

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION

SEPTEMBER 2009 £4.99

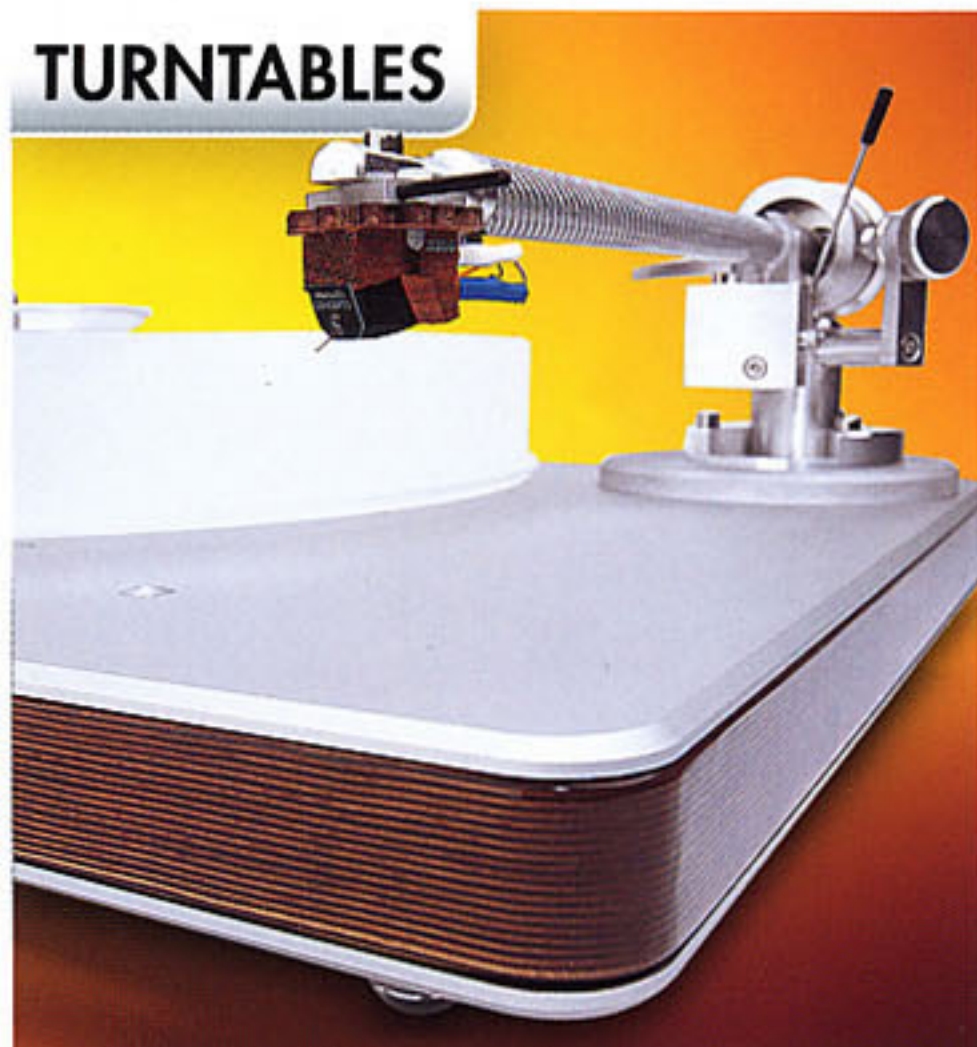
ULTIMATE GUIDE TO HIGH END ENTERTAINMENT

