

Hifi Pig

Magazine

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OCTOBER 2014
Issue #11

REVIEWS

Schiit Lyr2 Pre/Headphone Amplifier and Bifrost DAC, Robson Acoustics' Opulus Prima Loudspeakers, CAD (Computer Audio Design) USB Cable, JIB - Krypton Balanced XLR Interconnects, Audiophile Inventory AUI ConverteR 48x44 Professional Ripping and Converting Software, Beyerdynamic T1 Headphones

PLUS Dealer System, Album Reviews, The Classics (Gram Parsons), Behind The Brands with Daniella Manger, Tipplers Corner (New)



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From Betamax to Pono, Hifi Pig columnist and classic rock guru John Scott discusses the multitude of formats we've seen and what it all means for the listener.

I was thinking the other day about all the different audio formats that have existed during my lifetime - ok yeah I know, there must have been something more useful I could have been doing instead. Well anyway, there have been (takes a deep breath): vinyl, reel to reel, 8 track, compact cassette, elcaset, DAT, DCC, Compact Disc, Minidisc, MP3, SACD, DVD-Audio and Bluray Audio. That's just off the top of my head, I might have missed a couple. Oh, wait; VHS Hifi - a video recorder that did audio recording as well. Was that a real thing or just a really bad dream I had after eating some particularly good Stilton?

Clearly, the audio industry loves a new format. Maybe it's their never ending search for sonic improvement. Or maybe it's the hope that we will keep buying new equipment and replace all our music over and over again. Probably, it's a bit of both. The truth is though that the general public hate to make a choice and then find out that they have backed the wrong side - hands up if you knew someone who bought a Betamax.

I thought that once I had decided to free my digital music from its physical constraints (do you remember that scene in Superman where a two dimensional general Zod is entrapped like a laminated desk aide and banished from Krypton?; that's kind of how I have always felt CDs treated music) then I wouldn't have to worry about formats any more. All I needed to think about was whether to rip to FLAC or wave and I was good to go. No sooner did I get all my CDs ripped (FLAC, thanks for asking) and settled into the roomy and luxurious surroundings of my external hard drive (I secretly suspect that like Woody and Buzz in Toy Story they

come alive when I am not looking and have all-night jam sessions and wild parties and throw things out of the Windows) than along comes DSD, which I know nothing about and do not understand in the slightest but I suspect will make me want to spend yet more money.

According to the CEA, hi res audio is: "lossless audio that is capable of reproducing the full range of sound from recordings that have been mastered from better than CD quality music sources."

CD provided a fairly lengthy period of stability but I have my suspicions that the CD's obituary has already been written and is on file, just awaiting its eventual demise. When that day does eventually arrive, the man in the street is going to have to make some decisions: does he go down the mp3/iPod dock route? Does he give up the idea of a physical collection and opt for an on-demand streaming subscription? Or does he rip all his CDs and maybe, just maybe get hooked into hi res audio?

My bet would be that the industry has its fingers crossed for the latter scenario. Perhaps with this in mind, not to mention the impending Pono launch and

Apple's rumoured plunge into the hi res pool, the American Consumer Electronics Association have attempted to provide some clarity around hi res digital standards by drawing up a set of definitions.

How much this will actually mean to the man in the street, or in fact how much they will care...

But have they actually made things clearer? Let's see. They've started off by providing a definition of hi res audio. No problem so far, that's a good place to start. According to the CEA, hi res audio is: "lossless audio that is capable of reproducing the full range of sound from recordings that have been mastered from

better than CD quality music sources."

Seems fair enough so far. Thanks CEA. They go on to break down that description into four categories under the banner "MQ" (Master Quality - they must've been up all night). Three of these categories seem fairly straightforward: MQ-P - a PCM master source 48 kHz/20 bit or higher (generally 96/24 or 192/24 content) MQ-A - an analogue master source and MQ-D - a DSD/DSF master source (generally 2.8 or 5.6 MHz content).

The fourth category is MQ-C - high-resolution audio "From a CD master source (44.1 kHz/16 bit content)". So, one of the "better than CD quality music sources" is a CD quality music source? Err, okay. I can only assume that this classification will continue to enable retailers to market upsampled CD quality masters as hi res but at least it will be clearer to potential purchasers that this is what they are buying.

How much this will actually mean to the man in the street, or in fact how much they will care, is open to debate but it's a step in the right direction, I think.

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This month's Dealer System comes from The Future Of Audio in Poole. We asked them to put together a sub £10 000 system that played all kinds of music in an exciting and controlled fashion.



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Parkstone, Poole, BH14 0AQ
01202 738882 or 02036 511194.**

Proprietor: Matthew Scott
info@thefutureofaudio.co.uk
www.thefutureofaudio.co.uk

Having approached The Future of Audio for, what they believe to be a good system for under £10K we asked Matt why he chose this system and what it gave him in the form of sonic performance and value for money, his response was: "At The Future of Audio the term hifi system is not restricted to just the hifi equipment. We offer the best sound we can, not just the best hifi. Hifi can

Dealer System

only perform at its best when correctly set up in the best environment. Therefore, we address set up and environment before choosing the hifi equipment. The system has decent mains supply, mains cables and the support methods are addressed. The complete system budget is under £8K for the equipment, mains cables interconnects and speaker cable, the hifi rack, isolation feet and speaker platforms.”

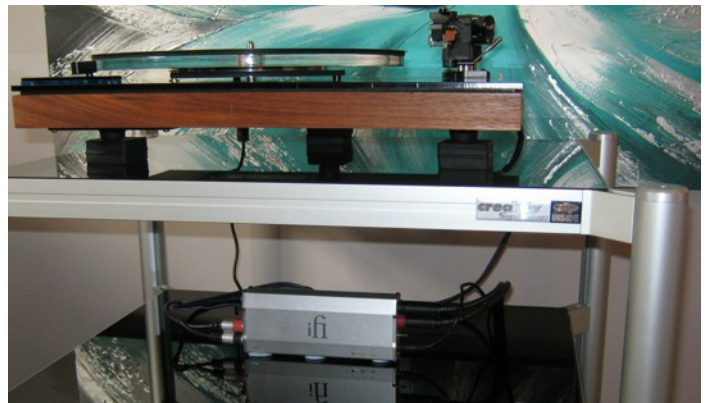


Matt used the Quadral Platinum M50 speakers on Track Audio's speaker platforms to isolate the unwanted energy from the cabinets from 'driving' the floor and limit this energy reaching the Creaktiv rack that housed the rest of the system; which allowed the Funk LSD turntable, which had an FX2 arm with an AT120 cartridge; Belles Soloist integrated amp and i-Fi phono stage to perform at its best. All equipment and speakers are connected with high quality Analysis Plus cabling.



The Future of Audio team believe that this 'ground up approach' removes any distortion, colouration or reflection but doesn't add anything or muffle the sound in this system leaving the recordings to be clearer and revealing more of the music and less "mush". "It simply produces a musical and emotional performance that I enjoy a great deal" says Matt.

“You feel connected with all the people involved in the production and performance of every recording played. It sounds real and can really ‘rock’ when needed”.



So how does this system perform specifically we asked? “It has power and delicacy as required and does not favour a particular genre of music. Tonally even from top to bottom with no nasty edges. Bass has excellent weight and extension with control and speed, which I would have expected from the Quadral speakers as I have always found them to be this way.”



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Dealer System

“The imaging, within the confines of the room, is superb in all dimensions; solo piano for example plays evenly left to right and not just left, middle and right. The music surrounds you and is not just casually presented in front of you. The Funk FX2 arm is a very significant upgrade over the standard F5 arm.”

“You feel connected with all the people involved in the production and performance of every recording played. It sounds real and can really ‘rock’ when needed”.

THE SYSTEM BREAKDOWN

Funk LSD/FX2/AT120 turntable/arm and cartridge

£685/£1300/£130

i-fi i-phono phono stage **£335**

Belles Soloist Integrated amplifier **£3200**

Quadral Platinum M50 speakers **£3150**

Track Audio Isolation Feet (4 for rack)

£395

Track Audio 350x400 Precision Speaker Platforms

£880

Creaktiv Hifi Rack **£1500**

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Serious Schiit



American manufacturer Schiit, yes it is pronounced like that, build all their range of kit in the US and still manage to keep prices pretty reasonable. Here Stuart and Linette Smith take a listen to the £340 LYR 2 high power headphone amplifier/preamplifier (*pictured above*) and the £395 Bifrost Digital To Analogue Converter.

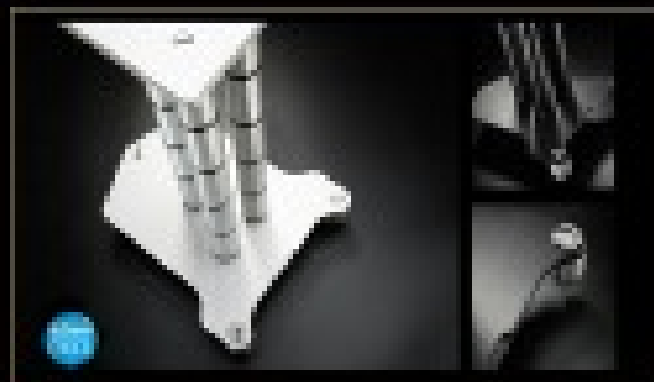


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Reviews

I like Schiit's attitude to their products and confess to using their entry level (£90 per box) [Modi USB DAC and Magni headphone amp](#) when listening none critically on my normal work desktop system. They're made in the USA, well made, attractive and offer very good value for money to my mind, and despite their name they have a solid history in the audio world - Jason Stoddard and Mike Moffat designed numerous well known products for Sumo before branching out on their own to launch Schiit. The entry level kit comes with a two year warranty, but the more expensive kit, like we're looking at here, comes with an impressive five year warranty. I also like their marketing spiel "Because you're an audiophile does not have to mean "born with a stick up your ass"

Here we have on test the Lyr 2 headphone amplifier and the Bifrost (with full blown USB 2 receiver) DAC which retail in the UK for £340 and £395. Both the units are substantially bigger than their entry level siblings, but still a good deal smaller than conventional hi-fi boxes and suitable for use on a desktop - they each measure 9 x 6 x 3.25 inches. All the bits and bobs in the boxes are surface mounted with the aim here being to keep prices down to affordable levels. The units are finished in brushed aluminium and look really rather nice I think.

Lyr 2

Lyr 2 is a high powered headphone amp offering up 6W into 32 ohms to 330mW into 600 making it suitable for just about any headphone you'd care to throw at it. In the box you get the attractive and distinctive Lyr 2 itself, a power cable, some little stick on feet and a pair of 6B7Z valves – the Lyr 2 can use any 6Dj8, 6922, ECC88, 6N23P and 6Bz7 tubes so that tube rollers can play to their hearts content, though I decided to stick with the stock Russian tubes in the box. The Lyr 2 uses a "Dynamically Adaptive Output Stage" which the company says is a "current sensing adaptive output technology which allows the amplifier to dynamically adjust to the headphone load. The Primary benefits are essentially single-ended Class A output for high-impedance headphones, moving seamlessly to push-pull Class A and finally into Class AB as current needs increase".

Set up is a simple case of inserting the valves, plugging in the IEC, turning the amp on and then connecting to a suitable source via the input RCAs. Also



around the back is a pair of RCA outlets (turned off when you plug in headphones) allowing you to connect to a power amplifier of your choice. You also get a gain setting switch for efficient or less efficient headphones and an on/off toggle switch. Move round the front and you have an LED to let you know the unit is powered up, a volume pot, a quarter inch headphone jack... and that's your lot.



The Lyr 2 has a few "upgrades" over its predecessor including a regulated 180V power supply for the valve stage, separate regulated power supplies for the current sources and DC Servo and regulated supplies for the DC heaters.

