre speaker	32x17x26	17x47x27	32x17x26	39x35x31	7

£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
B&W MT-50	1100	11.13/ST	★★★★★	Best style package £1000-£1400, Awards 2013	25x11x16	25x11x16	25x11x16	26x26x33	2
B&W MT-60D	1950	05.12/GT	★★★★★	Best style package £1800+, Awards 2013	25x11x16	25x11x16	25x11x16	34x27x36	2
Cabasse Eole 3	1000	11.13/ST	★★★★★	A likable, big-sounding system that lacks a little authority	13x13x13	13x13x13	13x13x13	33x33x35	2
Cambridge Audio Aero 5.1	1950	10.13/FT	★★★★★	Best traditional package £1500-£2500, Awards 2013	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	★★★★★	A vibrant 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 2013	20x13x14	17x46x17	20x13x14	33x32x33	3
Quad L-ite Plus 5.1 package	1200	12.13/FT	★★★★★	A fine package that's up against some formidable rivals at this price	25x14x18	15x38x17	25x14x18	31x24x24	3
Tannoy Rev. Compact 5.1	1300	12.10/GT	★★★★★	Exceptional sound in the average living room	27x15x16	15x30x16	39x31x34	32x29x29	2

£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 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
KEF R100 5.1	2850	06.14/GT	★★★★★	Best traditional package £2500-£3500, Awards 2013	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 SEAV	2400	06.14/GT	★★★★★	Despite a few issues with the centre and sub, this is an exciting package	95x20x25	15x31x16	37x20x25	44x34x37	1
Tannoy Revolution Signature	2300	11.08/GT	★★★★★	As thrilling or as calming as you want it to be	85x17x18	17x45x18	27x17x18	37x34x34	2

SYSTEM BUILDER

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<p>LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED</p>  <p>CYRUS CDI CD PLAYER "Though fast and fluid, the sound is much weightier than any of the company's previous models." – What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine. 5 Year Supercare £97.45</p> <p>WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2014 MARCH 2014 ★★★★★</p> <p>£974.95</p>	<p>LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED</p>  <p>CYRUS 8A AMPLIFIER "Has no issue, delivering a clean, punchy sound that manages to be precise yet still dynamic and powerful." – What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine. 5 Year Supercare £124.95</p> <p>WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2012 ★★★★★</p> <p>£1249.95</p>

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£549.95

REGULAR PRICE **£599.95**

Internet Radio
Bluetooth

SAVE £100

DENON DM39 SILVER MINI SYSTEM & DALI ZENSOR 1 SPEAKERS (PAIR)

These detailed, dynamic speakers are perfectly suited to complement the layers of detail offered by the Denon.

TSP £399.95 | 5 Year Supercare £29.95

£299.95

CALL FOR INDIVIDUAL UNIT PRICES

DEMON DM39 ALSO AVAILABLE IN BLACK

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
SYSTEMS
BEST NEW SYSTEM
DENON DM39
AUGUST 2013

SAVE £150

MARANTZ MCR610 STREAMING MINI SYSTEM & MONITOR AUDIO BX2 SPEAKERS (PAIR)

"The BX2s are quite an achievement and some of the most engaging speakers you can buy at this money." – What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.

SYSTEM TSP £699.95 | 5 Year Supercare £54.90

£549

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ALSO AVAILABLE MCR510

WiFi
AirPlay

ALSO WITH ALTERNATIVE SPEAKERS (PAIR):

Q ACOUSTICS 2010i	£539.95
TANNOY MERCURY VII	£549.95
DALI ZENSOR 1	£569.95

MANY MORE SYSTEM DEALS ONLINE

SAVE £120

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO 351A AMPLIFIER, 351C CD PLAYER & SX60 SPEAKERS (PAIR)

"The 351C's sound character mirrors that of its partnering amplifier. There's the same overt clarity, and the ability to dig up plenty of detail." – What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.

SYSTEM TSP £669.95 | 5 Year Supercare £54.95

£549.95

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WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2012
★★★★★
NOVEMBER 2012

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SAVE £500

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO 651W POWER AMPLIFIER, STREAM MAGIC 6 NETWORK MUSIC PLAYER & CAMBRIDGE AERO 2 SPEAKERS (PAIR)

The award-winning Stream Magic 6 makes high-resolution audio more accessible than ever. The separate power amp provides a new level of detail and subtlety, which the exceptional Cambridge Audio Aero 2s are able to take full advantage of.

SYSTEM TSP £1749.95 | 5 Year Supercare Only £124.95

£1249.95

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SPEAKERS ALSO AVAILABLE IN WALNUT

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013
★★★★★
MAY 2014

SAVE £450

CYRUS LYRIC 05 STREAMING MINI SYSTEM & TANNOY PRECISION 6.1 (PAIR)

What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision magazine praised the "wonderfully focused soundstage" of the Tannoy speakers. They're a perfect match for Cyrus' stunning new all-in-one system, which offers a perfect balance between convenience and amazing sound quality.

SYSTEM TSP £3148.90 | 5 Year Supercare £269.95

£2699.95

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Marco - Chiswick store



CAMBRIDGE AUDIO MINX GO BLUETOOTH SPEAKER

"A terrific product for this money, with a sound that is a pleasure to listen to." – WHF? S&V magazine.
5 Year Supercare £9.99

£99.95



CAMBRIDGE AUDIO MINX AIR 200 WIRELESS SYSTEM

"A formidable option in this competitive market." – WHF? S&V magazine.
5 Year Supercare £34.95

£349.95



CAMBRIDGE AUDIO STREAM MAGIC 6 NETWORK MUSIC PLAYER

The Stream Magic 6 is a hugely flexible player that offers music lovers an easy way to listen to their existing digital music collection, Internet radio and more in unbelievable clarity. Packing similar DAC chips to Cambridge Audio's highly rated DacMagic range, it polishes every track it plays to a shine, bringing out previously hidden details and additional bass impact. What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine described the sound as "open, focused, detailed and thoroughly absorbing" so it's no wonder they have given it awards two years running.
5 Year Supercare £69.95

£699.95

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AKG K451 HEADPHONES

"Not only do they look good, they're excellent sonically, too" – What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.

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LOGITECH UE AIR SPEAKER DOCK

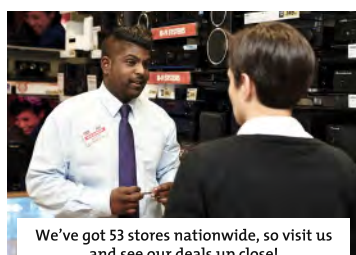
"Logitech's AirPlay-toting speaker dock sounds the business." – What Hi-Fi? S&V magazine.
5 Year Supercare Only 10% Of Purchase Price
TSP £199.95
VIP CLUB MEMBER PRICE

£99.95

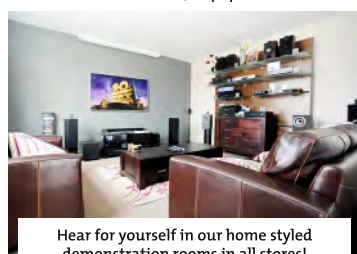
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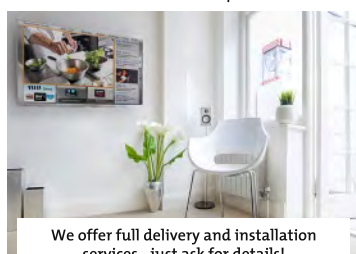
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SONY KDL50W829B
3D SMART LED TV

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SHARP LC60LE651
3D SMART LED TV

"Very decent black and contrast levels." – richersounds.com customer review.

TSP £999.95

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SAMSUNG UE46H7000
3D SMART LED TV

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PANASONIC TXP65VT65
3D SMART PLASMA TV

"One of the best flat-screen HDTVs we've tested." – HDTVtest.co.uk

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55" LG

LG 55EA980W
3D SMART CURVED OLED TV

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£3999

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49" LG

LG 49UB850
4K ULTRA HD 3D SMART LED TV

Packed with features and connectivity, this stunning set will revolutionise your viewing habits.

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Anca – Watford store

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"Picture that wouldn't look out of place on a projector costing twice as much." – trustedreviews.com

£499.95

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OPTOMA HD25E 3D PROJECTOR

"Can go so bright if required that its pictures are enjoyable even with a degree of ambient light in your room." – trustedreviews.com

TSP £749.95

£699.95

Our extensive range will suit all tastes and budgets.

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EPSON EHTW6100W 3D PROJECTOR

"Throws out a clear, bright and vivid image." – What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.

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PANASONIC PTAT6000 3D PROJECTOR

"Detailed, dynamic & confident." – What Hi-Fi? S&V magazine.

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YAMAHA RXV375 AV RECEIVER

"We highly recommend starting your system with this capable RXV375 receiver."
— What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision mag.
TSP £249.95 | 5 Year Supercare £14.95

£149.95

SAVE £120

PIONEER VSX923 AV RECEIVER

"A confident and compelling amp thanks to its precision and clarity."
— What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine.
TSP £349.95 | 5 Year Supercare £22.95

£229.95

SAVE £100

ONKYO TXNR626 AV RECEIVER

"An outstanding range of features at an attractive price."
— Home Cinema Choice magazine.
TSP £349.95 | 5 Year Supercare £24.95

£249.95

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED

YAMAHA RXV675 AV RECEIVER

"A powerful and thrilling amplifier for the money."
— WHF? S&V mag.
5 Year Supercare Only 10% Of Purchase Price

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SONY STRDN1040 AV RECEIVER

"Depth of detail, exciting and ample connectivity – this is a superstar in the making."
— WHF? S&V magazine.
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PIONEER SCLX77 AV RECEIVER

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TSP £1399.95 | 5 Year Supercare £99.95

£999.95

SAVE UP TO £100

CAMBRIDGE 752BD 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

5 Year Supercare Only 10% Of Purchase Price

REGULAR PRICE **£799.95** **VIP CLUB MEMBER PRICE* £699.95**

SAVE £580

PIONEER SCLX87 AV RECEIVER & DALI ZENSOR 15.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine praised the SCLX87's "precise, punchy sound" and the Zensor 15.1 speaker package, saying "these are enthusiastic and engaging performers that make sure the listener has a good time."
SYSTEM TSP £2579.90 | 5 Year Supercare £199.95

£1999.95

We can help you build your perfect system.

SAVE £600

YAMAHA RXA3030 AV RECEIVER & CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AERO 5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision magazine praised the RXA3030's "warm and muscular presentation" and the Aero 5.1 speakers' "combination of cohesiveness, punch and articulation."
USUALLY £3599.90 | 5 Year Supercare £299.95

£2999.95

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SONY BDPS4200
3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

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£89.95

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3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

A stylish, compact unit with sophisticated features and jaw-dropping picture quality.
5 Year Supercare £10.95

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ALSO AVAILABLE WITH MULTI-REGION DVD PLAYBACK ONLY £189.95



SONY BDPS6200
3D BLU-RAY PLAYER

Boasting a digital music enhancer, 4K upscaling and a dual core processor!
5 Year Supercare £17.45

INCLUDES WEB APPS **WiFi** **4K ULTRA HD UPSCALING**

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CAMBRIDGE AUDIO MINX TV
SOUND BASE

"Exciting sound for a great budget price." – What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.
5 Year Supercare £19.95

Bluetooth **WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2013** **★★★★★** FEBRUARY 2014

£199.95

SAVE £70



LG NB4530
SOUNDBAR

"Looks the part and sounds great." – What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.
TSP £299.95
5 Year Supercare £22.95

£229.95

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YAMAHA YSP1400
SOUNDBAR

"Offers an experience that isn't trumped until you spend quite a lot more." – What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.
5 Year Supercare £39.95

£399.95

SAVE £50



TANNOY HTS101
5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

"Simply in terms of scale, it's deeply impressive." – What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.
TSP £399.95
5 Year Supercare £34.95

£349.95

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED



Q ACOUSTICS Q7000i
5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

"The Q7000i is a stunning package at this price." – What Hi-Fi? S&V mag.
5 Year Supercare £89.95

£899.95

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CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AERO
5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

USUALLY £1599.95 | 5 Year Supercare Only 10% Of Purchase Price
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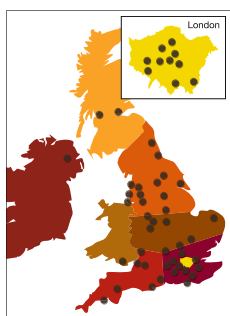
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Nottingham
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Oxford
0333 900 0052
Plymouth
0333 900 0047
Preston
0333 900 0080

Prestwich
0333 900 0042
Reading
0333 900 0044
Reigate
0333 900 0081
Romford
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CD players

Integrated _____ Has both a CD mechanism and digital-to-analogue conversion tech
Transport _____ Needs an outboard DAC but can deliver a higher standard of sound

The shortlist



AWARD WINNER
Marantz CD6005

Awards 2013: Best CD Player up to £500
 “Marantz has played it a little safe but when you’ve nailed this corner of the market, you don’t need to do much else. The best has just been made better. Again.”



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
Naim CD5Si

Awards 2013: Best CD Player £500-£1500
 “In performance terms the CD5Si can hold its own against tough competition from Audiolab and Cyrus. It’s been a long time since anything has managed that.”



AWARD WINNER
Roksan Caspian M2 CD

Awards 2013: Best CD Player £1500+
 “Factor in the Caspian M2’s brilliant timing, wonderfully layered and subtle midrange, and you have a top-class player capable of fronting some pretty exotic systems.”

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Integrated Transport	Co-axial out	Optical out	XLR out	Headphone out	Co-axial in	AES/EBU in	USB in	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Up to £500													
Cambridge Audio Azur 351C	300	11.12/FT	★★★★★	●	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2 9x43x31
Cambridge Audio Azur 651C	450	03.12/FT	★★★★★	●	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1 8x43x31
Marantz CD6004	300	01.12/ST	★★★★★	●	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	2 11x44x34
Marantz CD6005	350	10.13/FT	★★★★★	●	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	2 11x44x34
Sansui CDD-201V	200	10.12/FT	★★★★★	●	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2 7x43x28
£500-£1000													
Arcam FMJ CD17	650	06.12/ST	★★★★★	●	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	2 9x43x29
Audiolab 8200CD	800	03.14/GT	★★★★★	●	1	1	1	1	0	2	2	0	1 8x44x30
Audiolab 8200CDQ	950	09.11/FT	★★★★★	●	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	0	1 8x44x30
NAD C 546BEE	500	10.12/FT	★★★★★	●	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1 9x44x31
Cyrus CDi	975	03.14/GT	★★★★★	●	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2 7x22x36
Cyrus CD Transport	750	01.12/ST	★★★★★	●	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 8x22x36
Cyrus CD6 SE2	700	06.12/ST	★★★★★	●	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1 8x22x36
Naim CD5Si	995	03.14/GT	★★★★★	●	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1 7x43x30
Pioneer PD-50	500	09.13/FT	★★★★★	●	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	2 13x44x33
Rega Apollo-R	550	06.12/ST	★★★★★	●	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2 9x22x32
Roksan Kandy K2	900	06.12/ST	★★★★★	●	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2 10x43x38
Yamaha CD-S2000	979	03.09/GT	★★★★★	●	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2 14x44x44
£1000 and above													
Burmester 069	35840	11.13/FT	★★★★★	●	2	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0 1 16x45x34
Cambridge Audio Azur 851C	1200	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	●	1	1	1	1	0	2	2	1	2 12x43x34
Copland CDA 825	4298	05.13/FT	★★★★★	●	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1 10x43x39
Cyrus CD 8 SE2	1200	09.12/FT	★★★★★	●	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	2 8x22x36
dCS Puccini	11300	02.11/FT	★★★★★	●	1	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	2 11x46x40
Esoteric K-05	7495	01.14/FT	★★★★★	●	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1 13x45x36
Leema Antila IIS Eco	2995	09.11/FT	★★★★★	●	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2 11x44x31
Musical Fidelity M6CD	2100	08.13/FT	★★★★★	●	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1 13x44x39
Naim CD5 XS	1950	Aw.09/FT	★★★★★	●	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1 7x43x30
Naim CD555/555PS	18345	10.09/FT	★★★★★	●	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1 11x43x31
Naim CDX2	3640	02.10/FT	★★★★★	●	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1 9x43x31
Parasound Halo CD1	5000	07.13/FT	★★★★★	●	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	2 11x44x35
Primare CD32	2200	04.11/FT	★★★★★	●	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2 11x43x38
Roksan Caspian M2 CD	1650	Aw.10/FT	★★★★★	●	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2 8x43x33
T+A MP 3000 HV	7900	12.13/FT	★★★★★	●	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1 11x43x35

