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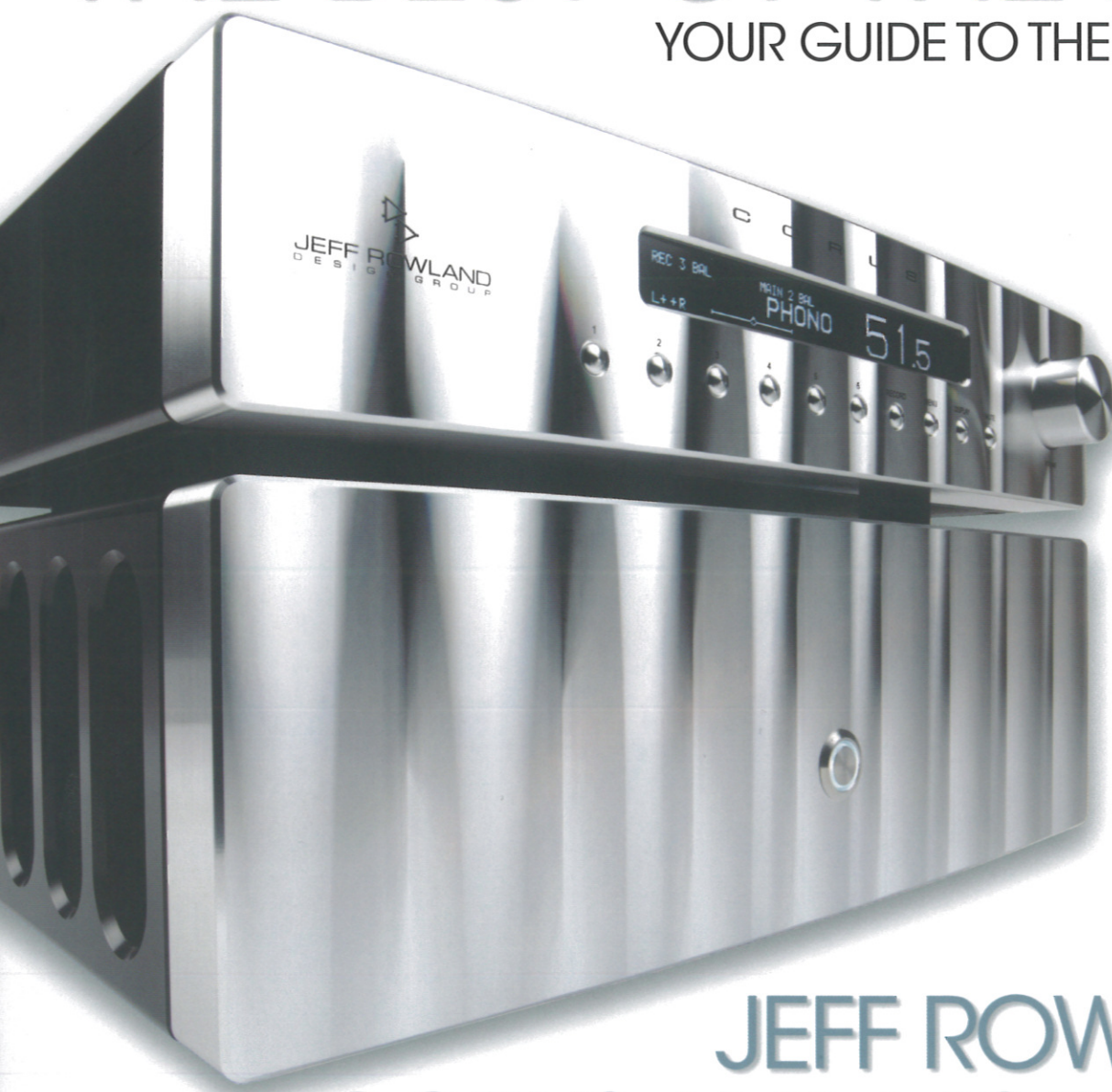
hi-fi+

REPRODUCING THE RECORDED ARTS • 83



THE BEST OF THE BEST

YOUR GUIDE TO THE FINEST HIFI!



HIFIMAN
HE-500
HEADPHONES

OPPO BDP-95
MULTI-FORMAT
PLAYER

REVOLVER
CYGNUS GOLD
LOUDSPEAKERS

JEFF ROWLAND CORUS AND MODEL 625

REDEFINING THE STATE OF THE AMPLIFIER ART?

