



news:  
groundhog day edition

winter 2019 - 2020

signals  
hi-fi for grown-ups

# News

Groundhog Day? Wait until you see the card! Welcome to our umpteenth newsletter.

So, what happened in 2019?

For a start, we took a break from holding Audio Show East at Trinity Park. Instead, we held a series of brand-specific open days at St Cecilia's House.

We saw the great and the good. Steve Sells, Naim's director of design, Rob Watts, the DAC designer and digital guru at Chord, Pete Thomas, co founder of PMC, Derek Gilligan, head honcho of Kudos, we had them all! Even without the owners or designers being present, the Dynaudio and Rega events went exceedingly well too.

'So, is this actually easier?' asked one of our customers with a grin as he watched us juggling drink and food production. The honest answer is that, we think these events did a better job albeit to a smaller audience. Being smaller, they were far more sociable too.

We will start figuring out a schedule for 2020 in due course. **In the meantime, we will be closed for the Christmas holidays, bringing down the shutters on the afternoon of 24th December and stumbling back on the morning of January 2nd.**

Many thanks to our fine customers for continuing to buy from us. After 26 years, we have made a lot of old friends with which we happen to do business and seem to be finding new ones along the way.

Within this booklet, we have some new arrivals that we hope just might tempt you . . .

Have a great 2020 from all of us at Signals.



# Accuphase

This is one of those 'old school' brands that gets talked about in hushed tones. Hand built in Japan in small volumes, build quality is exceptional.

UK distribution is now in the hands of Audio Works, the folks behind the Music Works cables and mains blocks. We feel that this small specialist team will be a good and reliable custodian of the brand.

We had a listen and were deeply impressed. PMC have shown that tone controls need not involve compromise and it turns out that Accuphase have been making this point for decades. All the convenience features you could wish for in a beautifully built package and it sounds marvellous.

We've invested in a couple of the integrated amplifiers and a CD player-cum-DAC. We have the DAC and MM / MC phono boards for the amps too.



# COLLARO AUDIO

This famous name from the past is now applied to a rather impressive turntable upgrade.

It's the result of many years of research and is a high quality 100% wool woven cloth with felt-like smooth facings, produced as a result of the finishing process. It provides a precise support of the record on the platter whilst protecting the groove from damage that can be sustained using a hard surface such as glass or metal.

The specially engineered cloth converts vibrational energy into heat. It's pictured below on a Rega Planar 10. We've yet to find a turntable on which it does not have a positive impact, cleaning and organising the sound quite strikingly.

**£99 delivered. Full refund if you don't like it.**



Equipment support is crucial part of the audio system and the impact this has cannot be overestimated. It's telling that, when testing samples out, we've found that a single Naim Uniti Nova can reveal virtually all we need to know.

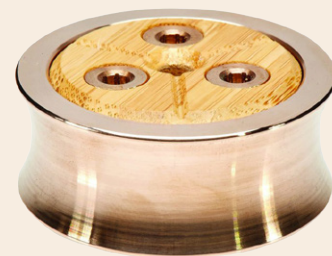
We have Naim's own Fraim and Fraim Lite, the entire Quadraspire range, Isoblue and, now, Lateral, so there are plenty alternatives to play with.

Quadraspire have taken the concept into new territory by making interfaces that replicate the sound signature of their various racks. The Reference version is on the right and these are available in threes and fours.

Our remarkably diligent customers are forever experimenting and we can say that these interfaces not only 'rescue' poor sounding support furniture but continue to improve some of the better ones.

Putting these between a Naim Fraim shelf and an NDX 2 brings unexpectedly dramatic results. Not unlike a serious power supply or high end cable. Work of the devil . . .

## Quadraspire



Naim were one of the first to grasp the concept of system synergy and the interdependence of components. No surprise, therefore, that their cables, including the PowerLine mains lead, should dovetail magnificently. It is supplied as standard with their high end products (PowerLine Lite comes with everything else).

It is a surprise, though, to find that this high end power cable has proved to be so universally useful with other brands too. Melco, Linn, Chord and many others sound noticeably better when used with PowerLines.

Some of our more adventurous customers, who talk of exotic mains leads in the manner of fine wines have been very impressed too. In this elevated world these actually seem comparatively inexpensive.

As with many other Naim designs, these cables are more about high quality materials and mechanical decoupling than anything else and the layered design of the MusicWorks blocks (top right) are an extremely good match.