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DACs

Digital-to-analogue converters take a digital data stream from its source (such as a computer or CD transport) and turns it into an analogue signal that your amplifier can work with. These devices have become more popular in recent years due to the emergence of computer-based audio

Our recommendations

Our recommendations					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 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	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	★★★★★	A compact DAC that makes a huge impression. Bluetooth sounds brilliant	0	0	0	10	0	●	0	1	0	2.5x3x4
Arcam rPAC	150	04.13/ST	★★★★★	More desirable alternatives, but the rPAC still has plenty of merit	1	0	0	0	0		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	★★★★★	Outrageously good sound quality at an aggressive price	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
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 GT 40	400	06.11/FT	★★★★★	Product of the Year - Cables & Accessories, Awards 2011	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
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 2013	1	2	2	0	0		0	1	1	6x25x25
Cambridge Audio Azur 851D	1000	06.14/FT	★★★★★	A fine DAC, even if it can't quite match the best in delivering outright entertainment	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
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

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DACs continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	USB in	Optical in	Co-axial in	AES EBU in	HDMI in	Wireless	Headphone out	RCA out	Balanced XLR out	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
£1000 and above													
Aesthetix Romulus	6500	06.14/GT	★★★★★	1	1	1	1	0		0	1	1	11x46x45
Antelope Zodiac Gold/Voltikus	3100	07.13/GT	★★★★★	1	2	2	0	0		2	1	1	11x17x19
Audio Research DAC 8	4698	07.13/GT	★★★★★	1	1	1	0	0		1	1	1	13x48x25
Arcam FMJ D33	2000	07.13/GT	★★★★★	3	2	2	1	0		0	1	2	11x43x37
Bricasti Design M1 DAC	7000	03.14/FT	★★★★★	1	1	2	1	1		0	1	1	6x43x30
Bryston BDA-1 DAC	2350	06.11/FT	★★★★★	1	2	4	1	0		0	1	1	4x48x29
Burmester 113	2300	07.13/GT	★★★★★	1	1	1	0	0	●	0	1	1	6x20x17
Chord QBD76 HDSO	4995	07.13/GT	★★★★★	2	2	2	2	0		0	1	1	6x34x15
Chord Hugo	1400	05.14/FT	★★★★★	2	1	1	0	0		3	1	0	2x13x10
dCS Debussy	7930	07.13/GT	★★★★★	1	0	2	2	0		0	1	1	7x45x39
McIntosh D100	3000	06.13/GT	★★★★★	1	2	2	0	0		1	0	0	10x45x41
Musical Fidelity M6 DAC	2000	07.13/GT	★★★★★	1	1	1	0	0		0	1	1	13x44x39
NAD M51	1500	07.13/GT	★★★★★	1	1	1	1	2		0	1	0	8x44x30
Naim DAC	2150	07.13/GT	★★★★★	2	3	3	0	0		0	1	0	7x43x30
Naim DAC-V1	1250	08.13/GT	★★★★★	1	2	3	0	0		1	1	1	9x21x32
T+A DAC 8	1250	09.13/FT	★★★★★	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 2012: Best Turntable up to £500



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
Rega RP3/Elys2

Awards 2013: Best Turntable £400-£800



AWARD WINNER
Rega RP6/Exact

Awards 2013: 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														
Edwards Audio TT1	380	11.11/FT	★★★★★	●	●			●		●	●		1	12x45x36
Pro-Ject Elemental	150	04.14/FT	★★★★★	●	●			●		●	●		3	9x43x30
Pro-Ject Essential II	200	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	●	●			●		●	●		3	14x46x36
Pro-Ject 2-Xperience Basic +	600	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★	●	●			●		●	●		1	14x46x36
Pro-Ject 2-Xperience Classic	750	12.10/FT	★★★★★	●	●			●		●	●		3	16x46x36
Pro-Ject Debut Carbon	300	09.12/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●		●		●	●		7	12x42x32
Rega RP1	225	Aw.10/FT	★★★★★	●	●			●		●	●		3	12x45x36
Rega RP3/Elys2	550	10.11/FT	★★★★★	●	●			●		●	●		3	10x45x36
TDK ETVT20102	350	01.12/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●		●		●	●	●	1	11x45x38
£1000 and above														
Clearaudio Emotion SE	2110	11.09/FT	★★★★★	●	●			●		●	●		1	8x40x32
Clearaudio Ovation/Tali. V2 Gold	5995	04.14/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●		●	●		4	14x42x35
Clearaudio Performance SE	2660	08.12/FT	★★★★★	●	●			●		●	●		2	13x42x33
Kuzma Stabi S/Stogi S	2940	04.10/FT	★★★★★	●	●			●		●	●		1	14x40x30
Linn Majik LP12	2350	03.09/FT	★★★★★	●	●			●		●	●		5	14x45x36
Michell Gyro. SE/TecnoArm A	1478	09.08/FT	★★★★★	●	●			●					1	19x41x53
Michell Orbe SE/TecnoArm A	2675	01.09/FT	★★★★★	●	●			●					2	26x46x53
Origin Live Calypso package	2440	12.11/FT	★★★★★	●	●		●	●		●	●		1	14x45x38
Pro-Ject 2-Xperience X-Pack	1000	08.10/GT	★★★★★	●	●			●		●	●		1	14x46x39

TURNTABLES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	33.33 — RPM	45	78	Elec. speed change	Manual operation	Phono amp	Tonearm inc.	Cartridges inc.	USB port	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
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	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	7x23x8
Pure Digital Elan II	99	01.10/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	16x28x9
Pure Digital Move 2500	90	11.11/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	10x6x1.5
Pure Digital Move 400D	90	11.12/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	8.5x15x2.7
Pure Digital One Classic II	65	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	15x21x7
Pure Evoke D2	85	09.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	15x21x7
Q2 Internet radio	90	03.11/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	10x10x10
Roberts Duologic	75	01.10/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	15x25x83
Roberts Expression	90	12.11/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	18x26x90
Sony XDR-S16	80	12.11/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	14x27x11
Tangent Trio DAB	90	01.11/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	17x33x20
View Quest WiFi200	80	01.11/FT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	73x125x23
£100 and above									
Geneva World Radio DAB+	270	09.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	17x30x7
Magicbox Nocturne XP-2	170	12.10/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	17x30x15
Philips Original Radio Mini	110	09.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	25x12x12
Pure Digital Avanti Flow i'net	250	12.10/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	13x39x23
Pure Digital Evoke Flow	150	05.10/GT	★★★★★	●	●	●	●	●	18x21x11
Pure Digital Evoke-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



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RADIOs continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	DAB	FM	MW	Internet	Battery	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
£100 and above									
Pure Digital Sensia	250	01.10/FT	★★★★★						17x28x18
Revo AXIS	200	12.10/GT	★★★★★						13x22x15
Revo AXIS XS	200	11.12/GT	★★★★★						12.5x22x15
Revo AXIS X3	200	01.14/FT	★★★★★						12.5x22x15
Revo Domino D3	170	05.10/GT	★★★★★						14x22x13
Revo Heritage	230	03.10/FT	★★★★★						18x26x10
Revo Pico RadioStation	170	12.10/FT	★★★★★						17x11x11
Revo Pixis	100	09.13/GT	★★★★★						13x16x16
Roberts Revival Cath Kidston	200	01.11/GT	★★★★★						23x16x12
Roberts Revival iStream	200	12.10/GT	★★★★★						15x25x13
Roberts Stream 83i	150	05.10/GT	★★★★★						21x25x13
Ruark Audio R1 MkII	160	11.12/GT	★★★★★						18x13x14
Tangent Uno	100	01.09/GT	★★★★★						13x19x13
Tivoli Albergo+	200	02.14/FT	★★★★★						11x19x11
Tivoli Model 10+	160	09.13/GT	★★★★★						20x12x12
View Quest Retro 1	100	12.11/GT	★★★★★						16x28x9



Hi-fi speakers

Standmounters Usually smaller speakers that need to be put on a stand, not bookshelves
Floorstanders Larger speakers that tend to go louder and deeper than standmounters
Powered Have built-in amplifiers and need mains power to work

The shortlist



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
Q Acoustics Concept 20

Awards 2013: Best Stereo Speaker £200-£400
 “The Concept 20s really are an incredible achievement and a very bold move from the chaps at Q Acoustics.”



AWARD WINNER
KEF LS50

Awards 2013: Best Standmounter £400-£800
 “The first thing that strikes you is the depth and power of the bass, which is a surprise given the compact size of the speakers.”



AWARD WINNER
PMC Twenty 22

Awards 2013: Best Standmounter £1500+
 “These PMCs have the scale and power to deliver rousing classical renditions and the finesse to handle more intimate recordings.”

Also consider

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 S30	120	07.07/FT	★★★★★	Has an air of quality that extends from its build to its sound		●		2	23x16x22
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

SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Standmount Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd,cm)
Bose Companion 20	200	05.13/GT	★★★★★	Solid, reliable speakers for buyers on a tight budget		●	1	22x9x12
Bose Computer MusicMonitor	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
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	01.14/FT	★★★★★	If it's entertainment you crave, then these standmounters deliver in spades	●		3	35x21x29
EB Acoustics EB1	470	08.09/GT	★★★★★	You'll have trouble faulting these nifty standmounters	●		2	31x17x27
Epos Epic 1	325	04.11/FT	★★★★★	Punchy and exciting but they can't deliver all-round ability	●		2	31x19x25
Focal Chorus 706V	390	03.11/FT	★★★★★	Thoroughly enjoyable but they may not cut it with dance music	●		3	39x22x29
Focal XS Book	300	07.12/GT	★★★★★	A potent-sounding speaker that brings hi-fi listening to your desktop		●	1	28x11x20
Focal XS Book Wireless	300	10.13/FT	★★★★★	Stacks of detail but not quite the measure of their rivals		●	1	28x11x20
KEF Q300	450	06.13/GT	★★★★★	Not quite at the top anymore, but still fine, engaging standmounters	●		3	36x21x30
Leema Xero	495	07.08/GT	★★★★★	Not a true all-rounder, but loaded with talent	●		5	25x25x16
Monitor Audio Bronze BX 1	200	05.11/FT	★★★★★	Stylish as you like, but not the complete article	●		4	26x17x18
Monitor Audio Bronze BX2	250	07.12/ST	★★★★★	Best stereo speakers £200-£350, Awards 2012	●		4	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 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	●		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	440	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Best floorstander £400-£800, Awards 2013		●	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 2013	●		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



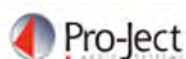
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SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Standmount Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd,cm)
£500-£1500							
Acoustic Energy AE1 Classic	1000	07.11/GT	★★★★★	A classic yes, but not the best around	●	2	30x18x26
Acoustic Energy AE22 Active	899	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Talented active speakers not easily matched	●	1	25x35x30
Audio Pro LV2e	700	09.12/FT	★★★★★	Wireless desktop speakers with a hi-fi flourish		3	98x14x24
Audiovector Ki1 Super	800	04.12/GT	★★★★★	These pint-sized speakers lack far-reaching dynamics, but are easy to live with	●	5	98x14x24
Audiovector Ki3 Standard	1200	03.12/FT	★★★★★	Packed with resolution and speed	●	5	98x14x24
Arcadyis SM35C	850	08.09/FT	★★★★★	If you want a quality small standmounter, audition these	●	3	30x16x14
ATC SCM11	1200	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	Best standmounter £800-£1500, Awards 2013	●	2	38x21x25
AVI ADM9.1	1125	07.12/GT	★★★★★	A simple way to make the most of your music	●	5	30x20x26
B&W 684	700	12.09/GT	★★★★★	Still a fine product after all these years	●	4	91x20x30
B&W 685 S2	500	05.14/GT	★★★★★	A superb, hugely entertaining pair of speakers. Worth the wait? Absolutely	●	2	35x19x32
B&W CM8	1250	08.11/FT	★★★★★	Stunning in some ways but not the last word in integration	●	4	96x25x30
B&W XT2	700	07.08/GT	★★★★★	Classy, sophisticated but the sound lacks bite	●	2	31x15x20
Cabasse Minorca MC40	720	02.11/FT	★★★★★	Ideal for those who like finger-snapping ability	●	2	40x23x28
Dali Ikon 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 TD 508 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
Elipson Planet L	600	02.12/FT	★★★★★	Charming in many ways, with good transparency	●	3	40x42x43
Epos Epic 5	750	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Hugely likeable floorstanders with broad sonic appeal	●	2	92x21x32
Guru Junior	800	12.13/ST	★★★★★	A rather mundane appearance is excused by some very expressive sound	●	3	28x18x24
Focal Aria 906	760	12.13/ST	★★★★★	For scale, power and refinement, you won't find many better	●	2	30x30x28
JBL Studio 530	650	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Odd looking - but fun sounding and refined	●	1	47x21x22
KEF LS50	800	12.13/ST	★★★★★	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
Klipsch RB-81	540	08.09/GT	★★★★★	If you like to party hard, audition these Klipschs	●	2	48x24x31
Leema Xone	995	10.09/FT	★★★★★	In certain areas nothing else comes close at this pricepoint	●	6	85x14x21
MAD 1920	1350	09.12/FT	★★★★★	Impressive and powerful. although not as precise as its peers	●	5	28x19x23
Martin Logan Motion 15	795	12.13/ST	★★★★★	Needs a bit more authority but let loose in a smaller room they can really sing	●	2	29x13x24
Mission SX2	700	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Dependable and capable, the SX2s product an authoritative sound at a fine price	●	5	38x23x37
Monitor Audio Bronze BX5	500	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Fine, refined speakers but outclassed by stronger newcomers	●	4	85x17x25
Monitor Audio Gold GX50	950	12.13/ST	★★★★★	Still good and still great looking, but loses out to rivals in terms of musical engagement	●	5	30x17x26
Monitor Audio Silver 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 6	800	11.08/GT	★★★★★	Possibly the best in their class	●	2	100x22x28
Mordaunt-Short Mezzo 8	1000	03.09/FT	★★★★★	Not the best all-rounders in the Mezzo range, but still very likeable	●	2	107x22x31
Mission MX-5	600	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Physically and sonically impressive	●	4	100x25x39
Mission SX1	700	12.12/FT	★★★★★	Almost mission accomplished. Hugely capable but not as entertaining as the class leaders	●	5	31x19x29
Neat Iota	695	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Attractive but with a hefty sound too	●	5	13x20x17

SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Standmount	Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd,cm)
Neat Motive 1	1350	02.09/GT	★★★★★	Charming unique speakers - they lean backwards	●			4	93x16x20
Neat Motive 2	945	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Cohesive, authoritative and downright exciting	●			4	77x16x20
Neat Petite SX	1250	01.12/ST	★★★★★	Small and perfectly formed standmounters	●			6	31x20x18
PMCD B1i	1050	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Superbly detailed and rewarding small speakers	●			4	29x16x23
PMCTwenty 21	1485	10.13/GT	★★★★★	If you're looking for a top-class pair of standmounters, these are well worth a listen	●			4	33x15x28
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	05.14/FT	★★★★★	A refined and easy-going pair of speakers. They deserve serious consideration	●			2	97x17x29
Quad 12L Classic	500	11.11/FT	★★★★★	There's plenty to admire here	●			4	34x21x28
Rega RS3	780	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Floorstanders that are effortless with dynamics	●			3	80x22x25
Revolver Music 3	650	06.10/FT	★★★★★	Big, bold looks disguise an easy-going character	●			4	39x21x28
Revolver Music 5	1300	02.10/FT	★★★★★	Fine all-rounders with the power to fill larger rooms	●			4	93x25x32
Ruark Acoustics Sabre III	899	06.09/GT	★★★★★	Communicate music so well they demand to be auditioned	●			2	34x20x27
Roksan Kandy K2 TR-5	750	06.09/GT	★★★★★	Stunning speakers that deserve to be labelled as contenders for class-leading status	●			1	37x19x28
Spendor S3/5R2	850	07.11/GT	★★★★★	A little less than the sum of their parts	●			4	31x17x18
Tangent Evo E45	650	12.09/GT	★★★★★	For those who like an exciting and exuberant listen	●			2	100x15x26
Tannoy Precision 6.1	900	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Rhythmic, detailed speakers but a lack of solidity leaves them sounding unbalanced	●			2	33x22x26
Tannoy Revolution DC6 SE	700	12.13/FT	★★★★★	Responsive with a good sense of cohesion. Could do with a little more spark	●			1	37x20x24
Tannoy Revolution DC6T	799	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Best floorstander £700-£1500, Awards 2011	●			1	95x26x29
Tannoy Revolution DC6T SE	1000	09.12/FT	★★★★★	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

What to consider: Boosting your TV audio

You've bought a new TV and discovered that the flat panel makes the sound a bit tinny and it lacks bass. What you need is something with a bit more grunt...