Bifrost

The USB input on this Bifrost uses C-Media CM6631 USB receiver interface and asynchronous data transfer of up to 24/192, but you also get the option to input via coaxial or optical. The D/A chip is an AKM4399 and rather than upsampling the Bifrost keeps samples at their original rate using adaptive master clock management system.



Round the back of the Bifrost you have the IEC power in, a power switch toggle, inputs for USB, Optical and SPDIF coaxial and a pair of RCA outputs to connect to your preamplifier. On the front you've got a button to cycle through the input selections and three LEDs to let you know what input you have selected.

Set up is a simple affair of downloading the Windows drivers, plugging in your input cables and connecting to your preamp/amp. J Player recognised the drivers and the Bifrost itself immediately and the whole set up procedure took no more than three or four minutes.



I'm moving over to a computer based system and so most of the listening will be done using the USB input using JRiver as the player, with some listening using the coaxial output from a pioneer DVD. Headphones used will be [Audeze LCD-XC](#) and when using the Lyr 2 as a preamplifier it will be fed into a TQ Iridium power amplifier.

Lyr 2 and Bifrost Paired Using Headphones

The first album off the virtual shelf was the excellent 2 Future 4 U by Amand Van Helden, a slab of funky

beats and deep bass which comes across here as nicely timed with snappy beats and a coherency across the frequency ranges that was really rather pleasing. There's punch to the sound but with no frequency range really dominating. I've been testing headphones and headphone amps out a lot over the last couple of months and it's to the pairing's credit that I didn't really miss the reference VAD DAC and my reference headphone amplifier on this type of music. Switching to the Tresor 109 compilation it's really hard to fault what the pairing is doing for just over £700. There's good separation of instruments in the mix, which is thrown wide and is stable. The combination give a slightly more analogue feel to the sound than I've encountered with some headphone/DAC combos. The slight softening of the sound will appeal to a good few and make the transition from an analogue front end to an all digital set up much more acceptable. This is not to suggest that the sound here is mushy or compromised, it's not, it's just not got that slight harshness at the frequency extremes that you can sometimes get with some DACs.

...for those with 700 quid to splash, then I reckon you'd be hard pushed to beat this duo when used with headphones.

On Fleetwood Mac's Songbird track there is a good sense of the recording space with the natural reverb on the piano being large and natural sounding, another area that can leave some cheaper DACs found wanting. In this area the Bifrost/Lyr 2 combo really do rather well when compared to the reference DAC and headphone amp, though there is a feeling of there being more spatial information being apparent with the, it has to be said, much more expensive references. This is evident also on Gil Shaham's 1930's Violin Concertos where it's pretty easy to get a good

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Reviews

sense of the orchestra in front of you and the recording space, but not as deep an insight as I'm used to. Could I live with it...well I suppose it's like anything isn't it, if you've heard something you consider to be the best then it's hard to move down the listening ladder, but for those with 700 quid to splash, then I reckon you'd be hard pushed to beat this duo when used with headphones.

On female vocals such as Kathryn Williams's Crown Electric and Mary Black's Best Of albums there's a silky smooth quality that is really addictive. Again there's a feeling of a slight softening, or warming to the sound in the mid frequencies that I really enjoyed with this kind of music. The combo will be popular with those that listen to the stereotypical audiophile recordings that prevail at shows, but that's not to say that the Shiit coupling can't rock out as proved on Pixie's Doolittle where there's enough power and oomph to satisfy, with that non-analytical feel to the sound that actually makes the combo really easy to listen to for long periods of time.

Lyr 2 in the Main Rig

Popping the Lyr 2 into the main system and using it as a preamplifier was a pleasant if not overwhelming experience, but then the pre it was replacing is the Coffman G1-A costing several thousands of dollars.

The soundstage is good, wide and deep with an ever so slight feeling that things are being slightly exaggerated. Instruments remain nice and stable and you get a good idea of where they are seated in the mix.

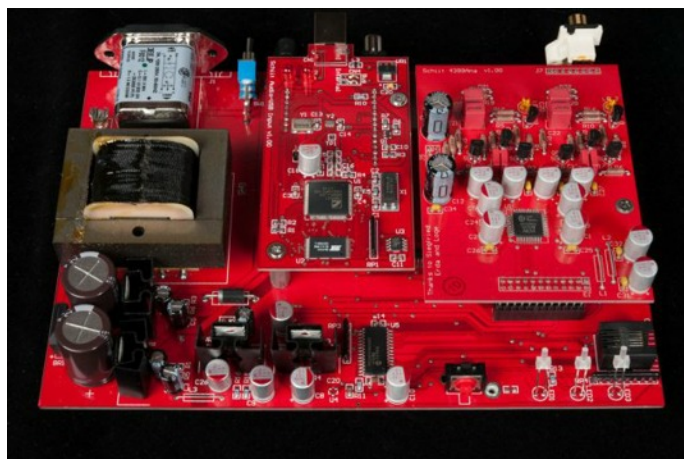
This is an easy to listen to preamplifier with the slight warming effect I noted previously and it has to be said that it performs very well for the money Shiit are asking you to pay. There's reasonable amounts of detail coming through when compared to the reference and there's good tonality...erring on the side of smoothness. In reality there's little really to criticise, but the Lyr 2 is a little out of its depth here, leaving me with a feeling that I'm not connecting with the music in the same way I would normally with the main pre in place. Sadly I don't have an entry level power amplifier in the house at the moment and so couldn't test the Lyr 2 in a setting it may be reasonably used in, but given its performance so far I'd say it would be a very decent choice for the money.

Plug in the headphones and the output to the main amp is cut. There's a sense that you are getting a rea-

Actually there's an addictiveness to this little DAC that belies its asking price. No, it doesn't have the overall finesse and poise of our reference, but it certainly does a very admirable job of connecting you with the music.

sonable deal of the VAD DAC's character, with the Lyr doing that slight softening thing again, particularly in the mid-band. However, when compared to the Beyerdynamic A20 headphone amplifier costing around £400 and in the same system it performs well, with the Shiit perhaps being more to my taste when listening to cans.

The Lyr drove all the cans I threw at it to loud volumes and with the Audeze headphones plugged in I found that going anywhere past 9 o'clock was too loud. I note here that the Lyr 2 does get very hot indeed and so this needs to be a consideration when placing it on your rack.



Reviews

Bifrost in the Main Rig

Again this is a bit of an unfair ask given the price-point of the Schiit DAC, but all in all it performed very well indeed. On Madonna's MDNA album there's a terrific drive to the sound, particularly in the lower frequencies and the play between drum tracks and basslines. There's a real feeling of pace and overall a big sound that is sure to bring a smile to your face.

The Schiit kit reviewed here offers great value for money and at the price point they offer a very high level of sound that most will fail to achieve. They are certainly a step up from many of the products I've heard at a similar price.

On more laidback tracks such as The Rolling Stone's Lady Jane, there's a warmth of the sound overall, particularly mids, but the plucked strings still manage to sound fast, precise and sparkly. Actually there's an addictiveness to this little DAC that belies its asking price. No, it doesn't have the overall finesse and poise of our reference, but it certainly does a very admirable job of connecting you with the music.

I've mentioned warmth quite a bit in the review of these two products, but I'd suggest that the Lyr 2 is responsible for the majority of this. The DAC is pretty well defined with a relatively transparent sound.

Soundstaging is pleasing and at the top end of the frequency scale hats sparkle nicely with good decay, whilst at the lower end of things there's good weight and punch. Mids are an area that I'd say are a little on the warmer side of neutral, but as a whole this warmth in this frequency band brings an ease to the listening experience that I really enjoyed. There is good layering and separation of instruments in the mix

Conclusion

The Schiit kit reviewed here offers great value for money and at the price point they offer a very high level of sound that most will fail to achieve. They are certainly a step up from many of the products I've heard at a similar price.

As a pairing when used as a desktop system for listening via headphones they are really very good indeed and despite being quite big for a workspace, they do look attractive and sound great.

As separate entities and for use in a main system, I have no qualms in heartily recommending each of the Schiit products reviewed here and they do punch well above their weight, but I would suggest that they are both best suited to ancillary equipment that is of a more relevant performance point.

Stuart Smith

Lyr 2

Build Quality – 8.5/10

Sound Quality – 8.25/10

Value For Money – 8.75/10

Overall – 8.5/10

Price at time of review – £340

Bifrost

Build Quality – 8.5/10

Sound Quality – 8.65/10

Value For Money – 8.9/10

Overall – 8.68/10

Price at time of review – £395

Both these products are recommended as offering no-nonsense solutions that offer good sound for a very reasonable asking price.

Having scored over 8.5 overall, both the Schiit Lyr 2 and the Bifrost will now go though for second review and the chance to gain an Outstanding Product Award.

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Robson Audio Opulus Prima

Hifi Pig

RECOMMENDED



Robson Audio are a British manufacturer who sell direct to the public. In this review Stuart Smith take a listen to their £750 Opulus Prima loudspeakers, a two way mini monitor design featuring a ribbon tweeter.

The Robson Audio Opulus Prima is a small monitor type loudspeaker with a rear firing bass port. They comprise of a 140mm Magnesium Alloy cone covering bass and mid frequencies and atop this driver sits a ribbon tweeter. The crossover is a second order affair. They really are a small speaker standing just 33cm high, with a width of 16cm and a depth of 20cm. They weigh in at 6Kg. The review sample came in a black textured paint finish that I'd initially assumed was some kind of leather/pleather covering, however, you can have them made in striking red and yellow colours too. Sensitivity-wise they're 86dB, are a nominal 8 Ohm load (minimum 50hms) and they will handle up to 150Watts.

Inside the speakers are wired with silver plated copper to the tweeter and copper for the woofer.

With their gold fittings they certainly look pretty stylish in an understated and classy kind of way and the lack of grilles is certainly no loss...I rarely put grilles on speakers anyway, preferring to see the drivers at work. For £750 (factory direct) I certainly think the fit and finish is above average and the nicely finished plate for the speaker binding posts really

I spent a good deal of time listening to these little speakers without really taking much notice, taking notes, or playing the test tracks I like to throw at speakers and I have to say that I thoroughly enjoyed them.

finishes them off – you don't see this in use obviously, but it's this attention to detail that inspires a degree of confidence even before firing the speakers up.

On their website, Robson ask if these could be the ultimate desktop speaker and I'm sure some may very well use them in this kind of nearfield situation, but for the duration of their stay here at Hifi Pig they were placed on our custom built 50cm stands...which were actually the perfect height when slouched in my Ikea chair, but I would suspect that for people listening from a standard height chair/settee then 65cm would be a better proposition. That said, their foot print is slightly smaller than the powered speakers I use on my desktop.

Initially we placed the Opulus speakers in our large main listening area and it was clear that they were a little out of their depth trying to fill this space effectively...it's a big space. Fortunately we have a smaller listening space off the main room which is more realistically proportioned at around 3m x 4.5m and it is here I did most of my listening. I had them firing down the length of the room, 150cm apart and around 20cm from the back wall, with the main listening position around 3m away. I believe this is a realistic position for these speakers and probably typical of the kind of environment they are likely to be used in.

Sound

I spent a good deal of time listening to these little speakers without really taking much notice, taking notes, or playing the test tracks I like to throw at speakers and I have to say that I thoroughly enjoyed them. Whilst my preference in the main listening room is for large floorstanders (or larger standmounts) I could perfectly happily live with the Opulus



Reviews

Primas in this smaller space. There's a really nice feeling of balance to the speakers that really lets you relax and get on with just listening to your tunes, whichever genre. I found myself delving further into my collection than I've been for a while and playing loads of different music (even some classical) and really connecting with it...which, the critical review process apart, is surely what hifi is all about. No, these little speakers don't do trouser flapping bass, but they do go pretty low and the bass is tuneful and fast...no one note wonders these!