MusicWorks



We've had the MusicWorks mains blocks for some time. Their top end block, the third generation 'Ultra' G3, was a revelation. We've enthused about it but, at £999, it's not something we would expect to sell in significant numbers.

And then one of our customers wrote of his experience on the Naim forum. Suddenly a £1000 mains block is perfectly normal! The range starts at £485, by the way.

Now, here's a thing. For another £300 the Ultra block can now be supplied pre-built or upgraded with a base layer made of a Peek / Acrylic composite. Peek is what the feet are made from but that never seemed particularly interesting.

Adding this new material, called Acouplex, does stupidly positive things to the sound quality.

We have them all in stock . . .

It's an audio cliché, but Lateral Audio Stands stemmed from a desire to make something better than was already available. Impressively, Lateral's owner, Kevin Hancock, has achieved his aim.

In terms of audio quality, we think these stands outclass many similarly priced and more expensive ones from established makers. The design is subtly unusual but very logical, with the shelves supported with lateral fixings through sturdy oak uprights. There is a naturalness and dynamic freedom about these stands that is instantly appealing.

Fundamentally, these are low-mass designs. As a further upgrade, isolation shelves can be added. Kevin is based in Derbyshire and he uses locally sourced solid oak, oak-faced plywood and aluminium. These are hand finished in a light wax.

**| LATERAL |**  
audio stands







# GRADO

New arrivals from Grado, the limited edition White Headphones in celebration of the Beatles White Album. They come with a copy of the fairly recently remastered vinyl album.

Yes indeed, this is the one that we had as a prize at Audio Show East at the end of last year . . .

Production apparently stops at the end of 2019, so we might be running a little late in mentioning these!

Anyway, you get the classic Grado sound, based on the acclaimed GS1000s. Cool looking in a huge-bobbin-on-your-head kind of a way. Price is £795

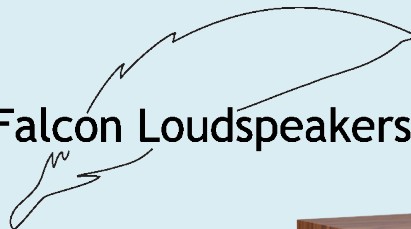
Along with these, we have the picks of the lower priced, higher value models in the Grado range.

 **FOCAL®**  
THE SPIRIT OF SOUND

We have the rather excellent Focal Elear, Clear and Utopia models from Focal. All are on demonstration and can be auditioned with a wide range of headphone amplifiers from Naim, Trilog, Lehmann and Project and Sennheiser, while stocks last. Sadly, Sennheiser have taken the unexpected step of closing down access by the vast majority of independent stockists, including ourselves. Deals to be struck!



## Falcon Loudspeakers



The Falcon LS3/As are fairly expensive, unapologetically 'retro' (early 1970's designs, after all) compact monitor loudspeakers. They hold the distinction of being the smallest loudspeakers we've ever had vetoed by a wife on looks alone (size is usually everything!).

Despite this crushing judgement, there is real love out there for these tiddlers and they are selling in numbers that we could never have anticipated.

Falcon manufacture the drivers in-house in short runs and the quality is clearly top notch. They manage to be easy to please yet sound disproportionately full range, dynamic, coherent and very musical.

When it comes to tech, there is evidently more than one way to skin a rabbit. These raise an interesting question about what actually constitutes progress.



The new Naim Supernait 3 and Nait XS 3 amplifiers arrived in the Autumn of 2019. Both are significant improvements over their already very capable predecessors and now, just as Rega launch an amplifier without a phono stage, these acquire one.

It's a moving magnet stage and very good too, quite decisively bettering a Stageline 'N' plugged into the socket that is still provided for external Naim stages. Both are exceedingly good matches with a wide range of loudspeakers, including the Falcon LS3/A above.

The Supernait 3 is a predictably good match for the NDX2 streamer and running this into Russell K Red 150 and 120 floor-standers has been one of the high spots of the year.

With speakers on hand from Dynaudio, Falcon, Focal, PMC and Q Acoustics too, we are well placed to help you find the ideal match.



Here, we have a budget loudspeaker brand with the purist values of a high end specialist. They are co-designed between the UK and Germany and built in the far east to a very high standard.

The new "i" series, arrived in 2018 and is a range of indecently capable loudspeakers at very modest prices.

Things get really interesting with the Concept series. The compact Concept 20 and 40 is the stuff of hifi bargain legend, the substantial (£4,000) Concept 500s shocked a few folks a couple of years ago and now we have the utterly funky Concept 300.