Soundbars

A soundbar is one option. Some will come with a separate subwoofer that sits on the floor for beefier bass and while inputs and outputs aren't plentiful, a few will have a combination of HDMI, coaxial and optical (but most soundbars don't). Some are wireless capable, with apps like Spotify available.

Soundbases

We've tested a number of soundbases in recent months and the idea of a one-box solution that sits under your telly is one that appeals if space is at a premium. Connectivity tends to be limited to a few inputs and Bluetooth, but the size of

the unit makes for a chunky, hefty sound. We expect the next generation of soundbases to be even better.

Hi-fi Speakers

Hi-fi loudspeakers tend to give you a better all-round sound at a higher price point but bear in mind that you'll need speaker cables and amplifier (to drive the speakers) too.

Powered Speakers

They're not the only options though. Powered speakers (which have amps built in) can do a similar job, are relatively small and some have optical/HDMI connections.

But not all speakers do. The Ruark Audio MR1 has a 3.5mm input and while connection to a TV is possible it's not as convenient.

Speaker Package

Or you can go the whole hog and plump for a surround sound package, upgrading your system from a stereo system to a fully-fledged home cinema set-up. Obviously this is dependent on space available and extra cost is a factor too but if you want that visceral home entertainment experience then a surround sound package is a fantastic option.

Soundbases are designed to sit under the TV; good if you need to save space



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Panasonic DMP-BDT260
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Soundbar
Philips HTL9100
£600 ★★★★★



Television
Samsung UE48H6400
£700 ★★★★★

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
Aurousal VS	1650	04.11/FT	★★★★★	When they're good, these Aurousal's are great	●	3	108x22x27
Analysis Audio Omega	14500	08.11/FT	★★★★★	These planar floorstanders are a sonic treat	●	1	168x61x6
ATC SCM 100A	11615	04.11/FT	★★★★★	Massively talented and proportioned	●	4	107x40x56
Beauhorn Rhapsody B2	2750	10.07/FT	★★★★★	Outlandish shape but treat them right and you'll be deeply rewarded	●	98	120x34x75
B&O BeoLab 9	5060	05.07/FT	★★★★★	Work not just as style but in hi-fi terms too	●	4	78x40x430
B&O BeoLab5	11000	10.08/FT	★★★★★	Active speakers with outlandish looks that sound fabulous	●	1	97x49x49
B&W 800 Diamond	18000	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Some of the best speakers money can buy	●	3	118x45x65
B&W 805 Diamond	3750	01.11/FT	★★★★★	Good, but easier to admire than really love	●	3	42x24x35
B&W PM1	1995	03.12/GT	★★★★★	Best standmounter £1500+, Awards 2011	●	1	33x19x30
Burmester B10	3220	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Well built, well refined and an engaging listen. We're in love	●	3	39x22x28
Dali Epicon 2	3750	01.13/FT	★★★★★	Reinforces Dali's reputation for making top-class speakers	●	3	39x21x37
Dali Epicon 8	11500	08.13/FT	★★★★★	Give them space and they'll deliver a muscular, enthusiastic sound	●	3	126x35x50
Dali Fazon F5	2700	12.11/FT	★★★★★	Stylish deliverers of audiophile sound	●	3	92x28x32
Dali Helicon 300 Mk2	2100	02.08/FT	★★★★★	Excellent midrange; woolly bass	●	2	44x21x40
Dali Mentor 6	2200	02.07/FT	★★★★★	Dynamic floorstanders that are really fast and agile	●	1	40x8x15
Dynaudio Confidence C1	5325	08.08/FT	★★★★★	Set up with care, the C1s are quite exceptional	●	4	45x20x43
Dynaudio Excite X32	1765	02.09/GT	★★★★★	These pack an eloquent, expansive sound	●	4	92x17x27
Dynaudio Focus 110A	1700	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Fun, flexible and hugely capable active speakers	●	6	31x17x32
Dynaudio Focus 160	1800	03.12/GT	★★★★★	Just do the job and don't intrude on the entertainment	●	6	35x20x29
Dynaudio Focus 220 Mk II	2630	10.09/FT	★★★★★	These Dynaudios are fine speakers; all they lack is a little star quality	●	4	98x21x30
Diapason Astera	6050	02.11/FT	★★★★★	Spellbinding performance with the right kind of music	●	1	38x26x44
Eclipse TD 510Z Mk2	3840	08.12/FT	★★★★★	Superb timing, detail and imaging	●	3	98x38x39
Eclipse TD 712z Mk2	6500	10.13/GT	★★★★★	They have a few compromises but their strengths can't be matched at any price	●	4	99x35x43
Focal Diablo Utopia	7686	12.12/FT	★★★★★	When it comes to levels of insight, little at this price even comes close	●	Any	43x26x43
Focal SM9	4580	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Intended for professional use, the SM9s work brilliantly as home speakers	●	1	32x49x39
Focal Easysa	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
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



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. Spendord7'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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hi-fi+

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SPENDOR

SPEAKERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Standmount Floorstander	Powered	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd,cm)
PMC Fact 3	4100	08.11/FT	★★★★★	Hugely caxpable but a touch overcontrolled	●		4	54x16x30
PMC Fact 8	4700	04.10/FT	★★★★★	These PMC floorstanders are quite simply magical - even at this price	●		4	103x15x38
PMCPB1i	5850	09.09/GT	★★★★★	Simply excellent speakers: big, bold and accomplished	●		1	108x20x40
PMCTwenty 22	1970	07.12/GT	★★★★★	Best standmounter £1500+, Awards 2013	●		4	41x18x37
PMCTwenty 23	2300	02.14/GT	★★★★★	Best floorstander £1500+, Awards 2013	●		4	92x15x33
PMCWafer 2	2295	02.12/GT	★★★★★	A real achievement for those after proper hi-fi			2	57x35x10
ProAc Response D18	2145	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Best floorstander £1500+, Awards 2011	●		6	93x19x27
ProAc Response D28	3250	07.07/FT	★★★★★	Another excellent pair of floorstanders from ProAc	●		6	108x20x29
ProAc Response D40/R	6125	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Articulate and dynamic, a top-class pair of floorstanders	●		6	120x21x34
ProAc Studio 140 Mk2	1650	12.10/FT	★★★★★	An entertaining and dynamic performer	●		4	104x19x28
Quad ESL-2812	6500	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Won't be to everyone's tastes but these electrostatic speakers truly excel	●		1	107x69x38
Quad ESL 2905	6000	01.07/FT	★★★★★	A truly world-class speaker	●		1	143x70x39
Tannoy Definition DC10T	5250	10.13/GT	★★★★★	While the DC10Ts aren't the most refined speakers out there, they're easy to love	●		3	113x34x32
Tannoy Precision 6.2	1700	10.13/GT	★★★★★	A beautifully balanced and hugely listenable pair of standmounters	●		3	100x31x28
Sonus F. Cremona Auditor M	2690	06.08/FT	★★★★★	One of the best standmounts money can buy	●		2	35x20x37
Sonus F. Liuto Monitor Wood	1649	01.10/FT	★★★★★	These are classy and natural standmounters	●		2	35x19x34
SP Acoustics SP1 Signature	14950	01.11/FT	★★★★★	Able to challenge the very best at this exalted level	●	Any		106x35x46
Spendor A5	1695	03.11/GT	★★★★★	The most accomplished speakers for this money	●		4	79x17x25
Spendor A6R	2500	02.14/GT	★★★★★	An outstanding pair of speakers that do very little wrong	●		5	87.5x19x28
Spendor D7	3500	10.13/GT	★★★★★	The finest Spendors in years	●		6	95x20x32
Tannoy Definition DC8	2500	03.12/GT	★★★★★	Capable of seriously controlled sound	●		3	47x27x26
Tannoy Precision 6.4	2200	02.14/GT	★★★★★	If bass is important to you, then these speakers are worth an audition	●		3	105x31x35
Totem 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
Vivid Audio V1.5	5250	11.09/FT	★★★★★	They might look odd, but these are a must hear	●		5	113x26x24
Wharfedale Jade-5	1650	01.12/ST	★★★★★	Floorstanders that pack immense power and poise	●		3	106x25x40
Wilson Audio Duette	11000	10.08/FT	★★★★★	One of the best pairs of speakers we've ever heard	●	Any		47x23x35
Wilson Audio Sophia 3	16500	10.13/GT	★★★★★	Expensive, but they deliver a stunning sound full of detail, dynamics and drive	●		7	105x35x48
Wilson Benesch A.C.T	8800	08.07/FT	★★★★★	Good looking, solid and superb sounding floorstanders	●		1	108x23x37
Wilson Benesch Trinity	4700	03.08/FT	★★★★★	An awful lot of technology and ability for the money	●		4	108x24x30

Go Wireless... build your own wireless desktop system

Wireless is getting better and better. Here are a few devices to get your wireless system up and running



A big hard drive to store your FLAC files is a plus

Computer

We've chosen the Apple Macbook but in truth any laptop/source will do, so long as it has enough space to store your library. We'd opt for lossless files such as FLAC rather than compressed MP3s for greater detail and compatibility.



Niftily, you can turn the MR1s into a portable wireless system by adding a £50 battery pack

Speakers

A recent *Group Test* winner (and an Award winner), it should go without saying that the Ruark Audio MR1s are a very talented pair of speakers indeed.

What they lack in versatility and inputs (Bluetooth and a sole 3.5mm input), they make up for in detail and delivery. Vocals are startlingly clear and immersive and with high quality aptX Bluetooth onboard, the MR1s boast a satisfying sound that belies their desktop origins.



The miniBlink goes in the opposite direction of some Bluetooth receivers, by delivering a buttery smooth presentation

Bluetooth

If you have music on your phone, PC/MAC then the Arcam miniBlink Bluetooth receiver is a great choice for wirelessly connecting to a conventional hi-fi set-up. The miniBlink delivers a smooth sound, registering all the detail and dynamics of a track without being clinical or reducing your tracks to bright sounding, harsh efforts. Pairing a device with it is simple and easy and it's aptX compatible too.



An excellent phone that also comes with noise-cancelling technology. Impressive.

Smartphone

We reviewed the Z2 in the current issue and were stunned by its build quality and screen but where it really excels for a smartphone is in its top notch sound. Its built-in speakers are better than most and the handset also features aptX Bluetooth, which produces a much better sound than standard Bluetooth.

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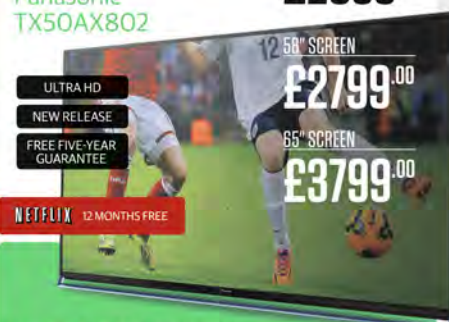
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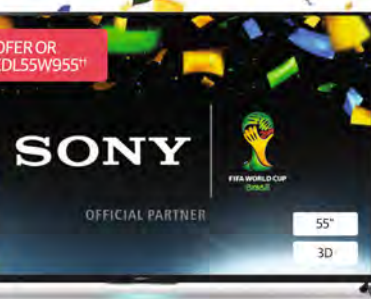
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Stereo amplifiers

Integrated These amplifiers combine a preamp and power section in one box
Power output A higher number usually means louder, depending on speakers
Digital inputs Some amplifiers now have a DAC built in, which could be useful

Our recommendations

Our recommendations					Power (w)	DAC	Line level in	MM phono in	MC phono in	USB in	Tape loops	Preamp out	Speakers out	Tone controls	Headphone out	Remote control	Finishes	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Product	£	Tested	Verdict															
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	05.13/ST	★★★★★	Best Stereo amp £500-£800, Awards 2013. 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	700	06.12/ST	★★★★★	Best stereo amp £600-£1000, Awards 2012	40		6	0	0		0	●	2		●	●	2	7x22x36
Cyrus 6XP	925	09.09/FT	★★★★★	Stereo amplifier Product of the Year, Awards 2010	40		6	0	0		1	●	2		●	●	2	7x22x36
Denon PMA-710	350	07.10/GT	★★★★★	The most enjoyable Denon amp we've heard in ages	50		5	1	0		2	●	2	●	●	●	2	12x43x21
Denon PMA-720AE	350	02.13/GT	★★★★★	Entertaining and capable, but sonically stubborn	50		4	1	0		1	●	1	●	●	●	2	12x43x31
Icon Audio Stereo 25	500	01.09/FT	★★★★★	The Stereo 25 is superbly made for the money	30		3	0	0		0		1				1	22x32x31
Marantz PM-KI Pearl Lite	900	12.10/FT	★★★★★	Decent performance at an affordable price	70		3	1	0		2	●	2	●	●	●	2	13x44x38
Marantz PM6004	310	01.12/ST	★★★★★	Product of the Year - Stereo amplifiers, Awards 2011	45		5	1	0		1	2	●	●	●	●	2	11x44x37
Marantz PM6005	300	05.14/GT	★★★★★	A shot across the bow to Marantz's rivals. An excellent system	45		5	1	0		1	2	●	●	●	●	2	11x44x37
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	05.14/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	11.13/FT	★★★★★	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	
Onkyo A-9050	350	02.13/GT	★★★★★	Lean presentation, but there's plenty to like	75		5	1	0		1	●	1	●	●	●	2	14x44x33
Peachtree iDecco	999	01.11/FT	★★★★★	Ideal for a digital based set-up	40		1	0	0	●	1	●	1		●	●	1	13x38x29
Pro-Ject Stereo Box S	200	11.11/FT	★★★★★	A small amp that's worth investigation	40		2	0	0		0	1			●	2	4x10x10	
Pioneer A-A6	350	03.08/FT	★★★★★	Among the most fluent amps under £500	45		3	1	0	●	1	1	●	●	●	●	2	10x42x36
Pioneer A-70	800	05.13/ST	★★★★★	Excels in many areas, falls short of class-leading	90		3	1	1	●	1	●	2	●	●	●	2	14x44x36
Rega Brio-R	480	06.12/ST	★★★★★	Best stereo amp £400-£600, Awards 2012	50		4	1	0		1	1			●	2	8x22x31	
Roksan Kandy K2	795	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Best stereo amp £700-£1000, Awards 2011	125		5	1	0		1	●	1		●	●	3	10x43x38
Roksan Kandy K2 BT	895	05.14/FT	★★★★★	Full of power and punch but some heart and soul is missing	140		5	1	0		1	●	1		●	●	2	11x43x38
Rotel RA-10	350	05.14/GT	★★★★★	Sounds good, but rivals offer more insight and better digital features	40		4	1	0		1	●	2	●	●	●	2	7x43x34
Rotel RA-12	600	05.13/ST	★★★★★	Well priced, appealing amp, just lacks a little expression	60	●	4	1	0	●	1	●	1	●	●	●	2	14x44x36
Wadia 151 PowerDAC Mini	999	02.12/FT	★★★★★	A compact digital amp with plenty of appeal	25	●	0	0	0	●	0	1			●	1	7x20x20	
Yamaha A-S300	195	04.11/FT	★★★★★	Solid performer but you can get better for a little more money	60		6	1	0		1	1	●	●	●	●	2	15x44x39
Yamaha A-S500	330	Aw.10/FT	★★★★★	Best stereo amplifier up to £500, Awards 2010.	85		3	1	0		2	2	●	●	●	●	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	1200	12.12/FT	★★★★★	Everything we've come to expect and love about Cyrus	70		5	0	0		1	●	2		●	●	2	7x22x36
Cyrus 8 DAC	1400	07.12/FT	★★★★★	Meticulous and engaging amp and DAC combo	70	●	6	0	0	●	0	2			●	●	2	7x22x36
Cyrus 8 XPD	1500	07.09/FT	★★★★★	Sets a sky-high standard at the price point	70		5	0	0	●	1	●	1		●	●	2	7x22x36
Cyrus 8XP	1250	11.09/GT	★★★★★	The Cyrus 8XP misses nothing out in sonic thrills	70		6	0	0		1	●	1		●	●	2	7x22x36
Cyrus DACXP Signature	2750	11.13/FT	★★★★★	With the Signature upgrade, the DACXP remains a fine product	70		2	0	0		1	●	1		●	●	2	7x22x36
Dartzeel CTH-8550	16858	05.10/FT	★★★★★	Well engineered - but with a colossal price tag	200		7	0	0		1	●	1		●	2	17x44x39	