SPEAKERS

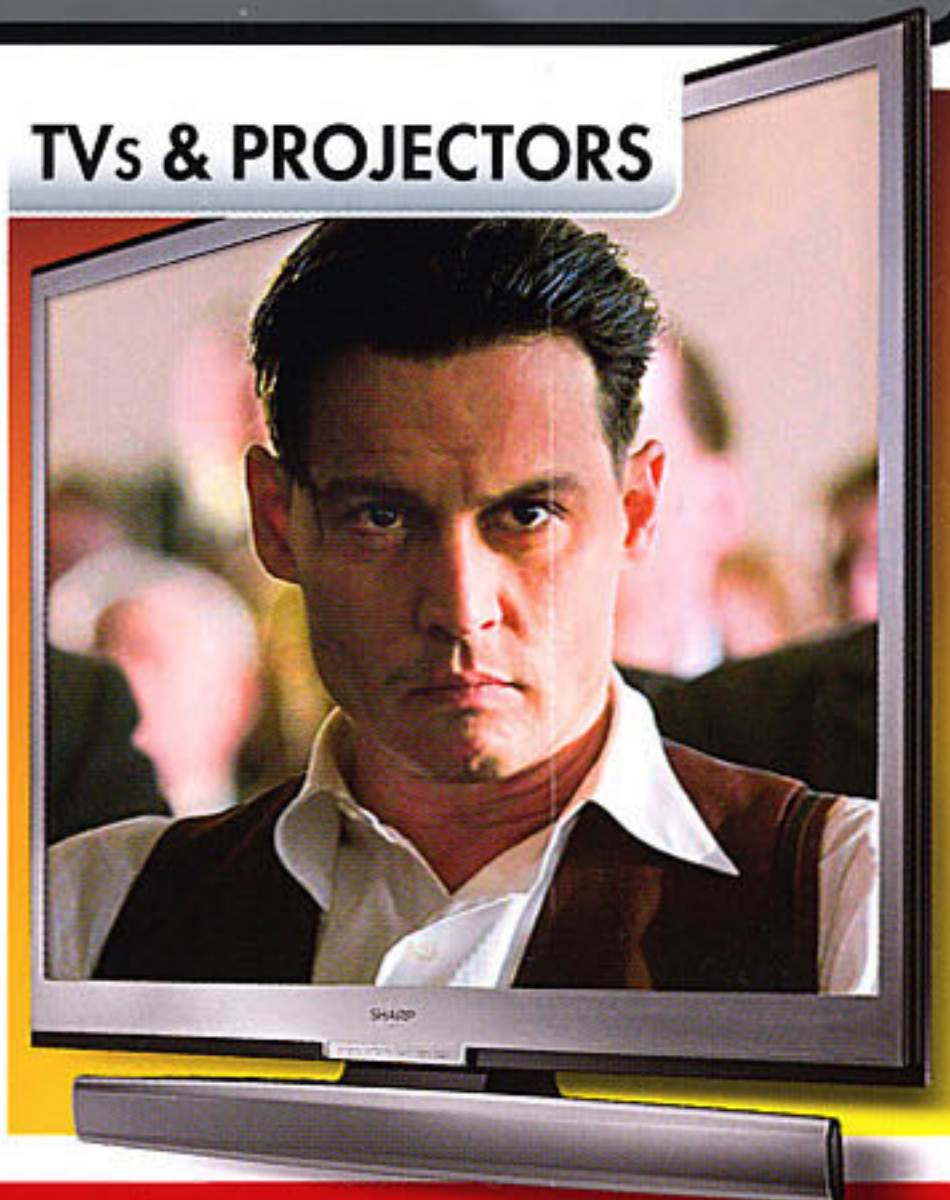


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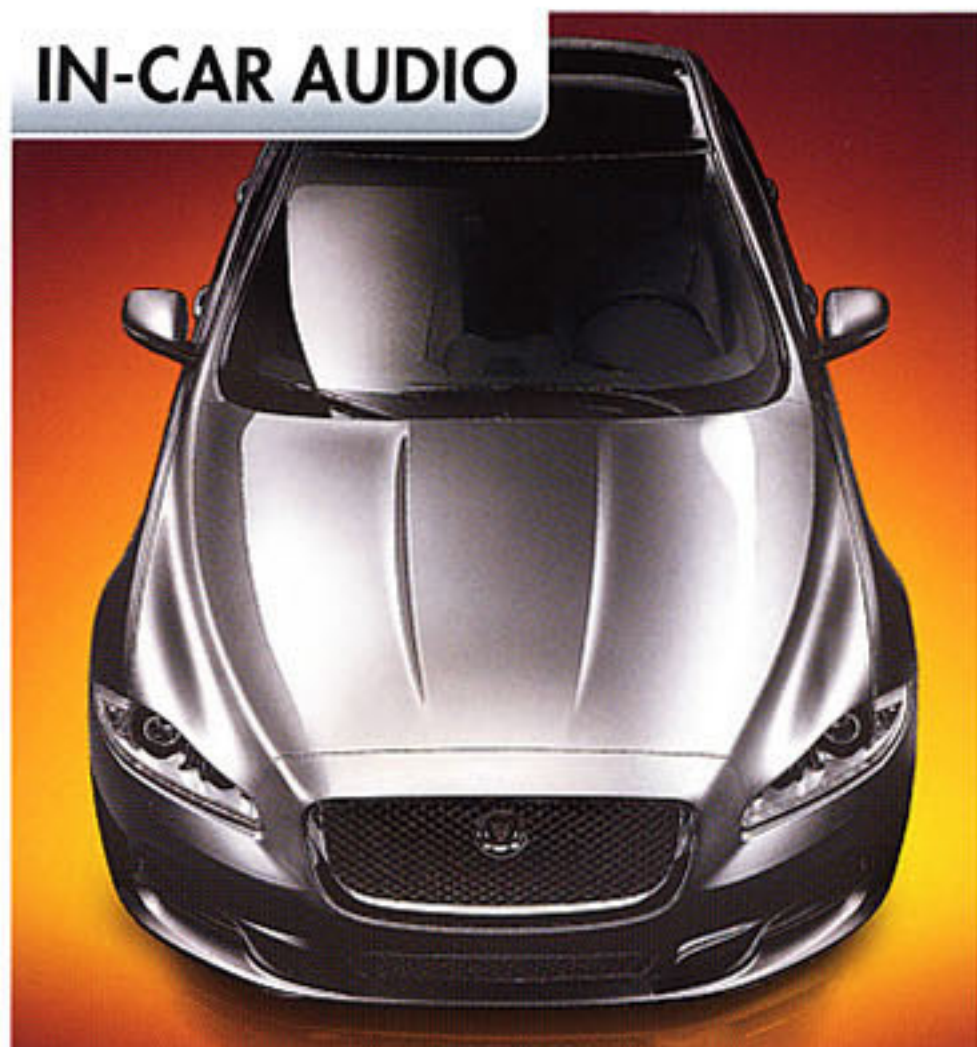
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Clearaudio Ambient/Satisfy/Concerto


£4500

FORGET THE AMBIENT turntable for a moment: let's talk instead about Mr Nicholas Edward Cave. Along with his band, the Bad Seeds, he created *Nocturama*, one of 2003's great albums. Beautifully produced, it's one of our favourite test records.

And most testing of all is the record's closing song, *Babe, I'm on Fire*. At more than 15 minutes long, it's both an exhausting and an exhilarating track to listen to.

Transformative power

So what has this all got to do with Clearaudio's Ambient turntable, we hear you ask? Well, played on the majority of hi-fi, *Babe's* rampaging bass, crashing cymbals, lashings of feedback and frantic vocals result in a chaotic soundstage, bass that jumps around like a toddler on Sunny D, and treble that cuts through week-old Stilton. Not good, in other words.

But play the same track on the Ambient, complete with the £640 Satisfy Carbon Directwire tonearm, plus a splendid £1400 (yes, we said £1400) Concerto cartridge, and the