Anyway, the "job" here is to try and pull these speakers apart by giving them something to challenge them and search out their strengths and weaknesses, so on with Left-field's Rhythm and Stealth album which has deep basslines aplenty. Actually it's surprising how much bass information these speakers convey. Phat Planet, which many will know from the Guinness adverts a few years ago, has complex beats and sub-basslines that can get quite confusing and incoherent on some loudspeakers. Not so here, the integration between that little woofer and the ribbon tweeter is seamless, offering up a sound that works as a whole, but still with the ability to pick out individual elements in the mix. On the dubby Chant of the Poor Man, I have to be fair and say that any more bass output would have been too much for the room. Soundstaging has decent depth and height, but does not extend massively beyond the sides of the speakers. Playing with toe in was interesting and I found the most pleasing image was when the speakers were firing directly at my head – slightly toed in...the classic set up. The feeling from a spatial point of view is very much like listening to a large speaker only on a smaller scale....if that makes sense. With electronic music I really expected the Opulus Primas to struggle, but they really don't and that tightness of the bass and the crisp top end really compliment this style of music. Within the stereo image individual elements in the mix are

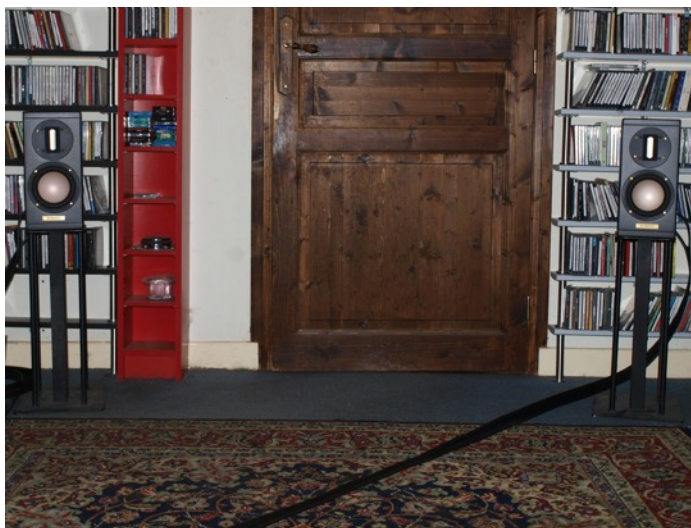
Whilst Merchant's voice is clearly the main event, the rhythm section's interplay and feeling of "integrated yet separate" sound the Primas give, adds pace and bounce to proceedings, with the tweeter rendering hi hats crisp and shimmer.

properly positioned, sit stable and it's easy to see why these are described as a "reference monitor" by Robson Acoustics.

Popping on the nicely produced, eponymous Natalie Merchant album there's that speed to the sound again...and a feeling of integration too. Whilst Merchant's voice is clearly the main event, the rhythm section's interplay and feeling of "integrated yet separate" sound the Primas give, adds pace and bounce to proceedings, with the tweeter rendering hi hats crisp and shimmer. Merchant's voice is rendered very nicely and accurately with the Primas seeming to add very little character of their own.

Regular readers will know that one of my pet hates is a sloppy/slow sound and this is where these little speakers really shine. Rage Against The Machine's Killing in the Name is a good example of a tune that can sound messy on some loudspeakers, but here it is punchy and hard hitting. Likewise Deep Purple's Smoke On The Water from their Made In Japan album with the grunty bass being well produced.

I mentioned the soundstage being quite narrow and not extending far beyond the speakers earlier, but put on Talvin Singh's Traveller from the OK album, where the width of the soundstage is exaggerated and it's all there. Jerry, who used to review for Hifi Pig, often said where a par-





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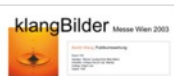
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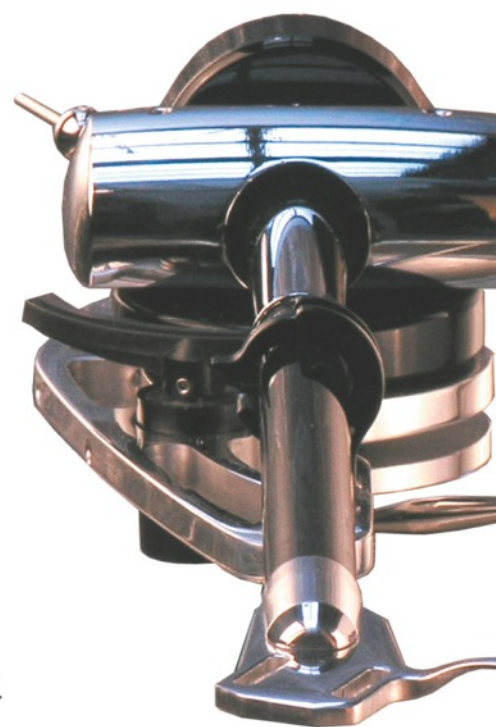


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ticular pair of speakers would make him feel he was sat in the concert hall and with the Opulus Primas I got the impression of being fairly far back in the hall with a clear stage being portrayed in front of me. Indeed, referring back to the Made In Japan album it's easy to "see" the musicians on the stage, or rather where they had been placed by the engineer on the desk.

Conclusion

This is a good loudspeaker when not pushed beyond its limits! In the right sized space it offers a level of refinement and coherency that should be applauded for the asking price. In the average sized living room, or smaller space, it will perform perfectly well.

The Opulus Prima's stand-out attributes are speed and integration and for these reasons it's a speaker that really appeals to my tastes. There's a distinct feel that you are listening to a quality near/mid-field monitor that has been refined and made fit for domestic use. There's an accuracy to the sound that really does deserve the monitor description.

Given my saying that these are accurate and monitor-like speaker, you'd be forgiven for thinking that they are clinical and fatiguing...they're not at all. On every kind of music I

threw at them they performed really well and I found myself listening for hours on end and just relaxing into the music.

All in all I heartily recommend the Opulus Primas, they sound great for such a small speaker, have surprisingly low, fast and tuneful bass and the way in which the woofer and tweeter integrate makes for a really entertaining and engrossing listen.

Stuart Smith

Build Quality – 8.15

Sound Quality – 8.25

Value For Money – 9.1

Overall – 8.5

The Opulus Prima loudspeakers are a good value for money, great sounding loudspeaker, which will suit listeners looking for a fast and detailed sound.

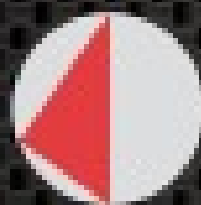
The Opulus Prima's will now go for second review to see if they will achieve Outstanding Product Award status.

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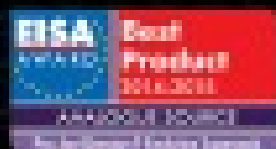
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Computer Audio Design USB Cable

This USB cable from UK company Computer Audio Design (CAD) uses separate data and power cables and costs £480 for a 1.1m length. Dan Worth takes a listen.

It has been somewhat of a bone of contention whether it is necessary to run external power supplies with USB cables. A couple of manufacturers/designers I have talked with state 'it's unnecessary if done correctly' and others say 'the computers dirty power needs to be removed and the USB chip should get the cleanest supply available'.

Now I'm no designer or technical whizz kid but I have listened to many USB cables and to these ears regardless of implementation I have found that USB cables display as much difference in sound reproduction as any other digital cables. Some I have experienced with separates PSU's have not sounded as good as the all in one design and vice versa, proving that implementation of each design from one end to the other is absolutely crucial.

Even though my Mac runs a couple of Paul Hynes' linear power supplies and its USB output power will be a lot cleaner than most systems, each of the aforementioned designs still have an effect as a whole on sound and I would not under any circumstances rule out the fact that an outboard PSU would now have no effect on overall performance.

Its nature is clean and clear in the top end and full and extended in the lower end.

Scott Barry's design of his USB cable without an external power supply is believed by him to be, after rigorous R&D, the most pleasing and best implementation of the cable that he could obtain. The cable has two wires - a data cable of thicker overall proportions and a separate power cable running externally of the main data cable.

There's no information about the internal structure of the cable and its conductors. Sometimes this is a

Reviews

good thing, not allowing people to have preconceived ideas about what a cable may sound like. I for one never do any research prior to getting a cable, or any other product for that matter, in for review, so I can judge its performance blind - so to speak.

...the well balanced nature of the CAD USB was very much at home with fast paced, heavy beats and searing treble, allowing a huge and airy soundstage to fill my entire room with pulsating and explosive dynamics.

The CAD Cable is well made, solid and flexible, there is plenty of strain relief to protect the annoyingly small solder tags of a USB plug (manufacturers note this point) making routing and connecting very simple compared to some other behemoths I own and have had in the past.

The Sound

Ed Sheeran's 'Runaway' from the 'X' album sounded totally authoritative, with distinctively projected and pure vocals that convey a touch of echo applied to the mic and a slap to the drum that produced a crystalline bass line, with punch and rhythm.

Ben Harpers 'Whipping Boy' proved that the CAD USB can definitely do texture. Its nature is clean and clear in the top end and full and extended in the lower end. Ben's playful, raspy guitar had all the presence of its acoustic chamber, the reverbs of its close environment coupled with that textured and detailed upper mid/treble, conveying a most organic and full frequency rendition of the reproduced instrument.



Chris Jones' 'Angel From Montgomery' is one of my truly favourite tracks and the CAD's ability to render the harmonics and lend its hand to maintaining the system's wide and tall soundstage was impeccable. A small negative was that I would have liked a bit more warmth in the upper bass, particularly with this track and my all ceramic drivers, which by their very nature require it. Vocals however started from a natural and true distance within the stage and projected with great clarity and control.

The CAD USB conveys such a 'satisfying' sound. The data retrieval abilities during complex passages is totally engrossing and never etched, exploring every part of the music without any brightness or analytical portrayal.

Moving onto some Dub Step, Tiesto, Mikado and Seb Fontain, showed that the well balanced nature of the CAD USB was very much at home with fast paced, heavy beats and searing treble, allowing a huge and airy soundstage to fill my entire room with pulsating and explosive dynamics.



Being able to simply sit and listen, not be drawn to any particular area or feature is a testament to the product and the CAD is a fantastic all rounder that excels in not one or two particular aspects, yet impresses emphatically in all.

To flip the coin again I made a playlist of sultry, sexy and delicate female vocalists. The upper mids in particular were hugely impressive. They exploited all the upper tones of a broadly natured vocal, remained clean and clear and in particular fantastically controlled without rounding any edges or sounding rolled off in any way.

From time to time I loan cables to a friend John, be it my own or ones that have come in for review. John has a high end headphone rig with some pretty serious modifications to the amp, DAC and power sup-

plies, running into a pair of Audeze LCD-2 headphones with the latest driver upgrades. His system is very transparent and shows any changes in system configuration very well. After he had the some time to play with the CAD USB he gave me an update on its performance exclaiming that "vocals have that eerie sensation, the balance is tremendous and top and bottom end sounds very right".

John listens to a good varied range of genres and spends many hours lost in music and tweaking his system with power cables, interconnects and sockets which he has found makes quite substantial differences in his highly detailed rig. When John reluctantly returned the cable for me to complete my review he stated "this is the best USB cable I've heard and I think I'll buy".

Conclusion

It can be a little difficult to pin point certain aspects of a cable or piece of electronics when the sound doesn't do any particular aspect very well but does the whole so impressively good. There's nothing in particular to latch onto and admire or attribute areas of the system to benefit from its characteristic. Being able to simply sit and listen, not be drawn to any particular area or feature is a testament to the product and the CAD is a fantastic all rounder that excels in not one or two particular aspects, yet impresses emphatically in all.

At its most reasonable price the CAD has to be auditioned, don't listen with intent, just put your feet up and let the music flow.

