

ONE-MAKE HI-FI SYSTEMS

Primare CD31



£1500

Primare I30



£1500

ProAc Studio 140



£1400



Once, twice, three times an Award winner, and we love this Primare and ProAc combo

Primare/ProAc



£4400

IN HORSE RACING terms this system is known as a 'sure thing'. Take an Award-winning Primare CD player, add the Award-winning Primare integrated stereo amp, and complete the set-up with a pair of Award-winning stereo speakers. It's a dead cert, surely?

Well, as any gambler knows 'sure things' don't always win, and it wouldn't be the first time, in a **WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION** system test that five-star individuals have fumbled their way to a four-star verdict overall.

The love affairs starts here

However, on this occasion, the favourite wins by a neck, mane, hoof, tail, and whatever other horse parts you care to name. Up and running, this trio rocks.

Presentation is, how do you say, **BIG!** The powerful amp combines with the gutsy CD player to feed

FOR
Grand scale performance; impressive authority; class-leading detail; even tonal balance

AGAINST
Strapping electronics and big towers need plenty of space to breathe their magic

VERDICT
We know it's not cheap, but this system delivers everything you ask of it – a perfectly matched trio

the formidable floorstanders just what they need to blow the cobwebs out of any dingy listening room. Introduce the queen of hi-fi test discs, Ms Kate Bush, and you get a wonderfully airy soundstage. Choose *Sunset*, and the '140s delve impressively deep to deliver the underpinning bass with authority, definition and weight.

Even better, as the tune switches tempo, this muscular system

“The ProAc speakers dig impressively deep, giving the bass solid authority”

instantly responds, rattling along with unbridled enthusiasm. Of course, you can't discuss Kate Bush without talking vocals, and here the Primare/ProAc selection continues to make you grin.

The '140s also offer a good, solid, midrange, but not at the expense of detail. The result is tremendously realistic vocals – if we didn't know Kate was at home writing songs about washing machines, we

would soon believe she was living inside one of these ProAc speakers.

Other kit on test, however, has received a glowing report only for another musical test to trip it up. A lack of aggression for rock, or perhaps a deficiency of finesse for more subtle tunes, can result in stars disappearing – but that is categorically not the case here. From Underworld's dance, to Eminem's hip-hop, to Holst's classical, this well-balanced system doesn't disappoint at all.

Solid build is out of this world

Sure, it doesn't offer quite the detail of the Densen system or quite the drive of the Naim kit, but – hey! – those systems cost thousands of pounds more than this one.

So, we're chuffed with the sound, and we're equally happy with build. The handsome Swedish electronics feel like they've been chiselled from a single meteorite, while the ProAc towers offer super-solid, if not the most visually enticing, cabinets. Will you love this system? Sure thing, we know you will.



CD31
CD PLAYER
TYPE Integrated
ANALOGUE OUTPUTS
Phono, XLR
DIGITAL OUTPUTS
Coaxial, optical
DIGITAL INPUTS
None
HDCD No
CD TEXT No
MEMORY No
DISPLAY OFF Yes
FINISHES 2

I30
AMPLIFIER
TYPE Integrated
LINE LEVEL
INPUTS 6
PHONO STAGE No
TAPE LOOPS None
BALANCED PREAMP OUTPUT
Yes
SPEAKERS
Single pair
TONE CONTROL No
HEADPHONES No
REMOTE CONTROL Yes
FINISHES 2

STUDIO 140
SPEAKERS
TYPE Two-and-a-half-way floorstander
DRIVERS
Two x 12cm bass/midrange, 25mm soft dome tweeter
IMPEDANCE 4ohms
MAX POWER-HANDLING 250W
BIWIREABLE Yes
FREQUENCY RESPONSE
32Hz-25kHz (±3)
SENSITIVITY 87dB
FINISHES 4
SIZE 98x20x30cm
WEIGHT 19kg

TEST RESULT

This is a test our reviewers fight over, just because there's so much pleasure to be had from hearing a quality **hi-fi system**

BEST SYSTEM UNDER £1000

THE SUB-£1000 contest was a straight shoot-out between reigning budget king, Cambridge, and once-upon-a-time supremo Marantz. Marantz's latest electronics offer outstanding value, and the Mordaunt-Short speakers combine to create a micro-killing separates system. If you can manage the extra cash, the Cambridge/Epos team offers an extra dose of 'hi-fi'. From detail, to pace, to punch – this trio punches way above its price point. It's awesome! And, like all these systems, budget a decent amount for the right accessories, which will add the final sparkle to your system.



EQUIPMENT RACK
TARGET S230 ★★★★★ £229
Isolates your kit from unwanted vibrations

INTERCONNECT
CHORD COBRA 3 ★★★★★ £60
A very musical delivery for the money

SPEAKER CABLE
CHORD CAR. SILVER ★★★★★ £5.50/m
A smoother sound from the Carnival Silver

SPEAKER STANDS
EPOS ST35 ★★★★★ £99
Complement its M5s perfectly for £100



Cambridge/Epos
★★★★★
£850



Roksan/KEF
★★★★★
£1400

BEST SYSTEM £1000-£2000

THIS CATEGORY PRODUCED the most surprising result. With the help of fierce pricing, plus a pair of Award-winning floorstanders, Roksan turned a four-star CD player and four-star integrated amp into a five-star system. It's a great example of perfect system-matching, and clever marketing. For £1400, the amount of fun you get makes our winner a 'must-demo' system. However, let's not forget the refined, agile performance of the Cyrus/Spendor kit – it's a classy system, ideal for medium-to-small rooms. The Creek/Epos combo was slightly over-priced, we felt. Creek should take a leaf out of Roksan's book.



EQUIPMENT RACK
ATACAMA EQUINOX ★★★★★ £300
Multiple-Award-winning modular supports

STEREO INTERCONNECT
ECOSSE NU DIVA ★★★★★ £125
Delivers clarity and sonic balance

SPEAKER CABLE
QED SILVER ANNIV. XT ★★★★★ £5.50
The QED's crisper sound suits this system

MAINS CABLES
MERLIN TARANTULA ★★★★★ 2x£50
Great-value leads – well worth the outlay

BEST SYSTEM OVER £2000

THE HIGH-END category always produces much 'enjoyable discussion' among the review team. You know the chat: "is a seven-grand system 14 times better than a £500 system?", and all that. There was no doubt, however, when it came to deciding the winner: though the Densen/Art system offers a sublime, astonishingly detailed listening experience, and the Naim system sets the sonic heather alight, the Primare/ProAc set-up is just so darn well-balanced it's impossible to shove off the winner's rostrum. Dynamics, finesse, scale – this £4400 wonder leaves you wanting for nothing.



EQUIPMENT RACK
CLEARLIGHT ASPEKT ★★★★★ £550
Gorgeous looks, and as solid as a rock

STEREO INTERCONNECT
ATLAS VOYAGER ALL-CU ★★★★★ £170
All-copper cable is clear as a proverbial bell

SPEAKER CABLE
ATLAS HYPER 3.0 ★★★★★ £20/m
Expensive cable, but worth all the hype

MAINS CABLE
CLEARER COPPER-LINE ★★★★★ 2x£95
Cleans your mains to the ultimate degree



Primare/ProAc
★★★★★
£4400