Supplied as a package with the remarkable suspension and rigid, low mass tensegrity stands, the looks are full-on "Marmite" but they definitely sound the part and the construction quality is beyond reproach.

See the offer below. Now is the time!



Trade in your old speakers for a pair of Concept 300s or  
Concept 500s and receive a minimum of 20% discount

Offer ends 20th January 2020





Surprise of Autumn 2019 was the arrival of the new, highly affordable, Chora range from Focal. Three in the range, 806, 816 and 826. The £806 stand-mounts are good but, to our ears the £1099 816 floor-standers are exceptional.

They are styled by Simon Matthews who also designs the Naim casework and the clean, crisp style is a breath of fresh air, particularly in the black which mimics the brushed black anodised alloy of the Uniti series. They are built in France too.

A Uniti Atom will achieve great things with a pair of these and a Supernait 3 shows just how much better it is. In our opinion, these are also the 'go to' speaker for the Rega Elex-R. Two wood-look finishes are also available and the larger three way 826 has yet to be assessed.



Two new arrivals from Rega at the end of 2019. First, the long-awaited Aethos integrated amplifier. This was first shown at the Bristol show as an empty case. Price is £2999 and it sounds like terrific value for money. It has oodles of power and scale, excellent dynamics and refinement too. Reassuringly it's also back breakingly heavy.

As with the Osiris amplifier above it but unlike the rest of its siblings, Aethos is line level only and matches the other reference components, including the Aura phono stage and power supply for the other new arrival, the Planar 10 turntable.

Ah yes, the new Planar 10. It's available with the new Apheta 3 moving coil cartridge and the combo is a proper upgrade over both the previous RP10 and current Planar 8.

There is a picture of it wearing a Collaro mat on page two.



## Winter DSM Trade-in Promotion



Minimum 20% trade in allowance for any piece of electronics  
against Linn DS, DSM or Selekt equipment

Offer ends 15 February 2020

Glory be! This years Linn winter promotion is both generous and easy to explain. Linn have increased dealer margin for DS, DSM and Selekt for sales where the dealer is taking an item in part exchange.

This item needs to be some sort of audio electronics, not necessarily serious hifi or Linn, and, well, that's it.

Should the trade be saleable and have value significantly above the 20% allowance, we will offer you more.

Looks like a good time for a conversation!

# REL

ACOUSTICS LTD.

A little while ago, a local customer asked if we could supply some REL sub-woofers. We had already been speaking to REL, but our well documented space issues had held us back from becoming stockists. Somehow a straight sale changed the dynamic!

So . . . we now have a couple of the subs (S3 and T7i) on hand should you want to investigate.

To Quote REL "We make subwoofers. That's it. Nothing else. No distractions. Nothing to steal our focus. No kidding ourselves that we can be good at everything. No trying to conquer the whole world. We just do our best to conquer our bit of it."





Naim refurbished. You may have spotted several items on our web site. At the moment, we have just Uniti Novas but we have had other higher end items too, including ND555 and NAC 252.

The deal is that these graded units have been brought up to 'as new' specification and performance internally and grade A ones should be as new externally too. Even the Grade B ones we've had have been hard to fault. The savings are significant and you get a two year warranty from time of purchase.

Keep an eye on our site or, for the higher end units, please let us know if you're interested.



# audioquest.

Now that we are owing up to brands that you may well not know we cover, we've been gently building our collection of Audioquest cables over the past eighteen months or so. It started with a Vodka Ethernet cable being recommended by a customer (yup, it's good) and has broadened to us having a reasonable cross-section of their digital cables on dem.

The Rocket series of loudspeaker cables has proved very popular and we've even dabbled with the Niagara mains conditioning. This proved to be excruciatingly successful when used with a Chord Dave driving active ATC loudspeakers. Even the comically bulky Tornado mains cable made sense feeding the Niagara unit. Thankfully, for the sake of domestic harmony, standard mains leads proved to be perfectly fine elsewhere.



Naim Mu-so 2 and QB 2 have been with us since summer 2019. Both are significantly better than their predecessors, offering a larger, cleaner, more spirited and spacious sound than before.

They have greater functionality too, including an HDMI input which is enabled for Audio Return Channel on TVs. The upshot is that the full size mu-so 2 now makes a very effective sound-bar that needs no additional sub-woofer and can play music properly.

We have both mu-so 2 and Qb 2 in stock and will be happy to demonstrate them in normal settings. We also have small number of the original Qbs at very attractive prices ...