THE HI-FI+ GUIDE TO THE CRÈME DE LA CRÈME

Digital Audio

Arcam rDAC kw

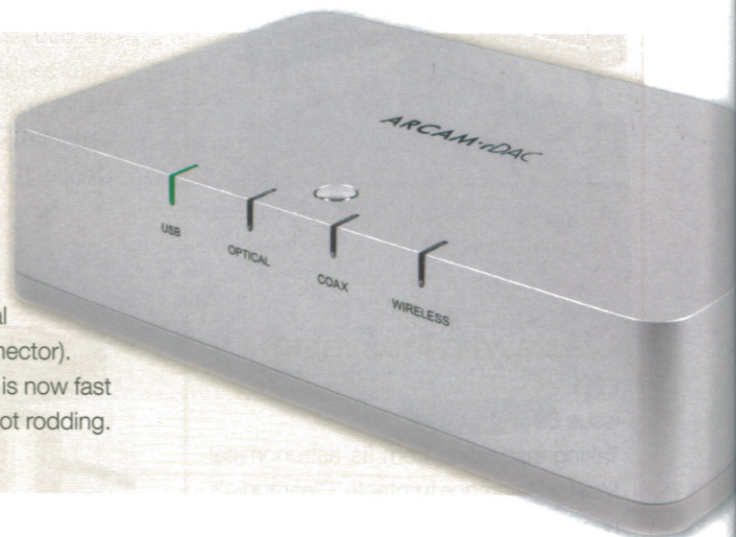
£££

Issue 80

People forget that Arcam was the one of the first companies on the planet to launch a standalone DAC, so the brand does know a thing or two about digital. The rDAC was originally launched with Asynchronous USB input, but now it includes the Klear wireless protocol that can beam up to lossless digital audio files across the room (either via a USB or an Apple i-connector).

A fine sounding, great value proposition in its own right, which is now fast becoming a platform for power supply and galvanic isolation hot rodding.

www.arcam.co.uk



Audiolab 8200 CDQ

££££

Issue 82

The digital audio equivalent of the Swiss Army knife, Audiolab's 8200 digital platform can be specified in a number of ways, but the full enchilada – complete with CD player, USB input, a range of filter settings and built-in preamp – represents the New Wave of audio products. Designed by the legendary John Westlake, the 8200 CDQ digital hub is all about detail, focus and precision. It's a tight sound that might not flap the trousers of bass hounds, but the rest of us will love it for its, er, unflappable sense of order. Just add power amp for a fine performance. All-in-one audio never sounded so right.

www.audiolab.co.uk



Ayre QB-9 DAC

££££

Issue 72

The DAC that first brought the digital revolution to the heart of the audiophile world. Now upgraded to 192/24 precision (a follow-up review is in the pipeline), the QB-9 manages to combine top-notch soundstaging and detail with some of the up-beat musicality that is sometimes considered a uniquely British preserve. An excellent DAC that has seen many a good CD player fall from grace by comparison.

www.ayre.com

www.symmetry-systems.co.uk



dCS Puccini/U-Clock player

£££££

Issue 73

We were already big fans of the dCS Puccini, the company's one-box 'entry-level' CD/SACD player. But the level of improvement we got when we added the U-Clock still managed to surprise us. A combination high-precision clock and Asynchronous USB input helped raise the already high standards of the Puccini still further. Not only does it add a very fine computer audio option to the existing player, the level of pitch stability and precision the U-Clock bestows on the already very precise Puccini makes it the combination very highly desirable indeed. Cambridge's finest just got better.

www.dcsLtd.co.uk

dCS Debussy

££££

Issue 78

It's perhaps a mark of just how much the audio world has changed recently. Although not a hardcore CD supporter, dCS has a commanding reputation of providing some of the best disc spinners around, but its latest product is a DAC, designed to bring out the best in computer audio, as well as a range of digital audio sources. Designing its own Asynchronous USB input from first principles (and then licensing it to Arcam), the 192kHz/24bit Ring-DAC equipped Debussy features a host of dCS-derived technology, but most importantly delivers a sound that is extremely open and detailed. Potentially upgradable too, thanks to a U-Clock.

www.dcsLtd.co.uk
**HRT Streamer II+**

£££

Issue 82

HRT has undergone a continuous improvement programme since the products first hit the streets in 2009, and has recently added an iPhone chummy version, but the concept remains the same. These are simple, low cost, high performance, USB-only digital converters, made for specific computer to audiophile conversion. Even the first generation were astoundingly good, but the hot spot is the 2011 version of the Streamer II+. Supporting up to 24bit, 94kHz sampling and featuring an HRT-designed Asynchronous USB input, this USB-powered DAC can easily stand toe-to-toe with any digital converter on the market. It really is that good, and must represent a hard act to follow.

www.highresolutiontechnologies.com
www.audiofreaks.co.uk
Neodio NR22 CD player

£££££

Issue 76

The French Neodio NR22 CD player proves there's life in the old CD dog yet. While it does have a USB input, the NR22's great strength is as an all-rounder CD player, managing as it does to combine much of the performance of the true greats of CD replay in one. It's a lithe sounding player that manages to dig into the detail of any disc it plays, and yet manages to extract a lot of musicality and insight in the process. A truly world-class player from a brand that deserves to be much better known outside of *La Belle France*.

www.neodio.fr www.selectaudio.co.uk
**Wadia 781i CD player**

£££££

Issue 69

Wadia's top one-box CD/SACD player is closer to a one-box audio decoding computer than a mere disc spinner. Using the latest iteration of Wadia's Digimaster software effectively makes it a 24-bit, 1.4GHz device, with a host of configuration and control options. Regardless, the sound quality – whether from the disc or through one of its many digital inputs – is little short of astounding, and its three filter options perfectly ally it to any system. If you like your music, well, musical the 781i must be the best single box around.

www.wadia.com www.mdc-hifi.co.uk