AMPLIFIERS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Power	DAC	Line	MMp	MCp	USB	Tape	Preamp	Speakers	Tone	Head	Remote	Finish	Dimensions (hwd)
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 XS	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	3650	09.08/FT	★★★★★	An inspirational amp: wonderful with all music	110		6	0	0		1	2				●	1	15x48x22
Plinius Hautonga	4455	07.11/FT	★★★★★	A powerhouse of an integrated amplifier	200		5	1	1		2	●	1			●	2	12x45x50
Plinius Hiato	6759	08.09/FT	★★★★★	If you're after a top class amplifier the Hiato is for you	300		5	0	0		1	●	1			●	2	17x45x45
Quad II Classic Integrated	4500	04.10/FT	★★★★★	A fine integrated amplifier with a hefty price tag	25		3	1	1		1	1					1	20x31x38
Rega Osiris	5998	06.10/FT	★★★★★	A fine amp that makes sense partnering its Isis sibling	162		6	0	0		1	1				●	1	12x44x35
Rega Elicit-R	1600	10.13/GT	★★★★★	This is truly a fantastic amplifier	105		5	1	0		1	●	1			●	1	8x43x34
Roksan Caspian M2	1695	10.13/GT	★★★★★	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



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
ATCCA-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

Subscriptions 0844 848 8813 email: whathifi@servicehelpline.co.uk

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 Tautoro	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

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Type	Power (w)	Phono in	XLR in	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	Weight (kg)
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	18x43x32	28
ATC P1	1566	12.09/FT	★★★★★	A matchless power amp when paired with the CA-2 preamp	Stereo	150	1	1	14x44x35	26
Bryston 2B SST	2925	08.06/FT	★★★★★	Big, strong and very powerful	Stereo	100	1	0	49x13x41	14
Chord Electronics Maxx	990	05.11/FT	★★★★★	This could be a sign of hi-fi to come	Stereo	20	1	0	7x16x4	0.4
Chord Electronics SPM 1050	3990	10.07/FT	★★★★★	Very fast and punchy, exciting and stable sound	Stereo	200	2	2	13x42x36	15
Croft Polestar 1	800	06.07/FT	★★★★★	Great buy if you want sound quality not quantity	Stereo	25	1	0	11x22x33	6
Cyrus 8 Power	850	02.10/GT	★★★★★	Performs with panache, we'd spend our cash here	Stereo	60	3	0	7x22x36	5
Cyrus Mono X300	2500	04.11/FT	★★★★★	Exceptionally fluid and agile. Recommended	Stereo	235	1	1	7x22x36	7
Cyrus Mono X300 Signature	2750	10.13/FT	★★★★★	A deceptively compact monobloc that surpasses the Mono X300	Mono	225	1	1	8x22x37	6.5
Heed Audio 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
£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

"If you value high-volume capability, a massively wide dynamic range and the ability to analyse a recording to the nth degree, the Krell 402e combination is king"

November 2012

Peter Tyson

Audio Visual Experts

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Newcastle, NE3 2FP

E: sales@petertyson.co.uk
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The end for MP3?

If you own a half decent hi-fi system, using 'FLAC' instead of 'MP3' files could be music to everyone's ears

For those of us that consider themselves a music lover, albeit to different degrees, we are part of a very fortunate generation. We now have access to an ever-growing wealth of recorded music of extraordinary range and depth, effectively accumulated over the last 60 years. With the introduction of the microgroove LP record in the early 1950's, playback quality took a quantum leap forward and this also coincided with a far higher standard of recording techniques. Although further improvements have been made over the years, this was a watershed time that first introduced hi-fi as a reality.

Listening to music has many benefits

Hi-Fi is, of course, a means to an end – the reproduction of music. Many studies over the years have shown remarkable benefits for mankind through listening to music. Making music is intrinsic to all cultures and music is often used for various therapeutic purposes because it involves using the whole brain. It is believed to improve memory and intelligence, improve physical development and coordination, reduce stress and blood pressure, and even reduce levels of pain.

We now have literally millions of recorded music tracks available to us in all genres and many different formats. One trend over recent years, however, has been to deliberately downgrade the quality in order to offer quantity. The main culprits have been MP3 and AAC formats which were designed as a low cost form of delivery when download speeds were slow and computer chip memory was expensive. Neither now applies and both formats should be consigned to history

along with 78 rpm records and the 8-track cartridge. Unfortunately, such is the current market penetration of MP3 and AAC formats that many people today are listening to a considerably lower quality of music reproduction than their peers back in the 1970's.

Bach - my favourite!



Quality vs quantity

Let us explain. The maximum resolution from MP3 and AAC file formats, which are both highly compressed, is 320 kbps (kilobytes per second) which compares with CD quality of 1411 kbps. This means the resolution quality is less than a quarter of that provided by a standard CD. However, most MP3 or AAC files are downloaded over the internet and the most used download resolution is 128 kbps, which is around one-eleventh of CD quality. This should ring alarm bells. If you are only playing back these tracks on an iPod or mobile phone with a pair of earbuds, the quality may be irrelevant to

you. But if these tracks are your primary source of music, perhaps with an iPod dock into a decent hi-fi system, you are only making a very poor quality sound louder. Information is irretrievably lost and the full dynamic range is lacking. The quality will be very poor in contrast with a full resolution version even if you are completely unaware of the loss you are inflicting upon yourself. This can even affect the type of music listened to as most classical recordings downloaded as an MP3 or AAC file will have so much information missing, and all the complexities of the music lost, with the end result that the recording is reduced to just the essence of a tune.

What is the future of recorded music?

There are now positive signs for the future of recorded music. Audiophiles, or hi-fi connoisseurs, have been very important to the music industry as they are generally avid music lovers who aim to maximise their enjoyment by listening to music at its best quality level, which means the play-back of great recordings through hi-end hi-fi to achieve the most outstanding results. Without them, a main driver for quality would probably be removed from the music industry. They have always sought out quality but there is now an increasing awareness among the wider public of the serious deficiencies of the highly compressed formats. Full resolution audio streaming, as well as CD quality downloads, are already available and will surely become the eventual norm with this greater awareness of the tremendous quality benefit. Consumers will vote through their purchases and will seek out higher resolution recordings. Look at Qobuz for a new high-profile entry into this field who offer CD quality (16 bit/44.1 kHz FLAC) streaming for over 15 million tracks.

The benefits of using a specialist dealer

Specialist hi-fi dealers are also a significant driver for maintaining high quality in the music industry. Hi-end hi-fi very soon exposes poor quality recordings and specialist hi-fi dealers are constantly assessing the relative merits of different brands from manufacturers for potential stocking. With specialist hi-fi dealers, achieving the best system performance and seeking out the most outstanding combinations is almost invariably both their hobby and their livelihood. Without them, hi-fi manufacturers and potential customers would have to rely on the opinion of magazine reviewers to assess levels of performance – a notoriously unreliable decision making process. For specialist hi-fi dealers, their relationship with audiophiles and hi-fi connoisseurs is also crucial to them for, if they are to stay in business, they must satisfy the most discerning customers in the industry. The reality is that audiophiles and specialist hi-fi retailers (and the ones listed on this page represent the UK's finest) are essential to each other.

Specialist dealers know how to choose the products that combine as a superb system and how to get the best out of it by expert installation in the home. They also appreciate how exciting and involving music can be and how it can deliver a powerful emotional experience. If there's a price premium over an internet purchase by choosing a specialist dealer, it's probably a small one, but it's unquestionably worth the difference.

“...there is now an increasing awareness among the wider public of the serious deficiencies of the highly compressed formats. Full resolution audio streaming, as well as CD quality downloads, are already available and will surely become the eventual norm.”

Listed below is our selection of **THE BEST HI-FI DEALERS IN THE UK**. They have been chosen because they are known to do an excellent job in guiding customers towards hi-fi that will give years of musical enjoyment and total satisfaction.

Our Top 20 UK Hi-Fi Dealers

SOUTH

Ashford, Kent

SOUNDCRAFT HI-FI
40 High Street.
t: 01233 624441
www.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

Cheadle

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www.theaudioworks.co.uk

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www.theaudiroom.co.uk

York

SOUND ORGANISATION
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VERDICT ★ ★ ★ ★ ★





iPod docks

Docks with power _____ These are ready-made systems for your iPod and usually include speakers
Docks without power _____ These integrate an iPod into an existing system as a line level source

The shortlist



Bowers & Wilkins Zeppelin Air

"The Zeppelin Air sounds great, it has better features and sound quality is a step ahead of the original."



AWARD WINNER

Epoz Aktimate Micro

"If you want a pair of speakers to sit either side of your laptop, these are a brilliant performance-per-pound option."



JBL OnBeat Venue LT

"The JBL Venue LT dock delivers an exciting all-round performance and sets the bar at its position in the market."

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	AirPlay	Bluetooth	Docktype	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
Epoz Aktimate Micro	260	09.13/GT	★★★★★			iOS	●	40	24x15x20
Epoz AktiMate Mini	350	07.12/GT	★★★★★			iOS	●	40	30x19x21
Epoz AktiMate Mini+	360	08.13/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	40	30x19x21
Gear4 AirZone Series 1	200	04.12/ST	★★★★★	●		iOS	●	n/a	18x33x19
JBL OnBeat Venue LT	200	03.13/FT	★★★★★	●		iOS	●	30	13x42x14
Klipsch iGroove HG WWI	110	04.12/ST	★★★★★			iOS	●	30	14x40x16
KitSound Boom Dock	100	12.10/FT	★★★★★			iOS		60	15x42x28
Logitech S715i	80	04.12/ST	★★★★★			iOS	●	20	6x39x13
Logitech UE Air Speaker	300	06.12/FT	★★★★★	●		iOS	●	n/a	17x53x15
Marantz Consolette	700	05.13/FT	★★★★★	●		iOS		150	26x54x21
Orbitsound T12v3	299	12.11/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	180	10x61x11
Philips Fidelio Primo DS9	300	09.11/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	50	18x51x21
Philips Fidelio Primo DS9010	400	08.11/GT	★★★★★			iOS	●	100	21x56x23
Pure Digital Contour	200	04.11/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	40	23x37x18
Pure Digital Contour 100Di	100	04.12/ST	★★★★★			iOS	●	20	18x31x15
Pure Digital Contour 200i Air	200	09.12/FT	★★★★★	●		iOS	●	36	23x37x18
Revo K2	300	02.12/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	40	33x11x11
Ruark Audio R2i	280	09.09/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	20	12x34x18.5
TEAC SR-80iDAB	150	10.11/FT	★★★★★			iOS		20	18x39x21
£500 and above									
B&O BeoSound 8	895	03.11/FT	★★★★★			iOS		n/a	24x66x16
Bose SoundDock 10	699	08.11/GT	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	n/a	22x43x24
B&W Zeppelin Air	500	12.11/ST	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	150	17x54x21
Geneva Lab Model L	1000	08.09/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	100	29x45x37
Geneva Lab Model M	550	04.12/ST	★★★★★			iOS	●	50	20x37x25
Geneva Lab Model XL	1500	10.09/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	600	79x55x37
JBL OnBeat Xtreme	500	04.12/ST	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	120	23x44x24
Loewe AirSpeaker	500	01.13/FT	★★★★★		●	iOS	●	4x20	13x24x24
Philips Fidelio SS DS9800	700	05.12/FT	★★★★★			iOS	●	100	22x27x9
Pro-Ject DBS1	500	06.11/FT	★★★★★			iOS		n/a	4x10x11
Samsung DA-E750	600	10.12/FT	★★★★★		●	iOS/Android	●	100	15x45x24

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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



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

Cambridge Audio Minx Go

"The Minx Go is a terrific product for the money. As a way of filling a small or medium-sized room with your music at a quality that belies its size and price. It's a winner."



AWARD WINNER

Denon Cocoon Stream DSD-501

"The DSD-501 is a superb wireless speaker whose impressive feature count is matched by its equally polished sound quality. A worthy Award winner."



NEW ENTRY

Sony SRS-X9

"When you buy it, you're not just buying into hi-res but into a superb wireless speaker that can pretty much play whatever you want. The X9 really is a true wireless wonder."

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	AirPlay	Bluetooth	Aux	Charging	Battery	Dimensions (HWD, cm)
Up to £800									
Audio Pro Allroom Air One	500	08.13/FT	★★★★★						20x31x19
Bayan Audio SoundBook	150	01.14/GT	★★★★★						9x16x4
Bose SoundLink Mini	170	01.14/GT	★★★★★						5x18x6
B&W A5	400	08.13/GT	★★★★★						18x30x20
B&W A7	700	12.12/FT	★★★★★						22x36x16
Bose SoundLink Air	300	12.12/GT	★★★★★						17x31x10
Braven 625s	150	10.12/FT	★★★★★						6.5x5x16
Cambridge Audio Minx Air 100	330	10.13/ST	★★★★★						18x35x12
Cambridge Audio Minx Air 200	430	08.13/GT	★★★★★						45x22x17
Cambridge Audio Minx Go	100	08.13/FT	★★★★★						23x24x6
Dali Kubik Free	625	03.14/FT	★★★★★						31x15x15
Denon Cocoon Stream DSD-501	250	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★						24x45x17
Geneva Model S Wireless DAB+	330	10.13/ST	★★★★★						15x14x18
Harman/Kardon Go+Play	280	05.13/FT	★★★★★						24x50x23
Jawbone Big Jambox	260	09.12/FT	★★★★★						9x26x8
iLuv MobiOut	70	05.13/GT	★★★★★						0x0x0
JBL Charge	120	01.14/GT	★★★★★						18x7x7
JBL Flip	100	05.13/GT	★★★★★						0x0x0
JBL OnBeat Rumble	260	10.13/ST	★★★★★						17x45x22
Libratone Zipp	370	10.13/ST	★★★★★						26x12x12
Libratone Loop	400	12.13/FT	★★★★★						33x33x8
Loewe AirSpeaker	500	03.13/GT	★★★★★						24x13x24
Logitech UE Boombox	200	12.12/GT	★★★★★						16x39x8
Logitech UE Mobile Boombox	75	05.13/GT	★★★★★						6x7x11
Monitor Audio Airstream WS100	250	09.13/GT	★★★★★						13x12x12
Panasonic SC-NA10	130	01.14/GT	★★★★★						10x20x3
Philips Fidelio E2	300	06.14/ST	★★★★★						30.5x16x16
Philips Fidelio P9	240	03.13/FT	★★★★★						12x29x5
Pioneer XW-SMA4	350	12.12/GT	★★★★★						21x36x17
Pure Jongo S3	170	06.13/FT	★★★★★						13x13x14
Pure Jongo S3 (pair)	340	06.14/ST	★★★★★						13x13x14
Roth Oli POWA-5	250	06.14/ST	★★★★★						27x18x21
Sonos Play:1	170	01.14/FT	★★★★★						16x12x12
Sony RDP-XA700	285	03.13/GT	★★★★★						18x40x16
Sony SRS-X9	600	06.14/FT	★★★★★						13x43x13
Sony SRS-BTM8	85	05.13/GT	★★★★★						19x25x9
Ultimate Ears Boom	170	01.14/GT	★★★★★						16x6.5x6.5



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



AWARD WINNER
SoundMAGIC E10

"These are exceptional in-ears for the money, and the new affordable choice for those looking to upgrade those bundled buds."



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
AKG K451

"That character, combined with their excellent build and compact size, makes the K451s a must-audition pair of cans."



AWARD WINNER
Sennheiser Momentum

"They certainly aren't the cheapest, but their refreshingly balanced sound and great design makes them worth every penny."