Dan Worth

Build Quality - 8.5/10

Sound Quality - 9/10

Value For Money - 8.5/10

Overall - 8.66/10

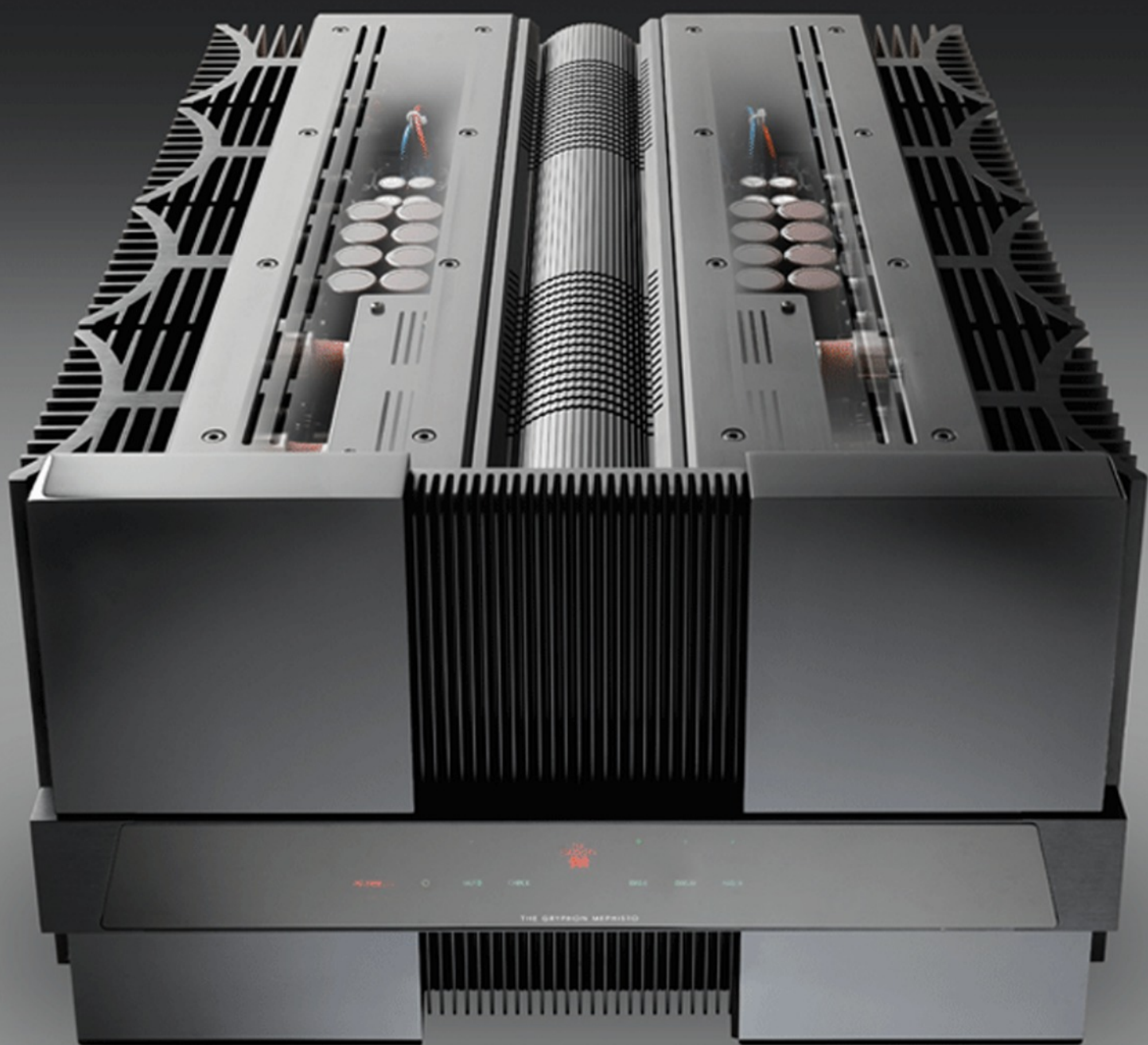
Price at time of review - £480 - 1.1m length

Recommended for abundant amounts of detail, top end control and excellent balance, making it one of the very best USB cables on the market.

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JIB - Krypton Balanced XLR Interconnects

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RECOMMENDED

The only other companies I've come across with such an extensive range of cables as JIB offers are Chord and Audioquest. JIB's inventory consists of every type of Audio and Video cable a consumer could require, along with power cables and car audio cables.

So who are JIB?

JIB is a German company run out of Berlin by founder Jurgen Isaac Bauer, his love for Classical music spurred him on design and create cables which he felt suited his system best. After a few years he began to develop on his growing knowledge of conductors and dielectrics and soon formed JIB which was to launch with not just one cable but an extensive range of cables.

I was asked by our editor Stuart if I'd like to have a look at the range JIB offer and choose a couple cables which would interest me for review - the list was long and wide! I decided to take a listen to a few cables - a glass fibre toslink, a silver USB and the topic of this review the Krypton XLR's.

Packaging wise the cables arrived in a wooden case with metal clasp, externally trimmed in a two tone leather and internally with a velvety/suede type material. Very nicely done and substantial.

Their construction is made up of:

Overall size of the cable is 18mm
99.9999% pure HG-OCC® (Ohno Continuous Cast) copper.

Reviews

Cable structure of high conductivity micro-conductors, in Teflon.

PTFE coated chlorine free cotton damping

Connectors made of Fiberglass with 24K gold plating.

Packaging wise the cables arrived in a wooden case with metal clasp, externally trimmed in a two tone leather and internally with a velvety/suede type material. Very nicely done and substantial.

The cables were burned in for a few days and then subsequently connected to my Kavent Acoustics amp for some listening. These cables are very thick and a little on the stiff side. I had to hold and bend, which wasn't natural to the cables original curve, with one hand and then locate the XLR socket with the other hand. Once in they didn't seem to pose any threat in moving or raising any of my components, it was just the contour out of the plug that was a bit tricky.

Sound

'Stolen Dance' by Milky Chance is a great track to listen to when ascertaining the harmonic flare of a piece of equipment, or in this case a cable. The JIB seemed to offer a quite a substantially more enveloping rear soundstage, spreading rear width and height on both sides further than I've previously heard on this track with any other combination of components. Centre focus remained absolutely solid and depth too was impressive. Overall three dimensionality is superior to many other cables I have heard of this type, complimenting the Kavent amp's abilities to image incredibly well.

Overall tonality of the cable is a little warm, a touch smooth and engrossingly immersive. The presentation is one of a sultry infection - late night bar rather than a nightclub.

Detail retrieval is pretty good with the most prominent details being a little rounded, well controlled and expressive. The smaller nuances, harmonics and micro details are fantastic. I found myself less focused on pin point imaging, but just emerging myself in the entire musics' acoustic.

Sam Smith's acoustic version of 'Latch' originally performed by Disclosure gave a splendid fluidity to his vocal tone, piano notes had a strong tone and sounded really quite natural. The overall performance held strong attention from me and left me digging out some more of my favourite acoustic tracks,

hunting for this insightful appeal to reverbs and cues like an archaeologists digging for ancient ceramics.

Live performances from the likes of Loreena McKennit and Candy Dulfer kept ticking box after box with regards arena and hall acoustics, picking out areas of the crowd who applauded more emphatically than others before the whole included themselves to congratulate the performance.

I wouldn't say that the Kavent is the most dynamic amplifier and the Krypton equally isn't either. I would state that the overall presentation is more geared towards musical flow rather than typical 'Hifi' type aspects, many will appreciate this and some energetically fatiguing systems I have heard would surely benefit from this approach.

During Chris Jones 'Soul Storm' I was drawn to the fact that the music remains very explanatory and cohesive during busier passages, yes there's a touch more grain when things get more complicated, but the slight colouration to the cable helps mask this in the midrange very well.



So, what are the individual portions of the bandwidth like if I had to nail it down?

Treble seems to have two aspects to it:

One would be that extremes are a little soft but still there and the upper end focuses the forefront of the soundstage well.

Two, lower portion of the treble is hugely open, just floats around the listening space of its own accord, expressing harmonics which late at night with the lights off can be a little eerie.

Midband is a little thick and juicy, three dimensionally it's fantastic and tonally gives real body to a vocal, great expression, presence and real musical involvement. There's a naturalness with a little bit of added flavour.

With some sexy looking plugs and a case which you could use take your hand luggage on to a plane, its value and pride of ownership factor to price ratio is outstanding!

Bass is firmly big and round, not lumpy or bloomy but just nice and plump. Expressively I'd say the Krypton does a great job of allowing notes to drop down and around the room, retaining good information in its upper registers.

Conclusion

The JIB Krypton is a substantially thick, well made cable which offers a truly engrossing musical character as opposed to the cleaner 'Hifi' typical sounding cables. One could suggest that it doesn't do this or that on first listen, but after taking some time to listen on your own, in your own time it's pretty damn addictive and draws the listener into the way it allows the music through from the system components.

With some sexy looking plugs and a case which you could use take your hand luggage on to a plane, its value and pride of ownership factor to price ratio is outstanding!

Dan Worth

Build Quality - 8/10

Sound Quality - 8/10

Value For Money - 8.2/10

Overall - 8.06

Price at time of review - £385 - 1m pair

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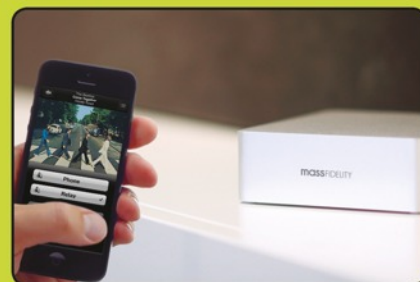
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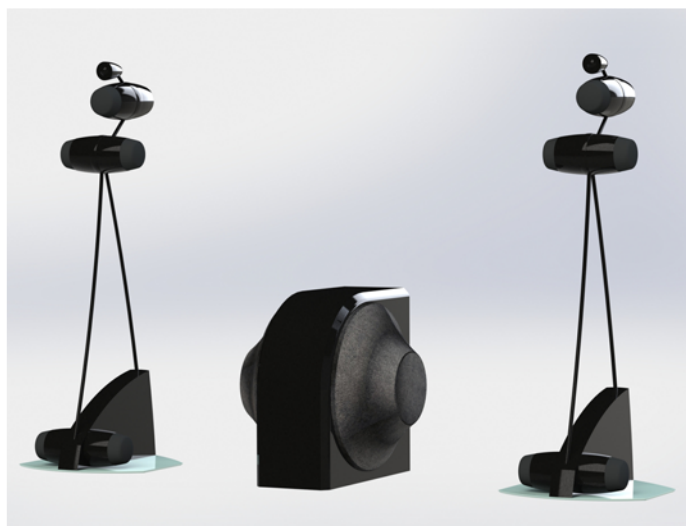
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In this configuration the two 9' and the two 15' work in push-push and each pairing of 15' / 9' drivers work in push-pull.

The two 9' drivers, loaded by 16L volume inside the box, work together to displace exactly the same volume of air in amplitude and in phase as the two 15' would in open air, i.e., making them work as they were in an infinite volume.

A 300W amplifier is used for each couple of drivers, both equalized to reach 20Hz at -1dB.

This technology eradicates the boomy effect and the low frequency ringing, by simulating a box of infinite volume, but also to meet the dynamic range by simulating a box of infinite mass, as the four drivers cancel each others mechanical reactions on the box.

The result is an ultracompact and powerful subwoofer able to reach 20Hz at -1dB that we logically baptised : 20.1

With the 20.1, each system sounds more natural because the ears are accustomed to listen to the sound and music without attenuation and compression down to 20Hz, at the same time improving significantly the reproduction of the high and medium ranges.

