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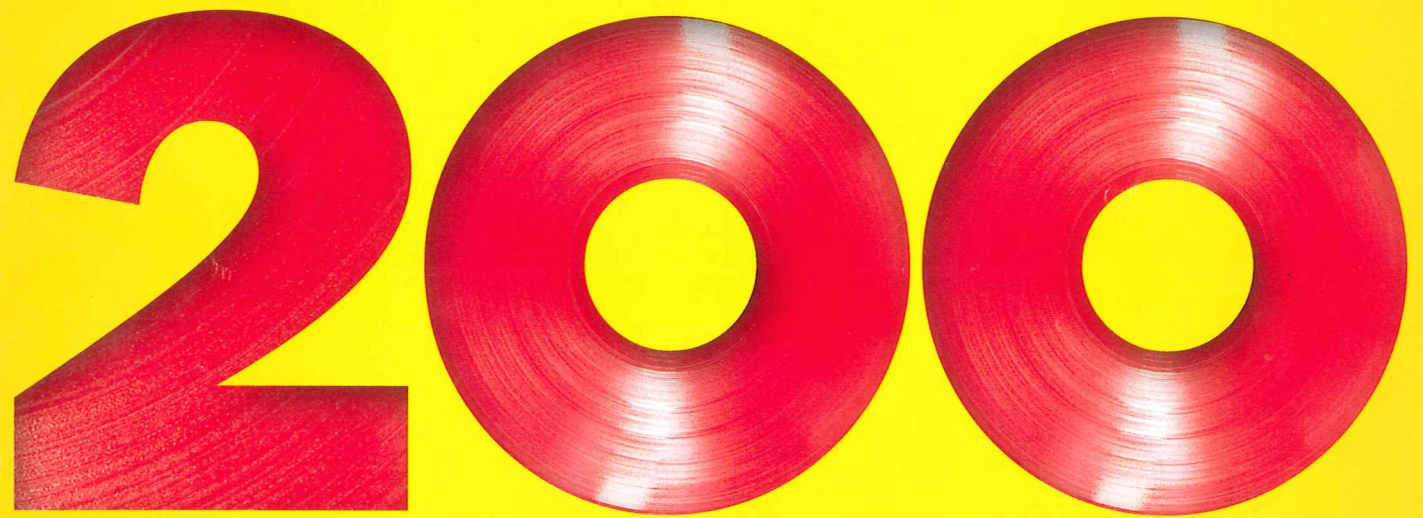
ACID JAZZ ★ BRUCE FOXTON ON THE JAM



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RAREST RECORDS – TODAY

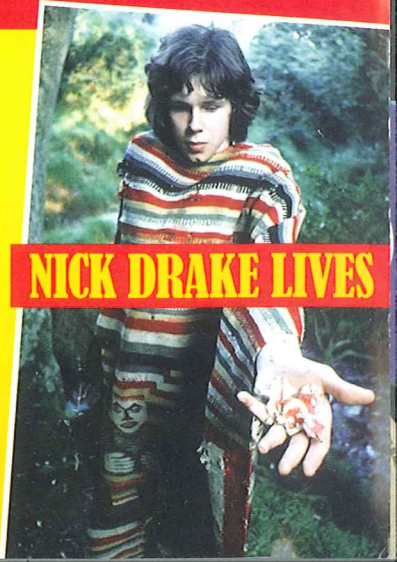
SPECIAL REPORT: NEW DISCOVERIES, SOARING VALUES



THE PARAMOUNTS PROCOL HARUM'S R&B YEARS

CROSBY, STILLS AND NASH THE INTERVIEW

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HIGH FIDELITY

RC's guide to the gear that will bring the best out of your records. By Paul Rigby

REGA BRIO-R

Buying and integrating individual components into a synergistic hi-fi system can take time and effort. A potential problem can occur when you decide to upgrade one of those components, which could throw your system off-kilter. Nothing sounds right any more, and sonic gloom descends. This is why you need to grab yourself a bunch of boxes that offer both quality and flexibility.

The 50W Rega Brio-R integrated amplifier is one such product. Available in black and silver, spanning a miniature 80x218x325mm and weighing in at 6kg, the front of the Brio-R features a volume control, input selector and power switch. On the rear are five inputs, plus an MM phono connection and a single pair of speaker connectors adjacent to the power plug.

The Brio-R is a venerable design that has been steadily upgraded over the years but, according to Rega owner/co-founder, Roy Gandy, it's always been the subject of attention to detail: "To keep the distortive noise down, we thought about the proximity and screening of low voltage parts of the amp in relation to the transformer, which is tough, in a small case. In the Brio-R, the transformer features a bespoke design supplied by a company that used to share our factory space. We tested around 20 toroidal prototypes."