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	In-ear	On-ear	Type	Noise cancelling	Wireless	Weight (g)
Up to £70									
AKG K451	50	10.12/GT	★★★★★	Best portable on-ears up to £100, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR			●	Closed	120
Audio Technica ATH-CK550	49	09.11/ST	★★★★★			●	Closed		8
Audio Technica ATH-CKS55i	45	08.12/GT	★★★★★			●	Closed		6
Audio Technica ATH-T400	50	11.10/FT	★★★★★			●	Closed		260
Apple EarPods	25	01.13/FT	★★★★★			●	Open		10
Beyerdynamic DTX101IE	65	01.12/GT	★★★★★	Best in-ears £40-£80, Awards 2013			●	Closed	11
Beyerdynamic DTX71IE	54	09.11/ST	★★★★★			●	Closed		11
dLogic EP-100	25	08.12/GT	★★★★★			●	Closed		117
Digital Silence DS-321D	60	09.11/ST	★★★★★			●	Closed	●	11
Etymotic Research MC5	57	01.12/GT	★★★★★			●	Closed	●	17
Grado iGrado	49	09.11/ST	★★★★★			●	Open		85
Jays a-Jays Four	50	12.11/FT	★★★★★			●	Closed		14
Jays t-Jays Two	67	09.11/ST	★★★★★			●	Closed		8
Ministry of Sound MOS003	30	12.11/GT	★★★★★			●	Closed		15
Mix-Style inner headphones	30	08.12/GT	★★★★★			●	Closed		13.5
Panasonic RP-HTX7	35	09.11/ST	★★★★★			●	Closed		153
Philips CitiScape Downtown	55	10.12/ST	★★★★★			●	Closed	●	174
RHA MA-350	30	12.11/GT	★★★★★			●	Closed	●	48
Sennheiser CX 300-II	30	09.10/GT	★★★★★			●	Closed		4
Sennheiser CX281	35	12.11/GT	★★★★★			●	Closed		16
Sennheiser CX495	35	08.12/GT	★★★★★			●	Closed		4
Sennheiser HD 202	26	02.11/FT	★★★★★			●	Closed		130
Sennheiser HD 218	40	11.09/FT	★★★★★			●	Closed		224
Sennheiser MM 70i	50	09.11/ST	★★★★★			●	Closed	●	12
Sennheiser PX100-II	40	11.10/FT	★★★★★			●	Open		80
Skullcandy Full Metal Jacket	65	07.10/FT	★★★★★			●	Closed		13
Slick Distributions SD50	30	10.12/ST	★★★★★			●	Closed	●	71
SoundMagic E10	35	10.12/GT	★★★★★	Best in-ears up to £40, Awards 2013			●	Closed	11
SoundMagic PL30	30	01.10/GT	★★★★★			●	Closed		10
SoundMagic PL50	50	02.10/FT	★★★★★			●	Closed		8
Sony MDR-570LP	30	08.10/GT	★★★★★			●	Closed		110
Sony MDR-AS40EX	24	03.09/GT	★★★★★			●	Closed		6
Sony MDR-EX500LP	45	09.10/GT	★★★★★			●	Closed		7
Vivanco Airc. Studio Monitors	50	12.10/GT	★★★★★			●	Closed		n/a

"As replacements for the Beyerdynamic T50Ps, the T51Ps are fantastic. A superbly entertaining, transparent-sounding pair of cans"

November 2013

HEADPHONES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	In-ear On-ear	Type	Noise cancelling Wireless	Weight (g)
£70 and above							
AKG K3003i	1000	04.12/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed		10
AKG K370	73	12.10/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed		4
AKG K450/HA450	180	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●	Closed		120
AKG K545	210	12.13/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed		280
AKG K550	200	02.12/ST	★★★★★	●	Closed		305
AKG K551	230	02.13/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed		305
AKG K845BT	250	02.14/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	292
AKG Q701	340	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●	Open		236
AKG Q460	140	02.11/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed		120
Audeze LCD-3	1725	02.14/GT	★★★★★	●	Open		548
Audio Technica ATH-A500	140	02.10/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed		290
Audio Technica ATH-AD700X	190	04.14/GT	★★★★★	●	Open		265
Audio Technica ATH-ANC1	80	06.10/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	100
Audio Technica ATH-CKX9IS	75	01.14/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed		10
Audio Technica ATH-ES55	90	09.11/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed		120
Audio Technica ATH-ES7	140	02.11/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed		160
Audio Technica ATH-ES88	230	02.12/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed		130
Audio Technica ATH-EW9	159	10.07/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed		33
Audio Technica ATH-M50	130	02.13/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed		284
Audio Technica ATH-W1000	650	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●	Closed		350
Audio Technica ATH-W1000X	650	07.10/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed		350
Audio Technica ATH-WS55i	89	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed		165
Beyerdynamic Custom One Pro	170	10.13/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed		290
Beyerdynamic DT880	200	06.09/GT	★★★★★	●	Open	● ●	340
Beyerdynamic DTX80	80	12.10/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed		12
Beyerdynamic MMX 101iE	95	01.14/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	11
Beyerdynamic T1	880	11.10/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed		350
Beyerdynamic T50P	230	02.12/ST	★★★★★	●	Closed		174
Beyerdynamic T51P	250	11.13/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed		174
Beyerdynamic T70	456	11.11/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed		330
Blackbox M10	90	12.10/FT	★★★★★	●	Open	●	180
Blackbox M10-RB	99	04.12/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	180
Blackbox i10	80	12.10/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	25
Bose AE2w	200	02.14/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	150
Bose MIE2i	120	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●	Closed		19
Bose QuietComfort 15	280	04.12/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed	●	227
B&W P3	170	08.12/FT	★★★★★	●	Closed		130
B&W P5	250	11.13/GT	★★★★★	●	Closed		195
B&W P7	330	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	●	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 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 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

HEADPHONES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	In-ear	On-ear	Type	Noise cancelling	Weight (g)
£70 and above								
Klipsch Image One	140	05.11/GT	★★★★★		●	Closed		138
Klipsch Image X7i	170	04.13/GT	★★★★★		●	Closed		16
Klipsch Image X10i	219	09.11/ST	★★★★★		●	Closed		320
Klipsch Mode M40	290	02.13/FT	★★★★★		●	Closed	●	356
Klipsch S4i	90	12.09/GT	★★★★★		●	Closed		12
Klipsch S5i	120	05.11/FT	★★★★★		●	Closed		12
Logitech UE 9000	300	03.13/GT	★★★★★			Closed	● ●	378
Lindy Premium Headphones	75	09.11/ST	★★★★★		●	Closed		225
Martin Logan Mikros 70	150	04.13/GT	★★★★★		●	Closed		13
Monster Beats by Dr Dre	280	03.10/GT	★★★★★		●	Closed	●	260
Monster Beats by Dre iBeats	80	03.11/GT	★★★★★		●	Closed		n/a
Monster Beats Pro by Dre	350	09.11/ST	★★★★★		●	Closed		299
Monster Gratitude	199	08.12/FT	★★★★★		●	Open		453
NAD Viso HP50	250	11.13/GT	★★★★★		●	Open		453
Nocs NS400 Titanium	80	01.12/GT	★★★★★		●	Closed		12
Onkyo ES-HF300	180	10.13/GT	★★★★★		●	Closed		240
Panasonic RP-HC101	82	04.12/GT	★★★★★		●	Closed	●	79
Parrot Zik	300	07.13/FT	★★★★★		●	Closed	● ●	352
Phonak Audeo PFE 022	80	03.11/GT	★★★★★		●	Closed	●	14
Phiaton MS300	150	02.12/ST	★★★★★		●	Closed		140
Philips Fidelio L1	230	05.12/FT	★★★★★		●	Closed		272
Philips Fidelio M1	125	10.13/GT	★★★★★		●	Closed		166
Philips Fidelio M1BT	250	02.14/GT	★★★★★		●	Closed	●	500
Philips Fidelio S1	70	01.14/GT	★★★★★		●	Closed		14
Philips Fidelio X1	200	04.14/GT	★★★★★		●	Open		430

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HEADPHONES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	In-ear	On-ear	Type	Noise cancelling	Wireless	Weight (g)
PSB M4U1	219	11.13/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			340
PSB M4U2	300	10.12/ST	★★★★★	●		Closed	●		362
Sennheiser CX880i	90	01.12/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			11
Sennheiser HD 380 Pro	110	02.10/GT	★★★★★		●	Closed			220
Sennheiser HD25-1 II Adidas	190	09.11/ST	★★★★★		●	Closed			140
Sennheiser HD 558	130	04.14/GT	★★★★★		●	Open			260
Sennheiser HD 598	190	02.12/ST	★★★★★		●	Open			270
Sennheiser HD 800	1000	10.09/GT	★★★★★		●	Open			350
Sennheiser IE 8i	260	03.11/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			18
Sennheiser IE 80	270	02.11/FT	★★★★★	●		Closed			5
Sennheiser IE 800	600	09.13/FT	★★★★★	●		Closed			8
Sennheiser MM 200	99	10.09/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed		●	28
Sennheiser MM 400-X	150	10.12/ST	★★★★★		●	Closed		●	105
Sennheiser MM 70s	70	01.14/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			13
Sennheiser Momentum	260	11.13/GT	★★★★★		●	Closed			190
Sennheiser Momentum On-ears	170	10.13/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			160
Sennheiser PXC 310 BT	190	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●		Closed	●	●	105
Sennheiser PXC310	200	02.11/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed	●		115
Sennheiser RS 160	115	05.10/GT	★★★★★		●	Closed		●	226
Sennheiser RS 180	185	05.10/GT	★★★★★		●	Open		●	204
Sennheiser RS 220	350	10.12/ST	★★★★★		●	Open		●	329
Sennheiser X 320	70	10.12/ST	★★★★★		●	Closed			280
Shure SE215	100	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●		Closed	●		30
Shure SE310	120	05.09/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			7
Shure SE425	200	04.13/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			32
Shure SE535	450	09.11/ST	★★★★★	●		Closed	●		272
Shure SE846	950	06.14/FT	★★★★★	●		Closed			36
Shure 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
Ultrasonics HFI-580	125	11.10/GT	★★★★★		●	Closed			285
Ultrasonics HFI-780	160	02.12/ST	★★★★★		●	Open			285
Ultimate Ears Super Fi 5vi	110	12.09/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			14
V-moda Crossfade M-80	160	10.12/ST	★★★★★		●	Closed			200
V-moda Remix Remote	70	12.10/GT	★★★★★	●		Closed			17

Headphones: What to consider?

Know you over-ear from your open-backed cans? Here's a simple guide to the differences between each one.

Open-backed or closed?

Open-backed designs tend to leak your music to the outside world but deliver what many people say is a more natural, transparent sound. That's fine for running, but not too sociable at work or on the train. For commuting, look for a closed-back design that seals in the sound. AKG's K550s (right) are a fine choice for those looking to keep their choice of music to themselves.



Hugely capable, the K550s handle tempos in a natural, unforced manner

Over-ear or in-ear?

Over-ears tend to be better for power and openness, but good earphones are still more than worthy. Smartphones come with their own, basic brand but we'd upgrade to the SoundMagic E10s for a better experience. Over-ears are ideal for a long journey where noise is always high. Look for a noise-cancelling option to shut the snorers out if you can find a pair at a suitable price.



The E10s aren't as bassy as some others but they have a tighter, faster sound



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	★★★★★	No matter what the source, the CEOL Piccolo will play all your music in superb style	●	●			●	●	●
Denon CEOL RCD-N8	350	02.14/FT	★★★★★	An attractive option if you're looking for a compact system that does a bit of everything	●	●	●		●	●	●
Denon D-M39DAB	310	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Best music system up to £400, Awards 2013	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Onkyo CR-N755	300	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	Best networked micro system, Awards 2012	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Panasonic SC-HC55DB	240	11.11/FT	★★★★★	Great specs and a great sound too	●	●	●	●			●
Panasonic SC-PMX9DB	450	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Well-featured but its laid-back sound makes it a solid buy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Pioneer X-HM70	350	03.12/GT	★★★★★	Not flawless, but gets much right	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Pioneer X-SMC5-K	300	02.12/FT	★★★★★	An excellent jack of all trades	●	●		●	●	●	●
Sony CMT-G1BiP	400	12.11/FT	★★★★★	Capable and fun to listen to	●		●	●	●	●	●
TEAC CR-H258i	230	08.10/GT	★★★★★	Big in heart and low in price	●		●	●	●	●	●
Teufel Impaq 40	299	08.10/GT	★★★★★	No frills but near-faultless sound for the money	●		●	●	●	●	●
Yamaha MCR-140	275	09.10/FT	★★★★★	Large portfolio of functions and it sounds good	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Yamaha MCR-232	300	12.13/GT	★★★★★	Harsh treble docks it a star but it's an impressively compact micro system	●		●	●	●	●	●
Yamaha MCR-550	280	03.11/FT	★★★★★	Ditch the speakers, the CD/receiver is top-notch	●		●	●	●	●	●
Yamaha MCR-555	380	10.11/GT	★★★★★	Vastly improved over the original	●		●	●	●	●	●
£500 and above											
Aura Note Premier	1500	05.10/FT	★★★★★	A fine sounding all in one system	●	●			●	●	●
Arcam Solo Neo	1350	09.10/FT	★★★★★	Extra functionality over the original Solo - great buy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Camb. A. Sonata DR30/CD30	550	10.09/FT	★★★★★	Decent, but the performance doesn't hit the heights	●	●	●	●			●
Cabasse Stream3	850	07.13/FT	★★★★★	Hardware is great but the app needs developing	●	●	●		●	●	
Consonance F. City - Ping	1495	08.08/FT	★★★★★	Delightful CD receiver in one box	●	●		●			
Lyngdorf Digital 2.2 System	12350	05.10/FT	★★★★★	Not without its flaws, but a system worth a look	●	●			●	●	
Linn Majik DSM	2965	02.13/FT	★★★★★	A thoughtfully designed system and a pleasure to use	●	●	●		●	●	●
Marantz M-CR610	500	11.13/FT	★★★★★	Best music system £400-£800, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Naim Uniti	2670	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Best Network Music Player £1500+, Awards 2010	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Naim UnitiQute	1600	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Systems Product of the Year, Awards 2010	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Pioneer P1DAB	550	07.13/FT	★★★★★	Great sound for a sensible price	●		●	●	●	●	●
Ruark Audio R4i	599	07.11/FT	★★★★★	Best all-in-one music system, Awards 2012	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Sony CMT-G2BNiP	500	04.12/FT	★★★★★	A solid performer in every respect	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
TEAC CR-H700DAB	550	10.11/GT	★★★★★	Great - but not a total all-rounder	●	●	●	●	●	●	●



Surround systems

This category includes a wide variety of systems. Most include a disc drive and now tend to feature video and music streaming capabilities. The speakers supplied tend to either be small satellite designs, or towers that usually provide greater scale and sonic authority.

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Blu-ray	3D Blu-ray	DVD	Streaming	Optical in	HDMI in	Channels
Up to £500										
LG HX906PA	425	07.11/GT	★★★★★	Talented enough to warrant an audition	●	●	●		1	2 5.1
Panasonic SC-BTT460	350	06.13/FT	★★★★★	No HDMI inputs but still a cracking system	●	●	●		1	0 5.1
Philips HTS5563	400	08.12/GT	★★★★★	A super budget solution	●	●	●		1	2 5.1
Pioneer BCS-SC626	400	01.12/GT	★★★★★	Great features, with tough competition	●	●	●		2	2 2.1
Q Acoustics Q-TV2	330	11.09/FT	★★★★★	A great way of boosting poor sound on your TV					1	0 2.1
Samsung HT-E5530	450	08.12/GT	★★★★★	Plenty of bang for your bucks	●	●	●		1	2 5.1
Sony BDV-E380	400	07.11/GT	★★★★★	A fine system for the money	●	●	●		1	2 5.1
Sony BDV-N590	400	09.12/FT	★★★★★	Best cinema system, Awards 2012	●	●	●		1	2 5.1

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SURROUND SYSTEMS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Blu-ray	3D Blu-ray	DVD	Streaming	Optical in	HDMI in	Channels
£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-BF7800	600	10.11/GT	★★★★★	A neat and well-priced all-in-one option	●	●	●	1	0	2.1
Panasonic SC-BT735	600	08.10/GT	★★★★★	Good Blu-ray system but lacks polish	●	●	●	2	0	5.1
Panasonic SC-BT590	500	08.12/GT	★★★★★	An excellent all-in-one Blu-ray system	●	●	●	1	2	5.1
Sony BDV-N7100W	600	09.13/FT	★★★★★	Best cinema system, Awards 2013	●	●	●	1	2	5.1
£1000 and above										
Harman-Kardon BDS 477	1100	01.13/FT	★★★★★	A jack of all trades that's pretty good	●	●	●	0	3	2.1
Harman-Kardon BDS-800	1300	05.11/FT	★★★★★	A simple, compact and effective system	●	●	●	1	0	5.1
Meridian G95	3995	12.07/GT	★★★★★	Top performer with sound and vision	●	●	●	2	0	5.1



Soundbars

One-box speaker systems that include amplification, and are a great alternative to a full-on home cinema package if you don't have much space. Few soundbars include a Blu-ray player as standard.