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Beyerdynamic T1 Headphones

Family owned Beyerdynamic launched in 1924 and have since become synonymous with the production of headphones and microphones for pro studios, but they also offer a wide range of cans for home use. Linette and Stuart Smith take a listen to their top of the range T1 headphones costing 949 EUR.



Hifi Pig

RECOMMENDED

Beyerdynamic were my favoured headphones when in the recording or radio studio back in the day and so it was great to get the opportunity to try out some of their headphones made specifically for the home and audiophile marketplace.

Here we're taking a listen to the top of the range T1 semi-open headphone which retails at 949 EUR.

The T1s arrive in a stylish aluminium box designed to look a little like a professional flightcase and is well padded inside. This inspires confidence immediately and gives you some indication of Beyerdynamic's professional and studio heritage. There's a certificate of authenticity and that's it – straight forward, no messing.

The cable is a good length for home use at around 2.5m and looks to be a no-nonsense (thick) design terminated at the end with a Neutrik quarter inch jack. The cable is fixed to the headphones and so there are no opportunities for playing with alternatives.

Looks-wise the T1s are pretty conventional looking with circular cans that cover the whole ear. They are an attractive champagne colour for the most part with the cans being attached to a metal frame. It's a simple enough design that works well with the cans pivoting vertically to ensure the correct fit over your ear. They clamp firmly but not uncomfortably to your head and you can shake your head quite vigorously without them moving about, so those predisposed to exercise should be fine with these. The earpads are good and thick and made of a velour material which is pretty comfy over longer periods of listening. The head band is well padded and covered in leather – it's not as comfortable as the [HifiMan HE-560s](#) but it's pretty good and should cause no one any issues. Adjustment of the length of the headband is a simple slide affair which you can do whilst the T1s are on your head. They weigh in at a 530g which is pretty light when compared to the likes of the [Audeze headphones](#) we've had in for review. All in all these look like well thought out and built to do what they are supposed to do which I really like.

The T1s have drivers that are angled towards the ear and are quite a bit off centre and to the front of the can with each driver achieving over 1.2 Tesla (the SI derived unit used to measure magnetic fields) which Beyerdynamic say is twice the value of traditional headphones. As a result of the increased magnetic

Clarity is really very good with T1s and whilst the midband is really gorgeous it's not to the detriment of other frequencies.

field the voice coil used in the T1s is more compact than in traditional headphones but still efficient. The actual membrane that makes the sound is what Beyerdynamic call a three layer "compound foil" and all in this makes the T1s a 600ohm load.

Using my reference headphone amplifier on the end of the Valve Audio Devices DAC10 using the computer to deliver FLAC files the T1s went plenty loud enough but plugging them into the [HiSound Studio DAP](#) required cranking the volume pretty much up to the max to get a decent volume. With this in mind I'd suggest that if you are considering using the T1s whilst out and about you will need to use an external portable headphone amplifier.

The Sound

These headphones throw a really good soundstage that feels quite natural and not overemphasised and I think this is down to the way the drivers are angled towards your ears. The soundstage isn't as wide as the final Pandora Hope VIs and yet there is a good out of the head feeling that seems very natural. There is a definite accuracy to the positioning of instruments in there without any exaggeration, some may think that this is a narrowing of the stage but I thought it gave a more "real" feel to the music. There is also a good front to back feeling to the soundstage, particularly around the ears (if that makes sense) which is again down to the positioning of the drivers.

Clarity is really very good with T1s and whilst the midband is really gorgeous it's not to the detriment of other frequencies. On David Crosby's Croz his vocal is presented very nicely and with a little warmth that seems about right for his vocal style. There's a part of the vocal on Time I Have which is obviously an edit and it's very easy to spot this on the Beyerdynamics. Bass is really nice and tight but not overblown or bloated – this leads to a very nice and natural sound on this record which I really enjoyed. Other headphones we've tested have the feeling that they go lower but on this kind of music I certainly never thought I was missing anything at all.

However, popping on Daft Punk's Homework album I did need to push the volume a little higher than normal to really get the full effect of this album. Once the volume is cranked up though, you are given a really dynamic and balanced sound which again really appealed to my personal taste. Again, it's a feeling that nothing is over done and what you are getting is a pretty much straight forward interpretation of what is going on on the record. Some will prefer a headphone that pushes to the fore a certain frequency band and others will love this no messing approach.

With the Made In Japan version of Deep Purple's Smoke on the Water I again found I needed to turn the volume up quite a bit to get the full effect of the record. There's bags of detail at lower volumes and it's all there, but to get real excitement from these headphones I believe you need to turn up the volume a bit.

I think a really good test for headphones is listening to house and techno and so to Deep Dish's Yoshiesque Vol II, an absolute masterpiece of a mix album. You get a total insight into the record from the very opening lines of Finally and the slightly effected vocal. All the little nuances to the mix are there and when the beat does kick in it's powerful and taut which is just right for this kind of music. The little touches in the mix fly around you head and there's a good deep feel to the basslines. Some headphones struggle to keep pace with this kind of music and get lost in everything that is going on but to the Beyerdynamic T1s credit they manage to stay up with the action and are an exciting listen.

The obvious comparisons here are going to be the [HD 800s from Sennheiser](#) as they come in at around the same pricepoint, the Sennheisers are



slightly more expensive at £999. It's a very close call indeed but the Beyerdynamics have it by a short nose I'd say. I loved the bass on the Sennheiser cans but with the T1s it just seems to be subjectively more appealing. They're a tad more explosive and exciting to listen to. On the negative side they're not as comfortable.

Comfort

By no means are the T1s an uncomfortable headphone and I found myself able to listen for long periods without any discomfort at all. The [HifiMan HE-560s](#) were better on the headband but worse on the ears and the [Sennheiser HD 800s](#) were better on the ears and slightly easier on the top of the head (they're lighter after all).

The earcups cover the whole of the ear very comfortably indeed, but the velour fabric can become a little "itchy" after long periods of wearing them. They clamp firmly to your head but this isn't overly done and so they remain comfortable in this aspect.

Conclusion

I liked the Beyerdynamic T1s a great deal and in some respects they could be the final headphone you'd ever need to buy. When paired with a headphone amplifier they come alive and offer a dynamic and explosive sound that is full of detail.

They don't have the lushness of the [Final Hope Pandora Vis](#) and overall are a more balanced headphone with a slight warmth to the midband. The [Sennheiser](#)

Reviews

[HD 800s](#) offer a crisper top end but I prefer the more balanced approach of these cans, but only by a hairs breadth.

Bass is good tight and powerful without being over done in any way and whilst the soundstaging is better on some of the headphones we've had in for review (Final and Audeze) it's up there with the best with the little nuances of the stage being particularly apparent around the ears in a front to back sense.

I believe the T1s are suited to a wide range of musical styles and offer a clear window into what is happening, with bags and bags of detail but not so much that they become a pain to listen to.

Beyer Dynamic are perhaps best known for their studio kit and it's clear that the T1s have benefited from this experience, but to their credit they also manage to bring their credentials to the living room too.

On the negative side, you will need to have a good headphone amplifier on hand if you want to get the best from these as they do need to be driven quite hard.

Stuart Smith

Sound – 8.85

Comfort – 8.15

Fit and finish – 8.25

Value – 8.5

Overall – 8.44

Recommended for those looking for a dynamic and yet balanced headphone that is very good across all the musical styles we tried them with.

And now Linette's thoughts on the Beyerdynamic T1 Headphones

Beyerdynamic have been making headphones and microphones for a long time....the company was founded in Germany 90 years ago and has become a bit of a byword for Germanic excellence.

The T1 was the first headphones in their range to use their Tesla technology which, without going into the entire science bit, makes the drivers more compact and more efficient.

Straight out of the packaging and the presentation case really does scream understated German class.....they come in their own embossed, brushed aluminium flight case.

The 'phones themselves are also very classy looking. Again brushed metal but with a slightly golden grey hue. They are industrially sleek and I really like the subtle styling like the 'herringbone' detailing on the earcups and the cut out T1 logo on the sides. They are described as semi-open, whatever that means...I thought headphones were either open or closed, but apparently these are somewhere in between.



The padding is generous on both the earpads and the headband but the way the Tesla drivers are placed means it seems to take a while to find a comfortable listening position with them....I also found myself adjusting quite a bit while listening.

They actually feel quite light on the head, even though they weigh in at over half a kilo (530g). Worth noting though that they actually became more comfortable the longer I wore them.

Happily they pass the 'glasses test' and sit comfortably with my specs on.

Once slight annoyance that I noticed was that the velour on the pads 'creaked' quite loudly when I moved my head...I'm guessing this is down to the velour not the actual pads so I imagine it could be cured by changing for a leather pad?

So, feeling in a Germanic frame of mind I decided to listen to some techno, one of Ben Klock's sets from the infamous Berghain club in Berlin. Now, seeing as this is a club that you can queue hours and hours

The Beyerdynamic T1s really deliver on bass, vocals and everything else in the mix.

for....only to be turned away by the fickle doorman when you finally make it to the entrance, I guess a recording of one of Klock's sets from the main room is a more guaranteed way to actually hear some tunes!

The sound is big and intense, giving a real sense of being in a club in what was a power station. Tremendous and defined bass and a sound that is very driving and detailed, I guess that's thanks to the Tesla tech then.

The 'phones do feel very isolating from the outside world but the soundstage is very open, perhaps not as 3 dimensional as the [Oppo PM1](#) but I love the big sound that I am getting.

Florence and the Machine's album 'Lungs' is next. Florence's voice on 'Dog Days Are Over' ranges from ethereal to powerful and sounds perfect throughout. The music sounds as defined when it really gets going with very energetic drumming and vocals as it does in the more simple and stripped back parts of the song.

I put on Florence's version of 'You've got the Love'....which sounds great, but it makes me want to listen to the original (and in my opinion, best) version...the epic Source featuring Candi Staton tune was the song me and Mr Hifi Pig got married to after all!

The Beyerdynamic T1s really deliver on bass, vocals and everything else in the mix.

The good mix of vocal and bass without anything being too much is again evident when I put on Rudimental's 'Home' album...the way this album has been recorded it can often come across as far too bass heavy but it works with the T1s.

Speaking of bass...yep, time for 'Once again back' by Hardfloor. The bass is dry and rumbling, right through my head, tops are skippy as they should be and the mids are good too.....I am overall very impressed by these understated, German headphones...a bit of a dark horse.

So in the interest of equality I get Gil Scott Heron's 'Ghetto Style' on as I've listened to it with all the headphones I've reviewed recently.

'Lady Day and John Coltraine' is very engaging to listen to, I am left wanting more, which has to be a good sign. There is that sense of being in the studio...not quite as much detail in the soundstage as the planar magnetic headphones as I mentioned before, but there is definitely something there that makes me really enjoy these headphones.

They are very well styled, well made with great materials and perhaps a bit more wearable out and about than some of the headphones that I have listened to recently, quite understated.

The detail and 3 dimensional immersion into the music is not up there with the top of the range planar magnetic headphones that I have tried but I do think they come out better than the [Sennheisers HD800](#). Euro for euro or pound for pound I like the looks, build quality and sound of the T1s best out of the two.

Yes again these are expensive headphones at 949€, however there are plenty of people wanting to spend that kind of money to enjoy their music privately....the T1 just adds another choice of flavour to the top level available.

I would suggest to anyone in the market for a pair of great quality 'phones, read the reviews make a short-list and then get down to your hifi dealer, headphone specialist or get to a hifi show and test listen to a few different ones and pick your favourite.

Linette Smith

Sound – 8.5/10

Comfort – 8.2/10

Fit and finish – 9/10

Value – 8/10

Overall – 8.4/10

Very well made, high quality and reliable headphones. High end without screaming it in your face.

Dan Worth takes a look at Audiophile Inventory's AUI ConverteR software used primarily for file conversion and ripping of CDs.

What is AUI?