Chord Electronics Ltd.

We held our Chord open day in the Autumn of 2019. The main focus, with designer Rob Watts in attendance, was the performance of the DACs and scalars but we had to play them through something.

As well as the excellent and impossibly compact TToby and Étude power amplifiers, we borrowed a pair of Ultima 3 monoblocs, the 'babies' of the new range. Quite honestly, 480 watts have never seemed so huge. Perhaps it was the beer, but the uncompressed headroom was a revelation.

We were certainly impressed enough to order a pair; (in black, without the oil rig structures) and should receive them before 2019 is out.



Also new, but already with us, this time, is the new £999 Huie phono stage. As the images below show, it shares dimensions and ingot-like build with the Qutest DAC.

It sounds great too, but at time of writing, we've spent less time with it than a couple of our customers.







Late 2017, we started stocking Dynaudio products. Mid 2019 and we almost have the set. This has turned out to be one of our better decisions.

The model of the moment when we started was the Special 40 stand-mount and we were in a state of rapture. These, plus the low cost but European made Emit 10 and 20 stand-mounts, have proved incredibly popular.

At ASE 2018, we had the honour of the UK preview of the new Confidence series. The ones we had, Confidence 50, are the second largest in the range. For a variety of reasons, things went a little less well than planned. The room was a little less well damped than would have been ideal, but they still acquitted themselves very well.

In some ways it encapsulated all that is wrong with trying to present products in a tight time-frame. Everything was

to the wire, even the speakers turned out to be not quite ready.

A few months later, we had the new, affordable Evoke series. These are really hitting the spot, offering high end performance from compact, room friendly packages.

With two stand-mounts, two floor-standers and a centre speaker these are likely to be the mainstays of the Dynaudio range. The newly designed tweeters are tangibly better than the ones in the Special 40s but, still, these limited edition speakers hold a special appeal. Incidentally, we are now down to just grey being available and the end of the limited run is very much in sight.

Further up the range, we've had some success with the Contour range, particularly the 20 stand-mount.

Finally, after that bumpy start, the fully fledged Confidence series is with us.

For our big room, we have the rather striking Confidence 60s (pictured right) and for normal spaces, the Confidence 20 stand-mount. Both are extremely fine examples of the loudspeaker makers art.

By the way, unless you have a gallery overlooking the listening room, the view on the right is not one you are likely to see. These are very tall indeed.





K U D O S

Kudos' **Titan 505**, the final model in the current Titan range, arrived in late 2018 but the means to drive them, and the rest of the range actively with wholly Naim electronics was very much a mid 2019 development.

The entire Titan range is in stock for demonstration and we have equipped ourselves with Naim SNAXOs, power supplies and multiple power amplifiers right up to NAP 500 level. It's worth the effort though. Active results from Kudos are proving to be genuinely stellar. Our Naim / Kudos active open days in the summer were very successful indeed and the ND555 / Statement preamp / 3 x NAP 500 system gave results that beggared belief. Noticeably ahead of the passive all Statement combo.

With Linn, it's a comparatively simple matter of using their digital crossover. With a stand-alone analogue active crossover now available from Exposure, anything, even the Chords, can be used actively, although the potential demo kit investment is scary.

The more modest Kudos X3 and X2 floor-standers have been finding new friends. Despite the existence in our portfolio of some new super high value loudspeakers, spending that bit more on a hand crafted UK built product, still holds huge appeal.

They do sound very good indeed.



We held our PMC 'fact finding' event in the summer of 2019. We used our whopping great fact Fenestrias in the large space where they were driven by our Naim Statement electronics.

The new revised SE versions of fact 8 and fact 12 were in the two smaller rooms and they were powered by Chord Cor amplifiers.

The new fact SE's are tangible improvements over the originals and now come in a choice of slightly textured grey or white.

As before, both are open, dynamic and refined, only even more so. They are able to drive large spaces yet are compact enough for smaller ones. Neither are terribly hard to drive either.

We subsequently used the fact 12s in the big space for the Rega Aethos and they worked well.

They are available for demonstration as required.

Beyond the fact series, we also have pretty much the full range of twenty5 series speakers on demonstration. The Twenty5 23 floor-stander is a particular favourite that keeps finding new buyers. Beyond the attractive slim looks, they are easy to place and will work very well with a wide range of electronics.

Finally, we really ought to 'big up' the Cor integrated. It's an extremely fine piece of work.



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