The shortlist



Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Disc drive	Smart	Ext. subwoofer	HDMI in	Optical in	Co-axial in	RCA in	Dimensions (hwd, cm)
Up to £1500											
Bowers & Wilkins Panorama 2	1650	09.13/GT	★★★★★	An improvement on the original	●	3	1	0			13x110x18
Cambridge Audio Minix TV	200	02.14/FT	★★★★★	A soundbase that delivers an exciting sound at a great price		0	1	0			8x43x38
Canton DM 50	400	02.14/FT	★★★★★	With gorgeous sound and looks, the DM 50 justifies its price		0	1	1			6.5x54.5x30
Canton DM 90.2	1100	09.13/GT	★★★★★	Thunderous sound but needs a bit more refinement	●	0	2	2			15x90x30
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/FT	★★★★★	An enjoyable performer with some impressive features		3	1	1			8x94x39
Monitor Audio ASB-2	1000	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 HTL5120	250	03.14/ST	★★★★★	A stonking soundbar for only £250		2	1	0			154x1010x81
Philips HTL9100	600	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	Best soundbar £400-£800, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	●	2	1	1			7x103x16
Pioneer SBXN700	350	05.14/GT	★★★★★	A talented subwoofer with an exhaustive feature set	●	●	0	2	0		9x90x12
Sandström S42SWLH13	150	03.14/ST	★★★★★	A great-looking soundbar with plenty of connections	●	2	1	0			113x900x48
Samsung HW-E551	400	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Decent sound in a versatile package	●	2	1	0			104x5x5
Samsung HT-E8200	500	11.12/FT	★★★★★	If it's convenience you crave, this is pretty alluring	●	●	2	1	0		10x104x13
Sonos Playbar	600	05.13/FT	★★★★★	An impressive soundbar that produces fantastic surround sound	●	0	1	0			9x90x14
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-5100	1300	10.10/FT	★★★★★	So impressive it may even persuade some owners of full 5.1 systems to trade-in		4	2	1	●		21x120x9



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 O3HD	900	12.10/FT	★★★★★	A great music server that's nearly excellent	500GB	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	24/192	●
Raumfeld 3Raumfeld	1680	Aw.10/FT	★★★★★	A fabulous product to make Sonos sweat	160GB	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	24/96	●



Media streamers

These access the music or video files you have stored on your network. Check for file compatibility and decent control apps that improve usability.

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	HDMI out	Optical out	Co-axial out	HDMI in	Optical in	Co-axial in	USB in	Wireless	Resolution (bit/kHz)	Video
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	●
Cambridge Audio NP30	430	05.12/ST	★★★★★	Still worthy, but there's better around	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	24/96	●
Denon DNP-720AE	250	02.12/GT	★★★★★	A bargain for its features	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	24/192	●
LG ST600	130	07.11/GT	★★★★★	With more apps it could be a class king	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	20/48	●
Marantz NA7004	430	05.12/ST	★★★★★	Unique, flexible and packed with dynamics	0	1	1	0	1	1	2	24/96	●
Netgear NeoTV 550	150	07.11/GT	★★★★★	Decent enough if you know what you're doing	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	24/192	●
Now TV	10	10.13/FT	★★★★★	Oodles of free and premium content makes this a great upgrade for a 'dumb' TV	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	16/48	●
Popcorn PopBox 3D	140	10.11/FT	★★★★★	A Swiss Army Knife of streaming	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	16/48	●
Pure Jonga T2	130	11.13/FT	★★★★★	Cheaper than Sonos but comes with a few niggles	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16/48	●
QED uPlay Stream	150	03.14/FT	★★★★★	A handy device that boasts decent sound and good features	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24/196	●
Roku 2XS	100	06.12/GT	★★★★★	A family friendly streamer	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	16/48	●
Sonos Play 3	259	12.11/ST	★★★★★	A cracking little performer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16/44.1	●
Sonos Play 5	349	12.11/ST	★★★★★	An ideal one-box network player	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16/44.1	●
Sony NSZ-GS7	180	11.12/FT	★★★★★	Good first Google TV device but needs more apps	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	24/48	●
Sony SMP-N100	120	07.11/GT	★★★★★	A fine mixture of paid-for and catch-up content	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	24/96	●
Sony SMP-N200	100	06.12/GT	★★★★★	A competent and easy to use device	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	24/192	●
ViewSonic VMP72	117	04.10/GT	★★★★★	A decent streamer at a good price	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	24/96	●

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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
£500-£1000					
Cambridge Audio Minxi	600	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Easy to use, well built and sounds great. A terrific streamer	0 0 0 0 1 1 1 ● 24/96
Camb. Audio Stream Magic 6	700	08.12/FT	★★★★★	Best streamer £600-£1000, Awards 2013	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. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	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 Lyric 09	3000	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Controversial looks aside, the Lyric is a really strong sonic performer	0 0 0 0 2 2 3 ● 24/192
Cyrus Stream XP	2000	12.11/ST	★★★★★	Best streamer £1000-£2500, Awards 2011	0 0 1 0 2 3 1 ● 24/192
Cyrus Streamline	1600	08.11/GT	★★★★★	Best streaming system up to £2000, Awards 2011	0 0 1 0 2 3 1 ● 24/192
Cyrus Stream XP2-Qx	2300	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	Best streaming system £2000+, Awards 2013	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 Product of the Year, Awards 2010	0 0 1 0 2 2 1 ● 24/192
Naim UnitiQute 2	1150	09.13/FT	★★★★★	Best music system £800-£1500, Awards 2013	0 0 1 0 2 2 1 ● 32/192
Pixel Magic Lumin	5000	02.14/FT	★★★★★	A fine player that leads the field in terms of file compatibility	1 0 1 0 0 0 2 ● 24/192
Sony HAP-Z1ES	2000	02.14/FT	★★★★★	A smartly designed, superb-sounding piece of hi-fi	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 ● 24/192
T+A MP 1260R	2700	12.10/FT	★★★★★	Amazing – this is proper high-end hi-fi	0 0 1 0 1 1 1 ● 24/192
Yamaha NP-S2000	1400	01.12/ST	★★★★★	Network streamer – a solid piece of hi-fi hardware	0 1 1 1 0 1 1 ● 24/96

Multi-room: An introduction

Multi-room streaming is set to become a lot more popular in 2014 but what exactly is it and how do you stand to benefit from a multi-room set-up?

We would generally classify a multi-room set-up as one that allows the user the ability to share or stream content from a source (smartphone, tablet, PC or NAS drive, for example) to different zones (or receivers) around the house.

The number of zones you have will dictate the number of streaming options available. Some multi-room set-ups are rather limited in what you can do with them, while others (such as Sonos) allow for a lot of freedom in how you want to set your system up.

Most wireless speakers need to be within a certain range of the music source to work (around 10m), and so as long as the receiver is in range then grouping your speakers together should not be too much of a problem and in most cases can be done via an app. You can link by

using your home mains network through a series of adapters too. But do remember that each speaker will add to cost of a multi-room system and they're not cheap. A two system speaker can set you back £400 and a more extensive set-up that covers several rooms can set you back thousands of pounds.

Conveniently the majority of devices can stream via wi-fi (local network) and Bluetooth while some companies feature their own proprietary technology such as Apple's AirPlay or Sonos' own wireless protocol.

There's freedom to play content source locally (i.e. digital files stored on a hard drive/NAS device) or from integrated third party apps such as Google Play Music or Spotify although you'll have to pay a subscription to access third party apps.



And the music? The ability with some multi-room players to play different music in each zone is a useful one but the really clever feature is synchronising your music across a number of devices, meaning you can pause one, walk to another, and continue where you left off. Despite that, a multi-room set-up won't best a dedicated hi-fi separate in terms of sound quality.

And very few set-ups support 24-bit/192kHz playback files and considering the bandwidth required you may be better off listening to a separate system that supports it.

In terms of convenience though, you'll be hard pressed to find a better solution to listening to your music without having to move your hi-fi gear from room to room.

Multi-room apps



Sonos, free

Available on Android and iOS, this app features support from Spotify and Google Play Music All Access. An updated version is available.



Pure Connect, free

Provides free access to radio stations, on-demand radio shows and podcasts. It features Pure's own music subscription service too.



Set-top boxes

Freeview	Large choice of digital TV channels via a rooftop aerial
Freesat	Much like Freeview, but takes signal from a satellite dish
Subscription	Services from Sky and Virgin give a vast array of premium content

The shortlist



AWARD WINNER

Humax DTR-T1010 (500GB)

"The Humax DTR-T1010 doesn't go in for the bells and whistles. But you know what? We don't mind. This box does what it does extremely well."



AWARD WINNER

Humax HDR-1000S (500GB)

"If great sound, superb picture quality and one of the most user-friendly TV experiences out there sounds like everything you want from a PVR, the HDR-1000s is the one to get."



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

Sky+ HD 2TB

"The Sky+ HD delivers excellent picture and sound quality as ever: the 1080i HD pictures are crisp and vibrant, while standard-definition content is generally clean and stable."

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Freeview	Freesat	Sky	Virgin	YouView	Tuners	Hard drive capacity (GB)	HDMI out	Smart
Up to £500												
Equinix Tizi	150	03.11/FT	★★★★★	●					1	n/a	0	
Humax DTR-T1000	230	10.12/FT	★★★★★					●	2	500	1	
Humax DTR-T1010 (500GB)	230	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★					●	2	500	1	
Humax Foxxsat HDR	300	04.10/GT	★★★★★		●				2	320	1	
Humax HD-FOXT2	100	07.10/GT	★★★★★	●					1	n/a	1	
Humax HDR-1000S (500GB)	220	01.13/FT	★★★★★		●				2	500	1	
Icecrypt T2400 (2TB)	330	01.12/FT	★★★★★	●					2	2TB	1	
Panasonic DMR-PWT500	350	01.12/FT	★★★★★	●					2	320	1	●
Philips DTR-5520	150	07.10/GT	★★★★★	●					2	n/a	1	
Philips HDT8520	270	09.10/GT	★★★★★	●					2	500	1	
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 HDF5	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	●

What system? TV On-demand



Grey's Anatomy BT TV

With a library the broadcaster claims features 5500 titles including US (*Grey's Anatomy*) and UK (BBC's *Being Human*) TV shows, it's not quite as current as the others. You can increase the selection available with bolt-on packages.



Game of Thrones Sky

The biggest, broadest and most comprehensive collection of TV box sets on demand with the broadcaster claiming to have 200 titles available to its customers. They include hits such as *Game of Thrones*, *Hannibal* & *Mad Men*.



Doctor Who Virgin Media

Some content overlaps with Sky but on the whole it's a decent slate. Virgin XL customers benefit from increased access. *Doctor Who* fans (or Whovians to the uninitiated) can be content with seasons 1-6 available on the service.



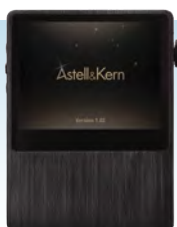
Music/video players

A category of products that has been put under increasing pressure by the rise of the ubiquitous smartphone. At the most basic level it will be a standard music player that can be use in the gym. Higher-end machines will add video, internet browsing and apps as well.

The shortlist



Apple iPod Touch



Astell & Kern AK100 MkII



Sony NWZ-NX1

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Screen size (in)	Resolution	Storage (GB)	Webbrowsing	Dimensions (hwd, mm)
Up to £1000								
Astell & Kern AK100 MkII	700	04.14/GT	★★★★★	A few design issues mar a very talented performer	2.5	320x240	32	79x59x15
Apple iPod Classic 160GB	229	09.09/FT	★★★★★	Carry your entire music collection, uncompressed	2.5	320x240	160	60x100x14
Apple iPod Nano 16GB (2012)	130	01.13/FT	★★★★★	A simple, attractive, music-playing wonder	2.5	240x240	16	77x40x5
Apple iPod Shuffle 2GB	40	12.11/GT	★★★★★	Simple and brilliantly effective	n/a	n/a	2	30x30x10
Apple iPod Touch 64GB (2012)	330	12.12/FT	★★★★★	Best iPod Touch so far, but it's fast becoming niche	4	1136x640	64	123x59x6
Archos 5 Internet Tablet	280	03.10/GT	★★★★★	A desirable media player with the occasional flaw	4.8	800x480	32	80x130x13
Cowon X7	200	02.11/FT	★★★★★	A genuine rival to the monopoly of Apple	4.3	480x272	120	127x79x15
Cowon Z2	200	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	A great music player with good sound and flexible storage	3.7	800x480	16	116x63x12
Creative Zen Style M100 4GB	35	12.11/GT	★★★★★	An ultra-portable player with punch	1.45	128x128	4	55x44x13
SanDisk Sansa Clip+ 8GB	40	12.11/GT	★★★★★	A worthy Apple alternative	1	96x96	8	60x40x20
Sony NWZ-F805 16GB	200	01.13/FT	★★★★★	This multimedia Walkman is a fine choice	3.5	800x400	16	115x57x9
Sony NWZ-ZX1	550	04.14/GT	★★★★★	A seriously impressive first attempt at a premium high-res audio player	4	854x480	128	123x61x16

How it works: PonoMusic

Kickstarted to the tune of \$6.2 million, PonoMusic promises a 'revolution' in how we listen to music. But just how will it work?

With its successful Kickstarter campaign behind it, the Neil Young-backed start-up is aiming for a 'revolution in music listening', that's a laudable cause for sure, but can it succeed?

Eschewing compressed MP3s and low-bitrate downloads, PonoMusic will offer a sizeable library of high-res music files, which will play on any compatible high-res audio player or, preferably for Young and co., the PonoPlayer.

There are two parts to the PonoMusic equation. The physical part is the PonoPlayer. Despite being shaped like a famous chocolate bar (a prism to be more exact), it's what's on the inside that counts

with this portable music player.

The PonoPlayer claims high-end components for top-quality sound, from a class-leading DAC to a natural-sounding digital filter.

A digital music ecosystem

The player will have 64GB of onboard storage with a removable MicroSD slot (an extra 64GB) bringing it to storage parity with Sony's NWZ-ZX1 high-res Walkman, albeit less than the Apple iPod Classic (160GB).

The second part of the equation is the PonoMusic online store, music app and desktop

The PonoPlayer can also be used with several other systems, including as an input for the Sonos Connect



music management software.

The pricing of albums has been set for America but there's been no word on any pricing outside the US, with \$15 to \$25 expected to be the sweet spot for lossless, DRM-free albums.

Due for a US release in October 2014, the PonoMusic venture aims to bring high-res audio to a larger, mainstream audience. We shall see.

Jargon buster: File formats

AAC: A compressed audio format that has a bitrate of 256kbps.

AIFF: A lossless, uncompressed format that's popular on Apple systems.

ALAC: Also known as Apple Lossless. It's a lossless data-compression format that works only with Apple devices.

FLAC: A lossless format that claims to offer no loss in audio quality. Also has the ability to embed metadata.

MP3: A compression system limited to 320kbps. Good for small hard drives.

WAV: A music file format that's used to store uncompressed audio.

Source	File types	Bit-rates
High-res audio	AIFF, ALAC, FLAC, WAV	from 2116 kbps, to 24-bit/192kHz
CD	Various	1411 kbps (16-bit/44.1 kHz)
Standard music download store	AAC, MP3	192-320 kbps (16-bit/44.1 kHz)



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	●	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 7	●	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	01.14/ST	★★★★★	Android	●	7	1920x1200	16/32	200x114x9	
Google Nexus 10	319	01.13/FT	★★★★★	Android	●	10	2560x1060	16/32	264x178x9	
LG G Pad	260	01.14/ST	★★★★★	Android	●	8.3	1920x1200	16	216x127x8	
Kobo Arc 16GB	160	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Android	●	7	1280x800	16/32	190x120x10	
Samsung Galaxy Note 10.1	450	02.14/FT	★★★★★	Android	●	10.1	2500x1600	16/32/64	171x243x8	
Samsung Galaxy Tab 2 7.0	160	04.13/GT	★★★★★	Android	●	7	1024x600	8/16	190x120x10	
Sony Xperia Tablet S	330	04.13/FT	★★★★★	Android	●	9.4	1280x800	16/32	240x170x10	
Sony Xperia Tablet Z	399	06.13/FT	★★★★★	Android	●	10.1	1920x1200	16/32	172x266x69	
Tesco Hudl	120	01.14/FT	★★★★★	Android	●	7	1440x900	16	192x129x10	

Which OS? iOS

So many tablets, so very few operating systems. Each one is good but what, exactly, are they good at? First up is iOS...

When you think of mobile operating systems, Apple iOS is probably the first that comes to mind. With the release of the seventh version last year, the staleness of previous iterations has been wiped away with a brighter, more transparent look.