Audiophile Inventory's AUI ConverteR is a Windows or Mac based tool for professionals as well as the home user. For use in Hifi its main features are - ripping discs for streaming and the conversion of file types for device specific requirements such as any high resolution home audio device, portable players and car head units etc.

The software offers:

- High quality sound conversion
- High precision (64-bit floating point) algorithms
- sample rates and bit-depth conversion (alphaC)
- Gentle dithering algorithms (alphaD) for decreasing audio bit resolutions to 16 bit.
- Uses a solid and simple user friendly interface

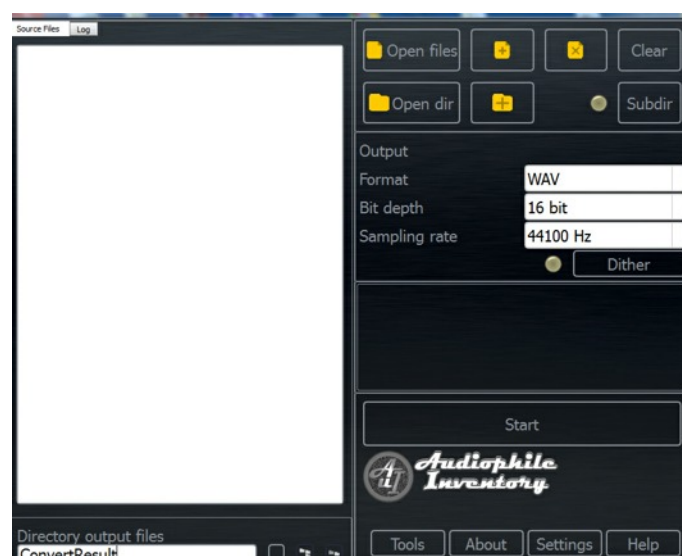
The user is also able to add their own input and output audio formats (by using command line software - encoders, players, etc). The more professional features are not really something the average audiophile will be interested in and their specifics are beyond the scope of this review.

In short AUI is in my eyes a tool for ripping and converting files for the day to day home user, which offers a very high quality rip for a file based system, with features such as "Dithering" to retain the integrity and quality of a digital file allowing for (in experience) a smooth and transparent sound.

Applying Dither to conversions

When truncating an audio file (reducing its bit depth) from say 24bit to 16bit for example, maybe if the user wishes to burn a disc for a car CD player or another disc player elsewhere in the home we can run into "Truncating Errors".

Truncating Errors are the result of this compression which manifest itself as missing bits, missing 1's and



0's in the digital signal leading to a loss in details, nuances and information within the audio track.

The effect of these truncating errors is what many refer to as a nasty digital sound or recording. Artifacts, hard edges and high frequency grainy noise becomes very apparent on down samples and compressed music. So, how can the signal integrity be retained and smoothed out? This is where "Dithering" comes into play.

Ripping is very straight forward. The trick is to create a Master directory on the chosen drive you wish to save all of your rips to.

Applying dither during the process of sampling from the 24bit original to the 16bit copy eradicates these losses and retains the information by adding a low

level noise to the sine wave. Dither however is not a magic wand, it does add a background hiss to the music just like a tape recording of old, yet at levels far below. This level of hiss is only apparent on 16bit and above files when at very high volumes during extreme silence cues between passages.

The audio signal with dithering remains intact, retains details and does not have a hard digital edginess or apparent noise across the frequency range which has been left by the missing 1's and 0's. The sound is more transparent and smoother sounding.

If a rip seems to have a level of background hiss which is not on the original disc then it's advisable to re-rip that particular album again with dither turned off.

AUI has a built in dither slider in the settings tab and fine tuning the levels of dither will produce better results dependant on the recording (whether it has already been dithered or not) any down sampling which needs to be undertaken or whether the user is ripping from a disc. The standard amount of dither which AUI provides is deemed by them as the ideal rate for ripping on the fly and in my experience using the software I have found that applying dither to a rip makes for a more musical and smoother rip, retaining or adding transparency and being a safe method to reach the optimum quality of the rip.

If a rip seems to have a level of background hiss which is not on the original disc then it's advisable to re-rip that particular album again with dither turned off. I myself have not encountered this as of yet. The recording may already have some high dithering in place when originally mastered to physical copy. Remember, nearly all recording are originally mastered in the studio at either 24 or 32bit and are down sampled to 16bit for a standard CD .

A 24bit SACD would have less or no truncating of the original file (due to its original deriving from a 24bit master or 32bit) and therefore dithering is not

essential. AUI has the ability to rip SACD's to DSD 64 or 128 formats allowing for the playback of High Rez files on compatible DACs and PC/Mac direct systems also.

DSD is trademarked by Sony/Phillips, the actual file extension is .dsf (data stream file). AUI refers to DSD files within the software as DSF "1bit/2.8mhz" and "1bit/5.6mhz". These numbers equate to:

1bit/44,1 kHz x 64 = 2,8 MHz (known as DSD64).

1bit/44,1 kHz x 128 = 5,6 MHz (known as DSD128).

The Software in Use

Using the AUI Interface is a breeze, the user is presented with a very simple GUI with options for sample rates, bit depths and file output type. The software covers all major file types, so if you wish to rip a disc to ALAC, FLAC, WAV, AIFF the option is there. Likewise if you wish convert pre-ripped files - say you originally ripped all of your files to Apple Lossless and have the need for them to now be in FLAC this is also an available option, or if you simply wish to make copies in other formats such as WAV for burning a CD for the car or MP3 for a portable music player.

Like other ripping software on the market AUI can obtain metadata by first opening iTunes. When the inserted disc ready for rip is recognised by iTunes and message appears asking if you wish to import the album simply click no. Leaving iTunes open however will allow for the album and track names to appear within AUI and be located into the albums folder once ripped.

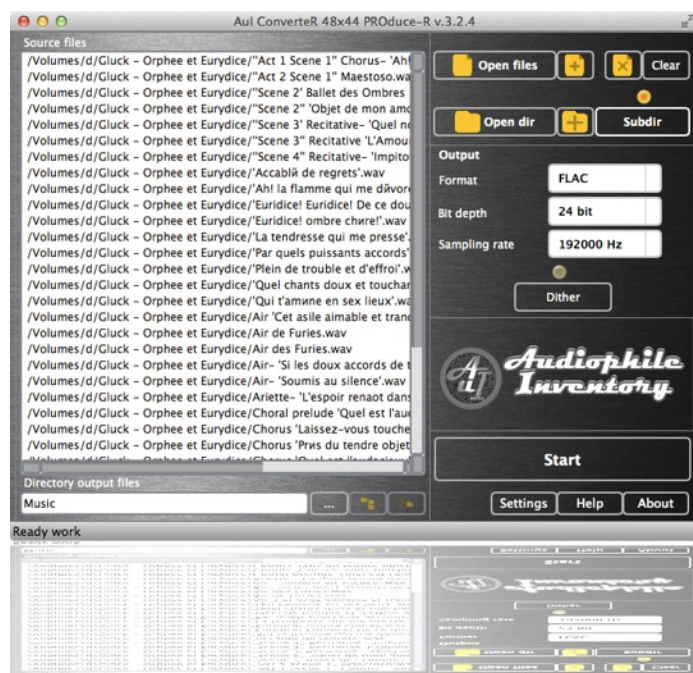
Details seem to portray a more solid leading edge and allow for a more natural decay of instruments, also revealing reverbs which are more understandable.

Ripping is very straight forward. The trick is to create a Master directory on the chosen drive you wish to save all of your rips to. Within this folder simply add sub folders with a preference to how you wish the library to be displayed. Personally I create a fold-

Reviews

er with the artists name and sub folders for individual albums.

Then on the AUI GUI click "Open Files" navigate to the disc and select all files and open. Then clicking the three dots at the bottom of the AUI screen allows you to navigate to the destination folder, once selected click "Start" bearing in mind the chosen output file format, bit depth and sample rate required, as well as clicking on the "dither" button which will be required 99 times out of 100. A more specialised dithering can be obtained through a trial and error process using the slider in the advanced settings, but for standard usage of the optimised settings it's just click click click and Start.



- Note: Some players/streamers will state that they will playback files of many variants, but in fact they can often convert these files to FLAC "on the fly". You may wish to investigate this and copy and rip all your albums to FLAC for piece of mind so that there is no converting necessary and to maximise hard drive capacity. Personally I rip everything to the exact file it appears in on the disc, mostly WAV and on the odd occasion AIFF, for me I feel why change anything about the original recording, especially if the playback software will play these files directly as my Amarra 3.0 does.

My impressions of the ripped media files.

it makes sense to put your trust into a ripper of the same calibre and Audiophile Inventory's AUI ConverteR 48x44 is one to consider.

Bearing in mind as earlier stated I haven't (yet) found the need to not use dither and have found that in practice multiple rips using AUI have sounded incredibly good and sometimes better than the original CD itself, offering a more analogue take on the sound with great midrange transparency and perceivable air in the top end. Now I'm not saying that these differences are game changing, but the subtleties which they convey are very pleasing to a high end system.

Details seem to portray a more solid leading edge and allow for a more natural decay of instruments, also revealing reverbs which are more understandable.

The difference is in these smaller notifications and cues which add more atmosphere to the performance.

Before AUI and being Mac based I would use X-ACT which is free software. X-ACT is extremely good software and gives an audio reproduction which is leaps and bounds ahead of iTunes, causing me to re-rip my entire library again after discovering it.

Now with AUI I find myself working back through my albums as and when I have the time. The distinctive difference is in all the smaller nuances, details and cues which add to and are crucial to the entire performance.

With many audio playback softwares available to the end user such as JRiver, Audirvana, Puremusic and Amarra, it makes absolute sense that a good solid ripper is essential too. Once you have experienced the differences with specifically and professionally designed playback softwares, it makes sense to put your trust into a ripper of the same calibre and Audiophile Inventory's AUI ConverteR 48x44 is one to consider. A Free Trial as with any good vendor is available from the Audiophile Inventory website.

Price - Varies from \$33 - \$249 dependent on edition.

Dan Worth

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“Had this review been written in 2013, the pre would have been my joint ‘electronics’ product of the year...” -Stuart Smith



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Album Reviews

Daniel Hope - Escape To Paradise

Deutsche Grammophon

Born in Durban, South Africa in 1974 the violinist Daniel Hope moved to London as a child as his parents escaped the apartheid regime, and this is sort of the starting point for *Escape To Paradise* (released 18th August).



In the sleeve notes Hope tells of how before his parents escaped apartheid his Grandparents fled Hitler's Berlin to live in exile in South Africa and he wanted to discover some of the musicians who managed to escape Hitler's tyranny, rather than, as he has in the past, explore the silenced voices that didn't.

So here's the escape; the escape from Europe, the escape within the music and the escapism of the silver screen.

So why Hollywood tunes? Well, referring to the sleeve notes again, as Hope was looking for which tracks he wanted to include on his next record it was becoming clear that the theme wasn't so much exile as escape and where better to escape than in the fabricated landscape that is Hollywood.

The record searches for the big and bold "Hollywood sound", or rather as he says "...intrinsically European expression that met the sweeping gestures of Hollywood in an age when big was the requirement."

So here's the escape; the escape from Europe, the escape within the music and the escapism of the silver screen.

Not all the composers included herein are refugees though and there are three composers still living included, but look at these living composers' history, or music, and there is the escape story again, whether

from abject poverty of the composer himself or the subject matter (*Schindler's List* and *Hotel Paradiso*).

Ok, so these are BIG themes and it would appear at first glance that this album on Deutsche Grammophon and available through HIGHRESAUDIO would be hard and heavy going for a non-classical type such as myself, but it's really not at all. The sound is big, but at times haunting, Hope's violin playing is really beautiful and there's even an appearance by Sting on *The Secret Marriage*.