Sound tests began with vinyl in the shape of the original 1964 RCA LP, *This Is Ethel Ennis*. The first impression gained of the Brio-R, care of the jazz-vocal piece, *He Loves Me*, is one of clarity. There's something Blue Lagoon-like in the way that the Rega presents music to the ear. You feel that each instrument within the dynamic backing orchestra cannot only be heard in full, but that every angle of each instrument is in view. This is partly due to the reduction in distortion, which removes the noise that often fills in gaps. With the distortion removed, the soundstage was able to present the instruments in a more articulate manner.

Moving to CD, with Stevie Wonder's *I Was Made To Love Her*, the pedigree of the Brio-R was apparent from the first few notes of Wonder's harmonica. The space afforded to the soundstage produced a clearer, more recognisable presentation. Instrumental separation on this early mix not only gave the vocal a richer, more emotional delivery, but also teased apart the backing band into their individual instruments.

Offering great value for money, the Brio-R represents the very best in budget amplifier design.
www.rega.co.uk

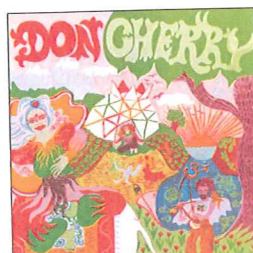
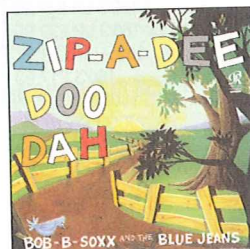
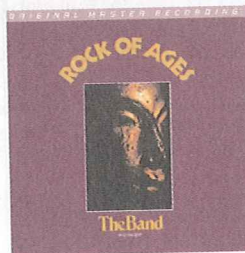
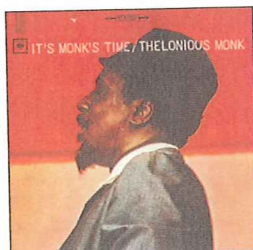
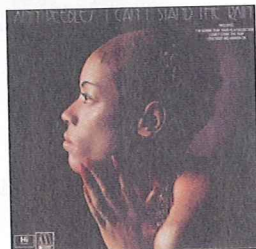
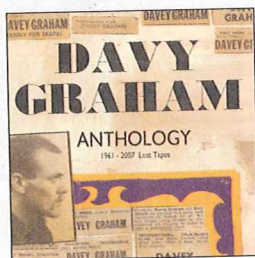


AUDIOPHILE LP ROUND-UP

The clue to the audiophile nature of the music in **DAVY GRAHAM's** *Anthology 1961-2007 Lost Tapes* (★★★★ Music On Vinyl) lies in the title, which has a slight mid-range recess but remains clean and more than listenable. That the recordings exist at all and, more than that, with five tracks exclusive to this vinyl release, is welcome. Where else, indeed, can you hear the perfectionist, Graham, produce a dazzling piece of finger picking guitar, on *Fannin' Street*, only to complete it with a note of frustration and the exclamation, "fuck!", as he hears the tiniest of mistakes, almost inaudible to this reviewer's ear.

Beautifully mastered, I have yet to hear a better transcription of **ANN PEEBLES' I Can't Stand The Rain** title track. (★★★★ Pure Pleasure). This soul classic has a hip, grinding, organic flow, with Hammond organ and brass providing a humanistic take on the track. The rest of the album follows suit. An audiophile gem.

THELONIOUS MONK: genius, or acolyte of the Les Dawson school of piano-playing? Monk's unique and often controversial sense of rhythm, chordal progression and tone is revealed on Lulu's *Back In Town*, via *It's Monk's Time* (★★★★ Speaker's Corner). This LP receives a wholly sympathetic mastering, which emphasises



clarity and transparency and allows the quartet to truly sing. Each instrument is laid bare, presenting both subtlety and nuance to the listener.

On **THE BAND's** live double-album, *Rock Of Ages* (★★★★ Mobile Fidelity), the outfit succeeds in displaying their rockier side, while being both wild yet tight as a group. The principle feature of this mix is the 3D aspect of the soundstage, which adds depth and layering to the performance. Essential to a live recording the music retains both space and air.

BOB B SOXX & THE BLUE JEANS' Zip-A-Dee Doo Dah (★★★★ Sundazed) is a perfect amalgamation of soul from Phil Spector's Phyllis label. Arranged by Jack Nitzsche, the LP also includes the hits: *Why Do Lovers Break Each Other's Hearts?* and *Not Too Young To Get Married*. Sundazed, while retaining the lively nature of the music, offers a clean, quiet pressing, with plenty of dynamic presence supporting the original energetic mix.

Finally, **DON CHERRY's Organic Music Society** (★★★★ Caprice) combines Cherry's dangerous, shrapnel-flying avant-garde trumpet, combined with beautiful pastoral, folk-derived, tribal rhythms. The pressing shows admirable instrumental separation.