Like it or not, iOS is slick and fast with a simple, uncluttered interface. Whether it's through a swipe, double tap or multi-finger gestures, you can navigate the many apps (one million plus), a number

that only Android can rival. We'd temper its advantage with the notion that you wouldn't use too many apps but, then again, more is better.

iOS 7 has brought many improvements to Apple's own apps with Control Center bringing easy access to your settings and both the Messaging and Mail apps overhauled. It still has faults elsewhere though. Siri, Apple's voice recognition assistant, remains inconsistent and the Maps app can frustrate.

If it's entertainment you're looking for then you'll find a wealth of it to sate your appetite. With the iTunes Store, iOS has a comprehensive entertainment centre that covers, music, ebooks, films, podcasts, TV shows and much more without breaking into a sweat. Film downloads are available in 1080p (you can rent and buy in standard definition



Developers tend to adopt iOS as their main platform, leading to apps being released on iOS before Android

too), and music at a bitrate of 256kbps (AAC format, ALAC is still not available through the store). Some tracks have also been encoded using the 'Mastered for iTunes' software, which some claim produces higher sound quality.

In terms of productivity apps Apple has a wide range that includes Microsoft Office, Adobe's Creative suite, Google Docs' online storage lockers such as Dropbox, Google Drive, and Microsoft's OneDrive. And with Apple's own creativity apps such as GarageBand, KeyNote and Numbers, there's a variety of options to choose from.

iOS exclusive apps



Facetime, free

A video messaging app that allows users converse over wi-fi/mobile networks.



Garageband, free

A free music creation app that gives users the tools to make music without any instruments whatsoever.



iTunes, free

The ubiquitous music/video store. A one-stop pit-stop for entertainment content.

Apple Maps is getting better but it's still behind Google Maps





Smartphones

Android	Offers great flexibility and innovation
Apple iOS	Fantastic ease of use; massive choice of quality apps
Windows	New kid on the block. Watch this space

The shortlist



Apple iPhone 5S

"Finding a smartphone that innovates while still getting all the basics right isn't always as easy as you'd expect, but the iPhone 5s has nailed it."



Sony Xperia Z2

"The Z2 is one of the best phones money can buy. Is it the best Android can offer? Possibly. The Xperia Z2 is the one to beat, doing everything right. It's magnificent."



HTC One (M8)

"The HTC One (M8) is a resounding success, building on one of the best phones of last year and making it even better. We like this phone alot."

Also consider

Also consider									
Product	Tested	Verdict	OS	NFC	4G	Screen size (in)	Resolution	Storage (GB)	Dimensions (hwd, mm)
Apple iPhone 4S	07.12/ST	★★★★★	Former reigning smartphone, now replaced but still good	iOS		3.5	960x640	16/32/64	115x59x9
Apple iPhone 5S	Aw.13/FT	★★★★★	Best smartphone, Awards 2013. PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	iOS	●	4.0	1136x640	16/32/64	124x59x8
Google Nexus 4	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A top performer and a brilliant realisation of Android power	Android		4.7	1280x768	8/16	134x69x9
Google Nexus 5	01.14/FT	★★★★★	A powerhouse of a phone in every respect	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)	06.14/FT	★★★★★	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	12.13/FT	★★★★★	Unbridled power and thoughtful design: a fantastic phone	Android	● ●	5.2	1920x1080	16/32	139x71x9
LG G Flex	05.14/FT	★★★★★	All the pros of the G2, but with a low-res screen	Android	● ●	6	1280x720	32	161x82x8
Nokia Lumia 920	07.13/GT	★★★★★	A promising start for Nokia's flagship	Windows	●	4.5	1280x768	32	130x71x11
Nokia Lumia 925	09.13/FT	★★★★★	The best Windows Phone yet	Windows	●	4.5	1280x768	16/32	129x71x9
Nokia Lumia 1520	05.14/ST	★★★★★	Apps still disappoint but this is the best Windows Phone yet	Windows	● ●	6	1920x1080	32	163x85x9
Oppo N1	05.14/ST	★★★★★	Quirky and flexible, this is a great effort from a promising brand	Android	● ●	5.9	1920x1080	16/32	171x83x9
Samsung Galaxy Nexus	07.12/ST	★★★★★	Great in many ways but pipped by rivals for audio	Android		4.65	1280x720	16/32	136x68x9
Samsung Galaxy Note	07.12/ST	★★★★★	A hybrid between a smart phone and a tablet	Android		5.29	1280x800	16/32	147x83x10
Samsung Galaxy Note II	01.13/ST	★★★★★	Massive screen, massive battery, very tempting	Android		5.55	1280x720	16/32/64	151x81x9
Samsung Galaxy Note III	05.14/ST	★★★★★	The original phablet, updated and still the best	Android	● ●	5.7	1920x1080	32	151x80x8
Samsung Galaxy S II	01.12/GT	★★★★★	Still great but upped by the new kids on the block	Android		4.3	800x480	16/32/64	125x66x8
Samsung Galaxy S III	08.12/FT	★★★★★	Best smartphone, Awards 2012	Android		4.8	1280x720	16/32	137x71x9
Samsung Galaxy S4	07.13/GT	★★★★★	Better than its predecessor but not as good as its rivals	Android	●	5.0	1920x1080	16/32/64	137x70x8
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

"The LG G2 is a brilliant phone... a stunning display, ergonomic design, clever features, excellent camera, and power on tap"

November 2013



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	★★★★★	Agutsy, well built HDMI cable.	1 1.3
Philex Thor HDMI/DVI kit	60	09.06/FT	★★★★★	A very decent cable for not much cash - you can't really go wrong	5 1.3
QED HDMI-P	50	11.08/FT	★★★★★	This award winning cable just got better	1 1.3
QED Performance HDMI	70	03.09/GT	★★★★★	Capable performer - finely balanced sound and a wonderfully rendered picture	3 1.3
QED Performance HDMI-e	35	03.11/FT	★★★★★	Perfectly good cable that just falls down in its pricing	1 1.4
QED Perf. HDMI-e S/speed	60	11.10/FT	★★★★★	Communicates a superb and natural colour balance and virtually noise-free images	2 1.4
QED Profile HDMI	25	01.12/FT	★★★★★	Now with 1.4 status, this is still a worthy cable	1 1.4
QED Qunex HDMI-P (5M)	75	09.08/GT	★★★★★	Fantastic picture quality mated with a dynamic and powerful sound	5 1.3
ThatCable HDMI	5	10.09/FT	★★★★★	Brilliant way to spend a fiver - will give rivals up to £20 something to think about	1.5 1.3
ThatCable HDMI (5m)	10	06.10/GT	★★★★★	A no-brainer for those on a tight budget	5 1.3a
Vivanco Prowire	45	10.10/GT	★★★★★	A fine cable that's worth seeking out	1.5 1.3
Vivanco Sound and Image	30	11.09/GT	★★★★★	A respectable upgrade, it provides greater fidelity in sound and vision over budget cables	2 1.3

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Wireworld Chroma 7 HDMI Cable



QED Reference Optical Quartz



Oehlbach XXL i-Connect IP-5/U



QED Signature Audio 40 Cable



AudioQuest Irish Red Sub Cable



Wireworld Oasis 7 Audio Cable



AudioQuest Cinnamon RJ/E Cable



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HDMI CABLES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Length as tested (m)	HDMI type
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

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WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2012

CABLES & ACCESSORIES
BEST HDMI CABLE
AUDIOQUEST PEARL



AudioQuest Pearl HDMI Cable

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2013

ACCESSORIES
BEST HIGH-SPEED CONNECT
ATLAS ELEMENT INTEGRA



Atlas Element Integra Audio Cable

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2012

CABLES & ACCESSORIES
BEST OPTICAL DIGITAL CABLE
QED PERFORMANCE GRAPHITE



QED Performance Optical Cable

NEW



AudioQuest DragonFly V1.2

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2013

PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
ACCESSORIES
AUDIOQUEST FLX-SLIP 14/4



AudioQuest FLX-SLIP 14/4 Cable

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2012

CABLES & ACCESSORIES
BEST COMBINATION DIGITAL CABLE
QED PERFORMANCE



QED Performance Digital Cable

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2012

CABLES & ACCESSORIES
BEST USB CABLE
SUPRA USB 2.0



Supra USB 2.0 Cable

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2010

CABLES
BEST MAINS CABLE
MERLIN TARANTULA MK6



Merlin Tarantula MK6 Mains Cable

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Digital interconnects

USB	An increasingly common way to connect your computer to your hi-fi
Optical	Digital cable that uses light to transmit sound between components
Coaxial	Sends audio via an electrical signal between your hi-fi and AV kit

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Type	Length tested (m)
Up to £50					
Audioquest Forest USB 1.5	25	11.10/FT	★★★★★	USB	1.5
Audioquest VDM-1	43	09.08/GT	★★★★★	Co-axial	1
Atlas Fibre Optic	32	06.09/GT	★★★★★	Optical	1
Ecosse The Producer	15	09.08/GT	★★★★★	Co-axial	0.8
Profigold PROI2102	30	03.11/FT	★★★★★	USB	2
QED Performance Coaxial	30	10.08/GT	★★★★★	Co-axial	1
QED Performance Graphite	40	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Optical	1
Supra USB 2.0	29	11.12/GT	★★★★★	USB	1
True Colours Industries Coral	35	06.09/GT	★★★★★	Optical	1
Wireworld Nova 6	40	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Optical	1
Wireworld Ultraviolet 5	40	04.07/GT	★★★★★	Co-axial	1
£50 and above					
Audioquest Cinnamon	60	11.12/FT	★★★★★	USB	1.5
Atlas Equator Optical	50	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Optical	1
Chord Company Optichord	51	11.12/GT	★★★★★	Optical	1
Chord Company Prodac	80	09.09/GT	★★★★★	Co-axial	1
Chord Co. Prodac Pro Digital	70	05.11/FT	★★★★★	Co-axial	1
Clearer Audio Copper-line 75	97	Aw.08/FT	★★★★★	Co-axial	1
Clearer Aud. Silverline Optimus	185	09.09/GT	★★★★★	Co-axial	0.5
Ecosse The Director SE	89	09.09/GT	★★★★★	Co-axial	1
Furutech Formula 2	55	Aw.11/FT	★★★★★	USB	1.2
Kimber USB	52	11.12/GT	★★★★★	USB	1
QED Qunex 75 Signature	80	09.09/FT	★★★★★	Co-axial	1
QED U Play (Bluetooth)	65	05.10/FT	★★★★★	Bluetooth	10
Vertere Pulse D-Fi	70	Aw.12/FT	★★★★★	USB	1
Wireworld Ultraviolet 5 USB	50	08.09/FT	★★★★★	USB	2



Analogue interconnects

These carry audio signal from source to amplifier, or between pre-amplifier and power amplifier. Some use a shielding construction to reduce external electrical interference.

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	RCA phono 3.5mm-to-RCA XLR (balanced)	Length tested (m)
Up to £50					
Atlas Element Integra (1m)	45	11.13/GT	★★★★★	●	1
Belkin Mini-Stereo Cable	13	12.08/GT	★★★★★		1.8
Black Rhodium Twist	36	06.14/GT	★★★★★	●	1
Clear. Aud. C-line Alpha One	30	12.11/FT	★★★★★	●	1
Ecosse Conductor CA1.2	49	06.11/GT	★★★★★	●	1
Ecosse The Composer	37	09.12/GT	★★★★★	●	0.8
Griffin Aux Audio Cable 3011	15	12.08/GT	★★★★★		1.8
Ixos XHA516-100 (1m)	40	09.07/FT	★★★★★	●	1
Merlin Mozart	40	09.12/GT	★★★★★	●	1
QED Audio 1	25	09.07/GT	★★★★★	●	1
QED Performance Audio 2	40	09.12/GT	★★★★★	●	1
QED Profile	18	06.11/GT	★★★★★	●	1
Wireworld Luna	37	09.12/GT	★★★★★	●	1

ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		RCA phono 3.5mm-to-RCA XLR (balanced) Length tested (m)
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
Black Rhodium Prelude	80	09.07/FT	★★★★★	Very good cable - sound is crisp and detailed, but still with lovely, chunky bass	● ● 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 iChord	50	12.08/GT	★★★★★	Expensive, but definitely worth it	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
Clear.Aud.C-line Alpha	85	09.08/FT	★★★★★	Entry-level - solid construction and a smooth sound. Not for sonic thrill seekers	● ● 1.8
Ecosse Maestro MA2	177	05.08/FT	★★★★★	The Maestro MA2 may be getting on years, but it remains appealing	● 0.8
Ecosse Nu Diva	140	09.05/FT	★★★★★	Not cheap, but they will take your listening experience to a new level	● 0.8
Ecosse The Baton Mk II	104	08.08/GT	★★★★★	Although there's much to admire, the Baton Mk II can struggle to gel sounds	● ● 0.8
Ecosse The Symphony	225	03.05/FT	★★★★★	Authoritative and detailed, a real all-rounder, but it is 10 percent too pricey	● ● 0.8
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
Russ Andrews GQ-24 UltPlate	73	12.08/GT	★★★★★	Best iPod cable, Awards 2010. Punchy cable for iPod or iPhone owners	1
QED Signature Audio S	190	09.09/FT	★★★★★	QED's new flagship interconnect offers great dynamics and punch	● 1
van den Hul The Bay C5	85	06.14/GT	★★★★★	For bright-sounding systems The Bay could be the antidote	● 1
van den Hul The Name	60	09.12/GT	★★★★★	Energy and fun trump ultimate precision	● 0.8
van den Hul The Wave	100	01.09/FT	★★★★★	The Wave has a formidable array of talents and is one of the best cables at this kind of money	● 1
van den Hul The Well	100	06.11/GT	★★★★★	An ideal booster for thin sounding kit	● ● 1
Wireworld Oasis 6	130	06.11/GT	★★★★★	A truly splendid cable for kit worth £800-£1000	● ● 1



Mains products

IEC _____ Usually a three-pin connector used in most hi-fi (and kettles)
 Figure of 8 _____ Small, two-pin connector. Tends to be used on lower-priced products
 Blocks and conditioners _____ Multi-plug units, some of which attempt to filter noise out of the mains

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict		Cable Block Conditioner Figure of 8 (2-pin) IEC (3-pin) Number of sockets
Up to £100					
Clear.Aud. C-Line Alpha One	25	11.10/FT	★★★★★	A fine first stage mains cable upgrade	● ● n/a
Clear.Aud.C-L Alpha P/HUB	90	04.11/FT	★★★★★	Makes a noticeable difference, but not the last word in cohesion	● ● ● 6
Ecosse Big Orange MK2+	60	04.10/FT	★★★★★	Provides worthwhile gains in performance - and plenty of them	● ● n/a
Lindy 6-way	40	12.08/FT	★★★★★	For just £40, this conditioner is a bona fide system booster	● ● ● 6

Tacima™ CS929 Award winning mains conditioner

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION

★★★★★
Aug 2006

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MAINS PRODUCTS continued

MAINS PRODUCTScontinued					Cable Block	Conditioner	Figure of 8 (2-pin)	IEC (3-pin)	Number of sockets
Product	£	Tested	Verdict						
Up to £100									
Merlin Tarantula Figure '8'	40	01.11/GT	★★★★★	Incredible bang for your buck from Merlin	●	●			n/a
Merlin Tarantula MK6	40	11.10/FT	★★★★★	Best mains cable, Awards 2010. A good tweak for a hi-fi or AV system	●		●		n/a
Russ Andrews Powerkord-8	75	01.11/GT	★★★★★	An ideal choice for a simple upgrade	●		●		n/a
Tacima CS929	40	08.06/FT	★★★★★	Explicitly illustrates the gains a modest outlay can achieve		●		●	6
£100 and above									
Audioquest NRG 1.5	100	01.11/GT	★★★★★	A lively and precise cable that does much right	●		●		n/a
Atlas Eos	147	05.09/GT	★★★★★	Well-balanced, delivering impressive depth and scale	●				n/a
Clearer Audio Silver-line	150	07.06/FT	★★★★★	Capable of truly astonishing improvements	●				n/a
Furutech G-320AG	165	02.11/GT	★★★★★	A pricey but worthwhile addition to your set-up	●		●		n/a
Russ Andrews Powerlink	112	02.09/FT	★★★★★	A roaring success in many ways		●			4
R Andrews Ref P/Kord W350i	232	05.09/GT	★★★★★	If you have components costing £2000 upwards, consider this cable	●			●	n/a
R Andrews Sig P/Kord W350i	275	11.06/GT	★★★★★	Top mains cable that will really get a system purring	●			●	n/a
Russ Andrews X2	200	11.11/FT	★★★★★	Effective but suffers from a lack of sockets		●	●		2
Supra MD-06	150	07.08/FT	★★★★★	It adds clarity, but some might not like the leaner sound		●		●	6
van den Hul M/Server Hybrid	150	05.09/GT	★★★★★	Not boring or dull, but it's just too relaxed and safe sounding	●			●	n/a
Wireworld Stratus 52	100	08.10/FT	★★★★★	One of the best mains cables for this money	●			●	n/a



Speaker cables

These carry the audio signal from your amplifier to your speakers. Bi-wiring uses two runs of cables per speaker and can lead to improvements in the speakers' performance.