Composers include Miklos Rozsa, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Hans Eisler, Eric Zeisl, Franz Waxman, Walter Jurmann, Bronislaw Kaper, Kurt Weill, Ennio Morricone, John Williams, Thomas Newman, Werner Richard Heymann and Herman Hupfeld.

An interesting concept for a record and one which works because of the diverse nature of many of the compositions, glued by the common poignancy of Hope's violin.

Jerome Sabbagh - The Turn

Bee Jazz

The Turn by Jerome Sabbagh was recorded live by James Farber at Sear Sound, New York City on June 6th 2013 to analogue tape and on this Bee Jazz release from HIGHRESAUDIO it



really shows. This is a really fantastic recording in the true tradition of jazz music. There is spontaneity and freedom within the constraints of the song structure and the musicians are laid bare.

This is a Jazz record that will surely appeal to those who are relatively new to the genre...

Guitar duties are taken by Ben Monder, Bass by Joe Martin, Drums Ted Moor and Jerome Sabbagh plays Tenor Saxophone and is the composer on all the tu-

nes herein other than Once Round The Park by Paul Motian.

Though my appreciation of jazz music is newly found this record had me enthralled by the first tune, The Turn, and the absolutely fantastic distorted guitar that comes in at around the half way point and finishes sounding like rock from the seventies....I couldn't help but be reminded of Gong for some reason.

There are influences of rock and pop on this record and there other more traditionally jazz styles layered in there too.

...you'd be forgiven that you weren't listening to one of the great rock guitarists helping the jazzsters out whilst his band were off the road.

The second track on the album, Long Gone is a laid back and cool affair and it is the inventiveness of the improvisation that really make this, and other songs really work. This quartet have been together for ten years and it really shows. The drumming of Ted Moor is solid and yet agile, the bass underpins the grooves brilliantly, the guitar of Ben Monder are at times delicate and at others more hard hitting and all this is topped of by Sabbagh's tenor sax which adds dimension and a lyrical focal point on which to focus.

This is a Jazz record that will surely appeal to those who are relatively new to the genre...it's not too challenging and there's a real feeling of a more 'rocky' feel to some of the tunes.

The guitar is what makes this record for me and on The Turn, Cult and Banshee you'd be forgiven that you weren't listening to one of the great rock guitarists helping the jazzsters out whilst his band were off the road. That said this is definitely jazz, very accomplished jazz, that has a somewhat broader appeal than it may well have had by the use of clever composition and instrumentation topped off by an absolutely wonderful recording.

I loved it!

Gui Boratto - Abaporu Kompakt

There's a fantastic amount of great electronic music coming out of South America at the moment and here we've got Brazilian Gui Boratto, once a member of the band Sect, adding to that output with his album Abaporu.



The opening lines of the first track immediately put me in mind of William Orbit and this is no bad thing, but the tune soon becomes its own distinctive groove which sets the scene for the rest of the record.

This album is brilliantly crafted and swings from nicely stripped back and deceptively simple tunes of a medium tempo such as the opening Antropofagia, which are perfect for the early evening or very late morning session and then to more obviously headline dancefloor tunes such as the second track on the album, Joker - which has a fantastic breakdown and build in the middle. .

Boratto is not afraid of a vocal either as demonstrated on Please Don't Take Me Home, a lush and funky tune perfect for the pre-club bar. And then you have him playing with guitar samples such as on Get the Party Started.

This is a very, very good record that gives the occasional nod to past with huge analogue sounds, but it never seems dated and every tune herein delivers in spades.

Take Control was on a recent Kompakt compilation unless I'm very much mistaken and it reminds me of Goldfrapp...only better!

Indigo's simple glockenspiel opening gives way to a great tune that's just full of textures that just build and build before finding the groove again.

This is World class dance/electronica that, whilst borrowing from the great traditions of dance and electronic music of Europe and the States it manages to have an identity and maturity all of its own. It's not a difficult record at all and its 13 tracks all have

Album Reviews

popular appeal that I can see doing really well, with the obvious hit for me being Wait For Me...or perhaps Too Late, though there are darker, more introspective passages that add intelligence and depth to the album.

Personally I thoroughly enjoyed this gloriously uplifting record which is out on the 29th September on Kompakt, a label that can do very little wrong as far as I can see at the moment.

Alternative TV - The Image Has Cracked

Cherry Red

I must confess that I missed out on the first wave of punk, but I do distinctly remember seeing a copy of the Sniffin' Glue fanzine, for which Alternative TV's Mark P was the founding editor, brought into school by one of the cool kids.

I also had a couple of Sex Pistol records. Mark P (Perry) left Sniffin' Glue on the cusp of it possibly going mega to concentrate on his own band and had he followed the herd down the tried and somewhat tested punk formula he'd have made it big. As it was he went down a different path.

Their sound was described by Perry and his musical partner as being more like "Can and reggae-type rhythms" - take a listen to Love Lies Limp, the first of the records's bonus tracks, or Life After Dub.

We're talking back in the hot and sweaty past of the summer of 1977, but where Alternative TV differ from their perhaps better known cohorts is that their musical style is a little bit more leftfield and not so formulaic. Their sound was described by Perry and his musical partner as being more like "Can and reggae-type rhythms" - take a listen to Love Lies Limp,

the first of the records's bonus tracks, or Life After Dub.

Listneing to The Image Cracked you will hear that ATV influenced a good number of bands who came later..and here I'm thinking of the likes of Tottenham AK47s, Radical Dance Faction and lots of other festival type bands.

The Image Has Cracked was the bands first album and was released on the Deptford Fun city label in May 1978 and here it contains the original nine tunes plus another 10 tunes and is out on Cherry Red.

This is clearly a record of its time but the music really does manage to stand the test of time pretty well. This is somewhat more clever than the aforementioned Pistols (and many more of their ilk for that matter) and all the better for it. Listen to Nasty Little Lonely and you will immediately get that ATV were an intellectual step up the ladder to the likes of Sham 69 et al...this is a tune of epic proportions and surely must go down as a classic of the genre...though the lines between punk and art rock are decidedly blurred.

So, is this a record just for those looking for a nostalgic blast from the past? Well no it's not, this record manages to sound pretty fresh and convincing even, or perhaps more so now, in a time when we are presented with homogenised pap. Listneing to The Image Cracked you will hear that ATV influenced a good number of bands who came later..and here I'm thinking of the likes of Tottenham AK47s, Radical Dance Faction and lots of other festival type bands.



This month John Scott dons his best Nudie suit and cowboy boots and takes a look at the career of country rock kingpin Gram Parsons.

Do me a favour please - as we go through this, keep the number 26 in mind. 26, got that?

Born into a wealthy Southern American family in 1946 as Cecil Ingram Connor III, Gram Parsons was instrumental in founding country rock and was a major influence on the future alt-country and Americana movements. Gram's family may have been rich - his maternal grandfather was a citrus fruit baron - but they were also touched by darkness. His parents were alcoholics and would both die while Gram was relatively young. His father committed suicide two days before Christmas in 1958; Gram had turned 12 years old the month before. His mother remarried - Gram took his stepfather's surname of Parsons - but she would die of cirrhosis the day Gram graduated from high school.

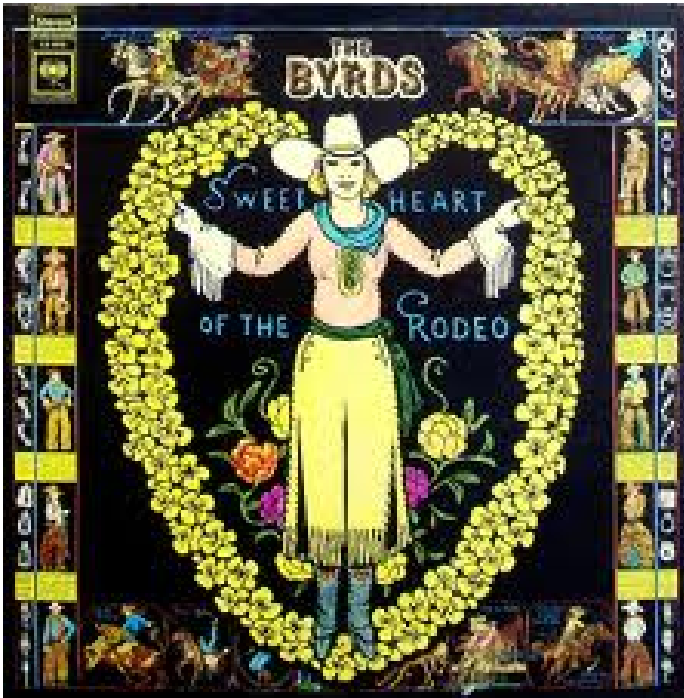
Gram had a vision to create what he called “Cosmic American Music”. If that makes you think of something like The Grateful Dead or Jefferson Airplane as I first did, then think again.

Perhaps as a distraction from his turbulent family life, Gram immersed himself in music in his early teenage years, playing rock and roll covers in clubs owned by his stepfather. Later, he gravitated towards folk music and by the age of 17 was playing professionally in The Shilos. When that band split, Gram enrolled at Harvard to study theology – I guess



Parson Parsons would have a certain ring to it - but soon gave that up to form The International Submarine Band who recorded their only album *Safe at Home* in 1967. By the time that album was released The International Submarine Band would have also broken up.

During 1967 Gram had become friendly with The Byrds bass player Chris Hillman and when that band found themselves in need of new blood following the departures of David Crosby and Michael Clarke, Gram was recruited on a salary rather than as a full band member. However, Gram made a full contribution to the band and it was mainly his influence that led to their next album *Sweetheart Of The Rodeo* being recorded in Nashville and having a strong country influence. Following the release of *Sweetheart Of The Rodeo* Gram toured England with The Byrds and became friendly with Keith Richards and Mick Jagger. Concerns about a proposed tour of South Africa resulted in Gram leaving The Byrds and he soon returned to America where he formed The Flying Burrito Brothers with Chis Hillman - on guitar this time, bass player Chris Ethridge and Sneaky Pete Kleinow on pedal steel. Gram had a vision to create what he called “Cosmic American Music”. If that makes you think of something like The Grateful Dead or Jefferson Airplane as I first did, then think again. There is no freewheeling psychedelia here. The resulting album *The Gilded Palace Of Sin* mixed traditional country



with rock and soul influences - the album included covers of two modern soul standards, *Dark End Of The Street* and *Do Right Woman*. Although now regarded as a country rock classic, the album met with limited commercial success but some critical acclaim on release. The band went out on tour but the band's enthusiasm for the distractions of life on the road including Gram's fondness for a variety of drugs somewhat impaired their performances. By the time work started on their follow up album, Gram had become more interested in partying with the Rolling Stones who were in America working on *Let It Bleed*. His drug use increased during this time and the resulting album *Burrito Deluxe* was a commercial and critical flop. It does however feature the first recording of The Stones' *Wild Horses*, perhaps in recognition of the many hours that Gram and Keith Richards spent together playing old country songs.