↑ FOR

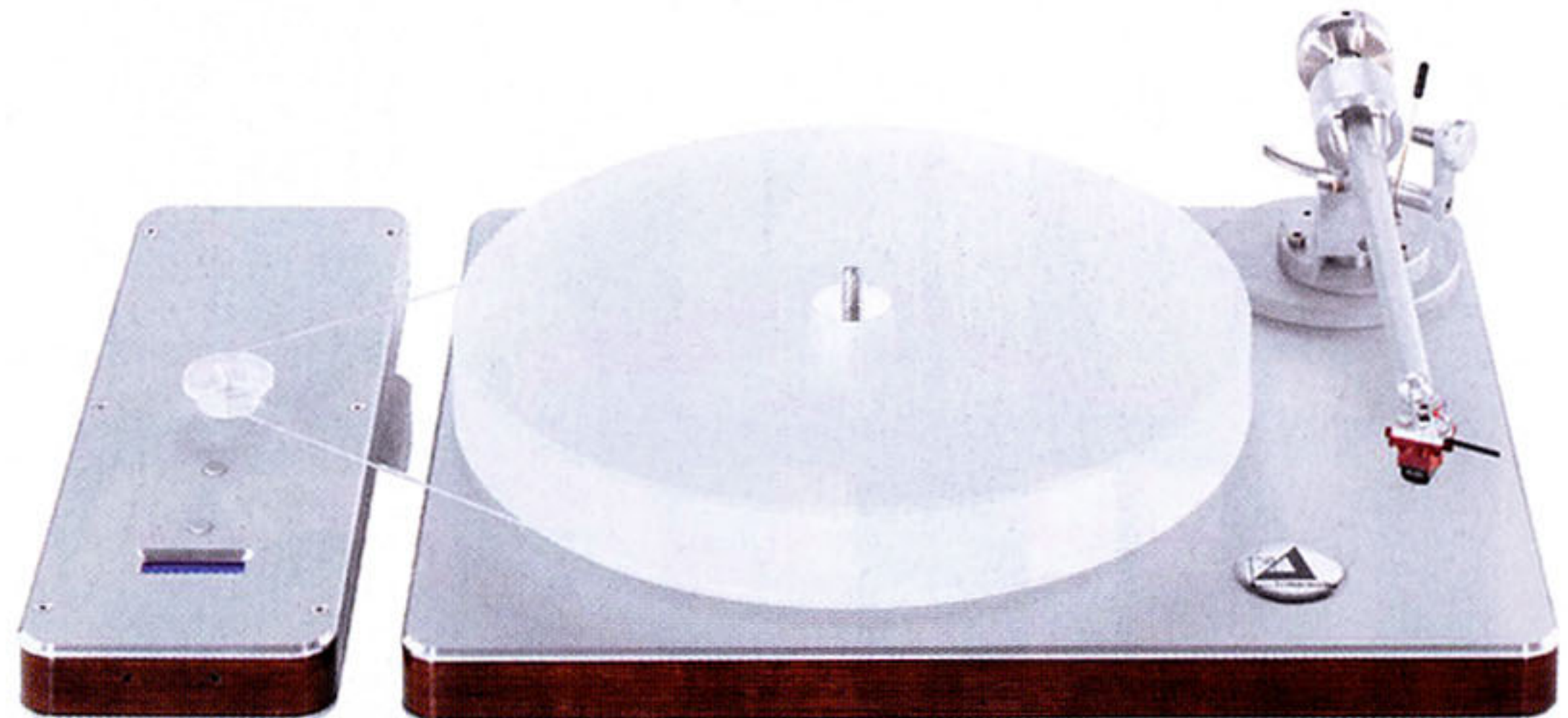
Thrilling delivery; sweet, open treble; spacious, detailed soundstage; looks

↓ AGAINST

Not without rivals; width; you wouldn't want to break a £1400 cartridge

→ VERDICT

Beautifully built, and a real joy to use and hear



Clearaudio delivers a performance as mighty as the music itself. From the mass of drums, guitar, percussion and violin, you can pick out each instrument, note and nuance.

“Orff’s *Carmina Burana* gets the dynamic reach and impact it deserves”

However, this space isn't at the expense of integration: while its soundstage is wide and deep, the Clearaudio expertly knits together lower, middle and higher frequencies.

Of course, you might not listen to Nick Cave. No one's perfect. No matter, this Clearaudio package loves all musical genres: Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*

gets the dynamic reach and impact it deserves, while Christopher and Raphael Just's *Popper* 12-inch sounds more bangin' than a child with a hammer and a tin box. Put quite simply, the Clearaudio Ambient is just wonderful, whatever it plays.

Finally, there's that look. It's not unusual for top-end turntables to stand out when it comes to styling, and the Ambient obliges on that front thanks to its translucent platter and fully separated motor section incorporating the power supply and speed regulation.

SPECIFICATION

Speeds 33¹/₃, 45, **Man/auto/semi op** Yes/no/no
Phono amp No **Tonearm/cartridge** Yes/yes
Belt/direct drive Yes/no **USB** No **Suspension** No
Finishes 4 **Size (hwd)** 15 x 53 x 33cm