The shortlist



Wireworld Luna 7

£6.50/m

"The all-round ability of the Luna 7 means it should fit very well with a wide range of systems. This is a fine cable."



Talk Electronics Talk 3

£4/m

"This cable performs admirably with detail, dynamics and subtlety, while there's a lovely expressive midrange and firm bass too."



QED Revelation

£15/m

"If your system is good enough to make proper use of a cable like this, you won't be disappointed."

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Biwire
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 Element	3	11.09/FT	★★★★★	A fine budget upgrade, but you don't have to spend too much more to do quite a bit better
Atlas Equator 2.0 OFC	6	03.14/GT	★★★★★	Allows for an impressive sense of weight and power, but doesn't quite match its rivals

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

March 2014

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SPEAKER CABLES continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	
Chord Co. Carnival Silv. Screen	6	10.12/GT	★★★★★	Slightly overtaken by newer rivals, but still a mighty fine choice
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

£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 Revelation	15	04.10/GT	★★★★★	A fine cable that should be on your audition list
QED Silver Anniv. XT Biwire	10	10.06/GT	★★★★★	A clear class-leader with exceptional sonic transparency on display
van den Hul CS122	17	04.10/GT	★★★★★	Still great with subtleties, but rivals have caught up
van den Hul The Clearwater	10	03.14/GT	★★★★★	A cable with an impressive level of detail and clarity

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QED Silver Anniversary XT

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★★★★★
March 2014



Wireworld Luna 7 Speaker Cable

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
★★★★★
March 2014



Van Den Hul The Clearwater

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
★★★★★
July 2008



Atlas Hyper 2.0 Speaker Cable

WHAT HI-FI?
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AWARDS 2013
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
AUDIOQUEST FLX-SLIP 14/4



AudioQuest FLX-SLIP 14/4 Cable

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BOTTENHAMS
CHORD COMPANY
CARNIVAL SILVERSCREEN



Chord Carnival Silverscreen Cable

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
★★★★★
March 2014



QED Ruby Anniversary Evolution

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Speaker stands

Many stands are hollow and can be filled with sand or other similar heavy materials. This is to increase mass and dampening and the sonic benefit is tighter bass – although too much of it can be counter-productive and end up deadening the sound.

Our recommendations

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	Fillable	Finishes
Up to £5000						
Apollo A3/6	80	07.10/GT	★★★★★	Spacious and well-focused fillable stands	60x23x26	● 2
Atacama HMS2	200	07.09/FT	★★★★★	Retain detail and cohesion with these solid stands	60x31x31	● 1
Custom rc60 Deluxe	125	10.07/FT	★★★★★	This bespoke service has made a fine pair stands	60x20x25	5
Custom Design FS104 Sig.	200	09.11/GT	★★★★★	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
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
Soundstyle Z2	70	11.08/FT	★★★★★	Best sub-£100 speaker stand in Awards 2007	57x17x23	● 2

"Tonal balance is a little lean, but the extra detail and panache in the sound outweighs this minor shortcoming and these Z2s firmly remain a five-star product"

November 2008

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Accessories

Best equipment support Atacama Eris Eco 5.0 £460

What it is

Here's a handsome, high-quality, modular equipment rack that offers superb isolation from vibration and sonic resonance for your electronics. It's made from steel and bamboo, which simultaneously maximises its chances of doing the job properly while keeping ecological considerations to the fore.

Why it won

The key is resonance and vibration control, of course, and put simply the Atacama Eris Eco 5.0 performs better than anything else we've come across this year. Whatever the characteristics of your electronics – detail, dynamism, bass definition, whatever – it's given greater expression via the Eris Eco 5.0 than on any alternative. And the flexibility of the modular design means it can grow with your system.

To find out more:

Visit atacama-audio.co.uk
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Buy direct today:



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"



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

Our recommendations					Modular Shelves	Dimensions (hwd, cm)	Finishes
Product	£	Tested	Verdict				
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	339	11.09/GT	★★★★★	Still a good rack, but newer rivals offer more	2-5	Variablex60x55	3
Atacama Equinox AVI	380	05.07/FT	★★★★★	Neat solution to mount a TV above AV electronics	2	110x106x60	3
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
Custom Design Milan LCD3	350	09.08/FT	★★★★★	A stylish addition to Custom Design's catalogue	3	42x77x40	4
Custom Design Tokyo Hi-Fi 4	430	08.11/GT	★★★★★	A lightweight rack with immense potential	4	64x58x40	3
Hi Fi Racks Podium	460	08.11/GT	★★★★★	Best equipment support, Awards 2011	3	62x60x40	1
Hi Fi Racks Podium Slimline	350	03.13/FT	★★★★★	A simple rack design with pretty decent results	4	Variablex55x40	1
Quadraspire Q4evo	380	11.09/GT	★★★★★	A solid, cohesive and supremely affordable rack	4	Variablex59x39.5	8
Sonorous PL2200	280	09.08/FT	★★★★★	Classy looks and features	2	82x95x44	6
Target CL470	299	06.10/GT	★★★★★	For pure performance, this is a winner at this price	4	82x50x55	2
Techlink Ovid	200	04.07/GT	★★★★★	Perfect for a minimalist system in a trendy flat	3	32x95x40	4
£500-£1000							
Atacama Elite Eco 12.0	500	03.13/FT	★★★★★	Offers solid performance and flexibility	5	Variablex115x32	1
BDI Valera 9724	500	03.13/FT	★★★★★	Complicated to assemble but the results make it worthwhile	3	54x112x52	3
Hi Fi Racks Akorner XL	930	09.12/FT	★★★★★	A corner-friendly alternative to the Podium	3	45x110x40	6
Optimum Avion 8925	999	06.10/GT	★★★★★	Heavyweight, but likeable and good with sonics	3	57x127x56	3
Quadraspire Q4 Bamboo	500	03.13/FT	★★★★★	An all round performer. Easy to set up and excellent results	4	Variablex59x40	1
Quadraspire QAVM (Oak)	540	04.07/GT	★★★★★	Solid and rigid, delivers a fine performance	3	50x109x50	8
Quadraspire QAVX	560	12.07/FT	★★★★★	Supports a great big telly and expansive system	2	Variablex163x52	8
Quadraspire Sunoko Vent T	800	11.09/GT	★★★★★	A first-rate rack, that highlights subtleties	4	Variablex59x47	6
£1000 and more							
Audiophile Base StarBase	1180	12.06/GT	★★★★★	Exceptional, spectacular results with high end hi-fi	3	65x59x52	3
Hi Fi Racks Podium XL	1050	06.10/GT	★★★★★	A great performer: plenty of weight and dynamics	3	53x140x40	1
Spectral Closed CL1050	1100	07.07/FT	★★★★★	Fantastic build and style, plus numerous options	2	31x101x53	17
Spectral Closed CL1552	1800	07.07/GT	★★★★★	Awesome style and decent abilities - a great rack	6	VariablexVariablex53	16



Headphone amps

The headphone outputs on most products are usually afterthoughts and have had little care taken in trying to make them sound good. A dedicated headphone amp is a must if you want the best headphone sound.

Our recommendations

Our recommendations					Line level in 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
Graham Slee Voyager	180	02.09/FT	★★★★★	It might not be the most practical headphone amp ever, but it's packed with potential	1 2
Lehmann Black Cube Linear	750	07.09/FT	★★★★★	Deeply impressive device given the right system	1 1
Lehmann Rhineland	400	04.09/GT	★★★★★	Best headphone amplifier £300-£500, Awards 2010. Its user-friendly sound makes this a very wise buy	2 2

HEADPHONE AMPS continued

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	Line level in Outputs
Up to £1500				
Meridian Prime	1200	02.14/FT	★★★★★	A top-class headphone amp and a talented preamp to boot
Musical Fidelity V-CAN II	120	10.12/FT	★★★★★	Does enough right to be worth serious consideration
Pathos Aurium	850	08.13/FT	★★★★★	This amplifier is a top class choice



Phono amps

Dedicated units tend to sound better than the circuits integrated into amplifiers. Higher priced options usually allow for electrical optimisation for your cartridge, thus producing better results.

The shortlist



AWARD WINNER

Rega Fono MM MK2

Awards 2013: Best Phono stage



AWARD WINNER

Leema Elements

Awards 2011: Best Phono stage

**Graham Slee Gram Amp 2 Communicator**

£150

Also consider

Product	£	Tested	Verdict	MM	MC	Finishes	Dimensions (wxd, cm)
Up to £2000							
Cambridge Audio 651P	120	06.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	1	2.5x8x11
Creek Audio OBH-15	240	02.09/GT	★★★★★	●	●	1	6x10x15
Graham Slee Gr-Amp 2 Comm.	160	06.13/GT	★★★★★	●		1	7x10x25
Leema Elements	495	03.10/FT	★★★★★	●	●	2	5x11x10
Lehmann Black Cube	325	02.09/GT	★★★★★	●	●	1	5x11x11
Plinius Koru	2325	04.09/FT	★★★★★	●	●	2	9x45x40
Pro-Ject Phono Box S	120	06.13/GT	★★★★★	●	●	2	7x10x14
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					
Clearaudio Aurum Beta Mk II	360	04.11/GT	★★★★★	MM	2.2
Goldring 2100	92	05.10/GT	★★★★★	MM	1.7
Goldring 2500	224	03.09/GT	★★★★★	MM	1.7
Grado Prestige Silver	115	05.10/GT	★★★★★	MM	1.5
Nagaoka MP110	89	05.10/GT	★★★★★	MM	1.8
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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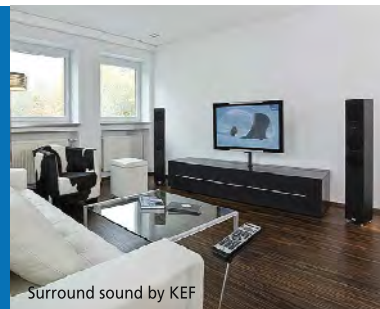
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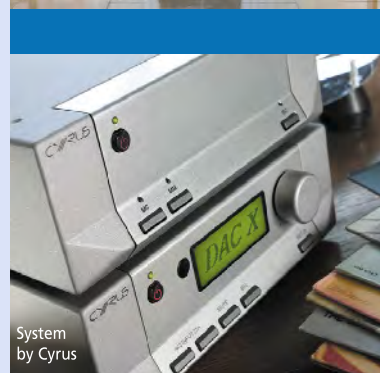
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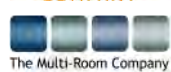
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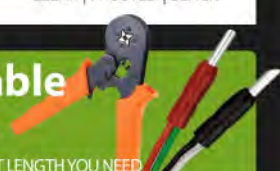
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0%
FINANCE
AVAILABLE

**MARANTZ 6005
CD & AMPLIFIER**
BLACK | SILVER

WHAT HI-FI?
★★★★★
MAY 2014



WHAT HI-FI?
★★★★★
DEC 2011

**ROKSAN KANDY,
K2 CD & AMPLIFIER**
BLACK | SILVER



WHAT HI-FI?
★★★★★
AWARDS 2010

**YAMAHA AS-500
AMPLIFIER**
BLACK | SILVER



**YAMAHA A-N500
CD & AMPLIFIER**
BLACK | SILVER

HI-FI SPEAKERS

THE LATEST AND GREATEST PAIRS OF LOUDSPEAKERS

**Q ACOUSTICS
CONCEPT 40**
BLACK | WHITE

WHAT HI-FI?
★★★★★
MAY 2014

AWARD-WINNING
'CONCEPT'
DESIGN



**MONITOR AUDIO
SILVER 10**
2 GLOSS
4 VENEER FINISHES

BEST FOR
LARGE ROOMS

**WHARFEDALE
DIAMOND 121**
3 FINISHES

WHAT HI-FI?
★★★★★
OCT 2013



DALI ZENSOR 1
3 FINISHES

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★★★★★
AUGUST 2011

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8-WAY



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ACOUSTIC FILL**
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DRAGONFLY v1.2**
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BLACK | WHITE



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AUDIO 40**
STEREO PHONO
RCA CABLE PAIR

**AUDIOQUEST
FLX-SLIP 14/4
SPEAKER CABLE**

**AUDIOQUEST
CINNAMON
HDMI CABLE**

**WIREWORLD
STARLIGHT
HDMI CABLE**

WHAT HI-FI?
★★★★★
NOV 2012

WHAT HI-FI?
★★★★★
AWARDS 2012

WHAT HI-FI?
★★★★★
JAN 2011

RE-DESIGNED
PLUGS

BLACK
OR GREY

LATEST
SPEC

LONG
LENGTHS
AVAILABLE



WIRELESS SPEAKERS

NO COMPLICATION, UTTERLY SIMPLE TO ENJOY

DALI KUBIK
RED | WHITE | BLACK



Q ACOUSTICS BT-3
RED | WHITE | BLACK



**MONITOR AUDIO
S300**
WHITE | BLACK



DENON ENVAYA
WHITE | BLACK



**GENEVA LABS
MODEL S**
RED | WHITE | BLACK

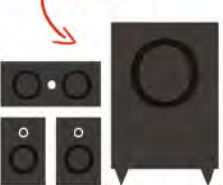


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THAT WAS THEN

Samsung PS-50Q7 Starting something big



VERDICT

Proof positive that whopping great flat-screens no longer need to cost the earth; a cracking budget choice

"This screen isn't flawless, but its clean, detailed, colourful picture represents phenomenal performance-per-pound"

THE LAST TIME we tested a 50in Samsung telly was way back in March 2005. The test-winning SP50L7HX was a rear-projection set, which we said was better than plasma in many ways. Now, it's this 50in plasma's turn to try its luck against the competition. Costing just less than £2500, it's over a grand cheaper than that rear-projection

POB

Invitingly priced; great colour balance; good detail; clean images; solid with motion

AGAINST

Some loss of detail in darkest blacks

VERDICT

Proof positive that whopping great flat-screens no longer need to cost the earth; a cracking budget choice

"The price is an indication of how quickly prices are dropping for ultra-big TVs"

model, an indication of how quickly prices are dropping for ultra-big sets. But does it have the performance? On paper, the claimed

adjustments to play with, including Low Noise Amplifier, for boosting a weak off-air signal, plus Digital Noise Reduction, which does what it says on the tin. Our screen came with a pedestal stand, and the PS-50Q7 is also wall-mountable. Watching TV via the built-in digital tuner, the picture is clean, and has a solid colour balance. There's no sign of noise either; the picture remaining commendably sharp at all times.

Brilliant quality at this price You get more of the same watching a DVD. *Training Day* offers plenty of opportunity for the Samsung to show

and it really shines, looking rich and refined. The icing on the cake is the PS-50Q7's price – it's a whopping £600 cheaper than the Pioneer.

This Samsung isn't flawless, but it offers a clean, detailed, colourful picture which represents quite phenomenal performance-per-pound. It truly brings massive television screens to the masses.

Test it with Training Day

A perennial on the test

Samsung wasn't always the all-dominating TV juggernaut it is today. As far as we're concerned it all kicked off with the PS-50Q7 plasma TV we reviewed back in October 2006.

Until then, Samsung was an also-ran in our tests. It got the occasional four-star review, but that was usually because it offered a decent set at an aggressive price, rather than having a product that could stand toe-to-toe with the best from Sony or Panasonic.

The PS-50Q7 started the change. This plasma still undercut rivals massively – it was £1600 cheaper than the mighty Pioneer PDP-506XDE – but it had a good picture too. This was a straightforward TV, like everything else on the market, and not a home entertainment hub in the way we expect now.

Fast forward to the curved UE65H8000 (see page 8) and it's obvious that Samsung has built strongly

on the PS-50Q7's foundation. The brand now leads the TV world as far as technology is concerned, and to a large degree sets the standard for performance at each price point.

It's a powerful position in the market place, one that many a rival will want to emulate. We wish them luck.



Learning curve: the new UE65H8000 shows Samsung has come a long way

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION

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