We'll Sweep Out The Ashes In The Morning is a tale of forbidden love with Gram and Emmylou taking on the mantle of George Jones and Tammy Wynette for a 1970's rock audience

Disenchanted with The Flying Burrito Brothers, Gram left the band and signed up with former Byrds producer Terry Melcher. This partnership, however,

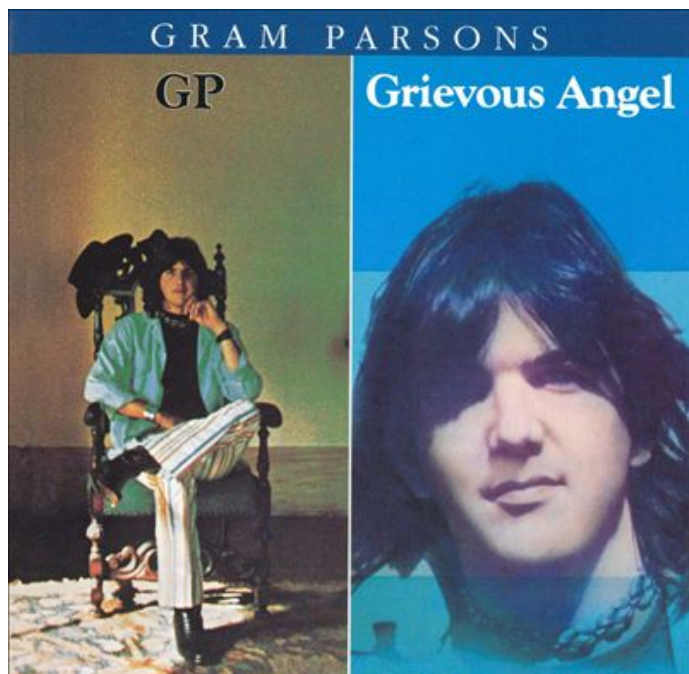
appeared to be founded on a mutual interest in drug consumption rather than artistic endeavour and produced little in the way of creative output. Gram headed out on tour with The Rolling Stones and then took up long term residence at Keith Richards' villa in the south of France during the recording of The Stones' *Exile On Main Street* album. The amount of time Keith and Gram spent together playing music, along with their other shared recreational interests was eventually seen to be holding up progress on the album sessions and Gram was asked to leave. His girlfriend Gretchen had accompanied Gram to France and they would soon marry although their relationship was often stormy.

Gram and Gretchen decamped to England where he was treated for heroin addiction by Dr Sam Hutt, who would later front his own rather excellent country rock band under the name Hank Wangford. Following his recovery he returned once more to America and became friendly with Emmylou Harris after hearing her sing in a club, leading to them working together.

If you are unfamiliar with Gram Parsons' work you may by now be wondering why I am recommending the work of someone with a track record of drug dependency, broken bands and commercial failure to you. Gram was not a technically great singer. He had a frail voice, often sounding much older than his years and not always quite hitting the notes he was aiming for. He sang with soul, with passion and with truth however, and when his voice harmonised with Emmylou's there was alchemy at work. Artistically and physically re-energised by their collaboration, Gram signed to the Reprise record label and with a stellar band including James Burton, Glenn D Hardin and Ronnie Tutt from Elvis Presley's regular backing band recorded his first solo album *GP*.

GP opens with upbeat fiddle, banjo, shuffling drums and soaring steel guitar but the song title, *Still Feeling Blue*, betrays the true mood of much of the album – loss, betrayal and self-loathing. Any upbeat artifice is only here to hide the tears of the rodeo clown. *We'll Sweep Out The Ashes In The Morning* is a tale of forbidden love with Gram and Emmylou taking on the mantle of George Jones and Tammy Wynette for a 1970's rock audience. Both *A Song for You* and *She* are tender love songs, where the frailty of Gram's voice works perfectly to bring out the emotion in the lyrics. The themes of guilt and infidelity seem to be ingrained in Gram's psyche through, almost certainly as a direct result of his own

upbringing but maybe also due to tensions within his relationship with Gretchen, and these re-emerge later in the album with *Kiss The Children* and *How Much I Lied*.



GP failed to trouble the Billboard chart on release, but Gram felt sufficiently encouraged to put a band together with Emmylou and go out on tour billed as Gram Parsons And The Fallen Angels. Phil Kaufman who Gram had met when he had worked for the Stones was employed as road manager and one of his key duties was to keep Gram's alcohol intake to an acceptable level and ensure that no drugs got anywhere near him.

Following the tour, Gram reconvened many of the players who had recorded **GP** and started work on the sessions for his follow up album *Grievous Angel*. Like the previous album, the material for *Grievous Angel* was a mixture of covers and Parsons originals. Only two of these, *Return Of The Grievous Angel* and *In My Hour Of Darkness* were new. The others dated from his time with The Flying Burrito Brothers or earlier. There was no scraping the barrel here though; many of these songs would come to rank amongst Gram's most loved. The undisputed highlight of the album is Gram and Emmylou's take on *Love Hurts*, surely the definitive version of that song. Other gems include *Brass Buttons* – a fond tribute to Gram's mother – and a revisited *Hickory Wind* which had first featured on *Sweetheart Of The Rodeo*.

By this time Gram had met up with Margaret Fisher, a former high school sweetheart and had ended his

relationship with Gretchen. With the tracks for the album completed and another tour in the offing, Gram and Margaret took a break in Joshua Tree National Park, one of Gram's favourite places and where, as he had previously disclosed to Phil Kaufman, he would choose to be buried. Two days after arriving, Gram was found dead in his bedroom. The cause of death was an accidental overdose of morphine and alcohol.

Events following Gram's death almost threatened to overshadow his achievements in life. Gram's body was due to be flown back to Louisiana for burial by his family. Believing that this would not be what his friend would have wanted, Phil Kaufman and another friend stole Gram's body from the airport and drove it to Joshua Tree in a borrowed hearse where they attempted to cremate it by pouring five gallons of gasoline into the coffin and setting it alight. The pair were later arrested but as there was, incredibly, no law against stealing a dead body were only charged for theft of the coffin and fined \$750. Gram's remains were eventually buried in Louisiana.

Grievous Angel was released after Gram's death.

Like his previous work, it had little immediate commercial success but, together with **GP** and *The Gilded Palace Of Sin* is now regarded as a country rock classic and Gram is acknowledged as that genre's founding father. He was 26 years old when he died.

Recommended Discography

The Byrds - *Sweetheart Of The Rodeo* – Deluxe Edition (Sony Collectors Choice)

The Flying Burrito Brothers – *Gilded Palace Of Sin* (Demon/Edsel)

Gram Parsons – *GP/Grievous Angel* (Rhino) – Available as a 2 for 1

Gram Parsons and The Flying Burrito Brothers – *Sleepless Nights* (Polydor) An excellent compilation of previously unreleased material.

Gram Parsons and The Fallen Angels – *Live 1973* (Rhino)

NEXT MONTH

John Scott takes a look at Laura Nyro's extraordinary 1968 release *Eli And The Thirteenth Confession*.

Tipplers Corner

French born Louis Bricka has worked in the wine and spirits industry for a couple of decades and here, in the first of his series articles pairing booze with music, he takes a look at the relatively little known 2009 Banyuls, Cornet & Cie, Abbé Rous.

Nothing on the box, again... Nothing to suit my mood, my frame of mind. I'm fidgety, restless, I need to calm down and put things into perspective. So I do what I usually do at times like this, I turn to the hi-fi. I select a few possibilities out of the meagre but eclectic cd collection, nothing really takes my fancy until I turn over UCJ's "the number one Classical album 2004". Netrebko, Gheorghiu, Domingo, Terfel, to name a few. That will do nicely, other tracks would have to be skipped.

You see, I'm in a mood for revisiting old friends, I need the reassurance of a known melody, the boost of a powerful aria. I've done this before and I know that the perfect bottle, for the occasion, is waiting for me... a red Banyuls wine.

Why Banyuls? Bold, complex but harmonious, just a sip is enough for the flavours to dance along to the music, lingering until you cannot resist picking up your glass. Sweet yet strong, smooth but tenacious, enough intricacies to compete with the best maestros. But what does it taste like I hear you ask? Buy a good bottle and find out for yourself.... No? Oh ok, I'll tell you, stewed spiced cherries with a hint of dark chocolate that lingers on forever. But Banyuls is like classical music, it's not all good and usually you need to spend a little to experience the best. Try it, give it a go next time you have time on your hands, especially if classical music is "not your glass of wine"!



The bottle enjoyed was a 2009 Banyuls, muté sur grain(neutral grape spirit is added to the grapes to halt fermentation to retain sweetness),mise tardive (indicates oak ageing, 12 months in this case), Cornet & Cie, Abbé Rous. 16.5° ABV, it is a vin doux naturel, a type of fortified wine. 100% grenache noir grown from very poor soil on schist terraces supported by dry-stone walls. With no irrigation and little mechanical help possible due to the terrain, viticulture is laborious. "Between sea and mountain, where the sun and the wind meet" is the slogan of Banyuls-sur-Mer, nestled at the foot of the Pyrenees and bathed by the Mediterranean, a few miles from the Spanish border.

Comments from She Who Speaks Her Mind: "I like this Port", well he could have told me what it was instead of trying to be clever. We first tried Banyuls last Christmas and our three daughters loved it too, it's now on their letter to Santa... don't worry they are over 21!

PLEASE DRINK RESPONSIBLY

Daniela Manger is the CEO & owner of Manger Products. She has involved in Hi-Fi, electronics engineering & Pro-Audio markets almost since she was born due to family interests.



Based on their unique Manger MSW/Sound Transducer their current portfolio includes Reference Active Monitor (MSMc1) & its floorstanding version (MSMs1), plus other accessories which help to evaluate the musical results in both the Hi-End & Professional markets.

Your History

- **How did you get into/what was your first job in the industry?**

Manger was always a family business. The development of the Manger Sound Transducer accompanies me since my childhood. After my degree in electrical engineering, I directly got in to the family business and overtook the company.

- **Who or what was the biggest influence on your career?**

My father

- **Proudest moment/product you're most proud of?**

When my father was honoured with the Diesel Medal in 1985 + the International Design Award in 2012 for our MSMc1 Reference Active Monitor.

You and your system

- **What was your very first system?**

The Manger Diskus (built from 1978-86), a Denon POA, a Panasonic Turntable with an SME

- **Tell us about your system history**

The speakers: all the development steps, done by us during the last years, Turntable always remains, various CD Players and DACs.

- **What component/product do you miss the most/wish you had never got rid of?**

The Manger Diskus

- **Best system (or single component) you have ever heard (no brands you represent please...!)**

Avalon speaker

- **Tell us about your current system(s)**

The Manger MSMs1 with a Zodiac Gold DAC fed by a Macbook pro, music stored on SSD

The state of the industry

- **What's your view on the valve renaissance of the past 20 years or so?**

I have no opinion on this. It is a matter of taste and in general it compensates footprints created by other parts of the chain, mainly the footprint of a speaker

- **What are your views on the state of the industry/where is it going/what will it look like in 5 years/what will typical systems look like?/What will happen to prices?/What will happen to the high end – will it carry on regardless?**

There will be a big change, because the younger music lovers grow up differently, so the typical system will look like a computer/streamer with an external dac and active speakers. I assume the classical way of purchasing through dealers will change and through the transparency of the web, prices can be compared all around the world

- **What are the industry's biggest con(s)?**

Honestly speaking the price policy.

The way you work

Behind the Brands

- **Presuming the measurements are fine, what do you listen for when assessing products?**

All styles of music and sounds - for this we created a Manger CD sampler, with excellent recorded tracks like bell ringing, an audio drama, various kinds of music.

- **Your sound preference - ‘Smooth, listenable musicality’, ‘forward, driving, ‘foot-tapping’, involving sound’ or ‘detailed neutrality and transparency’?**

The natural combination of all of this makes the most enjoyable music listening.

- **Your preference - Full-range floorstanders or freestanding mini monitors with a sub?**

Physic matters, so floorstanders with a smart design to satisfy the WAF;-)

It’s all about the music, man...

- **What is your favourite recording?**

A Denon recording: Gelber/Beethoven (one-point recording)

- **Tell us about your 3 most trusted test recordings**

There is only one, our Manger CD Sampler

- **What are your most embarrassing recordings/guilty musical pleasures**

Amy Winehouse – Back to black

- **Having safely ushered your loved ones out of the house as it is burning down to the ground, you ignore all standard safety advice and dash back inside to grab just one recording – what is it?**

May I grab two: Oscar Peterson Trio – We get requests; Michael Jackson – Thriller.

